

Accelerate Your Guitar Playing

Featuring Tomo Fujita

BY ADAM MOORE

The subtitle of this DVD is, "Exercises and tips to make you better – faster," and nothing could be more fitting. Coming from Tomo Fujita, a professor at the Berklee College of Music since 1993 and winner of numerous guitar awards, this video will be sure to give your fingers and your brain a workout enroute to quicker and cleaner playing.

A note before beginning: if you're looking for a video full of cool riffs to fill out your bag of tricks, you'll want to look elsewhere. While you'll find plenty of rock, blues, jazz and funk tidbits here, Fujita places much of the emphasis in this video on both the fundamentals of guitar playing and music theory, ideally giving you a solid foundation to build upon.

Part 1 of the DVD starts out with fingering and picking exercises designed to get your hands moving in directions you may not normally think about moving them. Fujita walks you through a series of chromatic scales and intervals, up and down the neck, all the while encouraging you to stray from those default shapes and patterns that we all fall into as guitarists. It is a helpful section, but the exercises will definitely take time to master.


Part 2 of the DVD discusses the fretboard, intervals and ear training. Fujita

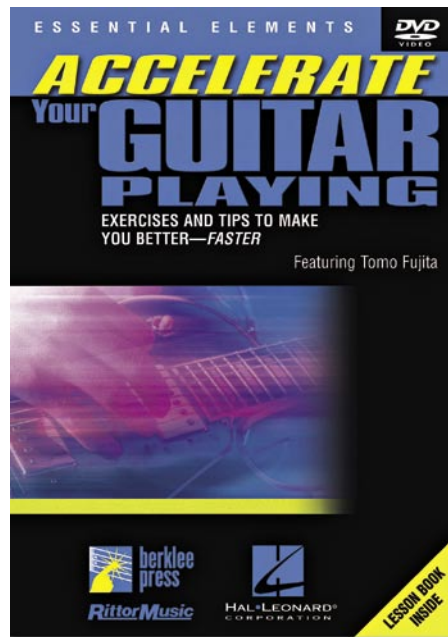
runs through the fretboard, quickly pointing out different locations of notes; however, if this is something that you are really interested in learning, I would recommend a beginning guitar text, simply because this video assumes a basic level of fretboard knowledge, and doesn't dig in too much. Ear training exercises are discussed briefly, as are basic intervals; all important things for the dedicated musician to know, and again, something that you should definitely take some time to study.

From there, Fujita moves into plenty of rhythm practice, covering things like left hand muting, alternate picking and handling blues changes and other various grooves. There's very little lead theory here, but Fujita makes a good point, noting, "People spend 90% of their time practicing solos and 10% of their time practicing rhythm, yet on stage, these times are often reversed." Well said, and Fujita does a commendable job of introducing some complex rhythm exercises that will keep even the most technical guitarist on their toes. The guy is a consummate rhythm player, as is evidenced by the several performance clips of him jamming along in various styles.

There are only a few downsides to this DVD; in the included instructional booklet (which contains the notation

for every exercise on the video), tab is not included for some of the earlier exercises are from part 1 (the fingering and picking exercises), but then it mysteriously shows up in part 2 and for the rest of the book; if you're not much for staff reading, you might want to bone up a bit before cracking open the booklet. Also, some of the exercises on the video move rather quickly in succession, with little explanation from Fujita. You'll find yourself frequently flipping through the booklet to find the corresponding lesson, and so a DVD player with good pause and rewind functions are definitely recommended to keep up.

In the end, for those of us looking to improve the fundamentals of the guitar, and become well-rounded musicians, this is an excellent DVD from Tomo Fujita to help get us there. With plenty of practice and dedication, players watching *Accelerate Your Guitar Playing* will notice impressive leaps in their guitar abilities. It's like having a Berklee professor in your living room! 



Accelerate Your Guitar Playing
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