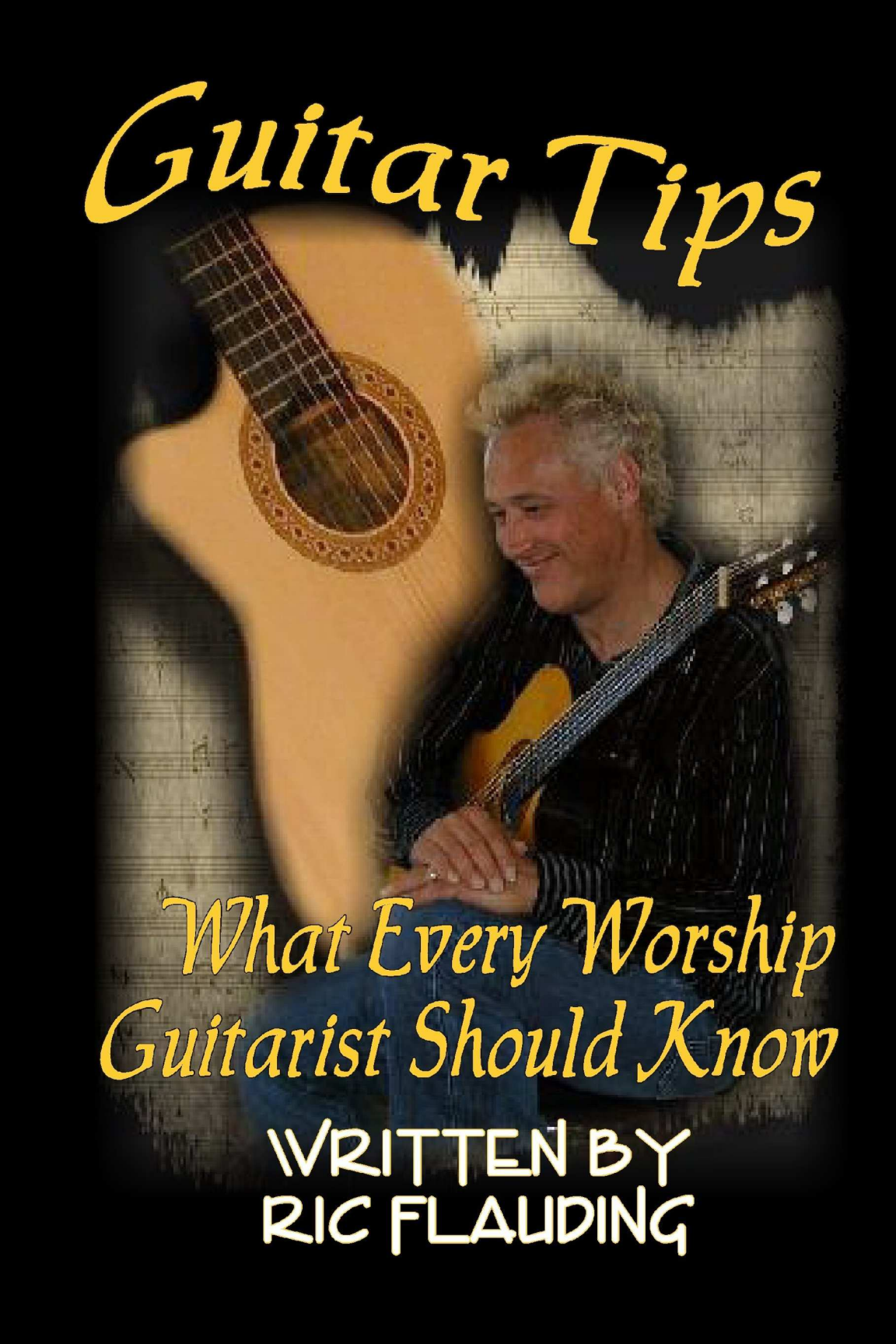
Guitar Tips



What Every Worship Guitarist Should Know

WRITTEN BY
RIC FLAUDING

Guitar Tips

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by
Ric Flauding



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This manual is dedicated to Arranger-Music Director Joe Bubar. Joe's response to my initial draft was very encouraging. I thank you Joe.



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Introduction

This manual is not meant as an exhaustive study on the subjects presented, but rather *tips* that have worked for me over years of performing on guitar as a sideman, recording session guitarist, and as a performing artist in and out of churches.

Having also spent many years as a composer-arranger-orchestrator and producer has served me well as a guitarist. Because I see myself as a "writer" first, I have used many techniques learned from writing and producing in my guitar performing work.

Know this: Playing an instrument is as much *mental* as it is *physical*.

We performers (especially us guitarists) tend to forget this. We usually are impressed by the physical aspects of playing guitar.

I have taught guitar for many years and have frequently seen what I call a *theory phobia*.

It is vital to know that your hands work about as good as what your head knows. What I mean is *how music works*, which is basically what Theory is.

How much you need to know will depend on your goals and is in relation to the styles you want to master. Mastering harmonic techniques for Folk or Popular music (i.e. most contemporary worship styles) will not, in most cases be as complicated as if you wanted to master Jazz, or 20th Century Classical harmonic techniques.

I have broken down the subjects according to the basic *elements* of music.

Music basically comes down to these three primary elements: *Rhythm - Melody - Harmony*. You might also add: *Texture* (homophonic, polyphonic, etc.), *Orchestration* and *Form*.

One of the first things I learned from studying composition was the importance of analysis.

If you can learn to analyze music, or make simple observations based on these three primary elements you will be doing yourself, your fellow performers and listeners a favor.

My objective in this manual is to help you want to be a ***better overall musician***.

Rhythm
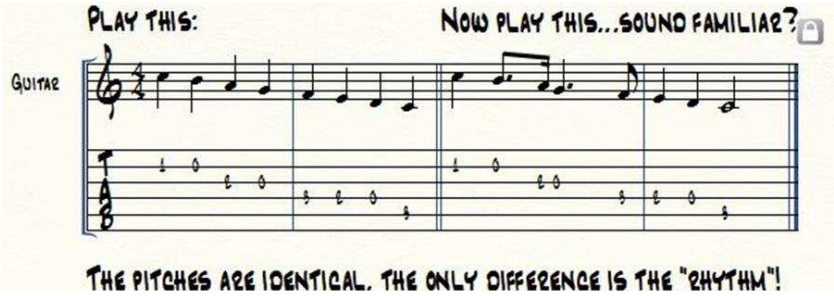
My opinion, as many others, is that rhythm is the most important element in music. Music cannot really exist without it. Historically, rhythm was the first to appear on the scene. Even the most primitive civilizations have had rhythm in their music, some only rhythm.

Do not overlook the importance of rhythm.

I remember when I was a young Father and I would play music for my children and it amazed me how they could bop to the beat! They seemed to instinctively know where beat *one* was!

I'm sure some of you have experienced this as well. See if your kids can respond the same way to a single harmony (chord)!

Here is a simple example of how important the application of rhythm is.



So, do not overlook the importance of rhythm in your playing!

As a guitarist, a big part of your job may be as the primary rhythmic *driver* - strummer! Second to the drummer and percussionist (if there is one), you may be the primary rhythmic force. So, here are a few things I apply in my own work that may help you.

Tempo

Always note the tempo of a song first! The tempo is the speed of the basic pulse or beat. Not only note it, but *get it in your head and ears before the downbeat!*

This may seem simplistic, but whenever I play, I always do this:

When someone counts off the song (be it a person or a click track) I always subdivide the count-off in my head, especially in slower tempos.

You may be amazed at how this simple habit helps to get the tempo in your head and ears and helps you to not *jump the beat* (come in too soon).

So, if the drummer counts 1-2-3-4, I count (in my head) 1&-2&-3&-4&. Or if it's a really slow tempo, I count in sixteenth notes: 1e&a, 2e&a, etc. This is a simple technique but it works.

Know the tempo before you play!

An interesting little bit of info about tempo is: The human heart beats about 80 BPM (beats per minute). Music at about that tempo tends to create a more serene/peaceful feel. Music faster than 80 tends to excite. Music under 80 tends to depress (but not to be interpreted as a negative).

The noted *style* of a song is also important. My opinion is this: *If you are not an expert on a particular style, think simple!* In fact, whenever you are confronted with something you are not exactly an expert on - apply the KISS rule (keep it simple stupid!).

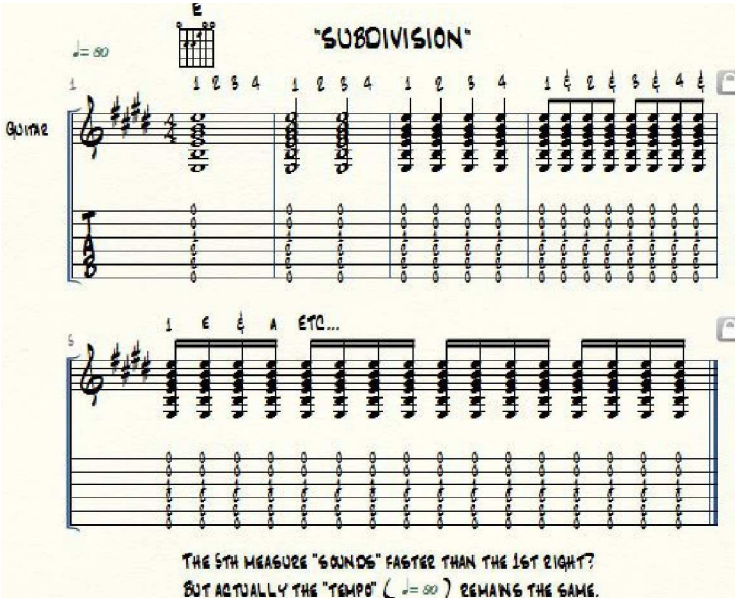
As a session player, I am sometimes brought into situations that are perhaps not my area of expertise, but I can almost always come up with something that works by usually thinking simpler than what's seemingly requested. I do not try and pretend to do something I am not expert in stylistically.

