

1 Fingerpicking

Fingerpicking is a guitar technique that involves the use of fingers to vibrate the strings of the guitar. "*Finger Picking*" literally means pinching with your fingers. This is as opposed to *strumming* where the strings are played simultaneously to produce chords, typically through the use of a pick.

The Technique of *Fingerpicking* and its style, known as *Fingerstyle*, was developed as a part of *Country Blues* by guitarists such as *Blind Blake*, *Rev. Gary Davis*, *Blind Willie McTell*, *Blind Boy Fuller*, and *Mississippi John Hart* in imitation of the *Rag-Time* piano of the early twentieth century.

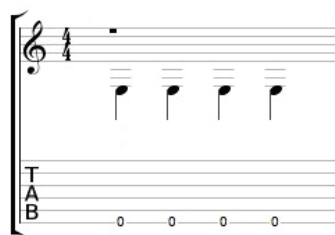
Through *fingerpicking*, one is able to simultaneously play the accompaniment part of the song as well as the more melodic lines. Both of which be played in contrast to each other. Low notes are played with the thumb and represent the rhythmic-harmonic structure above which the upper strings will be played, using the index finger, and occasionally the middle finger, representing the vocal line. Additional notes to emphasize the harmonic structure of the song, will also be played. Depending on the number of fingers used, the technique is called "*two-finger picking*" or "*three-finger picking*". In order to achieve greater sound volume, certain effects, and sound nuances, one can use different kind of picks for the thumb (*thumbpick*) and fingers (*fingerpicks*).

1.1 Comping

With regard to *Comping*, the styles are divided into "*Monotonic Bass*", typical of guitarists from Texas, such as, *Blind Lemon Jefferson*, *Blind Willie Johnson*, *Lightnin' Hopkins*, *Mance Lipscomb* and "*Alternating Bass*" typical of guitarists from the region of Georgia, North and South Carolina, and Virginia like *Blind Blake*, *Rev. Gary Davis* and *Mississippi John Hart*.

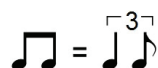
1.1.1 Monotonic Bass

The technique of guitarists hailing from Texas has the common element of "*monotonic bass*" or "*basso ostinato*". Above this rhythmic background, very complex melodic lines and more sophisticated than those used in the east coast or the area of the Mississippi Delta, can be played. Some songs are played with rhythmic patterns that are in contrast to the vocal lines and intricate melodic lines of guitar that alternate with singing



Monotonic Bass

On the rhythmic level, the use of *monotonic bass* gives the same weight to the four accents of the beat. The *monotonic bass* can be doubled with the *Shuffle Style*. This takes advantage of a fundamental characteristic in *Blues* and *Jazz*, the famous rhythm known as "*Swing Feel*," in which a pair of eighth notes is played as a triplet consisting of a quarter and an eighth note.



This is a basic feature of *Jazz* phrasing and the notes being played slightly later or earlier than the theoretical figuration, create the oscillating trends typical of *swing*. Let's take a look at how to becomes the monotonic bass of the *Shuffle* style:

is equivalent to:

or even muffling the quarter note:

Extending this technique to *bichords* leads to the classic *Shuffle Blues*:

is equivalent to:

1.1.2 Alternating Bass

In this technique, adopted by *Rag Time* guitarists, the thumbs alternate between playing two and three notes of the chord (for example: the root, third, fifth, seventh, eighth).

Use of the root and third

Use of the root and fifth

Use of the root, fifth, and third

Use of the root, third, and fifth

Use of the root and eighth

Use of the root and seventh