



The Navy's premier jazz ensemble, the "Commodores," presents the finest in America's truly original music. A specialty unit of the United States Navy Band in Washington, D.C., the group features 18 of the Navy's top jazz and "big band" musicians. Under the leadership of Senior Chief Musician **Philip M. Burlin**, the Commodores combine the best of jazz and popular music.

Since their founding in 1969, the Commodores have become one of the most acclaimed jazz ensembles in the country. Many jazz legends have appeared with the group, including Ray Charles, Louie Bellson, Terry Gibbs, Bruce Johnstone, Bob Mintzer, James Moody, Clark Terry and Eugene "Snooky" Young. In addition, they have opened for the Beach Boys and appeared on ABC's "Good Morning, America." They are highly sought after by the nation's foremost jazz festivals and educational conferences such as the International Association of Jazz Educators Convention, The Midwest Clinic, the Detroit/Montreux Jazz Festival and the Elkhart (Ind.) Jazz Festival. They are also featured at the annual Navy Band International Saxophone Symposium.

The Commodores trace their roots to before World War II, when Band members with jazz experience formed dance bands and rehearsed on an as-needed basis for specific occasions. Responding to public demand for unique types of music as well as the changing needs of Navy recruiting, then Ensign Ned Muffley formed a dance band in 1966 from members of the concert and ceremonial units, and in 1968, preparations began to make the ensemble a separate group. In January 1969, the "Dance Band" officially became the "Commodores" jazz ensemble.

Their performances are high-energy affairs that not only pay tribute to the legendary big bands of yesterday, but also feature original compositions by members of the group. In 2008, the Commodores released their latest compact disc, *Directions*. The Commodores continue to preserve the great heritage of jazz while also being innovative force for the future.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- 2006** - (Jan.) perform at 29th **International Saxophone Symposium** featuring jazz artist **Bruce Johnstone**  
- (Feb.) fourth appearance at **East Coast Jazz Festival** in Rockville, Md.  
- (Apr.) perform at **University of Mary Washington Jazz Festival** in Fredericksburg, Va.
- 2005** - (Jan.) perform at 28th **International Saxophone Symposium** featuring jazz artist **Jerry Bergonzi**
- 2004** - (Jan.) perform at 27th **International Saxophone Symposium** featuring jazz artist **Jim Snidero**  
- (Feb.) third appearance at **East Coast Jazz Festival** in Rockville, Md.  
- (Apr.) perform at 2nd **University of Delaware Jazz Festival** in Newark, Del.  
- (May) perform at the festivities celebrating the dedication of the **National World War II Memorial** in Washington, D.C.
- 2003** - (Jan.) perform at 26th **International Saxophone Symposium** featuring jazz artist **Bob Mintzer**  
- (Jan.) perform at 30th Annual Conference of the **International Association for Jazz Education** in Toronto, Canada  
- (Jun.) perform at 16th **Elkhart (Ind.) Jazz Festival**
- 2002** - (Jan.) perform at 25th **International Saxophone Symposium** featuring jazz artist **Ralph Bowen**  
- (Feb.) perform at the **John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts' Millennium Stage** in Washington, D.C.  
- (Dec.) perform at 56th Annual Conference of **The Midwest Clinic, An International Band and Orchestra Conference**, Chicago, Ill.
- 2001** - (Jan.) perform at 24th **International Saxophone Symposium** featuring jazz artist **Lew Tabackin**  
- (Mar.) perform at the **Berks County Jazz Fest** in Wyomissing, Pa.
- 2000** - (Jan.) perform at 23rd **International Saxophone Symposium** featuring jazz artist **Walt Weiskopf**  
- (Jun.) perform during "**Operation Sail 2000**" festivities at the Inner Harbor in Baltimore, Md.  
- (Jul.) perform at Hunter College in New York, N.Y. and at Fort Hamilton in Brooklyn, N.Y. in conjunction with the **International Naval Review 2000**
- 1999** - (Jan.) perform at 22nd **International Saxophone Symposium** with guest artist **Gary Smulyan**  
- (Sep.) appear at 6th Annual "**Newly Published Music Workshop**," with **Chris Vadala** conducting
- 1998** - (Jan.) perform at 21st **International Saxophone Symposium** with guest artist **Dick Oatts**  
- (Jan.) perform at **International Association of Jazz Educators** conference in New York City  
- (Jul.) perform for Ambassador **Jean Kennedy Smith's** farewell celebration in Dun Laoghaire and Dublin, Ireland  
- (Sep.) appear at 5th Annual "**Newly Published Music Workshop**," with **Frank Mantooth** conducting  
- (Dec.) perform at **Mid-West International Band and Orchestra Clinic** in Chicago

