

## TED GREENE: INTERVIEWED BY ALEXANDER ADLER — PART 2

**A:** You seem to be enjoying our sideroad away from your main story [Ted nods yes]. By the way, did you know that a lot of your references and preferences seem to be in the area of Black American Music? Am I wrong?

**TG:** No, you're right.

**AA:** Any understanding of why you came to feel this way?

**TG:** Sure, but a lot of it's just that music, that incredibly fine music, that one either loves or doesn't, due to 'no reason' or a whole bunch of reasons, every life being so different and all. And yet I can say that in my particular case, one other reason I was drawn to this music when I was young is that I learned that while black people may, in such huge numbers, have ended up here in the U.S. against their will due to one of the most hideous crimes possible--enslavement--they somehow kept at least some of their joy, rejoicing at just being alive and still having each other and being able to sing a song to make themselves feel better, to get through the day, and maybe even enjoy the night. Seemed so righteous to me in both good senses of the term.

And these onetime slaves once set free...their children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren and so on, having then gone on to revolutionize this country, revolutionize the world (long before rock'n'roll, way before rap). Just think of it. Heck, you've probably thought of it on your own. How it's all gone down. And that one of the very most powerful forces for a long time has been the music--the new forms of music that sprung up in the United States, as a result

of these extraordinarily musical people, these black people, interacting with each other and with other groups of people living in this country--as this wonderful energy forked out into 4 separate new

musics, 4 new forms of American Black Music: Blues \*\*\* Gospel \*\*\* Jazz \*\*\* Rhythm & Blues

[For r&b fans: in case you didn't know, a wild thing about rhythm & blue is that it comes out of all the three other forms! Which sure gets my vote and possibly explains its enormous appeal to those who found it--and still find it alluring. Of course there is also a healthy, sometimes huge, portion of Caribbean flavoring in certain types of r & b--of a different type than the Latin influences in jazz.]

Photo © Bob Barry

If you like things in 5's, add Boogie Woogie to the above-mentioned 4 styles; otherwise just think of the 'woogie as part of jazz or blues or r & b, or some combination of these. If you care to think of any of this at all.

**AA:** It's a monumental subject. I respect your involvement in it. And I'm just curious, are you 'winging' this particular breakdown of categories or is it something you've thought through?

**TG:** I'd broken it down once before actually, into these same 4 or 5 forms or styles, but had forgotten about it; and had never seen it quite so clearly until just now. That's the magic of the interview process--the questions stimulate lots of good thoughts and sometimes, a new clear way of seeing something. So, thanks.

**AA:** I'm definitely going to think about what you've brought up too. Now I'd like to ask you something I wanted to ask you about earlier which is, why you haven't pursued a recording career?

**TG:** I tried being a studio player, but that wasn't for me. I also recorded a solo album but it only sold maybe 50 to 100 copies in many of the 10-15 years it was available. It was displayed right on the counters of guitar stores where they sold my books but there was never much interest. Year after year. I figured, tough call, so what. I got over the disappointment. And truth is, I could understand the lukewarm response, because I seldom liked my playing either [laughs]. Not that I don't keep trying to. I haven't given up. These days, because friends, students, a few colleagues and a couple of family members have asked me to, I'm looking forward to at least attempting to satisfy their request for another recording or two. Yes indeed.

**AA:** *Since guitar players rave about your incredible tone, how about you just free associate now and talk about equipment you've used...and then anything else you want related to guitar, o.k.?*

**TG:** Sounds like fun. Let's see....my first pretty fine guitar was a Gretsch 6120 in 1960--those filtertron pick-ups were too tinny for my taste at the time tho' so I moved on to a Gibson ES-345 in 1962. It was visually so stunning, but I never could quite get the sounds I most wanted out of it either, even after years of experimenting. So after seeing two very fine players in a row, both of whom used and got really shockingly rich tone out of what I had previously thought of as a junk guitar--the Fender Telecaster--I acquired a '53 Tele in 1965. Other old Teles soon seemed to descend upon me. I found out you *could* get a horrible sound out of them--if you didn't set their controls well or work with the setup of these unlikely tone wonderpups. And they certainly *weren't* archtops let alone carvetops--nothing beats the carvetops for voluptotone. But they had their own rather highly appealing sound (actually a few sounds) which I fell in love with, a love affair that continues to this day.

