

**An important message from Ryan Porter over *The Optimist* and its connection to President Obama, the LA jazz community, and his family known as the West Coast Get Down:**

*In 2008, as I sat at the piano in my apartment in Inglewood, CA, I played through a number of different chord progressions and melodies searching for something new and fresh that would help to change the perspective in which my peers see jazz music. Something that could have the traditional elements of jazz, but at the same time reflect the fact that I have been heavily influenced by Hip-Hop, Gangsta Rap, '70s Soul, Funk, and R&B.*

*Just at that very moment, a man came on my T.V. speaking of change in a way that made me so excited; so motivated; so ready to go where no man has gone before. The voice that rang out from my T.V. sounded like someone who had tasted change and the conviction in that voice was contagious. I moved from the piano stool with extra haste to reposition myself so I could put a face to that voice, and saw the face of President Barack Obama. I've never been big on American Politics, but seeing Barack Obama take the seat as President of the United States inspired a change in my own personal life and at that moment, I made it a point not to give up on the dreams and goals I've set out for myself and to persevere no matter how hard the obstacles may be.*

*So with this in mind, "The Optimist" was born and of course, the first song that I wrote to go on this record was "Obamanomics," a theme I wrote which played as the score for me as I watched that amazing period in history unfold.*

*One of the places that became somewhat of a safe haven for us as kids was hanging out at Kamasi Washington's house in his garage, a.k.a The Shack. Kamasi's dad had all the instruments there. Like a baby grand piano and a drum set, so we'd always rehearse there and learn each other's songs. As time went on Kamasi invested in some recording gear and before long, "The Shack" became the studio and each of the guys in The West Coast Get Down started to record their music there every chance we could all get together. "The Shack" is where *The Optimist* was recorded, with the exception of "The Psalmist" and "The Chocolate Nuisance", the last piece to the triple LP.*

*The new studio acquired its name for a few reasons, firstly was that The Shack was located in Inglewood under the LAX landing strip. Every fifteen minutes you'd hear these massive 757s cruising in for a landing, so we had to make sure all of the windows and doors remained closed at all times while recording. This made the heat unbearable. In addition, the capacity for The Shack was comfortably four people, but for the recordings I definitely wanted everyone to play at the same time. That meant all eight of us would have to squeeze in, close all of the windows and doors, and record takes of each song without passing out.*

*With all of that in mind, it made us more eager to rehearse all of the songs at least once or twice before we had to shut those windows and doors. Once the session got running, the tension in the room was so high, and I'm sure I wasn't alone, but I felt scared to make a mistake. The heat in there made these performances absolutely amazing. Everyone sounded the best I've ever heard them play. After it was all said and done, The Shack smelled like tube socks and backpack straps, but the unity and love we have for each other was evident on every song. I believe this album marks an important period in time for The West Coast Get Down, captured well before any recordings with Kendrick Lamar or "The Epic" session. It was just The West Coast Get Down in a full state of Optimism, recording in late September of 2008, with hopes for something better.*

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