



RICK BRAUN ALL IT TAKES

Nobody on today's contemporary urban jazz scene knows more about the power of perfect, timely partnerships—or what it takes to keep the #1 hits coming—than **Rick Braun**. Drawing from the title of the trumpeter, composer and producer's stylistically eclectic, envelope-pushing debut on Artistry Music, **All It Takes** is finding the groove with his friends and fellow greats.

After launching the millennium in *Shake It Up* mode with Boney James and later hooking up with Kirk Whalum and Norman Brown as BWB, Braun reached even greater heights in 2007 when he and saxman Richard Elliot—who were partners at the time in the independent label ARTizen Music Group—teamed up for *RnR*. Their duet project hit #1 on the Billboard Contemporary Jazz chart immediately upon its release and its catchy title track single was an instant smash, staying at #1 on Radio and Records' (R&R) Contemporary Jazz airplay chart for over two months. After touring as part of Jazz Attack with Peter White and Jonathan Butler in 2005 and 2007, Braun and Elliot teamed up for the genre's biggest tour in 2008.

The recording of *RnR* gave Braun the opportunity to work with his longtime friend, Parisian-born keyboardist Philippe Saisse, who had recently relocated from New York to Braun's Los Angeles neighborhood. In addition to producing some tracks for the album, Saisse contributed one of the set's more unique tracks, the international flavored, cinematic "Que Paso." On **All It Takes**, Braun and Saisse expand profoundly on their working relationship, exploring exciting innovations and hitting new creative heights together; six of its tracks were co-written and co-produced by the two and one (the moody, gently grooving and string-enhanced title track) is solely composed and produced by Saisse.

"What I've always loved about Philippe's music is the continental, European melodic sense he brings to everything he does," says Braun, who counts 1997's *Que Pasa*, the Saisse-produced Gato Barbieri album, as one of his all-time favorite recordings. "I also like the fact that he has a different writing and recording process than I do. Usually when I co-write, my collaborator brings in the basic structure and groove and leaves the melody for me. But he came into our sessions with incredible melodies, including the beautiful ballad that became the title track that I loved so much I didn't want to touch it or take a co-writing credit. The day he wrote it was a tough one for him and he put so much emotion into it. 'All It Takes,' which we developed with a horn-bassline melody and subtle orchestral textures, became the touchstone for the project, the piece that established a level of artistry that set a high bar we challenged ourselves to live up to."

Partnering with Saisse helped Braun forge a musical identity for the project distinct not just from *RnR*, but also boosting the more retro-funky soul flavors he was working with simultaneously as a producer on Elliot's new solo project *Rock Steady*. "I always love working with Richard, but I couldn't picture myself completely getting into a whole new mindset for my project without the kind of outside perspective Philippe provided. We have an incredible chemistry together and

because of his contributions and the way he inspired me to try exciting new ventures, **All It Takes** has a very unique identity that sets it apart from any other solo or collaboration CD I have ever done.”

The versatile keyboardist, composer and producer also propels Braun into fertile territory beyond his trademark R&B/pop comfort zone. This mindset begins with the conscious effort Braun makes to progress beyond the familiar technique of doubling his horn with tenor sax lines and textures. Most of the songs on **All It Takes** find Braun artfully combining flugelhorn with muted trumpet (using the Harmon mute). The perfect example of this approach is “Ever Changing World,” which has a bubbling electronica ambience and soaring flugelhorn/muted trumpet melody over the booming electronic funk rock foundation. The playful, high energy, Euro funk meets disco trance tune “Sleeveless In Seattle” features Braun doubling on the chorus with trombonist Nick Lane. Only one lone track, the sensuous moody funk jam, “I Got Your Back,” has a larger horn section (with Lane and Elliot).

