

JUST JAZZ GUITAR

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THE PUBLICATION FOR

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Jim Hall

Poet of the Jazz Guitar

1930-2013

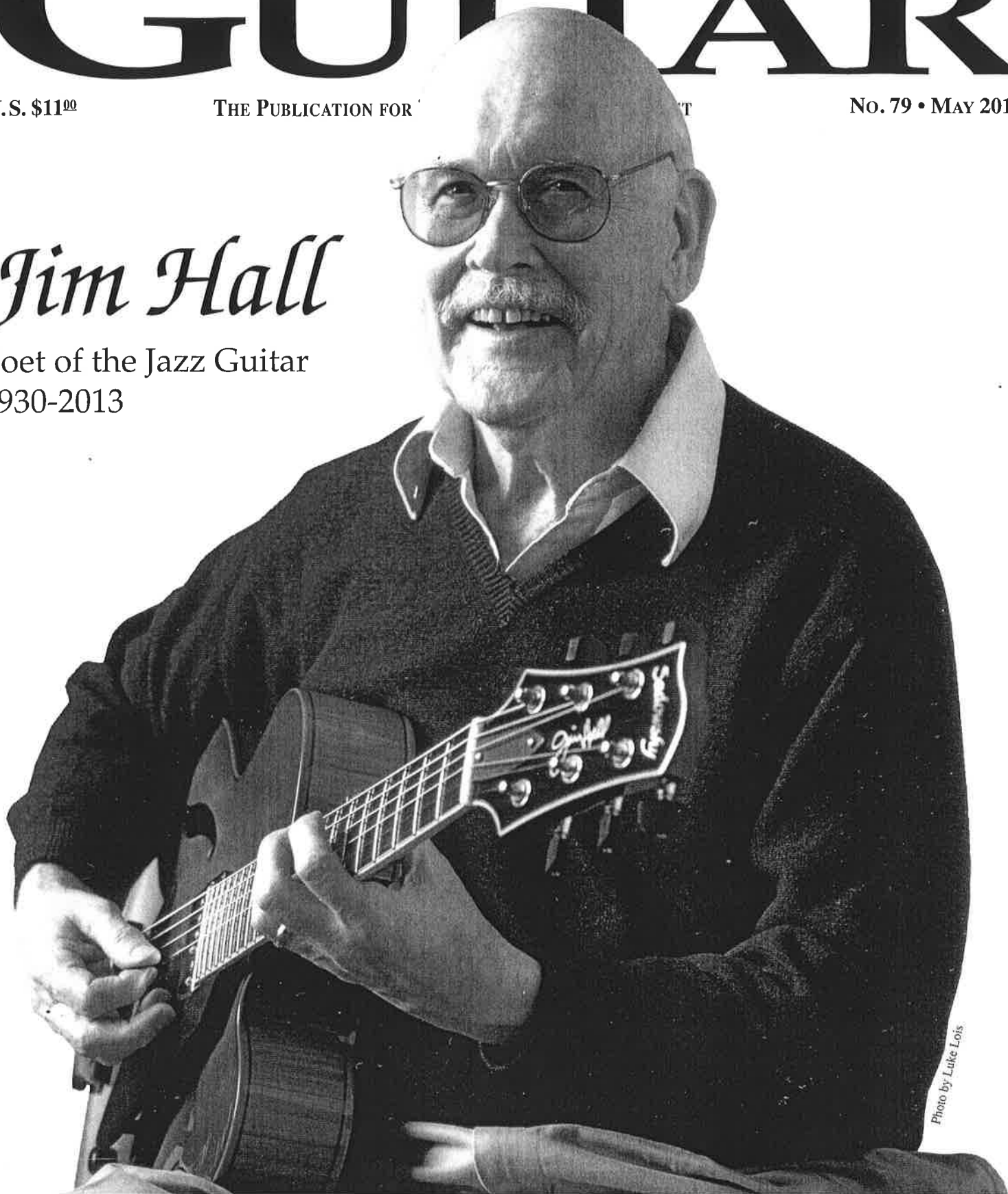


Photo by Luke Lois

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The Publication for The Jazz Guitar Enthusiast

No. 79

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Top: Bucky Pizzarelli and Gene Bertoncini
Bottom: Ed Laub and Frank Vignola celebrating
Bucky's 88th birthday

Just Jazz Guitar: Tell us a bit about your background: did you study formally and with whom? How long?

Mark Clemente: I've been playing jazz guitar for over 40 years and had the good fortune to study for three of those years with a great teacher – Lou Sosa of Brooklyn, where I'm from originally. I remember *JJG* did a story in which Lou was mentioned. In the 1960s, he used to run late-night guitar jams at the factory he owned. These were sessions attended by guys like Chuck Wayne, Jack Wilkins, Carl Barry, and others. Lou was an incredible teacher and person – highly creative and giving of his knowledge. A real “Renaissance man.” He was a close friend and collaborator with Chuck. Consequently, Lou taught me a system of jazz guitar that ultimately became known as *The School of Chuck Wayne*. Basically, Lou taught me the material that's in Wayne's instructional books. As far as additional study, over the years I've taken a few lessons – primarily focused on comping technique – with players such as Jack, Howard Alden, and Vic Cenicola. It's always been great living in the New York-New Jersey metro area where so many world-class players and teachers are!

