

Michael Eure Show Transcript

Episode 13 – *Special Guest Freddy Greene*

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EURE: Hello this is Michael Eure, and I'd like to invite you to The Michael Eure Show featuring student hosts and very special guests talking about a variety of interesting topics. You can find us on the Eagle Stream YouTube Channel.

EURE: Welcome to the Michael Eure Show. Today is a very special day, because it marks a transformation. Eagle Stream has moved onto our area of media, and that will be run by Mr., Dr., Carlos McCormick. And still we have Sarah Rothman with us. So today what we're doing is we're transitioning to get the students to try to think about hosting their own shows. As well as learning about all of the opportunities we have at Wake Tech. So I'm gonna right now just briefly have the students introduce themselves. And I'm gonna start with Alphonzo, if you can give us like a 30 second-

HEDGEPEETH: Hi everyone, my name is Alphonzo Hedgepeth. I'm in the Associative Arts program here at Wake Tech. I plan to transfer to North Carolina Central for accounting, and possibly finance.

EURE: Okay, Eduardo.

PERALTA-REYES: Hi, my name is Eduardo Peralta-Reyes, and my subject's in project management. I plan to transfer hopefully to UNCG or maybe UNC Charlotte, still undecided, but yeah.

EURE: All right, John.

WILLIAMS: Hi everyone, John Williams. My major is computer programming. Trying to get a little bit of cyber security too. And that's about it.

EURE: All right, so now our special guest is the Mr. Freddy Greene. Okay, you just start off by telling us a little about yourself. And I'm gonna move out of the way, and after that the students are gonna begin interviewing you, okay? Thank you.

GREENE: Okay, okay. Yes, I'm Freddy Greene, and I'm a saxophonist here in North Carolina. Originally I'm from Franklinton, North Carolina. I'm a former student of St. Augustine's College, and North Carolina Central University. My preferred instrument is the soprano saxophone. All saxophones are basically the same, but my preferred is the soprano saxophone. And I'm very happy to be here, thank you for the invite.

HEDGEPEETH: Quick question, what are the different types of saxophones, and why soprano?

GREENE: Well, there's several different types of saxophones. They range from the contrabass saxophone, that has a bell on it about this big, and you actually have to step on something to play it. It ain't nothing you hold, it's a great big thing. Then you got the bass saxophone comes down a little bit more. And you got the bari saxophone, which you might see in a band. It's a big heavy sounding saxophone. And then you have the tenor saxophone, which most people say it's the cream of the saxophones. But it's a matter of opinion. And then you've got the alto, which is the smaller one, like this here, small alto. Then you have the soprano, which can come straight, like I prefer the straight soprano. There's also a soprano saxophone that's small like this right here. And the differences are the same as you would have in a church choir. You got the soprano saxophone, you got a high c. Yeah, I was saying about the saxophone player came and played this really nice solo of a song called Disco Dance, Disco Dance. And I was saying where there's enough bass players and guitar players in this town, I'm gonna get me a horn. Cuz weren't no horn players around. I'm telling you, we did not have horns until my last semester of my junior year. So I had not even seen a saxophone except watching the Lawrence Welk Show. So I'd never even seen one, so when I saw one guy playing one I fell in love with it immediately. But to soprano, you kinda go through horns. You don't wanna start off on a soprano, you can start off on a soprano. But soprano is very, it's one part of probably the most sensitive of the saxophones. Takes a lot of lip control, a lot of embouchure. So I did the path that most horn players do, you'll start off on the tenor or the alto. And then if you decide to work your way to a soprano, and I love that sound on the soprano. It's light, you can carry it around easily. So I just kind of fell in love with it. So, soprano, mm-hm.

PERALTA-REYES: Nice.

WILLIAMS: Mr. Greene, I have a question for you. Where did the name Street Genie come from? Was it made up by you, or someone else?

GREENE: Well, I'll tell you, to be honest, I gave it to myself.

WILLIAMS: Okay.

