

Bertino Rodmann

Gypsy Jazz Guitar

Volume 1

– A Tribute to Gypsy Jazz –



*Introduction
into the style of
Jazz-Manouche*



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Preface

My passion and love for the music of *Gypsy Jazz* (or *Jazz-Manouche* as it is known in France), has been growing for many years.

I shall tell you how I first became interested in this type of music and why I am so fascinated with it, so that you as a learning guitarist can begin to understand the depth of feeling and respect that I have for *Gypsy Jazz*.

Where did it all start?

My career as a musician started with a dream in the early 1970s when I bought my first guitar. The first music that I began to play was the music that I listened to, the music that was 'in' at the time. It was a mixture of blues music, people such as the great **B.B.King**, **Muddy Waters** and **Rory Gallagher**, and early rock music, such as **Led Zeppelin**, **Deep Purple**, **The Animals**, **Eric Clapton**, **Santana** and many more.

After just a few months of playing guitar, I started playing in bands and my repertoire constantly changed and developed over the years. *Pop*, *Funk*, *R&B*, *Reggae* and *dance music* were just some of the styles that were added over time.

By 1982 I had collected some 10 years worth of knowledge about music and playing the guitar itself. I'd tried out many different styles, had played in a lot of bands, supported live projects and worked in recording studios. However, I began to feel bored by what I was playing – always playing the same three chords (as in blues or some rock songs) wasn't my cup of tea. I began to feel that many of the songs I played were too easy and didn't present a real challenge for me anymore.

So it was around this time that one day I was at a friend's house. He was a collector of records and owned more than 3000 LPs. We would often sit together and play our new favorites to each other. All of a sudden he asked me "Hey **Bertino**, do you know this one?", whilst showing me a five record set which was a 'Best Of' album of **Django Reinhardt** and the **Quintette du Hotclub de France**.

I replied, "Well, no I don't. **Django Reinhardt**? Who is that? Is that a new band?" He was absolutely flabbergasted! "You don't know **Django Reinhardt**?" he said. "My God, what kind of a guitarist are you? You have to listen to it!" He put the record on, and yes, from that moment I was blown away!

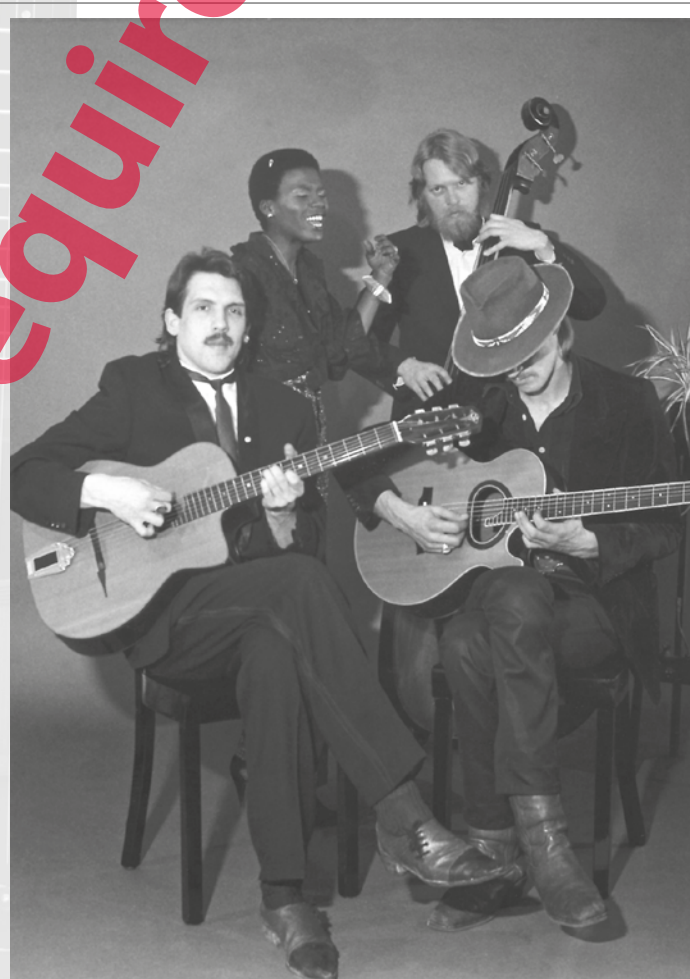
I had never heard anything like it before in my entire life. Melodies, like precious pearls, fell on my ears, melodies of such beauty and distinction.

