

**FRED** Welcome, everyone, back to the Fall Series 2008-2009, to the Berklee Oral History Project. Today we have with us  
**BOUCHARD:** Dave Fiuczynski, guitarist extraordinaire, who's had an interesting background in the Boston area doing the [New England] Conservatory and Berklee for many years, and has been playing in all kinds of intriguing bands over the years, coming to the plate with some amazing guitar chops and instruments. Dave, welcome!

**DAVE** Fred, thank you for having me.  
**FIUCZYNSKI:**

**FRED** Nice to be here on Halloween Day. Maybe we can raise a few spooks and get people thinking in new ways  
**BOUCHARD:** musically.

**DAVE** Sounds good to me.  
**FIUCZYNSKI:**

**FRED** You told me that your parents met on a boat going from Europe to...  
**BOUCHARD:**

**DAVE** New York to Germany.  
**FIUCZYNSKI:**

**FRED** Wow, I love it.  
**BOUCHARD:**

**DAVE** [Laughs] My father had just finished his graduate studies at Columbia, and my father's from Berlin, so he was  
**FIUCZYNSKI:** returning. My mother is from Darlington, South Carolina, and she was going to Europe on an exchange program. So they met on a boat, and got acquainted, and spent some time in Berlin. And then I think after that summer she also traveled around. And then she returned, and I think they thought that was basically the end of it, 'cause I believe it was 1959, and people still get squeamish about interracial issues now, can you imagine 1959? So my father told me he wrote a letter, and he went to the train station and he held onto the letter, put it in the mailbox, held onto the letter for five minutes, and let it go. And my mother received the letter, and she and her mother, they had a really good laugh. And then she thought about it, and she realized that he was serious. In 1960 they got married. And they weren't even allowed to be married in her home state, South Carolina. They had to get married in her aunt's house in Queens, in New York. They didn't even tell his parents, they just got married and then he brought his love back home and it was a jaw dropping shock to them.

**FRED** Wow, so they, the Germans, weren't any much readier for it thanless behind the times than the Americans.  
**BOUCHARD:**

**DAVE** But as soon as the grandchildren showed up everything changed.  
**FIUCZYNSKI:**

**FRED** Yeah, that's definitely an equalizer. Everybody comes around when the kids show up.  
**BOUCHARD:**

**DAVE**  
**FIUCZYNSKI:** But, my mother did contact the NAACP to get advice on what to do. When my father bought the first house in Somerset, New Jersey, she didn't even show up until he, until it was signed--until he owned it. It was a white neighborhood and there she was and they were shocked. But people eventually accepted us. You know, just a normal family. Traditional family, you know, my father worked, she stayed at home, and they had kids running around the yard.

**FRED**  
**BOUCHARD:** So he made the move to the States for....

**DAVE**  
**FIUCZYNSKI:** After, yes, when they got married.

**FRED**  
**BOUCHARD:** Cool, that's a strong vote of confidence, when you can uproot the man and have him come to the wife's place. Beautiful. So you were raised in New Jersey for a little while?

**DAVE**  
**FIUCZYNSKI:** Until I was eight years old. My sister was ten and my brother just turned, he was two-and-a-half. And then we moved to Germany. And for me, and I think for my family, that was really the best thing they could have done. I mean growing up in two different cultures, I can't imagine a richer experience. And I returned to the States to study music in Boston.

**FRED**  
**BOUCHARD:** How did the German education system prepare you intellectually for your career? Or just for life in general?

**DAVE**  
**FIUCZYNSKI:** Hard work.

**FRED**  
**BOUCHARD:** Unknown to many Americans.

**DAVE**  
**FIUCZYNSKI:** Well, I have to tell you, first of all, the German high school system has three different tracks, which has its advantages and disadvantages. There's the gymnasium, the old name from the Roman gymnasium, the highest high school form. That's the one that allows you to go to university. And you have to have that. And only about one third of Germans make it through it. Realschuler and Hochschuler end at the tenth and the ninth grade. The advantage is you have classes which are much more even. I mean brighter students go to the harder school, and students who are not as quick go to the other schools. Unfortunately, what you create right away is a class system. Right in high school, that's unfortunate. On the other hand, you can be in high school here, where the teacher has to cater to the next rocket scientist and the next, you know, I don't know, plumber, let's say. I don't want to get down on plumbers, or Joe the Plumber. Everyone does their job, and I guess does it the best they can. But you know as a teacher here, I have problems if I--when I first started teaching here I've got somebody who's really high level, and someone who can barely hang, and everyone in the middle. And you know what? In the end I have to kind of dumb it down, or kind of average it out, and I'm not really helping anybody.

**FRED**  
**BOUCHARD:** I know what you mean. Yeah, I've been there myself.

**DAVE**  
**FIUCZYNSKI:** So that's what the German system has an advantage. We had thirteen grades. There's some discussion if the thirteenth grade is really necessary.

**FRED** Is that like a prep school year?

**BOUCHARD:**

**DAVE** You have--your first semester in the thirteenth grade is really a lot of, it's preparation for the final exams. And  
**FIUCZYNSKI:** then you get about six weeks off to study. It's almost like college. And then you have these, you know, six-hour tests for a week. But then there's about a lot of down time. And people are saying if it's really necessary. But when I returned to the states to go to college. There's one college that accepted me as a sophomore right away.

**FRED** You had all those high-level courses.

**BOUCHARD:**

**DAVE** Yeah. Eventually I ended up at NEC, and I found out I could get all my liberal arts credits out of the way if I just  
**FIUCZYNSKI:** showed them my high school certificate.

**FRED** When you were a kid in Germany, were you the three B's: Bach, Brahms, and Beethoven? Or Black Flag, Beatles,  
**BOUCHARD:** and some Berlin band?

**DAVE** It was more like Beethoven, Beatles, and Bootsy. [both laugh] My father had a lot of classical music and some  
**FIUCZYNSKI:** jazz. My mother listened to jazz and R&B, so I eventually listened to all of that. The interesting thing is my nickname is Fuse, because Fiuczynski, Fuse-In-Ski, especially if you read it F-I-U-C-Z. People are like fiuzz, fiiiuzzzz, fuse! Okay, Fuse! I never called myself "The Fuse," it was a nickname that was given to me because it was easier. I only started using that when I saw other, you know rappers and so forth, using it. And I started using it on other people's records so I had a legal precedent if I ever wanted to, I don't know.

