

## I'LL STRING ALONG WITH YOU: SOME GUITAR PLAYERS

by Ian Muldoon\*

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Until quite recently I thought a Stratocaster was an aircraft flown by Pan American World Airways. At the same time such ignorance is put in stark relief by male baby boomers, who seem to have all played or been schooled in, or be authorities on, the guitar and guitar players. Maybe it was the emergence of rock and roll and the teenager in the 1950s and 1960s that inflamed the interest in this instrument, or for Generation X, Chuck Berry's *Johnny Be Goode* as performed by Michael J Fox (voice by Mark Campbell) in the film *Back to the Future*.

Whatever the case, there does seem to be hundreds of millions of guitar "players" on planet earth with each one having very strong opinions about the guitar, and guitar music. Hence my caveat that I'm no player, and no expert, but have had some listening experiences involving guitar players which have been, shall I say, "astonishing", "exciting" and "galvanising"?

My impression, perhaps misplaced, was that those players were artists who happened to choose the guitar to express themselves; that they were musicians who may have been as equally brilliant on some other instrument. Firstly, live performances.

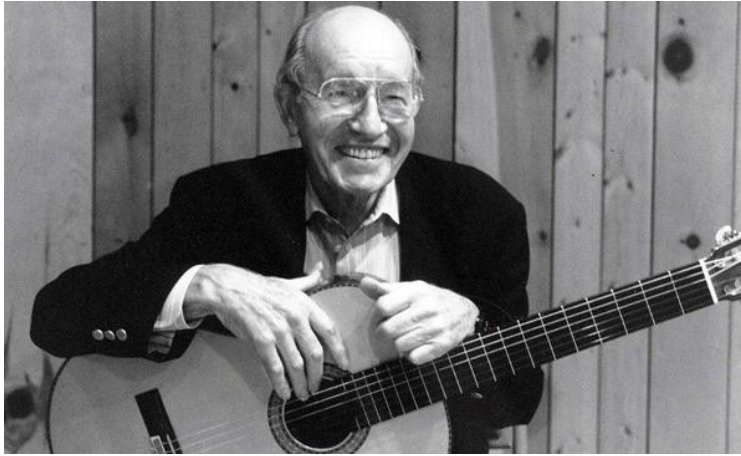


*Chuck Berry, writer of Johnny Be Goode, performing at the Newport Jazz Festival...*

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*\*Ian Muldoon has been a jazz enthusiast since, as a child, he heard his aunt play Fats Waller and Duke Ellington on the household piano. At around ten years of age he was given a windup record player and a modest supply of steel needles, on which he played his record collection, consisting of two 78s, one featuring Dizzy Gillespie and the other Fats Waller. He listened to Eric Child's ABC radio programs in the 1950s and has been a prolific jazz records collector wherever he lived in the world, including Sydney, Kowloon, Winnipeg, New York and Melbourne. He has been a jazz broadcaster on a number of community radio stations in various cities, and now lives in Coffs Harbour.*

I've heard Charlie Byrd live and two older modern masters: John Scofield, in Sydney circa 1981 with Terumasa Hino (Scofield's first recording was with Hino) and Adam Nussbaum just prior to Scofield joining Miles Davis, and Pat Metheny at State Theatre, Sydney 2020.



*The author has heard three American guitarists live in Australia: Charlie Byrd (above), John Scofield (below) and Pat Metheny (far below)...*



As good as Scofield and Metheny were in a concert setting, the most astonishing, exciting and galvanising musical experiences in live performance by guitar players that I've experienced was by James Muller at the Side On Cafe to an audience of nine and by Julian Lage at Bennetts Lane to a packed house. Maybe it's the case that smaller intimate venues are the best for both the player and the listener when it comes to jazz.



*Australian James Muller (above) and American Julian Lage (below): they provided the most astonishing, exciting and galvanising musical experiences in live performance...*



The difference between the two players was instructive. Muller had such concentration and focus on the music that evening in a little venue off Parramatta Road that whether or not we, the audience, were there seemed to be of no concern to him. It was as if Muller was saying: "Me and my guitar are not here to make music. I am my music. Listen if you will but that's not something I'm concerned with."

It was not the instrument or the listeners, it was the music and his submission to it, his immersion into the music if you will, and the disappearance of the venue and us and the world. All that was left was music. And he played with such stunning concentration, rhythmic drive and expressive power it was breathtaking. I'm embarrassed to report that I can't recall his musical accomplices to this event.

On the evening of 2nd June 2015, Julian Lage was playing with Harish Raghavan (on bass) and Eric Harland (drums) as part of the Melbourne International Jazz Festival to a packed Bennetts Lane and his demeanour was one where the audience was invited to share his surprise and joy at having this amazing musical gift and skill on his chosen instrument. Lage traversed a range of styles in his playing, acknowledging one presumes the wide range of influences within the American landscape and culture that have brought guitar music and guitar jazz in particular to this point. Bluegrass music was suggested at one point in his playing. He was passionate in his love for the music and it showed in a dazzling and accomplished display which left us all in an exhilarated and grateful emotional space.

The electric guitar is a modern beast that has evolved over thousands of years from its beginnings in the Middle East as the four-string Tanbur, then the Oud, the Lute and finally in 1890 the modern classical guitar which was created by Spain's guitarist Antonio Torres Jurado which is now strung with nylon. The six string "folk" guitars differ in that a plectrum is used instead of fingers; they have steel strings with a narrower finger board and neck. They are intended as simple self-accompanied whilst singing such as the great Big Bill Broonzy who started on violin, then took up the acoustic guitar, switched to electric, and returned to acoustic in his final years.



*Spanish guitarist Antonio Torres Jurado: he created the modern classical guitar...*  
*PHOTO COURTESY PINTEREST*

Another style guitar is the Arched Top or cello-style guitar which has a convex top and bottom, f shaped sound holes and brown and orange sun-burst finish. The Gibson company made it, and the similar Mandolin, in 1924 and it became the regular plectrum jazz guitar adopted by Eddie Lang (cf Okeh, *Tram, Bix and Eddie*, playing *Wild Cat*, 13/5/27, Bix Beiderbecke, cornet and piano, Frankie Trumbauer, C-Melody sax, and Eddie Lang, guitar). Electrical pick-ups were used with this guitar from 1935.



*Eddie Lang: he adopted the regular plectrum jazz guitar... PHOTO COURTESY PINTEREST*

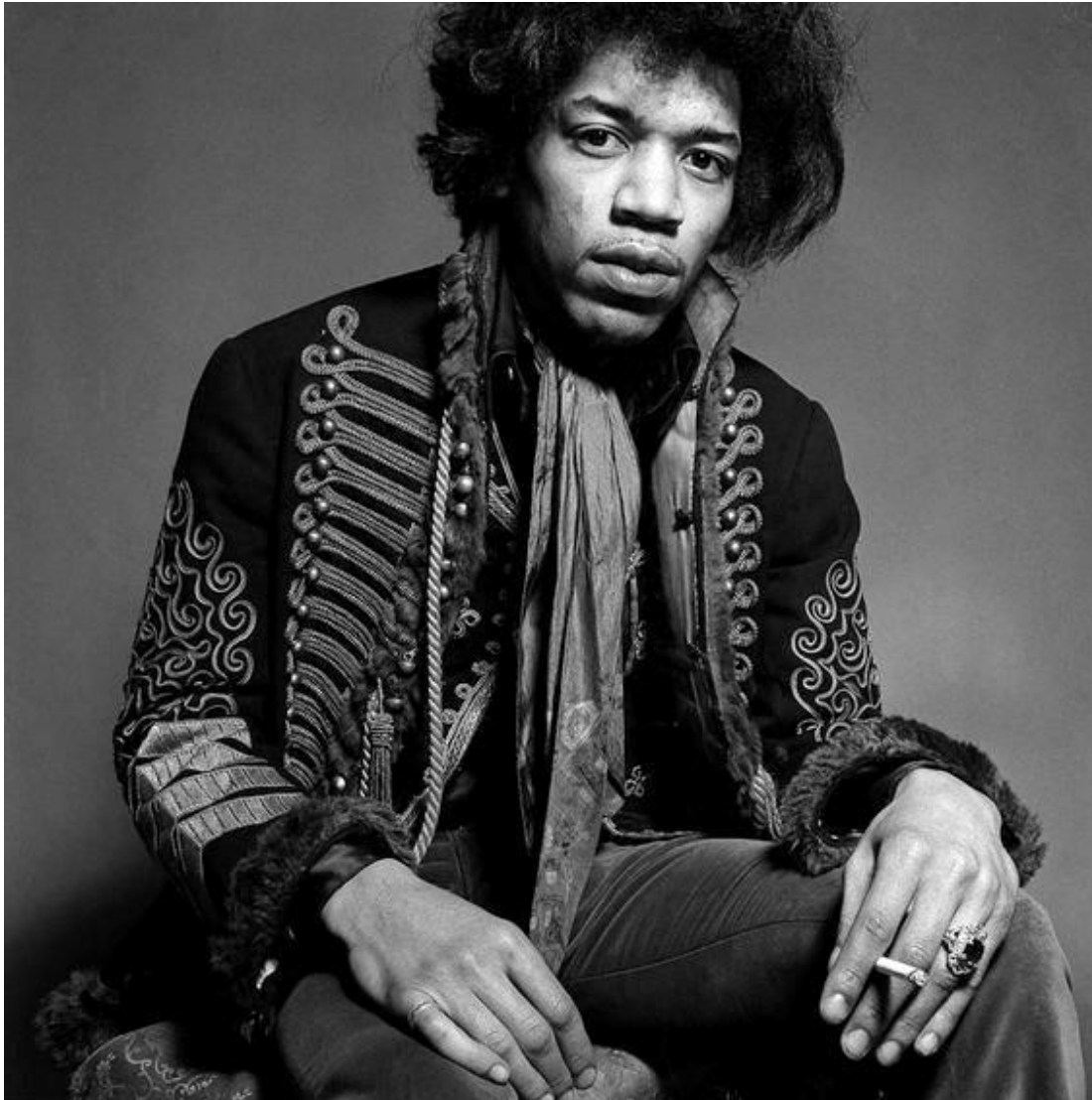
Hawaiian or "steel" guitars are hybrids of guitar and zither played across the knees. The left hand holds the metal bar (steel) which is slid along the strings with glissando and wide vibrato effects. "Steel" guitars are guitars that don't look like guitars. Some folk and blues players insert a finger into a bottleneck or steel tube for similar effects from an ordinary steel-strung guitar. Pedal steel guitars are mounted on a stand and operated through a system of mechanical controls which select different chords from the strings when unstopped. Hawaiian guitars may also be fully electric with pick-ups etc.

Electric guitars may be classified into three: solid-bodied, hollow-bodied and semi-solid, and bass. The first emerged in the early 1930s with its steel strings being sounded using a plectrum with the vibrating strings sensed by magnets (pick-ups). The change in string frequencies varies the current induced in the coil and the voltage output leading further away to the amplifier and loudspeakers through



volume and tone controls closer to the player. Foot pedal operated fuzz and wah wah effects are also possible.

Was Jimi Hendrix the most influential, in a good sense and in a bad sense, guitar player of all time? His musical abilities and innovations may have led to advances in music on the one hand, and in adaptation and proliferation by amateurs who mistook noise and destruction (of speakers or the instrument) for music, on the other.



*Jimi Hendrix: was he the most influential, in a good sense and in a bad sense, guitar player of all time?... PHOTO COURTESY PINTEREST*

The hollow bodied guitar has a true sound box made in various shapes with pick-ups. This was the guitar introduced by Les Paul in the 1930s and widely used in jazz (cf, Mercury, *Bugle Call Rag*, Willie Smith and his Orchestra: Billy May, trumpet, arranger; Murray McEachern, trombone; Willie Smith, alto saxophone; Arnold Ross, piano; Les Paul, guitar; Ed Mihelich, bass; and Nick Fatool, drums; Los Angeles, 2/5/45).



*The hollow bodied guitar was introduced by Les Paul (above) in the 1930s...*

The glory of the music we call jazz, is, at least in great part, is its individualism. Think of pianists: Art Tatum and Ahmad Jamal, Bill Evans and Cecil Taylor, Bobo Stenson and Marilyn Crispell and that variety in which they approach that most amazing of instruments. Or consider singers and the range of differences in sound beginning with Bessie Smith, Louis Armstrong, Billie Holiday, Lee Wiley, Ivie Anderson, Fats Waller, Nat King Cole, Sarah Vaughan, Ella Fitzgerald, Billy Eckstine, Chet Baker, Eddie Jefferson, Mel Tormé, Anita O'Day, Betty Carter, Jeanne Lee, Cassandra Wilson, Patricia Barber, and on to Diana Krall, Karrin Allyson, and Kurt Elling is to wonder at their differences.

