

# FINAL STEP

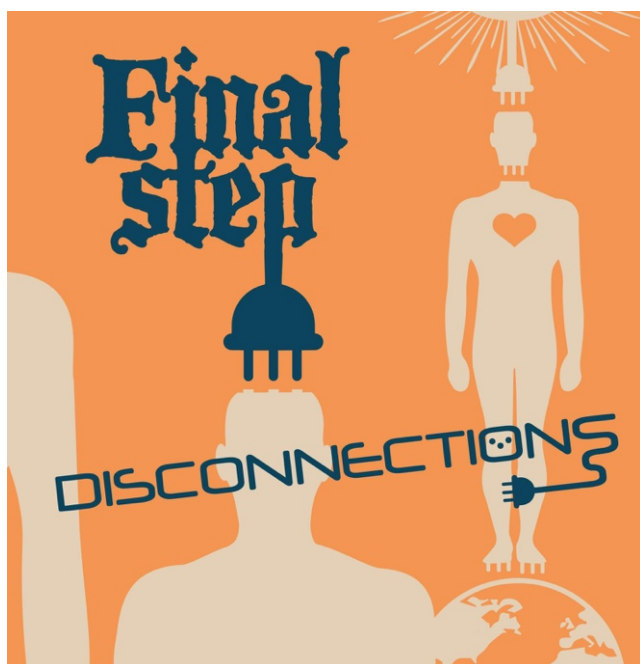
## Disconnections

Translation of the Press Book from italian by Ted K. Ling (assisted by Deepl)

[finalstep.ch](http://finalstep.ch)

*“a punch full of pumping fusion, funk and electric jazz!*

- Abstract Logix



From the multi-lingual border region of Ticino in Switzerland, guitarist **Matteo Finali** brings **Final Step** with their 5th album release, *Disconnections*.

To be organised neatly on your shelf marked ‘jazz fusion’, the group display a shared passion for that post-Miles brand of electric jazz which unites rock, funk, blues and ethnic music.

*“At a time when everyone is seemingly ‘connected’ all the time via their computers and phones, we want to bring a much-needed jolt of energy, reminding people of the importance of disconnecting and enjoying the spirit of live music.”*

Their 2017 release *Live at Estival Jazz* was recorded when the band opened for Mike Manieri’s latest iteration of Steps Ahead at one of Switzerland’s biggest festivals; this 2021 outing sees them back in the studio, adding an extra layer of slick production, colourful effects and bite-sized interludes to the proceedings.

The music is passionate, rhythmic and unashamedly funky, whilst displaying a compositional creativity that underscores the bandleader’s jazz credentials.

Matteo Finali Guitar

Mirko Roccato Saxophones

Alessandro Ponti Hammond Organ & Keys

Federico Barluzzi Bass

Dario Milan Drums

Recorded & mixed by Mauro Fiero @ Recording Studio Canaa, Losone (CH)

Mastered by Andrea De Bernardi @ Eleven Mastering, Busto Arsizio (IT)

Video: <https://youtu.be/MN1cbqZP8c8>

Listen: <https://finalstep.ch/album/disconnections>

WAVS: [download here](#)

Photos: [download here](#)

Following the release of the single of the same name, “Disconnections”, the new album from Final Step, the music project founded by Swiss Matteo Finali, is now available.

Disconnections is a journey into the depths of the soul and of past, familiar and personal experiences of hearings, memories, and of the masters: An acknowledgement to pause and reflect, to the reshaping of content and of a music that runs through life and permeates throughout it. In this sense, the word ‘fusion’ becomes the label in which to frame a complex artistic project and in which memories of various authors who have influenced Final Step’s musical pathway, meet with joy and great respect.

Above all, *Disconnections* is an invitation to stop and to pick out the sounds in one’s life and of music in real life, away from a compulsive and noisy world.



