What is your unique gift? – Do you believe in it enough to invest everything you have in it? I think it is unique that I was trained as a classical alto saxophonist and eventually began to play jazz full time. This allowed me to master the fundamentals of sound and technique from an early age, giving me great facility, which equips me to tackle the most challenging of musical endeavors. Inevitably, this means I also learned how to read music very well alongside having the ability to learn by ear. I’ve also been fortunate enough to be able to learn and play in a variety of different ensembles which explore many other genres such as Gospel, R&B, Funk, Soul, Rock, and Alternative. I also play a number of different instruments, mainly saxophone and piano, but also some flute and clarinet. My experience as a pianist informs my ear and knowledge of music theory in the context of songs and arrangements. I believe I’ve been gifted with highly extensive training from an early age which sets me apart from most other saxophone players in proficiency on my instrument. Coupled with my exposure to and appreciation for a wide variety of genres, I believe in my skillset to keep growing and refining to achieve new levels of success.

What difference are you trying to make in the world? – How passionate are you about doing this? I am very passionate about breaking down social boundaries between various racial and ethnic backgrounds. I believe music is an extremely important vehicle for doing so and creating music which draws from a multitude of different cultures helps to bring people together. I also believe in the importance of access to high quality music education from an early age in order to dispel the myth that some people are just incapable of creating music. I think if people were more educated about what’s involved in creating music, they’d be more equipped to think for themselves about what they enjoy in music rather than blindly following what’s popular. It would allow for a world where everyone could communicate intelligibly about what it is that speaks to them in a particular piece of music.

 How do you define success for yourself? – What challenges do you face in order to create success? Success to me, in the music business is not driven by fame or money. If I’m able to stably survive whilst being actively involved in music and fully realize my creative potential as a player and composer, then I would say I’ve created a successful situation for myself. Success as a player also involves knowing that I’m proficient enough on my instrument to be able to clearly express on any musical project I would potentially be a part of.

What is career vision and a mission? – A career vision should encompass the big picture of what one hopes to achieve throughout their career. It’s not necessarily a concrete plan but an outline of some of the jobs one would be involved in, lasting impacts one hopes to make, and some of the projects and events one would partake in. This vision is all about crafting a future “you” and attempting realize what path would be the most fulfilling for each individual.

Can you innovate and creates value and successfully communicate that value to intended audiences? Yes, creating value stems from providing a product that people either want or need, recognizing what that desire is and then finding a way to make it blindingly apparent. Some of the greatest examples of success are people who started doing something that no one else was doing or at least took a familiar component of something and put it in an entirely new package (for example: arranging pop tunes for a jazz combo). Being able to communicate value successfully is somewhat political as well and involves understanding what will resonate with your intended audience (i.e. what lyrics will they relate to? What rhythms or harmonies are familiar?)

Do you have a positive attitude? Yes, I think what keeps me positive most of the time is being grateful for my opportunities to continue to create music. People are definitely attracted to the positivity of others (no one likes to be around someone who’s a drag). I think many opportunities present themselves to those who try to be genuinely good people and search for the positives of every situation. It’s a choice that everyone has the capacity to make.

Have you set your goals? What is your road map to success? Can you set inspiring and realistic goals? - I do have a number of set goals but I think it’s important to have a backup plan and be open to future opportunities I hadn’t fully considered before. For instance, I have the short-term goals of completing my bachelor’s degree and writing enough material for a short jazz combo EP by the time I graduate. But long term I could be satisfied taking some time to play and travel after school providing a viable opportunity comes, or I could attend graduate school and work towards a master’s degree. Ultimately in 5 years, I want to have at least written, recorded, and produced 3 original albums/EPs featuring me as a soloist. As a saxophone player, I have many achievable short-term goals as far as learning tunes and refining my proficiency as an improviser

Do you have and/or acquire the necessary expertise to actualize your vision? I have a great deal of experience as jazz saxophone player and as an improviser and I am continuing to work on those skills. I am also working to continue developing my skills as a composer and producer which will aid me in being able to fully realize my creative projects.

