

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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## Maya Azucena Kicks Off The Rhythm Road: American Music Abroad Tour to Asia

**WHO/WHAT:**

Maya Azucena and her band, comprised of **Ivan Katz** on drums, **Bruce Mack** on keyboard and **Christian Ver Halen** on guitar, is touring with The Rhythm Road: American Music Abroad program, co-produced by Jazz at Lincoln Center and the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. Over the past two years, the program has presented 17 tours visiting 120 cities, in 66 countries, on 5 continents.

**WHEN:**

April 2 - May 1, 2008\*

**WHERE:**

**BURMA:** (April 2-7); **CHINA:** (April 8-20); **PHILIPPINES** (April 21-25); **SRI LANKA** (April 26-May 1)\*

\*Dates and locations subject to change

**HOW:**

Please visit **The Rhythm Road: American Music Abroad** at [www.jalc.org/TheRoad](http://www.jalc.org/TheRoad) for more information on this program. In addition, you can listen to music and stories about the program for free on **Jazz at**

Lincoln Center Radio at

<http://www.jalc.org/jazzcast/program.asp?programNumber=205>

**BACKGROUND:**

The program, produced by Jazz at Lincoln Center and the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, is designed to foster cultural exchange with audiences worldwide. Between Fall 2007 and Spring 2008, six jazz quartets and four urban music ensembles are visiting regions including Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Middle East. Participating bands were selected from a national pool of applicants in a competitive audition process.

International tour activities include public concerts, master classes, lecture-demonstrations, workshops, jam sessions, media outreach and collaborations with local musicians. The program also incorporates free performances by each quartet hosted by Jazz at Lincoln Center at Dizzy's Club *Coca-Cola* in New York and at The National Geographic Society in Washington, D.C.

"Cultural diplomacy allows artists and audiences to share in a common experience that reaches beyond differences in culture, religion, language and generations and to connect as people without borders," said Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Professional and Cultural Exchanges Alina L. Romanowski.

"In the historic tradition of such musical alumni as Armstrong, Ellington, and Gillespie, these tours focus on diverse geographic audiences and the dynamic interaction born of music. The emphasis on education as well as performance leads to powerful exchange for our audiences and musicians alike," said Susan John, Director of Touring for Jazz at Lincoln Center.

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With musical influences ranging from Earth Wind & Fire to Ella Fitzgerald, **MAYA AZUCENA** bridges the genres of soul, hip-hop, world and funk music. Through their "raw soul" sound and progressive lyrics, the band seeks to uplift communities worldwide. Best known for riveting

tracks and spirited live performances, Azucena and her band recently released their sophomore album, *Junkyard Jewel*, to wide acclaim.

**Maya Azucena (Vocalist)**, a Brooklyn native, sees her music as a voice of and for the people. Recently named *Best Alternative Artist of the Year* by Allhiphop.com and nominated by soultracks.com as *Best Female Vocalist of the Year*, Azucena has shared the stage with such legendary artists as Roberta Flack, Lupe Fiasco and John Legend. She has toured extensively in the United States and Europe and won two Croatian GRAMMY® awards for her collaboration with Croatian superstar Gibonni earlier this year.

**Ivan Katz (Drums)**, a Manhattan native, has been playing drums for 20 years. He holds a B.A. in Music Studies from Skidmore College and specializes in soul, hip-hop, reggae and dance beats. Katz's unique style results from immersion in the sounds and vibrations of New York City. He has shared the stage with reggae superstars including Toots Hibbert, Sugar Minott and Citizen Cope and participated in Jazz at Lincoln Center's The Rhythm Road: American Music Abroad tour to Southeast Asia in 2006.

**Bruce Mack (keyboards)** is a multi-instrumentalist and educator working in the genres of R&B, funk, jazz, experimental music, and hip-hop. He is the leader of the abstract/expressionist band Tricky Dilemma, a senior member of the collective Burnt Sugar, and also plays with the Arkestra Chamber. Over the course of his long career, Mack has performed with such talents as Dean Bowen, Me'Shell NdegeOcello, and Brian Hardgrove. He has created music for PBS/Thirteen and MTV, and has also co-produced two compilation CDs for guitarist Vernon Reid's Black Rock Coalition. Mack's visionary teaching style was the focus of the 2006 Tribeca Film Festival documentary *When Fried Eggs Fly*. He is committed to music education for children and currently oversees a special initiative at The Door, in New York City.

**Christian Ver Halen (Guitar)** is originally from Chicago and has been on the New York music scene for over six years as a guitarist, songwriter and producer. He has performed at all of the major venues in the city and has toured in the United States and Europe. As a leader of the group "The Rooftop," Ver Halen released the critically acclaimed album *A Live Shot* in 2006. One hundred percent of the album's sales are donated to Music Rising, a non-profit organization specifically aimed at assisting musicians affected by Hurricane Katrina.

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**Jazz at Lincoln Center** is dedicated to inspiring and growing audiences for jazz. With the world-renowned Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra and a comprehensive array of guest artists, Jazz at Lincoln Center advances a unique vision for the continued development of the art of jazz by producing a year-round schedule of performance, education and broadcast events for audiences of all ages. These productions include concerts, national and international tours, residencies, weekly national radio and television programs, recordings, publications, an annual high school jazz band competition and festival, a band director academy, a jazz appreciation curriculum for children, advanced training through the Juilliard Institute for Jazz Studies, music publishing, children's concerts, lectures, adult education courses and student and educator workshops. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Wynton Marsalis, Jazz at Lincoln Center will produce nearly 2,000 events during its 2007-08 season in its home in New York City, Frederick P. Rose Hall, and around the world. For more information, visit [www.jalc.org](http://www.jalc.org).

**U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs** promotes mutual understanding between the United States and other countries through international educational and exchange programs. Through its Cultural Programs Division, the Bureau supports a variety of cultural exchanges programs that support U.S. foreign policy, foster America's artistic excellence, and demonstrate America's respect and appreciation for other cultures and

traditions. The Rhythm Road: American Music Abroad program presents selected professional American performers of jazz and urban music on concert tours in countries with limited exposure to live American culture. For more information, visit <http://exchanges.state.gov/education/citizens/culture/index.htm>.

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*For more information please visit <http://www.jalc.org/TheRoad>*

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*The Rhythm Road: American Music Abroad program is made possible with underwriting support from the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the United States Department of State.*

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