

THE INTERMEDIATE GUITAR GUIDE



LEARN EMBELLISHMENTS, EAR TRAINING,
THE ULTIMATE GUITAR WARM-UP
AND MUCH MORE,...

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Chapter 8: Use embellishments to wow your audience

Every now and then you probably see a guitarist who does something just that little bit special. He or she stands up there on the stage playing what appears to be a standard chord, yet he plays these extra little notes by adding, moving or taking a finger off the fretboard.

He makes it look effortless, but when you have tried, you couldn't get anything like the awesome cool sound he got.

This is a technique called embellishing. Jimi Hendrix, John Frusciante (Red Hot Chilli Peppers) and many more are famed for using them.

They can be played with any chords from open position chords such as C, D, G, etc, to more difficult barre chords.

It doesn't matter what the chord is, embellishments are a tool that every guitarist should know. They sound great, as you are essentially playing rhythm and lead guitar in one.

Now, that's impressive.

It's not actually that hard a concept.

You will need to be confident of playing chords and using your all four fingers to add notes by hammering on, pulling off or sliding.

If you can't yet hammer-on, pull off and slide comfortably with each finger you may struggle with this technique so spend time practicing these specific techniques.

Likewise, if you struggle to play in time with basic strumming patterns you may not be able to lock in to the groove to create the interesting rhythmic flow that usually happens during the most interesting embellishments.

Hendrix was an absolute master of embellishments and frequently varied each chord embellishment each time the passage came back around.

This is because his rhythm skills were second to none. To be great at this technique you will also need superb rhythm skills.

If you are not comfortable with advanced rhythm, hammering on, pulling off and sliding, then practice these techniques individually alongside these embellishments pieces.

Add this technique to your playing; and your listeners will be very impressed.

Here we have 4 examples in the style of some legendary artists.

Ex 1. John Frusciante style embellishment:

Moderate ♩ = 82

The musical score is written in 4/4 time with a tempo of Moderate (♩ = 82). It consists of two systems. The first system is in treble clef and the second system is in bass clef. Both systems have a key signature of one flat. The melody in the first system features a series of eighth notes with a triplet of eighth notes. The bass line in the second system features a series of eighth notes with a triplet of eighth notes. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, triplets, and muted hits (marked with 'X').

Click [here](#) to listen.

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The Red Hot Chili Pepper`s guitarist is synonymous with using embellishment techniques to spice up his chord playing.

This is another piece that I wrote a while back which is inspired by John`s sublime playing.

If you imagine the funky verses to the band`s huge hit `Under the Bridge` but played in a minor key, it might sound a little bit like this.

There are hammer-ons, pull-offs and slides in here, so you will get playing a wide variety of chord embellishments with this piece.

I also added some muted hits in there to give it some extra funk-like groove but you do not need to add these in.

I wrote this piece originally for a solo acoustic performance so I wanted to fill in for the snare. Hitting muted strings on the beat where the snare would usually go is a great way to this.

Ex 2. Jimi Hendrix style embellishment:

Slowly ♩ = 72

1

T
A
B

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Take it steady with this embellishment.

The first two beats in each bar use the same consistent rhythm but the last two beats vary.

There are a few different rhythms going on in the second half of each bar.

Get the feel for the first two beats down separately, and then get working on the last half – which is the cool part and really makes it stand out from a simple and rather boring chord progression.

Imagine, if the embellishments weren't there, this would be a very simple piece to play.

It wouldn't sound bad, but it also wouldn't be particularly exciting.

That's what Hendrix used to think too. He would frequently take a simple chord progression, and spice up it with a variety of exciting, and rhythmic embellishments.

Ex 3. Radiohead style embellishment:

Moderately Fast ♩ = 117

The musical score is presented in three systems. The first system (measures 1-4) is in 4/4 time. The second system (measures 5-8) is in 7/8 time. The third system (measures 9-10) is in 5/4 time. The guitar line includes a double bar line and a repeat sign.

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Radiohead's guitarists Jonny Greenwood, Ed `O` Brien and Thom Yorke are all well known as original, inspiring and unique guitarists that create brilliant other worldly soundscapes as well as take something that has been done before and put a completely new spin on it.

Whether, you're a fan of the band or not, most guitarists striving for originality can look to this band and it's guitarists for inspiration.

This example uses a few different techniques the band have written with over the years, such as taking a major chord and turning it minor.

This is actually an old technique that was used as far back as Bing Crosby's `White Christmas` and used to great effect on their breakthrough track, `Creep`.

The track actually starts off as a `sus4`, it then goes major, and then it goes minor.

The `sus4` is a great, flexible chord that can be used to substitute for both minor and major

chords. Here it does both.

Another prominent Radiohead technique used here is the use of odd time signatures.

Inspired by the track, `Pyramid Song` as well as others, our example, plays about with 4/4, 7/8 and 5/4 time signatures to create a different groove than the listener expects.

Take your time with it as it's an intricate piece and really try to lock into the groove.

Once you do, it all becomes a lot easier to play.

Ex 4. Jimmy Page style embellishment:

Moderately Fast ♩ = 117

The musical score consists of two systems. The first system contains three measures with time signatures 4/4, 3/4, and 4/4. The second system contains three measures with time signatures 4/4, 3/4, and 6/4. The guitar tablature below the staff shows fret numbers and includes a complex sequence of notes in the final measure: 8-8 8-8 7-7 8-7 7-7 8-7 7-7 7-7 7-7 7-7.

Click [here](#) to listen.

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Led Zeppelin's legendary guitarist Jimmy Page consistently created huge powerhouse guitar riffs that seamlessly slotted in the use of embellishments to really bring them alive.

Here is an example that showcases Page's use of the major 3rd, which is added to a minor pentatonic sequence (in this case it's the c# found on the 4th fret of the fifth string and in the A major chord) which can be heard on legendary tracks such as 'Houses of the Holy' and 'The Ocean'.

The use of the major 3rd is very Page-esq and it highlights his Chuck Berry influence.

The track also features a few different time signatures which you will hear scattered on various Zeppelin tracks throughout their back catalogue.

This track has a very classic rock feel to it, and is also a bit reminiscent of AC/DC in parts.

For me the classic rock feel comes from the use of the A minor pentatonic single string notes mixed in with A major chords and the major 3rd notes.

This use of major and minor interplay of the same chord and scale is very much a

blues idea. Page, Angus Young and the rest of the godfathers of rock really just took the blues and adapted it to make it bigger and more aggressive.

You will therefore hear a huge blues influence on this track and on a lot of their playing.

When playing this piece, crank up some 70`s style Marshall overdrive with your pickups selected to the bridge or the bridge and middle combined and don`t be afraid to be aggressive with it.

This track is begging for you to play it hard and fast.

Have fun with these embellishments and then have a go at writing your own.

Summary

Well, that`s it. A free chapter on chord embellishments.

Listen and learn them all. It`s essential to hear them in action, so go back over each example, listen and learn them.

Use the ideas taught in this free chapter and create your own chord embellishments.

Good luck and keep having fun with your playing! You can and will be an awesome guitarist!

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