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MEDIA RELEASE

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Jazz Greats Playing Jazz's Greatest Hits
20th Anniversary All-Star Reunion Band
Ken Peplowski, Clarinet; Byron Stripling, Trumpet
Wycliffe Gordon, Trombone; Eric Schneider, Saxophone
Derek Smith, Piano; Jay Leonhart, Bass; Bob Breithaupt, Drums

Friday, February 11 at 7:30 p.m.

Scottsdale First Assembly

28700 N. Pima Road, Scottsdale 85266

Tickets: \$40; Premium Seating \$55; Student (K-College) \$5

Call (480) 488-0806, toll free (866) 488-0806 or visit www.azmusicfest.org for tickets.

Complimentary valet parking is available.

Over the years, *Arizona Musicfest* has presented literally hundreds of jazz musicians. Tonight's 20th Anniversary Reunion Band is the something special: it includes not only the *crème de la crème* of those who have performed previously at *Arizona Musicfest*, but each one is also recognized as a top musician in his field.

The great Mel Tormé once remarked, "Since the passing of Benny Goodman, there have been too few clarinetists to fill the void that Goodman left. **Ken Peplowski** is most certainly one of those few. The man is magic." The *New York Times* described a concert of Ken's as "Goodman straight up, with a twist of lightning." These quotes only hint at Ken Peplowski's virtuosity: not only is he an outstanding clarinetist and saxophone player, but he's also a charismatic entertainer who has been delighting audiences for over 30 years with his warmth, wit, and musicianship.

"When you grow up in Cleveland, Ohio, playing in a Polish polka band, you learn to think fast on your feet," says Peplowski, who played his first pro engagement when he was still in elementary school. "From my first time performing in public, I knew I wanted to play music for a living." Today, whether in a small group or leading a swing band of all-star musicians, he excels on stage and in the recording studio. Ken has an astounding number of solo albums to his credit and is a perennial top contender in *Downbeat Magazine's* critics' and readers' polls. He tours year 'round, playing in clubs, arts centers, jazz festivals and symphony halls. This is his fourth appearance at *Arizona Musicfest*.

A spectacular trumpeter with a wide range, a beautiful tone, and the ability to blend together many influences into his own style, **Byron Stripling** is also the artistic director of the Columbus Jazz Orchestra, leader of his own quartet, and constantly in demand to play with pops orchestras around the world. Byron is an extroverted performer who brings the audience into his music. The happiness that he exudes through his trumpet, his vocals and his words is reminiscent of Louis Armstrong, yet very much his own.

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Stripling earned his stripes as lead trumpeter/soloist with the Count Basie Orchestra, under the direction of Thad Jones and Frank Foster. He has also played with numerous bands, among them Dizzy Gillespie, Woody Herman and Lionel Hampton, as well as The Lincoln Center Classical Jazz Orchestra, and The Carnegie Hall Jazz Band. Byron has recorded as a leader (*Stripling Now*), is featured on CDs by the New York All Stars (*We Love You, Louis*), and can be heard on recordings with Tony Bennett, Natalie Cole, and numerous Broadway Cast Albums.

Stripling is also an accomplished actor and singer, having starred in the Broadway musical *Satchmo*. In addition, he is a committed educator who conducts seminars and master classes for students in universities, conservatories and high schools. This is his second appearance at *Arizona Musicfest*.

Wycliffe Gordon enjoys an extraordinary career as performer, conductor, composer, arranger and educator. He tours the world performing hard-swinging, straight-ahead jazz for audiences ranging from heads of state to elementary school students. Gordon's musical prowess has been captured on numerous recording, including 15 solo CDs and three co-leader CDs. His latest effort, *Cone and T-Staff*, released in February 2010, is a quintet recording featuring trumpeter Terell Stafford.

In addition to his thriving solo career, he leads the Wycliffe Gordon Quartet, headlining at jazz venues throughout the world. Gordon is a former veteran member of the Wynton Marsalis Septet, The Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra, and the Gully Low Jazz Band.

