



DAVID S. WARE Biography

David S. Ware was born in Plainfield, New Jersey, on November 7, 1949. His early love of music was nurtured by some dedicated teachers at the Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School. He began his saxophone career on alto, and then switched to baritone, before finally settling on the tenor as his musical voice. *"I had played in all the school bands, the whole way through junior high and high school: marching band, concert band, dance band and orchestras."* As a teen David was an ardent admirer of Sonny Rollins and struck up a relationship with the elder tenor player after seeing him countless times in the mid-'60s at the Five Spot and the Village Vanguard. The two practiced together intermittently in the '70s in Rollins' Brooklyn apartment; it was Rollins who taught young Ware the art of circular breathing in 1966.

By the late-'60s, David was attending music school in Boston and playing on the local scene with Stanton Davis, Cedric Lawson, Art Lande, and Michael Brecker, who later recalled: *"I remember how completely wowed I was when I heard David play .. we were about 17 or 18 .. here was a tremendously gifted artistic and creative presence – an inspiration to all of us."* While in Boston, David met drummer Marc Edwards and pianist Gene Ashton (Cooper-Moore), and together they formed a group called Apogee.

By 1973, David had moved to New York and became part of a circle of musicians, including Sam Rivers, David Murray, Butch Morris, Arthur Blythe, Don Pullen, Rashied Ali, Frank Lowe, who were creating and cultivating their own loft-and-studio performing circuit. He became a member of the Cecil Taylor Unit in a group that included Marc Edwards, trumpeter Raphe Malik, and the great alto saxophonist Jimmy Lyons. He performed with Taylor's legendary Carnegie Hall large ensemble. *"Ware's distinct sound and Holly Roller fervor were already evident when he was 25, performing in Cecil Taylor's unforgettable 1974 Carnegie Hall big band."* (Gary Giddins, Village Voice, August 1/7, 2001). Ware toured with the Cecil Taylor Unit throughout Europe, the U.S. and Canada, and recorded *Dark To Themselves* (Enja) with this group. Beaver Harris replaced Edwards on drums, which led to David joining Harris' 360 Degree Music Experience ensemble. It was also at this time that David joined master drummer Andrew Cyrille's group Maono.

By 1981, David had toured Europe with Maono, the Cecil Taylor Unit, and with his own group, which included Beaver Harris, Gene Ashton and bassist Brian Smith. He had recorded three albums with Maono, including *Metamusicians' Stomp* and *Special People* for the Italian label Black Saint. 1981 was also the year that *Birth of a Being* was released, David's first album under his own name, a trio date with Marc Edwards and Gene Ashton, for Hat Hut. In the early '80s, he collaborated with drummer Milford Graves. His trio toured Europe in 1985 with bassist Peter Kowald and either drummer Louis Moholo or Thurman Barker. Later, David served in trumpeter Ahmed Abdullah's Solomonic Quintet which recorded one self titled album on Silkheart.

In 1988 David formed a trio with Marc Edwards and William Parker and recorded *Passage To Music* for Silkheart. In 1989, he put out the word that he was looking for a pianist. William Parker and Reggie Workman both recommended Matthew Shipp: "*David got in touch with me and we started playing together. I was a big fan of Ware's work. Playing with Ware is like being at home. My style of piano really fits his compositions. He gives me freedom to be me. He doesn't put any restrictions on me.*"

In 1989, the David S. Ware Quartet was born. From that time to 2007 the only personnel changes have been the drummers: Whit Dickey replaced Marc Edwards in 1992, followed by Susie Ibarra in 1996, and finally Guillermo E. Brown in 1999. "*I'm seeing more and more the value of keeping a group together,*" says Ware. "*Rather than freelance with different bands, you make the group an institution. Looking at jazz over the decades, I feel this is how the music grows the most. Musicians get a chance to be thorough, to know the material and be involved instead of skimming over the surface.*" Rather than compromise his musical vision, Ware chose to be patient. "*I stayed out of the scene until I was ready to do my thing.*" He also refused to do sideman gigs. "*Working with other musicians doesn't work for me. Philosophically, I find it difficult to be under someone else's umbrella.*"

The '90s saw the full-on actualization of this group and the recognition of David S. Ware as a true saxophone colossus. A series of ground-breaking albums by the David S. Ware Quartet were released in rapid succession: *Great Bliss Vols. 1 & 2* on Silkheart; *Flight of i*, *Third Ear Recitation*, *Earthquation*, and *Godspelized* on the Japanese label DIW; finally, *Cryptology*, *DAO*, and *Wisdom of Uncertainty* on the American labels, Homestead and AUM Fidelity. One of the most highly acclaimed jazz groups of the decade.

