

## BILL FRISELL

"It's hard to find a more fruitful meditation on American music than in the compositions of guitarist Bill Frisell. Mixing rock and country with jazz and blues, he's found what connects them: improvisation and a sense of play. Unlike other pastichists, who tend to duck passion, Mr. Frisell plays up the pleasure in the music and also takes on another often-avoided subject, tenderness." - [The New York Times](#)



"Frisell is a revered figure among musicians - like Miles Davis and few others, his signature is built from pure sound and inflection; an anti-technique that is instantly identifiable." - [The Philadelphia Inquirer](#)

"I like to have fun when I play and I like comedy - but it's not a conscious thing. I'm basically a pretty shy person and I don't dance or get into fights. But there are all these things inside me that get out when I perform. It's like a real world when I play, where I can do all the things I can't do in real life." - [Bill Frisell to The Village Voice](#)

Over the years, Frisell has contributed to the work of such collaborators as Paul Motian, John Zorn, Elvis Costello, Ginger Baker, The Los Angeles Philharmonic, Suzanne Vega, Loudon Wainwright III, Van Dyke Parks, Vic Chesnutt, Rickie Lee Jones, Ron Sexsmith, Vinicius Cantuaria, Marc Johnson (in "Bass Desires"), Ronald Shannon Jackson and Melvin Gibbs (in "Power Tools"), Marianne Faithful, John Scofield, Jan Garbarek, Lyle Mays, Vernon Reid, Julius Hemphill, Paul Bley, Wayne Horvitz, Hal Willner, Robin Holcomb, Rinde Eckert, The Frankfurt Ballet, film director Gus Van Sant, David Sanborn, David Sylvian, Petra Haden and numerous others, including Bono, Brian Eno, Jon Hassell and Daniel Lanois on the soundtrack for Wim Wenders' film *Million Dollar Hotel*.

This work has established Frisell as one of the most sought-after guitar voices in contemporary music. The breadth of such performing and recording situations is a testament not only to his singular guitar conception, but his musical versatility as well. This, however, is old news by now. In recent years, it is Frisell's role as composer and band leader which has garnered him increasing notoriety.

"For over ten years Bill Frisell has quietly been the most brilliant and unique voice to come along in jazz



guitar since Wes Montgomery. In light of this, it may be easy to overlook the fact that he may also be one of the most promising composers of American music on the current scene." - [Stereophile](#)

"Bill Frisell is the Clark Kent of the electric guitar. Soft-spoken and self-effacing in conversation, he apparently breathes in lungfuls of raw fire when he straps on his (guitar)...His music is not what is typically called jazz, though it turns on improvisation; it's not rock'n roll; and it sure ain't that tired dinosaur called fusion. In one of the biggest leaps of imagination since the Yardbirds and Jimi Hendrix, Frisell coaxes and slams his hovering split-toned ax into shapes of things to come...But besides being a guitar genius, he's turned into a terrific songwriter. Like Monk, Frisell's harmonic and melodic ideas form a succinct, seamless mesh with outer sonic and rhythmic ideas about his ax." - [Spin](#)



"Frisell just has a knack for coaxing the most inviting sounds out of the instrument, and the composition skills to put them in just the right order. Combine a Colorado youth given to soul and C&W with solid jazz training, abetted by a decade-long residency in the heart of NYC's avant scene, multiplied by a fun factor of X (he has scored Buster Keaton's films) and you've got a recipe damn near perfection." - [The Mirror](#)

[Wire](#), the British music publication has observed: "What's really distinctive is Frisell's feel for the shape of songs, for their architecture; it's a virtuosity of deep structure rather than surface." Bill explains this sensibility to [Guitar Player](#), "For me, it's really important to keep the melody going all the time, whether you are actually playing it or not, especially when it's some kind of standard tune or familiar song form. A lot of people play the melody and rush right into their solo, almost with an attitude of 'Whew - that's out of the way, now let's really play!' Then they just burn on chord changes, and it doesn't relate to the song anymore. I like to keep that melody going. When you hear Thelonious Monk's piano playing - or horn players like Ben Webster, Miles Davis and Wayne Shorter - you always hear the melody in there. Sonny Rollins is the classic example of that - I've read that he thinks of the words while he's playing the sax, so the song really means something to him. It's not just an excuse to play a bunch of licks over chord changes."

