I often suggest starting your practice by asking: What do I want to play? Maybe there is a song you've really been enjoying lately or a sound you've found yourself magnetized toward. I think we should do everything we can to lower our resistance to picking up our instrument. Leave it out of its case and somewhere you'll see it often, don't feel like you've got to finish your chores first and play the thing you feel like playing as soon as it's in your hands. That way, we keep our relationship to practice exciting and easy. Playing something (even for a few minutes) early in the day is another great way to lower any feelings of resistance, procrastination or obligation. We're then much more likely to return to it again later in the day. In any case, once we have things in motion, it is usually easy to keep going for a while. When we have some momentum behind us, this can be a great time to work on what we might find more difficult or have been putting off. My challenge to you this month is to dedicate 20% of your practice towards any topic or topics on the list below that you've been meaning to work on but never really get around to. I know you can do the math but that would be 6 minutes in a half hour session, 12 in an hour. (I just like to see those numbers in typing.) It can be something different day by day but consistency is key with everything in music so try to circle back every few days for reinforcement and development.

- practicing scales or harmonic exercises (3rds, 6ths, 10ths, triads and inversions)
- plectrum (fancy word for a pick) or fingerpicking exercises
- improvising using any of the above as ingredients
- tuning by ear
- using a metronome
- playing along with recordings of songs you're working on (lesson review videos where I'm playing examples for you included)
- playing by ear (one great way is to figure out a melody you could hum or whistle but have never played on your instrument)
- transcribing, diagramming or creating any visual representation of what you're learning (making a mad scientist's musical diary)

Each of these is something every musician should nurture and develop. It will lead to a fuller musical life. Don't concern yourself with becoming a master. You can grow with everything over time. I often hear statements like, "I don't have an ear" or "I'm

just not an improviser" or "but scales are boring." Such statements are only reflections of having not spent much time in those areas of one's practice and not having done so with consistency. Not a single item on that list came naturally to me. In fact, I once uttered such statements. However, as I began to dedicate myself in practice over a prolonged period of time, I was wonderfully surprised that I did have an ear, I was an improviser and scales are exciting! You probably won't find that right away but see where that 20% gets you over the course of a month and I'm pretty sure you'll come back for more. Stick with it for a year and you'll have begun to transform your relationship to that topic.

One flaw I have as a teacher is I'm often a student pleaser. I want you to enjoy what you're doing musically at the moment. As a result, I sometimes won't push you hard enough to do the difficult work that you might resist at first but will be rewarding in the long run. I have been working on that flaw and will continue to do so as I know I can do better. With the majority of you, I have addressed many if not all of the things on that list at some point. However, if there is anything that I have not addressed, something that might require a deeper dive, or an unspoken goal that you secretly harbor but feel intimidated to pursue, please let me know! Whatever it is, I believe you can do it. It will just take time and dedication.

What do you wish you could do but doubt you can? What do you keep meaning to work on but putting off? And though you can't answer this one until December: what change have you noticed from the start of November to the end by setting aside that 20%?