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JIM HALL
NEA Jazz Master (2004)

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Levy: Well, it's May 12, 2011, and we're here in New York City talking with guitarist and jazz master, Jim Hall. My name is Devra Hall Levy. And for the record, I'm very biased because Jim's my father.

Hall: That's right. (laughs)

Levy: Now, I know that you prefer not to spend too much time looking back.

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: But every story has to begin in the past in order to get to the present so...

Hall: I like that.

Levy: Let me start off by just encapsulating a little bit.

Hall: Sure.

Levy: You were born on December 4, 1930, in Buffalo, I believe.

Hall: So I hear. My mother was there so I figured, what the heck. (laughs)

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Levy: Ah. Okay, good choice. And you grew up in Columbus and then Cleveland.

Hall: Yeah, right.

Levy: And just to set the stage for our listeners...

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: Tell us just a little bit about your childhood and your family.

Hall: It's a bit grim at the beginning, if you don't mind. Well, my dad just split. He left when I was about six, I guess, and my brother must have been four. And I think I saw him once after that. (laughs) So it was a bit bizarre. And if I, I mean, what the heck, this is the truth. Part of my... this is kinda hillbilly Ohio. Part of my mom's family were Jehovah's Witnesses. (laughs) And so my brother and I lived with the Jehovah's Witnesses for about a year, and we lived in a house out near Geneva, Ohio. It was like a farmhouse with no electricity. And so, that was my spiritual awakening. We lost Jesus and our parents... there was no Christmas tree here or anything, you know. (laughs) And that was an interesting lesson about a whole bunch of stuff about the God belief and why we need that. There's a lot of that in that terrific book I just showed you, by the way.

Levy: Oh, good.

Hall: Yeah, yeah.

Levy: We'll look at that book soon.

Hall: And my mom was great. She'd take out my brother and me. When did my brother pass? It's been about five years now, I guess.

Levy: Mm-hmm.

Hall: She got us out of there and got us in a housing project in Cleveland, and she really worked hard to support everybody. And her, my mom's brother, my Uncle Ed, had played the guitar so I heard that. That's where I heard the guitar first.

Levy: Did Grandma play piano?

Hall: She played... (laughs) Kind of ironic. Somebody just, maybe ten years ago... I think I told you this... But do you mind if I scoot around?

Levy: Yeah.

Hall: Put our bootleg record in Europe and had my name on the front, and I wasn't even the leader on a lot of things like, I don't know, Bill Evans and, you know, really good... But the liner notes were a riot. Probably had... I can't remember if it was in France or what, but they were written in English and it talked about music in my family. It said my mother was a pianist. My uncle, her brother, was a guitarist, and my grandfather (laughs) was a conductor. All of which is true. My mom played this terrible

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church piano. My Uncle Ed played hillbilly guitar and sang and kind of drank himself outta here. And my grandfather was a conductor on a Chesapeake and Ohio railroad so... (laughs) I think he would have loved that. I think he, he might have played a fiddle but I just, I loved that one, you know. So... (laughs) Oh, anyhow, then my mom got me a guitar for Christmas or birthday or something like that when, I forget, I was either nine or ten. And I guess the connection was that her brother, my Uncle Ed, had played the guitar so...

Levy: It wasn't something you asked for.

Hall: I don't believe so.

Levy: Hmm.

Hall: I still can't play the darn thing. I wouldn't have asked for that. (laughs) See it sittin' there. It said, "Try to play me today." I can't, I can't remember that far back, but I know she did get me a guitar. Maybe I did ask. And I started taking guitar lessons. Oh, I know. She got it at a... it was called a Wurlitzer music store in downtown Cleveland. And I had a terrific teacher, and you could... it kind of... part of paying for the lessons, I also paid a dollar and a half week or something toward the guitar and...

Levy: Hmm.

Hall: And at that point I was... I started playing at little groups when I was in, I guess, junior high school. I must have been thirteen or something. And the leader of one of these groups was a clarinet player. His name was Angelo Vienna, which is fascinating 'cause he was Italian background. And we went to... So we never had a bass fiddle. It was always accordion, drums and something else, and then guitar. So we went to a record store. He wanted to get a Benny Goodman record. And I heard... that's where I heard Charlie Christian first. And that was, that was literally my spiritual awakening. I still remember. He played two choruses of a blues — Charlie Christian did — in the key of F. It was called *Grand Slam*. And I remember thinking, whatever that is, I wish I could do that. So that, that kind of stayed with me. And slightly... I don't know if ironic is the right term... but ahead of its time because he was, he was maybe... he, I think he had already died. He died in his early twenties and he was a black guy—an African American guy, which is unusual in those days to be in a kind of a mixed something group. I'm not sure if Benny Goodman was responsible for that. I heard that it was Benny's manager who would find the... found Teddy Wilson and people like that so...

Levy: Mmm.

Hall: Anyhow, that's... And then I just kept playing it, and for a long time, I would play in a club on weekends and then I... Am I jumping around too much here?

Levy: No.

Hall: Okay. I decided, since it was the only thing I knew how to do, I wanted to become a better musician. And ironically, again, in Ohio (laughs) at a fantastic kind of conservatory — the Cleveland Institute of Music — and a number of teachers that had to leave Europe because they were Jewish or too smart or something. (laughs) And so my

composition teacher was from Vienna. He had been a friend of Arnold Schoenberg and people like that. And I knew nothing about classical music. I think I liked, I liked Stravinsky 'cause it reminded me of Woody Herman's band. I think Stravinsky had written a piece for Woody's band. And Hindemith probably reminded me of Stan Kenton. I thought Mozart was silly.

Levy: Really?

Hall: In five years in school Mozart got so much better, (laughs) I couldn't... So that was then. And then I discovered Béla Bartók, and I did a lot of writing and composing music, and I kept playing this club on weekends.

Levy: Can I backtrack just a little bit?

Hall: Sure.

Levy: :The first thing that struck me about that very first ensemble was the unusual instrumentation, and I was wondering why was it that, or is it just that those were the guys that were available. How did that...?

Hall: The accordion and drums?

Levy: Mm-hmm.

Hall: That was kind of typical, I think.

Levy: Oh.

Hall: I remember the first time I heard a string bass, I couldn't believe it. We were on some amateur show — that group — and the show had its own little band, and the string bass, the [treble?] bass player, was warming up with a bow, and I said, "Wow, what is that?" I couldn't believe it. 'Cause I had never heard a bass... literally heard one so... I'm not sure what that was but I played in several groups that didn't have bass.... You know, in a certain sense it was good for me because I got to kind of cover that end of the... I couldn't get as low as the bass, but I could work on the accompaniment in low strings, and maybe sometimes I'd play a bass line two octaves too high or something on the guitar.

Levy: Do you remember how you came to be in that group or...?

Hall: No.

Levy: Okay.

Hall: I don't. I guess somebody found me out, that I played the guitar. I can't even remember exactly.

Levy: It's not like you were already aspiring at the age of thirteen or fourteen to be a musician for life, or were you thinking like that already?

Hall: I can't remember.

Levy: Okay, that's all right.

Hall: Yeah. I know that even, (laughs) even when I grew up and had kinda really got kinda... Remember I had this sublet right down the block, 12th Street? I'd get these notes and... "Jim, when are you gonna come home and get a real job?" (laughs) From my mom, you know.

Levy: Uh-huh.

Hall: I said, "Mom, this is the only thing I know how to do is..."

Levy: :So what was a typical day like for you if you were a student and you were also actually performing professionally?

Hall: Oh, when I was in music school, you mean? At the Institute?

Levy: Actually, before the Institute. Before, you know, when you were a teenager in, let's say, high school.

Hall: Oh.

Levy: Did you do things besides practice, play gigs and...

Hall: Oh, yeah. To earn a living, I did. I worked as a caddy at golf courses for years.

Levy: Oh.

Hall: And I set pins (laughs) in bowling alleys, all kinds of stuff. I kind of enjoyed the golf course. I couldn't even hit a golf ball but I knew the setup on the course so well I could give guys tips on, you know. And it was, it was fun. It was really nice.

Levy: Hmm. And what was your brother doing? I mean, were you guys...? You were in a single mother household.

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: Where everybody was trying to help.

Hall: Yeah. Yeah, my brother and I grew up quite differently. I remember his group of friends... maybe I should call my therapist and ask what he remembers (laughs) or call my.... There was a great jazz club in Cleveland. I'll think of the name a little later. I heard Charlie Parker there and all kinds of people.

Levy: Hmm.

Hall: I think I may have seen John Levy play there with somebody or other, I forget. In any case, I was standing outside this jazz club and here comes my brother. And I said, "Rich, what are you doing here?" And he says, "Well, come with me." And there was a pool room downstairs. And my brother was... 'cause I noticed occasionally he would borrow five bucks from me and then he'd pay me back. So he was hustling pool. (laughs) So we went down to the pool room and everybody knew him. He had a special stick and everything. (laughs)

Levy: Wow.

Hall: Isn't that wild? Yeah. So that was not my gift of... (laughs) of talent. I can't do that at all but...

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Levy: You had mentioned the Charlie Christian recording.

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: And I've heard you describe that as an epiphany and...

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: ...an instant addiction. Can you in retrospect elaborate at all for someone... What is it that just grabbed you so, that it was maybe so different from anything you'd heard or...?

Hall: That's fascinating. In a way the jazz [type?], 'cause I told you I did an interview for this guy who works at NYU, up at Barnes & Noble, and he kind of asked me, "Well, what was so good about then?" And I almost said, "Dummy, listen to the goddamn thing. Are you kidding? Of course it got my attention. It changed my life." It was just incredible what, what this guy who was not all that much older than I was. He was in his early twenties and I was, what, thirteen, or something like that, I'd say. That he could do that. I mean, that was stunning. I'm playing the same instrument and I can't even tune it, you know. So that was, that was just a stunning moment. And I realized, I guess, the possibilities of music and playing the guitar. And there was also a big band piece for Benny's big band featuring Charlie Christian. I'll think of the name of that in a minute. And that was, that was just incredible. Eddie--

Levy: Was it *Solo Flight*?

Hall: Sorry? It was *Solo*... oh, right. Yeah, Eddie Sauter wrote that, whom I got to know a bit through Bill Finegan later on. Yeah, that [one?] was *Solo Flight*. And it was just so clear, his playing, and decisive and perfect and good and everything. I never got to meet him. I wish I had, I guess.

Levy: If he were still alive, can you imagine what direction he might have gone in, and would you ever wanted to play with him?

Hall: Probably not. It would scare the hell outta me. Are you kidding? (laughs) I wouldn't sit in with Segovia, either. No, one is enough, I think. (laughs) When I was like playing with Art Tatum, [which was?] completely different, but I mean... Nah, I'd just go and listen, that's all.

Levy: The other person that I think was an early influence on you might have been Django Reinhardt.

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: Do you have any thoughts about what you tuned into there?

Hall: Yeah, in a certain sense, the exact opposite of Charlie Christian, 'cause he played flurries of notes, which was remarkable because, as you know, his hand had been seriously injured in a fire 'cause he grew up in a, I was gonna say a gypsy household, a gypsy camp, or something. And, and during the war to end all wars... how's that for World War II? That didn't work too well, did it? He just kinda disappeared from view. I thought maybe he had died, and he was still alive in France. And that was fascinating

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that, that he could basically (unintelligible), he could basically just use these two fingers, and occasionally he could use these guys, but then he'd have to push them up with his other hand so...

Levy: All right.

Hall: Yeah, he was... It's quite a, quite an inspiration. Did you send me that book on Reinhardt?

Levy: Mm-hmm.

Hall: Yeah. Well, that was fascinating because whoever wrote the book about Django Reinhardt had done tons of research, and what I had forgotten was that the Nazis treated Gypsies just about as badly as they treated Jewish people. And it was fascinating how Reinhardt dealt with that. He must have been a great character. He would park his car with his family in it, and (sounds like "some Mary") and his Nazi troops would come over and start giving them a bad time, and he'd make up some kind of story or something. I think I mentioned I got to meet his son, Babik, one time.

Levy: Mm-hmm.

Hall: There was a... there was a Reinhardt festival at that river in France — I forget the name of it. And Babik played right before Larry Goldings and me. And, but Django was known... I think he used an amplifier just right at the end of his life, but he was known for acoustic guitar. And Babik had these huge amplifiers. He said, "I'm goin' another direction. To hell with that," you know. (laughs) Cracked me up. But he seemed very nice. He had, he had heard a tune called (Beja Flor?), a Brazilian tune that I recorded, and he didn't speak English very well, but he just said it, he was raving about that. So that was... Again, the camaraderie among musicians is great so...

Levy: So it was just about then when you enrolled in the Cleveland Institute of Music.

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: Majoring in theory or (overlapping/inaudible).

Hall: Yeah, there was no guitar and no, no jazz at all. I mean, taught in the school. In fact, I had... I could of... I had started... I was gonna go to a different school and major in English 'cause I was also interested in that. I can't think of the name of that school. And then I saw my curriculum and there was no music in it and I just panicked. So I took a few months and got my piano playing... I had done, I had used the piano to write music before that, but I couldn't really play. Still can't. So I took a few months and then I knew... a bass player that I worked with, he had gone to the Institute of Music and his wife worked in the office, so they were really kind to me. They, they let me pay the tuition, like three cents a week or something (laughs) and... I don't know, they, they just were so kind and, and so I... somehow I got in there and it was, it was amazing. Mozart became a genius suddenly. (laughs) I was there for about five years.

Levy: But you left just before graduating.

Hall: I guess technically I got a degree in music theory, and then I started to work on a masters, whatever that means, in composition. It was kind of funny in a way. I sound like I'm bragging but it's true. I got really good grades, and my composition teacher, the guy I told you was from Vienna, he was, he was a bit rough sometimes and... Oh, I'll give you a quick example. In, in a theory class, we were supposed to, we were supposed to take this piece of music apart and describe how it was written. So I thought this was great. So I wrote... I think it was counterpoint, and I wrote each thing that... if the material was repeated, I would write it in a different color ink. It took me a long time so it was all different colors, and if, if it was red it meant it related to this. So I saw my composition teacher in the hallway and I showed it to him. I was really proud of it. And he kept staring at it and staring at it. And I said, I started to explain. He says, "Oh, oh." He says, "I'm color blind." So that's the kind of stuff that happened. So anyway, one, one of the assignments was to write something for a small group, and I wrote... I thought it was a terrific piece, but I forgot to put in the harp, and he gave me a D. (laughs) That really bugged me. He could have said, "Jim, dummy, put in a harp." So I think because of that, I've never written for the harp, ever. (laughs) But I think, I said, "That jerk. Well, he didn't have to give me a D, for Christ sake. He just had to say, "Jim, put a harp in there." So a friend of mine was, was gonna drive out to L.A. He was a saxophone player and... I imagine that you can still do this. We delivered a car from Cleveland to Los Angeles. You just had to pay for the gas. And we had talked about going. Angelo Vienna, I think, was an ironic name. He was a saxophone player. Anyway, he called me one day and he said, "Jim, I'm leaving next week if you want to go." So I just picked up and went with him.

Levy: Describe the car.

Hall: I can't remember. It wasn't a bad car, actually.

Levy: Was it a strange color?

Hall: Possibly, why?

Levy: I have a memory that, I don't know if it's made up, of it being like a lavender Cadillac or something like that.

Hall: Oh, that's right. Yeah, I forgot that. Yeah, it was a lavender Cadillac. Lavender. And I had a friend in L.A. that I had studied big band arranging with. A guy named Joe Dolny, D-O-L-N-Y. And I knew that he could probably help me out there. And I had an Aunt Eva. I don't know if we were technically related, but she was already in her nineties and I knew that I could stay in her apartment for a while. So there were some... what's the term, enticements or... (laughs) some reasons to go out there. But I remember when Ray would be driving, I'd be sitting in the back seat practicing all the way out there. (laughs)

Levy: Really?

Hall: Yeah. 'Cause I said...

Levy: Ray who?

Hall: The guy that... What did I say his name was? The guy that drove me out there. Angelo, whatever.

Levy: Okay.

Hall: The other guy. (laughs) And I remember we, the first place we went, like dummies, we went to the Musicians Union 'cause they had a big rehearsal space there, and I was looking through the union book. There's Andre Segovia, (laughs) I don't know, all kinds of guys. Probably Johnny Smith and I don't know but... Well, Johnny was in New York, I guess. And I said... it was a little bit frightening to see, you know, 'cause I was still in my mid-twenties.

Levy: Did you have a plan, a goal... aside from the convenience and sort of the serendipity of having the ride, had it occurred to you maybe I should be going to New York but you went to L.A.?

Hall: Oh, that's interesting.

Levy: What...?

Hall: New York frightened me.

Levy: Oh.

Hall: Somehow it did because that's, that was, that was where the serious jazzers were, I thought, then and still do in a way, I guess, but... Yeah, that, that's interesting. And as you know, I had it first, when I first came here, I got a sublet right down the block. It had been Dick Katz's apartment. Oh, I'm not sure. It was just all that, that my buddy was gonna drive out to L.A., and I had this great-aunt. I don't mean she was terrific. I, she, I guess she was but I meant whatever that means in genealogy. She was a great-aunt, I think. And I could stay with her and I had this friend that had a, a rehearsal band at the union. But he wrote these great charts for a big band and everything, and that's, met a lotta people there. But I, for a long time I worked in a music store, not teaching but kinda straightening up the music and stuff like that. And then I got involved in the kind of classicals and I was... so I'd go to these classical music concerts. I remember sitting next to Igor Stravinsky one time.

Levy: Really?

Hall: Or right behind him at a concert. Yeah, isn't that wild?

Levy: Yeah.

Hall: And... oh, and then I started taking classical guitar lessons from Vicente Gomez in Los Angeles. He was great. I can't play classic guitar at all now but... He, he was, he was from Mexico and he had written... I don't think he did the scores but he wrote some music for, for some Hispanic films occasionally.

Levy: Hmm.

Hall: So he had this piece he was working on, and he wanted me to look at it 'cause he knew I had a background. So, it was a... oh, something about these guys were searching

for gold in the mountains of Mexico or something like that. And it's two men went walking, searching for gold, and when they started... So, and then, so that was okay. He showed me that. And then the next, and when they started, he had six notes there, and I was trying to be polite. I said, "Senor Gomez, I think you have an extra note." He says, "And when they es-started." And then he said, "Oh." (laughs) He changed it. So he was great. But... I can't remember if I was working, starting to work with... In any case, I remember, he asked me if I would stay and teach with him there, which was so flattering. I remember driving home from that and I was just going crazy. I said, "Well, I could... actually I'm gonna be okay. I think I could work with Chico Hamilton (laughs) and blah, blah, blah, so..."

Levy: Wow. If you have any other particular memories about the rehearsal band and who some of the people were in those (overlapping/inaudible) ...

Hall: Yeah, there were some terrific musicians. My friend's name is... I'm not sure he's still around. You found him for me about ten years... Joe Dolny, D-O-L-N-Y. Some great musicians. In fact, Mel Lewis was... Oh, I don't know if he was actually in that band, but [Joe?] ended up on a record date with a bunch of guys from Kenton's band, and Mel Lewis was playing drums and everything. And there was a French horn player in the band whose name I may remember sometime. And he was studying... Anyway, I was at the French horn player's house and we were rehearsing, and Chico Hamilton called. Talk about was it epiphany or something like that. Maybe he'd called the wrong number. But he was looking for a guitar player, and the guy said, "Well, hold on, I have one right here." (laughs) So that's how I hooked up with Chico, and that was amazing.

Levy: Let's talk a little bit about that quintet, because historically it was very innovative and unique and...

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: I don't want to lead you on this.

Hall: It's all right.

Levy: I would really just like to know what your experience was with that. Did it click right away? Was it...? How, how did it [go]?

Hall: Yeah, it was... Well, first of all, it literally was... I won't say a lifesaver but I needed a job. (laughs) And I could, with my background I could, it would... Fred Katz played cello and piano. And then Buddy Collette played the woodwinds — clarinet and alto, and I don't know if he played tenor. Carson Smith was the bass player, and Chico and me, I guess that's it. The quintet. So it was a perfect job for me and we played at this club in Long Beach — The Strollers — for months. So I could write for the group and I did some of that and, so it... and my playing was getting better all the time. So that, that was, that was a perfect... And then, through Chico when we traveled back to New York, that's when I met Sonny Rollins and all those people so...

Levy: We stick to the Chico group just for a minute.

Hall: Yeah, sir.

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Levy: You...

Hall: I gotta grab my coffee. Is, is there a coffee?

Levy: Yeah. [Drink mine?]. Take a little...

Hall: Oh, there it is. Sorry.

Male: (inaudible)

Hall: That's okay, don't worry. Sorry, Deb.

Levy: That's okay.

Kimery: (inaudible) when I was gonna do that, I was gonna shake this up just a tad there.

Hall: Oh, oh.

Kimery: There we go.

Hall: I shouldn't put coffee on it. (laughs)

Levy: You over the years have talked a lot to me and other people about music as a conversation and a language...

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: ...and communication so, I'm wondering, when you get into a new group, and it is truly a new group. It wasn't just you being added in, I don't think.

Hall: I'm not sure.

Levy: But was it instantaneous compatibility? Was there a chemistry that was there? Did you, do you recall having to work through to get...?

Hall: I'm, I'm tempted to start making things up now. Yeah, I told him, I said, "Chico, don't play that." (laughs) I'm sorry, Deb. Finish your thought on...

Levy: Well, no, that is, that is my... I mean, I'm just wondering what, you know, whether, whether you recall it having an evolution and a working through phase or whether it was just one of those instant chemistry situations.

Hall: I think in a sense it was, because I already had this background from a classical music school when I could... I knew how to, I knew how the cello was tuned and everything. (laughs) And so it was fun. I got, I got to write for the group and... That was interesting, too. I was thinking about the salary. I think it was about \$70 a week, which probably was more like \$700 today or something, you know.

Levy: Wow.

Hall: But... that was pretty good in those days.

Levy: And you said you played for months at The Strollers.

Hall: The Strollers. It seemed like a terrifically long time, which was great, too.

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Levy: It seems that over the decades that that gets less and less possible. I mean, that was not only normal then but was normal for some period of time after... How does...

Hall: That's a good question. Yeah, go on.

Levy: ...that compare for you in, in your approach and do you wish it was still that way or...?

Hall: In a, in a sense I guess I do. Yeah, I hadn't thought of that too much. I'm sure there are jobs now where maybe they have the same piano player for a few months or something like that, but it was perfect, though, because we're at this club called The Strollers. I assume it was six nights a week for it seemed like months. And then it was a DJ, disc jockey, whose nickname was Soupy Sales. Is that right, or am I confusing him? Anyway, he had a, he had a show from, from the club, too, so...

Levy: What were the audiences like?

Hall: I don't really remember specifically. I just... not terrifically inspiring, I guess. It, it wasn't like concert hall stuff. It was a barroom. And it was kind of funny, too, because we sat behind the, the group... (laughs) It happened a lot. There, there was a... the bar was there, and there'd be, there'd be people sitting there, and then the band was here. And something about the sound, I had this guitar, kinda like one of these guys. But I couldn't, I couldn't cut through the sound. And then Chico played a pretty heavy bass drum. So I ended up getting a Les Paul guitar, which I had for about six months. In fact, there's a picture of me with that on a Chico Hamilton Quintet CD. And it was a bit bizarre, too, because the thing didn't vibrate against you. It was dead, you know. (laughs) But... because of the way it was put together, it, it cut through better.

Levy: Wow.

Hall: And I couldn't afford two guitars, and as soon as we left that club, I traded it in for... I think I had had to give up one of my other guitars even to, to get that. There wasn't a whole lot of financial heights (laughs) going on then but... Anyway, it was, it was a great period for me, and I met so many terrific musicians out there.

Levy: Was that around the time you encountered Ben Webster?

Hall: Yeah, that was a bit later. I had gotten to know... Oh, there were some jam sessions in Los Angeles at, at a club... that's where I met Jimmy Giuffre and Red Mitchell, and I got to know Red there. And I remember... (laughs) I remember meeting Jimmy Giuffre outside this club one time, and I really admired Jim 'cause he had written all of those great things for Woody Herman's band. And... Jim, Jimmy was from Texas, I think Dallas. I can't remember for sure. Anyhow, he always had a bit of an accent, a Texas accent. So I remember I... I remember when I was outside this club where I was gonna play a jam session on Hollywood Boulevard, and I said, "What a pleasure to meet you," and he says, "Same to ya." (laughs) And then, it's... (laughs) kinda touching in a way. When, when Jimmy was on his way out, I can't remember specifically what his thing was, but I would call him on the telephone and we'd talk. And I remember one of the last things, conversations I had with Jimmy, I had just told him how much he had

meant to me and how helpful he'd been. And he, he said, "Same to ya." (laughs) It was kind of ironic, in a way, the same...

Levy: Full circle.

Hall: Yeah, full circle so... So that, that worked out really well out there. Shorty Rogers was out there then.

Levy: Tell us a little bit about some of these people.

Hall: Yeah. (I went?)... Oh, and then you mentioned... I got to know Red Mitchell through these jam sessions and stuff, and I remember going to an Ornette Coleman record date that Red was on. It was Red and Shelly Manne and Ornette and Don Cherry. And I told John Levy that I was a huge fan of that quartet that, that Ornette had. It was quite, quite unusual. And I had heard Ornette at the Sonny Rollins' concert a few months ago. Anyway... Tell me again. I lost the choo-choo train of thought here.

Levy: I was just kind of curious about the lifestyle in that time in California.

Hall: Oh, I see, and Ben Webster, yeah.

