

# Virtual Band Seminar

## Saturday Program Outline

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These outlines are provided as a courtesy to all in attendance at any of the Virtual Band Seminars conducted by Jay Buckey at various bluegrass festivals throughout the United States and Canada. This course material is detailed in the ‘**Virtual Band Bluegrass Method**’ Volumes 3 and 4 and in the video presentation, ‘**Music Theory and Improvising**’, available at [www.jaybuckey.com](http://www.jaybuckey.com).

### HEARING CHORD CHANGES (Part 1 - 30 minutes):

**RULE 1:** Generally, a song will begin and end with the 1 chord, which is also the same name as the key. The 1 chord is also the most frequently used chord most of the time.

**RULE 2:** When it’s time to change to one of the other two chords, the 5 chord is, many times, a good choice. It’s the second most used chord of the three. A lot depends on the melody line and what sounds good to your ear. However, more often than not, when the verse or chorus is coming to an end, the 5 chord will lead nicely into the 1.

**RULE 3:** Many times, the 4 chord is used less than the 1 or the 5. It can be found when the melody goes higher and there is more tension in the vocal line. The 4 chord can also be the first one to start the chorus.

**RULE 4:** When playing a 5 or 4 chord, each usually goes back to the one.

### SONG EXAMPLES:

#### NINE POUND HAMMER

*This nine pound (1)hammer is a little too (4)heavy for my (1)size, (5)buddy for my (1)size.*

*Roll on buddy, don’t you roll so (4)slow, how can I (1)roll, (5)when the wheels won’t (1)go?*

#### FOGGY MOUNTAIN TOP

*If (1)I was on some (4)foggy mountain (1)top, I’d sail away to the (5)West.*

*I’d (1)sail all around this (4)whole wide (1)world to the girl I (5)love the (1)best.*

#### LITTLE CABIN HOME ON THE HILL

*(1)Tonight I’m alone (4)without you my (1)dear. It seems there’s a longing for you (5)still.*

*(1)All I have to do is (4)sit alone and (1)cry in our little cabin (5)home on the (1)hill.*

*Oh, (4)someone has taken you (1)from me and left me here all (5)alone.*

*(1)Listen to the rain beat (4)on our window (1)pane in our little cabin (5)home on the (1)hill.*

For further study, experiment by putting these same songs in different keys like, G, A, D and E.

## LEARNING TO IMPROVISE (Part 1 - 30 minutes):

Lead improvising is based on scales. Of the myriads of scales available to play bluegrass, country, rock (did I say rock?) and jazz, music found on the Western side of this planet, can be narrowed down to two basic scale forms, MAJOR and MINOR. Today, we'll consider the Major Diatonic and Pentatonic scales.

### THE MAJOR DIATONIC VS. MAJOR PENTATONIC:

The diatonic scale (major or minor) has 7 different tones, (Ex. A Major: A, B, C#, D, E, F#, G#, A) and is mainly used to play the melody line. The pentatonic has only 5 tones (penta= 5, tonic= tone) and lacks the 4th and 7th tones of the diatonic, (Ex. A Major: A, B, C#, E, F#, A).

The scale example below is in the key of A Major. The guitar, banjo and Dobro can play the pentatonic easiest in the key of G. So that all can play it together, these instruments should use a capo at the 2nd fret to 'sound like key of A'.

The image shows a musical score for two scales: A Major Diatonic and A Major Pentatonic. The score is written for six instruments: Fiddle, Guitar (Capo 2), Mandolin, Banjo (Capo 2), Dobro (Capo 2), and Bass. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The A Major Diatonic scale is shown as a sequence of notes: A, B, C#, D, E, F#, G#, A. The A Major Pentatonic scale is shown as a sequence of notes: A, B, C#, E, F#, A. The score includes a double bar line between the two scales. The guitar, banjo, and dobro parts are written in a way that suggests they are playing the pentatonic scale, while the fiddle and bass parts play the diatonic scale.

