

James Tormé



According to Jazz FM, "If you get a chance to see James Tormé you should beg, borrow, even steal a ticket". Son of one of the all-time great Jazz vocalist, composer, arranger and three time Grammy Award winner Mel Tormé. James grew up spending time with a myriad of Jazz Legends such as Ell Fitzgerald, George Shearing, Buddy Rich, Peggy Lee and Duke Ellington. James' smooth singing style draws from the "old school", but has a very modern versatility and interpretation of his own where his clean-toned vibrato, Jazz sensibilities and charismatic stage presence are fast making this multi-award winning singer one of the most talked about artists of his generation. "... an extraordinary singer with immense resources... his phrasing ...audacious and brilliant," raves London Jazz News.



JAMES TORMÉ BIOGRAPHY

James Tormé (who is the son of 3-time Grammy Award Winning jazz legend Mel Tormé) is taking the legacy he was born into even further - and causing a serious buzz in the process. Often appearing with outfits like the BBC Concert Orchestra, Ronnie Scott's Orchestra and Les Paul Trio, the charismatic young star's debut album has topped both the iTunes and Amazon Jazz Charts*.

Tormé is "the best male jazz singer to come along in 20 years" according to long time Verve Records president, Chuck Mitchell, the man who first discovered him. Having grown up spending time with a myriad of jazz legends (Bing Crosby, Peggy Lee, Duke Ellington, George Shearing, Buddy Rich & more), one begins to understand why. Tormé himself attributes as much of his ability as a performer to the "*process of osmosis*" as he does to his own show-business background. Explains Tormé, "There's no question, I absorbed a lot from my dad, and his peers." This is clear as soon as one hears his singing style, which draws from the "*old school*", but with modern styling that makes it very current in today's market.

James Tormé is being praised from all corners of the globe by everyone from Billboard™ and CBS News, to BBC Radio 2 and Jamie Cullum. Possessing the look (and swagger) of a Hollywood star, he seems to know just how to handle all the press attention he's getting. It's no mystery that Tormé is now consistently appearing to standing room only crowds at the world's top venues as well as being featured as the centerpiece of prestigious jazz festivals across the globe. Says Tormé, "Every show, every appearance is important to me, whether it's the Greek Theater or a small jazz club. I remember every audience. If they're going to pay money to see me, I want to give them a night they'll never forget."



"If you get a chance to see James Tormé you should beg, borrow, even steal a ticket."
Jazz FM

"He's got a lovely voice"
Jamie Cullum

"...great arrangements, beautifully sung."
Michael Parkinson, BBC Radio 2

"Just like his dad - same quality of voice and everything. Fantastic!"
Sir Terry Wogan

"Born into a family blessed with talent and an immense passion for all genres of music, all it took was one album to jump-start James' future in music..."
CBS NEWS

"An extraordinary singer with immense resources — on top of everything else, his phrasing on "Love for Sale" was audacious and brilliant."
Andrew Cartmel, London Jazz News'

"He is in a class of his own."
Jo Good, BBC Radio 6 Music

"James Tormé is definitely his father's son - smooth and cool."
Dan Aquilante, NY Post

"In an evening brimming with brilliant moments it's difficult to chose favourites"
London Jazz News

"A smooth as silk crooner, Tormé also demonstrated that he can scat, swing and riff with the best of them."
Examiner.com

"Looking round the packed room feet were tapping and fingers clicking as the man from Los Angeles took something classical, polished it up and made it sparkingly contemporary."
Get West London

"Tormé is a sparkplug of sensational vocal artistry and showmanship."
Frank Griffiths, London Jazz News

“He is a master at vocal restraint and control. ...It is all in the genes.”

Bluesandsoul.com

“He has the relaxed phrasing that makes his singing seem effortless without skimping on emotion.”

Allmusic.com

“Proudly “old school” but with enough modern embellishments to keep things on a more contemporary footing...”

Directcurrentmusic.com

“Once you hear his rendition of a particular song, he OWNS it in your memory forever.”

Allen Kepler, President, Smooth AC Radio Networks

“James Tormé does possess a pleasantly soft tenor that gives this swinging collection of standards, funk faves and original compositions a listenability not always heard on jazz albums.”

Los Angeles Daily News

"He was the picture of cool urbane sophistication but also conveyed an easy-going affability, charm and a likeability that was endearing."

AXS Entertainment Arts

"His voice is extraordinarily powerful. He controls it like a tiger on a leash. Occasionally he lets it off the leash — and then watch out".

Andrew Cartmel, London Jazz News

"The combination of their world class musicianship and Tormé's incomparable vocal gifts and showmanship made for a rare musical experience".

Tom Alvarez, Indianapolis Performing Arts Examiner

“There’s really nothing in town that quite matches up to what Tormé is doing right now.”

Gianna Hughes, Proxart Magazine



James Tormé Tid-Bits



Style:

James infuses jazz and pop classics with current influences, and haunts newer songs with timeless throwback renditions. His magnetic relevance stems from the fact that he mixes the showmanship of his father's generation with the youthful charisma of a contemporary Hollywood/music star. He is a musical bridge between the *old world* and the 'new school'. This allows him to draw on his unique showbiz background while staying totally current and relevant in today's music market.

As a youngster, James spent time with some of the greatest musicians in history such as: Bing Crosby, Peggy Lee, George Shearing, Buddy Rich, Ella Fitzgerald, Cleo Lane, Artie Shaw, Branford Marsalis, Gerry Mulligan and many more. He absorbed a lot from them, both on & off the stage.

Awards:

James has won several awards, including the coveted John Lennon Songwriting Award and the Chuck Niles Jazz Music Award.

Standing Room Only:

The *Tormé Meets The British* Tour in March and April, 2014, including shows at Ronnie Scott's and several other famous London venues was entirely pre-sold out.

James is booked as the main event (centerpiece act) for many Jazz Festivals in the UK and elsewhere in 2014/15.

James' Jazz FM Christmas show in London was a sell-out.

James headlined multiple sold-out dates for his Las Vegas debut at the brand new Smith Center For The Performing Arts.

Just a few of the top venues around the world where James Tormé has performed:

The Greek Theater (Los Angeles), Walt Disney Concert Hall (Los Angeles), London Hippodrome, Ronnie Scott's (London), The Savoy Theater (London), Smith Center For The Performing Arts (Las Vegas, NV), The Las Vegas Hilton, The Hollywood Palladium, The Annenberg Theater, (Palm Springs, CA), Union Chapel (London), The Regal (Evesham, UK), La Mirada Theater For The Performing Arts (Los Angeles), The Fred Kavli Theater (Thousand Oaks, CA) Feinstein's (New York), Bell Auditorium (Augusta, GA), Bedroom Bar for Jazz FM (London), The Viper Room, Vibrato, Iridium with The Les Paul Trio (New York), The Elephant Room (Austin, TX) Anthology (San Diego, CA), Catalina Jazz Club (Hollywood, CA), Atlantis Resort (Bahamas), the BBC Club (London), Jazz Café (London).

James has been fortunate enough to perform with top-drawer Orchestras & Bands including: The BBC Concert Orchestra, The Ronnie Scott's Orchestra, The Les Paul Trio, The Guy Barker Big Band, The SWR Big Band, The New West Symphony Orchestra, The Walt Disney Trio, The Ronnie Scott's All-Stars, The Sid Lawrence Orchestra, The John Altman Big Band, The Symphony Orchestra Augusta, The California Philharmonic, The John Daversa Big Band, The Elevation Orchestra and more...

James Tormé Tid-Bits

LOVE FOR SALE a Chart Topper:

James' debut album *Love For Sale* (#2 on iTunes Jazz, #3 on Amazon Jazz) has garnered critical acclaim and rave reviews from all over the world. It was also Jazz FM's Album Of The Week. (UK - August 2012). He dedicated the album to his legendary father, Mel Tormé, a 3-time Grammy Winner, whose life-long love affair with music inspired James' own.

Having been released for less than 6 months, "Rock With You" was the #2 vocal track for the year at U.S. Smooth Jazz Radio format – right behind Sade's "I'm Still In Love With You".

It also gathered enough spins to be the year's number 13 song overall at Smooth Jazz Radio format.

