

Efpi

PRESS RELEASE

beats & pieces big band

ALL IN

Released on 8th June 2015

"They couple gale-force collective energy and confidence to startlingly original material (most of it by its rising-star leader Ben Cottrell) that acknowledges big-band traditions while radically modernising them"
The Guardian

"Their performance would have reassured anyone who wonders whether the big band tradition can connect with a twenty something audience that knows its Radiohead but thinks that Stan Kenton is probably a window-cleaner in Coronation Street" **The Times**

"There hasn't been a 'live' British big band since Loose Tubes with the same degree of energetic spontaneity and enjoyment of performing as this one" **Jazzwise**

Led by composer and conductor **Ben Cottrell**, **Beats & Pieces Big Band** see themselves as a band that happens to be big, rather than your average 'big band'. They're an extremely tightknit bunch, meeting as students in Manchester and growing up and developing musically individually and collectively within the city's exciting scene. First playing together as Beats & Pieces in 2008, today these fourteen musicians know each other inside out socially and musically, and this familiarity is part of what sets them aside from a lot of other big bands today. The music is an expression of the band's members and their varied musical backgrounds and activities, all brought together in Ben Cottrell's inspired writing. His compositions reflect the diversity of music that people of their generation have grown up surrounded by, and as such are influenced as much by Michael Jackson, Björk or Radiohead as they are Duke Ellington, Gil Evans or Loose Tubes.

The band's debut album **Big Ideas** was released to critical acclaim in March 2012 on Efpi Records, a small Manchester-based label co-run by Ben and Beats & Pieces guitarist Anton Hunter. Since then, Beats & Pieces have performed in Ireland, Germany, France and Norway; received airplay on BBC Radio 2, Radio 3 and 6music; and received awards for Best UK Newcomer at the 2013 Jazz FM Awards and Ensemble of the Year at the 2014 Parliamentary Jazz Awards. Now the band's eagerly awaited follow-up **ALL IN** is set to take their music to an even wider audience.

The title **ALL IN** reflects the band's tightness as a social and musical unit, as well as referring to their 'all in' attitude to performance that leads to their famously energetic and vibrant gigs. The band are also very much 'all in' in the financial sense – taking a fourteen piece band on the road in this current climate of cuts to arts funding in the UK is no small undertaking.

ALL IN was recorded over four days in January 2014 at Peter Gabriel's Real World Studios in Wiltshire. It was tracked almost entirely live with few overdubs and with the whole band in the same large room, ensuring everyone was in visual contact with everybody else at all times to create as much of an on-stage feel as possible within the studio environment. The resulting visceral energy brings the recording vividly to life.

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All but one of **ALL IN**'s seven tracks were composed and arranged by Ben Cottrell, the exception being a version of *David Bowie's Let's Dance*, reapproached and rearranged by Ben in his unique voice. Following a primal statement of intent from drummer *Finlay Panter*, the album opens with the short but intensely punchy **rocky**, which gives band and listener alike an intense workout to match anything ever faced by the most famous Rocky of them all. The captivating and catchy **pop** features fine work from *Nick Walters* on trumpet, and is influenced by the reliably consistent snare drum repetitions regularly found in 80s pop hits, such as many of Quincy Jones' productions for Michael Jackson. The beguiling **rain** is based around a repetitive Rhodes riff inspired by Steve Reich's pioneering and powerful work *It's Gonna Rain*, and later features some astonishing ensemble work in the build up to the final climax – something that is even more impressive when experienced live. The centrepiece of the album is **havmann** (the man from the sea), named after an Antony Gormley statue that stands in a fjord in Mo í Rana in Northern Norway, where Ben first workshoped the piece with Norwegian band Ensemble Denada (for whom the piece was initially composed). The track features an extended flugelhorn solo from *Graham South* and showcases the ensemble's wide range of expression, colours and textures over the course of ten and a half minutes. The barnstorming **hendo** has quickly become a live favourite and it is easy to see why. A dance inspired 'four to the floor' drum beat masks a number of complex rhythmic relationships, all topped off with a typically dynamic soprano saxophone solo from *Sam Healey*. Cottrell's sublime, languid arrangement of **Let's Dance** finds hidden subtleties and possibilities in Bowie's classic pop hit before the album closes with the wistful **fairytale**, a vehicle for the beautiful and heartfelt sounds of the band's horn section and providing a fitting coda to one of the year's standout albums.

"What really marked this gig as something special was its sheer generosity. The ideas and moods came thick and fast, each one so brilliantly vivid that you wanted it to go on, even while enjoying the leap to something new. This band's achievement is already astonishing, but they'll surely go further." **The Daily Telegraph**

www.beatsnpieces.net

Notes For Editors

Ben Cottrell is a composer and saxophonist currently based in Manchester, UK. He is best known as the musical director of the Beats & Pieces Big Band, and co-runs record label Efpire Records. An in-demand orchestral arranger, Ben has worked with and for a diverse range of artists including Laura Mvula, Esperanza Spalding, Everything Everything and Goldie, and his arrangements have been performed and recorded by world renowned orchestras such as the BBC Symphony Orchestra, Metropole Orkest (Netherlands) and The Heritage Orchestra. Ben is among the composers represented by In All Seriousness Music Ltd, the publishing arm of international music producers Serious. He is also a principal lecturer at Leeds College of Music and saxophone tutor at the University of Manchester and Hope University, Liverpool.

Based in **Manchester**, **Efpire** is both an independent record label and an umbrella organisation working to promote the activities of an emerging generation of musicians working across all areas of contemporary jazz, improvised and experimental music. Formed in 2009 by **Sam Andreae**, **Ben Cottrell** and **Anton Hunter** to bring together their various projects under a single banner, Efpire quickly expanded from its Manchester roots and now works closely with an ever growing number of musicians hailing from all over Europe and based across the UK and Scandinavia. **Efpire** artists include **Beats & Pieces Big Band**, **Let Spin**, **Trio Riot**, **Silence Blossoms** and the **Anton Hunter Trio**. www.efpirerecords.com