

## BARNEY KESSEL INTERVIEW.

During Barney Kessel's recent visit to Perth, he was kind enough to grant Ian MacGregor a very interesting and informative interview.

I.M. First of all welcome to Perth Barney, it's great to see you here at last. You started as a professional musician in 1942 and this year celebrate 50 years in the business. Could you tell us how you got started and how soon you began playing the electric guitar?

B.K. Well I started at the age of twelve. I was a young child selling newspapers on the corner of the street. I looked behind me from where I was standing and there was a pawnshop. This was 1935 and they were selling guitars there and they had a guitar in the window with a two coloured tassels cord, red and yellow interwoven to tie round the guitar to help you keep it up and a book entitled how to play the guitar in five minutes. Those three things the guitar, the cord and the book were selling for one dollar and I decided I wanted it. So I bought the guitar, took it home and strummed a few open strings and tried to put my fingers on it and then sort of gave up and forgot about it and put it in a closet where there were brooms and mops. Then one day, after a week or so, my mother brought it out and held it as though it was a dead rat by the tail and said: "This is taking up a lot of room in the closet, either learn to play it or lets get rid of it.". When I saw it then it ocured to me that I had forgotten all about it, its just like a child having seen a toy and played with it on Xmas morning then they put it away and forget all about it. When I saw it for the second time I really was enthused about it all the more and it just happened that a friend of mine who I used to ride bicycles with during hours after school unknown to me also had a guitar. He said to me: "Perhaps you would like to take some lessons?", and he told me about a place where he was studying guitar and that I could take free lessons that the Federal Government of the United States was paying for and so I certainly was interested especially as school was just getting out and I had a whole summer free. I enrolled in this school and I took the only lessons that I have ever taken on the guitar.

When I was twelve, I studied for three months. Then, it was 6 days a week for 3 months except on Sundays and that was the basis of my learning. It was a class of about 35 with 5 girls and the rest boys, and I do believe I was in the bottom 5 of the class. I was the only one who in trying to make some chords made my fingers bleed. No-one elses fingers did bleed. I was very slow in studying and learning how to read.

After about one and a half years I discovered jazz. A friend of mine at school had a large collection of 78r.p.m. records, and I became aware of jazz. Also I was working at the theatre as a ticket taker, usher and popcorn seller.

In those days movies played for a week and so I would hear all the musical songs for a week. I heard all the Fred Astaire songs and all the Bing Crosby songs then. I heard them many, many times and learned them from being around them. So many songs that are called standards today made a very indelible impression on me from the sheer repetition of hearing them.

Then at the age of 13 and a half years, I was becoming aware of jazz and getting interested in it. I started working with a local band in my home town because there weren't many people playing the guitar and got interested in the electric guitar, and started playing it very quickly. I then began playing with a 14 piece all black band playing jazz music. So I played with a white band and a black band and become more interested in jazz. Many people in the band had known or worked with Charlie Christian and they told me a lot about him and that's how I started.

I.M. Were you self taught?

B.K. Yes and I never did have any more lessons on the guitar, but when I moved to Los Angeles I went there with the idea of both studying the guitar and hoping that if I got good enough I would not only find a place to learn but to work. I found very few guitarists there that were forthgiving to teach me. They kind of hid their secrets, they kept to themselves. It was not a time when you could buy videos or any kind of aids. There were a few books but you had to pry it open yourself and they were very reluctant to share it with me, and most of them told me to get out of the music business, "There's no future in it."

So I didn't study guitar from anyone any more, although I wanted too, but I did begin and I discovered that what I wanted to do was to study music itself without the guitar. I did study arranging,



orchestration techniques for movie writing, psychological aspects of the kind of music you put behind a certain scene in a movie, and also conducting. So these helped me very much to increase the dimension of my music.

I.M. Where you grew up in Muskogee, Oklahoma was there much of a Jazz scene?

