

ON THE CD

TRACKS 15-19

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GT RATING
MODERATE

Will improve your:

- Harmonic vocabulary
- Right-hand technique
- Chord knowledge

YOUR GT TUTOR

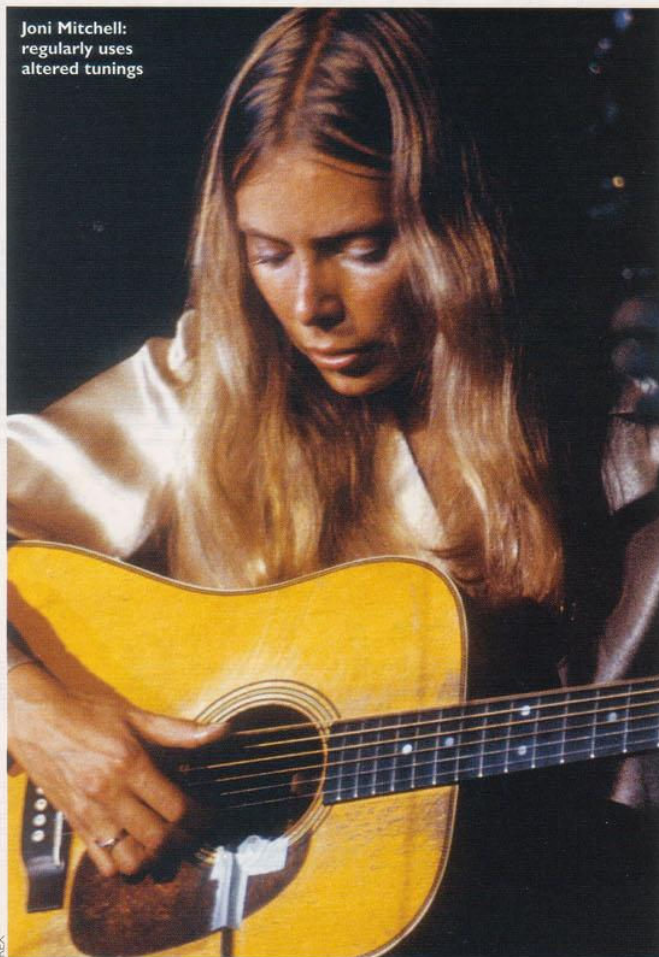
■ ERIC ROCHE
 See p9 for more info
 on all the GT tutors



Eric Roche looks at a simple yet effective way to achieve new sounds on acoustic guitar

A LESSON IN ALTERED TUNINGS

Joni Mitchell:
 regularly uses
 altered tunings



In its early days, the guitar was generally played by uneducated musicians and entertainers. Tunings such as the Vestapol Tuning (open D tuning) and Spanish tuning (from an eighteenth century guitar piece called Spanish Fandango in open G tuning) evolved from a need to keep the instrument as simple as possible to play. These tunings were very common in the 19th century and they continue to be used today.

The revival of the acoustic guitar, and in particular, fingerstyle guitar, received a worldwide boost in the folk boom of the late 50s and 60s. The trans-Atlantic trade in guitar music and tunings helped to accelerate the development of fingerstyle playing and altered tunings in both the UK and the US. UK players who were exploring the tunings and techniques of the pre-war American bluesmen had an influence on other UK guitarists on the blossoming folk circuit.

There are various categories of altered tunings including drop tunings, open tunings, modal tunings and crossnote tunings. In recent years musicians such as Nick Drake, David Crosby, Joni Mitchell and Michael Hedges have added dozens of new tunings to the already diverse vocabulary. Many of the modern metal bands have employed tunings that were originally the choice of folk and blues musicians. The following examples have been composed give you an insight in a variety of tunings. Of course, there are far more tunings in use than is possible

to cover in this lesson or even a series of lessons, but you should feel free to create your own altered tunings and discover what they have to offer.

GT



RECOMMENDED LISTENING

TUNE INTO SOME DIFFERENT GUITAR SOUNDS



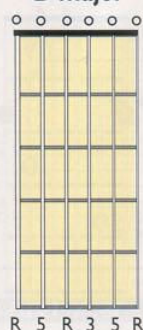
IF YOU WANT to explore the world of altered tunings, particularly as used on acoustic guitar, then check out the recordings of players such as Nick Drake, John Martyn, Joni Mitchell, Martin Carthy, David Crosby and Martin Simpson.

