

Duke Heitger, one of the best classic jazz trumpet players in the world today is known for his warm sound, virtuosity, and unwavering musicality. While renowned on the international scene, performing and recording around the world, he reigns as one of the longest tenured bandleaders in New Orleans appearing regularly on the Steamboat Natchez.

At an early age Duke was influenced by legends such as Louis Armstrong, Jelly Roll Morton, Fats Waller, Duke Ellington, Bobby Hackett, and Bix Beiderbecke, sounds that he heard daily from his father's records. Originally from Toledo, Ohio, Duke carries on a family tradition in the music business. He often played with his father's Cakewalkin' Jass Band; a Toledo institution that performed weekly for more than three decades at world famous Tony Packo's restaurant. Duke started playing professionally at age twelve and was touring and playing jazz festivals with his father's band around the country while still in his teens.

Michael Steinman (Jazz Lives, NYC) says "Duke Heitger-playing or singing-makes special music, lyrical and hot." Curt Beard (Jazz Soundings, Seattle) stated "A rare combination of musical characteristics. He plays hot...he plays sweet...he plays the blues as though there is a touch of pathos dripping from every note...Duke swings. Nothing else needs to be said."

Since arriving in New Orleans in 1991, Heitger has received international exposure leading to work with notable musicians such as Dick Hyman, Scott Hamilton, Bucky Pizzarelli, Dan Barrett, Engelbert Wrobel, and Topsy Chapman, just to name a few. He has made numerous guest appearances on syndicated radio programs including Garrison Keillor's "A Prairie Home Companion" with Butch Thompson, Judy Carmichael's "Jazz Inspired," and "Live from the Riverwalk" with Jim Cullum's Jazz Band.

Heitger has performed at the Hollywood Bowl, been featured at New York's 92nd St. Y, Lincoln Center's "Midsummer's Night Swing" series, and Orchestra Hall in Minneapolis, MN. Internationally, he has toured extensively either as a bandleader or as a guest soloist with regular appearances at festivals including the Edinburgh Jazz Festival, the Ascona Jazz Festival, and the Caesarea Jazz Festival in Israel as a member of the Statesmen of Jazz which also included Warren Vache, John Allred, Howard Alden and Ken Peplowski.

While not on the road, Heitger maintains a busy schedule in New Orleans. He has been leading his own Steamboat Stompers aboard the Steamboat Natchez daily since 1998, giving him one of the longest residencies in the history of music on the Mississippi River system. He can also be heard regularly at the Palm Court Jazz Café where he replaced the legendary Percy Humphrey on Thursday nights in the early 1990's.

As a sideman Heitger has recorded widely. While well known among jazz enthusiasts through those many recordings, he also made his mark on popular music with his trumpet work on the Squirrel Nut Zippers million selling disc "Hot," earning him both gold and platinum records. His trumpet has also been featured in film and tv including "Double Jeopardy," "Treme," and "Six Feet Under."

Heitger has recorded seven compact discs under his own name. The first, featuring his Steamboat Stompers, was recorded for GHB Records in 1998 and has sold more than 20,000 copies, a GHB top seller; the second, a critically acclaimed Fantasy Records release "Rhythm is our Business," features his Swing Band, and can still be heard regularly on national digital radio's "Swing and Swingers" station; the Stomp Off release "Prince of Wails" finds Heitger leading a quartet with Evan Christopher; the 2003 recording "Krazy Kapers" is on Jazzology, as well as "What is This Thing Called Love," which was a post

Hurricane Katrina tribute to New Orleans. Heitger's debut on Arbors records, a collaboration with German piano maestro Bernd Lhotzky titled "Doing the Voom Voom" received rave reviews internationally. And finally, by popular demand, he released Vol. 2 of "Duke Heitger's Steamboat Stompers" in 2014. Heitger is also a founding member of both the Yerba Buena Stompers and the International Hot Jazz Quartet. These two groups are highly regarded in the jazz world and have 17 recordings between them. Additional major record label appearances include Putumayo, Basin St. Records with "John Cleary and the Absolute Monster Gentlemen" and with Maria Maldaur, her 2018 release on The Last Music Company.

In March of 2000, Singapore's Lindy Hop Ensemble premiered "New Heights," a dance item performed to the music of Duke Heitger. Other notable acknowledgements include being inducted into Toledo Central Catholic High School's music Hall of Fame, mentions in Scott Yanow's book "Trumpet Kings," Tom Jacobson's book "Traditional New Orleans Jazz, Conversations With the Men Who Make the Music," and feature articles in jazz publications like "The Mississippi Rag," "Offbeat," Gerard Bielderman's "Swingin' Americans" Discography and Germany's "Jazz Podium." Heitger was also awarded New Orleans Magazine's 2004 Jazz All-Star for traditional jazz.

Duke Heitger has taught clinics at Stanford University, University of Colorado (Denver), and the Sacramento Jazz Camp. When not playing, he managed to squeeze in a Bachelor's Degree in Geology from the University of Toledo and a Master's Degree in Geology from the University of New Orleans.

Of all of Duke's past experiences and accomplishments, he is most proud of his role as father to Alicia and Briana Heitger, and as "Daddy" to their brother Cosmin Seidl.

Performed with and influenced by the following luminaries. (Partial list)

Jay McShann, Franz Jackson, Arvell Shaw, Bucky Pizzarelli, Joe Muranyi, Danny Barker, Milt Hinton, Dick Hyman, Al Grey, Freddy Cole, Bob Wilber, Joe Wilder, Doc Cheatham, John Bunch, George Masso, Houston Persson, Johnny Varro, Butch Miles, Roy Williams, Jake Hannah, Jerry Jerome, Leonard Gaskin, Marty Gros, Kenny Davern, Johnny Blowers, Scott Hamilton, Harry Allen, Becky Kilgore, Tom Baker, Dan Barrett, Bob Havens, Butch Thompson, Warren and Allen Vache, Howard Alden, Ken Peplowski, Rossano Sportiello, Topsy Chapman, Catherine Russell, Lillian Boutte, Mark Shane, Scott Robinson, Jon-Erik Kellso, Randy Reinhart, John Allred, Joe Ascione, Alan Barnes, Eiji Hanaoka, Paolo Alderighi, John Gill, Banu Gibson, Steve Pistorius and Jason Marsalis to name a few.