

- 1 Love Requiem 5:09  
(R. Gunn) (East Boogie Music / B3 Music / High Sign Music) SESAC
- 2 All You Need Is Love 6:05  
(F.L. McComb) (Boobeescoot Music / Chrysalis Songs) BMI
- 3 Because I Love You (The Stalker Song) 5:54  
(R. Gunn) (Groid Music Publ. / High Sign Music) SESAC
- 4 I'm in Love With a Stripper 6:30  
(T-Pain / M. Jones) (2 Playas Publishing LLC / Nappypub Music / Universal Music Z Songs / Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp. / Who is Mike Jones Music) BMI
- 5 Bitch, You Don't Love Me 6:09  
(R. Gunn) (Groid Music Publ. / High Sign Music) SESAC
- 6 Love Me in a Special Way 4:59  
(E. DeBarge) (Jobete Music Co. Inc.) ASCAP
- 7 Love for Sale 5:12  
(C. Porter) (Warner Bros. Inc.) ASCAP
- 8 Ghandi's Love 8:28  
(R. Gunn) (Groid Music Publ. / High Sign Music) SESAC
- 9 He Loves Me 6:26 (segue)  
(J. Scott / K. Petzer) (Blue's Baby Music / EMI April Music / Jay Qui Music / Touched by Jazz Music) BMI  
(R. Gunn) (Groid Music Publ. / High Sign Music) SESAC
- 10 The Stalker Song – Alternate Ending 1:29  
(R. Gunn) (Groid Music Publ. / High Sign Music) SESAC

Kahlil Kwame Bell



Brian Hogans



Orrin Evans



Carlos Henderson



Montez Coleman



# Russell Gunn

## *love stories*

Kirk Whalum • Orrin Evans • Carlos Henderson

Montez Coleman • Kahlil Kwame Bell

Introducing Brian Hogans

**HIGHNOTE**  
RECORDS, INC.  
HCD 7183





# THANK YOU

to HighNote Records, Orrin, Tez, Kahlil, Carlos, Hogans, Kirk, Mike, Heidi, Super Dave and Lady U Productions.

What you're holding is probably the most atypical item in the entire HighNote catalog. It comes from the mind of Russell Gunn, whose roots burrow equally deep into hip-hop culture and jazz tradition, and who has consistently refused to see these forces as antagonists. Programmed beats? Live musicians? Gunn is far from the only musician to insist you can have both. But with his Ethnomusicology series, he brought the jazz/hip-hop encounter to the next level, marrying instrumental prowess with innovations in sound technology and urban rhythm. Meanwhile, on six HighNote releases since 1997's *Gunn Fu* (HCD 7003), he has maintained his profile as a top-rank trumpeter, composer and interpreter of pure, unhyphenated jazz as well.

Gunn confounds distinctions like never before on *Love Stories*. "This is basically a hip-hop record," he declares. "The whole thing for me was production and arranging, even though I solo on some of the songs." The theme, obviously, is love, although Gunn has little use for an idealized take on the subject. "Love in all its dysfunction" is his message, and most of humanity will know exactly what he means.

"I spent a lot of time in pre-programming at my home studio before I recorded the live musicians," Gunn explains. But the players worked hard to complete Gunn's vision. Pianist Orrin Evans, bassist Carlos Henderson, drummer Montez Coleman and percussionist Kahlil Kwame Bell have all appeared on Gunn's recordings in the past, and they bring just the openness and flat-out skill that his music requires. Mike Scott, Gunn's friend and a member of Prince's band, plays tasty guitar on two tracks. And

DC-based vocalist Heidi Martin turns in a compelling performance on "Love for Sale."

The two saxophonists, Brian Hogans and Kirk Whalum, deliver a strong combined punch, despite their differences in age and style. Hogans, the newcomer, has highly advanced ears and an explosive alto attack. "It's almost unfair how bad he really is," says Gunn. "I think he will rank up there in the top ten of them all. Most of this record is just Brian f\*\*kin' soloing. I just love hearing him play, and I molded a lot of stuff around him being showcased."

