

Play That Guitar. Pt 4

A beginner's guide by Brian Powell

I recently read that to become an expert at certain practical skills you need to spend about 10,000 hours doing it! This applies as much to musicians as it does to skills like Carpentry, Painting and all sorts of Crafts. A lot of becoming skilled on an instrument like the Guitar is repetition, muscle memory and developing a part of your brain that tells your fingers and ears what to do. The 3 golden words are Practice, Practice and Practice. You are using mechanical movements and co-ordination with your fingers to create music. It starts with your brain telling your fingers what to do.

As you become more adept and start playing in public you will find it is the audience that will begin to tell you what to play.. and maybe what NOT to play !

TOP TIP.

Open your ears to different types of music and take an interest in all music featuring a guitar, eg Rock, Blues, Jazz, Classical, and Flamenco.

Also, try to play for 10 or 15 minutes each day rather than a marathon once a week.

And remember, the slower you practice the faster you will learn.

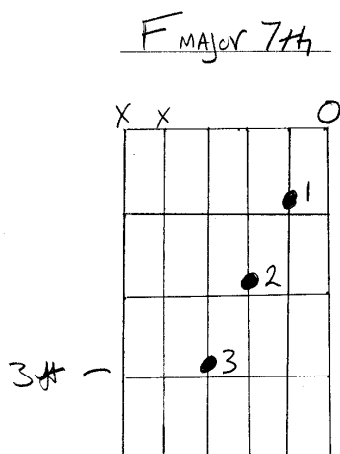
This month we look at 'The Quitters' Chord, the CAGED chord system and how to start Song Writing.

The 'Quitters' chord 'F'

So called because it can be so frustrating to perfect that it puts people off playing the Guitar. Don't give up, just practice!

You need to flatten your left hand 1st finger over the first 2 strings and arch your 2nd and 3rd fingers to create the full chord. This makes it tricky.

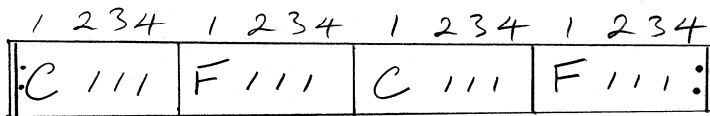
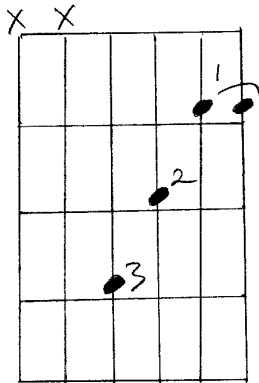
I teach people to start the 'F' chord as the easier F major 7th shape.



Get used to this shape and use it as a substitute in chord sequences requiring an 'F' chord.

When you feel comfortable with finding the Fmaj7 shape, try flattening your 1st finger to cover the 1st and 2nd strings to complete the chord. It requires a bit of practice and strength in your fingers at first but gets easier with repetition.

Fmajor



Try this simple chord exercise to improve your finger placing. Remember to ARCH your fingers onto the fingerboard so as to allow the required OPEN strings to sound. Of course you also need to FLATTEN your 1st finger for the 'F' chord. Let's play a tune.

The House of the Rising Sun

1 2 3 4 5 6 1 2 3 4 5 6 etc

| | | | |
|----------|---------|----------|---------|
| Am | C | D | F |
| Am | C | E | |
| Am | C | D | F |
| Am | E | Am | E |

Song Writing.

My advice for writing songs is to work backwards from the applause !

Take a few simple chords such as A, D and E. Get some device to record your efforts. I use a very cheap old cassette walkman. It works for me. Buy a notebook, pencil and rubber to write down lyric ideas, song titles, words and lines that work well together. Write in pencil and build up a song lyric over time. When something comes into your head write it down. Carry your book on you as much as possible. You never know when some killer line is going to hit you.

Strum away with your 3 chords and hum a tune over them. Change chords when it feels right and create a short sequence that you can repeat. Write it down as a chord chart and call this your VERSE or A section. Record it and find some words that fit the tune. Any Words will do at this stage. (Paul McCartney's 'Yesterday' had the working title of 'Scrambled Eggs, Oh how I would love some scrambled eggs'. Try singing it to the tune!) Next, tinker with your chord sequence and develop the tune and words to make a CHORUS or B section. Lyrically the chorus should contain the theme of the song in it. Most classic songs will also contain a BRIDGE section that links the Verse to the Chorus. Other devices are Solo's, Key Changes and Light and Shade.

This is a simplified way of looking at Song Writing but try to listen to songs as sequences or chords with melodies and words. That's all you need or as Dolly Parton says "Three chords and the truth".

Start making them up yourself. Listen to Hank Williams and Johnny Cash for simple songs with stories and heartfelt sentiments. The Beatles and Bob Dylan are also great examples of simple song composition.

Next month we will look at CAGED chords (ran out of time this month) and some Jazz Guitar chord shapes. In the meantime keep playing that guitar and listen to Charlie Christian, Jimi Hendrix and of course.....Hank Williams.

I have designed these 6 lessons to build the students ability a month at a time. Keep these articles and refer back to previous lessons. This page and all other 'Play That Guitar' lessons are posted at www.fivewaysdirectory.co.uk

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