



Pianist/Composer MICHAEL RAGONESE
Proudly Presents His Third Album
CHASING CALM

A musical reflection on an ongoing personal journey in search of stillness and peace . . .
Available worldwide on October 10, 2025

“There are some stellar younger jazz pianists working today, such as Emmet Cohen, Kenny Banks Jr, and Paul Cornish, and that if you are going to play in this league, you must have a style which sets you apart from the rest. Michael Ragonese falls into that category as evidenced by his latest release ‘Stracci’ . . . a propulsive and unpredictable trio.” – **Pierre Giroux, AllAboutJazz**

“A fresh, transcendent level of expression – high energy, hard swinging and off the charts imaginative improvisational trad jazz. To Ragonese and his trio, for this grand excursion, we exclaim an Italian word that everyone will recognize: Bravo!” – **Jonathan Widran, JW Vibe**

Los Angeles born and raised (by a musician mother, a singer, guitarist and composer), jazz pianist and composer **Michael Ragonese** has become one of the most in-demand voices of his generation, performing, touring, and recording with icons such as Barbra Streisand, Walter Smith III, Ben Wendel, Mark Turner, Dayna Stephens, Charnett Moffett, Bennie Maupin, Dave Binney, Engelbert Humperdinck and many others. Combined with two acclaimed albums as a leader, and more than 25 years immersed in music, Ragonese has established a distinct sound forged from three sources, jazz, classical, and his Italian heritage.

Ragonese’s debut album, a quintet recording titled *Day To Day*, is ambitiously about life itself, from the mundane to the extraordinary, and from the melancholy moments to times of jubilation. His sophomore album, *Stracci* (Italian for “rags,” Ragonese’s long-time nickname), honors his Italian heritage and classical piano roots. **Now with this captivating new recording, *Chasing Calm*** (recorded in January 2025), **Ragonese hits it out of the park again, with a set of seven lovely, compelling original compositions, and a trio take on the standard, “Alone Together,”** which they miraculously modernize and reinvent, despite the tune having been recorded by the likes of Artie Shaw, Miles Davis, Tony Bennett, Dizzy Gillespie and numerous other luminaries.

The music on *Chasing Calm*, featuring his powerful, agile quartet, featuring **Walter Smith III** on saxophones, **Luca Alemanno** on bass, and **JK Kim** on drums. reflects the theme of perpetually searching for stillness and peace. Ragonese elaborated, “this is probably the most personal record I’ve made so far. It reflects how my brain tends to work – always moving, always overthinking, but trying to

stay grounded and focused. However, it's not really about achieving peace, but about the search for it, and striving to make music that honestly reflects that feeling. The music sits in that space between tension and release, between complex rhythms and simple, clear melodies."

Ragonese began exploring and incorporating classical textures in a more conscious, intentional way on *Stracci*. *Chasing Calm* takes that idea even further. "A lot of the harmonic ideas come from my years studying classical music – it's something that's really ingrained in me, especially through my Italian and European background. That classical influence gets woven together with modern jazz elements: improvisation, interplay, shifting grooves – all of it kind of blends into this balance of structure and freedom," explained Ragonese.

The lineup on *Chasing Calm* is quite special. Walter Smith III is back on saxophone (also featured on the pianist's debut album), JK Kim is featured on drums ("he's new to my group, and brings a really fresh, responsive energy to the music," said Ragonese), and Luca Alemanno on bass ("someone I've played with for years, and who always brings depth and sensitivity to every note," commented Ragonese).

In addition to his active performing and touring career, Ragonese founded the Rags School of Music in 2021. In 2023, he collaborated with Alex Hahn to launch the "Modern Artist" program, designed to help high school students explore their artistry and prepare for careers in music. He also regularly travels to universities across the U.S., presenting masterclasses and clinics to aspiring musicians. Most recently, he partnered with Libretto Jazz Club in California – named one of the top jazz clubs in the country by *DownBeat Magazine* – to co-found the Libretto Conservatory, a program designed to support college students preparing for professional careers in music. Alumni from programs led by Ragonese have gone on to attend top institutions such as the Manhattan School of Music, Berklee College of Music, USC, NYU, and other leading conservatories across the country, and students have received honors and awards from *DownBeat Magazine* and various national jazz festivals.

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