Songs from James' album including "Rock With You", "Passin' By" and "A Better Day Will Come" have also charted in Greece, Cypress, Japan, The Philippines and in several other countries.

The New York Post chose "Comin' Home Baby" from James' album as one of the "top 40 cover recordings of the last decade." http://www.nypost.com/p/entertainment/music/the_best_cover_songs_7aoPvY194RsyZJvjQG9GL

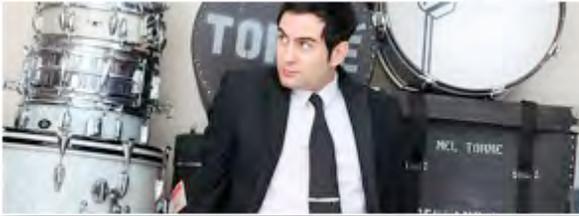


jamestorme.com

James Tormé displays a brand uniquely his own

[Tom Alvarez](#)
[Indianapolis Performing Arts Examiner](#)

He may be storied jazz singer [Mel Tormé's](#) progeny, but [James Tormé](#) demonstrated that he has his own distinct sound, not to mention identity, when he opened his two day run Thursday at the Cabaret at the Columbia Club on Monument Circle in downtown Indianapolis.



The 40 year-old descendant of “The Velvet Fog,” as his father was known, was accompanied by what he called his “James Tormé All-Star Trio.” Consisting of [Nikos Syropoulos](#) on piano, [Ryan Cross](#) on bass and [Dan Schnelle](#) on drums, the three are considered to be some of the most sought after musicians in L.A. And they certainly showed why, both individually and

collectively, through their virtuoso performances.

Tormé, wore black horn rimmed glasses, and was dressed in a fitted black suit accented with a matching skinny tie, **He was the picture of cool urbane sophistication but also conveyed an easy-going affability, charm and a likeability that was endearing.** His fast-paced show, during which he sprinkled anecdotes about his father, mother ([Janette Scott](#), a famous British actress), background and his own career, included renditions of many jazz standards and Great American Songbook songs composed by or made famous by music greats (including his father).

“No Moon At All” by David Mann, Lerner and Loewe’s “Almost Like Being in Love,” “Sunny Gets Blue,” “Mountain Greenery” and “That Old Black Magic” were just a few of the songs that illustrated **Tormé’s talent for styling.** Making some songs sound like the entertainers of old, he was also able to put a contemporary spin on others. **A smooth as silk crooner, Tormé also demonstrated that he can scat, swing and riff with the best of them.**

Reverse psychology was what Tormé said his dad used the night he met his mother in 1965 while playing the Cool Elephant, a famous jazz club in London. Prior to singing “Too Close for Comfort,” Tormé said that it was a song his dad sang that night he first laid eyes on his mother. She had been living with the journalist [David Frost](#) up to that point, but left that night with Mel and, six months later, the two of them were married.

Tormé also showed his talent for singing the blues when he brought down the house with his version of “Drowning in My Own Tears,” written by Harry Glover and released as a single by [Ray Charles](#) in 1956. Recently, Tormé enjoyed a sold out U.K. tour and while in London he performed with the BBC orchestra in a [Radio 2](#) concert tribute to Ray Charles which was heard by 13 million listeners.

It was clear when Tormé sang [Cole Porter's](#) “Love for Sale,” which is the title track on his 2011 début album, that **the apple did not fall far from the tree in terms of his ability to connect with the audience, but at the same time he also showed an charisma and stage presence that is his very own.**

A wonderful arrangement of “Just One of Those Things,” which incorporated a brief quote from “[On Green Dolphin Street](#),” and a medley of “Coming Home” and “Mary Ann” were the last two numbers of Tormé’s **highly appealing, not to mention satisfying, set.**

Pianist Syropoulos, who Tormé likened to the great George Shearing, bass player Cross who has appeared on TV hit shows “The X-Factor,” “The Voice” and “Glee,” and drummer Schnelle, who Tormé jokingly referred to as the “Schnellvet Fog,” **all played brilliantly** whenever throughout his show. **The combination of their world class musicianship and Tormé’s incomparable vocal gifts and showmanship made for a rare musical experience.**



James Tormé to celebrate the 'greats' in Cabaret show

May 12, 2014

[The Indianapolis 500](#) is of special interest to [James Tormé](#), son of legendary entertainer [Mel Tormé](#), because he not only inherited his dad's musical gifts but also his love for racing. In fact, if there's time, Tormé hopes he can fit in a visit to the track while he is in Indy making his [Cabaret at the Columbia Club](#) debut in "James Tormé in Love for Sale" on Thursday, May 15, and Friday, May 16, at 8 p.m.

Recently [Examiner.com](#) spoke by phone with Tormé, who was calling from his Sherman Oaks, Calif., home. The information about his dad's interest in racing came up when he was asked if he had ever played Indianapolis. "My career in some ways is like a lunar expedition, a sort of Mercury Mission, of that environment that my father, before me, spent a lot of time in.

"When I was a kid I was always hearing him talk about these mythical towns like Cincinnati, Boston and Indianapolis. He was always arriving back from places like that and now I am seeing them for the first time which is sort of surreal and a lot of fun," said Tormé. But the fact is, according to Tormé, he not only has relatives here, his dad spent part of his childhood in Indy which is where his lifelong passion for racing and the 500 became a family tradition.

The foremost Tormé family tradition, however, is music, and as heir to his father's renowned legacy, his 40-year old son has come into his own as one of his generation's most heralded young jazz vocalists. So far his gigs have included performances with the BBC Concert Orchestra, Ronnie Scott's Orchestra and Les Paul Trio, and his 2011 debut album "Love for Sale" topped both the iTunes and Amazon Jazz Charts.

Tormé is celebrated for giving older classics a contemporary spin and infusing newer songs with timeless throwback styling. When asked what accounts for his ability to do that, he said, "Dad was influenced by music from about 1929-1949 and I was sort of force fed all of that and of course everything else that has come out since then so it is a much wider well from which to draw.

"There is only so much you can do to get away from the genetic manifestation of who you are. I know there is a lot of my father in my texture, my musicality and my singing, even, but those different influences also make me a different singer. I love to reinvent things because it is a challenge to do a fresh version of something and really make it new. I actually learned that from my dad, who would do his own versions of certain, very specific,

contemporary tunes. I like being a song stylist. It all comes down to the vocal interpretation but also the arrangement.”

Tormé is also the son of British actress [Janette Scott](#) and grandson of [Dame Thora Hird](#), also an actress. Despite having inherited such a storied show business pedigree, he has clearly managed to establish his own identity. “Having grown up around my father and all his entertainer friends, I am very demystified about it all. It’s never anything I have shied away from in terms of the legacy I come from. I am very proud of it.

“I knew from a young age, however, that I would be able to offer something on an equal footing in terms of quality, something that would be tantamount, in terms of its level, to what my father was doing. If I didn’t feel that way maybe I would feel differently doing what I do. I don’t think I would do it if I felt that it was really a stretch. It hasn’t been intimidating for me and not something I have a chip on my shoulder about. If anything, it’s something I like to shout from the rooftops.”

According to Tormé, his father was his biggest influence, but there were others. “My father’s life long affair with music is what inspired mine. My father was sending me music when I was in boarding school in the U.K. (he lived there from the ages of 7-19). Music was used to keep us together so to speak. He really inspired my career in so many ways. I have other influences like [June Christy](#), [Chris Connor](#), [Nat King Cole](#), [Ray Charles](#), [Carmen McRae](#). Those would be my main influences. But being at his performances, year after year at Carnegie Hall and the Hollywood Bowl, places like that you just couldn’t help but absorb a lot of what was happening both onstage and offstage.”

As far as Tormé’s show, for which he will be accompanied by an all-star trio of musicians, including [Niko Syropoulos](#) on piano, [Ryan Cross](#) on bass, and [Dan Schnelle](#) on drums, he said that he has created it specifically for his Cabaret appearances. He was recently on a sold out U.K. tour where he did a show called “Tormé Meets the British, Part II.” He will combine elements of that show with contents of another show he performed which paid tribute to the 75th Anniversary of [Blue Note Records](#), the renowned jazz label.

