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## JACQUES SCHWARZ-BART'S "ABYSS" DEBUTS IN NORTH AMERICA WITH SPECIAL BONUS REMIX EDITION ON OBLIQSOUND ON NOVEMBER 24

**NEW YORK** - "Abyss", the fourth release from saxophonist Jacques Schwarz-Bart, follows the upward trajectory of his 2006 CD, *Soné Ka La*, which was lauded by the *All Music Guide* as "an exhilarating...Afro-jazz delight that defies all genre specifics but fits cozily into both jazz and world music bins." "Abyss" takes listeners deep into the heart of the scintillating marriage between jazz, Gnawa mystical music of Morocco, and gwo ka (the traditional music of Guadeloupe), and is Schwarz-Bart's debut for ObliqSound. The album releases November 24 in North America, featuring exclusive bonus remixes by DJ Spinna and Renovation Unlimited.

Only an artist with Schwarz-Bart's unique legacy could share this passionate quest for the sensual and poetic meeting of two cultures evolving from the same core, the same African roots, separated by the very history of their evolution.

The son of a black Guadeloupean mother, Simone, and a Holocaust-surviving French Jewish father, Andre, Jacques Schwarz-Bart was born in the suburbs of Guadeloupe in the early 1960s and spent his childhood living in both Switzerland and Guadeloupe. At the time, speaking Creole and exploring traditional music like the gwo ka drums was left to the descendants of runaway slaves, who kept the spirit of their ancestors alive by celebrating their African heritage. Schwarz-Bart's parents, both award-winning novelists, focused on Caribbean history and music to make sure they shared with their young son this heritage rich in commonalities and contrasts.

More than just a musical exploration of cultural themes that have intrigued Schwarz-Bart since childhood, "Abyss" is Schwarz-Bart's personal memorial to his father, who died in 2006. "This album is a Kaddish (Jewish memorial prayer for the dead) for my father," said Schwarz-Bart. "But far from being morbid, it is a celebration of the powerful and luminous being that he was, despite having to survive the holocaust of his people."

Schwarz-Bart has released three earlier albums as a leader, including the straight ahead "Immersion," "The Brother Jacques Project," a mixture of soul and jazz, with layers of Caribbean rhythms, and "Soné Ka La," a blend of the multi-cultural influences that set the scene for his new musical works. But it is "Abyss" that marks Schwarz-Bart's emergence as a confirmed soloist, composer and trail-blazer. He delves deeply into the sound of gwo ka and into Gnawa music, from the Moroccan descendants of African slaves who developed their own music and culture like their African American and Afro Caribbean counterparts, resulting in a mystical and divine sound of varied scales and constant interplay between call and response. The compositions here are even more inspired, and they allow the whole group to become unified by this new interactivity, to throw off constraints and devote themselves to the development of free space.

On this outing, Schwarz-Bart has several great musicians as his special guests: John Scofield plays an exquisitely serene guitar solo on the album's title track, in counterpoint to the vocals of Elisabeth Kontomanou, and Stephanie McKay's superb vocals shine on "Big Blue." On "An Ba Mango La," dedicated to Schwarz-Bart's father and based on a traditional Gnawa melody of an invitation to the spirits, his incantatory tenor sax is highlighted by legendary gwo ka hero Guy Conquet's haunting vocals and punctuated by Sonny Troupé and Olivier Juste's responses.

Two additional tracks on "Abyss" are dedicated to Schwarz-Bart's parents: "André," on which his tenor sax conveys a deeply spiritual message, accompanied simply by Milan Milanovic on piano; and "Simone," which opens with a poem written in Creole and read by the author herself over the tenor's melody. Propelled by relaxed, swaying licks from Hervé Samb's guitar, the piece's subtle rhythm, marked by the percussion and Reggie Washington's bass, provides a solid launch-pad for the shimmering, sinuous solo from the leader.

Multi-cultural diversity, a mosaic of different identities, provides the foundation for the musicians playing on "Abyss." There's no drummer in the "jazz" sense. Instead, two percussionists from Guadeloupe share the responsibility: Olivier Juste plays the boula that defines the basic rhythm, and Sonny Troupé plays the marké that causes this rhythm to dance like a flickering flame.

On keyboards is Milan Milanovic, the tenor's regular companion at his New York gigs, who plays with a sure harmony. Senegalese Hervé Samb is an extraordinary guitarist whose tone evokes the deep, strange accents of an "other" Africa, and who provides a sumptuous fulcrum for Schwarz-Bart's saxophones. Bassist Reggie Washington is a newcomer to the group, but his history with Schwarz-Bart dates back to the hip-hop/soul/jazz adventures of Roy Hargrove's RH Factor. Washington complements the eclectic ensemble, providing a strong foundation for the empathy between the percussionists and the rest of the band.

Schwarz-Bart was only six years old when he first discovered jazz by listening to a friend's father's LPs. He was so taken by the style that he quickly learned guitar by playing along, and by eleven, he began gigging at local clubs. When his family relocated from Switzerland to Guadeloupe, where there was no jazz scene, his musical career took a back seat to his studies and a burgeoning career in politics. Schwarz-Bart worked in the French senate as a Senator's assistant and had all but abandoned the musical and cultural influences that had shaped his early life. Then, at 24, his love for music returned with a vengeance when he picked up a friend's tenor saxophone. Soon, he was practicing whenever he could until he finally quit his post and moved to Boston to attend the Berklee School of Music.

After graduating from Berklee, he performed throughout Boston with such key local players as Danilo Perez, Bob Moses, and Giovanni Hidalgo. Once he'd moved to New York, Schwarz-Bart lost no time in immersing himself fully in that city's scene as well. In a moment of pure gusto that would shape his destiny, he walked into the legendary club Bradlee's where Chucho Valdes, Roy Hargrove and Randy Brecker were sharing the stage. Without a second thought, Schwarz-Bart jumped on stage and played his heart out. One month later, he got a call from Roy Hargrove to replace David Sanchez in his Latin jazz band, Crisol. Since then, artists of every stripe have called upon Schwarz-Bart's services, among them Hargrove, Erykah Badu, Eric Benet, Meshell N'degeocello, Danilo Perez, Soulive, Ari Hoenig, David Gilmore, and modern soul hero D'Angelo, who nicknamed him "Brother Jacques". Schwarz-Bart also began to earn acclaim for his work as a songwriter, after his song "Forget Regret," was the first single on Hargrove's "Hard Groove" album.

The album title "Abyss" stems from Schwarz-Bart's experience in the Caribbean sea as a deep sea diver. As he puts it, "Under the sea, I saw a world governed by different laws of physics, colors and behaviors, it was like facing the unknown of the infinite imagination of the universe and my own mortality. Facing my father's passing was as massive as diving into the unknown and embracing it." With this spirit, Jacques Schwarz-Bart forges a miraculous path between multiple worlds and universes.

"Abyss" allows a glimpse of the multiple possibilities of an aesthetic that is still growing, rich and vital in all its differences yet which stems from a common core whose origins go back centuries.

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