

**TRUMPETER/VOCALIST, PRODIGIOUS TALENT BENNY BENACK III RELEASES TRIUMPHANT  
SOPHOMORE ALBUM *A LOT OF LIVIN' TO DO***

**Produced by Drummer Ulysses Owens, Jr., Featuring bassist Christian McBride,  
Pianist Takeshi Ohbayashi, with guest vocalists Veronica Swift (“Social Call”),  
Alita Moses (“Where Is the Love?”)**

**Liner notes by famed designer, performer Isaac Mizrahi, Benack’s frequent musical employer**



**Out January 24th, 2020 on LA Reserve**

Following up his breakout 2017 debut *One of a Kind*, trumpeter/vocalist **Benny Benack III** brings his manifold talents even more bracingly into view with his sophomore outing *A Lot of Livin' to Do*, featuring the great **Christian McBride** on bass. In his singing, songwriting, fiery trumpet playing and compelling showmanship, Benack brings a wealth of almost unheard-of virtuoso talent to the table. He reveals not only a stirring command of the post-bop trumpet vernacular in the vein of Kenny Dorham and Blue Mitchell, but also a sly, mature, naturally expressive vocal delivery in the post-Sinatra mold, with superb intonation and also the kind of chops to handle astounding feats of originally composed vocalese (complex solos with written lyrics). On *A Lot of Livin' to Do*, these elements come together to reveal one of the most vibrant and multi-dimensional talents of our time.

Benack is currently the frontman, trumpeter and singer for **Postmodern Jukebox**, the vintage music collective famed for canny old-school covers of modern pop. He hails from **Pittsburgh**, a city that produced the likes of Roy Eldridge, Earl Hines, Art Blakey, Billy Strayhorn and so many more, including Benny’s trumpeter/bandleader grandfather, **Benny Benack, Sr.** (1921-86), who recorded the Pittsburgh Pirates theme song “Beat ‘Em Bucs” and toured with Tommy Dorsey and Raymond Scott, among others. Benny’s father, saxophonist/clarinetist **Benny Benack, Jr.**, was his first musical employer. He also absorbed influences from his classically trained vocal professor mother Claudia, though he himself has never had a vocal lesson. He displays a great love for the songbook and a true gift for interpretation, not least on the duet with McBride “**It Could Happen to You**” — featuring an original vocalese tour de force that places Benack in the higher echelons of that unique and underappreciated art form.

On the Gigi Gryce classic “**Social Call**,” Benny partakes in a stunning duet with emerging powerhouse singer **Veronica Swift**, taking flight in another wholly original vocalese odyssey. Video of the song, shot in the studio in black-and-white by Yasunari Rowan, garnered rave responses from around the world for its high-level virtuosity and deep and joyful sense of swing. A second duet with McBride, on Ray Brown’s “**Gravy Waltz**,” with lyrics by Steve Allen, reveals the seamlessness between Benack’s singing and his authoritative trumpet. The playful uptempo original “Irrepressible” captures it perfectly as well.

Benack's songwriting, a major focus of *One of a Kind*, again shows a wide range of emotion and authoritative style. "**Later On**" is a breakup ballad with fabulously mellow Rhodes outlining wistful harmonies. There are also jaunty modern-minded instrumentals: "**New Born Blues**," inspired by Phineas Newborn, Jr. and tailor-made for McBride; and "**Sub-Zero**," evoking Hank Mobley's "Funk In Deep Freeze" as played by Chet Baker in '74. "One can hear [Benack's] wit, clearly understanding his intended ideas and images from the music alone," writes Isaac Mizrahi in the liner notes.

Hand it to drummer/producer **Ulysses Owens, Jr.** for capturing these different modes of expression and making them cohere at every step, from the strutting syncopation of the title track to the mysterious Rhodes and Harmon-muted horn of the instrumental "The Shadow of Your Smile." "I've watched Ulysses hone his production craft," Benack says, "working on a number of notable recordings for vocalists and instrumentalists. In many ways a drummer is a natural producer, because there's already so much thought put into shaping the music and orchestrating from behind the drum kit. I was happy to let him guide me through the vision of this project, because I trusted that he knew my musical personality as well as anyone."

Owens played drums on Benack's debut as well and was the first established "cat" to give the young Benack a shot after his arrival to New York in 2009. He joins McBride in the rhythm section along with the extraordinary **Takeshi Ohbayashi** ("T-Cash") on piano and Rhodes. "Takeshi is the perfect embodiment of a jazz musician in 2019," Benack declares. "He possesses the elegance and sophistication of Hank Jones and Mulgrew Miller but has also assimilated the soulfulness of Robert Glasper and Cory Henry. In many ways he's the perfect pianist for me." When Owens formed the New Century Jazz Quintet in 2013 with Ohbayashi, Benack and others, it cemented their mutual bond all the more.

The inclusion of Swift on "Social Call," as well as **Alita Moses** on the inspired **Donny Hathaway-Roberta Flack** cover "Where Is the Love," stems from Benack's love of the vocal duet tradition. "A seminal moment in every jazz singer's career is finding duet partners and engaging in the musical conversation that jazz creates so effortlessly," says Benack. "I wanted to work with singers who were of my generation, to signal a new era of **Ella & Louis**, **Louis Prima & Keely Smith**, and Donny & Roberta. With Alita and Veronica I found two singers whose stars are very much on the rise, and they both happened to be great friends as well."

In the spirit of "Close to You" from *One of a Kind*, Benack taps the **Burt Bacharach** songbook once again with "What the World Needs Now." "Given the political climate today, I felt it was the perfect time to bring this song's message back to the foreground," Benack remarks. In that context, one can remember the decency and humanism at the heart of **Mister Rogers' Neighborhood**, the source for "**It's You I Like**" and "**Won't You Be My Neighbor.**" In Benack's case there's a family significance: Fred Rogers' show was filmed in his Pittsburgh hometown; Benack, Sr. once appeared on the show to give Mister Rogers a trumpet lesson. In addition, the aforementioned "Beat 'Em Bucs" was written by guitarist **Joe Negri** — **a.k.a. Handyman Negri** on Mister Rogers' Neighborhood. The connections run deep, and the emotional breadth of these performances captures that. With A Lot of Livin' to Do, Benny Benack III salutes his family ancestors and the jazz heritage as a whole, nonetheless staking his bold and highly individual artistic claim.

**RELEASE DATE: January 24th, 2020**

**PUBLICITY CONTACT: Matt Merewitz / Fully Altered Media / matt@fullyaltered.com / 215-629-6155**