

## SAM BLAKESLEE BIO

Originally from Columbus, OH, Sam Blakeslee is a New York City based, award-winning trombonist and composer. Sam has performed at multiple jazz festivals across the world such as the Fano Jazz Festival, Mosciano San Angelo Jazz Festival, and Parma Jazz Festival in Italy as well as the Deutsche Musikfest in Chemnitz, Germany.

Since his arrival in NYC in August 2017, he has performed at iconic jazz clubs such as The 55 Bar, Smalls, Birdland, The Jazz Gallery, Zinc Bar, and the Blue Note. He can also be found performing and/or recording regularly with top-tier large ensembles such as the Grammy-Nominated Dan Pugach Nonet, Manuel Valera's New Cuban Express Big Band, New Alchemy Jazz Orchestra, Terraza Big Band, Emilio Solla's Tango Jazz Orchestra, and the New York Afro-Bop Alliance Big Band. Sam has also performed with artists such as Joe Lovano, Sean Jones, Dan Wilson, Dick Oatts, Ingrid Jensen, Cleveland Jazz Orchestra, Jiggs Whigham, Aretha Franklin, Dominick Farinacci, Chris Coles, Wessell "Warmdaddy" Anderson, and Derrick Gardner.

Since April 2020, Sam has documented two albums with new project, "Wistful Thinking," a drummerless chamber-jazz ensemble with Cincinnati's Brandon Coleman (guitar), Matt Wiles (bass), and Chris Coles (alto saxophone/pedals). The first album, *The Long Middle* will be released in June 2021 on Outside In Music. The music pulls influence from the small bands of Bob Brookmeyer, Kenny Wheeler, and Paul Bley, but tinged with folk and electronica. The second album, *II: Electric*, due to be released in Fall 2021, contains a radically different sonic landscape and features percussion master Jamey Haddad, Grammy-nominated drummer/composer Dan Pugach, and woodwind/composer phenom Brian Krock. Sam is also an endorsing artist for Best American Craftsman (B.A.C.) trombones based out of Kansas City, MO.

In addition to his latest endeavor *Wistful Thinking*, Sam is also active as a big band composer, and since September 2019, he has been a member of the BMI Jazz Composers Workshop in NYC under the direction of Andy Farber and Alan Ferber. Most recently, Sam was commissioned by the International Association of Jazz Arrangers and Composers, and the resulting piece *Another Day In Which To Excel* will be released as a single in January 2021. The piece is dedicated to his grandfather, Dr. Jim Blakeslee who stated "Another Day In Which To Excel!" every morning upon waking up, even after his terrible diagnosis of ALS and has served as a mantra for him during the struggling times of the recent pandemic. All of the proceeds from the release will be donated to the ALS Foundation in honor of him. The single features some of NYC's most compelling artists including Remy Le Bouef (alto/tenor saxophone/flute clarinet), Andrew Gutauskas (bass clarinet/baritone saxophone) Stuart Mack (trumpets) Jennifer Wharton (bass trombone), Brandon Coleman (guitar), Manuel Valera (piano), Edward Perez (bass), and Jimmy Macbride (drums).

Sam also leads the "Sam Blakeslee Large Group" which is a 17-piece contemporary jazz orchestra that features original compositions and arrangements in a variety of styles and moods. The Large Group held a monthly residency at Blu Jazz in Akron, OH from January 2016-July 2017. Blu Jazz was recently voted one of the "Worlds Best Jazz Clubs" by Downbeat Magazine. Through the Blu Jazz Masterclass Foundation, the group featured many special guest artists including from Akron-guitar virtuoso Dan Wilson (and member of the Joey DeFrancesco's Trio and Christian McBride's Tip City), Grammy-Nominated NYC jazz artists Dan Pugach & Nicole Zuraitis, Dave Smith, as well as renowned pianist and composer Bill Dobbins. One of the artistic missions of the Large Group is to constantly be

expanding the repertoire of the music across many styles, leaving both the audience and band members guessing what each concert will hold. A live compilation of the residency at Blu Jazz was released exclusively on Bandcamp in October 2018 and featured the talents of Northeast Ohio jazz artists and longtime musical compatriots Dan Wilson, Chris Coles, Dave Morgan, Bobby Selvaggio, and Theron Brown.

The Sam Blakeslee Quintet features some of NYC's dynamic musicians including Jorn Swart (piano), Cory Todd (bass), Dan Pugach (drums), as well as Cincinnati-based guitarist Brandon Coleman. In its short existence since February 2016, the group has done several tours of the Midwest and East Coast. In September 2016, the quintet recorded at Systems Two Studios in Brooklyn to record Sam's debut album "Selective Coverage" which was released in October of 2017. The album received glowing critical acclaim from several jazz publications, including a 4-star rating from *All About Jazz*.

In March 2018 Sam was awarded the David Baker Prize in Composition for his piece *Slow Growth/New Growth* from the Ravinia Steans Music Institute's *Bridges: An International Jazz and Classical Fusion Competition*. His piece was premiered on June 9th, 2019 at Martin Theater for the 2018 Ravinia Festival alongside the other two finalists Zach Bornheimer and Gene Knific, as well as RSMI faculty members Rufus Reid, Billy Childs, and Nathan Davis. The concert featured the world-renowned Avalon String Quartet, who served as the ensemble in residence. In June 2019, he was invited back for a second time as a Composer-in-Residence at RSMI to have the piece performed again at Bennett Gordon Hall to start the Ravinia Festival's 2019 season.

Sam has also participated in some of the world's most prestigious workshops and residencies. In 2010, Sam was selected one of fifteen people nationwide to attend The Steans Institute for the Young Artist at Ravinia where he studied with Curtis Fuller, Rufus Reid, Dr. Nathan Davis, and Dr. David Baker. In 2011, he also attended Betty Carter's Jazz Ahead at the Kennedy Center which is a two week residency where his original music was broadcast to a worldwide audience. In May 2014, Sam attended the International Workshop for Jazz and Creative Music at the Banff Centre where he studied with Vijay Iyer, Ambrose Akinmusire, Steve Lehman, Tyshawn Sorey, Nir Felder, Warren Wolf, among others.

Sam holds a Bachelor of Music Degree in Jazz Studies from Youngstown State as well as a Master of Music in Classical Performance from the University of Akron. During his time at the University of Akron, he was a member and composer for the Jazz Trombone Group, which won first place in the International Trombone Association's Kai Winding Jazz Trombone Ensemble Competition. In June of 2013, he traveled to Columbus, GA to play his original music at the International Trombone Festival with the University of Akron Jazz Trombone Group. He is also well versed in classical music and was a 2013 recipient of a Tuesday Musical Scholarship in Brass. As a former resident of the Cleveland & Akron, OH area from 2013-2017, he worked extensively in Jazz Education and served as the Instructor of Jazz Trombone at Youngstown State University from 2013-2014, Director of the Jazz Prep Program at Cuyahoga Community College from 2014-2017, as well as the Instructor of Improvisation at the Cleveland Institute of Music.