



Interview By Thomas Erdmann

Elan Trotman

For those who live and work in New England, and especially for those who are Boston Red Sox baseball fans, the name Elan Trotman is well known. This saxophonist, flutist, bassist, vocalist, keyboardist, educator, composer and producer has recorded with *Boston Globe*, *Sports Illustrated* and ESPN baseball insider Peter Gammons (himself a fine guitarist as well as supporter and performer of indie rock). And with guitarist and major league pitcher, currently with the Cincinnati Reds but formerly with the Red Sox, Bronson Arroyo.

Since graduating from Berklee College of Music with a degree in Music Education, Trotman has become not just a fulltime music teacher, but also has his own studio of private students, and a burgeoning performance career that has led him to performances at not just jazz festivals but, perhaps because of his love of sports, performances of the National Anthem at ballparks like Fenway Park, Dodger Stadium and Cincinnati's Great American Ball Park. Along the way artists like fellow saxophonist Kirk Whalum have joined him on recordings. Trotman has worked with other artists like Nathan East, Roberta Flack, Brian Simpson, Cindy Bradley, Don Grusin, Brian McKnight, and put together the band that played for Boston Celtic star Ray Allen's wedding. Trotman is a three-time winner of the Best Jazz Male award at the New

England Urban Music Awards, and plays, when he has time, in the wedding band Flipside. He is also received national awards and nominations in his homeland as Best New Act and Gospel Act of the Year.

As a leader his solo recordings have received not just praise but charting success. His single, *Heaven in Your Eyes* featuring Brian Simpson, debuted at number 21 on the *Billboard* National Smooth Jazz Radio Chart, and is just one of his many chart successes. Another of his many charting songs include *Lovely Day*, which debuted at number 38 on *Jazz Week's* Smooth Jazz Chart and peaked at number 6 on the Smooth Jazz Indie Star Chart and at number 48 on Smoothjazz.com's Top 50 Chart.

But even with all of this success he can't seem to leave his job as a public school elementary music teacher, his love for the kids and the process of education is just too strong and today Trotman works to balance both careers. Perhaps this grounding in the needs of community, as well as his love of God, is why you can also find him playing many Sunday's in churches throughout New England. Covering a wide variety of styles on his five solo albums, in addition to his smooth jazz recordings, Trotman's *Let's Have A Good Old Time* is a gospel jazz album that showcases his jazz influences and improvisations on church songs along

ELAN TROTMAN'S SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

As A Leader

- *Love And Sax* (2011, E.T. Muzik)
- *This Time Around* (2009, E.T. Muzik)
- *A Reggae Christmas* (2007, E.T. Muzik)
- *Let's Have A Good Old Time* (2005, E.T. Muzik)
- *Memories: The Debut* (2001, E.T. Muzik)

With Others

- With Berklee College Of Music
Friends of the Festival (2010)
- With Bronson Arroyo
Covering The Bases (2005, Asylum Records)
- With Peter Gammons
Never Slow Down, Never Grow Old (Rounder, 2006)
- With Buffalo Tom
Give Us Your Poor (Appleseed Recordings 2007)
- With Bobby Perry & Rain
All About You (2006, Axiom)
- With George W. Russell, Jr.
George W. Russell, Jr. (2005, G Dub)

ELAN TROTMAN'S EQUIPMENT

- Soprano – Cannonball SA5-B with a Theo Wanne Gaia 8 mouthpiece and Rico 2½ reeds.
- Tenor – Cannonball T5-B custom with a Theo Wanne Durga 10 mouthpiece and Rico 2½ reeds.
- Flute – Selmer
- Sleek Audio Wireless In-Ear Monitors
- Shure Wireless Microphones
- Protec Cases
- Boss Effect Pedals
- SKB Pedal Boards
- SaxRax Stands
- Emilio Lyons – The Sax Doctor

with modern harmonies, and his *A Reggae Christmas*, is, as the title suggests, influenced by the music and rhythms of his native homeland. His latest release, *Love and Sax*, is, at the time of this interview, a charting rocket.

You've recently switched from Yamaha and Selmer to Cannonball saxophones. Why?

