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Jazz Guitar Talk

12 Great jazz guitarists discuss jazz guitar education

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From Chris Standring

www.ChrisStandring.com

www.PlayJazzGuitar.com

Hi there and welcome to Jazz Guitar Talk - boy it sounds like a radio show doesn't it? Well thanks for downloading this eBook, I sure hope it helps put some of your educational queries in perspective. What we have here is a small select group of musical perfectionists, all of whom have dedicated their lives to mastering the art of jazz guitar at the highest level. Jazz guitar instruction it seems is very personal and all who teach it usually teach their own methods and systems with fervor. It's also quite interesting to me how one great player can have a whole different slant on teaching jazz than another.

Because instruction seems so personal I wanted to invite some of the world's finest players and educators to answer exactly the same questions. This way we could find out what really was common to all and what was not. The answers were fascinating and it only confirmed how unique everybody is in the jazz guitar world. It is as it should be. Enjoy!



Pat Martino

www.patmartino.com

Photo by Jimmy Katz

(Taken from Mike Brannon's article: "*Pat Martino: Legend Among Us*"): "Pat Martino. A name that strikes anything from fear to sheer awe and reverence in musicians who know who this is. And what he's done and been through. And continues to go through. The name resonates a bridge between the true Jazz swing era throughout the organ trio groove and into the modern era and its (digital and electronic) resources of today".

1) In your expertise, what are the main facets of jazz guitar playing that a student should focus on more than any other in his or her developing stages?

Students should always experience an endless fascination of their own development. The instrument must always remain as childishly playful as it was when they initially chose it as their favorite toy.

2) What is it that separates a good player from a truly great jazz guitarist? Is it a gift or can you learn it?

A question like this is difficult to answer, maybe because it's similar as follows: "What is it that separates a good human being from a truly great human being? Is it a gift or can you learn it?" True learning results from intention, and demands faith, hope, trust, endurance, commitment and most of all fulfillment of itself with the failure of outside distractions and their success as meaningful experiences. I think that these are what ultimately separate the musician and the artist.

3) How important do you think sight reading is in your area of the music profession?

Sight reading is a legitimate part of the craft and is extremely necessary in certain formats. Jazz has spread into different areas of conditions, some of which interact in formal classical settings while others in more avant-garde formats; as well as everything in between. I think it's eventually decided by the individual, solely based on his or her professional comfort.

4) How important is TAB in your opinion?

I think TAB is useful for certain teachers and students. Personally I've never used it.

5) As a professional player is there any one area of your playing that you concentrated on as a student that there is never any call for?

I've always enjoyed studying different kinds of music, and there are a number of areas that

I've rarely had the opportunity to enjoy in public performance. A good example is the recording project "Fire Dance". Its topic was based upon Indian ragas. The last time I enjoyed something similar to it was recorded 30 years prior on one of my earlier albums; "Baiyina". In both cases neither of these were performed publicly.

6) Is there a particular area of traditional jazz education that you have disagreed with and which you think should be avoided?

I don't think that anything in jazz education should be avoided, but I do feel that certain forms of instruction can be broadly expanded. Jazz has a unique psychology and quite a number of these elements should be included in its instruction. I disagree with jazz education seen as a marketable package solely designed to prepare its students to enter the "music business" alone. Jazz and music in a broader sense can also be used as a tool to better ones physical and spiritual perspectives in multiple ways and can move to a much great inner and outer success. Again, I think that depends on the individuals intentions.

7) Is there a facet of jazz guitar education that you might be personally known for? In other words if a student came to you for musical inspiration, what might he or she get from you that they might not get from another source?

The geometry of the guitar. A blueprint that immediately reveals the instruments profundity.

8) What musicians, books or educational material turned your musical world around as a developing artist?

As far as the musicians; Elliot Carter, John Coltrane, Wes Montgomery, Olivier Messiaen, Johnny Smith, Aaron Copland, Hank Garland, Miles, Wayne, Herbie, Ron and Tony..... etc., etc. This can go on and on! In books; "A Course In Miracles"; brought about by Helen Schucman and William Thetford, "Gödel, Escher, Bach" by Douglas R. Hofstadter are two of them but once again: etc., etc.; there are many others.

9) Is it dangerous to practice too much? If so what do you think happens?

For me the word practice suggests being separate from the event. It's like the anticipation of something that hasn't happened yet. I've come to be more relaxed about these things, and do the best I can under any circumstances.

10) What advice would you give to a jazz guitar student looking to enter the music profession?

My advice is to be persistent, to remain focused on the moment. To pay attention to all the beneficial things that come forth along the way. There's a good in everything.

11) Where in your opinion is jazz guitar headed? Is there any new vocabulary to be found?

I don't think I'm qualified to determine where it's headed. Too many great players are moving in different directions simultaneously. Quite some time ago I found a new vocabulary that helped me greatly; (the use of the augmented and diminished parental forms). I'm sure this will continue to happen with others in different ways again and again.

12) What ambitions and goals do you have right now in your musical world?

To remain focused on each precious moment, and to continuously plant the seeds. In time they shall flourish in their own special way.

13) Any other comments?

Music is much more than just a craft. It's the key to a doorway that leads toward betterment.



Steve Khan

www.stevekhan.com

In a special issue of Japan's "JAZZ LIFE" magazine, they selected Steve Khan as one of the 22 All-time Greatest Jazz Guitarists. Steve's career is well documented. He has worked with the Brecker Bros, Donald Fagen, His solo albums are well known in the jazz world including: Two For The Road - 1977 Tightrope - 1977 Alivemutherya - 1978 The Blue Man - 1978 Arrows - 1979 Collection - 1980 Evidence - 1981 Eyewitness - 1981 Modern Times - 1982 Casa Loco - 1983 Local Color - 1987 Helping Hand - 1987 Public Access - 1990 Let's Call This - 1991 Headline - 1992 Crossings - 1994 Got My Mental - 1997 You Are Here - 1998

In your expertise, what are the main facets of jazz guitar playing that a student should focus on more than any other in his or her developing stages?

Unless one is exceptionally gifted, and comes to this music being able to simply "**hear**" everything, the learning process can be long and tedious. When one is **developing** I think it would be a tremendous help to locate a really good teacher. That does **not** always mean someone who **plays great**. You want to find someone with an **organized method**, an **approach** on how to get from point 'A' to point 'B.' Rather than jumping to learning the specific **language** and **vocabulary** or the Jazz idiom, I think one should begin by learning the basic scales and modes and how they correspond to the common chord forms one is going to encounter. Then, I would try to pick **simple harmonic problems** (chord changes) to negotiate by **linking** these scales/modes while confining them to an **area** of the guitar with no more distance than **4 frets**. While doing this, I would concentrate on mastering the **guide tones** for your first level/layer of accompaniment. It's essential to be a good accompanist.

What is it that separates a good player from a truly great jazz guitarist? Is it a gift or can you learn it?

Firstly, I don't know that one should approach being a Jazz musician with such a narrow focus, meaning to simply think of themselves as a Jazz guitarist. One should think well beyond their instrument. In other words, **BE A MUSIC-MAKER**. The music should always be bigger than any one player. It's great if one can be a virtuoso because it will certainly help in your ability to express your ideas, but it is not an essential component to being a great music-maker. To contribute something great to the music, one must be involved in **MUSIC** that, in the end, transcends the physical part of playing any one particular instrument. The players that can do this separate themselves from that which is ordinary.

One can learn to be a music-maker, it might take time, but I believe it comes from developing the ability to **LISTEN** to what is going on around you and to contribute to that in varying ways. Sometimes, playing nothing, **using the silences** can be the best contribution.

