

Mel Martin Biography



Mel Martin is a composer, arranger, bandleader, saxophone and flute player - one of the most versatile and creative musicians to ever emerge from the San Francisco Bay Area. In his long career,

he's played a part in many of the innovative movements that have come out of that creative community. He sat in with Wes Montgomery and his brothers while he was still a teenager, played in John Handy's Freedom Band in 1962, worked and recorded with many of the progressive rock and Latin rock bands of the late 60s and early 70s including The Loading Zone, Cold Blood, Azteca and Boz Scaggs. He founded the award winning Listen, one of the early West Coast jazz-fusion bands in 1976. He's currently artistic director of Bebop and Beyond, a group he founded in 1983, as well as leading the Mel Martin Band, The Tenor Conclave, the Mel Martin Big Band and the Benny Carter All Star Tribute Band.

Mel has recently completed the new Mel Martin Band recording *Where The Warm Winds Blow* to be released on Jazzed Media and distributed by Allegro-Music. "It is quite different from anything I've recorded since the early '90s and is reminiscent in ways to my early Listen recordings but with much more of a jazz slant." It was recorded in July, 2008 when the great jazz pianist Don Friedman came out from New York to do a California tour with the group including guitarist Brad Buethe, bassist Robb Fisher and drummer extraordinaire Jeff Marrs. Besides Don, special guests include John Santos on percussion and Barry Finnerty on guitar. The repertoire is broad and varied from the fiery Latin-tinged *Rhythm Man (Do*

Not Disturb) to the contemporary classical piece with a jazz breakout *In The Stars* by Stephen Mellilo, *I Have A Dream* by the great Grammy Award winning Herbie Hancock including Mel's adaptation for woodwinds of his original horn arrangement, the funky, Bitches Brew style of *Silly Hawk Walk*, a beautiful live version of *Blue In Green*, George Russell's inventive take on *Love For Sale: Ezz-Thetic*, The great Benny Carter composition *Where The Warm Winds Blow*, my personal tribute in 6/8 to my lovely wife Catey: *To Catey With Love*, and the chestnut Victor Young composition Weaver of Dreams. On many of the pieces, Mel overdubbed special woodwind arrangements appropriate to the particular composition or just featured the sextet and quartet. I'm very excited about getting it out there and hope that you will enjoy it.

Martin's previous album, *Just Friends*, (Downbeat *****) was a live recording by the Mel Martin/Benny Carter Quintet. It was released in July to coincide with Carter's 100th birthday. The sessions were cut live at Yoshi's Jazz Club in Oakland in 1994 and feature Carter on alto sax; Martin on sax and flute; Roger Kellaway on piano; bassist Jeff Chambers and drummer Harold Jones. Three tunes from this date appeared on *Mel Martin Plays Benny Carter* (Enja, 1994) and these tracks are just as compelling. "The mastering tools let us bring out the quality of the performance," Martin says, "but it was all there in the grooves."