



WARREN WOLF WOLFGANG

Throughout its history, jazz has been revitalized with a continual evolution of style, fresh transformations in expression, bold leaps into the free improvisational sphere of the unknown and most importantly the arrival of young artists who, while steeped in the past, have an eye to the future of the idiom. Jazz aficionados welcome the dawning of the next generations of talented musicians who boldly stride into progressive territory. Among the most important young jazz stars in that vein is vibraphonist **Warren Wolf**, who delivers his remarkable sophomore album, **Wolfgang**, on Mack Avenue Records. Wolf, a multi-instrumentalist who has also honed his chops on drums and piano since age three, is also following in the footsteps of vibes masters Bobby Hutcherson and Stefon Harris by becoming a member of the SFJazz Collective (both of whom precede him in the vibes chair).

Wolfgang, set for an August 20 release, features two different three-man rhythm sections (pianist Benny Green, bassist Christian McBride and drummer Lewis Nash; and pianist Aaron Goldberg, bassist Kris Funn and drummer Billy Williams, Jr.), as well as two noteworthy duo pieces with pianist/label-mate Aaron Diehl. Wolf and Diehl are both building their careers as young (each under age 35) musicians keeping the jazz tradition alive.

Comprising nine tunes (six of which are originals), **Wolfgang** spotlights Wolf taking a different, more laid-back take than his volcanic eponymous debut album on Mack Avenue. "The last record was a means of introducing myself as a leader," says the 33-year-old Baltimore-based vibraphonist. "This time I set out to showcase my writing skills with compositions that have melodies people can remember."

On his first album, which was produced by mentor/label-mate McBride (who Wolf has been performing with since 2007 after the pair met at Jazz Aspen seven years before that), Wolf placed himself in the context of a quintet and sextet (with saxophonist Tim Green and, on two tracks, trumpeter Jeremy Pelt). This time out he largely focuses on the quartet setting. "I wanted to display the beauty of the vibes," he says. "In a quintet, you're limited. With a quartet, you can hear me more. A lot of times the vibes is played in support of others. I'm showing here that I can hold the ball by myself." **Wolfgang** sets out to showcase Wolf's classical and blues influences, as well as his compositions.

Wolfgang opens with the vibraphonist leading his own home-base band (Fun and Williams with Goldberg sitting in as a guest) into "Sunrise," with Goldberg and Williams making predawn statements, then develops into the relaxed aurora with Wolf joining the group. The piece develops into a swinging gem with lyrical vibes lines. With the same band, Wolf speeds into the hard-burning swinger "Grand Central," which takes a frenetic pace with mad dashes of movement: a wild chase, a crushing push. "Actually, this originally had another title which we decided not to use," says Wolf. "But I was performing it at Dizzy's Club at Jazz at Lincoln Center, and a guy came up after and said that reminded him of being at Grand Central Station at rush hour. So, that's the perfect title."

The foursome also jumps into the upbeat "Lake Nerraw Flow" which features Wolf taking a rippling solo. It's a song he wrote as a senior at Berklee College of Music in 2001. "I don't write like that anymore, but I knew this would be great for all of us to stretch out," Wolf says. And the title? "That's my name spelled backwards." As for the fourth tune of the band, "Setembro," written by Ivan Lins/Gilson Peranzetta, Wolf invites singer Darryl Tookes to harmonize with smooth wordless vocals. "It goes back to my goal for this album: record melodies that people actually enjoy," says Wolf.

Wolf and Diehl have become good friends because of their deep appreciation for both jazz and classical music. "When I first composed the song 'Wolfgang,' I had a jazz band choir in mind as well as a whole other section that I cut out." In the tune, Diehl and Wolf marvelously converse on their instruments, in dialogues and in counterpoint. The other duo number comes at the end of the disc when the pair gleefully dives into "Le Carnaval de Venise," a waltz composed by Jean-Baptiste Arban. "I first heard this music in high school [Baltimore School of the Arts] where a trumpeter took the lead," Wolf says. "Fast-forward to seeing a clip on YouTube of Wynton [Marsalis] playing this with a symphony orchestra. I bought the recording and was blown away." The piece is delivered as a percussive waltz with Diehl and Wolf flowing together like gentle waves.

With the rhythm section of Green/McBride/Nash, Wolf launches into three tunes including a bluesy and hip take on the traditional song, "Frankie and Johnny," which his father had turned him on to when he was a teenager. "I listened to a live version that Ray Brown did with Milt Jackson and Stanley Turrentine and others, and I loved the pulse of the bass," Wolf says. "You can hear Christian yelling in this take, which is a tribute to Ray Brown." The group also serves up "Annoyance," with McBride bowing in the opening and Wolf taking the lyrical duties ("If you hear something like a mistake in this, it's supposed to be there," says Wolf, who likes to hear dissonance within the beauty) and the blues-oriented "Things Were Done Yesterday," where Green flies on the keys. "I've always been a big-time fan of Benny," Wolf says. "To hear the way he plays through changes is amazing. He tears it up here."

A smart, fun, blues-to-swing-to-classical collection of indelible melodies, **Wolfgang** ups the ante in Wolf's young career. Even though he's still developing his voice and his vision (he says he has several new projects he's thinking of), he has been given high praise, including from Blue Note Records' Chairman Emeritus, Bruce Lundvall. When asked about whom Lundvall is impressed with on the scene today, the legendary label chief immediately responded: **Warren Wolf**. "Warren is very different," he said. "He has a sense of swing and a percussive style. He has great dynamics, excellent compositions and is very exciting." He called Wolf's deal with Mack Avenue to be a very important signing.

Warren Wolf • Wolfgang
Mack Avenue Records • Release Date: August 20, 2013

For more information on **Warren Wolf**, please visit warrenwolfmusic.com

For media information, please contact:

DL Media • 610-667-0501

Maureen McFadden • maureen@dlmediamusic.com

For press materials on Warren Wolf, Mack Avenue artists or Mack Avenue Record labels in general (including album covers, promotional photos and logos), please visit media.mackavenue.com

MACK AVENUE • the road to great music • mackavenue.com

#