In 1997, David was signed to the Columbia Jazz label by Branford Marsalis. "*Branford caught my show (Vienne -France 1995) and he really dug what he heard. He was sincerely moved by the music, which he hadn't heard before. He really flipped.*" Two years later, when Branford was named the new creative consultant of Columbia Jazz, he made David S. Ware his first signing. David again, "*Musicians worry that once they get a deal with a major label they'll have to water down their music. But Branford said 'don't change a thing, just keep playing like yourself.'*"

The first album for Columbia, *Go See The World*, was released in 1998, and it was as unrelentingly powerful as any DSWQ record that had come before, meeting with great critical acclaim. The second album for Columbia, *Surrendered* was recorded in October 1999 and released in May 2000. It featured interpolations of Charles Lloyd's "Sweet Georgia Bright" and Beaver Harris' "African Drums," as well as four beautiful new compositions by David S. Ware. After making the two albums for Columbia, and in the wake of the Columbia Jazz department's dissolution, ways were parted in December 2000. Wasting no time, AUM Fidelity brought David and the Quartet into the studio in February of 2001. These sessions feature Matthew Shipp on synthesizer for the first time. The epic *Corridors & Parallels* album was the result, released in September 2001.

Shortly thereafter, the SFJazz organization commissioned David to prepare a new arrangement of Sonny Rollins' "Freedom Suite" to perform at their 2002 Spring Season. A studio recording of this was then made for AUM Fidelity in July and released in October 2002. "*This is a perfect opportunity to show the link between me and Sonny,*" explained Ware, "*an opportune time to show how one generation is built upon another and how the relationships work in the whole stream of music that's called jazz.*"

David carries forth the influences of the greatest that have shaped the art of jazz, with an original sound and concept that has added to the further development of this art form. His formidable artistic skills go beyond being an impeccable saxophonist and improviser. Matthew Shipp had expressed a strong desire to produce a record for the label ThirstyEar/The Blue Series that would showcase David's talent as a composer. This came to fruition with the recording of *Threads* in 2003. Daniel Bernard Roumain on violin and Mat Maneri on viola joined the quartet, with Matthew Shipp playing the synthesizer using a "strings" setting on most of the pieces. The resulting music, built on delicate, cinematic rhythms and melodic fragments, reveals a classical sensibility, and sounds like a new form of jazz chamber music. On some tracks, Ware's sax is nowhere to be heard; his artistry is fully presented through his distinct compositional approach. David explains. *"I'm interested in using different techniques to get to a place of transcendence. The thing that makes music great is that it's an infinite thing, an endless thing. Personally, I'm interested in going down more than one path, as far as the form, the melody are concerned. I don't want to restrict myself as to what area or style of music I can deal with."*

After more than 15 years of touring and playing with his quartet across Europe and in the USA, the David S Ware Quartet had not yet released a live recording. As if making up for lost time, *Live in the World*, released in 2005, was a stunning three-disc offering taken from three different concerts, and representing different phases and selections of material. His long-time sidemen, pianist Matthew Shipp and bassist William Parker, are constant throughout, with the drummer's chair changing from disc to disc. One of the three concerts, recorded in Milano, Italy in 2003 with current drummer Guillermo E. Brown, features the Quartet's renewed approach to "The Freedom Suite."

"We did "Freedom Suite" a number of times throughout Europe," Ware says. *"On this particular concert, we decided that we'd been doing it a certain way, so let's try to open it up even more and break up the form a little bit. That's exactly what happened in that concert, we broke up the form and built various parts of it differently that we had. During the concert, I knew that we touched on the transcendental several times as we played it. Sometimes you don't realize what you're touching upon, but this is one of those rare occasions ..The music transcended, it went beyond itself, it went beyond playing music and it touched upon the spiritual plane. This is one of the ultimate things in musical experience, to touch upon that universal, that cosmic reality, that makes us all related. That makes us, all human beings on this planet, truly brothers and sisters."*

In September of 2005, on the occasion of Sonny Rollins' induction into the Nesuhi Ertegun Jazz Hall of Fame presented by Jazz at Lincoln Center, Mr. Rollins invited David and the Quartet to perform a section of "Freedom Suite" as part of the ceremony.

By the Spring of 2006, David had a new set of compositions prepared specifically for the Quartet, and it was decided to record these pieces live as well. The concert was the main headlining event at Vision Festival XI (NYC) in June. The resulting album, *Renunciation*, was released by AUM Fidelity in April 2007.

In July 2007, his new group concept, featuring guitarist Joe Morris, made its debut at the Iridium Jazz Club in NYC. They made a European tour in November 2007, and continued working toward a recording which took place in May of 2008. The resulting album, *Shakti*, has been released on AUM Fidelity in January 2009.