

Danger Hall press release

The debut album by Danger Hall announces the arrival of a truly unique sound of interest for fans of instrumental music. Expectations are shirked left and right—what may seem like a typical jazz saxophone quartet is made entirely atypical with the presence of a pedal steel guitar. While there certainly are elements of jazz, there is an equal mix of rock and funk music, though decidedly not registering as fusion—there is less emphasis on virtuosic or flashy solos, but a priority on evoking moods and texture. The orientation toward refined compositions and intentional arrangements give the music more depth than purely “vibe”-based improvisatory approaches. The group is equally at home playing at dive bars as they are jazz clubs, carving their own focused path in creative instrumental music.

Based between Raleigh and Chapel Hill NC, Danger Hall comprises veterans of the indie rock and jazz scenes—Steve Grothmann (bass), Daniel Hall (drums), Peter Lamb (tenor sax), and Shepherd Lane (pedal steel). Though this band is quite new, forming in early 2024, some of the members have a long history together dating back to the early 2000s playing in the regional R&B and trad jazz favorites Countdown Quartet. The solid backbone and propulsive grooves are provided by the rhythm team of Grothmann, a composer of many of the songs on this album and a founding member of alt-country band Whiskeytown, and Hall, a former member of Chatham County Line and The Old Ceremony. Lamb has led his jazz quintet Peter Lamb & the Wolves since 2009, and Lane can also be seen with Steve in the partly instrumental rock group Clear Spots.

The wide variety of styles found on the album is unpredictable, yet wildly engaging. There are traces of exotica and space-age pop in “Blue Sink”, and hypotonic psych-rock in “Try Me Tone”. When there are overt dives into jazz (“Sparse Arse”) or funk (“Cave Painting”), the clever arrangements and production touches keep the performances direct and accessible. The choices of cover songs on the album are indicative of the far-reaching nature of the band’s modus operandi—the rendition of Can’s “Vitamin C” has the saxophone playing the vocal melody and pedal steel managing to fill in the atmospheres of both guitar and keyboards. The folk song “Home on the Range” is played sensitively and unironically as a rubato ballad, while John Coltrane’s “Dear Lord” ends the record on a hopeful note and shows the group is unafraid to put their stamp on the work of a canonical artist.