

SAM HANKINS

DAZZLING, INVENTIVE AND SUPER MELODIC TRUMPETER



Offering up a fresh and exhilarating vibe with his full length debut *Nothing Between Us*, trumpeter and composer Sam Hankins draws on a powerhouse resume as a music educator and R&B/jazz sideman that includes multiple awards as a middle school Band Director and performances with numerous legendary artists, including Al Jarreau, Clark Terry, The O'Jays, The Temptations, The Dells, The Impressions, Aretha Franklin and the Glenn Miller Big Band.

Armed with an impressive array of degrees and multi-faceted musical credentials, the multi talented Oklahoma born and raised, Chicago based musician is widely recognized in educational circles for his tenure as Band Director at Edison Middle School, where he led numerous ensembles from 1995 through 2006. Hankins led a struggling band program with limited participation into one of the premier middle school instrumental music programs in the United States. During his first year as Band Director, he led two bands to place first in division ratings in the State Music Competitions. The program subsequently earned extensive recognition as one of the premier middle school band programs in Illinois and nationwide by winning numerous Division I ratings, State and National awards and recognitions.



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During this time, Hankins was invited to be a Guest Conductor for Jazz and Concert bands as well as a guest soloist. He also founded, organized and directed The East Central Illinois Jazz Institute, a summer jazz camp of approximately 20 students from throughout east-central Illinois. In 1998, he received The White House Letter recognizing the Edison Middle School Band Program signed by Hillary Rodham Clinton.

A prolific composer, Hankins had composed over 150 pieces before he took his wife's advice and began pursuing the next phase of his diverse career, as a solo recording artist. He laid the groundwork for *Nothing Between Us* by releasing *Dream Catcher*, a compilation of his catalog of music in every genre from smooth jazz and dance to techno. Building up a supportive network of fans via social media, he blended old school R&B/funk with cutting edge grooves, dynamic melodies and wild brass sizzle on the new project, which is produced by bassist Paul Richmond and features Zorn McGuire on drums. Hankins has already received airplay on numerous internet outlets, including the GHP Radio Network and LUTG Radio.

"From my many years of working with different producers and in various studios, I've learned what people like to listen to, and generally they love music that keeps things simple," says Hankins. "I certainly had a lot of material that was artsy and complicated but for my first urban jazz project, my goal was to create tracks that people can enjoy that I personally felt good about. I admire popular contemporary trumpet players like Chris Botti and Rick Braun, but I take a different approach with my horn that makes my vibe unique to the genre. As a composer, I always want to write songs that uplift people's spirits and make them happy, or get them thinking about things. Because it mixes R&B and jazz, *Nothing Between Us* really gets me back to my roots as a musician."



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ON STAGE

While he is still putting things together as a solo live performer, with numerous musicians he has worked with on eager standby, Hankins has enjoyed a long history of doing gigs with many legendary jazz and R&B artists—from Clark Terry to Al Jarreau and Aretha Franklin. Over the years, while maintaining an active educational career, he has played with funk bands, circus bands, cruise ship ensembles and different "combos".



NOTABLE LIVE PERFORMANCES

West End Jazz Club - Cape Town, South Africa

UIC Auditorium - Chicago, IL
(w/ Al Jarreau & Mike Manson Group)

Indie Artist Festival at The UCO Jazz Lab -
Edmond Oklahoma, OK

Fine Arts Building PianoForte Hall - Chicago, IL
(w/ Rob Ryndak Group)

Hyde Park - Chicago, IL (w/ Audley Reid Band)

The High Dive Club - Champaign, IL
(w/ My Brother's Keeper Band)

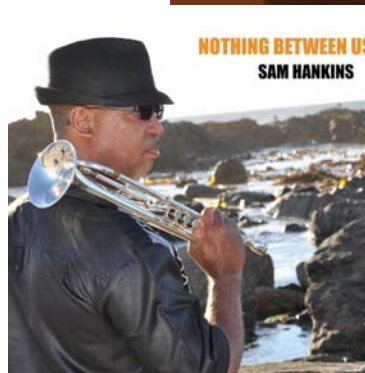
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MUSIC

