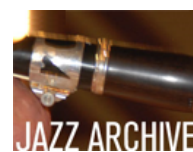


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## Cal Collins

*Guitarist Cal Collins was born on May 5, 1933 in Medora, Indiana. His early influences were diverse, from the mandolin styles of local Bluegrass groups to the Western Swing of Bob Wills. The jazz guitar of Django Reinhardt and piano stylings of Art Tatum also helped mold Cal's eclectic style. His career has included gigs with Benny Goodman, Warren Vache and Scott Hamilton. Cal has recorded numerous albums as a leader for Concord Records, and in 1990 he released "Ohio Style," a CD featuring his own Cincinnati-based quartet.*

*Cal was interviewed at the Allegheny Jazz Party in Chautauqua, New York on September 11, 1997 by Monk Rowe, director of the Hamilton College Jazz Archive.*

- 15 MR: My name is Monk Rowe and we are interviewing today for the Hamilton College Jazz  
16 Archive. It's a great pleasure to have Cal Collins, guitarist, with me today.
- 17 CC: Thank you very much.
- 18 MR: Welcome. You're from the midwest originally.
- 19 CC: Mideast we like to call it.
- 20 MR: Okay. Not quite into the west.
- 21 CC: Yeah, I was born and raised and live around what they call the tri-state area of Cincinnati,  
22 but we live in Indiana, which is just across the border. Kentucky is across the border,  
23 south.
- 24 MR: Did that part of the country have an identifiable style of music that you were growing up  
25 with?
- 26 CC: Outside of a lot of Bluegrass, a lot of real traditional, Country music, Bluegrass, pretty  
27 eclectic really. A lot of jazz fans, a lot of Dixieland fans and everything, but if there was  
28 one, I would say it would be Bluegrass probably.
- 29 MR: Bluegrass has — you played probably, some Bluegrass then.
- 30 CC: Yeah, I sure did. I played when I was very small I played mandolin in a Bluegrass sort of  
31 situation.
- 32 MR: Did any of the music that you learned in that situation help you in the jazz world?
- 33 CC: Oh, yes, quite a bit. I would say that Bluegrass is really the jazz of that kind of music  
34 because so much of it is off the top of your head type thing. Bluegrass musicians really  
35 plays the same songs all the time for instance, you know, a lot of times, but a little bit  
36 different every time, just a little bit different.
- 37 MR: So it leans towards improvisation quite a bit then.
- 38 CC: Yeah, quite a bit, yeah. And a lot of technical things, a lot of fast, really fast tempos, and  
39 very good musicianship.

40 MR: I've always looked at those mandolin players and wondered — it's such a small, little  
41 area to deal with it seems like.

42 CC: Oh, I know it. And they're speeding bullets you know.

43 MR: Your education in music, was it mostly self-taught?

44 CC: Yeah, all. No formal training at all. Not a bit.

45 MR: So it was all in the ears then?

46 CC: Absolutely, yeah, all of it. Later on, well it was after I got out of the Army actually, I was  
47 about 26 I think or something, 25, 26, and there were people around the area that had  
48 music stores. And they always have little music studios where they teach kids, you know,  
49 and beginners and everything. And so they were after me to do some teaching, and I said  
50 I don't know anything about it, about that end of it, and they said well get a Mel Bay  
51 Book I and go through it, and then keep ahead of them. So that's how I did that part of it.

52 MR: You were teaching yourself.

53 CC: Teaching myself, right, as I went along.

54 MR: As you went along. Well sometimes the best teachers are the ones that had the practical  
55 experience.

56 CC: Yeah, I would think so, yeah. And they can keep ahead, it's very easy to look at the paper  
57 and see what I was doing, that type of thing, for beginners especially. And even like the  
58 advanced players, some of the players that came in, they weren't too much interested in  
59 the book, the reading, they were interested in techniques and different chord positions  
60 and all that kind of thing. So it worked out good.

61 MR: So what was your first gig? Can you remember what would have been your first gig?

62 CC: I was five.

63 MR: You were five.

64 CC: I had a little small guitar and it was in Westport, Indiana, and I played and sang "Hand  
65 Me Down My Walking Cane." I was five years old. And they gave me five dollars, which  
66 was an awful lot of money then. A five dollar bill for my fifth birthday, it was just right  
67 after my birthday. I had that five dollar bill for years.

68 MR: It almost sounds like that Elvis story. He was at a county fair or something and he won  
69 second prize.

70 CC: Yes, about the same thing. But it was so neat, God, you know, five dollars. I was born in  
71 1933. I'm 64. So that was in 1938 then, around through there. And five dollars, good  
72 grief, a down payment on a car almost.

