

5 Ways to Make Your Covers Sound More Interesting



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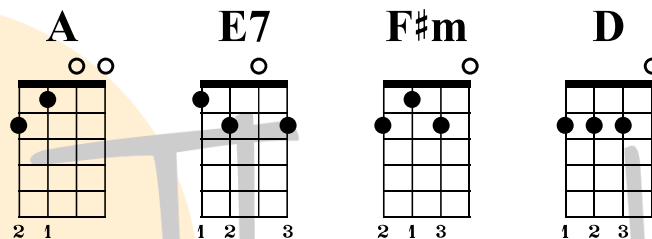
Key of example: A

Harmony: A, D, E7, F#m

BPM: 140

Video Tutorial: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7UU82jdfJxY>

Chord Shapes:



Inspiration for Lesson: Wagon Wheel

Chord Progression: - I-V7-vi-IV-I-V7-IV-IV in A

| A //// | E7 //// | F#m //// | D ////
| A //// | E7 //// | D //// | D ////

Strum Pattern:

1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & |
D D U U D U |

Full Progression with Strum Pattern:

1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & | 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & | 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & | 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & |
A | E7 | F#m | D |
D D U U D U | D D U U D U | D D U U D U | D D U U D U |

1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & | 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & | 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & | 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & |
A | E7 | D | D |
D D U U D U | D D U U D U | D D U U D U | D D U U D U |

SONG WRITER TIP Note how they simply changed one chord. If you have a lovely song that is a four chord loop but you feel like it needs just a little bit more variety, simply changing one chord can give it to you. The F#m and the D chord have two chord tones in common, the A and the F#, so in this case they didn't have to worry about the melody too much.

Technique #1: Mix up the Strum Pattern

1a. Basic changes at the end of the progression

1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & | 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & | 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & | 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & |
A | E7 | F#m | D |
D D U U D U | D D U U D U | D D U U D U | D U D U U D U |

1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & | 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & | 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & | 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & |
A | E7 | D | D |
D D U U D U | D D U U D U | D D U U D U | D D D D |

- This technique works the best at the end of the chord progression because it helps to "turn it around"
- We changed last measure in both progressions, but we used different variation, this creates more movement.
- All downs is a very strong strum so use that change sparingly.
- This can be something you do throughout the song, or just occasionally, as long as you are staying on beat and in time you can feel free to change your strum as much, or as little, as you would like.

1b. Let it ring.

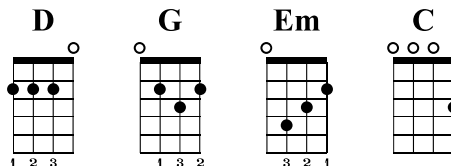
1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & | 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & | 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & | 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & |
A | E7 | F#m | D |
D | D | D | D |

1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & | 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & | 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & | 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & |
A | E7 | D | D |
D | D | | D U D U |

- This is a technique that Old Crow Medicine Show actually uses in the 3rd verse of their version of the song.
- Note on the last measure how we start strumming half way through, these are what I call "running starts" and they sound great to help get the change going.
- Feel free to experiment with the running starts in other contexts, licks, riffs, even when you are composing melody.
- There are a lot of other variations you can do with strumming, the more strum patterns you know the more you can vary them.

2. Change the key

I will be changing it to the key of G, here are the new chords



- You would do this primarily for two reasons, an easier key for you to sing, a key with easier chords for you to play or a key that is easier for the band to play.
- It is the singer who will determine the key that you will play in most of the time, it is the band's job to play to the singer's strengths.
- Changing the key also helps to make the cover less of a karaoke vibe and more of YOUR interpretation.

The progression in G

1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & | 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & | 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & | 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & |
 G | D | Em | C |
 D D U U D U | D D U U D U | D D U U D U | D U D U U D U |

1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & | 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & | 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & | 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & |
 G | D | C | C |
 D D U U D U | D D U U D U | D D U U D U | D D D D |

- You should be able to look at the song and see it is two four bar chord progressions
 - o I-V-vi-IV
 - o I-V-IV-IV
- With that you should be able to transpose them into a number of different keys instantly, as well as know your 7th extensions, for example the I and IV can be Major7 chords, the V a dominant 7 and the iv a Minor 7 chord.
- If you need help with that here is a link to show you how to instantly transpose any song to any key
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=00scP3rktLg>

2b. Experiment with the 7th extensions.

