

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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[kevin@thekevinsun.com](mailto:kevin@thekevinsun.com)**After Years In Music School in Boston, Great On Paper To Release Début Album,  
GREAT ON PAPER****Out February 11, 2016, on Endectomorph Music**Featuring: **Kevin Sun** (tenor saxophone), **Isaac Wilson** (piano), **Simón Willson** (bass, no relation to Isaac), **Robin Baytas** (drums)*“A young post-bop collective well equipped with knowledge both in and out of the canon” — The New York Times**“[They] can essentially play anything they want. The results are just as diverse as shuffling through anyone’s iPod” — Ethan Iverson, pianist of The Bad Plus**“...great in person” — Rio Sakairi, Artistic Director, The Jazz Gallery (NYC)***Upcoming CD Release Shows:**

—February 11, 2016 – The Jazz Gallery (NYC)

—March 6, 2016 – Twins Jazz (D.C.)

[www.greatonpaper.bandcamp.com](http://www.greatonpaper.bandcamp.com)[www.endectomorph.weebly.com](http://www.endectomorph.weebly.com)

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**Endectomorph Music** is exceedingly proud to present *Great On Paper*, the eponymous first release by the Boston-born quartet **Great On Paper**. *Great On Paper* collects six compositions, two-thirds by three-quarters of the band, plus a cover of a four-part chorale by 20<sup>th</sup>-century French ornithologist, organist, and synesthete Olivier Messiaen and a spontaneous, one-take rendition of the jazz standard “I Hear a Rhapsody.”

The album was recorded in a single six-hour tracking session at **Sear Sound** in New York on March 7, 2015. Following a last-minute studio cancellation that presented a serendipitous opportunity to record at this illustrious space, Great On Paper hopped on a bus from Boston to document several new and old compositions that had been fermenting in the collective band book. The ensuing 37 minutes of master takes, recorded in an intimate single-room setting, are at times frenetic, placid, unhinged, meditative, exfoliating, and always fresh.

“It was just, like, you know, we have four hours or whatever, so let’s just f——ing go for it,” says bassist Simón Willson, “And that’s what I think was nice about the record.”

The members of Great On Paper first played together in 2011 in a practice room session at the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston. After continuing to play together informally over the next couple of years, they formally banded together in the fall of 2013 as the NEC Jazz Honors Ensemble, a designation that provided two semesters of stipend money, regular faculty coaching, and a big, fancy concert at the school's imposing Jordan Hall.

Over many hours of practice room experimentation under the watchful ears of **Ted Reichman** (Claudia Quintet, Anthony Braxton), the band dug into a mountain of transmutable material, variously negotiating compositions by Carla Bley, Steve Coleman, Ornette Coleman, Herbie Nichols, Angelo Badalamenti, and many others. Catholicity of tastes as well as both seamless and jarring stylistic transitions have remained a hallmark of GOP's style ever since.

"There's this postmodern thing of flowing from one style to another and not needing to explain the connection to the audience from one song to another," says pianist Isaac Wilson. "Maybe they're scratching their heads at times because they don't know why certain things are juxtaposed, but I'm a big proponent of just allowing each listener to make their own associations in the moment."

As pianist **Ethan Iverson** (The Bad Plus, Billy Hart Quartet) writes in the album's liner notes: "Everyone in the band has studied all sorts of jazz music and can essentially play anything they want. The results are just as diverse as shuffling through anybody's iPod." For better or for worse, GOP is a millennial band, and its members regard stylistic multitude as both an aesthetic tool and an imprint of their 21<sup>st</sup>-century environs.

"It's something I'm really interested in: how we as musicians try to mirror and embrace the way that people now listen to music," says Wilson, "which is having a YouTube video open on their iPhone playing some goofy music video, and then having Spotify Premium open playing a Taylor Swift song, and having their Sam Rivers album on their iPod or on whatever it is, and hearing some cool electronic music on SoundCloud. It's all happening at once."

"We're able to switch hats so quickly between songs—or even within a song, you know—so it can be harder to grasp in a way," says drummer Robin Baytas, "but I also think that's our concept, in a way—that we're able to put on a lot of different hats. There are so many things in this day and age to get really good at, so we just have to take whatever we have and put it all together and just make that the thing: our thing."

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The album opens with "**Winnings**," a back-of-the-napkin composition by saxophonist Kevin Sun. Composed from the germ of a melodic cell that, played quickly and in a higher register on piano vaguely recalled the ring of a slot machine, Sun dubbed it "Winnings." At the top, Sun plays the theme unaccompanied before drums and bass

enter in rapid-pulse pedal point to support continued iterations of the theme, laying the foundation for open-form improvisations beginning with Sun and then continuing with pianist Wilson. The theme reprises over an even quicker pedal point, with Willson and Robin drawing “Winnings” to a close with a lockstep fade to silence.