**FRED** Your publishing company is Fusealicious....

**BOUCHARD:**

**DAVE** The record company is Fusealicious Morsels, yeah.

**FIUCZYNSKI:**

**FRED** Did you play in any bands as a kid over there, or was that too soon?

**BOUCHARD:**

**DAVE** Well I actually played in a fusion band. [Both laugh] But that's what I'm kind of getting to. I guess "The Fuse," is  
**FIUCZYNSKI:** kind of preordained. I eventually started studying in the Third Stream department at the conservatory. Third Stream was something that was coined by Gunther Schuller, mixing classical and jazz, and eventually also world music elements and I kind of started doing that without even thinking. I noticed right away I had different listening habits. I would buy records from different sections that I liked. And then I would wonder, well if we took this melody from this groove music, and this harmony from this jazz thing, and this rhythm over here, what would happen? I mean, I immediately started thinking like that, without ever thinking about fuse or fusion or fusing, or "third stream" or mixing. When I was nineteen, I did an arrangement--something I would like to do here at Berklee eventually--of the first part of the first movement of Beethoven. I mean it was the third. It's one of the movements of Beethoven's First Symphony for like an opera singer and a jazz band. And I was also sitting there and thinking why am I doing this? But I was just thinking, this is what I like, I'm doing this because I don't hear anyone else doing it and this is what I want to do.

**FRED** So right on, early on, you were thinking of--you were just doing your thing but it came out unique, it came out different because you didn't want to hear the same old stuff.

**DAVE** I was born in New Jersey, and grew up in Germany. And was forced, and lived in a, you know, household of U.S. Americans. I don't love that term American. You know, you go to Canada or Mexico, [they're] other Americans.

**FRED** We're all American.

**BOUCHARD:**

**DAVE** Yeah, we've kind of co-opted that term. But for lack of a better term Growing up in an American household, but after six months in Germany, the household spoke German because we just switched to thinking in German. So this mixing started from the get-go.

**FRED** Did you gravitate to plucked instruments immediately or did you mess around with horns and drums?

**BOUCHARD:**

**DAVE** No, you know, you're nine years old and have piano lessons, and I just really wasn't feeling it. And when I was thirteen, my mother said, "You should play an instrument." So I made a deal: I said, "I'll pick the instrument and I'll pick the teacher." And so I decided on guitar, because everyone was playing guitar. And a guy in my class had an older brother who was like the guitar player in town. And he said, "Oh, I see you have problems with your guitar. Why don't you come over to my place and my brother can help you out?" And there wasn't any mention of guitar lessons or anything. So he looked at my guitar and he pulled the nut off and he trimmed it down a little bit and he put it back on. And he picked it up and it played much better, then he started playing these bebop lines, and I was hooked. I mean, that was it. So I started taking lessons, and I can tell you there's nothing like a good teacher. My teacher was Markus Weinstroer in the Düsseldorf area in Germany. Really good player, as far as I know, he's one of only two guitar players in Germany who made his income exclusively from studio work. It's very difficult to do. He also played violin and could play a lot of different styles. But I just remember I'd leave every lesson with bebop lines. My head was filled with music.

**FRED** So what was it--Grant Green, Kenny Burrell, John [McLaughlin], Pat Martino?

**BOUCHARD:**

**DAVE** It was just kind of a mix of all different kinds of things and just little, you know, like easy something like "Lonnie's Lament," and you know play over one chord and solo. I was a terrible reader, and he gave me these examples of how to play over two-five-one. And I was also lazy; I didn't want to learn them. [Fred laughs] So eventually he said, "You know, you're a really really good student. I give you these things to learn, and because you know, other players don't know what to do over these two-five-ones, but you don't want to learn them, but you just make other things up." I guess there we go.

**FRED** He liked the idea that you were making things up.

**BOUCHARD:**

**DAVE** He did.

**FIUCZYNSKI:**

**FRED** He encouraged your improvisation.

**BOUCHARD:**

**DAVE** Well, he said, instead of learning something to then make something up, I just leapfrogged that and went into I

**FIUCZYNSKI:** thought I was kind of, you know, fudging and fooling and cheating, but he wasn't fooled. He said, "Well, I always wanted you to just improvise and make things up, and you're already doing that on your own, so that's great."

**FRED** Very cool. I mean think of how many other teachers would have made you rigidly follow whatever. So this was--

**BOUCHARD:** the bebop came on top of your Boosty stuff?

**DAVE** Well, I should say I got into P-Funk and Boosty when I was returned to the States. In Germany, it was at first kind

**FIUCZYNSKI:** of rock stuff. And then believe it or not, I became kind of a jazz snob. You know, I started taking these lessons and it was much harder to play than the rock stuff. So I became kind of a jazz snob. Unlike other people, I kind of outgrew that by the time I was fifteen. And I started listening to fusion, Mahavishnu Orchestra, and started listening to Van Halen, and then punk, and then free jazz. My parents had a lot of jazz records, and eventually I attacked every one of them. And there was one, I had only been playing for a year, and then I pulled out this Coltrane, and it was like, oh, here's another John Coltrane record, and it was all the way in the back. I wonder why this is here, let me check this out. It was 'Om.' Oh, man! I put that on, I couldn't even take thirty seconds of it. I was like, "What's going on?" Once a year I pulled that out. And my last year in Germany, when I was nineteen, I put it on again--and I got it. I thought, okay. It took a while, but...

**FRED** Lots of bent notes and eastern modes and...?

**BOUCHARD:**

**DAVE** Yeah, Coltrane, he studied a lot of different music, but I think he really used more the concepts--as in, once you

**FIUCZYNSKI:** got through the Giant Steps phase, modal improv, improvising over one chord, being influenced by Indian music, but not really using the rhythmic organization or the bent notes. I don't really hear specific world music things. I would hear more world music concepts.

**FRED** Ok, so he never went the Charlie Mariano nagaswaram route?

**BOUCHARD:**

**DAVE** Yeah, he didn't. He just used it to organize his ideas.

**FIUCZYNSKI:**

**FRED** And was he playing in the cracks? Was he playing microtonally at that point?

**BOUCHARD:**

**DAVE** You know I've studied a lot of microtonal music and I love John Coltrane; if he did, I don't think it's on purpose.

