



Bio information: **MICHAEL GIBBS AND THE NDR BIGBAND**

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Cuneiform promotion dept: (301) 589-8894 / fax (301) 589-1819

email: joyce [-at-] cuneiformrecords.com (Press & world radio); radio [-at-] cuneiformrecords.com (North American & world radio)

www.cuneiformrecords.com

FILE UNDER: JAZZ / BIG BAND

**Legendary Composer/Arranger Michael Gibbs' Long-Running Relationship with Germany's  
Acclaimed NDR Bigband Results In A Brilliant New Collaboration:  
The Album *In My View*, Gibbs' "Portrait of the Band"**

In a welcome burst of activity by the criminally under-documented master, **Michael Gibbs**, Cuneiform is releasing *In My View*, Gibb's newest collaboration with the **NDR Bigband**, alongside the arranger/composer's revelatory collaboration with **Bill Frisell** and the **NDR Bigband**, called *Play A Bill Frisell Set List*. Both albums will be released on **June 9, 2015**.

While studied with treasured recordings reflecting his singular writing skills, Michael Gibbs' slim discography has never kept pace with the breadth and depth of his creative output. In a career spanning more than half a century he's collaborated with a dazzling array of artists in jazz and beyond, including **Pat Metheny**, **John McLaughlin**, **Joni Mitchell**, **John Scofield**, **Gary Burton**, **Whitney Houston**, **Peter Gabriel**, and **Richard Galliano**. Gibbs's arranged **Norma Winstone's** *Here's A Song For You*, the vocalist's stellar 2011 album with the **NDR Bigband**.

Gibbs' intermittent relationship with Germany's NDR Bigband, which dates back to the early 1970s, has provided a particularly valuable vehicle for his vivid musical imagination. His first gig with them was in 1973, with the **Gary Burton Quartet** plus the Bigband, and since then he's been a guest sporadically, every 3-4 years. His new album, *In My View*, is the second release that he's made for Cuneiform featuring recordings of his music with the **NDR Bigband**. In many ways, *In My View* flowed from his first Cuneiform release, 2012's *Back in the Days*, a sumptuous anthology that gathered together highlights of sessions Gibbs recorded with the NDR between 1995-2003.

"That turned out to be a very satisfying endeavor," Gibbs says of *Back in the Days*. "So I took this further and asked NDR manager **Axel Dürr** to make a follow-up recording of my new music written especially for the Bigband. It's a sort of portrait of the band as I know it, having spent so much time with them."

Indeed, the album *In My View* is a case study of the creative dividends paid by intimate acquaintance (drummers **Adam Nussbaum** and **Gene Calderazzo** are the only American ringers, dividing rhythm section duties). Recorded over three years whenever the NDR had some spare time, the album showcases the ensemble's striking individual voices, particularly undersung masters like saxophonist **Chrisof Lauer** and trumpeter **Claus Stötter**, whose lustrous flugelhorn is featured on the inviting Latin-tinged opening track "**'Tis As It Should Be**."

Inspired by **Gil Evans**, Gibbs has honed a subtle and highly personal approach to arranging that often avoids layering sections. Favoring sinuous lines and lapidary textures, his pieces often draw a listener in with a shapely melodic phrase before revealing unexpected implications with a rhythmic motif or counter melody, like on the mysteriously surging "**As A Matter of Fact**," an inexorably spinning piece that he introduced on a 2007 all-star tour celebrating his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday. With the brooding cinematic noir of **Carla Bley's** "**Ida Lupino**," which climaxes with an achingly bittersweet **Lutz Büchner** clarinet solo, Gibbs displays an entirely different emotional hue in the NDR's textural palette.

After the looming shadows Gibbs turns up the bright lights with the deliriously celebratory and rhythmically treacherous "**Spanish Sketch**," which opens with a brass fanfare and a clip clop groove the suggests the approach of the conquistadors. Another highlight is his raucous take on **Ornette Coleman's** gutbucket country blues "**Ramblin'**," which culminates with **Ingmar Heller's** beautifully rendered elaboration of **Charlie Haden's** iconic bass solo from the original 1960 recording. But the most fascinating piece is Gibbs' woozily off-kilter arrangement of **Monk's** "**Misterioso**," (the only tune in common with the **Frisell/NDR** album on Cuneiform, *Play A Bill Frisell Set List*).

