

Quick(ish) Notes on “Hey Joe” by Jimi Hendrix  
 Tempo: 85 – 88 bpm (STANDARD tuning here)

While today's installment isn't specifically a riff (because it doesn't fully repeat as shown), Hendrix was absolutely famous for making use of chord shapes and phrases that were based on both [1] inversions and [2] quite logical “what *might* be riffs” when he played.

We'll be focusing on [2] because you're likely rather curious about that one.

First, here's the intro lead that everyone WANTS to be able to play:

You are free to alter the fingerings here, but I wouldn't go all crazy with it. Notice the red asterisk above the open E Major chord in the last measure above. It's just an open E Major, which will set you up for the ending of the intro. The ending of the intro is basically an A style E5 power chord (E, B) that “hints” at an E9 (E, F#, G#, D, B) without a 3<sup>rd</sup> note (G#) interval. Anywho....speaking of intervals...

So, the main progression in “Hey Joe” is ultimately C – G – D - A – E (where “E” gets held)

What Hendrix so masterfully accomplished when he played, as mentioned earlier, was chord phrasing. We can turn phrasing into a riff. After all, if you like what you work with and decide to repeat it – it CAN become a riff.

Before we go too far, I'll be supplying you with the most basic of chords using the C, G, D, A, and E that end are the main theme of the song itself. This will go a bit above and beyond what you'd really NEED to know in order to play along with this Hendrix classic, but you can absolutely use everything shown below as the basis for ANY (well, most any) time you approach these given chords.

Nothing below is specific in terms of a generic scale. Instead, I'm focusing on how the chord is created from the Major scale it is associated with as a whole. In other words, when we reach the “C Major” group, I will be referencing the tones found within the C Major scale itself. When we reach the G Major, the same applies. It's about the G Major scale.

Okeydokey, let's figure out what made Hendrix sound so flippin' awesome.

We will start by examining a few C Major shapes real quick to learn what Hendrix often did (either accidentally or intentionally – who knows?!) using the most common of chords.

## C Major Options

Notes in the C Major chord: C - E - G  
 Interval Formula: 1 - 3 - 5  
 Additional interval (step): 4  
 Result of C Major phrase: C - E - F - G

By adding the 4th interval to the C Major chord (found in the C Major scale) we have a nifty little note of F. This "F" note is also a half-step from the 3rd interval of E (so, it's E-F with **NO** space)

### C Major (standard)

### C Major (A style)

### C Major (E style)

0	5	8
1	5	8
0	5	9
2	5	10
3	3	10
		8

0	5	8
1	6	8
0	6	9
2	5	10
3	5	10
3	3	8

H P

H P

H P

5	6	8
2	3	9
2	2	10
3	2	10
3	3	8

H P

H P

H P

In a Nutshell: Hendrix often utilized the "F" note in C Major. Because it is both a half-step away from the 3<sup>rd</sup> interval in C Major (both in the chord and the C Major scale itself) it is a relatively easy spot to find as long as you understand the notes.

I wonder what he often used when working with the G Major chord?

## G Major Options

Notes in the G Major chord: G - B - D  
 Interval Formula: 1 - 3 - 5  
 Additional interval (step): 4  
 Result of G Major phrase: G - B - C - D

By adding the 4th interval to the G Major chord (found in the G Major scale) we have a nifty little note of C. This "C" note is also a half-step from the 3rd interval of B (so, it's B-C with **NO** space)

### G Major (standard)

### G Major (A style)

### G Major (E style)

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In a Nutshell: Hendrix did the same dang thing! Based on the G Major chord/scale he would often add in yet another half-step from the 3<sup>rd</sup> interval in G, which is a "B" note. This B-C transition creates an interval run of 3 – 4. This is also relatively easy to remember, depending on which chord you select to either phrase and/or create a riff/embellishment. Cool.

Next is D Major. And yes....

## D Major Options

Notes in the D Major chord: D - F# - A  
 Interval Formula: 1 - 3 - 5  
 Additional interval (step): 4  
 Result of D Major phrase: D - F# - G - A

By adding the 4th interval to the D Major chord (found in the D Major scale) we have a nifty little note of G. This "G" note is also a half-step from the 3rd interval of F# (so, it's F#-G with **NO** space)

### D Major (standard)

### D Major (A style)

### D Major (E style)

<p>2 3 2 0</p>	<p>7 7 7 5</p>	<p>10 10 11 12 12 10</p>
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0 1 2 3

5 6 7

10 11 12

<p>2 3 2 3 2</p>	<p>7 8 7 7 7</p>	<p>10 10 11 12 11 11 12 11</p>
<p>H P</p>	<p>H P</p>	<p>H P</p>

0 1 2 3

5 6 7 8

10 11 12

<p>2 3 2 3 2</p>	<p>7 8 7 7 7</p>	<p>11 12 11 12 11</p>
<p>H P</p>	<p>H P</p>	<p>H P</p>

0 1 2 3

5 6 7 8

10 11 12

By now I am positive you're with me! Hendrix was no doubt a master guitarist, but he actually used a rather simple concept. It's what he did with it that made it so special. Now, you might have noticed that at this point he's basically turned all these chords into somewhat suspended chords by making use of the 4<sup>th</sup> interval. Specifically speaking, he's hinting at "sus4" chords. The "4" is the giveaway.

