Michael Brecker Chronology

Compiled by David Demsey

- **1949/March 29** - Born, Philadelphia, PA; raised in Cheltenham, PA; brother Randy, sister Emily is pianist. Their father was an attorney who was a pianist and jazz enthusiast/fan

- ca. 1958 – started studies on alto saxophone and clarinet

- 1963 – switched to tenor saxophone in high school

- **1966/Summer** – attended Ramblerny Summer Music Camp, recorded *Ramblerny 66* [First Recording], member of big band led by Phil Woods; band also contained Richie Cole, Roger Rosenberg, Rick Chamberlain, Holly Near. In a touch football game the day before the final concert, quarterback Phil Woods broke Mike’s finger with the winning touchdown pass; he played the concert with taped-up fingers.

- **1966/November 11** – attended John Coltrane concert at Temple University; mentioned in numerous sources as a life-changing experience

- **1967/June** – graduated from Cheltenham High School

- **1967/Summer** – attended Berklee College of Music summer program in Boston

- **1967-68** – at Indiana University for three semesters: Fall 1967, Spring 1968, Fall 1968

- **1968/March 8-9** – Indiana University Randy Sandke Jazz Septet performs at Notre Dame Jazz Festival; is favored to win after semi-finals, but is disqualified from the finals for playing rock music. Judges: Oliver Nelson, Ray Brown, Gerald Wilson, Dan Morgenstern, Art Share. Brecker wins Outstanding Soloist award.

- **1968** – Formed Mrs. Seaman’s Sound Band with core membership from above group, performed around area including Eugene McCarthy rally in spring; in Chicago with Mrs. Seaman’s Sound Band members, in apartment; girl’s fatal fall from window in July incident (not involving Brecker directly). Band re-formed in fall 1968 with some new members (listed separately).

- n.d. – First steady gigs r&b keyboard/organist Edwin Birdsong (no known recordings exist of this period)
• Late 1968 – age 20, moved to New York City, had an apartment at corner of Broadway and 72nd St. (Sandke)

• 1969/January 21, February 3 – Recorded Score with Randy Brecker; Michael’s first commercial release

• 1970 – co-founder of jazz-rock band Dreams with Randy, trombonist Barry Rogers, drummer Billy Cobham, bassist Doug Lubahn. Recorded Dreams. Miles Davis attended some gigs prior to recording Jack Johnson.

• 1971 – Dreams recorded 2nd album Imagine My Surprise, produced in Memphis by Steve Cropper

• 1971 – recorded Chaplin’s Back with Darius Brubeck

• 1971 – recorded Wild Bird with Hal Galper

• 1972 – member of rock group White Elephant, led by Mike Mainieri; recorded White Elephant

• 1972 – appeared as soloist on James Taylor’s single “Don’t Let Me Be Lonely Tonight” on album One Man Dog

• 1972 – appeared on Todd Rundgren’s album Something/Anything?

• 1972/November 10 – recorded with Horace Silver, In Pursuit of the 27th Man [remainder of album w/Dave Friedman and no horns was recorded a month earlier]

• 1973/Spring-Summer – toured with Horace Silver

• 1973 – recorded Guerilla Band with Hal Galper

• 1973 – recorded Mind Games, John Lennon

• 1974/Summer-Fall – toured with Billy Cobham, recorded Crosswinds, Total Eclipse, Shabazz Live (July 4, 1974)

• 1974/August – Japan with Yoko Ono: 8/5 Kaiseizan Stadium, Karyama; 8/6 Koseinsenkin Hall, Osaka; 8/9 Nagoya City Hall, Nagoya; 8/11 Sun Plaza, Tokyo; 8/12 Koseininenkin Hall, Tokyo; 8/16 Hiroshima Prefectural Gymnasium

• 1975 – formed Brecker Brothers with brother Randy
• 1975/January – recorded Brecker Brothers, their first album that was originally intended as Randy’s solo album, contained Randy’s compositions, but Arista insisted on Brecker Brothers band name.

• 1975 – appeared on Paul Simon’s single “Still Crazy After All These Years”

• 1975 – appeared on Manhattan Transfer version of Operator

• 1975 – recorded Funky Thide of Sings, Billy Cobham

• 1976 – recorded Back to Back, Brecker Brothers

• 1976/June 8-9 – recorded Mel Lewis and Friends with Mel Lewis, Freddie Hubbard, Hank Jones, Ron Carter, Cecil Bridgewater, Gregory Herbert

• 1976/September-October – recorded Gate of Dreams with Claus Ogerman

• 1976/November 11 – recorded Reach Out with Hal Galper

• 1976 – appeared on Smile, Laura Nyro

• 1976/September-October – recorded Gate of Dreams, Claus Ogerman


• 1976 – appeared on Clones of Dr. Funkenstein, Mothership Connection with Parliament/Funkadelic