Eventually, I wanted to try other sounds too, try to learn more, so I tracked down a 1st year ('52) Les Paul, and traded a '54 Tele for a '54 goldtop Les Paul; I also swapped another Tele for a 'black beauty' Les Paul as they were called back then. I really loved trading guitars with someone, where both of us were then happier as a result. It is a little bit of a lost art these days though my friends and I are still keeping it alive.

Being absolutely wild about Gibson archtops, I finally got a *beautiful* '50's blonde Byrdland which was so expensive even then that I had to trade the 345

and the 3 pickup black Les Paul for it (not a good move financially and I knew it, but my heart ran the show every now and again. Still does). But as exquisite as that Byrdland was in some ways, the scale length proved to be quite a bit too short for me and it fed back a lot at the fairly loud volumes I was playing at in those days. I also tried a huge Guild electric archtop with a gigantic neck, an early X-350. This fed back maybe worse than the Gibson. Oh well, back to the solid bodies I went. Actually all this time I had continued buying and selling old Telecasters (for those of you who care about such things: also some Nocasters, Broadcasters and a few Esquires as well). I was doing some guitar repair and gigs to supplement the teaching dough, to pay for all these things. My average was about a guitar a week and that 1st Tele cost \$135 if I remember correctly (about equivalent to maybe \$400 in today's \$, I'm guessing) not \$1350 or \$13,500. I hit the pawnshops *hard*. There were only a handful of guys in L.A. who cared enough about any of these old used guitars to take the time to bother chasing them down back then--so we weren't pushing the market up drastically. My thing was, I kept doing listening tests--many, many listening tests--you know, comparisons--trying to see what affected tone. I found out that the Fender Telecaster is one helluva tone machine and that there are many ways to get a fine sound out of it, at times superfine.

I found that there are 50 to 100 things to get right in setting up a guitar to play like a dream, and sound like an angel. The factory or builder usually gets a lot of them right for you. But there are virtually always at the least, some little things that can be done to make it play better, sound better. And I found out that sometimes these things, taken as a whole, can have a massive impact on the sound or the feel of a formerly sad guitar, transforming it into something that you just can't keep your hands off of. And these have to be tailored of course, to fit what a player wants the guitar to do, what style(s) the axe will be asked to deliver in, and what the particular instrument is capable of. Which is often more than we might initially suspect.

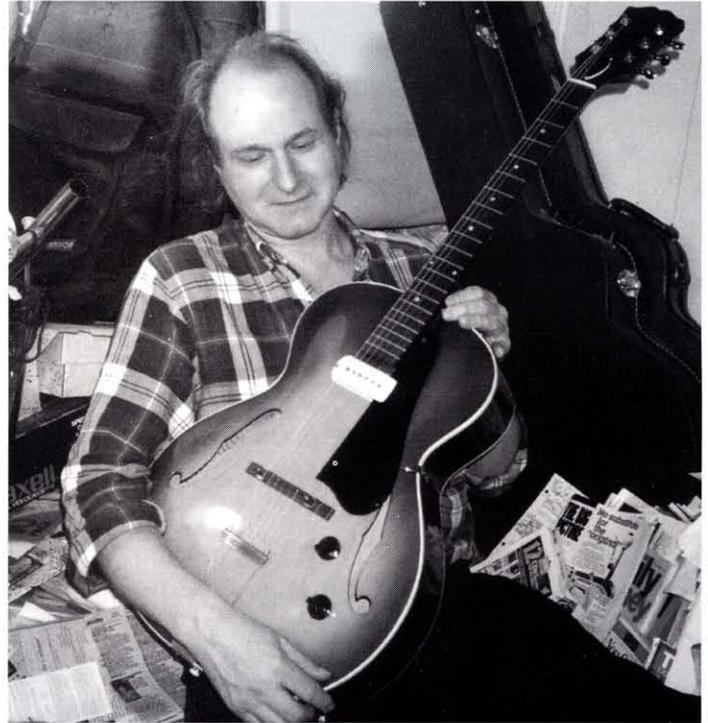
One other thing that became easy to notice was that prices depended on a host of things, and that it didn't hurt for me to know what these things were. Some sad guitars which were going unplayed were just screaming for a change of ownership, but were offered at a price that was not an accurate reflection of an active market, a price that hadn't produced a

