

# Michelle Pollace Biography

Michelle Pollace's musical journey is a testament to her passion, versatility, and relentless pursuit of innovation. Teaching herself to read music on a handed-down Estey organ at age 9, she also began playing by ear. In high school she studied under jazz pianist Martan Mann and became influenced by legends like McCoy Tyner, Chick Corea, and Herbie Hancock. High school and college years were a whirlwind of musical exploration; she learned bass and guitar, joined garage bands, and even played in and recorded with Lou Harrison's renown Gamelan Si Betty (Indonesian orchestral ensemble). Her post-college career spanned Latin rock, blues rock, progressive rock, grunge, and singer-songwriter projects—even musical theater.

But Latin and Brazilian music always held a special allure, and through Latin-rock connections, Michelle met Abel Zarate, Malo guitarist and cowriter of the hit "Suavecito." Together they became the Zarate Pollace Project (ZPP) and produced the Latin-infused *Soul Redemption* album in 2005. This experience, which included working with top-tier musicians and studios, laid the groundwork for her solo career.

Michelle's solo debut, *New Beginning*, came out in 2013 and showcased her growth as composer and band leader. Despite critical acclaim and airplay success, her music career took a backseat as she focused on homeschooling her son, who was facing educational challenges. Despite limited musical activities at this time, she released the EP *A Latin Jazz Christmas* in 2017 and continued performing locally.

The shutdown of the pandemic left a gigless void, during which Michelle evaluated next steps. She decided to explore a discipline that long intrigued her: electronic music production. This period of intense learning and experimentation culminated in her latest EP, *I'm Just Happy to Be Here*, blending jazz, Latin and Brazilian rhythms, and electronic elements with influence from Bonobo, Jazzanova, and similar artists.

Michelle draws on recent personal experiences on this four-song release, such as the pandemic-era family outing to a favorite beach that inspired the EP's first single, "New Brighton." Another song, "Alone Together," contemplates our collective experience of going through the pandemic; it is also the result of Michelle being awarded a composer's grant from San Jose Jazz in 2023. Coming as complete surprise, the grant made Michelle realize that, despite her previous release of original music being nearly ten years ago, people in her community still valued her artistic contributions. The grant, combined with her son's newfound educational independence and success, gave Michelle resolve to finish and release some of her electronic pieces; the result is *I'm Just Happy to Be Here*, a collection of work that veers into future jazz, broken beat, and house territory. Given her backstory, Michelle's choice of EP title is clear.

Looking ahead, Michelle's goal is to continue creating and sharing music that resonates with both long-time listeners and new audiences. As she navigates this new chapter, she remains grounded in her rich musical heritage and driven by a passion for exploration and innovation.

Beyond music, she is a black belt in tae kwon do, an avid gardener, and able to solve a Rubik's cube, a skill taught by her son. Her varied interests reflect her enthusiasm for lifelong learning and an unwavering dedication to personal growth and creativity.

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