

Cool Hand Uke Workshops

Play the Uke Now! A fun class for absolute beginners. Students play right away and get a clear vision of what “the job” is and the many paths a player may choose to take. I have given this lecture several hundred times over the past 20 years. Accomplished players can benefit, too, especially if they started off on the wrong beat.

Pick, Pluck, Muffle and Strum: Newbies, intermediate and advanced players build their ukulele toolbox by learning a variety of strums and muffles, picking patterns and other finger, thumb and palm techniques to add interest and texture to songs. Trills, glissando, chromatic walks, daring rhythms, and other paraphernalia of the accomplished ukulele player are explored. This is my flagship offering.

Shave and a Haircut, Two Bits – The Circle of Fifths Demystified: I’ve had great feedback on this presentation of the circle of fifths from a non-technical viewpoint, and how to use it to write songs, anticipate chord changes and learn chord patterns. This workshop includes slides to augment the lecture and attendees are encouraged to play along.

Imply the Melody! A survey of techniques to make the melody bubble up while strumming a tune. How to mix and match, bounce seamlessly between carrying both melody and chords. A fun exploration of scales and the do-able. (Most of us just need permission to try it!)

Basic Blues on the Ukulele Chord sequences, scales, rhythms and attitudes inherent in the blues genre. How to jam freely and still get “home”. This is a good “share your chops” workshop where the student is just as apt to be the teacher! Lot of playing along in several keys.

Hello Bye Bye Blues A freestyle workshop that marries a popular Tin Pan Alley tune to a traditional blues in the same key (Bb). A great opportunity to explore the ukulele neck, strums, textures and syncopation while learning two great tunes. Attendees should already be able to play a bit of uke.

Introduction to the Ukulele for Guitar Players A quickening of the learning curve for guitar players who want to jump into the uke world. Techniques, types of ukuleles, playing styles, reading fingers, conventions, history, lore, sources.

Ukulele Standards Explore the gotta haves of the ukulele: Aloha Oe, Ain’t She Sweet, Five Foot Two, Stars and Stripes Forever, JaDa, You Are My Sunshine, Jamaica Farewell, I Can’t Give You Anything But Love, to name a few.

Depression Era Songs Explore on the ukulele the great Tin Pan Alley songs that helped folks survive the Great Depression and jam with others while you improve your playing at the same time: I Can’t Give You Anything But Love, Brother Can You Spare a Dime, Pocketful of Dreams, Wrap Your Troubles in Dreams, Sunny Side of the Street, Pennies from Heaven and more!

Care and Feeding of the Ukulele What’s the right uke for you? How can you tell if a uke “sounds good”? Is it worth the money? How do I know if this uke will help my playing? What does it mean when a uke “speaks to me”? How do I fix a rattle? A crack? A loose nut? A worn slot? Should I polish my uke? A sharing of tricks learned in 50+ years of playing.