

# Jonny King

## Biography

Jonny King has been described by *Downbeat* as "one of the strongest piano voices" of his generation and a "bandleader who kicks ass." *JazzTimes* likewise wrote that he "represents the best of what jazz has to offer" as both a performer and composer. A native New Yorker, he grew up in the City's jazz clubs, participating first as a fan and then as a performer. Before he was a teenager, King had already performed onstage with Dizzy Gillespie and appeared on television at the piano alongside his early idol, Earl "Fatha" Hines. Before he was 20, he was already sitting in with Art Blakey and playing his first gigs in New York's many restaurants and clubs.

King is primarily self-taught, having neither received any formal music education nor attended any jazz schools. He gratefully credits pianists Mulgrew Miller and Tony Aless as important influences, mentors and personal teachers. Beyond their private instruction, King learned music in the most old-school of ways – by obsessively listening to records, attending jam sessions, and soaking up as much live and recorded music possible, from the most traditional to the most avant-garde. He continues to approach music the same way, both as a performer and composer.

Beginning in the 1990s, King became a steady presence on the City's club scene, featuring his own bands at The Jazz Standard, Smalls, and legendary clubs like Sweet Basil's and Bradley's, his home-away-from-home, where he performed regularly both as leader and sideman. He toured as a member of Joshua Redman's Quartet and the Blue Note Records cooperative band OTB, and worked as the pianist in groups led by saxophonists Steve Wilson, Eddie Harris, Vincent Herring and many others. Throughout the years, he has performed and recorded with many of today's finest musicians, including Christian McBride, Mark Turner, Chris Potter, Joe Lovano, Seamus Blake, Brian Blade, Joe Locke, Tom Harrell, Randy Brecker, and numerous others. He has performed widely throughout the United States, Europe, South America, and Asia.

King has also made his mark as a composer and arranger and has consistently attracted the attention of the jazz media for his compositions. The *New York Times* dubbed him "a thinker's composer," the *Boston Globe* called him "perhaps the best of the young composers," and the *LA Times* noted that his compositions are "consistently provocative." In

addition to his own recordings, King's pieces can be heard on a number of other recordings featuring such superb artists as Dave Holland, Billy Pierce, the late Tony Reedus, Steve Nelson, Alan Dawson, Renee Rosnes and Mulgrew Miller.

King's prior releases on Criss Cross and Enja Records feature many of the great artists with whom he has been privileged to play through the years, including Joshua Redman, Mark Turner, David Sanchez, Steve Wilson, Vincent Herring, Steve Nelson, Billy Drummond and others. *Notes From the Underground*, his first of two releases on Enja, earned four and a half stars from Downbeat and was deemed "truly exceptional." His latest project, *Above All*, a 2012 trio recording on Sunnyside Records with old friends Ed Howard and Victor Lewis, earned four and a half stars from the All Music Guide. *Critical Jazz* dubbed *Above All* a "far cry from the stereotypical piano trio" and celebrated King as an "incredibly distinctive voice for modern jazz."

King leads a busy life beyond performing and composing. He is the author of the critically acclaimed jazz primer, *What Jazz Is*, published by Walker & Company with the participation of Blue Note Records, and translated in a number of foreign countries. An introduction to jazz and improvisation from the perspective of a working musician, the book features a forward by King's friend, bassist Christian McBride, and has been used widely in universities as an instructional text.

King is also a summa cum laude graduate of Princeton University and cum laude graduate of Harvard Law School. Despite the demands of both careers, he has managed to combine life as a performer and composer with practice as a trial lawyer concentrating in intellectual property. Playing and writing music, authoring books and articles, and practicing law are all part of the mix for Jonny King, and he has no plans to let up. Just as energy and passion drive his consistently fiery music, so they motivate his approach to his multi-faceted life and career.