



Wolf Marshall - Just Jazz Guitar - February '06

by Mark Stefani

Wolf Marshall is considered by many of his peers and fans to be the top guitar author and historian of our time. However, due to his eclectic nature and well-deserved reputation in other genres, he often remains a "best kept secret" in jazz guitar circles. This is slowly changing, thanks to a recent string of critically acclaimed books, documenting the artistry of such legendary guitarists as Charlie Christian, Wes Montgomery, George Benson, Joe Pass, Pat Martino, and Grant Green. His latest release is the long-awaited, definitive study covering the music of guitarist Kenny Burrell. It gives me great pleasure to conduct this special interview for Just Jazz Guitar Magazine. Hopefully it will serve to expose and underline Marshall's deep passion and unparalleled knowledge of the jazz guitar and its players.

M.S. Wolf, during our past conversations, you've mentioned coming from a musical family with a classical background. How did that affect you, and for the sake of readers unfamiliar with you, when did you first decide to take up the guitar?

W.M. My mother, a classical pianist, insisted that all the kids in the family receive music instruction from an early age. I was the oldest of three, so I guess I got the most training and parental experimentation. I went through three years of violin, roughly between the ages of seven to ten, a couple of years of piano, and a few months of cello before I was fourteen. How did it affect me? Here's an early but illustrative anecdote. I was greatly affected as an infant by listening to my mom run through her classical piano repertory. She "baby sat" me by placing me under the piano while she practiced for hours; things like Beethoven sonatas, Debussy preludes, and pieces by Chopin, Bach and Rachmaninoff. When she made any slight errors in a complex piece, I heard her make instant corrections and replay the passage until it was perfect. I think several months of that daily exposure trained my ear on a subliminal level, as I had little other sensory input at that age.

I took up the guitar at age fourteen. Though my mom and uncle, who was a violinist, were avid devotees of classical music, they supported my interest in pop music. My mom arranged for me to have a rental guitar for my birthday, a cheap, single-pickup Kay. In that month I learned enough on my own to indicate that my real passion was guitar. My mom rented a Les Paul Junior for me later that year and finally, for my fifteenth birthday, I got my first real guitar. My uncle ceremoniously drove me down to Southern California Music in downtown LA and let me pick one out. I got a brand-new Fender Telecaster. It was a glorious day. Then I worked in a laundry for a few weeks to buy an amp, a Silvertone piggy-back model.

M.S. How did you first get into writing, publishing, and transcribing guitar music?

W.M. I got into transcribing at an early age. It began when I started taking music down by ear from records at 14. I didn't write it out at the time. This was in the days of the oral tradition. I used to learn a song and show it to any interested guitar-playing buddies at the time.

By 15 I began to learn various pop and blues songs that were in the air. This included the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, the Yardbirds, Cream, Bluesbreakers, B.B. King and Jimi Hendrix. When I was 17 I started hanging with Rick Mitchell (Red Mitchell's son) and developed an interest in jazz. He turned me on to Charlie Christian, though I had already heard and dug Howard Roberts, Joe Pass, Wes Montgomery and Kenny Burrell. I began writing the transcriptions down in notation when I was 20 or so. At that time I lived in Europe for a year, in Frankfurt (Germany), and totally immersed myself, to the exclusion of all else, in jazz guitar, particularly Howard Roberts, Wes Montgomery, Kenny Burrell, Barney Kessel and Johnny Smith.

As I developed my transcribing chops, I also studied traditional music theory and composition at LACC (Los Angeles City College) and then UCLA. During this mid-seventies period I had the good fortune to meet and make friends with Pat Martino. Much credit must go to Pat. He was an inspiration in my guitar development and he encouraged my transcription work. I first showed him a ten-page chart of "Minority" (Strings) in 1976 and wound up doing over 250 pages of his solos by 1977. In fact, I gave him two hardbound copies of those solos as a gift. We got together regularly whenever he was in town and when he did his albums for Warner Bros, he hired me to do the lead sheets for copyright. It was a real honor and an early milestone.

My first published transcription was in Guitar Player magazine. It was Pat's "Song Bird" solo from Joyous Lake, and I also did the annotation and analysis. That was my first official foray into writing. Later, in the early eighties, I got into self-publishing with a company called Star Licks. At this time the TAB industry was just taking off and I simultaneously hooked up with Guitar for the Practicing Musician. I stayed with GPM for five years and wrote a regular monthly column, Music Appreciation, that featured transcribed music. I did a lot of work-for-hire transcribing in those days; the tablature industry was exploding. I wrote books on Randy Rhoads, Michael Schenker, Yngwie Malmsteen, Van Halen; very technical rock players. I got a rep for that genre, so much so that in 1987 Guitar Player interviewed me in Pro's Reply about transcribing. That was another milestone.

