

Ted Greene – “All About Wes!”

Private guitar lesson with Ted and Mark Levy, October 18, 1993

Transcribed from the audio recording

https://www.tedgreene.com/audio/MarkLevy/41_TedGreeneGuitarLesson_MarkLevy_1993-10-18.mp3

Ted: We’re talking tonight about Wes Montgomery, a hero to many of us for many reasons. The simplest of reasons — if you had to put it into one paragraph or one sentence — is that his music was so wonderful and he was such a stylist; he had such a unique way about music.

On grooving songs, if it was medium-slow he had a relaxed style that became dynamic at any moment he wanted it to through the addition of accelerated delivery rates of notes. If the thing got to be medium-up, he could swing on straight-eighths, real strong with some triplets. On occasion he would decide to quadruple it and play 16ths, at one period in his life where he was doing a lot of up-stroking, too.

If it was really an up-tempo thing — which he seemed to enjoy; he includes them on his albums, early albums, his “Dearly Beloved” on *Boss Guitar*. He goes [Ted sings....] So, on those he’s [Ted demonstrated Wes’ fast soloing...] So, he could definitely excite you in different ways on the groove tunes.

But, especially for most people who plug into him, the grooves that he seems to be strongest on are those where he can be motific because of his octaves (which we’ll get to more on). And when a stylist is also able to be motific that means he can develop a long solo that constantly builds in terms of dynamics. And he was a master at building solos. He could pace it out. Like when he would play against--- even slow tempos: medium-slow like here [Ted taps a tempo], he could just gradually build more and more expressiveness.



There are many angles on Wes. You want to talk these things? You sure?

Mark: Oh, yeah! I’d love to...

Ted: Okay, so one angle is his **textural** aspect. So if you say, “The textures of Wes Montgomery”: his favorite texture is a toss-up between octaves and chords. He loves [single note solo] lines, but you can tell that he’s just extremely fond of those octaves and chords. Because it seems to be that he goes after them after only a few short choruses of lines on a lot of his records. It could be though that the producers said, “Don’t let these cats stretch too long.”

Mark: Don’t they seem to be possibly the high points of his solos?

Ted: I agree. And I think they’re more joyous. They’re like this extreme outpourings of joy sometimes. He’s just grooving like crazy, just going [Ted sings....]. He just develops those motifs with such joy. So yeah, he’s a hard-driving guy. Extremely hard-driving. And that’s another thing: he had so much drive, more than the average great jazz player. He seemed to be on super-intense drive when he wanted to. Not in an overbearing sense. I don’t know how he--- just born with that gift, whatever. Because it never seems to be overbearing....

You never feel like Wes is going to bridge the concept of "good taste" (whatever the hell that means), like he's going to start just banging on the strings real hard.

Mark: Like a subtle roar.

Ted: Yeah, that's a good way. I like it.

So, texture wise he has three main things: lines, octaves, chords. Very seldom but sometimes he resorts to a double-octave texture. Outside octaves, like the bottom and the top string.

Mark: Right, right.

Ted: And in the domain of chords it's mostly 4-note chords when he's grooving hard. Occasionally 3-note chords. Mostly 4 though, 4-part. Let's jump back: when he's playing solo guitar he does very little interspersing of single-note flurries, like Joe Pass does or Art Tatum does; Oscar Peterson does.

Mark: Right.

Ted: He seems to just go for the tune and make sure that he's got a pretty chord at least every few melody notes. He doesn't play a phrase with chords and then go off [with single notes], and then come back. That's not his texture style. So, mainly he's a chordal-stylist when he plays by himself. Big chords. That's where the texture changes, because he uses 6-voice chords, as well as the 4-parts in equal favor. He throws in a lot of 5- and 6-note chords whenever he's by himself. Just a whole lot of them. And his harmonic voice-leading isn't outstandingly stunning, but it's always tasty, and sometimes it's really intriguing where he'll play a [chord] change that nobody else seemed to have thought about a song. So he does modest reharmonization – modest.

Now let's go back to chord work in his soloing. He does have hallmarks: absolute things you can say these are things he relies on over and over because he loves them. One is the *Chord Stream* concept with blocks. Not "melodized streams" like George Van Eps. Demonstration: George might go for F major [Ted demonstrates...]. George is playing lines in chords, especially the top end moving when he wants to disconnect a bunch of the same. In the old days when he was a pick player he did tons and tons and tons of that kind of connecting of: [he demonstrates...] Lot of chromatics in his old records. Much faster, and more crisp than I'm doing right now.

So Wes' concept of chord stream is more just blocks. [he demonstrates...] You recognize it.

Mark: Oh yeah.

Ted: It's a hallmark. And slides. Quite a bit of legitimate half-step – meaning a "time" half-step, as in: [he demonstrates...] where this [the chord approaching from 1/2 below] is full value. He'll use half-steps. Joe Pass does it more. Joe made records that sound just like he is Wes Montgomery, except for not playing a lot of octaves. When he goes to his chords you think it's Wes. If you just came in in the middle; can't tell which guy it is. And Joe's early concept on altered dominants is taken from Wes, best I can tell. This: [he demonstrates an altered dominant lick] that you think of as Joe – a lot of that's right in early Wes.

Mark: Sharp 9?

Ted: Yeah, all that stuff. Exactly. [Ted demonstrates a C7#9#5 chord and the scale: C, Db, D#, E, G#, Bb, C.] I don't hear Wes using this note [Gb] a lot.

Mark: The b5?

Ted: Yeah. But Wes never seems to do it like that. Joe will do it like that: out-of-time. Wes seems to always be doing it in a groove situation. [he demonstrates...]

Wes likes to jump. [melodic octave jumps.] (We're back on the lines now; we'll get back to the chords.) His lines: [he demonstrates lines with jumps....] What else could we say right now? What do we hear? Two things: he loves to deliver notes as a triplet speed, and he loves to play in the low register more than other guitar players.

Mark: Yep. I like it.

Ted: Which gives credence to the idea that maybe he added the octave above the low note, being that his brother was a bass player. I think we talked about that. His brother might have said, "Look, just play these notes Wes. This is the head." Wes would imitate his brother and get used to the low register. And occasionally when the brother was late for a gig he'd sub on bass. Did you ever read that?

Mark: No. That's good.

Ted: Wes used to sub on bass. And he plays one cut on one record where he's playing a 6-string bass guitar: "Moving Along." I think that's the right album.

So Wes' chords. Let's again talk about this, because he has hallmarks. His top notes: he uses a lot of things above the 7th. He'll use 9's a lot. He doesn't use the Lydian note a lot [The #11th.] He's not a real "Lydian guy." He'll use that though for a different function in a different assumed root. Like, maybe as a 13 on another chord, or a 17 [a major 3rd above the 11th] on a dominant. [He demonstrates....]