I was listening to a musician who showed me all his fear and pain as well as his joy and luck – incredibly melodic and then completely detuned in the next second.

Rushing out or coming back into straight timing in one second, perfectly melodic again on the next chord. So shocked was I by the beauty of **Django's** playing, that I started to cry within the first minutes of listening.

The incredible virtuosity of this **man** ('**MANouche**' means '**human being**' in **Romanes**, the language of the **Sinti**) and his ability to tell fairy tales and stories in his playing totally surprised me. *This guy was talking with his guitar.*


Exactly on point every second, rhythmically perfect and, at many times, absolutely beautiful and elegant – his playing rendered me speechless. *From this moment on my fascination for this powerful music was born!*



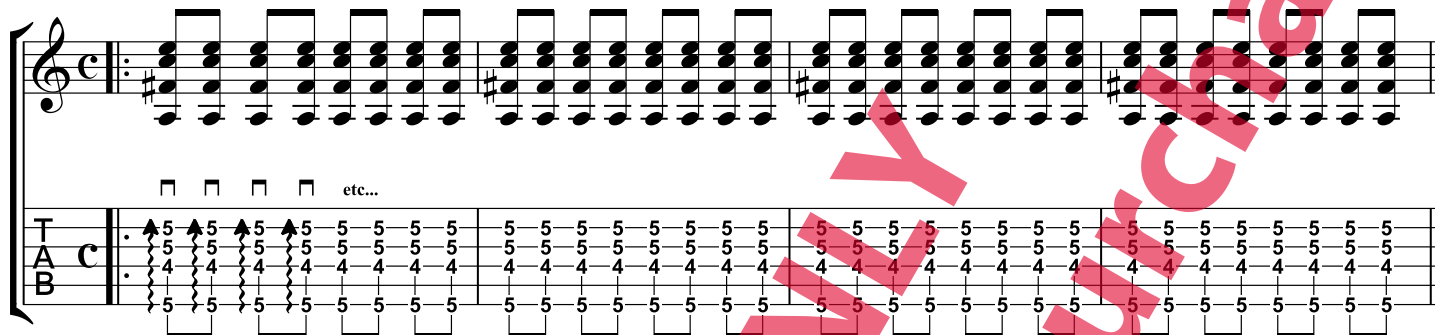
Alex Rodmann Group, 1983

Rhythm Exercise 2 – Comping Eighth-Notes

In the second exercise we will practice the straight playing of eighth-notes. This is vital to be able to learn to play a good swingin' *'La Pompe'* rhythm later on.

Am⁶
 ♪ = 100 
 2 134

CD 05



Rhythm Exercise 3 – Comping Eighths with Added Dead-Notes

This exercise is a variation of Rhythm Exercise 2 but with added muted notes ('dead-notes') (x).

Am⁶
 ♪ = 100 
 2 134


CD 06



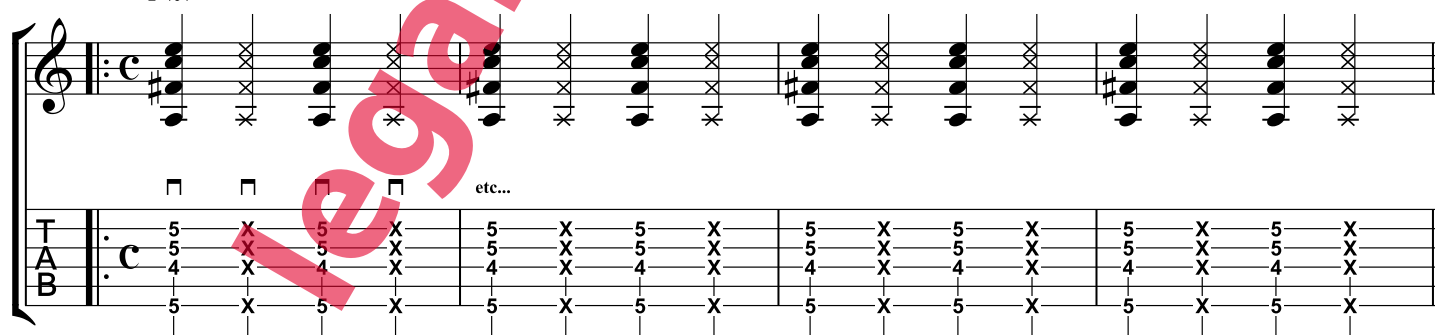
Remember, that up to this point, these are not real accompanying rhythms, just exercises!

