

Paul Silbergleit: *Hard* to pronounce, but *easy* to listen to!

By CP Christopher Peppas

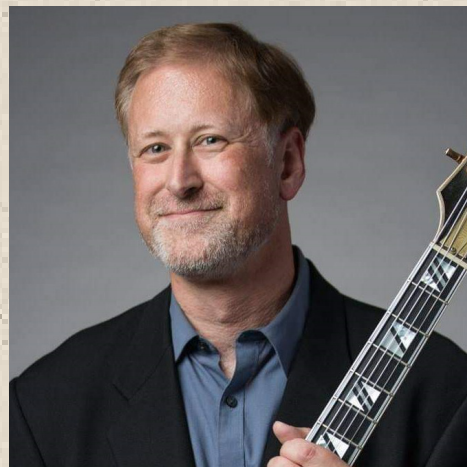
Paul Silbergleit (SIL-bur-glight) has made quite a name for himself as a jazz guitarist in our area. But the Milwaukee native took a most circuitous route to get here.

For starters, Paul was indeed born in the Cream City. But he moved to Fargo, North Dakota when he was seven.

Paul's appetite for music (at this point jazz wasn't on his radar) was whetted in high school when he tried the instruments and lit upon a loaner electric guitar.

Across the border in Moorhead, Minnesota, Paul started taking lessons from James F. Condell. "He was a jazz guy," Paul said. "That's what he did!"

Condell convinced Paul's folks that if he wanted to be a serious player, he would need a serious instrument. The teacher found a hollow body **Gibson Super 5** on sale and they bought it which lit the fuse.



"Other players have stories about saving up to buy a quality instrument," Paul said. "I worked for decades to earn the guitar I had. It is one of the finer instruments. I loved it and played it almost exclusively for years," Paul said.

Now the Oberlin (Ohio) College graduate plucks on an **Epiphone Casino Coupe** (guitar player porn reference). "It's cheaper and lighter and I like it for its portability and playability," Paul said.

People may be impressed that Silbergleit matriculated at Oberlin College. One gets the impression that he would clearly be talking about the Oberlin Conservatory of Music. But such was not the case.

"I never was in the Conservatory," Paul explained. Silbergleit was there in 1989-90 and this was long before they were known for their music education. "I sort of finagled a music major at the time. It was before they were established. I guess you could say I had the first jazz major there."

An awakening took place at that time that shaped the musical career path that Paul is currently on. "I didn't have a sense of the giants of jazz back then," Paul said. "It was a slow growing. The kids in middle school and high school are way ahead of where I was back then in high school and even after I left college."



Like a thunderbolt, Silbergleit was "hit by the music of (Charles) Mingus, Miles (Davis) and 'Trane (John Coltrane). I developed a real passion for it," Paul said. "How colorful the music was...I want to learn *that*."

That led to a list of influences like Jim Hall: "His low tone and mellow sound inspired me." Grant Green: "I'd transcribe his solos and try to perfect them." Then there was John Schofield, Pat Metheny, Pat Martino, Wes Montgomery...Herbie Hancock's *Maiden Voyage* left an imprint that survives to this day.



It wasn't until after Oberlin when Silbergleit came back to his hometown. "I knew I wanted to make my living playing jazz," Paul said. "But I was not brimming with confidence. I got a job in a (music) store and I started going to jam sessions at the Jazz Gallery of The Arts in Riverwest. "I got to play with (David) Hazeltine and (Jeff) Hamann.

Silbergleit now plays at the Jazz Gallery in his role as an instructor for the Milwaukee Jazz Institute, led by Mark Davis.

MJI has been chronicled on these pages before. "I do online workshops, jazz appreciation, give private lessons and occasionally sub for the combo teachers," Paul said.

But Silbergleit admits that he doesn't necessarily eat, sleep and drink jazz 24/7. "I've been quite the opposite. I guess I have a shared hatred of practice like (multi-instrumentalist) Jorge Rossy. At a certain point, there's no point to practice, you just have to play," Paul said.

And play, Paul does. He can be seen at Caroline's, The Transfer, Blu at the top of The Pfister and Bar Centro among many others.

So, if you see a name on a marquee that you can't quite pronounce, stop in, listen and enjoy!



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

CP Christopher Peppas is a Journalist, Jazz Vocalist and Conga Player in the Greater Milwaukee Area and Correspondent at Large for the *Jazz Unlimited Newsletter* and a Field Editor for *Our Wisconsin Magazine*.