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**VOCAL LEGACY — NEW CONCERT PACKAGE DEVELOPED BY LEGENDARY TALENT MANAGER**

**JOHN LEVY DEBUTS AT WORLD'S LARGEST JAZZ CONFERENCE ON JANUARY 14<sup>th</sup> IN NYC**

January in New York will be jumping when the 33<sup>rd</sup> Annual IAJE (International Association for Jazz Education) returns to New York January (11-14) to host the world's largest gathering of the global jazz community, with representatives expected from over 35 countries. "This is the perfect place to debut my latest project, Vocal Legacy," said John Levy, who will also be honored at this year's convention. Levy will receive the *A.B. Spellman NEA Jazz Masters Award for Jazz Advocacy*, at an awards presentation and concert on Friday, January 13, for his career as a manager. At age 93, he is the oldest living recipient of the National Endowment for the Arts Jazz Master title, the highest honor presented by the American government to the nation's jazz artists.

**VOCAL LEGACY**, featuring **Clairdee's** song stylings and **Henry Johnson's** mellow tones on guitar and vocals, will make its debut at IAJE on Saturday, January 14<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m. in the Sutton South room at the Hilton Hotel. **The Legacy Ensemble**, under the direction of pianist **Ken French**, includes bassist **Mary Ann McSweeney** and drummer **Dennis Mackrel**.

For Levy, the concept was simple... "Vocal Legacy is a new twist on the classic jazz standard," explained Levy. "Clairdee is a new client, Henry been on my roster for a while. I thought, why not let the two collaborate and create something fresh and new, but familiar. We could give audiences that clamor for the real taste of jazz and engaging performance, without the heavy price tag. I'm offering traditional jazz vocals by younger artists, with a contemporary edgy style to prove that those days of great music are not gone. Their appeal is straightforward, it is an easy to follow recipe for success... a dash of this, a pinch of that! Clairdee own unique sound is a contemporary blend influenced by the sassy irreverence of Carmen McRae, the silky soulfulness of Natalie Cole, and Shirley Horn's understated approach. If you liked the complex melody of Joe Williams, the soulfulness of Lou Rawls and Bill Withers, you'll enjoy hearing the voice of Henry Johnson."

Levy continued, "I titled the group Vocal Legacy because what I envisioned was a legacy of the classic jazz vocal genre. I am passionate about preserving the musical heritage as well as nurturing the continued growth of the art form. Jazz is timeless and the lyrics of the jazz standards still ring true." After more than five decades as a manager of the top names in jazz (and pop), this is John Levy's legacy too.

Henry Johnson and Clairdee share the same passion for the music's melody and lyrics. Their performance on the 14<sup>th</sup> will present a contemporary twist while still maintaining the tradition of the great jazz vocalists before them. The selection of songs for the show was inspired by the great artists who came before them, and while no attempt is made to evoke the styles of their predecessors, Vocal Legacy is a tribute to them and the legacy they left.

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## LEGENDARY TALENT MANGER DEBUTS NEW PROJECT – VOCAL LEGACY

Page 2

The performance will include:

*The Great City* (Salute to Shirley Horn)

*Sunday In New York* (Salute to Shirley Horn)

*Do Something* (Salute to Betty Carter)

*After You've Gone* (Salute to Joe Williams)

*My One & Only Love/Why Did I Choose You* (Salute to Johnny Hartman)

*Summertime* (Salute to Donny Hathaway)

*All They Way* (Salute to Frank Sinatra)

*Deed I Do* (Salute to Helen Humes)

*Someone Else Is Steppin' In* (Salute to Ernestine Anderson)

*For All We Know* (Salute to Nat Cole)

*Alright, Okay, You Win* (Salute to Joe Williams)

**Henry Johnson**, whose musical roots run deep into gospel, blues, and jazz, toured extensively with the groups of pianist Ramsey Lewis and legendary jazz vocalist Joe Williams before forming his own group, Organ Express. Johnson's style is a testament to the influences of Kenny Burrell, George Benson, and most significantly, Wes Montgomery.

**Clairdee**, a longtime member of the International Association for Jazz Education, is also an Artist-In-Residence with the San Francisco Symphony's "Adventures in Music" series, the vocal instructor for University of California Berkeley Jazz Department, and teaches "Jazz & Popular Solo Voice" at Diablo Valley College.

**Ken French**, director of the Legacy Ensemble, is musical director, arranger and pianist who has worked with Clairdee since 1998. With solid early training in classical piano, French discovered his passion for jazz in a high school music program in Seattle, Washington. While studying music composition, piano and philosophy at the University of Puget Sound, he demonstrated an affinity for exploring new perspectives with the classic standards. A performing professional for two decades, he cites influences as diverse as Miles Davis, André Previn, and Stevie Wonder. French is a sought after educator who enjoys conducting clinics and master classes in jazz improvisation, accompaniment, arranging, composition and related topics.

