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## George Van Eps's Harmonic Mechanisms for Guitar: Concepts and Influence on Jazz Guitar Education and Performance Practice

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**George Van Eps's Harmonic Mechanisms for Guitar:  
Concepts and Influence on Jazz Guitar Education and Performance Practice**

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Technological University Dublin  
Conservatory of Music and Drama

Supervisors: Dr Philip Graydon and Dr Michael Nielsen

February 2021

Jimmy Brennan BA (Hons) MA

## **Dedication**

To my friend and teacher Breffni Murphy, whose incredible knowledge is surpassed only by his generosity.

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The many jazz guitarists who responded to my inquiries and acknowledged the influence of George Van Eps on their guitar style, including Steve Herberman, Dr Martin Taylor MBE, Sheryl Bailey, Frank Vignola, Tom Lippincott and Jimmy Bruno amongst others. I would also like to thank all the professors of guitar at Berklee Guitar Department who acknowledged the role of George Van Eps's publications in shaping guitar education at Berklee. And finally, thanks to all of those who responded to emails, offered comments and answered questions. To all of the above, your help is deeply appreciated.

## Abstract

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine the content and influence of George Van Eps's *Harmonic Mechanisms for Guitar*, with particular emphasis on the fields of education and performance practice. Key principles from the volumes are demonstrated through notation, analysis and audio reproduction.

Chapter one is a literature review of the available secondary sources that cover aspects of GVE's teaching and related methodology.

Chapter two examines GVE's early influences to understand the contextual basis for his *Harmonic Mechanisms* series.

Chapter three presents the ten core concepts contained within GVE's *Harmonic Mechanisms* series and addresses certain editorial shortcomings which have impacted the accessibility of the volumes.

Chapter four assesses GVE's influence on both jazz guitar pedagogy and performance practice.

I have recorded all transcribed examples and etudes contained within the dissertation as a practice-based inquiry of the methodologies contained within *Harmonic Mechanisms for Guitar* and related works. The defining of such concepts along with their recording and use as vehicles for the composition of solo guitar etudes is unprecedented.

This project finds that GVE's *Harmonic Mechanisms* series has, and continues to have, a substantial impact on contemporary jazz guitar education and performance, much of which has, until the current research, been unacknowledged.

# Chapter One

## Literature Review

### Introduction

This chapter assesses the scholarly writings and related media regarding GVE's guitar style and his *Harmonic Mechanisms* series. From the outset, the lack of authoritative information on the latter is uncovered, and the need for a serious study is duly stressed. Although he worked extensively as a session musician and innovated the use of the seven-string guitar in American jazz, GVE's significance is defined largely by his *Harmonic Mechanisms* series, a set of three volumes that are amongst the most thorough accounts of jazz guitar harmony and voice-leading—the importance of which have been, in the main, largely underestimated until now. GVE was also one of jazz guitar's earliest pedagogues and a pioneer of the classical fingerstyle approach to jazz guitar as a solo instrument.<sup>1</sup>

This dissertation fills a gap within the existing works in the field on jazz guitar in several important respects; namely for:

- Its assessment of the influence of GVE's publications on later pedagogical works and contemporary performance practice
- Its clear and concise description of the essential concepts contained within the *Harmonic Mechanisms* volumes
- The crystallisation of the essential concepts into newly composed etudes

### Research Questions

This research aims to answer to following questions:

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<sup>1</sup> While George Van Eps is best known for his contributions to the field of jazz guitar, he spent eight years studying classical guitar before writing his first method book.

- What are the underlying concepts and techniques taught in GVE's *Harmonic Mechanisms* series?
- How GVE's publications influenced jazz guitar education?
- How GVE's publications influenced performance practice?
- How can the principles contained within GVE's publications be applied to the field of solo guitar composition?

## **Related Literature**

### **Interviews**

One of the greatest sources of information on GVE comes from an interview with the late Ted Greene, lasting more than three hours and resulting in Greene's 1981 article on GVE for *Guitar Player Magazine* (August 1981). Many aspects of GVE's style are addressed along with opinions on several music and guitar related topics. The article coincided with the release of GVE's *Harmonic Mechanisms* series and served to promote his publications. While a valuable source of information, it does not address important topics which are beyond the scope of a brief article, such as the application of the voice-leading principles in the *Harmonic Mechanisms* series and how they may be applied within the context of jazz guitar arranging/composing/improvisation and performance. The recent availability of the full audio recording of the interview offers a considerably more in-depth insight than the final article for *Guitar Player Magazine* and is currently among the most comprehensive sources of information on GVE's thoughts and opinions outside of his publications.<sup>2</sup>

Two shorter interviews have recently become available on [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com), including a thirty-minute interview and a one-minute interview, both intended for radio.

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<sup>2</sup> This interview is now in the public domain in both audio and written formats.

In an interview with Bill Milkowski dated 24/10/2009, the contemporary jazz guitarist, Kurt Rosenwinkel, cites GVE as a strong influence on his harmony, admiring his ability to create fluid contrapuntal lines via his impressive left-hand technique.<sup>3</sup>

Another interview with GVE's collaborator, Howard Alden, records several of his thoughts on GVE's influence, including insights into his performance practice. An additional video, which captures a workshop given by Alden demonstrates how his approach to teaching and practice, is very akin to the voice-leading exercises of the *Harmonic Mechanisms* series, whereby harmonised scales are stripped down to a series of moving intervals—used here by Alden to harmonise a jazz standard one interval at a time. Alden also reveals how he was inspired to switch to seven-string guitar upon working with GVE, during which time he realised the potential of the instrument.<sup>4</sup>

### **Magazine Articles**

Apart from the previously mentioned article by Ted Greene, *Guitar Player* featured several short articles on GVE including features from September 1970 and February 1971 which contained interview excerpts and later January 1994 and July 1995 editions, both of which included short examples of GVE's voice-leading exercises and some comments quoted from his 1981 interview with Greene. In addition to the above articles, *Guitar Player's* January 1990 issue announced GVE as the recipient of its Editors Award for Lifetime Achievement. The article described GVE as follows: 'combining awesome technique, a great sense of swing and a brilliant musical imagination, he remains the undisputed master of fretboard harmony. In fact, many of his ideas are so advanced that they have yet to be utilized by chord-melody

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<sup>3</sup> Despite GVE's classical influence, his left-hand technique was considerably different to that of the classical guitarist. These differences are addressed in Chapter Two.

<sup>4</sup> Full interviews available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4yHX2gQOjio>, and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3j4YMcl7P4s>

players in general'.<sup>5</sup> *Just Jazz Guitar* magazine published a posthumous tribute in its May 1999 edition which included contributions in the form of brief respectful words from several of GVE's admirers including Ted Greene.

### **Newspaper Articles**

*The Los Angeles Times* has published several articles on GVE, including an article by Jim Washburn and two articles by Bill Kohlhaase, the latter of which was a posthumous tribute.<sup>6</sup>

The online newspaper [www.independent.co.uk](http://www.independent.co.uk) also published an obituary written by Steve Voce.<sup>7</sup>

### **Published Books**

The most recent addition to the literature on GVE is a biography titled *Guitar Man: The Story of George Van Eps* by Harrison Stephens who, according to the book's description, set out to write GVE's biography and subsequently interviewed GVE weekly for several years:

Harrison Stephens was a journalist who was also a jazz guitarist. He was influenced by the legendary George Van Eps, who had played with big-name bands and on dozens of records and soundtracks. George Van Eps was perhaps best-known as the "father of the 7-string guitar". Stephens set out to write a biography of Mr Van Eps, and in the late 1980s and early '90s, the two met every Thursday for a couple of years and had conversations about Van Eps's remarkable career. This manuscript was the first draft of the book that was shaped from those stories. Not published until now, the original document was found on Mr Stephens's desk following his death in 2015.<sup>8</sup>

*Guitar Man: The Story of George Van Eps* was published by Amazon Publishing on a print to order basis along with a Kindle edition, and although the book itself contains no publication date, [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) dates the paperback edition of the latter as being 29 March 2018. As the only published biography on GVE, it is of considerable significance to the current study.

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<sup>5</sup> Cited in Stephenson, H. *Guitar Man: The Story of George Van Eps*, 2018, 136.

<sup>6</sup> Washburn, W. (1998) 'George Van Eps: A Life in Harmony', *Los Angeles Times*, doi: 02.1219. Viewed 12/04/2018. Kohlhaase, B. (1993) 'Jazz Review: George Van Eps Is a One-Man Band at Vinnie's', *Los Angeles Times*, doi: 12.071993. Viewed 03/05/2018. Kohlhaase, B. (1999) 'George Van Eps, a Harmonic Memorium', *Los Angeles Times*, doi:01.021999. Viewed 03/05/2018.

<sup>7</sup> Voce, S. (1998) 'Obituary: George Van Eps' *Independent.co.uk*, doi: 08.121998. Viewed 03/05/2018.

<sup>8</sup> Stephens, H. 2018. Jacket Material.

Although it is one of the most complete and important sources of information regarding the life and career of GVE, the crucial failing of *Guitar Man: The Story of George Van Eps* is made explicit by the very circumstances of its ‘publication’; it is, ultimately, an unfinished project, released following the death of its author in the (draft) form in which it was found and, as such, lacks several important aspects, such as references and sources for validation of the claims made therein.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, the narrow focus on biographical and anecdotal content has greatly overshadowed any effort to understand GVE’s thought-processes and technical considerations concerning the areas that, more than any other, he devoted his life to—those of the acts of solo jazz guitar-arranging and performance (as addressed in Erik Swanson’s doctoral thesis *Harmonically Speaking: George Van Eps and the Great American Songbook*) and the drafting and completion of his instructional volumes, their essential concepts and their influence on wider jazz guitar education and performance considerations (the focus of this study). While *Guitar Man: The Story of George Van Eps* is the only book that focuses solely on the life and career of GVE, *Strings of Memories: Jazz & Studio Guitar Pioneers & Recording Studio Legend Hollywood Session Players* by Jim LaDiana, contains a chapter on GVE which includes interview excerpts with GVE’s daughter Kay Van Eps Adikes who also edited GVE’s *Harmonic Mechanisms* series. Described as ‘a retrospective of a jazz guitar pioneer with daughter Kay Van Eps’, told ‘through chronicled events and a daughters memory’, the chapter offers considerable biographical information in Kay’s words in the form of fondly recalled anecdotes.<sup>10</sup> Kay’s admiration for her father is evident throughout the chapter.

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<sup>9</sup> The question of authenticity led this author to contact the guitarist, Steve Herberman (who is referred to later in this dissertation), upon which he acknowledged both his own involvement in the book’s ‘publication’, along with the presence of audio recordings in GVE’s own words that validate the contents. Email correspondence with the author, 05/07/2018.

<sup>10</sup> LaDiana, J. *Strings of Memories*, 2011, 75.

Several books dealing with more general topics of jazz guitar history and related areas such as those listed below have included information on GVE, although this is generally limited to a short biography and in some cases, a transcription of a guitar solo.<sup>11</sup>

## Websites

Although at the time of writing, there is no website dedicated to GVE and subsequently relatively little information pertaining to his work available online, a tribute website dedicated to Ted Greene— [www.tedgreene.com](http://www.tedgreene.com)— offers various insights on the influence GVE exerted on him, including handwritten notes by Greene himself and recorded conversations with his students. GVE and his publications appear in various discussion threads in forums both on the above website along with [www.jazzguitar.be/forums](http://www.jazzguitar.be/forums), which is a popular discussion platform for many jazz guitar related subjects. Discussions on GVE and his publications are also present on <https://groups.google.com> and <https://groups.yahoo.com>. The website [www.prezi.com](http://www.prezi.com), which is dedicated to slideshows, contains a short presentation on GVE dated June 2014 made by a user named Miles Hubs titled *George Van Eps and his Effect on Music Today*. This presentation focuses on GVE's invention of the seven-string guitar in Western culture and its use amongst modern guitarists.

A short biographical article written in admiration of GVE appears on <http://www.larrygrinnell.com>, dated 09/03/2012, and another short biographical article dated 1999 appears on [www.thejazzhouse.org](http://www.thejazzhouse.org).

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<sup>11</sup> *Masters of the Plectrum Guitar*, William Bay, Mel Bay Publications Inc, Missouri, 1995; *Interviews with the Jazz Greats*, Charles Chapman, Mel Bay Publications, Missouri 2010; *Historical Dictionary of Jazz*, John S. Davies, Scarecrow Press, Maryland, 2002; *Strings of Memories*, Jim LaDiana, Islandborn Press, Maine, 2011; *The Great Jazz Guitarists*, Ivor Mairants, Sanctuary, London, 2002; *The History of the Guitar in Jazz*, Norman Mongan, Oak Publications, New York, 1983; *The Guitar in Jazz an Anthology*, James Sallis, University of Nebraska Press, Nebraska, 1996; *The Jazz Guitar, its Evolution and it's Players*, Maurice J. Summerfield, Ashley Mark, Blaydon on Tyne, UK, 1979.



GVE receives several honorary mentions in various online blogs, one of which is entirely dedicated to him [www.georgevaneps.blogspot.com](http://www.georgevaneps.blogspot.com), however, despite its promising title, it contains less than 1000 words in total and offers little more than several public domain photographs and videos along with basic biographical information.

### **Instructional Material**

While GVE is often excluded from historically-focused jazz guitar instructional material, a recent exception is Jon Wheatley's *Jazz Swing Guitar* (2016, Berklee Press) which places GVE alongside his contemporaries in the form of style-based examples.<sup>12</sup> This inclusion is the exception, however, as the predominantly single-note styles of Django Reinhardt and Charlie Christian are largely viewed as being synonymous with swing era jazz guitar. While Wheatley's publication places GVE's guitar style in a historical perspective, other works have focused purely on the reproduction of GVE's compositions, such as the Spanish guitarist Jordie Farres' book/CD '*The George Van Eps Transcriptions*' and Charles Chapman's, *George Van Eps Guitar Solos* which is a re-publication of early works by GVE. GVE's ideas have inspired jazz guitarist Steve Herberman, who has recorded over fifty instructional videos for guitar at the time of writing—several of which make direct reference to GVE in their description and many more presumably owe much of their content to GVE's ideas.<sup>13</sup>

### **Theses and Dissertations**

Completed in late 2017 at The Graduate College of The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Erick Swanson's doctoral thesis, *Harmonically Speaking: George Van Eps and*

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<sup>12</sup> As explained in the chapter summary, GVE's style was so unique that it was often ignored, as it did not fit easily into a style or genre and contrasted with the largely single-note style of the swing era.

<sup>13</sup> This topic is addressed further in Chapter Four.

*the Great American Songbook* overlapped with this work and has, therefore, become a late (but welcome) supplement to the current research rather than an initial touchstone.

Swanson's thesis is based largely on the transcription and analysis<sup>14</sup> of eight of GVE's solo guitar arrangements as follows:

- 1) The Blue Room
- 2) I Didn't Know What Time It Was
- 3) Let's Do It (Let's Fall In Love)
- 4) Lover
- 5) Lover Man
- 6) The Very Thought Of You
- 7) What Is This Thing Called Love
- 8) Why Was I Born?

Swanson's first chapter offers perhaps the most complete overview of the life of GVE, rivalled only by the aforementioned *Guitar Man*, which was not commercially available during Swanson's research, while his Chapter Two ('Arranging and Performance Style') offers a clear and detailed examination of the defining characteristics of GVE's approach to solo guitar. As Swanson's thesis contains only two chapters with a total of nineteen sub-headings, it is examined here according to the latter. In his 'Biographical Sketch', Swanson compiles much of the then-available literature on GVE into a coherent depiction of the guitarist's formative years. 'The Lap Piano' addresses GVE's innovation of the seven-string guitar and its logistical implications for harmony. 'Technique' draws attention to GVE's strong classical influence, especially concerning his right-hand, fingerstyle technique.

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<sup>14</sup> Swanson also performed all eight pieces in a public recital as part of his research.

‘Repertoire and Recordings’ draws attention to GVE’s primary recorded and performance output being in the standard jazz repertoire of show tunes commonly referred to as ‘The Great American Songbook’. In ‘Methodology’, Swanson documents his process of transcribing his chosen pieces from GVE’s repertoire. In Chapter Two’s ‘Arranging and Performance Style’, Swanson goes into great detail on GVE’s arranging methodologies under the following headings: ‘Rhythmic Approach’, which examines GVE’s use of various rhythmic devices such as rubato, swing phrasing, syncopation and hemiola; ‘Harmonic Structures’, which examines GVE’s use of seventh chords, triads and voice-motion; ‘Drop 3 7<sup>th</sup> Chords and Drop 2 7<sup>th</sup> Chords’, which each examine GVE’s use of the above chord voicings in his arrangements; and ‘Shell Voicings’, whereby the author points to GVE’s frequent omission of the fifth degree from voicings.

‘Triads’ points to GVE’s use of both spread and closed-voiced triads to create specific effects such as the thickening of a melody. ‘Other Vertical Structures’ points to less-frequently employed chord voicings not addressed in the above examples.

‘Melody’ addresses GVE’s treatment of a tunes melody in terms of its connection to harmony and left-hand guitar technique, noting that GVE would often sustain harmony while simultaneously allowing free melodic voice-motion through his advanced left-hand technique, with a result similar to the effect accomplished by a pianist through the coordination of both left and right hands. ‘Reharmonization’ points to GVE’s contrapuntal approach to harmony.

‘Harmonic Embellishment’ draws attention to GVE’s use of chord substitution and chromatic passing chords. ‘Harmonic Elaboration’ is similar to the previous section, but points to longer passages of chord substitutions, often accomplished by implementing a stepwise bass-line over a passage of static harmony. ‘Full Reharmonization’ refers to GVE’s practice of

rewriting the harmony of established tunes. This mostly occurred in the form of adding jazz style harmony to simple popular tunes which were based on basic harmonic progressions.

‘Form’ examines GVE’s use of introductions and codas as additions to the form of a tune.

Although Swanson’s thesis offers much biographical information on GVE, its primary purpose is to assess GVE’s arranging style as applied to solo guitar; as Swanson notes:

For this project, eight of his finest and most complex unaccompanied recordings, arranged from [The] Great American Songbook, have been transcribed, spanning a period from 1955–1994. My objective is to understand how Van Eps approached arranging for the solo guitar in terms of his varied rhythmic styles, his treatment of melody, the vertical chord structures that he used (as well as how he approached moving harmony), and his approach to reharmonization.<sup>15</sup>

In this regard, Swanson’s thesis differs from this work, which assesses the content and influence of GVE’s publications. Although Swanson’s thesis has made an unprecedented contribution to the understanding of GVE’s arranging style, it makes no effort to assess the contribution of his publications, despite acknowledging such as his defining contribution. In

Swanson’s words:

While Van Eps was held in the highest esteem by his peers for his playing abilities, he is perhaps better known now more for his prodigious output as a pedagogue than his recorded music. Towards the end of his career, Van Eps published a series of three voluminous books known as *Harmonic Mechanisms for Guitar*, which offered the student a thorough set of exercises intended to explore how to play multiple voices on their instrument.<sup>16</sup>

While Swanson’s work can be considered an important contribution to the academic literature on solo jazz guitar arranging styles, it leaves much scope for the understanding of GVE’s methodologies as presented in his *Harmonic Mechanisms* series which can be considered the culmination of his life’s work and his defining contribution to the field of jazz guitar.

In his Master's Dissertation, ‘*Ted Greene: Sound, Time and Unlimited Possibility*’ (Newark, New Jersey, 2015), Terrence McManus highlights the influence GVE had on Greene. This

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<sup>15</sup> Swanson, R. *Harmonically Speaking: George Van Eps and the Great American Songbook*, University of Illinois, 2017, abstract (Authors note – reharmonization is here, and in subsequent quotations, kept in its American-English spelling in order to preserve authenticity).

<sup>16</sup> Swanson, R. 2017, 1.

influence is particularly important in understanding how GVE's harmonic ideas may have been disseminated through Greene's 1971 book *Chord Chemistry*, which has become a classic in the field of jazz guitar harmony.<sup>17</sup> Another important feature of this dissertation is the inclusion of an interview with noted contemporary jazz guitarist Ben Monder, in which the latter states that he has studied *The George Van Eps Method for Guitar* along with the first volume in his *Harmonic Mechanisms* series, thereby highlighting GVE's influence at the forefront of contemporary jazz guitar practice.

Esteban Marquez' master's thesis *Incorporating Barney Kessel's Methodology in Jazz Guitar Instruction*, (University of Texas at El Paso, 2000), is primarily a study of the guitar style of Barney Kessel, based on the analysis of four of Kessel's arrangements/improvisations and how they can be used for classroom-based instruction to develop jazz guitar technique. The pieces addressed in the study are:

'Barney's Blues'

'Our Love Is Here to Stay'

'Cry Me a River'

'Satin Doll'

As Marquez observes: 'the objective of this paper is to examine how the music of Barney Kessel can be used to help further our knowledge and appreciation of jazz in an educational environment'.<sup>18</sup> In his introduction, Marquez acknowledges GVE as possessing a style distinct from the more popular single-line plectrum based style of jazz guitar and uses it to create a contrasting comparison to that of Kessel as follows:

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<sup>17</sup> George Van Eps's influence on *Chord Chemistry* is addressed further in Chapter Four.

<sup>18</sup> Marquez, E. *Incorporating Barney Kessel's Methodology in Jazz Guitar Instruction* 2000, Abstract.

The electric guitar came into existence in the mid-1930s. It was a new and distinct instrument. The instrument was not well received when it was first introduced because it created a new set of variables when it was employed in a traditional music setting. When this new instrument appeared, many guitarists approached it as if it was an acoustic instrument; they attempted to play it using either a classical guitar or a “banjo” style of technique. Gradually, some guitarists were able to develop a style of playing using a fingerstyle approach. One of these innovative guitarists was George Van Eps, who described his approach to the instrument as “lap style piano”. Using an advanced harmonic approach to playing the instrument, Van Eps’ harmonic vocabulary was profuse in color and contrast. Barney Kessel’s approach to the instrument was different from this. Kessel played the instrument using a plectrum (pick), and he also played more in the style of another great guitarist, Charlie Christian, who approached playing jazz on the guitar much as a vocalist or a wind player might, in a more lyrical or melodic style.<sup>19</sup>

From this point on, Marquez places a great emphasis on Charlie Christian’s influence on Kessel, and while he acknowledges GVE as a guitarist with a style that strongly contrasts with that of Christian, Marquez fails to acknowledge GVE’s influence on Kessel, despite such influence being acknowledged several times by Kessel himself.<sup>20</sup>

While Charlie Christian was perhaps the most important influence on Kessel’s guitar style, Kessel drew from several sources, not least among which were GVE’s early *Guitar Method* and approach to harmony in general. Indeed, the characteristic which most distinguishes Kessel’s guitar style from that of Christian’s is his use of chord melody and harmonic sophistication which was absent in Christian’s single-line style. In this regard, Marquez thesis is another example of GVE’s publications being overlooked as a formative influence on popular jazz guitar styles.

Matthew Robert Dunne’s doctoral thesis, *Nine Jazz Etudes for Classical Guitar* (University of Texas Austin 2002), is devoted to the writing and analysis of a series of etudes for classical guitar which represent certain stylistic elements of jazz guitar loosely pertaining to classical eras within jazz (such as swing modal, etc). During his introduction of jazz guitar styles, Dunne traverses from early blues and gospel-based influences via slave settlement in New Orleans to a brief mention of Brazilian influences on to Django Reinhardt and Charlie

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<sup>19</sup> Marquez, E. *Incorporating Barney Kessel’s Methodology in Jazz Guitar Instruction* 2000, Abstract, 1/2.

<sup>20</sup> GVE’s influence on Barney Kessel is addressed in Chapter Four.

Christian's single-line style through to electric and modal influences without mentioning GVE, who personified perfectly a balanced mix of classical (fingerstyle) technique as applied to the language of jazz, which is central to Dunne's study. The lack of acknowledgement for GVE is again felt in his *Etude 6* which features contrary motion between the bass voice below an upper triad - a technique highly reminiscent of GVE. That such material is presented without acknowledging GVE is a testament to how he has been largely forgotten, not only to the public but also to the educated researcher within the field of classical and jazz guitar.

Similarly, Guilherme Caldeira Loss Vincens' doctoral thesis *The Arrangements of Roland Dyens and Sérgio Assad: Innovations in Adapting Jazz Standards and Jazz-Influenced Popular Works to the Solo Classical Guitar* (University of Arizona, 2009) highlights the abovementioned classical guitarists' contributions to the repertoire of jazz standards for classical guitar, pointing to the greater degree of polyphony found in the arrangements when compared with classic solo jazz guitar approaches due to the implementation of the classical fingerstyle technique. Again, the author does not acknowledge GVE's contributions in the field of fingerstyle solo jazz guitar which is also characterised by its polyphonic approach.

