

## **The Raga Bop Trio**

Steve Smith – Drumset and Konnakol

George Brooks – Tenor and Alto Saxophones

Prasanna – Electric and Acoustic Guitars

Drummer **Steve Smith**, saxophonist **George Brooks**, and guitarist **Prasanna** - three remarkable musical talents expressing a distinctly twenty-first century perspective on global music - have collaborated on a new recording entitled **Raga Bop Trio**. Steve Smith, George Brooks and Prasanna released **Raga Bop Trio** on July 20, 2010 on the AbstractLogix label. The Raga Bop Trio undertook an extensive USA tour during November and December of 2010 in support of their debut release.

The music of The Raga Bop Trio is unique in that the group's direction is grounded in jazz, with its focus on groove, atmosphere and harmonic adventure, yet also deeply rooted in the rhythmic and melodic traditions of Indian classical music.

The rhythmic foundation of the trio comes from drummer **Steve Smith**. After spending 1972-76 at the Berklee College of Music, Steve arrived on the international stage in his early twenties touring and recording with Jean-Luc Ponty and Ronnie Montrose. Steve is renowned as the creative underpinning of rock super group **Journey**, which he joined in 1978. In 1985 Smith left Journey to pursue his original passion, jazz. A short list of the jazz luminaries with whom Steve has worked includes Mike Mainieri's Steps Ahead, Michael Brecker, Soulbop Band with Randy Brecker and Bill Evans, Ahmad Jamal, Zakir Hussain, Mike Stern, Stanley Clarke, Victor Wooten, Richard Bona, and Dave Liebman. Steve remains a first call session player and has appeared on hit records with Mariah Carey, Bryan Adams, Zucchero, Andrea Bocelli, Ray Price and Savage Garden. Smith is the bandleader of the fusion juggernaut **Vital Information**.

Steve consistently wins polls in jazz and drum publications as one of the world's most extraordinary drummers. Modern Drummer Magazine's readers voted him the #1 All-Around Drummer five years in a row. In 2001 Modern Drummer Magazine named Steve as one of the Top 25 Drummers of All Time, in 2002 he was voted into the Modern Drummer Hall of Fame and in 2003 his Hudson Music DVD *Steve Smith Drumset Technique - History of the U.S. Beat* was voted #1 Educational DVD of 2003. The 2008 and 2009 Drum! Magazine readers poll voted Smith #1 Jazz Drummer and voted *Steve Smith Drum Legacy - Standing On The Shoulders Of Giants* the #1 educational DVD of 2009. Not content to rest on these laurels, Steve has further distinguished himself by becoming fluent in the rhythmic

language of southern India. He has taken the complex phrasings of mridingam and kanjira and translated them to the drumset. In addition he has mastered konnakol, the complex vocalization of traditional Indian drum rhythms.

**George Brooks** is a prolific and diverse saxophonist and composer, acclaimed for successfully bridging the worlds of jazz and Indian classical music. He is the founder of several important Indian fusion groups including **Summit** with Zakir Hussain and Steve Smith, **Bombay Jazz** with Larry Coryell and Ronu Majumdar and the **Kirwani Quartet** with Dutch harpist Gwyneth Wentink and Indian flute maestro Hariprasad Chaurasia. Brooks' deep understanding of raga has led to collaborations with many of India's most respected artists. He has performed at major festivals throughout India and was a featured soloist on John McLaughlin's 2008, Grammy nominated *Floating Point* CD. His facility with genre bending music has led to distinctive collaborations with Terry Riley, Yo-Yo Ma, The Mark Morris Dance Company and Merchant/Ivory Productions. Admired as an innovator, Brooks remains grounded in American vernacular music and has worked with blues greats Etta James, Albert Collins and Roy Rogers, R&B legends the Temptations, Mary Wilson and the Shirelles, jazz innovators Henry Kaiser, Wadada Leo Smith, Anthony Braxton and Jaki Byard and contemporary singer song writers Jackie Greene, Barbara Higbie, and Leni Stern.

Brooks has performed on many of the world's great stages including the Barbican and Queen Elizabeth Hall in London, the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, the Esplanade in Singapore and the Hong Kong Cultural Center. He has appeared at major international festivals throughout North America, Europe, India and Japan.

"How can you play South Indian Carnatic music on a guitar?" This is the question that was on everyone's mind when **Prasanna** daringly took to performing one of the world's most ancient musical forms on one of the world's most modern instruments - the electric guitar! Prasanna has crafted a unique approach that combines the subtlest of microtones and elaborate ornamentation essential to Carnatic music, and then spans the centuries by skillfully incorporating ultra-modern jazz melodies, greasy funk and stadium-rock distortion. In a world studded with brilliant guitarists, "Prasanna plays like nobody else on the planet"! As a guitarist and composer, Prasanna's prolific body of work is as diverse as it is integrated. He has recorded over eleven traditional Carnatic albums and several original CDs including *Be the Change* and the highly acclaimed Carnatic/Rock Hendrix tribute album *Electric Ganesha Land*.

Prasanna is an acclaimed film composer having scored for feature films and the 2009 Oscar award winning documentary film *Smile Pinki*. Prasanna has worked regularly on multi-platinum Indian film soundtracks for such top composers as Illyaraja and Oscar winner A.R. Rahman. His orchestration and arranging credits include the title score of the Oscar nominated Bollywood film *Lagaan*.

Prasanna has a degree in Naval Architecture from the prestigious Indian Institute of Technology, Madras and an honors degree from the famed Berklee College of Music in Boston from where he graduated Magna Cum Laude. He has performed with such diverse musicians as Joe Lovano, Umayalpuram Sivaraman, Vijay Iyer, Dave Douglas, Hariprasad Chaurasia, Victor Wooten, Trilok Gurtu, Anthony Jackson, Airtto Moreira, Dr. T.K. Murthy, Omar Hakim, 'Vikku' Vinayakram, Jeff Coffin and others. Some of the top international festivals at which Prasanna has performed are the North Sea Jazz Festival, Middelheim Jazz Festival, Festival Guitares Du Monde, La Fete de la Musique, Les Orientales De St. Florent Le Vieil, and the Festival Jazz En Artois.

Prasanna is the President of Swarnabhoomi Academy of Music, India's first international college for contemporary Jazz, Rock and World Music.

Together, as **The Raga Bop Trio**, Steve Smith, George Brooks and Prasanna create a musical form that is instantly recognizable, rhythmically dynamic and breathtakingly original.