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INTRODUCTION

Let's face it; learning to play the guitar is tough. You have to learn all the notes and all the chords, and you have to practice for hours on end just to make it sound decent. And to make matters worse, guitar instructors typically subject their beginning students to silly little songs that sound terrible even if you play them right. After all, who wants to spend hours on end practicing "Turkey in the Straw" or "Shortnin' Bread?"

That's where this book comes in. My theory is that practicing guitar is a lot more fun if the songs that you're practicing sound good when you play them right. This book is full of exercises that will help you become the guitarist that you want to be; not a folk guitarist, not a "picker and grinner", not a "happy popper", but a full-blown shredder. That's right; these are the exercises that will turn you into the shred machine that will make the other guitarists jealous, and will make you the star of the show.

Now before you get started, I have to warn you, shred guitar is tough, and I mean TOUGH! If you try to play these exercises full-speed right away, you'll get completely overwhelmed. Don't do that! Here's what I want you to do. Get a metronome, and set the speed to whatever speed you want to play the exercise. I don't care if it's written in 120 and you have to play it at 10; go as slow as you need to. Remember, and this is very important, you can play anything in this book as long as you play it slowly enough, so keep slowing it down until you can play it cleanly and in time. As you get more and more comfortable with the exercise, crank up the speed on the metronome little by little. Eventually, you'll be close to full speed, and then you'll be shredding!

Also, feel free to move the exercises around the fretboard. For instance, if an exercise starts on the 14th fret, feel free to move it down to the 10th fret if you want to; just remember that every note has to be translated down 4 frets if you do this. Moving the exercises up or down the fretboard is a good thing because it makes you more familiar with the different finger positions.

Now get out there and shred!

Kenny

TUNING NOTES

On the included CD, I play every exercise in this book both slowly and at full speed. If you want to play along, you'll need to tune your guitar along with mine. I tune my guitar down one half-step (one fret). This is a common tuning in metal music, and you'll hear it in such metal classics as "Over the Mountain" and "Into the Fire." Some of today's metal acts actually drop their tuning down a full step (two frets), so occasionally I'll go down there, but for this book, we'll keep it down one fret.

TWO NOTE HAMMER-ONS

These exercises introduce you to the concept of hammer-ons. Hammering on is actually one of the easiest techniques in shred guitar, but just because it's easy doesn't mean it's not powerful. The concept behind the hammer-on is simple. You pick the first note, then when it comes time for the next note, press down really hard with your fretting finger, which will make the second note sound.

Exercise 1A (CD Track 1):

Here's a really simple exercise to get you started with hammer-ons. When you're practicing this exercise, try really hard to make the hammered note sound strong and clean. It should be almost as loud as the picked note.

Moderate ♩ = 120

1 2

T
A
B

5 6 5 6 5 6 5 6 5 6 5 6

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

TWO NOTE PULL-OFFS

Pull-offs are basically the reverse of hammer-ons. When you perform a pull-off, you typically start by fretting both notes. You pick the first note, and then lift the finger that's fretting the first note, sounding the second note. Pull-offs are every bit as important in the world of shred guitar as hammer-ons, so practice the daylight out of these exercises.

Exercise 2A (CD Track 3):

Again, try really hard to make the pull-off note sound as loud as the first note.

Moderate ♩ = 120

1 2

T
A
B

6-5 6-5 6-5 6-5 6-5 6-5 6-5 6-5

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

Exercise 2B (CD Track 4):

This one expands on the previous exercise by including three different pull-off note pairs. The fingering is indicated below the tablature.

Moderate ♩ = 120

1 2 3 4

5 6

T
A
B

6 5 6 5 6 5 6 5 6 5 6 5 7 5 7 5 7 5 7 5 7 5 7 5 7 5 7 5

① ② ① ② ① ② ① ② ① ② ① ② ① ③ ③ ① ③ ① ③ ① ③ ① ③ ① ③ ① ③ ① ④ ④ ① ④ ① ④ ① ④ ① ④ ①

TWO NOTE HAMMER-ONS AND PULL-OFFS

In the real world, hammer-ons and pull-offs are almost always found together. Some guitarists will pick only the first note, and then put together a long string of blazing fast hammer-ons and pull-offs that can really make your head swirl. Tommy Englund of Evergrey is a master of this technique, which is known as “Legato Picking”.

Exercise 3A (CD Track 5):

In this exercise, you'll only pick the first note of each measure. The rest of the notes in the measure have to be sounded by alternating hammer-ons and pull-offs. This is an important exercise, so give it the time it deserves!

