

BRENAN BROTHERS

the throw down

Featuring:

Ralph Bowen, Terell Stafford,
Geoffrey Keezer, Dana Hall
and Rubim de Toledo

1. The Throw Down

2. Prince of Orphans

3. Violet to Blue

4. Bad Penny

5. Kingdom Come

6. Gemini

7. Were the Colour

8. el Gordo



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All songs



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1. The Throw Down - J. Brennan
2. Prince of Orphans - J. Brennan
3. Violet to Blue - J. Brennan
4. Bad Penny - C. Brennan
5. Kingdom Come - C. Brennan
6. Gemini - R. Bowen
7. Were the Colour - C. Brennan
8. el Gordo - J. Brennan

All tracks - BMI

Recorded by Barry Allen at
Homestead Recorders, Edmonton, Alberta -
April 13th, 2008
Mixed and Mastered by Brad Turner,
Vancouver, British Columbia
Produced by Ralph Bowen
Design by Scott MacAuley

Jim Brennan - Tenor Saxophone
Craig Brennan - Trombone
Geoffrey Keezer - Piano
Rubim de Toledo - Bass
Dana Hall - Drums
Ralph Bowen - Alto Saxophone,
tracks 2,3,4,5,6,8
Terell Stafford - Trumpet,
tracks 3,6

Ralph Bowen plays Selmer Paris saxophones;
Vandoren reeds, mouthpieces, and ligatures ex-
clusively.
Dana Hall plays Yamaha drums and
Bosphorus cymbals.
Terell Stafford plays Selmer trumpets

Brenan Bros. The Throw Down

A person could argue that jazz is one big brotherhood (and sisterhood). But in terms of artistic compatibility, it's hard to top actual blood ties. Jazz teems with examples of brother joining brother in the aim of making music: Heath Jones, Brecker, Marsalis, Grubbs, Eubanks, Strickland, Moutin, Rodriguez, Curtis. With *The Throw Down*, trombonist Craig Brennan and tenor saxophonist Jim Brennan throw their hats in the ring, working for the first time as co-leaders. The band is top-grade, the music new and the chemistry hot from the first count-off.

Hailing from Edmonton, Alberta, the identical twins Craig and Jim are part of a rich Canadian jazz legacy, though they both pursued higher learning in the finest of America's jazz labs: Craig at Boston's New England Conservatory, Jim in the Masters program at New Jersey's Rutgers University. While at Rutgers, Jim came under the tutelage of master saxophonist Ralph Bowen, and the two formed a lasting musical bond. *The Throw Down* gains not only from Bowen's searching musicianship on alto saxophone, but also his skills as a producer.

"The music Craig and Jim write is uniquely their own," says Bowen, and indeed, the two have amassed a strong, envelope-pushing record. Jim's bracing tenor work and inventive wiring can be heard on his most recent album *The Spectre*, with an all-Canadian band that features Rubim de Toledo, the bassist on *The Throw Down*. Toledo, of Brazilian descent, is also founder of the fine Edmonton-based Latin group Bombal, which has enlisted Jim's talents as well. Craig, leading the Modo Trio, has explored new paths for the underestimated trombone, using harmonizers and ambient textures to mix jazz improvisation with electronica and other contemporary forms. The Uninvited, Modo's collaboration with renowned keyboardist-producer Jamie Saft, was one of the sleeper highlights of 2006. A new album with the great Wayne Horvitz is in the works.

The Throw Down captures the Brenans in a fiery straight-ahead context, with the brilliant Geoffrey Keezer raising the flame on piano and Rhodes. Two tracks feature Terell Stafford, the Philadelphia-based trumpeter and educator whose current quintet includes Dana Hall on drums. The versatile Hall, who also appears on Bowen's organ-driven quintet session *Five*, guides the Brenan Brothers consistently on their course. These intertwined histories make for glowing, authoritative music.

Jim's leadoff track, "The Throw Down," ushers in high spirits but a certain dark energy, with horns and piano trading eights over unrelenting 4/4 swing. Craig's "Kingdom Come" reintroduces some of that full-ignition fury, but mood-wise, *The Throw Down* is enticingly mixed: Jim's "Prince of Orphans" and "El Gordo" edge into Rhodes-colored asymmetric funk, while his "Violet to Blue" relies on a classic, simmering minor blues feel. Craig's "Bad Penny" carries tinges of Afro-Cuban 6/8, and his lyrical straight-eighth ballad "Were the Colour" captures legato musings from both horns, highlighting Keezer at peak sensitivity. And Bowen's "Gemini" throws ambiguous, efflorescent harmonies into relief, prompting unexpected turns in form and solo interaction.

"We've been talking about this project for years, but we never seemed to be in the same place long enough," Craig remarks. But even if it's a first in some respects, *The Throw Down* builds on a longstanding musical — not simply genetic — relationship. "Jim and I do play live together, and we've done so since we started making music. After completing other projects, the time was right for this one to be next." And so the Brenans have made good. They've thrown down, as it were, betting not just on an inviolable fraternal bond, but on their individual artistic identities as well.

David R. Adler Philadelphia, August 2008

Thanks to Ralph Bowen, Rubim de Toledo, Dana Hall, Geoffrey Keezer and Terell Stafford for helping to make this disc. Thanks also to John Hyde, Tyler Homby, Darryl Meyer, Joe Lubinsky Mast, Jerrold Dubyk, Al Chapman, Yardbird Suite, Craig McGill, Roger Levesque, CKUA radio, Mario Allende and Simon Fisk. Special thanks to Mount Royal and the Alberta Foundation for the Arts; without their support this disc would not be possible.

For more information on the Brenan Brothers, visit
www.jimbrenan.com