1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & | 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & | 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & | 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & |
 Gmaj7 | D7 | Em7 | Cmaj7 |
 D D U U D U | D D U U D U | D D U U D U | D U D U U D U |

1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & | 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & | 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & | 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & |
 Gmaj7 | D7 | Cmaj7 | Cmaj7 |
 D D U U D U | D D U U D U | D D U U D U | D U D U U D U |

- Jazzy Wheel

3. Figerpicking

The musical notation shows a four-measure progression in G major. The chords are G, D, Em, and C. The bass line includes fret numbers: 2, 3, 2, 2 for G; 0, 2, 2, 2 for D; 4, 4, 3, 2 for Em; and 0, 0, 0, 3 for C.

- This is fairly straight forward, I put together this fingerpicking pattern based on the same rhythm as the strum.
- The very last C does a little variation, again aiming for the very end of the idea, a slight variation in the rhythm helps us to turn the whole thing around.

3b. Combining fingerpicking and strumming

- This is a very lovely style of rhythm on the ukulele, I am not sure why we don't see much more of it.

4. BPM

- A very simple technique, when you change the speed you change the emotion.
- A very general rule, that clearly can be broken, is slowing songs down works better than speeding them up.
- When you slow a song down it becomes more emotional, when you speed it up it often becomes more comical, having said that you should try both because there are times when a faster version works very well.

5. Arpeggios, Licks, Fills.

- Arpeggio is a really big word, there are a lot of ways to play them, in fact fingerpicking is a type of arpeggio.
- Here we play an arpeggio in the 4th measure, it is simply the triad, play the root, 3rd, 5th and the root note again. C - E - G - C notes.
- There is melody over the 4th measure but because we are just playing ¼ notes it is easy to sing and play at the same time.

Licks, Fills -

- Licks and fills are essentially the same thing, you could nitpick to define them differently but it mostly comes down to where in the world you are. In Michigan Pepsi is a pop, in California it is a soda, in Texas Pepsi is referred to as a Coke, that one is kind of funny to me.
- A lick/fill is simple a couple of notes strung together, when they are called fills that are referring to using a lick to fill a space that doesn't have melody or singing.
- If you put that lick in a solo, with a series of other licks, they are referred to as phrase.
- Sometimes these fills can overlap with the melody, as well, getting started while the singer is finishing.
- This particular lick, or fill, was created using the G major scale, as this particular cover is being played in the key of G. It is a series of ascending and descending double stops that all come from the G major scale.
- How to create licks, how to use them, these are all very large topics that deserve their own live lesson.

Both the progressions together

There you have it friends! 5 ways to make the cover you are playing your own. It is good to try and play a song exactly like the recording, it will improve your timing, sense of rhythm and melody, strumming, your voice, your ear, really every aspect of music. Having said that once you start to feel confident as a musician it is time to leave your own imprint on music, and that includes covers. So here is your homework.

Assignment one

- Take a song that you love, it can be a song that you have been covering for a long time.
- Apply 3 of the 5 techniques used in this lesson.
- Create your own unique cover.
- The next part is challenge by choice.
- Record your cover and either upload it to youtube or Instagram with the hashtag #TenThumbsCover
- If you upload it to youtube post it to the Tenthumbs Productions facebook page or the group 10 Thumbs Challenges
- If you upload it to Instagram tag me @tenthumbspro and I will share it on my story, I want to see these covers!

Assignment Two

- Find professional covers done by your favorite musicians, with the goal of finding covers that are very different from the original.
- Share these covers in the 10 Thumbs Challenge groups with the same hashtag #TenThumbsCover
- The goal is to make a collection of these covers so we can learn by listening, which is the most fun way to learn about music!