

TOMMY EMMERTON TRANSCRIPTION

TH: How did you start? Are you from Wales originally?

TE: Cardiff originally. Barry specifically.

TH: When did you start playing guitar?

TE: You want to start from the very beginning?

TH: Yeah, why not.

TE: Well I was a drummer initially. From birth I was obsessed with the drums and drummers. My earliest memories that I remember quite vividly are hitting pots and pans in front of videos of Queen and Billy Joel. I was bought a little kit when I was really young and my first proper idol was Nick Mason of Pink Floyd, I wanted to be him, I wanted to be in Pink Floyd. We had this video of Pink Floyd live, Delicate Sound of Thunder live at the National Coliseum. Momentary Lapse of Reason, that was the tour they did of Delicate Sound of Thunder and this video is epic man. I'd watch that thing twice a day and keep rewinding it, play along with it and that was what I wanted to do. My younger brother started having classical guitar lessons and purely to even things up with him I started having classical guitar lessons as well.

TH: So you started guitar as a rivalry?

TE: Yeah absolutely, my brother is only about a year and a half younger than me.

TH: How old were you when you started doing it?

TE: Guitar was a lot later; I think I was about eight when I started having classical guitar lessons.

TH: That doesn't sound too late to me because I know people start much later than that sometimes.

TE: Yeah absolutely, especially with guitar players I think. It's really hard to generalise but the guys that spring to mind, more so in the rock world, the Dave Gilmours, Ritchie Blackmores, Garry Moores, they tend to be teenagers. I think Steve Vai was about ten or eleven when he got his first guitar. I was seven or eight; classical guitar, and I suppose I always approached it as a stepping-stone. I knew I never wanted to be a classical guitar player. It was always like an academic preparation for a life of what I thought was going to involve being a session musician. I'd heard this term 'session musician' and those people existed in the late 80s and early 90s when I was starting to practice seriously. There was work and that was a viable and realistic potential job.

TH: Purely doing sessions five days a week?

TE: Yeah absolutely. I didn't really know who any session musicians were, this is pre Internet obviously, and I'd just heard from other people that there were these guys that play on all these records. They're not in bands specifically, they're hired by an artist and they make records for people. I suppose in a similar sense to Floyd post Waters; they hired guys in to join the band to do the tours like Guy Pratt, a bass player hero of mine, and in fact I got to play with him here at the last Gaucho gig. That's part of being a session musician, hired in by an artist or a group that's already in existence.

TH: That seems to be the way it's going at the moment these days.

TE: Well this is the thing. The term has been denuded of it's meaning now. I don't think session musicians really exist anymore. There's a handful of guys, maybe two or three guitar players in this country that can make a living purely from doing sessions and by sessions I mean recording commercial music. That's the purist's definition of what it is to be a session musician. John Parricelli, Adam Goldsmith, they do other stuff as well it's not just making records. Mitch Dalton would be the other guy; he's the daddy of the guys that are still around working. They can make a living purely from playing on films, jingles, the odd project for an artist but now you hear my generation and younger talking about doing sessions and what they mean is 'I've been booked to go and do a gig'.

TH: Right. Everyone I've talked to about sessions, it seems to be a big thing because most people think the session World is dead, it's not really happening anymore so people's definition of a session, like you were saying your purist definition that's not really a thing and what it means it so broad now.

TE: Yeah that's what the term originally meant but it's been denuded of meaning. I know in Irish Trad music, people who get together and do jam sessions or informal gigs, I think in that traditions they've called those things sessions for a lot longer than guys that go and do quite famous pop gigs with quite famous pop artist for very little money in big stadiums. That's not really a session in the original sense and yeah, the reality is it's not a viable career option anymore to make a living in studios. That's a sad thing. I think about my heroes, guys like Jay Graydon, Steve Lukather, Paul Jackson Jr. as guitar players and drummers as well, JR and Vinnie, guys who huge chunks of their career have been playing on other people's records and making hits.

TH: My vision of it is that those guys who did do it, they still do do it. I guess the guys who book them are the ones who will always book them, but then there's not many people doing that these days behind them any younger at the moment?

TE: Yeah and even then they're doing it remotely now. Guys in LA will have their home studio set up. It's the same as here; Adam Goldsmith, he's got his home studio set up; he does commercial recordings from home. There's no longer any need to lug amps to a studio even. We've got really good digital modeling gear that people are using at home and it sounds pretty much like a loud real amplifier that's been miced up beautifully in a beautiful room.

TH: Do you do any of that yourself?

TE: Yeah very little. Commercial recordings, like proper sessions, account for probably about five or six percent of my income so it's the smallest part.

TH: That's still a few though, fairly regular?

TE: Yeah, it's okay. Maybe one a month it probably averages out at. It goes in waves. A couple of months ago I had a fortnight where I did quite a few which was unprecedented. That's the way it goes sometimes though. Sometimes there will be a block of things and not necessarily the same projects during a couple of days but different things.

TH: How does it work for you, do you have one producer or one company that you work for or does it vary?

TE: Not really. There are a few people that book the same type of chaps. I'll give you the main example: Rick Clark, who works for a company called Silvascreen, they make sound-alikes of old TV and film music. That's part of what they do, they do loads of stuff apart from that including looking after bands, producing their records, doing distribution and all that sort of stuff. But the stuff that I've done for him and that company has involved, and these are really fun sessions as well, usually large ensembles; big band with a few other instruments. He tends to do the strings in Prague but the big band stuff and rhythm section, keyboards and stuff are done here.

TH: So that's done the old way like you go into Abby Road or AIR?

TE: It's usually Angel Studios and it's really good fun. Quite challenging because the guy that does the charts, he does these laser-precision take downs of old TV and film so they're very precise.

TH: So you've got to play it exactly?

TE: Yeah there's a lot of information on the page and the compound the difficulty Rick is a guitarist as well, he went to Guitar Institute, so he knows exactly what he wants.

TH: So you can't get away with it?

TE: No there's no hiding. I really look forward to those; we've got one in a couple of days time. Rick lives in New York now but he's back to do this project. I'm presuming it will be another album of stuff for library or I think they make a killing on iTunes releasing recreations of old TV and film music.

TH: Really?

TE: Well if people can see something for fifty pence instead of seventy-five pence and they don't know what the difference is then that's a strong incentive for a lot of people. And also they're really good and they sound better than the originals a lot of the time.

TH: That would probably be the point in a way wouldn't it?

TE: Possibly. I think the point is just to make money!

TH: It seems to be with sessions that very few artists do it that way or they don't produce stuff as often so it seems to be that library music, the more I talk to people about it the more I realise, that it's a huge part of the industry. So as you were saying all your sessions are doing library music, do you compose any yourself as well?

TE: No I don't do that, it's something I might get into. I have to confess I'm somewhat of a Luddite when it comes to technology, I've never felt much of an urge to really get the basics of recording down. I've got a simple home set up, but I can barely get Logic working.

TH: Really? That's interesting because guitarists you have pedals and all that stuff. As a drummer I don't touch electronics at all so I don't understand that at all, but that's really interesting.

TE: Well even with the electronics side of things as you said with the pedals and the processing side of being a guitar player, the simpler the better for me. I get paralyzed by the amount of choice. The more parameters there are the more overwhelmed I get and my perfectionism stops me from getting anything done. So I prefer to buy gear that has two or three knobs on it.

TH: Right, so you're not going to turn up with twenty pedals?

