

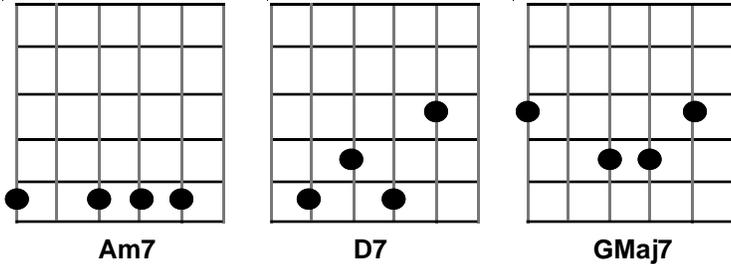


Do You Hear Voices?

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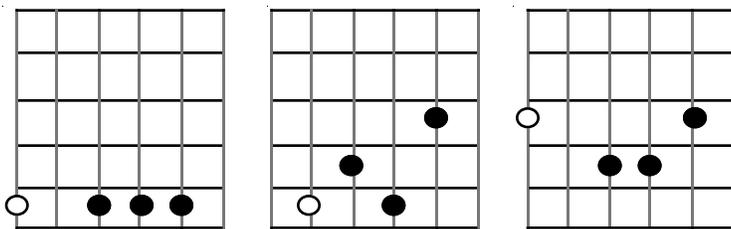
Many people come into their guitar lessons saying “I want to learn more chord inversions” and this is a good idea. I feel it is also good to look further into chords that are already known.

The following are examples of some new sounds that can be found within some very familiar chord voicings.



Everyone knows these voicings of Am7, D7, and GMaj7, each featuring its root in the bass. One way to play these chords is the familiar sound of four simultaneous tones strummed or plucked.

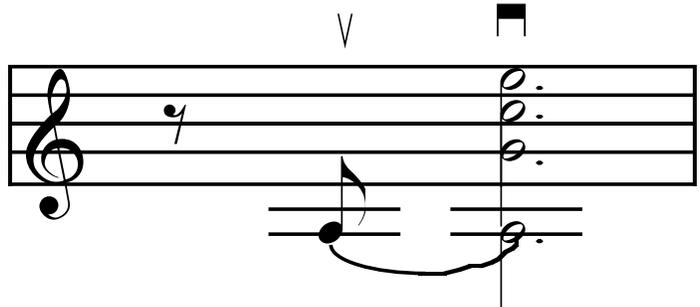
Now let's see where the tone of each chord can take us.



Begin with the lowest tone. Play this first then the rest of the chord tones simultaneously.

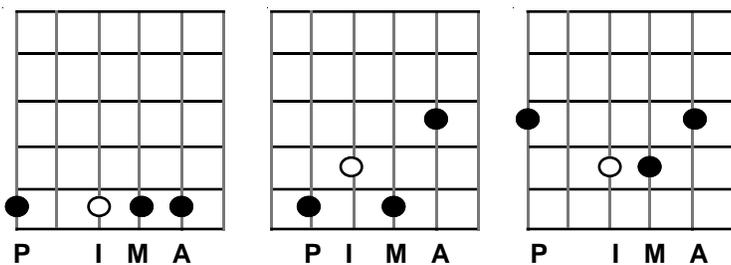
○ = First Note Played
● = Next Notes Played Simultaneously

If you are playing fingerstyle, try using one digit per string. P (Thumb), I (Index), M (Middle), A (Annularis). When using a pick, try playing the first tone with an upstroke and on an upbeat, then the simultaneous tones with a down stroke and on a down-beat, like this.



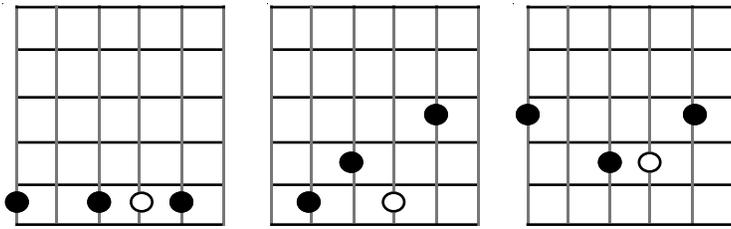
This is probably a familiar sound – it could be a bass line. It is one tone, one voice extracted from each of the chords, with the remaining voices of each chord then played simultaneously.

This word “voice” is an interesting one. We can imagine each string as a voice, along with all the subtle colorings that the word implies. When strings are combined, the choir sings.



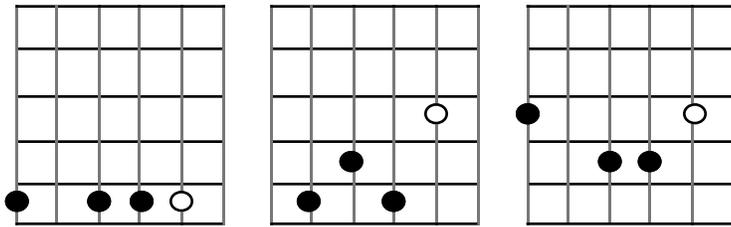
Now let's focus on one of the other voices.

Play this, the third tone or Tenor voice, with the index finger or with the up and down picking technique described earlier. These techniques are good for developing picking and finger dexterity.



Now, let's look at the last two tones.

Focusing on the second tone, or Alto voice. Try humming it as you play it.



And focusing on the first tone, or Soprano voice.

It becomes clearer that we can hear these chords as four independent moving voices. This opens the door to more detailed improvisations, comping, and chord-melody work. Try going through the chords to a tune you already know in this way – hear the voices moving through the chords. There are many melodies in there waiting to come out.

The last thought I would like to leave you with is regarding each string as a moving voice. Further linear lines can be developed from each chord tone along the string it is on. This is a whole new chapter but I hope the present introduction has been helpful.

Steve Greene has a teaching studio in Rochester, NY. He also teaches lessons through his web site, <http://www.stevegreene.com>. Steve has two CD's out, the first is Acoustic Living, the second is Gene with Greene, with Gene Bertoncini. Steve can be reached at 716-271-5006.