

Welcome to Masters of Rhythm Guitar.

Even though since **Chuck Berry** (or at the latest, since **Jimi Hendrix**) there has been no such thing as pure "rhythm guitar" or "lead guitar", the guitarist today spends most of his time working on improving his solo playing. There are countless books and methods for every imaginable style with which one can learn "how to play great guitar solos". Although this is extremely worthwhile and important, rhythm guitar often gets the "short end of the stick", despite the fact that in almost any playing situation, rhythm playing is 90 % of the job. And, just by the way, consider this: if you play a wrong note in a solo, only a few listeners are likely to notice. If you, on the other hand, lose the groove, everybody notices! So, in rhythm playing there is, in fact, a lot to do.

My intention with this book is to expand your repertoire of authentic rhythm grooves in a number of popular styles. Using different examples of the playing styles of the influential guitarists, I'll show their characteristic sounds, playing techniques and harmonic approaches. This, combined with background information and a discography will provide you with a comprehensive view of the work of each guitarist. This book should serve as a reference work which you can draw on as you need or choose to.

The great number of musical styles and guitarists make it almost impossible to write a definitive work on the stylistic development of rhythm guitar. To keep a reasonable amount of control over this project, I've restricted my choice to 22 "**masters of rhythm guitar**". The playing of these guitarists, which has been just as important to the success of record production as the lead guitar work, has made the guitar into one of the most important elements in music and is responsible for rock's establishment and subsequent development.

Mixing many different musical styles together came naturally to me, as I personally don't generally categorize music so much by style, as by whether it is good or bad music. All styles have their own worth and influence each other. It often happens that one style flows over into the other or that two styles join forming a new one. A clear separation between musical styles is simply impossible to make. Terms like rock, soul or jazz, or the order in which they appear when combined, are in this book only "working" expressions used for the purpose of organization.

However you choose to work with this book, I hope you have fun reading, listening and playing. With the necessary diligence and patience you'll find that a well founded vocabulary of rhythmic ideas will become available to you, leading you to success in the studio, in bands or as a teacher.

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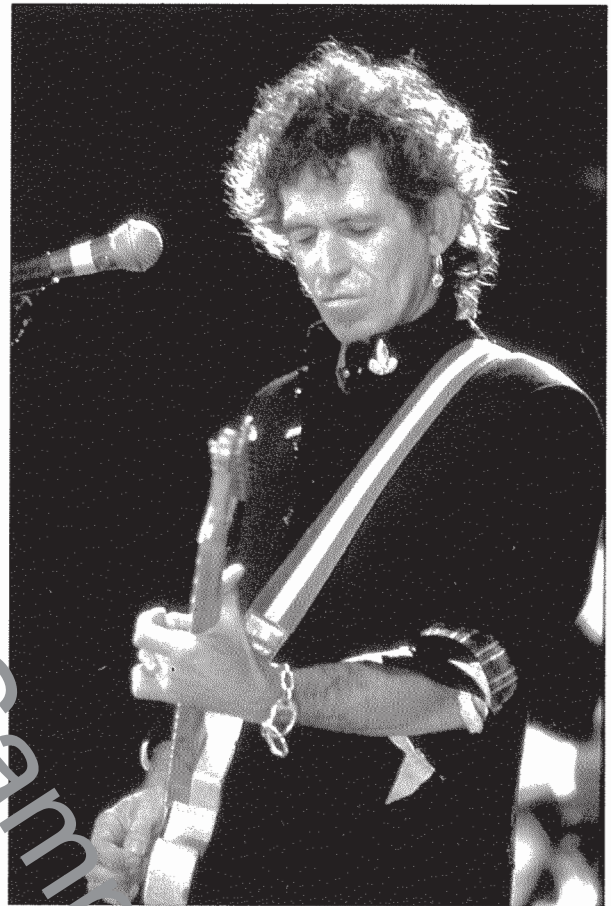
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It's Only Rock'n'Roll

Keith Richards and the Rolling Stones are the embodiment of 40 years of Rock'n'Roll. With numbers such as "Satisfaction", "Sympathy for the Devil", "Let's spend the night together" and "Honkey-Tonk Woman" they literally wrote rock history. Keith Richards is the musical leader of the Stones and has written the lion's share of the group's songs. His almost countless hits show how important a solid catchy rhythm guitar is the making of good rock tunes.

He was born in 1943 in Dartford, England. At the age of six he had already met Mick Jagger, who was born in the same area. In 1962, these two formed the Rolling Stones and met with rapid success, as blues was enjoying a wave of popularity in England at that time. Despite his excesses with alcohol and drugs, Keith is still "at the top" of the business.

After his solo project in 1988, he toured again with the Stones, once again the soul of the band, as he has always been. Keith Richards' guitar playing, having formed the sound of the Rolling Stones, has had a considerable influence on the development of rock music.