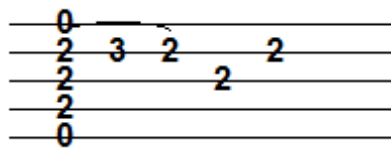
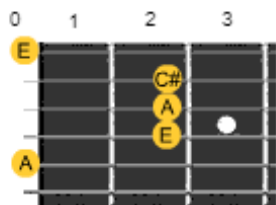
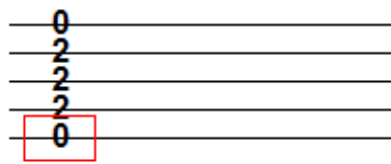
I won't go into theory here (well, not really) – but a suspended 4<sup>th</sup> chord is based on 1 – 4 – 5 in the scale/chord association. Thus, the lack of a true “3” (to get a Major chord) as well as the lack of a true “b3” (to get a minor chord) ends up giving the listener a “suspense” when played. This means, in actual theory, that any suspended chord (sus4 OR sus2) cannot and will not actually give us a real Major or minor chord. There's no “3” or “b3” in it!

A Major? That's next – and the result is the same. At this point I'll just use two basic A Major shapes, as the other standard option is a bit high on the fretboard. However, the same concept applies.

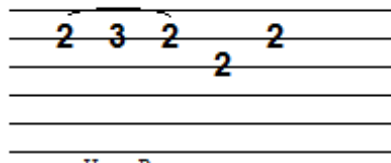
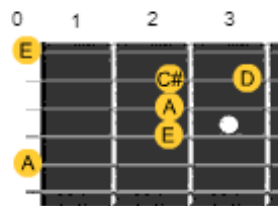
## A Major Options

Notes in the A Major chord: A - C# - E	By adding the 4th interval to the A Major chord
Interval Formula: 1 - 3 - 5	(found in the A Major scale) we have a nifty little
Additional interval (step): 4	note of D. This “D” note is also a <u>half-step</u> from the
Result of A Major phrase: A - C# - D - E	3rd interval of C# (so, it's C#-D with <b>NO</b> space)

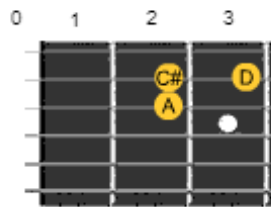
### A Major (standard)



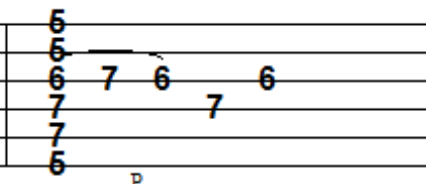
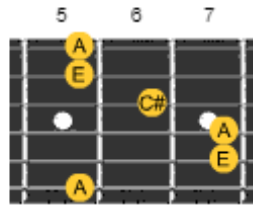
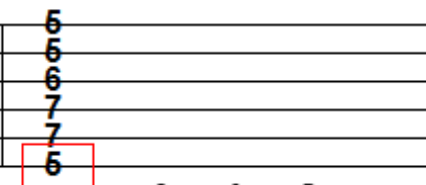
H P



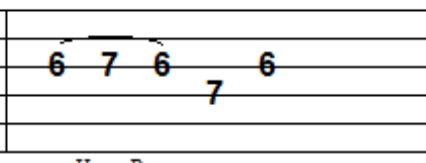
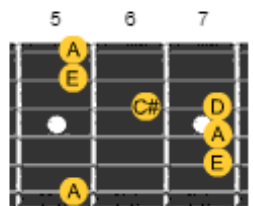
H P



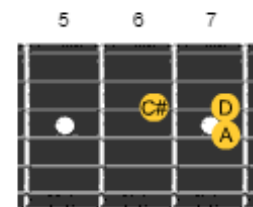
### A Major (E style)



H P



H P



We have now examined C, G, D, and A, but we have one more, which is E. This time we'll focus on the open E and the A style E.

## E Major Options

Notes in the E Major chord: E - G# - B  
 Interval Formula: 1 - 3 - 5  
 Additional interval (step): 4  
 Result of E Major phrase: E - G# - A - B

By adding the 4th interval to the E Major chord (found in the E Major scale) we have a nifty little note of A. This "A" note is also a half-step from the 3rd interval of G# (so, it's G#-A with **NO** space)

E Major (standard)		E Major (A style)	
0		9	
0		9	
1		9	
2		9	
2		9	
0		7	
0 1 2 3		7 8 9	
0		9 10 9 9	
0		9 9 9 9	
1 2 1 1			
2 2			
0		7	
H P		H P	
0 1 2 3		7 8 9 10	
0 1 2 1 1		9 10 9 9	
2			
H P		H P	
0 1 2 3		7 8 9 10	

And there you have it! Here's the best part – everything you've seen above in terms of hammer-ons can actually be played with your 4<sup>th</sup> finger every time. The fingerings are found below.

Now, the last thing I want to mention is how you don't necessarily have to use the full chord to get the phrasings. The final tab in each of these examinations is meant to let you use the idea and expand.

All of this is explained in the video, but what you choose to do with the following tab is up to you. If you are just looking for the lead phrasings/embellishments to play, the fingerings are actually very simple. Remember that you can turn these into riffs by inserting them into a given progression based on the chords used. This avoids you needing to fully understand any true scale association, and beyond all that – it's a heck of a lot easier than having to think!

The tab here is based on what we've worked with using C, G, D, A, and E. However, you might find other spots where these work really well!

C Group			
G Group			
D Group			
A Group			
E Group			

Final Thoughts: As mentioned in the video, try your best to “back up” any of the phrases/licks/riffs you create with the chord in question. If you create something from a C Major, end the passage with either the “full C” chord or the 1 (and/or) 5 of the given chord. It'll resolve in a way that works for any and every time you run into these chords – regardless of the official key. That's why I worked with these based on the notes/intervals within each chord/scale relation. Templates are awesome.