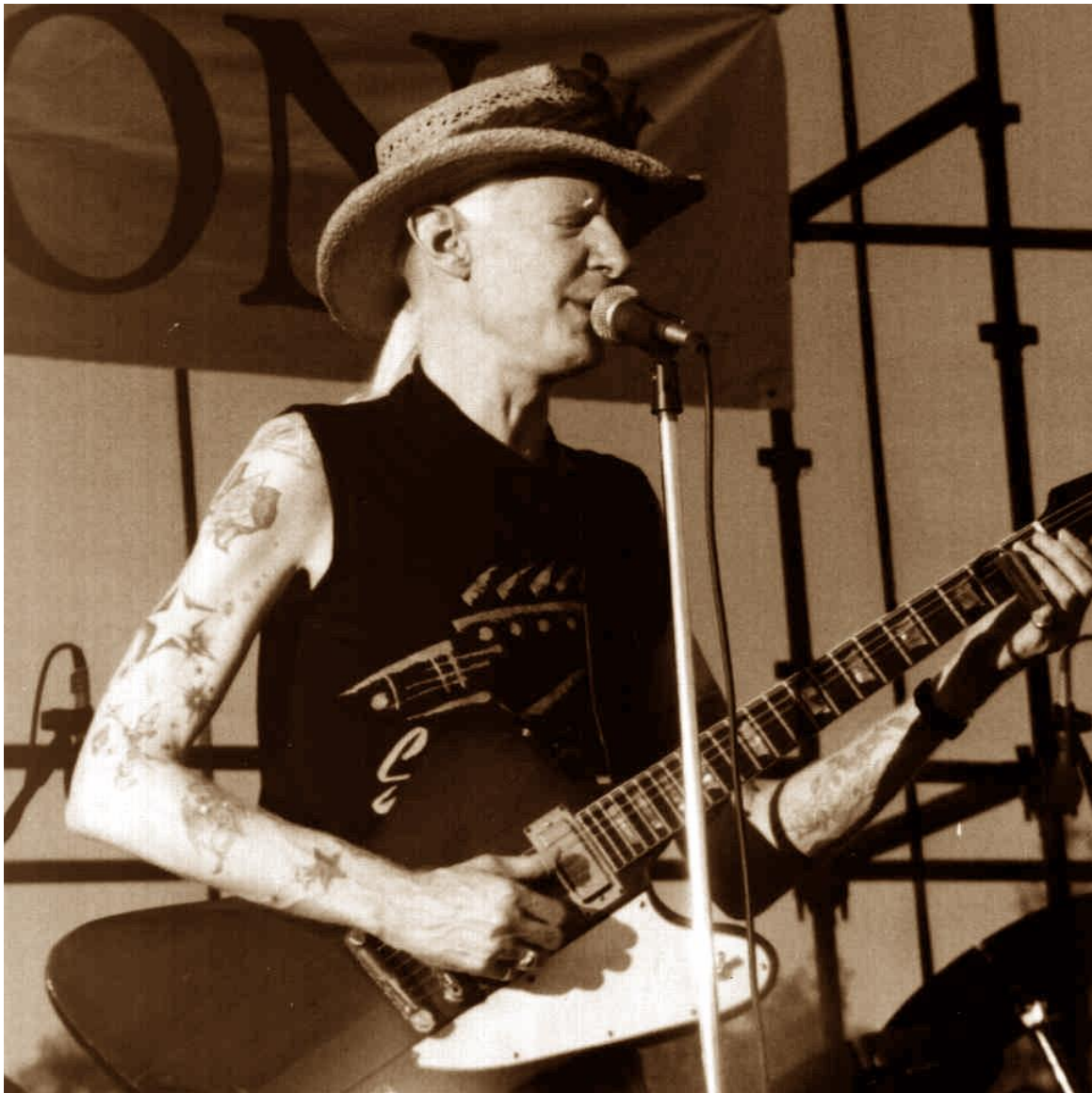
And so it is with the listener. I can listen to Ivie Anderson at any time but find Cassandra Wilson sometimes brilliant, sometimes mannered and irritating. More than most music, jazz appreciation is not a horse race. Harry Carney's 1956 Newport Jazz Festival may have been exciting to witness but it's musically quite boring when experienced on record. I'm reminded of the favourite solo by great Australian reed player John McCarthy as told to this writer - memory here is not wholly reliable - but it was a 25 second solo clarinet break on a tune written by Lionel Hampton and Sonny Burke called *Midnight Sun* performed whilst a member of the Bob Barnard Jazz Band and released on Swaggie records.

As to the so-called delights of so-called rock and roll my prejudices are articulated effectively in 1969 by Martin Williams writing about Johnny Winter:

*Blues-rock guitarist Johnny Winter has two current releases... "The Progressive Blues Experiment" and "Johnny Winter". Winter seems ready to out-twang everybody with his guitar and eager to out-muddy everybody with his rather weak and somewhat misused voice. He seems to me an embarrassingly sincere,*

*derivative performer who will probably have all the success that Columbia Records expects of him. His press release makes much of the fact that he is an albino (otherwise I would make nothing of it).*

*Winter's work couldn't stand much comparison with that of literally hundreds of black blues guitarists. Take Albert Collins out of Texas on "Love Can Be Found Anywhere (Even in a Guitar)." Collins, leading a little organ-tenor sax-brass blues band, carries his musical idiom as naturally as his personality and his gait: he is a pleasure to listen to and, I would imagine, a joy to dance to. He is a man, playing a man's music. Winter, by contrast, is a boy sheep in wolf's clothing- Howling Wolf's clothing.\**



*Johnny Winter in 1990: a boy sheep in wolf's clothing- Howling Wolf's clothing...*

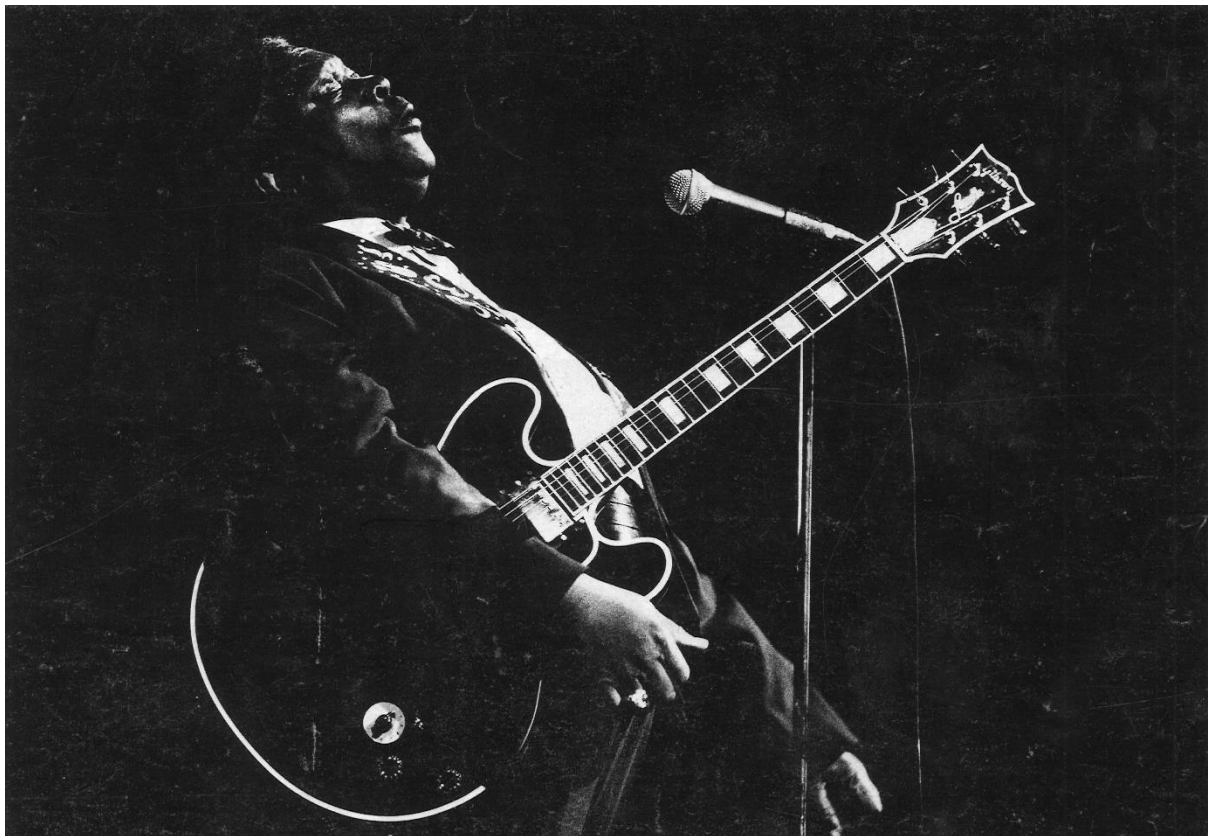
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*\*Jazz Masters in Transition, 1957-1959, Martin Williams, Da Capo Press, 1970, p 288.*



In this regard we note that *Rolling Stone* magazine places Winter as one of the greatest 100 guitar players of all time. Clearly rock and roll and its enthusiasts exist to me and others on a parallel musical universe. If I think the Beatles are the most overrated group of musicians in the history of Western music, is it because I find their rhythm simple and uninspiring? The Orioles, the Crew Cuts, the Ink Spots, the Chords, and the Penguins for example are just some who are musically more appealing to me than The Beatles.

One of the most generous acknowledgements about the British rock scene was made by B B King who thanked the likes of Mick Jagger for making the blues popular: it meant B B King and his cohort got more work. Electric guitars evolved into the likes of the Fender J Bass as used by the influential Yellow Magic Orchestra of 1979 and its manufacturing of electronic sounds which some allude to as music, but which its practitioners like because it saves decades of practise on, for example, the piano. Any music they create, is accidental, to quote Cecil Taylor.



*B B King: he thanked the likes of Mick Jagger for making the blues popular; it meant he and his cohort got more work... PHOTO CREDIT DAVID ANDERSON COURTESY AUSTRALIAN JAZZ AND BLUES*

So the second major distinguishing feature of jazz is rhythm in all its fascinating glory and power. Ted Gioia relates an instructive parable:

*“A young scholar decides to devote his life to the study of African rhythms. He moves to Ghana, where he learns under the tutelage of more than a dozen master drummers. He eventually spends a full decade immersed in the musical traditions and practices of the region, but he supplements these teachings with other sources*

*of learning, whether in the halls of Yale University or in the traditional communities of Haiti and other destinations of the African diaspora. With each passing year, his expertise grows, and eventually he becomes much more than a scholar. He is a full-fledged practitioner who now carries on the tradition himself.*

*But when our expert returns to the United States, he finds it difficult to convey the essence of these practices to outsiders. He tries to teach students how to play the Dagomba drums, and they ask him the simplest question of all: 'How do I know when to enter? When do I start playing?' In Western music, there is an easy answer. The conductor waves a baton, or a bandleader counts off the beat, or the musical score provides a cue. But entering into the ongoing flow of a West African musical performance is a much different matter.*

*'I find that if I tried to demonstrate how to enter with one drum by counting from another drum's beat, I could not do it,' our scholar admits in frustration. NO amount of analysis or rule-making solves his problem. Finally, he realises that the obstacle can be overcome only by moving away from analysis and entering into the realm of feeling. 'The only way to begin correctly,' he eventually discovers, 'was to listen a moment then start right in'.\**



*Ted Gioia: an instructive parable...*

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*\* Ted Gioia, How To Listen To Jazz (Basic Books, New York, 2016, pp1/2)*

Rhythm then, defies academic analysis and is felt. It is realised through careful if not concentrated listening. The African musical traditions from which jazz emerged were those that were community based, which is to say, all members of the community participated and rhythm and drums were integral to *life*: communication, celebration, entertainment. Thus the audience member and the player were joined together.

So when a modern jazz musician like Julien Wilson encourages his audience to participate in the making of his music, clapping, yelling, and so on, he is then endorsing and championing the deepest traditions of the music he plays. The *effect* of rhythm on the listener is to draw the listener in: it's the beating heart of the experience if you will.