How important do you think sight reading is in your area of the music profession?

Any of **the fundamental skills of musicianship** are **essential**! That said, there are countless cases of musicians who have contributed great things to the genre who knew next to nothing about music theory, nor could they read a single note. However, those types of players are just **gifted beyond belief**. They come to their instruments and this music with the ability to **hear** everything. In the end, for all the basic skills one can work at, when making music, it all comes back to being able **to hear something**.

There is no simple solution for **improving your ability to read music** on the guitar! Like many things in life, the more you do it, the better you will be at it. I suppose that there are some simple suggestions I could make:

[a] **Don't get discouraged!** Reading is **not** easy on the guitar. We have our own sets of problems to overcome. Not the least of which is that the same note can appear in up to 4 places on the neck. So, this alone makes split-second decisions all the more difficult. So, with more experience, practice, the better you will get at it.

[b] **Doing some transcribing** will actually help, only in reverse. By learning to **write what you hear**.....you end-up learning **to hear/see what is written**. It becomes especially effective to write out melodies you like, to **tunes you don't know!!!** This can be more important for you than writing out solos per se.

[c] Practice reading with a metronome, but, only go as fast as the speed at which you can actually **READ** the music. So, if it means slowing it down to Q=60 then start there!!!! But,

the key is that you must be **READING the** music.....processing what you see in your mind. Don't always associate 'reading' with having to play a **Charlie Parker head** or "**Flight of the Bumble Bee**".....in most cases, it is not so difficult.

[d] If you can, purchasing the book "**MELODIC RHYTHMS FOR GUITAR**" (William Leavitt/Berklee) might help you. It is organized in a very simple way and helps one to read 8th-note sub-divisions well and in many of the most played keys. As an exercise this might really help you in **visualizing intervals.....the movement of melodic intervals!!!**

[e] The problem with our instrument, the guitar, is we **don't begin to play learning to read FIRST!** We learn **to play** first, and that creates problems because sometimes we can even learn to play 'well' without actually knowing what we're doing. Then, if and when we are forced to learn to read, that becomes a big problem. On the positive side, one can do very well by knowing how to **read chord symbols** which **IS**, for all intents and purposes, what a guitar is going to be doing most of the time!!!

How important is TAB in your opinion?

For quite some time now, publishers have been concerned with making Jazz guitar books **Rock friendly**. That is to say, to try and make this music not so frightening for players who simply want to improve, without learning to **read**, nor to be forced to learn too much about **music theory**. So, **TAB** has become a **necessary evil**. You cannot get a Jazz guitar book published today without it. For me, as one who has had 5 books published, it's a total pain-in-the-ass!!! Mostly because it takes up huge amounts of space, which could be better put to use sharing more information.

As a professional player is there any one area of your playing that you concentrated on as a student that there is never any call for?

Actually, **no!!!** The guitar is such an active part of so many genres of music, and I was attracted to many of them. Apart from Jazz, I always loved **R&B** and the **Blues**. But, how could one not appreciate the great, great players in **Country music**, **Bluegrass**, **Flamenco** and **Brazilian** music and **Classical**? What one could know on the instrument is endless, so I obviously had to narrow my focus. But, in my life as a musician, I believe that, at one moment or another, everything that I've ever learned has come into play.

Is there a particular area of traditional jazz education that you have disagreed with and which you think should be avoided?

Yes!!! I don't like when some educators become too **RIGID** about what a young player has to know. I don't like it when some educators, and really great ones too, seem to only focus on music that was recorded **BEFORE** ca. 1963.

Is there a facet of jazz guitar education that you might be personally known for? In other words if a student came to you for musical inspiration, what might he or she get from you that they might not get from another source?

It's a little hard for me to answer this, but since my "**EYEWITNESS**" recording in '81, students have come to me to try and understand those aspects of music-making. But, with the publication of both "**CONTEMPORARY CHORD KHANCEPTS**" and the more recent "**PENTATONIC KHANCEPTS**" people come to me to gain a better mastery of those ideas. More than anything, I believe that students come to me because they have heard, or they know that I have **a system**, a most **organized approach to teaching improvisation**.

What musicians, books or educational material turned your musical world around as a developing artist?

Where the guitar is concerned, my favorite players, when I was first attempting to understand and learn about this music were: **Wes Montgomery; Kenny Burrell; Grant Green; and Jim Hall**. Of course, as time went on, I realized that the guitar was really a minor player in the pantheon of Jazz music and so I gravitated to the music of: **Miles Davis; John Coltrane; Sonny Rollins**; and all the wondrous and varied musicians who passed through their groups and went on to become leaders too.

One must keep in mind that, during the late '50s and early '60s there was **not** the scope and variety of books, videos and play-alongs which now exist and are just taken as common. There was no **REAL BOOK**; no **Jamey Aebersold** services; no **educational music videos**, no **Internet**. For the players of my generation, if you couldn't hear the music, transcribe the tunes, and the solos, or get them from friends, you just weren't going to get it!!! In this time, the player of today almost has no excuse for knowing many things because the information is just sitting out there, waiting to be plucked.

But, for someone who looking to go way beyond the specifics of music, and wants to enter the world of the philosophical, I would recommend: **Mick Goodrick's** book, "**THE ADVANCING GUITARIST**"! I would also recommend pianist **Kenny Werner's** book "**EFFORTLESS MASTERY**" and again it is for the philosophy!!! The spiritual part of learning to make music!!!

Is it dangerous to practice too much? If so what do you think happens?

The better question is how does one learn to get the most out of the time spent 'with a guitar in their hands'? For me, the answer is to set **SMALL GOALS.....SHORT-TERM GOALS**. That is to say, "something" which you can actually accomplish in a specific amount of time. This way, there is a **reward**, a tangible reward for your efforts. To seek to accomplish **HUGE general goals** makes all practice seem futile, a waste of time. One does **not** want to feel that

way!!!

To me, practicing is **NOT performing**, it is **NOT** making music with others. It is just trying to learn, to improve. So, for me there is no **Zen** state of being to enter. Try to focus on something very specific, and try to get better at it. Or to focus on something, a concept, which you might need to better understand.....and to make that concept a part of your being. The goal is that you do **NOT** want to be **thinking** about anything while you are actually **making music** with others! You just want to be **in the flow** of the music!!! That's the goal!!!

What advice would you give to a jazz guitar student looking to enter the music profession?

One, and perhaps most important of all, is **NEVER** give-up!!! Don't let go of your dreams!!! No matter how many times you are told that you are **NOT GOOD ENOUGH**, and countless other cruel critiques, just keep believing in yourself, in your humanity, in your abilities to communicate some part of that, and something good, something positive will eventually come of it. It is easy to be beaten-down and beaten-up by the things people say, or the circumstances that life throws at us, but, never allow such things to push you "out of the game!"

Two, simply try to reach the highest level of your own potential. Do not aim low, aim to be **the best** that **YOU** can be. I know that this sounds like a trite message from some jive self-help guru in an **Infomercial**, but it does have some merit. Measure yourself, and your work against the best that is out there. Don't settle for less in any aspect of your art form.

Three, each time you're about to play music, try to **envision** (perhaps even the night before) **just how things could go in their most perfect form**. Sometimes, these thoughts of great beauty can actually help you accomplish a small portion of your dream with your bandmates!!! It is perhaps an abstract approach but it can help to guide you from the inside out to those who listen.

No matter what, I would wish everyone success, but, **success on your own terms!!!**

Where in your opinion is jazz guitar headed? Is there any new vocabulary to be found?

