

# CONCORD MUSIC GROUP, INC. BIOGRAPHY

**Marcus Miller Biography**

*Marcus*

**In Stores March 4, 2008**

The double M's in the name **Marcus Miller** could stand for Many things to Many people.

Over the course of among the most enviable careers in all of music, Marcus ascended into a two-time Grammy-winner and the composer/producer of eight critically acclaimed and genre-defying albums (six studio and two live) as a leader, featuring his astounding and singular technique as among the world's most gifted, forward-thinking and eclectic electric bassists.

In the movie world, Marcus rose from writing the all-time great go-go party jam "Da Butt" for **Spike Lee's** "School Daze" to becoming the go-to score composer of 20+ films, ranging from the **Hudlin Brothers'** comedy classic "Boomerang" and the family gem "This Christmas" to the animated children's film "The Trumpet of The Swan," the basketball documentary "1 Love" and **Chris Rock's** coming of age television series "Everybody Hates Chris."

As a producer, writer and player, he was the last primary collaborator of jazz legend **Miles Davis**, contributing the composition "Tutu" to the canon of contemporary jazz music.

As a co-producer, arranger and player, Marcus was highly influential in the success of **Luther Vandross**, co-writing dozens of R&B/pop million-sellers with the beloved singer, including "Never Too Much," "Any Love," "Til My Baby Comes Home," "For You To Love" and the Grammy-winning "Power of Love/Love Power."

As a multi-instrumentalist, Marcus is highly proficient as a keyboardist, clarinetist/bass clarinetist and, primarily, as a world renowned electric bassist, topping critics' and readers' polls for three decades. His resume' is brimming with over 500 recording credits as a sideman on albums across the spectrum of musical styles: rock (**Donald Fagen** and **Eric Clapton**), Jazz (**George Benson**, **Dizzy Gillespie**, **Joe Sample**, **Wayne Shorter** and **Grover Washington, Jr.**), pop (**Roberta Flack**, **Paul Simon** and **Mariah Carey**), R&B (**Aretha Franklin** and **Chaka Khan**), hip hop (**Jay-Z** and **Snoop Dogg**), blues (**ZZ Hill**), new wave (**Billy Idol**) smooth jazz (**Al Jarreau** and **Michael Franks**) and opera (a collaboration with tenor **Kenn Hicks**).

And, starting with **David Sanborn's** 1980 album *Hideaway* and its follow-up *Voyeur* (for which the alto sax giant won a Grammy performing Marcus' composition "All I Need is You"), Marcus not only left an indelible mark on that world-renowned player's sound, he laid the often-copied blueprint for the coolest of contemporary jazz sounds.

Therefore Marcus Miller truly does mean many things to many people. And he brings them ALL together - in focused force - on his seventh and latest studio milestone, *Marcus* (in-stores early spring 2008 on Marcus' own 3 Deuces Records, distributed by the Concord Music Group). "A lot of people know who I am," Marcus explains, "but they each have a different idea. So I said let's just call this album *Marcus* so everybody knows it's all the same guy."

Jam-packed in the literal and figurative senses, Miller's latest thriller finds Marcus serving up three signature funk-jazz throw downs with the descriptive titles "Pluck," "Strum" and "Ooh." He gives you feel-good soul covers of **Tower of Power's** lickity-slick "What is Hip" (a virtuosic nod to T.O.P. bass man **Francis Rocco Prestia**) and the rock anthem "Higher Ground" by **Stevie Wonder** (Marcus' ever-present muse). He also revisits "Jean Pierre," a piece he played a part in helping Miles Davis create on a concert tour documented in the 1982 double Lp *We Want Miles*. Marcus also marinates in his mellow romantic side, spanning the eras with a gorgeous and soul-stirring rendition of **Nat "King" Cole's** 1957 chestnut "When I Fall in Love" that features him on both bass and bass clarinet. There are also two variations on soul-pop star **Robin Thicke's** 2007 love song "Lost Without U" - one featuring actress **Taraji P. Henson** ("Smokin' Aces," "Talk to Me" and "The Curious Case of Benjamin Button") in her spoken word debut while the other emphasizes Marcus' nimble execution of the melody with the bass upfront and **Lalah Hathaway** crooning over a butter Brazilian groove for lazy afternoons.

