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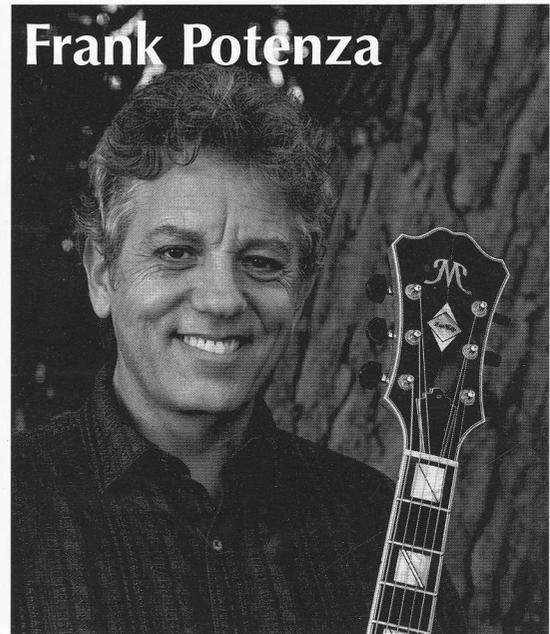
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# Frank Potenza

# FRANK POTENZA: HONORING THE LEGACY OF JOE PASS

by Chris J. Bahnsen

In 1974 an aspiring young guitarist named Frank Potenza, fresh out of Berklee College of Music, attended a Joe Pass solo concert at the Jazz Workshop in Boston. Potenza was so knocked out by the performance that afterwards he found his way to Pass's dressing room and asked the guitarist for a master lesson. That initial meeting "began a twenty-year friendship with one of my musical heroes and ultimately my single biggest influence on guitar," writes Potenza in the liner notes of his latest CAPRI release, *For Joe*. As the title implies, the album is Potenza's tribute to said musical hero. It's also a shining moment in jazz history in that Potenza was able to pull together the exact same band Pass used on his classic 1964 album, *For Django*. The lineup features: John Pisano (g); Jim Hughart (b); Colin Bailey (ds); and Potenza, who steps into Pass's giant shoes like no other guitarist could.

Bump any tune on the album and it's obvious that the former Pass pupil has gone on to become his own master. Potenza is a virtuosic band-in-a-box as a solo guitarist. His intro on "Do Nothin' 'til You Hear from Me" carries such lithe swing and rhythmic breadth you're almost disappointed when the rest of the boys glide in; until, that is, you vibe how great this band truly is, especially on Pass compositions such as, "A Foxy Chick and a Cool Cat," "For Django" and "Catch Me." To further capture this historical gathering of musicians, the recording sessions were filmed by Dailey Pike who edited the footage into a feature documentary, *A Not So Average Joe*.

In the four decades since Potenza's destiny-changing meeting with Pass, he has come a long way. He now chairs the studio/jazz guitar department at the University of Southern California's Thornton School of Music, considered one of the finest guitar programs in the world. And he was recently included in renowned jazz author Scott Yanow's latest book, *The Great Jazz Guitarists: The Ultimate Guide*, alongside such names as Charlie Christian, Django Reinhardt, Pat Metheny, and most fittingly, Joe Pass.

**CJB:** So, by the time you went to see Joe Pass perform that solo concert in '74 you were already a big fan, so much so that you went to his dressing room afterwards to meet him. But what was it about his playing that first drew you to him?

**FP:** Do you know his album *Intercontinental*; do you have that?

**CJB:** No.

**FP:** Great CD he did in Germany. It was Joe and Eberhard Weber and Kenny Clare. It's this great trio record, and it was the first record I owned of Joe's. I had never even heard his name before until one day in ensemble class at Berklee. We had two horns, but they never showed up. So there was myself and another guitar player and we would have to play all of these horn parts and the instructor would look at us and say, "You know, you're not phrasing like horns." And I would say, "That's 'cause we aren't horns," you know. And he's saying, "Yeah, but play it like Joe Pass and Herb Ellis." So after I heard the name Joe Pass a few times, I finally turned around to the other guitar player and said, "Who's Joe Pass?" And so I went out and I bought *Intercontinental* and it was like, "Oh, man." I had heard that style years earlier and I just thought, 'Umm, old guys.' It just didn't interest me.

**CJB:** You weren't ready for it yet.

**FP:** I was into George Benson, and I was into people who had that kind of greasy sound. And you know George Benson was playing sort of straight-ahead in those days, but he had a really bluesy, more electric, more sort of liquid sound. Whereas these other guys sounded like old guys. Two years later, boom. I bought the record and I just thought, "Oh man. This is some serious, good guitar playing here." So that, basically, was my entre into Joe.