Levy: What, what it was like. What you were all like then. What you were doing. What you were aspiring to. (overlapping/inaudible)

Hall: Yeah, I... I got to know Ben Webster. Of course, I was a huge fan of Ben's from having heard him on records, and he was with Duke Ellington for a short while and everything. And I had gotten to know Red Mitchell, and Red was working with Ben Webster, with Jimmy Rowles on piano. Oh man, the drummer... his name I'm drawing a blank on now. It doesn't matter. Anyway, Red invited me to come sit in one time, which I did, and everybody liked it so Ben, in effect, hired me and, but they couldn't pay any more, so the guys all chipped in a few bucks and I, so I got to work with Ben Webster. It was a, it was a real thrill. And I think it had a, a marvelous impact on my... (unintelligible). We played this with Greg Osby now. Chelsea Bridge. And I always think of Ben Webster playing it and how he, he would really just... just had so much, just played melodies so beautifully. I still can't get over it. Had nothing to do with facility and chops and all that stuff. And I... oh, he, he was great. (laughs) He would call... Oh, I can't remember exactly the sequence, but my mom had moved out there by then. My family. My hillbilly family was (following me out?). So I was staying at my mom's place for a while, and Ben would call. He was, he was a real ham in a way, and he'd, first he'd ask, "How's your mother?" and everything. And then, then he'd say, "We got this and that." And he'd say, "We'll all meet at my house," which meant he needed a ride. (laughs) So, so I was his chauffeur, you know, and I was proud of that. I didn't mind. We had a lotta interesting experiences. But it was... I don't remember how it was financially or anything, but it was just such an honor to be working with that guy. It really kinda changed my approach to guitar playing and stuff like that.

Levy: Can you articulate the change? Was it something conscious that...?

Hall: Well, just the way he put, would play melodies, especially of ballads. Had nothing to do with, with speed or anything. It just meant... sort of taking care of each. It

was very passionate, I felt, and... It was great. The opposite of... Charlie Parker wasn't bad, either, but it was the opposite of Charlie Parker, I guess, or, or even Art Tatum or any of those guys. Oh some...

Levy: Those of whom you liked a lot.

Hall: Yeah, sure, yeah. Somebody was talking about a Pete Bernstein record recently. Pete did a record... You know Pete. He's working with Sonny Rollins now, by the way. I think it's Thelonious Monk tunes. Anyway, a guy was called and he wanted me to get some comments about it, and he was talking about how Pete didn't, doesn't play a whole lot of notes, either. Like that's so, the guy was messing around. And I said, "Well, you have, you have Art Tatum and you have Count Basie, for Christ sake. You know, take your choice. (laughs) Neither one of 'em was bad. (laughs) Music can be... So anyway, that, that was... Ben Webster was a huge... He made me notice how much you can do with just paying attention to notes and where they go and everything so...

Levy: You talked about The Strollers club. I just want to paint a little bit more picture...

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: ...of Los Angeles at that time.

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: Is The Lighthouse going?

Hall: It was, believe it or not, I don't think I ever went there.

Levy: Mmm.

Hall: A lotta terrific musicians played out there [all the time?].

Levy: Shelly's? Did he have his club yet, or was that much later?

Hall: That was a bit later. I actually played Shelly's Manhole.

Levy: Any other places come to mind?

Hall: Let me see... They probably were, will, after you've gone to sleep tonight. (laughs)

Levy: The other thing that was going on at that time was a lot of recording for Pacific Jazz label.

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: And you were on a lot of that.

Hall: Yeah. I think... I'm embarrassed. I can't think of the guy's name who (unintelligible).

Levy: Was that Dick Bock?

Hall: Dick Bock, that's right. I was gonna say... yeah, Dick Bock, B-O-C-K, yeah. He was a good guy. And... Chico recorded for him. And then Dick put together this record that... it's called *Two Degrees East, Three Degrees West*, which is, was an ironic title

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because I was supposed to be one of the Three Degrees West. Bill Perkins played tenor and Chico played drums. And I was from Cleveland, so I wasn't from the West Coast at all (laughs) and... and John Lewis was from Texas, I think, and Percy, he... Anyway, it was, it was great. It was Percy and John, and that's where I kinda got to know John, who was an incredible help to me after that so...

Levy: Before we get to New York and John, you also came across Brookmeyer and Jim Giuffre and (this was?)...

Hall: Oh, yeah, yeah.

Levy: ...happening out on the West Coast at first, right?

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: Because I'm thinking about your forward-thinking approach, which is not new. You seem to have been a forward thinker way back in the beginning.

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: And I guess it was...

Hall: I have a low boredom threshold, that's part of it, I guess. (laughs)

Levy: Oh. Okay.

Hall: So...

Levy: Well, in '57...

Hall: In fact, what I, what I did... I tuned... a lot of that... I used to do that with Gary Larson, the *Far Side* guy, who was... He would come... I told you, with, with his imagination and everything, his guitar-playing was very middle-of-the-road. So I'd take his guitar and tune it randomly, and I'd say, "Okay, Gary, make something outta this." Didn't I tell you that?

Levy: Yeah, but I didn't know you did it with Gary. I saw you do it in a class one day at the New School.

Hall: Oh, yeah? Yeah. And I did it with this guy a couple days ago, 'cause I need to do a lot of practice and I get bored playing C major scales so...

Levy: How do you do something like that? If, if the... I mean, that would be like telling me that the notes on the piano weren't where they were supposed to be anymore.

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: How do you...

Hall: Well, you try to make something out of it, that's all. You just play it and see what you can make out of it.

Levy: Wow.

Hall: And... (laughs) It's actually fun. It's not... Oh, but I forgot. What, what was... my train of thought got derailed.

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Levy: Okay.

Hall: I'm looking at a picture of Jimmy Raney and the (inaudible).

Levy: Well, I'll get you back on the track. Back on the track.

Hall: Yeah, okay.

Levy: You had just gotten up to the Jimmy Giuffre unusual...

Hall: Oh, yeah, yeah.

Levy: (overlapping/inaudible), which, I think, is fascinating and...

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: ...(then this?) combination, and it was important to you, so I wanted you...

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: ...to tell us why.

Hall: I, again, I told you how I met Jimmy and I was a huge fan. And... I don't remember the exact sequence, but he, he called me and he was starting a... we had a trio. First, it was Ralph Pena on bass fiddle, and we used to rehearse in Ralph's garage, actually. And... Ralph had a, had a family. He had a couple of children and first... Well, I had, I had traveled with Chico already. But anyway, with Jimmy, we had this trio that was really pretty inventive, and Ralph wanted to go back home and be with his family. And we tried a couple of different bass players. One guy was Jim Atlas, who was on that *Sound of Jazz* film. And then we kind of discovered Bob Brookmeyer so, and Jimmy really loved Bobby's playing. And Bobby was an incredible musician, so we had... Bob played valve trombone on it. And so we had that, we had that group with Bobby for a long time.

Levy: Can you explain in any way to a non-musician maybe, or even to a musician that may not have had the experience, how that kind of instrumentation works in a group, because that's a (overlapping/inaudible)...

Hall: Yeah. Well, it had to do more with listening to one another, again, and reacting, and I didn't have to just play... I wish I could play Freddy Green rhythm. I can't do that anyway, but my role was, was more, more involved in that... Although what I did was I tuned the guitar down, I don't know, a few notes — maybe a fourth lower — so I could cover the bottom end of the, of the ensemble. And I went to John (D'Angelico?), who had a shop down here, and he... I can't remember the whole detail, but he fixed one of my guitars so that... the neck was... a funny thing. It's not, not really comical, but Jim Atlas had been the bass player for a while. And it was a big thing for Jim. And then Jim lost the job. So (laughs) it's kind of sad in a way. But I walked Jim up to Grand Central Station. He was taking the train back to Chicago. And he called me later, and that was when the United States was messing around with different missiles. They had some called the Atlas missile. So Jim gets off the train. (laughs) Jim Atlas gets off the train in Chicago and the headline says, "Atlas fired." (laughs) And then it said, "Europe cheers

as Atlas fires.” He said, “Thanks a lot.” He just got off the train from being fired, you know. Isn’t that wild?

Levy: That’s...

Hall: It’s like *Saturday Night Live* or something.

Levy: It is.

Hall: Yeah. (laughs) He got a kick out of it.

Levy: What were the challenges of playing in that kind of a group? You talk about tuning the, the guitar differently...

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: (and the range?). What other... ‘cause it must have had some major impact on your evolution and (overlapping/inaudible).

Hall: Yeah. Well, Jimmy was marvelous, obviously. He was a fantastic musician. And he was very, I hate to say, in tune. (laughs) But he was. And he helped me with my phrasing. He would say, “Why don’t you try to have this sound more like a wind instrument instead of banging out every note like flamenco guitar player (unintelligible)?” So he and I messed around with different string tensions and that sort of thing. But he made me very aware of making the guitar sound more like a wind instrument, actually. And that was, it was really important. ‘Cause if I was playing a line with Jimmy, he didn’t want to hear all these pick strokes — plastic guitar pick hitting the strings. That would ruin the phrasing for him.

Levy: (‘Cause you were?) keeping the time an issue in that group?

Hall: Well...

Levy: Not an issue that it was a problem, but did it have a different focus because of the instrumentation?

Hall: Well, I guess... you know, white guys have good rhythm so... (laughs) Even bald-headed hillbillies. (laughs) I’m sure it did in a way but... especially when we had Bob Brookmeyer. There was in a, in a certain sense no rhythm section, and I wasn’t gonna try to see if I could steal Freddy Green or something. I couldn’t do that, either, but... So each line had to have its own forward motion, which is important, I think. And that was, that was a great experience for me working with Jim.

Levy: And you mentioned, ‘cause I keep thinking in my mind about this as being the L.A. scene, but in reality, you were both with Chico and with Giuffre. You toured, right?

Hall: Yeah, yeah.

Levy: Where did you go? (overlapping/inaudible)

Hall: Sorry. Well, I mentioned... this is a fact (unintelligible). As you know, the, the black-white racial thing, even Jewish, uh, Baptists... (laughs) Humans aren’t perfect. I assume we’ll never be, but the racial thing was pretty tacky in those days, and I

remember talking about it with Sonny Rollins. This is where I get religious, for Christ sake. (laughs) (We have?) this fantastic musician and we play together. I think I was the pale face in that group, too, and, but a lot of times we couldn't find a place where we could eat together, you know. And it was either that or the guys would be nervous about trying even, so we went through all that crap. And especially on the road, we'd check into a hotel and people would assume I was their manager. (laughs) And I was very likely the most unmanageable one in the group but...

Levy: Were you a wild guy?

Hall: Not really but I got... The, the alcohol was always around and that was a, that was a danger for me. I finally was able to put that aside so... (laughs)

Levy: Were these travels mostly in the U.S.? Did you go abroad that early?

Hall: Yeah. No, not really, no. I think the first time I went to Europe... Oh, I did, actually. I think I went to Europe with Giuffre once, and then I was in Europe... Norman Granz had, was Jim Giuffre's manager for a while. We had had a couple of other... he had had a couple other managers. And Norman Granz also managed Ella Fitzgerald. And Herb Ellis had been playing guitar with Ella and he left. I think he went with Oscar Peterson – something like that. Anyway, I got... talk about lucky. I got to work with Ella Fitzgerald for quite a while and that was...

Levy: That's exactly the next thing I'm gonna list.

Hall: Okay.

Levy: And you almost answered how that came to be. That was a Norman Granz connection?

Hall: Yeah. And Paul Smith was playing piano. I had heard of her, of course. (laughs) With her. And I remember going out to her house (unintelligible), nice house. And in a sense I auditioned, I guess. We, I got to play with her a bit and with Paul. And it was great. I remember saying this to Tommy Flanagan 'cause Tommy had worked with her. I said, I said, "I used to tune up to her." If it was a choice between that and a tacky piano 'cause, I mean, her intonation was incredible. And then Norman Granz also got Yves Montand over here, and Montand had... I got this great book about Picasso, and there's a picture of Montand and Simone Signoret talking to Picasso. And Simone Signoret got an Academy Award in the late fifties, I guess. In any case, Yves Montand was primarily an actor, but he does this kind of song and dance show. He was great. He would, he would come to work to the theater every night and he would go in and exercise. He'd have one of these big bars where you stretch on and everything. And, but it was a complete show biz thing. Talk about funny stuff, though, then. Sonny Rollins hired me, basically, so I left. I got somebody to take the job with Yves Montand, and I, so I left. And I was, you know, thrilled, working with Sonny Rollins. And a couple musicians, I guess... I hate to put 'em down... commercial musicians. They came in to see me with Sonny Rollins down here (laughs), and they said, "You left Montand for this? What, you know..." (laughs) Can you believe that? I mean, it was the biggest thing of my life working with Sonny. So... (laughs) And then I played... I can't remember why now, but I played the

Academy Awards show... I guess because I was working with Ella and she sang on that show. That's the only time I ever heard her mess up. There was an arrangement that, big band arrangement. Andre Previn was leading the big band on the Academy Awards. And there was a quick change of key, and I think Ella missed one note there, (laughs) but she was just incredible. And Simone Signoret got an Academy Award that year for *Room at the Top*, I think. And she, she was lovely. She traveled with us for a while. So I had, I had my Aunt Eva's car. I think I mentioned this one time. It was a '51... no, '41, '41 Buick or something with running boards and everything. So I was leaving the parking lot after the Academy Awards, and all these fans are out there looking in. And they see me in this, and somebody says, "Who's in that car?" And that person says, "Jack Benny." (laughs) '41 Buick with running boards.

Levy: And that tour with Ella included the concert in Germany and *Mack the Knife*.

Hall: Oh, yeah. *Mack the Knife*, right. Yeah, I kept it. I said, "Ella, don't do that. Do..." (laughs) Yeah. Well, that's funny, too, because I didn't... when Ella died, this guy who has a radio show, whose name I forget. He sort of has to know all the answers. But I told him about the recording and he was arguing with me over the phone. We had this... Pete Cavallo was our road manager. A great guy. And Norman Granz said... anyway, Pete schlepped all this recording equipment around on the trains and everything. And we went into the place in Berlin, and he just set the stuff up and turned it on. But the word got around that Norman Granz had been there and done all this stuff, and I was, I said, "Schmuck, I was there, you know. I might have been drunk, but I was actually there." (laughs) Which, he just plugged it in and she sang great. And... (laughs) Yeah, she was incredible. But I think she messed up one thing on the Academy Awards, 'cause it was a quick change of key, and she, she had never heard the arrangement before. (laughs)

Levy: The *Mack the Knife* concert, did anybody that night in the group have a sense that that was going to be a major historical event that was going to live on forever?

Hall: No. (laughs) I don't think so. We just had a lotta fun. And... I won't say it was just another night. But it was an honor working with her, you know. And she sounded like she was having a ball, as well, on the record so...

Levy: How did playing behind a singer influence your approach?

Hall: Well, I was primarily part of the rhythm section. Not bad, either. Gus Johnson and Wilfred Middlebrook and Paul Smith, piano player. Paul and I didn't get around, along terribly well. I thought he was kind of mechanical, and his nickname out in L.A. was "Popular Mechanic" but... (laughs) Joey Baron told me. But, yeah, I think he was perfect for that job, though. Anyway, that, that was great, and I got to South America with Ella. I had no idea about... I thought Brazil was all jungle and stuff, and I couldn't believe it when we got there. Music was coming out of the air in Rio de... we were in Rio de Janeiro for a long time. Everybody played the guitar too good for me. (laughs) I hated it. (laughs) I was invited to lunch or dinner one time in Rio, and there must have been, I don't know, about six or seven people, and they, somebody took a guitar and passed it around. (laughs) One guy would play a bossa nova and the other guy'd play

classical. So I played a blues with my thumb and passed it around real quick. (laughs)
So that was good. And then we went to Argentina.

Levy: Did you stay in South America after the tour or did you...?

Hall: I did, yeah. I stayed in Buenos Aires. I borrowed, I don't know, two or three hundred bucks from Norman Granz and I stayed in, on... not, not terribly long afterwards.

Levy: What did you do?

Hall: Well, I had gotten to know some people, I guess, and I was fascinated by the music. I heard tango music. I heard Astor Piazzolla. I heard his music. I may have met him there. And there was another guy whose nickname was (Pachuko?). I'll think of his real name. Anyway, I go to this place where this tango music was playing. I couldn't believe it. I hadn't heard... you know, you hear the real stuff and the difference between that and the Brazilian music. It was, it was quite an experience. I really loved it.

Levy: When you came home with all this new sound in your head, what did you do with it?

Hall: Fell asleep.

Levy: (laughs) Did you incorporate all of that in, soon after or...?

Hall: Well, I don't know if I did consciously or not, but I'm sure that it seeped in there just like my discovering Béla Bartók in music school (laughs) did, you know. I assume that one's experience with any luck... I'm looking at a picture of Zoot Sims as we talked. (laughs) It was a great experience. And Scott Colley and I played in Buenos Aires just a few years ago and a couple that had owned a club where I used to go to... they, they came in to the concert. It was really nice.

Levy: Well, I suggest we take five.

Hall: Okay.

.....**Break**

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: We good to go?

Kimery: We are going.

Levy: Okay. I'm going to overlap just a tiny bit. Did you find the picture of the...?

Hall: Yeah. There's Yves Montand and that's... I think Simone is in one of those. Bright... She, especially, I think was very, very bright lady. Very politically involved in kinda left wing. That was why it was difficult for them to get over to the States. (laughs) A few years ago, they would probably have been put in prison. We ain't gonna have no foreigners over here talkin' to... the more I think about that.

Levy: Well, just before we took the break, we were sort of in Buenos Aires. That's where we left off.

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: And I asked sort of a dumb question, which was, did it influence your playing when you got home. And I mean, obviously it would in some way. But what I'm really curious about is that that was a few years really before Stan Getz's recording and...

Hall: Yeah, Stan did kind of bossa nova stuff from, from Brazil. I'm sorry, go ahead.

Levy: Okay. Mo, but that's a good distinction.

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: I was sort of lumping the whole South American influence together, and really what you're saying is that I shouldn't. So that's a good distinction for me to understand.

Hall: They're, they're quite different things. (laughs)

Levy: Mm-hmm.

Hall: Sambas and tangos. Tango music is really quite different, I think. It's like Count Basie and Stravinsky or something. (laughs)

Levy: So that you, do you see it... is there any relationship in that sort of migration, though, of the South American music influence in American music and in jazz that came about in the early sixties?

Hall: I'm sure there was. I know... Well, I guess it's like any experience in one's life. Unless you're a complete idiot, it affects you somehow. And it broadens your perception of whatever it is you're doing. And I know that Charlie Byrd and Stan Getz did these kinda fake Brazilian... (laughs) They were sort of bossa novas, I guess. It was a bit hammy. And my friends from Brazil said that they used to laugh about those records. (laughs) You know... It would feel the same if I tried to imitate, or if I tried to imitate flamenco or whatever. I'm a gringo. (laughs) I can't do that. It's not my fault, really, and it's too much... I can't play like Freddy Green, either. I could probably come closer to Freddy than bossa nova, though. 'Cause it's more stateside music that I've had experience with.

Levy: I'm going to digress now just...

Hall: Okay.

Levy: ...because we're on to (overlapping/inaudible).

Hall: You want to talk about dogs?

Levy: No, I wanted to ask about Paul Desmond's *Bossa Antigua*.

Hall: Oh, yeah.

Levy: And where, if at all, does that relate to what we're talking about?

Hall: I don't know. I like the title, though. Instead of *Bossa Antigua*... I mean, instead of bossa nova, it's old. I think Paul was bright enough to know that it wasn't gonna sound like a real South American tune. Boy, Paul was really special, too, as you know. We did a record of that standard tune, *Time After Time*, and he plays the melody, or whatever on the way out, and he plays something that is so much more beautiful than the original tune. (laughs) I can't believe it, the way... he just was so melodic and everything, incredible. Terrible guy but... (laughs)

Levy: We will come back to Paul.

Hall: Sure.

Levy: 'Cause you have a lot to say about him.

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: ... a little bit in the chronology then. You were involved a little bit with the Lenox School and the, or not?

Hall: Yeah, at the School of Jazz that John Lewis had? Yeah, I was.

Levy: Can you tell us a little bit about that?

Hall: Well, John Lewis had this School of Jazz at, I think it was three weeks toward the end of the summer, and it was in Lenox, Massachusetts. It was a place called the Music Inn. I'm drawing a blank on the couples' name that ran it. The lady died not too long ago, but she was terrific. Both of them were. And it... I went up... first time I was there, I was working with Jim Giuffre, so I was not a teacher or anything, and I think I was involved in Oscar Peterson's class. Oscar was teaching there and I would sometimes be part of Oscar's rhythm section and that sort of thing. And I think the first time it was Ralph Pena and I went, and Ralph... and it was incredible. The people that were up there as teachers. Max Roach. Of course, John's whole quartet with Percy Heath and Milt Jackson, Connie Kay... just all these incredible... Oh, Ornette Coleman's group was up there one time, the whole group. John got 'em up technically as students, but they put on a concert and everything. And I was working... I think I remember being there with Giuffre and there was some kind of jam session, and Jimmy was so knocked out by Ornette, Jimmy was going... Jimmy ended up sitting on the floor playing. (laughs) It just got kinda crazy. But it was great. And finally I got to be one of the teachers, and for a while, I had... I was in... there were three of us that had this group—Connie Kay, the drummer from the MJQ, and Bill Evans and me. And we had a, we had a group in a tent. And I was all involved in it. I would write these little arrangements up. And... oh boy, the vibraphone player who, Gary McFarland, was a student there so... And Attila... I think Attila was in the group—Attila Zoller. So I'd be running around tripping over the ropes that were holding the tent up. And Connie was, Connie Kay was sitting in the back where it's cool play... and I would, you know, try to get these arrangements. And Bill Evans is sitting out in the sunshine in a chair, and he had this piano player who was kinda nervous, and every once in a while, Bill would turn around and he'd say, "Think long." (laughs) That was his way of teaching. But that, that was a fantastic experience. It really was. The people that I kinda got to, to, you know... I wasn't... I don't want to say

equal but they're just incredible musicians up there. Max Roach and I think Basie's... Oh. Oh, one time Miles Davis's group was... they had a nice theater, too, to play. And the group didn't make it, so we put together something and we had a concert. It was Bill Evans and me and I guess Connie Kay and Percy and... Oh, Dizzy Gillespie was up there one year. So that was a... that was really important for me 'cause in a certain sense I was kind of a kid out, you know, I was just sort of in a sense starting out and... And John was so helpful to me after, after the... We can go ahead with that later, I assume, but... Anyway, yeah, the School of Jazz at Lenox. That was great.

Levy: Well, we are, I think, just about at that point. I'm not clear myself on when you actually moved and relocated to New York, 'cause you did a lot on the East Coast.

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: Up to that so...

Hall: Yeah. Well... Oh, I guess after I had been with that singer, Ella. (laughs) (Well, I can?) drop the names... Yeah, I worked with Ella Fitzgerald. My mom had by then moved out to Los Angeles so I was staying with my mom, and that's when I guess I played with Ben Webster and all that. And John Lewis kept calling me. He says, "You have to get back to New York." He was so helpful. He wanted to... he said we have... he had this thing called Orchestra U.S.A., kind of a hammy title, but it was literally an orchestra. And he said, "We have a lot of things for you to do here." And so I remember, I said, "Well, where am I gonna stay?" And he said, "Well, stay in my place. I'm never there, anyway." And it was on Tenth Avenue about 57th Street, I think. And so I stayed there for a while, and Miles Davis lived right down the hall, I remember. And one day the doorbell rang and I went to the door and it was Miles. He said, "Jim, what are you doing here?" So I said, "Well, I'm staying here 'til I find a place." He said, "Are you looking?" (laughs) Typical of Miles. So he took me down to his apartment and he played the... this, I guess it was the *Sketches of Spain* thing, that Rodrigo piece, and he explained he... and Gil Evans was gonna do an arrangement. He says, "But I don't want any electric guitar." So he ended up using Chuck Wayne on the record but... He was great. Yeah, and he was right down the hall (when?) ... So finally, Dick Katz, I guess, had just gotten married or something, and he had been living right down the block at 23 or something like that. So I had his...

Levy: On 12th Street.

Hall: On 12th Street, yeah. So I had his apartment for a sublet. And Dave MacKay was my roommate for a while.

Levy: Oh, in that apartment?

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: I never got that straight. Okay.

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: What were your first impressions of New York, having been afraid to come earlier on and...

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Hall: Well, by then I had gotten a pretty good dose of it, 'cause I had worked here a lot and everything. And I guess I was a bit nervous about work. And Dave MacKay and I split the rent for... It had a fold-out bed. (laughs) So I was sleeping in the bed. Dave MacKay is a blind piano player. (laughs) Terrific guy. And he had lost his vision kinda late in life, so he, Dave doesn't have any of the, the typical blind person mannerisms, you know. You'd think he has vision. Some funny things happened to him that... We went into a club to hear somebody and Dave had to go to the bathroom. When he came out of the men's room, he was laughing. I said, "What happened?" He said, "There was some guy in there. He looked. He says, 'What are you looking at?'" (laughs) Anyway, and I started getting these notes from Sonny Rollins when I lived down there, in the mailbox. And one of them, I remember one of them said, "Dear Jim, I'd like to talk with you about music." Oh. I had met Sonny when I was with Chico's group. We played opposite Max Roach's group. That was... I forget the name of the club. Something West. And it was that great group with Clifford Brown and Richie Powell. And Sonny. I'm embarrassed, I forget the bass player's name. And it was so tragically ironic that... I was working with Chico. All I remember that Richie and Clifford Brown, there was a jam session late. And they helped me lift my amplifier and everything into the taxi and we had to... Sonny played at this jam session. But with Chico's group, we were either in Pittsburgh or Philadelphia. And Richie and Clifford and Richie's wife came in. And it was so sad. I think that's the night they were killed driving back to New York, you know. So that was... And I know it was a huge blow to Sonny so... Anyhow, I'd gone... and I had this sublet down here. And I started getting these notes from Sonny Rollins. He said, "Dear Jim, I'd like to speak with you about music." (laughs) So I guess I left him a note 'cause I kinda knew what he does... Sonny had a dog named Major. It was a big... I forget the breed. (laughs) Big black dog.

Levy: German shep... oh. It was black?

Hall: Yeah, it might have been. I don't know but...

Levy: How did you... You had to leave him a note, too? Did you guys have telephones?

Hall: I think so, yeah. At that time it's quite possible that my phone had been disconnected for lack of funds. (laughs) I don't know. But anyway, finally, Sonny showed up one day and we sat across from one another at a table about that big. And Sonny had brought with him... he had a little plastic bag and he put it down there. So we started talking. Sonny was gonna start this quartet and the bag started wiggling. I said, "Sonny, what's, what's in that bag?" And he said, "Uh, uh, we'll talk about that later. First..." But that's how focused he is. And it turned out he had a... he had been to a pet shop and he brought a little chameleon or some kinda little lizard, and he said, "Look at that. Isn't he great?" you know (laughs) But that's, that's the way Sonny is and was, and he was so focused. He said, "We'll get this straight first so..." He, he was starting a quartet with Bobby Cranshaw and... Walter Perkins originally was the drummer. So that was, that was a fantastic moment for me to go working with Sonny.

