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Static Changes: V7 chords

April 2011 2,659 views 2 Comments



By Ted Eschliman

Using Three-note chords to supercharge your comping

Ch ch ch changes!

12-bar blues progressions can be tedious. Twelve bars of nothing but **Dominant 7** (V7) chords. We looked at a few variations, including minor blues in our most recent **Mandolin Sessions** article **Minor Blues: Fresh patterns** <http://www.mandolinsessions.com/?p=756>. What if we want to just *stick* with the simple traditional three-chord progressions, your basic **I7**, **IV7**, **V7**? There is a way to please both camps, keeping it simple, but also making it interesting.

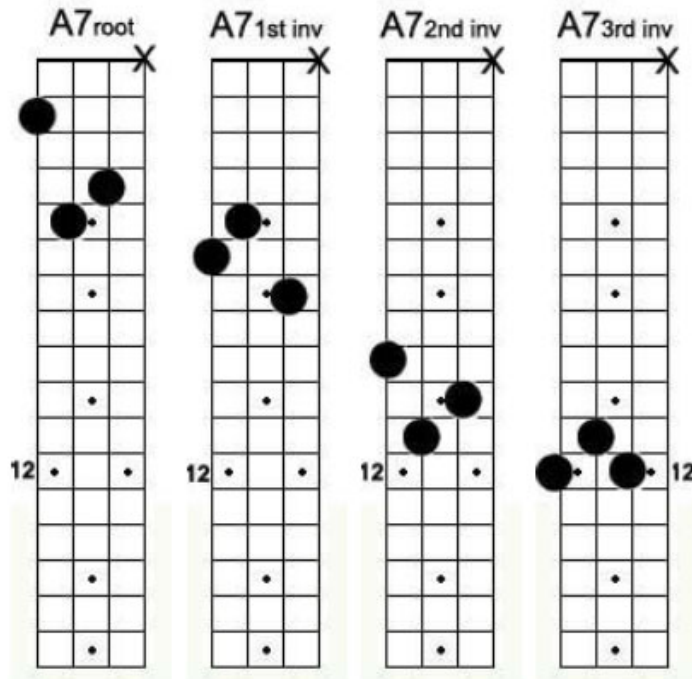
A long time ago, somewhere around October of 2006, we explored supercharging long, static multi-measure singular chord changes in our **Chords in Passing; Exploring Diatonic Chord Progressions** <http://archive.mandolinsessions.com/oct06/Eschliman.html>. The approach there was to move chords up the diatonic scale, but we want to go even more simply than that this time through the trick of **three-note V7 chord blocks**. What we can do is introduce four basic inversions of the **V7** chord but use only three notes (muting one string).

The beauty of simplicity

The magic in this?

- 1.) There are only four of them! From there, they just repeat up the hypothetically infinite fretboard
- 2.) They are instantly transposable up the neck
- 3.) They are instantly transposable across the strings

We'll start with **A7**. Note in the diagrams, the **X** on the **1st string** indicates it is meant to be muted. You can do this by lightly covering it with the palm of your left hand, or just not hitting it at all with your pick. We like using the lower three strings because of their meatier timbre, and you can adjust the amount of "chop" by varying sustain:



Don't worry so much about the *names* of the inversions (unless you're a devoted theory geek), the main thing you want to know is how they feel moving from one to the next. Most of the time, you aren't going to want to jump from extremes of the fretboard, so you'll go from one to the next closest.

If you're playing the first four measures of a blues progression in **A7**, you can grab the first two blocks and play:

A7root, A71st. A7root, A71st.

In other words, just alternate between those two, either playing one per measure, or one per half measure. First, second, first, second. You can do the same with the next pair, too. Second, third, second, third:

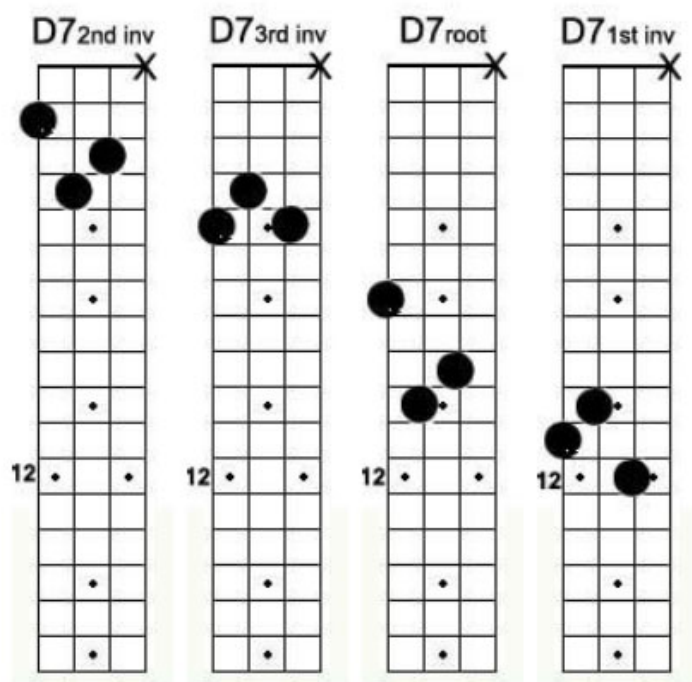
A71st, A72nd. A71st, A72nd

And the next with the **2nd** and **3rd** inversions. (*Third, fourth, third, fourth*) Once you become proficient with these, you can bounce around the fingerboard with an infinite combination of pairs, and this will really freshen up extended passages of **A7**.

Next Chord, please.

As we mentioned there are only four blocks. If we continue in the **A Major** Blues progression, the next chord will be **D7**.

Here's how they look:



Notice, we started by listing the **2nd inversion** chord first. The reason is to show how these work in succession up the fretboard. Again, it's not so important for you to know their names, just how they relate to each other.

You can do the same to internalize these in preparation for the real world. Just grab the first two pairs and work them back and forth:

D72nd, D73rd. D72nd, D73rd

Achieve proficiency and move to the next pair, the second block and the third block:

D73rd, D7root. D73rd, D7root

And on to E7

In the key of A7, the next chord will be an E7 (after a return to the A7, of course), and we don't even need to block these out for you. **All you have to do is look at the E7 blocks and move them up two frets.** Again, the simplicity of all this is a wonder to behold—you can move these all over the fretboard in any key, once you have them in your fingers.

Get a grip

It's worth developing a practice routine of your own, internalizing these. Play them in sets of two, play in sets of three. Go nuts and use all four. If you're doing thirty choruses of **12-bar blues**, this can be an incredible sanity break for you, and an opportunity to explore new regions of your fretboard you might have been insecure about venturing into.

On to other songs.

Think **Sweet Georgia Brown**. In the key of **F major**, you have a succession of **V7** chords, four measures of each:

D7 G7 C7, and back to home F Major.

Use the four blocks of **D7** we displayed above, and learn them for **G7** and **C7**. You'll find this immediately beneficial for many songs!

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http://jazzmando.com/ffcp_studies.shtml

Take a few moments to check out the wealth of inexpensive resources you can buy at Mel Bay Express or better, through your local Mel Bay dealer. If you enjoyed this article, do us a favor and click on the fifth star. (We love job security.) Leave comments.



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