



# Pete Petersen

S A X O P H O N I S T

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**Pete Petersen** is a jazz saxophonist from the Pacific Northwest. He regularly performs at venues across the western United States and is a favorite of swing, jazz and blues enthusiasts around the region.

## Early life:

Pete Petersen was born in Portland, Oregon. He developed a strong attachment to the Pacific Northwest while living in Portland as a young child, and also spent several years as a teenager in Boise, Idaho. It was in Boise where he first heard jazz pianist Gene Harris, playing in a local nightclub. Harris's playing would be a major influence on Pete's sound in later years, though he didn't know it at the time. "I was way too young to get into the bar Gene was playing in at the time, so my parents would sit me around the corner in the restaurant section where I'd listen from around the partition," says Petersen. "I don't think Gene ever saw me or knew I was there at the time, but I was hooked on jazz from that moment on, and I knew I wanted to do more than just listen to jazz, I wanted to play it, to be part of it, to live it."

## Education:

Pete earned a Bachelor of Music degree in Jazz Studies from the University of Denver, at the same time honing his jazz chops by sitting in with local greats like Ron Miles, Stefan Karlsson, Bruno Carr, Keith Oxman, and others. He also played 4<sup>th</sup> tenor sax in the area's top working big band, the *Denver Jazz Orchestra*, where he was able to hang out with and learn from old-school greats like Homer Brown. "Homer came out of the direct lineage of Lester Young: he was a protégé of Lester's; they used to call him 'Little Pres' because he sounded so much like him. Being able to sit next to guys like that in the band and learn from them was like getting as close to the source as possible."

Pete also studied from Marvin Blackman, another ex-New York bebopper who had spent time playing with Thelonius Monk and Rashied Ali back in the early days of the avant-garde movement, and from Art Bouton, a top-call studio and show musician in

the area. During this time he also was gaining professional experience as a member of a local alternative-funk band, Lord Groovy and the Psychedelic Zombiez. That turned out to be a very important opportunity – during his 2-year stint with the band, they were the opening act for several well-known touring acts including *Primus*, *Widespread Panic*, *Spin Doctors*, *Mr Bungle*, and the *Wallflowers*.

### **Early Professional Career:**

In 1994, Pete took a year-long gig with the band Page IV in Telluride Colorado. During this time he was featured on NPR's JazzSet playing behind vocalist Kevin Mahogany and trumpeter Jack Walrath. "At the time, that was the biggest thing I'd ever done," says Pete. "I was nervous, and I was holding back, playing tentative and scared. Kevin pulled me aside after the rehearsal and asked me 'What's wrong?' whereupon I proceeded to unload on him all of the nervous thoughts and fears that were going through my head. He smiled and told me 'You know those players you admire, those musicians you idolize, well they're just cats like you and me, they've just been doing it for a little longer is all.' That made all the difference in the world – I stopped being nervous and started playing."

### **Back to the Northwest:**

Since relocating to Portland, Pete has worked his way up the ranks of Portland's jazz scene. He was a member of a long-running quintet with jazz veterans Eddie Wied, Frank de la Rosa, and Keith Werner. He also was a longtime member of the venerable *Border Patrol Big Band* as well as the prolific *Art Abrams Swing Machine Big Band*. During this time he also was a member of several other working bands around the area in various style genres, most notably the Tower of Power tribute band *Soul Vaccination*. In 2003 he arranged music for and recorded on a CD project with Howard Crosby, nephew of the legendary crooner Bing Crosby. But his most lucrative and longest-running opportunity came when he joined *Lily Wilde's Jumpin Jubilee Orchestra* in 1998. Lily's ensemble rode the top of the wave of popularity generated by the resurgence in Swing Dancing in the late 90's, earning acclaim from swingers nationwide and garnering awards and acclaim from DJ's on the newest media, internet radio. Pete was a core member of that organization until 2003, when he left to focus his energy on developing his own jazz and swing project, the Lester Young-inspired *Porkpie*. That band has gone through several incarnations and evolutions to its present-day form and is currently known as *The Porkpie Septet*.

### **Currently:**

As a sideman, Pete Petersen is currently one of a list of the most in-demand players in Portland, performing regularly with top groups around the region and working in horn sections for nationally touring groups of all styles, ranging from the *Jimmy Dorsey Orchestra* to *Lynyrd Skynyrd*. He is currently a full-time member of horn sections with The Patrick Lamb Band, and the Ellen Whyte Band. He also has done long-term engagements with regional notables including Bay Area boogie-woogie pianoman Mitch Woods, and nationally acclaimed swing pianist Solomon Douglas. As a bandleader his septet has hit the national stage, performing at jazz and swing festivals

in Chicago, Denver, Seattle, and beyond. His newest CD, "Keep Your Hat On" was released internationally on Pony Boy Records in January of 2008.

