

John Klopotoski, jazz guitarist

Project 59

Featuring the Rave Tesar Trio

and special guest Bob Keller, tenor saxophone

The tunes:

- 1 – Subconscious Lee (Lee Konitz, KONITZ MUSIC) 4:33
- 2 – The Scale Song (Rave Tesar, Rave Tesar Music, BMI) 4:24
- 3 – Breaking the Ice (Bob DeVos, Devious Music, BMI) 5:20
- 4 – Wes' Tune (Wes Montgomery, TAGGIE MUSIC CO) 5:03
- 5 – Passata on Guitar > You're Welcome To a Prayer
(Pat Martino, Kitai Music, ASCAP) 9:00
- 6 – Child's Play (John Klopotoski, Boptist Music, BMI) 7:02
- 7 – Street of Dreams
(Victor Young/Sam Lewis, EMI MILLER CATALOG INC) 6:16
- 8 – Loco 47 (Warne Marsh, WILLIAM H BAUER INC) 5:00
- 9 – You'd Be So Nice To Come Home To
(Cole Porter, CHAPPELL & CO.) 5:31
- 10 – Defragment Now (Rave Tesar, Rave Tesar Music, BMI) 5:46

Total Time: 58:32

The players:

John Klopotoski, guitar

Bob Keller, tenor saxophone (tracks 1, 4, 6, 8, 10)

Rave Tesar, piano

Kermit Driscoll, bass

Bill Tesar, drums

Recorded at:

Tedesco Studios, Paramus NJ August 13-14, 2015

Production: John Klopotoski and Rave Tesar

Recording engineer: Tom Tedesco

Mixing/Mastering: Rave Tesar/Studio X

Cover Design: Jeannine Cuevas

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For more information and notes please visit

www.johnklopotoski.com.

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History - Background:

The idea for Project 59 grew out of a sequence of events in my life starting in 2013, one of the most important of these was acquiring a 1974 Gibson L-5 model guitar at the end of the year. The guitar needed quite a bit of work to be playable again so I turned it over to luthier John Mello and he did a great job with it. I then started learning quite a bit of music over the balance of 2014 and gradually started thinking about possibly doing a recording. I was very taken with the sound of my instrument and thought it could be fun and valuable to capture it in a high-quality setting.

Sometime shortly before New Year's Day of 2015, and 'out of the blue', I thought again about my old friend Rave Tesar. I have no idea why, and also can't say why I had not thought much about him for several years as I am very fond of him and have some great musical memories of experiences that we shared when we were younger. But I had moved to San Francisco in 1988 and we lost track of one another for the most part. Rave was busy with a career in performing, recording, and teaching and I became busy supporting a family with two boys. We did catch up in 2004 or 2005 and it was one of those conversations where you feel like the last time you spoke with the person was yesterday, or last week – instant familiarity and comfort!

So, for some reason I thought of Rave late one night just before New Years of 2015 and went to the computer. I searched for his name,

found his website, and immediately heard the familiar sounds of him playing with his trio (with Kermit Driscoll on bass and his brother Bill on drums). I quickly realized that I should contact him and propose doing my recording in New Jersey as a reunion of sorts. I did so, and Rave was very open to the project.

It took some time to organize, but the recording sessions were in some ways a birthday party with old friends. The music itself consists of a typical jazz guitar recital or concert that I would perform if the opportunity were present. In terms of instrumentation I have always enjoyed what I consider to be 'classic' jazz ensembles of varying composition - the piano trio, quintet with saxophone and trumpet, etc. I think there are a handful of these groups that feature the guitar, most notably in a quartet setting with rhythm section and also with an additional solo instrument, in our case Bob Keller on tenor saxophone. (Another ideal setting for a guitarist is in a trio with organ and drums, this is an idea for a future recording.) Project 59 took a lot of perseverance, work, and good fortune and I am extremely grateful for the results.

Conceptually, the first association with the number 59 is due to the fact that Rave and I were both that age when we made the recording. There are however, many other oblique references to the number throughout the selections. The number 59 definitely has a lot to do with all of the tunes, and in more ways than the fact of Rave and I being that age when we did the sessions. I will leave it at that, but if

any listeners enjoy a good puzzle then I invite you to investigate further. I suppose I should also deny being a numerologist of any sort, I just happened to notice the associations at a point in my preparations and was amused by the idea.

