

Living a life in jazz

Willy Dalton deals with it on his own terms

By **DON DIORIO**
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Willy Dalton likes to cite saxophonist Ben Webster's quote about the music business: "The first 20 years are the hardest."

After three decades in the biz, Dalton is keenly aware of the dues-paying years that musicians log on their career trajectory, years that can seem – and sometimes are – never ending.

"I really think that's the way it is," the local guitarist/composer/band leader says from his Paterson home. "It's difficult and I don't recommend it

to my students. But if it's something you just have to do, then you're going to end up doing it."

Dalton, 49, has been doing it in a variety of ways since he moved out to California in the early '70s to pursue the dream.

"I remember an article about (French horn player) Jim Buffington in the Sunday New York Times," Dalton recalls. "He was just a guy who went to work with his horn and had all kinds of gigs and shows and recording sessions. I just thought this is what I wanted."

These days, Dalton goes to work

with his guitar and has all kinds of gigs and shows and recording sessions. Locals will probably recognize him from his long-standing group, The Dalton Gang, a 10-piece band that plays jazz soaked with funk and Latin elements. Formed in 1979 as a way for Dalton to rehearse his then-budding arranging and composing talents, the band has become a favorite local entity with a semi-regular schedule of concerts. Comprised of some of the finest New York area musicians, the players have worked with such artists as Buddy

Please see **WILLY DALTON, D8**

Willy Dalton, a Paterson-based jazz guitarist, arranger and composer who has paid his dues over a three-decade career, is shown hard at work during a recent recording session at



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