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CLASSIC ROCK MEETS FREE JAZZ ON GUITARIST RICK PECKHAM'S DEBUT

LEFT END OUT JUNE 15

*** Featuring Drummer Jim Black and Bassist Tony Scherr ***

On *Left End*, his debut as a leader, Boston-based guitarist/composer Rick Peckham seamlessly marries rock tones and twisted intent with sophisticated jazz harmonies and freewheeling improvisational daring. Backed by the remarkable rhythm tandem of drummer Jim Black and bassist Tony Scherr, Peckham distinguishes himself as a gutsy, accomplished player whose mind is wide open to sonic possibilities.

“When I first started playing jazz...I don’t know how I got the idea...but it really seemed like part of playing jazz was that you had to hate rock,” says Peckham. “And so I sort of bought into that for a while. I got a new guitar and put strings on it that were too heavy to bend and just tried to get into Wes Montgomery and Grant Green, which I did. And I still love those guys, especially Grant Green. But when it finally came time for me to make a record, I didn’t want to jump into something that would be just another jazz record, I wanted to get into the difficult work of integrating Paul Kossoff (guitarist in Free) and all the great classic rock guys that I always loved.”

Echoes of rock guitarists of the ’70s and ’80s are heard all through the album. “Left End” takes its name and sound from a Cleveland Led Zeppelin tribute band Peckham liked as a teenager. “Mr. Medium” is “my take on ‘Mr. Big’ by Paul Kossoff,” Peckham says. “Shakey” is an homage to Neil Young. “I just love those huge sounds that he gets on his solo records,” Peckham says, “that Crazyhorse sound.” “Gibbons” is named for ZZ Top guitarist Billy Gibbons.

But the music on *Left End* refuses to fall into any one neat category. “Free 1” and “Free 2” are completely improvised pieces that explore textures and tone colors more commonly heard in jazz. The odd meter of “353-1001” and the African-flavored beat of “Real Time” add rhythmic variety to the rock rhythms heard elsewhere on the album. The quirky, medium tempo “Hawthorn” previously appeared on the long out-of-print debut CD by new jazz quintet Human Feel, which also featured drummer Black. The trio even takes on a certified jazz classic, Thelonious Monk’s “Evidence.”

- more -

A charter member of the notorious Boston-based improvising unit, Um, with trombonist and fellow Berklee educator Hal Crook, drummer Bob Gullotti, bassist Dave Zinno and occasional guest keyboardist John Medeski, **Peckham** appears on their debut CD, *Straydog* (Rope-a-Dope Records). He has also toured and recorded as a member of Irish bassist-composer Ronan Guilfoye's cross-cultural Lingua Franca band, and is featured on recordings by Human Feel, The George Garzone Quartet, and others. Peckham attended North Texas University and is currently Assistant Chair of the Guitar Department at Berklee College of Music.

The 46-year-old guitarist receives impeccable support from his bandmates. Drummer **Jim Black**, a ubiquitous figure on New York's downtown improvisers scene, leads his own band, YeahNo, and is a member of Pachora. He has recorded with Tim Berne, Ellery Eskelin, Uri Caine, and many others. Bassist **Tony Scherr** is a fixture in Steven Bernstein's Sex Mob, Michael Blake's Free Association and Bill Frisell's trio as well as a fellow North Texas State alumnus.

With this trio, Peckham makes a most expressive and personal album. "When I'm making a record, I'm not trying to document what somebody else has done," he says, "I want to go somewhere different."

Check out just how different his destination is on this edgy and adventurous CD.

#

CDs, photos available, www.rickpeckham.com

A conversation with Bill Milkowski and Rick Peckham about *Left End* Spring 2004

Bill Milkowski: I dug your record a lot. I like twisted stuff.

Rick Peckham: Hey...that's great!

BM: From the opening tune you immediately get the sense that this will not be a Wes or Grant Green homage. It's a way over the top power trio outing.

RP: Yeah, and people wonder if there are overdubs on it. There really aren't. I was using a rig where I had all the chorus and time delay on one side and all the distortion on another side so I could pan back and forth with an Ernie Ball volume pedal. Steve Morse talked about doing that sort of thing years ago. I really wanted a big guitar sound on this recording, no matter what happened. Even if I was just playing a single note or a chord I wanted it to be big. I don't like small guitar sounds. Jazz guitar is pretty famous for having poor tone. The whole conception of tone and using that with jazz vocabulary is what I'm trying to do. Tone is a whole expression in itself and it's a big part of what I loved about my favorite players.

BM: I also liked that other cd you were on with that band Um (featuring trombonist Hal Crook, drummer Bob Gullotti, bassist Dave Zinno and keyboardist John Medeski).

RP: Oh yeah, Straydog (Rope-a-Dope Records). I was hoping that album would do more than it did, but it still was good. We played at Tonic in New York and the place was totally packed. Medeski effortlessly fills any place he plays.

BM: This new trio of yours on *Left End* features a fabulous rhythm section in bassist Tony Sherr and Jim Black, who is such a musical drummer.

RP: Yeah, I love these guys. I used to play with Tony down in Texas when he was at North Texas State. I was there too. And when I came up to teach at Boston, that's where I met Jim. And so, I had never played with the two of them together until we did the record but I had played with them in different groups in each of those towns.

BM: When did you go to North Texas?

