



BIO BITES

- Leslie Drayton was born into a musical family; family friend Benny Carter gifted him a trumpet at age 11.
- Local professionals mentored him as he developed skills in arranging, composing, & music preparation. Honed his artistry by playing in local R&B groups and big bands led by Gerald Wilson and Louie Bellson.
- Attended Los Angeles Valley College; earned Bachelor's degree in Music Education from California State University; obtained a Master's degree in Composition from the University of Denver, where he met his wife, Kathy.
- Founding member of iconic group Earth Wind & Fire (appeared on three albums).
- Served as Marvin Gaye's musical director and conductor for three years.
- As an entrepreneur, established Esoteric Records, New Perspective Jazz, Ltd. and production company, Water Sign Music Productions.
- Mentored young musicians through programs supported by the GRAMMY Foundation, the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz and as a college professor at L.A. City College, Santa Monica College & Ventura College.
- Has released 12 albums ranging from jazz to big band (Leslie Drayton Orchestra; Leslie Drayton & Fun; Leslie Drayton)
- Latest offering, *Changing Landscapes*, features music that offers a snapshot of life and its evolution. A melding of Leslie's experiences and musical philosophies, the album unfolds an evocative story. Continues to push the boundaries of his talent and skill to keep jazz music relevant.
- Resides in Houston with his wife, Kathy, where they continue to mentor young people.

LESLIE DRAYTON

Talent is often skill, perfected. Sometimes it's instinctive. Leslie Drayton, born into a musical family, expressed his musical talents as a toddler by picking out melodies on a neighbor's piano. His natural ability and exposure to music fundamentals at a young age marked the start of a decades-long career as a music professional.

Leslie's formal musical training began at age five with the study of the piano, clarinet and bongo drums. Family friend and famed musician **Benny Carter** gifted Leslie a trumpet at age 11. At age 15, as a result of joining a local youth band, Leslie decided to pursue music as a career. While studying the trumpet he was also mentored by local professionals in developing the skills of arranging, composing, and music preparation.

After graduating from Los Angeles High School, he enrolled in L.A. Valley College and later transferred to California State University where he earned a Bachelor's degree in Music Education in 1971. The '70s was a prolific decade for Leslie. While attending school, he continued to hone his skills by playing in local R&B groups and big bands led by **Gerald Wilson** and **Louie Bellson**.

His reputation as a trumpet player and arranger allowed him to become a founding member of the group **Earth Wind & Fire** where he appeared on three albums. The creation of the horn sound that is prominent in the music of EWF is attributed to Leslie. In 1972, Leslie along with trombonist and arranger **Melba Liston** established a big band that led to his introduction to **Marvin Gaye**. This introduction resulted in Leslie working with Marvin as his musical director and conductor from 1974-1976. In 1977, Leslie established the critically acclaimed **Leslie Drayton Orchestra**. The '80s and '90s were good to Leslie as well. The Leslie Drayton Orchestra released four albums on his Esoteric Records label before establishing the **Leslie Drayton and Fun** band in 1984. After relocating to Denver, Colorado in 1989, he earned a Master's degree in Composition from the University of Denver. He also met wife Kathy and established Water Sign Music Productions as a publishing arm for many of his compositions.

In 1994, he recorded **Until Further Notice** and **A Jazz House Party** for his new company, New Perspective Jazz, Ltd. In 1996 Leslie returned to Los Angeles. He began mentoring young musicians through various programs supported by The GRAMMY Foundation, The L.A. Jazz Society, and the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz. He released **Urbanesque** in 1998 and followed with **By Request** in 2000, a compilation of his big band music.

Leslie added college professor to his long list of accolades and accomplishments in 2002, teaching at various educational institutions (Los Angeles City College, Santa Monica College, Ventura College). He released **Free & Easy** in 2014.

Leslie relocated to Houston, Texas in 2016, and continues to mentor young musicians. Like those who mentored him, he reminds his young associates "to develop and trust their musical voice and ideas."

His current release, **Changing Landscapes**, features music that offers a snapshot of life and its evolution. A melding of Leslie's experiences and musical philosophies, the album unfolds an evocative story. Each tune is accompanied by an intensely lyrical trumpet sound that allows for a musical conversation with the other instrumentalists. Leslie continues to push the boundaries of his talent and skill to keep jazz music relevant. To find out more on Leslie Drayton, visit www.draytonmusic.com.



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