73 MR: That's coming out of the depression. It was what mid-30's I guess. Check my history  
74 book. But yeah, that would have to be a nice chunk of money.

75 CC: Yeah. A real nice chunk. And I can remember everybody scuffling. That was a pretty  
76 rough time. Most of my people were into farming so we had plenty of food on the table

77 of sorts, but some of the people I can remember, that was a rough time, for the working  
78 man.

79 MR: And so you were a teenager during World War II. Do you remember, how did the war  
80 affect the area where you lived, and the people?

81 CC: Pretty much, a lot of flag waving and red, white and blue type things you know, in that  
82 part of the country and all over I guess really, it's not that much different. And of course  
83 when I was a kid I was very interested in flying, aviation. I used to fly quite a bit. I had  
84 my own pilot's license and everything. But at that time me and my brothers and cousins  
85 would get into building model airplanes, the P-51's and the P-38's and all that. We were  
86 really into that type of thing.

87 MR: Did the music of World War II get into your head at that time?

88 CC: Oh, yeah. There was a lot of great tunes written during that era. Of course the 20's and  
89 30's and all that, some of the best music I guess that there is. But some of the tunes that  
90 came out from the war, there were some great tunes. "White Cliffs of Dover," "I'll Be  
91 Seeing You" and all that kind of stuff. Great tunes.

92 MR: Do you ever remember any of the big bands at the time coming through your area?

93 CC: Yeah. I remember at a very early age, I was very interested in jazz, without really  
94 knowing what it was I guess. Because I had my own radio, the whole bit, and at that time  
95 you could just tune in almost any station on the radio and you could hear good music,  
96 good big bands, Woody Herman and all that kind of stuff, and Nat King Cole trios, Tate  
97 Cavanaugh was one of them maybe. Real good groups, very good groups.

98 MR: Was Benny Goodman still — he was hot then, right?

99 CC: He was hot about that time. I loved his trio things, you know, the trio and the quartet, the  
100 small things. And he was really an idol of mine, and it took until I was — how old was I  
101 when I joined him, it was in '76 I think, '76 when I joined him. And I was with him for  
102 about four years.

103 MR: We'll get to that.

104 CC: Yes.

105 MR: Rewinding just a moment to Bluegrass. You know you read very often a quote from I  
106 guess jazz historians or sociologists, and they say that jazz is the only true American art  
107 form. But I wonder about that statement, in referring to Bluegrass for instance. Where  
108 does Bluegrass come from if not America?

109 CC: Yeah, that's right. I guess maybe they figure that the origins of Bluegrass were really  
110 U.K., you know from Scotland and Ireland and England and Wales and all that. Because  
111 some of that music is very similar, the fiddles and the reels and the jigs.

112 MR: Celtic music I guess.

113 CC: Yeah, that stuff. So maybe they figure that because of that, because the origin maybe was  
114 there, instead of here in this country. Yeah, that might be it.

115 MR: I guess you can trace things back far enough, you can say they came from somewhere  
116 else.

117 CC: Yeah, absolutely.

118 MR: What about Blues? Was Blues a kind of music that you heard as a child?

119 CC: Yeah. There's a lot, in old Country music, and even in Bluegrass, some of the Bluegrass,  
120 some of those breakneck speed type things are based on Blues changes, so many of them.  
121 So many tunes are in the what they call the 1-3-5 changes, and that kind of thing.  
122 [off-camera comment: 1-4-5]

123 CC: 1-4-5 okay.

124 MR: Kind of a little music theory lesson here.

125 CC: C, F and G7.

126 MR: See that's interesting though, because the player doesn't have to talk about it, they just  
127 have to play it.

128 CC: They just play it, that's right.

129 MR: And then you had a period in the service, was this in the 50's?

130 CC: Yeah, right in the mid-50's.

131 MR: Did you get to play during your service career?

132 CC: No.

133 MR: That's too bad.

134 CC: They sent me to helicopter school of course in the Army, and being I had a whole lot of  
135 experience in fixed wing flying, I learned to fly when I was about 16, around 16, well I  
136 had to be 16, yeah. And fixed wing — I never even was inside of a chopper, oh maybe  
137 for a ride or two or something like that. So the Army of course sends me to school,  
138 helicopter school, and spent all that money, and I really didn't fly that much helicopter, I  
139 flew more fixed wing than I did helicopter. But it was a transportation course at that time.  
140 And I was right in between the two war things there, so I missed that.