*Julien Wilson: when he encourages his audience to participate in the making of his music, clapping, yelling, and so on, he is endorsing and championing the deepest traditions of the music he plays... PHOTO CREDIT GEORGE KRUPINSKI*

Ted Gioia relates how he spent 10,000 hours at the piano and made all the mistakes of the novice jazz player. It was only when he was first playing with Stan Getz that he realised Getz had uncommonly brilliant listening sensitivity when he remarked to Gioia: “I liked the way you slipped in that augmented chord,” when that musical moment had lasted only a second or two of the performance. Gioia's path to jazz thus continued with practise one day at a time, and listening.\*

To listen to strong rhythm in a modern context, consider *Domesticity* (Keller) arranged and composed by pianist Andrea Keller from her *Transients 11* (23/10/18), where she is accompanied by Flora Carbo, alto

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\* *Ted Gioia, How To Listen To Jazz, Basic Books, New York, 2016, p 7.*

saxophone; Julien Wilson, tenor saxophone; James Macaulay, trombone; and Sam Anning, double bass. Anning opens the proceedings and sets the up-tempo pulse and *all members get in the groove* - it's quite a moving romp with solid rhythmic cohesion which includes fine solos and beautiful harmony - the participants are great listeners all.

Although the great classic rhythm engines have a foundation in bass and drums, *Domesticity* is an example of powerful rhythm set by the bass alone then contributed to by participants sans drums. Because of its opening section by the bass and hints of Lennie Tristano by Keller in the piano solo, it's a reminder of the ability of Peter Ind to drive Lennie Tristano on his eponymous Atlantic album, and of Sonny Dallas (also Tristano-influenced) providing powerful support to Lee Konitz on the classic *Motion* albeit in the company of Elvin Jones.



*Andrea Keller: hints of Lennie Tristano in her piano solo... PHOTO CREDIT TOMAS POKORNY*

Rhythm is at the one time apparently simple, yet very difficult to create, and lifts music to another level altogether making emotional connections that transport the listener. The 38-minute version of solo alto saxophone by Lee Konitz on his album *Lone-Lee* playing *The Song is You* (Kern/Hammerstein) is fascinating and brilliant. But his creative efforts on *Motion* are elevated to classic status through rhythm. The guitar has played a central role in jazz rhythm.



My exposure to guitar music began with the instrument as a brilliant engine of rhythm for the Mills Brothers, for Fats Waller, for Bob Wills and his Texas Playboys, for Le Quintette du Hot Club du France, for Count Basie, for Nat King Cole, and for George Shearing.



*Ian Muldoon's exposure to guitar music began with the instrument as a brilliant engine of rhythm for groups like the Mills Brothers (above) and Count Basie (below, pictured with rhythm guitarist Freddie Green)...*





To know rhythm at its most potent is to never forget its power. Consider for example the contemporary Melbourne group The Furbelows, a trio of terrific female vocalists backed by double bass and two guitars. Their repertoire includes 1930s music (eg, *Undecided* by Charlie Shavers and Sid Robin, Onyx Club Boys 1938) not a million miles from say the Boswell Sisters and The Andrews Sisters, but also more recent interpretations of swing and popular music such as *Secret Love*. But the rhythm of the two guitars sounds metronomical and mechanical. In short, mastering rhythm is no cakewalk. The Mills Brothers were masters.



*Melbourne group The Furbelows, a trio of terrific female vocalists backed by double bass and two guitars.... PHOTO COURTESY FACEBOOK*

At an early age I was trying to make some sounds of the Mills Brothers on comb and tissue. Little did I know! John Mills Jr, the eldest Mills brother who began playing guitar at eight years of age, died the youngest at 25 in 1936. His guitar helped establish the rhythmic power of the group. Norman Brown who could boast of Freddie Green as mentor and referee, was selected by the three remaining brothers as John Jr's replacement in 1936. These unattributed comments about this group are apropos:

*There is no swing chorus as warm as theirs. It may sound like simple harmony, but on the contrary, the use of 6th and 9th chords and tension harmonies in a rustic but effective way makes their sounds modern and fresh, even now. In their early days, they used in place of a trumpet, an instrument called Kazoo, which had paraffin pasted across so it would make a buzzing sound when blown (like a toy), but one day, they forgot to bring it along. So, Harry blew into his hands to imitate, rather than the Kazoo, a trumpet. Talk about necessity being the mother of invention.*

One wonders when thinking about the feelings generated by music whether it is the case that the further music drifts away from strong rhythms the further we drift away from our deeper being, even from that joy that music can generate, that lust for life, the community of others.

When Thomas “Fats” Waller named his band Fats Waller and his Rhythm, he wasn’t kidding. Some other groups he led or co-led included Thomas Waller with Morris’ Hot Babies, Louisiana Sugar Babies, and Fats Waller and His Buddies, but Fats Waller and his Rhythm reflected the potent element of his appeal which had as its bedrock in a phenomenally powerful rhythm engine - his left hand, double bass, drums, and a legendary number of guitarists over the years: including Bobbie Leecan, Eddie Condon (banjo and guitar), Will Johnson (banjo), James Smith, Ceele Burke, John Smith, and Irving Ashby.

But the guitarist most associated with Waller’s rhythm engine was Al Casey (15/9/1915 – 11/9/ 2005). Casey started on violin, then ukulele and switched to guitar in 1930. He met Fats Waller in 1933 and a year later, at age 18, he joined Waller’s band.



*Al Casey: at age 18 he joined Fats Waller’s band...*

My very first recording I ever owned was a 78rpm bakelite 12” disc of *Blue Turning Grey Over You* (Waller-Razaf) with Herman Autrey, trumpet; Gene Cedric, clarinet, tenor sax; Fats Waller, piano; Al Casey, guitar; Charles Turner, bass; and Slick Jones, drums. Although the piano dominates proceedings in a range of expressive ways, Casey solos on guitar straight after the piano introduction, backed by the tenor and rhythm. The piece overall is one that gives voice to each of the instruments including a brief drum solo.

More typically, the Waller recording was one such as *The Joint is Jumping* (Razaf / Waller/ Johnson) 7/10/37 (same band as above) which emphasis Waller's vocal and piano, and entertainment value, and the musicians relegated to support. But on *Fat's Waller's Original E Flat Blues* (Waller) Waller, piano, vocal; John Hamilton, trumpet, Gene Sedric, clarinet, tenor sax; Casey, guitar; Cedric Wallace, bass; and Slick Jones, drums, 16/7/40) Casey gives a fine guitar solo straight after the introduction. He actually had a hit of his own composition and featured solo on *Buck Jumpin'* (same group) recorded in New York 1/10/41. He reprised this success on a Swingville album of that title in 1960 playing acoustic guitar. Casey remained with Waller more than a decade recording more than 200 sides. He briefly left in 1939 to be with Teddy Wilson's big band as rhythm guitarist.

Casey played with Louis Armstrong, Clarence Profit, Billie Holiday, Coleman Hawkins, Edmond Hall, Benny Carter, Art Tatum, Earl Hines, Frankie Newton, Teddy Wilson and King Curtis (rhythm and blues). He had such a powerful ability to swing that he had no need for complex solos and compared to other guitarists used a minimum of notes. He did play electric guitar after Charlie Christian and had a trio on 52nd street appearing opposite Dizzy Gillespie. He won Esquire Gold Awards in 1943 and 1945.

Bob Wills and His Texas Playboys was another brilliant swing entity. Wills' heritage included English, Irish, French and Cherokee stock. In his own words, after riding to Childress, Texas to see Bessie Smith perform he exclaimed "Bessie Smith is the greatest thing I ever heard." He later recorded a number of songs associated with Smith: *St Louis Blues* (Handy), *Alexander's Ragtime Band* (Berlin), *Down Hearted Blues* (Hunter/Austin) and *Gulf Coast Blues* (Williams).



*Bob Wills & his Texas Playboys in 1953... another brilliant swing entity...*

On his first recorded outing *Osage Stomp* (Wills), which was a reworking of *Ruckus Juice Shuffle* by the Night Hawks (Alabama Rascals) an African American band which included Big Bill Broonzy on violin, his brother Johnny Lee Wills played banjo

and 'Sleepy' Johnson played guitar. *Bluin' the Blues* (Ragas) originally recorded by the ODJB, was recorded by Wills and reprised three years later by Muggsy Spanier. *Basin Street Blues* (Williams), *Wang Wang Blues* (Busse/Mueller/Johnson/Wood) and *Trouble in Mind* (Jones) were also given treatment by the swinging Wills Band.

One of the leadership characteristics of Wills which was also one enjoyed by Eddie Condon was to verbally enthuse over proceedings including during recording sessions. Attending the studio for his first recording of his band with a new and bigger company, and enthusing about the music in his usual way - yeehawing, swing it baby, or yessiring - during the playing, the producer, at the end, asked him to try it again "without the vocal shenanigans". Bob looked at the producer. Pause. "All right boys, pack it up, we're out of here!"



*Bob Wills: "All right boys, pack it up, we're out of here..."*

Luckily for the producer, he apologised and said, to his great good material fortune: "Have it your way Bob. Next number."

Some of the guitar/banjo players who worked with Bob Wills include: (1935/6/7/8/9/40/41 *passim*) Derwood Brown; Sleepy Johnson, guitar and tenor guitar; Willim Leon McAuliffe, electrical steel guitar and electric guitar; Johnny Lee Wills, tenor banjo; Herman Arnspiger, guitar; (1938) Eldon Shamblin, guitar; (1945) Leon Huff, guitar; Doyle Salathiel, electric guitar; Noel Boggs, steel guitar; Cameron Hill, electric guitar; Jimmy Wyble, electric guitar; Les Anderson, steel guitar; Lester Barnard Jr, electric guitar; Harley Huggins, guitar; Tiny Moore, electric mandolin; Herb Remington, steel guitar; Jimmy Widener, banjo; and Ocie Stockard, banjo.



“Now friends here’s Leon. Take it away, boy, take it away!” begins Wills the fiddle player, composer and leader on the 1936 version of *Steel Guitar Rag*, with Sleepy Johnson, guitar; Everett Stover, trumpet; Ray DeGreer, clarinet; Zeb McNally, saxophone; Leon McAuliffe, electric steel guitar; Al Stricklin, piano; Johnny Lee Wills, tenor banjo; Herman Arnsperger, guitar; Joe Frank Ferguson, string bass; Smokey Dacus, drums and unidentified bass. McAuliffe begins his solo with a simple melodic phrase repeated and Wills yells: “Oh yeah, everybody dance now!” After a fine 30 second solo with chords familiar to devotees of Hawaiian guitar sounds, Wills yells: “Al Strickland now!” and the pianist obliges with some swinging ragtime piano, McAuliffe re-enters, the saxophone makes a brief contribution, and the steel guitar takes out proceedings in a rousing climax - it’s an infectious and fun turn with strong rhythm throughout.

On the other hand, *Sugar Blues* (Williams/Fletcher) with the same group, is given a distinctly mid-tempo jazz treatment with an open trumpet lead, vocal encouragement as usual from Wills who also sings the lyrics, who is followed by a fine muted trumpet solo, vocal, and nice trumpet chorus climax. It swings throughout.



*The great Django Reinhardt: surrounded by the music of the Roman gypsies from birth... PHOTO COURTESY THE WORLD OF JAZZ RODNEY DALE*

Without rehashing the history of the great Django Reinhardt it’s useful to recall that he was surrounded by the music of the Roman gypsies from birth; was first given a banjo/guitar at age 12; within 12 months was working with professionals; made his



first recording in 1928 as 'Jango Renard' at age 18; and after a caravan fire his right leg and left hand were severely burned and he spent 18 months bedridden. With ruthless dedication and great courage he taught himself to play again with the pinky and ring finger of his fretboard hand permanently paralysed by the burns. "Dragging his two crippled fingers along the strings, he invented unorthodox voicings and played octaves using his thumb".\* Interesting humility from two geniuses: Django claimed he was just copying Charlie Christian and Charlie Christian says he was copying Django.



