



Walter Bell Bio:

Jazz and Latin flutist Walter Bell first picked up the flute as an 11-year-old in his family's home in West Philadelphia. He graduated from Overbrook High School and attended Cheney University but not as a music major. A self-taught musician, his exceptional ear and grasp of blues, bop, swing, standards, and strong, rich percussive Latin sounds helped him develop his own unique voice, which has delighted audiences throughout the U.S. and around the world. Bell is very adept at weaving bossa nova, samba, cha-cha and Afro-Cuban themes into his impressive repertoire of standards and original compositions. Reviews of Bell's recordings rave about his presence on the contemporary jazz scene and his uncompromising precision is noteworthy. According to the venerable *Jazz Times*, "While most contemporary flutists gravitate towards either drippy melodrama or cold technical play, Bell mines the middle ground, playing with great speed and detail, while refusing to compromise emotion." His main influences, Yusef Lateef, Hubert Laws and Herbie Mann, inspired Bell to return to his flute after he had taken a twenty-year hiatus to raise his daughter. Bell, who now regularly performs in venues in Philadelphia and Richmond, Virginia, grew up in a musical household, where, he says, "the piano was like another piece of furniture." As the son of a nightclub owner in Philadelphia, Bell grew up watching and listening to legends like Jimmy Smith, Arthur Prysock and Sarah Vaughan. This first-hand exposure to the music, performance and professionalism of such artists left an indelible mark on Bell.

Mr. Bell has gigged with many jazz legends, including Nancy Wilson, Ray Charles, George Benson, and the Count Basie Orchestra, Roberta Flack, Jerry Gonzalez, Gato Barbieri, Danilo Perez, Carlos Patato Valdez, Dee Dee Bridgewater, and a host of others. He has headlined concerts and performed in popular venues on the east coast of the United States, including Birdland and Five Spot in New York City; Zanzibar Blue, Hibachi, Blue Moon and Meiji-En in Philadelphia; BET Jazz Supper club and Twins Lounge in Washington, DC; and

Belle Bistro in Richmond, Virginia. On the festival circuit, Walter Bell and L.J.U. have performed at the Mellon Jazz Festival, Cape May Jazz Festival, Capital City Jazz Festival, PECO Energy Jazz Festival, NAACP Jazz Fest, San Jose Jazz Festival, and the East Coast Jazz Festival. In addition, he and his ensemble have appeared at many colleges, and have been featured on the acclaimed cable television program "BET Jazz Central."

Bell is one of the few jazz musicians who play the flute exclusively. For him, the flute is not a "second" instrument to playing a saxophone primarily - as is typically the case for many jazz flutists. Says Bell, "The flute is the closest instrument to the human voice. I can make the instrument laugh, cry, or dance. I want my music to always be accessible to people."

At the present time, Bell has recorded twelve CDs on the Reika Records label. This includes his Volume 1 and Volume II "Walter Bell Companion" CDs, which showcase his best works. An 11th CD was released in 2008, which featured many new songs and collaborations, along with one or two previously-released cuts, recorded especially for his loyal fans and music lovers. His flute virtuosity and articulation are legendary and Walter continues to break new ground, while yet leading the charge for pure flutist and good music lovers everywhere. As a bandleader, promoter, agent and more, this Latin and Jazz heavyweight still finds time to inspire budding flutists with his lessons about the music, culture and history of this indigenous and universal art form.

As a recording artist, Bell is proud of several "firsts." He is the only musician who has written and copyrighted a song for Mother's Day. Bell also has the honor of being the only musician ever to make a "live" recording in the Pennsylvania Convention Center in downtown Philadelphia. In 2005, Walter suffered a debilitating illness, but thru prayer and therapy he has returned to the stage and recording studio. Walter Bell's discography includes: "The Walter Bell Companion Vol. 1 and 2." (2006 Reika Records); "Live in Sedona" (2005, Reika Records); Success Leaves its Clues (2004, Reika Records); Walter Bell Companion Vol.1 (2003, Reika Records); "IN THREE PLACES AT ONCE" (2001, Reika Records); "Standard" Room Only! (2000, Reika Records); An Evening With Walter Bell (1999, Reika Records); "The Pleasure's All Mine" (1998, Reika Records); Blue Smoke (1997, Reika Records); Ever So Gently (1996, Reika Records).