

Josh Nelson -Biography

A native of Southern California, Josh Nelson maintains a busy schedule as a jazz pianist, composer, and recording artist. At 30 years old, he has made a solid impression on the jazz and songwriting scene. Josh has performed with some of the most respected names in jazz, 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). Writer Mac Macdonald said the album displayed "solid, confident musicianship....with an innate sense of swing and rhythm." Josh's following projects include *The Leadwell Project* (2002), and *Emergence* (2001), both EP-length projects which demonstrate his versatility as a pianist and composer and also showcase the talent of Los Angeles' up-and-coming jazz musicians. With *Anticipation* (2004), Josh continued to focus on his original music. In 2007, Josh signed with the indie jazz label Native Language Music. *Let it Go* features the talents of Seamus Blake (sax), Matt Wilson (drums), Darek Oles (bass), Anthony Wilson (guitar), and Sara Gazarek (vocals). Josh's new album, *I Hear a Rhapsody*, further displays Josh's penchant for original music, standard interpretations, and reinventions of pop tunes.

Josh received his Bachelor of Music in Jazz Studies from Long Beach State University. While there he was privileged to study with 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. Most 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 jazz endeavors, Josh continues to pursue his interest in other areas of music. He currently serves as Musical Director for jazz vocal sensation Sara Gazarek, having completed tours of the U.S., Japan, and Canada in the last year. 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. Compositions and performances of his regularly appear on the television show "The Division" (Lifetime), "Lucky" (FX), "Jack and Bobby" (WB), and the Forrest Whittaker movie "First Daughter" (Paramount). His time is also spent maintaining a private studio of jazz students, teaching for the Thelonious Monk Institute After School Jazz Program, and as a guest lecturer for the UCLA and Cal Arts Jazz Programs.

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 Cross/Hart Jazz Experience, and the Jennifer Leitham Trio. Josh also arranges and composes music for vocalists Natalie Cole, Sara Gazarek, Annie Sellick, Rhiannon, Natasha Miller, and Susan Sinner. With his own 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) while keeping one foot in the jazz tradition and the other in a modern forward-thinking approach. 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."