RP: I was down there from '81 to '85...so I was there right as (producer-composer-saxophonist) Bob Belden was getting ready to leave. It was his last year there so I got to see him some.

BM: Did you attend Berklee?

RP: No, never did. I got hired here in '86 and was hired into the ear training department, then worked in performance studies with Hal Crook and Jim Odgren. Then I got in the guitar department as assistant chair of the guitar department in '92. And I've been there ever since.

BM: I'm interested in the fact that you obviously have a lot of schooling in jazz and music and yet you embrace rock music to a huge degree.

RP: Yeah...

BM: It's got more to do with Billy Gibbons and Neil Young, as you pointed out.

RP: Yeah, yeah, which is why I have that tune on the album called "Gibbons" and the other one called "Shakey," which is Neil Young's nickname.

BM: ...and the James Gang.

RP: Oh yeah! I love Joe Walsh -- James Gang Rides Again and James Gang Live.

BM: So there is a part of you that is embracing that rock aesthetic as much as jazz or improvisational music. It seems like you have one foot in one camp and you're looking around in other areas as well.

RP: Yeah, that's what I'm trying to do. When I first started playing jazz...I don't know how I got the idea but it really seemed like part of playing jazz was that you had to hate rock. And so I sort of bought into that for a while. I bought a guitar and put strings on it that were too heavy to bend and just tried to get into Wes Montgomery and Grant Green. But when it finally came time for me to make a record I didn't want to jump into something that would be just another jazz record, I wanted to get into the difficult work of integrating Paul Kossoff and all the great classic rock guys that I always loved.

BM: And of course all those guys from that era were very experimental in their own right...rock today behind devoid of that whole thing.

RP: Right.

BM: Adventurous rock music with an open-ended improvisational thing.

RP: Yeah, that's what I want to get deeper into.

BM: Of course, Scofield and Frisell dip into that hybrid thing when they play. And certainly there are many guitarists who are embracing different aesthetics in their playing. But the Grant Green-Wes Montgomery thing...that's the cliched profile of someone who teaches in the guitar department at Berklee.

RP: That's right.

BM: That's what you'd expect of someone...so this is totally renegade material.

RP: Well, that's the idea. When I'm making a record I'm not trying to document what somebody else has done, I wanna go somewhere different. And I went through a whole period where I was going back and listening to all the music that inspired me in the first place in the '70s -- like Ritchie Blackmore with Deep Purple and Paul Kossoff, who did all the open string tunings with Free on that great album Fire and Water. All of those albums from that era are really great. When I was in high school I would play along with the Stones' Get Yer Ya-Yas Out and Exile on Main Street over and over again, like so many other people did. For a long time I didn't know which one was Keith Richards and which one was Mick Taylor on Exile on Main Street. But man, I can see why Mick was angry that he wasn't getting credit because there was so much that he was doing on that album that was really beautiful. Since then I

really got into Mick Taylor and that open G tuning of his. And recently I got that new DVD with him playing with John Mayall. He sounds unbelievable on that! I think it's the best thing he's done since Exile on Main Street.

Track by track analysis:

"Left End" -- That was a band that I used to go see in Cleveland, near where I grew up. And this was a band that was signed but they really didn't go anywhere. There was a scene in that Kris Kristofferson-Barbara Streisand movie, *A Star Is Born*, where they go into a place and somebody has a Left End t-shirt on. That's about as big as they made it. They had a singer who could sing like Robert Plant and a guitarist who was like Jimmy Page and even a bass player who played with his fingers, which was the first time I had ever seen that. So in its way, this band was kind of an introduction for me to some great players.

"353-1001" -- I wrote that for Jim Black. That was his phone number when he was living in Boston. It's a piece in compound meters, which Jim handles beautifully.

"Mr. Medium" -- That's my take on "Mr. Big" by Paul Kossoff, the Free thing. I loved that band. So here I just tried to improvise the melody and add a bridge. Playing with Tony on this piece was so great because he has such anticipation for what's coming. He has great instincts as a player and he helps create a special band vibe.

"Shakey" -- I was just trying to channel Neil Young here... "Cinnamon Girl," "Down By the River"...his approach to rhythm and tone in his voice and in his guitar playing. I think he's really one of the great artists. I spent a lot of time growing up listening to Harvest. I just love those huge, big sounds that he gets on his solo records...that Crazyhorse sound...those big distorted things with interesting riffs in the voices. Yeah, it's just fun to hear those sounds.

"Free 2" -- This is a collective improv piece just to let these guys go and do whatever they want. They're both such accomplished players and so creative. Jim is so musical. He's a master of color. And again, people think there are overdubs throughout on the percussion but he's doing it all live right there in one day.

"Gibbons" -- When I went back and listened to all the stuff I listened to in the '70s, I keyed in on Billy Gibbons works with ZZ Top. His tone and melodic vocabulary is something that really resonated with all I love about the guitar. That big sound and execution of the time just really got to me. *Mescalero* is such a great record. And *Rhythmmeen* is one of the best guitar records of all time, to me. I love the guitar sounds on there and what he's doing with the different tunings. For this one I tuned down to D on the low string just as a way of starting to get that idea. I want to do more of that kind of thing.

"Soporific" -- Mister Rogers said that word while my son was watching tv one day. He's five and he was telling me about soporific, and I had to look it up. It means "sleepy" and that's sort of the vibe of this one.

