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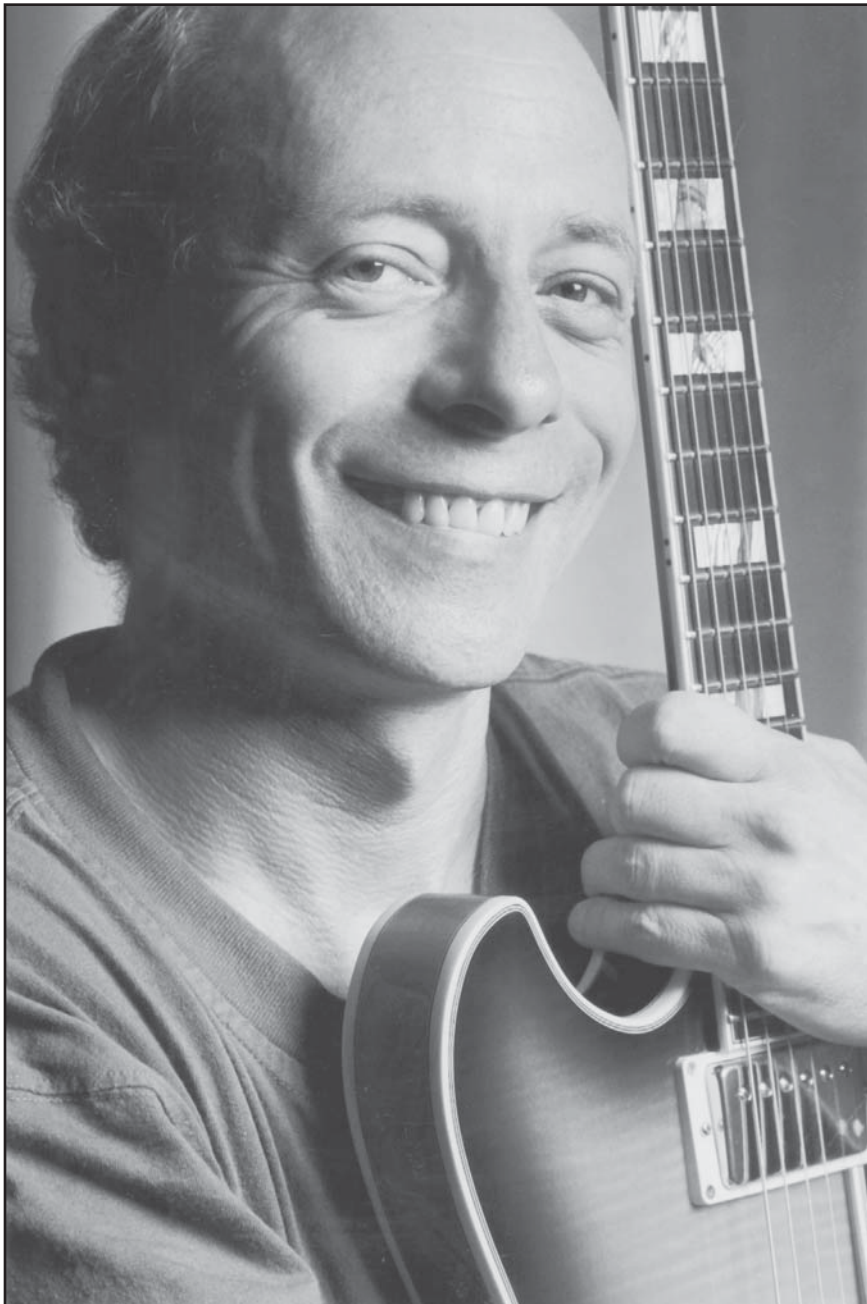
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About The Author

Jody Fisher has worked professionally in virtually all styles of music during his career, from straight ahead and contemporary jazz to rock and roll, country, pop and show tunes. In the field of education, he taught Guitar and Jazz Studies at the University of Redlands in Southern California for eight years and at the Idyllwild School of Music and the Arts (ISOMATA) for two years. An active performer in the Southern California area, he still maintains a private teaching practice, and is an associate director of the National Guitar Summer Workshop's California, Nashville and Connecticut campuses. Jody Fisher is also the author of *The Guitar Mode Encyclopedia*, *The Guitar Chord and Scale Finder*, *Jazz Guitar Christmas* and *The Complete Jazz Guitar Method*, all published by the National Guitar Workshop and Alfred.



