



Melissa Aldana

Saxophonist - Composer

# Press Quotes

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- **New York Times:** “..a supremely focused statement” (said about “Back Home”).
- **Feast of Music:** “Aldana doesn't play like a competition winner—she plays like a storyteller”.
- **ABC News:** “the young tenor with the breezy, accented voice is a hard-toned, unsentimental instrumentalist steeped in classical jazz”.
- **Jane Ira Bloom:** “Melissa is a young artist, who, in addition to having embraced a great deal of tradition, has made important steps in developing her own personal sonic vocabulary”.
- **NPR:** “A bold new talent..with her own style”.



# Melissa Aldana “Back Home” bio - page 1

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Acclaimed tenor saxophonist Melissa Aldana follows up her 2014 Concord release *Melissa Aldana & Crash Trio* with the explorative and deeply swinging “Back Home”, this time released on the Wommusic label. Pablo Menares, Aldana’s fellow native of Santiago, Chile, is again on bass. On drums is the in-demand Jochen Rueckert, bringing a supple and unpredictable rhythmic élan to the session. These three musicians turn on a dime and project an uncommonly full orchestral sound, rich in spiritual intensity, all in the absence of a harmony instrument.

The title *Back Home* might seem to evoke Chile, where Aldana left in 2007 to pursue jazz at ever higher levels in the U.S. In fact, Aldana reveals, *Back Home* “is not really related to Chile itself. It’s related to the first time I picked up the tenor and I heard Sonny Rollins.” The closing title track carries strong echoes of Rollins’ playful spirit, and reveals much about Aldana’s evolution from a 6-year-old alto player to “a bold new talent” (NPR), one of the most compelling and prodigious tenor saxophonists of her time. In fact she wrote “Back Home” specifically for Rollins, she recalls: “He was one of the first reasons I started playing trio, because the freedom that you have within the music, the interaction, the opportunity you have to express yourself and communicate with the other musicians.”

As a child Aldana studied with her renowned saxophonist father Marcos Aldana (son of saxophonist Enrique Aldana, whose Selmer Mark VI tenor Melissa performs with to this day). She began on alto but after hearing the landmark *Sonny Rollins + 4* she switched to tenor and never looked back. Other important influences she cites range from Don Byas, Gene Ammons and Lucky Thompson to Chris Potter and Mark Turner.

In 2007 Aldana moved to Boston to enroll at Berklee, coming under the mentorship of tenor great George Garzone. Pianist Danilo Pérez and saxophonist Patricia Zarate provided Aldana with crucial support and guidance as well. In 2009 she took the plunge to New York and began apprenticing with greats such as Greg Osby and George Coleman, among others. In 2013 she became the first female instrumentalist and the first South American ever to win the Thelonious Monk Competition. She is also a recipient of the Martin E. Segal Award from Jazz at Lincoln Center and a double recipient of the Altazor Award, Chile’s highly prestigious national arts prize.

“Jochen and Pablo are both great writers and I love the taste they have for music,” Aldana says. “Even though I’m the bandleader and I bring a lot of the music, I love to play the music of the people that I’m playing with, and I love for everyone to feel involved. I think of the band more as a collective, and it’s refreshing for me to play their music.”

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Aldana’s choice of the classic Weill/Gershwin ballad “My Ship” is also rooted in home: “It’s one of the first ballads that I heard with my dad,” she says. “I wanted to record it because it brings back memories of me and my dad learning music. The way that my dad rehearsed, the way that he practiced — that’s all a part of who I am right now.” On previous dates Aldana has recorded “I’ll Be Seeing You,” “You’re My Everything” and Thelonious Monk’s “Ask Me Now.” “Initially all those tunes are related to some period of my life — it might be where I heard the tune for the first time, or the things I was going through. The songs all have meanings related to my experience.”

The album leads off with the brisk, colorful “Alegría,” one of four Aldana originals. “I started working on that tune when I was hearing Wayne Shorter’s Native Dancer album. This was right after I won the Monk Competition, and when I won the first thing I did was buy a piano. So the piano arrived and I was hearing this. ‘Alegría’ means ‘joy’ and that was the feeling I was trying to recreate, thinking, ‘How can I express joy in my own way?’ That’s why the tune is more upbeat. It’s meant to be a lot of things going on at the same time.”

Aldana wrote “Before You” for her boyfriend during time spent apart. “He left for a while and I was on tour all over, and we met up in Vienna after a month and a half. Then we met up again soon in Montreal.” She likens the hip, dancing feel of the piece to flamenco, up to a point. “It’s not exactly the flamenco rhythm but I was thinking about castanets, and then Jochen added his own thing to it.”

“Time,” opening in a rubato vein, is Aldana’s meditation on her life since departing Chile. “I was thinking wow, it’s been almost nine years, a lot has happened — good moments, bad moments, I’ve met a lot of people. I was very emotional, it was rainy and there was a change of seasons, and I came up with that tune out of nostalgia, thinking of my life up until now.”

The first of Pablo Menares’ two entries, “Desde La Lluvia” (“from the rain”), is rooted in midtempo 3/4 swing, with a calm, lyrical melody that prompts spirited soloing from the leader on tenor. The second by Menares, “En Otro Lugar,” opens with a beautiful unaccompanied bass intro and moves into a gentle straight-eighth feel. Jochen Rueckert’s “Obstacles” finds the trio at its fastest, moving between a restrained “two” feel and straightahead walking swing, with a complex repeating rhythmic figure (an obstacle, perhaps?) tying the two sections together. Rueckert’s “Servant” is a slower swing vehicle not unlike “Desde La Lluvia” but quite different compositionally: the tune’s initial agitated vamp returns at points to break up the swing and keep the trio on its toes.

