

Unsung Hero: “Blue Lou” Marini

Saxophones, Flutes, Clarinet, Arranger, Composer, Educator, Producer

“Lou has a lot to say, and all should listen.”

—Bob Hensley, L.A. review

Often referred to as an “unsung jazz hero,” platinum recording artist, Lou Marini, Jr. is the seasoned soul and adept multi-instrumentalist, arranger, composer, educator, and producer credited with inspiring the origins of a fan-following cult across multiple genres of music.

Making a name for himself as a sideman in various high profile groups, any top New York jazz musician will tell you he’s “one of the absolute best jazz musicians.” The New York based Marini is famed for his chameleon-like adaptability to imagine and perform inventive ideas in jazz, rock, blues and classical music. Describing Lou’s performances, the *New York Times* said, “(he’s) the focal point of the group... (who) gives the band most of its colors and shadings, and provides it with a strongly melodic lead voice.”

Five time Grammy Award winning arranger / composer Bob Belden had this to say about one of the time-honored contributions from Lou Marini, Jr., “This composition and arrangement reflects Lou’s ability to create exciting, new music that embraces rock and the most advanced ideas of jazz music.” The statement helps illustrate Marini’s ability to inspire and traverse multiple music disciplines.

Highly Sought Sideman

Popular since the early 1970s, Lou Marini, Jr. continues to be one of the most sought-after sidemen and session musicians on the New York scene. Due in part to his incredible skill and talent of the highest calibre, Marini masters many styles and instruments. He is accomplished on soprano, alto, tenor, and baritone saxes, piccolo, flute, alto flute, bass flute and clarinet.

The ever-present influence of Lou Marini, Jr. is all around you. Jingles, television, radio and concerts all reflect the irresistible, innovative sounds of this veteran performer who electrifies audiences internationally. He truly is one of the industry’s most prolific luminaries who demonstrates a tireless commitment to his craft.

Band Membership

Lou Marini, Jr. is best known as a member of several distinguished bands: Woody Herman Orchestra, Doc Severinson, Blood, Sweat and Tears, The Band, Levon Helm & the RCO All-Stars, Dr. John, Frank Zappa, Saturday Night Live (SNL) Band, The Blues Brothers, Maureen McGovern, Lew Soloff Quintet, BlueBeck with Joe Beck, Eric Clapton, Red House, and the Magic City Jazz Orchestra. He has toured four times each with James Taylor’s Band of Legends and the John Tropea Band. A true blue lover of big bands, Lou has had the honor of performing with some of his childhood idols such as Thad Jones-Mel Lewis and the Buddy Rich Band, the latter with whom he also arranged.

Is it any wonder Marini’s arrangements and compositions display influences from the work of his heros? Gil Evans, Bob Brookmeyer, Thad Jones, Don Ellis, along with rock, pop and avant-garde techniques can be heard in his music. His unusual, off-the-wall notions, for example, are featured in his composition “Hip Pickles,” a tune whose title doubles as the abstract name of his publishing company.

Album Recordings + Performances

The high profile cultural icon, Blue Lou Marini has recorded on numerous albums, many of which went platinum. Celebrities with whom his “Blueness,” as Lou is also known, has recorded with include Aretha Franklin, Tony Bennett, The Rolling Stones, Stevie Wonder, Diana Ross, Aerosmith, Maureen McGovern, Billy Joel, B.B. King, Luther Vandross, Lou Reed, Brecker Brothers, Dr. John, Donald Fagan, Eddie Palmieri, Jimmy Buffet, Frank Zappa, John Tropea, and Steely Dan. Contrasting, yet notable icons he has also performed with include Eric Clapton Smokey Robinson, Jose Carreras, Lou Rawls, The Supremes, Dr. John, Four Tops, Sting, and Tina Turner.

