

MICHEL EL MALEM GROUP



Story

THE GROUP

- 2008: Michel El Malem brings together a first quartet
- 2009 : First Step disc released
- 2010 : Birth of the Michel El Malem Group
- 2011: Release of the disc Reflets with Marc Copland
- 2018: evolution of the Michel El Malem Group
- Late 2019: recording of a third album with Marc Copland as guest again.
- 2021: release of the album Dedications on the Inner Circle Music label.

AN OPEN AND CONTEMPORARY JAZZ

In 2008, saxophonist and jazz composer Michel El Malem gathered a first quartet of musicians for the production of his first album "First Step". He then played alongside guitarist Michael Felberbaum, double bassist Marc Buronfosse and drummer Luc Isenmann.

Then, in 2011, he founded the Michel El Malem Group, which brings together the same group to produce a second album, "Reflets", with American pianist Marc Copland as guest artist, which was released in 2011.

In 2018, the Michel El Malem Group evolved with two new musicians. Double bassist Stéphane Kerecki and guitarist Romain Pilon joined drummer Luc Isenmann and saxophonist Michel El Malem in the band. They replaced Michael Felberbaum and Marc Buronfosse.

At the end of 2019, the new group recorded a new album, Dedications, with Marc Copland as guest. It will be released in 2021 on the Inner Circle Music label.

For more information: <http://michelelmalem.com/>

MICHEL EL MALEM

Born in Paris, Michel El Malem started playing guitar at the age of 15, mainly studying with Thierry Garcia, Pierre Jean Gaucher and Pierre Cullaz.

Until the age of thirty, it was his only instrument. Then he started playing saxophone and piano. He studied saxophone with Sylvain Beuf and Remi Biet, arrangement and orchestration with Marc Bercovitz. He writes compositions for his group, for shows and TV reports and composes song arrangements.

In 2011, he won the Prix de l'Académie du jazz (Best French Record Award 2012) for his album Reflets.

Michel performs in concerts in France and abroad. He has played with Herbie Hancock, Marc Copland, Terri Lyne Carrington, Michael Rodriguez, Ben Williams, Nguyen Le, Michael Felberbaum, Luc Isenmann, Marc Buronfosse, Bruno Angelini, Sylvain Beuf, Michel Perez, Diego Imbert, Baptiste Trotignon, Georges Pludermacher, Frédéric Jeanne, Deborah Brown, Fawzy Chekili, Stan Laferrière, Sébastien Paindestre, Mauro Gargano.





LUC ISENMANN

Luc Isenmann studied classical percussion and jazz at the Conservatoire de Strasbourg between 1988-1994 (1st prize Percussion and Jazz), then studied with Daniel Humair in the jazz class of the CNSM de Paris between 1994-1998 (1st prize Jazz) under the direction of François Jeanneau. He is currently the drummer of David Patrois Trio and Quintet, Laurent Mignard Pocket Quartet, Bertrand Lauer Trio, Michel El-Malem Quartet, Frédéric Favarel Jazzpop Trio, Spoumij (Sound Painting Music Orchestra of the UMJ), Anitya (Christophe Cagnolari Sound Painting Ensemble), Benoit Simon Trio, Five in Orbit Quintet. Pedagogue, he teaches jazz drums at the Conservatoire de Strasbourg.



STÉPHANE KERECKI

Born in Paris in 1970, Stéphane Kerecki studied double bass at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Paris with Jean-François Jenny-Clark, Riccardo Del Fra and Jean Paul Celea. He then joined Steve Potts' quartet and became the first bass player of the Paris Jazz Big Band. In 2001, he won 2nd prize as a soloist at the Paris La Défense International Jazz Competition. Between 2003 and 2012, he released four records with saxophonist Matthieu Donarier and drummer Thomas Grimmonprez: Story Tellers, Focus Dance, Houria with American saxophonist Tony Malaby as guest, Patience with English pianist John Taylor, and finally Sound Architects with saxophonist Tony Malaby and Serbian pianist Bojan Z. Then followed in 2014 the album Nouvelle Vague with John Taylor, Emile Parisien and Fabrice Moreau. In 2016 and 2017, he participated in two trios: Modern Art and Aïrès. His latest album, French Touch, was released in 2018 as a quartet with Emile Parisien, Fabrice Moreau and Jozef Dumoulin.