*Charlie Christian: he said he was copying Django... PHOTO COURTESY PINTEREST*

Reinhardt was a member of the Romani (Manouche branch) Diaspora, colloquially Gypsies, a group considered by the Nazis as *Untermensch* in the same way as Jews, Poles, Serbs, Blacks, Mulattos and Finn-Asian were considered. Like the Jewish culture, and the African American culture, Romani culture was steeped in musical tradition. No wonder then that Reinhardt was drawn to jazz in the light of its (musical) revolutionary nature, its focus on freedom of expression, and its joy in performance. The historical perspective of European jazz is often overlooked. As Mike Zwerin has commented:

*(European Jazz) thrived under two totalitarian systems, one after the other: the Nazis followed by the Eastern European Communist regimes..... For once in its life it was politically important. Like rock in the 1960s, it had mass appeal. Great numbers of people listened to jazz for what it represented and symbolised as much as, or more than, for the music itself. It was about freedom.*

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\**The Oxford Companion To Jazz, Kirchner, OUP, 2000, p 539*

*Jazz music never meant more in the lives of so many ordinary people. It was never so pertinent, never as universal. Repressed people want freedom. By definition, jazz is about as good an artistic expression of freedom as can be found. You cannot censor improvisation. Jazz is, or ought to be, based on the principle that it is never the same twice. Nobody knows exactly what is going to happen next. In addition to the **looseness** (my emphasis) of swing, the creative process involved in making jazz is in itself democratic. Freedom of speech is at the core of it. Free and uncensored conversation. Everybody having their say.\**

After he heard Louis Armstrong Reinhardt knew his future was determined. Guitarist Martin Taylor remarked ( cf Penguin Jazz Guide, 2010, p. 51) “Whenever I meet guitarists who tell me they’d love to play like Django I tell them to listen to Louis Armstrong. That’s what Django did, that’s why Django phrased everything the way he did. Louis was Django’s hero. Just listen to Louis Armstrong play and you’ll understand what Django was really about.”



*Louis Armstrong & Django Reinhardt pictured together. “Louis was Django’s hero”... PHOTO COURTESY JAZZ REFLECTIONS*

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\**Oxford Companion to Jazz, ibid, p 543.*

Will Layman (Feb 2013) remarks on the recording of *Blue Again* (Fields/McHugh) by Armstrong, a favourite record of Gil Evans, recorded 28th April 1931 by Louis Armstrong and his Orchestra which included Mike McKendrick on guitar:

*The tune ends with 32 bars of ravishing improvised trumpet. With some room to actually develop a statement, Louis gets to play cat and mouse with the song and with the band's static arrangement. In the first eight bars, **he stays around a single note** (the tonic of a song's key), repeating it over and over again but in a myriad of rhythmic combinations that swirl around the groove like a tap-dancer. It's almost as much a drum solo as it is a trumpet solo. The next eight find him latching onto a single descending figure of three notes, which he repeats with small variations and growing momentum, always starting with that first tonic note, then finally repeating the lick again before he rises up to play a lyrical figure in contrast. The bridge starts with longer tones, played legato, then leads to a rushed/swing figure that doubles back to become a lick played coolly behind the beat. The final eight bars find Louis running across all of these strategies as he sees fit, varying his approach but touching back on the written melody slightly before ending with a heraldic high note.*

A fine description of, inter alia, the rhythmic power of Louis Armstrong. Rhythm draws the listener in and the artist then pursues his inventiveness on top of this. Such was the power and appeal of Le Quintette du Hot Club du France (QHCF) established in 1934 with the following instrumentation: three acoustic guitars, string bass, and violin. Stephane Grapelli, violin; Django Reinhardt, guitar; Joseph Reinhardt and Roger Chaput, rhythm guitars; and Louis Viola, string bass. The first three numbers recorded by the group in December 1934 were: *Dinah* (Young/Akst/Lewis); *Tiger Rag* (La Rocca); and *Lady Be Good* (Gershwin) showing the jazz direction the group was to pursue.



*Le Quintette du Hot Club du France: three acoustic guitars, string bass, and violin...*  
PHOTO COURTESY DEFINITIVE ILLUSTRATED ENCYCLOPEDIA OF JAZZ & BLUES

Jazz was their vehicle but it was also the golden age of melody and the time of the making of the Great American Songbook mainly through the collective genius of the Jewish diaspora including the Gershwins, Irving Berlin, Lorenz Hart, Jerome Kern, Yip Harburg, and Gus Kahn among them. The combination of a contrary personality and astonishing drive, masterful talent, the influence of jazz greats especially Eddie Lang and Louis Armstrong, and the availability of captivating brilliant melodies of the time, between 1934 and 1948 Reinhardt proved the guitar to be both a powerful rhythm instrument and a distinctive individual solo voice in the jazz pantheon. The QHCF made jazz for the ages and the period between 1934 and 1939 was probably their greatest period. Musicians such as Benny Carter, Dicky Wells, Rex Stewart and Coleman Hawkins acknowledged Reinhardt's genius and recorded with him. Others, such as Charlie Christian (cf *Stardust* recording 1940) and John Lewis cited him as an influence. Nor is it the case that Reinhardt is some relic of jazz from another era: one of the music's finest contemporary artists, James Carter (born 3/1/69) dedicated his 2000 Atlantic album *Chasin' The Gypsy* to Reinhardt. On it Carter plays bass saxophone, tenor saxophone, F mezzo saxophone, and soprano saxophone. Two guitarists are featured on the album: Jay Berliner, steel string guitar, and Romero Lubambo nylon string guitar.



*Between 1934 and 1948 Reinhardt (on the right above, pictured with Albert Einstein on the violin) proved the guitar to be both a powerful rhythm instrument and a distinctive individual solo voice in the jazz pantheon...*

Reinhardt also composed over 100 works including some that became jazz "standards" such as *Nuages*, *Daphne* and, with Stephane Grappelli, *Djangology*. With repertoire, anything was grist to Reinhardt's musical mill:

**Pop songs:** *Limehouse Blues* (Furber/Braham) Recorded 21/10/35 which was a pop song of the day is an uptempo performance with driving rhythm, swinging violin and percussive, inventive, extraordinary solo from Reinhardt.

**Originals:** *Improvisation*, (Reinhardt) 27/4/37 is a solo piece slow beginning at the lower end, then traversing the possibilities of the guitar including ravishing speed, startling contrast, and melodic interludes, with a deep musicality throughout.



**Jazz standards:** *The Sheik of Araby*, (Smith/Wheeler) by then a jazz staple, recorded 27/4/37 is a deeply rhythmic joyous romp as is *Avalon* (Jolson/DeSylva/Rose) recorded 2/3/35 which may stand as a remarkable high speed definition of swing.

**Classical:** *Liebestraum No 3* (Liszt) recorded 26/4/37 is somewhat plodding rhythmically made magic by a startling solo by Reinhardt.

**Swing classics:** *Runnin' Wild* (Gibbs/Grey/Wood) recorded 26/4/37 with two extended outstanding solos from Grappelly and one from Reinhardt.

**Ballads:** *Body and Soul* (Green/Heyman/Sour/Eyton) recorded 22/4/37 at mid tempo with fine solo by Reinhardt and unusually for this song, interpreted with very strong rhythm foundation.

Reinhardt's mature style has been described as "direct, confident, melodic line, the big tone, the never-ending swing" and is evident on dozens of records made with the Quintette.

One of the most revered rhythm engines for a big band was the piano, guitar, bass and drums of Count Basie with Basie on piano; Freddie Greene, guitar; Walter Page, bass; and Jo Jones, drums. For half a century Greene played with Basie and was one of those rare jazz musicians who remained subservient to the group, and the group sound. He rarely took solos. There is a consensus that this rhythm section was the finest of all the big bands. The pianist was a stride pianist meaning he was equally as strong in either hand. Jo Jones was a master of the brushes and the hi-hat and no virtuoso but did bring a subtle swing and inner excitement to drumming. And Walter Page was the bassist who the others in the section gave credit for giving the it that "feel" by bringing the volume down and the intensity up.



*The revered rhythm section of Count Basie's orchestra, L-R, Freddie Greene, guitar; Jo Jones, drums; Walter Page, bass; Basie on piano... PHOTO COURTESY PINTEREST*



One version of *Swingin' The Blues* a composition by Basie's sometime electric guitar player, Eddie Durham, with an arrangement by Durham, was performed live at the Famous Door, New York City, 15/7/39 and formed part of a radio broadcast that night. It's a good example of the relentless power of the whole swinging band with a notable chorus from a four-piece trumpet section led by Buck Clayton, three-piece trombone section, and four reeds. Lester Young plays his usual solo for this piece and Jo Jones concludes with a number of two bar exchanges with the band. *How Long Blues* (Leroy Carr) and just the rhythm section playing, recorded 9/11/38 is a fine example of largo swing where Basie displays amazing right hand work with placement of notes that both swing and provide musical tension. *Texas Shuffle* (Herschel Evans) 22/8/38 is most likely a head arrangement which begins with an up-tempo sparkling solo by Basie backed by rhythm, followed by the horns answering the reeds in back and forth conversation driving like *that* train, Lord, a clarinet solo, behind which the band drives on section against section, then the trombone, tenor, solos - band - broken by brief piano statement - lower the volume, stop. It's a classic Basie band performance driven very much by the piano, bass, guitar and drums of that rhythm section which has been described as a section that "breathed" rhythm.



*Eddie Durham: he wrote "Swingin' The Blues"...*

Oscar Moore was a long-standing member of the Nat King Cole Trio, and was the guitarist who fulfilled the promise of the advances made by Charlie Christian on the electric guitar (of whom more later). These advances meant the guitar was not just a powerful element of rhythm but another horn in the lineup. The Cole Trio made hundreds of records, some with boring melodies and inane lyrics, but all with the

sparkling pianism and mellifluous voice of the leader, the steady rhythm and solo brilliance of Oscar Moore, and all underpinned with the bass of Wesley Prince and later Johnny Miller.



*Nat King Cole Trio: guitarist Oscar Moore (left) provided steady rhythm and solo brilliance. Others are Cole on piano, and Johnny Miller on bass. This shot is from the 1949 film "Make Believe Ballroom"...*

Some have seen Moore as Cole's equal in his musicianship especially in his dazzling runs on the guitar in his solos. Consider his comping and chordal support which helped make *Embraceable You* (Gershwin/Gershwin) of 1944 a huge hit for the trio, or *Easy Listening Blues* (Nadine Robinson) also 1944. Or the astonishing instrumental version of *Honeysuckle Rose* (Waller/Razaf) broadcast in 1943 (AFRS Jubilee #29) taken at a hair-raising tempo where the pianist's percussive playing and Moore's solo make brilliant music.

Cole's popularity as vocalist, leader and pianist perhaps overshadowed Oscar Moore's standing but it's clear that he was a major figure in the instrument's history. It's an interesting exercise to re-listen to Cole Trio pieces just focussing on the guitar to wonder at Moore's guitar playing.

The George Shearing Quintet of 1948 had Shearing, accordion or piano; Marjorie Hyams, piano or vibraphone; Chuck Wayne, guitar; John Levy, bass; and Denzil Best, drums. As a young boy Wayne learned banjo, mandolin, and balalaika, then

took up the guitar. He recorded with Lester Young on the famous Aladdin Sessions in 1947; with Mildred Bailey, 1945; with Woody Herman, 1947; with Dizzy Gillespie in 1945; and, on the Mandola, with George Wallington in 1953. His most renowned service was with the George Shearing Quintet during Shearing's most glorious period. He was one of the first guitar players to play bebop. On *Cherokee*, 31/1/49, he displays both his rhythmic chops and his bebop credentials with a fine solo at a very high tempo. He was a member of the Shearing Quintet that made one of the few bebop performances to ever make the hit parade: *September in the Rain* (Dubin/Warren) 17/2/49.



*Chuck Wayne: he was with the George Shearing Quintet during Shearing's most glorious period...*

The musician who brought the guitar to front line status as a “horn” was Charlie Christian, who also managed to contribute so much to the Goodman aggregations as to make the documents he recorded with Goodman perhaps the finest in the Goodman canon. A Texan born man who grew up in Oklahoma whose guitar playing dad was blind, and whose four brothers were all musical, Charlie in his teens played

trumpet, bass and piano before settling on the guitar which he played in the family band. We need to remind ourselves that Oklahoma was a blues-drenched territory in the 1930s. Charlie likely was familiar with the popular records of the day made by Lonnie Johnson, Blind Lemon Jefferson and Eddie Lang. Interestingly Christian could play many of Django Reinhardt's solos by the time he met Goodman and his quartet in 1939. Reports of that meeting, probably apocryphal, perhaps racist, and contradicted by other evidence, noted that Charlie wore a ten gallon hat, pointed yellow shoes, a bright green suit over a purple shirt and a string bow tie - but to the elegant New York and conservative Goodman a major turn off, meaning he didn't pay Christian the attention he deserved. During a break, when Goodman was absent, band members who were impressed with Christian, snuck him in. The polite Goodman on returning did not make a fuss and proceeded with rehearsing. He called for *Rose Room* (Hickman/Williams) and the leader was so taken with Christian's playing the band kept playing for 48 minutes. Goodman took on Christian and bassist Artie Bernstein and thus was born perhaps one of the finest of all sextets in jazz.



