

James Barela was born and raised in Cheyenne, Wyoming and began his musical/trumpet training at 10. James attended Northwest College and studied with Neil Hansen, Mike Masterson, and Ronnie Bedford (whose group James regularly performed with). James later transferred to the Lamont School of Music at the University of Denver where he graduated with a Bachelor of Music/trumpet performance and a Master of Music/composition both with honors. While at Lamont his teachers included: Joe Docksey, Dan Kuehn, Bob Montgomery, Dave Hanson, Malcolm Lynn Baker, Vincent Laguardia, Donald Keats, and Art Bouton. During his stay, James became a first call trumpeter with many of Denver's finest musicians and performed in a number of diverse musical settings. Some of those he performed with are Bob Montgomery, Willie Hill, Sam Bivens, Joe Bonner, Eric Gunnison, Freddie Rodriguez, Ronnell Bright, Mitchell Long and Hi-Fi-Mo-Fo, Drew Morell, Paul Musso, Rich Chiarluce, Tony Klatka, Backstreet, Art Lande, Paul Romaine, Lou Fischer, Ron Miles, Bruno Carr, and Raw Brass, just to name a few. James also made a bigger name for himself with his quintet co-lead by tenor saxophonist Pete Peterson. This group, which included Shamie Royston, Artie Moore, and Rudy Royston, placed runner-up in the 1993 Cognac-Hennessy jazz search.

In 1998, James moved to Las Vegas, Nevada and continued his musical career as a first call lead/jazz trumpeter with many of the best groups and shows including, Jump, Jive, and Wail, Dian Diaz, Patty Janura, Sin City Daddies, Tropical Splash, Backstreet, Storm, David Poe, and countless others. James has also become a requested writer/arranger/producer for many of Las Vegas' finest. On the national/international scene James has performed with the Woody Herman Orchestra, Cyrus Chesnut, David Amram, Mike Stern, Joel Kaye's Neophonic Big Band, Ronnie Bedford, Frank Wess, Sheila Jordan, Bill Watrous, Butch Miles, Byron Stripling, Clay Jenkins, Kim Richmond, Lew Tabakin, Bobby Shew, Jamey Abersold, Nick Brignola, John McNeil, Phil Wilson, Ray Price, Jerry Hahn, Gladys Knight, The Temptations, Bobby Rydell, Frankie Avalon, Joe Williams, Kid Creole and the Coconuts, and Josephine.

James' playing can be heard on several recordings by artists such as, Nick Brignola, Unit Five, Neophonic Jazz Orchestra, Mark Massamino, Jump Jive and Wail, Josephine, "Downtown" Michael Brown, Simon Relph, and his own group BLU7. James has also been featured in the T.V. mini-series, "Steven King's-THE SHINING". James has been featured in magazines ranging from Downbeat, The gift of jazz, Las Vegas Weekly, Las Vegas Sun, Westword, and many more. James has performed all over the world with just about every type of musical ensemble and continues to search for new sounds to incorporate into his writing and playing. James' group, BLU7, has become an internationally renowned jazz ensemble known for an eclectic fusion of styles and highly original arrangements. BLU7's debut CD 'Cultural Instigator' is being played worldwide including NPR, BBC, Taiwan National Radio and receiving excellent reviews. BLU7 was recently nominated for a BMA award in the best jazz group category.

A recent injury to the upper lip led James to Dr. Simon McGrail in Toronto. Dr. McGrail performed a surgical procedure to repair the injury. This sidelined James for 3 years. James then sought the help of trumpet great Bobby Shew and within a year had regained most of the ability he had prior to the injury. This has led James to reach out to others who have suffered similar injuries and begin the process of writing a study on embouchure injuries, how to recognize, recover, and the residual psychological effect. During his down time, James delved into the electronic realm and learned to play the EVI or Electronic Valve Instrument. Becoming one of a very few players on this instrument has opened new avenues of performance and recording.

James endorses Cannonball trumpets and plays model 789 RL-S and a Cuesnon flugelhorn conservatory-monopole model. James also plays the Steiner EVI with the Roland Integra 7, a Roland XV-2020 sound module and an AKAI EVI1000 with an AKAI EWV2000 sound module.

