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CONVERSATION WITH JOHN MONTELEONE

PART ONE

The following conversation was taped at the workshop of John Monteleone, a young builder of custom mandolins, in Islip, Long Island on January 24, 1978. John has built 18 mandolins for 18 ecstatic mandolin pickers, and after the grand tour of his small but efficient workshop, and an examination of several of his creations, including his new design, he took some time to explain how and why.

David Grisman

- DG: Maybe you could talk a little about your new design.
- JM: Well, I wanted to change the F-5 into something more personal, something that had more of my own expression ... my interpretation of the instrument.
- DG: Which is based on a certain dissatisfaction with the F-5 design?
- JM: Yes, I'll give you some examples. I wanted to allow the F-holes to project more and not be obscured, especially on the treble side, with the pick-guard hanging over it. So I designed a shortened-up version of the pick-guard which is free-standing, it has no bracket to suspend on, it's just free-standing, short, and doesn't cover the F-hole. It allows that F-hole to ring clear.
- DG: I got around that problem by removing my pick-guard and giving it to Frank Wakefield.
- JM: You certainly did! Pretty soon you may have yourself a new sound hole. Then, I was concerned about the tailpieces for a couple of reasons. One was the availability of the tailpieces, the reproduction-type tailpiece. I wasn't satisfied with that because they're just cheaply made. I think poorly made. The pins would break on them, you know that kind of problem.
- DG: Yes, that's what happened to the *original* tailpiece on my mandolin.
- JM: Right. The covers would rattle or fall off, get bent out of shape, the whole business. So I took it upon myself to clean up that design, and so I designed my own tail-piece and I think that it's a much-needed piece of hardware for that instrument.
- DG: I agree. Are you planning to market these on any kind of mass-level?
- JM: Not really. I'm not prepared to do it, for me. My first concern is to make them for my instruments, and if I can manage to make extras, then I would. My first priority is to make everything I can to make my instruments. The body changes on my instrument were to increase the air chamber just a tiny bit on the bass side. So I elongated the scroll, which I think helps the bottom-end of the instrument. Sometimes, it gets choked-out, I think, on a lot of '5's'.
- DG: What do you mean by "choked-out"?
- JM: Well I just thought it would give more *bottom character*, bass character to the instrument. The treble I can always deal with in other ways, by working through the bridge or the tone-bars, which I think I'm getting there. I don't know if I ever will be totally satisfied because of the many possibilities.

DG: I imagine your opinion is that the Gibson design is superior to most others such as a Martin design or certainly a Harmony design.

JM: Oh yes. Well, I wouldn't want to say anything that would infringe upon anybody in particular, but I think that the Gibson instrument does basically best what it's supposed to do; better than other instruments as far as design goes. In refining that design that's another story. I think it can be tailored to each instrument specifically, and that's the advantage of one maker making an instrument. He can see it through from the choice of a top or a back or the sides and just put them together. The combination there I think is going to work right.

DG: Do you still have the first one you made?

JM: It's right there! (Points to an un-strung F-5 copy sitting in the corner). It's an animal of a different color, really. I wasn't really going after an out and out Gibson at that point. That was my very first mandolin.

DG: So how many have you built to date?

JM: I've built 18 so far.

DG: All "F-5" style?

JM: There are a couple of specials. One was a 2-point and another special was with very, very special wood that I had gotten from a guy who had worked for Gibson. It's not documented as fact, but he supposedly worked around 1928 or 30 in the Gibson factory, and he had gotten this wood. I showed you that piece. Very dynamic-looking maple with the wormholes in it. I got a big plank of it inside for about 9 mandolins. So I just stash that away for very special things. That's not my standard wood. The wood that I use is the best that anybody can get. Some of it's domestic. It depends on what I'm going to use it for. The necks I like to make out of the domestic wood, because it's a little harder. But if someone really wants a little softer kind of sound overall, then I usually use the Austrian. I generally like to use the Austrian maple (it comes from the Tyrolean Alps) for the back and sides. It lends a subtle softness to the overall sound.

DG: My mandolin's harder-sounding.

