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IN SOME WAYS, it's not surprising that John Jorgenson lives so close to Music Row. This is, after all, a boulevard of dreams — some achieved but many broken — for countless musicians who have settled in Nashville, this affable ex-Californian among them.

On the other hand, Jorgenson doesn't fit the Music City stereotype. Sure, he's garnered session credits that include Brooks & Dunn, LeAnn Rimes, Hank Williams Jr., Kenny Chesney, Trick Pony, Pam Tillis, Travis Tritt and other pillars of big-time country music; the Academy of Country Music even anointed him guitarist of the year three times.

The difference is that for most local studio cats,

he is more *in* than *of* this town. This isn't necessarily a distinction to be flaunted, yet Jorgenson is by nature a musician, not a star. That much is clear when approaching the home he shares with his wife, the filmmaker, therapist, activist and former record-industry executive and producer Dixie Gamble, and their two dogs, Benny and Beau.

Deep-toned wind chimes hang over the porch; the word "peace" adorns the gate into their yard, with "peace to all who enter here" etched into a nearby stone. Inside, the ceilings are high, and sunlight pours through tall windows. The furnishings are perfectly mismatched: The shade on a floor lamp bears a Bell System logo, a laptop perches in the living room atop a wavy Art

Gypsy Come Home

Versatile virtuoso John Jorgenson returns to the music of Django Reinhardt

BY ROBERT L. DOERSCHUK

these are often the only kinds of names on their résumés. While even A-team players tend to run in small, if elevated, circles, Jorgenson came to town by way of Hollywood punk clubs, stadium stages (alongside Elton John), symphony orchestras, Telecaster supergroups and even Disneyland.

In recent years, he has concentrated primarily on gypsy jazz. The idiom traces back to the 1930s, when guitarist Django Reinhardt and violinist Stephane Grappelli formed the Quintet of the Hot Club of France, an all-string band that mixed the freedom of American swing with the exhilarating romanticism of Romany music. Jorgenson has devoted much of his energy to this sound, most recently on his quintet CD *Ultraspontane*, an album of original material plus two Reinhardt "improvisations" adapted for his group with chamber orchestra.

Thus, even with the respect he enjoys in Nashville,

Deco desk, books line spare Scandinavian shelves and a wicker rocking chair beckons to both human visitor and canine resident.

What you don't see are prominently plastered memorabilia of Jorgenson's career. There's no evidence of the role he played in furthering the modern fusion of rock and country as a member of the Desert Rose Band; there's no sign of his later adventures with the Hellecasters, a summit of Olympian pickers whose virtuosity enhanced, not overwhelmed, their craft.

Yet, if you look a little closer, mementos are there. In fact, one of them has a tendency to nuzzle against a visitor's leg.

"We got Benny from Elton," Jorgenson explains, after shooing the affectionate beast into the living room. "He's a border terrier, from the border of England and Scotland. Elton had 10 of them. Dixie and I had never seen one before, and they had so much personality, and

John Jorgenson sits with one of his four original Selmer guitars. This particular guitar was made in 1939 and was found on eBay.

JIM MCGUIRE

we were admiring them so much that he said, 'I'll send you one.' I thought he was kidding, but he's the best gift that anybody has ever given me."

THE ESSENCE of Jorgenson is most evident when he sits back with one of his Saga Gitane signature guitars and rips through a few Django-like passages. It's as true today as it was when he was growing up back in Redlands, California: He always comes to play. However, there was little about his first efforts, or his choice of instrument, that would forecast where his endeavors would lead.

Begin with the soundtrack behind his earliest memories. His father, James, a composer and member

and bassoon as well as piano. Upon reaching his mid-teens, he was able to play under his father's baton with both the university and community orchestras. At the same time, he discovered rock 'n' roll and began listening to the Beatles, the Animals, the Beach Boys, Sam the Sham, Tommy James and the other stars du jour. Even more alarming, he started expressing an interest in playing some of this stuff — on the very instrument that most challenged adult preconceptions.

And so, after plucking tentatively on a ukulele he'd found somewhere at home, Jorgenson announced to his parents that he wanted to become a guitar player. Hoping in vain that he'd lose interest, they deferred his pleas over the next several years before buying him his

"I realized that I could make \$80 for playing two or three rehearsals and a dress rehearsal for a concert with an orchestra, or I could make \$40 playing Rolling Stones songs one night at a frat party — and I didn't have to wear a tux!"

of the music faculty at the University of Redlands, made sure that classical music topped the family playlist. "It was a big deal if we got to listen to *Peter and the Wolf* or *Carnival of the Animals*," Jorgenson remembers. "And my mom taught piano lessons. Every day I heard kids play the piano and saw them getting attention from her. So I decided to start playing the piano, too."

