

# JAZZ THROW SANDRO ALBERT

Sandro Albert stands in his New York City apartment, surrounded by packing crates and guitar cases. The multifaceted jazz guitarist and composer has just relocated to the Big Apple after a decade in Los Angeles.

"I've only been here three weeks," says Albert. "I had a great time in LA, making three records and working with a lot of different people. But I wanted to get out of my comfort zone and explore new opportunities, new musicians to exchange ideas with."

This isn't the first time Albert has pulled up stakes. He first took up the guitar in his hometown of Puerto Alegre, Brazil, where he'd play Beatles and Antonio Carlos Jobim songs on the street after school. As a teen, Sandro discovered the music of Wes Montgomery and embarked on a jazz path. By the time he left Brazil for California, he'd developed a suave, melodic style that combines Brazilian grooves with warm-toned guitar lines.

"Brazil is a musical country," notes Albert, "but it doesn't have that much to offer instrumental musicians. Brazil has a great understanding of the melodic and harmonic aspects of music, but I always liked the way American players viewed improvisation."

Soon after arriving, Albert scored a gig with famed funk band War. He went on to work with a long list of jazz and Brazilian greats, including

Brenda Russell, Victor Bailey, Abe Laboriel, Jimmy Haslip, Alphonso Johnson, Russell Ferrante, Kenny Garrett, Harvey Mason, Airta Moreira, Flora Purim, Peter Erskine, Vinnie Colaiuta, Luis Conte, and Robben Ford.

Sandro looks forward to exploring the New York scene. "There's definitely more edge here," he says. "There's more of a commitment to improvisation and quality of music. The West Coast has more emphasis on smooth jazz. I have nothing against that, but it requires a different set of skills. Right now I'm interested in combining the Brazilian thing that I have with avant-garde and old school jazz."

Albert has always excelled on both acoustic and electric guitars, but these days he's increasingly likely to play unplugged. His soon-to-be-released third album, *A Beautiful Cloudy Day*, is entirely acoustic, with woodwinds and a string section complementing Albert's steel-and nylon-string guitars.

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"I've definitely been exploring acoustic tone more and more," confirms Albert. "After all, acoustic guitar was my first instrument. It was hard finding any electric guitars we could afford in Brazil! I bought my first acoustic guitar from a local ice cream vendor. Nowadays, I enjoy sitting late at night with my acoustic guitar in my living room, trying out chord and melody ideas, exploring the harmonic possibilities. It's like Segovia used to say: The acoustic guitar is a mini-orchestra."

Whether he's on acoustic or electric, chances are Albert's playing a Yamaha. "I have many Yamaha guitars," he says. "Steel-strings, nylon-strings, electric solidbodies, semi-hollowbodies. It's all beautiful stuff. My very favorite is probably the electric archtop they developed for me. It's a full-sized model with a maple top. The playability is incredible. The response is so defined. The balance from the first fret to the last is amazing. It's so reliable that when I moved to New York from California, I didn't even have to adjust it." He also owns the same custom model in sunburst.

Albert's principal nylon-string guitars are a GCX31C and a CG171, and his main steel-string is an LS36. "They all sound incredible, and the guys at Yamaha Guitar's custom shop in LA are like a family to me. Ken Dapron and the other guys have been great friends and supporters of my music. There is no other company in the world like that!"

No matter which instrument he's holding, Albert displays a warm tone, effortless melodic sense, and a tune-ful, almost vocal approach to the instrument—no surprise, given the Beatles and Jobim influences. Even Albert's main jazz influence, Wes Montgomery, was renowned for his fluid lyricism.

"The Wes influence seems to be coming out more than ever these days," says Albert. "I don't play in quite the same blues and jazz environment that he did, but I use his type of tone a lot. My other great influence is the Brazilian singer and composer Milton Nascimento. There definitely is a vocal influence to my playing—I've even transcribed vocals by Milton and João Gilberto." He chuckles. "Think about it: Your mouth is closer to your brain than your fingers!"

You can learn more about Sandro Albert and his music at [www.sandroalbert.com](http://www.sandroalbert.com).