

To: RBC

**Re: Letter of support for BEN DUFF for the
RBC Future Launch Scholarship**

My name is Brownman Ali. I am an internationally acclaimed jazz trumpet player and the CEO of the award-winning jazz record label **Browntasaurus Records**.

The **RBC Future Launch Scholarship** is designed to support Canadian youth looking to gain new skills in the modern work force. I can think of no one more deserving of this honor than **Ben Duff**.

As a career jazz musician and record label owner, I have often been in a position to hire jazz youth and employ some of the very best of the 20-somethings in this country over the years. Ben Duff, as a young professional bassist, has always represented the top-tier of his young community and we have shared many stages together over the years. Having traveled the country on tour many times with him, I've spent several thousand hours in awe of his abilities as a bassist.

Then the pandemic hit in early 2020 and we (professional musicians) all went from several hundred days of touring each year – to zero – almost overnight.

Ben immediately began looking at other paths for himself in this new world order, and months ago, in rehearsal, he excitedly shared with me his vision for a new clothing business whereby clothes were made to last, were comfortable and ethically constructed. *“I want to dress people for all the battles we all face, and provide them with the confidence they need to make difficult decisions”*, he eagerly professed post-rehearsal. Such mature vantage points, I rarely see in today's 20-somethings. His vision was well crafted, carefully thought out, and -- most importantly (for me) -- driven by passion. One of the things that has always set him aside from other bassists in the jazz world, was his deeply passionate approach to music.

There are many with high-level skills in his community, but few with his focus, intensity and passion. It's thrilling for me to see this young man pivoting his skill set into this new business venture. His plans for how the money would be spent --should he be awarded this scholarship -- were no less focused, having realized the importance of additional training in order to bring his visions to fruition. He has shared with me his desire for textile & technical drawing training and has already narrowed his options to the London College of Fashion or Central Saint Martins -- both providing excellent courses in skills he will need to aptly interface with the fashion industry.

I see Ben bringing the same focus, sustainability and work ethic that made him one of the most in demand young bassists in the last decade in Toronto -- to this new business venture, stacking his deck for success.

I also would like to take a moment to note that I believe his skill sets beyond music making aptitude will additionally work in his favor -- the dedication required to practice

religiously (quintessential to developing new skills); his ability to comport himself professionally (I've never seen him late for a rehearsal – ever); his aptitude with modern business tools from internet savviness to spreadsheet usage to modern communication archetypes (key attributes for any new sole proprietorship); and lastly his ability to clearly and concisely articulate what his goals are as a clothing designer – will all serve him extremely well manifesting his new endeavor.

He once said to me, *“Clothes should make you feel ready to take on the world. I know when I put on my favourite t-shirt, pants, and sweater, it makes me feel stronger. Today, there are so many people hurting, from so many different issues, I believe – now more than ever – they need that strength to fight against those problems... and I want to do what I can to provide them with that”*.

I have met few with so defined or inspired a vision.

For all of these reasons I feel Ben Duff to be absolutely deserving of a RBC scholarship, which he'll use to garner the new expertise required to help him bring his clothing visions to life.

I hope you do as well.

Thank you.



Brownman Ali

Trumpet player / Composer / Bandleader / Label Owner

brownman@brownman.com | Toronto, ON : 416-738-9449 | Brooklyn, NY : 718-701-9449

www.Brownman.com | www.Browntasauras.com

BROWNMAN ALI

"... one of the next great voices in the new generation of jazz improvisers"

-- Randy Brecker, grammy award winning trumpet legend

Heralded as “Canada’s preeminent Jazz trumpeter” by NYC’s Village Voice, Brownman Ali - born on the small Caribbean island of Trinidad, & schooled in NYC - is a multiple award-winning NYC-schooled protégé to his teacher, Grammy-winning trumpet legend, Randy Brecker. He tirelessly leads 8 unique ensembles of his own including the internationally acclaimed Miles Davis influenced BROWNMAN ELECTRYC TRIO, and the award-winning CRUZAO latin-jazz quintet. In high demand in the studio world with over 300 CD appearances to date, Brownman delivers stylistically authentic horn playing over a wide range of styles from bebop to hiphop. He is considered to be one of the most unique and provocative improvising trumpet players on the scene today and is widely regarded as a vanguard for the evolution of Jazz in Canada. A highly decorated player, his accolades include several National Jazz Awards, a CBC Galaxie Rising Star award, a SOCAN composers award, an International Independent Music Award, 3 Toronto Independent Music Awards, 6 Global Music Awards, an induction into the WHO'S WHO IN BLACK CANADA, a Canadian Black Music Award nomination, a BRAVO! channel documentary on his life, NOW magazine named him "Jazz Artist of the Year", CBC Radio Canada named him "one of the most recorded trumpet players in Canadian history", the Trinidad & Tobago Consulate General awarded him with a citation for being a "Distinguished National of Trinidad", and is listed by Air Canada as one of the "Top 10 reasons to visit Toronto". In 2010 Brownman launched his own record label - Browntasauras Records - as a home for his substantial musical output. In 2015 he began signing other artists to his award-winning label which now sports a veritable who's who of young visionaries, all redefining modern jazz with their own visions.