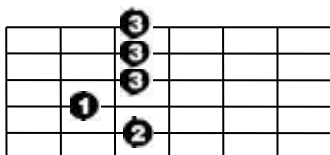


Rhythm Guitar Lesson #5. -Funk Guitar lesson – Grooving with 16ths

Hey there rhythm fans. If you have looked at the previous rhythms lessons you will probably be ready for this lesson in **funk** guitar. Many guitar players make the the mistake of spending hours learning the latest flash lick and neglecting their rhythm playing. Although I admit that playing flashy solos is my favourite thing to do on the guitar, the honest truth is that, if you can't play in time then no matter how good you are at soloing you will never earn a penny from playing. At the end of the day 97.3% of guitar playing is playing rhythm guitar. So lets get down to it.



Here is a Dominant 9th chord, this is a popular funk chord. To be honest most bar chords will work for funk. Open chords sound a bit rubbish because it is hard to stop all the strings ringing out. For funk you will mainly play the thinner strings and aim for a short snappy kinda percussive sound.

By the end of the lesson we will be playing the above funk pattern. We will build up to it slowly. As you can see there are lots of little "x" in the notation. This means that the note is muted. The cool thing about the above funk rhythm is that each of the four beats is a different pattern and you accent every variation of a 16th note in just one bar. Basically, if you look you are playing a "3 against 4 feel". This means that the chord is at the beginning of a group of 3 notes, but you are still only tapping your foot 4 times in the bar, rather than tapping your foot every time you play the chord. This is harder than it sounds! Don't panic! Have a look at the example below:

Before we start playing make sure that you can count the 1 e + a etc while tapping your foot. Your foot should be tapping when you say the numbers 1 2 3 4 and at no other point. Practice this till you can do it easily then practise clapping the rhythm while tapping your foot and counting out loud. This means that you will be clapping four times for each tap of your foot. Make sure you accent (play louder) the clap that is on the beat.

Ok, we are ready to start playing now. At the moment all the notes are muted. To get the muted sound get your fingers in position on the E9 chord shape. Strum up and down, making sure that you accent the first beat of each group of 4 16th notes. Now, loosen your grip so that your fingers are still in position but no note sounds, but rather a kind of "**chaka chaka chaka**" sound. If the fat E string is ringing out, just gently rest the tip of your 2nd finger on it. Ok, practise this till you are confident. Remember to tap your foot and **count out loud!**



"doobie doobie duck truck!"

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1 e + a 2 e + a 3 e + a 4 e + a

In the above example you are going to play the E9 chord on beat 1 and 3. To do this just squeeze the E9 chord just enough to make the chord notes sound and then release the pressure in order to return to the muted sound. Make sure you maintain a constant up down strumming motion through out. Did I mention that you need to count out loud and tap your foot?

1 e + a 2 e + a 3 e + a 4 e + a

Right, this is where things start to get a bit tricky. Now you have to play the E9 chord on first and fourth notes of beats 1 and 3. The temptation will be to tap your foot every time you play a chord, (we call this guitarist syndrome, the only known cure is a regular dose of metronome). What you have to remember is that the second E9 chord comes *just* before you tap your foot for beat two. If you practise it really slow and count out loud while maintaining a steady up down strumming motion the foot tapping should fall into place. **DO NOT MOVE ON UNTIL YOU CAN PLAY THIS PATTERN CONFIDENTLY.**

1 e + a 2 e + a 3 e + a 4 e + a

Ok, the above pattern is the same as the previous example, except this time you play the E9 chord on the “+” of beats 2 and 4. Practice playing the pattern by counting 1 e + a 2 e etc, and then try playing the rhythm only counting 1 2 3 4 and leaving the “e + a” part out, this will save not only your voice but will also help you get a feel for the rhythm against the down beat.



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“chakka khan this is hard work!”

Ok, we have finally arrived at the full funk groove. The trickiest part of the whole groove is the section on beat 3. Basically you play the E9 chord on the upstroke, just after you have tapped your foot for beat 3. Everything in you will want you to play the the chord on beat 3 when you tap your foot, or worse still, tap your foot in the wrong place. I cannot stress enough how important it is to practise this slowly counting and tapping your foot. As with other examples, practise counting with the 1 e + a etc and then play the same rhythm but only counting the down beat ie 1 2 3 4.

The above funk pattern is the same as the previous example, except the E9 chord is played twice in quick succession. Remember practice it slowly, counting, tapping, with the metronome as your trusty companion. In no time at all you will be a fully fledged rhythm Jedi.

May the funk be with

you...always.

Dave Brons



PS, If you want examples of funky guitar check out anything by “The Meters”, Tower of Power, James Brown, Nile Rodgers from “Le Chic”, and (*believe it or not*), Michael Jacksons “Thriller” Album.