**FIUCZYNSKI:** It's not like a, let's say, a husseyini makam, which is an Arabic makam. The pitch set would be similar to a Dorian mode, where the second and the sixth step are a quarter flat. Depending on when they occur, if it's ascending or descending, but it's always those degrees and only those degrees, specifically. As soon as you--as soon as it's played, you hear it right away. It's just like major or minor. It's just like the third, major or minor here. It really sticks out. And I don't hear that in his playing. There may have been some intuitive, but I don't hear a purpose, a purposely....Like for example I really like the husseyini mode with a quarter sharp eleven added onto it. And I'm specifically playing those notes, and I'm actually also stacking these notes as a chord scale. You don't hear that. It's much more of an intuitive context.

**FRED** Certainly not Ornette Coleman playing an alto sax and playing you know, "Lonely Woman" a little bit flat, either.

**BOUCHARD:** That's intentional.

**DAVE** Yeah I mean, the microtonal jazz innovators, I mean, the microtonal jazz innovator is Joe Maneri.

**FIUCZYNSKI:**

**FRED** Ok, and you worked with him at the Conservatory?

**BOUCHARD:**

**DAVE** I had his last semester, his last microtonal class.

**FIUCZYNSKI:**

**FRED** And Matt [Maneri] carries it out on the fiddle, does he not?

**BOUCHARD:**

**DAVE** Matt does it. Dr. Julia Ward is now teaching that class, Joe retired. But he is really the first. There's also Sun Ra, who would--he read about quarter tones. He was talking about it in the late forties. Some pieces like "Sun Song," you can, I think, "A Call For All The Demons," I'm not sure. But you can hear that specific chords or notes are intentionally out of tune. Because it's always those notes that recur. You know if somebody can't play, and plays out of tune, it's not that specific. But he would try to get his players to try and think outside of the box and make them play a piece they knew but pull their mouth piece out. So you can hear a specific texture in some of these tunes. So...

**FRED** Yeah, I love Sun Ra. I'll have to go back and listen a little more carefully.

**BOUCHARD:**

**DAVE** I'll tell you which, I wrote a paper on it, and I'll tell you which pieces specifically.

**FIUCZYNSKI:**

**FRED** Oh good! Great! I'll have to check it out. I know that those influences did run through the Conservatory in some of those years you were there. Your Neighborhood Saxophone Quartet with Allan Chase and those guys, they did a whole album of Sun Ra stuff. And they played two of those tunes you just mentioned: "A Call for All Demons" and a couple of others. They must have been paying attention to that. And, maybe I wasn't.

**DAVE** [nods] I don't know, I wrote that paper and Allan said he hadn't considered those options before. You know, I recently got my master's specifically to study microtonality, and I took the Sun Ra class with Allan Chase, which is unbelievable. What a great teacher and player! And I read the autobiography, and I underlined the places where he talks about microtonality, and I researched the tunes where it's either mentioned or where it occurs. And I did some transcriptions, and some are beautiful, they are really unique. I was surprised. Sun Ra is a really underrated innovator. The first to use electric keyboards. One of the first to use synthesizers. Beat Miles and Coltrane by at least maybe a year to record something that was modal. Was doing free stuff before many other people. And had these shows before people were doing happenings.

**FRED** Or light shows. And all that regalia and parades and Eastern stuff.

**BOUCHARD:**

**DAVE** Yeah, he did that before anyone freaked out and did that in the sixties.

**FIUCZYNSKI:**

**FRED** Yeah, you listen to any one album and you get a panoply of a lot of those effects in the space of four or five tracks

**BOUCHARD:** and you go, "What is this? Where is his head?" Space is the place! [both laugh]

**DAVE** It's in space.

**FIUCZYNSKI:**

**FRED** You want to talk about your student years at the Conservatory a bit more? Some of the people you worked with,

**BOUCHARD:** some of your classmates who hipped you to things or who you worked with?

**DAVE** I had previously gone to Hampshire College, and I wasn't sure about the music thing. I ended up only taking

**FIUCZYNSKI:** music classes, so I got into the Conservatory, but I had to wait a semester. So I talked my dad into--you know I was a pretty responsible kid--and I said, "Look, I'll find a cheap place, I'll eat macaroni and cheese, I'll find a teacher, and I'll practice." Which I did. But it was pretty one-sided. I practiced scales for eleven hours a day for three months and I got tendonitis. So I actually entered NEC with tendonitis, not sure what was going on. And that's actually how I met John Medeski, it wasn't a musical occasion. Somebody--they used harsher language--but they said, "Oh, you're screwed up? I know this guy who is screwed up, too. You guys should meet." So I met him, and we would take these trips out to this amazing therapist by the name of Richard Zykowski. And he has helped me, John Medeski, and many other jazz players. Many people in the BSO too, to come back and be able to play. So that's how I met John Medeski. The other people I met at NEC were like Cuong Vu, a trumpet player, I think is one of the most forward-thinking. Interesting concept with his trio.

**FRED** Oh yeah, I recently played for one of my classes, a little Thai boat song, with the guys chanting behind a female

**BOUCHARD:** singer.

**DAVE** Oh I don't know that one.

**FIUCZYNSKI:**

**FRED** It's from one of his new records. And he is playing very bent note stuff in the background.

**BOUCHARD:**

**DAVE** On the bass or trumpet?

**FIUCZYNSKI:**

**FRED** Is there trumpet on there?

**BOUCHARD:**

**DAVE** Who is the trumpet player?

**FIUCZYNSKI:**

**FRED** Yeah, there is a trumpet and, oh, I'm sorry--wrong guy. Nguyen Le.

**BOUCHARD:**

**DAVE** Oh oh, I love him! I would love to do something with him. I've met him on numerous occasions. I would love to do

**FIUCZYNSKI:** a quartet with him. That'd be amazing.

**FRED** Anyway, sorry for the aside.

**BOUCHARD:**

**DAVE** Great aside. [both laugh] People.really.NEC--New England Conservatory, is one of the top schools in the world  
**FIUCZYNSKI:** because I got incredible concepts to organize my musical thoughts from Dr. Peter Row, who got his Doctorate in Sitar performance in Calcutta; Dr. Robert Labory, who is recognized as one of the Turkish music specialists here in the United States, who plays a rare Turkish harp that may not even be played in Turkey anymore, he speaks fluent Turkish. I mean these are heavy, heavy hitters. Ran Blake, Hankus Netsky--what an amazing teacher! I had a semester with and got my ass kicked by Dave Holland. And I was really, really lucky to play with some of my teachers like Bob Moses and George Russell. So my cup runneth over.

