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ACOUSTIC WORKSHOP

This issue, we introduce the first of a series of 'Workshop' articles from guitarist John Goldie. An accomplished player in his own right and will be taking us through the theory behind good playing, starting with the basics...

Hi everyone, and welcome to my new guitar column in SCMAG. Over the next few issues I'll be looking at how to apply some simple theory to basic chords that players of all levels can manage. It is a recurring theme amongst guitarists to spend hours trying to 'nail that lick' but no time on the 'basics'. Traditionally there has always been a huge gap between 'readers' and people who play by ear, the void being reinforced by accusations of readers lacking feel and ear players just 'hearing it' and having no need for written music.

As a kid I fell into the latter category, and I recall being warned against going over to the 'dark side' aka learning to read by people who assured me it would damage my playing! Nevertheless my frustration with not really understanding what I could already play got the better of me and I sought out a great teacher who made learning about theory, harmony and reading fun. This turned out to be the catalyst for many things that would prove essential in my career as a professional guitarist. Even a basic ability to read can provide many opportunities for work e.g. theatre, cruises, TV, sessions and teaching to name but a few.

An increased knowledge of theory and harmony will greatly enhance composition and arranging skills and a good understanding of chords is essential in most jobs. But for the average guitarist who is in a band, plays for fun at home or is a complete beginner you can apply some simple theory to what you already know, which will expand your knowledge of chords considerably. To keep it simple I will be focussing on the first position on the neck and using chords most people will know i.e. C major. If we look at diagram 1 we see a C chord played in the first position. I'm sure most of you will recognise the chord but how many people know the notes under their fingers or the names of the open strings?

Since most people learn chords by copying from someone else or out of a magazine or book the primary concern is to get a good sound, the notes generally go by unnoticed. Most players learn this way,

myself included, and it's a good way to get started strumming and posing in front of the mirror etc. Now lets have a look at the notes 'behind the scenes'. If we want to play a C6 chord for example, how do we work it out? Firstly it is C 'something' so we use the C scale C D E F G A B C. In order to find the sixth note we simply count up six starting from C, finding that our sixth is A, so by adding this to our C chord (Diag 1) we have C6. But I don't know

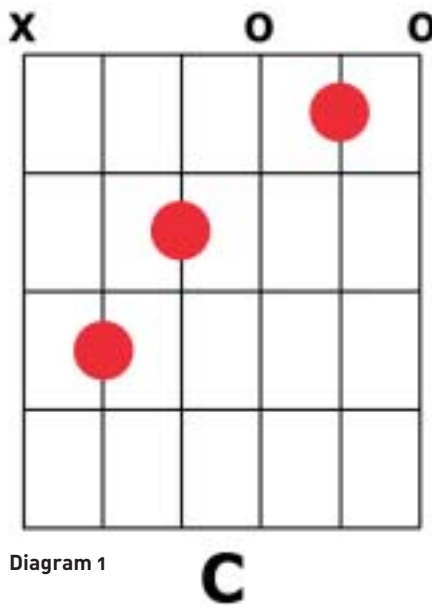


Diagram 1

where A is on the fingerboard I hear you cry, Don't panic, I've included a diagram (Diag 2) showing the names of the relevant notes in the first position. We can see from this that the 'A' note is on the third string, second fret. Now all we have to do is add this to the C chord in diagram 1, but to do this we have to alter the fingering slightly, see diagram 3.

It's also worth pointing out at this stage that the visual aspect of chords can be helpful also. By removing your fourth finger from the chord and leaving the fifth string open hey presto! It's an A minor chord. Over the next few issues I will be

expanding on these ideas and showing how a little knowledge can go a long way. Until then have fun.

John Goldie

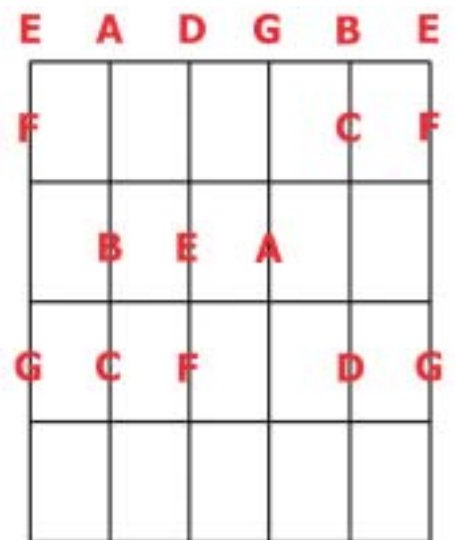


Diagram 2

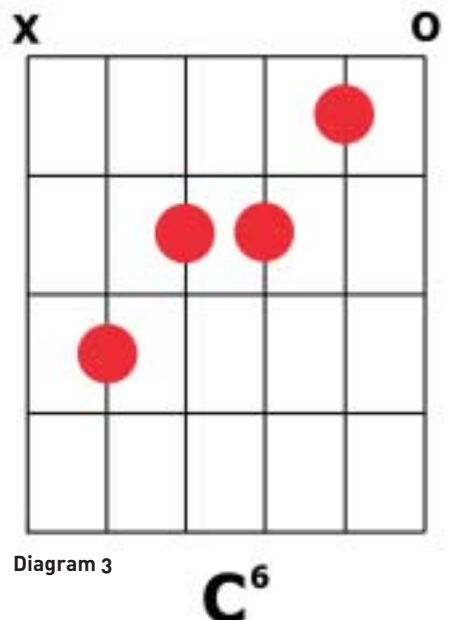


Diagram 3