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HARRY CONNICK, JR. AND BRANFORD MARSALIS
CREATE DUO MAGIC ON NEW MARSALIS MUSIC DVD

**On *Harry and Branford: A Duo Occasion*, Award-Winning Director Captures
Ottawa Jazz Festival Performance**

Pianist Harry Connick, Jr. and saxophonist Branford Marsalis are old friends who regularly surprise the music world with their eclectic tastes and ability to deliver in a variety of idioms. When the pair got together to record *Occasion*, the latest in Marsalis Music's *Connick on Piano* series, the setting may have been unexpected, but the results were typically challenging and satisfying. After the positive response that *Occasion* received upon its spring 2005 release, further encounters by the pair were inevitable. One particularly memorable set, from the duo's world premiere appearance at the Ottawa Jazz Festival, has been captured by award-winning director Pierre Lamoureux on *Harry and Branford: A Duo Occasion*, a new DVD from Marsalis Music.

The pair, who first met when Connick began taking piano lessons at age nine from Marsalis' father Ellis, have long formed a mutual admiration society. "Harry is a true musician," says the saxophonist. "He has a massive amount of information that he's dealing with, so he is very comfortable wherever a song goes. Great music is like leaping off a cliff, but some musicians will only go to the precipice. Harry just jumps, which is why playing with him is very liberating."

For his part, Connick insists that "Branford brings the level up when we play together. His experiences are so vast, and so different from mine, that he always inspires me. *Occasion* was raw, naked music, and Branford forces you to get to that naked place because he has no inhibitions. As a result, we could play without preparing beginnings, middles or endings. We didn't have a blueprint."

The fearless and intimate performances that resulted over three days of recording in March were a revelation to fans of both musicians, and inspired Connick and Marsalis to convene again for select concert performances that began at this year's Ottawa Jazz Festival. As luck would have it, the second of two sets the pair played at that June 24 debut was special. "You always hope to capture a magical moment when you perform," Connick explains, "but you can't plan it. On our second Ottawa set, though, there were moments on each tune." That stunning performance, which includes ten compositions from the CD plus Connick's "Light the Way" and the standard "Chattanooga Choo Choo," was captured on high definition video by Pierre Lamoureux, the celebrated director who has previously been

heralded for his work with Connick on *Only You in Concert*, which won an Emmy, and with Marsalis for the Marsalis Music DVD *Coltrane's A Love Supreme in Amsterdam*, which took honors for both audio quality and music at the recent DVD Excellence Awards. What results is a concert document that is both musically and visually exceptional.

Through their recent efforts as Gulf Coast and New Orleans honorary chairmen, respectively, of Habitat for Humanity's Hurricane Katrina relief efforts, Harry Connick, Jr. and Branford Marsalis have proven themselves to be among the music world's leaders off the bandstand as well as on. *Harry and Branford: A Duo Occasion* finds them in the same elevated place as performers.

Harry and Branford: A Duo Occasion will be released by Marsalis Music on November 15.

What the critics are saying about *Occasion*:

"Simultaneously cerebral and playful, and with hands chock full of inventiveness, Connick uses this release to explore space and harmony with a wonderfully sympathetic partner..."

JazzTimes

"...music that's low on glitz and high on gravity...the musicianship is never short of impeccable." **Jazziz**

"This is jazz without the safety net...informal and spontaneous...Connick demonstrates an encyclopedic knowledge of jazz piano styles...Marsalis, already known for his robust tenor sax playing, shows a gentler side with his soprano...their infectious enthusiasm is clearly conveyed to the listener." **Associated Press**

"These New Orleans homeboys display their dizzying interplay and invention with the kind of ease that can only come from years of friendship." **Amazon.com**

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