

## **Jeff Clayton**

Few musicians have had as fertile ground as Los Angeles to learn and build their career. Jeff Clayton has done so in excellent fashion while gaining considerable respect from his peers.

Jeff's first musical influences were in the Baptist church where his mother took him at an early age. He recalls,"I spent many years in the church, which is the best place on earth to experience emotional majesty...which, of course, can also be applied to jazz."

He began his college studies at Cal State University Northridge where he received four years of university level study as an oboe major. He never received his diploma for the very good reason that Stevie Wonder insisted Jeff join him on the road.

Jeff observed,"From Stevie Wonder I learned about songwriting and communicating without speech. He taught his musicians to reach into a feeling that would pull you into another dimension and allow you to access information that you didn't possess. He also has the uncanny ability to suggest musical direction through tone and rhythm."

Subsequently, he began a career as both a touring musician as well as a studio musician. In addition to recording important albums with Stevie Wonder, he also recorded with Gladys Knight, Kenny Rogers, The Temptations, The Four Tops, Michael Jackson, Patti Labelle, and Earth, Wind and Fire just to mention a few.

After several years of experience playing behind pop music groups, Jeff had become so adept on his various instruments that his reputation grew accordingly. He naturally evolved into jazz and decided to make it his career. As a sideman, he worked for such musical titans as Frank Sinatra, Sammy Davis Jr., Ella Fitzgerald, Woody Herman, Lionel Hampton, Lena Horne, and a short stint with the Count Basie Orchestra. Jeff now spends considerable time working with his bassist/arranger brother, John, and drummer Jeff Hamilton as leaders of the popular big band, The Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra.