

## BOB BALDWIN BIOGRAPHY



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NEW YORK – Mount Vernon, NY native Bob Baldwin, Jazz Artist, Radio Host and Music Presenter, is an unsung herowhen it comes to the Contemporary/Smooth Jazz genre and is on the move. With a vision to take his gift of music to bless those less fortunate, and raise funds for organizations in need of help, Bob Baldwin adds Arts Advocate, Educator, and now Author to his resume.

In 2012 Baldwin is slated to perform with Cynthia Calloway (daughter of the esteemed legend, Mr. Cab Calloway) and Michael Mills for the Feed the Children Program in Phoenix, Arizona. Humanitarian efforts go back to 1986, when he raised the awareness of HIV/AIDS in his hometown. On a production front, he is working with Peak Records, The Best in Contemporary Music to produce a tribute to the great Thom Bell, Philadelphia Songwriter legend and Music Producer, who is known for being one of the creators of the Philadelphia sound for groups like The Stylistics and the Spinners. The project is slated for first Quarter 2012, and includes: Paul Taylor, Russ Freeman, Vivian Green, and new voices Ragan Whiteside, and Elan Trotman.

Baldwin will return to the ArtsWestchester in February and March as co-curator of the NewUrbanJazz Series. The series will feature extraordinary artists from Westchester County, Hiroshi Yamazaki Quartet (Pianist Extraordinaire), Vaneese Thomas (Legendary Vocalist), The Tony Jefferson Quartet (Jazz Vocal Standards), and The John Patitucci Trio (Award-Winning Bassist).

December 2011 was busy nonetheless with great events to end the year with a bang. Bob Baldwin was a performer for a Gospel Jazz Christmas Program in Bridgeport, Connecticut on December 17 where he was reunited with Gospel singer Corvina Nielsen to appear at Mount Aery Baptist Church for a Gospel Jazz Concert to announce the release of his 17<sup>th</sup> CD *Never Out of Season*. The CD is a fusion of Gospel hymns, seasonal songs, and originals. *Never Out*

*of Season* is a collection of hymns, gospel classics, and seasonal songs with a touch of the Baldwin re-harmonic vibe...you know, that special twist.

Baldwin says "I wanted to put together a project that could be played all year round, not just the holidays. It's a constant rework of our souls and spirits, as well as a testimony of my own personal life and my personal relationship with God. God has been good to me and blessed me with a wonderful talent. I look to Him daily for direction and strength and give Him thanks." His Gospel influences are Tramaine Hawkins, Helen Baylor, Yolanda Adams, and Vickie Winans. "When you sing from God's soul, you ultimately save souls." Hence, the feeling you get from Baldwin's passionate playing comes from his spiritual source.

The need to pass the torch on to the next generation moved Bob Baldwin to become an author. Bob Baldwin released his first book on December 13, 2011: *You Better Ask Somebody! Staying On Top Of Your Career in the "Friggin" Music Business*, which has been distributed in eBook form for the Amazon Kindle, Apple's iPad, Barnes & Noble Nook, and the Sony Reader. The eBook, created for high school and college level students, explains how aspiring musicians can create a successful career path and make a name in the industry while maintaining their integrity. It's also a refresher course for veteran artists and a manager's reference guide to improve their own work ethic. The book will eventually be turned into a handbook, as Bob will be going into the schools and universities to work with students.

"As I have ventured to many parts of the world, I thought it would be a tragedy NOT to document it in a book on how to help young artists find early footing in a very tricky music business climate," says Baldwin who will be collaborating more and more with colleges, universities, and local school systems.

November 2011, two major events took Baldwin back on the road to Charleston, South Carolina, and Montclair, NJ. Marion Meadows and B.B. performed for the Urban League Gala Fundraiser in Charleston South Carolina. Baldwin then returned to Trumpets Jazz Club and Restaurant to host the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Sag Party where he performed with some of the best in the industry: Chembo Corniel, Café Da Silva, Ragan Whiteside, Ron "Butta" Jenkins, and Thierry "The Frenchman" Arpino.