Bassist **Mary Ann McSweeney**, recently back from touring with Lee Konitz, has also performed with Dizzy Gillespie, Jimmy Witherspoon, Betty O'Hara, Stacy Rowles, Rick Margitza, Lynn Ariel, Maiden Voyage Big Band, and the Ed Palermo Big Band to name a few. She has recorded with the Jim Cifelli New York Nonet, the Diva Big Band, Gene Burkert, Nana Simopoulos and Manhattan Vocal Project among others. On the classical side, she has worked with conductors Leonard Bernstein, John Williams and Lalo Schifrin.

Drummer **Dennis Mackrel** is a seasoned musician and clinician, traveling extensively and performing with such ensembles as The Carla Bley Very Large Band, Slide Hampton and the Jazz Masters, The Dizzy Gillespie Alumni Band, The Manhattan Symphony Jazz Orchestra, The Carnegie Hall Classic Jazz Orchestra, The Hank Jones Trio, The Maria Schneider Jazz Orchestra, The Smithsonian Jazz Orchestra, and The American Jazz Orchestra. His compositions and arrangements have been recorded and performed internationally by ensembles such as The WDR Radio Big Band in Cologne, Germany, The RIAS Radio Big Band in Berlin, Germany, The Klüvers Big Band in Aarhus, Denmark, and The McCoy Tyner Big Band. Some of the other notable musicians Dennis has performed with include: Monty Alexander, Don Sebesky, John Pizzarelli, Harry Connick Jr., Lionel Hampton, Buck Clayton, Grady Tate, Kevin Mahogany, Tony Bennett, Joe Williams, Nancy Wilson, Chris Connor, Quincy Jones, Clare Fischer and George Shearing.

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The vast and impressive roster of notables handled by John Levy over the past 50 years includes more than 85 artists, eight of whom are already NEA Jazz Masters: Betty Carter, Herbie Hancock, Shirley Horn, Ahmad Jamal, Abby Lincoln, Billy Taylor, Joe Williams, and Nancy Wilson; and one more, Freddie Hubbard, who will join the ranks with him in 2006. Other notable clients on the Levy roster through the years include Cannonball Adderley, Ernie Andrews, Brook Benton, Randy Crawford, Roberta Flack, Arsenio Hall, Eddie Harris, Johnny Hartman, Henry Johnson, Etta Jones, Yusef Lateef, Ramsey Lewis, Herbie Mann, Letta Mbulu, Les McCann, Wes Montgomery, Billy Paul, Dianne Reeves, Marlena Shaw, George Shearing, Dakota Staton, Stanley Turrentine, Sarah Vaughan, and Maxine Weldon.

Levy, the great-grandson of Louisiana slaves, was born in New Orleans in 1912 and is considered to be the first black talent manager in jazz and popular music. He has made millions of dollars for his clients bringing them from sometimes-total anonymity to the rarefied atmosphere of success.

When “Men, Women, and Girl Singers” (Levy’s life story written by his wife, Devra Hall) was published in 2001, Levy said, “I’d like to be remembered as someone who helped musicians and singers spread the love of jazz around the world.” It seems only fitting that the NEA honor him for that.

Initiated in 1982, the NEA Jazz Master title is the nation’s highest honor in this distinctively American art form. Levy is looking forward to joining his 2006 Fellows – Ray Barretto (percussionist), Tony Bennett (vocalist), Bob Brookmeyer (arranger-composer), Chick Corea (keyboardist), Buddy DeFranco (solo instrumentalist, clarinet), and Freddie Hubbard (solo instrumentalist, trumpet) – at the January 2006 awards ceremony in New York City.

John Levy heads John Levy Enterprises, Inc. in Altadena, California, where he with his wife Devra Hall currently reside.

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### **Editor’s Note:**

Check out the following websites for additional information (bios, news, profiles, calendar of appearances, music samples, photos (JPEGs), and even a video web cast.

Clairdee: [www.clairdee.com](http://www.clairdee.com)

Henry Johnson: [www.henryjohnsonjazz.net](http://www.henryjohnsonjazz.net)

Dennis Mackrel: <http://dennismackrelmusic.com>

Mary Ann McSweeney: <http://maryannmcsweeney.com>

To read more about John Levy, his clients, his life story (*Men, Women and Girl Singers: My Life as a Musician Turned Talent Manager*), the September announcement about the 2006 NEA jazz Master A.B. Spellman Award for Jazz Advocacy, and “John Levy Speaks...”, log on to [www.lushlife.com](http://www.lushlife.com).

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