Jorgenson's instruction was exclusively classical, although his ears were open to other influences. His father, a onetime jazz trombonist, arranged a residency at Redlands each summer for his friend Stan Kenton. "Every night, Kenton's band would play a concert," Jorgenson says, "and every day, he would be at our house, playing the piano or hanging out. So as a very young kid, I had no problem with going up to him at a concert and requesting 'The Peanut Vendor' or whatever I wanted to hear."

By then, Jorgenson was taking lessons on clarinet

first guitar, a Japanese Fender Jaguar knockoff called a St. George, along with a Teisco Del Rey Checkmate amp they'd found at a local grocery store. The condition was that he would continue to practice his "real" instruments, too, and he agreed . . . for a while.

"Playing guitar with my friends was just more fun," he explains. "I loved all those '60s guitar songs — 'Mr. Tambourine Man' and the riff at the beginning of 'Day Tripper.' I also started getting paid to play music pretty early on, when I was 12 or 13, and after a few years I realized that I could make \$80 for playing two or three rehearsals and a dress rehearsal for a concert with an orchestra, or I could make \$40 playing Rolling Stones songs one night at a frat party — and I didn't have to wear a tux!"

That nailed it. Jorgenson got started by copying songs, riffs and solos he heard on the radio. His first lessons came after that, for which his parents had to



buy him an acoustic. Armed with his Yamaha FG-180, Jorgenson progressed rapidly to an advanced class in which he was the only member. Luckily, his teacher was a blues player, so their one-on-one lessons focused less on chops and more on improvisation.

"I got the idea pretty quickly," he recalls. "Here's the blues scale. These are all the notes you can use. Do whatever you want with them, and it's going to sound OK. You can bend them, tremolo them, unison-string them, hit harmonics . . . Yes, the notes are important, but when there are only four of them — G, B, D and E, if you're in G major — then the attitude with which you play them is even more important. B.B. King does it with just one note, so I understood that I could, too. For some reason, that just didn't intimidate me."

On graduating from high school, Jorgenson began playing five days a week at Disneyland. Over the next few years, his routine involved going back and forth

between this gig, freelance jobs around L.A. and classes at the University of Redlands. After earning his music degree and completely burning out on *The Happiest Place on Earth*, Jorgenson accepted a scholarship to study bass at the Aspen Music Festival. While there, he also took advanced lessons on bassoon and played with an orchestra directed by Leonard Slatkin.

One day, he answered an ad from a group in need of an "acoustic jazz bass player." The lineup was mandolin, guitar and violin, and the repertoire was closer to the "dawg music" hybrid being played by David Grisman than to anything Jorgenson thought of as jazz. He got the job, played a lot around Aspen and went back to Redlands that summer, his curiosity kindled about what might be described amorphously as "acoustic music."

Between punk-oriented jobs at the Starwood, the Whisky, Madame Wong's West and other L.A. venues,

The John Jorgenson Quintet onstage at DjangoFest Los Angeles in 2007: Gonzalo Bergara on rhythm guitar, Charlie Chadwick on bass, Jorgenson, Doug Hardwick on drums and Stephan Dudash on five-string viola.

ANTHONY DONEZ

When striped shirts ruled the earth: Jorgenson with the New Wave band Neo Paris and the Futures in 1980. Jorgenson, Neo Paris, Kenny Phillips and Steve Williams. COURTESY OF JOHN JORGENSEN



▲ The award-winning Hellecasters in 1994: Jerry Donohue, Will Ray and Jorgenson. This may be the only band in which every member had their own signature guitar model. COURTESY OF JOHN JORGENSEN



◀ Jorgenson jams with Elton John and Davey Johnstone in 1998. Although you can't see it in this photo, Jorgenson's Tele is painted with the artwork from John's classic album, *Goodbye Yellow Brick Road*. LYN PETERSEN

Jorgenson plays with Chris Hillman and the Desert Rose Band on *Hee Haw* in 1987. "I was playing a 1983 Japanese-reissue Telecaster that was just a monster guitar," Jorgenson remembers. "I do have a 1954 Tele, but that Japanese guitar sounded so good I almost always used it onstage back then." S. HAMILTON



◀ The Rhythm Boys with their Selmers in 1982: Doug Mattocks (with serial number 879), Jorgenson (574, purchased from Fred Walecki) and Raul Reynoso (881). Selmer didn't make basses, so Charlie Warren was out of luck. RENE BARDEAU



he practiced on a mandolin borrowed from a neighbor. When drug and alcohol problems derailed his band, Jorgenson drew a deep breath and went back to Disneyland, this time with an outfit that played bluegrass and Dixieland — though not simultaneously. Rushing from Frontierland to Tomorrowland to whatever Land needed him next, Jorgenson sensed that his mandolin work for the string sets and his clarinet work on the New Orleans tunes were somehow complementary.

