

the bo-keys

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The Bo-Keys don't simply replay the Memphis instrumental tradition – they deliver a hard-hitting and authentic take on the city's original soul-stew sound. A devotee of Stax instrumental groups like the Mar-Keys and Booker T. & the MGs, bandleader and bassist **Scott Bomar** formed the Bo-Keys as an homage to the quintessential Memphis sound – yet he has both feet firmly planted in the 21st Century.

Their story goes back to 1998, when Bomar was asked to put together a band to back Stax sensation Sir Mack Rice. The idea for a soul-jazz combo was born, but it took Bomar a few more years to assemble the perfect line-up for the Bo-Keys.

Organist **Ronnie Williams** got his start on Beale Street, backing R&B sax legend Johnny London on a handful of Sun singles before moving to Stax, where he'd played his Hammond B-3 on sessions with the Bar-Kays and David Porter. Drummer **Willie Hall** is also a Stax veteran, playing with Isaac Hayes and the Blues Brothers then working as a session man in Los Angeles before eventually returning home to Memphis.

Trumpeter **Marc Franklin** and tenor saxman **Jim Spake** are, like Bomar, young players on the Memphis scene. But over the last decade, both men have anchored some mighty horn sections, recording and performing live with such legends as Rufus Thomas, Ike Turner, Bobby "Blue" Bland, and Al Green. With an energy and raw talent that's reminiscent of the Memphis Horns, Franklin and Spake are living proof that Memphis music is alive and well.

Finally, a chance meeting between Bomar and guitarist **Charles 'Skip' Pitts** – at Memphis' Stax Music Academy, where both were teaching at-risk youth – led to the current incarnation of the Bo-Keys. Isaac Hayes' right hand man (that's Skip's wah-wah you hear on the intro to "Theme From *Shaft*"), Pitts also lent his unforgettable grooves to Rufus Thomas' "Do The Funky Chicken" and the Soul Children's "I'll Be the Other Woman."

Bomar's concept was for an updated version of the incendiary Memphis sound embodied by players like Willie Hall and Skip Pitts. Not only did he capture that sound, he recruited the original musicians who inspired him in the beginning. And now Bomar's vision was fulfilled: in spring 2003, the Bo-Keys headed into Willie Mitchell's Royal Studio to record their debut album. It's the sound of Memphis *now* – familiar, fresh, and unquestionably fantastic, with *The Royal Sessions*, the Bo-Keys have finally arrived.