



The Hammond B3

An entertaining evening of jazz and swing

Presented by

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Brief Bio's of...

Jimmy Smith Joey DeFrancesco Count Basie Earl Grant



Jimmy Smith

Early Life and Musical Roots

James Oscar “Jimmy” Smith was **born December 8, 1925, in Norristown, Pennsylvania**, and grew up in a family that encouraged his early musical curiosity. From a young age, Smith showed an uncanny ability to absorb music by ear, beginning with piano lessons before gravitating toward the organ. The Hammond B-3 organ, which would later define his career, became a personal fascination in his teenage years.

In the late 1930s and early 1940s, Smith was exposed to the sounds of jazz greats such as **Fats Waller, Art Tatum, and Nat King Cole**. These artists **profoundly influenced his sense of rhythm, improvisation, and phrasing**. After serving in the U.S. Army during World War II, he returned to Philadelphia determined to pursue a career in music. He started performing in local clubs, blending blues, gospel, and swing in ways that foreshadowed his revolutionary approach to jazz organ.

By the early 1950s, Jimmy Smith was already experimenting with techniques that would become his signature: the use of **walking bass lines with his left hand, complex chordal improvisation, and a percussive right-hand approach**. These innovations would lay the groundwork for a new era of jazz, where the organ became a lead instrument capable of both harmonic depth and rhythmic drive.

Smith's Career Breakthrough and Musical Impact

Jimmy Smith's career took a decisive turn in 1956 when he signed with **Blue Note Records**, a label that recognized the organ's untapped potential in modern jazz. His debut album, *A New Sound... A New Star*, showcased his virtuosic skill and immediately garnered critical acclaim. Over the next decade, Smith released a series of landmark albums including ***The Incredible Jimmy Smith, House Party, and Back at the Chicken Shack***, each blending bebop, blues, and swing in an electrifying, unmistakable style.

Smith's playing was not only technically brilliant but also deeply soulful. He transformed the Hammond B-3 from a novelty instrument into the centerpiece of small-group jazz ensembles. His ability to **combine bass lines, chords, and melodic improvisation** simultaneously allowed him to operate as a one-person band. This innovation inspired generations of organists and expanded jazz's sonic possibilities.

In the 1960s, Smith collaborated with a range of jazz luminaries including Stanley Turrentine, **Wes Montgomery**, and **Kenny Burrell**, producing recordings that became essential references in jazz education. His approach to improvisation—mixing gospel-inspired motifs with bebop complexity—cemented his reputation as a transformative figure in jazz history. Critics often praised him for bridging the gap between mainstream jazz audiences and the more adventurous, experimental styles emerging in the post-bop era.

Smith's Legacy and Later Years

Jimmy Smith continued to perform and record prolifically throughout the 1970s and 1980s, **exploring funk, soul-jazz**, and even elements of R&B while retaining his jazz roots. His influence extended far beyond the jazz world, impacting genres as diverse as rock, funk, and even hip-hop, as later artists sampled his recordings.



Notable compositions like ***The Sermon!*** and ***Organ Grinder's Swing*** became standards for aspiring organists worldwide.

Beyond his recordings, Smith was revered as a live performer. His electrifying stage presence and improvisational skill **captivated audiences from intimate clubs to major concert halls**. Even into the later stages of his career, his performances demonstrated a rare combination of technical precision, emotional depth, and sheer joy in music-making.

Jimmy Smith passed away on February 8, 2005, but his legacy lives on through countless recordings, the many organists he influenced, and the enduring popularity of the Hammond B-3 in jazz and beyond. His contributions not only redefined what the organ could do but also reshaped the sound of modern jazz itself, leaving an indelible mark on 20th-century music history.



Joey DeFrancesco

Early Life and Musical Roots

Joey DeFrancesco was **born April 10, 1971, in Springfield, PA**, into a musical family. His father 'Papa' John DeFrancesco was a professional jazz organist who introduced Joey to the Hammond B-3 at a very young age. By the **age of 10, Joey was performing in local clubs**, already displaying the extraordinary technical skill and soulful phrasing that would define his career.