GREENE: Yeah, I've been a street musician, started back in 77. And so after 20 years of doing that I came up with a stage name for myself, Street Genie. Don't get me wrong, I played the streets, but I play some other places to.

PERALTA-REYES: There we go.

GREENE: Just over the weekend I played in West Virginia, a town called Buckingham. Where they were having a memorial thing, because of the gas pipeline that's coming through people's property. And they're afraid that it's going to poison their water and all of that. So me and some guys, we played for that event. And I did an event and we had Dr. William Barber, formerly president of the NAACP, and former vice president Al Gore. So I love the streets, I mean, I'll go do that gig and

then come out and play on the corner. Because I love that vibe, very much so. Very personal, playing on the street corner, very personal.

HEDGEPEETH: Well you're a well-known jazz musician, right?

GREENE: Okay, if you say so.

HEDGEPEETH: How would you describe your playing style? What inspires you to play the way you play?

GREENE: I can tell you from street playing, I can tell you real quickly. The faces of people. I play off of what I see coming to me, and also the atmosphere around me. I try to not take over the atmosphere, but blend into it and become one with it. Not demand that you listen to me, but just listen to me as you go along. I'm just trying to become one with my environment, pretty much so. I used to practice walking through the woods. I would listen to birds and the sound of water running through. And try to be as one with that nature thing, not to run the birds away. Although I did go play in a graveyard one time. And then with the birds, [WHISTLE], and wasn't cool, because they ran me out of there. And it was like one of those Alfred Hitchcock movies. So you can you can mess with the spirits in different ways.

HEDGEPEETH: So how do you select different artists to work with or do collabs with on concerts and workshops?

GREENE: Well I guess I have to say I love when they have a good ability to play their instrument. To miss. That's very important. But that's not the most important thing to me. The most important thing to me, the attitude. The attitude that they know the music is greater than they are. And that we are servers to the music and to the people. So you get a guy with the kind of personality that says he loves his instrument, but he also knows that he's a servant. So the music can come through him before his personality. His personality come through his instrument as well, but I really enjoy playing the guys that can know at the eagle over there. And that the music flows to you and we can all do this thing together.

PERALTA-REYES: Well are you involved with inspiring the youth, and let's go with your performance as an artist? And do you have any plans to outreach programming in the future?

GREENE: Well, I'm a substitute teacher in Franklin County. And whatever class I substitute for I take an instrument with me. Whether it be a science class or a math class, whatever it is I take an instrument. And now, when I'm coming in and don't have a instrument, I've got a problem. Mr. Greene, where your horn? You going to play something for us? I found out that learning to play music is very much a disciplined thing. You have to sit down, stop whatever else you're doing, to play music. You don't practice today. And practice again next week. As one of my teachers used to tell us, she said, Miss Diane, not Davis, she said, music is a jealous

lover. That is, you love me today. And then you go love somebody else tomorrow, we've got a problem. You got to put it, you want to put God first, but that music gotta be real close to it. Cuz it's a very personal thing. So for as working with the youth, and I go to the school and I work with them like that, I would tell them that to play with them, you got to be disciplined. I actually talked to Donald Byrd who was a teacher of mine at North Carolina Central. Donald Byrd was a famous trumpet player. He passed a few years ago. I used to call him Mr. Byrd, and I would say, Mr. Byrd, I'm trying to learn how to do this right here and that. And he said, Practice! Okay, so I go and I practice. And I come back to him again, I said Mr. Byrd, now I want to learn how to do, he said practice. So I got to the point I would practice eight and ten hours a day for years. I dropped out of society, I stayed in a place that was nailed up and snowed in one side and rain on the other. And I had one spot on the other, but I practiced and I practiced. And folks would see me walking, going down the street going to the store. I'm gonna go to the store, I'm like this here. I just separated myself. Sometimes you've gotta lose yourself to find yourself. And I'll tell the students the same thing, about discipline. You have to discipline yourself to play music and anything else that you wanna do. You've got to be able to discipline yourself to do that.

