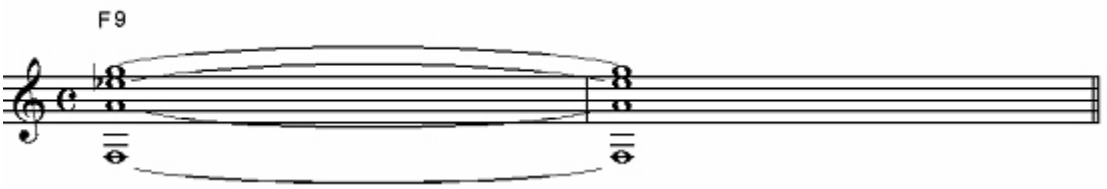
A Painless Approach to the 7-String Guitar Part 2

by Ted Ludwig

Welcome back for the second installment of *A Painless Approach to the 7-String Guitar*. This time we'll be exploring chord vocabulary that will be useful in applying our 7-string harmonic palette. For those who are just joining us for the first time, this lesson is a continuation of Part 1 which was posted in the July 2004 issue of *Guitar Sessions*.

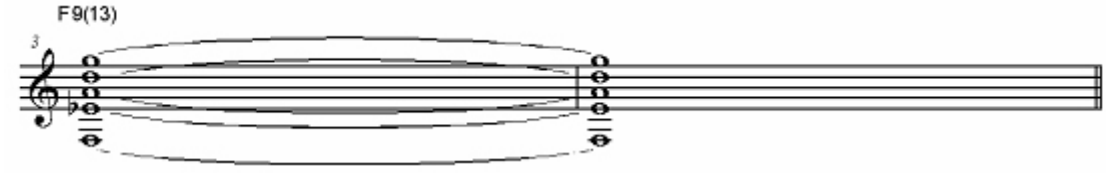
The 7-string guitar can provide us with some new options when playing harmony. We learned in Part 1 how to adapt 6-string voicings to the 7-string by simply dropping the 5th string root of the chord down one octave so that it falls on the 7th string. We have now relieved the fifth string of its bass note duties, freeing it up for other intervals.

Many guitar chords position the guide tones (3rd and 7th) so that they fall on the fourth and third strings. For example: Here is an F9 chord that follows this pattern. Notice how the A and Eb notes fall on the aforementioned strings.



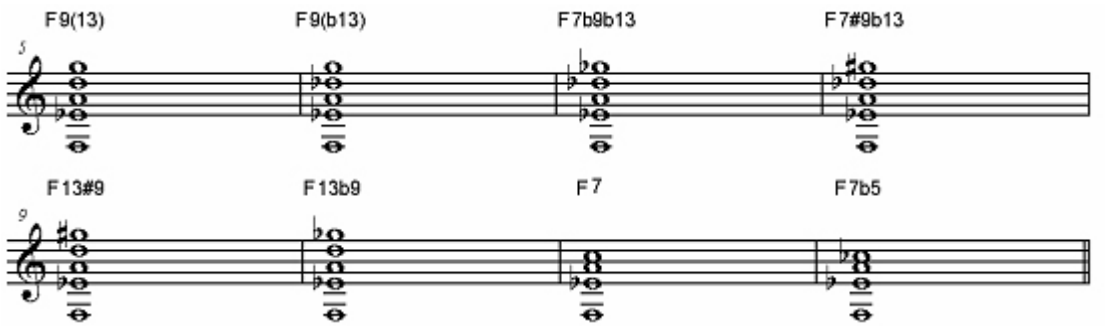
The first thing that we'll do is invert the guide tones so the 7th degree of the chord falls on the fifth string and the 3rd degree remains on the fourth string. This inversion is great for playing higher up the fingerboard because it allows the guide tones to be positioned so that they fall into a practical range on the staff. For matters of musical taste we don't want the guide tones to be placed too high up on the staff.

