

Gail McArthur

Gail McArthur is one of a new generation of women instrumentalists emerging in the male-dominated genre of jazz music.

An immensely talented saxophonist from Glasgow, Scotland, Gail began playing tenor sax at the young age of 14. Advancing quickly enabled her to play first with the Lanarkshire Concert band, then the newly formed Strathclyde Youth Jazz Orchestra. Their first rehearsal was broadcast by Channel 4 Television, "Down the Line".

At age 16, Gail studied with Scotland's most prolific jazz saxophonist, Tommy Smith, subsequently studying with Dan Haerle, Mike Tracy and Jerry Coker. Shortly afterwards being accepted to the Jazz course at Leeds College of Music.

Gail worked as a professional musician performing regularly with her own quartet at many of the major venues and festivals in Scotland, including the Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dunoon Jazz Festivals. In 1992, Gail was the force behind Scotland's first Brazilian style marching carnival band, "Brass Street". Performing extensively at all the major summer festivals in Britain, Brass Street brought the smoldering samba rhythms of Latin America to a new audience, recording "Brassed Off!" late in 1993. Also that year Gail formed the "Hot and Anxious Big Band". While building a strong reputation on her home shores, Gail had her sets firmly set on America.

In 1994 Gail was the first British female tenor saxophonist to win a scholarship to the world renowned Berklee College of Music. There she had the opportunity to study with George Garzone, Frank Tiberi (Woody Herman band), Phil Wilson (Buddy Rich Band), Joe Viola and Billy Pierce (Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers). During her time in Berklee she took every chance to perform in various jazz clubs around Boston. She also appeared on the CNN Berklee television special as part of the Thelonious Monk Ensemble. Gail won the Berklee Woodwind Achievement Award and the Alex Ulanowsky Award for Harmony. Graduating in 1998, Gail was the first British female tenor saxophonist to graduate from Berklee with an Honors Degree in Jazz Performance.

Gail has won a string of awards including the Princes Trust Award in 1994, Foundation for Sport & The Arts 1994, The STUC James Milne Award 1995 and 1996, Scottish International Education Trust, (whose trustees include Sean Connery), 1995 and 1996, The Cross Trust Award 1996 and 1997, Daily Record Hearts of Gold Award, East Kilbride Arts Council Awards 1994 - 1998 and the Mary Patton Rowan Award 1994 - 1998. Scottish Arts Council Artist Award 2000. In 1995 Gail also won the prestigious Cosmopolitan Magazine and American Express Award for the Performing Arts.

McArthur has performed with a plethora of noted jazz musicians including Benny Carter, Gerry Mulligan, Grover Washington, Don Cherry, Jackie McLean, Ciara Civello, Danny Gottlieb, Ed Jackson, Ian Froman, Antonio Sanchez, Miguel Zenon, Dirty Dozen Brass Band, Christian McBride, Maria Schneider, The Scottish National Jazz Orchestra and Vital Information - Steve Smith, Frank Gambale, Baron Browne and Tom Coster.

In 1998 Gail was cast in "The Celtic Story" The play about a Scottish Soccer club opened in Glasgow to rave reviews and was performed in Dublin, Ireland before the Irish Prime Minister, Bertie O'Hearn.

In 1999 and 2001 Gail was commissioned by the Scottish National Jazz Orchestra as part of a series entitled "Famous Scots in History" and then a work entitled "Greyfriar's Bobby"

Also in 2001, Gail performed with the Scottish National Jazz Orchestra under the direction of Maria Schneider.

Since 2002, Gail has been involved in music education, teaching on several VH1 Save the Music Programs. She was interviewed for the CN8 "Nitebeat" show, airing in June 2003. That year, Gail proudly became the first British woman to join the Faculty at Berklee College of Music.

Currently McArthur is working on her own CD project, performing with several groups in the Boston area, pursuing a recording contract and storming ahead on all fronts to further her jazz career.