

Ted Greene Guitar Lesson with Mark Levy

Excerpt: Transcript on Discussion about Ted's V-System
1992, May 4

Ted: Have I ever given you that—I doubt that I have—that---it's a page that---it says something like, "Master Voicings List"?

Mark: No.

Ted: I should give you that 'cause it has a few juicy ones, and...

Mark: ...and one of my questions was---and although, as a study, you know, you have a study: let's say we're choosing inversions, voicings—this is a study and you want to be thorough. And we're starting right from voicing, I guess, 2—is what you call. And...

Ted: Voicing group 2? Is that what you're talking about?

Mark: The small, medium densities.

Ted: Okay, yeah. The way the sounds line up—we'll just try this again real quick: you just end up grouping them by their size, if you feel like it. I felt like it.

Mark: Right.

Ted: The smallest, tightest size—no matter what the quality, be that minor 6, major 7, doesn't matter as long as it's a *4-note chord* with *4 different notes*. If it's all "packed-in" within an octave, that's in the smallest size—all belongs to one voicing group, a group of voicing. They all share one amazingly similar quality, which is that they're all tight sounding.

If you say E minor 6/major 7. [*Ted plays note cluster*] Somebody says, "Well, how about Em6/9?" [*Ted plays note cluster*] They're not that different. Both have a [?] and they both are tight. Somebody says, "Well, how about Em7?" [*Ted plays another note cluster*]. So now it's tropical sounding instead, but it's still—from just a "tightness" point of view—it's identical. It doesn't matter what quality, they all belong to the same group. And if you invert it, then the inversions are all going to be tight too. Right?

If you look for the second tightest group—not the tightest but now the second tightest—that's what in the old page I called "small density." That's voicing group 2. For short VG-2, or even for shorter, just V-2.

Mark: Do you have a paper on that that explains it?

Ted: Oh, that explains it? No, no, because it's too much to.... If I offer up all 14 then you're going to try to practice them all and you're going to be very frustrated because there are 43 rows to learn in each voicing group. That's if they're only on one string set. Some are on more than one string set. So...and last time I checked there was more than one key, so it's "a bit" of information to process!

Mark: Well, okay. Here is my....

Ted: If we do it in order...

Mark: Order. Right. Which is hip, and I understand that. Okay. And I understand the process. I'm seeing this and I want to follow through with this. The question is, or the concern I have, and I'm sure you'll dispel it quickly...

Ted: We hope.

Mark: Yeah. ...is that because, really, I'm living those---that one particular voicing, my ear is hearing just this one type of voicing, generally. I'm just thinking in those terms. Would I limit—should I be concerned that it would narrow my process?

Ted: What would narrow it? To stay in that?

Mark: Just by...because I'm spending so much time, that I don't want to develop bad habits.
Ted: It can't be bad.
Mark: Okay.
Ted: Let's put it this way: the big guy there from Indianapolis [*Wes Montgomery*]: 90% of the chords he played—in order to move around quickly—were in this voicing group 2 [V-2].
Mark: Well, I dig it. I groove it. I groove on it.
Ted: Last time we checked he was a good player! [*they laugh*]
Mark: He played, what, a Standel custom? Huh?
Ted: Somebody said, yeah, there's one picture of him somewhere with a Standel or something.
Mark: Wow!
Ted: Now, how'd you hear that?
Mark: I was reading your book. [*Ted obviously loaned Mark the book, Go Wes.*]
Ted: Oh, okay.
Mark: *Go Wes.* I'd love to get a hold of that.
Ted: So would a lot of us.
Mark: That baby's out of print, huh?
Ted: Oh, that book? If I ever find another store that's willing to stock it I'm gonna buy a ton of them if my budget can afford them and pass them out, because it's a great book. And it's great that there is such a thing, that's the main thing.

[*Getting back to the subject of Voicing Groups, Ted hands Mark a lesson sheet:*]

Ted: Enjoy this. This will be either one of two things, Mark: self-evident as you read and thereby used for a reference or process immediately, if possible. Or, furthering tons of questions. If it does you'll write them down on the back.
Mark: Okay. I see how you've divided them up into groups and the quality of the groups. So anyway, so I shouldn't be concerned about that. Just keep plugging away—voicing group 2.
Ted: If you...you know what? For playing lots of chord passages at a fairly fluid, rapid pace, they're the best. They're literally the best.
Mark: Okay.
Ted: Nothing even close, really. But every other voicing has something about it which makes it charming, except for two or three of the late ones that are really a struggle, but there are a few beauties in there.
Next point?
Mark: That was it as far as that. I don't mind just plugging away as long as I know that the results and the fruits are there.
Ted: Stay with it, man.

[*End of discussion on Voicing Groups*]