

Fast Fingers Guitar Lessons

Practice CD

Hello and thanks for purchasing the FFGL practice CD. The need for this CD became apparent when I began teaching again. During the 80's, people had cassette tapes recorders which I used myself for practice. The idea was to record a particular chord progression I was working on, play it back and work on my improvisation. A musician needs to hear how their musical ideas sound against the chords.

In today's digital world, few own cassette recorders anymore. Music is downloaded as 0's and 1's and not "recorded" but saved off, usually in an MP3 format. There are some software packages out there where you can program your back up band, but they're pricey.

In 2003 I bought my first Mac and it came with some free software called Garage Band. It enabled me to write songs and use bass and drum loops and actually record my original songs. However, the bass lines would dictate the songs chord progression and I didn't care for that, so I soon bought my first bass as a way of having more control over the recording process.

As I became aware that my students that were learning how to solo didn't have access to tape, they could really only practice soloing when I was there playing the chords for them, which slowed their learning process. Thus the idea of the practice CD came about.

On the CD there is about 45 minutes worth of back-up tracks. Each track has drums, bass, and rhythm guitar. In the following sections I describe each chord progression and what are some of the approaches you would take to improvise against it.

As always, I am looking to improve ways of enriching my students learning experience. If there is anything here you feel I've left out, please email me at fastfingers76@gmail.com with your suggestion.

NOTE: as these CD's are burned on my home Mac, the process of burning a CD is different than that of major record labels and thus the life expectancy

of the CD is unknown. Therefore, it is **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED** you rip this to your PC or Mac or Linux box and make back up copies.

Happy Playing!

Spencer

Track 1-6 Tuning Up

You can either tune to a tuner or tune your guitar by ear to these individual tracks for each string, E (6th string), A (5th string), D (4th string), G (3rd string) B (2nd string) and E (1st string).

Tuners are great, but they only work well when the guitar is close to being in tune. For example, your 4th string D, if it was sharp enough, could “confuse” the tuner to thinking you are really tuning an E string and would direct you to continue to tune “up” to the E note, when in reality you should be a whole step lower. You can use these tracks as well when you change strings to get in the right “neighborhood” of the pitch you want, then you can use a Tuner to “fine tune” your string.

Track 7 – the ii V progression in G Major

Anybody who has taken lessons from me knows this progression. It's an Amin7 (or Amin9) to D Dominant 7 (D7) or D Dominant 9 (D9). These chords are built of the second (ii) and fifth (V) note of the key of G.

Approaches for soloing:

- 1) G major scales first and foremost. Work the scales in each position, as well as get used to moving around the neck (lateral movement).
- 2) Triads (chord shapes) in G. Use the Aminor7 triad and the D7 triad. To get extended harmonies, play the Cmajor7 triad against Aminor7 and F# minor 7 flat 5 triad against the D7.
- 3) A minor pentatonic scale
- 4) A Blues scale

Track 8 – Blues in Bb

This is a jazzier form of blues taught to me by guitar teacher way back when. Blues are fundamentally a I IV V progression but these chords make a lot of use of the ii V and secondary dominant “lead in” chords.

The progression:

Bb 6	Eb9	Bb6	Fmin7 Bb7
Eb9	Eb9	Bb Maj7 Cmin7	Dmin7 G9
Cmin7	F9	Bb6	Cmin7 F9

Approaches for soloing:

- 1) Bb blues scale
- 2) Match the triads to the chords. This takes some work and you’ll probably have to map it out in advance but as you work with it, your playing will smooth out.

By the way, guitarists don’t usually pick Bb as a key to play in but the “Bb instruments” like saxophone – really like this key so if you’re going to be playing in various bands, you should get to know this key.

Track 9 Blues in A

Ok, this is the kind of stuff guitarists live for – blues in the key of A. This is a I IV V progression in A played in a swing style where the cords are played Root and fifth, Root and sixth, and back to root and fifth. Consider the tonality of these chords all as dominant 7th chords:

A7	D7	A7	A7
D7	D7	A7	A7
E7	D7	A7	A7 E7

Approaches for soloing:

- 1) A blues scale, of course. You can use the b5 of the scale on this one liberally (Eb)
- 2) A more complex approach but one you should aspire to is to play the triad shapes against each chord. See my blog on blues for more information.

Track 10 Vi IV I V in Cmajor

While I say it's in Cmajor and you can play the Cmajor scales against this, it's really in A minor, the relative minor of C. This progression is quite a few songs. I did this in kind of a rock fashion, so you might want to use distortion while you solo against it. At times I break up the chords a bit by singling out notes. I do this because this is a fairly melodic chord progression, not really straight-forward rock, somewhat in-between.

| A minor | F major | C major | G major |

Approaches for soloing:

- 1) A minor pentatonic scales. You can get away with throwing in the flatted fifth as well for more of an A blues effect.
- 2) C major scales. Technically, this is A Natural Minor so you'll be resolving a lot of your licks to A. The Major scales are nice as we have an F Major in the progression and there is no F in the A minor pentatonic scale so unless you make use of the A Natural Minor scale you'll miss out on this sound.

