

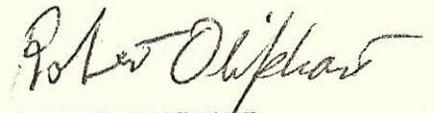
October 5, 1977

Editor
GUITAR PLAYER
Box 615
Saratoga, CA 95070

Dear Sir:

I would like to submit for publication the enclosed photoessay, "3
Guitarists 3!!!"

Yours truly,



ROBERT OLIPHANT
22653 Cass Avenue
Woodland Hills, CA 91364
(213) 888-9692

3 GUITARISTS 3!!

A MUSICAL ENCOUNTER BETWEEN RON ANTHONY, JOE DIARIO, AND TED GREENE

"I hope it's not too loud," said the wife of the Semi-Retired Sideman, as they drove down the cul-de-sac toward the Zdenek house. Dale Zdenek, a young music publisher, had invited them over that evening for dinner and drinks, promising them a chance to hear some splendid guitar work. Still, as they got out of the car and walked down the long flight of steps to the garden, the Semi-Retired Sideman felt a little out of place. Sparrows, after all, really don't belong in the same garden with young, lively, handsome Southern California peacocks.

He was quickly reassured, though, by the music itself. Down at the far end of the garden, under a group of trees, was Ron Anthony, his guitar, and a crisply professional little supporting group--drums, bass, and vibraphone. To his delight, the SRS found he could actually recognize familiar lines like "Emanon," "Elevation," and "Scrapple from the Apple." Subtle, restrained, always in perfect taste--Ron and vibraphonist Charlie Shoemake traded choruses back and forth, with a generous allowance here and there for bassist Monty Budwig and drummer Dick Best. "Beautiful," said the SRS to himself, closing his eyes and quietly nodding his head as the group threaded their way through a rich tapestry of ballads, bossa novas, and brisk up-tempo jazz.

After about an hour, the tapestry was rolled up and put aside, as Ron's place was taken by Joe Diario. With Joe on guitar, the mood suddenly shifted from musical conversation to a strong solo flight that went on and on, preaching from the text of Gershwin's "Summertime." Melody, counter-melody, rhythm, counter-rhythm--Joe put them together like little red bricks, one by one, always building toward the sky somewhere off in the third chorus beyond where he was at the moment. "Beautiful!" The SRS chuckled and started to snap his fingers, but caught himself in time as he remembered the natural decorum, dignity, and

reserve which young people expect their elders to display.

After a short space of time, Joe closed off his last tune with one sharply struck chord, and the set was over. As the supporting players made their way over to the bar, still another guitarist walked up, plugged into Ron's amplifier, and began to play. It was Ted Greene. Growing suddenly uneasy, the SRS looked around and wondered if he was in for a half hour of community folk singing.

There was singing, it turned out, but it came this time from the guitar itself, plucked with all fingers and pushing the instrument to the limits of its capability. As the SRS listened, he could hear a smooth bass line keeping a strong pulse going and supporting richly voiced chord melodies. The roots here, he felt, were basically "country," going back to Merle Travis and his "hound dog" guitar style. But the harmonies were those of a fine jazz pianist like Ellis Larkin or Oscar Peterson. From "Just Friends" to "Surrey with the Fringe on Top," Ted surveyed the idiom of popular music and brought it under the control of an unaccompanied guitar. "Beautiful!!" The SRS beamed approval as Ted struck his last high harmonic and then put his instrument down.

"Does it remind you of 52nd Street, Dear?" The SRS sipped his drink and let his mind wander for a moment. The old get togethers--or sessions--had been pretty competitive, he remembered, particularly among those who showed up playing the same instrument and tried to "cut" one another--almost like a musical duel to the death. Still, as Barney Bigard once put it, there was no real malice to it, since the goal was always the mutual pursuit of better jazz. Nevertheless, the challenges back then had been more direct, more open--faster, break-neck tempos, sudden unexpected changes of key. It was a good way to find out who you were and whether you could keep up with "fast company."

You couldn't really call this a "session" in the classic sense, he decided. Perhaps it was because the spirit of competition was a little less keen in warmly comfortable Southern California. Or perhaps it was because musical goals had grown more diverse. Of the three guitarists--Ron, Joe, and Ted--it was really impossible to say which had "won" the musical encounter. In his own way, each was equally polished, equally masterful, even though they took the instrument off in different directions of subtlety, excitement, and richness. No doubt about it, they were all beautiful!

"What are you thinking of, dear?" The Semi-Retired Sideman and his wife had said goodbye to Dale and were on their way home.

"I was just thinking that maybe I should start practicing a little more," sighed the SRS.

"I'm sure we'd all enjoy it, even the neighbors--as long as it's not too loud."