Rhythm Exercise 1/1 – Comping 'La Pompe'

The following exercise is a preview to the real *'La Pompe'* rhythm that I will show you a little later on. The exercise is designed to show the *'Pompe'* rhythm in its basic form and varies regular quarter-notes with quarter-dead-notes (x).

Am⁶
 ♪ = 100 
 2 134

CD 07



Lesson 2/3

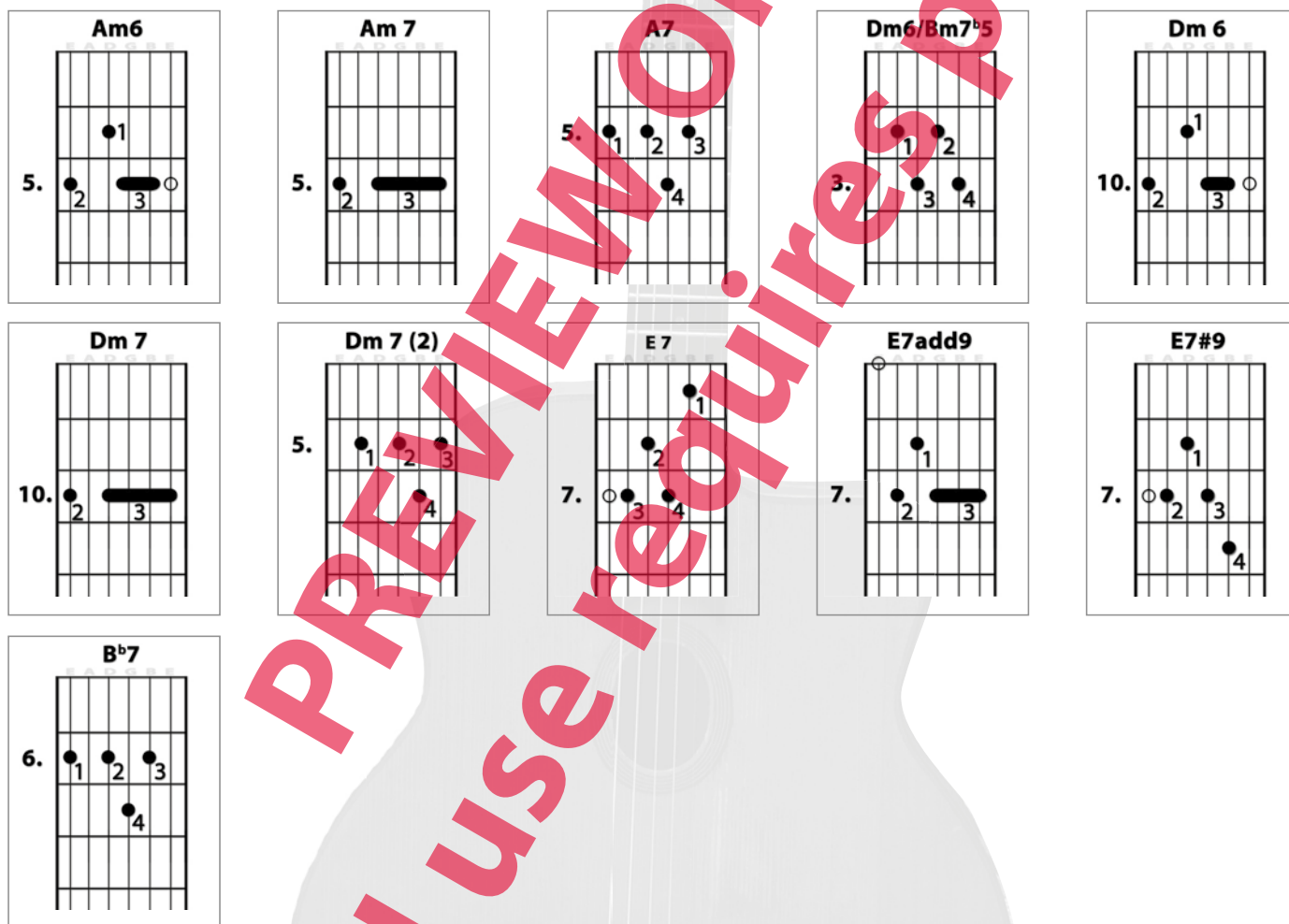
In the third exercise of 'Minor Swing' we will now use the already known Am6 chord instead of a common Am chord. We will then substitute a Bm7b5 chord instead of the regular D-minor chord and we will use a major-E7add9 chord instead of E-major (e.g major-E7 chord).

