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NEWS RELEASE

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Organist Dan Trudell Unplugs On Much Awaited New Album, Dan Trudell Plays The Piano, Out September 15, 2015

Leader of soulful B-3 Bombers gets back to basics in reunion with longtime friend Matt Wilson on drums

"A unique voice on the piano." – Chicago Jazz Magazine

"Trudell infuses almost everything he plays with at least a whiff of funky jazz, no matter how sophisticated the tune or how complicated the solo. I wouldn't miss him."

– NEIL TESSER, GRAMMY®-winning jazz journalist

Midwest pianist **Dan Trudell** had a very specific purpose in choosing the title ***Dan Trudell Plays The Piano*** for his expansive and rollicking new album. Known primarily for his Hammond B-3 work in other bands he's led – including the Dan Trudell Organ Trio and the B-3 Bombers (which stars legendary funk drummer Clyde Stubblefield) – Trudell felt the time was ripe for a return to the 88s. "So many people pigeonhole me as an organ player," says Trudell, a veteran of jazz scenes in both Chicago and Milwaukee, "that I wanted to remind them I'm also a pianist." And the leader of a sterling trio, too: the album stars the versatile veteran drummer **Matt Wilson** (he and Trudell have been friends for more than 25 years) and prodigious young bassist **Joe Sanders**, who regularly anchors a trio led by pianist Gerald Clayton.

These high-profile collaborators indicate the esteem in which Trudell – who has worked with a panoply of jazz stars, among them Kurt Elling, Jon Faddis, Roy Hargrove, Eric Alexander, Benny Golson, Clark Terry, and Nicholas Payton – is held by musicians around the country. One hearing of the album leaves little wonder why. It's a sprightly collection of jazz and pop standards, with two Trudell originals, showcasing Trudell's encyclopedic technique and irrepressible good humor – just two of the qualities that regularly leave his audiences and bandmates beaming.

In keeping with the album's title, even the repertoire is piano-centric. Except for two gems from the Great American Songbook ("That Old Black Magic" and "If Ever I Would Leave You"), it consists of songs written by pianists – Duke Ellington, Horace Silver, Stevie Wonder, and Alicia Keys (whose "A Woman's Worth" receives an especially expressive reading from Trudell). Even Trudell's originals are dedicated to other keyboard giants: "McCoy For Now" (for McCoy Tyner), and "Jonesin'," which honors the great Hank Jones.

Born and raised in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, Trudell studied classical organ from the age of 12 and entered Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo majoring in organ – and tuba (early proof, perhaps, of an innate lack of orthodoxy). While in Kalamazoo, he found himself drawn to jazz piano, and soon transferred to the renowned jazz program at North Texas State, where he studied under the noted educator Dan Haerle. After college, Trudell played the cruise-ship circuit before ending up in Boston, where his trio often featured another young musician, Matt Wilson, on drums. "We went our own directions after that but stayed in touch," Trudell explains;

in recent years, he has occasionally subbed on piano and organ in Wilson's acclaimed Arts & Crafts quartet.

Moving to Chicago in 1990, Trudell soon inherited the keyboard chair in the Sabertooth Quintet, a fledgling local band fronted by two saxophonists. He spent the next decade in that band (now known simply as Sabertooth), helping launch one of the longest- and still-running gigs on the planet – three sets from midnight till 4:30 AM, every Saturday night since 1992 at Chicago's world-famous Green Mill. Trudell went on to become the pianist for the Chicago Jazz Orchestra – which has performed at the annual Kennedy Center Honors Awards for the last quarter-century – and to establish several bands of his own, most notably the B-3 Bombers, whose 2002 album *Live! At The Green Mill* (featuring the original “funky drummer” Clyde Stubblefield) became a college-radio hit.

In fact, Trudell's work with the B-3 Bombers led to his inclusion of Joe Sanders on this recording. “He's originally from Milwaukee,” Trudell explains, “and it turns out he used to come hear us play there – but, he told me, he was too intimidated to come up and talk to me. I thought he and Matt would work well together, and I was right – one rehearsal for two hours, and then we made the disc.”

Dan Trudell Plays The Piano reaffirms his importance on the Midwest jazz scene. He now makes his home in the resort community of Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, which by jazz standards is pretty much the middle of nowhere – some 50 miles from Milwaukee and more than 70 miles northwest of Chicago. He moved there in 2000, attracted by the low-key pace of life and the opportunity to live on a lake, and he hasn't regretted it for a minute.

“It's kind of a dream,” says Trudell, who is laid-back in person, saving his dynamic energy for when he sits down at the keyboard. “Living right on a lake, not having to deal with the complications of being in the city, leaves me space for creativity. It gives me a chance to have some quiet, to get in touch with my own voice, I suppose. And of course I can come into the city whenever I want.” It helps that Trudell scored an ideal gig shortly after moving to Lake Geneva: four nights a week – trio on weekends, solo piano Monday and Tuesday – at the Grand Geneva Resort, where he's regularly joined by some of Chicago's best bassists and drummers. “And I'm playing jazz!” he marvels.

Trudell's employment at the Grand Geneva came about in the way you might expect in a small community. He was performing at the historic Pfister Hotel in Milwaukee when Greg Marcus – who heads up the corporation that owns the Pfister and many other hotel properties – struck up a conversation over a couple of beers. “I told him I lived in Lake Geneva,” Trudell recalls, “and that when I first moved there I had tried to get a gig at the Grand Geneva – which he also owns. About a month after we met, I got a call from the resort saying, ‘We've had a request that you come and play here.’”

“It's not a jazz crowd *per se*, but some of them are very knowledgeable. And it's cool that there are travelers from all over the world in the audience.” Nonetheless, it was an audience member from much closer to home that made this recording possible. “An adult student of mine in Chicago said, ‘I really want you to go to New York and record with some well-known guys, to get the word out.’ So he generously fronted the money for my trip, and this album is the result,” says Trudell, adding, “I gave him an old Hammond A100 in appreciation.”

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