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SHARE Bill Jolly

Who is that man with the iconic piano scarf? It's Bill Jolly, three time Emmy-Award winning musical director and keyboardist who has accompanied such greats as Michael Bolton, Brian McKnight, Celine Dion, Gerald Levert, Grover Washington Jr., Jill Scott, Stevie Wonder, Teddy Pendergrass, and Usher. ABC, NBC, BET, VH1, and HBO are just some of the many stations where you may have heard his jingles and scores. Bill is respected not only for his piano playing chops, but also for his producing, audio engineering, and songwriting talents as well.



Bill's love for music originated with his early exposure to the soulful sounds of James Brown. He would imitate the drumbeats with his mouth, or by beating on his desk, as early as the first grade. His parents bought him a set of drums, and he eventually started a band. When the pianist left the band, Bill got frustrated and taught himself how to play keyboard and has played from that time on.

Where did Bill get his much-admired piano scarf? His mother made it for him when he was in high school. Since the passing of his mother, his biggest supporter, Bill decided to do an original CD that he entitled, *Behind the Scarf*, as a tribute to her. This scarf represents a sense of identity for Bill, "We all have to have something about us that makes people recognize us, and the scarf is just one of those things," Bill confides. "Even if someone couldn't remember me by name, they would say, 'You remember that guy with the keyboard scarf?'" This album is this sideman's way of bringing his own vision to the forefront. As he explains, "I'm ready to be the guy that's the focal point."

Bill credits his achievements to his tenacity at overcoming adversity. When his keyboard player and singer resigned, he felt it was necessary to teach himself how to play and sing. When his drummer quit, he bought himself a drum machine. When his sound engineer quit, he purchased a sound system, and then he eventually built his own studio. Bill's philosophy is simple, "Don't let anybody's vision of you or anybody's unwillingness to cooperate with you be a stumbling block. Let that be your stepping-stone. Stay open and stay focused and just keep moving forward." A positive and open attitude and an unwillingness to be intimidated by technology are just two of the many ingredients that have contributed to Bill Jolly's success. "I'm either going to do it and do it well, or I am not going to do it at all," is the motto that Bill follows.

Bill recently appeared in a Verizon ad with his microKORG. Verizon asked him to appear with an object that symbolizes who he is and what he does, and the microKORG fit the bill. "It's a contemporary piece of gear – it shows my love for the keyboard, and it's portable. It's got this vibe about it. It's small and it gets the job done," he explains. Bill loves the vocoder, the bass patches, and the fact that he can bring his microKORG on the road with him. The microKORG is just Bill's latest addition to his Korg collection, which includes a PolySix, TRITON-Rack, Electribe•M,

and a Trinity. “I love the Korg stuff. They’ve been working great,” Bill enthuses. “I call the TRITON my Swiss army knife! Usually if there is some particular sound that I am really, really looking for, I pull out the TRITON and I’ll be able to get it. It’s the one piece that I use when I have to cover a million parts. It makes me sound like 20 people. It’s been really just a workhorse for me.”

Presently, Bill is working with a variety of artists from many different genres around the globe. He is using the Internet with his production company, SongProduction.com, as a communication portal to produce music projects from his home studio. Bill explains, “What I am trying to do is reach out to more people who have music in their soul, but don’t necessarily know how to produce it. Or people who just write lyrics and need somebody to sing their songs or produce their songs.” Bill also has a band called Bill Jolly’s Hard Drive, which incorporates horns, a rhythm section, gospel singers and the tunes of Aretha Franklin, Chicago, James Brown, P-Funk and Tower of Power.