Much has been made of the uncategorizable nature of Frisell's music and the seamlessness with which his bands have navigated such a variety of styles. "Frisell's pals just happen to be superb musical chameleons, up to every change of gears and genre the guitarist's catch-all music throws at them. The band even comfortably follows the leader

onto Country and Western turf, as Frisell often approximates the whine of a lonely steel guitar." ([Minneapolis Star Tribune](#)). Bill's comments to the same publication: "When I was in Colorado, I never really played that country stuff or even liked it that much, though it was all over the radio. But as I got older, it crept into my music a lot." In fact, the [Chicago Tribune](#) observed that "Frisell possesses not only impressive compositional skills but also a remarkable ability to encompass seemingly antagonistic musical genres." Commenting on his eclectic compositional inclinations, Frisell told [Down Beat](#): "When I write something, it just sort of comes out. I'm not thinking, 'Now I'm going to write a cowboy song'. It just happens, then I usually think about what must have influenced it later. When I sit down to write something in a certain style, it doesn't work. I don't know if that's important or something I need to do, or if it doesn't matter. I don't care; I'm just thankful something comes out sometimes."

This musical kinship with Miles Davis has been cited repeatedly in the music press. [The New Yorker](#) notes: "Bill Frisell plays the guitar like Miles Davis played the trumpet: in the hands of such radical thinkers, their instruments simply become different animals. And, like Davis, Frisell loves to have a lot of legroom when he improvises--the space that terrifies others quickens his blood."

On this subject [Down Beat](#) has noted: "With his respectful if improbable eclecticism and audible ethnic guitar roots, Frisell is the new music's Ry Cooder...His engagingly droll sense of humor is never far from the surface; no one else's persistent dissonances sound so consistently congenial."

Sometimes using delays and distortion and an unmistakably unique touch, Frisell, as [Jazz Times](#) once observed "has an airbrushed attack, a stunning timbral palette and a seemingly innate inability to produce a gratuitous note." [Musician](#) has described his guitar style as "modern in the best sense of the word, straddling the electronic ambience and distortion of contemporary rock and the nuances of touch and harmonic sophistication usually associated with jazz." The guitarist won the 1990 [Down Beat](#) critics' poll.

"The electric guitar sound of the decade - oozing, cloudy enveloping - belongs to jazz renegade Bill Frisell - Like the best artists in any field, Frisell is not a slave to his tools; he's the creator who gives them new validity...His guitar sound is unmistakable - billowing, breathlike, multi-hued, immense at times, almost palpable. Frisell's music is accessible and avant-garde, a lyrical victory of man over machine, of personality over mechanics, of message over mathematics." - [Minneapolis Star Tribune](#)

### **Biography / Recordings:**

Born in Baltimore, Bill Frisell played clarinet throughout his childhood in Denver, Colorado. His interest in guitar began with his exposure to pop music on the radio. Soon, the Chicago Blues became a passion through the work of Otis Rush, B.B. King, Paul Butterfield and Buddy Guy. In high school, he played in bands covering pop and soul classics, James Brown and other dance material. Later, Bill studied music at the

University of Northern Colorado before attending Berklee College of Music in Boston where he studied with John Damian, Herb Pomeroy and Michael Gibbs. In 1978, Frisell moved for a year to Belgium where he concentrated on writing music. In this period, he toured with Michael Gibbs and first recorded with German bassist Eberhard Weber. Bill moved to the New York City area in 1979 and stayed until 1989. He now lives in Seattle.

