

# Richard Elliot

Interview by Tony Washington

The following is an interview with one of the nation's top Jazz saxophonists at the Mt. Hood Festival of Jazz. During the interview, Mr. Elliot showed himself to be very accommodating, relaxed and candid.

**TW:** Over the last couple of years, I see that you've been putting out a lot of material and going in different musical directions.

**RE:** Every time I do a CD, I try to go another step. It gets tough after doing 11 CDs. You want each one to be a step up the ladder, and, at the very least, you don't want it to be a lateral step. From my standpoint, I try very hard to make each CD another step in personal growth. Whether or not other people see it that way, I can only hope.

My CDs have tended to cover a lot of ground on a single release. For example, I'll do one R&B song then in a later tune I'll do something completely different. Maybe it has something to do with my Scottish roots. This latest CD, "Chill Factor" tends to follow more of a common theme; it's an Instrumental R&B record rather than an Instrumental Jazz record. My influences as a young man were more steeped in R&B than Jazz anyway, so it seemed like a next step in evolution for me.

**TW:** Are you keeping real busy performing?

**RE:** I'm trying to tour a little bit less. In the past, I did about 120 tour dates a year. Now, I've got a 10-month-old baby at home. Because of that, my priorities are different. I still love to tour, but I've restructured my busy lifestyle so that I'm not away from the family for any lengthy period of time and I can still do what I love, which is performing on stage.

**TW:** Tell me about your involvement with "Tower

of Power" and then deciding to go it alone musically.

**RE:** I have been doing solo records since 1984, but never really made my solo career a priority. It was always something I did for fun. What I took seriously was being a musical sideman for other people. Being with "Tower of Power" for five years was like a dream come true.

The group was doing OK, but I got to a point where I needed to find out just how far I could take my solo career. I made the decision to leave the band in 1987.

**TW:** Did you consider that move to be a big gamble?

**RE:** Oh yeah, very much so.

**TW:** Well, it's obviously paid off; you are one of the most dynamic artists on the scene today, and it's exciting to see someone who obviously cares about his family and uses that as inspiration for his music.



Richard Elliot

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