JM: Yeah, that's domestic maple you got there. It's a harder wood. And in the tops, too. You can gauge that, too. If somebody really wants a little bit harder sound, I can pick out a hard piece.

DG: Do you just use spruce exclusively?

JM: German spruce almost exclusively.

DG: Do you ever use fir?

JM: No. I like the German spruce because it's harder. It responds a lot nicer, I think, overall.

DG: What have you noticed about grain? Any preferences? I know some people say that wide grain is good, and others like a very close even grain.

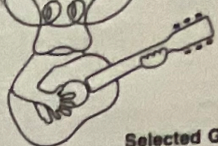
JM: Well, that's controllable too. By picking the different kind of grain that you have, you can control the bass and the treble, or the volume a little bit.

DG: What do you find is the difference in grain?

JM: The wider grains are going to bring out a little bit more of the bass, a little bit chunkier kind of sound. Narrowing the grains in are going to give it a little bit more clarity, especially into the treble range. It will be a sweeter sound overall, a little bit better blend, I think. But the wide grains ... they're your "powerhouse" woods, I think.

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DG: Do you find that the wood on the neck affects the tone a lot? I noticed a change in tone when I changed fingerboards.

JM: Yes. It does. Using the harder wood in necks, I think I got a little bit more sustain out of them than the softer necks that I was using. But to really notice a difference, you would have to build one, tear it apart, and then rebuild it another way to really find out. Then you get into the experimental business.

DG: How about that? Could you ever see yourself just being an experimenter?

JM: No. There's no fun in that. The real satisfaction is in making an instrument and then putting it into somebody's hands and then once you make it, you're done with it. Experimentation is a full-time job. A certain company has been producing print-out data in their experimental lab for years. What have they done with it? Nothing that I know of. They still have the same line of instruments. Everything is pretty much the same way. The only thing they did was they went back to one of their old designs. They brought out one of their older guitars.

DG: I wish some other companies would do that if they could get back the craftsmanship too.

JM: I don't need a machine to carve the tops; I don't do that. I carve them all myself. I take each piece for what it is, and I can work with it.

DG: Are you finished with your new design, or will you continue to work on it?

JM: You have to arrive at some point where you have something to show to people. Yes, I've got that basically. Later on I may change a few things, but that's not important now.

DG: I imagine you're looking forward to the day when all your mandolins will be of your own design, as well as your own construction.

- JM:** I think so, if there is a future, yes. What am I talking about? (laughter) For the future, yes, that would make me happy, in the long run, to go completely to my own design. That would say what I need to say to people which is that there is room enough for an instrument of equal or greater quality than the F-5. Trying to break out of a mold, somehow.
- DG:** I'm impressed. I don't know which of those three mandolins I would pick to take home with me. I think I do. Do you have a particular favorite?
- JM:** Yes, I do. I think that the new prototype has more in terms of evenness and balance, and just total response. I think it's got more quality to it, in sound, than the others. It's so subtle, it's very hard to say. I would have to make some more of those to really be able to make a statement on it.
- DG:** Well, what are your plans, other than to make two Monteleone mandolins a month for an indefinite future? Do you see that as being able to take care of your physical and spiritual needs, in light of our economic reality?
- JM:** Well, nothing is easy, of course, but when you dedicate yourself to something, you just do it, you see. I'm not bad off at all. I'm, of course, happy doing what I do, I enjoy doing it because I learn from it, and at the same time I can make a living out of it.

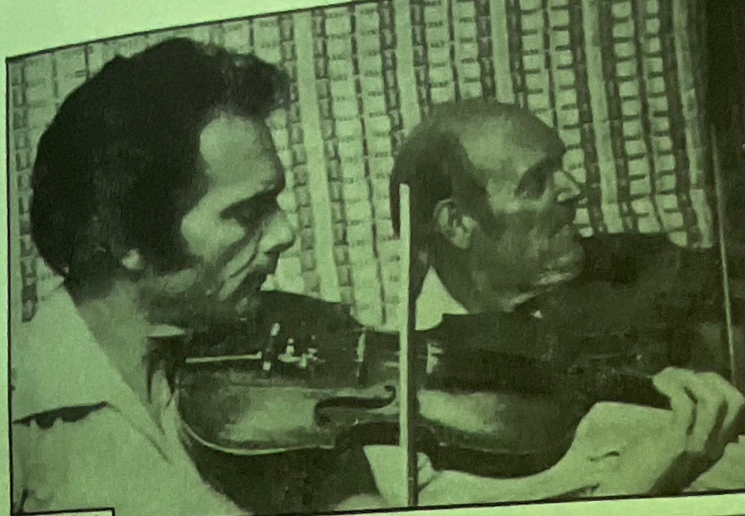
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Tiny Moore