The singer also said he show will encapsulate his story and his parents. His mother, Janette Scott, met his father in 1965 in a club called the Cool Elephant in London. She had been living with journalist [David Frost](#) at the time but that night, according to Tormé, his father stole his mother from Frost. Scott was a British actress who appeared in some 70 films.

Tormé said the show was originally going to be about his influences but it ended up turning into a bio about his past, present, and future. He also said the audience can expect to hear about what it was like growing up in his family to things he is experiencing now on the road, and in the music scene and his plans for a show he is taking to Paris.

Tormé said another name for his show is “Celebrating the Greats” because some of the songs performed will honor the likes of [Cole Porter](#), [Duke Ellington](#), [Ray Charles](#), [Ella Fitzgerald](#), [Peggy Lee](#), [Fred Astaire](#), and his father.

After experiencing his show, Tormé hopes those attending “leave with a good feeling, knowing they just saw something different than they have ever seen. People come up to me after shows and say ‘I feel like I just went to church or temple. I feel like I just did something good for myself.’ I can offer a key into some different rooms that nobody has been able to go into for a long time.”

For tickets and information about “James Tormé in Love for Sale” call (317) 275-1169 or visit www.thecabaret.org.





LondonJazzNews

News, reviews, features and comment from the London jazz scene and beyond

James Tormé and his Jazz All Stars **(The Bull's Head, March 29th 2014. Review by Andrew Cartmel)**

After years of under-attended gigs at the old Bull's Head it's cheering to see the new jazz room there packed with people on a Saturday night. I'm not exaggerating, either — it's standing room only for singer **James Tormé**. Inheritor of one of the most famous names in the business, James immediately proceeds to demonstrate there's no nepotism involved in his presence tonight as he launches straight into *Almost Like Being in Love* with perfect swing and absolute control. A great voice, and very powerful. I'd say something here about iron fists in velvet gloves if I hadn't voluntarily embargoed the word 'velvet' for the duration of this review.

In *No Moon At All* James begins to show what else he can do with that voice, skimming effortlessly over the punchy, haunting tenor sax of **Brandon Allen** and silvery flashes of cymbals from drummer **Martyn Kaine**. Brandon Allen gives the song a bebop subtext while the rhythm section goes for swing. James Tormé has a voice that rocks the room, that you can feel as a sympathetic vibration in your diaphragm. The mood changes to rough-edged, soulful rhythm and blues with the Ray Charles number *Drown in My Own Tears*. Brandon Allen particularly catches the raw, smoky R&B feel of the number. He could be playing at a Saturday night fish fry, rather than Barnes, where people are steaming their scallops with vermicelli. His tenor solo rises like swirling smoke while Martyn Kaine maintains a metronomic pulse on drums with staccato cymbal passages. Allen's solo builds to a magnificent squawking conclusion that is almost in free jazz territory.

The brilliant arranger Marty Paich was one of Mel Tormé's best and most frequent collaborators, so it's wonderful to hear Tormé's son perform Paich's classic arrangement of *Too Close for Comfort*. The singer and Brandon Allen harmonise in a benign blast of sound and then Allen gets a showcase bebop solo in this beautifully arranged miniature, which makes a quartet sound like a big band. James Tormé scats with concise, immaculate skill. **Tom Farmer's** hip, bouncing upright bass provides the floorboards that the soloists stroll across, along with Martyn Kaine's joyous drumming.

But one of the heroes of the evening has to be pianist **Malcolm Edmonstone** who stepped into the breach at the last moment. *What Is There to Say* begins with just Edmonstone and James Tormé, the piano rising like the skeletal scaffold of a tower into the sky where the floating clouds of the singer's vocals await. James Tormé's voice is fascinatingly different from his father's — more plangent, playful and reverberant. The song is a concise masterpiece.

Mel Tormé's hit *Mountain Greenery* is revisited in a fascinating version. James sings an intoxicating flow of vocals in this finger snapping, toe tapping number. Martyn Kaine's delirious drums and cymbals and Tom Farmer's high speed bass are adorned with Malcolm Edmonstone's shards of Basie. The effortless time changes performed by James Tormé and the quartet re-contour the tune into modernistic chunks and Brandon Allen's restrained, intermittent sax is like a gleam of precious ore in the mother rock.

It's impressive how Brandon Allen controls his virtuosic playing, using immense restraint so as never to overwhelm the vocals. Restraint is evident in James Tormé, too. His voice is extraordinarily powerful. He controls it like a tiger on a leash. Occasionally he lets it off the leash — and then watch out.

Comin' Home Baby by Ben Tucker and Bob Dorough was another Mel Tormé hit. Martin Farmer's intricate cross-weave of bass sets the mood, then James Tormé launches into a skipping, surging vocal. Brandon Allen, his saxophone henchman, joins in as they perform a heist that corners the market in cool. Malcolm Edmonstone plays coruscating runs that interweave, coil the tune up, then unleash it, spilling cascades of notes before he begins to hammer at the number with machine-gun authority. Martyn Kaine's delicate drumming is like the excited heartbeat of a small creature before turning into a deep, thunderous, sonorous solo. Over all of this, James's masterclass scatting unfurls in a liquid surge.

But the towering enormity of James Tormé's voice, and his immaculate timing, is really evident on *The Street Where You Live*. It's a rich, rhapsodic voice with vast reserves of power — I might mention a foghorn here, if I hadn't vowed to abstain from using the word 'fog'.

When Sunny Gets Blue was another homage to a great Mel Tormé arranger, Angela Morley (née Wally Stott), while *In the Heat of the Night* showcased the exquisitely tormented, soulful tenor of Brandon Allen. In an evening brimming with brilliant moments it's difficult to chose favourites, but Bobby Timmons' *Dat Dere* received an unforgettable treatment, featuring the unstoppable fluency of James Tormé's vocals over the ticking cymbals and drum rolls of Martyn Kaine and exhilarating chords from Malcolm Edmonstone that progress towards an intricate, tripping, trilling piano feature. Then Brandon Allen launches a sweetly piercing tenor solo that develops into a big sound, like a searchlight being shone around the room.

This is a great jazz quartet fronted by an extraordinary singer with immense resources — on top of everything else, his phrasing on *Love for Sale* was audacious and brilliant. You should catch them all, live or on recordings, as soon as you can.



James Tormé: Hippodrome, London

Review 12/9/13



Blessed with his mother's good looks and a healthy dose of pater's talents, James Tormé revels in the best of both worlds. Yet, as the Rolling Stones once wrote and sang, it's the singer, not the song. **Tormé's a fabulous entertainer, with a skill set that seems destined** to take him back to further engagements in Vegas, from whence he came. His natural good nature was as much a part of the christmas festivities as the familiar melodies he plies.

This **transatlantic troubadour oozes silky charm** like only a crooner can, his scatting shows to be a chip off the old block - there is no monotone delivery either, he is always right up there with his fine musicians and more importantly the melody. There is a quivering frailty to his sound which I like, not dissimilar to Michael Jackson's voice, but with an **overriding jazz sensibility - it's arresting and rather unusual** (which is what you've got to be if you want to stand out in the crowd)

Yes he is an artist who offers a **dexterous style** which rolls out a **clean-toned vibrato, feverishly musical** and **indelibly associated with his father**. Perhaps his dues are now paid in full (as the recent gig in Vegas certainly seems to point that way) JT is about to break into the **top tier of crooner, performers (move over Bublé your bubbly's about to burst!)** and deservedly so. **This kid has got personality, joi de vivre, bags of bonhomie and a healthy sense of humour...** dedicating his jaunty version of "Love For Sale" to the oldest profession in the world, proclaiming that 'whores are people too' - by gad what a wag! Tackling Ray Charles ballads is a tall order for any singer, but tonight JT sang the bluesy ballad "Drown In My Own Tears " - not like the throaty rapines of the original, but a different sweeter timbre and was **employed and delivered with panache**. The mood was set...



