

# T.K. Blue

Saxophonist, Flautist, Composer, Arranger, and Educator

Blue, Talib Kibwe's nickname, appears on over 85 recordings and performed with such artists as Don Cherry; Jaki Byard's Apollo Stompers; Ted Daniels' Big Band; Abdullah Ibrahim; Miriam Makeba; Randy Weston—T.K. was also his musical director and arranger; Sam Rivers; Archie Shepp; Xalam (from Senegal); Charli Persip; Sahib Shihab; Benny Bailey; George Lewis; Rufus Reid; Dizzy Gillespie; Pharoah Sanders; Dewey Redman; Andy Bey; Melba Liston; Patti Bown; Chico Hamilton; Carl Allen; Stefon Harris; Randy Brecker; Regina Carter; Bobby McFerrin; Dee Dee Bridgewater; Jimmy Scott; Jayne Cortez; Benny Powell; Mal Waldron; Winard Harper; Russell Malone; Gregoire Maret; Etienne Charles; Candido Camera; Bobby Sanabria; Steve Turre; Mulgrew Miller; Warren Wolf; Monty Alexander; and Arturo O'Farrill, just to name a few.

In 2017 T.K. released *Amour*, his 11th CD as a leader, cited as one of the best jazz recordings of the year by *Downbeat Magazine* (four stars) Deeply indebted to organizations such as Jazzmobile, Jazz Interactions, The Henry Street Settlement, and The Muse, for his own jazz studies, Blue remained committed to music education from Pre-K to the graduate level. Having received a Bachelor's Degree in Music and Psychology from NYU and a Master's Degree in Music Education from Teacher's College Columbia University, Blue taught at Roosevelt Pre-K, Suffolk Community College, Montclair State University, and Long Island University LIU-Post where he was the director of jazz studies from 2007 to 2014. T.K. was commissioned by NYSCA and Transart Incorporated to compose a new suite dedicated to the early presence of African-Americans in the upstate New York Hudson Valley area. The result was a CD entitled *Follow The North Star* based on the life of Solomon Northup and his memoir "12 Years A Slave" Having lived close to 10 years in Paris, Blue was hired by the USIA to embark on three state department tours of Africa.

Blue's musical journey unfolded in 2019 and 2020 with his 12th CD as a leader entitled *The Rhythms Continue*, dedicated to two NEA Jazz Masters Dr. Randy Weston and trombonist/composer/arranger Melba Liston. T.K. was quite fortunate to be on a panel for the Jazz Congress at Lincoln Center in discussion of Dr. Weston's cultural and musical legacy; as well as celebrations

of Randy's music at the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C. and a record release party at Minton's Playhouse in Harlem, NYC.

A documentary film company called "While We Are Still Here" produced a short film entitled "In The Face of What We Remember: Oral Histories of 409 and 555 Edgecombe Avenue", with an emphasis on all the famous Black musicians, entertainers, artists, and writers that lived there. This film features music composed by T.K. Blue.

As a result of the pandemic many concert performances were canceled here and abroad, yet Mr. Blue kept the flame and passion of music alive with several outdoor shows and online lecture/demonstrations for the Community/Cultural Awareness Series in Jersey City as well as Eleanor Roosevelt High School in NYC. Another highlight included a "Latin Bird" streamed performance with his sextet in dedication to the 100th Centennial of Charlie Parker's birthday August 29, 2020. T.K. is featured in two recent book publications: Learning The Score, A Jazz Memoir by James Spaulding and Phree by Maaxerutep. Blue's original composition and improvisation was also recently sampled for the award-winning recording by drummer Makaya McCraven entitled 'Gil Scott-Heron, We're New Again.' 3

There is a very well known jazz magazine in France entitled Jazz Hot, which published a very detailed and lengthy interview by Mathieu Perez on the career of T.K. Blue in their issue for March 2020. In addition T.K. is featured in a film documentary on NEA Jazz Master Dr. Randy Weston called "An African Born In America" premiered in Dakar, Senegal in November 2021.

T.K. Blue continues his monthly performance series in January 2022 at Brothers Smokehouse in Ramsey, N.J. for their Jazz Fridays concerts. A huge highlight for T.K. Blue was being hired by piano legend Monty Alexander in April for a performance at the Shubert Theater in New Haven, CT. In May T.K. recorded his 14th CD as a leader entitled "Planet Bluu" which features the younger generation of Jazz masters: Orion Turre, Davis Whitfield, Dishan Harper, Wallace Roney Jr. plus special guests Steve Turre and Dave Kikoski.

January 2023 T.K. Blue is featured soloist on a new release by Panamanian bassist Santi Debriano entitled Arkestra Bembe "Ashanti" on JoJo Records.

Blue's "Wise Eyes Of The Elders" on Arkadia Records is released on all digital platforms. This recording is comprised of alternate tracks from the original date "Eyes Of The Elders" 2000. T.K. Blue and drummer George Coleman Jr. team up to produce "Shades of Melba and Benny" in dedication to trombone masters and legends Melba Liston and Benny Powell, with performances at Smoke NYC, Clement's Place Rutgers University Newark N.J., and the Jersey City Jazz Festival 2023.

N.Y. Times best selling author T.J. English organizes a band called Dangerous Rhythms to celebrate his new book release at Birdland Theater NYC featuring Grammy nominated drummer Bobby Sanabria and T.K. Blue.

Blue performed at the Saint Louis Jazz Festival in Senegal May 27th with his quartet and at the American Legation in Tangier Morocco for a Juneteenth (June 19th) celebration with Gnawa master musicians.

April 2023 Arkadia Records releases T.K. Blue "The Tide Of Love" on all physical and digital outlets; a recording of beautiful ballads and songs of romance. In May T.K. Blue performed for the Saint Louis Jazz Festival in Senegal, West Africa. In June Blue opened the 2023 Jersey City Jazz Festival. Also on Juneteenth (June 19th) T.K. performed in collaboration with the traditional musicians of Morocco known as the Gnawa. They performed a concert at the American Legation in Tangier, Morocco, which is the oldest foreign American diplomatic post in the world and the only national monument outside the continental USA. In August Blue opened the annual Charlie Parker Jazz Festival in NYC with his band "Latin Bird" In September T.K. Blue paid tribute to his mentor NEA Jazz Master Dr Randy Weston for three nights at Dizzy's Club JALC. On one night the special guest was NEA Jazz Master Violinist Regina Carter. Blue closed out 2023 in performance with Billy Harper's Quintet, Santi Debriano and Arkestra Bembe, and his own band of various configurations. T.K. Blue is extremely grateful to consistently be listed in the flute category for Downbeat Magazine's Critics and Readers' poll 2023. Be on the lookout in 2024 for a new recording entitled Planet Blue!!!