ROMAIN PILON

Romain Pilon is a French guitarist born in Grenoble. After four years at the Berklee College of Music in Boston where he played with many musicians including Christian Scott, Esperanza Spalding, Warren Wolf, Lionel Loueke, he spent a year in New York before moving to Paris. In 2011, he released his first album as a leader, Ny3, recorded with drummer Colin Stranahan and double bass player Matt Brewer. Since then, three other records have followed: Colorfield with Michael Janisch, Jamire Williams and the American saxophonist Walter Smith III in 2013; The Magic Eye with Fred Pasqua, Yoni Zelnik, Ben Wendel and Walter Smith III in 2015; and finally Cooper with Tony Paeleman, Fred Pasqua, Pierre de Bethmann and Seamus Blake in March 2018.



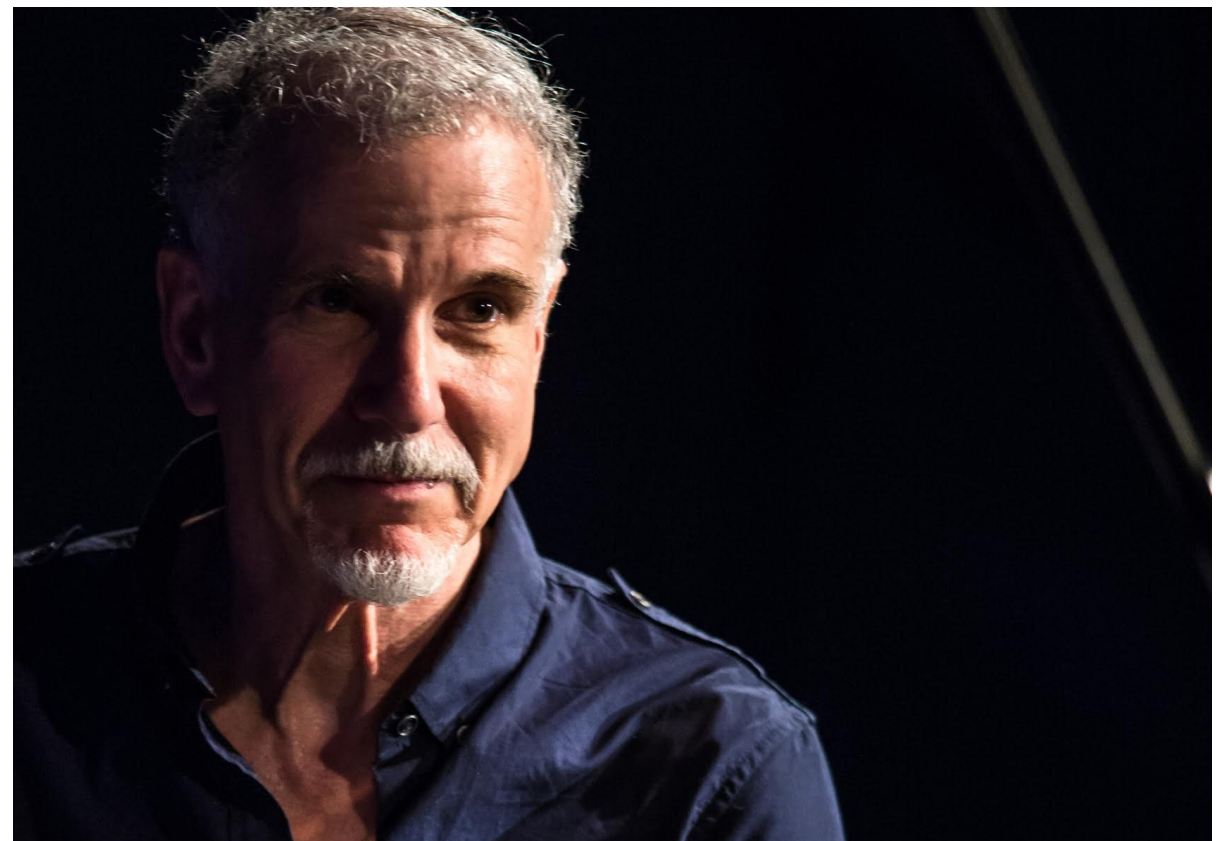
MARC COPLAND (GUEST)

After a record in 2011, "Reflets", awarded the French Record Prize by the Académie du Jazz, the year 2019 was marked by a new encounter between the Michel El Malem Group and the American pianist Marc Copland. The result is an album, Dedications, which will be released in 2021 on the Inner Circle Music label.

With a music that belongs to an open and contemporary jazz, it was natural for the band to turn for its new album to a pianist poet and colorist like Marc Copland.

