

Get A Grip On Chords

With An Inversion Immersion

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Are you able to play basic chords and know enough about them to create an exciting rhythm accompaniment? Then this brief tutorial will serve as a review of your overall prowess. If not, then pick up your guitar and read on.

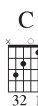
From A Simple Lead Sheet

In this simple tune, "Home On The Range," I have created a few possibilities for chord accompaniment using a common musical practice of "chord inversions" to add movement to rather plain garden-variety cowboy chords. The simple triads

might work for you as in the lead sheet. The diagonal slashes are used as simple quarter note suggestions so you can invent your own rhythms. The chords are basic in the key of G major and feature an occasional secondary dominant yet they don't quite augment, propel or excite the overall song very much. **Fig. 1**

Moderately in 3

Verse:



Cont. simile

Oh give me a home, where the buf - fa - lo roam, and the deer and the



an - te - lope play. Where seld - om is heard a dis - cour - a - ging



Chorus:



word and the skies are not cloud - y all day. Home, home on the



range, where the deer and the an - te - lope play. Where seld - om is



heard a dis - cour - a - ging word and the skies are not cloud - y all day.

Using Inversions

All four-part chords contain four different notes. From each one of these notes you can create another chord shape. The sound changes slightly and its spelling is rearranged. For

example, Gmaj7 chord is a four-part chord containing the root, 3rd, 5th and major 7th notes. When you displace the lowest chord tone, the root, and place it somewhere else in your chord

voicing or fingering, the lowest note in the chord becomes the 3rd. This new fingering shape is called the first inversion of Gmaj7 and is now called Gmaj7/B. The chord has been inverted.

Fig. 2.

Fig. 2 shows four chord shapes for Gmaj7 and its first inversions. Each chord is represented by a fretboard diagram, a musical staff in G major (one sharp), and a TAB. The fretboard diagrams show fingerings: Gmaj7 (1 2 3 1), Gmaj7/B (2 1 3 3), Gmaj7/D (3 2 4 1), and Gmaj7/F# (3 1 1 1). The musical staff shows the notes: Gmaj7 (G, B, D, F#), Gmaj7/B (B, D, F#, G), Gmaj7/D (D, F#, G, B), and Gmaj7/F# (F#, G, B, D). The TAB shows fret numbers for strings 3, 4, 4, and 3.

T	3	7	8	12
A	4	7	11	12
B	4	5	9	12
B	3	7	10	14

* Optional right-hand fingers

Fig. 3 shows the fingerings for the four chords. Gmaj7 uses fingers 1, 2, 3, 1. Gmaj7/B uses fingers 1, 2, 3, 3. Gmaj7/D uses fingers 1, 2, 3, 4. Gmaj7/F# uses fingers 1, 1, 1, 3. The fret positions are 5th, 9th, and 12th.

For A More Involved Arrangement

The second arrangement of "Home On The Range" Fig. 3, is a little more involved and opens the door to some great possibilities for chord movement. It has been transformed from a simple "campfire sing along" to a more hip arrangement. By simply moving the

chords along using inversions a far more ear catching accompaniment is created.

Without wasting any time measure 1 moves from the I chord (Gmaj7) to the 2nd inversion V7 chord (D7/A) on beat three. This sets up the first inversion G/B

in measure 2 followed by a 1st inversion dominant G7/B that resolves nicely to Cmaj7.

Take note of the chords played in measures 5 and 6. They can really test your finger dexterity if the shapes are unfamiliar. On the lead sheet

there are only two chords played in measures 5 and 6 yet I've created some worthy of note movement in the new arrangement. Isolate and play just the lowest note of each of these chords to hear how a bass player could walk through these measures. Simply playing the melody together with these low

notes implies the chords. Gmaj7/F# is the 3rd inversion of Gmaj7 and A7/C# is the 1st inversion of A7.