M.S. Wolf, you've witnessed the publishing industry from several angles over the past twenty to thirty years, with decisions often being made on the basis of popular genres and what will sell to the masses. How difficult has it been to push the need to document great jazz guitar artistry, and are we now seeing some progress on that front?

W.M. It was unheard of at first. Now it's a no-brainer. We are indeed seeing great progress. Through incremental steps I moved from hard rock transcribing to broader horizons. Back in the mid-nineties I wrote and recorded a book called *Blues Guitar Classics*, which contrasted the work of various famous blues guitarists playing a common repertory. For example, a version of "T-Bone Shuffle" played by T-Bone Walker (the original) followed by Buddy Guy doing the same tune with a different take. This inevitably led to *The Best of Jazz Guitar*, which had a similar format, and *The Best of Wes Montgomery*. Most of my writing in this regard is published by Hal Leonard, a great company. Working with them allowed me to move from rock to blues, a real passion of mine, and finally to jazz, an art form I feel has been under-represented in the world of TAB transcription/CD books. In the past six years I feel we have made a lot of inroads on the jazz guitar front, and the momentum is only gathering exponentially as we move forward.

M.S. Any conversation regarding the roots of jazz on guitar would have to involve Charlie Christian, the man most consider to be the father of jazz guitar, and a player who had a powerful impact on Wes Montgomery and his lineage. What are some of your thoughts on the historical significance of this guitar legend?

W.M. Charlie Christian was the first jazz guitarist who played fluent and swinging single-note solos with a horn-like conception, phrasing and sound. That's important and historically significant. Also significant is the fact that he popularized the jazz guitar tone we still use today. Moreover, he was the role model for practically every major electric archtop player to follow: Barney Kessel, Tal Farlow, Kenny Burrell, Wes Montgomery, Herb Ellis, George Benson, the list goes on and on. Don't take my word for it. I was fortunate to get together with Barney Kessel, just before he passed during the writing of my Charlie Christian book-CD. We listened to a lot of music together. During those precious hours he concurred and underscored Christian's timeless importance for all guitarists and offered some personal memories and insights. Barney's reminiscences are respectfully included in that book's text. We miss you, Barney.

M.S. Wes Montgomery was the guitarist most responsible for developing the language of bebop on our instrument, and Joe Pass was one of jazz guitar's greatest ambassadors, due to his rich performing and recording legacy. Two of your best jazz books are devoted to these artists. Given their lengthy discographies, and while we could probably spend a great portion of this interview discussing their historical impact, how did you decide which performances to include?

W.M. With the Wes Montgomery book-CD, my goals were to introduce his music to a new young audience and hopefully satisfy the existing die-hard Wes fans, as well as

to create a varied retrospective of his playing from his Riverside tracks to the final Verve recordings. That would span 1959 to 1967. In those years certain signature pieces are inescapable. Wes compositions such as "West Coast Blues," "O.G.D." ("The Road Song") and "Four on Six." I also wanted to present his playing approach to various straight-ahead blues and standard tunes, especially aspects which would be useful to guitarists today. That's where "Misty," "Yesterdays," "Besame Mucho," "Sun Down," and "Missile Blues" come in. Moreover, I felt a couple of Wes' beautiful chord-melody solos were absolutely necessary to round out the collection and depict the pretty, harmonic side of his style, so I included the standard "I've Grown Accustomed to her Face" and his original "Mi Cosa."

I took a slightly different path with Joe's book-CD. While it is a career retrospective from 1961 to 1988, I leaned heavily on his early Pacific Jazz period, particularly the For Django album. I feel that this period was Joe's most bopping, burning and under-exposed. Because most of the Pacific Jazz records have been out of print, the music has languished for too many years in obscurity. Now, with the Mosaic and Sundazed re-issues, the music is available on CD, so those performances have been given a new thrust. Moreover my book-CDs are rhythm section-oriented, so I did only one piece from Joe's massive body of unaccompanied work, "Blues for Basie." I included the standards "One for my Baby" and "Ghost of a Chance" as two examples from the later Pablo period.

M.S. Speaking of the Wes lineage, on several occasions you and I have discussed guitarist George Benson, his logical place in that chain, and the impact he has had on both aspiring players and listeners beyond the jazz genre. Because of his rhythmic inventiveness and technical approach, I would imagine that doing book on him was particularly challenging. Was that the case, and what is your opinion of his role in jazz guitar history?

W.M. The George Benson book-CD was one of the most challenging projects I have ever done. His technique and idiomatic style are unlike any other player, though ironically he is one of the widely-copied of the contemporary jazz guitarists. What is challenging about his style? In order to assimilate his single-note approach and reproduce the sound, you have to play like he does, essentially with the three main fingers of the left hand. That's one key to his fluidity and freedom on the fingerboard. For many players this means re-learning pet licks that have been cultivated through years of practice. But there is a greater benefit. Charlie Christian and Wes Montgomery also favored those fingerings. You'll be in good company.

