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Vijay Iyer  
Quotes

*In What Language?* has been featured on PRI's *Studio 360* and NPR's *All Things Considered*.

"A song cycle of powerful narrative invention and ravishing trance jazz, *In What Language?* is about nothing less than the death of trust... seventeen pointed fictions and candid reflections on exile, quarantine, suspicion and skin... with a spinning-wheel score for jazz-rock septet: roiling outbreaks of fusion, lusty sighs of brass, jolts of electro hip-hop. There is a beautiful resilience here, too – in Iyer's cleansing cascades of piano and Ladd's declaration near the end of the album: "I swallow whole every complexity and digest all the answers/And no answers will emerge, only music, food and family in the air." *In What Language?* is a compelling, provocative record about a world grown smaller, meaner, and more fearful. It is also an eloquent tribute to the stubborn, regenerative powers of the human spirit."

**David Fricke, *ROLLING STONE***

"With a seven-piece band playing odd-meter funk, lulling ambient chords, blots of rhythm under Indian-accented raps, it's that elusive thing, underground political music that sounds good. And though its points of origin are far from the mainstream of either hip-hop or jazz, let's count it as a breakthrough hip-hop-jazz fusion. Because if we do, it's one of the smartest I've heard, and one of the few that really works."

**Ben Ratliff, *The New York Times***

"Jazz pianist Vijay Iyer and poet Mike Ladd understand the strange energy of an airport: constant restlessness, sterile anonymity and an ultra-charged atmosphere post-Sept. 11, 2001. With Iyer working as composer and Ladd as librettist, the two weave together elements of jazz, hip-hop and spoken-word art into a new, subversive kind of song cycle. Shifting constantly between narratives, their kaleidoscopic lens sees the airline passenger as both the viewer and the viewed. Cultural and political references fly fast and furious, shifting as quickly as the musical mood. As much as this album is a potent political statement, it is also a fine work of music—just listen to the crackling energy of "The Density of the 19th Century," the Reich-like, hypnotic, circling piano figures of "DeGaulle" or the rolling, majestic balladry of "Plastic Bag." This is a disc that demands repeat listening."

**Anastasia Tsioulcas, *Billboard***

“... this epic work explores life through the microcosm of the airport -- a place of arrival and departure, of being an alien or leaving one's citizenship behind. Poet/hip-hop man Mike Ladd has done a superb job with the lyrics, polished by real little monologues that examine all aspects of the problem -- and it's a problem that often leaves travelers dehumanized. Keyboard player Vijay Iyer gives tone and color to all this in his compositions, and the two together become more than a sum of their parts. It's not an easy album to listen to -- often harrowing, as in "Innana After Baghdad" or "Terminal City" -- but more than repays the investment of ears and time. Is it jazz? Not really. It falls outside category... dense and demanding, but ultimately satisfying, inasmuch as it leaves the listener full of questions and less certain about the world.” **All Music Guide**

“The great success of *In What Language?* can be measured by the seamlessness with which Ladd's verse meets Iyer's music. The strength of their collaborative efforts can hardly be overstated... The marriage of sound and word are so complete that it becomes impossible to imagine one component of the project without the other... More than anything, '**In What Language?**' signals a culmination of Iyer's vision. The music he presents here -- groovy and shape-shifting, slippery yet concrete -- amounts to a tour de force... Steeped in the language of South Asian and pan-African culture but trafficking in universal impulses, the suite fulfills not only the dictates of its premise but also the actualization of Iyer's fascinating and still-evolving conception.”

**Nate Chinen, *JazzTimes***

“...challenging, potent music that takes risks and offers substantial rewards...*In What Language?* [is] a monumental work that seamlessly combines sound and voice for an artistic statement that should reverberate for years to come... It is simply a masterpiece...”

**Signal to Noise**

“4 1/2 STARS (OUT OF 5) Iyer and Ladd interconnect layers of effects to complement an electro-acoustic production awash with looping ostinato grooves, horns, string overlays and perky funk/techno beats. Ladd and the actors' recitations are extraordinarily moving...”

**Glenn Astarita, *Down Beat***

“...an ambitious protest for a belittling time... The airport, with its relentless energy of coming and going, is the perfect site for the pair's commentary on lives in transition... The music - composed by Iyer and performed by a seven-piece band - glides and swirls with a thick, heartening spirit. Ladd's characters are complicated, and though they emphasize the uniqueness of their positions, there's always something open, even affirming, about them... **In What Language?** succeeds by not wearing its political views on its sleeve but offering them slyly, through the feeling the performance evokes.

**Hua Hsu, *The Village Voice***