• 1977-78 – toured with Hal Galper Quintet

• 1977 – recorded Don’t Stop the Music, Brecker Brothers

• 1977/March – recorded Tring-A-Ling with Joanne Brackeen

• 1977/October 31 – recorded You Can’t Live Without It with Jack Wilkins

• 1977 – appears on disco hit “Native New Yorker,” Odyssey

• 1978/DATE? – recorded Heavy Metal Bebop Brecker Brothers

• 1978/January 18, 23 – recorded with Charles Mingus, released as Me, Myself and Eye and Something Like a Bird
• 1978/February – recorded *Speak With a Single Voice* with Hal Galper. Later, Galper’s *Redux ’78* contained more material from this live session

• 1978/July 7 – recorded *In, Out and Around* with Mike Nock

• 1978/July 21-22 – recorded *Blue Montreux Vols. I-II* at Montreux Jazz Festival

• 1978/July 23 – recorded *Live at Montreux*, Ben Sidran

• 1979/August-September – toured with Joni Mitchell, documented on LP/video, Forest Hills Tennis Stadium NYC 825/79; *Shadows and Light* video in September 1979 in Santa Barbera, CA

• 1979 – recorded with Mike Nock, *In, Out and Around*

• 1980 – recorded *Détente*, Brecker Brothers

• 1980 – appeared on single *Same Old Lang Syne*, Dan Fogelberg

• 1980 – toured Europe in July/August, Japan in September with Brecker Brothers

• 1980/Late – joined Steps, collaborative group with Mike Mainieri – started as Steps w/Japanese Columbia contract, then became Steps Ahead w/US album releases

• 1980/May 26-29 – recorded with Pat Metheny, *80-81*

• 1980/December 8, 10 – recorded *Step By Step*, Steps

• 1981 – recorded *Straphangin’*, Brecker Brothers

• 1981 – recorded *Smokin’ in the Pit*, Steps

• 1981/January-February – recorded with Chick Corea, *Three Quartets* with Eddie Gomez, Steve Gadd

• 1981/September – recorded *Paradox*, Steps

• 1981/August-September – toured Europe with Chick Corea 80/81 band

• 1981/December 1 – recorded *Birthday Concert* with Jaco Pastorius

• 1982 – toured extensively with Steps: Japan, Europe, US dates
• 1982/January 4-8 – recorded *Cityscape* with Claus Ogerman – saxophone and orchestra

• 1982/December 9 – completes rehab, clean from that day onward [per 1995 *Jazz Journal* interview]

• 1983 – toured with Steps Ahead; March-April in Europe,

• 1983 – recorded *Steps Ahead*

• 1983/May – recorded *Double, Double You*, Kenny Wheeler

• 1983/October 29 – Steps Ahead in Maine? Check…

• 1984 – toured with Steps Ahead; Europe in March, July; US dates

• 1984/January-February – recorded *Modern Times*, Steps Ahead

• 1985/July – Spain, Italy, France with Steps Ahead

• 1985 – Recorded *Hearts and Numbers*, Don Grolnick

• 1986 – recorded *Magnetic*, Steps Ahead

• 1986/January 24 [per SB] – Married Susan


• 1986/March, October – Europe with John Abercrombie


• 1987 – Released first solo album, *Michael Brecker*, appeared at Newport Jazz Festival in July; extensive touring to promote album. First two tour dates of Michael Brecker Band: Hunt’s Tavern in Montpelier, VT, 3/26, concert at U. Maine Augusta 3/27

• 1987 – intense work on EWI development, promotion with Akai

• 1987/June 8-9 – recorded live video with Carly Simon on Gay Head, Martha’s Vineyard, MA
• 1988 – recorded solo album *Don’t Try This At Home*

• 1988/March – 1st Grammy: Best Jazz Instrumental Performance, Soloist, *Don’t Try This at Home*

• 1988 – many tour dates with Michael Brecker Band

• 1988/July – Europe tour with Herbie Hancock

• 1988/December, January 1989 – recorded *Claus Ogerman, Featuring Michael Brecker*

• 1989/January 21 – Live performance of *Cityscape*, Japan

• 1989 – Daughter Jessica born (same night as Grammy Award)

• 1990 – recorded solo album *Now You See It…Now You Don’t*

• 1990 – touring with Michael Brecker Quartet

• 1991/March-December – worldwide touring with Paul Simon

• 1992 – recorded *Return of the Brecker Brothers*

• 1992/June-December – two European tours, Japan with Brecker Brothers

• 1992/November 29-30 – recorded *Twin Tenors*, Bob Mintzer

• 1993 – more touring with Brecker Brothers; Europe in June-July

• 1993/August 1 [per SB] – son, Sam born

• 1994 – recorded *Out of the Loop*, Brecker Brothers

• 1994/March – Two Grammys: Best Instrumental Composition, “African Skies;” Best Contemporary Jazz Performance, Brecker Brothers *Out of the Loop*