Quentin Angus's doctoral thesis *Phrasing and Polyrhythm in Contemporary Jazz Guitar: A Portfolio of Recorded Performances and Exegesis* (University of Adelaide, 2014) offers an in-depth examination of polyrhythm in the context of jazz guitar. This subject is addressed in chapter four of GVE's *Harmonic Mechanisms Volume Three* titled 'odd against even', yet Angus makes no mention of GVE's work and is seemingly unaware of such.

In his Master's thesis, *An Integral Approach for Jazz Guitar Improvisation* (Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 2005), Rocco Matone proposes a system of left-hand fingering that can be learned systematically by the jazz guitar student. Matone makes

several mentions of GVE's fingering suggestions and string-set groupings as found in his *Harmonic Mechanisms* series, but points out that the volumes are presented in a disorganised manner and therefore largely inaccessible to the reader. Matone's work is helpful both in its mention (although brief) of GVE's fingerings along with that of several other jazz guitarists and in his observation of the inaccessibility of his work, but again, such topics are subject to brief mentions as opposed to critical study.

Other doctoral theses (such as *Strategies in Jazz Guitar Improvisation* by Stein Helge Solstad, (Norwegian Academy of Music, Oslo, 2015) have focused on jazz guitar improvisation, but have neglected to address chordal based improvisation, favouring the more well-known, single-line approach.

In the doctoral thesis, '*An Analysis of Freddie Green's Guitar Style and his Importance in the History of Jazz Guitar*' by Lewis Hay Dickert Jr, (University of Memphis, 1994) Dickert states: 'It is concluded that Green was unique among jazz guitarists in that he focused solely on rhythm guitar playing and voice-leading, in both of which he had no equal. Consequently, his impact on jazz guitar will continue to be felt for many generations'.<sup>21</sup> While it is true that Green was unique amongst jazz guitarists for his exclusive focus on rhythmic accompaniment and may rightfully be considered the foremost exponent of such, the use of voice-leading in his technique is overstated here. Although Green did successfully achieve impressive voice-leading in the context of a block chordal technique, GVE's voice-leading went far beyond such a method, implementing sophisticated counterpoint in a solo guitar setting, whereby melody, harmony and countermelody are applied simultaneously. Also noteworthy is Green's early study with Alan Reuss, himself a student of GVE. As pointed out in Dickert's research:

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<sup>21</sup> Dickert, L. *An Analysis of Freddie Green's Guitar Style and his Importance in the History of Jazz Guitar*, 1994, 16.



According to the late Steve Jordan, rhythm guitarist for the Bradley-Mckinley Band, Green studied for a short time with Allan Reuss, Benny Goodman's rhythm guitarist: "Freddie Green told me that Allan Reuss straightened out his rhythm work when he was first working with Count Basie, shortly before I went to Allan for help when I was twenty-years old and playing with the Bradley-McKinley Band". Jordan was twenty-years old in 1939, therefore it can be concluded that Green studied with Reuss that same year. Reuss taught rhythm guitar by watching and listening to his students and then using a pencil and yellow pad to draw open-voiced chord diagrams and explain the concepts he felt the student needed at that particular time. Reuss learned rhythm guitar directly from George Van Eps. Therefore, Green's school of thought paralleled that of Van Eps.<sup>22</sup>

The above statement highlights how GVE has so often indirectly impacted the development of jazz guitar.<sup>23</sup>

### **The Need for Research**

From the above discussion, it can be seen that while several sources augment the understanding of GVE as a performer, arranger and inventor, there are very limited materials available that directly assess his *Harmonic Mechanisms* series and their role in the development of jazz guitar performance and teaching methodologies. Although GVE must be considered an important figure in jazz guitar both in terms of his highly personal approach and emphasis on harmony, the scope for research remains great, as none of the above publications has directly addressed his *Harmonic Mechanisms* series, despite the latter being the culmination of forty years of study and therefore his life's work. While the majority of academic writing on jazz guitar have thus far sought primarily to identify the idiosyncrasies (and thus the style) of important figures within the genre, this research contrasts by examining important pedagogical output and assessing both its impact on contemporary practice along with its largely untapped potentiality and how it may be used in the context of performance and arrangement.

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<sup>22</sup> Jordan, S. and Scanlan, T. Cited in *Rhythm Man: Fifty Years in Jazz* (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan press, 1991, 136).

<sup>23</sup> George Van Eps's influence on Green and the legacy of jazz rhythm guitar is discussed further in Chapter Four.

This thesis further draws attention to the very origins of the harmonically-sophisticated approach which is prevalent in modern jazz guitar as expressed through triadic voice-leading practices. The research presented here also points to the origin of a formalised approach to the study of improvisation for jazz guitar and demonstrates how this approach became a touchstone for modern jazz guitar education as realised by Berklee Guitar Department and Musicians Institute amongst others. This research also presents the essential concepts contained within the *Harmonic Mechanisms* in a clear, applicable and musical form through newly composed etudes based on these concepts.

### **Methodology and Procedure**

In order to gain insight into GVE's methodologies, an analysis of the content of each book in his three-volume *Harmonic Mechanisms for Guitar* is undertaken to lay the foundation for understanding key concepts and devices presented throughout the volumes. This understanding is then distilled into a presentation of the key concepts and techniques which form the basis of GVE's approach to guitar. These concepts are then used as the basis for the composition of a series of etudes for solo guitar which demonstrates the concept in a musical application. Along with analysing GVE's publications themselves, this thesis also examines their influence on later publications and contemporary current practice. Having identified the key elements of GVE's style, an examination into the field of jazz guitar instructional literature and media exposes stylistic elements which have derived from GVE's methodologies. An examination of the arrangements of several contemporary performers who can be traced through the lineage of GVE's instruction highlights his influence on contemporary performance practice. Fresh insights are gathered from contemporary performers and educators within the field via interview to assess GVE's influence on his contemporaries and current practice.

To fully appreciate GVE's methodologies, I, the author, will record all of the transcriptions included in this dissertation consisting of exercises and pieces from GVE's publications along with those of his successors and each of the etudes demonstrating the essential concepts contained in the volumes. The audio recordings will be submitted as a separate volume which comprises a salient part of the research.

## **Conclusion**

A growing number of theses address the music of high profile jazz musicians to further the understanding of jazz music and its place in society. This has greatly increased the amount of credible information on jazz in a musicological sense and is, in turn, helping to clarify a genre that has been largely undocumented until relatively recently. While the field of jazz studies is steadily increasing, serious critical appreciation of the early jazz guitar is still relatively limited (and less so, the educational material written by such guitarists). This thesis adds to the understanding of GVE and his contributions to the fields of jazz guitar education and performance practice, paying particular attention to his publications which have remained in the shadows of guitar history.

GVE had the unfortunate fate of falling between two genres to the extent of being largely ignored by both; his classical influence flourished at a time when jazz guitar was growing ever closer towards its cousin (rock music) and his strong association with jazz guitar performance left his works unexamined by the serious classical guitarist. Despite these impediments, GVE's influence is evident in the music of several important modern players and his ideas are experiencing a revival in modern times, albeit in a form that does not always acknowledge its origins. Moreover, this research demonstrates how GVE's methodologies have had a profound though often indirect influence on jazz guitar education and have influenced the curriculum of some of the most respected jazz guitar institutes and educators

in the world. It is the purpose of this work to draw attention to the origins of the harmonic approach to jazz guitar and place GVE in the historical context in which he belongs.

## Chapter Two:

### Pre-Harmonic Mechanisms: GVE's Early Influences

#### Introduction

This chapter examines GVE's early life, musical influences and educational output prior to the publication of the *Harmonic Mechanisms* series. This includes an observation of the influences shaped by his early family life, including his fascination with harmony and his desire to reproduce pianistic harmony on the guitar. Also noted is the almost unparalleled exposure GVE had to the most prominent jazz and popular musicians of his time through his exhaustive career as a studio, big band and session guitarist.

This is followed by a survey of each of his early publications in order of publication: *The George Van Eps Method for Guitar*, *Three Compositions*, and *George Van Eps Original Guitar Solos*.<sup>24</sup>

#### Influences

GVE's obsession with music and mechanical precision are not surprising given that the Van Eps family can be traced back through six generations of musicians and watchmakers. As the youngest in his family, GVE had the benefit of both his mother and older siblings as influences, as GVE noted: 'the house was like a conservatory'.<sup>25</sup> Being a musical family, several figures frequented the Van Eps household and were held in great esteem by GVE. One such figure was Ralph Wiley, a professor of music at Harvard University and teacher to two of GVE's older brothers. Wiley's aesthetic greatly impressed GVE and he refers to him

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<sup>24</sup> Here, GVE's early publications are given a brief review in order to more fully understand their influence on his later *Harmonic Mechanisms* series. As these early publications have been reproduced elsewhere in video, audio and written formats, a thorough analysis here is unnecessary. See, Chapman, C. (2000) *George Van Eps Guitar Solos*. Mel Bay Publishing, Missouri, and <https://www.youtube.com/user/RobMacKillop/videos>.

<sup>25</sup> Stephenson, H. 2018, 29.

with great admiration, both in his *Harmonic Mechanisms* and during his interview with Ted Greene. GVE devotes a short section in *Harmonic Mechanisms Volume Three* to Wiley, titled ‘A Late Acknowledgement to An Early Friend’ in which he refers to Wiley as a master musicologist and philosopher who never failed to be interesting and wise. GVE also notes that although he did not study directly with Wiley “there was a lot of ‘rub off’”.<sup>26</sup> Wiley seems to have embodied the kind of prestige which GVE aimed to achieve, both for himself and jazz guitar as a respectable art form.

Another notable influence on GVE was George Gershwin who, at one point, served as accompanist to GVE’s father, himself a famous banjoist and banjo maker. As GVE recalls: ‘Gershwin was my dad’s accompanist for a while...he hadn’t written *Rhapsody in Blue* yet, but he was toying with the idea, and he’d play things like that on the piano...I was 5 years old at the time...he’d bounce me on his knee...he always kept time to everything...I’d sit here and he’d bounce me up and down. It was great’.<sup>27</sup>

Although such an encounter seems incidental, GVE referred to Gershwin as ‘a remarkable man’ and spoke proudly of their early encounters. Whether responsible or not, two distinct parallels can be drawn between GVE and Gershwin’s musical direction, that of extended harmony and traditional classical technique applied to the then-contemporary setting of jazz and studio music. Also notable is the influence of GVE’s elder brother Robert Van Eps. In GVE’s words:

‘I listened to everybody. Mostly piano players...of course my brother was the biggest influence’.<sup>28</sup> GVE has cited his elder brother as his reason for creating the seven-string guitar, the purpose of which is to extend the range of the instrument through the inclusion of

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<sup>26</sup> Van Eps, G. 1982, *Harmonic Mechanisms Volume Three*, 2.

<sup>27</sup> Van Eps, G. Interview with Ted Greene, 1981.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

low A-string and octave below the fifth-string. ‘I wanted to get down where my brother was playing...a piano only goes an octave lower’.<sup>29</sup> GVE stated many times that he wished to play pianistically and often referred to his guitar as a lap piano. During his performing career, GVE worked with Fats Waller nightly for six months in the format of guitar and piano duo.<sup>30</sup> Recalling this period, GVE stated: ‘We got along harmonically and personally’, and further elaborated: ‘he would play very pointedly and suddenly go into a very velvety sea, like the doldrums. He’s still striding but he’s using the sustaining pedal. I try to imitate that; I can do it at times when everything’s going right. Art Tatum did that too and he got it from Fats’.<sup>31</sup> GVE’s reference here to Art Tatum is significant, as Kay also notes GVE both expressed a desire to play like Art Tatum on guitar and referred to the pianist as a genius.<sup>32</sup>

Along with the above jazz pianists, GVE cites several classical influences, including the harmony of Bach and the piano works of Rachmaninoff, whom he held in particular regard: I enjoy Rachmaninoff very much because he was not only a perfectionist, but he was a marvellous creator, he wrote marvellously, he was a master orchestrator and just a natural, highly inspired musician. I learned a lot listening to Rachmaninoff.<sup>33</sup> Also notable is the influence of Duke Ellington, whom GVE’s daughter Kay Van Eps referred to as ‘one of his heroes’.<sup>34</sup>

Pianist Bill Evans was also held in high regard by GVE and was referred to by the latter in his interview with Ted Greene as ‘adroit’ ‘marvellous’ and ‘inventive’.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Van Eps, G. Cited in Greene, T. 1981.

<sup>30</sup> Stephenson, H. 2018, 87

<sup>31</sup> Ibid 88.

<sup>32</sup> LaDiana, J. 2011, 87

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 21.

<sup>34</sup> LaDiana, J. 2011, 87.

<sup>35</sup> Van Eps G. Cited in Greene, T. 1981.

While the piano's harmonic capacity captured GVE's imagination, it was ultimately Eddie Lang, (whom GVE referred to as his hero) and his use of tenths that made GVE decide to devote himself to guitar.<sup>36</sup>

I didn't really copy tenths from Eddie Lang, although he used them, because I was hearing those on the piano right from 3 years old on up. But Eddie was the first one I'd heard play tenths in a pianistic way on guitar. I immediately told myself: I want that. That's how the purchase of the first Martin came about because that's the first thing that struck me – the richness, the fullness of those tenths on guitar, the way they would sustain. You couldn't do that on the banjo, so that ruled out the banjo.<sup>37</sup>

GVE would later befriend his childhood hero and eventually, the two worked side by side in The Smith Ballew Band. While GVE does not reference any publications in particular as having been influential, there are several sources that are likely to have had at least some influence on his works. Perhaps foremost among them was a work by his elder brother Robert, which was never published but had the intended title of *The Mechanics of the Piano Keyboard* and was to deal with similar content to GVE's *Harmonic Mechanisms* series but aimed at the pianist. In an interview with Ted Greene, GVE expressed his admiration for his brother's work by stating: 'Rob's book, *The Mechanics of the Piano Keyboard*...when that comes out that's going to open piano players eyes because it's so damn full of logic'.<sup>38</sup>

Although it is not known which of the Van Eps' began working on their respective educational materials first, they almost certainly influenced each other, as the title *The Mechanics of the Piano Keyboard* bears a strong resemblance to *Harmonic Mechanisms* and GVE has commented on times he and his elder brother would sit and discuss the contents of their works, both of which were in developmental stages at the same time. It is also worth noting that GVE's father Fred Van Eps published a book of banjo solos in 1923 on which the cover page describes the solos as 'carefully arranged and fingered'.<sup>39</sup> Although GVE

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<sup>36</sup> Stephenson, H. 2018, 4

<sup>37</sup> Van Eps, G. Cited in Stephenson, H. 2018, 3.

<sup>38</sup> Van Eps G. Cited in Greene, T. 1981.

<sup>39</sup> Van Eps Banjo Solos, Van Eps. F. 1923, WMJ Music Co. Inc. New York.



discounted his father's influence (having been primarily raised by his mother) it is likely to have borne some influence on GVE's later work; if only as a touchstone of publication standards.

Other likely influences were *Eddie Lang's Modern Advanced Guitar Method* (1935) and *Eddie Lang's Fingerboard Harmony for Guitar* (1936), as Lang was an early influence on GVE and both titles were published shortly before GVE started work on his first guitar method. Interestingly, Lang seems to have had little to do with either of the publications since they were written by author Dave Berend after Lang's death in 1933, although they are credited as written by Lang in collaboration with Dave Berend and focus on Lang's guitar style. Both *Eddie Lang's Modern Advanced Guitar Method* and *Eddie Lang's Fingerboard Harmony for Guitar* focus primarily on rudimentary material related to guitar playing including basic chord forms, scales, arpeggios and basic music theory. Included are several more advanced sections which are designed to appeal to Lang's fan base including *Typical Eddie Lang Chord Study* and *Exercises on an Eddie Lang Cadenza* along with excerpts from recordings by Lang. While the content itself would seem uninspiring, especially to GVE, the very notion of two publications dubiously attributed to Lang containing little more than guitar fundamentals may have inspired GVE to release his material. Indeed, GVE states in the introduction to *The George Van Eps Method for Guitar* that one of the main reasons for publishing the book was a general lack of high-quality information for guitarists of the time. During his interview with Ted Greene, GVE recalls: 'the two great influences were Eddie Lang and...the greatest influences were Eddie Lang, initially, and then I heard the potential of the instrument when I heard Segovia play'.<sup>40</sup>

As Erik Swanson notes in *Harmonically Speaking: George Van Eps and the Great American Songbook*:

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<sup>40</sup> Van Eps, G. Cited in Greene, T. 1981. Here, GVE is referring to the year 1928, when he was 15 years old.

‘Van Eps’ technical approach to solo guitar playing... is highly informed by classical guitar technique’, and:

Visual evidence shows that the orientation of his right hand was very similar to Andrés Segovia’s right hand, in which the wrist is slightly extended outward and angled down (as opposed to most modern classical guitarists who keep the wrist straight). Other aspects of classical guitar performance practice, such as the usage of *sul ponticello* (where the performer changes the timbre of a note by attacking the strings closer to the bridge), can also be heard in many of Van Eps’ recordings.<sup>41</sup>

While Swanson’s observations may be correct, GVE’s right-hand position was also influenced by a breakage that occurred in 1976, after which he changed the angle of his right-hand to compensate for the lack of mobility.<sup>42</sup> Another noteworthy example of the classical influence on GVE is that in his private practice, he only used a classical nylon-stringed instrument.<sup>43</sup>

During their 1981 interview, Ted Greene asked GVE why he did not choose to pursue a career as a classical guitarist to which GVE responded: ‘because this man [Andrés Segovia] was so great—I’m not a defeatist—but I figured he has got that field so cornered that I’m going to stay away from it. Now, I spent eight years with a classical repertoire, you know...1932 to 1940’.<sup>44</sup> The years 1932-1940 overlap with the publication of *The George Van Eps Method for Guitar* which suggests a strong classical influence on the publication. In *Strings of Memories*, GVE’s daughter recalls: ‘daddy played me to sleep every night. He played things on the cornet and then he’d play his gut string. He would play my favourite, Tarrega’s tremolo study. I love that. And he would play things for me and I would go to sleep to that’.<sup>45</sup> This classical influence goes well beyond *The George Van Eps Method for Guitar* and is prevalent in every aspect of GVE’s approach to guitar including his emphasis on solo performance, his adoption of the classical fingerstyle technique and his emphasis on

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<sup>41</sup> Swanson, E. 2017, 11/12.

<sup>42</sup> Stephenson, H. 2018, 68.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 11.

<sup>44</sup> Stephenson, H. 2018, 11.

<sup>45</sup> LaDiana, J. 2011, 80.

precise mechanical devices as a means of performance and improvisation – all of which can be considered as opposing the norms of jazz guitar as it developed through the swing, bebop and modal eras of GVE’s lifetime.

### **Professional Engagements**

Along with having the privilege of a highly musical upbringing, GVE also collaborated with many of the leading musicians of his time. Such experience has undoubtedly effected his musical development and shaped his individuality. In the years before the release of his first publication, GVE was extremely prolific as a studio guitarist, working simultaneously at Columbia Studios, Brunswick, Vactor and Decca. GVE himself estimated that in the year 1934 alone, he featured on well over 2000 recordings.<sup>46</sup> As a complete list is impossible, given that GVE’s career spanned almost seven decades and included work with many large ensembles such as big bands and orchestras, the following lists some of the more prominent musicians with whom Van Eps worked.<sup>47</sup>

Dance Bands: (listed by bandleaders)

- Smith Ballew
- Gene Fosdick and Milt Shaw
- Freddy Martin
- Henry Tobias
- The Dorsey Brothers
- Benny Goodman
- Ray Noble

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<sup>46</sup> Stephens, H. 2018. 13.

<sup>47</sup> Van Eps was said to be able to recall working in fifteen dance bands, fifty-one recording radio and television orchestras, five radio staff bands and a countless number of what he referred to as ‘pickup groups’ for casual dates. Stephens, H. 2018. 69.

- Jimmy Lytell
- Ray Conniff
- Skitch Henderson
- Pete Rugolo
- Archie Bleyer
- Adrian Rollini
- Reus Morgen
- Van Eps Brothers

Singers:

- Frank Sinatra
- Peggy Lee
- Tony Bennett
- Doris Day
- Bing Crosby
- Fred Astaire
- Sarah Vaughan
- Helen Ward
- Mel Tormé
- Yma Sumac

Prominent Musicians and arrangers:

- Louis Armstrong
- Fats Waller
- Hoagy Carmichael

- Liberace
- Jack Teagarden
- Bix Beiderbecke
- Roy Eldridge
- Ben Webster
- Coleman Hawkins
- Frankie Signorelli
- Teddy Wilson
- Nelson Riddle
- Paul Weston

### ***The George Van Eps Method for Guitar***

‘The average guitar player, way back when, wasn’t very good, and my father felt that they were too limited. They had this whole fingerboard to use and they weren’t using it. That’s why he wrote the method. He used to call it playing “wall to wall”’.<sup>48</sup>

GVE’s first book *The George Van Eps Method for Guitar* was put together in about seven weeks over the winter of 1937-1938 when GVE found out that a student of his intended to publish his own book based on GVE’s lesson material. This was done with the help of his wife, who was a journalist and several writers loaned to GVE from the Epiphone Company who published the book. Compared to the voluminous *Harmonic Mechanisms* series, *The George Van Eps Method for Guitar* offers a succinct account of GVE’s teaching style and approach to solo guitar in general, with its large emphasis on harmonic formulas and intervallic exercises.

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<sup>48</sup> Stephens, H. 2018. 84.

In the forward, GVE states that “Through this method I hope to open the door to a new type of harmonic technique and knowledge for the guitar”.<sup>49</sup> GVE points out that each of the exercises is presented in one key to save space but should be practised in all keys by the student, who should not favour one key over another. The method begins with general instructions, including holding the guitar, the pick and wrist action and hand position. While GVE’s instructions are generally similar to the classical approach and highlight the importance of developing what he calls mechanical perfection, certain aspects, such as his method of holding the guitar and the use of a plectrum are fundamentally different to the traditional classical technique. For example, while sitting with the guitar, GVE suggests crossing the left leg over the right so that the left knee rests above the right while keeping the right foot on the floor. GVE points out that although the left leg may go to sleep in this position, it will not bother the student after it becomes familiar.

Following the general instructions, page six introduces the string sets, which organises the strings into twenty-two groups of combinations as follows:

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<sup>49</sup> Van Eps, G. *The George Van Eps Method for Guitar*, 1938, 2.

1. 1<sup>st</sup> set of 3 (1/3)
2. 2<sup>nd</sup> set of 3 (2/3)
3. 3<sup>rd</sup> set of 3 (3/3)
4. 4<sup>th</sup> set of 3 (4/3)
5. 1<sup>st</sup> set of 4 (1/4)
6. 2<sup>ns</sup> set of 4 (2/4)
7. 3<sup>rd</sup> set of 4 (3/4)
8. 1<sup>st</sup> set of broken 3 (1/B3)
9. 2<sup>nd</sup> set of broken 3 (2/B3)
10. 3<sup>rd</sup> set of broken 3 (3/B3)
11. Broken 1<sup>st</sup> set of 3 (B1/3)
12. Broken 2<sup>nd</sup> set of 3 (B2/3)
13. Broken 3<sup>rd</sup> set of 3 (B3/3)
14. 1<sup>st</sup> set of broken 4 (1/B4)
15. 2<sup>ns</sup> set of broken 4 (2/B4)
16. 1<sup>st</sup> set of broken 2 (1/B2)
17. 2<sup>nd</sup> set of broken 2 (2/B2)
18. 3<sup>rd</sup> set of broken 2 (3/B2)
19. 4<sup>th</sup> set of broken 2 (4/B2)
20. (A/1)
21. (A/2)
22. (A/3)<sup>50</sup>

These groupings are depicted in a graphic that shows the strings of each grouping marked on the fingerboard (see figure 1).

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<sup>50</sup> The groupings A/1, A/2 and A/3 are not explained as well as the previous sets, but refer here to strings 1 – 4, 2 – 5 and 3 – 6, respectively. This is depicted in *Figure 1*.

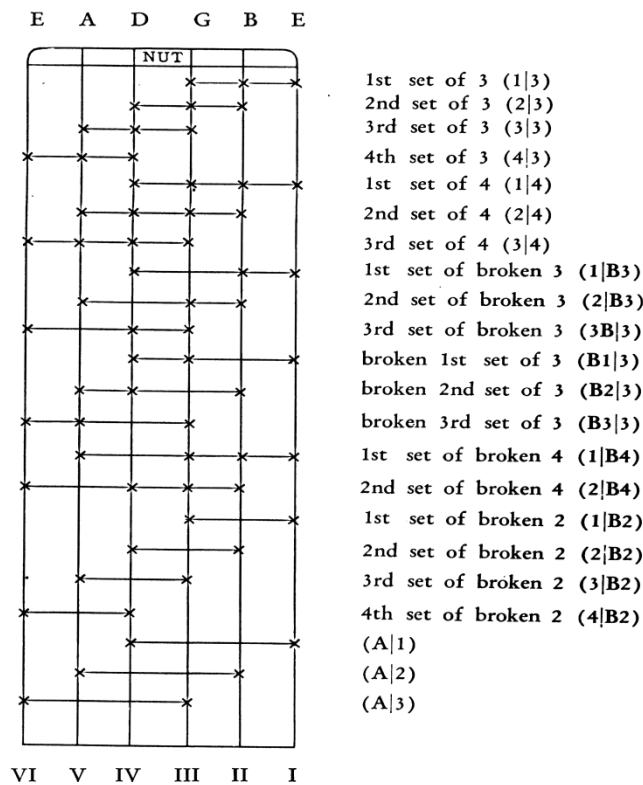


Figure 1: *string sets*.

