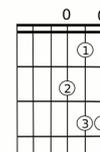


Rob's Guitar School

Guitar and Bass Tuition

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Welcome

Greetings all – well it has come almost to the end of another term very quickly! The end of the year and the festive season is upon us! I have enjoyed teaching as I always do, it is great to see how people are progressing with their guitar playing and their appreciation of music. Do always feel free to tell me if there is something in particular you want to learn – a favourite song, or how to play like a particular artist, or in a particular style. I try to teach fundamentals of music and technique that can be applied to many different styles, but it helps you to enjoy your music if we can work on the styles you like yourself! Remember that if you have any questions about guitar related topics, such as advice on buying a new guitar, or guitar related equipment, drop me a line and I will do my best to help! I would like to wish all my students and their families a safe and joyous christmas/festive season, and look forward to seeing you all again next year.

Rob

Teaching Dates – Private Students (including Mt Nebo after school)

My teaching times generally follow the state school term dates, so I will be finishing teaching on Thursday 9th December. Lessons will commence again in the week of the 24th of January 2011. Lesson times will be the same as this year, but if you need to change your time, just let me know.

Samford State School SEEP Program

We have had a successful second half of

the year with some of the students at Samford State School. I have been running group lessons on a Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons. Next year I will also be running a Friday afternoon group class for more advanced guitarists at the school. Unfortunately, the classes are only available to students at Samford State School. If you are interested in these classes for your child, have a chat to me to see whether they would work in your situation. Contact Deputy Principle Elaine Tibbles for more information and bookings.

Private Teaching Locations

Rob teaches at Samford on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, with private lessons conducted at the Anglican Church Hall, just over the bridge on Samsonvale Rd; at The Gap, at 39 Kirri St, on Monday afternoons and evenings; and at Mount Nebo on Thursday afternoons and evenings.

How to Get the Most from Your Practice

This little article appeared in the last newsletter, but I am reprinting it, because it is so important!

Most of my students will have heard me say how a small amount of practice each day is much better than a large amount once a week! It's something you will hear me say a lot! A daily practice schedule is the foundation for learning any instrument. The littlies usually need help and encouragement from mum or dad to do their daily practice routine. Some things that are helpful are to

1. set aside a specific time each day for guitar practice;
2. have a reward system for doing practice;
3. get your child to teach you what they have learnt, and play along with them.

For beginning students fifteen or twenty minutes a day is a good start. As students develop they will find that half an hour per day works well. From there, it depends on your goals and your motivation, and your love of music! The more you practice, the better you play! However, it is important to keep a sense of fun and play with it as well. No point forcing kids to do their practice – it doesn't work!

For older students, a good practice session will have the following elements

1. Some finger exercises, such as scales, or arpeggios, or finger flexibility exercises;
2. Some work on strumming and chords;
3. Some practice reading music, working on a song;
4. Some creative play – improvising to chords played by a friend or recorded.

I will have some practice tracks available soon on the school website! So stay tuned! This is one of my projects over the christmas break, so this should be ready for next term!

Learning to Listen

An essential part of learning to be a competent musician is to develop your ears. While everybody can hear, musicians need to develop their musical hearing. We have to be able to translate what we hear with our ear, to a note we can play on our instrument. This is especially important in styles like Blues, Jazz and Rock that depend on one being able to *hear* what is being played by other musicians, so you can play something that fits with what they are doing.

To musically *hear* takes time and practice. To help you develop your ear, play along

with some recorded music. At first, just try and get a note that fits. As your ear gets better, try and pick out the tune. Try and strum a few chords, and see if you can find chords that fit. Or see if you can play a few bass notes (on the bottom two or three strings) that fit the tune. One thing I do sometimes is have my guitar with me when watching the television, and try and play along to the music of the show and the ads. Or put on your favourite CD, and try and pick out a few notes that seem to fit the tune. The important thing is to listen very carefully, and when you play a note decide if it 'fits' or if it doesn't!

Fridays Nights at Homestead Restaurant

I will be playing Friday 10th and 17th of December at the Homestead Restaurant at Samford, doing a jazz and grooves set, featuring some jazz favourites and funky grooves, supported by my Virtual Guitar Orchestra (a.k.a looping software!), that allows me to overlay several guitar tracks in real time. So come along and say hi, enjoy a nice meal, and listen to the music! Phone the restaurant on 3289 1485 for more info!

Walter Stahl Art Show

I am providing music for Walter Stahl's art show on Sat 18th December. It will be an electronic music sound scape improvisation, with keyboardist Dave Crane. The art show opens from 12pm to 6pm, we will play at 3ish! The venue is Annerley Baptist Church Community Hall, 560 Ipswich Road, Annerley. See <http://www.stahlwerk.ws> for some of Walter's art.

