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INTRODUCTION

I learned to play guitar right-handed. The thing is, I'm naturally left-handed.

As I was developing as a player, it became clear that my picking hand was weaker than my fretting hand. For years, I tried to find exercises to improve my right-hand picking technique, but there was very little material that focused solely on right-hand pick playing. Classical guitarists have books like Mauro Giuliani's *120 Studies for Right Hand Development* and Emilio Pujol's *Guitar School* that deal extensively with the right hand and its position and function, but there's very little instruction for the majority of us right-hand pick players. This book serves to fill this void and addresses this serious gap in the education and playing of most guitarists.

The method of picking I use was introduced to me by legendary guitarist Robert Fripp. It was at his Guitar Craft courses where I finally found the right hand specifically addressed. Until then, the topic had always been glossed over, along the lines of "Here's a pick, hold it between your thumb and 1st finger, now play."

The exercises in this book are organized by the number of strings involved, beginning with exercises on a single string, then progressing to two strings, then three, etc., all the way to six strings. Also included are exercises that emphasize string skipping. With all the exercises, there are definite patterns that present themselves, but a certain amount of redundancy from one group to another was inevitable. The beginning of the book has all the iterations written out, but as we progress, the basic exercises will be in a more abbreviated form, leaving it up to you to develop your own versions and variations—something I highly encourage you to do. At the end of each section are **Make It Musical** examples, which develop the exercises you've learned into musical ideas. This way, you'll see the exercises applied in a real-world manner so you won't feel like you're practicing by rote; the point, always, is to be musical.

It is my hope that this book helps you become a better guitar player. More importantly, I hope it helps you become a better musician.

Thank you to Donny Trieu, Link Harnsberger, Ted Engelbart, Ron Manus, and everyone at Alfred Music for making this book possible. And to Robert Fripp for his inspiration and guidance.

—Mark Burgess

Economy of Motion

The following exercises are specifically designed to eliminate unnecessary motion in the right hand. Picking with economy of motion offers the most efficient way to play.

Economy of Motion Exercises

Play the notes in the first exercise below slowly and very *staccato*, short and detached, using the pick itself to cut off the ringing of the string. On the downstrokes, play the note and then immediately bring the pick up to stop the string from ringing. Next, play the upstrokes and immediately bring the pick down to stop the string. Before trying this, review the picking method we introduced earlier to ensure you are using the most efficient way to hold and play with a pick.

Once you are comfortable with the motion of stopping the string with your pick, play the exercise with eighth notes.

Now try it with alternate picking, starting with downstrokes.

Finally, reverse the alternate picking, starting with upstrokes this time.

Practice these economy of motion exercises on the remaining five strings. As with all the exercises in this book, start slowly with a metronome and gradually increase the tempo.

TWO-STRING EXERCISES

One of the great challenges with using a pick is moving from one string to another. The following two-string exercises begin to address this. Start slowly and focus on playing each note as cleanly as possible. Focus on the movement of the hand to achieve a balanced up-and-down stroke. (Note: The accents here are optional, included to help keep time.) These exercises are written out using all open strings but can be played using any chord shape that uses all six strings.

2.1—This is the most basic two-string exercise, moving from one string to another.

2.2—Reverse the order of strings played.

2.3—Note the time signature change.

2.4—Reverse the string order from Example 2.3.

Make It Musical on Four Strings

4.28—Here's a simple chord progression in D Major over a descending bass line.

4.29—This is another simple chord progression, this time in G Major, over a descending bass line.

4.30—Next is a chord progression in C Major with open-string pedal tones.

4.31—Here, we have the same notes as Exercise 4.30 but in $\frac{6}{8}$ time.