"You Know What That Means" -- I wrote that for the Hal Crook band. Right before that record came out with Hal I mentioned to him, "You know that record's coming out pretty soon and we've been getting more people watching us every week. Things look like they're going great." And he said, "You know what that means." So I wrote the tune around that outlook on life.

"Hammer Damage" -- I was in a new wave band during the '80s called The Lines and I think we warmed up for Hammer Damage once. I just think it's a great name for a band. There were some terrific bands in Cleveland in the late '70s and early '80s. I wish I would've been following Jamey Haddad and Joe Lovano and Bill DeArango and those guys playing around Cleveland at the time I was growing, but I really was following all the different rock bands around Cleveland and then eventually playing in one that didn't do very much. But Hammer Damage was another one of those great Cleveland bands.

"Hawthorn" -- I wrote this and recorded it with Jim Black on Human Feel's first record, which I'm told is something of a collectors item around the world today. It was a tune that Jim hadn't played since then and I hadn't played it much either since then so I thought it would be a fun thing to do again. And it shows that I was a lot more ready to play it this time than the last time.

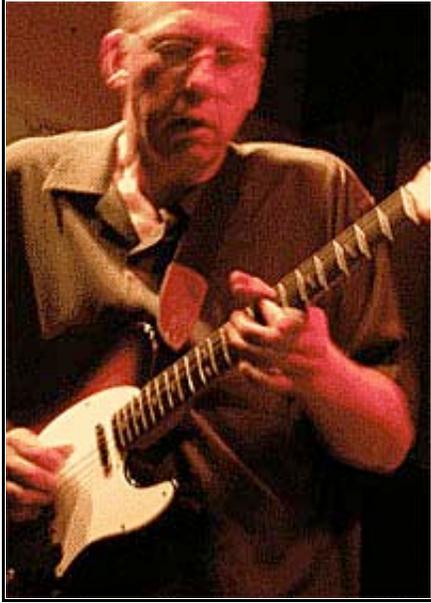
"Real Time" -- I was trying to get more of an African 6/8 backbeat on this tune. And I was trying to get different times over the top of it, a la Jeff Beck. I love Jeff Beck. I think he just keeps getting better and better. He reminds me of Joe Henderson or Scofield or Abercrombie...these guys just keep getting better every time you see them.

"Free 1" -- This is another collective improv piece that really highlights the interactive nature of this trio. Jim sounds great here. He's such an amazing musician.

"Evidence" -- I taught a Thelonious Monk course at Berklee for about ten years. This particular tune kind of boils everything down that Monk did rhythmically and arrangement-wise...that idea of using the melody all over the place. I saw Steve Lacy once playing that tune solo and he said that that is THE Monk tune. So I figured if I was going to do one, that would be it. I've always loved playing Monk's stuff.

Pop Music

A Professor of Guitar from the School of Rock



Margaret Satchell

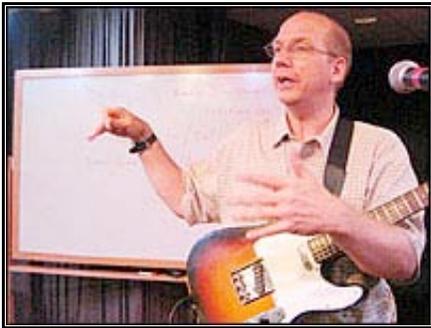
Guitarist Rick Peckham at play...

Weekend Edition - Sunday, October 24, 2004 · Founded in 1945, the Berklee College of Music is the ultimate "school of rock" -- with a good bit of jazz, blues, and just about any other pop form to boot. It's the world's largest music college: there are classes in songwriting, film scoring and sound engineering. But the majority of musicians who enroll at Berklee are interested in playing an instrument. And out of the 3,800 students enrolled here, some 1,100 have come to play guitar.

Rick Peckham teaches guitar at Berklee, and he also plays a mean Telecaster. And now his trio -- with Tony Scherr on bass and Jim Black on drums -- has released a CD called *Left End*. The music reflects the many streams of guitar styles that waft through the halls of Berklee -- biting riffs that take their cue from the solid roots of rock, but with intricate technique and complex harmonies that pay homage to the jazz tradition.

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Ned Wharton, NPR

... and at work in his teaching role at the Berklee College of Music.



Profile: Berklee College of Music's Rick Peckham

Broadcast: October 24, 2004

LIANE HANSEN, host: If a violinist's path to Carnegie Hall is through practice, practice, then how does a budding rock star find his way to Madison Square Garden? Well, practice, of course, but a detour through Boston may be a good idea. Founded in 1945, the Berklee College of Music is the ultimate school of rock with a good bit of jazz, blues and just about any other pop form to boot. It's the world's largest music college. There are classes in songwriting, film scoring and sound engineering. However, the majority of musicians who enroll at Berklee are interested in playing an instrument. And out of the 3,800 students enrolled here, some 1,100 have come to play guitar.

Mr. **RICK PECKHAM** (Berklee College of Music): Let's look at this melody.

(Soundbite of music)

Mr. **PECKHAM**: If you look in the middle of that page, there where it says tone roll...

HANSEN: At a recent guitar clinic, the assistant chair of the Guitar Department, **Rick Peckham**, describes some thorny harmonic theory to a lecture hall full of 20-somethings.

