



Mike Freeman

(click above for website bio link)

From Omaha, to Chicago, to Hell's Kitchen NYC, Mike Freeman is the vibesman behind several notable groups and leader of ZonaVibe.

With spirited soulful swing rooted in Afro-Cuban clave, Freeman creates a distinct brand of **mambo and salsa infused jazz**. Dan McClaneghan of Allaboutjazz described him as "masterful" and ranked him among other top names of the instrument. His performances have taken him from North America and Europe to the Azores, Caribbean, and South America. Freeman's recordings of original music have received national and international attention with outstanding reviews, radio airplay charting on jazz, contemporary jazz, and World Music radio, and airing on nationally syndicated radio shows (Latin Perspective with Tony Vasquez, Jazz after Hours with Jim Wilke, The Jazz Show with David Sanborn, WOR radio network with Joey Reynolds, Music Choice, and United Airlines).

Freeman is a **Lower Manhattan Cultural Council (LMCC) Creative Engagement** grant recipient for Hell's Kitchen Vibe-Centric; Boricua Blues; Hell's Kitchen Soul Sauce; and Latin Music in Hell's Kitchen. Performances included legendary guests Ray Mantilla and Jose Mangual Jr. at the Times Center, Highline, Pier 84, Bella Abzug Park, Riverbank State Park, and Dimenna Center in NYC. The concert productions highlighted the once-thriving Latin music record businesses that dotted the landscape in Freeman's Hell's Kitchen neighborhood, the tradition of vibraphone in Latin music, and his original music born from that tradition.

Commissioned work includes a decade-long series of compositions and arrangements for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's Percussion Scholarship Program and arrangements for a national percussion curriculum for China that were performed by members of the Shanghai Symphony at Shanghai Symphony Hall.

Freeman is also known for his work and recordings with several acclaimed groups including the legendary Ray Mantilla, Jose Mangual Jr's Son Boricua with Jimmy Sabater (an architect of boogaloo), Lucho Cueto's All-star Black Sugar, Julio Salgado, and Willie Villegas' Joe Cuba Sextet.



Discography

(website link above)

Mike Freeman ZonaVibe Circles In A Yellow Room

Jazzweek chart: twenty weeks on the chart

nine weeks in the top 10, peak #4

2025 Year End Top 100 chart #38

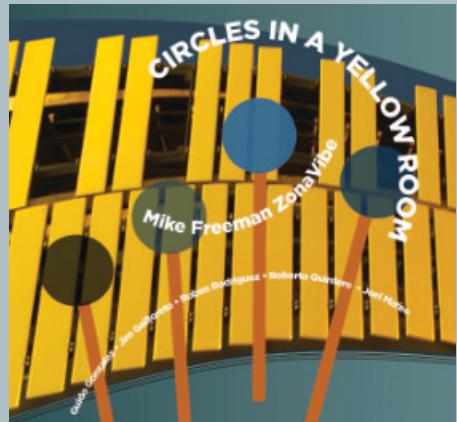
NACC chart, peak #4

Roots Music Report top 50 chart:

seven weeks top 10, two weeks #2,

Latin chart eight weeks #1

2025 Top 200 chart #40



Previous recordings:

Venetian Blinds

Blue Tjade

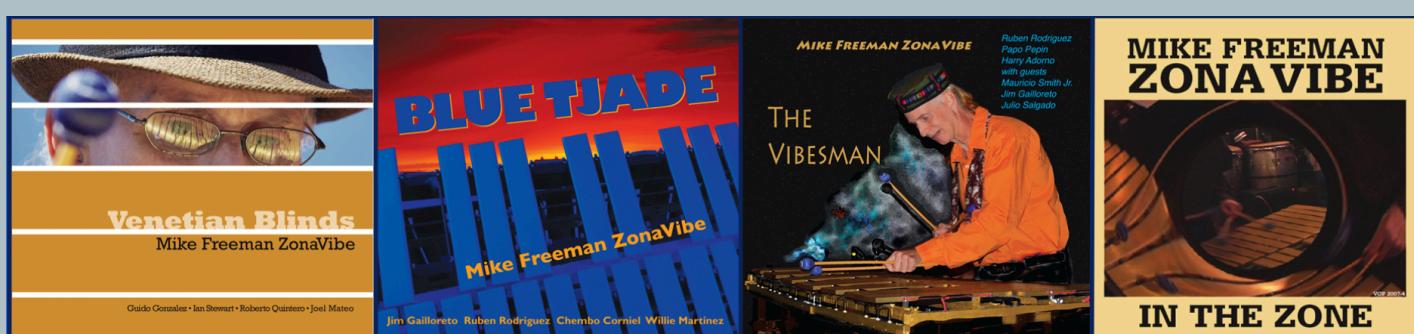
The Vibesman

In the Zone

Wiggle Stomp

Street Shuffle

Mike Freeman & Spellbound



Music Links

[Bandcamp](#)

[Soundcloud](#)

[YouTube](#)

[Spotify](#)

[Apple Music](#)

[Amazon](#)

Recording Session Video

[Cool My Curry Down](#)

[Cascade](#)

[Pendulum](#)



Reviews/Interviews:

(click above for website links to full reviews)

Press Quotes

"...Freeman is wildly talented on the vibraphone" [Classicalite](#), January 27, 2016 –Mike Greenblatt

"Swinging sounds that are reminiscent of vintage Cal Tjader sessions!" [Jazz Weekly](#) November 1, 2018 –George Harris