His top notes on the chords often are either step-wise or 3rd intervals. [He demonstrates....].

Mark: I love that. I'd love to talk about exercises on that baby.

Ted: Have I given you these chord streams?

Mark: No, I don't think so. I want them.

Ted: Eventually I'll give you some pages that I've written up. I can't find it fast enough tonight to get it.

Mark: Alright.

Ted: Remember that Wes has that "Co-minor" concept?

Mark: Yeah, you mean the minor up a fifth? Yeah, I mean, I'm plugged in. That is something that's part of my life. I'm trying to ingrain that.

Ted: He seemed to have invented it, or extrapolated it from the sounds of Debussy, which I think we've mentioned before. So for jazz he seems to have invented it for guitar, literally come up with it out of nowhere.

Mark: Now, do pianists use it?

Ted: That's what I'm thinking, I never hear them do it.

Mark: Really!

Ted: I never hear anybody but Wes or his followers do it. So, in a way I think he kind of [invented it]. I'm not saying it's not buried in some swing arrangement or one little phrase – but no one else seems to have (that I've ever heard) as a hallmark of their style. Whereas Wes took it and made it as one of his cornerstones.

Mark: Yeah, it's interesting that you have with that minor sound that the 7th is actually the 11th of the dominant.

Ted: Yeah. Many times people have said – if they're intelligent and study hard enough – that it's as if you're going suspended dominant to a regular one, over and over. Or maybe the opposite, where you hit the dominant and then go backwards and hit the sus.

Mark: What are pianists doing, like if you work that way?

Ted: Well, then it's a different effect. When you hear a piano player do this [he demonstrates...] then it's not the same vibe. It's in the same color area of life, but the expression of texture of hearing blocks move around.

Mark: I hear more of an organist doing something like that.

Ted: You know, there might be some organ cats that did this as Wes would do it, but...

Mark: But whatever. It's cool for guitar.

Ted: Yeah. So, you take G7's or G6's occasionally, G9's...[he demonstrates...] G9's with roots. [he plays some 4th chord voicings.] Occasionally mix in that sound with it just for the hell of it. This is an all-purpose voicing. It gives you an instant late '50's jazz vibe. It's kind of "next door." So, for instance, a phrase like that is three different systematic inversions of Dm7, Dm9 to G7 (simple G7), you can make it G9 if you want.

Mark: Do you ever spice up the dominant?

Ted: Not when he uses it this way. I shouldn't say never because there'll be some instance. But I don't think of it as his sound.

So, another cornerstone of his sound is to take chords and insert their own Five dominant 7b9 (V7b9).

Mark: Now, you said that---what was that last? Up a fifth; a flat-9---dominant b9 up a fifth?

Ted: Yes. Like if you take C major, 6, or 6/9, or a major 9, another C major without a major 7. C6/9, C major7. Now we're going to add---we're going to do "directional streams" with added Five (V) inserts. [He demonstrates....]

Mark: Oh, I know those.

Ted: You worked it out, right?

Mark: Yeah.

Ted: Well, that's a Wes thing. [he demonstrates....]

Mark: Oh, yes! I like that.

Ted: He doesn't use that particular soprano.

Mark: I guess maybe I don't phrase it like that.

Ted: When you play two and two, as in [he demonstrates....]

Mark: That's nice. I would like to be able to do that.

Ted: Two and two this way....[he demonstrates....]

Mark: These are little variations that I probably---I don't systematically break up, you see. That's great!

Ted: This thing...[he demonstrates....]. I just went in relative minor, a half-step above the Two dominant (II7); half-step above the Five (V).

Mark: Nice.

Ted: And one of Wes' favorites... He and Barney Kessel like this chord. The tension is remarkable. You've got....[he plays a dominant 13b9#11 chord]

Mark: What was that? A flat-9?

Ted: [Ted plays] This is so different. Now you can hear how dissonant. In our century we've lost the concept of how dissonant we are until we do things like that. When you know these are the right bass notes — "right," whatever that means, "old style right" — and suddenly you go: [Ted plays a dissonant sounding bass note]...and we're using that as a chord. It sounds so dissonant at first, you can tell. In fact, without the flat 7 this is not acceptable to most of our ears. We need that b7.

I found recently the more I study it, the more carefully I scrutinize: b7 is the "great leveler." It makes all these other dissonances come into line and be workable.

Mark: Interesting!

Ted: It softens it up just enough so we end up---. I mean---. I use this example sometimes — you'll appreciate it: [Ted plays reharmonized version of "I Love Lucy" theme song]

Mark: Yeah...da, da, da, da, da, da, da, da. "Lucy." "I Love Lucy."

Ted: Right. Here's the same thing up in F. [He demonstrates]. I mean, it's kind of a nice dissonance. Same thing without the b7: [he plays]

Mark: What sound it? Is that a b9b5?

Ted: It's a 13 on top, and there is a b9, and there is a b5. But when those tones are together, we don't call that thing a b5...

Mark: Sharp 11.

Ted: There you go.

Mark: Really? With a b9 you call it a #11?

Ted: Think about it. You have 9, 11, and 13. That's easier to work with.

Mark: Right. Okay.

Ted: And if one of them happens to be sharp and one's flat, so be it. Just the idea that you have 7, 9, 11, 13. The brain likes that. So if it's a lowered 7 and lowered 9 and a raised 11 and a 13, we can learn to live with that. You can put a major 3rd in there. [Ted plays C13b9#11/E: E, Bb, Db, F#, A.]

Mark: You like that on the Five (V)?

Ted: I think it's outstanding for "pungent dissonance." Because this is pungent [he plays chord], and that's real pungent [he plays different chord].

This is a minor thing, right? [He demonstrates F#m – C#7 – F#m.] So if somebody goes [he plays F#m/Bb] you can tell how...[he plays an F#7#9 chord with a bass run]...we've accepted these sounds, you know? Somebody puts that note in the bass [C] and you go: [he plays the "I Love Lucy" passage again, which ends on the C13b9#11 chord]. I mean, it's "jazz city" there. That's a pungent dissonance.

A lot of people say, "Oh yeah, I like that chord," and they just toss it off like it's nothing. They've forgotten how dissonant it really is.

Mark: It truly is.

Ted: You can tell when you compare it to the [F#m] triad upstairs. It's fun, man. I just can't get over all this stuff.

So yeah, Wes likes to do all those "insert fives." If we're in F we do it this way: [he demonstrates...].

Mark: So what...Okay. How to practice that?

Ted: Well, you just start going directionally with inserts, and do as you said, some of those breaking up thing, [melodic] patterns. [he plays] These are some ascending ones that we didn't do before.

Mark: Do twos, threes...

Ted: You'll be amazed. You'll find some real friendly sounds as you just.... You already heard some tonight.

Mark: I've already put some, some of that stuff, in songs.

