



Using Movable Chords

One of the biggest challenges guitar players face is that of playing chords. Some of the problems are 1). Knowing where all the chord shapes are on the neck. 2). How they all fit together. 3). How to make great music with them. In this article you will tackle all those things, and while this is only a start on this amazing subject, it will hopefully get you interested in more of this.

There are many ways you can play chords on a guitar. When you first begin you tend to learn five- and six-string chord shapes, while later in the intermediate and advanced stages you will be playing more four-string chords, triads, double stops, with single notes to join chords up. I have kept this lesson to the four-string chord shapes.

In Exercise 1 you can see four different shapes for an E7 chord. The first one is from an E7 open chord, the second is the D7 shape moved along the fretboard, the third is from the E7 bar chord shape and the last one is the A7 open chord moved along the fretboard. Start by getting to know these chords well.

Exercise 2 is chords in A7, and are the same chords as the E7 shapes moved along the fretboard five frets. If you wanted to play these chords in B7, which you will, then move them along the fretboard another two frets. Again, make sure you get to know these chords really well before moving on.

The theory behind what you are doing here is harmonising each note

of the dominant seventh chord. So for E7 the notes of the chord are E, G#, B, and D. You can see via the music or tab that is what the top note is for each chord shape. It is similar for the A7, and B7 chords.

What many guitar players don't realise is that playing good supportive rhythm guitar is all about playing a nice supportive melodic back up, not sitting on the same bar chord for four bars and strumming away like your life depends on it. In fact many of the best rhythm players don't play much at all, but when they do it supports the song.

Exercise 3 is a blues progression using the new chord forms you've just learnt above, along with some in B7. This is not how you would play them in a real song, but an exercise to get you to know them all thoroughly. This exercise might take you a while to get your brain and fingers around, but take your time and get them deeply ingrained into your memory system.

Once you have Exercise 3 well learnt then it is time to experiment with some of your own blues progressions and see what you can come up with using the ideas presented here. For many this is boring stuff, but when you spend around 95% of your time playing rhythm and back up parts, having this sort of knowledge is priceless. Ever wondered why all the guys who have the best rhythm chops get most of the gigs?

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Ex 1.

E7

Ex 2.

A7

Ex 3.

E7 A7 E7 A7 A7

E7 B7 A7 E7 B7