### **Press Reviews:**

"Petersen's an accomplished player. He has a big, throaty tone and a blowzy, swashbuckling style with the conversational touch of old-time sax players." --- *Paul de Barros, Seattle Times*

"Get ready for some swinging, down the center of the groove, well-paced, scintillating straight ahead jazz and bop from a Portland cat who writes and plays in the best of the tradition. ...Every [tune] rings out with the joy of playing the real deal."  
--- *George Fendel, Jazz Society of Oregon writer/critic at large*

"This group, their arrangements, and musical choices are a little big band at its best."  
--- *Mary Burlingame-producer/host, HomeGrown Live KMHD 89.1 The Jazz Station*

"[The Porkpie Septet] plays spirited, with enthusiasm and like they're having fun with it. ... Their album is a must have in my collection."  
- *Tim "Java Man" Taylor KMHD 89.1 FM the Jazz Station*

"The highlight of my weekend! I walked into that place and instantly felt at home. My grandparents were both professional musicians, and I grew up singing and playing big band music. I can't wait to see [the Porkpie Septet] play again."  
--- *Shel "Charlie Girl" Bailey, Marketing/Promotion director, 97.1 Charlie FM*

### **Audience Reviews submitted by email:**

"Pete and Band...I love your CD!! I have listened to it many times and played it for friends who were amazed this great music was live here in town for our dancing pleasure! Great selection of songs, incredible musicianship. I'm looking forward to many more from you. cheers!"  
--- *Linda, Portland, OR*

"...the best performance of swing music I've heard in this town in a long time."  
--- *Dan, Portland OR*

No doubt - after last night they're EASILY my favorite band in the northwest. The amount of energy they put into that room was incredible. I've just never heard a band that good playing so many classic swing tunes..  
--- *Kevin, Eugene, OR*

Great fantastic stupendous show. Please please tell the rest of the guys how much we enjoyed the music. In case you couldn't tell, we REALLY enjoyed the music. REALLY!!!  
--- *Amy, Seattle, WA*

### Selected Discography:

- **Pete Petersen Quartet:** *Silver Lining* (1997 Four Flavors Music)
- **Stan Bock:** *Of Fathers and Sons* (1998 Bockbone)
- **Lily Wilde:** *Insect Ball* (2000 Lil Tom Tom)
- **Howard Crosby:** *Pennies From Heaven* (2002 PanJanDrum)
- **Porkpie:** *Hats Off* (2004 Four Flavors Music)
- **Donny Osborne:** *Live at Tony Starlight's* (2007 Poltun Entertainment)
- **Pete Petersen & the Porkpie Septet:** *Keep Your Hat On* (2008 Pony Boy Records PB50157-2)
- **Ellen Whyte:** *Four Way Stop* (upcoming 2008 release date TBA)
- **Solomon Douglas** (upcoming 2008 release date TBA)

### Career Highlights:

- 20+ years as a professional musician
- Bachelor of Music degree from **University of Denver** Lamont School of Music
- Finalist in **Hennessey™ Best of Colorado Jazz Search** in 2 consecutive years, 1993-1994
- Featured on NPR JazzSet backing **Kevin Mahogany** at Telluride Jazz Celebration
- 2 years with **Soul Vaccination** (1996-1998)
- 5 years with the **Lily Wilde** Jumpin Jubilee Orchestra (1998-2003)
- 2 years with the **Art Abrams Swing Machine** (1996-1998)
- 2 years with **Border Patrol Big Band** (1995-1997)
- 6 years with **Keith Werner Swing Revue Big Band** (1997-2003)
- 3 years with **Johnny Martin** (1997-2000)
- Toured briefly with bluesman **Mitch Woods & his Rocket 88's** (various NW dates, 1999-2002)
- Arranged and orchestrated for & recorded with **Howard Crosby**, the nephew of legendary crooner Bing Crosby (2003)
- 2-week boat tour with **the Jimmy Dorsey Orchestra** (2004)
- Played in horn section for **Lynyrd Skynyrd**, December '05
- Toured with pianist/bandleader **Solomon Douglas** (ongoing)
- Worked as a sub on-call for various Portland-area bands including **Pepe & the Bottle Blondes, Carlton Jackson/Dave Mills Big Band, Body & Soul, Mel Brown Septet, Thara Memory Superband**, others (ongoing)
- 2 years as a member of the **Patrick Lamb** Band (2006 – ongoing)
- 2 years as a member of the **Ellen Whyte Band** (2006-ongoing)
- Recorded with several local jazz and blues musicians, including **Lily Wilde, Stan Bock, Ellen Whyte**, others
- 2 self-released CD's (1997 and 2004)
- 1 CD released nationally on **Pony Boy Records** (2008)
- Performed at major festivals including: **Telluride Jazz Celebration (CO), Cathedral Park Jazz Festival (OR), Portland Jazz Festival (OR), Gene Harris Jazz Festival (ID), Bumbershoot (WA), Denver Lindy Exchange (CO), Windy City Lindy Exchange (IL)**

