

# Contents

|                                              |    |                                                |    |
|----------------------------------------------|----|------------------------------------------------|----|
| About the Author .....                       | 3  | Chapter 7 — Left-Hand Techniques               |    |
| Introduction .....                           | 3  | and Syncopation .....                          | 30 |
| Chapter 1 — Getting Started .....            | 4  | Hammer-Ons .....                               | 30 |
| Parts of the Guitar .....                    | 4  | Pull-Offs and Slides .....                     | 30 |
| Holding the Guitar and Basic Technique ..... | 5  | <i>Don't This Road Look Rough</i>              |    |
| Tuning the Guitar .....                      | 6  | <i>and Rocky</i> .....                         | 31 |
| Reading the Examples in this Book .....      | 7  | Syncopation .....                              | 32 |
| Chapter 2 — Let's Make Some Music .....      | 8  | <i>Sloop John B.</i> .....                     | 33 |
| Warm Up .....                                | 8  | Chapter 8 — The Carter Family Style .....      | 34 |
| Four-String Chords .....                     | 8  | <i>Wildwood Flower</i> .....                   | 34 |
| <i>Skip To My Lou</i> .....                  | 9  | <i>Creole Belle</i> .....                      | 35 |
| Full Chords & Bass/Strum                     |    | Chapter 9 — Blues and The Shuffle Rhythm ..... | 36 |
| Accompaniments .....                         | 10 | The Shuffle—Let's Swing .....                  | 36 |
| <i>Hey Ho, Nobody Home</i> .....             | 10 | <i>Blues in A</i> .....                        | 37 |
| <i>Aunt Rhody</i> .....                      | 11 | <i>Frankie And Johnny</i> .....                | 38 |
| <i>Swing Low, Sweet Chariot</i> .....        | 11 | <i>Sittin' On Top Of The World</i> .....       | 39 |
| Chapter 3 — More Chords and the Capo .....   | 12 | Chapter 10 — Melody Picking .....              | 40 |
| Primary Chords .....                         | 12 | <i>A' Soalin'</i> .....                        | 40 |
| Capo .....                                   | 12 | <i>Skip To My Lou Solo</i> .....               | 42 |
| Alternating Bass Notes .....                 | 12 | <i>Railroad Bill</i> .....                     | 43 |
| <i>Shady Grove</i> .....                     | 13 | Drop D Tuning .....                            | 44 |
| <i>John Henry</i> .....                      | 14 | <i>Fair And Tender Ladies</i> .....            | 45 |
| 3 Time .....                                 | 15 | Appendix — How to Read Music .....             | 46 |
| <i>Amazing Grace</i> .....                   | 15 | Pitch .....                                    | 46 |
| Chapter 4 — Fingerstyle Chord Plucking       |    | Time .....                                     | 47 |
| and Bass Runs .....                          | 16 |                                                |    |
| Fingerstyle Chord Plucking .....             | 16 |                                                |    |
| Bass Runs .....                              | 17 |                                                |    |
| Chapter 5 — Exploring Some New Keys .....    | 18 |                                                |    |
| The Key of A .....                           | 18 |                                                |    |
| <i>Careless Love</i> .....                   | 19 |                                                |    |
| The Key of E .....                           | 20 |                                                |    |
| <i>Will The Circle Be Unbroken</i> .....     | 21 |                                                |    |
| The Key of C .....                           | 22 |                                                |    |
| <i>New River Train</i> .....                 | 23 |                                                |    |
| Chapter 6 — New Chords                       |    |                                                |    |
| and Right Hand Techniques .....              | 24 |                                                |    |
| Transposing .....                            | 24 |                                                |    |
| New Minor Chords .....                       | 24 |                                                |    |
| The Sixteenth Note Bass/Strum Pattern .....  | 24 |                                                |    |
| <i>Wayfaring Stranger</i> .....              | 25 |                                                |    |
| Arpeggio Picking .....                       | 26 |                                                |    |
| <i>I Am A Pilgrim</i> .....                  | 27 |                                                |    |
| <i>Greensleeves</i> .....                    | 28 |                                                |    |
| <i>Paddy On The Railway</i> .....            | 29 |                                                |    |



A compact disc is available for this book. This disc can make learning the examples in this book easier and more enjoyable. The symbol above will appear at the beginning of every example or song.

