

MICHAEL GREGORY JACKSON

“Michael Gregory Jackson has long been one of my favorite musicians. We came along around the same time and I have always considered him to be one of the most significantly original guitarists of our generation with his own distinctive sound and point of view. I am always curious to know what he is doing and where his inspiration has taken him next.” Pat Metheny

Michael Gregory Jackson is an unfettered composer, innovator, guitarist, singer, improviser, sound explorer, educator and poet. Upon his arrival in NYC, and since his 20's, he is widely considered one of the most innovative guitarists to emerge from New York's avant-garde loft scene of the 70s. Michael stands as a pioneer of a new movement, one in which genres and sounds were suddenly mixed in new and inventive ways. Rolling Stone magazine called him "the most original jazz guitarist to emerge since the sixties." Michael embodies the nature of a true and natural artist, perpetually cultivating new ideas and directions.

By age 20 Michael was an integral part of the fertile New Haven CT music scene, creating music with composers Wadada Leo Smith, Anthony Davis, Gerry Hemingway and others. Upon his arrival in NYC he was widely considered one of the most innovative guitarists to emerge during New York's avant-garde loft scene in the 70s.

Jackson's brilliant technique on electric and acoustic, flavored with quicksilver runs, volume pedal swells and sudden shifts from crystalline melodic to fuzzy dissonance, has been name-checked as a critical influence on such 6-string greats as Bill Frisell, Vernon Reid, Brandon Ross, and others.

Michael has worked and/or recorded with luminaries across the musical spectrum including Julius Hemphill, Oliver Lake, Wadada Leo Smith, Nile Rodgers, Anthony Braxton, Will Calhoun, Nels Cline, Nona Hendryx, Jack DeJohnette, Steve Winwood, David Murray, Walter Becker, Buster Williams, Carlos Santana, Marcus Miller, Henry Threadgill, Omar Hakim, Vernon Reid, and Patti LaBelle, to name a few.

Currently Michael is touring for the 10.26.2017 release of Michael Gregory Jackson "Spirit Signal Strata" with Kenwood Dennard - drums and Keith Witty - bass. Michael played guitar on Wadada Leo Smith's "Najwa" released 10.20.2017 on TUM Records. Also, a new Michael Gregory Jackson Clarity Quartet release is scheduled for 2018.

His recent credits as a producer include Pulitzer Prize nominee Wadada Leo Smith, for whom he produced two critically acclaimed discs "Heart's Reflections" (disc 2) and "Spiritual Dimensions" both on Cuneiform Records. Michael taught at California Institute for the Arts, New England Conservatory of Music,

Copenhagen Conservatory of Music, DK, Hampshire College, and is a guiding artist at The Creative Music Studio, Woodstock, N.Y.

His annual travels to Denmark to perform and collaborate have led to his most recent recordings, Michael Gregory Jackson's Clarity Quartet, "After Before" 2015 and "Liberty" EME 2013, and his 2018 release "Essence Breaks Free" Michael Gregory Jackson/Simon Spang-Hanssen Duo with guests.

In 2016/17 Michael toured with his European based Clarity Quartet, supporting the critically acclaimed 2015 release "After Before." Michael Gregory Jackson's Clarity Quartet (DK) members are Niels Praestholm bass, Simon Spang Hanssen saxophone and flute and as of 2016 the magnificent Kresten Osgood on drums.

Michael has also been performing and recording duets with Simon Spang-Hanssen, the new release "Essence Breaks Free" from this exciting duo with guest is forthcoming. Michael is also performing and touring with his CLARITY TRiO, featuring Rakalam Bob Moses on drums and a changing line up of bassists. Also, Michael recorded with London based drummer Kikanju Baku and tuba player Joe Daley, the project is titled "Endogeny and Exogamy" was released in 2016.

Michael is proud to endorse Pigtronix Pedals, Fishman Triple Play, Reunion Blues Gig Bags and Godin Guitars.

MICHAEL GREGORY JACKSON Full Bio by Sal Cataldi

One of the most influential guitarists to emerge during New York's avant-garde loft jazz scene has returned to influence a new generation of edge-pushing, genre-hopping musicians. He's also returned, after a few decades' detour courtesy of "The King of Pop," to his original name and performance moniker – Michael Gregory Jackson.

Michael has tread a winding musical path over his 30-plus year career, embracing everything from creative music, jazz, blues, rock and electronica soundscapes to harmonically rich and lyrically-deep vocal tunes, with the complex arrangements and subtleties that are a signature of his music. His ability to span musical genres was best captured by one reviewer's depiction, "Musical Mercury."