I consider George Benson's role in jazz history to be very significant. Benson effectively bridges the gap between jazz and R&B/pop styles. He has reached the masses like no other jazz guitarist ever, and probably not since Benny Goodman in the forties. I'm not just talking about his singing and entertaining, which are obvious pop attributes, but also his guitar playing. "This Masquerade" and "On Broadway" were pop hits. Both show his fusion of the genres and also demonstrate his close connection with the instrument. Who else could scat and play everything they hear with such precision and accuracy? He is transcendent and has done it all on his own terms. That's what Bird and Clifford Brown were striving for on their albums with

strings. But anyone ready to equivocate and dismiss Benson as just a "pop superstar" should have a listen to "Ode to a Kudu" on Weekend in LA. Not to mention his early hard bop organ-group albums and CTI cuts like "My Latin Brother" and "Take Five." That's essential listening.

M.S. You had a terrific friendship with the late guitar legend and pioneer, Howard Roberts. You've often stated that Howard was ahead of his time, and a significant part of the history of our instrument. How did the two of you meet, and can you enlighten any readers who may not be aware of his contributions to both the playing and educational field?

W.M. Howard is unique in the music world in that he has enjoyed three distinguished careers: as an innovative jazz artist, a studio musician extraordinaire, and a gifted educator. And he was incredibly strong in all three areas. GIT and Musician's Institute grew directly out of his efforts in education, and his credentials as a player speak for themselves. He was the first to self-publish serious in-depth guitar books in 1971. He was a first-call studio guitarist for all the top acts, from jazz and pop to acid rock, and his jazz albums from the 1950s and early 1960s are cult classics.

I had the privilege to meet Howard in the early seventies, when I was a kid trying to learn the jazz language. After trying a few local professional teachers, all of whom refused to show me exact solos from records by Howard, Joe Pass and Wes (but that's another story), I heard about the Howard Roberts Guitar Seminar, which he conducted at Donte's, a jazz club in North Hollywood. After working a little with his Howard Roberts Guitar Book, I decide to go to the source. I got into the last day of the seminar and introduced myself to Howard, who was very receptive and forthcoming. After I asked him for lessons he gave me a response I'll never forget: "If I were you, I'd study with George Van Eps!" As a result I took bi-weekly lessons with Van Eps for a year, and learned more about chords and guitar harmony than I could ever apply in two lifetimes. Thanks, Howard.

About fifteen years later we got re-acquainted when we both judged a guitar contest in Oregon at Portland Music. After that we stayed in touch by phone regularly. Here's the sad part of the story. In late 1991 Howard and I had talked often and planned to do an interactive correspondence course and virtual school focusing on all genres of guitar music, using personal computers. In those conversations he envisioned and specified, in prescient detail, many of the internet tools we take for granted today but which were science fiction back in 1991. It was mind-boggling, in retrospect. But that's the kind of guy HR was. Tragically, he died in 1992 before we could act on those plans.

Apart from memories, all I have left of Howard is the mysterious, much-modified black guitar he played on my favorite HR albums of the early sixties, Color Him Funky and HR is a Dirty Guitar Player. To me it's a Stradivarius. Thanks to Howard and his widow Patty, I am the owner, actually more of a caretaker, of that precious guitar. It's filled with Howard's soul. It exudes his soul. I played it, or should I say it played itself, on my re-make of "Satin Doll" on my Best of Jazz Guitar recording. That was the actual guitar Howard used on the session over thirty years ago. Talk about coming full

circle. Coincidentally that was one of the first jazz guitars I ever saw and heard. It was definitely the first jazz guitar I noticed. The track was "Watermelon Man" and Howard was on the local Lloyd Thaxton TV show, similar to American Bandstand, promoting and performing the single in 1964. He was the essence of cool with those shades, that black archtop and that funky Herbie Hancock blues tune. A few years later, a friend of mine showed me "Dirty Old Bossa Nova" from HR is a Dirty Guitar, and that got me deeper into Howard's music. I guess Howard has been part of my life since the guitar has been of interest. Howard inspired everyone who met him, and I have been blessed to have known him. He was truly one of a kind.

M.S. In a recent article centering on guitarist Kenny Burrell, you referred to what you believe to be the three essential ingredients for a guitarist to truly be considered a great jazz artist. Can you discuss the meaning of "The Three B's" as it relates to Burrell and others of his stature?