Levy: And that was another historic recording in historical retrospective.

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Hall: It ain't bad. I actually listened to it again. I think about the time I did that concert with Sonny up in September. And...

Levy: What was he like then?

Hall: He was extremely... I don't mean self-centered but focused all the time. And I remember on the record date... Well, first of all, he got me practicing, I'll tell you that. (laughs) 'Cause he's such an amazing player. We did, we recorded something he called *John S. S* with a period. He was so taciturn. I said, "Uh, Sonny, was that for John S. Wilson?" You know, the... He said, "Uh, it could be." (laughs) That's all he ever told me. Then years later, I read an article where evidently the... you have to ask Sonny. The S had to do with, with John Col... John Coltrane. John was John Coltrane and maybe, I think Coltrane had helped Sonny financially when Sonny took off and everything. Coltrane was a lovely guy, I remember. I didn't know him well. But he came into the club. We opened at this club over east of here, which I... Anyway, that, that's, that's how Sonny was. He was so focused, you know, and it was just great.

Levy: You guys are still close, you and Sonny.

Hall: Yeah, yeah.

Levy: And you share a great deal, I think, of philosophy and attitude towards music and to life and even politics.

Hall: That's kind of ironic, yeah. And I remember when I saw Sonny up at... oh, there was a jazz festival... I'm thinking, I forget the name of the... in Vermont, I think.

Levy: Was it Litchfield?

Hall: I'll find it. Anyway, I was so thrilled that we had an African American guy as President, and both Sonny and Bobby Cranshaw said they had not voted for him. And I never wanted to go into it, but I asked Russell Malone about it. He said, "Well, I came, I grew up in Florida." He said, "Everybody down there was votin' for that other guy whose name I can't even say (laughs), who was the President for eight years before." So I have no idea. Yeah, it's a bit bizarre, isn't it? Unless they voted for... what's her name? That kind of... the woman who, who was... good Jim.

Levy: I'm shocked.

Hall: Yeah, I was, too. I didn't, I never went into it. That's what...

Levy: Because he's so about the environment and about...

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: ...the world and how you treat people. I mean, there is so much ground that you share...

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: ...in your outlook. Spiritual and not religious, but the, but the treatment of music and the treatment of people and (overlapping/inaudible).

Hall: Are you talking about Obama?

Levy: No, you and Sonny.

Hall: Oh, Sonny and I? Yeah.

Levy: So to hear that difference, I'm, I'm (overlapping/inaudible) surprised.

Hall: Yeah, I never pursued it. I was... unless they... Oh, god, who's the woman whose husband was President? (laughs) That she works with Obama on... Clinton. Hillary Clinton. Let's say he voted for Hillary Clinton.

Levy: Oh. (overlapping/inaudible)

Hall: I don't know what... they couldn't possibly have voted for that Republican. I don't even want to think about that. Maybe I heard it wrong. (laughs)

Levy: Didn't you have some conversations with Sonny about world peace and maybe doing a concert or... I mean...

Hall: Say that again.

Levy: Did you have conversations (overlapping/inaudible)...

Hall: Well, I did, yeah, yeah.

Levy: ...with Sonny?

Hall: Yeah, we... 'Cause I had done a concert up in Woodstock that Steve Josephs put together. And I talked with Sonny about doing one up there. And somehow it didn't happen. I think he was... he wanted the kids into it. (laughs) But it never happened. Yeah, I'd be curious to hear his take on all that stuff. I don't know.

Levy: Well, one of the reasons I'm sort of asking about this is because as focused as he is and as you are on your music...

Hall: Mm-hmm.

Levy: You also have lives outside of...

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: Or in addition to the music.

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: And so I thought that might be an interesting way to, to get into some other thoughts.

Hall: I'm sorry, I didn't follow you.

Levy: To get, to ask you about other areas of interest. And I thought that there was a connection there. Maybe there isn't but... the connection of, of what you as a musician and a traveler and an explorer of cultures...

Hall: Oh, yeah.

Levy: ...people, what... you know, how that shaped your life and your music.

Hall: Yeah. Well, you do... one does. One do... (laughs) see things differently. And people who make generalizations about nationalities and color and stuff, you say, well, that's, you know... (laughs) I was there, dummy, and they ain't like that at all, you know, so... Yeah, so... And, and yeah, generalizations are, in general, can get you in terrible trouble, I think, and... Yeah, I feel very privileged to have first of all made a, made a living so far, doing something that I really care about. And I get paid to go to these fantastic places. You usually get paid and meet amazing people and... I like to say that I've played music with people with whom I couldn't have a conversation. Of course, some of them were New Yorkers but... (laughs) That's, that's great, though, you know, I just played with, you know, people in Japan and Europe and all over.

Levy: Let's talk about some of the places that just stand out in your mind, whenever they might have occurred.

Hall: Well, I'm still... nervous about my friends in Japan. I told you Satoshi... there's a marvelous guitar player—Satoshi Inoue, who, who had moved to New York about 22 years ago. He was just gonna stay a couple years, he and his wife. And they ended up... He took lessons from me for a while and then he was teaching at the New School for a long time. And he had just moved back to Japan very recently. In fact, there's a card someplace up there with a picture of his, his dog and his cats and stuff like that. And then this earthquake happened, and for a long time I couldn't reach him at all. And evidently, they're okay. They, they're south of Tokyo. But they... it was... I hate that word "ironic," but you know, he just, just moved back. (laughs) He had been here all that time and... And it turned out he was working more in around Tokyo than he was in the States, so he decided to move back. I remember one of my first times in Japan. The culture is fascinating, I think. I took a taxi someplace, and obviously I don't speak Japanese. I can say yes and no and that's about it. But I gave the driver a tip and he chased me down the street and gave it back to me. (laughs) Somehow that's not part of the culture, tipping. They just...

Levy: What are the audiences like in Japan?

Hall: Oh, that's fascinating, too. At least it was at first. You would... you'd do a concert and you'd think it was going really well and there were just sorta deadpans out there. And you'd think you... But then when the concert was over, they'd go crazy and they'd bring you... Ask other gringos about this. They'd bring you flowers and everything and just flip out. But it's just completely different. It's not a rowdy audience at all. It wasn't then. And... it's a fascinating, fascinating culture, I think. It really is.

Levy: Was it hard in any way to get used to at first, because... do you in any way... were you used to feeding in some way off the audience?

Hall: Probably, yeah. Yeah, sure. Yeah. There was a... (laughs) guitar player in Cleveland when I was in music school. I can't think of his name, either. He had played with Benny Carter's band. Good guitar player. Black guy. And he had a group in this club when the neighborhoods were racially divided. And I used to go in and he would

ask me to sit in. So I'd play and it was great. A lotta fun. So I went in with Don Erb one time. My friend the composer. And I got... we got talking about the difference between jazz and contemporary classical music and everything. And my, my friend... I'm embarrassed. I can't think of his name. I know he played with Benny Carter's band. He said to Don. Don, Don Erb was a friend that I went to music school with. Also had been a jazz trumpet player, but he was a far-out composer. I got a lot of his music. And so... let's call the guy Benny. I can't remember his name. He, he was talking with Don, and he said, "I don't get that far-out classical music." He says, "You're going along fine. One, two, three, four. One, two, three, four. One, two, three, four. Five? Like why?" (laughs) Then some guy in the audience yells, "Hey, Benny, play *How High the Goddamn Moon*." So that was that club. (laughs) But I like Benny. When he got to the five, like why? (laughs) Why do you want to do that and mess it up? Then Paul Desmond told me that Paul... you know, he did this famous *Take 5*, Paul wrote. Paul said... you may have heard him say. He was in a bar someplace and some guy, drunk, was raving about *Take 5*. He says, "Paul Desmond, I love that piece. One, two, three, four, five. One, two, three, four, five. One..." (laughs) I forget how I got into that but I just...

Levy: Well, we had started talking about traveling and cultures.

Hall: Oh, right, yeah. That's a cultural thing, I think. (laughs)

Levy: Yeah.

Hall: *How High the Goddamn Moon*. (laughs) Yeah, it's...

Levy: You've been to some very unusual places, though, I mean... (I'm thinking?), Zagreb and...

Hall: Sorry?

Levy: Were you in Zagreb?

Hall: I was, yeah. Yeah, and very unusual places in Europe and... Yeah, I was in Zagreb and... Oh, right after... I'll find the... What country is Zagreb? What...? I'll get out my atlas later. Anyway, they... It wasn't when the World Trade Center... Yes, it was. The World Trade Center had just gone down, and we got... we were going to Europe and we got so much empathy that it was incredible. People almost couldn't believe that it happened here. We, we can see it out the window of our apartment. So we were in... I'll think of the, the country in, in a minute. It doesn't really matter. And we, we got off the plane and the people that picked us up at the airport, they were terrific. They said... "Just recently there were people shooting at us from back..." Anyway, we're driving into the, to the hotel and it was incredible poverty. People were selling household goods along the street and everything. It was really sad. I'll find it on the atlas later. And then here's this huge billboard with a picture of Jerry Springer. (laughs) His show... Do you believe that? In that setting? So then, a few weeks later, I was playing at the Vanguard and a guy whom I had met at, at this jazz festival there came in and he said, he said, "That show was taken off the air. It was too violent for..." Jerry Springer's show." (laughs)

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Levy: Oh, my goodness.

Hall: (But I mean, talk about?) what... you know, all that stuff that has happened. There's a big billboard with Jerry Springer... (laughs) Springer.

Levy: It's like Twilight Zone or something.

Hall: Yeah, exactly. That's what it was.

Levy: I remember from childhood you always with the atlases, the maps, (overlapping/inaudible).

Hall: Yeah, I was gonna say I'll, I'll find it over there.

Levy: Did your other musical colleagues do as much as you did to visit the cultures and try to communicate in the languages and...?

Hall: Yeah, I don't, I don't know if I actually did, but you tend to get immersed in it anyway. Like I had been to the... Remember Peter, the doorman? He was from Zagreb. And we played in his hometown. And it was fascinating. Again, what happens when... we did some pieces with a string quartet which I had written, and the verbal communication was kinda nil but their musical communication was great. And all over that area... I'll get the atlas out in a minute. I forget. And, oh, I finally got to Budapest. Just a couple years ago. I had never been there, and Bartók was always my hero. And Attila Zoller, of course, was from Budapest. And Chris Potter's wife is from Budapest.

Levy: Oh.

Hall: So we finally got there and it was great.

Levy: Do you have any favorite, favorite places?

Hall: Cleveland. (laughs) I guess just anyplace, really. It's just kind of whatever you make of it. Speaking of weird things, though. Do you remember, you remember Joe, the guy who lived down the street here, was always in a wheelchair? A great...

Levy: Mm-hmm. (overlapping/inaudible)

Hall: He was, he was murdered just a... a couple of weeks ago maybe. Somebody broke in, went into his apartment and beat him up. The guy was in a wheelchair. And he was in the hospital a long time and then just yesterday, he died. Isn't that wild? On 12th Street, Ramsey Clark lives here. (laughs)

Levy: Well, I was gonna say, this is a great time to talk about the neighborhood.

Hall: Yeah. Anna Sui lives in the same building as Joe did.

Levy: Anna Sui's a clothing designer?

Hall: Yeah. And I mean, Anna Sui, sorry. Anna Sui. And Elliot Carter, the composer. I think he's 102. He lives in that building.

Levy: Uh-huh.

Hall: But there... someone who lives there said there had been a lot of work... the doors were kinda open a lot now, because there had been a lot of workmen in and out. And evidently, somebody followed this Joe in and robbed him and then just beat him up and he, he died in the hospital. Was that wild? I can't get over that.

Levy: Ah, that's awful.

Hall: Strange species we belong to. (laughs)

Levy: Tell us a little more about the neighborhood and people on the block.

Hall: Yeah. Well, we have two clothes designers. Anna Sui, of course, down here. And then Isaac Mizrahi lives right next door and Janie buys his clothes off of QVC all the time on television. Isaac has two dogs, which is kind of funny. I mean, 'cause, you know, always... for a long time, I would see Mizrahi and I kinda, I knew who he was but he wouldn't even make eye contact. He'd just go... And then he got a dog. And I said, "This is gonna change your life." He's out there picking up poop with the rest of us. (laughs) So he said, "It has already." And then Meryl Streep used to live right down the block. And she moved out. And...

Levy: And Nat Hentoff.

Hall: Oh, Nat. Nat and Margo Hentoff. Yeah, they live in the Butterfield building, too. So it's, it's kind of a fascinating neighborhood. And you lived here for a long time. (laughs)

Levy: I lived here. Do you... did you ever know, is it David Byrne that lived across the street?

Hall: I met him, yeah. I didn't really... I know who he was, that's all.

Levy: And the Forbes guy. Is he in the neighborhood?

Hall: Tell me about that again, 'cause I think so.

Levy: Isn't it Forbes magazine at the corner? Who am I thinking of?

Hall: I think so. Somehow, what I... I lost... I was in the hospital a long time. (laughs) I forget about... I think you're right, though. Yeah, it was... it's a fascinating neighborhood here. I still can't believe that that murder happened... It's a guy in a wheelchair.

Levy: But he was also a character, as I recall.

Hall: Yeah, he was. Absolutely, yeah.

Levy: He believed in people's bodies being invaded or...

Hall: Oh, yeah. What was that? We got into a talk once.

Levy: Extraterrestrial something...

Hall: Yeah, extraterrestrial space travel or something like... That's right, I forgot about that. Yeah, he, he was a character. And his wife was pretty sane, and she died about ten years ago. I liked his wife. But it's just so... 'cause he was getting... 'cause they had

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those big steps down there, to get up and down, and he was always... every time I'd see him, he was scuffling with a couple of canes and then he'd get in the wheelchair. So the idea of, I don't know... That just happened about a week or so ago. He just died yesterday. First time I... I don't go to movies very much but I had seen a movie that Meryl Streep did where she played the part of a violin teacher for kinda inner city kids or whatever. And so I made a point of... 'cause I could see that she was trying to stay out of sight basically. I'll jump back in. The first time I realized the whole thing, I was walking Django, and I saw this lady walking a dog, and she was reading *The Times*, or pretending to. So I said, "You're a very brave lady," meaning you're reading the front page. They always put the worst disaster... And then she made... and then I realized it was Meryl Streep. But then I had seen this movie, maybe on television, where she plays this woman who teaches violin, and she really looked like she was playing a violin. So this time I was walking Django and I saw her coming down all dressed up. So I said, "Do you have 15 seconds for a compliment?" And I told her, I said, "It really looked..." And she got all coy like a little girl. She said, "Oh, well I wish I could have stayed with it but I was just so..." (laughs) It was sweet, you know.

Levy: Tell me a little bit about whether the New York... I don't know, rhythm, feel, atmosphere... does to your artistic sensibilities? Does it feed it, does it dampen it?

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: Do you want to get away sometimes?

Hall: Probably all, all of the above. It's probably things that I've talked about before. When I, when I have... like when I wrote that orchestra piece, I really had to concentrate like mad, and I never did finish it. It was supposed to be piece movements, plural, (laughs) (when?) I squeezed it together. I think in a certain sense it... I'm not sure. I think it had been a bit easier for me to do composition up, up in the woods at the house in Lake Celeste there. But I'm not... If something needs to be done and you have... the term deadline is pretty appropriate, I think. You somehow get it done.

Levy: Was there a change over the decades maybe in the jazz world? In the feel of New York in a jazz context? In the really early days, like there was the Jazz Loft and...

Hall: Oh, yeah.

Levy: ...different milieu, I'm thinking. I don't know. That's what I'm curious about.

Hall: Yeah, that was fun. There was a nice camaraderie—that term again—among musicians and painters and writers, as well. And there were a couple of painters' lofts up on Sixth Avenue in the Flower District there, and we used to have kinda all-night jam sessions. And it turned out a lot of them were recorded, unbeknownst to us, by this guy on the first floor who was a pretty well known reporter and photographer. He had actually gotten beat up in Japan for something he did but... Jim Raney and Bob Brookmeyer would go over there and... It, it was great. It was great fun. Oh, and I met... Oh, this guy, of course, Ray Parker. He was a friend. And oh boy, the guy that... I'll think of his name later. Anyway, a lot, a lot of really well known painters, contemporary in those days, painters that I, that I got to know through that. And there

were a couple of bars where everybody hung out. One was Bradley's over on University Place. Painters and musicians and that sort of thing.

Levy: And that changed at some point.

Hall: Well, at least for me. I'm sure there's probably... these kids today probably, (laughs) you know, have different contact from what I do. Yeah, it was, it was fun 'cause we could go sort of just play all night, and it was terrific.

Levy: Art Farmer was around that time, maybe?

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: Tell me a little bit about Art.

Hall: Yeah. I had got to know Art when he and... oh, boy... they had a quintet together. Benny Golson. They had a group. And then Art was... I can't remember how I got hooked up with Art, but we... I played with Art in his quartet for a long time. I remember when I first met Ron Carter, it was kinda nice. Ron had just come in from Detroit, I guess, and we were working at The Half Note with, with Art Farmer's group. It was Ron and... I forget who the drummer was. Pete La Roca, maybe. And one night I saw Miles... Miles Davis came in and I saw him skulking around there. It turned out that Miles asked Ron Carter to join him, and Ron was great. He said, "Well, you're gonna have to talk to Art Farmer 'cause I'm working with Art now." So that's why (laughs) Ron split and went... but I thought that was pretty classy of Ron to do that. He said, "You're gonna have to ask Art."

Levy: You, during that time, you recorded with Art, and I think one of those was *Live at The Half Note*.

Hall: Probably, yeah.

Levy: Early '63.

Hall: Yeah. I was only twelve years old then.

Levy: Tell us a little bit about The Half Note, 'cause that was a very famous place that's forgotten...

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: ...too easily.

Hall: Well, Zoot Sims and Al Cohn played there a lot. And the... in a certain sense, I guess it was typical that the bandstand... well, as I remember, it was kind of a long bandstand, but there was, there was a bar around it on one side. And I remember watching Zoot and Al there, and Al would... they would order a drink and Al would finish his shot glass, and then he would just drop it. And Sonny the bartender would catch it (laughs) so it was... And the drummer would catch that. And they had... Al, oh, Al the waiter, that's who he... Al was a riot. He would holler. He'd say, from way across the place, "Sonny! You know, two blah, blah, blah..." (laughs) I don't know. I think... well, a couple musicians... anyway, it was a marvelous bunch of characters

there. I remember playing there with Art Farmer, and as I recall, you played 'til really late at night there. And there was this huge clock... probably a Budweiser clock, and it would sort of turn so you look around... So you'd look at the clock and it'd say 20 minutes to 2. So then you'd play about another hour and you'd look up and the clock would say 15 minutes to 2, you know. (laughs) I mean, it felt like that.

Levy: Yes.

Hall: That's the point so... Yeah, we played really late in those days, which was great in some ways. And... yeah, Zoot Sims and Al Cohn played there a lot. Jimmy Rowles played with them sometimes and... It was, it was just kind of a great hangout and place to... pretty good food, too, I think, as I remember.

Levy: It was a popular place, too, with a certain... And correct me if I'm wrong, but I have this memory of like Kitty Carlisle and what was his name? Harry Morgan. People of those sort of TV, jazz lovers gravitating to that club.

Hall: Who was the first one?

Levy: Kitty Carlisle?

Hall: Kitty Carlisle. Well... maybe. I was kinda too busy playing, I guess, but... I guess it was a pretty well... I remember one time... oh, who was the guy that had the jazz radio show who was (laughs) really well known? I'll think of it by tomorrow, anyway. Had a show from Birdland, I think. Anyway, and, and the guys—the, the waiters and the, the coat check—that was a family-owned place and everything. It was, it was really fun, yeah.

Levy: The Canterinos?

Hall: Canterino, yeah. Symphony Sid, that's right. Symphony Sid came in one night and that was kind of funny.

Levy: Were there other places that you could tell us a little bit about? I'm thinking about the Five Spot... think places that are long gone now that people might not know about.

Hall: Yeah. Well, part of my thing about wanting to live in the moment is probably because I don't remember these things. (laughs)

Levy: Okay.

Hall: I forget where the... Oh, the Five Spot was over East, right? Yeah.

Levy: Mm-hmm.

Hall: Yeah, I actually played there with Jim Giuffre, and we played opposite Ornette Coleman's group there and it was great. And then when I first started working with Sonny Rollins, we rehearsed there in that club. And the Canterino Brothers. (stammers) They, they also had the club just further east of there where it had just opened, and I played there with Sonny Rollins. I can't remember the name of that club now. But yeah, the Five Spot was great. That was... the... Leonard Bernstein, he would say, (laughs)

said, "You don't, you don't buy a Steinway piano. It's Pete Bernstein and Leonard Bernstein. Remember him saying that?"

Levy: Vaguely.

Hall: He had these television shows that he would insist that people call him Bernstein. He says, "You know, E-I in German is ein." He says, "You don't buy a Steinway piano." Anyway, he came in one night and he flipped over Ornette's group. It was nice.

Levy: Is there... I shouldn't say is there because there's got to be... both an upside and a downside to the nightclub life?

Hall: Well, you can figure that out pretty easily. Yeah, one tends to... in the old days especially, they used to stay open really late. And in order to make it sometimes, you'd... I, anyway, started drinking too much and stuff like that. On the other hand, it's a great way to... a lotta times, on trips like the one we did out West, we'll only play an hour in each city. You know, you play a concert and that's an hour and a half; whereas, in a club, you really get to work things out and go over them a lot. So in a certain sense, it's great. And even, even Birdland uptown here, that, that was a lot of fun.

Levy: What about issues of sound or space, physical space and...

Hall: Well, probably no different from what there is in any other proceeding, like trying to figure out this space to do the interview. You're talking about in nightclubs now or what?

Levy: Well, I mean, one of my memories is you getting mugged outside of Sweet Basil.

Hall: Oh, that was... that's... I liked that story in a way.

Levy: Tell it.

Hall: It's, it's ironic and funny, that's... I was playing at Sweet Basil years ago, and I think it was a Saturday night. It was really crowded. I was working with Brookmeyer, just the two of us. So I went in the kitchen and I got a cup of coffee, and I was standing outside the club on Bleeker Street. And there was a lot of traffic. It was a busy evening and I was just kinda thinking. And I felt this arm around my neck, really strong, and I thought it was a friend putting me on or something. Then I noticed whoever it was had a huge knife poking me in the stomach. And I, I said, "What do you want?" And the guy, some kind of accent, he said, "I want the money." (laughs) So I managed... I got my wallet out and I spilled coffee on myself. I was really getting angry, too. And I... he took the wallet and I think just 40 bucks or something. I said, "Would you not take the wallet?" So he threw the wallet down. He said, "Stay there." (laughs) But I was furious. So he ran across Bleeker Street and he ran down one of those side streets. So I was standing there watching him. I was looking for a cop. I was seeing where he went. Two or three minutes. And this couple comes up to me, maybe in their late thirties, said, "Excuse me, do you know where a 45 Bleeker Street is?" (laughs) This is a New York moment. I said, "No, I'm sorry." I said, "I just got robbed. The guy... I'm looking for a cop." About three seconds, the guy says, "Oh," he says, "they said it was right around here." (laughs) Is that a New York moment or what?

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Levy: That's a New York moment. It'd be fitting in a Woody Allen movie.

Hall: Yeah. (laughs) Oh.

Levy: And then you had to go play another set.

Hall: Yeah, we played another set. (laughs) Brookmeyer had heard about it, too. And the cop, evidently, who worked that area, he was furious 'cause it had happened on his beat, you know. (laughs) Yeah, I liked that, the couple. (laughs) "Oh. They said it was right around here." (laughs) Like what else is new? That was... I think, there's one of those clubs I played with Ron Carter. It might have been the same one, I'm not sure but...

Levy: You also worked that club with Red Mitchell.

Hall: Oh, with Red, yeah. That's right. Yeah, there's a record of that, too.

Levy: All right. Let's talk a little bit about your friend Paul.

Hall: Desmond?

Levy: Yeah. Do you recall how you met?

Hall: I think he robbed me outside.

Levy: (laughs) I know you recorded with him really early, in actually 1959...

Hall: Was it...

Levy: ...was that first album was East of the Sun.

Hall: Oh, yeah.

Levy: But I don't know if you knew him before that or how that even came to be.

Hall: I had gone to hear the Brubeck Quartet when I still lived in Cleveland. They did a concert at a college up there, north... I don't know, near Cleveland. That's funny. I'm, I'm really not sure. I just... I had always loved Paul's melodic sense, really. I think I told you we did the record of *Time After Time* and he plays... his improvised thing is so much better than the original. Oh, yeah. We rehearsed in the bedroom here once with Eugene, Gene Wright, I think, the bass player. Jane came home and the three of us... 'cause it was really hot and everything, so we had the air, and we were, had the music on the bed. And Paul used to come over... oh, Elaine's Bar was the hangout uptown there. And Paul would come over, and Janie and Paul would play Scrabble. They were so good, I would just watch. And then, Paul would go on up to Elaine's. I can't remember how I first met him, though. And I heard him with Brubeck, of course, and *Take Five* was a...

Levy: Do you recall whether there... again, this is a question I'll probably ask about different people, but was there an immediate simpatico or... was it a challenge? What...?

Hall: You mean, musically?

Levy: Mm-hmm.

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Hall: Why don't you call up Paul? (laughs)

Levy: I wish I could.

Hall: Yeah. Me, too. I really don't know. I think somehow we, we got along musically pretty fast, and by then I had heard Paul quite a bit on recordings and stuff like that. And I can't remember how we played together the first time. I'll give that some thought, though. Maybe I can...

Levy: Okay.

Hall: ...bring it back. He... I just, I just admired him a lot and still do, even though he's gone so...

Levy: Well, let me back up for one second, because I managed to skip over Dick Katz and meeting Jane. So you've mentioned...

Hall: Oh, yeah, yeah.

Levy: ...her a couple of times.

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: But we haven't introduced her officially so...

Hall: Okay, yeah.

Levy: Let's tell that story.

