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# FLAMENCO RUMBA, PART 1

JOE LOPICCOLO

**H**ello, and welcome back to the Global Guitarist! For this column we are leaving Brazil (don't worry, we'll be back) and are traveling to Spain as we introduce the flamenco rumba.

Rumba originated primarily in Cuba and other Latin American countries that had slave trade with Africa. Over the years rumba migrated and has been adapted and transformed by various cultures. Outside of Cuba, the rumba is most popular today in Spain and the African country of Congo.

The flamenco rumba is one of the most basic, fun, and flexible forms in flamenco. It's also one of the most accessible for listeners and has essentially become the commercial trademark of many flamenco guitarists. In the late 1970s, flamenco rumba went international as artists such as Paco de Lucía and Manolo San Lúcar recorded and performed rumbas with more modern instrumentation with great popular success.

The fundamental harmonic progression in flamenco and the flamenco rumba is the "Cadenza Andaluz" (the Andalusian Cadence), which can be thought of as I, VII, VI, V in the Aeolian mode; and IV, III, II, I in the Phrygian mode. Note that the flamenco phrygian mode is different from the standard phrygian mode in that the dominant chord in aeolian (commonly played with a major third and flat 2<sup>nd</sup>) becomes the root. This creates a "Phrygian Major" tonality as it is sometimes referred to in jazz circles. Examples 1-5 will all use this progression in the key of E minor or B phrygian. Allow your left hand to develop strength over time as the barres are difficult to hold down if you are not used to them. Flamenco players often barre all six strings even when the root is on the A string. Sometimes the 5th below the root is played, sometimes not.

The following examples introduce some common right hand rumba patterns. I have notated upstrokes (high to low strings) with an up arrow and downstrokes (low to high strings) with a down arrow. Note that it is common in many flamenco publications to see the opposite system of this notation.

The right hand pattern of **Example 1** is really only four 8th notes long and repeats throughout the entire eight bars. We start with a mute on beat 1 that is played by opening your right hand and letting it fall flat on the strings to dampen them and create a percussive effect. Keep the left hand chord shape down throughout the entire example, including while the mutes are played. Next we use our index finger and wrist to come up on the and of 1. The wrist rotates simultaneously as the index finger strokes upwards. For the downbeat of 2 let your wrist rotate as you use the index finger for a downstroke and rotate your wrist back as you come up with the thumb on the and of 2. Keeping your wrist relaxed and not strained is essential to having these patterns sound stylistically correct.

**Example 2** is a one-measure pattern that repeats throughout the entire example. Rotate your wrist down on beat 1 and up on the and of 2 for the strokes with the thumb. There is a palm mute again on the downbeat of 3 followed by consecutive index finger strokes up, down and up. While we still use the wrist and finger for these strokes they are not played with the wrist rotating; in fact keep your thumb on the low E string as you play them. This provides stability and you are pre-placed for the next thumb stroke down as the pattern repeats.

**Example 3** is almost identical to example 2 except for the mute on beat 4. You'll notice this mute has a downstroke with the index finger rather than the palm mute we have been using. Mute

## EXAMPLE 1

Example 1 consists of two systems of musical notation. The first system is for E minor (Em) and D7. The Em section shows a guitar chord diagram with a barre on the 7th fret, and a rhythmic pattern of upstrokes (↑) and downstrokes (↓) with fingerings: i, i, p, i, i, p. The D7 section shows a guitar chord diagram with a barre on the 7th fret and a rhythmic pattern of upstrokes (↑) and downstrokes (↓) with fingerings: i, i, p. The second system is for C7 and B(b9). The C7 section shows a guitar chord diagram with a barre on the 7th fret and a rhythmic pattern of upstrokes (↑) and downstrokes (↓) with fingerings: i, i, p, i, i, p. The B(b9) section shows a guitar chord diagram with a barre on the 7th fret and a rhythmic pattern of upstrokes (↑) and downstrokes (↓) with fingerings: i, i, p, i, i, p.

## EXAMPLE 2

the string by laying the side of your palm (towards your pinky) on the strings at the same time you strike with the index. Executed correctly you should actually hear a little bit of the chord ring rather than a complete mute.

**Example 4** is a two-bar example and introduces a flamenco technique called golpe. Golpe is from the Spanish verb Golpear which means to hit and that's exactly what we do to the guitar on beat 1 of each measure. Do not do this on a guitar with a light polish without the golpe (tap plate) or you may leave marks on the face. As you rotate your wrist to come down with your thumb on beat 1 of the pattern, bring your middle or ring finger in to hit the face of the guitar below the high E string at the same time. Continue with wrist rotation strokes for the next three 8th notes (p,i,p) and then anchor your thumb on the low E string on beat 3 while the chord sustains. The rest of the measure are index finger strokes from this position. On beat 1 of measure two there is a golpe as the chord sustains over


from the end of four from the previous measure. Keep your thumb on the low E string for the index finger downstroke on the end of 2. Free your thumb from the low E string for the next 2 strokes with wrist rotation on 2 and the end of 2. We re-anchor the thumb on the downbeat of 3 while the chord sustains and the rest of the measure are index strokes with the thumb resting on the low E.

