



# strings jazz

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# Tale *piece*

## George Martin



### HOLY GROSZ!

The multi-talented Marty Grosz, master raconteur, comedian, singer and superlative arch-top player recently presented his secular performance in the hallowed All Saints Church Hall, Woking, for a well attended and appreciative audience from Woking Jazz Circle on a recent cold February evening.

Sporting his customary bow tie, which perhaps encapsulates the musical eras in which he revels, Marty prefaced the evening's entertainment with his witty invective on the difficulties, as a solo performer, of adhering to political correctness whilst maintaining the ideal balance of colour, gender and sexual orientation! I leave this scenario to your vivid imaginations if you have been so remiss as to not have attended one of Marty's 1996 gigs!

Aside from his sizzling string work, Marty's verbal articulation is a joy to ears numbed by everyday 'street' grunts and monosyllables. After thawing out chilled fingers around the light bulb of an adjacent standard lamp, the evening's musical feast of song

and fretwork got under way with "Anything For You".

Interspersing his songs are anecdotes and discourses on musical history which, in Marty's inimitable way, enhance and illuminate the 'lessons' in his 'lecture tour'. A medley of "Cheerful Little Earful" and "Pardon Me, Pretty Baby", it was explained, were based around the same pianistic structure.

A 'Fats' Waller medley ensued, which included "Ain't You Glad", "Up Jumped You" and "Keep A Song In Your Soul". Despite lyrical amnesia, from which he (oh so) comically, musically and professionally extricated himself, this miscarriage was readily forgiven by the audience and the Waller came remained, notwithstanding, unspoiled.

Following Marty's droll observation of Bing Crosby's celluloid, lute attired performance in "Pennies From Heaven", we were regaled with this movie's title song, "One Two Buckle Your Shoe" and, what was for me the highlight of the evening, "Skeleton In The Closet", the latter concluding with a few bars of that distinctive bassy, whistly chordal work which could have convinced listeners that Carl Kress was alive and well and presently in Surrey!

Another highlight was "You Took Advantage Of Me" by two of Marty's favourite songwriters, "Roy" Rodgers and "Gary" Hart (sic) which again included some chording a la Kress. Often vocalese nonsense supported Marty's superb finger work on his 1929 Gibson LS. "Crazy About My Baby" and "Keeping Out Of Mischief Now" contained a mixture of Noel Coward-isms and Fats Wallerisms, but this should not be allowed to detract from the guitaristic mantle that Marty Grosz has clearly (and solely, it would seem) inherited from the likes of Dick McDonough and Carl Kress. How many present that evening spotted Marty's quote from Kress-McDonough's "Danzone" (from 1934) interjected into his minstrelsy "All God's Chillun Got Riddum"?

Perhaps, having taken a perverse look at Victor Borge's notable punctuational feature, this prompted Marty to sing, in both New Orleans patois and Yale-ish sophomore dialect, a fully punctuated version of "I Wish I Could Shimmy Like My Sister Kate", complete with sung-as-written semicolons, full stops and exclamation marks!

Red McKenzie was the next stop on our musically historical journey through the early days of jazz, the Mound City Blowers, et al. "From Monday On" was Marty's exquisite and vibrant closing example from the McKenzie canon.

Much mirth accompanied Marty's depiction of a young Fats Waller fingering the NY Yellow Pages to discover James P. Johnson's listing under 'Mentor', which lead appropriately into a Marty Grosz staple, a marvellous rendition of "A Porter's Love Song (to a chambermaid)".

Marty had obviously not listened to Eric Clapton's "From the Cradle", maintaining that Englishmen cannot sing the Blues and promptly supporting this theory by playing "English Blues" (intro by Sir Edward Elgar?!), sung in aristocratic tones, complete with Churchillian utterances, "I was born in Soho and raised in Battersea (repeat.....)" to much amusement.

A most enjoyable evening was concluded with Walter Donaldson's "Changes" and after acknowledging the rhythm section, Lord Lucan (bass), Amelia Earhart (drums) and Jimmy Hoffer (piano), Marty was gone and his cherished musical magic over (for the time being anyway). To precis the evening's music - totally enGROSZing! (sorry!)

As a footnote, for any STRING JAZZ bibliophiles, Marty is presently researching and writing a book on jazz rhythm guitar players through the ages, their styles and attributes, which sounds fascinating. I was lucky enough to receive a personal lesson

from the Master on the varying styles, ranging from Johnny St.Cyr to George Barnes' accompaniments and can't wait to see it in print, Marty's articulate descriptions. Thank you Marty, catch you next time!

## MORE TALE PIECES

Any guitar record enthusiast still harbouring a vinyl addiction might be interested in two "new" album releases recently spotted in Japan: Sal Salvador Quintet/Quartet (Blue Note BN 5035) and Tal Farlow Quartet (Blue Note BN 5042). Both of these were originally released in 10" format during 1954 as part of Blue Note's Modern Jazz Series and on the second-hand market today, command very substantial auction prices if found in excellent condition.

In their latest Japanese reincarnation, the original artwork and disc size have been increased to 12" dimensions, but without the benefit of any additional tracks and yet the catalogue numbers remain the same as the original issues. Price? Japanese Yen 3000 each - around £20.00 sterling when local sales tax is included. Who said vinyl was dead?

As an ironic footnote, both of these original albums were reissued one 12" album (Blue Note/King Records GXF 317) in Japan way back in 1979, with each 10" disc occupying one side.

Although their appearance has yet to be confirmed, the Bucky Pizzarelli Trio has been approached to appear at the 1996 Brecon Jazz Festival. We will keep you posted.

Finally, on one of their excellent budget CDs, "Swing Was Our Business - Ridin' High" (RAJCD 859), Empress Records have craftily secreted away three tracks which will delight collectors of vintage guitar sounds but which may have escaped their attention. Featured are, "Spring Fever", "Yankee Doodle Plays a Fugue" and "Dedication (to Eddie Lang)" by Ivor Mairants and Albert