

Grace Kelly Full Bio

"...broad tone and tenacious flow on the alto saxophone, clearly in possession of virtuoso talents... impressive singing voice, flitting among a range of styles." - **NY Times** (July 2018)

Saxophonist, singer, composer, producer, and educator Grace Kelly defies genres. She plays with the heart and passion of an old soul yet with the genre-bending zest and energy of a 26 year old. [Grace Kelly's](#) 10th CD *Trying To Figure It Out*, was voted #2 *Jazz Album of The Year* in 2016 Downbeat Magazine Readers Poll.

Kelly is about to release her 12th Album as a leader, *GO TIME: Brooklyn 2*, this fall. "I'm extremely excited to release *GO TIME: Brooklyn 2*, which features the latter half of the *GO TIME: Brooklyn* live show inside the Systems 2 recording studio. Fans on our tour and online loved the dynamism and audio quality of the music in the first CD, plus the ability to watch the professionally filmed video footage online whenever they want," Kelly says. "This second album keeps those same core elements while pushing the envelope musically to explore the sonic world where jazz meets electronic, contemporary, and pop influences."

"*Grace Kelly has an electric charisma on-stage that instantly ignites the room,*" says, band leader Jon Batiste. In Dec 2015 Jon Batiste snagged Grace as a regular on The Late Show with Stephen Colbert's band, Stay Human, playing multiple reeds and singing. "*She is one of the most kind - hearted, easy - going people I've had the pleasure of working with.*" adds Batiste. In June 2016, Grace was also thrilled to join a dynamic 10 - piece house band for NBC's new variety show "Maya & Marty," starring Maya Rudolph and Martin Short and produced by Lorne Michaels of SNL.

Kelly wrote her first song at 7 years old, recorded her first CD at 12, orchestrated and performed her original composition with the Boston Pops Orchestra at 14, and performed at Kennedy Center as part of President Obama's Inauguration celebration at 16. As a bandleader Grace has performed over 800 concerts in over 30 countries in notable venues as the Hollywood Bowl, Kennedy Center, Carnegie Hall, Symphony Hall and festivals such as Montreal, Newport, and Montreux. Clubs in NYC, such as Blue Note, Birdland, and Dizzy's. Grace has performed and/or recorded with Harry Connick Jr, Wynton Marsalis, Dave Brubeck, Toots Thielemans, Steve Martin, Tina Fey, Martin Short, Emma Stone, Miley Cyrus, Lin Manuel Miranda, Questlove, Esperanza Spalding, Lee Konitz, Phil Woods, Ron Carter, David Sanborn, Marcus Miller, Dianne Reeves,

Dee Dee Bridgewater, Huey Lewis, Valerie Simpson, Paul Shaffer, James Cotton, George Clinton, and Gloria Estefan to name a few.

Kelly, a multiple award winner as an alto sax player, winner of the 64th Annual 2016 Downbeat Magazine Critics Poll as “Rising Star Alto Saxophone”, “Jazz Artist of the Year” 2016 Boston Music Awards, “Alto Saxophonist of the Year” by NYC Jazz Fans Decision 2016, has also drawn recognition as a singer and songwriter, having placed second in the 2017 International Songwriting Competition (Adult Contemporary category). She has been featured on Amazon’s Emmy-nominated TV show “Bosch”, CNN.com, Glamour Magazine’s Top Ten College Women 2011, Forbes, Billboard, Huffington Post, and many appearances on NPR. Jazz and mainstream media including NY times, L.A. Times, JazzTimes, and All About Jazz have raved about her music. Grace has won multiple ASCAP Composer Awards, Boston Music Awards, and International Songwriting Awards and many more.

Kelly also produced, emceed, and performed in a major All-Star concert at Berklee Performance Center recently, as she raised \$70,000 to established an endowment for the Fred Taylor Endowed Scholarship Fund at and in partnership with Berklee College of Music. www.fredtaylorscholarshipfund.org

As Grace Kelly defiantly reminds us on The Other One, a standout number from her 10th Album

Trying To Figure It Out, she’s not looking to be like anyone else. “Got my own thing,” she sings over the song’s urban, trance - like groove. Although the singer and saxophone player has been acclaimed by critics and audiences alike as a jazz musician, the track’s exhilarating chorus, haunting keyboard hook and brittle electro edge show an artist interested only in playing what she loves; labels be damned.

Already known for defying genres with her award - winning music, Kelly is picking up steam by rewriting the rules of the performance experience. Her recent project, GO TiME: Brooklyn, brought a fully live, choreographed, electrifying show to the Systems 2 recording studio in New York City in front of a spellbound in - person audience and to thousands more globally over a Facebook Live broadcast.

