

# PINKY POWER

BY GLENN WEISER

**S**trengthening the left-hand pinky finger is a common concern among beginners, and rightly so. This finger is naturally disadvantaged by its size and also by the fact that the pinky side of the hand is less adept neurologically than the thumb side. Building up dexterity in the fretting-hand pinky is therefore important for playing both chords and single-string leads. The following exercises and simple blues accompaniment are designed to help you “empower” your pinky.

Exercise 1 (see page 98) is on one string only. Play the first string open and then place your index finger on the first fret. Play the note (F) with the finger as close to the fret bar as possible.

Leave that finger down and place your middle finger on the second fret (of the same string), also as close to the fret bar as possible, playing an F $\sharp$ . Next, place your ring finger on the third fret and play the G. Then place your pinky on the fourth fret and play the A $\flat$ . Next, begin removing your fingers one at a time, first lifting your pinky and playing the G, then lifting your ring finger, etc., until you’re back to playing the open string. Repeat the exercise ten times on each string.

The second group of exercises (see page 98), which were taught to me by a cellist, also involves playing only one string. Exercise 2a starts with the index finger on the first fret of the first string.

Play the note (F), leave the finger in place, place the pinky on the fourth fret, and play that note (A $\flat$ ). Lift the pinky, place the ring finger on the third fret, and play the G. Leave the ring finger in place, put the pinky back down on the fourth fret, and play the A $\flat$  again. You should now have three fingers down on the first string—the index finger, ring finger, and pinky. The other two exercises work the same way: 2b involves the first, second, and fourth fingers, and 2c the second, third, and fourth fingers. As with Exercise 1, you should practice these exercises on each string.

Next come a more demanding set of exercises that benefit not only the pinky, but the entire left hand. They are

done by holding down either the first or sixth string with any two fingers and then walking across the neck with the remaining free fingers. For example, Exercise 3a starts out with the first finger on the sixth string, fifth fret (the note A), and the third finger on the seventh fret of the same string (B). With the first and third fingers in place on the sixth string, play the fifth string, sixth fret, with the second finger and then the same string on the eighth fret with the pinky. Then play the rest of the strings from fourth to first the same way—first and third fingers on the sixth string,

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second finger playing the notes on the sixth fret, and pinky playing the notes on the eighth fret. If you have small hands, you might have some difficulty reaching all the way back to the first string.

In Exercise 3b, the process is turned upside down. You'll be holding down the first string at the fifth and seventh frets with your index and ring fingers, while your middle finger and pinky walk from the second to the sixth strings on the sixth and eighth frets. You can also vary the exercises by playing the eighth-fret note before the sixth-fret note on each string.

The remaining exercises all work the same way, but with different combinations of anchored and free fingers. All combinations are to be done starting from both the bass and treble sides of the neck. These exercises can be strenuous, so do them slowly and carefully and take a break if your hand gets tired.

The last exercise is a common blues backup pattern in the key of A. When you play this pattern on the fourth and fifth strings, this is an A chord riff; on the fourth and third strings, it's a D riff; and on the sixth and fifth strings, it's an E riff. The only time the riff varies is in the second ending, where the first finger stays on the fourth string, and the third and fourth fingers are on the fifth string instead of the fourth.

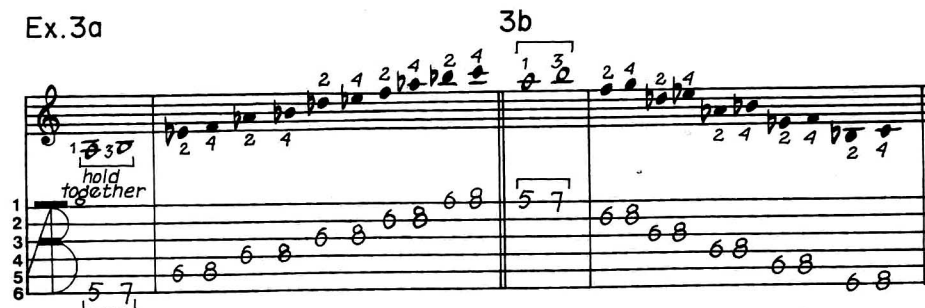
This backup pattern should be played with a pick, using downstrokes only. It can be done at a slow, moderate, or fast tempo. By the way, if you have a fellow picker to jam with, this pattern can be played as a duet with "Boll Weevil Blues," which was printed on page 30 of the September/October '92 issue. ■

