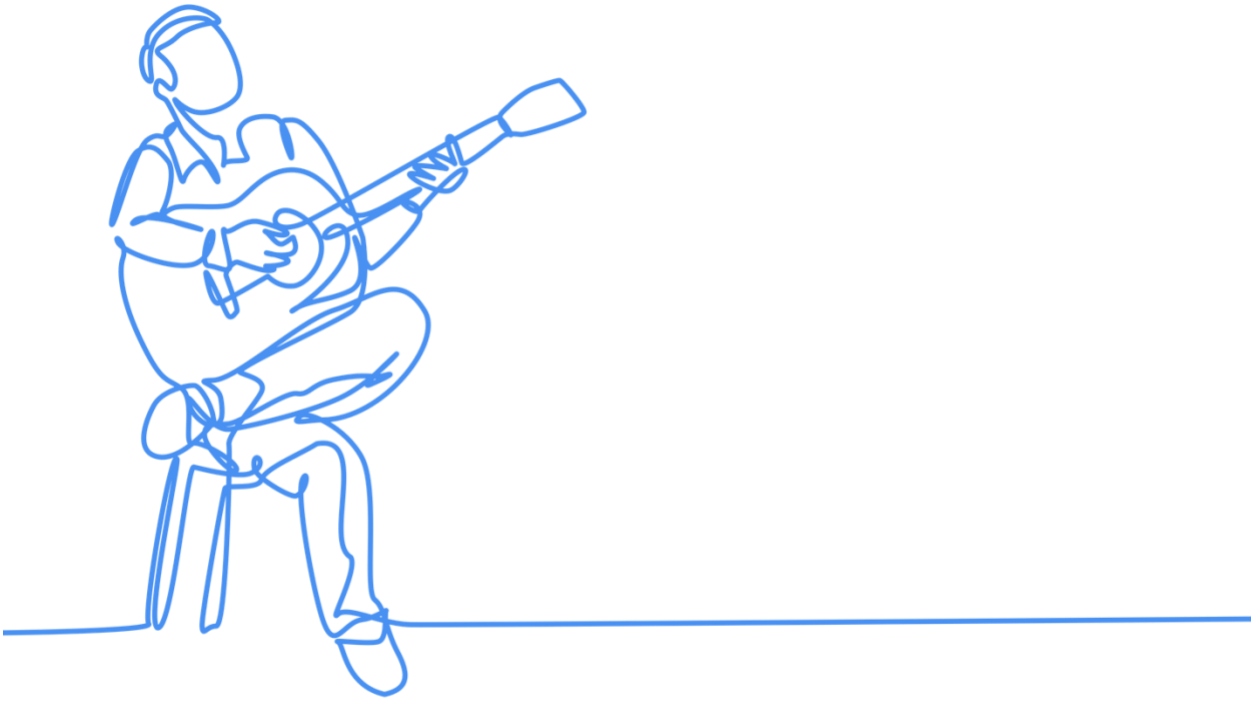
LEARN BLUES FINGERPICKING

INTERMEDIATE COURSE

3.3 Riffs, Triplets & Chord Tones



Patrick O'Malley

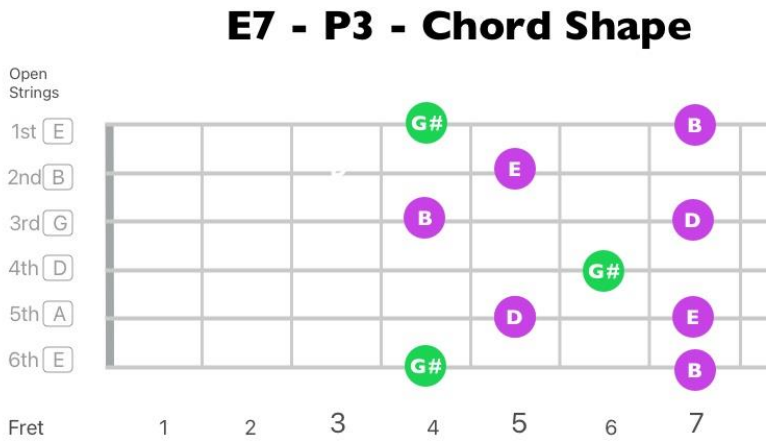
Intro

In this lesson, we are going to play more riffs.

