

CONCORD **BIOGRAPHY**

MUSIC GROUP, INC.

Christian Scott

When Christian Scott graduated from the Berklee School of Music in Boston, he wanted to record a specific style of music, one that didn't necessarily fit in the rigid confines of what may be expected for a trumpet player with his impressive musical pedigree. "The type of music that I wanted to do was like a hybrid music," Scott says. "I wanted to create music that related to what was going on musically in other arenas. I didn't know that any jazz label was going to be ready to deal with that."

So Scott saved his money, started his own record company and in 2002 self-released his eponymous debut album in Boston and in his native New Orleans. The album's far-reaching sound caught on at a grassroots level, and at Virgin Megastore in-store in Boston, a huge audience showed up to see Scott perform, causing the store to shut down its escalator. A representative from the distributor of renowned jazz imprint Concord Records was blown away by Scott's following and urged Scott to contact the label.

Scott sent Concord his album. They quickly signed the young artist, who they later discovered was the nephew of jazz saxophonist Donald Harrison. Scott's Concord debut, 2006's *Rewind That*, was a Top 15 album on the Billboard's Top Jazz Albums chart and established Scott as one of music's most exciting and innovative new talents, one who was respected in jazz circles and whose sensibility led to collaborations and performance gigs with Mos Def, Jill Scott and X-Clan, among others.

Rewind That also set the stage for Scott's most impressive work to date, *Anthem*. As a man whose parents required that he be informed in local, national and international events, Scott was moved by the destruction caused by Hurricane Katrina, and by the catastrophic failure of government that has yet to result in the repair of the Gulf Coast region nearly two years after it struck. Scott wanted his new album to use New Orleans to serve as a microcosm for what was going on around the world.

"I saw a lot of problems in context to what was happening with our country and abroad during the time I was writing the music for the album," he recalls. "I wanted to try to make something that would relate to everyone, and no one at all. It started off as a social-political album. In context with that, I wanted the *Anthem* to be for, or represent, people who were disenfranchised in any way."

The two versions of the title track directly speak to Scott's musical mission. "Anthem (Antediluvian Adaptation)" reflects New Orleans before the storm and the flood. On this selection, his playing is minimalist, and the accompanying, piano, guitars and drums are visceral, reflecting the ennui seeping through a city about to be destroyed. "Anthem (Post Diluvial Adaptation)" reflects the rage post-Katrina, when residents are outraged. A fiery performance from X-Clan rapper Brother J reflects this angst, as does Scott's playing, which offers both pain and anger. But both versions of "Anthem" also contain similarities, a nod to New Orleans' consistent status as a city in disarray.

“The nature of the city has not changed from then till now,” Scott says. “People have acted like after the storm happened things have gotten worse, but all the problems that were there before the storm are still there, if not worse. But the way that people have interpreted the city has changed.”

The somber, smoldering “Litany Against Fear” builds into a bright space, thus speaking to Scott’s constant pursuit to be aware of what’s going on in the world around him, rather than fear the unknown or unexplored. “Remains Distant” pays homage to Miles Davis by creating an avant garde groove that will appeal to jazz listeners and to the fast-paced lives of young black children living in the streets of America. (The album’s liner note is a poem by Saul Williams, “When The Storm Remains Distant,” which Scott felt mirrored “Remains Distant.”)

The slow, heavy, sensuous “Cease Fire” reflects the moment when a relationship dissolves, while the caressing, comforting tone of “Katrina’s Eyes” came to Scott in a dream where he imagined himself a father who was mesmerized by the eyes of his young daughter.

Indeed, the impact children have on us can be profound. That’s why Scott chose to use a photo of himself in front of a young girl playing in a murder scene chalk outline as his album cover. The photograph, taken by his twin brother Kiel, represents how our children are so desensitized to the ills of society surrounding them that are comfortable playing in the middle of them.

Scott himself was fortunate to emerge from the rugged Ninth Ward of New Orleans where he was raised. Even though he was a straight-A student and deep into athletics, he also had a propensity for fighting. It was a pastime that got him kicked out of several schools. Fortunately, Scott was also surrounded by music as a child, and realized that regardless of the mood of the day, when a second line would come through his neighborhood, everyone felt better. “I noticed from a very young age that no matter what was going on in your experience,” he says, “when you heard music, people got happy.”

A sports injury ended his athletic career at age 12, but two weeks later, he found a new love: playing music. That’s when he was given his first trumpet. Scott was consumed by playing the instrument. His fighting tapered off and he landed a slot at the prestigious New Orleans Center For the Creative Arts, a high school whose other alumni include Wynton Marsalis, Branford Marsalis, Terence Blanchard and Harry Connick Jr.

Scott’s superior playing led him to the Berklee School of Music, where he completed a double degree in less than half of the standard time. Soon after releasing his first album, he relocated to New York to be among other great artists and musicians, helping pave the way for his current success.

“I want to show with my music that you don’t necessarily have to follow a model to be successful with what you’re doing,” Scott says. “If your intentions are right and you’re

coming from a place of sincerity, then typically people will understand, get it and gravitate towards it.” And even make it their *Anthem*.