## Interview in a Box: quotable answers to common interview questions

**On Jazz:** “I’ve always believed that music is music, and jazz music doubly so. The word ‘jazz’ can mean so many different things to so many different people, but essentially it boils down to a specific dialect within the language of music. See, Music is a conversation between people, using notes and rhythms instead of words. As such, it’s a language unto itself. Swing, Bop, Funk, Blues – those are all just various dialects in the musical language. I love the fact that musicians of all flavors can meet each other for the first time and have a conversation – is that jazz? You bet. One thing people sometimes forget, though, is that there’s another element: the audience. They’re taking part in the conversation just as much as the people up on stage are; they’re listening, dancing, enjoying and participating in the music just as sure as the people up on stage performing it. It’s easy to overlook, but it’s vitally important to have that connection between musician and audience, otherwise it’s just self-gratification.”

**On ‘Jazz Purists’:** “It’s important to keep the perspective that the original jazz musicians were the rock stars of their day. They didn’t intend for their music to be a teaching tool or a museum piece, they intended it to be enjoyed by real people. They intended it to entertain audiences, first and foremost. They didn’t have a method book or a Jazz-Studies curriculum from a music school to grow up with, that stuff hadn’t been developed yet. They just played, they communicated, they made music, and it was good.”

**On Gene Harris:** “Gene was one of my favorite jazz pianists. One of the things that made him great was his ability to connect with audiences and make them feel good. One of the most important things a musician can do is to connect with listeners and make them FEEL instead of just HEAR the music – otherwise it’s just notes. Gene was a master at this; no one ever left a Gene Harris concert feeling worse than when they came in. I got to talk to Gene in person a few years before he passed, and I had a chance to tell him what an influence he’d been on me over the years; he, his wife Janie, and I had a great conversation about all sorts of things. I’ve kept in touch with Janie over the years, she’s been very supportive and a positive influence on me as well.”

**On Jazz Education:** “There are a lot of good music teachers doing a lot of good things; I like to hope that they’re teaching kids to be *musicians* no matter what style they choose to focus on. I remember one of my professors in college told me that my generation was among the first to experience ‘formal jazz education’ at the college level. Back in his day, he said, the music schools were all about classical training, if students wanted to play jazz they had to go out and find it after hours. That’s because when he was coming up, jazz was essentially the pop music of its time, and thus not something that music schools felt was worthy of being part of their curriculum. It was extremely rare for any college to have a Jazz Studies degree program back then; now every school has one, and many have pop music and commercial music programs as well. As the music programs evolve to embrace and legitimize new styles, we’ve got

to be careful to make sure students are learning more than just techniques – part of every jazz curriculum should include the how-to's of scales, chords, rhythms, etc., but in addition students should learn essential musical elements like using music as a communication tool to connect and interact with the audience. Otherwise, schools will just crank out scores of identical-sounding players who all have monster chops and huge vocabularies but not much to say. Fortunately, the jazz education world has a lot of good people who are doing great things to teach the next generation of players to be musicians in every sense of the word.”

***On living in Portland:*** “I love the Northwest. Portland and Seattle both have really strong music scenes; there are so many world-class musicians living here. If nothing else, it’s been an incredible learning experience to be part of this scene. Nowadays with the current technology that’s at our disposal, it’s becoming more and more possible for someone to live anywhere and promote their music to audiences everywhere else, thus the notion of having to live in New York or Los Angeles or Nashville in order to make it in the music business is starting to become less and less important – but it’s still very important to be part of a *scene* where one can interact with fellow musicians at that high level, and we definitely have that here in the Northwest.”