In terms of our shared history, I grew up in northern New Jersey and had the good fortune to be introduced to Dave "the Rave" Tesar in 1975. We met shortly after I had enrolled as a jazz guitar student at William Paterson College in Wayne (now William Paterson University). It turned out that we had much in common and are less than three months apart in age.

Rave and I had a mutual friend, Paul Speziale, who remains an excellent and active guitarist on the North Jersey scene. In October of 1975 I noticed that the Bill Evans Trio would be playing at the Village Gate in New York and the three of us went to the show. Rave and I hit it off and then got together to play some duets in the following weeks. Playing with him was immediately special for me, and has always been, regardless of context. We went on to perform a recital at the college in November of 1975; Rave had many friends there and also was a private student of piano faculty member Gary Kirkpatrick. We were very well- received and went on to perform as a duo regularly over the next three years as well as locally at jazz clubs and colleges with other players. I moved to Long Island in 1978 to attend graduate school but we stayed in touch and continued to play sessions and occasional performances. A personal highlight for me was our

performance on the Monday Guitar Night at Gulliver's jazz club in West Paterson in 1982 on two different occasions. We have always shared an easy musical connection and chemistry and this has not changed at all.

As this is my first recording as a leader, I drew on material related to key influences over my time as a student and player of jazz. I also am a great admirer of Rave Tesar, and wanted to feature our collaboration, his composing skill, and his great playing. I was very lucky to have Bill Tesar on the recording; Bill has been a friend for many years and has long been one of my very favorite jazz drummers. Additionally, Kermit Driscoll is a world-class bass player and really a great guy. We all had a lot of fun and enjoyed each other's company a great deal, but also shared a seriousness of purpose in presenting the music to a future audience.

We recorded over two days at Tedesco Studios in Paramus, and for the second day we were joined by Bob Keller on tenor saxophone. I met Bobby in 1975; I had just turned twenty and was auditioning in early September to be placed in an ensemble at William Paterson College. I was nervous but did my best, and when the audition was over I went to a practice room to work on my lesson from my guitar teacher Bob DeVos for that week. A short time later there was a knock at the door and Bob Keller came in. He had been one of the judges in the audition and sought me out to introduce himself and tell me how much he enjoyed my playing. Not only was I placed in a quartet, but

Bobby and I became lifelong friends and have played together at various times over the ensuing years in New Jersey, Long Island, San Francisco, and now on this recording. We have shared family and personal history and he has been an incredible source of support and advice over the years. Also, I so much enjoy 'talking shop' with Bobby about the craft and art of improvisation and jazz performance. It feels to me like we are analogous to two experienced comedians sharing time with each other and I am immensely happy that he was able to do this recording with us.

Following are notes on each piece that provide a bit more background.

The songs:

Subconscious-Lee: To Charles Tesar

This dedication is to all of our parents, and specifically to Charlie Tesar. I had often heard stories from Rave about his dad exposing him to great jazz at a young age and he would mention listening to Lee Konitz and this tune. Bill also tells the same stories, and I want to pay tribute to all of our parents and the support they gave us in our musical pursuits. Charlie was somewhat legendary in northern New Jersey jazz circles – as a trumpeter, band leader, teacher. It has been a real pleasure for me to know the whole Tesar family.

Based on the structure of Cole Porter's "What Is This Thing Called Love," "Subconscious Lee" is famous in jazz history as one of the great

early recordings and original compositions of alto saxophonist Lee Konitz. I chose this particular line to play because we have multiple associations with the tune: the very early introduction of Rave and Bill by their Dad, Bobby and I played the piece together over thirty years ago and made a live recording in San Francisco in 2001, Kermit would play this tune live with Bill Frisell quite often, and Rave's trio has an excellent version of the tune on their CD "Defragment Now." This particular treatment features solos by myself and Bobby, and also collective improvisation inspired by the type of playing that Lee would do with Warne Marsh.

The Scale Song: To Eddie Kaye

This one is for my brother, a constant source of support and friendship. He was very gracious to take me to a whole lot of live music in New York when I was a teenager. I heard some of the great bands of the day in concert and club settings and these experiences have had a lifelong positive influence on me.

I also want to recognize my friend Rave Tesar and his overflowing excellent musicianship. I had tremendous pleasure when I listened to his first trio recording "You Decide", and I was equally impressed with both his compositions and playing. This is a tune that seems to be 'about' music, and I believe this is an interesting sub-genre that many musicians can relate to. We have all practiced our share of scales! It's also a tune I thought my brother would dig, this one's for you Ed.

