
London College of Music Examinations

Rock Guitar

Handbook Grade 2

From 2019

Rock Guitar: Grade 2

This handbook is part of a progressive series of handbooks, primarily intended for candidates considering taking London College of Music examinations in rock guitar. The series provides a solid foundation of musical education for any rock guitar student, whether intending to take an exam or not. Candidates must always refer to the current Rock Guitar Syllabus: from 2019.

Syllabus validity

This handbook is valid for examinations from Summer 2019.

Entering for an exam

Exam entries can be made online at lcme.uwl.ac.uk/enter

Audio recordings

Audio recordings of the pieces and backing tracks are available from lcme.uwl.ac.uk

Cover design

Each LCME Rock Guitar handbook has a unique cover design. Designers MuirMcNeil used the instrument name to create a multi-layered typographic 'seed' composition, using interlocking fonts from their TwoPlus type system. This composition was then zoomed, cropped and modified by a colour palette specific to the instrument, generating a one-off cover design for each book. The seed composition is scaled in calibrated increments, the early grades zooming deep into the artwork, the higher grades revealing more of the typographic basis of the composition. As a result, bold, abstract, geometric cover designs develop progressively in their detail and complexity through the series.

Rock Guitar: Grade 2

Catalogue no: LL 344

© 2019 University of West London, LCM Publications

Cover design by Muir McNeil

LCM Examinations

lcme.uwl.ac.uk

Contents

Rock Guitar: Grade 2

Introduction	4
Prepared Performances	5
Improvisation	8
Aural Assessment	14

Introduction

Tuning

For exam purposes instruments should be tuned to concert pitch (A=440Hz). The use of an electronic tuner or other tuning aid is permitted. The examiner will offer an E or A note to tune to on request.

Notation

Fretboxes

Fretboxes are used to illustrate the chords required at this level. The vertical lines represent the strings (with the line furthest to the right representing the high E string); horizontal lines represent the frets. 0 above a string line indicates that an open (unfretted) string should be played. The numbers on the lines show the recommended fingering.

Tab

As well as traditional musical notation the pieces within this book are also notated using tablature. The horizontal lines represent the strings (with the top line being the high E string). The numbers on the string lines refer to the frets — 0 on a line means play that string open (unfretted). Tablature does not include rhythm notation, so you should look at the traditional notation and listen to the recordings to guide you.

Fingering and picking options

Throughout the exam, it is your choice whether to use a plectrum, fingers or a combination of both; a thumbpick can be used if desired. The fingerings given in this book are likely to be effective for a wide range of players, however any alternative fingerings that produce an effective musical result are acceptable.

Component 1: 60 marks

Prepared Performances

Requirements

Performance of two pieces, chosen from the list below:

Day Tripper — The Beatles
Wonderful Tonight — Eric Clapton
Should I Stay or Should I Go — The Clash

Information

Obtaining the notation and audio

The notation and audio tracks for the pieces above are included in the book *Graded Guitar Songs: 9 Rock Classics for Beginning Level Guitarists* (Hal Leonard). These songs have been arranged to be suitable for this grade.

Backing tracks

The pieces at this level are to be performed along to set backing tracks; these backing tracks are on a CD which is included with *Graded Guitar Songs: 9 Rock Classics for Beginning Level Guitarists*. You do not need to bring these to the exam, as the examiner will provide the necessary backing tracks. Also included with the CD are recordings of the tracks performed in full for demonstration purposes.

Performance style

Performances should be accurate reproductions of the specially arranged versions of the pieces as notated and recorded in the book *Graded Guitar Songs — 9 Rock Classics for Beginning Level Guitarists*. Alternative fingerings and playing positions can be adopted if preferred, provided the overall musical result is not altered. Prior to the performance commencing, you will be allowed a brief soundcheck to choose your sound and volume level. A clean or a distorted sound can be used, and you can bring distortion or other effects units to the exam providing you can set them up promptly and unaided.

Performing from memory

You are encouraged to perform the pieces from memory, although this is not a requirement. If notation is used it should not detract in any way from the confidence and presentation of the performance.