sale for months, sometimes years. I knew, I made it my business to know back then, but convincing an owner in this situation was sometimes another story. A price on a guitar is only fair if there is market support. What others say it 'should' be worth--well--sometimes it just won't be sellable at that price. And so maybe some of you have run into colorful characters who say things like "well sir, it's a 40 year old Shtuckentookus. They're gettin' really collectible now; and should be goin' for a lot more than I'm askin' "[yeah, really 'collectible' especially because of the ' I'm from Sequoia ' neck on this origami body with the Bumblebee tuna can knobs]. I've met a few guys whose feet must've never touched the ground ever, even for one day, and who had especially festive ways of fooling themselves... "son, y 'asked me so I'm gonna tellya, I got this one from Methuselah's dad. And y'know they only made 7 of these lawn brown long ones. Yessir. So it really is still undervalued at my asking price of \$47 bazillion K plus your first born" [yeah..very good..seems fine..I'll have to consider it--though I saw one yesterday at Pup 'n' Taco for a *lot* less...hmm ].

But the smart sellers I met kept lowering their price on slow-moving items until there was a buyer. This is hip commerce and it fit well for me in that I only had limited bucks to play with, tho' no complaints here. And actually, to be accurate, it's good to remember that almost nobody talked about these guitars in terms of being 'collectible' back then, almost 35 years ago. They were referred to and thought of as 'used guitars'.

In the waning days of 1966, I drove for hours up the coast of California to purchase the guitar I had dreamed of for years, and had had people out looking for one for me, a blonde Gibson ES-345 (1959 ). I set it up and used it on a pre-new year's eve gig the next night, and I've never been more thrilled in my life with a guitar purchase. I cherished that guitar, as anyone who knew me then and saw me play it will attest to. But a few years later, it was destroyed by *two* repairmen, one after the other. They were considered to be among the very top men in Los Angeles in working with acoustic guitars and guitars in general, but they were both ill-equipped to work on this guitar because as I later found out, one was on the sauce and the other was on powder. Booze and drugs destroyed my favorite guitar, and just about broke my heart. I still miss that guitar and have never been able to

afford another of the identical model and year. Of course I was to blame as much as the bad guys because I should have seen the telltale signs--but I wasn't looking--my guard was down since everyone I had talked to about their work had spoken well of it, probably a result of the craftsmanship they must have shown before the bad stuff brought the quality of their efforts down to terrorville. The moral: be mighty careful about who works on your guitar.



Non-cutaway plywood needs love too.

I have other shocking horror stories but one was maybe more than enough here. I still like to remember my old blonde friend as she was when I used her on gigs in the '60's. What a dream come true it was while it lasted. And I have to be philosophical about it--not everything works out in life, sadness is part of the deal. I try to deal with 'what is' more than what was (also, 'what can be' has been a terrific help). But when this doesn't work, I reverse it,'cause there's some sweet memories back there, and a little whiff of it now and then doesn't impede the forward flow too much.

I took a long period off from buying, selling, trading, and repairing guitars--lots of other things to do. During the '90's, I seemed to find myself chasing down the Guild archtops I dreamed of as a boy. Yeah, I've loved 'em since I was a kid. And now they've afforded me so many wonderful hours of pleasure. Speaking of afford,as in my earlier buying days, one of the reasons I was able to buy these guitars is they

were more affordable than other guitars I loved. Some of that differential has vanished.

