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### **Make Music and Relieve Stress**

Our Focus 18 article, Music for Moods and Memories, concentrated on tunes and songs produced and recorded by professionals. These are the melodies so often associated with a particular event or time that was special; and whenever it is heard again, the pleasure of that moment is re-visited. There is, however, a way to achieve a greater benefit from a few notes strung together; and that is by making them yourself.

I know – you’re probably thinking: I’m no musician and, anyway, I don’t have the time. Fair enough: most people have busy schedules; but all work and no play, etc. Stress feeds on this syndrome. The less “me” time a person has, the harder it is to enjoy life because it seems geared to someone else’s needs; and the result is dissatisfaction. Surely, something can be done to put that right?

I reckon making music is one of the answers. I’ve played instruments since I was a kid, from the obligatory triangle at primary school, to the recorder, then trumpet. None of them, however, have given me as much back as the guitar. I bought my first acoustic in the 60’s and have played off and on since then; and I like to think I’ve improved over the years. But this was never for profit: I just found solace and contentment by sitting on my own, practising until I could replicate the tunes on my vinyls and cassette tapes. And I’m still trying.

When talking to others about me, my wife often says: “When he’s playing his guitar, he goes off into his own little world.” I admit that I do, and I like it there. Nothing else matters except for getting those notes right; or finding the chords for a particular number. No, it’s not always easy; and the fingers get sore sometimes; but when I manage to play a song through and it actually sounds like the one on the CD, I am stoked!

What I’m suggesting is to give it a go. If you have the voice for it, join a local choir or choral society; or try learning to play an instrument. The choices are numerous – harmonica, pan pipes, any of the stringed, reed or brass instruments; but I don’t believe you can go past the self-contained band like a guitar or keyboard. With either of these you won’t need anyone else. As for learning, it takes time, patience and practice; but this is where music’s therapy comes in. When you’re making it, the tedious, daily routine has to take a back seat; and with it the anxiety and stress it creates.

This is the main reason I produced my guitar tutorial. Module 1, the introductory lesson, was published last month, and five more will be slotted in each month until January next year – ALL FREE to download. It is specifically written for beginners and is designed for anyone who can’t be bothered to learn how to read music. You don’t have to: I was led

to believe that Sir Paul McCartney couldn't read a note; and yet he has proved he can play many instruments, and has created some unforgettable songs.

I can't deny that mine is a musical family; but only my father was a professional. The rest of us muddle along because we enjoy making music, and occasionally we get it nearly right.

So, have a serious think about it. Learn to blow, bow, pick, strum, or finger those magical harmonies; then, should Lauren Bacall pop her head round the door and say: "Play it one more time, Sam," you might be able to; and as time goes by you could even score a free beer from your audience!

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