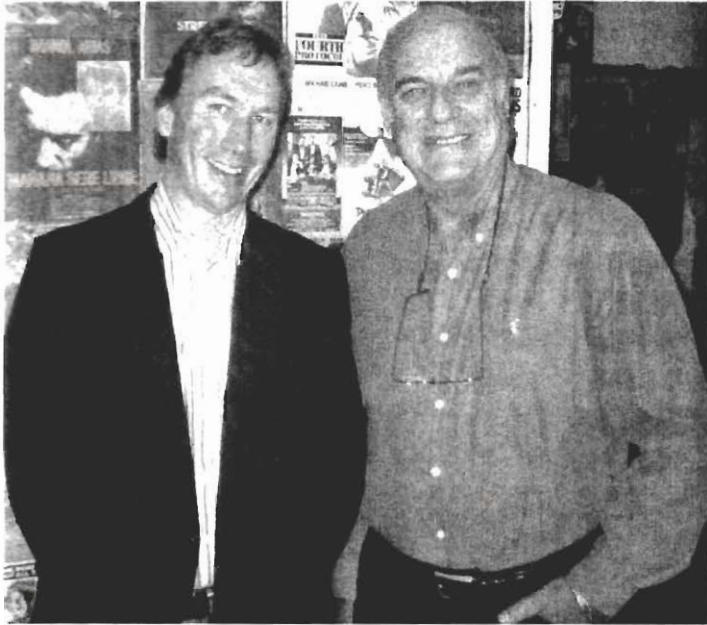


## MILES OF MUSIC TV HOST BOB MILES 3 MILLION SUBSCRIBERS AND GROWING

by Ed Benson



LtoR: Bob Miles and JIG Publisher Ed Benson during a taping of Ed's show with Bob.

**T**his past October I made a trip to the Northeast Django Festival in Pennsylvania. While there I was invited to tape Bob Miles's cable TV show, Miles of Guitar. After the show we had some time to talk about the show's beginnings and future.

**EB: The original show was World of Guitars; is it still called that?**

BM: No, now it's Miles of Music. It was World of Guitar since '96. I changed it because I could not get a registered copyright or trademark for World of Guitar. The publisher of Guitar World said it was too close, and fought me on it. So rather than get attorneys and everything else, I said, "I'll back off." He felt, as did the person at the trademark office, that magazines sometimes grow from television shows. So, I decided to go with Miles of Music, and it turned out to be good.

**EB: And when did you change the name?**

BM: About 4 or 5 years ago.

**EB: So the first show started in '96?**

BM: In 1996 we went to tape. I think the first show aired in January of 1997.

**EB: Was it specifically geared to guitar players?**

BM: Specifically. It was World of Guitar, a guitar player's show.

**EB: Rock? Jazz? Anything?**

BM: Anything. To back up just a little bit, I went to a jam session at a church, and a girl was watching me play with a saxophone player. It was a jazz jam. She asked, "Would you like to be on TV?" I said, "Sure." She said, "Well, I'm putting together a house band for a talk show, on what was called SCTV." And I said, "Yeah, I watch it all the time." And so I did the gig for about a year, as a staff guitarist for SCTV, but decided to leave because it just was too much junk. It wasn't what I wanted, and I felt too unprofessional doing it time. It was out of the Bucks County, Doylestown, PA area. A lot of people have come out of there. One of the most famous in recent years is Justin Guarani, from American Idol. His family watches my show all the time. Justin's niece was taking lessons from me when Justin was on the show. So anyway, I left the SCTV show, and about a year later this representative of the TV station called me and said, "Why don't you do your own show about teaching the guitar?" I said, Fine. I thought about it and figured if I do a teaching show now, it's always something I can do in the future. I'd rather bring on other people. I think if you do for others, you're doing for yourself as well. My producer at the time was an enormous jazz guitar fan. I was really lucky. I told him that I had just been talking with Bucky Pizzarelli in NY the night before and that we'd been discussing Just Jazz Guitar Magazine." And my producer said, "It would be great if you can get Bucky on here..." Well little did I know that two years later, Bucky would be doing the show. So it was a self-fulfilling prophecy.

