

Michele Rosewoman

Artist Bio

www.michelerosewoman.com

Michele Rosewoman, a vanguard and pioneering artist in her field, mines acoustic modern jazz, sophisticated funk, dynamic electric fusion and elements of Cuban folkloric music, to create a distinct musical experience. Her command and rich vocabulary elegantly expands the horizons and boundaries of jazz while remaining firmly rooted in tradition. With a more than 30-year history, Rosewoman stands out in her class as a visionary pianist, composer bandleader and gifted performer.

Rosewoman's musical growth took root in Oakland, California where she began playing piano at age six in a home full of music, art and politics, providing an important foundation as she went on to expand her knowledge and artistic concept. She studied jazz with the great pianist/organist, Ed Kelly to whom she further attributes her traditionally rooted but wide open vision of music. Studies in percussion led her to avidly explore Cuban and Haitian folkloric idioms with an emphasis on the ritualized, spiritual aspects of the music. These early explorations would profoundly impact Rosewoman's musical direction with a pervasive influence on the formation of her sound as a pianist and composer.

Before moving to New York in 1978, Rosewoman performed at venues in the San Francisco Bay Area with her own ensembles, including the renowned Keystone Korner, and with Julian Priester, Julius Hemphill, Baikida Carroll and Oliver Lake and other fellow jazz innovators. In New York, she formed new ensembles and continued to present her music with New York-based jazz masters and collaborators.

Her debut recording as a leader, ***THE SOURCE*** (Soul Note/1984) was praised for its radiance and ingenuity, and in a review published by *DownBeat*, Rosewoman's direction was likened to that of master innovator Charles Mingus. With her maiden voyage on record, she distinguished herself as both a talented player and a composer of unique vision and had begun to establish a reputation as one of the most ingenious and prolific bandleaders of her generation.

Rosewoman went on to perform with notable New York-based jazz artists Jimmy Heath, Freddie Waits, Billy Hart, Reggie Workman, Oliver Lake, Julius Hemphill, James Spaulding, Gary Bartz, John Stubblefield, Rufus Reid, Howard Johnson, Billy Bang and Carlos Ward, among many others. Her very first recording was as pianist and arranger for the Cuban songo group, Los Kimy in 1984 and in the Latin genre she has performed with Celia Cruz, Paquito D'Rivera, Chocolate, Orlando 'Puntilla' Rios' "Nueva Generacion," Daniel Ponce, Chocolate, Pedro Martinez, Roman Diaz, Ernesto Gatell, Nicky Marrero, Andy Gonzales and many others.

Throughout the years, Rosewoman's innovative projects have received critical acclaim as well as highly coveted awards and recognitions. Highlights include major support from the National Endowment for the Arts for "*New Yor-Uba, A Musical Celebration of Cuba in America*" inspired by the profound collaboration with her mentor, the late Orlando "Puntilla" Rios. In 2008, 2006, and 2003 her project, *Quintessence*, received a Chamber Music/Doris Duke Foundation New Works Creation and Presentation Commission, and a Chamber Music America Encore Grant. A 1984 ASCAP/Meet the Composer Commission for Emerging Composers -- awarded by Dizzy Gillespie, Marian McPartland and Lester Bowie-- culminated in premieres at the Cooper Union Great Hall in New York City, the Paramount Center for the Arts in Peekskill, NY featuring the 40-piece Brooklyn Philharmonic Orchestra plus quintet of improvisers.

Quintessence's debut recording continues to be noted as one of the best jazz recordings of the decade and her subsequent release, *Guardians of the Light* was described by NPR, as "*spontaneous, serious and mysterious. Rosewoman and her band are jazz believers....keepers of the flame.*"

Ms Rosewoman's highly acclaimed trio recordings include *Occasion to Rise* (with Rufus Reid and Ralph Peterson) - voted one of the year's best recordings by six critics' polls, and *Spirit*, a live trio performance at the Montreal Jazz Festival, released on Blue Note Records to rave press. A *Gavin Report* review stated "*Michele Rosewoman has probed many important junctures in jazz history. She's fluent in Monk, Bill Evans and Bud Powell, but her influences don't end there....She is a modern day lightning rod to the innovations of the past and the tense uncertainties of today.*"

