

TONE



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Supplementary Notes to Tone:

WARNING: EXTREME HONESTY BELOW!!

I got pretty far into writing traditional “liner notes” for *Tone* before I came to the realization that no one is going to read them. I mean, who has CD’s anymore? Of the limited amount of CDs that I will actually receive as part of my record deal with Fresh Sound New Talent (FSNT) almost all of those will go to promotional efforts. And those that decide they would rather purchase the album online (rather than pirate it) will likely opt for mp3s versus ordering a hard copy over the internet. And let us not even bring up the subject of record stores. Thinking about the American public’s desertion of what I believe to be one of our most important cultural beacons brings me to the verge of tears. I miss the days of getting sticky black fingers from rifling through racks upon racks of used and new CDs, looking for the perfect way to spend what little money I was affording myself to spend.

I do not mean to cast a shadow of darkness and a sense of “things were better then” on these “liner” notes. As quickly and radically as things are changing in the music world, with *Tone* I was still able to write, record, and release an album of all original material on a record label. Besides... as much as I like to “mouth off” and write a bunch of stuff to influence the listener, I thought the nature photography of my aunt, Treas Manning, was much better suited as the supplementary material inside the actual CD than my ranting. If I don’t say so myself, *Atroefy* had some pretty good liner notes. There was some sarcasm, some humor, some honesty, and some insight to my artistic concept. In the following paragraphs I hope to capture some of those qualities. But if the listener never sees the photos that permeate the entire physical CD package, or reads this narcissistic text I will still be happy with the product the listener consumes. I know my former professor and mentor for two years, David Ake, will cringe; but I believe my music *will* speak for itself.

I have no interest in participating in a combative discourse with Ake, because in all honesty that would be one of those proverbial “two hit” fights. Him hitting me, and me hitting the floor. And I mostly agree with Ake, because he thinks that we as people bestow meaning upon the music (I am paraphrasing here). All I am saying is that I am happy enough with *Tone* so much so that I care not if the listener looks at the pictures contained in the CD packaging, reads reviews about my prior releases, reads these haughty supplementary notes, or hears eighteen seconds of one track and clicks on the “thumbs down” icon on Pandora. It all starts with the music, and I am happy with it.

There were a few motivations behind the title, *Tone*. The first reason: *Tone* is simply easier to spell than *Atroefy*. I am not pulling any punches here. As personal as

the title of that album was, it was less than beneficial to have a debut release by someone relatively unknown spelled so mysteriously. If one couples my intentional misspelling of a weird medical term (*Atroefy* - atrophy) with the trickiness of my Irish last name (Meagher – Marr), it pairs as a masterful marketing disaster. Google did a great job of redirecting traffic to my site, but I cannot help but wonder how much more success *Atroefy* would have had if I had a simpler last name and a simpler title for my debut record [Or if my playing was better; or if it wasn't jazz, for that matter]. I guess that is also me in a nutshell though. I am a contrarian by nature. How else could one explain why the debut album by a so-called jazz guitarist sounds almost as much grunge rock as it does jazz?

The second reason I chose the title *Tone* for this release is a much more personal than syntax. One of the biggest male influences in my life is my godfather, Antonio Modica. His nickname is Tone (derived from Tony). I am so thankful for having this little man in my life, and naming an album after him seems unspeakably lame compared to all of the wonderful things he has done for my family and me.

A little about the tunes:

Run and Gun – I originally wrote this tune with Ralph Alessi in mind. Aside from being one of my favorite trumpeters and composers in New York today he is also, like me, a huge Golden State Warriors fan. For those of you do not know much about Golden State Warriors fans let me tell you one thing. We are crazy. I mean, that is the only reasonable explanation. Why else would such a large group of people be so loyal to a franchise that continually fails to reach the playoffs? Anyway, the Warriors are famous for their loose style of play, which is where the title comes from. They like to get out on

the fast break and huck up wild shots. And it's exciting! But it's not a very good way to consistently win in the NBA.

Bad Time – Just listen. I have incredibly awful time. It's not that hard to figure out...

The Intolerable – This tune was inspired by my favorite rock group, The Shins. In writing this tune I tried to incorporate the things that I like about them most. I love the shape and structure of their melodies. I love how the country twang added to their folksy sound hints at the cowboyishness of their New Mexican roots. I even love their lyrics, which is a part of music that my brain typically and inadvertently ignores. This tune was written with some lyrics in mind for certain parts... but you'll never see them!

Sherner – I wrote this tune in dedication to my godmother, Sharon Howell. She was a wonderfully loving and giving woman who always put others needs before her own. I was thinking about naming this tune, "The Silent Reward" but in the end I thought the moniker my brother and I had for her was a better dedication.

