

ERNIE WATTS

Biography

"All things in the physical world have vibration; the music I choose to play is the energy vibration that touches a common bond in people. I believe that music is God singing through us." *Ernie Watts*

Artists from Cannonball Adderley to Frank Zappa have featured him during his 30 years in the studios, and on TV. You may have already heard Ernie Watts, and his unique interpretation of the divine voice.

This adds up to 55 years onstage so far, starting when he was 16 and still in high school. In short, Watts is one of the most versatile and prolific saxophone players, whose distinctive tone is immediately recognized. His fifty-plus years of musical artistry have produced over five hundred recordings, two Grammys, and being part of countless gold records.

In 2014, he joined luminaries like Chick Corea, Paquito D'Rivera and John McLaughlin in receiving the coveted Frankfurt Music Prize -- one of only six jazz musicians who've shared this honor with their fellow classical and non-classical awardees. In 2015 Watts was Guest of Honor at the Telluride Jazz Festival in Colorado on the Ernie Watts stage with his Quartet, and in 2016 was again at Jazz at the Kennedy Center, where he had been with Kurt Elling for the 'Dedicated To You' project, which won Kurt a Grammy.

At 13, Watts was handed a saxophone by the school music department in Wilmington, Delaware, and found his direction in life. By 16 he was a featured soloist with the Delaware Symphony, but learning jazz by ear. His first jazz record of his own was the most famous of all; Miles Davis' 'Kind Of Blue'. When he first heard John Coltrane, who would be his muse, he said it "felt like someone put my hand in a light socket."

He practiced all the time, (he still does). His discipline and natural talent won him a scholarship to the Wilmington School of Music, but next he received a Downbeat Scholarship in saxophone to the Berklee College of Music in Boston, renowned for jazz.

Buddy Rich's Big Band suddenly needed an alto saxophonist when they came through Boston on tour, and trombonist Phil Wilson, teaching at Berklee, was asked for a bright student as a temporary member to get the band to New York. Two years, three albums, and a tour of the globe later, Watts was still there. "I guess I got the job," he laughs now.

This led to time in LA with Buddy on a summer replacement TV show, then work in the big bands of Gerald Wilson, Louie Bellson, and Oliver Nelson, including a three-month State Department tour of Africa in 1969, and a recording session with the one and only Thelonious Monk for the Columbia release 'Monk's Blues' with Oliver Nelson's band.

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Once in Los Angeles, the Watts signature sound made its way into the studios--TV and films, most all the early West Coast Motown sessions, plus pop stars as varied as Aretha Franklin, Glenn Frey, and Steely Dan. Never losing his love of acoustic jazz, he also had his own jazz group, and played live every week.

After playing a concert at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion in LA, Watts met Charlie Haden backstage, who asked him to play. His first tour with Haden was in Pat Metheny's Special Quartet, to Japan and Brazil. Next Haden started his own group, the storied Quartet West, with Watts a charter member. Playing live jazz at this high level night after night on tour, he felt it was his true direction, and began moving himself towards primarily playing jazz.

He had recorded with various large labels, Warner, Elektra/Asylum, and Verve with Haden. He now went to JVC Music, where he surrounded himself with jazz icons like Kenny Baron, Jack DeJohnette, Arturo Sandoval, Mulgrew Miller and Jimmy Cobb.

Then in 2004, Watts and his wife Patricia founded their own label Flying Dolphin Records, starting a new era of creative expression for him; he is free to make all of his own music choices. The label has had 9 releases so far with his own Ernie Watts Quartets (one group in Europe and one in the US). He writes and arranges music, also selecting tunes written by his friends and band members, and music he admires, to create a series of musical stories that uplift and bring joy. He calls this process "reaching up."

His latest Flying Dolphin release is 'HOME LIGHT,' just-pressed and filled with a variety of powerful and lyrical pieces, and also some humor, such as the irresistible, Ornette-like energy of 'Frequeie Flyers,' a tribute to bebop, and 'I Forgot August,' built on the harmonic structure of the standard 'I Remember April.' 'Horizon' is a lovely meditative ballad, and the title tune, 'Home Light,' a nod towards gospel.

Watts continues to explore that divine voice electrifying the eclectic and inclusive pulse of jazz. That pulse goes through all his work, with vocalists such as Kurt Elling and Diane Schuur, his years with Charlie Haden in Quartet West, and performances with orchestras and bands such as the famed WDR Radio Band of Cologne and the National Symphony of Costa Rica.

It led him onto the stage with Billy Cobham and orchestra in Australia, the Indian icon violinist Dr. L. Subramaniam in India, and jazz festivals in Singapore, Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur, and Japan, as well as North Sea, St. Moritz, Umbria, Stockholm, Montreux, and many others, in Europe. It also inspires his workshops and concerts with student musicians at colleges and universities worldwide.

In other words, Ernie Watts is living out his vision of music: what he has called that "common bond having potential to bring all people together in peace and (of course) harmony."

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All *Flying Dolphin* releases are available at Watts' concerts, www.erniewatts.com (via CDBaby.com), and in selected stores in the USA, Europe and Japan.

SOLO DISCOGRAPHY

Home Light	Ernie Watts Quartet	Flying Dolphin (2018)
Wheel Of Time	Ernie Watts Quartet	Flying Dolphin (2016)
A Simple Truth	Ernie Watts Quartet	Flying Dolphin (2014)
Oasis	Ernie Watts Quartet	Flying Dolphin (2011)
Four Plus Four	Ernie Watts Quartet	Flying Dolphin (2009)
To The Point	Ernie Watts Quartet	Flying Dolphin (2007)
Analog Man	Ernie Watts Quartet	Flying Dolphin (2006)
Spirit Song	Ernie Watts Quartet	Flying Dolphin (2005)
ALIVE	Ernie Watts Quartet	Flying Dolphin (2004)
Reflections	Ernie Watts & Ron Feuer	Adventure Prod. (2003)
Classic Moods	Ernie Watts	JVC Music (1999)
The Long Road Home	Ernie Watts	JVC Music (1996)
Unity	Ernie Watts	JVC Music (1994)
Reaching Up	Ernie Watts	JVC Music (1993)
Stand Up	Ernie Watts	Odyssey (Singapore -1992)
Afoxé ("ah-foh-SHAY")	Ernie Watts w/Gilberto Gil	CTI (1991)
Ernie Watts w/Gamalon	Ernie Watts w/Gamalon Amherst	(1989)
The Ernie Watts Quartet	Ernie Watts Quartet	JVC Music (1987)
Sanctuary	Ernie Watts	Qwest/Warner Bros (1986)
Musician	Ernie Watts	Qwest/Warner Bros. (1985)
Chariots Of Fire	Ernie Watts	Qwest/Warner Bros. (1981)
Look In Your Heart	Ernie Watts	Elektra (1980)
The Wonder Bag	Ernie Watts Encounter	Vault (1972)
Come Together	Ernie Watts with Richard "Groove" Holmes	World Pacific Jazz (1970)
Planet Love	Ernie Watts	World Pacific Jazz (1969)