

“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 2015

## MICHAEL GREGORY JACKSON CLARITY QUARTET

MGJ's Clarity Quartet has evolved to a place of profound musical communication and camaraderie; they exhibit a high level of spirit and compositional and improvisational interplay. Each member of this group is an accomplished composer, improviser and leader in their own right. Together they deftly and rigorously explore many realms of sound, beauty and creative expression.

Michael officially formed the Michael Gregory Jackson Clarity Quartet in 2013. MGJ's Clarity Quartet evolved naturally after many fruitful years of working with Danish bassist Niels Praestholm. Michael initially auditioned and hired Niels in 1979 for his premiere tour of Denmark. Throughout the years Michael and Niels have maintained their strong connection both as friends and musical collaborators. In 2013 they co-produced and released "Liberty, Art Ensemble Syd with Michael Gregory Jackson". Art Ensemble Syd, founded by Niels Praestholm, also included saxophonist Simon Spang-Hanssen and the multi-talented Kresten Osgood on drums.

## MICHAEL GREGORY JACKSON

is an American composer, innovator, guitarist, 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 is a pioneer of a new movement in which genres and sounds were suddenly mixed in new and inventive ways. Michael embodies the nature of a true and natural artist, perpetually cultivating new ideas and directions. He has served as a critical influence, name-checked by Bill Frisell, Vernon Reid, Marc Ribot, Brandon Ross, Elliot Sharpe and Mary Halvorson.

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, Marc Ribot, Mary Halvorson and more.

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.

His recent credits as a producer include Pulitzer Prize nominee Wadada Leo Smith, for whom he produced two critically acclaimed discs. 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, the critically acclaimed "After Before" 2015, "Liberty" EME 2013, and his soon to be released 2017 Michael Gregory Jackson-Simon Spang-Hansen Duo with Guests recording "Essence Breaks Free".

## **NIELS PRAESTHOLM**

is a bassist, visionary composer, adventurous improviser, and a strong organizational force on the Danish jazz scene. With his groups Embla, The Gyroscope String Trio and Art Ensemble Syd (South). Niels has toured extensively throughout Denmark, Scandinavia, Europe, USA and in the Caribbean Islands.

"Bassist and composer Niels Praestholm employs a genuine, delightfully off, sound, which he creates with his instrumentation. There is no trace of the reverence and solemnity often heard in the so-called Nordic sound. There is a vivid energy in the up tempo tracks that makes the music burn...the music has a down to earth timbre of life." -Boris Rabinowitch, Politiken (Denmark)

Praestholm has worked and/or recorded with Kenny Drew, John Tchicai, Horace Parlan, Michael Gregory Jackson, Rakalam Bob Moses, Lee Konitz, Django Bates, Dave Liebman, Doug Hammond, Teddy Wilson, Kresten Osgood, Richard Boone, Ed Thigpen, Clark Terry, Rudy Smith, Simon Spang-Hanssen, Pierre Dorge, The New Jungle Orchestra, Ernie Wilkins, Benny Waters, Sahib Shihab and many more.

## **SIMON SPANG-HANSSEN**

Saxophonist, artist and composer Simon Spang-Hanssen began his career in the mid-seventies in Copenhagen, Denmark as a member of the famed John Tchicai and "Strange Brothers", which included bassist Peter Danstrup and drummer Ole Roemer. He also performed with bassist Johnny Dyani, Jesper Zeuthen, The New Jungle Orchestra, Doug Raney, the Brazilian drummer/composer Nenê and with his own groups that included Ben Besiakov, Jesper Lundgaard and Alex Riel.

Simon also lived and worked in Paris, and played with Andy Emler Megaoctet, The Quintet of Francois and Louis Moutin, Nguyễn Lê "Tales of Vietnam", The Orchestra National de Jazz, Bojan Z., Denis Badault, Anouar Brahem and with his personal projects featuring musicians such as Richard Bona, Billy Hart, Xavier Desandre, Mariane Bitran, Mario Canonge, Tony Rabeson and Franck Tortiller.

Returning to Denmark Simon formed several groups including "Rainbow Spirit", with Gambian kora-player Dawda Jobarteh, an octet "Alisio Ensemble", the Paris based "Ear Witness" with Emil Spányi, Linley Marthe and Felix-Sabal-Lecco The Brazilian Projects and the S.S.H. 5-tet with a.o. Bob Rockwell.

Since his tenure with John Tchicai Simon has experimented in many directions both as a player and composer and has developed a personal mixture of his many roots in jazz and across the musical spectrum.

## **KRESTEN OSGOOD**

is a drummer and composer, he graduated from the Rhythmic Conservatory of Music in Copenhagen in 2002 and has been playing on the Copenhagen scene and internationally since 1997.

Kresten has released numerous recordings as a leader featuring Dr. Lonnie Smith (Hammond Rens 2002), Sam Rivers (Purple Violets 2003 and Violet Violets 2004) and Paul Bley (Florida 2007).

He is in high demand, playing over 300 concerts a year, the music ranging from swinging jazz with Hugo Rasmussen to improvisation and abstraction in various constellations.

Osgood has performed and/or recorded with Derek Bailey, Peter Brötzman, Oliver Lake, John Tchicai, Henry Grimes, Fred Anderson, Marshall Allen, William Parker, Tim Berne and Steve Beresford, but also Billy Preston, Kurt Rosenwinkel, Brad Mehldau, Mark Turner, Django Bates, Chris Cheek, George Garzone and Josh Redman. He plays on well over 30 albums and is receiving more and more international attention and tours in Europe and the US. Awards: Django D'or Award, "Musician of the year" by the Danish critics (Steppeulven) and two Danish Jazz Grammys.