

Jim Hall and Pat Metheny

Is it jazz, modern jazz, straight-ahead jazz, smooth jazz, classical jazz? Jim and Pat are both musicians who eschew commercial titles or labels. To them it's all music. "I'm still training and the guitar is still a mystery to me," says Jim. "I'm not sure I have what's called *a style*, but I have an approach to music, an attitude to consciously allow myself to grow. I don't like to be boxed in or labeled as having to do with any certain period of jazz music or music in general." According to John Snyder, producer of more than ten Jim Hall recordings including (*Dedications & Inspirations, Dialogues, Textures, Panorama, and By Arrangement*, all on Telarc), "Jim brings out the best in the people he works with, creating relationships that become mutually inspiring. Jim has always got some new idea and I think that's what sets him apart from a lot of other artists; he doesn't stand still in any standard musical context." No matter how you describe **JIM HALL & PAT METHENY**, no matter what radio station airs this disc, no matter which record store bin holds it, Jim's fans, Pat's fans, jazz fans, and all music lovers will enjoy this rare and exceptional collaboration.

Perhaps the greatest difference between the two artists is their approach to recording. Jim prefers live sessions. "Music involves communicating with live people, so having an audience is a big help. You can only react spontaneously one time," explains Jim. Pat, on the other hand, prefers to "use the studio itself as a musical instrument." Pat explains his preference by comparing photographs to books; photos are of the moment while books are written, edited, and rewritten until the author feels the work is done. The best harmonic resolution was to do a little of both: 11 of the 17 tracks were recorded in the studio, but 6 of the longer selections, comprising some 37 minutes of music, were recorded during four live concerts at The Manchester Craftsmen's Guild in Pittsburgh, PA. As expected, the 350-seat auditorium was sold out for all four shows.

The studio sessions were scheduled first. Pat booked time at Right Track Studio in New York City and he and Jim spent three days in July collaborating and experimenting together. Some of the most unusual and daring work to come out of these sessions are the numbered *improvisations*. These spontaneous compositions, ranging in length from 1 to 3 ½ minutes, were conceived without benefit of plan or chart. Sometimes Jim and Pat would just look at each other until one of them started something, and the results are as varied as their moods of the moment: at times acoustic, soft, reverential, melodic, cacophonous, outlandish, humorous, and upbeat.

In addition to the improvisations, the rest of the selections create a nice balance and variety; there are four original compositions by Jim, four original compositions by Pat, two tunes by mutual friends and musical coconspirators, and two standards.

Another source of variety on this CD is Pat's use of three different types of guitars: electric, acoustic, fretless acoustic, and a 42-string guitar. He uses the acoustic on one of his originals, "Farmer's Trust," and the 42-string on another, "Into the Dream." He plays electric guitar on "Ballad Z" and "Don't Forget". Out of these four original selections, only "Farmer's Trust" was recorded live.

Two of Jim's originals are lyrical waltz-time compositions, both recorded during the studio sessions. "Lookin' Up" was written with this project in mind, and "Waiting to Dance" is a 1971 composition originally heard in "Desperate Characters," the movie starring Shirley Maclaine. The other two Jim Hall originals, again, one recent and one not-so-recent, were recorded during the live concerts in August. "Cold Spring," named not for the weather but after a Hudson Valley town, is based on a folk round that some may recognize as "Heigh Ho, Nobody Home." Jim's composition "All Across the City" was the title track of a 1989 quartet album, but it was first recorded in 1972 on an album titled *Two Jims and a Zoot* with fellow guitarist Jimmy Raney and saxophonist Zoot Sims, backed by drummer Osie Johnson and bassist Steve Swallow.

The jazz world is at once both large and small. Although it stretches around the world, everybody knows everybody, so it is no surprise that Steve Swallow is a friend and colleague of both Jim's and Pat's. Steve and Jim had worked together with Art Farmer in the early 1970s and Pat and Steve were both with Gary Burton just a few short years later. Steve's composition, "Falling Grace," is one of the tunes composed by a friend. The other coconspirator's tune, Atila Zoller's "The Birds and the Bees," was selected as a fitting tribute to the composer—the man who had brought them together so many years ago who had just recently died.