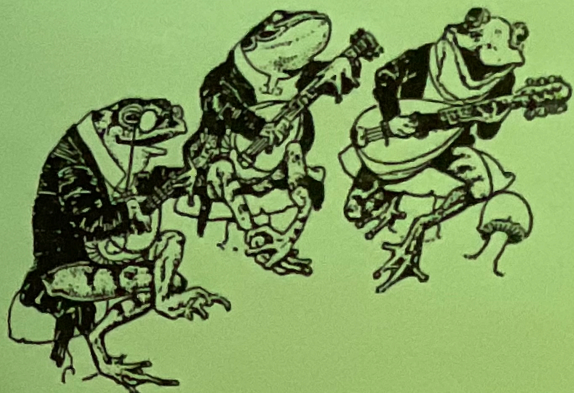
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- TM:** You know, that's a hard question to answer. Of course any teacher can write down things that he plays or things that he maybe wants to get across, most any teacher can do that. But I'm not sure that this is the way it should be done for people to learn an individual style in playing jazz or takeoff or call it whatever you want to. This one fiddle contest judge calls it hogwash. If I get a student, and by the way most students that I teach don't go that far, most of them are beginners in guitar, fiddle, or mandolin. Occasionally you get one that does, and I try to guide them roughly like this: music is nothing in the world but a combination of scales and chords. If I want to deviate from the melody that this fellow wrote, whoever it was, and put in a few extra little things there are a few rules that I know I have to go by. 1) I must know the chord I'm on. 2) I need to start a passage with one of the notes of that chord, whether it be the first, third, fifth or maybe even the sixth or the flatted seventh or whatever. But it needs to be a note that lends itself to that chord. I also need to end that passage with one of those notes. If it happens to be a seventh chord I think it should have several flatted seventh notes in there to make sure that I know what I'm playing. To me these are the basic rules of playing hokem, jazz or whatever. And if a person will follow that, he's not gonna get in trouble. The only way I know to teach it is to explain that way and then, of course if a person's had enough music maybe play some things for them and let them record it and pick a piece here pick a piece there and so on. That's the only way I know to do it.
- DB:** Any scales or arpeggio studies that you recommend?
- TM:** I don't know of any specifically, except some that you could just make up. Any violin book would have them, any clarinet book, any horn book. If you want to go that route. One of the fellows who teaches here went to a seminar with Howard Roberts. And he went into a very detailed study of "you can use these notes against this chord if so and so is in place and go on with these hundreds of rules as to what you can do. Then he ended the entire thing by saying, 'Now you can, for all practical purposes, forget all this stuff and play what sounds good.' And that's about what it amounts to. I still need to know those specifics that I told you.

DB: Who would you suggest listening to?



Tiny & Merle



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Several people have written and requested that their subscription begin with a specific back or future issue other than the first issue of that calendar year. As much as we'd like to individually accommodate each of you, it is virtually impossible from the standpoint of keeping current and correct records. To streamline paperwork our complete membership is turned over each year. That's why if you joined in late 1977 you very possibly received all four 1977 issues at once along with a plea to resubscribe. We hope this doesn't cause anyone undue inconvenience, yet it seems the only manageable alternative to a bureaucratic mess.



D. Grisman

John Montealeone with one of his new mandolins.

CONVERSATION WITH JOHN MONTELEONE

part 2

What follows is a continuation of David Grisman's interview with mandolin builder John Montealeone, initially published in MWN Spring 1978. The interview, conducted in Islip, Long Island on January 24, 1978, has so far covered Montealeone's particular innovations in mandolin design, different acoustic properties in woods, and the economics of being an artisan in today's commercial world.