W.M. I recently wrote that in a Kenny Burrell piece for Line 6's Guitar Port Online. The three B's are short-hand criteria I use to distill the essence of a jazz performer. For me it's got to be a blend and balance of Blues, Bebop and Ballads. Those are the proving grounds and Kenny personifies the ideal combination. First, blues. He is the bluesiest jazz guitarist around. He was an influence not only to players like George Benson and Wes Montgomery, but to Jim Hendrix and Stevie Ray Vaughan. 'Nuff said. His bebop style in the fifties was quite advanced and ahead of its time. I consider Kenny's Blue Note albums of 1956-1960 to be the fountainhead of hard bop guitar playing. He was the only guitarist to record with Trane, and that speaks volumes. He has taken the bop elements and mixed them perfectly with the blues quality without compromising either of the aesthetics. Just check out "Wholly Cats" or "KB Blues." And ballads. Harmonically, in terms of both single-note lines and chord sounds, it is difficult for me to think of another player who has Kenny's combination of soul, beauty, phrasing and great tone.

I am currently working on a Kenny Burrell book-CD. It is to be a deluxe project with two extra tunes, 16 in all, several full-length. But for me the most exciting part is getting to interview and spend time with Kenny while it is underway. That's the sort of documentation that needs to be done whenever possible. In this sense I liken my work to that of a curator or ethnomusicologist. These musicians are national, make that international, treasures.

M.S. Not too long ago, you had a chance to get together with guitarist Jimmy Bruno, when he was performing in SoCal. You've known Jimmy for many years, and I sense a great deal of mutual respect. How did the two of you first connect?

W.M. Jimmy is one of my favorite people in the whole world. And I do respect him greatly, as a guitarist and a human being. We met in 1995 when we were both teaching and giving clinics at Duquesne University's Guitar Camp in Pittsburgh. Initially we had some great conversations in passing. He has the best sense of humor around. However, my strongest memory is a social one. One night three of us, Jimmy, Michael Fath, and I decided to celebrate his birthday and hit the town. We started with a train ride across the river to a fine Japanese restaurant, after which

we walked the streets smoking cigars and ended up at the hotel lounge with brandies and musical war stories. It's been a tradition with us ever since.

I had the privilege of producing, moderating and conducting his first live internet special for EMP, Paul Allen's Seattle-based Experience Music Project, in 2000. This is available to view in the EMP archives. Jimmy is also responsible for introducing me to Hank Garland and his wonderful family. That's another bond we share: the Hank Garland connection. Through Jimmy I produced an EMP show with Hank before he died. He made that historical documentation possible.

Jimmy is not only an exceptional guitarist and an artist, but a very generous person. More recently I did a feature for Guitar Port Online on Jimmy's solo style. He graciously ran through sections of his new album, "Solo" (Mel Bay Records), specifying his exact fingerings and voicings, and broke down the music for my readers. That happened when we got together on his birthday in LA and had a sushi lunch, and passed the guitars around before his gig at the Jazz Bakery. It marked ten years of our friendship.

M.S. Out of your recent series of books based on notable jazz guitarists, I felt that the Pat Martino edition was particularly impressive. I'm familiar with his work, yet there are several times when I almost couldn't tell the difference between your performance and the original recording. Tell us a little bit about your friendship with Pat, and how you managed to capture and replicate his work to that degree?

W.M. My friendship with Pat goes back to 1976, when he was in LA touring behind the Consciousness album. It is now thirty years old. We have always stayed in touch over the years and even attempted to do a few publishing projects involving my transcriptions of his work, but the timing or logistics just weren't right. Pat is a mentor. There's no other way to put it. I learned so much about music and playing the guitar from him; technically, philosophically and spiritually. Through transcribing hundreds of pages of his solos I began to understand how the jazz language lay on the fingerboard. And through a personal association with Pat, I began to relate to and interact with an actual jazz icon as a flesh-and-blood person, where prior to that they were my heroes and inspirations.

When Hal Leonard and I began doing the jazz guitar book-CDs in the late nineties, I always hoped the opportunity to present Pat's music would arise. That happened in 2002. I was fortunate to have several conversations with Pat at the time about the music in the book and his perspectives. Those are woven into the text. As far as the playing goes, I have had an affinity for Pat's style since the seventies, and strived to copy him back then. I still strive. However, with a few years of practice I got more competent, more familiar with his techniques, and better at transcribing the nuances of his playing. In my book-CDs I strive for authenticity. What you hear on the Martino audio is my relentless woodshedding, extended study and respect for his music. In practical terms I lived Pat's music for two months in preparation for the sessions. That means I practiced playing the transcriptions daily for hours before entering the studio. That's the only way I could record the music at tempo and make a convincing product. Additionally, Pat made it possible for me to employ the exact instruments he

plays. During the course of the project I acquired a Gibson Pat Martino Custom guitar, an Acoustic-Image Clarus amplifier and a Raezer's Edge Stealth cabinet. Rich Raezer made the last piece an identical version of Pat's cabinet. It even has a plate that reads "Custom Built for Pat Martino." It is one of my most cherished pieces of gear, an heirloom.

