

# Gilad Hekselman

Gilad Hekselman is first perceived as the most gifted guitarist of this early millennium from a rhythmic standpoint. – Ludovic Florin, JazzMan



*Photo: J. Goleman*

Born in Israel in 1983, Gilad Hekselman began playing guitar at age 9 and quickly developed a passion for jazz. He graduated with excellence from the jazz department of the prestigious Thelma Yellin School of Arts at 18, then received a scholarship from the America-Israel Cultural Foundation to study abroad.

At 21, after winning the prestigious Guitar Collective competition in his native country, he moved to New York in 2004 to study at the New School for Jazz and Contemporary Music, where he earned his BFA in 2008.

Since arriving in New York, Hekselman has become an essential figure on the jazz scene, performing at legendary venues such as the Village Vanguard, the Blue Note, Dizzy's, Smalls, and the Jazz Standard. He has shared the stage with renowned musicians including Larry Grenadier, Chris Potter, Eric Harland, Fred Hersch, Mark Turner, Anat Cohen, Esperanza Spalding, Tigran Hamasyan, Jeff Ballard, Mark Turner, Aaron Parks, and Joe Martin, among others.

Hekselman has released several acclaimed albums as a leader:

- SplitLife (2006)
- Words Unspoken (2008)
- Hearts Wide Open (2011)
- This Just In (2013)
- Homes (2015)
- Ask for Chaos (2018)
- Further Chaos (EP, 2019)
- Far Star (2022)
- Life, at the Village Vanguard (April 2024)

His album **Far Star** reflects his evolution, incorporating more electronic elements while maintaining his distinctive voice. Hekselman is recognized for his warm tone, fluid technique, and sophisticated harmonic approach. His playing combines traditional jazz vocabulary with modern concepts and lyrical sensibility. Critics highlight his ability to blend virtuosity, technique, emotional depth, and musical storytelling. His compositions feature complex melodies and rich harmonies while remaining accessible.

He currently works in a trio with Larry Grenadier on bass and Marcus Gilmore on drums, two major figures in contemporary jazz – Grenadier known for his work with Brad Mehldau and Pat Metheny, and Gilmore recognized as one of the most innovative drummers of his generation.

Among his notable recent projects is **Trio Grande**, a collaboration with Will Vinson on saxophone and Nate Wood on drums. This group released **Trio Grande** in 2020 (with Antonio Sanchez) and **Trio Grande: Urban Myth** in 2023 (Whirlwind Recordings).

Hekselman also leads other formations such as **ZuperOctave** with Aaron Parks and Kush Abadey, and the gHex Trio with Rick Rosato and Jonathan Pinson.

In Europe, Hekselman is considered one of the most innovative jazz guitarists of his generation. He regularly performs at prestigious festivals such as the **North Sea Jazz Festival**, **Jazz à Vienne**, and the **Copenhagen Jazz Festival**, as well as major festivals in the United States and elsewhere (Montreux, Montreal, SFJazz, Java Jazz in Jakarta...).

His achievements include several distinctions:

- First place in the Rising Star category of Downbeat magazine (2017 and 2022)
- Winner of the international 7 Virtual Jazz Club competition (2022)
- Winner of the Gibson Montreux International Guitar Competition (2005)

Following this last prize, he opened for the legendary **Paco de Lucia** at the Montreux Jazz Festival in 2006. In 2018, he was invited by **Pat Metheny** to perform at the guitarist's NEA Award ceremony at the Kennedy Center.

In January 2025, the New York Times featured him among 14 jazz guitarists to discover. Joel Harrison, guitarist and director of the Siena Jazz International Summer Workshop, described him as an important new voice in jazz guitar demonstrating a magnificent sound, enormous technique, excellent feeling, and unequivocal lyricism.

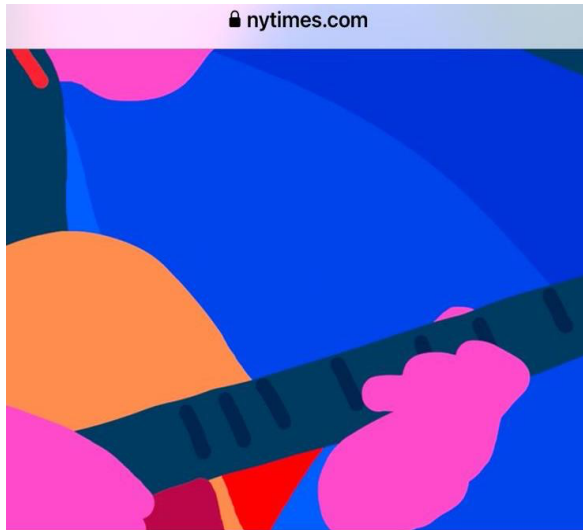
Hekselman is regularly invited to give masterclasses at prestigious institutions such as the Amsterdam Conservatory and the Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama, where he held a chair for three years. He is widely considered one of the most influential jazz guitarists of his generation, continuing to push boundaries while honoring jazz tradition.