DG: How did you get started building instruments?

JM: Well, I had 12-string when I was 14 and the neck went out on this Harmony 12, and I took it upon myself to ... instead of throwing the guitar away ... I couldn't sell it that way. I made a neck because I had worked with wood. I knew a little bit about it, but working for my father, he's a pattern-maker. So I took it upon myself to get into it, but the real thing that got me bitten about building anything was I needed a guitar. I couldn't afford to buy this one and I knew just what I wanted; I bought some wood, went into Manhattan, found H.L. Wylde, bought the wood, came home and I think I was about 16 then and I built this in my spare time. Just a mahogany box. I still have it somewhere around here ... and to finish that guitar, on and off, it took about 7 years. 7 years later finished it. I went off to college, the whole bit. I got interrupted a lot. I finished up college with a music degree to teach. Couldn't find a job.

DG: Why mandolins? I mean, did you become a mandolin player? You're not a mandolin player?

JM: No, I can't play the mandolin to save my life.

DG: You just felt sorry for us.

JM: Yeah. No, I'm intrigued to death by the instrument. I think that it's different enough from the violin line of instruments. I mean the violin line is very traditional and tried-and-true type of arrangement, but the mandolin ... you can't compare it to the violin, you can't. Structurally and physically everything is a whole different shape and different concept, different stresses. So you have to approach it from a different point of view and I thought that was very intriguing. There aren't many people, I think, that are really getting into making a good instrument available for people in mandolins. Banjos and guitars ... there's such a flood of things happening with those instruments. But I told myself in fact that I would never make a mandolin; this was back when I was doing restoration. I just looked at it and I wasn't really thrilled with mandolin as much as I was into guitars and banjos.

DG: What changed your mind?

JM: After working with them enough, I got really intrigued with what made this instrument do what it does. Also, the design of it intrigued me.

DG: Do you know much about the early Gibson situation? I mean in the Lloyd Loar era ... the Golden Age. In other words, those instruments that were beautifully made, how many people were responsible? It seems that they got a large number of beautiful instruments together at some point.

JM: Yes. It's interesting to think back. Like, Guy Hart was responsible for the building of the instrument, really. Lloyd Loar was just a signature man, really.

DG: He was a musician.

JM: Yes, he lent his musicological ideas as much as he could, I think. But as far as building them, he was not the builder. Guy Hart was really the builder.

DG: Lloyd Loar designed the modifications, didn't he?

JM: Yes, he helped bring them about ... the F-holes, the bridge design and whatever ... the concept, yes. But even then, it was kept on a more personal level, as far as I know. It was not a real huge assembly-line product. There was more control involved, and that's what I like to do is keep more control. If I stay as small as I am, then I'll have the control.

DG: Of course there are discrepancies in workmanship in The old Gibsons.

JM: Well, sure, you'll find some of those that just don't meet the kind of great expectations that we demand of them today. But a lot of them do. I don't know the technical background of Gibson the early years, but I have formulated my own idea about it. They had a great working situation, I think, in the factory and the way that they supervised the construction of the instrument. They took an idea and concentrated on it and developed it very well. They had a good idea and good people to carve these, cut these ... but what happens is that goes through a transformation because you'd have a standard instrument which as the tools and dies get used or worn out, they have to be reproduced ... the templates wear out, especially in manufacturing, as well as availability of certain materials ... you have to tailor your building to those situations. If you can't get it you can't get it, but what you have is these templates and dies having to be re-made over and over again, you have new people coming in, taking places of other craftsmen, so what you have is different hands, and different minds and you're going to come out with a different instrument, or a different concept of the same instrument. Basically, we call it an F-5 because it still looks like an F-5, but it is a different instrument today than it was.