Hall: I was having dinner. There's a hotel, I guess, on 11th Street or something where I used to stay once in a while when I was in town. And Dick was with Jane. We had, the three of us had dinner together, and that's how I met Janie, was with Dick. And then I guess we all came back here or something, and Janie had a dog. I can't remember the dog's name. And the dog had gotten under the bed and wouldn't come out. And I managed to coax the little dog out, so I guess I was a hit with Janie that time.

Levy: That was Bosco.

Hall: Bosco, that's right. Thank you. And, so then Jane and I started dating, and then I met you. (laughs) And it's still going on. Yeah, yeah, Dick Katz introduced me to Janie. That was...

Levy: Was she a jazz fan?

Hall: A jazz fan? I... somehow I don't think so, because I remember she told me that she talked to Julian Adderley—Cannonball Adderley. I don't know if we went to hear him or if she went with Dick. But she in effect said, "What the hell are you guys doing up there," you know. (laughs) Ask her about it sometime. Yeah. It was, it was... the Adderley Brothers. A great, great couple of guys. Nat and Julian. I worked... Well, anyway, that's how Jane and I met, and we started dating and hanging out, and eventually I moved in here and... still here.

Levy: You can digress to the Adderleys, if you want. I didn't know you had any interaction with them. I'd be very...

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Hall: With who?

Levy: The Adderleys. Since you mentioned them.

Hall: Oh, oh, yeah. When I was with Jim Giuffre, Brookmeyer and I, we... It was kind of interesting. We played in a theater with Mort Saul. He had a show called *The Next President*. And we would go from there down to this club to play opposite Miles Davis's group. It was... I remember where it was and everything. I can't think of the name of it, but it doesn't matter really. But we played opposite Miles's group. It's a great group with Cannonball Adderley and John Coltrane. Bill Evans was playing piano. Philly Joe Jones and a marvelous bass player whose name I'm drawing a blank on. So... that's where... I had heard Bill before. He had a... he was in a quartet with Tony Scott, who moved to Italy afterwards. But my feeling was that in, in those days, the thing of piano was all this macho nonsense, and Bill Evans would really listen and he, he had got a beautiful sound out of the piano. So I thought it was pretty hip of Miles to, to seek him out and, again, it was the racial thing, too. He was a... Paul Chambers was the bass player. Great guy, too. And so I got to... Oh, and then, shortly after that, and I was working with Sonny Rollins at this club I mentioned, Bill came in one night and he said, "Do you want to do a duet record and...?" (laughs) It's Bill Evans. And it's funny 'cause people think of him as this tragic figure hunched over the piano. And he, he was great. He had a great sense of humor, and one time he had a party up at his apartment and he cooked the food, I think, and played the piano, and it was great. Unfortunately, he, he got addicted to drugs and that kinda did him in, but it was a great experience working with him. Talk about listen well and listening and reacting. What a sound he got.

Levy: So the duo albums that were so noted just came out of that first interaction and...?

Hall: No, I told him... Yeah, I think so. And we just seemed to, to work well together and... Again, listening, listening carefully and reacting, and he, he was really fantastic at that. And, and you can hear it on the records, you know. That really doesn't need any drums and bass fiddle and everything so... That was great. That was really a pleasure working with Bill.

Levy: Is there something specific, if you were going to talk maybe to some young people today who might, say a guitarist and a piano player...

Hall: These kids today? (laughs)

Levy: These kids today. And were going to attempt that, and they said to you, "Well, how do you deal with it when you have two instruments that both have chordal capabilities..."

Hall: Oh, right. Yeah.

Levy: And a lot of capabilities....

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: What should we do? What should we think about?

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: Would you have any advice?

Hall: Well, I assume part of it is listen to the whole texture of what's happening and try not to, to mess it up, but to stick with the, the thing as a texture. I think I did a CD called *Textures*. And, and that's a... two components of it would be... And it's a little dicey because they tend to be in the same register a lot of the time, so you really have to listen to the other person, respect and then react. Something else I was gonna say about that. Yeah, it's funny. People ask me about those records a lot. Yeah, I really admired Bill, and he had a great sense of humor, as well. He would do some very funny things sometimes.

Levy: Do those records hold up for you over the years?

Hall: I think so. I rarely listen to anything. I'm gonna slip a bit here. I did a duet record with Pat Metheny, which you know about. And it got doctored up so much that I think you're better off you didn't do the liner notes but... (laughs) I listened to it all the way through after... The guy came over two or three nights ago, was it?

Levy: Mm-hmm.

Hall: Interviewed me about this record. And I hadn't heard it in years. And I listened to it once but I never wanted to hear it again. (laughs) 'Cause it had been... Oh, I think volume, not that... Yeah, I had to get Metheny to... I don't know... I think I told you. Eliza, a little girl, genius girl next door. I went to a recital that her guitar teacher had. It was so goddamn loud, I could not believe it. It was dangerously loud, and everything seems to be like that. I don't get it.

Levy: And you're not the first person that said that this week to us.

Hall: Good.

Levy: George Wein made the same complaint yesterday.

Hall: Oh, really? Good, yeah. It's, it's a bit frightening, and it takes a whole dimension out of music. The guy... I don't want to bore you with the details, but anyway, I went through that with Metheny, as well. And it takes a whole dimension out of, out of the music if it, if it's that loud all the time. What do you do for variety, you know? So I guess it... it's like if you're a painter and, I don't know, just everything is blobbed on there, now what are you gonna do but...? (laughs) That, that takes away so many dimensions of music, I think, to have everything that loud, and it's physically dangerous as well. I probably lost a lot of hearing over the years. I told you Sonny Rollins used to wear earplugs, even when we had the quartet. It might have just been to get him to help him concentrate better, 'cause we didn't play that loud but...

Levy: Well, we're at a good spot for another little break.

Hall: Okay.

.....Break

Kimery: We are running.

Hall: I guess the... I was thinking about Europe, of course, and Denmark. And I... years ago I got this... the Danish Jazz Par Award, which was a nice chunk of money. And I could do some writing. I took Chris Potter over there with me and Terry Clarke and everything, and I got to write for a string quartet and... and I found out the sponsor was the Danish cigarette company. And you had just been hospitalized with cancer, right?

Levy: Mm-hmm.

Hall: Yeah. Having to do with cigarette smoking. So I... and I knew the guy in Denmark. It was a friend. And I said, "I can't do this. Anything to do with cigarettes, I absolutely can't, cannot do that." So I rejected it. And then, I forgot. Then he told me how, you know, it paid really well and everything. So... Oh, and my, my friend, the Danish tennis player who, who lives out in, on the West Coast now, whose name I forgot. He even called me later and he was... he says, "Yeah, but that's sponsored by cigarette companies." (Torbin Aldridge?) And so I called the guy. I said, "I can't do this. My daughter just had cancer due to cigarettes." So he said, "Well, think it over." So then one of Janie's friends whose name I forgot, who's a therapist who lives out West, she says, "Well, why don't you..." Anyway, what I did was I gave a big chunk of the money to the American Cancer Society or whatever. And I put, "No smoking in any of the places where, that was in my contract where we play." (laughs) But still, I got picked up at the airport with this big van that said, "Cigarette..." You know, it was so disgusting, I could... But okay, I said, "No smoking in any of the... (laughs) venues." And we had, we had a nice quartet (unintelligible). I think it's recorded someplace but...

Levy: It's interesting, though, that a lot of alcohol companies and tobacco companies have been good financial sponsors of a lot of jazz events and...

Hall: Yeah, go hear this concert before you die of lung cancer. (laughs) I'm sorry. That's funny, funny because I never literally smoked. I mentioned this the other day. But I probably inhaled a ton of it at clubs and... I worked at the Vanguard. You remember, I'd hang my clothes in, in the bathroom every night. (laughs) And... this is a digression, but I think I told you when I was about eleven, a bunch of us chipped in and bought a pack of cigarettes, and I took a couple puffs and I said, "What the hell is this?" (laughs)

Levy: It doesn't even taste good.

Hall: No, I didn't... I never got it but... anyway, I was just thinking about that.

Levy: How did you manage to not get involved in the drug scene?

Hall: I don't know. Just... Oh, I think I took cocaine literally twice, and each time it had to do with, I was drunk and I had to get on the bandstand or something, but it just... I don't know. It just never, never really appealed to me at all.

Levy: It's not that you saw somebody you admired ruin themselves with it or, I mean, was there...?

Hall: Admired what? I missed...

Levy: Was there maybe somebody you saw that you admired musically, who you saw destroy themselves with it? I mean, were there just good reasons not to in your mind? Were you just too smart?

Hall: Oh, I'm smart. (laughs) I don't, I don't really know. It seemed like a... it seemed illegal to begin with. And... Although especially since I've been in the hospital all this time, my energy level is really low, and I have a prescription for something called Provigil, but even there, I have to be careful that I don't overuse that so... The cigarette thing, I never, I never got at all. I just... anyhow... Yeah, I liked that that I put in the contract no smoking in any of these places. (laughs) I told you I did that in Germany not too long ago. Did I mention that? I was over there with...

Levy: You know, it's hard to do in Europe.

Hall: Yeah. I was over with... It is, you're right. With Scott and Greg Osby, and it was supposed to be a concert. Just, just the two of us... three of us. And, but it was in a huge bar, really, and everybody was smoking. So I told the, the guy, the promoter, I said, "You're gonna ask them not to smoke. Otherwise, we won't play." So I gotta say this guy's name now. It's gonna make me vomit, but I got on the microphone. I don't know if I said it in German or not, but I said, "There's three things America has given the world." I said, "Cigarettes, McDonald's and George Bush." (laughs) Got a few grins, anyway, but...

Levy: Did you apologize? (laughs)

Hall: For having said that?

Levy: No. For America?

Hall: Well, if you want to call it that, yes, I guess. And during that time, I still can't over that that... At first, I thought it was mildly amusing, the first time he got... It was so obviously stolen. The, the swing state was Florida and guess who was the governor of Florida? (laughs) That schmuck's brother. And I thought, well, that's... and even the Supreme Court got involved somehow. And I just thought... Oh, and before that, the voting districts were being shifted around in places like Texas or something, and I sort of, well that's, you know, that's a historic idiotic... that's mildly amusing. And then it just got less and less amusing as the days went by. (laughs) I couldn't believe it. The guy couldn't say, couldn't pronounce nuclear, so we have to say weapons of mass destruction. Meanwhile, my niece, whom you know, Amy, she was over there as a nurse for months.

Levy: Iraq.

Hall: Sorry?

Levy: In Iraq?

Hall: In Iraq. Sorry, yeah. So I figured if someone you care about gets killed, that's mass destruction, schmuck. (laughs) Anyway, sorry to digress...

Levy: It's okay. That's part of the world and it... I don't know. Do you get to, in a sense, take refuge in the art, in the music? Does that give you some balance to the bad sides of the world?

Hall: Probably in a way. Because I guess and still guess that when you're on the bandstand, you can express things that will reach people, you know, and it doesn't have to be extreme or anything but... Oh, I said that at that concert in Washington, when it was supposed to be peace movements, remember that?

Levy: Mm-hmm.

Hall: The orchestra was good. I should of done it on a microphone but... I said that it was before the second election, or whatever you call that schmuck... And I said... Oh, I said... I think I said, what really hit me in the hotel today, as I was thinking about this concert, is that music has to do, I believe, with humanity, and I pointed to the orchestra. I said it's, you know, all nationalities and colors and everything, and I said, just marvelous musicians. And I said... I should have said it on a mic when I said, "We have a chance this fall to make a huge step forward for humanity." And I said, "In four letters, V-O-T-E." (laughs) So... Yes, my point is I actually said that on a microphone.

Levy: Yes.

Hall: Or not on a microphone but on a stage. The orchestra loved it. They...

Levy: Let's talk just a little bit about some of the other duo work that you were doing. There was what I thought was a really unusual duo to my ears as a kid was with Bob Brookmeyer, just the two of you.

Hall: Oh, yeah. I forgot about that, yeah.

Levy: I don't know, was that by any chance an outgrowth of the Giuffre...?

Hall: Probably in a way, yeah, with Bobby. And Bobby's an incredible musician, as you know, and incredible composer, and his orchestrations are just out of sight. They really are. Yeah, I forget how that happened, but it's really easy to play music with him and... Yeah, probably it was an outgrowth of the trio stuff with Giuffre, I guess, 'cause we realized we got along okay. (laughs)

Levy: Was Bobby in the Griffin Show band?

Hall: He was, yeah. Bobby was in that band.

Levy: And I think this might have been all around the same time.

Hall: Yeah, let's see...

Levy: Would have been mid to late sixties?

Hall: Yeah. That was... I remember I took that job after Janie and I got married, 'cause I'd been on the road so much and I thought, well, I can take a subway to work here and...

oh, what's his name, the guitar player whose place I took? He was moving out to California. Can't think of his name now. And... Yeah, so Bob (unintelligible) an incredible musician. Bob Brookmeyer. Richie Kamuca, marvelous tenor player. Art Davis, the bass player. Jake Hanna. Jake made it possible for... He was so funny. God. I would think... sometimes I would get so depressed doing it. 'Cause I felt like I was... that's one of the reasons I never got to record with Miles Davis. He, he had called me once before. Anyway, he called me and I felt like I had been outta music. Literally did. 'Cause I was doing that television show. So I recommended George Benson. (laughs)

Levy: Bill Berry was in that group?

Hall: Bill Berry was in the group, that's right. And Jake. Jake was an incredible drummer, which I didn't even pay attention to, 'cause it was a television show. But his sense of humor and the way any of the guests that were rude to him... (laughs)

Levy: Tell a Jake story.

Hall: Yeah. We had a guy, a comedian allegedly, come on. And I knew he was in trouble 'cause we're setting up and he comes on and he says, "Hey drummer," to Jake, and I said, "Uh-oh." (laughs) Jake says, "Yes." He said, "I got this routine, cowboys and Indians." And I said... He said, "I'm surrounded by Indians and, and he..." And you catch them with rim shots. I shoot a bunch of 'em. And then, I forgot. And then pretty soon there's only, there's only one, and something like that. Anyway, Jake rehearsed it and, with the guy, and he said, "Boy, you got that fast." So Jake said, "Yeah, I did that before." And he mentions two other comedians. So he got him that way. So the guy comes out and he does his routine, cowboys and Indians, and finally he, he goes down. And then he goes over and he's talking with Mort Lindsey. And Jake didn't forget. (laughs) Sense of humor. And, and Mort said, "Oh, gee, Tony," or whatever. He said, "That was so marvelous. And where are you living now?" "Oh, I live in Las Vegas." "Oh, that's good. How's your family?" "Ah, they're fine, Merv." And he says, "How many kids you have now?" He says, "I got three kids." Jake goes, bang, bang, bang. (laughs) I almost fell off...

Levy: On the air?

Hall: Oh, yeah. It's on the... He, he would just do stuff like that. I almost fell right off the stool, I couldn't believe it. (laughs) Took care of the kids, too, you know. (laughs) But he would do stuff like that. And then he would do... Merv would be doing these interviews and Jake would do a... Was it Fred Allen? Allen's Alley. He had... Fred Allen had this thing called Allen's Alley. He'd go for a door... pretending he'd go for a door, and somebody'd answer. "Howdy, bub." And he'd say, "Aw, Mr. Moody," you know, blah, blah, blah. And then Moody would say something. He says, "Now..." and the audience would laugh. He'd say, "Now, wait a minute, Moody," you know, that kinda stuff. And, so we had a bishop, Bishop Sheen, or somebody. And whenever Merv had special... like Martin Luther King was on his show once kind of... and he'd get these special padded chairs, and they'd sit right out close to the audience so... I think it was a Bishop Sheen or something like that. And Jake was behind. And the bishop said

something slightly off-color, and everybody cracked up and the audience is laughing, and Jake says, "Now wait a minute, Bishop." You know, like Fred Allen. (laughs)

Levy: Who was the actor that Jake had to walk on the stage and hit a gong?

Hall: Oh. Oh, yeah. Well, you, you remember that 'cause we did it when he came to the apartment one time. Jake, I had, I had this waste basket right near... Jake was in back of me and the piano, blah, blah, blah, and I had a wastebasket, and Jake would do this routine from a W.C. Fields' movie, *The Fatal Glass of Beer*. Fields would come in and it was raining outside or something, and he'd get his foot stuck in the wastebasket. "Ain't a fit night out for man or beast." So every time Jake went by my spot, he would get his foot stuck in the basket, in the wastebasket, plastic one. And he always would see it and kinda crack up. So one time, I filled the bucket with water and I put some... I glued some paper over the top and I bought some socks for Jake to wear. (laughs) So he came back from doing something. He stuck his foot in the... And I taped some paper... and he got (unintelligible), and it's all wet. And I offered... And Merv said... Merv says, "Why is Jake's... why is the band cracking up and Jake's foot is all wet" or something. And... (laughs) So I offered him the socks and he refused them, anyway. So Jake came over to the apartment one time and we put a bucket at the door. (laughs) I told you his cousin or some relative is doing a book.

Levy: Mm-hmm.

Hall: And she hadn't called me back. I've wanted to talk about Jake and I left her a message so...

Levy: Oh. Okay.

Hall: I don't know if you can get in touch with her. I'd love to talk about Jake. He made that... A lotta times I'd... I'd say, "I can't do this stupid show any longer," you know. And it didn't pay all that much. And I said, "Well, Jake'll come up with something to make it possible." (laughs)

Levy: It certainly wasn't the players. It was the music.

Hall: Say it again.

Levy: It wasn't the players that was the drag. It was the music that you got to play.

Hall: Oh, yeah. Yeah. It was pretty stupid music. Occasionally, on the other hand, by default, I got to play with Duke Ellington and Basie was on the show one time. So I say, "Yeah, I played with Duke Ellington," you know. (laughs) That's because I was in that band, that's all. And there were some marvelous guests. I told you Martin Luther King was on. Bobby Kennedy was on one time. And Arthur Treacher was marvelous. He would... (laughs) He, he would look at the band and if something really hammy was going on, Arthur would sort of do like this, like can you believe this? (laughs) He, he was great. He called me. There was an article in the New Yorker that Whitney Balliett wrote about me. And Arthur wrote to me or called me or something. It was nice.

Levy: The next bunch of... well, not bunch. It almost seems like there are these migrations. So you've done some duos, and the next bunch of duos are with bass.

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Hall: Uh-huh.

Levy: The first one, I think, was the Ron Carter. I know you did three albums over a period of time.

Hall: Mm-hmm.

Levy: But the very first one... Tell us a little bit about the... was it, started at the guitar playing together, the club up on the West Side?

Hall: Oh, yeah. That's right. That was one of the things that got me out of the television industry. Ron... it was great. We played at this club called The Guitar. I'd forgotten about that. As a duo. And it really was fun. And Ron was marvelous. So we started working together a lot and still do.

Levy: Can you describe the club a little bit? Do you remember it?

Hall: Let's see... I get it confused with a club in Cleveland that was very similar. As I recall, typical club, the band was kinda... band... the two of us... the bandstand was up high, and I assume... I don't know for sure if there was a bar there, but we were up, kinda up high, and we could look out over the crowd. And it was great working with Ron. It really was. I remember one of the... The Beatles came in one night. The guy who plays left-handed guitar. I forget which one that is but... That was also funny, 'cause I got the message on The Beatles when I heard Eleanor Rigby. I thought that was good. That was a good arrangement. And then, later on, I read about how much they had worked... the hours they had worked in Europe to get their act together for, you know, in someplace in Germany. So I came to have some respect for them but... and I liked Eleanor Rigby. That was... But previous to all that, I think jazz musicians didn't really... that was just garbage, you know. Yeah, anyway, Ron kinda pulled me outta there and it was great. Then we worked at that same club where I had worked with Brookmeyer, I think, or over at one of those clubs over on, on the West Side.

Levy: Did... Well, before we move out of that club, I think that's where Attila Zoller came in and brought Pat Metheny...

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: ...to see you, right?

Hall: Yeah, Pat was about fifteen. Pat Metheny. And I think he was... Oh, Attila was a great character. Attila Zoller.

Levy: Tell us about him. A lot of people have never heard of him.

Hall: Yeah. Z-O-L-L-E-R. He was from Budapest, Hungary. And he had... Oh, just, just to fill in the Pat Metheny thing. Attila started a jazz school up, upstate New York, I guess, or maybe even... And, and I guess... Pat Metheny was a student there, and Pat was about fifteen. So Attila came in with Pat. Anyway, Attila, when so many sections of Europe became Communist like... Attila, literally, he swam across the Danube River from Buda to Pest or whatever, and he used to swim in it, anyway. And then he walked... my understanding is that he walked to Vienna with no papers or anything. And

shortly after that, idiots started putting landmines around 'cause people were escaping, you know. And then he somehow got to New York, and I got to know him there and... I think John Lewis was a big help, too, and John got him up to the music school up in Lenox and all that and... What's his name, the... Oh, good, Jim. The bass player we talked about earlier that... Oh, he, he was with the quartet with Joe Lovano and...

Levy: I'm not following the train.

Hall: I'm thinking of people who left, who kind of... He was from... what used to be Czechoslovakia. He was from Prague.

Levy: George Mraz?

Hall: George Mraz, yeah. George... he had a terrible experience when it, when it turned Communist. His, his folks had... I think his father was a doctor or something? And they had been just reduced to menial labor by the, when the Communists took over. So George somehow got a, got a gig in someplace and he packed everything up and he went there and never came back. He just came over to the States. Kinda the same way that Attila did. And I remember when we played in Prague with the quartet with Joe Lovano. Oh, let's see, we had... we were going from what used to be Slovakia. We had to go across a border. We played in what's now Slovakia, I guess. And there's a border crossing when you go into the Czech Republic. Do I have this right? Anyway... (laughs) We were in this big van. It was Joe Lovano, George, Lewis Nash and me, and all the instruments. So we got to the border crossing, middle of the night, and this, this young guy with a huge gun, and he stops us and he's suspicious. He sees all those instruments. And a lady who was kinda traveling with us — not the driver, but she's from that country. She went up. She was trying to explain to the guy. So finally I... Oh, if there was any difficulty ever, Joe Lovano would take care of it. At airports and stuff, and he'd call the bass a cello so we didn't have to pay as much. So I said, "Let me deal with it." So I got out, (laughs) I got out of the van and I went out, and with this lady's help, I showed him our itinerary. I said, "You know, we're not smuggling instruments like that." So... so he said, "Okay." (laughs) So, so we... I got back in the van and (inaudible), "Jim, how do you do that?" I said, "I told him, man." I said, "Don't mess with us. I'll kick your butt." (laughs) So... anyway, I forget what my point is, but yeah, Mraz was from there and Attila Zoller did a similar thing leaving Hungary. He walked to Vienna, and then he somehow got over, over here, and he's really amazing, talented guy. And... Yeah, we, we became really good, really good friends. Yeah, he... and he, yeah, he came in with Metheny at that club where Ron and I were playing. I drifted away there but... (laughs)

Levy: That's okay. You actually played a little bit with Attila from time to time, didn't you?

Hall: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, I think we recorded something. But yeah, we had played together. In fact, Kenny Burrell and Attila and I went to Japan together.

Levy: Oh.

Hall: It was three guitars on there. And then, I went up to Attila's music school a couple times, I think, up in New England someplace.

Levy: Well, since we digressed a little it, should we mention Jimmy Raney in here?

Hall: Oh, sure, yeah.

Levy: Tell us a little bit about Jimmy Raney and...

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: ...where he fits into this.

Hall: Jimmy Raney? I can't forget how I... I kinda forget how I met him. He... well, I knew that he had played with Stan Getz and all that. And then there was a... He was one of my favorite guitar players. And a great character. Very funny guy. He... and I got to know his whole family. There was a club that Max Gordon actually... the Blue Angel. And Jimmy was playing there. It was a, it was a nightclub scene, really. And so I remember I would... I can't remember why, but I would go in just to hear Jimmy 'cause I'd heard him on all those Stan Getz records and everything. And we became really close friends and... Jimmy had an incredible sense of humor, as well. And (laughs) one time we were... Jimmy and I were in the Village, and Jimmy's car... I forget what happened, but we were in some part of the Village, and almost where I got mugged over there. And the car got locked. We didn't... Jim didn't have the key. So we finally got in. We went in someplace and one of the guys who worked in this bar or something had a... some way of... he had... Jimmy had to show him his ID and, anyway, we got a... But we're trying to get in (laughs) Jimmy's car and this lady's, old lady is sitting in a window and she's saying stuff like, "Is that your car?" Jimmy says, "Yeah, it is." And she kept going on and on. "Are you sure that's your car?" (laughs) And what did Jimmy say finally? He said something like, "Well, if you don't, don't believe me, call the police. Otherwise, just shut up." Then he said, and that goes for your parrot, too. (laughs) Jimmy would say stuff and I would just fall, fall down laughing sometimes. (laughs) It's great.

Levy: Was that their album? Was it *Two Jims and Zoot*?

Hall: Oh, yeah, yeah. Yeah, we did a record... It was O.C. Johnson and Steve Swallow and, and Zoot and Jimmy and me. And I think it was Jimmy's record initially, and he was kind enough to invite me to be on it. And I wrote a... I wrote that tune *All Across the City*. We did that. Yeah, and then... yeah, it was Jimmy and Zoot and me.

Levy: Do you want to talk a little bit about Zoot? Does he fit in here in this time?

Hall: Yeah. Zoot Sims. Of course, he and Al Cohn worked together all the time. Zoot was... his, his time sense was just outrageous, swinging. Just incredible. I'm looking at a picture of Zoot kinda hunched over there, right next to your grandpa's picture.

Levy: Mm-hmm.

Hall: And that, I don't know, again, that was the camaraderie—Al Cohn and Zoot. Zoot used to come over to the apartment 'cause... I can't remember if I was... somehow we had... one of the doormen or something was a big fisherman, and we'd always have

this fish that the guy had caught. So Zoot would come over and get some fish and stuff. Oh, and Zoot told... he was living in the top floor... I don't know if he was split up with his wife or what but... of some building now down near the Vanguard. And evidently, it was or is an historical building. So these tourist groups would come along, and Zoot had to leave. He said, he said... I mean, he had to leave... He said, "I'll be looking out the window in the morning and all these tourists are looking up." (laughs) He said, "I gotta get out of here. I can't deal with that with a hangover, you know." So...

Levy: Well, let's go back and finish the bass/guitar story.

Hall: Oh, yeah.

Levy: Which is Ron, the Guitar Club on Tenth Avenue, I think it was.

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: And then, you guys did a gig at the Playboy Club that was a live recording.