B.K. Yes there was. There were many black musicians who had migrated from Kansas City. This was a very live spot in the thirties. It was one of the successes to be in a Jazz centre after New Orleans. There was New Orleans, there was Chicago, there was New York and Kansas City was one of them. That's where Count Basie came from and that's where Benny Moten's Band and Lester Young came from. That's where the action was in the Swing era. Now the early era was New Orleans where Louis Armstrong began and later it shifted to Kansas City and that's when it was really Swing, where it was really grooving. People played with great swing and people danced to it. Many of those black musicians migrated to Muskogee, Oklahoma.

To give you an example, when I was living there the population of Muskogee was 35,000, and yet out of those 35,000 people, if you examine Jazz encyclopaedias, you will see there are probably 12 people who had international reputations from Muskogee. That's 12 people in the world with international Jazz reputations from a town that small and then there were white musicians who played in society bands. They were playing for dances and tea parties and were interested in Jazz so it was a very healthy climate.

I.M. Charlie Christian was one of your early influences when you started and I believe you spent a few days with him during one of his visits back to Oklahoma. Could you describe this briefly?

B.K. Yes I did spend a few days with him and we jammed together and he brought some other musicians with him. He was on a brief respite from the Benny Goodman Band. Benny Goodman had an attack of sciatica and had temporarily disbanded and Charlie Christian had left and gone back to Oklahoma City. I was playing in Oklahoma City going to high school and playing with the college band, some one working in the club told Charlie Christian that there was a white boy down there playing the guitar and he went down and listened to me and we asked him to sit in and he sat and played my guitar with the big band and later we went out after hours. We talked a lot and was there in the city for three days and we spent all of this time together playing and although he was not a teacher and he didn't instruct me, I asked him many different questions about things and sort of drew my own conclusions. I was very gratified that in those 3 days he turned around and said I'm going to tell Benny Goodman about you. I was 16 at the time.

I.M. What was the first band you played with professionally?

B.K. Well the first band of any reputation and other than locally or even regionally would be a band that was under the name of Chico Marx of the Marx Brothers, which in reality was a very fine band and the band was actually formed to accompany Chico Marx for stage shows that we would do so that he would have consistent backing all the time for the same people and be able to count on the music being a certain quality. I was the youngest member of the band along with Mel Torme, we were in that band together. The musical director of that band, because Chico had nothing to do with it, was Ben Pollack. Ben Pollack for those who are Jazz fans, was a band leader of the 1920's, although who never really found success himself, his band contained some of the best Jazz musicians of that day and most of them who worked with Ben Pollack did go on and have very successful bands, people like Jack Teagarden and Glen Miller, Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey. Ben Pollack had Benny Goodman when he was 14 years old and in short pants.

I.M. What other big bands did you play with and did you get the chance to play many solos?

B.K. Yes I played solos in all the bands. For one thing electric guitar was a novelty and they liked the way that I played and I was enthused about playing, I played not only rhythm in the orchestra and not only played solo but the arrangers would write things for me to play with the other musicians so that I would play parts in the orchestra and I was of course travelling. I worked with many bands in Hollywood who would record and leave, but as far as being on the road, I was on the road with and under exclusive contract with Artie Shaw for one year where you get paid whether you play or not just



like ball players you know. So I was with Artie Shaw, I was with Benny Goodman three different times, I was with Charlie Barnet four times, I was with a band headed by the man who was the lead alto player for Glen Miller who when on to have his own band Hal McIntyre. I think those are the principle bands.

I.M. When you left the big bands and settled in Los Angeles and did a lot of studio work, did you enjoy the change?

