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# THE PRESTIGE AWARD

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## FOR 2009

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**W**hen you say someone has *prestige* or is *prestigious* you are generally referring to the level of respect at which one is regarded by others, a person's high standing among others or the individual's widely recognized prominence, distinction, or importance in his or her field.

The *Prestige Award* is intended for an individual who brings prominence to the region and has obtained national recognition. It is a celebration of their accomplishments and their stature as a role model. It is recognition of their demonstrated successes and their consistent ability to establish their brand through their many diverse projects.

This is only the second year that the Top 100 MBE Awards includes a *Prestige Award*. Last year we presented our first *Prestige Award* to actor/director/producer Charles "Roc" Dutton. That evening Mr. Dutton was so impressed by our program that he offered to do a fund raiser for the Center for Business Inclusion and Diversity. On Saturday, September 19th, he performed his one man show – "From Yale to Jail". It was an awesome performance.

The 2009 Top 100 MBE *Prestige Award* winner is equally prestigious. The winner of this year's *Prestige Award* is jazz musician extraordinaire and entrepreneur, Maryland native, **Kim Waters**. We congratulate Mr. Waters on this award and wish him continuing success in his musical career and his business ventures.

## Kim Waters

**K**im Waters is no newcomer to the music business. For close to two decades the saxophonist, composer and producer has been one of the premier architects of Urban Smooth Jazz and a beacon of light in contemporary jazz.

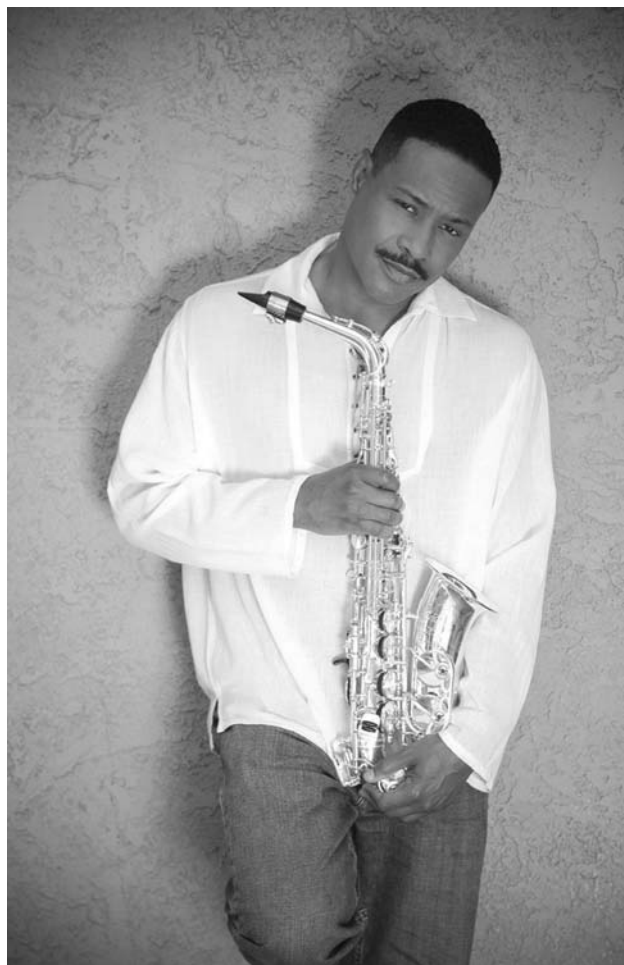
He has amassed record sales of over a million albums and ranks among the top five best-selling jazz instrumentalists. In his music, Waters' has fine-tuned the perfect combination of sensitivity and brawn, intellect and emotion and technique and soulfulness. It is these winning combinations, along with his sincere dedication and love for his craft that have enabled him to score top-ten singles on all of his albums. Waters commanding ability to transcend the musical boundaries of jazz, pop and R&B have made him one of the most sought-after musicians in contemporary jazz. "The most incredible gift is to be able to do something of value that makes people happy and music has the ability to do that like nothing else. I have been blessed to share what I love with the world," notes Waters.

The critically acclaimed saxophonist celebrates his 20th anniversary as a recording artist with the ultimate love collection, *I Want You: Love in the Spirit of Marvin*, paying homage to one of his musical heroes, Marvin Gaye. The saxman tapped into the Marvin vibe last year with his vibrant, party-ready cover of "Got To Give It Up" (from *You Are My Lady*), which *Jazz Times* called "downright infectious." On *I Want You*, Waters mixes old school R&B textures and contemporary hip-hop with his trademark, sensual as always, playing to fashion a unique kind of tribute. Rather than simply doing a set of Marvin covers, he uses his dreamy, candlelit twist on the title) and a soaring, passionate take on the classic "Distant Lover" as a springboard for nine originals that, as the album subtitle promises, spread true love in the spirit of Marvin.

The musical essence of Marvin takes Waters back to his childhood in Maryland, where his father, a Marvin Gaye fanatic, turned the young saxman on to Gaye's albums even as he was absorbing the jazz influences of Sonny Stitt, Cannonball Adderley, John Coltrane and Coleman Hawkins (later influences included David Sanborn and Grover Washington, Jr.). Waters can't specifically remember the first Marvin song he ever heard, but he thinks it very well might have been "Let's Get It On."

The first single from *I Want You* shipped to radio was "Take Me Away," whose silky verses mixtures of passion and eloquence, while the seductive closer "Smooth Sailing" lives up to the rhythmic flow that inspired its name.

As well as being a solo act, he is part of *The Sax Pack*—Waters' triple threat touring and recording ensemble with fellow horn greats Jeff Kashiwa and Steve Cole—which took him to the top of the Radio & Records chart earlier in 2008 with "Fallin' For You," the kickoff single from their self titled disc that stayed at #1 for two months and is one of the biggest smooth jazz tracks of the year.



In addition to his musical successes, Waters is now an entrepreneur. He recently announced that he is co-owner and Vice President of a new cognac brand "Celebrity Jazz Cognac," being imported from France and distributed by Republic Distribution Company.

Growing up in a musical family, Waters picked up his first instrument, the violin, at age eight, but eventually switched to alto and soprano saxes at 13 because "the violin didn't go over too well with the fellas." His switch to the horns led to playing in a band with his brothers James and Eric and his old friend Cyrus Chestnut, who later became a well respected pianist and artist in his own right. While the former all-star high school basketball high point guard could have pursued a career on the courts, Waters focused on music and began his career as a sideman to a wide variety of jazz and R&B acts, from Alex Bugnon and Isaac Hayes to Phyllis Hyman and Teddy Riley.

Waters launched his solo career with a series of R&B recordings on the Warlock label (beginning with 1989's *Sweet and Saxy*), and has sold over a million units of both his original material and thematic projects like his sax tribute to The Platters. He recently relocated to Sacramento, California from his longtime home in Aberdeen, Maryland but continues his affinity for recording in the home studio setting.

Waters says, "Whether I'm doing my latest CD or performing live at my own shows or these past few years with The Sax Pack, the most rewarding thing is to be able to contribute something of value to the world which affects people positively and makes them happy. Music has that ability like nothing else in the world."