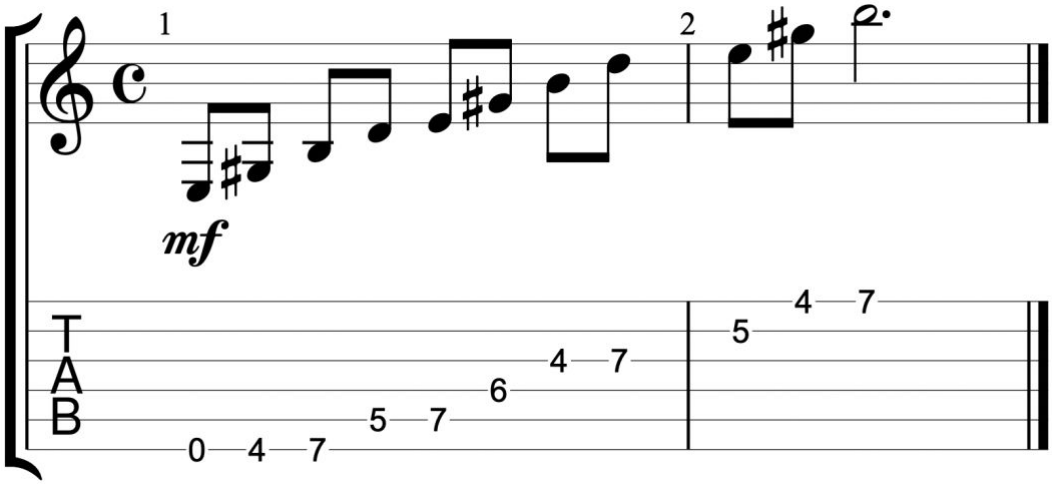
Using our knowledge of arpeggios, we'll identify a few notes of the scale to target (i.e. give emphasis to in our playing) that are also chord tones (notes of the E7 chord in our case!)

The E7 arpeggio in Position 3

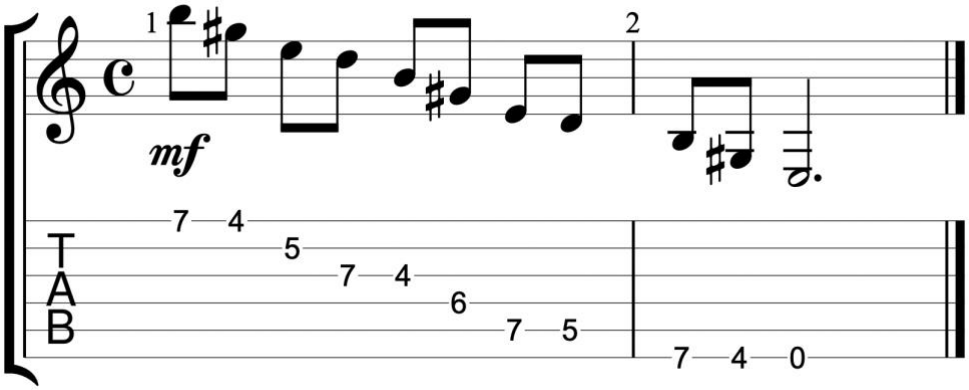
Here is the shape and name of each of the notes in the E7 chord



We can practice this arpeggio ascending:



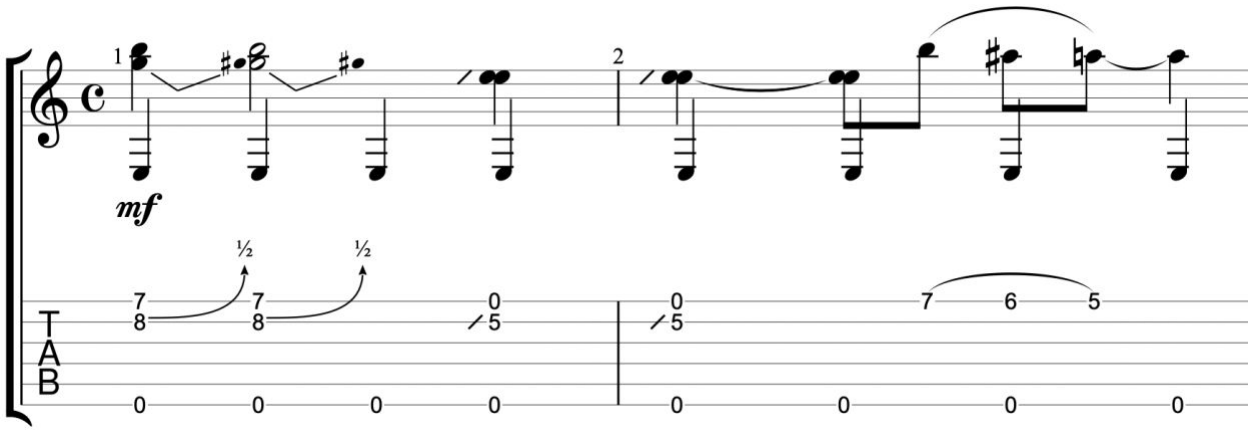
And descending:



