

BOSS BARITONES - Bio

Inspired by the rich history of the great 2-tenor pairings in jazz (think Lester Young & Herschel Evans, Gene Ammons & Sonny Stitt, Lockjaw Davis & Johnny Griffin, and Al Cohn & Zoot Sims), the Boss Baritones continue this tradition, but with the pairing of the tenor saxophone's lower pitched baritone brethren.

So who are these "Boss Baritones?" Locking horns in the front line are two of today's finest exponents and practitioners of the baritone saxophone in jazz: Gary Smulyan and Frank Basile.

Gary Smulyan has been steadily polishing his craft for over 40 years and is all but unanimously regarded as today's leading baritone saxophonist. Since filling the baritone chair in Woody Herman's Young Thundering Herd in 1978, Smulyan has gone on to perform with virtually every important name in jazz since. A sampling of this lofty company includes the Mel Lewis Jazz Orchestra, the Gene Harris Superband, B.B. King, Joe Henderson, Freddie Hubbard, Michel Camilo, the Carnegie Hall Jazz Band, Cedar Walton, Joe Lovano, George Coleman, the Mingus Big Band, and Dave Holland. A favorite of critics and peers alike, Smulyan has consistently topped polls in Downbeat, Jazz Times, and with the Jazz Journalists Association for the past two decades. Smulyan is a 6-time Grammy winner.

Frank Basile made his way on to the New York scene in 2001 after his studies at the University of North Texas and a brief stint at the Juilliard School. He has since forged his own path following in the footsteps of his mentors such as Smulyan. Dubbed a "prized sideman" by The New Yorker, Basile has been called upon to perform with the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra, the Dizzy Gillespie All-Star Big Band, the Jimmy Heath Big Band, the Bob Mintzer Big Band, the Jon Faddis Jazz Orchestra, the Christian McBride Big Band, the Count Basie Orchestra, and the Duke Ellington Orchestra. As a "rising star," Basile has consistently appeared in the Downbeat critic's poll since 2014.

The Boss Baritones made their debut the weekend of March 6-7, 2020 at Smalls Jazz Club in New York City. This was an auspicious start for the band, but one week later, the Coronavirus pandemic would officially put it all on hold. Since the easing of restrictions and the return of normal aspects to life, the Boss Baritones have been regaining their momentum with performances in the New York City area (including numerous return engagements at Smalls) as well as an upcoming eponymous debut recording on Steeplechase Records.