



Tiny Moore & Jethro Burns



BACK · TO · BACK

Jethro Burns & Tiny Moore

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Original LP notes by David Grisman, 1979

This recording marks a new plateau in mandolin playing, jazz mandolin playing, that is, "jazz mandolin," one asks? "Didn't know there was such a thing." Well, neither did I until one day at least a dozen years back, when the needle on Steve Arkin's turntable dropped down onto a new record by Homer and Jethro (you remember them) called "Playing It Straight." I nearly fainted. As a budding bluegrass mandolinist, the possibilities of playing like that, or even *thinking* like that seemed too remote and I continued trying to figure out "Raw Hide." From then on though, I uttered the name Jethro Burns with reverence.

Finally, in July of 1973, I stopped off in Evanston, Illinois, to take a mandolin lesson from the man himself, in the back room of Main Music. Jethro was everything that any mandolin student could wish for: chords, fingering, riffs, patterns, *tunes*... he seemed to know them *all*, and in any key. New melodies, new harmonies... so this was jazz, having it all together! And to top it all off, a sense of humor to rival George Burns (no relation) and Gracie Allen!

Five years later (1978), I sensed history strangely repeating itself in Sacramento, California, as I walked into another back room at Tiny Moore Music for a group mandolin lesson with Tiny himself, proprietor and veteran swing electric 5-string mandolinist. *Veteran swing electric 5-string mandolinist?* Rare but real, for Tiny was playing hot jazz solos with Bob Wills' Texas Playboys in the '40s. In the early '50s, he developed a new single-string, electric solid-body mandolin, with an added fifth string (low C), which he still plays today with Merle Haggard's Strangers, and his own Tiny Moore Trio. As the first few phrases of Tiny's first chorus of "Honeysuckle Rose" floated out of his small amp, with its warm, fat, large tone, my suspicions



were confirmed. Here was yet *another* pioneer of jazz mandolin! I was reminded in many ways of Jethro, both in the depth of Tiny's playing, and in the warmth of his personality. Surely they knew one another, but, as I was surprised to find out, they hadn't ever met. Could a summit conference be arranged?

The answer was, of course, yes; and this recording is the result of that historic conclave. Members of the supporting cast were no less legendary than the principals: Eldon Shamblin, rhythm guitarist extraordinaire, and veteran arranger for the Bob Wills group; Ray Brown, of the true pioneers of jazz bass, and his frequent associate on drums, the incomparable Shelly Manne. Their rapport was instant. Everyone played their ass off, and had a great time. My only regret is that these cats were so good, they finished early. So spread the word ... I want more!

CD notes by Don Stiernberg, 2004

The real development of jazz, America's indigenous music, is found in recordings. Historians and critics wax eloquent, but what has really mattered is the eloquent wax! Many contributions have seemingly "flown under the radar," but not when we consider how the recorded legacy of one artist can inspire another. Some of the greatest jazz has come from unlikely places.

Consider how the chamber jazz of Lang and Venuti spawned the Hot Club Swing of Reinhardt and Grappelli which in turn came back across the Atlantic and influenced virtually every form of string playing. Wes Montgomery's profound impression on Pat Metheny shows yet again how messages encoded in the grooves are spiritual and musical, and thus transcend culture, geography, and even time.

Back to Back is just such a recording — now enabling a new generation to experience the prowess and spirit which these brilliant artists brought to their instruments and music. Surely some mandolinist born in this 21st century will hear the work of these past masters, be touched and moved to write new chapters in the history of improvised music.

Jethro and Tiny were both born in 1920, just ten years after Django and the same year as Charlie Parker. Their innovations on the mandolin were accomplished within the context of the popular music of the day, which was jazz. Jethro was a Grammy-winning comedian whose fans tended to overlook his deep musical artistry along with that of his partner, Homer Haynes, although their instrumental recordings "Playing it Straight" (1960) and "It Ain't Necessarily Square" (1965) clearly display their genius. Tiny similarly gained national exposure with Bob Wills and his Texas Playboys, making the most of his opportunities for "take-off" (improvised) solos in the era of 78 rpm

records. Both Tiny and Jethro learned to say a lot musically in a short amount of time. Their style of improvisation pre-dated jazz education and other intellectual concepts and is consequently more about spontaneity, healthy competition, and swinging. Still there's no shortage of harmonic depth here. Jethro claimed to have not been that interested in bebop, yet his use of tritones, flatted ninths and other devices from that style is apparent. Tiny came to a similar language along with another pioneer of electric string instruments from the Southwest, Charlie Christian.