There are certain (let’s say), ethnic rhythms that I may let the drummer/percussionist drive the primary rhythm and I opt for simpler un-syncopated strums and collectively accomplish the same effect.

Everyone in the band playing the same rhythms (especially syncopated) over periods of time can be a real groove killer!

An occasional tutti (all playing the same rhythm) may be fine, but unless everyone in the band has impeccable time and rhythm ability, it is best to think simple.

This leads us to…



Subdivision

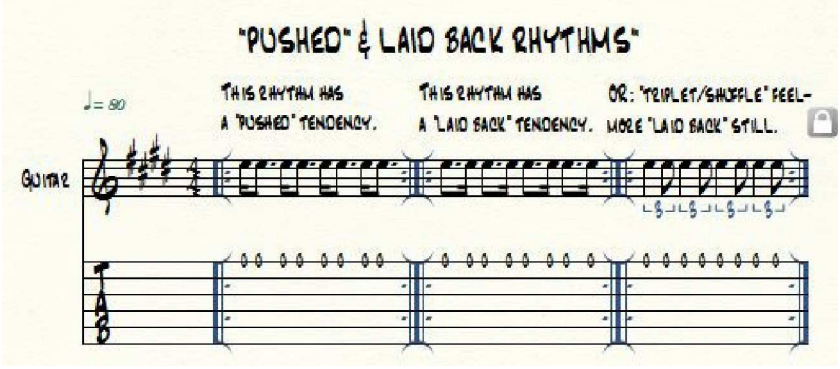
Subdivision is how the beat (the main pulse) is split. Or, how often you *split the beat in what you play***.**

For example, a whole note may be split into two half notes, which may be further split into four quarters, etc. The thing to know about subdividing is that the effect will *sound faster* even though the actual tempo (pulse) is not any faster!

I know this may seem simplistic, but do not underestimate this. I determine ahead of time, based on the tempo, how much I can realistically (and physically) subdivide the beat, and what sonic effect will result from that. This helps you to know how much subdivision is practical.

One can hear the basic beat (let's say a quarter note) and think "no problem", then go to play a sixteenth note fill, solo or strum and.....uh oh – too fast!

Also, certain subdivided rhythms will *sound faster* (let's call it *pushed*) and others slower (*laid back*)**.**



Composer-Educator Joseph Schillinger called certain rhythms *positive* and others *negative.* This does not mean that one is <u>better</u> than the other, just that they have distinct effects. Some rhythms tend to push the music, others pull it back.

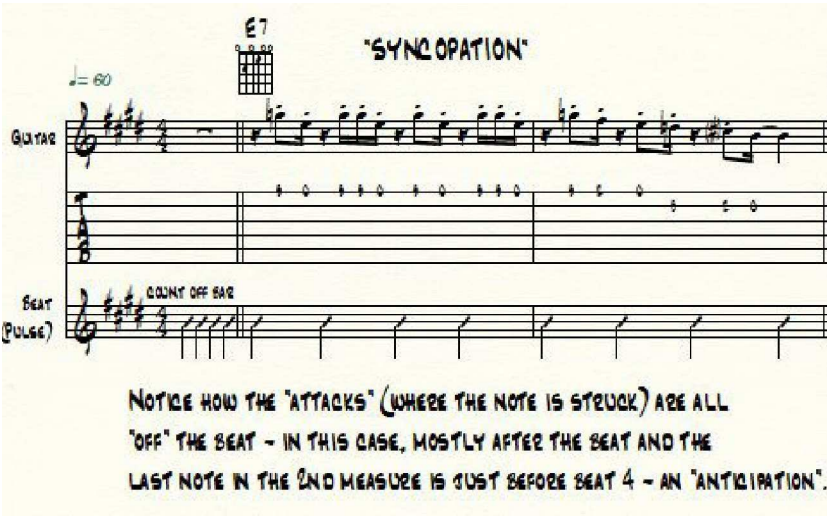
A simple example is this: A dotted eighth note, followed by a sixteenth is a more laid back rhythm than the opposite (sixteenth followed by a dotted eighth). In general, it is easier, natural to push the second one.

You may have noticed how shuffle rhythms (dotted eighth followed by sixteenth, or in *triplets* - quarter followed by eighth) tend to have a more laid back feel associated with styles such as Blues, Jazz, Gospel.

Another tip about rhythm and time is: *Generally, the busier the music (or parts within it), the longer the music tends to sound, or be perceived.* Much of Bach's music like the Inventions, Fugues tend to sound longer than they actually are!

Syncopation

Syncopated rhythms are ones that are *off the beat*, and often have a wide variety of rhythmic values, dotted notes, etc.



First, look at the music you are going to play (if there is printed music- if not, listen).

Note the amount of syncopations, especially in relation to the tempo of the song. Generally, the more syncopation there is in the melody, the accompaniment, bass line, etc., AND, the *harmonic rhythm* (where the chords change), the more the potential for rhythmic trouble!

A general rule of thumb for a rhythm player (often the acoustic player) is the more syncopation there is, the more you need to *hold the fort down! – simplify!*

Of course, this is not always the case, but often. I have many times heard, and have seen an ensemble fall apart because no one was holding the fort down! Examples abound such as everyone jumping on (pushing) the syncopated rhythms, too many fills over them. I have performed with drummers, and others who had to fill over syncopated sections that were not needed – especially "turnarounds" – the end of one section going into another – this is not a good place to over-fill and slow down or speed up.

I am a big believer in laying down a nice *pad* (if you will) in the rhythm, a *groove* as some say, a part that offers rest to the weary listener! I cannot stress this enough. Why? As I have said before rhythm is the most primary element. It is the element that the general listener can most hear and relate to.

There are many great examples of ensembles and bands laying down a nice "groove". One of my favorites is the Pat Matheny Band – driving, yet subtle. They know how to (as I like to say) "keep it in their back pocket"! So, when the rhythmic parts of an ensemble aren't jivin, nothing else matters - period.

In a worship situation this is vital! Believe me you can play a wrong note (pitch) or a dissonant chord and perhaps get away with it, but rhythmic problems are, as we say...a train wreck!

Let me add: Even though we are talking about rhythm here, other elements such as harmony factor in as well. For example, if there is an abundance of harmony, this too can clutter the rhythm. A simple example is: play a melody, now play it harmonized (add chords). Which version moves more fluently, with rhythmic clarity?

One thing I always do is note the amount of harmony, <u>especially coming from the singers.</u> If I see on the chart and/or hear an abundance of harmony parts with syncopated rhythms, I adjust my playing – again, mostly - simpler. I will generally simplify rhythm, use smaller chords, less thirds in the chords, maybe play a melodic line through the chord progression, let "passing chords" go by, or instead of "playing the whole chord", I will double the bass note in a passing chord(s) passage.

Single notes are never to be underestimated in overly harmonic passages. They can be especially effective on the guitar as they can define pitch, imply harmony yet simply support the rhythm without getting in the way.

We will get to some of this more in the harmony section, but keeping the ensemble rhythm sounding clean is, in most cases critical. Certain intervals (distance from one note to the next) in the harmonies will also determine what I play.

For example: If I hear an abundance of *thirds* in the vocal harmonies I will opt for my chords emphasizing 5ths, and 2nds - *less thirds*, especially if I am doing a more driving rhythm. This technique has been employed often in much of the acoustic alternative styles used in contemporary worship music – "*2" chords*, and, in general, *chords in quartal and secondal harmony*.

I have been in many church ensembles where a particular song had a lot of chords / many inversions / a fast tempo / lots of syncopation in the melody and harmonic rhythm where everyone in the instrumental ensemble was playing big chords and everyone playing everything! This too is a recipe for rhythmic disaster.



Ensemble

Be aware of your ensemble (size, etc.). What do I mean?

Well, if you are driving the rhythm you might want to see yourself as kind of like the engine of a train. For example, if you are playing with an orchestra, that's a big train! Basically, the larger the ensemble, the more potential for rhythmic disaster!

Someone is always the primary rhythmic driver. Sometimes it's a whole section (*the rhythm section*). Sometimes it is the guitarist - you! Sometimes it is a conductor, or worship leader, etc. So, not only does your timing need to be good, but here are some other things to consider.

I rarely play the same way in an orchestra as I would in a contemporary worship band. Of course many things would factor into how I play in any ensemble, but generally, *the larger the ensemble, the less I play*. This may seem like a "duh" statement, but I have heard guitarist approach an orchestral situation like they were in a metal band and it was tragic!

Orchestras can be very hard to pull together rhythmically (many cars on the train).

You will do well in that situation to look for those *sweet moments*, where the guitar can *speak*. Harmonic choices (chords, voicing, etc.) are very critical in an orchestral situation. Think of yourself as "orchestrated" into the ensemble. By the way, that is how I approach most recording sessions. Of course if the music is note-specific that is determined for you by the writer.