"I feel I know the individual players so well, that I write for them personally, or use how I know them in making orchestrational choices," Gibbs says of the NDR Bigband. "That's a luxury these day, when other projects are written more for the standard instrumentation without knowledge of the personal attributes (stunning as though they might be, and often are)."

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Established in 1945 as a German regional radio dance band, the Hamburg-based **Nord Deutscher Rundfunk Big Band** (aka **NDR Bigband**) is one the world's longest-running jazz repertory ensembles. It adopted its present, supremely hip identity in 1971 when **Wolfgang Kunert** took over as producer. Over the past four decades the NDR has collaborated with some of jazz's most eloquent improvisers, including American masters **Chet Baker**, **Johnny Griffin**, **Howard Johnson**, **Herb Geller** and **Joe Pass**, and European stars **Barbara Dennerlein**, **Tomasz Stanko**, **Phillip Catherine**, and **John Surman**.

Born on September 25th, 1937 in Salisbury, **Southern Rhodesia** (now Harare, the capital of Zimbabwe), Gibbs grew up playing trombone and piano. He moved to Boston in 1959 to study at **Berklee College of Music**, and quickly fell in with progressive-minded jazz innovators. In the summer of 1960 a full scholarship brought him to **Lenox School of Jazz** for studies with **Gunther Schuller**, **George Russell** and **J.J. Johnson**. Deeply drawn to contemporary classical music, he graduated from the **Boston Conservatory of Music** in 1963 and earned a full scholarship at **Tanglewood Summer School**, where he absorbed information from Schuller, **Aaron Copland**, **Iannis Xenakis**, and **Lukas Foss**.

Gibbs made his recording debut in 1962 with Berklee buddy Gary Burton, contributing to the vibraphonist's second album with **Phil Woods**, **Clark Terry**, **Tommy Flanagan** and **Joe Morello**. But by 1964 Gibbs had relocated to London, where he became a first-call trombonist through his work with **Tubby Hayes**, **Graham Collier**, **John Dankworth** and **Cleo Laine**. It was also the start of his prolific career as a studio player and arranger on radio, television, film and pop sessions.

Gibbs quickly became recognized as one of jazz's leading young arrangers and composers, and he developed a personal, thickly textured approach inspired by **Gil Evans**, **Charles Ives** and **Olivier Messiaen**. Incorporating driving rock rhythms and asymmetrical phrasing, his work anticipated the jazz-rock fusion movement of the 1970's. The release of **Michael Gibbs**, his self-named debut album in 1970 and a follow up, **Tanglewood '63** (both on **Deram**), seminal sessions featuring free blowing horns, blazing electric guitars and propulsive funk beats, led to a succession of **Melody Maker Awards**, including **First Composer**, **Best Big Band**, **Musician of the Year**, and **First Arranger**.

At the height of his European success, Gibbs returned to the US in 1974 to take up the post of **Composer-In-Residence** at Berklee, a position he held until 1983, when he decided to focus on freelancing in New York City. After two years he returned to London, and by 1988 he was recording with his own bands again, including his critically acclaimed 1988 album **Big Music** (**Virgin/Venture**). Commuting between the US and Europe since the mid-80s, Gibbs has poured most of his creative energy into writing, but he's still managed to hit the road on occasion, such as his 1991 UK tour with **John Scofield**. He received a welcome burst of attention in 2007 when, as part of his 70th birthday celebrations, he took an all-star large ensemble featuring **Bill Frisell**, **Steve Swallow**, **Adam Nussbaum** and **Chris Hunter** on the road in the UK.

Now based in Malaga, Spain, Gibbs is a dedicated educator who has taught at major universities around the world. He's composed scores for nearly a dozen films, from **Bette Davis's** *Madame Sin* and **Robin Williams's** *Being Human* to **John Woo's** *Hard Boiled* and **Bill Forsyth's** *Housekeeping*. As a composer, he's probably best known for "Sweet Rain," a jazz standard that has been recorded by numerous jazz giants, including **Stan Getz**, **Stephane Grappelli**, **Gary Burton**, **Randy Weston**, and **Herb Pomeroy**.

With 2015's release of *In My View* (and simultaneously, *Play A Bill Frisell Set List*), Gibbs makes an unimpeachable case that this jazz cat in winter hasn't lost a step. He's the first to say that the album doesn't capture everything he wants to express with the NDR Bigband, but he's already deep into another project with the ensemble. In the meantime, Gibbs' view of this tremendously accomplished band adds up to one of the year's most rewarding and successful big band projects.