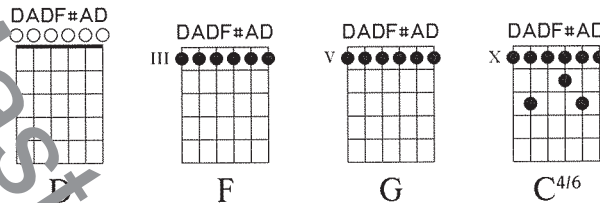
Keith Richards

Influences

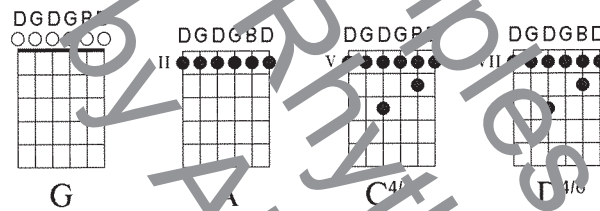
Chuck Berry and Scotty Moore are his idols. Chuck and Keith have become friends over the years and he takes Scotty Moore with him on every tour in the form of a copy of Elvis' Sun Sessions. Another important influence are the old blues guitarists, above all Robert Johnson, the king of the delta blues.

Recognizable traits

Keith isn't into speedy fingers or virtuosity. His sole interest lies in feeling, grooves, rhythms and riffs. He plays often in open tunings. In the beginning phase of his work with open tunings (1968) he experimented primarily with open E (E - B - E - G[#] - B - E) and open D (D - A - D - F[#] - A - D the same tuning as open E a whole step lower). "Street Fighting Man" for example, is played in open D using the following chords:



Working together with **Fly Cooder** on the "Let it Bleed" album, he began to use open G tuning (D - G - D - G - B - D). A good example is "Honky Tonk Woman":



The open tunings make it considerably easier for him to play. He lays down a cool, laid-back groove, but hits the strings pretty hard. You can find further information on open tunings in **Jürgen Kumlehn's** book, "Rock Guitar Harmonies" (AMA publisher).

Musical Material

Keith uses mostly major triads as well as fourths and fifths in building his riffs. For fills he liked to use sixths (see the **Steve Cropper** chapter further in this book).

Sound

He plays Les Pauls, Strats and Telecasters over Fender Bassman, Marshall or Mesa Boogie amps. His sound is biting and scratchy but somehow transparent. Thick strings and high action are also a part of his playing and sound.

Rhythm Licks

As I've already mentioned, **Hendrix** combined melody and rhythm into an "orchestral" guitar accompaniment, creating a sound full enough to keep things jumping all night.

What's important in the following examples is to get them to groove without the band. You'll have to hit the strings pretty hard in order to get an authentic sound.

①

E7#9

Sm tr

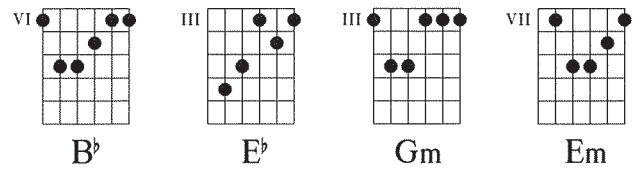
TAB 8 8 7 5 7 5 0 7 0 H P

Sm P

TAB 8 7 6 5 5 4 3 3 0 Sm P

Musical Material and Voicings

Pentatonic, single-note rhythms and simple major and minor chords make up Marley's guitar arrangements.



Sound

Gibson Les Paul, wah-wah pedal, an undistorted setting on a Marshall amp and, above all, lots of reeling make up the Wailers' rhythm sound.

Rhythm Licks

All these grooves have to be played very laid back. The rhythm is neither a shuffle nor is it straight. The best thing is to listen to lots of reggae, forget about theory and just try to get into the feeling. Licks 1 and 2 are meant to be played by 2 guitars at the same time.

①

B^b E^b G^m G^m

②

The same for licks 3 and 4. Note the rhythm in measures 1 and 3 of the third example. These are used often by Marley.

③

B^m S^m S^m

Sound

His main guitars are a Gibson Explorer, a Fender strat and telecaster which he plays over a Vox AC 30. Despite the hiss and feedback, he loves his Electro Harmonics analog delay. The delay is an important element of his licks, as meaningful as the notes that he plays. He uses 011 and 012 string sets and uses the rough side of the pick to get his "edgy" sound.

Rhythm Licks

The use of open strings in lick 1 produces an interesting effect.

①

Now we come to a harmonic technique used in classical music. Touch the string gently with the index finger of your picking hand exactly 12 frets above the fretted note. Hold the pick between the thumb and middle finger, strike the string and, at the same time, remove the right index finger from the string.