What are your priorities? Can you set priorities? My priorities first and foremost include my health and mental stability. Without sound mind and body I would not be fully equipped to handle the level of output necessary in this field. Secondly, I have to prioritize my playing and practice in order to be consistent. My financial stability and independence is also a major priority (I need to eat!) and I need to be consistently growing financially and investing in equipment which will further my music education and/or improve the quality of my musical output. Continually seeking ways to further my education is of the utmost importance as well (education goes beyond the classroom and often the most important things I learn I have worked to teach myself).

What opportunities are you looking for? What opportunities are you creating or intend to create? Ultimately, the opportunities that I’m looking for the most are the ones that allow me to express myself as a saxophone player and an improviser. I’m also looking for opportunities that allow me to gain more experience working in a music studio (understanding the equipment and knowing how to produce a desired sound on command). I intend to create some of these opportunities for myself by writing material and seeking out players who I know would be interested in playing with me.

How comfortable are you with uncertainty? What risks are you willing to take? I think that as a musician, we have to embrace uncertainty. The music industry is volatile with trends consistently changing and the demand for certain types of music always fluctuating. Every gig that I’ve ever had has never lasted and I’m certain this is one trend that will continue forever. Thus, I have to be prepared to be adaptable and be comfortable with exploring different styles or learning how to play in ways I wouldn’t initially desire to. As humans, we learn through failure and experience so many risks are worthwhile if there’s something to be learned.

When facing challenges, do you persevere or do you walk away? Again, we learn best by failing, recognizing what went wrong and how we could have been better, and making the necessary changes. It’s important for me to keep in mind the grand scheme of my musical journey and know that if I continue to grow, I’ll be much better in a year, 5 years, etc. Each challenge that I’ve faced has been worthwhile and has made me a better person and musician. I would say that I try to seek out adversity in order to learn.

What experience have you learned the most from? So far, the experience I’ve learned most from was my time in a band called Eclectic Soul. I’ve learned so much in the academia world through all my schooling and it’s all been important and worthwhile. However, what I learned from playing next to some other horn players who were much more skilled than I at 15 years old taught me so much about restraint and clear phrasing in improvisation. I learned how to relax when playing and how to be confident in my musical ideas. This is also where I learned it was acceptable to take a leap of faith and jump into something and fail a little along the way.

What actions are you taking to realize your vision? Are you consistently taking action? Of course I practice as much as possible but I also try to consistently reach out to acquaintances and former colleagues even old professors fishing for potential opportunities. I’ve gotten several gigs just in the past month doing this. I’m also consistently trying to seek out new information to better inform my approach to how I play and write. The more artists that I know of and the more I keep up with the current scene and what’s in demand, the better equipped I am to handle this constantly changing musical landscape.

How well do you put things in context? Are you able to easily respond to changes in your environment? What’s your best example? My best example of this is the multitude of times I’ve been asked or expected to play something that I’d never dealt with before on the spot. Sometimes it’s on a gig and the band leader felt the audience would appreciate a certain tune over another and I’ve had to be able to switch gears to accommodate.

What is your plan to continually grow and evolve? How have you grown or evolved in there past year or three? I’m working to establish more routine in my life which covers all the basis of keeping up with my skills. Again, I’ve mentioned health as a priority. When I’m working on my health, I have much more energy to be creative and inspired. Consistent practice is paramount to my success. I’ve learned it’s acceptable to take a break from the horn every now and then if it means I can return to it with much more vigor. Learning new tunes and writing as much as possible is also important to furthering my skills. I’ve grown so much just in the past year or so especially just as a person. I’m much more confident in my capabilities and my potential and my priorities are in order more than ever.

How easy is it for you to reach out to others to ask for support and to offer help? I’ll admit I could be better about this. For a long time I thought I’d be looked down upon by needing to ask for help. I’ve definitely gotten better and I’ve been much more gentle with myself and understanding that it’s fine to be inexperienced in some areas at this stage in the game. It’s only natural and I’m only twenty two after all.

How are you inspiring others to join and/or support your mission in order to create a financially sustainable enterprise that allows you to live your gift and contribute something valuable to society?

– If you aren’t currently, how do you intend to? Right now, one of my projects involves starting an artist friendly independent record label with a good friend of mine. Hopefully a project such as this could serve as a community platform for artists to realistically and reasonably produce their own projects (and projects of my own). Other than that, I seek to inspire others around me to want more from their own musical experiences by just being the best musician I can be. I hope to encourage others to achieve great heights in music through hard work.