Furthermore, we will add more variations of the root-chords of this song with the same principle as explained in the chapter before:

Am6 | Am7 | A7 and Dm6 | Dm7 | Dm7/B (or Bm7b5) | E7 | E9/B | E7#9

So now, in the next example, you can see the chord voicings that could be played this way by any Gypsy guitarist today in 'Minor Swing'. The rhythm will be played as in the last exercise of Lesson 1/1 (extended Pompe, page 26).

The Chord Voicings



As the Manouches (Gypsies) are always on the move in real life, so it is the same with their chord playing in Gypsy Jazz: rarely will they rest on one chord for longer than two bars.

Example: even if in a song there is a major-E7th chord notated to last for four bars, a Gypsy would play another substituted chord voicing on each of these four bars!

that means instead of playing $E7 \mid E7 \mid E7 \mid E7$ on 4 complete bars they would instead play something like $E7 \mid E9 \mid E7\#9 \mid E7$ to give more color.

Introducing Solo Guitar – The Right Hand Placement



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

To really understand the playing techniques of *Django Reinhardt* and many of today's *Sinti* guitarists (such as *Stochelo Rosenberg*, *Bireli Lagrene* or *Tschawolo Schmitt*) and to play them authentically, there are some important basic points to consider.

Of course, as already discussed (see *Introduction*, page 12-15), choosing the right instrument (e.g. *Selmer* style guitar) and choosing the right pick and strings are all important factors when it comes to creating an authentic Gypsy Jazz sound.

Among other crucial elements in the style of Gypsy Jazz mentioned earlier, the most important things to be pointed out are the 'right hand placement' and the 'picking techniques'.

Here are the important facts on these two subjects:

1. The right hand should ideally be placed parallel to the strings, almost in a right angle to the guitar without touching the bridge or the top of the guitar (see Figure 1).
2. The wrist should be held lightly angled to produce the kind of 'pressure' for playing a strong rhythm as well as for solos. Important note: resting your hand on the bridge or the top of the guitar (as is common when playing electric guitar) must be strictly avoided at all times! (See Figure 2).
3. Whether you are playing rhythm or solo, the pick should rest on the next following string after playing any string whenever possible (see Figure 3, 4 and 5). This generates greater precision in playing and therefore results in a feeling of 'playing security' for the guitarist as you stay in contact with the strings through the pick at all times.
4. By using the 'reststroke'-technique, you can create a much stronger sound while the playing still remains easier and less exhausting.



Fig. 5

By 'letting fall' the pick onto the string you don't have to put any additional muscle power into your playing as you are using gravity instead (see the next chapter 'Picking Technique' on page 75).

Lick 4/5

In the next four bars this lick connects the Am6 chord (root note) leading to the subdominant chord Dm6.

Am6 Dm6

♩ = 200

Lick 4/6

Here are bars 11 to 14 of the solo, leading from the dominant E7 chord back to the root note (Tonic A) in Am6.

Dm6 E9 E7 Am6

♩ = 200

Lick 4/7

Lick 7 again leads from the subdominant Dm6 chord back to the root note (Tonic A) in Am6.

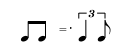
Am6 Dm6 Am6

♩ = 200

8/3 Valse à Bertino (Le grand escalier)



Music: Bertino Rodmann
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♩ = 208 **Gm⁶**
Intro
2 134

B^bm⁶
2 134

Am⁷
2 3333

D⁷b⁹
2 314

Musical notation for measures 1-4, Treble and Bass staves.

Musical notation for measures 5-8, Treble and Bass staves.

Part A
Musical notation for measures 9-12, Treble and Bass staves.

Musical notation for measures 13-16, Treble and Bass staves.






2314 1324 21333 3241

17 *tr* *tr* *tr* *tr* *tr*

TAB 15 *tr* 12 (13) 14 11 (13) 12 9 12 *tr* 9 (10) 11 *tr* 8 (10) 9 6






2 134 2 134 2 3333 3241

21 *tr* *tr* *tr* *tr*

TAB 14 *tr* 10 (11) 10 11 12 10 (12) 13 12 10 9 (10) 11 10

Part A





2 3333 2 134 2 3333 2 134

25 *tr* *tr* *tr* *tr*

TAB *tr* 10 (11) 13 12 12 11 10 15 10 (11) 11 *tr* 12 12 (13) 13



1 243

29 *tr* *tr* *tr* *tr*

TAB 12 11 14 14 14 12 17 *tr* 12 (13) 14 14 12 13 14