The first twenty-five exercises are all variations of the harmonised major scale, which is presented in various sequences and rhythms with a variety of picking techniques. The following exercises make the same use of rhythmic and picking variations but focus on different tonalities, with exercises twenty-six to thirty-two being minor, thirty-three to forty-seven dominant and the remainder of the exercises (forty-eight to eighty-two) focusing on diminished tonalities with added complexities including combined open and closed string voicings and inner voice motion.

GVE's first publication set many of the trends which are prevalent throughout his succeeding volumes; it primarily focuses on triads with single-voice motion as applied to major and minor tonalities, including chromaticism and contrary motion and presents exhaustive left-hand fingering variations, some of which are not considered practical but are, rather, designed as exercises for the left hand. Also notable are several presentational oddities which carry through the volumes such as the lack of time signatures in examples and the occasional lack



of bar lines.<sup>51</sup> However, its use of a single key to demonstrate each concept sets it apart from later publications and while all of the exercises in the guitar method are recommended to be placed in all twelve keys, (with a few exceptions) they are not exhaustively presented that way as in the *Harmonic Mechanisms* series. Although GVE's next publications were three short solo compositions, in *The George Van Eps Method for Guitar* he states that 'succeeding volumes are in preparation for publication in the near future'.<sup>52</sup>

### ***Three Compositions for Solo Guitar*<sup>53</sup> and *Original Guitar Solos***

A year after the publication of *The George Van Eps Method for Guitar*, The Epiphone Company published three short compositions for solo guitar by GVE titled 'Queerology' 'Squattin at the Grotto' and 'Study in 8ths'. It is unclear as to why such a small offering was published, considering the amount of material GVE had in the form of manuscript notes, especially considering the above statement of 'volumes' being ready for publication in the near future. Each of the three compositions for solo guitar is harmonically dense, and do not easily fall into conventional categorisation.

GVE's third publication *George Van Eps Original Guitar Solos*, published twenty-six years after *The George Van Eps Guitar Method*, contains six compositions for solo guitar which emphasise his techniques of voice-motion, delayed chordal entry and sustained harmony. Although a mere sixteen pages in total, this volume offers a unique insight into GVE's harmonic ideas in actual application and has been referenced as an important influence on several contemporary guitarists including Howard Alden, who recommends dividing every

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<sup>51</sup> The majority of exercises throughout GVE's publications contain no time signature yet are presented with time signatures in this study for the sake of clarity.

<sup>52</sup> Van Eps, G. 1938, 2.

<sup>53</sup> The three compositions, along with *George Van Eps Original Guitar Solos* are minor publications in comparison to *The George Van Eps Method for Guitar* and the *Harmonic Mechanisms* series, but are included here for the purpose of presenting GVE's publications in their entirety. These works have been re-published by Mel Bay with a full harmonic analysis. For more on this, see Chapman, C. (2000) *George Van Eps Guitar Solos*, Mel Bay Publishing, Missouri.

two measures into a short study and transposing it to all keys and Frank Vignola, who states that *George Van Eps Original Guitar Solos* has influenced him tremendously.<sup>54</sup> Formatting peculiarities are evident from the outset, where the table of contents lists the song order in a way that does not correspond to progressive page layout as follows:

<b>Cross Roads</b> .....	2
<b>Love Theme No. One</b> .....	5
<b>Love Theme No. Two</b> ....	10
<b>Midnight</b> .....	12
<b>Tango</b> .....	14
<b>Water Fall</b> .....	8

Here, *Water Fall* is listed at the end of the contents, despite its position as the third piece in the volume. It is also unclear as to whether the pieces *Cross Roads* and *Water Fall* are deliberately titled as such, as opposed to *Crossroads* and *Waterfall*. It seems likely, however, that *Love Theme No. One* and *Love Theme No. Two* were originally intended as being grouped together, or perhaps mistakenly presented in such a way by an editor. The main techniques emphasised in *George Van Eps Original Guitar Solos* are hinted at by GVE in the preface when he states: ‘I hope these solos will provide interest through the use of ties and suspensions to sustain tones while other tones are in motion’.<sup>55</sup> Although left-hand fingerings are included, *George Van Eps Original Guitar Solos* marks the beginning of a trend that follows through GVE’s later publications; a huge discrepancy towards the level of attention given to left and right hands. Again, in the preface: ‘These solos may be played with a pick

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<sup>54</sup> Vignola stated this in email correspondence with the author, 04/02/18, while Alden has expressed the above idea several times, including during public interviews and in conversation with the author.

<sup>55</sup> Van Eps, G. *George Van Eps Original Guitar Solos*, 1964, 1.

by agile cross or skip picking where necessary, but were intended for fingerstyle. Right-hand fingerings have been omitted because there are many choices. Use standard alternate fingering or whatever fingering is most comfortable for you'.<sup>56</sup>

## **Conclusion**

By examining GVE's early life and career along with his early publications, the above chapter pieces together the many influences which helped to shape his life's work as manifested through his *Harmonic Mechanisms for Guitar*. Several important themes are evident, notable among them the influence of the piano from his elder brother and Gershwin coupled with his admiration for the guitar via his childhood heroes Eddie Lang and Andrés Segovia. Also notable is his desire to encode his method, which, perhaps to his dissatisfaction was first released under time constraints as *The George Van Eps Method for Guitar*. Despite its hasty production, *The George Van Eps Method for Guitar* demonstrates many of the trends which run throughout *Harmonic Mechanisms for Guitar* including its emphasis on harmony in general and triads in particular, along with the importance placed on the delivery of concepts in major, harmonic minor and melodic minor tonalities. Having surveyed the landscape from which *Harmonic Mechanisms for Guitar* emerged, the following chapter examines the content of the volumes themselves.

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<sup>56</sup> Van Eps, G. *George Van Eps Original Guitar Solos*, 1964, 1.

## Chapter Three:

### GVE's Harmonic Mechanisms for Guitar

#### Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present the core principles contained within the *Harmonic Mechanisms for Guitar* series. Since their publication, even the most serious students of the volumes have expressed their frustration with the lack of organisation of exercises, the absence of practical applications and the relentless manner in which a single idea is presented exhaustively through twelve keys in three tonalities (major, melodic and harmonic minors) with exhaustive left-hand fingering variations on a wide variety of string-groupings. As this chapter demonstrates through GVE's own words, his intention was for the reader to pick a single area of interest for study with the countless variations of such serving as an encyclopaedic reference. This approach, however, is not made clear in the volumes themselves and thus a logical system of study has eluded readers since their publication.

Along with drawing attention to the crucial factors that contribute to their inaccessibility, this chapter addresses the frustrations students have expressed due to the lack of clarity and concise presentation contained therein. The chapter concludes by detailing each of the core concepts in just such a concise manner, thereby clearly presenting their key harmonic ideas in a highly distilled and readily accessible format.

#### Harmonic Mechanisms

‘They contain some of the most in-depth revolutionary resources of the harmonic framework of music as applied to the guitar fingerboard ever presented’ – Jim LaDiana.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> LaDiana, J. 2011, 85.

‘His main goal was to teach guitar players – or anybody on any instrument – to have facility in all 12 keys and in major and two minors. He wanted them to be able to improvise in any key that anybody wanted to play in’ – Kay Van Eps.<sup>58</sup>

Comprised of a combined 897 pages, GVE’s *Harmonic Mechanisms* series expands greatly on the ideas put forth in *The George Van Eps Method for Guitar* and represent the distillation of a lifetime of serious harmonic study. While the material itself was written by GVE over a forty-year period on an estimated 16,000 manuscript sheets, it was GVE’s daughter Kay Van Eps-Adikes who compiled the material into book form and worked closely with GVE as editor and proof-reader.<sup>59</sup> As Adikes stated: ‘I had to go through every sheet...it took me six and a half years to put the book together. I finished it April 12, 1982’.<sup>60</sup>

Throughout GVE’s publications, the notion that one lifetime is not long enough for a detailed study of all the harmonic possibilities contained therein is repeatedly emphasised.

GVE states in the series introduction that achieving creativity will be the natural result of countless hours of mechanical reproduction of the mechanisms presented, which the student is expected to elaborate on and use as springboards towards further exploration.

‘There are really years and years in that first volume...to do it in all the keys...could be five, ten years worth of work for a serious guy’ – Ted Greene.<sup>61</sup>

‘A work of this magnitude, from such a virtuoso, should be sought by guitarists of countless generations. These timeless concepts will remain fresh and viable in the twenty-first century’- Charlie Menees.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> LaDiana, J. 2011, 130.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. Here, Kay is referring to the completion of *Volume Three*, as *Volume One* was published in 1980. This is congruent with comments made by GVE in which he would refer to the combined three volumes as ‘the book’ as opposed to individuating the separate volumes.

<sup>61</sup> Greene, T. 1981.

Throughout the *Harmonic Mechanisms* series, virtually all exercises except for a few short examples, are presented exhaustively in twelve keys in major, harmonic and melodic minor tonalities in three inversions through the full range of the instrument across a variety of string-groupings. This approach has been the focus of much criticism since their publication, as many readers feel that the principles could be described and demonstrated in a single key with the task of transposition being left to the reader as in *The George Van Eps Method for Guitar*. GVE has defended his approach by stating that each key has its own specific fingering challenges which are addressed throughout the exercises.

### **Inaccessibility**

‘I’m also known to be quite redundant at times—most of the time as a matter of fact, but, I’ve found over the years “things” must be pictured and explained many different ways in the hope that one of them will find an open door into the mind’ - GVE.<sup>63</sup>

Van Eps intentionally builds redundancy into his lessons, coming at a concept from different angles to make sure it takes – Harrison Stephens.<sup>64</sup>

While GVE’s publications are renowned for their thorough nature, they are perhaps even better known for their inaccessibility. As Rocco Matone notes in his Master’s thesis, *An Integral Approach for Jazz Guitar Improvisation*:

Van Eps’s pedagogical work, the three-volume *Harmonic Mechanisms for Guitar*, is a detailed study of the relationship between the fingers, the fingerboard, and the ear. His studies are inventive and his rigorous codification (deemed incomplete by the author himself) is of enormous value. Unfortunately, an abstruse lexicon and an intimidating methodology have made his studies inaccessible to most students.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Menees, C. Cited in *Harmonic Mechanisms Volume One, 1980, 2.*

<sup>63</sup> Van Eps, G. 1982, 3.

<sup>64</sup> Stephens, H. 2018, 126.

<sup>65</sup> Matone, R. *An Integral Approach for Jazz Guitar Improvisation*, 2005, 12.

There are several aspects of GVE's publication that render them largely inaccessible and have led to them being overlooked by guitar students. One of the most obvious is the overwhelming nature of the content, which often leads to readers withdrawing from their study of them, rather than absorbing the basis of the principles as intended by GVE.

As jazz guitarist, Ben Monder stated:

I started going through the Van Eps thing years ago and...only got through maybe the first few pages...playing triads all over the place different scales and different inversions. And that for so long I didn't even bother going further but...just in the last couple months...I was looking at it again and noticed, there [are] like eighty or a hundred in volume one where all he's doing is, what he calls, like upper, middle and lower voice sub, where he's just playing triads up the scale, anticipating one of the notes by a step...he just has all those pages devoted to it, he goes through every scale, which is a little bit overkill...all in close and all in open every inversion so it takes all these pages where really all you need is the principal.<sup>66</sup>

This aspect of GVE's publications is unfortunate, considering his intention was for the reader to absorb the principle rather than play through all of the variations presented. This is made clear in GVE's interview with Ted Greene when he stated:

'One lifetime's not long enough, but we have to sweet-tooth it...that's why in one section I said, "just pick a section that fascinates you, or if you're into it a little bit. And if it doesn't fascinate you, dump it and go to something else. Because it's all related, you know'.<sup>67</sup>

GVE himself deflected from the overwhelming nature of his publications by stating that 'many of the exercises may seem redundant yet are necessary'.<sup>68</sup> A Google Group thread titled 'Harmonic Mechanisms Van Eps' started by user Mark Cleary on 14/09/2015 opens with the comment/question:

I just throw this out wondering if anyone else has the same thoughts I have on George Van Ep's 3 books. I have all 3 books and frankly I have never been able to get anything much out of them. I realize George played great and I really like his stuff but his books leave me with not much on application. I did try a few times to work through them and I never can make a connection. Maybe it is over my head and I just do not "get it" but all the 3 books are

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<sup>66</sup> Monder, B, Cited in *Ted Greene: Sound Time and Unlimited Possibility*, McManus, T. 2015.

<sup>67</sup> Van Eps, G. 1981.

<sup>68</sup> Van Eps, G. Volume Two, Page 8.

gathering dust in my shelves. So help me out, did or does anyone use these and did they help?<sup>69</sup>

Several responses echo Cleary's frustration, including: 'The[y] could all have been condensed into a single volume and most of the "mechanisms" distilled to 3 or 4 pages. Following this he could have provided applications for them. I think they have value but they are packed in a box that's almost impossible for most guitarists to pry open', and: 'I went through the first few pages, which involved diatonic triads. At the time, I didn't see the point and I eventually bogged down and gave up'.<sup>70</sup>

Many guitarists have expressed the same frustration as Monder and the above forum users and have begun to study GVE's publication only to become overwhelmed by the process. As Norwegian guitarist, Knut Mikalsen commented 'Louis and I agreed you would need a life sentence of some sort to seriously get through them'.<sup>71</sup> This reaction of withdrawing from such an overwhelming study is referred to as 'choice overload' by researchers Sheena S. Iyengar of Columbia School of Business and Emir Kamenica of the University of Chicago in their collaborative research project, *Choice Overload and Simplicity Seeking*.

As stated in the abstract:

In this paper, we analyze how an abundance of options influences which alternative is selected. We present both laboratory experiments and field data that confirm our theoretical prediction: larger choice sets induce a stronger preference for simple, easy-to-understand options. The first experiment demonstrates that, in seeming violation of the weak axiom of revealed preference, subjects are more likely to select a given sure bet over non-degenerate gambles when choosing from a set of 11 options than when choosing from a subset of 3. The second experiment clarifies that excessive choice sets induce a preference for simpler, rather than less risky, options.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>69</sup><https://groups.google.com/forum/#!searchin/rec.music.makers.guitar.jazz/harmonic%20mechanisms%7Csort:date/rec.music.makers.guitar.jazz/rgyXbPh7UWE/Ui5aHLv7CAAJ>, accessed 01/05/2018.

<sup>70</sup><https://groups.google.com/forum/#!searchin/rec.music.makers.guitar.jazz/harmonic%20mechanisms%7Csort:date/rec.music.makers.guitar.jazz/rgyXbPh7UWE/Ui5aHLv7CAAJ>, accessed 01/05/2018, comments from usernames 'Gerry' and 'rpjazzguitar'.

<sup>71</sup> Mikalsen, Knut, Email correspondence with the author, 16/01/2018. 'Louis' here refers to Irish jazz guitarist Louis Stewart.

<sup>72</sup> Iengar, S. and Kamenica, E. 2007, *Choice Overload and Simplicity Seeking*, cited in <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org>, accessed 31/03/2018.



According to the above research, it would seem that even if one did study the endless possibilities presented in GVE's publications, it may well lead to more conservative choices being made in performance situations. However, further research relating directly to 'choice overload' in the context of improvisation would be needed to verify this opinion.

Interestingly, Ted Greene, who perhaps more than anyone else, held GVE in exalted reverence, noted that Wes Montgomery only knew approximately twenty chords, yet was able to use them to incredible effect.<sup>73</sup> The capacity of the harmonic material contained in GVE's publications to induce choice overload is compounded by the many fingering options presented for the left-hand, which, interestingly, is an aspect that many of GVE's successors have disregarded as unnecessary. Another aspect of GVE's publications that adds to their inaccessibility is the often arcane manner in which information is presented. An excellent example is found in Chapter Six: 'The Displaced Concept' of *Harmonic Mechanisms, Volume Three*, in which GVE gives the following lengthy explanation of key relationships:

All the keys can be thought of as common to each other – here is an example:  
If we start with the key of "C", the dominant key is "G", which has the minor seventh essence of "E" minor, "E" minor has the has the subdominant major sound of the key of "D" (remember that these are just a few examples) "E" minor is the subdominant minor of "B" – "E" minor is also part of the "A" ninth family – "E" minor also contains the essence of the augmented seventh, with the flatted ninth. Of the key of "A flat. "G" also has the suspended seventh/eleventh essence of the key of "D" etc. (The examples mentioned here are based on the triads as voiced in the basic triad scale). "F" is the subdominant key of "C", which enjoys all of the relationships of "G", but a whole tone down which takes us into "F" sharp/"G" flat major. "D" minor contains both the dominant and subdominant sound, because "D" minor can be "F" major sixth and "G" ninth, because it contains all the basic notes except the third. "D" minor is also the subdominant of the key of "A". "A" minor being the relative minor of "C" contains the "C" major sixth sound, and is also the subdominant minor of "E" – it's also an "A" flat augmented seventh with the lowered ninth, and so on – All of the minor contain the essence of the thirteenth – example; sound a first inversion "E" minor triad against a "G" seventh and you have a thirteenth. All majors enjoy a lowered fifth position with the next lower key. "B" flat major contains the "C" eleventh sound – "B" flat contains the essence of the "G" minor seventh – the "E" flat scale, second step, to second step, contains an "F" minor essence – "F" minor has a dominant/subdominant essence that relates it directly to "E" flat major – "E" flat major contains the sound of a "C" minor seventh – "E" flat sixth can be "C" minor – "C" minor contains the essence of "A" flat major seventh – "A" flat major contains the major seventh plus ninth sound of "D" flat – "D" flat is the subdominant key of "A" flat – "A" flat is also in a lowered ninth, lowered fifth relationship to the key of "G" – "A" flat is the dominant key of "D" flat, and "D" flat is the lowered fifth position to the key of "C" sharp – there are

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<sup>73</sup><http://www.tedgreene.com/audio/audio.asp>, accessed 12/06/2016.

many more relationships, as will be discovered. All of the keys enjoy these floating changing relatives'.<sup>74</sup>

Yet again, while such presentation may have the intended effect of sparking the curiosity of the reader, it seems more likely to induce 'choice overload' and lead to withdrawal from their study.

A final characteristic of GVE's publications that, undoubtedly, contributes to their inaccessibility is the lack of organisation and systematic presentation of information. There are many examples of the disorganised formatting of the information, such as commenting about practical consideration near the end of *Harmonic Mechanisms Volume Three* rather than at the beginning of the first volume, along with the sporadic way in which material is presented; the second section of *Harmonic Mechanisms Volume One* is titled 'Reductions', as is the first section of *Harmonic Mechanisms Volume Two*. Another aspect of GVE's formatting style which may seem odd to the reader is the peculiarities often found in the notation, such as the omission of bar-lines and the use of enharmonic notes (such as C-flat) in music without a key signature.

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<sup>74</sup> Van Eps, G. 1982, 124-125. Ironically, the full stop in the middle of the sentence, along with the single inverted comma accentuate the poor delivery of complex information.

## Intended Approach to Study

You could spend a million years putting all three volumes through everything, all the potential that's there. That isn't the point. The point of the three books and the concepts are: learn the concept. You can't play all the variations; you can't play all the mutations and all the permutations. Nobody lives that long; nobody. So, the whole purpose of the concepts is: learn the concept. They're not that difficult to understand. And once the concept is understood then you can pick up the ball and run with it in any direction you want - GVE.<sup>75</sup>

While GVE was clear in his explanation of how to approach the study of his publications to Ted Greene during their 1981 interview, such clear direction is lacking within the publications themselves. As Greene comments during a recorded lesson: 'when I asked him in the interview he said 'oh just open it anywhere, find something you like and work on that' ...it would have been cool if he explained that at the beginning'.<sup>76</sup>

One of the ways GVE would help students in his private practice develop the concepts found in his *Harmonic Mechanisms for Guitar* was through writing short etudes similar to the exercise given at the end of *The George Van Eps Method for Guitar*. As GVE's private student Mark Peters recalls:

After working on some of the mechanisms, George usually would ask me to try to use them creatively. So I'd be writing etudes... We're trying to get many melodies going at the same time, and each melody has to have freedom to go whichever way it wants to. To achieve that, you have to develop an awful (*Sic*) lot of technique on the instrument. I think that's what so much of "Harmonic Mechanisms" is about: trying to develop independence of the fingers and independent thought to the point where you can get a bunch of things going at the same time. There are dozens of different ways to play any passage. You can develop an economy of movement. We worked on that.<sup>77</sup>

Commenting on his teaching style, GVE states that he guides the student in becoming his or her own teacher through their own effort by passing on information and fuelling desire for further exploration. He also states that creativity cannot be taught, but through mechanical repetition of harmonic exercises a sufficient level of technique is achieved, enabling ideas to

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<sup>75</sup> Van Eps, G. Cited in Greene, T. 1981.

<sup>76</sup> [https://tedgreene.com/audio/MarkLevy/37\\_TedGreeneGuitarLesson\\_MarkLevy\\_1993-06-21.mp3](https://tedgreene.com/audio/MarkLevy/37_TedGreeneGuitarLesson_MarkLevy_1993-06-21.mp3), accessed 21/12/2017.

<sup>77</sup> Peters, M. Cited in Stephenson, H. 2018, 129.

flow like water.<sup>78</sup> This notion of using the exercises to ignite ones creativity is further explained by Kay Van Eps-Adikes as she recalls:

‘One guy came up to him and said ‘you know I bought Volume One. I went through the first chapter and in the middle of the second chapter I just started taking off. All these ideas came to me, I really didn’t stick to the exercises because I got all of these ideas and I started playing’! And dad just got this grin on his face and said ‘that’s the whole idea’.<sup>79</sup>

### **Essential Concepts**

Ask him the time and he tells you how to make a watch – Kay Van Eps.<sup>80</sup>

“‘Harmonic Mechanisms’” contains hundreds of exercises, but essentially it is a book of concepts’ – Harrison Stephens.<sup>81</sup>

An important part of deciphering the many exercises found within GVE’s volumes is the identification of exercises that contain the essential concepts, rather than the many possible variations thereof. In this way, the reader can focus on the essential elements of the various publications to gain a full picture of the harmonic possibilities contained therein without devoting a disproportionate amount of time to the development of a single concept through its many possible variations. A similar identification scheme is used in the field of linguistics to identify words from which variations are derived. This concept is expressed in *Becoming Fluent: How Cognitive Science Can Help Adults Learn a Foreign Language*. As authors, Rogers and Kreuz, note:

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<sup>78</sup> This concept is expressed in *Harmonic Mechanisms Volume One*, page 5, but is reiterated throughout the series.

<sup>79</sup> LaDiana, J. 2011, 85.

<sup>80</sup> Van Eps, K. Cited in Stephenson, H. 2018, 14.

<sup>81</sup> Harrison, S. 2018, 129.

If you know the meaning of help, do you automatically get credit for helps helped, helping, helper, helpful, helpless, helplessly, unhelpful and unhelpfully? Should this count as one word or as ten or more? Linguists deal with this issue by designating one word as the ‘lemma’, or citation form, in this case ‘help’. The other terms are considered to be variations of a single underlying ‘lexeme’.

It is assumed that if you know the lemma, you also know, or can figure out these variations.<sup>82</sup>

This approach to the classification of exercises is essential to the understanding of the overall intentions of GVE, as expressed in the publications. Of the thousands of exercises found throughout the volumes, the majority can be considered to belong to one of ten specific, although related, categories.<sup>83</sup>

The idea of distilling a large number of exercises into a lesser number of concepts is hinted at by GVE in Volume Three where, at the outset, he introduces four concepts which he refers to as the concepts contained in the Volume, despite the Volume containing nine separate chapters. In total, the Volumes can be thought of as containing ten essential harmonic concepts as follows:

- 1) Reductions
- 2) 10ths with Inner Line Motion
- 3) 6ths with Upper Line Motion
- 4) Chromatic Triads
- 5) The Super and Sub Series
- 6) The Chromatic Concept
- 7) The Stagger Concept
- 8) The Satellite Concept
- 9) The Displaced Concept
- 10) The Progressive Motion Concept

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<sup>82</sup> Rogers, R., and Kreuz, R., *Becoming Fluent: How Cognitive Science Can Help Adults Learn a Foreign Language*, 2015, 103.

