

Michael Powers, Jazz Guitarists

Michael was born in New York City in 1960, but grew up in the San Francisco Bay area. His musical career began as therapy, when at the age of 15 he took up strumming the guitar to strengthen his wrist after a skateboard accident. Following his graduation from Berkeley High School when he was 15½, he moved to Seattle and frequented local jam sessions, keeping his fingers on the guitar strings and his mind on making his music reach a wider audience. Says Powers, *“I learned how to play by sitting in at as many places as I could, developing eclectic tastes by playing with all types of bands: Jazz, Rock, Blues, R&B, and Top 40. I wanted to learn how to play any kind of music that featured a guitar as a solo voice.”* As Michael’s musicianship progressed, his interests broadened to include music theory. He enrolled



at Seattle’s prestigious Cornish College of the Arts where he graduated Magna Cum Laude with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Composition and Performance in 1982. While at Cornish, Powers studied under composers Gil Evans and Sam Rivers, bassist Gary Peacock, pianist Art Lande, and trombonist Julian Priester. His style was also influenced by a diverse group of musicians which includes Jimi Hendrix, Carlos Santana, Charlie Parker, George Benson, Stanley Jordan, Miles Davis, and Kevin Eubanks. On stage, Michael has shared performed with, recorded with or shared billings with piano giant Herbie Hancock, classic Jazz saxophonist Eddie “Clean Head” Vinson, B3 master Dr. Lonnie Smith, Ronnie Cuber, Gil Scott Heron, Keiko Matsui, Nancy Wilson, Les McCann, Najee, Tommy Davidson, Dr. Cornel West, the legendary Ray Charles, Afro-pop star King Sunny Ade, Grammy award-winning vocalist Diane Schuur, R&B greats Gladys Knight and the Pips and Atlantic Starr, contemporary Jazz artists Ronny Jordan, Tom Grant, David Benoit, sax great Ernie Watts, the Yellowjackets, and the duo of Tuck & Patti. *“It’s hard to categorize my music, although it usually ends up in the Jazz record bins,”* says Michael. *“If I had to put a label on it, I would call it contemporary instrumental music. It’s a sound rooted in the Jazz tradition that keeps pace stylistically with Pop, R&B, and Blues; with Blues being at the core of my inspiration.”* His powerful performances have regularly commanded standing ovations.