Ted: You can skip string sets. That makes it easier to leap. Or you can "cross." I used the wrong word. You can cross strings. [he continues to play examples]. Some day I'll give you papers on all this, but I want to see what you do on your own.

Mark: Okay, can I hold you to the papers but later on?

Ted: As soon as my V-2.... I've got so many stacks of V-2's that I can't. I mean, if you gave me a half hour I could find it, but I'm just....

Mark: No, I understand. It's nice to have. It's for reference.

Ted: I don't blame you, man. That's one of my plans: just catch up on all being a guitar teacher: just know where everything is; what works for what person. So, sorry about that.

Mark: Okay. That's okay. So that I'm definitely into.

Ted: Take streams of 4 forms and 5 forms and resolve. [he demonstrates....]

Mark: Wes would use a chord stream on a minor?

Ted: Oh yeah. [he demonstrates... then they talk briefly about Wes' "Bumping on Sunset"]

Mark: In certain degrees, does he [Wes] have certain sounds that he likes on certain degrees?

Ted: Yes, he surely does. That's a very wonderful question. Let's take all families: For major he certainly loves the I and the IV. He certainly is not afraid of a borrowed major 7 type – a major 9 or whatever – if the prior chord seems to suggest itself as a V, pulling you in there. Like here's one of his very favorites: bVI. [Ted demonstrates]. He just likes the bVI. So when he wrote....[he plays]

Mark: "West Coast Blues"?

Ted: There's one of those cases: bvi minor – bII. It takes time to learn to hear the key center as all being there – as not changing keys. It's so easy to think, "change of key." But that would mean that this is really in that key....and it's not; it's all in Bb. So, you do better for your ears by thinking: I – bvii – bIII – bVI – bII – I. Which is a take-off on this progression: I – bIII – bVI – bII7 – I. So his lines... [he demonstrates]. Volume – volume difference.

Mark: All with the thumb? He never used...

Ted: All thumb.

Mark: See, I don't play that way. I do a lot thumb, but mostly....

Ted: It's the only way to get his sound right. It really is. If you try to do it this way, like on the octaves, if you try pinch them, it's a nice sound, it really is. It's very clean and focused. But you don't get that [he demonstrates the octaves thumb brush]. It's like a little drum. [Ted plays single-note lines and describes the progression he's outlining.]

Mark: Flat two right there?

Ted: Sure was. Flat three – flat six –

Mark: Do you use that #11 on the bII?

Ted: Oh yeah. He loves that sound.

Mark: Yeah. I love that too.

Ted: So yeah, majors appear on I, IV, bVI. Not much bIII major for that man, from what I can remember. Some bII Lydians. Some. He's not like "Lucy in the Sky" John Lennon using IIadd9. I don't hear that sound in Wes. I just don't associate it with him.

So, he's fairly sparse in the major territory. Dominant: he plays all 12 dominants. He uses all 12.

Mark: Flat-Five, sharp-Five, flat-nine, sharp-nine....

Ted: Everywhere, everywhere. I mean he uses all 12 degrees.

Mark: Okay. On all 12 degrees he plays.

Ted: He plays dominants on all 12 degrees. On those as we've discussed before, there's certain ones that love to have alters. Do you remember ever discussing? Or was it too many years ago?

Mark: I think it was a long time ago. I could sort of get some certain things, like I think I could...

Ted: Overtone dominants work great on everything except for — and they'll even work on these in exceptional cases, but generally stay away from them on: III, and VII, and be careful on V.

Mark: Okay.

Ted: When you use them on VI, have in your mind the sound of the 9th of the VI chord, which is the Leading Tone of the home key. In the old days they used the 9th chord, and it was real traditional. As in [he demonstrates] – I'm in C, with a C major, [he then plays A9] A real sweet, pretty note. With a A9. Can you see?

Mark: Yep. That's going to be a VI.

Ted: It is. It's an unaltered VI7. It's very tranquil and sweet.

Mark: Yeah. Yes.

Ted: [Ted now plays an altered VI7 (A7#5#9 and b9).] Later, jazz players started doing more of that. That's become so much the American way, from all the young kids learning jazz in this country for the last 25 years. And all the veterans seeming to favor that, that you don't hear this sound anymore in today's music. But you do hear an updated version of it if you're really a lover, a connoisseur of harmony, and you study it carefully. You find out that certain things work there on the VI, like Overtone dominants with more color in them.

Mark: Mmmm.

Ted: If you go... Let's see – a song that would [demonstrate]. You've heard "Pennies from Heaven?"

Mark: I think so.

Ted: [Ted plays and hums melody] Right here.....[he plays an A13#11 on the 5th measure from the end]

Mark: Beautiful!

Ted: It is, man. I'm really surprised by how pretty that can sound.

Mark: That's a 9 with a sharp 11?

Ted: 13#11. It's voiced: A7: 13 is hiding on string 2.

Mark: I see.

Ted: The 9 is up above it. The #11 is in the 3rd string. [low to high: G, C#, D#, F#, B] So, it's: [Dm7 – Fmaj7 – F#m7b5 – Fmin-maj7 – Fm7 – Cmaj9 (or Em7) – A13#11 – Dm7 – G7 – C6/9]

ii – IV – #iv half-diminished – iv minor-major7 – ivm7 (four distinct colors you can get in there if you like.) – I (there's our I and iii minor bit again) – kind of a "Take 6" chord, if you heard them a lot. Heard that group yet?

Mark: I haven't heard them a lot, no.

Ted: You're going to go crazy, man. They're the best.

Mark: We've talked about it.

Ted: They're going to put you on your best behavior for months! It's so good! It's nourishment. So, this song ends: "Pennies from heaven for you and me." It's a Steve Martin film. It's very off-beat musical called "Pennies from Heaven."

So, things we don't hear in Wes Montgomery that we love in music would make a huge list. Maybe 500 things. He's not---his palate is small, but what he does with it is fine and wonderful.

Harmony-wise, what else can I tell you, man? He's going to play altered dominants on any degree where it pulls in by a fourth to the next chord. You know, like, if you're on C7 going toward some kind of F?

Mark: Right.

Ted: He loves to throw in altered dominants. Just loves it!

Mark: Just the #5 for the b5 or what?

Ted: Well, there are a lot of altered dominants, but you can list them into categories. He doesn't do that [Ted plays C7#9 and then moves the whole chord form down in half-steps] I don't ever hear him doing what Kenny Burrell does. Kenny Burrell plays "White Christmas" and goes....[he demonstrates] But I bet you when Wes heard him do that, if he heard that record, he went, "Wow, that's a nice use of that chord!" He doesn't seem to play regular old #9's that much. In fact, most guitar players who play jazz don't.

Mark: That's a tough one to handle, right there.

Ted: Does that sound too weird for you?