"Marc is not only a great pianist, he has the ability to impregnate with his talent all the projects in which he plays." Michel El Malem

www.marccopland.com



TESTIMONIALS

GREG OSBY

Saxophonist, educator, recording artist, producer and president the Inner Circle Music records label

"It is my pleasure to present this recommendation for saxophonist Michel El Malem. My name is Greg Osby and I am a performer, educator, recording artist, producer and president the Inner Circle Music records label with more than forty years of experience in the music industry. Along with several commissions, artist endowments and critical awards, I also have extensive touring experience in the United States, Europe, Asia and Latin America as a side man for many cherished and celebrated artists

I have followed Michel's musical career for several years and I have come to realize that he is an exceptional artist who has a great talent for music performance and composition. I was extremely impressed with his musicality the first time I heard him perform and I could recognize in him the kind of artist that gives himself entirely to his performances.

Michel's exceptional sense of commitment to his performances and complete musicianship deserves recognition and support. He is an artist who has contributed greatly and would contribute even more to the international music community with the support of art music lovers worldwide."

MIKA SHINO

Former director of the Herbie Hancock Institute of Jazz, director of UNESCO International Jazz Day

"In my role as the former Director of the Herbie Hancock Institute of Jazz, Director of UNESCO International Jazz Day and Senior Advisor to numerous jazz artists including Herbie Hancock, Wayne Shorter, Esperanza Spalding, Marcus Miller, and Advisor to Quincy Jones' Qwest TV, I have had the privilege of witnessing Michel's musical journey unfold. His virtuosity and creativity are nothing short of extraordinary, capturing the essence of jazz in its purest form. Michel possesses a rare ability to evoke deep emotions through his music, weaving intricate melodies that resonate with both technical brilliance and profound soulfulness.

Michel's compositions are a testament to his innovative spirit and deep understanding of jazz tradition.

I wholeheartedly believe that Michel El Malem is poised to make significant contributions to the future of jazz music on a global scale. His dedication, artistry, and profound musicality make him a standout figure in today's jazz landscape."

TESTIMONIALS

RICK MARGITZA

Saxophonist and educator

"My name is Rick Margitza and I am a saxophonist/composer and educator who has been active in the music industry for 50 years.

Forced to describe what makes Michel such an extraordinary talent, I would point to his technical precision on his instrument and his very rich, soulful tone. When he plays works of his own composition, there is a clear emotional communication. Alternately, when he plays the works of others, he is able to very much determine what sound is needed and replicate it in a way which is true to its origin but which is still uniquely Michel's.

He is, simply put, a talented player who differentiates himself from a crowded field by a deeper sound and commitment to expressivity that a less adept player would be unable to achieve."

DAVID LIEBMAN

Saxophonist and composer.

"I enjoyed Michel's recording, especially the compositions and arrangements."

JERRY BERGONZI

Saxophonist, composer, and educator

"My name is Jerry Bergonzi and I have been active in the music industry since the 1970s - I perform and record internationally with many artists like Dave Brubeck, Hal Galper, Adam Nussbaum, Daniel Humair, Mick Goodrick , and many many others.

I collaborated with Michel by playing one of his compositions, in one of my 'livestream' videos in 2023.

I know his work and am aware of his reputation for excellence as a performer and composer. I think it would be fascinating to listen to his projects on stage in the USA.

If I had to summarize, I would say that the music that Michel El Malem plays is the music that I want to play. It's modern, warm, full of atmosphere and magic.

Please listen to it."

TESTIMONIALS

PHIL GRENADIER

Trumpeter and professor at The Berklee College of Music

"His improvisation and sound on the sax is exceptional and shows a keen awareness of the history of Jazz, but also demonstrates a vision of where his music is going toward the future. He is truly a rare artist, well versed in straight-ahead jazz as well as more modern jazz styles. A true student of music and one that works extremely hard, he is grounded by his passion in his artistry and sharing it with the world."

FRANÇOIS JEANNEAU

Saxophonist, flutist, composer, conductor, soundpainter

"It gives me great pleasure to draw your attention to Mr. Michel El Malem. Since meeting him, I've had many opportunities to appreciate his talents as a saxophonist, composer and leader. In my opinion, he's just the kind of musician every musician wants to work with and perform with."

ISABELLE OLIVIER.

Harpist, composer, and an artistic director

"I had the opportunity to work with Michel El Malem, saxophonist and composer. His areas of interest and expertise, namely the saxophone and particularly jazz saxophone, are a strong complement to the musical scene in France. I can firmly testify that he has the extraordinary ability to play the standard repertoire with extreme musicality and the highest level of technical skill, but also improvises at an equally advanced level. In short, he is an all-around accomplished artist."

As well as being an renowned performer, his compositions are unique, soulful and demonstrate a deep understanding of the connection between emotion and music."



