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Bio information: **MICHAEL GIBBS AND THE NDR BIGBAND**  
Title: **BACK IN THE DAYS** (Cuneiform Rune 322)

Cuneiform publicity/promotion dept.: tel 301-589-8894 / fax 301-589-1819

email: joyce [-at-] cuneiformrecords.com (Press & world radio); radio [-at-] cuneiformrecords.com (North American radio)

www.cuneiformrecords.com

**FILE UNDER: JAZZ / BIG BAND JAZZ**

"Gibbs music is full of intriguing inner detail that does not deflect from the ultimate destiny of his pieces." – *BBC Music Magazine*

"Mike Gibbs' ingenious arrangements suggest a pop art incarnation of a traditional big band -- assembled from blistering guitar riffage, fiery brass and deeply idiosyncratic rhythms ...[his music]...nevertheless retains the soulfulness of conventional jazz, and for all its mind-expanding consciousness, the music speaks to the body as loudly as it does the intellect. Most impressive is the tactile sumptuousness of Gibbs' sound -- the music boasts as many tints and textures as a Pantone Color Guide." – *All Music Guide*

With a career spanning more than half a century and at least three continents, trombonist, composer and arranger **Michael Gibbs** is a jazz giant who has spent recent decades writing arrangements mostly for other artists. Documenting his tremendously rewarding collaboration with the vaunted 18-piece **NDR Bigband**, *Back In the Days* is an invaluable addition to Gibbs' fascinating but unfortunately sparse discography as a leader.

Recorded over five sessions between 1995 and 2003, *Back In the Days* features seven Gibb originals, three jazz standards and two pieces by Gibb collaborators, all arranged and conducted by Gibbs. While the album's title smacks of nostalgia, there's nothing sentimental or backward looking about Gibbs' music. Making full use of the NDR's vivid soloists and finely honed sections, he supplies the orchestra with a series of luscious settings, marked by gracefully swooping lines, exquisitely detailed cross voicings, and an expansive harmonic palette.

With a resume that includes collaborations with artists such as **Pat Metheny**, **John McLaughlin**, **Joni Mitchell**, **John Scofield**, **Michael Mantler**, **Gary Burton**, **Whitney Houston**, **Peter Gabriel**, **Bill Frisell**, and **Richard Galliano**, Gibbs' creative endeavors cover far too much territory for one album to encompass. But *Back In the Days* gives a good sense of the vast scope of Gibbs' capacious musical vision.

The album opens with the sly, intoxicating "The Time Has Come," a reference to a verse from **Lewis Carroll**'s delightfully dark poem "The Walrus and the Carpenter" from *Through the Looking-Glass*. Written for legendary Boston trumpeter and bandleader **Herb Pomeroy**, an early Gibbs' mentor, the surging arrangement features a typically incisive solo by guest Gary Burton (the first of three tunes he appears on).

Gibbs wrote "June the 15<sup>th</sup>, 1967" for an early incarnation of **The Gary Burton Quartet** on the eponymous date. "Gary tells me that **Thelonious Monk** heard the quartet play this one night and whooped with delight," Gibbs says. With its surging brass and chugging bass line, it's easy to see what got Monk excited.

Tinged with the deep shadow of film noir, "Jail Blues" started as a cue for a TV episode of "Tales From the Darkside," but Gibbs transformed that seed of a concept into a full-fledged drama with **Lutz Buchner**'s clarinet playing the role of the irresistible femme fatale. Other highlights include a gorgeous version of "Round Midnight" that feels like Monk conceived the ballad for a big band, and "Moshier," a lush, loving tribute to the great Boston altoist and educator **Jimmy Moshier** (a Gibbs compatriot in the **Herb Pomeroy Band**). The album closes with a long, marvelously bleary-smearly version of Burton and **Steve Swallow**'s classic "Country Roads" featuring the vibes master himself and an insouciantly sauntering trumpet solo by **Reiner Winterschladen**.

Ultimately, Gibbs provides the singular **NDR Bigband** with music ideally suited for showcasing the band's manifold strengths. It helps that he has a good deal of history with this ensemble, including orchestrating the album *Here's A Song For You* featuring the superlative British jazz singer **Norma Winstone**. Established in 1945 as a German regional radio dance band, the **Norddeutscher Rundfunk Bigband** is one of the world's longest running jazz repertory ensembles. The band adopted its present supremely hip identity in 1971 when **Wolfgang Kunert** took over as producer.

