

PREFACE

"The goal isn't to play jazz—it's to speak through it."

Why This Book Exists

In December 2025, I found myself preparing for a series of informal sessions with musician friends across North London—guitarists, bassists, drummers, and the occasional horn player dropping by. We needed material that was genuinely playable, harmonically interesting, and suited to the guitar trio format. What we didn't need was another collection of transcriptions or standards arrangements.

So I composed these pieces myself.

Each tune in this book is an original composition written in the style of a jazz guitar master—from Jim Hall's reflective lyricism to Ant Law's rhythmic complexity. They're designed not as tributes or imitations, but as vehicles: functional pieces that let you explore specific harmonic, melodic, and rhythmic concepts while building real repertoire you can perform.

This isn't an exercise book disguised as music. These are real tunes. They have form, narrative, and emotional arc. The educational material surrounding each piece exists to help you internalize the language so thoroughly that when you play, you're not thinking about theory—you're making music with friends.

The Core Philosophy

Three principles guide this method:

- 1. Style as Vocabulary.** Each chapter immerses you in a specific guitarist's harmonic and melodic language. By learning to "speak" in Jim Hall's voice, then Pat Metheny's, then John Scofield's, you develop range. Over time, these voices blend into your own.
 - 2. Trio Thinking.** The guitar trio is a unique format. You're simultaneously the harmonic foundation, melodic voice, and textural colorist. Every tune in this book is conceived for this reality—with space for the bass to walk or lock in, the drums to breathe or push, and the guitar to lead without dominating.
 - 3. Performance-Ready.** Each piece is designed to be gigged. They have clear heads, logical solo sections, and satisfying endings. The goal of your practice is always the same: play these tunes with other musicians, in front of other people, as soon as you're ready.
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The Eleven Tunes

The compositions are arranged by quality and impact—the strongest pieces first. Here's what each explores:

- 1. The Mirror** (Jim Hall) — Reflective, unhurried harmony. Teaches patience, voice-leading, and the power of space. The quietest tune in the book, and often the most powerful in performance.
- 2. Crystal Silence** (Chick Corea) — Luminous major 9th chords, ECM-style clarity. Explores quartal voicings, modal ambiguity, and lyrical phrasing across long arcs.

3. Orbit (Wayne Shorter) — Elliptical harmony, unexpected resolutions. This is mystery and propulsion combined—Shorter's gift for making the strange feel inevitable.

4. Parallax (John Scofield) — Angular lines over funk elasticity. Blues chromaticism meets modern sophistication. The rhythm section will love this one.

5. First Light (Pat Metheny) — Open-sky lyricism, arpeggiated figures that shimmer. Teaches breathing, dynamics, and the Lydian palette.

6. Angular Motion (Pat Martino) — Linear intensity, fretboard logic at speed. A workout for technique that never sacrifices musicality.

7. Blue Cycle (Rosenwinkel/Monder) — Modern blues abstraction. Reharmonization without losing the form. For jazz-savvy listeners who lean in.

8. Harmolodic Sketch (Bill Frisell) — Textural, spacious, Americana-inflected. Open triads that ring like bells. The art of understatement.

9. Entangled Horizons (Ant Law) — Rhythmic displacement, modern extensions. Complex on paper, natural in practice. Teaches precision that sounds effortless.

10. Fractured Light (Ant Law) — 7/4 meter, refracted through a prism. Seven beats, one unified groove. For when you're ready to leave 4/4 behind.

11. Greezy (Grant Green) — Soul-jazz simplicity, pocket and blues vocabulary. The anchor tune—fun, immediate, and always welcome at a session.

What Each Chapter Contains

Every chapter follows the same structure, designed to take you from first encounter to performance-ready:

Overview

Context for the style, the concept behind the tune, and what you'll learn. Read this first to orient yourself.

The Form

Complete chord charts with section breakdowns. This is your roadmap—memorize it early.

Scale Palette

Scale choices for each chord, with color tones highlighted. Not prescriptive rules, but proven options.

Triad Pair Vocabulary

Modern linear approach using paired triads. This is how contemporary players generate melodic material without running scales.

The Three Choruses

Three versions of increasing complexity:

- **Version A** — Lyrical, melody-focused, space to breathe
- **Version B** — Triad-based, more motion, developing fluency
- **Version C** — Chord melody, full voicings, performance-ready

Voicing Reference

Practical chord shapes you'll actually use. Fingerings, positions, voice-leading connections.

Technique Focus

Style-specific techniques unique to each chapter—volume swells for Frisell, hybrid picking for Ant Law, arpeggiated phrasing for Metheny.

Practice Routine

A four-week structured approach. Week by week, you build the components, then integrate them.

Listening Recommendations

Essential recordings to study. These are your real teachers—I'm just pointing the way.

Self-Evaluation

Checklist for mastery. Be honest with yourself. If you can answer "yes" to every question, you're ready to perform.

How to Use This Book

If you're a beginner: Start with The Mirror, First Light, and Greezy. These are the most approachable harmonically and will build your confidence.

If you're intermediate: Work through Chapters 1–6 in order. The progression is intentional.

If you're advanced: Jump to Chapters 7–10 for modern vocabulary. The Ant Law tunes will challenge your rhythmic assumptions.

If you're preparing for a gig: Pick three tunes maximum. Learn them deeply rather than superficially. A trio set of The Mirror, Parallax, and Greezy covers a lot of ground.

A Final Word

The best jazz I've ever played happened in living rooms and rehearsal spaces, with friends who were willing to take risks and listen hard. That's who this book is for—musicians who want to grow, who aren't afraid of complexity, but who never forget that the point is connection.

I hope these tunes serve you as well as they've served me. Learn them, adapt them, make them your own. And when you play them with your own musician friends, somewhere in your own corner of the world, I hope they sound like yours.

Mike Bryant

North London, December 2025

Continue to Introduction →

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