141 MR: Right, fortunately. We look back on the 50's as an age of innocence I suppose, and  
142 somewhat prosperity after the war. Do the 50's seem like that to you?

143 CC: Yeah, they did — yeah, they did. I never had any problem, before I went into the Army  
144 and after I was in the Army, I didn't have too much problem getting work. But the Bill  
145 Haley and the Comets, and all that Rock 'n Roll really got into it as far as popularity was  
146 concerned I think. Real good music, big band and jazz and all of that sort of faded from  
147 the limelight, and here comes Elvis and all that.

148 MR: Right, and at the same time you had jazz turning to Bebop I guess somewhat.

149 CC: Oh, I was really into that. I loved that change, it just fit, it seemed like it just fit me just  
150 perfectly. Yeah, I really liked that. I can remember the first times that I heard people like  
151 Parker and Miles and some of those people. And then later on of course some of the real  
152 good tenor players, I loved them, Stan Getz and all that thing. But I don't know, the  
153 Bebop was a new direction for the music, and I loved it, still do. I consider myself a  
154 Bebop player I guess.

155 MR: Technically do you think it's harder to play Charlie Parker type lines on your instrument  
156 than let's say on the saxophone?

157 CC: I don't think so. A lot of guitar players I think maybe there's a lot of them that can play  
158 lines like that, Bebop lines. But a lot of guitar players, myself included, are really  
159 influenced by the straight ahead, mainstream swing guitar, Barney Kessel type things,  
160 and all that. As a matter of fact I think Barney Kessel probably influenced more guitar  
161 players that are around my age maybe or younger or something, than people give him  
162 credit for. Even though he's not all that older, Barney, of course he's in bad shape now, I  
163 think Barney maybe is like 13 years older than I am, which would make him probably 76  
164 or something like that. He influenced a lot of players.

165 MR: Yeah. They usually mention Charlie Christian perhaps more than him.

166 CC: Um hum, Charlie Christian of course.

167 MR: But he was not around for very long.

168 CC: That was one of Barney Kessel's major influences. And the redhead, it was one of his, he  
169 talked about him all the time, Herbie Ellis.

170 MR: Oh. "The redhead?" Is that what you call him?

171 CC: I call him the redhead, or the farmer — I call him the farmer once in a while because he  
172 was born in Farmersville, Texas. He calls me a hillbilly and I call him a farmer.

173 MR: Well you've been around the country, you've lived in a number of places. You moved to  
174 L.A. for a while, is that right?

175 CC: No I didn't, I didn't live there, I just worked there in San Francisco, recording. That was  
176 when I was in the Concord years, when I was with Concord Jazz. And I did a lot of work  
177 out there and stayed there, two weeks at a time, that type of thing. But I've always been,  
178 I've always lived around that area, the Cincinnati area. I was planning on moving to New  
179 York, and Benny talked me out of it — Benny Goodman talked me out of it. He had said  
180 "I hear you want to move to New York, and why" he says. I said "well that's the thing to  
181 do." He says "not anymore, not necessarily," he says "you live 35 minutes from an  
182 international airport in Cincinnati, and most of the gigs that you get, overseas and east  
183 coast and west coast, you get on an airplane and go, so why move to New York?" Talked  
184 me right out of it. I'm glad he did.

185 MR: Yeah. Well he knew. He lived right there. How did that gig come about with him?

186 CC: Really, Jack Sheldon was probably more responsible for me getting a gig with him than  
187 anybody, I'm sure. I'd played at a jazz club in Cincinnati, a local club, a house band, a  
188 house trio. I had the band once in a while or I played with somebody, with a co-op band,  
189 a quartet type thing. And we had a lot of, we would import names, you know big jazz  
190 names and everything. And Sheldon was one of them that came in quite a bit to do a little  
191 comedy routine and his playing and everything. And as it turned out Sheldon and  
192 Goodman were very good friends. Goodman really liked him, really liked him, because  
193 he was funny or something. And he asked Sheldon, he said "I'm going to go on a tour  
194 overseas, and I need a guitar player." And Jack recommended me. So Goodman's  
195 secretary, Muriel — what was her last name?  
196 [off camera comment: Zuckerman]

197 CC: Zuckerman. Muriel Zuckerman. And she called me, I was living in Mount Adams in my  
198 bachelor pad, that was before Phoebe and I, and so one morning about ten o'clock she  
199 calls and says "I'm with Benny Goodman's office, and we were wondering if you would  
200 want to — we'll send you a ticket and you come out and play a gig with him up in  
201 Dearborn, Michigan" I think it was. And I thought at first it was one of these things, you  
202 know, I said "yeah, yeah, sure." She said "I'm serious, I'm serious." And then I finally  
203 realized that she was on the square and I says "absolutely," I said "I'll do it." I figured  
204 that I couldn't miss that opportunity, even if it was just a one-shot deal. So it turned out  
205 all right. And he said well you're hired if you want to do it, and I said okay.

