

# josh nelson > biography

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A native of Southern California, Josh Nelson maintains a busy schedule as a jazz pianist, composer, and recording artist. At 32 years old, he has already made a strong impression on the jazz and songwriting scene on the West Coast. Josh has performed with some of the most respected names in music, including Natalie Cole, Ralph Moore, Christian McBride, Anthony Wilson, Albert "Tootie" Heath, Ernie Watts, Tom Scott, Alex Acuna, Abraham Laboriel, Seamus Blake, Matt Wilson, Jack Sheldon, Peter Erskine, Bob Hurst, Queen Latifah, and Sara Gazarek to name a few.

Josh produced his independent debut album at age 19 (*First Stories*, 1998). Music critic Mac Macdonald described the album as "solid and confident musicianship, with an innate sense of swing and rhythm." With *Anticipation* (2004), Josh continued to focus on his original music. In 2007, Josh signed with the jazz label Native Language Music. The critically acclaimed album *Let it Go* (2007) was the result of that collaboration, and it featured an all-star lineup. His latest album, *I Hear a Rhapsody* (2009), displays Josh's strong original music, standard interpretations, and reinventions of rock tunes.

Josh received his Bachelor of Music in Jazz Studies from Long Beach State University. While there he was privileged to study with veteran jazz pianist Cecilia Coleman, as well as with icons Buddy Collette and John Prince. While in high school, Josh also attended summer jazz camps through the Berklee College of Music, studying with Neil Olmstead, Tiger Okoshi, and Kim Steiner. Other mentors include Bill Cunliffe, Alan Pasqua, Putter Smith, and Benny Green. Josh is the recipient of countless honors, awards, and scholarships. In his high school years, he received the Louis Armstrong Award, the John Phillip Sousa Award, as well as numerous "Outstanding Soloist Awards" at music competitions from around the country. Most recently, he received the \$10,000 Tom Talbert Scholarship. Josh has also been a member of many honor groups, including the SCSBOA Honor Jazz Band, the SCSBOA All-Stars, and the Grammy Band. More recently, he was a semi-finalist in the prestigious International Thelonious Monk International Jazz Piano Competition which was held in Washington D.C. in 2006.

In addition to his ongoing career pursuits, Josh stays busy in other areas of music as well. He has been touring worldwide with legendary jazz vocalist Natalie Cole for the past two years. Josh also served as Musical Director for jazz vocal sensation Sara Gazarek, and toured the U.S., Japan, and Canada with her. Josh's compositions for Sara have garnered him international acclaim, with Sara's album reaching number 10 on the Billboard Jazz Charts. He has toured Taiwan twice performing and arranging film scores with the Hollywood Pops Orchestra and the Ars Nova Chamber Ensemble. He has performed with film composer Michael Kamen, Monty Python co-founder Eric Idle, and actors Jon Lovitz, and Clint Eastwood. Original compositions of his have appeared on the television shows "The Division" (Lifetime), "Lucky" (FX), "Jack and Bobby" (WB), and he has also scored a number of shorts and documentary films over the past 5 years. His time is also devoted to maintaining a private studio of jazz students and teaching as Adjunct Faculty (Jazz Studies) at Soka University.

Josh keeps a busy performance and recording schedule in Southern California and around the U.S. He performs regularly with his own Trio and Quintet, the Sara Gazarek Band, the Jack Sheldon California Cool Quartet and Big Band, the Jennifer Leitham Trio, and various instrumentalists and vocalists who come through Los Angeles on tour.

With his own modern original music, Josh is always looking towards the next future. He draws from a wealth of experience and influences (including Herbie Hancock, Bill Evans, and Keith Jarrett), but always cautious to keep one foot firmly planted in the classic jazz tradition. Quoting drummer Peter Erskine said: "Josh is that rare young musician who has not only a wealth of study and experience under his belt (all but assuring him a prominent place in jazz music), but he also possesses those rarest of musical attributes: a touch, a tone, and a "sound" that are all identifiably his own."