



Ulli's Monthly (Fingerstyle-)Guitar Secrets lesson # 1

Hi,
in the first issue of Ulli's Monthly (Fingerstyle-)Guitar Secrets I will teach you the main principles of how to arrange a popsong for acoustic guitar.
At first let's warm up with some finger exercises to develop a smooth and effective guitar technique.

Left Hand Exercise

Over the years I have found out that most people play with too much pressure instead of using a precise technique.
Let's check your playing in the 5th fingering position as indicated in bar 1.
My left arm makes a 90 degree angle in relation to the guitar neck.

The fingers have to press the string right in front of the fret with the middle of the finger tip and with a minimum of pressure.
Try to take off all of the pressure until the string sounds muted. At this point, press slightly harder. Do it slowly and carefully to get a feeling for the necessary amount of strength. It is always less than you think.
Train your fingers to play exactly in front of the fret with the middle of the tip of your finger by playing hammer-on's as shown in bar 2 - 4. Play slowly and precisely. Try to keep your eyes closed to focus your full concentration on your fingertip.

Right Hand Exercise

Basic Arpeggio in Pattern Position: p, i, m, a (see bar 5 and 6)

In the pattern position your thumb (**p**) is responsible for the bass strings (6, 5, 4 th string), **i** plays the notes on string 3, **m** on the second and **a** on the first string. This pattern stays the same during the entire exercise only the bass describes a melody.
(To be continued)

Method of Arrangement

The main principles of how to arrange a popsong for acoustic guitar will now be shown by using the example of the main 4 bars of Right Here Waiting for You (Richard Marx).
The clue to my way of arranging is that I do not think in chords but in melody, bassline and harmonies.
In the 1. step I write down the melody as exactly as possible (*see bar 11-14 in line 3*).
Thereby I can see that the melody is composed by using exclusively notes of the C-major-tonality.

We play the melody by alternating **i** and **m** of the right hand.

From these notes you can derive a nice collection of harmonies by building triads and finally tetrachords by using only these notes (no sharps, no flats).

See bar 15-18 in line 4 to learn the 7 degrees of triads derived from the C-Major-Scale.

As first step of my arrangement I put the fundamental bassnotes on the first beat of each bar. If it was my own composition I would have different choices of harmonies that fit with the melody but in this case I certainly follow the composer using C-Major, G-Major, a-minor, F-Major and again G Major (see bar 24-27 in line 5).

Let's have a look at bar # 25. So far we have G as root of G-Major. For sure we will get a much nicer passage from C-Major to a-minor by using the note 'B' as bassnote (see line 6).

Please practise pointing out the melody while playing the bassnotes as this tune lives from the big number of syncopates (notes that are played on an offbeat and keep ringing on the first beat of the next bar). Make sure that the melody notes keep ringing from bar to bar.

After arranging melody and basses we have to fill the bars with notes that fit harmonically. (see bar 32-35 in line 7). These notes are taken out of the harmonies of the C-Major-Tonality.

Since these notes are less important than the melody notes we have to play them softer. Take your time to practise the dynamics slowly and carefully. This makes the difference between just playing guitar and performing a great piece of music.

I have chosen carefully all these harmonical fills below the melody. It is really important that you never cross the melody line whatever you fill in.

(There will be exceptions. I'll come back to that matter in the next lesson).

Finally we will fill the tune with more harmonic notes. Make sure that the melody is always on top. The highest notes will always be the most perceived because our ears can differentiate between the highest frequencies the best. You can play all notes below the melody notes but never on top of them, otherwise the melody is ruined.

(see bar 36-39 in line 8).

What's next?

In lesson # 2 I will provide finger exercises, tell you how to get access to a new arrangement and send you exclusive scores and tabs for my brand new arrangement of the world's most famous lullaby:

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