**FRED** Yeah, Mark Rossi always speaks very highly of Peter Row. And he did work with Jimmy Giuffre and Bob Nieske  
**BOUCHARD:** when he was there. But yeah, those guys were all, they all came to the school under Gunther Schuller's aegis, when he was running the place in the seventies. And he had an ear of those world concepts. And coincidentally, Gunther gave a lecture a couple years ago and said, "Good music isn't dead, nowadays they call it world music."

**DAVE** Yeah, well "third stream" to me was never a noun, it was a verb. To me it has this big title. It's not so much what  
**FIUCZYNSKI:** it is, it's what you do. To me third stream--in a way jazz is third stream. I mean in a brutally simplistic way, you take rhythms derived from Africa, you know African rhythms and European harmonies. Two streams coming together into one, creating a third stream of new music. So in a way, it's experimentation and doing something else. To me it's something you do. So to me it was always a verb, not a noun.

**FRED** Nice. Active. After the Conservatory, did you do some gigging and traveling? Did you enrich your...?  
**BOUCHARD:**

**DAVE** Well, I was lucky to do some gigging and touring while I was in school with Bob Moses once, and a few times with  
**FIUCZYNSKI:** George and then afterwards, when I moved to New York, I played in the big band on and off when he had work in Europe. I moved to New York after NEC. And luckily--I wasn't even interested in moving to New York, I was kind of afraid. I thought I'd just stay here in Boston and try to get a gig and... But there was a drummer, Ben Perowski, who got me a gig in New York. One gig! And Billy Hart heard me on that gig, so I played with his band. Through him I connected with Santi Debriano. And then through him I connected with Jack Walrath. And just went from one thing to another. And it was hard, you know, I did break down once and call my dad to pump him for money. But otherwise, you know, I took on every crappy gig that I could and just went for it.

**FRED** The guys you mentioned as performance leaders and players always struck me as having exceptionally big ears.  
**BOUCHARD:** I mean, Walrath got it, he probably had it before he started working with Mingus.

**DAVE** Those records Changes I and II, my favorites.  
**FIUCZYNSKI:**

**FRED** Yeah, and then Billy, man, he's like the arch drummer. He was doing free jazz gigs in the early seventies like  
**BOUCHARD:** Enchance, where he was bringing guys from all walks of life--you know, Dewey Redman, Oliver Lake--putting all these cats in one game and making it happen.

**DAVE** Billy is like the most underrated living jazz drummer. Period. Period. And then these things he drops: "Oh, yeah, I  
**FIUCZYNSKI:** played with Hendrix. Yeah, we were in so-and-so's band and Hendrix was in the background, but he did whatever he wanted to do. Yeah, Coltrane asked me to play, but I was scared, I wasn't ready." And he is on those Miles' records, Big Fun and On the Corner.

**FRED BOUCHARD:** Mhmm. I just saw the guy recently, and--talk about humility--the guy abases himself before people because he is so respectful of everyone. That's a great way to be, particularly when you're at the top of your game and you could be commanding respect. He goes the other way, he takes the Eastern obeisance routine. He was praising us as jazz critics saying, "You guys are doing a great job." Wow. This is coming from Billy Hart. I mean he knew me, but he didn't really know me, and a couple of other people that were standing around. It's a matter of lifestyle and spiritual level of attainment before you can get to that place.

**DAVE FIUCZYNSKI:**

**FRED BOUCHARD:** Anyway, great experiences for you, you're carving out your career with all of these great people in New York, and you want to talk at all about what concepts you drew from say George Russell or Moses, teachers that kind of spurred you in new directions?

**DAVE FIUCZYNSKI:** I can talk about a couple of people. Bob Moses helped me with a great rhythmic concept, as in, in any musical phrase there's always a resolution point. And it's not necessarily the downbeat. And if you can figure out what's the most important accent in a clave or in a groove, or even in a melody, what are the kicks, you can almost play virtually anything you want as long as you hit those. And of course a drummer would say this, but he said the most important thing is rhythm. I said, "Well, yeah, yeah you're a drummer, you would say that." And he said "No, you can have the prettiest note, the most amazing chord in the world, and you put it in the wrong place it sounds terrible. You could have the weakest note, the ugliest chord in the world, you put it in the right place, it sounds killin'." So that's what, of the many things, I got from Bob Moses.

From George Russell, of course his music and his Lydian Chromatic Concept, the ingoing outgoing, how close can you play to a chord and how far can you get away, and the various degrees in between. Horizontal, vertical, I'm not going to go into this right now. But his Lydian Chromatic Concept, those basic things, those are things I teach, I use, it's kind of the Bible to me.

**FRED BOUCHARD:** There were a couple of other people here at Berklee who kind of worship that training. I mean Mark Rossi is a perfect example.

**DAVE FIUCZYNSKI:** Right, right. I got a lot of my harmonic language from Billy Hart and Jack Walrath. I got a lot of melodic ideas from Ronald Shannon Jackson.

**FRED BOUCHARD:** There's so many musical drummers around; Victor Lewis is another.

**DAVE FIUCZYNSKI:** And Shannon. You know what I played with Shannon--that was kind of, he had already hit his, when I was playing with him, I would say in decline, but still, he would pretty late in life, he learned how to play flute, and he would use that to play these really simple floating melodies. They had this ancient feeling. And when it came together it was amazing. The funk, that's from Jean Lake, Michelle Ndegeocello, and especially Bernie Worrell, and playing with him. So although I have degrees and I did a lot of practicing and I learned so much here in Boston, there's also the school of New York, with specific "professors," if you will, that are as important, if not more important than what I got here in Boston.

**FRED BOUCHARD:** Well, Dave, you've covered some aspects of your history, but we haven't yet talked about you as a leader and your interesting projects like The [Screaming Headless] Torsos and Kif, etcetera. Maybe we can delve into that.