TE: I've got shit loads of pedals but I try to do gigs with a distortion pedal, a volume pedal if I really have to and some delay and I'm happy with that. I mean I've got switching systems, I've got loads of digital gear and it's just too much hard work.

TH: It just distracts from everything else?

TE: The main thing that pushes me away from it, and this links with the studio thing as well is I find that I'm sacrificing my valuable practice time. I'm open to the possibility that that will change and I think at some point I will have to take the plunge and really get a good home set up sounding good. At the moment I'm using it more as a just a writing tool and a practice tool, but it's silly to have such a gaping hole in my business as well as practice.

TH: I mean you seem to be doing incredibly well even with, if you think it's a hole, you seem to be doing so well without that.

TE: It's a question of priorities isn't it and I think the older you get and the busier you get you have to triage everything. What do you want most immediately in your playing? Be honest about those things and allocate time and effort accordingly and for me at the moment I want to be really good at playing jazz so that's the bulk of what I practice.

TH: That's interesting. We've gone off topic from miles ago but so you learn classical guitar and you were in Wales and then you came to London to study?

TE: That was always the intention.

TH: How did you know about it, because a lot of people are unaware?

TE: Well I won this competition when I was a teenager for electric guitar players; it was called the Matthew Pritchard award or something. I sent a demo tape to what was then called Guitar Institute in Acton because this guy Shaun Baxter, who I idolised, was the head honcho there and the price was you get to spend a week there and have lessons with him and loads of other teachers and use the facilities and it was all paid for by the Musicians Union. They give you a years membership, bought you a train ticket, gave you a wad of cash, put you up in digs, it was wicked.

TH: Sounds amazing!

TE: It was great and I was still doing my A Levels at this point, so basically I bunked off school for a week around the time that the exams were about to kick off so some teachers weren't particularly happy but fuck that, who cares about that shit? I always knew that I wanted to go to London, my parents lived and worked here in the 70s and so did a lot of other family members so I'd heard the stories. I'd heard about places like Ronnie Scott's and about the music scene and it was impressed upon me that this is really the centre of everything music wise in this country. There's stuff going on everywhere but if you want to make a living as a jobbing musician I think this is the only place to be. And on top of that I always had this romantic attraction and fascination with this place being brought up here as a kid and being mystified by Soho really enhanced the pull that this place has.

TH: So you always wanted to come to London?

TE: Always wanted to come here and the thing that I wasn't so sure about was studying jazz because my allegiance at that time was to rock music. I wanted to be principally a rock guitar player that was doing commercial recordings and playing with artists making records and all that sort of stuff.

TH: So you still had the session musician image in mind?

TE: Absolutely. I spent about three years getting into jazz from an interesting perspective. Two of my favorite guitar players early on were Joe Satriani and

Steve Vai; rock guys, shredders. I was obsessed from about the age of eleven or twelve, that's when I started practicing seriously staying up all night.

TH: That is quite young actually.

TE: Yeah but simply because I wanted to emulate Vai. I'd heard about mammoth ten-hour practice routines, my teacher at the time in Cardiff, Paul Goodyear, he told me about all this stuff. He was showing me the stuff that Vai practiced; there was this thing that Vai published in a magazine a long time ago which was basically the plan of his ten-hour routine, it showed you everything that he used to practice and I'd try and get through all of that sort of stuff. But in a very immature way; I was purely concerned with technique.

TH: That's still a very intense thing to do at that age.

TE: Yeah, massively.

TH: And you said you did that consistently for about three years?

TE: Well as much as I could, I also liked sleeping and drinking at that point as well. I was into school as well, I was still quite academic, not in the sense that I was particularly up for going to lessons, I saw that as eating into my practice time, but I was very into reading. That's still a huge part of my life and that's something I dabbled with, I toyed with the idea of doing a philosophy degree instead of going to Music College.

TH: That's really interesting.

TE: It's still something I'd like to do, a philosophy or English degree.

TH: Well I know you do a blog as well, right?

TE: Yeah, I mean I've been inactive for quite a while now partly because of laziness and making excuses and procrastinating but also because I've had a busy spate of either working or holidaying. Man, it was hard work doing that blog but I found it really helpful. What I did was I used it as a tool to basically kick me up the arse to get a little EP done, actually do some writing and force me to do a load of stuff and essentially try to apply some of the organisational and motivational stuff I'd learned from Tim Ferris. Have you checked him out?

TH: Yes, Four-hour Work Week, amazing book.

TE: Precisely. It was Mike Outram, the amazing guitar player, another one of my heroes who also lives down the road from me in Ealing; he introduced me to the Tim Ferris books. He said 'you've got to start thinking about this stuff. This is amazing, this is transformative stuff, this is stuff to apply to your practice.' And more so that Four-Hour Work Week it was Four-Hour Chef, I think that's the one. So the blog was effectively an application of the rules that he suggests, the overarching one being tracking everything that you do. If you want to control the

variables that either lead to success or failure you need to track everything you do. So I started keeping practice diaries, I'd always kept a loose practice diary but from a couple of years ago it became very systematic and that's such a valuable tool, man.

TH: Really?

TE: Super, super valuable; it keeps you honest. On a Sunday afternoon look at your diary for the week ahead and fill out your diary in realistic places where you can get practice done. You've got all your work things, your real life commitments that you have to do as well. Work your practice around that and again, be sensible about what you do where. If you've got five minutes before something, if I'm teaching at College and I've got five minutes before a student turns up I'm not going to start writing a composition in that five minutes; it's not going to be an effective use of five minutes. Well, that's not a hard and fast rule, inspiration might strike and you might come up with a riff or something in five minutes. Fine, record it on your phone, done. But usually what I'll do is I can do my five-minute pattern practice in that time. Another thing I got from Outram was tipping the balance in my practice away from preparing to do playing and actually playing music; practicing doing music.

TH: That is a big distinction isn't it?

TE: It's massive and a huge part of my practicing life has been massively inefficient because I've been preparing to do instead of actually doing. So what I mean by that is spending hours on end trying to get patterns through all keys, really mammoth tasks that just burns you out and it's really something that I think you should be doing piecemeal in a consistent way. Mike said 'why don't you try doing five minutes a day of something. Don't try and get through all key on something if it's something unfamiliar, set yourself realistic goals; see if you can get through three keys in five minutes. Repeat it the next day, see if you can get through another three keys on day three and build it up piecemeal instead of burning yourself out'. And be really rigorous with this because the insistence on capping these things at five minutes, and I consider that type of practice to be a bit of an addiction for me.

TH: Like five minutes on the timer?

TE: Well I mean pattern practice in general is something I'm quite obsessive about. I find it's meditative; it's a very satisfying experience for me, but there's huge negatives with that. There's no music in that. It's very helpful and I think pattern practice is essential and there's huge amounts of valuable stuff that you can get that informs your improvising. Look at Michael Brecker, my current hero musician, the guy that I idolise that most, he is for me the epitome of someone that has used pattern practice to an incredibly successful end because you end up with music that has these flowing logical motif based ideas that have this sense of coherence. A solo from him is glued together but the ability to manipulate themes and I think that in a large part comes from the type of pattern practice that he was doing. In fact I will put out a blog on this because there are a

few lectures that you can see from Brecker, on YouTube there's one North Texas, early 80s and there's another one at a Canadian University as well where he talked about the way that he pattern practices. Loads of those guys did it the same way like Dick Oatts, Jerry Bergonzi: just any seemingly arbitrary set of intervals and playing them from the lowest point on your instrument to the highest and then reversing it and then working out how many permutations of that you can do and what it's doing is it's giving you control over melodic themes. So when you're improvising the idea is that instead of it coming from an academic rational type thing that's going to end up sounding very cold and systematic and patterny, which you don't want, you end up with this really flowing sense of coherence in the same way that we speak in sentences, hopefully, that make sense, that are coherent they belong in larger frameworks. Paragraphs that detail one concept, one idea. And I think that sort of practice gives you that conversational development of distinct ideas. So there are huge benefits to that sort of practice.

