



By Richard Gilwitz

## Why Another Beginner's CD-ROM for Guitar?

**T**here are countless educational books, CDs, DVDs, and even VHS tapes running throughout our world of music, along with a multitude of more than competent instructors at all levels. So, you may ask why I—along with my friends at TrueFire—decided to attempt to present in a beginner's platform, a topic that has been thoroughly covered, if not repeatedly hammered into the ground.

I hate to use that hammered into the ground cliché, but to me the answer is obvious. Plainly put, so many people are just not getting IT. I will not say that, 'for some reason', IT is not registering with people. But, based on what I have encountered and observed, I believe I can accurately express my exact feelings about the reasons why many folks are not getting IT.

Let me start by defining IT. IT is a number of roadblocks that get in the way of progress and, in this case, creates a sluggishness of forward movement in the skill level of the guitarist. For example, one obstruction is the lack of understanding of timing and how to use a metronome effectively, and how to actually think of it as a fun tool, instead of an instrument of terror that reveals a player's supposed incompetence.

Another barrier is the absence of a quick and effective method of presenting a bare minimum of music theory at the snap of one's fingers. Often the extensiveness of music books and lessons trigger a solid wall of blank stares from a student. Off goes the learning switch and that knowledge pathway clogs up quicker than a slowdown on the highway from "rubber-neckers" looking at an accident. Regardless of the accuracy of the material or patience of the instructor, this visually surreal obstacle course seems to yank up that emergency brake in some students or players, sometimes permanently.

### CRUISING THE NOTES

One of the more discouraging issues I have come across is the enormous number of students who are totally unwilling to even consider learning standard musical notation. I can't say that this is necessarily

the case for students of the classical guitar, but it seems far more so for the steel string player or for the individual who just likes to 'play by ear'. By closing off this channel to learning musical notation, a plethora of tunes that are yearning to be played are simply never attempted. Learning Tablature, in addition to music notation, does come in handy, no doubt, since attempting to interpret an open tuning composition with a presentation of merely standard notation would seem as ludicrous as underwater bowling!

My intent with this CD-ROM release is to open a roadway for many potential students by triggering their 'I think I get it' nerve before that fearful obstruction gets an opportunity to build up. Once there is dissipation or ideally an obliteration of that apprehension, I believe the trick for keeping it at bay is to never let there be a chance for the student to even sense that their cruising speed will falter. There is no need for the student to even be aware of that open door potentially slamming on his or her toes, ears, nose, or...fingers. (Ok. I know 'fears' would have rhymed, but hopefully you get the point!)

One way to maintain that continuing progress is to offer not just another new approach, but an alternative method, by making concepts simpler by minimizing them. For example, on the front end of the process, why bother to attempt to learn every key or key signature in which the guitar can be played? Take the time to master or at least acknowledge just a few. And why limit this notion to only the guitar? I have worked with many new students who have prior training in other instruments. Part of their success has been my ability to tap into what they already know, transfer it, and apply it to the guitar. And above all,

make the lesson enjoyable, which includes proper pacing of the presentation of new material.

### ON YOUR WAY

After all of the years I have spent studying music theory - which started in high school and college, learning to play tunes by ear from an album on a turntable, reading music notation and then Tablature, attempting the art of composition (surprisingly successfully, so there is hope for every player), along with the experiences of performing with others playing on various instruments, recording in the studio, and appearing on live television and radio, I wanted to as simply as possible lay out what I know to be some of the most important facets of learning the instrument of guitar. Hopefully, this apprentice agenda will prepare the student to have the confidence to continue his or her studies with a supportive instructor, attend a school of music, perform effectively solo and with others, and learn how to communicate with other instruments. And, most importantly, my wish is to fill up their human musical vessel with the right stuff, embracing the concept of the right attitude, while understanding the importance of avoiding that 'cork' being put in at the get-go.

So, as you keep on your training wheels for a while, what will be covered in this new project? You know. The usual. Playing in different keys, understanding key signatures, triads and chord development, scales, intervals, the language of fingerstyle patterns, rock solid timing, song composition, and even a little Blues. But, no worries as the approach will be fresh and simple. You'll even learn how to make hundreds of dollars a year doing this for a living! Seriously, be prepared to have fun this time around and you will get it. Get IT? 🎸