



Artist Profile: Christopher Burnett

Biography by Matt Collar / AllMusic, TIVO


Saxophonist, educator, and military band veteran Christopher L. Burnett is known for his warm and lyrical jazz sound. Following a 20-plus year military career during which he taught and performed, Burnett embarked on a fruitful career teaching at a university and became a performer. He continued to perform in his native Kansas, releasing albums like 2013's *Time Flies*, 2014's *Firebird*, and 2021's *The Standards, Vol. 1*.

Born in Olathe, Kansas, Burnett grew up in a military family. Consequently, he moved often before settling in the Kansas City area. Along with his older brother, drummer Richie Pratt, Burnett was exposed to music growing up. His mother introduced him to the piano and he was a member of the youth choir at his church. As part of his school band program, he took up saxophone and clarinet. After high school, he enlisted in the U.S. Army Music Program where, along with performing, he continued to pursue higher education, studying at the Armed Forces School of Music, Webster University, Missouri's Columbia College, Berklee College of Music, and American University. Burnett spent over 22 years in the military, rising to the distinguished rank of First Sergeant in the position of Enlisted Bandleader. While in the military he held numerous positions, including a staff and faculty assignment at the Armed Forces School of Music. He was also the Leading Chief Petty Officer of the NATO Band in Naples, Italy. There, he served as NATO Ceremonial Band Conductor, directed the jazz band, and performed as a featured soloist. Other assignments included being selected to play the lead alto saxophone chair with the West Point Military Academy Band's Jazz Knights, selection for assignment as a Jazz Ensemble Rehearsal Conductor at the Armed Forces School of Music, and being a featured soloist with the Hof Symphony Orchestra in Germany. By the time he left the military, he had been awarded both the Department of Defense Meritorious Service Medal and Army Meritorious Service Medal.

Outside the military, Burnett continued to teach, holding the position of director of the jazz ensemble program at Missouri University of Science and Technology (formerly University of Missouri-Rolla) where he worked as an Adjunct Lecturer for a decade. He has performed with artists like Bobby Watson, Will Matthews, Marcus Hampton, Ahmed Alaadeen, and many more. Based in the Kansas City area, Burnett is the Founder and Artistic Director of KC Area Youth Jazz and along with colleagues Erica Lindsay and Sumi Tonooka is a co-founder of the large independent recording label, Artists Recording Collective.

He has performed at the Roots Festival in Paola, Kansas, held residencies at the historic Drum Room and the Black Dolphin in Kansas City, and appeared as a guest artist and clinician for the Northwest Missouri State Jazz Festival. In 2013, he formally released his debut album as a leader, *Time Flies*. *Firebird* arrived in 2014. In 2021, he released the studio album *The Standards, Vol. 1*. A second volume of standards (*Live at The Drum Room in Kansas City*) arrived in 2022.

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Learn more at <https://ChristopherBurnett.US> 



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Photographs By Corinna Gray Photography (2023)

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