Moderate ♩ = 120

1 2 3# 4#

5 6

T
A
B

6-5-6-5-6-5-6-5 6-5-6-5-6-5-6-5 7-5-7-5-7-5-7-5 7-5-7-5-7-5-7-5

8-5-8-5-8-5-8-5 8-5-8-5-8-5-8-5

Exercise 3B (CD Track 6) Mr. Crowley run:

This is a run from Randy Rhoads' legendary Mr. Crowley outro solo. I told you that you'd find hammer-ons and pull-offs all over the shred world. Now isn't this more fun than "Turkey in the Straw"?

Moderate ♩ = 120

1 2

T
A
B

2-3-2-3-3-5-3-5-5-6-5-6-6-8-6-8 8-10-8-10-10-11-10-11-11-13-11-13-15

full

THREE NOTE HAMMER-ONS

Let's take the concept of hammer-ons one step farther. In these exercises, you'll be picking one note, and then hammering on two notes in a row, and these three notes (the picked note followed by the two hammered notes) will form a triplet. Triplets, especially sixteenth-note triplets, are exceedingly important in shred guitar. They're a little tougher at first, but you can't avoid them, so practice until you can do them.

Exercise 4A (CD Track 7):

This exercise is nothing more than an A minor (or C major, depending on where you define your root) scale, played in eighth-note triplets. It's very important that you play this one in strict time, and make sure that each note is clear and distinct.

Moderate ♩ = 120

The image shows a musical score for Exercise 4A. It consists of two staves. The top staff is a treble clef in 4/4 time, with a tempo marking of 'Moderate' and a metronome setting of '♩ = 120'. The music is written in eighth-note triplets. The first measure contains four triplets of eighth notes, each starting with a red '1' above the first note. The second measure contains four triplets of eighth notes, each starting with a red '2' above the first note. The bottom staff is a guitar TAB with six lines. The first four measures correspond to the first measure of the top staff, with fret numbers 5-6-8, 5-6-8, 5-6-8, and 5-6-8. The last four measures correspond to the second measure of the top staff, with fret numbers 5-7-8, 5-7-8, 5-7-8, and 5-7-8. There are small square markers below the TAB staff, one under each triplet.

Exercise 4B (CD Track 8) Into the Fire run:

Oh yeah, this one's fun! This run is taken from the end of Dokken's "Into the Fire" solo. Don't get scared; just remember to play it slow and build up your speed. When you get this one to full speed, you're shredding!

Moderate ♩ = 120

1

2

3

full

TAB

THREE NOTE PULL-OFFS

These exercises are kind of the reverses of the previous ones. Instead of picking one note and then hammering on two, you'll be picking one note and then pulling off two. Most beginning shredders think that pull-off triplets are a little more difficult than hammer-on triplets, but with practice, you won't have any problem with them.

Exercise 5A (CD Track 9):

Notice that this exercise is nothing more than Exercise 4A in reverse. That's a very important point, and you should give it some thought. Not only are pull-offs the reverse of hammer-ons from a technique standpoint, but musically, you can use pull-offs after hammer-ons to reverse the direction from where you just came. After you practice this one, try combining Exercises 4A and 5A and you'll see what I'm talking about.

Moderate ♩ = 120

1 2

T
A
B

8-7-5-8-7-5-8-7-5-8-7-5 8-6-5-8-6-5-8-6-5-8-6-5

Exercise 5B (CD Track 10):

This exercise shows two different ways of using pull-off triplets to move from the same high note down to the same lower note. You might want to practice the two halves of this exercise separately, but eventually you should play them together. Also, you might notice that the use of the G sharp (second string, ninth fret) gives this exercise an exotic feel. That's because the addition of that note (the raised seventh) makes this a harmonic minor scale. This scale is used extensively by Neo-classical shred masters like Yngwie Malmsteen.

Moderate ♩ = 120

The musical score is written in 4/4 time with a tempo of Moderate (♩ = 120). It consists of four measures. The first measure contains a triplet of eighth notes (17-15-13), followed by another triplet (15-13-12), then a triplet (13-12-10), and finally a triplet (12-10-9). The second measure contains a single eighth note (10). The third measure contains a triplet of eighth notes (17-15-13), followed by another triplet (13-12-10), then a triplet (10-15-13), and finally a triplet (12-10-9). The fourth measure contains a single eighth note (10). The guitar tablature (TAB) below the staff shows the fret numbers for each note: 17-15-13-15-13-12-13-12-10-12-10-9 | 10 | 17-15-13-13-12-10-15-13-12-12-10-9 | 10. Below the TAB, there are small square icons representing the fretboard positions for each note.