Back Home was recorded at Sear Sound on June 6+7, 2015. It was engineered (tracked and mixed) by James Farber and mastered by Greg Calbi, two of the top recording engineers in the world. Unlike the Crash Trio album, this time Aldana and the trio played together in the same room instead of using separation. The end result is a more intimate, full-bodied sound, with exceptional clarity, expanse and color.

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As the trio charts new terrain and evolves in its musical identity, Aldana remarks, “I do feel that there’s continuity from the last album but perhaps some added maturity. We were working and touring a lot, performing one day at large outdoor stages like the Playboy Jazz Festival in LA, then the next at intimate clubs like Smalls in New York, and I’m trying to bring in all the experience and things that I learned these past two years. I went to many really different places, hanging out with the guys, rehearsing back in New York, composing new music. I feel on this album there’s a more mature band sound that’s starting to emerge.”

## *MELISSA ALDANA “Back Home” Tracklisting:*

1. Alegria (Aldana)
2. Desde La Lluvia (Menares)
3. Obstacles (Rueckert)
4. En Otro Lugar (Menares)
5. My Ship (P. Menares)
6. Servant #2 (Rueckert)
7. Before You (Aldana)
8. Time (Aldana)
9. Back Home (Aldana)

Total time: 53 minutes

Produced by Anders Chan-Tidemann

Executive Producer: Stephanie Chan-Tidemann

Engineered by: James Farber

Mastered by Greg Calbi

Recorded at Sear Sound Studio June 6+7, 2015

## FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE VISIT:

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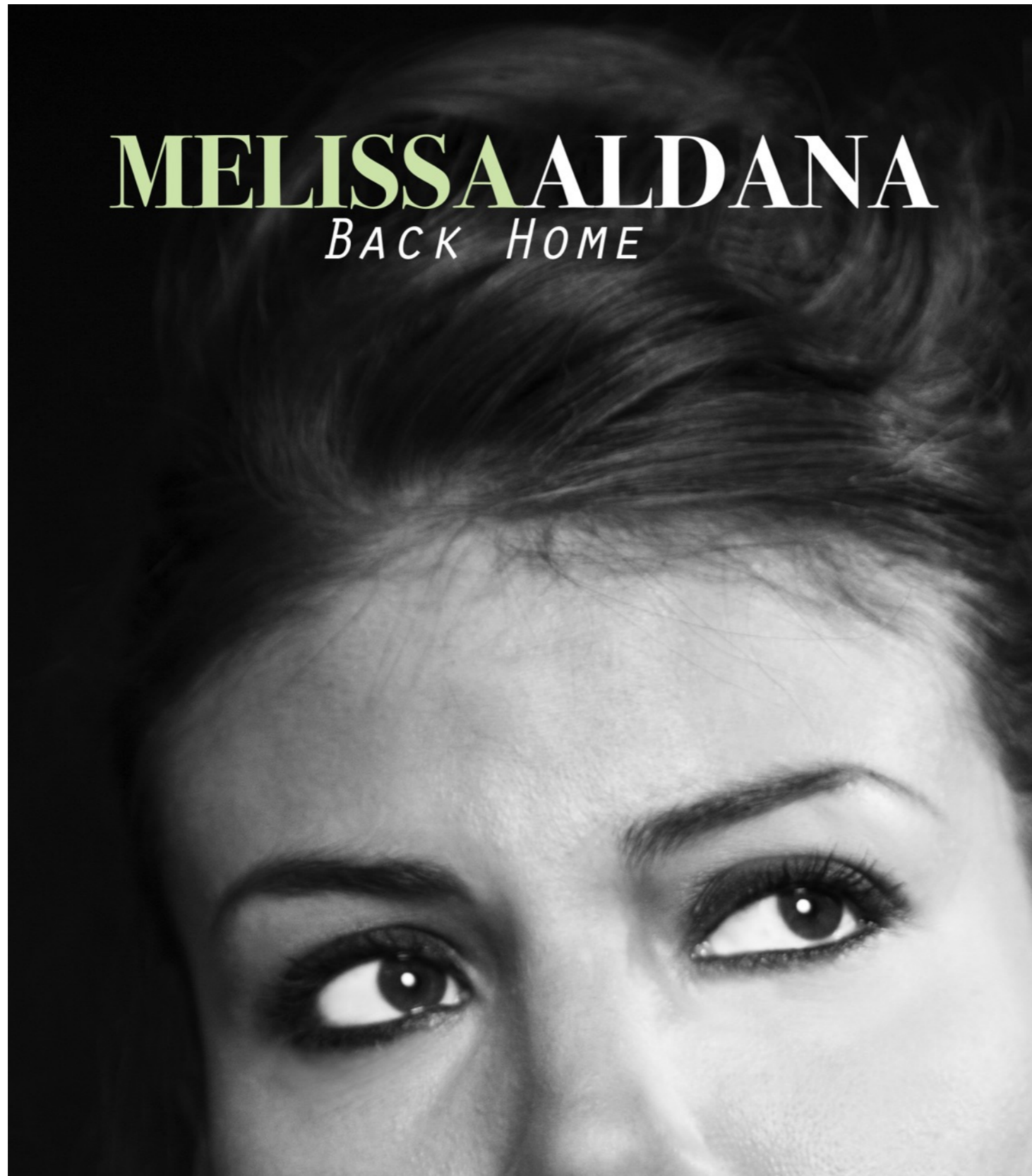
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