

SOLOING OVER 7TH CHORDS & THE BLUES

GUITAR GATHERING LIVE STREAM LESSONS



Soloing Over 7th Chords & the Blues

Seventh chords are some of the most common types of chords but can be tricky to solo over at times.

Seventh chords have three main tones – the root, the major 3rd, & the flatted 7th.

Here's the problem: If you want to solo using pentatonic scales then neither the major or minor pentatonic scales work perfectly.

The major pentatonic scale doesn't include the b7.

And the minor pentatonic scale doesn't include the major 3rd - although it does include the bluesy sounding minor 3rd.

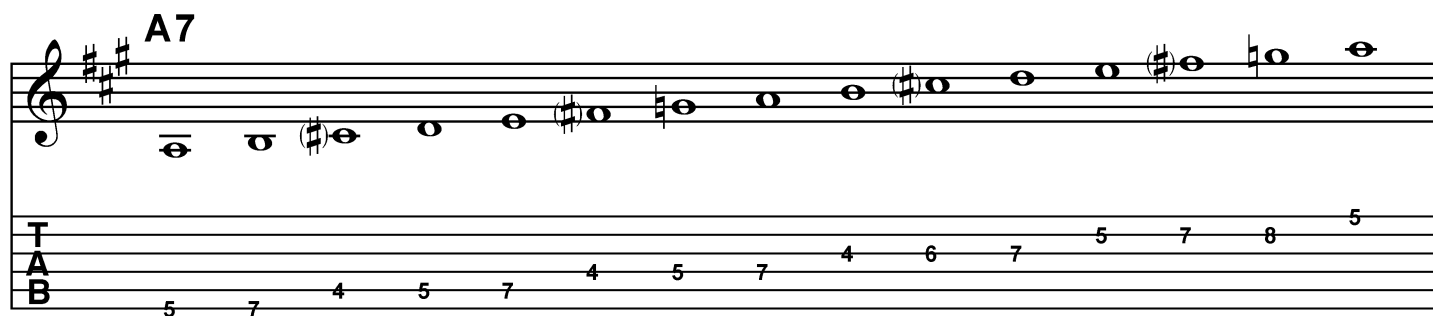
So, it's helpful to find other ways to approach this common chord.

Use the Dominant 7th (Mixolydian) Scale

A scale that works well over any 7th chord is the Dominant 7th Scale, which is also the Mixolydian mode.

A Dominant 7th scale is a major scale with a flatted 7th step.

For example, in the key of A, the dominant 7th scale in A (two octaves) would be...



This scale would also be considered a D Mixolydian scale. Or, another way to think about it is a scale in the key of D going from A to A.

Mixolydian is a type of mode built off of the 5th step of the major scale in any key.

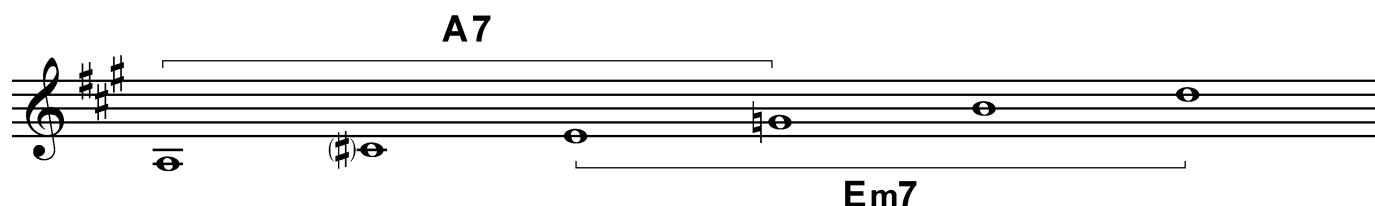
Use the V (five) Minor Chord

Another way to approach soloing over the 7th chord is by building ideas by going to its five and playing the minor chord or arpeggio.

For example, over an A7, you could play ideas from an Em chord.

The fifth of an A7 chord is an E.

Making the fifth step minor and building an arpeggio would be Em7 = E-G-B-D. The tones of the Em7 are the upper extensions of the A7 chord.



So, over an A7, you could play Em7 ideas and arpeggios.

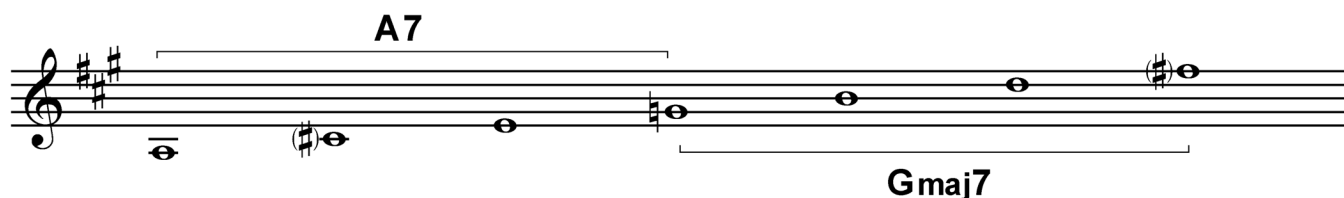
Use the bVII^{maj}7 Chord

Another way to approach soloing over the 7th chord is by building ideas from the flatted 7th step of the dominant 7th chord.

For example, over an A7, you could play ideas from a Gmaj7 chord.

The flatted 7th of an A7 chord is a G.

Making the flatted 7th step into a major 7th chord and building an arpeggio would be Gmaj7 = G-B-D-F#. The tones of the Gmaj7 are more upper extensions of the A7 chord.