He also proves to be a very savvy operator when it comes to cherry picking his UK backing band, which consists of the 'twilight twinkler' Ross Stanley on piano. The heavy hitters, Quentin Collins on trumpet/flugel and the ubiquitous Branden Allen on tenor sax. These guys swing harder than Pierrepont's noose, providing a win win situation as these surely must get plenty of time under the spotlight in the glitzy Matcham room, filled with a knowing and enthusiastic audience who even clap the arrangements, **Bravo!**

The christmas spirit was entered into with lighthearted stage banter, snappy and informative, my favourite story being the one about the origins of his dad's "The Xmas Song" (chestnuts roasting on an open fire etc..) "I saw a spiral pad on his piano with four lines written in pencil", Tormé recalled. "They started, "Chestnuts roasting..., Jack Frost nipping..., Yuletide carols..., Folks dressed up like Eskimos.' Bob (Wells, co-writer) didn't think he was writing a song lyric. He said he thought if he could immerse himself in winter he could cool off, from the blistering californian heat. Forty minutes later that song was written! Yes, he is **proud of his heritage and it certainly doesn't hamper him as the natural talent is self evident throughout his performance**. Highlights for me were his **fantastic version** of "Almost Like Being In Love", **showing his adroitness and agility on one of my favourite all time jazz standards**.

Nice to see guests coming up too, in the shape of Earl Okin, who is clearly idolised by James, who earlier covered one of his tunes ' "Drinkin' Yesterday's Wine" in an impressive upbeat fashion. Okin repays the compliment by joining in on "It Don't mean A Thing If It Ain't Got That Swing" - mimicking with his mouth, mute trumpet, clarinet and trombone. **The audience were absolutely enthralled into the bargain**. This was a great way to ease your way into christmas, **a scintillating performer, generously spirited and one to watch with an eager eye as to where he takes it next...to jazz, or not to jazz, there is no question!**



Words Emrys Baird



Review: James Tormé stars in Tormé Meets the British

Apr 03, 2014 14:11

By Chris Longhurst

James Tormé Bulls Head, Barnes Saturday March 29

Son of American singer Mel and British actress Janette Scott, half brother of singer Steve March-Tormé and grandson of national treasure Dame Thora Hird.

A youth spent hanging out with legends including Ella Fitzgerald, George Shearing, Buddy Rich, Peggy Lee and Duke Ellington

These are the family ties and early experiences of 41-year-old jazz man James Tormé, who all should agree deserved a chance to stand on his own merits and not be judged by his famous relatives.

Of course it wouldn't have been much of a show if he had appeared totally alone, so it was fortunate that he was superbly supported by a quartet of highly polished musicians.

They were led by saxophonist Brandon Allen, lauded by the crowd for his recent fatherhood, double bass player Tom Farmer, and drummer Martyn Kaine.

James himself appeared particularly impressed with piano player Malcolm Edmonstone, who was a stranger even to him having stepped in at the last minute when the scheduled pianist pulled out.

Things got off to a swinging start as the highly charismatic James launched into his rendition of Almost Like Being in Love.

Looking round the packed room feet were tapping and fingers clicking as the man from Los Angeles took something classical, polished it up and made it sparkingly contemporary.

Plaudits have been rained down on him from a young age, perhaps the most endearing of them all coming from Playboy founder Hugh Hefner who once said: "James Tormé is a chip off the old block, and a mighty cool block it is. His daddy would be proud."

As he **crooned, scatted and dazzled through standards** like Drown in my own Tears, What is there to Say? and Ms Fitzgerald's hauntingly special Black Magic it was clear **he is a born entertainer.**

Relaxed and at ease with the crowd, perhaps his coolest talent when not singing was to show how his English heritage enabled him to imitate with amazing accuracy not only an Essex accent but also an ad-man's voice of the kind associated with local radio stations promoting independent carpet retailers and jean warehouses.

His backing team all got their chance to step into the limelight and shine with solo performances which wouldn't be out of place in any of the world's greatest jazz venues.

On the street where you Live was **bouncy and upbeat** while tales of Earl Okin and his work with the Beatles **led perfectly** into numbers like My Room as James demonstrated the great respect he holds for musical legends past and present.

None more so than Ol' Blue Eyes himself, the Chairman, Frank Sinatra and to honour him what better than one of his all time favourites, One for my Baby.

All too soon James was wrapping things up with an encore of Don't mean a Thing before sticking around to sign copies of his new album Love For Sale.

James Tormé at The Rio Café, Glasgow

By : Alan Hush

The Rio Café in Partick, an area of Glasgow, would, on first sight, seem an unlikely venue for an international recording artist based in Los Angeles to make his Scottish debut, but what a debut it was. The Rio transformed from a 1950's style daytime diner to an honest-to-goodness legitimate Jazz venue on Wednesday evening. ♦

James Tormé had announced a low-key pop-up gig to celebrate his birthday. No fancy advertising, just a name on the chalkboard in The Rio "Wednesday Jazz – James Tormé". Along with a few well-placed mentions on the social media sites which generated interest among fans to ensure a packed room in a corner café in Partick. The buzz among the local community had been palpable in the lead up to the performance. One local exclaimed "who would have thought we'd ever have a star of the calibre of James Tormé performing in our town?"

Well perform, he did. The locals who knew their music arrived early to claim the best seats in the house for this free gig. Fans from across Scotland arrived to find the star setting up for the performance and carrying out a soundcheck with a trio of young talented performers who were to provide the backing for the evening. **The superb young players provided much more than backing, they were an integral part of the show and their musicianship was outstanding.**

The room was crowded by 9pm when the trio struck up the overture to the evening, with James taking to the tiny stage to **rapturous applause. We were in for a treat, From This Moment On... Cole Porter's timeless classic got the evening off to a rousing start. Delivered with assured aplomb by James and the trio.**

David Mann's "No Moon At All" followed before James gave some background to his *Tormé Meets The British* tour, providing insight into his journey to introduce himself and his music to a wider audience. Ray Charles' "Drown in my own Tears" followed before the star explained a rather tenuous link between the great Mr. Charles and his Scottish audience. Reference was made to the first singing Tormé, dad Mel, visiting the UK many years before during which, Tormé senior proposed to the future Mrs T, James's mum, the British actress Janette Scott. This led into "Too Close For Comfort" to emphasize the reverse psychology employed by dad, class! "A Better Day Will Come" was next up, the song Tormé won the John Lennon Award for, was reminiscent of the Great American Songbook that was prevalent in the days prior to the Great British Invasion of the USA, which also heralded the 'completion of the destruction of jazz', according to some. Nat King Cole's "What Is There To Say"

was discovered by Tormé during a late-night YouTube session (or "binge" as he called it). Even great jazz singers seek inspiration using technology.

James referenced his own heritage, being "quarter Scottish", as all LA residents do, whether it's true or not, and reflected on his father's 1956 stay at The Grand Central Hotel in Glasgow while promoting his number one record "Mountain Greenery", which was then performed at breakneck speed. "Love For Sale", the title track of James' current album made an effortlessly brilliant end to the first set, with a promise of much more to come.

A cool trio tune commenced the second set. Three extremely talented young musicians provided the perfect accompaniment to the evening. Pete Johnston played keyboards magnificently, Brodie Jarvie pounded the Bass incessantly and drummer Stephen Henderson kept everyone on track with his beats. **Outstanding musicianship.**

James delivered a perfect rendition of Michael Jackson's "I Can't Help It" to get the second set off to a great start. Having paid tribute to the late star by including "Rock With You" on his album. "Almost Like Being In Love" by Loewe and Lerner, made popular by its inclusion in *Brigadoon*, led into more Ray Charles with "In The Heat Of The Night." This was an inspirational set. "Dat Dere", a jazz song with music by Bobby Timmons and lyrics by Oscar Brown, Jr., was delivered with assured expertise by Mr Tormé. Another Nat King Cole song, "When Sunny Gets Blue" included a sublime interlude from Peter Henderson on keyboard. This led into a perfect rendition of London legend Earl Okin's "My Room".

The atmosphere in the room was akin to a real old jazz club. Everyone was captivated by the music and performance of the small group on the tiny stage in the corner. Respectfully listening and watching a truly professional performance. I have rarely spent a better musical evening, and here I was in a small corner café in Partick. Music knows no boundaries. The locals lapped it up. A Hollywood star in their town, it was crazy.

Duke Ellington's "It Don't Mean A Thing (If It Ain't Got That Swing)" included solos from all of the talented trio who were putting their all into this show. They knew they were in the company of true talent, not least their own.

