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Alex Donner

CELEBRATES 25 YEARS

By Kayla Baken

For Alex Donner, one of America's most popular bandleaders, 2013 marks his 25th Anniversary in the business. Throughout his illustrious career as an entertainer, Alex Donner has performed with his Orchestra for many upscale clients including Donald Trump, President George Bush, the Rockefellers, Tony Bennett, the Queen of Sweden, Harry Belafonte, Itzhak Pearlman and the Roosevelt family. When it comes to Palm Beach, Alex is certainly no stranger. Aside from vacationing in the area as a child, he recalls fondly his very first Palm Beach performance when he was invited by former Mayor and family friend Paul Ilyinsky to play at the Coconuts New Year's Eve party. Alex has since lent his remarkable talent to many of the community's most prominent and lavish events.

PALM BEACH REPERTOIRE

When asked to pinpoint some of his favorite performances in Palm Beach over the past 25 years, his response was simply, "I love what I do so I enjoy each and every performance." He highlighted some of the bigger events that he is extremely proud to have been a part of including The Palm Beach Heart Ball, The American Cancer Society's Annual Gala, The Palm Beach Preservation Society Ball, The Community Foundation Gala and The Norton Art Museum's Annual Bal Des Arts Gala, all of which he and his Orchestra have played numerous times.

Alex holds all of these events close to his heart because while performing at them, he notes that he is not only doing what he loves, but genuinely appreciates that each is for a good cause. "I am always thrilled to play a part in helping to generate support for the wonderful programs and services that these evenings represent," he says.

Though he has performed in cities like Paris, Rome, London, San Francisco and New York, Alex particularly loves working in Palm Beach because over the years, a number of his best musicians have moved to South Florida so when here, "I am able to provide a top-flight orchestra with a very diverse repertoire consisting largely of Florida musicians."

THE ROAD TO SUCCESS

Alex Donner has certainly come a long way in 25 years, having headlined at the Café Carlyle and The Algonquin's Oak Room, and perhaps just as intriguing as his accomplishments is the path that led him there.

Noting that he was musically active from an early age, Alex grew up on Fifth Avenue in New York City and his father regularly took him to many local jazz clubs as a kid. Alex attended Princeton University and then went on to Fordham Law School and became a matrimonial lawyer. During this time he was also the bandleader/singer at the infamous Club El Morocco where NY society mingled with Hollywood A-listers including Frank Sinatra, who was a regular.



This passion for performing was never lost. "I was doing divorces during the week as a lawyer and playing weddings on the weekend with the band," he explains. This combination, just unusual enough, began to generate human-interest pieces among the pages of top tier media outlets like the *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal*.

While working at the law firm, Studio 54 signed on as a client. "Whenever there was live music to be played there I got the call because they knew me and knew I loved to perform." Through this opportunity, Alex was playing frequent parties for some huge names including Mick Jagger, a feat most aspiring artists can only dream of.

In asking if he recalls experiencing a "big break," surprisingly, singing for Mick Jagger and Frank Sinatra wasn't it. Alex was asked to perform at a second-time-around wedding in India for a former divorce client who was a big name Texas oil heiress. His performance at the lavish reception gained him international recognition and from there he was able to quit his job to pursue music as a full time career.

WHAT'S TO COME

With the 2013 Palm Beach social season underway, Alex and his Orchestra have already graced the stage at the Boys and Girls Club Jingle Bell Ball and the International Society of Palm Beach Gala, both of which took place in December. The Society of Colonial Wars in the State of Florida's Annual Dinner Dance, the Cosmetic Awards Gala and the POSH Palm Beach Lighthouse International Benefit are among the multiple events in Palm Beach that Alex and his orchestra are scheduled to play in February.

For more information on the Alex Donner Orchestra, please visit www.alexdonner.com, or call 800-ITS-MUSIC