Rhythmically, I look for where I can help move the rhythm along (if desired by the director). Often in an orchestral situation I will opt for doubling melody lines, or counter lines, bass notes, etc. I try to be another instrument *in* the orchestral color.

Not wanting to get too away from the subject of rhythm, I will say that even after all these years many music directors, conductors and even writers (arrangers, etc.) have little understanding of how well a guitar can benefit an orchestral ensemble, but, of course, us guitarists haven't helped the cause in many ways as well.

Be aware of the ensemble you are in - large, small, etc. and the instruments within the ensemble - got a drummer *and* percussionist? You need to not get in the way with your big chord strums. Smaller chord strums might be what work's best.

I also note the *strengths of the players* I am playing with, where I can support them.

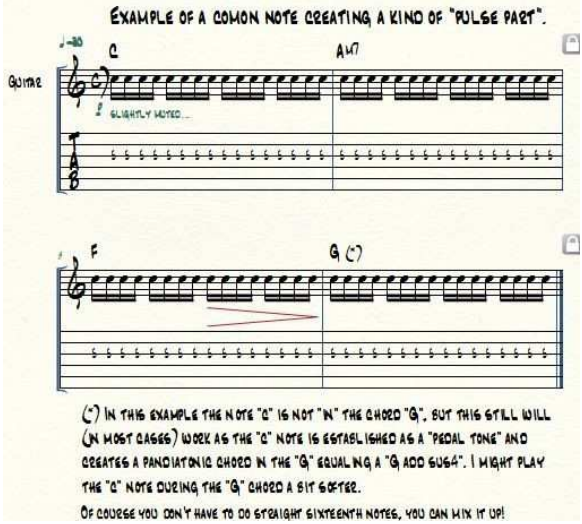
I may opt to double some bass lines to help a less experienced bassist, or do single note (slightly muted) parts to create a kind of *pulse part* to help the rhythm. That's another thing - you DO NOT always need to *strum* to help the rhythm.

Usually a single note muted part is played by the electric guitar, but they sound great on acoustics as well - especially a nylon string! Guitarist Earl Klugh did that on a few projects I have heard of his over the years with Bob James, Dave Grusin and his own solo releases.

Do not underestimate the power of one note!

One technique I frequently use that is very effective is to have a single note, or a three note chord that is common to all the chords in the harmonic progression that I can sustain (whether strummed, or repeatedly *picked*) through a chord "progression"**.**

If I hear everyone in the ensemble playing ALL the chords and their inversions, etc. and I note that the rhythm is getting funky (not in a good way), I will do this technique.

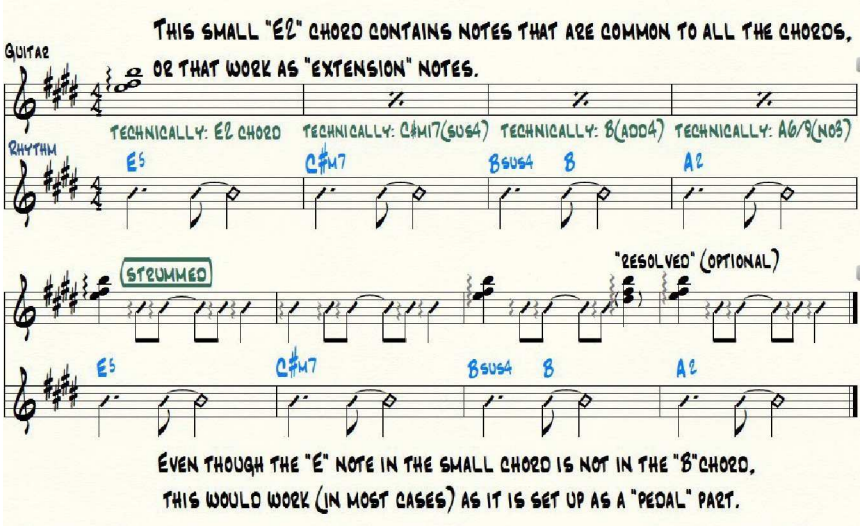


A simple example is this:

I can play a rhythmic single note, let's say a "c" note through all these chords: C - Ami - F - G (sus, or resolved) and many other chords (*see above*).

I can also play (where stylistically appropriate) a three note pandiatonic (don't worry about this big word!) type chord through the same progression.

For example: If you play the notes "c", "d", "g" (collective C2 chord) through the same progression it too will work. I may adjust my volume through some chords (such as the G if it's a resolved G - not suspended in any way), but by playing a *small* chord (few notes - in this case - three), I can emphasize the rhythm while others are covering the primary harmony



I recently did this on a song at a church. I played a three note chord (with some doublings) in a song that had lots of rhythmic drive. The result was this odd combination of *drive* and *trance*. I would adjust the volume and rhythms to add to the driving meditative quality.

By the way: You can also use a single note as a *pedal tone*. Pedal tones are a note that persists through all chords though it may not be *in* all the chords (as a chord tone – component). Because the ear hears it persistently it creates its own identity separate from the harmony.

Classical and Jazz music (and many others) are full of pedal tone usages.

Ostinatos (a repeated pitch “pattern”, usually in the bass) are another form of pedal point.

Some simple rhythm applications would be:

Practice with a metronome or loops, drum machine, whatever! Start with quarter notes then progressively subdivide.

Practice your strums very evenly, straight eighth notes up & down. If you use a pick hold the pick somewhat loosely and strum at different volumes.

Try some *uneven* rhythms or syncopations starting with *positive* and *negative* type rhythms. *Make sure you strum from your wrist, not your arm*.

If rhythm is your problem, I might recommend something I used to do years ago and it might help you: Get some *drum books* and just practice the rhythms without having to think about the pitches. Try the rhythms as single notes first then progress to strums.

Take one to three chords perhaps I/IV/V like a blues progression to start. Then progress from there. I used to play through the Louis Bellson drum books - they we're great!

Take a worship song and try various patterns with a single note, or chord strums.

Since guitarist tend to want to play “fast” – be disciplined and keep things relatively slow to start. If you do something over and over, it will get faster without you trying.

In my own compositions and arrangements, rhythmically just about anything goes including such techniques as metric modulations (not advised for worship music!).

Rhythm is the life blood of music, and there is so much one can do with it.

The past few years I have been studying Flamenco music mostly for the physical techniques which are applicable to other styles (hear and see my arrangement of *"How Firm a Foundation"* as an example of using Flamenco physical techniques with other styles-in this case Latin, Bluegrass, Folk, Jazz).

Flamenco is a style where the rhythm (the *compas*) is just about everything - the flowing river. Flamenco is traditionally based on the dance. I mention this because my study of Flamenco and other styles and physical techniques has made me re-appreciate the power of rhythm alone.

I did a recording session recently for a well-known Christian music Producer where I was able to apply some Rumba strums in worship songs. I didn't think it would work, but it did! I also did a subtle *rasgueado* strum, using my fingers instead of a pick to strum on a Martin steel string for one song and it worked great!

Remember: Being a great guitarist has as much to do with your head as it does your hands. I'd rather be a smart player than a physical techno wizard. Of course, both are good too!

I have many times received compliments on my playing when I have had to kind of (to myself) laugh, because quite honestly, what I did that was effective had more to do with what I *didn't play*, rather than what I did. The above example I gave about the three note chord (driving trance) was a case in point:

A Little Story…

After an evening service at a church a few years back, a well-known Christian artist and his Producer approached me and complimented my approach to the songs. Of course I graciously accepted the compliment (as you should), but this particular case was a bit…humorous? Why? Because a couple of the songs I played in the five song worship set I did with one or two small pandiatonic type chords strummed (in this case aggressively) emphasizing the rhythm, *not* the harmony.

In one song, I kept this chord through the entire song! In fact, I thought someone might fire me for being so simple! Nope, they loved it!

For those desiring to be recording session musicians I might add this. The best players I have ever worked with (mostly LA and Nashville area) were *team players and problem solvers*.

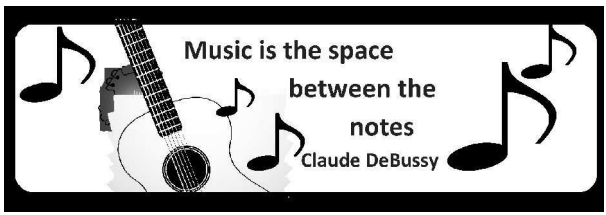
Many I have worked with were not necessarily the most accomplished virtuosos, but they know how to get the job done, and with a good attitude. Generally they have overall "musicality" which includes an ability to think beyond their own instrument.

One more thing I would like to add: Music can be *rubato*! (in and out of the beat). This is something I personally want to bring up if for no other reason to remind you that not all music has to have a *beat*! And…a clic track!

In our pop-culture world (yes, including churches), we can easily forget this. Much music through history was written to be performed a least somewhat rubato and NOT tied to a clock!

Learn to play expressively!

Your job as a good rhythm player (or any kind of player) is to help make the whole ensemble sound good*, and that is being a good servant as well, or as we say, a servant leader*.



MELODY

Melody is *pitch on rhythm,* pitch applied to rhythm. Melody is the most memorable element of music to the general listener, the part many people actually call *the song*.

You need to always make some observations about the melody, especially if it is *sung*.

The melody also contains the lyrics (in a vocal song) and that is what is most important in any song, especially in music for the church.