To me, the future of Jazz guitar is in **very capable hands!!!** If one studies the history of this music, the entire genre, it becomes obvious that the guitar entered the picture relatively late. It was only **liberated** to play lines and solos long after a **style** and **vocabulary** had been long since established. So the instrument's initial innovators had to find ways to imitate what they were hearing the trumpets, saxophones, and the piano doing. There was no specific Jazz guitar vocabulary.

If one studies the development of the guitar in this genre, there can be no doubt that the guitar

was a harmonic and linear "tinker toy" when compared to the piano and the horn players! However, somewhere during '70s and '80s everything began to change. And I would have to say that some of the most important **MUSIC-MAKING** has been done by groups led by **GUITARISTS**. This would have been totally unthinkable during the '30s, '40's, '50s' and '60s. In many ways, the playing field has been leveled. But, on the instrument itself, there's a long ways to go.

What ambitions and goals do you have right now in your musical world?

Well, the process of **learning** in all areas of life is simply endless. So, there is **ALWAYS somewhere to go** from wherever you might find yourself at a given moment. It is easy to discover what you don't know, and to proceed accordingly. The pursuit of **excellence** (of doing something well, to the best of your abilities) is always just beyond one's grasp); and the truth is, you **NEVER** get there!!! There's always something left to do, to be explored. So, in a sense, there is little or no time for self-satisfaction. Sometimes, a pat on the back is all you can do, and then you must be on your way again to the next goal, the next destination. **Success** (whatever that might be relative to each one of us) should **never be** measured in terms of fame or stardom, for these are shallow and, in the end, meaningless pursuits. One must try to never be fooled by such things, or the people who are consumed with them, because it/they can only distract you from what is truly important. So, in answer to your question. **I just want to continue to get better as a music-maker**. That is what I am, that is what I strive to be - **a music-maker**.....I happen to make music with a guitar. It is **not** the other way around!!!

More than anything, right now I want to get myself recorded again as a leader, even if it means that I must self-finance the recording. If this becomes the case, it would be the **5th time** that I've had to do this!



Sid Jacobs

www.sidjacobs.com

After moving from Las Vegas to Los Angeles Sid Jacobs developed the curriculum for the Advanced Bebop and Jazz Guitar course at the Dick Grove School and the Jazz Guitar class at the Musicians Institute (MI and GIT), where he continues to teach. In 1991, his CD *It's Not Goodnight* was released. It is a straight-ahead blowing session featuring his original compositions. In 1998 Sid was the first North American jazz guitarist invited to perform in Argentina's "Guitars of the World" festival. In May of 2001 he was invited to perform at the Ankara Music Festival in Turkey. Some of the jazz artists with whom he has performed include Harold Land, Eddie Harris, Buddy Montgomery, Joe Diorio, Brad Mehldau, Larry Goldings and Javon Jackson.

1) In your expertise, what are the main facets of jazz guitar playing that a student

should focus on more than any other in his or her developing stages?

Melody. Learning tunes becomes much easier if you learn melodies by ear. A melody will stay with you if you learn it by heart. Accompaniment. With two simple versions (R,3,7/R,7,3) of the three basic chords (major, minor and dominant) one can navigate through the standards and start to play with people. This is an important part of developing as an improviser. And in those simple chord shapes are the guide tones necessary to make melodies where you can hear the changes.

2) What is it that separates a good player from a truly great jazz guitarist? Is it a gift or can you learn it?

Time. In the end everyone will know or have available the same information. Everyone has time. Everyone has a heartbeat. Time isn't learned, it's realized. In other words it's not an intellectual procedure but an awakening.

3) How important do you think sight reading is in your area of the music profession?

It is important to be literate if you want to write music, play anyone else's music or play in ensembles. But the craft of reading comes from a different part of the brain than creative improvising.

4) How important is TAB in your opinion?

I don't have an opinion. If it helps someone decipher notes, fine. Eventually, like the dots on your neck, they become inconsequential in the dark.

5) As a professional player is there any one area of your playing that you concentrated on as a student that there is never any call for?

Is there a call for jazz guitarists? If there is I must have missed it. The only reason to do anything is because you love it. In answer to that question I'd have to say everything.

6) Is there a particular area of traditional jazz education that you have disagreed with and which you think should be avoided?

I think that there is an incorrect mixing of aesthetics that creates more confusion than it helps. For example modal jazz uses scales and every chord has a chord scale. Schools have been taking this approach to understanding harmony and improvising and forcing it into every style of music. For example, this approach doesn't work well with bebop or music with lots of changes. As a matter of fact musicians who learn this way have a hard time with tunes that have lots of changes. If you look at the solos of the bebop masters you don't find scales but guide tones and embellishments of the guide tones. Beboppers enjoy lots of changes because they're not struggling with fitting scales into each chord that passes, just two notes.

7) Is there a facet of jazz guitar education that you might be personally known for? In other words if a student came to you for musical inspiration, what might he or she get from you that they might not get from another source?

I have some books and videos that some students might find helpful.

8) What musicians, books or educational material turned your musical world around as a developing artist?

I got to hear Joe Diorio and Ira Sullivan when I was growing up in Florida. They are a couple of master musicians that continue to be an inspiration. Joe told me about the Thesaurus of Scales and Melodic Patterns by Slonimsky, a book that Trane had worked out of.

9) Is it dangerous to practice too much? If so what do you think happens?

You can practice too much but you can't play too much.

10) What advice would you give to a jazz guitar student looking to enter the music profession?

Play as much as you can. When you play you will realize what you need to bring your thing into balance.

11) Where in your opinion is jazz guitar headed? Is there any new vocabulary to be found?

There is always fresh talent and great musicians to build upon what is strong and get rid of the rest. It has always been that way.

12) What ambitions and goals do you have right now in your musical world?

To play as much as possible.

13) Any other comments?

Music is a spiritual path. You deal with stepping aside and letting creativity or an inexplicable force flow through you. There is no greater joy.



Jack Wilkins

www.jackwilkins.com

Photo by Brian Kelly

Guitarist Jack Wilkins has been a part of the New York jazz scene for more than four decades. His flawless technique and imaginative chordal approach have inspired collaborations with Chet Baker, Sarah Vaughan, Bob Brookmeyer, Buddy Rich and many others. Benedetto and DiCarlo endorser and a professional guitarist for 40 years. In recent years, Wilkins has played at many international festivals and played with many jazz greats including Stanley Turrentine, Jimmy Heath, The Mingus Epitaph, 5 Guitars play Mingus (primary arranger) and bassist Eddie Gomez. Wilkins lives in Manhattan. He teaches at The New School and Manhattan School of Music. He was recently invited to judge the Monk Institute Guitar Competitions in Washington. He also conducts seminars and guitar clinics, both in New York and abroad. His Latest CD'S "REUNION" {Chairoscuro} "HEADING NORTH" {String Jazz} and the Video "CAFE BENEDETTO" {Mel Bay} are all currently available

1) In your expertise, what are the main facets of jazz guitar playing that a student should focus on more than any other in his or her developing stages?

I don't think that the focus should be 'jazz guitar playing' per say but musical development first. A student should learn as many fundamentals as possible. Concentrate on getting a good sound, learning to read, learning theory, developing ear training. If a student learns these things first, they can advance much more quickly In simpler terms, make the guitar an instrument!

2) What is it that separates a good player from a truly great jazz guitarist? Is it a gift or can you learn it?

One can learn most anything if you put your mind to it if it's not out of your physical realm. To be a true artist is something else however. I would say don't even think about it. If you are a true artist, you may not even be aware of it.

