

Hailed by the New York Times as “one of the greatest musicians in jazz history,” Grammy Award winning saxophone giant **Joe Lovano** has distinguished himself for some three decades as a prescient and path finding force in the arena of creative music. The secret to Lovano’s success is his fearless ability to push the conceptual and thematic choices he has made in his quest to find new modes of artistic expression within the jazz idiom.

Since 2009, Lovano’s main vehicle for his exploration has been **Us Five** a dynamic young band—which features drummers **Otis Brown III** and **Francisco Mela**, bassist **Esperanza Spalding**, and pianist **James Weidman**. The band’s most recent release - ***Bird Songs***—Lovano’s 22nd album for **Blue Note Records** (the release of which marked his 20th year on the label) is an exploration of the Charlie Parker songbook that breaks the mold of Bird tribute records. “I didn’t approach this as a tribute record,” states Joe Lovano, dispelling right off the bat any preconception that his latest album is a mere retread. In 2011 the **JJA (Jazz Journalist’s Association)** named ***Bird Songs* Recording of the the Year** and named Us Five **Small Ensemble of the Year**. It was also the **Downbeat Editor’s Pick** for **Album of the Year**. **Us Five’s** debut recording—2009’s ***Folk Art***—was a wide-ranging set of Lovano’s original compositions that resulted in Us Five being awarded Best Small Ensemble of the Year at the 2010 JJA Jazz Awards and winning the **Best Jazz Group of the Year** category in the 2010 **DownBeat Critics Poll**. Lovano completed a double-triple of awards by also winning the JJA’s Musician and Tenor Saxophonist of the Year, and **DownBeat’s Jazz Artist** and **Tenor Saxophonist of the Year**.

Lovano was born in Cleveland, Ohio in 1952, and began playing alto saxophone as a child. A prophetic infant photo of Lovano shows him cradled in his mother’s arms along with a saxophone. His father, tenor saxophonist **Tony “Big T” Lovano**, schooled Lovano not only in the basics, but in dynamics and interpretation, and regularly exposed him to live performances of international jazz artists such as **Sonny Stitt, James Moody, Dizzy Gillespie, Gene Ammons**, and **Rahsaan Roland Kirk**.

Upon graduation from high school he attended the famed **Berklee College of Music** in Boston. Lovano’s early professional gigs were as a sideman with organists **Lonnie Smith, Brother Jack McDuff**, and a three-year tour with the **Woody Herman Thundering Herd** from 1976 to 1979.

After leaving Herman’s band, Lovano settled in New York City where he eventually joined the **Mel Lewis Orchestra** for its regular Monday night concert at the **Village Vanguard**; playing from 1980 to 1992 - recording six albums with the Orchestra.

To this day, Lovano finds time for very special performances with the Vanguard band and recently paid tribute to **Thad Jones** with Thad’s brother **Hank Jones**, on the **Grammy nominated**, 2007 release, ***Kids: live at Dizzy’s Club Coca-Cola***.

Lovano joined the **Paul Motian** band in 1981 and has since worked and collaborated with **John Scofield, Herbie Hancock, Elvin Jones, Charlie Haden, Carla Bley, Bobby Hutcherson, Billy Higgins, Dave Holland, Ed Blackwell, Michel Petrucciani, Lee Konitz, Abbey Lincoln, Tom Harrell, McCoy Tyner, Ornette Coleman, Jim Hall, Bob Brookmeyer** and many more.

Lovano's illustrious relationship with **Blue Note Records** began in 1991 and includes eight **Grammy nominations** with a win in the **Best Large Ensemble** category for 2000's **52nd Street Themes**.

Also In recent years, Lovano has spent a good deal of time collaborating, both in the studio and the concert hall, with two other premier tenor saxophonists of his generation - **Dave Liebman** and the late **Michael Brecker** in the collective **Saxophone Summit**. Their first release **Gathering of the Spirits** was released in 2004 on **Telarc**. After the untimely passing of Michael Brecker, Lovano and Liebman were joined by **Ravi Coltrane** on their acclaimed sophomore release, **Seraphic Light**.

In early 2008, Joe replaced **Joshua Redman** in the tenor saxophone chair of the touring and studio ensemble, the **SFJazz Collective**. Also in the Collective were trumpeter **Dave Douglas**, trombonist **Robin Eubanks**, and fellow Blue Note Recording Artist vibraphonist **Stefon Harris**. They joined **Miguel Zenon**, **Renee Rosnes**, **Matt Penman** and **Eric Harland** in this popular ensemble of some of today's most exciting jazz players.

Lovano's 2008 release and Grammy nominated **Symphonica** placed him in front of the world-renowned **WDR Big Band** and **WDR Rundfunke Orchestra** performing some of the saxophonist's most acclaimed and cherished compositions as arranged and conducted by **Michael Abene**.

As Ben Ratliff opined in The New York Times, "It's fair to say that (Lovano's) one of the greatest musicians in jazz history."

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