Breaking the Ice: To Bob DeVos

This performance is for Bob in gratitude for being my first jazz guitar teacher and inspiring me to a lifetime of playing. I started studying with him in February of 1975 and for those first few months I had the feeling that I was pursuing somewhat of a secret art, and that he was introducing me to the hidden world that surrounded it, as well as the hard work and commitment required in learning to play jazz. Bob ultimately inspired me to be a serious guitarist for the rest of my life and became a great friend and supporter. He was always one of the very best players around, and he is still playing great. He performs regularly in the New York area, and also continues to record and teach. The original recording and CD of "Breaking the Ice" is one of my all-time favorites, and I encourage listeners to check it out. You can visit Bob's website (<http://bobdevosjazzguitar.com/music>) for purchase instructions.

Wes' Tune: In memory of Wes Montgomery

Wes Montgomery was a monumental artist, he gave all jazz guitarists a way to approach the instrument and function in a group and is one of my personal heroes. In relation to Wes coming to prominence in jazz, my friend Sonny Dallas told me a story about a time when he was on the 1959 Newport All-Stars tour as the bassist in the Lennie Tristano Quintet. Sonny said that the official concerts on the tour were in the early evenings at large venues – theatres, etc. However, there was an

'advance man' who would scout out the hippest jazz club in any particular city and the musicians would go to these clubs after the concert to relax, hang out, sit in, etc. To paraphrase Sonny: 'Two buses would pull up to a club around midnight and people like Cannonball and Nat Adderley, George Shearing, Lennie Tristano, Lee Konitz, and others would get off the buses. The local people in these clubs couldn't believe their eyes!' At the stop in Indianapolis the club was the Missile Room and the house band was Wes Montgomery's trio with organist Mel Rhyne and drummer Paul Parker (another classic ensemble for jazz guitarists). This was the famous night when Wes was 'discovered' by Cannonball Adderley. Sonny said that he of course dug Wes, but that he was more amazed at the bass lines that Mel played on the Hammond organ. One last detail is that Sonny told me that a lot of people sat in with Wes' group, including my eventual teacher Warne Marsh. Warne loved Wes' playing and many years later I would hear him play Wes' piece "Twisted Blues" at the Village Vanguard with pianist Hank Jones.

Passata on Guitar/Welcome to a Prayer: In memory of Janina Kłopotowska and Helena Kłopotowska

I was working as a volunteer DJ when I was a freshman in college and found a copy of Pat Martino's LP "The Visit" one day when I was looking through the jazz collection. This record was a game changer for me, it seemed like I had never heard a guitarist like Pat before that day although I had listened to Django Reinhardt and a few others.

Though his prodigious technique was intimidating the freedom in his playing was very inspiring, and I loved his dark jazz sound. And to paraphrase Lester Young, Pat was telling stories that I liked to hear. Listening to him also led me to start studying, and shortly after this time I was introduced to guitarist Bob DeVos. Bob knew Pat as they had both studied with Dennis Sandole in Philadelphia. Pat was performing often in New York then and releasing records on the Muse label on a regular basis, and I would make a point to hear him in person whenever possible. His record "Consciousness" included the solo piece "Passata on Guitar" and I immediately thought this was an excellent composition; it reminds me in form of many great short works for piano including those of Chopin. It took me some time to learn it (over thirty years!) and along the way I followed Pat's very interesting career arc. I was equally impressed with his record "The Maker" from 1995 and especially with the ballad "Welcome To a Prayer." The haunting melody immediately made an impression on me and this combination of both tunes is my tribute to Pat and his influence. I was fortunate to spend a few days in 2001 with him at the Stanford Jazz Festival and look forward to hearing anything new from him.

Also, since 2013 I have been studying Polish language and culture in depth; I have a family history that goes back several centuries in current northeastern Poland. It struck me that Pat's two compositions communicate something that I would like to offer in memory of my grandmother and aunt. My performance of "Passata on Guitar" is therefore dedicated to the memory of my aunt Janina, who was a

victim in the Warsaw Uprising. "Welcome to a Prayer" is for my grandmother Helena, the strength of our Polish family and a victim of Soviet persecution during the same historical period.