Alpenglow – This is a word that is not familiar to everyone, so let me save you the trouble of looking it up. Alpenglow is a reddish glow often seen on the summits of mountains just before sunrise or just before sunset. When I was getting my master of music degree in the Northern Sierras I was able to see some of the prettiest alpenglow available to most humans. It inspired me to create a tune based on the simplicity and beauty of this natural occurrence. The "tune" is just three notes (G-sharp, E, and D), the definition of Alpenglow I just provided, and a line drawing general shape that I would like the tune to take. It is up to the musicians to breathe the life into this simple concept and I think we did a fantastic job on this tune. By we, I mostly mean THEY.

Reminiscent – There is a portion of this tune that was written when I was in high school. There is a portion of this tune that was written just barely before the recording session. The bulk of the tune was written when I first moved to New York. This tune is basically a Shelley-esque amalgamation of parts, both old and new. The title came while I was working on this tune late one evening and particularly inebriated. Like a lot of people, I tend to harvest fond memories of my comrades when I have “had a few”. As for the Middle Eastern character of the melodic material... I don’t think I even know any Middle Easterners, so I don’t know where that came from...

Farad’s Challenge – Much of this record has been inspired by the natural world. I was fortunate enough to have family members, both immediate and extended (consanguineous), that could be considered modern day explorers. I saw a TON of the wildest parts of the West since I have been old enough to walk. My Uncle Lee just recently celebrated his sixty-second birthday and proclaimed the anniversary as the achievement of a lifelong dream. He had always wanted to be eligible for the ridiculously cheap Lifetime Pass for our National Parks system. I believe my Aunt Treas will be quite well known for her landscape photography some day soon because she was able to turn her love of nature and knack for photography into quite an impressive skill set. I mean... just LOOK at her photos! [<http://www.photographybytreas.com/>] Those are just a few examples of the tree-huggers I grew up with.

There is also the fly fishing thing. I have been fly fishing since I was a youngster. My Dad took it up pretty heavily when I was a kid, and since I followed my Dad around like a puppy dog it was not long till I was roll casting dry flies into treetops along the shorelines of California’s rivers. I have stuck with this hobby (though quite honestly, the

patience required of a fly fisherman is a virtue I do not readily possess). I have even fly-fished a few spots in New York City (My homies, Matt Garrity and Matt Renzi, are probably rolling on the floor right now). My home waters, if you will, are the Truckee River. I caught my first trout there. While I was getting my master's degree I fished it almost every day during certain months. There are parts of the Truckee that I know like the back of my hand. However, there are parts of the Truckee that are known throughout the fly angling world as being among the most difficult to get fish to rise.

This tune, "Farad's Challenge" is about one of those spots. Farad is the last exit on Route 80 in California before coming into Nevada. There is nothing at this exit. The only building, which is even difficult to find, is an abandoned powerhouse. In this small section of the 120-mile river the native trout are wily, and spiteful. Not to mention, the wind can blow through the Truckee River Canyon as if God is blowing leaves off his front porch. As peaceful and serene as one might think fly-fishing is there were many times at Farad when I was kicking water and cursing fish. This tune is supposed to reflect that frustration.

Walther's Pond – When most people think of New Jersey there is a litany of negative things that comes spewing forth. These might include anything from super-tanned, over-amped, spoiled beach-goers; industrial wasteland; crime (both random and organized); etc. Of course, there are certainly areas of New Jersey that exemplify these stereotypes, but I often recall New Jersey being a pastoral paradise. My Dad grew up in Blairstown, New Jersey and many of my extended family members on his side still reside there. My Dad's brother, Rick, and his wife, T.C., live in a cabin that has an adjoining property line with the 17th century farmhouse they grew up in. It is beautiful, and it is

quiet. To this day I still use Blirstown as a nature escape from the bustle of the Big City.

In October 2009, after an exhausting week of fly-fishing for salmon in Pulaski, New York with my uncle Rick, I spent a week or so at he and his wife's house in Blirstown. When I was not practicing or composing I was engaging in a number of outdoor activities with my uncle. I found myself awestruck by the fabled colors of fall in the Northeast. One of our favorite haunts was the two-acre back pond on the Walther's property. For fifty some odd years my dad, his brothers, and sisters have been tripping around on these family friends' property. With my cousins, my brother, and me, the tradition continues. This modest sylvan pond is full of feisty bass and panfish that are not too difficult to catch; and the little clearing next to the pond is where I learned how to shoot clays with a shotgun (a hobby in which I have immersed myself). The Walther's pond is special to a lot of people, and not just us Meagher's.

The main objective of composing this tune was to encapsulate the irony of being overwhelmed by natural American beauty so close to notorious urban squalor. Open guitar strings and picaresque American rural scenes go hand-in-hand, so it follows this tune is in guitaristic... but there are certainly some twists and turns. From the musicians who play this tune I often receive compliments on how this tune sounds; but they are often followed with derisions of how deceptively difficult it is. I love this tune, but it is a bear!