206 MR: So in a sense it was an audition.

207 CC: Yeah, in a sense it was. The gig up in Dearborn was for some kind of a Ford party, you  
208 know, the Ford Motor Company party, some kind of thing. And it worked out good.

209 MR: Do you remember who else was on that gig?

210 CC: Yeah. It was John Bunch played piano, let's see, Connie Kaye, because that was when  
211 MJQ wasn't happening for a while. As a matter of fact Connie Kaye played almost all the  
212 time that I was with him too, you know both of us were together at the same time. And  
213 who was on bass, I've forgotten now. I think it was Nobby Totah. Do you remember  
214 him?

215 MR: I don't remember that name.

216 CC: Nobby Totah, T-O-T-A-H, he used to play quite a bit with Johnny Smith, on some of his  
217 old recordings, Royal Roost I think it was, and that was about it. Let's see, Warren  
218 Vache, he was on, and later on Scott Hamilton played quite a bit. It was a good quintet,  
219 very good.

220 MR: Now in that kind of situation, did he have music for you?

221 CC: Um hum.

222 MR: So in addition to having to be a good player, with the right attitude to please Benny I  
223 guess, you had to know all the tunes.

224 CC: Yeah.

225 MR: And did you have an idea when you got on the stand, like what's he going to call?

226 CC: It really didn't make too much difference. He would call tunes that I was very familiar  
227 with, I'd been listening to him for years. That's what we all did really. We would just, we  
228 know how he played the tune and it was like that, it was real easy, it was real easy, like  
229 you'd been doing it all your life. Now the times that I was with him, about four years I'll  
230 say, we probably never did any more than six big band things, you know the big band  
231 things, about a half a dozen of them. The rest of them were all very small, quartet,  
232 quintet, sextet and all that stuff. But with the big band things I had chord charts and  
233 everything that I could sort of read a little bit. But it was easy, there was nothing to it. We  
234 knew everything he did.

235 MR: That's the fascinating part about jazz sometimes, how are they doing that? And you have  
236 to have a pretty big collection of tunes in your memory I would say.

237 CC: Oh, you do. I've had people that are into that, maybe professional gamblers or something,  
238 that would tell me and a bunch of musicians, that you have no idea how many tunes you  
239 know, you have no idea. It's in the thousands, literally. And you're not even aware of it. I  
240 know it's got to be true because once in a while I'll play a tune — somebody'll call a  
241 tune or if I'm playing with a singer, that I know, that I haven't played for years, but it's  
242 right there. Yeah. That's one good thing.

243 MR: Does it get difficult, mentioning singers, that they'll say "Body and Soul" could we do it  
244 in A or something. Do we have to?

245 CC: Oh, I love that yeah, I love that. I think there are a lot of guitar players, they love to play  
246 in those "bright" keys they call them, you know the A and the E and all that kind of stuff.  
247 But some of the newer ones, of course that read real well, they're used to reading the  
248 tenor keys and the alto keys and all that. But yeah, I like to play in those different keys.

249 MR: Why is it that it seems the majority of standards from the 30's and so forth, are written in  
250 flat keys? Do you know why that would be?

251 CC: I don't know, it has to do I imagine with the horns, you know B flat for trumpet, A flat or  
252 E flat for alto, that kind of thing.

253 MR: Right. So when they transpose it puts them in good keys.

254 CC: Yeah, exactly.

255 MR: Maybe piano players tend to go to the flats more too.

256 CC: So many singers love to sing in five flats, which is just a half step away from C and I  
257 always wonder, why in the world don't you do them in C instead of D flat?