“**O Sacrum Convivium**” (“**O Sacred Feast**”), a choral setting of the Latin Eucharistic text often attributed to St. Thomas Aquinas, was composed by Olivier Messiaen shortly before the outbreak of the Second World War in Europe. Sun first heard the piece after whimsically clicking on a YouTube link in his Facebook feed, which presented a score scrolling alongside the audio. “I listened to it every night before going to bed for weeks,” he says. “I just couldn’t believe the sound, that it was just four voices.” This arrangement liberally adapts the four-part choral harmony to this quartet configuration, an unadorned recitation of the setting without solos and unnecessary filigree.

“**Negative Bird**” is nominally a twelve-bar blues loosely inspired by sets of chord changes made famous by Charlie Parker; it is also an exercise in negative harmony, a concept Sun first heard about from pioneering M-Base saxophonist and spontaneous composer Steve Coleman. During the summer of 2013, Sun attended several of Coleman’s open music workshops, a series which had sponsored by The Jazz Gallery for over a decade, and soon after began tinkering with an alternative approach to Western functional harmony where resolution and voice-leading reverses its basic gravitational pull, forever tending upward rather than downward. A negative Bud Powell-inspired intro gives way to a snaking melodic statement, with brief negative interludes leading to solos by Sun and Wilson.

“**Slimy Toboggan**,” composed by bassist Simón Willson and dubbed the “most deconstructed music of the date” by Iverson, also bears the most evocative title on the album, although the moniker emerged *ex post facto*. “The compositional process was very unemotional,” Willson says. “I used a series of intervals while thinking of contraction and expansion, starting more chromatic and then using minor and major seconds, expanding to fifths, sixths, and sevenths, eventually kind of inverting as well.” A brief statement of the melody, peppered with occasional quarter tones by Sun and other subtle dissonances, leads to a period of ominously still, prolonged inaction, suggesting the trace of another compositional influence, 20<sup>th</sup>-century American composer Morton Feldman.

Willson, a top-call bassist in Boston and the regular bassist in trumpeter Jason Palmer’s band at Wally’s Jazz Café, doesn’t deny the influence of contemporary bassists Thomas Morgan and Ben Street that Iverson identifies in his playing. “It’s almost like you can hear their values when you play,” Willson says. “They never show off, it’s always very honest, kind of understated, and the sound is beautiful: that really earthy, dark bass sound.” Aside from the traces of elders like Wilbur Ware, Paul Chambers, Charlie Haden that Willson has studied to complement his admiration of these two modern bassists, horn players such as Lester Young have also proved a key melodic influence. He recalls a teacher at NEC, Anthony Coleman, once saying to him: “There’s too much bass in your playing,” and since then Willson has been equally attuned to studying the

supporting role of the bass as he has been to its potential to sing melodies like any vocalist.

Heralding the banner of one particularly recognizable branch of modern jazz, pianist Isaac Wilson's "**Torsion**" emerged as a kind of cathartic release, perhaps even a kind of musical enema. "I remember saying, 'Okay, I have all of these elements of modern jazz language kind of floating around in my head, and I want to see if putting them down on paper and getting them into a tune would actually allow me to move forward compositionally,'" the composer says. Although heavily influenced by a diverse range of jazz pianists as Ahmad Jamal, Paul Bley, and Andrew Hill, among others, Wilson, a native of Los Angeles, has also long had the sound of contemporary jazz artists such as Gerald Clayton, Walter Smith III, Ambrose Akinmusire, and others in his ear.

According to Wilson, elements of this distinctively slick sound include the odd-meter vamp with piano-bass-doubled ostinato and the minor seven flat six sound, which Wilson theorizes has much to do with the influence of gospel music, among other influences. Although perhaps the most complex form on paper for the band to navigate, the track features a fluid solo by the composer as well as the now-ubiquitous drum solo over vamp before the reprise of the melody; Baytas, however, has some surprises to share, unleashing a barrage of reserve sounds with trinkets and small cymbals, inspired by contemporary drum kit colorists such as John Hollenbeck. Ultimately, this challenging form does not interfere with spontaneous composition. "For me, at times that's the most problematic thing about modern jazz—or that kind of modern jazz," says Wilson, "That you can really become a slave to the form, counting bars and trying to make the harmony, rather than feeling like you're really free over it."

As a neat complement to the formal obstacles immediately preceding in "**Torsion**," the album ends with "**I Hear a Rhapsody**," a familiar standard that grants maximum improvisational freedom. With some time to spare at the end of the studio session, one of the band members called the standard, and the track captures the moment of Sun's impromptu, count off-less plunge into the tune. Everybody in the band gets a piece of the action, including Willson's only two featured solo choruses on the album and a solo statement by Baytas featuring the hi-hat.

