

keeps your reading up, and forces you to listen to other points of view and be aware of what's going on.

There are amazing pop things happening. I can't believe how many people think Louis Johnson invented the stamping, popping bass sound. They forget about all those early Sly records when Larry Graham was doing it. I was exposed to that a while ago through Will Lee, who told me I had to hear Graham.

I like the pressure of doing jingles for television. You have an hour and somebody's in there watching their clock and their budget. You're handed the piece of music and within a take or two it's gotta be perfect. It's also like the social part of high school; I enjoy running into Steve Gadd, and Will and Grolnick and Pat Rebbilot, and all the others, having a cup of coffee afterwards and talking about it. How you hated the jingle, how's your record going? I'll never forget the first time I was in New York and a friend of my father's took me into a studio where they were doing a commercial. There were Mel Lewis, Richard Davis, Mike Mainieri, Jimmy Raney and Roland Hanna. I didn't realize it then, but I do now: unless you are very lucky, you can't make a living as the evolved jazz musician.

Smith: Are those sessions practice for you or do you practice outside of that?

Khan: I practice completely outside of them. The only practice those sessions afford me is possibly reading practice. I practice scales and arpeggios. If I didn't already know what I sounded like, I would even plug it in. But as it is, I just finger.

Smith: Do you prefer a pick or fingers?

Khan: I do things with my fingers but I am primarily a plectrum player. I can't do what Wes does. George (Benson) plays well with his fingers.

Smith: And the guitarist with Dizzy Gillespie, Rodney Jones.

Khan: Yeah, I heard him. You know how few people know that George is the guitarist on his own records? They listen, and like the vocals, and ask who the guitar player is. It's so wonderful to see it happen to him because he's such an amazing guitar player. He wrote one of the forewords of my book. [Ed.: As did Larry Coryell, Pat Martino, and Jim Hall.]

Smith: What about the *Folio*?

Khan: It was a warm experience talking to so many guitarists who loved Wes. All of the guys who did the forewords loved his playing. I remember reading once that Jim Hall spent a whole day in San Francisco trying to catch Wes' thumb in a car door. Things like that made working on the book fun. You could see from Wes' smile the joy he radiated with his playing. I don't know too many guys with that kind of smile these days. And it was rough on him. He wouldn't fly; he would drive to gigs. I sometimes wish that I knew then what I know now about playing and could have spent more time doing it ten years ago.

Smith: When did you begin playing acoustic guitar?

Khan: When I came to New York in '70 I had my Gibson Super 400 fat jazz guitar and my David Russell Young acoustic and that's it. I didn't own a solid body then. You always use an acoustic guitar when you do session work. But it was when I started doing the duets with Larry that I was forced to use it due to the nature of the whole thing. That was '75-76. I think the album was called *Two For*

The Road, even though there's a Herb Ellis/Joe Pass album by the same title.

Smith: Is there a difference between acoustic and electric?

Khan: You develop little characteristics because the instrument feels differently, and the sound is different. I don't think McLaughlin, Coryell, DiMeola and I approach the instrument in a completely different way. John has had the instrument bevelled like an Indian instrument for bending notes. Perhaps that's changed his approach, but I don't think it's all that different.

Smith: Talk about the electrification of acoustic instruments such as is done by Earl Klugh and Charlie Byrd.

Khan: You almost have to electrify to play in front of a set of drums—it's very hard to hear a nylon string guitar otherwise. You can put a Barcus-Berry on so you can hear yourself. Now some of us play steel strings. Essentially, they are folk guitars used with steel. Earl's forte is on nylon strings, more of a classical or Brazilian approach, like Byrd. It's totally finger style playing, not plectrum. When you play with all your fingers you control the notes within the chord a little better. With a pick you're going to cross all the strings, so if you want to bring out one note more than another it can be a little more difficult.

Smith: There are a number of different styles of acoustic guitar playing. Care to run them down for us?

Khan: There's a variety of styles in c&w and bluegrass. I'm no expert on any of those things. There's Doc Watson who plays with a pick, and Chet Atkins who will put on finger picks sometimes, like the dobro players. Classical and Brazilian styles are without a pick and use a multi-finger approach with both hands. What you do with either hand largely depends on the piece. The right hand is playing the single notes, or it's arpeggiating a chordal passage. Brazilian is usually accompanying yourself while you sing, or playing the melody in chords.