258 MR: What would your fellow musicians think if you took out a capo and put it on?

259 CC: They would say “what’s that?”  
260 MR: I don’t think I’ve ever seen a jazz guitar player with a capo.  
261 CC: No. Some of the Blues players use them quite a bit, some of the old — oh one of my  
262 favorites, I was on tour with him, I was on tour twice with, what do they call that,  
263 “Masters of the Steel String Guitar” — it’s some kind of endowment thing, arts  
264 endowment thing.  
265 MR: Right.  
266 CC: And John Cephas — is that his name?  
267 MR: Yes. John Cephas.  
268 CC: And he would do the slide bar and I just loved him and he was something else. And he  
269 would use a capo once in a while, so he could take advantage of the open keys and  
270 everything. But jazz guitarists, I don’t know of any that ever did.  
271 MR: If I gave you five bucks, would you do that tonight so we could get it on film?  
272 CC: I would not know how to use it. I really wouldn’t know how to use the thing.  
273 MR: Well some of the Rock players nowadays, also, they tune their guitars down a half step I  
274 think. And I don’t know the reason for that.  
275 CC: Well I think probably they tune it down because it automatically makes the strings looser,  
276 of course they get looser, and they love to bend it and then turn it into the amplifier to  
277 make that ridiculous, horrible noise for five minutes or so.  
278 MR: So I trust I’m not going to hear any feedback from you tonight on the stage.  
279 CC: No. No wa-wa pedals, and no feedback, none of that kind of thing.  
280 MR: Do you play a hollow body electric?  
281 CC: Um hum. A Benedetto. He’s a private builder, one of the best ones in the world.  
282 MR: So you counted in your influences, Charlie Christian perhaps?  
283 CC: Um hum. Just about all of the older guitar players. But actually, when I was growing up  
284 and through that phase there, actually my influences were piano players. Yeah, because I  
285 wanted to mimic those beautiful chord things that they were doing, and try to get as close  
286 to them as I could on guitar. That’s how I learned a lot of chords of things, listening to  
287 piano players.  
288 MR: Some of the reviews I’ve read about you mention the fact that sometimes you can sound  
289 like two people. Does that come from listening to piano players? Trying to do  
290 everything?  
291 CC: I think so. I think that’s because I have sort of an unorthodox style, on both hands really.  
292 I can play bass lines and chords at the same time and maybe a little melody here and  
293 there. It’s kind of unorthodox. I use the thumb, which you’re not supposed to do, and the  
294 nails, plus a pick and that type of thing. But I think that’s right. I think it was the  
295 influence of the piano players, especially the Tatum, and Fats Waller, the incredible

296 things. I know that I would never do anything on the guitar like that, but I come as close  
297 as I could, and George Shearing, some of the pretty stuff that he did, and later on Bill  
298 Evans, and that type thing.

299 MR: I have a quote here from *The Grove Dictionary of Jazz*, and it's talking about you and it  
300 says "a technically well equipped, fluid, and exciting soloist, Collins has forged a highly  
301 eclectic style." In fact you used the word "eclectic" when you were talking about where  
302 you grew up.

303 CC: Yeah, the music, yeah. Probably it comes from all that, from listening to different kinds  
304 of music. For instance, in that Cincinnati area, around through there, there's a lot of old  
305 German population, and they love to play, oh some of the sort of Dixieland and you know  
306 the two beat stuff. I loved that when I was a kid, the different music. What I did was try  
307 to, I don't know if I did it on purpose or if I thought I should for my further education, is  
308 try to just absorb as much music as I could. Because I figured now there's no way I can  
309 put down a certain kind of music if I don't listen to it and see what it is, how can I make  
310 any kind of judgment on it? So I like it all, if it's good. Any music that's good I like.

311 MR: Okay, how about, let's see ... Chuck Berry?

312 CC: Well I'll tell you there's some things he did that I liked. I never was a fan — I was more  
313 of a fan of his then oh the other guy that everybody went crazy about, the guitar player  
314 that played with his teeth and everything?

315 MR: Oh, Jimi Hendrix?

316 CC: Yeah, Jimi Hendrix. I never was a fan of his too much at all. I liked more of the Blues,  
317 the old Texas Blues guys that play. There was more excitement. And it seemed like they  
318 played more of the guitar.

319 MR: Is there a definition for Texas Swing?

320 CC: Yeah I love it. I love Texas Swing. I automatically think of Bob Wills, Spade Cooley, and  
321 there was a couple of more of them but those two were prominent. But I loved that music.  
322 It had such, sort of jazz roots of some kind. They always had a couple, three guitar  
323 players that could really swing their tails off. And real hot fiddle players that played sort  
324 of like Stephane Grappelli, you know, the real good stuff and all. But I love Texas Swing,  
325 oh I love it. Yeah. I would play it if I could get hooked up with one of those guys.

326 MR: That would be fun.

327 CC: There's some new bands out, as you are aware of I'm sure, some new groups that try to  
328 play that music sort of like it was. I don't know the names of them — "Asleep at the  
329 Wheel" or something like that.

330 MR: Yeah. They've been around quite a while.

331 CC: And they really play good. I love it.

332 MR: Yeah, they have a real good singer, a real tall fellow. I don't know if his name is  
333 "Asleep" or what. But he's the leader. I actually got to hear them once, and they do —  
334 pretty authentic.