*For more information on Michael Gibbs and the NDR Bigband, please visit:*  
<http://www.cuneiformrecords.com/bandshtml/gibbs.html>

*For additional Michael Gibbs bio info, discography etc, please visit:*  
<http://gibbs.onttonen.info/>

### **PROMOTIONAL PHOTOS**

Digital [High-Resolution] versions of these images are available for download on *Michael Gibbs and the NDR Bigband* artist page @ [www.cuneiformrecords.com](http://www.cuneiformrecords.com)



## WHAT THE PRESS HAS SAID ABOUT

### MICHAEL GIBBS & THE NDR BIGBAND

### BACK IN THE DAYS

### CUNEIFORM (2012)

“Recorded with the NDR Big Band between 1995 and 2003, *Back In The Day*, provides a **broad look at Michael Gibbs’ songbook and arranging talent**. Three pieces...feature Gary Burton...the superb German tenor saxophonist Christof Lauer...gets three feature spots. **4 out of 4 stars.**”  
- James Hale, *Downbeat*, June 2012

“**The music of Michael Gibbs remains woefully under-recorded, even as the composer hits his mid-70s, so this release from the ever wonderful Cuneiform Records is a bit of an event. ...Inspired by Olivier Messiaen as much as Gil Evans, his music was luxurious, complex but accessible, and driven by rock rhythms and electric instruments....**

...These recordings come from three sessions with the German NDR Big Band made from 1995 to 2003. The earliest session features vibraphonist Gary Burton as guest soloist (Gibbs' first arranging job was for Burton in the early 60s...while all sessions feature the massively underrated saxophonist Christof Lauer, whose work is a joy throughout.

The highlight here is *Mosher*... a sumptuous ballad for Burton's luminous vibes and Lauer's airy tenor. In fact **it's the more introspective material that stands up best – *Tennis, Anyone?* could be a lost Ellington tune re-imagined by Gil Evans, while the brooding *Antique* (from 1975) features some beautifully poised, intricate writing.**

**...this is an immensely enjoyable set from an under-represented talent.”**

- Peter Marsh, *BBC Music*, 2012

“...There are other Gibbs originals... And then there are the lovely arrangements of favourite songs by others...”

**All the usual Gibbs traits are here, including, naturally, his wonderful writing for the low brass – a case of the trombonist doing his fellows some favors. What is really striking once more is how careful he is with the time he is allowed...There is no froth anywhere, no self-indulgence. It's all vital stuff with no filler. A very valuable addition to any (no matter how meager) Mike Gibbs collection.”**

- Peter Bacon, *thejazzbreakfast*, June 2, 2012

“...a lush, richly eclectic, sometimes lurid collection of tracks recorded both live and in the studio at several sessions in 1995, 2002, and 2003....the compositions here reflect his work as a film composer more than his fusion days in the early 70s....Gibbs' long career...encompasses a vast range of styles...”

**The album's highlight is *Jail Blues*, a noir masterpiece, like a slow, symphonically arranged Bryan Beninghove number...*Round Midnight* takes its cue from the Evans arrangement but is more cinematic, less nebulous: if Miles' big band recording was the definitive analog version, this is the digital one. ...Gibbs' old pal Burton is featured on three tracks here, including...his old favorite *Country Roads*.”**

-d elarue, *Lucid Culture*, February 4, 2013

“...this album sees composer/arranger Michael Gibbs conducting one of Europe's most versatile and accomplished large ensembles, the NDR Bigband, through seven of his own tunes, three jazz standards and two pieces by Gibbs collaborators.

The Gibbs originals range from a live opener dedicated to Herb Pomeroy, ‘The Time Has Come’, through a gorgeous feature for alto saxophonist Fiete Felsch ‘With All Due Respect’...to ‘*Mosher*’, a tribute to Boston saxophonist/educator Jimmy Mosher, one of three selections featuring vibraphonist supreme Gary Burton.

**All twelve tracks, though, whether originals or arresting arrangements of standards and classics...are packed with what one recent review termed ‘intriguing inner detail’ and another ‘the tactile sumptuousness of Gibbs’ sound’....the entire album, at once vigorous and lush, is a compelling showcase for one of the most original voices in contemporary jazz.”**

- Chris Parker, *London Jazz News*, May 15, 2012

“...three tracks from 1995 feature Gary Burton on vibes...**With a sixteen piece ensemble at his disposal for these tunes, Gibbs’ arranging provides a harmonic backdrop that gives Burton the freedom to express his musical ideas.** All three compositions offer different interpretive challenges with the first tune dancing brightly, then a moving ballad that also has some fine tenor work from Christof Lauer, and finally a funky blues on which Burton shines.

