

# BRAITHWAITE & KATZ

Communications

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **The neo-jazz sextet Ratatet – led by drummer/composer Alan Hall – dissolves genres and expands musical horizons on debut album, *Arctic***

**To be released March 11, 2016 on Ridgeway Records**

With its audacious frontline of trombone and bassoon, the Bay Area-based sextet **Ratatet** is no run-of-the-mill jazz ensemble. The adventuresome spirit exemplified by the band's novel instrumentation is also reflected in leader Alan Hall's cliché-free and melody-rich compositions on ***Arctic***, the outfit's genre-dissolving debut recording. Incorporating prime elements of jazz (from mainstream to fusion), funk, rock, South American idioms and classical music, Ratatet categorically rejects rigid categorization. The band, featuring **Alan Hall** on drums, **Paul Hanson** on bassoon and tenor saxophone, **John Gove** on trombone, **Dillon Vado** on vibraphone, **Greg Sankovich** on keyboards and **Jeff Denson** on acoustic and electric bass and vocals, blends sterling musicianship with unbounded creativity, taking full advantage of the inclusive freedom that characterizes the best of new millennium jazz. In addition, **Paul McCandless**, a member of the famed group, Oregon, is a guest on the album's last track. *Arctic* will be released **March 11, 2016** on **Ridgeway Records**.

Hall's eleven strikingly melodic original compositions can build off of spirited rhythms ("Electrick," "Red State, Blue State," "Word By Word," "Gataxi") or paint effectively moody landscapes ("Arctic," "Returning"). Binding everything together is the singable quality of Hall's writing. "I thought in terms of tight pop song-like structures" he says, "melodies that were stimulating yet accessible and memorable." Full blooded yet succinct improvisations from Hanson and Gove, along with concise and noteworthy contributions from the others, enrich the performances. The darker, low-toned quality of the unique trombone-bassoon front line is cushioned by an active and supportive rhythm section bolstered by the inspired inclusion of Vado's atmospheric vibraphone. Although Hall cites such significant influences as jazz icons Pat Metheny, Wayne Shorter and Chick Corea, as well as classical masters including Ravel, Debussy and Copland, his own music has thoroughly assimilated its sources and found its own voice. The result is thoroughly contemporary jazz that owes its identity to no other composer or ensemble.

A respected drummer who, in addition to his extensive jazz experience, has played with "everything from Pop and Rock to Latin and Klezmer bands," Hall brings the full range of his broad experience to his sextet. "It's hard to define Ratatet's music," Hall claims, "I purposely avoid limiting it to one genre. I also want to explore the full range of what the band's instrumentation can offer. Some songs call for funky electric bass, others for bowing on the acoustic bass. Some songs need organ, some need a muted trombone and a vocal. It's great having this sonic versatility."

Of special interest is bassoonist Paul Hanson's occasional employment of startling sonic effects on his electrified instrument as in "Gataxi," where his unaccompanied introduction and vigorous exchanges with trombonist Gove reveal a boldly altered bassoon tone. Hanson emerges as an integral key to the band's unique approach. "Paul is a Bay Area fixture." Hall asserts, "Anyone who has heard him knows he's one of a kind."

A visual artist as well as a musician-composer, Hall was inspired by celebrated works from a host of iconic painters. Song titles including "Basquiat (inspired by Jean Michel Basquiat)" "What Cy's Eyes See (inspired Cy Twombly)" and "The Marriage of Arnolfini" confirm the links between his passions. For the musicians in Ratatet, *Arctic* is as personally revealing as an artist's brushstroke. As Hall states, "the truth of who you are is on display."

Members of Ratatet have collaborated with such celebrated artists as Lee Konitz, Kenny Werner, Bela Fleck and the Flecktones, Ralph Alessi, Paul McCandless, Cuong Vu and the Cirque Du Soleil theatrical ensemble.

Ridgeway Records is dedicated to the recording and perpetuation of jazz and related styles of music. The label is committed to providing artists a platform to promote improvisation, artistic growth and audience development. The label is a part of Ridgeway Arts, Inc. – a new non-profit serving the Bay-Area jazz scene led by renowned jazz bassist/composer/educator/community activist Jeff Denson. The organization is built upon a series of initiatives designed to enhance and fortify the Bay Area scene, and to make a strong contribution to the national landscape of jazz and the arts in general. Ridgeway Arts will present concerts, organize educational and community outreach activities, and more.

<http://www.ratatet.com/>

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