M.S. One of your most heralded publications is "The Best of Jazz Guitar." I found it to be fascinating as well as innovative. In that book, you choose common tunes as recorded by two or more well-known players, then analyze the harmonic content to observe the different approaches used. What gave you the idea to create this unique insight into jazz guitarists and their music?

W.M. As I stated earlier, that grew out of the earlier book-CD called Blues Guitar Classics. In jazz and blues genres, improvisation and innovation, while keeping to an established standard, are at the forefront. I think it is fascinating and highly instructive to see how Kenny Burrell, Pat Martino and George Benson treat the same tune; "All Blues" for instance, as in The Best of Jazz Guitar. That art of reinterpretation is at the core of who a jazz player is, how he or she applies their approach and grasp of the musical language to a common focal point. The Best of Jazz Guitar was a labor of love. I thoroughly enjoyed making the book-CD for its diversity and historic depth, and I was particularly honored and touched by the testimonials of my dear friends Johnny Smith, Pat Martino, Hank Garland, Herb Ellis, Henry Johnson and Jimmy Bruno, which appeared on the cover.

M.S. Grant Green, much like Kenny Burrell and the subject of another one of your books, has always had an appeal to blues-oriented guitarists and listeners who are not necessarily big fans of traditional jazz music. I've always felt that the power of blues is universal and reaches across genre, and I know that you feel the same way. Can you discuss the impact of Grant and other jazz guitarists who are clearly cut from the blues cloth?

W.M. I put the blues-based jazz guitarists in a separate category; they are a rarefied group. At the top are Wes Montgomery, Kenny Burrell, George Benson and Grant Green. There are others. The common denominator is the embodiment of blues within a bop-oriented jazz language. It's a distinct dialect. The impact of these musicians is great, as to me blues is the most universal feeling in music. Kenny Burrell said as much in his personal liner notes for Blues: the Common Ground, and I paraphrase.

As a consequence, I believe blues is a lasting music and is not disposable like much of pabulum pop has been; although great pop songs endure and whether written by Jerome Kern, Duke Ellington, the Beatles or Stevie Wonder, are certainly not disposable. On a related note, I recently was privileged to contribute several entries to Ed Komara's exhaustive new Encyclopedia of the Blues (Routledge). This is a massive two-volume set which chronicles the blues art form in great detail. In it I acknowledge and expound on the impact blues-based jazz guitarists like Kenny Burrell and Wes Montgomery have had on rock and blues icons Stevie Ray Vaughan and Jimi Hendrix, and as a corollary on the mainstream pop culture itself.

M.S. Your current string of jazz guitar books focus on legendary players who are household names. Obviously there are numerous guitarists in the jazz genre who are highly deserving but underrated for one reason or another. Is there any one artist in your mind who really stands out and fits this description?

W.M. Without any hesitation I would have to say Henry Johnson. Henry is a walking encyclopedia of jazz music and jazz history. He often straightens me out on points that most people, including myself, miss. Like the subtleties of Wes' fingerings and chord voicings, ways to navigate "Giant Steps," or applying new ideas gained from transcribing to the existing jazz language. Henry has played with most of the greats and it shows in his depth, finesse and inventiveness. Every musician should check out his recent albums *Organic* and *An Evening at Sea* as well as his earlier release, *New Beginnings*.

Not only is Henry a remarkable player and an accomplished jazz singer, he is also a perpetually curious student of music and a dedicated student of life. I admire so many aspects of his playing and musicianship and chief among them is his inquisitive musical mind, which keeps him in the constant update mode. That's a rare attribute and translates into his continued growth and evolution. Also commendable is Henry's desire to share his knowledge and experience with others. He is the personification of what you described: highly deserving but underrated.

Henry and I share the common bond of transcribing music, and during the making of my Wes Montgomery book-CD I called him often for insights to the Wes style, on which he is an expert. Henry has forgotten more about Wes' music than most will ever learn. But during those discussions back in 1998 and 1999, I was made aware of his love of and passion for the music and the aesthetics as well as his grasp of the technical side. I'll never forget his performance of "Unit 7" back in Pittsburgh in 1996. It's still ringing in my ears. Since then I have been an avid fan. In recent years Henry and I have become better acquainted. I am always inspired when we have a conversation, whether marathon length or brief. And I am fortunate to call him a "brother of the lead" (fellow transcriber) and a close personal friend.

M.S. Of the great jazz guitarists that are no longer with us, which one would you most like to have a one-on-one with, and what you would you ask him?