A fearless bandleader and mentor, her Quintessence ensemble, with 5 releases to date, brings together some of the most inventive voices in jazz including Steve Coleman, Greg Osby, Gary Thomas, David Sanchez, Steve Wilson, Miguel Zenon, Steve Lehman and Mark Shim; trombonists Vincent Gardner and Robin Eubanks, bassists Kenny Davis, Lonnie Plaxico and Brad Jones, drummers Terri Lyne Carrington, Gene Jackson and Tyshawn Sorey and guitarist Liberty Ellman, while New Yor-Uba, with its uncompromised synthesis of contemporary jazz and traditional Cuban folkloric music, unites master musicians from both musical worlds. Many have cited that working with Rosewoman made an indelible mark on their artistic development as musicians, composers and bandleaders.

In addition to numerous recordings under her name, she has presented her various ensembles at jazz festivals, concert halls and jazz clubs throughout the world including the JVC, Ravinia, Atlanta, San Francisco, Chicago (2007), Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver, North Sea, Warsaw, Berlin and Paris jazz festivals, Carnegie Hall, Merkin Hall, Cooper Union Great Hall, the Public Theater, MOMA, Museum of Natural History, NYU, Temple University, University of Pennsylvania, University of Mas. Amherst, Augusta University, Stanford University, Dizzy's Lincoln Center, The Blue Note (New York & Tokyo), the Village Vanguard, The Apollo, Birdland, Jazz Standard, Yoshi's, New Morning (Paris) and the Jazz Café (London). She has composed and arranged music for and performed with groups from duos to big bands, to full orchestras.

Rosewoman has always been active as a music educator and conducts educational workshops at colleges and universities throughout the U.S., Canada and Europe. She teaches piano and composition privately and has held past and current positions at NYU and the New School, serves on faculty of The Jazz House Kids in Montclair, NJ and conducts workshops at the Berkeley Jazz School.

With the September 2013 release of her New Yor-Uba ensemble's debut CD, Ms, Rosewoman celebrates the 30-year history of this highly acclaimed ensemble. Featuring master musicians from both the worlds of contemporary jazz and Cuban folkloric music, personnel includes Pedrito Martinez, Freddie Hendrix, Oliver Lake, Vincent Gardner, Howard Johnson, Yunion Terry, Adam Cruz, Roman Diaz and Abraham Rodriguez. With October 2013 sold out CD release events at Dizzy's Lincoln Center, the recording and performances have received rave reviews from the Wall Street Journal, The New York Times and many other publications.:

"...two big cultural streams flowing simultaneously ...a strange additive chemistry of rhythm made coherent through practice. It was dense, but it fizzed; it was grand but never grandiose...cultural multiplicity in sound taken to a reasonable extreme, where a song can still be allowed to sound logical and beautiful...ancient and experimental at the same time, and capacious enough to include more and

more..". **Ben Ratliff / The New York Times**

"Dazzling tracks...startling for its balance of unfettered improvisation and undiluted Cuban folklore within a complex and often grand structure." **Larry Blumenfeld, The Wall Street Journal**

"Absolutely one of the most exceptional records of 2013 is pianist-composer Michele Rosewoman's 30th Anniversary New Yor-Uba release." **Willard Jenkins / The Independent Ear**

"(Rosewoman's) piano playing draws equally from the bluesy drama of Randy Weston and the ardent yet grounded freedom of Cecil Taylor. Her grasp of Afro-Cuban tradition enables her, when she chooses, to make her instrument function like a set of tuned drums. At times, she trades phrases with percussionists as if one of them....Rosewoman's music unites players with distinct personalities into a communal voice, much in the mold of Mingus or Ellington, even as she adheres to Afro-Cuban traditions. It sounds bold, swinging, ceremonial and formal — all at once, in many cases.. New Yor-Uba's balance of unfettered improvisation and undiluted Cuban folklore within a complex, swinging and often grand structure was startling. The music had both stylistic swagger and spiritual heft." **Larry Blumenfeld / Jazziz**

CD Now describes Ms. Rosewoman in this way: *"No other pianist-composer in jazz brings the music of the African diaspora together quite like Michele Rosewoman.,,(she) is way past collecting influences. Simply put, she's one of the most creative and fully realized jazz artists on the scene today"* ---a fitting reflection of her impact as a prolific and and highly original pianist, composer and bandleader.

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