

Bennett Paster

Keyboardist, Composer & Educator

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Bio (full length)

“Paster's hands have an infectious percussive exuberance.”

(Dan McClenaghan , AllAboutJazz.com March, 2005)

Keyboardist, composer and producer Bennett Paster is one of New York City's most creative and versatile musicians. He has performed original music at clubs, concerts and festivals in the United States, the Caribbean, and throughout Europe. He has been a featured performer with jazz stars Kurt Elling, Brian Lynch, Peter Bernstein, Rufus Reid, Bill Stewart, Billy Hart, Albert “Tootie” Heath, Ndugu Chancler, Cassandra Wilson, Miri Ben-Ari and Yosvany Terry among others.

Paster was born in Washington D.C. in 1970. Two years later, his family relocated to Albuquerque, New Mexico, where he grew up. Throughout high school he played jazz and popular music; from age 14 he performed as a professional musician around New Mexico. Deciding to pursue a career in music, Paster moved to Boston, MA in 1988.

He attended college simultaneously at Tufts University and New England Conservatory of Music, receiving both a BA in English and a BM in Jazz Studies. At NEC he studied with Dave Holland, Cecil McBee, Geri Allen, Paul Bley and Stanley Cowell. In addition to increasing his knowledge of jazz at NEC, living and studying in Boston broadened Paster’s influences to include 20th century classical music and avant-garde improvisation.

Committed to furthering his career and his musical development, Paster moved to Brooklyn, New York in 1997. It was there that he began to develop his newly found love for Afro-Cuban music and Latin jazz. In 1999 Paster and bassist Gregory Ryan founded *Grupo Yanqui* to perform their original Latin jazz and to interpret classic Latin standards. This band was selected to tour internationally as a part of the prestigious US State Department / Jazz at Lincoln Center “The Rhythm Road: American Music Abroad” program. They performed at concert halls, clubs and schools in Sweden, Russia, Estonia and Serbia and Montenegro throughout February 2006 and they returned to Belgrade to teach for two weeks in October 2006. Their new CD “Grupo Yanqui Rides Again” was released in May 2008 on Miles High Records.

The sophomore recording by his jazz piano trio, *Paster, Ryan & Hall* is entitled “Invisible Horizon” (2006). This album showcases Paster’s broad vision of modern jazz. Though totally swinging, the CD covers significantly more ground. In their insightful, melodic original compositions, Paster and his band-mates incorporate R&B, funk and Latin grooves with comfort-

able authority. Plus, they've included their unique arrangements of several standards. Paster describes "Invisible Horizon" as being ripe with "the Good Feeling." The disc is the follow-up to their critically acclaimed debut "Skyline" (2004).

Featuring Paster on Hammond organ and vintage keyboards, *Organic!* is a funky psychedelic organ trio. *Organic!* performs live improvised compositions. Each performance features spontaneous new music that is fresh but rooted in the tradition of 70's instrumental funk and R&B. Paster engineered and produced their two CDs "The Undoing" (2001) and "Sweets" (2006) at his studio Benny's Wash 'n' Dry.

Paster's fluency in pop, jazz and Latin styles has made him an indispensable fixture on the NYC music scene. His ability to transcend a single genre has made Paster a popular studio musician among singer/songwriters. He is comfortable playing acoustic piano and electric keyboards; he is an experienced Hammond organist and he plays and programs all types of synthesizers. Paster works as a producer and recording engineer from Benny's Wash 'n' Dry.

Paster was a finalist in the 2008 Jacksonville Jazz Piano competition, held annually in Jacksonville, Florida. He performed solo and trio in front of more than 1000 people.

Paster is also an experienced educator. He has been an active member of the faculty of the Stanford Jazz Workshop for over 20 years where he has taught master classes, theory, musicianship and improvisation classes and coached ensembles. At Stanford he has taught and performed alongside Regina Carter, Houston Person, Jimmy Heath and Clark Terry among others. In addition, he has taught masterclasses and clinics at Western Michigan University and Albuquerque Academy as well as at conservatories overseas in Sweden, Russia, Estonia and Serbia. He has also served on the faculty of schools including Albuquerque Academy, Thayer Academy (Braintree, MA) and Indian Hill Arts (Littleton, MA). He currently teaches privately from his studio in New York City.

"My diverse musical background and life experiences all contribute to my personal style," Paster said. "I thrive playing in many contrasting groups- I can't choose just one style of music. My colleagues appreciate the broad palette of styles in which I am conversant. I always try to find the most appropriate sound to bring to any song or project. My motto is: serve the song."