

Strumming



ADVANCED
TECHNIQUES

CJ "Boom" Helekahi. Photo by Oceanfront Photography



Use these simple techniques to add some hipness to your strumming!

What is hip?

Now that you've mastered the basic strumming concepts presented in Lesson #1, it's time to inject some coolness into your comping chops (Wanna sound hip? Say "comping" instead of "accompanying").

The simple techniques that follow will open your ears and solve a lot of mysteries for you. A fuller, more sophisticated strum and a solid sense of rhythm will improve your solo singing performances drastically. As an accompanist, your jam-mates will

have a lot more fun and when you make it fun for them, you make it easier for them to relax and play or sing in a more inspired way. *This* is hip.

Be sure to check out the song examples in the following pages to hear and better understand what others are doing and remember - there is no substitute for LISTENING. From jazz to rock to country - all the greats spent a LOT of time sitting by their record player lifting that needle and replaying their favorite parts as they learned how to emulate what

they heard. If they can take the time to do it, so can you.

So dust off those old favorites, revisit them with an open ear, strum along and HAVE FUN!

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Noteworthy Ukulele Players

(surprised at some of these names?)

George Harrison
Tiny Tim
Bill Tapia
Jake Shimabukuro
Benny Chong

Lyle Ritz
James Hill
Troy Fernandez
Abe Lagrimas
Bryan Tolentino

Byron Yasui
William H Macy
Greg Hawkes
Don Henley
Johnny Winter



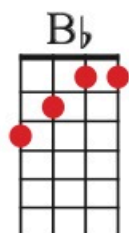
L-R: Auntie Geri Brigoli, Leokane Pryor, CJ "Boom" Helekehahi. Photo by Marsha Aguon

Left Hand Muting

In "Mastering Strumming" (Lesson #1), you learned how to properly count and keep a 4 beat pulse going as you strum. You learned to replace up and downstrokes with "Ghost Strokes" to emulate different sounds.

Simply replace those ghost strokes with the scratching sound you get when you use this left hand muting technique and you will hear those familiar disco, reggae and rock grooves jump out at you.

Let's start with the B \flat chord at the



first fret. Be sure your index finger is properly covering the 1st two strings and the fingertips of your middle and ring fingers are pressing

down the other two spots. Now strum the strings, making sure you're getting a nice, clear sound. Notice how all the strings are covered and you are in complete control of the sound.

Now release the pressure in your left hand but keep your fingers in their respective chord positions.

Strumming across the strings now produces a scratching sound.

This is the basis for strumming riffs from countless popular songs. In fact, back in the 20's as a boy, Bill Tapia may have been the first to use this technique to emulate the snare drums he heard in the parade as the band played "Stars and Stripes".

Start with a "1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &" pattern and release the pressure on all the beats except "1". You want to time it so that by the time you reach "&" after "1", the strings will have stopped ringing - or, in other words - by the time your strumming finger comes back up.

Now add in different beats and practice these patterns where "x" = "scratch":

1 x 2 x x x 4 x

1 x x & x x 4 x

...and any other combinations you can think of.

This technique works best with chord shapes that cover all the strings and will take some practice to coordinate the strumming and the letting-go of the pressure on the desired beats. Start out slow and when you have a pattern under your fingers, gradually pick up the tempo.

Song Examples

Listen closely to hear that scratching sound on the guitars in these songs:

Peace Of Mind
(Boston)

One Thing Leads To Another
(The Fixx)

What I Like About You
(Romantics)

Stir It Up
(Bob Marley)

Rock With You
(Michael Jackson)

The Long Run
(Eagles)

When The Morning Comes
(Kalapana)



It's always a good idea to practice to something that will help you develop a strong sense of rhythm like a metronome, a track you create in Garage Band, or by strumming along to your favorite recording.

On Practice:

"It takes a lot of devotion and work, or maybe I should say play, 'cause if you love it, that's what it amounts to. I haven't found any shortcuts, and I've been looking for a long time." - Chet Atkins



Right Hand Muting

This is another technique that works hand-in-hand with Ghost Strokes and is the preferred method when playing open chords (chords that have one or more strings not covered by a finger).