TH: Did they do it in a similar way restrictive time wise?

TE: I don't know he wasn't that specific on how long he would do that stuff for. I'd have to check, I don't remember him saying 'I did this for an hour and then moved on to something else.' I think that big thing to take from it was that it was the smallest parts of the days practice and for a large part of my practice history it's been the biggest part. You end up, you don't practice any music, so now by restricting yourself to five minutes you ensure that you're focusing on what you're suppose to be doing, the main course if you like, which is getting down to practicing music. That's much less safe space really practicing to do music because it's hard and I think to self analyse why my patterny practice, the academic side of things, was dominant it's probably because it's safer. You're secure in the fact that you can get through this where as practicing improvising is tough. You fuck things up a lot, it can be quite demoralising, and it's a messy process getting down to the business of doing music. It's not a perfect rendition of performance like pattern practice can be but that's the point because we have to go and do gigs, we have to go and improvise in front of people and we have to get used to fucking things up; going for things you don't make, that's part of the excitement of the music. So it makes complete sense to at least try to synthesize that experience in the practice room. Just going for it, you have to get used to what that mental state feels like otherwise you're going to feel really out of your depth on stage.

TH: I know a lot of people, myself included especially at College, you can go into a practice room for an hour and you can do ninety percent of it as pattern practice like you say and technically you're working on it and doing stuff and then you come out after the hour and you don't really feel like you've done anything.

TE: Yeah. Well your chops feel good. There are superficial benefits, I think, from that sort of practice but they're not deep.

TH: I think a lot of people get stuck in a repetitive cycle of doing that and not really knowing how to expand out of it.

TE: Well because I think for a lot of us by being musicians who have signed up for four years of shutting yourself away in a dark room with an instrument I think a lot of us have compulsive tendencies and going through a daily set of exercises is like a sort of observance. It becomes habit very quickly and I find it quite addictive. So if you cap it to five minutes, the other main benefit that Mike told me about was that what you're going to do is you're going to squeeze every drop of potential out of that five minutes; you're really going to focus. If you're big into chops development and patterny type stuff then you're really going to take full advantage of every second there, which you might not do if you've set aside an hour to do that. I've been experimenting with that for a couple of years now and it's had transformative affect on my playing.

TH: Really?

TE: Yeah massively so.

TH: It's interesting because a couple of tutors I've had like Trevor Tomkins and James Maddren; they're both very big into that whole thing. James is very much like you're saying, he'll just sit down for five minutes do something and do it really intensely for five minutes then go and make a cup of tea or something, come back, do another five minutes but it's laser-like focus. Trev as well, he was saying to me that there's some research from Stanford that he always cites with stuff like this, saying that you do forty-five minutes and after forty-five minutes your focus trails off if you don't take a break so he's very much into that as well. Rather than sit down in an hour and do two things half an hour each do five lots of ten with a ten minute break in the middle.

TE: Absolutely, I mean forty-five minutes I think is massively optimistic; I would say four to five minutes as being the top. It's because of habituation, that's the problem. If you think of your learning potential on a graph over time, your peak of productivity is going to be in the first two or three minutes then the arse drops out of it straight away and I think a big part of this is to do with the problem of habituation. So the reason why the first few minutes of your practice are going to be most productive is because you have to install this booting-up software to engage in the task. So there's much more processing power firing in your brain within the first few minutes and as you start getting comfortable, as the habituation kicks in your productivity drops out. It's the reason why you can practice something loads one day and you'll feel like you've got it under the fingers and then come back the next morning and it's disappeared; it's because the learning that you've done the day before is superficial. So with the five-minute blocks the idea is that what you're practicing is you're practice starting the task, which is the hardest thing. We all know that don't we, especially if it's a new bit of information that you're working on, it's baby steps to start off with. You're really struggling, you're really having to think and yes it gets comfortable after a while but it's that comfortable bit that you should be worried about. So you're better off, as you say, instead of doing half an hour, break it up into five-minute chunks. Stand and look out the window for thirty seconds, walk around the room, it's better for your posture anyway if you're sitting down.

TH: There's that thing of, I can't remember where I read it now, but it's not how long you spend on a task it's the amount of times that you relearn it, like you're saying when you restart it, going through that process again. So if you had half an hour doing one thing and you spread that half an hour in five-minute chunks over six days you'd probably be much better in those six days than you would in the half an hour on one day.

TE: Absolutely and another good thing to add to that as well is let's say you're working on your time, swing time, eight note feel and you've got the click set to give you one click per bar on an off-beat somewhere and you're working on the consistency of your eight notes. So you pick a tune, you might want to pick Cherokee or something like that, set your timer, get your metronome going, five minutes of trying to play a couple of choruses without your time phasing. Five minutes is up, maybe spend some time to write some observations about that in your practice diary, walk around the room, look out the window, go back and do something else; a totally different task. Maybe something hearing based, sit at the piano and sing scales, sing arpeggios or in fact maybe you could link it to the tune that you're learning. Play a walking bass line or just the root movement and try and sing the thirds of each chord for five minutes; really good practice. Pick a different interval every day, try and get through the whole sequence singing the thirteenth of each chord. And cycle that for an hour because again the most powerful learning that you're doing is in the starting of the process. If you do that every day, man, that's powerful learning I think. I don't think you should be doing too many things at once, certainly two complimentary but distinct activities in one practice session. I think that's a powerful way of learning.

TH: So if you're sitting on a Sunday evening like you're saying and you're planning your week and you see that you've got an hour block and you're like 'I can do some good practice in here' how would you plan that before, would you get like you say two tasks?

TE: Good question. So I'll tell you what I'm practicing at the moment. I went for a lesson with Mike Walker a few months ago and I said to him my priority in my playing is time and hearing at the moment, it has been for quite a while, and I played for him and he saw through my playing within thirty seconds and it was a transformative experience. Within seconds of hearing me play he told me stuff that I could improve that I wasn't even aware of and he made me a lot more honest about the stuff that I was aware of in my playing that I wanted to develop, rectify or improve drastically; things that I'm not happy about that I suppose I've been covering up for. An interesting thing he said was to split your time with the metronome fifty-fifty, so however much time you spend with the metronome, make sure you're spending at least that much time without the metronome, which is something I've never really done. I suppose that's one of my long term goals is being able to do the cadenza or intro thing that Chris Potter and Brecker do where they're like trains those guys; the time is so strong, there's such a sense of authority there and being able to improvise so beautifully, so melodically and harmonically clear and rich but within this overall framework of being so groovy and so strong and so consistent. So Mike said 'well it's obvious you need to start

working without the metronome much more than you're doing'. So that's what I'm doing now and another thing was articulation. There was a bias in my playing towards the upbeats in my eight note lines; I was tending to consistently accent the upbeats. So he said 'listen to Parker more deeply', I've done a lot of Parker transcription but again wasn't really that conscious of the way he articulates within the lines, where those accents are the give this texture within the eight notes. Mike said really simple exercises, just picking one downbeat within the bar, say it's beat three for example. So I've been doing it with Giant Steps with the Jamey Aebersold slow Giant Steps, and trying to play continuous eight notes and working on my line construction, playing clear harmony but at the same time getting myself used to accenting places that I've been ignoring all these years and adding another level of richness to my improvising. So you can start off with that, pick a different beat every day; beat three one day, beat four one day, beat two one day. So I'll do a little time thing, I might play Cherokee with the click dropping out. I use, I don't know if you know the Polynome app?

