

GRAMMY-winning, guitarist **Lee Ritenour**, AKA Captain Fingers, has a wide-ranging array of material to revive, as evidenced by *A Twist of Rit*. 2015 commemorates 40 years since his debut recording, *First Course*, on Epic Records. *A Twist of Rit*, set for release on July 31, 2015 via Concord Records, is a magnificent follow-up to his critically acclaimed 2012 album *Rhythm Sessions*.

A Twist of Rit spotlights Ritenour with several long-time musical cohorts, including keyboardists **John Beasley**, **Dave Grusin** and **Patrice Rushen**; saxophonist **Ernie Watts**; bassists **Melvin Lee Davis**, **Tom Kennedy** and **Dave Weckl**; and percussionist **Paulinho Da Costa**. That core group is augmented by drummers **Ronald Bruner Jr.** and **Chris Coleman**, along with **Bob Sheppard** on saxophone and **Rashawn Ross** playing flugelhorn. Joining Ritenour for the first time are guitarists **Michael Thompson**, **Wah Wah Watson** and **David T. Walker**, plus Japanese pianist **Makoto Ozone**.

A Twist of Rit features Ritenour's soaring guitar lines with 12 of his compositions ranging from the funky fusion and sophisticated jazz that he has become so well known for. All of the material was captured by his longtime GRAMMY Award-winning engineer Don Murray and the tracks were recorded with everyone performing together, old-school, but with modern, state-of-the-art recording techniques. Another album highlight will be the debut of Hungarian guitarist **Tony Puztai**, Grand Prize Winner of Ritenour's biennial, 2014 Six String Theory Competition. Puztai was selected from over 500 entries and 72 participating countries. "People such as Ernie, Patrice, Dave and John Beasley, who worked closely on [my album] *Wes Bound* – along with Melvin Davis and percussionist Paulinho Da Costa, go back with me to the very beginning," Ritenour says. "Ernie had been on so many of my projects. And, of course, I couldn't do this without Dave Grusin, who is my best buddy, and who has been involved in almost all of my recordings. All of these people are very close friends of mine. We've had this musical mafia for twenty, thirty, forty years." With his formidable fellow travelers, Ritenour revisits several selections from his iconic albums including *First Course* (1976), *Friendship* (1978) – an LP consisting of the Ritenour- led super-group that included Ernie Watts, Don Grusin, drummer Alex Acuna, percussionist Steve Forman, and bassist Abraham Laboriel – *Rit, Vol.1* (1981), *Earth Run* (1986), *Stolen Moments* (1990) and *This Is Love* (1998).

Save for "Pearl," a heartfelt, Latin-tinged tribute to Ritenour's mother, as well as the mid-tempo, bouncy title track and the surging, organ-filled "W.O.R.K.n' It" (Weckl, Ozone, Ritenour, Kennedy) – another version, "More W.O.R.K.," will be released on an upcoming 5-LP retrospective box set – the rest of the album features the new-and-improved vintage Ritenour tracks. "When I first proposed this record to Concord, I didn't want it to be perceived as a 'best of' rehash of my old tunes," Ritenour says. "I love to write new material. So there is new material on the record. But I wanted to take a look at my earlier tunes – not necessarily the major radio hits – but in general, I wanted to take material that could have a fresh look today, that we could 'twist,' or flip. This is the first record where all of the tunes are mine. It was really fun to look back at my catalog, which stretches back forty years, and pick certain tunes to take a fresh start." From the LP *First Course*, "Wild Rice" and "Fatback" swing with some grooving, mid- and up-tempo Muscle Shoals-meets-Malibu horn lines, originally arranged by Tom Scott and re-arranged by Ritenour and Beasley that ring with the spirit of the late B.B. King and Steely Dan. Two more selections from *First Course* include the Crusaders-coded, Michael Omartian-arranged "A Little Bit of This and A Little Bit of That" and the funky, 9/4-time, Head Hunters-inspired "Sweet Syncopation." The spry, festive "Bullet Train" from *Friendship* bounces with the air of a Brazilian love affair, and "Soaring," from *Earth Run*, is rhythmically laced with a Latin lilt. "Ooh Yeah," from *This Is Love*, is reincarnated as a laid back, Quiet Storm selection, topped by Ritenour's luscious, Wes Montgomery-esque chords. "Waltz for Carmen" from *Stolen Moments*,

written for Ritenour's wife, is an intricate duo featuring **Tony Pusztai**. "Tony, who is an insane classical guitarist from Hungary, has got some incredible jazz chops, too," Ritenour proudly says. The zenith of the release is Ritenour's re-imagining of "Countdown" from *Rit, Vol 1.*, a surging, anthemic contemporary jazz classic of the highest order. "I did some sampling of my original recordings," he says. "I was able to hunt down the original tracks and have them transferred to digital. We used a sample of the original "Countdown" vocoder [track]. As we were playing live, we were triggering the sample and playing along with it."

Ritenour is able to draw upon a diverse body of work that reflects his polyglot musical upbringing. Born on January 11, 1952 in Los Angeles, Ritenour grew up listening to a wide variety of music. His father was an amateur pianist who exposed him to Peggy Lee, Ray Charles, Nancy Wilson, Erroll Garner and Stan Kenton while he took his first guitar lessons at eight. Ritenour experienced his first jazz "eureka!" moment three years later when his father took him to the record store.

"We bought three records by Howard Roberts, Wes Montgomery and Joe Pass. I was influenced heavily by all three guys," Ritenour says. "A lot of people don't know Howard, but he was an incredible studio player. And, of course, everybody knows Joe. My dad called Joe on the phone, and said, 'I've got this fourteen year-old. Will you give him a lesson?' So I went to Joe's house a couple of times and we became friends. And I was also influenced by Wes' rhythmic and melodic approach and his tone."

Along with his love of R&B, rock and fusion, Ritenour started his career early. He played in a band that featured Patrice Rushen and Dave Grusin at the L.A. club The Baked Potato, while making a name for himself working with The Mamas & the Papas and Tony Bennett. Ritenour's work with Pink Floyd, Steely Dan, Dizzy Gillespie, Simon & Garfunkel, Herbie Hancock and Frank Sinatra, to name a select few, made him the most ubiquitous guitarist of his generation. In 1986, he received a GRAMMY Award for his collaboration with Dave Grusin on his recording *Harlequin*, and has been a perennial chart-topper in numerous critics polls. In the 1990s, he was a founding member of the contemporary jazz supergroup Fourplay, with Bob James, Harvey Mason and Nathan East.

A Twist of Rit aurally illustrates Ritenour's delicate balance of maintaining his individuality while working with an array of diverse artists. "Even though I was a studio player, I was trying to establish my own identity," he says. "The live thing is just as important as the studio thing. And when I did my first album, where a lot of the songs [on this album] are from, in 1975, I didn't think I had a 'Lee Ritenour sound.' But then, a few years later, I listened to the record, and I realized that wow, I *did* have my own sound then."

Along with *A Twist of Rit*, Concord Records will release a five LP vinyl box set of some of Ritenour's classic records, including *Wes Bound*, *Festival*, *Color Rit*, *Portrait* and *Earth Run*. Ritenour will be touring and promoting these projects throughout 2015/16.