

REDEFINING A GREAT  
*Arts* EXPERIENCE

HONORING  
Diana Hart

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT  
AWARD TO  
John Lee

ENTERTAINMENT  
Michael Feinstein

Nov  
06  
2021

SOPAC  
gala



Bassist, producer, composer and audio engineer, John Lee was born June 28th, 1952 in Boston, MA. The son of an A.M.E. minister and a social worker, John's earliest musical impressions were formed in church and at home listening to his parent's extensive Jazz and Gospel record collection. In 1970, after graduating from Overbrook High School, John enrolled at the Philadelphia Musical Academy to study string bass and composition. He also began performing with the bands of Carlos Garnett, Joe Henderson, Pharoah Sanders and Max Roach.

In June of 1972, Herbie Hancock introduced John to his friend and kindred musical spirit, Chris Hinze, the great Dutch flautist. In August of 1972, John moved Holland to join the Chris Hinze combination. During this time abroad, he also worked and recorded with Gary Bartz, Philip Catherine, Joe Henderson, Jasper Van'T Hof, Joachim Kühn, Charlie Mariano, James Moody, Sahib Shihab, Jeremy Steig and Toots Thielemans.

After returning to the United States in the fall of 1974, John moved to New York and began working in the bands of Norman Connors, Joe Henderson and Lonnie Liston Smith. In 1975, John joined Larry Coryell's Eleventh House Band and he also began to form his own bands with drummer Gerry Brown. In 1977, John left the Eleventh House to concentrate on the John Lee/Gerry Brown Band. In 1982, he joined the McCoy Tyner Quintet, where he worked until joining the legendary Dizzy Gillespie in 1984. The long personal and professional association that ensued was to be a turning point in Lee's career. From 1984 until Dizzy transitioned in 1993, John was the bassist in the trumpet master's various bands including the Dizzy Gillespie Quintet, Dizzy Gillespie 70th Anniversary Big Band, Dizzy's Grammy Award-winning United Nation Orchestra and Dizzy Gillespie & Miriam Makeba's "Back to the Future Band."

After Dizzy's passing, his family asked John to create an ongoing tribute to the great man and his music...and the concept for the Dizzy Gillespie All-Stars was born. John also began working in the bands of Jon Faddis, Aretha Franklin, Roy Hargrove, Jimmy Heath, Gregory Hines, James Moody, Claudio Roditi and Sonny Rollins. At present, John is the executive and musical director of the Dizzy Gillespie All-Stars, the Dizzy Gillespie All-Star Big Band and the Dizzy Gillespie Afro-Latin Experience. John is also a Grammy winning record producer and a seasoned recording engineer. To date he has engineered over 100 CDs and he has produced over 70 CDs. The Dizzy Gillespie All-Star Bands have performed in major concert halls and jazz festivals throughout the world including; Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Curaçao, Denmark, England, Finland, France, Germany, Holland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lebanon, Luxembourg, Monaco, Norway, Portugal, Russia, Scotland, Singapore, Slovenia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Thailand, Turkey, Uruguay and Wales.