<sup>83</sup> The process of counting exercises in the *Volumes* presents several problems due to their lack of clear distinction. Many exercises are comprised of twelve-bars of major and twelve of minor yet, could be considered a single exercise rather than twenty-four. Often, what could be considered a single exercise ranges from twenty to sixty-eight bars while many more of the exercises are written without bar-lines. However, even in their greatest underestimation (such as counting sixty-eight bar examples as a single exercise) the exercises in the *Harmonic Mechanisms* series still number in the thousands.

In application, several of the concepts can overlap; for example, an open triad with the middle voice moved to super or sub position results in a tenth with inner line motion and a close voiced triad with the upper voice moved into super or sub position results in a sixth with upper line motion. When the notes of a tri-chord with any voice in super or sub position are played simultaneously the result can parallel voicings from the stagger concept. In this regard, the ten concepts can be considered different ways of achieving the same goal of complete chromatic control over several voices at once.

## Reductions<sup>84</sup>

The concept of reductions refers to two-voice counterpoint in one of six combinations:

- A stable upper voice with a lower voice ascending
- A stable upper voice with a lower voice descending
- A stable lower voice with an upper voice ascending
- A stable lower voice with an upper voice descending
- Two voices in contrary motion moving closer together
- Two voices in contrary motion moving further apart

Variety is achieved by containing the voice motion within various intervals such as the tenth, sixth or octave.



Ex 1: *Reductions 3rd rising to 6<sup>th</sup> degree.*

## 10ths with Inner Line Motion

10ths with inner line motion refers to the interval of a tenth with a moving inner voice, often between the sixth and seventh degrees. The enclosure of the tenth, along with the moving inner voice can itself be taken through various scales resulting in three voices in motion relating closely to the open triad.

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<sup>84</sup> In this chapter, the concepts are explained and demonstrated in the most concise manner feasible to basic understanding. Appendix 1 presents ten compositions which demonstrate the musicality of each concept.



Ex 2: *10ths with Inner Line Motion.*

### **6ths with Upper Line Motion**

The concept of sixths with upper line motion relates closely to that of tenths with inner line motion; only here, the two lower voices remain stable resulting in the interval of a sixth while the upper voice moves freely. This concept also results in three voices in motion (when moved scale-wise) and relates closely to the open triad.



Ex 3: *6ths with Upper Line Motion.*

### **Chromatic Triads<sup>85</sup>**

‘Chromatic triads’ refers to moving triads chromatically above a stable bass pedal. Many variations of this basic idea are explored, including using an alternating bass pattern or a bass line that moves through the cycle of fourths below the chromatic triads, chromatic triads in two alternating inversions, triads moving in arpeggio pattern above a chromatic bass line and contrary motion between the bass line and the upper triads. The final examples demonstrate an independent bass line below chromatic triads. Thus, GVE’s chromatic triads may be the earliest guitaristic example of what is now commonly referred to as ‘upper structure triads’.

Other exercises include playing fixed intervals chromatically which could more accurately be described as chromatic dyads.

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<sup>85</sup> GVE’s flexible use of the term triad more accurately refers to tri-chords.



Ex. 4: *Chromatic Triads with Pedal G, first inversion.*

### The Super and Sub Series

The super and sub series refers to each voice of a triad moving one-step diatonically through its relevant scale independently of the others. When a voice is raised a scale degree it is referred to as being in super position, when it is lowered a scale degree it is referred to as being in sub position. In the example below, three voices begin in unison on a G major triad with the following scale degree of A minor being anticipated by the upper voice (super position) before being followed by the lower two voices.



Ex 5: *Super and Sub Series – upper voice super.*

### The Chromatic Concept

The chromatic concept is described by GVE in the following way ‘when ascending, each note is approached from a semitone below. When descending, each note is approached from a semitone above’.

The chromatic concept refers to adding chromaticism to any and all other concepts which are predominantly demonstrated diatonically in their pure form.

When ascending, each note of the scale (any scale) except the first, is approached by a semitone below. When descending, each note except the first is approached by a semitone above. This results in playing the notes of three diatonic keys at the same time. For example,



when playing in the key of C, all the lower approach notes belong to B natural and all the upper approach notes belong to D flat. The complexity of this principle depends on the number of voices in motion at a given time.



Ex 6: *Chromatic Concept 6ths with Upper Line Motion.*



Ex 7: *Chromatic Concept Super and Sub Series, first inversion triads, upper voice super.*



Ex 8: *Chromatic Concept, 10<sup>th</sup> Reductions.*

## The Stagger Concept

In the stagger concept, one or more notes of a triad are raised or lowered diatonically (staggered) such as in the super and sub series, only here, the staggered voicing is frozen and taken through the diatonic scale resulting in interesting and uncommon voicings.



Ex 9: *The Stagger Concept (three voices).*

## The Satellite Concept

The satellite concept states every note of the chromatic scale has two satellite notes; one a semitone above and the other a semitone below. These notes move in any direction one semitone at a time. This relates closely to the chromatic concept but may also be applied to

what GVE refers to as the grande arpeggio which is the diatonic scale minus the fourth degree. This results in close voice leading and often interesting resolution between keys.



Ex: 10 *The Satellite Concept (in 3rds, upper voice satellite, lower voice stable).*



Ex 11: *The Satellite Concept, tri-chords from Db and C grande arpeggios with close voice-leading resulting in modulation.*

### The Displaced Concept

The displaced concept refers to displacing various steps of a scale for the purpose of learning to think in multiple keys. For example, in the key of C the second scale step may be raised, thus belonging to the key of C sharp/D flat while all other scale steps remain unaltered. This can be repeated with various scale steps or multiple scale steps each resulting in various altered scales. More elaborate examples are possible by mixing seemingly unrelated keys resulting in a large palette of harmonies belonging to two or more keys which results in unexpected harmonic relationships. Thus, the displaced concept is synonymous with polytonality.



Ex 12: *The Displaced Concept – Db chord placed between the first and second degrees of a first inversion C major scale.*

## The Progressive Motion Concept

In the progressive motion concept, all the notes of any chord move one at a time through what GVE refers to as ‘the grande arpeggio’ which is the diatonic scale minus the fourth degree.



Ex 13: *Progressive Motion, middle voice moving independently.*

## Three Methods of Realisation

The above concepts are each realised exhaustively through three primary methods

- 1) Triad Chord Scales in Three Tonalties
- 2) Forty-Two String Groupings
- 3) Left-Hand Fingering Variations

## Triad Chord Scales

While the majority of the exercises presented in the Volumes consist of triad chord scales, many contain alterations and therefore could be more accurately said to be based on tri-chords rather than triads. Others contain less or more than three-notes but are treated as triads with a note omitted or triads with a base note. GVE makes the following observations to stress the importance of triads:

The major triads make minor sevenths, minor triads make major sevenths. Three-note diminished triads make dominant sevenths; three-note dominant seventh triads make diminished chords. Diminished chords make seventh flat nine chords. The major sixth interval is present in the outside notes of any first inversion minor triad, while the minor sixth interval is present in the outside notes of any first inversion major triad.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Van Eps, G. 1980, 22.

## Three Tonalities

The triad chord scales are presented in three tonalities – major, harmonic minor and melodic minor. This is true for the majority of exercises although some exceptions include those relating to chromatic triads or chromatically moving intervals which could be considered atonal. GVE also uses several variations including what he refers to as mixed minors in which exercises contain notes from both harmonic and melodic minors (such as ascending in one tonality and descending in the opposite) and reversing or altering the usual order of ascension and dissonance of the melodic minor scale. This type of treatment of the melodic minor scale yields four possibilities:

- 1) Original form
- 2) Ascending form up and down
- 3) Descending form up and down
- 4) Original form reversed (ascending notation descending, descending notation ascending).

## String-Sets

GVE presents forty-two string groupings or sets throughout the series (which expand on the twenty-two sets presented in *The George Van Eps Method for Guitar*). The sets are as follows:

- 1/2 – the first and second strings
- 2/2 – second and third
- 3/2 – third and fourth
- 4/2 – fourth and fifth

5/2 – fifth and sixth  
1/3 – first, second and third  
2/3 – second, third and fourth  
3/3 – third, fourth and fifth  
4/3 – fourth, fifth and sixth  
1/4 – strings one to four  
2/4 – strings two to five  
3/4 – strings three to six  
1/5 – strings one to five  
2/5 – strings two to six  
1/B2 – first and third  
2/B2 – second and fourth  
3/B2 – third and fifth  
4/B2 – fourth and sixth  
1/B3 – first, second and fourth  
2/B3 – second, third and fifth  
3/B3 – third, fourth and sixth  
B1/3 – first, third and fourth  
B2/3 – second third and fifth  
B3/3 – third, fifth and sixth  
1/B4 – first, second, third and fifth  
2/B4 – second, third, fourth and sixth  
B1/4 – first, third, fourth and fifth  
B2/4 – second fourth, fifth and sixth  
1D/3 – first, second and fifth  
2D/3 – second, third and sixth  
1/D3 – first, third and fifth  
2/D3 – second, fourth and sixth  
D1/3 – first, fourth and fifth

D2/3 – second, fifth and sixth  
D1/4 – first, second, fourth and fifth  
D2/4 – second, third, fifth and sixth  
A1 – first and fourth  
A2 – second and fifth  
A3 – third and sixth  
B1 – first and fifth  
B2 – second and sixth  
O1 – first and sixth

The memorisation and or referencing of such a large body of information presents a considerable inconvenience to the student of the volumes. The string-sets are presented seven times in Volume One, with the introduction of the string-sets being indicative of a new chapter.<sup>87</sup> Volume Two takes the logical approach of presenting the string-sets at the outset on pages six and seven only, while Volume Three presents the sets three times; once at the outset on page seven and eight and twice more at seemingly random locations (pages eighty-four and eighty-five and ninety-eight and ninety-nine).

### **Left-Hand Fingering Exercises**

‘Adding fingerings to manuscripts took nearly 6 years’ – Kay Van Eps.<sup>88</sup>

‘He applies mechanical principals to his musicianship - his fingering is engineered for efficiency’ – Harrison Stephens.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> In one instance, the string-sets are only re-explained without the chart. In all other cases the string sets are presented with a page of explanation and a page of the chart itself. Although this results in continuous restatement, this is the only marker of new chapters or sections in Volume One.

<sup>88</sup> Van Eps, K. Cited in LaDiana, J. 2011, 85.

<sup>89</sup> Stephens, H. 2018, 46.

I think one of the things he has done is to work out a kind of systematic way, based on mathematics and common sense, for the judicious, intelligent use of the fingers – Barney Kessel.<sup>90</sup>

During their interview, Ted Greene asserts that the fingerings are the very essence of the Volumes, a point on which GVE agrees. In the following excerpt, Greene is speaking to GVE about *The George Van Eps Method for Guitar*:

I went through the book recently, paying careful attention to your instructions instead of skimming as I had done earlier. I was astonished—I mean that—I was astonished by the well-arranged planning and totality of the fingering system. It seems that virtually every physical hazard in the left hand, that one might face has been challenged head-on [ . . . ] ended up feeling that the fingering principles themselves, just that, were in one sense the essence of the whole book. That it's being illustrated through harmonic principles, but the fingerings are what---. I don't know; I was just struck by that. Is that? GVE: Yeah. Those are the physical mechanisms. TG:...Does it seem like that to you? GVE: Yes, yes. Because they open the door to---release the mind to become more inventive. TG: That's fascinating. GVE: Because of the dark areas—what used to be the dark areas—are no longer dark anymore. They let a little light in there. And it's like we were saying earlier, as the technique goes up and the ability to produce, so do the ideas.<sup>91</sup>

This emphasis on left-hand fingering variations continues throughout the *Harmonic Mechanisms* series, with GVE stating that: ‘the intent is to present as many fingering combinations as space will permit’.<sup>92</sup> Interestingly, while many of GVE's successors have based a great deal of their technique on a single element of his harmonic approach, such as the enclosure of a tenth or contrary motion (as will be demonstrated in Chapter Four) the most commonly ignored recommendation is the adoption of complex left-hand fingerings. The problem with such fingerings is addressed by Rocco Matone in his Master's thesis, *An Integral Approach for Jazz Guitar Improvisation*:

Of the several skills that the student guitarist must develop, the most important is the ability to play ideas and riffs within the confines of a harmonic context using any left-hand finger, string, and fret combinations in all keys. Acquiring this necessary skill requires a clear and concise approach; otherwise, a student may become overwhelmed by the potential fingering choices

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<sup>90</sup> Stephens, H. 2018, 136.

<sup>91</sup> Greene, T. 1981.

<sup>92</sup> Van Eps, G. 1981, 5.

encountered in improvisation, which would handicap running changes, an essential step for solo improvisation.<sup>93</sup>

GVE defends his position by stating: ‘the fingering, string-sets, and crossovers are not always comfortable or logical—some are intentionally awkward and difficult for practice sake.

Others are smooth and flowing—the instrumentalist must work with both types’.<sup>94</sup>

And again, in another explanation of his fingering logic:

Some of the fingerings are intentionally awkward in these and other studies throughout these books. They are good practice for agility and finger discipline/manipulation. There are smoother more logical (*sic*) fingerings also shown that quite naturally should be used for more flowing continuity. Each key has been given a slightly different fingering pattern/mixture of fingerings. Certain sections of each key scale may contain flowing fingering while other parts of the same key scale may show awkward gymnastic fingering. In other words, each of the three inversions in each key have been marked with a mixture of varied fingerings thereby offering a wide variety of fingerings from which to choose.<sup>95</sup>

Indeed, the complexity of harmonic situations addressed within GVE’s publications would naturally require an equally sophisticated left-hand technique for their realisation, as GVE also states: ‘chords with motion require different fingering’.<sup>96</sup>

While a great deal of attention is paid to left-hand fingering throughout the volumes, the right-hand is addressed only briefly, with GVE giving general remarks at the outset of each volume as follows:

There are many ways of sounding the strings—the most common are:

The plectrum (pick) —alternating is best for velocity (up and down strokes)

The fingers (classic) —again, alternating is best for velocity— (up and down strokes)

The fingers and pick combined—usually a mixture with both alternating—

The classic fingerstyle offers the greatest advantage because of being able to utilize all five fingers.

The material presented in this series of books is most suited to the classic right hand and the combination of fingers and plectrum<sup>97</sup>.

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<sup>93</sup> Matone, R. *An Integral Approach for Jazz Guitar Improvisation* 2005, Abstract (ii).

<sup>94</sup> Van Eps, G. 1980, 64.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid*, 26.

<sup>96</sup> Van Eps, G. 1980, 47.

<sup>97</sup> Van Eps, G. *Harmonic Mechanisms Volume One*, page 9, *Volume Two*, page 5, *Volume Three*, page 6.



This general guidance is presented at the beginning of each Volume, appearing in Volume One on page nine, Volume Two on page five and Volume Three on page six. After these comments, very little is mentioned of right-hand technique, apart from occasional references to alternating in unison with the left hand.

One of the underlying principles of GVE's left-hand fingering approach is the implementation of an alternating motion, of which he states: 'a solid, positive sound can be achieved by alternating between any two fingers when three voices are in motion'.<sup>98</sup>

This alternating motion is applied to groups of consecutive intervals such as sixths, as demonstrated in Figures 2 and 3, which depict finger teams moving from a major sixth (with the first and second fingers) to a minor sixth (with the third and fourth fingers) and Figures 4 and 5 which demonstrates finger teams alternating between the interval of a sixth (middle and third fingers) and a tenth (first and fourth fingers).



Figure 2: *Fingerings example 1.*

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<sup>98</sup> Van Eps, G. 1980, 26.



Figure 3: *Fingerings example 2.*

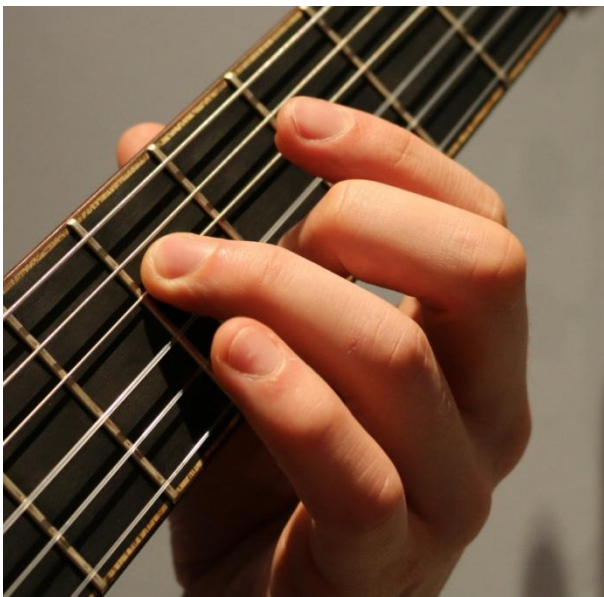


Figure 4: *Fingerings example 3.*



Figure 5: *Fingerings example 4.*

Other common tendencies in GVE's left-hand fingerings include the use of each finger forming a half *barré* for the purpose both of strengthening the finger in use, thereby falling into the category of finger exercise, and the freeing of other fingers for voice motion as depicted in figures 6 to 9.



Figure 6: *Fingerings example 5.*



Figure 7: *Fingerings example 6.*



Figure 8: *Fingerings example 7.*



Figure 9: *Fingerings example 8.*

A similar freeing of the fingers can be observed in triad fingerings in which three notes are held with each combination of left-hand fingers resulting in the freeing of each single unused finger as demonstrated in figures 10 to 13 with a D minor triad on the first three strings.



Figure 10: *Fingerings example 9.*



Figure 11: *Fingerings example 10.*



Figure 12: *Fingerings example 11.*



Figure 13: *Fingerings example 12.*

One of the most obvious and perhaps most characteristic left hand fingering devices used by GVE is the use of the fifth finger principal. As described previously, this involves the use of a single finger to sound two notes on different frets as demonstrated in figures 14 and 15 whereby the tip and joint of the first finger is used to sound the third and first strings respectively on adjacent frets.



Figure 14: *Fingerings example 13.*

This same technique can be combined with the previous triad voicing thereby freeing two fingers as demonstrated in figure 15.



Figure 15: *Fingerings example 14.*

Another technique employed by GVE and one that is not generally found in the standard classical left-hand fingerings system is the crossing of a finger as demonstrated in figure 16.



Figure 16: *Fingerings example 15.*



The above technique also resonates with GVE's unorthodox use of the fourth finger of the right hand which, again, is unused in the classical system.<sup>99</sup>

Guitarist David Oakes (who is addressed further in the following chapter) recalls frustrations with such fingerings during his lessons with Ted Greene in the following way:

Ted really wanted me to get out of my “classical head space” and wanted me to see the guitar in terms of being more “shape oriented”. Much of our lesson time was centered (*sic*) on conversations dealing with fingering a chord, inversions of that chord with the alternatives to that fingering. My classical technique and training tended to not want to make some of the chord shapes that Ted wanted me to play. He kept telling me that I “will” get it. Just be patient and keep working on it. He was right. It did come but certainly not as fluid as Ted's masterful playing. Ted used his little finger on his right hand to pluck five note chords quite often. I would always try and find an alternative way to use four fingers and leave out a voice or change up the right hand to get the voice in there. He would never let that go without some comment and/or a knowing smile.<sup>100</sup>

Several times throughout the Volumes, GVE compares the repetition of a single finger to hopping on one leg for its lack of speed and stability. This idea of alternation appears to have become somewhat of an obsession; with GVE suggesting several times that a hand containing extra fingers would be able to achieve perfect alternation. This is expressed in *Harmonic Mechanisms, Volume One*, as the notion of the left hand containing two extra fingers:

‘complete alternation would be possible if we had two more fingers—we could then sound one triad with fingers 1-2-3 and the next with 4-5-6’<sup>101</sup>, and, again, in *Harmonic Mechanisms,*

*Volume Three* as the notion of an extra finger on both hands: ‘If our hands had one more finger, the alternation could be continuous thereby making repetition unnecessary’.<sup>102</sup>

## Conclusion

The *Harmonic Mechanisms* series has suffered from a lack of clear identification of principles and organised presentation of concepts which has resulted in many of its students withdrawing from their studies. This chapter shows that despite their disorganised

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<sup>99</sup> Here, the use of the fourth finger in the right hand is referenced only for information purposes and to more fully understand GVE's creative use of the fingers as it does not feature in the Volumes themselves.

<sup>100</sup> Oakes, D, 2010. [http://www.davidoakesguitar.com/pdf/girl\\_talk.pdf](http://www.davidoakesguitar.com/pdf/girl_talk.pdf), accessed 11/11/2018.

<sup>101</sup> Van Eps, G. 1980, 26.

<sup>102</sup> Van Eps, G. 1982, 13.

presentation, the exercises in the Volumes may be categorised into ten main areas of study and that the student need only understand these ten concepts to derive much of the benefit of the many exercises contained therein. It also demonstrates through GVE's own words that this concise approach was his intention for students of the Volumes.

This chapter demonstrates that the many exercises in the *Harmonic Mechanisms* series belong to ten main principles which can be considered to be the essence of the Volumes.

Having grasped the essence of the Volumes, the student may treat the many variations of each concept as an encyclopaedic reference. Each of the concepts discussed in the chapter point to a larger goal, that of chromatic freedom in a harmonic context resulting in independent motion of several voices simultaneously to the extent of being applicable to spontaneous improvisation. Given GVE's lofty vision of improvisation in several voices simultaneously, it is, perhaps unsurprising, that it consumed a lifetime of study and was codified so extensively. This extensive codification, however, has resulted in an obfuscation of the broader purpose of the publications and has, subsequently, resulted in a series that is often viewed as being largely inaccessible.

Perhaps the essence of GVE's volumes is best understood by reinterpreting the title of *Harmonic Mechanisms* as triad-motion (harmonic) fingerings (mechanisms). It is hoped that the findings presented in this chapter will make the essential concepts contained in the Volumes more accessible to current and future generations of researchers and musicians.

Having defined the important concepts contained within the volumes, the following chapters examine their influence by demonstrating the existence of these concepts within the publications and performance styles of GVE's successors.

## Chapter Four

### GVE's Influence on Jazz Guitar Education and Performance

#### Introduction

George has influenced everybody who ever played guitar. If you've played a chord on a guitar, you've got to relate to George Van Eps - Bucky Pizzarelli.<sup>103</sup>

'He's the father of us all' - Peter Nieuwerf, professor and guitar teacher, The Conservatory of Music, The Hague, Netherlands.<sup>104</sup>

While it is impossible to estimate the full extent of GVE's influence on jazz guitar education and performance, this chapter highlights some of the most important examples of such influence, pointing to prominent figures within the field who themselves exert strong influences in the spheres of education, literature, performance and innovation.

Some of this influence has come directly from his *Harmonic Mechanisms for Guitar* while some has come from his direct tuition and earlier publications and more still, through second and third-generation inheritance of his methodologies; all of which reflect the type of ideas found in *Harmonic Mechanisms for Guitar*.

This chapter draws attention to the vast sphere of influence exerted by GVE's publications in the fields of performance, literature, academia and current educational platforms. In so doing it traces an influence that spans the field of jazz guitar performance through its formative years in the swing era through several developmental phases to the present day and jazz guitar education from the early establishment of Berklee's Guitar Department to current online platforms.

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<sup>103</sup> Cited in Stephenson, H. 2018, 134.

<sup>104</sup> Stephenson, H. 2018, 135.

## **GVE's Influence on Solo Guitar Arranging Styles**

‘You can easily hear George in the unaccompanied styles of Joe Pass, Jimmy Wyble, Johnny Smith and Howard Roberts among others’ - Ted Greene.<sup>105</sup>

While the use of sophisticated chord voicing has permeated jazz guitar practice since GVE's earliest publications, perhaps GVE's greatest contribution is in the elevation of the jazz guitar to the status of a legitimate solo instrument capable of matching that of its cousin, the classical guitar. Again, in the words of Swanson: ‘an even bigger aspect of his influence was the development of the guitar as a viable solo instrument; prior to Van Eps' landmark recordings, solo guitar was a rarity; from 1970 onward, countless solo jazz guitar recordings were issued, from the likes of Joe Pass, Ted Greene, Martin Taylor, Barney Kessel (*sic*), and many others’.<sup>106</sup> Although GVE's influence is obvious in many cases, both Greene and Swanson's statements assert that even those solo jazz guitarists who are not immediately recognisable as being influenced by GVE musically are nonetheless indebted to him through the process of lineage. Those belonging to the group most obviously influenced by GVE are the guitarists who adopted the seven-string instrument and emphasise or emphasised solo repertoire, including Bucky Pizzarelli, Howard Alden, Howard Morgen, and Ron Escheté.

