



**This recording reflects** my formative musical journey in the 1970's and 1980's. During those two decades I got my first saxophone, played my first dance jobs, formed my first band, earned three degrees in music and started a career as a music professor. It is an eclectic collection of tunes, reflecting (directly and indirectly) my diverse musical influences, but if you listen to it from beginning to end, I think you will find that there is a continuity of musical concept.

The year was 1973, in Littleton, Colorado. I was 14 going on 15. I had been working for a little over a year in a 1940's style dance band – Joy Cayler's Brass Beat for the 70s - playing the music of my parents' generation. My mom had to drive me to every rehearsal and gig. To learn the style, I listened to my dad's record collection – mostly Benny Goodman and Duke Ellington records. My dad loved Johnny Hodges, and his sound on the Alto Saxophone seemed somehow inevitable. I wrote my first arrangement for "Brass Beat" – a version of Les Brown's "Leap Frog." I got the trombone parts in the wrong octave, and it was a horrible mess – when the band played it, the whole thing sounded like mud. Not a successful 1st attempt. One of my first musical friends was a trumpet player in that dance band, Brian Bettger

(he is on this recording). Soon thereafter, Brian got his license and a very cool car (a 1966 Thunderbird complete with factory 8-track stereo), and I started riding with him everywhere – even my first dates were in the backseat of Brian's Thunderbird. Riding in that fine car, he turned me on to the music of Blood, Sweat and Tears and Chicago - I decided to try writing down some of their music and starting a band to play them. I wrote charts like a madman – learning to arrange as I went. Every Sunday afternoon, I would carefully remove all of my mother's furniture from the living room so we could have a band rehearsal, and I would return everything to its place afterward (if I had damaged even one lamp, that would have been the end of my dream). Soon we had a book sufficient to play a four-hour dance job. Our first gig was in 1974 at a junior high dance, and soon we were playing weddings and bar mitzvahs on a regular basis. Our drummer was from a musical family - his father was a prominent saxophonist in Denver – the first working musician I ever met. On a particularly memorable Sunday afternoon, in the basement of their home, he introduced me to two big band recordings that altered my life: Quincy Jones' "Smackwater Jack," which became the basis for my first big band arrangements, and Pat Williams' "Threshold," which featured Tom Scott - I quite literally wore out two copies of that record learning to imitate his sound. Those recordings inspired me to learn to write arrangements, and to begin developing an identity as a musician. I heard Stanley Turrentine, George Benson, and the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Orchestra, all of whom came through Denver in the late 70's. In college, I came to know Miles Davis, Cannonball Adderley, Michael Brecker, John Scofield and Pat Metheny. The music on this recording reflects all of these influences.

**Moonscape** is layered on a simple but catchy bass riff accompanied by a reggae-inspired drum groove, reflecting the influence of Michael Brecker and "Steps Ahead." It is sort of a minor blues with a bridge – a good backdrop for soulful solos by Paul McKee and Jeff Ellwood, and when it finally becomes a shuffle, Dave Askren takes off his shoes, puts his feet up, and cruises to the end.

Miles Davis wrote **Nardis** for a 1958 Cannonball Adderley record called Portrait of Cannonball. I didn't discover Cannonball until I was in college, but when I heard "Kind of Blue" for the first time, I was changed forever. He was such a great force in my life that my son is named Julian. In this arrangement, I mixed the original swing groove with a funkier section that is sprinkled throughout.

**The Fotomat Song** (Someday My Prints Will Come) is an arrangement of the famous Disney song from the movie Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. I was coaching a student combo that was playing this tune, and I was encouraging them to come up with an original way to play it. We developed it from a waltz into a samba version that worked pretty well - I was inspired to expand the idea into a big band arrangement. One of the best things about students is that they have a way of inspiring creativity. Of course, nobody remembers Fotomat – we used to get our film developed there (film?) – but the obscurity of the reference is part of the fun.

