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# Introduction

Classical guitarists have had a few hundred years in which to evolve an organized, disciplined approach to playing: a “proper” method. The plectrum guitar, like jazz, is a product of this century, and the electric guitar is so recent an innovation that we’re only beginning to recognize its possibilities as a legitimate instrument.

The early guitar players combined elements of the classic style with banjo or mandolin picking techniques to form a sort of guitar method. When I started learning to play, the instrument books available were very limiting.

Some thirty years later, when I began to have the time and inclination to teach a few students, I was shocked to discover that the situation had improved only slightly. With a couple of worthy exceptions, there was virtually nothing in existing guitar literature designed for the working musician, teacher, or even for the “middling” guitarist.

Experience is unquestionably the best teacher, but it should not be the serious student’s only access to new knowledge. This slim volume is the first in a series of attempts to bridge the current gap between what is known and what is in print about playing guitar.

Music is an enormous subject, and no one can claim to know everything about it. Bill and I have spent, between us, about seventy years as working guitar players, and we’re still learning. Our goal in this book, and in those to follow, is simply to share with you what we’ve managed to learn thus far.

The emphasis here is on improvisation, which seems the most neglected and widely misunderstood area of modern music, and on the ear training essential to mastery of that gentle art.

The chapters on chords, theory and harmony have been condensed from an original manuscript which was several hundred pages in length. These subjects will be treated in greater detail in subsequent volumes, as will the elements of technique, style, solo development, chord-melody solos, and much more about improvising.

No book can substitute for your own experience...there are too many things you can learn on a stand that cannot be translated into printed words. If this book provides a few new ideas, a different approach or a fresh viewpoint towards your playing, then it is a beginning...a good first step in what is hopefully the right direction.

May it please you.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joe Pass". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large, prominent 'J' and 'P'.



## PART ONE: HARMONY

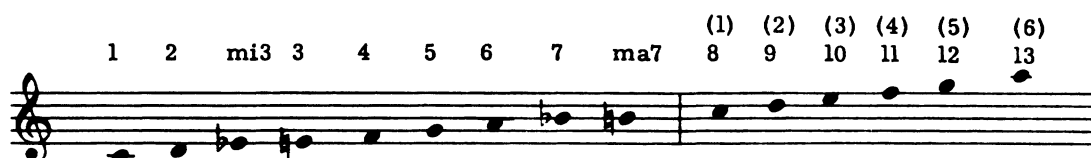
Intelligent improvising depends on a working understanding of the relationship between chords and melodic lines. The purpose of this section is to provide the necessary harmonic foundation for the solos in Part Two.

The chordal theory is presented in its briefest form, as it directly relates to the guitar. If some of the explanations differ from those in "formal" theory books, you're free to change the words to suit your own way of thinking. It is the idea that's important, not its explanation.

This material is designed more as a reference than a method. If these ideas are **TOTALLY** new to you, there may be other books you might investigate before finishing this one.

### CHORD CONSTRUCTION

The C Major/Minor Scale



**MAJOR CHORDS:** add chord NAME to basic triad

major	1 3 5 (basic triad)	C	C E G
major 6th	1 3 5 and 6	C6	C E G A
major 7th	1 3 5 and ma7	Cma7	C E G B
added 9th	1 3 5 and 9	Cadd9	C E G D
major 9th	1 3 5 and ma7 and 9	Cma9	C E G B D
6th/9th	1 3 5 and 6 and 9	C6/9	C E G A D

**SEVENTH CHORDS:** add chord name to a 7th (or 9th) chord

7th	1 3 5 7	C7	C E G B <sub>b</sub>
9th	1 3 5 7 and 9	C9	C E G B <sub>b</sub> D
11th *	1 3 5 7 (9) and 11	C11	C E G B <sub>b</sub> (D) F
13th **	1 3 5 7 (9) and 13	C13	C E G B <sub>b</sub> (D) A

\* in most guitar inversions, the 3rd is omitted from 11th chords. The 9th is often omitted from both 11th and 13th chords.

\*\* in theory, a 13th chord also contains the 11th, but that tone is normally omitted in guitar fingerings.

**MINOR CHORDS:** add chord name to basic triad

minor	1 mi3 5 (basic triad)	Cm	C E <sub>b</sub> G
minor 6th	1 mi3 5 and 6	Cm6	C E <sub>b</sub> G A
minor (ma7th)	1 mi3 5 and ma7	Cm+7	C E <sub>b</sub> G B

**MINOR SEVENTH CHORDS:** add chord name to a m7th chord

minor 7th	1 mi3 5 7	Cm7	C E <sub>b</sub> G B <sub>b</sub>
minor 9th	1 mi3 5 7 and 9	Cm9	C E <sub>b</sub> G B <sub>b</sub> D
minor 11th	1 mi3 5 7 and 11	Cm11	C E <sub>b</sub> G B <sub>b</sub> F