Hall: Oh, yeah, right.

Levy: That was the first of the three duo albums.

Hall: Yeah. It reminds me I have to get back to that guy who asked about that record, I guess. Yeah, we, we played quite a bit together as a duo and still do sometimes. Yeah, that was recorded that way. It's the only time I've been in a Playboy Club. (laughs)

Levy: Is there something... I don't know if gratifying is really the word I want...

Hall: How are you staying so alert? This is disgusting. (laughs)

Levy: (laughs) Well...

Hall: You kids today...

Levy: Is there something... maybe challenging is a better word. Something that can pique your interest...

Hall: At the Playboy Club? (laughs)

Levy: No. In playing just guitar and bass?

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: The thing that makes life, musical life different from other things.

Hall: Yeah. Well, I hear the bass fiddle as a, as a lower extension of the guitar, actually, so that's kind of how I deal with it. So what I do, I realize now, is I'll... if we're playing a standard tune, I'll keep my ears on what Ron is gonna do with the bass line, and even if I'm playing... either playing a solo or just chords, I'll listen to where Ron's going. So I stay out of his register and... although it would be an octave higher, but it still could mess up the sound, and sometimes he'll play something funny and I'll catch it and we'll kinda grin at each other, you know. So it's like two parts of the same instrument, really. And I had played the string bass a bit in high school and music school, 'cause we always needed a bass in the orchestra. I never practiced 'cause I figured I'd ruin my hand for guitar playing but... I've always been really tuned into the

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bass fiddle. That's... Don Thompson and I had bit of difficulty that way, 'cause when Don plays a solo, it's marvelous, incredible music. His, all his solos he plays, it's called thumb position. They're always really up high, and it's hard to accompany him 'cause I'm bumping into him. We're in the same register.

Levy: Oh.

Hall: So Don and I talked about that, too, and worked it out somehow. Yeah, Ron, Ron is just marvelous to play with that way. We listen to one another and crack up occasionally.

Levy: You also did some duo stuff with Red Mitchell.

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: Different? And how so?

Hall: Yeah. Well, the same in that, again, I would listen to what Red's playing or... Red just played these marvelous melodic solos. He's incredible, I think. And on the other hand, Red was very controlling. I remember seeing... maybe I mentioned it when I was out at your house with John. I went to a record date, Ornette Coleman record date. It was Don Cherry and Ornette. It was Ornette's... it was their record date, and the rhythm section was Shelly Manne and Red Mitchell. So Red invited me to the record date. And Red was, his need for control... I think I told you, when we were, he had this stool that he worked on, he sat on, and it would have to be a certain number of twists of the stool. That would be the right height and everything. (laughs) So Red kept saying to Ornette, "Well, how many bars in, you playing?" And Ornette said, "Well, just listen to me." And Red couldn't deal with that. So Red came in and sat in the control room where I was for a long time. Isn't it funny he was that controlling? But he played his gorgeous melodic solos himself and... I had known Red in, in California and... Oh, he's the one who got me on Ben Webster's band, too, so...

Levy: One more short section and then we'll wrap up for the day.

Hall: Okay, sure. I'm just getting wound up. I want to...

Levy: Oh, good.

Hall: I'm kidding. (laughs)

Levy: We'll just keep on going. We're in the 1970s now, roughly.

Hall: Okay.

Levy: And you did a lot of albums as a leader in that decade. A lot. You did at least seven. But there are a couple that...

Hall: The one with Beethoven?

Levy: Yeah. And then there was the...

Hall: Yeah, he was a nut. He would say, "Don't play that note, you stupid fool." (laughs) Go ahead, sorry.

Levy: (laughs) There are a couple that stand out for me and that I've heard talked about a lot, too. So I'd like to ask you a little bit about *Concierto*, for one.

Hall: It's funny. The guy who was here the other day that was talking about the Pat Metheny duet thing. He was asking about that, as well. That was CTI, Creed Taylor's record company. And it was recorded at Rudy Van Gelder's studio in New Jersey. It's up the Hudson River, not too far up there. And it was a great recording studio. But I had so much respect for that piece — *Concierto* — that I've forgotten the composer's name. (laughs) But I just didn't like the idea of messing with (singing) da-da-la, da-da-le-le-le. But... it was kinda forced upon us to do it and...

Levy: It's Rodrigo? Rodriguez?

Hall: Yeah, Rodrigo. That's right, yeah. Yeah. I loved, you know, the melody and everything. It seemed a bit cheap to use that, but the musicians that were together, that, that was incredible. I love... I really enjoyed listening to it just recently, too, 'cause it... it starts out with Ron playing a tremolo, which he does beautifully on a high D or something. And I play the melody, and I guess I overdubbed an acoustic guitar. Played some chords. And then Chet Baker comes in, repeating the melody, and he plays it beautifully. And then, for the bridge, Paul Desmond comes in. And it's really nice. And then we go into a double time thing and... It was so bizarre. When I was in the hospital after this operation, I got all these phone calls from people. And the guy who had done the cover of that album with the... I forget what it is. But it looks like a... (laughs)

Levy: Aztec kind of a thing?

Hall: Aztec thing, yeah. He called me in the hospital. Isn't that wild?

Levy: Yeah.

Hall: Yeah. And I had initially not even wanted to record that thing. And it was so bizarre that it got so popular that next time I went to Japan, the contract said I had to play that tune every concert. (laughs)

Levy: Oh, my goodness.

Hall: Yeah. So I guess Rodrigo got even with me.

Levy: Wow.

Hall: Yeah, that's Allan Ganley. That's my British friend, that one. That's...

Levy: There was a helluva rhythm section on that, too.

Hall: Yeah, yeah.

Levy: Roland Hanna.

Hall: Yeah, Roland was beautiful. And Ron and...

Levy: Steve?

Hall: Sorry?

Levy: Steve Gadd?

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Hall: Yeah, Steve Gadd, yeah. I had never, I didn't know anything about Steve Gadd at all. That was kinda... it worked out okay, too, with Steve, too.

Levy: And one of the tunes on there is Mom's, isn't it?

Hall: Oh, yeah, yeah. That was cute. *The Answer Is Yes*. Was it that one?

Levy: That's the one.

Hall: I didn't know Chet Baker well. I knew about him for years and everything, and he had a really rough life. And he was really a hippy from... (laughs) So we're looking at this tune. *The Answer Is Yes*. And Chet sees Jane Herbert Hall and so he says... He looks at me and says, "A chick wrote that, man? Wow." (laughs) I still remember that. That's the only thing he said to me the whole time. "A chick wrote that, man. Wow." And then, another... I don't know if it was that CD or what, but I was doing some editing... it might have been up at Rudy Van Gelder's and it was a huge snowstorm. So I'm there. It was just Rudy and Creed Taylor and me. Not a terribly compatible, fun group. And it was a huge snowstorm. And I said, "Oh no, I'm gonna have to be..." And fortunately, and George Price, our friend the cartoonist, lived nearby. So somehow I got plowed out of there and I called George and I went and stayed overnight at George's, George's house but... But it was a great recording studio, though, so...

Levy: Another album in that general timeframe was almost the opposite in how it came to be. I think that Don Thompson may have just put a tape recorder across the (overlapping/inaudible).

Hall: Oh, yeah. Up in Toronto.

Levy: Mm-hmm.

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: Tell me about that.

Hall: We played at this club in Toronto. Oh, it was funny. I had gone up there a few times to work. Tell me the name of the club 'cause it's on...

Levy: Bourbon Street?

Hall: Bourbon Street, yeah. And I would always take a bass player from New York or something with me. And then, I went to... Ed Bickert was a dear friend and marvelous guitar player, who ended up playing with Desmond and everything. I went over to Ed's house once for a jam session and Don Thompson and Terry Clarke were there, and I said, "Why am I take... bringing musicians from New York?" So... we... I've worked with Don and Terry. That's how we hooked up. And Don just put recording equipment on the stage, and we were there for a couple of weeks, and he recorded the whole thing, and that's how that record happened. But again, people insist that it must... you know, must have had this great engineer come, and Don just set up a couple mics. (laughs) And yeah, he had the recording equipment there for the whole time. It was... So you hear... There's one tune where... or a couple tunes where we play a silly ending or something

and we all crack up, and that's because we... I didn't even realize we were recording or I had forgotten. But it came out really nice, I think.

Levy: Well, it suits your sensibility, at least my understanding of things that you've said over the years about the live performance.

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: The taking what comes, the risk-taking.

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: The (overlapping/inaudible) taking.

Hall: Yeah. That's what I would like to think of as part of the creative process, you know. It's what I got into with Metheny. I think I told you, finally I... 'cause we got in this discussion about recording together, and he said, "Well, I want to do this and that and then I'll fix it up." And, and so we went back and... I was sending him faxes and I said, "Pat, what you're describing sounds more like embalming than recording." (laughs) So we agreed to do part of it in the studio and then part of it at the Manchester Craftsmen's Guild. But I know that he embalmed it, anyway, 'cause I could hear it on the... Anyhow. Yeah, so this is completely live, the thing at Bourbon Street. And with mess-ups and laughter and everything. It was, it was fun. I still enjoy being around those guys.

Levy: Well, it was finally, finally reissued on a CD. But it was interesting to me that... I used to get a lot of mail for you and people asking about albums and...

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: ...you know, were they available. And the number of people that kept requesting that album...

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: ...looking for that album...

Hall: Yeah. It's interesting. I've found that, too.

Levy: ...was phenomenal.

Hall: Yeah. Maybe you should start selling them, huh? I got a, I got a, from Telarc, I guess. You know, I had done this duet album with George Shearing years ago. And there's a couple of tracks that are really lovely on there. And it had been re-mastered, I guess, or something, and it really sounds marvelous. I'd like to get the whole CD again, you know, and... I told you, that was, that was kind of funny, too, 'cause it took me a long time to realize I couldn't make hand signals or eye contact with George Shearing. Dummy, I can't see you. (laughs)

Levy: Well, I think we came to a pretty good rest place.

Hall: Okay, sure. Thanks.

Levy: Is that okay, Ken?

Kimery: That sounds great.

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[END DAY ONE]

[BEGIN SECOND DAY]

Levy: You tell me when.

Hall: So is that little stand, is that from the Smithsonian there? Is it on exhibit?
(laughs)

Levy: It should be.

Hall: Yeah. (laughs)

Kimery: I think we're ready.

Levy: Okay. Today is Friday the 13th of May.

Hall: See?

Levy: 2011. Back here with my father, Jim Hall, continuing our Smithsonian Jazz Masters Oral History.

Hall: Yeah. The 13th, is that have to do with some kind of religious thing? Was that it? What, what is it about the 13th, I wonder?

Levy: I don't know, Jim.

Hall: I forgot. I think it has some kind of religious...

Levy: Is it? I know there are buildings in New York with no 13th floor.

Hall: Oh, yeah, I know it.

Levy: It's a superstition, I guess.

Hall: For years, yeah. I know, but it had to do with... that was the day Jesus was nailed up or something like that, I forgot. (laughs) Instead of saying "ouch," he said, "Man, it's Friday the 13th."

Levy: Well, you know, I was not raised with much religious (overlapping/inaudible).

Hall: I remember that, yeah. (laughs)

Levy: Um...

Hall: What was... they had took the Jews to Japan, right? Who did that? (laughs)

Levy: (laughs) Moses.

Hall: Moses, that's right. (laughs) He got cheap tickets, probably. (laughs)

Levy: Well, that, that was a childhood story because you asked me what I was doing.

Hall: Oh, right, yeah. I called.

Levy: And I was preparing to go to a Seder...

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Hall: Yeah.

Levy: ...with my grandparents. And I asked you if you were Jewish. And you said no.

Hall: Right.

Levy: So I proceeded to tell you the story...

Hall: Right.

Levy: ...for Passover, and you asked me where Moses took them, and I said they marched to Japan.

Hall: Remember the other part?

Levy: Yes. I then had to get off the phone...

Hall: 'Cause you were making Christmas cards or something?

Levy: Easter eggs.

Hall: Easter eggs, that's right.

Levy: I was dying Easter eggs.

Hall: (laughs) That's a very nice New York story. I like that.

Levy: Well, it does make me wonder if you had any religious upbringing or training. I know you were raised early on (overlapping/inaudible).

Hall: Actually, it was more a down-bringing, I think. (laughs) Is that serious? Is that a question?

Levy: Well, yeah. I mean, not so much the religion but your... you do have a spiritual side, and it's interesting because I think it's probably creativity.

Hall: (laughs) I'm sorry, I'm in a goofy state. As all relatively innocent little kids are, you, you kinda... somebody says, "Well, this is your religion," and you go to church and this happened to Jesus and this and that... (laughs) And then, when my dad split, as I mentioned, my brother and I went to live on a farm for a year with Jehovah's Witnesses, so we lost Jesus (laughs) and our parents the same year. And I started to see the whole thing as a crock, you know. (laughs) None of it made any sense. It was all pretty stupid. But yeah, it started, I guess, the Baptist Church. And... I don't know. That lasted a little while until... I understand... comical in a way... I understand humanity's need to have an answer. Like why are we here. Even the guy who did the evolution thing. He probably... I forget his name right now. I have the book and everything. *The Theory of Evolution*. He, he couldn't really say what we were like when we crawled out of the water. So I understand the need for some kind of purpose, some kind of reason why... you know, what are we as humans, and why, what are we doing here, and not at the, at the delicatessen or something having lunch. (laughs) But the, frankly, the belief in a GOD is just so incredibly naïve and, and destructive eventually. I think I told you, if there were a Jesus, he's probably saying, "Oy, what are you doing in my name, you schmucks? That's not what I meant. (laughs) You're killing each other. You're killing

those..." Anyway, yeah, so it, it kinda started out and it didn't work for me too well. (laughs) And incredible, there's been some incredible music written around... I imagine Bach and Beethoven and all those guys probably got commissions to write, so "Okay, you give me another \$50, I'll write..." (laughs) But yeah, so anyway, that was the religious thing started out that way and... Then...

Levy: But do you have faith in something?

Hall: Do I?

Levy: Mm-hmm.

Hall: (sighs) That's an interesting word. I think we're here... us meaning humans... for, for some kind of reason. And I, I tend to trust other humans. Unfortunately, I've gotten in trouble that way, too. And I think music is a nice gathering together of people. Like my manager and Joey Baron together fighting. (laughs) I don't really have any kind of belief at all. That way, I mean.

Levy: If you are down about something, is there something that keeps you going?

Hall: The moment, I believe, does. That's, that's the thing that... which is why it's difficult for me to talk about the past like that. I (unintelligible). That's besides the point right now, except that I... some of it's relevant, I guess, to that. I was born at an early age. (laughs) You know, I started... how did I start on the guitar? Well, that is interesting because my mom bought me a guitar probably 'cause of my Uncle Ed, blah, blah, blah. But I've just seen so much nuttiness associated with people's religious beliefs. That's... I just get incredulous. Like the... some, who was it told me just... was it you who told me just recently all the musicians, professional jazz musicians that are Jehovah's Witnesses?

Levy: No, that wasn't me. (laughs)

Hall: Wasn't you? Who... maybe it was... maybe it was Brian. A whole bunch of otherwise hip, good jazz... Are you kidding? (laughs)

Levy: Does music give you solace?

Hall: I don't know if solace is the right word, but it certainly is something that I associate to and I kinda cling to and just, just the idea of tuning the guitar every day is a, is a project. It's kind of interesting and...

Levy: In what way?

Hall: Oh, because it's never in tune perfectly and certain... You get it in tune and... so it works in E major, and then you start playing in D-flat and it's all out of tune 'cause of the overtones.

Levy: Oh.

Hall: In fact... Oh, one of my favorite guitar players... I'll think of his name in a while... He was quite a bit older than I am. He... talk about tuning up the guitar. And everybody... you know, you go in an orchestra and everybody tunes to an A, which is

interesting, except all of the overtones mess you up if you're playing in flat keys. So... Barry Galbraith.

Levy: Oh, yes.

Hall: He would always tune up to B-flat, which is kind of ironic... I mean, kind of... nobody does that almost. But he explained. He was on lots of record dates. He said he'd get it perfectly in tune in A and then all the arrangements are in E-flat or B-flat. So he would always tune up to B-flat, which I thought was pretty, pretty advanced.

Levy: Do you have perfect pitch?

Hall: No. No, I don't. Oh, that's funny. Joey... not Joey. Gil Goldstein has perfect pitch. And which, it's kinda funny in a way. He's incredible. Very funny guy. And Gil and I were in the airport in Rome one time years ago. And a couple of funny things happened there. There had been some kind of violent incident there. This is before all the 9/11 and everything. And there were lots of young guys with... guards with guns around and stuff and very suspicious of everybody. And the guy who was kind of booking the thing... we had to keep walking around with my guitar to the tickets, and one of the guards was kind of looking suspicious about. So meanwhile, Gil and I are sitting there, and every time there was a flight announcement... Sorry. The, over the intercom, you'd hear *Volare*. (singing) Da-da-da de-da. And it sounded like it was in a weird key. Sounded like it was in F-sharp. And we're saying *Volare* in F-sharp? I mean, why would that...? That can't be. So, and we were trying to figure it out, and I told you Gil, I think he has perfect pitch. So finally, the guy who was carrying my guitar. We walked past one of these young guys, a security guard. And in Italian, I guess, he said, "What is that?" And my friend said, "That's a guitar." And he says, "Do you play it?" And the guy says, "No." He says, "Who plays it?" And he pointed at me. I apologize. So he said, "Put it down." So put it down, I opened it up. And he said, "Play it." So I played *Volare* in F-sharp. That gun gave me perfect pitch. (laughs) That's the only time I had perfect... I saw that huge gun and just (unintelligible) I played. He cracked up, and he liked it so... (laughs) No, I don't have perfect pitch. It's, it's close sometimes. I can kinda... because I played the guitar so long I know what the feeling of a key is, but I get close sometimes.

Levy: Take a sip [referring to Jim's coffee].

Hall: Yeah, sorry.

Levy: You just used an interesting phrase, actually, and I don't know if this is a good question because it may be one of those intangible, nonverbal things. But can you talk a little bit to a non-musician about the feeling of a key? And picking a tune and deciding on a key to play it in because of a reason?

Hall: Well, that's interesting, yeah. Well, occasionally, I'll play it, something in a key where I can use the open strings on the guitar, and generally, that would mean something with sharps in it like E major or A major. I've written that thing called *Careful* is in A major, and it has a, based on a weird scale with a bunch of half-tones. It's sort of like a

John Coltrane scale. But one of the reasons it's in A major is I can use open strings to, if I'm kinda playing by myself and everything.

Levy: And what does that get you, being able to play on open strings? Is that a sound or a...?

Hall: Yeah, different sound. And I can, I can play a phrase, single line, and kind of accompany, almost accompany myself with the open strings. Whereas, if it were in E-flat, I would have to... I have to have a few more fingers to do that so... (laughs) That's interesting, 'cause I, I hadn't thought about that too much. And E major is another one 'cause you got an open B on the guitar or open E, open D if you want E-7th.

Levy: So part of the reason for a choice of key is the facility it gives you for a certain kind of approach to that song?

Hall: Yeah. Yeah, right.

Levy: And is there a sound difference, too? You used the word mood before?

Hall: I used what?

Levy: The word mood, I think.

Hall: Oh, yeah. There is, I think, believe there is a sound difference. I love that tune of *Chelsea Bridge* that we play a lot, written by the guy who wrote for Duke Ellington. I'm a little embarrassed.

Levy: Strayhorn?

Hall: Sorry?

Levy: Is it a Strayhorn piece?

Hall: Billy Strayhorn, that's right. And I imagine Ben Webster playing it, 'cause I got to work with Ben and he would play that to me. He would just really make it sound so gorgeous. But somehow that key.... it's in what, five flats, I guess. D-flat major. I think the tune was on an entirely different... I think, if it were in E major or something, somehow the, all the, all the flats do something to the feeling, and it's much more poignant to me that way so...

Levy: Hmm. I think that people who aren't musicians and people who... even maybe some musicians who don't play a string instrument...

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: ...wouldn't ever think of such things—the overtones, the sound of the...

Hall: Yeah. I'm sure that Sonny Rollins thinks of that, you know. And I imagine Coleman Hawkins did, as well. (laughs) I actually played with Coleman Hawkins a couple times, just kind of jam sessions but...

Levy: Oh. What was he like?

Hall: He was great. I was, you know, a huge fan. I just... but I can't... Oh, yeah. There was... somebody threw together a bunch of musicians for some kinda something

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on Long Island. There were some really good players. Coleman Hawkins... Hank Jones played piano. That was funny 'cause the piano was terribly out of tune. And Hank was such a marvelous... He, somehow when he... by the time he finished, it sounded like it was in tune. He just would choose notes that worked.

Levy: Wow.

Hall: That was, that was a great experience.

Levy: What is the... I don't want to say what is the difference, because that sounds dumb. But to play with Ben Webster and then to play with Coleman Hawkins must be two very different experiences.

Hall: Yeah, I would have to say Coleman. (laughs) Yeah. I didn't really play with Coleman Hawkins enough to say. But they both played tenor saxophone. But even Ben and Sonny Rollins, the difference between those two guys.

Levy: Did you classically change your approach?

Hall: Probably. I guess, again, it sounds corny but part of it is keeping your job. (laughs) And... also, I think I mentioned before, Art Farmer would like to hear a chord and then kinda play over it. So (to play a chord?)... But if I did that with Sonny, I'd get these kinda (laughs) aside looks, like come on, don't tell me... (laughs) So I had to listen a split second and then react to what Sonny had done.

Levy: Hmm.

Hall: So yeah, so it does change. Yeah, I think, my feeling was that Art liked to hear a chord and then react to it so... Give me about 30 seconds. (coughs) This leprosy is terrible, you know... (laughs) Oh, we got a nice thing from Rhoda Rothman and... I'll show it to you later. It has to do with, I guess, jazz musicians. She found it someplace and she mailed it. I was a little nervous because I wasn't sure if Murray was okay.

Levy: Let's explore, if you will, a little more about working with different people and what some of the musical challenges are.

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: You know, I don't mean to get into too much personality.

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: But the evolution of the musical relationships. Some were short, some were long, some were repetitive. We had just ended the other day... we were just about to talk a little bit about George Shearing.

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: And that was a one-time kind of project.

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: Tell us a little bit about that recording.

Hall: It isn't terribly amusing, but it involved Jimmy D'Aquisto, the guitar builder, too. So I'll just go into that part. Jimmy wanted to come to the record date, and Jimmy had been divorced and everything. And he had... (laughs) He had this dame with him. Not terribly sophisticated. And it was a lovely... the feeling on the record date was... 'cause of George, you know, it was just beautiful and... I told you, it took me a while to realize I couldn't make eye contact with George Shearing and, you know, get signals. So I just listened. And it was going beautifully, and Jimmy and this dame was sitting in the area where they could, they could hear. (laughs) Sorry. So at one point, listening to a playback, Jimmy said, "I'll be right back. I have to go put some quarters in the parking meter." (laughs) And he didn't come back. (laughs) So... Jimmy D'Aquisto. So we waited and waited, and finally I'm sitting there with this dame who I just met. Had nothing to talk about. So I said, "Well, might as well go to the apartment and we'll wait for him." So we're sitting here with nothing to say to each other. And all of a sudden, here comes Jimmy D'Aquisto. He comes in. And his, his shirt is ripped and he's got a bruise on his face and everything. (laughs) It was typical of the kinda stuff Jimmy would get into. Jimmy had some kind of affliction, which I had forgotten about, but he would have seizures occasionally. I think that's what killed him finally. But this, this was not a seizure. This was Sicilian upbringing, I think. He had... his car had been towed away. And he was really bugged about it 'cause he just went out to put quarters in the meter. And so I guess in the taxicab, he told us later, and he gets in a scene with the taxi driver, and they're shouting at each other. And then he goes to the place where the car had been towed. That happened to me one time. Different place. And he sees the car and it's got all these scratches on it. It had been scratched. And he gets furious. Jimmy does. He gets in a fight with the guy there — a fistfight. (laughs) And the guy kinda beats him up, and he's all bruised and... So we're sitting here. That was the end of that day, anyway. Jimmy finally shows up and he's swearing and he said, "Those so-and-so's, they towed the car and I got in a fight and..." (laughs)

Levy: And this is the end of the day.

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: You had done the recording.

Hall: With George Shearing.

Levy: You (were in?) the recording.

Hall: Yeah. So that was... yeah, that was... that sounds like *Saturday Night Live* or something. Yeah, Jimmy comes in. He's all furious and he's all scratched up and everything. So... (laughs)

Levy: The session was good?

Hall: Yeah, I thought that session was beautiful. Yeah, I told you. I think it's been remixed or something, and I got two or three tracks from Telarc. And we did... oh, what's the name of the... it's a ballad and it's got... (singing) doo-dee-da, doo-dee-deh, doo-dee-da, dee-doo-doodle, dee-dee-dee...

Levy: *Emily?*

Hall: *Emily*, that's right. And... I just more or less played the melody on that. I played a chorus of melody and not too bad. It was in the key of A major, I think. And then George just does a gorgeous thing on it. He just sort of develops that idea. And at the end, I come back in. I play about three notes and that's it. But...

Levy: You'd never played with him before?

Hall: I think I did. I can't remember if I was sitting... I can't remember the, the reason. But I think at the Blue Note downtown here. I think I played... Oh, I know. I played opposite him, and that was kind of funny, too. Typical stuff. I forget who I was working with. Just bass and guitar and... I don't know if you remember the Blue Note. It has these two tiny dressing rooms, and you have to go up a bunch of steps and everything. So George was in the next dressing room. And somebody knocked on the door of my dressing room and said, "Is Mr. Shearing in?" And "No." And the guy wanted to get George's autograph. (laughs) So I went next door to George's dressing room. I can't remember... I think he was just by himself kinda just looking or not looking off into space. And I said, "George, a guy wants your autograph." So George says, "Okay, Jim, I'll tell you how we do this." (laughs) He said, "You hold my hand, and I'll hold the pen. You hold my hand, and you write my name, and that'll be it." So I start... (laughs) Here I am holding... a man is holding is my hand. I guess it made me nervous. So I wrote very carefully. I wrote, "Jim Hall" (laughs) So I said to George. I said, "George, you won't believe this." (laughs) I said I just wrote my name in your handwriting. Now... (laughs) But it was just hilarious. So finally, finally we got it straight, you know. George wouldn't have known the difference but I looked. I said, "What did I do? I wrote Jim Hall." But it's in George's handwriting so... Yeah, so I think I might have sat in with... I do remember having played with him maybe once before but...

