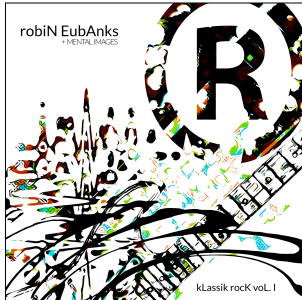


FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Robin Eubanks and Mental Images Releases Klassik Rock Vol. 1



Ask someone to describe **Robin Eubanks** in two words, and you are likely to get this: jazz trombonist. And for good reason—for more than three decades the Philadelphia native has contributed bold, edgy and distinctive 'bone playing to the music of dozens of jazz titans, from **Art Blakey** and **Elvin Jones** to **Dave Holland** and the contemporary supergroup **SFJAZZ Collective**. He has also released a number of recordings as a leader and led his own performing bands, and was one of the movers and shakers behind **M-Base**, a progressive aggregation that sought to move jazz into the future via new creative avenues.

But now Eubanks is wearing a new two-word appellation: rock star! With the release via **ArtistShare** of **Klassik Rock, Vol. 1**, by Robin Eubanks and **Mental Images**, fans of this master musician will hear a side of him they've never before experienced. On five new original compositions and reimaginings of four cornerstone rock tracks originally cut by **Led Zeppelin** ("Kashmir" and "The Ocean"), **Jimi Hendrix** ("Fire") and **Sly and the Family Stone** ("Thank You"), Robin Eubanks fulfills a longtime dream of paying tribute to two other genres of music—rock and funk—that helped shape his musical outlook.

Of course, being the visionary artist that he is, Eubanks, who self-produced **Klassik Rock, Vol. 1**, puts his own cutting-edge spin on the music—this isn't your grandfather's classic rock! "This is a project I've wanted to do for many years," Eubanks says. "It's music that many people are already familiar with but I'm adding my concepts of jazz, funk, rock, odd meters and electric trombone to the classic foundations that already existed. I grew up listening to R&B, funk and rock. I didn't start playing jazz until I was 20 and I started then in order to learn to play better solos in my funk band. My subsequent study of jazz made me truly appreciate it in a significant manner. But when I was growing up my favorite bands, in addition to the ones I cover on this recording, were Chicago, Grand Funk Railroad, Kool and the Gang, Earth, Wind and Fire, Mahavishnu Orchestra, Return to Forever, James Brown, Aretha Franklin, Tower of Power, Yes, Gentle Giant, Emerson, and Lake and Palmer."

The initial concept behind **Klassik Rock, Vol. 1** stretches back into the 1990s, but at that time, says Eubanks, "It was difficult to find a label that would record an electric trombone playing rock songs. Trombones, if you recorded them at all, were only in the 'jazz' idiom and jazz labels did not know how to market something like this." The development of the Internet and the advent of the digital age, he says, "gave musicians more autonomy, control and ownership of their music, and made it possible for us to think differently about ways to present our musical ideas. So I believe the time is ripe for this to happen now."

Accompanied by his band, **Mental Images**—**Boris Kozlov**, acoustic and electric bass; pianist/keyboardist **Mike King**; and **Nate Smith**, drums—along with a host of guests including vocalist **Corey Glover**, brothers **Kevin** and **Duane Eubanks** (guitar and trumpet, respectively), pianist **Kris Bowers**, alto saxophonist **Antonio Hart**, drummer **Billy Kilson** and percussionists Daniel **Sadownick** and **David Silliman**, Robin "presented my versions of the familiar classic rock tunes in a way that would prepare the listener to relate to my original music in a more accepting way. I'm hoping," he adds, "that my arrangements of the classic rock tunes will make them sound more like my original music."