B.K. Yes I did, to me it seemed to be a step upward, not only for me but for most musicians. They could say I'm leaving the road and I'm going to Hollywood and I'm doing motion picture work or I'm working with Bing Crosby or I'm working with Dinah Shore. It seemed to be a progressing step, an evolutionary step rather than continuing on the road at that time. Also it required a different kind of musical discipline, you had to have other skills than the dance musician had. I found myself in a situation where even though I didn't know some of those skills because I hadn't had that sort of experience. I was tolerated as were many dance musicians for what we could do, it took a little time for us to learn some of the other things, but we were tolerated because we had great spirit, we had great love of the music and great presence. It's sort of like they took us from what we were and enjoyed that and looked the other way for the things that experience had not brought to us. Most of us went ahead to learn these skills, how to follow a conductor, how to interpret music that wasn't Jazz, how to play a Viennese Waltz, how to play something in a picture scene that had nothing to do with your previous experience. It was fun and I worked with great, great musicians, orchestrators and conductors and working with string players who had worked with Toscanini, Stowkowski and just a great body of musicians who had come from various cities in the United States as well as capitals all over the world to be in Hollywood and I was there for 35 years during one of the three golden ages of the city.

I.M. You made your first records under your own name around the mid to late forties for Atomic Records, did you record much under your own name before you joined Contemporary?

B.K. No I didn't, under my own name. The Atomic Records were the first ones that I made, and I think I did about four sides for Norman Granz which later came out in an album that he had put together that had four sides from Oscar Moore and four sides from Tal Farlow and four from myself. Do You remember that?

I.M. "Swing Guitars."

B.K. Yes, and that was the first explorations in trying to work without piano. but I did have another guitar, it was Jimmy Wyble and I had Shelly Manne at that time, but I did move away from the idea of piano at the time searching, looking for something. I made those sides for Norman Granz before I made anything for Contemporary.

I.M. It was during your time in the studios you made those fine records with Charlie Parker, could you describe the experience?

B.K. When I played with Charlie Parker, one of the things that was very prevalent in his playing at that time, was they really played at very fast tempos and they genuinely played fast instead of the way it is today where they infer playing fast where they give the illusion of playing fast, or they play fast for a few minutes or its a psuedo-illusive type of thing. But then they stayed on it and they really played fast, and I must say looking back as objectively as I can, you know we all have different skills, we all have things where we have strengths and weaknesses. I would say in my earlier years particularly, I was not very comfortable with fast tempos. I sought at the very best to be able to play and kind of give a decent account of myself by just getting through it. It was not something I excelled in and not something I felt comfortable with and yet an awful lot of bebop songs were very fast. Since that time I've learned to work with that and also in general the music has come down a bit, so both of those things have made it a lot better.

The other thing was I grew up principally as a swing guitar player and the move into the language of bebop is not a change everyone has made gracefully. Not everyone has done it, some people swing within bebop, they don't grasp it and many great musicians never made to switch, even though they desired to do it, some people with great capabilities, it was beyond them and other people didn't



desire to do that. I enjoyed mostly playing with Charlie Parker after hours in clubs where there was no leader. When we got into the studio, he had some of these things written down, they were written in pencil, they were written on very poor paper shining on one part that I had, shined on my music in such a way that you could absolutely not see anything written on the page, and there was a kind of uneasiness in the production. The producer was anxious to get four sides down in 3 hours and was going more for quantity than quality, like let's get through it, let's do it, and it really required much more than the time we gave it, and being young and the ego involved, things that are no longer a part of the make-up, wanting to impress wanting to please and not being all that sure, and really in bebop which was not an unfamiliar context to me, but a new one, because most of my experience had been swing and I had now moved in and I was new in it, but it was a lot of fun, it was great and I had no idea that at this time, I had travelled the world and there were a great many people that don't understand what I do say I guess he must be good or he wouldn't have been with Charlie Parker. I never dreamed at the time that just relationships with other people would give me validity today instead of my own music. This is the case when people really don't know. They figure I'm listening to this man, I don't know what he's doing, I don't know if it's any good but gosh he's worked with Billie Holiday and he's worked with Charlie Parker. I guess he's good, but I really deeply don't know. But I know they are good so I guess he's supposed to be good too. This is called credibility through association!

I.M. It was round this time you were comping a lot more and getting away from the 4 to the bar style?

