

BIO

Gabriel Johnson was born in Santa Clara, California in 1980 and grew up in Salinas, California. Early on, his greatest musical influence was his grandmother who always preached to him the importance of the arts and, most importantly, jazz. "She was the one who told me I really needed to go hear Dizzy play in 1989 at the Monterey Jazz Festival. It was there that I heard not only Dizzy but another of the all-time greats, Freddie Hubbard. That was about all it took for me to say, 'this is what I want to do.'" After practicing obsessively throughout middle and high school, Gabriel attended Boston's prestigious New England Conservatory of Music. While there he studied under the tutelage of jazz greats Steve Lacy, Danilo Perez, George Garzone, John McNeil and Bob Moses.

After completing his education in Boston, he decided to return to his California roots, only this time to Los Angeles where he has lived since 2004. Since arriving in LA, Gabriel has been very active in the studio scene, and has played or recorded with a wide variety of musicians and bands, including Blood Sweat and Tears, Gladys Knight, Steven Tyler, Leann Rimes, Trombone Shorty, David Foster, Jill Scott, Diddy, Skylar Grey, Faith Evans, Gerald Albright, Dave Koz, Johnny Mathis, Kyle Eastwood, Vince Gill, Andrea Bocelli, Chris Botti, Minda Abair, Paula Cole, Lyle Lovett, Keb Mo, M83, B.o.B. and Burt Bacharach.

A turning point came in 2007, when Clint Eastwood called upon Gabriel to be the featured soloist with orchestra on his Golden Globes nominated score to *Changeling*, starring Angelina Jolie. Eastwood, once a trumpet player himself, said that Johnson "plays like a singer." This was a bit of a full circle moment for Johnson, since as a child he grew up not too far from Clint's home in Carmel, California. He says, "I had heard about his love of music while I was growing up, so to be standing there playing the trumpet, his favorite instrument, on a movie he directed, with him sitting 5 feet from me in the room was exciting and humbling at the same time." Following the success of the *Changeling* soundtrack, Eastwood once again called upon Johnson to be the soloist in his Nelson Mandela biopic *Invictus*, which was released in theaters in December of 2009.

In September of 2012, Gabriel released his first solo album "Introducing Gabriel Johnson," which blended his trumpet sound with the sounds of modern jazz and hip-hop. In the week leading up to the release of *Introducing*, Gabriel was also featured on The Tonight Show with Jay Leno as the guest soloist with legendary Tenor Placido Domingo.

After touring in support of *Introducing*, Gabriel went back into the studio and recorded a follow-up album titled "Alone Together," released in April of 2014. This time, the music was recorded entirely live and acoustic in two 3-hour recording sessions.

In 2016, Gabriel released 4 albums with his trio. The albums, Sketches part 1,2,3 and 4 respectively, were all recorded in 1 take and are a true representation of his current vision and the development of his sound and composing. The albums, which feature Jeff Babko on Piano and Lyman Medeiros on bass, are without a doubt his most honest and spontaneous recordings to date. "When I decided to make these albums, I wanted to do something that put the musicians in an unfamiliar territory: No rehearsal before hand, no option for a second take, and no listening to the song after the take. We all had to trust ourselves to play the way we do and be happy with that. In the end the results were something I feel really great about, and something that I hope the listener can feel when they listen. We aren't trying to show off or play in a way that's full of technical acrobatics or self indulgence. What we are doing is simply trying to be honest and truly be 'in the moment'. Yes, that's a cliché in jazz, but sometimes clichés exist because they are of value. In this case, I think the value comes across in the music."

Gabriel's main passion, without any doubt, is playing live. "I'm really proud of the band I have assembled, with some truly world-class musicians who really help make the live show a great experience not only for me as the band leader, but for the audience as well. We really have fun up there, and aren't afraid to show the audience that we are so grateful to them for being there. More than anything, I just hope that when people come and hear us play they walk away feeling better than when they arrived, want to come hear us again, and know that I am grateful for their ears and their time. That, after all, is why I do what I do."

For those who are interested, Gabriel plays a 1956 Martin Committee Large Bore trumpet and a New York Bach #3 mouthpiece from the 1930s.