

The Reggae Groove

Reggae music was born in Jamaica and is a very unique style, which covers various sub styles like; rock steady, dub, roots, raga, UK reggae, and deejays among others. The reggae groove is something that is heard on modern radio play lists regularly and is also very popular throughout Maori and Polynesian music. Some great artists that are influential in this style are Bob Marley and the Whalers, Jimmy Cliff, Toots and the Maytells, and Peter Tosh, while Herbs are most probably the band to have made this style very popular in New Zealand. The influence of this music can be heard on many other popular artists' albums as well like Eric Clapton, Sting, and our own Dave Dobbyn, Charlotte Yates and many others.

Reggae music is characterised by the emphasis of the off beat rhythm, which is normally played by a guitar or keyboard instrument, and the music mostly has a laid back feel to it. Coupled with strong bass line support on the downbeats, this tends to give reggae its very danceable and infectious groove. To get into the feel of this music you really need to listen to it a lot.

To get started playing this style it is important that you can feel the “upbeat” or “offbeat” rhythm within the music. To do this, begin tapping your foot while counting 1, 2, 3, 4, when your foot taps down. Then begin to count “+” or “and” when your foot taps up so you have a count like this,

Count	1	+	2	+	3	+	4	+
Foot tap	down,	up,	down,	up,	down,	up,	down,	up.

It is important you can feel this rhythm before playing anything on your guitar, so spend plenty of time getting used to it if you are not conversant with it. When you have got used to this prerequisite exercise, then begin strumming any chord you like in a down, up fashion along with your foot. When you can do that, just cut out the strums on the down beat so you only have the “+” being played. This is the main essence of the reggae style.

The guitar style used in this sort of music is mostly triad (three note chords) based on the top three strings and uses a staccato (cut the notes off as soon as you play them) attack. The chord structure of the music is normally based around the primary chords of the key (I – IV – V) and heavy picks are normally required for this type of rhythm.

Ex 1 is a common simple reggae groove that uses the rhythm you have just done above. When strumming this exercise make sure the attacks are strummed on the up stroke, just like your foot tap is doing. If you find this difficult, then go back and practice the prerequisite exercise more. The chord sequence is a simple C to G which is an easy one to begin.

Ex 1

Ex 2 is a little more difficult and has a sixteenth note group on beats one and three coupled with down and up strumming. The reason this type of strum is a little difficult to begin with is because the down strums are on the up tap of your foot. Hang in there and you will get used to it.

Ex 2

Ex3 is a little trickier than exercise two in that it has more chords and sixteenth notes on every beat. Make sure that you play a down and up stroke strum when your foot tap is on the up.

Ex 3

Reggae is a fun style to play, although it looks and sounds easy it can be quite complex and take a while to perfect. Remember to take your time with each exercise and begin really slowly.

To hear the music for this lesson visit <http://www.guitar.co.nz/the-reggae-groove/>

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