Song Study 01: Knockin’ on Heaven's Door

"Knockin' on Heaven's Door" is a song written and sung by Bob Dylan in 1973. It has been covered by Eric Clapton and Guns N' Roses, among many other musicians.

This song is a Ballad. The tempo is usually around 70 bpm. The song is in the key of G Major. G Major is also the first chord in the sequence. This song will teach us three very useful open chords, and a scale shape that we can use to improvise a solo over the chords.

Here are three open chords to learn, G Major (G), D Major (D), A minor (Am):

Once you have memorised these shapes, keep a steady count in your head. Tap your foot, and strum the chords in this pattern:

Count: 
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Strum: /
/
/
/
/
/
/
/

Chord: G G D D Am Am Am Am

Once you can play the chords in sequence comfortably, learn these scale shapes. The relative minor key for G Major is E minor. You can improvise on the E minor pentatonic scale (or E minor blues scale).

You can begin using these scales to improvise over the chords. All of the notes will fit over all of the chords. Some of the notes will sound better than others. Use your ears and play around with different ideas.

E minor blues scale, 1st position (rooted on E) E minor blues scale, 1st position (one octave higher)