

March 28, 2011

To Whom it may concern:

I am writing this letter as a general recommendation for Tim Wallis. In my capacity as the Chair, Music Industry Studies at Millikin University in Decatur, Illinois, I am responsible for identifying and developing young musical talent. It also falls upon me in this position to introduce young musicians to music professionals who have something to offer. It is in this spirit that I am writing to help get the word out about Tim Wallis and his amazing talent.

Tim is simply one of the most advanced and inspiring guitar players I have known and followed in my 22 years in Central Illinois. He has followed his calling as to what is even *possible* on the electric guitar to a truly unique and astounding point. First - and most importantly - he is by any conventional standard a superb guitar player. He knows more songs than I can even guess at, he is proficient in numerous styles, his technique is bordering on immaculate and his "voice" is immediately recognizable. Normally, that would be about all I would have to say to recommend someone for offering a master class in guitar. However, in a sense, his story really *begins* with that description.

Clearly Tim's vision for his guitar style was influenced by the mechanics that influence the melodic and harmonic approach of pedal steel players. However, he just as clearly wanted to retain the technical elements of the standard six-string electric guitar. Thus Tim set out on a course to advance the technology of the electric guitar to include certain mechanical devices found only on the pedal steel guitar. I would not presume to offer a highly detailed accounting of his modifications, though I have played one of his modified guitars and talked at length with him about the technology he has employed. His modified guitars are truly marvels of ingenuity! What makes it all inspirational, however, is the *music* he makes. I can honestly say that I've heard nothing like it. He effortlessly combines super-clean conventional lead and rhythm guitar with the spot-on sophisticated note bending of the pedal steel guitar. His sound is not the least contrived or gimmicky, but rather natural and voice-like. In a word, *beautiful*.

I will confess to being surprised upon discovering (after years of having listened to Tim) that he has virtually no traditional theoretical background whatsoever. I say I was surprised because he is so fluent improvising over sophisticated harmonic progressions - he struck me as possessing the language of a jazz player. I came to realize that he in fact is in possession of that degree of sophistication, but he just doesn't *articulate* it in the language of music theory. As a player in many styles myself (including a lifetime devoted to jazz improvisation and arranging) I can say Tim is as fluent and inventive with harmony as anyone.

In closing, it is my sincere desire to see Tim succeed in his efforts to reach young players and share his knowledge. He came by it the old fashioned way - he earned it! Tim is a very engaging fellow, charismatic and articulate. Any young player should aspire to perform even half as much as Tim has in his life, let alone at such a high level of quality. To my knowledge, there is no book anywhere that could begin to unlock the language that Tim speaks so effortlessly on his guitar. Guitar players are a hardy group, capable of absorbing information in many ways besides "theory talk" and music manuscript transcriptions. I offer Tim my heartiest recommendation and trust that any master class for guitarists that hears what Tim has to say and absorbs something of his rich music vocabulary will be inspired for a long time to come. Please consider offering students this unique opportunity.

Sincerely,



Dr. David Burdick
Chair, Music Industry Studies
Millikin University