The first single from *Marcus* also pulls another astounding hat trick, featuring the soft-n-sweet voice of multi-platinum newcomer **Corinne Bailey Rae** caressing singer/songwriter **Deniece Williams'** 1976 soul classic, "Free." Recalling the calculation-free manner in which this all-natural collaboration came about, Marcus states, "I was in the middle of doing the album and driving my car when 'Put Your Records On' came on. I thought, 'Now there's a unique voice.' I live for distinctive personalities. I pulled the car over right then, called my people and told them they had to find Corinne for me. When they got her, it turned out she was a fan and that she'd love to work with me. As soon as I hung up the phone, the song 'Free' just came into my head - tempo, key and all. I knew she'd be perfect for it. And sure enough, when I got her in the studio, it only took her two hours to nail it."

Long known for his appreciation of literature (the title track of his previous album, *Silver Rain*, was inspired by a **Langston Hughes** poem) and spoken word (he had a sleeper collaboration with bassist/poetess **MeShell Ndegeocello** titled "Rush Over" from the soundtrack of "Love Jones"), Miller passionately showcases the art form on *Marcus*. "Nobody was stepping to spoken word with music in a really forceful way," Marcus states. "I felt it could be funkier without losing the meaning of the words." Beyond Taraji P. Henson's breakthrough contribution to "Lost Without U" - co-writing the poem, reciting it and singing (don't forget her shining Academy Awards moment singing the Oscar-winning "It's Hard Out Here For a Pimp" from "Hustle and Flow" - Marcus didn't), **Shihan Da Poet** from *Def Poetry Jam* also graces the album with the sensual yet tasteful "'Cause I Want You." "We went through a lot of poets looking for someone that could deliver some love poetry I could feel," Marcus shares. "I really appreciate how Shihan is so into his woman in his poetry. He's respectful and sexy at the same time."

Lyrics also play an important role in "Milky Way," featuring modern blues giant **Keb Mo** kicking some far out and relevant observations about man and his relationship to the planet. Marcus recalls, "Keb listened to some music I was writing and said, 'Man, this sounds like something from outer space!' People often joke that I'm not from this planet but some place where everybody plays 14 different instruments! 'Milky Way' deals with the concept of The Creator putting us here to see if we could get it together. It was Keb's idea and it really resonated with me because I've been thinking the exact same thing."

For many of Marcus' most ardent fans, it will always be about the instrumentals, the most thrilling of which this time is the opener... "Blast!" Among other things, it features a solo by **Andre Braido**, an Italian guitarist Marcus found on MySpace. Regarding the origin of "Blast," Marcus explains, "I was in Istanbul, Turkey, went into a music shop and saw this beautiful thin

silver horn...looking like something 'Barney' (the purple dinosaur) might play! The guy told me it was a Turkish clarinet. I bought it, put my mouthpiece on it and played a regular scale, but it sounded like some ol' Middle Eastern stuff. I put the horn back in the case because I knew right away that I was going to need a couple of years shedding with that thing! But the sound of the horn inspired me, so I decided to apply it to my bass playing instead. (Superstar producer) Timbaland does a lot with it in hip hop and I wanted some of that flavor in my realm. Songs like Beyonce's 'Baby Boy' are great, but I wanted to take that sound into other dimensions with jazz." As always, Marcus does.

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Style, soul and intense professionalism have set Marcus Miller at the top of his game for three decades now. Marcus was born in 1959 and raised in a musical family that includes his father, **William Miller** (a church organist and choir director) and jazz pianist **Wynton Kelly**. By 13, Marcus was proficient on clarinet, piano and bass guitar, and already writing songs. Two years later he was working regularly in New York City, eventually playing bass and writing music for jazz flutist **Bobbi Humphrey** and keyboardist **Lonnie Liston Smith**. Miller soon became a top call session musician, gracing well over 500 albums, recording with musicians and in countries around the globe - from **Frank Sinatra** and **Elton John** to **Bill Withers** and **LL Cool J**. The breadth of his collaborative talents were best showcased in his work with soul man Luther Vandross, contributing to well over half of his albums as a producer, composer and/or player on a string of hits capped by "The Power of Love/Love Power" for which Marcus won his first Grammy: 1991's R&B Song of the Year.

