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NEWS RELEASE

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DRUMMER-COMPOSER MARK LOMAX DELIVERS MUSICAL REPORT ON "THE STATE OF BLACK AMERICA"

"This album draws from the best of the creative jazz traditions that re-defined jazz."

— Dr. William Banfield, professor of Africana Studies and Music at Berklee College of Music

Inarhyme Records is pleased to announce the July 6, 2010 release of **The State of Black America**, the extraordinary new CD by the Mark Lomax Trio, featuring composer/drummer **Mark Lomax II** along with saxophonist **Edwin Bayard** and bassist **Dean Hulett**. They make music with a purpose, not just to entertain, but also to invite the listener on a journey towards peace and enlightenment through sound.

"As I was writing the music for this CD," Lomax says, "I was dealing with issues of identity. I was trying to figure out what good an African American male who composed in the Western European art tradition could do for his community or the world at large."

Lomax formed his first trio, Blacklist, with Bayard in 1998. Through the years, they gained national recognition for their work with trumpeter **Marlon Jordan**, and most recently tenor saxophone legend **Azar Lawrence**. The band has undergone several personnel changes as it struggled to stay together. Then Lomax scheduled a recording session that only Bayard and the newest member of the band, bassist and composer Dean Hulett, could attend. The results reinvigorated the road-worn trio and gave birth to The Mark Lomax Trio.

"I reformed the trio because I have grown disillusioned with both the tradition of 'art-for-art's-sake' and the low esteem with which African American art traditions are held in the academy," Lomax says. "I began writing and performing music rooted in the blues tradition that gave birth to Sonny Rollins, Ornette Coleman, Max Roach, and Charles Mingus. And I felt that my music explored spiritual, philosophical, and political ideals that can unite listeners and help inspire them to realize their individual and collective potential."

The State of Black America reflects both the spiritual and artistic concerns of Lomax, as well as the exceptional, almost telepathic rapport the trio has developed over the years. The five-movement composition creates a narrative that balances the structure of groove and swing with complete freedom. "Stuck In A Rut" opens the suite with a powerful display of the trio's potent energy and interplay. Lomax's deeply resonant trap sound and crisply articulated cymbal work establishes him as a strong force in the music. He propels the group in several directions at once, using his astonishing independence of limbs. However, as Banfield writes, "Lomax never overstates his role or abuses his power as a drummer. As a matter of fact the drums are "the disciplined role model" throughout, never

dislodging its role to guide and gracefully lead.” It is upon Lomax’s drumming that Bayard and Hulett create deeply personal and exciting improvisations that are steeped in blues vernacular and always sensitive to the overall structure of the composition.

On “The Unknown Self,” bassist Hulett’s featured solo shows his thoughtful swinging construction, equal parts logic and lyricism, with a highly developed harmonic approach and a big, solid sound. Tenor saxophonist Bayard, the son of a be-bop era trumpeter who played in Dizzy Gillespie’s jazz orchestra, is a force to be reckoned with throughout the album. On “To Know God Is To Know Thyself, he pours out graceful ribbons of sound that give way to pure sounds and cries of passion. “The Power of Knowing” shows the group’s sensitive interactions to great effect. They collectively feel their way into the piece, building a spontaneous arrangement of contrasting parts and shifting tempos as they circle around an invisible center.

Lomax has spent a lifetime in music. His mother, a composer of gospel music, introduced him to both gospel and jazz at an early age. He continued his study of gospel music with Dr. Raymond Wise, founder of the Center for the Gospel Arts, where Lomax currently teaches. Besides performing with gospel choirs around the country, Lomax also boasts impressive jazz credentials. He toured with the Delfeayo Marsalis Sextet in 2005, and has worked with Clark Terry, Marlon Jordan, Azar Lawrence, Bennie Maupin, Billy Harper, Nicholas Payton, Ellis Marsalis, Donald Harrison, and Wessel Anderson, among others. *Jazz Times* says Lomax’s “forceful drumming would have made Elvin Jones proud.” He is currently completing coursework for a Doctorate in Composition at The Ohio State University.

With **The State of Black America**, Lomax synthesizes all his previous experiences, in gospel music, jazz, and as a composer into a powerful personal concept. “It has never been about one or the other when it comes to human experience,” Lomax says. “It is always about the whole, the ability to celebrate our differences while building upon our similarities.”

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