With this epiphany, Jorgenson took his first step toward the altar of gypsy jazz. In fact, Disneyland officials granted his request to perform with a group dedicated to the style. After punching out at the Magic

bluegrass in what they were doing. Elvis was singing songs by Wynonie Harris. You could hear Charlie Christian guitar in the early Bill Haley stuff. I also love the essence of each style, which is why I always try and re-create Django's original sound a couple of times in my shows. But I certainly wouldn't want to stay there."

This sense of curiosity helped define the Desert Rose Band as innovators in country music, a genre not primarily known as a hotbed of experimentation. They were commercially successful, too, with five No. 1 singles and citations from the Academy of Country Music as the industry's top touring band for three consecutive years. This exposure helped establish Jorgenson's

"I played at Carnegie Hall with the Desert Rose Band. I played all over the world with Elton John. But with everything I've done, the Hellecasters still seem to be the thing that most people associate with me."

Kingdom, he started nurturing other musical personae on his L.A. gigs: He played straight-ahead jazz at clubs like Oscar's and the Nucleus Nuance and country with another band he put together, the Cheatin' Hearts, which featured drummer Steve Duncan, steel-guitar icon "Sneaky Pete" Kleinow and bassist Bill Bryson. When former Byrd Chris Hillman called with an invitation to launch a new acoustic quartet — based on a recommendation from Bryson — Jorgenson added that to the mix. By their second gig, Hillman's group had altered its sound a bit, based largely on input from Jorgenson, and started calling itself the Desert Rose Band.

These stylistic leaps felt as natural to Jorgenson as going from song to song in a set. "I always found commonality, rather than separateness, in these styles," he says. "Johnny Cash and Carl Perkins were early rockabilly performers, but there was a lot of country and

reputation beyond Southern California while elevating him to a higher tier among his peers at home.

That high-profile gig, along with his interest in a particular line of guitars, set the stage for his next move. Jorgenson had been playing Fender Telecasters since 1974, when his search for a brighter tone than the one he'd been getting from his Gibson Les Paul SG led him to a Tele being offered for \$150 in a newspaper ad. "I wasn't that crazy about its pink paisley finish," he says, "but I loved how radically different it was from my Gibson. Then I came across a '53 Tele for sale, which I bought for \$200 and still have. It had that same character that I liked, but its front and back pickups sounded full enough that I began thinking it could actually become my main guitar."

The more he played it around town, the more Jorgenson eased into a network of peers who shared his interest in the instrument. "I'm not saying the Tele

can't be a versatile guitar," he explains, "but it's like the gypsy-jazz guitar in that it's especially well-suited to doing a few specific things. That sound draws a certain type of player. Jerry Donahue, for example, is known for bending behind the nut, and the Telecaster is scooped behind that nut perfectly for that. I knew Jerry was a great player, and another great Telecaster aficionado, Jeff Ross, introduced me to Danny Gatton's playing. I was already a big fan of Albert Lee because I'd seen him play with Emmylou Harris. I saw Will Ray one night, playing with this extra slide on his fourth finger and using effects in really unusual ways. By then I was getting interested in this brotherhood of the Telecaster."

After hanging out and sitting in at each other's gigs, Jorgenson, Donahue and Ray decided in 1991 to work up a set of instrumentals to play at the Palomino. Jorgenson came up with the name Hellecasters, which seemed right on the money — as far as both gear and attitude. He also suggested that they avoid the self-indulgences that people might expect and instead concentrate on taking a more musical approach to playing actual songs. It was, in retrospect, a perfect combination of talent, focus and presentation, which is why they decided to run with the project for a while, just to see what happens.

"The only instrumental electric-guitar music back then, outside of the jazz world, came from these shredding guitar players," Jorgenson explains. "But we stuck with the melodic stuff, concentrated on getting good tones and playing as an ensemble, and kept a sense of humor about it. People were like, 'Wow, these guys can shred, but it's not just posing. It's not the same distorted sound we've heard a million times.'"

