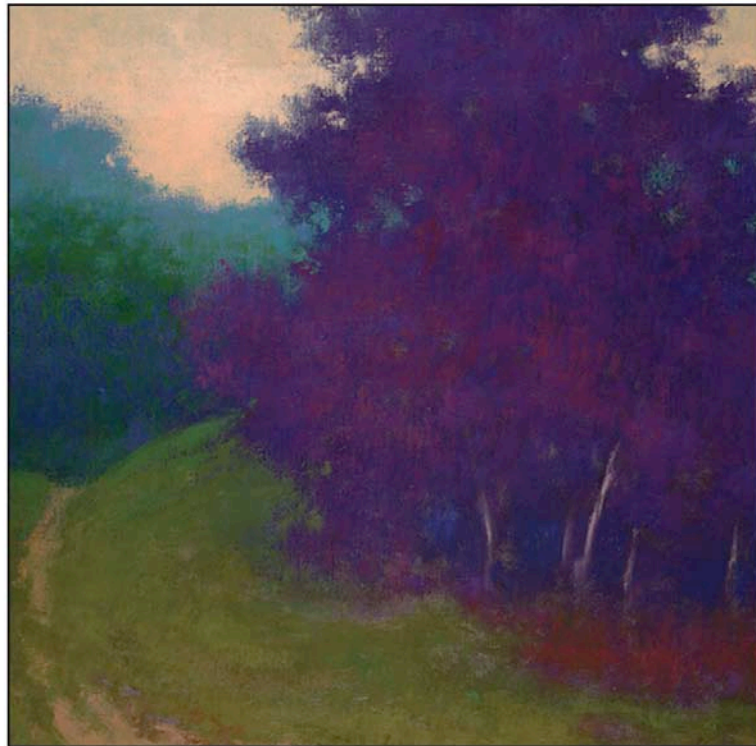
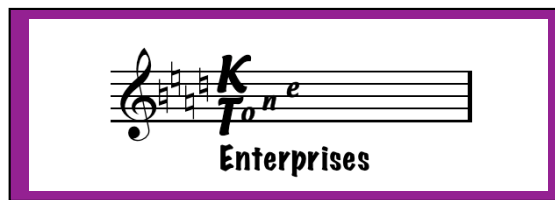


KEVIN TONEY 3
NEW AMERICAN SUITE



Press Kit



Press Release – Fall 2011

Kevin Toney 3 – New American Suite

Award-winning and two-time Grammy-nominated recording artist Kevin Toney is in the midst of a profound spiritually based compositional renaissance that began with his solo piano project A Grateful Heart (a.k.a. Heart of Gratitude). The next phase of his proposed trilogy is the 9-song **New American Suite** which introduces his amazing new trio, The **Kevin Toney 3** with Kevin Toney on piano, Mike Bradford on bass and Chris Coleman on drums. Though renowned as a founding member of The Blackbyrds in the '70s through his string of acclaimed smooth jazz projects in the '90s/'00s, the now masterful Toney triumphantly returns – at the absolute peak of his performance abilities – to his roots in the traditional jazz and classical music on which he began his journey at the age of 5 in Detroit. New American Suite – consisting of eight new original pieces plus a dynamic arrangement of Scott Joplin's ragtime masterpiece "**The Entertainer**" – finds Toney and his remarkably tight new unit creating richly multi-faceted landscapes of improvised music in a contemporary expression, all the while maintaining ties to Americana roots that were, naturally, deeply influenced by the melting pot of cultures that have come to call it home. Song titles such as "**Spacious Skies**," "**In God We Trust**" and "**Cyberia**" metaphorically represent ideas and concepts of this 'New America' in which we now live. Simultaneously, the playing of the musicians – as an ensemble and in brilliant solo turns – showcases psychic interplay and the utmost sensitivity.

Says Executive Creative Producer Don Mizell of this spellbinding debut by The Kevin Toney 3, "They cook, they burn, they smoke. They're cool, they go deep within, and then a bit outside the box. They're impressionistic and then again so-so vivid. They rock, they roll, they jazz it Up and cool it Down. They listen, they say, they swing and sway. They pray, they laugh and groove. They flux and flow — always, always together. What was Old is New again."

