

Mike LeDonne
Eric Alexander
Jeremy Pelt Vincent Herring
Kenny Washington
Peter Washington

THE HEAVY HITTERS

I remember the phone call I got from Mike LeDonne excitedly telling me about The Heavy Hitters recording. “Weeds, I know you’re gonna love this record and I don’t trust anyone else with it. This record was made for you.” I love when musicians are excited! What’s not to like? All of my favorite cats on one record, Eric Alexander (co-leader) on tenor saxophone, Vincent Herring on alto saxophone, Jeremy Pelt on trumpet, Peter Washington on bass, Kenny Washington on drums and of course Mike LeDonne on piano.

Mike speaks glowingly about his bandmates. “The “side people” are among the greatest musicians on the planet. We are all friends who have shared the bandstand many times together so we know each other well and I think you can hear that in the sound of the band and the way we play together.” More specifically on his co-leader Eric Alex-

ander, LeDonne waxes poetic “I can’t say enough about Eric Alexander, he’s simply in a league of his own complete with his own harmonic language, a big, beautiful sound and a true love for not only masters like John Coltrane and George Coleman but for Dexter, Jug and Stanley Turrentine as well. As daring as he is he’s also not afraid to be soulful and play some blues.

For the past several years Mike could be heard recording in the organ quartet format and piano trio format. “Actually the sextet was Eric Alexander’s idea. Eric was generous enough to allow me to co-lead it. He said it would consist of all original

music by both of us. Our friend Jed Paradies funded the recording through a donation to The Musicians Aid Society of New York earmarked for the project. Jed is a devoted fan of ours as well as being a very fine tenor and flute player himself. Because he’s a player he has a true understanding of what’s happening and knows exactly what he likes. We all see eye to eye on loving music that is built to tickle your mind, hit you in the heart and get your head swaying back and forth. He wanted to hear the kind of soulful kickass swinging music that you might have heard on

a Blue Note record back in the day. Not to look back but to say that this is still vibrant challenging music that is as relevant today as it ever was. And of course we got to record it at Rudy Van Gelder’s studio, a place we are so lucky to still have up and running and that is putting out the same great sound we have all loved for all these years. To me it’s a true “Jazz” sound.



Mike contributes the majority of the tunes. Six in all, many of which pay homage to the masters. For example Hub is for trumpeter Freddie Hubbard. “I never played with Freddie but we became friends later in his life through my long association with Benny Golson who Freddie liked to come out and hear. As a player he was the toughest and his writing was at the very highest level. The introductory figure of “Hub” is Freddie in a nutshell to me. This is not the first appearance of Mike’s tune Silverdust and for good reason. It’s a hit. “It’s a crowd pleaser” says Mike. Written for



Horace Silver Mike says “Horace was the first to focus on bringing Jazz back to the people. He was super hip but he based everything on having a funky dance feeling to it with plenty of blues and soul everywhere.

Cedar Walton was an idol of mine who became a close friend because we shared the bond of having played piano in the Milt Jackson Quartet. Cedar Land is a contrafact over the chords to his tune Holy Land which is one of my favorites.

Tenor saxophonist Eric Alexander contributes 3 original compositions including Chainsaw which is a funky, quasi minor blues, but it's not really a minor “because when you go to the IV chord, it's still the same triad sitting there on top. It's just basically one sound for the entirety of a long form blues and the concept is chainsaw” says Alexander. “Something New is a chord progression spawned from the brilliant mind of George Coleman, which had never been given a melody. I simply put the top extension notes of each chord that he dictated to me at the top of the three part harmony of the horns and that became the melody” continues Alexander. Alexander switches to alto and features himself on the gorgeous Big Richard written for his father who passed away in 2017.

When asked about Mike as a musician Eric is quick to respond. “As a soloist he encompasses all of the great components of the master pianists and he does so with his own style and with aplomb. He has great ears, he's a great comper. Whatever he plays on the piano is complimentary even if it's not exactly what I'm doing and that's a very special gift. That's a Wynton Kelly or Cedar Walton-esque ability. I consider Mike a very close confidant.” That'll happen when you have a friendship that spans more than 25 years, hundreds of gigs and dozens of recordings!

The Heavy Hitters is going to be on repeat I can assure you. Simply put, it doesn't get any better than this. Enjoy!



Cory Weeds

July 2022

Vancouver, BC

1. **HUB** 8:19 (M. LeDonne, Mike LeDonne Music - BMI)
2. **NEW DAY** 6:14 (M. LeDonne, Mike LeDonne Music - BMI)
3. **SILVERDUST** 7:31 (M. LeDonne, Mike LeDonne Music - BMI)
4. **UN DIA ES UN DIA** 5:26 (M. LeDonne, Mike LeDonne Music - BMI)
5. **BIG RICHARD** 5:37 (E. Alexander, Skeefmusic - BMI)
6. **CHAINSAW** 7:58 (E. Alexander, Skeefmusic - BMI)
7. **THIS IS SOMETHING NEW** 6:14 (E. Alexander Skeefmusic - BMI)
8. **CEDAR LAND** 6:08 (M. LeDonne, Mike LeDonne Music - BMI)
9. **BLUESIT** 7:27 (M. LeDonne, Mike LeDonne Music - BMI)

Executive Producers: Cory Weeds & Jed Paradies

Produced by Mike LeDonne

Recorded at Van Gelder Recording Studio in Englewood Cliffs,
New Jersey on May 8th & 9th, 2022

Engineered by Maureen Sickler

Mixed and mastered by Chris Sulit at Trading 8s

Photography by Jed Paradies

Design and layout John Sellards

Eric Alexander and Jeremy Pelt appear courtesy of High Note Records

Vincent Herring appears courtesy of Smoke Sessions Records

*For more information and to make a donation to The Musicians Aid Society
of New York please visit <https://musicians-aid.com>*



Mike LeDonne - piano

Eric Alexander - tenor saxophone

Jeremy Pelt - trumpet

Vincent Herring - alto saxophone

Peter Washington - bass

Kenny Washington - drums

Rale Micic - guitar (track 6)