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THE NEARNESS OF YOU



LIEB ON THE ROAD

Dave Liebman



DEDICATIONS

"Dedications" is the third record of saxophonist Michel El Malem, performed in with guitarist Romain Pilon, bassist Stéphane Kerecki and drummer Luc Isenmann, with American pianist Marc Copland as guest.

Dedications is distributed by the American label Inner Circle Music, created in 2008 by saxophonist Greg Osby with the aim of highlighting original compositions, particularly from the current New York jazz scene. Michel El Malem now appears in the Inner Circle Music catalogue alongside saxophonists Troy Roberts and Adam Larson and other inspiring instrumentalists. A special milestone in his career.

"I enjoyed Michel's recording, especially the compositions and arrangements."

Dave Liebman

"The compositions are great. You played some good solos and your saxophone tone both tenor and soprano are superb."

Greg Osby

 **LISTEN**



PRESS

➡ ALL PRESS REVIEWS



Revealed with the aptly named "First Step" in 2009 by the pioneering label Fresh Sound New Talent, this saxophonist returns with six new original compositions that reflect great elegance.

First, there is this quintet, in which the music flows with a rare fluidity: alongside the leader's saxophone, Romain Pilon's guitar, Marc Copland's piano, Stéphane Kerecki's double bass and Luc Isenmann's drums form an ensemble that gives the impression of having been around for a long time. Apart from the excellence of the soloists, we owe this fruitful complicity to the singing qualities of the themes of Michel El Malem, who, as a tenor as well as a soprano (the boss of his label, Greg Osby, is right to stress that he distinguishes himself as much on both instruments) projects something strong: the idea that a finely chiselled melody has the power to guide us through the meanders of an improvisation, his own as well as those of his accompanists.

We find in "Dedications" ("Dedications" to Dave Liebman, Marc Copland, and even his little black cat...) everything we liked in the acoustic jazz of the end of the 20th century (the 1980s, 1990s...), this constant concern to never lead the listener astray, to keep him quietly alert through the beauty of the sound, the choice of colour, the order (very cleverly thought out) of the pieces. What we also like is, therefore, the right balance between the musicians who inhabit this record, which is not only that of a saxophonist but, once again, that of a real band. This will not prevent us from underlining the perfection of Romain Pilon's solos, the luminous sound of Marc Copland or the woody bass of Stéphane Kerecki. Superb, really superb.

Julien Ferté, Jazz Magazine, N°735, March 2021



Like "six pieces of a mirror that never breaks", saxophonist Michel El Malem delivers six splendid new pieces, thanks to a lasting collaboration with his friend the pianist Marc

Copland, recognisable by his gentle touch and his colourist approach.

A slice of life has passed for Michel since 2011 and the French record prize of the jazz academy came to distinguish his album Reflets. He welded a quartet with a line-up renewed in 2018 with Luc Isenmann on drums, Stéphane Kerecki on double bass and Romain Pilon on guitar. Michel composes Dedications "starting from an emotional state", pushing the emotion when he thinks of the loved ones to whom he dedicates his pieces. notably his missing mother.

The recording, which takes place in the fall of 2019 at the La Buissonne studio, allows the tenor and soprano to join the catalogue of the American label Inner Circle Music and ensures its distribution in the United States. In March 2020, his participation with Marc Copland at the Biennale du Centre des Bords de Marne is cancelled a few hours before the performance due to government health announcements. Everything was then put on stand-by, except for a few private lessons. "I live in the countryside, I work like crazy on music, but - despite the Spedidam, Sacem, Adami aid allocated after the first confinement - the situation is violent for all of us. »

For the release of his 2021 album, Michel is thinking of two formulas, one with Marc Copland when he comes to Europe, the other without piano or with invited French pianists, starting with Jean-Marie Machado. While waiting for the concerts, the impression of serenity and anchoring provided by the album Dedications, its remarkable dynamics and clarity, make listening to it greatly beneficial.

Alice Leclercq, Jazz News, Février-Mars 2021



REFLETS

"Reflets" is the second record of Michel El Malem. It brings together saxophonist Michel El Malem, guitarist Michael Felberbaum, double bassist Marc Buronfosse and drummer Luc Isenmann, with American pianist Marc Copland as guest.

The album, produced and distributed by Arts et Spectacle, was released on November 7, 2011. He won the Prix du Disque Français (best disk recorded by a French musician). It was also selected by the French radio station FIP as "Jazz album of the week" in December 2011 and obtained the labels "Révélation Jazz - Jazzman" from Jazz Magazine and "Découverte !!!! "of JazzNews Magazine.