**CJB:** What year was that about, where that happened for you?

**FP:** '70 or '71, I think. Because I was still in school. I was still an undergraduate. So all of that started the whole thing with Joe. Right around '74, Joe started making all those records for Pablo, and Norman Granz [founder of Verve and Pablo record labels] just recorded him to death, Granz had played a huge part in Charlie Parker's career. So that hookup for Joe was monumental. Granz figured out that this guy had something going on that nobody else did.



The first batch of Pablo releases that I bought were the first *Virtuoso* record, and *The Trio* with Oscar Peterson and Niels Pedersen, and then *Take Love Easy* with Joe and Ella Fitzgerald as a duo. So that completely catapulted him into first place as far my guitar heroes. I just thought, ‘Oh man, this guy can do it all.’ The solo guitar thing became something that I just totally fell in love with. So in ’74, when I went to see him at the Jazz Workshop, that’s basically what I wanted to ask him about.

**CJB:** *What area of Boston, for the folks at home?*

**FP:** Boylston Street, right near where that awful bombing took place [during the Boston Marathon in April 2013].

**CJB:** *Were you out of Berklee by then?*

**FP:** I was two years out of Berklee. I was playing in a blues band, and basically still studying classical guitar with somebody, and just out there being a perspiring musician. And I took my father to the Jazz Workshop to see Joe because he was playing solo. So we sat there and watched him, then I went to his dressing room. I shook his hand. I said, “Are you giving lessons while you’re here?” And he said, “Sure. I’m at the Lenox Hotel. Come tomorrow at ten-o-clock.”

The Lenox Hotel, oddly enough, was where my folks

had their honeymoon. And so I go to the Lenox, and I walk in and call his room, and he comes down and says, “I didn’t eat. Did you eat?” And I said, “Yeah.” So we go into the hotel restaurant and he has breakfast, and he’s giving the waitress a hard time, just being his cranky self, and I’m getting a kick out of all of that. So then we go up to his room and he’s got that ES-175 that has since disappeared—nobody knows where that guitar is anymore.

**CJB:** *Oh man, that’s tragic.*

**FP:** And he’s got this guy Andy, who was a really nice guy. I don’t know if he’s still alive, but he was the rep for GHS Strings in New England. So he was there attending to Joe because somebody had talked Joe into rubbing 30 weight motor oil into the fingerboard of his 175 because the fingerboard was dry. Now, coming from somebody of that stature, I thought, ‘How could you be so stupid as to follow that advice?’ But on the other hand, I thought, ‘I don’t even know if that’s what happened. I don’t know if he’s making that up or what.’ But anyway, Andy was there, helping him remedy the effects of the motor oil having supposedly been rubbed into the fingerboard of this 175. So, he had a product called String Guard which looked like toothpaste. It was like a silicone thing that you rub onto the strings and it basically gets rid of the friction—surface friction. And it was somewhat of a cleaner and a lubricant. So he was rubbing the instrument with String Guard, and when he gets done he leaves.

Now, Joe and I are alone. He knew I had gone to Berklee, and he was leery of anybody that had an education who was going to come and ask him some stuff. And he says, “What do you want from me? You went to Berklee.” And I say, “Well, you know, this solo guitar thing is something that I’m trying to do...” So that at least opened up an area of discussion. He says, “Well, play something.” So I played “Little Darlin’” or something like that. And I get done playing, and he says, “What’s wrong with that?” I say, “Alright, but you know on your version...” So that opened up a whole bunch of places where I could ask him questions about specific things on his recordings: “What are you doing here?” “What’s the device that you do on this tune?” “Where did you get that contra structure thing that you did on ‘I Cover the Waterfront’ coming out of the bridge?” And he looks at me and he says, “I stole it from George Shearing.” So, kind of wacky stuff like that. I was expecting some big, deep answer.

**CJB:** *You were used to the more professorial answers at Berklee.*

**FP:** Yeah.

**CJB:** *And this Pass guy was right from the gut.*

**FP:** The street. That kind of stuff. So it was funny, and we had a good time, and I was there for two hours or something. Now we're done, and I pack up and he walks down with me, and we get out to the street. And I can't remember what time of year it was, but it wasn't warm. It was halfway foggy, rainy, awful New England kind of crap weather. And so, he's got on dress shoes with no socks. Black dress shoes. I asked him what I owed him, and I paid him, and he had my money in a wad and he put it in his pocket. Now we're on Boylston Street and he says, "I'm going to take this money and I'm going to walk down to the shoe store that I saw down there yesterday, and I'm going to get myself"—and he turns his foot up to show me—"a new pair of shoes." And he's got a hole the size of a 50-cent piece right there in his sole.

