

DOUG MACDONALD BIOGRAPHY

There are some musicians who earn the label “a players player.” Individuals who possess a quality and integrity that peers look up to, not for mere bursts of blazing notes or chops, but for the perfection of their performances and the joy they bring. Such a musician is West coast based Jazz journeyman guitarist Doug MacDonald.

“I’ve simply never lost my love affair for warm notes, a good standard and striving for the best performance,” states the guitarist. In that regard, MacDonald’s musicianship evokes thoughts of such artists as Chet Baker and Sinatra, to name a few, who performed and excelled in a particular style their entire careers while keeping it fresh for their audiences time after time.

Originally from Philadelphia, he began his career in Hawaii, where he played with Trummy Young and Gabe Balthazar, and with Del Courtney at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel. Relocating to Las Vegas, Doug found himself immersed in a vibrant music scene, and began playing in lounges and showrooms with jazz greats, including Joe Williams, Carl Fontana, Jack Montrose, and Carson Smith. On to Los Angeles, Doug played in the bands of Bill Holman, Ray Anthony, and John Clayton, and performed and recorded with Jake Hanna, Rosemary Clooney, Jack Sheldon, Bob Cooper, Ross Tompkins, Ray Brown, Buddy Rich, and Ray Charles. Doug also began recording and performing with his own trio and quartet, as well as his 13 piece ensemble, The Jazz Coalition.

Throughout his career the guitarist has caught the attention of noted jazz writers and critics. Michael Nastos of All Music Guide wrote, “a veteran guitarist who know his influences cold, and consistently plays to his strong suit.” Scott Yanow wrote of MacDonald, “...a fine bop-based guitarist in the tradition of Herb Ellis, Barney Kessel, and Joe Pass.” Chicago Tribune’s Zan Stewart captured so much of MacDonald when he wrote, “...beautiful bell-clear sounds and a sure-footed sense of swing.” drummer Harold Acey round out the personnel.”

To date, MacDonald has released a prolific catalog of 15 CDs spanning configurations as a soloist, in duos, trios, quartets and big bands. A selection of discs include 2009’s orchestral project Fourth Stream for 13-piece brass and woodwind ensemble augmented with strings. 2014 saw the release of Solo Plus, a 14 song collection of standards played solo by MacDonald. In 2016, he released Doug MacDonald’s Reorganized Quartet. Bill Milkowski writes in the liner notes for the CD, “On this potent outing, MacDonald is surrounded by a pair of like-minded old school burners on the LA scene in tenor saxophonist Clarence Webb and 70-year-old Hammond B-3 master and Columbus, Ohio native Bobby Pierce (who recorded with a young Pat Martino in his band on a couple of Cobblestone and Muse sessions from the early 1970s). Tenor saxophonist Rodger Neumann and drummer Harold Acey round out the personnel.”

In 2017, MacDonald released View Of The City on Blujazz, a recording where the guitarist and composer returns to New York with mainstays Harvie S on bass and Steve Williams on drums. As Doug explains, “The time was right to return to the City and work with just bass and drums, which is a trio format I particularly enjoy. Harvie and Steve contributed a huge amount of soul and enthusiasm throughout the hours we recorded.” Organisms, released in February, 2019 on Scholz Productions, is a organ quartet featuring Ben Scholz on drums, Carey Frank on organ and Bob Sheppard on tenor sax. The music has a palpable synergy between each member of the quartet and contains ten songs, three originals and fresh takes on seven standards.

Doug’s 15th release, his first on his own dmacmusic label, is California Quartet released in May of 2019. It is a mainstream jazz ensemble featuring some of the West Coast’s finest musicians. The quartet includes Kim Richmond on alto sax/flute, Harvey Newmark on bass, and Paul Kreibich on drums. The hard swinging disc, produced by Ben Scholz, has six original MacDonald compositions and the American-songbook standards “A Beautiful Friendship,” “If You Could See Me Now,” “The Things We Did Last Summer and “Tenderly.” Recorded in 2017 at Tritone Studios, the recording was engineered by Talley Sherwood, mixed by Maurice Gainen and mastered by Robert Vosgien at Capitol Studios. This unique record will delight fans of classic jazz and swing music.

Back on the West Coast, MacDonald continues to do what he loves and does best, perform, record and in the past few years teaching via online lessons. He continues to tour and perform around 300 plus performances a year across the country from Hawaii to Las Vegas, Los Angeles and New York City, as well as to Spain, Hawaii, Finland, Estonia, and England. Some of the venues include Cezanne, in Houston, The Jazz Showcase, in Chicago, and Carnegie Hall and Mezzrow, both in New York City to name a few. In 2018, he performed on the East coast with Steinway artist Lenore Raphael and her Quartet.

The guitarist states, “Earlier on as a Jazz musician you pay your dues and work hard every minute. I’m fortunate, at this stage of my career, that I am working often and still loving it.”