

Music

Shake It Up with Boney James and Rick Braun

CONTRIBUTED STORY
FOR THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

An exciting collaboration from two of the world's top instrumentalists, Shake It Up pairs saxophone sensation Boney James with trumpet wonder Rick Braun for an outing that more than lives up to its title.

Infused with dynamic energy, Shake It Up features ten tracks that span an array of moods, emotions and musical genres. Shake It Up mixes the perfect blend of pop, soul, latin, funk and jazz.

After a chance meeting as session players about eight years ago, Boney and Rick cemented their musical connection with a few guest appearances on each other's solo records, racking up three No. 1 hits in the process: "Boneyizm" (from Body Language), "Grooves" (from Beat Street) and "Notorious" (from Body And Soul). Boney states, "We always had so much fun playing together that we began to consider the idea of a whole record." Braun concurs, "We have some sort of chemistry like Jerry Rice and Joe Montana... whatever it is, it works."

The appeal of Shake It Up undoubtedly stems from the two players' musical connection. Braun reflects, "The spontaneity and interaction was there on every song because Boney and I cut our horns together. Nothing can compare with that element of excitement when you don't know what's going to happen." Boney elaborates, "When we're facing each other in a room and we're playing - I don't know if it's healthy competition or inspiration - we really do tend to reach new heights. I guess we feed off of each other... we respond to each other's thoughts and finish musical sentences and it takes the whole thing somewhere exciting. Braun agrees, "It's amazing, there are moments on the record where we actually sound like there's one person playing. We really click like that."

That unique energy is apparent on the opener, "R.S.V.P." "It's a party song," Boney says, adding, "R.S.V.P." says, "Will you come to our party?" It's the invitation to come into this whole fun thing we're doing."

"Love's Like That," featuring Fourplay, was another highpoint for both artists. "Bob James, Nathan East, Larry Carlton and Harvey Mason, these guys are legends," Boney asserts, "and to be able to hang out with them, playing live with Fourplay, was one of the great moments."

There is also a strikingly fresh take on pianist Horace Silver's "Song For My Father." "This is one of those great songs that features the trumpet and sax out front," comments Boney, "and so it was natural for us. I think this is one of the most interesting arrangements that we came up with. We took the song and really twisted it."

"Shake It Up is a bit of a play on words," continues Boney, "because aside from the energy of the music, it was sort of a left turn for us to do a collaboration CD." And it is amazing that in the midst of their packed schedules and individually flourishing careers, they found time to produce and record Shake It Up (Boney James shares production credit with Paul Brown, while Braun co-produced three tracks). The motivation to make it happen is clear. "It's an extremely fun record," says Braun. "I think when people listen they're going to feel the electricity that was in the room when we were playing."

The two are planning a worldwide summer tour in support of Shake It Up so fans can experience these musicians' astounding energy in live performance. Both artists also have solo projects in the works. Rick Braun's solo debut on Warner Bros. is projected for late 2000 and Boney anticipates a new solo album out the beginning of 2001.

The Ray Rom Octet

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The Ray Rom Octet, formed in 1998 to "play some of the West Coast jazz that was being played in Los Angeles in the 1950s and 1960s," is dedicated to keeping jazz alive, both old and new. Rom learned saxophone in elementary school and graduated from the University of Montana in 1953 with a music degree, centering on theory and composition. He plays tenor saxophone with the Art Abrams

Swing Machine and his "My Own Little Big Band" in addition to the Octet, using many of his own arrangements and compositions. The other seven members of this group are Stan Bock (trombone), Bob Bork (baritone saxophone), Dan Donahue (piano), Ralph Patt (guitar), Pete Lampe (bass), Dave Clausnitzer (trumpet), and Lou Chavez (drums).

The concert will be held in the Willamette Valley Vineyards' Great Room For more information, call 503/588-9463 or 503/399-5184.



Rick Braun (on trumpet) and Boney James (right). Saxophone sensation, Boney James will be playing at this year's JazzFest on July 8 at the Portland Meadows.

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