



# Comping: Chords Based on Fourths: Part 1

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Chords based on fourths were made popular by *McCoy Tyner* (John Coltrane’s piano player) and *Chick Corea*. These chords have a contemporary sound and are known as quartal voicings; they have an “open” jazzy sound and work well in modal jazz. We can call these “Marmite” chords – you will either love them or hate them!

A good place to start learning this technique is to harmonise the Dorian mode in fourths:-

## Step 1

**D Dorian – 2 8ve. (2nd mode of G Major)**

D E F G A B C (D E F G A B C D)

To harmonise the first note of this scale, stack fourth intervals above the notes of D, G and C

Fourth above D = G

Fourth above G = C

Fourth above C = F

So the chord comprises D (Root) G (4<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup>) C (7<sup>th</sup>) and F (b3) which could be called ***Dmsus4***.

## Step 2

Continue constructing quartal voicings from each note of the mode ***using notes from the mode*** in the same way as Step 1. You should end up with this:-

| Mode note | Harmonised in 4ths | Chord name      |
|-----------|--------------------|-----------------|
| D         | D G C F            | Dm7 sus4        |
| E         | E A D G            | Em7 sus4        |
| F         | F B E A            | F Maj7b5(or#11) |
| G         | G C F B            | G7 sus4         |
| A         | A D G C            | Am sus4         |
| B         | B E A D            | Bm sus4         |
| C         | C F B E            | C Maj7 sus4     |

Note: m7sus4 chords sometimes referred to as “ m11 ”

### Step 3

Work out voicings on the guitar. Various patterns are shown below, which are fairly easy to remember.

#### Root on G (3<sup>rd</sup>) string

|       | Dm7add4 | Em7add4 | Fmaj7 <sup>7</sup> 5 | G7add4  | Am7add4 | Bm7add4 | Cmaj7add4 |
|-------|---------|---------|----------------------|---------|---------|---------|-----------|
|       |         |         |                      |         |         |         |           |
| Str I |         |         |                      |         |         |         |           |
| T     | 1       | 3       | 5                    | 7       | 8       | 10      | 12        |
| A     | 0       | 3       | 4                    | 5       | 7       | 9       | 10        |
| B     | 0       | 2       | 3                    | 5       | 7       | 9       | 10        |
|       | shape 1 | shape 1 | shape 2              | shape 3 | shape 1 | shape 1 | shape 4   |

#### Root on D (4<sup>th</sup>) String

|   | Dm7add4 | Em7add4 | Fmaj7 <sup>7</sup> 5 | G7add4  | Am7add4 | Bm7add4 | Cmaj7add4 |
|---|---------|---------|----------------------|---------|---------|---------|-----------|
|   |         |         |                      |         |         |         |           |
| T | 6       | 8       | 10                   | 12      | 13      | 15      | 17        |
| A | 5       | 7       | 8                    | 10      | 12      | 14      | 16        |
| B | 5       | 7       | 8                    | 10      | 12      | 14      | 16        |
|   | shape 5 | shape 5 | shape 6              | shape 7 | shape 5 | shape 5 | shape 3   |

#### Root on E (6<sup>th</sup>) string

|   | Dm7add4 | Em7add4 | Fmaj7 <sup>7</sup> 5 | G7add4 |
|---|---------|---------|----------------------|--------|
|   |         |         |                      |        |
|   |         |         |                      | Etc.   |
| T | 10      | 12      | 14                   | 16     |
| A | 10      | 12      | 14                   | 16     |
| B | 10      | 12      | 13                   | 15     |

## **Step 4**

Put the voicings to work! On a tune such as *So What* where there is just one chord type played over a set number of bars, so you can use these voicings to add some movement and special harmony to the accompaniment. Loop a Dm7 chord in *Band-In- A-Box*, drop out the piano/guitar and accompany the bass and drums with these voicings. Try syncopating the chord stabs so that you emulate a pianist (this “comping” style has been covered on Saturday workshops). You should also work out these voicings for the other 11 Dorian modes so you can vamp using the quartal technique in any key! Next time I will examine how quartal voicings can be used in a jazz blues.

- **Simon Newton**