The guitar is a great melodic instrument, but if it plays over the vocal it can be very unmusical and in a worship setting, very inappropriate!

When I used the term *sweet spots* in the rhythm chapter, what I basically meant was places where the guitar can speak (be heard), but it also means spots where there are spaces (or holes as some say) in the melody.

I have written hundreds of pieces of music as a composer, arranger and orchestrator.

I have studied hundreds of scores and recordings, as well as having done many takedowns. As a performing musician I have performed countless pieces of music. Having said that I like many others before me, (and much greater than I) have come to this conclusion: *melody reigns supreme!* It is the musical King (or Queen if you prefer).

Seriously, melody is extremely important! When I say melody, I don't necessarily mean a long ballad style melodic line. Melody can be shorter figures such as *hooks* in popular music, lead lines, counter lines, etc. It is the *sing-able* part.

Ask anyone to think of a song and they will most likely think of the melody, or some melodic fragment. A lot of people think it *IS* the song. In fact, our copyright laws are pretty much based on the melody as the song (that's another issue for another time).

God gave all of us a voice, and most people can only sing one note at a time. Most people *hear* the same way. Yes, I know we are a culture of multi-tasking, but in reality, most people can only really focus on one thing, *well* that is, at a time. This is also true of music.

Though I have employed multiple voices (counterpoint) often in my writing work, I really do try to keep things down to two primary melodic ideas at any one given moment, all else is frosting on the cake as they say.

I feel very strong about the above, and really try to apply this *when I perform as well*, especially in any worship situation where I feel this is even more important as the participants are not merely spectators, and the text (lyrics) should be well heard!

By the way: If you want a great example of how powerful melody is *alone*, listen to a good bagpipe version of *Amazing Grace!* I realize you may hear the drone as well, but that is just grounding the root, letting the melody soar. It's hard to hear *Amazing Grace* this way and not get very emotional. I could list many other well-known melodies that do the same.

Anyway…

So, what is melody? It is the application of pitch on rhythm. As I said in the rhythm chapter, *rhythm is the most basic musical element*. Melody is *adding pitch* to rhythm.

Your probably wondering why I am putting so much emphasis on melody when you are a guitar player? Well…

There are some really great techniques that one can use to *support* the melody, and add to the overall cohesiveness of the song. In simpler terms, there are some simple techniques one can use to play in and around the melody of a given song.

I know us guitarists think it's really cool to hear a shred solo, etc. but quite a lot of music (especially in most worship settings) doesn't really allow for shred or speed demon playing! However, you can create some nice background lines (for *fills*, *solos* or *counter-lines*) by applying a few simple things.

All melodies can be analyzed according to: 1) Rhythm, 2) Pitch. All melodies are made up of shorter phrases or *cells* if you will (there are several names one can use such as motifs, motives, etc.).

Now, I realize this is probably what you think of as a writing technique, but not true.

You can apply some really great fill and solo work by *deriving from the melody* (or any melodic part of a song).

Simple development techniques:

Melodic development techniques are techniques that can help you to create new material from a given melody (theme, motif, hook, etc.). As said before, this manual is not meant to be an exhaustive study on any specific technique including this one, but some insight to these techniques and some simple examples may help you. But before getting into *how* you can develop other melodic material from a given line, let me say some things on *why* you may want to do this.

Generally, the more you can draw from existing material, the more what you create will have a relationship, a *cohesiveness* to the song - make sense? This does not mean it will automatically be a great part just because you pulled it from an existing melodic part, as you may need to do some refining, etc., but, a part created from an existing melodic line will tend to hang with the song better.

Beethoven was a master of this technique. If you find yourself interested in this subject (as I have), you might want to check out his sketches (they are in book form along with many commentaries).

Now hold on!...you might be saying at this point: "what does Beethoven and his form of music have to do with what I do as a guitarist in a worship ensemble?" Well, in some ways: nothing, but in others - a lot!

I am not here to promote any particular style, and certainly wouldn't promote a hard core Classical study BUT, ***do not confuse the style with the technique!***

The *technique* can be VERY applicable to music in popular forms as well (such as contemporary worship music). If you are a songwriter, you can benefit a lot from a study of melodic development techniques even if you do just a basic study. If you are not a writer, but a player you can as well.

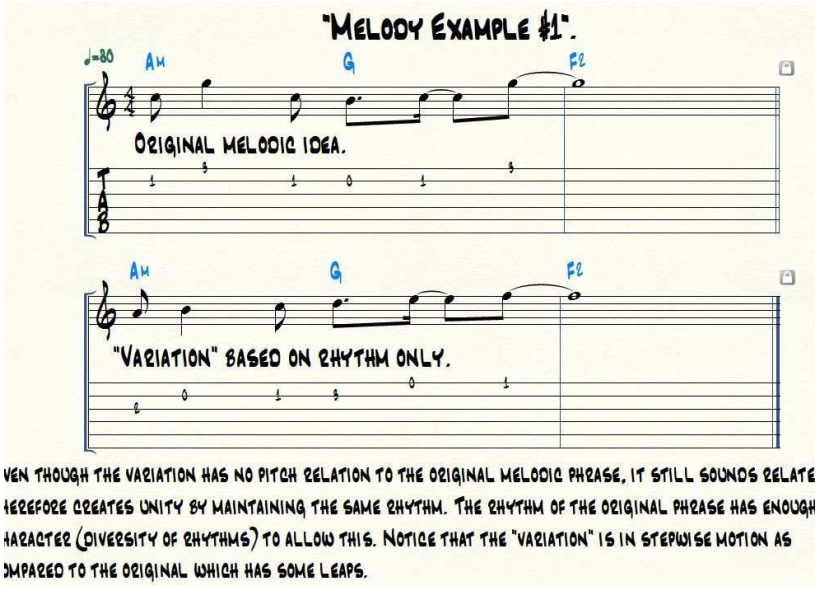
How?

As for me, I use the techniques to create fills, solos and other material. If, when asked to do a fill I can pull from the melody, my fill will most likely have more meaning and, of course, relationship to the song. Now, I can also choose to just play a *lick* fill (whatever I want), and that may be the best choice, but if I can find something *in the melody*, so much the better.

Sometimes I do a fill using a phrase that was just sung. Sometimes I use something that may yet be coming up, kind of as a *hint* of things to come. Sometimes I may look for a significant melodic part which accompanies a lyric that impacts me, or perhaps the music that accompanies the *title* of the song.

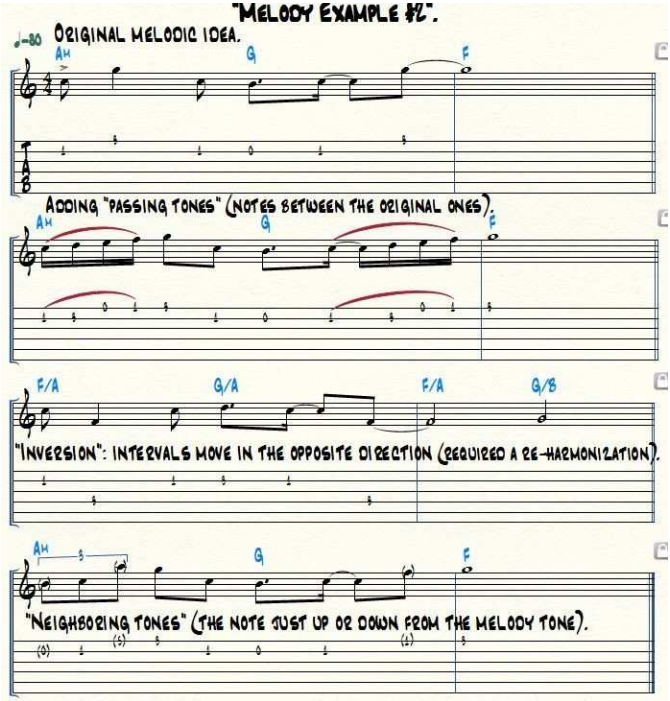
As an arranger for recordings, I have many times drawn material from the melody for just about everything I developed in my arrangement, including *writing out solos* that were derived from the melody. Either way, melodic and thematic development is a whole art unto itself and the possibilities are practically endless.

Having talked about rhythm already let me mention that when using melodic development, *rhythm is still the strongest unifying element*. If you take a melodic fragment with some rhythmic character and put entirely different pitches on the same rhythm it will sound related to the original - try it yourself…



I point this out because rhythm is easier to quickly see and hear than pitches, and in a *gotta do now* situation rhythm is easier to grab! Grabbing fragments already existing in the melody actually can make it easier on your head than completely coming up with something new. So, you get a “win-win” – easier on you, more related to the melody making it more easier on your listeners!

In ***Melody Example #2 (next page)*** I have written out some simple developments based on the original phrase from the Melody Example #1. There are a number of great books dealing with this subject, I would recommend Arnold Schoenberg's *Fundamentals Of Musical Composition*. If you're really into this, I might recommend you also study the works of Classical composers such as Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven. Bartok is another!



I normally do not like to use the word *rules* when I'm talking about music and art, but I will here.

Rule #1:
Even if you do not play any melodic lines, solos, fills, etc. always be aware of the melody. Even if you are just playing rhythm guitar (chords).

Rule #2:
If you are asked to play some fills, try drawing from the melody. Try playing the phrase that was just sung, or one coming up.

