

MIKE WOFFORD Biography

“My piano influences are many and varied. They include, to name a few, Thelonious Monk, Horace Silver, Sonny Clark, Herbie Nichols, Duke Ellington, Jimmy Rowles, Richard Twardzik, Glenn Gould, Bill Evans, Cecil Taylor, Paul Bley, and, of course, the greatest of all, Art Tatum. My ongoing commitment has always been to absorb and, in turn, develop something of my own, which I consider the very definition of a jazz musician.”

Having appeared on over two hundred recordings as a sideman, pianist Mike Wofford now continues to record and perform primarily as a leader. He has received critical acclaim for his *Live at Maybeck, vol. 18* in the Concord Records solo piano series, and his 2004 CD *Live at Athenaeum Jazz* on Capri Records, with bassist Peter Washington and drummer Victor Lewis. In 2008, Capri released *Live at Athenaeum Jazz, vol. 2*, a duo CD with his wife, flutist Holly Hofmann. Mike’s newest quintet CD *Turn Signal*, due out in January 2012, is also on Capri and is co-led with Hofmann, featuring Terrell Stafford on trumpet.

A native Texan, Wofford was raised in San Diego, California where he resides currently. His mother was a professional singer, and he began studying piano at age seven. At nineteen, he moved to Los Angeles and entered the jazz scene there in the early 1960s.

His first professional performances were with the legendary Lighthouse All-Stars and the bands of Teddy Edwards, Art Pepper, Red Norvo, Chet Baker, Bud Shank, Zoot Sims, Shorty Rogers and Maynard Ferguson, as well as a tenure as singer June Christy’s accompanist. It was during this time that he also appeared on his first jazz recordings with Mel Tormé, Gary Burton and Joe Pass. He also subsequently recorded the first albums on Epic and Discovery Records under his own name.

By the late 1960s, Wofford also became busy as a free-lance session player in Los Angeles on recording dates and motion picture and TV soundtracks. He was the staff pianist on such live TV series as “The Bill Cosby Show” with Quincy Jones, and was first-call pianist for Oliver Nelson at Universal Pictures. He also became active as an arranger, working at Capitol Records as well as writing for such artists as Sergio Mendes, and the Mike Barone

Big Band. During this time, Mike also performed and recorded with Roger McGuinn, John Lennon, The Jackson 5, Tom Scott, Joan Baez and Harry Nilsson, among many others from the pop world.

Wofford began his longtime association with drummer Shelly Manne in 1967, playing and recording with Manne's various groups until 1982. Mike toured Europe with the Shelly Manne Sextet and the Shelly Manne/Lee Konitz Quartet, and later South America, Europe and Japan as pianist and music director for Sarah Vaughan. He returned to Japan for several tours with Manne, Harry "Sweets" Edison, Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis, Zoot Sims, and the Benny Carter Orchestra. He also traveled to Brazil with the Benny Carter Quartet.

In 1989, he became pianist and music director for Ella Fitzgerald until her retirement in 1992. He was also house pianist during this time at San Diego's two national jazz clubs, Elario's and the Horton Grand Hotel. At these venues he performed with such legendary jazz figures as Art Farmer, Charlie Haden, Barney Kessel and Ray Brown.

Wofford continues to be one of the most in-demand pianists in jazz, having played and recorded with Bobby Watson, Jeff Hamilton, Charles McPherson, Joe Henderson, Kevin Mahogany, James Moody, Phil Woods, Kenny Burrell, Benny Golson, as well as duo-piano appearances with Kenny Werner and Pete Malinverni. He currently performs and tours with his own trio, and as co-leader in a quartet with Hofmann, and has arranged for their string orchestra configuration focusing on the music of Antonio Carlos Jobim and Ellington/Strayhorn.

Shelly Manne has said, "Mike is outstanding... a musician's pianist... He inspires as he plays."

Thomas Burns
President and CEO
Capri Records