**CJB:** *And no socks?*

**FP:** Yeah, so his foot's showing through [laughs]. And I say, "OK, have a good day," and he went down the street and I went to my car. So that was the day I met him.

**CJB:** *Forty years later you honor him with a tribute album.*

**FP:** Yeah. When we started conceptualizing what this record was going to be about, I said to Tom Burns, who owns CAPRI Records, "I want to hand you a record that is exactly what you think you can do something with. I don't want to hear 'Oh, gee, it's too bad it's this, or it's too bad it's that.'"

Now, my sense is if you have a lot of different configurations on a record, like solo, duo, trio, quartet, big band, marching band, strings, whatever, it's confusing to radio programmers. And, if they hear one thing, and they think the whole record is that, then you're in that pigeonhole. And that's never good. So, in a lot of cases, if you don't have a rhythm section, you're not going to get played as much. If you're playing solo, you won't get played as much on some of these radio stations. You won't get booked playing solo.

**CJB:** *But you've found ways to work it into most of*

*your albums.*

**FP:** With this record, I felt apprehensive about doing something that had too many different configurations on it, or more than one. And Tom made it really easy by saying, "I would feel the best about selling a swinging quartet record." And I went, "There it is." So that's all we did.

**CJB:** *What was it like doing sessions with the very same guys who fueled Joe's genius? I know you had already played with a couple of them, especially John.*

**FP:** Well, I'd played with John so much, and actually Jim couldn't be a more agreeable person. First off, I sent them all PDFs of everything, because I did everything in Finale [music notation software], for the most part. And they were really clean parts.

**CJB:** *So you really thought these parts out ahead of time, unlike Joe who was an off-the-cuff kind of guy, right?*

**FP:** Yeah. Joe's whole thing was he didn't like to prepare; he didn't like to practice. His stock answer when someone would ask if he practiced was, "I tried it once and I didn't like it." So he liked to play. He's not going to sit there and practice, what, scales or something. He learned tunes. That's his version of playing. Generally, Joe liked it fast and loose. He would never think, like, 'OK, I'm going to read this part, and I'm going to figure out a whole bunch of stuff.' Whereas, I come from a very different place. But I would be lying if I said I wasn't heavily influenced by him. I do sound like him, and it's unavoidable. But I'm not trying to sound like him and I'm not trying to imitate him, and I have influences that are not part of anything that he did.

**CJB:** *Like who, for example?*

**FP:** Like Jimmy Hendrix. There's a lot of stuff in my playing that isn't in Joe's playing. But, you know, the idea of my coming up with a project that pays tribute to him, it was really easy to do.

**CJB:** *So you had that initial lesson and wacky day with Joe at the hotel in '74. How did things evolve after that?*

**FP:** He would come to town, and I'd go see him. Or, a few times we were both playing in New York at different clubs. So I finish playing my gig and he's at the Village Gate, and I go over with the singer from the band I'm with, or whatever, and we watch him play. We

hang out. We get something to eat. I take him back to his hotel, and he says, "Hey, come by tomorrow at one-o'clock, and we'll play." Stuff like that would happen occasionally. And then in 1980, when I moved to Los Angeles, he was living in Northridge. So when I get to town, I call him. I say, "I live in California now." And he says, "Oh, wow. We'll have to get together." So, you know, I'd go over to his house.



**CJB:** *You didn't drop the ball on staying in touch.*

**FP:** No. And then I met Pisano when I went to see him play with Oscar Castro-Neves. They had like a duo where they were sitting on wooden stools playing nylon-string guitars at this little place on Mulberry Street that's about the size of your place. And so I went, I introduced myself to John. John started inviting Joe and I over—and then Joe and I would go to MI. Joe was teaching at MI. So when he was in town, he'd do what they called "open counseling," which basically meant he'd sit in a room, people would come in and play, and he'd pick on them.

**CJB:** *[Laughs] MI being the Musicians Institute?*

**FP:** Yeah, but it was called Guitar Institute of Technology at the time. GIT. This was in, like, '80 or '81. So I'd do that. Or I'd go get Joe at his house and take him to drop his car off to be fixed. Or, you know, we'd go hang out at John's house. John would say, "Come over, I made a pizza" or whatever, and I'd have food that I got from home. My folks would send me these packages with stuff from Federal Hill, the Italian section of Providence [Rhode Island], with provolone and stuff.

**CJB:** *Right, all three of you are Italians who love Italian food.*

**FP:** Yeah. And there was wine, and we'd play. And John would invite some guy from Brazil who was in town. John knows all the Brazilians from having been at A&M Records, so he knew Jobim. He knew Dori Caymmi who was over there one day.