Levy: So what kind of goes through your mind when you're going to do a project with somebody that you haven't been working with on and off for years and you're going to actually record? Is there...?

Hall: Well, even... yeah, even with people that I have... like the quartet that are going to Rochester... I know how each one of those guys plays—Greg Osby and Steve (LaSpina?) and Joey Baron. And I try to come up with stuff that'll fit those players appropriately to write. I mean, I want to write some... There's a couple of tunes of my own that I would like them to play, and I gotta get that ready but... Again, I guess some of the it is really very exciting and... I did a... Andre Previn got me involved in this project with Itzhak Perlman, classical...

Levy: Mm-hmm. It's on my list. So tell me about it.

Hall: Oh, yeah, yeah. That was, that was a real lesson. Incredible player in Itzhak Perlman. And as you know, he's disabled. He's on crutches all the time. And I was, I really admired him. We would... if we wanted to listen to a playback, he would get on those crutches and waddle back there. And Andre also had Shelly Manne and Red

Mitchell come in from California. So it was a, it was a great group, potentially, anyway. And I thought it was kind of... I think this was Shelly's idea. He thought we would do a "free piece." What I love to do — just listening and reacting. And I thought it was maybe one of the, the best things of the day. And so we did, we did a free piece and we're listening back, and I guess excrement has become okay to... but anyway, we listened back and Itzhak says, "That sounds like shit. I don't want that on the record." (laughs) It was my favorite thing on the record. But, but it was fascinating, trying to play with those, those people. And another kind of funny thing. We went and did another record date, and it was in Pittsburgh at a... I can't remember the name... Oh, I know. It was at a concert hall, we did it. That's right. But we stayed in this hotel that had about 800 steps when you, when you got out of the, the taxicab. So the second time around... this is kind of amusing. I was, I was at the airport and... in the waiting area. And Henny Youngman was there. Remember him?

Levy: Mm-hmm.

Hall: He was a comic who used the violin?

Levy: Yep.

Hall: And he would play, (singing) da-da-de-da-de-la. That was part of his thing. He lived across the street from Paul Desmond for a while, by the way, Henny Youngman. He used to (unintelligible). So what I thought was funny was that in the waiting room, Henny Youngman would go to use the phone and he would just leave his fiddle sitting there like a... (laughs) It probably cost \$15 or something. So... and I think in those days I could carry my guitar on the plane. So I got on the plane. I put the guitar, and here comes Henny Youngman with his fiddle. And he said, "Oh, are we work... are we working...?" No, wait. That was different. Anyway, we said hello. So I get out of the taxicab at the hotel, and there's Itzhak Perlman standing there. So he said hi. He gave me a nice greeting. And then he had to walk up like 8,000 steps. He was amazing. He just went up. So I got to the check-in place there at the desk at the hotel, and I had my guitar, and here comes Henny Youngman. He said, he looked... And I said, "Hi," or... I don't really know. He said, "Are we working together?" And I said, "No, not..." I said, "I'm working with Itzhak Perlman." He says, "Where is Itzhak? Let's get him down here," you know, so... (laughs) So I went up to the room and it was so bizarre that in the, in the bathroom there was this air duct, and I could hear a violin occasionally. And I would say, "Is that Itzhak Perlman practicing?" I said, "No, Henny Youngman doesn't practice," you know. (laughs) So the thing was videoed, the second one. So at the very end of it, Perlman is packing up his fiddle and he says, (singing) "They asked me how I knew my career was through. Boonk." And he closed... That's the end of the video so... I always loved that. And then he came in the, the Blue Note a couple times, Itzhak did, to hear us. I thought that was nice. Not a bad violin player, by the way. (laughs)

Levy: No. But how was he as a jazz player?

Hall: I, well, I think Previn had written out all his solos for him and... You'd have to ask him. I don't think he really improvises that way, and certainly not with chord changes so... Yeah, I think all his alleged... his solos had been written out but...

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Levy: What about the feel? Is there a... can classical people feel jazz and vice versa?

Hall: Jesus, I have no idea. You have to ask... I'm sure it's different. I imagine. But...

Levy: Are there jazz people who just don't fit together because their internal feel or style is just incompatible with another player?

Hall: I don't, I don't know. What, what would be your take on that, seriously?

Levy: I... seriously, I think there must be people that just don't have the same sense of...

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: ...of time. I don't mean keeping time but that, the feel. Their sense of, I don't know, to use expressions that I probably shouldn't. But, you know, one's sense of where the groove is is not someone else's or...

Hall: Yeah. I'm sure... just like... that's how people are, right? (laughs)

Levy: Well, yeah.

Hall: Some people you get along with; other people you say, "Schmuck! I don't like you." (laughs)

Levy: Was there anybody that you, for instance, might enjoy listening to but wouldn't want to play with?

Hall: Well, it's funny. I did a telephone interview while I was still lying here about... The guy from New Mexico called me, and he was asking me about different people, and he asked me about Tal Farlow, who was a dear friend, as you know. But we played so entirely differently. We... Tal had an incredible technique and everything, and that was a dear friend. Very helpful. Gave me money when I needed it in L.A. But I don't think we would work out too well on a record somehow. And the same with, with Pat Metheny. I had lot of difficulty with Pat. We did a record together. I told you about that.

Levy: Tell us a little bit about that recording. It had some really unusual...

Hall: Yeah, I think it could have been more unusual. (laughs) The... Pat is... I admire him in a lot of ways. He's very inventive and he's got a lot of technique and everything. But we... I kind of insisted... Well, our whole approach, I assume to life and other things, is, is quite different because Pat likes to do something in a studio and then take it home and mess with it and fix it, take all the mistakes out of it and all. And we... did I tell you this last time, or was it Brian I was talking to about it? Or maybe the, the other guy who interviewed... So Metheny... 'cause I told you I met him when he was about fifteen. Attila...

Levy: That you talked about.

Hall: Yeah. So Pat wanted to blah, blah, blah, and do this and that so... And I was really against that because it just takes all the spontaneity out, I think. He likes to take

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things home and then fix them up—recording, I mean. So finally I sent him this, this fax. I said, I said, “Pat, what you’re describing sounds more like embalming than recording to me.” (laughs) So finally, we got together for lunch and we talked, and we agreed that we’d do part of it in the studio and then part of it down at the Manchester Craftsmen’s Guild. But listening to the CD, I know that he tampered with it, ‘cause it’s just all the... there’s just no, nothing to catch your attention. Nice playing but it’s just, it’s just all slick and all the life is taken out of it, you know. And I even insisted on doing some “free pieces,” ‘cause I figured that would loosen everything up. But even those, you can, you can hear they’re, they’re iced over. (laughs) I kind of resent that, in a way. That’s why I didn’t even have one of those records. I got about a zillion of ‘em and I left them out in the country or something. But the company was considering reissuing it so I thought, what the hell. Maybe another five bucks. (laughs) It wouldn’t hurt so...

Levy: Does that translate, that story, into suggesting that you might prefer live recordings in the studio?

Hall: Yeah. Absolutely. Sure.

Levy: Okay.

Hall: Well, just like you and I are having a live discussion, right? (laughs)

Levy: Yeah.

Hall: If you sent me a taped interview and I taped one back, that would be dead. (laughs)

Levy: That’s right. But you’ve done some studio recordings that are fabulous. So I mean, it’s not...

Hall: Yeah. Yeah, true. But I like to get the instant kind of interaction with other humans. And certainly, even in a studio recording, I hate the idea of taking it home and say, “Oh, well, I don’t like that note. I’ll take this note out ‘cause...” Recovering from mistakes is, is an important part of playing music, I think, so...

Levy: There are no wrong notes? Is that the philosophy? That you turn it into...

Hall: I wouldn’t put it that specifically, but it’s just interacting with, with other people and... If it’s something really gross, like the thing I did with George Shearing and I just need to get one guitar note taken out of it, I’ll say, “What the heck, that’s good.” But yeah, I don’t like the idea of, of embalming performances. I just kinda hate that. In fact, that great record with Ella Fitzgerald... I told her what to do, you know, but... (laughs) A couple times, she forgets the words and everything. And she says in English, “I bet these people don’t know what I’m saying.” And it’s a riot, you know. So that’s on there. That’s great. It’s something that humans do, basically. I guess when one dies, you either get cremated or what’s that other thing where they put you in something and they stick a bunch of chemicals in there. (laughs) Embalming, that’s right. We embalmed this record. (laughs)

Levy: Let’s talk about a very different pairing of people that you worked with. For a short period, there was some work with Michel Petrucciani.

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Hall: Oh, yeah. That was great.

Levy: Tell us about, musically, that kind of an association 'cause after you've done Bill Evans duos...

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: ...and the Shearing. And now you've got this thing going with Petrucciani, who's a very different flavor.

Hall: Yeah. I think Mary Ann Topper was managing Michel as well as me, and she put it together. I'm trying to remember if I had ever heard him play at all but... As you know, he had... I don't know the technical term, but it was glass bone disease. He had no calcium. And he got about this high. I don't think he made it to age 30, even. And we had a guy with us on the road to carry Michel. And I just admired him so much. And he had special foot pedals that, you know, that clamp on and he, so he could reach them with his feet. And I may have said this before. I think I heard him complain, serious complaint one time... We had a rough trip and we were playing someplace in Germany, and the piano stunk. (laughs) And he kind of flipped at that, but generally, he would just make it happen. And that concert that we did that came out on a record, I think it's...

Levy: Montreux.

Hall: Was that Montreux? That's right. And with Wayne Shorter. That, that worked out. But basically, just Michel said, "I'm gonna play this thing," you know, "I don't care." Yeah, I had a lot of affection and admiration for Michel.

Levy: What was his music... what was the musical connection between you? Was it, I mean, did it give you something different? Was it a different... did it change your approach over time?

Hall: Well, as I said before, my approach changes according to who I'm playing... So I would play... I would play on my knees... No, I'm kidding. And we listened to one another and reacted, and it was just really great. And it was so easy to play music with him. It was incredible. And on this... there's a video of it. And you see him grinning at me from the piano a lot of times. And... I mean, I think I mentioned this last time, about rehearsing with Wayne Shorter. Did I tell you that? Anyway, we... the three of us were in Europe, not together, and Wayne... it was some town we were in, in some country. So we rehearsed there in the, in the hotel, and something was getting messed up. And Wayne said, "Oh, it'll be fine when the bass and drums get here." So Michel looks at me like, "Who's gonna tell him?" (laughs) So I said, "Wayne, this is it. It's just the three..." And Wayne was great. He said, "Oh, well, straight ahead," you know. And it worked out, it worked out really well, I think. One... (laughs) Michel and I played some concerts in Sicily, and I assume... again, I'm putting thoughts in somebody else's head, but something about his size and all that stuff, he was fearless about that, 'cause he must have said, you know, "I'm this big. Some big Sicilian Mafioso's not gonna beat me up here," and all that kinda stuff. So, and he didn't handle... if he had a couple of beers, he was gone. So we played this place in Sicily, and on the way over, he said, "Jim," he says, "I know these guys are in the Mafia." He says, "'Cause I worked (unintelligible).

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They'll get you anything you want here," blah, blah, blah, (unintelligible). So we played the concert. It was an outdoor concert. I'll think of the town. It was on the coast of Sicily. And the... (laughs) the promoters took Michel and me to dinner or lunch outside of a restaurant. We're sitting right along the, the road, the street. So Tony, I guess was the promoter's name. It was a nice concert. So Michel had a couple beers and he looks at Tony. He says, "So, Tony, how's the Mafia business?" And Tony looks at me like, "Ugh, who's your friend?" So... (laughs) How's that for... What would you call that? He just... and so I was, I was... Tony looked at me like, "Who's your friend here?" And I was expecting a drive-by shooting or something. (laughs) We're having dinner outside and he's, "So, Tony, how's the Mafia business?" But he would come up with stuff like that, 'cause he was fearless, I guess.

Levy: Well, was he musically fearless? I mean, was his playing kind of out there...?

Hall: I don't know. What do you think? You've heard the... It seemed to me he could go in any direction, you know, and he would react. Yeah, I think he was really a pretty stunning, gifted guy, and yeah, I feel privileged to, you know, to have worked with him and everything. Unfortunately, I think he has a son who has the same disorder, but he had been treated earlier or something and it's not as severe but...

Levy: When you have an experience playing, whether it's one concert or a tour or... with somebody that you, you know, haven't been working with before, do you find anything particular in your mindset when you... that says, "Oh, well, you know, next time I do this, I might do it differently?" Or did it... 'cause you are constantly evolving, and I'm wondering if you have any sense of how different musical experiences...

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: ...have actually shaped your evolution.

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: Or if that's something that's too intangible.

Hall: No. Well, I think, I hope I've in different ways talked about it quite a bit in the last couple of days. Yeah, it does. And as I said, the same as just conversations, like my conversation with you. You react to different situations differently according to people and... especially when you're, you're in a improvisatory art form kind of a... But I'm sure even classical musicians play differently even though the music is written with different accompanists and accomplices and orchestras and stuff so... Yeah, it's a very... in a good sense, it's a very human experience. And I mentioned working with... duets with Bill Evans and what great fun that was. And I'm sure... I never got to play with Thelonious Monk but I'm sure that would have been different. I wish I had. Even in a duet, you know. Art Tatum, I'm sure he would fill in all the... (laughs) all the empty spaces. So I would just sorta sit there and smile. But he wouldn't see me so... Yeah, I told you, that was funny about Dave MacKay, also... being blind.

Levy: Yes.

Hall: Yeah. So...

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Levy: There are a couple of groups that you have that have a simpatico... I'm thinking of a lot of dates both recording and live that you've done with, let's say, the Don Thompson and Terry Clarke...

Hall: Oh, yeah. That was fun.

Levy: ...(trio?). I guess I wonder, you know, what... And, and again, I have a feeling that a lot of the questions about music are not easy to put into words.

Hall: Well, more than that, there's kind of questions having to do with humanity or people getting along or not getting along personally because that's...

Levy: Well, for instance, are there some groups or ensembles or people that you work with that are more fun and this person is more classic and this group has more of an adventure bent...

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: Or this one can be more avant-garde-ish or...

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: And do you have a preference?

Hall: Well, I guess especially what I just said about Metheny... I guess my preference would be to... not necessarily avant-garde, but to kinda be open to changes and things like that and... Again, it has to do with humans interacting and... I'm trying to remember classic... Oh. (laughs) I did... Who was I working with? This string group someplace. Oh, I know what it was. I played a piece of Don Erb's.

Levy: Oh.

Hall: Yeah. He... for guitar and string trio or something. And Don and I were old, old friends, and Don... I think I told you. He had been a jazz trumpet player when he was a kid. And then he's an incredible composer but pretty far out. And it must have been at the Institute of Music because... Anyway, I went there and I played a piece of Don's for guitar and string quartet or something like that. So after the first rehearsal, the guys or people... I don't know if they're all guys or... had this classical piece that had guitar and they said... (laughs) I couldn't read the goddamn thing. I couldn't even play it. You know, it was... it was for classical guitar. And finally I just... I said, "I can't play this thing." (laughs) There's a whole different technique and I don't read that well. And I guess they assumed that it was pretty simple. They said, "Oh, let's have fun. Let's read this." (laughs)

Levy: Oh, wow.

Hall: (laughs)

Levy: But you read well.

Hall: Not, not terribly well, but... Not, not the way classical players do, if they're any good. But, but anyway, I think it was classical guitar, too, whatever that means. So finger style when I, I can't do that. Even though I studied with Vicente Gomez and

helped him with his English. (laughs) But finally, I just said, “Gentlemen, I apologize.” Or, I don’t know if they’re all guys but...

Levy: Well, there are some guys that you worked with at different times that have really outrageous senses of humor that fall into their music as well, I think.

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: And that must give the different sense on those dates.

Hall: Sure, yeah.

Levy: (overlapping/inaudible) Stewart and...

Hall: Yeah, well, Michel had that—Michel Petrucciani, in a lot of ways. Something would happen and he’d look at me and he’d, he’d do this. Like can you believe this? (laughs) Michel and I played a concert in, in Norway one time. And it was supposed to be a duo, and somehow the... whoever booked it... sent along a drummer and a bass player, which we, which he didn’t expect. So we’re doing the concert. And great, great guys. Typical kinda jazz musicians. And the drummer, you know... Michel would play a solo and the drummer would look at him and blow him a kiss like... (blows kiss) and Michel would look at me and go, “Oy, what’s going on? What is this crap?” (laughs)

Levy: Oh, dear.

Hall: I have to show you a picture. Well, you know who he was, I guess, Michel.

Kimery: Oh, yeah.

Hall: Yeah, great. Just incredible.

Kimery: I saw him in performance half a dozen times.

Hall: Oh, yeah? Oh, great, yeah. I’m sorry to be so silly about so much of this, but that’s just kind of the way I’m put together, I guess. (laughs)

Levy: That’s okay.

Hall: It’s better than saying, “Man, my back hurts. I can walk in with a cane.” (laughs)

Levy: How are we doing on time?

Kimery: We have about 15 minutes.

Levy: Okay. Let’s talk about... Oh, let’s talk a little bit about that *Live at Town Hall*. Mostly because it was one of those eclectic concerts where you... it was Jim Hall and friends, and you had so many different people in combinations on one concert.

Hall: Oh.

Levy: And I can tell you who they all are, if you need any memory.

Hall: Yeah, just to refresh.

Levy: Well, you did some duos with Ron, and you did some duos with Brookmeyer.

Hall: Oh, yeah.

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Levy: Gerry Mulligan was there.

Hall: Oh, yeah.

Levy: Don Thompson played a little piano, as well.

Hall: Really talented guys there. (laughs)

Levy: There was nobody with any talent. Gary Burton.

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: Steve was there. LaSpina. Terry Clarke. And the Classic Heritage Ensemble. I think you did *Thesis* that night.

Hall: Oh, yeah, yeah.

Levy: Was it Kermit Moore?

Hall: Kermit Moore, yeah, who I had gone to school with in Cleveland. That was great.

Levy: Gil Goldstein. And then just to round things out at the other extreme, you had Mick Goodrick, John Abercrombie...

Hall: Oh, yeah.

Levy: Peter Bernstein and John Scofield.

Hall: Oh, yeah. I forgot about that, yeah.

Levy: So it's all a June concert in New York City at Town Hall.

Hall: That's right. Yeah, I had forgotten... I remember one time looking behind and there were... with all these guitar players. There was a stack of amplifiers. And I said to the audience, I said, "This is not as dangerous as it looks. We have a non-proliferation treaty here. (laughs) It's not gonna get too..." Yeah, that, that was great.

Levy: Talk about these guys. There were some interesting guitarists there.

Hall: Yeah. Some inter... yeah. Well, John Abercrombie—he's got an incredible sense of humor, and I really admire him a lot and... Was Scofield there, as well? I forgot.

Levy: Mm-hmm.

Hall: Yeah. Great players. And Pete Bernstein was... (laughs) You know, he was three years old or something. I just... I had met Pete at the New School. He was in one of my ensembles there, and I just kinda wanted to, to show him off. So he, he was there. Then my...

Levy: What did you hear as a guitarist of your style and history... what do you hear in Mick Goodrick and Scofield? What is it that turns you on?

Hall: Well, each one is different from the other and... I thought that was kind of important, too. I'm trying to think about it.

Levy: Okay.

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Hall: But I remember Mulligan. We played a duo together — Gerry Mulligan. And he, he was incredible. He would... you can hear it in his quartet recordings, too. He, he would find on the baritone sax just these perfect lines to accompany whatever you were doing that would make the harmony fill out somehow. And Gerry and I had... This almost seems like the good old days. When Nixon was President, we played there. And I wasn't gonna go. That, that was... I think when I first got... I don't want to say politicized, but I became aware we're killing people in Vietnam, for Christ sake, and so we got... And somebody... one of the lawyers was Charlie Garment's brother — Lenny Garment, who allegedly had been a saxophone player. And there was this tribute to Duke Ellington, which had gotten messed up somehow, so somebody came up with the bright idea of doing it at the White House. There's some pictures of Janie saying good-bye to Duke there. And I absolutely... I didn't really know Duke Ellington, but all I had to do was hear one chord from that band and I was gone so... I wasn't gonna go. And then I thought, well, it's not his White House. It's our White House and I want, you know... So I said, I said, "I'll go but I won't shake his hand," the President. And then we rehearsed. Gerry wrote some really nice arrangements, and Gerry, Paul Desmond, Hank Jones, Milt Hinton... I'm drawing a blank on the drummer's name. I'm embarrassed. But anyway, we rehearsed and Gerry wrote some nice arrangements for it. I think... oh, it doesn't matter. It was about ten players. But I... oh, yeah, I was doing the Merv Griffin Show then. And I always had this big peace sign on my bandstand and I had to take it off when the show started being filmed. And I would... I'd get the contributions for helping, (laughs) you know, peace movement and everything. 'Cause I couldn't believe we were in a... we got conned into sending people to Vietnam to kill other people (laughs) who didn't do nuttin' to us, you know. (laughs)

Levy: Yeah.

Hall: And somehow I... somehow that didn't seem right to me. (laughs) I forgot how I got into that. Anyway, and I love Duke Ellington. Then I found out... oh, and I noticed that none of the, of Duke's band were at the thing except Freddie Green, who had played guitar with Duke a hundred years ago. And a few months later, I was talking to, doing an interview with a woman who had known Duke Ellington really well. I think he was still alive. And she said that, that Duke hated Nixon so much that he booked another job for his band. He was hoping he could get out of it. (laughs) So... and I played... was it *In a Sentimental Mood*? Well, some piece of Duke's with Milt Hinton, and Duke was very complimentary. And then, but I played a stupid wrong... literally wrong chord in it and I didn't realize it 'til later so... So... anyway, it was... I forgot how I got into that but...

Levy: We got in it because we were talking about Gerry Mulligan.

Hall: Oh, yeah, Gerry, yeah. So, and there's some great pictures of Gerry and Paul Desmond and me cracking up at something or... I forget where, where it was. At the end of the concert, I guess.

Levy: Well, we might as well finish that story, too, because that... they wanted to release the album...

Hall: Yeah.

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Levy: ...and somebody...

Hall: Oh, yeah, refused to have it released for years. And one of the reasons... Well, first of all, because of the history. Nobody... so obviously, it was like the Watergate thing. Nobody said it's gonna be recorded, schmuck. (laughs) So I resented that, and also the fact that I played bad on it. So I called a couple... Believe it or not, I called Stanley Crouch, who's a character. But he said, "Well, they... somebody's gonna release it after you're gone, anyway. You might as well let it out." And then I called... I can't think of his name right now. But a guy that used to have the things up at the, up at the YMCA—the Y... the Jewish Y, whatever it is. (laughs)

Levy: Mm-hmm. The 92nd Street Y?

Hall: Yeah, 92nd Street Y. And they both sort of said, "Well, let it..."

Levy: This was years later, 'cause originally...

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: Was it you and Paul? There were only two of you that refused and made it impossible for them to put it out in the beginning.

Hall: I'm not sure...

Levy: I think it was you and Paul Desmond.

Hall: Sounds right, anyway. But then, Lenny Garment... I... Oh... (laughs) I got this great letter from Lenny, after I refused it. It said, "Dear Jim, Wasn't that a wonderful evening at the White House?" Blah, blah, blah. And he said, "It was all recorded and we want to release..." So I wrote to Lenny. I said, "I don't want my, my music or any... associated with that regime." (laughs) And so I refused (unintelligible). You know, it went on for years that way.

Levy: Mm-hmm. So let's go back to Town Hall.

Hall: Okay, that's better.

Levy: That's where we were with Gerry Mulligan.

Hall: That's right. Sorry to digress. (laughs)

Levy: That's okay. We were gonna get there...

Hall: Stuff was... stuff was lying there and I stepped in it. (laughs) Yeah, that was, that was fun. And I remember... 'cause I mentioned on the stage that Gerry and I had last played together at the...

Levy: At the White House.

Hall: At the White House, yeah. Gerry and I, we just played a duet and it was incredible. Gerry would just find perfect notes to fill in the whole feeling and you didn't need to play chords even. And then we had all those guitar players. Each one different, I think.

Levy: Some people might be surprised to hear that you appreciate some of those players. And I don't know if there's any way for you to describe what it is you hear, you know. What you like about it.

Hall: In, in who?

Levy: Scofield (inaudible).

Hall: Oh. Well, they're so different from one another, I think part of it, and... That's another funny thing. Scofield, especially. He, he's in that group that plays really loud now, with amps. And I think I told you I did a duet... It was his concert someplace upstate. I forget where. And most of it was okay. And then he would pick up this electric... And I couldn't stand next to the guy and do this, so I just said... but... I forget what my train of thought is here, but yeah, I just wanted people to play differently and guitar players that I admired and... John Scofield, he's a riot. He's one of the funniest guys around, and he does, he does an Indian accent that made it almost impossible for me to... He says, "Oh, good golly, Jim, we got to get together today and have some mamadam and papadam." Every time a guy from India starts talking to me, I have to cool it. I'm gonna crack up. It sounds like John Scofield, I mean, Abercrombie.

Levy: Do these guys think conceptually musically differently than you do or...?

Hall: I don't know. You, you'd probably have to meet those guys. I'm sure they... I hope so. We're different humans. But different people and different genders and everything can actually interact. And then I told you I had Kermit Moore in one of the quartets, and we had gone to music school together in Cleveland. That was nice. [What did?]. Kermit said... typical musician's sense of humor. He said, "We're playing in... oh, in North Carolina..." Rats. I'll think of it later. But it's, it's a term that also means some kind of meat like a steak. He said, "We're playing in..." (So-and-so?), North Carolina, and there's a lot at stake." So (unintelligible)... It was a, you know, joke.

Levy: Yeah.

Hall: So I got Kermit in there (inaudible). Are we running out of...

Kimery: Five.

Hall: Okay.

Levy: Since we're talking about Kermit and the quartet and the... that was done... that was a composition in your Institute of Music days, right? Was that your thesis there or...?

Hall: I don't... it might have been. I don't think so because there was no guitar originally in that... that was my... when I was in music school. It was a string quartet.

Levy: Okay.

Hall: And...