• 1994 – more touring with Brecker Brothers; Europe in May, October-November
• 1995/January/February – UK with Don Grolnick; touring with Brecker Brothers

• 1995/March – Grammy: Best Jazz Instrumental Solo, “Impressions” on Infinity with McCoy Tyner

• 1995/November -July 1996 – touring with McCoy Tyner; Newport Jazz Festival in August with Tyner

• 1995/April 12-14 - recorded Infinity, McCoy Tyner

• 1996 – recorded solo album Tales From the Hudson

• 1996/February 29, March 1 – recorded Hardbop Grandpop, reunites with Horace Silver

• 1996/March – Two Grammys: Best Jazz Performance, Individual or Group, for Tales from the Hudson; Best Jazz Instrumental Solo for “Cabin Fever”

• 1996/June-July – Europe with McCoy Tyner Trio

• 1996/October-November – Israel, then Europe, US with Michael Brecker Band

• 1996 – recorded The New Standard with Herbie Hancock

• 1997 – Europe in Jan./Feb. with Michael Brecker Band; Montreal, then Europe with New Standard band

• 1997/May 29-30 – recorded Prescription of the Blues, Horace Silver

• 1998 – recorded solo album Two Blocks From the Edge

• 1998 – tours with Michael Brecker Group: New Jazz Festival, Euriope in June, July, October-November

• 1999 – recorded solo album Time Is of the Essence

• 1999 – tours: Tenor Summit in Montreal, NY Blue Note in December; Elvin Jones in NY, October; US tour with Michael Brecker Quartet in spring, Europe in October-November

• 2000/June-July – Europe with Brecker-Metheny Special Quartet, US in September
• 2000/August 2 – performed John Psathas Saxophone Concerto, Bologna, Italy
• 2000/Oct-Nov – with Kenny Barron Trio in Seoul, Tokyo
• 2000/December 18-20 – recorded solo album *Nearness of You: The Ballad Book*

• 2001 – toured with collaborative group Hancock-Brecker-Hargrove, with music dedicated to Miles Davis and John Coltrane. Brecker performed solo saxophone version of “Naima” nightly.

• 2001/January 12 – Brecker Bros. with Metropole Orchestra, IAJE

• 2001/March – Grammy: Best Jazz Instrumental Solo, for “Chan’s Song”

• 2001/June – Montreal Jazz Fest, featured artist, with own band, solo, organ trio, Steps Ahead reunion, Danilo Perez

• 2001/July – Europe with Brecker Brothers Acoustic Band

• 2001/Sept-Oct – US with Directions in Music

• 2001/September – with Diana Krall, Tokyo

• 2001/October 25 – Recorded *Directions in Music: Live at Massey Hall*

• 2001/December – Chick Corea Three Quartets band, NY Blue Note

• 2001 – *Directions in Music: Live at Massey Hall* wins Grammy Award

• 2002 – Tenor Summit, Birdland, New York

• 2002/March – Grammy: Best Jazz Instrumental Album, for *Directions in Music*, co-led with Herbie Hancock, Roy Hargrove

• 2002/May 14-17 – recorded *American Dreams* with Charlie Haden, with orchestra

• 2002/June-July – Directions in Music, Europe

• 2002/October – Solo Concert, Franfurt, Germany

• 2003/January 22-24 – recorded solo album *Quindectet – Wide Angles*

• 2003/March – Two Grammys: Best Instrumental Arrangement, for “Timbuktu;” Best Large Jazz Ensemble Album, for
• 2003/November 11 – Records *Some Skunk Funk* w/WDR Big Band, Germany

• 2003 – tours with own band, Brecker Brothers, Farmers Market 6/17 and Urban Connection 6/20, Molde Norway; w/Ray Brown 7/5, Salzau, Germany; Saxophone Summit Europe October; Quindecetet (first gig?) New York November

• 2004/January – recorded *Saxophone Summit*, with Dave Liebman, Joe Lovano

• 2004/January-February – Quindecetet in Japan

• 2004/August – John Coltrane Tribute, Newport Jazz Festival

• 2005/January 19 – Quindecetet, Zankel Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall

• 2005/January-February – US tour, Directions in Music “Our Times”

• 2006/August – recorded final solo album, *Pilgrimage*

• 2006/March – Two Grammys: Best Jazz Instrumental Solo for “Some Skunk Funk;” Best Large Jazz Ensemble Album for *Some Skunk Funk* with Randy Brecker, WDR Big Band


• 2007/February 20 – memorial celebration, Michael Brecker Remembered, held at Town Hall, New York City, featuring Daryl Pitt, Randy Brecker, David Liebman, Pat Metheny, Herbie Hancock/John Patitucci/Jack Dejohnette, Paul Simon, and Sam Brecker

• 2007/March – Two Grammys: Best Jazz Instrumental Solo for “Anagram;” Best Jazz Instrumental Album, Individual or Group for *Pilgrimage*