I had an opportunity to go to the NAMM convention in Anaheim, California in January (National Association of Music Merchandisers); it was my first time. I tried a bunch of horns and mouthpieces while there, made some good connections and formed some good relationships with people. Cannonball was highly referred to me by a few good friends, Gerald Albright and Najee. I had been having conversations with them since NAMM. I was to the point where I was going to have to invest in a new horn, my old Selmer was banged up and not ideal for recording. I felt it was time for an upgrade. I was able to work some things out with Cannonball where I would endorse their product and advertise for them, in return I get to play a beautiful horn that looks, sounds and feels great. It's actually given me new motivation to practice more. I also credit Emilio Lyons, the Sax Doctor, with helping me. I take my horns in to him at least once every couple months to make sure they're working correctly, and that my pads are sealing well. Emilio is the best.

I had the opportunity to interview trumpeter Richard Boulger who has worked with a number of rock bands. He said he was having a real hard time giving up his daily teaching gig in New York to work fulltime as a traveling and touring musician because he loved the kids and the educational relationship too much. As you've progressed to national recognition and prominence, you've also kept your teaching gig. For you, what is there about the teaching profession that continues to call to you?

It's rewarding. It's something I really enjoy doing. It balances me out. I'm not much of a traveler, I'm more of a stay-at-home family guy. I'm looking forward to my upcoming summer season because I'm probably going to travel more than I ever have due to being more in demand, but the security of the teaching job is nice. When I was at Berklee I decided to pursue a degree in music education because I wanted that security, and I knew I'd always be able to play and travel but I wanted teaching to be my main gig. I just don't see myself touring and traveling all year long. I need something that balances me, and teaching does that.

As busy as you are with your teaching and performing, do you still find time to practice?

I'll be honest, I don't really have that much time to practice. I'm fortunate that I'm in a lot of bands and play at least three nights a week; at least once during the week and twice on weekends. Those are my oppor-

tunities to get some playing done and I use those opportunities to work on new ideas. It's tough when you have a family and a lot of different things going on, but I'm always doing something in music. If I can't pick my instrument up I'm still always thinking and writing, composing, producing, I'm always learning more and of course I'm always listening. To me listening to music is a big part of my practicing because I can't always pick up my horns. When I listen I spend time transcribing and learning new vocabulary. I purchase a lot of music on iTunes and listen in my car on my iPhone; that's a large part of my practice routine.

When I interview artists and ask about their teaching, specifically regarding transcribing solos, there's a wide diversity of opinion regarding the value of transcribing. Where do you fall?

My students are more on the beginner level. I don't have a lot of intermediate or advanced students right now. We, however, do

There's a reason it's called Super...

The Super 400 series offers: **Rose brass body, bell, bow and neck** giving a complex tone which cannot be achieved any other way; **Two different necks** create two entirely different sounds, one bright, one dark; **Keywork to high G** extending the range without difficult fingerings; **Upper stack speaker key** resolves intonation issues in the upper octaves; **Never stick G# mechanism** solves the oldest saxophone problem; **Kangaroo leather pads** eliminate sticking and key noise; and **Solid copper resonators** give great projection and a huge, dynamic range.

Saxgourmet Super 400 altos and tenors offer the player options previously unavailable on any saxophone, at any price. These big bore horns bring an unmatched rich sound and intonation to the market, at a price that compares quite favorably with lesser equipped horns from other makers.

R RESTRICTED TO LIMITED PRODUCTION, BUILT BY HAND, USING ONLY THE FINEST MATERIALS

Like all the other horns in the Saxgourmet line, the Super 400 series features double arms on the lower keys; full hand cut engraving on the bell, bell flare, bow, body, both necks, and all key cups; a three ring strap hook, and genuine abalone key touches.

Steve Goodson's

Nation of Music

WWW.NATIONOFMUSIC.COM

very basic ear training. I think it's really important for musicians to study the vocabulary of artists and coming to understand how different artists approach improvisation is an important element in learning to play. I attribute a lot of my growth as a musician and my ideas as coming from other artists I've studied in depth. I've been able to bring together my sound and my ideas from the compilation of things I've learned in studying other artists, so to me transcription is very important.

You have a home studio. What advice can you give the readers who are thinking about putting their own home studio together to help them?