Mr. **PECKHAM**: And now bar three or the second section of the tone roll...

(Soundbite of music)

Mr. **PECKHAM**: ...is the same set of notes but backwards. That's called retrograde. There we go.

HANSEN: Sporting spectacles, a plaid shirt and khakis, **Peckham** looks more like a math professor than a rock star, but don't be fooled. He plays a mean Telecaster.

(Soundbite of music)

HANSEN: **Rick Peckham** and his trio with bassist Tony Scherr and drummer Jim Black have released a new CD called "Left End." It's filled with biting guitar riffs that take their cue from the solid roots of rock, but the intricate technique and complex harmonies also pay homage to the jazz tradition. The music on the CD reflects the many streams of guitar styles that walked through the halls of Berklee itself.

Mr. **PECKHAM**: Guitarists--it's kind of a hero-driven world. There are icons like Jimi Hendrix or Wes Montgomery or George Benson. Berklee attracts people mainly in the jazz and rock world, although there are a lot of blues icons that we're hearing about now, too.

HANSEN: Does it pretty much break down 50:50, maybe, jazz and rock?

Mr. **PECKHAM**: Yeah, it's 50 percent rock and then 50 percent everything else. So we have great performers and teachers in, well, all of these styles. On the heavy metal side, we have Joe Stump. He has albums--he doesn't shy away from puns in his titles. "Night of the Living Shred" is the one I think of right away. And on the other side, we're very proud to have Mick Goodrick here, who's kind of the godfather of Boston guitar. And music is a world where, if you're interacting with other great players, you just get better by osmosis. You absorb strong skills by playing with people with strong skills. And when you talk to people, John Scofield, for example, or Pat Metheny or Bill Frisell--when they talk about the most influential events in their life, they talk about their time at Berklee when they were able to kick back and spend time with other players and experiment and really come up with their own voice.

(Soundbite of music)

Mr. **PECKHAM**: So it's kind of a mechanical way to look at it on the guitar, but to me it's a melodically interesting way. So any questions about that?

Unidentified Man #1: Yes, **Rick**.

Mr. **PECKHAM**: Yes.

Unidentified Man #1: You've got these missing notes here that you've got written here. I mean, part of the reason you picked pentatonic, like, was that because when you go to the...

HANSEN: They also learn things like theory and harmony and, I think, something particular with guitarists: the idea of tone, the way you can bend a note, extend a note and enhance a note using electronics.

Mr. **PECKHAM**: That's the absolute truth. Well, the biggest challenge is to play a melody so that the listener wants to hear what's going to happen next: Is there a shape on the note? Is there a way the note is set such that you want to hear what's going to happen next? If listeners respond, then you know you're on to something.

(Soundbite of music)

HANSEN: You have a new CD out. It's your first CD as a leader. You're in your late 40s. What took you so long to release a CD as a bandleader?

Mr. **PECKHAM**: That's a great question and one I ask myself. I really should have jumped in sooner. It's the most fun I've ever had in a recording studio.

HANSEN: It's big. I mean, big guitars. You are paying homage in many of these cuts to

some of your own rock gods, aren't you?

Mr. **PECKHAM**: Yep. I wanted the guitar to sound big. I wanted to have it so that, if I was just playing a single note, it would just sort of envelop the listener.

(Soundbite of music)

Mr. **PECKHAM**: Going through this and thinking while I was writing the music and rehearsing, I went through the '70s guitarists that I idolized, and I think of Billy Gibbons from ZZ Top and especially Paul Kossoff from Free. These are names that a lot of people wouldn't know, but they mean a lot to me. I mean, to me, the '70s guitarists-- there were a whole lot of them and it's sort of like the legacy of great tenor players of the '40s and '50s. So these are people that I listened to and kind of drifted away from while I was learning about jazz with Wes Montgomery and Grant Green, whom I love a great deal, and then the post-bop guitarists like Mick Goodrick and John Scofield and John Abercrombie and Bill Frisell. All of these are my influences and I try to do them justice with every note I play.

(Soundbite of music)

HANSEN: The last cut on the CD is a Thelonious Monk tune, "Evidence." What can guitar students learn from Monk?

Mr. **PECKHAM**: Well, anybody can learn from Monk that individuality wins out over technical ferocity, that musical identity is the most important thing. If you have an interesting character, whatever you say will be interesting. And the other thing is the use of wrong notes--he's quoted somewhere as saying, "There are two types of wrong notes, the ones that sound good and wrong notes," and he does that all over the place.

(Soundbite of music)

HANSEN: If you were to go back to guitar school, who would you want to teach you?

Mr. **PECKHAM**: That's an interesting question. Historically, I would love to sit down and play with Grant Green or Wes Montgomery or Charlie Christian. To get a chance to play with Thelonious Monk would be, you know, the ultimate thrill really. Just playing with him would make you play better yourself.

(Soundbite of music)

Unidentified Man #2: Yeah.

(Soundbite of applause)

Mr. WILLIAM HERON(ph): My name is William Heron and I am from Panama.

HANSEN: Now you are not yet a student of **Rick Peckham's** but you attended the clinic that...

Mr. HERON: Yes, I attended the clinic and I saw him performing at the Berklee Performing Center last week and it was, like, astonishing. So I saw the flier for the clinic

and I stopped by.

