

Kevin Mahogany

Biography

Mahogany's arrival in the early 90's on the jazz scene created an unprecedented stir and resurgence of vocal jazz. Noted writer Whitney Balliett said, "New female jazz singers seem to appear regularly, but for a long time the space behind Joe Williams, Mel Tormé, and Ray Charles has been empty...there is little (Mahogany) cannot do. He has absorbed Billy Eckstine, Williams, Charles, Al Hibbler, Betty Carter, and Leo Watson. He can sing the blues and he can sing ballads. He can scat. He can sing Monk and Gillespie and John Lewis and Miles Davis, and he can sing soul songs and novelty songs. And he is a startling gospel singer who shouts, hums, bends notes in two, growls, and locks every syllable to five or six notes."

Born in 1958 in Kansas City, Missouri, Mahogany grew up listening to the richly diverse musical sounds of his hometown, where jazz and blues had reigned supreme in the early 1900s. He studied clarinet and piano in his formative years and was tutored at the Charlie Parker Foundation. Working regularly in the Eddie Baker New Breed Orchestra in Kansas City, Mahogany was an accomplished baritone saxophonist by the age of 12 and was teaching clarinet by the time he was 14.

Mahogany developed a keen interest in vocals while studying music at Baker University, where he established a jazz choir and also led two groups focusing on R&B and classic soul. He graduated with a BFA in Music, English, and Drama in 1981.

Mahogany recorded three well-received albums with Enja, the independent German label, before signing with Warner Brothers in 1995. His self-titled Warner debut in 1995 received a host of accolades to include *Newcomer of the Year (Penthouse)* and the first of four nominations as #1 Jazz Singer of the Year (*Down Beat* Critics Poll). *Newsweek* described him as "the standout jazz vocalist of his generation," the *Los Angeles Times* called him "one of the first truly gifted male vocalists to emerge in years" and *USA Today* gave him four stars. That same year, Mahogany appeared in the Robert Altman film "Kansas City," where he portrayed a character inspired by Big Joe Turner.

The auspicious Warner debut sparked high demand for the Mahogany touch on projects. He appeared on the 1997 Malpas release *Eastwood After Hours*, a Clint Eastwood ensemble project performed and recorded live at Carnegie Hall. That same year, he made a guest appearance on *Monk On Monk*, T.S. Monk's tribute to his father.

After three more successful albums on Warner (*Another Time, Another Place* in 1997, *My Romance* in 1998 for which he received the *Downbeat* Male Vocalist of the Year Award, and *Portrait of Kevin Mahogany* in 2000), Mahogany moved to the Telarc label in the summer of 2002 for the release *Pride & Joy*, a jazzy set of extraordinarily distinctive takes on Motown classics.

When Mahogany arrived on the international jazz scene, it was with a sound that was both traditionally grounded and boldly innovative. The result was a much-needed change to the jazz landscape. Over the course of Mahogany's extraordinary career, he has made significant breakthroughs in style and sounds that redirected, redefined and even reinvented jazz music.

In the autumn of 2003, Mahogany, along with Kurt Elling, Jon Hendricks and Mark Murphy toured extensively as The Four Brothers. A year of worldwide touring in 2004, Mahogany brought his big band program to South Africa, Russia (two tours with The Igor Butman Big Band), the Caribbean, as well as selected US venues. Mahogany would perform at the Kennedy Center and toured the Hartman Show

extensively throughout North America. Additionally, Mahogany continued to maintain his teaching responsibilities at the University of Miami.

The release of *Kevin Mahogany Big Band*, on Mahogany Jazz with Warner Brothers - WEA distribution in 2005 would find Mahogany #3 on the charts and the #1 male vocalist on jazz radio. *Billboard* declared, "Kevin Mahogany is unquestionably one of today's most exciting and musically adept jazz vocalists."

In 2007, Kevin Mahogany will be launching two international tours based on pivotal points of jazz history: Kevin Mahogany's Kansas City Revue, Featuring the Music of Big Joe Turner (costarring the Godfather's of Groove) and The Coltrane/Hartman Fantasy (costarring David Liebman).

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