

Tommaso Starace



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Tommaso Starace was born in Milan in 1975 from an Italian father and Australian mother. He started playing the alto saxophone at the age of 18.

In 1994 he took part in a weekly jazz seminar organised by Berklee College of Music, taking place in Perugia as part of the 'Umbria Jazz Festival' and in that same year he was accepted at the Birmingham Conservatoire where he graduated with a BMus first class honours degree. During those 4 years of college he studied with saxophonists Andrew Tweed, Chris Gumbley and Nigel Wood both classical and jazz repertoire. In the summer of 1996 he took part in the Jamey Aebersold Summer Camp in Kentucky and had the chance of performing and studying with saxophonist Don Braden and Jazz Educators David Baker.

Between the years 1999/2000 he completed the Postgraduate Jazz course at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, London. While attending the course he studied with ex-Jazz Messengers saxophonist Jean Toussaint, and saxophonists Stan Sulzman and Martin Hathaway; he performed in small combos and big bands with Billy Cobham, David Liebman, Kenny Wheeler and Norma Winstone. He also took part in several master classes some of which with renown jazz musicians such as saxophonist Tim Garland and bass virtuoso John Patitucci.

Across the years, since successfully completing his Postgraduate course, Tommaso has gained a considerable reputation in the UK jazz scene appearing at many jazz clubs and Festivals with his Quintet. Some of the venues include:

Purcell Room - Queen Elizabeth Hall, Pizza Express Dean Street, The 'Vortex' Jazz Club, The 100 Club, Pizza on the Park, Royal Festival Hall Foyer, Boxford Fleece Jazz Club, Plymouth Jazz Club, Bonington Theatre Nottingham, Jazz in the Streets Festival (concert in Trafalgar Square), Bexley Heath Jazz Club, National Theatre, Jazz at The Green Man, Derenham Jazz Club, Quay arts Centre, Milestone Jazz Club, Gumbles Jazz Club, National Portrait Gallery, Capital Gardens Jazz Festival, Chelsea Festival, Windsor Festival, St Ives jazz Club, St Davids hall - Cardiff, Drill Hall - Lincoln, Swanage Jazz Festival, Southampton Jazz club, Swansea Jazzland, Royal Parks Summer jazz concert series, Grimsby Jazz Club, Schmazz Jazz at the Cluny, Norwich Arts Centre, Colchester Arts Centre, Restormel arts Jazz series - Cornwall, Chichester Jazz Club, Brighton Jazz Club, Three Players Theatre Thame, The Crypt jazz Club - London, Derby Jazz Club, Birmingham Symphony Hall Jazz Foyer, Posk Jazz Cafe', Royal Albert hall Jazz Ignite, Lichfield Arts Centre, Lichfield Festival, Oxford Jazz Festival, Wakefield Jazz Club, Derby Jazz Club.

He has performed with some of the most respected uk jazz musicians including:

Attilio Zanchi, Paolo Fresu, Tino Tracanna, Jim Mullen, Roger Beaujolais, Phil Lee, Liam Noble, Jonathan Gee, Dave Cliff, Tim Richards, Roland Perrin, Andy Hamill, Steve Brown, Mike Gorman, Colin Oxley, Jim Hart.

In the year 2003 Tommaso and pianist Joan Taylor started a new project called 'Jazz Meets Classical' performing repertoire of 'classical composers' from the 20th Century who influenced and were influenced by the Jazz idiom (M. Ravel; C. Debussy; J. Ibert; A. Piazzolla to name a few). The duo across the years had the chance of performing in many churches and music clubs in London and frequently appeared at the Victoria and Albert Museum as part of the 'Late View Program' concert series.

In the year 2004 he collaborated with award winning oscar film composer Dario Marianelli ('Pride and Prejudice' and ' The Atonement') recording music for 'This Little Life', a BBC drama for Channel Four.

In December 2005 Tommaso produced and recorded his second album - *'Tommaso Starace plays the photos of Elliott Erwitt'* with a new fresh and exciting quintet line-up including Roger Beaujolais on vibraphone, Liam Noble on piano, Julian Bury on bass and Jim Hart on drums.