TH: No I don't.

TE: Oh man, it's fantastic. A guy called Joe Crabtree; a British drummer has developed this app called Polynome, fabulous. It's really good for my polyrhythmic stuff that I'm working on as well because you can set up these playlists where you can have really complex metric modulations based on things like quintuplets.

TH: So you can set them four bars of this, four bars of that?

TE: Exactly, and I'm going to do a blog on this as well because unless he's already done an update on this, what I'd like him to do is do an update where the shifts are random between two statuses, if you like. So this one pattern I'm working on at the moment is a quintuplet thing, playing quintuplets in four-four but then the modulation happens so the quintuplet becomes eight notes so you go into five-four at a slower tempo it feels like, but the unifying rate is the quintuplet. I've got it set at the moment to a fixed amount; eight bars of one and two bars of five-four of the other and it would be nice if it would jump arbitrarily so you can get used to having the rug pulled from under your feet.

TH: And that is more like a live situation isn't it?

TE: Absolutely. My pal that I work with and that I'm making a record with at the moment, Pete Zeldman is another hero of mine, he's the world authority on polyrhythmic playing and playing with him you've really got to dig your heels in because he can just manipulate the time in such mind-boggling ways that it's very disorientating. So baby steps with that is just to get used to the basic metric modulations that drummers do.

TH: I saw on your blog that you're doing stuff with him. Have you got anything out between the two of you or is it just a project?

TE: Not yet, it's an ongoing long term project.

TH: Are you aiming to eventually recording something and put something out?

TE: We've started recording, yeah. We're going to put it out and it's crazy. We've got one, it's twenty minutes long this track and we have Mike Mondasi come and play bass on it and it's bonkers, but we're going to layer it up, it's a piecemeal. Pete will have a concept based on displacement, metric modulation or polyrhythm and I'll come up with some sort of riff for it and we have these elaborate compositions that develop out of that. It's groove music with a lot of rhythmic language.

TH: That sounds incredible is one track is twenty minutes long.

TE: Yeah there's a lot of stuff but that's why it's a big part of my practice, the rhythmic vocabulary thing and the time thing because it has to be to play with him because he's very demanding you know, it can't budge because the illusions don't work then. The modulations don't work if your sixteenth note isn't ridged so it's a massive challenge. So with the practice thing I'll flip between those two types of things, I'll do a rhythmic type exercise with one click per bar on a sixteenth note up beat or something like that, and then swap to an articulation type exercise. With that though you're actually improvising as well it's not just a cold academic exercise. I'm finding that quite challenging, playing through something with a lot of changes like Giant Steps, playing continuous eight notes through it and making sure that you're articulating different places and maybe doing two articulations in a bar; one on, one off. Alternating two bar phrases perhaps; you can have the first bar as beat two and the and of four and the second bar of that phrase you could do and of one and beat three, try and do that, have that as a framework for improvisation. That's a real test of how internalized the changes are for you because at the front of your mind is going to be this requirement to play certain accents which means that the stuff in your lower levels of consciousness are taking over there to deal with the harmonic and melodic aspect of the playing.

TH: So it's like two things at once?

TE: Exactly. Juggling multiple balls, I think that's a really important thing for practice and more efficient time wise as well. Yes it's much more of a challenge but it keeps you focused, do it in small manageable chunks and you're saving time.

TH: So you're really into jazz now and you're working on that a lot and you went to jazz College?

TE: Yeah I went to Trinity. I went off on a massive tangent there because I was going to say that the thing that lead me to jazz was the harmony used by guys like Satriani and more so Steve Vai. My teacher at the time in Cardiff said 'this is modal harmony, we need to learn the modes and start exploring these colours because this is what these guys use to improvise over, this is what they use to write with.' And that necessarily lead to an exploration of jazz.

TH: Okay. So then you went to London to do jazz?

TE: Yeah I went to Trinity for two years.

TH: What kind of things were you practicing?

TE: Bebop.

TH: Just straight up?

TE: Yeah.

TH: I know for a lot of people that's the first thing you get pushed towards when you go into College, from my experience and other people's experience, that's the basis when you go to a jazz College, you learn all of that.

TE: Yeah because I felt totally overwhelmed and I felt like the poorest player there because I was totally new to it. I'd started listening seriously during A levels and lower sixth, there was an amazing teacher I had there called Adrian Colbourne who not only introduced me to proper jazz recordings but Classical music as well, which I'd never been interested in, film music and musicals; West Side Story in particular. That was the gateway and again it was purely because Steve Vai says that West Side Story, he cites Bernstein as one of the massive inspirations in his writing and you can hear it. He's very fond of the Lydian sound, it's a colour that he uses huge amounts and the link there is with Zappa as well, Zappa uses that sound huge amounts, and he got that from Bernstein from West Side Story. It's the principle modal light motif of West Side Story; the tritone interval in the context of this Lydian harmony like is Maria.

TH: Yeah it's all over the place the whole show.

TE: Absolutely. So yeah, I went to Trinity and they had this teacher-student jam session on day one and I was too afraid to get up and play because everyone was playing proper lines and all this chromaticism and stuff that I'd never really explored. So that first year was spending all day, Parker, I did loads of Parker transcriptions. The book that really helped me was Jerry Bergonzi's jazz line book about the formal rules of chromaticism in Bebop. And hanging out with people who were much better than me and them introducing me to records that I needed to check out and I was slowly building up a record collection and becoming more and more obsessed with jazz.

TH: It seems like it's always been a kind of obsession for you?

TE: From probably about the age of sixteen or seventeen and it was tentative to start off with, it was more of an academic interest. I wasn't moved by the music initially, I was interested in the music. I was mystified by the colours harmonically that were used because in my head I wanted to be able to write and play like Vai.

TH: So you were still learning jazz with that end goal in mind?

TE: Yeah absolutely and the balance has tipped now where Bop playing is still a huge part of my identity as a musician, it's a huge part of my daily listening and I still find it joyous to listen to but maybe part of it is that because I grew up with it and it's something that I gained facility with quite early on it feels natural, whereas jazz is something I have to constantly work at because I came to it very late.

TH: Is that why you're attracted to it, because it's a challenge?

TE: Oh yeah the challenge aspect of it is a massive attraction definitely. I felt I caught up fairly quickly actually, that first year of Trinity was great and it wasn't so much in the second year. At that time I was spending more time at the Academy doing musical theatre stuff, I think Trinity has a musical theatre department now but they didn't back then, and there were only two guitar players on the jazz course at the Academy when I was at Trinity, so this was 2001. It was Vernon Christiansen, who's such a lovely chap, he was lovely to me and he's an amazing player, real inspiration, and Jacob Chrisguards who's amazing as well, he's a famous player now; he always wanted to be a rock guitar player although he was amazing at playing jazz and they weren't really interested in doing the musical theatre thing. So I used to go up there and do their theatre stuff and there would be guys from the jazz course going in and doing that; guys like Tom Mason who I met there who's a phenomenal bass player, and hanging out with those guys and I preferred the atmosphere there and I liked the idea of being around those guys who were so much better than me that were dragging me along and really kicking me up the arse. The work ethic there was different.

