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GUITARIST/COMPOSER HENRY ROBINETT **REVIVES 20-YEAR-OLD HOMAGE TO JAZZ HEROES** **JAZZ STANDARDS, VOL. 1: THEN** **COMING MAY 1, 2020**

HENRY ROBINETT is a guitarist, composer, bandleader and recording engineer who has released five albums since 1986 to stellar reviews. His first release, *The Henry Robinett Group*, received a 4-Star review in *DownBeat Magazine*. *JazzTimes* said about his 2016 release, *I Have Known Mountains*, "The dozen pieces that appear here make it plainly clear that Robinett is a man who places a high premium on clarity. His well-thought-out messages, be they focused on tragedy, love, or life's winding road(s), manage to appeal to the ear. If jazz has an accessibility problem, nobody bothered to tell Henry Robinett."

Robinett is finally releasing an album he recorded 20 years ago. **JAZZ STANDARDS, VOLUME 1: THEN** is unlike his other releases. Known for his modern, eclectic sound that melds world music with electric jazz, Robinett recorded *Jazz Standards* as an homage to the musicians whom he admires and who have shaped his music. "Honestly, I don't know why I left it on the shelf for so long," says Robinett. "I grew up listening to bebop, and the great bebop players had enormous influence on me. When I wrote and performed my own music, though, I naturally incorporated the wide range of music styles I had played with other bands. I think the *Jazz Standards* album was just too different from my other work, which made me hesitant to release it. But after listening to it again after so many years, I like it. I think it stands up well and shows another side to my playing."

Jimi Hendrix was Robinett's idol when he was 13 years old, so he began studying guitar. He studied at first with a couple of classical guitar teachers. Robinett had to learn Bach, Paganini, Mendelssohn, and Rimsky-Korsakov on the electric guitar using a guitar pick. But right from the beginning, his influences were wide-ranging. His father had a large collection of music, including many albums by Charlie Mingus, who was his father's first cousin. Then, while still in high school, he studied for two years with master guitarist and jazz teacher Warren Nunes.

A native of Sacramento, California, Robinett attended Cal State University Sacramento before joining The Runners, a group that was very popular in Northern California. The band played a combination of R&B, rock, Brazilian and jazz. Then, in 1978, Robinett had an experience any jazz musician would envy -- he lived with Charlie Mingus for three months at his New York City apartment. On the very first night he arrived, there was a big surprise party for Mingus' wife, Sue, that was attended by Sonny Rollins, Nat Hentoff, Leonard Feather, and many other notables. Robinett took advantage of his time in New York, playing with

Jazz luminaries like Hal Galper, Clifford Jordan, Frank Strozier, Muhal Richard Abrams, Chico Freeman, Ricky Ford, and many others. He was also in New York when Mingus was writing music for Joni Mitchell, and he got to hang out with her, talking about music and life in general. She also showed Robinett some of her guitar tunings, which she wrote down for him. He carried them in his guitar case for many years.

When his New York experience was over, Robinett moved to San Francisco, where he played at the legendary Keystone Korner with many of the Bay Area's top players, including pianist Jessica Williams. He was then asked to play guitar on her album *Orgonomic Music*. Trumpeter Eddie Henderson was also on that recording.

Robinett spent a year in Munich, Germany, playing in various bands and doing some studio work for the Munich Sound Machine and other artists. When he came home, he kept busy performing in other bands, but at that point, Robinett wanted to start playing his own music and lead his own group. He assembled a band, and it took no time for him to get signed by the Artful Balance record label. The Henry Robinett Group produced three albums for the label.

During this period, he wanted to take more control of his music, and he learned how to be a recording engineer. He built a small studio and recorded all his subsequent albums himself.

After several years, Artful Balance shut its doors, so Robinett started his own record label called Nefertiti Records. He developed a solid distribution channel and was soon producing his own records and records for other artists, as well. The Henry Robinett Group was named the Best Jazz Band by The Sacramento News and Review for three years in a row.

For *Jazz Standards, Volume 1*, which was recorded in 2000, Robinett gathered top West Coast artists, including **JOE GILMAN** on piano, **CHRIS SYMER** on bass, and **MICHAEL STEPHANS** on drums. The album is resplendent with Robinett's tasty grooves. His guitar work is swinging and accessible, and he approaches a tune not unlike a singer, emphasizing the melody while adding colors through his phrasing and harmonic choices.

Jazz Standards, Volume 1: Then shows a more traditional side of Robinett's artistry while still retaining a high level of appeal and accessibility. *JazzTimes* was dead on: "If jazz has an accessibility problem, nobody bothered to tell Henry Robinett."

Robinett will be releasing a volume of jazz standards, called *Volume 2: Then Again* in the near future. He is also planning on releasing two volumes of contemporary standards, called *Volume 3: Now* and *Volume 4: Now and Again*.

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JAZZ STANDARDS, VOLUME 1: THEN is set for release on May 1, 2020 and will be available online everywhere.

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