

The Al McKay Story

World famous guitarist and multi-platinum songwriter. Veteran session player, sideman and in-demand instrumentalist, both on stage and in the studio. A bandleader of international renown.

Over the course of the extraordinary career that is now entering its fifth decade of uninterrupted music-making, Al McKay has established a reputation as one of the most innovative and influential artists of his generation. A musician's musician, McKay's professional portfolio puts him front and center in many of the pivotal moments on modern music history and even if his name doesn't immediately ring a bell, there's no mistaking his unique and distinctive sound. Simply put, Al McKay is the real McCoy.

Now, Al McKay steps to center stage and into the musical spotlight with Al Dente, his first ever solo offering and solid evidence that this remarkable artist is creating some of the most vital, engaging and purely entertaining music of his career. Featuring a sparkling selection of hits from Al's long-running tenure as a member of the legendary Earth, Wind & Fire, including sterling renditions of such chart toppers as "Getaway," "Evil," "Love's Holiday," "Singasong," "Fantasy" and "September," Al Dente also includes a sampling of some of the artist's newest original tracks. On selections such as "Make It Happen," "It's Only Love," "Who Am I?," "My Heart Is Wide Open," "You Owe It All To Love" and "Do You Want It?" Al Dente is a showcase for the potent and persuasive songwriting skills of this multi-talented individual. Add to that the consummate craftsmanship and passionate performances of Al's all-star backing band and the result is an auspicious solo debut from one of the truly legendary names in contemporary music.

That legend began early for Al McKay. Born in the musical melting pot of New Orleans, both his mother and father were accomplished artists in their own right. But it was his uncle who introduced the five year-old Al to his first guitar and, after seeing Elvis Presley in Loving You, the fledgling musician's career path was set. With influences that ranged from Freddie King to Duane Eddy; The Everly Brothers to James

Through his connections on the burgeoning L.A. music scene, Al was subsequently introduced to the late great Sammy Davis Jr. who also hired him on the spot after hearing him work out on the latest development for guitar special effects, the wah-wah pedal. Constant touring, Las Vegas engagements and the occasional studio session, all as part of Sammy's backing band further honed Al's impressive abilities and when he finally moved on, there was no shortage of offers to keep the hot young guitarist on the A-list. Everyone from Andy Williams and Pearl Bailey to The Sylvers and Isaac Hayes made use of his distinctive sound.

It was then that Al was approached by a freshly minted band out of Chicago with a whole new music approach, who called themselves Earth, Wind & Fire. The rest, as they say, is history. From 1973, when he first joined the group, up until 1981 when he left to take a well-deserved break from the hectic world of major musical stardom, Al was responsible not only for a lion's share of the group's instantly recognizable sound, but was also writer and co-writer on some of their most enduring hits. Along with founder Maurice White, McKay penned such EW&F perennials as "September" and "SingaSong," which both became chart-topping signature tracks for the group. But it wasn't only within the band that Al's songwriting shined. As co-writer of The Emotion's smash hit "The Best Of My Love," he contributed one of the most enduring songs of the era, raising the bar on the art of pop craftsmanship in the process.

After eight years, seven albums, uncounted thousands of tour miles and a virtually unequalled stack of hit records, Al left Earth, Wind & Fire. While he continued to keep his hand in music through various production and writing projects, his primary focus was on raising his young son. As a single parent, Al turned aside from the demands of a busy career and for several years kept a low profile to put the emphasis on his personal life.

When he reemerged, in the early 90's, it was with a different direction and whole new energy. Since live performing and having the chance to connect directly with his audience has always been the single most satisfying

Brown, Al took his talent and ambition with him when he relocated to Southern California to live with an aunt after his mother took ill.

Continuing to polish his guitar chops, Al landed his first professional gig at the tender age of eighteen, not long after his high school graduation. A mutual friend had invited him to meet R&B kingpin Ike Turner, and when Al pointed out a mistake Turner was making while rehearsing a version of The Temptations' "Losing You," with his band, he was offered a job on the spot as guitarist for the Ike & Tina Turner Revue.

A musical education second to none, Al's tenure with the Revue lasted a year and a half, after which time he returned to his L.A. home base where he immediately garnered a reputation as a versatile session player, working on stage and in the studio with an diverse array of jazz, pop and R&B artists and eventually landing a short stint with funk progenitors, Charles Wright and the Watts 103rd St. Band.

aspect of Al's multi-faceted career, it's no surprise that his comeback would entail gathering the best and brightest musicians to create an unparalleled concert experience. As the front man for what became variously known as The L.A. All-Stars and the Al McKay All-Stars, he fashioned a large and revolving cast of supporting players to fully explore new musical territory, even as they helped to celebrate Al's incredible history with performance highlights from his years with Earth, Wind & Fire.

A major attraction throughout Asia, The All-Stars have become a premier international concert draw among diehard fans of Al and his music, as well as a whole new generation only now discovering this singularly talented artist with a sound that belongs to no one else.

It's that sound that's front and center on Al Dente, the long-awaited new solo album from Al McKay. On Al Dente, Al McKay is coming all the way back to where he belongs. On top.

