

COURTNEY PINE

No one better embodies the dramatic transformation in the British Jazz scene over the past twenty years than Courtney Pine. The saxophonist heads a new generation of exciting and innovative musicians who have chosen to turn their talents to the demanding requirements of jazz music, in all its shapes and forms.

His debut album, "Journey To The Urge Within" in 1987, was the first serious jazz album ever to make the British Top 40, notching up sales to qualify for a silver disc. It was a remarkable achievement in British jazz history and established Courtney Pine as the leading figure in the British jazz scene and an inspiration to many young black musicians.

The follow-up to this in 1988, was the acclaimed "Destiny's Song" produced by Delfeayo Marsalis, again making its way into the British Top 40, but also cracking the American jazz charts, establishing the start of his international reputation. It was this year he also performed at Nelson Mandela's 80th birthday concert at Wembley.

His international growth continued with the release of his third album in 1989, "The Vision's Tale", recorded in America and produced again by Delfeayo Marsalis.

March 1990 saw a change of direction in the shape of "Closer To Home", a collection of reggae tunes taking Courtney back to his musical roots. Recorded in Jamaica with contemporary reggae producer Gussie Clarke and released on Island Record's Mango label, the compilation included the single "I'm Still Waiting" (featuring vocalist Carroll Thompson). The album was later re-mixed by Pine and Ingmar Kiang for release in America and the UK, reaching number 14 in the Billboard chart in America in the summer of 1992.

This success was followed by the release of "Within The Realms of Our Dreams", recorded in New York and featuring such US talents as Charnett Moffett, Jeff Watts and Kenny Kirkland. The release of the album combined with Courtney performing concerts with an All Star American band in the UK

and US, finally confirmed his international status.

"To The Eyes of Creation", his sixth and final album for Island Records combined a mixture of sounds, incorporating jazz, African, Indian and West Indian influence. Recorded in London, Pine arranged and produced as well as playing the tenor and soprano saxophones, alto flute and bass clarinet.

Signing to PolyGram in 1995, he returned to the studio to record his seventh album "Modern Day Jazz Stories" for Verve, with US jazz giants, Charnett Moffett (Bass), Geri Allen (Piano) and Ronnie Burrage (Drums) as well as DJ's Pogo and Sparki from the UK Hip-hop scene.

"Modern Day Jazz Stories" was released World-wide in January 1996 and received widespread critical acclaim - in the UK The Guardian reviewed it as 'Crossover album of the week' and the press were unanimous in it's praise for this new musical direction. The first single from the album "I've Known Rivers" featuring Cassandra Wilson made the National chart with mixes by 4 Hero and Roni Size and the follow-up "Don't Explain", also featuring Cassandra Wilson was voted "single of the week" by KISS FM and remained on the playlist for some six weeks.

In the US the album debuted at Number 28 in the Billboard Jazz chart, having sold some 40,000 copies and Courtney was seen supporting Cassandra Wilson on her tour of the States and Canada in May.

Modern Day Jazz Stories was also one the prestigious Mercury Music Prize - "1996 Albums Of The Year". He was also honoured with a MOBO (Music Of Black Origin) Award for "Best Jazz Act" for two years in a row (96 & 97).

Further success followed in 1997 with the follow-up release of "Underground", again to mass critical acclaim - not one bad review! The album featured talent from both sides of the Atlantic, with an all-star American band recording in New York, alongside our own DJ Pogo and Sparki, both of whom are at the forefront of British hip-hop and featured vocalist Jhelisa who can be heard on the albums two vocal tracks, "Save The Children" and "Tryin' Times".

March 1998 saw the release of a remix album "Another Story", with tracks taken from "Modern Day Jazz Stories" and "Underground", remixed by some of the most prominent drum & bass artists in the UK, perhaps most notably Roni Size who also picked up a Mercury award for his debut album.

Album number 8, "Back In The Day" was released in September 2000 with stunning vocal contributions from Beverley Knight, Lynden David Hall and Kele Le Roc. Again media attention was high and Courtney delivered - with widespread critical acclaim, more award nominations and radio support for the album and chosen singles. In addition to his recording career, Courtney is now a renowned presenter and broadcaster, having presented a number of programmes both for tv and radio and currently in pre-production for his 7th series of the acclaimed specialist jazz show - Courtney Pine's Jazz Crusade on BBC Radio 2.

In 2000 he travelled to South Africa to make a documentary for the BBC on the local musicians whose stories and music revealed a hidden chapter of apartheid. The programme was critically acclaimed and has since been nominated for two media awards in the category of Best Documentary.

He made his debut as musical director on the Windrush Gala Concert for the BBC and led his own band performing these arrangements with an all-star line-up at the televised ceremony in London and recently composed and performed the soundtrack to the BBC's definitive 2 part documentary on Nelson Mandela: 'Mandela - A Living Legend'.

He also composed, arranged and produced the soundtrack for a feature film. 'History Is Made At Night' for Stephen Wooley's (Mona Lisa, Absolute Beginners) Scala Productions and was nominated for an award for his score of 'It Was An Accident' for Pathe Films.

He was also the subject of the prestigious South Bank Show, with an hour long programme, documenting his career so far, shot in London, New York and Jamaica. Broadcast in November 2000 on LWT, the show was watched by a staggering 1.1 million people.

On the live circuit, Courtney is the ultimate road warrior with 20 years touring behind him. He has played across the World from the main stage at Glastonbury to the intimate Blue Note Tokyo, Japan and continues to tour Internationally with his award winning band.

His education work has included workshop tours not only in the UK but through the British Council as far afield as Africa, Asia and South America, major television series 'ReWind' for Channel 4 and he is currently producing a short animated educational film for children for release in the UK in the Spring of 2005.

In recognition of his career to date and his contribution to the black community and jazz music, Courtney was awarded an O.B.E in the 2000 New Year's Honours. He has also been honoured with a Gold Badge Award from the British Academy of Composers and Songwriters and a Fellowship to The Leeds College of Music. In December 2005 he was also made an honorary doctor of music by the University of Westminster in London.