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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 (1959–2002) was the eldest son of Japanese-American parents. He attended Macalester College in St. Paul Minnesota, graduating Phi Beta Kappa with a Liberal Arts degree. He then went on to Columbia University, where he received his Master's Degree in journalism. He is the author of *Zen Guitar*, *Zen 24/7*, *Zen Sex*, and *The Book of Six Strings*.

To start, although this book comes across as a guitar-only book at first glance, musicians of any instrument can benefit from this title. The book does assume that the reader is a guitar player, but it

really does not delve into any guitar-specific content other than "pick up your guitar, tune, and play." Replace any instance of the word "guitar" with your own instrument, and you'll be all set. Zen Guitar is one of a handful of books regarding the intersection of music and spirituality that have come to my attention in recent years. As a music student who is sometimes in need of a refresher amidst the chaos of my curriculum, books that tackle the "why?" aspect of music-making - books that seek to expose the truth behind why we do what we do as musicians - have been of interest to me. To this end, Zen Guitar does not disappoint. The book contains no technical exercises, chord charts, or arpeggios, simply because it is not that type of book. Rather, this is more of an analysis of the type of mindset one must cultivate to become more in tune with their inner voice. Nearly everything the author says is backed up in supplemental anecdotes/quotes that come from various well-known musicians of all instruments and idioms, including such contrasting musical acts as George Harrison and Miles Davis. It is, by all counts, a good starter text for books of its kind. I gave it only four stars because I thought it could offer some more specific examples on how to cultivate the type of mindset that the book speaks of; anyone who has experience practicing meditation or mindfulness exercises will see exactly what the author is trying to go for here, as what he is promoting is essentially a meditative, focused & full state when you make music - he leaves us on our own when it comes to finding this state. Some of us may already naturally embody some of the traits Sudo describes in the book, but to abide by all of them without much direct guidance is a quest indeed. A really great book in a similar vein to this one is Victor Wooten's The Music Lesson, which also deals with philosophical concepts relating to the connection between ourselves and Music - in his instance, through an extended allegory. Because I read Wooten's book first and practiced meditation for a number of months prior to reading this title, I didn't feel like I read anything particularly groundbreaking; but, I will definitely keep it around as a handy reference. I think some of the connections between the author's native Japanese culture and our own are valuable, and there's a nifty glossary of specifically Zen-Guitar terms in the back. So in closing, a great book to devour if this is the first of its kind you've encountered; if not, a good book to have in your collection for reference as needed.

I've been playing/learning guitar for over 30 years. This book is great because it allows you to put things into perspective. If you find yourself frustrated because you can't play like your guitar idol, can't play a particular song, can't master a certain technique, this book is for you. It is a bit cliché, but it's essentially about the journey...and you should enjoy the ride rather than whining in the back seat saying "are we there yet?!?!?" When I hit my next slump (and it will come), I plan on rereading

this book.

Are you ready? If you are ready for the message, this book is invaluable. No chords, no scales, no teacher, no guru. It is you and what you think about playing music. If one's ego gets involved in the process of making music there might be a problem. I am on my second reading. Insights abound, not only for music but for life. Imagine there are other possibilities out there-- just play. Reminds me sometimes of Golf in the Kingdom. As is mentioned there F\*\*\* ever getting better. It works but don't read it for that reason, just read it.

Beautiful book, should be read by all musicians of all levels, and even people who just love music but never got around to learning the guitar. Captures the essence of playing music, of not rushing towards an illusional goal, but just being in the moment and enjoying the playing itself. As a guitar teacher, I have asked my students to read Zen Guitar, so they can have a different approach to guitar playing, an alternative to the objective-oriented western style of playing guitar. Zen Guitar teaches one to be humble towards the instrument and life in general. Thank you Zen Guitar and Philip Sudo.

After hearing a lot of good feedback and reviews about this book i decided to find out for myself. I haven't been able to put it down since I got it. The book is focused on guitar, but from a positive spiritual/philosophical perspective. Because of this, the lessons in the book can be applied to anything, not just playing guitar. Although, the book has some philosophy, it is by no means the focus of the book to dispel any concerns there. You should get this book if: You have any interest in playing guitar, or a guitar player of any level with an open mind and a positive attitude about music and guitar playing. This book is packed with great quotes and perspective to help you form or reinforce your perspective. You should NOT get this book if: You are looking for a technical book with music theory, sheet music, or exercises etc. In summary, I have really enjoyed this book and recommend it to anyone with a positive attitude about music or playing guitar.

This can be applied to anything in life. Not for the 5 minute attention span folks. It's a little deeper. No easy button.

good for mind as well as hands and fingers

Great little read for anyone seeking to learn guitar (or any musical instrument really) in a non-conventional way, doesn't matter if you're just starting out or if you're a pro. Awesome book to have around and read twice a year because it has some great content that you will want to remember. I gave it 4 stars due to the price since I think it is a little out of range in ratio to the amount of content given. Still a great buy.

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