To really learn and understand flamenco you have to spend some time in Spain. The rhythms and forms of flamenco are in the blood of the Spanish flamencos and they play it on the absolute highest level with inflections and style that are truly their own. In the summer of 2005 I attended an annual festival in Cordoba (Festival de Guitarra de Cordoba) that is overseen by one of the most important artists in the history of flamenco, Manolo Sanlúcar. While there I met a young flamenco guitarist named Vahagn Turgutyan who has studied extensively with Manolo Sanlúcar and Paco Serrano. Vahagn helped tremendously with this column and

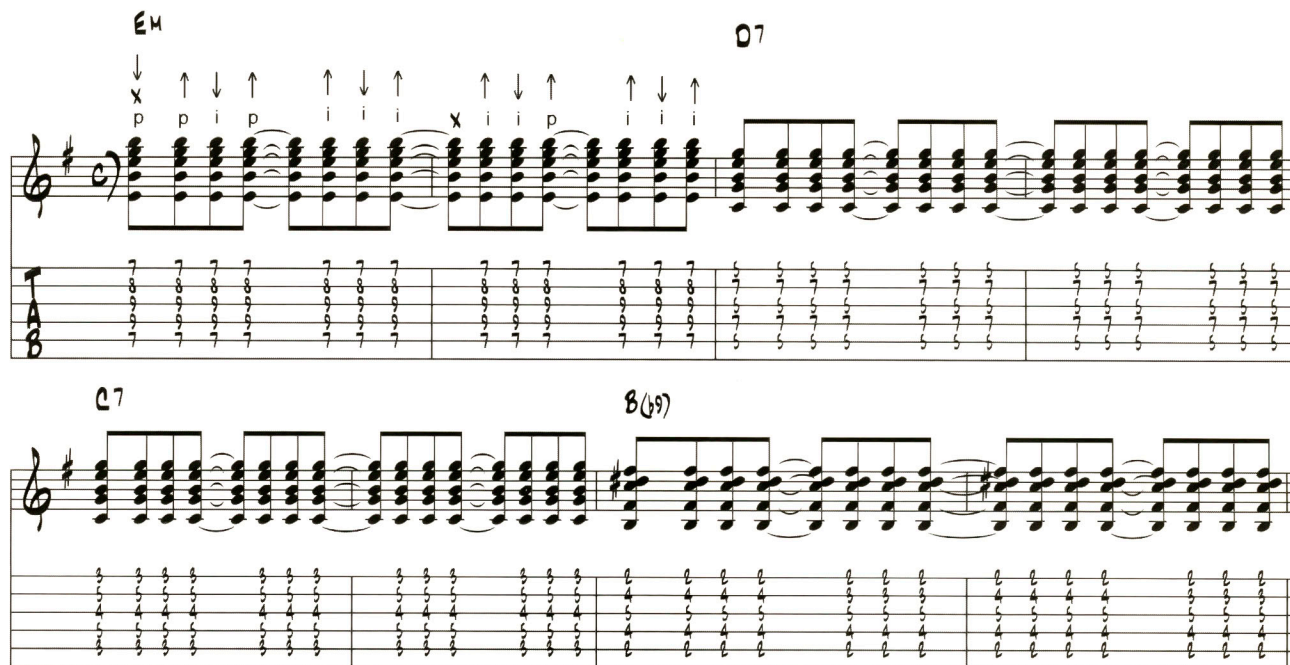
## EXAMPLE 3

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plays all of the recorded examples on the CD. Example 5 uses the same progression as examples 1-4 but is not notated as it was completely improvised by Vahagn. True flamenco rumbas always have variation and don't cycle the same pattern over

and over as you may have heard "Flamenco Nuevo" artists do. I told Vahagn to mix up some of the previous examples and said "go!" I hope you enjoy listening to it as much as I do. Next issue, Rumbas 2: Modern Rumbas. 

## EXAMPLE 4



The musical notation for Example 4 is presented in two systems. The first system covers the first 12 measures, with chords E<sub>M</sub> and D<sub>7</sub> indicated above the staff. The second system covers the next 12 measures, with chords C<sub>7</sub> and B<sub>(b9)</sub> indicated. The notation includes a treble clef, a 2/4 time signature, and a key signature of one sharp (F#). Above the staff, there are various performance markings: 'x' for natural harmonics, 'p' for plectrum, and 'i' for fingerpicks. Below the staff, there are two lines of guitar tablature corresponding to the notes on the staff.



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