# GILAD HEKSELMAN

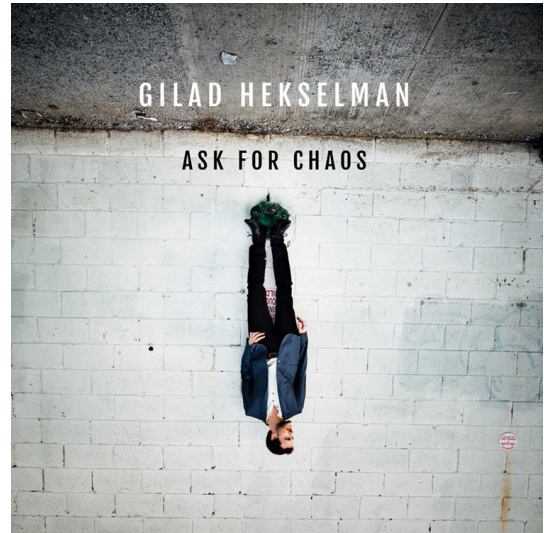
## 5 MINUTES TO MAKE YOU LOVE JAZZ GUITAR

Excerpt from the [New York Times](#) January 8, 2025 (translated from English)

By [Giovanni Russonello](#)



Dante Zaballa



*The instrument has not always been a central actor in jazz, but the best guitarists have risen to the challenge of finding their own path. 14 musicians and writers share their favorite pieces...*



Joel Harrison, guitarist

Gilad Hekselman, "Milton"

Difficult task. Jazz guitar in 2025 can mean many things. It would be easy to choose a grand master like Wes Montgomery, George Benson or Pat Metheny, who changed my life at a young age. But in my role leading the Alternative Guitar Summit, I'm inclined to select a younger musician. **Gilad Hekselman** is an important new voice in jazz guitar, and demonstrates here a magnificent sound, enormous technique, great feeling and unequivocal lyricism. When he plays, it always sounds beautiful. This piece is dedicated to the beloved Brazilian singer Milton Nascimento and offers a delightful interpretation of a groove that Nascimento himself used. The piece has a singing melody that makes me smile. Gilad takes his time in his solo, he tells a story, distilling phrase after phrase. There's a lively interaction with **Rick Rosato** on bass and **Jonathan Pinson** on drums. I think this piece could soften the darkest mood.

[Listen to « Milton » by Gilad Hekselman](#)

## PRESS EXCERPTS

...A blessing in these times of trouble and fear: that music says "peace and love" without sappiness is perhaps the best way to resist. **Michel Contat TELERAMA**

This Just In comes after Hearts Wide Open which established Gilad Hekselman among the rising stars of jazz. The monthly JazzTimes notes that the album puts him in the ranks of authors writing jazz in a rich and fascinating vocabulary. **Alex Duthil - France Musique**

...Gilad Hekselman has an approach to modern jazz with fluid harmony, without his melody being too simplistic or basic... Homes is a new memorable album. Nate Chinen, **The New York Times**

There are probably no stronger melodies in today's jazz than those that escape from Gilad Hekselman's guitar. Gilad Hekselman's new album, Homes, testifies to his sense of melody and his writing ability, as well as his trio with Joe Martin on bass and Marcus Gilmore on percussion. **Ben Gray, Nextbop**

Hekselman (...) often creates the illusion of a second ghost guitarist (...) as if his sonic spectrum doubled the melody. **Tom Greenland, The New York City Jazz Record**

Homes is one of our best recommendations. In a world where mass musical production reigns and where art is relegated to the background, Gilad Hekselman and his group boldly resist to compose music of great sincerity, profound and with intact creativity. **Learnjazzstandards.com**

Possessing a beautiful sound and fluid, wonderful phrasing, Gilad Hekselman's writing is always first class, both personal and moving beyond clichés. **DOWNBEAT MAGAZINE**

Guitarist Gilad Hekselman quickly gained the confidence of the greatest, from Chris Potter to Mark Turner including Gretchen Parlato and Jeff Tain Watts. Fascinating in his ease and talent, he is designated as one of the most promising guitarists in New York. **TSF JAZZ**

"Luminous music, light but demanding, complex and accessible served by a dream quartet: the cream of current jazz in New York! Essential!" **Culturejazz.fr**

... they came, they played, they left. The music tells a completely different story - engaging and risky, emotional and vibrant, delivered with the demands of the moment. **NPR / WGBO Radio**

Gilad Hekselman is at the forefront of the jazz guitar world, bringing his mark to the technique, mood and composition created by greats like John Scofield and Kurt Rosenwinkel. Hearts Wide Open is highly recommended. **ABOUT.COM**

"Let us therefore salute in Hearts Wide Open a beautiful album and in its leader one of the best representatives of a talented generation of Israeli guitarists." **Jazzman**

This album is propelled by Hekselman's playing. The sound is definitely refreshing. He plays with the precision of an experienced veteran and carries the optimistic spirit of a young soul... **The Revivalist**

Through complex harmonies, Hekselman played with fluidity and lyricism, without straying from dissonant tensions and without predictable resolutions, while remaining fresh and exciting. His trio captivated the very attentive audience at the Upstairs club. **Jazz Times**

Hekselman symbolizes an incisive jazz, turned toward the future... But what else? A jazz that borrows harmonies from world music to better blend them into North American rhythms. **Le Devoir, Montréal**