**CJB:** *I've heard other musicians talk about John's generosity. He's sort of a Godfather to jazz guitarists.*

**FP:** He has this really nice house on the side of the hill in Studio City that overlooks the whole valley. So you go there, and it's just this really beautiful, peaceful, lovely house. Not opulent, but you just go "Wow." And you have this combination of good food and this wine and all these great guitar players. And there's cigars, and there's whatever, and it's this really nice place to just hang out and just be with a bunch of people that do what you do.

**CJB:** *That's so cool.*

**FP:** And it was very catch as catch can, because John was part of the guitar night thing that happened at Dante's way back before the current version of it at Lucy's 51 in Burbank. I think it was on Monday nights.

**CJB:** *Where was Dante's?*

**FP:** Dante's was on Lankershim Boulevard at Whipple, which is right near Universal Studios. And it was this legendary jazz club that was still in business when I came to town, and that was where Joe used to play a lot. In the years between '69 and '73, he was playing at Dante's a lot. And they had the guitar night thing. This was before Joe got with Norman Granz and started to do all those recordings for Pablo Records, and then Norman started sending him out playing solo concerts and he became a huge hit. He got too big to play at Dante's.

**CJB:** *So the day you met him when he had a hole in his shoe, was he kind of a starving artist, before his career really took off?*

**FP:** No, I don't think it was because he was broke. I think it was just because he hadn't got around to getting some new shoes.

**CJB:** *He didn't give a damn.*

**FP:** Yeah, it wasn't anything where he was starving. I'm sure he was getting paid well to play at the Jazz Workshop. I mean that was where headliners appeared

in Boston. They had two rooms: you either played the Jazz workshop or Paul's Mall, which is a bigger room.

**CJB:** *Let me ask you something kind of deep about Joe. You hung out with him and you picked up guitar techniques from him and got to know him as a human being. So what was it about the man that really stays in your gut and still resonates with you?*

**FP:** [Pauses] He just, he had this very down-to-earth side, and then when you'd see him play these concert venues, you know, he's in this room of people, alone onstage. He's playing solo, and he's got the whole place in the palm of his hand. And you just watch, and you just think to yourself, 'Man, it couldn't be quieter and they couldn't be more focused and enraptured by what he does.' It was really remarkable.

**CJB:** *So few performers have that power.*

**FB:** On the other hand he had the same foibles and the same problems as the rest of us. You'd see him yell at his kids, or fight with his wife, or, you know, split up with his wife, or whatever happened. He was basically living the same pedestrian life we all were on the one level. But then you'd walk into some place like Westwood Playhouse [now known as Geffen Playhouse]. And there he is playing with Oscar Peterson. You know, all these other people that are giants, and there he is, a giant himself, and he's the same guy that I just took to pick up his car someplace where he got the muffler fixed or something, you know?

And then I'd go in the dressing room in the back to say hi, and Clint Eastwood's there being a fan, fawning on Oscar Pederson and Joe and all these people. And it wasn't about being star struck as much as—you kind of thought, 'Wow, here's this guy that I eat and hang out with, and Clint Eastwood is asking him for his autograph.' It was just like a funny set of circumstances to find yourself in.

**CJB:** *Yeah, but Joe didn't buy much into celebrity, did he?*

**FP:** Well, he was cool. I'm sure he was very happy with all of it. So, you know, it just brought the whole thing into perspective. I started to think, 'Maybe this is something I could do. This is definitely something I aspire to.'

**CJB:** *Alright, for me there's something that you and*

*Joe have in common, aside from any similarities in sound. Both of you have this bottomless well of ideas when you're blowing solo guitar, or otherwise, and there's flexibility, and this silken lyrical flow that you both share that many guitar players don't have. When you play, there seems to be a freedom to it where you're not thinking and such. You know, I hear that spirit taking off the way it does with Joe.*

**FP:** Uh huh. Well that's the thing that inspired me the most about him. At one point, I was sitting in his den in Northridge, watching him play, and it occurred to me that he was pretty much doing the same thing on stage in front of ten thousand people that he was doing right there in front of me. And he had gotten comfortable being himself in front of an audience; he was as willing to try whatever might come into his head in front of those people as he was alone in his den.

**CJB:** *That kind of comfort level is unachievable to most of us.*

**FP:** It was sort of an epiphany for me. I just thought, 'This guy has found a way to be fearless in front of an audience, the same way he is if he's just sitting around with me in the den.' So that inspired me to feel more like I was willing to take that leap of faith and take that chance. And that has been the single touchstone that comes back to me when I'm playing: If I can think to myself, 'Joe would have gone for this,' that makes me push myself and go out on a limb where I might not have. And he always found a way, even if he had to stop dead and start off in another key and another tune, he always found a way to get himself out of trouble. So he basically got to the point where it was failsafe. He couldn't do anything wrong, because even if he decided he was going to stop playing that tune, stop that tempo, start another tune in a different key and in a different tempo, you'd buy it. Because it was him.

