

Transformation — Alex Skolnick Trio

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The Alex Skolnick Trio's 2002 debut *Goodbye To Romance: Standards For A New Generation* stunned both the metal and jazz worlds. Skolnick, onetime guitarist for Bay Area thrashers Testament, had transformed loud, rollicking works by the Who, Ozzy and KISS into fluid and flawless jazz standards. No, seriously.

It worked so well that jazz bible *Downbeat* awarded the record four-and-a-half out of five stars. Today, with the release of *Transformation*, which finds Skolnick leading bassist Nathan Peck and drummer Matt Zebroski through pieces from Scorpions, Iron Maiden and Deep Purple (plus several richly realized originals), Skolnick has taken his place beside Bill Frisell as one of the freshest and most innovative voices in contemporary jazz guitar. While it might be hard at first to imagine Judas Priest's "Electric Eye" performed on a hollow-body guitar or Pink Floyd's "Money" transformed into a Brubeckian masterpiece (the tune's original odd meter aside), it's here, waiting to be heard and cherished.

But Skolnick really comes to the fore as a composer with pieces such as "Fear Of Flying," "Scorch" (featuring Charlie Hunter on eight-string guitar), "No Fly Zone" and the instantly addictive "Transformation." Zebroski offers up a fine original piece with "Both Feet In" and the trio as a whole shines throughout, dispelling the idea that *Goodbye To Romance* was a novelty record, a one-off. Anyone who listened to that outing knows that nothing could be further from the truth.

Like its predecessor, *Transformation* is a fascinating portrait of one of the great six-string geniuses of our time.