Their first album, *Return of the Hellecasters*, achieved a unique distinction by winning both Album of the Year and Country Album of the Year honors in *Guitar Player* magazine's reader poll. They cut two more CDs, more or less in the spare time each could scrounge between other projects. The band's success prompted Fender to issue a line of Hellecaster guitars, based more on the Strat than the Tele and built at the company's limited-edition shop in Japan. "It's funny," Jorgenson muses. "I played at Carnegie Hall with the Desert Rose Band. I played all over the world with Elton John. But with everything I've done, the Hellecasters still seem to be the thing that most people associate

with me. I guess we struck a nerve."

After their third album, 1997's *Hell 3: New Axes to Grind*, the band members felt that the project had run its course. "My favorite [album] is actually the second one, *Escape from Hollywood*, because we had time to gel as a unit by then," Jorgenson says. "But by the third one, we were under too much pressure to top ourselves. What we came up with was so complex that when it came to playing it live, we felt we'd created a monster. At that point I figured that we'd done what we'd come together to do."

Besides, something else had yanked Jorgenson's career in yet another direction. At a release party for *Running*, their second album, the Desert Rose Band performed at the Roxy before a roomful of celebrities; one of them, Elton John, came backstage to congratulate Jorgenson on his playing. Later, the guitarist returned the courtesy at one of Elton's shows. They got along well enough, and Jorgenson started a friendly acquaintance with Elton's guitarist, Davey Johnstone. Still, they drifted out of touch as Jorgenson worked on various projects, including a gig as musical director on Delta Burke's sitcom, and built up his session schedule in L.A.

About six years later, in the middle of sessions for *Escape from Hollywood*, the phone rang. It was Elton John, out of the blue, with an invitation to join his band for an 18-month world tour. "Honestly, I almost didn't take the gig," Jorgenson admits. "I wasn't at all sure I wanted to drop the super-varied career I had built up in L.A. I was happy with my life. But then I heard the music that Elton was doing, and I really liked it. They wanted a lot of guitar playing in their show. So I thought, 'Well, you know what? If I can't do this just because I like the music, then why am I in this business?'"

For seven full years, Jorgenson toured and recorded with the English superstar. Because Johnstone already handled a lot of guitar parts, Jorgenson dusted off some of his other instruments — mandolin, pedal-steel guitar, various saxophones, flute and some percussion — and fit them in where needed. But guitar remained his specialty, whether doubling or harmonizing parts with Johnstone or switching to acoustic for the moodier stuff. Equally important, he made himself a visual component of the show; with Elton anchored to the

Ahead of the Game

A word on Saga's gypsy-jazz guitars

In the mid-1980s, Richard Keldsen's Saga Instruments began having guitars made in Japan that were in the Selmer/Maccaferri style. "The idea started with Paul Shelasky, a fiddler and instrument collector I've known for years," Keldsen says. "He convinced me that there was a market for good, inexpensive gypsy-jazz guitars so I decided to try them. When we introduced them, they sold like crazy for a year or so, and then the sales just stopped dead. I think there was a small pent-up demand for the guitars, which we satisfied very quickly." When the orders dwindled to almost nothing, Keldsen dropped them from the catalog.

Fast forward 20 years. The embryonic gypsy-jazz scene of the mid-1980s had grown so much that it was able to support numerous festivals around the world. Even more importantly, players like John Jorgenson, Paul Mehling and Stephane Wrembel were producing instructional books and DVDs, which had created a strong demand for well-made, reasonably priced guitars. So Keldsen, again with Paul Shelasky's input, decided to try a second time. Shelasky, who owned a couple of original Selmers, went to China with his guitars to show them to the people who would be making the Sagas. The result was the Gitane DG-500, a 12-fret D-soundhole Maccaferri-style, and the DG-250M, a repro of Shelasky's rare 14-fret maple Selmer with solid headstock.

The word quickly spread around gypsy-jazz circles about the Saga Gitanes, and in quick order players like Jorgenson, Wrembel and Lulo Reinhardt had signed on as endorsers. "We have a great relationship with the people in China who build our guitars," Keldsen says. "They're able to make signature models that are structurally — not just cosmetically — different from our standard line." The John Jorgenson models, for example, are closely based on his old Selmers and have the larger, more rectangular neck and thicker fretboards that characterize the French guitars. And the Stephane Wrembel model is based on his Marc Delie guitar, which was made for him in 1999 and has a steeper neck angle and taller bridge, which produce a snappier, louder tone. The Lulo Reinhardt model is basically a stock DG-255 with some cosmetic upgrades.



