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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this book is to give the serious student of the guitar sets of exercises specifically designed to benefit the form and function of the left hand. It is meant to be a companion to my first book, *The Serious Guitarist: Right-Hand Picking* (Alfred #40913). Here, we will focus primarily on left-hand dexterity and technique, with exercises culled directly from my three decades plus of guitar experience—both as a student and as a professional guitarist. Included are the exercises that I've found to be most effective, the ones I've gotten the most out of through the years.

As with *Right-Hand Picking,* our focus will be on *how* to play, not *what* to play. If your technique is sound, and the hands are prepared to execute whatever combination of notes the music requires, then all you have to do is play them. There is no need to change your technique to play certain things. You can, but it's better to do something with intent, as a conscious choice, than attempt to accidentally stumble upon a way to play a certain piece of music. We will be focusing on getting the left hand prepared for any musical challenge. Then, whatever music is in your head can be brought out through your hands and into the world.

Many of the major concepts introduced here were adopted from the Guitar Craft courses I attended over a period of years. These courses had a profound influence on my playing, as well as continuously informing my life. Robert Fripp, Curt Golden, Tony Geballe, and many others who were present at the various courses I attended are owed a debt of gratitude that can never be fully repaid.

Thank you to Donny Trieu, Burgess Speed, Jared Meeker, Daniel Cohan, Link Harnsberger, Ron Manus, and everyone at Alfred Music for making this book possible. And, as always, my gratitude and admiration to Robert Fripp for his inspiration and guidance.

–Mark Burgess

About the CD

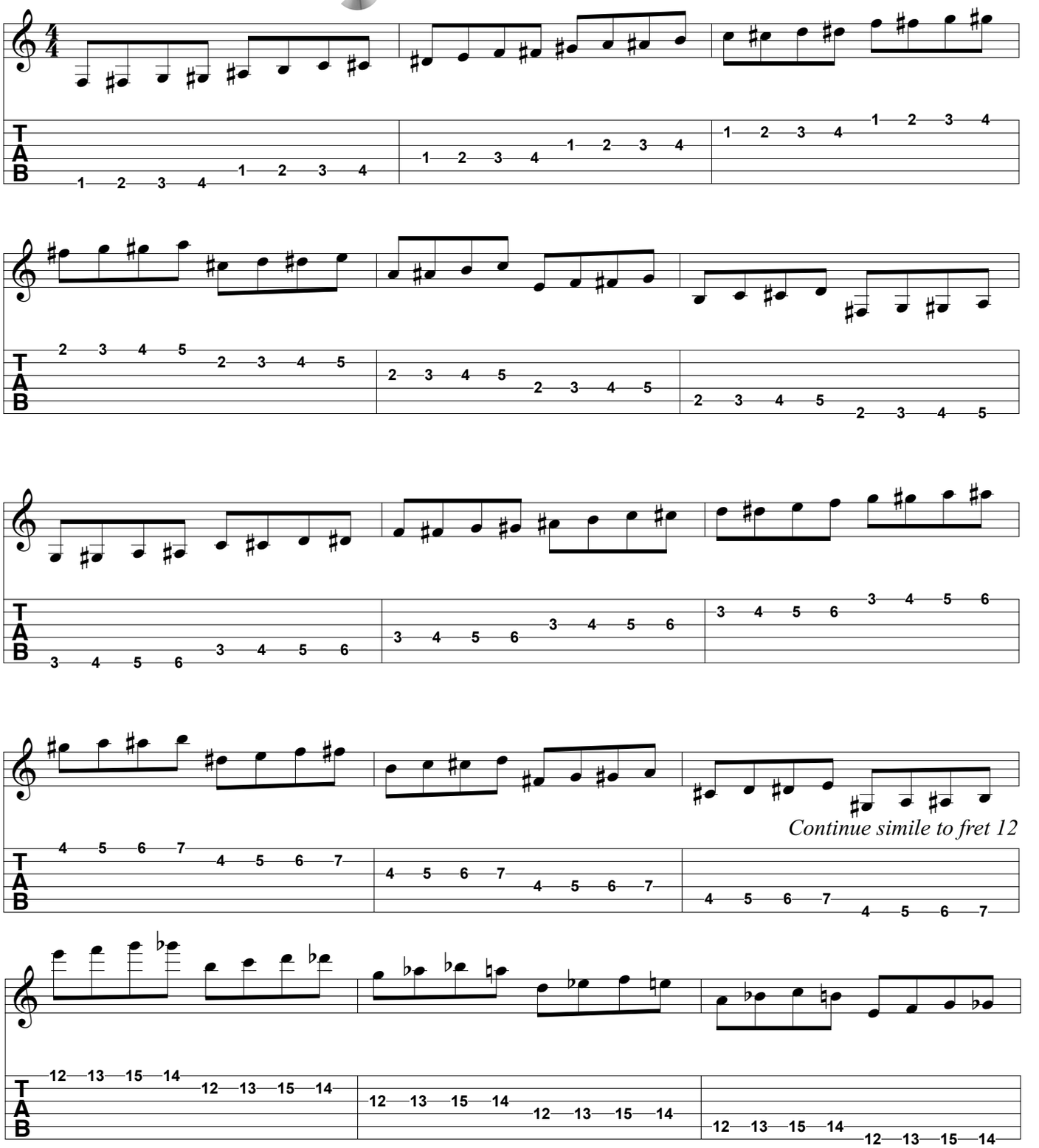
The included CD features audio recordings of the exercises in this book. Listening to the recordings will help you accurately interpret the feel and rhythm of each exercise. Look for the icon to the left, along with its corresponding track number, as you progress through the book.

