

Jazz Guitar University

Lesson #1 “Chord Families And Soloing”

We will begin our study of Jazz Guitar here at www.GuitarLessons365.com with a study on single note soloing and improvisation. Before we start to study actual chord families along with their arpeggios and scales, we need to understand a little bit about how a jazz guitarist typically approaches a chord progression when he or she is soloing.

Soloing “Over” Changes

What does that mean? Well, when a jazz musician is improvising with a rhythm section, the solo typically takes on the effect to the listener as being on top of or “over” the music since the soloist is typically playing melodies or contrasting musical phrases when compared to the other musicians in the group. I say this just so you don't get confused with typical jazz terminology. Basically someone who is playing “over changes” means that they are soloing while the rhythm section is playing a chord progression. The soloists job is to improvise using melodies that work well over the chord progression being played by the rhythm section.

Jazz Soloing vs. Rock, Blues & Popular Music Soloing

The first thing we need to understand when beginning our studies on jazz guitar improvisation, is to understand how a jazz guitar player that is improvising works with the chords that he is improvising over. In most styles of music that you may be more familiar with, a guitarist typically solos within a particular key or keys. Basically their thinking is “OK, the key that this chord progression I am soloing over is A Major, so I am just gonna think A Major scales and that is it”. That is how most guitar players in rock, blues and popular music approach improvisation. Not all, but most.

However, how a jazz guitarist approaches playing over chord changes is quite different. The typical jazz guitarist plays TO THE CHORD and NOT the key. What that means is this, lets say that we want to solo over a simple I IV V in A Major. If this was rock, blues or most other styles we would just think about our A Major scales across the fretboard and run with it. However, as I said before, a jazz guitarist usually plays over this chord progression differently. What is meant by playing “to the chord” and not the key is that a jazz guitarist will typically determine the type (ie. Major, Minor, Dominant) of each chord in the progression and play a scale or arpeggio that works well over that particular chord.

So in our previously mentioned I IV V progression in A Major (if you don't know what this means, go through the prerequisite lessons!), the actual chords would be A Major/I, D Major/IV and E Major/V. Most of the time in jazz music we wouldn't be using triads exclusively like this, but this is just a basic example.

Most jazz guitarists use a couple of basic tools for single note soloing. First, they would learn a couple of scales that work for each chord type. For a basic major chord type like all of the I IV V chords above, the two most common scales to use over them are a major scale and a lydian scale/mode. These two scales both work over the major triads, because they contain the exact same notes as the triad. Once again there would be more scale options if we were using just triads, but most jazz chord progressions employ at least seventh chords. A full explanation of why these scales work over major type chords will follow.

The second tool a jazz guitarist may use when soloing over a chord is chord tones. Chord tones are basically arpeggios. If you don't know exactly what an arpeggio is, it can be explained as the notes of a chord played one at a time just like the notes of a scale. Since arpeggios are made up of only chord tones, you can assume that playing the notes of an Major 7th arpeggio would sound great over a major type chord because we would be playing basically the same notes that are in the chord while soloing.

So a jazz guitarist will combine scale wise playing with chord tones to create his licks, lines, runs, solos, phrases or whatever you choose to call them. They all basically mean the same thing. The beginning of our single note soloing for jazz study will concentrate on soloing over Major type chords all over the neck in any key. I will break the fretboard down into 7 regions (just like we did in our 3 notes per string major scale video lessons), and you will learn how to eventually solo in each region over each chord family, then we will step up the process by having you solo over chord progressions that use different chord families throughout.

In each new region of the neck you will be given 3 new things to learn. First you will be given the major type chord forms for that region. Even though this portion of the Jazz Guitar University course is not devoted to chords, becoming familiar with these chord forms will help you memorize the arpeggios and practice musical examples. So the second thing you will be given is a set of arpeggios to learn based on all of those chords. These arpeggios are basically just groups of chord tones that you can use in your soloing. The last thing you will need to learn is the scale types that work over that particular chord type and how to play them in that region.

After you have worked through the material for that one region I will give you some examples of musical phrases created using the chord tones and scales that you learned. You should memorize and analyze these examples then try to create your own following the same principles that I used to create the examples. After you have all of this down, practice the given examples AND your own phrases over the provided backing track so you can start to get the sound of these chord tones and scales in your ear.

This process may seem time consuming at times, but just remember that every new lesson will build upon previous ones. You will be doing improvisations over major chord types after just the very first lesson. It may not sound as sophisticated as soloing over a cool jazz chord progression with tons of substitutions and stuff, but you will be developing a solid foundation for all of that to come later.

Now On To The Good Stuff!!

