

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### El Cerrito High School To Host Third Annual Jazz Festival, Featuring the Donny McCaslin Small Group

El Cerrito, CA – January 2, 2017

On **February 11, 2017**, El Cerrito High School will host its third annual Jazz Festival featuring high school jazz programs from throughout the San Francisco Bay Area. Sponsored by the City of El Cerrito Arts and Culture Commission, the California Jazz Conservatory, Stanford Jazz Workshop, World Projects, and the West County Ed Fund the event will be headlined by the nationally acclaimed and Grammy-nominated Donny McCaslin Group.

The festival will take place in the El Cerrito High School Performing Arts Center located at 540 Ashbury Avenue in El Cerrito, CA beginning at 8:00am.

The El Cerrito Jazz Festival will include workshops, master classes, clinics, concerts, and adjudicated performances. Festival adjudicators and clinicians include Dam Gailey from the University of Kansas, Dr. Aaron Lington from San José State University, Joe Mazzaferro from Stanislaus State University, Gary Pratt from CSU Northridge, and Rob Tapper from the University of Montana.

Participating schools include Acalanes, Albany, Aragon, Berkeley, El Cerrito, Las Lomas, Marin School of the Arts, Northgate, and Valley Christian high schools in addition to an afternoon concert featuring the University of the Pacific Jazz Ensemble.

The festival's culminating event will be the evening concert featuring the Donny McCaslin group at 7pm. Tenor saxophonist Donny McCaslin leads this group consisting of Jason Linder on keyboards, Tim Lefebvre on bass, and Mark Guiliana on drums. With three GRAMMY® nominations and 11 albums to his name, McCaslin's path to Bowie and *Beyond Now* can be traced back to 2011 with the release of his album *Perpetual Motion*, taking on an electric direction for the first time in contrast to his previous acoustic projects. Two subsequent albums  *Casting for Gravity* (2012) and *Fast Future* (2015) released with his working band were directly influenced by electronica artists (covering groups such as Aphex Twin, Boards of Canada, and Baths), which netted McCaslin a 2013 GRAMMY® nomination for "Best Improvised Jazz Solo."

The once in a lifetime opportunity to work with David Bowie came after composer Maria Schneider, a longtime collaborator, recommended McCaslin and his group to Bowie. Schneider and Bowie were collaborating on the track "Sue (Or in a Season of Crime)," which featured McCaslin as a soloist. In June 2014, Bowie heeded Schneider's advice and made a visit to hear McCaslin and company at the 55 Bar in Greenwich Village. Soon after, Bowie began corresponding with McCaslin over email and sending music, forming a new collaboration and friendship that transpired through the recording of *Blackstar* until Bowie's passing. The result is *Beyond Now*, which documents "David Bowie's Last Band" as they were processing both their grief and Bowie's distinctive impact.

“This new album is an expression of that journey for all of us,” says McCaslin. “David allowed *Blackstar* to be what it was going to be regardless of how people might have categorized it. More than anything, it was his fearlessness in crossing musical boundaries and genres in his music and life that inspired the risks I’m taking in *Beyond Now*. I am indebted to Bowie for showing me the risks and rewards of going for your uncompromising musical vision.”

All festival performances and concerts are open to the public. Tickets for the entire day’s activities will be available at the ECHS Performing Arts Theater throughout the day for \$15.

A full schedule of events is posted online at [www.echsbands.com](http://www.echsbands.com).

**Contact:**

Keith Johnson  
ECHS Director of Bands  
540 Ashbury Avenue  
El Cerrito, CA 94530  
keith@echsbands.com  
(510) 231-1437 x 26418