**CJB:** *He could only do that alone, though, as a soloist.*

**FP:** Oh, yeah. I don't know that anyone could follow him around, and it would be asking a lot of anybody. But that was what, for me, was so engaging about watching him play; he had this, sort of, very reckless abandon. At the same time he was able to make you believe that he meant to do that, because of the balls that he would do it with.

**CJB:** *There it is, then. That's the essence I was trying to get at.*

**FP:** It's that fearlessness that you just don't see in a lot

of people. And when you can see somebody do that in front of an audience, it's inspiring. Because it's like watching somebody on a tightrope. They could fall. They could smash into a pile of guts.

**CJB:** *That expression from the sci-fi book Dune comes to mind: "Fear is the mind-killer."*

**FP:** Almost everybody has some kind of performance anxiety. You get nervous before you play, or you get keyed up, or whatever.

**CJB:** *But it's what you do with that nervous energy, how you handle it.*

**FP:** I've seen this a million times with students, where they get keyed up and they get nervous, and they get completely bound up in their fear, and they can't play. Whereas Joe managed to shrug all of that off.

**CJB:** *Joe was that way all the time, then. He didn't turn it on when he walked on stage.*

**FP:** It's not a matter of turning it on, or turning it off. It's an attitude. It's just a way you approach the whole thing. And he just had that thing. He was able to approach it with that same feeling of, 'Oh, I'll make this work one way or the other.' And you just don't see a lot of people who have the nerve to try that in front of an audience.

**CJB:** *Yeah, it's true. Brazen bulletproof confidence like that is a rarity.*

**FP:** You know, some people are more adventurous than others. And some people are their own worst enemy. They can't get out of their own way. So, they have a lot of ability, they have a certain amount of vocabulary. They haven't played that much, they don't have that much of a history, as far as playing thousands of tunes. They've played 60 tunes that they've learned their way around fairly well on. But, you know, when you play thousands of tunes, and you know them as well as Joe knew them, where he could play them in any key and at any tempo, at the drop of a hat...

**CJB:** *That's a whole different planet.*

**FP:** And a lot of people don't have the nerve to play solo in the first place. Just to play an opening chorus, alone, is beyond what a lot of people are willing to take on.

**CJB:** *It's playing without a net.*

**FP:** Yes.

**CJB:** *Speaking of that freedom of playing and that fearlessness, it sounds like it's more derived from knowing your repertoire of songs so well and playing them for so many years, that your hands have the benefit of much more muscle memory, perhaps. Yet you're not playing a tune the exact same way every time because you don't just know the tune, you own it.*

**FP:** Yeah, I mean you've got to own it. You've got to know it to the point where there's no question where it's going next. It's like the same thing as speaking English. If you're speaking any language, and you're having to think about the rules of grammar, and the spelling, and the order of the words, and all of that, well, that seriously gets in the way of your ability to be able to communicate. So, in the same way, if you're playing, and you have to think 'chord change, chord change, chord change,' and form and all of that stuff—it has to be a foregone conclusion. It has to be something that you have so internalized, that it's a given. When it is that familiar, then you're free to extemporize and, sort of play off of it, and, in some cases, wander off the path and get lost, and take chances, and be more adventurous with it.

The floor and the ceiling kind of go up, because you're willing to take way more chances and soar to heights that you haven't experienced yet. And if you're going to be willing to take that leap, you better be sure that the floor is raised. The bottom line is that I don't have to think about where I am in this tune at all. And I've got a million variations that I can use, and I've played this in a million different ways, and a million different treatments, and all of that stuff. And, basically, those are the conditions that allow you to have that feeling of total abandon.

**CJB:** *So, raising the floor and ceiling means learning a tune well beyond one key and the same set of memorized chords.*

**FP:** Yeah. One of the fundamental things I tell my students is, "If you really want to know a tune, learn it in several other keys. If not every other key." It's kind of an undeniable fact. If you can play something in one key, then you know it. But if you can play it in any key, you know it at a much higher level than people who know it in one key. There's no comparison.



**CJB:** *That must be a really freeing experience, like getting wings on a tune.*

**FP:** Yeah. I mean, do it on one tune.

**CJB:** *You realize how much you can know on just one tune. And then you can never go back to the single-key limitations.*

**FP:** And it'll do either one of two things: It'll inspire you to try harder on every tune you know, or it'll make you so depressed about how short life is, that you...

