

## Mp3 Ben Graves Trio - Crazy Italians



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Jazz-inflected acoustic pop/rock with "...easy grooves and smooth roots-rock sensibility...incisive observations on the everyday in a honeyed voice (Howard Myint, San Francisco Bay Guardian)"; "...his melodies are consistently fresh and inventive... (Craz 7 MP3 Songs ROCK: Acoustic, POP: Folkly Pop Details: Dubbed a "jazz rocker" (SFWeekly), singer/songwriter Ben Graves represents an eclectic history of musical experience; in high school in rural Tennessee he sang in a band with members of the platinum-selling hard rock outfit Fuel, but was also a fledgling jazz saxophonist. At 18 he headed north, to Wesleyan University and Berklee College of Music, where he studied with the likes of avant-garde maverick Anthony Braxton, Ghanaian master-drummer Abraham Adzinyah and pop icon Billy Joel. After a graduate teaching assistantship in Washington state that earned him an M.F.A. in jazz studies on guitar, Graves headed south to San Francisco, where he landed a job in a juice bar. It was there in the thriving multicultural Bay Area music scene that he honed his unique instrumental approach. Ben custom tunes his Jerry Jones 6-string bass/baritone guitar, allowing him to play the multiple roles of singer, bass player, and guitarist. Says online music critic Eric Rasmussen, "It not only sounds original, but it is impressive to watch him perform something that would require three separate musicians in many bands." Graves is a versatile performer who has shared stages with artists as random as Modern Jazz Quartet bassist Percy Heath and Kid Rock, and as a multi-instrumentalist his list of doubles prompts confusion; in his hometown of Nashville, Graves does studio work on chromatic harmonica, mandolin, and dobro, and has worked for years as a professional saxophonist. His most recent studio CD, Memphis, has been played on some 300 radio stations worldwide, and in the summer of 2002, charted top 30 at some 50 stations, such as WTSR Ewing, NJ (#3), WNYK Nyack, NY (#10), and WUIC Chicago (#14). Memphis features the contributions of pros such as drummer Scott Amendola, keyboardist Rob Burger (Tin Hat Trio, Norah Jones), and bassist

Lee Alexander (Norah Jones). Rosalie Howarth of San Francisco's KFOG called it "very, very good"; "excellent CD," said KRZA in Colorado; and "a great, great disc," said music director Sean Wilson of WTSR. More recently he recorded Live, chronicling the Ben Graves duo's 4-year Thursday night steady at SF's vibey cocktail lounge, Tonic. Live showcases Graves' writing, baritone guitar work, and live loops (amidst the clinking beer glasses and bar banter), in the liberating context of a 'rock duet' featuring Jim Kassis or Darian Gray on drums. The first CD from the Ben Graves trio, Crazy Italians, included the cut "Princess Grace," which was featured on the Performing Songwriter magazine 1999 CD sampler showcasing their picks for the top 12 unsigned independent releases. Critic Russell Hall of Performing Songwriter called Crazy Italians "consistently fresh and inventive," and "intelligent pop music--tightly crafted songs that lend themselves well to improvisation in a live setting." And improvise he does. Musing Americana as a songwriter, Ben embraces the jazz ethic of keeping the performance loose enough so that almost anything can happen, and nothing sounds stale. Solo, or in the company of other fine musicians, Ben Graves weaves his unique guitar and soulful voice into a truly original tapestry that is at once innovative, informed, and inspired.

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