It's becoming more and more popular to have your own home studio. It's very cost efficient. You can save a lot of money by taking your time and not worrying about being on the clock paying 30, 40, 50, or 75 bucks an hour. For me, the main reason I have it is as a writer. When I have ideas I like to get them out. I don't necessarily finish the production in my studio, instead it's the place where I develop my ideas. There is a lot of software and hardware that is user friendly. You can get a very high quality sound if you do the right things, like figuring out your mic'ing techniques. I definitely encourage people, especially those who are writers and composers, to utilize and start with their own studios and their own equipment. Then you can always go into a bigger studio. It's amazing how much you can do over a computer these days. Half of the people who played on this project weren't even in the studio with me when they laid down their tracks. I can send the files over cyberspace, they can play their part, and then they send them back to me.

The new recording, Love And Sax, is great, and it was a massive undertaking, having been recorded or mixed or mastered almost

everywhere, including your own studio, and Burbank, California; Boston, Massachusetts; Worcester, Massachusetts; Barbados in the West Indies; Escondido, California; Marietta, Georgia; Los Angeles, California; and other places. How did you keep all of the tracks and guest artists straight as you were producing the recording?

It just came together. It usually just takes one good song or idea to get me motivated to do a project. I had a basic foundation of tracks that I started to write to. For me, it all begins with writing a melody and then having another producer build underneath that melody, or the opposite where a producer gives me a song or a track and I build a melody on top of it. From there I develop the song and decide if I want to have guest artists on it, and if I want to replace some of the programmed instruments with real instruments and musicians. Through this process each song takes its own shape. I also make it a point to have at least one vocal track on each album. It's tough as an instrumentalist because the average listener is conditioned to hearing lyrics. I think each instrumentalist should strive to have at least one vocal selection on their project; it's a great way to connect with all listeners. I also love working with brass players and on each project I try to work with a trombonist or trumpet player. I did that on this recording as well. I also wanted to do a guitar or piano feature, and all of these ideas helped me in choosing who I wanted to have as guest artists. I also like to use younger producers. So far in my career, I haven't used producers that "everyone" uses, like a Jeff Lorber or George Duke or Marcus Miller. I try to use guys who produce R&B and Hip Hop, as this allows my music to have a unique sound. I enjoy fusing my ideas with their production. I think the combination works.

Did you have an overriding concept you wanted to present as you began to assemble the compositions for this new recording?

Definitely. One of the first songs I worked on was a track Herman Johnson, who is also known as P-Nut, a very talented drummer and producer, sent me. He sent me two tracks, *Midnight Serenade* and *Rain*, which both had different names when he first sent them to me. I told him I wanted something that was very seductive, romantic, and easy listening. I didn't want something that people could tap their feet and snap their fingers to. I wanted to make an album that made you sit and listen; something that would mellow you out. Once we started to work on those songs I found I was really pleased with the direction we were going, and the reactions I was getting from people who heard the music liked it. They were saying the music had a sexy sound and they were sexy songs. That really motivated me to keep that style consistent throughout the recording. For some people this might be a little boring, people are used to hearing a backbeat or, as in smooth jazz, a steady groove, but I took a chance. I'm one to take chances and risks because to me that's what keeps music evolving, and that's what I did. I'm pleased with how it came out. It's an easy listening recording that allows you to sit and listen with a glass of wine and kick back.

Your previous recording, This Time Around, is the one that really started to take your name nationwide. With its release the noted critic Scott Yanow said "(this recording was) a major step forward (for Elan and that with it he is) ready to make (his) mark on the contemporary jazz world." What do you think it is about that recording that led it to not just receiving so much airplay but also so many great comments from the critics?

I think radio played a big part. I've always had music I was able to release, but it wasn't until I made a conscious decision to push my music to radio that I really found myself going all in. I had to follow up with the publicity and the marketing. Radio

Since 1984
Meridian Winds
 has provided quality products and services to saxophonists. We specialize in all aspects of maintenance, repair and restoration and are the originators of the Magnetic Dent Removal System. (US Patent #7207205B2)

contact: Eric Satterlee
 517-339-REED(7333)
 bandrepair@comcast.net
 meridianwinds.com

After working with Mr. Sinta we are proud to offer the reissue of "Voicing" which now includes a biography, photos, a discography and listing of all works written for, commissioned by and/or premiered by the author.