The alternate disc provides golden insight into what made these cats swing so hard. Shelly Manne's comment to Tiny about "getting a better feeling when you're standing" brought to mind a memory of Tiny performing with Merle Haggard in a large stadium. Merle would point (Bob Wills style) at Tiny for a "take-off" solo, and video cameras would broadcast the image of Tiny and within two or three bars, the crowd was cheering. He was one of those guys whose body language totally expressed the groove of the tune. You'll feel that explosive energy here too, but don't let it stop you from digging his unusual note choices.

We usually think of Jethro as a happy-go-lucky, major-key kind of guy. With the addition of the alternate takes, we get a glimpse of his bluesy minor-key side as well. Some of his most interesting improvisations come in the minor-keyed bridges on Tiny's tunes. Jethro is clearly inspired here by his colleagues. I remember him telling me after the sessions "Man, that Eldon Shamblin, every chord he plays is from the 1980's!" This statement, of course, was made in 1979.

What sessions these must have been! Imagine the thrill for Jethro and Tiny, two great but unheralded musicians playing unusual instruments, now being supported by jazz musicians of the highest caliber. You don't have to imagine that thrill — you'll feel it. Tiny and Jethro were meeting and playing together for the first time, and as if that wasn't enough, here comes Eldon, Shelly and Ray. That's right — the same Eldon Shamblin who orchestrated for Bob Wills — the same Shelly Manne who recorded with the likes of Bill Evans, Art Pepper and Sonny Rollins — and Ray Brown, the very definition of modern jazz string bass.

Everything about these sessions is a superlative somehow — five instrumental genius legends, a broad range of material expertly arranged (John Carlini), and a visionary producer (David Grisman) who even sat in occasionally. Even the instruments played were rare and beautiful: Eldon's famous Stratocaster, Tiny's five string electric Bigsby mandolin, and Jethro's one-of-a-kind Florentine Gibson A-5 in "George Gobel" red.

No wonder that this music has resurfaced, after three decades and now transitioning to extended life in a new format. That's the history of our music: trends, critics, and analyses come and go. The notes and the vibes remain, and these five hard-swinging cats are all still here, Back to Back.

Produced for Dawg Productions by David Grisman
Executive Producers — Jeff Alexson, Tom Diamant (LP) & Craig Miller (CD)

Recorded at Wally Heider's, San Francisco on January 6 & 7, 1979.

Engineered by Bill Wolf

Mastered by Paul Stubblebine

Cover Photograph by Jim Marshall

Additional Photography by Jim Marshall, Jon Sievert and Tom Diamant

Illustration by Dug Waggoner

CD Design and Layout — Brenna Ramirez & Charlotte Gibb

Special thanks to John Burns, Terry Burns, Tom Diamant, Maureen McCready Glassman, Tracy Bigelow, Deborah Moore, Martha "Dean" Moore & Don Stiernberg

Dedicated to the spirits of Tiny, Jethro, Eldon, Ray, Shelly and Jeff



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BACK · TO · BACK

Tiny Moore
Electric 5-string Mandolin, Mandolin,
and Fiddle on track 15, Disc One

Jethro Burns
Mandolin

Eldon Shamblin **Ray Brown** **Shelly Manne**
Rhythm Guitar Bass Drums

David Grisman plays Mandolin on
"Moonlight Waltz", "Tiny's Rag" & Maiden's Prayer



Shelly, Jethro, Tiny, Ray & Eldon

DISC ONE (Original takes)