The set grew to a close with a perfect medley rendition of "Comin' Home Baby" and "Mary Ann". **The Rio went wild. A standing ovation was assured, they were dancing in the tiny café that would be serving breakfasts and shakes in the morning. What a transformation.**

What a night. If you get a chance to see James Tormé you should beg, borrow, even steal a ticket, it'll be well worth the effort to be in the presence of such an outstanding showman and performer.



Review: James Tormé at the London Hippodrome.

James Tormé

(London Hippodrome. 3rd August 2013. Review by Frank Griffith)



Vocalist **James Tormé**, one of the two singing progeny of Mel Tormé (his older brother, Steve performed recently at Crazy Coqs and reviewed [HERE](#)) **was in spectacular form** at this wonderful new venue in London's Leicester Square. The Matcham Room at the Hippodrome, perched alongside a bustling casino has a warm and comfortable atmosphere with a large stage, quality piano and PA system, etc. Featuring a programme which favours cabaret, lets hope that it continues to build as a jazz venue as well.

Tormé is a sparkplug of sensational vocal artistry and showmanship. He resembles his father vocally, with a similar light and airy quality and a **stupendous range and agility**, quite necessary to tackle the repertoire. **His delivery is clear and unpretentious, and even more remarkable is his stylistic versatility.** Of the 17 numbers he sang, about half of them were associated with his father with the remainder embracing many other genres. These included two Ray Charles classics, and a Bobby Timmons/Oscar Brown Jr ditty and two originals, one, "*A Better Day Will Come*" featuring James' lyrics and "*My Room*" penned by comedian and song and dance man, Earl Okin, who was present in the audience.

Tormé was not one to stifle his sidemen's creativity and expression: he was clearly enjoying and spurring on the brief but frequent solo forays by tenor saxophonist **Brandon Allen** and pianist **Ross Stanley**, especially in the second set. Allen deftly balances a fiery explosiveness in his solos with a supportive adherence to the written parts, clearly avoiding any overshadowing of the vocal. His solo on "*Dat Dere*" ran the risk of blowing the already high roof off of this venerable W1 edifice. His four-octave range and flawless command of the altissimo register was nicely offset by his full-bodied yet raucous tonal quality offering something for fans of the entire history of the instrument- from Hawkins to Brecker- he's got em covered. No shrinking violet, Stanley acquitted himself famously in both the solo and accompaniment stakes. He also provided a steady diet of what Ben Webster referred to as "reminiscing"- lightly playing moodily supportive tinklings behind the vocalist's verbal patter with the audience, of which there was no shortage. Bassist to the stars **Geoff Gascoyne** and **Josh Morrison**, who handed the drum chores flawlessly, both made peerless contributions.

Tormé is no mean scat soloist either. The focused shaping of his solos occasionally suggested that they could have been somewhat pre-structured, but they were no less effective. **This adds yet another feather to his cap to illustrate his eclecticism** as well as carrying on the bebop tradition.

James Tormé ended with a tribute to his mother, British actress, Janette Scott who was in the audience. His rendition of "*If Only*" sung by Janette in the 1957 film "*The Good Companions*" was **gracefully handled** and touching, in a non-sentimental way, wrapping up the programme together fittingly and poignantly.



Review: James Tormé

“With a name like Tormé, it has to be good!” And it was...in fact **it was fantastic!** Such a treat to see and hear this heir to his father’s seat as the foremost jazz singer of his time. If James keeps going, and I see no reason why he won’t, he will indeed be a star and fill those huge shoes left by his legendary father, Mel. I’m sure many who attend the concert came because of his famous father and were curious to see what young James had to offer. Well, he had a lot to offer: **a great voice and musical dexterity, fabulous personality and stage presence, and he’s extremely handsome to boot!**



James’ killer young band, featuring award winner, Danny Janklow on alto sax, was right up to James’ level of expertise. Opening with an upbeat Thelonious Monk blues, they showed what they were made of and had a chance to solo and stretch out before James came on stage. **But from the moment James appeared, he had the overflowing audience firmly in his extremely capable hands. His performance was absolutely riveting!** I found myself wanting to see what the other musicians were doing, but couldn’t take my eyes off of James when he was onstage.

Many of James’ renditions of standards like *Lullaby of Birdland*, *Too Close for Comfort*, & *Come Back to Me*, were basically Mel’s arrangements, but with a twist from James. He also did a few contemporary tunes like Stevie Wonder’s, *Looking in the Mirror*, made famous by Michael Jackson. It’s so refreshing to hear such a young singer scatting and putting his stamp on classic standards as well as choosing the best of what contemporary music has to offer.

Swinging at the Haven was a great vehicle for Danny Janklow and his sax. It’s easy to see why he was chosen as the top saxophone player at the North America Saxophone Alliance Competition in 2010. Pairing Janklow with bassist, Ryan Cross on the opener was delightful and pianist, Sam Barsh, with a mostly deadpan expression, let his capable fingers handle the emotions. Drummer, Robert Perkins who works with Michael Bublé, had a chance to shine on *Dat Dare*.

During the afternoon, Tormé made reference to his father and other terrific musicians who have recently passed. It was reassuring to note that although we have lost some great ones, we have wonderful, young musicians like those we heard that afternoon to keep Jazz, our national treasure, alive.



SIMON REDLEY

Review

James Tormé: Love For Sale

Big shoes to fill, has young James. Son of the late, great jazz singer Mel Tormé, who for many years paired up with pianist George Shearing. The latter I had the pleasure of seeing in concert some years back.

The burden of being from a famous parent who was or is in the same game as you; is you are forever going to be compared to their celebrated talent.

In the case of James Tormé, that is far from being a problem. **He is a superb singer**, if you enjoy smooth jazz, and like guys such as Buble and Connick Jr. More to James than that though. **He has soul.**

His cover of Michael Jackson's **"Rock With You,"** is just lovely. On paper, a car crash waiting to happen. Tackling such a big song from an icon of pop. But on record **it's a triumph**, and has already been in the US charts at number 11. The public clearly agreeing with me.

With his album released here end of August, I'd have thought "Rock With You," had Radio 2 Playlist all over it. He has made the song his own, but mainly stayed true to the original. Strange how it sounds like it could have been written just for him. It has won praise from MJ's musical director Michael Bearden, and James was lucky enough to get an invite to watch rehearsals for Jacko's "This Is it," shows. I think Michael would have really dug this version had he ever have got to hear it.

He also tackles Al Green's timeless soul ballad **"Let's Stay Together"**, the opener of this 13-track album. Again, **a clever and finely crafted job. Faultless vocals and phrasing to die for, on the entire CD.**

He has more soul, more jazz and is a little less commercial than Buble, but as good a voice as that very successful man. **He is a master at vocal restraint and control.** He delivers amazingly fast scat singing, like Ella on an LSD trip! If it hasn't been souped up with studio technology, he is a genius! But for me, it is a little over used on the album, perhaps.

There's are some very fine trumpet and piano solos dotted across this album, and the entire ensemble give James world class backing. The piano solo on "Autumn Leaves," is very much in the style of Buddy Greco. The Cole Porter classic, "Love For Sale," comes at us at 100mph, set on a Latin, piano-based track. **James in fine vocal form, delivering immaculate phrasing and clever scat singing.** Putting me in mind of Buddy again, for vocal phrasing and sheer class. Set on lush strings and featuring a fab trumpet solo, "A Better Day Will Come," provides a sweeter side of his vocal.

For James, his late Father was his main inspiration. He spent time in the UK with his mother, actress Janette Scott and grandmother Dame Thora Hird, and in LA with his Father. Alongside his Dad,

James spent time with some of the greatest musicians in jazz history, such as Duke Ellington, Sammy Davis Jr., Peggy Lee and Buddy Rich. Their influence clearly rubbed off.

No stranger to these shores, in May this year he performed on Radio 2 from the Cheltenham Jazz Festival, as part of the celebration of Ray Charles and his music.

The New York Post said 39-year-old James was: “Definitely his Father’s son, smooth and cool.....has made Comin’ Home Baby his own.” They refer to his Dad’s big hit song, which James treats us to at track nine here. Dare I say, it is as good, if not better than the original and as good a version as I’ve ever heard. More scat singing, and a fine horn solo. I am sure Mel would be proud of young James. Brave choice, as he is sure to be compared to his Father. He should not have any problems with that though.