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**1997** - (Mar.) perform with **James Moody, Nick Brignola, Dick Oatts and Mike Smith** at **20th International Saxophone Symposium**

- (Apr.) perform with **Arturo Sandoval** at **Walt Disney World Jazz Festival** in Orlando, Fla.

- (Sep.) third appearance at **Ford Montreux Detroit Jazz Festival**

**1996** - (Jan.) perform with **Ernie Watts** at **19th International Saxophone Symposium**

- (Apr.) perform with **Randy Brecker** at **All-Eastern Band and Instrumental Clinic** in Little Creek, Va.

- (Jun.) appear with **Marvin Stamm** at **Elkhart (Ind.) Jazz Festival**

- (Jun.) perform with **Frank Tiberi** at **Penn's Landing** in Philadelphia

**1995** - (Jan.) perform at **18th International Saxophone Symposium** featuring jazz artist **Charles McPherson**

- (Feb.) second appearance at **East Coast Jazz Festival** in Silver Spring, Md.

- (Mar.) perform with **Greg Bissonette** for **Percussive Arts Society Conference** in Fairfax, Va.

- (Jun.-Aug.) featured in "**The American Sailor**" **Navy Summer Pageant** in Washington, D.C.

- (Sep.) appear at **2nd Annual "Newly Published Music Workshop,"** with **John LaBarbera** conducting, Fairfax, Va.

- (Nov.) perform with **John McNeil, Eugene "Snooky" Young, and Marvin Stamm** at the **Carmine Caruso Trumpet Competition** in Kalamazoo, Mich.

- (Dec.) perform with **Marvin Stamm** at **49th Mid-West International Band and Orchestra Clinic** in Chicago

**1994** - (Feb.) third annual **Black History Month** concert in Largo, Md. with pianist **Dick Morgan**. Previous concerts featured jazz legends **Milt Hinton** and **Eugene "Snooky" Young**

- (Apr.) **25th Anniversary** concert in Fairfax, Va. with jazz trumpet artist **Marvin Stamm**

- (Jun.) perform at **International Trumpet Guild Conference**, Urbana, Ill. with **Marvin Stamm**

**1993** - (Jan.) perform at **16th International Saxophone Symposium** with jazz artist **Bud Shank**

- (Jun.) third appearance at **Elkhart (Ind.) Jazz Festival** with **Don Menza, Richie Cole**

- (Sep.) second appearance at **Montreux Jazz Festival** in Detroit

**1992** - (Jan.) perform at **15th International Saxophone Symposium** with **Stanley Turrentine**

- (Jan.) perform at **International Association of Jazz Educators** conference in Miami, Fla.

