

# Jazz Guitar Warm-ups and Practice Routine

By Mike Dana

## TECHNIQUE AND STRETCHING

- **The Chain** (*develops correct finger position and placement*)
  - 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 on low E (hold down each finger) then on A, etc. Then backwards from high E.
  - Later on...start on low E, then D, then, A, then G etc. Then backwards from High E to G etc.
- **The Diagonal** (*develops cross/alternate picking. Courtesy of Jerry Hahn*)
  - 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 diagonal shape going up across four strings , reverse direction coming down
  - Then 4 – 3 – 2 – 1, going up across four strings , reverse direction coming down
  - Try starting the 4-note pattern on 4+ instead of the downbeat (rhythmic displacement.)
- **The Caterpillar** (*works on stretching*)
  - Start on a higher position
  - Diagonal major 7 chords shape
  - Lower 1<sup>st</sup> finger, then 2<sup>nd</sup>, then 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>
  - You're now one fret lower. Continue on down as far as you can.
- **Legato** (*develops LH slurs*)
  - Any string or position that's comfortable
  - 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 3 – 2 repeat (it's a 6 note pattern; pick 1<sup>st</sup> note only, the rest are LH attacks.)
  - Vary the picking...
    - pick on 1 only
    - pick on 1 and 4 LH notes (I alternate down and up)
    - pick every other note (1 3 3 LH notes. Alternate picking)

## SCALES AND ARPEGGIOS

- General tips
  - I think of scales and arpeggios as part of the warm-up process.
  - ALWAYS follow the Circle of 5ths
  - Cover all ranges of the neck (lower, middle, higher, upper)
    - Focus on position playing (across the neck) at first, then add vertical playing (up/down the neck) later.
  - I do both alternate picking and legato picking (slur from the “and” to the next beat)
  - You don't have to start on the root all the time! Start on, say, 2 (= Dorian)
  - Try starting on 4+ or 1+ sometimes (rhythmic displacement.)
  - Slow, steady, legato, CLEAN. Use a metronome. Record yourself occasionally, listen back.
  - **How you practice = how you play.**

- The “Big 3” scales
  - **Major**
    - Includes the modes; Dorian, Phrygian etc.
  - **Jazz minor** [*ascending melodic*]
    - Includes Lydian dominant, altered dom. [*diminished whole-tone, super locrian*], Phrygian nat. 9, Lydian augmented
  - **Diminished** [*Dominant 9-tone*]
- **Arpeggios to focus on from major scale**
  - Major 7, Minor 7, Dominant 7, half diminished 7
- **Arpeggios to focus on from jazz minor scale**
  - Min (MA 7), Min 9 (MA 7), Maj 7 #5

## WORDS OF WISDOM

- Don’t check out mentally (no mindless finger-wiggling!)
- Get the most out of your scale practice: improve your understanding of the fingerboard, your sight-reading, and your ear **WHILE YOU PRACTICE YOPUR SCALES!**
  - As you play (slowly!) the scale **AND** look at the fingerboard, also do this:
    - Say the name of the note you are playing (helps your fingerboard knowledge.)
    - Say the number of the scale degree you are playing (helps your theory.)
    - When you’re ready, sing (don’t say) the note name or scale degree. It’s OK to change octaves when things get too high or low) This is **FANTASTIC** for ear training!
    - Close your eyes and “see” the staff in your mind. Visualize where the note you are playing sits in the staff (helps your reading.)
    - When you’re feeling invincible, **play** the scale, **sing** the name/degree, and **see** the note on the staff.
- Hey, if you are going to practice your scale for X minutes every day, why not improve your fingerboard skills, theory, ear, and sight reading **AT THE SAME TIME?** It’s a no-brainer. 😊
- Figure out a realistic amount of time where you can keep focused on what you’re doing. When your mind wanders, **STOP**, walk around, play with the dog...then come back focused. Personally, I do 20 minute sessions (but I do as many as I can!)
- Keep distractions away! No unrelated phone/tablet/laptop stuff allowed.
- You can’t do everything every day. But you *can* keep a log or notebook, and make sure you cover everything over time.
- I like to “warm down” too. I always end each practice session by playing whatever I want: solo guitar, soloing over changes, playing along with albums, whatever you like. Think of it as dessert. 😊