

Jonathan J. Golko: A History



Born in Chicago and raised in the Northwest suburbs, an aptitude for music developed and I was fortunate to attend 2 public schools with nationally acclaimed music programs, including recognition from the GRAMMY Foundation as a Signature School in 2005. This led to an opportunity to join the GRAMMY Foundation's California-based "GRAMMY Camp" in its second year as the first saxophonist admitted to the program in 2006.

This music industry-focused program brought together a special group of students from around the U.S. for an intensive experience working with and attending master classes with award winning and nominated artists and industry leaders such as Earth, Wind, and Fire, saxophonist Dave Koz, guitarist Steve Vai, *American Idol* musical director Rickey Minor, orchestra members of Hollywood films, and an opportunity to perform as the opening act for the Foundation's 2007 Starry Night gala and concert honoring Quincy Jones, hosted by David Foster along with a collection of popular artists – to name a few: Herbie Hancock, Nancy Wilson, Gloria Estefan, John Legend, and Kanye West (who may or may not have stolen my sunglasses that evening). A year later, I would become classmates again with a few GRAMMY Camp alumni when we traveled east to attend Berklee College of Music in Boston.

After beginning with an interest in Music Synthesis and Technology, I switched majors to Music Business and Management as to use the college experience to continue gaining critical insight to the inner workings of the entertainment industry. During this time, I had taken a role as an instrumental contractor for brass musicians in the school, booking players for shows and performing at the Berklee Performance Center. Performances included their "Singer Showcase" series and supporting special shows with artists ranging from keyboardist George Duke to vocalists including Layla Hathaway, Angelique Kidjo, Rosa Passos, Paula Cole, and Philip Bailey/Maurice White of Earth, Wind, Fire. After graduating in 2010, it wasn't long until I got hooked up with Holland America Line and started a 6-year career traveling and performing in the cruise industry.

Prior to joining my first cruise ship, I had taken residence in Los Angeles while completing my internship at Blue Microphones in a hybrid position of Pro Tools audio engineer and studio manager while assisting the VP of marketing with assorted "intern-stuff" (like failing to buy the right kind of coffee for the 2010 "Esquire House" and getting a sandwich with only mayo instead of mustard... he hated mayo. Or was it the other way around?). Then, on an 80-degree day in the middle of December, while considering selling my 1977 soprano saxophone to afford a month or two of rent, I got the call to audition for the Dutch-driven cruise line.

My time as an entertainer on cruise ships began as a saxophonist in the showband, performing 3 to 5 times a day in 4 to 6-month long contracts. Performing on HAL, I got to visit all 7 continents between the years 2011 and 2013 - immersed in the cultures of some of the world's biggest cities, most remote islands, and ancient mythological temples. By 2014, I had established myself as a headliner and joined a unique production show with Royal Caribbean called "Sonic Odyssey" on a rare musical instrument called the Earth Harp (as seen on *America's Got Talent*). Following this role as the "Maestro," I returned to LA once more in 2017 before taking residence in my home city of Chicago in 2018 and establishing 2 new musical projects: ForEverAfter (classical/pop) and Action Heights (jazz/pop).

Since 2020, notable performances included the Duke Ellington inspired "Sophisticated Ladies," "Billy Elliot," a substitute role in the circus-meets-dinner productions "Teatro ZinZanni" and "Cabaret ZaZou" on saxes, clarinet, flute, and keyboard, and most recently, the 1980s-driven jukebox musical "Rock of Ages" on bass guitar.