The Alan Jay Lerner song, “*Come Back To Me*,” has a fine big band horn arrangement and another classy vocal performance. The whole album swings like a bitch one minute, with blistering big band arrangements that Neil Hefti would have been proud of. **Then snuggles up to a candlelit, intimate atmosphere that would aid any seduction scene.**

He is adept at writing too, his original “One Or The Other,” a well crafted song that fits him well. **His musical vocabulary was born out of the music of his father and his contemporaries – Ella Fitzgerald, Carmen McRae, Nat “King” Cole – mixed with influences from his own childhood like Michael Jackson, Earth, Wind and Fire, James Taylor and Bonnie Raitt.** He says: “Growing up in England, things like Jamiroquai and The Brand New Heavies showed that it was possible to keep the jazz textures I grew up with – brass, strings and woodwinds – in my music, yet let it remain totally fresh at the same time.”

He assembled a strong team for the recording, including jazz composer and trumpet virtuoso John Daversa, and veteran musician/producer/arranger David Paich to take on the production duties. A fine job, and I have to say the arrangements make James’ job so much easier as a vocalist, and should get much credit. Both guys are second generation musicians, as the sons of celebrated trumpeter Jay Daversa and legendary arranger Marty Paich. Clearly, like James, **it is all in the genes...**

Arts & Entertainment



Santa Barbara Jazz Society to Showcase Singer *James Torme* Son of the Legendary “Velvet Fog”



Who knew? That singer Mel Torme, who died in 1999 and was considered an international jazz icon, had musical progeny. One son Steve is an alternative singer/guitarist; but son James Torme is a jazz vocalist who is carrying on the legacy of his legendary father, who was affectionately nicknamed “The Velvet Fog.” The Santa Barbara Jazz Society is showcasing the young Torme — along with his quartet, featuring saxophonist Danny Janklow — on its monthly Sunday afternoon concert on September 16 from 1 to 4 p.m. at SOhO. In his recently released album, *Love for Sale*, which covers classic jazz and pop songs, Torme put a new spin on some old classics. “I think it has a lot more value if you’re bringing something new to it and reinterpreting it, which is really what my father did as a song stylist,” Torme says. “I think it’s fun to challenge yourself to not only satisfy the intentions of the original writer, but also to do something very fresh.” Although his parents weren’t wild about him becoming a singer, because of the lifestyle involved, he had spent much of his childhood listening to his father sing and hanging out with the likes of Ella Fitzgerald, Sammy Davis Jr., Peggy Lee and Nat King

Cole. The decision was almost inherent. But even after deciding to be a musician, Torme says he didn’t want to “ride the shoulders of his father into any sort of parade,” and originally set out to be more of an R&B singer, but eventually came around to the idea of singing jazz. “It was just irresistible for me to leave as much as I can of this legacy that I grew up with to my own generation, future generations — and, of course, to hopefully please the long-term fans of the genre that followed my dad so loyally.” SOhO, 1221 State St. For more information, call 962-7776 or check online at www.sbjazz.org

SANTA BARBARA NEWS-PRESS



newspress.com

Filling big, shiny shoes

by Josef Woodard, News-Press Correspondent
September 19, 2012

Try as we might have to keep an open mind and open, objective ears, most members in the closed-packed, sold-out crowd at SOhO on Sunday afternoon couldn't help but nurse a skeptical mindframe when first encountering the artist known as **James Tormé**, aka son of the late master singer Mel. Could he possibly measure up to the old man? Needless to say, the young-ish Tormé, a 39-year-old whose music career is starting to heat up with the release of his debut album "Love for Sale" has a formidable name and reputation to live up to and/or represent, especially considering that, like Frank Sinatra Jr., he is steering down a very similar artistic path as his famous father.

We're happy to report that this **Tormé has much to offer**, on his own and as a latter-day extender of the nostalgic, **Great American Songbook-wielding front man**. A handsome chap, waxing shamelessly nostalgic in his "Rat Pack"-ish tight black and white suit, Mr. Tormé in the way of **skilled musicality, a natural improviser's skill** (and the scattling factor can be a downfall in many an otherwise fine jazz singer), and a certain Vegas-ready suavity with **self-effacing humor** to keep the flies of slickness away. Over the course of two sets, abetted by a **stellar young band**, Mr. Tormé won a lot of fans on this day in this town.

This was the monthly gathering of the Santa Barbara Jazz Society, presenting Sunday afternoon gigs mostly featuring vocalists and musicians from the region. But **this particular confab was something special**, and turned out to be more special than some bargained for. Members of Mr. Tormé's family, including his sister and stepmother, were also in the house, adding to the hovering aura of the patriarch's presence, once generationally removed.

Sunday's fine show kicked off with "Rhythm-a-ning", an instrumental appetizer of Monk-ish swing, **putting the crowd in the proper mood to be wowed**. Mr Tormé's impressive band, with ace 23-year-old alto saxist Danny Janklow, versatile pianist Sam Barsh, bassist Ryan Cross and drummer Robert Perkins, provided the kind of solidity and flexibility a good singer needs to put across a "voice" - from a specific vocal instrument to the broader musical concept at hand.

No doubt, his timing on the general musical scene is ripe and right, given the phenomena of younger old school jazz-pop singers such as Michael Buble (whose sound Tormé's resembles), but that family name doesn't hurt open doors, either. **But he is a real deal, who can move from the worlds of Cole Porter, Antonio Carlos Jobim ("Wave"), Michael Jackson (by way of Stevie Wonder, via the song "I can't help it"), Bacharach and Hal David ("What's New, Pussycat?") and, yes, Mel Tormé**. From his father's oeuvre, James called on songs such as "Comin' Home, Baby". and from his dad's 1960 album "Swinging On The Moon", "No Moon At All", and the title track- "written by our father, who art in heaven", quipped the son- here dedicated to the late Neil Armstrong, with winking proto-space age wit in lines such as "let's have a honeymoon on the moon, honey".

For an encore, following a set-closing uptempo, philosophically meaningful gust of "It Don't Mean a Thing(if it Ain't Got That Swing)" Mr. Tormé sat down for a voice-and-piano visit to the Cole Porter songbook, and the dulcet balladic strains of "Looking At You". **In short, the general impression rendered at SOhO was that, given this singer's quite together and tradition-stoking act, the Tormé family business appears to be continuing on into the future, apace.**

James Torme Steps Into His Father's Legacy

by NPR STAFF

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James Torme's new album is titled *Love for Sale*.

Courtesy of the artist

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Weekend Edition Sunday

June 26, 2011

Singer James Tormé, son of the legendary entertainer Mel Tormé, just released his new album, *Love for Sale*. The record covers classic jazz and pop songs from artists such as [Michael Jackson](#) and [Cole Porter](#). Tormé tells *Weekend Edition Sunday* guest host Susan Stamberg that he wanted to put a new spin on some old classics.

"I think it has a lot more value if you're bringing something new to it and reinterpreting it, which is really what my father did as a song stylist," Tormé says. "I think it's fun to challenge yourself to not only satisfy the intentions of the original writer, but also to do something very fresh."

Tormé says his parents weren't wild about him becoming a singer, because the life of a traveling musician isn't easy. His father was married four times and warned him that "absence makes the heart wander." In spite of his parents' misgivings, he says, in a lot of ways he couldn't help but soak up the music. He spent much of his childhood listening to his father sing and hanging out with an array of talented artists, including [Ella Fitzgerald](#), [Sammy Davis Jr.](#), [Peggy Lee](#) and [Nat King Cole](#).

But even after he decided he wanted to be a musician, Tormé says he didn't want to "ride the shoulders of [his] father into any sort of parade." He originally set out to be more of an R&B singer, but eventually came around to the idea of singing jazz.

"It was just irresistible for me to [want to] leave as much as I can of this legacy that I grew up with to my own generation, future generations — and, of course, to hopefully please the long-term fans of the genre that followed my dad so loyally."

<http://www.npr.org/2011/06/26/137401019/james-torm-steps-into-his-fathers-legacy>

Aiken Standard

Augusta Orchestra performs annual holiday pops concert

By Dr. TOM MACK Feature columnist

Friday, December 09, 2011

"My dad was a hero to me, and his lifelong love affair with music inspired my own," James Tormé said of his famous father Mel Tormé, the noted jazz singer and composer. "He was impressing musical tastes and ideas on me from very early on, and I am endlessly grateful for that."