### Tracklist:

1. Prelude (Love Ballade) 2'05”
2. Disconnections 5'37”
3. Leaving For 6'37”
4. In A Brooklyn Store 7'13”
5. Interlude (Country Road) 2'49”
6. Prickly Pear Jam 6'29”
7. Ladybug 7'02”
8. Sunday Morning Rev. 5'01”
9. Postlude (Dreamtime) 3'41”

### Final Step

A band “Made in Switzerland” with a rock-jazz flavour, Final Step's stylistic signature is post-Miles Davis electric jazz in its canonical variant usually referred to as ‘fusion’. To put it more precisely, the shelf on which we could place this formation is that of a jazz-rock band, where the *bifrontal brand* indicates a style marked by an intense rhythmic pulse, often persistently dual and funky. In this band, the dust is shaken off the cuff, animated and driven by the power and strength of new ideas. An intense compositional creativity that offers a reinterpretation that is anything but philological, but rather evolutionary, of a way of bringing jazz together with the rhythms of rock.

### The Band and It’s History

Final Step published their previous album in 2017, which documented their 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2016 live performance at the Estival Jazz in Mendrisio (CH). An intense and passionate album that testifies to the will and ability to relive from within one’s self with creativity and joy, a fusion, which far from being limited to just being a craft, is rather a musical game and a dense interplay with the public.

Today's line up includes: Matteo Finali (guitar), Mirko Roccato (saxes), Alessandro Ponti (keyboards), Federico Barluzzi (bass) and Dario Milan (drums).

Many musicians from the Ticino region of Switzerland and nearby peninsula have been involved in the long journey that has led to the present day, such as Dario Milan, Alessandro Ponti, Mirko Roccato, Gabriele Pezzoli, Fabio Buonarota, Francesca Morandi, Walter Calafiore, Silvano de Tomaso, Max Pizio, Rocco Lombardi, Gian-Andrea Costa, Frank Salis, etc.

## The Story

The artistic project, founded in 2003 through the creativity of its founder member Matteo Finali, debuted in 2010 with the very first album, “*Desert Trolls*” in which the group at its first trials in sound ‘gymnastics’ seem to seek a pathway, testing the tightness of the arrangements and finding their strengths. All containing a considerable measure of energy. The album was released on the Tetraktys Music label (Giubiasco) and was well received by both the public and critics. Alongside Matteo Finali, in this first phase, is Max Pizio on sax.

With “*Uncle Joe’s Space Mill*” of 2014, published by the label Altrisuoni (Manno), an extremely personal evolution seemingly begins. Matteo Finali, always supported by Max Pizio, but now flanked by a quartet of well polished, mature and ambitious instrumentalists, begins a very original exploration of rhythmic modules of North African and Maghreb origin. The electric-tribal mixture here is moving in a direction perhaps a little less funky, but no less enjoyable or involving. It is this turn that imposes a decisive change to the poetics of the band, today making the trait of their style evermore interesting.

The third disc, 2015’s “*Three Sails - Live @ Il Magazzino*”, released on the Bernese Unit Records label, marks an evolution not so much in repertoire as in the expansion of the ensemble. The front line horns are now two, trumpet and saxophone: The songs from “*Uncle Joe’s Space Mill*” now resonate in a new framework; a subdued strength in expression. As if, having found the most reliable and sustainable format, the band explores the personality of each of the pieces with an authority and a calmness worthy of note. The souplesse is perfectly evident watching the live footage of the recording, which is contained in a DVD attached to the release.

2016 and the year of Estival Jazz was the right context to give voice to a wide and complex musical dimension, rich in energy and arrangements. In 2017 the group’s fourth album was released entitled “*Live At Estival Jazz*”, containing live tracks from the 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2016 concert and which saw Final Step take the stage at Estival Jazz 2016 in Mendrisio before the very famous group Steps Ahead. From here, Final Step set off on a new adventure, moving into a creative exploration that has become increasingly clear and defined. The route is drawn on the map of the collective project. It exploits the resources of a genre that shows not only to be perennially vital, but also to be able to lend those resources to new and unexpected musical forms.