What makes the pentatonic so special is that, regardless of what chords the band is playing, solos based on these 5 notes will almost always sound great, as long as the scale keeps moving. The 4th and 7th tones that were omitted have the potential to discord with the harmony of a song. The remaining 5 notes in the pentatonic scale fit in well because they are part of the 1 chord, or an extension of it. Remember that the 1 chord is generally the most frequently used chord in a song. The A chord is: A, C#, and E. The F# note, when added to the A chord is an A6, an acceptable jazzy substitute, and the B note is a passing tone or a 'soft 9th', another pleasing substitute. If you decided to pause a moment during a solo, you will want to land on one of the notes found in the chord that the band is playing, even if it's not in the pentatonic scale. These are called, 'Target Tones'.

Sunday's program (tomorrow) will continue on the same theme as today. The topics covered will be: The use of *minor and diminished chords* in bluegrass music, getting that 'hot' sound with the *minor pentatonic* scale. *Breaking away from 1st position*, i.e. play any song, in any key, in any position without breaking a sweat! A new outline will be provided.

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## Sunday Program Outline

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### HEARING CHORD CHANGES (Part 2 -30 minutes):

#### MINOR CHORDS

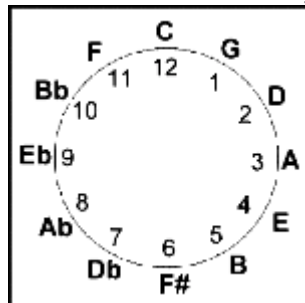
Every key has 3 major chords (*primary*) and 3 minor chords (*secondary*) built on the major scale tones. In G, they are: G (g,b,d); Am (a,c,e); Bm (b,d,f#); C (c,e,g); D (d,f#,a); and Em (e,g,b). The 7th tone, F# (f#,a,c), is a diminished chord. For each major chord, one of the minors is relative to it; they share nearly the same notes: G-Em, C-Am, D-Bm. A minor chord can replace its relative major when there are enough measures and it fits the melody line. Ex: *Foggy Mountain Breakdown*, *Mountain Dew*.

#### MOVEMENT OF A 4TH

A **Dominant 7th** chord (D7, C7, etc.) can be formed on any chord when the root of the next note is a 4th higher. Ex: D to G becomes D, D7, G. Song example: Red River Valley. The 7th chord uses ‘tritone’, an interval of 3 whole steps (C to F#, in this example). Its discord adds momentum to the progression. It’s also used in car and train horns.

Any Dominant 7th can be preceded by a **Minor 7th** built on a chord that has its root a 5th higher. In other words, before playing a D7, count up 5 letter names (D, E, F#, G, A), to arrive at A. Make the A an Am7, and put it in front of the D7. Am7 to D7 is a movement of a 4th, then D7 to G is also a movement of a 4th. The 50’s chord progression: G, Em, Am7, D7, G. Very cool!

This last progression is called **Back Cycling** and is based on the *circle of keys* (see below). The minor chords above could also be made Dominant 7ths and you have *Salty Dog Blues*.



#### MOVEMENT OF A 5TH

The **Diminished Chord** has a very unique sound and contains 2 tritones. By itself, its tonality is very harsh, but is very useful when the chord progressions move a 5th. When moving a fifth (G to D), insert a diminished chord a half step higher from the first chord (G, G#-, D). The rough edges of the diminished can be smoothed a bit by following it with a minor 7th, a half step higher (G, G#-, Am7, D). Does the Am7 to D sound familiar?!! Try it with Jimmy Crack Corn.

(G)Jimmy Crack (G#-)Corn and (Am7)I don't (D)care, (Am7)Jimmy Crack (D)Corn and (G)I don't care.

(G)Jimmy Crack (Em)Corn and (C)I don't (C#-)care, my (Am7)master's (D7)gone (G)away.