Introduction

Most guitarists want to become great improvisers. The image of the wailing guitar player, lost in the moment, searching for the means to express him or herself is well known — almost stereotypical. The truth of the matter is that without great rhythmic backup the soloist has nothing to work with. To a large extent, the success of a solo has a lot to do with how the rhythm section and the lead player interact.

Originally, the guitar (in non-classical circles) was strictly a rhythm instrument. The pulse provided by the guitarist was the glue that held the rhythm section together. It was, and is, used to provide a harmonic and rhythmic background for vocals as well. With the advent of pickups and amplifiers, guitar players were able to step out front and solo just like the other members of the band. This provided a more balanced role for guitarists. Somehow, through the years, “rhythm playing” has taken a backseat to soloing. As a result, many guitarists today are not hip to the benefits of becoming a great rhythm player. This book is designed help remedy this.

This is a multipurpose book. There are several ways it can be helpful:

- First, it can be used as a reference source. You come home from the gig, embarrassed because you didn’t know how to play an authentic Bossa Nova pattern, and look it up. Maybe you had to play some Reggae or a Viennese Waltz. Perhaps you are a jazz player who has limited rock rhythm chops, or a rocker who needs more funk ideas. Do you freelance, play in a wide variety of styles? Inside you will find everything from Afro-Cuban rhythms to the Bunny Hop!
- Second, if you are a songwriter, you should find plenty of material here to inspire new ideas and help you break out of your old rhythmic habits.
- Third, working your way through each page is a great way to practice reading rhythmic notation. If you are comfortable reading most of the rhythms here, you are probably ready to handle anything you find in the professional world.
- Fourth, arrangers will find these ideas helpful for coming up with new ways to treat old, worn-out material.

Becoming a knowledgeable rhythm guitarist will help you become a better improviser as well. You will become more musical in your approach and more in control of your ideas from a rhythmic perspective.

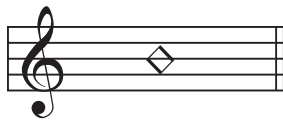
No book can say it all or list every example of every style. This book surveys many styles, but be assured that you could spend your life studying any one in depth. However you use this book, it is my hope that you will create good music and find self-expression.

Thanks to my family, Julie, Josh, Shauna and Tom, Jennifer, Mom, Dad, Jack and Yvonne Abels, Noah, Maggie, Jasper and all of my teachers and friends for having supported my musical endeavors through the years. Thanks to David Smolover and Nat Gunod for their friendship and for providing so many opportunities to further my career — I’ve learned a lot.

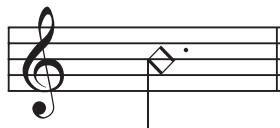
How to Use This Book

RHYTHMIC NOTATION

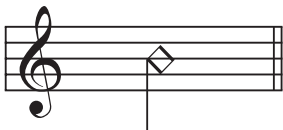
This book uses a system known as *rhythmic notation*. Actual pitches are not usually shown. The various symbols used show when to strum and sometimes how to accent.



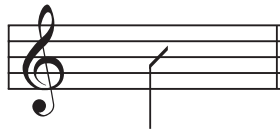
Strum and sustain chord for 4 beats.



Strum and sustain chord for 3 beats.



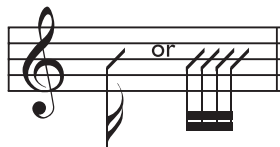
Strum and sustain chord for 2 beats.



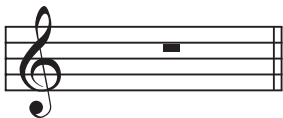
Strum and sustain chord for 1 beat.



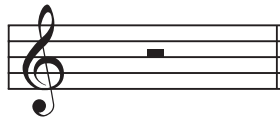
Strum and sustain chord for $\frac{1}{2}$ beat or 2 for 1.