Mark: No, it doesn't sound too weird. But I notice when I play it there are certain instances where it really works, and others that I don't feel it does.

Ted: It's getting to be that time of year when you could play every Christmas carol a little jazzy. [He demonstrates and discusses the changes...] Now it should be major. Actually, you can sneak in a little "borrowed major" Eb. Ab, G11, and altered.

Mark: And your key was in C?

Ted: Yeah.

Mark: And you were doing a Gb and an Ab?

Ted: I went Eb (I love a bIII in C), bVI too (Ab). I was expanding the major.

Mark: That's something I need to increase is....

Ted: Just go with the first big three: bIII, bVI, and bVII. Just sneak them in all over the place.

Mark: Right. I tried that this week.

Ted: And? Okay, we've been talking about it for a while.

Mark: The standard one of having it with the root in the bass, you know, that's pretty cool. We know that Wes. It sounds good. But I've been trying to work with the other inversions, and getting mixed results.

Ted: I don't follow what you said. I heard every word clearly. The forms are the forms. Whether they're on I or, you know, major 7s. Inversions. They just exist. You mean trying to utilize those sounds on the....?

Mark: And make it musical.

Ted: Put them in songs. That way you'll get that first-hand experience. Like what we just did on the Christmas stuff.

Mark: Because you did Eb, but the first inversion.

Ted: Sure. I didn't have to. I could have done it in second inversion. I could have even done root in bass. [he demonstrates....]

Mark: Okay.

Ted: That was Am7 – D13 – D7b9 – new key: this becomes a Two chord. Pivots: it becomes a ii (Am7) – V (D7) – I (Gmaj7) – ii (Am7) – iii (Bm7) – IV (Cmaj7) – I (G/D) – V (D7) – it's supposed to go [to I (C/D)]. It can go: (Ebmaj7)

Mark: bVI?

Ted: bIII. (Ebmaj7: Eb, D, Eb, G)

Mark: bIII, right. Okay.

Ted: [Ted plays various inversions of Ebmaj7.] I like those 5th in the bass when I'm by myself.

I got to back up two or three...I went off on the Christmas thing; I thought it would be a good [demonstration]. [Ted talks to himself here:] Don't tell me, don't tell me....altered dominant. Yes.

Altered dominants consist of groupings: #5's sound natural to the ear. You don't have problems with those. [Ted plays G7#5 to Cmaj9] If you're going to alter it [the dominant chord], they sound normal. If we add a b9, it still sounds normal. If we add a #9, sounds normal. If you add the natural 9, there better be a good reason because that note [the A note of the G9#5 chord] is less normal than the altered 9's on the V.

Ray [Charles] and Joe Pass know because they go: [he demonstrates a blues lick using G9#5 to C9, then C9 to F7, etc.] It's just a sweet sound, an altered V chord. [He continues....] That was iii, Lenny Breau style: the melody, then the bass, then the inside notes, while this is still ringing. Comp and sustain. Comp, meaning just let go of it. A9 while that's still ringing. Very Lenny-ish, that texture. You don't hear Wes do it. You don't hear GV [George Van Eps] do it. No guitar player before Lenny did it. Lenny just put that piano texture on the map.

Back to Wes, though. So, he's got all these [#5 dominant sounds] grouped in his mind. You can hear him. If you say, "How about the b5? Well, that's a more pungent note. We notice them when they're on the top especially. When you add an altered 9, a natural 9, #9, even the root, b7, 13 – these are all great top notes. But this note [the b5] take over the shading. It's so powerful. Kind of like what that sus4 does to a dominant. [Ted plays a C7sus chord.] No matter what we put over this (within limits of sanity) it's subservient to the fact that this note [F, the 4th or 11th] is in the chord now, coloring every one. The top notes are just little "window dressing."

Say, "We'll, that's a 11th chord, and that's an 11th with a 17; that's a 13 with an 11." Doesn't change. You'd think all those would sound drastically different, but they don't. They all sound like variations on, "frosting" on this big, big, big cake. I mean, it just has so much influence. The frosting is a second thought, or an afterthought, or less important.

So, the natural 9 and the raised 5 is completely different from the others. When you voice those from the 5th string root.... Let's say we're in G now. And you put b9 [on the V chord, or C7b9], we know that people associate #9 with b9. We all do it. They sound like they're friends. We could put raised 5 on top of either of those.... [he demonstrates] Those are pretty similar.

Mark: I gotcha on that one.

Ted: A b5 again is more pungent. It jumps out differently than the other do.

Mark: Does it want to be sort of an appoggiatura sound?

Ted: Yeah, it does. Either down or especially up in jazz. It loves to come up. When guys go...[he plays Am9 (B on top) to D7b9b5 (Ab on top) to Gmaj9 (A on top) and other examples.]

So, Wes has got all that stored away. He uses all those chords. He even occasionally will use a raised 9 with the b5, but less than the other three.

When you say 13b9, that's real diatonic, and real smooth and easy and pretty.

Mark: 13b9 on any degree?

Ted: Watch: "Misty" key of G: Am7 (with the melody way up high) – D13 (b9 with a 13) to [G major 9]

Mark: Yes.

Ted: The melody if you never heard "Misty" could probably go...[he demonstrates]. That's a song called "Poinciana"

Mark: I used to play that song.

Ted: "Ebbtide" just like "Misty" [he demonstrates].

13b9's to Wes often involve not playing the root. He likes those little dark ones, instead of... He likes both. 13#9 I don't hear him using. I don't hear almost any guitar player. I hear big bands use it. I just don't know any guitar players that made a career out of it. Barney Kessel and Tal Farlow used the wildest chords at one point, because they both played at least two strings on demand with their thumb. So they have chords like that, and they can use them.

Mark: Wow.

Ted: But that's another era. Most of us aren't as influenced by their chord style as Wes. He just kind of took over for our ears on how to play chords. And Lenny [Breau] for the other way. And George Van Eps for the solo guitar way. Between the three of them, you just get three massively different approaches to textures, and voicings, and general approach; rhythmically, and everything – it's different, between those three giants. I keep them all separate in my mind. I know that they're all tremendously easy to love at their best, and they're all doing completely different things. It's incredible!

If you listen to a 9#5 down here [he plays D9#5, voiced D, F#, C, E, A#] that's pretty noticeably different than the other boys [he plays D9#5 to G6] Because you feel this [E and A#] like it almost has a 4-7 effect. Again, Ray [Charles] is right in there with the "pack," hunting

that chord down, bring it home for the princess to enjoy. [Ted plays some blues licks using 9#5 chords]. That's how Ray's big bands in the old days, he'd write all these things. [He demonstrates....] A little comping with a lot of bass. I mean, he's really a master of that kind of phrasing. Ray's got a lot of that in his old music. You've got that "Genius + Soul = Jazz" album?

Mark: Yes!

