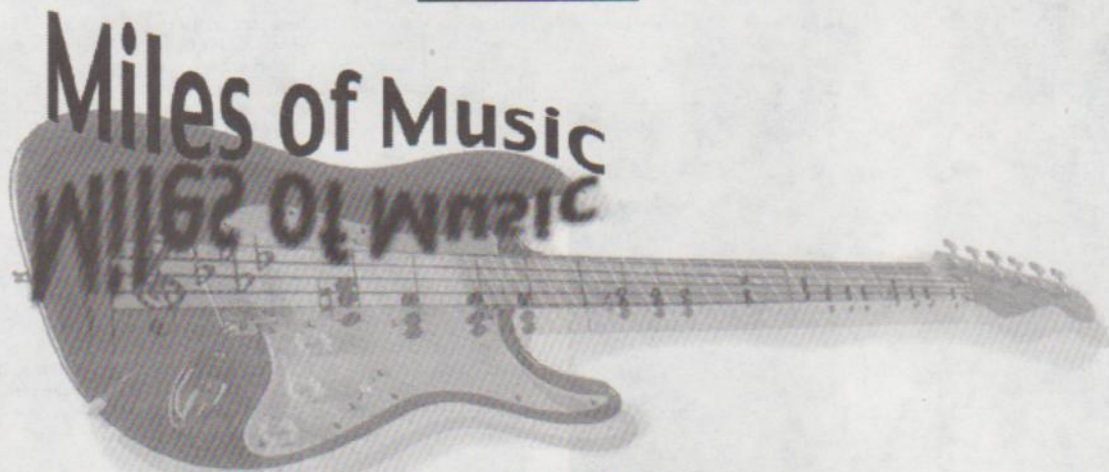


Jazz Guitar PROFILES

By Jude Hibler



Bob Miles:

The World of Guitar Television Host & the Guitar's Ambassador of Goodwill

Out of necessity, in the profession of jazz, making a living comes in many forms. Performance is the ideal for most musicians. Teaching is probably the next populated field for musicians.

Of all the medium choices, television is the one which features jazz the least. It is written about in magazines and books. It is heard in certain geographical locations throughout the world on the radio. Happily, the Internet has made streaming music online available any time of the night or day.

Did I mention television? Yes. Thank goodness for **Dr. Billy Taylor**, one of my personal heroes, who has devoted his lifetime to enhancing the quality of life by presenting jazz on television for close to fifty years.

A hero is one who believes in something or someone so strongly, that he or she stands up to the possibility of being ridiculed, being slighted, or of being rejected.

Dr. Taylor has brought dignity, warmth, intelligence, talent, and humor to jazz and to the viewing public. He has presented a multitude of jazz personalities during the last half century.

He himself is an incredible musician, composer, arranger and leader of countless ensembles. He is truly a friend to jazz and much more important, a friend to humanity.

With similar personal attributes, another jazz musician - who plays guitar, rather than the piano as Dr. Taylor does - has been working in the television medium over



Bob Miles Photo/Terry Ruhl

the last five and a half years. While his viewing audience and region served is smaller, guitarist **Bob Miles'** enthusiasm, integrity, warmth, and humor are as present at Dr. Taylor's.

[Without a CD to hear, I have only heard good things about Bob's playing ability, but I cannot speak to the part of his talent.]

Although Bob's television show, *The World of Guitar*, is aired on cable ComCast and RNC in Pennsylvania and New Jersey - at this point - and primarily involves the guitar, he has had musicians who play other instruments as part of his program, too.

Tenor saxophonist **Larry McKenna**, who gets one of most fluid and warm sounds on that instrument, has been a featured artist. McKenna is one of those musicians who deserves to be heard throughout the world, as he most certainly is a world-class artist.

Another Pennsylvania native and Temple University alumnus is guitarist **Dale**

Bruning. Although Bruning has lived in Colorado for the last four decades, he is also a world-class musician who Miles wants on his program sometime in the near future.

Dale and Larry might even appear together on that program. For when they were young men in Philadelphia, they worked together. It is the quick mind and generosity of Bob Miles who makes opportunities like that happen for others. He is generous in his nature and demeanor.

In looking back over his life, a foundation of overcoming obstacles and adversity will be laid, making his story even more impressive.

- The Early Years -

A native of Bucks County, Pennsylvania, Bob was one of three brothers. Of his brothers Eddie and Ron, Ron also played an instrument as a youngster. Bob began his music involvement by playing the drums.