THREE NOTE HAMMER-ONS AND PULL-OFFS

The combination of hammer-on triplets and pull-off triplets is extremely powerful, and you'll find this combination throughout the world of shred guitar. These exercises look harder than they are, so don't be intimidated, and remember to play them slow at first, and speed them up as you get better and better.

Exercise 6A (CD Track 11):

Here's a really cool-sounding lick based on the Em scale (though since we're rooting in B, it's technically a B Phrygian scale). Notice that this exercise requires you to shift finger positions halfway through, which will be tricky at first.

Moderate ♩ = 120

1

T
A
B

12-13-15 12-14-15 15-14-12 15-13-12 13-15-17 14-15-17 17-15-14 17-15-13

Exercise 6B (CD Track 12) Bark at the Moon solo final run:

See, I told you that this technique was found throughout the shred world! Here's the final run in Jake E. Lee's "Bark at the Moon" solo. You know how cool it sounds when it's played at full speed, so keep practicing until you can do it!

Moderate ♩ = 120

1

T
A
B

2

3

Exercise 7B (CD Track 14):

In this exercise, the second bar effectively mirrors the first bar, but an octave higher. You might find it difficult to play the two halves of this exercise together. If so, practice them separately, but eventually you'll want to play them both together, because it gives you a good example of a long sixteenth note run that covers a significant portion of the fret board.

Moderate ♩ = 120

1 2 3

T
A
B

17-16-14-16-17 14-16-17-16-14 17-16-14-16-17 14

20-19-17-19-20 17-19-20-19-17 20-19-17-19-20 17

20

Exercise 7C (CD Track 15) Crazy Train intro riff:

Here is the opening riff to “Crazy Train,” perhaps the greatest riff in metal history. It’s not really a shred lick, but it is a classic example of alternate picking in the real world. If you want it to shred, just play it faster!

Moderate ♩ = 145

1 2 3 4

T
A
B

2 2 4 2 5 2 4 2 | 2 5 4 5 2 5 4 0 | 2 2 4 2 5 2 4 2 | 2 5 4 5 2 5 4 0

5 6 7 8

2 2 4 2 5 2 4 2 | 2 5 4 5 2 5 4 0 | 2 2 4 2 5 2 4 2 | 7 7 5

ALTERNATE PICKING – TRIPLETS

Triplets are a little more difficult than sixteenth notes when using alternate picking, because every triplet will start with a stroke in the opposite direction as the previous triplet. For instance, if one triplet in a run starts with a down stroke, then the next triplet will start with an up stroke. Plus, triplets are usually faster (50% faster, to be precise) than sixteenth note runs with the same tempo. Still, today's modern shredders use this technique extensively, so you have to learn it. Just remember to start slow and gradually build up your speed.

Exercise 8A (CD Track 16):

This exercise is about as simple as it gets when it comes to alternate picked sixteenth note triplets, but it's still pretty tricky. Remember to fight the urge to use hammer-ons and pull-offs; pick every note using strict alternate picking. Pay particular attention to the first note of the second, fourth, sixth, and eighth triplets, because it requires both an up stroke and a jump to another string.

Moderate ♩ = 100

1 2

T
A
B

14-16-17 14 17-16-14-16-17 14 17-16-14-16-17 14 17-16-14-16-17 14 17-16 14

Exercise 8B (CD Track 17):

This exercise is pretty similar to the previous one, but the major difference is that it spans three strings. Again, use strict alternate picking, no hammer-ons or pull-offs!

Moderate ♩ = 100

1

2

T
A
B

17-16-14 17-16-14 14-16-17 14-16-17 17-16-14 17-16-14 14-16-17 14-16-17 19

Exercise 8C (CD Track 18):

In this exercise, we move the triplets up to the treble strings, and we also require a shift in finger position halfway through the first bar. This one sounds fantastic when you play it full speed, so keep working on it.

Moderate ♩ = 100

1 2

T
A
B

12-13-15 12-13-15 12-13-15 17-15-13 12-13-15 17-15-13 12-13-15 15-13

12-13-15 12-13-15-17-15-13 12-13-15 17-15-13-12

Exercise 8D (CD Track 19) Goodbye to Romance run:

Here is a run taken from Randy Rhoads' "Goodbye to Romance" solo. The actual solo uses hammer-ons and pull-offs, but I want you to practice it using strict alternate picking. You can always modify it however you want later on when you're on stage.