**CJB:** *...Toss your guitar into a funeral pyre.*

**FP:** [Laughs] Yeah.

**CJB:** *In his book Effortless Mastery, Kenny Werner talks about how there are no wrong notes. The idea is that, if you don't think it's a mistake, you can bring it across to the audience as a right note. Werner is alluding to the ability to embody that invincible confidence toward your own playing.*

**FP:** And again, especially if you are playing alone, you are the hope and the dream. Everything that's coming out, is coming from you. So, if you play it with enough authority and enough conviction, then they're going to

buy it. It takes a long time to get to the point where you have that level of confidence, as far as playing alone in front of an audience. And if you look at a guitar, it's perfectly suited to playing alone. But people don't do it that often.

**CJB:** *Getting back to the new album, For Joe, this is such a historical jazz event because you were able to record with the exact same guys that Joe Pass used on his 1964 album, For Django.*

**FP:** And they were also his touring band for years afterward. They went to Japan in the '90s, I think. Joe stayed friendly with them and used them off and on as a quartet whenever there was a budget.

**CJB:** *So this album comes 20 years after Joe's death.*

**FP:** It was something that I always thought about doing.

**CJB:** *I cannot believe this record, which you also produced, was completed in only two days of sessions.*

**FP:** Saturday and Sunday.

**CJB:** *Were they marathon days? Did you sleep much?*

**FP:** [Laughs] It was difficult. I mean, it was fun. It's just that, with producing, you have a lot more things to attend to. Whereas, it's kind of nice to have somebody else just say, "Sit here." "Do this." "Play this." "Think." "Don't think." "Sit." "Stay." Whatever.

**CJB:** *You had to do this quick, because these musicians all have such busy schedules.*

**FP:** Well, yeah. I didn't have as much time to prepare for it as I would have liked. But I made it my priority, and I got everything done. It was hard to pick like ten tunes out of three million tunes. I could have picked any number of them. Joe recorded a ridiculously large amount of tunes.

**CJB:** *How did you narrow it down?*

**FP:** Well, you know, we had to go with some of the *For Django* stuff, and the option was there to do all of the tunes that he did on that record. But I didn't want to do that. I really didn't. So Tom and I went back and forth and narrowed it down together.

**CJB:** *And then, next thing you know, the sessions become not just an album but also a documentary film, a "jazzumentary" as Dailey Pike calls them. How did he get interested in this project?*

**FP:** He came to one of John Pisano's guitar nights when John first moved it over to Lucy's 51. And he filmed me and Mundell Lowe playing together on one of those nights. He also filmed a bunch of other people that sat in and he posted those on Vimeo. And then he got really excited about working together and told me, "Oh, I really want to do something with you." And so I pitched him a couple of different ideas that never really seemed to appeal to him. But then I mentioned my idea of maybe doing a video of one tune with Joe's original band from *For Django* that would give me some kind of footage to be able to post. And he envisioned this whole other documentary, which floored me. He got way into the whole historical thing, which hadn't really occurred to me. And he's going, "This is historically significant." And I'm going, "It is?" So he was the one who inflated this thing into this whole project, which is great. I really appreciate that.

**CJB:** Which guitar and amp did you use on the sessions?

**FP:** The guitar is my Mapson. And the amp is my Polytone, which I bought in 1976. I figured that's what Joe played on. I brought other amps. And then I was setting up, and I had one of the Fenders in there that

idles a little louder than the Polytone. And I just thought 'Joe played a Polytone. Let me set that up first.' He used a direct sound, so I plugged into a box and then we came out of the box into the amp.

**CJB:** What model is that Polytone?

**FP:** Mini-Brut II.

**CJB:** That's it, for the whole session?

**FP:** Yeah.

**CJB:** Well, I think this album showcases your blowing at its absolute greasiest. And to hear you with this band is to understand why Joe recorded with these exact same guys.

**FP:** Thanks so much.

All photos courtesy Bob Barry  
Please check out Dailey Pike's link for his  
documentary *A Not So Average Joe*  
<http://joepassfilm.wordpress.com>

[www.frankpotenza.com](http://www.frankpotenza.com) • [www.facebook.com/JoePassFilm](http://www.facebook.com/JoePassFilm)



## HOWARD ALDEN

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I Remember Django - an acoustic set featuring Anat Cohen  
and Warren Vaché

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Scott Hamilton

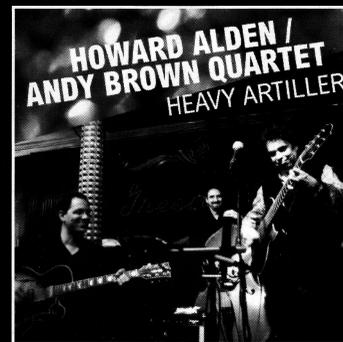
and Don't Think Twice - innovative vocalist

Jeanne Gies with 8!! top jazz guitarists in duets with Howard

CONTACT: Howard Alden

ph (646) 269-8394 [howard@howardalden.com](mailto:howard@howardalden.com)

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## Howard Alden / Andy Brown Quartet Heavy Artillery • Delmark Records 5008

New York guitarist Howard Alden and Chicago guitarist Andy Brown co-lead a swinging two-guitar quartet session. Playing a mix of standards, Brazilian tunes, and songs by fellow jazz guitarists, this recording documents a fifteen-year relationship between the two musicians.

