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For more information, please contact:

Mike Wilpizeski at 718-459-2117

email: mikew@headsup.com

Tour Publicity: **Kelly Johans-DiCillo** at 216-464-2313 (ext. 247)

email: kjohans@headsup.com

NO HOLDING BACK FOR SAX MASTER GERALD ALBRIGHT ON JUNE 15 HEADS UP RELEASE

Pushing The Envelope features special guests Fred Wesley, Earl Klugh and George Duke

Jazz and R&B icon Gerald Albright is considered to be one of the most innovative and successful artists of the last twenty-five years. With the June 15, 2010, release of *Pushing The Envelope* on Heads Up International, a division of Concord Music Group, Albright's super cool side is back. With its polished soul/jazz vibe, *Pushing The Envelope* is a showcase for Albright's remarkably fine balance of songcraft and musicianship, and features special guest appearances by Fred Wesley on trombone, Earl Klugh on acoustic guitar and George Duke on acoustic piano.

Produced and arranged by Albright, *Pushing The Envelope* provides the perfect opportunity for this master musician/saxophonist/songwriter to exhibit his skills. He plays soprano, alto, tenor and baritone saxophones, flutes, bass guitar, and keyboards, and also handles synthesizer, EWI and drum programming. Albright's band on most of the album includes keyboardists Tracy Carter and Luther "Mano" Hanes, guitarist Ricky Watford and drummer Ricky Lawson.

The set opens with "What Would James Do?" an irresistibly soulful Albright original and a celebration of the legacy of "The Godfather of Soul." The track spotlights Albright's trademark strong chops on saxophones and bass, alongside the distinctive sound of Fred Wesley of the original J.B.'s on trombone.

Albright's choice of Wesley is part of a natural progression since Maceo Parker and Julian "Cannonball" Adderly were two of his early influences. "I came up with this tune as a tribute to James Brown," Albright says. "His music was a direct influence on me, and Fred was the obvious choice for a duet on the project."

Alongside eight Albright originals, *Pushing The Envelope* offers two cover tunes: a fresh new take on Michael Jackson and Louis Johnson's "Get On The Floor," and Burt Bacharach and Hal David's classic hit "Close To You." Albright's daughter, Selina, also contributes her vocal skills to both of these well-polished tracks.

"I was in Nairobi, Kenya last year, and I woke up singing the tune 'Close To You,'" recalls Albright. "I heard the whole arrangement in my head that morning. I jotted down some notes and it was one of the first tunes I recorded for the album."

Albright dedicates "Bobo's Groove" to the life and music of American jazz percussionist Willie Bobo (1934-1983), one of the many legendary musicians with whom Albright has worked. "I used to play bass and saxophone with Willie," says Albright. "He schooled me on Latin jazz and provided me with the discipline to become a solid bass player."

Albright's distinctive tone heats up again on "I Found The Klugh," which spotlights Earl Klugh, considered by many to be one of the finest acoustic guitarists today. "Earl and I have been friends for a long time," Albright says. "I've appreciated his music for a number of years, and when I wrote this tune, I heard Earl on it. He has a sound all his own."

While "Capetown Strut" features a sunny African vibe, "The Road To Peace (A Prayer For Haiti)," with keyboard pioneer George Duke on acoustic piano, carries a more serious tone. Both tracks are reminders that *Pushing The Envelope* brings a global message that Albright hopes the whole planet will embrace.

One of the biggest stars of R&B, contemporary and straight-ahead jazz, Gerald Albright has earned his reputation as a "musician's musician." Born in Los Angeles, he began piano lessons at an early age. Albright's love of music picked up considerably when he was given a saxophone that had belonged to his piano teacher. By the time he enrolled at the University of Redlands, he was already a polished saxophonist. Albright decided to switch to bass guitar after he saw Louis Johnson in concert. A few months after graduating from college, he joined jazz pianist/R&B singer Patrice Rushen, who was in the process of forming her own band. Later, when the bass player left in the middle of a tour, Albright replaced him and finished the tour on bass guitar.

During the '80s, Albright became a highly requested session musician, playing on albums by a wide variety of artists – including Anita Baker, Ray Parker, Lola Folana, Atlantic Starr, Olivia Newton-John, the Temptations and Maurice White. He also toured extensively with Les McCann, Jeff Lorber, Teena Marie, the Winans, Marlena Shaw, Quincy Jones, and Whitney Houston, among many others. Albright also went on to record numerous successful solo albums for Atlantic Records. Two albums hit the number one slot on *Billboard's* Top Contemporary Jazz Chart, and were nominated for GRAMMY® Awards in 1989 and 1990. Phil Collins asked him to front a Big Band in 1998, and they toured together. The two of them also recorded one of Albright's tunes, "Chips N' Salsa" on Collins' Big Band Project, entitled *A Hot Night In Paris*. Later that year, Albright released *Pleasures of the Night* with Will Downing on Verve Forecast, which hit No. 1 on *Billboard's* Top Contemporary Jazz Albums chart as well.

Albright moved to GRP in 2002 for the *Groovology* album, and continued to maintain his busy schedule as a session man. His second GRP album, *Kickin' It Up*, followed in 2004. Two years later, he signed with Peak Records, which released the 2008 GRAMMY® nominated *New Beginnings*, and the 2009 GRAMMY® nominated, *Sax for Stax*; both in the category of Best Pop Instrumental Album.

Over the years, Albright has appeared on numerous TV shows such as *A Different World*, *Melrose Place* and *BET Jazz* segments, as well as piloting a show in Las Vegas with *Designing Women* star Meshach Taylor. Albright was selected to be one of 10 saxophonists to play at President Clinton's inauguration ceremony. Along the way, he has sold over a million albums in the U.S. alone and has appeared on nearly 200 albums by other artists.

Pushing the Envelope is easily Gerald Albright's most rewarding session to date. "The title reflects all the tunes on the project," Albright says. "I didn't want to hold anything back. I really wanted to push the envelope and give people a little more edge. I come from the era where we didn't think of a formula – we went from the gut."

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