

# Alex Hutton Trio – Magna Carta Suite Album Review

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## Alex Hutton Trio 'Magna Carta Suite' (F-IRE) 4/5

The inspiration for Magna Carta Suite came on pianist/composer Alex Hutton's daily dog walk through the ancient woodland where the Magna Carta was signed, between the villages of Wraysbury and Runnymede, near Windsor. "When you're looking up at the branches under which Roman soldiers would have gathered" remarks Hutton, "the first thing you think of is 'if the tree could talk – what stories it must have...'" Hutton, through his music, is a storyteller himself. Helping him achieve this musical narrative are bassist Yuri Goloubev and drummer Asaf Sirkis. Having performed together as a trio for some years now, their intuitive interplay is a potent feature to this recording, with this relationship being key to the colourful, dynamic and expressive content throughout the suite. The music itself appears rooted in folklore and yet encompasses many styles and influences, ranging from early folk music to baroque, classical and contemporary jazz. The recording also features Liz Palmer: Baroque Flute, Liesbeth Allart: Cor Anglias, and the spoken word, reciting his own poem "Thoughts bear heirs to memory", of Neil Sparkes. The different themes throughout the suite sit well together as a whole, with the listener taken on an engaging and enchanting journey. Hutton's previous releases have been notable for their non-conventional take on the piano trio format and with its warmth, calmness and sincerity, this release cements such a view. Magna Carta Suite feels open, honest and optimistic and provides a welcome diversion from the regular fare. The album begins with "Old Yew". One can almost visualise the musical gears of Hutton's thought process clicking into action as he sits beneath the tree, pondering its existence and thinking about the signing of the Magna Carta which took place 800 years ago beneath a 2000 year old Yew tree. Flute lines twist and turn over a percussive piano enticing the listener to walk with the composer on his musical adventure backwards through time. "King John's Hunting Lodge" is a thoughtful, thematic piece and it is clearly its simplicity that makes it work so well. Far more urgent and intense is "The Barons", a sweeping, lyrical tune that segues into "June 15th 1215", reminiscent of a traditional jig one might have heard with the innkeeper's approval. "Gutenberg Press" highlights the trio at their unified best. Hutton's own tree may have branches of folk and classical music but it is the jazz roots of the tree that help nurture and make it grow healthy and strong. On "Gunpowder and Compass" we hear the trio exploring the country that surrounds them with Hutton reaching out with an abundance of style and substance. The romanticism of "Self Made Man" is followed by the somewhat tense "The Fog of War", where an innocent beginning soon leads into a jittery piece of musical theatre. "King John's Hunting Lodge (Reprise)" oozes a warm melancholia and leads us back to the starting point of "Old Yew (Reprise)", a stronger, bolder, more optimistic offering from the opening track, as if to demonstrate how the tree still stands strong in the year 2015. The final two pieces "Thoughts bear heirs to memory" and "As sunlight

passes (Old Yew)" feature the spoken words of Neil Sparkes and are an uplifting and contemplative reflection on time passing, history revisited and present day appreciation of how we got to be where we are today.

Alex Hutton Trio will be performing throughout the summer, taking in gigs at St. Andrew's Church, Wraysbury on 15th June, 606 Jazz Club, Chelsea on 13th July, and Ronnie Scott's Jazz Club as part of the International Piano Trio Festival, on 13th August.