## **GVE's Influence on the Jazz Guitar Lead Soloist**

‘Have I been influenced by him? I think all guitar players have been—serious guitar players’ - Tony Rizzi.<sup>107</sup>

‘If you mentioned George Van Eps to any of the jazz greats like Jimmy Raney or Tal Farlow they'd bow to the waist’ - Remo Palmier.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Greene, T. Greene, 1981.

<sup>106</sup> Swanson, E. 2018, 91/92.

<sup>107</sup> Cited in Van Eps, G. *Guitar Man*, 135.

<sup>108</sup> Palmier, R. Cited in Greene, 1981.

At first glance, it would seem that GVE's harmonic approach to jazz guitar bears little in common with the classic bebop-era of jazz guitar, and much less so with contemporary practice, which emphasises single-string soloing, fusion with various styles and the use of electronic and digital sound synthesis. While the influence of the single-note lead soloist style of Charlie Christian is obvious in contemporary electric guitar via Chuck Berry and Wes Montgomery *et al*, the chordal and voice-motion techniques of GVE represent a subtle, but pervasive, influence on performance practice from the swing era to contemporary practices.

Though Charlie Christian championed the rise of the electric guitar, GVE completely disregarded rock, which became an important point of reference for fusion guitarists following the popularity of Jimi Hendrix in the late 1960s. During his interviews with Harrison Stephens in the late 1980s and early 1990s, GVE expressed his frustration by stating: 'nobody thought rock would last this long. It's so damn redundant; it's the most monotonous sound ever invented'.<sup>109</sup> GVE also shunned several other important developments which, in his lifetime, were considered pivotal influences in jazz and contemporary music, such as the avant-garde works of John Cage, micro-tonality and George Russell's 'Lydian Chromatic Concept', which was an important influence on Miles Davis and, subsequently, the rise of modal jazz through the influence of Davis's *Kind of Blue* (1959)—the best-selling jazz record of all time.<sup>110</sup>

Despite all of the abovementioned obstacles, GVE's volumes have remained important sources of inspiration for jazz guitarists since their publication. As Swanson notes in *George Van Eps and The Great American Songbook*: 'Jim Hall, perhaps the first modernist jazz guitarist, credits the first *George Van Eps Guitar Method* as a valuable resource in the

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<sup>109</sup> Stephenson, H, 2018, 21.

<sup>110</sup> Boothroyd, M, 2010. *Modal Jazz and Miles Davis: George Russell's Influence and the Melodic Inspiration Behind Modal Jazz*. <https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1004&context=notabene>, accessed 27/07/2018.

development of his own harmonically sophisticated style; other modern jazz guitarists such as Kurt Rosenwinkel and Mike Stern also credit Van Eps' instructional material as an important source of knowledge for studying harmony on the guitar'.<sup>111</sup>

Indeed, many of the guitarists influenced by GVE are themselves highly influential, thereby solidifying the impact of GVE's influence. As Swanson also notes:

As the instrument's role evolved from a simple chordal instrument for dance band accompaniment to an instrument that could handle the growing harmonic demands of the jazz idiom, Van Eps ushered in a style not based on simple idiomatic chordal "grips," but an instrument capable of handling complex harmonic structures, sophisticated voice leading, and independent moving parts. He achieved this by reducing the number of notes in chords with drop 3, shell voicings, and spread triads, which allowed for greater control of voice-leading and would become common practice in the years to follow.<sup>112</sup>

### **Barney Kessel**

I was self-taught, but I studied out of the first George Van Eps book to play the guitar, and when I was 13 or 14 I was practising out of that book - Barney Kessel.<sup>113</sup>

Barney Kessel is widely acknowledged as a successor of the Charlie Christian swing jazz-guitar style, which Kessel further developed into his bebop language. One of the most prominent jazz guitarists of the 1950s–1960s, Kessel worked in a variety of settings, including various jazz ensembles along with television and studio settings, collaborating with such artists as Frank Sinatra, Ella Fitzgerald, Lester Young, Elvis Presley and The Beach Boys, among many others. While Charlie Christian's influence was obvious when Kessel improvised as a lead soloist, a GVE-indebted, sense of harmonic inspiration can be readily observed in his more intimate settings, such as that instanced in his accompaniments to songs performed by the vocalist, Julie London, and in solo guitar performances and unaccompanied introductions.

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<sup>111</sup> Swanson, E. 2018, 92.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Stephenson, H, 2018, 135.

GVE's influence on Kessel went beyond the mere study of his publications to an admiration for his approach to arranging and harmonic concept. In Kessel's words:

As I recall my entry into music and playing the guitar, he was one of the few people I became aware of on any instrument who had just a vast harmonic knowledge. The idea of reworking the harmonies in a way that made it unusual – made them very appealing and didn't in any way take away from the quality of a song. He did it long before most others did it, and he did it in great measure and always with great taste and great curiosity.<sup>114</sup>

Kessel continues by comparing GVE's harmonic innovations to that of Art Tatum: 'when I think back into the '30s, the two names that come to me as possessing a curious, adventurous longing for interesting harmonies would be George on guitar and Art Tatum on Piano'.<sup>115</sup>

### **Jim Hall**

'There's all sort of triadic stuff, where anything you hear in the way of a melodic line, you can harmonize a number of different ways. I took a lot of that stuff from the first George Van Eps method book, and I would use my own chord voicings. Stravinsky did that kind of thing a lot, too' - Jim Hall.<sup>116</sup>

Often considered a 'modernist' jazz guitarist, Hall is the recipient of such accolades as *Chevalier dans l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres*, granted by the French Minister of Culture and Communication; America's Jazz Master Fellowship, bestowed by The National Endowment for the Arts; and the Danish Jazzpar Prize, among many others. In 1992, Hall was the only jazz guitarist to be named among 'twenty-five guitarists who shook the world' (according to *Guitar Magazine*), along with popular rock guitarists such as Jimi Hendrix and Eddie Van Halen. Along with such awards, Hall's career has included collaborations with artists such as

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<sup>114</sup> Stephenson, H, 2018, 2

<sup>115</sup> Ibid

<sup>116</sup> Hall, J. 07/01/1999. Cited in <https://jazztimes.com/features/jim-hall-the-emperor-of-cool/>, accessed 25/07/2018.

Paul Desmond, Sonny Rollins, Bill Evans Jimmy Giuffre and Ella Fitzgerald, among many others.

Although Hall acknowledges the influence of GVE's publications, he also places GVE in the category of musicians which he felt were beyond his capacity to emulate. In Hall's words:

I was around Tal Farlow a lot when I moved to California. I had heard him with the Red Norvo Trio, which was an amazing group. And then Jimmy Raney was a good friend of mine. And Wes Montgomery... I already knew Wes's brothers before I heard him. And I'd heard George Van Eps since I was a kid, as well. So my point is, that it's almost like I said to myself, 'Okay, if I practice every minute for the rest of my life, I'll never be able to do that. So what am I doing?' It was like I said to myself, 'Hey dummy, do something different'.<sup>117</sup>

As the above statement shows, Hall was highly driven to develop a personal style and succeeded to do so while drawing inspiration from several musicians including GVE.

### **The Guitar in the Big Band Rhythm Section**

GVE was highly influential on the development of a conventional approach to big band rhythm guitar, both through his own contributions and those of his student, Allan Reuss. Reuss is considered one of the most important rhythm guitarists in early big band jazz and is second in popularity only to Freddie Green. Having studied guitar with GVE, Reuss joined The Benny Goodman Big Band in 1935 on GVE's recommendation. This led to an almost ten-year partnership between Goodman and Reuss, and it was the start of a successful career for Reuss, which included working with Jimmy Dorsey, Jack Teagarden, Paul Whitman, Coleman Hawkins and Lionel Hampton, as well as fulfilling numerous studio and session dates. As discussed in Chapter One, Reuss was partly responsible for shaping the guitar style of Freddie Green, who is known as the greatest jazz rhythm guitarist of all time, having spent almost fifty years with the Count Basie Orchestra beginning in 1937 until Basie died in 1984. While several scholars have noted that big band rhythm guitar reached a peak in The Count

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<sup>117</sup> Hall, J. 07/01/1999. Cited in <https://jazztimes.com/features/jim-hall-the-emperor-of-cool/>, accessed 25/07/2018.



Basie Orchestra in the hands of Freddie Green, it is a less documented fact that GVE's student, Allan Reuss, was a mentor to Green and other aspiring big-band guitarists.<sup>118</sup>

After the decline of big band jazz, one of the main guitarists to preserve Green's tradition was Steve Jordan (who studied with Reuss). Jordan acknowledged GVE's influence by stating: 'as a youth, I studied with Allen Reuss. We play a similar style which evolved from the early George Van Eps who was Allen's teacher'.<sup>119</sup> Although their careers overlapped for a time, with Jordan being part of The Will Bradley Orchestra from 1939 to 1941, The Artie Shaw Orchestra from 1941-1942 and The Benny Goodman Orchestra between 1953 -1957, much of Jordan's career was spent as a studio musician at NBC. Jordan continued to work as a freelance musician until he died in 1993.

### **Tony Mottola and Studio Music**

George is the master of them all. He influenced me so much with his chordal harmonic concepts – of course, he influenced everybody - Tony Mottola.<sup>120</sup>

Along with extensively recording as a soloist and in supporting roles, Mottola's career is largely distinguished by his studio work, which included being a member of The Tonight Show Orchestra at NBC studios from 1958–1972. In 1951, Mottola became the musical director for the CBS-TV television series, *Danger*, and appeared regularly on both *The Perry Como Show* and *Caesar's Hour*, hosted by the comedian, Sid Caesar. Mottola was the recipient of an Emmy Award for his score on the 1960s television documentary, *Two Childhoods*, based on the lives of Hubert Humphrey and James Baldwin. Along with his studio and television work, Mottola toured with Frank Sinatra from 1980–1988 and

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<sup>118</sup> Jordan, S, 1975. <http://stevejordan.info/bio.html>, accessed 03/08/2018.

<sup>119</sup> Jordan, S, 1972, Sleeve Notes to *Here Comes Mr. Jordan*, <http://stevejordan.info/bio.html>, accessed 04,08,2018.

<sup>120</sup> Mottola, T. Cited in Greene, 1981.

performed with the latter at The White House. Another, lesser-known studio guitarist at NBC, Tony Rizzi was a student of GVE's and would perform in small group settings with GVE during the 1980s. A different NBC studio guitarist, Barry Galbraith, who also worked at CBS and performed with such luminaries as Miles Davis, Oscar Peterson and George Russell stated: '[he] wished that the younger players knew more about Van Eps. There's nobody like him. Harmonically speaking, he's the greatest ever for guitar'.<sup>121</sup> Another student of GVE's, Bobby Gibbons, worked as a guitarist for *The Tennessee Ernie Ford Show*, which aired from 1956 to 1961. Despite working in jazz groups with Benny Goodman and Red Norvo, Allan Hanlon, who was another of GVE's students, made much of his living in session work with groups such as The Coasters and The Blenders, and with artists LaVern Baker, Johnnie Ray and Leslie Uggams, among other.<sup>122</sup>

Of GVE's successors to work in studio settings, perhaps the most widely recognised is Howard Roberts. Although Roberts' career as a studio musician required a great amount of versatility, his studies of GVE's concepts remained apparent, especially when playing in the chordal jazz style. As the author and guitarist, Wolf Marshall, notes: 'Roberts possessed one of the most facile and swinging block-chord styles in jazz ... it is an outgrowth of the early (pre-polyphonic) George Van Eps plectrum-based approach'.<sup>123</sup> From the late 1950s to early 1970s, Howard Roberts was one of the world's most prolific studio guitarists. During this time, Roberts' work permeated popular media and includes playing lead guitar on such popular television themes as *The Twilight Zone*, *The Brady Bunch*, *Batman*, *Lost in Space* and *Mission Impossible*, among almost countless others. Along with his session work for television, Roberts was a member of The Wrecking Crew and a contributing player to Phil Spector's Wall of Sound, resulting in Roberts contributing guitar parts to some of the most

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<sup>121</sup> Galbraith, G. Cited in Greene, 1981.

<sup>122</sup> <https://www.allmusic.com/artist/allen-hanlon-mn0001762860/biography>, accessed 06/08/2018.

<sup>123</sup> Marshall, W. *The Best of Jazz Guitar*, 2000, 79/80.

popular songs in history.<sup>124</sup> Among the virtually countless number of musicians Roberts recorded with are The Monkees, Little Richard, Ella Fitzgerald, Frank Sinatra, Elvis Presley, Ray Charles, Sammy Davis Jr., The Beach Boys, Merle Travis, Nat King Cole, Little Richard, Sonny and Cher, The Jackson Five, Rick Nelson, and The Supremes.

### **William Leavitt and The Berklee Guitar Department**

As a founding member of Berklee's Guitar Department and Department Chair for twenty-five years, William Leavitt has had an immeasurable impact on the world of jazz and contemporary guitar education. Leavitt's admiration and reverence for GVE were expressed by Berklee professor, Charles Chapman, in his book, *The George Van Eps Guitar Solos*, where he recalled:

In 1969 I entered Berklee College of Music as a fledgling (*sic*) jazz guitarist full of the vigour and audacity a 19 year old has. During my first week I made a point of seeking out Bill Leavitt (then Chairman of the Guitar Department) informing him I was there to hone my jazz skills. He looked straight into my eyes, reached up and tapped a picture on his wall of a man with a 7-string guitar and stated: "if you want to learn jazz, and truly understand the workings of the guitar, get into George Van Eps".<sup>125</sup>

Along with *A Modern Method for Guitar Vol I-III*, which is still the basic study manual of the Berklee curriculum, *The George Van Eps Method for Guitar* formed the veritable backbone of the Berklee Guitar Department. Apropos of GVE, Berklee professor, Andrew Maness, states:

I have his first book, and still work out of it, although it is very challenging. I can tell you that in my experience as a student of William G. Leavitt's... which represented my entire eight semesters as a Berklee student (1977-80), the only book that Mr Leavitt ever used that he hadn't written himself was the first Van Eps book.<sup>126</sup>

Another current Berklee professor, Joe Baboian, recalls:

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<sup>124</sup> Although a lengthy account is beyond the scope of this research, The Wrecking Crew are known for their prolific contributions to popular music, including work with Bob Dylan, The Beach Boys and The Monkees, While Phil Spector is hailed as a visionary record producer through his work with John Lennon, George Harrison and The Righteous Brothers amongst others. For more see *The Wrecking Crew: The inside Story of Rock and Roll's best-kept secret*, Hartman, K. 2013, and *Tearing Down the Wall of Sound: The Rise and Fall of Phil Spector*, Brown, M. 2008.

<sup>125</sup> Chapman, C. *George Van Eps Guitar Solos*, Mel Bay Publications, Missouri, 2000, 2.

<sup>126</sup> Maness, A, Email correspondence with the author, 07/02/2018

I was not influenced directly by the Van Epps (*sic*) books. But I was influenced indirectly by them. My teacher at Berklee (40 years ago) was William G. Leavitt, one of the founders of the Berklee Guitar Dept., chair for 25 years, author of many guitar books...he was influenced by those books, and therefore indirectly got to me. He also played me recordings of GVE great solo guitar playing, which affected my own solo guitar performance.<sup>127</sup>

William Leavitt's profile on [www.berklee.com](http://www.berklee.com) states that: 'he had a profound influence on Berklee's guitar curriculum, as well as jazz guitar education worldwide'.<sup>128</sup> This being the case, the above quotations acknowledge that GVE's publications, in turn, had a profound influence on William Leavitt and subsequently Berklee's guitar curriculum and, by extension, jazz and contemporary guitar throughout the world.

While the very concept of jazz guitar as a serious study may have originated with GVE and come to full fruition in Berklee's Guitar Department, the actual technical influence of GVE's publications on Leavitt are most easily recognised in *A Modern Method for Guitar Volume Three*.

*A Modern Method for Guitar Vols. I–III* are amongst the most popular guitar method books in the world and have remained a cornerstone of the Berklee College of Music guitar program for over forty years. Several endorsements are displayed on [www.berklee.com](http://www.berklee.com) using such terms as 'bible' and 'all-time best', the most noteworthy of which comes from Mike Stern, himself a renowned jazz guitarist, who refers to it as 'the best method ever written for guitar'.<sup>129</sup>

Although volume three contains many examples of triad studies, the most derivative of GVE's publications are what Leavitt refers to as 'melodization' (*sic*) of triads, which refers to moving a single voice within a triad—as found throughout GVE's publications—but most closely related to exercises found throughout *The George Van Eps Guitar Method* and the 'super and sub series' exercises found in *Harmonic Mechanisms Volume One*. In a more

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<sup>127</sup> Baboian, J, Email correspondence with the author, 07/02/2018

<sup>128</sup> <http://berklee.com/berklee-authors/william-leavitt/> accessed 15/02/2018

<sup>129</sup> [www.berklee.com](http://www.berklee.com), accessed 14/03/2018.

general sense, it demonstrates the idea of triadic voice-leading that represents the very heart of GVE’s publications. According to Leavitt’s description: ‘Melodization of triads is accomplished by replacing the top note of a triad (the root, 3rd, or 5th, depending on the inversion) with a higher degree of the scale from which the chord is formed. These notes (other than 1, 3, or 5) are referred to as tension notes, tensions, or higher degrees’.<sup>130</sup> While GVE’s publications demonstrate many triadic voice-motion studies including motion in upper, middle and lower voices, Leavitt focuses primarily on the upper voice, with only brief examples of middle and lower voice-motion or melodization. As Leavitt notes: ‘tensions are also used as inside voices of chords, but because these are more difficult to “see”, we shall not emphasize (*sic*) them until later’.<sup>131</sup>

Although the term melodization does not appear in GVE’s publications, it has been used within Berklee to describe not only Leavitt’s triad motion exercises but, also, those published by GVE. This can be observed in the course description of Berklee’s ‘Building Guitar Technique Through Triads’ (course code ILGT-367), which is based on *The George Van Eps Method for Guitar*. According to the course description:

This lab uses the original George Van Eps method for guitar. The student is rigorously involved in developing a triad-oriented approach to the finger board. Topics covered include harmonized scales and scale patterns, melodized triads, and free improvisations. Strong emphasis on correct technique for both right and left hands.<sup>132</sup>



Ex 14: *Melodization of Tonic Major Triads*, page 41.

## Charles Chapman

<sup>130</sup> Leavitt, W. 1987, 32.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> <https://www.berklee.edu/courses/ilgt-367>, accessed 23/03/2018.

Based on *George Van Eps Original Guitar Solos*, Chapman's *George Van Eps Guitar Solos* contains all six compositions from the original publication and the additional three solo guitar compositions by GVE which were published separately. Chapman's updated version includes guitar tablature for each of the pieces and an accompanying CD on which Chapman performs the solos. As the above compositions are each harmonically analysed in Chapman's book, a re-examination here is unnecessary. While Chapman has included tablature for each of the compositions, it is sometimes incorrect, with notes from the original notation being omitted from the tablature. As mentioned previously, Chapman's interest in GVE was directly influenced by William Leavitt during his undergraduate studies at Berklee.

### **Mick Goodrick**

Goodrick, who began studying at Berklee in 1963 and took up a teaching post in 1967, is, perhaps best known as a teacher, despite a successful performance career working with Gary Burton and Pat Metheny (amongst others). Goodrick's students include such luminaries as Lionel Loueke, Lage Lund, Nir Felder and Julian Lage and his publications have received wide critical acclaim. As a contributing writer to the online magazine, *Jazz Times*, noted: 'Goodrick's many books, such as the *Almanac of Guitar Voice Leading* series and *Creative Chordal Harmony for the Guitar* (with Tim Miller), are exhaustive studies in voicings, the work of a scientist, a completist, (*sic*) in which every last solution to a given problem is considered and annotated'.<sup>133</sup> The influence of GVE on Goodrick is obvious, not only because of the latter's studies with William Leavitt but, also, via his focus on guitar harmony with particular emphasis on the areas of triads, chord scales and voice-leading. Both influences are confirmed by the ex Goodrick student, Ron Murray, who stated: 'Mick

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<sup>133</sup> Harrison, J. 2017, <https://jazztimes.com/features/guitarist-mick-goodrick>, accessed 18/02/2018.

Goodrick, certainly one of the most harmonically advanced jazzers, really respected and loved Leavitt, and is of the opinion that the *Method* is a supreme foundational work', and 'Mick and I worked on some of Van Eps' material together many years ago'.<sup>134</sup>

Goodrick is the author of a series of three large volumes titled *Almanac of Guitar Voice-Leading*, which bear similarities to GVE's *Harmonic Mechanisms Series* in several ways (not least by their purely physical appearance as three large spiral-bound volumes on voice-leading for guitar), including their primary focus on guitar harmony and voice-leading, their exhaustive presentation of voicing principals and the use of major, harmonic minor and melodic minor chord scales as the basis of their content. Despite the many similarities, there are several important differences, including the omission of fingerings/alternate fingerings for the chord scales, the omission of string-sets and, perhaps most strikingly, the omission of standard notation as all harmonic formulas are presented in graphic letter form (Figure 17). While each of the volumes bear resemblance to GVE's *Harmonic Mechanisms*, the similarities in the content are most notable in *Volume One*, which focuses on triads, seventh chords and triads over bass-notes (*Volume Two* addresses quartal voicings and *Volume Three* addresses chromaticism). Many of the opening comments of *Almanac of Guitar Voice-Leading* bring to mind similar comments in *Harmonic Mechanisms*, such as the supposition that studying all the material in the volumes is both impossible and unnecessary. After introductory sections, the book's exercises are divided into twelve sections:

Triads: Close & Spread 6 Cycles C Major

Triads: Close & Spread 6 Cycles C Melodic Minor

Triads: Close & Spread 6 Cycles C Harmonic Minor

7th Chords: 6 Voicing Types 6 Cycles

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<sup>134</sup> Murray, R. 2010, <https://www.jazzguitar.be/forum/>, accessed 18/02/2018.

7th Chords: 6 Voicing Types 6 Cycles

7th Chords: 6 Voicing Types 6 Cycles

TBN I: 6 Voicing Types 6 Cycles C Major<sup>135</sup>

TBN I: 6 Voicing Types 6 Cycles C Melodic Minor

TBN I: 6 Voicing Types 6 Cycles C Harmonic Minor

TBN II: 6 Voicing Types 6 Cycles C Major

TBN II: 6 Voicing Types 6 Cycles C Melodic Minor

TBN II: 6 Voicing Types 6 Cycles C Harmonic Minor

**Chord Family:** Triad      **Cycle:** 2      **Scale:** C major  
**Voicing Type:** Close

	C	Dm	Em	F	G	Am	B <sup>o</sup>
<b>Intervallic Voice-Leading</b>							
5 → 2nd	G →	F →	E →	C →	B →	A →	F →
3 → 2nd	E →	D →	B →	A →	G →	E →	D →
1 → 3rd	C →	A →	G →	F →	D →	C →	B →
<b>Functional Voice-Leading</b>							
5 → 3	E →	D →	B →	A →	G →	E →	D →
3 → 1	C →	A →	G →	F →	D →	C →	B →
1 → 5	G →	F →	E →	C →	B →	A →	F →
5 → 3 (down 1)	C →	A →	G →	F →	D →	C →	B →
5 → 3 (down)	G →	F →	E →	C →	B →	A →	F →
5 → 3 (down)	E →	D →	B →	A →	G →	E →	D →
<b>Voicing Type: Spread</b>							
	E →	D →	B →	A →	G →	E →	D →
	G →	F →	E →	C →	B →	A →	F →
	C →	A →	G →	F →	D →	C →	B →
	C →	A →	G →	F →	D →	C →	B →
	E →	D →	B →	A →	G →	E →	D →
	G →	F →	E →	C →	B →	A →	F →
	C →	A →	G →	F →	D →	C →	B →
	E →	D →	B →	A →	G →	E →	D →

M.S.R.P.      CAG F

||: C A G F D C B G F E C B A F E D B A G E D :||

1                      5                      3

<sup>135</sup> Goodrick uses the abbreviation TBN for triad over-bass note.



Figure 17: Goodrick's graphic notation.

## Chris Buono

As a student and colleague of Mick Goodrick, Chris Buono shows a strong although indirect influence of GVE's methodologies in his educational material. Buono's *Triad Chord Scales*, released in 2014 on [www.truefire.com](http://www.truefire.com), consists of three separate courses addressing triad chord scales in major, harmonic minor and melodic minor tonalities, which reflect the format of triad scales presented in GVE's *Harmonic Mechanisms*. Having recognised striking similarities between Buono's *Triad Chord Scales* courses and the triad chord scales presented in *Harmonic Mechanisms Volume One*, this author contacted Buono to enquire if indeed GVE's *Harmonic Mechanisms* were the inspiration behind his courses. The following is Buono's response:

While I have all three volumes as well as George's first book, they had nothing to do with my Triad Chord Scales courses. The primary influence was Mick Goodrick's Almanac series as well as Mick himself. I spent some time with him when I first started teaching at Berklee. I ended up going down that rabbit hole quite a bit with articles in *Just Jazz Guitar* and *Guitar One*. The latter was a co-byline with him.<sup>136</sup>

The above response is a strong example of how GVE's influence has permeated three generations of guitar instruction, here from Leavitt to Goodrick to Buono and countless others through their exceptionally popular, instructional materials.