B.K. It seemed to me that as a musician, indeed as anything whether its making music, where it's picking the right clothing from your wardrobe, or where it's picking the right words to say, it seems to me when you take it away from judgemental its neither good or bad but whether it's appropriate. I don't think comping is any better than 4 to the bar or strumming it like a ukelele, but I think it gets beyond which is the best, but rather any sensitive musician I think serves all of the music better if they think here I am sitting with a lot of resources at my command, what can I do at this time that is appropriate for the occasion and it seems that comping for bebop was right and that when you play 4 to the bar, the Freddy Green type it wasn't the right kind of beat for that. The Freddy Green 4 to the bar was better for swing music, Riff music the music of Count Basie, but for this it was better to comp.

I.M. In the last six months, some of our local guitarists have formed the W.A. Jazz Guitar Ensemble, but I think you were the first to record a five guitar Jazz album, "Five Guitars In Flight" with Arv Garrison, Irving Ashby, Tony Razzi, and Gene Sergeant?

B.K. Yes that's right, however it really wasn't an album, I think it was just two records, two pieces and someone had the idea of experimenting with the guitars then to write single lines in the same way as saxaphones. Now it's a very common thing to do, but then it was an exciting concept and new at that time, we didn't have a bass guitar and so we did it all with normal guitars, one of the guitars tuned down just a little bit just to accomodate that. Later like that were done with 4 guitars and 6 string guitar that was an octave lower. In the early days in the forties, most guitar players were not very accomplished readers and even simple phases like that took quite a while to learn. It took a lot of time to get in tune with each other, it took a lot of time to phase together to make sure that we were picking all at the same time and slurring at the same time. Things that were not really a part of a guitar players experience of playing with other guitar players and working out the phasing and where do you play legato and where do you play staccato, so it took far longer to make it sound smoother and get a blend and for the engineer also to pick up all of the parts, but it was fun and it was a great experience and I really felt good at the time, one of the things was the chords mostly were clusters where they were very dissonant but I mean't that they were very much like the Four Brothers sound with Woody Herman the saxes, and it was a kick I remember, it sounded warm and I remember as a kick to hear the guitars together making chords they ordinarily don't make separately.

I.M. You have played with two of the most technically accomplished pianists in Jazz, Art Tatum and Oscar Peterson, did you find it difficult fitting in them?

B.K. I did not find it difficult fitting in with them, I found it difficult for them to fit in with me, because my desire was to consciously to fit in with them. When I played with Art Tatum I realised that it was his record and what I wanted to do was to contribute without being obtrusive and the same with Oscar Peterson. When I worked with him I was working for him, I was paid by him, I was there to help



him tell his story, so again it goes back to the same thing, what can I draw on that is appropriate to help showcase Oscar Peterson and the Trio, so I sought to do what I thought would be the right thing in order to enhance what he was doing, and to enhance the values that he was exhibiting.

I.M. When you first travelled abroad with Jazz at the Philharmonic in 1952 you met Django Reinhardt and I believe his family presented you with one of his guitars. Do you still have it?

B.K. Yes I do, and I treasure it regarding his talent and what he has meant to the world of guitar and music, for his uniqueness as a musician, but even more so things that are hardly ever touched on the fact that he had the courage to go ahead and play after he lost the use of two of his fingers and continue and actually became a much better guitarist without the use of them he had previously. It is a testament to the human courage. It is amazing what a human being can do rising out of ashes to become a phoenix, to become something. I think of him and I think of Glen Cunningham a man whose legs were burned and he was told he would never walk and who gradually moved from a wheelchair to crutches and from crutches to canes and from canes to one cane and started walking and walking and walking and then beginning to run and run and run and finally won the Olympics as the world's fastest runner, in 1936 I believe. That story along with Django Reinhardt, I mean beyond what he did as a guitarist, the fact that this human could rise to do what he did, he wouldn't have to play one note for me, so it mean't a lot, it mean't for what he stood for and also I personally treasure and respect highly, artistic contribution from people I regard as one of a kind.

I.M. Although you have basically used the same guitar since the mid forties, do you have a large guitar collection?