"When I was 16, I was listening to a lot of surfing music, a lot of English rock. Then I saw Wes Montgomery and somehow that kind of turned me around. Later, Jim Hall made a big impression on me and I took some lessons with him. I suppose I play the kind of harmonic things Jim would play but with a sound that comes from Jimi Hendrix", Frisell told [Wire](#). Bill also lists Paul Motian, Thelonious Monk, Aaron Copland, Bob Dylan, Miles Davis and his teacher, Dale Bruning, as musical influences.



Bill recorded his first two albums as a leader on ECM, both produced by Manfred Eicher. Subdued and lyrical in nature, [In Line](#), the first of the ECM recordings, employed both electric and acoustic guitars in a series of solos (including some overdubbing) and duets with bassist Arild Andersen. Second was [Rambler](#), featuring Kenny Wheeler, Bob Stewart, Jerome Harris and Paul Motian. About [Rambler](#), [Fanfare](#) said: "Bill Frisell has built a little masterpiece here - not just a showcase for his own instrumental creativity (of which there is much in evidence), but a clever and poetic whole."

Frisell's third album and last for ECM, [Lookout For Hope](#), marked the recording debut of The Bill Frisell Band featuring Hank Roberts, Kermit Driscoll and Joey Baron. Produced by Lee Townsend, the album's diverse material - ranging from country swing to reggae, quasi-heavy metal and backbeat rock with a twist to Monk's "Hackensack" - nevertheless possessed the cohesive and unmistakable personality of a working band on to a sound of its own. [High Fidelity](#) called it "the fullest showing of Frisell's ability to date, especially his compositional range." The [Chicago Tribune](#) said, "[Lookout For Hope](#) offers one of the most hopeful signs that contemporary jazz can evolve with dignity, wit and charm."

[Before We Were Born](#), Frisell's debut recording for Nonesuch, featured three musical settings: Peter Scherer and Arto Lindsay produced, co-arranged and performed on three Frisell compositions. "Some Song and Dance", produced by Lee Townsend, is a suite of four pieces performed by Frisell's Band with a saxophone section featuring Julius Hemphill, Billy Drewes and Doug Wieselman. Frisell's "Hard Plains Drifter" is an extended work shaped, produced and arranged by John Zorn and played by the Frisell Band. [The New York Times](#) observed: "By following through on the implications of his unfettered sounds, Mr. Frisell has made his best album."

Frisell's second Nonesuch album, [\*Is That You?\*](#), features nine original Frisell compositions, one by producer Wayne Horvitz and two cover tunes - "Chain of Fools" and "Days of Wine and Roses". With Frisell playing guitars, bass, banjo, ukulele and even clarinet, [\*Is That You?\*](#) demonstrated with great clarity his pan-stylistic, yet strangely unified musical world. [Musician](#) called the album "a very personal vision, tearing down stylistic barriers with delicacy and sudden bursts of emotion."



Frisell's third album for Nonesuch, [\*Where in the World?\*](#), also produced by Wayne Horvitz, was the band's final recording with cellist Hank Roberts. The [Philadelphia Inquirer](#) said: "There is nothing standard about [\*Where in the World?\*](#)...Frisell is not only a master of an unusual guitar-based sonic tapestry, he's one of the few composers capable of writing for an interactive ensemble."

[\*Have a Little Faith\*](#), Frisell's 1992 Nonesuch recording, was something of a tribute album. Here, he interpreted the music of a number of American composers whose music had inspired him - Aaron Copland, Muddy Waters, Bob Dylan, John Hiatt, Sonny Rollins, Stephen Foster, Charles Ives, Victor Young, Madonna and John Philip Sousa. The extent to which Bill has made this music his own demonstrates the completeness of its link to his own compositional approach. For this recording Frisell's Band was augmented by Don Byron (clarinet, bass clarinet) and Guy Klucevsek (accordion) and produced by Wayne Horvitz. The [San Francisco Bay Guardian](#) said, "Frisell treats each piece with typical earnestness and lyricism, breaking into wrenching distortion and stormy group improv only after breathing the original full of a softly glowing life."

