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INTERVIEW WITH PATRICK BUTLER

PATRICK SPEAKS WITH RUDY CHAVARRIA, JR. OF AMERICANAMP
ABOUT JAZZ MUSIC AND HIS NEW CD, MESMERIZER

▣ What was it that made you decide that you were going to be a musician?

Music touched me at an early age. I always remembered singing along to certain songs that I liked and, of course, the decadence of the rock and roll lifestyle kind of sweeps you in. You get up on stage, plunk on a guitar and get paid! I was lucky enough to be around certain movements of music where I was getting paid at an early age, so it made it easy to dedicate myself to music.

▣ Your schooling was that of a jazz guitar player?

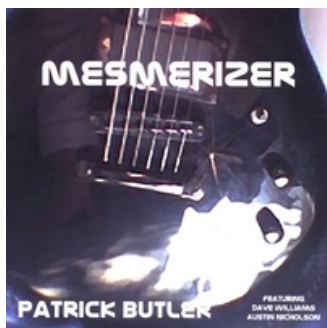
I studied with Harry Leahey, who was Phil Woods' guitar player; he won a Grammy while playing with Phil Woods. I started studying with Harry when I was 13 years old. Harry had studied with Johnny Smith and Dennis Sandole. Johnny Smith is considered one of the masters of chordal jazz guitar. Dennis Sandole was this guitarist out of Philadelphia – elite musicians know who he is. Pat Martino took lessons from him. Coltrane also took some lessons with him.

▣ How did you go from jazz into rock?

I had been playing rock for about a year before I started studying jazz. It took me a couple of years to master the modes. When I first started studying with Harry, I didn't know who Harry was and I didn't have a lot of knowledge of jazz. I thought Harry was this kind of affable, likeable guy. I didn't have awareness at the time that he was this guitar guru. So I studied jazz with Harry, but on my own was learning Hendrix, Albert King, Harvey Mandel.

▣ What made you move from New York to Los Angeles?

I left New York because funk died. Out of high school, I was hanging out in Manhattan and was in a funk band with a blind keyboard player, Ricky Williams. Ricky was a synthesizer god like Herbie Hancock and could write and sing on top of that. He was 6'8," 250 lbs. with no fat on him – built like a linebacker! Ricky was a legend in New York, but what happened was all the funk bands would cherry pick their musicians out of his band. I got poached from Ricky's band by The Drifters. The Drifters band actually had no original Drifters playing in the band. There was this guy from Philly who owns the name, and he wanted to put together five touring bands to tour the country at the same time. I did the tour, then came back to New York and was hanging with Ricky's band again playing funk. Bill Curtis with The Fatback Band saw me play with Ricky's band and offered me a chance to play with his band. I played and toured with Fatback, recording three albums, including the track King Tim III, which is supposedly the first rap record ever made. As rap began to take off, this style relied heavily on DJs and production machines; in fact, on many tracks there are no live instruments on rap music. With funk music dwindling and the rock scene completely dead in New York, I figured it was time to make the trek out west. So I packed up the van and moved to Los Angeles.



▣ Let's discuss your recent CD release, Mesmerizer. What was your process for writing and, for that matter, even recording the project? This project was completely different from Superkeltic – your Celtic rock band.

Actually, Celtic music shares similarities with jazz. Celtic music is based upon four or five diatonic chords, but changes rapidly and you have to approach it in a chordal way, similar to jazz. Celtic music provides the roots to European classical music. But I've always kept up on my jazz. Once you get jazz – although I don't even want to call it jazz because of the denotations given to the word back in the day. The word jazz doesn't give the music the proper respect – it's a classical form of American art. It's a higher musical form. When you really master it, it gets into your head. You can't forget it. Once you start thinking about Giant Steps, you can't stop. You're walking down the street, you're running through Giant Steps...you're running through these changes. So all through the years, when I wasn't playing jazz guitarist, these chords were running through my mind, constantly.

▣ What was it like recording this CD – was it the rhythms or the guitar parts that came first? Were you sitting in your kitchen writing these songs and then you could hear the drum machine in your head? Or did you just come into the studio and the producer said, "Oh, this is the beat that I hear..."

Meeting Dave Williams, the trumpet player and co-producer of the CD, who is a fervent advocate of jazz and the new approach to it, was helpful to the process. I got inspired by playing in his band and started writing again. The process of writing brought back all the years of knowledge, listening to and thoughts about jazz. When I first starting playing with Dave, the band was playing a brunch gig on Catalina Island every Sunday morning – incidentally, a great location to gig as it was outdoors overlooking the harbor. The gig was about running through some funk standards; but through playing in Dave's band, became aware that he has this whole other vision of music. He's got some solo stuff that's unbelievable. I was pretty enthused. I liked a lot of the stuff I heard out of the MPC60, where you look at your sampler as the production focal point. So that's what we did, used the drums as the focal point. I had the heads already written out – some of the heads I would give to Dave and that's what he would have to work with on paper. He would construct the underpinnings of that track. Sometimes I would sample a beat and write for that particular beat.

▣ **What is your favorite song on the CD?**

I like EZFlo a lot. Also, Fialoa.

▣ **What was it like producing this CD?**

It was a lot of fun. It just happened; we didn't plan on it. We had put together this project for fun – we were playing together and I'm going to college right now and was concentrating on that. But it came out so good, I figured we had to do something with this; we have to put this out. God is leading me to put together this CD.

▣ **It's a brilliant combination of jazz and modern beats.**

Well, you should hear some of Dave's work. Dave has a record that is similarly style, but focus is on the trumpet. We hope to put that one out if there is any success with Mesmerizer. Also, we have another project we play with – the Magic Bullet Theory – which plays around Long Beach, Hollywood, Los Angeles area. It is an indescribable mix of music – you can go to my website and find all the links to that project.

▣ **How do you feel about working this new CD in the college Jazz Market?**

The sound we created for this CD is not necessarily a traditional jazz sound, though the guitar sound is more traditional. The production is more of a modern sound and features a DJ on some tracks, a sound which the college market may find appealing. ■



Rudy Chavarria, Jr. is the CEO of [American AMP](#), an advertising marketing and promotions company headquartered in the U.S. American amp played a major role in the success of such movie blockbusters as Disney/Walden Media's *The Chronicles of Narnia*, Mel Gibson's *The Passion of Christ* and Universal's *United 93*, to name a few. A force in the music industry responsible for promoting and marketing hundreds of major and independent label recording artists from various genres, American Amp recently marketed three Bob Marley CDs and box sets for JAD Records International.

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