

“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

“I first heard Michael Gregory Jackson in 1975 when I moved to Boston. He blew my mind and influenced me a LOT. I believe he’s one of the unsung innovators.”

– Bill Frisell

Michael’s NeW! CD and latest production, Michael Gregory Jackson Clarity Quartet “WHUNUFINDITUWILLKNOW” is set to be released on February 8, 2019 featuring Michael’s stellar Danish quartet!

This release includes pieces Dedicated to Geri Allen, Jessica Hagedorn, Baikida Carroll, Fred Hopkins & Bruce Kevin Jackson.

MICHAEL GREGORY JACKSON: IN DEPTH BIO INFORMATION 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 aka Michael Gregory 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 Halvorson 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 aKLaft, 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 *Clarity, Circle, Triangle, Square* (Bija; reissued 2010 on 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* on 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 he 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. He collaborated with Steve Winwood, who recorded on Michael’s Situation-X, and with Walter Becker of Steely Dan fame, in addition to other rock headliners.

While the record-buying public may not have provided platinum level support, the critics did. About Situation-X, 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.”

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 Maine.

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. 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.

Michael is poised to reclaim the mantle of the god of jazz guitar avant. 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, where he has been connecting with both old compatriots and a younger generation of players.

Over the past decade, Jackson has increasingly performed at such venues like John Zorn's Stone, 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 aKLaft. Jackson has also hit the European festival circuit, performing in ensembles led by another longtime partner in sound, Pulitzer Prize finalist, Wadada Leo Smith, for whom he produced two noted and critically acclaimed discs released on Cuneiform Records, *Spiritual Dimensions* (disc 2) in 2009 and *Heart's Reflections*, in 2011.

Michael recently played on one of Smith's new releases on TUM Records and several other new projects. He also recorded with London based drummer Kikanju Baku and tuba player Joe Daley on Endogeny and Exogamy, released in 2016.

The guitarist currently performs, records and tours with several of his own ensembles, including his CLARITY Trio, which features Rakalam Bob Moses on drums and a changing line up of bassists. In 2017, he released the album Spirit Signal Strata, recorded with his trio featuring drummer Kenwood Dennard and bassist Keith Witty.

Simultaneous with his current work in the USA, Michael's been collaborating with musicians in Denmark, recording and releasing several albums and touring in Europe. His newest release, which comes out February 8, 2019 on Golden, is WHENUFINDITUWILLKNOW by the Michael Gregory Jackson Clarity Quartet, which includes Niels Praestholm on bass, Simon Spang Hanssen on saxophone and flute, and Matias Wolf Andreason on drums.

The quartet's first album, After Before, came out in October 2015 to critical acclaim, and was accompanied by a tour. Prior to that, Michael collaborated with the A r t E n s e m b l e S y d , a creative ensemble from Denmark, for the album Liberty (2013 Embla Music). The disc, which includes seven Jackson originals, compelled jazz author Bob Gluck to write "The music is deeply touching and even heartbreaking. It defies category... I cannot stop listening to this recording. It is that good..."

Michael's other Scandinavian collaborations include performing and recording duets with Simon Spang-Hanssen for an upcoming album, Essence Breaks Free.

Active as a composer, performing musician, and educator, Michael is performing solo, duo, trio and large ensemble concerts, producing recordings and teaching at various institutions in Europe and in the USA. He's toured as a member of drummer Ra-Kalam Bob Moses's Heart Breathe Trio, and in January 26, 2019 served as guest composer and guitarist for a performance at Gateway City Arts by John Kordalewski's 13-piece Makanda Project.

In addition, he's finishing a project of songs with lyrics called Breathe and editing a book of his poetry titled Poems Righting Me.

Performed and/or Recorded With: Julius Hemphill, 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 A ward 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.

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