The October 2011 fall season got off to a great start as Bob and Atlanta trumpeter Joey Sommerville performed at the Redstone Room in Davenport, Iowa. The concert was in collaboration with the Daniel Pearl Music Days, which is an international network of concerts that use the power of music to reaffirm our commitment to tolerance and humanity. The concert was dedicated to Daniel Pearl, the *Wall Street Journal* reporter who was brutally murdered by his captors in Pakistan on February 21, 2002. The keyboardist and trumpeter traveled to Champaign, IL to perform for a smokin' evening of jazz.

Baldwin, along with saxophonist Marion Meadows, and special guest drummer, Pogie Bell kicked off the beginning of the Labor Day Weekend at the Rams Head on Stage in Annapolis, Maryland. Jazz lovers were treated to an evening of Jazz as Baldwin, Meadows, and Bell brought down the house.

August 2011 sizzled with Bob Baldwin and Friends performing at The Theodore D. Young Community Center for an evening of jazz. Baldwin and Friends played music from his latest

CD *NewUrbanJazz.com 2 / Re-Vibe* along with a number of tunes from previous albums. The free concert provided an evening of cool jazz on a hot summer evening.

On July 2011, Baldwin released his 16<sup>th</sup> CD *NewUrbanJazz.com 2 / Re-Vibe* on Trippin' N Rhythm Records. The CD which debuted on Billboard Jazz at #14 features Glenn Jones, Darren Rahn, Ragan Whiteside, Joey Sommerville, along with Atlantic Starr legend Porter Carroll, Jr. The reviews have been positive nonetheless.

Amazon's Editorial Review stated: "Bob Baldwin's nationally syndicated radio program 'The NewUrbanJazz Lounge' now airs on over 21 radio stations in 10 states and is broadcast across the African American Public Radio Service and the Internet to a weekly audience of over a million listeners. This becomes the perfect vehicle to introduce the next volume in his highly popular and bestselling series *NewUrbanJazz.com* aptly titled, *NewUrbanJazz.com 2 / Re-Vibe*."

Over more than two decades and 16 records, Bob Baldwin has carved out and more than solidified his place as one of the chief progenitors of true urban jazz. When you listen to Baldwin's cuts, more than just hearing, you feel them as he has long had a way of digging deep into your soul and touching that inner sweet spot. *NUJ.com 2 / Re-Vibe* showcases Baldwin in the thick of his element fusing funky Contemporary Jazz with Gospel, Hip-Hop and Brazilian all with a strong dose of heavy urban flavoring.

Bob Baldwin fans will rejoice at the arrival of this his finest work to date and the early buzz on the streets indicates that this *NewUrbanJazz.com 2 / Re-Vibe* will re-invigorate not only his massive following, but also continue to build upon it."

Baldwin continued to bring the music to the people by hosting two Listening Parties to celebrate the release of the 16<sup>th</sup> CD. Trumpets Jazz Club and Restaurant in Montclair, NJ hosted the first listening party. Baldwin then turned around and came back home to Westchester County to host the second listening party at Arts Westchester located at 31 Mamaroneck Avenue in White Plains, NY. The former bank now converted into the Arts Exchange is the premiere venue in Westchester County for The Arts.

Hosting the listening party there solidifies Baldwin's commitment to The Arts on a local level and fulfills his role as curator for the Jazz Series, *NewUrbanJazz* at Arts Westchester. Baldwin gave the audience what they were looking for, with a one-on-one question and answer session with the artist. For two hours, attendees had the opportunity to hear how the CD came about, and ask the artist questions: from where he has recently travelled, to where he is going in the future. Fans were also treated to particular cuts from the CD. To cap off the evening, Baldwin fans were able to follow him over to The Lazy Lounge on Mamaroneck Avenue, where he took part in a jam session that included Gil Parris, Curtis Winchester, and special guest star, former New York Yankee Bernie Williams. Porter Carroll, Jr. stopped by and took part in the jam session.

Bob Baldwin's commitment to the next generation and Arts Education led him to team up with long time friend Marion Meadows to take part in the 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Jazz-N-June Festival in Huntsville, Alabama. The June 2011 jazz concert benefited the Huntsville Tennessee Valley Jazz Society. The Jazz Society's mission is to sponsor, encourage, and promote The Arts

through youth development, health awareness and educational activities in the Tennessee Valley.