I wrote **The Weather Is Here, Wish You Were Beautiful** when I moved to L.A. in 1989. I was struck by the fantastic weather, and the Hollywood culture that seemed to value style over substance. The edginess of the tune was a counterbalance to the "everything is beautiful" mantra of the L.A. scene. Luckily for me, I have come to know the real L.A., which is an incredibly soulful city – you just have to know where to look for it. Jeff Hellmer takes the first solo, followed by Paul McKee. After a ridiculously difficult interlude by the band, you hear from Charlie Richard on baritone. Charlie is the finest baritone saxophonist I have ever known – that he plays such an awkward instrument in such a fluid manner is remarkable. I read this quote once in a review, describing the difficulty of this task: "Soloing on Baritone Saxophone is like driving a Grand Prix race in a garbage truck." The last solo is by Jeff Ellwood, one of the very best tenor saxophonists in L.A.

**Armadillo Research** is another tune based on the minor blues. I wrote it when I was in the throes of studying for my comprehensive exams for my doctoral degree. I was in the library at the University of Texas, procrastinating, and I wrote this tune instead of my doing my research. I take the first

- 1 **Moonscape** 6:41  
*Jeff Benedict, Maroon Creek Music, BMI*  
*Paul McKee, Trombone*  
*Jeff Ellwood, Tenor Saxophone*  
*Dave Askren, Guitar*
- 2 **Nardis** 4:52  
*Miles Davis, Jazz Horn Music Corp, BMI.*  
*Arr. Jeff Benedict*  
*Paul McKee, Trombone;*  
*Jeff Hellmer, Piano;*  
*Jeff Benedict, Alto Saxophone*
- 3 **The Fotomat Song** 5:04  
*(Someday My Prints Will Come)*  
*Frank Churchill, Bourne Co, ASCAP.*  
*Arr. Jeff Benedict*  
*Paul McKee, Trombone*  
*Jeff Benedict, Soprano Saxophone*
- 4 **The Weather is Here, Wish You Were Beautiful** 7:01  
*Jeff Benedict, Maroon Creek Music, BMI*  
*Jeff Hellmer, Piano;*  
*Paul McKee, Trombone*  
*Charlie Richard, Baritone Saxophone*  
*Jeff Ellwood, Tenor Saxophone*
- 5 **Armadillo Research** 9:15  
*Jeff Benedict, Maroon Creek Music, BMI*  
*Jeff Benedict, Alto Saxophone*  
*Paul McKee, Trombone*
- 6 **Ant Dance** 6:20  
*Jeff Benedict, Maroon Creek Music, BMI*  
*Jeff Benedict, Alto Saxophone*  
*Dave Askren, Guitar*
- 7 **Cheek to Cheek** 9:31  
*Irving Berlin, Berlin Irving Music Corp, ASCAP.*  
*Arr. Jeff Benedict*  
*The Saxophone Section*  
*Jeff Hellmer, Piano*
- 8 **The Mighty Dollar** 6:31  
*David Arnavy, Studio N Music, BMI.*  
*Arr. Jeff Benedict*  
*Jeff Ellwood, Tenor Saxophone;*  
*Jeff Benedict, Alto Saxophone*
- 9 **Tom and Jerry** 8:30  
*Sandy Megas, Alexander C Megas, ASCAP*  
*Jeff Benedict, Alto Saxophone*  
*Brian Bettger, Trumpet*
- 10 **Hikky Burr** 4:18  
*Quincy Jones, Makalota Music, BMI.*  
*Arr. Jeff Benedict*  
*Jeff Ellwood, Tenor Saxophone;*  
*Dave Askren, Guitar*  
*Steve Hawk, Trumpet*

solo on this cut, followed by the ensemble, and then you hear again from Paul McKee. The last part of the tune features Dean Koba on drums.

**Ant Dance** is so named because it is a groove that might inspire dancing, but since in a meter of 9, I thought it would be well suited for dancing if one had legs in groups of three. Ants, having six legs, would be well equipped for the task. The inspiration for this tune was the music of Pat Metheny, the master of the long, slow climb. It starts low and builds, with an alto solo and then Dave Askren on guitar. The melody returns, and finally Jeff Hellmer plays some beautiful and spacious piano that builds to the end.