The CD launch took place at the Purcell Room, Royal Festival Hall on December 21st and was followed by a favourable review in the Evening Standard by jazz critic **Jack Massarick**:

"Signor Starace is a shrewd operator. He plays alto and soprano sax with impressive post- Parkerian felicity and Italian flair"

Some of the exciting concerts for the 'Elliott Erwitt Project' include a performance at the Photographers' Gallery for Magnum Photos annual meeting in June 2006 and a winter tour with the quintet across the UK in that same year, sponsored by Jazz Services.

In May 2006 Tommaso was accepted in the finals of the prestigious International Massimo Urbani Award, Camerino, Italy and was awarded a Bursary to attend the Nuoro Jazz Seminars organised by trumpeter Paolo Fresu. At the end of the course the Nuoro Jazz Faculty awarded a bursary to the seven most promising musicians that could form a band to take part in the prestigious Sardinian Festivals of 2007, 'Time In Jazz' taking place in Berchidda and 'Nuoro Jazz', both of which Paolo Fresu is artistic director. The concerts were recorded and a CD was produced out of it.

In the year 2007 Tommaso put together a new exciting Italian quartet made up of young talented pianist Michele Di Toro, Attilio Zanchi on bass (part of Paolo Fresu's Quintet for many years), and the hard swinging drums of Tommy Bradascio. Together they have been performing in some of the most respected jazz venues across Italy including :

Blue Note Milano, Brianza Open Jazz Festival, Biella Jazz Festival, Le Scimmie Jazz Club - Milano; Borgo Jazz Club - Genova; Art Blakey Jazz Club - Busto Arsizio; Schighera jazz concert series - Milano; 'Time in Jazz Festival' - Berchidda; 'Nuoro Jazz Festival' - Nuoro, Galleria Rudh Jazz Club, Biella Jazz Club.

In June 2008 Birmingham Conservatoire awarded Tommaso with an Honorary Membership which is an acknowledgement given to past students who made a significant contribution within the various branches of the music profession.

In July of 2008 and 2009 he was accepted together with a few other students to take part in the yearly prestigious Master Class lead by saxophonist Dave Liebman which consists of 6 intense days of workshops dealing with the saxophone, jazz harmony/improvisation and ways of improving ones playing to the highest level through his notorious book ' Chromatic Approach to jazz harmony and melody'. Saxophonist/flautist Steve Wilson was

guest speaker and joined the event as well.

In the Winter of 2008 Tommaso's quartet went through a second extended tour of the UK sponsored by Jazz Services. The group was made of Jonathan Gee on piano, Larry Bartley on bass and Italian drummer Paolo Pellegatti.

'Tommaso Starace Quartet - Don't Forget' marks a new exciting musical time for saxophonist Tommaso in the year 2009. This CD was recently recorded with his Italian line up. Renowned jazz author and critic **Vittorio Franchini** says of Tommaso's new recording:

"The sax is filled with voices, it sings gaiety.....I like the way he follows joyful paths, I imagine him playing around with rhythms, playing with the other instruments, opening up to new feelings and inventing new ways..."

The launch of this new recording took place as a sold out concert at the Blue Note in Milano in January 2010.

The quartet undertook a UK tour in April and an Italian Tour in May 2010.

In May 2010 Tommaso releases his fourth and latest album 'Blood & Champagne' recorded with a new all star UK quartet comprising: Frank Harrison on piano; Laurence Cottle on electric bass and Chris Nickolls on drums. The band recorded music by Michel Petrucciani, Billy Strayhorn, Ennio Morricone, Henry Mancini plus some original material by the band leader.

Tommaso is currently busy performing concerts between the United Kingdom and Italy and is working on a new album down in Italy which will be recorded in Rimini and features: Roger Beaujolais on vibraphone, Sam Gambarini on Hammond Organ, Alessandro Pivi on drums. The Cds will be a collection of tunes written by Pat Metheny, Joe Henderson, Wayne Shorter, Cannonball Adderley, and some original material composed by the band members.