Track 11 Cycle of Fourths

Just when you thought it was safe to crank and wail, I lay all 12 keys on you. Ouch. Sorry about that.

The Cycle of fourths is a way of “cycling” through all 12 keys (yes, all 12) by playing a ii V I I6 progression in one key, then moving to a key that only differs from the current key by one note. So if we start in G, we have an F#, all other notes natural. Then we move to C, which has all naturals, so there is only one note difference (F# becomes F natural). Next we move to the key of F which has one flat, Bb. Again, only one note difference between it and the previous key of C.

The effect here is we move through all 12 keys without being jarring about it. Nothing abrupt, we smoothly move through these keys where we end up back where we started. You’ll be pushed through your limit in knowing the guitar neck on this exercise.

The chords:

Amin7	D7	Gmaj7	G6
Dmin7	G7	Cmaj7	C6
Gmin7	C7	Fmaj7	F6
Cmin7	F7	Bbmaj7	Bb6
Fmin7	Bb7	Ebmaj7	Eb6
Bbmin7	Eb7	Abmaj7	Ab6
Ebmin7	Ab7	Dbmaj7	Db6
Abmin7	Db7	Gbmaj7	Gb6
C#min7	F#7	Bmaj7	B6
F#min7	B7	Emaj7	E6
Bmin7	E7	Amaj7	A6
Emin7	A7	Dmaj7	D6

This is probably somewhat confusing, but here is when we encounter all the keys in music and there are 3 overlapping keys (keys with the same pitches but different names).

Cb is also the key of B

F# is also the key of Gb

Db is also the key of C#.

Where I decided to switch from the flat keys to the sharp keys is just an arbitrary choice. I chose to flip into the key of C# rather than keep it in Db but I didn't have to. And the same for F#- I could have called that as a ii V I in Gb. But by the time we reached the key of E, there is no more over lap so the change has to occur in one of the three key changes before. Remember, pitch wise it is identical, no matter what you call it.

Approaches for soloing:

- 1) The first thing to try to get down are the major scales, and that means all of them. While you can jump up and down the neck switching keys for this, it is better if you learn to stay in one area of the neck. Your ideas will sound more fluent and connected. Pick one area, say around the 3rd fret, and realize that every key is going to have a G, a G# (Ab) or a Gb (F#) and go from there. All your scale positions will be pulled into play. Deal with it a chunk at time.
- 2) Triads – this will be easier than the scales. Learning the min 7 and dom 7 of all these keys will probably be a faster way to stay on top of the key changes.

Track 12 Iii Vi ii V in G

This is a jazz chord progression that confuses inexperienced players. The actual progression is:

Bmin7 | E9 | Amin7 | D9

So it appears to be a ii V in A then a ii V in G. And certainly you can play it that way. But if you look at it in the context of the key of G you'll find that only one note (G# in the E9 chord) doesn't fit in the key of G. And that's why I call this a iiis VI (dom7) ii V in G.

Thus you can get away with playing in G for this progression. Or you can deal with it as a key change from A to G.

Approaches for soloing:

- 1) G major scales is the easiest route here.
- 2) Play the triad shapes against the chords to more closely follow the chord progression
- 3) Play from A Major scales to G major scales

Track 13 E Funky Blues

I have to admit, I have a lot of fun with this progression. It is only two chords:

E7 + 9 | A7 |

Now the E7+9 chord has the following notes:

1 3 5 b7 #9

E G# B D F## (which is G, as F# is the 9th and a sharp 9 results in a G)

And then there's A7:

A C# E G

This almost all falls nicely in the E blues scale. With the E dominant chord you can have fun with the minor 3rd (G) to major 3rd (G#) to E. Both notes are in the chord.

Approaches for soloing:

- 1) Rock out on E blues- get funky on this one. Double stops and long riff patterns work well here. It's a nice space to experiment with.
- 2) Triads, of course. Be aware there is no C# in the E blues scale so hitting that note is the "sweet spot" on A7.

Track 14 vi V IV in C

This is a variation on Track 10, however this chord progression is a bit more common. Plenty of rock tunes use this progression. Again, like in Track 10, the home here is A (A minor) so you'll be resolving a lot of your licks around A.

Approaches for soloing:

- 1) A minor pentatonic and A Blues (using the flatted 5th)
- 2) A natural minor scales (aka C major scales, but just centered on A, not C)

Track 15 I bIII bVII IV in G

Looking at this title, it might seem confusing – flatted thirds and flatted 7ths. The truth is this is really quite simple.

This chord progression is built around the G minor pentatonic scale, not the major scale. So with G Major, we had:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
G A B C D E F#

But with G minor pentatonic, we have:

1 b3 4 5 b7
G Bb C D F

And thus the chords in this chord progression:

G | Bb | F | C |

Approaches for soloing:

- 1) G blues scale is the best way to go here.