CHROMATIC EXERCISES

The first exercise presented is a basic "chromatic" four-finger exercise. It moves from the 6th string to the 1st string in 1st position, then shifts up one fret, and uses the same pattern to come back from the 1st to the 6th string. Shift up one fret, and start again.

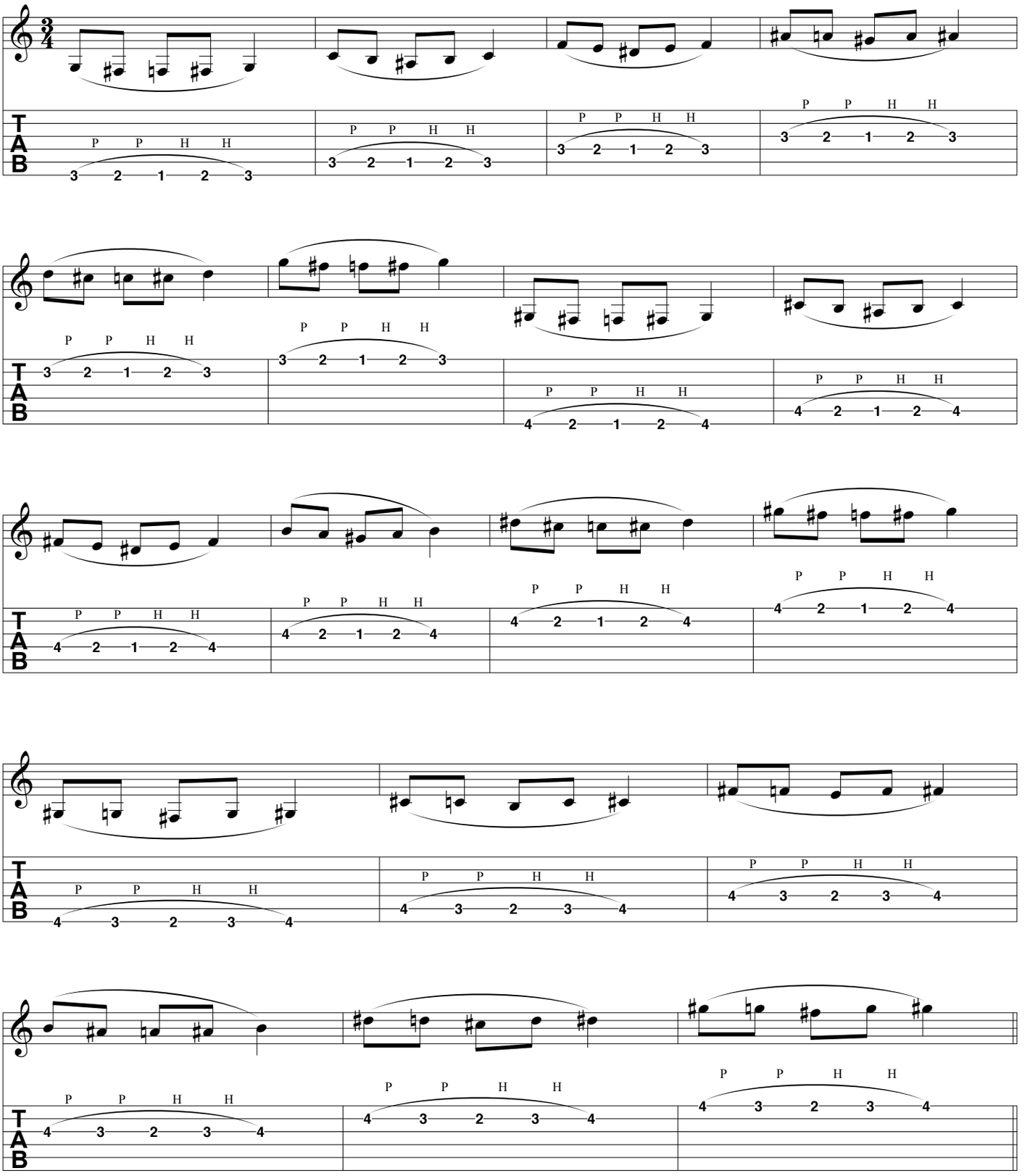
Often, there are certain variations that will prove to be more difficult than others–these are the ones to work on. A metronome will always be an invaluable tool for keeping the time steady, as well as allow you to measure your progress. Play Exercise 1 using alternate picking.