HANSEN: Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

Mr. HERON: Not just as a guitar player but as a full musician, you know, being able to play piano or play harmonica, play guitar and probably recording commercial music for TV shows and for anyone who needs music and for myself.

HANSEN: So a professional musician.

Mr. HERON: Hopefully.

HANSEN: Hi. Tell us who you are, where you're from.

Mr. PETER ALLEN: I'm Peter Allen. I'm from Grand Junction, Colorado.

HANSEN: Why did you want to come to study here at Berklee?

Mr. ALLEN: Berklee is a really famous school, of course, and it has lots of great teachers. So a person who really wants to learn the musical language should come here for fluency.

HANSEN: And what do you see yourself doing in 10 years?

Mr. ALLEN: I'd like to be a full-blown rock star if I could, but, you know, I'm probably just going to be teaching and composing music because that's what I would also like to do.

Mr. BUENO VENTURA MARCO(ph): My name is Bueno Ventura Marco but I go for Buena(ph). I'm from Valencia, Spain.

HANSEN: Why did you want to study with **Rick Peckham**?

Mr. MARCO: I'd heard of him on records and I saw him perform live. I liked his playing so--and then I had the pleasure to meet him personally and so I--he's a great human being, not just a great musician.

HANSEN: What have you learned from him so far?

Mr. MARCO: First, to take care of the music. So if the music is good and it's, like, from the heart, then it'll be heard.

(Soundbite of music)

HANSEN: What do you look for in a student that you then personally take an interest in? You teach private students, right? How many private students do you have?

Mr. **PECKHAM**: I do. It ranges between a half dozen and a dozen students because I'm involved with so much administration in the department, but I really like to work with them and try to help them emerge with their own voice. I'm certainly not showing them exercises to make them sound just like me because that just doesn't work. The best teachers have students that sound totally different from each other and that's what I've

always aspired to do.

HANSEN: **Rick Peckham** is assistant chair of guitar here at the Berklee College of Music in Boston. His debut CD with the **Rick Peckham** Trio is called "Left End."

Rick, thanks a lot.

Mr. **PECKHAM**: Thank you very much.

HANSEN: There's more information and audio on our Web site, npr.org.

This is WEEKEND EDITION from NPR News. I'm Liane Hansen.

(Soundbite of music)

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review



Rick Peckham, *Left End*

(Perfected)

...Peckham's understanding of rock guitar goes way beyond the application of the odd power chord or turning his amp up to 11...

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Rick Peckham

Left End

(Perfected)

There aren't many jazz guitarists around who'd namecheck [Paul Kossoff](#), [Billy Gibbons](#) or (gulp) [Ritchie Blackmore](#) as influences, but Rick Peckham's not your average jazz guitarist by a long chalk. Though he's a new name to me, his CV includes work with [Dave Liebman](#), [Mike Gibbs](#) and [John Medeski](#), but most suprising is the fact that he's been teaching guitar at Berklee's Jazz department for the best part of 20 years.

While Berklee's come to be associated with a highly technical approach to improvisation that's produced a seemingly endless stream of heavy metal bebop guitarists ([Mike Stern](#)'s got a lot to answer for), Peckham's music is a joyful, boisterous union of rock, er, 'primitivism' and seat-of-the-pants improv.

Peckham's raw, wiry Telecaster lines thrash and ooze their way round the tumbling dialogues of double bass and drums (Tony Scherr and Jim Black respectively). Unlike many of his peers Peckham doesn't go for oodles of techie effects. There's a smattering of delay, a touch of distortion, but that's pretty much it.

Importantly though, Peckham's understanding of rock guitar goes way beyond the application of the odd power chord or turning his amp up to 11. THough his technique's pretty impressive, it doesn't get in the way, and there's a feral energy to his chordal slashes and bluesy, tumbling runs that'd give [Marc Ribot](#) a run for his money. Add to that a slightly cerebral approach to soloing (not unlike the off-kilter logic of [Bill Frisell](#) at his best) and you've got a pretty potent combination.

Black is the ideal drummer for such a venture; his economical, crisp timekeeping can pack a hefty punch ("Gibbons") or the lightest swish ("Soporific"). Scherr is right behind him, unfazed by the testosterone on display. It's the double bass that gives the music its character; Scherr's agile touch and elastic, resonant tone adds a touch of warmth and space that stops the whole thing turning into power trio cliché.

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After tributes to Billy Gibbons and [Neil Young](#), the trio head back towards jazz country with their flying leap at the oblique pleasures of [Monk's](#) "Evidence". Black and Scherr play cat 'n' mouse with each other as Peckham whips out a thoughtful, restrained solo. If you're like me, you'll find yourself clapping at the end of it (but make sure no-one's around or they'll laugh at you). Very, very nice.

Reviewer: Peter Marsh

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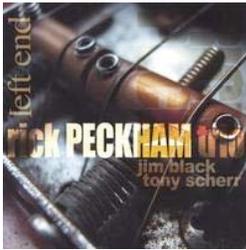
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Review Courtesy AllAboutJazz.com

Left End

Rick Peckham Trio | Perfected Music



Track Listing: 1. Left End 2. 353-1001 3. Mr. Medium 4. Shakey 5. Free 2 6. Gibbons 7. Soporific 8. You Know What That Means 9. Hammer Damage 10. Hawthorn 11. Real Time 12. Free 1 13. Evidence

Personnel: Rick Peckham - Guitar; Jim Black - drums; Tony Scherr - bass

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Left End has definitely got attitude. Combining the rock aesthetic with jazz improvisation, guitarist Rick Peckham has a background in jazz academics (he taught a Thelonious Monk class for ten years at Berklee) and with rock influences (ZZ Top and Neil Young). Jazz and rock music have had an interesting, if somewhat uneasy, relationship over the years. Early examples included Jimi Hendrix's merging free style playing with classic rock elements, as did Jeff Beck, Scott Henderson, and countless other guitarists whom have explored the duality of styles.