Moderate ♩ = 80

1 2 3

T
A
B

14-15 17-15-14 17-15-14 16-14-16 14-15-17 14-15-14-15-17-15-17-19-17-19-21-19 22

TWO-HANDED TAPPING

Two-handed tapping is a technique that was popularized by Eddie Van Halen in his shred epic “Eruption.” It’s a technique that is actually surprisingly easy, so much so that many guitarists in the Eighties used this technique to hide their lack of technical proficiency. Today’s shred guitarists use two-handed tapping to compliment other techniques, and you’ll find that as you get better and better two-handed tapping allows you to do many things that you couldn’t otherwise do. For instance, since you’re tapping with your right hand, your runs can include notes that are much farther away from your base note than your left hand alone would allow.

I personally use my index finger for my tapping, and you’ll probably find that to be the easiest way to do it. However, since you’re just starting out, you might want to consider using your middle finger to do the tapping. If you use your middle finger, you can continue to hold your pick between your index finger and your thumb while you’re tapping, which gives you a lot of flexibility.

Exercise 9A (CD Track 20) Two Notes:

Here’s a very simple example of two-handed tapping. Simply put your index finger on the tenth fret, and tap the thirteenth fret with your right hand (either your index finger or your middle finger). The tapped note should be as loud as the first note, and when you lift the tapped note, try to pull it off so that it sounds the note on the tenth fret. I’m only showing two bars here, but you should practice doing this for much longer.

Moderate ♩ = 120

1 2

T T T T T T T T T T T T T T

TAB 10-13-10-13-10-13-10-13-10-13-10-13-10-13 10-13-10-13-10-13-10-13-10-13-10-13-10-13

Exercise 9B (CD Track 21) Two Notes:

This exercise gives you a little better idea of some of the possibilities enabled by two-handed tapping. In this exercise, you'll be moving your tapping finger up and down the fret board. This lick sounds really cool for such a simple exercise.

Moderate ♩ = 120

1 2 3

T T T T T T T T T T T T T T T

TAB 10-13-10-13-10-13-10-13-10-15-10-15-10-15 10-17-10-17-10-17-10-17-10-15-10-15-10-15 13

Exercise 9D (CD Track 23) Three Notes:

This exercise expands on the previous one by adding three more arpeggios after the A minor. Try to figure out what the other three chords represented by these arpeggios are.

Moderate ♩ = 120

1

2

3

4

T
A
B

Exercise 10B (CD Track 26) Three Strings Major:

This exercise is very similar to the previous exercise, except it demonstrates a sweep on a major chord form, C major in this case. Use the same fingers that you used on the previous exercise. Once you master these two exercises, you'll be able to sweep across major and minor chord forms, so you can combine these any way you want.

Moderate ♩ = 120

T
A
B

12 13 12-15-12 13 12 13 12-15-12 13 12 13 12-15-12 13 12 13 12-15-12 13

□ □ □ V V □ □ □ V V □ □ □ V V □ □ □ V V □ □ □ V V □

Exercise 10D (CD Track 28) Three Notes Diminished:

This sweep is perhaps the most popular of all the sweeps, the three-string diminished sweep. I won't get into all of the theory behind the diminished scale; just listen to it. Cool, huh?

Moderate ♩ = 120

1 2

T
A
B

15 14 12 15 12 14 15 14 12 15 12 14 15 14 12 15 12 14 15

□ □ □ V V □ □ □ V V □ □ □ V V □ □ □ V V

Exercise 10F(CD Track 30) Five String:

Unfortunately, sweep picking just gets harder and harder, but the good news is that it sounds cooler and cooler. Here we expand what you learned in the previous exercises into five-string sweeps. Not only do we now have five strings, but we also have a right hand tap when we get to the end of the low-to-high sweep. In this case, you'll probably have to use your middle finger to do the tap, because you'll need to keep the pick between your thumb and index finger. By the way, what chord are we sweeping here?

Moderate ♩ = 120

T
A
B

17 15 14 15 13-17-22-17-13 15 14 15 17 15 14 15 13-17-22-17-13 15 14 15 17

□ □ □ □ □ □ V V V □ □ □ □ □ □ V V V □

Exercise 10G(CD Track 31) Five String Run:

It's fitting that this is the last exercise in the book, because it's by far the toughest. We're taking both minor and major form five string sweeps, and combining them to make this ultra-cool sounding lick. If you can pull this one off, you'll have the other guitarists begging for mercy, but you won't grant it, because shredders show no mercy!

Moderate ♩ = 120

1

2

3

4