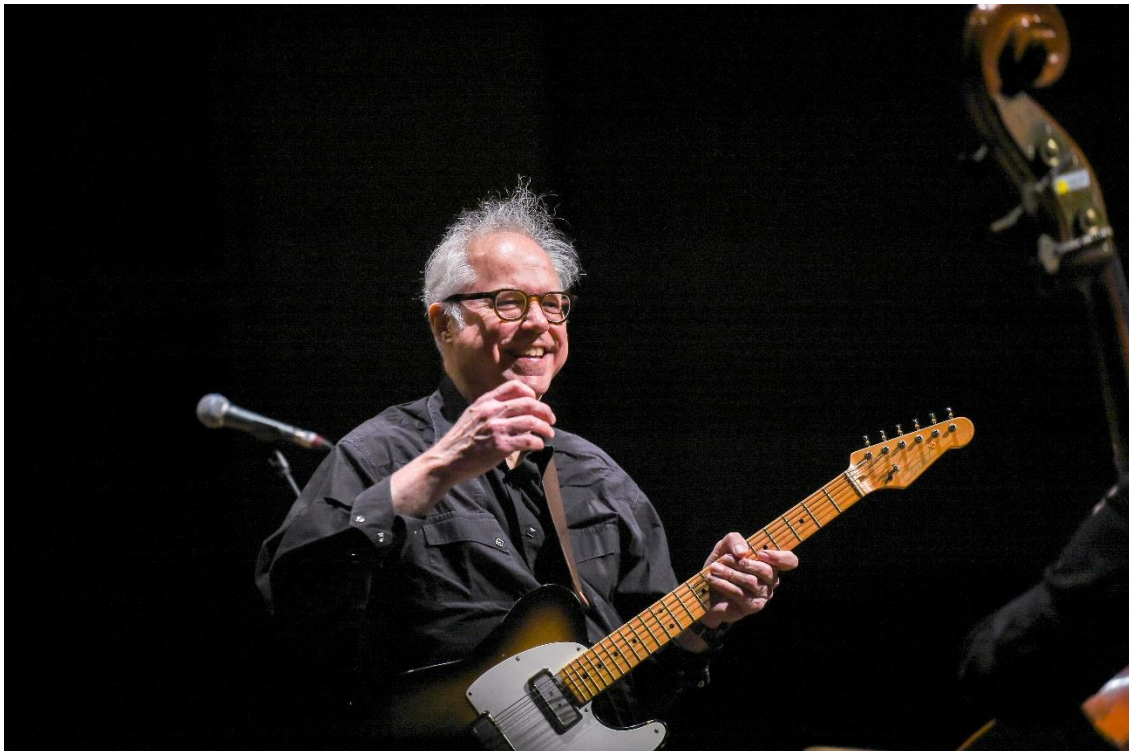
*Benny Goodman (left, on clarinet), performing with guitarist Charlie Christian...*

Listeners used to guitars as rhythm instruments or with a tinny or whiny sound discovered in Christian a percussive approach and a beautiful bell-like tone. His music also had volume and was now a horn. In his harmonic style dissonance found a place but his rhythmic sophistication was unparalleled with the possible exception of Art Tatum. Because most of what he did has become standard for guitar players that followed, he's not perhaps seen by some later guitarists as anything special. Even so some have this to say:



*No one swung like Charlie Christian. It's safe to say that he was one of the founders of the bebop movement. You listen to what he was playing back then and hear it still being played today. Charlie's influence is everywhere. (Russell Malone, 1999)*

*It's been more than 30 years now since I first heard Charlie Christian, and every time I hear him, I'm still able to uncover a little bit more. His music sounds deeper and deeper and more modern each time. The affect he's had on the guitar is just staggering. I don't there's one of us that has come along since that hasn't been touched by him, whether we know it nor not. And more important even than his guitar playing is what he accomplished as a musician. His musical ideas transcend the instrument. His music is timeless. (Bill Frisell)*



*Bill Frisell says Charlie Christian's music is "timeless"... PHOTO CREDIT ANTHONY BROWELL*

*Miles Davis told me that he thought Charlie Christian was the original instigator of the bebop movement, Bird and Diz's main influence. When you listen to his playing today, it's still inspiring, fresh, harmonically and rhythmically advanced. I love the fact that the modern jazz movement seems to have been started by an electric guitarist! (John Scofield)*

*Although Charlie was not the first jazz guitarist to use amplification during the latter half of the 1930s, his contribution ensured that electric guitar would soon take over from acoustic as the most emphatic form of expression in this area of instrumental jazz. His unique brand of phrasing is just one aspect of his playing which makes him stand out from other jazz guitarists of the 1930s, its horn-like quality parallels the work of tenorist Lester Young - both musicians used unusually long melodic lines, comprising evenly placed notes, phrased in a legato manner. Like Lester, Christian concentrated on a freer expression of the 4/4 time*

*signature, whilst deploying a new approach to the use of basic riffs to produce a rhythmic excitement that was as fresh-sounding as it was exhilarating. On top of that, Charlie's playing was further enhanced by his subtle use of augmented and diminished chords, making substantial contributions to the birth and development of the new music bebop. (Joop Visser, in "Notes to Hittin' On All Six", Proper Records, UK, 2000)*

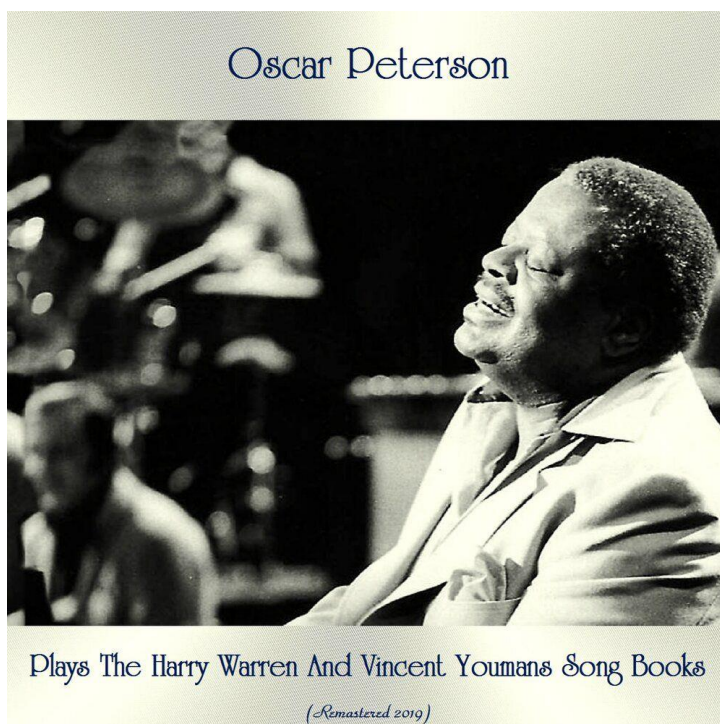
And then there's the evidence. Perhaps more than other music, owing to its individual nature, its dependence on listening, which is to say the positive interaction between the artists as they support each other in the joint creative act and improvise, and on the importance of mood and the wilfulness of the audience's love of the moment, and the freedom occasioned by a club away from the strictures and atmosphere and time constraints of the studio, jazz blossoms when played live. On 12th May 1941 one of the great moments in musical history and one of the finest guitar solos ever recorded (at Minton's by Jerry Newman) was made with a group comprising Joe Guy, trumpet; Thelonious Monk, piano; Charlie Christian, guitar; Nick Fenton, bass and Kenny Clarke, drums. Its provenance is "unknown" so it's likely that the musicians sat down and Charlie began playing. It's nominally called, *Swing to Bop* and lasts nine minutes. Christian's rhythmic drive, expressive power and structured artistic statement in these opening three-and-one-half minutes is music for the ages. Monk's solo is stride piano but Christian does inspired comping during it. Christian solos again which in itself could stand as a guitar solo worthy of study. The recording fades during the trumpet solo and ends though the music may have continued.



*Charlie Christian: his rhythmic drive, expressive power and structured artistic statement in these opening three-and-one-half minutes is music for the ages...*

Another piece of evidence is a recording (13/3/41) of Christian which the microphone seems to preference, with other members in the background. In a two minute solo Christian plays a figure which the others pick up, and in turn the tenor plays upon, the trumpet gains in confidence then dominates: Christian re-enters keen to continue, the piano intervenes for a brief solo, then “stand by - ten seconds” comes from the control room. The group included Cootie Williams, trumpet; Georgie Auld, tenor; Johnny Guarnieri, piano; Christian, guitar; Artie Bernstein, bass; and Dad Tough, drums. Christian’s contribution is much the more musically interesting than any of the other distinguished players. The sextet Goodman formed with Christian at this time may be the finest aggregation of any he had. It made what seems to be the most lasting, influential and artistically rewarding music in the Goodman legacy, which is considerable.

There is a tendency to ignore the guitar because of the power of other voices, certainly on first listening to much music. Take for instance the shakeup occasioned by the emergence of Oscar Peterson into the music scene in the early 1950s. Producer Norman Granz who had championed Peterson suggested the production of a series of albums based on the great composers of the day. Eventually Peterson agreed and the so called “songbook” series was born in which selected works of Ellington, Gershwin, Berlin, Rodgers, Kern, and Youmans were interpreted by a trio led by Peterson on piano, Ray Brown, bass, and Barney Kessel, guitar. This series of works was made during 1952 and 1953. Its motive was a brilliant one in that the intention was to broaden the appeal of jazz by seducing listeners through the potent melodies of some of the great composers of the 20th century. Even the titles reflected the “coverup” approach: *Oscar Peterson Plays Pretty* for example.



It was a resounding success and helped very much to establish Clef/Verve records as a major player in the music business. Thus it did achieve its success of expanding the reach of jazz to many who may have seen “jazz” as loud, or even “unmusical” of bebop, dixieland etc. Whilst the listener marvelled at the rhythmic power of the trio, and the enchantment of great melodies and the pianism of Peterson, they may have overlooked the significance of Barney Kessel to the trio’s success. It was Peterson who knew and who had recruited Kessel for the very reason that he wanted the trio to avoid sounding “the same” over such a large recording project - rhythm with piano.



*Barney Kessel: he wiped the floor, ceiling and the walls with his solo on “Sweet Georgia Brown”... PHOTO COURTESY BBC*

Barney Kessel had played with Charlie Parker and Charlie Christian and had been influenced by him to the extent of adopting his approach to the guitar. On the very first time that Kessel played with Peterson, the pianist explained: “He arrived that afternoon. He came out of the studios and he was hungry. I didn’t realise how hungry he was. I called *Sweet Georgia Brown* and Barney wiped the floor, ceiling and the walls with his solo.” Over the next two years the trio recorded 128 sides. Among other amazing musical revolutions and advances made in the 1950s, the guitar entered its second golden age due partly to technology allowing for tonal and timbral refinements and the ability to play cool jazz or bebop, emphasising single note lines rather than chords.

A direct descendant of Kessel was Herb Ellis who joined the Peterson trio in his stead as Kessel hated travel and remained a studio musician for most of his career - Kessel is one of the most recorded artists in jazz history. With the instrument now both a rhythm driver and a horn Ellis flourished.

Herb Ellis is a great example of the master guitar player who managed to straddle being an engine of rhythm and timekeeping, as well as bringing another horn to the line-up. Take for example *The Jazz Cellar Session* produced by Norman Granz in San Francisco on 31st January 1960. Although some wrote that the session was a



two-horn line-up with Ben Webster, tenor saxophone and Johnny Hodges, alto saxophone supported by the rhythm of Herb Ellis, guitar; Wilfred Middlebrooks, double bass and Gus Johnson, drums, it's hard not to appreciate and accept Ellis' superb solo on the opening track to the proceedings *Ben's Web*, as an instance of the guitar as horn. The whole session is interesting in that it is a programme of all originals but no-one knows for sure who wrote what, so everything was attributed to the two horns. Hodges once remarked that "The best record sessions are those where you go for yourself".\* In *The Jazz Cellar Session* it seems that spontaneity prevailed and the two legendary horns, Webster (51) and Hodges ( 53) mainly improvised the lot. That they were happy to work with Ellis indicates the standing of Ellis in the jazz world.

