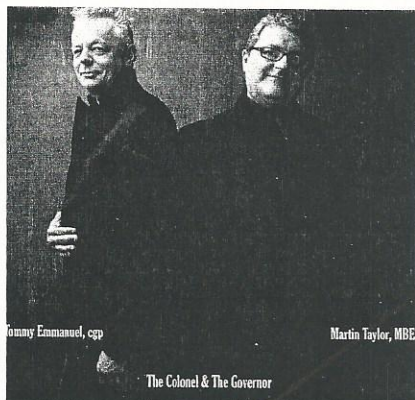


The Colonel & The Governor

Martin Taylor and Tommy Emmanuel
Create a True Event for the World of Jazz Guitar
by Dr. Dave Walker



In our over-hyped world it's hard to seriously consider the release of a CD as a "event" and yet this is one of the few times that, for me at least, the word is warranted. When two of the finest players of our instrument decide to collaborate on a full album it should be front page news, at least in the guitar press. The Colonel & The Governor is such a CD, and such an event.

Martin Taylor is arguably the foremost ambassador for jazz guitar today in a world that slides more and more towards lighter and lighter pop music. His impeccable credentials link him to a jazz tradition of the highest order while his talent and personality draw more and more fans to a genre that they may otherwise have dismissed.

Tommy Emmanuel performs the same sort of ambassadorial work for the acoustic guitar, bringing his amazing playing to an audience that more and more only thinks of the guitar as a solidbody electric. With a talent that defies easy categorization, Tommy has been increasingly influenced by jazz lately, again bringing the genre to an enormous audience that might not even realize that they are hearing fine jazz.

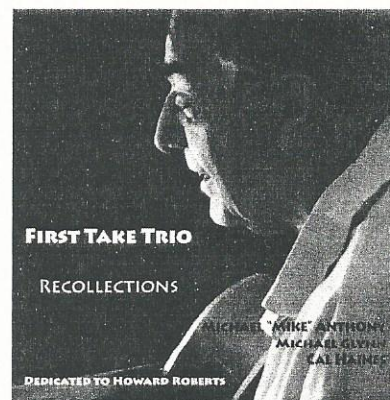
More important even than the different strengths that each brings to this project are their shared ones. Both men are consummate entertainers who back it up with the highest caliber of playing. Seasoned guitarists marvel at their performance while those who simply love music are enchanted by their very presence and the music itself.

If you have been disappointed by such "summits" in the past then you know that all too often this type of

project becomes a clash of egos or of styles that just don't mesh. Have no fear: in this instance two styles could not blend more harmoniously. Not that Martin Taylor goes easy on his long)time friend, and in fact he lays down the gauntlet right from the start, but with his impeccable ear and lightning)fast reflexes Tommy Emmanuel is able to catch the ball and throw it back with his own unique spin on it. Martin runs a gamut of styles from easy swing through hard bop while Tommy matches with genres from acid blues to raunchy rock before meeting up in good ol' hard)swinging jive.

The tunes range from classics like Lullaby of Birdland, Secret Love, and Benny Goodman's A Smooth One to three great ones by Martin Taylor. First is a wonderful rendition of True that reveals a new depth in this two)guitar treatment. Then there is the wistful pensiveness of The Fair Haired Child that is such a contrast to the tour de force performance of Martin's Down at Cocomo's, with Tommy's incredible imitation of an entire band as accompaniment. Not to be outdone, Martin provides an amazing imitation of steel drums to complement his partner's improvisations.

With so much new music settling for bland mediocrity it is as great a joy as a relief to find two veterans still pushing at the boundaries and coming up with delights for the listener and fresh challenges for players. When two such great players get together to produce music like this, it is truly an event.



