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GEORGE DUKE SERVES UP FUNKY *TREATS* ON HEADS UP DEBUT

***Dukey Treats* Due in Stores August 26, 2008**

Veteran keyboardist and producer George Duke remembers a time when funk was a powerful force – not just in popular music but in social discourse. Frequently with a measure of wit and irony, and often with a strong dose of positivity at the core, titans like James Brown, Sly and the Family Stone and other funk icons of the '60s and '70s boldly addressed societal concerns ranging from poverty to racial disharmony to the battle of the sexes.

Duke invokes that same combination of wit and wisdom in *Dukey Treats* (HUCD 3143), his debut on BPM/Heads Up International set for worldwide release on August 26, 2008. A careful balance of rhythmic energy and simmering balladry, *Dukey Treats* recalls the golden age of funk and soul, while at the same time maintaining a fresh sound and addressing issues that are relevant to the global culture of the 21st century.

“I didn’t want to drift too far away from the old school sensibility,” Duke explains. “That was my main objective. I wanted to do an album where everybody went into the room at the same time and played. That’s important, because the personalities of the musicians come through, and it’s not just a progression of different musicians coming in one at a time, sitting down in front of a computer and laying down a track.”

Among the numerous treats on this album are not just the songs themselves but the roster of high-profile personnel helping to bring them to life – many of them alumni of Duke’s earlier bands and projects. Included on the guest list are bassist Christian McBride, percussionist Sheila E and trumpeter Michael “Patches” Stewart, to name a few. Along with Duke himself, the vocal crew includes Jonathan Butler, Howard Hewett, Teena Marie, Rachele Ferrell and more.

The high-energy opener, “Everyday Hero,” is a song of praise for the various unsung and under-recognized figures who move in and out of our lives every day – police officers, firefighters, doctors, teachers and countless others who make contributions that often go unnoticed. “This is the first tune I wrote for the album,” says Duke. “I wanted something funky that had something relevant to say. It’s sort of a Sly Stone vibe, only on steroids.”

“A Fonk Tail,” an intergalactic epic full of over-the-top comic moments, is Duke’s nod to Parliament/Funkadelic, who perfected the caricature of the cosmic funk hero back in the early ‘70s. “I’ve often wondered what happened to funny funk,” he says. “What happened to the fun and comedy in R&B. This track is recorded in that old-school tradition.”

The title track is one of two songs recorded with Duke’s original Dukey Stick band (the other being “Mercy,” just a couple tracks later). On hand are guitarist Jef Lee Johnson, bassist Byron Miller, drummer Leon “Ndugu” Chancler and percussionist Sheila E. Duke who trades vocal lines with Josie James, Lynn Davis, Darrell Cox and Napoleon “Napi” Brock, while trumpeter Michael “Patches” Stewart (a longtime Marcus Miller sideman) rounds out the four-man horn section. “This one has all the loose talk and fun we used to have back in the day,” says Duke.

The comical “Creepin’,” which features Christian McBride on upright bass, is a rearrangement of a song that first appeared on Duke’s 2002 recording, *Face the Music*. “I did a remix of the song, and I had been sitting on it for a while. It’s a humorous look at sneaking around on your significant other, with the girls pitted against the guys.”

On the more serious side, “Sudan (It’s a Cryin’ Shame)” deals with the human tragedy that continues in Darfur. “Joining me to sing about it is Jonathan Butler and Teena Marie,” says Duke. “The song is not so much a political statement as an awakening to the tragic situation being perpetrated there.”

“Are You Ready,” the followup to “Sudan,” is Duke’s nod to the message of global unity intrinsic in the music of Earth, Wind & Fire. “What I always loved about their style was not just the great music but also the positive messages – peace, respect and tolerance. It’s a fitting song to follow ‘Sudan,’ as it is up to all of us to call attention to these injustices wherever they occur. The title asks the question: ‘Are you ready to make a change?’”

The closer, “Images of Us,” is essentially “a long keyboard solo,” Duke explains. “It’s a jazz/funk instrumental that gives me the chance to build a solo over an extended period of time, something more than the thirty seconds before the singing starts again. The tune is basically a jam vehicle for the rhythm section over a sometimes-syncopated bass pattern. I wanted to include a song where I could just dig deep and play.”

Digging deep and coming up with great music is what George Duke has always been about, and *Dukey Treats* is no exception. It’s a fun and entertaining ride, to be sure, but underneath the occasional tongue-in-cheek posturing and comedic moments – the stuff that made R&B and funk so engaging in the first place – is music of substance that speaks to both the lighter and darker sides of the world we live in.

“I feel a responsibility to carry positive messages in my music,” says Duke. “I think music is meant to lift people up. I don’t think you can push things under the rug and not address them. Those who have the ability and the opportunity to let people know what’s going on musically and socially should not be afraid to say it and do it and play about it and sing about it.”

No tricks here. Just plenty of *Dukey Treats*.

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