Growing up, he immersed himself in the recordings of jazz organ legends such as **Jimmy Smith, Jack McDuff, and Larry Young**. These early influences helped

shape Joey's approach to the organ, blending blues, bebop, and soul-jazz with a fresh, modern sensibility. He also studied piano and trumpet, developing a versatile musical foundation that would allow him to innovate within jazz while honoring its traditions.

By his early teens, Joey's reputation as a prodigy had spread beyond his hometown. His **virtuosic playing, infectious energy, and deep understanding of jazz harmony** positioned him for a career that would eventually place him among the greatest jazz organists of all time.

Joey's Career Breakthrough and Musical Impact

Joey DeFrancesco's professional career took off in the mid-1980s, when he began performing at **major jazz festivals and recording with established artists**. At age 16, he had already captured the attention of jazz audiences and critics with his breathtaking skill and commanding stage presence.

He released his first albums in the late 1980s and early 1990s, quickly establishing himself as a modern master of the Hammond B-3. His style combined **rapid-fire improvisation, deep blues feeling**, and a rhythmic drive that could fill a room. Joey's collaborations with

legends like **Miles Davis, John McLaughlin, and Papa John DeFrancesco** further expanded his musical horizons, blending traditional jazz with elements of fusion, funk, and gospel.

Throughout his career, Joey **recorded dozens of albums** that showcased both his virtuosic technique and his emotional depth. He became known not only for his recordings but also for his **electrifying live performances**, where his improvisation and energy consistently captivated audiences.



Joey's Legacy and Later Years

Over more than four decades, Joey DeFrancesco cemented his place as one of the **most influential jazz organists of his generation**. He **revitalized the Hammond B-3** in modern jazz, inspiring

countless musicians to explore the instrument and its possibilities. His recordings and **performances blended technical mastery** with soulfulness, creating a sound that was both rooted in tradition and forward-looking.

In addition to his organ work, Joey was an **accomplished pianist and trumpeter**, demonstrating his **deep understanding of jazz harmony and improvisation**. He continued to record, perform and mentor young musicians up until his passing on August 25, 2022.

Joey DeFrancesco's **legacy lives on in his extensive discography**, the musicians he influenced, and the countless fans who were moved by his music. His contributions ensured that the Hammond B-3 would remain a central voice in jazz for generations to come.



Count Basie

Early Life and Musical Beginnings

William James “Count” Basie was **born August 21, 1904, in Red Bank, New Jersey**, into a family that encouraged musical exploration. He grew up in a modest household where music was a constant presence. Basie learned to play the piano at a young age, influenced by his mother and early experiences with church and community music.

As a teenager, Basie became fascinated with jazz and the emerging big band sound. He drew inspiration from legendary pianists such as **Fats Waller** and **Earl Hines**, studying their styles and techniques. By his late teens, he was performing in small clubs and dance halls, earning a reputation for his rhythmically precise, swinging style.

In the 1920s, Basie joined several traveling bands, honing his craft as both **a pianist and an arranger**. His early experiences laid the foundation for what would become one of the most influential careers in jazz history.

Count’s Career Highlights and Musical Achievements

In **1935**, Count Basie made a pivotal move by forming the Count Basie Orchestra in Kansas City. The orchestra quickly became renowned for its swinging rhythm, innovative arrangements, and the unique ability to let each musician shine. Basie’s **minimalist piano style**—favoring space and subtlety over excess—became his signature sound, allowing the band’s ensemble to take center stage.

Some of Basie’s most famous works include “One O’Clock Jump”, “April in Paris”, and “Jumpin’ at the Woodside”, which remain jazz standards today. Over his career, he collaborated with many jazz legends, including **Billie Holiday, Frank Sinatra, Lester Young, and Joe Williams**.