Here we stop the strings from ringing on a given beat by covering the strings with the strumming hand. You can either stop it very lightly with the edge of that hand (depending on how fast you are strumming) or you can actually slap the strings as you stop them to add the percussive effect made famous in the song "More Than Words" by Extreme (he's not strumming, he's plucking, but same idea).

Right hand muting is usually done in place of a downstroke as in these examples (x=stop with right hand):

1 & 2 & x & 4 &
1 & x & 3 & x &

When you do the stop/slap with your strumming hand, be sure to stop the strings with the index finger



pointing slightly toward the ground, below the

first (A) string. Why? Because an upstroke will immediately follow and you want that strumming finger to be ready and in position to come right back up.

Try the previous two patterns plus a few you create yourself. Once you've played through each one a couple times, stop counting and focus on the sound itself as you assign the movement to muscle memory. Muscle memory is important - at some point you have to stop thinking and start feeling.

Combining different strum patterns with different chord progressions such as C-G7-C, G-C-D7-G, F-Dm-Gm-C7-F, etc. will help keep things interesting and make it even easier to "discover" songs.

Just keep that strumming hand going strong - up, down, up, down. Once you're consistent with that and have mastered Ghost Strokes and Left and Right Hand Muting, there is no strum you won't be able to figure out in a matter of seconds - you'll actually be able to hear it before you even pick up your ukulele!

stopping the strings with the edge of the hand



Song Examples

Listen closely to hear the right hand muting/slapping technique in these tunes:

Venus
(Shocking Blue)

More Than Words
(Extreme)

Run To You
(Bryan Adams)

My Favorite Mistake
(Sheryl Crow)

Wild Night
(Van Morrison)

No Rain
(Blind Melon)

Somewhere Over The Rainbow
(Israel Kamakawiwo'ole)



To best match what "Bruddah Iz" is doing on his version of "Somewhere Over The Rainbow", use a low G string for the bottom string and emphasize that one string when strumming down on beat one: 1 x 2 & x & 4 &

"A nonmusician is thrilled to be doing music and is quite happy to sit there and plunk one note all day.

Nonmusicians really listen sometimes, because that's the only thing they have available to them" - Brian Eno

Song Examples

Listen closely to hear examples of chromatic slides in these tunes:

Jailhouse Rock
(Elvis Presley)

Talk Dirty To Me
(Poison)

Bring It Back Again
(Stray Cats)

Summertime Blues
(Eddie Cochran)

Roll Over Beethoven
(Gene Vincent)

Johnny B Goode
(Chuck Berry)

Fun, Fun, Fun
(Beach Boys)

Achy Breaky Heart
(Billy Ray Cyrus)

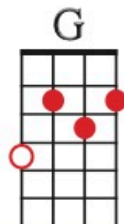


Bryan Tolentino (L), Jeff Peterson (R) and Pomaika'i Keawe Lyman at the 2009 Aloha Falsetto Festival in Los Angeles. Photo by Marha Aguon

Chromatic Slides

Here's one more gimmick to add to your strumming arsenal, one you often hear in jazzy swing tunes as well as in a lot of rockabilly music.

Let's use the G chord for this example (open circle on bottom string is optional).



Strum a "1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &" pattern. On "4" slide that whole G chord shape DOWN one fret (your fingers should now be in the 1st and 2nd frets). What would you call this new chord? Who cares? We'll only be on it for a split second. Now slide back up to "regular" G on beat "1". Practice both slow and fast tempos. Sounds pretty cool, eh?

Second version: Slide down to the weird G chord on the "&" after "4". This means you will be hitting that chord on an upstroke and immediately return to the original G chord as you strum down on beat "1". Notice how just a subtle shift in timing makes a pretty big difference.

Tip:



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kxn'\sq -Rkxn'WE-sq'k|o'pEx
ok}..f k.}'y'sx}+xx-v.wkwo
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Enjoy!
- Mitch Chang