[\*This Land\*](#), Frisell's fifth Nonesuch recording, consists of all original material with the band and a horn section of Don Byron (clarinets), Billy Drewes (alto saxophone) and Curtis Fowlkes (trombone). Produced by Lee Townsend, the album readily displays the connection between Frisell's own writing and the composers' work to whom he pays tribute on his previous [\*Have a Little Faith\*](#). From the standpoint of synthesizing his celebrated composing and arranging talents with exuberant improvising and spirited band interaction, it is a landmark recording, which prompted this description in [Rolling Stone](#): "Strange meetings of the mysterious and the earthy, the melancholy and the giddy, make perfect sense by Frisell's deliciously warped way of thinking. The warpage is catching on and not a moment too soon."

In 1994, Frisell recorded a pair of recordings of music that he composed for three silent Buster Keaton films - [\*The High Sign\*](#), [\*One Week\*](#) and [\*Go West\*](#). The band premiered this music along with the films to a spirited and sold-out audience at St. Ann's in Brooklyn in May '93. The pairing displayed a natural affinity between work of both artists. Their works together possess an undeniable sense of adventure and penchant for the unexpected that only enhances the warmth and humanity of both the musical elements and the films themselves. It has proven to be the rare case where the whole truly transcends the sum of its parts. Of the "[\*Go West\*](#)" recording, Billboard noted: "With this set of music for the

classic Buster Keaton film, "[Go West](#)," Bill Frisell has crafted one of his finest, most evocative albums. Evincing his best qualities as both guitarist and composer, he harvests melancholy Americana from deceptively modest, episodic themes. Coloring the scenes with acoustic as well as his trademark electric, Frisell produces strangely cinematic motifs on guitar, and his rhythm cohorts - longtime bassist Kermit Driscoll and drummer Joey Baron - provide abundant narrative drive." Both albums were produced by Lee Townsend.



Frisell's success with the Keaton films has led him to other film-related projects. He scored the music for Gary Larson's "Tales From the Far Side" animated television special and Daniele Luchetti's Italian feature film, "La Scuola." Some of the music from these projects has been adapted and recorded by Frisell on [Quartet](#), Frisell's Nonesuch recording released in April '96.

The formation of the Quartet, with Ron Miles (trumpet), Eyvind Kang (violin) and Curtis Fowlkes (trombone), was a new working band for Frisell, who had worked with the telepathic rhythm combination of Kermit Driscoll and Joey Baron for nearly ten years. Frisell told [Down Beat](#): "It's so different from the traditional guitar-bass-drum thing, even though Joey Baron, Kermit Driscoll and I never played like a typical jazz trio. This group, with violin and brass, can play an orchestral range of sounds. It's gigantic. It's given me a chance to write and arrange in an even bigger way." [Quartet](#), was quickly hailed by critics. [The New York Times](#) declared: "[Quartet](#) may be his masterpiece."

Nonesuch released [Nashville](#) in April of 1997. Recorded in Nashville and produced by Wayne Horvitz with members of Allison Krauss' Union Station band - mandolin player Adam Steffey and banjo player Ron Block - the project also features her brother and Lyle Lovett's bass player Viktor Krauss, dobro great Jerry Douglas, vocalist Robin Holcomb and Pat Bergeson on harmonica. "Comprising acoustic instrumental folk tunes with unpredictable stylistic accents, [Nashville](#) boasts a dreamy, seductive grandeur. The backing mandolin/dobro/bass interplay simmers - Frisell himself picks and strings and most of all floats, laying out liquid tones that settle over the melodies like heat haze on a swampy, swimmerless lake." wrote the [LA Weekly](#). The [Atlanta Journal-Constitution](#) summed it up simply as, "Frisell's nod to Nashville is Americana at its best."