Note the contrary motion of melody against the low notes of the chords in measure 13. The melody takes a downward path as the lowest chord notes move upward. The note or notes

in between help determine what kind of chord is created. Measure 20 introduces three different ways to play D7 while measures 29 and 30 essentially follow the melody contour before coming to rest on G.

Moderately in 3

Chord diagrams for measures 1-6:

- Gmaj7 (1 231)
- D7/A (3 24, 4fr.)
- G/B (2 134, 5fr.)
- G7/B (3 142, 5fr.)
- Cmaj7 (1 231, 8fr.)
- Cm6 (2 1333, 7fr.)

Musical score for measures 1-6. The score includes a melody line in treble clef, a harmony line in treble clef, and a TAB line. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The melody starts on G4 and moves through various intervals. The harmony consists of chords. The TAB line shows fret numbers for each string.

T								
A	4	5	8	6	8	8	8	8
B	4	4	5	5	9	9	9	7
B	3	5	7	7	8	8	8	8

Chord diagrams for measures 7-14:

- G (4312, 7fr.)
- Gmaj7/F# (3412, 7fr.)
- Em7 (1312, 7fr.)
- A/E (342, 6fr.)
- A7 (1 121, 5fr.)
- A7/C# (2314, 2fr.)
- D7 (3241, 3fr.)
- D7/C (2413, 2fr.)
- Gmaj7 (1 23, 7fr.)
- D7/A (3 24, 4fr.)

Musical score for measures 7-14. The score includes a melody line in treble clef, a harmony line in treble clef, and a TAB line. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The melody continues with various intervals and rests. The harmony consists of chords. The TAB line shows fret numbers for each string.

8	8	8	6	6	5	3	3	3	3	4	5
7	7	7	7	6	2	5	5	5	5	4	4
9	9	9	7	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	4
10	9	7	7	5	4	5	5	3	3	3	5

10

G/B 5fr. G7/B 5fr. Cmaj7 8fr. Em7(b5) 7fr. Cm6 7fr. Gmaj7 1 231 D7/A 3fr. G/B 2 13 A7/C# 2fr. D7/C 2fr.

8	6	8	8	8	3	3	7	5	5	3
7	7	9	7	8	4	5	7	5	2	2
5	5	9	8	7	4	4	5	7	5	4
7	7	8	7	8	3	5	7	5	4	3

15

G/B 2 4 Cm6 3121 G 32 4 D7 3fr. 3241 Gmaj7 1 33 D7/A 4fr. 3 24 G/B 5fr. 2 134

3	1	0	3	4	4	5	5	8	8
0	2	0	5	4	4	4	4	7	7
0	1	0	4	4	4	4	4	5	5
2	3	3	5	3	3	5	5	7	7

20

D7/A 4fr. 3 24 D7 4fr. 324 D7/C 2fr. 231 Gmaj7 1 231 A7/E 5fr. 312 Am7/E 5fr. 311 D7/F# 7fr. 231

5	5	2	4	4	6	6	5	5	7
4	4	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	10
5	5	3	4	4	7	7	7	7	9
5	5	3	3	3	7	7	7	7	9

25

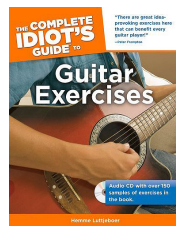
Gmaj7 D7/A G/B G7/B Cmaj7 Em7(b5) Cm6

29

G D7/F# Em7 D7 A7/E D7/F# G Cm6 G

Compare this involved harmonization of "Home On The Range" to the lead sheet arrangement. You don't have to play a new chord on every beat as in some of these measures but hopefully I have given you a possibility for spicing up a somewhat staid arrangement. Take other simple tunes you know that use a few chords and liven up the arrangement by injecting some inversions. You'll be amazed at the transformation!

You can find more lessons with chord inversions and guitar exercises in my book "The Complete Idiot's Guide To Guitar Exercises" published by Penguin/Alpha Publishing.



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