

ACOUSTIC MASTERCLASS

Our resident acoustic master, John Goldie, returns with another slice of wisdom this month looking at more chord action, moving up and down the neck.



John Goldie is a virtuoso acoustic fingerstyle guitarist who encompasses twenty years experience as both session player and jazz guitarist into his repertoire as a solo performer. He is also a renowned composer and educator.
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Hi there and welcome back to Acoustic Masterclass, hope you're enjoying the new chords and putting them to good use! Last time we stayed in the first position with our minor chords so I thought it would be a good idea to look at some moveable shapes as we did before with Major chords. This is particularly useful since open strings can limit the amount of chords playable in the first position. It goes without saying that open voiced chords sound good and have a unique 'ringing' quality and everything would be fine if it wasn't for those pesky singers! – 'It's too high!' 'Can you do that lovely picking part in G flat?' etc, etc.

Now obviously we could use a capo – I believe they are still legal in this country! But failing that it is a good idea to familiarise yourself with some mobile shapes, so let's have a look at some industry standards as it were. In a recent instalment of A.M we looked at a version of D minor which can be played anywhere on the neck on the top four strings, see Diag 1. In the same issue there was a diagram for F major, (Diag 2), again on the top four strings, and a shape which is easy to move around, so it follows that we could do the same if the chord was minor. As we know the difference between major and minor chords is the third, so to make the chord minor we flatten the 3rd of the chord (A) down to Ab see Diag 3. The best way to play this shape is with a partial barre using your first finger. So now we have another mobile minor shape – one fret up is F sharp minor etc. This shape is great for rhythm playing and picking – see classic Led Zep intro as an example – beware though, this is virtually banned in most music shops!

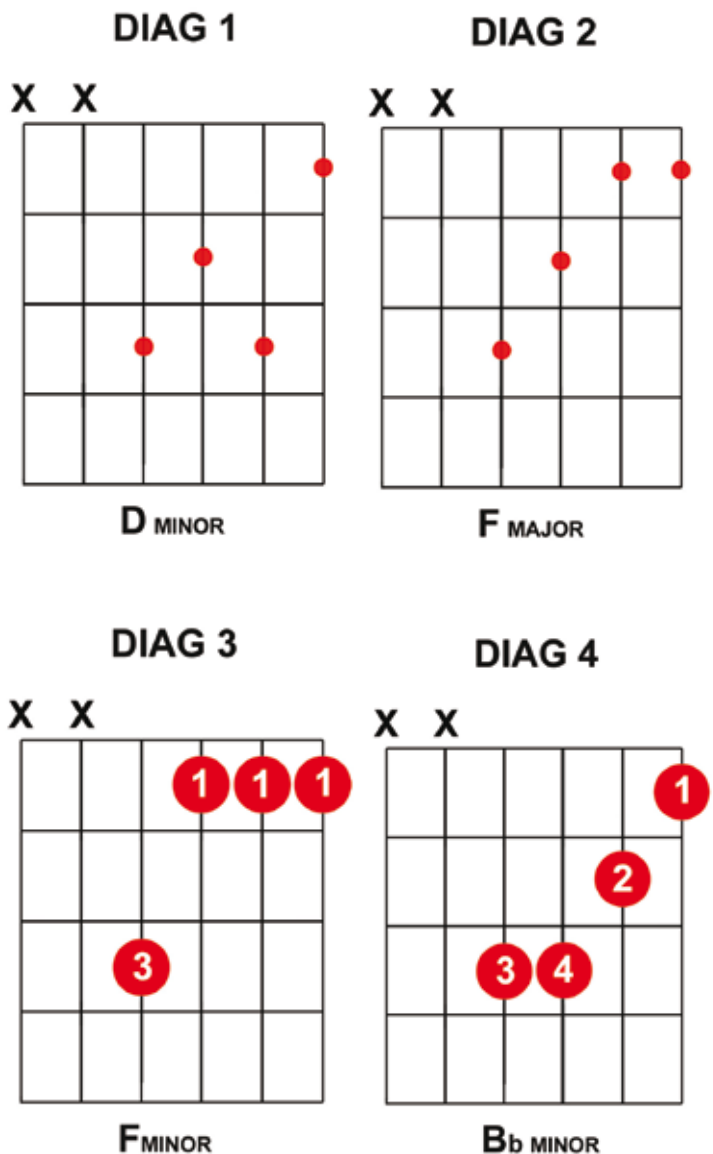
Anyway back to the plot! One more useful and moveable shape is A minor. Normally we play this chord in the first position but by changing the fingering and moving up the neck by one fret we get Bb minor (see Diag 4) and again as with the other shapes this can be played anywhere on the neck. Now I know some people may be wondering why

I'm using shapes utilising the top four strings rather than full barre chords but I have purposely avoided them for two main reasons. Firstly, a lot of people find them very hard to play – not everyone has a guitar with a super low action – most don't – I learned on a guitar which could have effortlessly doubled as a crossbow the action was so high! Secondly, once you grapple with your barre chord and finally get it down you will realise that all of your left hand digits are involved in holding the big guy down so it is difficult to do anything else

with the chord, whereas the four string versions are easier to work with and adapt to minor 6 and 7th chords etc.

Have a go playing minor chords up and down the neck, you should be able to find three inversions of any minor chord. Good luck with the new mission, drop me an e-mail and let me know how you're getting on and check my website for past issues etc.

Till next time have fun.



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