In January of 1998 Frisell's next project [Gone, Just Like A Train](#) came out. On this exceptionally melodic and rhythmically vital instrumental collection of original compositions, Frisell is joined by Viktor Krauss and by Jim Keltner, all star drummer of choice for Bob Dylan, Ry Cooder, T-Bone Burnett, George Harrison, John Lennon and The Traveling Wilburys. [The Rocket](#) in Seattle wrote that "Frisell has managed to pull together an ad hoc super trio of musicians from drastically different pasts, and they manage to assemble a machine of colossal proportions: part skewered jazz, part roadside folk blues, part gritty rock..[Gone](#) presents Frisell at a creative apex. He's integrated a

thoroughly unique understanding of so much American Music. And it's all gift-wrapped in a lean, unimposing trio framework that conveys sheer genius in a million directions. It flies with shining power." Produced by Lee Townsend, the album proved to be one of Frisell's most celebrated and popular to date.

[\*Good Dog, Happy Man\*](#), brims full of Frisell's shimmering original compositions. Here he is reunited with the [\*Gone Just Like a Train\*](#) rhythm section of Viktor Krauss on bass and Jim Keltner on drums and joined by Wayne Horvitz on Hammond B3 organ, multi-instrumentalist/slide guitarist Greg Leisz (known for his work with Joni Mitchell, K.D. Lang, Emmy Lou Harris, Beck and Jimmie Dale Gilmore, among others) plus special guest Ry Cooder on the traditional folk song "Shenendoah". Produced by Lee Townsend, *Good Dog, Happy Man* celebrates Frisell's emergence as a composer who has created a genre unto himself. The Philadelphia Inquirer wrote: "The 12 breathtakingly beautiful originals on [\*Good Dog, Happy Man\*](#) resist every obvious classification. Frisell's been doing the undefinable for years - creating revelatory music from threadbare accompaniment; finding vital contexts for jazz improvisation that are worlds away from bebop; burying shiny nuggets of melody beneath a gauzy lace-like surface. Frisell manages to evoke big worlds with stark single notes and foreboding sustained tones, conjuring a richly textured atmosphere that is both understated and undeniable. No matter what you call it."

"Bill Frisell makes such consistently great records that it would be easy to take the guitarist for granted. That would be sad, since no one refracts age-old Americana through a cutting-edge prism with the warm-hearted, fleet-minded individuality of Frisell. With [\*Good Dog, Happy Man\*](#), he has crafted one of his earthiest essays yet. Backed by an ultra-hip band, Frisell has forged originals whose folky melodies and big-sky grooves make them seem like old friends in snazzy new clothes." - [Billboard](#).

Bill's solo album, [\*Ghost Town\*](#) was called described as "moody, articulate music is a milestone in the career of a true innovator - enchanting as anything he has done and a clear window into his muse" ([CMJ](#)). With producer Lee Townsend, Frisell has created a sonic tapestry that weaves in and out of original material and cover songs, some recorded in multiple layers, others recorded nakedly solo. According to [Billboard](#), "[\*Ghost Town\*](#) sounds like a classic already".

For Frisell's acclaimed CD [\*Blues Dream\*](#), released on Nonesuch in early 2001, the New Quartet of Greg Leisz, David Piltch and Kenny Wollesen is joined by a horn section of Ron Miles (trumpet), Billy Drewes (alto saxophone) and Curtis Fowlkes (trombone). In many ways it represents a culmination of the strands running through many of the recordings in Frisell's catalogue, combining the homespun lyricism of [\*Good Dog, Happy Man\*](#), [\*Gone Just Like a Train\*](#) and [\*Nashville\*](#) with the orchestral timbres of [\*Quartet\*](#) and the expanded tonal palette and harmonic sophistication afforded by a larger group (i.e. [\*The Sweetest Punch\*](#), [\*This Land\*](#) and [\*Before We Were Born\*](#).) Produced by Lee Townsend, it has been described as "A rich, eclectic masterpiece." (Blair Jackson, [Mix Magazine](#)).