3) How important do you think sight reading is in your area of the music profession?

Not as much as it used to be when a lot of work was live TV and radio or some band with different featured acts. These days you can get a chance to look over your part before you need to perform.

4) How important is TAB in your opinion?

I don't think tab is anything one way or the other. It's not a bad thing but it really doesn't help

too much either. You still have to learn the rhythms. It's a lot easier to learn how to read for real. One thing in favor of tab is the occasional chord voicing that needs to be played in a specific place.

5) As a professional player is there any one area of your playing that you concentrated on as a student that there is never any call for?

No, everything contributes to a more professional understanding. Even if you don't play something for years, it's part of your vocabulary.

6) Is there a particular area of traditional jazz education that you have disagreed with and which you think should be avoided?

I think play along records are a little silly. I wouldn't say to be avoided but not taken too seriously as there is no interaction and you stop listening to the real players if you spend too much time with play along.

7) Is there a facet of jazz guitar education that you might be personally known for? In other words if a student came to you for musical inspiration, what might he or she get from you that they might not get from another source?

Probably chord and melody playing as I'm pretty well schooled in that area.

8) What musicians, books or educational material turned your musical world around as a developing artist?

I guess Johnny Smith, Clifford Brown, Bill Evans and many others. The one book I would pick is John Mehegan's "Jazz Improvisation" "Tonal and Rhythmic Principles" Book #1.

9) Is it dangerous to practice too much? If so what do you think happens?

If you practice the wrong things or are very tight when you practice. You can hurt your hands with too much tension. Patience is the key!

10) What advice would you give to a jazz guitar student looking to enter the music profession?

Be as experienced as possible and don't be so sure you know everything. Always room for more learning.

11) Where in your opinion is jazz guitar headed? Is there any new vocabulary to be found?

I don't know as jazz guitar has so many different areas now. There's always something or someone doing new things however.

12) What ambitions and goals do you have right now in your musical world?

Same as always and that's to play as good as possible and continue learning.

13) Any other comments?

Treat the instrument with care. Not just the guitar itself but the music. It's a glorious thing to be able to play and express yourself. It can be learned with care, patience, and understanding.



Mike Clinco

www.michaelclinco.com

Mike Clinco's musical journey began at eleven years old when he first started playing guitar. In 1977 his first jazz gig was with Ella Fitzgerald and the Nelson Riddle Orchestra. In 1980, he joined Henry Mancini's west coast touring band and for the next 14 years enjoyed working with great players and orchestras all over the country. Over the last 25 years, Mike has managed to juggle multiple road gigs traveling all over the world. He continues to play with various ensembles in the Los Angeles area and has been writing music for film and television.

1) In your expertise, what are the main facets of jazz guitar playing that a student should focus on more than any other in his or her developing stages?

I think listening to great players (on all instruments) phrase is really the most important.

2) What is it that separates a good player from a truly great jazz guitarist? Is it a gift or can you learn it?

Feel, time and swing is what separates a machine from a master of jazz. We all have this gift to create. When we take ego out of the mix, then I believe we can really contribute.

3) How important do you think sight reading is in your area of the music profession?

Have as many tools as you can to make yourself a complete musician. Sight reading becomes a daunting task if you wait until its too late. Put in the time and you'll reap the rewards.

4) How important is TAB in your opinion?

TAB serves a purpose if you are teaching kids that don't want to learn the staff. There a certain notations in tab that are specific to guitar nuances especially in rock.

5) As a professional player is there any one area of your playing that you concentrated on as a student that there is never any call for?

No! I used to (and still do) practice in front of the television. Any interaction with your instrument is good and beneficial. It's all about creating a relationship with your axe.

6) Is there a particular area of traditional jazz education that you have disagreed with and which you think should be avoided?

We all process information differently and my teachers had their approach. You can always find something worthwhile to use.

7) Is there a facet of jazz guitar education that you might be personally known for? In other words if a student came to you for musical inspiration, what might he or she get from you that they might not get from another source?

I've always felt that I had a good sense of time and feel. Students who want to become better compers and accompanists may be able to glean something from me. I have found that this is not as important to young players as it is to older ones.

8) What musicians, books or educational material turned your musical world around as a developing artist?

There are so many great musicians that have had a profound influence on me. Certainly Miles, Coltrane, Bill Evans, Debussy, Puccini to name a few. Two teachers that stand out in my education are Charlie Banacos and Walter Sharf.

9) Is it dangerous to practice too much? If so what do you think happens?

I think everyone is different. It depends on what you spend your time on. Playing a gig is practicing but practicing isn't playing a gig.

10) What advice would you give to a jazz guitar student looking to enter the music profession?

You can go one of three ways:

- a) You can take all work (clubs, casuals, roadwork) that might not be what you want.
- b) You can get a day gig and just play jazz for the esthetic pleasure.
- c). Or you might be the next Wes Montgomery if you have that much talent.

11) Where in your opinion is jazz guitar headed? Is there any new vocabulary to be found?

There's always new horizons in the arts. Listen to John Scofield. He's always moving forward.

12) What ambitions and goals do you have right now in your musical world?

My goal is to keep composing and playing on my projects. It is very satisfying to produce music that finds its way to public performance and the royalties are a nice bonus.

13) Any other comments?

Jazz guitar has been one of my loves from the time I was a teenager. I was influenced by local players (Joe Pass, Barney Kessel) and Midwest and east coast icons like Wes Montgomery, Grant Green and Pat Martino. It is by far the most challenging and satisfying of the styles that I have pursued. I'm always finding new avenues and approaches to tunes that I have played for years. Anyone who seeks this path does so at his/or her own peril. It's not for the squeamish!



Richard Smith

richardsmithguitar.com

Richard Smith is a professor of music at the USC Thornton School of Music, one of the world's leading conservatories, where he chairs the Studio/Jazz Guitar department. He has eight solo recordings, the latest, SOuLIDIFIED went to number one on the Music Choice Contemporary Jazz charts.

1) In your expertise, what are the main facets of jazz guitar playing that a student should focus on more than any other in his or her developing stages?

a) Rhythm/time b) Scales c) Repertoire d) transcription e) Time management

2) What is it that separates a good player from a truly great jazz guitarist? Is it a gift or can you learn it?

I have seen miracles happen when students get the right instruction and inspiration. Hard work and a focus on fundamentals is a "gift" in itself.

3) How important do you think sight reading is in your area of the music profession?

Very important, almost essential. One trick to making it as a professional is to be as versatile and multi-skilled possible. Literacy is one of these skills.

4) How important is TAB in your opinion?

TAB does more damage than good to professional ambitions, it is a quick-fix crutch, unless

the only musicians that the student is going to work with in their career are TAB reading guitarists. The most important thing NOT to do, is limit your options.

5) As a professional player is there any one area of your playing that you concentrated on as a student that there is never any call for?

Great question! Absolutely not. It seems that a professional career is so demanding that one will probably use it all at some point.

6) Is there a particular area of traditional jazz education that you have disagreed with and which you think should be avoided?

From my observations, music schools are for the most part vocational institutions for classical musicians, and outlets for jazz purists. The only way most jazz musicians become professors is to convince a committee of classical musicians how similar jazz music is to classical music. In general, jazz instructors adopt the purist sensibilities of their classical counterparts because that is the mold that they try to fit into. That is doing a huge disservice to the art and spirit of jazz, and this is one reason why the guitar doesn't enjoy a larger role in higher music education. In learning jazz, do not limit yourself to any particular area, learn it all!

