

# Fillin' in the Blanks

(A guided improv exercise for bass guitar)

The first system of the exercise is in 4/4 time. It consists of two staves: a bass staff and a tablature staff. The bass staff contains a melodic line with eighth and quarter notes, including rests. The tablature staff shows the corresponding fret numbers: 5, 5, 3, 5, 5, 3, 5, 5, 3, 5, 3, 3, 1, 3. There are two measures of rest in the first system.

The second system of the exercise is in 4/4 time. It consists of two staves: a bass staff and a tablature staff. The bass staff contains a melodic line with eighth and quarter notes, including rests. The tablature staff shows the corresponding fret numbers: 5, 5, 3, 3, 5, 5, 5, 5, 4, 4, 5. There are two measures of rest in the second system.

The third system of the exercise is in 4/4 time. It consists of two staves: a bass staff and a tablature staff. The bass staff contains a melodic line with eighth and quarter notes, including rests. The tablature staff shows the corresponding fret numbers: 3, 3, 2, 2, 3, 3, 4. There are two measures of rest in the third system.

**Directions:** Play as written once (or until comfortable), counting the rests as rests with no improvisation. Then play it again with no measures of rest, improvising in between the written sections of music.

This quick exercise is designed to work with the simple riff 'shapes' we talked about in previous lessons. The key area of focus here is not necessarily virtuosic playing, or finding 'correct' notes at all, but to listen to what notes come before and after areas where you are free to improvise. What notes might connect these disparate musical ideas so that someone listening would not even be able to tell that there were gaps in the written music? Improvising is about subtlety as much as it is about creativity! Find different approaches that make sense to your ears, and practice them. Remember to listen both to rhythms and notes! Have fun with it and see if you can put this 'puzzle' together.