Rule #3:
If you are asked to solo, again, like rule #2, draw from the melody. I often will play the melody by *slightly changing the rhythm*. You can almost never go wrong with this!

In some churches soloing is frowned on as it brings too much attention to the player. I won't get into my own theological opinion of this matter, but we all know this exists, so, you can almost never go wrong with restating the melody!

Here's another thing. From a listener, or worshiper's point of view, a *lick based* guitar solo can be distractive in that it is introducing something new at that moment (new material). On the other hand, the melody played in the solo can act like an oasis. I like to call this a *Selah* moment. Selah is a term used in the Psalms to indicate a reflective (*think about it*) moment.

In our culture we are so busy. Many churches adopt this philosophy of keeping the congregation's attention constantly, which I think is kind of a shame, because we all need moments of silence and reflection with ourselves and God.

Some other techniques you can try are:

1) Doubling the vocal melody with your guitar. Perhaps an octave higher or lower.

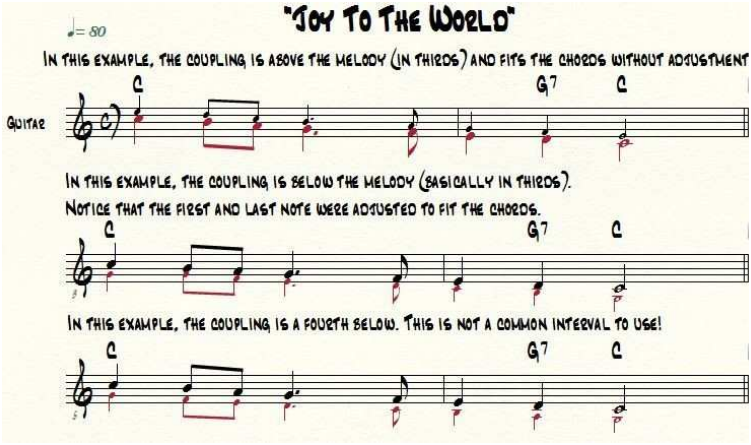
I wouldn't do this all the way through a song, or even an entire section, but at certain moments. There might be a line that contains lyrics that can be emphasized this way.

If you do this, make sure your guitar is tuned!!! (which you should always do anyway!).

You don't want to tick off the singer. Some singers are very fussy about being doubled by an instrument, be sensitive to that.

2) Another technique I like to use is called *couplings.* This is what most singers call a harmony part. Not to be too technical, but a harmony part is one that employs *voice leading,* and that is another subject that is addressed in the Harmony chapter.

A coupling is a part that goes parallel to the melody but is a different interval (notes) than the melody. Usually a coupling part is a third above or below the melody. *Some notes may need to be adjusted to fit the chords,* but usually as long as the first and last note in the coupled phrase fit's the chord, it is "generally" fine.



In the third line of the example above, I used a coupling a fourth below the melody. This is not too common, especially if you are accompanying a vocal melody, but may work in certain situations especially where you may want a more ancient or serious effect.

I used couplings in fourths and fifths in my solo guitar arrangement of *How Firm A Foundation* to give the song a more serious, even liturgical quality in the Intro. Playing up to the concept of God, and His word (the Bible) being taken seriously. It sounds a lot like post Gregorian chant style which is called *Organum* (the first form of harmony).

You can use couplings at any interval, but keep in mind intervals other than thirds or sixths can sound a little odd to the general listener!

In conclusion

As I said before, the guitar is a great melodic instrument, and one I believe not employed as effectively as it could be in the church community. If you become a tasteful player, you will get more opportunities.

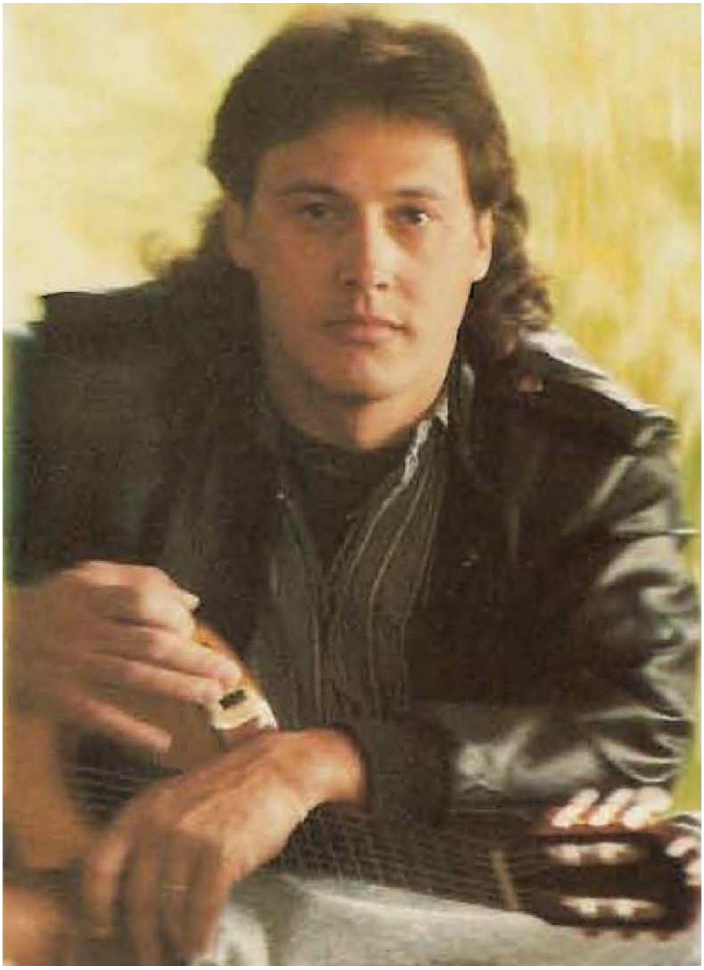


Photo from "Letters" album

HARMONY

At the risk of sounding too professor-like I'd like to say a couple things about the word "Harmony".

Technically harmony has more to do with voice-leading. When components of one chord exchange functions in the following chord that is harmony. Chord components are just the notes that make up the chord. For example, the components (notes) that make up a C major triad are "C", "E" and "G".

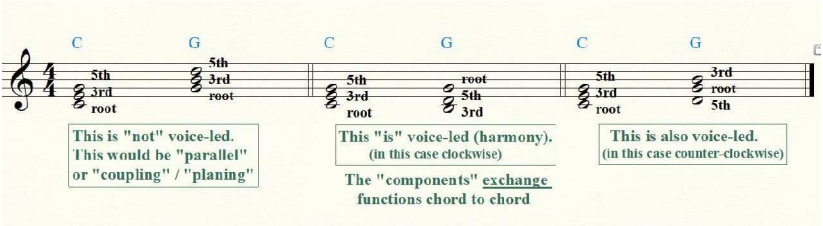
It doesn't matter how many "Cs", Es", "Gs" you have it would still be a C Major triad chord. Each component has a note name and a chord function name. In the case of the C chord (short for C major triad chord), the "C" is the root of the chord, the "E" is the 3rd, the "G" is the 5th.

If the functions "exchange" into the following chord that is voice-leading…that is harmony.

So, if your 2nd chord is a "G" major triad ("G chord") which is the same vertical structure as the C chord (that's a subject for another time) you would have the notes "G" = root, "B" = 3rd, "D" = 5th.

If the components in the C chord (c-e-g) move to components (notes) in the G chord (g-b-d) by "exchanging functions" you would have voice-led chords…harmony.

EXAMPLE #1



Please forgive my seemingly academic digression but as I said in the Introduction, *your hands will work about as good as what your head knows* and some theoretical study will help you a great deal.

In our culture we use the word harmony to generally mean the chords or perhaps a coupling (parallel) part that moves with the melody or some other melodic type line. I'm sure you have heard a singer say "*I'm going to sing a harmony part to that melody*". Actually what they are talking about is a "coupling", but it is fine that we use the term this way as it has become the norm.

Getting back to the basic applications of harmony: The next thing I would like to say to band musicians, especially guitarists is this: *You do NOT have to play all of the chords*. Just because it is on the page does not mean YOU have to play it. For some of you, this may seem so basic that you are now wondering why you are reading this! But for many musicians this is something they did not realize.

Many times I have been in church band situations where all the harmonic instruments were playing all of the chords and it sounded like mud.
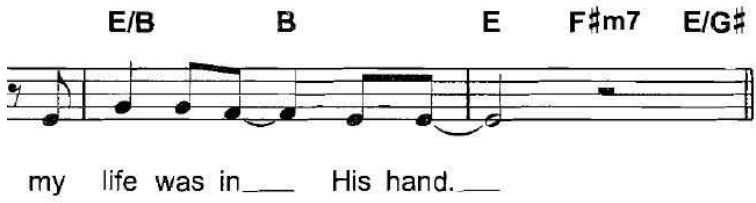
If you are a guitarist who has a good keyboard player, let them cover most of the chords, or vice-versa.

Musicians often forget that perhaps the most musical thing you can do sometime is NOT PLAY! – lay out!

Where problems most occur are in the "passing chords". These are those chords you generally see at the end of a measure going into a new section.

Here is an example from Tommy Walker's "He Knows My Name". At the end of this verse there are two chords (the F#m7 being a "passing" chord) that pushes into the Chorus.