In February 2011, Baldwin traveled half way around the world to attend the Dubai International Jazz Festival in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. This international gig exposed Baldwin to a country rich in resources. Baldwin had the opportunity to produce his radio show *NewUrbanJazz Lounge*, giving his audience a flavor for music from the Middle East. Baldwin's wealth of knowledge when it comes to Jazz exposed his audience to artists that would even be heard on American radio. The music moved Baldwin enough to produce the song "Arabian Sweets" for his upcoming CD *NewUrbanJazz.com 2 / Re-Vibe*.

The unexpected and untimely death of Pop icon, Michael Jackson, on June 25, 2010 led Baldwin to contact the family to ask if he could honor the Pop icon with a tribute CD. After receiving the blessings from the estate of Michael Jackson in February, 2010, Baldwin released his first CD of the new decade (his 14th overall) simply titled *Never Can Say Goodbye*, a tribute to Michael Jackson.

"At this point in my career, it's really about taking my gifts and using them to help others, feed people, and develop people's careers, giving them some valuable lessons in music along the way, as well as how to conduct yourself in a business setting, both on a local and national platform," says Baldwin. Most recently, it's been about creating programs that speak to these needs, as well as feeding the musical palettes of our incredible music audience, which has a double benefit.

Baldwin was the Curator of the *NewUrbanJazz @ the Arts Exchange* in White Plains, NY, with the blessings of Arts Westchester, with the hopes that it will continue. "We had an incredible lineup of people, and the response from the community has been wonderful. It was a nice shot in the arm for Westchester residents."

The commitment to use his gift to help others led Bob Baldwin to take on the role of educator to present workshops that would pair young musicians with the pros. Collaborating with Arts Westchester and the White Plains Youth Bureau, Baldwin presented a workshop that would prepare young people for a career in music. Baldwin stated "What we wanted to do is create a music theater piece that also featured a workshop element," he said, "so that the people that were on stage were allowed to share their experiences on the road in terms of the music business and musical experience with some young kids and try to implant some new seeds so that the torch can be passed."

2010 also brought forth the desire to produce two shows on behalf of Haiti. *Westchester Musicians for Haiti* was able to bring together some of the cream of the Westchester crop under one musical umbrella to raise some funds for the Arthur Schweitzer Hospital in Deshapeles, Haiti. He also produced the *Jazz for Haiti*, which featured a different blend of Contemporary and Latin Jazz at the Newark Symphony Hall (Chieli Minucci, Dave Valentin, Ruben Rodriguez, Chembo Corniel, and up and coming shining stars like Ragan Whiteside, to name a few), raising awareness of the tragedies of Haiti and shining some light on the American Red Cross, who has assisted tremendously in that region. His *Jazz for Haiti* program raised over \$60,000.00 for the American Red Cross of Northern New Jersey.

Although he has been running his production company since 1997, Baldwin has released 5 records on 5 different labels since 2000. With labels collapsing and going out of business more now than ever, his last 5 discs have managed to make the Billboard top 10 Contemporary Jazz.

The pianist tries to never allow his business acumen go to waste. He independently produced his CD (distributed through the powerful Virgin/EMI Network) *Bob Baldwin.com*, which sold an impressive 60,000 units. He also used his business skills to develop and negotiate his recording deals with upstart labels 215 Records, NuGroove Records as well as Narada Jazz, all of which have since gone under.

His radio program *New Urban Jazz Lounge with Bob Baldwin* is changing the sound of Contemporary Jazz in the midst of the debilitating hierarchy that is Smooth Jazz, which has lost over 18 stations in the last 20 months. The radio show covers Contemporary Jazz going back to the 70's, which helps secure its legacy, but also brings to light new artists and fuses Urban and Brazilian flavors. It's the perfect fix for Contemporary Jazz fans from all walks of life, and later this year, look for an all out Internet blitz for the new programming.