B.K. Not as large now as I used to have, I had 25 guitars at one time, not because I was an avid collector, rather because I worked in Hollywood and worked in so many different types of musical assignments that there was no one all purpose guitar. I looked for an all purpose guitar and while there were some that would satisfy many occasions it was not as good in any of those occasions as one that was specifically right for it, so it wasn't as convenient to have as many guitars. It wasn't convenient to carry them around. When you think about a situation you say it really calls for this kind of guitar, then there was no question for me, that I had to have the right instrument, so at one point I had up to 25 guitars only for that I am not by nature a guitar collector. But now I have fewer guitars, but I only use one.

I.M. The Pollwinners Albums you made with Ray Brown and Shelly Manne in the mid fifties were a new departure for you, being one of the first albums with just guitar, bass and drums. Were you aware you were starting a new trend?

B.K. Well I thought I was, but it wasn't with the idea of starting a new trend, it's just that I had been playing with a lot of piano players who were very, very good and I couldn't get them to play reserved and to play in a subordinate capacity because it's very difficult to have phenomenal technique and to curb it, and hold it back. It's almost like a man with great big muscles who wants to wear a shirt that looks like he's breaking through it, he doesn't want to be in a very large overly sized overcoat, and so I even began to write accompaniments for the piano that were very sparse and I got many compliments of how judiciously the piano player backed me up, how very economical they were. They were economical because I wrote that economy into the part, but I always have loved chords as a part of the guitar I've thought that along with the lines that one can play like a tenor sax or a trumpet we had the unusual advantage of being a miniature orchestra. Berlioz said that the guitar is a miniature orchestra, Segovia has said it and I've always felt that it is a miniature orchestra and today I play it orchestrally, I think of it as an orchestra in different colours, and I found out that when I didn't use the piano, and I love the piano and I love piano players and if you go back and listen through all the albums I did, there are generous helpings of piano, it's not as though I stopped at one time, the last two albums I did have piano in abundance, but it's rather that I found that the chords that I played became very vital and very clear and had a great meaning when it was not against the background of piano, and indeed almost any other chordal instrument, I brought it out more, it made it more prominent and I did think about how it's very much like when you take a pearl and you put it in a case that black velvet, the background of the black velvet against the pearl, it shows off the pearl better than if you just put it in some white paper, and so if you think about what is behind you, the chords all of a sudden loomed



into prominence, and that's what I wanted and I felt freer, also when I work without a piano I don't feel compelled to get locked into certain chord changes, I feel very flexible, because as long as I have the bass player moving and playing fundamental things, it offers me the great many possibilities to change and change in a way where there aren't any clashes and even if I worked with a piano player who said Mr Kessel I will go with you and play what want, I say well that all very well, but what I want today may not be what I want tomorrow.

I.M. Where you surprised to have a hit record with Julie London on "Cry Me A River" at the height of the late fifties rock and roll explosion?

B.K. Yes I was surprised, I felt at the time that particularly that song on the album had a particular unique appeal, but I have felt other things that I have done in the past would be something that the public would like, or it could be a hit, it sounded like a hit and I've been wrong at times. There were times when I did something for someone else where I really didn't thing too much of it or we put it on the other side of the record because we thought that the 'A' side would be important and it ended up that this throwaway thing on the back was the important record. Which shows that no one really knows what the public at any given time. But I did feel that it would be a hit, I think it had a particular charm, it certainly had an intimacy, it had the be intimate because there were only two people in the orchestra, bass and guitar, and a very intimate voice and it was low key, it wasn't although everybody was screaming or superchops or anything like that it was a very intimate performance and I think coming at a time where most of what was going on was very loud and bizarre and overlays of overlays and overdubs that the difference had even greater significance.

I.M. In 1973, you formed the Great Guitars with Herb Ellis and Charlie Byrd during an Australian tour, could you tell me how this came about?