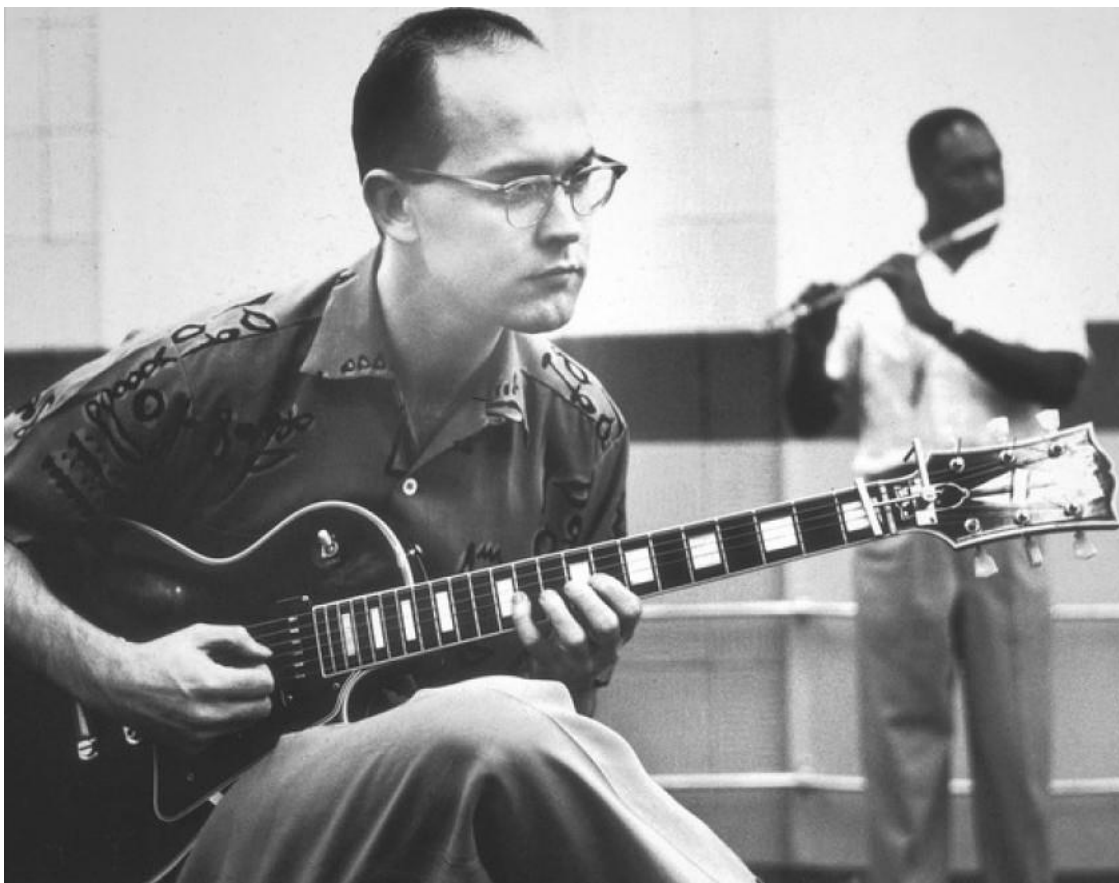


*Herb Ellis: a master guitar player who managed to straddle being an engine of rhythm and timekeeping, as well as bringing another horn to the line-up... PHOTO COURTESY JAZZ MAGAZINE PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN*

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\*Stanley Dance, *The World of Duke Ellington*.

The guitar player that made the greatest impact on my early listening experience before I'd heard the Goodman Sextet recordings with Charlie Christian was Jim Hall. It's a case of being one of those electric shock moments (at least that's the best metaphor I can come up with) that are generated by music sometimes and which seem to burn into one's emotional memory bank never to be erased. I recall it happening in live situations from time to time, once when Bernie McGann did a coda that made tears involuntarily spring into my eyes, another when Lloyd Swanton did a Jimmy Garrison-inspired introduction to a Coltrane piece, or in film, Louis Armstrong doing *Basin Street Blues* in *The Glenn Miller Story*, but it is less common for it to happen when listening to an album. The music was a composition by Buddy Collette, reed player, called *Blue Sands* and it was performed when he was a member of the Chico Hamilton Quintet in 1955. Not *yellow* sands, mind you. It was a *blues* tinged take on a *Caravan* (Ellington) derived composition. The band was Buddy Collette, tenor saxophone, alto saxophone, flute, and clarinet; Fred Katz, cello; Jim Hall, guitar; Carson Smith, bass; and Chico Hamilton, leader and drums. The album was called *Spectacular* with the first side of the album a studio date and the second side a live recording. Again, strangely for a performance, the studio date with its delightful take by cello on *My Funny Valentine* and the other four pieces were musically more interesting and moving than the louder, faster and freer numbers played at The Strollers club venue.



*Jim Hall: an electric shock moment that is generated by music sometimes and which seems to burn into one's emotional memory bank, never to be erased....*

*Blue Sands* begins with a long percussion figure on mallets by Hamilton, a figure which he maintains in tempo throughout the piece, varying only in definition and volume, briefly after Collette provides a fine flute solo, at the two minute mark, Hall enters with a simple Eastern cascade of notes which he repeats, he then states the theme, which he repeats at a lower volume, then a Spanish tinged run of melody, silence between phrases, then a series of lines that climaxes in a number of statements of the theme and decays into silence, and some pretty notes, the flute returns with the mallets maintaining their thrum of the desert, as the caravan passes, and the guitar repeats a phrase at the high gentle end of the strings, then fadeout. One has to wonder at its simplicity and at the same time its power to move through a deep musicality.

A bald Jim Hall and a bald and bespectacled George Golla and bespectacled and skinny Barney Kessel were ordinary looking individuals who, if passed in the street, might be ignored as clerks from the local Department of Boredom. But what magic came from their fingers. In contrast, Pat Metheny, even in his 60s, maintains the image of the long-haired teenager. Jim Hall is not simply a guitar player, in my view he is a supreme instrumental artist of the music, to be spoken of in the same way as we speak of Clark Terry, Coleman Hawkins, J J Johnson, Milt Jackson, Gerry Mulligan, Horace Silver, or Jackie McLean. Pat Metheny comments:

*Jim is father of modern jazz guitar to me, he's the guy who invented a conception that has allowed guitar to function in a lot of musical situations that just weren't thought of as a possibility prior to his emergence as a player. He reinvented what the guitar could be as a jazz instrument... Jim transcends the instrument... the meaning behind the notes is what speaks to people.*



*Pat Metheny: even in his 60s, he maintains the image of the long-haired teenager...*  
PHOTO CREDIT GIANCARLO BELFIORE

It's useful to remember that Hall's guitar replaced the piano when he joined Sonny Rollins.



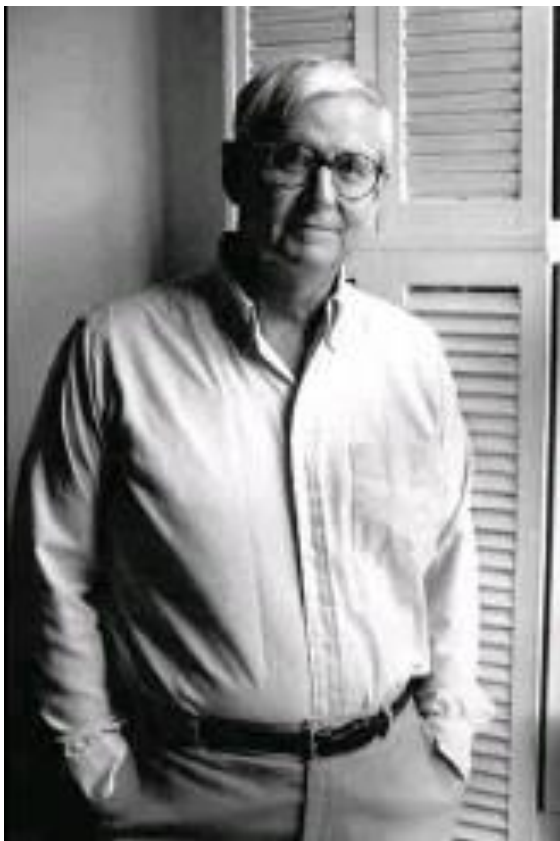
*Jim Hall & Sonny Rollins performing together...*

Before looking at the evidence of Hall's legacy some comments from Whitney Balliett on Hall's musicality:

*Each phrase evolves from its predecessor, his rhythms are balanced, and his harmonic and melodic ideas are full of parentheses and asides. His tone is equally demanding. He plays both electric and acoustic guitars. On the former he sounds like an acoustic guitarist for he has an angelic touch and keeps his amplifier down; on the latter, a new instrument specially designed and built for him, has an even more gossamer sound. Hall is exceptional in another way. In the thirties and forties, Christian and Reinhardt put forward certain ideals for their instrument - spareness, the use of silence, and the legato approach to swinging - and for a while every jazz guitarist studied them. Then the careering melodic flow of Charlie Parker took hold, and guitarists became arpeggio ridden. But Hall, sidestepping this aspect of Parker, has gone directly to Christian and Reinhardt, and plumping out their skills with the harmonic advances since been made, has perfected an attack that is fleet but tight, passionate but oblique. And he is singular for still another reason. Guitarists are inclined to be an ingrown society (my emphasis), but Hall listens constantly to other instrumentalists, especially tenor*



saxophonists (Ben Webster, Coleman Hawkins, Lester Young, Sonny Rollins) and pianists (Count Basie, John Lewis, Bill Evans, Keith Jarrett) and he attempts to adapt to the guitar their phrasing and tonal qualities. In his solos he asserts nothing but says a great deal. He loves Duke Ellington's slow ballads and he will start one with an ad-lib chorus in which he glides softly over the melody, working just behind the beat, dropping certain notes and adding others, but steadfastly celebrating its melodic beauties. He clicks into tempo at the beginning of the second chorus, and, after pausing for several beats, plays a gentle, ascending six-note figure that ends with a curious, ringing off-note. He pauses again, and, taking the close of the same phrase, he elaborates on it in an ascending-descending double-time run, and then skids into several behind-the-beat chords, which give way to a single-note line that moves up and down and concludes on another off-note. He raises his volume at the beginning of the bridge and floats through it with softly ringing chords; then, slipping into the final eight bars, he fashions a precise, almost declamatory run, pausing second at its top, and works his way down with two glancing arpeggios. He next sinks to a whisper, and finishes with a bold fragment of melody that dissolves into a flatted chord, upon which the next soloist gratefully builds his opening statement\*.



*Whitney Balliett: he writes so well about the music it's worth reading for its own intelligent and beautifully descriptive reasons...*

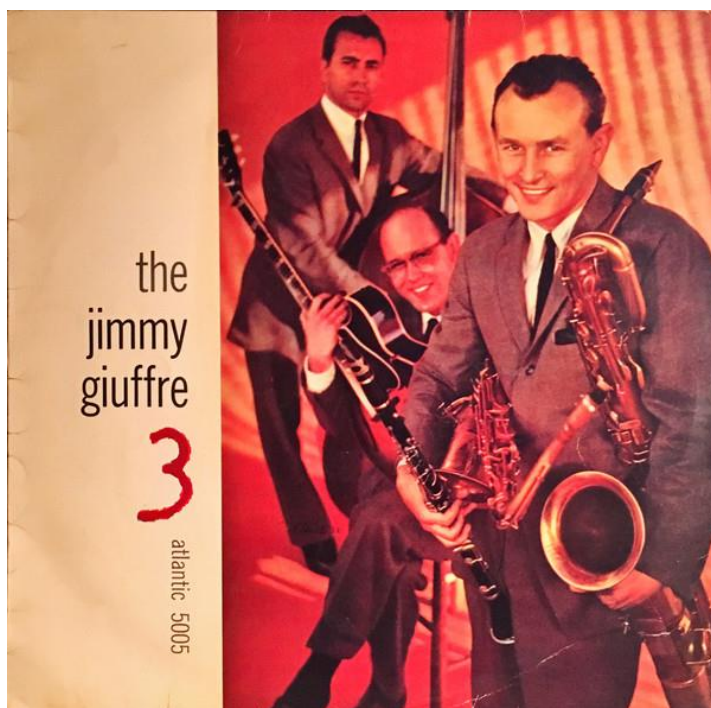
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\*Whitney Balliett, *American Musicians 11-72 Portraits In Jazz*, OUP, New York, 1996 pp 425/6.

