

**Illinois State University  
Wonsook Kim College of Fine Arts  
School of Music**

**27<sup>th</sup> Annual  
Illinois State University  
Jazz Festival**

featuring

**Walter Smith III  
with Illinois State University Jazz Band I**

**Center for the Performing Arts  
April 11, 2026  
Saturday Evening  
7:00 p.m.**

**This is the one hundred and forty-eighth program of the 2025-2026 season.**

# Program

Please silence all electronics for the duration of the concert. Thank you.

## 2026 ISU Jazz Festival

(please confirm times with the FINAL SCHEDULE upon arrival)

### SATURDAY April 11 ISU CPA Concert Hall

8:05AM	Central Jr. High Big Band	Belleville, IL
8:30	Central Jr. High Combo	Belleville, IL
8:55	Paxton/Buckley/Loda Jr. High	Paxton, IL
9:20	Monticello Middle School	Monticello, IL
9:45	University HS	Normal, IL
10:10	Paxton/Buckley/Loda HS	Paxton, IL
10:35	Richwoods HS	Peoria, IL
11:00	Lemont HS	Lemont
11:25	Niles West HS	Skokie, IL
11:50	(Prep stage)	
<b>12:00</b>	<b>ISU Jazz Ensemble II with Walter Smith</b>	
<b>12:30</b>	<b>Walter Smith III Jazz Masterclass</b>	
<b>1:30</b>	<b>ISU Jazz Ensemble I with Walter Smith</b>	
1:50	(Prep stage)	
2:10	Dundee Crown HS Combo	Carpentersville, IL
2:35	H.L. Richards HS Combo	Oak Lawn, IL
3:00	Northridge Prep HS Combo	Niles, IL
3:25	Old Quarry Middle School II	Lemont, IL
3:50	Dundee Crown HS I	Carpentersville, IL
4:15	Mattoon High School	Mattoon, IL
4:40	Old Quarry Middle School I	Lemont, IL
5:05	Dundee Crown HS II	Carpentersville, IL
5:30	(Clear stage- Tabulation finalized)	
6:00	<b>Awards Presentations</b>	
6:15	Clear Concert Hall	
6:30	Doors open	
<b>7:00</b>	<b>CONCERT:</b>	
	<b>1) Festival “Grand Champion”</b>	
	<b>2) ISU Jazz Ensemble I with Walter Smith</b>	

## Guest Artist, Walter Smith III



### About the Artist. . .

Although it may appear Smith is a new voice on the scene, he is widely recognized as an adept performer, accomplished composer, and inspired educator. Smith's recent release, **Return to Casual**, garnered critical acclaim from audiences and critics alike. "Return to Casual [is] Smith's deeply poised first album as a leader for Blue Note... The whole enterprise rings of cool sophistication in a small-group style that Smith and his contemporaries helped define... In that sense, Return to Casual is not just a homecoming of sorts, but also an emphatic confirmation." In September of 2024, Smith released his sophomore album for Blue Note Records, "**Three of us are from Houston and Reuben is not**", featuring a new offering of original music. In March of 2026, Smith reprises his acclaimed TWIO concept with the release of **TWIO Vol. 2**.

Smith has developed under the wings of many of the music's greats. Walter is/has been a member of several influential groups (recording and/or touring), including the Roy Haynes Fountain of Youth Band,

Terence Blanchard Quintet, Eric Harland's "Voyager", Bill Stewart Trio, Jason Moran's In My Mind: Monk at Town Hall, Ambrose Akinmusire Quintet, the Christian McBride "Situation", Marquis Hill "New Gospel Revisited", Gerald Clayton Quintet, Christian Scott group, and the Sean Jones Quintet to name a few.

Smith has performed worldwide, participating in virtually every international festival and famed venues such as Carnegie Hall, the Village Vanguard, and the Kennedy Center. In addition, he has shared the stage and/or appeared on recordings with many important artists including Mulgrew Miller, Billy Childs, Terri Lyne Carrington, Joe Lovano, Herbie Hancock, Maria Schneider, Ron Carter, Ralph Peterson, and a host of others. To date, Walter has appeared on over 100 recordings that have been released worldwide.

Originally from Houston, TX, Smith now resides in Boston, MA, and is Chair of Woodwinds at Berklee College of Music, helping to prepare the next generation of young artists.

## **Festival Adjudicators**

**Dr. John Cooper** is a jazz artist and composer who makes his home in central Western Illinois and is Professor Emeritus of Music at Western Illinois University. Cooper began his musical career in 1983 in Detroit, Michigan where he completed a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree at Wayne State University in Jazz Studies. At WSU Cooper studied with John Trudell and Gordon Stump and Matt Michaels, as well as other prominent Detroit area musicians. While in Detroit, he performed with the Johnny Trudell Orchestra as well as jazz artists Jon Faddis and Carl Fontana and other national touring acts including The Temptations, Rich Little, Joan Rivers, The Four Tops, and Lou Rawls.