W.M. That would be Wes Montgomery. What would I ask him? Have you got a couple of weeks? There are so many things I would ask. I would want to know more about his harmonic concepts and how he applied it to improvising. I would ask him to get into depth about his block chording solo style. On a purely guitaristic level, I would love to play with him and stop him to ask about particular fingerings and how he navigates the fingerboard. I would delve deeper into his minor conversion principle. There is a lot more. And I would want to know him as a person. His music is so full of joy and enthusiasm I would imagine there would be much to his spiritual side.

M.S. The process of transcribing the works of fellow artists has been the central focus of your career, regardless of genre. Despite the obvious value that your books

represent for all students of jazz guitar, how critical is it for them to do likewise?

W.M. Transcribing music is the portal to and the means by which you gain a greater vocabulary and develop your ear. There is no substitute. In my view there are two modes. One is to simply pick up the music by ear without writing and directly transferring to the instrument. This applies to sax, trumpet and piano lines as well as guitar licks. There is great value in figuring out an Oscar Peterson phrase, as you well know, or, for me lately, to look into what Eric Dolphy was doing in "Teenie's Blues" on Blues and the Abstract Truth (Oliver Nelson). I think that's how players like Wes, Charlie Christian and countless others developed their basics, by copying and tapping into the music of their predecessors and contemporaries. The stories about Wes playing note-for-note Charlie Christian solos during his first gigs with Lionel Hampton are well-documented accounts in guitar lore.

The other mode of transcription is what I do professionally, and for personal development. That is, write out the music in notation. This mode requires that you have knowledge and competence in perceiving rhythms, pitches and chord voicings, and writing them in paper form. For me I can do it fairly quickly and the extra step allows me to have a printed record of what I am learning. It also helps me to look at it when I am in the analytical mode. In any case, transcribing is a vital part of a musician's training and its importance cannot be overstated.

M.S. What kind of software or hardware tools do you use for transcribing music, and do you have a standard operating method for your projects?

W.M. Over the years I have kept changing and updating my transcribing rig. I think you have to, in pursuit of greater audio clarity and ease of operation. I am currently using the Transcribe! software from Seventh String (seventhstring.com). It is amazing in its audio quality. It has no perceivable artifacts in the digital slow-mo section. I can still hear individual string timbre at quarter speed! It is equipped with easy controls, well-conceived use of keyboard commands, and has a very convenient and functional wave-form interface and read-out. I stayed away from software transcribing packages for years, but this one has made me a convert.

As far as hardware, I still use the Reed Kotler TR-1000, which I like because it is a digital desktop unit which acts like a tape recorder and is very user friendly. I used this one exclusively from 2000 to 2005. Reed also makes a real nice filter box, the LBR-100, which is great for fine-tuning the output mix and isolating hard-to-hear parts. I patch both of these units into my 32-track board in my studio and play around with the audio until it is as clear as possible.

My standard operating procedure is as follows: I record an audio track to be transcribed from a CD into either the software at the computer or the TR-1000 in the studio. These days it's usually done at the computer. I plot out the sections to be transcribed, drop markers and so on, and then just nibble away at the music one phrase at a time. With the digital slow-mo I can stop a particular chord or note and freeze it or loop it to check pitches. I first play the phrase and figure out how it lays on the guitar fingerboard. Then I go back and count the rhythms for the written

notation. In simpler, steady eighth-note lines that can happen simultaneously with learning the notes. I use conducting patterns to help delineate the beats and the activity between the beats. For me it helps to have a physical reference point to mark the time and conducting patterns have proven very useful. It's something you learn in Musicianship 101 that holds great advantages for the transcriber writing down rhythms.

M.S. The audio discs that accompany your jazz books feature a rhythm section with top professionals, one that very closely matches the original recordings. The timing, feel, and overall performance is very impressive. How do you manage achieve that level of accuracy?

W.M. I am lucky to have great musicians on those backing tracks, players like Bob Magnusson, Dennis Croy, John Nau, Rob Whitlock, Mike Sandberg, and my man, Robert Parker. To guarantee a similar feel I always have the original audio on a track of my recorder during the sessions. We all play to the original. This keeps the timing as close as is humanly possible on the final reproduction. Any decelerando, accelerando or rubato feel is derived from the original and serves as the guide for the players, including myself when we record a copy of the performance. It helps tremendously to have Wes, George or Pat playing in the background when you track their solos. Finally, I listen carefully to the soloed guitar parts and make sure each phrase, complete with inflections and idiosyncrasies, is as close as I can make it.

M.S. Regardless of genre, tone plays a big part in defining the personality of a guitarist. Over the years, you've made a concerted effort to not only study a player's music, but also their personal combination of instrument and amplification. What are some of your thoughts on this subject, and can you cite some guitars and amplifiers that are particularly noteworthy in achieving a good jazz guitar sound?

