

David “Fathead” Newman



The story begins way back in the very early 50's down in the deep south of Texas. David Newman was playing with bands doing one nighters and dances throughout Texas, Arkansas, Oklahoma, and sometimes California. On one of those tours, David met Ray Charles. Ray was working as a sideman with another group on the night's roster. They immediately bonded, both musically and as friends. When Ray started his own band, he called on David to be part of his group. In 1954, David began a twelve year association with the Ray Charles Band.

David began as the baritone player and soon became the star tenor soloist. In 1959, David recorded his first album as a leader, "Ray Charles Introduces David Newman: "FATHEAD" on Atlantic records. It included Newman's dramatic and now famous rendition of "Hard Times. Shortly thereafter, Newman moved to New York City where his career took off in many directions.

In addition to extensive touring with Ray Charles throughout most of the 60's, Newman lead his own groups and recorded extensively for the Atlantic, Warner Brothers and Prestige labels. He played with many of the great jazz musicians of the day including Lee Morgan, Kenny Drew Sr., Billy Higgins, Kenny Dorham. And as a studio musician, Newman became very busy working on numerous recording projects with the likes of Herbie Mann, Aretha Franklin, Hank Crawford, and Aaron Neville, just to name a few.

The late nineties has brought David to the High Note label where he has recorded six successful CDs. The most recent "Cityscape" was released in January, 2006 and spent 18 weeks on the Jazz Radio charts, 10 weeks in the Top 10.

David Newman has appeared on many television shows including Saturday Night Live, David Sanborn's Night Music, David Letterman and appeared in Robert Altman's film "Kansas City". In the fall of 2004, the long awaited film "Ray", the life story of Ray Charles, was released with actor Bokeem Woodbine portraying the part of David "Fathead" Newman.

Newman still hones a brawny, robust tone that's splendidly enlivened by his nimble, dance-like phrasing. When he plays, he never loses sight of the melody even during a song's most prickly sequences, making every phrase utterly singable. Like his blustery, wide-open sound, his improvisational emphasis on the melody is a testament to his Southern blues roots.

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