The Autumn of 2001 saw the Nonesuch release of [Bill Frisell with Dave Holland and Elvin Jones](#), on which Bill was joined by two jazz legends to interpret a number of the most enduring compositions from his songbook as well as Henry Mancini's "Moon River" and Stephen Foster's "Hard Times" in another Townsend-produced set. "Holland and Jones warm well to the folk-inflected material, complimenting the guitarist's offbeat charm and unerring taste with their muscular authority." [Billboard](#).

[The Willies](#) is Frisell's characteristically inimitable and modern take on bluegrass and country blues with Danny Barnes (from The Bad Livers) on banjo and guitar and Keith Lowe, (known for his work with Fiona Apple, David Sylvian, Kelly Joe Phelps and Wayne Horvitz) on bass. Produced by Lee Townsend and released in June, 2002 on Nonesuch, the material consists of such traditional songs as "Cluck Old Hen", "John Hardy", "Single Girl", "Sugar Baby", "Blackberry Blossom", "Sitting on Top of the World", "Good Night Irene", "Cold, Cold Heart" and a number of Frisell's original compositions. John Cratchley, in [The Wire](#) described it as follows: "This is music that you feel you have known yet you have never heard before, like some treasured memory of an event that hasn't happened yet . - It is firmly rooted in the simplest of musical gestures yet manages to build, intricate layer by intricate layer into a manifestation of cultural timelessness - . This is composition of the highest order masquerading as back-porch rambling."

Frisell's encounters with such Malian musicians as singer and guitarist Boubacar Traore and percussionist Sidiki Camara, who has played with many of Mali's most renowned performers, left him eager to further explore the commonalities of African and American roots musics. His grammy-nominated 2003 Nonesuch release, [The Intercontinentals](#), produced by Lee Townsend, is evidence of those impulses. In late 2001, Frisell assembled an intriguing quartet with Brazilian composer, singer, guitarist and percussionist Vinicius Cantuária, Greek-Macedonian musician Christos Govetas on oud, bouzouki and vocals and Mali's Camara on percussion and vocals. The debut concerts at Seattle's Earshot Festival created quite a stir. Downbeat described the group's music as possessing "fine webs of guitar interlacings, swaying momentum, dense textures and rhythmic urgency." The group was soon expanded to include Greg Leisz (on pedal steel and various slide guitars) and Jenny Scheinman (violin). The material on the album consists of Frisell compositions plus songs by Boubacar Traore, Cantuaria, Gilberto Gil and Govetas. It is an album that combines Frisell's own brand of American roots music and his unmistakable improvisational style with the influences of Brazilian, Greek and Malian sounds. The Washington Post called it, "A remarkable achievement - a hybrid that somehow both respects and transcends the styles involved..... with a sort of earthy, relaxed feeling - it's country music from the global village." [Post](#)

Frisell's 2004 Nonesuch release, [Unspeakable](#), featuring his long-time rhythm section of Tony Scherr and Kenny Wollesen as well as percussionist Don Alias, horn arrangements by Steven Bernstein, and Frisell's string writing for the 858 strings of Jenny Scheinman, Eyvind Kang and Hank Roberts is "a revisiting of an old friendship that stretches back 20 years: a partnership with producer Hal Willner. Taking fragments of obscure vinyl records as a launching point, the duo traverses a landscape that passes, in an almost

hallucinatory way, through myriad styles." - [Billboard](#). The Observer describes it this way: "The brilliant 53-year old guitarist embraces a jazzy kind of post-rock whose most immediate point of reference is the electric Miles Davis. It's a multi-textured, multi-hued disc that never sees Frisell sacrifice his impeccable technique, or neglect the deep structure of his songs, but never sees him forget to have fun either." And the Sunday Independent had this to say about it: [Unspeakable](#) radiates the kind of authority that only absolute confidence in the primacy of melody and feel in music can confer." It won a Grammy award in 2005 for Best Contemporary Jazz recording.