While the triad chord scales make great effort to contain all inversions across various string-sets in three tonalities, Buono saves a considerable amount of time by presenting each scale in a single key, in contrast to the twelve-key format of *Harmonic Mechanisms*.

## Steve Herberman

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<sup>136</sup> Buono, C. Email correspondence with the author, 19/12/2017.

‘Steve Herberman is the present and the future of jazz guitar’ – Vic Juris.<sup>137</sup>

Although generally confined to Washington DC and New York, Herberman’s solo duo and trio outings are amongst the most exact example of GVE’s influence in contemporary performance (notwithstanding Howard Alden’s inclusion of GVE’s compositions in his concerts). Herberman also reaches a worldwide audience by posting a number of his performances on his Youtube channel. Herberman has released six albums with his seven-string guitar at the time of writing (the most recent in 2019) which have earned him praise from some of the most respected guitarists in jazz, including Jim Hall, Jimmy Bruno and John Pisano, among others. Along with his albums and transcriptions, Herberman makes his transcription of GVE’s 1949 recording of ‘Once In A While’ commercially available on his website, [www.steveherberman.com](http://www.steveherberman.com). Herberman’s composition, ‘For George’, is dedicated to both GVE and George Gershwin and celebrates the relationship between the two, which Herberman demonstrates through his use of GVE’s techniques in his contrafact composition based on the chord progression to Gershwin’s popular standard, ‘Embraceable You’.

Herberman also teaches many of the concepts contained in *Harmonic Mechanisms* on his video courses for the website [www.mikesmasterclasses.com](http://www.mikesmasterclasses.com). At the time of writing, Herberman has over fifty courses and over 5000 students enrolled thereon.

Explaining how he became interested in GVE’s publications, Herberman states: ‘mainly my teacher Bill Leavitt at Berklee; it was his *Modern Method Vol. 3* that got me into the multi-line style’.<sup>138</sup> Although a complete analysis of Herberman’s instructional material is beyond the scope of this research, a brief description of several titles which relate most closely to GVE’s publications should be sufficient to demonstrate their influence on Herberman’s lessons.

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<sup>137</sup> Juris, V. Cited in <https://www.steveherberman.com/press-kit>, accessed 06/08/2018.

<sup>138</sup> Herberman, S. Email correspondence with the author, 12/02/2018.

*Chord Melody Arranging and Soloing Inspired by George Van Eps*, which is described as ‘utilizing ideas for voice motion and chord substitution inspired by George van Eps (*sic*)’ uses the popular standard *Autumn Leaves* as a framework for teaching concepts derived from the study of GVE’s publications.<sup>139</sup> Herberman describes GVE’s style as often being based on three-lines in motion comprised of a melody, bass and inner voice. He elaborates on this idea by stating that maintaining a half note bass line with a melody while allowing room for an inner voice is ‘really the foundation of the Van Eps style’.<sup>140</sup>

The image shows a musical score for the first A section of 'Autumn Leaves'. It consists of four staves of music in G major, 4/4 time. The first staff shows the beginning of the piece with a melody line, a bass line, and an inner voice line. The second staff continues the melody and bass line, with the inner voice line providing harmonic support. The third staff shows a more complex arrangement with multiple voices. The fourth staff concludes the section with a final chord and a half-note bass line.

Ex 15: Herberman, *Autumn Leaves* first A section.

Another of Herberman’s classes *Applications of Triad Motion Studies Inspired by George Van Eps* also draws directly from *Harmonic Mechanisms*, as Herberman states in the lesson description:

I often get requests to demonstrate how Van Eps’ triad studies in *Harmonic Mechanism’s* (*sic*) can be applied to comping and soloing as well as chord/melody. In this masterclass we’ll see how his multi-line triadic approach can add depth and interest to triads and upper structure triads. If you’ve never worked through Van Eps’ books than (*sic*) this class could be a real eye-opener. If you’ve

<sup>139</sup> <https://mikesmasterclasses.com/>, accessed 07/01/2018

<sup>140</sup> Herberman, S. *Chord Melody Arranging and Soloing Inspired by George Van Eps* (ND).

checked out Harmonic Mechanisms and need a fresh look at how to put the concepts into practical use over tunes than (*sic*) don't miss this masterclass'.<sup>141</sup>

For this class, Herberman uses the chord progression to Gershwin's *I Got Rhythm* as a vehicle to demonstrate concepts from GVE's publications, focusing primarily on triads and triadic voice-leading. As Herberman states: 'I've tried to use as many triads as possible and sometimes the top line, the upper line is moving, sometimes it's the middle line and sometimes it's the bass line'.<sup>142</sup> During this process, Herberman describes GVE's super and sub series technique of voice-leading within the framework of harmonised triad chord scales as found in *Harmonic Mechanisms Volume One*.



Ex.16: Herberman, *I Got Rhythm*, bars 1 – 8.

The following is a brief description of several additional master classes by Herberman which relate to GVE's publications.

In *Chordal Solo Choruses* Herberman states: 'what I'm attempting to do in this class is demonstrate the concepts and techniques for playing two, three and four-part chord solos'.<sup>143</sup> And in the product description states that: 'the inspiration for this fun and challenging class comes from the exciting chordal solo choruses George Van Eps recorded for the Jump record

<sup>141</sup> <https://mikesmasterclasses.com/course/applications-of-triad-motion-studies-inspired-by-george-van-eps/>, accessed 21/05/2018

<sup>142</sup> Herberman, S. *Applications of Triad Motion Studies Inspired by George Van Eps* (ND).

<sup>143</sup> <https://mikesmasterclasses.com/course/chordal-solo-choruses/>, accessed 19/05/2018.

label with his small group. Those solos were all about motion in any voice at any time’, and ‘the written solos used in the class are an expansion on the rhythm changes etude used in Steve’s class *Applications Of Triad Motion Studies inspired by George Van Eps*.<sup>144</sup>

Another of Herberman’s instructional videos *The Inner Line* is described as ‘using principles that were inspired by the materials George Van Eps outlines in his *Harmonic Mechanisms* books’.<sup>145</sup> Describing another of his video series: *Pedal Points Vol. I – IV*, Herberman states: ‘George Van Eps and Jimmy Wyble were my inspiration for putting this class together’.<sup>146</sup>

Another set of videos *Motion and Chord Voicings Vol. I- II* is described in the following way:

You and he will begin with triads and create lines in parallel and contrary motion while maintaining some common chord tones. After examining many kinds of voice motion within one chord, you’ll apply these concepts to a progression. This is in essence what the George Van Eps volumes were all about: looking at chords as several voices forging ahead over time to arrive at familiar destinations along the way<sup>147</sup>

And continues:

George Van Eps used to say that “Guitarists put too damn many notes in their chords”. In this class we’ll heed the maestro’s advice and examine 10th intervals with a moving inner line. Also, we’ll look at other intervals such as 6th’s and 12th’s with inner line motion and apply these to a progression.<sup>148</sup>

Another of Herberman’s classes *Contrapuntal Triad Pairs Vol I–II* makes direct reference to GVE’s technique of triads taken through the super and sub series as found in *Harmonic Mechanisms*. As Herberman describes:

In my previous harmonised melodic minor scale class, strings of triads and seventh chords were put together and used for comping and chord soloing. Now we’ll take those chords and give them a thorough workout with all types of line motion utilizing the Van Eps super and sup in all possible voices.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> <https://mikesmasterclasses.com/course/the-inner-line/> accessed 19/05/2018.

<sup>146</sup> <https://mikesmasterclasses.com/course/pedal-points-part-1-lower-pedals/> accessed 19/05/2018.

<sup>147</sup> <https://mikesmasterclasses.com/course/motion-and-chord-voicings-part-i/> accessed 19/05/2018.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> <https://mikesmasterclasses.com/course/contrapuntal-triad-pairs-part-1-close-voiced-triads/> accessed 19/05/2018.

During the class, Herberman points to *Harmonic Mechanisms* as sources of further information on the super and sub series and refers to them as ‘terrific books that you’ve heard me talk about before if you’ve had some of my other classes’.<sup>150</sup>

Herberman’s recent class *Fun with Tenths* explores the many possibilities of the tenth interval, as he points out in the course description: ‘this five chapter class explores the very useful and important 10th interval for a wide variety of applications. George Van Eps referred to it as the “Mighty 10th” and when the interval is explored in-depth, harmonically and melodically, you’ll see why’.<sup>151</sup>

### **Mike Stern**

While Herberman’s playing bears an obvious influence of GVE’s publications in terms of contemporary performance, many guitarists who, at first glance, seem far-removed from GVE’s harmonic approach are also advocates of such. One such example is contemporary guitarist, Mike Stern. Although not immediately obvious in his jazz-rock fusion style, multi-Grammy Award nominee Mike Stern has been cited as recommending *The George Van Eps Method for Guitar* to students. As guitarist Mike Neer recalls: ‘at my first lesson with Mike, he made a point of telling me to buy the book, which was still available in some stores at the time (circa ‘87) ... It took a while for me to discover how Mike used it, but now that I think about it, a lot of the use of triads in Mike’s soloing (arpeggios and chromatic triad sequences) was probably developed from that’.<sup>152</sup> Having risen to prominence as guitarist for Miles Davis’s 1980s comeback group along with his group ‘Blood Sweat and Tears’, Stern continues to record highly-acclaimed albums (which have received him six Grammy

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<sup>150</sup> <https://mikesmasterclasses.com/course/contrapuntal-triad-pairs-part-1-close-voiced-triads/> accessed 19/05/2018.

<sup>151</sup> <https://mikesmasterclasses.com/> accessed 08/01/2018

<sup>152</sup> Neer, M. 29/07/2018. Email correspondence with the author.

nomination including ‘Best Contemporary Jazz Album in 2007) and tour internationally with all-star line-ups.

### **Kurt Rosenwinkel**

On the guitar, my main influences are George Van Eps for his unparalleled mastery of the instrument and his unique way of playing the guitar like a piano - Kurt Rosenwinkel.<sup>153</sup>

A former student at The Berklee College of Music, Kurt Rosenwinkel (1970–) is perhaps the definitive jazz guitarist of the modern era. Having come to prominence in the 1990s, Rosenwinkel has collaborated with artists such as Brad Mehldau, Joe Henderson, Gary Burton and Q-Tip, and has featured on over eighty albums, of which twelve as a leader. The recipient of numerous awards including The Composers Award from The National Endowment for the Arts (USA), Rosenwinkel taught at Universität der Künste, Berlin for twelve years after relocating to Germany. Along with continuing to record and tour internationally, Rosenwinkel has launched his own record label, Heartcore Records.

While Rosenwinkel cites several guitarists as sources of influence, he has frequently noted GVE’s publications as a source of continuing harmonic study. This acknowledgement by a leader in contemporary jazz guitar innovation is a testament to the wealth of harmonic potential contained within the volumes. The English-based jazz guitarist and journalist, John Harris has noted Van Eps’ influence on Rosenwinkel, referring to aspects of his playing as ‘pure George Van Eps’.<sup>154</sup>

During an interview for the German magazine, *Gittare & Bass*, Rosenwinkel discussed several aspects of GVE’s Harmonic Mechanisms that held particular interest:

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<sup>153</sup> Gerantab, F. 2011, <http://www.jazzreview.com/jazz-artist-interviews/kurt-rosenwinkel.html>, accessed 20/07/2018.

<sup>154</sup> Gerantab, F. 2011, <http://www.jazzreview.com/jazz-artist-interviews/kurt-rosenwinkel.html>, accessed 20/07/2018.

Kurt has been working with the late George Van Eps' *Harmonic Mechanisms for Guitar* (this New York Telephone Directory style bible mostly addresses triads and all their permutations on various string-sets). In connection with this method Kurt mentions the study of triads from harmonic minor as well as various possibilities for the movement of inner voices as particularly interesting to him.<sup>155</sup>

During a clinic at Old Town School of Folk Music, Chicago (a video of which is posted on the schools' Youtube channel) Rosenwinkel makes the following comments about his study of *Harmonic Mechanisms for Guitar*:

These three books are...They're referred to as the telephone books because you know they're big. If you know George Van Eps's playing it's this stunning...you know, sounds impossible what he's playing...what he has worked on so exhaustively are finger mechanics or harmonic mechanics. How to make things sound like they are, you know, sort of sleight of hand stuff you know. Things that sound like you got two guitars going on...So you know I would open the books and just read some stuff. I didn't go through the whole things...I got so much out of that.<sup>156</sup>

In his master's thesis *The Rosenwinkel Introductions: Stylistic Tendencies in 10 Introductions Recorded by Jazz Guitarist Kurt Rosenwinkel*, author Jens Hoppe both acknowledges the influence of *Harmonic Mechanisms for Guitar* on Rosenwinkel's guitar style and attempts to mitigate the influence of such on his introductions by stating:

In an interview published in *Guitar Player*, Rosenwinkel mentioned that he had gained much from the study of George Van Eps' *Harmonic Mechanisms For Guitar* (Milkowski, 2010; Van Eps, 1980). The study of these books, and their meticulous dissection of triad and interval permutations and melodic movement within these, may well have contributed to Rosenwinkel's ability to negotiate and blur the boundary between single-note and chordal playing, but they do not address the topic of introductions.<sup>157</sup>

The above statement fails to acknowledge that Van Eps's *Harmonic Mechanisms for Guitar* do not dictate how any of the material contained therein be applied to song form. A prominent example of GVE's influence manifesting in Rosenwinkel's introductions is found in 'A Life Unfolds' from his live album *The Remedy* (2006) which is based on open-voiced

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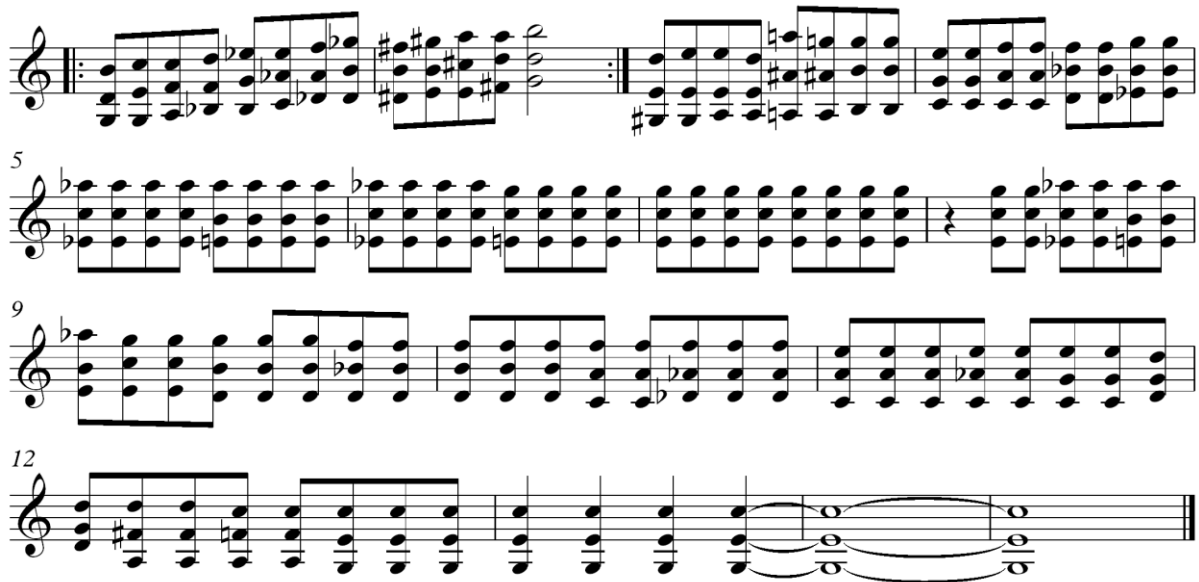
<sup>155</sup> www.christianrover.com, accessed 18/02/2018, original quote from *Gittare & Bass*, 2000, Ebner Verlag GMBH & CO. KG, trans. C. Rover.

<sup>156</sup> Rosenwinkel, C. 2014. Quoted in <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k-ox3Mfby2I>, accessed 22/02/2019.

<sup>157</sup> Hoppe, J. 2017, 3. *The Rosenwinkel Introductions: Stylistic Tendencies in 10 Introductions Recorded by Jazz Guitarist Kurt Rosenwinkel*, University of Sydney.



triads, often with a single moving voice, moving primarily through a cycle of fifths as found throughout *Harmonic Mechanisms for Guitar* and closely related to the ‘progressive motion’ concept (example 17).



Ex. 17: *Rosenwinkel, A Life Unfolds, introduction.*

### **Jimmy Wyble and The Musicians Institute**

The Musicians Institute, which offers degrees at both undergraduate and master’s level, is widely recognised as one of the leading institutes of contemporary music studies in the United States (along with a sister institute in Tokyo, Japan), offering studies with strong links to the industry in the fields of business, performance and engineering. The Musicians Institute was founded in 1977 as The Guitar Institute of Technology by businessman, Pat Hicks, and the jazz guitarist, Howard Roberts, who, along with being a prolific session musician and educator, was a student of GVE’s publications. Another of GVE’s direct students, Ron Escheté, was one of the original teachers at GIT. While GVE’s methodologies are likely to have had a profound effect on the curriculum of GIT, perhaps the strongest direct

influence is seen in a series of lectures given at MIT over the course of two years by another of GVE's students, Jimmy Wyble.

Jimmy Wyble's student and collaborator, David Oaks (who recorded and edited Wyble's book *The Art of Two-Line Improvisation*), has made much of Wyble's lesson materials available on his website, [www.davidoakes.com](http://www.davidoakes.com). Amongst this material is a series of ideas on guitar harmony titled *Harmonic Awareness and Efficiency: A Method by Jimmy Wyble*, which Oaks refers to as 'his complete thought process and should be viewed as Jimmy Wyble's own version of "Harmonic Mechanisms" (*sic*).<sup>158</sup> Oaks describes how these ideas came about as the result of Wyble studying with GVE and finishing the chord scales from *Harmonic Mechanisms*, at which point GVE challenged Wyble to come up with his own variations on the chord scales. These ideas were then presented at Musicians Institute as a series of lectures from October 2007–March 2009. In Oaks's words:

Jimmy Wyble had two guitar teachers that really inspired him to play the guitar at a very high level - Laurindo Almeida and George Van Eps. Jimmy often spoke of his work with Van Eps and went through all of his chord scales. Anyone who has ever gone through the Van Eps "Harmonic Mechanisms" (*sic*) books knows all about the chord scales that Jimmy was referring to. George then challenged Jimmy to come up with his own chord scales and the information presented in this packet reflects Jimmy's hard work and commitment that was spawned from that Van Eps comment. I think that George Van Eps would be very pleased with Jimmy's work!<sup>159</sup>

The above comment clearly expresses that Wyble's methodologies not only carry an imprint of GVE's publications but are, in fact, a direct reinterpretation of the latter. As Ted Greene noted during his interview with GVE, Wyble's works seemed to be 'all a direct offshoot' of his studies with GVE.<sup>160</sup> In his opening comments, Wyble states:

'as we have seen from the Van Eps method, the study of chord scales is an ongoing process and is not something that can be learned in a week or a month. It is truly a lifelong journey as well as a commitment and understanding that the study of harmony is essential to the growth and development of any musician'.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> <http://www.davidoakesguitar.com/gswyble.php>, accessed 18/02/2018.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid

<sup>160</sup> Greene, T. 1981.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

Along with the above example, GVE's influence can be found in two additional publications by Wyble: *Classical Country Guitar Method* and *The Art of Two-line Improvisation*.

Jimmy Wyble's *Classical Country Guitar Method* and *The Art of Two-Line Improvisation* both draw on a series of twenty-five etudes written in the 1970s, with etudes one to six appearing in *Classical Country Guitar Method* and etudes seven to twenty-five appearing in *The Art of Two-Line Improvisation*.

Etude One from *Classical Country Guitar Method* is particularly characteristic of the tenths with inner line motion exercises found in *Harmonic Mechanisms for Guitar*. As David Oakes notes:

I asked Jimmy what he thought about this etude and his answer was very simple. He said that he wanted this etude to be a study of 10th intervals. Every chord has a 10th interval in it between the root and the 3rd of the chord with an octave in-between. These notes are usually located on the 6th and 3rd strings. From there he wanted to come up with a line inside of that interval.<sup>162</sup>

The most striking similarity to GVE's publications in *The Art of Two-Line Improvisation* is Wyble's extensive use of two-part counterpoint, closely related to GVE's 'reductions', with particular emphasis on contrary motion. Wyble's student Sid Jacobs, himself a highly accomplished and innovative guitarist, currently teaches at Musician's Institute.



Ex. 18: Wyble, *Etude 4*.

<sup>162</sup> Oakes, D. ND, [http://www.davidoakesguitar.com/pdf/Etude\\_1\\_synopsis.pdf](http://www.davidoakesguitar.com/pdf/Etude_1_synopsis.pdf), accessed 20/05/2018.

## Howard Alden and the George Van Eps Revival

‘Widely heralded as one of the finest jazz guitarists of his generation, Howard Alden regards the late George Van Eps, with whom he recorded four CDs in the 1990s, as one of his most important professional influences’.<sup>163</sup>

As a direct student of Jimmy Wyble and a recording and performance collaborator of GVE’s, Howard Alden (who, as noted in Chapter One, was a firm advocate of GVE’s earlier publication, *George Van Eps Original Guitar Solos*) is one of the strongest examples of GVE’s influence in contemporary guitar performance. A lifelong admirer of GVE, Alden has stated: ‘I’ve been studying his music and his playing since I first became aware of him; I was about twelve years old.’<sup>164</sup> Along with advocating GVE’s use of the seven-string guitar, Alden includes GVE’s solo compositions in his concerts, stating ‘I always like to do at least one or two little pieces by George because it kind of exhibits the character of the seven-string guitar’.<sup>165</sup> In 1991, Alden began a series of four commercial recordings in duo (along with drums and bass accompaniment) with GVE that took GVE out of a twenty-year period of retirement and resulted in a series of tours across the US and the UK.

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<sup>163</sup> Sleeve notes to *Howard Alden Live at the Smithsonian Jazz Café*, (DVD) 2006.

<sup>164</sup> Alden, H. 2011.

[http://www.jazzhistorydatabase.com/content/collections/in\\_their\\_own\\_voice\\_jazz\\_interviews/zupan\\_joe/howard\\_alden.html#](http://www.jazzhistorydatabase.com/content/collections/in_their_own_voice_jazz_interviews/zupan_joe/howard_alden.html#), accessed 04/08/2018.

<sup>165</sup> Alden, H. *Live at Jazzland Wien*, 2012. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wf\\_3k2i2SSM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wf_3k2i2SSM), accessed 04,08,2018.

Alden’s popularity in modern jazz helped to expose GVE to a new generation of fans. As journalist Steve Voce noted in an article for *The Independent*: ‘The two men recorded together five times from 1991 onwards and in that short period Van Eps achieved more exposure on record with Alden than he had during the whole of a recording career that had begun more than 60 years before’.<sup>166</sup>

Alden has also recently (2018 - present) released several instructional videos on [mikesmasterclasses.com](http://mikesmasterclasses.com), the most obviously indebted to GVE of which being *Turning Your Guitar into a String-Trio*, which addresses many of the familiar interval voice motion exercises found throughout *Harmonic Mechanisms for Guitar* (Examples 19 – 24). The exercises are based largely on 10ths with inner line motion, as demonstrated in the following examples:



Ex. 19: Alden string trio, 10ths with inner voice motion, example 1.



Ex.20: Alden string trio, 10ths with inner voice motion example 2.




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<sup>166</sup> Voce, S. 1998. <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/obituary-george-van-eps-1189986.html>, accessed 03/08/2018.

Ex.21: Alden string trio, 10ths with inner voice motion example 3.



Ex.22: Alden string trio, 10ths with inner voice motion, example 4.



Ex.23: Alden string trio, 10ths with inner voice motion, example 5, diminished tonality.



Ex.24: Alden string trio, 10ths with inner voice motion, example 6.

