



# all about jazz

NEW YORK

CD REVIEWS

April 2006 | Issue No. 48

***Leaving New York***  
**Dana Leong (Tateo Sound)**  
Review by Thomas Greenland

“Earth living birth rhythm... it grows and grows, in studios and shows, amassing energy, momentum, it rolls from New York to the whole globe.” These words, excerpted from Baba Isarael’s “Poem,” the opening cut on cellist/trombonist Dana Leong’s debut recording *Leaving New York*, aptly foreshadow the music to follow: an effervescent, ebullient explosion of jazz energy.



Dana Leong is a phenomenon: a creative and eclectic cellist, a gifted melodist and composer, and a wonderfully expressive trombonist. Leong’s working quintet features Alan Grubner (viola and violin), Christian Howes (acoustic and electric violin), Jason Lindner (piano, organ and Moog) and Tony Escapa (drums). They are joined on *Leaving New York* by rap poet Baba Isarael, who contributes “Poem” and “Beer Goggles,” the latter an extended funk workout a la Bootsy Collins, with Escapa backbeating a tight dry snare drum behind Lindner’s sci-fi organ, the string trio answering with conversational lines that weave in and around the flow-etry.

Other special guests include Christian McBride, who plays a charismatic introduction and fleet-fingered fills on “Sunrise,” and Paquito D’Rivera, whose virtuosic clarinet dances effortlessly with the strings on “Insatiable.” Violinist Christian Howes bows a rocking, wah-wahed solo on “Sunrise” and strums chicken scratch rhythms on “Beer Goggles,” while Leong contributes a number of fine improvisations, particularly the melodically inventive trombone of “Storm Warning” and the dexterous cello of “Sunrise.” Leong’s writing is excellent throughout: “Sunrise,” “Insatiable,” and “The Way” contain intriguing string arrangements; “Poem,” “Storm Warning,” and the hymnlike “Amen” feature flowing, lyrical melodies.

Leong’s music is exemplary of the musical enthusiasm that seems to bubble up out of New York like no other place, offering its flavors and its Earth rhythms to the world at large.