Guidance

Performances should be fully accurate and very confidently presented. Timing, clarity and technical control should be totally secure throughout and some expressive qualities (such as varying the dynamics of the performance) should be displayed.

In performance

Day Tripper

The arrangement of this piece is in the original key of E major. The intro riff moves smoothly across the three bass strings.

The intro riff repeats five times before the verse starts, so count the repeats carefully and listen for the lead guitar playing the vocal melody as the cue for the beginning of the verse.

The move from the last note of the verse in bar 10 to the first F#5 power chord in the chorus is tricky to execute smoothly so practise this transition carefully. There are two different rhythm patterns used in the chorus, so follow the notation carefully and listen to the recorded track to ensure you are familiar with how these are to be played.

The riff that occurs in the bridge (bars 23 to 24) may require practice to perform smoothly—to avoid a wide finger stretch, a shift of fingerboard position may be required to reach all the notes—so you'll need to take care to adopt a fingering approach that enables fluency and accuracy.

Although not indicated in the notation, there are instances where the use of a hammer-on may produce a smoother, more fluent sound and this technique can be utilised if preferred. In bar 1 the G# note on fret 4 can be produced by hammering-on from the preceding G note on fret 3. Similarly the E note on fret 2 at the end of bar 2 can be played using a hammer-on from the open D string that precedes it. If using a hammer-on, bring the appropriate fretting-hand finger down firmly onto the note to ensure that it sounds clearly and make sure that the rhythm of the notes is not altered by employing this technique.

Wonderful Tonight

The arrangement of this piece is in the original key of G major. There are several different guitar parts on the original artist's version of this track; our arrangement combines elements of several of these parts—so follow the notation carefully throughout to ensure that your performance is accurate.

The slow tempo and ballad feel means the pitch accuracy of the string bends in the intro section is particularly important. Similarly, the slide and hammer-on in bar 8 both need to be executed smoothly and cleanly as demonstrated on the recording.

In the opening bar of the verse (bar 9) the high D note at fret 10 should be held down and allowed to ring out for a count of 3 beats. Whilst this note is ringing the open string pattern on the D, G and B strings can be picked.

If preferred, this optional open string pattern in bar 9 can be omitted from the exam performance to ensure a smooth transition to the D chord in bar 10.

Care is needed for the chord changes that occur throughout the remainder of the verse, chorus and bridge sections to ensure they are executed smoothly and cleanly. Practise the chords carefully to maintain an even rhythm pattern, using whichever picking method feels most effective.

There are a number of techniques such as string bends and slides within the arrangement. Practise each of the string bends on its own to ensure the string is being bent up to the correct pitch. Using at least two fingers to execute a string bend will give greater control and accuracy. Make sure the starting note of each bend doesn't ring out for too long and that this note rings out clearly when bending back down to it. For the slide that occurs in bar 8, move the fretting-hand finger smoothly and confidently from fret 12 to 13; the note on fret 12 has no real rhythmic value so don't let it ring out for too long.

Should I Stay or Should I Go

The arrangement of this piece is in the original key of D major. The percussive strums in bar 2 are performed by resting the fingers of the fretting hand gently against the strings to mute them whilst strumming. Count the rhythm carefully in bar 4 to ensure the hammer-on is played correctly — at the start of the third beat of the bar.

The open string 'vamps' that occur between a number of the chord changes throughout the piece help to maintain the energy and fluency of the music. The chord changes still need to be executed smoothly and fluently, especially the tricky move from the G chord to the F chord that occurs in bar 11. Practise all of these changes carefully to ensure that the rhythm remains accurate and consistent even when playing the open strings between the chords. Try to keep your strumming hand moving evenly and smoothly all the time when practising these chord changes — this will help you learn how quickly your fretting hand has to move to ensure the changes are accurate and rhythmically secure.

Follow the notation and listen to the track carefully in the chorus to ensure you are familiar with the rhythm patterns that are required there. The chords need to change smoothly and the rhythm is quite tricky to execute at first. In particular the move from the G chord to the F chord and back to the G chord in bars 21 and 22 will require some careful practice to execute smoothly.