"He Knows My Name" *(Tommy Walker):* key of "E" (4 #s)

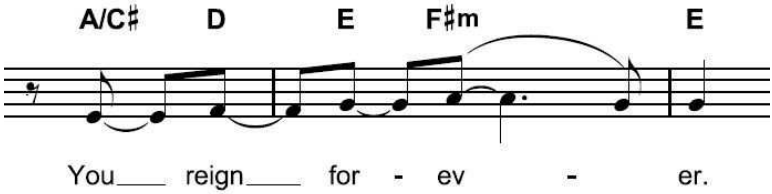


If I am playing guitar in a band where I have a good keyboard (piano or synth) player and good bass player I may decide to just play the "E" chord and let it sound through the entire measure and re-enter on the "A" chord at the beginning of the Chorus.

On the other hand, if I am the primary harmonic driver (a guitar driven song) I might play the two chords on beat 3 and 4 (F#m7 – E/G#).

In the case of "He Knows My Name" there is less danger of rhythmic clash because the chords on beat 3 and 4 are not syncopated unlike the example below.

"Everlasting God" (Brenton Brown & Ken Riley):
key of "A" (3 #s)

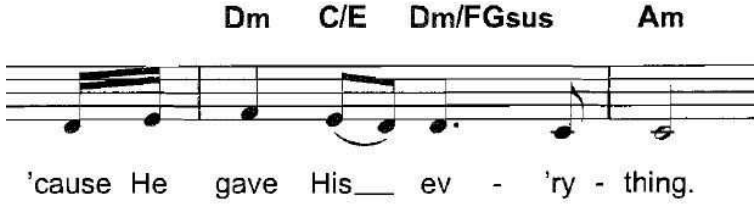


The above example is syncopated. Syncopations can be recipes for disaster if all the instruments play all the chords – in "full chord". If I am playing this, I might play the bass notes (single-note) which also function as a lower coupling to the melody.

The melody notes, along with the bass notes combine to give you the primary *chord components*. Any harmonic notes that are not actually "sounded" in the chords are implied by prior notes. Starting with the "D" chord, the melody is on the 3rd of the chord (F#) with the bass note on the Root of the chord (D). These 2 note components (the Root & 3rd) are the primary chord components in a triad chord. Unless the 5th is "altered", you may omit it. Considering the fast tempo of this song also gives me a reason to thin out the chord components.

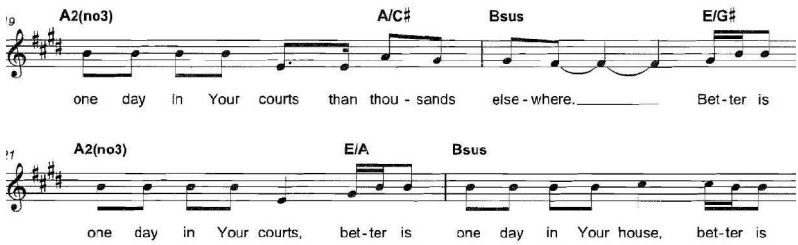
The example below presents another interesting case.

"That's Why We Praise Him" (Tommy Walker)*:* key of "C"



I would most likely double the bass line here as well. In this case, I would do so not because it is syncopated, but because the bass notes move against the melody in contrary motion (what we theory geeks might call "diverging axes") creating a greater climax effect on the words "*gave His everything*". Doubling the bass notes would bring this out – would strengthen it.

"Better Is One Day (Matt Redman):



The example above is another case where I might not play the chords on beat 4 and let the keyboard play them, or not have them at all. The E/G# in measure 2 can be sounded without any real effect or obscuring of the Bsus chord. It acts as a (here comes another theory geek word) "Pandiatonic" chord collectively with the Bsus. Pandiatonicism is actually quite common in many forms of popular music, especially worship music even if few know this term.

By the way: The Bsus = Bsus4 meaning the 4th degree is "suspended". These days some charts have "sus" implying EITHER sus 4 or sus2 which I do not agree with using. **If you write charts, be more clear on your chord symbols! Know the difference and use the appropriate one.**

Speaking of pandiatonicism. A common pandiatonic chord is the major triad with the sus4 added – both the 3rd of the chord and the 4th sounded simultaneously. In classical music, composer Aaron Copland used pandiatonicism in works like *Appalachian Spring* as did Igor Stravinsky in *Petrouska* (see page 44).

Since I have now discussed some options to playing *the whole chord,* here are a few other similar things you might try. Playing "small chords". Small chords are exactly that. That may include "Diads" (2 note chords or couplings.). Technically, diads are not "chords", but they can imply the chord and because you are only playing 2 notes at a time, they can add to the harmony, yet may be played more rhythmically and driving the rhythm may be what you need to do. Playing diads and single notes to hold down the rhythmic fort is often just what is needed in a good band. Another thing that can work well on any guitar, electric or acoustic is playing them muted, or slightly muted.

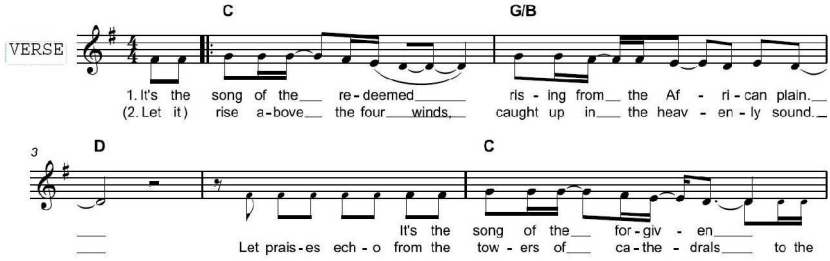
If songs have a lot of chords, I often play smaller chords, dyads or single notes, even on an acoustic guitar. I prefer to play them because it really can be most musical thing to do. I often fall back on them because something or someone in the band doesn't have good rhythm and by simplifying the harmony I can help the rhythm. As I have probably said too many times before, rhythm is something everyone will notice when it's not together!

Single notes and dyads are generally less effective on keyboards, but very effective on guitars.

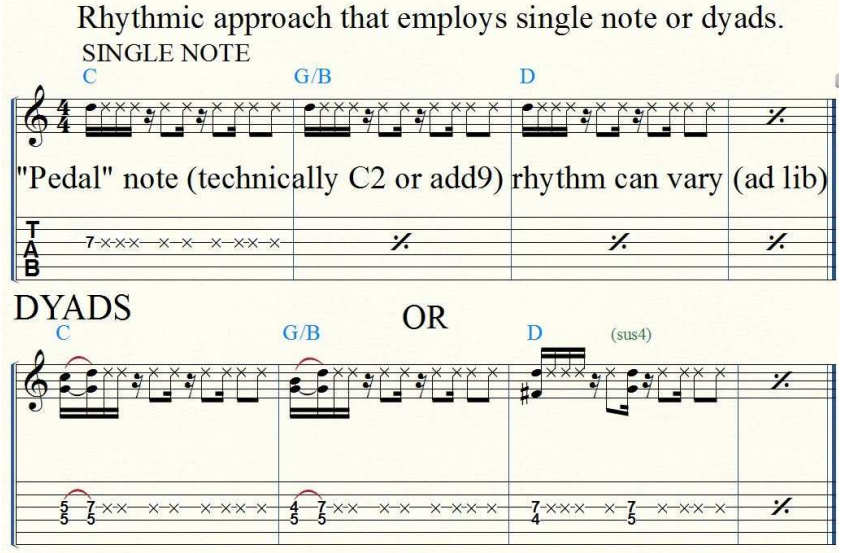
Another thing that works well in some passages is to *double the melody.* This is something I am more careful about doing, especially if I have weaker singers that may be thrown off by me doubling them. I rarely play an entire melody or even a whole section (Verse, Chorus, Bridge), but I may look for phrases, such as a melodic "hook" or climax passage that doubling will strengthen. Or sometimes, I may opt to double the melody if the singers are struggling a bit, but even then, I may just play the opening phrase and get off of it.

When you double the vocal melody (or any melody) always make sure you are matching the others playing or singing it as much as you can. That is…."how THEY are phrasing it". Some variance may work.

"He Reigns" *(Newsboys)*



The next example presents a possible solution to "too much harmony" by using single note or Dyads. This rhythmic approach also adds to the kalimba, African-sounding effect of this song.



Note: The first note, “D” (in the single note example) is technically not in the “C” chord, but is considered an “add2” and will work with the chord and it *connects* all 3 chords in this passage (“C”,”G/B”,“D”) by being common to all chords. The “add2” (or “add9”) sound has been quite trendy for a number of years.

Probably the biggest obstacle I have experienced in playing with a church band and experiencing many others in service that muddles up harmonic matters (and the general sound) is too many guitars and/or keyboards (but mostly guitars) all playing the same chords with the same voicing.

Many times I have played in a worship band along with 2-3+ other guitarists. My primary solution has been to employ different inversions. There are a number of solutions, but if I am playing acoustic, which I most often am, the solution has been to determine where the other guitars are voicing their chords.

I will then voice mine differently, usually up higher as many guitarists hang around the open position, especially acoustic players. This can be accomplished by actually playing in another position or by using a Capo. A Capo is often the preferred choice.

Several years ago I wrote an article for Alexander Publishing on using Capos both live and in the studio. Capos can be a great tool in the studio by creating a guitar harmonic orchestra (my own term). I have done many sessions for artists where I layered (overdubbed) multiple guitar parts using a Capo to take advantage of the "open string" sound.

