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Jazz Trio Plays Spanos Theatre Oct. 4

SAN LUIS OBISPO – In a spectacular showcase featuring jazz greats Bill Frisell (guitar/banjo), Jack DeJohnette (drums, percussion, piano) and Jerome Harris (electric bass/vocals), Cal Poly Arts launches its new 2006-07 performing arts season.

The trio of master musicians will perform on Wednesday, October 4, 2006 at 8 p.m. in the Spanos Theatre. The evening will include highlights from the acclaimed release, “The Elephant Sleeps But Still Remembers.”

Recorded at Seattle’s Earshot Festival in October 2001, “The Elephant Sleeps But Still Remembers” brilliantly captures the collaboration of two unparalleled musical visionaries: Jack DeJohnette -- “our era’s most expansive percussive talent” (Jazz Times) -- and Bill Frisell, “the most important jazz guitarist of the last quarter of the 20th century” (Acoustic Guitar).

DeJohnette and Frisell first worked together in 1999. “We immediately had a rapport and we talked about doing more,” DeJohnette recalls.

Frisell needed no convincing: “I have been such a fan of Jack’s since the late ’60s when I first heard him,” the guitarist says. “He’s been such an influence and inspiration throughout my musical life.”

The two got together the afternoon before the 2001 Earshot concert and at the soundcheck, ran through a couple of numbers, but the encounter was largely improvised.

“We had a few themes prepared,” Frisell says, “but it was pretty much just start playing, and go for it.”

According to DeJohnette, “Bill and I co-composed in real time, on the spot” for “The Elephant Sleeps…”

The album features 11 tracks covering a breadth of sonic territories. Adding to the guitar and drum artistry are live sound manipulations, such as Frisell’s delay/sampler/looper and DeJohnette’s electronic hand percussion, and some tasteful post-production work by mix master Ben Surman, who also joins the “Elephant Sleeps” tour as sound engineer.

For all its sonic ambition, “The Elephant Sleeps…” never lacks for organic and deeply human interplay; the two players explore deep and varied grooves on the opening title track as well as “Entranced Androids,” “Otherworldly Dervishes” and “Ode to South Africa.”

Jack DeJohnette made jazz history with Miles Davis on the epochal “Bitches Brew” and The New York Times called him “one of the most important musicians in the last 40 years of jazz.”

He is a longtime member of Keith Jarrett’s “standards” trio with bassist Gary Peacock. Before founding his own Golden Beams label, he led
countless sessions for ECM Records.

"The Elephant Sleeps..." is the latest of a number of inspired duo sessions in DeJohnette’s discography, including “Ruta and Daitya” (with Jarrett, 1971), “Pictures” (with John Abercrombie, 1976), "Invisible Nature" (with John Surman, 2002) and 2005’s “Music from the Hearts of the Masters” (with Foday Musa Suso).

Bill Frisell emerged as an ECM artist in the early 1980s and has since been acknowledged as one of the most innovative musicians in any genre, on any instrument.

“He dips into and skips across blues, roots, country, folk, rock, bluegrass and electronic squeaks and squonks,” writes Richard Seven of the Seattle Times.

Frisell’s long association with the Nonesuch label has resulted in such stellar recordings as “Nashville,” “Ghost Town,” “Blues Dream,” “The Intercontinentals,” “Unspeakable.” and the double-live album, “East/West.”

Frisell is also a member of Paul Motian’s historic trio with saxophonist Joe Lovano. His other collaborators over the years include Paul Bley, Tim Berne, John Zorn, Julius Hemphill and Elvis Costello.

According to The Atlantic Monthly, “Frisell’s music seems...evocative not just of rivers and prairies and small-town parades but of lost highways, dead-end streets, and heartbreak hotels.”

Multi-instrumentalist and singer Jerome Harris is internationally known for his versatile and penetrating style on guitar and bass guitar. Harris is a frequent collaborator with DeJohnette and has also worked with Sonny Rollins, Don Byron, and Madeleine Peyroux, among others.

A pre-concert lecture will be held by Cal Poly Music Dept. professor Paul Rinzler in the Davidson Music Center, Rm. 218, at 7 p.m.

Tickets for the performance range from $25 to $38, with student discounts available, and may be purchased at the Performing Arts Ticket Office, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays and 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturdays.

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