

TOOTS THEILMANN, harmonica

- Born : Brussels, Belgium 1922
- Immigrated : USA 1952
- Played accordion at age 3
- Started playing harmonica as a hobby
- First guitar won on a bet
- "Hooked" on Jazz during German occupation
- First idol : *Django Reinhardt*
- Early influence : *Charlie Parker*
- Nicknamed "Toots" after musicians Toots Mondello and Toots Camarata
- First international break through : Joining Benny Goodman on European concert tour in 1950
- Early US jobs : member of Charlie Parker's All Stars in Philadelphia; George Shearing Quintet; ...
- Composed "Bluesette", 1962
- Originated new sound : Whistling and guitar in unison
- Whistler for commercials : Best known "Old Spice"
- Harmonica soloist for film scores: *Midnight Cowboy*, *The Getaway*, *Sugarland Express*, *Cinderella Liberty*, *Turks Fruit*, *Jean de Florette* , ...
- Concerts and recordings with names like George Shearing, Ella Fitzgerald, Quincy Jones, Bill Evans, Jaco Pastorius, Natalie Cole, Pat Metheny, Paul Simon, Billy Joel, ...
- Harmonica Soloist - TV : *Sesame Street*
- Perennial winner of Down Beat readers and critics poll "miscellaneous instruments"
- Favorite compliment (from the late Clifford Brown):
"Toots, the way you play the harmonica they should not call it a miscellaneous instrument"

"I can say without hesitation that Toots is one of the greatest musicians of our time. On his instrument he ranks with the best that jazz has ever produced. he goes for the heart and makes you cry. We have worked together more times than I can count and he always keeps me coming back for more ..."

*from Quincy Jones' liner notes
Q's Jook Joint, 1995*