TH: I think that is a big thing actually, people that I know at Academy since my time, it's not that people don't work at the other Colleges but Academy seems to be incredibly focused on everything they do.

TE: Yeah the work ethic generally in the jazz department when I was there and prior to my being a student there; me going up there purely as hired help to go and play in the musicals that they put on there, most people on the course there were hard workers. Whereas when I was at Trinity the work ethic was generally slacker. There were massive exceptions there, don't get me wrong. Also the numbers were larger as well, I think that's a big part of it. Rory Simmons was in my year and we lived together for a bit, which was hilarious, and he worked his arse off. He also partied his arse off as well but he was phenomenal. Andy Davis, both those guys are proper jazz trumpet players, top of the game, they worked incredibly hard. But there was a lot of mucking around there as well.

TH: That seems to be a big thing putting in the work, obviously you need to put in the work but there's always people who get picked up and do stuff or people who supposedly don't need to practice as much and they still sound great, but it does seem to be a thread that you just can't get away from; you need to put in the

work if you want to do it. Do you feel like it's important to put in the work at a younger age? Because people I talk to like Ralph Salmins has said that he recons if you go to College until you're about twenty-fiveish, that's the golden window of you can practice your arse off all day and then after that point you're going to be busy because you're going to be good enough by that point and you're going to have less time to practice.

TE: So what you're saying is that you hit a certain age and there's normal life requirements that preclude the possibility of practicing to the degree that you can when you're in College.

TH: Yeah more factors come into it.

TE: I think that's generally fair, I think that's true but it's not hard and fast. If you really want to be a World-class jazz guitar player, shut yourself away for a few years and do what's required to be a World-class jazz guitar player. In theory you can do that at any age but there are caveats there aren't there; you need to be independently wealthy if you're going to do that. You can't go and do a day job and learn to be a player of that caliber. Although saying that, Wes Montgomery had a factory job apparently with a large family to support and he still managed to get his practice in and become the best.

TH: Well there are always exceptions but that's a big factor for people my age and I'm sure it is the same for you as well, especially when you're in London because it's so expensive. It's quite hard to financially support yourself while you're at College purely through music so I know a lot of people who have had to do other jobs. So you did two years at Trinity?

TE: I did two years at Trinity and fortuitously I got a gig around the time that I was looking to sack College off.

TH: Were you already fed up with it after two years?

TE: Not College in general, particularly Trinity; I wasn't happy there and the idea was that I was going to transfer to the Academy where I feel at home and I'm going to maximize my potential there. So I got this gig doing a touring show around the World.

TH: Great!

TE: Yeah it came at just the right time as well. My friend Matt McDonough, who's a brilliant drummer, he suggested me for the gig. This is the guy who played drums in my audition at Trinity and I thought 'wow this guy is brilliant' because he was into the funk thing as well and had great chops and when I turned up on day one I was like 'right I need to find this guy because that's the guy I want to play with' and they said 'he's bugged off, he's on tour doing this gig, he's left College'. So I ended up playing with him, he got me on this gig and it was brilliant for loads of reasons. Health wise it was great because two years at Trinity there was a lot of drinking and messing around, all that sort of stuff and I got really

into the fitness thing because we had to dance on stage, it was a stage show, you had to be physically very strong to do it.

TH: Full on every night?

TE: Yeah and it was such an amazing experience to be away from home like that as well because everything was taken care of. We did a couple of months at the Banff Arts Centre rehearsing this show, which is so beautiful. They have a jazz summit there that Dave Liebman runs every year. It's up in the Canadian Rockies, the most breathtaking scenery, they've got a gym there, an Olympic swimming pool, you live in these little chalets and everything is done for you because the idea is that artists of all flavors submit a proposal to go there to work on a project, you have poets there, ballet dancers, musicals will be there.

TH: Sounds like artistic Heaven.

TE: Well it is! And the food is great, they take care of all of that. There's an amazing library there, that was the thing, that was my evenings off; there listening to records and getting into American Literature. Again, this is the early days of Internet, certainly before Spotify and things like that so this library at Banff they had a huge record collection, loads of stuff that I'd heard about that you couldn't get hold of or you couldn't afford. So that was beautiful and then going on tour and I did loads of practice while I was away as well.

TH: Did you have a lot of time to practice with your schedule?

TE: Yeah. Not on the travel days so much but there were a few places where we had a week there or longer. New Zealand we had over a week, San Francisco we had over a week, and Singapore we had over a week. So there, go out and explore and enjoy all the lovely food and things like that but you could get a good solid day of practice in as well before going to do a show and you can train as well physically what you're working on.

TH: Musically, what was the genre of the show?

TE: It was a really mixture of things. It was a Canadian stage show with loads of violins and stuff like that so I suppose the core theme of it was Bluegrass type stuff but there was a real mixture of stuff. There was a Supertramp tune that we did, there was a version of Live and Let Die so loads of different stuff. Rocky stuff, ballady acoustic stuff and there was this really difficult guitar feature which was a Bluegrass thing with loads of alternate picking on a big steel string guitar it was really difficult to play, all sixteenth note stuff. There's a record that you can get.

TH: What's it called?

TE: Vagabond Tales I think, the show was called Barrage. We recorded the album at Banff at the recording studio there at the Arts Centre. It was a really good show for working your technique generally, nice and broad, loads of different things, you couldn't slack off.

TH: So what were you practicing at the same time as having to do all this?

TE: I remember precisely what I did at this time. There was a pattern that I was working on, an a-rhythmic grouping thing. It was diatonic sevenths arpeggios with different chromatic approach tones to make in an a-rhythmic grouping. So I was working on cool things with fives and sevens and I transcribed Chic Corea's solo on Matrix, from Now He Sings, Now He Sobs and apart from that me, the drummer and the bass player, any town we were in we would go and find jam sessions and stuff to go and try and play. More like funk things that standards and stuff but we'd practice together away from the show. So jazz language stuff, it was transcription and technique I was working on a lot then.

TH: How long were you away for, how long was the tour?

TE: Nine months in total including the rehearsal time.

TH: Fairly long time then, pretty much the year. Did you go back to education as soon as you finished?

TE: No I got back and I got a touring show here in the UK; the Who's Tommy, the rock opera. So I did that for eight months, something like that, and then went into third year at the Academy.

TH: So even after you'd done two years...

TE: I think it was closer to three in the end.

TH: Three years of full time work you still felt like you wanted to go back?

TE: That was always the aim and that never left me, I'd do it again happily.

TH: So you went back to Academy because that was where you wanted to go and then was it still a four-year course at that point?

TE: Well the idea was for me was to pick up where I left off, so do the third and fourth year, graduate and get the degree. But Gerard Precenser who was head of the course back then, said 'why don't you do the old-style diploma, two years, because you can pick and choose the modules that you want to do and you don't have to do any of the written work. So keep it quiet but you can have your freelance career and get a qualification.' Which was brilliant and I would recommend that to anyone, especially if you're working already.

TH: Did you find that quite hard to mix the two; working with your stuff for Academy?

TE: Not really because I'd been away for quite a long time, started at the Academy and I didn't have any gigs. I was skint as well, it was hard because three years of living it up and going back to being not just a student but a student that

was three or four years older than everyone else that was acclimatized to a higher standard of living, I was back to proper poor student territory. But that was good, it focused the mind and there was less distraction that way and I really got the most out of it.