#### HOW IT ALL BEGAN...

Bob Baldwin was born in Mount Vernon, N.Y. His father, Robert Baldwin, Sr., was also an accomplished jazz pianist and upright bassist in his own right. Dad's brief pianist career included working with Keter Betts (Ella Fitzgerald's main bassist) and Art Davis (the last bassist for the legendary John Coltrane), both Westchester residents. Little Bobby Baldwin used to go to his dad's jam sessions around county and studied the masters of the Westchester region, such local stars as Lou Derry, Jimmy Hill, Fred Smith, Carmen Leggio, and others.

Fortunately, this journeyman was blessed to be taught to play the piano by his father at age 4. Meanwhile, we should seriously consider his musical influences as a youngster with the likes of the aforementioned Hancock, Stevie Wonder, Patrice Rushen, Chick Corea, EWF, Joe Sample, Ramsey Lewis, Miles Davis, and George Duke. His musical voicings are a by-product of these artists. Yes, it's obvious this cast of prominent players made a profound impact on Baldwin's musical journey. Even after studying accounting, business and broadcasting in college, he never strayed far from his first love.

In 1989, his first CD, a concept record under the artist name *The Dream Featuring Bob Baldwin*. That record would eventually lead him to meet the legendary Herbie Hancock at a Sony Innovators ceremony in Beverly Hill in 1989. As one of his childhood idols, the meeting with Hancock inspired him during his own formative years, and even today. He was selected from over 300 applicants, including the group Straight Ahead out of Detroit. Singer/Songwriter/Musician Roberta Flack was the finalist judge. Both Baldwin and Flack would eventually sign to Atlantic Jazz in the early 1990's. It was there Baldwin recorded *Rejoice* and *Reflections of Love*. The albums featured luminaries like Pooie Bell, Lenny White, Marion Tom Browne, James Robinson, Noel Pointer, Freddy V. (Average White Band), to name a select few.

In 1986 he formed The Bob Baldwin/Al Orlo Project in New Rochelle, NY. The Baldwin/Orlo Project performed at the legendary Bottom Line in New York City leading to his first

production with trumpeter Tom Browne. This opportunity led to his first album and eventually to his two-album deal with Atlantic Jazz Records. The Project also proved to be a stepping stone for other band members. Many went on to work as instrumentalists for some of the most popular jazz and pop bands in the world, including: Spyro Gyra, Michel Camilo, Paul Simon, Luther Vandross, Roberta Flack, Aretha Franklin, The Silos, The Average White Band, The Temptations, Ben E. King, the Broadway play *Momma Mia*, and Chick Corea.

With Baldwin's natural ability to weave life's experience into music while creating inventive harmonies, he doesn't really need to fill his releases with high-powered guest appearances. However, he has used the likes of Roy Ayers, Gerald Albright, Dean James, Jeff Kashiwa, Dave Mann, Chieli Minucci, Phil Perry, Jocelyn Brown, Kim Waters, Will Downing, Marion Meadows, Najee, Jocelyn Brown, the late Grover Washington, Jr., and Noel Pointer, Tito Puente alumni Ray Vega, and Brazilian Percussion Cafe' Da Silva on previous recordings.

### ALBUM NUGGETS

His 2009 release, *Lookin' Back* is a reflection of his career, dating back to his first recordings of 1988 and features Chuck Loeb, Marion Meadows, Will Downing, Grover Washington, Jr., and Tom Browne. "On *Lookin' Back*' I hope the career has a sense of consistency and longevity, but musically, I must note that my voice is not nearly complete," says Baldwin.

His 2008 release, *NewUrbanJazz.com* fused Jazz, and Funk with vocals. It also launched his new radio show on WJZZ in 2008, which allowed the program to grow from there. The 2008 offering features Jocelyn Brown, Phil Perry, Freddie Jackson, Marion Meadows, Najee, Frank McComb, and Atlanta stars Joey Sommerville and Toni Redd.

2007 brought the release of his live DVD from Croton on the Hudson, NY, home of the largest Contemporary Jazz Festival in Westchester County, NY, 20 miles north of the Hudson.

