



**HEADS UP**  
INTERNATIONAL

## **SAXOPHONIST RICHARD ELLIOT CELEBRATES HIS FUNK AND R&B ROOTS ON *SUMMER MADNESS***

**Elliot joins forces with trumpeter/trombonist/producer Rick Braun  
on September 9, 2016 release**

*For Immediate Release* – When tenor saxophonist **Richard Elliot** began preparing *Summer Madness*, his follow-up to 2014’s critically acclaimed *Lip Service*, he knew exactly what he wanted to do. First and foremost, it had to be funky. “When I was growing up in the ’70s and first learning to play the saxophone,” he says, “I was mostly attracted to instrumentally based R&B and to jazz that had R&B roots. This record definitely goes down that path, leaning more on the funk side.”

He also knew precisely who he wanted to accompany him on the new music. “I wanted to involve my band,” Elliot says. “A lot of artists tour with a group of musicians, and then when it’s time to make a record they hook up with a producer and go into the studio and use completely different people that maybe they’ve never even met before. I feel that if you’re lucky enough to have a regular group of musicians that you work with, and you don’t draw on their talent and their inspirations, you’re short-changing yourself.”

*Summer Madness*, set for release on September 9, 2016 via Heads Up, a division of Concord Music Group, is a new kind of Richard Elliot recording. For one thing, the cast includes two other horn men augmenting Elliot’s signature sax work: trumpeter/trombonist Rick Braun, who also produced the album and, on several tracks, baritone saxophonist Curt Waylee. Most importantly though, the music was created from scratch as Elliot and his handpicked musicians formulated and honed their ideas in the studio, with Braun’s ultra-capable guidance. For Elliot, recruiting the additional players and having the entire band—plus a well-respected veteran producer help him shape the music—was integral to the project’s success.

“I didn’t want to direct them,” he says. “I wanted to bring them in and let them be part of the process—the writing, the arranging—and to do it all together. I had a lot of confidence that these guys are mature enough musically. Everybody brought what they do to the table and we all put our heads together. We didn’t have rehearsals first, we didn’t have writing sessions first. We booked some days in the studio and the music just poured out.”

The result of these impromptu jams—seven new originals and three classic interpretations—is unquestionably one of the most electrifying and gratifying recordings of Richard Elliot’s three-plus-decade solo career. From the opening salvo, a super-funkified take on Spyro Gyra’s

“Cachaca,” through the closing “Mr. Nate’s Wild Ride,” spotlighting bassist Nathaniel Phillips, who wrote the track along with Elliot and Braun, *Summer Madness* is one of those albums that simply takes hold the moment you press play and never lets go. Along the way it touches down on a variety of moods and styles, from Latin- and African-inspired funk to soul jazz, even flirting with fusion on the hard-driving, appropriately titled “Ludicrous Speed.”

A couple of sparkling ballads pay tribute to heroes of Elliot’s going back to his earliest days of musical discovery: “Europa,” on which he honors one of his saxophone inspirations, the late Gato Barbieri—who famously remade the Carlos Santana-penned track in his own image, and the title track “Summer Madness,” a mid-’70s hit for funk titans Kool & the Gang.

Among the original compositions, “Harry the Hipster,” says Elliot, “is reminiscent of songs that had cool, recurring melodies and a funky pulse—the idea was not to wrap yourself up in how much complexity you could put into the song, but how much feeling and groove can you put into the song?” Another highlight, the band-written “West Coast Jam,” is Elliot’s nod to yet another influence, the late leader of funk trailblazers Zapp, Roger Troutman, while “Breakin’ It Down,” which arrives early on *Summer Madness*, is designed, he says, to bridge the genres of funk and contemporary jazz, with which Elliot has long been associated. “I sort of formulated that theory later though,” he confesses. “When we were making the music we were just making it.”

It should come as no surprise to Elliot’s longtime fans that he would, at some point in his career, choose to celebrate funk in such a dedicated, decisive way. It was, after all, with the legendary Tower of Power that many first heard the saxophone virtuosity of Richard Elliot. Although he was born in Scotland and grew up in Los Angeles, where he started playing saxophone while in middle school, his five-year run with the Bay Area institution ToP during the 1980s was when Richard Elliot first came to prominence.

“I learned more about being a musician, about being a performer, about being a team player in a horn section, about how to make a statement when you step out and do a solo, from being with Tower of Power than from any other group or artist I ever worked with,” Elliot says, adding that it was “initially terrifying” to find himself among some of the most accomplished and highly respected musicians on the funk/R&B scene. In fact, he learned enough from working with them, Elliot says now, to know that he was ready to go off on his own when he did.

“Leaving Tower of Power was the hardest decision I ever made,” he says now, but great things were to follow almost immediately. By the late ’80s, Elliot had launched his solo career and was signed to Blue Note Records, where he worked with the legendary record executive Bruce Lundvall, an early champion of Elliot’s work. Since then, Elliot has released more than 20 albums as a leader, and has also polished his chops serving as a sideman for a considerable list of diverse giants, including Motown hitmakers Smokey Robinson and the Temptations. One of Elliot’s favorite projects was the collaborative 2013 release *Summer Horns*, which found him teaming up with fellow sax-slingers Dave Koz, Gerald Albright and Mindi Abair—the album was nominated for a Grammy in the category of Best Pop Instrumental Album.

Throughout all of his music, Richard Elliot has always strived to achieve one certain goal. “Miles Davis said, ‘The hardest thing for a musician to do is sound like himself.’ That stuck with me,” Elliot says. “If you fixate on a single influence, you tend to sound like someone who’s trying to sound like that person. I never know if I’ve achieved that goal but on occasion I’ve had someone come up to me and say, ‘I heard a song on the radio and I knew it was you.’” *Summer*

*Madness* puts a bit of a new twist on the classic Richard Elliot sound, but you won't doubt for a single second who you are hearing.

Date	Venue	City	State
17-Aug-16	Racine Zoo Bandshell (Animal Crackers Jazz Series)	Racine	WI
20-Aug-16	Copper Mountain Resort	Frisco	CA
26-Aug-16	Scullers Jazz Club	Boston	MA
27-Aug-16	Jamesport Vineyards	Jamesport	NY
07-Oct-16	Ft. Sam Houston Theater	San Antonio	TX
08-Oct-16	Bishop Arts Theater	Dallas	TX
09-Oct-16	Cullen Theater	Houston	TX
16-Oct-16	Thornton Winery	Temecula	CA
04-Nov-16	The Jazz Kitchen	Indianapolis	IN
05-Nov-16	The Jazz Kitchen	Indianapolis	IN
11-Nov-16	Tangier-Cabaret Room	Akron	OH
12-Nov-16	SmoothChicago.com Showroom @ Loews Chicago O'Hare Hotel	Rosemont	IL
16-Nov-16	BB King Blues Club and Grill	New York	NY
17-Nov-16	Buffalo State Performing Arts Center	Buffalo	NY
13-Jan-17	Crowne Plaza Melbourne Oceanfront	Melbourne	FL
14-Jan-17	Crowne Plaza Melbourne Oceanfront	Melbourne	FL
21 thru 28 Jan-17	Smooth Jazz Cruise	Ft. Lauderdale	FL
09 thru 23 May-17	The Dave Koz Cruise	Venice	ITALY

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Richard Elliot Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/richardelliottmusic>

Online media kit: <http://mediakits.concordmusicgroup.com/p/summer-madness>

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