TH: I feel like this is a really crucial stage, it's the stage I'm currently at as well; as a student when you leave College there's a lot of people I know that are finding it very tough switching from being a student to being a proper freelance professional. My view of it is that I've been splitting myself having a freelance career and doing College for the four years trying to build it up so at this stage I'm in quite a good position but I know a lot of people, like you were saying who are really focused on their stuff while they're at College and then when they leave College find it quite hard. So what position were you in after having finished Academy? What happened for the next couple of months?

TE: I was in an uncommonly strong position because I was doing a West End show that I started before I finished.

TH: Oh right, so were you still doing all the stuff at Academy, the musical theatre like you were before?

TE: Yeah. Mary Hammond who used to be head of the course wrote my reference to go to the Academy and that was my repayment for playing for them over the years. I mean, the repayment really was the networking and learning the art of playing that type of music and being able to read and follow a conductor. That was super valuable and I encourage my students to approach places like the Academy theater department or any institution that puts on productions, even if it's amateur dramatic societies, and volunteer yourself for their productions. Don't do it for free, at least get your expenses covered and bear in mind you're not going to make a lot of money doing this, but that's where you learn your craft.

TH: That's interesting that you say that. So you were always very into theatre and obviously you've done a lot of theatre productions since leaving?

TE: Yeah I never knew that it was a viable option as a teenager, even when I got to A levels, this guy that I was talking about, Adrian Colbourne, that introduced me to musicals, I would never have even entertained the idea of listening to a musical. But what he was into was really classy; Sondheim and Bernstein and stuff like that, amazing tunes, amazing orchestrations beautiful music, but I didn't realise that that was an actual viable career option in London, I didn't realise. But that was one of the lessons I learned and I suppose the silver lining of the death of the traditional session industry is that when the studios died and when that scene fell apart there was a migration of those players to the West End, you know, follow the money. So consequently the standard of playing shot through the roof and that why those jobs, they're very much the holy grail of jobs for jobbing musicians now and I've notice it, over the last couple of years of teaching, where I've come across students now who's sole aim after a three-year course of studying is the end up in the West End playing musicals. I don't think

that's healthy but it's a sign of the times. I think it's economics and of course the fact that there are exceptionally good players doing that line of work now because it's so well paid, it's consistentish, it's the most regular things you're going to get apart from teaching as a jobbing musician. So I can understand that there's a lot of interest in that line of work now.

TH: There's so much money in the whole theatre business, it seems to have grown exponentially in recent years.

TE: Yes and no. So their profits increase every year, it's humongous. In 2008, the financial crash, the West End theatre made something like half a billion in profit, it was huge. Economic downturn is good news for theatre. I don't understand the mechanisms here but one theory is that instead of going out every night and chipping away at a few pints people will save up now for one special night out at the theatre when times are hard.

TH: But even then the tickets for certain shows are really expensive.

TE: So expensive. It's huge business so the people that own the shows are making a packet but bear in mind that they try to make the band smaller every year. There are exceptions, I think 42nd Street is a large band as it was originally intended, our show is relatively big by today's standards and that's nine players.

TH: And that's considered quite big?

TE: Yeah. Ten years ago that was the norm so it is getting smaller because that's economics. There will be a bean counter and if he's worth his money he'll be looking at these spreadsheets and not thinking 'that's a human being's livelihood there', all he sees is numbers and his job is to maximize profits for the producer, which necessarily means keeping the bands as small as possible.

TH: But then on the flip side of that, the payment for the bands is, like you're saying, one of the best paid things you can get as a musician.

TE: Yeah it is, but again don't forget that the person paying you is fighting to keep that as low as possible. Every year there's prolonged not just polite discussion but arguments about the terms of our contracts and how much we should be paid. It's a constant battle and understandably; that's business. So it's not to be taken for granted. The people that are paying you, they're not benefactors, they don't want to pay you that money and I'd imagine they don't think you're worth that much; the cynic in me says that, and they want more from you every year.

TH: Does it fluctuate? You've done it for a number of years now, have you seen it fluctuate or is it going in one direction?

TE: So I've been on Book of Mormon for four and a half years now and the good thing about being on a show that runs for a long time is that the money does go up every year, it won't go down. There are exceptions; I heard that the Jersey Boys band, I used to do that gig when it was originally at the Prince Edward

Theatre. That's the most money I've ever made on a show and it's probably the most money I will ever make on a show.

TH: Why was that?

TE: Because not only was I playing the maximum four instruments; there's a cap on the doubles that you can do and you were handsomely paid for that anyway, but the guitarist had to go on stage in emergencies and play the second drum kit part.

TH: Oh I wondered because I saw the show and saw that it was two drummers.

TE: Yeah so it's an actor-musician who does it but if he's off for whatever reason; he could be sick or if he's on holiday, then guitar two goes up and plays drums two. So there's a supplementary fee for that, costume fee and there's also a scene like an Italian restaurant scene, where one of the waiters plays a mandolin. Again it's an actor-musician, they can't get all of his understudies to learn that so you play it from the pit if he's off so there's another supplementary fee for that. So on top of your basic, if those two people are on holiday and you're playing mandolin and drums for a week, it's a good earner. But this is the thing; when that show moved from that theatre to the Piccadilly Theatre I think they were very naughty and they ended the contracts, started new contracts, which means there was effectively a re-negotiated lower fee.

TH: This must happen all over the place when they move?

TE: I it's more common on tours I think.

TH: Have you ever done any tours?

TE: Yeah well the only one I did was that Tommy; that's the only UK tour I've done.

TH: So you've been in town ever since?

TE: Pretty much. It hasn't been consistent; there have been gaps of three years of not having a show of my own and depping for people. Before Mormon I had three years of depping and the show I did before that was a brief stint of Hair at the Gielgud where I played with Neal Wilkinson. You know Neal?

TH: Yeah, incredible.

TE: Man, my favorite drummer. He's the best guy. Talking about learning stuff from hanging out with people, he's your man to tell you about records to listen to and he'll point things out to you.

TH: Is he on something at the moment? He wasn't doing Beautiful was he?

TE: Yeah, there you go.

TH: Yeah. We had, I can't remember his name now the keys MD for Beautiful, but he came into Guildhall and he literally said the same thing; 'this guy, it's just like a record swap,' every week they go in and he gives them so much stuff and was like 'that's one of the main things, one of the best things about being on the show is that.' Just like you're saying about talking to people and what you get to listen to as well.

TE: I think that's something; that you can always tell the people that are super serious are the ones that are always talking about music and Neal's really interesting because he doesn't really talk about drums that much. If you first met him and you didn't know who he was you probably wouldn't know that he's a drummer but he just talks about records. He talks about listening, I think his thing is listening; he's a deep listener, spends all his time listening and loving being a listener and that's why he's got such a wealth; he's got this library, this encyclopedia in his head of everything and he's got the facility honed over decades to recreate all of that and then permutations of everything and that's why he's the ultimate studio player.

TE: But like you're saying, a lot of the studio guys they're now in the West End and I know because I've done quite a few Amdram things as well and I'm quite interested in all that stuff, I'd love to do it one day, but it's like you were saying before there's so many extra skills that you don't learn in any other area, I don't think. Because you've got to be able to read, you've got to be able to follow and you've got to stay focused and there are so many things.

TE: Yeah so the following thing is more important than the reading because I think there's a bit of a misconception about the essential nature of reading in theatre because if you're a dep or it's your gig and you're sent the music in advance you don't necessarily have to be able to read music to go and do that. I just don't think it's particularly safe because if something goes wrong during a show and the MD has to shout bar numbers to you, if you don't know where you are and you're doing it off-book or even if someone pointed to where you are on a page and you can't read music, you're fucked. You'd have to pick it up where you hear it.

