

# Johnny O'Neal Portrays 'Art Tatum' in the Blockbuster Hit "Ray"

Johnny O'Neal's appearance in the 2004 blockbuster film "Ray" soared his career to new levels. In the Hollywood film, **Ray Charles**, played by **Jamie Foxx**, goes to a nightclub to hear legendary Toledo jazz pianist **Art Tatum** played by O'Neal.



Jazz pianist and friend, **Oscar Peterson** recommended Johnny for the *Tatum* role. During filming, O'Neal played three or four songs, although only one, "Yesterdays" made it to the silver screen.

Johnny says, "That was a real honor for me, and for Toledo audiences, to play the part of *Tatum*--one of the greatest pianists ever." When people ask Johnny what *Tatum* record he was playing along with, he chuckles and says, "I was playing live. That was me!"

Following the success of "Ray", the **Ray Charles Band** asked Johnny to take the piano chair for its major venue tour in 2005. This band is just the latest to seek Johnny's talents.