Track Listing

1. New American Suite 6:36
2. Love Is All We Need 5:28
3. A Soulful Union 5:20
4. Cyberia 5:30
5. Spacious Skies 5:39
6. E Puribus Unum 6:07
7. The Entertainer 7:01
8. Family Times-Getting Happy 3:21
9. In God We Trust 4:53

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Tour: Select US Dates (Mar, April, May 2012)

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A photograph of Kevin Toney, a Black man with short dark hair, wearing a dark tuxedo jacket, a white dress shirt, and a dark bow tie. He is smiling broadly and looking towards the camera. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be a stage or performance space with warm lighting.

Critical Acclaim for Pianist / Composer Kevin Toney

“Throughout his career as a pianist and composer, Kevin Toney has continually demonstrated why he is one of contemporary jazz’s brightest and most inspiring talents.”

- Kenny Burrell, Jazz Guitar Legend

“I really dug New American Suite! Very original and refreshing mixture to hear.”

- Nicholas Payton, Grammy Award Winning Trumpeter

I really love the “New American Suite”, I think it's Kevin’s most powerful work yet...so much passion and diversity, and thematically rich as well!”

- Jonathan Widran, Music Journalist

“Toney’s intricate compositions and sophisticated piano playing are evidence of his rich and solid jazz, blues and gospel roots”

- Jazz Times

“Kevin’s piano skills and ear for melody set him apart from the pack and make him enjoyable and engaging.”

- Billboard Magazine

“Kevin Toney has proven himself to be among the most masterful and versatile keyboardist of his generation, playing with a technical proficiency that is at the absolute peak of the contemporary jazz game.”

- Scott Galloway, Urban Network

“ To my amazement, Toney’s magic tap dances gracefully from corner to corner of the almighty ivories”

- Abyss Jazz Magazine

Kevin Toney 3 – New American Suite Biography

In recent years America has seen a paradigm shift toward the manifestation of real, forward thinking change – especially in the minds of people of faith. Keyboard master and composer **Kevin Toney** was already in the midst of a personal metamorphosis when these positive changes began to take shape. The fruits of Kevin’s and his country’s evolution are both in beautiful, vibrant evidence on his latest recording, *New American Suite*. This dynamic music also marks the debut of his new band **The Kevin Toney 3**: **Kevin Toney** on piano, **Michael Bradford** on bass and **Chris Coleman** on drums.

How sweet the sound...pushing and advancing musical boundaries around.

“When the men’s group at our church had a barbecue at Michael’s house,” Kevin recalls of their origin, “I peeked inside his studio and saw platinum plaques proving he’d worked with everybody from Anita Baker to Deep Purple. We did a few church gigs and secular gigs together, and genuinely clicked. Then when I needed a new drummer, bass great ‘Ready’ Freddie Washington referred Chris who was working with Prince, Stanley Clark and others. The chemistry was clear between all three of us the very first night. I couldn’t wait for us to work on new music – embracing tradition but with fresh new-found energy. This is a group of brothers that loves God - we play and pray together. To be around musicians that share the same values is extremely important to me. Out of that spiritual evolution came musical reinvention, resulting in ‘KT3’ – a group where each member brings something of equal value to the table.”

It wasn’t until after the group’s songs were composed (primarily by co-producers Toney and Bradford) and recorded that the concept of *New American Suite* took shape. Simply put, it was the music that told Toney what it was all about. “The first song was a suite in four sections each representing specific aspects of America’s traditions of music,” Kevin explains. “It begins with classical piano flourishes, moves into a swinging jazz section that mirrors the way we began moving away from our European counterparts, then an Afro-Cuban section in 12/8 which builds to a powerful climax, followed by a tranquil return to the theme in closing. The music had a patriotic feel – uplifting, propelling and encouraging. From my vantage point, this represented America. I did some studying and learned that classical composer **Antonin Dvorak** titled one of his 19th century works ‘American Suite.’ we decided to call our piece ‘New American Suite,’ claiming that groundwork of music and culture through the looking glass of right now.”

