

Reading Tablature

or

How to (almost) Read Music Without Really Reading It

Mom: Johnny, have you practiced reading music today?

Johnny One Note: Oh, Mom, I'm tired of practicing the guitar! Isn't there an easier way to learn to read music played on the guitar?

Mom: No there isn't, Johnny! You'll just have to practice every day for the next 2 years until you've memorized all the notes on the guitar!

Johnny: But Mom! . . .

Mom: Quit complaining! Not even SuperMusician could help you with this one!

Johnny: Who's he?

Mom: You mean, who's *she*? She can read music faster than a speeding "A" Train, play complex polyrhythms on her toes, and leap through chord progressions better than Al DiMeola!

[Suddenly, a deafeningly loud G-sharp-major-thirteen, flat-five chord blasts through the silence and a stack of Marshall amplifiers appears out of the blue. An athletic (though obviously artistic) woman stands before them holding a Fender Super-Stratocaster guitar. She's wearing silly looking red and blue shirt and pants, accented by a red and yellow cape. The letter "S" is boldly written on her shirt.]

SuperMusician: Did I hear someone call my name, or was it just the coincident randomness of a John Cage composition?

Johnny: Wow! Who are you?

Mom: Well, Johnny, she's SuperMusician. She's here to encourage you to keep practicing until you learn every note on that fingerboard.

SuperMusician: Your Mom's right, Johnny! It's good to learn to read staff notation. But in the meantime, Johnny, you should try tablature. It's an easier way to read music written for the guitar. Just take a look at this!

Numbers placed on the lines tell you which fret and string to pluck. (Don't get these confused with finger numbers.) A "0" means "open string".

Tablature uses six lines - one for each string on your guitar. The top line represents the first string and each line down represents each subsequent string.

Various symbols direct you to use certain techniques. In this example the line from frets "3" to "9" tells you to "slide" from the first to the second note.