7) Is there a facet of jazz guitar education that you might be personally known for? In other words if a student came to you for musical inspiration, what might he or she get from you that they might not get from another source?

I like to teach my students the skills they need to become professional guitarists. The skills they need to win auditions, do tours, make records. That generally means contemporary styles (R&B, Latin, pop) and versatility (various guitars and effects). But it also means professional life-skills.

8) What musicians, books or educational material turned your musical world around as a developing artist?

The Mickey Baker Guitar books one and two. Lessons with Joe Diorio and Jack Petersen. Miyamoto Musashi "A Book of Five Rings" Which is related to Zen and the Bushido code. Surrounding myself with serious, talented and positive musicians.

9) Is it dangerous to practice too much? If so what do you think happens?

I have grown up, studied and attended school with some really great musicians and they all practiced around 5 to 7 hours a day. The definition of a prodigy is someone who can sit and focus on one task for many hours at a time. I think this is important, and it has always been one of my biggest challenges!

10) What advice would you give to a jazz guitar student looking to enter the music profession?

There has never been a better time to be a professional musician, as long as ones mind is open to all forms of jazz music, the opportunities abound.

11) Where in your opinion is jazz guitar headed? Is there any new vocabulary to be found?

This is the most exciting thing about jazz guitar - I am always so blown away with the variety of approaches and styles that keep popping up. Style is only limited to ones imagination. Audiences love innovators.

12) What ambitions and goals do you have right now in your musical world?

Keep playing and writing my own music of course! I would also like to contribute to a fundamental change in all our education system that puts guitar classes on par with band, orchestra and choir programs.

13) Any other comments?

Find your passion, Lose your fear, Dream big, Talk Small, Work Hard... In your dreams, so shall you become.



Jeff Richman

www.jeffrichman.net

Jeff Richman grew up in Los Angeles and then Hawaii. Influenced by pop, R&B, blues and rock music of the 70's. Fell in love with Jeff Beck's guitar playing as well as Led Zeppelin, Cream and Jimmy Hendrix. Jeff went to Berklee College of Music in the mid '70's and learned about jazz. He had Mick Goodrick and Pat Metheny as teachers (among many other great ones). Heard lots of live music in those years. Lived in NYC for three years. Currently living in Los Angeles where he does a fair amount of studio work, teaching and live gigs. Jeff has released 12 solo albums, most recently produced and arranged a CD for "Tone Center" Records called *"A Guitar Supreme featuring many guitarists playing Coltrane's music"*.

1) In your expertise, what are the main facets of jazz guitar playing that a student should focus on more than any other in his or her developing stages?

Playing and learning jazz standards by yourself and with other players, transcribing solos, working on a good swing feel, listening to live and recorded jazz.

2) What is it that separates a good player from a truly great jazz guitarist? Is it a gift or

can you learn it?

How to use the 'spaces' in music to develop your phrasing and time feel.

3) How important do you think sight reading is in your area of the music profession?

Very important, helps to organize your thoughts on form, tempo.

4) How important is TAB in your opinion?

Not very....it has been helpful to me only for country guitar finger picking (ala Jerry Reed) where you need to know which notes are played on open strings.

5) As a professional player is there any one area of your playing that you concentrated on as a student that there is never any call for?

Not that I can remember...it all comes into 'play'.

6) Is there a particular area of traditional jazz education that you have disagreed with and which you think should be avoided?

Memorizing too many 'licks'

7) Is there a facet of jazz guitar education that you might be personally known for? In other words if a student came to you for musical inspiration, what might he or she get from you that they might not get from another source?

I'm known for working on a modern approach to playing jazz standards. I can also give direction in composition for the contemporary jazz idiom.

8) What musicians, books or educational material turned your musical world around as a developing artist?

Miles Davis, Weather Report, Herbie Hancock, Monk, Parker, Coltrane etc...I like the Hal Crook book called "How To Improvise"

9) Is it dangerous to practice too much? If so what do you think happens?

Sometimes, There has to be a period where one practices a lot. But then you need to be playing a lot. You also need to stop playing and practicing to draw some inspiration from life.

10) What advice would you give to a jazz guitar student looking to enter the music profession?

To have other sources of 'happiness' so as not to let any rejection to get you too down, because it will happen. You need to have the uncompromising desire for music.

11) Where in your opinion is jazz guitar headed? Is there any new vocabulary to be found?

There is still a great future for jazz guitar...many beautiful guitarists always to listen for!

12) What ambitions and goals do you have right now in your musical world?

To actually do less teaching, more playing, composing, producing and recording.



Mark Stefani

www.visionmusic.com

Mark Stefani has taught guitar and bass professionally for over thirty years, with a background that includes blues, jazz, and classical music. He founded the Vision Music educational website in 1997, which features lessons by top jazz guitarists (George Benson, Jimmy Bruno, Robert Conti, Hank Garland, Henry Johnson, etc.), the most popular jam session on the web, "*Jam Central Station*", plus numerous compositions and 'how to' articles. He conducts the 'Lessons by Mail' correspondence program, and writes columns for both Just Jazz Guitar and Jazz Improv Magazines.

1) In your expertise, what are the main facets of jazz guitar playing that a student should focus on more than any other in his or her developing stages?

Everything comes down to what you can play, regardless of technical ability or theoretical knowledge. Therefore, having a vocabulary of tunes and the ability to improvise using 'real world' jazz language are critical areas of focus, even in the earliest stages of development. My motto is to only practice something that you would actually play for someone, which allows the specific facets of jazz guitar to naturally evolve. I should also mention how important I think it is for a jazz musician to have a solid blues foundation, because blues is the very life blood of jazz.

2) What is it that separates a good player from a truly great jazz guitarist? Is it a gift or can you learn it?

All great players have one thing in common, a powerful work ethic. While natural talent can be endlessly debated, there are numerous stories of players who were poor improvisers early in their careers, yet rose to the occasion through sheer determination and love for the music. Some, like Wes Montgomery and Charlie Parker, became recognized as leading jazz innovators. You have no control over the talent or gift that you were born with, but you have total control over how hard you're willing to work, and therefore your eventual destiny as a successful jazz artist.

3) How important do you think sight reading is in your area of the music profession?

Sight-reading is an important skill, one that many guitarists lack. It's not being able to read the notes themselves, but understanding timing and phrasing that is most significant for jazz. Since having a good ear is so critically important for jazz evolution, transcribing is the perfect way to become a better reader. Learn to read and write what you hear.

4) How important is TAB in your opinion?

Visual aids have always been important for guitarists, because we play an instrument that is visual by nature, and one that's tough to sight-read due to all the potential areas to play any given note. Tablature, contrary to what some traditional educators may think, is not some invention by rock guitarists too lazy to read music. TAB actually dates back several centuries to early lute and classical guitar music. However, it should represent an aid, NOT a substitute for reading music.

5) As a professional player is there any one area of your playing that you concentrated on as a student that there is never any call for?

Yes. The most useless areas of study are those that are isolated from others in an abstract manner. For instance, when you play music, you use many senses, like the ear, the mind, your physical technique, vision, etc., simultaneously. Superior areas of study are those that address these senses collectively. Arranging and transcribing are excellent examples. Inferior practice is when you isolate just theory, or just technique, or just ear training, without the others involved. Since there's never any call to use only one sense when you play music, it only makes sense to involve them all when you study. You might say that I learned this lesson the hard way.

6) Is there a particular area of traditional jazz education that you have disagreed with and which you think should be avoided?