Music industry veteran **Don Mizell** - Kevin’s close friend, colorful confidante and natural born conceptualist - was instrumental in shaping the individual song titles as well as the over-arching theme for the project. This earned him the illustrious credit of Executive Creative Producer. And as the Grammy-winning co-producer of the great Ray Charles’ final recording, *Genius Loves Company*, Mizell clearly understands a thing or two about America! Kevin explains, “In our effort to paint a consistent picture we came up with all of the song titles in one night.”

Highlights of *New American Suite* include the brilliant and briskly driving “E Pluribus Unum.” Taking its title from the Latin term meaning “out of many, one” that has appeared on American currency, the piece finds the trio swingin’ hard yet in unity just as America’s founding fathers intended in maintaining a strong union. The feel-good number “A Soulful Union” continues this theme in a stew of gospel, rock and soulful jazz that reflects the reawakening of collective spirits to the truth that all men and women are created equal. “Spacious Skies” is a tranquil meditation of appreciation on the freedoms that Americans too often take for granted, featuring the lyrical bass playing of Bradford. Coleman sets up a tasty reggae swing hybrid on “Love is All We Need” over which Toney unconsciously recalls the breezy melodicism of the great Vince Guaraldi.

The cleverly titled “Cyberia” is another suite-like composition, this one reflecting the lightning-fast world of the internet age via the twists and turns of Toney’s and Bradford’s composition and the ensemble’s psychically intertwined playing. Meanwhile, “Family Time – Getting Happy” rolls with a New Orleans swagger - the one song co-composed by drummer Coleman with Kevin. Conversely, the South American flavored “In God We Trust” closes the CD on a billowy cloud of hope and peace reflecting our country’s core beliefs.

The one non-original piece of *New American Suite* is a most original arrangement of Ragtime king Scott Joplin’s familiar 1902 classic “The Entertainer” (which enjoyed a renaissance in popularity in 1973 as used in the movie “The Sting”). “Our goal was to bring the composition into 2011 with reharmonization and a relaxed forward motion groove,” Toney states. No stranger to contemporizing standards, Toney produced a whole album of the Duke’s work on 2001’s *Satin Doll: Smooth Jazz Plays Ellington*. What he does with “The Entertainer” is far more impressive, capturing Kevin at his absolute improvisational peak – a peak he is still climbing from a long and fruitful journey.

A seasoned veteran, Kevin Toney first started playing piano at age five in his city of birth, Detroit, Michigan. His first teacher was his sister Helen. At eight, he added cello and alto saxophone to his skill set. He later attended the prestigious Cass Technical High School and performed with many of his city’s top musicians. Kevin graduated to attend Howard University in Washington, D.C. where he earned his B.A. in composition and jazz studies. During his tenure, he became the leader of the **The Blackbyrds**, the innovative soul-jazz fusion sextet founded by jazz trumpet legend **Donald Byrd**. Kevin wrote and co-penned many of the band’s most memorable music including the funk hit “Rock Creek Park”, the lovely harmonica-laced instrumental ballad “All I Ask,” and the brassy Grammy-nominated scorcher “Unfinished Business.” After six now-classic ’70s Soul albums, the group disbanded and Kevin recorded his first solo LP, *Special K* in 1982.

Kevin Toney truly came into his own with his 1994 release *Lovescape*, featuring his composition “Kings” which became a staple of then burgeoning smooth jazz radio. Over the next decade-plus, Kevin’s sound evolved over seven more meticulously crafted CDs that found him experimenting in nearly every contemporary music palette. Among the

honors he earned was having his 2001 album *Strut* selected by the 2002 Winter Olympics Committee as “official music” alongside that of Paul McCartney and Alicia Keyes. He also became a fan favorite presence on the American jazz festival circuit.

