

# NOW WE'RE TALKIN'

By Helen Marketti

## HAPPY DAYS DONNY MOST RELEASES JAZZ SWING CD



Many will recognize Donny as the loveable and laughable character, Ralph Malph from the hit TV series, "Happy Days". Donny is enjoying his singing career as well as his acting. In fact, he always had a strong interest and talent in music. "I was into big bands, swing music and jazz for as long as I can remember," said Donny. "I was 15 years old and singing in clubs in the Catskills Mountains. I was singing songs from the Great American Songbook. It isn't a new thing for me as some may think but it is new in that I put a show and band together nearly two years ago."

He continues, "I just finished recording a CD with many jazz standards and big bands. The CD is called, "D. Most, Mostly Swing" which will be released in February. However, the single from it, "C'est si bon" was released in early November. I am excited about the recording we did. The arrangement turned out well. The musicians are incredible!"

What is it about the big band era that appeals to Donny? "The songs have incredible lyrics and they were interesting musically. The songs are timeless. They were written 60 and 70 years ago and artists still record their versions of these great songs. I love the jazz and big band approach," he explains. "I was a teenager during the 60s which by then there was an entire renaissance of music. It was an amazing time and I was into that as well but the big bands were in my blood and soul in a different way. I love that I am doing it now and enjoying it very much."

"When I was 9 years old I saw the Jolson Story about singer, Al Jolson. The movie made an impact. I bought a lot of his records," said Donny. "I grew up in Brooklyn and started listening

to WNEW radio station. There was a DJ named William B. Williams who played songs of singers doing the standards. It was an education for me while I was growing up. I loved Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin and Sammy Davis, Jr. I can't forget the great female singers such as Ella Fitzgerald, Billy Holiday and Dinah Washington."

He continues, "Then I discovered Bobby Darin who is my favorite singer. I enjoyed listening to him sing the standards. He could sing swing better than anyone. I discovered his album, "This is Darin". Rock and Roll was a means to an end for him because that wasn't his style. It was a way for him to get a name for himself and get a foot in the door compared to what he really loved which were the standards of jazz and swing. My favorite song of his is, "Mack the Knife". That was the song that turned it around for him. It was Record of the Year in 1959. I am also hearing people say that "Beyond the Sea" is another favorite of theirs by Bobby Darin."

Donny explains why he had not put a band together in the early days. "It was more of the timing not being right. It was an uphill battle," he said. "During the 70s and 80s, this kind of music was looked upon as passé and your grandparent's music. It was not looked upon as something you would listen to. Then I started seeing a resurgence of this genre such as Tony Bennett singing these great songs and being on TV, and then you have Harry Connick, Jr. It started opening up in a big way."

"When we were filming, "Happy Days", Anson Williams who played Potsie did most of the singing on the show. Our writer and producer, Garry Marshall had allowed Potsie's character to sing. I sang in a couple of episodes. I like to surprise people because many did not know that I could sing," said Donny. "It was within the last few years that I started doing live shows where people were telling me that I should record a CD. I had met several people that could help me achieve that because I am very picky about the arrangements. We decided to record some Christmas songs. The holiday CD will be released on December 9. It all came together better than what I expected. I think people will really like it."



In addition to his music projects and live performances, Donny still loves acting and directing. "Anson Williams and I travel to do the "Happy Days Live" performances. We reminisce with the audience with songs, photos and stories. I still keep in touch with Henry Winkler, Marion Ross, Scott Baio and Ron Howard."

The signature line for Ralph Malph on "Happy Days" was, "I still got it"! Donny explains how that originated. "Our director was Jerry Paris. He directed 95% of the "Happy Days" episodes. He was a great guy, a great director and a comic genius. He used to be on the ole Dick Van Dyke Show and played the dentist who lived next door. He also directed many of those episodes. When he became our director on "Happy Days", it was a big thrill. There

is a good amount of Jerry in my character, Ralph Malph which evolved over time. My real personality is nothing like Ralph so I worked on basing my character on people I knew from high school. Jerry was always telling jokes and when something was especially funny he would say, "I still got it!" Then one day I decided I was going to use that line while we were filming an episode of "Happy Days". I didn't tell anyone what I was planning. I threw it in there when the time was right and everyone loved it. That is how it became my signature line on the show."

I think many will agree that Donny Most still has it!

[www.donnymost.com](http://www.donnymost.com)

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