335 CC: Oh, yeah, I love it.

336 MR: What's it like trying to get yourself on record these days?

337 CC: That's pretty hard, it really is pretty hard.

338 MR: I see some body language over there that tells me that...

339 CC: It's pretty hard because it's a pretty good taste in the first place to get one together, and  
340 the distribution and the whole bit and all that marketing. So you're going to have to get  
341 ahold of somebody who wants to do that for you, and I've been pretty lucky here and  
342 there, there and here, and of course Concord Jazz really did a number, real good, for a  
343 bunch of us. I was on as a leader and a featured soloist and a featured sideman and just  
344 plain old sideman, 32 or 36 different albums on Concord. Of course you have to have  
345 some albums out, on the market, before anybody can hear you. You know they have to  
346 hear you, you can't rely on playing local venues, you have to get out and let people know  
347 who you are, that you're around.

348 MR: And then how do you get it on the radio, too?

349 CC: That's pretty easy, it really is. Susie and I, my wife is my manager by the way, she is my  
350 manager, she is really into that thing, and she knows, we both know and her especially, a  
351 lot of people at the college stations that feature a jazz program once in a while, make sure  
352 that they have all the new tapes or an old tape or something that they play, that type of  
353 thing, all over the country really. And there's quite a few of them that do that, that play  
354 me pretty regularly on those jazz stations, all of that. So I'm played pretty regularly on  
355 that, and that helps, that helps tremendously to get you gigs.

356 MR: Do the distributors — I can address this to either of you — are they pretty honest with  
357 giving you what you're owed?

358 CC: As a rule. I think they're mostly, well the distributorship and all of those people, they  
359 make money by what's popular and of course what's popular is Rock 'n Roll or Heavy  
360 Metal or something like that. So that give more emphasis, I'm sure, to marketing those  
361 products. I think Buddy Rich once said on Carson's show that if marketing, in general, all  
362 over, the advertising marketing people would give jazz musicians only one percent of the  
363 monies and promotions as they do to Country and Rock 'n Roll, we'd be satisfied, we'd  
364 be all right. But jazz is not a popular music. And so we're at the bottom of the rung as far  
365 as throwing money into it to promote it. And it's a damn shame, but that's the way it is.

366 MR: In your career, was there a time, what span of years would you say jazz was most  
367 popular?

368 CC: In my time?

369 MR: Yeah.

370 CC: Probably from the time I was born to — it seems like it started petering out in the 50's,  
371 somewhere in the 50's, we had to scuffle around. Of course there was a lot of bars that  
372 you could play, you know, cocktail lounges and all that, you could play some pretty nice,  
373 easy, light jazz. But it started petering out, especially around 1960, with more takeover  
374 from Rock 'n Roll. Of course Country's always been there. Everybody loves Country  
375 music it seems like. But it started getting pretty rough around the 60's. About 1960.

376 MR: It's kind of interesting when you listen to some of the early Rock 'n Roll records, I notice  
377 Chuck Berry especially, is that he was moving into a Rock 'n Roll thing but the guys  
378 behind him were still playing Swing. And there was this kind of bumpy transition.

379 CC: Yeah, yeah, yeah. A lot of those guys played the straight ahead Rhythm & Blues, which I  
380 still like, you know the organ trios and all that I think really swing and it really sounds  
381 good. And they were sort of into that. Connie Kaye as a matter of fact, when he was  
382 younger, he played with the R&B bands quite a bit.

383 MR: Connie Kaye, no kidding.

384 CC: Yeah, with the back beat, the heavy back beat and all that stuff and Honky Tonk and  
385 whatever, some of those people. But they did change it to this other stuff, whatever it is,  
386 you were saying Chuck Berry's sidemen were changing the way they played. I don't  
387 know, Rock 'n Roll, I just really can't .. I don't hate it, I'm just anti it.

388 MR: In mentioning Connie Kaye and that Goodman gig, it makes me think that Goodman was  
389 one of the first fellows to have an integrated band of any note. What's your take on the  
390 racial balance in music today, or, do you have any views on that?

