

# GuitarSlinger

A Newsletter from John Hanberry

March 2004

## Music Is A Contact Sport!

Not physically, of course, but in the inter-personal way. Without making contact with other musicians, people in the business and most importantly your audience, you won't get very far. That's also what this newsletter is about. I want to be sure that you know about two other points of contact. One is my website, [www.GuitarSlinger.com](http://www.GuitarSlinger.com). The newsletters are archived there. Sometimes they are enhanced with updates, links or additional material. Another is **FretWire**, my email discussion list for current and former students. It's an open forum on guitar related topics. If your interested, send me email.

## Strings

Whatever type of guitar you have, whatever style of music you play, there is one item you need at all times - strings! Without them you can't make a sound. Next time you're in a music store, look at the huge array of available strings. Confused? Let me help.

String gauge (diameter) is measured in thousandths of an inch. A typical 1st string for electric is .009 or .010. A 6th string might be a .046 or even .052.

To vibrate at the same pitch, a heavier string must be tuned tighter. That makes it harder to push down on the frets and makes bending difficult. So you want the lightest possible string - right? Well, usually. But a heavier string has better tone and won't break as often. It's a tradeoff. I like something on the light side unless tone is really a factor; like recording an acoustic guitar. Avoid ultra-light sets that have a .008 first string. They just don't last and they sound a little thin.

I am frequently asked "How often should I change my strings?". I change strings if something is wrong with them.

If it **breaks**, change it. Notice where it broke. If it breaks frequently in the same place, it may not be the string. Sometimes a bridge saddle will have a bur or sharp place on it. This can be easily fixed.

**Dirty** strings are hard (or impossible) to tune. Do your hands sweat? Keep a hand towel with you and wipe the strings after every time you play. You can clean your

strings by wiping them with a small, lint free cloth and some light oil. Look at all that black stuff that comes off.

Old strings are all stretched out and have lost that nice bright tone they had when they were new. They are tired and more likely to break.

I always change strings before **performing**. The new strings sound better and the chance of breaking a string at the gig is reduced. I usually do this the day before so they can stretch a little and stay in tune better.

I use two different sets on my electrics: Ernie Ball Hybrid Slinky (.009-.046) and D'Addario XL-140 (.010-.052). Both of these sets are described as "light top-heavy bottom". The lower strings are slightly heavier which gives a little more "chunk" on power chords while the high strings are still light and easy to bend.

I don't really have a favorite acoustic set. D'Addario's are generally good. Martin's are good but they cost more.

Try different strings and discover what works best for you.

You should assemble a string changing kit including:

- Spare strings of the proper type and gauge.
- A string winder. The best \$2.00 you can spend.
- Wire cutters. **DO NOT** use Mom's scissors!

Have it with you every time you play.

## Calendar

No lessons the week of "Midwinter Break" 2/16-2/20.

No lessons 3/29-4/2 and 5/10-5/14.

There **are** lessons the week(s) of Spring Break..

Cancel 48 hrs in advance, no charge. 24-48 hrs 1/2 charge.

Less than 24 hrs full charge. **No exceptions.**

February

March

April

May

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Contact: John Hanberry—206.725.0182 JWH@BeadGame.net