

# Palm Springs-based **SAXOPHONIST** **WILL DONATO** could have ended up being a trumpeter, a flutist or even a classical clarinetist.

By Preston Turegano

"I was raised in a musical household," said Will Donato, who was born in Boston but lived in many other places as a result of being an Army dependent. "My uncle was a big band drummer and was always playing music for me. My parents are extreme music lovers and steered and supported me from the very beginning. When I first went to a music store with my folks, a salesman put a clarinet and a trumpet on the counter. I wanted to grab the trumpet. My folks nudged me toward the clarinet and related that you could also

move (from  
clarinet)  
to other



instruments like sax and flute. That was it for me. I became a serious classical clarinet player but switched to sax after hearing an early recording of Don Myrick playing the original solo in the live version of 'Reasons' for Earth, Wind & Fire. I also heard the sax player in Billy Paul's 'Me and Mrs. Jones' and thought there's a lot of love here. I gotta check this out!"

Since 2003, Donato has been a recording artist. Also a songwriter, Donato has a stellar list of credits and movie soundtracks to his name, including smooth jazz exponents such as Steve Oliver, Steve Reid (formerly of the Rippingtons), Blake Aaron, Al McKay (Earth, Wind & Fire) and Gregg Karukas, and pop stars Toni Childs, Gerald Levert and Richard Marx. The most notable movie soundtrack credits include "Thelma & Louise" and "The Wedding Planner."

This year, Donato released his third CD, *Will Call*.

"I think the element that most defines me is that I absolutely enjoy celebrating people through music," Donato said.

"Smooth jazz and music in general can be a challenging endeavor, but for me I live for the travel, meeting new fans, and recording music. My only priority is delivering the best show and

performance."

Donato is particularly keen on live performance.

"I've noticed that as radio gets more competitive and technology is advancing, a lot of people are making nice pristine production-based music, but then they realize that you actually have to play live for human beings," he said. "I'm really comfortable in communicating with people through music. At the same time, I'm always trying to maintain the quality of the music and change with the new markets. 'Whatcha See Is Whatcha Get'—a single off my new *Will Call* CD—defines my personality. I strive to maintain a genuineness and authenticity both on and off stage."

Donato's advice to aspiring musicians is twofold. First, he says, start an original project and write and perform material live.

"Go to a local coffeehouse or cafe where you can perform and be treated with respect," he said. "You can

learn so much when you are responsible for some of the most basic and important skills in our business, including writing and working with other skilled musicians. Second, it's important to have several platforms of abilities to draw from, including songwriting, live performance, and studio skills.

"The market is so competitive that the more you bring to the party, so to speak, makes you that much more valuable. I put a lot of time in my sound and songwriting focus. There are so many wonderful players and styles in today's market. There's not much real estate left in differentiating your own signature sound. It's such a compliment when someone says 'I know that's a Will Donato tune or song.' Recognizing someone's signature sound in a few notes or minutes of a song is the ultimate compliment."

## will donato press

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