

Ted Nash Bio

Born in Los Angeles, multi-instrumentalist Ted Nash's interest in music started at an early age. Exposed to music and encouraged by his father, trombonist Dick Nash, and uncle, reedman Ted Nash – both well-known studio and jazz musicians – the younger Nash started playing the piano when he was seven. By the time he turned 12, he had started playing the clarinet; a year later he picked up the alto sax. Nash blossomed early, a “young lion” before the term became marketing vernacular.

In high school Nash had the good fortune to study jazz improvisation with Charlie Shoemaker, the innovative teacher and well-respected vibraphonist. Nash's first gig came when he was only 16. At that young juncture he played a week in Hawaii with legendary vibraphonist and band leader, Lionel Hampton. The same year he won an audition to play lead alto with the Quincy Jones band, and by the time he was 17 Nash had toured Europe, appeared on three records, and was performing regularly with the likes of Don Ellis, Louie Bellson and Toshiko Akiyoshi, as well as leading his own quintet.

Ted Nash has been a composer since he was 15. Bellson recorded his first composition, "Tristemente," on his album Raincheck (Concord) which featured, along with Nash, the great trumpeter Blue Mitchell.

When he turned 18, Nash decided to make the move to New York City. It wasn't long before he had recorded Conception (Concord), his first album as a leader. During his first three years in New York Nash became a regular member of a variety of ensembles. He worked with the Gerry Mulligan Big Band, the National Jazz Ensemble. He also began what would be a 10-year association as a member of the Mel Lewis Jazz Orchestra.

In 1994, Nash received a commission from the Davos Musik Festival in Switzerland to compose works featuring a string quartet in a jazz

setting; it was the seed that led to his forming his group Double Quartet and subsequently to his recording *Rhyme and Reason* (Arabesque). The effort was extremely well-received. *Jazz Times* magazine voted it one of the best releases of 1999.

One of Nash's most important associations is with the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis. A recent commission by the JLCO, "Portrait in Seven Shades," was recorded by the Orchestra released in February, 2010, followed by a month-long tour. This recording, a first-ever JLCO release devoted to original music by a band member other than Wynton Marsalis, has been credited by Ted Panken in *Downbeat Magazine* as marking a new direction for the Orchestra.

Writing in *The New York Times* critic Nate Chinin noted that "Mr. Nash came to the band with a wellspring of jazz experience," but that it "took a while to adjust," given his modern leanings. "It didn't take long for Mr. Nash to lay claim to what Mr. Marsalis calls 'the wildcard chair' in the band." Chinin would then quote Marsalis: "He plays, on a virtuosic level, all of the reed instruments. He plays them all perfectly in tune, and has a personality on each one that's different. And he can read music unbelievable well."

Nash, while always mindful of traditions, reaches well outside a "traditional" nexus. His eclectic group Odeon has garnered much attention in the jazz world and received features and in-depth mentions from publications such as *The New York Times*, *Village Voice*, *Boston Globe*, and *New York Newsday*. Said the *Los Angeles Times* after hearing this group at the Jazz Bakery, one of the area's best clubs: "You say jazz is having trouble these days finding a creative focus? Don't believe it. Go to the Jazz Bakery tonight to hear saxophonist Ted Nash's marvelous group Odeon, and any doubts will quickly be dispelled. What this Los Angeles native is demonstrating with Odeon is the fact that -- far from being on a down slope -- jazz is in a period of extraordinary opportunity." Gary Giddins, in a *Village Voice* feature, singled out the first track from Odeon's "Sidewalk Meeting," an adaptation of Debussy's "Premiere Rhapsodie," as his favorite from all the jazz CDs recorded

in 2001.

In addition to leading his own groups, Nash has been very instrumental in the New York-based Jazz Composers Collective. The innovative entity is a musician-run, non-profit organization dedicated to presenting the original works of composers who are pushing the boundaries of their self-expression. Others who participate include Ben Allison, Frank Kimbrough, and Michael Blake. Nash can be heard on several acclaimed CDs produced by the organization, including The Herbie Nichols Project's *Love is Proximity* (Soul Note), *Dr. Cyclops' Dream* (Soul Note) and *Strange City* (Palmetto).