We have covered various altered tunings in this column in the past, but this month I have devised a lesson to help you understand a variety of tunings. The term 'standard tuning' can mean different things to different people depending where and when you use it. The history of the guitar is very fragmented. It has been evolving for thousands of years in various parts of the world and consequently its shape, size, construction and tuning has varied widely.

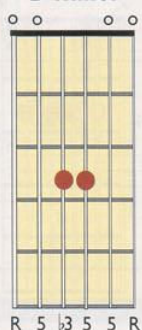
There was some consensus in tunings based on fourths or fifths. Once luthiers had settled on six strings, our modern standard tuning E A D G B E was employed in the late 18th century. However, in North America open G tuning was far more common, particularly among blues and folk musicians, and facilitated the development of slide playing.

OPEN D CHORD SHAPES (TUNING: D A D F# A D)

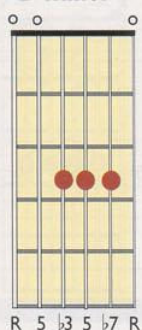
D major



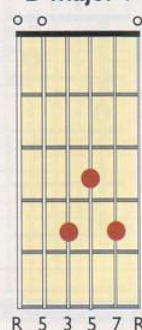
D minor



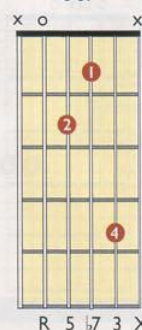
D minor 7



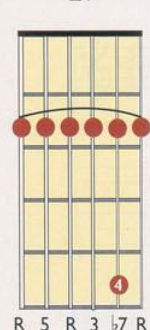
D major 7



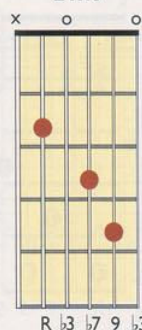
A7



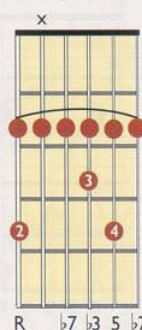
E7



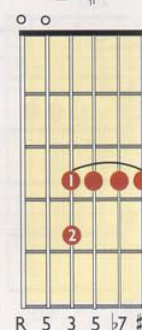
Bm9



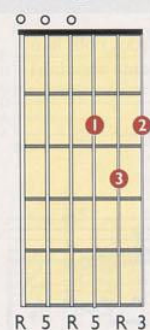
Gm7



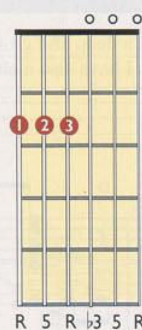
D7#9



D



Em



E



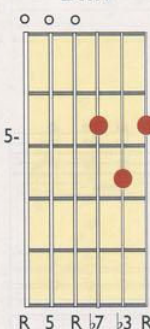
F



D



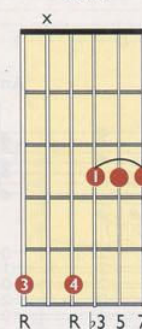
Dm7



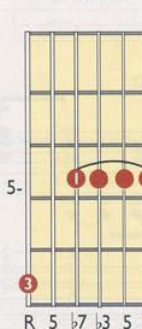
Eb



Gm



Am7

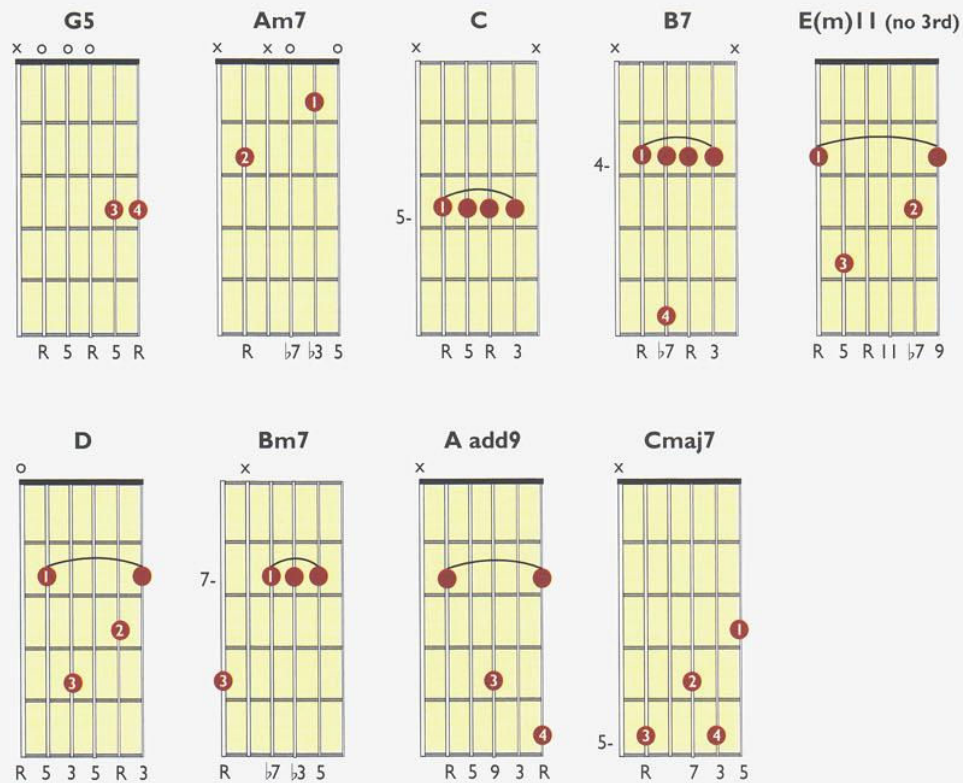


**SOUND
ADVICE**
RECORDING NOTES

THESE EXAMPLES WERE recorded on a Nick Benjamin OM guitar. The pick-up was a Fishman rare earth blend system and recorded direct to a Tascam 788. The strings were a set of .013 gauge by D'Addario.

"Certain tunings evolved from a need to keep playing guitar as simple as possible."

OPEN G CHORD SHAPES (TUNING: D G D G B D)



EXAMPLE 1 DROP D TUNING: D A D G B E

THIS EXAMPLE IN DROP D TUNING is in the style of Neil Young. Drop the low E string down a whole step to D. The tuning was an obvious deviation from standard tuning because the keys of D

