

# Tom Lellis

New York based, singer Tom Lellis is critically acclaimed as an original. "One of the most easily distinguished contemporary jazz singers on the planet" (Jazzradio.net, Berlin). Long known and respected as a musician's singer, his facets include pianist, composer and lyricist on recorded works by Jarrett, Corea, Hancock, Brubeck and others and a recording debut with Eddie Gomez and Jack DeJohnette.

Born in Cleveland, Ohio, Tom Lellis began singing professionally at the age of 15. By age 21, he was working on bills with Ray Charles and Gregory Hines and a 15-piece big band. After 9 years as a stand up singer, Tom began intensive piano studies with colleague, Bill Dobbins. Three years later he was singing, playing and opening for Dizzy Gillespie, Bill Evans, Jimmy Smith and other jazz greats.

His debut *And In This Corner* (Inner City 1981) made "Lucky Southern" a dance hit in London's Jazz discos and is reissued currently.

*Double Entendre*, his second album with DeJohnette and Gomez, was released in the U.S. and Japan. "Tom Lellis should fascinate not only vocal fans, but instrumental fans, thus producing an ideal vocal form" (Jazzlife, Tokyo).

With the release of his 1993 Concord recording, *Taken to Heart*, Tom's interests expanded into Brazilian music. His collaboration with Brazilian guitar master and composer, Toninho Horta, resulted in "Mountain Flight" which has been further published in *The Latin Real Book* and CD.

Tom has been voted to the Down Beat International Critic's Poll, and dubbed by numerous writers and critics a "triple threat". He is quoted in *Singing Jazz, The Singers and their Styles* (Miller-Freeman Books, 1998).

Tom's recording, *Skylark*, was named The "Top Vocal Jazz CD of 2002" by the *International Association of Jazz Education Journal* and was New York's WBGO's "Most requested record of 2002". The CD of his original works, lyrics and concepts with the 52-piece, stringed, Netherlands Metropole Orchestra conducted by John Clayton and arranged by Grammy winner, Vince Mendoza, and others is in reissue release currently.

*Southern Exposure* was named Jazziz Magazines "Best CDs of 2004" and the *Jazz Education Journal's* "Best Vocal CDs of 2004." It is a collection of Brazilian/jazz with Horta, Dave Kikoski, Kenny Werner, and Romero LuBambo on Adventure Music with music by Horta/Lellis also published in *The Latin Real Book*.

*Avenue of the Americas* released in 2006 features all Tom's facets and arranging creativity with his lyrics to Brazilian and jazz composers and reworked standards and pop from the Beatles to Ashford and Simpson and U2. Featuring Horta and Richard Bona it has been named to *Jazziz Magazine's* "Critic's Best CDs of 2006" list.

The duet CD *Tonight* with Toninho Horta, released in 2008 on Adventure Music, continued the collaboration of the Tom and Toninho in an intimate setting which the *New York Times* called "Studies in romance and reverie" and was followed in 2009 by Adventure's reissue of *Skylark*.

Tom is currently writing and recording in New York for an Adventure Music 2011 CD release.

## Teaching / Production / Education

- Guest Professor of Vocal Jazz at K.U.G., Graz, Austria (2001-2002)
- Vocal Jazz Instructor at New Jersey City University (1995 -1998)
- Instructor at New Jersey Performing Arts Center, Newark, NJ
- Studied piano, as well as performed with, Bill Dobbins (Eastman- WDR, Koln)
- Studied theory with Stan Kenton arranger, Phil Rizzo and Dobbins.
- Plays piano, guitar and percussion as well as being a composer, lyricist and producer on his own recordings.
- Staff Producer/A&R for Inner City Records (1980-1981).

## Teaching Premise:

To achieve an environment in which the pursuit of "music" is above all personal and ego matters, where rhythm, melody, space and aura are encouraged, and where, "imitation is valid only until it can be replaced with originality".

To vocalists: Strive to become musicians to fully integrate musically in theory. Play piano or guitar to learn chordal theory.

To musicians: Realize singers have no keys, buttons, strings or frets to fall back on but bring language to communicate the music in effective ways to be embraced.

Website: [www.tomlellis.com](http://www.tomlellis.com)