Levy: Your thesis.

Hall: Yeah. And I... the first movement's not too bad, and then I was running out of time and I needed to graduate, so I quickly scribbled off two more movements. And then, I have opened it up a couple times and added a guitar solo in a part so...

Levy: Okay.

Hall: Anyway. Yeah, that was, that was done and...

Levy: You... and we're gonna, when we pick up again...

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: ...we'll talk more about strings but I'm curious about how your mind works when you're envisioning or writing for strings with guitar and what that gives you. Is it like an extension of your own sound?

Hall: I'm sorry, is, is it what?

Levy: Is writing for strings an extension of your own instrumentation, being on guitar?

Hall: Extension of my own instrumentation on guitar?

Levy: (overlapping/inaudible)

Hall: If it were that, I would play... I would have very few notes. Don't, don't, don't... (laughs) Well, I... Yeah, you try to make it work with, with what's gonna come out of your instrument. Some of it is a contrast and... you, one does... you try to envision or hear what the various instruments sound like. I think I told you, I sort of, even in string groups, I sort of lopped off the top, and I don't use violins too much. I start with the viola and work down. I just happen to like that texture better, I guess. And when I get writing again, you see some scribbles on pages, and it'll probably, probably be a quartet or a quintet with maybe two, two violas and two cellos, something like that.

Levy: Hmm. Okay. Well, let's take a break.

.....**Break**

Kimery: We are going.

Hall: Anyway, just quickly, Joseph... originally, he was from... his family were not from Germany, originally, 'cause their last name was Janik, J-A-N-I-K. But he, his family had been hiding Jewish people in their building and they were found out, and his dad was sent to the Russian front and never came back and everything. So for years, Joseph taught high school... I think he taught art. And in any case, he would take German students to Israel every summer to work on kibbutzes, and it really stayed with him, you know, his whole, whole life. And they told me, boy, (laughs) he and his wife, they were kids. And Faye, his wife said they would have to do this Nazi salute when they were kids. And she said, "Your arm would get so tired, you'd have to rest it on the shoulder of the kid in front of you." (laughs) And that's kind of touching in a weird way, isn't it, so...

Levy: Was... were they with you? Was Joseph Janik with you on the trip when you went hang-gliding?

Hall: Oh, that was... that was... oh, what's his name? The piano player that... from the New School. What the heck's his name? Great piano player. Played with Pete Bernstein and everything. Larry Goldings. (laughs) I've somehow over the years, I got to know this guy in Germany who, who had a... he would go hang-gliding. I think he was a guitar player. In any case, he invited Larry and me to go one time. (laughs)

Levy: When you were on tour.

Hall: Yeah, yeah. No, we took a special trip to... No, yeah. Larry and I were playing in Europe. And Larry's Jewish, too, so... and he got a great sense of humor. So, and he was just out of school. He was a kid. So I said, "Well..." I thought, well, I'll go up first, 'cause if anything happened to, to Larry, I said, well, you know, I just said, I said, "If I'm gone, it's all right." (laughs) So you have to be kinda pulled down the runway by another plane and then you let, and you go. So, and it was really bumpy and my friend said, "Well, because we don't have too much time, I'm trying to find air currents." So it got, it got bumpy as hell. So... (laughs) Larry was gonna go next and... (laughs) So I was standing kind of near the runway, and he gets in there... I guess my friend was in front and Larry's in back. So here's this Jewish kid with the great sense of humor, and as he's being pulled down the runway, he looks at me and he crossed himself. (laughs) That was Larry. That's Larry.

Levy: Well, as you've toured the world...

Hall: (laughs) So far.

Levy: I know that a lot of times your trips don't allow you much time...

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: ... to see or do anything, so that's one of the reasons I asked you about that because I thought it was interesting that you were overseas and kind of got to do something...

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: ...unique and different.

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: Are there any particular memories that stand out for you from your world travels of things you saw or were able to fit in?

Hall: Columbus, Ohio was... I've been to Vienna a number of times, and Sigmund Freud used to live at 19... neunzehn... I forget the name of the street now. It's in German, actually. And a couple, couple things happened. One time we... oh, whoever booked us over there had booked us into this rotten hotel and that. So I got all the guys moved out. And our hotel was close to, to where Freud had worked and everything. Oh, Larry was with me then, too. So I went down to, to Freud's old apartment house, and it was kind of fascinating, 'cause there were photographs later on of Nazi flags outside of

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his building. Berggasse Street? Neunzehn some street, I forget. And I, I think I... Oh, that was cute, too. I bought some... was this that... Anyway, one time over there, I bought... It was before they had Euros. I forget what the currency was. But I bought a couple books and some cards and stuff like that, and I put them up at the counter and this nice lady says... I forgot. I didn't have enough money. She says, "Oh, yeah, but you have enough for this nice book on this and that." And so I said, "Okay, thank you." So then there's a long pause and she says, "But you must give me some money." (laughs) So I said, "Oh. I made a Freudian slip." She said, "Yeah, we are used to that." And then the next time I was there, I went up and by then it had become kind of a business, and you had to pay to get in. And just... I wasn't trying to get in free, but I just say, "Oh, my wife is the President of the Freudian Society in New York," so the lady said, "Oh, go on in." (laughs) So...

Levy: Any other places where you saw things or were able to visit local color or temples in Japan or museums in Timbuktu or...?

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: Something that stands out from your travels?

Hall: Well, just about everything, as you know. Just interaction with people. Oh, this stands out recently, though, is when this, this scum still occupied the White House. (laughs) And evidently I did it okay. Ron Carter and I were playing in Paris. I couldn't find a bass player so what the hell. And I got on a microphone and in French... evidently, I did it okay. I apologized. I said, "We have... at this moment, we have a Fascist government in, in our country." And people seemed to like that. So then... Do you remember Benny Aronov, the piano player?

Levy: Sure. Benny and Nicole.

Hall: Yeah. They've been living in France for years. So Benny called. He said, "Hey, Jim, we saw you on television." I said, "Oh, great." And he said, "Yeah, you weren't playing. You were, you were putting down the American government." So I said, "Oh, right. I made it." (laughs)

Levy: Wow.

Hall: I was really proud of that.

Levy: Okay. Let's talk... Well, let's, let's digress for one more moment since you mentioned moving guys out of the hotel...

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: ...and it was crummy and... There's obviously a business aspect to music. Not to the making of it but towards maybe the maintaining of it.

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: And at some point, and we're about to talk about your compositions, but before we talk about the artist's part of it...

Hall: Mm-hmm.

Levy: At some point, you started a publishing company. Do you remember how that came to be so that you could maintain control of your own works?

Hall: Oh, yeah. No, I don't. Probably Jane would answer that better. Either that or Mary Ann Topper or Anna or something but...

Levy: Well, Janhall Music...

Hall: Oh, Janhall Music, that's right. Dot-com. (laughs)

Levy: No, it's not a dot-com but...

Hall: No, I'm kidding. You know I'm kidding, right?

Levy: Pre-dates them, actually.

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: And I was wondering if maybe John Lewis talked to you about it, because he had MJQ Music already.

Hall: Yeah. Yeah.

Levy: That some of your colleagues...

Hall: Oh, I guess, yeah. Yeah, it probably had to do with getting royalties from recordings and that sort of thing. And yeah, John might have advised me. "Dummy, you gotta," you know, (laughs) "get a company." And then... maybe the lawyer that we had... Noel Silverman?

Levy: Mm-hmm. Noel Silverman.

Hall: Yeah. I can't remember that specifically, but, but it has come in handy and every once in a while I'll get, as you know, get a nice royalty check so that's worked out great. Thank you for that.

Levy: So that's something you would advise young people who are beginning to think about composing and whatever to, to have an awareness of that or...?

Hall: I would think so just from a... It sounds rather unartistic, but it is necessary to eat, as well. Otherwise, it's hard to write music if you're starving to death. (laughs) So...

Levy: Well put.

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: Well, let's talk about the writing of the music.

Hall: Okay.

Levy: When you sit down and are looking at a blank piece of paper...

Hall: I fall asleep. I'm sorry, go ahead.

Levy: Well, I was going to ask... the way I would phrase it is, what... would you talk a little bit about what you strive for?

Hall: Yeah, what my mind went to was there's a book that Igor Stravinsky... I think it's kind of a... I don't remember how much of it he actually wrote but he's... it was the idea of composing every day. Later on... never mind. Decomposing is the opposite, I guess. And he said that he would just keep the pencil going, and he, he said if he, if he couldn't think of anything, he'd write his name and then he'd write it backwards just to, just to keep something going. And eventually, something would come out. So I also do that. And it does help for me. For instance, the orchestra piece that I tried to write and never finished. But to have a, a deadline in a way (laughs) and something specific to work on, that helps a lot. And sometimes the specific thing will just come to you suddenly, like during this, this quartet stuff again with Greg and Steve and Joey. And then, in the process of that, something else will come to you and you say, "Oh, maybe I'll work on," and then you write that down in the corner, too, so...

Levy: When you say, "Something will come to you," is it like a line or a... Sometimes I've heard you talk about shapes...

Hall: Yeah. It's hard to say. When I say something, I mean a number of things. Maybe just a motif or something. Or maybe something that I have already written, I'll say, "Gee, if I wrote that backwards, it would be cute, too," so... I'm not even sure what the quote "creative process" involves, but that's kind of how it's worked for me so I... You saw that Mother's Day tune I wrote for Janie. Even though I'm not your kid, I love what your Debbie did. Something like that, you know. So I said, "I gotta write a tune that isn't too hard."

Levy: Well, let's talk about a specific project. Let's talk about *Textures*.

Hall: Mm-hmm.

Levy: Because that was a phenomenal, wide-ranging, multi-part endeavor.

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: I mean, it was a symphony but it had several of...

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: Every tune was an original.

Hall: Sorry?

Levy: Every tune on that album was an original.

Hall: Is that right? I'd forgotten that, yeah.

Levy: And also with different soloists.

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: Some were with strings. Then there were a couple of... would you call it a brass choir?

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: Tell us about that. That was a strange instrumentation.

Hall: Well, I can't remember. I guess I'd have to look at it.

Levy: I can give you a little bit.

Hall: Yeah, tell me.

Levy: The brass part you had Jamie Finegan on trumpet.

Hall: Oh, yeah.

Levy: Conrad Herwig on trombone.

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: Ryan Kaiser on trumpet. Lovano was a guest. Jim Pugh on trombone.

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: Claudio Roditi on flugelhorn.

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: And a tuba. And Marcus Rojas on tuba.

Hall: Oh, yeah. Oh, Michael, yeah. Marcus. Yeah, I think... Janie and I... Jane was with me. I played something in Turkey one time and... and we went out for lunch or something and I heard... I don't remember if it was a group playing or just... And I heard this silly tune and I liked it. So I stuck that in my memory. I think it's still there. And I wrote a kind of a... (singing) Bi-de-de-do, bop-bomp-bop-bomp-bom... That kind of thing. A silly tune for brass and... and I tried to figure out the instrumentation. And the tuba player was great 'cause he has a "bomp" at the end that I didn't even write. He said, "That needs another note," so... And I think that was the time that Telarc was kinda dubious, whoever Telarc are or was. So I think I said I won't even charge you for this. I'll just... 'cause I wanted to do it. That was one... one of them I did that way, anyway. I think they, whoever they are, didn't realize that I could actually... I'm a college graduate. (laughs) I could write for strings, you know.

Levy: Mm-hmm.

Hall: And I like the string stuff. And there's a passacaglia on there. Now I remember at the, at the rehearsal... I think even the professional string players... yeah, this bald-headed jazz guy (rag?). So Lady...

Levy: Louise.

Hall: Sorry? Louise, yeah. She says, "Oh, this is a passacaglia." (laughs) For Christ sake. I'm a college graduate. But I feel, I like that record. I really feel good about it, and I thought Lovano... And there was one... Oh, I called it *Ragman*, that's right.

Levy: Mm-hmm.

Hall: It was a childhood memory, actually, ‘cause I lived in Columbus, Ohio, and there was a guy who used to come in this kind of horse-drawn thing and collect paper and rags. And he had, what I assume, was kind of a European or a Jewish accent. I’d never been out of Ohio, but he would say, “Paper...” I thought he was saying, “Paper, ex.” “Paper, ex,” you know. Paper and rags. And I was gonna call it *Paper Ex*, but I thought, well, that sounds political. So I called it *Ragman*, what the hell, huh? And, and I liked that. And you can kinda hear the wind blowing... down the...

Levy: Mm-hmm.

Hall: ...down the alley and everything. It was also kind of fascinating ‘cause our neighborhood was, was integrated by low-income. (laughs) And Joe Louis was having those bum-of-the-month fights. And every once a month, the neighborhood would go crazy. People cheering, you know.

Levy: Oh, wow.

Hall: It was great. Anyway, yeah, I like that CD. I haven’t listened to it for a while but...

Levy: That instrumentation has a particular sound, I guess. The brass choir stuff. I think the tune, You were having a circus dance.

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: I think that’s what you ended up calling it.

Hall: Yeah, that’s right.

Levy: I guess I just wonder where some ideas like that come from.

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: I mean, that the...

Hall: The ragman. (laughs)

Levy: Is it the timbre of an instrument or the range...?

Hall: I imagine or... Is the vocal group on that one, too?

Levy: Yes.

Hall: Yeah. Oh, yeah, I had a Russ Freeman tune that I always loved — *The Wind*.

Levy: Mm-hmm.

Hall: And...

Levy: Well, actually, that was on the second CD. That was on *By Arrangement*.

Hall: Oh, it was *By Arrangement*, I see.

Levy: Textures was all your tunes.

Hall: Okay. Do you have the names of them down there?

Levy: No. But *Passacaglia* was one.

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: And *Ragman* and... I'll think of it. I have the people but not the tunes' titles on that.

Hall: Well, just tell me the people and I'll...

Levy: Well, the people like... that was with Pat Metheny was a guest on one track.

Hall: Oh, yeah.

Levy: And Greg Osby was a guest on one track.

Hall: Oh...

Levy: And Lovano...

Hall: Oh, Greg did *The Wind*, though, didn't he?

Levy: He did that, as well, but he was on *Textures*, also.

Hall: Oh, okay.

Levy: So there was a tune of an original.

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: I can get it and...

Hall: Okay, if you...

Levy: If you want but...

Hall: Yeah. My...

Levy: Let's come back to it.

Hall: Okay, sure. Yeah. Anyway, yeah, I feel good about that record, about the writing I did. And I told you, people at Telarc were dubious so I did it. I didn't even charge them, as I recall, just... 'cause I just wanted to get it done so...

Levy: That recording was when we also were making a video of your...

Hall: Oh, that's right, yeah.

Levy: ...time. And it was called *A Life in Progress*.

Hall: *Life in Progress*, right. And one of the stupid shields they had for the... almost fell and hit me. I don't know. Maybe that was the recording studio scene. They had this, these big shields, you know, to separate things. (laughs) And it fell and almost bashed me. But I survived. Anyhow, go ahead.

Levy: What was... do you recall at all the... you had started to talk about Louise and the string section.

Hall: Yeah.

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Levy: And as I recall, you tried to leave some room for them to improvise, which I think was alien to some of them.

Hall: Oh. You know what I would do? And I've seen other people do this. I would write just the, the rhythm and maybe the direction of the line, but just these little x's for notes so they can, they can play any notes. It's just, just the sound of a bunch of string players hitting up here. Maybe I'll have an arrival chord or something but it... I think a lot of jazz writers had done that in the past, too. So you don't want... it doesn't have to be specific notes, 'cause sometimes that can inhibit, especially classical players, so you just write, say, a bunch of 16th notes with the direction. You go up here and then you hit something here and come back down.

Levy: Huh.

Hall: Any, any notes is okay.

Levy: Do you recall them enjoying that or...?

Hall: I don't know. You'd have to call... I have no idea. I imagine... I'm sorry, I don't mean to be obstinate but I had...

Levy: No, I just didn't know if you had any memories of...

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: ...working through that with them in the studio. 'Cause there were some... we did rehearse for about two days before the session.

Hall: Is that right? Yeah, I'd forgotten.

Levy: So I didn't know if you had...

Hall: Yeah. Yeah, it was fun.

Levy: ...any memories of that.

Hall: And Jamie Finegan, of course, I had known since he was an infant. Is Bill Finegan's son.

Levy: Talk about Bill for a minute. It's a complete digression.

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: We didn't include him earlier.

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: He was such an important part.

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: Just tell us... Some people don't know who Bill is.

Hall: Bill Finegan probably is best known for having been half of the Sauter-Finegan band. Bill Finegan and Eddie Sauter. They... Eddie had written for Benny Goodman's band and all kinds of great bands. And Bill started out with Tommy Dorsey when Bill,

he was still a teenager, I think. He wrote a bunch of things for Dorsey and... and I think he called me about a record date or something years later. I think he... oh, he came in to hear me with Sonny Rollins. In fact, Bill lived in the Village right down near Washington Square there. So we got to be good friends. And it's funny. Right up to the very end, Bill would call me... just two or three years ago, and we would never talk about music. He'd say, "Hey, Jim, I got one for ya." And he'd tell me something ridiculously ironic or funny that had happened. He said, "So-and-so was and then this happened and..." So that was our... And the same with Allan Ganley. He would call me about these silly things. Occasionally, we'd talk about music. But usually just... It was a friendship and...

Levy: You listened to his music for a bit then.

Hall: Yeah. Yeah, I did. Right.

Levy: Did you learn anything particular from it? Like do you learn different things from different classical composers?

Hall: Gee, Deb, I'm not sure. I'm sure that I did. Especially with the Sauter-Finegan orchestra. That was, that was an incred... Just the way both those guys wrote. And organized things and the different sounds they got. I still have a record of the Sauter-Finegan band. And... I'm trying to think. And also Bill had an incredible, ironic sense of humor, too. Yeah, it's... it was, again, bizarre in a way 'cause... Well, Bill was in his nineties, but both he and Allan died while I was in the hospital, and Allan had been calling me in the hospital so... that was weird.

Levy: Yeah. Well, Allan Ganley was on at least one album.

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: *Commitment*.

Hall: *Commitment*, right. Yeah. Because I had worked with Allan in London years ago, and then Allan got a divorce and he moved to Bermuda.

Levy: Mm-hmm.

Hall: And so I would run into him in Bermuda, and he's a dear friend. I had no idea he was such a great big band writer until I got that CD. So I got him over from Bermuda to play on a couple tracks of the *Commitment* album. 'Cause I think *Commitment* had to do with... it sounds hammy, I guess, but people who had been important to me and had helped me. So I had Art Farmer, had Tommy Flanagan. I had Ron and Don Thompson, as well. A couple different drummers.

Levy: And Jane.

Hall: And Jane sang, that's right. It's nice. Tough place... The past is a cute place to visit, but I wouldn't want to live there. (laughs) I'm telling you, man. The hell with it. (laughs)

Levy: (laughs) Well, it...

Hall: I'm sorry, dear. I'm just making a joke.

Levy: No, no, (overlapping/inaudible). It's interesting that as we're talking about some of these albums, you know, that certain things sort of stand out.

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: About people who are, who have been important to you...

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: ...or influenced you or inspired you. And I'm thinking of two completely different albums now that relate to that in my mind.

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: One is the *Dedications and Inspirations*, which was a solo album.

Hall: Oh, yeah, yeah.

Levy: Isn't that your only one?

Hall: I'm not sure. Probably. I'm not even sure, Deb. Yeah, that was...

Levy: 1994.

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: Do you remember what's on there? Because I can... there's some interesting things that relate to...

Hall: The people.

Levy: People and places and art.

Hall: Oh, yeah. I tried to get certain painters in my mind, I guess, and then improvise something that, that would maybe suggest that.

Levy: Yep. You have a tune called *Miró*.

Hall: *Miró*, that's right.

Levy: And another one called *Monet*.

Hall: *Monet*.

Levy: And those are both on that album. There's a tune dedicated to Coleman Hawkins.

Hall: Oh, that's wild. Yeah. Yeah, I'd have to hear that again. But obviously, I really admired him. And I guess I just tried to... I think they were all improvised, basically. So I just tried to aurally visualize Coleman Hawkins playing and make some sound like that, I guess. And I think I did one for Charlie Christian, as well. I can't remember but...

Levy: Yep. You dedicated a Bluesography...

Hall: Oh, yeah.

Levy: ... to Charlie Christian and Lead Belly.

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Hall: Oh, wow. Huh.

Levy: I don't know what role they ever played in your listening history.

Hall: Oh, well, we have to talk about...

Levy: Well, (overlapping/inaudible)...

Hall: Yeah, yeah.

Levy: But Lead Belly is a surprise to me.

Hall: Yeah. Well, I must have heard him and I was really impressed by his approach to, first of all, to guitar playing and... That's why I like... oh, what's the guy that has a restaurant uptown I love? Blues player.

Levy: B.B. King.

Hall: B.B., yeah. I love his playing. I'd rather hear him play just maybe one or two notes than most guys play all night, 'cause it means something. And then, and he'll play and he can't sort of play the guitar and sing at the same time or something. So then he'll stop and... (laughs) But yeah, so that was... Obviously, that's what Lead Belly... And then, I guess the Charlie Christian thing had to do with my habit. He was my spiritual awakening, (laughs) as I said, so...

Levy: You've got a tune dedicated to Lunceford.

Hall: Oh, wow. Yeah.

Levy: And a *Canto Nostalgico*.

Hall: Oh, yeah. Nostalgic song, I guess.

Levy: That you dedicated to your friends in Argentina.

Hall: Oh, yeah.

Levy: So of your worldwide...

Hall: Yeah. Yeah. I told you... was it yesterday... about having been in Argentina and having discovered all this (laughs) pretty good music that tango players are doing.

Levy: And there's a tune dedicated to Gary Larson.

Hall: Oh, yeah. Gary.

Levy: Tell us about Gary.

Hall: Well, that's one of his drawings (laughs) on the wall there.

Levy: That's on the cover (overlapping/inaudible). (of your book *Exploring Jazz Guitar*?)

Hall: That was the cover of a CD, right. Parenthetically again, he did all that stuff. He never charged me a cent for anything and he's this expensive, famous cartoonist and he would just do these things. I would have to hear it again, but I imagine it has some relationship to Gary. And it was a way of maybe thanking him a bit.

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Levy: Gary was a student of yours at some point?

Hall: Yeah. He and Toni, his wife, they... He took a year or so off from his cartooning and he and Toni rented an apartment down, right off, just above Washington Square down there. So they were here for quite a while and he came over almost every day for a lesson. And we'd hang out, and I told him... I told you about the... Gary and Toni went to this class that... Oh, good, Jim. (laughs) My friend who has ArtistShare Records.

Levy: Right.

Hall: Brian had at the New School?

Levy: Mm-hmm.

Hall: I told you that and he kept talking about Django, Django. And Gary in his honest innocence, he raised his hand. He says, "Did Django have a last name?" And all the kids turned around and say, "Reinhardt." Like Dummy. (laughs) So a few days later... I used to get great, these great faxes from him. And there's a note on it, but on the side is Gary writing "Django Reinhardt" on a blackboard 80... like a kid who screws up in school. (laughs) He was embarrassed about that.

Levy: You taught a little bit from time to time, and some of the early years, had some private students. Do you remember who any of them were? I mean, there were some notable people that would come to the apartment for a lesson (then?).

Hall: Oh, yeah. The guy who's just kinda making a comeback now. Had met him through Paul Desmond. It's kind of folk music that his...

Levy: Is Paul Simon one of them?

Hall: Paul Simon, yeah. Paul would come over and... In fact, he... I couldn't really help him. (laughs) You know, it was... (I done nothing?). Play C-7th and then you... (laughs) I don't know. It's just... But he gave me a ride with... or else we took a taxi. He was going up to 48th Street to get something or other, and I got out of that cab with him, and all these teenagers were running over getting autographs and stuff. He was sort of saying, "Well, this... (laughs) Get this guy's autograph." He seemed like a nice guy and everything but... We... that didn't last too long. (laughs)

Levy: Okay.

Hall: I'm not putting him down. It's a whole different...

Levy: That's what I find fascinating.

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: Is that some of these sort of popular folk, whatever the music of that time was...

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: ...were coming to you looking for something, and I just found that interesting and I wasn't sure what...

Hall: Yeah.

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Levy: ...they were seeking or...

Hall: I think it was...

Levy: ...(maybe you were exchanging in life?) (overlapping)

Hall: ...probably through Paul Desmond, actually. He had known Paul and... I really don't know, Deb. But obviously, they didn't get it 'cause they left pretty soon. (laughs)

Levy: Okay. Did you... Well, you mentioned Brian and ArtistShare.

Hall: Brian Camelio, yeah.

Levy: Yeah. So there are two things going on that I think are very current. I mean, I don't mean today but...

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: First, musically. At some point, you started using some pedals.

Hall: Say that again.

Levy: You started using a pedal (overlapping/inaudible).

Hall: Oh, yeah.

Levy: And I don't know anything about them, but I'm very curious as to...

Hall: They... you're working with your feet. I'm sorry, go ahead. (laughs) Go ahead. I'm sorry.

Levy: Why? When?

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: How?

Hall: I avoided all that stuff—the electronic doodads. I think I associated them with kind of loud music and rock 'n' roll. And Bob Brookmeyer... bless his heart... he wrote a piece for symphony orchestra, which I did in... Janie came with me... One of those countries in Europe. (laughs) And, and he had written a section where I had to use certain foot pedals. So I thought, well, that's interesting. And then, I think especially after this long time in the hospital, my finger technique really was slow. And certain settings on a foot pedal will help the notes come out faster. (laughs) And it... actually, I did a whole CD at the Vanguard with Louis Nash and Scott Colley. And I think it's a CD except I'm all addicted to foot pedals for the whole thing. (laughs) It's kind of over-pedaled, you know. And I guess like anything else, like alcohol or anything else, you have to be careful you don't get an addiction. You forget you can't think of anything so you press on a foot pedal and it comes out.

Levy: What does it do, technically, to... I mean, I think of the guitar and the hollow body and...

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: ...and the resonance of the strings. What does the pedal do?

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Hall: Well, what, what do you imagine? I mean, you've heard them. What, what would come to your mind?

Levy: Well, the only thing I relate directly to is the one that makes it sound like a steel drum.

Hall: Oh, yeah. Well, that's one thing, right.

Levy: But I don't know really what, what the (overlapping/inaudible).