Over the past four decades the NDR has collaborated with some of jazz's most eloquent improvisers, including Americans **Chet Baker**, **Johnny Griffin**, **Howard Johnson**, **Herb Geller** and **Joe Pass**, and European masters **Barbara Dennerlein**, **Tomasz Stanko**, **Phillip Catherine** and **John Surman**. *Back In the Days* ranks among the very best NDR projects, a session all the more significant because Gibbs has been so under-exposed in recent years.

Born on September 25th, 1937 in Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia (now Harare, the capital of Zimbabwe), Gibbs grew up playing trombone and piano. He moved to Boston in 1959 to study at Berklee College of Music, and quickly fell in with progressive-minded jazz innovators. In the summer of 1960, a full scholarship brought him to Lenox School of Jazz for studies with **Gunther Schuller**,

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**George Russell** and **J.J. Johnson**. Deeply drawn to contemporary classical music, he graduated from the Boston Conservatory of Music in 1963 and earned a full scholarship at Tanglewood Summer School, where he absorbed information from Schuller, **Aaron Copland**, **Iannis Xenakis**, and **Lukas Foss**.

Gibbs made his recording debut in 1962 with Berklee buddy **Gary Burton**, contributing to the vibraphonist's second album with **Phil Woods**, **Clark Terry**, **Tommy Flanagan** and **Joe Morello**. But by 1964 Gibbs had relocated to London, where he became a first-call trombonist through his work with **Tubby Hayes**, **Graham Collier**, **John Dankworth** and **Cleo Laine**. It was also the start of his prolific career as a studio player and arranger on radio, television, film and pop sessions.

Recognized as one of jazz's leading young arrangers and composers, Gibbs developed a personal, thickly textured approach inspired by **Gil Evans**, **Charles Ives** and **Olivier Messiaen**. Incorporating driving rock rhythms and asymmetrical phrasing, his work anticipated the jazz-rock fusion movement of the 1970's. The release of his self-named debut album in 1970 and a follow up **Tanglewood '63** (both on **Deram**), seminal sessions featuring free blowing horns, blazing electric guitars and propulsive funk beats, led to a succession of **Melody Maker Awards**, including First Composer, Best Big Band, Musician of the Year, and First Arranger.

At the height of his European success, Gibbs returned to the US in 1974 to take up the post of Composer-In-Residence at Berklee, a position he held until 1983, when he decided to focus on freelancing in New York City. After two years he returned to London, and by 1988 he was recording with his own bands again, including his critically acclaimed 1988 album **Big Music** (**Virgin/Venture**). Commuting between the US and Europe since the mid-80s, Gibbs has poured most of his creative energy into writing, but he's still managed to tour, for instance performing around the UK with John Scofield in 1991. More recently, as part of the celebration of his 70th birthday Gibbs took an all-star large ensemble on the road in the UK, a group featuring Bill Frisell, Steve Swallow, **Adam Nussbaum** and **Chris Hunter**.

A dedicated educator, Gibbs has taught at major universities around the world. He's also composed scores for nearly a dozen films, such as **"Madame Sin," "Being Human," "Hard-Boiled"** and **"House Keeping."** As a composer, he's probably best known for **"Sweet Rain,"** a jazz standard that has been recorded by numerous jazz giants, including **Stan Getz**, **Stephane Grappelli**, Gary Burton, **Randy Weston**, and Herb Pomeroy. With precious few albums dedicated to his own music **Back In the Days** can't help but whet the appetite for more, leaving listeners eager to hear where Gibbs is going next.

*For more information on Michael Gibbs, see:*

[www.MySpace.com/MikeGibbsCompserArranger](http://www.MySpace.com/MikeGibbsCompserArranger) - [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael\\_Gibbs\\_\(composer\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_Gibbs_(composer)) - [www.gaibryantspareparts.com/mike\\_gibbs.htm](http://www.gaibryantspareparts.com/mike_gibbs.htm)