For example: here is the same F9 chord in the new inversion. We can also add the 13th of the chord on the 3rd string which is now available for use.



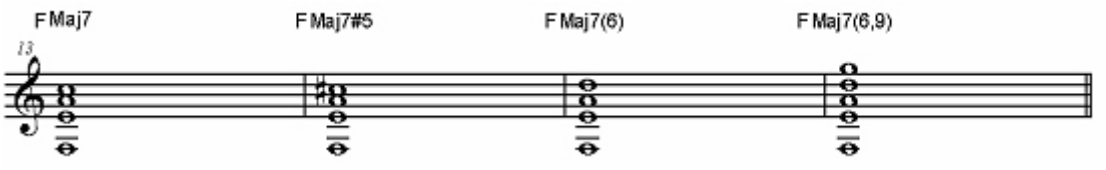
Which voicing sounds better to your ear? You will probably prefer the sound of the second example. You can also play these chords on a 6-string guitar by simply omitting the bass note.

Next we'll explore some different chord voicings using this same formula. For example, let's keep the guide tones on the same strings while exploring some of the extensions of this chord.

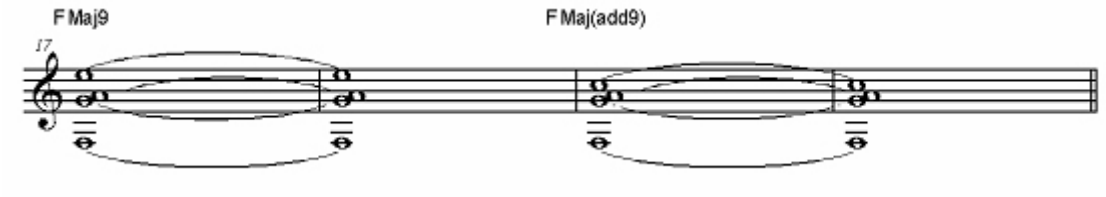


Go ahead and explore more possibilities of this voicing on your own.

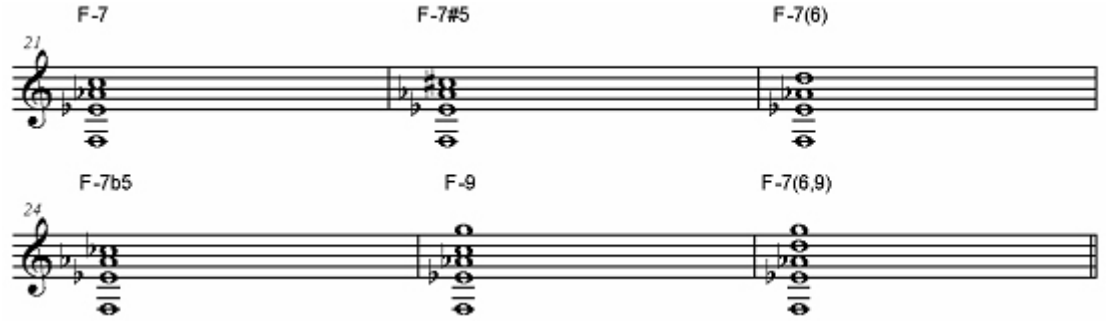
Next, let's apply this same concept to Major 7, Minor 7, and Minor 7b5 chords. For example, the same rules can be applied to chord voicings other than Dominant 7 chords; Let's put them to use with Major 7 chords.



Here are some other 7-string Maj9 voicings that do not follow the exact same format as the previous chords. These voicings also sound good because we can apply a closed interval between the 9th and the 3rd.



Here are some examples of the guide tone inversions being used on a minor 7th and Minor 7b5 chords.



I sincerely hope that this lesson will help you in your pursuit to learn the 7-string guitar. I urge you to continue to explore the harmonic advantages that the 7- string

affords; I know that I will. There is so much more to learn from the 7-string guitar, but we'll have to explore that in another lesson- maybe next year!

Happy picking,

Ted Ludwig