

AN ARTIST'S CORNER

featuring

Stafford Hunter



3-time Grammy nominated trombonist & sea shells player (and sometimes vocalist), **Stafford Hunter**, is a Philadelphia native (but born in Atlantic City, NJ). He became a professional musician at the age of 16. And, was an award winner of the "Al Grey Award for Musical Excellence". It acknowledged Stafford as "the Most Promising Jazz Trombone Talent". Graduate of the New School Jazz & Contemporary Music Program (NYC). Of which, he was the first trombonist to actually graduate from the New School Jazz Program.

Beside music, Stafford appeared as a model in the December 1992 issue of L'Uomo Vogue (the Italian Vogue magazine for men). This issue also featured jazz greats like Milt Hinton, Clark Terry, Louie Bellson, etc. And, he appeared in a documentary film on the late-great pianist; Dorothy Donegan. Also,

he was an actor in a movie entitled "the Day the Ponies Come Back" which was released March of 2001 in France. And, he appeared in a diet Coke television commercial which featured the great Elton John.

He has performed at former-US President Bill Clinton's first inaugural. Since then, the trombonist has performed, recorded and toured all over the world with the likes of Illinois Jacquet, McCoy Tyner, Lester Bowie & Brass Fantasy, Abdullah Ibrahim, Charli Persip, Charles Tolliver, Tony Bennett, Roy Hargrove, Donald Byrd Dance Troupe, Cab Calloway Orch., Joss Stone, Orrin Evans, the Mingus Big Band, Lauryn Hill, Frank Foster, Clark Terry, Reggie Workman, Toshiko Akiyoshi, Lionel Hampton Orchestra, Dionne Warwick, Lenny Kravitz, Muhal Richard Abrams, Amy Winehouse, Oliver Lake, Steve Turre & Sanctified Shells, and has been a member of the Duke Ellington Orchestra since 1998 among other groups.

Stafford still performs with the Duke Ellington Orchestra but manages to tour the USA, South America, Europe, and Asia with his own groups, Orrin Evans' Captain Black Big Band, and many other groups. Also, he frequently gives master classes, lectures, concerts as a special guest and gives lessons at universities & high schools and privately in Japan, Russia Europe and around the world.

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My website: www.staffordhunter.com

XOBrass: <http://www.xobrass.com/portfolio-item/stafford-hunter/>

Willie's Custom Brass: <http://willies-custom-brass.jp/2018/>

sshmute: <https://bremnermusic.co.nz/testimonials>

Stafford Hunter music is available at: <https://www.staffordhunter.com/music>

Also, available on itunes & CDBaby.

How old were you when you began playing your instrument? Did you start playing another instrument before your current one?

I started playing trombone the in 6th grade. I guess 11-12 years old. The trombone is the only instrument that I studied as a kid. Later, I saw the slide/fingering chart in a lesson book. And, I figured out how to play baritone horn. But, I never really took formal lessons but, I did a few gigs on it as a kid.

What equipment do you primarily use?

I play a custom made Black Nickel XO trombone. It was designed for me by Koichi Haido (in Japan) and me. It's a small bore trombone similar in size to a King 3B. Also, I play XO BT-L (which is XO 1236 L-T in the USA). It's a large bore F-attachment trombone. And, I use my signature model trombone mouthpieces by Willie's Custom Brass (from Japan).

What are some of the highlights of your career?

3-time Grammy nominated, winner of the Al Grey Award for Excellence, performed at President Bill Clinton's inaugural, modeled for L'Uomo Vogue (Italian Vogue for men), appeared in a diet Coke commercial with Elton John, played and/or recorded with Clark Terry, Amy Winehouse, McCoy Tyner, Frank Foster, Charles Tolliver, Roy Hargrove, Orrin Evans & the Captain Black Big Band, and have been a member of the Duke Ellington Orchestra since 1998, etc...

If you were stranded on a desert island and could only have 10 albums, what would they be?

- Art Blakey & the Jazz Messengers: Free for All
- Miles Davis: Nefertiti
- Woody Shaw: Lotus Flower
- João Gilberto: João Gilberto
- Stevie Wonder: A Song Review
- Kenny Garrett: Songbook
- John Coltrane: A Love Supreme
- V.S.O.P.: The Quintet
- Earth, Wind & Fire: The Best of Vol. 1
- McCoy Tyner: the Real McCoy

With whom did you study?

During my high school years, I had private lessons with David Rupp of the Pennsylvania Ballet Orchestra. Also, I studied all aspects of music with Dr. George Allen Sr. of Overbrook High School. Also, sometimes lessons with jazz trombonist Wayne Smith. Later in college, I studied with Dr. Mark Lusk (Penn State Univ.), in NYC with jazz greats Steve Turre, Benny Powell & NEA trumpeter great Jimmy Owens.