EURE: Thank you. Go ahead, tell us a little bit about it.

GREENE: Okay.

EURE: And then give us a quick demo.

GREENE: Well, this is a soprano saxophone. This is a straight soprano. Like I said, they have them as curved, and this is a straight one. Which projects more out than the curved one does, but it's still the same. Okay, I'm gonna blow a little something on the bluesy side.

[MUSIC]

GREENE: Thank you. Thank you all.

EURE: And now we gonna go back to the to the students and ask some questioning. And thank you all for being here, once again.

GREENE: Yeah, that funny sound was not a mistake. That was a growl.

WILLIAMS: Can you tell us a little bit about your favorite recordings?

GREENE: Say it again?

WILLIAMS: Can you tell us about your favorite recordings and what makes it particularly special to you?

GREENE: My favorite recording? Does it have to be my music, or could it be someone else's?

WILLIAMS: Your choice, really. Maybe something that influenced you when you were younger.

GREENE: Early on, I didn't really get into the sound of jazz cuz I just went around. Like I said, I didn't see a saxophone till I was 17. So without going into my twenties, okay?

WILLIAMS: Okay.

GREENE: And that's when I got exposed to jazz. It turned out that at college, I got exposed to it, but really started getting into it. There's two musicians that I favor very much, and that is Miles Davis and John Coltrane. John Coltrane's album *Love Supreme* is probably one of the best albums that's ever been written. If you ever hear it you can hear how spiritual it is. And the way that he approached sounds and different sounds. Miles Davis, can I tell you all my how I almost met Miles Davis story?

PERALTA-REYES: Go for it.

GREENE: My almost met Miles Davis story. Okay, I was living in Washington, DC, and I was living out. When I say living out, it means I was homeless. So I'm walking around Washington DC, and I see a sign saying Miles Davis in concert. And I was about 24 years old, 25. I said, I heard that name before, Miles Davis. I'm not very familiar, but I heard it. I said, I'm gonna go hear him play. I ain't got no money, I can't pay for a ticket, but I don't need no ticket. Because I'm a musician, I don't need a ticket to go see another musician. I always go see the musician. And I'm gonna hang out with them, with the band. I got this long coat on, I got this cool cap on, I got sunglasses on, and I got a horn. I'm going to hang out with the band, that simple. So I goes up to the place, Constitution, I think it was Constitution. Think the name on the building. So the lady that's there ready to take the tickets, I walks up to her with my horn and my sunglasses and my cool hat. And I looked at her and I go. She looks at me she goes.

GREENE: And I go right on backstage. I hang out with The Dirty Dozen Band. Miles Davis is on stage, I'm backstage, I'm checking them out. And I need to mention, ain't nothing ever been the same musically for me from that point that I saw Miles Davis play. I found out it was alright to do it however I wanted to do it. If I want to wear sunglasses when I play that was cool, however I wanted to approach music it was cool to do it. From watching Miles, what he was doing. I said when he comes off stage I'm gonna talk with him. So I'm hanging backstage and something took my attention. And when I turned back around again Miles was just a few feet in front of me smoking a cigarette. And I say, there you go, right there, let me speak to him. I grab my horn, which was leaning against my leg, to make a step toward him. When I

made the step toward him, I looked beside me and standing right beside me was Cicely Tyson, which was his wife back in the day. Right beside me. And I say, "Oh." Let me speak to her first, but I made my move to speak to her. Her body guard just took her away. I looked back around again, Miles was gone. But he did come to me in a dream, he told me to keep doing the way I'm doing, it'll be all right.

EURE: Now we have an online question.

HEDGEPEETH: We do, we have two for you. The first one is what advice would you give aspiring musicians?