B.K. Well Ian, like many things I have felt that throughout my life I have had plans to do certain things but when I look back I almost have to laugh that many of the plans that I formulated never happened and some of the things that turned out very well were sort of my accident, by chance very briefly how this happened is that one day in Hollywood I got a call from Kim Bonyathan of Adelaide and he told me he was bringing the Charlie Byrd Trio to Australia for a tour and that he had had him here before and he wanted to bring him back again and he wanted a two hour concert and he didn't want Charlie Byrd to play for two hours, he wanted him to play for one hour and Kim Bonyathan asked me if I would be at all interested playing for one hour before Charlie Byrd and would I if I were at all interested select one other guitar player to play with me so the two of us as a duo could play for the first hour of this presentation and we would do this as a tour straight through Australia doing it this way, and I agreed to do it and the first person I thought of both in terms of someone who would be musically compatible and also as a person to be compatible because your'e going to be around that person a lot and I thought of Herb Ellis, and Kim Bonyathan also asked me, he said if you can it would be helpful if he came from California rather than New York since its a long way and we would just spare ourselves the airfare, but if you can't find somebody, get somebody from wherever it is, so again there was the thought of Herb Ellis. So I asked Herb. He was interested, we got together, we worked out some things, we had some things to do as a duo and we went to Australia. We met Charlie Byrd at the airport in Los Angeles, he was coming from Washington D.C., we all got together, I had never really met Charlie Byrd. Herb had met him and even made an album with him at one point for Columbia ("Guitar, Guitar" - CBS 9130). We all got together, had a good time, enjoyed and for a few dates we did it just the way we had planned to do it. Then at one time Herb said to me, Barney if we were able to get permission from Charlie Byrd to use his bass player and drummer maybe for our last two songs, would you object to that or would that be OK with you. I said that would be fine, but I really don't know if he would do it, we can ask him. Charlie said it would be OK. So then we started where Herb and I played the first hour, but maybe the last two tunes we would have the bass player and drummer comeout and join us. Then there would be an intermission and Charlie Byrd would come out and he'd finish it up. We did 10 or 12 concerts, but moving through the middle part of it either Kim Bonyathan expressed a thought or we got feedback from the public. It is possible that the very last song that you do all of you could play together, and we said yes we would do that and they said could you do an encore. So we were doing two, so we did that for a while and that pretty much the way it stayed. But when the tour was over we realised that we were compatible. We realised that the public really did like it when we were all together, and when that tour was over we decided to try to do something where we all worked



together, but we really hadn't worked that way except just to jam, to play a couple of songs. When we went back we spoke with Charlie Byrd's manager and he expressed interest in doing something and that's where we really started to do things where we all played together and Herb says humourously "You know when Kim Bonyathan expressed the thought that what he would like to call it was the "Great Guitars". It's interesting that none of us objected to the title!

I.M. In the 70's and the 80's you made many fine albums for Concord, among my favourites are "Soaring" and "Barney Plays Kessel", the latter containing your own compositions. Do you have a favourite album of your own?

B.K. No I don't, I liked each one of them. You know it's like the way a parent feels about their children, they love each one for different reasons, or it's when you have travelled the world and you can honestly say you love London, Paris, Salzburg, Vienna and you like them in different ways, they aren't the same and you like them for their differences. I don't look back at something I did 20 years ago and be critical anymore than I would look at the newspaper 20 years old and find fault today because it's not today, it was then and it was right for then. What's interesting is I looked back at some of the things and I've been happy with most that I done. What's amazing is like the first album I did for Contemporary, I played "Tenderly" and at the time I thought it was very smooth and very lyrical. I thought that I moved from one chord to another in a very legato and graceful manner. On hearing it 10 years later, it seemed almost like a prehistoric man fumbling with a ukelele, because my concept of what smooth sounded like had changed. By hearing more and by grasping more as to what really is smooth movement, it seemed to be rather sticky and rather clumsy although there were no wrong chords and it was not performed without some expertise. When I did it, it seemed more graceful than it does now.

I.M. Do you have any plans to make any new albums?