ON SALE NOW
 25\$ + shipping

Voicing
 An Approach to the Saxophone's Third Register
 Donald J. Sinta

received that album very well. The first single was *Lovely Day*, and once radio started to find out about my music I had to really back it up and start promoting my music on a national level. That meant I was introducing myself to a lot of listeners who had never heard of me. I worked to really develop a brand and a sound, and then follow it up with my current project, *Love And Sax*.

We're going backwards through your career here, but as you were composing the tunes for This Time Around, were you thinking about specifically composing tunes that would have a radio friendly atmosphere, or was it just the next step in your evolution as a musician? It is very different from the discs that come before it.

I definitely made it a point to be as consistent as possible with respect to the whole concept and genre where I would find my niche within the industry. I was a little torn between doing gospel jazz, or Caribbean jazz, or contemporary jazz or fusion. I love music so much, and I love so many different styles of music. I have many different influences including those from my upbringing. I just wanted to be able to express myself in all of those styles because I have such a love for each of them, but I had to make a conscious decision to be consistent. That's when people will start to recognize you, when you are consistent. I honestly didn't think I would be able to make much of an impact within the industry with that project. Its success went well beyond my expectations. It hit radio and then it started to move up the charts, and I was, "Oh my gosh, this is serious." The other projects I had done before this one were ones where I made a couple thousand CDs and sold them at my shows and on CD Baby. My past albums weren't in stores, but as my fan base grew I started to take it really seriously and began to study the contemporary jazz industry and focus on my branding.

Your second CD as a leader, Let's Have A Good Old Time, is a gospel recording. You stated on the liner notes it was influenced by your public school students. Can you tell the readers how they influenced your decision to move in that direction on this recording?

We did a couple units on African-American music, the blues and spirituals in class. There is always a gray area as to where the blues came from in our research. Some people differ on where they think the origins of the blues and rock and roll lie. I really tried to tell my students to look beyond race and culture, and just look at music as an art form so they can see how it all came together. I talked to them about slavery and during Black History Month we sang spirituals, like *This Little Light Of Mine* and *Swing Low Sweet Chariot*. I tried to explain to them why the music sounded so dark and why the lyrics were so painful.

Then I explained that some of those songs also had subliminal messages. They really took a liking to the songs and were able to make a connection between that music and the music they like to listen to now, modern music including hip hop and rap, even contemporary gospel music and R&B. This led to me starting to like these spirituals even more. At this same time I was playing at a Baptist Church in the Boston area. I made a decision I wanted record some covers of these spirituals, but with my own voice on these melodies. They are simple and repetitive melodies, even the harmonies are basic being mostly blues structures. They were fun to play around with, even changing some arrangements. It ended up having a New Orleans Second-Line feel to it. It was really fun doing that project and being able to connect with a lot of my listeners, especially those who are gospel lovers and church goers.

Do you approach improvisation on the saxophone differently when you're playing gospel music, as opposed to when you play in a contemporary or straight-ahead jazz setting?

No, I base my improvisations off of feel; whatever emotion I get at that point in time whether it is the rhythm or the chords. I've studied and have always had a great love of bebop, and I try to include that vocabulary into all of my improvisations because bebop is a big part of jazz. There are so many different styles of jazz, but I have a strong respect for the guys who created that vocabulary, the Charlie Parker's and the Dizzy Gillespie's, and how they were able to take ideas from Western European music, the scales and patterns and exercises, and turn that into a language that works over a series of chord progressions. I love that and I love to improvise and form my own lines and melodies on top of chords. I wouldn't say I approach improvisation differently in any style. For me music has to have a feel and a soul to it, as well as a groove and a life to it, this then allows me to be creative.

Kirk Whalum is an artist whom you have a musical relationship with, and he appears with you on this recording on the tune Everything's Gonna Be Alright. Can you tell the readers how your musical relationship with him began and how it has grown into today?

