

MIKE STERN

Profile

In a career that spans three decades and a discography that includes more than a dozen eclectic and innovative recordings, five-time GRAMMY nominee Mike Stern has established himself as one of the premier jazz and jazz-fusion guitarists and composers of his generation.

Born in Boston in January 1953, Stern grew up in Washington, DC, then returned to Boston to study at the Berklee College of Music. After college, he got his start as a guitar player with Blood, Sweat & Tears at age 22. Following a brief stint with Billy Cobham's powerhouse fusion band from 1979 to 1980, he moved to New York City, where he was recruited by Miles Davis to play a key role in Miles' celebrated comeback band of 1981 (which also included bassist Marcus Miller, drummer Al Foster, percussionist Mino Cinelu and saxophonist Bill Evans). During his three-year period with Miles, Stern appeared on three recordings with the jazz maestro – *Man with the Horn*, *Star People* and the live *We Want Miles*. He toured with Jaco Pastorius' Word of Mouth Band from 1983 through 1985 and returned to Miles' lineup for a second tour of duty that lasted close to a year.

In 1985, Stern recorded *Neesh*, his first recording as a leader, for the Japan-based Trio label. A year later, he made his debut on Atlantic with *Upside Downside*, featuring such celebrated colleagues as David Sanborn, Jaco Pastorius, saxophonist Bob Berg, bassists Mark Egan and Jeff Andrews, keyboardist Mitch Forman and drummers Dave Weckl and Steve Jordan. Over the next two years, Stern was a member of Michael Brecker's potent quintet, appearing on *Don't Try This At Home*.

In the summer of 1986, Stern took to the road with David Sanborn and later joined an electrified edition of Steps Ahead, which featured Mike Mainieri on midi vibes, Michael Brecker on the Electronic Wind Instrument (EWI), Darryl Jones on electric bass and Steve Smith on drums.

Stern's second Atlantic album, *Time In Place* (1988), delivered on the promise of his debut. He followed with *Jigsaw* (1989) and *Odds Or Evens* (1991), both of which ably showcased his legendary guitar prowess and

musicality. During this period he also formed a touring group with Bob Berg that included drummer Dennis Chambers and bassist Lincoln Goines. They remained a working unit from 1989 to 1992, at which point Stern joined Michael and Randy Brecker in a reunited Brecker Brothers Band, appearing on *Return of the Brecker Brothers*, released in 1992. Other notable sideman credits include work with the late tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson and the live recording *4 Generations of Miles*, in which he joins other Miles Davis alumni George Coleman on tenor sax, Jimmy Cobb on drums and Ron Carter on bass.

The '90s proved to be a prolific and critically successful period for Stern. His acclaimed 1993 release, *Standards (And Other Songs)*, earned him the pick of Best Jazz Guitarist of the Year by the readers and critics of *Guitar Player* magazine. He followed that up with two hard hitting offerings – *Is What It Is* in 1994 and *Between The Lines* in 1996 – both of which scored GRAMMY nominations. In 1997, he recorded *Give And Take* with bassist John Patitucci, drummer Jack DeJohnette, percussionist Don Alias and special guests Michael Brecker and David Sanborn. Their freewheeling covers of Sonny Rollins' "Oleo," John Coltrane's "Giant Steps," Cole Porter's "I Love You" and Jimi Hendrix's "Who Knows" helped Stern earn the Orville W. Gibson Award for Best Jazz Guitarist that year. Stern's ninth release for Atlantic was a six-string summit with colleagues Bill Frisell and John Scofield that was appropriately titled *Play*. His *Voices* (2001) release, his first foray into vocal music, was also another GRAMMY nominee.

After 15 years with Atlantic, Stern shifted to ESC for the 2004 release of *These Times*, an eclectic set that included guest appearances by some high-profile session players – bassist Richard Bona, saxophonist Kenny Garrett and banjoist Bela Fleck.

Stern joined the Heads Up label with the August 2006 release of *Who Let the Cats Out?* Regardless of who let them out, the cats are indeed loose on this album, and making a serious noise. Included on the guest roster are bassists Richard Bona (who handles vocals on two tracks), Anthony Jackson, Meshell Ndegeocello, Chris Minh Doky and Victor Wooten, trumpeter Roy Hargrove, saxophonists Bob Franceschini and Bob Malach, drummers Dave Weckl and Kim Thompson, harmonica player Gregoire Maret, and keyboardist/producer Jim Beard.

A frequent world traveler, Stern took his group to Europe, Asia and elsewhere throughout much of 2008 – an ambitious itinerary that included a memorable one-nighter at the New Morning, the longstanding and highly celebrated club in Paris, France. This electrifying show in front of a capacity-plus crowd in May 2008 was captured on film for posterity, and is presented in *New Morning: The Paris Concert*, a live DVD scheduled for worldwide release in March 2009. Backing Stern on this gig is the expert crew of saxophonist Bob Franceschini, bassist Tom Kennedy and drummer Dave Weckl (who also mixed the DVD).

###

HEADS UP

I N T E R N A T I O N A L

23309 Commerce Park Rd. Cleveland, Ohio USA 44122
216-765-7381 phone 216-464-6037 telefax
headsup@headsup.com <http://www.headsup.com>
[WWW.HEADSUP.COM](http://www.headsup.com)