Use the CD to make sure that you are capturing the feel of the examples, interpreting the rhythms correctly, and so on.

The track number below the symbol corresponds directly to the example or song you want to hear. Track 1 will help you tune to the CD.

Have fun!

# About the Author

Paul Howard has been a guitar instructor and performer for over twenty years. His experience includes rock, county, folk and jazz styles on both acoustic and electric guitar. He began private teaching in 1970 and graduated with honors from Central Connecticut State University in 1972. Paul has been a faculty member at the National Guitar Summer Workshop since its inception in 1984. He also operates his own music school in Avon, Connecticut. Paul released two albums with his band, Last Fair Deal, and can be seen playing around New England with the Paul Howard Group. He also tours nationally with the Stacy Phillips/Paul Howard Duo.



# Introduction

Congratulations. You are about to join a large and distinguished group of people, from all walks of life and all cultures, who enjoy playing folk music on the guitar. They accompany themselves singing and in many cases take their performing to a high art.

The general definition of "folk music" is music that it is handed down from generation to generation, or person to person, by ear, by rote and imitation. There is no substitute for listening to performers, both on recordings and in person, to learn the subtleties of any style. This book is an attempt to pass along essential information that will help you in your listening and learning. Hopefully, it will clear up some of the mysteries you may encounter.

This book deals with North American folk guitar styles. There are many other beautiful folk styles from South America, the British Isles and many other ethnic traditions and nationalities. Although they are beyond the scope of this book, they should definitely be on your list of music to hear.

Learning to use the chords and techniques in this book creatively and imaginatively will bring you hours of joy. It will also point you in the right direction as you begin your journey of discovery into the world of folk music and guitar. This book is mostly concerned with using the guitar as an accompaniment instrument for singing. The melodies of all the songs are written out in standard notation (see appendix). The guitar parts are only written in tablature, so a knowledge of standard music notation is not necessary.

As you begin to learn the songs and techniques in the book, try to apply this information to the thousands of other songs you can learn from other song collections and friends. Check around your town or city for other people interested in folk music, and you may find a thriving "scene" you hadn't noticed before. Community bulletin boards, local newspapers, folk radio and the internet are all sources to network with other like-minded folks.

Many great singers and players have traveled this road before you. Here are some players you may want to get acquainted with:

Big Bill Broonzy

Joan Baez

Greg Brown

The Carter Family

Elizabeth Cotton

Rev. Gary Davis

Ani DiFranco

Bob Dylan

Woody Guthrie

Mississippi John Hurt

Lonnie Johnson

Robert Johnson

Patty Larkin

Leadbelly

Brownie McGhee

Joni Mitchell

Odetta

John Prine

Jimmie Rogers

Bill Staines

James Taylor

Merle Travis

Josh White

Muddy Waters

and many more.

Have a great journey!

