

## VICTOR WOOTEN EXPLORES THE MYSTERY OF CREATION ON HEADS UP INTERNATIONAL DEBUT

### *Palmystery* set for April 1 worldwide release, simultaneous with Wooten's new book, *The Music Lesson*

We live in an age when science and technology have answers for almost every question, and there's little if any room left for the unsolved or the unexplained. In the highly accelerated, digitally-driven culture of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the mystery and mysticism of the world around us has slipped almost completely out of our collective grasp.

And yet, there are those fortunate few who are still tapped into the less concrete – but perhaps more real – dimensions of the human experience. Among them is bassist Victor Wooten, whose sense of creative exploration has fueled a highly successful career that spans more than two decades, five solo recordings, a diverse resumé of guest-artist work and a longstanding collaborative relationship with the innovative Béla Fleck and the Flecktones.

Wooten makes his debut on Heads Up International with the worldwide release of *Palmystery* (HUCD 3135) on April 1, 2008. In keeping with the ongoing philosophy of genre-bending eclecticism that has driven all of his solo work, *Palmystery* embraces a range of styles – jazz, funk, pop, soul, gospel, world music and more – and boasts a diverse guest list that includes Mike Stern, Richard Bona, Keb' Mo' and several others. The result is an amalgam of voices, styles and grooves, but one that never fails to hold together at its rock-solid core – in much the same way that Wooten's legions of devoted fans hail from all walks of life and all corners of the globe, yet share a common affinity for artistic diversity.

*Palmystery*'s April 1 release date is simultaneous with the release of *The Music Lesson*, Wooten's new novel published by Berkley Trade Paperback (The Penguin Group USA). *The Music Lesson* is the story of a struggling young musician who is unexpectedly visited by a mysterious, seemingly mystic music teacher who guides him through a spiritual journey of higher education in both music and life.

The themes of spirituality and mysticism at the core of *The Music Lesson* dovetail perfectly with those of *Palmystery*. A few of the twelve tracks on the album were written over the past couple years, and have since been road tested in Wooten's live shows. Others were written only recently. Whatever the time frame, Wooten maintains a great respect for the mystery of the creative process – something that is very real, yet can never be completely explained.

"It doesn't matter how you go about writing songs," says Wooten. "The music is coming from somewhere. If we think it's our brain, or some strictly intellectual source, I would say we're mistaken. Sometimes the songs show up quickly, almost completely. That's when you realize, 'Wow, I didn't even write this song. It happened on its own.' But whether it comes together in 30 minutes or several months, it's coming from the same place. Call it what you want to – spirituality, mysticism, whatever – that energy is there. The musician is the conduit that enables that energy to enter the world."

The energy of *Palmystery* shows up with an initial bang. The set opens with "2 Timers," a track that bounces back and forth between three-four and four-four time, courtesy of drummers Derico Watson and JD Blair, respectively. Riding atop this rhythmic tug-of-war is a full horn section, harmonica, violin and mandolin. "This song is stacked," says Wooten.

“I Saw God” is an intriguing discourse into the who, what, where and why of God, with Wooten delivering a spoken-word narrative over an upbeat African groove that features Richard Bona in the vocal chorus. “This was one of those songs that just came to me one day,” says Wooten. “It turned out to be one of the songs that everyone was talking about after our shows were over. I think it’s a powerful piece of music. It’s going to make people think and ask questions. And it might even make some die-hard religious people a little nervous. To me, that’s exactly what some music should do.”

The highly syncopated “Left, Right, & Center” came from Wooten’s idea of recording a song with three drummers. He enlisted Blair, Dennis Chambers and Will Kennedy on cans, along with B3 player Neal Evans and guitarist Mike Stern. “Mike just burned through that song in one take,” says Wooten. “He took a solo that was so incredible that I started learning it. I thought it would be awesome to double his solo all the way through, so I did.”

“The Gospel” marries two generations of the Wooten family with the help of a snippet from an old Southern Baptist hymn sung by Wooten’s mother. “I recorded her singing it to me over the telephone and it just happened to fit into the song perfectly,” says Wooten. “I had my aunts and uncles sing along to give it the genuine sound. My brother Joseph added the second section. We recruited the younger generation of relatives to sing on that section. It’s a bringing together of the old and the new.”

The closer, “Us 2,” is a quiet, melodic piece with acoustic slide guitar accents courtesy of Keb’ Mo’. “I thought of Keb’ when I first wrote this song,” says Wooten. “He added the grit that the song needed. I also play slide bass on this one, which creates a unique blend of the two sounds. ‘Us 2’ shows a softer side of my playing, and I like how it leaves you in a peaceful place at the end of the record.”

While *Palmystery* is distinctly Wooten, the diversity of guest players adds a flavor to the stew that Wooten himself could never have concocted on his own. “When I bring people into the studio to play on a song, I’ve rarely ever completely finished writing the song,” he explains. “I leave it open for these people’s interpretation. Unless I really wanted the song to go in a specific direction, I’d say, ‘Here’s the idea, but if you hear it differently, go for it.’ They came up with their own contributions to the songs better than I could. If I just want my interpretation, I’ll just play the part myself...But usually the song is going to be better if I bring someone else into it.”

Wooten sees himself and his collaborators as channels who tap into a higher creative power to bring music into the world and deliver it to an audience. “Creating music is a lot like the eternal question about whether a tree falling in a forest really makes a sound if there’s no one there to hear it,” he says. “A song is just an idea until someone brings it into the world. That’s the great mystery of music or any creative endeavor. The power is in the palm of your hand. You just have to release it to the world.”