

Kai Eckhardt



## Biography

Kai Eckhardt is a Liberian/ German bassist and composer best known for his contribution to the John McLaughlin Trio in the 80's, Billy Cobham's International Quartet in the 90's and the band Garaj Mahal in the new Millennium. Kai has also recorded and performed with Trilok Gurtu, Stanley Clarke, Wayne Shorter, Patrice Rushen, Dewey Redman, George Brooks, Donald Byrd, Bela Fleck, Maria Joao, Dino Saluzzi, Sertab Erener, Palle Mikkelborg, Victor Wooten, Alphonse Mouzon, Aziza Mustafa Zadeh, Michael Franti, Larry Coryell, Warren Hill, Al Di Meola, Zakir Hussain, Steve Smith, John Scofield, Bill Frisell, Mike Stern and George Benson.

Kai Eckhardt has performed at distinguished venues around the globe such as the Royal Festival Hall in London, the Philharmonic in Munich and the Esplanade in Singapore. Festival engagements include Montreal Jazz Festival, the North Sea Jazz Festival in the Hague, WOMAD World Music Festival in Spain, Summer of Love at Golden Gate Park and Glastonbury in the U.K. In recent years, Kai began to distinguish himself as a first call bassist and composer for artistic collaborations with musicians from the Eastern regions such as Dubai, Qatar, Oman, India, China, Turkey, Bulgaria and the former Soviet Union.

Besides being an active performer, Kai is a passionate and experienced music educator who teaches privately and online while being a faculty member of the Jazz School Institute in Berkeley, CA. He has taught clinics and master classes world-wide with engagements ranging from Berklee School of Music in Boston, the Bass Collective in New York, the Musician's Institute in Hollywood, the Anton Bruckner Conservatory in Austria, Amsterdam Conservatory in the Netherlands and Victor Wooten's Bass and Nature camp.

### **Career highlights 2009/2010:**

- 120 shows performed with Garaj Mahal across the US and Canada.
- European Tour with keyboard diva RAD (formerly Prince)
- Japanese Tour with Alex Machacek and Marco Minnemann
- Featured performer at the symposium "Bioneers conference" in San Rafael
- Concerts in Qatar, Oman and the United Arab Emirates
- Performance with Trilok Gurtu and Theodossi Spassov in Bulgaria
- Akbank Jazz Festival Istanbul
- Appearance at the Asian Games in Guangzhou,
- Honoree at the 2010 Liberian Awards

### **Career highlights of 2011:**

- National TV broadcast in Istanbul/ Turkey with the Turkophony Allstars.
- Featured performer at Java Jazz Festival in Indonesia with "Eastmania".
- Tour of Germany with Garaj Mahal
- Featured performer and instructor at "Jazzaar" Switzerland
- Concert and recording with Turkish fretless guitarist Cenk Erdogan
- Live show at the Indian embassy in Muscat with 'Naad' from Calcutta
- Featured artist at the Rocky Mountain bass bash in Boulder Colorado
- Featured artist and instructor at Victor Wooten's Bass and Nature camp
- Live shows with Ray Manzarek and Michael Mcclure
- Live shows with Linda Tillery, George Brooks and Barbara Higbie
- The official launching of the Kai Eckhardt Band.

## Life story

Kai Eckhardt was born the year of 1961 in Mainz/ Germany, raised by his German mother in the town of Bingen until the age of six. In joining his African father, Kai moved to Monrovia, Liberia where he spent four years attending West African middle school. In 1970 he returned to Germany into foster care. During this period Kai developed a talent in competitive sports, excelling in track, gymnastics and diving. In 1972, Kai won the title "junior district champion" in the one-and three meter board diving competitions. After a series of injuries Kai turned away from competitive sports and discovered music. A bass guitar was given to him by a school mate and he began practicing seriously. Besides music, academics were an important factor in Kai's life. Kai received his German high school diploma in 1980, finishing with the second best grade point average of his class. In 1982 Kai conscientiously objected to the German army. After being interviewed at a military court, he was released from the draft. In substitution for the army training, Kai became a nurse's assistant at the Children's Neurological Institute in Mainz/ Germany, caring for severely handicapped inpatients. Throughout his service Kai remained faithful to his instrument, the bass guitar. After receiving a scholarship to Berklee College of Music, Kai left Germany to attend music college in Boston, MA in the year of 1983. After graduating with honors in 1987, Kai began his active touring life as a bassist, clinician and composer. He has been on the road ever since, averaging between 100 and 120 shows a year. Besides music, Kai has developed a strong interest in social justice and environmental issues. In the past he has helped put together benefits for the homeless, rallies for green collar jobs and poetry projects featuring socially conscious messages. He has collaborated on projects with activists Julia Butterfly Hill, Deb Delman, Alli Chagi-Starr, Van Jones and Majora Carter among others. For the first time as leader of his own group, Kai is developing a concept bringing together the worlds of music, environmental awareness and activism. Stay tuned!

Today Kai Eckhardt resides in Berkeley, California, married with two children. His Regina wife is from Sao Paulo, Brazil and his children Danilo (15) and Naima (11) are growing up tri-lingual, speaking Portuguese, English and German. Kai and Regina have just released their first album together which is a duet of poetry and music.