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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: February 29, 2008

**TENOR SAXOPHONE MASTER SONNY ROLLINS KICKS OFF
HIS 2008 WORLD TOUR AT CAL PERFORMANCES,
THURSDAY, APRIL 3, AT 8:00 P.M.**

BERKELEY, February 29, 2008—Tenor saxophone master **Sonny Rollins**, the “last jazz immortal” (*Village Voice*), kicks off his 2008 world tour at Cal Performances **Thursday, April 3, at 8:00 p.m.** at **Zellerbach Hall**. Fresh from his landmark 50th anniversary concert at Carnegie Hall, Rollins will perform selections from his vast repertoire of standards and his own compositions with his working sextet of **Clifton Anderson**, trombone; **Bobby Broom**, guitar, **Bob Cranshaw**, bass; **Kimati Dinizulu**, percussion; and **Jerome Jennings**, drums. Not one to rest on his laurels, Rollins is always working to improve on the celebrated improvisations that forged his reputation and that comprise his body of work. “I’ve realized that regardless of what I like about them, the work is far from the best I should be able to do. I’m still on the trail, so to speak” (*JazzWax.com*). The program will be announced from the stage.

SONNY ROLLINS

Over the course of his long and distinguished career, **Sonny Rollins** has participated in many of the most important and influential jazz performances and recordings, and today he stands out as one of the few surviving icons from the golden era of modern jazz. Rollins made his first recordings in 1949 and, nearly 60 years later, remains the most formidable of jazz improvisers—the absolute master of the tenor saxophone and a living inspiration to musicians and listeners worldwide. Says *The Boston Globe*, “Nobody rivals his fluid mastery of the tenor sax.” On April 3 in Berkeley, Rollins give the first concert of his 2008 world tour, which will include performances in the Far East, Brazil and Argentina.

Theodore Walter Rollins was born in Harlem on September 7, 1930, of parents native to the Virgin Islands. He gravitated to the tenor saxophone in high school, inspired in particular by

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Coleman Hawkins. By the time he was out of school, Rollins was already working with Bud Powell, Fats Navarro, Roy Haynes and other big-name musicians. In 1951, he made his debut recording as a leader for Prestige; his affiliation with that label produced such classic recordings as *Saxophone Colossus* and *Tenor Madness* (with John Coltrane).

From early 1956 until he struck out on his own as a leader in mid-1957, Rollins played in the Max Roach-Clifford Brown Quintet, the definitive hard-bop ensemble of its day. Then, often with a piano-less trio, Rollins entered a tremendously fertile period during which he recorded such major works as *A Night at the Village Vanguard*, *Way Out West* and *Freedom Suite*. In 1959, he took the first of his famous sabbaticals from music. Living on Manhattan's Lower East Side, Rollins was often spotted on the nearby Williamsburg Bridge at night, deep in a rigorous practice regimen. "I wanted to work on my horn, I wanted to study more harmony, I wanted to better myself," he told *The New Yorker*, "and I wanted to get out of the environment of all that smoke and alcohol and drugs."

When Rollins returned to performing in 1961, he recorded *The Bridge* with guitarist Jim Hall and bassist Bob Cranshaw, led a quartet with trumpeter Don Cherry and drummer Billy Higgins and recorded with his idol Coleman Hawkins. He also received a Grammy nomination for his score for the popular film *Alfie*. At decade's end, he undertook one final hiatus, studying Zen Buddhism in Japan and yoga in India. While living in an ashram, he considered leaving music permanently in order to pursue spiritual studies, but a teacher persuaded him that music was his spiritual path and an uplifting force for good. "One day I told my teacher that I had trouble sitting still in one position. My teacher said, 'You know Sonny, you don't have to meditate that way. When you play your horn, that's a form of meditation.' I was glad to hear that. I mean, it made sense. But sometimes you have to go a long way around to find a simple truth. Playing fills this need for me, as a human being. Just being able to play satisfies so many things for me that are essential for life. Physical, mental, everything" (*JazzWax.com*).

