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# David Benoit

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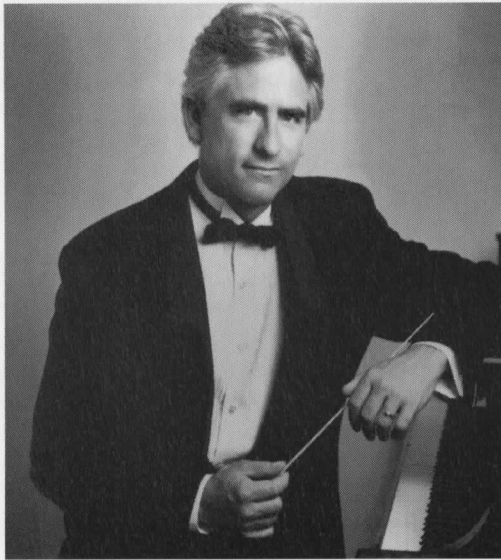
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Governors State University

Presents

*David Benoit*



*Saturday, February 2, 2002*  
*8:00 p.m.*

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## David Benoit

More than 15 years after he helped pioneer the successful contemporary jazz sound, composer-pianist David Benoit, a three-time Grammy nominee, continues to ride a seemingly unending wave of popularity and acclaim. Now this prolific artist is treating his audience to *Fuzzy Logic*, his twenty-second recording as a leader in twenty-four years, and the fourteenth in his long and productive relationship with GRP.

"I wanted to do something very funky and upbeat," Benoit remarks, "and I hadn't done a record like this in a long time. Actually, I don't know if I've ever done a record like this. Here's to You, Charlie Brown was very reverent, a tribute record, so I thought it was time to go in the other direction and do something innovative. I got back together with [trumpeter-producer] Rick Braun and tried a few new things with him. Then I got together with [Down To The Bone producer] Stuart Wade to bring a fresh sound into the music. And I had a little fun with my own ideas, as well, producing five tracks myself. We just kept it in an positive mode." For instance, the ear-catching, unusually named title track illustrates Benoit's turn toward a more down-to-earth groove. "Fuzzy Logic," he explains, "refers to machines that can sort of figure things out on their own. I thought it had an intriguing sound to it, something with energy and a little different from so many of the usual smooth jazz titles, like 'Tropical Sunset' or 'Midnight Stars,'" he says with a laugh. "I mean, it was time to do something that I felt was a little more interesting than the vacation-scene, resort-style titles."

Even the mellower tracks reflect this "change of pace" concept. "If you look back at all my records," Benoit notes, "usually there's a string section on at least one song, if not many songs. This is the first album where I intentionally didn't want to use any strings. I wanted to go for an edgier sound. So on the more melodic songs, like 'Reflections' and 'One Dream at a Time,' which I wrote for my daughter, June, I used woodwinds and French horn in place of strings; that gave the music a different texture. It was a little more of a challenge, too. String writing comes easy for me, but it was a challenge to write in more of a chamber group environment, something that would give the music warmth, but a little edginess, too — not quite the soft sound that strings can sometimes give you."

Earthy, funky, fun - all these qualities come together in Benoit's amusing "War of the S.U.V.'s" "That's really my favorite cut on the record," he reveals. "It was my own personal way of saying, 'Let's

have some fun. Let's not take this thing too seriously.' Sometimes we can get so serious about everything. Of course, I didn't want to call it 'I Hate S.U.V.'s' because my audience, probably a good 60% of them own S.U.V.'s. But they'll get a little laugh out of this title and know that we're poking fun at ourselves."

Along with his familiar piano, Benoit, on three tracks — "Fuzzy Logic," "Then the Morning Comes," and "War of the S.U.V.'s" — visits with another old friend, the Hammond B-3 organ. He clearly enjoys the sound, as well as the special challenges, the instrument presents. "There's a certain sound that only a Hammond can make. And it's a fun solo vehicle for me, to get away from piano for a minute."

Benoit's work on the ivories has helped him create an impressive and wide-ranging resume that includes straight-ahead jazz recordings, television and film scoring, classical composition, and conducting such eminent orchestras as the Los Angeles Philharmonic and the symphonies of London, Nuremberg, San Francisco, Atlanta, San Antonio, and San Jose. His involvement as a guest educator with the Mr. Holland's Opus Foundation has taken him into classrooms throughout the country, where he shares the gospel of jazz with young people. Currently, he is nearing completion on his first Broadway musical, in collaboration with lyricist Mark Winkler, about the life and times of Marilyn Monroe.

If all that were not enough to keep this busy musician occupied, Benoit recently accepted the position of musical director for the Asia America Symphony in Palos Verdes, California. In this role, he will help develop the orchestra's programming, conduct concerts, and build an "East meets West" musical concept. Meanwhile, he continues touring with own group, and this winter will join the Smooth Jazz Christmas Tour with saxophonist Dave Koz.

Benoit's GRP recordings encompass a wide range of jazz-inflected styles, from contemporary pop to straight ahead bebop, orchestral, and hip hop. Among the highlights of his discography are 1988's *Every Step of the Way*, nominated for a Grammy in the "Best Jazz Fusion" category; 1989's *Waiting for Spring*, which for eight weeks topped *Billboard's* traditional jazz chart; and 1992's *Letter to Evan*, a heartfelt tribute to the late jazz piano giant, Bill Evans. Benoit was a charter member of The Rippingtons and reunited with the Ripp's leader, Russ Freeman, on the 1994 hit, *The Benoit/Freeman Project*. He also has participated in the popular GRP All-Star Big Band Projects.

After the release of his previous GRP CD, *Here's to You, Charlie*

*Brown: 50 Great Years!* in the spring of 2000, Benoit developed an entire live musical tribute to Charles Schulz's beloved comic strip, PEANUTS(tm). The show featured a full orchestra, arranged and conducted by Benoit, performing a variety of music, including the memorable melodies composed by the late pianist Vince Guaraldi for the classic PEANUTS(tm) TV specials. Benoit also composed and performed a classical piece for piano and orchestra, "The Peanuts Gallery," commissioned by Carnegie Hall. He has since brought the show to various parts of the United States.

Back in the studio, the artful production team of Benoit, Braun and Wade brought a range of musical moods and nuances to the fore-front on *Fuzzy Logic*. "I've always liked those bands like Tower of Power and Chicago," Benoit concludes, "and *Fuzzy Logic* was a fun project for me because I used a big horn section and I played a lot of Hammond organ on it. You could think of it as 'retro,' a return to what I call the real boogaloo, grooving, old-style stuff. And it felt really good."

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