Basie’s influence extended beyond performance. As a bandleader and arranger, he shaped the sound of swing music **and inspired countless musicians** with his emphasis on clarity, groove, and musical storytelling. The orchestra’s tight rhythms and signature riffs set a new standard for big bands across the United States.



Count's Legacy and Lasting Influence

Count Basie's career spanned more than five decades, leaving an indelible mark on jazz and popular music. He was celebrated not only for his technical skill and musical intuition but also for his **ability to connect with audiences**, creating music that was both sophisticated and deeply enjoyable.

He received numerous awards throughout his lifetime, including multiple Grammy Awards and recognition as an **NEA Jazz Master**. Even after his passing on April 26, 1984, Basie's music continues to influence jazz musicians, educators, and listeners worldwide.

Basie's legacy lives on through recordings, performances by his orchestra, and the countless artists he inspired. Often called the **"Swing King"**, Count Basie remains a symbol of jazz excellence, creativity, and the joyous spirit of swing music.



Earl Grant

Early Life and Musical Beginnings

Earl Grant was **born July 20, 1931, in Idabel, Oklahoma**, and raised in a musical family that nurtured his early love for music. Showing prodigious talent from a young age, he became proficient on both the **piano and organ**, instruments that would define his signature sound. Grant's musical upbringing combined classical training with a deep appreciation for jazz, gospel, and the burgeoning sounds of rhythm and blues.

By his teenage years, Earl was performing locally, demonstrating an extraordinary ability to connect with audiences through his music. He developed a style that **fused technical virtuosity with emotional warmth**, a balance that would later define his recordings. Grant's skill on the Hammond organ and piano earned him early recognition, and he began to attract the attention of music industry professionals in the early 1950s.

His first recordings highlighted not only his instrumental talents but also his smooth, velvety voice. This combination of **vocal elegance and instrumental mastery** set him apart from other entertainers of his time, allowing him to bridge genres from jazz to pop with effortless charm.

Grant's Rise to Fame and Career Highlights

Earl Grant's professional breakthrough came in the late 1950s and early 1960s, a period when he became a prominent figure in the American music scene. In 1957, he recorded the hit single **"The End"**, which showcased his silky vocals and earned him national attention. Around the same time, Grant's skillful performances on the **Hammond organ** were capturing the hearts of jazz enthusiasts and mainstream audiences alike.

He became a **frequent performer on television and in nightclubs**, a rare feat for a black musician in the era, and his style was characterized by elegance, charm, and versatility. His repertoire included jazz standards, popular ballads, and Latin-inspired tunes, which demonstrated his global musical awareness. Grant's recordings, such as **"Swingin' Gently"** and **"Ebb Tide"**, became staples on radio stations and contributed to his reputation as one of the most refined entertainers of his generation.

Grant's artistry was not limited to performance; he was also a composer and arranger, crafting lush, romantic orchestrations that complemented his piano and organ playing. His smooth vocals, combined with instrumental sophistication, earned him a devoted following and the respect of peers in jazz, pop, and R&B circles.

Grant's Legacy and Lasting Impact

Earl Grant's influence extends far beyond his chart successes. He was a pioneer in bringing the **Hammond organ** into mainstream popular music while maintaining a sophisticated, refined sound that appealed to audiences across racial and generational lines. His recordings continue to inspire modern jazz and soul musicians who admire the



seamless blend of technical skill and emotive performance that defined his career. Tragically, Grant's life was cut short in **1965**, when he died in a car accident at the age of 34. Despite his early passing, his music has endured, earning him a place among the great mid-century entertainers whose work transcends time. Today, Earl Grant is remembered not only

for his remarkable recordings but also for his ability to convey **romance, joy, and elegance** through music—a true entertainer in every sense of the word.

His recordings remain treasured by collectors, and his style continues to influence contemporary jazz, pop, and R&B musicians. Earl Grant's legacy is a testament to the power of **talent, versatility, and heart** in music, making him a cherished figure in American musical history.
