

Attention All Media

For Immediate Release

Bennett Paster, Gregory Ryan and Keith Hall Release New CD

The jazz piano trio is alive and well! *Skyline*, the new CD from Bennett Paster, Gregory Ryan and Keith Hall emphatically proves it. Recorded in Brooklyn, NY, this recording showcases three talented young musicians who have a broad vision of modern jazz. These guys really swing, but they also cover significantly more ground. In their insightful, melodic original compositions, Paster, Ryan and Hall incorporate R&B, funk and Latin grooves authoritatively. In addition, they've included their interpretations of three favorite standards: Coltrane's "Naima," Bernstein's "Some Other Time" and Oliver Nelson's "Yearnin'." This CD lives up to its promise: the sonic fidelity is crystal-clear, the playing is masterful and the groove always feels good.

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, the UK and Norway. He has been a featured performer with such jazz stars as Cassandra Wilson, Kurt Elling, Billy Hart, Albert "Tootie" Heath and Ndugu Chancler, among others. He was recently a finalist in the 2004 Great American Jazz Piano competition.

New York City native Gregory Ryan has established himself as an in-demand sideman on both acoustic and electric bass. He is at home in a variety of musical worlds, accomplished in Brazilian, Cuban, funk and mainstream jazz styles. Described as a musician whose "big supportive sound" and "great time" combine to make even the most complex modern composition swing, Ryan has appeared with jazz greats Mulgrew Miller, James Williams, Billy Harper, and Albert "Tootie" Heath, among others. Ryan's growing Latin Jazz credits include performances with the Lincoln Center Afro-Latin Jazz Orchestra, the Chico O'Farrill Afro-Cuban Jazz Orchestra, Arturo O'Farrill, Papo Vazquez' Pirates Troubadours, and Bobby Sanabria's Quarteto Aché.

Drummer Keith Hall is a native of Battle Creek, Michigan. He has performed with many well-known jazz artists, including Wynton Marsalis, Betty Carter, Michael Phillip Mossman, Joe Gonzalez, Claudio Roditi, Sir Roland Hanna and Steve Wilson. Hall currently performs with singer Curtis Stigers, with whom he has toured extensively, playing concerts and festivals in the U.S. and around the world. He is currently on the faculty of the jazz department at Western Michigan University.

The trio of Paster, Ryan and Hall has been playing regularly together for several years; the roots of their connection run deep. Paster and Ryan met over ten years ago at the Stanford Jazz Workshop, a summer jazz residency where both are esteemed faculty members. They have collaborated regularly since then, both in trio settings and with *Grupo Yanqui*, the Latin jazz band they co-lead. (Check out their CD at www.grupoyanqui.com.) Of their long musical fellowship, Ryan says: "we've developed a real communication and trust playing together."

Individually, Paster and Ryan have both played with Hall since the mid-nineties. It wasn't until 2002 that fate brought the three together, but the chemistry was magical. Ryan explains: "If I had to choose one drummer to play with for the next year (or 10), it would be Keith Hall." Paster feels similarly stating "Keith is a drummer who makes me need to swing ... I find his playing compelling." The three describe the formation of their trio as "inevitable;" *Skyline* fully illustrates this claim.

This recording came about naturally, almost accidentally. “The idea,” Ryan surmises, was to get together with two musicians with whom I connect to play in a largely informal way. The original intention wasn't necessarily to make a record, but just to document a relationship and what I think of as the honest musical communication that is the product of it. We played for a few hours, with very few second takes of anything. At the end of the day we had 11 tunes that we were quite happy with. After some thought, we decided to reconvene several months later when Keith returned to New York to record a second day, this time focusing more on our original compositions. This record is a cross-section of the best takes from the two sessions.”

Although the original compositions and arrangements on *Skyline* span musical styles from jazz to Latin to funk, the record is unified by the rhythm section's deep groove. When asked why they chose particular songs for this CD, each musician refers to the strengths of the others. Ryan says: “Keith brings a feel to my songs ‘Easy and Fun’ and ‘Skyline’ that no other drummer has.” Hall reports similarly, “Paster's blend of lyricism and bluesy-funk makes him ideally suited for ‘Her Lullaby.’”

Paster says, “I chose ‘Jabali’ because the three of us share a love for the swinging drumming of Jabali Billy Hart (for whom the song was composed). I know I can count on Greg and Keith to lay down a solid groove, no matter what the style. When we play together, I have the confidence to be myself; that's when we all sound our best.”

Paster explains: “on *Skyline* we have sought to create an honest musical statement. One that is neither self-indulgent nor contrived.” Ryan continues, “The CD doesn't try to be anything other than what it is: a document of 3 specific musical relationships at a given point in time. I believe in what we do. I think the music feels great and the compositions are strong. Our hope is that the pleasure we take in playing together comes across to the listener and that they too will find the music compelling.”

Paster, Ryan and Hall describe their musical goal as “the pursuit of the Good Feeling.” The music on *Skyline* proves that they've definitely found it.

Along with trumpet player Alex Norris, Paster, Ryan and Hall were recently selected to travel internationally as a part of the prestigious Jazz at Lincoln Center / U.S. State Department 2005 American Music Abroad program. The quartet, an extension of *Grupo Yanqui*, will be touring under the name *Panorama*. The musical focus of this tour will be their original Latin jazz compositions. They will perform concerts and teach master-classes .

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The CD Bennett Paster, Gregory Ryan, Keith Hall *Skyline* is currently available exclusively online at:
www.cdbaby.com/cd/skyline