"Lulo Reinhardt, who is Django's grandnephew, played a DG-255 at the Musikmesse in Frankfurt and liked the way it felt and sounded off the rack," Keldsen says. "To make it a little more special, we came up with the idea of using silver-plated hardware with lapis lazuli accents, which matches the jewelry he sometimes wears. We've been working with a number of other artists, but it takes a few prototypes to get just what they want, so I want to hold off on announcing them until we get it right. I'm very pleased with the way things have turned out with the Gitanes. To be honest, I was a bit hesitant to get back into building them after our experience in the 1980s, but it now looks like we were about 20 years ahead of the game on those guitars."

— MICHAEL JOHN SIMMONS

piano, it was up to the two guitarists to scamper around the vast stage, adding physical emphasis to the music.

It was thrilling, it was fun and it paid well, but Jorgenson came to realize that it was not music that he could claim as his own. After an amicable departure from Elton's band, Jorgenson returned to the music that had first beckoned to him back in the Disneyland days.

"WHAT DRAWS ME to Django's music?" he asks, giving the question serious consideration. "I guess I would say that it encompasses almost everything: classical, jazz, the string-band tradition, the energy of rock, the attitude and tone of bluegrass, the challenge of getting a big sound out of an acoustic instrument. It just meets so many of my musical needs."

Jorgenson was inspired by gypsy jazz and its acoustic texture, its medium tempos, its insistent two- or four-beat pulse generated by two or more guitarists chugging in sync and its alternately fiery and sentimental solos. His first solo album, *After You've Gone*, released by Curb Records in 1988, featured violinist Darol Anger and mandolinist David Grisman, which tied it to the work of young American players, primarily in the San Francisco area, who had previously touched on this tradition. Yet, the emphasis on authentic repertoire showed Jorgenson's determination to excavate his Django roots faithfully and fully.

In addition to researching Reinhardt's playing and history, Jorgenson also pursued authenticity in his choice of guitars. Since the 1990s, when G&L issued approximately 190 Jorgenson-model ASAT guitars, he has worked closely with several manufacturers in designing instruments that reflect his perspectives on quality. Besides the Hellecaster model, Jorgenson lent his name to a Fender variation on the Telecaster, which featured a korina body and custom pickups made from double Tele coils on the front and back. At roughly the same time, Takamine produced two acoustic/electric Jorgenson signature models, both of them dreadnought-sized cutaways, one with six strings and the other with 12.

None of these fit the gypsy-jazz profile. The ideal guitar for this application came from Selmer; its sharp, snappy tone and U-shaped neck suited Reinhardt, who put a premium on volume — both for rhythm and lead

work — and ease of movement, due to the challenge of working around a severe burn on his left hand that he suffered in a caravan fire. Django devotees are quite familiar with his injury, which immobilized the fourth and fifth fingers of his left hand into a tight curl against his palm. Jorgenson, eager to probe more deeply into the story, lodged an unusual request when director John Duigan cast him to play the late guitarist in his 2004 film, *Head in the Clouds*.

The makeup department devised a glue-like gunk that, when painted on, locked Jorgenson's left hand into exactly the same position as Reinhardt's. As expected, when he began playing, the experience proved enlightening. Picking up his Saga guitar, he dashes through a series of runs, fretting with only his index and middle fingers. "Guitar players typically think in terms of shape on the fingerboard as they play chords and scales," he explains. "Some people would call this 'playing in a box.' Django, because of his handicap but also because of his ear, laid things out very differently, with much more movement up and down the neck."

Without the flexibility to play runs easily from low to high strings in one position, Reinhardt soloed on a more limited selection of strings, often sliding far up and down the neck to hit notes that would be within easy reach for most players. While he could press against the strings with his paralyzed digits for occasional approximations of a barre chord, his usual approach was to do the job entirely with his two mobile fingers, whose strength, accuracy, pristine articulation and sweet control of vibrato astonish even today.

Reinhardt's unique requirements and attributes led him to the Selmer guitar. Built between 1932 and 1952 in France, it has become a relic of sorts, admired and coveted by those who chase the muse of gypsy jazz. Jorgenson, being very much a part of this crowd, therefore sprang into action when he spotted one for sale on eBay.