Hall: Oh, yeah. I, that's what...

Levy: ...to the instrument.

Hall: What that is... there's a setting on it where it actually shoots the note up an octave or two, and it sounds a bit like a steel drum. And I got fascinated by that when I was working with Sonny Rollins, so there's a few notes from Eliza next door 'cause that's her favorite tune and... So whenever Eliza comes in, I play St. Thomas. I actually played it on Sonny's concert, too, at the end. But it adds a sense of orchestration, I think, to the guitar. And sometimes, anything one does can get boring eventually. So sometimes I try to freshen up the, the approach and freshen up my mind and, yeah, use a foot pedal. Almost the way a drummer has different cymbals he can use. I don't mean S-Y-M, but C-Y-M. And the trouble is that it's so easy to get hooked on them. And there's another one that kind of adds... (stammers) like a little dimension and a vibrato or something like that. That's kind of cute to use sometimes. But again, as with anything else, you can kinda, kinda get hooked on it and overdo it and... So you do have to think about that. And I say this so often, especially... (laughs) 'cause of this age of extra loud music. I just don't get it at all. So sometimes, rather than turn the volume way up, you can just add a little tweak, is that a cute... that's a "in" word, right? And get a whole different sound and everything without... I told you I was working... Larry Goldings was in the group, the quartet. And I'd be playing things. I played parallel fourths and fifths and thirds with my hand, and sometimes, you know, get injurious. And Larry finally said, "Dummy, you can get a foot pedal that'll do that," so... (laughs)

Levy: Oh.

Hall: Yeah, so that was funny. The only thing is that it's a whole different... If you're, if you're stretching to play two or three notes at the same time, that's one thing. But if you press a foot pedal, it does that automatically, it's a little, it's a little slick. So I have to watch that. It's like any other addiction, I guess. (laughs) But...

Levy: I guess it's the outgrowth of using a clack on your fret board.

Hall: Oh, right, yeah. Yeah, I never had to do that. That's in case you want to play open strings. But you can't do that in the key of A-flat or something so you put something on it that does that, yeah.

Levy: Well, the other thing that you've done that is very modern is to hook up with Brian on ArtistShare.

Hall: Yeah.

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Levy: And to have a presence on the Internet, which has allowed communication with fans.

Hall: It's especially ironic because I don't even have a computer and I don't even know how to work one, and you do all that great stuff on. Yeah, Brian had come here for, I guess, guitar lessons years and years ago. And... oh, a couple things. He'd be shown the music in a drawer and he said, "You know, I could put that whole drawer full of stuff on a little disk for you." So I said, "Well, that's interesting." So he sort of brought me into the... what century it is. Whatever century this is. (laughs) And, and also, he's an excellent musician. He had gone to a music school. What else? And then, I was working at the... It was the Vanguard, I remember that, because that's when... and I wanted to record there. And I was, at that time, I think my contract with Telarc Records had just... they were terrific to me. But the, the money that they offered me for doing that was just so meager, and Brian had started this ArtistShare. I think he had already started it. Anyway, I decided to do it through Brian, and that's how that got started. It was great. He brought in a sound engineer, who managed to do okay with Lorraine Gordon and everything. (laughs) And we recorded at Vanguard. And then, we... Brian and I have become close friends. He's a terrific musician, too, as well, and super bright and super nice, too.

Levy: Mm-hmm.

Hall: Very positive guy. He... (laughs) he gets into some funny situations, though. Like talking Japanese to a Chinese lady at an airport. He's trying to be nice to her. They had just gotten off a plane from Japan and she looked confused. She probably was cute, too. So he (said?) in Japanese, you know, "Well, can I help?" blah, blah... And she's looking at him. She says, "I'm Chinese, you idiot." (laughs) So he gets into stuff like that, you know. (laughs)

Levy: Musically, he has enabled you to do some very interesting projects with ArtistShare.

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: So that first one is the one you were talking about. That was *Magic Meeting*.

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: It was the Vanguard Trio.

Hall: Oh, right, yeah.

Levy: The next thing you did was in collaboration—another duo collaboration that was, again, a pushing of the envelope. That was with Geoff Keezer. *Free Association with Geoff Keezer*.

Hall: Yeah. We... I'd have to, I'd have to hear that again. Where did we do that?

Levy: That done in the studio. I think it's a blue cover. And it's just you and Geoff. It's a duo recording. That was now, mm, six years ago.

Hall: Do you remember any of the tunes or anything?

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Levy: I don't, but if we take a break, maybe I should pull those couple of CDs. What do you think, Ken?

Hall: Okay, later on. Here's a question. What does Geoff play on these things?

Levy: What does Geoff Keezer play?

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: Piano. You're not placing Geoff at the moment, right?

Hall: I'm not and I can't remember anything about...

Levy: Very young piano player. He was once managed by Mary Ann Topper when he first started out.

Hall: Oh, oh. Jesus, yeah. I remember that. Yeah, and we both were... Yeah, Geoff is amazing. And then we worked together in the quartet and everything, yeah. Yeah, that's great. Yeah, I don't remember what we played, but he's, he's incredible. Can go in any direction, you know, and...

Levy: Mm-hmm. I think he plays inside the...

Hall: Yeah, yeah. He, they live out in, near San Francisco now.

Levy: Oh.

Hall: Yeah. That's so stupid that I forgot, forgot his name. (laughs) Well, when I work with so many people, you know...

Levy: Yes. (laughs) But what is it that spurs you to... I mean, to me, these are not risky in a scary sense but...

Hall: Mm-hmm.

Levy: I mean, it's like walking into another universe where, you know, that...

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: With some of these people. And especially in a duo setting.

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: 'Cause you did it with Keezer, then you did it with Frisell, and then you did it with Joey.

Hall: With Joey, yeah.

Levy: And these are the last three albums. So...

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: (overlapping) Talk a little bit about the...

Hall: (overlapping) Well, Bill Evans wasn't too bad, either.

Levy: No.

Hall: It's... well, I think I've alluded to it, anyway, all the way through. I enjoy taking musical chances and either surviving or not, and you try to find... Oh, we had a quartet for a while that Geoff was in, and it had been a trio... I can't remember... but somehow we ended up going to Europe as a quartet, and I thought, well, we don't really need a piano in the quartet 'cause I'm playing chords. But what would happen, often, on concerts, when it came time for Geoff to play solo, he would take a little bit of the tune, and by himself he would just do a whole composition on that section, by himself, and then bring us back into tempo. And it was great. He was... I thought it would be a little extraneous having, because, you know, I'm, I play chords, too, and everything. (laughs) But Geoff was just perfect. He knew when to not play and when to play and everything, and it was great. We got along great. I remember doing a concert outdoors someplace. The stage was just... the dressing room was in this big building then you walked out on the stage. And it was when we were, our government was involved in killing people (laughs) in different parts of the world. So I just... Oh, it was in... I'll think of it. I know where the country is and I can find it. It was in Europe and I, in effect, said, "We're, you know, even though we're from this country we're here to..." We were talking about peace and everything. So we went in the dressing room and this American sailor, officer or something, he says, "Well, we're here, too, to make peace." (laughs) And I said, "Oh, yeah. Well, kill those people then." (laughs) But anyway, Geoff was just... *is* just great to, to play... In any kind of context—duo... And we've stayed in touch right through everything.

Levy: Well, what about the Frisell collaboration?

Hall: Yeah. Yeah, that was fun. Bill... I met Bill Frisell... I think he... again, I think he was about fifteen and he came for some guitar lessons and everything. And... so I had known him that long. And we... I think this might have been Brian's idea. We, we did a double CD and half of it is just Bill and me, and it's great 'cause Bill has all these foot pedals that he uses for sounds and everything. So I mostly just played straight guitar. But I think on the first track... I don't remember the titles 'cause a lot of them were improvised, but just minutes go by where you just hear Bill doing this funny stuff with the foot pedal. And finally I come in. I'm playing (good?) and it's a nice setting. And then, both Bill and I thought it needed some beefing up, so we did another whole CD with Joey Baron and Scott Colley. So it's, it's a double CD. And I think I did mention that Brian had kind of solicited a cover from Dan. I think he specifically aimed these solicitations or something at certain groups that... Anyway, he, Bill and I picked out this beautiful drawing. It turned out to have been done by a woman who's... I don't know if she's retarded, but she's in some institution kind of where she had done this beautiful drawing. And I think I told you I met her finally out in San Diego.

Levy: Mm-hmm.

Hall: So that, that became the cover.

Levy: That solicitation, as you put it, was part of the ArtistShare participation.

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: Which is an intriguing way of having your fans involved in your process and sort of participating in, in the creation of your, your project, in this case. Does that, I don't know, intrigue you in any way?

Hall: Tell, tell me what you mean specifically.

Levy: Well, specifically, anybody who was a participant in your project...

Hall: Oh, that's right, yeah.

Levy: ...could submit an artwork for consideration for the cover.

Hall: Oh, I didn't know that. But I know that they get their names on the CD as a, as a contributor, (depends?) on how much money they...

Levy: Yeah, at a certain level, yeah. But the rest of it was designed so that anybody who was signed on in any level, even just buying the CD...

Hall: Uh-huh.

Levy: ...could participate in some way. And one of the ways in this particular project was by submitting artwork...

Hall: Oh, I didn't know that.

Levy: ...for consideration.

Hall: I literally did not know that. I just knew that Brian contacted different lockup places (laughs) for, you know, people who... that's all I know. You gonna add something, which I don't know.

Levy: Well, I just wonder if you find it an interesting... I mean, you're the, the musician, the performer in this case.

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: The idea of finding some way for your fans to participate, since they're not in the audience... When, when you talked about audience feedback, in a sense...

Hall: Yeah, yeah.

Levy: This feeling you get from the audience.

Hall: No, they all came to the record date. They were all in the studio. That was so crowded. Yeah, no, it's, it is a great thing, it really is. And then Brian mentions them on the CD, as well. And... yeah, I don't really know too much about that but I like the feeling that I get from that. It's so much closer to humanity, I think, than going in a studio for four hours and sweating and then coming... (laughs) I think it's marvelous. I blame that on Brian Camelio. And... and I do remember that Bill Frisell and I, I believe, didn't realize who had done this painting. But it was a very touching moment when I met the woman. I called Brian 'cause we were supposed to get the original, too, and it never showed up so... maybe it was all a fake. She sold it to a museum for (laughs) eight million dollars.

Levy: How did the Joey Baron project feel?

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Hall: At first, I didn't know if it would work. I had been in the hospital a long time. And I assume that was Brian's idea, too. And my time is up?

Kimery: No, it's how much longer, do you think, Devra?

Hall: What do we got on the tape?

Jane Hall: (inaudible) needs to get in here so...

Levy: How much time do we have?

Kimery: There's about fifteen, fifteen minutes on the tape.

Levy: That's it. Ten, fifteen minutes left.

Hall: (inaudible). Anyway, okay.

Levy: The Joey Baron project.

Hall: Yeah, and Joey was marvelous on that. Again, I had been in the hospital a long time and the idea of doing a whole CD with a drummer only... And I think finally it worked out well. And Joey was very inventive. Sometimes he'd say, 'cause it was literally all just improvised. Occasionally, we would start with a melody that we knew. Then Joey would say, "Okay, how about if I start with these cymbals," blah, blah, blah, "and then you do this..." And then, we invited Eliza to come and she wrote a poem for it. Our fifteen-year-old neighbor. Uh, I still am not sure that it's my favorite record to listen to, but I think it's kind of fascinating. And we touch on a couple... I think we play a kind of a short version of Django, the John Lewis tune. Hell, and it's funny, at the end... at the beginning, I mean, Joey sets up a nice blues rhythm. And I play John Lewis's tune, *Two Degrees East*, or something like that. And I probably did it on purpose but I entered differently from what Joey thought, so he thought I screwed up and he, he moved the beat around. (laughs) But it turns out okay, you know. But Joey, Joey was amazing. He was really inventive and helpful. And I wouldn't mind having another shot at that, actually, sometime but...

Levy: Is there something particularly either intriguing or challenging about a guitar and just the drums?

Hall: I don't know. What, what would you imagine that...

Levy: I don't know. That you don't have a bass line...

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: You don't have... but yet you have a chordal instrument so...

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: You don't have... or and you don't have any of those flavors or textures.

Hall: Right.

Levy: So I wonder if that makes you think in a different way...

Hall: Yeah.

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Levy: ...with just the guitar and...

Hall: Yeah, sure. In fact, I wasn't sure it would work at all. And I'm still not sure it worked but... and I wasn't playing all that well then, either. It's improved a bit but my chops was pretty, pretty low. (laughs) But yeah, and again, it depends on the person. If it's just two people, it depends on the other person and... You could have a big band or something and it would still be rotten so... But so Joey is just... the same with Geoff Keezer. He is just amazing to play duets with or anything and... I like, I like the duet thing I did with, with Geoff quite a bit.

Levy: I'm fascinated that an artist of your standing would... I don't know, and again, maybe it's a risk-taking, but I'm wondering if it's just a matter of keeping you intrigued, because to walk into a studio and put your career in the hands of something you don't it's gonna work.

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: Whereas, you could go in and play *My Funny Valentine*...

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: And *How High the Moon* and know that, you know, it would sell and be wonderful and whatever.

Hall: I hate that idea, though. You know me and...

Levy: Well, that's what I...

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: Can you, can you talk a little bit in your voice about what it is that keeps you intrigued in moving and risk-taking?

Hall: Well, yeah, I thought I had kinda talked about that quite a bit. But I have a low boredom threshold, evidently, and that's... since it is quote "an art form"... and I prefer Jackson Pollock to... (laughs) I told you about that scene I had with our friend.

Levy: Yes.

Hall: And it, it just... it's a hammy word, but it's just more interesting to me than playing... maybe it's from all those years on the Merv Griffin Show, too. (laughs) I think I told you when I got out of the hospital, I didn't have any money, and Gary Larson bought that guitar for me. It was very nice of him to do it. And I noticed when I was looking at it, right where the neck joins the... (laughs) the body, there was this whole big section where all the finish was worn off. I said, "How in the hell..." Then I realized I just spent hours sitting there with my hands folded over that part of the guitar and it wore all the finish off. (laughs)

Levy: Oh, wow.

Hall: Waiting for something interesting to happen... Then Ron bailed me out of that, I told you.

Levy: You mention occasionally not having any money.

Hall: Yes. (laughs)

Levy: And...

Hall: By the way, can I... I'm sorry. (laughs) How much do I get paid? Oh, I do get paid something.

Levy: Yes, you do get paid (for this?).

Hall: That's right. I'd better shut up and talk.

Levy: Well, no, I'm, I'm curious about, again, about the... It keeps you interested, but you don't know if it's gonna pan out.

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: So that sort of takes me back to, I don't know, faith and artistry, I guess.

Hall: Yeah. Well, that's sort of like life itself, right? (laughs) You know, you'll step out and get hit by a car maybe. (laughs) Or maybe you'll have a heart attack, so you'd better do something interesting, anyway. (laughs)

Levy: Okay.

Hall: Yeah, I don't mean to be...

Levy: Well, it brings me to someone I want to ask you about.

Hall: Okay, all right.

Levy: I wanted to ask you a little bit about Miles Davis in his later years. Because my recollection is, in my younger days, is that you were interested in what he was doing. You actually went to hear him someplace, and I was astounded by that. So...

Hall: That I, that I was interested, you mean?

Levy: Mm-hmm.

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: 'Cause he was way out there at that point. It wasn't...

Hall: Really?

Levy: Yeah, it wasn't like *Sketches of Spain* or those era. It was, it was sort of almost rock fusion at that point.

Hall: Oh, oh.

Levy: And I didn't know that would interest you.

Hall: I don't remember, either. That... I'd forgotten that he kinda went in that... I think... didn't Metheny work with him, or one of those guys, for a while?

Levy: Maybe.

Hall: Yeah.

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Levy: What I'm seeing, in retrospect, and what I'm hearing from you is your interest and your intrigue in the possibilities and things that haven't been done yet, and I'm wondering if that's what you were seeing in...

Hall: In Miles?

Levy: ...him and his exploration.

Hall: Well, I would imagine, and I am imagining, that I probably wouldn't have been too thrilled at hearing that music. But I always admired Miles Davis and still do. And he, he, you know, he came along at a fascinating time and he had worked with Charlie Parker and everything and... I loved his voice, too—a cute, kinda salty sounding voice. It's also interesting... literally, that I've talked to Brian Camelio about that and Brian actually liked Chet Baker's playing better than Miles'. And I can understand that. It is... Miles had kind of a... an attitude or something. His, his presence was really strong. And then Miles had the courage in those days to call Bill Evans and get Bill involved. So Miles was searching constantly, as well, I think. And he had that great group that I told you we played opposite. We had... what was Cannonball's real name? Julian or...?

Levy: Mm-hmm.

Hall: And then he had John Coltrane, Paul Chambers, Philly Joe Jones and Bill Evans. And that, that was fairly avant-garde 'cause he had this waspy piano player who was really tuned in and sensitive and everything so... I really admired that part of Miles, where he was willing to go ahead and take chances on other things. Again, I didn't... wasn't always thrilled with the, the mud he stepped into there, (laughs) but he was at least trying so... And then, and again, that's the fascination, I assume, with getting up every morning and then picking up the guitar every day. And I told you I, I did it to one of these 'cause I tune them randomly occasionally, just to keep my interest, you know.

Levy: Who do you have your eye on today? Anybody? Musically?

Hall: Musically?

Levy: That piques your curiosity on the horizon or your admiration even?

Hall: Well, I like the guys in my group, actually. I love Greg Osby. He is, I think he's unique. We do... I told you we, we feature Greg on *Chelsea Bridge*. So he comes out and he sorta just plays by himself for a while, and he plays this stunning stuff, for me. I never know what direction he's going to go, and then he takes some pickup notes and we're into this old Billy Strayhorn tune right away. And it just paints a whole different color to the bridge and... (laughs) *Chelsea Bridge*, I mean. So yeah, Greg, Greg's playing is very, very important to me. And then Joey, as well. They're both really inventive and chance-taking. And that's kind of what I look for. It's funny. Ornette Coleman, I... As much as I admired Ornette for years, I don't know if I would have this success working with Ornette now, although I was on one record with him, and it was his record. And I always admired his courage and all. In fact, I got this, this... one of Russell Malone's messages was that he had hung out... he had gone over to Ornette's place and hung out, talked with Ornette about his approach to music for a while. And

then somebody else... Joey, I think. Joey had done the same thing 'cause they... 'cause Russell got to play with Ornette on that Sonny Rollins concert.

Levy: How was that Sonny Rollins concert for you? What is it like to hook up again with Sonny after all those years?

Hall: Oh, it was marvelous, of course. And we had played up in Vermont together. Same kinda thing. And then, as I said, I didn't get to hear too much of that particular concert 'cause it was a long concert and my back was not good. And so I was up in the dressing room. But one of the really touching and amazing things that made me feel so privileged was all the friends that I saw there that, you know, I had worked with. Jesus, it was just great. Everybody. You know, Bobby Cranshaw, of course, and Ornette Coleman and, oh man, the other drummer that played for a while who's in his nineties now. I can't think of his name.

Levy: Roy Haynes?

Hall: Sorry?

Levy: Roy Haynes?

Hall: Roy Haynes. Yeah, that's right. And... oh, it was just great. Christian McBride was there. And Cranshaw. Cranshaw's lovely. He still looks like a kid, that devil. (laughs) It's disgusting. He probably has a pact with the devil or something. (laughs) But...

Levy: You mention a young guitarist (overlapping/inaudible).

Hall: Oh, yeah. Julian Lage. Yeah, he's, he's really something. He's... I met him when he was eleven out in California at Yoshi's. He came in with his parents. And just for the heck of it, we went in the dressing room and he played my guitar. He sounded fantastic when he was eleven. And I'd been hearing about him. Oh, he's working with Gary Burton now sometimes and... and he... Oh, Brian brought him over here once, when I was (in a real?) bad recovery period. And Brian wanted to tape us together, so I said, "I don't think I'm ready for it." (laughs) But he's just a lovely guy and he's completely original, you know, so I admire that. So it ain't over, is my point. (laughs) There's new people coming along that are fantastic. And Jane Ira Bloom. She's not a kid, but I mention, she has a new CD called *Wing Walker* that is so original. So that's, that's the stuff that gets my attention. (laughs) The hell with Beethoven. He had his time, you know. (laughs)

Levy: (laughs) All right.

Hall: Don't quote me on that in Germany, please. (laughs)

Levy: I'm just looking to see if there's anybody else. The only other name that popped into my head while you were talking, I don't think we've mentioned, is Chris Potter.

Hall: Oh, Chris, yeah. I'm trying to remember how I got in touch with Chris. Oh, he was working with Red Rodney at the Vanguard. And I had known Chris a long time, and he... I got him involved in some things in Europe — things using a string quartet and

everything. And I've just watched him evolve. And he's married now. He has a lovely wife and a daughter. And he's just doing great. And you know, that... again, it sounds hammy but the camaraderie, the friendships are just great. And he came to the hospital and everything and...

Levy: Would it be a correct guess to say that what you look for in a potential person that you, a person you would hire potentially to work with the group would be somebody that would take those same kind of out-there risks and (overlapping) (forward thinking?) ...

Hall: Probably, yeah.

Levy: ...and have a good personality, and they'd be in...

Hall: Personality helps, too, 'cause you... (laughs) I told you, you have a fight with somebody and then you gotta sit next to them in a car for three hours. (laughs) So... And there's a, there's a Brazilian guitar player that I met in Europe this last time. He was accompanying... I forget... a terrific lady, Brazilian singer. Lubamba is his last name. I have a CD of his. He came over to the apartment. Fantastic. Brazilians. They're disgusting. And he's a lovely guy. He lives in New Jersey now. And... So he came over and brought his guitar and we played some together and everything. But again, it was, it was the same thing. I was in my dressing room and I had heard this lovely Brazilian singer. I hadn't even seen her. And all of a sudden there's a knock on the dressing room door, and it's the lady singer. She's, she's really fat and everything, and she's with this guy guitar player. I'll think of her name, too. Fantastic Brazilian singer and... having been to Brazil, I was knocked out. But anyway, he came over to the apartment once to play and I just mostly listened. (laughs)

Levy: Anybody that you can think of that you've never played with that you would want to, dead or alive, I mean...?

Hall: That I would want to?

Levy: Mm-hmm.

Hall: I would like to have done something with Miles Davis during a certain period, I guess, of each of our lives maybe. I probably blew it by not agreeing to do that second record with him. But I told you, I literally felt like I was out of music. (laughs) And I was nervous about it and... I never got to play with Slam Stewart, I think. I loved his playing, too. I don't know. I've... I think I've hit a lot of them that I... a couple of them that are real famous... (laughs) that I managed not to... Benny Goodman, who was extremely, I think I told you that. He had called a couple times and he was such a pain in the butt at the rehearsal. And I... Oh, it was funny 'cause I was kind of proud of it. I didn't take any crap from him, and he kept saying, "Well, that amplifier is flat." And he would move it and I said, "That's, that's strings, dummy." And he was really rude to the guys at rehearsal. So he called later and he said, "I'm not gonna use guitar on this." (laughs) So I said, "Oh, good." And I told... I was with this analyst, therapist that Janie had gone to, and so I was proud of that. And he sorta starts, he says, "Well..." He starts defending Benny Goodman. So I think that's when I said, I said, "I'm outta here." (laughs) He (unintelligible). (laughs) That was funny 'cause he also didn't believe in

homosexuality. He thought if you can get... That came up 'cause there was this gay rights day where there was this big... what was the, the club down in the Village that had... it was famous because the police were trying to raid it and the gay people in there... it has an appropriate name.

Levy: I don't remember.

Hall: Good. Glad you don't. (laughs) I'll think of it. Anyway, Bieber's name was in the article and... 'cause evidently, he... he told me one time he was giving a talk and a bunch of gay people started hollering at him until he... So I said, "Shut up!" (laughs) I scared him, you know. So... what's my point of view? I don't know. But yeah, Benny Goodman. Glad I missed that. Sorry, Benny. (laughs)

Levy: (laughs) Anybody else that you'd like to play with or not?

Hall: I don't know. Just about anybody, I guess, that... I'd like to, to do some gigs with Gary Larson sometime. That should be fun. Yeah. I think that, that's about it (inaudible).

Levy: Any compositions in your head? Like I would like to write a ballet or...

Hall: Uh...

Levy: ...anything project-wise that...?

Hall: Not really. I wouldn't mind writing another orchestra piece or finishing the one that didn't get finished.

Levy: Mm-hmm. Your unfinished symphony?

Hall: Unfinished symphony, right. That's good. I don't really know, Deb. I'm just, just kinda taking it a day at a time and a note at a time, and with any luck, moving forward in increments, is that the right term?

Levy: Bar by bar?

Hall: That's good.

Levy: Phrase by phrase?

Hall: Yeah. Or by bar.

Levy: Okay. Just looking to see if there's anybody else that I wanted to ask you about that we didn't get to but... we covered a whole lot of ground.

Hall: Yeah, I know it. I can't believe you had all that. I feel like, feel like I've been spied upon.

Levy: (laughs)

Hall: This is way off the subject but you know that guy got murdered right down the block.

Levy: Yes, you told us.

Hall: Is that...? The guy who had been in a wheelchair and...

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Levy: Yeah, we even talked about Jimmy Raney and...

Hall: Oh, Jimmy, yeah.

Levy: ...we talked about Tal Farlow and...

Hall: Yeah.

Levy: ...Attila. We got a lot of people in there.

Hall: Oh, that's great. I'm glad.

Levy: So I think we're done. Unless there is anything you'd like to add.

Hall: So I can retire now, you mean? (laughs)

Levy: Anything you want to... any message you want to leave the world?

Hall: (laughs)

Levy: (laughs)

Hall: There's gotta be something there. Don't walk in front of a car. I don't know. (laughs) Ah, just get on with it. (laughs)

Levy: Get on with it.

Hall: Don't get nailed to the cross too early. (laughs) Yeah, I always picture... if there... I told you if there were a Jesus, he'd say, "Schmuck, what you doing in my name? I don't mean... Didn't mean this." (laughs)

Levy: Well, thank you for sitting through this.

Hall: You're, you're welcome. (laughs) I hope it... Probably the Smithsonian will fold now, right?

Levy: Well, Ken didn't cut me off so I think we probably got what they wanted.

END