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PRESS RELEASE

Branford Marsalis Quartet emphasizes musical cohesion on adventurous new album

CAMBRIDGE, MA: On August 7, 2012, legendary saxophonist Branford Marsalis and his tight-knit working band will deliver *Four MFs Playin' Tunes* on compact disc and digital formats. This is the first recording of the Branford Marsalis Quartet with an electrifying young drummer that joined the band three years ago and the results are a nimble and sparkling album, featuring ambitious original compositions by members of the band, a Thelonious Monk classic, and one standard dating to 1930. The record blends the beautiful and subtle ballad sounds of 2004 release *Eternal* with the ecstatic contrasts of critically-acclaimed *Braggtown*. In other words, this just might be the Branford Marsalis Quartet's most sublime musical achievement yet.

On *Four MFs Playin' Tunes*, the song takes center stage with the band members bringing their considerable musical expertise to bear as they focus on each tune as an important musical entity unto itself and not merely a vehicle for showcasing individual talent. Branford Marsalis elaborates: "We need to quit thinking of songs as vehicles and think of them as songs, and treat each with equality... What we are trying to do is to figure out the emotional purpose of each song we play and then play according to that purpose, as opposed to musicians who spend their time developing what they call a concept."

Those sentiments are echoed unanimously by the group from the youngest and most recent member, drummer Justin Faulkner, who joined the band in 2009 and has been impressing audiences and critics alike during the band's electric live performances, to core fixtures pianist Joey Calderazzo and bassist Eric Revis. Asked to describe the challenge of his first recording session with the Quartet, Faulkner responds with a question, "What can we do to make each tune an actual song rather than just a bunch of notes on a page?"

Asked about the band concept, Calderazzo clarifies, "I wouldn't call it a concept. It's a way we communicate... like a conversation, a dialog." Revis describes the recording sessions as "natural, like home" and characterized the band as "family" stressing that the "implicit trust" among the band members is key to the success of their collaboration. Faulkner adds, "Like Eric said, we're a family, and in a family discussion, everyone has something to give to the conversation."

On his perspective as a bandleader, Marsalis explains, "When you hire people who you feel are talented, 95% of the time, they're gonna play the right thing. They know, and they've listened to enough music to know what's gonna make the song work, and you just wait a second, and they'll hook it up, they always do. They always hook it up." Refuting the suggestion that he chose to include compositions contributed by other band members to be viewed as a democratic bandleader, he stated simply, "they're the best tunes. It's always about good tunes."

In describing *Four MFs Playin' Tunes*, Marsalis recalls a television interview program on which famed bandleader and drummer Art Blakey was asked to describe jazz in one word. Blakey's answer? "Intensity, intensity, intensity." The Branford Marsalis Quartet has built its reputation by bringing intensity to each and every live and recorded performance, including the ballads. Says Marsalis, "Even if people don't know what we're doing, they'll feel what we're doing."

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