

Duets with Emily Remler

1. Cisco [*Pat Martino*]
2. Whistle While You Work
3. 'S Wonderful

Excerpts from the thesis, *Ted Greene: Sound, Time, and Unlimited Possibility* by Terrence R. McManus.

...These recordings are an incredible document as they show Greene improvising with extended periods of continuous eighth note passages, a way he is not heard on any other available recording. Both guitarists sound great, playing very clearly in the Wes Montgomery style, but Remler more so, playing quite a few Montgomery-esque lines, if not direct ones.

“Cisco” chord changes:

G7 | F7 | G7 | F7 | G7 | F7 | G7 | F7 |
C7 | Bb7 | C7 | Bb7 | G7 | F7 | G7 | E7 |
Bbm7 | Eb7 | Am7 | D7 | G7 | F7 | G7 | F7 |

Remler begins playing first. It is not clear how much, if at all, they rehearsed the piece. It is conceivable, because of Greene’s expansive knowledge of the jazz guitar tradition and great ear, that they did not discuss exactly how to play it and that Green simply knew the tune. Hearing Greene use a pick is very rare. On these recordings, however, the pick is clearly being used to play lines. Additionally, listening to Greene’s comping shows that he is still using the pick and does not switch to picking with his fingers. At times it sounds like there is a third musician, performing on electric bass, however this phenomenon is only present when Greene is comping.

This can be explained by watching Greene show a student an interesting tuning technique in one of the online lesson videos. In an attempt to simulate a seven string guitar, the fifth string, usually tuned to A, is tuned down to E, the typical pitch and octave of the sixth string. The sixth string is then tuned down to A, the interval of a fifth lower than normal. The benefit of this method is that one only needs to reverse the fifth and sixth string in their head and voicing will work. Single line soloing could become an issue as lines running down to the fifth string would essentially skip the normal fifth string pitch range and be in the pitch range of the normally tuned sixth string. Since low notes are not part of Greene’s solo lines on these recordings, Greene could have avoided using the lowest two strings and only improvised his solos on strings four through one, save for the end of his solo where you can hear him transitioning back to the low strings.

He still shows signs of hesitation even in the informal setting; he gives Remler the first solo on every piece. After the melody statement on “Whistle While You Work,” it is clear that Remler wants Greene to solo first. Their exchange is:

Remler: “No, no.”

Greene: “Yes. Go ahead Emily, come on.”

Remler: “I’m bored.”

Remler’s comment, referring to being bored, must mean she is bored with her own playing and she would rather not solo or solo first. While Greene solos on the blues Remler cheers him on several

times, though he does not seem to buy it; he makes disapproving noises and comments several times as he plays.

Rhythmically, Greene's eighth notes have an incredible evenness and it is one of Greene's most consistent sounds on record, though darker than normal. Greene can typically be heard switching between pickups when playing, however his sound here remains similar throughout and shows no signs of frequent pickup switching.

There is no way to tell what guitar Greene using, a solidbody or some type of hollowbody, though Greene generally used solidbody guitars. If that is the case here, it is further proof that Greene is able to extract very full, warm jazz tones from a solidbody instrument. These intimate tapes provide the listener an opportunity to hear Greene comment on his own playing while playing. He makes the following comments: "Ted eats his lunch" and "You live with what you can do."

With the knowledge of these recordings and the clear documentation of Greene's exceptional ability at eighth note playing, one might ask why Greene does not use single line eighth notes in his other work. For example, on the recordings with Pisano, they play two tunes and Greene does not play a single eighth note line. Greene is also audibly pleased with Remler's playing. He can be heard comments "yeah" and, "that's the stuff," while Remler is soloing.

While Remler's playing is very strong she does have a tendency to overplay at times, perhaps being a bit too exuberant. On her comping she really digs in and it is harder to hear Greene, though part of that may be a hesitation by Greene to turn up. Since this is a home recording, it also stands to reason that one aspect affecting the recording balance may be that the mic may be closer to Remler. They both do not leave a lot of space in their respective solos. This could have to do with propelling the time and not wanting to leave excess space that will cause the time to suffer. Rather than leave it to the accompanying guitarist to continually supply the time, by continually playing eighth notes lines they are contributing to the propulsion of the music.

Greene claims that he is not a jazz guitarist, but he appears to have been well-versed in jazz performance terminology and practices. For example, he knows enough to say "trade 4's" on "S Wonderful," and he says "bridge" on another tune, indicating that they go to the song's bridge.

On the duet recordings with Emily Remler, a noticeable change occurs when Greene and Remler switch roles as accompanist. While Remler is a very competent and energetic accompanist, Greene is smoother and more even, more relaxed and subtly, more swinging.

Another possible link with Greene's familiarity with [Pat] Martino is the duet recordings with guitarist Emily Remler. The duo plays a version of Martino's "Cisco," which he recorded on his 1967 album "El Hombre." In addition to Greene knowing the tune (though it's possible Remler showed it to him), the examples of his eighth note playing, which are very rare, sound quite a lot like Martino, probably more so than Montgomery.

Greene's lines, like Martino's, are very even. They do not have the peaks and valleys in dynamics and articulation that are common in Montgomery's lines. Greene's lines move between the octaves much more methodically and slowly; there are very few registral jumps. Greene's tone on the duo recordings with Remler, like Martino's, is much darker than Montgomery's. Martino is known to use a very heavy string on his top string. Similarly, Greene said he has used up to a .013 or .014 on his top string. That is not as uncommon as a .015 or .016, though it is slightly more uncommon than the more modern standard of .011 or .012. While information about the diameter Montgomery's first

string is not widely known, it is unlikely that it was as heavy as Martino's, more likely it was around a .014.

Greene typically used a solidbody electric guitar and on the duo recordings with Remler, and was similar to Martino in tone. Coincidentally, over time Martino transitioned to more of a solidbody and/or thin hollowbody guitar, versus the more traditional type of hollowbody guitar he used earlier in his career. Greene's sound, like Martino's, is often very thick, similar in many ways to the sound of an organ. This differs from Montgomery in the fact that his tone was much more light, even though he used thick strings, and though many contemporary jazz guitarists play with a dark sound, Montgomery actually had a fairly bright sound. At times Montgomery's sound was bright enough to hear the strings buzz against the frets in a way that one does not hear much in the sound of Greene or Martino. Many of the lines that Greene plays in the duo with Emily Remler parallel what one might expect to hear from Martino.