"I think my love story with music is like any story, there are good days and bad days, moments of calm, chances, unhappy moments and other pleasant ones, but it's when a moment comes along, like this encounter, that I can believe it's all worth it."

Marc Copland

 **LISTEN**

PRESS

"There is in this second album of saxophonist Michel El Malem (the previous one was released on the Fresh Sound New talent label) a much more collective adventure than in the first one.

As much in the previous album it was the meeting with a musician who expressed something very personal, as a presentation of himself to the public, as in this album it is a musical meeting with a high-level group and especially an encounter with an exceptional pianist, Marc Copland whose universe we could have sworn was very far from that of the saxophonist. And yet it is on the path of themes with warm harmonies that they meet with some evidence.

In this mastered universe, there is a combination of the softness of groove and modal jazz under control. And it turns out tremendously well, especially because each member of the group asserts a real strong musical personality, while succeeding in blending in with the rest. The compositions are superb. They are sometimes a little melancholic, but always without pathos just with the effusion of strong feelings. A kind of touching tenderness that the resonances of Marc Copland's keyboard highlight with a certain depth.

Each intervention of the pianist is magnificent, making the bass medium of his keyboard ring out or searching for harmonic inversions and chords of infinite richness (to be heard on Reflets). Michel El Malem continues to assert himself in this line of saxophonists in a very Breckerian lineage.

Powerful saxophonist and formidable improviser who manages to avoid all overwhelming effects to the contrary control his lyricism with a striking evocative force. There is in his game the strength of Brecker (as we have said) but also the fluidity of a Shorter. And a beautiful sound carved into the rock.

Michael Felberbaum is a kind of chameleon impressing by the diversity of his play so many different colors, going for oppositions to the central color to better bring it out by contrast (the window). And then this rhythmic, here perfect in the intelligence of what it must play. A strong rhythmic and whose presence is very cohesive. Marc Buronfosse, here immense, confirms what we have been writing for a long time: he is indeed one of our greatest double bassists, essential and indispensable. His association with Luc Isenmann is luminous and contributes greatly to the success of this album. A peaceful break, this magnificent album is full of serenity. It is one of those albums that we can hope will benefit from a wide distribution. He deserves it very much."

Jean-Marc Gelin, Les dernières nouvelles du jazz

Michel EL MALEM Quartet

first step



Michel EL MALEM
Saxophones

Michael FELBERBAUM
Guitar

Marc BURONFOSSE
Bass

Luc ISENMANN
Drums

"Michel El Malem, it is first and foremost music. Fifteen years of guitar, piano and saxophone that he started at the age of 30. Jazz completely. Michel signs here a first album in his own image. A gifted and generous artist, a jazz musician in perfect harmony with his music. You can feel it. You listen to it mostly."

Eric Daries

FIRST STEP

"First Step" is the first record of saxophonist Michel El Malem, performed in quartet with guitarist Michael Felberbaum, double bassist Marc Buronfosse and drummer Luc Isenmann. Released on January 6, 2009, it is distributed by the Spanish label Fresh Sound New Talent Records.

 **LISTEN**

PRESS

"Producer Jordi Pujol has a great gift for finding new saxophone talent (Jérôme Sabbagh, David Prez, etc.). It is the turn of Michel El Malem, a saxophonist who came to the instrument late (30 years old) that he invites us to discover in his first steps. An astonishing discovery if ever there was one. One can but be amazed by El Malem's elegant mastery: mastery of sound, breath and phrasing without any lyricism or demonstration but devilishly effective on harmonic and rhythmic meanders, where all the possible traps are hidden. In this former guitarist, a real writing talent also emerges in subtle atonalities, delicate counterpoints and clean and clear groove on which Felberbaum, "less kind" in intent, makes sparks. He is helped in this by an impeccable rhythmic. Certainly, these first steps are totally convincing. In any case, they are announcing a direction that will be exciting to follow."

Jean-Marc Gelin, Jazzman

"A group. That's the feeling that comes out of this record. A group at the service of music, which feeds it, invests it, enlightens it, gives it its breath. Marc Copland's presence behind the keyboard is not for nothing in the intensity of the seven compositions of Michel El Malem, tenor saxophonist and soprano. But the American pianist is not the only one who stands out. Michael Felberbaum is in high spirits, Marc Buronfosse and Luc Isenmann bring the irrigated and powerful foundations that this music requires, which takes the time to develop. A record of rare cohesion, very far from the assembly of circumstances, which gives the impression of going to the end of oneself."

Vincent Bessières, Jazz News