I started to shoot the show as a guitar instructional show for the first 10 minutes, and then brought in guests. That lasted only for 3 shows. By the 4th show, I scrapped the teaching, because it was only a half-hour show. It had commercials, and there was just not enough time for the guests. On the 4th show, I brought on Bob Benedetto, and everything broke open from there. On the 2nd taping, we shot 3 shows a day. I had Bob Benedetto on that show and also had Bob DiNardo, staff guitarist from the Mike Douglas show, and Richard Dreuding. Richard is a guitar player who tours with John Prine and people like that--a fine player. We shot the 3 shows, and I then had dinner with Bob and Cindy Benedetto that evening. They thought the show was great. We were speaking at the dinner table and I said, "If I could get these great players on my show, it would really help." Cindy said to me, "Bob, these people need you more than you need them." And in some ways, that's true.



Jimmy Bruno and Tyrone Brooks on Miles of Music

**EB: For the exposure?**

BM: Yes, for the exposure. And little did I know, there was nothing like my show in not only in the United States, but in the world. No guitar shows were in existence.

**EB: Where was this show being broadcast at that time?**

BM: It was going to 660,000 viewers, strictly in the Bucks County area.

**EB: Is that households that had cable at that time?**

BM: Yes. So if you look at it, it's typically 2.1 per capita per household. So 2.1 times 660,000---that's as many viewers you could look at. But we're speaking households. That's in '96. I kept the show there and brought in many people with the help of yourself and Bob and Cindy Benedetto. Bucky came on board, Jimmy Bruno, and others. A big show for me at that time was going on location to Scott Chinery's estate.

**EB: To view the Chinery collection?**

BM: Right. We were to do 4 shows. My producer said we could not do the 4th show, which featured Gerry Beaudoin. My producer said, "Look, we will be here until 10:00 at night, and it's not fair for the crew to have to stay all day and night." And I said, "That's fine." So we had Jimmy Bruno, doing his own show, The Smithsonian Blue Guitar Exhibit, and then I asked Arlen Roth for something different. Little did I know that Arlen was such a great guy. He said to me, "Bob you are doing such a great thing here, let me help you." So I had the entire Hot Licks video roster at my disposal.

**EB: All the guitarists in the videos?**

BM: Yes, one from there was the late Sal Salvador.

**EB: I think Jack Wilkins did your show, didn't he?**

BM: That's a whole story in itself. Jack and I are friends, and I got Jack a gig booked also for that evening and the weekend. Jack sold the place out---a place that Charlie Parker had played, and a great jazz club. Jack came in to do my TV show after a 2-hour ride, opened his guitar up, went on with Tyrone Brown, bassist with the Max Roach group, and tore the house down. Chops, music, ideas, everything combined without warming up. And I was blown away, just blown away. And what a gentleman and a great human being. So I can go on and on with guests who did the show Les Paul did the show, as well.