While Gibbs' band voicings may not have the ethereal quality of a Gil Evans, nevertheless he has put together some arrangements that have complex structures and certainly the NDR Bigband is up to the challenge in their execution...

**The NDR Bigband is a top flight band and Mike Gibbs has written and arranged charts that are constantly audacious. This disc would be a worthwhile addition to anyone's record collection. 4 stars.”**

-Pierre Giroux, *Audiophile Audition*, June 14, 2015

“...*Back In The Days*...continues the tradition that the Cuneiform label has already established, via recent releases by John Surman and Soft Machine, of releasing top-notch material recorded for German radio by distinguished British jazz artists....Very high quality stuff, and it's thrilling to see Cuneiform actively releasing it. **More, please.”**

-Dave DiMartino, *Yahoo Music*, January 24, 2012

“With one of the finest jazz arrangers in the world and one of the best contemporary big bands around, it's no wonder that this is such a **remarkably successful album**... ...Mike's rich, brooding and distinctive voicings provide the perfect setting to draw out and frame a host of stunning solos by Fiete Felsch, Christof Lauer and Ingolf Burkhardt among others...”

-Peter Bevan, *Northern Echo Newspaper*, May 2012

“...few artists have...made their names solely as composers and arrangers....when it comes to legacy artists, the name Gil Evans is the one...But there are others who've been shaping music for large ensembles in ways that are no less definitive and just as personal.

**Michael Gibbs is one such figure...*Back in the Days* serves as a welcome reminder that the nearly 75 year-old Gibbs is still with us, and still making terrific music....it's also a chance to recall why artists like vibraphonist Gary Burton, saxophonist Stan Getz and singer Norma have chosen to work with the composer/arranger over the half-century span of his career. ...Gibbs has garnered respect rare amongst such an international bevy of players—in addition to Burton, also including bassist Steve Swallow, guitarists John Scofield, Bill Frisell and Philip Catherine, saxophonist Charlie Mariano and Bob Mintzer, and trumpeters Kenny Wheeler and Ian Carr....**

...with Burton in tow for three tracks...there's at least some star power to attract those who need it, though every soloist from the...Germany's NDR Bigband represented here is world class and worthy of attention....

**Burton's performances on "Country Roads" and, in particular, Gibbs' bright opener, "The Time Has Come," raise plenty of questions about who exactly defined the vibraphonist's late 1960s to mid-'70s recordings. The ultimate answer is...the confluence of a number of factors, [including]...Gibbs' role as both an arranger *and* composer, with Burton drawing from the his gradually expanding songbook as early as *Duster* (RCA, 1967) and...ECM dates like *Ring* (1974) and *Picture This* (1982). Here, in this 1995 session with guitarist Stephan Diez soloing at length after the ever-impeccable Burton...the harmonic landscape over which Diez solos irrefutably defined by Gibbs' unmistakable voice.”**

- John Kelman, *All About Jazz*, March 15, 2012

**“This collection...is both a career retrospective and proof that his finesse in mixing orchestral colors is still intact.**

...intriguing arrangements are linked to high-gloss solos from band members and especially visiting American vibist Gary Burton. Nonetheless, precisely **because of his musical gifts...there are certain facile qualities in his orchestrations which are multiplied by the performance of the NDR...**

**...Carefully harmonized passages and glitteringly contrasted tone colors abound in the arrangements...**

...“June The 15th 1967”, composed for Burton...the foot-tapping groove is genuine and was unique for its time. Composed in 1996, lead-off track “The Time Has Come” is intense and inspiring, with the section work multiplying and swelling as it modulates around Burton's supple mallet popping solo...Familiar and innovative simultaneously, Steve Swallow's and Burton's 1960s standard “Country Roads” is performed at a homey lope....**Burton, of course, is centre of attention, and his aluminium bars chime and ring...**

Valuable as a record of what the too-little-recorded Gibbs was up to in the 1990s and early part of this century...it's evident that a future rendezvous with Burton playing some new Gibbs music would be a welcome addition to the recorded legacy of both Gibbs and the 68-year-old Burton.”

- Ken Waxman, *Jazz Word*, June 25, 2012