[East/West](#) is a double-live CD featuring Frisell's two working trios. "West" features Bill's trio with Viktor Krauss and Kenny Wollesen and was recorded at Yoshi's in Oakland. "East" features Frisell's other working trio with Tony Scherr and Kenny Wollesen. It was recorded at the Village Vanguard in New York City. [Further East/Further West](#) offers additional material by these two trios available in download format only. Produced by Lee Townsend, [Salon.com](#) described it as follows.

"The two trios are vastly different. In general terms, the Krauss trio works by accumulation and aims to mesmerize, while the Scherr trio operates much closer to traditional jazz... Wollesen, essentially a groove player in the Krauss trio (and a monstrously good one), becomes an interactive, improvising presence in the Scherr trio..... In both settings Frisell is a wonder.... For any skeptics of modern jazz, this should be required listening... one of the best of his career."

His album, [Bill Frisell, Ron Carter, Paul Motian](#) (Nonesuch), a collaboration with two musicians who Bill considers to be true mentors and inspirations, represents a personal milestone for him. [All About Jazz](#) described it as "A gorgeous, restrained meeting of the minds, this recording embodies fine, subtle improvisations from three of today's most iconic players."

[History, Mystery](#), nominated for a Grammy award in Best Instrumental Jazz category and featuring an octet of strings, horns and rhythm section with some of his closest music collaborators, it explores a fuller palette of compositional colors and timbres than any Frisell has previously written for. "The whole album stands as yet another testament to the man's place at the very epicenter of modern American music." - BBC.

The recent collection titled *The Best of Bill Frisell, Vol 1: Folk Songs* is the first in a series of compilations, this one drawn from Frisell's catalog spotlighting his idiosyncratic excursions into country and traditional folk.

[Disfarmer](#) features long-time colleagues Greg Leisz, Jenny Scheinman and Viktor Krauss and was inspired by the photographer Mike Disfarmer. "Frisell's pacing is magnificent, and the album sweeps along with purpose like a gorgeous, spacious epic. It is full of sounds that suggest settings and characters, including the mysterious eccentric who inspired the recording." - [The Houston Chronicle](#)

After 22 years of a fruitful relationship with Nonesuch records dating from the late '80's, Frisell has embarked on an exciting new chapter with the Savoy Label Group. For his first album for the label, [Beautiful Dreamers](#) features a trio Eyvind Kang on viola and Rudy Royston on drums. The material consists of a number of Frisell originals plus interpretations of such classic songs as "It's Nobody's Fault But Mine", "Tea for Two", "Goin' Out of My Head", "Keep on the Sunnyside" and a rousing rendition of Benny Goodman's "Benny's Bugle". "This record doesn't really sound much like jazz as much as compelling, emotionally resonant, genre-free music. Sure, it swings in places, and there's some fiery improvisation. But after decades of trodding such a brave and singular path, maybe Frisell deserves his own genre. How about 'friz'?" [Financial Times](#) (London).

Frisell's second album for Savoy Jazz, [Sign of Life](#), with his 858 Quartet featuring Jenny Scheinman (violin), Eyvind Kang (viola) and Hank Roberts (cello) finds him exploring chamber-group dynamics and interplay on a set of all-Frisell original material in a seamless concoction of all composition and improvisation. "Of the many families of musicians that nourish Frisell's music, the 858 Quartet is among the most satisfying yet least recorded. So make the most of this endlessly varied, gloriously inventive music ... Most of all, it's music retains that classic Frisell feel of melancholic optimism... and in its humility and generosity stands prouder and than music that swaggers and brags." [Jazzwise](#) (UK)

In 2011, Frisell assembled a trusted ensemble consisting of Greg Leisz (guitars), Jenny Scheinman (violin), Tony Scherr (bass) and Kenny Wollesen (drums) to record his take on the classic songs of John Lennon. The project had long been in the works—one could go as far back as the first time he heard the Beatles at the age of 13. Fast forward a few decades and Frisell was asked to put together a performance in honor of Lennon as part of a special event in Paris. The arrangements and interpretations came to fruition with this project on [All We Are Saying...](#) (Savoy Jazz) "This is a glorious hymn to the art of playing together, of which Lennon would surely approve." - [The Independent](#) (London)

### **Collaborative Projects:**

Frisell's collaboration with Brazilian singer-songwriter and multi-instrumentalist Vinicius Cantuaria, [Lágrimas Mexicanas](#) (E-one), has been described as "warm, sexy and visionary" ([All Music Guide](#)). Drawing heavily from Brazilian and Latin rhythms and blending them with contemporary ambient sonic effects, they create a fresh new brew of multi-cultural music.