**EB: Did you expand into new markets?**

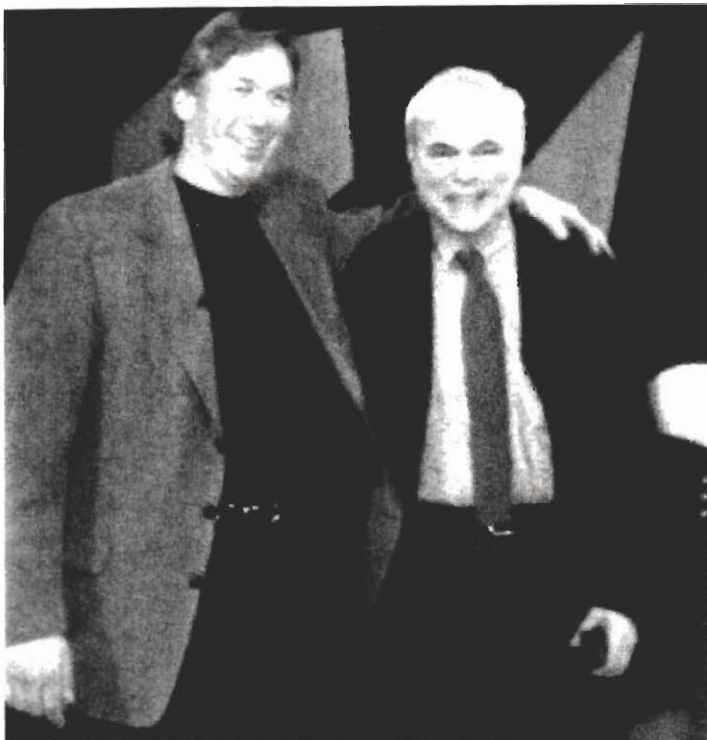
BM: I'm regional, and it took a lot of work from many programming managers. I'm on 6 different systems. Comcast in the Philadelphia Region ,where I go to two counties. I'm also on Comcast in Trenton, NJ, which goes to a large part of the NJ/PA market. I go to Princeton, TV 30, which goes to the entire Princeton area, including the University, which is a great market. They tell me I have a very big following there. I go onto Patriot 8, which was previously RCN. Patriot 8 goes to most of the Central NJ market, from Mahwa down to Stockton--a big market there. I'm on Drexel University television, which goes to the entire Center City and all of the Philadelphia market as well. And I'm also in Nashville, Channel 19, which is all of Nashville and the surrounding communities. They tell me in Nashville---and it's hard to believe this--- that it's the only guitar show in Nashville. So they're excited about it. I get a lot of emails from there.

**EB: So your total viewership combined is about 3 million?**

BM: Yes.

**EB: Do you go anywhere in the NY or Connecticut area?**

BM: Not yet, but I have two offers right now. The Guitar Channel finally has arrived and they are to start at 10 million viewers. Doug Haines and Gordon Close from the Guitar Channel have been calling me quite a bit recently, and said they can now go to 10 million viewers, and need my programs.



Bob Miles and Gene Bertocini

**EB: So you might do that?**

BM: Right. I am also in the process of producing a national show for PBS. John Oates and Steve Howe are currently filming for it, and it should be wrapped up soon, I hope. We'll see what happens. You know, Mother Teresa had a great saying, "If you want to make God laugh, tell him your plans." So, I've been there; I've had offers. I've had a representative from HBO come to me, but that deal fell through. I had a deal with AOL Time Warner. They have a show called Sessions. They had wanted to do this. At the very end, when things were just about due to be finalized, somebody stepped forward and said, "No, we have a certain demographic market; we don't want a guitar show." I had given them a show of Steve Howe from the group Yes, and I said I could bring forward a lot of celebrities as well. They just said no. So you know, I've had my heart broken quite a bit.

**EB: Do you fund it all yourself?**

BM: Yes, yes I do. I've never made a dime on it. I have to tell you, I'm a full-time guitarist. I have a studio where I have six teachers who work for me. So I make an average income. My wife works; she makes an average income. Combined, we're the average household. We have a child, a daughter.

**EB: Do you play out yourself?**

BM: Oh, yeah, of course.

**EB: Is there enough money to keep the show going?**

BM: No, no, no. It's just that I use volunteers to shoot the show. Comcast has been gracious enough to provide a studio for me. College and high school students come forward and shoot the shows for me. They're very experienced. I have to pay a sound person and a director. Typically I pay about \$250 per day that I'm at the TV station.

**EB: Then you've got to edit it?**

BM: Sometimes, yes. And I have an editor who sometimes does it for me for free. Sometimes he charges me a minimal amount. I'm in the hole for \$250.00 versus \$3000.00, which is typical if you had to rent the camera people and a studio. I look at it that way.

