

A Lesson From Jimmy Wyble

This material is part of a lecture Jimmy Wyble gave at Musicians Institute on January 31, 2008.

Chord Scales:

Chord scales are one of the best ways to develop harmonic awareness on the instrument. We will be working with and manipulating two different chord scales today - the 1 - 7 - 9 - 11 voicing and the 1 - 7 - 3 - 5 voicing.

- Play each chord slowly and accurately. Be aware of fingerings. Use four fingers in your left hand and the thumb, index, middle and ring fingers in the right hand.
- Become aware of not only the names of the notes that you are playing but also the chord voicing.
- Break the chord up into two - two note voices. Play the root and the 9th together and then the 7th and the 11th together. Use your thumb and middle fingers to play the root and 9th. Use your index and ring fingers to play the 7th and the 11th. Try lifting the two notes as you play them so they back and forth so the four notes do not ring together. This is good for your technique.

C major chord scale voiced: 1 - 7 - 9 - 11

The image displays two rows of guitar chord diagrams and their corresponding musical notation. Each diagram shows a six-string guitar fretboard with fingerings indicated by numbers 1-4 and 'x' for muted strings. The first row contains four chords: CMa11 (fret 1), Dmi11 (fret 3), Emi11(b9) (fret 5), and FMa9(#11) (fret 7). The second row contains four chords: G11 (fret 8), Ami11 (fret 10), Bmi11(b9) (fret 12), and CMa11 (fret 13). Below each diagram is a musical staff showing the chord as a whole note on a single line, with a bass line below it.

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Here are some variations on the chord scale from the previous page. Remember to lift each set of fingers and then place the next set so that the chord will have a detached sound. This is good for developing finger independence in the left hand. Also, make sure that you alternate your fingers in the right hand. (P and M then I and A)

Cmaj⁹⁽¹¹⁾ Dm¹¹ Em^{11(b9)} Fmaj^{9(#11)}
 G¹¹ Am¹¹ Bm^{11(b9)} Cmaj⁹⁽¹¹⁾

One challenge that I give myself is to everyday put my fingers on the guitar differently than I did the day before, even if that means just simply altering an exercise slightly. Below is an example of how I might accomplish this. If I practiced the above exercise yesterday, then I would try and find something different to do with it today. For example inverting the top two notes and changing my right hand fingering to (P and A then I and M).

Cmaj⁹⁽¹¹⁾ Dm¹¹ Em^{11(b9)} Fmaj^{9(#11)}
 G¹¹ Am¹¹ Bm^{11(b9)} Cmaj⁹⁽¹¹⁾

Here is another chord scale voiced 1 7 3 5. As you play through the chord scale become aware of several things:

- Try not to just play chord shapes up and down the neck of the guitar. Where this is important, it is not the goal of this lesson. I would rather you track each voice up and down the individual string so that you start to become aware of voices moving rather than chord shapes.
- You might be more comfortable playing some of these shapes with a 1st finger bar. Where as that is a very legitimate way to play those chords, avoid using the bar and use the concept of four fingers for four notes. This will ultimately help you to develop finger independence, strength as well as a better stretch.
- Break these chords up into two note voicings as we did with the chord scale on the previous page.

The image displays two rows of guitar chord diagrams and their corresponding musical notation. Each diagram shows a six-string guitar fretboard with fingerings (1-4) and barre positions (3, 5, 7, 8, 10, 12). The first row includes Cmaj7, Dm7, Em7, and Fmaj7. The second row includes G7, Am7, Bmi7(b5), and Cmaj7. Below each diagram is a musical staff showing the chord voicing in a 1-7-3-5 configuration.

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Another way that I vary the way I practice chord scales is to add alterations to the scale that I am harmonizing. Below is the same chord scale from the previous page but now I have added the $b3$ and $\#4$ to the scale. I like to play these kinds of chord scales in way I played it on page 3 and then play it below with the alterations. This makes it easier to compare the sounds.

- When you are playing these chord voicings up and down the neck of the guitar, track each voice up and down the individual string and become aware of where you are altering each chord voice.
- Listen to the new sounds that you have now created and if you like any of them try and manipulate them into ideas. More on this later. . . (see page 5 and 6)
- Break these chords up into two note voicings as we did with the chord scale on the previous pages. Avoid using any bars.

C major chord scale voiced: 1 - 7 - 3 - 5 w/ $b3$ and $\#4$

The image displays two rows of guitar chord diagrams and their corresponding musical notation in treble clef. Each diagram shows fingerings (1-4) and fret numbers (3, 5, 6, 8, 10, 12, 2).

Row 1:

- Cmi maj7:** Fret 3, fingers 1, 2, 3, 4. Diagrams show X on strings 1 and 2.
- D7:** Fret 5, fingers 1, 2, 3, 4. Diagrams show X on strings 1 and 2.
- Ebma7#5:** Fret 6, fingers 1, 2, 3, 4. Diagrams show X on strings 1 and 2.
- F#dim7:** Fret 8, fingers 1, 2, 3, 4. Diagrams show X on strings 1 and 2.