Use the iii (three) m7(b5)

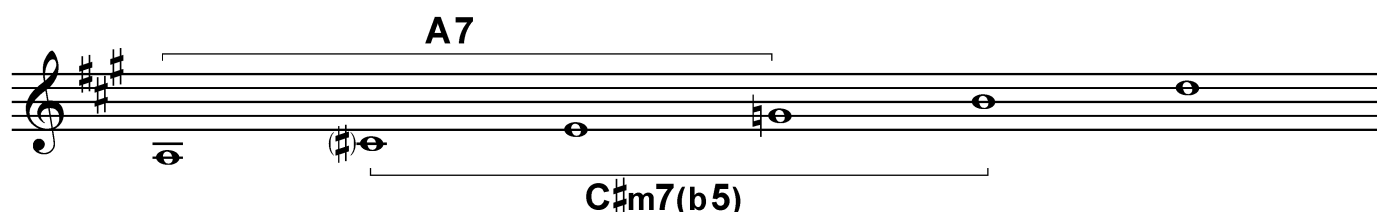
Another way to approach soloing over the 7th chord is by building ideas from the third step of the dominant 7th chord and making it a min7(b5) chord.

For example, over an A7, you could play ideas from a C#m7(b5) chord.

The third of an A7 chord is C#.

Making the third (C#) a min7(b5) chord and building an arpeggio would be C#m7(b5) = C#-E-G-B.

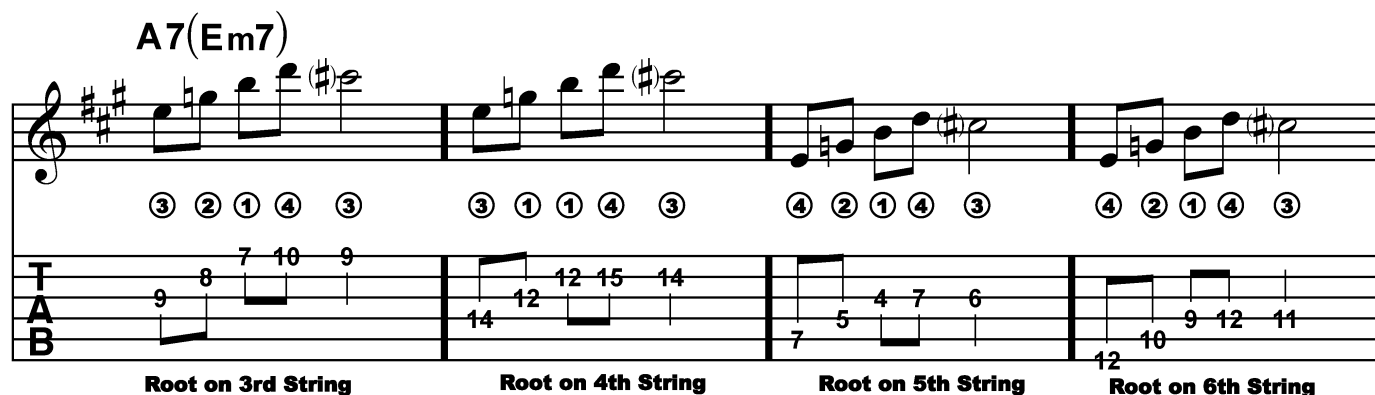
Once again, the tones of the C#m7(b5) are upper extensions of the A7 chord.



Licks Using the Em7 over an A7

Here are some ways to use an Em7 arpeggio over an A7 chord. Here is a simple ascending arpeggio shown on every possible string combination. (Fingerings in circled numbers)

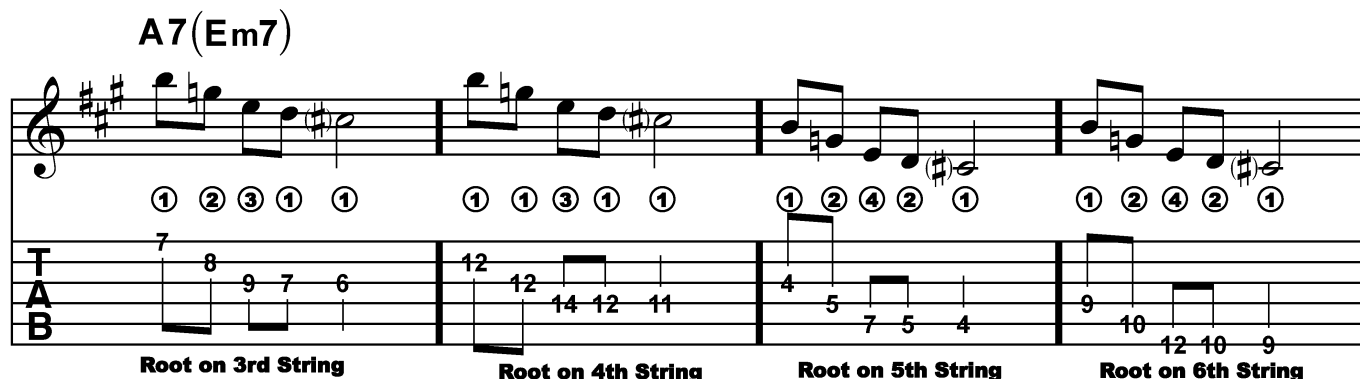
A7(Em7)



Root on 3rd String Root on 4th String Root on 5th String Root on 6th String

Here is a similar Em7 pattern but played descending.

A7(Em7)



Memorize these ascending/descending patterns on all string combinations in various keys.

Soloing Over an A Blues

The three chords in an A blues are A7, D7, and E7. If these substitution ideas are used over each chord the possibilities are...

- The I (one) Chord: A7 = Em7, Gmaj7, or C#m7(b5)
- The IV (four) Chord: D7 = Am7, Cmaj7, or F#m7(b5)
- The V (five) Chord: E7 = Bm7, Dmaj7, or G#m7(b5)

Practice soloing over an A blues using these substitutions.

