How to Make Fills
Using Chords and Chord Tones
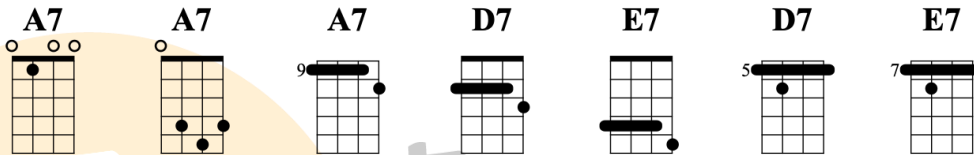
TenThumbs

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Key:  A
Chords:  A7, D7, E7
Video Tutorial: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4-2bNSN_XZk
Chord Shapes:
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| A7 | A7 | A7 | D7 | E7 | D7 | E7 |

What is a fill?

- "In popular music, a **fill** is a short musical passage, riff, or rhythmic sound which helps to sustain the listener's attention during a break between the phrases of a melody."
- **Definition taken from Wikipedia, links to other Wikipedia articles**

When do you use a fill?

- **Look for empty spaces, a lot of times it is when you are strumming the ukulele and not singing.**
- **Blues example**
  - **When you strum the blues the for the first four measures you sing over the first two and just strum the second two, those second two empty measures are perfect for creating a fill.**

What do you use to create a fill?
- **One tool is scales, if the song is in the key of A minor you can use the A minor scale, if it is in G# you can use the G# scale.**
- **The other thing you can use is chords and arpeggios, that is what we are doing today.**

Fill 1 – Use different shapes

- For this one you simply just strum the same chord just a different shape. For measures 3 and 4 we are strumming an A7 using the G shape.
- Want some extra help learning about chord shapes? Check out this link
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Fill 2 – Adding another shape

- Here we are adding the A7 in the C7 shape

Fill 3 – Fingerpicking fill

- You could do the same exact idea with the same shape that you were strumming but we added another chord shape for added interest.

Fill 4 – Fingerpicking multiple chord shapes

Fill 5 – Targeting chord tones

- The A7 chord is made up of
  - A – the root
  - C# - the major 3rd
  - E – the 5th
  - G – the b7th
- You can target any of these notes individually to highlight sounds from the chord
- First we slide into the root note from a whole step down, which is two frets
  - We do this because it slides from the b7th into the root, giving it an A7 feelt
- After that we target the 3rd, in this riff we slide into the C# from the C
  - Going from the flat 3rd to the 3rd is a classic blues sound, so when doing this idea over a blues progression or if you want a blues sound slide into your 3rd from a fret down
    - This only work with major chords
- So we have targeted two notes from the chord and played them in a flashy and expressive way and then added a cool rhythm as well. All of these still feels like an A7, just a fun, dynamic and expressive A7 instead of a basic strum pattern

Fill 6 – Triplet double stops

- Here we play the exact same two notes but we play them at the same time
- To give them power we play them in triplets
- To give them some interest we slide into them from a half step, meaning one fret below

Fill 7 – Spicy 7 chords

- Targeting chord tones again here we go after the roote, b7th and 5th, 3 of the 4 notes

- Because the harmony goes from E7 to D7 you can just move the lick down two frets to match the new chord
- At the end because we are doing this over a blues I added a turnaround. It has a pedal tone, the root, as it moves up from the 3ʳᵈ, to 4ᵗʰ, to b5th to 5ᵗʰ. It then finishes by chromatically moving from the IV7 chord to the V7 passing through the bV7 chord

Putting this all together in a 12 bar blue context

- You can rearrange this any way you want with the fills that you like best as long as you play them in the same place as the fills
- Sometime there is overlap, for example you may finish singing on the same beat you start the fill, a little overlap of one or two beats is okay, but make sure to keep it minimal.
- As these ideas are based around chords you can do them an execute them with any popular music
- You can also take the exact same ideas and mix up the rhythm, speed it up, slow it down, experiment! That is the idea and of course have fun while experimenting.

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