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## STANLEY CLARKE STRIKES UP THE BAND ON NEW RELEASE

**Bassist assembles high-caliber players on *The Stanley Clarke Band*,  
with keyboardist Ruslan Sirota, drummer Ronald Bruner, Jr.,  
and featuring pianist Hiromi Uehara**

Renowned bassist Stanley Clarke's new recording, *The Stanley Clarke Band*, is scheduled for release on June 15, 2010, on Heads Up International, a division of Concord Music Group, and the Roxboro Entertainment Group. Unlike his previous acoustic bass releases, Clarke feels that this album's music is fresh and different from just about anything he's done before. Produced by Clarke and Lenny White, the range of collaborative material on *The Stanley Clarke Band* has allowed him to venture to new levels of experimentation, utilizing his arsenal of bass instruments. Clarke compares this new release to the first three albums of his solo career: *Journey to Love*, *Stanley Clarke*, and *School Days*, with long extended electric pieces that take the listener on a kind of journey.

"Technically, it's a Stanley Clarke record, but it's very much a band-oriented record at the same time," says Clarke. "I may be the leader, but everyone played an important role in what emerged. If a project like this can be looked at like a ship, I'd be the one steering the ship and keeping everybody on course. But all hands were definitely on deck, and everyone played an important role in getting us to our destination."

Also a new foray for Clarke, the album includes original compositions from members of the band. He is joined by Stanley Clarke Band keyboardist Ruslan Sirota and drummer Ronald Bruner, Jr. – who have been performing and recording with him for the better part of five years. Innovative young musicians, they have virtually grown up in Clarke's band and bring a freshness he admires. Following 2009's highly-acclaimed *Jazz In the Garden*, this is featured artist Hiromi Uehara's second Clarke recording collaboration. Clarke's rugged and complex bass work serves as the ideal foil for her trademark fiery and expressive piano chops, as reflected through critics' praising it as "a superb trio effort" (*Bass Player*) and "one of the best jazz CDs of the year" (*San Jose Mercury News*).

“There are people on *The Stanley Clarke Band* other than myself who have something to say,” explains Clarke. “Everyone on this project brought their own music and their own ideas. The styles of the individual tunes may be different, but the continuous thread that runs through the whole record is the fact that we’re all operating as a unit on each track.”

While Hiromi is generally regarded as a solo artist, she shifts effortlessly into a band setting, says Clarke. “She doesn’t need to be on the stage with anybody else, because she’s a phenomenon on the piano,” he says. “But, she likes collaborating with other musicians. She can play faster than anybody, but she can really listen, and she’s right there with you.”

Acoustic pianist/composer/arranger Ruslan Sirota has traveled the world, playing with some of the biggest names in classical and pop music. Born in the Ukraine, he was exposed early in his youth to American jazz and improvisation, and now shows an intelligence and understanding of the genre way beyond his years. “Ruslan is becoming a recognizable force in the music world,” Clarke notes. “He is one of the few musicians I’m aware of that knows a thousand songs. He has a unique understanding of the jazz language.” On this album, Sirota brings an unparalleled contribution in piano performances, not only on keyboard but with his profound melodic techniques on acoustic piano.

Ronald Bruner, Jr., is a second-generation drummer extraordinaire. His earliest influence was his father, Ronald Bruner, Sr., a world class drummer who has performed and recorded with Diana Ross, the Temptations and Gladys Knight. Clarke feels that Bruner is probably one of the most important young drummers on the scene today and compares his innovation, technique and skill to that of the legendary drummer Tony Williams. Although a dynamic fixture in Clarke’s touring band, Bruner has also performed with George Duke, Lee Ritenour, Suicidal Tendencies, and Wayne Shorter.

Among the additional players in the album’s supporting cast are vocalist Cheryl Bentley (a longtime member of The Manhattan Transfer); guitarists Charles Altura, Rob Bacon, and Armand Sabal-Lecco; saxophonist Bob Sheppard; bass synthesizer Lorenzo “Larry” Dunn (of Earth, Wind & Fire fame); keyboardist Felton Pilate; horn players Andrew Lippman and John Papenbrook; and drum programmers Chris Clarke and Jon Hakakian.

Perhaps the most appealing aspect of *The Stanley Clarke Band* is the exceptionally organic nature of its genesis – the sense of grassroots creativity that existed outside of any efforts to tailor the music to any specific segment of the market.

Clarke concludes, “This is the last electric album I’m going to do for awhile. The legacy of this release is that I’m providing lots of material and homework for a new generation of bassists to catch up with. I’ve worked hard to give the bass a distinctive voice, and I feel so excited about where it’s going.”