Michael Gregory Jackson was barely of his teens when he served as co-commander of the Oliver Lake Quartet, one of the most critically acclaimed and far-traveling ensembles working jazz's outer fringes. Michael's brilliant technique on electric and acoustic, flavored with quicksilver runs, volume pedal swells and sudden shifts from crystalline melodic to fuzzy dissonance, has been name-checked as a critical-influence, and can be heard deep in the musical DNA of six-

string legends like Bill Frisell, Vernon Reid, Pat Metheny, Marc Ribot, Mary Halvorsen and others.

The fruits of Lake and Jackson's post-modern Bird and Dizzy flights, often woven in a trio format with renowned drummer Pheeroan aKLauff, can be enjoyed on discs like "Life Dance Of Is" (Arista Novus), "Holding Together (Black Saint", "Shine" Arista Novus), and the re-released live set "Zaki" (Hat-Hut) and Michael's own solo releases of this era, his 1976 debut released in 2010 "Clarity, Circle, Triangle, Square" (ESP) and "Karmonic Suite" (IAI).

It was on "Clarity, Circle, Triangle, Square" that listeners may have first detected the staggering breadth of Michael's musical influences and ambitions. All About Jazz's Clifford Allen writes: "The shock – at least to those weaned on improvised music – comes when he spins out a delicate, soulful tune reminiscent of a young Steve Wonder. It's effect is extraordinary, immediate and unlike anything else before or since in improvised music." Q Magazine concurs, writing of the 1987 "What To Where" BMG: "Gregory has that rare combination of virtuosity and versatility, able to play the guitar whiz...then slip easily into hugely commercial cuts."

Michael Gregory Jackson's journey from the avant-garde to what the industry regarded as a more commercial, song-based sound was thankfully and intriguingly gradual. It gave fans with inquiring taste a ringside seat to an evolution that unfolded subtly over a series of superb albums, ones that continue to be favorites of critics and his fellow musicians.

1979 saw the release of two masterpieces produced for Arista/Novus, "Gifts" and "Heart and Center." Legendary Rolling Stone critic Robert Palmer called the song-centric second release: "a completely original synthesis of influences ranging from Stravinsky to Duke Ellington to Hendrix to Earth, Wind and Fire, unlike anything that's been heard before." With the more instrumental-focused "Gifts," Michael showcases his spiraling, cliché-free guitaristics, and a chamber jazz approach to horn-driven melody, one highlighted with the 10 minute, "Sir Julius of Woodstock." The skat-accented instrumental was titled and dedicated to another of his frequent musical partners, composer and sax man Julius Hemphill. Inspirations Magazine called it "a beautiful, magical record... (Jackson) thoroughly inhabits these intricate compositions, always finding an improvisational voice that is absolutely at home. A masterful performance."

As the 1980s unfolded, Michael dropped the Jackson (to avoid confusion with we all know who) and moved further towards commercial sounds, as a performer, producer and session man, with releases like the synth-heavy "What to Where" RCA/BMG and "Situation -X," Island, the latter produced by Grammy Award winner producer Nile Rodgers, an acknowledged fan of Michael's guitar and songwriting prowess.

During this era, his talents as guitarist and vocalist also adorned projects by folks who might seem unlikely partners for the one-time outre guitar god, Steve Winwood who recorded on Michael's Situation-X and was hired by Mick Jagger for a solo tour. Michael also collaborated with Walter Becker of Steely Dan fame.

While the record-buying public may not have provided platinum level support, the critics did. About "Situation-X," The Trouser Press observed that its' formula combined "Bowie's sophistication, Prince's flamboyance and with plenty of originality." The Advocate added that Jackson's more pop leanings "lay bear the sinews of human emotion," observing that his "high tenor voice calls to mind Smokey Robinson, Sting or Ben Harper."

Like many veteran musicians, Michael Gregory Jackson has most recently quenched his wandering creative spirit by making his recording more of a cottage industry, and by helping to point, in the right direction, a new generation of genre-hopping musicians in his role as educator.

Throughout the 90s and 00s, Jackson continued to evolve his own sound with releases like "Way We Used to Do" (Tip- Toe), "Red" and "Towards the Sun" (both Golden/iTunes). Dense horn-driven clusters have given way to a stripped-down, largely acoustic sound, with multi-tracked guitars, wide harmonic chording and alternately soaring and quiet vocals, on some songs imparting an almost alt.folk feel that might reside in your record collection next to Nick Drake. The sound may have been influenced by his idyllic surroundings, his chosen homes in western Massachusetts and, until recently, Maine.

Over the last two decades, Jackson has taught and led creative workshops at wide variety of institutions in the U.S. and abroad. These include the Berklee College of Music, New England Conservatory of Music, CalArts (California Institute for the Arts), Woodstock's Creative Music Studio and The Copenhagen Conservatory of Music in Denmark, which have led to his most recent recordings.

As the guitarists he influenced with his early avant-garde palate have continued to widen the ears of the listening public, Jackson has again returned to this style and experimental jazz's center stage – New York City.

