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Communications

NEWS RELEASE

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GRUPO YANQUI RIDES AGAIN, SOPHOMORE CD
BY PIANIST BENNETT PASTER and BASSIST GREGORY RYAN
AVAILABLE MAY 20 on MILES HIGH RECORDS

FEATURING CHRIS CHEEK, tenor and alto saxophone; ALEX NORRIS, trumpet; KEITH HALL, drums; and GILAD, percussion

*“Although a North American production, Grupo Yanqui has all the savory taste of the islands and the Southern Hemisphere. This band regularly heats up the temperature and lays down a bountiful dose of syncopated vibrations.” — **Cadence***

“Paster’s hands have an infectious percussive exuberance.”
— Dan McClenaghan — AllAboutJazz.com

Grupo Yanqui, founded by pianist Bennett Paster and bassist Gregory Ryan, is a hard-hitting, NYC-based band that skillfully balances Afro-Cuban-, Brazilian-, and American-influenced compositions with Latin-tinged arrangements of standard gems. “Yanqui” is the Spanish version of the English word “Yankee,” and with this name, Paster and Ryan playfully acknowledge that the group is led by non-Latinos who play Latin music. Many of the titles of their compositions also display a sense of humor. However, the music-making is serious, and their love and respect for the music is clear at every turn. *Grupo Yanqui Rides Again* was recorded on the heels of a prestigious tour sponsored by the U.S. State Department/Jazz at Lincoln Center program, “The Rhythm Road: American Music Abroad,” which brought the group’s singular sound to Sweden, Russia, Estonia, and Serbia. Their sophomore release, which features a reconfigured line-up that includes some of NYC’s most acclaimed and accomplished musicians, proves again that Grupo Yanqui defies simple classification – it’s not just Latin jazz, but world groove music that brings together myriad influences to create an eclectic, exciting, and distinctly New York sound.

Grupo Yanqui Rides Again is a collection of six original songs penned by Paster or Ryan, and two thoughtfully revisited jazz standards. The disc opens with Chick Corea’s classic *Tones for Joan’s Bones*, reconceived as a Latin jazz guaguancó that bristles with energy. In contrast, Paster’s *The Unabonger* is a thoroughly modern jazz tune that grooves hard in a very different way while still retaining some Latin flavor. Ryan’s wittily-titled *The Chick from Panamá* alludes to Jobim’s *The Girl from Ipanema*. While this tune has a certain seductiveness to it, there’s an undercurrent of kinetic energy created by Gilad’s rustling percussion that allows Alex Norris to take a blistering solo here. Chris Cheek displays beautiful tone and sensitivity in a sumptuous arrangement of Billy Strayhorn’s *Chelsea Bridge*, while Ryan’s *If Woody Had Gone Right to the Police...* is an up-tempo descarga that features both horn players in rapid-fire eight bar exchanges. The opening vamp of Paster’s *The Kid from Albuquerque* is quirkily dissonant, giving a glimpse of what Monk might have done if he’d ever played Afro-Cuban music!

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Drummer Keith Hall, who also works with Paster and Ryan in a piano trio, solidly holds it down in every tune, but also breaks out with Gilad in scintillating percussion exchanges as in Paster's *El Vaquero Número Cinco*. Paster and Ryan shine throughout as supportive rhythm section players and soloists, but in Ryan's *PoMoAfroMoFoJo*, both have incredible solo turns. In the intro (*PoMoAfroMoFoJoIntro*), Ryan makes a soulful statement that leads into the tune proper, and in a stroke of genius, an applause-like sound materializes during the segue which turns out to be a percussive effect made by Gilad. This tune, a shout-out to the modal compositions of the immortal Joe Henderson, features Paster in a McCoy Tyner-esque solo that has the power of a gale-force wind.

Pianist Paster and acoustic and electric bassist Ryan met in 1993 as faculty members of the Stanford Jazz Workshop. Several years later, at the same workshop, they were among the first Americans to meet and play with Cuban saxophonist Yosvany Terry Cabrera and percussionist Dafnis Prieto. The two pairs of friends, who developed their own styles of playing thousands of miles apart, came together to form Grupo Yanqui, an inspired new alliance, which resulted in their 2001 debut release and performances in the New York City metro area and California. Though he does not perform on the newest CD, Yosvany Terry Cabrera, now among the most sought-after saxophonist/composer/bandleaders in NYC, frequently joins the band for performances. The new Grupo Yanqui lineup includes original member saxophonist Chris Cheek, a noted leader in his own right; trumpeter Alex Norris, popular for his work with NYC Latin mainstay Manny Oquendo and Libre; drummer Keith Hall, and Israeli percussionist Gilad, also an original band member, who adds Latin, Middle-Eastern and Brazilian flavors and more to the musical salsa.

At home in a variety of musical worlds, including Brazilian, Cuban, funk, and mainstream jazz styles, New York City native Gregory Ryan has established himself as an in-demand sideman on both acoustic and electric bass. He has appeared with such artists as pianists James Williams, Mulgrew Miller, and Arturo O'Farrill; guitarists Jim Hall and Pat Martino; vocalists Karrin Allyson, Peter Cincotti, and Dena DeRose; and many others, including Billy Harper, Tom Harrell, the Afro-Latin Jazz Orchestra and the Chico O'Farrill Afro-Cuban Jazz Orchestra, and has performed in festivals and concerts worldwide. Keyboardist, composer, and producer Bennett Paster is one of New York City's most creative and versatile musicians, and has performed in the United States, the Caribbean, and throughout Europe. He has been a featured performer with jazz stars Kurt Elling, Brian Lynch, Peter Bernstein, Rufus Reid, Bill Stewart, Billy Hart, Albert "Tootie" Heath, Ndugu Chancler, Miri Ben-Ari, and Yosvany Terry, among others. He also plays Hammond organ and vintage keyboards in *Organic!*, a funky psychedelic organ trio, and runs a studio called Benny's Wash 'n' Dry. The piano trio Paster, Ryan & Hall released two CDs, of which Modern Drummer said of their debut: "it radiate[s] warmth, vitality, robust melodicism, and an effortless swing." Ryan and Paster are dedicated educators as well, and after Grupo Yanqui's 2006 U.S. Department of State/Jazz at Lincoln Center tour to Sweden, Russia, Estonia and Serbia, they returned to Belgrade, Serbia on the organization's behalf to conduct a two-week workshop at the Belgrade Music Academy.

www.grupoyanqui.com

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