And as much as I love Guilds, so it pains me to say it, I must warn anyone who's considering buying a used one: in case you don't know, this company had trouble with the neck angle on lots of their old guitars and you cannot get nice buttery action from say the 12th fret onwards on many of them without some medium to serious work. You don't want to know how many hours this has cost me (some Gibsons, Fenders and plenty of others also occasionally have had this problem). And the various fixed-height pickups used on Guilds during its first ten years and then later again at another juncture--whoa, these things are too close to the strings in a bunch of cases!!! This can be a very-very bad situation, with all acceptable options involving something unwanted. Also, many of their electrics were wired wrong--so that when you turn them off, they're not off, and this can create some despicable things to deal with. Gibson wired a lot of their fine guitars wrong too--including some of their very finest '50's and '60's models (they admitted it to me in the early '70's ), but I've learned to use their wrong circuit as a midrange control--which is a damn nice thing to have on a powerful Gibson guitar--and have come to prefer it for getting a hollow body tone out of a solid body; or for making an electric cuttop (i.e., pickups mounted in holes cut right in the top, e.g. the ES-175, L-5 CES, etc.) sound more like a carvetop (the true jazz guitars--the hand carved solid top exquisite ones) in its acoustic mode.

And for anyone who cares, those earliest Gibson-looking Guild pickups are *not* P-90's. But correct internal magnet alignment, as inside of P-90's, is astonishingly crucial. Flip one of those babies by accident and you might as well leave the axe in the case 'cause everybody's goin' home as soon as you start to play anyway. But nobody promised us life would be easy (and you can always count on meeting some platitude-spoutin' guy to 'brighten' your day).

Overall I'm a tremendously lucky guy--I love guitars as much as anyone's allowed to in this life and am still being the custodian and friend to a truly nice little group of Teles, Guilds, and some other fabuloso tone-teasers. How can I not be thrilled. Yet with guitar, dreams don't stop so I have my heart set on getting a blonde with gold parts Duane Eddy D--500 to love someday. Speaking of Mr. Eddy, now there's a

fellow who's far more accomplished than many people who love his hits know. If a person hears his 2nd and 3rd albums they will likely be so pleasantly surprised because there's a *lot* of guitar on there. And the guy got the hugest tone in history in some ways--on those rock 'n' roll hits of all things. When I saw him perform live in my old home town of White Plains, N.Y. in 1959 or '60, he and his band were by far the most exciting act on a huge show of famous people--they just tore the place up and Duane's guitar filled up this gargantuan County Center. In fact, they were the most exciting band I'd ever seen, and probably still are to this day, and as if that wasn't enough, Duane was even *better* than on the records. So overall this was and remains one of the greatest thrills of my life. I love Duane Eddy and have since the first time I heard a cut called "Stalkin' " come out of a radio--which just completely halted whatever I was doing. Likewise for almost every record he came out with from about '57 thru '63 or so. And for anyone who knows about such things, I still think he ghosted on "Ghost Riders In The Sky" by the Ramrods in 1961 or so. Or else it was his pal Al Casey maybe.



Photo courtesy Ted Greene

The small photo on the right is one of Ted's musical soulmates, the late Emily Remler

Students who are studying jazz have asked me which guitar players they should listen to for comping inspiration. Probably my favorite comping guitarist is the wonderful Ed Bickert from Canada. His chord solos are also so very attractive. He's just so smooth and pretty, so beautifully lyrical with his chords, yet always has a surprise or two up his musical sleeve. His ideas are so clear, focused, beautifully articulated. Really fun to try to follow. Rewarding too in another way--I always learn something from listening to this man play the guitar. Try the album "Pure Desmond" (a Paul Desmond album ) to hear Ed if you haven't. Always a treat. An extremely musical

guy. Also way up there would be the comping done by Kenny B. with Jimmy Smith--or with anybody now that I think about it. Mr. Burrell was and is the benchmark for this beautiful way of playing. Such an especially beautiful tone and fabulous phrasing. Um-hum. Taste city. Duke Ellington's favorite guitar player. Not for no reason. Try the incredible album "Midnight Blue" for an example of Kenny at work. Funny--his album "Man At Work" would be another sensational choice.

Sometimes you meet a person who really does change your life. Such is the case with a fine guitar player who meant so much to me in my career, a man named Domenic Troiano--like Ed Bickert and Lenny Breau (though not by birth in Lenny's case ) from the great country to the north--thank you Canada. This guy had a group who played all kinds of stuff including organ trio style jazz with Donnie taking the organ's role on guitar. With the right voicings, and the hip progressions. It was really a thrill to hear him play and we became friends. And he was gracious enough to show me some of his favorite ideas--concepts which really set me off on another direction from which I've never recovered to this day. And I'm grateful to him even more for 1) insisting that I simply had to go to this one club to hear George Van Eps; and 2) suggesting that I really listen to and study this Lenny Breau album that I had just bought. 30 years ago. A lot of memories. Thanks again, Donnie.