"My brother Ron was really a good musician," said Bob. "When I was 12, I picked up the guitar. It was a Hohner guitar and then a Penco guitar. I think Penco actually builds lockers," he laughed.

"What is really funny all these years later is that I still go back to my middle school, where I attended 6th, 7th, and 8th grades, and I speak about my tv show. Up until two years ago, my old drum teacher, **Bob Fitt**, who has since retired, would have me come to talk to his kids. That was kind of neat and I always felt good about that."

Jazz Guitar PROFILES

- Documenting Guitar History -

"Randall has always told me that what I am actually doing with this show is documenting a part of history and great guitar players. I've heard of other people trying to do this, but they can never get the air time. I've always been fortunate enough to have in built-in air time.

"I have worked very hard to get the greatest guitar players in the world on my show. There is no exchange of money. This is cable television. I don't get paid."

In addition to those artists already mentioned for being featured guests on *The World of Guitar*, some others have been: **Jackie King** [from the Willie Nelson band]; **Sal Salvador**; **Bill Neale**; **Johnny DeFrancesco**; **Les Paul**; **Charles Chapman** [Professor at Berklee College of Music]; **Joe Dalton** [*Hot Licks* video and country guitarist]; and **Mitch Seidman** [who also writes for *20th Century Guitar* magazine].

One of the reasons for the success of the program is that it has never been about its host. Rather, Bob Miles' generosity extends to even occasionally giving up his regular gig at The Gobblers in Bucks County to his featured guest.

Jimmy Bruno, bassist **Tyrone Brown** (once with **Max Roach**) and Bob play a built-in intro for each show.

"The show is seen in two states right now - Pennsylvania and New Jersey. The show is on two systems: RCN and ComCast. If anybody wants this show on their system, they can contact me and I'll be glad to talk to them. I would like the show to grow and go to other states."

Bob Miles can be reached at 609-397-4984. His website is www.milesofmusic.net.

"Bob's got one of the best guitar shows that I've seen in many years. He's an excellent player; a very enthusiastic person. He certainly knows how to do a show like that. It's very admirable. I have a lot of respect for Bob." Jackie King

- The Guitar Academy -

Since he is not paid to do the tv show, his primary income comes from a school he started called *The Guitar Academy*. It is located in Warrington, Pennsylvania where he and three other instructors teach. His television show has also generated business for this school. The students are people of all ages and come with various levels of ability.

- Out of the Darkness and into the Light -

Overcoming adversities have served to strengthen his resolve to follow the passions of his heart and soul. In the short period of time that I have come to know Bob Miles, I, like all the others I have spoken to, have come to admire and respect him.

In many ways, he is filling a very special need for musicians, giving them greater visibility and honoring their talent. Just as Dr. Billy Taylor has ennobled the world of jazz by his very presence, so, too, is Bob Miles on his way to creating a similar image for jazz and himself. I, for one, am grateful he is in our world. ■

[Jude Hibler can be contacted at www.jazzlinkenterprises.com or at 303-776-1764.]



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MARTIN F-9 (1935) - See our feature ad elsewhere in this issue 45U-900 CALL
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As a child, Bob had a speech impediment. He took weekly speech therapy until 7th grade. The eustachian tube in his right ear never grew. With an operation at the age of 10, his hearing vastly improved. But this did not stir sympathy among his mates.

- The Golden Rule in Action (The Golden What?) -

A tried and true principle of how one treats other people, called *The Golden Rule* was based on the Biblical ethic of 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.'

Publicly talking or writing about the Bible, or any other spiritual book used to be not only acceptable, but commonplace. Today, sad to say, this rarely happens outside the confines of a theological school or in a place of worship.

"I was always picked on and bullied as a kid. To this day, I still despise bullies. But, in a way, it worked out to be to my benefit, for I grew up having a lot of respect for other people, especially for people with speech impediments.

"After I had the operation, my speech facility grew and I was able to catch up in school. I find that I still do repeat words to this day." Miles is one of those people whose inherent goodness out distances the need to succumb to the derision targeted at him when he was young.

- The Leap Into Jazz -

By the mid-70s, **Craig McCluskey** became his guitar teacher. As part of his ear training, Bob was given records to listen to.

"The first jazz guitar player I heard was **Wes Montgomery** and next was **Pat Martino**. When I heard Pat, I really did not think it was a guitar that he was playing, as it was so articulate. I thought it was somebody playing piano that sounded like a guitar. I was overwhelmed. That kind of talent is so God-given, I wondered how could he learn to do that?"

