

Going back to the days when I was learning my first songs, there were always other guitar players around. At first these were people I was learning stuff from, because I couldn't find anyone who could play worse than me.

As we got better on our axes—meaning we knew a half dozen cover versions—we began playing live. Sometimes the audience was completely imaginary. Sometimes we found a bassist, a drummer or both. Sometimes we found a keyboard, although if there was more than one guitar it really got in the way. It didn't really matter. Even in the most isolated musical surroundings there was always someone who wanted to get together one on one, with two acoustic guitars.

Some guitar players feel another guitarist just gets in their way, and know what they mean. It is kind of like moving furniture. But have you ever been able to move in anywhere without moving furniture? And if you have to move furniture, isn't it nice to have some help?

That said, I will admit that I was glad when I got a little better on banjo because then I could go to some guitarists I know who really couldn't stand playing with other guitarists and say, listen, the banjo is a completely different instrument! I even tried this in the days when I got my first dobro, but that didn't really fool anyone...

On this recording you will hear electric and acoustic guitars combined, you will hear them combined with banjo, you will hear the classical

'gut string' guitar combined with banjo, you will even hear two banjos at once.

More important than the instrumentation is the players, four of the most unique and talented players I have come across while searching the earth for wild partners.

As I put together this collection of performances with other string players, I realized that each of these players had come in and out of my life over the last 20 years, usually resulting in some pretty choice anecdotes. In the telling I hope I don't stir up any bad memories for Duck, Davey, Loren or Tony.

I first met Duck, although I had also heard of Tony by then. In fact when I put out my first self-released vinyl album, *Solo Acoustic Guitar: Volume 1*

I briefly hooked up with a Canadian indie distributor who offered to see how many copies he could sell out of the trunk of his car.

He was also dealing with ethnic labels such as Ocora, and a new folk and bluegrass label called Rounder. Tony had a few releases already that have become classics. I guess this distributor guy liked his stuff better than mine, because one day he walked into the newspaper where I was still working and plopped a copy of a Trischka album on my desk. "You know what you are trying to do? This guy is already doing it, and he does it better than you." The next thing the guy did was give me back my cartons of unsold LPs.

In the meantime I was starting to get a few solo gigs on the strength of this LP, and at one of them in Toronto a fellow came up and introduced himself. That was Duck Baker.

Gerry Hemingway, Anthony Davis and Jane Ira Bloom. When Henry Kaiser and I did a duo gig there, the audience was Wadada, Loren and Jane. When John Zorn and I did a duo gig there, all the local players must have been out of town and the only people that showed up were Zorn's parents and Loren.

Loren I remember as being a mysterious, but nice guy. Over the years I would hear bits of his music and was amazed at how he had created his own musical universe. More and more people began to talk about how much they liked his recordings. I finally ran into him again at a small but wonderful festival in Atlanta. We were playing the same night, with almost three hours sandwiched between our respective solo sets. One of the groups in between was being avant garde by letting off smoke bombs and hanging slabs of prime rib from the front of the stage. Someone mentioned a studio nearby. Would we want to record a duet? This is where *Lament for Tal* came from. At the time it was recorded it had no title, it was just a really good

and really long piece of music that we had created with no conversation about what it would be or what it was. We both really liked it, and I knew someday one of us would do something with it.

When Duck Baker and I got together for an impromptu encore at a recent concert in Berkeley, it was Duck's suggestion to call it Lament for Sonny, because the great free jazz guitarist Sonny Sharrock had died a few days before. The other morning while reading the paper and thinking about this collection, I noticed an obituary for Ta! Farlow, one of my favorite jazz guitarists and a North Carolina native son, I figured it would be okay with Loren to call this piece Lament for Ta!. I'd like to dedicate this recording to the late Ruth Smith, an ex-neighbor of mine who went to school with Farlow, and because of her drinking problem never could remember how many times she had asked me the same question: "Since you play jazz, have you heard of a guitar picker who goes by the name of Talmadge Farlow?"

It took a while longer to meet Tony Trischka and begin working with him, but ironically I think! have done more playing with Tony than any of the others on this CD. It was Brian Ritchie of the Violent Femmes that hooked me up with Tony. At one point there was supposed to be a Chadbourne and Trischka with the Femmes rhythm section project for Rounder. But this never came off.

I finally had a chance to hire Tony to play at some improv events. I realized that he was a great musician, but he was more comfortable dealing with some kind of structure. This was no problem for me, structure can be anything. Looking back on how difficult it has been to put our schedules together over the years, I find it hard to believe that one year we actually went on tour for a little bit over a week, playing almost every night, staying in motels together, teaching each other new things on our instruments and, best of all, eating donuts after every gig when they were available. (In Kansas City, unfortunately, we looked at piles of donuts behind locked glass doors helplessly; we waved a wad of money at the guy working in there but he wouldn't unlock, frightened because of a rash of street crime.)

The tradition of eating donuts after a gig is one of many important things I learned from Tony. Another is that Krispy Kreme does not count as a donut, a bit of info I pass along with apologies to my pal David at the High Point Krispy Kreme.

Tony and I have continued to work together and have recording plans for the future. I still find myself going back to the collection of soundboard tapes from that tour, because we had managed to put such nice arrangements together and were playing well in front of sympathetic audiences. For this CD it seemed natural to use a couple of the Monk arrangements we did during the tour to offset the free improvised pieces done with the other players.