

# JEFF LORBER

## Heard That

Over three decades after breaking ground as leader of the pioneering Jeff Lorber Fusion, the Philly-born and bred composer, producer and keyboard legend is still keeping the vibes fresh and the grooves funky. On *Heard That*, his highly anticipated Peak Records debut, Lorber keeps the soulful momentum going, collaborating brilliantly on pop, jazz, R&B and blues-influenced tracks--and even harkening back a bit to his early 80s Fusion heyday--with one of urban jazz's top hit makers and sonic architects, Rex Rideout.

Highlighted by the first single, a swinging, bluesy-brass twist on Amy Winehouse's Grammy winning "Rehab," *Heard That* features a typically vibrant Lorber all-star guest list, including trumpet great Rick Braun, guitarist Paul Jackson, Jr., saxman Gary Meek, bassist Alex AI, trumpeter Ron King, guitarist Darrell Crooks and Peak labelmates, saxman Gerald Albright. Lorber has been touring all throughout 2008 as part of Guitars & Saxes with Albright, Peak labelmate Jessy J, Jeff Golub and Peter White.

As high charting, pop-jazz oriented releases like *West Side Stories* (1994), *State of Grace* (1996) and *Midnight* (1998) were establishing him as one of the genre's top artists, Lorber also became an in demand producer. Every artist looking for a hit melody and groove, from Albright to Eric Marienthal, Richard Elliot and David Benoit, tapped his behind the board talents. On his later projects, Lorber sought new inspiration himself by collaborating with other producers. *Kickin' It* (2001), *Philly Style* (2003) and 2005's Grammy nominated *Flipside*, the keyboardist partnered with fellow first call producer Steven Dubin. Leaning more jazzy on his eclectic 2007 date *He Had A Hat*, (which earned him his third Grammy nomination) he worked with legendary Blood, Sweat & Tears drummer and Chris Botti producer Bobby Colomby.

Eager to return to his trademark R&B sound when he signed with Peak, Lorber immediately sought out Rideout, who has lent his Midas touch over the past ten years to a virtual who's who of contemporary jazz and soul instrumentalists and vocalists: Albright, Elliot, Boney James, Paul Taylor, Kirk Whalum, Maysa, Will Downing, Lalah Hathaway and Ledisi. Lorber first worked with Rideout when he produced his track "For You To Love" on the popular 2006 Luther Vandross Tribute *Forever, For Always, For Luther, Vol. 2*.

"I have been a fan of all of the records he'd been doing in the urban jazz realm for years. My last album *He Had A Hat* was more of a serious jazz exploration, and I wanted to get back to more of a hard-hitting, focused, funky, multi-keyboard approach that would be totally today, yet also have some of those jamming fusion flavors and jazzy chord changes like one of my classic songs, 'Tune 88' from 1979's 'Water Sign,' which is one of my favorite old albums. Songs on *Heard That* like 'The Bomb', 'Night Sky' and 'Gamma Rays' are heavily influenced by these kind of fun, jazzy chord changes. As we began working on more tracks, we also tapped into a big blues sound on the title tune and 'Don't Stop.'"

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That exciting blues twist is also a prominent element in Lorber's instantly infectious romp through "Rehab," which was actually added to the set list of *Heard That* at the last minute—in much the same way as his cover of Chaka Khan's "Ain't Nobody," which has become a staple of his live shows, and was a final stroke of brilliance on *Kickin' It*. "I was just messing around at the piano," says Lorber, "and realized it would be a good instrumental song, very bluesy, based on a Wurlitzer piano figure, which I included in my version, of course! It all came down very quickly. Tony Moore, a good friend just happened to be coming over and played the drum part on Bobby Colomby's 30 year old Slingerland drum set that he used to play with Blood Sweat and Tears. We got into a groove reminiscent of Ramsey Lewis' 'In Crowd' immediately. Rex suggested a Motown style back beat guitar part, which I recorded with plenty of spring reverb, like a record from the 60's. Gary Meek and Rick Braun laid down their horn parts a few days later --and everything just clicked!"