After co-leading **The Jamaica Boys** (with drummer **Lenny White** and singer **Mark Stephens**) for two albums followed by two R&B-leaning solo albums for Warner Bros. in the '80s, Marcus took a hiatus then returned rejuvenated with the galvanizing *The Sun Don't Lie* (1993) and *Tales* (1995), both of which found him brilliantly connecting the dots of Black music's evolution. Following the fan-demanded *Live and More* in 1997, Miller released *M2* ("M-Squared") on his own 3 Deuces Records label and won his second Grammy: 2001's Best Contemporary Jazz Album. A second double live CD, *The Ozell Tapes: The Official Bootleg* (2003), came next, followed by *Silver Rain* (2005).

Today, Marcus' interests and projects are expanding into even more artistic endeavors. Last year found him hosting the first **North Sea Jazz Cruise**, which called for him to not just bring his band and turn the boat out, but hand-pick the other musicians who participated, covering all the bases with legends **Herbie Hancock**, **McCoy Tyner**, David Sanborn and **Dee Dee Bridgewater**, edgy contemporary stars **Roy Hargrove**, **James Carter** and **Medeski, Scofield, Martin & Wood**, European imports **Ulf Wakenius** and **Silje Nergaard** and fierce up-and-comers **Lionel Loueke** and **Roberta Gambarini**. Treating fans to excellently planned programs (including a Sunday morning "Gospel Hour" co-hosted with the chameleonic **Kirk Whalum** - who was all over the ship for the entire cruise) as well as spontaneously thrilling jam sessions (including one where ship guests could sit in with the pros), Marcus also led seminars, interviews with the giants, and insisted that all of the talent be available on downtime to mingle with the cruisers. It was an awesome experience.

"I was a little skeptical when they first approached me," Marcus admits. "I wasn't trying to subject my musician friends to playing background music on 'The Love Boat!' But when I shared my vision with everyone and they agreed to come aboard, I knew it was going to be something special. We had the most wonderful people from around the world - all so into the music - which gave the whole event such a beautiful spirit. It was like having the dopest backstage pass ever,

plus I got to do some fresh things that I've always wanted to do." Marcus is now on deck to host the first **Playboy Jazz Cruise** of the Caribbean in 2009.

In that same spirit of new conquest, Marcus is collaborating with his old friend and film director **Reginald Hudlin** – now President of Entertainment for the BET cable network – on a talent quest TV special that will take the “American Idol” and “Sunday Best” contests to another level. “We’re going to look for musicians that are true individuals,” Marcus states, “pulling kids from universities and music programs across the country. The grand prize will be to go on the road with me and my band (drummer **Poogie Bell**, trumpeter **Michael “Patches” Stewart**, saxophonist **Keith Anderson**, harmonica player **Gregoire Maret**, keyboardist **Bobby Sparks** and guitarist **Dean Brown**). It's important to me to talk to music students today because some think they're going to come right out of school and step into a job. It's not like that. You have to be an entrepreneur these days, really figure out how to sell yourself and have several irons in the fire. I want them to really understand what is required to succeed in this business.”

In addition to the jazzy winter holidays score (featuring a trio led by pianist **Cyrus Chestnut**) that he just completed for the acclaimed “This Christmas,” Marcus is about to score another as-yet-untitled film centered around a family. “These kinds of scores are really challenging,” muses Marcus - a loving husband and father of two sons and two daughters. “Nobody’s jumping out of planes so what you’re writing is the emotions of the people and what’s happening in their lives. Film scores really open me up...make me write things I wouldn't write for an album. Then when I come back to making my albums, I have some new colors to mess with.”

Returning to the spoken word aspect that fills his generous new 14-track masterpiece, Marcus doesn't rule out the possibility of kicking some poetry of his own at some point. But for him, a few well chosen notes – like a great photograph – can speak volumes. “I still prefer relaying a message with the music...and implying things,” he says.

“The beautiful thing about music is you put it out there and people say, ‘Man, I know exactly what you meant by that song,’ and they'll be totally wrong! But it's cool because that's what it meant to them.”

Marcus Miller – the man and his ninth album, *Marcus* – ultimately stand for one thing – Musical Magnificence.

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