- DG: What is your opinion of what's happened to the Gibson Company?
- JM: Gibson had to re-educate themselves, they're still going through a re-education.
- DG: Are they interested in getting back to their former standards? Are they aware of what they have done in the past and the differences that exist?
- JM: If they are, they're very slow to respond. They are interested in the market and that's what's obvious. I don't think its in their interest to conform to the bluegrass musician. I think they stand on their reputation and that's about as far as that goes. They put out a product and that's it. If I back up a second, one of the important things is in those days money could buy a lot more than it can now, and with more talented people, that is, the craftsmen, who were probably immigrants or families of immigrants or what-ever, just craftsmen, european craftsmen, who may have come to work in the factory at prices that are well-affordable.
- DG: Was your approach initially to recreate a Gibson of a certain period?
- JM: Well, yeah. Let me tell you this. I started making banjo necks for old parts and I was really into the fever of authenticity . . . I mean really matching it. Not just attempting it but I mean matching it. And that was satisfaction because I got there, and after that point I turned around and I satisfied myself. That's what I wanted to do. I wanted to satisfy myself and say I could do it.
- DG: I had a similar trip with Bill Monroe's style of mandolin. I wanted to play like Bill Monroe, and as soon as I satisfied the urge, it didn't intrigue me that much any more. I couldn't go and do that.
- JM: Right . . . then you reach the biggest wall of all, going out on your own from that point, to extend yourself beyond that point of satisfaction, and say "that's not enough." I think I've looked into it seriously enough to say that there's more that I think I can get out of this instrument. I'm going to try.
- DG: Specifically, in what areas do you see room for improvement?
- JM: Technically?
- DG: Yeah. For example what was the hardest part of recreating or getting back to the old craftsmanship? Was any one thing really a stumbling block for you?
- JM: In a way. They're just small challenges. It went pretty smoothly, but I knew it wasn't going to be right away. I spent about two years getting all my information together, my trial and error business, setting my tools up, my moulds, everything I needed. I made everything. Like I said, I had good access to some fine instruments. I had several Loars that I inspected completely and documented.
- DG: Did you find them all to be consistent?
- JM: Uh, no, I found variation. I found them consistent in contour, shape on the outside, and attention to detail on the headstock. Almost everything exterior I found consistent. On the inside the instrument was a little different. Sometimes I would find differences on the shape of the tone bars, or position of them.
- DG: Slight differences?
- JM: Just slight, which you can attribute to . . . now this you don't know, you can only theorize about it . . . you can attribute that to trial and error or you can attribute it to an assembly-line type of attitude, where you place part A on part B and it's basically there, know what I mean? It's not calculated out with a micrometer. It's placed in position in a relatively "right" place and I think that that was their concern. I don't think that they were making a "super" instrument, you know what I mean? I think

they gave a lot of attention to it, enough attention to the instrument to want to get the best quality they could short of being master craftsmen, OK? An affordable good quality, as an instrument that would revive their whole industry, it would be good enough to bring back the mandolins, that was their effort, really.

- DG: That was the idea behind the F-5.
- JM: It's like the Avanti car. It was the effort to bail Studebaker out of their problems, but it died. But the interior of the instrument, I found that the most important thing was to make the top and back as a complete body, to be as resonant as possible. When I build them, I build them to be as free-vibrating as possible . . . to be as responsive as possible. And I do it basically by feel and tapping . . . I don't tune them up. I played around with that for awhile, tuning the plates and the bars, but when it comes right down to it, you just have to get behind your chisel and do it! You do it with your hands and your head. That's why it's kind of fascinating to me in a way, all this laboratory type of approach to it. I can understand what they're doing, they're trying to understand what is happening, and measure it somehow, to graph it. But what happens, in applying this information, I've never seen anybody apply it really and come out with results that can work every time. What it comes down to is no two pieces of wood are alike, basically they're like snowflakes, you know? They're the same but they're all different. So you have this combination of woods that you put together, and as you're putting them together, that's when you can figure out what is going to happen . . . or you try to understand if that way with the piece in your hands, not behind a microphone or something like that.
- DG: Well you have to have an affinity for it.
- JM: Right. You have to have an understanding of what is going to be the result of a particular move of placement of this or that. Or if you carve this thinner, it's going to produce this.
- DG: I would imagine that you would say that the selection of woods is critical.
- JM: Absolutely.
- DG: Would you say that in the old Gibsons a lot of the, y'know, not so good-sounding mandolins would be more a result of something in the wood, or a mis-match?
- JM: I think it's a blend of things. First of all, they did carve their tops rather heavy.
- DG: Right. Mine's a little thinner, I've noticed.
- JM: Right. And the tone bars tended to go on the heavy side later on, too, the result being a very trebly-sounding instrument, but it tends to lose the body. You start losing body and balance, and power in the overall spectrum of the instrument. We call it balance, from one end to the other. But there's a misconception about thinning out tops too. The thinner the better . . . that's not the solution.
- DG: Is there an optimum thickness, barring structural considerations? If you could have a top as thin as a razor blade would it sound good?
- JM: No, I don't think so.
- DG: You need a certain mass of wood to move.
- JM: You start washing your sound out if you go too thin. There's not enough substance. When you put things like tone bars in an instrument, you're putting substance or material, you're adding material to the top. There are several reasons for that. The tone bars have many functions, I think. It's primary function is to run sound to the outer portions of the top, in other words, instead of concentrating beneath the foot of the bridge area, to run this out onto the plate more, like a pebble in water effect.