## Ted Greene

‘You have built yourself up and worked hard; you built yourself up into a very sizeable piece of the music world. You’re a big chunk of the music world. You’re very talented. You’re very intelligent. Now, that is more payment than I deserve’ – GVE comment to Ted Greene.<sup>167</sup>

Ted Greene’s *Chord Chemistry* is widely considered one of the most important chord reference books for jazz guitarists. Greene has acknowledged many diverse influences (including Wes Montgomery and Bach), but referred only to GVE as his ‘beloved teacher and

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<sup>167</sup> Van Eps, G. Cited in Greene, T. 1981.

friend'.<sup>168</sup> Recalling his lessons with GVE, Greene has stated: 'I used to go to George's house to study with him. Oh, do I have great, fond memories of this. He was such a special guy, and what a player. I loved George and was tremendously inspired by him ... [his playing was] the summit of solo guitar playing...at his best, he was, and is, the greatest I've ever heard'.<sup>169</sup> In the following comments, which Greene made to GVE during their 1981 interview, Greene describes dreams in which he would receive instruction from the latter:

'I used to have dreams, and you were helping me in my dreams. That may be fantasy; it may be conjecture; it may be symbolic—but I don't believe that it was. I just noticed *after* I studied with you, after, I mean months later. And it wasn't necessarily because of what I was working on. I'd have these dreams - a few days later: acceleration, distinctive acceleration'.<sup>170</sup>

Along with the above statements, GVE's influence can be seen in a collection of personal notes which were written by Greene dating from 1972 – 1998 that reveal his continued study of GVE's methodologies (Figures 18 – 23).<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> Greene's handwritten note on a manuscript of his last lesson with GVE, dated 31/01/98. Taken from [www.tedgreene.com](http://www.tedgreene.com), accessed 01/09/16

<sup>169</sup> Greene, T. *Just Jazz Guitar*, 2000, 60.

<sup>170</sup> Greene, T. 1981.

<sup>171</sup> Notes are from [www.tedgreene.com](http://www.tedgreene.com) accessed 11/07/2018.





MAXIMUM FOUR FIFTHS 7 STRING VOICINGS - BOTTOM 6 ONLY (many) (many) 12-16-90

Figure 19: 'George Van Eps 7-String Voicings', 05/12/1980, 16/12/1980.

Med. Swing *GREYISH COUNTERPOINT (with aff.)* SOA A.M. 8-22-90  
*Bb7b5*

Figure 20: 'George Van Eps-ish Counterpoint', 22/08/1990.

GVE - I'll Remember April 8-17-73 in (F) F. ....

Fm ... F = Bb7 A7+ A67/6 Gm7 ... C7 (F#G A B natural) Cm7 (6) E7sus(R) Eb7/sus(R) D7sus(R)

Gm7 ... Bbm7 Eb7 Ab7 ... Fm7 C7b9/Bbm7 (thumb up to 11) Gm7 Abm7 A Dm A Dm

A 9sus7 Gm7/Bb C7 C7sus C6 F#7/9 F6/9 Bm7 Abm7 Am7 A Dm A Dm

A7 E7 C C A A7/A# D7 mel D7 D9 Em9 C7/b

5 + 4 7 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32

on end of 2nd phrase use Am7 D7 Am7 D7 on end of third phrase use Cm7 F7 Bm7 E7 Bb7 A7 F7

good V.I.'s to F / C7/b to F6/9 / good contrary run with hammer on on 6/5

Figure 21: 'GVE I'll Remember April', (analysis of GVE's arrangement) 17/08/1973.

Lesson from George Van Eps in early 1972

I didn't absorb this apparently (from trying in a cursory read through at present). I'd like to now. Always meant to. Not easy stuff. 10/12/03 Sunday night.

2/3

GVE

Figure 22: 'Lesson from George Van Eps in Early 1972'.<sup>172</sup>

<sup>172</sup> The text in the upper right-hand corner reads: 'I didn't absorb this apparently (from trying in a cursory read through at present). I'd like to now. Always meant to. Not easy stuff. 10/12/03 Sunday night'.

GEORGE VAN EPS - STYLE VARIATIONS

2-25-81

The image shows a handwritten musical score on two systems of staves. The notation is dense and includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and chords. The first system consists of two staves with a treble clef and a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The second system also consists of two staves with the same clef and key signature. The score is annotated with several handwritten notes: "(MIXED WITH JAZZ FEEL)" in the top left, "5th-6th POSITION" above the first staff, "3rd E" above the first staff, "Tasty" above the second staff, "delay" above the second staff, and "on delay slightly" above the second staff. The bottom of the page shows empty staves.

Figure 23: 'George Van Eps Style Variations' 25/02/1981.



Figure 24: 'Last Time I Ever Saw my Beloved Teacher and Friend, George Van Eps', 31/01/1998.

## Timothy Lerch

Timothy Lerch, who studied with Ted Greene, Ron Escheté and Jimmy Wyble has published over 300 videos on his popular (currently over 26,000 subscribers) Youtube channel at the time of writing, many of which are performances and lessons based on content attributed to Ted Greene. Lerch has also created eight instructional courses for the website [www.truefire.com](http://www.truefire.com), the most recent of which 'Melodic Triads' draws heavily on GVE's methodologies and culminates in a tribute etude titled 'By George'.<sup>173</sup>

<sup>173</sup> Published January 2021

## **Randy Vincent - Three-Note Voicings and Beyond**

Randy Vincent's jazz guitar chord voicings book *Three-Note Voicings and Beyond* (2011) boasts a unique dynamic concept of harmony based on three independently moving lines which team up to create beautiful harmonies.<sup>174</sup>

The source of some of these concepts can be traced to GVE given that Vincent refers to GVE as being one of his guitar teacher's heroes, (the other being Freddie Green, who, as noted in Chapter Two was himself influenced by GVE).<sup>175</sup> Along with GVE, Vincent also references Jim Hall and George Shearing in relation to several of the exercises.

Vincent, a prominent contemporary educator and performer, has worked with Dizzy Gillespie, Joe Henderson and Bobby Hutcherson, and has taught jazz guitar at Sonoma State University since 1981, along with giving lectures and clinics throughout the United States. His students include Julian Lage, Dave MacNab, Chris Pimental and Liberty Ellmen.

Vincent's *Three-Note Voicings* differs from *Harmonic Mechanisms* in several ways which undoubtedly make it more accessible to the reader. Firstly, the examples themselves are void of left-hand fingerings, with practical suggestions being summarised in chapter one, which gives practical fingerings for three-note chords and shows several variations which leave different fingers free. Secondly, the examples are demonstrated in chord grids along with standard notation similar to Ted Greene's *Chord Chemistry* and the section titled 'The Visual Fingerboard' in *Harmonic Mechanisms Volume One*. And lastly, the examples themselves are often demonstrated through fragments of standards from the jazz repertoire. Each of these qualities makes *Three-Note Voicings and Beyond* more accessible than *Harmonic Mechanisms for Guitar* and point to a methodology and format which, arguably, GVE's publications could have benefitted from.

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<sup>174</sup> Product description, <https://www.shermusic.com/9781883217662.php>, accessed 23/11/2018.

<sup>175</sup> Vincent, R. *Three-Note Voicings and beyond*, 2011. Sher Music Co. CA. 9.

GVE's influence is felt most strongly in chapter one under the heading 'Van Eps Exercises', which is a group of exercises given to Vincent by his guitar teacher based on GVE's concepts of tenths with inner line motion and sixths with upper line motion (Examples 26 - 29).



Ex.25: 10ths with inner line motion, page 9.



Ex.26: 6ths with upper line motion, page 9.



Ex.27: 10ths with inner line motion example two, page 10.



Ex.28: 6ths with upper line motion example two, page 10.

Vincent's *Three-Note Voicings and Beyond* has received endorsements from many of the leading figures in contemporary jazz guitar in the fields of both education and performance, including Pat Metheny, Jim Hall, Mike Stern and Ben Monder who refers to it as "an

invaluable asset to any serious student of jazz guitar”.<sup>176</sup> Other notable endorsements come from Vic Juris, a prominent jazz guitar professor who has taught at The New School of Jazz and Contemporary Music, Lehigh University and Rutgers University who states “I look forward to using this with my students”, professor Mark Levine of the University of California, concert guitarist Gene Bertoncini and jazz guitar virtuoso Julian Lage who states “I consider the topics explored in this book to be the foundation of how I like to look at harmony on the guitar”.<sup>177</sup>

## **Martin Taylor**

George Van Eps was, and still is, a great influence on me. He was such a harmonically and technically advanced guitarist ... I met him several times but never got to work with him. My mentor, Ike Isaacs, was a good friend of Georges and played in a similar style. What I’ve inherited from George Van Eps via Ike Isaacs is the polyphonic approach to solo playing, which is quite different to chord melody style and far more musically interesting – Martin Taylor.<sup>178</sup>

As a student of Ike Isaacs, Taylor can be considered a second-generation student of GVE and demonstrates a strong influence from GVE’s methodologies in his instructional materials. As Guitarist Teddy Dupont notes: ‘I think he [Ike Isaacs] was actually one of the very best chord soloists a la George Van Eps of all time, he also taught Martin Taylor; his harmonic knowledge was extraordinary’.<sup>179</sup>

Isaacs’ book (published in 1984) and subsequent instructional video, *Guitar Explorations* (later re-published as *Jazz Guitar School*), focuses heavily on voice-leading applied to chord forms and the development of string independence in a harmonic context.

*Guitar Explorations* begins with examining triads and arpeggios as they relate to common major and minor chord formations. Isaacs then moves on to open-voiced chords which allow

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<sup>176</sup> Monder, B. <https://www.shermusic.com/9781883217662.php>, accessed 11/11/2018.

<sup>177</sup> Lage, J. Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> Taylor, M. 17/02/2016, <https://artistworks.com/martin-taylor/learning/110049/98964>, accessed 19/02/2016.

<sup>179</sup> <https://gypsyjazzuk.wordpress.com/36-2/ike-isaacs/>, accessed 21/02/2018.

space for inner moving lines. These techniques are then demonstrated in an open-voice blues etude. Isaacs continues to elaborate on the idea of moving inner-voices, now inside the enclosure of a tenth interval. Here the inner-voice is shown moving chromatically between the fifth and seventh intervals (corresponding to GVE's 10ths with Inner-Line Motion from *Harmonic Mechanisms Volume Two*). Isaacs influence on Taylor can be seen by comparing the lessons in *Guitar Explorations* with Taylor's instructional material, both of which rely heavily on the enclosure of a tenth interval with moving inner voices as found in GVE's *Harmonic Mechanisms*.

On his online school 'The Martin Taylor Guitar Academy' hosted by ArtistWorks (a web-based teaching company) Taylor has devised a system whereby students learn harmonised scales, beginning in intervals of a tenth, followed by adding intervals (the seventh degree) and moving the inner voice (from the seventh degree to the sixth degree).

During a video response to one of his online students, Taylor acknowledges the influence of GVE while discussing the difference between chord melody and polyphonic guitar styles:

Joe Pass played more in that kind of style, Barney Kessel did too when he played solo but the way I play is more ... probably [like] another guitarist, a hero of mine; we go back to George Van Eps, [who] played more in this kind of style, and going back even further in the very old days Eddie Lang played in this kind of style, although he didn't play fingerstyle but he had all these lines going on.<sup>180</sup>

Having crystallised his method of teaching solo guitar via his online school, Taylor's recent publication *Beyond Chord Melody* (2018) demonstrate many exercises based on 10ths with inner voice motion (examples 30 -31) and culminates in a series of etudes based on the chord progression to the standard *Autumn Leaves* (example 32).

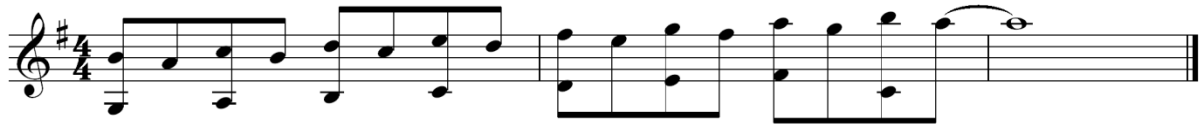
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<sup>180</sup> Here, Taylor refers to chord melody as 'that' kind of style and polyphony as 'this' kind of style.





Ex. 29: G major scale harmonised in 10ths.



Ex 30: G major scale harmonised in 10ths with inner voice motion.



Ex 31: Taylor Autumn Leaves Etude.

It is interesting to note that as Taylor's arranging process has synthesized, he has arrived at a similar system to GVE based on the interval of a tenth along with the systematic distribution of melody, bass-lines and inner voices across groups of two strings each (first and second

string for melody, second and third for harmony and fifth and sixth for bass). As Erik Swanson observes in *George Van Eps and the Great American Songbook*:

‘In terms of the orchestration of chordal voices among the strings, some of Van Eps’ general tendencies include relegating bass notes to the 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> strings; Van Eps usually played the inner voices of the chord (often consisting of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>) on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> strings, and he most often played the melodic voices in chords on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> strings’.<sup>181</sup>

It is also worth noting, however, that, along with the above techniques, GVE also placed great importance on triads which are not addressed to a great extent in Taylor’s instructional material) as a foundation to his harmonic technique.

### **Howard Morgen**

‘For my 20<sup>th</sup> birthday, Harlow (a friend and band mate of GVE) gave me *The George Van Eps Guitar Method* and an album of George’s solo recordings. In 1980 while playing in a booth for *Guitar World Magazine*, I had the great pleasure of meeting George and telling him of that pivotal point in my life’ – Howard Morgen.<sup>182</sup>

Morgen exemplifies a group of guitarists who followed in Van Eps’s footsteps by switching to seven-string guitar and emphasised the harmonic aspect of the guitar by focusing primarily on solo repertoire. As Morgen’s wife, Estelle notes: ‘Howard was very fond of George Van Eps and his work. It was a mutual feeling ... at one time he told Howard that he passed the mantel (*sic*) to him.’<sup>183</sup> GVE’s endorsement of Morgen’s ability held particular pride for Morgen; the following quote from GVE adorns the homepage of Morgen’s website:

‘Listening to Howard Morgen play the seven-string guitar is a most delightful musical

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<sup>181</sup> Swanson, E. 2017, 34.

<sup>182</sup> [www.howardmorgen.com/docs/Howard\\_Morgen\\_Article\\_8\\_2007.pdf](http://www.howardmorgen.com/docs/Howard_Morgen_Article_8_2007.pdf) accessed 18/02/2018, containing citation from *Just Jazz Guitar Magazine*, August 2007.

<sup>183</sup> This comment came from Howard’s wife Estelle, 2016, in Email correspondence with the author.

experience. His reharmonisations of standards are very refreshing, full of surprises, but never rude to the ear. Howard is an accomplished, inspired musician and a truly great guitarist'.<sup>184</sup>

The extent to which GVE's arranging style influenced Morgen is observable in both guitarists' arrangements of Gershwin's *They Can't Take That Away From Me*, which GVE released on his 1956 album, *Mellow Guitar*, and was recorded by Morgen for his 1998 publication *The Gershwin Collection for Solo Guitar*.

There are many similarities found in GVE's and Morgen's arrangements, such as the choice of the rich sounding E sixth/ninth chord resolution in bar 6 of the A section (used by GVE in bars 11 and 19); the choice of the B eleventh with chromatic voice leading (lowering the ninth degree) leading to B flat minor seventh in bar 22-23 (a harmonic substitution used by GVE in bars 13-14); the strict rhythm of the B section, and the atypical voicing of E major seventh in bar 39 (bar 6 in GVE's arrangement). The most notable influence, though, is found in bars 48-50 (example 32), in which an E harmonic is held on the twelfth-fret of the low E-string beneath moving voices outlining a shift from E major seventh to E seventh (as in GVE's opening statement from bars 1-5, (example 33)).



Ex. 32: Howard Morgen's arrangement of *They Can't Take That Away From Me*, bars 48 – 50.

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<sup>184</sup> Van Eps, G. Cited in [www.howardmorgen.com](http://www.howardmorgen.com), accessed 04/10/16



Ex 33: GVE's arrangement of *They Can't Take That Away From Me*, five-bar introduction.

## Ben Monder

Ben Monder, who has spoken openly about his study of *Harmonic Mechanisms*, is part of the *avant-garde* of jazz guitarists focusing primarily on original material as opposed to playing standards of the repertoire. The recipient of wide critical acclaim, Monder has been noted for his 'great chord voicing' by multi-Grammy Award-winning jazz guitarist, Pat Metheny.<sup>185</sup> Based in New York, Monder tours internationally in solo and trio settings as well as contributing to jazz guitar education through the medium of instructional materials and his position on the faculty of both The New School and The New England Conservatory, in Boston, Massachusetts. Along with featuring on over two-hundred records as a sideman, Monder has released eight albums as a leader from 1995–2015. Along with his contributions to popular music, Monder has worked with some of the biggest names in contemporary jazz, including Lee Konitz and Jack McDuff. Monder's performances and recordings include the use of electronic synthesis coupled with GVE's chord-scale voice-leading to achieve his modern experimental sound which the journalist, Bill Milkowski, referred to as 'a penchant for weaving complex, contrapuntal lines and creating ambient moods and textures.'<sup>186</sup>

In an interview for [www.playjazzguitar.com](http://www.playjazzguitar.com), Ben Monder stated:

<sup>185</sup> Metheny, P. Cited in <http://www.c-marek.de/xmonder/?p=397>, Accessed 05/08/2018.

<sup>186</sup> Milkowski, B. 2005, *Jazziz*, cited in <http://www.c-marek.de/xmonder/?p=397>, accessed 05/08/2015.

the one book that stands out as supremely influential to me is Ted Greene's *Chord Chemistry*. I've gone through that one thoroughly many times over. I also love all of Mick Goodrick's books, from "*The Advancing Guitarist*" to the "*Almanac of Voice-Leading*" volumes...Also, the George Van Eps "*Harmonic Mechanisms*" books are great, if a little daunting.<sup>187</sup>

Monder's course *Jazz Guitar I* on the video-streaming website

[www.mymusicmasterclass.com](http://www.mymusicmasterclass.com) is a lesson on guitar harmony based on triad chord scales through various string-groups in major, harmonic minor and melodic minor tonalities in root position and two inversions, along with playing triad chord scales with voice-motion, in sequence form and through the diatonic cycle of fourths—all of which can be found in GVE's publications (example 35). Unlike GVE, Monder leaves much of the process to the student and offers examples in a single key while advising transposition. Monder also advises that all chord scales be practised with as many fingerings as possible in the left-hand but, again, does not demonstrate such fingerings.



Ex 34: *Triads with voice-motion.*

### Video-Streaming Websites

[www.truefire.com](http://www.truefire.com), which has been referred to as ‘the planets largest and most comprehensive selection of online guitar lessons,’ hosts a library of over 33,000 online video lessons by over 600 guitar teachers in a variety of styles.<sup>188</sup> Many of the teachers offering lessons through the site have acknowledged GVE as an influence, among them Frank Vignola, Sheryl Bailey and Sean McGowan. While none of the courses offered on this particular website focus explicitly

<sup>187</sup> [www.playjazzguitar.com/jazz-guitar-interviews-ben-monder.html](http://www.playjazzguitar.com/jazz-guitar-interviews-ben-monder.html), accessed 15/08/2017.

<sup>188</sup> <https://truefire.com/about>, accessed 30/05/2018.

on the guitar style of GVE, several make honourable mentions, including Frank Vignola's *30 Smokin Jazz Guitar Licks You Must Know* which contains a lick titled 'George Van Eps Style Triads' (example 36), Tom Dempsey's *50 Jazz Masters Licks You Must Know*, which contains a lick based on GVE's guitar style (see Example 35) during whose instruction Dempsey refers *Harmonic Mechanisms* and Sheryl Bailey's *Bebop Etudes*, in which Bailey states 'George Van Eps would always say 'don't move your fingers until you have to.' Several others list GVE's music as recommended listening and/or an influence on their course material, including Frank Vignola's *Chord Melody Etudes*, Ton van Bergeijk's *Fingerstyle Blues and Boogie*, Fareed Haque's *Solo Guitar Handbook and Jazz Comping Survival Guide* and Tim Sparks' *Post-Modern Fingerstyle Blues*.



Ex. 35: Van Eps style triads.



Ex. 36: Van Eps based lick.



Ex 37: Van Eps Honeysuckle, blues based on 3rds and 6ths with a pedal.

Along with such honourable mentions, a number of the courses on [www.truefire.com](http://www.truefire.com) cover material with strong links to GVE. These include *Fingerboard Breakthrough* by Howard Morgen, *Triad Chord Scales Vol I – III* by Chris Buono and *Jazz Textures* by Christopher Voitach who has stated ‘I did study Van Eps’ *Harmonic Mechanisms*...very powerful stuff and an influence for sure’.<sup>189</sup>

Videos relating to GVE on [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) range from user submissions of covers to uploads of entire GVE albums and several live appearances, both solo and in duo with guitarist Howard Alden (uploaded to Alden’s user account). There are only three transcriptions at the time of writing, uploaded by user Francois Leduc, who has uploaded over 200 transcriptions of pieces by well-known jazz guitarists and has over 50,000 subscribers, along with a page on [www.patreon.com](http://www.patreon.com), on which he makes his transcriptions commercially available. The user Fabrizio Brusca has uploaded four short videos based on GVE’s displaced concept. While [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) has made it possible to access

<sup>189</sup> Voitach, C. Email correspondence with the author, 13/02/2018

commercially-unavailable albums by GVE, the greatest example of the latter's publications on this website are contained in video demonstrations of exercises from *The George Van Eps Method for Guitar* on two separate channels, those of the user, Rob McKillop, and a channel titled solid guitar lessons. While the videos uploaded to the channel solid guitar lessons are relatively new and continue to be updated, McKillop's various videos on *The George Van Eps Method for Guitar* (30 in total) currently range between 600 - 10,000 views each.

The website [www.mikesmasterclasses.com](http://www.mikesmasterclasses.com) is a streaming/video download music lessons site with several strong GVE influences, among them the instructor Tom Lippincott, who, at the time of writing, has thirty courses, covering such topics as fingerstyle technique for jazz guitar and jazz guitar harmony with over 4000 students enrolled thereon. As Lippincott states:

George Van Eps has definitely been a huge influence on me. I have been listening to recordings of his playing since I first found out about him in my late teens. I also learned his piece "Crossroads" as a grad student at U. of Miami, which had a pretty significant effect on my playing. Later on, I went through some of the other pieces in that same guitar solos book and got further insights.<sup>190</sup>

Further GVE related material on the website includes the previously addressed courses created by Steve Herberman and Howard Alden.

### **Summary of Influences**

Perhaps the most succinct means of summarising GVE's influence is in the form of a family tree which graphically represents the many spheres of influence that have grown from the volumes (figure 25).

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<sup>190</sup> Lippincott, T. Email correspondence with the author, 22/04/2018.



# George Van Eps

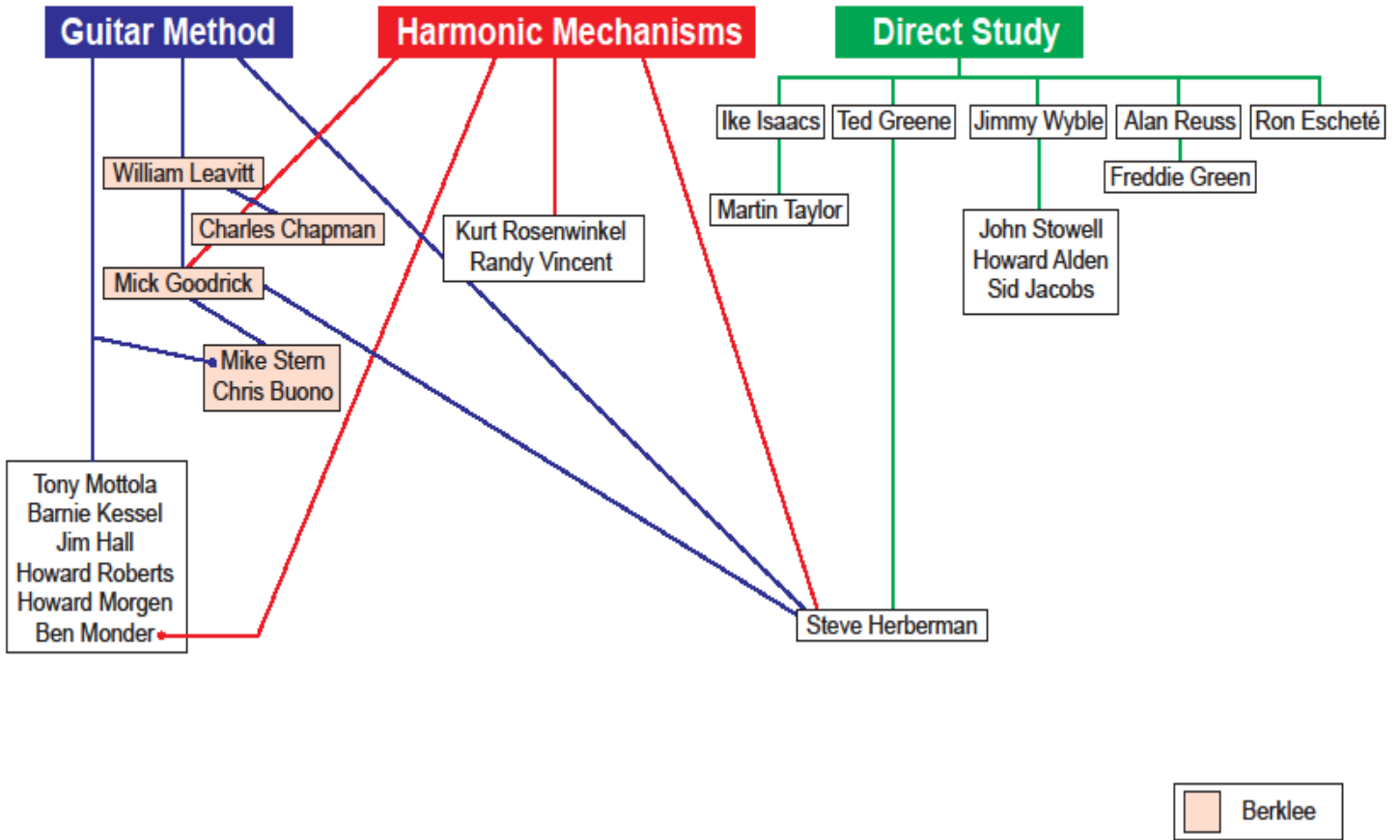


Figure 25: GVE Influence Family Tree.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter highlights the profound—and enduring—influence that GVE’s publications have had (and continue to have) on jazz guitar education and performance practice. As one of the earliest pedagogues in the field, GVE created a model that had a profound influence not only on jazz guitar instruction but also on the legitimacy of both jazz and the guitar as vehicles for serious study. The above publications, along with GVE’s publications themselves, have the umbrella effect of influencing virtually the totality of contemporary jazz guitar performance practice. Indeed, it is extremely difficult to find a contemporary jazz guitarist who cannot trace their lineage to one or more of the above sources. While all of the publications addressed in this chapter demonstrate a profound influence from GVE’s publications, many share commonalities in terms of presentational and logistical deviations from the GVE publications.