Kirk is like a mentor to me. I've known him for about six years now. I've known of him for much longer. Growing up in Barbados I heard his music on the radio, most recognizably with his sax solo on Whitney Houston's *I Will Always Love You* from *The Bodyguard*. Kirk grew up in the church in Memphis, his dad is a pastor. I also grew up in the church playing gospel music also, though my dad isn't a pastor. It's very inspirational to me

LEGENDS SERIES™
SAXOPHONE MOUTHPIECES. HANDMADE USA

“CREATE WITH A LEGEND”

Stan Getz
Johnny Griffin

Bird
Charlie Parker

Made Exclusively for
RS Musical Instruments
www.RSBerkeley.com

Handmade in the USA by
Drake Mouthpieces
www.Drakemouthpieces.com

to see him produce different styles of music at such a high level, even though he came out of a gospel setting. He's put out dozens of albums that have all done really well. For me it's not that he's just a great person, everyone will tell you what a great person he is, but his sound is amazing. I really take pride in my sound and my tone, and everyone will tell you Kirk's sound is very recognizable and distinct, but it's also very vocal. He sings through his instrument, it's as simple as that, he sings through his instrument. I've always tried to model myself after that. It's good to have technique and chops, but the thing I think people will remember the most is the beautiful sound that comes out of your instrument and how melodic and vocal it is. People especially identify with that. I've really looked up to him. He's inspired me. He's such a great guy. I first met him at the Barbados Jazz Festival, and then we actually flew back to the States together. I played him some of my music on the plane and he was very impressed. I pitched that song to him, knowing he loved gospel music and would like the tune and the concept of two tenor saxophones dueling, and it worked out perfectly.

He's taught me about this industry. One of the first things he taught me, when I started doing this and was really trying to step my game up to the next level, was that you have to do a little at a time. I asked him how he got to the point where you sell hundreds of thousands of albums and get all of the national and global exposure, and he said you have to start locally. For me that's Boston and the East coast. I have to develop my fan base. That really resonated with me. I can't be trying to reach people in California if people in Boston and New York don't know who Elan Trotman is. That advice really helped me to grasp the concept of developing your brand. You want to start to build an audience on a local level, and then you can start to think about working on a national and global level.

On your CDs as leader you've featured a number of different kinds of music. My favorite song from your debut CD is Memories. One of the things you do on that disc is play with steel drums in a Caribbean quasi-Calypso setting. You have really mastered the Caribbean style. I've heard many musicians try to play in this style, and they just fall on their face. What do you know about this style that so many other musicians who try to play in this style, do not know?

I like to compare that to my playing bebop or my playing the blues, that music was not branded into me from childhood, those musics I had to learn and come to understand. Calypso however, the rhythms and syncopation, is in my blood and in my bones. It comes back to the melodies. Caribbean music is very melodic. Everything I play is all about beauty and simplicity. The songs do not have a lot of notes. The music is very easy and catchy to sing along to. Even in my solos I try to play things people can sing along to; I try to solo very melodically, nothing too dissonant, unless needed. Calypso is close to Afro-Cuban music. All music, for that matter, is very similar and that's why music is so awesome, because everything overlaps and comes around full circle. Growing up listening to Bob Marley and Calypso groups taught me to approach music in a feel good manner; in the end the music should make you feel good and be happy.

On a number of occasions, including on O Happy Day from your debut CD, you overdub a saxophone choir behind you. How do you go about making sure you play each successive overdubbed line perfectly in sync with the lines you've already laid down?

It can be tedious. Fortunately here in the digital age there is a lot you can do. It's not like 30 or 40 years ago when recording was done to tape and there were a lot of limitations; if you messed up back then you had to start all over again. I credit a lot to the en-

gineers, but when I'm recording I try to be as precise as possible because I want the music and lines to sound clean and tight. It's very common for saxophonists to overdub their own background horns, it saves money not having to hire other musicians. It really adds a nice thickness and depth to the songs, and the more you do it the easier it gets. I definitely try to layer my horns, going for some nice rich harmonies, and model the parts on the traditional three or four part, soprano alto tenor bass, chorus. I think in terms of choral arrangements and write the harmony parts in that manner.

