

"Marcus Strickland has started to turn heads in the most thriving but most competitive jazz scene on the planet ...his tone: liquid and luminous, yet forceful and exact."

-Thomas Conrad (JazzTimes Magazine)

The great Miles Davis once said, "The thing to judge in any jazz artist is, does the man project and does he have ideas?" If these are indeed the canonical essentials of a jazz artist at his best, then saxophonist Marcus Strickland is one of today's truest exemplars.

Triumph of the Heavy: Volume 1 & 2 is Strickland's fourth release from his independent Strick Muzik record label, and his seventh as a leader. The music lives up to its title, and Strickland's distinctive artistry is synonymous with its concept. With a professional career that has just passed the ten-year mark, Strickland's influential sound, distinguished body of work, impressive set of credentials and steady acknowledgement from every credible jazz critic since emerging on the scene has earned him a rightful place alongside the very best narrators of modern jazz.

Strickland's desire to preach above and beyond the jazz choir is rooted in his affinity toward a multitude of musical styles. Growing up in a household which encouraged the arts, Strickland's musical palette had been vast long before his professional endeavors. This broad creative range, along with his emergence as a singular voice on his instrument, helped Strickland land his first recording deal as a leader with the Fresh Sound label, soon after the Miami native graduated from New York's esteemed New School for Jazz and Contemporary Music; a breeding ground for many who would become today's most relevant figures in jazz.

Strickland has a covetable list of recording and performing credits, having collaborated with Wynton Marsalis, Tom Harrell, and Dave Douglas, but Strickland's longest and most impressionable working relationships include

two of the most influential drummers ever to play the instrument: Roy Haynes and Jeff "Tain" Watts. Strickland was still attending college when jazz master Roy Haynes asked him to join his Fountain of Youth band. Strickland held the tenor spot for five years before joining Watts; a drummer who is without question at least in-part responsible for ushering in this generation of successors.

As a bandleader, Strickland unsurprisingly takes cues from yet another drummer. "There's a quote from Art Blakey that just says, 'Leave the band alone,' Strickland emphasizes, through an abundance of hearty laughter. "He's referring to his leading style. You know, don't tell them how to play! And it's very important. I want everybody to feel good. I want the band especially to feel good so the music can feel good, and the audience can feel good. I want there to be room for a party. So I write like that, I lead like that."

Strickland's critics are listening, too. Over the last five years, Strickland has held some of the most prestigious positions in the realm of jazz journalism: Rising Star on Soprano Saxophone in *Downbeat's* 2012 Critic's Poll Rising Star on Tenor Saxophone in *Downbeat's* 2010 Critic's Poll, Rising Star on Soprano Saxophone in *Downbeat's* 2008 Critic's Poll and Best New Artist in *JazzTimes'* 2006 Reader's Poll. For Strickland, the blueprint for triumph is based on one main principle, "As long as you're honest, I think nobody can mess with that. I think that's essential to being an artist... to be yourself. Really expose what's inside of you, try to put that out there in a very creative and beautiful way that people can enjoy. My whole goal is to make enjoyable music with great depth, and touch as many people as I can with it. That's all I want to do."