The track features a number of rests (silences) between chords; look out for these when playing and ensure you silence the strings when a rest is notated.

Component 2: 30 marks

Improvisation

Requirements

Lead and rhythm improvisations over a previously unseen chord progression

Information

In the exam

You will be shown an 8-bar chord progression in 4/4 time. This will be played five times without stopping (on a backing track). After the final playing, the backing track will end on the first chord of the progression played once.

Improvisation structure

- **Verse 1** (listening)
Listen and digest the chord progression, without playing
- **Verses 2 to 3** (lead playing)
A 4-beat count-in will be given and then during the next two verses you should improvise a lead guitar solo
- **Verses 4 to 5** (rhythm playing)
A 4-beat count-in will be given and then during the last two verses, you should improvise a rhythm guitar part

Preparation time

You will be given a short time to study the chord chart and will be allowed a brief soundcheck with the track, prior to the performance commencing, to choose your sound and volume level. A clean or a distorted sound can be used, and you can bring distortion or other effects units to the exam providing you can set them up promptly and unaided.

Backing track

The backing track will include drums, bass and rhythm guitar for the first three verses, but in the last two verses the recorded rhythm guitar part will be omitted so you can perform your own rhythm guitar part. The rhythm guitar part recorded on the backing track gives an indication of the standard that is expected. Your rhythm playing should be stylistically appropriate and with a feel

that is in keeping with the backing track.

Chords

The following chords may occur in the chord progressions — open position chords are expected for all except for those marked * :

- Major chords: A C D E F* G
- Minor chords: Am Dm Em F#m*
- Dominant 7th chords: A7 D7 E7

Scales

To ensure accuracy it is essential to select the most appropriate scale to improvise with. At this grade the first chord in the progression will be the key chord — it will indicate the scale that would generally be best to use for improvising a lead solo. Although other scale options and improvisation approaches are acceptable, the scales listed below will provide a core foundation for improvisation at the appropriate level of technical development. At this grade, improvisation using 2-octave fretted scales is expected.

Scale	Use over progressions featuring these chords
A pentatonic major	A D E F#m
A blues	A7 D7 E7 C G
A natural minor	Am C Dm Em F G

Sample tests

Included at the end of this chapter are examples of the style and standard of the tests that will be given at this grade. Above each chart is a suggestion of a scale that could be used for improvisation. These are given for guidance in this book; they will not appear in the examination. Audio recordings of these, with backing tracks in the style of those that will be used in the exam, can be downloaded from the LCME website.

Guidance

Performance advice

The examiner will be looking for accuracy and confidence in the execution, with a high level of clarity and fluency. There should be clear evidence of stylistic interpretation, inventiveness and creativity that is maintained throughout the track. Dynamic markings are not included, to enable you to display your own dynamic interpretation.

Lead playing techniques

The improvised solo should be accurate in terms of note selection and timing in relation to the accompaniment with some evidence of melodic phrasing and shaping. The use of specialist techniques such as string bending, slides and slurs can be attempted if you wish, but a high level of skill in using these techniques

is not expected at this grade. Keep an awareness of where you are in the chord chart during the lead section, so that the 4-beat count-in to commence your rhythm playing doesn't take you by surprise — the examiner will not restart the backing track once it is underway.

Rhythm playing techniques

Rhythmic security and fluency are expected. When switching to rhythm playing, consider quickly adjusting the volume on your guitar in a controlled manner, as the settings you have used for lead playing may overpower the accompaniment if used for rhythm playing. At this grade, the most straightforward methods of adjusting the volume are:

- Turn down the volume control on your guitar.
- Use the pick-up selector on your guitar to switch to a pick-up with a lower output, or (if your guitar has more than one volume control) to a pick-up that you have pre-adjusted to a lower volume setting.
- If you are using your own distortion/overdrive unit for lead playing, turn this off and use a quieter clean sound for rhythm playing.