***On touring:*** “Nowadays, unless you’re on the level of a Wynton Marsalis or a Harry Connick, Jr., it’s not economically feasible for jazz artists to go on tour with their entire band. On the other hand, for an individual, it’s cheaper than it’s ever been before to fly anywhere in the country using discount airfares. Put those two facts together and you get a recipe for a business model where it’s entirely possible to play jazz in various cities all over the country for only slightly more than it costs to stay local. I can fly somewhere for a weekend with my book of music, and hire local musicians to fill out the band in whatever city I’m in at the time, then I fly home again when the weekend’s over. It’s great for the venues, since they get to book an ‘out-of-town’ artist at only a slightly higher cost to them than they would have to pay for a local band; it supports local musicians in various cities, and it’s great for me because I get to perform all over the place without actually having to live on the road.”

***On the Music Industry:*** “We’re in a real transitional period right now. People aren’t buying physical products like CD’s as much as they used to, opting in favor for downloading music through iTunes and other pay services, and often sharing it illegally instead of paying for it at all. This has both good and bad effects for the business overall; The big record companies are terrified, they don’t know quite what to do, and until they figure it out it’s anybody’s game. Indie labels and individuals have found it easier thus far to capitalize on the new technology as a way to get the music out there to wider audiences, but it remains to be seen whether or not the industry overall will eventually turn it into the same kind of huge money-making machine that the major record labels have enjoyed for the past several decades. Meanwhile, it’s gotten so easy to make a good quality recording, so easy to self-release a studio-quality project and put it out there worldwide over the internet, that’s definitely changed the rules of the game. But there’s also still a lot to be said for

traditional distribution channels, still some inherent value in liner notes and packaging that comes with a well-produced album, and there are still plenty of fans who appreciate these things enough to pay money for a real, physical CD. This is especially true in the jazz idiom, where a majority of the fan base are audiophiles, arts patrons, and collectors, people who prefer quality over quantity. So where every other stylistic genre has fluctuated up and down with changing personal tastes, jazz has remained a steady solid percentage of record sales since the 60's."

**On the band called Porkpie, the hat and all that:** "I started the band as a Lester Young tribute band. Lester always wore his porkpie hat, he was known for it. It seemed natural at the time to name the band after Lester's hat. But I was wearing a porkpie hat before I started this band; I got one while I was with Lily's band and started wearing it to 'look the part' - then once I showed up to a gig without it and everyone said things like 'where's your hat?', 'I didn't recognize you without the hat', things like that. So I kept wearing it. Plus it keeps this Oregon rain off of my head."

**On other musicians/band chemistry/etc:** "I really love working with all of the musicians I'm surrounded by lately, in all the bands I play in. When I formed my band, I called all of the guys who are my favorite players to work with from all the other bands I'd been in contact with recently, and those are the guys who make up this band. When we're on stage it's one big love-fest; everybody really genuinely likes each other both on and off-stage. That's important to me, and I think the audience picks up on that too."

**On gear:** "For anyone who's asking, I use a Selmer Mark VI tenor sax, a Selmer Mark VI alto sax, a Buescher 400 Bari sax and a Hermes soprano sax. My clarinets are a Selmer Series 9 and a Buffet R13, and a Yamaha bass clarinet. I play a Gemeinhardt open-hole flute. Mouthpieces are: Otto Link hard rubber 7\* (alto), Jody Jazz HR and Meyer 7J metal (tenor), Otto Link metal 7\* (bari), Selmer metal E (soprano), LeBlanc crystal and Vandoren B45 (clarinets). My wireless microphone rig is made by AUDIX. But let me say something about my thoughts on gear: Using good quality gear will help bring out the sound that's inside the player - just like any trade, you don't want tools that are low quality or constantly breaking, if you're a carpenter for a living, you want to use the best hammer money can buy, but that hammer isn't going to make any difference unless you have the skill to hit a nail with it. Instruments are the same way. Any player who thinks that the right gear will instantly make them play better needs to go back into the practice room and work on scales and tone studies."

**On clams:** "The band has this little inside joke involving a can of clams. I'm not sure where it started, but we've got a can of clams that makes its way around the stage during the course of a gig. As to what that's about, come up and ask me at a gig sometime."

**Need more?** Pete Petersen is available for interviews in person or over the phone. Please call 503-313-9398 to arrange a meeting time.