But let's get one thing straight from the start; Peckham's trio is not your typical "fusion" group--a category which has sometimes been an overly abused classification for modern jazz combined with over-amplification and distorted guitars. Call it what you will, *Left End* clearly rocks hard while still processing the ability to be expressive and spontaneous. The trio is hot and the music is performed with intensity and an in your face vibe that resonates realness.

From the title composition things are clearly bent toward the edgier side of the spectrum with its power guitar riffs and booming rhythm section. With influences from Monk to Led Zeppelin, Peckham has opted to not just combine two styles but to more so articulate a passion for the music. His guitar playing is quite accomplished as he uses and abuses his axe with fiery skill, utilizing sounds such as distortion, delay, and phase effects without the use of overdubbing.

On the energized "353-1001" things shift from a funky riff to more complex and open patterns as the trio plays with abandon. Drummer Jim Black is a dynamic musician who expands the compositions with an assortment of power rhythms, subtle designs and contours on the improv themed "Free 2." Bassist Tony Scherr adds a firm foundation to the music and also

delivers some interesting work with skillful hands on the quiet yet surreal piece “Soporific.”

The trio is not confined to just head-banging but also deliver some introspective and most interesting work on the soulful composition “Shakey” and the serene “Hawthorn,” demonstrating these players' range. Other highlights include the ZZ Top-inspired “Gibbons” and the eclectic antics of “Free 1.” With a nod to jazz purists, the CD concludes with a unique take on Monk's ever classic “Evidence.” Whether a hidden message is intended, the real deal is clearly whether the music can connect to the listener--be it jazz or rock--and this clearly sets *Left End* in the right direction.

Visit [Rick Peckham](#) on the web.

~ [Mark F. Turner](#)

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Standard
Devorah Day/Dominic Duval (CIMP)
 by Florence Wetzel

If you think nothing new is happening in the world of jazz vocalists, it's time to listen to Devorah Day. Her 2003 debut *Light of Day* (Abaton Book Company) was a revelation, and now she follows up with the equally strong *Standard*. Day is gifted with a one-of-a-kind voice: her range is astounding, and her phrasing highly original and unexpected. But while Day has great skill, she employs no artifice, and this gives her a powerful authenticity; she has the emotional honesty found in all the great jazz singers, an uncompromising clarity that expresses the heart of a song.

Standard finds her in the illustrious company of Dominic Duval, one of jazz' most important bassists, and their duet is an inspired pairing. Day and Duval match their gifts to a wide range of standards, as well as Day's composition "Come Closer" and an improvisation entitled "Four Dees". Day dives deep into the poignancy of "Good Morning, Heartache", "Yesterday", "When Sunny Gets Blue", and she gives a unique interpretation to "Them There Eyes", "Just One of Those Things", and "Ain't Misbehavin'". Day's fractured cohesion and strong fragility invest the songs with a thoroughly modern sensibility, and Duval's subtle bass gives Day both the background and space needed to make the songs her own.

It's also quite impressive that *Standard* was recorded in CIMP's legendary Spirit Room, live to two tracks with no alteration whatsoever. At this point CIMP has 200 releases to its credit, forming a veritable library of improvised music. *Standard* proves once again that you can't pigeonhole CIMP, who might be one of the last labels expected to release a CD with songs by Cole Porter and Lennon/McCartney. But CIMP prides itself on standing out of the artist's way, and happily they gave Day all the freedom she needed. Like Thelonious Monk, standards provide Day with a perfect jumping off point, a means to give full range to her unique conception and artistry.

For more information, visit www.cadencebuilding.com. Duval is at 55Bar Jul. 13th. See calendar.



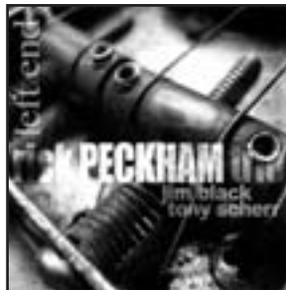
The Long View
Marty Ehrlich (Enja-Justin Time)
 by Jeff Stockton

Jazz needs composers like Marty Ehrlich. Like his mentor Julius Hemphill, Ehrlich, while proficient in the more conventional small group settings, envisions something greater, hearing music of multiple textures, moods, origins and voicings. Divided into six movements and a postlude, *The Long View* was originally conceived as aural accompaniment to an exhibition of paintings by Oliver Jackson (another Hemphill cohort). That this work stands on its own is implicit.