In 1972, with the encouragement and support of his wife, Lucille, who had become his business manager, Rollins returned to performing and recording, signing with Milestone Records. His lengthy association with the Berkeley-based label and famed producer Orrin

Keepnews produced two dozen albums in various settings—from his working groups to all-star ensembles, from a solo recital to tour recordings with the Milestone Jazzstars, and from the studio to the concert stage. During this period, he was the subject of Robert Mugge’s 1986 documentary *Saxophone Colossus*.

In 2000, Rollins won his first Grammy Award for *This Is What I Do* and his second in 2004 for *Without a Song (The 9/11 Concert)*. That same year, Rollins received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences. In June 2006, Rollins was inducted into the Academy of Achievement—and gave a solo performance—at the International Achievement Summit in Los Angeles. The event was hosted by George Lucas and Steven Spielberg and was attended by world leaders and distinguished figures in the arts and sciences.

On September 15, 2007, Rollins marked the 50th anniversary of his Carnegie Hall debut with a standing-room-only concert in the fabled hall. He performed that night to critical acclaim with two different bands: a trio with bassist Christian McBride and drummer Roy Haynes and the sextet with which he is currently touring. Trombonist **Clifton Anderson**, Rollins’ protégé and front-line foil, has performed with the saxophonist for more than 25 years. **Bob Cranshaw** has been Rollins’ regular bassist since 1959 and is featured on many of his greatest recordings, at first on acoustic bass and most recently on electric. Guitarist **Bobby Broom**, having made a lasting impression on Rollins when he played with him briefly in the 1980s, was the saxophonist’s first choice for the guitar chair in his latest band. **Kimati Dinizulu**, a master percussionist and music educator, adds depth and context to Rollins’ rhythmically intricate improvisations. Drummer **Jerome Jennings** is the newest and youngest member of the band.

“I am convinced that all art has the desire to leave the ordinary,” Rollins said in a recent interview for the Catalan magazine *Jaç*, “and to say it one way, at a spiritual level, a state of the exaltation at existence. All art has this in common. But jazz, the world of improvisation, is perhaps the highest, because we do not have the opportunity to make changes. It’s as if we were painting before the public, and the following morning we cannot go back and correct that blue color or change that red. We have to have the blues and reds very well placed before going out to play. So for me, jazz is probably the most demanding art.”

TICKET INFORMATION

Tickets for **Sonny Rollins** on **Thursday, April 3** are **\$34.00, \$48.00** and **\$68.00**. Half-price tickets are available for purchase by UC Berkeley students; UC Berkeley Alumni Association members, UC faculty and staff, senior citizens, and other students receive a \$5 discount. For more information, call Cal Performances at (510) 642-9988 or visit the Cal Performances web site at www.calperformances.org.

For select performances, Cal Performances offers UCB student, faculty and staff, senior and community rush tickets. Rush tickets are announced two hours prior to a performance and are available in person only at the Ticket Office beginning one hour before the performance; quantities may be limited. Rush ticket sales are limited to one ticket per person, and all sales are cash only. Rush ticket prices are \$10.00 for UCB students; \$15.00 for UCB faculty and staff (UCB ID required) and seniors age 65 or older; and \$20.00 for all other community members. For more information call 510-642-9988, press 2 for the rush hotline, two hours prior to a performance only.

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CALENDAR EDITORS PLEASE NOTE:

CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS

Thursday, April 3 at 8:00 p.m.

Zellerbach Hall, UC Berkeley

Bancroft Way at Telegraph Ave., Berkeley

Jazz

Sonny Rollins

Sonny Rollins, tenor saxophone

Clifton Anderson, trombone

Bobby Broom, guitar

Bob Cranshaw, bass

Kimati Dinizulu, percussion

Jerome Jennings, drums

Program: Saxophone master Sonny Rollins kicks off his 2008 world tour in Berkeley with a concert at Cal Performances

Tickets: \$34.00, \$48.00 and \$68.00, available through the Cal Performances Ticket Office at Zellerbach Hall; at (510) 642-9988 to charge by phone; at www.calperformances.org; and at the door.

– Cal Performances –

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