Definitely. The over-emphasis on scales, modes, and arpeggios at the expense of 'real-world' language. This is analogous to studying the English alphabet in the vain quest to write a good book or to give a memorable speech. Scales shouldn't be avoided altogether, but their emphasis should be reduced in a big way. Aspiring jazz students see scales as a source of freedom. In reality they can represent a prison instead. The best jazz guitarists historically knew little about scales.

7) Is there a facet of jazz guitar education that you might be personally known for? In other words if a student came to you for musical inspiration, what might he or she get from you that they might not get from another source?

I am referred to as "Coach" by my students, who see me as someone who provides a path based on my mentors, like Wes, George Benson, Oscar Peterson, Charlie Parker, John

Coltrane, Miles Davis, and many others. While I can dispense raw musical information as well as any instructor, providing an inspiring path is my primary goal.

8) What musicians, books or educational material turned your musical world around as a developing artist?

While I've had numerous mentors and educational influences, including many books, I'd have to cite pianist Oscar Peterson, guitarist George Benson, and my late father as my three main sources of inspiration, and the ones most responsible for pointing me in the right direction as an evolving jazz artist.

9) Is it dangerous to practice too much? If so what do you think happens?

How much is too much would vary from individual to individual. Certainly the great players exhibited a level of obsession with long hours of study that ended up being responsible for their achievements. Much depends on what you practice. For instance, areas like composing, arranging, and transcribing may not represent a high level of physical study, yet the case can be made that these are some of the most productive ways that our time can be spent. So the only danger I see would involve practicing something redundant and uninspiring. In that case what can happen is that you may lose your motivation to study. Quality time is the goal.

10) What advice would you give to a jazz guitar student looking to enter the music profession?

Making a living in music is no easy task, and jazz guitar is a small niche when compared with the spectrum of guitar related to other genres. The key lies in being open-minded and versatile regarding the music business in general. If you wish to perform as a jazz guitarist, develop the ability to go solo, duo, and trio as well as 4-5 piece ensembles. Consider teaching, because as long as you remain humble to the art and are willing to share what you've learned and continue to learn, it's a good source of steady income.

11) Where in your opinion is jazz guitar headed? Is there any new vocabulary to be found?

Depending on how the genre is defined, jazz has always embraced change. In a sense, it's the ultimate "fusion" music. I do believe that it's critically important to acquire core jazz language in any quest to create something new and innovative. The blends are unlimited, especially if it involves influences from non-guitar sources.

12) What ambitions and goals do you have right now in your musical world?

My goal as a creative musician is to continue composing, recording, and sharing the results with fans, colleagues, and students. As an educator, my ambition is to be the best instructor in the world.

13) Any other comments?

I'd like to thank my very good friend, Chris Standring, for what he's doing for jazz guitar, and for the opportunity to share my thoughts with others.



Larry Koonse

www.jazzcompass.com

Larry is an LA based jazz guitarists that has recorded and/or toured with the following artists: Mel Torme, Terry Gibbs, Bob Brookmeyer, Billy Childs, David Friesen, Warne Marsh, Cleo Laine, Jimmy Rowles, Lee Konitz, Alan Broadbent, Ray Brown, Bill Perkins, Toots Thielemanns, Bob Sheppard, Charlie Haden and many other jazz artists. He is currently a member of Billy Child's landmark chamber sextet which just recorded a CD featuring Brian Blade and is a featured soloist on Charlie Haden's new release "Land of the Sun". Larry has two CD's as a leader ("Americana" and "Dialogues of the Heart" and four CD's as a co-leader (with the Los Angeles Jazz Quartet). Larry has been a full-time faculty member at the California Institute of the Arts since 1990.

1) In your expertise, what are the main facets of jazz guitar playing that a student should focus on more than any other in his or her developing stages?

There should be an emphasis on studying the multi-layered connections between harmony and melody. Learning the chord scales and arpeggios by rote is a good start and then studying voice-leading (Bach chorales are a good source) by theory and by ear is the next step. The sound that a student produces should also be emphasized a lot more as your identity is contained in your tone. I work on my sound for about an hour at the beginning of each day.

2) What is it that separates a good player from a truly great jazz guitarist? Is it a gift or can you learn it?

Great jazz guitarists always have a sense of being in the moment and sounding fresh. Taking chances and having an identifiable sound is also a hallmark of the greats. I think all the great jazz guitarists were dedicated to refining their own personal style without falling victim to fashion and trends.

3) How important do you think sight reading is in your area of the music profession?

Sight-reading skills are invaluable to the working sideman as it gives you quick access to information. Being a great sight reader does not make you a great musician though.

4) How important is TAB in your opinion?

TAB is a cop out. If you are constantly using TAB as a crutch you will not be able to access music written for other instruments and it also makes a lot of the deep relationships in vertical and horizontal thinking invisible.

5) As a professional player is there any one area of your playing that you concentrated on as a student that there is never any call for?

I use everything. There is not one area of my study that was a waste. I overemphasized certain ways of practicing, e.g., working on speed with the metronome, but there was always something to learn from my mistakes.

6) Is there a particular area of traditional jazz education that you have disagreed with and which you think should be avoided?

Once you have a strong understanding of the basics of harmony I think it's important to start using your ears and start playing in real musical situations as soon as possible. Studying licks, scales, arpeggios, and any other "device" endlessly can ultimately stifle your own voice and lead to stagnation. Jazz education should include as much performance as 'class room study'. Also, it's important to remember that jazz is also about learning the rules in a highly disciplined way and finding your own way beyond those limitations. The whole emphasis on the 'tradition of the music' goes too far. Incorporate whatever elements feel right for you as an individual.

7) Is there a facet of jazz guitar education that you might be personally known for? In other words if a student came to you for musical inspiration, what might he or she get from you that they might not get from another source?

I like to incorporate right-brain exercises that work on all the aspects of music that are not emphasized enough e.g., your sound and how to develop it, phrasing, dynamics, flow, etc.

8) What musicians, books or educational material turned your musical world around as a developing artist?

Joe Pass guitar style was a great source of information. Seeing Andres Segovia when I was six was monumental. Hearing Julian Bream, Pat Metheny, Brad Mehldau, and Keith Jarrett live was also life changing. Playing with Charlie Haden also opened me up to a whole new realm of feeling and listening.

9) Is it dangerous to practice too much? If so what do you think happens?

It's only dangerous if bad things happen and those things are constantly reinforced without any recognition of it. I personally don't like to practice over three hours a day but other people have different internal mechanisms that drive them. It's a highly personal choice and each case has to be evaluated on its own merit.

10) What advice would you give to a jazz guitar student looking to enter the music profession?

Find what you love to do and do it the best you can. Versatility is an advantage only if it is part of something you love to do. If there is no true passion for any endeavor don't waste too much time with it.

11) Where in your opinion is jazz guitar headed? Is there any new vocabulary to be found?

The most important pursuit in this music is to find your identity, be true to it, and continually develop it. Clever licks, impressive technical feats, and even 'new vocabulary' do not necessarily push the art form ahead. There will always be new strong voices that emerge that are playing the same notes that we all play and move us in different ways.

12) What ambitions and goals do you have right now in your musical world?

I want to continue to develop and explore as an artist and be able to live in a place where my personal issues; insecurities, need to impress, fighting natural impulses, etc., stay out of the way of the process.

13) Any other comments?

Finding your own way of doing things is the highest art as long as it is done with sincerity, discipline, and the intention of looking inward.