The first movement commences with a bracing sax statement by Ehrlich, followed by the stirring entry of twelve more musicians on a range of reeds, brass and rhythm. Trumpeter Eddie Allen takes a turn out front, before being joined by Ehrlich in an exchange of growls and squeals. The horns swell and recede, sometimes in big band style swing, at other times in furious group improvisation. Occasionally an instrument will come to the fore, like Mark Dresser's bass solo that signals the segue into "Movement II". In contrast to the rousing horns of the first part, this movement features the rolling mallets of Bobby Previte, the mournful strings of Mark Feldman on violin, Ralph Farris on viola, Erik Friedlander's cello and Ehrlich's pretty soprano. The depth of "Movement III" is measured by Ned Rothenberg's bass clarinet, J.D. Parran's contrabass clarinet and Andy Laster's baritone, which enable a conversation between trumpets and provide poignant contrast to Ehrlich's flute song. "Movement IV" starts with Wayne Horvitz playing delicately on piano in a quartet setting before Ehrlich tears it up on alto. Later in the same piece, Ehrlich and Dresser duet on flute and bass. Ray Anderson's trombone establishes the slow drag groove of the beginning and end of "Movement V", with Ehrlich responding with bluesy tenor, and for "Movement VI", the full ensemble mimics the scope and variety of "Movement I", this time dominated by Ehrlich's honking alto soloing, bubbling accompaniment by Marcus Rojas on tuba and Pheeroan akLaff's emphatic beats.

Movement within movements, gripping orchestrations, and overwhelming collective work define Ehrlich's accomplishment. If you're looking for something more than usual small group jazz, Ehrlich's music for large band is challenging and rewarding.

For more information visit www.justin-time.com. Ehrlich is at Tonic Jul. 1st. See calendar.



Left End
Rick Peckham (Perfected Music)
 by Sean Fitzell

The opening twangy guitar riff off the title track of guitarist Rick Peckham's *Left End* suggests an edge usually associated with rock music, a feeling solidified by the propulsive groove of drummer Jim Black and bassist Tony Scherr (both with plenty of rock in their backgrounds) to push the leader's statement further. And that's just the first 30 seconds.

Peckham's debut as a leader draws on early classic rock guitar influences for sound and attitude and infuses them with improvisational daring and sophisticated harmony. The resultant blend, in this capable trio's hands, reminds listeners that "fusion" doesn't have to be pejorative. This is exemplified on "353-1001", when the group locks into the rollicking odd-time opening. After a guitar solo over the halting bass line and skittering drums, the tune devolves into a more spacious exploration of quiet dynamics and sonic textures, until Black rebuilds the quirky groove, returning the group to the head.

The mid-tempo feel of tunes like "Mr. Medium" and "You Know What That Means" feature Peckham's more cleanly phrased and slick guitar runs. Open-formed pieces, including "Hawthorn" and "Soporific", highlight the trio's ability to coax an array of sound from their instruments and patience for subtle nuance.

These qualities were evident at the group's CD release show at Tonic last month, which allowed for extended improvisations. This was especially apparent in the middle of "Hammer Damage", with Peckham meandering amid Scherr's percussive bowing and Black's assortment of toy bells and steel bowls. Also highlighted was how seamlessly Peckham changes his guitar sound - "Gibbons" went from a growling riff and aggressive rhythm to a mellower, moody section and back again without dropping a note or a beat.

Left End is a new chapter in the tradition of the "power trio". Peckham's concise composing serves an array of sonic textures and unexpected twists, with a healthy dose of attitude and wit.

For more information, visit www.rickpeckham.com



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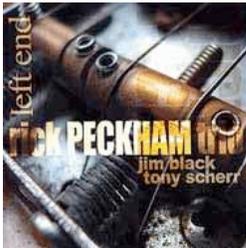
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Review Courtesy AllAboutJazz.com

Left End

Rick Peckham | Perfected Music



Track Listing: Left End; 353-1001; Mr. Medium; Shakey; Free 2; Gibbons; Soporific; You Know What That Means; Hammer Damage; Hawthorn; Real Time; Free 1; Evidence

Personnel: Rick Peckham (electric guitar), Tony Scherr (acoustic bass), Jim Black (drums)

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For the first album by the assistant chair to the guitar department at the Berklee School of Music, one might expect a heavily jazz-centric affair and, given Rick Peckham's vintage, one that would be heavily informed by alumni like John Scofield, Pat Metheny and Bill Frisell. And, to be sure, there's a certain outward edge a la Scofield, and some reference to the skewed Americana of Frisell territory. But while *Left End* may demonstrate these allegiances, they are just as much informed by classic rock guitarists including Jeff Beck, Free's Paul Kosoff, Deep Purple's Ritchie Blackmore, and Neil Young. The resulting blend is something that's not quite rock, not quite jazz, but somewhere in the middle. And that's exactly where Peckham wants it to be.

With a grungy tone that sounds at times like Robben Ford but with more attitude and less finesse, Peckham may think like a rocker, but he constructs like a jazzier. Tunes are often deceptive, with extra bars thrown in to unbalance things, as in "Shakey," or in completely irregular meters, as in "353-1001." There are even a couple of free improvisations that would be completely at home in the downtown New York scene. And that's no surprise, given the presence of bassist Tony Scherr and drummer Jim Black in the trio.

Peckham may show himself capable of more advanced harmonic construction and oblique stylistic devices, but with a pervasive beat, rock and roll attitude and a recording that is at its best when played *loud*, Peckham does his best to combine the sound and feel of some of his formative rock influences with a looser improvisational nature. "You Know What That Means" has some drumming that would do Ginger Baker proud, but enveloping the somewhat straightforward ascending bass line are guitar parts with close voicings and less-than-predictable melodies.