"Latin jazz doesn't get any better than this" [Allaboutjazz](#), August 9th, 2016 –Mark Sullivan

"Freeman's a formidable composer", "Cool My Curry Down is a funky gem" [Jazz Journal](#), May, 2016 –Brian Morton

"The Soul of Cal Tjader Smiles" [Jazz Caribe](#), April, 2016 –Luis Raul

"Freeman is not only carrying on the Latin jazz vibe tradition, but is also bringing his unique voice and substantial contribution to the genre." [Percussive Notes](#), Percussive Arts Society (PAS) 2012 –Jeff Moore

"an intoxicating Latin Jazz gem" [Latinjazz Corner](#), 2007, –Chip Boaz

Audience Quotes:

Times Center, NYC, 2019

"Great Music and a history lesson too"

"My friends and I were blown away by your concert tonight"

"Congratulations on a well conceived and executed project"

"That was fantastic"

Fox Jazz Festival, WI, 2018

"At first I was thinking where's the piano player, but as soon as you started playing I realized you don't need one and the listener doesn't miss it! I've never heard a vibes player playing piano montunos. Everything was so together, that was fantastic."



Live Performance Video

(click photo for youtube video)



Photos

(click photo for hi-res download link)





Quick Facts:

(click title above for website link)

Mike Freeman

Musician Composer Bandleader Recording Artist Producer Arts Advocate

Recordings

Eight recordings as a leader with seventy original compositions that charted on jazz, contemporary jazz and world music radio, aired on nationally syndicated radio programs (Latin Perspective with Tony Vasquez, Jazz after Hours with Jim Wilke, The Jazz Show with David Sanborn, Joey Reynolds WOR radio network, Music Choice, United Airlines), and received outstanding reviews.

Lower Manhattan Cultural Council Creative Engagement grantee for Hell's Kitchen Vibe-centric, Boricua Blues, Hell's Kitchen Soul Sauce and Latin Music In Hell's Kitchen. Performances included guest legends Ray Mantilla and Jose Mangual Jr. at the Times Center, Highline, Pier 84, Riverbank State Park and Dimenna Center in NYC.

Groups:

- ★ Mike Freeman ZonaVibe
- ★ Mike Freeman Vibe Caliente
- ★ Mike Freeman & Spellbound®

Associated groups:

- ★ Metropolitan Jazz Octet
- ★ Ray Mantilla Good Vibrations Band, Tres Amigos, Space Station
- ★ Son Boricua with Jose Mangual Jr., Jimmy Sabater (an architect of Boogaloo)
- ★ Lucho Cueto (Allstar) Black Sugar
- ★ Mark Holen Zambomba
- ★ Julio Salgado
- ★ Willie Villegas' Joe Cuba Sextet
- ★ Timba Vibes

Based in New York City since 1981

Artist/Clinician Balter/Vic Firth Mallets and formerly Musser Instrument Company

Commissioned composer and Arranger, Concert Producer

Clinics/Masterclasses/Residencies

Studio sessions for Kirsten Thien; The Manhattan Transfer Swing, Atlantic Records; Don Sebesky Foxwoods, *The Wonder of It All*, featuring John Pizzarelli Jr; Broadway stars Stephanie Pope, *Now's the Time to Fall in Love*, and Capathia Jenkins with Lou Rosen, *South Side Stories*; and Hale Rood among others.

Performed with legendary sonero Cheo Feliciano and the Spanish Harlem Orchestra at Madison Square Garden, and with Willie Villegas Joe Cuba Sextet at NJ Salsa Congress; Latin Legends Tribute Concert at Aaron Davis Hall with Louis Bauzó; Cuban Fantasy at Weill Hall with Kathleen Landis



Mike Freeman Performance Highlights

Dimenna Center, NYC, 2025
Jazz Showcase, Chicago, 2025
White Plains Jazz Festival, 2023
Riverbank State Park 2022
The Highline NYC, 2021, 2022
Hudson River Parks Trust Concert Series Pier 84 NYC - 2019, 2021
Fox Jazz Festival, Menasha, WI - 2018
Riverfront Jazz Festival, Stevens Point, WI - 2018
Jazz Forum Arts Summer Concerts, Dobbs Ferry, NY - 2016
Third Street Music Series - 2008, 2013, 2016, 2018
Jazz on the Vine, Long Island, - 2013
Islip Jazz Fest, Long Island - 2011
Harlem Meer, Central Park New York City - 2008
Trinidad & Tobago Steelpan & Jazz Festival - 2008
Festival Internacional, Terceira, Azores - 2007
Jazz on the Green, Omaha, NE - 2002

1990's

First Night Celebrations (Numerous in the Northeast)
Rehoboth Beach, DE, Jazz Festival - 1997
Berks Jazz Festival, Reading, PA, - 1997
IAJE International Convention, Atlanta - 1996

1980's:

JVC Newport Jazz Festival, Saratoga, NY - 1989
Hennessy Greenwich Village Jazz Festival - 1987 & 1988
Musikfest, Bethlehem, PA - 1987
Mayfair, Allentown, PA - 1987
NJ State Aquarium's Jazzin the Deep Festival, Philadelphia, PA - 1992
Penn State University Tour - 1992
Toured Portugal on grants from the Fulbright Foundation and the American Embassy (USIA) - 1985

Numerous other festivals as a sideman



[Youtube](#) [Bluesky](#) [Linkedin](#) [Instagram](#) [Threads](#) [Facebook](#)
[Facebook1](#) [Facebook2](#) [Twitter](#) [Myspace](#)

Mike Freeman Jeff Jenkins



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