

Introduction to Chord Melody

A popular style of playing among guitar students is that of chord melody. It is called chord melody because you play the melody and the harmony (chords) both at the same time, which is akin to how pianists play.

While many of the arrangements in this style tend to lean towards jazz and classical, the more melodic pop songs and movie themes are also very popular performed this way. Most rock players are unfamiliar with chord melody playing, but if you have a desire to get out of your comfort zone, or a hunger for playing in a new style, then you will have a lot of fun with this lesson. Three of the best players to listen to who use this approach are Tuck Andress, Joe Pass, and Johnny A.

Although the music or tab might look difficult I have picked an easy song to begin with. This style of playing can get very difficult if you want to pursue it in earnest, but it is the best way to get to know your chords and how they work. The song I have picked, *Aura Lee*, is a song heard a lot in radio and television advertisements. Elvis Presley wrote some lyrics to it and turned it into a major hit. I have done this arrangement in a more traditional or classical style, but in a later lesson I will give you a more advanced jazzy version of it.

If you look at the music you will see that it contains mainly open chords that you will already know, however, I have notated many of the chords as three or four note chords to keep the arrangement easy to play and sounding good. If you are not familiar with three or four note chords, they are just parts of five or six string chords you already know. For those whose knowledge of chords is limited there are two that need explaining; the A7 in the first bar of the last line is just an A7 chord with the melody note of F added to it; likewise the G7 in the same line has the melody note of E added to the G7 chord.

The melody of the song is the top note of each chord followed by the single notes, so the idea when playing this song is to keep your fingers on the chords while you play the melody notes so they all ring together. Only lift your fingers when you play the next chord shape. Also, watch the 4th finger over some of the notes in the second and third line.

Aura Lee

Moderate

Traditional

1 0 1 1 3 2 3 1 0 2 0 1 0 2 2

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 1 3 1 3 0 0 1

0 0 1 0 3 2 3 1 1 0 0 3 1 0 2 3 3

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To hear the music for this lesson visit
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Happy Practising
Kevin.

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