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Pete McCann is a bespectacled, clean-cut white guy from America's heartland, not an image normally associated with the new breed of jazz musicians. "I like a lot of different styles of music. I don't like to be pigeonholed into one category," the Eau Claire, Wisconsin native says from New Jersey.

His clean, round tone stands comfortably alongside off-kilter melodies and dissonant shredded chords on his new CD, *Most Folks* (Omnitone Records). "I just wanted to present harder and more interesting music than my previous two CDs," he explains. Expanding the legacy of jazz-rock fusion guitarists Allan Holdsworth and John McLaughlin has come naturally to McCann. Bill Frisell, another maverick jazz guitarist, has influenced McCann's use of reverb and delay.

Guitar, however, is still a bastard child in jazz compared to its icon status in rock. McCann attributes this relative lack of respect to the historical prominence of saxophone, trumpet, piano and clarinet in jazz. But he still sees guitar as an important component in jazz's development. "It's been at the forefront of expanding categories like jazz-rock fusion and the country-sounding jazz of Frisell," he says of guitar while lamenting, "There are still groups of jazz musicians in New York that don't want to have anything to do with guitar."

After stints in various bands, McCann decided, at age 30, to lead his own group and record his own CDs. He recorded *You Remind Me of Someone* and *Parable* on Palmetto Records before signing with Omnitone Records for his new CD. "My tunes have gotten better and my soloing concepts have broadened and expanded," he assures. "I'm not just spewing out notes anymore. I really try to have structure behind what I'm doing."