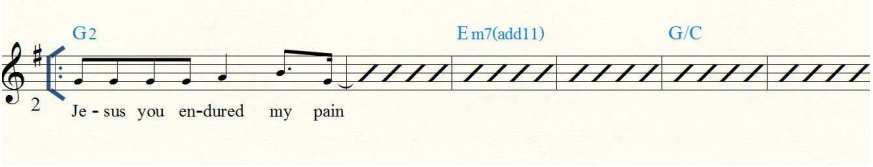
As I said before, if you will take it on yourself to learn enough basic theory to know the *note components* that make up the basic chords (Triads – there are 4 – *major, minor, diminished and augmented* – the diminished and augmented are not used much in contemporary worship music).

Also learn the primary forms of 7th chords (major7, minor7, dominant 7 - i.e. "D7", minor7(b5) – not used a lot in worship music). And, if you learn the notes on the finger board at least up to the 7th position (fret) you can create your own voicing.

A trend the past X amount of years has been with Major 7 chords to omit the 3rd in the chord. For example a CMa7 (components " C" - root, "E" – 3rd, "G" – 5th, "B" – 7th) may be played as a "G/C" chord, omitting the 3rd ("E"). I like this sound because it thins it out a bit and quite honestly "3rds" in chords tend to thicken up the sound and can be difficult with matters on pitch (tuning) and even helping singers.

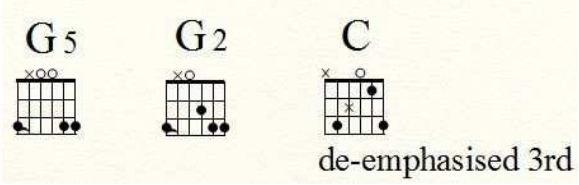
Here's an example:

Because Of Your Love *(Phil Wickman)*



What I mean is this: My experience has been, over many years that when there is a prevalence of 3rds, whether in chords or in the melody (scale notes, and 3rds in relation to the chords) there "tends" to be more pitch problems. I often opt for "5" chords, or "add2", "add9" or just chords with less 3rds in them, and I definitely avoid chords where the 3rd is in a lower position.

Here are just 3 examples of chord forms that have become very popular.



I would highly recommend you make it a point of learning a few things if harmony (chords), are your weakness.

One suggestion, is knowing at least 2 ways of playing all of the primary triads and 7th chords. Preferably you should learn chord forms that can be easily adjusted into Barre Chord versions. An open "E" can be easily arranged into an "F" Barre chord, etc. The same is true with an open "A" chord.

When I was learning the guitar and first learned Barre Chords (didn't come easy!) I made it a point to know 2 versions of the primary chords. I already knew open chords very well and figured out quickly that if I could know the Barre versions and knew what they were at each fret I would be way ahead.

I remember memorizing that going up by frets, F# or Gb was 1 fret up from "F", etc. I could take a standard open "E" chord, move it up 1 fret (making some physical finger adjustments) turning into an "F", then "F# / Gb", then "G", etc.

The "fret pattern" (whole step, half step) was the same for an open "A" turned into a "Bb" Barre, etc. Voila! I knew a whole bunch more chords!

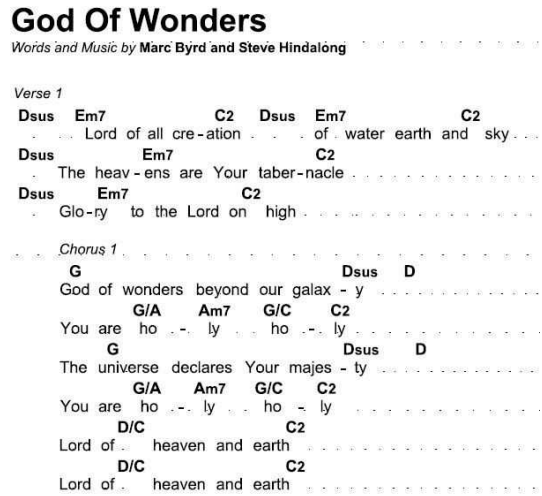
Another things is that if you can learn all of the notes between fret "0" up to the 12th fret and in turn, you learn the "components" of the primary chords, you can create your own voicings for all chords rather than always falling back on standard chord formations.

For the serious or more advanced guitarist there are some "patterns" (one might say "tricks") to help with memorization of this concept.

The last thing I want to discuss is the various forms of music charts you may come across. There are 3 primary forms of charts used these days. One is the very basic "chords over lyrics" charts. I personally do not like these unless it is a song everyone knows very well.

I have seen quite a few times wasted rehearsal time spent using these charts. I have nothing inherently against them in the case where everyone knows the song well. If all the chords are accurate it can work.

Below is an example:



God Of Wonders

Words and Music by **Marc Byrd and Steve Hindalong**

Verse 1

Dsus **Em7** **C2** **Dsus** **Em7** **C2**
Lord of all cre-ation of water earth and sky
Dsus **Em7** **C2**
The heav-ens are Your taber-nacle
Dsus **Em7** **C2**
Glo-ry to the Lord on high

Chorus 1

G **Dsus** **D**
God of wonders beyond our galax-y
G/A **Am7** **G/C** **C2**
You are ho-ly ho-ly
G **Dsus** **D**
The universe declares Your majes-ty
G/A **Am7** **G/C** **C2**
You are ho-ly ho-ly
D/C **C2**
Lord of heaven and earth
D/C **C2**
Lord of heaven and earth

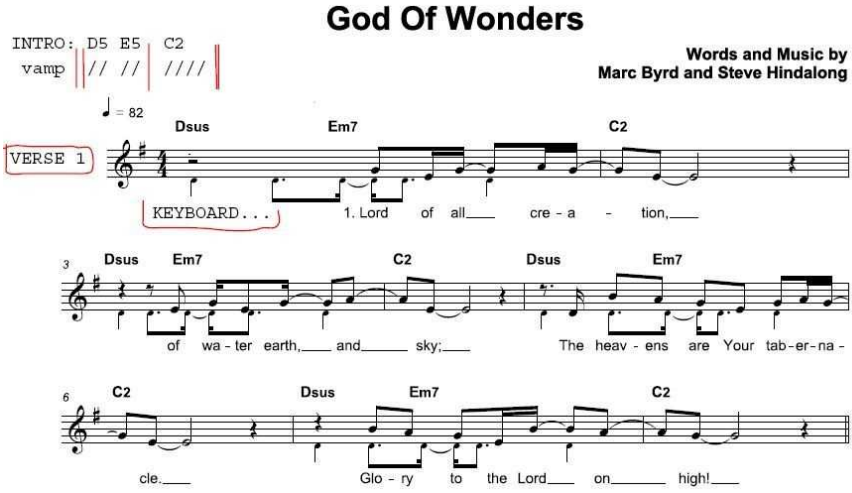
I was at a church to conduct their orchestra and before my rehearsal I witnessed a worship leader working with a pianist with one of these charts (not the example above) and it took a bit of time for the pianist to know where the chords changed. Is it a big deal?

You have to determine that for yourself. What I do know is that as someone who likes efficient rehearsals, I do not want to waste time with inadequate charts.
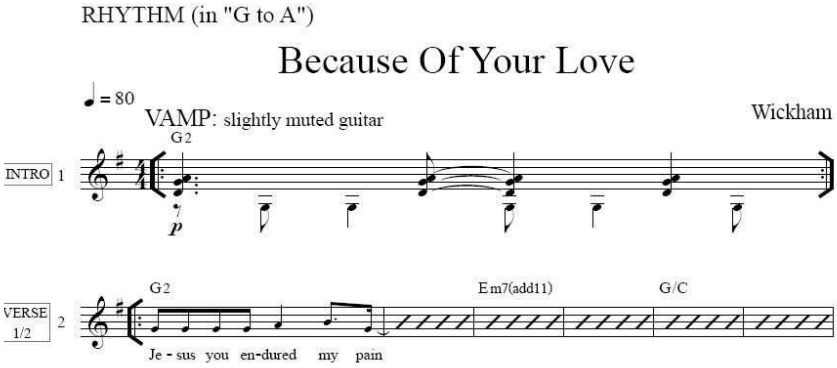
One thing I think churches can improve on is “charting”. It is a bigger subject than I can address here, but if it is improved, it will make rehearsals far more improved.

The basic “standard” of charting that has worked for many years is the “Lead Sheet” (Rhythm) chart. This is a preferred method and how I write all of my own charts (and I often rewrite charts). It contains the melody (or at least fragments – entrances, etc.), chord symbols WITH inversions the correct form (not just “Chorus” / “Verse” / “Bridge”). I include any significant counterlines, bass figures (or at least a measure or so).

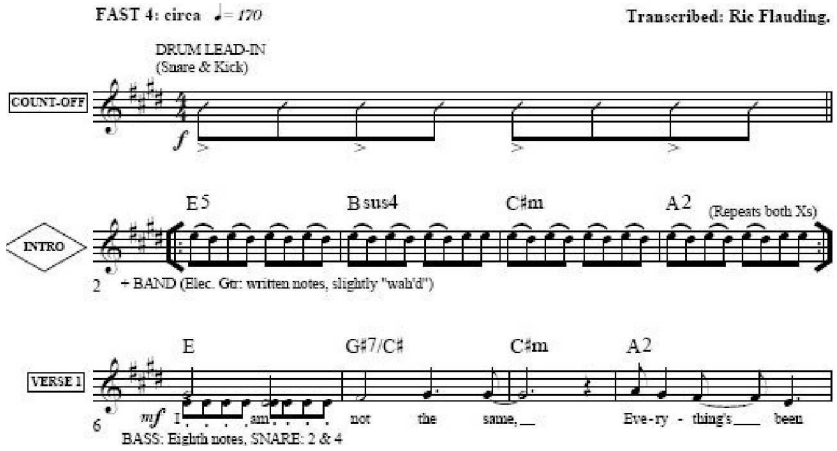
The first example is from CCLI and is what I prefer the band has though I almost always add some things.



