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**Larry Rosen Reflects on 30th Anniversary of Iconic Label GRP**  
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**GRP co-founders Larry Rosen (left) and Dave Grusin.**

Groundbreaking jazz label GRP Records officially began celebrating its 30th anniversary with the Sept. 25 release of "GRP 30" (Verve Music Group/Universal Music Group). The double-CD retrospective of 30 songs includes tracks by George Benson, the Brecker Brothers, Ramsey Lewis, the Rippingtons and Patti Austin, among others.

But the celebration doesn't stop there.

A series of anniversary shows is slated for Oct. 9-14 at New York City's fabled jazz club the Blue Note. The six-day event will feature such notable GRP alumni as Lee Ritenour, John Patitucci, the Yellowjackets' Will Kennedy, Diane Schuur and musician/producer and GRP co-founder Dave Grusin. And in conjunction with the aforementioned "GRP 30," 10 classic GRP albums -- re-mastered in the new high-resolution audio format -- were released digitally on Sept. 25. Among the sets' featured artists: the Yellowjackets, Dave Grusin, Chick Corea and the Elektric Band and the GRP All-Star Big Band.

"When you start something like a GRP, you're working day-to-day in the trenches," GRP co-founder and musician/producer Larry Rosen tells *Billboard.biz*. "You don't even know if it will work, let alone think of a word like legacy. You do what you've got to do."

Rosen partnered with Grusin in the early '70s as Grusin/Rosen Productions. The pair built a solid reputation through production work for RCA, Columbia, Blue Note and CTI. That prompted then-Arista chief Clive Davis to propose a joint-label venture. GRP/Arista ignited the careers of such artists as Angela Bofill, Dave Valentin and Tom Browne. Then in 1982, Grusin and Rosen established GRP as an independent label.

"We mortgaged our houses to borrow money to start the company," Rosen says. "Our lawyers and financial advisors advised against it, saying that two musicians starting a label was the worst possible formula for success."

Defying the odds, GRP achieved several milestones. Most notably, it became the first record company to adopt digital recording technology for all its releases and to issue every release on CD worldwide as the new format was just taking off. That intrepidity later earned GRP the moniker "digital master company."

"It was an interesting moment in time to see this opportunity in the marketplace that the majors weren't embracing at all," Rosen recalls. "Being a guerrilla company, we jumped right into that space, which helped establish GRP as a label and a lifestyle brand. We had a sound and style at a moment in time like a Motown or Stax."

GRP went on to earn 80 Grammy Award nominations, 33 Grammy wins and was named *Billboard's* top contemporary jazz label for five consecutive years. In 1990 Grusin and Rosen decided to sell the company to MCA, staying on through 1995 to run the company.

"Our lawyers and financial advisors all asked, 'Why sell now? You can get more down the road,'" Rosen says. "But it was the best timing we could have had. As an entrepreneur, you go by your gut."

Another Rosen gut instinct led to his next brand-building endeavor, Jazz Roots. The concert and educational/outreach program created for performing arts centers is celebrating its fifth anniversary this year, selling out 2,000-plus-seat venues. Jazz Roots' 2012-2013 concert series includes "Ladies of Jazz" with Esperanza Spalding and Terri Lynn Carrington at Atlanta's Cobb Energy Centre (Oct. 19), the first annual Sarah Vaughan International Jazz Vocal Contest at New Jersey Performing Arts Center (Oct. 21) and "Jazz and the Philharmonic" with Chick Corea, Terence Blanchard and others at Miami's Adrienne Arsht Center (Jan. 11).

Able now to think about the word legacy, Rosen says of GRP, "It was two musicians who just believed in the music and merging technology with quality product. We wanted to see if audiences would like it, and they did. It's rewarding to have this conversation 30 years later.