Ted: Yeah, there's a lot of that on that album. Whew! Ray! I wish I could catch all of his stuff, man. He's harder than Wes to catch, man.

Mark: Why is that? Rhythmically?

Ted: Piano. Piano. That stuff is so ferocious. The subtleties of what he's doing in this slurring way — wowie!

In the altered dominant arena, you have suspended types with lowered 9's — that's a unique sound too. Now we come over to something that Wes Montgomery is fond of: he's one of the only guitar players to play sounds like that, that I've ever heard. That's A11 (key of D): he's got A11 with a b9. [A, G, Bb, D, A] There's the 11; there's the b9. So here's a tune [Ted demonstrate using the A11b9 chord] ...[end of tape side 1] So, expect a blue tone on occasion.

Here's a real unusual chord you never see in the charts: A11#5. [A, G, B, D, E#] I'm putting it on A in case you want to use the open strings. Where might you use that? [Ted plays some blues using the A11#5 chord]. It's got a blues sound because of that [#5].

Mark: It sure does.

Ted: Instead of... [he plays a A13sus chord]. "Milestones" That's that other vibe. So...[C13sus] not [C11#5].

Don't look for that in Wes Montgomery, that 11#5.

So, that about---for now, that's about all about altered dominants. He uses them on so many degrees. Again, if the next chord is a fourth higher, expect---don't be surprised if he's using them.

Mark: Rhythmically, how does he put that in? Is it like, an off-beat that he throws that stuff....?

Ted: He might push it in the last half of a bar, or he just plays the whole bar of it. Again, for songs, what was that song we were just doing?... "White Christmas." Let's do "Rudolf the Red-Nosed Reindeer" because that's normally....[he demonstrates C – G7 – Dm7 – G7 – C. Or F – G – C.] If you don't know a thing about harmony except a few "campfire" chords.

Rhythmically, if you hear [he plays the first phrase of the melody] There could have already been...[he plays a reharmonization] There could have been an approach chord in there. That's a tough thing: to make approach chords sound good, because it kills off a lot of V chords, because it's the sus now.

Mark: Right.

Ted: It's still pretty and musical, but it won't allow you to be [he plays a G7#9#5 chord]...like that for instance, you know, because of the melody. So if Wes were playing it...[he plays...] No, he wouldn't do that. What would he do? He's not going to go... [he demonstrates] Who'd do that of the three guys I mentioned? [he plays the bIII, bVI, and bVII].

Mark: Lenny Breau?

Ted: Yeah. He's got such a cool sound. So Wes might be...[he experiments....] What the hell would he do? I can't hear him playing this song. He's not going to bounce the bass. George might. But George doesn't do that Erroll Garner playing behind the beat. I can't hear those fellows playing it. Only Lenny out of the three big guys.

Mark: So you feel those are the three fairly large pillars of the jazz guitar?

Ted: I do, man. I'm not disallowing Pat Metheny for instance, who is certainly a huge influential stylist. And John Scofield, while there's only a few guys like that. But just I guess, more towards the main stream of jazz.

Mark: What about Jim Hall?

Ted: No, because---. I love what Jim has become. He's even better than he ever was in his career I think now. He's getting a much better tone. But I don't think he's an innovator the way Lenny was a new thing. And Jim is very close to Lenny in his concepts, sometimes – the texture. [He] off-sets the chords and the lines.

Mark: Right, right.

Ted: But no, with all due respect, he's not quit---. Lenny sounds like Bill Evans, and very few---. I heard Lorne Lofsky in Canada at one time — I used to hear about him — that he did [sound like Bill Evans], but nobody else seemed to. On a good day I can sound like Lenny if I try real hard. That means I'm trying to sound--I'm second-generation Bill Evans. I'm getting Lenny's version of Bill. But I know I'm playing a style that I wouldn't be playing if it weren't for Lenny.

Mark: You were influenced a lot by him then?

Ted: Oh gosh! I never realized it until I started playing more like him. For many years I didn't play at all like Lenny. All I did was just the harmonics, and everything else I didn't do at all. Much more, just something else, there it was. But. Like that tape we played – it doesn't sound at all like Lenny Breau. But now I tend to---I want to play like piano, it just sounds fun. You don't have to walk the bass to play by yourself. I used to always want to hear that bass. But when you do get it back it's nice. [Ted continues to play portions of "Rudolph the Red-nosed Reindeer" like Lenny might have.]

What would George Van Eps do there? Gosh, I cannot project. [he experiments] He'd have big chords. Lenny might just go...[he demonstrates]

Mark: He liked the tritone?

Ted: Yeah. [Ted continues with "Rudolph" in Lenny style.] You know who plays like this? Mose Allison. Have you heard him play?

Mark: Yes.

Ted: Oscar Peterson. This change [Ted demonstrates "Rudolph" with Oscar Peterson type reharmonizations.] You have to speed up somewhere. [continues playing...] Two minor [ii], half-step about the V, half-step the I.

Mark: That's nice.

Ted: Contrary motion. Do you hear that little line?

Mark: Yes.

Ted: If your contrary motion can involve perfect intervals that are same notes in the chord, that's usually a feast for the ear; it gives it more to listen for. [he demonstrates]

Mark: How can we---can we create any exercises working with that? Or dealing with...?

Ted: You have to decide on root motion... I mean, we're off the Wes subject now for a little while. I'm going to come back to the Wes thing with octaves. You and I are not good candidates for staying on one thing. It's me. It's really not you, and you go right with me.... But we should pursue this a little bit. If you work on these and decide, "Okay, what are the cool jazz changes I want to hear?" You got to do a lot of experiments to come up with fundamental changes that you like that aren't too fancy, but aren't too lame either. Maybe you go...[he demonstrates] Instead of ii-V, that was iv-iii-ii-bii-I.

Mark: That's good.

Ted: It's not really reharmonization in the maximum sense, because we're keeping fairly standard things going on.

Mark: Right.

Ted: We're more like adding a lot of chords. Where it would just stay on C, we're going C-G7-C-G7-C-A7-Dm. We're adding the A7 to Dm. Whereas the song....[he demonstrates....] C-G7, there's a G7 at that point, so that's a chord substitution. But really not, because we're just pushing the G7's coming up next. We've just bumped the G7 down, put Dm in front of it, A7 in front of it. You have to hear by experiment, by going [he demonstrates....] You might say....there's G7, that's great, sounds like jazz, especially if you phrase it cool. I'd say, "Can you hear anything else harmonically that could go there?" And you might say, "I use the Dm7 approach to G. Now we're going to use the A7 to approach it." A7 – Dm. And use an E-something in front of that. [he plays....] Now it's getting too busy. I didn't like the way it sounded as much, so I cut back.

Mark: I need more work on this a lot.

Ted: A lot of trial and error, but you understand how it [works].

Mark: Yep.