391 CC: In all music?

392 MR: Well I'm talking jazz mostly.

393 CC: Jazz mostly? It's good and healthy I think because — I don't know — like a venue like  
394 this, and this type of jazz, which I sort of call mainstream I think, maybe that's a good  
395 term, and there's so many of us around my age, maybe a little younger or a little older,  
396 Black and White, that play and love that kind of music. But there is a separation I think,  
397 of sorts. There are venues where you have, they'll call them jazz festivals or something,  
398 and it's really more Pop, it's more of a Pop thing than jazz, there's not too much jazz, I  
399 don't think, that's played. For instance if Toni Tenille and some of those singers that sing  
400 Pop tunes, I mean standards, ballads, it's pretty and it's nice but it really doesn't come off  
401 with that feeling. I've got to hear Rosemary Clooney sing it — I'd rather hear, you know,  
402 Sarah sing it, or Ella, and that type of thing, than some of those, because they don't know  
403 how to treat it. But I think it's pretty healthy. And at these festivals, at different festivals  
404 around the country, around the world really, give all of us a chance to get together and

405 maybe haven't seen each other or played with each other for a year or two years, and it's  
406 like a real good party.

407 MR: It's an interesting and fortunate phenomena I think, that these things exist, for the  
408 musicians. And I do notice that the audience in most of them is usually mostly White.

409 CC: Yeah, mostly White. Yeah, they are. And I don't really know why. I really don't know  
410 why. I imagine that there's several views on it, but I really can't put a finger on it. I really  
411 don't know why that is.

412 MR: Well I'm glad to see that there's some talented younger players that are basically playing  
413 what we'll call mainstream, you know, Harry Allen and those fellows, and keeping that  
414 alive.

415 CC: Yeah. I know we have an excellent school in Cincinnati, The Cincinnati Conservatory of  
416 Music, it's pretty well known all over the country. And I'm really delighted to see maybe  
417 two or three top notch, even if it's only two or three, come out of there a year, that can  
418 really play, I mean really are good players. It's very rewarding to see that. It means that  
419 jazz is not dead, and it never will be, it never will be. Not with that kind of thing going  
420 on.

421 MR: Well the whole education thing is an interesting thing to look at. You know there is some  
422 great teaching going on. I hope they have places to play.

423 CC: Yes, when they get finished with their education. Remember, it hasn't been that long  
424 enough where jazz education was nonexistent in the universities and the colleges. It never  
425 occurred. It wasn't there. If you wanted to take some guitar lessons, it was classical. And  
426 even then it was sort of thin, you know, the guitar, what's that? That's Roy Rogers out on  
427 the plains or something like that. But it's really gratifying to see, there are two  
428 exceptional young men in the Cincinnati area that are really playing very good guitar,  
429 really good. And one of them is only 21. Andy is only, what, 21 I think. Oh is he 23?  
430 How'd that happen? So it's really nice to see that coming out. It makes it all worth while.

431 MR: Well your most recent — is it "Ohio Style" — is that your most recent record?

432 CC: As a leader it is. The other, a couple more as a co-leader, let's see I'm on a thing called  
433 "Tenderly," what label do they call that? I think it's an independent type owned thing.  
434 And oh I did that tribute to Wes Montgomery thing with a whole bunch of us, a whole  
435 bunch of guitar players did a tribute to Wes Montgomery. That was released in Tokyo  
436 long before it was released over here — about a year or so, before it was released over  
437 here. That was really the last thing major that I did and this other one, "Tenderly," and  
438 then I've got a thing coming up — how is that?  
439 [off camera: Bob Bernard's thing]

440 CC: Oh yeah, that's the other ... yeah. There's an Australian trumpet player, Bob Bernard?  
441 And I did a recording with him, less than two years ago in New York. I think that was on  
442 a Canadian label, oh I forgot the name of it, Sackville or something like that?

443 MR: Sackville.

444 CC: Sackville it was, yeah. It was on Sackville.

445 MR: Well with the "Ohio" album, you used your own group? It sounded great too.

446 CC: Yeah that was a real nice one. I used the quartet that I've used around the Cincinnati area,  
447 and once in a while we do go out as a self-contained group but not too often. When you  
448 get into a self-contained group, you're talking about money, headaches, this and that you  
449 know.

450 MR: Yeah. It's hard to keep a band working enough that you can tell all the fellows, stick with  
451 me.

452 CC: How many is there? Phil Woods. Oscar Peterson's trio. Dave Brubeck. That's about it,  
453 you know, self-contained groups.

454 MR: I have to ask you why "Tumbling Tumbleweeds?" That was clever. In fact, when I was  
455 listening to it, I wasn't looking at it I was just listening to it. All of a sudden I go — what?  
456 Wait a minute. What is that tune? And it was an interesting choice and treatment.