Cooper continued his education, obtaining a master's degree in music composition from Bowling Green State University in Bowling Green, Ohio, where he worked as a teaching assistant in Jazz Studies under the supervision of Jazz Studies Director, Jeff Halsey. From Ohio, Cooper moved to New York City to continue studies with jazz artist and composer Jim McNeely at New York University, where he graduated with a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Music Composition in 1996. While in New York, Cooper was a member of the BMI Jazz Composer's Workshop and graduated to the Master Composer's group.

**Mike Stryker** is the Director of the University of Illinois at Chicago Jazz Studies Program as well as Clinical Professor of Music, where he directs Jazz Combos and teaches Jazz Piano and Improvisation. Dr. Stryker is also on the faculty of the Birch Creek Summer Music Performance Center located in Egg Harbor, Wisconsin, teaching Jazz Piano, coaching Jazz Combos, and performing with the resident faculty big band. His doctoral studies at the Eastman School of Music were completed fall of 2009, with the degree awarded spring of 2010. Past degrees include a B.S. in Biology from Purdue University in 1985 and both the B.M. and M.M. in Jazz Performance from DePaul University in 1996. He was also certified to teach Kundalini Yoga in 2017. Previous teaching positions include Western Illinois University, Eastern Illinois University, DePaul University, and the University of California at Berkeley.

Dr. Stryker is co-leader of a jazz quintet called Condition Blue, whose first CD, *Condition Blue Live* (opens in new window), was released January of 2007. He can also be heard on *Roots and Branches* (Jazz Excursion Records, 2007) with the Shirantha Beddage Quartet. Led by drummer/composer Tom Marko, Dr. Stryker's most recent recording is *Inner Light* (Summit Records, 2016), and features NYC veteran Scott Wenholdt on trumpet. He is fortunate to have worked with many masterful musicians, including Maria Schneider, Clark Terry, Frank Wess, Dave Douglas, Freddie Hubbard, Jim Snidero, Robin Eubanks, James Moody, John Fedchock, Kim Richmond, Clay Jenkins, Gary Foster, Bob Mintzer, Joshua Breakstone, and Carl Allen.

**Perry Rask** is Professor Emeritus at Millikin University. During his tenure, his teaching duties included the applied saxophone studio, saxophone quartet and directing Jazz Band I and II. Dr. Rask received degrees from the University of Mary, the Conservatoire National de Région de Bordeaux, North Texas State University (UNT) and the University of Northern Colorado. His teachers include Marvin Eckroth, Loran Eckroth, James Riggs, Jean-Marie Londeix and Roger Greenberg. Active in both classical and jazz areas of saxophone performance, he performs regularly with regional jazz groups such as Diversity and the Dixie Daredevils, as well as with the Millikin Faculty Jazz Sextet, the Decatur Big Band and the Decatur Municipal Band.

## **Program: Saturday April 11, 2026 Noon**

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### **ISU Jazz Ensemble II with Walter Smith Tom Marko, *Director***

#### *The Chicken*

By Alfred James Ellis; arranged by Kris Berg

#### *Sugar*

By Stanely Turrentine; arranged by Mark Taylor

#### *Miss Fine*

By Oliver Nelson

#### *I Remember Clifford*

By Benny Golson; arranged by Sammy Nestico

with Watler Smith III:

#### *Switch in Time*

By Sammy Nestico

### **Illinois State University Jazz Ensemble II:**

#### **Saxophones:**

Joey Umansky, *alto*

Chloe West, *alto*

Aidan Rivera, *tenor*

Adrian Magana, *tenor*

Andrew Shadel, *baritone*

#### **Trumpets:**

Trent Kobulnicky

Emilio Miralrio

Brennan Burns

Andrew Sniegowski

#### **Trombones:**

Matt Sourwine

Nick Vandenberg

Lucas Logacho

**Guitar:** Roberto Lopez

**Piano:** Gabriel Owens-Taylor

**Bass:** Christian Luedtke

**Drums:** Ethan Prado  
and Sammy Calderon

**Program: Saturday April 11, 7:00PM**

**ISU Jazz Ensemble I with Walter Smith  
Tom Marko, *Director***

*Stablemates*

By Benny Golson

*July*

By Walter Smith III; arranged by Matt Otto

*Shout Me Out*

By John Clayton

*I'll be Seeing You*

By Sammy Fain and Irving Kahal; arranged by Kevin Cerovich

*Ask Me Now*

By Thelonious Monk; Arranged by Greg Yasinitzky

*Day by Day*

By Sammy Cahn, Axel Stordahl and Paul Weston  
arranged by John Clayton

**Illinois State University Jazz Ensemble I:**

**Saxophones:**

Seth Berkshier, *alto*  
Adam Brown, *alto*  
Gareth Fullin, *tenor*  
Dean Shrofe, *tenor*  
Logan Hughes, *baritone*

**Trumpets:**

Andrew Sniegowski  
Leonard Dozier  
Matt Oyibo  
Ezra Tirado  
Josh Hunt

**Trombones:**

Elton Gund  
Luke Fuller  
Sean Creighton  
Griffin Gund, *bass*

**Guitar:** Tommy Gray

**Vibraphone:** Noah Berkshier

**Piano:** Charlie Machamer

**Bass:** Bubbles Thomas  
and Will Hussey

**Drums:** Joseph Burgoni  
and Noah Berkshier

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