A gifted composer and arranger, his works have been performed throughout the US and abroad by notable ensembles. His tribute to Muhammad Ali, *I Saw the Light*, which was commissioned and premiered by the Brass Band of Battle Creek, is scheduled for release on DVD this year. Gordon recently completed *Trombone Majesty*, a collection of trombone quartets, trios and duos. One of America's most persuasive and committed music educators, he currently serves on the faculty of the Jazz Arts Program at Manhattan School of Music. This is his second appearance at *Arizona Musicfest*.

Eric Schneider represents the true spirit of jazz, walking in the footsteps of the genre's great giants, yet expressing a vision that is entirely his own. His career and music are constantly responding to the challenge of remaining true to the great traditions of jazz, while continuing to evolve as an artist.

A child prodigy, he started piano lessons at age five, began playing the clarinet at 10, and took up the sax at 15. Hearing Charlie Parker turned his musical life completely around, and he heeded the call, dropping piano lessons, neglecting the clarinet and starting a passionate relationship with the alto saxophone.

After graduating from college, Schneider spent four years on the road with Earl "Fatha" Hines; their union produced the album *Eric and Earl*. He then joined the Count Basie Orchestra and toured with Basie for two years, recording three albums, including the Grammy Award-winning *88 Basie Street*.

The list of luminaries Schneider had performed and toured with includes Tony Bennett, Benny Goodman, Mel Tormé, Ella Fitzgerald, Joe Williams, Sarah Vaughn, Rosemary Clooney and Billy Eckstine. This is second first appearance at *Arizona Musicfest*.

A jazz pianist noted for his versatility and elegance, **Derek Smith** was born and raised in London, England. After taking up the piano in early childhood, he was a staple on the UK jazz scene by the early 1950s, performing regularly with the likes of Kenny Graham, John Dankworth and Kenny Baker. In the mid-'50s Smith moved to New York City, where he became a session musician in great demand by studio orchestras and

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other recording units. He also continued pursuing his jazz aspirations in the company of Benny Goodman and Connie Kay. At the end of the 1960s, he added piano duties in Doc Severinsen's *Tonight Show* orchestra. In the 1970s, he reunited frequently with Goodman, and in 1978 finally led his own recording date, *Love for Sale*. In addition to solo performances, he also regularly appeared in a trio with Milt Hinton and Bobby Rosengarden. This is his fourth appearance at *Arizona Musicfest*.

Drummer **Robert Breithaupt** enjoys a diverse career: musician, arts administrator, professor, author and entrepreneur. Bob is professor of music and chairs the Department of Music Industry Studies at Ohio's Capital University. He has performed, toured and recorded with many great jazz talents. He is the drummer for the Columbus Jazz Orchestra and has accompanied many of the nation's finest orchestras and ensembles. This is his second appearance at *Arizona Musicfest*.

A superior bassist, **Jay Leonhart** has also had a parallel and sometimes overlapping career as a witty lyricist and occasional singer. As a child, he attended the Peabody Conservatory; by the time he went to the Berklee College of Music, he was a jazz musician. After playing with Buddy Morrow (1961) and Mike Longo (1962-63), Jay became a busy freelance musician in New York, working with, among others, Marian McPartland (with whom he recorded in 1971), Jim Hall, Urbie Green, Chuck Wayne, Phil Woods, Gerry Mulligan, Lee Konitz, Don Sebesky, Louie Bellson and pianist Mike Renzi. In the 1980s, Jay became recognized as a lyricist when he began leading his own recording sessions and other singers started performing his songs. As a leader, he has recorded for DMP, Sunnyside, Nesak, and DRG. This is his third appearance at *Arizona Musicfest*.

*Thank you, Emerald Baton Impresarios Susan and Eliot Black
for sponsoring this evening of jazz all stars!*