## ***The Stanley Clark Band Track List...***

“**Soldier**” (Track 1) is the driving and intense opener written and arranged by Ruslan Sirota, who frames his concerns about global conflict in a musical context. “There are 27 recognized armed conflicts going on in the world right now,” Ukraine native Sirota explains. “A soldier’s path is never easy. Perhaps today more than ever, on the battlefield of life we are *all* soldiers, fighting for a better tomorrow, fighting for our humanity, fighting for hope.”

Africa inspired “**Fulani**” (Track 2) is written by international superstar bassist/composer/singer Arman Sabal-Lecco, a native of Cameroon. The Fulani tribes are noble sub-Saharan nomadic shepherds known for centuries of integrity, strength and honor. This piece allows Clarke to explore his sub-Saharan ancestry, his jazz tradition and contemporary approach to music in a unique way.

“**Here’s Why Tears Dry**” (Track 3) written by Clarke, takes a much more melancholy turn with its combination of clever bass/piano conversations and aching electric guitar lines. “The tune came about when a family member was ending a long-time love affair,” says Clarke. “There were a lot of tears, so I came up with that song. The tears evaporate into thin air, and the pain eventually goes away.”

Funky and uncut, “**I Wanna Play For You Too**” (Track 4) is written by artist/composer/producer/keyboardist Felton Pilate of Confunkshun fame. Raw funk is accentuated by the strong [HYPERLINK "http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rhythm"](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rhythm) rhythmic groove of Clarke’s bass, with Bruner’s drums to the foreground.

As in previous recordings, Clarke unveils a couple more of the solo bass compositions he has dubbed Bass Folk Songs, beginning with the gently rhythmic “**Bass Folk Song No. 10**” (Track 5) and followed later by the more atmospheric “**Bass Folk Song No. 6**” (Track 11). “These aren’t quick bass solos that I just fire off in the moment,” says Clarke. “They’re very specific compositions, and each one is different. I started writing them when I was much younger. You could play these on another instrument, but they really only sound good on the bass.”

“**No Mystery**” (Track 6) written by Chick Corea won a GRAMMY<sup>®</sup> Award for Return To Forever. Clarke considers it an almost perfect composition, but one very difficult to play. “I love to play it just for the challenge of playing it,” says Clarke.

Churning and unpredictable, **“How Is the Weather Up There?”** (Track 7), co-written and arranged by Clarke and Bruner, is a commentary on global warming, built around comments submitted by fans. “We left a message on Facebook inviting anybody who wanted to talk about global warming to call a phone number that we posted,” says Clarke. “We got almost a thousand calls – left-wing stuff, right-wing stuff, guys who were so far out that you had no idea where they were coming from.” The track was inspired by a song called “After the Cosmic Rain,” which Clarke wrote in the early ‘70s for Return To Forever. Stanley’s questions and concerns about global warming go back as far as that time.

Possessed of one of the longest song titles in the annals of jazz, the multi-rhythmic and multi-layered **“Larry Has Traveled 11 Miles and Waited a Lifetime for the Return of Vishnu’s Report”** (Track 8) is Clarke’s homage to the heady days of jazz, rock, fusion in the 1970s. A long title with a purpose, which includes a handful of bands that dominated the era – Larry Coryell’s 11<sup>th</sup> House, Miles Davis, Tony William’s Lifetime, Clarke’s own Return To Forever, the Mahavishnu Orchestra and Weather Report. “The record companies didn’t even know what the hell we were doing back then,” Clarke recalls, “but they were selling records, and people were coming out to see the shows. We were as loud as rock bands, but we brought all kinds of technique to it. It was like a grassroots movement. It was a great time.”

**Labyrinth** (Track 9) is composed and performed with the band by featured artist/pianist Hiromi. As the title evokes, the song is a maze of complex melodic paths leading to the center. Hiromi’s characteristic high energy, emotional performance on acoustic piano here is a blend of [HYPERLINK "http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Musical\\_genres"](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Musical_genres) musical genres – [HYPERLINK "http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jazz"](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jazz) jazz, [HYPERLINK "http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Progressive\\_rock"](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Progressive_rock) progressive rock, [HYPERLINK "http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European\\_classical\\_music"](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_classical_music) classical and [HYPERLINK "http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fusion\\_%28music%29"](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fusion_%28music%29) fusion.

Up tempo and lighthearted, **“Sonny Rollins”** (Track 10) is just what the title suggests – a tribute to one of the last living masters of the post-bebop era, embellished by the vocal acrobatics of Cheryl Bentyne. “What’s really cool about this piece is that I used Charlie Mingus’ bass to record it,” says Clarke. “It was given to me by Bill Cosby many years ago, and I haven’t modified it in any way since Charlie used it. So the track has this really classic sound that I like a lot. The tones I could pull from this bass were extraordinary.” Clarke considers Rollins one of the most significant musicians in his life. “One of the highlights of my life was recording with Sonny and an even greater highlight was playing live with him.”

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