Hankins draws urban jazz fans into the pocket from the get go, playing a lighthearted trumpet melody over an infectious funk groove and soaring symphonic old school R&B textures on the opening title track. His dreamy and soulful melody on "We Come Together" is backed by cool ambience and easy rolling percussion; the tune features a hypnotic horn hook and tradeoff sections between the trumpet and saxophone. Hankins' Earth, Wind & Fire influence is front and center on the high energy "See Me", who's bright brassy horns accent and provide a dynamic foundation for a playful lead trumpet melody all over a cutting edge funk groove. The trumpeter chills out and takes the tempo down a few notches on the sweet and romantic "I Can Be", a vocal ballad sung by his brother Marcellus Hankins. The groove kicks back up only slightly on the sensual, light funk driven "Soft Touch," whose 70s styled soul textures give way to a more 80s styled synth jam energy on the bass driven "Reach For Me"; the track features a playful interaction between Hankins' dancing trumpet melody and the synthesized grooves. He ventures into brassy gospel territory (complete with textured vocals) on the jangling funk explosion "Give It A Try" before moving into more hypnotic, lyrical territory on the easygoing, crunch groove driven "Where Am I." Some infectious wah-wah guitar and old school synth bounce adds flavor to the horn-splashed funk of "You Should Have". Hankins moves from old school to contemporary hip-hop on the final track "Get Back Step Back", whose dramatic orchestral intro gives way to bouncy hip-hop with street signs and a spirited anthem-like rap.



FROM THE BEGINNING

Samuel Hankins had the great fortune to be born into a musical family that would help cultivate his own talent and ambitions. His maternal grandmother played the piano and sang gospel. His father played harmonica and vocals in various R&B bands, and his brother Marcellus (who performs on *Nothing Between Us*) plays the piano, majored in voice and teaches elementary school music. Encouraged by his father, Samuel Hankins Sr., young "Hank" began with the guitar, then switched to his trademark trumpet in middle school and began playing in churches, professional bands and orchestras.

After earning his Bachelor's Degree in Music Performance from Northeastern State University in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, Hankins joined the Air Force Jazz Band, The Pacesetters, stationed at Chanute Air Force Base in Rantoul, Illinois. He remained with the Pacesetters as a trumpeter until the Air Force Base closed in 1991. Sam then returned to school, earning both a second Bachelors

Degree and a Masters Degree in Music Education from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Hankins left Edison Middle School after 11 years in 2006 to pursue an international teaching career in the country of Bermuda. He then returned to the U.S. in 2008 to teach at McKay High School in Salem, Oregon, again leading their Jazz Band & Marching Band to place within the top three in state competitions. In 2010, the trumpeter returned to Chicago, where he was hired as Band Director at Christ Our Savior Catholic School in a temporary position; when this band program was terminated due to a lack of funding, Hankins began concentrating on pursuing his passion for arranging and composing, which ultimately led to the recording of *Nothing Between Us*. He recently accepted a position as Band Director at Crete-Monee Middle School in Chicago and is looking forward to working with band students again while pursuing his solo career.

REVIEW

"If there is any drawback to being a successful and busy school band director and sideman, it's not having enough time to let the simmering inner artist out. Though these other demands and commitments ensured that Sam Hankins would take a while to find his voice as a solo artist, the good news is that he's drawing on a lot of diverse life and musical experiences as he emerges as a visionary trumpeter and composer. One of the most dynamic and powerful indie breakout releases of the year, *Nothing Between Us* keeps Hankins' dazzling, inventive and super melodic trumpet front and center while the grooves and textures takes the listener in a whirlwind back to the ultra cool 70s and 80s via retro textures and back into the cutting edge of the present day. Although making a solo album was on Hankins' bucket list for a long time, he guarantees that it's more than just a brilliant one off; rather, it's the start of a new phase of his career at center stage that we can all enjoy and groove along to. A truly remarkable album from an artist of seemingly unlimited imagination!" —Jonathan Widran

"Sam Hankins is an brilliant trumpeter who stretches himself within the genre of smooth jazz. His tone sometimes hints at Chuck Mangione while his solos are generally more explorative than that of Chris Botti and Rick Braun, even when he caresses melodies. On his latest CD, *Nothing Between Us*, Hankins plays all of the instruments in most cases, including several brass instruments, keyboards and percussion, taking an effective vocal on the love song "I Can Be." Throughout the project, Hankins displays the influences of R&B and funky jazz. He has a knack for coming up with memorable and catchy riffs and, like the late Grover Washington Jr, he is capable of playing lengthy solos over fairly simple backgrounds that never lose one's interest. His ten originals each have their moments. "Nothing Between Us" features some powerful trumpet playing. "See Me" finds Hankins playing muted a la Miles Davis while the ensembles build in density and intensity. One can imagine the rhythmic piece "Reach For Me" being sung someday. "Give It A Try" and "You Should Have" in particularly features Sam Hankins at his best, showing a lot of personality, color and wit in his solos while carving out his own place in contemporary jazz.

— Scott Yanow, author of *The Jazz Singers*, *The Great Jazz Guitarists*, *Jazz On Film and Jazz On Record 1917-76*



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