

FOURPLAY GENERATES HIGH *ENERGY* WITH HEADS UP DEBUT

New album features guest vocals by bass phenomenon Esperanza Spalding

According to some very basic laws of nature, when powerful forces come together, some form of energy is created – usually in large amounts. In music, the laws of interaction are no different. When keyboardist Bob James, bassist Nathan East, guitarist Larry Carlton and drummer Harvey Mason come together as Fourplay, the result is *Energy* (HUCD 3146), the Heads Up debut of the acclaimed contemporary jazz quartet scheduled for worldwide release on September 23, 2008.

Energy grafts a variety of sounds – R&B, pop, African and more – to Fourplay’s unwavering jazz foundations. In addition to vocals by East – a charter member since the band’s inception in 1990 – the album also features a vocal track by Esperanza Spalding, the upright bassist, composer and vocalist who has recently taken the jazz world by storm with her self-titled recording debut earlier this year on Heads Up.

“I always feel a special energy coming from all four corners of this group,” says James, who originally came up with the album title. “This combination of passion and intensity is what keeps me coming back for more. The energy is multiplied by a factor of four.”

“The title is a reflection of the various moods captured in the tracks,” East adds. “Whether romantic or sophisticated, upbeat or mellow, each player brings his own unique energy to the music. That combination of energies reflects what this album is all about.”

The set opens with the midtempo and atmospheric “Fortune Teller,” a track built around a catchy riff, with plenty of interplay between James and Carlton atop the solid underpinnings provided by East and Mason.

Further in is the exotic and uplifting “Cape Town,” a piece co-written by Nathan East, his brother Marcel East, and their cousin Alan Dones. The track chronicles the journey of the three cousins’ grandparents – James and Lucinda East – who traveled to South Africa two generations ago to do missionary work. “After several weeks at sea,” East explains, “their ship finally landed on the beautiful shores of Cape Town. Their calling took them to the village of Middledrift, South Africa, where they gave birth to our parents, continued their vision as missionaries, and laid the foundation for truth and reconciliation.” In addition to the main vocal track by Nathan East on “Cape Town,” additional vocals are provided by James and Lucinda East’s great-grandchildren – Marcel East’s six-year-old son Elijah, and Nathan’s eight-year-old twins Sara and Noah.

“Prelude for Lovers” turned out to be “one of the most exciting developments that came about during the recording,” says James, thanks in large part to guest vocals by Esperanza Spalding. The song was written by James’ daughter Hilary and her husband, Kevin DiSimone, as a

showcase for a guest vocalist that had yet to be decided. “Heads Up President Dave Love suggested Esperanza, and the rest, as they say, is history. Talk about energy, she’s got it! her fresh, intimate style was a perfect match for this song. She was a dream to work with in the studio, full of ideas and confidence. We’re really happy to have her as our special guest.”

Carlton adds: “All I can say about Esperanza’s contribution to this track is ‘Wow!’ She sounds so comfortable in our setting. What a great performance.”

“Look Both Ways” is an extremely dynamic track that allows plenty of room for James and Carlton to explore and converse. “While we were recording this song,” says East, “Bob unexpectedly broke into this blazing piano solo and Harvey jumped all over it – swinging and bopping as only he can. It was very inspiring and energetic, a moment I’ll never forget. We listened to the playback, and the magic that we heard helped us make the decision about using that particular take for the record. Those moments are like lightning, and they don’t usually strike twice.”

In the final stretch, “Comfort Zone” sets up a cool, guitar-driven groove on top of East’s rock solid bass lines and Mason’s metronomic drum work. This one’s tailor-made for late-night drives or kicking back with a cocktail or two (although indulging in both of these enterprises at the same time is admittedly not a good idea).

The closing track, “Sebastian,” takes its name from one of the greatest classical composers of all time. “I surprised everyone by bringing in a sketch based on a chord progression from a Bach piano piece I had been playing at home,” says James. “It occurred to me that it might provide the framework for a Fourplay song. We all have classical backgrounds to some degree, so I thought it would be fun to try something to bring out that aspect of our performing.”

Regardless of the eclectic range of sources – jazz, pop, funk, R&B or even classical – “the overriding goal, as always, was to make the very best CD we could,” says Mason. “Our constant aim is to explore and push the boundaries while still satisfying our longtime fans, who have traveled this journey with us for nearly two decades. They still recognize the Fourplay sound, but I believe their musical taste has been expanded along the way.”

Tap into the *Energy*. There are powerful forces coming together here.