Gunn and Whalum have remained close ever since working together on a tsunami relief project. "It's like a grown man playing basketball with elementary school kids," says Gunn of Whalum's husky tenor sax work on *Love Stories*. "He's so mature and seasoned, his approach to melody, his sound—it's perfect. He came and played on this strictly for the love and I'll never be able to thank him enough."

"Love Requiem," leading off the disc, is from Gunn's 1999 HighNote release of the same name, though it's thoroughly transformed here. "I was married really young," Gunn offers, "and 'Love Requiem' was basically about the demise of that relationship, which started my whole love-hate relationship with love in the first place." Relief from the darkness comes with "All You Need Is Love" by Frank McComb, Gunn's former bandmate in Buckshot Lefonque. "I had the pleasure of playing on Frank's version, and I've been planning on recording it myself for years," Gunn confides. "I had Kirk play on

it because he can really approach it the way I think it should be."

The mood darkens again with "Because I Love You (The Stalker Song)." Gunn wanted to create "that ominous feeling, like a Hitchcock movie, or like 'Jaws,' where you never really see the shark until the end. The title 'Because I Love You' is one of those skewed views of love, and why people do the crazy things they do."

"I'm In Love with a Stripper" (by the rapper T-Pain) is "a highly dysfunctional song," notes Gunn. "You can see how somebody with a weaker mind would fall in love with [a stripper] just from looking at them and fall into an unhealthy stalker-like mentality. My arrangement is pretty close, but I flipped the order of the solo chords to give it a different feel."

"B\*\*\*h, You Don't Love Me," thick with sustained Leslie organ chords, pizzicato string sounds and tight solos across the board, is based on the changes to "St. James Infirmary." "My point is not necessarily 'bitch' meaning 'girl' or 'woman,'" Gunn elaborates. "It's for people who think someone loves them but they're not really loved. It could be the music industry, it could be your boss at work. It's basically a song about being used. For me, more than anything it means the music business."

"Love Me in a Special Way," the '80s power ballad by DeBarge, gets a far hipper drum treatment from Gunn, who took inspiration from R&B singer Tamia's gospel-tinged version as well. Panned electric piano chords set up Whalum's melody statement, which leads into the song's massive chorus. Cole Porter's "Love for Sale," by contrast, takes us into go-go territory, ideal for the buoyant, soulful vocals of Heidi Martin, who phrases

loosely but stays right on top of the tempo. "He Loves Me," by pioneering neo-soul singer Jill Scott, "keeps in line with my theme of dysfunction," says Gunn. "This was on her album *Words and Sounds, Vol. 1*, and it was obvious that she was in love on that record. Ultimately that relationship didn't work out, so it really spoke to what I was trying to get across."

"Gandhi's Love" evokes yet another kind of love, socio-political love, the love of humanity. "A good friend of mine displays paintings of jazz musicians at a club here in Atlanta," Gunn explains. "He came in one day with a painting of Gandhi. Around the same time I watched the movie 'Gandhi' and it got me thinking about the kind of person he was. Especially when he went on hunger strikes—for somebody to sacrifice like that so idiots would stop fighting among themselves was so powerful for me." Regarding the clip of Gandhi's voice at the end, Gunn says: "I'm actually not into sampling and things like that, but I wanted to reiterate his life purpose, to hear him in his own voice."

And there it is: HighNote does hip-hop, Russell Gunn style. People will continue to weigh these musics in the scales; some may always see hip-hop aesthetics and methodology as an affront to the bedrock principles of acoustic jazz. But it's important to realize: For Gunn, his peers and the players coming up under them, the debate has long been over. Far from a fad or a concession to pop values, hip-hop is a major part of the artistic conversation, and it won't be dislodged. While Gunn cherishes and comments on the past as incisively as any jazzier out there, ultimately he's addressing the next epoch in African-American musical history.

—David R. Adler