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Lionel Loueke Solo Debut Album *Virgin Forest* Garners International Accolades, Released March 13, 2007 in USA with Distribution by HBD/Koch

(New York, NY) Lionel Loueke's debut solo album, *Virgin Forest (OS 104)*, has just hit stores in the USA with distribution by HBD/Koch. The album has already been released in Europe in October 2006. *Virgin Forest* features legendary pianist **Herbie Hancock**, percussionist **Cyro Baptista**, **Gregoire Maret** and others. The recording includes a number of preludes with West African percussion ensembles led by the **Raimi and Tessi Brothers**. Mr. Loueke traveled to his homeland of Cotonou, Benin, West Africa to preserve these native rhythms he describes as "disappearing."

Early reviews position *Virgin Forest* to become one of the groundbreaking jazz albums of our era. With virtually no "standards" performed on the album, *Virgin Forest* is a blend of original Loueke compositions and a series of one-on-one improvisations with Herbie Hancock and **Cyro Baptista**, exquisitely captured by renowned producer **Robert Sadin**.

Declared a "masterpiece" by France's *Vibrations Magazine*, *Virgin Forest* was selected as Record of the Month by *Jazz Magazine* and *Mezzo Magazine*, and was recently featured on iTunes UK as "song of the week", engendering acclaim from fans of all stripes. The album received a four-and-a-half star rating from *Echoes Magazine's* **Kevin Le Gendre**, adding, "With *Virgin Forest*, Loueke can stake his claim as a real original, an artist for whom notions of genre become an irrelevance such is the sheer beauty of his work." The March issue of UK jazz magazine *Jazzwise* calls *Virgin Forest* "an adventure in pure sound...*Virgin Forest* confirms the arrival of one of the most startling new names to emerge on the cusp of jazz and African music for many years."

Virgin Forest is more than Lionel Loueke's debut solo album on ObliqSound; it is an intimate look into Mr. Loueke's musical consciousness. "For me, personally, I think [*Virgin Forest*] is going to be the record. My record," states Mr. Loueke. "This music represents me in all dimensions – my heart and all of my experiences beyond the music."

Michele Locatelli, co-founder of ObliqSound and the album's co-producer added: "*Virgin Forest* is the quintessential ObliqSound album – a crossover album that can be easily appreciated by anyone who is interested in good music."

Herbie Hancock, who brought Loueke on as a sideman for his current world tour, is awed by Loueke's global approach to jazz. In his introduction of Loueke for the **2006 JVC Jazz Festival** from **Carnegie Hall**, Hancock remarked, "When we came to America from Africa, we lost a lot along the way. Lionel has brought some of those things with him."

In addition to touring with Herbie Hancock, Lionel Loueke regularly performs with his trio **Gilfema**, the dynamic jazz trio featuring Loueke on guitar, **Massimo Biolcati** on bass and **Ferenc Nemeth** on drums. *Gilfema*, signed exclusively to ObliqSound, received worldwide recognition for their debut album release, *Gilfema (OS 504)*, and in November 2006 wrapped up an engagement at **Sunside Jazz Club** in Paris, France, and recently performed at the **Monterey Jazz Festival** and **Korea Jazz Festival** in Seoul. The trio will return to the studio to begin recording their second release on ObliqSound early 2007.

"Loueke's playing and singing can only be described as remarkable" - Don Heckman, *LA Times*

"Lionel Loueke has already achieved greatness" - Bill Buettler, *Boston Globe*

"Loueke can stake his claim as a real original, an artist for whom notions of genre become an irrelevance. Such is the sheer beauty of his work." - Keven Le Gendre, *BBC Jazz on 3*

For complete feature story on *Virgin Forest*, please see feature story at www.obliqsound.com/press