Rounding out the selections on this disc are the two standards, both recorded live. Again Pat makes use of the acoustic guitar, strumming out a thick and resonant sound on "Summertime" while their treatment of "All The Things You Are" is a study in linear counterpoint; a tour de force in simultaneous dual line improvisation complete with rhythmic seasoning.

Sound unheard, some might find it hard to imagine Jim Hall and Pat Metheny playing together, sort of like picturing a painting done jointly by Pablo Picasso and Leonardo Da Vinci; or a duet sung by Ella Fitzgerald and Luciano Pavarotti. Jim and Pat may indeed be very different from one another in background, age, musical temperament, or even style (whatever that is), but they are both dedicated musicians, masters of their crafts, and above all, lovers of music who continue to strive, to grow, and to share their creations with new audiences.

It was almost thirty years ago that Jim and Pat first met. The Jim Hall-Ron Carter duo was in residence at The Guitar, an Tenth Avenue club in New York City. Fellow jazz guitarist Atilla Zoller stopped in to listen, and he had a new young guitarist in tow. The kid's name was Pat Metheny, he was all of 15 years old, still wearing braces, and it was his first time outside of Missouri. "I was really green coming from Lees Summit, Missouri. I'd never been anywhere and. I didn't know anything about anything," remembers Pat. "That week Attila took me to hear Bill Evans who was playing down at the Village Gate and we heard Freddie Hubbard several nights up at the Club Baron, but every night he took me around to hear Jim because that's the thing that I really wanted to hear."

"Within a day or two of expressing any interest in the two words '*jazz guitar*,' you will come across Jim Hall," explains Pat. "He is in many ways the father of modern jazz guitar. To me, he's the guy who invented a conception that has allowed the guitar to function in a lot of musical situations that just weren't thought of as a possibility prior to his emergence as a player. He reinvented what the guitar could be as a jazz instrument."

Jim's influence is felt by many of the younger generation of guitar players: Pat, Mick Goodrick, John Scofield, Bill Frisell, and John Abercrombie, to name a few. Bill Frisell (featured on two tracks of the 1995 Telarc recording, *Dialogues*) comments that while there may be generational differences in the music that influences different artists, "there is no generation gap with Jim because he hears the spirit of the music."

"It's not about the guitar, it's about music which is the thing you would say about any great musician," explains Pat. "Jim transcends the instrument. The notes that he plays, if they were played by any other player on any other instrument, would have the same kind of value and the same kind of impact and effect. And that is, to me, the quality that separates someone who's an

important musician from somebody who's just a really good player on their instrument. The meaning behind the notes is what speaks to people. It's not necessarily the sound or the technique of it, it's more the spirit of it and that's the thing that Jim is about for me."

Of course Jim did not spring fully formed into his own musical being; he, too, had his influences. Jim was a teenager when he first heard Charlie Christian's solo on a Benny Goodman recording of a tune called Solo Flight. "Charlie Christian literally changed my life. He had a combination of musicality and intelligence that is really rare. I wasn't even sure what it was that he was doing, but I knew that I wanted to be able to do that." Another guitarist, Django Reinhardt was also a major influence. "It seemed like he took wild chances with music. He added another dimension to my concept of what it meant to play the guitar."

But not all of Jim's influences come from the past; in fact, very few. Jim keeps his ears trained on the newcomers and the innovators, no matter what their age or influences. "Music is done by people of all kinds of backgrounds. Pat is a guy who stretches things out. He has incredible facility and imagination. I see music as a family and it doesn't surprise me that we play it together."

Pat, along with Mick Goodrick, Pete Bernstein, John Scofield, and others were all on hand to play with Jim at the Jim Hall Invitational, a concert at Town Hall in 1989. That was the first time that Jim and Pat played together in public. "Pat is an incredible player and can play lines through any kind of chord changes," says Jim. "His focus is more detailed and technical than mine, and he has a ferocious work ethic, he's always prepared."

A few years later, Jim and Pat played four duet concerts in France. They were familiar with a few of each other's compositions and they worked out a couple of signals, but basically they went out with very little rehearsal and a lot of faith; they decided to trust each other and see what happens. They liked it, and so did the audiences. Jim and Pat began talking about recording, but logistics, tour schedules, and other projects conspired against them. "When are we going to record?" became a frequent refrain in a conversation that lasted almost five years...until last summer. Now it's here: at the stores, on the air, and in your ears.

— Devra Hall