

My first professional job was playing rhythm guitar with the Vaughn Monroe dance band, which spent most of its time on the road. In those days I used an Epiphone Deluxe carved top acoustic guitar with a De Armond pick up to play a few electric single string solos. We had over two hundred arrangements in our book. My job was mostly rhythm (unamplified), blending in with the rhythm section (bass, drums and piano).

My big desire was to try to play every chord symbol in the book on all six strings of my guitar. I was wrong. All the chords with big names and added notes were being played by the reed and brass sections. After experimenting with the bassist, I discovered that three note chord formation (voiced properly) could be more functional and musical. All my rhythm guitar playing is based on these simple formations.

As an example:

A C7 formation will cover the written chord name:

C7 \flat 9

C7add9

C7 \sharp 9

C13

C13 \flat 9

When a C7 \flat 5 is written, omit the \flat 5th of the chord. This may leave you with a two note chord. Don't worry, it will sound.

In the case of minor chords the same rules apply.

When confronted with a C11th chord substitute a Gm7.

Keep in mind, the string bass is playing the proper bass note, the guitar plays the after beats. Together their throb gives a uniform sound to a rhythm section.

The A string is not used. Let finger of Low E damp it when stroking. Practice right hand stroke that never reaches the B and E strings, except for G7/B bass and G7+.

Only *thirteen* chord formations are needed to play any chord in all keys in any dance band or combo.