"Howard Alden belongs to a small, elite group of the very best jazz guitarists in the world." - guitar legend Johnny Smith

"Andy Brown is an uncommonly good player, with a modesty that brings to mind the fine Canadian guitarist Ed Bickert and a warmth suggestive of Joe Pass." - DownBeat

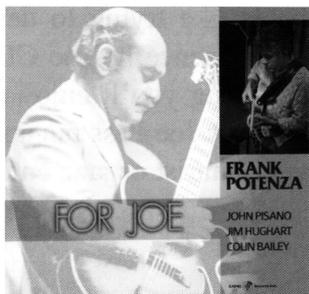
"Brown and Alden don't merely mimic an earlier era in jazz history-they build upon it, offering a freshness of spirit that transcends any particular period or style." - Chicago Tribune

Available from Amazon, iTunes, and the Jazz Record Mart (800) 684-3480 [www.jazzmart.com](http://www.jazzmart.com)

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

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

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**FOR JOE FRANK POTENZA; John Pisano, Jim Hughart and Colin Bailey** [www.caprirecords.com](http://www.caprirecords.com)

**F**ranks Potenza, professor and Chair of the Studio/Jazz Guitar Program at the Thornton School of Music, USC was a protege and long time friend of the late guitar virtuoso. This tribute CD with Pass's long time associates, Pisano, Hughart and Bailey showcases a number of Joe's originals like *For Django*, *Catch Me* and *A Foxy Chick and a Cool Cat* along with standards such as *Do Nothin'till You Hear From Me*, *Love Is Here To Stay*, *Beautiful Love* and a Pisano tribute tune *Blues For Joe*. This is like a walk down memory lane as rhythm ace Pisano, drummer Bailey and bassist Hughart recorded Joe's classic recording *For Django* in 1964. Franks' playing is nothing short of spectacular-both in single lines and chord melody style. Check out his bossa groove on *For Django*, written originally as a jazz waltz, and his chordal style on *Do Nothin'* and tasty melodic playing on *Love is Here to Stay*. One of the best CDs I've heard in a long time. Highly recommended.

*Review by Ed Benson*

**A NOT SO AVERAGE JOE  
A DAILEY PIKE JAZZUMENTARY  
For Joe  
Frank Potenza**

<http://joepassfilm.wordpress.com/tag/a-dailey-pike-jazzumentary/>  
Capri Records Ltd. 74127-2

**I**love Dailey Pike's films. His knack and know-how in presenting an excellent story by showcasing artists just doing what they do always results in an engaging experience. He provides the viewer with a great deal of information, not just pictures and audio, but relevant and informative text that complements and enhances his story. But it's not the bombastic overkill that clutters the cable news channels. It's information we need, which is presented with perfect discretion. For instance, in very short order we get the film's backstory, along with vintage photos about four musicians

paying homage to the late Joe Pass: "Twenty years after the death of legendary guitarist Joe Pass, who recorded the seminal album *For Django*, the remaining members of his quartet, jazz giants Colin Bailey, John Pisano and Jim Hughart, along with Joe's protege, Frank Potenza came together over two days to record for Capri Records, a tribute aptly titled, *For Joe*."

Pike's jazzumentaries give us the sense that we're in on all the action, and it's more than just the music; he provides the viewer with an omnipresent point of view. It's what the late media maven Marshall McLuhan called an acoustic (no pun intended), presentation because many things are happening at once and the viewer is the recipient of the action. But it's so nicely paced that there's no overload. And that's, in part, what's so impressive about Pike's talent.

We see guitar-great Frank Potenza and the guys talking through the arrangements. They're certainly more than head arrangements but the conversations have the easy feel of confident pros responding to each other. Frank is often calling the shots and in essence producing on the fly, but it's still a collaborative effort of top-notch pros. There are no egos here, just great players enjoying themselves and each other's talent.