Riff E

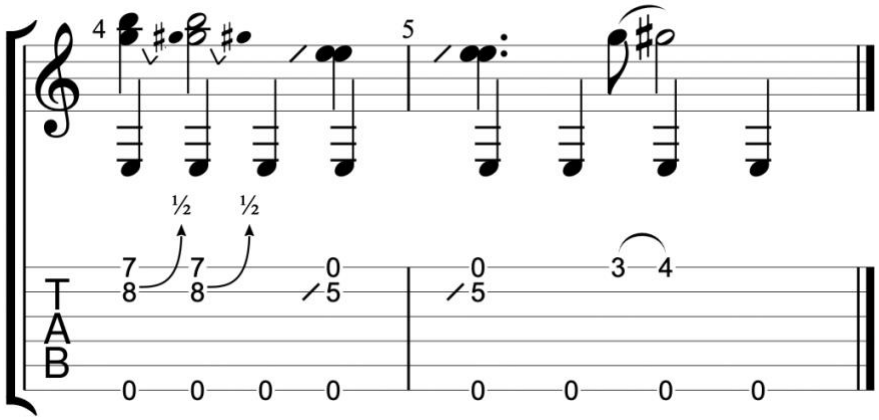
A few cool things in the first half of this riff. Firstly, we have those bends where we hold the 1st string at the 7th fret (with index finger of fretting hand) and then we bend up the 2nd string at the 8th fret. Very bluesy.

We also have a unison slide. Sliding into the 5th fret of the 2nd string gives us an E note so if we play the open 1st string (also an E note), we will get two E notes and these notes are "in unison". It's a lovely effect and again a hallmark of blues playing.



Th second half of the riff starts off the same and just has a different ending. Here we target the G# note (the 1st string at the 4th fret).

If you look at the E7 arpeggio above, you'll see it is a chord tone and you'll also notice that it is not in our scale. Because the G# is the major third of E, it really emphasizes the chord. The first note is 1st string at the 3rd fret (between bass notes) and then hammer-ons to the 4th fret (with bass note). This technique is explored more in my intermediate guitar course.



Triplets

A triplet is basically a way of sub-dividing the count of music intro three.

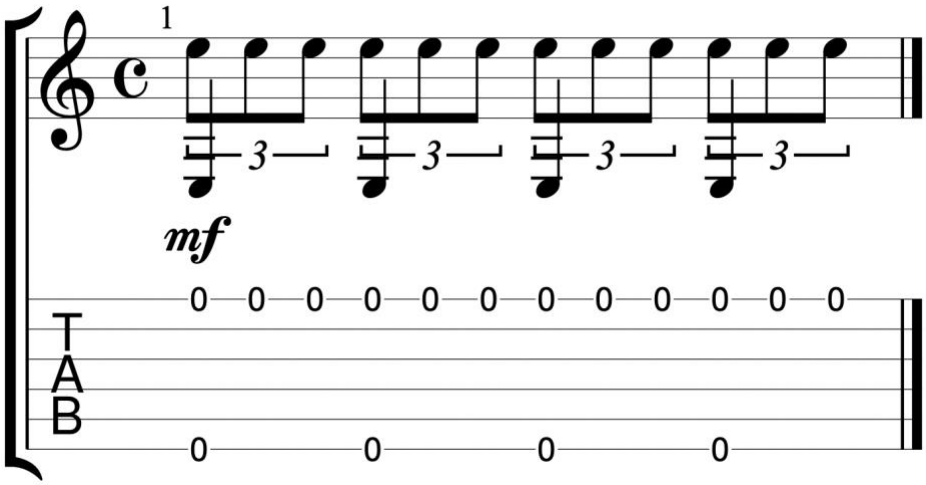
You can try practicing triplets verbally, right now.

