

## Guitar Skills – What an Arranger Needs to Know

The freedom an arranger has obviously depends on the skill of the guitar player. Here are rough categories of skills and what they allow for an arranger

### Strumming chords

#### Open position chord strumming

- \* This is where almost all guitarists start
- \* One or more strings are not fretted while playing the chord
- \* Generally limited to the keys of C, G, D, A, and E major and relative minor keys
- \* Some 7<sup>th</sup>, sus, and 6<sup>th</sup> chords are accessible in open position

#### Triad Barre chord strumming

- \* Index finger is used to fret some or all of the strings at once – other three fingers used to form the chord
- \* Requires a long enough index finger to reach across the neck and strength in the index finger to properly fret all the strings
- \* Allows all the major/minor chords to be played – thus music can be in any key
- \* Some chords inversions with a non-root bass note are available. These are notated as chord/bass and are often referred to by guitarists as “slash chords” (eg G/B)

#### Advanced Barre chord strumming

- \* Complicated chords including sus, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and higher as well as all the various diminished and augmented tones are all available once barre chording is learned; however a guitarist may not have the required “muscle memory” for unusual chord types.
- \* Depending on the skill level of the guitarist, you might want to suggest a way of fingering a particular chord with a fretboard diagram.

### Picking/Arpeggiating chords

#### Advanced strumming

- \* Usually this starts with more complicated strumming patterns involving alternating the lowest note, for example, between the root and fifth.
- \* Strumming patterns can be suggested by writing chord symbols (including slash chords if you want a non-root bass note) over percussion-style notation
- \* Some guitarists can play multiple patterns and styles, but cannot read notated music – they play from chord charts in the desired style (e.g. rock, blues, jazz, latin, country, shuffle). Alternatively some guitarists pick up and play the desired style by listening to the arrangement.

#### Arpeggiation - Two distinct styles

- \* **Flat picking:** individual notes of a fingered chord are played with a flat pick, can generally only play one string at a time unless the player understands advanced flatpicking techniques.
- \* **Finger picking:** Strings of the formed chord are individually played with the thumb (bass) and fingers. Two or more strings are easily played at the same time.

#### Single/multi- note Melody/Harmony:

- \* Generally for more advanced players
- \* Guitar music is notated one octave up.
- \* Consider using or offering to notate music in guitar tablature format

#### Melody+chords/bass

- \* Advanced guitarists who can play in the classical style can read music with melody, full chords and bass; however music must still be arranged for the guitar (look up web sites on classical guitar music notation)