Folk guitar playing, like Fred Hellerman, Pete Seeger, Theodore Bikel, is passed down orally. Tradition. Sitting in a living room with a friend and watching or asking how something is done. There's a lot more tablature of that because of magazines like *Guitar Player*. It's got its own language; you don't have to write everything out.

While I listen to all those guys, they are not what I'm into now. Acoustically, the steel string six-string as I played on Maynard Ferguson's *New Vintage* album is what I prefer. On that album on the tune *El Vuelo* I even used an electric 12-string in one channel and overdubbed an acoustic six-string in the other. On *Oasis* I used my acoustic and electric, tuning the low E string down to D to effect more bottom.

Smith: What does Bucky Pizzarelli do with his seventh string?

Khan: I think he tunes it down to C. That's another thing. Bucky's amazing. I think he has the rest of the guitar tuned normally and just uses the additional string as a bass. There's a man by the name of Ralph Patt who completely retuned the whole instrument and relearned it. Once you change the tuning of the instrument you might just as well have never played the guitar. He tuned the whole instrument in fourths. Eventually, he drove himself crazy [joking].

Smith: What did Lobue do to your instrument pickup-wise?

Lobue '75-'76?

Khan: Charles helped me get my sound straightened away. I knew what I wanted to sound like; I just wasn't getting it. This was before the DiMarzio craze, the hot pickups. Before that old was best: "Gibson pickups from the '50s were better than Gibson pickups now." A lot of guys started taking apart pickups, rewinding them, and making them louder by the number of wrappings of coil around the magnet. Lobue, who owned a repair shop in Greenwich Village, had three workers in the shop who were instrumentalists. All types got their axes fixed there, rock and jazz alike. I won't name any because I'll leave out too many. Charles and Richard Fleigler made the pickup that's in the guitar I use all the time. I just had an electronic copy of the guitar made by Steve Bleucher at DiMarzio. Woody Phifer is the master of frets, and he worked on my instruments as well. The new pickup is like a Gibson Humbucker. It gives the instrument a sustained kind of sound. For me, I get the best qualities of a Gibson and the best of Fender. Fender-wise, I get a very crisp rhythm sound, sometimes a very biting solo sound, and from the Gibson side I get a sustained, rich, fatter tone. People who play straight Gibson end up suffering rhythm-wise.

Smith: The first time I saw Klugh I believe I saw something stuck on his guitar.

Khan: That was either a Barcus-Berry or a DiArmand. To get that just right night after night means a lot of work with a sound man. With the CBS Jazz All Stars we had our own Sound crew so that problem was alleviated. I have an Ovation on my acoustic guitar . . .

Smith: Wait, wait. How can you call it acoustic if you electrify it?

Khan: Because of the body. The solid body guitars are electric, while the big hollow jobs are acoustic. In the studio you record it with a mike. It's very hard to get studio quality sound when you're playing live.

Smith: What about the CBS Jazz All Stars. How did that happen?

Khan: Each of us had a new album out as solo players and we and Columbia thought that it would be more efficient if we went out together to publicize the albums rather than each of us taking a group out individually. Expenses were shared and we all benefitted tremendously from the exposure. Audience response was good everywhere. At the end of the tour there was a "band" feeling which we did not start out with. All four of us are versatile players; we played different kinds of music. Any one of us can play each other's stuff. Alphonso Johnson is going in a more vocal direction than the rest of us. There were times when some of his vocals were the high point of the show. Who would have dreamed that anyone in any audience came to hear any one of us sing! We all learned one valuable lesson: how to be sidemen again.

Smith: What was the interplay like between you and Tom Scott, studio musicians, and Cobham and Johnson, freer types?

Khan: I played it less safe. It was a great opportunity for me to stretch out some and play more of what I feel rather than what I must play.

Even when I was with Coryell and the Breckers the format, for my own personal expression, had its limitations. With the Marcus band I had a lot of chances to stretch out.

In general, my whole approach to music is that every time I get up to play I think it might be the last time I'll ever play. It's that intense.