In addition to being a superb player, Frank Potenza is articulate with his remembrances and comments. His recounting of his first lesson with Joe is quite similar to other Joe Pass "first-lesson" stories I've heard. Potenza had already been graduated from Berklee so Pass was skeptical that he could offer anything to enhance the young guitarist's skill set. Frank said he practically had to goad Pass into showing him things. But one of the highlights of this film is its recently discovered and compelling footage of Joe and Frank in concert with the Long Beach City College Band.

Anyone who knew Pass will testify that he was his own man who could at times be difficult; but he respected great talent and that's no doubt why the college's band's director Dr. George Shaw kept reiterating to Frank, "Joe really loved you." Even back then, a young Potenza was a burner and could hold his own with Joe Pass. You can extrapolate that to mean he could hold his own with anyone. The footage showcases Potenza and Pass as a duet, with the band respecting a long tacit, blowing over the changes to "Cherokee." That by itself, is worth as they say, the price of admission.

Any good guitarist is going to be wowed by the footage of John Pisano's extraordinary rhythm playing but we're also treated to some of John's excellent and impressive - and downright bluesy soloing. One thing I've always admired about Pisano's playing is his penchant to stay modern. There's nothing wrong with being of one's era, it certainly worked for Lionel Hampton and many others, but John Pisano has stayed *au courant* the way Jim Hall has. I will never forget how emphatic Ted Greene was when he and I were discussing John. Ted said, "Jim, the man has ears for days." And there's no question that the guitar community owes John a significant debt for his creating and perpetuating Guitar Night. In fact, it's just embarked on its umpteenth year, and now at a new venue: Cody's Viva Cantina in Burbank. If you haven't seen John host a Guitar Night and musically complement such players as fingerstyle artist Laurence Juber or such tremendous jazzers as Anthony Wilson, Mundell Lowe, Mitch Holder, Sheryl Bailey and so many other brilliant talents, it's worth a trip to the coast.

If there's such a thing as an artistic temperament, Pass had one. At times he could be demanding and sometimes difficult. He was a no b.s. guy whose candid comments, often aimed at those he didn't know, could be enough to get "an average Joe" in a potentially hostile predicament. But when once questioned about his attitude by John Pisano, Pass responded with, "John, you gotta know when to smile." In addition to delightful footage presenting their exceptional musicianship, Jim Hughart and Colin Bailey both get plenty of screen time to recount their memories of Joe. Both are funny and so talented. One couldn't ask for a better engine to drive a group. Colin Bailey's brush work is so authoritatively crisp and Jim's choice bass notes provide a rhythmic bottom that's indelibly in sync with the group and sports such melodic flair.

And do yourself a favor and look for Frank's new CD entitled *For Joe*, available from Capri Records. It of course features John, Jim and Colin. The tunes, chosen by Frank, are an excellent representation of Joe's career: "A Foxy Chick and a Cool Cat," "For Django," Pisano's "Blues for Joe," "Do Nothin' Til You Hear From Me," "Love is Here to Stay," "Rosetta," "Voce," "Fleur D'Ennui," "Catch Me" and "Beautiful Love."

Describing music is like trying to describe perfume; you just need to experience it. The CD is superb and, like the film, something you'll enjoy repeatedly. This set will be a joy for any Joe Pass fan and belongs in the library of any jazz guitarist or jazz enthusiast.

Highly Recommended

Jim Carlton

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

## IN GOOD TIME by HUEY

We're all aware that *Just Jazz Guitar* is no doubt the best magazine of its kind, hands down. Obviously its focus is jazz guitar, but I'd like to offer a bit of a departure and write about a piano player, but with good reason. The jazz world lost one of its giants recently, the extraordinary Marian McPartland, who had the longest running show on NPR, *Piano Jazz*.

Documenting her passing and saluting such a career is important on many levels, but it's pertinent here because she gave so generously of her airtime to support and showcase many of the world's greatest jazz guitarists. Marian presented hour-long shows with Mimi Fox, Kenny Burrell, Kevin Eubanks, Julian Lage, Bill Frisell, Jackie King, Russell Malone, both John and Bucky Pizzarelli, who even filled in as hosts, and many more including Willie Nelson who the author of a book I reviewed elsewhere in this issue cites as a jazz guitarist. That's debatable, but not important. What's important is recognizing Marian McPartland's contribution to our particular art form and paying tribute to a phenomenal music career. And that's been accomplished brilliantly by a filmmaker who refers to himself professionally as just "Huey."

Huey produced and directed *In Good Time*, an 85 minute documentary that despite being barely two years old, has been screened at several prestigious film festivals and garnered the award for *Best Documentary* at the Garden State Film Festival. I'm happy to report that it's now available on DVD. You can order it, or catch a trailer here:

<http://www.filmsbyhuey.com/films/in-good-time/>

Huey accomplished the near impossible by capturing the essence of Marian's long career (she died at age