

Ted Greene - Private Concert at Alec Silverman's Home, July 1975

Remembrances of the Performance By Mark Thornbury

This performance (and recording) of Ted Greene happened due to the efforts of a gentleman named Alec Silverman. We all owe a debt of gratitude to Alec, as his keen ear and eye for all things fine, and his efforts to make this happen so long ago.

As best as I can remember, Ted's performance at Alec Silverman's home came about rather shortly after Ted had performed at a Grand Opening party at the (now defunct) Valley Arts Guitar store on Ventura Blvd. Quite a number of renowned players performed there that day, including Grant Geissman and Larry Carlton. It was quite a show, and went on for hours. I attended, but left before everybody had played, so I missed Ted's performance. However, Alec stayed for the entire set of players, and was so blown away by Ted's performance that he called me soon after and told me that I had really missed something special.

He contacted Ted and asked him if he would play for a private setting of musicians, and how much he would charge. Alec already knew that Joe Pass would do it for \$50.00 (please bear in mind that in 1975 the minimum wage was \$2.10/hr, a gallon of gasoline was about \$.59 cents/gallon, the median price for a home was \$38,800.00. So \$50.00 for a gig was actually pretty good). He offered him \$75.00, provided he could get a commitment from enough people. He figured that he knew at least 15 people who would be interested, and would be willing to pay \$5 each. Ted eventually agreed (his humility caused a bit of hesitation), with the stipulation that the liquor at the gathering would be no stronger than light beer.

When Alec told me that a private performance was going to happen, I was quite excited at the prospect of seeing and hearing what this author of the amazing *Chord Chemistry* book would do with all of those chords (which, of course, we ALL owned a copy of), and I committed to providing \$20.00 as 'insurance' in case a few folks couldn't make the event.

Alec got it all set up, and on the night of the mini-concert we cleared all the furniture out of the living room, folks came in and sat down pretty much cross-legged on the floor and waited. Then in strode this rather tall, hippy looking man with a Fender Twin Reverb in one hand and a Fender Leslie in the other, looking just like the guy on the cover of *Chord Chemistry*. He was accompanied by a very striking woman carrying his guitar case, his sister Linda (I remember she bore a strong resemblance to Katharine Ross, an actress that many of us had a crush on).

Ted got set up, and there was a gentleman there with a Revox reel-to-reel tape recorder and two microphones, who asked Ted's permission to record the event. Ted granted him permission, of course, but he wanted a verbal agreement that the recording was not to be used in a commercial manner. I was struck by Ted's approach to this total stranger: he smiled and began his conversation with saying, "My friend...." I guess I was struck by his natural warmth and gentleness, something that spiritually advanced people display, at least to my rather So Cal New Age mind-set. (This impression has stuck with me to this day.)

I made sure that I was right in front, probably only 5 feet in front of Ted, who was seated in what appeared to be a dining room chair. He was playing a modified blond Fender Telecaster, with heavy round wound strings, and his tuning that day was down a whole step. I clearly remember the side of the guitar (facing his chin) had a strip of paper attached which had very tiny writing with a HUGE list of songs. He did have a foot pedal to switch from the Twin Reverb speakers to the Leslie. He got things lit up, and I remember his first test chord was a C major ninth chord, which I recognized from both *Chord Chemistry* and *Joe Pass Guitar Chords*, both favorite books of mine. HOWEVER, after Ted lightly strummed the chord, he immediately played the harp-harmonic arpeggio technique across it, and I GASPED when I heard and saw it done—with such speed, flair, and smoothness. I realized that I was in for a real experience. He then played a sequence of rather dark sounding chords (which I later learned were minor sixth inversions), and it was at this time that the recorder was switched on, leading into "When Sunny Gets Blue."

This event was stunning, absolutely stunning, for me (I had seen Joe Pass play many, many times at Donte's, and loved every note, but the only guitarist that had such a beautiful sense of 'touch' that I had ever seen play like this was Andres Segovia). After Ted was finished, I (along with others, to be sure) 'pestered' him with questions, starting with a close-up of the harp-harmonic arpeggio technique. In typical Ted fashion, he responded with "No big deal, here's how you should approach it" followed by several demonstrations and a specific exercise (that I remember to this day) on how to start to practice it. I also asked about studying with him, and was a bit disappointed to learn that there was a 9 month waiting list involved (I signed up anyway within a week at Dale's Guitars on Topanga Canyon Blvd).

It was interesting to watch the other players clamor about him, peppering him with questions, and his patient answers. We were clearly in awe of him, and yet he displayed great humility. Shortly after Ted left I remember somebody joking out loud that there must have been a hidden guitarist in the Leslie playing all the extra parts, and guitarist Danny Costello (of the DeFranco Family band) joked, "You know, maybe we should just put all our gear together and sell it!" We all knew that we had been treated to an unusually fine musical experience, of the sort that is very, very rare, and were sort of 'basking in the afterglow.'

Knowing that the concert had been recorded, I made sure that I was very soon a recipient of a copy of the performance (which is what is preserved here, again thanks to Alec Silverman). Not long after getting it I had friends over to my house to listen to it with me, including guitarists Steve Lukather and Mike Landau, who were my childhood friends as well as very powerful musical heroes and influences. I remember Steve recognizing "Bess, You is My Woman Now" from "Porgy and Bess," and when he heard "Here's That Rainy Day" he sat there with an amazed expression on his face and asked "Has Joe Pass heard this guy? This is amazing! Mark, you should cop this arrangement!" I also distinctly remember Mike's reaction to a certain portion of "Danny Boy," saying, "It sounds like a bass player is playing with him right there! Wow!"

This recording has been a treasured part of my musical enjoyment and education, and it is still, for me, as thrilling to listen to today, some 40 years later, as when I first heard it performed. It is now a part of the Ted Greene archives, where it deserves to live. While it is a shame that a better recording in terms of sound quality by today's standards is not available, I am grateful for the recording that we have, as it has preserved a high standard of performance. He really played the heck out of the guitar that night, and showed us what could indeed be done with a rare combination of knowledge, touch, tone, taste, and talent.

I will be forever grateful to Alec Silverman for introducing me to Ted's music. I am also grateful to Paul Vachon for so wonderfully handling the transfer process from crude analog to the digital domain, where this recording will be heard and appreciated by many musicians for many years to come.

Thank you, Ted!

~ Mark