W.M. I am a firm believer in using the gear which most closely approximates the artist's original sound. For example, I used a Gibson Pat Martino model with a Clarus amp and Raezer's Edge Stealth cabinet for the Martino book-CD. When I recorded the Charlie Christian project I had to find a guitar with a Charlie Christian bar pickup and an old Gibson amp. It took awhile; they are quite rare. I wound up buying one of the last Gibson period amps from e-Bay and scoured LA until I found a Gibson ES-175CC guitar. Bob Benedetto told me that pickup is worth more than the guitar!

For the Kenny Burrell recording I'll be using my newest acquisition, a Heritage Super KB (Kenny Burrell model), which is like a vintage Super 400CES made to Kenny's current specs. This is an unbelievable instrument. It feels and sounds just like a Gibson archtop electric from the early sixties. And it should. The same luthiers made it. I recently did a clinic for Heritage with this guitar and it more than proved itself. In fact I also played the new Heritage Henry Johnson, which is like an improved sixties L-5CES, at the clinic. That has a definitive Wes-style tone. It's a great guitar that would give you a good jazz guitar sound.

I have several other jazz guitars, each selected for their specific tone, like a modern Gibson ES-175 with humbuckers, an Epiphone Blues Zephyr with P-90 pickups,

Howard's black guitar, which has the ultimate P-90 sound, and a Kevin Roberts custom, which is like an early 16-inch L-5 with a floating Kent Armstrong pickup.

For amplification I use a wide variety of tools: various vintage and re-issue Fender amps. I have an immaculate white '61 Bandmaster which looks exactly like what is pictured on the back of Wes' Full House album, a couple of old Gibson amps: a 1939 EH-150 like Charlie Christian played and a 1951 GA-75 with a 15-inch speaker, a Polytone Mini-Brute II, and the Clarus, which is often plugged directly into the board. Lately I've pleased with some of my experiments in jazz tone with a Fender Cyber-Twin SE. This amp has a tube preamp and some very good modeling capabilities and reverb effects. I was able to approximate the old Fender Twin and Deluxe tones as well as a more modern solid-state jazz sound with some basic adjustments.

M.S. Many jazz educators and authors continue to over-emphasize the knowledge of scales, modes, and arpeggios as the most important aspect of improvisation, despite the reality that some of the greatest players learned mainly by ear and had little formal education. With that in mind, what are some of your personal observations and advice for aspiring jazz guitarists?

W.M. The ear is the primary apparatus of music, not the hand, eyes or the mind. Consider one of my favorite musicians of all time, Ray Charles. Obviously he didn't have the ability to read music, but look at what he created. Many of my idols, like Wes and Joe Pass, didn't rely on formal theory, scales, modes or arpeggios to make music. After deeper examination we find, through the medium of transcription for me, that these amazing musicians had a greater command of arpeggios, modes and such than formalized study can impart. It's really about acquiring, assimilating and re-interpreting the jazz language. Like any language, these idioms are made into personal expressions through the art of fluent conversation. An effective blues solo or great bebop solo has that quality. It is filled with novel applications and re-inventions of the familiar vernacular. Consider the language of jazz as comparable to any verbal language. You acquire the art by imitating the combinations of sounds. Then you get better by speaking, increasing your vocabulary regularly, and learning to express yourself more openly and freely. In speech you don't have to diagram sentences or intentionally drop big words to communicate universal feelings. Aurally the lexicon serves the music, not visa versa.

My advice? Study the language of your predecessors and strive for their mastery of the lexicon and unselfconscious communication. Translation: Learn to play Bird's break in "Night in Tunisia," a chorus of Trane's "Giant Steps" solo, or an Oscar Peterson blues phrase instead of practicing scale routines. Make that your technical study. And don't limit yourself in source material. Remember the famous Hemingway line: "Stealing from one is plagiarism, stealing from many is research."

M.S. Did you ever have the opportunity to study with any famous jazz guitarists?

W.M. As I mentioned earlier I had the privilege of studying with George Van Eps in the early seventies. As far as harmonic concepts and guitar fingerings go, he was a genius and had a terrific system for expanding simple triads into unusual and

enlarged voicings. The first lesson I had with him was based on what he called "The Basic Voicing Chart." I am still working with that page and constantly discover more in the Van Eps matrix. George also showed me the most practical comping forms for rhythm guitar using tenths with an inner-voice movement. Remember, he played with some of the greatest big bands as a rhythm guitarist. That was one of his specialties, along with "lap piano." I still use most of the chord forms and information he gave me to this day.