Exercise 1–Chromatic Four-Finger Exercise 2



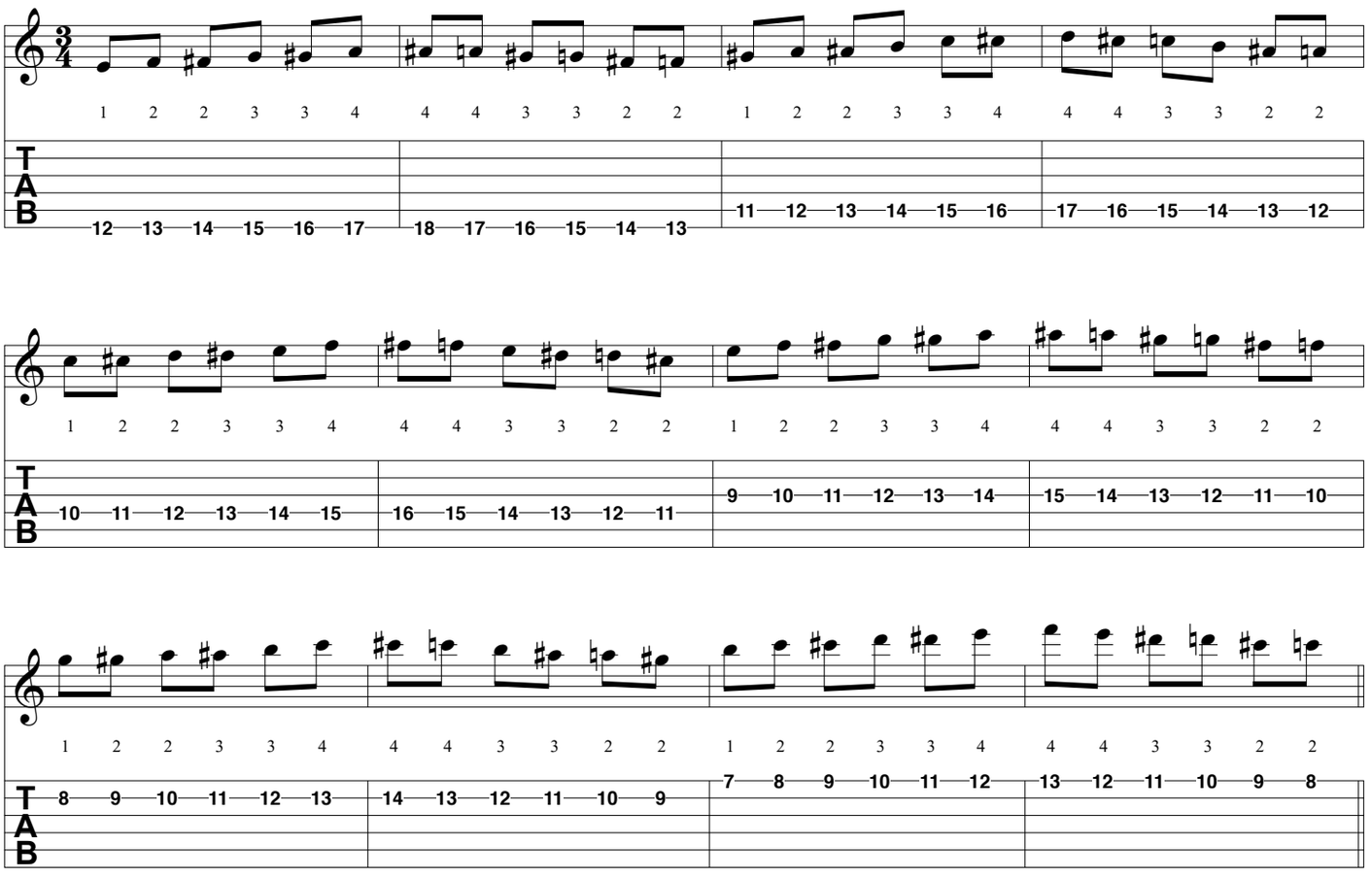
The hammer-on/pull-off combination in Exercise 52 efficiently gets us five notes with only one stroke of the pick.