1. BACK TO BACK (Montgomery) 4:18
2. DIANE (Rappee-Pollack) 2:56
3. IN A MELLOTONE (Ellington) 3:30
4. REAL LAID BACK (Moore) 2:17
5. FLICKIN' MY PICK (Burns) 2:37
6. MOONLIGHT WALTZ (Monroe) 3:33
7. JETHRO'S TUNE (Burns) 2:32
8. SWING '39 (Reinhardt-Grappelli) 3:55
9. OUT OF NOWHERE (Green-Heyman) 3:45
10. TICKLE TOE (Young) 2:40
11. TINY'S RAG (Moore) 3:03
12. GROOVIN' HIGH (Gillespie) 2:45
13. MAIDEN'S PRAYER (Bonus Track) 2:43

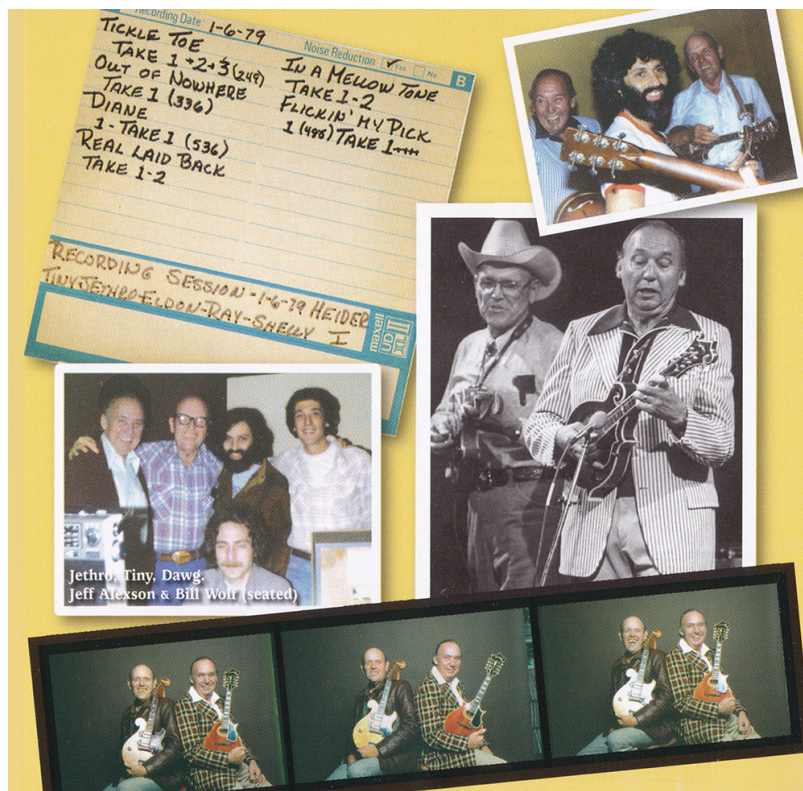
Total time: 41:11

DISC TWO (Alternate takes)

1. BACK TO BACK (take 2) 4:36
2. DIANE (rehearsal) 3:40
3. IN A MELLOTONE (take 2) 3:34
4. REAL LAID BACK (take 4) 1:15
5. FLICKIN' MY PICK (take 3) 2:30
6. MOONLIGHT WALTZ (take 1) 3:34
7. JETHRO'S TUNE (take 2) 2:40
8. SWING '39 (take 1) 4:12
9. OUT OF NOWHERE (take 1) 3:29
10. TICKLE TOE (take 1) 2:46
11. TINY'S RAG (take 1) 3:14
12. GROOVIN' HIGH (take 1) 2:47
13. MAIDEN'S PRAYER (take 2) 2:51

Total time: 42:42

The alternate takes were discovered in October, 2004.
They were recorded "live" to 2 track during the original sessions.



Recording Date: 1-6-79
Noise Reduction: Yes [] No [X]
TICKLE TOE TAKE 1-2-3 (249)
OUT OF NOWHERE TAKE 1 (336)
DIANE 1-TAKE 1 (536)
REAL LAID BACK TAKE 1-2
IN A MELLOTONE TAKE 1-2
FLICKIN' MY PICK 1 (496) TAKE 1-4

RECORDING SESSION - 1-6-79 HEIDER
TINY, JETHRO, ELDON, RAY, SHELLY I



Jethro, Tiny, Dawg,
Jeff Alexson & Bill Wolf (seated)