The gutsy and dynamic re-imagining of music creation brought together Kelly’s phenomenal live audience chemistry with the intimacy and mystery of the recording studio and the community - igniting technology of Facebook Live. Fans have responded in droves, with over 100,000 views on the video and thousands of positive comments and shares. “This idea was created so I could connect with fans all around the globe and have them feel the magic of presenting new music and experience it more viscerally through their

screens,” Kelly said. “I want them to feel as if they’re there for the conception and making of it.”

Featured by *Vanity Fair* as a millennial shaking up the jazz world, Kelly’s state-of-the-art brand of electro jazz-pop and inventive digital content are pushing her to the forefront of the fusion scene, alongside names like Snarky Puppy, Jacob Collier, Cory Henry, Robert Glasper, Jon Batiste, and Too Many Zooz. In efforts to bring jazz to a younger audience as well as to bridge music, cinematography, and her joyful personality via [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and her [Youtube](#) channel, the snackable “PopUp” video series was created further establishing her brand as an artistic veteran with a digital native’s flair for innovation. “I have had so much fun doing those, I wanted to find other ways to present my music so it feels like an experiential thing for everybody,” Kelly said. So far, she has released more than 70 “PopUp” videos with over 2 million views that feature soulful sax solos with exotic locals, including locations as unexpected as a gondola in Venice, in the water in Labadee, Haiti, and in New York’s Times Square, the latter in a spirited duet with Leo P.

For Kelly, evolution is part of the jazz artist’s credo.

"I'm a very strong believer that jazz is about improvisation and about creating and spontaneity," Kelly once said in an interview. "That's what really drew me to it, but I think there's plenty of music that can fuse elements of jazz with its own type of sound whether it's rock or pop. I'm not into 'No, this isn't jazz.' I like everything that's good and I encourage people to think that way."

Kelly says she has been well served by applying those same jazz concepts to the personal demands of everyday life. “I really take the concept of improvisation and spontaneity in the music, and I live it,” she said. That personal readiness for anything accounts, in part, for the open-spirited nature of her art. “I try to say yes as much as possible,” Kelly says. “If you have a closed idea of what you want in your head, and it’s only going to go this way from A to B to C, you miss a lot of other things that could be popping up. And because you have such a small mind frame, you won’t be able to see those great opportunities.”

Raised in a household that exposed her to many forms of music, Grace was drawn to jazz by melodic players like Stan Getz and Paul Desmond. Kelly also found in the music a freedom to express herself that she had not found in her classical piano lessons. Née Grace Chung in Wellesley, Mass., in 1992, Kelly started taking clarinet lessons in Grade 4 but quickly switched to alto sax at the age of 10. She was soon transcribing Charlie Parker and Miles Davis pieces.

Kelly recorded her first album, *Dreaming*, when she was 12. Even on that debut release, the music pointed to her future eclecticism by mixing the pure pop of *On My Way Home* with selections like the Beatles' *Can't Buy Me Love*, a medley of *Blue Skies* and *In Walked Bud* and the self-composed odd-meter jazz instrumental *G-Bop*.

"My way has always been a mix of music I've listened to and loved, including jazz, pop and blues," Kelly says. "Even when I made that first album, I was a total Broadway kid, so some of that even creeps in."

Times Too (2005) was an ambitious double disc that mostly paid homage to jazz standards on its first half and explored classic Beatles and Stevie Wonder, along with some innocent and catchy originals, on its second. *Every Road I Walked* (2006) followed, further refining Kelly's ability to blend genres. Self-penned tracks like *Filosophical Flying Fish*, with its second-line groove, and the easily accessible charmer *Finish Line* sounded quite at home with a sweet and sensitive reading of *Somewhere Over the Rainbow*, a winning excursion into bossanova with *Samba de Verao* and a lightly funky *Summertime*.

Kelly, 14 at the time of the album's release, received the first of her five (5) ASCAP Foundation Jazz Composers Awards for the title track and was invited to perform with the Boston Pops. For the occasion, she wrote her first full orchestral arrangement, adapting the award-winning piece.

Lee Konitz, the influential composer and alto sax player, who had been Kelly's teacher and mentor since she was 13, became her collaborator on the 2008 release *GRACEfulLEE*, which featured the two stretching out with a stellar band made up of guitarist Russell Malone, bassist Rufus Reid and drummer Matt Wilson. An almost 10 minute take on Konitz's *Thingin'*, the stately, jointly-composed title track and taut, unaccompanied improvised miniatures like *Alone Together* and *Buzzing Around* were among the highlights. The album was a critical triumph as well, drawing a 4 and ½ star review in the jazz bible *Downbeat*, an endorsement that later earned it a spot in the magazine's *Best Albums of the 2000's* issue. "Her duet with Malone on *Just Friends* is stunning in its simplicity and feeling how can a teenager communicate this depth of expression?" the publication's Michael Jackson wrote in his appraisal.