Henry Johnson

www.henryjohnsonjazz.net

The Chicago-born guitarist began playing at age twelve. Johnson's musical roots run deep into gospel, blues, and jazz. He has performed and recorded with Nancy Wilson, Marlana Shaw, Dizzy Gillespie, Sonny Stitt, Freddie Hubbard, Grover Washington Jr., Stanley Turrentine, Ramsey Lewis, Joe Williams, Richie Cole, Terry Gibbs, organist Jimmy Smith, and many other jazz artists. His latest recording is called "Organic" - with Nancy Wilson. On A440 Music Group.

1) In your expertise, what are the main facets of jazz guitar playing that a student should focus on more than any other in his or her developing stages?

I have found that the most important thing to focus on is listening to and being submerged in

the music. Without this, you cannot develop a concept of what to play, how to play it, and what it should sound like when it's played correctly.

2) What is it that separates a good player from a truly great jazz guitarist? Is it a gift or can you learn it?

A good player can function well through musical situations, but a great player is in command of those musical situations. It can definitely be learned, or your favorite players would not have developed into the great artists that they became.

3) How important do you think sight reading is in your area of the music profession?

I think that being able to read music is an advantage because the world of written music is at your disposal. If you're working in the theatre industry, I think that sight reading is a must. I must also say that even though it would be preferred that you learn to read music, some of the greatest jazz artists could not read music.

4) How important is TAB in your opinion?

I feel that tab does a big service for the guitarists who do not read music, but still want to learn things from recordings and books. It's healthy to learn something however you get it.

5) As a professional player is there any one area of your playing that you concentrated on as a student that there is never any call for?

There wasn't for me because the areas I concentrated on were the ones I needed for the particular artist I was working with at the time. So, I use everything that I have learned thus far.

6) Is there a particular area of traditional jazz education that you have disagreed with and which you think should be avoided?

Just the areas where people are led to believe that they can learn to play jazz by learning scales, arpeggios, and modes. I can't tell you how many people I run into who cannot play a simple song, but can play all their scales, arpeggios, and know the modes.

7) Is there a facet of jazz guitar education that you might be personally known for? In other words if a student came to you for musical inspiration, what might he or she get from you that they might not get from another source?

I don't know what someone may or may not get from another source, I only know what they'll get from me. I teach students how to teach themselves. I don't want a student to look at me as the 'All Mighty Teacher' who knows everything. I teach them how to speak the jazz language so they can learn to say whatever THEY want to. I do not want them to imitate or play like me. I make them find and trust their own way of playing things.

8) What musicians, books or educational material turned your musical world around as a developing artist?

Musicians and recordings are what turned my world around as a developing artist. Listening to, and absorbing as much music as I can is something that I still seriously practice today. There is so much to learn, and not enough lifetime to do so. You'll always have something to work on. I also like reading the biographies of great artists for musical insights.

9) Is it dangerous to practice too much? If so what do you think happens?

I think that you can overdo anything if it's taken to an extreme. You can end up damaging your joints or getting carpal tunnel from repeating the same movements too many times. You also have to make sure to warm your muscles up before you jump into practicing or playing. Besides, your mind is only going to retain so much before it 'zones out' on you. At that point, you're just spinning your wheels because your mind can't process any more information, so go out to a movie or something.

10) What advice would you give to a jazz guitar student looking to enter the music profession?

Go out to see all the great guitarists in your area and all the musicians who come to your town as much as you can. Hearing jazz live has a great impact on you as well as listening to the classic jazz recordings. This also helps you to network with all the people who may be your future employers or employees.

11) Where in your opinion is jazz guitar headed? Is there any new vocabulary to be found?

Nobody knows where ANY type of music is headed these days. We can only hope that people keep discovering jazz so that it will continue to be played and heard for a long time to come. There is plenty of new vocabulary to be found in the old. People don't realize it sometimes, but there is nothing new left to be played. New discoveries are made when one studies things that are new to one's self. For example, if you've never understood the principles of Superimposition, that could be a whole new method of self discovery waiting for you to embark upon. What you come up with may be new to my ears because of the way that YOU choose to express what you've learned from Superimposition.

12) What ambitions and goals do you have right now in your musical world?

One, to take my music to as many people as I possibly can on a consistent basis. And two, continue to research, discover, and try new ways of expression on my instrument.

13) Any other comments?

Thank goodness for websites like this one, where people can log on to find out about what they love. Thanks, PlayJazzGuitar.com!



Pat Kelley

www.patkelley.com

Pat Kelley has recorded eight CDs as a leader, toured in more than thirty countries, worked as a Los Angeles studio guitarist on hundreds of sessions for records, television, commercials, and motion pictures, and composed more than one hundred songs that have been commercially recorded. Pat has worked with Natalie Cole, George Benson, Tom Scott, David Benoit, Rick Braun, Jeff Lorber, Richard Elliot, Dave Koz, Al Jarreau, Gregg Karukas, Ronnie Laws, Hubert Laws, Jose Feliciano, Eric Marienthal, Randy Crawford, Melissa Manchester, Burt Bacharach, and many more. Pat was the house guitarist for several years on the Merv Griffin, Pat Sajak, Joan Rivers, and Carol Burnett television shows. He has also performed with symphony orchestras in San Francisco, San Diego, Houston, Atlanta, Tulsa, Denver, San Antonio, Toledo, and Auckland. Pat holds a full time teaching position in the Studio/Jazz Guitar Department at the University of Southern California's Thornton School of Music in Los Angeles.

1) In your expertise, what are the main facets of jazz guitar playing that a student should focus on more than any other in his or her developing stages?

It requires a commitment to a combination of activities to develop into a serious and competent musician. Listening to music is probably the first step. We learn to speak mostly from listening to other people talk. The language of music has a lot of subtle magic that no one can really explain or teach. The reason a great many children of musicians become even better musicians than their parents is because of early exposure to music. The feel of music, phrasing, and melodic ability develops in the subconscious from an early age and then all through our lives. As we get older and study music we learn to hear melody, harmony, and rhythm in ways that we could never imagine at an earlier time in our development.

The fundamentals of music and mechanics of our particular instrument need to be mastered in order to have a free command of what we have learned to hear. This is the realm of scales, arpeggios, chords, melodic patterns, and music reading.

Developing a jazz repertoire is important not only for the purpose of making music with others and for others, but because learning songs allows us to explore the harmonic possibilities that make jazz a truly unique music.

2) What is it that separates a good player from a truly great jazz guitarist? Is it a gift or can you learn it?

I think there are those who have special God-given gifts for music. I also think that one is not able to fully recognize this without some work on the craft of playing an instrument. On a practical level, there is usually a great deal of study and practice that goes into developing the ability to play well enough to be a great player. It is a physical as well as mental activity much like tennis or other sports. Pete Sampras had to hit a million tennis balls to develop his ability to make that perfect stroke over and over again without thought. With practice and study, musicians can break free of the technical and analytical aspects of becoming a musician, and just react to each moment that the music presents. Truly great musicians transcend the notes and bring forth a unique feeling that touches the listener in a way that reminds us of the uniqueness of our humanity in relation to a force greater than ourselves. By that I mean that however we want to define it, there is a space, when we get out of our own way and deep into the music where some kind of magic happens that no one really understands.

3) How important do you think sight reading is in your area of the music profession?

In my career, sight-reading has been extremely important and has in many cases been a determining factor in getting the job. In addition to performing with my own group and as a solo guitarist, I am currently touring with Natalie Cole and David Benoit. Natalie has more than one hundred songs in her book, many with written single note lines that double big band horn lines and also some funk riffs and rhythm parts that are written in standard music notation. David Benoit's music also has a lot of written notes. Working as a regular band member on various television shows such as the Merv Griffin Show, the Pat Sajak Show, The Carol Burnett Show, and playing on all kinds of recording sessions, I have used my reading skills on a regular basis throughout my career.