While most of Lorber's previous recordings exclusively feature him on piano, Wurlitzer, Hammond B-3, Fender Rhodes and synthesizers, the spirit of the sessions for *Heard That* allowed him to share the keys with Rideout, most notably on the old school soul-jazz jam opener "Come On Up" (highlighted by a swirl of Rhodes and piano with the Ron King/Gary Meek horn section and a crackling Paul Jackson, Jr. guitar solo); the cool, slow jam soul ballad "You Got Something" (which they wrote with featured vocalist Phillip "Taj" Jackson); the wild and soaring, brassy funk/fusion explosion not called "The Bomb" for nothing!; and the sensual vocal track "Take Control," which blends a thick funk ballad rhythm and dark keyboard chordings with co-writer Lauren Evans' vocals.

"Rex and I were surrounded by tons of keyboards in my studio," Lorber says, "and every time we came up with a new idea, whoever was closest to the one that would have the right sound basically played it. I play keys so much that it was great to have his flavor as a complement to my style. I wanted him to play as much as possible." The rest of the tracks, include the guitar and bass driven "Don't Hold Back"; the percussive, Lorber Fusion-influenced "Gamma Rays" (with Rick Braun on trumpet and Gary Meek on tenor sax and flute); the sensual, bass and horn accented "Don't Stop"; the vibrant up-tempo "Night Sky," featuring Lorber's bright piano melody and retro wah-wah guitar and the high energy, swinging funk/jazz title track closer which Lorber wrote with rising urban jazz star Eric Darius, with whom Lorber toured Indonesia and Japan in early 2008.

Since the late 80s advent of the New Adult Contemporary format, Jeff Lorber has found himself filling a unique dual role. Having played a significant role in developing the late 70's, early 80s R&B-jazz hybrid sound that later evolved into today's smooth jazz, the keyboardist is a true elder statesman of the genre and mentor to many of this generation's top artists. Berklee educated, Jeff Lorber had no specific design in mind when he recorded his first album for Inner City Records, *The Jeff Lorber Fusion (1977) and Soft Space (1978)* -- both of which have been recently re-issued.

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Lorber fondly refers to the wealth of music he created on his six popular Arista albums from 1979-1985 (which led to his first Grammy nomination for Best R&B instrumental for “Pacific Coast Highway” in 1985) as “second generation fusion.” In 2000, Arista Records released *The Definitive Collection*, which gathered the best material from these classic recordings. After the heyday of Jeff Lorber Fusion—a band which featured a then little known sax player named Kenny G, whose first album Lorber produced—the keyboardist produced R&B artists like Karyn White (including her Top Ten hit “Facts of Love”) and entered his remixing phase. Getting back into the instrumental groove in the 90s, he produced tracks on Dave Koz’s first two albums (and later, 1999’s *The Dance*) and other projects for Eric Marienthal, the late Art Porter and Michael Franks.

Throughout 2004 and 2005, Lorber anchored the immensely popular tribute tour Groovin’ For Grover, which featured Gerald Albright throughout its run in addition to stints by Richard Elliot, Paul Taylor and Kirk Whalum. In November, 2004, the keyboardist had a kidney transplant surgery (his wife Mink was a perfect match) after experiencing end stage renal failure due to the genetic condition Polycystic Kidney Disease; he is currently a spokesman for the PKD Foundation. True to his hardworking form, Lorber was back in action within a few weeks, performing gigs and getting back to his popular, weekly three hour radio show Lorber’s Place, Sunday nights on Sirius’ Satellite Radio’s Jazz Café Channel.

“I’m very grateful to be healthy and having the opportunity to do what I love to do, which is making music,” says Lorber. “I think the key to my success and longevity is that I’ve always had a strong work ethic and the time I spend focusing on writing. Some artists only compose songs when it’s time for the next album, but I’m open to inspiration and ideas 24 hours a day, always thinking about harmony, melodies and chords. The best part of recording *Heard That* was having the chance to work with and become friends and partners with Rex, who generously brought his talent and perspective to the project. Jazz thrives on being a collaborative medium and working with Rex was for me a great opportunity to learn and bring in new ideas.”

So as you’re grooving along to Jeff Lorber’s Peak Records debut, shout it out as loud as you can: ***I Heard That!***