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Russell Malone Biography

Russell Malone was born on November 8, 1963 in Albany, Georgia. His first exposure to music was in the Church. "The music was not sophisticated, but there was so much spirit!" he explains. "They didn't always have instruments either, mostly drums, tambourines, and a washboard with a coat hanger...people do not know what soul music is until they see those Church people singing."

Soon, guitar was incorporated into the Church music and Russell found himself fascinated by it. Before he was five, his mother bought him a toy guitar, and he began copying the Church players. At ten, Russell developed an interest in the blues and country music after seeing such musicians as Chet Atkins, Glen Campbell, Johnny Cash, Roy Clark, B.B. King and particularly, George Benson, perform on television. Ultimately, it was Jazz that Russell chose to play: sitting next to the record player and playing along, that's how I learned jazz, he notes. He became a self-taught player influenced by players such as B.B. King, Wes Montgomery, George Benson, Kenny Burrell, and dozens of others whom he discovered through voracious research.

Russell first worked with master Jazz organist Jimmy Smith in 1988, and between 1990 and 1994 toured with Harry Connick, Jr. During the late nineties Malone toured internationally with Diana Krall, receiving critical acclaim in his role as Diana's right hand both in concert and on her recordings. Russell has also shared the stage with artists of the caliber of Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson, Claude Fiddler Williams, Bucky Pizzarelli, Jack McDuff, John Hicks, Clarence Carter, Little Anthony, Freddie Cole, Mulgrew Miller, Kenny Barron, Roy Hargrove, Cyrus Chestnut and Patti Austin. Malone was also a featured performer in Robert Altman's 1996 film "Kansas City."

His first recordings as a leader were made for Columbia: *Russell Malone* (1992), *Black Butterfly* (1993) and *Wholly Cats* (1994). Later, he became exclusive with Impulse-Universal, for which he has recorded *Sweet Georgia Peach* (1998), *Look Who's Here!* (2000), and *Heartstrings* (2001.) He has also played a prominent role in Diana Krall's recordings, such as the Grammy-nominated *All For You* and *Love Scenes*. Russell Malone has recorded with countless artists, including Harry Connick Jr., Branford Marsalis, Benny Green, Kenny Barron, Don Braden and Etta Jones. Russell Malone's debut CD on the Maxjazz label entitled *Playground* was released in April 2004. This recording features Mr. Malone's working quartet.