Strum and sustain chord for $\frac{1}{4}$ beat or 4 for 1.



Rest for 4 beats.



Rest for 2 beats.



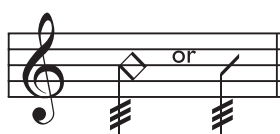
Rest for 1 beat.



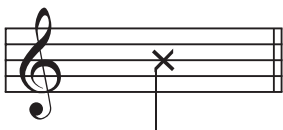
Rest for $\frac{1}{2}$ beat.



Rest for $\frac{1}{4}$ beat.



Roll: a rapid succession of down and up strokes for the duration shown.



Choke: mute the strings with left hand. Strum producing a percussion sound.

TIME SIGNATURES

Time signatures tell us the basic feel of the song. They are not an indication of *tempo* (speed). The top number shows how many beats appear in each measure. This includes rests as well as notes. The bottom number shows what note value receives one beat.

* $\frac{4}{4}$ 4 beats per measure
Quarter note ♩ = 1 beat

$\frac{3}{4}$ 3 beats per measure
Quarter note ♩ = 1 beat

$\frac{2}{4}$ 2 beats per measure
Quarter note ♩ = 1 beat

$\frac{7}{4}$ 7 beats per measure
Quarter note ♩ = 1 beat

$\frac{6}{8}$ 6 beats per measure
Eighth note $\text{♩} = \text{♩}$ = 1 beat

$\frac{12}{8}$ 12 beats per measure
Eighth note $\text{♩} = \text{♩}$ = 1 beat

$\frac{7}{8}$ 7 beats per measure
Eighth note $\text{♩} = \text{♩}$ = 1 beat

** $\frac{2}{2}$ 2 beats per measure
Half note $\text{♩} = \text{♩}$ = 1 beat

* Also written as **C**, *common time*.

** Also written as **♩**, *cut time*.

Tempo

All the examples in this book can be played at a variety of tempos. The tempos used on the CD available for this book are chosen for clarity. They do not necessarily reflect the “correct” tempos. Tempos will depend on context.

Downstrokes and Upstrokes

This is a *downstroke* sign: ▣ This is an *upstroke* sign: ∨

Generally, downstrokes (moving the hand across the strings towards the floor) are used on the downbeats in a measure and upstrokes (moving the hand across the strings towards the ceiling) are used on the “ands” (&).

▣ ∨ ▣ ∨ ▣ ∨ ▣ ∨
1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &

In many instances, certain styles require the use of consecutive downstrokes to attain the correct feel. You will need to experiment, but this book does provide suggestions for each example. Although all but some of the folk examples include upstroke and downstroke indications, many of them can be played with the fingers. Experiment.

Accents

This is the accent sign used in this book: >

There are many different accent signs used in music notation. It would be a good idea to be aware of all of them.

Chords and Practice

In most of the examples in this book, only one chord is used. This will allow you to concentrate on learning the rhythms. Feel free to substitute any other chords. At first, count (or write) out the beats for the rhythm and practice it while counting out loud. Tapping your foot or using a metronome can be helpful. Then practice while counting silently. Finally, just play the rhythm without counting at all. Always remember that maintaining a steady beat, without speeding up or slowing down, is a musical skill you need to master. Once you have learned to feel the rhythm, it is time to apply it to the actual song you are working on.

Technique

Using a Pick

The strumming action should come from your wrist. Avoid using your forearm.

Fingerstyle:

A few examples use some fingerpicking patterns. The labels for the fingers of the right hand are:

- p* = thumb
- i* = index finger
- m* = middle finger
- a* = ring finger
- c* = pinky

African

There are many different cultural groups in the region known as West Africa, each with their own distinctive music. The African rhythms shown in this book are derived from the Ashanti and Ewe peoples of Ghana. If you develop a taste for these rhythms, and want to learn more, you should find recorded music from this area of the world. It is available in the “World Music” sections of most record stores.

SIKYI—ASHANTI

1

2

3

4

5

6

Dixie

Banjo is the traditional rhythm instrument for most Dixieland jazz groups. Try to capture a “banjo vibe” when playing these patterns.

DIXIE

1

2

3

4

5

6