



# NEWS

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**Photo available upon request.**

## **El Camino College Honors Palos Verdes Resident David Benoit as 2011 Distinguished Alumni Awards Honoree**

El Camino College recently honored Palos Verdes resident and Grammy nominated jazz pianist David Benoit as a 2011 Distinguished Alumni Award honoree.

Benoit is one of five honorees of the Distinguished Alumni Awards, given to ECC alumni who have shown outstanding achievement in their chosen career, service to the community or area of endeavor, and have gained local, state, or national recognition for their contributions. Honorees were selected by a committee and represent the fields of art, medicine, politics, business, and education.

Benoit is a composer and producer who was a music student at ECC in 1972. He studied music theory with Professor Wallace Bower, piano with Professor June Nelson, and orchestration with ECC Professor Donald Nelligan; he later took film scoring classes taught by Donald Ray at UCLA. His education in music conducting began with Heiichiro Ohyama, assistant conductor of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, and continued with Jan Robertson, head of the conducting department at UCLA.

He began his career as a musical director and conductor for diva Lainie Kazan in 1976 before moving on to similar roles with singer/actresses Ann-Margaret and Connie Stevens. Benoit has arranged, conducted and performed music for many popular pop and jazz artists over the years, including Russ Freeman and the Rippingtons (he was involved with the band in its formative stages, and they often appeared on each other's albums); Kenny Loggins, Patti Austin, Dave Koz, Kenny Rankin, Faith Hill, David Lanz, Cece Winans, David Pack, David Sanborn, The Walt Disney Company, and Brian McKnight.

Benoit also paid homage to one of his chief influences, Leonard Bernstein, by playing, arranging and performing on *The Songs of West Side Story*, an all-star project produced by David Pack, which achieved gold sales status.

In addition to his successful jazz career – which has included more than 25 solo recordings – Benoit is also the music director for the Asia America Symphony and Asia America Youth Orchestra; an on-air personality for KJAZZ radio; and is the artistic director for the Korean Youth Symphony.

In addition to Benoit, El Camino College Distinguished Alumni for 2011 include: Donald Brann, El Segundo Councilman and Vice President of the Da Vinci Schools' Board of Trustees; Pat Furey, Los Angeles County Principal Deputy County Counsel; Michael Montoya, Director, Southern California Edison; and Cinna Toy-Wohlmuth, Doctor of Medicine.

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