Frisell's collaborative project with drummer Matt Chamberlain and producers Lee Townsend and Tucker Martine, [Floratone](#) (Blue Note), is a groove-based and textural extravaganza, described by [Guitar Player](#) as "a modern masterpiece and one of the best recordings of 2007".

Frisell's 2003 recording with Petra Haden, the self-titled [\*Petra Haden and Bill Frisell\*](#), is a collection of their interpretations - some sparsely arranged and others more lushly orchestrated - of songs by Elliot Smith, Foo Fighters, Tom Waits, George Gershwin, Henry Mancini, Stevie Wonder, traditional material, as well as songs written by Frisell and Haden. Frisell, who had known and played with Petra's father Charlie Haden for many years, was captivated when he went to see Petra perform in Seattle. The two began talking, occasionally performing together, and eventually they began work on their CD, produced by Lee Townsend. It has been described as "a gem of an album" by the Star Bulletin.

Other projects include a Burt Bacharach - Elvis Costello CD, [\*The Sweetest Punch\*](#), on Decca which features Frisell's arrangements of the same 12 tunes Elvis and Burt recorded together on their pop record for Mercury, *Painted From Memory*. The record was produced by Lee Townsend and features Bill on guitar, Viktor Krauss on bass, Brian Blade on drums and a horn section comprised of Curtis Fowlkes on trombone, Ron Miles on trumpet, Don Byron on clarinet and Billy Drewes on saxophone. Cassandra Wilson and Elvis Costello lend vocals to a couple of tracks.

In September 1998 Nonesuch released a duo recording of jazz standards by Frisell and labelmate pianist Fred Hersch entitled [\*Songs We Know\*](#).

In 2002, Frisell was appointed the musical director of *Century of Song* by artistic director Gerard Mortier and Chief Dramaturg Thomas Woerdehoff for the 2003-2004 seasons at the Ruhr Triennale Arts festival in Germany. The celebrated series of programs featured guest songwriters, interpreters and performers in collaboration with Frisell not only to investigate their own bodies of work, but to bring a fresh perspective to songs and songwriters that have been influential upon their own music, as well. Guests included Elvis Costello, Suzanne Vega, Van Dyke Parks, Loudon Wainwright III, Rickie Lee Jones, Vinicius Cantuaria, Vic Chesnutt, Ron Sexsmith, Jesse Harris, Petra Haden and Marc Ribot with band members being specially selected for each program. With Lee Townsend producing, the concerts took place in former industrial spaces that have been converted into performance venues in the Ruhr region of Northern Germany.



Moviegoers will hear Frisell playing alongside Bono, Brian Eno, Jon Hassell and Daniel Lanois on the soundtrack of Wim Wenders' film, *Million Dollar Hotel*, starring Mel Gibson with a screenplay by Bono. He is also a featured player on the T-Bone Burnett soundtrack for *Walk the Line*, the biographical motion picture about Johnny Cash. In addition, Frisell composed the score and performed on the soundtracks of the following productions:

The independently produced feature film entitled [\*All Hat\*](#) directed by Leonard Farlinger; *Double Lives*, a documentary film directed by Ruby Yang; *American Hollow*, an HBO documentary

special by Rory Kennedy; two Gus Van Sant films - *Finding Forrester* and the remake of *Psycho*; *La Scuola* by Italian filmmaker Daniel Luchetti; Gary Larson's animated television project "Tales From The Far Side." ; and two public radio series - *The DNA Files* and *Stories from the Heart of the Land*.