Two of the most prevalent of such logistical deviations are the condensation of harmonic material to a single key (thereby leaving the responsibility of transposition to the student) and the demonstration of harmonic concepts in practical application in the form of repertoire-based etudes. While this approach certainly makes such harmonic material more accessible and perhaps more attractive to the consumer, it also has the effect of locking such material into a genre; an effect that was largely avoided throughout GVE’s publications. Perhaps the greatest deviation, however, is in the omission of the exhaustive left-hand fingering options in GVE’s publications, many of which GVE admitted to being impractical, but still deemed as necessary, for technical development. While most of the player-tutors in this chapter have leaned towards practical fingerings, perhaps the most extreme example is found in Martin Taylor, who repeatedly advises students to pay no attention to left-hand fingerings, but instead, focus entirely on the notes.

Although GVE's publications themselves remain in relative obscurity, it seems virtually impossible to find a significant stratum of contemporary jazz guitar that does not bear their profound influence through the abovementioned publications and pedagogical resources. This understanding places the ethos of GVE's publications not only at the root of jazz guitar education but, also, at its very forefront today.

Along with GVE's enduring influence education, this chapter has also highlighted the influence of GVE's publications on jazz guitar performance practice. The process of evaluating GVE's influence began with drawing attention to his role in shaping the approach of the rhythm guitar in the big-band setting and how this became a template for future generations of big-band rhythm guitarists. It also demonstrates how GVE's methodologies subtly permeated mainstream music both through session performance and popular media. Moreover, GVE's influence on standard or conventional jazz guitar performance is thoroughly parsed, with an emphasis on his role in establishing the jazz guitar as a solo instrument and in terms of his influence on subsequent solo guitar arranging styles. By drawing attention to the link between GVE's harmonic approach and contemporary performance methodologies, this chapter has also demonstrated that, although generally not credited as the source of such methodologies, GVE's harmonic concepts continue to be a strong influence in jazz guitar performance practice.

## Conclusion

While every care has been taken not to overstate GVE's influence and to draw attention to certain shortcomings evident in his publications, their effect on generations of jazz guitarists in the fields of both education and performance is undeniable and, indeed, all-pervasive. This research began with three fundamental questions:

- What are the Underlying Concepts and Techniques Taught in GVE's *Harmonic Mechanisms* series?
- How Have GVE's Publications Influenced Jazz Guitar Education?
- How Have GVE's Publications Influenced Contemporary Performance Practice?

This research has systematically addressed the above questions by first elucidating the central concepts of the publications in their entirety, along with editorial shortcomings which obscure such concepts (Chapter Three). Chapter four examined the influence of GVE's publications on a wide range of educational sources, ranging from third-level education to online-resources. Also demonstrated is the influence of the same on jazz guitar performance practice, emphasising the scope of their influence in such diverse settings as the big-band rhythm section, studio settings and contemporary composition. And finally, Appendix One and Two show the fruits of the practice-lead investigation into the specifics of applying the core concepts of the volumes to the composition, performance transcription and recording of ten etudes which serve as practical and musical expressions of the core concepts for the solo guitarist.

In the process of answering the above questions, many interesting aspects of GVE's legacy have been made apparent: from his profound influence on solo guitar arranging-styles to his advanced chordal and voice-leading concepts and the immense impact of his publications that have endured across several generations of guitarists. An assessment of the current literature

relating to jazz guitar studies (as conducted in Chapter One) reveals not only an absence of research relating to GVE's publications but also, in turn, a larger deficit in the entire field of jazz guitar pedagogy attributable to a trend in research that favours reportorial analysis and associated 'close reading' over the contextualisation of influence and its effect on the dissemination of style.

Analysing the content of the volumes themselves reveals a lifelong dedication, perhaps even obsession, with the harmonic capacity of the instrument demonstrated through an exhaustive execution that emphasised the guitar's full chromatic potential. Given the volumes' labyrinthine presentation of 'mechanisms'—coupled with their often flawed editorial delivery—the esteem to which GVE's publications are held among contemporary jazz guitarists is a testament to their content value. Research into the stylistic influences on GVE reveals three main figures who shaped his approach to the guitar—Eddie Lang (who steered GVE toward the guitar and the idiom of jazz); Andrés Segovia (who influenced a classical approach to the instrument manifested through a right-hand fingerstyle technique) and George Gershwin (who, along with George's elder brother Robert, influenced GVE's lifelong obsession with harmony and the guitar's ability to mimic the piano). Each of these influences became fused into what resulted in a unique approach to the guitar which, despite its stimuli, became distinctly unique in its mature form.

That GVE's methodologies would shape the praxis of solo jazz guitar-arranging and performance is perhaps unsurprising, given their emphasis on harmony and the independence of the instrument. What is perhaps more surprising is their influence across such a wide scope of both education and performance and their endurance in contemporary settings. That GVE's publications formed such an important part in shaping the curriculum of The Berklee College of Music's Guitar Department—yet were never acknowledged for such prior to this thesis—is, perhaps, revealing of their often hidden, yet all-pervasive influence on jazz guitar

practice. Potentially, this thesis has paved the way for greater research in a number of areas, including:

- The construction, design and use of the seven-string guitar in Western culture and its impact on popular music
- The identification of harmonic formulas within GVE's publications, including drop-2 voicings, drop-3 voicings and upper-structure triads and their usage in contemporary guitar styles
- The systematic application of GVE's mechanisms in jazz guitar repertoire
- A comparison between GVE's left-hand fingering methodologies and those of the classical tradition
- A comparison between GVE's left-hand fingering methodologies and those established within the field of jazz, such as Jimmy Bruno's five fingerings.

Perhaps most significantly, this study acknowledges the influence of GVE's publications in a way that many high-profile users of such have failed to. Such an acknowledgement thus places GVE's publications both at the root and the forefront of jazz guitar education and performance studies.

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## Appendix A:

### Transcriptions of the Ten Etudes

#### Reductions

The image displays a musical score for guitar, consisting of seven staves of music. The score is annotated with various fingering and articulation markings. Roman numerals (II, III, V, VII, IX, CV, I) are placed above the notes to indicate fingerings. Dynamic markings such as *p* (piano) and *pl* (pianissimo) are used throughout. The score includes a variety of rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. The piece concludes with a double bar line at the end of the seventh staff.

# 6ths with Upper Line Motion

XI  
 7 3 7 3 7 3 7 3  
 p i m m 7 i m i m i  
 p p p p  
 Cont. Simile

VII/VIII  
 4 7 7 7 7 7 7 7  
 p i m i m 7 i m 7 i  
 p p

IV  
 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7  
 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7

III  
 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7  
 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7

XI  
 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7  
 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7

I  
 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7  
 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7

III/IV  
 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7  
 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7

X  
 10 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7  
 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7

VIII  
 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7  
 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7

VII/VIII  
 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7  
 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7

IV  
 13 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7  
 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7

III  
 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7  
 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7

I  
 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7  
 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7

III  
 16 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7  
 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7

CI III  
 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7  
 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7

III  
 19 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7  
 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7

CI III  
 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7  
 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7

1/2 CVIII II  
 21 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7  
 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7

⑥ ④ ⑤ ③ ④ ② ③ ①  
 3 4 1 2 4 1 2 3

# Chromatic Triads

Freely with Swing Feel

The musical score is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It consists of a melody line and an accompaniment line. The melody line starts with a CIII chord and features a chromatic descending line. The accompaniment line provides harmonic support with various chords and textures. The score includes several measures with specific techniques and chord markings:

- Measures 4-15: Melody line with chromatic descending line, accompaniment with chords and textures.
- Measure 16: Melody line with a chromatic descending line, accompaniment with chords and textures.
- Measures 20-22: Melody line with a chromatic descending line, accompaniment with chords and textures.
- Measures 23-25: Melody line with a chromatic descending line, accompaniment with chords and textures.
- Measures 26-33: Melody line with a chromatic descending line, accompaniment with chords and textures. Includes a "5th finger Technique" annotation.
- Measures 34-36: Melody line with a chromatic descending line, accompaniment with chords and textures.

Chord markings include CIII, VII, V, and III. The score also includes annotations for "5th finger Technique" and "7 7 z".

# The Super and Sub Series

XII  
 ②  
 ③  
 ④  
 3 3 3 2 2 4 3 2 1 XI 2 3 2 3  
 Cont. Simile  
 6 2 1 3 1 3 3 1 2 1 4 2  
 12 1 p i m i m i Cont. Simile ③ ②  
 18  
 24  
 30  
 36 XI ⑤ ④ ③  
 43  
 49  
 55 p i m i m a XI ⑤ ④ ③  
 p i m i m i ⑥

This musical score is written for a single melodic line in 4/4 time. It consists of ten staves of music. The first staff begins with a key signature of one flat (Bb) and a common time signature (C). The piece is marked 'Cont. Simile' throughout. The score includes various rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 above or below notes. There are several trills and slurs. The piece concludes with a final cadence. The lyrics 'p i m i m i' and 'p i m i m a' are placed below the notes they correspond to. Roman numerals XII and XI are placed above the first and eighth staves, respectively. Circled numbers 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 are placed above specific notes or groups of notes.

# 10ths with Inner Line Motion

① ④

10 ② ⑤ ③ ⑥

16 ② ⑤ ① ④

23 CII VII

29 ① ④ ② ⑤ CVII

35 1/2 CX 1/2 CV ② CVII

38 ② CVII

*Fine*

*D.C. al fine*

Detailed description: This musical score is for guitar, written in treble clef with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and a 12/8 time signature. The piece is titled "10ths with Inner Line Motion". It consists of seven staves of music. The first staff begins with a double bar line and a key signature change to three sharps. It features a melodic line with tenor lines (indicated by numbers 1-4) and a bass line with tenor lines (indicated by numbers 2-5). The piece concludes with a first ending (marked 1.) and a second ending (marked 2.) leading to a "Fine" instruction. The second staff starts at measure 10 and includes tenor lines 2, 3, 4, and 5. The third staff starts at measure 16 and includes tenor lines 2, 3, 4, and 5. The fourth staff starts at measure 23 and includes tenor lines 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, with chord diagrams for CII and VII. The fifth staff starts at measure 29 and includes tenor lines 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, with a chord diagram for CVII. The sixth staff starts at measure 35 and includes tenor lines 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, with chord diagrams for 1/2 CX, 1/2 CV, and CVII. The seventh staff starts at measure 38 and includes tenor lines 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, with a chord diagram for CVII. The piece ends with a double bar line and a "D.C. al fine" instruction.

# The Chromatic Concept

The image displays a musical score for a piece titled "The Chromatic Concept". The score is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. It consists of six staves of music, with measure numbers 6, 11, 17, 22, and 27 indicated at the beginning of their respective lines. The notation includes various chords, melodic lines, and dynamic markings. Above the first staff, the Roman numerals "VII" and "III" are placed above the first and third measures, respectively. Above the second staff, the word "Harm." is written above the first measure. Above the third staff, "Harm." is written above the first and second measures. Above the fifth staff, "A.H.--1" is written above the final measure. The music features a mix of block chords and moving lines, with some measures containing complex chordal textures. The overall style is that of a contemporary or modern classical composition.

⑤ ③

5

9

13

17

21

25

29

33

37



Musical score for guitar in G major, 4/4 time. The score consists of six staves of music. The first staff (measures 1-4) features a melodic line with a repeating eighth-note pattern. The second staff (measures 5-8) continues this pattern. The third staff (measures 9-13) includes a measure with a circled note and a 'Harm.' marking. The fourth staff (measures 14-18) features a melodic line with a 'Harm.' marking. The fifth staff (measures 19-21) continues the melodic line. The sixth staff (measures 22-24) concludes the piece with a final chord and a 'bar' marking.

# The Stagger Concept

The musical score consists of six staves of guitar notation in treble clef, 4/4 time. The first staff (measures 1-8) features a melodic line with fingerings ⑥ ⑤ ④ and ⑤ ④ ③. The second staff (measures 9-12) continues the melodic line with fingerings ④ ③ ①, ④ ② ①, ④ ② ①, and ④ ③ ①. The third staff (measures 13-16) includes a triplet (III) and a circled ⑥. The fourth staff (measures 17-18) shows a complex chordal texture with fingerings ③, ②, and a circled ④, and includes the instruction "L.V." and the sequence "CIII CV CVII CV". The fifth staff (measures 19-20) features a melodic line with fingerings ③ ①, ④ ②, ③ ①, and ⑤ ①, and includes the instruction "1/2 CIII" and "1/2 CV". The sixth staff (measures 21-24) is marked "L.V. Cont. Simile" and includes fingerings ③ ①, ④ ①, ③ ①, and ⑤ ①.

# The Satellite Concept

The musical score is written for guitar and bass in 4/4 time, with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It consists of five staves of music.

- Staff 1 (Guitar):** Labeled "VII R.H. Cont. Simile". It begins with a *p* dynamic and a *pima* marking. The notation includes chords and single notes with fingerings (1, 2) and a *p* dynamic.
- Staff 2 (Guitar):** Labeled "II L.H. Cont. Simile". It continues the harmonic accompaniment with chords and fingerings (1).
- Staff 3 (Guitar):** Labeled "VII". It continues the harmonic accompaniment with chords and fingerings (1).
- Staff 4 (Bass):** Labeled "VII". It provides a bass line with chords and fingerings (1, 2).
- Staff 5 (Bass):** Labeled "VII". It features a more active bass line with eighth-note patterns and fingerings (1, 2).

I  
 1/2 CV  
 1/2 CIII  
 7 I  
 1/2 CV  
 CIII  
 14 CIV  
 CIII  
 CII  
 CIII  
 19 1/2 CIII  
 1/2 CIII  
 CVIII

# The Displaced Concept

III 1/2 CIII 1/2 CII CII 1/2 CII CI

7 1/2 VI 1/2 CVII CVI IV

12 II IV II

17 VII CVII

21 V II CV II

*a m i*

*c a m p*

The musical score consists of five systems of music. The first system (measures 1-6) features a guitar part with complex chord diagrams and a vocal line with the lyrics "a m i". The second system (measures 7-11) continues the guitar and vocal parts, with the lyrics "c a m p". The third system (measures 12-16) shows a guitar part with various chord diagrams and a vocal line. The fourth system (measures 17-20) continues the guitar and vocal parts. The fifth system (measures 21-24) concludes the piece with a final guitar chord and a vocal line.

## Progressive Motion

1

IV

5

*i m a p m i i m a p m i*

8

12

15

*p*

*p*

⑤ ②

## **Appendix B:**

### **Explanation of the Ten Etudes**

The following is a description of the ten etudes based on the ten concepts found in *Harmonic Mechanisms* as described in Chapter Four. It is hoped that these etudes will bring the concepts to life in a practical and musical way. I have purposely not included dynamic markings to allow the student their expressive preferences. However, I have included recordings of the etudes which may be used as a reference. I have performed these fingerstyle on a nylon-string guitar but again, these represent my preferences rather than an absolute requirement. My tendency when playing block chords at slower tempos is to slightly arpeggiate the voices as this is pleasing to me personally. This, also, is not required of the student. I have included left-hand fingerings where necessary but these also should be considered as practical suggestions rather than requirements. Many of the etudes span the entire fretboard and change position every measure or two. In these cases, I have indicated string-groups for the convenience of the reader. I have tried to strike a balance between clearly demonstrating the concepts and using them as vehicles for expression as an overemphasis on either of these aspects at the cost of the other would make such etudes redundant.

### **Ten Etudes**

Although not included in *Harmonic Mechanisms*, the process of writing etudes based on the concepts within the volumes is an exercise GVE would use with his private students.

## **Reductions**

Reductions makes use of the various combinations of two-voice counterpoint found in *Harmonic Mechanisms*, beginning with contrary motion in C major in bars one and two where it moves into a sustained voice, first above, then below a melodic line. This device of switching between contrary motion and pedal-point forms a basis for the rest of the piece. While the majority of the piece explores the aforementioned devices in C major from the first to the tenth position, both ascending (bars one to twelve) and descending (bars twelve to thirty) the piece also includes brief modulations to D minor in bars seventeen to nineteen and A minor in bars twenty to twenty-two. Bars twenty-three and twenty-four, again make use of contrary motion but here, voices are moving towards each other rather than apart as in the rest of the piece. The piece resolves with a V-I cadence, delayed by continued use of pedal-point in bars thirty and thirty one resolving in the final measures. I have used extensive left-hand finger markings throughout this piece as many of the measures require an unusual stretch beyond standard positions. As with each of the etudes, such markings are included for convenience and may be substituted at the discretion of the individual performer.

## **6ths with Upper Line Motion**

This piece begins with a four-bar descending motif based on the C harmonic minor harmonised scale which is then repeated an octave lower. The sixth interval of the motif is created by the notes Eb and C while the upper line motion is provided by the notes G and Eb. On the restatement of the lower octave, the upper voice plays a melodic variation. The following arpeggiated pattern places the melody in the bass before concluding with pure sixth intervals moving from first to twelfth position and resolving in a minor sixth chord.

## **Chromatic Triads**

This piece presents the principle of chromatic triads through a traditional jazz blues in G. The main techniques associated with GVE's chromatic triads principal can be observed in this etude, including chromatic scales with upper pedal-point (bar twenty-four), chromatic scales with lower pedal point (bars two, four, seven and ten), chromatically moving consecutive intervals (bars seventeen to twenty-one), tri-chords moving chromatically above



a lower pedal (bars forty-one to forty-seven) and free chord movement based on a descending cycle of fifths below an upper pedal (bars twenty-eight, twenty-nine and thirty-three). Bar twenty-nine also employs GVE's fifth-finger principal on the upper pedal.

### **The Super and Sub Series**

Beginning in the high register, a harmonised first inversion C major triad chord scale is moved one voice at a time down the octave resulting in a 'sub series' treatment of voices (bars one to four). This scale is then repeated (now in 3/4 time) in its pure form but with an upper melodic voice. Measure thirteen begins on a new string-set and in root position with voices now moving one at a time through 'super' voice motion up to measure forty-one employing a right-hand pattern that lasts for the remainder of the piece. Measure forty-two again marks a shift in string-sets and direction of voice-motion, here returning to sub motion first in the upper voice followed by middle then lower voices (bars forty-two to fifty-nine), then repeated in the middle followed by upper and lower (bars sixty to seventy-eight) and finally in the lower voice followed by the middle and upper voices. The result is a wide variety of voice-motion combinations spanning the open to twelfth position and numerous string-groups realised with a fluid right-hand arpeggio pattern.

### **10ths with Inner Line Motion**

The majority of this etude is a very literal presentation of the concept and therefore requires little explanation. Notable aspects include the change of time signature from 3/4 to 4/4 in the second section and the shift to the tonic minor in measure twenty-six. Also notable is the inclusion of pure tenth intervals in bar twenty-nine. Measures thirty-five and thirty-six add two inner notes to the pure tenth interval resulting in diminished harmony, thereby demonstrating the ability of the interval to act as an enclosure.

## **The Chromatic Concept**

Although written in E minor for convenience, the inclusion of a key signature in this etude is almost arbitrary due to its chromatic nature.

The measures one to twenty-two are based on a melodic and rhythmic motif consisting of a dotted crotchet followed by three descending notes in quavers. The notes used change as the motif develops and are often displaced with the inclusion of chromatic motion. This motif begins in the opening measure and lasts until bar twenty-two. Examples of chromatic motion in the motif can be found in measures fifteen to twenty-two while chromatic motion surrounding the motif can be observed in the previous measures such as bars six to nine which place a chromatically descending voice below the motif. Bar twenty-three demonstrates a very literal presentation of the chromatic concept and the D major seventh chord is immediately followed by upper (third degree ascending to fourth) and lower (root descending to seventh) chromatic voices which immediately resolve back to the D major.

This is then repeated in the following bar but with the inclusion on the fifth degree ascending to the sharpened fifth before all voices resolve back to D major. Another permutation of the chromatic concept can be observed in measures twenty-eight and twenty-nine which contain a series of diminished chords ascending in minor third intervals and connected by an upper chromatic voice. The latter part of bar twenty-nine and bar thirty, which move through a descending cycle of fifths (D, A, C, G) are connected by an inner chromatically descending voice which moves from D to Db to C to B. The following section (measures thirty-one to seventy-six) is based on a diminished chord descending chromatically one voice at a time in an arpeggiated figure. The voice-motion creates the chords diminished to diminished flattened sixth to major sixth to sixth sharpened fourth or eleventh, each of which descend chromatically from the eleventh fret to the open position. Thus each chord is repeated in all twelve keys on its descent to the open position with the exception of the sharpened eleventh chord which is repeated eleven times. Measures seventy-seven to eighty-one are based on chromatically ascending dominant seventh chords (A, A sharp, B) while the remaining measures are a repeat of the opening theme.

## **The Stagger Concept**

In the stagger concept, the opening three notes spell out a C major triad with the upper voice lowered or ‘staggered’ a degree to F which creates a dissonance with the third degree exploited by the motif of the repeated voices in the rest of the bar. This voicing and motif is taken through the altered root position C major triad scale up to bar eight, after which it descends in C harmonic minor in measures nine to thirteen. The following chord clusters of measures fourteen to seventeen are again formed by staggering voices of C major, as are the arpeggiated figures of bars eighteen to twenty-two.

## **The Satellite Concept**

Part one of the satellite concept explores each of the possibilities of chromatic motion of two voices below a melodic arpeggiated motif as follows: both voices descending (bar two), both voices ascending (bar four), lower voice ascending, upper voice descending (bar six) and lower voice descending, upper voice ascending (bar eight). This motif is then repeated on the fifth degree of E minor before returning to the tonic. The slurred cadenza of measure twenty-five to twenty-eight explore chromatic or ‘satellite’ notes above and below a tonic minor arpeggio. Part two of the satellite concept combines notes of the grande arpeggio of two keys for what GVE referred to as ‘immediate resolution’. This is done in two-bar cycles with the second chord of each bar belonging to the C major grande arpeggio with the whole process ascending chromatically through the various grande arpeggios. Thus, measures one and two are D flat grande arpeggios resolving to C grande arpeggio, measures three and four are D resolving to C, five and six are E flat to C and so on. The result is interesting voice-leading and resolutions between keys.

## **The Displaced Concept**

The displaced concept is a series of ii V I progressions which change key every two measures by descending through the cycle of fifths but with this alteration: the resolution chord of each sequence is a C major or some variant thereof. Thus, a degree of the progression has been ‘displaced’. This results in similar modulations and voice-leading between keys as part two

of the satellite concept, only here the resolutions are based on a ii V chord progression to a modulation.

### **Progressive Motion**

Progressive motion takes each arpeggio note one at a time through the 'grande arpeggio' of E major, which, the reader will recall, is the diatonic scale minus the fourth degree, A. This can be seen in the opening measure which moves straight through the grande arpeggio of E major followed by a Vi iii ii V turnaround before starting the grande arpeggio from the third degree in measure two, again followed by a similar turnaround and a restatement of the scalar passage, this time starting on the fifth degree in measure four. The second melodic statement, beginning on measure twelve is a descending pattern in tenths. This is restated with an additional inner voice beginning on measure fourteen creating an open triad and again in measure sixteen with an added top voice, dropped momentarily to avoid the fourth degree. The resolution chord of E major ninth is, like the rest of the harmony in this etude, created by stacking voices of the E major grande arpeggio.