JJG: What type of material did you study?

MC: I focused mainly on chord-melody playing for solo guitar. Lou taught me how to create arrangements. In the course of showing me the Wayne system – the core voicings, modes, arpeggios, etc. – he'd also show me chord solos. He would ask me what tune I wanted to learn and, at my next lesson, he'd have an arrangement ready to teach me. Over time, he worked up about 10 of these for me – each time explaining how he identified the voicings and chord phrases to use and why. I guess you could say these were the “foundational” chord solos that I used to develop my own style of arranging. I still play some of the chord melodies Lou showed me, including *I Get a Kick Out of You*, *On a Clear Day, I'm Getting Sentimental Over You*, and a forever-challenging version of *Bluesette*. In terms of my chord-melody playing style, I mainly use a pick and three fingers – another Chuck Wayne technique that Lou emphasized in his teaching to achieve a pianistic effect. Also, I often use my left-hand thumb in fretting certain chords.

JJG: Did you always plan on being a professional musician? Do you do this full time?

MC: I'm a writer and publisher by trade. I've written several books and have published digital content such as

business ebooks and research studies. As far as jazz guitar, playing professionally was not something I originally set out to do. I mainly played for my own enjoyment and kept working up new songs. Again, just for fun and for creative expression. Over the years, though, I found I had built up a large body of arrangements that people said they really enjoyed hearing. So I started playing professionally. That was about 10 years ago. Then in 2012, I decided to publish my arrangements. It was something I had been thinking about for a while. I looked at it as an opportunity to combine my two principal pursuits: jazz guitar/arranging and writing/publishing. Plus, I had experience in web-publishing through my editorial work, so producing digital musical content was just an extension of that.

JJG: Is your major interest chord melody arrangements- you have an extensive catalog of 90+ tunes on your website. Do you keep adding to the site?

MC: Actually, online I'm publishing the first 35-40 songs of the 90+ arrangements I've written for my catalog: *The Mark Clemente Chord Melodies™ for Guitar*. The songs are virtually all jazz standards from the Great American Songbook. In the coming years, I plan to produce as many of these as possible, and someday hope to have all my arrangements up on the site. But what's there now is just Volume 1. As an aside, I'm using *GuitarPro 6* software to create downloadable PDFs of the arrangements.

JJG: On your website you sell individual arrangements? Do you have copyright approval to do so? Has getting approval been a problem? Any plans to do a book of arrangements?

MC: Yes, I've secured licensing rights for all the arrangements I'm currently offering on my site. Copyright approval? Today, it's a long and agonizing process – especially when songs are delivered in a web-based digital format as opposed to straight print. Territorial rights are also strict. In fact, the songs now available on my site can only be purchased by players in the US and Canada. I'm still working on securing global rights. That's an ongoing process considering the large numbers of songs I'm trying to license. To answer your other question: I plan to keep growing my online catalog, but will only be offering individual arrangements due to provisions in the licensing agreements I have in place.

JJG: What do you think about all the free arrangements from so called teachers on the net?

MC: Well, as I said, I'm an author who's always had to heed guidelines regarding copyrights and intellectual property in all materials I've ever written or published. Free arrangements on the net? I applaud any player who's developed musical skill and looks to share their creative knowledge with other guitarists. But I believe you have to share that content in a way that respects the copyright holder – and there's always a cost involved. In short, it's important to do the right thing from a legal licensing point.

JJG: The arrangements that I've seen appear to be very playable for the average player yet have some interesting harmonies along with tab and chord grids. Was that your goal when writing them?

MC: Thanks very much, Ed! But, no, I didn't have a particular strategy in mind when writing the arrangements. They're all just built from the four- and five-note voicings I was taught – as well as other chord forms I've picked up from other instructional systems. Most of these chords are relatively easy to play. However, in just about every one of my arrangements, I use Wayne-style "octave voicings" and "spread voicings" that, I guess, would be a little more challenging for the average player. I would add that the arrangements I'm publishing are the exact ones I play when I'm performing – chord-for-chord, with few variations – although I do improvise all beginnings and endings.

JJG: Do you teach? What level of students?

MC: I only teach occasionally and informally, and the few students I've had are intermediate-to-advanced players. Aside from that, I've been teaching my middle son, Daniel, to play over the last couple of years – and he's developing into a fine player. Importantly, I hope to "teach" through my arrangements. To that point, I'm very thankful to Howard Alden and Jack Wilkins, who offered kind testimonials for my site and noted how the arrangements are, in fact, good learning tools that could be beneficial to players at all levels.

JJG: Do you perform locally?

