

Ron Sunshine

Entry in the Jazz Encyclopedia

Being compiled by Professor Lewis Porter of Rutgers University for Routledge Books.

To be released in 2004.

Sunshine, Ron (Ronald Scott), vocalist, jazz and blues harmonica player, songwriter, bandleader, producer; b. Denver, CO. August 24, 1963. Grew up in Denver, attending Steck Elementary, Hill Jr. High, and graduating from Manual High School in 1981. Parents (Ruby Kolnick (Sunshine) Barter (b. 1923), and Irwin Sunshine (b. 1922) divorced in 1966. Irwin re-married to Barbara Meer (now Sunshine), and Ruby to Gerson Barter. Irwin played trumpet in East Denver High School and University of Colorado (Boulder) big bands in the '40s. Ron's sisters Shari (b.1946), Peggy (b. 1948), Randi (b. 1952), and JoAnne (b. 1954) performed during the late '50s and early '60s as an a capella vocal group and won local awards. Music was always very much a part of the household, with JoAnne in particular a strong instrumentalist, singer and songwriter. One of JoAnne's songs will appear on Ron's fifth CD, to be released in the Spring of 2003. When his father bought him the "Smithsonian Collection of Classic Jazz" when Ron was about 14, the youngster was hooked for good. Ron's first instrument was a drum set, which he received at the age of 5. He performed in small combos in elementary school, Jr. high school, and high school, as a drummer and then as a vocalist. While attending Columbia University in New York City, where he moved in 1981, Ron took up the harmonica. He graduated from Columbia College with a BA in English in 1985. While there, he studied writing with Albert Murray, Kenneth Koch, Arnold Weinstein and others. He studied music with Jose Luis Greco and Joe Donovan. He continued studying music theory at the New School for Social Research in 1990. Ron and his second wife, Feather Frazier are currently expecting their first child. His first marriage to Tiziana Caloro ended in 1995.

Ron's first professional experience in New York was as a sideman playing harmonica with blues guitarist Brian Kramer in 1988-89, at such venues as Tramps, Sun Mountain, Kenny's Castaways, etc. In 1989 Ron traveled to Paris and began performing on the streets of France and Switzerland with Dan Fitzgerald and the Lost & Wandering Blues and Jazz Band. Here--as he fell in with such musicians as Madeleine Peyroux, Joe Flood, Charlie Hunter, Calder Spanier, Christian Fernandez, Belinda Blair, Billy Collins and others--he began to sing in the jazz tradition, and to study the canon of the Great American Songbook.

He returned to New York in 1990 to form two of his own groups, one concentrating on funky R&B originals (the Smoking Section), and the other on '30s and '40s jump swing and standards (Full Swing). These groups performed constantly in NYC and around the world during the 90s, and up to the present time in such venues as Tramps (where Full Swing performed a regular Friday slot from 1990-1994 opening for such greats as Charles Brown, Jay McShann, Wilson Pickett, many others), Windows on the World, the Supper Club, Irving Plaza, the Beacon Theater, Roseland Ballroom, Midsummer Night's Swing (Lincoln Center), The New Jersey Center for the Performing Arts, the Bermuda Jazz Festival, the Stockholm Jazz Festival, Club Kristiania (Oslo), St Gervais Jazz

(Switzerland), the Red Bank (NJ) Jazz and Blues Festival, Celebrate Brooklyn (at the Prospect Park Bandshell), The Supper Club, The Roxy (Boston), The Five Spot (Philadelphia), Louisiana Community Bar & Grill, and many others.

Band members have included drummers James Wormworth IV (the Conan O'Brien Show, Erskine Hawkins, Johnny Copeland, many others), Charlie Caldarola, the late Howie Wyeth and Jason Pharr; saxophonists Joe Hrbek, Lee Greene, Craig Dreyer & Anders Gaardmand; pianists Rick Germanson (Craig Handy, Louis Haynes, Lonnie Plaxico), Eddie Swanston (Louis Armstrong's big band, Art Blakey, Ike Quebec, many others), Matt Ray, Paul Tillotson, Doug Petty, Jon Dryden; guitarists Joe Flood, Dan Hovey and Bruce Edwards (Sun Ra, James Carter); bassists Andres Villamil, Jim Greene, Andy Hess (Jon Scofield), Cliff Schmitt, Kelly Friesen, Dom Richards, Reggie Workman (one gig, but it was a great one); trumpeter and arranger Tim Ouimette (Ray Charles, Ray Baretto), Kenny Rampton, Guido Gonzalez; tap dancer and drummer Herbin Van Cayselle (Urban Tap), and others. Ron also sings with the big bands of Tim Ouimette and George Gee.