Ex.1 *leave fingers down*

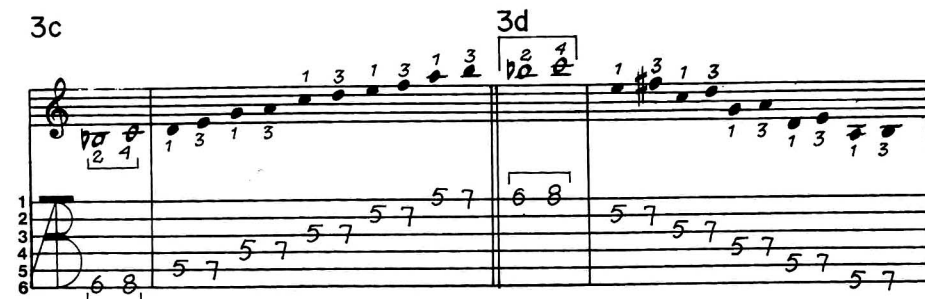


Ex. 2a 2b 2c

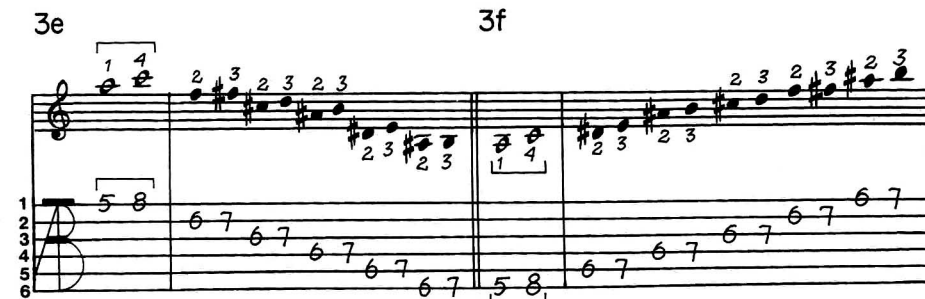
Ex. 3a



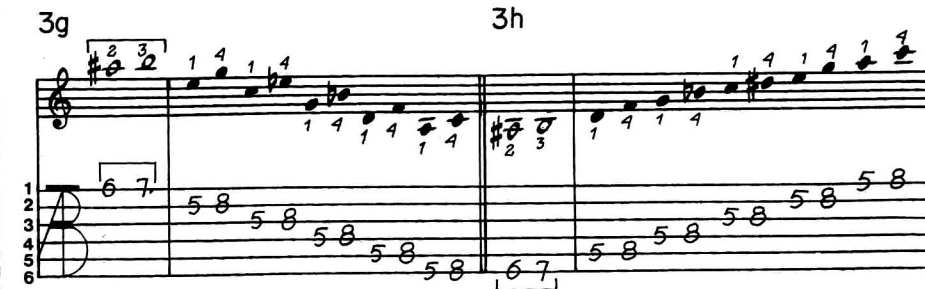
3c



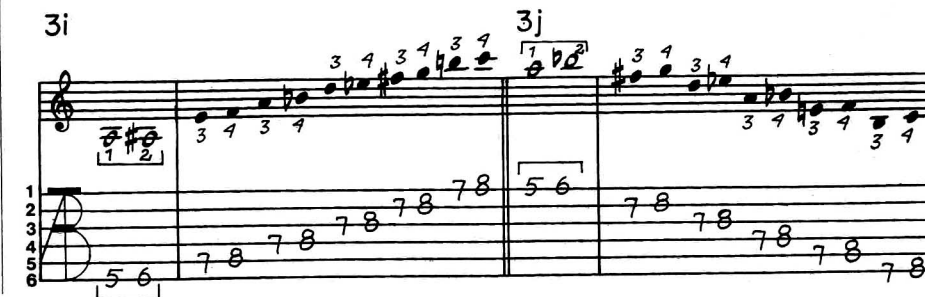
3e



3g



3i



3k

3l

3k

3l

## Ex. 4 EVERYMAN'S SHUFFLE

A<sup>7</sup> D<sup>7</sup> A<sup>7</sup>

simile

D<sup>7</sup>

A<sup>7</sup> E<sup>7</sup>

D<sup>7</sup> A E<sup>7</sup> Turnaround A