Child's Play: To Edith Klopotoski

This is a tribute to my mother, and is a jazz line that I composed over the harmonies of "My Melancholy Baby" when I was a student of Warne Marsh. (From all accounts I was a happy baby!) My mom's maiden name is Pritchard, she is a proud Welsh woman with a fondness for Polish soldiers, and in short there is no way this project could have happened without her. She gave me a place to stay and a car to drive while we made this recording, as well as listened to a lot of my ranting while I was preparing for the sessions. She has been a lifelong supporter of my art, and may also qualify as the one person on earth who has heard me perform with Rave the most times. She attended the public performances that we gave in the 1970's, and when we performed at Gulliver's both sets of our parents were in attendance. So this one is for Edith, in Welsh: "Hir oes i chi fyw!"

Street of Dreams: To my sons, Frank and John David

There is a message for my sons in this song, and it is also a tribute to guitarist Ed Bickert. I am a huge admirer of his playing and my treatment of the melody is a transcription of one of his performances. I like to know the words of standards and these are classic, I am especially fond of the line "Dreams, broken in two, can be made like

new, on the street of dreams.” These are some of the words of wisdom that I offer to my sons! Ed’s performance is available on youtube, and I very much enjoy Frank Sinatra’s version with the Count Basie Band at the Sands.

Loco 47: In memory of Warne Marsh and Thad Jones

This tribute is to my teacher Warne Marsh. Warne was such a special jazz musician and human, and it was a great privilege to know and work with him. This particular tune is a treatment of the standard “This Can’t Be Love” and Warne improvised the ‘melody’ chorus on his original recording. Bobby and I both learned it and we are presenting it as an ensemble piece.

A second dedication is to jazz trumpeter/composer Thad Jones. I met Thad late in September of 1975 at William Paterson College, and he was one of my teachers for the next two years. Two days after meeting him he invited me to sit in with his quartet at the campus coffee house. I could never have fully known or appreciated Thad’s genius at that time but responded to his genuine interest in me and thought he was an amazing guy. I have come to regard him as one of the great jazz improvisors, and I wish that he and Warne could have played together as I believe it would have been a very fertile collaboration. Thad was also fond of playing “This Can’t Be Love”, I heard him perform it many times with small groups. I asked Rave to start this track with a chorus ‘up-front’ to set the tone, and when I listen

to it I feel like I’m transported to the Vanguard on a Monday night in the 1970s. The feel reminds me of Thad’s band with Mel Lewis and Warne’s line is a great starting point for a swinging group performance.

You’d Be So Nice To Come Home To: To Jeannine Cuevas

This is for Jeannine, you are so nice to come home to, you are so nice by a fire! I also have fond memories of playing this tune so many times with Sonny Dallas, and also with Warne Marsh. In doing this performance I was looking for a vehicle for the quartet to improvise together in the context of a standard. I really admire and enjoy the freedom and interaction that Rave, Kermit, and Billy can create, and felt like we were all improvising our parts together on this version although there are featured soloists.

Defragment Now: In memory of Sonny Dallas

Jazz bassist Sonny Dallas was a great friend and mentor in my life, and I think he would love this entire recording. He was a veteran of the New York jazz scene in the 50s and 60s and gave me a personal connection to that life. Although Sonny worked with Lennie Tristano for several years he also had a background with other noted jazz groups working at the time, including the Phil Woods Quartet, Phil’s quintet with Gene Quill, pianist George Wallington, and others. Sonny had a reputation as a very hard swinging bassist with great time and a special bass line.

“Defragment Now” is another of Rave’s compositions, and is an interesting treatment of the twelve-bar blues. I know that listening only to individual tracks or using playback ‘shuffle’ options have been prevalent for a couple of decades however I do imagine a preferred track order for these tunes. “Defragment Now” would represent the end of a hypothetical concert or club set, and is the most adventurous composition on the recording in terms of group improvisation. The prior tunes all introduce the players and idea of simultaneous improvising, and in “Subconscious Lee” Bobby and I revisit the collective improvisation that we started in “Child’s Play.” In “Defragment Now” this is expanded to the entire group, and the end of the tune gives a sonic description of the process of defragmenting a hard drive on a computer!

Project 59 has meant a great deal to me and has represented the opportunity to celebrate friendship, family, love, great art, excellence, hard work, and acceptance of ‘what is!’ We offer our music to listeners with best wishes. Please enjoy!

John Klopotoski

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