major and minor both lacked a deep and grounded root note like that enjoyed by the key of E. I have also included some standard drop D chord shapes.

Tuning DADGBE

The musical notation is written for a piece in Drop D tuning (D A D G B E). It consists of two systems of music, each with a guitar staff and a bass staff. The guitar staff shows chords and melodic lines, while the bass staff shows the low D string being used as a pedal point. The piece includes chords such as D, Fmaj7, C, D, Am7, and G 1/2 B11.

EXAMPLE 1 DROP D TUNING: D A D G B E ...CONTINUED

Chords: D, A, G, Fmaj7, C, D

Fingerings (Bass):
 D: 0 0 0 0 0 0
 A: 0 0 3 3 3 3
 G: 0 0 0 0 0 0
 Fmaj7: 0 0 0 0 0 0
 C: 0 0 0 0 0 0
 D: 2 2 2 2 2 2

Other markings: 7, V, Rallentando

EXAMPLE 2 DROP A TUNING: A A D G B E

BY DROPPING THE LOW E string down a perfect fifth to A you get drop A tuning. You will need a minimum of a .056 gauge string to

hold such a low note, and in the past I have fitted a whopping .070 gauge string (from a bass guitar) when recording with this tuning.

Chords: A5, C5, D7, A5, C5, D7, A5, C5, D7, F7, E7, Am9

Fingerings (Bass):
 A5: 2 2 2 2 2 2
 C5: 2 2 2 2 2 2
 D7: 2 2 2 2 2 2
 A5: 2 2 2 2 2 2
 C5: 2 2 2 2 2 2
 D7: 2 2 2 2 2 2
 A5: 2 2 2 2 2 2
 C5: 2 2 2 2 2 2
 D7: 2 2 2 2 2 2
 F7: 8 8 8 8 8 8
 E7: 7 7 7 7 7 7
 Am9: 0 0 0 0 0 0

Other markings: 1, 3, 5, vib, 7

EXAMPLE 3 OPEN G TUNING: D G D G B D

OPEN G IS ONE of the open tunings family. These tunings are based on the notes of a major triad. By tuning the open strings to these notes a simple major chord can be produced with a single

finger. This simplicity is exploited by slide players and blues musicians. I have also included a variety of chord shapes for this tuning.

Tuning DGDGBD

1

3

6

8

EXAMPLE 4 OPEN D TUNING: D A D F# A D

THIS FINAL EXAMPLE is another open tuning – open D. The right-hand technique in this example will require a bit of time in

the woodshed. Again, I have included some standard chord shapes for this tuning.

Open D Tuning