You're A Reggae Christmas CD is yet again another recording where you play in a different style than on previous recordings. I was fascinated to learn it originally started as a disc for your friends, but became so popular you started selling it on your website. Can you tell the story of how it came to be released and available for everybody?

Reggae Christmas is one of those projects that probably should not have released, but I did. It's not the best in terms of production. I definitely did it on my own, and sometimes it's not good to try to wear too many hats. I was both the producer and musician on that one, but again, sometimes I take risks. One holiday season I went into the studio and starting messing around with some popular Christmas carols, burnt some CDs and passed them out to close friends and family. It was a little stocking stuffer. They all really liked it. Living up here in New England winter can be a little tough, especially if you grew up on a warm island. Everybody received it well saying it both put them in the Christmas spirit and had an island-y vibe. I said to myself, "It's not the greatest recording, but I think it's good enough that I can make it available to my fans." I took a chance, put it up on my website, and people started downloading it. We've actually gotten some spins on radio stations with the disc. At the time that *Lovely Day* was in rotation some stations started to slip in one of the Christmas singles from the disc. People were digging it.

One of the things you've done, like many other musicians, including Art Blakey and Charlie Parker, is play wedding gigs. You have a band that has been tremendously successful at this select genre of music, to the point where you get more requests to play weddings than you can possibly fulfill. For the readers who play these gigs, and almost all of us do, what do you think is the key to being successful when it comes to playing weddings?

It's basically a cover band gig, like working corporate dinners. You do a dinner set, play some jazz standards, then you get people dancing by playing Motown and Earth, Wind & Fire as well as anything from Van Morrison to the Beatles. For me, these gigs are an opportunity to grow as a musician. I'm fortunate to be surrounded by great musicians and be able to play on stage in front of people a couple days a week. Through it I'm able to develop ideas and learn from how people respond to my playing; certain things I do. It's all part of my growth, and it's fun to play these legendary songs that last for decades. Songs like *Let's Stay Together*, and even tunes from the band Journey, go over well. I covered a Journey tune on my *This Time Around* disc as a direct result of my work doing weddings. That was a song the people always went bonkers for every time we did it. I decided to do it on saxophone with a few little weird electronic effects added. Weddings also pay well and you can't complain about that.

I read where you said you don't get nervous about performing. What secret have you found to help you with this and can you share it with the readers who face this problem?

I try not to think of music as right or wrong. I believe there

are already too many things in this life people label as right or wrong, and I never want to perceive music in that way. I tell my students they might have played an incorrect note, or it might not have come out correctly, but we're not going to label it right or wrong. We work on ways to make it sound better. We'll just look at music as a way to express yourself, and however you choose to express yourself is always going to be right. I'm always excited, every time I get on stage, to express my ideas with my listeners, even if it's just two people sitting in a little bar. I don't think about the negatives, like, "Am I going to be able to nail this ending." Obviously I take pride in making sure everything sounds the best it can, I want to strive for excellence, but again for me it's all about having fun. I don't ever want to look at music as something to worry about whether it's perfect or if I'm not going to be able to pull things off. I come ready to go and when I step off that stage I want it to be smoking and people to be standing on their feet clapping. Every time I play I leave everything on the stage, I don't look at it as a test with a pass or fail grade; it's all about having fun.

How important has your background on the piano been to you as you've progressed as a musician?

If I had never taken piano lessons I would not be the musician I am today. Even though my principal instrument is the saxophone, I always go back to the piano. It's like my calculator. Anyone that wants to go beyond their instrument and understand the theory of the music has to understand the piano. It is the best instrument on which to learn how music works. When I went to Berklee I already knew what major, minor and diminished chords were, but for them to actually show me intervals and come to understand how intervals work in flat-5-sharp-9 chords just blew my mind. All of the things I was hearing I didn't truly understand theoretically or what they meant on a piece of paper; I just knew what it sounded like and I knew what to play when I heard that chord. But for them to explain all of these things to me, and then to be able to sit at the piano and build all of these chords was incredible. Any musician who can play chords on the piano will immediately become a better song writer and a better musician. Understanding harmony is a huge part of what we do as musicians.

You also play the flute, along with a number of other instruments. What advice do you have for young musicians who are thinking about adding other instruments as doubles, like the flute and clarinet?