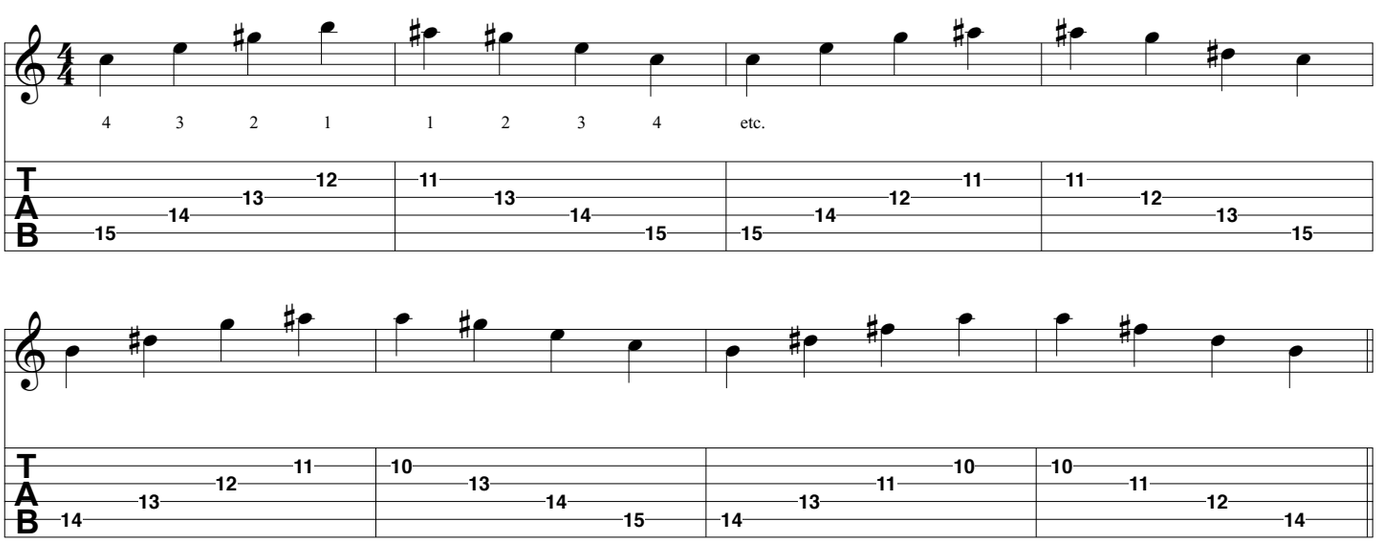
Exercise 52–Three-Note Pull-Off/Hammer-On Exercise 60



Exercise 62 involve shifting the fingers up and down by one fret. Remember to keep your fingers planted once they are placed.

Exercise 62–Chromatic Stretch 71



Play Exercise 63 as if you are playing a chord, meaning all four notes should sound at once. It focuses on the inside four strings but can be played on any of the four string groups. Play it down the neck as far as you can.

Exercise 63–Single-Fret Chord Crawl 72