

# Table of Contents

About the Author .....	2
Introduction .....	3
What Is Swing? .....	4
Reading Examples in This Book .....	4
<b>CHAPTER 1—TECHNIQUE AND THEORY</b>	
<b>FOR SWING</b> .....	6
Basic Technique .....	6
Basic Swing Rhythm .....	7
Basic Theory for Swing .....	8
Voicings .....	10
Essential Swing Chord Voicings .....	11
<b>CHAPTER 2—SWING PROGRESSIONS</b>	
<b>AND FORMS</b> .....	12
The 12-Bar Blues .....	12
<i>12-Bar Blues in G</i> .....	12
<i>12-Bar Blues in B<sup>b</sup></i> .....	13
Other Progressions .....	13
Secondary Chords .....	14
Song Form .....	15
The ii-V7 Progression .....	16
<i>“Rhythm” Changes in G</i> .....	17
Another 32-Bar Form .....	18
<i>32-Bar Changes in F</i> (Version 1) .....	19
<b>CHAPTER 3—CONNECTIONS</b>	
<b>AND INVERSIONS</b> .....	20
Connections .....	20
Inversions (Part 1) .....	22

<b>CHAPTER 4—MORE SONG FORM</b>	
<b>ARRANGEMENTS</b> .....	24
<i>“Rhythm” Changes in B<sup>b</sup></i> .....	24
<i>32-Bar Changes in F</i> (Version 2) .....	26
<i>32-Bar Changes in C</i> .....	28
<i>32-Bar ABAC Form in G</i> .....	29
<i>Django-Style Blues Changes</i> .....	30
<i>16-Bar Gypsy Swing</i> .....	31
<b>CHAPTER 5—SWING-STYLE SOLOING</b> .....	32
Getting Started with Soloing .....	32
Inversions (Part 2) .....	34
Arpeggios .....	34
More Arpeggio Licks .....	35
The Blues Scale .....	39
Soloing with Composite Scales .....	39
Putting It All Together .....	41
<i>Blues Solo in G</i> .....	42
<i>Blues Solo in B<sup>b</sup></i> .....	43
<i>Entomology</i> .....	44
<i>Money for My Honey</i> .....	46

## About the Author

Paul Howard has been a guitar instructor, performer, singer and songwriter for over 25 years. His experience includes bluegrass, country, rock, folk and jazz on both acoustic and electric guitar. He began teaching privately in 1970 and graduated with honors from Central Connecticut State University in 1972. Paul has been a faculty member at the National Guitar Workshop since its inception in 1984 and has published three other instruction books and two videos for the National Guitar Workshop and Alfred. He also operates a private teaching studio in Avon, Connecticut. Paul played bluegrass and swing with the popular New England acoustic ensemble Last Fair Deal, with whom he recorded two albums. These days he performs, records and tours with Grammy Award-winning resophonic guitarist Stacy Phillips.

### DEDICATION

For my boys, Todd & Jesse Howard

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# What Is Swing?

Swing is not only a style and an era, but also a type of rhythm that has influenced many musical genres. *Swing rhythm* is characterized by a certain way of interpreting *eighth notes* (notes that receive half a beat). Instead of the expected division of the beat into two equal halves, the first note is longer than the second. One approach to playing swing eighths is to think of them as though they were eighth-note triplets, tying together the first two eighths as in the example below. This creates a loping rhythm with lots of forward momentum, a common element in many styles of popular music.

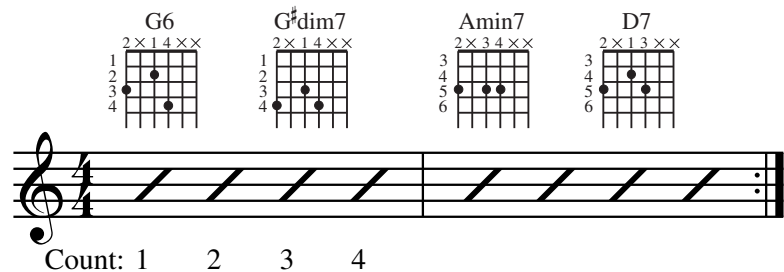
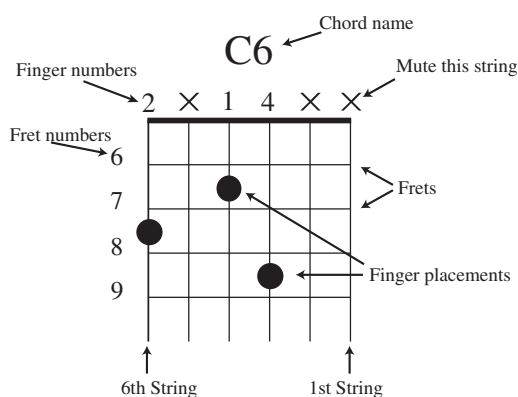
Here's an example of how swing eighths work:



All of the music in this book should be played with swing eighths unless otherwise indicated.

## Reading the Examples in This Book

As you study the music in this book, you'll come across fretboard/chord diagrams. In the diagrams, a grid represents the strings (vertical lines) and frets (horizontal lines) of the guitar. The chord name is shown above the diagram. Black dots show the position of the left-hand fingers, while numbers above the diagram indicate which fingers are used. An "x" indicates a muted string. Numbers to the left of the diagram shows which frets are used. Slash marks in the staff indicate rhythm; each mark usually represents a quarter-note (one-beat) strum of the indicated chord.



Eddie Lang's playing impressed some bandleaders enough to have their banjo players switch to guitar.

The great Gypsy jazz guitarist Django Reinhardt played a fusion of Gypsy/European styles and American jazz.

## THE LEFT HAND

Your left hand must finger the notes you need and, at the same time, mute the strings that you *don't* want to sound. Keep your thumb behind the neck unless you are using it to fret a note on the 6th string (a technique used only sparingly in this style). Most often, you'll use chords of three or four notes in which one or two strings need to be muted. Strings are usually muted by lightly touching the string in question with a finger that is already fretting a note on an adjacent string. Lean the finger slightly into the string that needs to be muted.

The left hand also determines how long a chord rings once it is struck. You'll want to develop good left-hand control so that you can let chords ring or cut them short with great precision. To cut the chord short, release pressure in your left hand just enough to stop the sound. Be sure not to let the fingers lose contact with the strings.



*Left-Hand Position*

## Basic Swing Rhythm

The basic articulation of swing rhythm in  $\frac{4}{4}$  time works like this:

- Beat 1: Full duration
- Beat 2: Short and slightly accented
- Beat 3: Full duration
- Beat 4: Short and slightly accented

Try this exercise using a basic G6 chord. Remember to use your left hand to both fret the notes and mute unwanted strings. Use all *downstrokes* (strokes toward the floor) with the pick.

1

Track 2

■ = Downstroke

◌> = Short and accented

— = Hold for full duration

Sometimes, the articulation is played as shown in example 2. Notice that every strum—as opposed to those on beats two and four only, as in example 1—is short and accented. Release left-hand pressure after every strum.

2

Track 3

• = Short

The rhythm in example 3 is occasionally used for ballads. Be sure to cut the chords so that they don't carry over into the rests. Notice that the rests in this example are *quarter rests*, which receive one beat each.

3

Track 4

> = Accented