

# MIKE FREEMAN ZONAVIBE

MUSICIAN \* COMPOSER \* BANDLEADER \* RECORDING ARTIST \* ARRANGER \* EDUCATOR \* PRODUCER



ZonaVibe is "...an  
intoxicating Latin Jazz gem"  
—Latin Jazz Corner

**Mike Freeman** has been hailed as "masterful", a "superb" vibes player, and "wildly talented" for work with his own groups and performances as a featured member of other notable groups. Energetic, rhythmic, soulful, and melodic, Mike's performances have taken him from North America and Europe, to the Azores, Caribbean, and South America. His six recordings of original music (ranging from jazz, Latinjazz, salsa, Brazilian, fusion, and R&B) have gained national and international attention, have been both Grammy and Latin Grammy entries, and received extensive radio airplay charting on jazz, contemporary jazz, and world music radio. Mike Freeman & Spellbound's 1985 self-titled debut recording was followed by the drive-time success of "Street Shuffle." "Wiggle Stomp" reflects a deeper immersion into the Latin music scene that, for him, began in the mid-1990s. On "In the Zone," Mike brings salsa forms into a jazz context. "The Vibesman" 2012, takes that exploration further with a set of music that captured

the attention of many. His newest production "Blue Tjade" (a tip of the hat to Cal Tjader) blends some of his early Spellbound writing styles into clave-based music.

**Past performance highlights** as a leader include the Trinidad & Tobago Steelpan & Jazz Festival; Festival Internacional (Terciera, Azores); Central Park's Harlem Meer concert series in New York City; performing for Flood Relief in Des Moines, Iowa; Joslyn Art Museum's Jazz on the Green in Omaha, NE; the Berks, Rehoboth Beach, Hennessy Greenwich Village, and JVC Newport (at Saratoga) jazz festivals; International Association of Jazz Educators (IAJE) Convention, as well as an extensive tour of Portugal, cosponsored by the Fulbright Foundation and the American Embassy (USIA), where he received the Medal of the City of Guarda.

**Other endeavors** include producing at Manhattan Plaza, "Band Together" a Hurricane Katrina Benefit Concert for Tipitinas Foundation benefiting New Orleans-area musicians and the Humane Society. He wrote a series, spanning more than a decade, of commissioned compositions and arrangements for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's Percussion Scholarship Program and in 2014 was commissioned by drummer/educator Ed Uribe to write arrangements for a new percussion curriculum for the country of China that were performed by members of the Shanghai Symphony at Shanghai Symphony Hall.

**Mike is also widely known** for his work and recordings with several acclaimed Latin groups. The vibes behind the name, Mike has worked extensively with legendary percussionist Ray Mantilla's Good Vibrations Band, which toured Italy far and wide. "Good Vibrations" (Savant Records) was Jazzweek's top Latinjazz recording on radio, 2006. He was part of Lucho Cueto's all-star group Black Sugar, "Estamos Azucar", which gave blockbuster performances for thousands at the Toros Y Salsa Festival in Dax, France, and at the Festival Internacional de Salsa in Lima, Peru. For over ten years he was a member of Jose Mangual Jr.'s Son Boricua featuring the late Jimmy Sabater (one of the architects of Boogaloo) that performed for large gatherings at salsa congresses in New York, L.A., and Atlanta. Jose Mangual Jr.'s Boricua Blues formed after Jimmy's passing. His vibe work can also be heard with Mark Holen's eclectic Latin blues band Zambomba. In the 1990's he was often heard in New York with Jorge Jimenez's salsa group Timba Vibes, having created the groups book, followed by an over 15 year association with salsa singer Julio Salgado. He performed with the Spanish Harlem Orchestra (directed by Oscar Hernandez) at Madison Square Garden and with Willie Villegas's Joe Cuba Sextet for New Jersey's salsa congress both with legendary sonero Cheo Feliciano.

Mike endorses Mike Balter Mallets

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**Born and raised in Omaha, Nebraska,** Mike Freeman started learning drums at age five and began playing professionally at age thirteen. At twelve, he began playing the vibraphone, and by fifteen, he was a percussionist for the Omaha Symphony under conductor Thomas Briccetti. During his last year of high school, he began traveling to Chicago to study with renowned percussionist and veteran studio musician Bobby Christian. He graduated DePaul University with a Bachelor of Music composition with high honors in 1981. In New York, where he's lived and worked since, he studied with composer/arranger Hale Rood, (who wrote for Louie Bellson).

**Family:** Mike's grandfather was a drummer and leader of Ron Freeman and the Melody Masters, a popular band that was heard on the radio in the Midwest. Neal Hefti played in his band before becoming famous in California. Mike's paternal grandmother sang and played the organ and marimba. His maternal grandmother was a talented piano player in her youth. Mike's father, Harry Freeman, worked his way through college playing the saxophone.

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