**AA:** *Since you're back with George and Lenny, how about we go back to how you learned and problems you had to overcome? When we left your story last, you had just quit college and made a life commitment to make music your profession.*

**TG:** Right. That's right. Well the years went by with many other musical trials and errors, and some successes as well, first as a devoted rhythm and blues player (it was now also called 'soul music', and eventually just 'soul'), then as an overly-excited rocker, and finally as a deeply committed blues player. But eventually I had to face the fact that I was little more than a beginner in the area I now wanted to pursue: namely, the great Tin Pan Alley Standards, and arranging them for solo guitar. It was time to get serious on another level.

I found out my memory was far worse than I had thought. And I didn't know *why* so many of the chords and chord progressions were there in these songs (let alone how to do much to improve any that

seemed to need it), which of course made it even harder to remember them. Much to my horror, I couldn't retain the names of the chords to even one sophisticated song. My brain was mush. I had screwed it up through drugs. It was a tough thing to accept. To make matters even nastier, I realized that a large part of my mom's worst fears had come true. You see, a big chunk of the reason for her extreme reaction when I dropped out of college was due to her knowledge of my attraction to the underbelly of life. Ever since I was a very small child, I had been drawn to the ghettos and city streets and just loved spending time there. Now my mom, she was hip to most of the scenes that were goin' down in that world. Couple that with the darker lifestyles of many musicians in the particular musical styles I had chosen, and add in a dangerous dose of the times we were living in, namely, the explosion of drug availability and use in my generation, and you can see why she had been so upset by my decision.

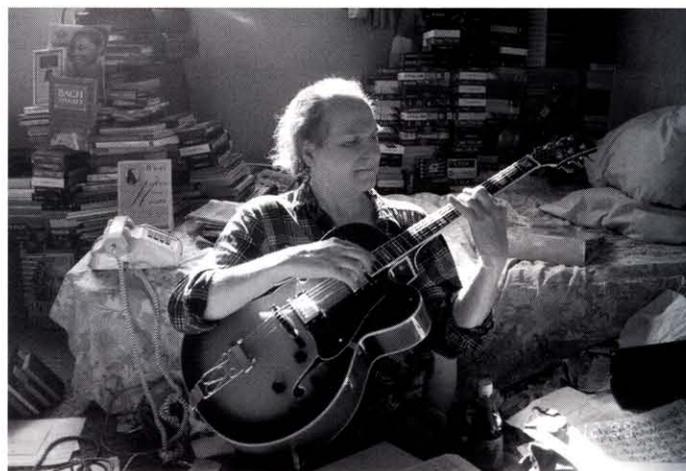


Photo courtesy Ted Greene

That's LaVerne Baker eyeing Ted way over on the left near Bach studies.

And here I was at another crossroads, about to tackle some fairly serious stuff, and so ill-equipped to do it. I was in big trouble. As I was saying, it was a tough thing to accept. I had received lots of accolades about my playing by this time (1971), but in the musical vistas that now called me, I couldn't do anything. These were sad days, but sometimes sadness forces us to make a good change. I decided to try to rebuild the brain, take a shot at some clarity. I had nothing to lose since the only direction to go in was up, and there was nothing I wanted more. An intense course of study, much of it mental and visual--that is, without the guitar in hand quite a bit of the time, was the only way I could see out of the mess. I pretty much hated

doing it. But, I kept setting small goals and kept the big goals in mind as well---to keep me going when I would get depressed about it all. So many hundreds of hours on a fountain of necessary things: note names in scales, note names on the neck, chord formulas, spelling chords, chord names in songs, harmonic structure logic, and most of all, a 'Tune Roadmap' as I ended up calling it, for each song I was studying. My roadmap thing is different than chord progression analysis in that it's a shortcut, a more direct method for getting through any tune successfully. It's probably best left for a whole separate discussion.