Just say “ONE-and-ah TWO-and-ah THREE-and-ah FOUR-and-ah”

Just by playing the open 6th string and open 1st string on the guitar, you can also practice triplets.

Play just the “one, two, three, four” as your bassline (open 6th string)

And play each of the twelve sub-divisions (one-and-ah, two-and-ah etc) on the 1st string!



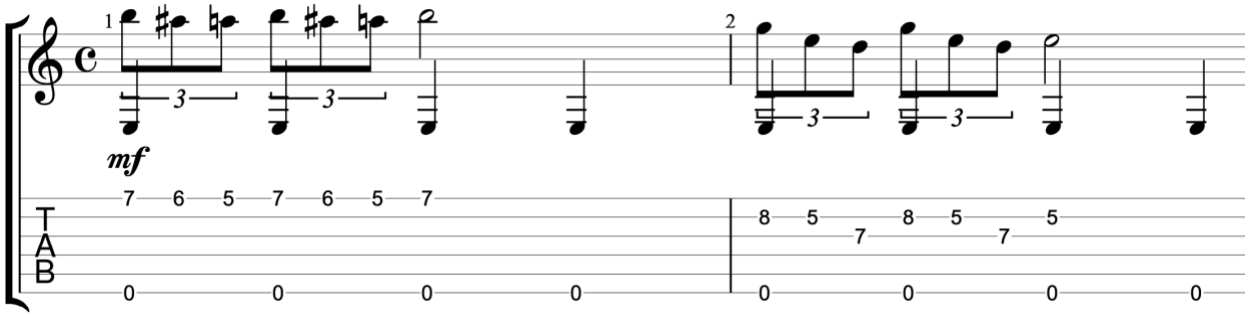
Riff F

The first half of the riff uses triplets.

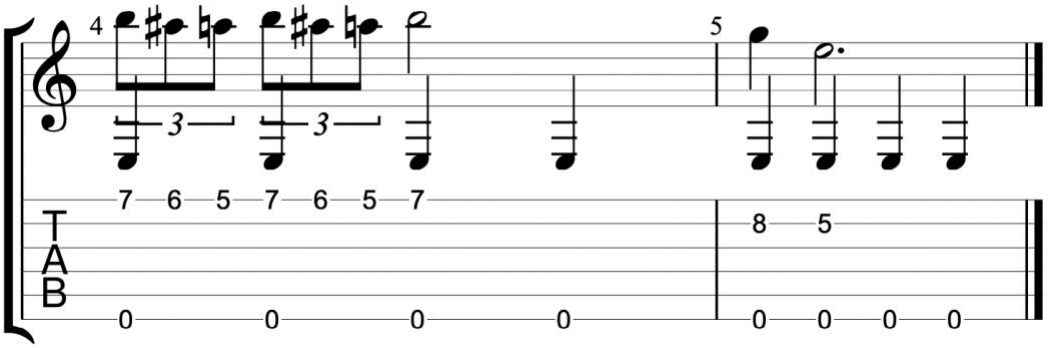
We play the 1st string at the 7th, 6th, 5th fret and notice how those are played over one beat (i.e. one bass note).

In the following bar, we again have triplets but this time on the 2nd and 3rd strings but using the same rhythm as the first bar.

You may also have noticed that we let 2 notes ring (1st string at 7th fret & 2nd string at 5th fret) that are chord tones (i.e. in our arpeggio)



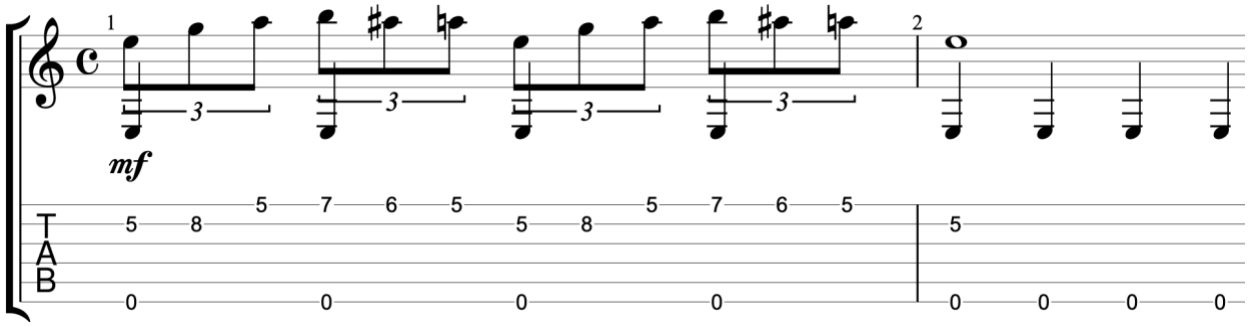
The second half starts off the same and has a different ending.



