

## Benny Reid

### *Findings*

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A fresh and potent new voice on the modern jazz scene, 26-year-old alto saxophonist Benny Reid reveals a unique compositional vision along with an abundance of chops on his auspicious debut as a leader. A collection of six stirring suite-like compositions that unfold like richly appointed short stories, *Findings* is a fully realized work of remarkable depth and maturity that takes listeners on a musical journey traversing a whole range of emotions within each individual piece. And while the influence of Pat Metheny can be readily heard in the flowing melodicism, dramatic crescendos and overall uplifting nature of these half dozen tracks, Reid's own approach here is highly personal, inspired by a tragic event that forever changed the course of his life.

"The major inspiration for this record is my sister, who passed away when I was 13," says the New Jersey native and current resident of Long Island City, Queens. "That is what drives me still. Back when I was a kid I promised myself, 'Some day I want to have her live through my music.' And now I am finally able to say, 'This is for her.'"

"I really got deep into playing because that was my way out," he recalls. "I remember in grade school just sitting around transcribing Joe Henderson solos for hours each day. A lot of kids probably don't do that but that was my escape and I went full force into it. Later on when I began to write tunes, they tended to be sad or touching or sentimental somehow. There was always a deepness to them, and that hasn't changed because I still feel very sad about my sister. I don't want people to feel sorry for me but the fact is, that's what made me who I am and it's really the defining factor of why I do what I do."

These events help explain the cathartic, contemplative nature of *Findings*. But there is also a touch of light to balance the darkness in provocative, atmospheric pieces like the opener "Destiny?" and complex offerings like "Findings: A Quest For Peace" or "Waves of Red." Wordless vocals play a significant part in buoyant, uplifting numbers like "Transient Melody" and the poignant "Dancing With My Father," Reid's homage to his first important musical influence. And the full scope of his compositional powers is employed on the dynamic closer, "Legend," which builds to a grand crescendo and showcases some of Reid's most passionate playing on the record.

"I feel like I was in some sort of a spiritual zone writing the music for this record," says Reid. "Everything from the titles that I came up with to the music itself just seemed very fitting for how I felt in those couple of years that I wrote the music."

Accompanied by a stellar crew including Pat Metheny drummer Antonio Sanchez, bassist Reuben Rogers, pianist Aaron Goldberg, guitarist Richard Padron,

Specialty Records and executive producer Dave Fitch. Reid produced his debut on his own

vision on his impressive first outing. And by eschewing the head-solo-solo-head formula of standard jazz repertoire for a more through-composed approach, Reid stakes out some adventurous new territory on *Findings*.

"I feel like there's more to say and develop than just a short head," he explains. "I may come up with a catchy line or musical idea and then I'm always thinking, 'How can I extend this and take it somewhere else?' From there I come up with transitions which lead to other sections -- a rubato section, 3/4 section, reharmonized section, funkier section or any number of other things. And I keep expanding from there so that I may end up with four, five or more sections in each piece."

Reid adds that an essential component in each piece on *Findings* is melody. "I feel the most beautiful element of music that you can write is melody, and that's an integral part of jazz and music in general that is kind of lost sometimes; moreso now in this day and age than ever. So I feel like that's what I'm trying to do is create beautiful lines in all kinds of different ways."

Born in Westfield, New Jersey on October 7, 1980, Reid grew up in a musical household where the records of Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Stan Getz and Pat Metheny provided a soundtrack for daily life. "Since I was a kid, my mom and dad listened to all kinds of music," says Benny. He recalls, "When I was in second grade, they got us started in band. My uncle played the alto sax in college so when they asked what instrument we wanted to play, I chose the alto sax because of him."

He credits both his parents along with his first sax teachers with shaping his early interest in jazz. "I was blessed to have very good teachers. And during this time of studying, my parents were also buying me records and taking me to jazz concerts. I saw Sonny Rollins, Joe Henderson, Phil Woods and so many others. They were really exposing me to the right elements and I started listening to jazz incessantly. I also started practicing a lot and by ninth grade, I was going to jam sessions locally. Later, in high school, I went into New York once in a while to play jam sessions there. So I got my ass kicked real young, and it just helped get me into shape."

From age 15 on, Reid's main mentor was former Buddy Rich alto saxophonist Andy Fusco. "Here was a real working jazz guy who was a phenomenal player and knew everything about jazz, so it was very inspiring to be with him."

Reid later attended Indiana University, where he came under the tutelage of jazz educators David Baker and Tom Walsh. "It allowed me the freedom to experiment and go on my own path," says Benny of his tenure at IU from 1998 to 2002. "Many schools tend to group you into a certain thing, but my teachers there really gave everyone individual attention. And I had terrific peers who provided a very friendly, but competitive atmosphere. We learned a lot and practiced hard. And that's the environment where I fully developed."

Although he was already composing in high school and showcased some of his original music at high school and college recitals, it wasn't until he finished his

schooling at Indiana University that Reid began writing some of the music which appears on Concord Records debut. "I started writing that music when I was 20 and I



finished when I was 22, so I've been sitting on it for a long time," he explains. "And I've probably written three albums worth of material since then that keeps changing and evolving. So I'm excited to hopefully get that out in the future as well.

"It's my dream to ultimately work on an orchestral scale," he continues. "I want to keep expanding the canvas and building these pieces to even bigger and bigger heights."

But for now there is *Findings*, a wildly ambitious work which introduces Benny Reid as a composer of great promise while hinting at even grander things to come.