



Often Forgotten Need for Repertoire

Have you ever run into other musicians in jam sessions, open mic nights, bands, or the like and realised you don't know many of the songs they are playing? Students often tell me this happens a lot when they begin lessons with us.

Plenty of guitar players at all levels don't know a wide repertoire simply because they are too focused on learning how to get ahead with technique, chords, soloing, and other things. In doing so they are forgetting a golden rule – music is a social thing in that we play guitar to play songs and have fun with our friends. It is not a solitary thing where we sit in our bedrooms/practice rooms to play to ourselves or practise all the time, at least not for most who enjoy

favoured genres (allowing for your current level of ability), and start learning them. Don't pick songs that use a lot of bar chords or advanced chords if you don't know them. If your current level is open chords, then find songs that use them, and begin with the easiest ones first.

Aim to learn one song a week. Many starting out on this journey want to learn a song a day. This is too much for most people. Focus on playing the song a few times each day while also maintaining your current practice material, which would include the other things we need to improve.

Learn the different parts of each new song if you can. In most there are more than one guitar part; like a strumming part, bubble part, back beat part, arpeggios, and many more.

go along. Over the years I have learnt many different genres of music from classical and opera through to metal, jazz, blues, rock, fingerstyle, etc., using these techniques. And no some advice for more advanced players...

Learn songs by ear. Many players tend to rush to the internet these days to find chords for songs. That will not be good for your musicianship. Working things out by ear, although not easy at first, helps with a number of other musical skills, not to mention ear training. After a while you should be able to hear popular chord progressions by ear, so you don't have to race to the internet to find chord progressions for songs – which most often are wrong.

Write a chord chart of the song. Once you have worked out

ideas for a solo, etc., as well as many other things. Don't skip that part.

So where do you start you may ask?

Again, start with easy stuff first. Whether you have just learned your open chords or as a more advanced player are trying to work things out by ear using triads up the neck, always start off with easy to play tunes. Maybe the one with the least number of chords, and preferably an easy enough strum part. You could type in "songs that use three chords" into any search engine and plenty will come up.

Quick wins with easier songs to begin is very motivational, but be careful not to go forward too quickly or the reverse happens quickly – overwhelm yourself and frustration set in.

For players who like classic rock maybe some Creedence Clearwater Revival songs like *Bad Moon Rising* which uses D, G, and A. Many CCR songs use only use three or four chords. Or a more modern song by Corella, *Blue Eyed Māori*, which uses Dm, Gm, Am.

Among the benefits of increasing your repertoire are: having more fun playing guitar; increasing your musical and technical abilities; increasing the number of gigs you will get; and meeting more friends and people within different music circles. There are many more.

I hope this article helps motivate you to increase your current repertoire, or to upskill into working out more advanced songs or other instrumental parts.

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it. Treating music as a solitary pursuit is one of the quickest ways to become frustrated and giving up that I know of.

To use a sports analogy, people who play rugby or netball do not just practise passing the ball, playing as a team, running to keep fit, etc., because they like doing the drills, they do it to play the game. We are the same, our game is playing songs with our friends in jam sessions, performing on stage, or at open mic nights, etc.

As a social musician it is not enough to just know the intro to this song, a riff of that song, or a solo or an ending to another popular song. You must be able to play songs from start to end comfortably, in time, and have played them enough times to have it all memorised.

So, the big question is how do we increase our repertoire?

First, make a list of 40-50 of the most played songs in your

Listen carefully to all the parts of a song, work out what they are and practise them. Knowing all the guitar parts in a jam session allows you to dish out easier parts to the less skilled players around you, while the more advanced parts can be covered by the more skilled. This gives all the players in the room a chance to play and interact with each other.

Focus on your personal main genre first. You should be able to play around 50 songs in your current genre before moving onto others. For example, if you are a rock player learn 50-60 popular rock songs before moving into blues or metal, etc. You can add other genres later.

The reason to initially focus on just one musical style is that many genres use specific musical devices and chord progressions that are associated with that genre, so it makes it easier to learn a specific genre as you

a tune reasonably well then it's a good skill to write out a chord chart for it. This will also help you memorise it, which is something you need to do for the most played songs in your repertoire. Experienced players will have thousands of songs memorised over many years of playing.

Learn some of the other instrumental parts. Once you learn all the guitar parts in a song, then it's time to learn the piano, horns, bass, or drum parts if they exist. Many top players do this automatically, and for numerous gigs I've been on there was no piano player, so I was expected to play the prominent piano parts.

Learn the melody. Guitar players are generally bad at knowing the melody of songs, while other instrumentalists like piano, horns, etc., are normally very good. Knowing the melody of songs can help you in memorising the song, give you