



*Gotham Goodbye*  
**Franck Amsallem (Jazz&People)**  
by Scott Yanow

Pianist Franck Amsallem moved from his native France to the United States in 1981 to study at Berklee. After graduating, he settled in New York where he developed his own voice within jazz' modern mainstream, performing and recording with Gary Peacock, Tim Ries, Roy Hargrove, Bobby Watson and Joshua Redman in addition to leading his own groups. In 2001 Amsallem returned to France where he has since become one of his country's top jazz players. The recently recorded *Gotham Goodbye*, his tenth album as a leader, has Amsallem paying tribute to his 20 years in the U.S. Rather than offer standards (other than "Last Night When I Was Young"), he features originals that were written to recall his valuable time in America.

For this outing, Amsallem is joined by tenor saxophonist Irving Acao, bassist Viktor Nyberg and drummer Gautier Garrigue. The music is essentially modern hardbop with an emphasis on swing and chordal improvisation. The pianist has combined such influences as McCoy Tyner, early Herbie Hancock, Chick Corea and others into his own style while Acao has an attractive sound, hints at the phrasing of Branford Marsalis on "From Two To Five" yet can also play a ballad with shades of Ben Webster's warm tone and lets out some soulful cries worthy of Red Holloway on "From Twelve To Four".

The opener, "From Two To Five", has a fairly simple theme, some cooking by the quartet and shows that that time of day must be exciting in New York. "A Night In Ashland" is a complete contrast since it is moody and thoughtful. The dreamlike title ballad is a bit melancholy but becomes an energetic modal piece. The quartet plays pretty on Harold Arlen-Yip Harburg's "Last Night When We Were Young" while "Baton Rouge" utilizes New Orleans parade rhythms over a modern chord structure. The other performances include the fairly straightahead "Standard Form"; the introspective and quietly mournful "In Memoriam"; an eccentric medium-tempo blues ("From Twelve To Four"), on which Amsallem throws in some chords worthy of Thelonious Monk; and "Hamsa" which has a haunting melody and is played in 5/4 time.

*Gotham Goodbye* may be a tribute to the New York scene of the '90s, but Amsallem has succeeded in giving current players some very good songs to adopt.

*For more information, visit [jazzandpeople.com](http://jazzandpeople.com). Amsallem is at Mezzrow Nov. 6th and Jazz at Kitano Nov. 8th-9th with Sacha Boutros. See Calendar.*