

Created by: Debra C. Argen

Jay Geils and Gerry Beaudoin - Interview

[Jay Geils and Gerry Beaudoin](#)- Interview with the guitar legends.



LEM

Jay, welcome back to your jazz roots. After being a long-time fan of the Jay Geils band, I really enjoyed your first jazz recording [Jay Geils Plays Jazz!](#) ([Stony Plain Records](#)) which Luxury Experience Magazine reviewed in the [August 2005](#) edition.

Jay

Thank you. I have another one in the can, that will be called Jay Geils Plays More Jazz, or something like that, as soon as Gerry (Beaudoin) can get a deal for a record label, because we really need to get the CD into stores.

LEM

You have collaborated with some jazz guitar greats such as Duke Robillard and Gerry Beaudoin, how did that come about?

Jay

I have known Duke and Gerry since the 1960s, and we all like the same brand of jazz. The New Guitar Summit came about 8 or 9 years ago, when all of our schedules allowed us time to play together and someone wanted a nice concert.

LEM

Before your long and successful run with the legendary J. Geils Band, you were playing jazz and blues. Did you ever want to cut a jazz/blues release during the J. Geils Band timeframe?

Jay

No, it was just one of those roads that was the way to go. I started the J. Geils Blues Band in 1967, which later evolved into a Rock and Roll band, and we played together for 14 or 15 years. I always wanted to get back to learning how to play standards.

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Is your musical focus only on jazz now?

Jay

It is what I prefer to do these days.

LEM

What musical influences did you have growing up and now?

Jay

The influences are the same: Count Basie, Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Duke Ellington, and Blues greats T-Bone Walker and Charlie Christian. I am a Charlie Christian fanatic. I was a trumpet player as a kid and when my father would play Charlie Christian, I would always listen and try to figure out what he was doing. My father was a big influence, and in the early 1950s, there was always a jazz station in Greater New York, and even normal stations in pre-Rock and Roll days would play kind of jazz music like Frank Sinatra or Tony Bennett. In pre-television days, after dinner, my father would play Benny Goodman, Count Basie, and Duke Ellington, which is all I heard until about 1955 or 1956, when Fats Domino and Elvis Presley came on the scene. I did buy Rock and Roll records, but I tended to like the Rhythm & Blues guys like Little Richard.

LEM

There was some time between the end of the J. Geils Band and the beginning of your jazz days, what did you do during the interlude?

Jay

Actually, I did not do much musically from 1984-1992. I was in the vintage sports car business, which was my father's other passion: classic cars. I remember as a kid that in one year I went to hear Louis Armstrong play and saw my first sports car race. It is kind of funny, that I made careers out of two of my father's hobbies.

I discovered vintage cars late in the 1970s and sold the business in 1996. During the 1970s, I knew that I wanted to get into vintage car racing, and in 1978 or 1979, I bought a 1958 Ferrari, red of course, nicknamed the "250 Tour de France" because those cars always won the Tour de France, which I bought for around \$40k-\$45k, and raced it for 5 years. My car came in second place in the Tour de France. Since that time, I have owned about six Ferraris.

I also collect guitars, most from the 1940s and 1950s, but I am "just a caretaker" as you really do not own them. My favorite guitar is a 1939 Gibson L5 with a Charlie Christian pick-up, which was the first series of magnetic pick-ups that Gibson made. I also have a Stromberg acoustic arch that I like. Last year, I sold some of the guitars and bought some vintage Italian sports cars. At one end of my house is the music room, and the other end is the garage, and I felt I was light in the cars area.

LEM

On Kings of Strings, you play an acoustic free-format 'gypsy' style of the 30's and 40's. Whose idea was it to focus on this style?

Jay

We were not so much going for the Django (Reinhart) sound, but rather the record company wanted an acoustic element. We did some standards like Take the A Train, and I picked Desert Sands.

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On Kings of Strings, you work with Aaron Weinstein, the 19-year old violin and mandolin sensation, how did this come about?

Jay

Gerry found Aaron through a referral from Bucky Pizzarelli, who told him that he had to hear this kid. Aaron is a great kid and a great player and is still only 19 or 20 years old.

LEM

We were all young once.

Jay

Yeah, but I did not play like that when I was his age.

LEM

You played on, mixed, and produced the release Kings of Strings; do you look forward to getting involved with all aspects of a recording session?

Jay

Oh yeah, I always have been involved. Over the last 10-years I have produced many CDs for other people, as well as for myself, and the New Guitar Summit.

LEM

I understand that you started your own record label; what inspired you to undertake creating your own record label?

Jay

Gerry had it for a while and I then became a partner on the record label. CDBaby.com carries a lot of our stuff, and Gerry's stuff from a while ago.

LEM

How has the music industry changed in the time you have been involved?

Jay

It has changed big time! The Digital Age allows any kid with about \$1,000 worth of equipment in his basement to put together a CD and have it sound as good as a record label.

LEM

What is next for Jay Geils musically and personally?

Jay

I do not know. I would like to continue to make more jazz records, and make another New Guitar Summit record if I can get Duke off the road. I would also like to learn about 10,000 great jazz solos. I still listen to the artists that I always loved, and the more you listen and the more you learn, the more you realize that you still need to learn more.

As for the vintage cars, I now have a 1958 Alfa Romeo, a 1961 Ferrari, and a 1963 Maserati, which I drove all summer, and I am now working on two of them which are partially taken apart at the moment.