Indeed, through his father, James Tormé met other veteran musical performers like Bing Crosby, Duke Ellington and Ella Fitzgerald. It is not surprising, therefore, that he would eventually consider following in his parent's footsteps and pursue a singing career himself.

Yet, at the time he first began performing professionally, James Tormé envisioned a personal repertoire mostly combining both pop music and rhythm and blues. All that changed when he chose as an encore piece at one of his live concerts "Round Midnight," a jazz standard composed by Thelonious Monk in 1944.

"The responses to that song changed the course of my career," Tormé notes. "I wanted to leave this musical legacy - classic jazz - to my own generation and realized it was my destiny to do that during those early shows in Los Angeles. No question about it."

Saturday night, James Tormé and his trio come to Aiken as the featured performers in this year's annual holiday pops concert by the Symphony Orchestra Augusta at USC Aiken's Etherredge Center. Titled "Home for the Holidays," the concert, under the direction of Maestro Shizuo KuwahTorméara, also features the Augusta Children's Chorale.

The highlight of tomorrow's concert, however, is bound to be the appearance of James Tormé, and the high point of his personal performance is sure to be a rendering of his father's immensely popular holiday composition "The Christmas Song."

Written in July of 1944, this audience favorite with music by Mel Tormé and lyrics by Tormé and Bob Wells began, oddly enough, as an exercise to "stay cool by thinking cool" in the middle of the summer. In his account of the song's genesis, Mel Tormé spoke of driving on a very hot day to Wells' house in Toluca Lake, Calif., where he saw on the piano the opening stanza: "Chestnuts roasting on an open fire/Jack Frost nipping at your nose/Yuletide carols being sung by a choir/And folks dressed up like Eskimos." Thinking that Wells' text had promise, Tormé claimed that the two of them sat down at the keyboard and wrote the complete song in just 45 minutes. Recorded by Nat King Cole three times from 1946 to 1961 and Mel Tormé himself four times from 1954 to 1992, the song is now firmly entrenched as a seasonal standard.

Other songs to be performed by James Tormé and his trio at the holiday concert will most likely be selections from his debut album titled "Love for Sale," which includes an eclectic mix of tunes from such diverse artists as Cole Porter - the composer of the title track - and Michael Jackson - Tormé does a jazzy version of "Rock with You."

Of his first recording effort, Tormé said, "I think it has a lot more value if you are bringing something new to it and reinterpreting it, which is really what my father did as a song stylist. It is fun to challenge yourself not only to satisfy the intentions of the original writer but also to do something very fresh."

In addition to his reinterpreted standards, there are also a number of original compositions by James on the CD. A Los Angeles Daily News reviewer praised Tormé's "pleasantly soft tenor that gives this swinging collection of standards, funk faves and original compositions a listenability not always heard on jazz albums."

Tormé now tours the world, playing a variety of venues, from small supper clubs - these performances feature his trio: Brandon Coleman, pianist; Ryan Cross, bassist; and Robert Perkins, drummer - to large concert halls with full orchestra.

The Symphony Orchestra Augusta's three-concert season in Aiken is sponsored each year by the Aiken Symphony Guild, a group of local supporters who banded together more than 20 years ago to bring orchestral music to our community. Each year, the Guild sponsors three public performances by the SOA at the Etherredge Center along with a special concert free of charge for all fifth-grade students in Aiken and Edgefield counties.

The Augusta Chronicle

Tormé has a musical gift in mind for Augusta audience

By Lisa Kaylor Correspondent

Wednesday, Dec. 7, 2011

“Tis the season for sparkling holiday music, and James Tormé will bring it in style to Symphony Orchestra Augusta’s Holiday Pops! at the Bell on Friday, Dec. 9.

Tormé has a Christmas jazz concert planned for the Augusta audience that is unlike anything he has performed before.

“I don’t think I’ve ever been more excited for a concert than I am for this one. It will truly be an exciting journey through a winter wonderland,” he said.

For starters, he will be backed not only by the symphony but also a trio consisting of bassist Ryan Cross, who has recorded with Grammy winner Alicia Keys, drummer Lyndon Rochelle, who performs with jazz musician Esperanza Spalding, and Los Angeles sensation Nikos Syropoulos on piano.

He will be accompanied by a 60-adult chorus and the Augusta Children’s Chorale to help him sing some well-loved Christmas carols.

“There will be multiple Christmas legacies in the show,” Tormé said.

The son of jazz legend Mel Tormé, he will perform his father’s *The Christmas Song (Chestnuts Roasting on an Open Fire)*, arguably one of the most popular Christmas songs of all time.

But he will also perform two other, little-known Christmas songs written by his father – each can hold its own next to that Christmas classic, he said.

One of the songs, *Christmas Was Made for Children*, was to be recorded by Bing Crosby, but he died before he could record it, Tormé said.

The opportunity to share his father’s legacy and music is very close to his heart. As a child, he was bounced on the knees of Ella Fitzgerald, Buddy Rich, Olivia de Havilland and others he knew only as his parents’ friends.

His father instilled in him a love of music and steeped him in jazz. But Tormé also fell in love with the popular music of his childhood, from singers such as Michael Jackson, Bonnie Raitt and Earth, Wind and Fire. He has taken all of those influences and incorporated them into his own sense of jazz.

It incorporates the music of the 1920s, that of his father’s era, and of this era, and blends it into an art form that honors the elder Tormé’s legacy while giving him something from his own to pass on to the next generation.

“This is our American culture. It should be preserved and celebrated and passed on from generation to generation,” he said.

In addition to Mel Tormé’s Christmas music, the concert will honor Alfred Burt, a largely unrecognized composer who wrote 15 Christmas carols in his lifetime. Only one was recorded before his death in 1954.

Friday’s concert is Tormé’s Christmas gift to his audience, and hopefully to a new crop of fans. It’s a moment of Tormé Christmas magic in the midst of the bustle of the holiday season.

“Anyone who misses the sort of magic of Christmastime that they remember from their childhood in a world that is increasingly sterilized should be at this concert,” he said.

Tormé will also perform at the Aiken Symphony Guild’s Holiday Pops Concert at 8 p.m. Saturday at the USC Aiken Etherredge Center.

SANTA BARBARA NEWS-PRESS



IN CONCERT: Father and Son Know Best - James Tormé, son of the late, great Mel, appears with an ace band at SOhO, in this month's meeting of the Santa Barbara Jazz Society

By Josef Woodard, News-Press Correspondent September 14, 2012 12:17 PM

IN CONCERT

James Tormé

When: 1-4 p.m., Sunday

Where: SOhO, 1221 State St. (upstairs)

Cost: \$12 for members, \$20 for non-members, \$7 for musicians and students

Tickets: 962-7776, www.sohosb.com, www.sbjazz.org



A jazz-pop singer who goes by the family name Tormé has some big lineal shoes to fill and comparisons to meet, and the 39-year-old James, son of Mel, is presently **busy making a name for himself, to impressive ends**. Last year, Mr. Tormé the Younger, put out his debut album, "Love for Sale," and essentially showed what he's made of, a **nicely integrated blend of jazz, pop, and originals, in an all acoustic, old school jazz format**.

This Sunday afternoon at SOhO, the singer who seems to be **finding his groove** in midstream makes his official Santa Barbara debut as the featured artist in this month's meeting of the Santa Barbara Jazz Society. He'll bring along an ace, young band, including 23-year-old saxophonist Danny Janklow, pianist Sam Barsh, bassist Ryan Cross (with Alicia Keys on his resume) and drummer Robert Perkins, who, fittingly has also played with the jazz-infused pop singer Michael Buble.

We caught up with Mr. Tormé on the phone from his home in Sherman Oaks this week where he lives, close to the Mulholland meets Beverly Glen neighborhood that is home to Herb Alpert's Vibrato club, where the singer did his first "jazz" gig just five years ago. He is in town after having played various gigs in the UK — where he mostly grew up with his mother, British actress Janette Scott. In England, in sync with a notable popularity and attention given his new album, Mr. Tormé's recent work included shows with the BBC Concert Orchestra and the Ronnie Scott Big Band. He is headed back there this fall. Closer to SoCal home, he will soon make his Las Vegas debut at the invitation of British-born Vegas icon, Clint Holmes.