457 CC: I don't know, we used to play years ago at the Playboy Club, me and Mike Moore, Mike  
458 Moore is also from the Cincinnati area, and Ron McCurry, the drummer, we had a trio  
459 and played at Playboy Clubs. And we used to play things like "Along the Navajo Trail"  
460 but we'd do it in like six-eight time, you know, real fast, and this and that, and how  
461 would that sound ... you know, because it's a great tune, it might make a good jazz  
462 vehicle. And so we did it. Neat tune.

463 MR: It works. It reminded me, you know Brubeck did a thing on "Camptown Races."

464 CC: Yeah. So it was that type of feeling and all of that stuff. And then a friend of mine, right  
465 after that, a group recorded that tune and it was real nice. She was a fiddle player. She  
466 was a fiddle player from Portland I think, Oregon or around through there somewhere.  
467 And part of those guys that were on that steel string guitar tour knew her and recorded  
468 with her, and they did that thing too. I like the tune. It drifts along.

469 MR: And you have been to different parts of the world and been to Japan. Do you like playing  
470 abroad?

471 CC: Yeah I do, I really do. Once in a while, I've done then very often, I've been overseas  
472 many, many times, and they always, it seems like the venue always gives you a chance  
473 — every other day you have off, which is nice, so you can kind of look around in the  
474 shops and all that kind of stuff. But then after you've been to the same place several  
475 times, it's just gets to be another gig you know, another long ride on the airplane. But  
476 I've always enjoyed it.

477 MR: From a practical sense I've always wondered what you fellows do with your instruments  
478 on those flights.

479 CC: Cross your fingers. I guess most guitar players get in the habit of — oh I loosen the  
480 strings and pack the case with all kinds of padding, and tie a big leather belt around it,  
481 and hand carry it gently so that it's the last thing that goes on the airplane, and the first  
482 thing that comes off. And I've only had about one major wreck. Oh, yeah that's right I've  
483 had three of them including the neck thing. Three fixable things 28 years and whatever,  
484 that's not too bad.

485 MR: What's it like playing with musicians from other countries. Does the music cross border  
486 lines?

487 CC: It's a real treat, I love it. There's a lot of excellent musicians all over the place. England  
488 has, the U.K. has many of them. Sweden and Denmark has a lot. Australia has a lot. And  
489 Japan is coming on with a few. And it's all about the same, because they've copied so  
490 much of the American jazz thing. The only thing is, it seems that you can really tell that  
491 it's a little bit different are the Australians. It's hard to pin down, but it's a different  
492 feeling. They write a lot of tunes, a lot of tunes that you never heard of, that type thing,  
493 but they fit good, but maybe there is a pattern or a system or something that most jazz  
494 musicians maybe follow, they don't. It's a little bit different. It's something you can't put  
495 your finger on. Excellent musicians by the way.

496 MR: Isn't there one on the bill tonight? An Australian player? John Allred or something?

497 CC: Yeah, he's on. I don't know his work that well. I know several of them, but I don't think I  
498 know his work that well.

499 MR: Well you may know better by the time the weekend's...

500 CC: I'll know better by the end of the night, or the end of the weekend.

501 MR: Can you think of anything that I might want to ask Cal?

502 CC: We've covered it pretty good.

503 MR: Young guitar players coming up these days — I don't know, sometimes I think there's  
504 too much music to listen to. What do you think they should zone in on if they're a young  
505 jazz aspiring player?

506 CC: Yeah the only thing I don't like about so many of the new young guitar players is they  
507 seem to think that the faster single line things that they play, the better they are. And  
508 some of them are really excellent. They are very fast with single lines, you know, like a  
509 horn, just single lines. And they've forgotten, and I'll just tell them at clinics, when I do  
510 them, I'll say you guys have forgotten one big thing. You have a small orchestra there in  
511 your hands. You have six strings, you have beautiful chordal things that you can get, and  
512 you don't pay any attention to any chords, you just want to play faster single line things.  
513 Don't do that. Play some chords, play some chords. So that's the only beef that I've got

514 about some of those youngsters. They want to play faster than Pat, you know, Metheny  
515 there, or some of those other guys. They can play lightening fast, but that really doesn't  
516 get it. Any good guitar player, any real good guitar player can play fast. So what? Play  
517 some of them chords.

518 MR: Well those are good words of wisdom. Well it's been a pleasure talking to you.

519 CC: It's my pleasure.

520 MR: And I hope you have a great night tonight and tomorrow.

521 CC: Going to. I've never played a festival of any kind, anywhere in the world, that I didn't  
522 have a ball. It's just really fun. Everybody gets together and has a good time.

523 MR: Plus your old pal Michael Moore will be with you.

524 CC: Yeah.

525 MR: That's terrific. Okay.

526 CC: My pleasure.

527 MR: Thanks for joining me.