Chords

A major

C major

D major

E major

E major

F major

G major

A minor

T 0
A 2
B 0

D minor

T 1
A 3
B 2

E minor

T 0
A 0
B 2

F# minor

T 2
A 2
B 4

A dominant 7

T 2
A 0
B 0

D dominant 7

T 1
A 2
B 0

E dominant 7

T 0
A 1
B 2

Scales

A pentatonic major

A blues

A natural minor

Sample tests

Example 1 (A pentatonic major scale could be used to improvise over this progression)

Example 2 (A pentatonic major scale could be used to improvise over this progression)

A	A	F#m	F#m	
D	D	A	E	

Example 3 (A blues scale could be used to improvise over this progression)

A7	A7	D7	D7	
E7	E7	G	E7	

Example 4 (A blues scale could be used to improvise over this progression)

A7	A7	C	C	
D7	D7	E7	G	

Example 5 (A natural minor scale could be used to improvise over this progression)

Am	Am	F	F	
G	G	Dm	Em	

Example 6 (A natural minor scale could be used to improvise over this progression)

Am	Am	G	G	
Dm	Dm	Em	G	

Component 3: 10 marks

Aural Assessment

Requirements

A series of aural tests, designed to assess your listening ability and musicianship

Rhythm test

A 2-bar riff will be played three times via a recording. During the third playing you will clap along with the exact rhythm of the riff.

The time signature will be 4/4. Note durations will be limited to crotchets (quarter notes) and quavers (eighth notes).

Some examples of the type of riffs that will occur at this grade are shown overleaf, with the rhythm to be clapped indicated below the tab.

Pitch test

The same riff will be played two further times, with a click track. A gap will be left after each playing so you can practise the riff. You will then be asked, after a 1-bar count-in, to play along with the click track, accurately reproducing the riff on the guitar.

The examiner will state which scale the riff is taken from and it will start and end on the keynote of the scale. The range of scales from which the riff will be derived is limited to A pentatonic major, A blues and A natural minor.

Example 1 (A blues)

Musical notation for Example 1 (A blues) in 4/4 time with a key signature of two sharps. The staff shows eighth-note patterns. Below the staff is a guitar neck diagram with the strings labeled T, A, B. Fret numbers 5, 5, 5, 6, 7, 5 are marked on the B string, and 5, 5, 5, 6, 7 are marked on the A string. Below the neck diagram are corresponding eighth-note patterns.

Example 2 (A natural minor)

Musical notation for Example 2 (A natural minor) in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp. The staff shows eighth-note patterns. Below the staff is a guitar neck diagram with the strings labeled T, A, B. Fret numbers 5, 5, 7, 8, 5, 7 are marked on the B string, and 5, 5, 8, 5, 8, 7 are marked on the A string. Below the neck diagram are corresponding eighth-note patterns.

Example 3 (A natural minor)

Musical notation for Example 3 (A natural minor) in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp. The staff shows eighth-note patterns. Below the staff is a guitar neck diagram with the strings labeled T, A, B. Fret numbers 7, 7, 5, 4, 7, 7, 5 are marked on the B string, and 7, 7, 5, 4, 5, 7 are marked on the A string. Below the neck diagram are corresponding eighth-note patterns.

Example 4 (A pentatonic major)

Musical notation for Example 4 (A pentatonic major) in 4/4 time with a key signature of two sharps. The staff shows eighth-note patterns. Below the staff is a guitar neck diagram with the strings labeled T, A, B. Fret numbers 2, 2, 2, 4, 2, 4 are marked on the B string, and 2, 2, 2, 4, 2, 4 are marked on the A string. Below the neck diagram are corresponding eighth-note patterns.

Chord recognition test

The examiner will play a short chord progression once. Without using the guitar, you will be required to state whether it contained either all major chords, all minor chords or all dominant 7th chords.

The range of chords used in this test is limited to:

A C D E F G Am Dm Em F#m A7 D7 E7

Below are examples of the type of chord progressions that will occur at this grade in the chord recognition tests.

Example 1 (major)

| **A** | **D** | **E** | **A** ||

Example 2 (minor)

| **Am** | **Dm** | **Em** | **Am** ||

Example 3 (dominant 7th)

| **A7** | **D7** | **E7** | **A7** ||