**AA:** *I'd like to go back to something and see if we can link a few things together here. I know you're trying to be helpful and accurate but I'm a bit puzzled by something... .*

**TG:** Ask whatever you want. It's your call.

**AA:** *So, if you weren't blessed with lots of natural talent, how'd you write 'Chord Chemistry' at age 24? Maybe you had more natural skills than you knew, than you still know now... .*

**TG:** As to the 'Chord Chemistry' question, I think you'll see how that came to be if I can clear up the talent issue. Actually, let me weave them together: first, know that I was fortunate, very fortunate to have time, lots of time on my hands, no pun intended, and the fire of youth and energy on my side as well. And please, don't get me wrong, I did have some natural skills. It's just that the most useful of these weren't about musical talent per se, though they helped stimulate more than I thought I had here. Stay with me on this. It'll be clearer soon. I do worry still, that this is going to get or has already gotten boring.

**AA:** *Please. We're here to hear you speak. How could you beating the tough problems of learning be boring?*

**TG:** I'm not sold on this Alexandra. I'll keep going, but if I sense a lot of boredom in the room, I'm definitely gonna have to cool it.

**AA:** *Fair enough.*

**TG:** We already discussed my good luck with rhythm, but there were a few other things as well. As far back as I can remember, there was this tone recognition thing---not pitch, *tone*. The ability to sense the difference in the sound of related instruments, or pickup settings, amp settings, things like that. Also, a kind of tone memory aspect to this...And a tone affinity offshoot to it too in that I just loved certain tones so

much even as a very young child. No big deal, none of this is all that uncommon. But it did show that there was *something* going on in me, though what good it would do, I didn't know. It did give me hope. And through the years I've noticed that *every* one who loves music has some natural skills hiding inside somewhere. Sometimes people bloom late. I wouldn't doubt in my case that the tone affinity I had eventually spilled over and gradually unlocked pitch skills. Somehow.

Another thing here was I had natural curiosity to the max. But sadly, my questioning nature seemed to irritate others, other players, teachers, repairmen. Eventually, I would notice and back off and try again on a different day. Same problem. Finally I couldn't bear it anymore, seeing over and over that I was just bugging a lot of people. It wasn't their fault. They weren't saints. And it really wasn't mine either. Even though I was a street-savvy young man, I was emotionally very young in many other ways. And I remembered how as a small child, adults would tire of my questions and banish me to the yard, where I would sit holding a purring cat, trying to figure out how to fix the situation. I never did and still never had. I decided now as a so-called adult, to stop bothering people. I stopped coming around. I tried harder to figure things out. And so I withdrew into a world of my own and stopped asking questions of anyone. Except myself. A better use of everyone's time, given my nature.

The last thing worth mentioning here is that I had some organizational skills lying dormant. Why they were resting, I don't know. But once unleashed and combined with the curiosity, they were the greatest thing for me, and became my finest friends. I wrote out thousands of little studies on all kinds of musical subjects once these problem-solving skills kicked in. Also some really big studies. I'm not sure I wanted to. I'm pretty damn sure I had to. Because of what we've already discussed and also because much of the knowledge in books back then wasn't leading me to where I wanted to go; and worse, wasn't holding up to even modest scrutiny.

**AA:** *How did you come up with all this material?*

**TG:** Every way I could think of that possibly made any sense. My parents were big on the idea that things we're going to do with our time should make sense and must've put this thing in me and it finally manifested.

**AA:** And yet you seem to be maybe shall we say, quite an imaginative person (chuckling). This played a large role in figuring out so many things, right?

**TG:** Strangely, I was pretty tame in this area. Which is ironic because as I've gotten older, my imagination seems to have exploded all over the place. I was curious but not imaginative. If I were, I would have solved my problems a lot easier and a lot earlier. But no, I was a sad guy, a wounded guy. But a lucky guy as I was saying, because at least I had time, energy and this burning *need* to understand the instrument, all of which created a place where my lifelong inquisitiveness could finally be put to good use instead of taking somebody's furniture apart and not being able to get it back together.



Photo courtesy Ted Greene

Relaxing with plywood friends. Lo-bucks life isn't so bad.