Ted: It's back-cycling to create a frontward cycle to the ear when it's down to C... C – A7 – Dm7 is acceptable (it could be b5) – G7. "Poor Rudolph" a little sad note for Rudolph. Flat-5's do that. Instead of going ii-V. I want to stress again, that that could be very jazzy if you....it's in the phrasing. But if you're hungry for more harmony, so you back up and play its own V. Like "Body and Soul."

Mark: Oh, I see.

Ted: [he demonstrates] Then we came forward instead of ii-V twice. Maybe you go [he plays bass root movement of E to A to D...] I don't hear that as working. I'm going to try.... [he experiments] The reason it doesn't work is---

Mark: The melody?

Ted: Yeah. So I'll try it with a better voicing. [he experiments....] It actually did work: E7 (strange E7: E13b9) – Am – A7 – Dm – Ab to G7 real fast [Ab6/9 – G13]. You could get....[he sings 8th notes] You could have that many chords. You don't need that much activity.

Mark: No. But for an exercise.

Ted: Yeah, but the exercises should be what you're going to play on the gig. We don't need [8th-note chords]. There'll be plenty of places where it will sound right, where the melody isn't so frantic. "Misty," the bridge: [he demonstrates....] So, you know, a lot of changes.

Mark: I like that.

Ted: I do too. When it's right it's really right.

Mark: Yeah, it's beautiful!

Ted: Yeah. You have to find the right tunes, with the right spots.

Mark: The ability to — and that's what I need to work more on — the ability to make a decision when to go, like, diatonically up the scale, or back-cycling.

Ted: That's right. But you know from trial and error, you'll hear it eventually. When I say, "No, I don't want that," it's because either after the fact or right before I'd start to play it, I'd say, "No, no, no. I'm hearing this." You do hear it after a while.

Diatonic harmony is rich and warm and sweet and very warm-hearted. It speaks of love of something, you know, in a major key. It's real warm. It's not corny if you voice it rich. It's just very warm.

So, when they go [he plays "Rudolph" with diatonic harmony] ...only one non-diatonic chord; that'd be A7 before the Dm. All those others were just right up the scale. I came back down after three degrees. I'm going to go higher this time. [he demonstrates: Cmaj7 – Dm7 – Em7 – Fmaj7 – C/G – Cdim.maj7/G – Dm9/G – G7/F.] Just to change it at that point. That was diminished with a pedal tone.

Mark: Another exercises that I need to work on.

Ted: But you've already had a paper on it and everything. Do you need to hear diminished?

Mark: No.

Ted: Remember we were on those exercises where Mark was "Mr. D."? [Ted demonstrates]

Mark: Oh, yes, that one. I know it.

Ted: Did I not give you a paper on "Learning to Hear Diminished" at the time?

Mark: I think so, yes.

Ted: It had some---it ended up with some huge Bill Evans pedal tone diminished chords?

Mark: Yes, yes, yes.

Ted: So, I just put one of those in here. If you work on it over and over, it becomes part of your inner hearing. Just like you can hear [he plays an E7#9] If someone says "E," right before you touch the strings you can hear the [he sings G, G, E, D, E]

Mark: It's just breakthroughs. It's like that minor to dominant relationship: when I hooked into that. That is "hooked in." I hear that now. I play that. It's like part of my life. And I guess what I'm struggling right now, maybe because I'm not playing as much as I want, or what, to make that next breakthrough. Does it happen like that, Ted?

Ted: Yes, it does. It does for me. It really does.

Mark: You know, plateaus.

Ted: Yeah, all the time.

Mark: To me I can see that as a plateau. When I discover that, and when you turned me on to that, and I got that into my sound – then it was like, "Whoa! I'm up another level. I can hear it." I started playing single lines hearing it. You know what I mean?

Ted: Yes.

Mark: And I'm still right there.

Ted: Maybe something---if you put in the effort, Nature has a way (She doesn't withhold for long), She'll show you something grace there and give you something new in rewards.

So, we're saying: take some of those turnarounds out of *Modern Chord Progressions*. And say this is one of your favorites (one of my favorites) to hear the melodies go: [G, E, G, D] with hip chords.

Mark: I do love---it seems I really get turned on by the rich low sonorities with the melody up high

Ted: I love that too.

Mark: That's real cool.

Ted: That's hard to get the melody here, obviously in this case. Within reason. The thing is: if all your chords have the huge sound, you can't do long arrangement, usually, on guitar. Because if that's your style, what are you going to do on the next tune? And the next, and the next?

Mark: Right, right.

Ted: It's too much, man. It's like massive scoops of ice cream until finally a person is sick. In our case finally they go home early. You got to save this [these huge sounding chords] for its maximum impact. One reason you liked these a few moments ago is because I withheld them from the party for a while.

Mark: Right.

Ted: So, you have to figure out.... [he demonstrates "Rudolph" with small chords]... I mean, this is like calling Rudolph's sisters, man, and they're all sad 'cause he don't get to go with Santa. They're young. They're like 6 and 7. "Well, he's home with us. We're knitting."

Mark: Then you got Rudolph's big uncle coming down right off the bar.

Ted: Well, it's not time yet for the big uncle.

Mark: Rudolph's big uncle Ralph.

Ted: I like it! That's very good, Mark. Contributing. [he continues playing]

Mark: The kids are in bed, okay. Now Mom is like brushing her coat before bed.

Ted: Momma reindeer. Checking the antlers out making sure they're hygienically sound.

Mark: Then there's a knock on the door, and here comes Ralph.

Ted: So, there's the time to get...[Ted now adds a walking bass line with some bluesy chords]

Mark: I notice those---you do a lot of approach chords with a dominant tritone effect.

Ted: Ah, give me an example. I'm not disagreeing, I just want to know which one you mean.

Mark: It just seems like coming up from a half-step below.

Ted: Half-step below? No, no. That's---I was---. One sound I like which is 3rd in the bass (getting from Bach) which is that. But I don't do a lot of, say like Ab7 into Am.

Mark: Well, I guess. No. Maybe it's not. Maybe it's just coming from the iii to V7

Ted: Those aren't half-step below. Those are iii-vi-ii-V's with chromatic---. Oh man, I like that. I love that sound.

Mark: Yeah, right.

Ted: It's just a groovy sound, and it sounds like jazz to my ears. There was a big revolution in the late 1950's where jazz piano players started playing this...[he demonstrates tritone comping with melody on top]

Mark: Like Monk?

Ted: Before Monk. But Monk also, yeah. They usually credit Red Garland with the most long-term impact in this area. [he continues to play] How's this style doing for you?

Mark: I like it.

Ted: Can you play it? Are you playing it?

Mark: I've just started, to tell you the truth; just started. [Ted continues] And how are you looking at that? It's just like a back-cycling blues?

