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## HARRY CONNICK, JR. · OTHER HOURS, CONNICK ON PIANO, VOL. 1 BIOGRAPHY

On the heels of his recent successes in a big band format (*Come by Me, Songs I Heard*) and as a solo pianist on the album *30*, Harry Connick, Jr. features his piano in the context of a small jazz group on *Other Hours*, his first album in a quartet setting. Connick's longstanding association with the Marsalis family, which began when he studied as a teenager with patriarch Ellis Marsalis, now finds the multitalented artist recording for Branford Marsalis' new Marsalis Music label in what will be an ongoing Connick on Piano series. In a rare move for a major record label, Columbia Records generously allowed Connick to follow his muse and record this series for his friend.

Each of the twelve Connick compositions on *Other Hours* was originally conceived for the musical *Thou Shalt Not* and reflects the steamy atmosphere of post-World War II New Orleans that was the setting for the play's variation on Emile Zola's classic 1868 novel "Therese Raquin". The shifting, often explosive passions of the characters are reflected in the score, which earned Connick a Tony nomination for his first writing venture for Broadway. Some of the songs were not incorporated into the final production and make their debut on the album.

Connick and three mainstays of his big band – tenor saxophonist Charles "Ned" Goold, bassist Neal Caine and drummer Arthur Latin II – turned these melodies into the stuff jazz is made of during a handful of road dates during the summer of 2002 then went into the recording studio. What resulted is a program of music that, having stood on its own in the context of the theatrical production, now proves equally effective as inspiration for improvisation, and that confirms Paul de Barros' summation in a 1999 *Down Beat* cover story of Connick as "ambitious... but also reflective, serious, incredibly hard-working and determined to make a mark on the music he loves over the long haul, not only as a singer but also as a pianist, arranger and composer."

A special feature of *Other Hours* is the unique artwork which graces its cover. Created by Connick's mother, Anita, the treasured drawing holds great significance for the artist, particularly on an album that marks his return to the piano in an instrumental jazz setting. "My mother loved when I played piano for her," Connick explains, "so I thought it would be fitting to have a piece of her vision next to mine."

Among the numerous activities that have kept Connick in perpetual motion during the past two years, in addition to his Grammy-winning disc *Songs I Heard*, his Tony-nominated score for *Thou Shalt Not* and his numerous live performances with his big band and quartet, have been acting roles in several theatrical and television films and a recurring role on the NBC-TV hit series *Will & Grace* as Grace's husband, Dr. Leo Markus. Connick's immediate future also includes a new Christmas album for Columbia Records, a return to *Will & Grace*, an NBC Holiday TV special – and more instrumental jazz on Marsalis Music.

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