

# Tommaso Starace



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Born in 1975 in Milano, Italy Tommaso started playing the saxophone and studying music at the age of 18. He moved to the United Kingdom in 1994 where he graduated at Birmingham Conservatoire with a Bmus 1st class honours and later at the Guildhall School Of Music and Drama with a Postgraduate Degree in jazz studies in the year 2000.

He has performed with some of the most respected jazz musicians including Billy Cobham, David Liebman, Kenny Wheeler, Stan Sulzmann, Jim Mullen, Jonathan Gee, Fabrizio Bosso, Paolo Fresu, Laurence Cottle. In the year 2004 he collaborated with award winning Oscar composer Dario Marianelli ( 'Pride and Prejudice' and ' The Atonement' ) recording music for 'This Little Life', a BBC drama for Channel Four.

'Tommaso Starace plays the photos of Elliott Erwitt', recorded in 2005 with his British Quintet, his second debut album to his name, is a project dedicated to the iconic images of Magnum photographer Elliott Erwitt. The Quintet features some top British musicians such as Roger Beaujolais on vibraphone and Liam Noble on piano. This album allowed the young saxophonist to tour twice round the United Kingdom performing with his quintet in some of the most prestigious jazz clubs, festivals and concert halls.

***"...The promising Starace seems to be revealing his most personal voice in the full-on music."*** - John Fordham, The Guardian

***"Starace's melodious originals offer good blowing potential for alto and soprano solos delivered in a cleanly articulate post-bop style reminiscent of Phill Woods."*** - Jack Massarik, Jazzwise

***"The rhythm section is dynamic and Starace is star material"*** - Ian Carr, jazz

In 2008 Tommaso was awarded with an Honorary Membership by Birmingham Conservatoire given to him

for his significant contributions made across the years within the various branches of the music profession.

'Tommaso Starace Quartet - Don't Forget' recorded in the year 2009, also marked the beginning of an exciting musical collaboration with his Italian Quartet comprising Michele Di Toro on piano, Attilio Zanchi on bass (Paolo Fresu's collaborator for many years) and the hard swinging drumming of Tommy Bradascio. Renowned jazz author and critic Vittorio Franchini says of Tommaso's new recording : "The sax is filled with voices, it sings gaiety.....I like the way he follows joyful paths, I imagine him playing around with rhythms, playing with the other instruments, opening up to new feelings and inventing new ways..." The launch of the CD successfully took place at the Blue Note in Milano in front of a full house. The Italian quartet undertook a UK tour in April and an Italian Tour in May 2010.

In May 2010 Tommaso released 'Blood & Champagne'. The CD was recorded with a new all star UK quartet

comprising: Frank Harrison on piano; Laurence Cottle on electric bass and Chris Nickolls on drums. The band recorded music by Michel Petrucciani, Billy Strayhorn, Ennio Morricone, Henry Mancini plus some new exciting original material by the band leader.

The Tommaso Starace Italian quartet records in August 2011 'Celebrating the Music of Michel Petrucciani'. The quartet performed ten of the most loved and well known compositions written by the great french pianist who thanks to his positive and exuberant character and virtuoso piano playing made his fame in America and around the world. Two fantastic guests are featured on the CD: Italian trumpet star Fabrizio Bosso, and Uk vibraphone virtuoso Roger Beaujolais. The CD is released on the Universal Label.

Tommaso Starace goes back to a new jazz/photograph project. His previous jazz/photographic album was dedicated to the iconic images of Elliott Erwitt. 2014 sees the saxophonist embarking on a project dedicated to his country Italy and to one of his most beloved photographers in Black and White: Gianni Berengo Gardin. The album 'Italian Short Stories' is a collection of 14 compositions dedicated to 14 images taken by Berengo across Italy from the 50's to the year 2000. All compositions are original and recorded with his Italian quartet. The special guest on the album is trumpet star Paolo Fresu. The CD is the second collaboration with the Universal label.

In the year 2015 Tommaso teams up with his long time musical companion Michele Di Toro to record an album in duo: 'From a Distant Past'. All original compositions plus arrangements of tunes by Chick Corea and Randy Newman. This new recording as the previous one 'Italian Short Stories' continues to explore a melodic and cinematic approach to jazz this time bringing to life a world that belongs to a remote past made of fables and surreal stories. The recording marks the third collaboration with the Universal label.

In 2018 Tommaso continues to explore different formats, instrumentations and sounds in his projects. Two CD's are produced that year: 'Eleuthera All That Jazz Quintet' and 'Tommaso Starace - Narrow Escape'.

The first one is the result of a consecutive four year collaboration with a Quintet taking part in the Eleuthera All That jazz Festival in the Bahamas. The Festival hosts a total of 15 jazz musicians from all over the world who get together to collaborate and create several different concerts across seven days of live music in different idyllic spots of the beautiful island of Eleuthera. The CD features three of the best Bahamian musicians from the main island of Nassau: Lamont Gibson on trumpet, Adrian D'Aguilar on bass and Kevin Dean on drums. Milano based pianist Massimo Colombo joins the rhythm section on Fender Rhodes to complete the Quintet. The album explores mostly Latin music with a modern flavour. The second album has a completely different line up and sound all together: Tommaso on alto sax, Dave O'Higgins on tenor sax, Davide Liberti on bass and Ruben Bellavia on drums. As there's no harmonic instrument in the band the name 'Harmony Less Quartet' is given to the group. This album is a combination of original tunes and unusual jazz standards all capturing the Hardbop spirit of Jazz.

The latest Album was recorded in 2020 this time with a Trio 'The Power of Three', featuring alongside Tommaso: Jim Watson on piano and Laurence Cottle on bass guitar. In this live recording the Trio explores some of Tommaso's favourite jazz standards which he enjoyed performing in concert across the last few years.

Tommaso's aim through composition and the production of his CD's is to write tunes with a strong melodic component exploring traditional and more contemporary harmony and always maintaining the sense of swing and groove. Not surprisingly some of Tommaso's influences are Johann Sebastian Bach, Cannonball Adderley, Clifford Brown, Joshua Redman, Brandford Marsalis, Ennio Morricone, Stevie Wonder, Maurice Ravel. But his passion for black and white photography, painting and cinema are also a continuous inspiration to his writing and music.

Tommaso is currently busy performing with his quartet all over Europe in jazz clubs and festivals.