

John Fordham on a formidable keyboard king – plus the rest of the week's jazz CDs

Flying solo

JAZZ CD RELEASES

Bojan Zulfikarpasic
Solobsession (Label Bleu)

★★★★★ £14.99

It's a quarter of a century since Keith Jarrett's *Köln Concert* solo album, one of the most celebrated and successful piano recordings of all time. This solo set from Belgrade-born pianist Zulfikarpasic repeatedly brings the *Köln Concert* disc to mind.

Zulfikarpasic grew up in a music-loving household in Belgrade, with European classical music, jazz, the Beatles and Brazilian sounds constantly in his ears, and he would go to sleep to the sound of his parents' friends singing Yugoslav folk songs at night. All these influences bubble in his work today.

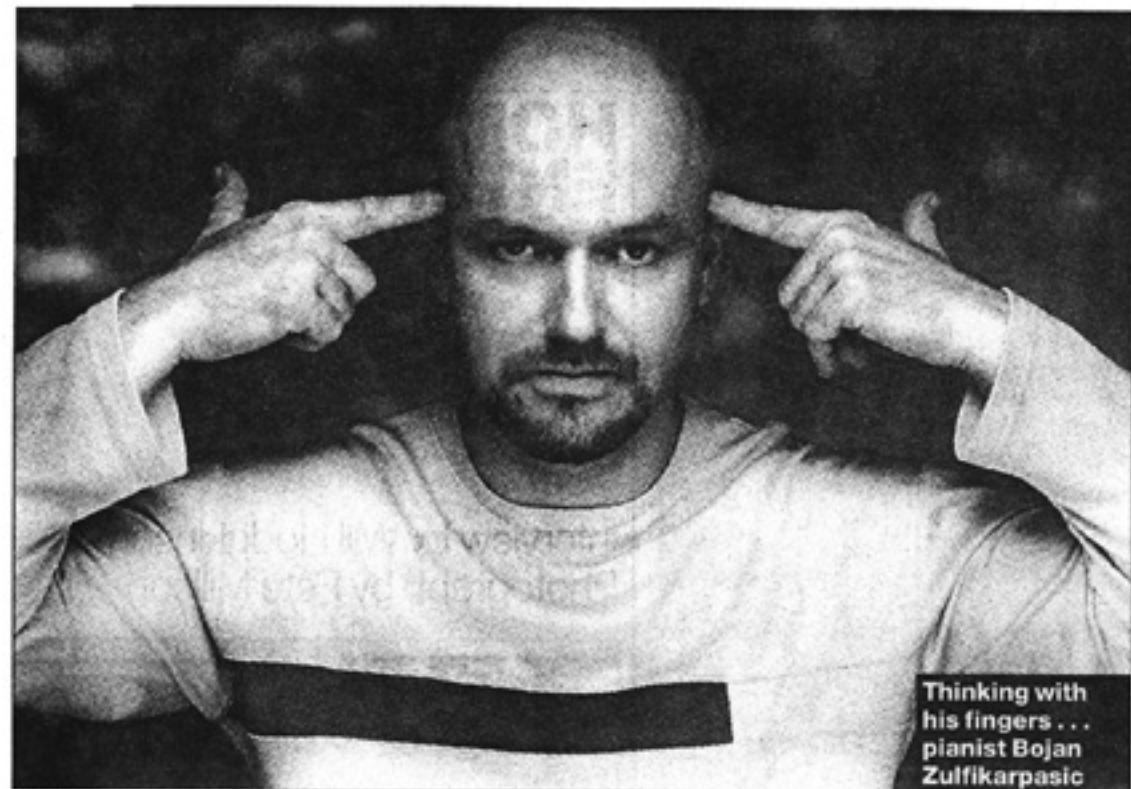
Ten tracks make up this remarkable set, six of them originals, plus a Macedonian folk theme, a rolling mid-

tempo Texier jazzy episode, a rather stately account of Sonny Rollins's *Valse Hot*, and an extraordinary exploration of Ornette Coleman's *Mothers of the Veil*, beginning with restrained blues-nuanced phrasing mingled with washes of arpeggios and turning into a roar of percussive low-register sound.

Zulfikarpasic hints at more lateral technical investigations in his dramatic slow-build opener, a mix of percussion and bass effects plucked inside the lid, sudden sharply struck Monk-like clusters and hissing metallic sweeps across the soundboard. He then develops the music through increasingly elegant jazzy phrasing, sometimes switching the melody to the bottom keys and the accompaniment to the top, and threading his own folk music ever more explicitly into the mix.

The title track, with its blend of wildly displaced blues figures, stormy chordwork, clamour of

contrasting ideas and shifting harmonic roots elicits the *Köln Concert* comparison most vividly in its sweep and confidence. Zulfikarpasic's gift for familiar yet glowingly fresh melody surfaces again in the original *Zulfikar-Pacha*. A standout disc of 2001, and a fascinating confirmation of Zulfikarpasic's already formidable stature.



Thinking with his fingers... pianist Bojan Zulfikarpasic