**EB: Once you shoot a show and you spend your money putting it together, do you then sell it to the cable stations? Or do you just give it to them? How does it work?**

BM: I have to pay for copies and mail it to them.

**EB: And they get it for free?**

BM: They get it for free, yes. You have to understand when I went to Nashville to talk to them, Jim Gilchrist said to me, "Bob, we have tax payers here in Nashville who have come to me for shows, and I have turned them down. Why should I pick somebody from out of the area, and put him on here when I can't even give shows to the local people?" And then I sent him the show and he said, "Give me as many as you have; I love it." So it was that sort of a thing. I'm doing this, I'm hanging in there, I'm just hanging in there. For one thing--let's face it--at best jazz guitar is a very, very difficult career. You know that. And to give these guys the exposure they deserve, anybody making it as a living, no matter if you're Jack Wilkins, Jimmy Bruno or Pat Martino, it's tough. It's a tough business. So if I can have these guys on my show, it helps them with exposure. Pat Martino got three shows out of this, and I promoted his guitars, which is more than some of these companies are doing for the artists. Believe me, I hear the stories. I put these guys on a pedestal, not falsely, but very sincerely, and they deserve it; they really do. Also, Randall Kremer from the Smithsonian said to me, "Bob, you're doing something nobody else is doing. You're documenting part of history. Let's be realistic. Let's look back. How much documentation is there on Charlie Parker? Almost nothing. Bill Evans? Almost nothing. John Coltrane? Almost nothing. Django Reinhardt? Almost nothing." Now I'm docu-

menting people. And not only documenting them, I'm getting them on the air.



Pat Martino getting ready to film Miles of Music

**EB: How often do you do a show?**

BM: Now, things have really broken open. I shoot one show, three Fridays a month.

**EB: You shoot everything at Comcast?**

BM: They are doing a show for me once a month. And I also shoot at Middle Bucks Institute of Technology, which has a multi-million dollar TV station with 30 students working on the show using thirty state-of-the-art computers for editing. They're building me a several -thousand-dollar set as we speak. It is NBC-quality. They have 7 cameras. And they cannot get their work on the air, so it's a win-win situation. So, I'm bringing the heavyweights there. They're also doing my show for PBS there, as well. I am doing my teaching guitar show for PBS there. Bucks County Community College is producing the shows, as well. My next guest at the college is Joe Bonamassa, Greg Allman's guitar player.

**EB: What do you have coming up in the future?**

BM: I spoke to Jim Hall. He said he would do a show. I hope to have Russell Malone. I would love to have George Benson. I plan to pursue him. Carl Filipiak and Michael Faith are coming up.

**EB: Any luthiers? I know you had Bob Benedetto on there. Have you had Dale Unger on the show?**

BM: Dale did the show a few months ago. I've had Bill Comins on as well. I have quite a few shows lined up. People have been contacting me. I was limited with my production. But now things have broken open, so I have to pursue those people as well. I sometimes give repeat shows. Jimmy Bruno did two shows. I want to have Sheryl Bailey and Jack Wilkins back on. I hope to have them as a duo. You know, just to document these

people. I want to have Frank Vignola and Lou Pallo. It's a funny thing, every year Lou's schedule never permits when my schedule does, so now I've got all these availabilities. Lou is a wonderful player.

**EB: Have you had any moments that stand out? Good ones or bad ones? Screw-ups or whatever?**

BM: Oh, my gosh yes! Countless. I'll tell you a couple. One time was when Bucky Pizzarelli came on. I never really ask the guests to do the intros with me. If they want to, they can. So, I'm playing with the fabulous guitarist Bill Neale. Bill Neale was a guest on the show once. He was with the Gong Show, and is an outstanding player. So Bill and I would do many of the openings together. It was myself, bassist Tyrone Brown and Bill Neale. Bucky was watching us, and we were doing the "Flintstones Theme." Bucky said, "Hey, do you mind if I play?" I said, "Bucky, I would love it!" So Bucky got up and played the rhythm changes. Well, we were doing 2 shows on Bucky that day, so for the second show I said, "What do you want to play? You name it, Bucky." And he said, How about "Nuages." I did not know it. Bucky said, "Oh, you're kidding me. You have to know that." So Bucky's telling Bill Neale and me the changes, even as the cameraman is saying, 10, 9, 8, counting down. And the sweat is pouring off of me. I said, "Bucky, just play, we'll follow." It came out perfect. We got lucky!