Oz Manouche Festival

I have just had a very enjoyable weekend at the Oz Manouche festival. Jazz Manouche, or Gypsy Jazz, is a style of music that relies heavily on guitar, and was pioneered by Django Reinhardt during the years prior to the second world war in Paris. He often played with violinist Stephane Grapelli. I was able to attend a master class with international recording

artist Robin Nolan revealing some of the secrets of Gypsy guitar! I also spent a lot of time playing bass during the many jam sessions over the weekend.

The unique sound of Jazz Manouche comes in part from the chords used, which can be quite different to the standard guitar chords. Partly this is because as a young man, Django Reinhardt seriously burnt his left hand, and as a result almost completely lost the use of his third and fourth fingers. He had to teach himself to play again, using only his first two fingers, and what remained of his third and fourth fingers. He invented a lot of chord fingerings and voicings to suit his damaged hand, and they help give the music its distinctive sound.

Gypsy Jazz is great fun to play – it is all about jamming and having fun with a tune! Some artists playing in this style today are Robin Nolan, Romane, Stochelo Rosenberg, and Biréli Lagrène, just to name a few. On the local scene, we have Ewan McKenzie from Brisbane. So have a look on YouTube for the above artists, and of course for Django Reinhardt, and see if you like it!

The Music of Eric Clapton

One thing I would like to do with these newsletters is to broaden your playing horizons, by drawing your attention to some of the great guitar players. One of the best ways to really learn to play is to put on a record of your favourite guitarist, and try to play along with them, and learn to play exactly what they play on the record.

This is exactly what Eric Clapton did as a teenager growing up in Surrey, England. He played along to his records of John Lee Hooker, Muddy Waters, and Jimmy Reed, until he could play what they played, note for note! Other influences were B.B. King and Robert Johnson. There weren't too many players who could actually play that kind of music, let alone teach it, in England at that time, in the late fifties and early sixties. So Eric

had to use his ear and figure it out by himself. I am sure that this is one reason why he became such a great guitarist.

Eric Clapton went on to become one of the most influential guitarists in the world of Rock and Roll, playing in the bands Cream, Blind Faith and Derek and the Dominos, in the late sixties and early seventies, before launching his solo career. He is perhaps best known today for his song *Tears in Heaven* which commemorates the tragic death of his five year old son in 1991. The song *Sunshine of your Love*, a classic by Cream, has been immortalised by the Guitar Hero computer game. For vintage Clapton at his best, have a look on YouTube for *Sunshine of Your Love*, *Strange Brew*, and *White Room*, all from the 1967 *Disraeli Gears* album. Other Clapton classics are *Layla*, and his version of *Who Shot the Sheriff*.

Every guitar player dreams of getting good enough to play with their heroes. Eric achieved this long cherished dream, touring, performing and recording with blues legends B.B. King and Muddy Waters. It's just a matter of practice!

A Short History of the Guitar

The ancestors of the modern guitar go back many thousands of years to the region of Persia, where a fretted instrument with four strings was known as "charitar". "Char" meant four, while "tar" meant string. These fretted instruments with four strings were introduced to Spain with its Arab connections prior to 1200, and were known in Spanish as guitarra. Over the next 400 years, the number of strings varied, from four, to eight (with each string doubled), to ten (five double strings), to 12 (six double strings), before settling on the six we know today. The first recognisably modern guitar was made in Spain in about 1850, by Antonio Torres, and classical guitars today still follow the basic design and dimensions he established. The next big development in the design of the guitar came in about 1900, when makers in the USA began experimenting with steel strings, which required stronger bracing to support the

extra tension. Orville Gibson began making guitars with a floating bridge and a tail piece (like a cello) around the same time. Electric pick-ups were added in the late 1920's, and by the mid 1940's solid body electric guitars were being built by Leo Fender, Les Paul, the Gibson Company, and other guitar makers. Fender and Gibson guitars are still being made today, and used by many recording artists. Both companies make more affordable student versions of their guitars, "Squire" (Fender) and "Epiphone" (Gibson) which provide good value for those on a budget!



Classical nylon string guitar.



Steel string acoustic



Fender "Stratocaster" solid body electric guitar.



Gibson "Les Paul" solid body electric guitar.

See You Next Year

Well that's it for this newsletter, and this year! I hope you have a good holiday, and take the opportunity to do lots of playing, and lot's of listening! I look forward to seeing you all next year! A safe and festive Xmas season to all!

Regards,
Rob.