

Al Foster

Aloysius Foster was born in Richmond Virginia on January 18, 1943.

His family moved to New York when he was a child, so as a boy growing up in Harlem he had the opportunity to hear many great shows at the Apollo theatre.

He heard Miles Davis live in 1958 with his sextet that featured John Coltrane, Cannonball Adderly, Bill Evans, Paul Chambers, and Jimmy Cobb.

Other memorable experiences were hearing Buddy Rich and Philly Joe Jones' drum battle, Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers with Lee Morgan, Dave Brubeck, and John Coltrane's quartet. These experiences got him hooked on the Music. His father, who was a bassist, bought him a set of drums, and he would practice every day after school.

Thus began a journey that has included recordings and performances with virtually all the jazz greats of the period from 1964 until the present; most notably with Blue Mitchell, Sonny Rollins, Herbie Hancock, Miles Davis, Thelonius Monk, Cannonball Adderly, Tommy Flanagan, Hank Jones, John Scofield, Joe Lovano, and Joe Henderson.

He joined Miles Davis in 1973. Miles said of him in his autobiography, "I replaced DeJohnette with Al Foster. He had such groove, and would just lay it right in there. For what I wanted in a drummer, Al had all of it." Al became one of Miles closest friends and confidants, and was the only person to participate in 2 generations of his bands. Their live record "We Want Miles" won a Grammy award in 1985.

Although self taught and unable to read music, Al composes at the piano. He plays his pieces in tempo, putting a groove on it, and is very specific about voice leading and melodic phrasing. His songs have recently been noticed by the jazz community.

Pianist Hank Jones recorded Foster's composition "Pauletta" on his album "For my Father", and Chris Potter arranged and recorded Al's tribute to his wife, "Bonnie Rose" for his Verve album "Pure".

In 1995 Al decided to form his own group and took a quartet featuring Dave Kikoski and Chris Potter to Europe. In the winter of 1996, with the addition of Doug Weiss on bass, the quartet went to Europe and recorded "Brandyn" for Laika records.

This record featured five original compositions by Mr. Foster.

Chris Potter eventually left to perform with Dave Holland and in 1999 saxophonist Eli DeGibri, formerly with Herbie Hancock's band, joined the group.

Aaron Goldberg played piano at this time, and introduced Eli to AL.

Aaron joined saxophonist Joshua Redman's band in 2000 opening the piano chair for Kevin Hays. In 2005 the band recorded a live record titled "Love, Peace, and Jazz".

The album was critically acclaimed, earning 3 1/2 stars in Downbeat and featuring Al's compositions as well as the conception of the group as a whole.

Pianist Adam Birnbaum replaced Hays in 2009 and has been with the group ever since.

Over the past 14 years Al's band has performed more than 1000 dates at Festivals and in clubs all over the world.

