

# The Guitar Principles Path: Rhythm One

## The Purpose of this Course

There is no area of musical knowledge that is more misunderstood than rhythm. Many students start out very shaky in their grasp of the basic concepts, and remain shaky forever after. Many learn to copy rhythms by ear, and get by that way. But they never really grasp the system of rhythm notation itself, which makes it possible to function on a higher level as a musician.

The reason for this difficulty in grasping the fundamentals of rhythm is that rhythm, by nature, is abstract. It deals with the intangible dimension of time. The rudiments of rhythm, which must be grasped before the system of notation can really be worked with, are also abstract, and hard to "get a handle on" for many beginners. Then the whole situation is made worse by the fact that the usual guitar method book often distorts basic concepts, or leaves much too much unsaid (perhaps leaving it to the teacher to clarify, which often doesn't happen).

Because fundamental concepts are not adequately or clearly defined, the student cannot grasp more advanced concepts. As you will see, Lesson One begins with a clarification of the most basic concepts dealt with in music.

For now, in the beginning, let us think of rhythm this way: a person who can play with "good rhythm" is a person who can make all the notes sound for exactly the right length of time in relation to each other, because he or she can make the right movements which will begin and end each sound at the exact right time.

It is like a carpenter who can build a beautiful cabinet because he can measure all the wood to the right size, and has the skill to cut it to that size, not a millimeter bigger or smaller. When our music is "in rhythm" it has the right "shape". If the sounds are not measured out or "cut" correctly, the music will have a distorted shape to our mind's sense of time, as an improperly made cabinet would have a distorted shape to our eye's sense of form and line.

It must be understood that the person who can "copy" a rhythm by ear has a great natural ability, in fact, one that is more primary than the ability to read and write rhythms, just as being able to speak and understand words is more primary than the ability to read them. However, being able to read music opens up the possibility of endless growth in any style of music, as well as communication with other musicians.

### **This course is designed to foster these abilities:**

- 1- The natural ability of the body and mind to perceive and perform rhythms.

- 2- The mental understanding of the system of rhythm notation that has developed over hundreds of years, and is one half of what reading music is all about (the other, of course, being pitch).

This course assumes absolute ignorance on the part of the student. Make sure you actually DO the exercises, no matter how simple they seem. **The learning is in the DOING!**