

## Ted Greene Remembered

Various Artists

El Dorado Records

[www.eldoradorecords.net](http://www.eldoradorecords.net)

[www.tedgreene.com](http://www.tedgreene.com)

This labor-of-love tribute CD is the brainchild of producer Tom Bocci, a longtime close friend of Ted Greene's and the appropriate person to realize this project. Bocci, with comprehensive and impressive music biz experience worked relentlessly to produce this collection that took a year to bring to fruition as he assembled a roster of extraordinary talent, all eager to pay homage to Ted Greene. And each, in the accompanying booklet, shared specific feelings about Ted, conveying discriminating sentiment without sentimentality.

Tommy Emmanuel kicks off the set with a swinging and captivating rendition of Michel Legrand's, "Watch What Happens." Shades of Django emerge early on as Tommy navigates those cool half-step changes during the customer chorus. He then attacks with the ferocity of an underfed pit bull and charges on to a unison scat-singing solo en route to the coda. You can also hear a tasty tip-of-Tommy's-hat to Jerry Reed who had enormous impact on a young Ted Greene, someone he always referred to as, "the Ray Charles of the guitar." "After hearing what Tommy sent us," said Tom Bocci, "I knew I could stop holding my breath because we were off to a great start."

Fingerstyle wizard Laurence Juber offers a splendid version of the Gershwins' "A Foggy Day," a favorite of his and one with personal significance as he was born in London during the worst fog on record. He said he was also inspired by Ted's open suggestion to guitarists to explore the tune in disparate keys. Juber's DADGAD treatment brilliantly dispenses the song's joyful message and showcases an engaging and complex arrangement that he executes masterfully.

Lee Ritenour's "For Ted" is hauntingly stunning. It's a fingerstyle, nylon-string rendition of a reverent and introspective composition that conveys a sense of melancholy as a poignant and graceful elegy. For Ted's memory, Lee created an aptly pensive and evocative piece.

Dan Sawyer presents his homage to Ted with a lovely and lush version of “It Had to be You.” Sawyer, a close friend of Ted’s for decades, also passes along insightful and amusing comments in the liner notes that are remembrances of their first meeting, recollections of Ted’s friendship and his long-term influence on Dan and his artistry.

“Bring,” Mark Goldenberg’s contribution, begins with a tasty, country-like motif in a C-F-Bb-E-Gb-C tuning that scampers through some nice changes and evolves into interesting places while never forsaking the listener’s attention. If Goldenberg has recorded a CD in this style, I’d like to have it. I know Ted would have loved this track. And the sound is unusual and unexpected from a 1965 Howard Roberts Epiphone.

Anthony Wilson graces us with his always gorgeous tone on a multi-tracked and layered arrangement. It’s unlike anything I’ve heard on his other CDs and was no doubt created for this tribute. Wilson relates an amusing account of his first meeting with Ted and recalls a number of personal vignettes including Ted transcribing a George Van Eps performance in real time. Now, that’s impressive.

Jay Graydon’s “Star-Spangled Banner,” his 9/11 tribute, serves as a fitting lament in this context as well. Again, this is something Ted would have loved and endorsed. Graydon’s idea is original, inventive and meaningful with an underlying sense of reassurance and respect in today’s troubled political climate. It’s beautifully done, and you can almost hear Ted yell, “Play ball!”

Phil de Gruy is one of the most astounding talents to ever touch strings. He commands his instrument, the harp guitar, or guitarp, passionately, flawlessly and with a sense of artistry that only a few fall out of bed with. This medley of “Who Can I Turn To?” and “My Romance” will have you hitting the repeat button to be sure you just heard what you did. Other artists have used the harp guitar as a concert novelty, and in varying degrees of seriousness, but Phil de Gruy, like Earl Scruggs, George Van Eps, Wes Montgomery and Charlie Christian has taken his instrument into new dimensions.

Steve Ferguson’s haunting “Midnight Greene” is reminiscent of a 1950s Laurindo Almeida piece or even a vintage David Raksin composition.

Ferguson is a piano virtuoso and composer who just happens to play excellent guitar. "Midnight Greene" yields a memorable motif and creates a mood that's at once mysterious and nostalgic. It's superb.

It's just plain fun to hear Ted and John Pisano comp, romp and swap solos on the meat-and-potatoes, "Theo's Rhythm 'n' Blues." You can imagine the two smiling throughout and appreciating each other's playing. Both men were so fond of each other. In the liner notes, John states that Ted was his closest encounter with a musical genius. And Ted's respect for John was boundless. When I asked him about his association with John he said, "Of course I don't really teach John. He has such great, great ears and he doesn't conceptualize music unless he needs to. He just plays. Occasionally he'll ask me to show him something because he knows other guitarists have traveled different roads and he's an open spirit that way." Such honesty and praise was typical of Ted's attitude toward any player he admired.

Another surprise, at least for me, is Windham Hill piano star George Winston playing guitar. George offers a fingerstyle version of Bob Dylan's classic "Farewell" in a slack-key tuning: C-D-C-D-G-B-D. Altered tunings open a guitar's dynamic range and provide the ringing sustain that resounds in the literal sense of the verb. I just discovered that Winston has been a longtime avid fan and exponent of Hawaiian slack key guitar and more of his work is available on Dancing Cat Records. Certainly Ted would have been enthusiastic about anyone, especially such a successful artist, exploring other musical areas.

Stephen Bruton tells us that his contribution, the atmospheric and beautifully wistful "Spirit Lake," was inspired by a lesson with Ted. "I remember leaving his apartment one afternoon, so excited, that I went to my car, rolled up the windows to keep the street noise out even though the temperature was in the 90s and worked on what we'd been discussing during the lesson while it was still fresh. This song wrote itself right there on the spot...the inspiration was pure Ted."

The final track is a lovely guitar duet that pairs Ted and the CD's producer Tom Bocci on a project that integrated sounds of endangered species and habitats with instrumental music for a CD entitled, "Vanishing Voices, A Musical Celebration." Bocci said that Ted not only went out of his way to help but literally grounded himself during the session by running a wire from his body to the floor via duct tape in an effort to eliminate a 60-cycle

hum. Tom said, "...proves once and for all that Ted wasn't wired like the rest of us."

When reading the liner notes, it struck me that an underlying theme through most of the artists' recollections is Ted's sense of humor. Yes, his artistry and brilliance were profound and his encyclopedic knowledge was unrivaled, but maybe more important was how he evoked laughter from everyone he called friend. Perhaps this was his greatest gift. It's obvious that it remains a personal legacy for so many who knew him and all who were involved in this project.

Jim Carlton

Author of *Conversations With Great Jazz Guitarists*