A nice jazz solo is just like a gourmet meal. It usually consists of many ingredients, all of which serve a purpose in the finished product. You can't create a masterpiece of cuisine without knowing the proper ingredients to use right? So these first sections of the single note soloing course will focus on the ingredients that we will use to create our masterpieces later on. Sound good??

Jazz musicians are required to solo over a large amount of chords. Fortunately, these chords can be organized into families. After defining these chord families it becomes a much easier process to determine which scales work the best with each chord family. The first chord family that we will take a look at is the Major Chord family. This particular family will be broken up into 3 separate groups. Don't worry, it may sound complicated, but after you learn the first group the last two will be a breeze. :)

Major Chord Family (Group 1)

Every chord in the major chord family will be built off of a basic 1 3 5 major triad. That will be the one thing that connects all of the chords found in the major chord family no matter what group they are in. Each of the 3 groups that we will break the major chord family into are grouped that way because each of the chords in a particular group have a similar sound. This will become apparent after playing through the chords within each group.

Major Chord Family (Group 1) Chords

Major Triad – 1 3 5
Major 6th – 1 3 5 6
Major 7th – 1 3 5 7
Major add 9th – 1 3 5 9
Major 9th – 1 3 5 7 9
Major 6/9th – 1 3 5 6 9
Major 13th – 1 3 5 7 9 13
Major 7/6th – 1 3 5 6 7

These are all of the chord forms for group one. We won't be trying to learn to play all of these chords quite yet, not in this section of the course anyway, but we will learn arpeggio forms for each chord. That way if we ever wanted the chord tones for a Major 9th chord, all we have to do is play the Major 9th arpeggio and so on.

Extensions

When learning the notes to some of these larger chord types you may be asking yourself, “how am I supposed to be able to figure out what a 9th, 11th, or 13th is when each major scale has just 7 notes?”. Well aren't we just the little inquisitive one huh? But seriously, it is a very good question. When spelling larger chord forms we have to lay our scales out across two octaves for any chords larger than a 7th chord. So an E Major scale across two octaves would be:

E Major Scale Across Two Octaves

E F# G# A B C# D# E F# G# A B C# D# E
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15

You can see from the diagram above that in the second octave E is 8, F# is 9, A is 11 and so forth. Any note over a 7th is considered an extension since we have to get that note from the second octave.

As you can see from the chord formulas above, we create most of our chords in western harmony in stacked 3rds. 1 3 5 7 9 11 13 (information on this is in the prerequisite lessons!). By extending the basic major scale across two octaves we can now continue our pattern of stacking 3^{rds} until we have used every single note in the scale. E G# B D# F# A C#

Scales To Use Over The Major Chord Family (Group 1)

Typically the two most used scales for all of the Group 1 major chords are either Major or Lydian. Which one you use is pretty much determined on personal taste since both scales work great in almost all situations over any of these Group 1 chords. The reason that these scales work so well over each one of these chords is because each of these scales contains every note of each of the Group 1 chords! That's right, if look at the formula for a major scale you have 1 2 3 4 5 6 7, in E Major that would be E F# G# A B C# D#. The formula for a Lydian scale is 1 2 3 #4 5 6 7, in E Lydian that's E F# G# A# B C# D#. The only difference between the two scales is the 4th scale degree is raised a half step in the Lydian scale.

If you look at the chord formulas on the previous page you will see that all of the notes of them fall within the notes of these scales. Pretty cool eh? If you are wondering about that #4th clashing with any of these chords you will see that the 4th which is also the 11th in the second octave does not appear in any of the Group 1 chords. That is why both of these scales will work equally well with these chords from group 1.

Interchangability Of Group 1 Arpeggios

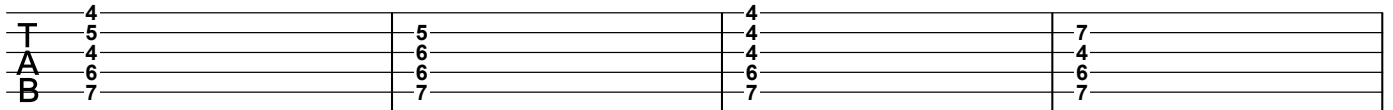
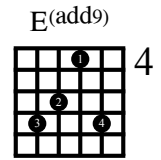
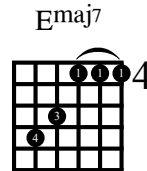
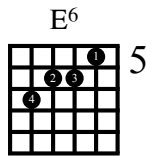
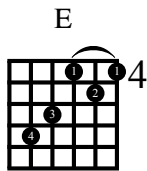
The number one thing that you need to understand about *ALL* of these Group 1 arpeggios is that each of them can be used over *ANY* of the Group 1 chords. So you can play a Major 9 arpeggio over a Major 6th chord, Major 7th chord or any other chord in this Group. Remembering that one basic fact is the key to allowing you to great endless amounts of soloing ideas over any of these chords from group one, because no matter what the Group 1 chord is, you can play *ANY* arpeggio from group one AND either the Major scale or Lydian scale over it just fine. Within the same solo or phrase or runs, you can even use every single arpeggio from Group 1 and both scales together and it will still sound great over any of the Group 1 chords.