Currently, as a full time faculty member of the Studio/Jazz Guitar Department at the University of Southern California's Thornton School of Music, I am constantly involved in reading and writing music. We make reading a high priority in our program.

4) How important is TAB in your opinion?

Tablature is important because there are so few guitarists who can read music. If you are writing guitar books it is important to include tablature. It is also useful as a tool to show more precise fingerings.

5) As a professional player is there any one area of your playing that you concentrated on as a student that there is never any call for?

Everything that I worked on as a student has some kind of relevance to my playing.

6) Is there a particular area of traditional jazz education that you have disagreed with and which you think should be avoided?

Sometimes jazz education gets stuck in a very traditional rut that doesn't leave room for

explorations of modern jazz and new ideas. I'm a big believer in having the knowledge of traditional jazz and still work now to learn standards that I don't know, but at the same time I see the need for young students to listen and learn music of their contemporaries.

7) Is there a facet of jazz guitar education that you might be personally known for? In other words if a student came to you for musical inspiration, what might he or she get from you that they might not get from another source?

I have developed an ability to move young improvisers from the world of modes and scales to a place of really playing the changes in a song. Good solid fundamentals go along with it. Materials are presented that I find practical and help students to make music right away. In his book *Effortless Mastery*, Kenny Werner stresses the importance of working on a smaller amount of material before moving on, and I agree with him that this is helpful to the learning process. I like to see a student learn to play some new ideas with ease in one position before moving on to master all the positions on the guitar where a pattern or scale can be played. In this way the ear has already been trained to hear the idea before learning to play it on another part of the fingerboard.

I also work with students on the subject of playing different, better, or alternate chord changes to songs and understanding commonly occurring chord progressions.

Above all, I want to encourage students to find their own voice and be engaged with music that moves them emotionally.

8) What musicians, books or educational material turned your musical world around as a developing artist?

When I was thirteen, I was introduced to some Howard Roberts Records. That really changed my life. I loved his swing and the songs with great melodies and chord changes. Shortly after that I also discovered Wes Montgomery, Johnny Smith, Jim Hall, Grant Green, and Joe Pass. Later I was into George Benson, Pat Martino, John McLaughlin, and Ralph Towner. Musicians other than guitarists that had a big impact were Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Freddie Hubbard, Herbie Hancock, Chick Corea, and Bill Evans.

9) Is it dangerous to practice too much? If so what do you think happens?

I'm not sure if I can answer this in a way that would apply to all players. A person's mental disposition has a lot to do with how much practice time is the right amount. Aside from physical injury such as some sort of overuse syndrome, one student may be intrigued or even possessed with the process of practicing while another may get burned out and lose enthusiasm before reaching full potential. I think there is a correlation between the time put into practicing and the level of accomplishment. I recommend the book *Zen Guitar* by Phillip Toshio Sudo (Random House) as a source of inspiration regarding practicing.

10) What advice would you give to a jazz guitar student looking to enter the music

profession?

Make the most of your early years. You want to be prepared to get the most out of your opportunities. Opportunities include learning from other players that you will encounter as you begin to work with other musicians. Your early preparation will have an exponential component to it. If you have done the work you had intended for yourself in the early years, your opportunities to play with more advanced musicians will be greater and you will have the ability and understanding to be able to take full advantage of the learning that can take place only in an environment of high level musical interaction. This will then push you to the next level of your musicianship and open up a further opportunity that is now available because of the previous experience. It works like compound interest in a savings account. Get started early and your chances for success will be much greater.

11) Where in your opinion is jazz guitar headed? Is there any new vocabulary to be found?

With twelve notes to use, it is remarkable that so much different music exists. There always seems to be some way to combine melodies, rhythms, and harmony to come up with something that sounds new. I don't know where it will go in the future. I hope that we go in a more positive direction in regards to music education in our schools so that we can have a better hope of having a musically educated society. I wish for a radio format not bound by the confining requirements that have been imposed by advertising and media consulting groups. There is some adventurous and inventive music being recorded that does not have a home on radio. The Internet has been a good thing for making CDs available that can't be found on radio or in most stores. I think radio listening over the Internet will increase, and more artful music will be available for the masses to discover.

12) What ambitions and goals do you have right now in your musical world?

After recording seven CDs in various instrumental formats, I want to record a new jazz quartet CD and a solo guitar CD this year. I plan to perform more on my own, do more producing, and further develop my teaching, coaching and mentoring abilities so that I can benefit young up and coming musicians.

13) Any other comments?

Music has its own rewards. Don't short change yourself by being in too much of a hurry. There is much to discover about music that will only be revealed when the time is right. I see it as a blessing that there will always be undiscovered territory to explore as long as I have the passion to embrace the challenge.



Bruce Forman

www.bruceforman.com

Bruce Forman is best known for his legato bebop-style phrasing, his inventive harmonic sense and great comping. His ability to work in a variety of settings keeps him in constant demand throughout the world.

1) In your expertise, what are the main facets of jazz guitar playing that a student should focus on more than any other in his or her developing stages?

- a) Repertoire: You must learn tunes, tons of them, and by that I mean the melody and the harmony.
- b) Vocabulary: you must learn and analyze the phrases of the masters, and then make them your own.
- c) Fundamentals of music and technique: (scales, arpeggios, theory)

2) What is it that separates a good player from a truly great jazz guitarist? Is it a gift or can you learn it?

A great player is expressive, has a great sound, has a fluency about their playing, can interact with all that is going on around them, and most of all, has a good (and solid) rhythmic feel to their playing.

3) How important do you think sight reading is in your area of the music profession?

I can't imagine anyone would choose to be illiterate. Music has been transcribed and archived, take advantage of that. Don't be lazy: dedicate a part of your practice time to this.

4) How important is TAB in your opinion?

Not

5) As a professional player is there any one area of your playing that you concentrated on as a student that there is never any call for?

I was fortunate to play with great players from the very beginning. My experiences dictated the focus of my study.

6) Is there a particular area of traditional jazz education that you have disagreed with and which you think should be avoided?

The emphasis on scales as ideas for improvisation instead of the melody and phrases from the

masters. I also think there is not nearly enough emphasis on rhythmic development and its priority in the overall scheme of things.

7) Is there a facet of jazz guitar education that you might be personally known for? In other words if a student came to you for musical inspiration, what might he or she get from you that they might not get from another source?

I try to simplify concepts, to keep the mind as free as possible so that hearing, feeling and intuition can take over. Everything is simple...it's just not easy!

8) What musicians, books or educational material turned your musical world around as a developing artist?

Listening to great players...that's the key!

9) Is it dangerous to practice too much? If so what do you think happens?

Only physically, be careful. Make your playing your practice and your practice your playing and you'll be OK. Never enough for me!

10) What advice would you give to a jazz guitar student looking to enter the music profession?

Welcome and good luck. Everything in this world is changing rapidly, be creative and honest with yourself.

11) Where in your opinion is jazz guitar headed? Is there any new vocabulary to be found?

I'm concerned with playing what I hear and like to hear. I try to stay open-minded and I look forward to being surprised about the future. It'll come no matter what I do.

12) What ambitions and goals do you have right now in your musical world?

To keep playing and to meet more great players and people.

13) Any other comments?

While there are many sources of info out there, nothing is more important than playing with people. Get out there and support the scenes where you live and help expand them. If you play this music, you have that responsibility.



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