RECOLLECTIONS
MIKE ANTHONY AND THE
FIRST TAKE TRIO
MA 131011 Lone Guitar Publishing

In 2004 I wrote my first review of a Mike Anthony recording. It was entitled New Journey. Of course I knew Mike had been a first-call L.A. studio ace who'd flexed his talented chops for music's A-List: everyone from Tony Bennett to the Beach Boys,

Michel Legrand, Burt Bacharach, Quincy Jones, Nelson Riddle, Peggy Lee and too many more to mention here. His TV credits include The Carol Burnett Show, Happy Days, Dallas, Knot's Landing, The Dean Martin Show and countless others. And few of us can boast that we played the Monterey Jazz Festival with Gil Evans and Miles Davis. But Mike doesn't boast. He doesn't need to. His guitar playing speaks eloquently. In the interests of full disclosure, I've hung out with Mike and once saw him jam in a roomful of monster studio guitarists. If I dropped the names you'd know them all; most were Mike's old session crowd. It was an amazing afternoon and somewhat of a reunion. Mike retired from the studio grind a few years ago and moved to Albuquerque to teach and gig at his leisure. When he finally convinced the great Tommy Tedesco that he was really leaving L.A., The Great One threw Mike a going away party that was brimming with name guitarists. The event was even covered by Guitar Player Magazine. Now, that's respect and cachet.

I wrote that I'd immediately noticed the influence and sense of lively musical fun that Mike had gleaned from Howard Roberts, his friend and mentor. But I'd also mentioned that Anthony was an extraordinary artist in his own right. That statement of course still stands. But this new CD, entitled *Recollections* is Mike's homage to Howard Roberts. Mike says, "He took me on as a student, gave me a path and made me walk it." H.R. took his protege to sessions, introduced him around and jump-started his career by using him on one of the famous Howard Roberts Capitol albums.

So, Mike Anthony, along with bassist Michael Glynn and drummer Cal Haines are the First Take Trio, and with this excellent collection are paying respects to one of the greatest guitarists ever, Howard Roberts.

Virtually all studio players have the protean ability to play any style that's called for. That's the job description. But when they're not on the clock they get to express themselves in their own style. And this collection is a fine example of Anthony's respect for great composers. His interpretations of quality material is a joy to hear. The set kicks off with an elegant and swinging rendition of "Mr. Lucky," perhaps the ultimate after-hours tune. And because the group literally personifies its name, First Take Trio, we're hearing these fine musicians create the mood of the set list as Coltrane said at a "moment's notice." Throughout, all three players trade solos with Anthony comping when Glynn and Cal Haines are taking choruses. Michael

Glynn's bass solos are inventive and creative and Haines timekeeping is a sideshow in itself. His playing is solid and imaginative. In short, this is just what you'd expect from seasoned pros. The dialog and interplay discloses the group's synergy. And it's always fun to appreciate musicians who are listening to each other.

Anthony showcases his composing chops with the breezy bopper "Union Square," and of course the thoughtful and soulful "Recollections of H.R.," on which he musically distills evoked feelings and memories of his mentor. It's an all too brief tour de force that embraces a litany of expression from bluesy licks to lush chord melody statements. Mike really digs in here but it's the collection's *raison d'être*. This one's for guitar players but that doesn't discount Michael Glynn's superb solo or Cal Haines' understated playing. He's a drummer gifted with the good taste to know when to lay back and when to push.

The trio explores a brisk and vibrant version of "Monk's Dream," a nice showcase for Haines before Mike and Michael take impressive turns. And listen for another tip of the hat to H.R. with Mike's whole tone run at the coda. It was one of Howard's signatures and Anthony briefly channels the spirit who gave him so much. It's such a nice touch.

Sergio Mihanovich's lovely "Sometime Ago" is a favorite and receives a scampering solo from Glynn and an engaging turn from Anthony. It's a tune that doesn't get enough play and it's a great choice for these players who really know how to get around on it. You'll hear a similar treatment for Djavan's Chilean tune, "Flor de Lis."

This CD is a terrific blend of hip under-the-radar tunes along with such venerable old standards as "How Deep is The Ocean," Cole Porter's timeless "It's All Right With Me," and a cool rendition of Frank Loesser's "On A Slow Boat To China." I wonder if Mike knows his old, late friend and studio guitar-great Al Hendrickson sang the 1948 hit with Benny Goodman's orchestra. The nice Wes Montgomery riff tune "Monk's Shop," rounds out the set with an urbane solo from Anthony that would make H.R. proud. In fact, there's no doubt this CD would make Howard proud. It's now part of his legacy. And that, I'm sure is just what Mike Anthony had in mind. Highly Recommended

Jim Carlton - *Author of Conversations With Great Jazz and Studio Guitarists - Mel Bay Publishing.*