

Jordan Klemons - Short Bio

As a guitarist, composer, and educator living in New York City, Klemons has worn many hats and been through a lot. He started working on music at the age of 10 on a guitar that his mother found in a trash can and brought home for him. He began working on his own and writing songs with his older brother, which eventually led to his first official “band”. Throughout high school, Klemons joined and helped form several more bands where he was able to cut his teeth as a songwriter and an improviser.

In college, Klemons studied music and economics. After graduating he moved to Western Australia, and upon returning to the states, hit the road to tour nationally with several bands. He performed at Bonnaroo, The Joshua Tree Music Festival, and many other exciting festivals and venues all around the country. It was also during this time that Klemons released his debut album as a leader, “New Road.”

Shortly after completing “New Road,” Klemons moved to New York City and began a masters program in jazz studies at New York University. It was during this time that he was able to get to know many of his favorite musicians. He studied with John Scofield, Peter Bernstein, Brad Shepik, Alan Ferber, and Stefon Harris. He also played and studied with Jean-Michel Pilc, Ari Hoenig, Mark Turner, and many other wonderful and inspiring musicians and teachers. During this time, Klemons performed around NYC including multiple sets at The Blue Note with Grammy Nominated Alan Ferber, Rich Perry (Maria Schneider’s Orchestra, Vanguard Jazz Orchestra), Mike Rodriguez, Dave Pietro (Maria Schneider’s Orchestra), and Billy Drewes (The Vanguard Orchestra), a set with Mike Rodriguez at ShapeShifter Lab in Brooklyn, as well as leading his own groups at different venues around the city.

It was also during this time that Klemons composed and arranged most of the music for what became his nonet album, “This City,” which was an homage to the love/hate relationship Klemons developed with New York City... with all of its ups and downs, highs and lows, inspiration and moments of defeat.

It was during the mixing process of “This City” that Klemons started experiencing utterly debilitating headaches. Thinking they were probably just stress induced migraines, he kept teaching and working on the album, but day after day, and week after week they got worse until one day he actually started to see visual hallucinations and feared he may be having a stroke or some other serious issue. He had an ambulance take him to a nearby hospital, was brought into the ER where many tests were run, and was eventually admitted into the hospital for what unexpectedly turned into close to two months, with almost the first month being kept in the Intensive Care Unit. There, the doctors gave him the names of all the symptoms and problems going on within his brain, and told him that this was a potentially fatal problem that he was lucky enough to still be alive from, but admitted that, short of a very risky brain biopsy, there was no way to get an official diagnosis of what was going on. If that weren’t hard enough to deal with, he was also diagnosed with cancer and told he would need chemotherapy.

Unfortunately, throughout all of the medical issues, Klemons remained so unhealthy that he simply wasn't able to pick up his guitar for about six months. After having survived the cancer and the chemo, and after having treated the brain, his health and spirit returned and he began picking up the guitar again. Only, he found that he had forgotten so much that it felt like he was starting over. Fortunately, throughout all of the medical problems and hospital stays, Klemons had learned a lot about patience and persistence - even continuing to work on "This City" from his hospital bed, refusing to put the project down. Tapping back into this patience and persistence, and the positive outlook required to overcome cancer, Klemons is currently reteaching himself how to play guitar and viewing it as a positive experience. An opportunity to get rid of all the bad habits and all the things that were implanted in his fingers by teachers and magazines before he was mature enough to decide whether or not he wanted them to be there in the first place. Now, he is able to make the conscious decision about what he does and does not want in his playing, and to practice his way to getting back to where he used to be only better. It will be a long and tough battle, but in the end it will be worth it.