Beyond his own music, Kevin Toney has performed with an impressive survey of major artists that includes **Aretha Franklin, Stevie Wonder, Shania Twain, Isaac Hayes, Carl Anderson, Shirley Caesar, Oscar Brown Jr., Edwin Hawkins, Pink, Kenny Burrell, Whitney Houston, Norman Brown and Peter White**. He also scored two films: the period drama “Kings of the Evening” (starring Lynn Whitfield and Tyson Beckford) and the documentary “The Kinsey Collection” (about a married couple that assembled the largest collection of African and African American artifacts in the United States). In fact, it is a work from their collection – “Fugue 2000” (oil on canvas) by renowned painter **Richard Mayhew** – that graces the cover of The Kevin Toney 3’s *New American Suite*, courtesy of his dear friends **Bernard and Shirley Kinsey**.

In line with Kevin’s personal spiritual evolution he wanted his music to make thematic statements as well. Thoughts of a trilogy emerged within conversations with Don Mizell. The first chapter was the 2008 solo piano recording *Heart of Gratitude* (a.k.a. *A Grateful Heart*). This CD takes the listener on a spiritual journey through music in hopes of encouraging a deeper connection with God. Mirroring the message of that music, Kevin is a mentor for the ‘Manformation Project,’ a Los Angeles-based rites of passage setting that brings boys of 10-18 years of age into contact with Godly minded men to cultivate positive growth. Kevin and his wife - renowned costuming designer **Phyllis Toney** - also started *The Toney Family Foundation* which focuses on arts and music related philanthropy.

The second chapter of Toney’s trilogy is the work at hand – *New American Suite* – which represents new musical landscapes of jazz and improvised music in a contemporary expressing while maintaining ties to earlier musical roots. For Kevin, whose first studies were of classical music and jazz piano greats of ; Art Tatum, Fat’s Waller, Ahmad Jamal, and McCoy Tyner, this was nothing new – more a revisiting to his roots. The upcoming third chapter of his trilogy is a large-scale work he foreshadowed on his *110 Degrees and Rising* CD with the rapturous symphonic piece “Touched By You (Suite 2005).”

“This cycle of creatively brings to bear everything I’ve done up to this point in my evolution,” Kevin concludes. “I look forward to expanding my palette by writing for symphony orchestra and larger musical forms as well.” Don Mizell surmises, “As Kevin stretches into new creative directions, he continues to do what he’s always done - make records that are accessible and appealing, all the while digging to pull out deeper levels of expression - keeping him gracefully engaged in artful invention...and the very American tradition of ingenuity.

- A. Scott Galloway
(March 2011)



Kevin Toney Discography

As Leader

New American Suite	2011 KTE
Kings Of The Evening (Soundtrack)	2010 KTE
A Heart Of Gratitude	2008 KTE
Retrospectives	2006 DM
110 Degrees And Rising	2005 Shanachie
Sweet Spot	2003 Shanachie
Strut	2001 Shanachie
Satin Doll	2000 Shanachie
Extra Sensual Perception	1999 Shanachie
Pastel Mood	1995 Ichiban
Lovescape	1994 Ichiban
Special K	1982 Fantasy

With Blackbyrds

Happy Music: The Best Of The Blackbyrds	2007 Concord
Love Byrds: The Best Of The Blackbyrds	2007 Concord
Better Days	1981 Fantasy
Action	1978 Fantasy
Unfinished Business	1977 Fantasy
City Life	1976 Fantasy
Cornbread Earl and Me (Soundtrack)	1975 Fantasy
Flying Start	1974 Fantasy
Blackbyrds	1973 Fantasy

With Various Artist

With Donald Byrd

* Thank You for Funking Up My Life	1979 Elektra
* Caricatures	1977 Blue Note
* Places And Spaces	1976 Blue Note
Hugh Brodie - Unforgettable Sax	1994 FQ/FUSA
Reggie Codrington - C-Note	2003 Liquid 8

With Craig T. Cooper

* Nasty Man	2010 Craigland
* Love Letters	1996 Sin Drome
Armed and Dangerous (Soundtrack)	1986 Columbia
Rahmlee Michael Davis - Soul Jazz	1986 HE