- DG: I see, when they vibrate, they vibrate the other parts of the top that they're touching.
- JM: They're helping carry sound out to the rest of the top, to get as much of the top to vibrate or pulse. The more area you can get on the top, the less quality sound you're going to have. So once you're able to run the sound out and control it that way, then you can deal with shading to tone a bit. I've been playing around with different lengths and size braces, or tone bars we call 'em. They do have that function too a little bit. They act as braces in a way too. They add strength.
- DG: That's a big difference in instruments... the bracing. Martin mandolins have different braces.
- JM: That's a whole 'nother animal.
- DG: And the round-hole Gibsons are a whole other design, too. What is your professional prognosis on round-holes and F-holes?
- JM: I think most mandolin players tend to look at the mandolin from the bluegrass approach. Not necessarily a classical approach. I think there are different qualities that we (they) expect to get out of these instruments. They want 'em to "bark" or they want "woody" sounds, or whatever. But there are some qualities of the mandolin that can be brought out if people wanted them, in other words, orchestral qualities. You can refine the balance of that instrument very sweetly. But you have to do a little compromise, if you want power. If you want power and response, volume, you're going to sacrifice a little bit of tone for that. That's just a well-known thing with a lot of craftsmen, that if you're going after volume, basically you're going to drop a little bit of the quality of sound. But I think these days there are some people who are getting around to that classical kind of sound. A more refined-type sound.

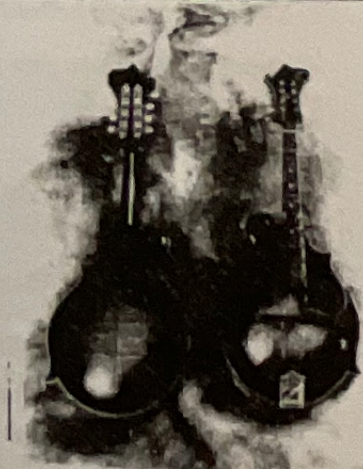
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- DG: I've really noticed dramatic changes in instruments that have been played a lot.
- JM: Yes. One of the things that happens when you do play an instrument is that you expose it to the elements, and that's a very subtle thing, but it's important. The oxidation of the inside of the instrument helps too, in helping that instrument breathe. In fact, instruments that don't get played are kept in cases usually. And there they sit, and they're not able to breathe. They must be able to breathe and take the changes of moisture balance, otherwise it gets trapped in, just like mold can develop. Well, the same thing can happen in the case. Yes, and even worms. That's been happening with old violins, you can get a case of worms, they just can destroy a masterpiece.
- DG: Imagine eating a Stradivarius!
- JM: Yeah! They're going to work . . . chiselin' their way around. But you know, these days we've been, by and large, educating our ears, I think, to be more critical. Especially with all the recording devices, and electronic devices that we have available. We're able to sit and listen and make observations about different blends of sounds, and become more critical, and more demanding, in fact. That's why all these different instruments tend to specialize themselves for different pieces of music; you'd use this for that, this for this, and that, but electronically we can get around that.
- DG: Sure, electronically, but that's not a real mandolin sound.
- JM: Right. The volume thing is interesting too, because it's helped put a demand on the F-5, because the F-hole is an instrument that can project a lot more than most round-holes, not all, but most. Playing in a band is another thing that has helped create the demand for something that has just power, a "power-house" instrument. The orchestra guitars of the '30s, unamplified, are power-houses. They have their tone bars set in parallel, you see. F-hole guitar, parallel-braced, one under each foot of the bridge, and they're just chunkers! They can sit and chunk, unamplified . . . you can hear it under everything! Amplification was a problem then, they needed that type of thing . . . but then again there was a sacrifice too, of the mellowness and the sweetness of the instrument. Now we don't really need that, because we have all the devices that we can depend on for amplification or playing in different band situations for volume. The demand more is now for a more melodious solo instrument, one that can blend everything and be playing in solo, and have lots of quality to it. It doesn't have to be a "power-house" any more. The balance is now controlled. In fact, if I get some time (which is always a problem) I'd like to experiment a little bit on the mandolin with re-designing the tone-bar structure.
- DG: How do you feel about the emergence of the Japanese F-5 copy?
- JM: Well the Japanese are very good at copying things, but not too good at developing their own ideas. Their copies are not very faithful. Attention to detail, I'm concerned with that. Finesse is another key word too. It's an object of beauty as well as everything else we've talked about. I used to feel better about the Japanese or the imported things, but I don't so much anymore. I feel the same way about them as I do about Ovations and the like, which is that they serve a purpose. You know, it's the "chicken in every pot." It's something that's affordable to a lot of people, and a lot of people are satisfied with them, too. The ones who are dissatisfied are the ones who look for better. Some of them can be outstanding.
- DG: Do you have any favorites?
- JM: No. I don't mean that way. I think that some of them happen to fall together the right way. I mean, it just happens to work out that way.

