

Play That Guitar. Pt 3

A beginner's guide by Brian Powell



I hope that you enjoyed last month's exercises have been able to do plenty of practice.

I think I even heard Link Wray's 'Rumble' being practiced through the window of a Havelock rd house one day. Keep it up!

Try to play for 10 or 15 minutes each day rather than a marathon once a week.

And remember, the slower you practice the faster you will learn.

Top Tip

Try to find another guitarist at a similar stage as yourself or even a little more advanced. You will learn much more if you can get together with another guitarist at regular interval. For me playing guitar is all about playing with other musicians. The sooner you start, the better !

This month we look at 'The Blues', Improvisation and Right Hand Technique.

Blues is a bitter sweet form of music that is born out of Gospel music and the struggles of black Americans in the deep south of USA.

It is the crucible of many forms of music such as Rock and Roll, Jazz, Country, Soul, Punk, and Metal ! Without Blues music there would be no Elvis, Led Zeppelin or Hank Williams.

Let's take a simple 12 bar Blues sequence in the key of E

Fig 1. 12 bar Blues chord sequence.

Fig 2. Strum pattern related to the beats of the bar.

Strum along with a lazy slow right hand technique. Try this strum pattern. Down,Down,Up,Up,Down over 4 beats.

Divide the 4 beats of each bar into 8 and count as '1 and, 2

and, 3 and, 4 and '

Try to 'feel' the skip or bounce on the Up strokes.

Repeat as a regular and constant right hand rhythm whilst changing chords at the correct point in

the sequence. Tap your foot along evenly and practice the strum pattern on 1 chord only until it is firmly in your head. Then apply it to the chord sequence.

Fig 3. Blues Scale in E.

This scale is very similar to last months Pentatonic scale as used in the tune 'Rumble'. To change a Pentatonic scale into a Blues Scale we need to add THE BLUE NOTE.. It is on the 1st fret 5th string and 3rd fret 2nd string for our Blues Scale in E. I

have chosen the key of E as it will be playable with your 12 bar blues sequence on this page. Record yourself playing the 12 bar sequence or get a friend to play it. You can use the Blues Scale to improvise with.

Try playing the notes from the scale in a random way and make up short melodies. Make up little

runs using long notes and short ones too. Above all use your EAR and anything that sounds good....play it again! Maybe imagine you are taking a walk in a park and use the notes of the scale to tell a story. Enough of this cosmic hippy stuff! Just keep practicing and use the BLUE NOTE as a stepping stone to other notes.

Fig 4. Chromatic Scale Exercise.

This is a good technique building exercise. It has little musical value but will encourage co-ordination of left and right hands. Remember to use your left hand finger tips behind the frets. Start this scale on the open 6th string and ascend using each

string until you reach the 3rd fret 1st string. Try reversing and going backwards down the scale.

Be very particular about the right hand. Use DOWNSTROKES all the way up and down until you get smooth and even. When you are feeling comfortable with downstrokes try an ALTERNATE picking technique using DOWNSTROKES and UPSTROKES in a regimented style. DOWN,UP,DOWN,UP,DOWN,UP etc. Start each string with a Downstroke.

Next month we look at 'The Quitters' chord, CAGED chords and simple song writing.

In the meantime keep listening to The Blues (Robert Johnson), check out Django Reinhardt, Jimi Hendrix and of course.....Hank Williams.

I have designed these 6 lessons to build the students ability a month at a time. Keep these articles and refer back to previous lessons. This page and all other 'Play That Guitar' lessons are posted at www.fivewaysdirectory.co.uk

Brian Powell is an RGT registered guitar teacher and teaches in the Fiveways area.

More information available at www.brianguitar.co.uk and Tel 01273 565600.

Copyright B Powell