At the end of his high school year, he had been studying with **Ed Flanagan**, who taught at Music Masters.

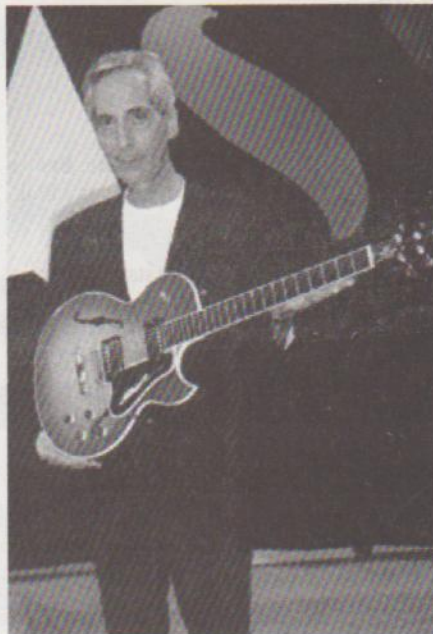
"My professional playing took place in disco bands until I was about 25. But I studied jazz all along, too. When I turned 25, I thought I needed to pursue something else - just to get another dimension in my life.

- From Music to Business -

"I ended up graduating from Temple University with a bachelors degree in business. I was a real estate major with 60 credits in music. I was in real estate for a number of years, but I was happier in music.

"In 1996, I walked away from real estate appraising, which I had done for 10 years. My heart was in music. When I left real estate, I was determined to be a guitarist, no matter what. That was the crossroad of my life.

"However, while I was in college, I had a part-time job in a funeral home. Seeing death as often as I did, I learned how valuable life is and what a short time we are given to make the



Pat Martino during a filming. Photo/Bob Miles



Bassist Tyrone Brown & Mitch Seidman. Photo/Bob Miles



Bob Miles. Photo/Janet Miles

most of it. You should pursue your dreams. Don't ignore them."

- The World of Guitar -

Many doors have opened for him because of this. In 1996, the birth of a new television show was about to unfold. "I played at a jam session at a local church. When I was done, a girl walked up to me and asked if I would like to be on television. I said sure.

"The next week, I was at a cable tv station called Suburban Community Television. It was one of the largest cable tv stations in this region. I joined the house band for a talk show and played in it for a year.

"Following that, I thought this was not the avenue I wanted to pursue. They were playing '50s music, and everything else but what I wanted to do. So I walked away from television.

"I thought I was walking away from tv for good. But six months later, I had a call from the television station and they asked if I would like to have my own show. I said sure! And I ended up creating *The World of Guitar*.

"That weekend, I had been up to see **Bucky Pizzarelli**. Back in the tv station, I said, 'Hopefully, I can bring people like Bucky on the program.' **Jim Bunn**, the Executive Director at Suburban Cable station, is a big jazz fan. He told me if I could do that, I'd be his best friend!

"Two years later, Bucky was doing our show. When I first started, I shot three shows in one day. They included **Bill Comins**, who is a luthier; **Ed Goehringer**, who had a duo with **Tal Farlow**; and a fusion guitar player.

"I did a show five days a week - four nights a week and once on Saturday. An artist would get 20 viewings in a month. To start with, we had 700,000-800,000 viewers. The production was really good. Suburban Cable was just great and supportive of what I did.

"**Ed Benson**, publisher of *Just Jazz Guitar* magazine, gave me an introduction to **Bob and Cindy Benedetto**. They live close by to me. The Benedetto's did a show with me; **Bobby DiNardo** from the *Mike Douglas Show* was there.

"Then I was introduced to **Randall Kremer** of the Smithsonian Institute and **Scott Chinery**, as well. Randall was representing the Smithsonian, as they were doing the Blue Guitar Exhibit of Scott's.

"Scott and his wife **Kathy** were so gracious. They catered the whole thing. Bob, Cindy, and **Jimmy Bruno** arrived. In fact, Jimmy and I had both studied with **Al Stauffer**, the bass player, at one time. Al was like a father to me and such an inspiration.

"Randall then came and so did **Arlen Roth**. We did three shows on location.

"During each show, I would do a short opening. The host should be well versed and know what they are talking about. Jimmy and I played *Au Privave*, the Charlie Parker standard. I remember Arlen putting his thumbs in the air saying, 'That was great.'

"Then Arlen and I played a country blues together.