The Braun-Saisse tracks lead off brilliantly with “Tijuana Dance?”—a heavy thumping, sizzling multiple horn-infused jam that rolls energetically onto pop-inflected, Herb Alpert/Tijuana Brass turf; the “four on the floor” groove provides a backdrop for some crafty moments featuring a bank of synergistic and propulsive trumpet clarions pouring through a phase shifter to create a “wash” effect. Saisse’s arsenal of electronica sounds and downtempo ambiances provides the perfect setting for the tropical, Latin flavored “Puerto Alegre Jam,” which features dreamy and alluring vocalese by Brazilian singer Vanessa Falabella. In addition, the lush acoustic guitar harmony line by guest star (and Saisse’s fellow Parisian) Marc Antoine and a jazzy piano solo by Saisse himself are the perfect accompaniment. “Berlin” is perhaps the ultimate dual expression of Braun’s love for the dazzling nightlife of Germany (the homeland of his wife Christiane) and Saisse’s Euro sensibilities. Braun imagines lithe German models dancing the night away to the track’s colorful mix of bouncy beats, old school R&B flavors and modern chill elements.

The trumpeter complements his Saisse collaborations with three equally seductive tracks that roll very much in the old school soul vein. The breezy, gently soaring Jeff Lorber co-written and co-produced “Christiane” is another solid example of Braun’s dual muted/non-muted trumpet approach; he dedicated it to his wife because every time she listened to the album as a work in progress, she kept commenting on how beautiful she thought this piece was. “She’s The One,” co-written and co-produced by keyboardist Tim Gant, has a picture perfect soul-jazz sensuality, bubbling grooves and spacey key riffs right out of the 70s. “Freddie Was Here” is a heartfelt tribute to one of Braun’s chief influences, the late great trumpeter Freddie Hubbard. “Freddie was an incredible genius on his instrument,” says Braun, who met the legend several times. “There was no player who was ever as confident, creative or innovative. He took improvisation to a whole new level and I have always considered his album *First Light* with George Benson and Hubert Laws to be the original urban jazz album.”

The success of *RnR* capped an amazing run throughout the 2000s by Braun, who has also become a top genre producer over the years, working with Elliot, Antoine, Willie & Lobo, David Benoit and Jeff Golub, among others. Braun set a record at the 2002 National Contemporary Jazz Awards in San Diego by winning a total of five trophies, including Best Male Artist, Best Album (*Kisses in the Rain*, which hit #1 on Billboard’s Contemporary Jazz Chart), Song of the Year (the title cut) and Best Brass Player. He also shared a Best Collaboration award with (then Warner Bros. label mate) Boney James for their 2000 hit *Shake It Up*, which reigned at #1 on the Billboard chart for 11 weeks. Braun next huddled up with Kirk Whalum and Norman Brown for *BWB*, which starred the #1 hit title track “Groovin’,” and a popular U.S. tour in the Fall of 2002.

Even those who have followed Braun's rise as a solo artist since the release of 1993's *Intimate Secrets* are sometimes surprised by the diversity of the Allentown, Pennsylvania native's résumé before he found his niche in contemporary jazz. While attending the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York, Braun and some classmates formed the jazz-fusion combo Auracle, which released two albums. His path toward solo stardom ("I also wrote my share of Rick Springfield-like songs because I was also a good singer," he laughs) led him to some prestigious behind the scenes roles, first as a pop songwriter ("Here With Me" was a Top 20 hit for REO Speedwagon in 1988), then as a touring sideman with Rickie Lee Jones, Tina Turner, Glenn Frey, Natalie Cole, Crowded House, Tom Petty and War.

Understating his impact on his colleagues and thousands of fans across the globe just slightly, Braun says, "I am one of the luckiest guys in the world. I mean, when you really think about it, I make my living blowing into plumbing. The best part of finding this niche is being able to live in an extremely creative environment and do what I love to do best, without making compromises. The joy of that is being able to work with incredible artists like Philippe, which makes all the difference between making a good album and one that transcends what's been successful in the past and drives me to a different creative level altogether. The new energy he brought to the picture helped me express myself in ways I could have never imagined and I'm very grateful for the experience."

Rick Braun • All It Takes (ART 7020)

US Street Date: July 28, 2009 • R/O/W Street Date: June 30, 2009

NATIONAL PUBLICITY:

Don Lucoff
DL Media
Tel: 610-667-0501
Fax: 610-667-0502
Don@jazzpublicity.com

LIFESTYLE PUBLICITY:

Sheila Eldridge
Miles Ahead Entertainment
Tel: 201-722-1500
Fax: 201-722-1119
Sheila@milesaheadentertainment.com

#