Mood Changes, released in 2009, found Kelly playing tenor, alto and soprano sax on her most self-assured work to that point. The bouncy, swinging *Happy Theme Song* set a celebratory, searching tone best showcased in smart, inventive arrangements of *Comes Love*, *Ain't No Sunshine* and *I Want To Be Happy*.

A second auspicious studio collaboration followed when another alto sax legend, Phil Woods, 80 at the time, teamed up with Kelly, then 18, for *The Man With the Hat* (2011), which also brought a tour to promote the album. Master and protégée traded ideas on four of the disc's seven performances, including the swinging title track and a stunning reading of Billy Strayhorn's *Ballad For Very Sad and Very Tired Lotus Eaters*. "We jammed together through *I'll Remember April*," Woods said of his first musical encounter with Kelly. "How did she sound? I gave her my hat! That is how good she sounded! She is the first alto player to get one. Hooray for the future of jazz and the alto sax!"

Kelly added to her musical palette later that year by releasing the reflective jazz-gospel set *Grace*, most of which featured her and inspirational jazz pianist George Russell Jr. putting their own stamp on traditional spirituals, without further accompaniment. Among the few exceptions, Kelly's melodic overdubbed solo piece *Grace Alone* and a joyous, infectious *Let There Be Peace on Earth* with percussionist Jamey Haddad from Paul Simon's band were every bit as satisfying.

By then, the music sounded as if it were coming from a deeper place.

"I really believe in universal energy and vibrational energy, and I think music comes from that place," Kelly says. "So it would be safe to say that music is my religion."

Kelly also graduated from the Berklee College of Music in 2011, with a degree in professional music. She has taught residency workshops there since 2012. That year also brought another important opportunity to pass on her musical knowledge: the U.S. State Department sent her on an international speaker's tour to be an ambassador of jazz and educate the people of Madagascar and the Comoros Islands about the music. "The folks in the Comoros Islands had never heard of legends like Louis Armstrong or Miles Davis," Kelly said. "It was a challenging and exciting task."

The dynamic 2013 *Live at Scullers* disc offered a country-flavored original, *Kiss Away Your Tears*, among other self-penned performances and a couple of jazz standards. The 2014 EP *Working For the Dreamers* featured gems like the urban, soft R&B of *Touched By An Angel* and the pulsating electro beat of *Cold Cold Water*, keeping the momentum of change in the foreground of Kelly's creative agenda.

Trying To Figure It Out, released in February 2016, finds Kelly once again following her restless artistic spirit. The new work explores, in her words, "the world of jazz and beyond." Fittingly, the album's musical setting shifts from acoustic, conventional jazz (as typified by her touching version of *Somewhere Over the Rainbow*, a live favorite) to a genre-bending approach, with more contemporary production values.

Blues For Harry Bosch perfectly illustrates the concept, appearing in two versions as a retro-jazz piece with a film nourish feel and as a thoroughly contemporary remix with a clubby trance groove. The track was written for the Emmy-nominated Amazon Prime series Bosch, in which Kelly will appear when the jazz-loving title character, an L.A. homicide detective, stops into Catalina's Jazz Club in Hollywood to see her perform during the show's second season.

Artists ranging from Wynton Marsalis to Huey Lewis have praised Kelly. Awards continue to come. Kelly, a multiple award winner as an alto sax player, has also drawn recognition as a singer and songwriter, having placed second in the 2017 International Songwriting Competition (Adult Contemporary category). Her live performances also continue to draw rave reviews and expand her fan base.

But Kelly says she has never lost sight of a larger picture.

"I think everybody comes to life with a calling," Kelly says. "I've been super blessed that my calling in life has been music and that I found it from an early age. But what I really hope my music brings to people is healing. There's nothing that makes me feel better than when somebody, after a show, says 'You lifted me up.'" Is it the main reason she plays? Her response comes without hesitation: "It's the only reason."

[For further information about Grace Kelly, visit her website at www.gracekellymusic.com](http://www.gracekellymusic.com), on Facebook at facebook.com/GraceKellymusic, on Instagram at instagram.com/gkellymusic, on Youtube youtube.com/gracekellymusic or Twitter at [@gracekellyPAZZ](https://twitter.com/gracekellyPAZZ).

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