**DAVE FIUCZYNSKI:** Well, I've been really fortunate to play with many of the people that I mentioned, and all of this has informed my own music. The first record I did, which I was very proud of, was a record called Lunar Crush, that I did with John Medeski, one of my favorite keyboard players in the world. I have a little anecdote about that--later on Pat Metheny confirmed this--through the grapevine, I heard that Tony Williams asked Pat Metheny who he would recommend, because Tony Williams was going to put another Lifetime together, that group, that trio with organ, Larry Young and John McLaughlin. And Pat had recommended Larry Goldings and me. And this was a month before Tony died. And I found this out later, and in a way Lunar Crush, it's really paying homage to Tony Williams' Lifetime, kind of like a nineties version of, quartet with bass, of guitar and organ, guitar and organ group. So that's the first record I did. Then what people mostly know me for is Screaming Headless Torsos. I was very much into Nina Hagen and the Bad Brains. So initially here in Boston, in the late eighties, I had Screaming Headless Torsos, I had an opera singer, and it was basically a punk, rock, and reggae band. I later on experimented more in New York, and I got more and more into funk rock. But it was always with you know, jazz harmonies. Always kind of experimenting and how it's--it went away from fusion to be more groove-oriented and it was funk rock based, or reggae, ska, what have you. With a fabulous singer, Dean Bowman, we did a couple of records. And that's what I'm kind of known for. Eventually I found a love again for instrumental music.

And it really started--I was lucky enough to be invited to perform with a group, it was a concept thing the Moroccan government put on for the World Fair in 1992 in Seville. They wanted this kind of, you know, north-south-east-west gala kind of thing. It came out really well--I don't know if they really cared, they just wanted to be able to say that--but they got these Western musicians under the direction of Richard Horowitz. He plays the in-blown flute in A, and keyboards, and he speaks French and Arabic. And Jamie Haddad was there and he got on the gig. And we were kind of like that house band backing up all of these, like, ten different Moroccan folklore groups. And we rehearsed in Marrakesh, and because I was the guitar player, one by one over this week many of the Moroccan musicians came up to me. It was very important for them, that I was aware of the fact that Jim Hendrix came to Morocco.

So that sowed a seed for a record I have out called Kif. And I was always interested in Indian and Arabic music, and here was my first opportunity to learn about it. I studied more, and I now play a double-neck fretted and fretless guitar. And on the fretless guitar I can do Indian slides and Arabic modes with the correct microtonal notes that are in between the frets. So Kif is a groove rock trio with at times Eastern melodies or melodies that have an Eastern or Arabic treatment. And I like to see it as an homage to the living Hendrix. If Jimi was still alive, could this be something he may be doing? You never know, maybe today he would plug in an electric oud, living in Casablanca and Friday and Saturday nights, and he'd go and rock the Casbah.

**FRED BOUCHARD:** Beautiful! That's the other direction, that's the world direction. A couple of my students were speculating on if Hendrix had actually gotten that gig with Gil Evans and Miles Davis back in the states the summer he died. But Hendrix is one of these icons who people look to from everywhere because he traveled a lot. He really made his mark in Britain first. But anyway, that's a beautiful idea. And I'm glad you got to bring it to fruition.

**DAVE FIUCZYNSKI:** Yeah, that was a privilege. And my new thing-- in a way it's not really a new thing. I've always, you know as a teenager, taken a rhythm from here, a harmony from here, a melody from there and putting it together and hopefully the result will be bigger than the sum of the elements. That's always been the concept. But now I went back to New England Conservatory, and recently I got my masters last May, and I focused on microtonality. I also studied Indian aspects, mostly melodic aspects of North Indian music with Peter Row and Turkish music with Bob Labory. I was also lucky to be able to take Joe Maneri's last microtonal class at New England Conservatory before he retired. I just caught him. And I made a mental note in the eighties, because of scheduling things I wasn't able to take a class with him, that I wanted to come back and somehow deal with this. And it was great to be able to do it with him. And also I took a semester of independent study, two credits, with a Chinese guzheng player in town and studied, learned some melodies, again with the correct microtones. And of the six guzheng styles, it's the--I don't know if I'm pronouncing this correctly--Tao Zsu, I think that's what she was teaching.

**FRED BOUCHARD:** Before we get over our listeners' heads too much, would you distinguish between a guzheng and a pipa?

**DAVE FIUCZYNSKI:** Oh a guzheng, I'm sorry. What most people know is the Japanese koto. A koto is a type of zither. The guzheng, the koto as far as I know, is probably based on the guzheng. The guzheng, and well, even older is probably the guqin, which is probably the first kind of zither. The chen, though, is laid out and you press down on the strings to a sounding board. With a guzheng you don't do that, they are floating. You can bend--but you never press down onto--the sounding board to stop frets, like on a guitar or something. But those are the first zithers that most other zithers in the world are based on.

**FRED BOUCHARD:** To back up a little bit in your discussion of microtonality, would you first perhaps define it? And then show how Joe's class...

**DAVE FIUCZYNSKI:** Yeah, I mean that's actually difficult. First of all, what we consider to be microtonal here in the West, is music that is outside of our twelve-tone tempered system. Twelve notes per octave. The fact of the matter is that's a very Eurocentric concept. Ninety percent of the world's music is microtonal. In other words, they have tuning systems that have five, seven, nine notes per octave. Gamelan can kind of fall into that, twelve or thirteen, I'm not really sure. Each gamelan orchestra has a different tuning for the orchestra. Arabic modes are often based on quarter tones--that's twenty-four notes per octave, but that's kind of more the grid, they slur them one way or another. The Turkish system is based on a nine-note per whole tone, so I guess that would be fifty-four notes per octave, that they use to alter six, seven, and eight-note modes. But you can't really call them modes, because they're makams. Which is, that's a pitch set with rules.

But nevertheless, to come back, in terms of microtonal music, what we consider to be microtonal would be for example, the Western classical microtonal grandfathers would be Julian Correo, Alois Haba, and Ivan Visnogradski. [Charles] Ives wrote a few pieces that have quarter tones here and there, but he's not really included because he wrote so few of them, whereas these guys, that's what they did. They either wrote twenty-four, thirty-six, forty-eight, seventy-two, or ninety-six notes per octave, equal tempered.

In terms of microtonality you can look at two basic systems of thought. One is equal temperament or just intonation, where it's based on the overtone series and notes that fall between the cracks, but the steps between them are not equal, and they sometimes don't even line up according to an octave, they could go further. So in a way they are not microtonal, they're macrotonal. So there's a whole--you know, this sentiment that twelve notes per octave, that's it, it's kind of like the continents on our planet. We think this is a solid--we think the ground we walk on is solid, it doesn't move. But if you look at it in a larger way, all of the continents are floating. And it's the same thing with twelve-tone equal temperament. Most orchestras didn't even really use it until 1850. I think organ tuners only then started tuning organs to equal temperament in 1850. We're talking less than 200 years here.