After disappearing briefly into a back room, he emerges a moment later with the precious item, dating from 1939 or '40, its finish somewhat weathered. "Obviously, the face has seen better days," he observes. "Certainly, it looked better online. I might not have bought it had I seen the condition in person, but now I'm really glad I did because I really like its sound."

He plays, and the tone is unmistakable. "It's rose-

wood on the outside, poplar and mahogany on the inside,” he notes, “not because laminate was cheaper, since in those days it was more expensive to make laminate than to use solid wood. It was more so that the back and sides can be rigid and thin.”

This is actually the fourth Selmer that Jorgenson has acquired over the years, the least expensive of which was priced in the vicinity of \$15,000. They are, first of all, few in number. The company issued about a thousand instruments over its 20-year run, and of those, perhaps only 600 were the type that Reinhardt played; fewer than that weathered the passing decades. For this reason, when Jorgenson began talking with Saga Musical Instruments about designing a guitar specifically for gypsy jazz, price point was among his top priorities.

Setting his Selmer aside, he picks up his Saga Gitane DG-330 “Modele Jorgenson.” To ears not attuned to the fineries of the idiom, it sounds pretty close to the Selmer. “Well,” he answers, a bit dubiously, “I’ve got this one set up more for playing onstage. Ordinarily I’d have the action a little higher, which would make them sound more similar. But they actually sound as different as any of my guitars of this style.”

He first crossed paths with Saga at the Musikmesse trade show in Frankfurt, Germany, where the company was showing its maple-bodied DG-250 guitar. Jorgenson liked it but had some technical suggestions, which he shared with Saga designer Greg Rich, a long-time friend. (Rich has since moved on to another company called Music Link.) Rich responded with an offer to incorporate these ideas into a signature model. The proposal was tempting, but first Jorgenson wanted to make sure its cost would be within reach for players in the real world. They agreed, which is why none of his three signature Gitanes lists above \$1,395, with a street price frequently below \$1,000.

Many of its key elements are imported directly from the Selmer, including the ladder bracing, the zero fret, the near-U shape to the neck and the use of a pressed (rather than a carved) arch in the top. The black finish on this particular model suggests formal applications onstage but also, in some ways, the blues, an association Jorgenson doesn’t overlook. “To my mind, it’s definitely designed for gypsy jazz,” he says. “But the qualities that make it good for that — the percussive,

penetrating, brilliant lead sound — would also work well for some forms of acoustic blues and things like that.”

Saga guitars appear throughout *Ultraspontane*, the latest CD from the John Jorgenson Quintet. “I played a prototype of my signature model on ‘G-Funk’ and ‘Ghost Dance’ because it has a more modern, hi-fi sound than the Selmer,” he points out. “For ‘Le Journee des Tziganes,’ I used this one” — the DG-330 — “because it has a different type of sustain and it plays really well in tune, which was important because this melody has a lot of open, ringing strings. It’s also on the bridges of ‘Swingapore,’ which has similar parts; for the verses, I used a guitar that Maurice Dupont built for me in the mid-’90s. It’s become known as a John Jorgenson model because it has a lot of unusual characteristics: It’s a 14-fret D-hole, where normally D-hole guitars are 12-fret, plus it has an extra internal sound chamber, with Brazilian rosewood back and sides. The rosettes are Art Deco colors, like cobalt and lavender. He made only three or four of these.”

There’s plenty of Selmer, too, Jorgenson adds. “My first Selmer is on most of the rest of the record: ‘Lucky Sevens,’ ‘Boss Orpheum,’ ‘Don’t Worry About Me’ and ‘Improvisation No. 1.’ ‘Ultraspontane’ and ‘El Camino del Che’ is my second Selmer. For ‘Improvisation No. 2,’ it’s another Selmer, a D-hole 12-fret with no sound chamber, which is the type of guitar that Django played on his very first recordings.”

No matter what instrument he chooses, Jorgenson is deep into his mission to master the Reinhardt aesthetic — and more critically, to personalize and develop it as well. But other goals are taking shape, including a few that the music police at Disneyland might not have endorsed. “I’ve been listening to Middle Eastern, Romanian and Bulgarian music lately,” he says. “For instance, there’s a Bulgarian brass band called Fanfare Ciocarlia, who play with amazing speed and intensity. There’s another group called Taraf de Haïdouks, who include violins, accordions and cimbalom, which I especially love. I’m actually composing a piece for Carl Marsh for guitar, cimbalom and orchestra . . .”

Music Row might as well be a thousand miles away. What matters, obviously, is not where Jorgenson is, but where his work will lead him — and his faithful listeners. ⑥