

B. How do you Teach your Strumstick to Sing?

Even when just playing chords, it is good to vary the rhythms, the chord voicing, the intensity of strumming, muffling and choking....to vary all the little things that you can control so that even a simple Strumstick part has life, emotion, and musical expression in it. The word *Dimension* comes to mind.

Properly done, making your Strumstick sing should be pretty transparent, not so dramatically noticeable as a technique. What should be noticed is the expression. Rather than the listener saying, "oh, there is a muted chord at the one beat for accent," what you want is the listener saying, "wow, this song is really opening up and coming alive now." Even more and important, is the listener feeling "wow, I feel really open and alive now!" And you are always one of the listeners, so it all applies to playing just for yourself, too.

Let's begin by looking at the range of variation we can access on Strumstick.

C. The Strumstick Musical Palette

Painters speak of a palette of colors, meaning both the broad array of colors at their disposal to paint with, and also, more subtly, a group of colors that are related, though different. The idea of a palette, in both senses, is a convenient metaphor for keeping track of the many sound effects Strumstick can produce. We might look to things from the Rhythm Palette in one part of a song, or from the Tonal Palette or the Chord Palette. All these things comprise the Strumstick Musical Palette, a handy way of mentally organizing the things we will be talking about so they can be ready at hand when you are playing.

First we will assemble a group of techniques, and then look at employing them for emotional effect.

D. The Rhythm Palette

From Part 1:

Free Strumming (adding upstrums, leaving out downstrums)

Accenting

Percussive effects (Chopping, Cutting, Muting)

Left hand Effects (Hammering-on, Pulling-off, Sliding)

New To This Part:

• Tempo / Effective Tempo

Tempo is how fast a beat you are playing. This is a key choice to make in arranging a song. Playing faster feels different than playing slower.

Effective tempo is different than actual tempo. You can actually change the effective tempo (the feel of speed in the song) without changing the actual tempo.

Example: Play 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + with down and upstrums: then play it again using only downstrums (downstrums are coming twice as fast). Your actual tempo is the same but it feels like you are playing much faster. Effective tempo depends on the fact that a given beat will sound different when played with one sound only, or two sounds

alternately.

Example 2: Play with a steady beat the 2nd fret 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 . Now play, same beat, 2nd and 3rd frets, 2 3 2 3 2 3 2 3. What do you hear about the feeling of the tempo?

- **Uni-sound / Multi-sound rhythms**

Your ear seems to separate multiple sounds and not string them together in the