

## Mark Towns

**Mark Towns** is one of the world's leading exponents of guitar-based instrumental Afro-Cuban Jazz, composing and performing music which blurs the lines between Latin Jazz, Flamenco Jazz, Salsa, Funk, and Fusion. With grooves inspired by traditional Latin Jazz masters Tito Puente, Eddie Palmieri, and Cal Tjader, Towns guitar work and arrangements combine the technical sophistication of jazz and flamenco with the down-to-earth feel of the blues and rock from his Texas upbringing to create something brand new. As Paul MacArthur (writer for Downbeat) says, "**Mark Towns isn't just playing Latin Jazz, he's making sure it continues to evolve.**"

Mark Towns began writing songs at the age of six, when he also began formal piano lessons. By the time he was 10, he began teaching himself the guitar, and quickly joined a band with some of his fifth grade classmates. "One evening, I taught myself four chords out of the book that came with my first guitar, and the next day, I was at school, performing in front of the class," recalls Towns.

Although his earliest musical inspirations were the Beatles and Jimi Hendrix, he became aware of Jazz and Latin music while in his teens, and Miles Davis, Cal Tjader, and Tito Puente soon became major influences as well.

Towns continued songwriting as he went on to do stints on guitar, bass, percussion, and sometimes even drums and keyboards with various Experimental Jazz, Rock, Avant-Garde, Blues, Indian, Middle-Eastern, and Brazilian bands.

Soon afterward, Towns began playing guitar and bass with various Salsa bands, as well as playing more Jazz gigs of all types, including Big Band, Funk, Fusion, and Latin Jazz. His songwriting soon began to reflect these elements as well.

During this period, he was often called upon to play salsa gigs on guitar in bands with no pianist. "I figured out *tumbao* patterns that laid well on the guitar to take the place of what a Latin pianist usually would do," says Towns. These inventions for guitar eventually propelled Mark Towns into becoming a recognized expert on Latin Jazz guitar playing. After having tutored many established jazz guitar veterans in the art of Latin guitar articulation, Mark is now at work finishing an instructional book of Latin *Tumbao* patterns for the guitar.

Towns has since been leading his own top-notch bands, in addition to finding time to perform with a diverse array of major artists, including Rickie Lee Jones, Chaka Khan, Martha Reeves and the Vandellas, Arnette Cobb, Stanley Clarke, Pharaoh Sanders, Clay Aiken, Pete Barbuti, Chucho Valdes, Roy Hargrove, Hubert Laws, Kirk Whalum, Yomo Toro, Rick Braun, Larry Coryell, Michael White, and Dave Valentin, to name a few.

Mark Towns' music has the unique quality of being both esoterically hip yet universally accessible. Whether it's burning hot or flowing cool, Mark's music retains a magical, otherworldly feel.

Coming soon: Mark Towns new album, "Unspoken Invitation," again featuring Hubert Laws.

## **Mark Towns**

### Performing/Recording Credits, Discography

#### Jazz, Latin, Pop, and R&B Artists

**Chaka Khan**

**Poncho Sanchez**

**Rickie Lee Jones**

**Larry Coryell**

**Clay Aiken**

**Dave Valentin**

**Martha Reeves & The Vandellas**

**Kirk Whalum**

**Polish National Ballet**

**Stanley Clarke**

**Oscar Hernandez**

**Pharoah Sanders**

**Hubert Laws**

**Yomo Toro**

**Pete Barbuti**

**Roy Hargrove**

**Chucho Valdes**

**Rick Braun**

#### Discography

**"Passion" (2004 Salongo Records) Mark Towns with Hubert Laws**

**"Flamenco Jazz Latino" (2000 Salongo Records) Mark Towns with Kirk Whalum & Hubert Laws**

**"Latinology" (2006 Guzman Fox Records) Joel Guzman/Sarah Fox (Mark Towns – featured soloist)**

#### Venues and Festivals

**Jazz Zone – Lima, Peru**

**The Jazz Cafe – San Jose, Costa Rica**

**The Baked Potato – Los Angeles**

**Sun West – New York City**

**The Office – Cabo San Lucas, Mexico**

**Spazio – Los Angeles, CA**

**Steamer's – Fullerton, CA**

**Live Oak Music Festival – Santa Barbara, CA**

**Antones – Austin, Texas**

**Cezanne Jazz Club – Houston, Texas**

**La Ve Lee Jazz Club – Studio City, California**

**Red Cat Jazz Club – Houston, Texas**

**Elephant Room – Austin, Texas**

**Texas Jazz Festival – Corpus Christi, Texas**

**Austin Jazz Festival**

**Tribeca Rooftop – New York City**

**Dallas Latin Jazz Festival**

**Puerto Vallarta, Mexico – Spring Festival on the Bay**

**and many more...**

## What they're saying about the music of Mark Towns:

"Mark Towns' music has the piquancy and surprise of the best Latin-inflected jazz, with a sense of space unique to his Southwestern roots meeting the sophistication of his residency in Los Angeles. Mark is a deft, lyrical guitarist -- the bright arrangements of his pretty original tunes, the quick, tight, shifting rhythm section featuring hot pianist Rainer Pino, and the simpatico guest appearances by flutist Hubert Laws reward my repeated listening with growing pleasure." - Howard Mandel, Down Beat

"Stupendously wonderful!" - Dr. Jazz, Dr. Jazz Operations, Detroit, MI

"Smart, fun and mesmerizing." *Houston Press*

"I love it! I have to put it on the air today." - Emily Hernandez, Programmer, DMX Music, Los Angeles, CA

"There are only a few *really* good guitarists. Mark Towns is one of them." – Larry Coryell

"Mark's music has an intensity to it that makes you want to move and dance, and yet it really relaxes you too." – Kirk Whalum

"Everyone loves it. Mark's guitar playing has become a special musical personality." - Hubert Laws

"Beautiful! Mark's playing is silky, sleek and elegant. It's quite lovely." - Donna McKenzie, 95.7 FM, Houston

"Mark Towns' music is at times understated in a sensuous and elegantly introspective way, and at times driving and irresistible. Its subtle contrasts of moods and textures are the qualities that make it so evocative and gratifying." - Michele Brangwen, Brangwen Dance Company

"Mark's compositions really take you on a journey, and special guest Hubert Laws is right at home playing them. I find the collective compositions of Mark Towns to be an amazing body of work that displays a guitar master telling some great stories with his songs." Greg Schreve, "The Waterjet Chronicles"

