



TRACK 27

## FRIENDS IN LOW PLACES

G G#7 Am7 D

let ring

TAB

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## BLOCK CHORD STYLE

Aside from Travis picking and arpeggiation, there's still other fingerstyle approaches. One of the most common is the *block chord* style (where several notes are struck at the same time). Let's take a closer look at this approach.

Here's a basic example of the block-chord style. In this example, the right-hand thumb handles the bass notes, and the fingers (1, 2, and 3) pluck all the treble notes.



TRACK 28

G D C

let ring

TAB

With a little syncopation, some make-do percussive sounds, and variation, we can turn the previous example into a nice little riff. The "X" notes on beats 2 and 4 are accomplished by simply "planting" your right-hand fingers on the appropriate strings with much more force than normal. On beat 2 of measure 1, for example, you would bring your right hand down in preparation for the following D chord, with your thumb ready to strike the fourth string and your fingers on the three treble strings. But you would do this with a quick, forceful motion so that the strings slap against the frets and cause the desired percussive "smack."



TRACK 29

G D C

TAB

Let's take a look at a few songs that make use of the block-chord style.



TRACK 30

### YESTERDAY

The musical score for 'Yesterday' is presented in two systems. The first system covers the first four measures, with chords G5, F#m, B7, and Em. The second system covers the next six measures, with chords Cmaj7, D7, G5, Em7, A, C5, and G5. The tablature (TAB) is written on a six-line staff below the treble clef staff, showing fret numbers and string numbers for each note. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4.

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TRACK 31

### MORE THAN WORDS

The musical score for 'More Than Words' is presented in two systems. The first system covers the first four measures, with chords G, G/B, Cadd9, and Am7. The second system covers the next four measures, with chords C, D, Dsus4, and G. The tablature (TAB) is written on a six-line staff below the treble clef staff, showing fret numbers and string numbers for each note. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The instruction 'let ring throughout' is placed below the first system.

\*Hit muted strings w/ R.H. throughout.

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not change. That said, I'd like to note a little detail regarding your fretting hand that's holding down the Am7. As you start the pattern (on the "&" of 4), the first chord is "tied" over the bar line to the downbeat (1), which is why that downbeat is not played. You should hold down (sustain) the chord through this beat (1) until you re-pluck it on the "&" of 1. This re-pluck is not sustained as it is followed by a rest. This is when you can let up on the chord, or "take a breath," as we say when talking about phrasing. The following "&'s are played the same way (in groups of two): first long, then short, long, short, long, short, etc. And that's the whole chord pattern.

**Combining Patterns**

Now let's try putting our two separate patterns (Fig. 1a and 1c) together. This is the part that's like climbing on a bike for the first time. Hang in there. You'll get it and it will be fun! We'll get to the third element, the percussive click, in a moment. In playing them together we're going to slow the process down and look at the activity for each individual eighth note. Your beginning "&" of 4 starts with both parts. Pluck your thumb (bass) and fingers (chord) simultaneously, Am7. On the downbeat (1), re-pluck just your thumb (bass) on the sixth string (A) while your fingered chord remains held down from the initial pluck. On the "&" of 1, while holding down your bass note, pluck another upbeat with your fingers (chord). Now let's insert the percussive click (Fig 1b). On the downbeat (2), continue to sustain the bass note, but take your fingers that just plucked the chord and tap them back into playing position between the strings to create a percussive sound. Often, a finger or two will make it all the way to the guitar's top as you tap, which is where the "click" term comes from. I'll cover these percussive clicks more in the companion video.

So far we've covered four eighth notes, with three individual patterns (bass, chord and percussive click) played simultaneously. Rhythmically, you're done! These four eighth notes simply repeat to complete the measure, with one alteration: the bass note (thumb) changes in this second half of the measure to the E, fifth string, seventh fret (remember the opening exercise, Fig. 1c?). Let's walk through this last half measure with the bass note change. We left off on the downbeat 2 performing the click.

Now this eighth-note pattern starts all over again on the "&" of 2 with the bass (thumb) and fingers (chord) playing together, but this time our bass note is the E on the fifth string, seventh fret. On the downbeat (3), you re-pluck

**Fig. 1a**  
 Chords + 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +  
 Am7 fret diagram: 0-2-0-2-0-2

**Fig. 1b**  
 Click 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +

**Fig. 1c**  
 Bass + 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +  
 Fret numbers: 5, 5, 7, 7, 5, 5, 7, 7, 5

**Composite**  
 + 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +  
 Fret numbers: 5, 5, 7, 7, 5, 5, 7, 7, 5

just your thumb (bass) on the fifth string E while your fingered chord remains held down from the previous eighth note. On the "&" of 3, while holding down your bass note, pluck another upbeat with your fingers (chord) and finally, on the downbeat (4), you perform another click.

Since we started our measure with an eighth note pickup on the "&" of beat 4, we are now back to the beginning of the pattern, ready to start it all over again for the identical second measure. Down the line when you feel comfortable with this two-measure Am7 pattern, try substituting another chord in the second measure, such as D9. (The Am7 to D9 pattern is very popular.) From here, you can start playing different chord progressions and entire songs. You'll probably be coming up with your own derivations of this pattern as well. The only thing

to be aware of when playing different chords is the string order of bass notes. Depending on whether the root of each chord is on the sixth string or fifth string, your first degree to fifth degree bass line will either be sixth string (root/first degree) to fifth string (fifth degree), as in this lesson, or fifth string (root/first degree) to sixth string (fifth degree). When playing a chord whose root is on the fifth string, the fifth of that chord is always on the same fret (as the root), sixth string.

One final note on percussive clicks: If you grow your fingernails out for picking, and especially if you use a coating to strengthen them, be aware that aggressive "clicks," where you actually tap the guitar top, can leave very small dents in the finish. Over time it can become more visible. You can protect the guitar top in that area with a variety of non-adhesive, cling-on,

removable pickguards. If you need more information, contact Taylor's Customer Service department.

That wraps up this lesson. As I mentioned earlier, because of the specific details presented here, my companion video will provide a useful visual reference. Watching it will help you smoothly integrate these pattern elements. I'll also include extra tips, including an extended chord progression using this lesson's technique, along with several variations. Good luck and make it fun! **W&S**

*You can watch Wayne's video lesson at [taylorguitars.com](http://taylorguitars.com), in our Blog section under "Lessons & Tips." You can also find him at [www.WayneJohnsonOnline.com](http://www.WayneJohnsonOnline.com)*