

A photograph of Michael Hilgendorf, a guitarist with long hair and glasses, wearing a floral shirt and playing an electric guitar. The background is dark and out of focus.

Michael Hilgendorf



michaelhilgendorfmusic.com

Biography

DownBeat Award-winning guitarist and composer Michael Hilgendorf is one of the fieriest and most thoughtful improvisers in NYC's next generation of musicians. Drawing inspiration from every facet of his musical upbringing, Michael seeks to create music at only the highest level, constantly seeking to push boundaries and bring improvised music to new places. Influenced by the harmonically dense, ethereal sounds of Kurt Rosenwinkel, the deeply creative interplay of Miles Davis' second quintet, all the way to the rhythmically and technically intense drive of progressive metal like Animals as Leaders, Michael seamlessly weaves these seemingly unrelated styles into a singular sound that is unmistakable.

Michael's musical journey began in the suburbs of Detroit, where he was born and raised. Initially a successful rock and blues guitarist (Michael's band won the Detroit Blue Society Youth Blues Challenge while only 15 years old), it didn't take long for the lifelong study of jazz to take over his life. Michael spent three summers on full scholarship in Wayne State University's JC Heard Jazz at Wayne program, where he became fully engrossed in the music through teaching artists like Joey DeFrancesco, Theo Croker, and Ralphe Armstrong.

This led to Michael moving to Chicago to earn a BM in Jazz Studies from Columbia College Chicago. During his time in Chicago, Michael performed regularly in and around the jazz scene, studying and performing with world class artists like Kendrick Scott, Donny McCaslin, Jon Irabagon, Cory Henry, and even performing with former Prince music director Cassandra O'Neal at the NAMM convention in 2018.

Upon graduating in 2020, Michael wanted to push his playing even further, which led to a move to NYC to obtain a MM in Jazz Studies from the prestigious Manhattan School of Music. While at MSM, Michael studied under some of jazz's most respected names: Mike Moreno, Phil Markowitz, Marc Cary, Jaleel Shaw, just name a few. He immediately began carving out a spot for himself as one of NYC's most technically advanced guitarists, equally at home in complex mixed-meter original music as he is in straight-ahead swing. In his short time in NYC, Michael has already recorded and performed with top names (Dayna Stephens, Charles Altura, Wycliffe Gordon, Joe Block) and in top venues (Apollo Theater, Jazz Gallery, The Django).

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Video



Antithesis



Live w/ Human Music
feat. Dayna Stephens



Adderall Brain

Music



Recorded w/
The Outside In



Live Session w/
Hugo Caldeira



Live w/ Destructive
Forces of Nature



Michael Hilgendorf

Press



Young Musician
Heads To Boston



From Happy Accidents to the
Manhattan School of Music

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