

## Three Four Pull

Foregoing the Fourth Finger Frack

By Ted Eschliman



### **Pull from the past**

We've discussed the importance of the aural "pull" of the 1/2 step relationships of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Major Scale degrees (as well as the 7 to 1). Review Link: [Gravity Notes](#)

It's a very important connection to hear and more importantly, PLAY cleanly. What makes this challenging for mandolinists is that once you leave the comfort and security of open string scales and close them with [FFcP](#) movable patterns, you increase the demand for a strong, secure 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> finger. Play in the "Jethro" keys of **Eb**, **Ab**, **Bb**, etc. or sink into the momentary modulations of many jazz standards, you discover finger strength and flexibility is even in higher demand.

Here is a link to a downloadable PDF of the exercise accompanying the article, in case you missed it the first time: [Guides and Gravity PDF](#)

Feedback we've received on this single issue is most vocal. Concerns or rather "complaints" (always a fine line between the two) about the difficulty of routinely double-stopping two strings with the pinky are a frequent query in our Feedback Forum at the JazzMando website.

Certainly, this is a challenge, but with determination and the right exercise, even a 98-lb. weakling can develop the strength to cover this cleanly. It will take attention and discipline, but you'll be amazed at how this increases your versatility and tone, even in other aspects of your playing. We've created an exercise to help you focus on this, but first let's examine why this problem is unique to you, the jazz mandolinist.

### **Fourth Finger "Frack"**

Trumpet and trombone players will tell you of the inherent difficulty of their instrument, that inability sometimes to nail that note between lip partials. The fingers hit the valve combination but the lip just isn't quite in synch, air starts moving, but the sound out of the horn is pretty pathetic. This lack of note preparedness is not unlike what mandolinists experience.

There's nothing more annoying than that half-fretted buzz from a finger not positioned to optimally cover that sweet spot between frets. If you are anticipating a virtual "barre" to the next string with the weaker 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> finger it's even more frustrating. This is what we call the "**Fourth Finger Frack**:" part buzz, part indeterminate pitch.

Though quite integrated, strength must come before dexterity; **slow it down** until you can bridge these combinations cleanly. This is hard, and frankly, most mandolinists (even professionals) will try to avoid it.

If their repertoire or playing style is mainly in the open string keys of **G, D, and A**, it's conveniently easy to steer around.

Not you, the jazz musician wannabe! We've stressed this again and again, you need to be comfortable in all 12 keys to be successful in the literature.

The question is begged: Do I need to do a **double stop** (two strings with one finger) in order to "bridge" the note, and keep the tone fluid and connected? The answer: Yes, *mostly*. The goal is to anticipate; in most cases it will be a firm, but rocking or rolling "plant" of both strings. (You still need to think ahead to the notes in the rest of the pattern.) The following exercise will help you in this pursuit!

**Diatonic Linear Gravity:**  
7 pulls to 1  
4 pulls to 3  
6 pulls to 5  
2 pulls to 1

**Three Four Pull**  
Start off *SLOWLY!*  
A 'Circle of Fifths' approach to 3rd & 4th Finger Strength.

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(See below for link to printable copy of above exercise)

Remember: our goal in the above "**Three Four Pull**" exercise is to isolate the **3<sup>rd</sup>** & **4<sup>th</sup>** scale degrees (and 7 to 1) in all 12 keys. Notice, again we only have four different ways to finger this, so this is more chop-buster than mental exercise.

**Connect the notes, no space or break between.**

However, since it does progress through the "Circle of Fifths" (V to I), a residual fringe benefit of the exercise is *using* your brain to understand this relationship (as well as your ear to hear it!). The first key is the "V" of the next; the next key is the "V" of the next, and so on, until **all 12 keys are covered**. (E is to A what A is to D, D is to G what G is to C, etc.) Also, be thinking about where these **1/2 step** relationships are and you'll be building a subconscious association you'll magically pull from in your improvisation. (*It will be like the notes are coming from nowhere!*)

Connect the notes, no space or break between. The string should consistently vibrate, and in string crossings, bleed into the next string. This may be foreign to you, but don't fear it. Give yourself time--weeks, if not months. It will eventually pay you back!

Note the significance of the title of the exercise; "**Three Four**" is relevant in that the exercise is in 3/4 time, the challenge is on the **3rd** & **4th** finger, and the relationship of the **4<sup>th</sup> scale degree** (and its aural pull) to the **3rd**.



#### Practice Hints:

**CONSIDER EACH TWO MEASURE SET AS A SEPERATE STUDY.** Don't be afraid to overwork each individual key.

**CONNECT THE NOTES AS CLOSELY AS POSSIBLE.** Hold the tone as long as you can before the articulation of the following note. (At string crossings, set your fingers almost *as if you were playing doublestops.*)

**THINK WHERE THE TONIC IS.** The drill starts on the 4th note; be mentally aware of what scale degree you are on within the key.

**SPEED IS NOT AS IMPORTANT AS GOOD, CLEAN TONE!** This is a challenge, but it will develop finger strength, proper Left-Hand position, control, and other aspects of your playing.

**USE A METRONOME!** Don't depend on your own (un)natural rhythm and sense of timing. Call in a mechanical "referee."

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For a clean printable copy of the above exercise in a pdf format, click link: [ThreeFourPull.pdf](#)

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