**AA:** Ted, is it possible you had another natural talent, that being superior work skill?

**TG:** No. I had horrible work skills, filthy rotten for the first 10 or 11 years of my guitar playing. Practicing for more than 15 minutes at a time was tough. The lure of life was strong. But I eventually upped the ante to 30 minutes. Anything beyond this was a major accomplishment. Oh, I could goof around for hours, but this wasn't going to produce the progress I wanted and needed. Gradually though, as I've been saying, desire and self-discipline won out over childishness, and then I could sit and practice, study, focus for long periods of time. Superior work skill? I laugh. That's an acquired habit. For 9 out of 10 of us.

Having said that, I gratefully acknowledge that apparently my *potential* for work was so far greater than I ever knew during my earlier years with the guitar. It gives me the highest of hopes for all those I meet who wish they could work more but haven't found a way. Yet.

**AA:** How did you then learn all this material you had written?

**TG:** I didn't. I'm still shocked by how much of what I've written I either don't recall at all or haven't absorbed. Luckily, *some* of it is in me now, finally, in at least a primitive kind of way. But there are thousands of pages of more elegant manifestation that I'd love to get back to. I could study this material for the rest of ...so long.

**AA:** One thing I find fascinating is that your story sure doesn't square with what a lot of us have heard others or ourselves say, "Ted Greene, that guy's truly a genius, the chord wizard." What do you say?

**TG:** Do you want the short answer or the long one?

**AA:** [Laughing] Both.

**TG:** The short answer? [In gangster voice]...."they got me all wrong boss."

**AA:** And the longer?

**TG:** O.K. and I promise to include the *real* short answer as well.

**AA:** That'll be good. So what can you tell us about this genius issue? I know you've thought about it because we talked a little about it not too long ago.

**TG:** As you know Alexandra, the human race is endlessly fascinating. Making sense of things, finding the truth in certain kinds of subjects is often so difficult for most of us because of many factors, one of which is the very natural desire to elevate others' status, worth, ability or accomplishments in our minds and hearts.

Not that the reverse isn't also unfortunately true as well, chopping others down to make ourselves feel more important, more worthy. But sticking to the point, everyone has noticed that from childhood on, most of us humans simply love having heroes. It's usually such a deeply satisfying form of pleasure and tends to make life far more exciting. Of course, this creates a problem. Apparently we long for this so much, that we sometimes take factoids and somehow in our mind, turn them into facts. And the reverse too, taking facts, things that *are* real, and, even if sometimes with the best of intentions, misinterpreting these facts until they've become factoids, that is, things that seem so real, or things that have an element of truth or are close to being true, but in reality, are not.

The way the world is set up, things that are real should be able to and do hold up to scrutiny, deep scrutiny if required.

And much of what we say and believe are of course only just our opinions anyway, not necessarily only facts are they. Due to a huge cornucopia of reasons. Likes and dislikes, inherent ones; acquired ones; imagined ones. Our particular values. How we were raised. How we view the world, regard life, see things. There's so much here. Even in any one area. Such as say, this area known as likes and dislikes---forget it---so huge, a person could study just that for all their days on this earth. And whether we 'like or dislike' it, such a large part of us is *about* this. We can't escape it. Plenty of room for this too since it's not going away. How can it? We're *made* of the stuff. And not everything has to be just cold, hard facts right? Many of life's sweetest things aren't viewed only through a 'fact or fiction' lens. But sweet mother of abalone, it sure also helps to know when we're only just foolin' ourselves, doesn't it?

So your question referred to me being called a genius, right? I brought up the concept a little of 'hero'. In the usual sense of this word and given my checkered past, please know that few if any would be accusing me of being *that*. But just as a treat to myself and as a diversionary breather for a few moments, please forgive the indulgence while I mention a hero or two of mine. Nowadays, John Pisano, one of the finest artists I've ever had the privilege of knowing. And one of the finest all-around guitarists in jazz history. Need a sideman? John was a cheerful team player for decades. Has to read? No problem. Put those flyspecks up there. A bebop gig next week with lots of soloing? John loves the challenge. After all, he had to (and did) hold his own with Billy Bean in the late 1950's. How many others could've? An accompaniment gig tonight? Ah, one of John's specialties. Oh, and could he find a singer? *Could he find a singer*. How about his wife Jeanne, and get ready for one of the most exciting duos ever, The Flying Pisanos. Would they mind doing a Latin tune? I don't know since John's only been *the* major Latin jazz guitarist on the West coast for what, the last 30 or 40 years? And Jeanne can only sing every song she's ever heard, in any key, any groove, and at any tempo known to man or womankind, and do it so beautifully. Gee, I *guess* they could. And oh yes, a producer who'll be at tomorrow's brunch needs an original composition with a memorable melody, but it's got to be *very* good. Could Mr. Pisano write something? Count on it.