Discography

"Pick it Up" (1994) Ron Sunshine & the Smoking Section, featuring Dr. John and the P-Funk Horns (Golden Bug Records) funk, R&B, blues, re-released in France in 1996 on XIII Bis Records

"Sumpin Jumpin" (1994) Cassette only. Ron Sunshine & Full Swing (Golden Bug Records) swing, jump

"Straight Up" (1998) Ron Sunshine & Full Swing (Daddy-O/BMG) swing, jump, jazz, re-released in 2000 on Golden Bug records. Special guest vocalist: Madeleine Peyroux.

"Soul Drug" (1998) Ron Sunshine (Golden Bug Records) funk, soul/jazz

"Candy" (2001) Ron Sunshine (Golden Bug Records) jazz standards, big band. John Allred on trombone, Danny Wilensky on alto sax and flute are special guests.

A new CD, **Deluxe**, is being recorded in 2003, with nine new jazz, blues and soul originals, and three covers. Featuring guest trombonist **Wycliffe Gordon**, pianist Rick Germanson, and new arrangements by Tim Ouimette.

Compilation CDs (featured on)

"PB Swing" (Pottery Barn) also featuring Louis Armstrong, Nat King Cole, Duke Ellington, Louis Jordan, Count Basie Orchestra, and others. (Rock River) 1998

"Hipsters Zoots & Wingtips" also featuring Diana Krall, Brian Setzer, Big Bad Voodoo Daddy, Lavay Smith, others. (Hip-O Records/Universal Music) 1998

"Christmas With a Kick" (Restoration Hardware) also featuring Lou Rawls, Peggy Lee, Louis Armstrong, Count Basie, Kurt Elling, Squirrel Nut Zippers, and others. (Rock River) 1998

"The Gavin Holiday Sampler" also featuring Etta James, Chicago, Martina McBride, and others. 1998

"**New York City Swing**" also featuring The Camaros, Jet Set Six. (Lo-Fi Records) 1997

Other Recordings

Hardkiss "God Within" (Columbia/Sony Records) 1999, harmonica

Oren Bloedow "Luckiest Boy in the World" (Knitting Factory Records) 1997, harmonica
(also features Medeski, Martin & Wood)

Jono Manson "Almost Home" (A&M Records) 1995, backing vocals.
(also features Warren Haynes, John Popper, and others).

Pinetop Perkins "Pinetop's Boogie Woogie" (Pipeliner Records) 1992, harmonica

Many Others

Television

CNN (Newsstand)--Willow Bay interviews Ron in his home for a story about music on the internet, also featuring MC Hammer, Chuck D. Also aired on Delta in-flight entertainment. February 1999.

BET (Jazz Central)--Ron and band are featured in a one-hour concert and interview show hosted by jazz great Ramsey Lewis. January 2000

News Channel 4 (NBC) New York—featured live performance Dec 31, 2000.

Fox Channel 5, NYC--Ron and band are featured in a segment about swing dance and music on "Good Day, New York." May 1998

Also seen on German, Brazilian, Japanese, Swedish TV, and the BBC at various times. Many local TV appearances in New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania.

Radio

House Of Blues Radio Hour (hosted by Dan Aykroyd as Elwood Blues) featured several times, including best-of-year awards. Nationally syndicated on major commercial stations.

The Rhythm Review (hosted by Felix Hernandez) Nationally syndicated R&B/Soul show.

WPLJ FM, New York (Scott & Todd in the Morning) Ron has appeared live in the studio.

Hundreds of other stations in the US and overseas have played Ron's music, including several live concerts broadcast over WVIA in the Scranton/Wilkes-Barre, PA area.

Books (featured in)

Music Hound Swing, the Essential Album Guide, edited by Steve Knopper ©1999 Visible Ink Press. A 450-page comprehensive, photo-packed jazz album guide with

biographical essays of everyone from Louis Armstrong to Lester Young (and Ron Sunshine).

Mister Satan's Apprentice, a Blues Memoir by Adam Gussow ©1998 Pantheon Books

The Swing Book by Degen Pener ©1999 Little, Brown & Co. A complete guide to swing music, dance and fashion from the 1930s to today.

This Joint is Jumpin', An Illustrated History of Swing by Tanja Crouch ©2000 TV Books

online essay by **Lee Jeske**:

<http://www.broadwayswing.50megs.com/cast/sulinernotes.htm>

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