TH: Do you know people who do that?

TE: I know one guy.

TH: And he does it effectively enough?

TE: Yeah.

TH: That's quite an incredible skill to have I would imagine, to learn a whole show like that.

TE: Yeah I know one guy who does it that way but most people are fairly strong readers. As I say, the guys that are doing it, a lot of them migrated from being

full-time studio players where reading is essential; that's where you can't not be a reader. Well again there are exceptions of course; if you're making pop records like Lukather playing on Thriller or stuff like that or a Boz Scaggs record, I doubt there's going to be any written music for that. That sort of thing they go in and they do a quick take-down of what they've got already or someone will shout some chords at him or he just hears it and it just pours out of him, you don't have to be able to read.

TH: But that again is such a skill to have I'm sure not many people have the skill to that level to be able to go into a studio, listen to something once and then do it.

TE: But again I think if you do it for ten years and you're doing it six days a week, out of necessity you're going to get good at it in the same way that an editor, out of necessity, will get good at reading things fast; speed reading. If you've got to read every newspaper, a load of magazines and five novels in a week you end up being fast out of necessity and I think that's why it's certainly a huge contributing factor to the skill set that Lukather has or Jay Graydon has even though they have very different approaches. Spending all that time in the studio listening to yourself for ten years, it's effectively research and development. You go and play on someone's record, you lay a track down, you go and listen to it and you have that objective perspective then 'that works, that doesn't' and then formulating these little rules for yourself and you can see it in their playing. There's a formula, certainly with Jay Graydon, he knows that there are things that just work in certain contexts and effectively they become licks or templates of ideas. I teach a class on this at LCCM and I'm going to do it at Guildhall next year with some of the guitar players.

TH: That's a big thing, loads of people hate listening to themselves when they initially start doing it because when you record yourself it's so blindingly obvious where your weaknesses are. I started doing it for just the last year of College and it's so beneficial. Do you do it for yourself in practice?

TE: Every day. It has to be a core component of your playing because it's the only way to be objective about your playing. I'm not aware of things while I'm in the act and it's interesting how it flips as well. I tend to find that the things I think are shit actually don't sound that bad and the things that I think sound good really aren't cutting it, when I'm in the act and it's only listening back to it that you will realise that. That's why I've got a basic home recording set up, is to record myself doing stuff so I can really work out what I'm getting right and what I'm not doing so well and what things work as well.

TH: It's a lot easier to do it these days as well. Microphones aren't massively expensive or you can just plug straight in.

TE: If I'm away from home I just use voice memo recorder on my phone. You have to turn whatever metronome you've got going on right down but just play acoustically and record three minutes of you playing, listen to it, make some notes. Those three minutes is better than an hour of slogging away at trying to get through twelve keys of a monumentally difficult pattern.

TH: That's really interesting and I think that's really important. But going back to the West End stuff you got into it through going through Academy and knowing people that way. On your blog, I know you said you haven't done a lot on it recently, but you specifically said that you like having students that are aiming towards the West End, I think? And there's something on there about having an edge over certain people. What kind of things do you think people should be doing if they want to get into that kind of stuff?

TE: Well I think what I said and the way I phrased it was that I've got a relatively unique insight on the skills required to do that sort of job and if you're interested in doing that work then it's worth getting in touch with me and reading the blog because I can give you a few valuable tips I think. Man, this is a whole World of stuff here but what do you want to hear first? Do you want to hear about getting in to that sort of work?

TH: Yeah lets start there, because I know there's no path into any job but especially the West End, but from the outside it seems like once you're in, you're in. If you do a good job you can do it but how do you feel like you can get in in the first place?

TE: Well there are other elements to it as well. So it's a mixture of your ability as a player and you as a personality. Obviously you have to be as good as you can be and the sort of skills that are essential to that job, I think by in large you have to learn on the job, which is why I suggest people to get in touch with Colleges, Universities, Amdram societies and volunteer themselves to go and learn it on the job. It's process-oriented learning, the only way you're going to learn how to follow a conductor is by following conductors, good ones and bad ones, people that do things very differently but over time seeing the general patterns. I think that's the core essential thing. I think another thing as well is being aware that there is a general path that people do before you end up in the West End and it's this old school idea of paying your dues. So don't expect to land a West End gig even if you're brilliant and a really top guy if you've never gone out and slogged it doing function gigs for years and doing a normal jobbing, humble, solid working life as a musician. That's super important. You make loads of contacts doing that as well. That work isn't as prevalent as it used to be and there are amazing players that do it especially when we don't have a show. If you're low on gigs and you're out doing a regular function thing then you're going to come across people that are doing shows who dep on things who will recommend you for stuff. So it's a general networking thing.

TH: So you think the networking this is a big thing?

TE: I suppose this links in with the personality thing as well; you've got to be careful how you approach that sort of thing because in this country the hustle isn't really the done thing. I think you've got to be a little bit political with that. You've got to be a bit cool with how you approach that sort of thing. So be around, a lot of these things will get hooked up in the pub, I think.

TH: Really?

TE: Yeah I think so. Where you'll be introduced to people and that's much better than cold calling someone and saying 'can I come and sit in on your show?' or 'do you need any deps?' that sort of thing. By in large that's not going to work. I think it's fair to say that just calling a player a player up and saying 'can I come and dep for you?' especially if you've got not experience, it's not going to happen. But if you're out slogging away being in town doing gigs, whatever they are, and eventually you'll get introduced to these people and there will be a friendly thing and you can take it from there then. At least then you can ask about sitting in just out of interest. Be sure to state that it's not with a view to come and dep for you or anything like that 'I just want to come and hear you play and see the show' because that in itself is a really valuable learning experience. If you've never seen a pit, you've never seen how it works, that things then man, I encourage all my students to come and sit and see what it's like because at worst you might find out that you fucking hate it and you don't want anything to do with it. That's a good thing to know. But it might be massively inspiring and you're going to learn loads of stuff from that as well; seeing the conductor, seeing how everyone behaves.

TH: It's interesting you say about the personality because when I talked to Jim Knight we had a long discussion about the personality thing because he think's it's mega important as well. We were talking about the link between your personality and your voice with your playing and how they're really linked and like with shows, you've got to hang around with people in between shows or either side of it for hours so if you don't get on with people it's a big thing.

TE: Absolutely so I suppose the general thing to take from that is don't be pushy. It will come to you if all the other things are observed, you just have to play the game and bit and you have to wait your turn I think. Make sure you're doing tones of functions, just playing with people, that's where you're learning your craft and paying your dues. A massive help for me was NYJO. Not just because of the skill set thing but because every generation of that band, anyone that's working in town or doing recordings and stuff like that has had some sort of connection with that band. I know the whole set up has changed now.

TH: Yeah it's been revamped a little bit.

TE: Yeah and there's auditions and stuff and its a lot more systematic now. It wasn't like that in my day, you just turned up on Saturday morning Bill Ashton would corner you, the guy that used to run the band, and he'd tell the player there, that's where I first met Adam Goldsmith. I was terrified one day turning up and Bill saying 'who are you?' grilling you, 'I'm a guitar player. I want to come and play' and he'd go and say to Adam 'there's a guitar player here' and Adam would play the bulk of the rehearsal and then he'd look around and say 'right, your turn' and you've got to get up and sight read something with the band. It was terrifying but it doesn't get any harder than that I don't think.

TH: It does seem to be a breeding ground and it's a really important thing to go through.

