

# Ben Sher Biography

Ben Sher is a unique jazz guitarist. Fluent in the classic jazz tradition of Wes Montgomery, Kenny Burrell, and George Benson, Ben also draws from the rich Brazilian guitar tradition of Baden Powell, Raphael Rabello, and João Gilberto. Ben combines standard jazz plectrum technique, with classical fingerstyle, to create a wide range of sounds and textures. Ben's unique blend of American jazz and Brazilian styles has made him one of the leading educators and performers in jazz guitar today.

A twelve year veteran of the New York music scene, Ben is originally from Pittsburgh where he received his B.A. in Music from Carnegie-Mellon University, while studying with the great Brazilian classical guitarist Carlos Barbosa-Lima. Ben relocated to Boston in 1984 where he studied with Mick Goodrick, receiving a Master's degree in jazz studies from the New England Conservatory in 1986. Before leaving Boston, Ben appeared on two recordings, *Jumpin' Into the Future*, by Gunther Schuller, and *Lookin' Up From Down Below*, by George Schuller, both on the GRM label. Ben also recorded and performed with the Boston Jazz Composer's Orchestra.

Ben's first solo recording, *Handprints*, released in 1994 on Cymbal Records, received rave reviews. *Handprints*, which features Bruce Barth on piano, Dennis Irwin on bass, Mike Clark on drums and the late great Frankie Malabe on congas, is a Latin influenced jazz record.

In 1996, Ben toured Brazil with a production of the rock opera "Tommy" It was on this trip that Ben's infatuation with Brazilian music began. Ben had a chance to play with many of the great local musicians and recorded a track for the Brazilian



PHOTO BY R. BLIWAS

singer Oswaldo Montenegro, which was produced by the great bossanova legend Roberto Menescal and later released on the CD *Letras Brasileiras* on Albatroz Records.

After returning from Brazil, Ben recorded *Tudo Bem?*, a Brazilian jazz record for BGI Records, and formed the group by the same name. TudoBem has toured in Austria, Switzerland, Germany and in 1999 performed at the Blue Note for a month-long engagement in Fukuoka, Japan. *Please Take Me to Brasil*, featuring Kenny Barron and Luciana Souza, was released in 2000. The CD has received rave reviews and is in rotation in major radio stations including WBGO in New York, and WERS in Boston. Ben performs music from his CD's at many venues, including the Worldbeat Jazz Festival at the Guggenheim and the Blue Note jazz club in New York.

Currently, Ben is an Assistant Professor at the Berklee College of Music in Boston where he teaches courses in Brazilian guitar style and private guitar instruction, and at the New England Conservatory, where he leads a Brazilian jazz ensemble. His "Brazilian Guitar Style Seminar" is offered every summer at the National Guitar Workshop. He has presented workshops at UNC Asheville, Appalachia State, UNC

"A fine improviser, Sher's solos are both melodic and adventurous within the modern mainstream.... within the idiom he shows a generous amount of creativity and enthusiasm."

SCOTT YANOW, CADENCE

Charlotte and the College of New Jersey. Ben has also developed a course called "Fretboard Harmony" which is a comprehensive study for beginning jazz guitarists.

Ben is also busy as a sideman. He is a member of "Ballin' The Jack" a group which has two recordings on Knitting Factory Works; *Jungle* and *The Big Head*, and has performed at the North Sea and Marsala Jazz Festivals, the Jazz and Image Festival in Rome, and most recently the Berlin Jazz Festival. He has toured the world with cabaret star Ute Lemper, recorded for Philip Glass's Point Record label, and performed with the Miles Evans Big Band.

For more information on Ben's schedule, recordings, etc. contact him at:

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"Different styles come and go. One sound, adopted by Ben Sher seems to endure through all fashion changes. The writing is excellent. Remember his name. You will hear more from Ben Sher."

MARK CARROTO, SPEED OF SOUND