Another moment was with the late Sal Salvador, a lovely man. I went to dinner with him, Mike Giordano, and Bill Neale. Sal's telling us millions of stories. We were done with dinner and I said to Sal, "So, I'll see you tomorrow morning. We have to start at 9:00 am. Sal said, "9:00am? I don't get out of bed until 11:00am. I can't be at the studio until noon." I said, "I don't know what to do." So I was panicking. Sal got there around 11:00. We did the show. But you know what, he's documented! He was the sweetest man in the world.

**EB: Yes, I agree. He was one of the first guys willing to give me anything for JJG. Anything at all.**

BM: What a wonderful, wonderful human being. And they're the type of guys that do the show. And they're documented. So many people have done a show that have passed away. And I thank God they were on the show.

Another moment was when we were doing Sal's show. unbeknownst to Sal. I had called Johnny Smith, and Sal idolized Johnny.



Tyrone Brooks, Bob Miles and Bill Neale

**EB: They lived together for awhile.**

BM: Yes and Johnny said a wonderful thing about Sal for the show. Johnny said that Sal was a great guitar player and did so much for the guitar world. I read that to Sal on the show, and his eyes welled up, and you could see it, and he said, "Thank you, Johnny." To give that to somebody, and to touch somebody like that, it meant the world to me, as well.

**EB: Did you study guitar?**

BM: Oh my gosh, yes. I had the honor to study with Pat Martino, right out of high school in the late '70s. Pat was great. He was with GIT coming back and forth. This was prior to Pat's brain aneurism. To see Pat and walk into his house with his parents, was like walking with a king. I was so star-struck at the time. Pat's father was, I think, a prophet in many ways. He knew his son would be one of the greatest guitar players in the world. I studied with Dennis Sandole for many years, as well as Tom Giacobetti, Chuck Anderson, Ed Flanagan, Ted Dunbar and Al Stauffer.

**EB: So you decided to make music your career?**

BM: Well no, not at all. I wanted to, but I saw the light. I saw what a difficult road it was. I played 5 nights a week in a disco band, back then. I ended up going back to college, and got a degree in business as a real estate major from Temple University. I appraised real estate for about 10-12 years as a living, full time. It's a nice career, and I can go back into that tomorrow if I have to. When I got laid off, I was at a crossroad, and said, "Let me try music again." And when I did that, all of these doors opened up. It was just amazing. So we'll

see what the future brings. Life takes some strange twists.

**EB: Are you playing much these days?**

BM: Yes, I'm at a brand new jazz club called Stephanie's in Doylestown, Bucks County. And I'm probably one of the main acts there, because people watch the show and come out to see me.

**EB: And you have 6 teachers in your studio?**

BM: Six, very good, very high-caliber teachers and about 150 students come through a week. I'm doing more of the administrative work right now, and less teaching. At this point I can't do both. I've been blessed. And the show brings a lot of people in.

**EB: Is there somebody you'd love to get on the show that you've not been able to get on yet?**

BM: Yeah, George Benson would be one. I would love to get George, or Johnny Smith. George has been documented, but I don't think he's been documented in quite this way. It's really a documentary on the person's life. Joe Diorio is another player I'd love to have on. I've been through every one of his books from start to finish. I've had most of the greats. Once Bob and Cindy did the first show, I think things were meant to be at that point. They were an enormous help, and throughout the years, they have been with me and my wife Janet, side by side. And I can't speak highly enough of them.

**EB: Thanks Bob and best of luck. I look forward to seeing the shows.**

*Photos courtesy Bob Miles*