

James O'Donnell

MASTER JAZZ TRUMPETER



James is the director of the popular James O'Donnell Band and he is also co-director of the "Planet D Nonet" Jazz ensemble which has earned nine Detroit Music Awards honors. As a noted Detroit trumpeter, James has performed in 13 states and in more than a dozen foreign countries. He has also played for several legendary music artists.

James is a Master at his craft. Like an artist who paints wonderful artworks, James uses his trumpet as a brush, music notes as his paint and an audience as his canvas. The result is a memorable music masterpiece for all to enjoy.

586.690.3393

James O'Donnell

BIOGRAPHY



James O'Donnell has been entertaining Detroit audiences with his special brand of music for more than three decades.

While known primarily as a trumpeter, he also plays flugelhorn and coronet. And while his favorite music genres are Jazz, Big Band, Standards, and Blues, his repertoire also includes R&B, Funk, Soul, Motown.

Over the course of his career, James has performed in more than 15 countries in North America, Europe, Africa, and Asia.

Here in Detroit, James has graced stages at renowned venues like Ford Field, Meadowbrook Theater, Cobo Center, Hart Plaza, The Masonic Temple Theater, The Dearborn Performing Arts Center, and The Detroit Institute of Arts.

James' music career began at age 9 when a member of The Detroit Symphony Orchestra introduced him to the trumpet. He loved the instrument immediately and began practicing it fervently. Then when he was 14, he joined the Jazz Band, Concert Band and Marching Band at his high school. He studied music theory and harmony and earned a spot in the All City All Star Jazz Orchestra.

At age 16, James became part of a group called "Kuumba," which means "creativity" in Swahili. It was his first exposure to the music of Jazz legends, John Coltrane, Sun Ra and The Art Ensemble of Chicago. Eventually, the band morphed into the famed "Sun Messengers." During that time James learned the Costello embouchure technique and the Max Schlossberg teaching method.

After graduating high school, James formed his first band. The Jazz sextet was called "Chronology - Music of All Times" and they played at local Jazz joints around Detroit.

In his early 20s, James played primarily with The Sun Messengers. They opened for The Neville Brothers, Buckwheat Zydeco and Dirty Dozen Brass Band.

In 1986, James moved to New York City and played in the Destiny Merengue Orchestra. That same year he began working an eight-year stint working for the cruise ship industry. There he played in show bands backing up stars like Julie Andrews, John Davidson and Charo. He also played for bands like The Regular Boys, The Blues Disciples and Art of Fact.

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BIOGRAPHY



In 1994, James formed a New Orleans Jazz-style band called "Bon Temps Roullé" ("Let the Good Times Roll"). They opened for David Sanborn at Meadowbrook Music Theater and for Dr. John at The Detroit Jazz Festival. They also performed at Ford Field, Fishbone's and The Town Pump.

As a musician, James played for The Four Tops, Martha Reeves, The Dramatics, Pine Top Perkins, Hubert Sumlin, Russell Green, and Lee Oscar. After the Millennium, James played and recorded with Detroit Blues Legends, Johnny Bassett, Sir Mack Rice and The Falcons, Alberta Adams, Odessa Harris, and Thornetta Davis.

In 2007, James joined RJ Spangler as the co-leader of the "Planet D Nonet" band. They performed throughout the Midwest and on the Southern circuit, earning numerous awards and recording more than a dozen CDs. Separately, he formed the "Nicky Boy Street Band" that plays New Orleans Jazz and Dixieland Jazz and opened for The Detroit Jazz Festival in 2009 and 2010.

Over the past decade James' primary focus has been performing with Planet D Nonet at major events like The Detroit Jazz Festival, The Lansing Jazz Festival and The Grand Rapids Jazz Festival as well as at premier local Jazz hotspots like Cliff Bell's and The Dirty Dog Jazz Cafe.

In addition to his extraordinary trumpet playing, James also entertains audiences by singing parts of the songs he plays and interacting with his fans.

One of the unique features of James' trumpet play is that he specializes in the nearly lost Swing-era techniques like growling and half-valving as well as the use of the plunger and mutes.

When asked to name his favorite music and artists, he responded: "I love playing Classic Jazz Standards from The Great American Songbook as well as hits from the great bands of the 20s, 30s and 40s. I especially like to play the song stylings of Louis Armstrong, Nat King Cole, Frank Sinatra, Sammy Davis Jr., Ella Fitzgerald, Dinah Washington, Billie Holiday, and the music of the great Blues singers like Bessie Smith, Ma Rainey, Lizzie Miles, and Etta James. As a musician, I am a trumpet Stylist along the lines of Louis Armstrong, Harry James, Cootie Williams, Al Hirt, and Russell Green."