## What They Say About Us

*“(…) A fine example of complex funk-jazz-rock, which is well composed, quickly catches the ear and surprises with some crazy, funny ideas.(…) To be recommended to everyone who understands funk not as danceable pop, but as instrumentally exciting music.”*

(Volkmar Mantei)

*“Final Step might be something like the European answer to Steps Ahead”.*  
(Reinhard Kochl, Jazz Thing)

*“Final Step is a fist full of pumping fusion, funk and electric jazz!”*  
(Joe Lang, Abstract Logix)

*“The Steps Ahead have found worthy successors!”*  
(Steve Braun, Rocktimes.de)

*“Final Step demonstrate once again: Music knows no boundaries!”*  
(Andreas Schiffmann, Musikreviews.de)

## Main characters



### Matteo Finali

Born in 1977, he began studying classical guitar at the age of eight at the Music Conservatory of Italian Switzerland. In 1991 he developed a strong interest in contemporary music, studying electric guitar with the masters Luca Zamponi and Andrea Menafra. Seven years later he leaves for the United States. He graduates at the Musicians Institute of Los Angeles, studying with various musicians, among which are Scott Henderson, Jeff Richman, Ross Bolton, Allen Hinds, Sid Jacobs, Art Renshaw, Daniel Gilbert, Masaki Toraiwa and Keith Wyatt. His musical

experiences are varied and he has played at many concerts and festivals in Switzerland and abroad.

In 2003 he founded the group Final Step with which he has, to his credit, four discographic works: *“Desert Trolls”* published in 2010, *“Uncle Joe’s Space Mill”* published in March 2014, *“Three Sails - Live @ Il Magazzino”* published in October 2015 and finally *“Live At Estival Jazz”* in 2017.



### Mirko Roccato

He began his studies at the Music Conservatory G. Verdi in Milan graduating in clarinet under the guidance of Prof. Mauro Ferrando (1. Clarinet in the Symphony Orchestra of the “La Scala Theatre” in Milan). In the field of classical music he has played the clarinet in various chamber and symphonic formations (Orchestra of the Conservatory G. Verdi, Stage Band of the La Scala Theatre, etc.). Later he approached jazz music by completing courses in improvisation and

functional harmony under the guidance of the masters Paolo Tomelleri and Emanuele Cisi. He boasts collaborations with numerous musicians of the Swiss and Italian jazz scene (Paolo Tomelleri, Marco Castiglioni, Stephan Aebi, Junior Gill, Danilo Moccia, Hilaria Kramer, Ivan Lombardi, Gabriele Pezzoli, Silvano Borzacchiello, etc.). Moreover, as saxophonist and guitarist, he has collaborated with several singers and Italian pop groups (Dik Dik, Camaleonti, Fausto Leali, Lalla Francia, Ivan Cattaneo, Jenny B, etc.).



### Alessandro Ponti

Alessandro Ponti is a classically trained pianist and composer who has been working in the field of music for visuals since 2006, writing soundtracks for cinema, video games and trailers. He graduated in pianoforte playing with top marks (Music Conservatory of Novara, 2001), in harpsichord (Music Conservatory of Vicenza, 2005) and also in Modern Literature (Catholic University, Milan 2005). He received a Masters degree in Composition and Music Theory from the Conservatory of Italian Switzerland in 2013. Since 2009

Alessandro has also been composing music for video games and trailers. Of particular importance is the collaboration with the English publisher Slitherine/Matrix Games, for which he has composed music for several videogames on PC, Nintendo Wii, Nintendo DS & iPad and with which there are already other titles in the pipeline.

In 2010, after having written the soundtrack for two short films, Alessandro made his debut in American independent cinema writing the score for the film 'Sedona's Rule' by San Francisco director Josh Gillick. At the end of 2011 he wrote for his second feature film, the thriller "House Of Last Things" by director Michael Bartlett, for which Alessandro temporarily moved his studio to Los Angeles. His harpsichord opus 'In Fuga Da Verona' won the composition contest held by the British Harpsichord Society in 2012 and is published by Cadenza Music. It has since been recorded by Maggie Cole for the Prima Facie label.