MC: I mainly do solo guitar work at private functions like weddings and corporate events. I also play at restaurants here in northern New Jersey as a soloist, in duos with other guitarists, and sometimes with a trio/quartet I co-founded called the *QT Jazz Collective*. And, yes, you can say I perform locally. *Very* locally! For example, I've played at the Glen Rock (NJ) Inn several times. It's funny. My family and I moved from Brooklyn to Glen Rock 27 years ago – and the Glen

Rock Inn, at one point, suddenly became this really well-known jazz guitar room that's literally within walking distance of my house! Jack and Howard perform there all the time. I've seen Bucky Pizzarelli there more times than I can count, as well as numerous other guitar grandmasters like Al Caiola, Gene Bertoncini, Vinnie Corrao, and Frank Vignola, to name just a few. Thursday nights at the Inn. It's been great!

JJG: Is the Campellone in your photo your main guitar?

MC: The Campellone is my most prized musical possession! It's just an incredible acoustic archtop – honey blonde with quilted maple back and sides, and a floating pick-up. I met Mark at the Long Island guitar show back in 1993. If you recall, he was the talk of the show that year. I saw his work and immediately commissioned him to build me a *Special 18*. Basically, I said, "... Mark, build me a guitar that's just like a *D'Angelico New Yorker*" – and he did! It's a wonderful axe that I only gig with occasionally. The guitar I play out with is a fairly unique 1988 Gibson ES-175 with a vintage sunburst flame maple top, back and sides – with a three-piece maple neck – and gold hardware. I've had work done to it over the years. For instance, I had Jimmy Millinchuk custom-build an ebony bridge for it, which completely warmed up the sound of the instrument. I also have a Dell'Arte *Dark Eyes*. And recently I picked up a Godin *Fifth Avenue* non-cutaway acoustic archtop. What a cool little guitar! I play out of a TomKat (JazzKat) amplifier.

Website

The Mark Clemente Chord Melodies™ for Guitar
www.markclementeguitar.com

Testimonials

"Mark Clemente has assembled a collection of core repertoire jazz standards, arranged to let any guitarist integrate easily played chords with melody. A great way to build technique and understanding through practical musical example!"

Howard Alden

"A wonderful collection of standard tunes arranged by Mark Clemente that are distinctly musical and fun and easy to play. Guitarists at all levels can benefit from learning these fine arrangements."

Jack Wilkins

G13 **G# DIM7** **G# DIM7** **F6** **G9(b9)** **CMA17** **Am7** **Am7**

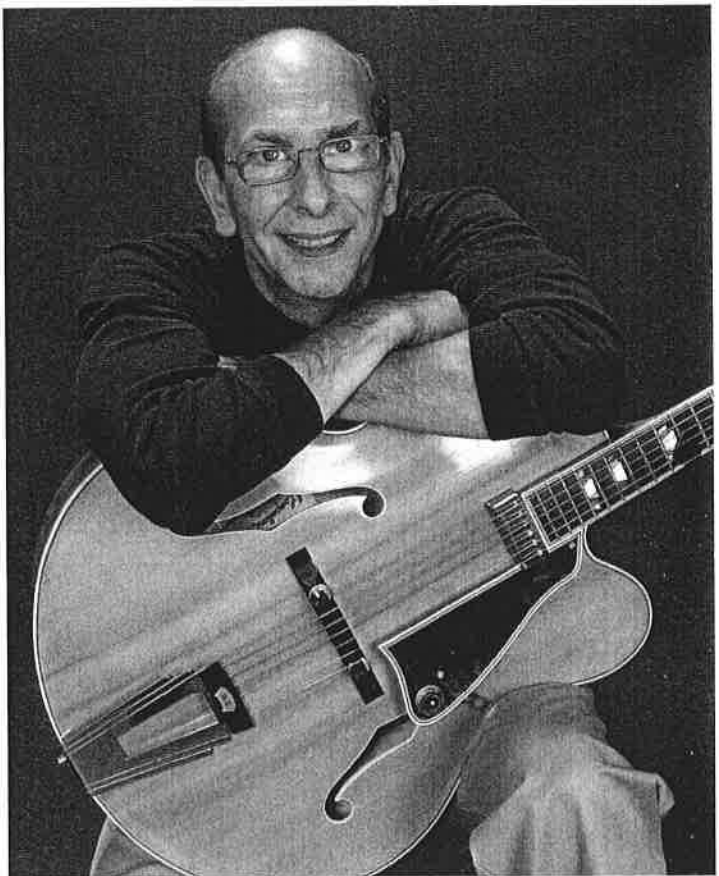
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 5 3 5 6 10 10 7 8 12 8
 4 4 4 4 10 9 9 9 10 10 8
 3 3 2 5 10 9 9 8 10 10 7
 3

Dm7 **G13** **CMA17** **A9(#5)(#9)** **Dm9** **G9(#5)(#9)**

50
 10 5 10 10 5 6
 10 10 10 5 5 5
 10 10 3 5 5 3

C6Add9

33
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