**FRED BOUCHARD:** In those 200 years, if you looked at a map of the world, you would see that the continents had shifted ever so slightly, and of course the oceans are rising, so you know maybe it's time for a shift.

**DAVE FIUCZYNSKI:** Well, it is really a time for a shift because more and more people I talk to are looking for something, or they already have experimented with it.

**FRED BOUCHARD:** You did say that Schoenberg was quoted as saying tonal music as we know it is kaputt. Even as he was devising his twelve-tone material.

**DAVE FIUCZYNSKI:** Well, what actually he said, he mentioned that music systems based on twelve notes--I mean with the chromaticism of late Romanticism--it's basically exhausted. And it's really striking, he wrote that before he started his twelve-tone experiments. But he also said something really interesting, he said, "Microtones will arise when their time has come." Now I wrote an essay called "Global MicroJams," and I think the time for microtones will come when there's a technological innovation. In other words, when there's an affordable microtonal keyboard that people can acquire easily and start working on. Right now they're too expensive and they're hard to find and....

**FRED BOUCHARD:** You'd want one where you could push a button and get the Turkish fifty-six tones, push another button and get the Arabic flat second.

**DAVE FIUCZYNSKI:** You can do that! There are some Arabic Casio keyboards where you can do that. But I'm talking about a keyboard that has a row of keys like our piano, but then it has more rows of keys above and below so this could be quarter tones and then this could be sixth tones and so forth.

**FRED BOUCHARD:** Programmable function keys, like you could get on a keyboard for your computer.

**DAVE FIUCZYNSKI:** Yeah, but something that is playable, that is easy to understand, and I mean--you can reprogram a keyboard right now, and that's what one of my students does in Berklee's first ever Microtonal Groove Ensemble that I started teaching this semester.

**FRED BOUCHARD:** Who were the kids?

**DAVE**  
**FIUCZYNSKI:** It's Evgeny Levidev on piano, a really great piano player from Moscow. But he reprogrammed his keyboard to twenty-four notes per octave. So he has all twenty-four notes over two octaves. So now he has to re-learn where every note is. What happens if he switched to thirty-six tones? He has to re-learn again. What if you do seventy-two notes, that's the grid I would like to work on. He would run out of keys, that wouldn't even be one octave. So with a microtonal keyboard, like one made by H-P, or Star Labs, or Turbstra, you can do that. And I'm trying to get one of those here and hopefully we can start a revolution here.

**FRED**  
**BOUCHARD:** Hey, alright!

**FRED**  
**BOUCHARD:** Talking about your various axes you play, your double-fretted guitar, you find you play them in the Torsos and Kif and also with some people you work with?

**DAVE**  
**FIUCZYNSKI:** I basically play my double-neck, it's fretted and fretless on top, in every group. But it will have different functions in different groups. For example with Michelle Ndegeocello, it will be more of a groove thing. It will be less Eastern and less microtonal. If you use a lot of distortion you can get a really cool blues slide sound on the fretless.

**FRED**  
**BOUCHARD:** Absolutely. I've heard that and it's very rich sounding.

**DAVE**  
**FIUCZYNSKI:** You can also do kind of a banjo sound. You know banjos were fretless first before people started fretting them. So this whole [imitates banjo] comes from it being fretless first. That's where these kind of slides come from--the concept.

**FRED**  
**BOUCHARD:** Roger Brown in his address last week said that now you can get a major in Mandolin and Banjo at this school, it's brand new. Who's teaching those courses?

**DAVE**  
**FIUCZYNSKI:** Uh, I know--God, we have five hundred teachers here, I'm blanking.

**FRED**  
**BOUCHARD:** But anyway, are they aware of the fretless capabilities yet?

**DAVE**  
**FIUCZYNSKI:** I'm not sure. You know there's a lot of fretless players, there's a lot of microtonal people, but it's still very underground. Again, you know people talk about a revolution--I always thought that was kind of corny--you know we could actually start something here.

**FRED**  
**BOUCHARD:** Why don't you tell us about some of the other nodes of activity in the greater Boston area. I mean you've just gotten your MA? PhD? At the Conservatory in microtonality?

**DAVE**  
**FIUCZYNSKI:** Master's.

**FRED**  
**BOUCHARD:** Master's. There's at least one or two societies for microtonality. Tell us a little about them.

**DAVE FIUCZYNSKI:** Well, interestingly enough, I had first thought, I'll just do this on my own, and I was always looking outside of Berklee. I've been playing with Hiromi, who is a fantastic Japanese piano player, over the last two years, touring more than ever. It was kind of crazy, teaching full time and studying full time, I was, like, doing homework on the road. But to make a long story short, Taiwan, Japan, Canada, the States, all over Europe, I asked the same question, "Who's experimenting with their traditional music and mixing that with western stuff?" That's nothing new, that's like world music. Who's looking into microtones and experimenting with that in a harmonic context with their traditional music or Western ideas. And very few or just about none. I really traveled far and wide. I've been in touch with microtonal societies in New York, U.K., Salzburg, Austria, Australia, with fans online--I mean they're always up on the newest--the answer has always been no, no, no, and no: "We've never heard of this, we don't know anyone who's doing it."

So actually, interestingly enough, the best place to do it is here. [Points to ground] Because at Berklee, in terms of new groove ideas, where are you going to have an institution where basically a thousand experts like this gentlemen here [points off camera] enter school every year and know what the newest thing is going on, in terms of pop and so forth? I mean, I'm forty-four, I don't know a lot of these things that are going on. And in my classes I force them to transcribe a simple rhythm of a groove that everyone's talking about, and that they love--or hate--and that they have to learn how to transcribe it, manipulate it, write something with it.

**FRED BOUCHARD:** What kind? Like a one-four-five pattern on bass?

**DAVE FIUCZYNSKI:** No, I'm talking about just a kick, snare, high-hat pattern. That's usually what it revolves around, and the bass line. And then write something in an unusual mode. So we have that here at Berklee. We have some world music classes here. NEC has been doing that forever, and NEC is really the only school in the world that has had microtonal instruction. There's the Boston Microtonal Society...

