

Bradley Leighton - Bio

Classically trained, Bradley Leighton's musical interests have always been diverse. As a young man, he loved big band music, particularly Maynard Ferguson, Stan Kenton and Woody Herman. Yet he also found himself drawn to the R&B sounds of Tower of Power, Earth Wind and Fire, and, the Brecker Brothers.

Although his first fascination was the player piano, he soon started playing the flute, becoming very involved in school bands. After considerable listening, and practicing, Bradley's interest in Jazz and blues led him to hanging out at after-hours clubs in his native Seattle, where he first surprised, and pleased, such local legends as T McGee, Terry Camon, Leri Carter, Billy Haddon, and Mel Washington.

Having mentors both assist and encourage Bradley, and a true love of performing, served as the catalysts for his decision to pursue a career in music. Immediately after high school, he seized an opportunity by enlisting and playing in the Army's 9th Infantry Division band at Ft. Lewis, Washington. When his talent quickly became obvious, he was appointed musical director of the jazz ensemble. A tour with the 8th Army band in Seoul, Korea soon followed. Bradley remained in Seoul after his discharge several years later to teach, and perform in the country's only Jazz bar.

But after realizing that the only place to really utilize his musical expertise was the land of his birth, Bradley returned to Seattle for more professional opportunities. By now, an accomplished musician and teacher, he spent the next fifteen years playing in rhythm and blues bands, Hammond organ trios, funk dance bands and straight-ahead jazz groups. He also taught privately, working with encouraging young musicians, just as his Seattle mentors had done for him.

At the same time, he focused on developing his own sound on the flute. His approach was born in his big band roots, where accomplished reedman took their saxophone experience to the flute. Inspired by such legends as Frank Wess and Sam Most, Bradley found that the alto flute was the best vehicle for his creativity.

During this period, he worked in bands that accompanied such legendary artists as Bobby McFerrin, Clark Terry, Dizzy Gillespie and Patti Kim in addition to jamming and playing with all the local musicians. He became Seattle's first call flutist, and developed a reputation as one of the leading players in the area.

In the last five years, he finally decide to start making his own recordings, and performing with his own group. In 2001, Bradley relocated to San Diego and in 2003, released his first solo CD, "Groove Yard," with "Just Doing Our Thang," the followup that arrived this spring. "Thang" features his flute in a unique setting, in collaboration with a Hammond B-3 organ trio.

The reponse to "Groove Yard" was, not surprisingly, very strong. Derek Winterberg of the *thesmoothjazzsite.com* wrote "this is straight-ahead jazz for the smooth and

contemporary jazz set. His selections definitely have the unmistakable energy and improvisation that marks it as straight-ahead but is so warm and inviting that it would be appropriate to have it playing while you're romanticizing that special someone in your life."

And for "Thang," *Improvisation Nation* wrote that "the combination of subdued & laid-back B3 with Leighton's joyful expressions on his flute won't soon escape your ears, and will come back (days later) to recharge your mind."

In addition to recording and performing, Bradley Leighton has continued to share his knowledge and enthusiasm of music as a clinician and teacher. Besides private lessons, he leads workshops for musicians of all skill levels, including, "Jazz Improvisation for the Classically Trained Flutist," and "Music For Life – Improvisation for the Adult Amateur Musician."

Bradley's music education theory is simple: "We need to make music fun again... Let's not get bogged down with the technique and theory – that's too much like calculus and physics to most students. Instead, we should be teaching the skills that our students will use to express their own musical ideas for the rest of their lives."

One participant, Gerry Presor, of Bradley's Rancho Penasquitos Flute Choir, believes that "Bradley's teaching method gently guided me from trepidation in the morning to triumph in the evening - backed by a live rhythm section. What a blast! Having taken this first step I feel much more confident in expressing myself musically."

Bradley Leighton performs weekly at the club Aurora Trattoria in downtown La Jolla, California, as well as at other venues in the San Diego County. He's also available for clinics, and in performance with his Duo, Quartet and Sextet, as well as a soloist for big bands and orchestras.