Fortunately for us as woodwind players, the instruments of the woodwind family are very similar, so it's easy to double in terms of fingering. The embouchure and tone, on the other hand, gets a little dicey. I'm not a true flute player, and my tone on the flute is that of a saxophone player playing flute; it's a little airy. A real flute player has a pure sound. I actually like having a raspy airy sound on the flute, especially for jazz because I find the sound works better. If you can double you increase your stock as a musician. You'll get more work and you'll have more flexibility in terms of the music you can create. If you look at guys like Eric Dolphy, and even Grover Washington Jr., Grover played all the horns from bari up to soprano, and most people don't even know what a soprano sax is. That takes a lot of work because every day you're going to have to pick them all up and work on your embouchure as all those mouthpieces are different sizes. If you don't get your muscles acclimated to the different mouthpieces it's going to be a train wreck. A lot of tenor players, when they go to soprano, end up with bad intonation because the soprano mouthpiece is so much smaller and the instrument itself is very hard to play in tune even if you're not coming to it from the tenor.

As you make the transition from one saxophone to the next, do you change the way you're thinking as you approach each saxophone?

Yes and no. It will always be the same in terms of the ideas I have for improvisation; those ideas will always be the same no matter what instrument I'm playing. Certain horns work better on certain pieces and certain keys work better on certain horns as well. I really try to hear the horns when I'm composing. The range on the tenor lends itself to a very warm sound; its range is closer to the human voice. The alto cuts through a little more and is brighter. The soprano is a softer sound; you can't be aggressive with it. They all have a very unique sound. I don't play that much alto, but some days I wish I did because there are some songs when you can really hear an alto on it. As long as I know what sound I'm looking for in my head, I feel confident I can pull it off with just a tenor and soprano.

NOW AVAILABLE! Ron Diehl's 25 Jazz Excerpts



\$20.00

includes CD and
printed excerpts

With text and CD, you can see and hear how alternate (false) fingerings are used in jazz soloing by the saxophone masters.

ALSO AVAILABLE!

"ALTERNATE (FALSE) FINGERINGS"

*For a new dimension in saxophone playing!
A 23-page guidebook and fingering chart showing all the great special effects and lip shakes used in jazz.*

\$15.00

RON DIEHL & FRIENDS LIVE!



\$15.00

Ron's jazz sextet CD
Recorded live at the Rehoboth
Beach Jazz Festival

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------|---------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 1. 25 JAZZ EXCERPTS..... | \$20.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 2. ALTERNATE FINGERINGS..... | \$15.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 3. RON DIEHL & FRIENDS CD..... | \$15.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 4. COMBO PACK (ALL 3)..... | \$40.00 |

ORDERS OUTSIDE USA ADD \$4.00 S&H

MAKE CHECK PAYABLE TO:

Ron Diehl
224 Mallow Hill Rd.
Baltimore, MD 21229-3241
rgdiehl@comcast.net

There is a video of you on the web playing the National Anthem at a Los Angeles Dodgers baseball game where you belt out the last few notes in the high altissimo register with a pure sound and beautiful tone. What advice do you have for those who are just starting to work in the altissimo register to help them with the technique?

Funny you should ask that, I've gotten a lot of comments regarding that video. I was on line yesterday looking at new altissimo fingerings because on my new horn some of the fingerings I used on the Selmer do not come out the same way on the Cannonball. I've been looking for an alternate fingering for G-sharp, and there are about six different fingerings listed. I tried them all to see which one was the most comfortable and worked the best for me, but being able to play the full range and beyond on your instrument is a huge advantage. It helps you to extend your ideas and is a great tool for connecting with your audiences. It's beyond the normal sound of the instrument and once people hear you play those notes it makes them pay attention a little more than usual. A lot of guys use this technique in their solos and a lot of guys are famous for this technique in and of itself, people like Lenny Pickett and Gerald Albright. They are both very good with the altissimo register and they have incorporated it into their work. Gerald has actually incorporated these notes into his performances and it's a huge part of his show. Even guys like Kenny G, I grew up listening to him on cassette tape and I still have crazy respect for him because he's a player. I was watching some videos of him from back in the 1980s when he was with Jeff Lorber, and he has a lot of bebop under his belt. Both he and Michael Brecker played a lot of tenor but they could get up into the alto range and you can't tell if they're on alto or tenor saxophone because their technique is so flawless. It's just a huge advantage when you can go on beyond the regular range of the horn. For me it was a lot of practice that helped with the altissimo register. There is also something to be said for your setup. Just messing around with different mouthpieces and different strength reeds, as well as how you preserve or break in your reeds or how you soak them, different things like that can all help or hinder you. But with practice, the more you do the easier it gets.