Peckham, Scherr and Black sound like a power trio from hell, a strange confluence of warped elegance and periods of outright bombast. “Gibbons,” with its head-banging theme and Peckham wailing over Scherr’s pedal-tone and Black’s Bonham-style power drumming, is the closest things get to a straight rock rhythm approach. But then the group moves into more obscure territory with “Soporific,” where Peckham demonstrates a more angular side. There is even one more-or-less overt nod to the jazz tradition with the trio’s cover of Monk’s “Evidence” but, coming at the end of the record, it seems like more of an afterthought.

It should come as no surprise that Peckham teaches ear training at Berklee, as most of the guitar heroes who inform his work on *Left End* couldn’t read a note if you paid them. But coupled with the stylistic naiveté of those classic rock gods is a deeper musical knowledge; and that is what ultimately makes *Left End* such a satisfying listen.

Visit [Rick Peckham](#) on the web.

~ [John Kelman](#)

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CD Reviews: RICK PECKHAM : Left End (Perfected Music. PM1001)

Posted by: Adminon Tuesday, September 07, 2004 - 01:16 PM

 Paul Donnelly

Largely eschewing the regular influences displayed by jazz guitar trios Peckham and his associates have come up with their own take on the power trio that fuses jazz and rock in sometimes unexpected ways. He wears his rock influences for all to hear from the outset with a Led Zep homage full of choppy licks and a barrage of rhythms from drummer Jim Black and acoustic bass man Tony Scherr.

Continuing to pay tribute to the rock pantheon there's 'Mr Medium' which Peckham describes as his 'take on Mr Big' the old Free favourite, featuring the late Paul Kossoff. He retains that sharp edged riff as an opener, the sound not quite like Kossoff's except for the power he often exhibited. But then it isn't meant to be an exact copy. You may remember Andy Frazer's rubbery bass lines were also a highlight of the original and this time Scherr's mobile muscularity on acoustic bass is an equally exciting feature.

I thought 'Shakey', his nod in Neil Young's direction, would be a more grungy affair. While Peckham goes for an expansive sound he doesn't try to approximate that wired excess that Young takes pleasure in. His name check continues with a piece named after the ZZ Top guitarist. 'Gibbons' finds one guitar trio echoing another as the guitarist peels off cascades of sustained, bluesy string-benders while Black supports him with high energy battery from around the kit.

Of course there are other sides to this trio and they offer two examples of improvisation, 'Free 1 and 2', which draw on aspects of jazz vocabulary and construct entirely different textures that rely on interactions of another kind. From an equally interesting jazz tradition they choose to re-visit Monk's 'Evidence', a composition which suits the sometimes spiky, angular style of Peckham's playing. Black's ever inventive rhythmic attack also fits the tune perfectly while Scherr walks the bass alongside the guitarist's liquid explorations.

It is refreshing to hear work that bears the influence of Grant Green along with those various schools of rock guitar without a trace of incongruity. I hope his debut as a leader encourages Peckham to release more of these interesting 'fusions'.

Paul Donnelly

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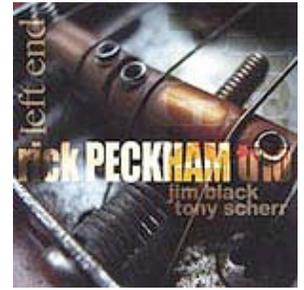
From the *Spring 2004* issue.

Rick Peckham's credentials are definitely from the jazz world: Gigs with John Medeski, Jerry Bergonzi, Mike Gibbs and Dave Liebman. On faculty at Berklee College. Graduate of North Texas State University.

But on his first recording as leader, Peckham leads his trio through an hour of some heavily rock-based improvisational jams that have as much in common with the Allman Brothers or Jeff Beck as they do with John Scofield or Oregon.

Peckham is a monster guitarist, with a full arsenal at his disposal. From modal jazz noodlings to heavy-metal axe attacks, Peckham has as broad a range of tricks up his sleeve as you'll find.

But he leavens that technical brilliance by putting the music first. Nothing groundbreaking here compositionally, just interesting songs (he wrote all but one of the 13 tracks) that show imagination and taste and give him plenty of room to dazzle you with his technique.



Left End

By the Rick Peckham Trio

Perfected Music; New York, N.Y.: 2004

To hear sound clips or learn more about this release, Turbula recommends viewing its [CD Baby entry](#).



Review by Jim Trageser. Jim is a writer and editor living in Escondido, Calif.

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THE IRISH TIMES

Review by Ray Comiskey from 4.22.04.

RICK PECKHAM

Left End Perfected Music ★★☆☆



Rock guitar has had a bad jazz press, much of it deserved. But there's a refreshing sense of engagement and discovery about Rick Peckham's debut as leader, not least because he's an inventive, probing player who knows the best qualities of both traditions and creates a synthesis of the two that works. Helping him is one of the most open-minded jazz drummers, Jim Black, and the solidly adventurous bassist Tony Scherr. In Peckham's hands the devices associated with rock guitar never allow manner to dominate substance; instead, they reinforce the discourse with Scherr and, in particular, Black, who shares a rapport with Peckham that borders on the uncanny. Whether playing freely or simply grooving, the trio is so together it sounds like a working group - which it is not. www.rickpeckham.com

Ray Comiskey