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High resolution photos available at <http://www.katahdinsege.com/media.php>

## **Katahdin's Edge** is out to play on ***The Ridge***

With their debut ***Step Away***, **Katahdin's Edge** was celebrated as a roguish jazz piano trio goading a languid standard into confrontation. Roots intact, they produced funk- and rock-inspired grooves with cunning licks and intrepid meter sampling. ***The Ridge***, their latest release available in May 2006, evokes the same adventurous spirit while challenging the equilibrium of tradition and innovation they established two years ago.

***The Ridge*** is where simple and evocative contends with infinite possibility, where composer and pianist **Willie Myette** unravels a new voice in the charged exchange between himself, bassist **John Funkhouser**, and drummer **Mike Connors**. A fourth voice emerges in disquieting sounds: a cool whistle like knives sharpening, a jarring squeal like rewinding tape on a reel on "Glad You Called," a strange chanting counterpart to the bass on the title track. The group marries audio effects like looping and distortion with the kinetic meter variations, aggressive improvisation, and haunting melodies that first established **Katahdin's Edge** as a trio of depth and drama.

From the buoyant melody that launches "Glad You Called" through the song's two mood shifts, serpentine sound effects break the surface; they mystify at first then unleash a rising and leaping crescendo. "The Path," rock ballad apparent, grows an understated melodic seed in two measured shoots that unfurl, rolling and sprightly, before a satisfying return to the source. But the understated must eventually yield to vigor, and so, the title track opens with rhythmic pluck then lurches into thematic leapfrog until a penetrating chant unites the trio in an elevating, captivating jaunt. Eerie distortions of staccato tapping and of a slide introduced to piano strings confirm a fresh pulse.

The adventurousness is contagious. **Katahdin's Edge** is out to play on ***The Ridge***. They're charged with rock energy akin to Bad Plus or classic E.L.P. and are agile at cracking thematic and rhythmic nuts. Like Brad Mehldau and E.S.T., they optimize the arsenal of a trio with pioneering esprit de corps. Technological voicing has evolved their sound while Myette's compositions remain assured and melodically sophisticated.

A **Berklee College of Music** graduate, Myette departed Boston for Providence in 1996, created a unique instructional method for jazz piano, founded **JazzKids**®, and published about a dozen books, all aimed at teaching jazz and improvisation to children. Old friends Myette and Connors never stopped performing together since their college days. Connors, who has studied with Joe Hunt and Alan Dawson, has also shared the stage with Funkhouser, a former student of the **New England Conservatory**, teaches at Berklee and has toured internationally with his own band, FunkHouse. The trio converged in 2002 to incite an alchemic flash. ***Step Away*** was released two years later, and was touted as "energetic, listener-friendly progressivism," avant-garde jazz that could satisfy an eclectic crowd. No matter how **Katahdin's Edge** evolves, no matter how far-out their exploits are on ***The Ridge***, it's apparent that the group's mission grounds their music with uncanny authenticity.

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