Usually I'm reluctant to quote at such length the analysis of music as I believe like D H Lawrence that science can destroy the moon, by explaining away the moon's romance, its mystery, its contribution to art, by telling us about its minerals, lack of water, by landing on it and kicking up its dust and proclaiming rubbish about "a step for mankind". In other words by analysis and science we "destroy" it, that thing the moon and the idea of the moon. And too much analysis of music may not help its appreciation at all. However, I quote Balliett because Hall is so important an artist, and because Balliett writes so well about the music it's worth reading for its own intelligent and beautifully descriptive reasons.

Hall himself talks about his attempts to get a melody to sound on a guitar like it might sound on a wind instrument. He thinks of keys in colours: A Flat is reddish orange, G Major is green, E Flat is yellow. When with Hamilton he played a Gibson Les Paul Custom. Now to some evidence.

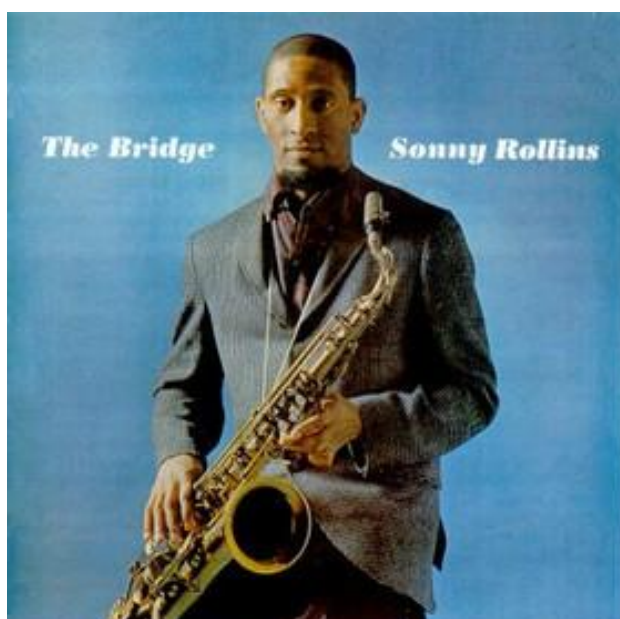
There's a remarkable series of works Hall recorded with Jimmy Giuffre between 1956 and 1959 beginning with *The Jimmy Giuffre 3* (Atlantic) 1956, which were notable for the absence of piano or drums but which managed a toe-tapping swing that was a thing to marvel at. Giuffre was on clarinet, tenor and baritone sax; Hall, guitar; and Ralph Pena was on acoustic bass. Of the nine tracks six were by Giuffre. It opens with *Gotta Dance* (Giuffre) and that sets the swinging tone for the album. Hall's guitar has the swing and the memory of country blues in its voice, and yet is as modern as tomorrow. *Two Kinds of Blues* (Giuffre) has the clarinet making a blues statement and the guitar respond to it, the guitar makes a statement, and the original theme is repeated by the clarinet, then the guitar responds slyly, it repeats the theme, and so on - it's a remarkable musical conversation between friends, varying in tempo, from slow to very slow, with some beautiful blues tinged guitar and swinging clarinet, backed by walking bass.



*The Train and the River* (Giuffre) is a swinging romp with Giuffre on baritone sax. 61 pieces were recorded in the studio with Giuffre over that period, some with Bob Brookmeyer on valve trombone replacing the bass. Without piano, bass, or drums, the three musicians improvise at the same time, keeping rhythm themselves. The remaining five trio albums were *Trav'lin Light* (1958) with Brookmeyer, trombone; *The Four Brothers Sound*, (1958) with Brookmeyer and four overdubbed tenor sax lines; *Western Suite* (1958) again with Brookmeyer; *7 Pieces* (1959). Bassist Red Mitchell replaced Brookmeyer in the trio; and *The Easy Way* (1959) was the last album with Giuffre, Hall and with Ray Brown replacing Mitchell.



Hall's renown had spread to Sonny Rollins who heard him when he was with Hamilton in New York and called on him at home. Hall recorded with Rollins on the RCA album *The Bridge* (1962).



Hall was interested in modern classical music and played with Ornette Coleman on Schuller's *Piece for Guitar and Strings*. He made a memorable duo album with Bill Evans, *Undercurrent* (1962) which is one of Evan's finest collaborations; and also duo recordings with Bob Brookmeyer, Tom Harrell, Joe Lovano, Bill Frisell, Ron Carter, Pat Metheny and Charlie Haden. This last is a recording of their appearance at the Montreal International Jazz Festival 2nd July 1990. Hall contributes two originals, *Down from Antigua* and *Big Blues*, Haden two, *First Song* and *In the Moment*, and there are compositions by Monk, and Ornette Coleman and two standards, *Body and Soul*, and *Skylark*. It's a fine testament of two of the great musicians of the 20th century, Hall was 60 years old at the time of recording and died 10th December 2013, six days after his 83rd birthday. Haden was 53 years old at the time of recording and died 11th July 2014 aged 76.



*Charlie Haden (left) and Jim Hall: two of the great musicians of the 20th century...*

It's interesting to look at Pat Metheny and his wide range of influences and collaborations. He seems to have encompassed elements of blues, country, Brazilian, free, avant-garde, minimalism (Reich) in his playing and recording projects. It's easy to understand the very wide appeal of his music. His instruments include a custom-made 42-string Picasso I created by Canadian luthier Linda Manzer. He is the only person to win Grammys in ten categories. He has had three gold albums and 20 Grammy Awards. And he is not unambitious: his *Orchestrion Project* was Wagnerian in scope and involved him alone performing with his guitar and piano, marimba orchestra bells, basses, guitarbots, percussion, cymbals, and drums, blown bottles, and other custom-fabricated acoustic mechanical instruments and robotic angels guitar.



Jim Hall and Metheny collaborated on a duet album on Telarc (1999) which got to number two position on the Billboard Top Jazz Album table. It's an excellent opportunity to listen to both players and witness their approach. Metheny has a very broad Americas-drenched approach to his music whilst Hall has incorporated European elements of harmony and spacing and construction and silence to great effect.



Metheny's growth and development from a child prodigy to this world class musician is a wonder to behold. A brilliant comparison might be made between his solo album *Zero Tolerance For Silence* on Geffen (1994) which is improvised free jazz in the realm of Sonny Sharrock and his solo album *One Quiet Night* on Nonesuch (2009) which he recorded at home on a baritone guitar - just sample the touching and beautiful Nashville suggestive and exquisite *Last Train Home* (Metheny). Even so I prefer his work in the context of say Joshua Redman, leader and tenor; Charlie Haden, bass, and Billy Higgins, drums, on the album *Wish*, and his brilliant contribution to *Song X* (1985) with Ornette Coleman, or *At Woodstock* on 19th September 1981 with Chick Corea, piano; Anthony Braxton, alto sax; Jack De Johnette, drums; Lee Konitz, alto sax, and Miroslav Vitous, bass as documented on the Douglas double album *The Song Is You* than I do to other explorations.



Metheny sees jazz as a vehicle to a “true destination”. He was much taken by Paul Bley’s solo on *All the Things You Are* (Kern) on the RCA album *Sonny Meets Hawk* (1963) and in his comments reveals his listening genius: “The thing about that solo for me is: there’s a certain kind of elusive and very mysterious *groove* that connects things melodically and rhythmically, that often a certain kind of resonance or truth or power that you can’t really quantify..... his relationship to time... is the best sort of pushing and pulling, wrestling with it and at the same time, phrase by phrase, making these interesting connections between bass and drums, making it seem like it’s a little bit on top, and then now it’s a little bit behind”.\*



*Paul Bley: Pat Metheny was much taken by Paul Bley’s solo on “All the Things You Are” on the RCA album “Sonny Meets Hawk” (1963)...*

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\* *Ben Ratliffe, Conversation Over Music, Times Books, New York, 2008, p 19.*

Pat Metheny's amazing world of music is a lifetime's exploration and I relish that journey, but Jim Hall for me is a perennial like Peterson, Jamal, Monk, Miles Davis live at the Plugged Nickel, Ellington, etc. Hall received entry into the 62nd Downbeat Poll Hall of Fame (2014) a year after Pat Metheny.

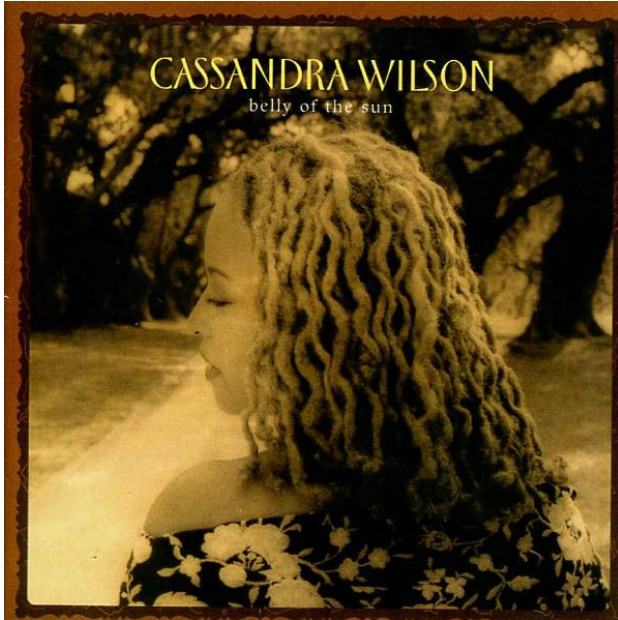
Guitar and voice have a long blues/jazz history partly because of the instrument's portability and availability but also because of its possibilities. One contemporary guitar player, known principally through her voice, is Cassandra Wilson whose work on record I have found to provide the most exciting and rewarding of guitar music in records since the 1980s. Of Fon (Benin), Yoruba (Nigeria), Irish and Welsh heritage, her father was Herman Fowlkes, Jr, a guitarist, bassist, and music teacher. Although she was taught piano, and played clarinet, on the guitar she is self-taught.



*Cassandra Wilson: her work on record has provided the most exciting and rewarding of guitar music in records since the 1980s... PHOTO CREDIT JOANNE SAVIO*

On record, Wilson rarely plays guitar but uses guitarists, and arranges blues, folk songs, jazz standards, originals, Brazilian classics *Black Orpheus*, (Jobim); pop songs *If It's Magic* (Wonder); Country and Western, *I'm So Lonesome I could Cry*, (Williams); and *Wichita Lineman* ( Jimmy Webb); homages (to Billie Holiday on *Coming Forth by Day*) 2015; rock and roll, *The Weight* (Robertson) and Soul (*Children of the Night*, Bell/Creed).

Of the guitar music in the past thirty years, Wilson's ability to use guitars to enhance the beauty, drama and power of her music has been outstanding and memorable. Some guitar players she has worked with include: Marvin Sewell, acoustic guitar, electric wah guitar; Kevin Breit, slide resonator guitar, 12 string banjo, E-bow guitar, bouzouki, omni-chord, mandolin and electric guitar; Richard Johnston, guitar; Jesse Robinson, electric guitar; all on *Belly of the Sun* (2002) an album recorded in the Clarksdale Train Depot and a box car.



On *Coming Forth By Day*, (2015) Kevin Breit, Guitar, Banjo, Loops, Atmospheric Loops, Tape Loops, Guitar chimes; Ming Vauz, Guitar string effects; T. Bone Burnett, Baritone Guitar; and Nick Zinner, guitar, guitar loops. On *New Moon Daughter* (1995) Chris Whitely, resophonic guitar; Brandon Ross acoustic and octave guitars, electric rhythm guitar; Ken Breit, tenor banjo, Irish bouzouki, acoustic and resophonic guitars; and Gib Wharton, pedal steel guitar; and Cassandra Wilson, acoustic guitar and vocal (all).





On *Silver Pony* (2010), Marvin Sewell, acoustic and electric guitars; Luke Laird, acoustic rhythm guitar; and Brandon Ross, acoustic guitar.