LEM

Gerry, thank you for taking the time to speak with me. You have collaborated with some jazz guitar greats such as Duke Robillard, Bucky Pizzarelli, Frank Vignola, and of course Jay Geils, as well as music giants such as Randy Bachman (Guess Who, Bachman Turner Overdrive), Andy Summers (The Police), Jay McShann, and Fred Lipsius (Blood Sweat and Tears). Do you have a list of performers you would like to play with? Are there any performers from the past that you wish you could have played with?

Gerry

I would love to have played with Les Paul Desmond, Herb Ellis, and Barney Kessel. I would like to play with Kenny Burrell. Kenny used to come to my house for dinner whenever he was in Boston. I grew up with the great masters. I met Bucky (Pizzarelli) in New York when I was about 19-years old. I played with Russell Malone and Howard Alden, who are my generation, and are great guitarists. I love playing with Bob Nieske who has played on almost all of my records. Duke and I have played together for 20 years. I have watched Jay grow into an authentic master jazz guitarist. I have been fortunate. A former manager once told me that I always play with the best.

LEM

Who influenced you growing up and now?

Gerry

Kenny (Burrell), Les Paul Desmond, BB King, Don Alessi, who is 88-years old and a major guitar player in New England; he is a fantastic guitarist and is still playing.

LEM

What type of music do you listen to?

Gerry

I pretty much exclusively listen to jazz and blues. I love blues, love BB King. I grew up playing blues as a kid starting out. Frank Sinatra and Count Basie are two of my favorites.

LEM

Jay also mentioned Count Basie and Sinatra.

Gerry

That is why we get along. Jay and I got together in 1993, and we obviously come from the same place. I have played on over 40 records, was featured on 17 or 19 of them, I have a good career, I am happy with it.

LEM

On King of Strings, you play an acoustic free-format 'gypsy' style of the 30's and 40's. Is this an era and genre that you have long enjoyed or is this a new track that you are exploring?

Gerry

The King of Strings is grounded in the 30s and 40s. I missed playing that kind of music. I like to play 30s - 50s music, as does Jay. It's not avant garde but its good cooking jazz. I explored my roots when I was 20

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and 25 years old and moved forward. I have now found my niche. Two David Grisman CDs turned me on to playing acoustics, no amps, just a mike in the studio.

LEM

On Kings of Strings, you play with Jay Geils and with Aaron Weinstein, the 19-year-old violin and mandolin sensation; the result was a fun and free flowing sound, was it this way in the studio?

Gerry

Of yeah! Aaron is the most incredible kid. He was coming to Boston to go to Berklee and Bucky told me to connect with him. Don Stromberg called me and told me about Aaron. One day I got a call from Aaron. He was going to audition at Berklee and needed a guitarist, because his guitarist backed out on him, and he was wondering if I would play with him. I said I would, and showed up at Berklee, where I had gone and knew all of the teachers, and when I arrived, the teachers wanted to know what I was doing there. I said that I was going to audition Aaron. The kid is a great player, very mature player, and a mature young man and is only 20-years old. He is a great talent, and you are going to hear from him for years. He and my son Gerard, who plays vibe, have become good friends.

LEM

Do you still teach?

Gerry

With my travel schedule, I backed down from teaching guitar because it was not fair to my students, though I still have a few private students, in fact, one of my former students just flew in from Chicago, and we are going to go to dinner before I play a gig later this evening. I still teach Development of Jazz at Quincy College in Massachusetts. Jazz and Blues are American Art forms, which spread all over the world. I tell my students that the only place that Jazz is not popular is in the United States. Many of the kids in my class were never exposed to jazz. One of the students in my class had never heard jazz before the class, and now she has 25 jazz CDs.

LEM

I understand that you started your own record label; what inspired you to undertake the creation of your own record label, (**Francesca Records**, (www.FrancescaRecords.com))?

Gerry

I was disgruntled with the record labels, so in 1996 my brother, who is a plumber, put up \$2,000 for me to put up this record label. By 2002, my brother decided that he wanted out of the record label business, and Jay bought my brother out and became my partner.

LEM

Who is Francesca?

Gerry

Francesca was my Italian grandmother. When I was growing up, she was my best friend. Italian families really do not want their kids to become musicians, but my grandmother was very supportive of me. She taught me to speak Italian, which I still do with a Neapolitan dialect.

LEM

What is next for Gerry Beaudoin musically and personally?

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Gerry

I have a new all-acoustic CD, Stringularity on Francesca Records with Bob Nieske, Jerry Miller, and Jay playing rhythm guitar, available on CDBaby.com. I have a jazz guitar duo with Larry Bayone that Jay is producing, plus the New Guitar Summit with Duke and Jay due out in 2007 on the Stony Plain Records label, and we just released Jay Geils, Gerry Beaudoin and the King of Strings Featuring Aaron Weinstein on Arbors Records, which is a great label to be with. President Matt Domber really cares about the music; swinging jazz will stay alive because of him.

Personally, like Jay, I also like old cars, but not sports cars. I like Packards and Lincolns. My grandfather Henry Beaudoin was a chauffeur to some bigwig politician in Boston, so my father and I grew up around cars. Jay and I were playing in Las Vegas and the first minute we had we went to the car museum.

LEM

At the Imperial Hotel.

Gerry

Yes, we could not wait to visit. I love old Americana. Today everything is so plastic. My first car was 1957 Chevy, so there is no way that I would drive a Ford Taurus. Now I drive a van. I love vintage instruments, love old guitars, and old music.

Read the **Music Scene** section for a review of **Jay Geils, Gerry Beaudoin and the Kings of Strings**.

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