Ted: Blues. I'm just saying: I – IV – I – maybe V and I. Let's take that much. So here's I – IV – I – V – I. Have we been through this before?

Mark: A little bit, yes.

Ted: Is it instructive to do it again?

Mark: Go. Please.

Ted: I – IV – iii – vi – ii (and its alternate dominant) Either ii minor or V suspension, and then V altered or bII dominant or even major on the bII. Three or four different ways to go on the last little bit before the turnaround. And then [he plays a turnaround]

Mark: What was that turnaround?

Ted: See if you can hear the bass. Don't watch, just listen to the bass. [Ted plays]

Mark: Flat 6?

Ted: Sing the bass this time. Try to get on the root with me. Listen to just the bass.

Mark: [Mark sings bass line]

Ted: That's right. And what are those numbers?

Mark: I – VI...

Ted: No, no. It's not I – VI. I – VI is....

Mark: Flat VII.

Ted: When you hear I – vi – ii – V it's, "We want Tele-casters"...whatever....

Mark: [Mark sings..] Down a whole step.

Ted: And that is?

Mark: Flat VII.

Ted: And then?

Mark: Flat VI.

Ted: And then?

Mark: V

Ted: So you've heard....[he demonstrates...C – Bb – Ab – G.]

Mark: But how did you voice it?

Ted: Pretty poorly. [he plays...] Pretty stock, actually. I tried to make the right hand nice. I should gone...first variation that's....[he plays...] full of contrary motion there. Let's try that again. Major 7 [on the bII]

Mark: That's cool contrary [motion] there.

Ted: Yeah. It got too thick. This key isn't right. We're too low in this key. [he continues to demonstrate, now in a higher register] ...– IV – III – iii – VI – II – V - I – VI – You can do it all with one shape if you must.

Mark: Gottcha. I was working with this a little this week.

Ted: I thought I heard you doing it before when this other fellow was sitting here. It's just kind of fun.

Mark: It's great. You get it into your style, and you get it where you can start playing like that in tunes, and the whole shot. Right?

Ted: Yeah. You know what it is also, this style? It's almost in that universal bag for American ears. It's hard for an American not to like that sound. It's got so much sound of our country: urban blues.

Mark: Right.

Ted: I don't know why. It just is. Along with rural [blues]. It seems people like one form or the other for sure.

Mark: What did you say, "rural"?

Ted: Yeah, rural, meaning like not big buildings and not cities. This is more....it came up the Delta. The rural became Chicago blues, though. It was more.... I'm playing a more Chicago-type taught style with more harmony.

Mark: Can you play that sort of style solo guitar?

Ted: That's what I'm doing, man. I aim to do it just because it's fun.

Mark: But are there tunes that you would do, or just improvising?

Ted: These are my just.... I mean, these become tunes. But it'd be better if someone sang something, you know?

So, we have some loose ends on Mr. Montgomery to patch up this evening. Mark, we're going to do that, clearly, okay? But if you have questions, I want you to ask.

Mark: Right.

Ted: Let's go back. Single-lines: loose ends on that: he loves triplets, man. Just loves, loves, loves to deliver triplets. Much more than any guitar player I've ever heard. Closest thing is Freddie King, believe it or not, with triplets. They both love triplets. Most guitar players...[he demonstrates]. Wes is... [he demonstrates same tempo but with triplets].

Mark: I love that. I love that too!

Ted: Yeah, man. He just loves to play triplets.

Mark: Just like arpeggiating them, or...?

Ted: Well, when you say, "arpeggiating them" – who doesn't play arpeggios? He plays off of arpeggios, okay. He'll make a melody, always it seems, out of an arpeggio. He just doesn't go...

Mark: Right. It's not straight; square.

Ted: Seldom. He'll just try to come back where he's just been, and go lower than that, maybe, in kind of semi-pattern ideas. But he never carries it far enough to where you're upset.

What else with his lines? He's the most "half-step slide guy." He's always doing that. Tal Farlow was famous for it too. His top notes are almost always vocal-like. He's not above a little vibrato every now and then. Not real often, though. No reverb; no tremolo. No wang-bar.

Mark: Would you consider him basically not a real chromatic type of guy?

Ted: Correct. He's not real chromatic. Not at all. George Benson is really chromatic. At his best George is an extremely chromatic player. But Wes wasn't. But he's piquant, spicy. Those are spicy notes. But it's not chromatic music. And it's not diatonic. Chromatic music is... [he demonstrates.] All those chromatic effects, where it starts to even lose the key if you're not careful. But when Wes goes.... [he demonstrates]

Mark: You still hear a key.

Ted: Yeah. Like if he's playing [he plays and hums "'Round Midnight'] On that One [i]...if he... [he plays single-line]

Mark: What kind of sound was that?

Ted: Melodic minor. [he plays] The two most important arpeggios in melodic minor have to do with... [he demonstrates] You know, minor-major 7 with or without more color after that. And the minor 6.

Mark: I only know 1 or 2 forms of that. That's my problem. I only know, like...

Ted: Arpeggios?

Mark: Yeah. Like, when you say "melodic minor," I always go to the main stock; one form.

Ted: We don't have---. You know what? It is good to get it down, though. Because you're going to see a lot of Four minors [iv] in songs. Quite often they like to be a minor 6. So, if you have Fm6, that's a pretty bitchin' thing, you know, before we even add a 9th or anything.

Triplet's, rhythmically. Start-and-stop stutters: the true sign of Bop phrasing. [he demonstrates] Because a lot of those bop heads are stuttering. Yeah. Wes is---he's a heavy stutterer, man. His solo on "Caravan" is full of those stutters.

Mark: That's a good analogy. I've never...I mean, I've known it. I've heard Bird... [Mark sings]...you know, start-and-stop-stuttering" – that's really great, Ted.

Ted: Yeah, thank you. There's a little stuttering in there.

Now, harmony-wise let's see if there are any loose ends. Hallmarks: his V inserts. When he's on the Two minor [ii] one of his very favorite things is to go backwards in the cycle and insert its own V. Of all the sounds he does, that's to me the most identifiable – other than that "co-minor" thing – as a Wes thing. If I'm listening to a record and I hear a guy go...say he's already on the Two [ii] chord, you know, like the song goes...[he demonstrates...] And later it's just on the ii, and he's going to improvise, he goes...[he demonstrates]

Mark: You're doing a b9 or...on the VI?

Ted: Just b9s. Usually almost always just as on b9s. That's his sound for when he moves around on the VI – exactly – which is the V of that ii.

Mark: Like you said, he didn't have a large palate, but he was very sophisticated with the use of it.

Ted: Yeah, very musical. Yeah, it's semi-sophisticated. It's sophisticated enough that's it's interesting intellectually, but especially it's just so musical.

Mark: Musical – that's sure!

Ted: He's got a warm approach to that sound.