DG: Maybe you should say a little about your bridge design which is also unique.

JM: Well, I like the one piece bridge because I think that it offers a bit more sustain than the standard adjustable bridge. There's less metal hardware for that transmission of sound waves to go through.

DG: That also probably softens it down a little.

JM: In fact, yeah, it doesn't make it as pungent a sound. It takes the metal harshness out of the sound.

DG: What about when I get off the plane in Switzerland and my action is below the fingerboard?

JM: (Laughing) That's why I'm designing an adjustable bridge. I have to do that. The one piece bridge is a good idea, but not wholly practical as far as traveling and meeting all kinds of situations. It is a problem there, because these instruments are like barometers, they change. I have made a couple of bridges, spare bridges for people who do change them, different heights for different seasons. In summer and winter you change the height somewhat. But in terms of practicality, you do have to have something adjustable. Oh, in the neck, too, that's another thing I did; as far as I know I think I'm the only one besides Gibson that has a *carved* truss rod in the neck. Most of the others have straight cut-through channels. It's rather difficult to cut a carved channel inside that neck.

DG: Right. That's the proper way to do it, wouldn't it lose its function if it's not curved?

JM: Yes. If it's just a straight rod, you have to compress so much tension in that neck, that the rods generally can't take it ... and the neck can spring out at any point. There's just so much tension and it has to go somewhere, either down or up, and you don't know. This way you have control ... you know that if you tighten that rod it's got to go in the direction you put it. So that was another thing that worked out nice.

DG: Have you made any mandolins that you were unhappy with?

JM: In fact, *no*. And I haven't made any that any of my customers have been unhappy with. Everyone has, happily, been thrilled. Really, that's nice. That's a part of the drive behind it, the satisfaction. You know, in your music, same thing. Feedback, that's very important.

DG: Yeah! I'm very impressed. I just wish that there was a way to get more of your mandolins out into the world. Of course, there is no way if you're going to hand build every mandolin yourself.

JM: All you can do is try to do all you can do!

DG: This is the day of the "super everything." Most people think they're doing much more than they can do or should be doing.

JM: That's right. It just falls apart from there. You lose grasp on things ... control of it ... just to make it more available, and that's not my point. The Japanese and all these other people can make it more available, but I'm making something that I'm just steadily trying to produce.

DG: Great. You're succeeding. I think we've got a great interview here, we've crased an hour and a half of gypsy music (Laughter).