### Dario Milan

Born in Cittiglio in 1977, he approached the drums at the age of 8 years and, only a few years later, found himself spending his summer holidays playing in different Italian Piazzas (town squares). He received the Diploma of Theory and Solfège at the Novara Conservatory of Music in 1991 and then continued his studies with teachers Bruno Fraimini and Maxx Furian. In 1998 he participated in the seminars of the Berklee College of Music on occasion of Umbria Jazz, where he followed the lessons held by Ron Savage and Elvin Jones. In 2004 he attended a Latin-jazz drumming workshop with percussionist Roberto Vizcaino in

Cuba. Since 1997 he collaborates as session man with several groups in different genres such as gospel, jazz, ska/reggae, world and pop music. Among the various collaborations, those made with Tonino Carotone, Arpioni, Manu Chao, Gogol Bordello, Roy Paci, Bandabardo, Stefano Rosso, Valerio Mastandrea, Jandricson Mena Diaz, Andy Davies, James Arben, Max Pizio, Marino Peiretti and Yuri Goloubev, stand out the most. Since 2002 he has recorded more than 10 discs and played live in several television and radio broadcasts (RaiDue, Italia Uno, Radio Popolare,

ReteTre, RSI-LA1). Over the years he has participated in clinics held by musicians such as: Ellade Bandini, Maxx Furian, Cristian Mayer, Marco Minneman, Jonny Rabb, Giorgio di Tullio.



### Federico Barluzzi

Born in Milan, he studied for three years in a private school where he learned the fundamental theoretical, harmonic and technical aspects of the instrument. He continued his studies with Hermes Locatelli, Piero Orsini and Riccardo Fioravanti with whom Federico deepened his knowledge of jazz. He followed a private course of harmony and arrangement with Filippo D'Acco'. He also attended professional Afro-American courses in the instrument, ear training, harmony and an arrangement course with Giovanni Tommaso.

He attended the summer seminars of Fara Jazz held by Dario Deidda and Ares Tavolazzi; then he flew to New York and undertook an intensive course at "The Collective School of Music" where he had the opportunity to refine his technical and stylistic

knowledge with teachers such as Lincoln Goines, Frank Gravis, Hill Greene, Irio O'Farrill, Steve Marks. He had the opportunity to collaborate with artists such as E. Finardi, A. Minetti, U. Smaila, A. Mingardi, Dennis Fantina, Giuliano Rasso, Leonard Johnson (Kool and the Gang) and Matt Bianco. He teaches in prestigious schools in Lombardy.

## Track by track

by Matteo Finali

### Prelude (Love Ballade) di Oscar Peterson

Legend has it that my grandfather (my father's father, who died in 1976 before I was born) was a fairly talented self-taught pianist. It is said that he loved to play piano-bar with escapades into jazz. It seems that he had two hands as big as shovels and that he loved Oscar Peterson, whose music he passed on to my father, who in turn passed it on to me. This ballad is about love and is dedicated to the birth of my two children with the memory of a grandfather that I have never met.

I wanted to add *Prelude* to the title because there are three, more introspective and intimate, moments in the recording at regular intervals as if they were precisely a prelude, an interlude and a postlude. During the lockdown it was a blessing to be able to resume these types of intimate and introspective compositions and be able to express musically the state of being alone and indoors at home.

### Disconnections

The title track of the album was composed by yours truly and inspired by John Scofield. It came out almost on the spur of the moment a few days before entering the studio ...

I wanted a boogaloo track with an upbeat and fun vibe. Once we got into the studio, drummer Dario completely changed the groove towards a second line. The song acquires a ternary character and is much more "swinging" which gives it even more of a party feel than I had imagined. The finale leaves room for the chaos of the groove, hitting the belly more than the

brain. The finale is deliberately disconnected! Let's disconnect from this virtual world and go back to really living socially!