His 2005 release *All In A Days Work* on 215 Records was certainly no departure from his winning formula as a composer, arranger, keyboardist, and producer. His trip to Brazil was life-changing as he has since woven his Brazilian-Latin influences in most of his music from that day forth. "Spending six weeks in Rio and Ipanema allowed me to feel the spirit of the people and get into their music and their beautiful aura," says Baldwin. The end result is the *Brazil Chill* disc of 2004 (a440 Records) and featured Brazil hipsters Ivan Conte and Alex Malheiros of the group Azymuth, Armando Marcal, Café Da Silva, Andriano Giffoni, Leo Gandelman, Toquarto Mariano, and Pianist Marcos Ariel, who played chorinho flute on the disc.

"Like everyone else, the events in September 2001 moved my soul and impacted me tremendously. From that point, it felt necessary to write music that says 'be proud of who you are, stand up for what you believe, and do what you love, and that tomorrow is not granted to any of us. Art does imitate life and vice versa, so live your life to the fullest... today," Bob urges. In 2002, he produced two discs, *Standing Tall* and *The American Spirit*.

In 1999, I sat with Grover Washington, Jr. and chatted about the business of music, and he urged me to take a stab at controlling my recording catalog and not to be so quick to give things up that may have value over time. Bob's 2000 creation, *Bob Baldwin.com*, his first big

independent undertaking proved to be inspiring. On 2/01/01, his position on the Billboard Contemporary Chart was #17, which was its peak. *BobBaldwin.com* features the awesome talents of Gerald Albright, Marion Meadows, Armsted Christian, Dean James, Eric Essix, and Tom Browne, to name a few. Baldwin's touch on "Funkin' For Jamaica" is world class, as he dedicates that tune to the aforementioned Washington, Jr., who was supposed to perform on the tune before his untimely death. It is Bob's second CD on this new independent label, which he founded in 1996. This CD is his most popular in his catalog, with reported sales of over 70,000 units.

In 1997, *Cool Breeze*, which was on the Shanachie Records label, garnered tremendous radio success on the Gavin Smooth Jazz charts. It featured the hit single, "Summer Breeze," featuring saxophonist Marion Meadows and Larry Coryell on guitar.

His 1996 Internet release, *City Sketches* (a privately released disc during the 1996 Olympics) is a musical portrait of the city of Atlanta, Ga., and is on his label, City Sketches, Inc.™ A commemorative celebration of Atlanta's unique history, some of the titles on this jazz composition include "Welcome to the Games," "Freedom Parkway," "Dreamin' the Dream," and "Downtown Underground." Then Atlantic Jazz labelmate violinist Regina Carter liked "Downtown Underground" so much that she used it on her latest LP, *Something for Grace*. Baldwin's highlight for the 1997 season was performing at the legendary Montreux Music Festival in Atlanta (9/97) where he shared the stage with an Atlanta based ensemble (Blake Gaines on bass and Forrest Robinson on drums), as well as his friend and AWB member saxophonist Fred Vigdor. Baldwin also performed for the athletes at Atlanta's 1996 Centennial Olympic Games and shared the stage with Roy Ayers and Chuck Loeb in front of hundreds at the Club Benson and Hedges Music Festival in 11/96 and 5/97. Baldwin also went to South Africa with Marion Meadows in the fall of 2000.

In 1994 *State of Mind* was recorded, but never released due to the eventual closing of Atlantic Jazz, and today, it sits on the mantle hopefully to be released in this decade. Previous discs include the aforementioned *I've Got A Long Way To Go* (1988-Malaco), *Rejoice* and *Reflections of Love* (1990 and 1992, respectively) on Atlantic Jazz.

The journey continues, indeed.



BOB BALDWIN'S CONTACT INFORMATION:

CITY SKETCHES, INC.

Founder/CEO

[www.citysketches.com](http://www.citysketches.com)

NEWURBANJAZZ RADIO NETWORK

Founder/CEO

[www.newurbanjazz.com](http://www.newurbanjazz.com)

[www.bobbaldwin.com](http://www.bobbaldwin.com)

Contact info:

Sheila D. Jackson, Consultant  
City Sketches, Inc.  
8 Stevenson Avenue  
Cortlandt Manor, NY 10567  
(914) 414-7049  
[sheilad.exdirector@gmail.com](mailto:sheilad.exdirector@gmail.com)