



## The Harmony Shuffle

The shuffle pattern for playing back up guitar is an essential one to know because it is used in many genres, and you will be required to play it on many gigs or jam sessions. A lot of guitarists know the many basic shuffle types similar to Exercise 1 here, but most players never venture beyond that basic pattern and therefore miss out on a lot of fun. Basic types of shuffle grooves I refer to are the ones that use two strings – typically the 5th and 6th

strings or the 4th and 5th strings.

The 'harmony shuffle', as it is often called, uses three strings at once. The lowest note is a static bass root note of the chord of the moment, while the other two strings have ascending and descending double stops which are harmonised by a 6th interval. If you look at Ex. 2 you can see that the bass note in the first four bars stays the same while the double stops move up and down. The harmony part is

normally only played over the E and A chords with the B7 chord played in an ordinary fashion, but later you could harmonise the B7 if you wanted. If you don't understand this theory part, don't worry as it is more important that you can play it.

Although it might appear difficult at first, the harmony shuffle proves quite easy with a bit of practice, yet sounds difficult. The finger pattern for the E chord is to keep your 1st finger on the

third string at all times with your 2nd and 3rd fingers playing the 5th string notes. Notice the 4th string is not played and should be muted with the underside of the finger that plays the 5th string. When the chord changes to A your 2nd finger stays on the 4th string, while fingers one and three play the second string. The 3rd string will now need to be muted with the underside of the finger that plays the 4th string. Make sure to take your time getting the finger pattern correct or it will be difficult to play smoothly, and finally, to play it with a good shuffle feel.

If you already have a bit of experience playing harmony shuffles you could try sliding into some of the chords, try a hammer on with the G to G# over the E chord, or maybe trill those same two notes, etc. By only using the two top notes it is easy to change keys as well – listen to The Pusher by Steppenwolf, which is in the key of G major as a good example. There are many ways you can take this sequence to a more advanced level - you are only limited by your imagination.

To hear what this arrangement sounds like visit <http://www.guitar.co.nz/category/resources/freelessons/>

Kevin Downing is a professional guitarist, teacher, and author. He can be contacted through his website at [www.guitar.co.nz](http://www.guitar.co.nz) or PO Box 4586, Palmerston North 4442. Tel (06) 357 0057.

*Ex 2.*

E7

5

A7 E7

9

B7 A7 E7 C7 B7

*Ex 1.*