#### **NDR Bigband personnel on *Back In the Days*:**

<b>Wolfgang Ahlers</b> (tb)	<b>Ingolf Burkhardt</b> (tp)	<b>Fiete Felsch</b> (as)	<b>Christof Lauer</b> (ts)	<b>Lucas Schmid</b> (btb)	<b>Thomas Zoller</b> (bari)
<b>Thomas Alkier</b> (dr)	<b>Egon Christmann</b> (tb)	<b>Martin France</b> (dr)	<b>Dirk Lentschat</b> (tp)	<b>Vladyslav Sendeci</b> (p)	<b>Gary Burton</b>
<b>Lennart Axelsson</b> (tp)	<b>Frank Delle</b> (bari)	<b>Joe Gallardo</b> (tb)	<b>Lucas Lindholm</b> (b)	<b>Claus Stötter</b> (tp)	(vb - <i>guest soloist</i> )
<b>Rüdiger Baldauf</b> (tp)	<b>Stephan Diez</b> (g)	<b>Dan Gottshall</b> (tb)	<b>Stefan Lottermann</b> (tb)	<b>Ian Thomas</b> (dr)	<b>Michael Gibbs</b>
<b>Peter Bolte</b> (as)	<b>Marcio Doctor</b> (perc)	<b>Ed Harris</b> (g)	<b>Mark Mondesir</b> (dr)	<b>Jon Welch</b> (tb)	(conductor/arranger)
<b>Lutz Büchner</b> (ts)	<b>Johannes Faber</b> (tp)	<b>Ingo Lahme</b> (btb)	<b>Simon Nabatov</b> (p)	<b>Reiner Winterschladen</b> (tp)	

**(a)** Tracks #1, 11, 12 - November 24, 1995:

Lennart Axelsson (tp), Ingolf Burkhardt (tp), Johannes Faber (tp), Reiner Winterschladen (tp), Joe Gallardo (tb), Wolfgang Ahlers (tb), Egon Christmann (tb), Lucas Schmid (btb), Fiete Felsch (as), Peter Bolte (as), Christof Lauer (ts), Lutz Büchner (ts), Thomas Zoller (bari), Stephan Diez (g), Lucas Lindholm (b), Thomas Alkier (dr) Guest soloist: Gary Burton (vb)

**(b)** Track #10 - February 1, 2002:

Dirk Lentschat (tp), Ingolf Burkhardt (tp), Claus Stötter (tp), Reiner Winterschladen (tp), Joe Gallardo (tb), Dan Gottshall (tb), Stefan Lottermann (tb), Ingo Lahme (btb), Fiete Felsch (as), Peter Bolte (as), Christof Lauer (ts), Lutz Büchner (ts), Frank Delle (bari), Simon Nabatov (p), Ed Harris (g), Lucas Lindholm (b), Ian Thomas (dr)

**(c)** Tracks #3, 4, 5, 6 - February 18-21, 2002:

Lennart Axelsson (tp), Ingolf Burkhardt (tp), Claus Stötter (tp), Reiner Winterschladen (tp), Joe Gallardo (tb), Dan Gottshall (tb), Stefan Lottermann (tb), Ingo Lahme (btb), Fiete Felsch (as), Peter Bolte (as), Christof Lauer (ts), Lutz Büchner (ts), Frank Delle (bari), Vladyslav Sendeci (p), Stephan Diez (g), Lucas Lindholm (b), Mark Mondesir (dr), Marcio Doctor (perc)

**(d)** Tracks #7, 8, 9 - September 3, 2002:

Rüdiger Baldauf (tp), Ingolf Burkhardt (tp), Claus Stötter (tp), Reiner Winterschladen (tp), Jon Welch (tb), Joe Gallardo (tb), Dan Gottshall (tb), Ingo Lahme (btb), Fiete Felsch (as), Peter Bolte (as), Christof Lauer (ts), Lutz Büchner (ts), Frank Delle (bari), Lucas Lindholm (b), Vladyslav Sendeci (p), Stephan Diez (g), Ian Thomas (dr), Marcio Doctor (perc)

**(e)** Track #2 - December 15, 2003:

Lennart Axelsson (tp), Ingolf Burkhardt (tp), Claus Stötter (tp), Reiner Winterschladen (tp), Joe Gallardo (tb), Dan Gottshall (tb), Stefan Lottermann (tb), Ingo Lahme (btb), Fiete Felsch (as), Peter Bolte (as), Christof Lauer (ts), Lutz Büchner (ts), Frank Delle (bari), Lucas Lindholm (b), Vladyslav Sendeci (p), Stephan Diez (g), Martin France (dr), Marcio Doctor (perc)

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