# Chapter 1

## Getting Started

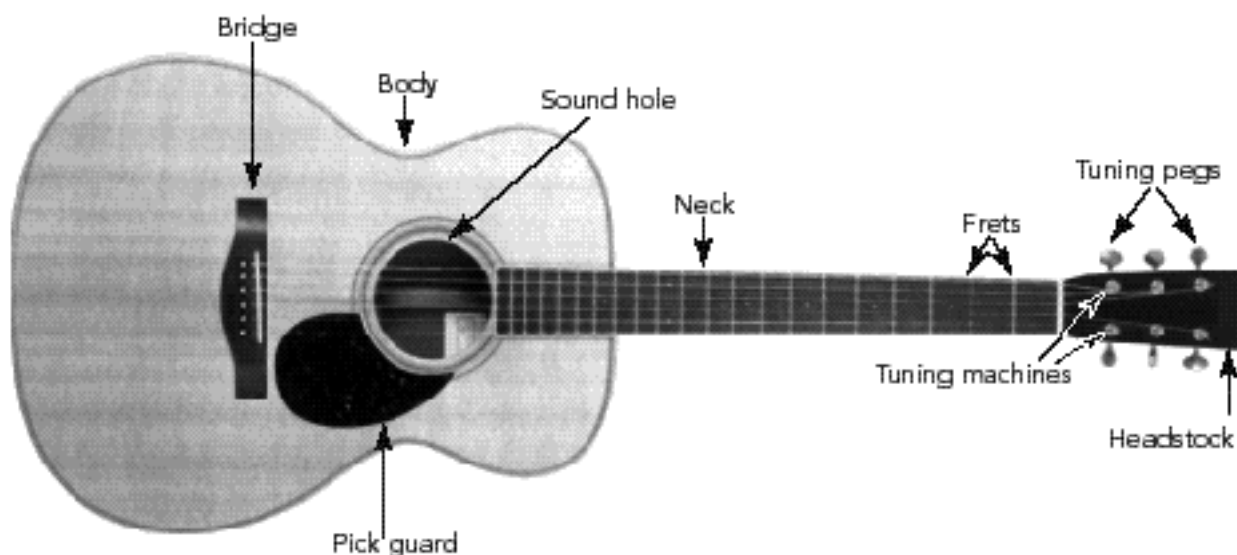
### Parts of the Guitar

The biggest part of the guitar is the body or sound box. The neck extends out to the headstock. The front of the neck is the fingerboard which contains the frets. The strings are suspended between the bridge and the nut. When you strike a string without pressing down on a fret it is called an open string.

The pitch (highness or lowness) of the string is changed by pressing down immediately behind one of the frets with a left-hand fingertip so that the string comes in contact with the fret. This creates a new vibrating string length, and thus a different pitch. The further towards the body you go, the shorter the vibrating string length and the higher the pitch.

The strings are connected to the tuning machines on the headstock and secured at the bridge by the bridge pins, tail piece or tie-ons depending on the type of guitar. Most folk guitarists use a steel-string acoustic guitar (flat-top) or in some cases a nylon-string (classical) guitar. The steel-string will be a bit more versatile for playing the music in this book. It is also louder and better for flat-pick style playing.

The sound hole allows the sound box to project tones that have been produced by the vibrating strings and the resulting movement of the wood of the guitar. It is a good idea not to let your arm come across and press on the face of the guitar and deaden the vibrations of the top. Let it ring, baby!



# Chapter 2

## Let's Make Some Music

### Warm-Up

We will begin with a simple exercise. It will get both hands working. Practice slowly and work for a good, clear tone on each note. Be conscious of keeping the beat steady as you play. Rhythm is the basis of all music, so start now to keep good time.

If you are using a pick, hold it as described on page 5 and pick downward, towards the floor. Remember to stay relaxed. If you are plucking (fingerstyle) with your right hand fingers, alternate your index (*i*) and middle (*m*) fingers. Strike the string with an upward motion toward the palm of your hand, keeping your hand still. Use the corner of your finger and combine a little flesh and a little nail. See page 16 for more about fingerstyle technique. Keep your left hand in good position as described on page 5. Press with your fingertips, directly behind the frets. Arch your fingers!

Here's the exercise:

- Play the open first string.
- Play the 1st-fret note with the 1st finger.
- Play the 2nd-fret note with the 2nd finger.
- Play the 3rd-fret note with the 3rd finger.
- Repeat this process.
- Now do the same exercise twice on the 2nd string.
- Continue in this manner on the remaining four strings.

#### Important Tips

Keep each finger depressing its note as you add the other fingers. This will help you develop finger independence and a smoother sound. Keep your left hand wrist and thumb positioned correctly so you can reach all the frets, especially as you get to the lower strings. Keep your hand still—let your fingers do the work.

1  
Track 2

Count: 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 etc.

### Four-String Chords

It's time to try your first *chords*. A chord is any group of three or more notes played together, so they are produced by striking three or more strings at a time. We will start off with the simple four-string chords shown on the right. These will get your fingers used to arching and staying out of the way of adjacent strings as you fret the necessary notes. Notice that in each chord, some

of the notes are open strings. While holding down the proper frets, try striking the top four strings one at a time. Make sure all the notes are ringing out. Now, try to strum downward over the four strings together using a pick, the back of your nails, or even your thumb. Make it a light, quick motion so that all four strings sound almost simultaneously.