With Andre Delano

* My So Fine	2008 Nu Groove
* Full Circle	2005 7 th Note
Def Jazz	2005 Verve
Chazzy Green - Street Sax	1999
Bobbi Humphrey - Live At Montreux	1973 Blue Note
Paul Jackson Jr -Duets	1996 Blue Note
Talita Long - Back To You	2006 TLR
Dave McMurray - Nu Life Stories	2003 Hip Bop
Alphonse Mouzon - Live At Montreux	1973 Blue Note
David "Fathead" Newman - Scratch My Back	1979 Fantasy
Andrew Neu - In Clear View	2007 Andrew Neu Music

With Ray Parker Jr

* I'm Free	2006 Raydio Music
* After Midnight	1987 Arista

With Doc Powell

* Cool Like That	2004 Heads Up
* Life Changes	2001 Sampson
Sharon Redd - Sharon Redd	1980 Unidisk
Brenda Russell - Piano In The Dark	1987 A & M
Marlena Shaw - Live At Montreux	1973 Blue Note

With Bill Summers and Summers Heat

* We Call It the Box	1983 MCA
* You Can Call It What You Want	1981 MCA
Sylvester - Fell Mighty Reel	1979 Honey/Fantasy
Jeanie Tatum - Love In Motion	2000 Uotahum
Chester Thompson - Joyful Noise	1992 Rhino
Two Tons Of Fun - Get The Feeling	1993 Fantasy
Phil Upchurch - Midnite Blue	1991 KICJ (import)
The House Of Urban Grooves	2004 Peak
Val Watson - Live At The Funk Lounge	2005 215 Records
Randell K. - Randell K.	2006 Ranwake

With Andrew White

Passion Flower	1973 AM-5
Songs For A French Lady	1974 AM-6
Theme	AM-7 1975
Live At The Foolery (Vol I)	1975 AM-8
Live At The Foolery (Vol II)	1975 AM-9
Live At The Foolery (Vol III)	1975 AM-10
Collage	1975 AM-14
Marathon (Vol VI)	1976 AM-20
Marathon (Vol VII)	1976 AM-21
Marathon (Vol VIII)	1976 AM-22
Marathon (Vol XI)	1976 AM-23
Fonk Update	1979 AM-37
I Love Japan	1979 AM-38
Have Band Will Travel	1979 AM-39

Awards and Achievements...

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| - Grammy Award Nomination | Best Instrumental Song, Unfinished Business (original composition), The Blackbyrds, 1978 |
| - Grammy Award Nomination | Best R & B Song, Walking In Rhythm The Blackbyrds, 1976 |
| - RIAA Certified Gold Album | “ Action ” - The Blackbyrds, 1978 |
| - RIAA Certified Gold Album | ”Unfinished Business”, The Blackbyrds 1977 |
| - RIAA Certified Gold Album, | “City Life” with The Blackbyrds, 1976 |
| - NAACP Image Award | Best Jazz Group - The Blackbyrds, 1977 |
| - Billboard Magazine Award | #1 Pop Instrumental Group - The Blackbyrds, 1976 |
| - Record World Award | #1 Jazz Group - The Blackbyrds, 1976 |
| - National Endowment For The Arts | Fellowship Grant for Jazz Composition and Performance, 1981 |
| - Keys To the City” Awards | Detroit, New Orleans, Los Angeles |
| - Madison Who’s Who In America | 2008 |
| - Service To The Community Honor | Inglewood Unified School District Visual & Performing Arts Theatre, 2008 |
| - Division Marshall | 37th Annual Black History Parade City Of San Bernardino, 2006 |
| - Certificate Of Commendation | College Bound Program, Los Angeles, CA 2001 & 2002 |
| - Who’s Who In America | 1984, 1992 |

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KEVIN TONEY 3



KEVIN TONEY
PIANO

MICHAEL BRADFORD
BASS

CHRIS COLEMAN
DRUMS

All Inquires

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