

Introducing YAZ BAND

A native of Osaka Japan, Yasuyuki "YAZ" Takagi lives in Brooklyn New York since 1992. He formed his own band called "YAZ BAND" in 2002 and has been playing in New York Metro area.

Yaz Band is a four piece group which plays classic R&B songs written by artists such as Stevie Wonder, Earth Wind & Fire and Marvin Gaye as well as original instrumental tunes influenced by Grover Washington, Jr., Maceo Parker and The Crusaders.

As an official member of the Metropolitan Transit Authority sponsored "Music Under New York" series, Yaz Band has performed at various New York City subway stations. In addition, Yaz Band has had the opportunity to take their music abroad as part of the 2003 & 2004 Under New York performance series held in Seoul, Korea.

The release of his two CDs ("YAZ" in 2003 and "*You Can't Say It in Public*" in 2005) have been well-received by both the critics and public, alike. Equally as impressive is the fact that his group has gained further exposure and recognition "above ground" as they have performed abroad in Seoul, Korea in both 2003 & 2004 as part of the Music Under New York in Seoul performance series and in cities well beyond the New York metropolitan area. Yaz has also performed as part of Lincoln Center's "Out of Doors" Festival and at the historic Minton's Playhouse, both in New York City. Additionally, audiences have had the pleasure to hear his energetic and soulful playing at many venues throughout the metropolitan area. Yaz's popularity has soared to the extent that he has also appeared on television in his native Japan and New York City's smooth jazz radio station WQCD, better known as to New Yorkers as "CD 101.9".

His new CD "*RUSH HOUR*" has been released in December in 2007.

visit myspace page <http://www.myspace.com/yazband>

(These CDs are available on their website.)

www.yazband.com



3rd CD

" RUSH HOUR "

released in December 2007



1st CD " YAZ "

released
in June 2003



2nd CD

"You Can't Say It
In Public "

released
in February 2005

Contact : Yasuyuki Takagi

56 Norman Ave. #2, Brooklyn, NY 11222

Phone : (917) 346-8875

E-mail : yaz@yazband.com

Website : www.yazband.com



Yasuyuki “YAZ” Takagi Tenor Sax

A native of Osaka, Japan, Yasuyuki “Yaz” Takagi was influenced by the sounds of jazz at a very early age. As a child, Yaz listened to both the music of his native homeland as well as his father's jazz collection. Looking back on his childhood, Yaz always felt that the presence of his father's records had a big influence on his musical development. And though he admits that he didn't know what it was he was listening to back then, it had enough of an impact to shape his musical direction for the rest of his life.

As a student, Yaz listened to artists such as Bob James, Dave Grusin, The Crusaders, Earth, Wind and Fire, Grover Washington, Jr. and other American jazz artists. While his friends were listening to the energy and power of rock 'n roll, it was David Sanborn's music that led him to pursue the saxophone as his instrument of choice. Subsequently, upon entering Japan's Kochi University Yaz began to study the saxophone while earning his Bachelor's Degree in Education. Although he started to listen to and collect more of the same albums which he heard as a child in his father's house, he never dreamed that one day he might go to the United States, New York in particular, to pursue a career as a professional musician.

After graduation, Yaz worked through the day as a social worker in Osaka while studying saxophone with **Tetsuyuki Miya** and theory with **Sadayasu Fujii**. As his passion for jazz grew stronger through time he began to play with jazz groups and also sat in on some of teacher's gigs, as well. At this point Yaz decided that he wanted to continue his jazz studies abroad and moved to New York in April, 1992.

After moving to New York, Yaz was impressed with the higher level of musicianship and began to lose confidence in his own abilities. Feeling that his own ability was inadequate to pursue a career as a professional musician in New York, he decided to return back to Japan. However, with only a month left in N.Y. before his scheduled return home, he met a fellow saxophonist who encouraged him to stay and pursue his dreams.

Hence, he decided to stay in New York and began studying with **Rob Scheps** while working as a dishwasher in a Japanese restaurant. As time passed, his abilities (and confidence) improved as his continued to work at night and practice during the day until soon he was able to switch to a day job, thus leaving his evenings open for music.

As Yaz began to play with more and more groups and jam sessions, his abilities came to the attention of some N.Y. area local bands, such as **Joy Ryder and the New York Rhythm All Stars**, the smooth jazz group **Since When?**, and **The Sly Gerald's Band**, and many others. When he lost his day job as the result of the September 11th tragedy, Yaz became a full time musician, formed his own group (the Yaz Takagi Group) and became a regular feature with the New York City Transit Authority's "**Music Under New York**" series. Currently, Yaz is still working with his own and other groups throughout the New York metropolitan area.



Eric Smith: Keyboards

Keyboardist, composer and arranger Eric J. Smith has been involved with several music projects. He was a member of the group *Me and My Friends*, which performed at various clubs in the New York metropolitan area during the early 1980's. He has also been the music director for such performers as *T West*, *Tracy B* and singer **John Lewis**, and produced the theme music from popular NHK Japan series "*New Yorkers*".

Although influenced by jazz, he has deeper roots in the classic R&B music of Motown and "The Philadelphia Sound" as exemplified by artists such as MFSB, Gamble & Huff, Jean Carne. He has performed at venues such as *Sweetwaters*, *The Cotton Club*, the legendary *Apollo Theatre* and other popular New York City venues.

Currently he is producing the debut CD of the smooth jazz group *Since When?* while performing with Yaz Band.



Sly Gerald: Bass

Sly Gerald studied classical music at the prestigious Juilliard School of Music in New York City and later with virtuoso acoustic/electric bassist Stanley Clarke of *Return to Forever* fame. He has also been a coach for young viola, cello and bass players and writes and performs his own compositions with his group, *The Sly Gerald Band*.

Sly has worked with Bob Dylan, the Indigo Girls, the Del Vikings, Michael Urbaniak, Maceo Parker, Al Green, Southside Johnny, and Baba Olatunji. Of special significance; In 1996, Sly and his own band had the privilege to play for then-Russian premier Boris Yeltsin while also touring as bassist in Bob Dylan's Band, as well.

In 2003, he participated in a world tour of Europe, South America, Australia and Japan as bassist, vocalist and musical director of the world renowned Harlem Gospel Choir.



Tomoaki Kanno: Drums

Tomoaki started playing piano when he was five years old, and subsequently learned to play many different instruments as a child in Kanagawa, Japan. At the age of 17, he became interested playing the kit drum and decided to continue his study on the instrument at "Tokyo Communication Art". While studying at the school, he joined a band called "Will" with "Sing Like Talking" bassist Sakuma Akihiro and played extensively throughout Japan.

Upon graduation from school, he started playing with Yujiro Wada and although he learned much about playing the drums while with Wada, decided to go to New York to learn music.

Currently he is involved in an intensive study program at the New School of Social Research's Jazz Program and plays with groups such as The MK Groove Orchestra, Manipulation and toured with Yaz Band's 2003 Korea tour.