GREENE: Practice, same thing Donald Bird told me, you have to practice. You have to be willing to separate yourself, while other people are doing other things. And they're at the party and they're gonna do this and that, if you wanna play music, you gotta give it up. I mean, that depends on how well you wanna play music. For me, it was a total thing. I told myself I'm gonna learn to play this horn if it means playing it on the streets. If it means that, then I'm gonna do that. So for a young musician, you gotta be willing to not go to the party, at least not every time.

HEDGEPEETH: All right, the next one, do you perform weekend events?

GREENE: Weekend events?

HEDGEPEETH: Yes, sir.

GREENE: Every chance I get.

HEDGEPEETH: Okay.

WILLIAMS: Just another question, do you have any music releases or events coming up?

GREENE: Say that again?

WILLIAMS: Do you have any releases-

EURE: You're going to have to speak up.

WILLIAMS: Do you have any music or releases right now coming up, or any events?

GREENE: Well, I have an event Saturday. It's called Myles of Great Hopes. Myles is spelled M-Y-L-E-S. It's a benefit for the people of Kenya, who's putting in wells for different villages, to raise money to dig wells. I think I got the website here for you for those who want to check it. His website, spell that Myles, Y-L-E-S, of great hopes, and you can find out more about it. But it's exciting to hear Myle. And was that two questions or was that one?

WILLIAMS: Yeah, if you have any musical releases coming up?

GREENE: Yeah, I got two of them I'm working on. I was playing on the corner, and I witnessed these police officers spoke real unkindly to probably a homeless guy. I said probably cuz I don't know what his situation really is. We can assume and be real wrong about that. So the way he was speaking to him, asking him did he have permission to beg? Permission to beg. And he really dug that in on him. So I been working on a song, quite a while, now, about that. Kinda inspired me to write a song.

PERALTA-REYES: What are some of your upcoming performance dates? Are you performing anywhere or working on projects?

GREENE: Well, as I said previously, it's Saturday, Saturday here in Raleigh. Actually, the building itself is called the Knights of Columbia, that's the name of the building and it's here in Raleigh. And earlier that same day. Now, I can't tell you exactly what this is, but it's also a, I'm doing something earlier that day. And this is for the people that's gotten killed by police officers here in Raleigh. The event is built around the mothers and their families talking about what happened and what's going on with. In my musical thing I've been doing I've gotten pretty much interested in justice music and being a part of movements like that. So my music is kind of swaying a little bit in the way of activism.

EURE: We are winding it down, I mean 3 o'clock comes really quickly. So what I will say is if you would like to each of you quickly do a closing statement. If not we'll let you do all the closing, Freddy Greene.

GREENE: Close it?

EURE: Yes, tell us, close it. If you wanna give us one more selection that's great, but if not I'll take the words.

HEDGEPEETH: What about if someone wanted to book you could you mention that also?

GREENE: What's that?

HEDGEPEETH: If someone wanted to book you, could you mention that also?

GREENE: Yeah, you can definitely book me.

EURE: Do you have a website?

GREENE: I do, I do. That is freddygreene.com. You gotta spell the Freddy with the D-D-Y, and Greene with the E. freddygreene.com.

EURE: And I really appreciate you coming, and we're gonna try to get you back and maybe you can do a concert at Wake Tech. I think that'd be great. Even if we live stream for the students, so that is my plea. Let's get you back and let you really have a great interactive session with the students. And I'd like to give all of you a great round of applause for coming in and doing so well.

GREENE: Thank you.

EURE: It's on you.

GREENE: Thank you. Well, I tell you, okay. I don't have no mind, I don't have no problem playing my horn. I have problems when I don't play it. I'm gonna do something now that's kinda bluesy, all right? And I stay within a, what do you call that? Like the family, the key center of a sound, like the key center.

[MUSIC]

GREENE: Key center's here.

[MUSIC]

GREENE: Yeah, yeah, we'll go there. But now I'm going to go to a place where the music is going to be moving all around the place. There's no key center so much, it's just a lot of half steps.

[MUSIC]

GREENE: Thank you all.

EURE: Look forward to seeing y'all next month.