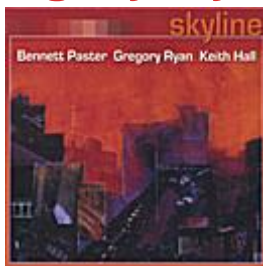


# Mp3 Bennett Paster, Gregory Ryan & Keith Hall - Skyline



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"The Good Feeling" is in effect on this jazz piano trio CD- melodic songs with comfy grooves played in a thoughtful, interesting manner. 11 MP3 Songs JAZZ: Traditional Jazz Combo, JAZZ: Smooth Jazz

Details: The jazz piano trio is alive and well! "Skyline," the new CD from Bennett Paster, Gregory Ryan and Keith Hall, emphatically proves it. Recorded in Brooklyn, NY, this recording showcases three young musicians who have a broad vision of modern jazz. These guys really swing, but they also cover significantly more ground. Insightful, melodic original compositions by all three musicians incorporate R&B, funk and Latin grooves with comfortable authority. Plus, they've included their interpretations of two favorite standards: Coltrane's "Naima" and Bernstein's "Some Other Time." This CD gives jazz a good name: the sonic fidelity is amazing, the playing is masterful and the groove always feels good. I recently got a chance to interview pianist Bennett Paster about "Skyline." His words and thoughts about the music provided clear insight into what the CD is about: the "Good Feeling" is in effect. -L.C. Taylor, Jazz Critic \*

\* \* \* \* LCT: Why did you make this recording? BP: Gregory Ryan, Keith Hall and I decided to record this CD, "Skyline," because, during the past several years, the three of us have felt a strong musical connection, but our busy careers as sidemen prevented us from documenting any of the music by our own trio. The title reflects our experiences living and performing in New York City, where we are surrounded by diverse music and culture. "Skyline" is window looking onto the landscape of our collective musical vision. I went through a period of my musical development where I was concerned that everything I played or composed had to be different from music that had been made before. I was fascinated by contemporary classical and avant-garde jazz and my music reflected these styles- the harmony was atonal and rhythmically the music was very free, often not in a steady pulse. When I stepped back and listened to what I had created, often I didn't find the results compelling or pleasing.

After some reflection, I finally admitted to myself that, in spite of my intellectual desire to create "new," unique music, most of the music that really moved me had a strong groove. Simultaneously, I started paying more attention to the lyrics of songs (especially in popular music) and noting how they related to the melody. Perceiving this connection really made me appreciate the strength of a lyrical melody. Once I learned to stop caring whether my music was unique and "hip" I felt better able to find my voice through my compositions and improvisation. The resulting music was more genuine and interesting to me and I hope also to the listener.

LCT: What do you enjoy most about playing with this trio? Why did you release the CD in all three of your names instead of just one? BP: I love playing with Greg and Keith because, first and foremost, the groove always feels amazing. We like to say that we are on a quest for the "Good Feeling" and I believe on this recording that we have harvested a bumper crop of it to share. Greg and I have been playing together for more than 10 years- he is a musical soul mate to me. After countless gigs and rehearsals, he can always read my mind and interpret my ubiquitous head-nod signals and know what to play next. Keith is a drummer who makes me want to swing. I find his playing compelling; we often resolve ideas the same way. This group likes to transcend the traditional boundaries of the jazz trio- at gigs we play songs by Stevie Wonder and the Beatles as often as Gershwin or Ellington. I know I can count on Greg and Keith to lay down a solid groove, no matter what the style. When we play together, I have the confidence to be myself; that's when I sound my best. In addition being a supportive rhythm section, Greg and Keith are both great composers. We have been playing each other's tunes for years and it seemed natural to record our own music as well as a few selections from the standard repertoire. We decided to make this recording a collaborative release because we each contributed significantly to it. Among the most difficult decisions we made in this project was choosing the best songs from almost 2 hours of material. Each of the diverse songs we selected for this CD is strong; when heard together they make a cohesive statement.

LCT: Speaking of original music, why did you choose to include these particular ones of yours on this CD? BP: Four of my compositions are featured on "Skyline." "Jabali" is the oldest of the lot- I composed it fifteen years ago for legendary jazz drummer Jabali Billy Hart, with whom I played several gigs at the time. In addition to being one of my favorite drummers, Jabali has been a teacher and a mentor to Keith, so this tune was a compelling choice for both of us for the session. I wrote "Passing Time" in the St. Louis airport while waiting for a very late flight. The irregular form follows the intuitive melody that winds its way through unusual phrase lengths. Both "If I Said Goodbye" and

"Song for my Sheep" explore the power of simple melodies. The former is a lyrical ballad; when I play it, I try to imagine how a singer might convey the emotion of the unadorned melody. "Song for My Sheep" was inspired by the music of Antonio Carlos Jobim. Long melodic tones juxtapose the challenging, specific harmony of the verse. The syncopated metric subdivisions of the intro/interlude section provide an interesting framework for Keith's rhythmic improvisation. Although I am proud of all our original compositions on the CD, my favorite track is "Some Other Time" by Bernstein, Comden and Green. The groove that forms the basis of our arrangement is a blend of an R&B shuffle and reggae with a nod to Ahmad Jamal's "Poinciana." The melody floats above it as if suspended in mid-air. The concise melodic statement combined with short solos makes this track more like a pop-song than a jazz odyssey. This balance of groove, melodicism and individual interpretation personifies what our trio is about. LCT: Where was it recorded? How did that affect your creative process? BP: We recorded "Skyline" at my home studio in Brooklyn, New York. This setting provided a relaxed environment where the three of us felt free to create without the pressure time constraints at a midtown Manhattan studio. This mellow, comfortable atmosphere really comes through on the recording. Plus, I was fortunate to get to play my own 1933 Steinway B piano, with which I'm intimately familiar. LCT: What makes this recording unique? BP: With "Skyline" we have sought to create an honest musical statement. One that is neither self-indulgent nor contrived- just melodic songs with comfortable grooves played in a thoughtful, interesting manner. Our love for this music and our unique personalities really shine on this CD. I am confident that once you share our "Good Feeling" you won't want to be without it. Enjoy!

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