

Josh Lawrence

Artist Statement – *Still We Dream*

Thelonious Monk's "Ugly Beauty" has always struck me as a kind of portrait of Lady Liberty. Its delicate, asymmetrical phrasing, at once haunting and dignified, felt like an aural metaphor for the American ideal—beautiful and fractured, unresolved and still reaching. I made that connection long before I discovered the rarely heard vocal version of the piece, titled *Still We Dream*. The lyrics only deepened the impression: they reframed the tune as an ode to imagination, resilience, and the collective dream of something better. Suddenly, the piece wasn't just a paradox—it was a vision.

From that spark, the idea of *Still We Dream* began to unfold. The phrase itself carries multiple meanings:

- When the world changes—*still, we dream*.
- When the mind becomes still—*we dream*.
- And together—*still we, dream* toward a shared future.

The original concept for the album was a conversation between Thelonious Monk and Frédéric Chopin—two pianists and composers whose work, though born of vastly different worlds, shares a commitment to lyricism, clarity, and emotional honesty. That impulse grew from my time studying with Barry Harris, who could take a melody from Bach and recast it in the voice of Bud Powell. To Barry, there were no barriers between jazz and classical music—only ideas, sound, and the expressive potential of the piano. That philosophy guided these quintet arrangements, which seek not to fuse genres but to let musical traditions encounter each other on open terms.

As the 2024 U.S. presidential election approached, the scope of the project expanded. I felt the need to include pieces that spoke directly to this moment: "*Long As You're Living*" by Julian Priester and Tommy Turrentine—a bold assertion of presence—and "*Pure Imagination*," which holds a still hopefulness that transcends genre or era. Together, they helped anchor the record in this specific time while gesturing toward something more timeless.

David Lynch's passing cast a final, unexpected light over the album. From *Twin Peaks*, his iconic line echoes: "*We live inside a dream. But who is the dreamer?*" That question—mysterious and unsettling—hovers over this music. It invites us to listen not just inward, but outward. What kind of dream are we living in? Who shaped it? And what might it become?

Still We Dream is not a fusion project. It is a set of conversations—between Monk and Chopin, between past and present, between the real and the imagined. It's a space to ask questions, to listen deeply, and to remember that even in uncertainty, we keep dreaming. When all is still, we dream. In motion, we dream. And together—still we dream.