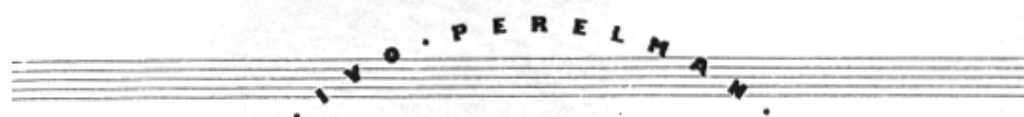


JAZZ COOKS

PORTRAITS AND RECIPES
OF THE GREATS



With Chopin preludes, Brazilian pop star Roberto Carlos, and the Beatles sharing equal time on the turntable, it seemed natural that matzo balls, feijoada, and black beans would coexist on the stove in the São Paulo household where Ivo Perelman grew up. Born in 1961 of a Polish father and Russian mother who had settled in Brazil as children, the tenor saxophonist had little choice but to appreciate the world's cultural diversity at a young age. Traditional Jewish and Brazilian meals were the fare, a potpourri of international sounds, the music.

Perelman carries with him a similar desire to cross-pollinate his jazz. No South American reedman since Gato Barbieri mixes a flare for sweet melodies with fierce, American-influenced free blowing as powerfully as Perelman does. "I'd like to get the essence of black American jazz and the essence of Brazilian music and meld them," he says.

Unlike some musical fusions, there's nothing watered down about Perelman's union of these two distinct cultures. A disciple of the spiritually explosive jazz of John Coltrane, on occasion he even visits the late saxophonist's grave on Long Island to pay homage. Perelman's passion for carving out a jazz career for himself was so strong that he moved from Brazil to New York because he felt the music was not taken seriously enough in his native country. "Gilberto Gil and those people are wonderful, wonderful composers and singers," Perelman says. "But the instrumental tradition is not respected there. The instrumental

teacher, made sure that Perelman and his older sister were well versed in the classical repertoire. He was playing music by Bach and Brazilian composer Heitor Villa-Lobos by nine and at various times tried his hand at the violin, cello, trombone, and piano. He even took up the clarinet as a member of the São Paulo Dixieland Band before settling on tenor sax. By sixteen, Perelman had moved from progressive rock to heavy doses of Dexter Gordon, Sonny Rollins, Coltrane, and Brazilian alto saxophonist Victor Assis Brasil. "I would buy whatever I could put my hands on," he recalls. "It's hard to find jazz records in Brazil. You have to go to obscure places and really shop around."



In 1981 Perelman moved north to Boston. He attended Berklee College of Music briefly before heading on to Montreal and then Italy, where he played with Brazilian electric guitarist Trio de Paulo. America soon beckoned again, but not before Perelman, a devotee of the macrobiotic diet when he had arrived in Italy, was converted to the magnificently varied tastes of Italian cuisine. "I used to go to a club in Milano where the owner, right before and after you play, would

would eat like a pig. It was such a heavy meal that I couldn't even play. It wasn't funny back then.

"When I left Brazil I was into natural, macrobiotic food, and I've been trying to keep that ever since. I eat a little white meat and fish, and I'll have a beer once in a while, but I'm very conscious of health food. If you start eating industrial food, I feel you really become more aggressive. You become greedy and always unsatisfied. You put your body out of balance. Eating light, you live lighter. If I'm more in balance with myself, I can reach deeper into myself and express myself in more satisfying, consistent, and meaningful ways."

Perelman's jazz indeed sounds like it emanates from deep in his soul. In the company of artists like Fred Hopkins, Flora Purim, and Mino Cinelu, he comes off as genuine whether he's splattering atonal ideas on a fragmented chordal canvas or waxing lyrical on a beautiful Brazilian children's song. When he was in Los Angeles for a time, he discovered that he didn't have much choice about his music. "I tried to be a commercial musician, but I wasn't successful," he says. "I don't have the attitude. I was called for a studio gig and it took me hours to play an eight-bar intro to a pop ballad in C, whereas any sax player would have done it in thirty minutes. From that day on I learned that it was definitely not my thing. The music I'm playing is the only thing I know how to play."

Perelman's macrobiotic diet includes soups like miso, brown rice with lentils, azuki beans, fish, salads, and fruits, but he often ven-