Over the past decade, Jackson has increasingly performed at New York venues like John Zorn's Space, Tonic, Roulette, Spectrum and during the annual Visions Festival, at a much-anticipated reunion of the Oliver Lake Trio alongside his original cohorts, saxophonist Lake and drummer Pheeroan aKLaff. Jackson has also hit the European festival circuit, performing in ensembles led by another longtime partner in sound, Pulitzer Prize nominee, Wadada Leo Smith, for whom he produced two noted and critically acclaimed discs, "Spiritual Dimensions," (disc 2) Cuneiform 2009 and "Heart's Reflections," Cuneiform 2011. Michael also produced Pulitzer Prize winner Paul Muldoon's 2008 release "Resistance."

Jackson is poised to reclaim the mantle of the god of jazz guitar avant, with a busy touring schedule and a move back to New York City, where he is increasingly connecting with both old compatriots and a younger generation of players.

His newest release “After Before” Michael Gregory Jackson Clarity Quartet, released October 2015 and has garnered critical acclaim. His previous project “Liberty” (2013 Embla Music) is also a product of his European travels and teachings, it features Jackson and the Art Ensemble Syd, a creative ensemble from Denmark. The disc includes seven Jackson originals including the free-spirited, two part title track, the touching vocal ballad “Down” and the wild, improvised “Citi”, compelling jazz author Bob Gluck to write “The music is deeply touching and even heartbreaking. It defies category (yay!)...I cannot stop listening to this recording. It is that good...one part New Orleans early jazz, another part Ornette Coleman ‘harmolodic’ synchronicity, and a third part jam band party.”

Currently Michael is touring with his European based Michael Gregory Jackson Clarity Quartet, Michael Gregory Jackson’s Clarity Quartet (DK) members are Niels Praestholm bass, Simon Spang Hanssen saxophone and flute and as of 2016 the incredible Kresten Osgood on drums. Michael has also been performing and recording duets with Simon Spang-Hanssen, “Essence Breaks Free” the new release from this exciting duo with guest will be released in 2017. Michael is also performing and touring with his CLARITY TRiO, featuring Rakalam Bob Moses on drums and a changing line up of bassists. Coming soon an incredible new release with MGJ’s SPRIT-SIGNAL-STRATA his other major trio project featuring drummer Kenwood Dennard and bassist Keith Witty. Also, Michael recorded with London based drummer Kikanju Baku and tuba player Joe Daley, the project titled “Endogeny and Exogamy” was released in 2016.

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Michael is recording a solo guitar project, a project of duos, trios and quartets, finishing a project of songs with lyrics, working title “Breathe” and editing his book of poetry titled “Poems Righting Me.”

Michael recently played on Pulitzer Prize nominee Wadada Leo Smith’s newly released CD on TUM Records and several other new projects soon to be released. Michael has also joined storied drummer Ra-Kalam Bob Moses’s Heart Breathe Trio, which began touring in April 2014.

Michael is performing solo, duo, trio and large ensemble concerts, producing recordings and teaching at various institutions in Europe and in the USA.

<http://www.michaelgregoryjacksonepk.com>
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Performed and/or Recorded With:

Julius Hemphill, Mick Jagger (Rolling Stones), Oliver Lake, Will Calhoun (Living Colour), David Murray, Matt Shipp, Nile Rodgers (Chic, Daft Punk), Wadada Leo Smith, Carlos Santana, Bernard Edwards (Chic), Vernon Reid (Living Colour), Billy Hart (Wes Montgomery, Wayne Shorter), Nona Hendryx, Kenwood Dennard (Dizzy Gillespie, Wayne Shorter, Herbie Hancock), Buster Williams (Herbie Hancock), Steve Winwood (Traffic), Keith Witty (Anthony Braxton, Amel Larrieux, Somi), Nels Cline (Wilco), Walter Becker (Steely Dan), Anthony Braxton, Rakalam Bob Moses, Patti LaBelle, Kenwood Dennard, Anthony Davis, Jack DeJohnette, Anton Fig (Letterman Show), Melle Mel, Omar Hakim (Weather Report, Sting), Jerome Harris, Eddie Henderson, Amina Claudine Myers, David Sancious (Bruce Springsteen, Peter Gabriel), Obie Award Winner Ntozake Shange, Rodney Holmes, Jimmy Bralower, Nona Hendryx, Kevin Jones, Jessica Hagedorn, Ed Blackwell (Ornette Coleman), Steve Thorton (Miles Davis), Anthony Jackson, Gary Bartz (Miles Davis), Tony Thompson (Robert Palmer, Led Zeppelin), Sammy Figueroa (Miles Davis), Kermit Driscoll (Bill Frisell), Ole Romer, Bernard Davis (Sam and Dave, Mariah Carey), Marty Ehrlich, Karl Berger, Ingrid Berger, Henry Threadgill, Baikida Carroll, Victor Lewis, Thulani Davis, Jeff Bova, and many others.