Row 2:

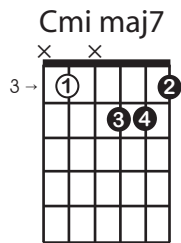
- Gmaj7:** Fret 10, fingers 1, 2, 3, 4. Diagrams show X on strings 1 and 2.
- Ami7b5:** Fret 12, fingers 1, 2, 3, 4. Diagrams show X on strings 1 and 2.
- Bmi7:** Fret 2, fingers 1, 2, 3, 4. Diagrams show X on strings 1 and 2.
- Cmi maj7:** Fret 3, fingers 1, 2, 3, 4. Diagrams show X on strings 1 and 2.

The musical notation below each row shows the chord voicings on a five-line staff, with notes placed on the strings to represent the fretted notes. The notes are: C (open), G (open), Bb (3rd fret), Eb (6th fret), and F# (8th fret) for the first row; and G (open), C (open), Eb (6th fret), Ab (8th fret), and B (10th fret) for the second row.

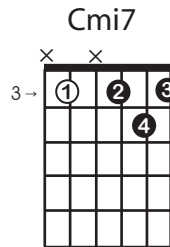
Another way that I like to experiment with harmony and develop harmonic awareness is to move voices of chord shapes and then try and manipulate them into lines. For example, if we take the first chord from the previous page and move notes around we can come up with many different sounds.

1. Lets start by moving the 7th down a half step. (We now have a Cmi7 voicing)
2. Next lets move that note again down to the 6th degree. (We now have Cmi6)
3. Lets move the root down to the 7th degree. (We now have a Cmi chord that harmonizes well with the melodic minor scale. These same notes are played in a very common jazz guitar voicing at the 7th fret. I don't hear many people playing this voicing that we just came up with.

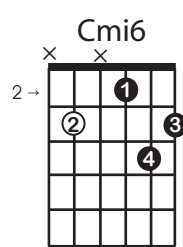
First shape from the previous page.



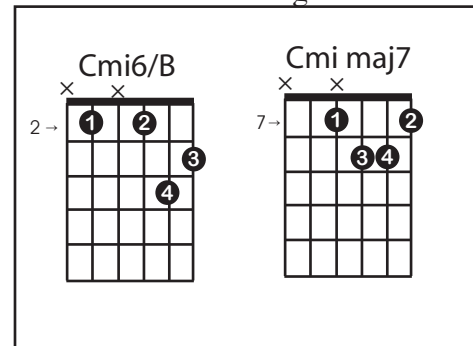
1.



2.



3.

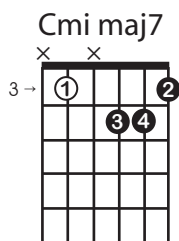


Common jazz guitar voicing same notes as #3.

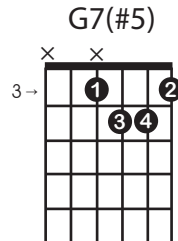
Lets look at that first chord from a different angle. I see a G augmented triad with a C in the bass.

1. Lets change the bass note to an "F". (We now have a G7(#5))
2. Lets change it again to a "Db". (We now have a Db9(#11))
3. Lets change it again to a "G". (We once again have a G7(#5) but a different voicing.
4. Finally, lets break it up into two note voices and put it into context of a progression. (Shown on page 6)

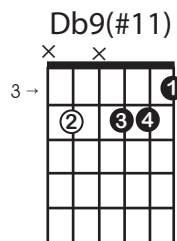
First shape from the previous page. G aug triad (top 3 notes)



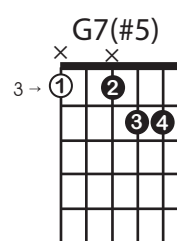
1.



2.



3.



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4. The notes from the previous page broken up into 2 lines and put inside a ii - v - i chord progression in C minor: (Play with a swing feel)

⑤

m a m a p i p i a p i a i p

Several points of interest with the above example:

- The Dm7 chord is the 1 - 7 - 3 voicing from page 3. The 5th is simply left off of the chord so that the 3rd or “F” could be the melody. The “Ab” on beat 3 is just moving the bass note around like we did on the “Gaug triad” on the previous page.
- The G7 is also the same voicing 1 - 7 - 3 but an octave lower and on a different string set. I practice all possible fingerings of this chord scale.
- 2nd measure beats 3 and 4 are our chords from the previous page broken up into two voices.
- The C minor chord is just moving notes around the same way we practiced the top of page 5.

A note from David Oakes:

This lesson sheds light on how Jimmy practices, organizes his thoughts, creates sounds and how he manipulates his lines. It is both very simple but at the same time brilliant. The students enrolled in this class at MI have no idea how lucky they are to be in the presence of this 87 year old man as he departs such depth of thought and wisdom. This particular lesson continued on for another hour. Jimmy shared some other ideas with the students but wanted to continue those concepts for next week. That sounds like another lesson like this one coming up. He also passed out an excerpt from one of his etudes (Etude 24 from the “Art of Two Line Improvisation”) and went through the first few bars explaining and demonstrating how he composed this work.

Jimmy has made MI his home away from home and I for one am so happy to be able to share thoughts and concepts with him and at the same time grasp his ideas and share them with you.

I hope that you enjoy this lesson as much as I did putting it together for you.