James O'Donnell is a Musician and a Singer – but most of all, James is an Entertainer who loves to share his music with audiences. He is one of Detroit's finest.

James O'Donnell

PHOTO GALLERY



James O'Donnell

REPERTOIRE



JAZZ – Mack the Knife, New York - New York, Minnie the Moocher, Route 66, Bye Bye Blackbird, Watermelon Man, On Green Dolphin Street, All Blues, My Favorite Things

DIXIELAND – New Orleans, When the Saints Go Marching In, Way Down Yonder in New Orleans, Sweet Georgia Brown, Doctor Jazz, Swanee, Second Line, Bourbon Street Parade

BIG BAND – In the Mood, Take the A Train, Satin Doll, Moonlight Serenade, Tuxedo Junction, Begin the Beguine, Stardust, Stompin' at the Savoy, A String of Pearls, Trumpet Blues

STANDARDS – Fly Me to The Moon, Unforgettable, Misty, All of Me, My Funny Valentine, As Time Goes By, Summertime, The Way You Look Tonight, What a Wonderful World

MOTOWN – Dancing in the Street, My Girl, Ain't Too Proud to Beg, I Heard It Through the Grapevine, Just My Imagination, Uptight (Everything is Alright), Get Ready

R&B – Mustang Sally, Stand by Me, Midnight Train to Georgia, Knock on Wood, High Heel Sneakers, My Babe, Tell It Like It Is, Hit the Road Jack, Unchained Melody

SOUL – Sittin' on the Dock of the Bay, I'm A Soul Man, Let's Stay Together, Mustang Sally, Rainy Night in Georgia, Higher and Higher, Bring It On Home to Me, Rock Steady

BLUES – The Thrill Is Gone, Got My Mojo Working, Chicago Blues, St. Louis Blues, Sweet Home Chicago, Night Train, Honky Tonk, Sweet Home Alabama, CC Rider

FUNK – Cissy Strut, I Gotcha, Brick House, Pick Up the Pieces, I Got You, Chameleon

POP – Happy, Just the Way You Are, Deja Vu, Mercy Mercy Mercy, Knock on Wood, Sunny

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CAREER HIGHLIGHTS



INSTRUMENTS

Trumpet, flugelhorn, coronet, tuba, baritone horn

MUSIC GENRES

Jazz, Big Band, Standards, R&B, Blues, Funk, Soul, Motown

MAJOR EVENTS

Michigan Jazz Fest, Detroit Jazz Festival, Chicago Blues Festival, Arts Beats & Eats, Detroit Winterblast, Detroit Auto Show

LOCAL VENUES

Ford Field, Meadowbrook Theater, Cobo Center, Hart Plaza, Greenfield Village, Masonic Temple Theater, Dearborn Performing Arts Center, Campus Martius Park, Detroit Institute of Arts, Fisher Building, The Carr Center, The Roostertail, Baker's Keyboard Lounge, Dirty Dog Jazz Café, Cliff Bell's, Detroit Yacht Club, Detroit Boat Club, Detroit Athletic Club



COUNTRIES PERFORMED IN

Canada, England, France, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Germany, Finland, Denmark, Netherlands, Greece, Turkey, Russia, Morocco, The Panama Canal, Costa Rica, Mexico

ARTISTS PERFORMED WITH

The Four Tops, Martha Reeves, The Dramatics, Pine Top Perkins, Hubert Sumlin, Russell Green, Johnny Bassett, Alberta Adams, Odessa Harris, Bette LaVette, Sir Mack Rice and The Falcons, Thornetta Davis

MEDIA APPEARANCES

WDIV-TV "Music Mondays," FOX 2 TV

VIDEO SAMPLE

[WDIV-TV "Music Monday's" Feature Performance](#)

WEBSITE

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CONTACT

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James O'Donnell

PERSONAL MESSAGE



As a musician and performer, I get to create musical paintings on a canvas of air. If my musical performances are good, people smile, applaud and often give me and my band standing ovations. How many professions allow you to experience that? The satisfaction is simply indescribable. I can't imagine doing anything else.

I hope you like the styles of music that I play and I hope that I am able to get you to move to the wide variety of rhythms and beats.

To me, music is magical. It brings people together for a common experience and helps brighten their day. That's a pretty Cool Thing.

*All the best,
James O'Donnell*