TE: Yeah that's another massive piece of the puzzle, I think, that puts you in a really strong position not least because of the social thing. Those guys they're all doing touring shows, West End shows, the same as all of us, a mixture of everything and they will introduce you to people and they will suggest you for things. The other thing to remember as well is depping first of all on touring shows, that's a prior step.

TH: That's like the first step?

TE: Yeah, I mean again, not necessarily, there are exceptions. Some guys are just brilliant and have proved their worth very early on and have bypassed things but that's super rare. Super rare but usually they've still slogged away for a long time doing bread and butter gigs.

TH: I think a lot of people are quite impatient, especially after leaving College.

TE: Understandably. I was, but it didn't take that long. I was twenty-four, twenty-five when I got my first West End gig. It was only eight or nine weeks of Rocky Horror show at the Comedy Theatre over a Christmas period while I was at the Academy but that was a big deal for me, that was brilliant. I bought a load of great gear with that as well.

TH: Shall we just end with a few quick questions?

TE: Yeah, go for it.

TH: So talking about gear, what kind of gear do you use or recommend?

TE: I can't really recommend anything specifically because everyone is different. For me personally I'm a Stratocaster type guitar player predominantly, that's the guitar that I was first obsessed with as a child. I used to draw pictures of Stratocasters; I loved just looking at pictures of the guitars that Clapton and Hendrix used and Ritchie Blackmore. I still think they're the most beautiful instruments and I formed my technique around that instrument. There's a relationship between me and that guitar. That's where the foundation of my technique was built and they're still incredibly versatile instruments. I think it's a core requirement of your arsenal of guitars if you're a general jobbing guitar player. This is biased but I would say that that is the guitar that is the one. Other people disagree, I know people that don't like Stratocasters. I think Adam Goldsmith likes Les Paul's and other guys like Telecasters and things like that. Absolutely fine, they all do different things. With gear you need to have everything, you need to have two of everything at least really. That's essential because different jobs require different things and you need a back up.

TH: So you do get asked to use specific things on gigs?

TE: Yeah not always but sometimes some people with specify 'you need a Les Paul for this'.

TH: So you do need to have the whole range of everything?

TE: Absolutely and gear wise digital is a big thing now. So for home set ups and just for convenience and for flying as well Kemper amp modeling or Axe-Fx, they're the two industry standard units. We use Axe-Fx on the show, amazing bit of kit, I prefer the Kemper I think it sounds slightly better but it doesn't have the same options FX wise though, but it think it's more realistic sounding, the Kemper, so either of those or both. Standard FX wise you need the full spectrum of things really but at the core of it is going to be various distortion pedals, that's what you'll have most of as a guitar player. Guitar players are notorious for collecting these things, buying them, plugging them in, trying them once and not ever using them on a gig. But my favorites are probably in this order: the Analogman King of Tone, I think that's a phenomenal pedal and the Xotic BB preamp; the orange one, which is a high gain-ish distortion, pedal. They're beautiful but there are millions of others. But have everything you need, a Tube Screamer type thing either for getting a Stevie Ray Vaughan type sound or tune the output right up and the distortion level right down and putting that in front of a loud Marshall for an 80s Cock Rock full on compressed distorted sound. You need some sort of chorusing sound; there are millions of those on the market. I like the Eventide stuff and the Strymon stuff, although the small pedal form that I use most is the Analogman Bi Chorus. Volume pedal is essential, especially for studio and theatre stuff. Again there are loads of those. I like the Vertex ones, I bought it purely because Larry Carlton and Landau and those guys use it and it's really solid and really transparent; it doesn't suck a lot of tone from the signal. Delays: TC Electronic, Eventide, Strymon are the main ones there. Man, there's loads of stuff; phaser, Flanger some sort of Tremolo type effect. That's the core really but I try and keep it as simple as possible. For me, if I can I'll go and do a gig with just a distortion, volume pedal and delay.

TH: That's all you need?

TE: Yeah, I think so.

TH: Do you have any recommended listening at all? Favorite albums?

TE: Oh man, yeah! Wow...

TH: Anything you're listening to at the moment, two or three things?

TE: Michael Brecker, the album Michael Brecker. Meshuggah, Koloss. What have I been listening to recently? Al Jarreau, the Jarreau record and Breakin' Away, those two are my favorite ones. The easiest way to answer this is just to show you what I've been listening to recently. Sergio Mendes, Brasileiro. Bob Berg, Another Standard, I really like that record. Gary Novak and Dave Kikoski, incredible. The new Pete Bernstein record, the live record with Brad Meldau. Stevie Wonder. Laurence Cottle quintet live with Gerard, Ian Thomas.

Whitesnake, Slip of the Tongue. You know that album with Vai and David Coverdale? Cock Rock at it's best. Holy Diver, Dio, amazing. I think Laury played in Black Sabbath when Dio was the singer; he made a record with them. Parker with Strings. Thriller; Lukather on that man, killing.

TH: Well you obviously listen to a lot of stuff!

TE: Oh man, loads of stuff. David Hazeltine, Modern Standards that's a lovely record. For anyone, Jon Herington's Time On My Hands, I love that record man that's incredible. Jenny Garrett, Pursuance; the Coltrane record he made. Wynton, Black Codes; mid 80s, Kenny Kirkland.

TH: I love that album; I think it's very underappreciated.

TE: I made an album a couple of months ago, a jazz record with Graham Flower, Chris Nicholls, Mark Rose and we did an arrangement of Delfeayo's Dilemma from that record. Oh man, James Taylor. Every day I listen to James Taylor. Brecker and James Taylor.

TH: What's your favorite James Taylor album?

TE: For me October Road I think.

TH: I prefer Hour Glass.

TE: Man, that's up there as well for me. I think the only reason I'd choose October Road is because that was my first proper experience of listening to a full Taylor record.

TH: The only thing that sways it for me is that there's a Christmas tune on October Road.

TE: Yeah on the B side, Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas. It's Russell Malone playing guitar with him.

TH: Yeah it's great but just because it's a got a Christmas tune means I can't listen to it.

TE: That's the best Christmas tune ever though.

TH: Very true.

TE: And the way he sings it is fabulous. Yeah man, there's tones of stuff I listen to. It's mainly, jazz: Coltrane, Brecker, Bob Berg, Jerry Bergonzi, Brad Meldau, Chick. Dave Kikoski I love, Kenny Kirkland I love. Metal and Rock stuff and Classical music as well. I just got a wicked recording of Martha Argerich playing the Prokofiev piano concerto number three, the famous one. That's ridiculous and it's Deutsche Grammophon and it's got her playing Gaspard de la Nuit, Ravel, it's beautiful. My favorite bit is Le Gibet, 'the gallows'. It's got this death toll at the

beginning but the harmony in this beginning thing has got this thing in fifths that move down a major third, I think, and it sounds like New Metal; it's the thing that New Metal bands use all the time. So a quintal thing, two fifths. Something like A, E, B, that moved down a major third, that sort of sound you hear that a lot in New Metal. And then it's got this thing in the middle that sounds like early Ellington, proper jazz chords. There's this cycle thing and loads of diminished stuff as well, really colourful diminished stuff so it sounds early jazz.

TH: Wow that sounds incredible, I'll definitely have to listen to that.

TE: Yeah it's phenomenal. It's spooky.

TH: It's weird how it all links to together. It's so strange. Well thank you very much.

TE: Pleasure.

TH: It's been incredible to hear what you've got to say about everything.

TE: Great, I hope I kept on topic I get too excited and ramble about these things sometimes.

TH: Not at all that's why I'm here, to hear all about it.