I had a couple of very informal lessons with Joe Pass in the mid-seventies. That's the only way he taught, informally. However, one of those lessons lasted for several hours. This was during the height of his Virtuoso period. He straightened me out on chord-melody arranging and gave me some tips for improvising. At another lesson I remember asking him how I could develop his type of speed in single-note playing. His reply was typically Joe: "Practice playing fast." That's classic Pass, Zen-like in its immediacy and simplicity. Where George was ingenious Joe was ingenuous.

In July 1972 I was fortunate to attend the Johnny Smith Guitar Seminar in Colorado. It was a week-long series where Johnny taught a master class all day and then performed at night. And as if that wasn't enough, Chet Atkins was the guest clinician at the seminar! One of my strongest and happiest musical memories is seeing the two of them jump into an impromptu jam on "Lover Come Back To Me," and to experience their camaraderie and exchanges of wisecracks. That's when I first met Johnny in person. I had known him only through his music for a couple of years prior. He was an early influence, along with Howard Roberts, Wes Montgomery and Kenny Burrell. When I was a kid I learned and played his version of "Shiny Stockings" (Phase II, Verve), and it still reminds me of him whenever I call it at a gig. He played the tune at the seminar, in fact he opened his set with it, and it tickled me to no end. I learned more about his playing and jazz by watching him interact with the band than I could in a dozen books. I was delighted to get to know him better since 1998 when he received the Lifetime Achievement Award at Duquesne's guitar camp. He wrote a very nice blurb for me on the Best of Jazz Guitar book. Johnny is one of the warmest, kindest, and most sincere people I have ever known.

M.S. What interests do you have outside of music, and what personal philosophies have you found that have made an impact on your music and your life?

W.M. One of my favorite recreational activities is bicycling along the beach here in Southern California. Going to the gym and working out is a rare pleasure, as is jogging. They are necessary breaks for the typical sedentary lifestyle of a recording and writing profession. On the flip side I enjoy evenings out wine tasting, fine dining and having good conversation. My wife is a gifted gourmet cook and we engage in a lot of rewarding culinary experiments at home. These days I am putting a lot of my spare time into home improvement. We just moved into a new place. I like to read philosophy and history as well as current events. I also enjoy tinkering with the Rolls. It's a long-term restoration project.

And I try to make time to involve myself in art work. My favorite medium is pen and ink drawing. I am an avid student of religion and have explored numerous disciplines

and paths in my life: Yoga, meditation, Buddhism, Sufism (especially the Nasrudin collections), Hinduism, the works of Paramhansa Yogananda, the traditional Russian Orthodox faith, many forms of contemporary Christianity and general metaphysics. These days I am very active in the life and the music ministry of my local church in Solana Beach. I feel these disciplines have impacted me and improved my outlook. They have allowed me to get in touch with my spiritual side and find a higher purpose in life.

M.S. With your busy schedule and constant deadlines, do you find much time for personal practice or gigs nowadays?

W.M. I try to make time to play things purely for enjoyment and illumination every day. It's not always possible. When I do have the time, generally at the end of a long day in the studio or at the writing table, I have a bite, get re-energized and pick up the guitar, usually the Super KB, to run through some re-harmonizing of chord-melody pieces. I also practice single-note improvisations on a set of changes, reinforcing the language. These days it's "Giant Steps," "Stella By Starlight," "Angel Eyes," "'Round Midnight," and "Dreamsville." I have been playing out more than usual lately. Last weekend I did three concerts with a full symphony, big band and 40-piece choir at a big local Christmas show. It was great playing a jazz-oriented version of "Greensleeves" with the ensemble. I am also playing some regular jazz gigs with my good friend Robert Parker on keyboards. These vary from a duo to larger groups and give me a lot of room to stretch out and improvise.

M.S. Wolf, on behalf of Just Jazz Guitar Magazine, I want to thank you for taking the time to share your many thoughts with the readers. In closing, what can we expect to see from you in the near future?

W.M. In the continuing jazz guitar series we have plans to do book-CDs on Jim Hall, Barney Kessel, and a sequel/volume two to The Best of Jazz Guitar. I really want to present some of the guitarists we couldn't get into the first volume: George Van Eps, Jimmy Raney, Chuck Wayne, Henry Johnson, Jimmy Bruno, Bill De Arango, Oscar Moore. There are others. I am also in the process of filming an extensive instructional guitar DVD combining jazz, blues and rock styles. I will continue to write monthly columns for Vintage Guitar Magazine and hopefully move the jazz guitar art form forward with Jazz Improv's Guitar Pages. Of course you can look for my weekly articles in cyber space at Line 6's Guitar Port site. You know, one day I'd like to have the time to record and release some of my own music.

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Visit Wolf Marshall on the web at **www.wolfmarshall.com**.