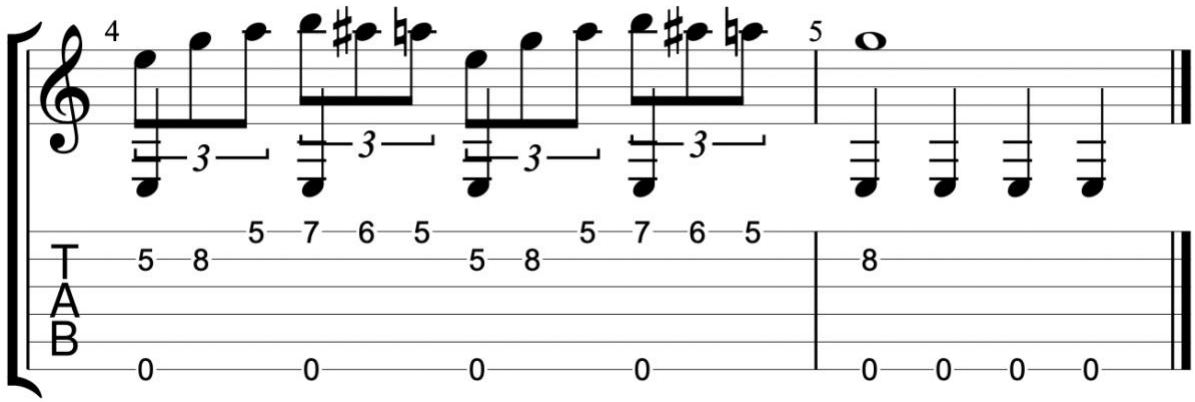
Take your time with this if you are new to the concept of triplets. You are not just learning something on the guitar neck, but rather learning a little how to count time and this will really improve your playing.

Riff G

The first half of this riff uses triplets again. We use the blues scale, and we end on a chord tone (the root note or E note)



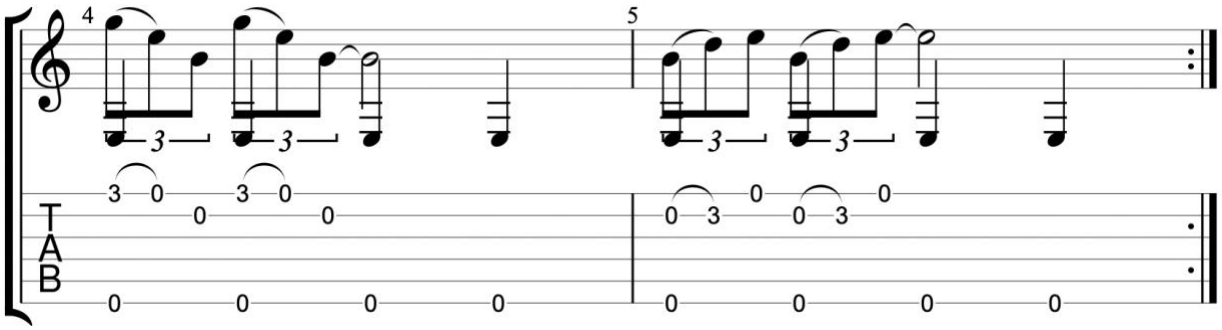
The second half of this riff uses triplets again. We use the blues scale, and we now let a note ring that is a scale tone but not a chord tone – can you hear that additional tension? It's fine if you don't yet, but really cool if indeed you did..



Riff H

This riff goes back to open position.

We now add some pull-offs and hammer-ons to our playing – using open strings.



Assignment

Focus on the following elements as you practice these riffs:

- Playing triplets for us fingerpickers usually means for each bass note, we are playing 3 notes with our fingers (melody notes)
- We focus on playing those evenly
- We count one-and-ah, two-and-ah, three-and-ah when we play triplets