

Referential Playing

Playing a Four-Note Chord in Groups of Three

In this lesson, we extend our conception of a single, four-note chord beyond the most common fingerings. We do this by breaking the four-note chord up into groups of three notes, and playing these groups horizontally along the fretboard. In following previous lessons, we will use the chord <D, F#, A, C#>, or DMaj7. With our referential set being the D major scale, DMaj7 can be considered the most important (seventh) chord in the set, since it most strongly reflects the sound of the set.

Ex.01: An initial DMaj7 chord (a) grouped into three's (b-f), played *horizontally* along the fretboard:

a. b. c. d. e. f.

T
A
B

Ex.02: Using groups b-f (shown in Ex.01) as variations of a DMaj chord, with the note D in the bass:
(Note: The three-note chord group is represented in black; in c-f, the D-bass is in white and does not have to be included)

FRET: 2 2 3 7 8

<D, F#, A> <(D), F#, A, C#> <(D), A, C#, D> <(D), C#, D, F#> <(D), D, F#, A>

Ex.03: The closing improvisation uses the following chord shapes + bass notes, which supports single 3-note D chords with various bass notes from the referential set:

<(D), A, C#, D> <(G), A, C#, D> <(A), A, C#, D>* <(B), C#, D, F#> <(G), C#, D, F#> <(D), C#, D, F#> <(A), C#, D, F#>*

* These shapes use the open A string, as represented by the white dot outside the fretboard diagram.