

JARROD LAWSON

It was in late 2022 that Jarrod Lawson had the biggest, and most unexpected, thrill of his music career. He had just received a glowing endorsement in print from Michelle Obama, who was asked by Entertainment Weekly who she was listening to and, after mentioning Beyonce's Renaissance album, added "There's this young jazz, blue-eyed soul kid Jarrod Lawson that I'm loving...."

At the time Jarrod, who had relocated to Nashville from his long-time base in Portland, was receiving major airplay in the US and in Europe on his remake of the Isley Brothers Seventies classic "Footsteps In The Dark", which followed his 2020 sophomore album "Be The Change".

That album, released six years after his self-titled debut, made its mark immediately, with entries at #1 on Amazon's Jazz Albums chart and at #2 on Billboard magazine's Contemporary Jazz Albums chart.

For singer/songwriter/keyboard player Lawson, who had previously worked as a stone mason and piano tuner, the appreciation of his music in his native US was particularly gratifying, since his breakthrough in 2014 had been primarily in Europe, where in a whirlwind couple of years he played festival, club and concert dates in 15 countries, including the North Sea Jazz Festival, London Jazz Festival and the world renowned Ronnie Scott's Club, as well as powering his way into the Dutch Top 40 Albums chart.

He has since performed around the world in Tokyo, Beijing, Melbourne and at Indonesia's Java Jazz festival. In the US he has played many of the leading jazz venues from New York to Seattle.

The "Be The Change" album saw Lawson accompanied by a talented band that benefited from the rhythmic presence of Grammy-nominated percussionist Sammy Figueroa. The album is a beautiful, restrained, dreamy mix of love songs, irreverence and social commentary. Describing the album as "*a masterpiece*", SoulTracks.com hailed the title track as "*an instant classic that would have fit just as comfortably in 1970 as it does in 2020*".

Lawson's trademark layered harmonies and vocal phrasing, his jazz fusion arrangements and his stunning keyboard skills are in evidence throughout, notably on title track "Be The Change", "Universal Chord" and "How Long". On the intimate "I'll Be Your Radio" he was joined by Amber Navran and her fellow members of Los Angeles alternative R&B trio Moonchild. One critic described it as "a match made in harmony heaven".

And now in 2024 Lawson has come up with an exciting new collaboration, with fast rising Los Angeles vocalist Raquel Rodriguez, on a beautiful retro soul jam "Next Move". The track had its origins in a two-day recording/writing session that he had with Rodriguez and Sam Brawner at their Blue Dream Studios in 2018. Andris Mattson from Moonchild was also in town and joined in the session.

Nothing from that session found its way onto record right away but Jarrod says “the bones of the track which eventually became ‘Next Move’ haunted me above and beyond the others, and while starting to work on my third album I decided to resuscitate that rough idea. So we got to work, refining and shaping the song, and voila six years later ‘Next Move’ became a thing”.

Rodriguez has been one of the fastest rising independent artists since she released her debut album “Sweet Side” in 2021 and it remains a staple on playlists and on radio across the globe. Like Lawson she has also built a steadily growing following in Europe.

Lawson’s earliest memories were exploring his father’s recording studio in Redwood City, California, the family home at the time. At the age of two he found his way to the drum kit, which created in him a highly rhythmic sensibility that can be witnessed in his keyboard playing to this day. At the age of eight, he moved with his family to Portland and began delving into his father’s record collection, enjoying the music of Donny Hathaway and Stevie Wonder, two giants who would inspire and inform his own development as a singer and songwriter.

At 13, as he explored the magnificent harmonies of soul, a near obsession with the piano blossomed. Lessons began under his father’s tutelage and in his quest to find his own sound he discovered the masters – from Chopin to Chick Corea, Oscar Peterson to Joni Mitchell, Ravel to Errol Garner. He went on to study music and was a member of his college chamber choir and jazz ensemble.

Following the release of his self-titled debut album the smokey-voiced singer-songwriter sent positive ripples around the globe with his powerful message songs such as “Music And Its Magical Way”, “All That Surrounds” and “Sleepwalkers”. Sold-out shows at London’s Ronnie Scott’s Club and Jazz Café and Amsterdam’s North Sea Jazz Club followed, as well as prestigious radio sessions for the BBC, including one from the historic BBC Maida Vale studios in London, where the Beatles, Jimi Hendrix, Led Zeppelin and David Bowie all played.

He appeared on Dutch television and played a number of live sessions on Dutch national radio, building a following that resulted in a Top 40 chart entry for the album, while his popularity in the UK has continued to grow with festival appearances and headline concert dates. Following the release of “*Be The Change*” he was honoured to be included in radio station Jazz FM’s Top 100 Artists of All Time, chosen by listeners, in the company of many of the jazz and soul legends he has admired since childhood. He also ended 2020 by guest hosting a two-hour show on Jazz FM, selecting his favourite tracks and artists.

“Six years have passed since his rapturously received debut album, so these tracks certainly haven’t been rushed. Au contraire, each one has been lovingly burnished to a deep-down sheen of perfection” – *London Jazz News*

“This album is his crowning achievement to date – the kind of set that really pushes him over the top and which earns the term ‘instant classic’ in our book” –
Dusty Groove, Chicago

“Jarrod Lawson delivers a masterpiece... Its sophisticated blend of soul and jazz displays again an artist who is the real deal” – *SoulTracks.com*

“Soul doesn’t get any better than this in 2020. Unquestionably Album of the Year” –
Soul Brother Records, London

“The man from Portland has repaid our patience with another wonderful selection of work...Excellence is everywhere” – *Echoes magazine*

“Just one listen to the very beginning of the gracefully opulent soul ballad ‘*Love isn’t Always Enough*’ is proof that here is one of the best soul singers at work. The only comparison I think would be legitimate to make is the Stevie Wonder of the Seventies” –
GinaLovesJazz.com, Berlin

“Whether it’s a funky jam session on ‘*Battlefield*’ or channeling Stevie Wonder and Donny Hathaway on complex arrangements like ‘*Universal Chord*’, ‘*Connected*’, ‘*Soul Symphony*’ and Latin-infused ‘*How Long*’, there’s no shortage of tunes that challenge the mind and speak to the soul.....another incredible collection that was definitely worth the wait” –
SoulBounce.com

Jarrod Lawson discography

Jarrod Lawson (2014)

Live At The BBC (2015)

Be The Change (2020)

Footsteps In The Dark single (2022)

I Would Die 4 U single (2023)

Next Move single – with Raquel Rodriguez (2024)