### Leaving For

Composition by Alessandro Ponti. *Leaving For* is a track with a sweet and slightly sad character. A very pop introduction with the bass singing and a melody taken up by sax, rhodes and guitar. However, in the solo part the piece moves to a samba but is still sweet and persuasive. The finale takes up the melody and pop atmosphere of the beginning.

### In A Brooklyn Store

Composition by Alessandro Ponti and arrangement by Dario Milan. Inspired by and dedicated to Snarky Puppy, it was originally conceived for an entire wind section. Here it is performed with only the saxophone that gives a nice "New York" character to the piece. Basically the tune is divided into three distinctive parts: The first is more percussive and linked to the melody that winds on a persistent 5/8 groove, leaving room for the opening on a 3/4 with dynamic crescendo. The second part is linked instead to the synth and Hammond solo, always on a 3/4 rhythm that gives an intense and engaging groove, ending with the finale, a third 'unhinged' part with an alarmist background and a rhythmic obstinacy that unfolds as the counterpart to a baritone solo.

### Interlude (Country Road) by Pat Martino

Piece that I had studied at the *Musicians Institute of Los Angeles* during my time there. It is a tribute to one of my mentors at the time (Dan Gilbert) with whom I first tackled it and to Pat Martino, an icon of jazz guitar. A quiet and melodious country road contrasting with the daily chaos of today's cities.

### Prickly Pear Jam

I composed this song thinking of a simple and very repetitive hip-hop, simple from a harmonic point of view and inspired by Ronny Jordan. The title comes from a trip with my wife to Greece during which we were able to taste desserts containing precisely the jam of the prickly pear. I liked the name (as well as the taste) and so I thought I'd compose a piece with a sweet and sticky groove like the jam in question. There's also a little reference to 'disconnect' in the piece (the pause in the melody!) ...

### Ladybug

Composition by Alessandro Ponti and arrangement by Dario Milan. A tender and tacit little ladybug. A very sweet and melodious theme, followed by a guitar solo a la Pat Metheny that leaves me particularly satisfied in rarefied and very simple atmospheres. The following sax solo shifts the groove more and more towards an Afro 12/8, increasing in dynamics. The ending goes back to being a little flutter of the ladybug ...

### Sunday Morning Rev

Composition of Alessandro Ponti. Have you seen the light? Yeah, I've seen the light! Preacher atmosphere on a Sunday morning in any Afro-American church with a gigantic intro by Alessandro on Hammond. The track leads us through a very rhythmic and syncopated melody until the sax solo where we ride on a 'classic' 4/4 beat in 70's funk-soul style; the wah-wah guitar loads the

solo and launches the Hammond's, which is then supported by a Davis-like melodic phrase. At the same time the rhythm turns into a sort of disco-music, until it suddenly disappears. The final melody brings the engrossing and groovy track to an end.

### **Postlude (Dreamtime) by Art Renshaw**

Composed by Art Renshaw. Art was my other mentor in Los Angeles and he had these very new-age solo guitar compositions. This piece was passed down to me orally from him and I felt the time was right to record it. For the same reason I recorded the other two ... it's meant to be a tribute to Art who was instrumental in me still being a guitarist today and not a fishmonger! Jokes aside, in Los Angeles I had two very disconcerting moments. In both cases Art was like a father to me and helped me understand that the important things in life are other than ... A complex topic to be delved into deeply and personally!

More info: [www.finalstep.ch](http://www.finalstep.ch)

### **BOOKING**

**Final Step**  
Matteo Finali  
In di Campagn 29a  
CH-6528 Camorino  
[matteo.finali@gmail.com](mailto:matteo.finali@gmail.com)  
+41 76 615 99 79  
[www.finalstep.ch](http://www.finalstep.ch)

### **MANAGEMENT**

**Associazione Vibrisse**  
Marco Finali  
Via Strada Növa 6  
CH-6835 Morbio Superiore  
[marco.finali@vibrisse.ch](mailto:marco.finali@vibrisse.ch)  
tel +41 76 616 51 57  
[www.vibrisse.ch](http://www.vibrisse.ch)