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JEFF LORBER RECAPTURES THE SPIRIT OF JAZZ FUSION ON *NOW IS THE TIME*

June 1, 2010, Heads Up release features material from the Jeff Lorber Fusion

**With Jimmy Haslip, Eric Marienthal, Paul Jackson, Jr., Vinnie Colaiuta,
Dave Weckl, Randy Brecker and others**

By the late 1970s, keyboardist and composer Jeff Lorber had become a prominent figure in the new movement known as jazz fusion – a marriage of traditional jazz with elements of rock, R&B, funk and other electrified sounds. Lorber and his band, the Jeff Lorber Fusion, first honed their craft in the Portland, Oregon, club scene and rapidly expanded their reach to a national and international audience via a combination of complex harmonies, unconventional time signatures and compelling rhythms.

In subsequent years, Lorber dropped the term “fusion” from his billing as the movement evolved into what is currently known as contemporary jazz. Still, he continued to explore the innovative, improvisational potential of grafting other musical forms to the jazz idiom.

More than three decades after his earliest recordings, Lorber has come full circle. His new recording, *Now Is The Time*, is set for release on June 1, 2010, on Heads Up International, a division of Concord Music Group. The album delves back into his early catalog and reinvents some of the most compelling compositions from the Jeff Lorber Fusion heyday. As a result, the artist once again makes a bold statement in the evolution of jazz.

This new incarnation of the Jeff Lorber Fusion includes luminaries like bassist Jimmy Haslip (who co-produced with Lorber and Bobby Colomby), saxophonist Eric Marienthal, trumpeter Randy Brecker, guitarist Paul Jackson Jr., and drummers Vinnie Colaiuta and Dave Weckl.

“We all had a vision of what we wanted this record to be,” says Lorber, who points to a recent European tour with many of these same musicians – and the positive response that resulted from it – as the primary catalyst for the album. “We wanted a return to the sound of the Jeff Lorber Fusion, but informed by everything I’ve learned since then. All of a sudden, people seem to be interested in hearing that again. They’re ready to hear musicians who can really play, really stretch the envelope with their technique, with their songwriting, and with harmonic structure.”

Stretching the envelope has been Lorber's strategy from the very beginning. Born in Philadelphia in 1952, Lorber began playing piano when he was just four years old. By his teen years, he had hooked up with several local R&B bands, but his tastes trended more toward jazz when he studied at Berklee College of Music.

After college, he relocated to Portland, Oregon, where he formed the Jeff Lorber Fusion. The group released their self-titled debut album in 1977, and quickly became one of the most popular acts in the jazz fusion scene, due in large part to relentless touring and a string of artistically daring and commercially successful recordings.

The entity formerly known as the Jeff Lorber Fusion became Lorber's solo career with the release of *It's a Fact* in 1982. After a brief but prolific stretch culminating with the highly successful *Private Passion* in 1986, Lorber took a break from recording his own material, opting instead to do session work and produce other artists. He resumed his solo career in 1991 with *Worth Waiting For*, although he continued to produce for the remainder of the decade.

Lorber has been just as prolific and innovative in the new century as he was in the last, with recordings on Narada (*Philly Style, Flip Side*), Blue Note (*He Had a Hat*), and most recently Peak (*Heard That*).

In some ways, *Now Is The Time* is a culmination of all that has come before – and a nod to the raw energy and enthusiasm that fueled the music of the early days. The set opens with a reinterpretation of Lorber's "Rain Dance," a song that has been sampled by Lil' Kim and other hip-hop artists since the original recording on the *Water Sign* album in 1979. The combination of vocals by Irene B and trumpet by Randy Brecker – with additional brass by the Blood Sweat & Tears Horns – provides a fresh look at an early Jeff Lorber Fusion classic.

Among Lorber's favorites is "Mysterious Traveler," a song originally written by Wayne Shorter during his Weather Report years. "It's hard to compete with the original version of this song because it's so interesting," says Lorber, "but our version is much more funky and hard-hitting. There's a sense of freedom in this track that really goes beyond anything else on the record, because the whole thing was sort of a jam session done live in the studio."

"Black Ice," originally from the 1978 album, *Soft Space*, "represents the essence of the Jeff Lorber Fusion sound," says Lorber. "It's very uptempo, with some quick-shifting harmonic changes and exciting rhythms. It was fun to revisit this song and do it in the studio with Vinnie Colaiuta on the drums."

While Colaiuta handles the lion's share of the drumming on *Now is The Time*, Lorber recruited Dave Weckl to manage the offbeat 7/4 signature of "Chinese Medicinal Herbs," a song originally recorded for Jeff Lorber Fusion's 1977 debut album. "The song is just so perfect for Dave," says Lorber. "He just excels at that kind of music. The minute I heard him play three bars of it, I knew he was just the right guy for the job. The drumming is amazing on this track."

Calling this set of refashioned classics *Now Is The Time* was no accident, says Lorber. The album represents a transition in the artist's creative perspective – one that might well be a reflection of the changes in the audience's perceptions as well.

"This record is a clear statement," he says. "It represents a real musical shift toward something a little jazzier, and a little more exciting. The title has a very positive thrust to it, and it evokes a certain sense of being serious and taking charge."

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