

# **The L.A. Jazz Quintet Biographies**

## **Kenny Kotwitz    accordion and celeste**

Kenny Kotwitz was born on April 27, in Milwaukee Wisconsin. At age 5 his parents purchased the first of many accordions to come. Kenny's Uncle Roy played a "button- box" at all the family gatherings, and encouraged the young accordionist to play along. Frank Cascio of Cascio Music Co., New Berlin, Wisconsin accepted the youngster as a student. It was he, who laid down a solid technical foundation, emphasizing a thorough understanding of harmony and theory. Kenny identifies Frank as the first of two musicians to have had the greatest influence on his career.

By his early teens, Kenny was leading his own band performing in and around Wisconsin. While still in high school, Kenny and his group were flown to Los Angeles to perform on ABC-TV's "Lawrence Welk Show". At 19, a good friend of Kenny's, John Skiba, introduced him to the man who would become his second major influence – Art Van Damme. For the next three years, Art shared the techniques and subtle nuances unique to this international poll-winning jazz accordionist. Many years later they recorded an album together for Pausa Records, "Art Van Damme and Friends", which featured Art, Kenny, Frank Marocco, Pete Jolly, Chuck Berghofer, and Jeff Hamilton.

Kenny moved to California after his discharge from the U.S. Army as a soloist with the NORAD Band. After a short stint conducting for the Mills Bros. Kenny met his future wife, singer Mary McDermott. After working together for several years in Wisconsin and California Kenny proposed to her and they were married. They moved to Los Angeles where they currently reside and have a beautiful daughter, Kimberly, who works in the advertising business. Mary can be heard on 3 of Kenny's CDs: "Front Street," "The Moon Is Blue," and Reflections On Christmas.

Kenny has been busy as composer, arranger, and keyboardist as well as accordionist. He has been recording music for motion pictures, television, CDs, as well as commercials, commercial jingles. He has worked with the best composers, singers, and instrumentalists. Michel Legrand, Dave Grusin, Johnny Mercer, Johnny Mandel, Alf Clausen, Danny Elfman, and Alan Sylvestri, to name a few. But appreciation for Kenny's musical style and talent extend beyond the U.S. border. He has performed around the world, playing concerts in Finland, Switzerland, Italy, and France. While working in Paris at the "New Morning" jazz club, Kenny recorded a CD called "Cordes Et Lames +1 Accordion Madness" with accordionist Francis Varis. Kenny has also played in Guatemala City and in Mexico City.

He has also been on The Tonight Show, The Today Show, The Mike Douglas Show, The Steve Allen Show, Art Linkletter's House Party. He has played live at Carnegie Hall and The Hollywood Bowl. As a musician, Kenny has slowly added color, texture, contour and shading to his musical "palette" – the result is a feel, form, and unique signature-sound.

## **John Chiodini    guitar**

Guitarist and composer John Chiodini began his performing career in clubs, recording studios and theaters throughout New England in the 1960's and 1970's.

As a member of the Boston Pops Orchestra under Arthur Fiedler, John made numerous appearances in concerts and on recordings, including the long-running PBS television series "Evening At Pops". In the early 1980's, he relocated to Los Angeles, touring, writing, and recording with Peggy Lee. His MCA recording entitled "Weightless" was critically acclaimed. He toured and recorded with Natalie Cole ("Unforgettable" tour). Other artists with whom John has toured and/ or recorded include: Buddy DeFranco, Maynard Ferguson, Carl Andersen, Louis Bellson, Tony Bennett, Michael Bolton, Bobby Caldwell, Celine Dion, Dr. John, Arthur Hamilton, Shirley Horn, Lainie Kazan, Hubert Laws, Barry Manilow, Rebecca Parris, Terry Harrington, Diane Schuur, Nina Simone, Barbra Streisand, Nancy Wilson, Michael Buble.

**For bookings and management:**

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## **Nick Mancini vibraphone**

Nick Mancini is a native of Upstate New York. After a 10 year stint in NYC, he relocated to LA in 2006, where he has remained ever since. He is well-liked and respected by his peers, colleagues, and audiences and can be seen performing all over LA with the finest musicians the city has to offer.

As a sideman and band leader he's toured through Europe, Australia, and Tahiti. His playing can be heard on TV and feature films such as "Turbo", and he's performed and recorded with jazz, pop and avant guard artists the likes of Kamasi Washington, Arturo Sandoval, New York Voices, Peter Erskine, Santi Gold, Dr. Dre, and Solange to name a few.

## **Chuck Berghofer bass**

Chuck Berghofer enjoys a varied career as a jazz musician and recording artist. He has performed on hundreds of movie soundtracks and TV shows, receiving the NARAS award for the most valuable bass player for 4 consecutive years.

Two of his biggest 'hits' were his bass solo on 'These Boots Are Made For Walking' and the Barney Miller TV theme. He has worked with many jazz legends including Herb Ellis, Zoot Sims, Shelly Manne, Stan Getz, and renowned vocalists including Peggy Lee, Ella Fitzgerald, Mel Torme, Barbra Streisand, Joni Mitchell, Michael Buble. In the 90's, Chuck joined the rhythm section to tour with Frank Sinatra, and later recorded the classic Duets I and II. He now records and performs with Seth MacFarlane. Chuck has appeared twice on the cover of Jazz Journal magazine, and his warm, rich bass sound has been recognized for over 60 years.

## **Kendall Kay drums**

Kendall is a native of Durban, South Africa. After working with most of the major artists there, Kendall moved to the US in 1983, and attended the prestigious music program at North Texas University.

After graduating, he arrived in Los Angeles in 1987 and has been playing and recording with a wide range of artists ever since. His resume includes work with Diane Schuur, Alan Broadbent, Phil Upchurch, Kiki Ebsen, Bobby Shew, Kyle Eastwood, Mary Wilson, Jack Jones, Mark Murphy and Rickie Lee Jones.

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