



Ray Marchica **IN THE RING**

with Rodney Jones, Lonnie Plaxico, and Teodross Avery

New York, NY – Sons of Sound proudly announces the June 7, 2005 release of *In The Ring*, the jazz-funk debut from workhorse drummer **Ray Marchica**, who goes nine rounds with three heavyweight instrumental masters: **Rodney Jones** on guitar, **Lonnie Plaxico** on bass, and **Teodross Avery** on tenor saxophone. Like the “sweet science” itself, these veterans dance, bob, and weave their improvisations across a canvas of deep groove.

Ray Marchica is one of the most diverse freelance drummers in New York City. In addition to leading his own group, Ray is a member of The Ed Palermo Big Band specializing in performing the music of Frank Zappa, a challenging collection of work that demands the most highly skilled of drummers (Bozzio, Colaiuta, Wackerman). He has recorded with James Brown, Little Richard, Dan Hartman, and Earl Klugh, and has toured with guitar greats Roy Buchanan and Johnny Winter. A graduate of Brooklyn College, he holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Music Performance.

In The Ring features nine tracks that bring together the elements of the New York jazz-funk tradition. Rodney Jones’ contributions, “Minor Mishap” and “Journey’s End,” are genuine examples of this style. A drummer focused more on feel and groove than on soloing, Ray makes his musical imprint on the introduction to “Tequila,” for which he imagines the fate of the worm in a bottle of a similar beverage, mescal. He also pays tribute to his stylistic influences, Elvin and Philly Joe Jones, on “The Joneses.” Ray explores the brushes on the ballad “I Can’t Get Started” and works the blues on his own “9H5,” named for the TV dressing room where the tune was written. True to their jazz roots, the influences of Jimmy Smith and Wes Montgomery are heard on the band’s closing track, “Summertime.”

Ray and Rodney met as bandmates on *The Rosie O’Donnell Show*. During the show’s six-year run, they performed with Phil Collins, Tony Bennett, Bette Midler, Cher, Marc Anthony, Robert Palmer, Jennifer Holiday, Chaka Khan, and Neil Diamond, among other guests. Ray also played gigs with Rodney’s group, where he met Lonnie Plaxico and Teodross Avery. When it came time for Ray to do his own record, he wanted Rodney, Lonnie, and Teodross in his corner.

Ray is also respected for his work in Broadway musical theatre. He held the chair as the house drummer at Radio City Music Hall for two years, then went on to the Broadway productions of *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*, *Damn Yankees*, and *The Will Rogers Follies* (directed by Tommy Tune). He is currently the drummer for *Mamma Mia*. The Broadway gigs introduced many theatrical stars to Ray's talent, and he has subsequently toured with Bernadette Peters, Betty Buckley, Tommy Tune, Joel Grey, Michael Feinstein, Leslie Uggams, Shirley Bassey, James Naughton, and Jimmy Webb.

Himself a fusion of the influences that define New York jazz/funk, **Rodney Jones** was drawn to Jimi Hendrix, Johnny Winter, Alvin Lee, and Barney Kessell. At 17, he joined Chico Hamilton's band. After a brief stint with Jaki Byard, he toured with Dizzy Gillespie for three years until his early twenties. After Gillespie, he accompanied Lena Horne, an experience that led to his current role as musical director for Ruth Brown. Rodney has worked with Pee Wee Ellis and Jimmy McGriff, and he toured with Maceo Parker for five years. He has recorded eight albums as a leader, including two for Blue Note: *The Undiscovered Few* and *Soul Manifesto*.

Lonnie Plaxico has been a very versatile bassist throughout his career. Early on he played with Chet Baker, Sonny Stitt, and Junior Cook. After spending time in Wynton Marsalis' band in 1982, Plaxico worked with Dexter Gordon and Hank Jones before joining Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers. He recorded with Dizzy Gillespie and David Murray and led his own sessions for Muse. Lonnie has also performed with Steve Coleman, Greg Osby, Bud Shank, Cassandra Wilson, and Don Byron.

Teodross Avery made his recording debut as a leader on GRP at the age of 20. He had studied classical guitar when he was ten, switched to alto saxophone at age 13, and a few years later took up the tenor saxophone. Avery studied with Joe Henderson while still attending high school. At Berklee College of Music he won the *Sony Innovation Award* in 1993.

Sons of Sound is an independent jazz label founded in 1997 with the goal of bringing jazz music and instrumental technique to a younger audience. The label supports music education through The Commission Project, a nonprofit based in Rochester, NY. Through TCP, Sons of Sound underwrites residencies at Princeton University, including Bob Mintzer in 2003-2004 and Jimmy Heath in 2004-2005.

For additional information see the label's website at <http://sonsofsound.com>. For more about The Commission Project, see <http://tcp-music.org/> and <http://swingnjazz.org>.

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