**FRED BOUCHARD:** Are these mostly classical cats?

**DAVE FIUCZYNSKI:** Mostly. And there's an incredible amount of world music in the greater Boston area. So it's interesting enough, I had always been looking on the outside, it's really been right under my nose right here. It just needs to be pulled together.

**FRED BOUCHARD:** Back in your own backyard.

**DAVE FIUCZYNSKI:** Yeah. Somebody else said--there's a guy, Wolf, around the corner, who's been fixing guitars for decades. I knew him as a student. He's like, "Aw, you're back. Just like the salmon swimming back upstream." [imitates fish swimming]

**FRED BOUCHARD:** Are you able to play some microtonal stuff in Hiromi's band? Can you get into that?

**DAVE**  
**FIUCZYNSKI:** The really hip thing about Hiromi is that she--yeah, to answer your question in different bands I can do different things. With Hiromi, she lets me do anything I want to do. As long as I, you know, I obviously play the head and do a solo and so forth. So on some pieces I would do kind of an Indian-influenced improvisation. In one piece there would be a point when she and I would do a pentatonic improvisation, and I would play a quarter tone away against her, and we would all of the sudden have this amazing, dissonant but sweet dissonant tapestry.

**FRED**  
**BOUCHARD:** And not only a familiar theme, but just a little bit out of whack. I played your Chinese go-go track in one of my blindfold tests for my students last spring, and they all looked at each other! I had a lot of bassists and guitarists, they weren't ready for that. But maybe they will be.

**DAVE**  
**FIUCZYNSKI:** I think so.

**FRED**  
**BOUCHARD:** Is Hiromi looking around for a microtonal keyboard, or is she not ready to?

**DAVE**  
**FIUCZYNSKI:** I've tried to corrupt her, but she's incorruptible! [Fred laughs] She'll see the light someday.

**FRED**  
**BOUCHARD:** Can you work on the bass player?

**DAVE**  
**FIUCZYNSKI:** There's not much movement. It's all here. Here I have--you know, there's the Student Microtonal Society.

**FRED**  
**BOUCHARD:** Tell us about that. I don't even know about that.

**DAVE**  
**FIUCZYNSKI:** We have one of these keyboards here, I'm going to pull it out in two weeks and demonstrate it, and try to find some new victims who are interested. Keyboard players who want to experiment and play on it. I have Berklee's fretless guitar lab, where I introduce, you know, a little easy Arabic melody and some quarter tones just to get their feet wet. And usually that's where I get a guitar player for the microtonal ensemble. But you know, there's great diversity here. I mean, again, I guess I had the wrong attitude. I came here thinking, I teach, okay, that's it, I leave. But you know, I took lessons. I bartered, I would trade, I would teach chord scale knowledge, and in exchange I took lessons with a Japanese koto player; a fabulous Dmitri. what's his name a fabulous Greek oud player; Gutch Gulay, an incredible fretless guitar player and singer, and more.

**FRED**  
**BOUCHARD:** It's a two-way street.

**DAVE**  
**FIUCZYNSKI:** It's really all here.

**FRED**  
**BOUCHARD:** Paquito [d'Rivera] said, "You know you're always going to learn some new stuff from your students," and he's so right. If you get too legit-ified in your teaching, then you close too many doors.

**DAVE** They keep me on my toes, which is actually the best thing.

**FIUCZYNSKI:**

**FRED** Yeah. Speaking about the rave reviews you've gotten from critics in a very wide range of magazines: fresh  
**BOUCHARD:** sounds, new ideas, superlative chops, when you read your critics or fans in print, what's your attitude towards that, and do you learn anything from the reviews? I'm speaking as a critic at this point, just to try and find out whether it's...

**DAVE** I've learned that I really have to be able to explain microtonality a whole lot more. Because I would throw these  
**FIUCZYNSKI:** things out and often it comes off as "nutty professor," which in a way it is. Because they say, "this is awesome," but there's just about nobody out there who knows what you're talking about. So I have to find examples, and go to the blues. That's our microtonal music. There's so many notes that you won't find on the piano that fall between the cracks, those sweet blue notes.

**FRED** You know, somewhere you stop a gliss in the right place and you've got it.

**BOUCHARD:**

**DAVE** Like Moses said, the right place.

**FIUCZYNSKI:**

**FRED** Right, right. In midst of all the adulation, I mean beyond defining microtonality, are there things or perceptions  
**BOUCHARD:** that you're picking up from listeners that are instructive? People who make your job a little easier by showing you where the gaps are?

**DAVE** I need to simplify. I think I may be trying to pack too much into a tune. Longer and slower development--that's a  
**FIUCZYNSKI:** direction I want to go into. You know, after the 1940s, eclecticism became big, I mean the global village was shrinking. And to a certain extent it's not really hard to do anything new. You know, you take a punk rock groove and you have like a Scottish bagpipe doing an ostinato on top, and then some comping, and then on top Sri Lankan monkey chant and boom!--you got something new. But, there's a difference between, I guess, mixing and melding. Ultimately is it any good, does it have any staying power? And with Screaming Headless Torsos, I enjoyed the energy. It's not so much like, "Look, Ma! I can do all these things in one tune." I really liked going from a reggae part into a metal part into a funk thing. It was more about the energy of one going to the other. But you can weaken that effect if you do it too much.

It's a little bit like the serialists. They took the twelve-tone concept and applied it to everything: timbre, tonality and so forth. And what happens is there's a constant change. If you take a slice of Boulez' piano sonatas, the early ones, to me the language is very rich and it's violent. But it goes by so fast--I mean, you know, one moment it's quiet, then you get punched in the face, then you get a hug again, then punched in the face, hug, punch, hug, and eventually it's static and all these colors, they're too close together, they switch too quickly and eventually it's just all grey. That's where the serialists kind of really kind of painted themselves into a corner for me.

**FRED** Yeah, I mean with fusion cuisine too, like Michel Guérard in the seventies, was trying to mix and match things,  
**BOUCHARD:** different spectra from different countries. On the taste buds it can either be sublime, but if it's not quite there, like Moses said, it can be jarring and distasteful and 'bleh.' So you've got to figure out some way to blend it so that both foot the bill.

