

Pioneer Hall of Fame: John E. Campbell II, class of 1973

Inspired by his father's record collection, John Campbell began formal piano lessons at age six. His teacher, Bee Guess, influenced John by introducing him to different styles of music. As a teenager he entered the world of jazz. During John's junior year at University High School, he began taking lessons from Anna McGrosso, who recognized that "he was already a great jazz player. He always showed a real sensitivity to music, whatever the style." John practiced and performed in Stroud Auditorium as the pianist for the U-High Jazz band and the percussionist in the concert band. John went on to Illinois State University for further musical training.

In the mid '70s, Campbell, along with U-High graduates Clay Hulet and Rick Drexler, formed the initial John Campbell Trio, which performed locally. In 1976 John headed to Chicago, where he became a legend. He was crowned, according to jazz critic Neil Tesser of the Chicago Sun-Times, "the finest young keyboard man in town, and one of the better pianists anywhere." Though quite successful in Chicago, John headed East to solo in New York and tour with seasoned artists. Regarding this experience, he said, "It is definitely an education. Not a classroom education, but a road education." He also stated, "It's still hard to realize I'm starting to be a part of the same scene as all the great players I grew up listening to." Years later John returned to Chicago where he was chosen Chicago's Jazz Musician of the Year in 2000, rewarding him for his talent and for remaining true to himself, his beliefs, and his music. Campbell explained, "I like to let the music speak for itself. It's straightforward jazz; it's as honest as I can be at that moment."

Campbell has performed in concert venues around the world including Orchestra Hall, Chicago; Carnegie Hall and Avery Fisher Hall in New York; The Hollywood Bowl, Los Angeles; Symphony Hall, Boston; Kan-i Hoken Hall and Imperial Hall in Tokyo; Wolftrap, The Kennedy Center, The Smithsonian Institute, and The White House in Washington, D.C.; and many other locations in the United States, Japan, Canada, Holland, Belgium, France, Germany, Iceland, Italy, Jamaica, Mexico, Portugal, Yugoslavia, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland. John's discography includes *After Hours*, *Turning Point*, *Live at Maybeck Recital Hall*, and *Workin' Out* as a leader, and many recordings as a sideman. He has performed with jazz greats Terry Gibbs, Buddy DeFranco, Stan Getz, Lionel Hampton, Milt Jackson, Anita O'Day, Cleo Laine, Clark Terry, Joe Williams, and Mel Torme. John, a Steinway artist since 1991, has appeared on television, in videos, on Jazz Cruises, and at Disneyland, the Oscar's, jazz clubs, and festivals too numerous to mention. Quoting John, "This was something fun that I could really do and maybe make a living at it. I thought I would just do it until it didn't work anymore." He views his career as "a passion, not a job." Over a quarter of a century since graduating from University High School, John Campbell, renowned for his masterful artistic ability, is still "playing it his way."