

YELLOWJACKETS DAZZLE FRENCH AUDIENCE IN NEW CONCERT DVD

New Morning: The Paris Concert due at retail on July 7, 2009

A performance by the Yellowjackets – purveyors of progressive jazz for nearly three decades – is an experience that has as much to do with sight as it does with sound. Any given performance on any given night by this seasoned quartet brings with it a degree of spontaneity and expression – on an individual as well as collective level – that can be best appreciated by seeing these four highly skilled musicians in front of a live audience.

New Morning: The Paris Concert (HUDV 7167) is a new DVD that takes you up close and personal with the Yellowjackets – keyboardist Russell Ferrante, saxophonist Bob Mintzer, bassist Jimmy Haslip and drummer Marcus Baylor – on stage at the New Morning, one of the most celebrated clubs in Paris. Recorded in March 2008, the DVD is scheduled for worldwide release on July 7, 2009 on Heads Up International, a division of Concord Music Group.

The DVD captures 90 minutes of live music at the New Morning. The disc also features “Soundcheck Sketches,” a brief but insightful segment narrated by Haslip, who introduces each band member and provides an overview of the Yellowjackets philosophy as a whole.

“The visual aspect of a DVD really adds a huge dimension to the Yellowjackets experience, especially for someone who may have never seen us before,” says Haslip, a charter member of the band that began as the backup unit for guitarist Robben Ford in 1981. “You’ll certainly get a lot more information about who we are and what we do than you would from a CD. You’re actually seeing the entire band in a performance setting. It’s an intimate look at the group. We don’t have a big stage production in our live performances. We’re just four guys up there, playing music from the heart in the most straightforward way we know how. There are no bells and whistles. It is what it is. And hopefully, it’s music that reaches out and touches whoever is listening.”

The New Morning performance showcases what Mintzer describes as “the mixture of intricate ensemble playing with collective improvisation” that has been a hallmark of the Yellowjackets’ music since the very beginning – both in the performance setting and in their studio recordings. “This band offers the best of many different worlds, and that comes across in this DVD. Our approach is wide open and very democratic. Everybody has room to play anything, and everyone supports each other in the process. There’s always a very gratifying conversation taking place when we play.”

For all of the band’s inherent strengths, the ultimate success of *New Morning: The Paris Concert* is just as much about the audience as it is about the musicians on the stage, says Baylor. “The New Morning is a great place to play and record, because the crowd is right there and you

can feel their energy,” he says. “It’s always great to be a part of a setting where you can feel a crowd’s energy, and they’re excited to be as much a part of the show as possible.”

The set gets under way with “Aha,” a syncopated piece that features Mintzer and Ferrante taking solos atop an arrangement of churning chord blocks. “Capetown,” the followup track, is a bit more melodic, with a few interludes that drift toward an intriguing atonality.

“Bop Boy” is a bit of brand new material not heard on any previous Yellowjackets recording. It’s a blues-based composition penned by Mintzer, who takes the clear lead with assistance from Baylor’s taut drum work. Further in, the breezy and melodic “Dewey” features tasty solo work from Haslip, while “With These Hands” follows a fiery Latin vibe.

The home stretch provides an eclectic juxtaposition of styles and grooves – the accelerated and intense “Downtown,” the quiet and gentle “Healing Waters,” and the driving closer, “Evening News.” This last piece provides a few moments in the spotlight for everyone on hand – most notably Haslip and Baylor – to deliver some solid solo work.

New Morning: The Paris Concert is a snapshot of one of the finest jazz bands in the world doing what comes naturally in front of an energized crowd. A simple formula, perhaps, but one that has served the Yellowjackets well for the better part of three decades. “Anyone who sees this DVD is watching four people enjoying what they do for a living,” says Haslip, “and also doing their best to deserve the gift of being able to stand in front of an audience and perform music that goes beyond words to an entirely different level of communication.”