On the next page we will begin to learn all of the actual chord forms, arpeggios, and scale forms that fit within the Major Chord Family (Group 1) Region 1. We will eventually learn to apply this method across all seven regions on the guitar neck effortlessly. I will be doing these chords, arpeggios, scales and musical examples in the key of E Major. That key was just chosen by chance and you should try to transpose these examples to at least a few keys a day. Transposing these examples to a different key just requires you to play the exact same exercises, just on a different area of the fretboard. So if you learn a cool lick in the key of E Major, all you have to do to make it a D major lick is move it down 2 frets. Or if you wanna make that E major lick an F major one, just move it up the fretboard one fret. If you don't understand this moveable concept on the guitar, check out some of the CAGED system tutorials on the site and they should clear it right up.

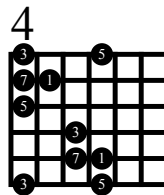
OK!! Let's start learning some of this stuff on the guitar shall we??? :)

Major Chord Family Group 1 Region 1

Memorizing these chords from Group 1 will help you memorize the arpeggios

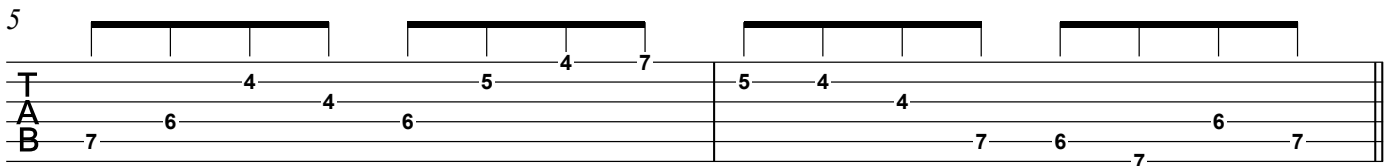


Major 7th Arpeggio

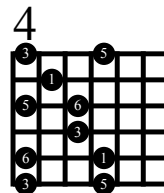


* The numbers in the arpeggio diagrams represent the scale degree.
MEMORIZE THIS!!

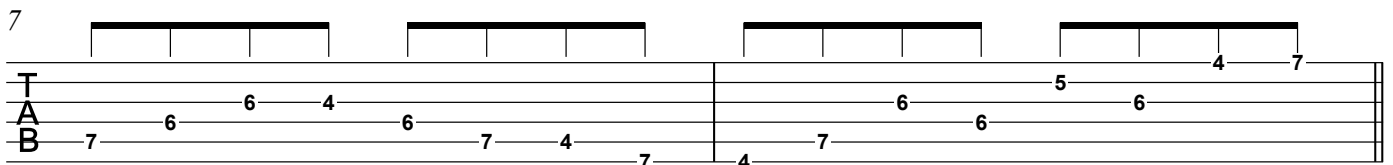
-Run using Major 7th Arp./Chord Tones



Major 6th Arpeggio

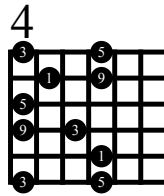


-Run using Major 6th Arp./Chord Tones



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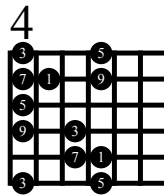
Major add 9th Arpeggio



-Run using Major add 9th Arp./Chord Tones

9

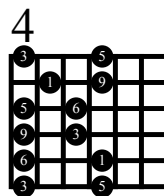
Major 9th Arpeggio



-Run using Major 9th Arp./Chord Tones

11

Major 6/9th Arpeggio

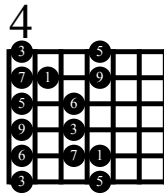


-Run using Major 6/9th Arp./Chord Tones

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Major 13th Arpeggio

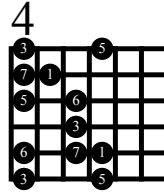
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-Run using Major 13th Arp./Chord Tones

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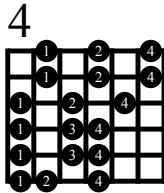
Major 7/6th Arpeggio



-Run using Major 7/6th Arp./Chord Tones

17

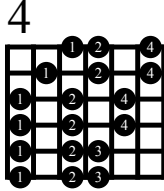
Major Scale



-Run using Major Scale with Chord Tones

19

Lydian Scale/Mode



-Run using Lydian Mode with Chord Tones

21