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# Zen Guitar



## Synopsis

Unleash the song of your soul with *Zen Guitar*, a contemplative handbook that draws on ancient Eastern wisdom and applies it to music and performance. Each of us carries a song inside us, the song that makes us human. *Zen Guitar* provides the key to unlocking this song—a series of life lessons presented through the metaphor of music. Philip Sudo offers his own experiences with music to enable us to rediscover the harmony in each of our lives and open ourselves to Zen awareness uniquely suited to the Western Mind. Through fifty-eight lessons that provide focus and a guide, the reader is led through to Zen awareness. This harmony is further illuminated through quotes from sources ranging from Eric Clapton and Jimi Hendrix to Miles Davis. From those who have never strummed a guitar to the more experienced, *Zen Guitar* shows how the path of music offers fulfillment in all aspects of life—a winning idea and an instant classic.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Philip Toshio Sudo is not Mel Bay—if you buy *Zen Guitar* looking for scales and chord charts, then yes, you will be disappointed. But the book's concept—the "path of Zen Guitar"—is not how to play, but how to play and, depending on your interpretation, why. It's about motivation and fulfillment, not technique. What the book does—or did for me, at any rate—is help you evaluate why you play guitar in the first place and gives you some food for thought as you go about achieving your guitar goals. I am a sloppy, self-taught player, I have no experience with Zen teachings, and I'm not big on books that offer fun new dogma—but I found the book's focus on the spiritual and

emotional aspects of creating music on a guitar as well as the musician's unique and personal relationship with the instrument both fascinating and extremely valuable. I feel I'm a better player now, practicing with sharper goals and better intentions; the book's advice has helped both broaden my outlook and focus my efforts. At no time does Zen Guitar neglect the importance of practice; it is, in fact, at the heart of the book (its First Point Of Focus: "Don't ask, practice"). Many of its concepts are direct from Zen teachings and beliefs, but the book neither preaches nor drags. Zen Guitar is a difficult book to describe, but I didn't find it difficult to comprehend--and I was able to apply its wisdoms to my playing immediately. As long as you \*want\* to explore the spiritual aspect of playing guitar, the book can be an invaluable tool.

If you can only play one string - then play it! That is the spirit of this book. It connects the basics of guitar playing to spiritual development. Start with the basics, play what you enjoy, do what you are good at. Such easy advice, yet so difficult to embrace. To really understand the book the reader needs to go through it several times, and really ponder what the author means. All chapters start with a quote from famous guitarists, people who know, and is worth listening to.

In this age of mainstream music and synthesized music and voices, and [disappointing] boy bands, VERY few musicians, unfortunately, carry any passion at all for their instrument, or even their craft. Since the first time I picked up a guitar back in 1995, I've been completely and utterly awed and inspired by Johnny Rzeznik of the GOO GOO DOLLS. His songwriting and guitar playing always amazed me, and in one interview I read, he had spoken about this book and how it had helped him. Now, I have been playing guitar for 8 years now...and I'm pretty damn good! I've played for professional theatre productions, various bands, I even played in the band for Late Show with David Letterman. I thought I was good ~ Then I read this book and realized just how much I was MISSING! Don't get it wrong ---> this book isn't going to poison you with some strange new dogma. All you need to do is believe that there is in fact a spiritual connection between what your fingers are doing on the fretboard and what is going on in your heart. This book teaches you how to harness that and use it to your advantage. I honestly believe, and dozens of my co-workers and friends have agreed, that my guitar playing has been taken to a whole new level. ALL YOU GUITAR PLAYERS OUT THERE, I URGE YOU TO DO THE SAME. This book will be the best ... bucks you'll ever spend in your musical career. Enjoy it, and learn something. You might be surprised by what you find out.

This book has a lot of positive reviews by people who are very passionate about it. Some of these reviewers make critical or even insulting statements about readers who don't like the book or give it a negative review. I could be wrong, but the most common criticism of folks who don't like the book seems to be something along the lines of "You don't get it -- this is not a book about technique or specific guitar skills. This is a book about attitude and mindframe, in order to become a better guitar player." And they're absolutely right in their description of what the book is; but the negative reviews here don't seem guilty of expecting the book to be a skills/technique book, so the criticism is a non-sequitur. I fully expect this review to get some comment telling me I don't understand what this book is about; but that comment will be dead wrong. I do know what the book is about. I'm just having trouble finding it useful because it spends its time telling you how to be, without spending much time at all on *how* to change. It tells you the the qualities you should adopt in your approach to the guitar; but it tells you very little in how to internalize those qualities. For example, the book starts by telling you that having the beginner's mind, even when you no longer seem like a beginner by the opinion of outsiders, is of absolute paramount importance. It tells you that you should try to approach the guitar with no preconceptions, as if you've never played before so that what you've learned in the past isn't a barrier to learning more now. I like this philosophy; indeed, as I understand it, many authors have suggested that this is the central precept to following the path of Zen (and, for that matter, to learning anything else, not just guitar). And when I came across those passages, I looked forward to reading some advice on how to learn to be this way, how to change my mindset. But there wasn't any. As another example, the "White Belt to Black Belt" section gives you "The Twelve Points of Focus" -- things you should do -- and "Twelve Common Missteps" -- things you should not do. From this, we learn (among other things) that we should be disciplined in how we practice and play, and that we should put aside ego or the need for immediate gratification. And all of that sounds right to me: there's not a bit of it that seems like bad advice. But *how do you do it*? How do you shut aside the intrusive thoughts of the day and focus? How do you put aside your ego? How do suppress the interference of the desire for instant gratification? Telling you 'these are good things to do' isn't that useful, especially when some of them are obvious. Helping you to learn to do these things or be that way *would* be useful. But the book doesn't seem to do that. The number of positive reviews makes me think that there are some people out there for which this isn't an issue. Some people, I guess, can be told to put aside self-doubt, and are just able to do that. But some of us see that advice and think: "HOW do I put aside self-doubt?" Without such guidance, the book can actually seem very frustrating, like someone is telling you to solve the Riemann hypothesis when you don't know any advanced math. After having finished those first two sections --

"White Belt" and "White Belt to Black Belt" -- I don't really know what to do with the book now.

Should I go on? The way in which the book is structured, the way in which Sudo explains the book at the beginning, suggests to me that I "should not": I have not made much progress in developing the personal characteristics those first two sections describe, so I'm not very far along the path; and reading who I should hope to be to advance from C to D doesn't make much sense to me when I can't get from A to B. But it's frustrating because I really do like the perspective described here, even if I don't have the slightest idea of how to make it a reality in my own life and my own playing.

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