As you can see, I added a simple Intro in the top left corner. I also highlight in one way or another, the “sections” of a song (verse, chorus, etc.) so everyone can jump to them quickly.

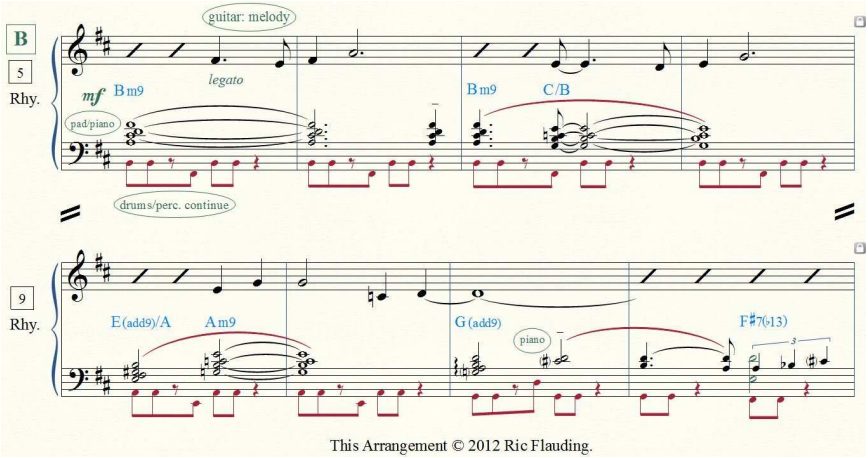


Below are a few examples that are even more thorough.



The above example was from an arrangement I was hired to do for a worship band with orchestra. The first thing I did was a "takedown" of the song they wanted me to do before adding the orchestration. The rhythm section at this church was very good and I knew it had to come together very fast in one rehearsal prior to the service.

"Revelation Song" *(Jennie Riddle)*
contemporary jazz arrangement by Ric Flauding.



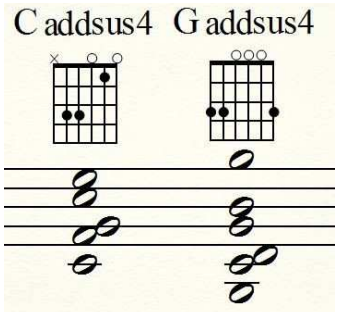
The above example is from my contemporary jazz arrangement of "Revelation Song". This is an instrumental arrangement so the lyrics are not shown, but the melody is on the chart all the way through as well as specific voicing and a very specific bass line which drives this arrangement.

The chords are very different from the original because this is an original arrangement in the contemporary jazz style.
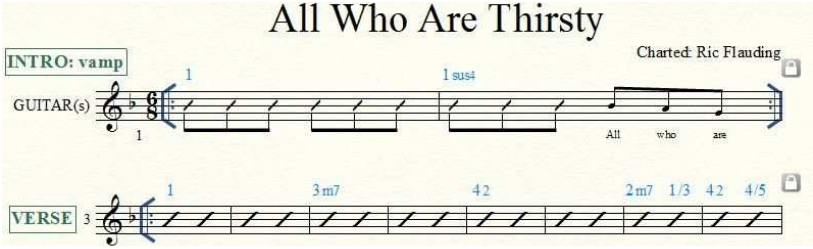
Another type of chart that I am seeing more and more in churches (perhaps because I have been in Texas over 5 years!) is Nashville Numbering System (or Nashville Shorthand). This is a system that generally works best when chords are simpler (triads, sevenths). It somewhat combines the concepts of "chord symbols" and the traditional Roman Numeral System often used in traditional theory courses.

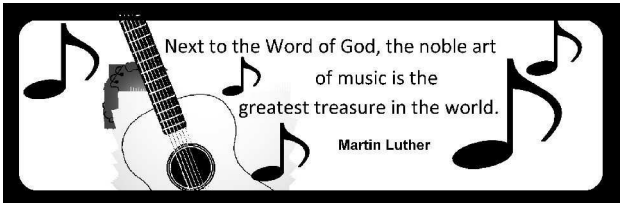
Some scoring programs, such as Finale provide functions that quickly and easily convert standard chord symbols into the Nashville Numbering System. Finale also can convert into Capo versions – at any fret – handy!

Pandiatonic Chords



Example of Nashville Shorthand





CONCLUSION

I hope you have gained something from this manual. As I said in the beginning, this is not meant to be an exhaustive study on playing guitar, or even playing guitar in a worship band. It is "some of what has worked for Ric" over the years.

After writing out some of the topics I wanted to cover I have had many rehearsal and performance situations where I have found myself saying, "Oh, I need to mention this…and this….and also this." Perhaps for another manual!

I also hope some of the theoretic topics has not scared you off but instead has perked your interest in knowing more how music works be it for guitar specifically or just in general – how music works. I really do believe that generally your hands will work about as good as what your head knows. I know it has helped me and my greatest improvement as a guitarist happened after I started learning more about theory as a composer-arranger and even orchestrator. You certainly do not need to go as far as I have in theoretical knowledge to be way ahead of many guitarists.

In the churches and the general Christian community we tend to toss terms around without definition.

Regarding "Talent"

Communication is important to me as a music director, producer and certainly as a teacher. Making sure words are defined is very important. I have seen, and been involved in debates where two people are arguing a point having not even defining the word or words they are arguing about!

Some words in the Christian community that get tossed around are words that I consider to be a bit more "spiritual" or emotionally based and less defined not only among those who use the words, but perhaps even in dictionary definition. Words like "talent", "gifting", "inspiration", "anointed" or even (in my opinion) overused terms like "excellence". I have heard excellence said so many times in church circles it drives me nuts ONLY because few take the time to make sure everyone involved understands the word and its usage and it is basically understood among the participants. Let me be clear about this: these words, and many others are all good words - that I am not questioning – it is the clarity of definition that concerns me.

Words convey concepts…

I guess what I am hoping to get across is this: We use these terms sometimes as if we have no responsibility in the development of our skills. We basically over emphasize "talent" and "gifting" as if our abilities and responsibility for them lies solely with God. I DO believe in the super-natural, I DO believe in talent and gifting and other such things, but I also believe we humans (musicians are humans, even if some don't think so) have responsibility in our development.
It is not all "talent" or "gifting" as our over-romanticized philosophies (Enlightenment anyone?) drive us. Our whole culture promotes this thinking and has for years. Just watch some music reality shows.

I have a personal motto I developed while taking classes at a Seminary for my Master's Degree. I had to read many books, write papers, etc. It was overall quite a drag, BUT it did help me define and refine my philosophy of music, ministry and art in general.
The motto I came up with is this: **"The CREATOR (God)…the created (us)…creating".**

It's simple motto that expresses my belief that God is the provider of things like natural and spiritual gifting and inspiration and other spiritual things, but it is us who have to take responsibility for developing our skills. I believe (and you can certainly disagree) that things like "discernment" come by Knowledge (learning) and Experience (application). God can certainly do whatever God wants and He can give anyone the full package complete with no human knowledge added, but in most cases, He gives us a bit and expects us to do our homework! It's a "hand in hand" with God creative existence.

When it comes to "inspiration" I like to call those nuggets "Golden Crumbs" that God gives us, but expects us to learn how to mix the ingredients to make the complete loaf of bread!
I think it's time the general Christian music community start applying a more Renaissance concept of talent and skills. This is a time to take responsibility. If we want "excellence" we have to have knowledge and not just "tech" knowledge but also the knowledge from the past.

"Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls…" (Jeremiah 6:16).



Ric in Dave Mustaine's home studio, Scottsdale, AZ

BIO

With a performance career that began at age 11, Ric Flauding's music has been featured on ABC, NBC, CBS, Billboard Magazine and with The London Symphony Orchestra. As a high school senior in southern California, Ric's guitar prowess helped open the doors to LA's competitive recording industry and through study with Barney Kessel, Horace Hatchett and classical master Ted McKown, Ric was soon on the road as a touring musician.

Ric is a sought after guitarist and composer who has created music for national commercials and network television, with projects being featured on Oprah's show. He has been showcased on recordings with David Benoit, John Patitucci, Eric Marienthal, Jeff Kashiwa and Russell Ferrante (Yellowjackets). Ric has opened for Bob James, Richard Elliot, Rick Braun and Michel Camilo and despite his skill with classical and flamenco, Ric is so versatile that he even worked with Dave Mustaine of Metallica/Megadeath.

Voted Best Online Jazz Artist by CMAP Music International, Ric is the "consummate musician's musician...Filled with passionate emotion this artist will carry you on musical journey after journey on the wings of some of the most beautiful guitar melodies you will ever hear." - CMAP Music International.

Ric is also an educator having taught composition, theory and related subjects at a number of universities and internationally online.
In the church world Ric has worked for many churches. Some well-known.

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