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*Great On Paper*, as Willson and others in the band note, is admittedly not the most polished album, but here polish plays second fiddle to other aesthetic concerns: namely, capturing the energy and off-the-cuff chemistry of a group of friends and young musicians making their first recorded statement together.

"We know each other so well that sometimes it's a bad thing—like if you get too emotional, it shows a lot in the music," Willson says. "If we had a bad day or whatever, in that way it's quote-unquote less professional, and sometimes it so happens that

something's a little off, but that's kind of what jazz is to me: the risk of sometimes sucking and sometimes being incredible. If you play it safe all the time, then what's the point?"

According to Baytas, GOP is willing to eschew safer choices precisely because of the relationships in the band. "The chemistry between two or multiple people is definitely the element that takes precedent, because the trust there will allow the music to turn into something," he says. "You open doors together as the song progresses, and your trust in each other allows you to take more courageous leaps, those courageous leaps lead to other more courageous leaps, and it grows exponentially from there."

Of course, all of the above doesn't answer the basic question: why, among the endless and ever-more-easily accessible archive of recorded music, listen to improvised music recorded by a bunch of relatively inexperienced, young 20-somethings fresh out of music school? Rejecting the tautological argument that music should speak for itself, GOP's band consensus centers on the aforementioned youthful chemistry, as well as the need for refreshing, perhaps naïve idealism—an argument that connects the '80s Marsalis brothers band to the original beboppers to all other youth-oriented creative enterprises.

"I think [people would like to listen to us] exactly because we're in school—because young people have newer ideas of how things should be, because younger people have a different view of the world because we haven't been here for that long," Willson says. "We imagine things to be different maybe from what they are in reality, or we would like to change things from the way they are, so in a way the music is more idealistic."

But this idealism also comes tempered with a generous helping of levity.

"There's a certain irony to our band name; we don't have to take ourselves too seriously," says Wilson. "Over time there's the culture that's created within the band, and there's an appreciation of the absurd in the band—I don't want to say nihilism, because that's too dark—but we all get it."

Sun concurs. "Ethan put it best: This is our first record, we went into studio resigned to our fate, which I'll leave unsaid because we haven't seen it unfold yet," he says. "And now it's on to the next one."

"Sometimes technique gets in the way of truth, almost," says Willson, waxing philosophical. "And I'm all for technique, but I think in this album there is truth, whatever it meant at that moment when we recorded it."

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**Robin Baytas** is a drummer and 2014 graduate of The New England Conservatory of Music in Boston, MA, and is currently enrolled in the Masters Program at the Manhattan School of Music. In high school, Robin performed and developed

relationships with local legends Billy Hart, Steve Turre, Christian McBride, Geri Allen, and Claudio Roditi. He currently freelances around New York, performing frequently at venues such as The Blue Note and Bar Next Door.

**Kevin Sun** is a saxophonist, 2014 graduate of Harvard College, and 2015 graduate of The New England Conservatory of Music. Kevin was the 2013 Vandoren Emerging Artist Competition winner and the 2012 Yamaha Young Performing Artists Competition winner in the jazz saxophone category. He was previously the editor of *Jazz Speaks*, the blog of The Jazz Gallery, a nonprofit jazz cultural center in New York City.

**Simón Willson** is a bassist hailing from Santiago, Chile. Simon attended the Escuela Moderna de Music preparatory program in Santiago and decided to pursue his musical studies at The New England Conservatory of Music in Boston, MA, where he completed his undergraduate degree in the spring of 2015. Apart from keeping a busy sideman schedule, Simon composes music and has taught several students and masterclasses in his home country. He plays every Friday and Saturday in trumpeter Jason Palmer's band at Wally's Café Jazz Club.

**Isaac Wilson** is a pianist and composer. Isaac performs regularly as both a leader and as a sideman around the greater Boston area, and graduated in the spring of 2015 with a B.M. in Jazz Performance from The New England Conservatory; he currently attends Berklee College of Music as a member of the inaugural class of Masters Jazz Program candidates. His teachers include Ran Blake, Frank Carlberg, Fred Hersch, Cecil McBee, Alan Pasqua and Edward Simon, and he has studied classical piano with Stephen Drury, Jeffrey Lavner, and Sophia Rosoff.

At this juncture, Baytas, Willson, and Wilson are all, by an ironic turn of events, back in school completing Masters Degrees in music at Manhattan School of Music, NEC, and Berklee, respectively. Sun lives in Brooklyn and will begin teaching as a Teaching Assistant to Vijay Iyer at Harvard University, Sun's alma mater, in the spring 2016 semester. They are all scheming as to ways of escaping the academy; for now, they continue playing, composing, experimenting, and working on the next big thing.