From the first notes of Sly's "Thank You," played in a 9/4 meter, it becomes immediately apparent that Eubanks has succeeded in meeting his goal. Here is one of the all-time funk anthems, a cultural marker of the post-Woodstock era, taken to a new level of funkdom. Eubanks and crew toy handily with the familiar rhythm, bouncing it around and stretching it while maintaining the original Family Stone vibe. (Astute listeners will catch a quote from Herbie Hancock's song "Sly" from the keyboardist's Head Hunters LP.) The Jimi Hendrix Experience's "Fire," as electrifying as rock has ever been, is twice as sizzling here, the clash of Robin's electric trombone and Kevin's appropriately incendiary guitar, King's and Robin's keys and a battery of drums and percussion redefining the FM radio staple for a new generation of listeners. The two Zep tracks retain the mystery and foreboding given them by Page, Plant and co., while ratcheting up the intensity level.

"I use electric effects on all of the classic rock tunes, in addition to the acoustic trombone," Eubanks explains. "The computer-based effects give me a much wider, colorful, sonic palette than I have with the acoustic trombone. The different electronic trombone sounds help bring a variety of sound and focus to the intent of the recording. I'm sure there will be times when people will not even know when they are listening to me playing the trombone. Sometimes I start a solo with the acoustic trombone, then switch to added effects in the middle of a solo." But, he assures, "I love the sound of the acoustic trombone and I work on developing it every day, so I have no problem playing without effects. In the end the music dictates what I use when."

As exhilarating as the actual "classic" classic rock tracks are, Eubanks' new original tunes sit proudly alongside them. Any of these five—"Bahian Parade," "Shifting Centers," "United Vision," "Ostinato" and "Between the Lines"—would have held its own back in the day of psychedelic light shows, black lights and iconic slabs of vinyl. Yet at the same time, there is nothing retro about them; this is very much a 21st century take on the sound, accounting for all of the evolution that music has undergone in the past half century. And Eubanks was especially conscious, while composing and recording, to consider that jazz is still at the root of everything he does. "These are not all rock or funk songs," he says. "I wanted to give the jazz listeners who may check out the recording something to relate to also."

Klassik Rock, Vol. 1—and yes, he's already thinking about Vol. 2—Eubanks says, "was mostly done live" in order to capture the excitement generated among the musicians. He sees the recording as a game-changer, for himself, of course, but hopefully with further ramifications as well. "This time I've employed more of the approach I've wanted to take with my music for some time now," he says, "not to replace more conventional jazz elements but in addition to them. And actually, anyone who's been checking out the compositions I've written during the last 15 years with Dave Holland, SFJAZZ Collective and on my own, will not be too surprised by this direction."

"I'm not sure how people will react," Eubanks concludes. "I think the 'jazz police' might say, 'Shoot first, ask questions later,' but that's fine and if I don't hear some of those criticisms I will think I did something wrong. I expect it, I welcome it. It will start a discussion that I will be glad to help facilitate in the jazz and rock communities. I also know there will be people who will embrace it with open arms. This is me being myself without the synthetic restrictions that are usually placed on jazz and trombonists."

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Robin Eubanks, the premier jazz trombonist of his generation, grew up in Philadelphia in a very musical family. After graduating from the University of the Arts, he moved to New York City where he began a career that has since yielded an amazing array of collaborations with such notable artists as Art Blakey, Elvin Jones, Eddie Palmieri, Sun Ra, Barbra Streisand, The Rolling Stones and Talking Heads. He's won Grammys for his performances on Michael Brecker's *Wide Angles* and Dave Holland's *What Goes Around*. He is equally in demand as a composer and as an educator (currently a tenured professor of Jazz Trombone at The Oberlin College Conservatory).

Track List

1. **Thank You** (*Sly Stone*)
2. **Kashmir** (*John Bonham, John Paul Jones, Jimmy Page, Robert Plant*)
3. **Fire** (*Jimi Hendrix*)
4. **Bahian Parade** (*Robin Eubanks*)
5. **Shifting Centers** (*Robin Eubanks*)
6. **United Vision** (*Robin Eubanks*)
7. **Ostinato** (*Robin Eubanks*)
8. **The Ocean** (*John Bonham, John Paul Jones, Jimmy Page, Robert Plant*)
9. **Between The Lines** (*Robin Eubanks*)

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