**DAVE** Yeah you do, and at the same time you have to kind of--you just also have to stand up for who you are. Because  
**FIUCZYNSKI:** you know, Van Gogh was jarring. Mozart was jarring. You know, I guess you need to make it palatable to yourself, but at some point you have to say this is what it is.

**FRED** We've got to come into a closing mode here, but....let me ask you, what do you love about teaching, and are  
**BOUCHARD:** there any things that bug you about it?

**DAVE** What I love about teaching is the opportunity I have at Berklee to experiment. There's no other fretless guitar lab  
**FIUCZYNSKI:** in the world. There's no microjam ensemble. NEC was very post-serialist, very rugged counterpoint. Very thorough. And I loved that. But I feel you can get to a fresh area with modal microtonal chord scale concepts. And I'm really happy that I can do these things here. You mentioned, you know a teacher saying that they learned so much from their students. I mean, I've been shocked. I always heard that before, but I'm shocked at how much I can learn. So that's what I love about teaching.

There's nothing that really bugs me, the only thing that I'm a little surprised [at] is that at times I wish students would be more open-minded. You know, when I do auditions for someone like Michelle Ndegeocello or--I hosted her and Marcus Miller, I had a large pool of groovers [gestures] and a large pool of jazz players [gestures] and just about "the twain shall never meet." I mean, if you're a jazz player and you're not aware of James Brown and you leave this place, you will have problems. And if you're a groove player and you think that everything is in minor-seven, or seven, or major-seven you will have problems. And I see some resistance to learning, which I think is unfortunate.

**FRED** If you had your druthers for a faculty development trip, what country would you like to visit next?  
**BOUCHARD:**

**DAVE** Wow, I mean if I can recommend a country, it'd be New England Conservatory.  
**FIUCZYNSKI:**

**FRED** You mean like a...  
**BOUCHARD:**

**DAVE** I mean everything that's there is just unbelievable in terms of the access to the faculty that I had and the things I  
**FIUCZYNSKI:** could learn. I wanted Turkish, I wanted Indian, I wanted microtonal, and I was also able to get some, I wanted Vietnamese actually, but I couldn't find any Vietnamese teachers here. But Japanese and Vietnamese, many Asian styles are somewhat based on Chinese styles. I mean, I'm saying this in a very loose way obviously, I don't want to insult anyone. But China has kind of been--you know they started everything first, and spread out and people have based their ideas. Of course Japanese ideas are completely unique, I mean the tea ceremony and so forth. You can only get that in Japan. But I studied with this Chinese guzheng player and I actually got what I was looking for.

**FRED** Well there's been a lot of students from Taiwan, Japan, and Korea in this school. Maybe if the development opens  
**BOUCHARD:** a door to more scholarship to Beijing, have a couple of field trips out there, you may get a few of these kids with ears that don't need to be tweaked as much, or coming in with their own concepts.

**DAVE** I guess I'd want to go to China. That's the one place I haven't been. For me, a faculty development trip would go through Turkey, India, and, well, if I had to pick three it would be Vietnam then. I've been to Taiwan and Japan, I've been to India and briefly in Istanbul. China, I've never--well I played in Hong Kong, I was on the ground for thirty-six hours, it was terrible. In and out, can you imagine? I flew to Hong Kong for the weekend. I was actually in the air longer than I was on the ground.

**FRED** That's what Phil Woods always used to say: "They pay you to get there."  
**BOUCHARD:**

**DAVE** Yeah, travel a bit through China and other parts of east Asia. Play with musicians and jam. There is a student, **FIUCZYNSKI:** Simon Yoon, who just graduated, and he's kind of basing himself in New York and Hong Kong and going back and forth. He learned Japanese here so he plays in Tokyo. So I mean, I would love to go there with him and experiment. Actually, you know, maybe, no I think I've been here long enough to actually think about a sabbatical. Maybe a trip, a study trip, with a quintet of him, myself, bass, and drums and you and Lee. That would be amazing, that would be great. I don't think my chair is going to be happy to hear about this. Hey, when can I take some time off?

**FRED** Hey, with this new Valencia impetus here, there may be a chance for like a Moorish historical music department, **BOUCHARD:** you know? Go in that direction, recreate that Moroccan thing you did in Seville. That would be hip.

**DAVE** Yeah, yeah, that would be amazing.  
**FIUCZYNSKI:**

**FRED** You never know, probably some of those flamenco cats are already thinking those lines.  
**BOUCHARD:**

**DAVE** I'd like to hear a flamenco cat do that stuff on oud, with the microtones.  
**FIUCZYNSKI:**

**FRED** What do you think about some of these new guys like Rabih Abou-Khalil from Morocco or from northern Africa?  
**BOUCHARD:** Some of these guys who're playing, oud player?

**DAVE** Rabih, I'm not sure I know him but, yeah I think I've heard of him. If I am thinking of the right guy, I don't know **FIUCZYNSKI:** too much about him but I've heard he's really happening. But the person I do know who I think is amazing is Datir Yusef from Tunisia. He's based in Paris, he's done some stuff with Nguyen Le. And he's great. He plays and he sings, he plays and he knows, he's been experimenting with classical musicians and jazz players. He's third streaming.

**FRED** You know, the last time I was in Paris was in the early nineties, and I went over the left bank there and I heard a **BOUCHARD:** lot of kids from Morocco and Tunisia working in the jazz bands. There was a kid on bass named Etienne M'bappe who was playing a fretless bass, he was doing really good. This is in the early nineties. I wonder where he is now?

**DAVE** Yeah, he was the last guy to play with [Joe] Zawinul.  
**FIUCZYNSKI:**

**FRED** Is that right?

**BOUCHARD:**

**DAVE** Maybe yeah.

**FIUCZYNSKI:**

**FRED** Cool. Hey, there's a lot happening out there Dave, and we're right on the edge.

**BOUCHARD:**

**DAVE** I think we're on the edge, ready to jump off. I'm just trying to find people to jump with me. Will you jump with me?

**FIUCZYNSKI:**

[shake hands]

**FRED** I'll jump with you, Dave. Get those parachutes out.

**BOUCHARD:**

**DAVE** Thanks. Oh, no parachutes.

**FIUCZYNSKI:**

**FRED** No net?

**BOUCHARD:**

**DAVE** No net.

**FIUCZYNSKI:**

**FRED** Just sharp ears. Thanks Dave, this has been a blast.

**BOUCHARD:**

**DAVE** Thank you.

**FIUCZYNSKI:**