Saturday Night Live and The Blues Brothers

In fact, it is Marini's seven year association as an original SNL band member that led to his role as "Blue Lou" in John Belushi and Dan Akroyd's cult classic movie, "The Blues Brothers." To this day, the remarkable popularity of the Blues Brothers Band is kept alive. Lou and the other band members tour worldwide, giving live concerts to packed houses and hundreds of thousands screaming fans.

No stranger to film, Lou Marini enjoys a formidable roster of success in this arena, too. His character as a band member and the saxophone soloist, who performs with his sax on the counter of a diner as Aretha Franklin sings "Think" in "The Blues Brothers" movie, remains throughout the sequel "Blue Brothers 2000." Dubbed 'Blue Lou' by Dan Akroyd, he is also well-recognized for his saxophone solos at the open and close of SNL episodes, and as the golden pharaoh who plays a solo instrumental hit for comedian Steve Martin's "King Tut" sketch on a 1978 episode.

Screen Undertakings

Different film-related projects Marini has lent his talents to are "Nightlife," hosted by comedian David Brenner (saxophone soloist for Billy Preston's band), numerous appearances on the "David Letterman Show," the "Grammy Awards," "Tony Awards," "James Taylor's Musicare's Man of the Year Special," "Kennedy Center Honors," the soundtrack of Martin Scorsese's "The Last Waltz," "Sesame Street," countless network television specials (i.e. Aretha Franklin's duet special, all-star band for President-Elect Obama on HBO's 'We Are One,' an AIDS special featuring Dionne Warwick and Elton John). Likewise, Lou's genius is featured in "The Ref," "The Wiz," "Bright Lights Big City," "Burning Bed," "Bye Bye Birdie," "Turner & Hooch," "Mixed Nuts," and most recently a "Family Thing," starring Robert Duvall and James Earl Jones.

About a decade prior to SNL, Marini's sound was beginning to form at the University of North Texas (UNT). A member of the famed One O'Clock Lab Band, Lou flushed out his musical influences in fresh, exciting ways to create a sound that set him apart from his peers.

New Project

Today, Blue Lou's singular, expressive voice achieves virtuosity in his first collaborative recording with Misha Segal titled "**The Blue Lou & Misha Project - Highly Classified.**" His third album as a leader, Marini defines a cutting-edge, urban cool jazz vibe that revolutionizes the soundscape with edgy concepts and cliché-free tones. The celebrated saxophone wizard takes listeners on an ultra-original, sonic adventure showcasing horn solos. Masterful compositions and arrangements combine with smooth rap rhythms and hints of humor. Overall, this unconventional, yet accessible, collection transports the listener at warp speed into the future, fusing contemporary jazz, fusion, rock, straight-ahead jazz, rap and hip hop. Other albums featuring Lou are "**Chihuahua Boogie**" (2010), "**Lou's Blues**" (2001), and "**Soul Serenade**" (1992). Future releases include a Lynda Carter album, and a father-son project.

Education - Awards - Family

Born May 13, 1945 in Charleston, S.C. and raised in Ohio, making music is in the roots of the Marini family tree. At Fairless High School where Blue Lou attended, his father Lou Marini, Sr. directed his high school band and composed the alma mater. Each year the school bestows the Lou Marini Award in honor of his father. In 2010 the Marini's were honored by the school, when they received the 'Distinguished Fairless Falcon Award' given to Blue Lou and his late father. Marini, Jr. carries on the tradition of education previously started by his father. He has arranged for Stan Kenton, and been on the faculties of both the Stan Kenton Camps and National Stage Band camps. Currently, he is an active clinician with high school and university jazz bands, and serves as Musical Director of the Brianza. Blues Festival in Monza, Italy.

Married to his beautiful Spanish bride, Carmen, Blue Lou is a long time resident of Manhattan's Upper West Side where he continues his life-long pursuit of musical excellence. Known as "Double-Dad" by his granddaughter Alaina, Blue Lou's son performed with him in Tuscany during the summer of 2010. Dubbed 'Louie Tre' (Italian style), Lou's son carries on the music roots as a vocalist in the Dallas area.

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