He is a jazz singer with a touch of the subtle, purist approach at the heart of it, but also has his senses timed with the here and now and can be reached at Facebook, Twitter, the World Wide Web and all the usual cyber-places where artists hang their shingles these days.

News-Press: You do have a multiple, or blended personality, in terms of covering what might be considered jazz and pop material. Is that fair to say?

James Tormé: **My dad, who of course influenced me a lot**, was himself influenced mostly by the music of his childhood, which was from about 1925 — literally, because he was listening intently to things when he was not even a year old. He was an exception to the rule, in that way. I have all those influences, plus everything else since then. My father kept the music of his childhood close to him, and that was the music he concentrated on. It was the music he loved the most, and he did that rain or shine, so to speak, whether or not the music was in or out of favor. He had to ride out long periods when nobody really wanted to hear jazz too much. This was during the rock and roll insurgency that happened in the mid-50s onwards, really. I didn't have to contend with any of that, although I'm working in a time when there's a market that is much more diverse and competitive, with many more players in the game. At least I don't have to contend with the invasion of one genre on another. **So my influences include much more of an eclectic mixture of musical idols of mine. You have everything from my father and Duke Ellington, Count Basie, June Christie, Carmen McRae, Chris Connor, and Chet Baker, all the way through to Earth, Wind and Fire, Steely Dan and Hall and Oates and Elvis Costello, Cyndi Lauper, Bonnie Raitt, Michael Jackson, Stevie Wonder, and so on. That's more the mixed bag that I draw from.**

NP: I hear that on your album, "**Love for Sale**", on which Al Green's "Let's Stay Together" segues into Cole Porter's "Love for Sale" and Michael Jackson's "Rock with You" nuzzling up against the next track, "Autumn Leaves," for instance.

JT: Indeed. But then you hear a little bit of Michael Jackson in "Autumn Leaves," which is unique. The thing is, that the joy that I get is from re-interpreting songs. **Like my father before me, I'm a song stylist** as much as anything else. I write songs and am proud of the songs that I write, including some songs on the album. **I love the concept of having the opportunity to re-interpret somebody else's musical or lyrical notion and bringing new life to something and creating something that has never happened before, to have the story be told in a way it has never been told. All songs that are great can be done countless times by different people and remain fresh.**

NP: Do you have a shifted mindset when approaching the "Great American Songbook" versus taking on Michael Jackson or Al Green?

JT: Yes, in a way. That same mix of influences and exposures, if you will, that I have osmosized not only from my father and his contemporaries both on and off the stage, from popular music on both sides of the Atlantic, having grown up on both sides of the Atlantic, is exactly what leads me to the concept of how I approach the American Songbook. I call the repertoire of songs that I sing the "**New American Songbook.**" It has three categories. **Number one is the songs we know and love in the American songbook**, including "Come Back to Me," "Love for Sale," "What are you Doing for the Rest of Your Life." Then the **second category is songs that aren't quite as old, but have come of age, that have matured, like a wine, and belong in the New American Songbook**, in my opinion. That includes the great Al Green and Smoky Robinson songs. Other songs that I do from that era include "Walk on By" and "What's New, Pussycat?" The **third category is brand new original songs**, which I think are worthy of inclusion in the American Songbook. **It's almost like you've already heard them when you hear them for the first time.** There were 65 people involved in the making of this album, and **everything you hear was played by a live musician.** There are no synthesizers. **I do everything under the roof of what I think my father would approve of, whether I like it or not.** I just do the best I can by making sure everything is on a certain level. **I have to have a certain purity with my approach.**

NP: At your SOhO show on Sunday, will you be leaning on the more "old school jazz" component of your songbook you're describing?

JT: Absolutely, since it is for the Santa Barbara Jazz Society. But to be fair, **the jazz influence in most of what I do is always clear.** It's like when you peel away layers of an onion, you get that shallot that's in the middle. With me, that's probably being somewhat of a jazz singer, because I like to improvise a lot and my influences are a bunch of people who I think, it's fair to say, are jazz singers. I literally grew up on the laps of people like Ella Fitzgerald, Peggy Lee, Gerry Mulligan, Buddy Rich, Artie Shaw, even Barry Manilow. That's not to mention Jack Jones, Vic Damone, all that crowd. That's where I grew up. But I'm much younger and **I love pop music of my own generation.** I love Prince and Maxwell and Van Hunt and various people around now.

NP: Looking at the larger context of the current music scene, there are several jazz or strongly jazz-fueled male singers making good, such as Michael Buble, Jamie Cullum, John Pizzarelli, Kurt Elling and others. This does seem like a fairly good period for the jazz male vocalist, whereas not so much in years past.

JT: You may be right about that. Certainly, some of the names you mentioned have helped to pave the way for artists such as myself, and I'm very grateful for that. We all share a love of a group of influences that we value, a lot of which is steeped in the past. But everyone you just mentioned has the **ability to make it new, to breathe new life into it by way of just their own style and the uniqueness of their own phrasing and interpretation.** I'm very fortunate, because I have been helped out a little bit by Sir Michael Parkinson in England, who was instrumental in getting Jamie Cullum out there. I met Jamie recently, because we were at the Cheltenham Jazz Festival together, playing with the BBC Concert Orchestra there. It was a wonderful concert we did along with Gregory Porter and Madeleine Bell, on the theme of the life of Ray Charles. I will be doing two of those songs that I sang in that BBC concert at the SOhO club.

NP: Generally, you seem to be in a good groove in your musical life at this point. Is that your feeling?

JT: I am. You caught me on a good day, my friend. I am in a good moment. **I'm very, very fortunate.** I have assembled a great time around me in my career, where all these amazing possibilities are opening, with some great seeds in the UK, which is the new thing. I've been accepted and embraced over there. I'm half-English, so it's great to be recognized over there. But I am a west coast chauvinist, Southern California Los Angeleno, who approaches the entire concept of identification with a "blood is thicker than water" attitude.

The best secondhand songs

When great singers cover a hit, the results can be sublime. Post music critic Dan Aquilante Picks his top 40 of the past decade (in no particular order).

By DAN AQUILANTE

August 13, 2011

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20. Pink, “Highway to Hell” (AC/DC): The five power chords and pile-driver drums are still at the hard core of this metal classic, yet Pink raises hell — and the ante — by adding she-devil vocal fuel to the brimstone.

21. Madonna, “American Pie” (Don McLean): In what still remains one of the more complex suites in pop music, Madonna gives new life to a dusty classic with a synthesizer arrangement that’s refreshing.

22. Cee-Lo Green, “No One’s Gonna Love You” (Band of Horses): Cee-Lo’s R&B roots gives this love song soul power.

23. Fiona Apple, “Across the Universe” (The Beatles): Working a Beatles classic is dangerous ground because our ears are tuned to the Fab Four, but Apple is safe twisting this one into a seductive lullaby.

24. **James Tormé “Comin’ Home Baby”** (Mel Tormé) : James Tormé is definitely his father’s son — smooth and cool. But in his redo, Mel’s kid lightens up on the syncopation and **digs into the tune’s blues-rock foundation.** “My dad recorded the original in 1962,” Tormé says. “His label gave him a list of rehashed rock tunes they wanted him to sing. He wasn’t very happy about recording ‘Comin’ Home Baby,’ so it made him crazy when it kept climbing the charts, week after week. He ranted about ‘that piece of rock crap.’ When I heard the song as a kid, my reaction was totally opposite. I thought ‘Cool, my dad is singing rock.’ All these years later I know that song is better suited for my style.

25. Kid Rock & Jerry Lee Lewis, “Honky Tonk Woman” (the Rolling Stones): The cowbell whacks, guitar slides and Mick’s wailing meet their match on this roadhouse rave. Lewis’ piano is extraordinary.

26. Alan Jackson, “Summertime Blues” (Eddie Cochran): Adding hat-act twang to this rockabilly classic doesn’t hurt it a lick.

27. John Fogerty with Bruce Springsteen, “When Will I Be Loved” (Everly Brothers): Fogerty and Springsteen are classic rock legends who turn this early rock classic into a party.

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http://www.nypost.com/p/entertainment/music/the_best_cover_songs_7aoPvY194RsyzJvjvQG9GL