- (May) aboard carrier **USS John F. Kennedy** for annual "**Fleet Week**" in New York City, segments aired on **ABC's "Good Morning America"**

**1991** - (Jan.) perform at **International Association of Jazz Educators Convention**, Washington, D.C.

- (Jul.) fifth appearance at the **National Independence Day Celebration** on Washington Monument grounds, performing with guest artist **Lou Rawls**

- (Oct.) **Kennedy Center** performance celebrating the Navy's **216th Birthday** and commemorating the **50th Anniversary of World War II**

**1990** - (Jun.) perform at **International Trumpet Guild Conference**, College Park, Md., with **Marvin Stamm**

- (Dec.) perform at **Mid-West International Band and Orchestra Clinic** in Chicago

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**1989** - (Jul.) second appearance at **Elkhart (Ind.) Jazz Festival**

**1986** - (Jan.) perform at **National Association of Jazz Educators Convention** in Los Angeles  
- (Jul.) open for **Beach Boys** concert aboard the battleship USS Iowa in New York Harbor  
- (Dec.) perform at **Mid-West International Band and Orchestra Clinic** in Chicago

**1985** - (Nov.) perform at Navy Band-hosted **Eastern Trombone Workshop** in Washington, D.C. Subsequent annual appearances with guests including **Bill Watrous, Phil Wilson, and Doug Sertl**

**1984** - (Jul.) perform for **CBS Television's "Salute to Lady Liberty"** aboard the carrier USS Independence in New York harbor

**1982** - (Jun.) perform with **Eddie Daniels** at **International Clarinet Symposium** at Catholic University in Washington, D.C.

**1978** - (Jan.) perform at Navy Band's first **International Saxophone Symposium** in Washington, D.C. Subsequently featured at each annual symposium

**1976** - (Jul.) perform during bicentennial **"Operation Sail"** festivities in New York City

**1974** - (Mar.) USO-sponsored tour of **Scotland, Iceland and Newfoundland**  
- (Jul.-Dec.) tour **Central and South America**

**1969** - (Jan.) renamed the **"Commodores"** and designated official dance band of U.S. Navy

**1966** - U.S. Navy Dance Band formed

## Commodores: Jazz As Good As It Gets

By MUCS Chris Erbe  
Navy Band Public Affairs

Washington - Senior Chief Musician Philip M. Burlin, leader and tenor saxophonist with the "Commodores" jazz ensemble, says that directing an organization of this caliber is a great experience. "The band is playing better than ever. I feel I have a team around me that makes my job very easy."

The Commodores are the Navy's premier jazz band, an 18-member "big band" that features some of the Navy's top jazz musicians. They perform music ranging from authentic sounds of the Swing Era to contemporary music. The group has performed around the world, including concerts in Dublin, Ireland, and at the Detroit Montreux Jazz Festival and the Newport Jazz Festival. They've toured Central and South America and Europe, and have accompanied such jazz legends as James Moody, Eugene "Snooky" Young, Clark Terry, Louie Bellson as well as contemporary jazz artists Bob Mintzer, Jerry Bergonzi, Chris Potter, Eddie Daniels and Dave Liebman.

"Every time we hold auditions, we find musicians that make the band sound even better," Senior Chief Burlin says, "We're always improving our hiring system, but I think the nature of the music business, with good music jobs becoming harder to find, has contributed to quality players looking toward the military for a career in music."

The Commodores experience almost always includes selections that pay tribute to the Big Band Era, but the members themselves are the source of much of their newer material. "The writing from within the group is really a strong point that separates us from other bands," says Senior Chief Burlin. "We have several members contributing music, each in a different style, which gives us a wide palette of colors to choose from and a repertoire that is uniquely ours."

On their newest compact disc, *Three Shades of Blue*, released in the fall of 2005, six of the selections are original compositions and the other six are arrangements of standard tunes, also penned by members of the group.

Chief Musician Steve Williams, musical director and lead alto saxophonist, joined the Commodores in 1994. "These days I really enjoy hearing the players around me," he says. "We have such good soloists that, even though I'm playing, it makes every concert an enjoyable listening experience." Asked about the writing in the group, Chief Williams says that it is absolutely essential. "If you're not playing your own music, then you are playing someone else's. We will never play Count Basie's music as well as Basie did or Thad Jones' music as well as he did. Because much of our material comes from within the group, we have our own sound that we do better than anybody."