Who are some of your musical heroes?

Some include trombonist Steve Turre, Robin Eubanks, Frank Lacy, Curtis Fuller, Slide Hampton, Al Grey, Benny Powell, Jack Jeffers, etc... Other musicians like: Freddie Hubbard, Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Woody Shaw, Kenny Garrett, Clark Terry, Reggie Workman, Herbie Hancock, McCoy Tyner, Elvin Jones, Art Blakey, Ron Carter, Buster Williams, James Brown, Stevie Wonder, Maurice

André, Christian Lindberg, Betty Carter, Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, João Gilberto, etc...

Discuss your early musical experiences. Why did you pursue music?

I was a music major in high school as a music magnet student at Overbrook High School in Philadelphia. Besides having my normal academic courses like history, math, etc... I had concert band, orchestra, jazz band, choir and even music composition. While in high school, I was a member of Philadelphia's All-City concert band, orchestra & jazz band. I had private lessons on Saturday followed by youth orchestra practice at Temple University. Also, I sometimes played in the Philadelphia Community College Big band too. So, I think I was being groomed for a career in music most of my life.

Do you have a website? If so, what is the address?

I can be found online at: www.staffordhunter.com

Who are your main influences in your life (not just music!)?

I have many influences. None greater than Dr. Jack Jeffers: A bass trombonist in NYC; who is approaching his 90th birthday, still playing well, and who is one of the smartest people I know. Has degree's in law, engineering & music. And as a black man, has worked in each during some racially tensed times in America. And, he manages to be one of the most positive people you will ever meet. He's a very inspiring music and human being.

How do you suggest balancing life with music?

Hmm... As you get older, the things you want/need to do change. While younger, it is important to practice, play, meet people and network as much as you can. Also, go out to listen to music is very important. Later, you start thinking about balancing your time with family, friends, work, rest, non-musical fun, etc... There is no template for this. It really depends on you, your life style/personality, etc... Just pay attention to your happiness. Adjust as your needs/desires change.

Please give some tips for freelancing.

Freelancing as a musician can be a curse and a blessing. For me, it's great to play many kinds of music. Not just play with one band. Not even just my own music. But of course, if you don't belong to a group that isn't consistently working, then you need to be a bit more conscious of your income. If you want to play with many people, remember. Be versatile, be on time, be ready, and likeable. Many people can play. But, you want to have something that makes folks want to hire you over someone else. Answer calls, text or emails right away, and say thank you for the call. Also, respect the work. It can easily not be there.

Is anyone else in your family a musician?

I am the only musician in my family.

What advice would you give to someone interested in majoring in music in college?

Be ready to get as much as you can out of school. Of course, getting away from home is going to be fun and liberating. So, enjoy it. THEN... practice as much as you can. Get to know as many people as you can. They will be your peers for 4 years and maybe competition in the future.

Don't just go to class, do the exams, learn the music, etc... Probably your teachers have a lot more information to offer. They are in a classroom setting. If you are truly interested in what they have done or still doing, then ask them about it. Learn. Ask to check out their rehearsals, concerts, etc... I say, bug them until they invite you in. There is so much to learn. If you are interested, they will let you in. And probably they will respect that you are taking your life & career in your hands.

Do you have a favorite genre of music?

I love so many different kinds of music. But if I had to choose one, it would have to be jazz. But these days, jazz has expanded in so many ways. It's getting easier and easier for everyone to love all kinds of music too.

Do you have any tips for preparing for auditions?

Doing any auditions is probably going to be a bit nerve-racking. Just know that up front. The one sure thing you can do is, be as prepared as possible. The more prepared you are, the harder it is to make a mistake. Play in front of people. Play in front of your friends, family or even strangers. It will all help you feel comfortable.

If you couldn't have a career in music, what would you do instead?

I'm not sure if I could do anything but music. If I couldn't play trombone, I think I'd make a good music critic.

Who are your favorite composers?

Wow, there are so many. A few would be Duke Ellington, Wayne Shorter, Thelonious Monk, Stevie Wonder, Kenny Garrett, John Coltrane, Thad Jones, Herbie Hancock, etc...

How could we make music education better?

I think music education in America is getting better in some ways, and worst in others. I have recently decided that I want to be more involved in music education in America; particularly in jazz. But as with all music, there is no substitute for experience. And, that seems to be the very thing that music education in America has depreciated. It seems to value folks who have not accomplished much more than a degree(s). So, I think more people who have had lots of experience as a working musician, need to get degrees and seek out jobs in music education. Then, students can really get the best of all aspects of their education. I think schools in American need to get back to recognizing that fact.

Do you like to teach? Why or why not?

I go through periods in which I teach private students (and not). I have always done workshops of various kinds. Trombone workshops, jazz combo, big band, concert band, etc... I will start to include teaching more in my life.