Playing outdoors is going to take its toll on reeds. You've done a lot of playing outdoors, both here in the States and in Barbados. Do you have any advice to help with reeds for playing outdoors?

If you're in a climate that is pretty consistent, I don't think playing outdoors affects reeds that much. If you're in colder climates and then you go back and forth between hot and cold environments you might have a problem, and that will affect not just the reed but the instrument as well. Again, it's tough to find a consistent set of reeds in a box. They're all different. Each reed will feel a little different. I'm always trying different things. I saw Kirk Whalum a few weeks ago in Pennsylvania at the Berks Jazz Festival and he was doing something to his reeds, sanding them with sandpaper, and I wasn't familiar with that technique.

Everybody tries different things. Some people even try soaking them in vodka, and some people will argue that you should soak them in your own saliva because acids in the saliva help the reeds out. I always try to put myself in position where I'm ready to go once I'm on stage. I don't want to have to warm-up or break in the reed, I want it ready to go. In order to accomplish this I try to make sure I have two or three reeds ready and an extra mouthpiece set up just in case a reed gets cracked or broken. My advice is to always be ready.

What advice do you have for young saxophonists?

The saxophone was not my first band instrument of choice. I actually started on French horn. I eventually noticed the saxophone players were getting most of the attention and most of the solos, and that was one of the things that attracted me to it. Obviously the way it looks is great, but also how people respond to it was appealing. Not to be biased towards it from other instruments, because each instrument is important or we wouldn't be able to make music together, but I think as a saxophone player we have an advantage because it's so close to the human voice and one of the most vocal instruments that people respond to in a positive manner. It's an instrument that is so close to the human voice it's almost like you're singing. As saxophone players we need to take pride in that and make sure our sound or tone is beautiful, and that our intonation is true. Some people like a more raspy sound, some a more pure tone, some a more edgy sound, some like a lot of vibrato. Everyone has their own preference. For me, my goal is to always have a consistent tone and a beautiful sound. For me, everything else comes after that. The technical stuff, the chops, the vocabulary is secondary for me. I think the sound and the tone is the most important thing, and that means doing long tones and building up the muscles so you don't get tired after playing for an hour. You don't want to have your pitch go flat after an hour of playing because your muscles are toast. Take pride in your sound as a saxophonist. Listen to different saxophone players and try to understand why they sound the way they sound and what they did to get that sound. That way you can eventually develop your own sound. I think my sound is a cross between Kirk Whalum and Grover Washington Jr., but some days I might want to sound like Stan Getz and play really soft, breathy and airy. Understanding tone and how you can get different sounds from the instrument is important. §

Elan Trotman's Complete Biography

A complete biography of Elan Trotman is available as a PDF file at www.dornpub.com/download.html. Scroll down to the Sept/Oct 2011 2011 issue of *Saxophone Journal*.

WWW.MAMCOUS.COM

**QUALITY PRODUCTS FOR
WOODWIND & BRASS INSTRUMENTS**

MAMCO

Musical Accessory Manufacturing Company

Serving professionals and students since 1987

- **SAX DIAPER® - ULTIMATE PULL-THROUGH SWAB**
- **PAD LIFE® - LEATHER PAD CLEANER AND REJUVENATOR**
- **KEY HOLDER® - MAINTAINS KEY/PAD ADJUSTMENT**
- **SPACEFILLER QUALITY LUBRICANTS™**
 - ULTIMATE I - 'NORMAL' PISTON & ROTOR VALVES
TROMBONE HAND SLIDES
 - ULTIMATE II - 'TIGHT' PISTON & ROTOR VALVES
 - TS - TUNING SLIDES AND MECHANISMS