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NEWS RELEASE

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New York Guitarist Nick Moran Seizes the Moment With a Gorgeous Organ Trio Album "No Time Like Now"

With every well-placed note and every incisive solo on **Nick Moran's** new album ***No Time Like Now***, the guitarist brings an urgent creative agenda to the table. Featuring organist **Brad Whiteley** and drummer **Chris Benham**, both rising players on the New York scene, *No Time Like Now* is a potent trio session that focuses on Moran's stirring compositions and arrangements, venturesome material that consistently moves beyond organ combo conventions. The CD will be released March 6, 2012 on the Manor Sound label.

Considering the music's searing emotional immediacy, it's not surprising that many of Moran's tunes were inspired by musicians, friends and even strangers who are no longer with us. This is a trio that can lock into a ferocious groove, but it's equally capable of ravishing, aching poignancy.

"Some of this music was inspired by loss," says Moran, who was born and raised in New York City. "I wanted to capture the immediacy of the moment, the preciousness of the time we have."

No Time Like Now is an impressive follow-up to Moran's 2006 debut, *The Messenger*, an organ trio session featuring an earlier incarnation of the band. While clearly steeped in the rich B3 tradition running from Jimmy Smith to John Patton to Wes Montgomery's classic sides with Melvin Rhyne, "we don't really play that way," Moran says. "This is not a 'Chicken Shack' band in any sense. We all love the organ bands, especially Dr. Lonnie Smith who's been a big inspiration. But at the heart of it, I come from a rock and blues tradition."

Moran acknowledges and deconstructs his rock roots with the opening track, transforming Cream's 1967 hit "Strange Brew" into a surprisingly effective jazz vehicle. While recognizable at first, the album's only cover turns strange indeed, segueing from a spacey interlude to a flash of dissonance, concluding with Moran's artful evocation of Eric Clapton's tangy lick.

"My Beautiful" displays Moran's gift for writing long, episodic melodies. Opening with a brief drone, the piece quickly lives up to its title, settling into a delicate, dancing line that moves into a sensuous bossa nova groove. The deliberately paced "Intention" is another self-possessed piece with a seductive melody built upon a stately bass line inspired by Moran's studies with bass legend Ron Carter.

"I wanted a bass line that had a melodic function," Moran says. "And I wanted the drums to have a wash of color, so Chris plays the cymbals with that sheen of sound."

With "Slow Drive," the mode abruptly switches from beatific balladry to badass funk. The deceptively simple tune, essentially two chords, serves as a launching pad for some deftly stuttering trap work, surging organ lines and Moran's diamond clean guitar tone.

Inspired by an idea from Jeff Beck, Moran wrote "Wishful Thinking," an angular tune that subtly changes meter while Whiteley maintains an insinuating bass ostinato. "I wanted to write a tune that changes meter in mid-stream without the listener noticing. It should feel completely natural."

"Say Hi to Paris," is another tribute to a lamented friend, in this case the great New York blues singer Frankie Paris who hosted a weekly jam session at a neighborhood bar near where Moran grew up. Based on a funky bass line, the idea for the piece came to Moran while he was riding in the subway, and he ended up weaving a signature Paris phrase into the tune.

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“Frankie was always encouraging,” Moran says. “He made everyone feel like they were invited to participate. It’s a message to say hi to Paris when you’re on the other side. We all miss him.”

The album’s heaviest piece emotionally is “Natalya,” a heartbreaking funeral march that Moran wrote in honor of the fearless Chechen human rights activist Natalya Estemirova after reading about her assassination in 2009. Moran’s lithe solo flows seamlessly from the haunting melody, a soulful tribute to an unthinkably brave soul.

Moran composed the album’s elegiac title track thinking about a phone conversation with a close friend that turned out to be their last communication before his unexpected death. While it’s a tribute, it’s also a luminous meditation on the preciousness of each moment. On “The Physicist Transformed,” Moran offers a spirited send-off to a late friend who was an engineer and an accomplished blues musician. Set in five, the piece is based on an extended blues form, and builds to a dramatic drum solo. The album closes with “Renewal,” another Moran composition that evolves in unexpected directions. With three distinct sections, the piece captures the trio at its most cohesive, flowing from the lilting opening statement through the optimistic conclusion.

If Moran possesses an unusually fluent sense of phrasing, perhaps it stems from his singular creative path. Starting first on trumpet, he switched to guitar at 13, inspired by British Invasion fret stars like Jeff Beck, Peter Frampton and Jimmy Page. He played in rock groups during his high school and college years, but first got turned onto jazz at 15 by a mesmerizing George Benson performance on a late-night broadcast of “Don Kirshner’s Rock Concert.”

“I had never heard anything like that, such a perfectly round sound, super swinging,” Moran recalls. “He was playing his big Gibson Super 400 with Phil Upchurch on rhythm guitar. At one point he started doing that Benson octave with the fourth and it’s perfect, just a little bit of musical rightness.”

Before pursuing musical professionally, Moran devoted himself to language study in France and Germany. During his six-year stint in Germany he ran a small music company that focused on translating American piano method books. Looking for a creative outlet, he studied arranging and ear training at the Fachbereich Musik in Mainz, Germany, where he also played guitar and trumpet in the university big band.

Upon returning to New York in 1998, he decided to devote himself to music and began to study with esteemed guitarist Rick Stone. Recognizing Moran’s potential, Stone recommended that he enroll in City College, where Ron Carter was on faculty. Though Carter as a rule didn’t accept incoming students, the bassist happened to be on the panel for Moran’s audition, and accepted him as a student. He did two years of rhythm section studies with Carter and studied composition with pianist/arranger Mike Holober.

“It was great studying with Carter,” says Moran, who received his B.F.A. with honors in jazz performance from the City College in 2001. “I came to respect him in a very specific kind of way. It’s love on his terms. He could be really tough, but I learned adaptability. I still feel like he’s looking over my shoulder.”

Veteran pianist Mike Longo is another mentor who instilled the importance of constantly assessing what a musical situation requires at any given moment. “He said, you should be asking these questions: what should I be playing right now? What does the music need?” Listening to “No Time Like Now,” it’s clear that Moran has turned those profound questions into a compelling musical approach.

In addition to his organ trio, Moran plays in various rock bands and solo guitar settings. He’s cultivated a rich network of creative connections through performances with musicians such as the Ray Santos Orchestra, trumpeter Shunzo Ohno, bassists Tom Hubbard and Marco Panascia, guitarists Adam Rafferty, Rick Stone, Nick Russo and Russ Spiegel, and pianists Cliff Korman, Daniel Kelly and Burt Eckoff. An accomplished producer and recording engineer, Moran also runs his own production studio in Brooklyn, N.Y.

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