On a good day, John will thrill you. Catch him for a whole evening and you'll hear most of the history of jazz guitar. He's a true improviser. A daring risk-taker. A master of appropriateness. Exquisite taste. And look how he lives. A terrific person. John Pisano. A hero.

**AA:** *You really, really, really are a 'case' Theo. I ask you to talk about whether you're maybe a genius of sorts at least, and you go off and talk about someone you think is a hero--not that I didn't love it you scalawag.*

**TG:** My mom referred to me as an 'enthusiast'. I'll buy it. Because what good is life without passion? There's a time and a place for most everything and you've given me a forum to express myself so I've grabbed it.

**AA:** *Do continue with anything you feel like talking about.*

**TG:** How lucky people of my generation have been to have grown up with all the wonderful music we have had a chance to hear. We were the luckiest kids in the history of mankind. As a near-infant, heck I *was* an infant, when I first heard Bird and Diz. I was enraptured and probably hooked on music right then. These two cats entered the hero suite of my mind, and they're still in there. Can't see how they'd ever leave. Irrespective of Mr. Parker's nefarious dealings with the human race at large and even those he loved. Heroin does that to you. Anyway, it's been a fabulous century to have lived in, this 20th one, as regards having heroes.

**AA:** *And why do you think this is?*

**TG:** Combine the population explosion with the Technological Revolution and the resultant increase in leisure time, money and near-instant access to the achievements of others, and no wonder we have such large numbers of heroes to choose from. An extraordinarily fortunate circumstance. At least for those of us, thank God, not living in poverty, and able to partake of all these fruits. I mean for me, Ray Charles on Atlantic and his early ABC stuff, would've been enough alone to wipe me out for the whole century. I used to walk for miles as a kid to a place I found way across town that had a jukebox with "I Got A Woman" on it so I could sneak in and play it. Just to hear it again, once more, each time. I loved every second of it. I never told anybody. I figured they'd think I was nuts. Which I was. Over music. I did a lot of stuff like that. And I think that's the main reason why

I hung out in the ghetto even as a young child. Because I had more access to the music I loved. Rhythm and Blues. Jazz. Chicago Blues. It was Heaven on Earth to me. Heroes everywhere. My list is long. I better stop now. From a high-voiced young man present during the interview, "So this genius thing about you, it's not real then?"

**TG:** [Laughter from Ted and everyone present due to the abrupt shift in mood] It's fantasy my good fellow. They're being so kind in bestowing this word upon me but they're mistaking experience for talent, knowledge for genius. (Alexandra, I promised you. this was the *real* short answer by the way ). There was so little talent showing up for so long, how could this be genius? I've been around geniuses and it's quite something to see. You want genius, I'll name one. Jon Kurnick. Most people've never heard of Jon, but those of us who know him and have seen what he can do, find it easy to be awestruck. Just about any sound he's ever heard, he seems able to reproduce. Want more? He does this on *many* instruments. All kinds of instruments. In every style of music he's ever heard, and he's heard most everything. Still more? Voices. Seems to have 1001 voices hiding inside.

Astonishing. Let Jon be on the cover of a magazine with the term genius next to his name. This would be fitting. Not some fellow who was so lucky to have had time, energy, a reasonable brain, enough curiosity for 2 people, and the flaming desire of 3, at least where music is concerned.

You know, I'm not sad that I don't have the genius faculty and I hope most other players to whom this applies aren't either. Because luckily, for most of us musicians, genius isn't necessary. Developing the barest little seed of talent into something large, something that continues to grow, until it is a beautiful thing, a dazzling thing, now we're talkin'. A lot of us can work towards *this*. The world may get confused and call it genius, alright, we can gently correct them, or not, doesn't matter much either way in most cases. But finding ways to bust out of the laziness, finding ways to work hard with joy, this is the real deal.

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