



Eric Alexander

Tenor Saxophone

"...a tenor saxophonist who can play at all tempos, in all registers, and never without swinging mightily."

-George Kanzler, Hot House

A fine hard bop player who grows a bit in individuality each year, Eric Alexander grew up in the state of Washington. He initially attended Indiana University, studying classical music as an altoist. However, Alexander soon discovered jazz, switched to the tenor, and transferred to William Paterson College in New Jersey.

After graduating, Alexander moved to Chicago and soon gained important experience touring with Charles Earland while also becoming a fixture in local clubs. In 1991, Alexander placed second at the Thelonious Monk Institute's saxophone competition, finishing just behind Joshua Redman. In 1992, he relocated to New York and that year made his recording debut as a leader with a set for Criss Cross. Alexander was set to join Art Taylor's Wailers in 1995 when the drummer passed away. Influenced by Dexter Gordon and George Coleman, but gradually developing a more original sound, Alexander has also worked with Mel Rhyne, Cecil Payne, Kenny Barron, and Eddie Henderson, among others.

Alexander recorded two additional sets as a leader for Criss Cross, was part of their Tenor Triangle session, and cut several heated CDs for Delmark, including one that he co-leads with veteran tenor Lin Halliday. His 11th album, *Man With a Horn*, was licensed for U.S. release in 1999 by Milestone, which also issued the follow-up, *The First Milestone*, in 2000. Alexander has since released a steady slew of albums including *Summit Meeting* in 2002, *Dead Center* in 2004, *Temple of Olympian Zeus* in 2007 and *Prime Time: In Concert* in 2008.

Alexander has lost count of how many albums feature his playing; he guesses 60 or 70. While he has garnered critical acclaim from every corner, what has mattered most has been to establish his own voice within the illustrious bop-based jazz tradition. "There was a point several years ago where I stopped thinking, 'What would Stitt or Trane do on this tune?,'" he says. "I put the horn in my mouth and just played the way that I play, trying to get out the ideas that I had in my head. Although I'm a perfectionist by nature, lately I've been able to be a little more accepting about the way I sound when I play the horn.

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