

CJF Plans Event to Honor and Help California Jazz Musicians

By Michael Dolphin, Contributing Writer

Published April 20, 2022



Don Was (Courtesy photo)

Most jazz fans have an idea of the great legacy of jazz and blues in Los Angeles. The famous places where musicians and fans hung out are names forever etched into our memories – from Dolphin’s of Hollywood, founded by my father, to The Parisian Room, Marty’s On the Hill, Club Alabam, The Last Word and so many more.

These clubs existed (and some continue to exist) because of the great jazz musicians who create the music that strengthens and supports our souls in tough times. The California Jazz Foundation (CJF) gets to return the gift by aiding many of these creative musicians when they themselves face challenging times and circumstances.

CJF is a nonprofit organization started in 2006 to aid and assist California jazz musicians in financial and medical crisis. To date CJF has touched the lives of almost 400 jazz musicians, providing rent and mortgage payments, housing relocation, arranging for medical and dental care, in-home nursing, discount prescriptions and helping with other emergencies as they arise.

On Saturday, April 30, the California Jazz Foundation will present its 10th annual “Give the Band a Hand” Gala fundraiser at the Omni Los Angeles Hotel. The event honors the best of the jazz community while raising money to provide support to California’s jazz musicians in financial or medical need. The evening will feature live and silent auctions, a gourmet dinner, video tributes, award presentations and lots of great live jazz.



Jeff Clayton (Courtesy photo)

“The California Jazz Foundation fills a critical void by assisting California’s jazz musicians in need,” says Edythe L. Bronston, CJF founder and president. “Many older musicians have neither Social Security nor any or inadequate health insurance, and some see no residuals from their important work. They rely on us, and we rely on the community to keep the Foundation financially sound and swinging.”

This year, CJF will highlight the stellar achievements and memory of the late Jeff Clayton with the Heritage Award, recognizing his many contributions as a musician, teacher, and mentor to the jazz community. Born in Los Angeles, Clayton was an expressive, sensitive, and soulful musician, playing alto saxophone and flute.

Jeff Clayton began his career recording and touring with Stevie Wonder, followed by gigs with Gladys Knight, Michael Jackson, and Madonna, Ray Charles, Lena Horne, Dianne Reeves, and B.B. King and a lengthy association with Frank Sinatra. In 1977, Jeff and his bassist brother John Clayton founded The Clayton Brothers Quartet and in 1985, with drummer Jeff Hamilton, they co-founded the Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra.

A dedicated jazz educator, Clayton taught at UCLA, USC, CSU-LB and CSU-LA and participated in countless jazz camps, festivals and clinics world-wide. Clayton's musical philosophy was, "Music is not mine to keep, only to have and to hold. I must give back what I have been so freely given."

In addition, CJF will recognize the creative contributions of Don Was, president of the legendary jazz label Blue Note Records. A professional musician who has been passionate about jazz from his early years, he is one of the record industry's most significant artists, producers and executives.

As president of Blue Note Records since 2011, Was has led the restoration of the renowned 80-year-old label to its rightful place in the jazz firmament. Was will receive the Nica Award, which honors individuals who exemplify the legacy of Baroness Pannonica (Nica) de Koenigswarter, patron of such great jazz artists as Charlie Parker and Thelonious Monk.

A number of great musicians will appear at the gala to "give back" as Jeff Clayton taught. Those performing in tribute to our honorees include Marcus Miller, Ronnie Foster, Paul Jackson, Jr. and Clayton Cameron, Rickey Woodard, Adam Ledbetter, Don Littleton, Edwin Livingston and Charles Owens. Nationally-known comedian and NPR personality Alonzo Bodden will serve as master of ceremonies.

Michael Dolphin is vice-president of the California Jazz Foundation. For more information on the Gala, call 818-261-0057 or visit www.californiajazzfoundation.org.