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## LAPD Band

by Michael Ellington

The Los Angeles Police Concert Band boasts three categories of players. All Band members are community volunteers, but periodically, some include rising star collegiate players, and others include brilliant professional players. All support the Band's performances at recruit graduations, special civic events and elementary school assemblies.

The focus of this month's Band member profile is professional trumpet player Didi Reyes. He frames his approach to music in very personal terms: "This is not a job. This is my life. I breathe through my horn. I can't express myself in a different way."



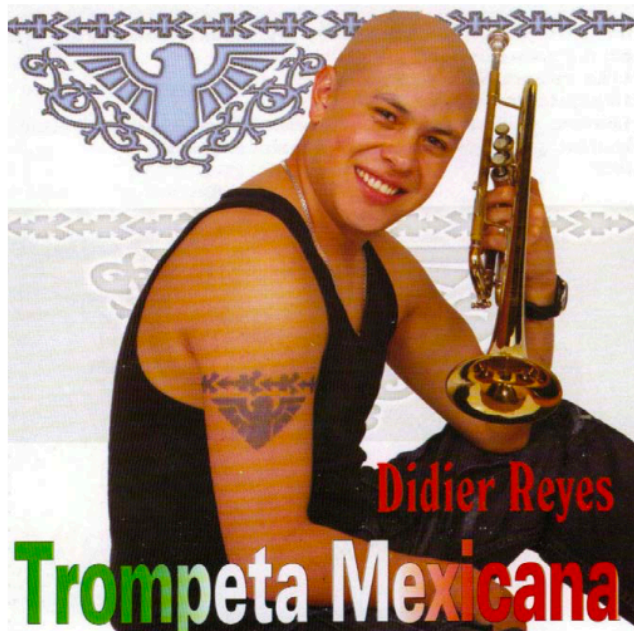
At the Lighthouse Cafe jazz club.

That passion for pursuing musical excellence started when Didi was 11 years old, in his native Bogota, Colombia. His teacher was the esteemed Maestro Jose Mayorga. Those lessons drove well-spent hours of study and practice. In a scant four years, he was a working trumpet player. Two years later, now a well-regarded professional, he was chosen to be a part of the Bogota Symphonic Wind Band. A close reading of the biographies of many musicians will reveal a patchwork of other occupations they held while pursuing their passions. For example, trumpet great Louis Armstrong hauled coal and sold newspapers, and bandleader Xavier Cugat was an *L.A. Times* cartoonist. Didi was fortunate to

have an early and sound foundation that allowed him to grow and develop his talent. That advantage allowed him to move from the halls of academia directly into the professional world of music.

Didi's family is somewhat musical. His maternal grandmother sang in an a cappella duet with his mother. They eventually joined various choirs. His uncle plays piano. Didi decided to pursue music as his livelihood. Professionally, he plays Bb, C and Eb trumpet, flugelhorn and piccolo. He is also proficient on several Latin percussion instruments and plays piano like his uncle.

In recalling the first time he performed as a soloist, he remembered the excitement, the band playing all around him and wanting to play his best. It all came together in a way that can only



Didi's album cover.

be described as magical. But the magic doesn't happen unless you've studied and practiced enough to be in the moment and go with the feeling. He practices a lot. The shape that practice takes is determined by the type of music he'll be playing and whether he'll be playing lead or with the rest of the brass section.

He cites a number of spectacular trumpeters as inspirations. Among them, Clifford Brown, Dizzy Gillespie, Maurice André and Freddie Hubbard. One name stands out though. Didi admires the classical approach and clarity of tone of Wynton Marsalis. "He means every note he plays," Didi said.

The message he tries to get across when he plays is simple. For music

lovers, he is sending happiness, love and relaxation. And even though he says, "musicians are jealous of what other musicians are doing," to other players, he hopes his horn communicates in such a fashion that they enjoy his style and reading of the particular piece they're playing. He confesses, though, whatever he's playing, whispers or shouts of his musical roots in Bogota will always come through.

For more information about the Band, see our website at [www.lasown.com](http://www.lasown.com) and contact Jim Starr, executive director, at [sngcop@aol.com](mailto:sngcop@aol.com). For greatly appreciated donations, please go to [www.lapolicefoundation.org](http://www.lapolicefoundation.org), and in the "comments" box, put "For the Band." ♦



Miguel Vaamonde with Didi.

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