

MIKE WOFFORD

BIOGRAPHY

Having appeared on over two hundred recordings as a sideman, pianist Mike Wofford now continues to record and perform primarily as a leader. He has received critical acclaim for his “Live at Maybeck” volume 18 in the *Concord Records* solo piano series, and his 2004 CD “Live at Athenaeum Jazz” on *Capri Records* features bassist Peter Washington and drummer Victor Lewis. In 2007, *Capri* released “Live at Athenaeum Jazz, Vol. 2”, a duo CD with flutist Holly Hofmann.

A native Texan, Wofford was raised in San Diego, California, where he resides currently. His mother was a professional singer, and he began studying piano at age seven. At eighteen, he moved to Los Angeles and entered the jazz scene there during the 1960s.

His first professional performances were with the legendary Lighthouse All-Stars and the bands of Teddy Edwards, Red Norvo, Chet Baker, Bud Shank, and Shorty Rogers. It was during this time that he appeared on his first jazz recordings, with Mel Torme, Gary Burton and Joe Pass. He also subsequently recorded his first albums on *Epic* and *Discovery* under his own name.

By the late 1960s, Wofford became busy as a free-lance session player in Los Angeles on recording dates and motion picture and TV soundtracks. He was the staff pianist on such live TV series as “The Bill Cosby Show” with Quincy Jones, and was first-call pianist for Oliver Nelson at Universal Pictures. During this period, he also became active as an arranger, working at Capitol Records as well as writing for such artists as Sergio Mendes, and the Mike Barone Big Band.

Wofford also began his longtime association with drummer Shelly Manne, playing and recording with Manne’s various groups over the years. Mike toured Europe with the Shelly Manne/Lee Konitz Quartet, and later South America, Europe and Japan as pianist and music director for Sarah Vaughan. He returned to Japan for several tours with Shelly Manne, Harry “Sweets” Edison, Eddie “Lockjaw” Davis, and Zoot Sims, and subsequently with the Benny Carter Orchestra. He also traveled to Brazil with the Benny Carter Quartet.

In 1989, he became pianist and music director for Ella Fitzgerald until her retirement in 1992. He was also house pianist during this time at San Diego's two national jazz clubs, Elario's and the Horton Grand Hotel. At these venues he performed with many legendary jazz figures from Art Farmer and Charlie Haden to Slide Hampton and Ray Brown, among many others.

Wofford currently performs and tours with his own groups and as co-leader in a quartet with his wife, flutist Holly Hofmann. He is also now performing with and arranging for their string orchestra configuration focused on the music of Antonio Carlos Jobim, and Ellington/Strayhorn. He continues to be one of the most in-demand pianists in jazz, working with such artists as Charles McPherson, Kevin Mahogany, Houston Person, James Moody, Phil Woods, Kenny Burrell and Benny Golson.

Benny Golson has said, "I could sum up Mike in one word: quintessential. He is the essence of a jazz pianist in his purest and most concentrated form." Of Mike, Shelly Manne said, "[He] is outstanding...a musician's pianist....He inspires as he plays."

Tom Burns
President and CEO
Capri Records