On *Loverley* (2008) Marvin Sewell, acoustic and electric guitar. On *Travelling Miles* (1999), Marvin Sewell, electric guitar, classical guitar; Kevin Breit, electric guitar, Greek bazouki, e-bow electric guitar; electric mandolin, mandocello guitar, resophonic guitar; Doug Wamble, acoustic guitar; and Pat Metheny, classical guitar.

On *Blue Light 'Til Dawn* (1993) Brandon Ross, steel string guitar, octave guitar, classical guitar; Gib Wharton, pedal steel guitar; Charlie Burnham, mandocello; and Christine Whately, National resophonic guitar.



*Marvin Sewell: he appears on Cassandra Wilson albums Travelling Miles (1999), Loverley (2008), and Silver Pony (2010)... PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN*

Individually these musicians may not be considered top flight artists on the guitar - then again, Pat Metheny clearly is, but context and arrangements can work wonders. My point, perhaps crudely made, is that the arrangements by Cassandra Wilson or by others on these records such as Brandon Ross, illuminate the brilliant music capable by these artists.

In the same way, Ray Crawford's greatest moments may have been with Gil Evans notwithstanding the great work with the Ahmad Jamal trio. Similarly, the brilliance of Metheny is enhanced very much given a great context of other fine players, and beautiful arrangements.

In any case, these Wilson documents are testament to the possibilities of the guitar and I'm sure helped elevate Ms Wilson's vocals to another musical level.

Just to take one small instance out of many: *Hellhound On My Trail* (Robert Johnson) arranged by Brandon Ross, from the album *Blue Light 'Til Dawn*, ( 1993) which has a vocal by Wilson, Brandon Ross on steel string guitar; and Old Dara, cornet. It is simple, powerful, and drenched in feeling and a stunning soundscape for the blues. Once heard never forgotten. It may be that at one and the same time we are listening to modern music but sounds, like the blues, which seem as old as humanity itself. Artistic and technically accomplished music that dives straight to the heart.



*Brandon Ross: his arrangement of “Hellhound On My Trail” is simple, powerful, and drenched in feeling, a stunning soundscape for the blues...*

An interesting parallel artist, if not a jazz singer, is Amina Alaoui who sings in Arabic, Classic Persian, Haketia, Spanish, and Portuguese. On the ECM (2011) album *Arco Tis* she sings and plays the daf (small Indian tambourine) and is supported by Saïf Alah Ben Abderrazak, violin; Eduardo Miranda, mandolin; José Luis Montón, flamenco guitar; Sofiane Negra, oud; and Idriss Agnel, percussion. Another example of the ubiquitous presence of guitars in the world of music.

It seems that in jazz the guitar has established itself as a major force. Music leaders such as John Zorn and Anthony Braxton have championed and worked with masters of the modern instrument such as Marc Ribot, Mary Halvorson, Bill Frisell, and Tim Sparks (Zorn). Halvorson for example, whether interpreting modern composers such as Zorn (cf *Book of Angels* Volume 32 Paimon Tzadik 2017) where her quartet of two guitars, herself and Miles Okazaki, the bass of Drew Dress and drums of Tomas Fujiwara interpret ten compositions by Zorn; or compositions by bassist

Stephen Crump (cf *Super Eight*, Intakt, 2012) in a live recording; or leading her own group Thumbscrew ( cf *Thumbscrew* Cunieform,2014) Mary Halvorson is one such modern master. Her playing is otherwise described as unique being "with a flinty attack, a spidery finesse and a shiver of wobbly delay."



*Mary Halvorsen: her playing is described as unique, being "with a flinty attack, a spidery finesse and a shiver of wobbly delay"... PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN*

Another Anthony Braxton guitarist is Canadian Kevin O'Neil who features with Braxton's 2005 Quartet with Braxton on saxophones; Kevin Norton, percussion; Andy Eulau on bass and O'Neil on guitar. This Quartet did a 2003 European Tour captured on Anthony Braxton *20 Standards (Quartet)* 2003, on Leo Records (4CD). On *Desafinado* one writer describes the guitar as "as a textural exploration of suckings, crackles and barking effects from guitarist Kevin O'Neil".



*Canadian guitarist Kevin O'Neil: a textural exploration of suckings, crackles and barking effects...*

Guitarist Henry Kaiser has appeared on more than 300 albums and scored dozens of TV shows and films. On the 19-minute *Yongari vs Bulgasari* from the document *Mudang Rock* (Fracial Music) 2017, he opens with a free improvisation. Replete with distortion and percussive effects, silences, and long winding notes, interrupted by percussive “remarks” by drummer Simon Barker playing at the lesser tempo, it’s a remarkable performance. At the 13-minute point he returns with a high-level solo with lyrical echoes and sustained wavering notes. All pieces on this album are jointly improvised/composed in performance. Bill Laswell is on bass and Rudresh Mahanthappa is on alto saxophone.



*Henry Kaiser (left) with bassist Bill Laswell: a remarkable performance...*

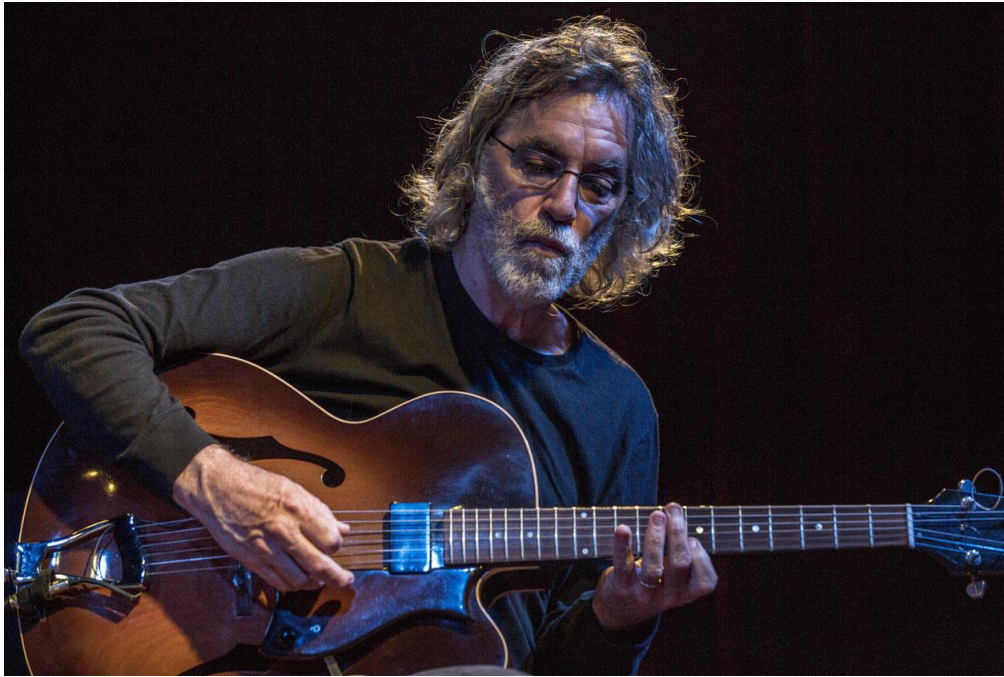
The guitar of Melbourne’s Stephen Magnusson adds considerably to the power and beauty of such aggregations as The Australian Art Orchestra, Jonathan Zwartz’s Tentette (cf *Animarum*) 2018 and Andrea Keller’s Duo and Trio work (cf *Transients Volume 2*) 2019.



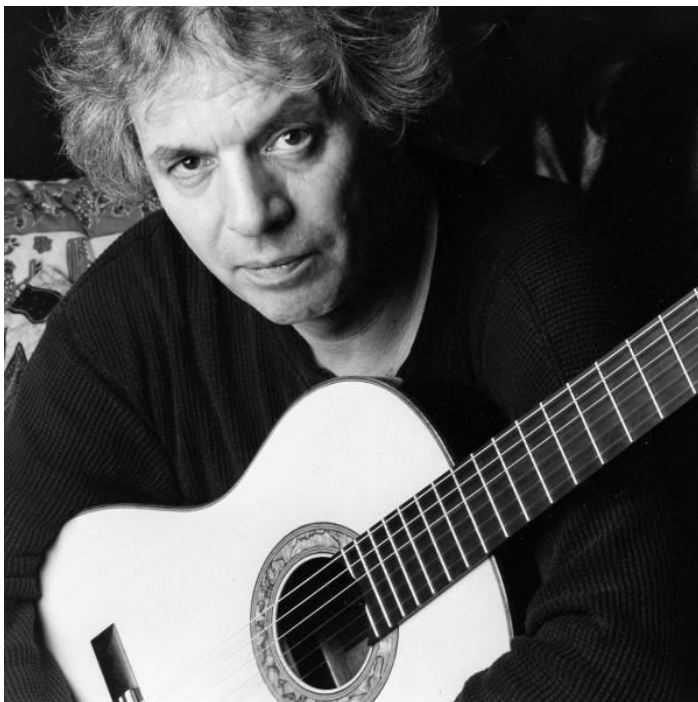
*Melbourne’s Stephen Magnusson: he adds considerably to the power and beauty of a number of aggregations... PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN*



The range of the guitar then can go from the playing of Joe Morris (*A Cloud of Black Birds*) 1998 where he can play lyrical, rhythmical, or free, and make beautiful music out of his original compositions, to that of Ralph Towner whose classical and 12 string guitar original works have engaged music lovers for over 50 years, of the group Oregon or the 1998 ECM document *A Closer View* with Gary Peacock which has all originals by Towner.



*The range of the guitar can go from the playing of Joe Morris (above), where he can play lyrical, rhythmical, or free... to that of Ralph Towner (below) whose classical and 12 string guitar original works have engaged music lovers for over 50 years...*

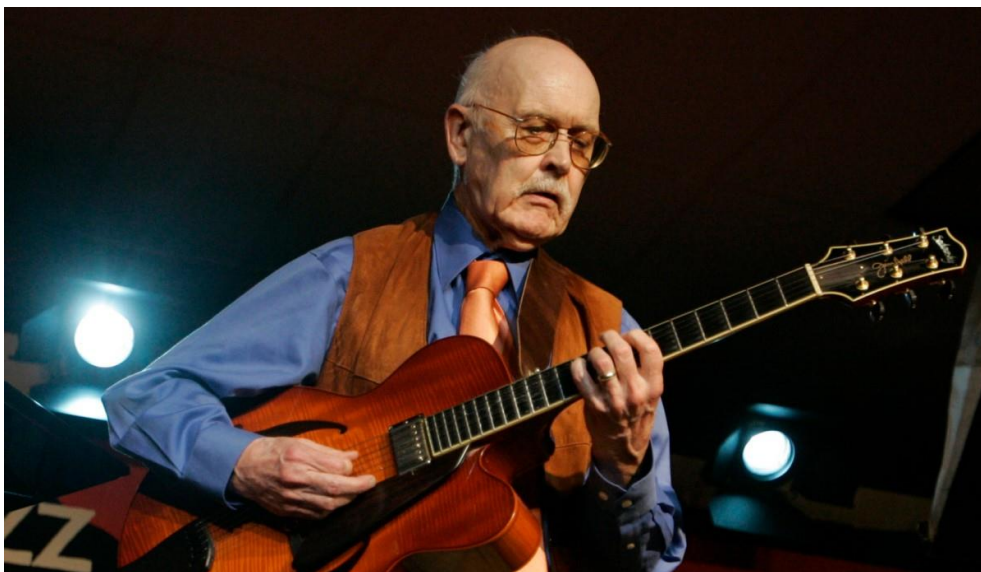


You also have the guitar interpretations of the works of classic composers such as Duke Ellington or Thelonious Monk. One is that by Miles Okazaki (Work) 6CD, which is the first recording of Monk's entire catalogue on a single solo instrument. It took a guitar to do it.



*Miles Okazaki: the first recording of Monk's entire catalogue on a single solo instrument...*

My four favourite guitarists are Jim Hall, Big Bill Broonzy, Ray Crawford with Ahmad Jamal, and Sonny Sharrock. To end with a cliché - the story of the guitar in jazz, is a never ending (glorious) story.



*The author's four favourite guitarists are Jim Hall (above) and (next page overleaf) Big Bill Broonzy, Ray Crawford with Ahmad Jamal, and Sonny Sharrock...*



*Big Bill Broonzy...*



*Ray Crawford...*



*Sonny Sharrock...*