B.K. I always have plans to make new albums, but it depends on finding the right business deal, it depends on finding the right company, the right situation, the right money, the freedom to do certain things, to be sure that the company has good distribution, that they are honest, that I can make records that I'm very proud of, that I can really express myself and what it is that I'm feeling, and where they will go along with me, that I will do the best I can, I put the money second, I want to put out something that I feel is truly honest and expresses where I am right now. I want each record to be a documentation of where I am. I don't want to work from the standpoint of putting money first and get some kind of a premise and put out some record and some photograph of myself that's in a fake kind of marketing pose and get a group called the Purple Penguin or the Pregnant Unicorn and do something that I really don't believe in. When I find the right situation, I will make another record.

I.M. Is there anyone you would have liked to record with and didn't get a chance.

B.K. I'm sure there are both in terms of instrumentalists, arrangers, vocalists, I wished that the opportunity had presented itself at some time to have made an album of beautiful ballads arranged by Robert Farnon, I wish that I'd had that opportunity. I wished that I could have been part of a group like some wonderful string quartet where they play their music but I'm improvising through it. I'm sure there's been some singers throughout time and musician, I can't really think. I wish that I had recorded with Bobby Hackett, Bunny Berigan, people from different eras. I wish I'd made a lot of swing records with Jack Teagarden, so I'm sure there are people, I would have liked to make records with Erroll Garner, but I'm grateful for the one's that I've worked with.

I.M. I don't think you've missed too many people out!

B.K. No I don't think so.

I.M. Lastly, what strings and amplifier do you use?

B.K. Well I must tell you I generally don't talk about equipment, there's any number of reasons for that, but one is we live in a capitalistic society and being a professional, I don't like to further any products that I pay for because I'm paying for it like anyone else. If I were paid for being a spokesman for



something I would do it.

I.M. Can you tell me the guage of your strings?

B.K. Yes I can do that, I can even tell you the strings that I use at this time. I use flat wound strings and at the present time, I use strings put out by a company called G.H.S. and the guages that I use from 14,18,26,36,46,58 they are very low on the fingerboard only because I want to be able when I play to sustain without using a Les Paul bridge. Just a wooden bridge and I want them to sustain when I want them to sustain, I am able to play them higher and were I play them higher, I have the strength to do it. Were I to play them higher they would have a more percussive snap to it, but at the same time, I would not be able to sustain them for the balance and I have chosen to do it this way. Everything is a compromise, if you set your instrument up one way your going to be able to do one thing, if you set it another way, you do another thing. It's up to each person to decide what is the fine balance for what your trying to do. There is no perfect solution for everything. Thats the idea behind it. Now I do use a Walter Woods amplifier, I've used it for 14 years and never had one problem with it. I am able to change it from 120 or 110 voltage for the United States to the 240v for Great Britain and Australia by just the flick of a little button. Wherever I go, it's in my contract that they supply me with speakers or an amplifier which I can disconnect the amplifier and use the speakers, and I had very good luck with it, it's particularly compatible with my guitar, and I would say that in the last 14 years, my amplifier problem has been solved. I carry it with me, it weighs about 12 pounds, very light, I've never had one problem, I usually get the same sound wherever I go, it doesn't matter whether it's Africa or Chicago, it sounds the same, the only thing I have to watch, I try to get real heavy duty 12" speakers. I prefer to work with what is called Electovoice speakers or S.R.O. which I understand are the same. It's the same speakers but it has two different names, and Electovoice is also interestingly enough the company that supplies sound systems for most of the theatres in America and I found that it works. A J.B.L. works very fine too, a Jensen would work, a Utah would work, but any straightforward heavy duty, I do not use tweeters or woofers or anything that accentuates the highs and that's about it.

I.M. Well thank you very much Barney for giving us your time and we wish you well on the rest of your Australian tour.

B.K. I must say to any of those people out there who are interested in Jazz guitar or the music, I think that the main reason people get involved with music at any age in any kind of music at first is to have fun with a believable hope that they will have fun. I hope that if you do get involved in music, that you will always make that your no.1 incentive and never lose sight of it along the way. It continues to be fun for me or else I wouldn't be in it.

10 FEB. 1992  
Ian MacGregor