I first heard Phil Woods in 1975 – in the same basement where I first heard Quincy Jones. He was on a Michel Legrand record entitled “Images.” I was so impressed by Phil’s expansive sound that I instantly had a new hero. Two years later, I heard his “Live at the Showboat” record, and I was never the same. In this arrangement, I transcribed Phil’s solo from **Cheek to Cheek** from that record and harmonized it for 5 saxophones. I didn’t know what I was getting into - it is an extraordinarily challenging solo to replicate. It requires not only musical dexterity, but a good deal of physical stamina. It is one thing to play the notes, of which there are more than a few, but in order to sound at all like Phil you have to get a lot of sound out of the instrument, which requires a lot of air. It’s hard work to play it on Alto, but Charlie Richard plays the whole thing on the Baritone, which takes about twice as much air. If Phil were still with us, I like to think he would be pleased by our tribute to him. We love you, Phil!

**The Mighty Dollar** is a composition by David Arnavy, who I met when he was a student at Cal State L.A. I was inspired by it’s joyful swagger, and I wanted to arrange it in the style of a New Orleans brass band. My concept included a Tuba as the bass instrument, but Jerry Amoury is such an amazing bass trombonist that I re-imagined the brass band with bass trombone instead. Jerry is one of the finest bass trombonists anywhere – we were both students at the University of Texas. After we graduated, we went our separate ways – I got my first job as a college professor in Rock Island, Illinois, and Jerry went to Washington DC where he played in the U.S. Army Band “Pershing’s Own” for 30 years. I love Jerry’s playing and his generous spirit: I can’t imagine doing a big band recording without him. **Tom and Jerry** is a composition by Sandy Megas, a talented writer and kindred spirit (i.e. cynic) whom I have known for almost 30 years. Sandy is a talented writer, and this tune fit squarely into the 1970’s theme of this recording. The title refers to Tom Scott and Jerry Hey, who were ubiquitous in the L.A. studios in the 1970’s. For this tune, I am Tom, and Brian Bettger is Jerry.

**Hikky Burr** is from the aforementioned Quincy Jones record “Smackwater Jack.” It features Steve Hawk with some wild trumpet commentary as well as terrific solos by Jeff Ellwood and Dave Askren, and some great work by Jonathan Pintoff and the trombone section. Given the outsize influence Quincy Jones’ music has had on my musical career, I wanted to include this as a tribute to him. Steve Hawk was a fellow student at the University of Texas. I knew Steve was going to be a lifetime friend the minute I met him – we just “clicked.” Steve is one of the finest lead trumpet players in the country, and a sterling human being – I am fortunate to count him among my friends.

The process of making music is intensely personal. Over the course of a career in music, I have come across many kindred spirits – musicians who also became friends. That bond of friendship creates a very special space and a freedom to take chances and be creative. All of the musicians on this recording are those kindred spirits, and I am grateful to them for sharing their talent and their friendship. I especially want to thank Jim Linahon for all of his support during the often painful process of recording and mixing. Jim’s sterling musicianship and consummate technical proficiency are impressive – but what really makes Jim special is his humanity. I feel very fortunate to have Jim as a friend and colleague.

I sincerely hope that listening to this recording affords you even a fraction of the joy that I have had in the making of it. Thank you for being a part of my musical journey.

- Jeff Benedict

*The Jeff Benedict Big Big Band*

*Trumpets – Steve Hawk (lead), Kevin Mayse, Brian Bettger, Tom Tallman*

*Trombones – Paul McKee (lead), Jacques Voyemant, Alex Henderson*

*Bass Trombone - Jerry Amoury*

*Saxophones – Jeff Benedict (sopranolalto), Adrian Williams (alto),*

*Ken Foerch (tenor), Jeff Ellwood (tenor), Charlie Richard (baritone)*

*Guitar - Dave Askren; Piano - Jeff Hellmer; Bass - Jonathan Pintoff;*

*Drums and Percussion - Dean Koba; Conductor - David Caffey*

*Producer – Jeff Benedict*

*Recording Engineer – Jim Linahon*

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*Cover Art - Jeff Benedict*