### LEARNING TO IMPROVISE (part 2 - 20 minutes):

## THE MINOR DIATONIC VS. MINOR PENTATONIC:

For every major scale, there are 6 other scales ‘hidden’ inside. Greek culture came up with this concept and called them ‘*modes*’, like the Dorian, Myxolydian, etc. Minor scales are one of these, taken from the 6th tone of the major and are called ‘Aolean’. Starting with the C major scale (C, D, E, F, G, A, B), count up 6 from C and stop at A. Now, starting with A and using no sharps or flats, continue to the next A (A, B, C, D, E, F, F, A), and we have the A minor scale.

Minor scales have a dark sound and when used in improvising, give us that ‘hot’ sound. The major pentatonic scale has no 4th and 7th tone, in the C scale, those would be F and B. The A minor pentatonic, which comes from C, also drops these same notes. Therefore, the minor pentatonic has NO 2ND’S AND 6TH’S.

**A Minor Diatonic:** **A Minor Pentatonic:**

*Fiddle:*

A B C D E F G A A C E E G A

*Guitar capo 2:*

*Mandolin:*

*Banjo capo 2:*

*Dobro capo 2:*

*Bass:*

## BREAKING OUT OF FIRST POSITION (10 minutes):

To play further down the neck effortlessly, without the use of a capo, it’s important to build on what we already have learned. By thinking of the left hand index finger as a capo, and reassigning the other fingers, we can play the same scales in any key we wish. It does take time, mainly because the fourth finger is ignored by many, but is well worth the effort. Scale studies and written examples of this are available in the VIRTUAL BAND series.

## GAINING CONFIDENCE WHEN PLAYING WITH OTHERS (10 minutes):

# Cripple Creek

Using Pentatonic Major and Minor Scales

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Fiddle:

Key of A

A D A E A

Mandolin:

Guitar (Capo 2):

G C G D G

Dobro (Capo 2):

Banjo (Capo 2):

D A E A

C G D G

Sheet music for guitar in A major, featuring a melody line and four guitar staves with chord diagrams. The key signature is A major (three sharps). The melody line includes the notes A4, B4, C#5, D5, E5, D5, C#5, B4, A4. The guitar staves contain fretting diagrams for the melody and accompaniment. Chords E and A are indicated above the melody line.

Chord diagrams for the guitar staves:

- Staff 1: 2 4 4 | 2 0 4 2 | 4 0 2 5 2 0 4 2 | 4 0 4 2 0
- Staff 2: 2 4 0 | 2 0 2 0 | 2 0 2 0 2 0 | 0 3 0 3 0 3 0 2 | 0 0 2 0 0
- Staff 3: 2 4 0 | 2 0 2 0 | 2 0 2 0 2 0 | 0 0 5 5 5 0 0 2 | 0 0 2 0 0
- Staff 4: 2 4 0 | 2 0 2 0 | 2 0 2 0 2 0 | 0 0 5 0 5 0 0 7 | 0 0 2 0 0

Sheet music for guitar in A major, featuring a melody line and four guitar staves with chord diagrams. The key signature is A major (three sharps). The melody line includes the notes A4, B4, C#5, D5, E5, D5, C#5, B4, A4. The guitar staves contain fretting diagrams for the melody and accompaniment. Chords E and A are indicated above the melody line.

Chord diagrams for the guitar staves:

- Staff 1: 2 4 4 | 2 0 4 2 | 2 4 2 0 4 2 | 5 3 0 5 3 0 5 3 | 4 0 4 2 0
- Staff 2: 2 4 0 | 2 0 2 0 | 2 0 2 0 2 0 | 3 1 3 1 1 3 1 3 | 0 0 2 0 0
- Staff 3: 2 4 0 | 2 0 2 0 | 2 0 2 0 2 0 | 5 3 0 1 3 0 1 3 | 0 0 2 0 0
- Staff 4: 2 4 0 | 2 0 2 0 | 2 0 2 0 2 0 | 0 3 3 5 3 3 5 3 | 0 0 2 0 0