

***Beloved Guitar Teacher/Author was 58***

By Oscar Jordan

**A**s a young guitar player in the Seventies I became aware of Ted Greene through his book, *Jazz Guitar: Single Note Soloing Vol 1*. At the time, I was blindly reaching out for anything that could help me evolve as a guitar player. That book was a revelation. It was way over my head, but sobering when I discovered what I had to learn to get around on the guitar. I still have that book. The binding is split and the pages are falling out and yellowed with age. A lot of the concepts are still way over my head, but if anything, that book today is a gentle reminder of how ambitious I was as a teenager. I thought to myself back then, "If I could master all the stuff in this book, I could rule the world!"

Ted Greene had the kind of knowledge that most guitar players only dream of. (Players such as Charlie Hunter, John Pisano, Jay Graydon, and Lee Ritenour consulted him.) I later learned that successfully teaching guitar and inspiring others was a gift even the greatest guitarists do not possess. Greene's book opened up a lot of concepts for me and got me thinking about jazz guitar and the endless possibilities of the guitar.

Greene passed away from a heart attack on Saturday, July 23rd. He was 58 years old. He was a virtuoso guitar player, a highly regarded teacher and an influential author. Wes Montgomery was his favorite guitarist. Greene's knowledge of

jazz, rhythm & blues and obscure guitars was encyclopedic. With his humble soft-spoken demeanor, he never came off like a know-it-all. He contributed as a writer to guitar magazines and became famous for his instructional books: *Chord Chemistry*, *Modern Chord Progressions: Jazz and Classical Voicings for Guitar*, and *Jazz Guitar: Single Note Soloing I and II*. His CD *Solo Guitar*, which was recorded in 1977, was released last year.

Above all, Ted Greene was a beloved teacher to many performers, including guitarist Matt Lee, who became one of his students in 1977 at the age of 17. Like many of the instructor's acolytes, Lee became a longtime friend. "He was a buddy and you could talk with him about everything," says Matt Lee. "We both loved coins and baseball cards. I was going through some problems with my family and I told him about some stuff that was missing. It was my baseball card collection that I left with my father who had passed. Ted felt so bad, he gave me a 1956 baseball card. That's the kind of guy he was. He was all heart. As a teacher he was somehow able to zone in on the central hub of what it is you needed to be aware of. You'd start growing right away. He'd give you the bare element of what you needed to know and you'd start embellishing from there."

Lee recalls how he once had an audition coming up for a rockabilly band, but knew nothing about rockabilly, "I went to Ted and he said, 'What is it that you're trying to do?' When I told him rockabilly he said, 'Oh, how fun! Let me show you this.' He showed me how to play 'Suzy Q.' The pounding thumb on the low E string for the bass and picking the high strings and doing the melody with your fingers. He showed me basic claw-picking. I practiced the dickens out of it for about a week. I went to the audition and got the gig. That was because of Ted. He was so great at seeing where you are as a player and knowing what you could handle. That was his greatest gift.

"Ted knew more about theory, harmony and chords than just about any living human being. He held the master key to all the locks of the musical universe. He was the custodian of that while he was here. As a student you could ask him, 'Where do I go from here?' and he'd have the key to it. Ted was like Yoda and all his students were the Jedi Knights. He was truly a genius. He was Mr. Wizard. He knew so much about music history and all the classical writers. He studied everything. He was a walking encyclopedia. He was a classy guy and sincere as the day is long."

**"Ted was like Yoda and all his students were the Jedi Knights.**

**—Matt Lee**