So, that's---. For minor keys he definitely is a "Dorian man" – he loves to go forward – the opposite of "co-minor." You know, associate with the Four dominant [IV7]? [he demonstrates]. He's got a million tunes like that.

Mark: Yeah, "Unit Seven."

Ted: Just a lot of them. Here's....[he plays]

Mark: He seems to fade out chromatically. Is that chromatic sort of...?

Ted: Yeah, that's more chromatic when he goes...[Ted plays and sings] if he wrote a tune.... It's that flat-5 relationship.

Mark: What other relationships are like that? I mean, I've gotten that down....

Ted: It's the only one I know that has that effect.

Mark: Really?

Ted: But chords of "mediant relations" — remember that term in school — chords in mediant way: you know, there are four of them: 1) minor third down, 2) minor third up, 3) major 3rd down, 4) major third up. There's often a lot of fun to be had by moving in those directions. But it won't sound like this, man.

Mark: What I'm thinking with that is, that with the single notes, if you time it right and you do it right, with that b5 is sound a little outside.

Ted: That's right.

Mark: Really cool outside.

Ted: Cool outside. That's right.

Mark: You know what I mean? If you do it rhythmically---

Ted: Yeah. [?] what else sounds cool is outside.

Mark: Sort of like---yeah, sort of like: you do it right off the beat and you use it to go into the four.

Ted: Well, try mediant things inserting that resolve, as best you can, back to normalcy. It'll go outside.

Mark: Within the major third or minor third relationships?

Ted: Up or down, yeah. Any quality that you want. It's a pretty open field.

Mark: Okay.

Ted: If you're on G7, and you have enough time, and it's [Ted plays and whistles "White Christmas" then demonstrates single-note soloing over it] Notice how I came out....those are stock to me. That wasn't that "out." It was [he plays arpeggios] All those are in the 8-note dominant scale of G7. But those were the four major triads that hide in that scale: G itself, Bb, Eb — "Okay boys and girls, we're going to circus tonight" it got whimsy in it.

Mark: You got to just do it right or it doesn't sound like that, huh?

Ted: You have to just resolve at the right moment.

Mark: It's rhythm. A lot of it is rhythm, isn't it, you think?

Ted: Yep. It's the timing.

Mark: A lot of those guys---. The cats like I think of---even Bird, or a lot of horn players, they get outside but they do it so that it's on a weak beat so it resolves. You know what I mean? I guess. Is that correct in saying that?

Ted: The ends of the lines are unpredictable. They can end anywhere. The accents are irregularly spaced. Where they are regular they tend to be--- Jazz is more often a 2 and 4 music than a 1 and 3, rhythmically. But harmonically it's a 1 and 3 music, which is pretty stunning. The main harmonies are on 1 and 3, but the main rhythms are on 2 and 4 as far as accents. But the whole jazz bop thing is about comping, so it's all irregular. Phrase starts anywhere; ends anywhere. Accents could be anywhere. It's just all plastic---ah---*pliable*. Plastic doesn't have a nice connotation. "Well, that Charlie Parker, his music is very plastic" — that won't do it!

So, anything else about Wes? Let me think: Timing, Harmony, Sense of Form — we'll save that for another time. That's a big subject: Form.

Mark: Octaves?

Ted: Yeah, of course. I was going to talk about the octaves. I'm not 100% convinced, but I tend to think he's watching the lowest note because his brother's bass thing. Hand is free when he does octaves. For lines he plants the fingertips down; touches the [pick]guard and pushes on it, kind of. But for octaves he lets go of everything. Does backstrokes sometimes.

When he wants the real fast thing that he does, he uses the nails – the back of the nails, not the fingers, surprisingly. I thought for sure he was using the thumb. If he wants an

occasional one of those, he'll use the thumb. But when he does that real fast thing, like when he goes.... [he demonstrates] I thought he was going to use the thumb, but he'll use the nails.

Mark: That's cool.

Ted: It's hard to get it just right with nails, though. I'm using one finger to do it. I find that's more controllable.

Mark: Was he a guy you think that practiced 8, 10 hours a day when he was growing up, or what?

Ted: You see, he couldn't. And when you read the bio, as a young boy he had a guitar. The myth that he started at 19 is a myth, because he did fool around on the axe from about age 10, 11, whatever. But he just fooled around; didn't make the serious strides he felt he made later. But other people thought he was really good already, including when he was a young boy, so. That came out later. But when he was---really got deep into that Charlie Christian thing, remember....

Mark: Right. He bought an album and he learned all the licks, or something.

Ted: You know the story: he was a newlywed, he was working a gig in the day and playing afterhours at night, late. (No, what I was going to say.) He was working a gig in the day, and he'd come home and practice after dinner. He might have gotten 5 or 10 [hours of practice] in those day, huh? Because he got awful good in a couple of years. He went out on the road with Lionel Hampton. Did it for a while, about a year. Missed his family, came back.

Mark: Right.

Ted: That's when he started performing live, just doing [Charlie] Christian solos, and started to jam afterhours. Then he got a gig working afterhours, too, as a musician. So, there's a long story in the Wes Montgomery biography book about a typical day: how he'd go to work, he'd do the welding. He'd get off at, say, 4:00; he'd come home, take a nap. He'd eat and take a nap, and then go to the second gig. And then he'd come home at 6:00 in the morning and sleep for maybe an hour, and get up and go to work again.

Mark: Wow! Hard.



Ted: Yeah, he had two jobs, and then later he had two jobs and he would sit in at other clubs. So, he barely would sleep in those days. In other words, he was making the rounds besides gigging at night.

Mark: Yeah. He didn't drink either.

Ted: Wasn't a drinker. Heavy smoker.

Mark: Big smoker.

Ted: Coffee drinker, so I think the caffeine and the nicotine, man, both... Well, they may have got him, but they also gave him all that energy a little bit too, I would think. They say he was a quick study, though. He would listen to a song, and just after hearing it once he could join in and play.

Mark: He had great ears. Wow!

Ted: That's a remarkable study, man.

Mark: So, he had great ears.

Ted: They say he had perfect pitch. So, he was one of those genius cats. Bill Evans isn't. When you ask Bill, he says, "No, I'm no perfect pitch."

Mark: Hard work.

Ted: Yeah, hard work. Which is real exciting for me and you.

Mark: Yeah.

Ted: Lenny [Breau] was not a genius, but he had a few near genius sounding things because he worked so hard. But he just worked hard, man. Lenny Breau put in so many hours, man. Eight to 10-hour days, many, many days.

Mark: Practicing.

Ted: Practicing, practicing. Two years just strict Flamenco alone. Many years of jazz practice.

Mark: And what, teach? How could he pay the rent? I mean, did he just teach?

Ted: He gigged on bass at one point. You know, I'm sure musical thing.

Mark: Just whatever. Yeah.