

WILLIE JONES III - BIOGRAPHY

With an unparalleled style of rhythmic expression, drummer Willie Jones III is one of the world's leading jazz drummers. In addition to honoring his monumental influences - the late greats Philly Joe Jones, Art Blakey and Billy Higgins - Jones' bold articulation and constantly innovative sense of swing are results of his life-long musical experience.

Born in Los Angeles, California on June 8, 1968, Jones' earliest exposure to music was through his father, Willie Jones II, an accomplished and notable jazz pianist, who offered guidance and inspiration to his gifted son. Dedicated to the further development of his skills, the younger Jones spent the next few years working diligently with acclaimed drummers and music instructors and began performing with distinguished musicians by the time he was in his teens. He completed his academic training after receiving a full scholarship to the California Institute of the Arts where he studied under the tutelage of the legendary Albert "Tootie" Heath. Before he was a semifinalist in the 1992 Thelonious Monk Jazz Drum Competition, Jones co-founded jazz band Black Note. Influenced by the rich soulful energy of the West Coast bop movement, Black Note's hard-swing sound propelled them to first place in the prestigious John Coltrane Young Artist Competition in 1991. Jones contributed his skillfulness as both musician and producer on all four Black Note recordings: 43rd & Degnan and L.A. Underground (World Stage Records), Jungle Music (Columbia) and Nothin' But the Swing (Impulse!). By 1994, the band had toured Europe and across the U.S. and was the opening act for Wynton Marsalis.

Near the end of 1994, while Jones was reaching for a higher level of drumming dexterity, he gained the privilege of playing sideman to the renowned vibist Milt Jackson, where Jones learned the importance of pacing and sensitivity. Meanwhile, his musical career continued to unfold. From 1995 through 1998, he was a member of Arturo Sandoval's band and is featured on Sandoval's GRAMMY® award winning release Hot House (N2K). Subsequently, Jones recorded with Horace Silver on Jazz Has a Sense of Humor (Impulse!).

From 1998-2005, Jones was a member of Roy Hargrove's Quintet and is featured on Roy Hargrove's CD releases on Verve: Moment To Moment, Hard Groove, Nothing Serious and RH Factor's Distractions. Jones can be heard on a host of recordings including Kurt Elling's GRAMMY® nominated Night Moves (Concord) and Eric Reed's Here (Max Jazz). Jones has worked with Sonny Rollins, Ernestine Anderson, Bobby Hutcherson, Wynton Marsalis, Cedar Walton, Frank Wess, the Dizzy Gillespie All-Star Big Band, Houston Person, Billy Childs, Eric Reed, Ryan Kisor, Eric Alexander, Bill Charlap, Michael Brecker, Herbie Hancock and Hank Jones. In 2000, Jones' released his debut CD, Vol 1...Straight Swingin' on his own label, WJ3 Records. He continues to reveal his proficiency as a composer as well as a producer on Vol II...Don't Knock The Swing (2002); Volume III (2007); WE 2 (2008), a trombone and piano recording featuring Wycliffe Gordon and Eric Reed; and Jones' latest release The Next Phase (2010).