

NOJO – NEUFELD-OCCHIPINTI JAZZ ORCHESTRA
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Celebrating its 10th anniversary in 2004, multiple JUNO and National Jazz Award nominee NOJO continues to create a stir with its bold and original music. The group's newest CD of original music, *City of Neighbourhoods*, features jazz legend Sam Rivers, and will be released in the U.S.A. on February 8, 2005 in time for the group's tour of the eastern United States.

Performing the compositions of pianist Paul Neufeld and guitarist Michael Occhipinti, NOJO's many influences include African music, early blues, contemporary classical music, funk and r&b, and a century of jazz, yet the group's recordings reveal a distinct and cohesive sound. The Los Angeles Times has called NOJO "one of the most imaginative large ensembles on the current jazz scene" and it is no surprise that the band's music has intrigued guest soloists such as saxophone great Joe Lovano, trombonist Ray Anderson, trumpeter Kenny Wheeler, and most notably clarinetist Don Byron and saxophone giant Sam Rivers, both of whom have recorded with NOJO. Don Byron appears on NOJO's JUNO nominated Cds *You Are Here* (1998) and *Highwire* (2002), and the group's new CD features Sam Rivers on compositions written to feature his work on flute, and soprano and tenor saxophones.

City of Neighbourhoods was recorded during the summer of 2003, after NOJO toured Canada with Sam Rivers. At 81 years of age, Sam Rivers remains a pioneering force in jazz, and runs his own Grammy nominated big band. NOJO was thrilled to work with Sam, and he recently returned to Canada to perform concerts with the band in Toronto and Montreal.

Since in inception in 1994, NOJO has performed at numerous jazz festivals and venues, including the prestigious Umbria Jazz Winter Festival in Orvieto, Italy, the *Stranger Than Paranoia* festival in Holland, and the Festival de Jazz de Montreal, often in the company of clarinetist Don Byron, who has been a frequent guest soloist since 1997. Covering a broad stylistic range with an energy that few ensembles can match, NOJO performs with a friendly spirit and a high level of musicianship that puts it on par with the best large ensembles anywhere. The group has been profiled on Italian TV's RAI UNO, TV Ontario's *Studio 2*, and on CBC's *JazzBeat*.

Over its ten year history NOJO has always challenged itself to undertake new creative projects. Whether continuing to perform with the top international names in jazz such as Sam Rivers, or performing an improvised funk set with rapper Phatt Al, NOJO has distinguished itself from other jazz groups through the band's willingness to explore new ideas. In October of 2003 NOJO performed in Toronto as an expanded ensemble that included a 12-piece string ensemble, and this group was a featured performer at the 2004 Distillery Jazz Festival in Toronto. Composers Neufeld and Occhipinti have already begun preparing music for strings for a future CD.

NOJO won the JUNO Award for *Best Contemporary Jazz Album* for its 1995 self-titled debut CD, and its three subsequent recordings, *FireWater* (1996), *You Are Here* (1998) and *Highwire* (2002) have all been JUNO nominees. NOJO also won the 2002 National Jazz Award for *Best Big Band*, and the group has been nominated for the same award in both 2003 and 2004. NOJO's Cds are available on True North Records, distributed in Canada by Universal Music, and in the U.S. by Rounder Records.