

PROFESSIONAL MUSICIANS

Interview with Blue Devil Alum Chris Komer

BY TODD TANJI

Chris Komer is one of the most prominent freelance musicians in New York City over the past eighteen years. A french horn virtuoso and jazz pianist, he is constant demand for studio, Broadway, television, movie and club performances. He performs regularly with the New Jersey Symphony and the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra. Equally at ease in the world of classical and jazz music, Chris is one of the only french horn improvisation musicians in the world today. A native of Kansas City, Chris marched in BD's horn line in 1981. He recently traveled back to California to be a featured performer on the new Blue Devils Alumni CD available this June.



BDAA: How did you get involved in music?

CK: I grew up in a musical household. Dad played pedal steel guitar professionally and still sings and Mom plays piano and sings great. My brother and sister play as well. I was also lucky to grow up with a great public school music program.

BDAA: Who was your biggest musical inspiration as a young person?

CK: I got turned onto Mahler, Strauss, Brahms and all those guys early thru the Junior Youth Symphony of Kansas City (I was in 6th grade and another former Blue Devil Kate Gascoigne was also in that section) and hearing the great horn playing in all the John Williams sound tracks also got me excited about the horn but I have to say Chuck Mangione was probably the biggest single inspiration during my formative years. He was just hitting it big at the time and came out with Children of Sanchez which featured a French horn player named Jerry Peel. That stuff blew me away. So it was a real gas to get to play with Chuck and Jerry here in New York. I even told Chuck that he is one of the main reasons why I went into music professionally. He was so funny though he just said "Don't tell me THAT, it makes feel really old."

BDAA: How did you get involved with Drum Corps?

CK: My high school band director was a drum corps nut. He would drag as many kids from the band to finals as he could. I didn't have a clue about drum corps and went mainly because a cute girl was going too. My first show ever was '79 Birmingham when Blue Devils rocked the place to it's core. My second show was '80 Birmingham when Blue Devils. I was blown away. I never, ever dreamed that I would have a chance to do it. At the end of my junior year BD was looking for one more French Horn and somehow through a connection with Dave Tuttle and my band director they asked for a tape. I think Kate might have put in a good word for me too. Anyhow they invited me out and a few weeks later I was on a greyhound thinking that there had to be some mistake.

BDAA: What was your biggest thrill or most memorable experience in Drum Corps?

CK: Man there was so many. Hearing my family and friends from back home yell for me when we stood in the company front on the front side-line right before we started our show in somewhere in Iowa I think might be the biggest though.

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