As musical director, Chief Williams chooses the selections for each Commodores concert. "I try to pick music that I think will go over well for the particular audience that

we're playing for. I also try to feature quality music with a good mix of soloists and musical styles. My goal is to connect with our patrons so that they leave the concert with a good feeling about the Navy and the Commodores."

Connecting with an audience is the specialty of Chief Musician Yolanda Pelzer. Joining the band in 1995, she has captivated Commodores fans with her radiant smile and soulful singing ever since. "Every audience is different and it's fun for me to see which songs move them," she says. "I enjoy singing songs that people know. They tap their feet or relive memories and that's how I connect with them. I leave it to others to write music that is new and cutting edge. My job is to sing and swing!"

Chief Musician Bill Mulligan is the master of ceremonies and alto saxophonist for the group. Before joining the Navy Band in 1997, he worked for eight years as a band leader for Princess Cruise Lines. That experience prepared him well for his role as spokesman for the Commodores. "I love doing it," Mulligan says. "I feel like I form a relationship with the audience and I get a sense of what they enjoy. People must feel like they get to know me, too, because many of them come backstage to talk to me after the concerts."

Chief Mulligan feels that a wide range of repertoire is important in order to please as many people in the audience as possible. "Many of us love the 'old school' jazz and we know that our patrons, even the younger generation, identify with the music of the Swing Era. The good thing about our original music is that it gives us an opportunity to develop our own style and personality. I think it's great when we can go out and perform classics of the Big Band Era, arrangements by musicians in the band, originals or whatever else is called for. A good mix is the way to go."

The Commodores can be seen frequently in the Washington, D.C. area and around the country during their annual national tours. For schedule information, music downloads and instructions on how to access Commodores recordings, please visit the Navy Band web site: [www.navyband.navy.mil](http://www.navyband.navy.mil).

"We have a lot of fun playing this kind of music," says Senior Chief Burlin. "We are truly embracing this American art form we call jazz, and I think it's fantastic."

## WHAT OTHERS SAY

**WASHINGTON TIMES:** “The U.S. Navy jazz band Commodores is one of the most professional bands around.”

**MILT HINTON:** “What a joy...such a wonderful orchestra.”

**MARVIN STAMM:** “It goes a lot deeper than just playing great jazz--the contributions this band makes, not only to the Navy, but to the young people are so important. It’s so easy to inspire youth with a group like this!”

**DAVE WOLPE:** “The Commodores jazz ensemble is a highly polished and exciting group with the capabilities of any Big Band in existence today.”

**THE MUSKEGON (Mich.) CHRONICLE:** “Everyone had a right to be enthusiastic as the Commodores mesmerized the audience with the finest jazz arrangements this side of New Orleans or at least Kalamazoo...the concert was filled with brilliant performances and excellent musicianship.”

**THE MUNCIE (Ind.) STAR:** “...this was a polished group that displayed more than just dynamic control...they made it all sound like one person...to say it was a tight performance would be an understatement.”

**VANCE-GRANVILLE COMMUNITY COLLEGE (Henderson, N.C.):** “...Most professional, extremely talented, and a first-class performance were some of the phrases used by concert-goers in describing the show.”

**NAVY BAND PATRON (Pueblo, Colo.):** “...A truly exciting and delightful evening of talented musicians with a unique blend of their talents, versatility and musical selections.”

**NAVY BAND PATRON (Olathe, Kan.):** “...I actually got goosebumps when the vocalist sang the Star Spangled Banner!”

**NAVY BAND PATRON (Terre Haute, Ind.):** “...My husband and I have just returned from a most inspiring program given by the “Commodores” of the U.S. Navy Band. The musicianship and the program were outstanding. No political speech could elicit the response and the spirit of patriotism that their performance did.”

**The late RICH MATTESON:** “The Commodores have set a new standard that we should all strive for. You can’t help but like them!”





MORG KRONOS

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THE UNITED STATES NAVY BAND OF COMMODORES

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