

**Dude...**  
**That Accordion Rocks!**

Workshop by  
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National Accordion Association Convention  
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## Introduction

1. This workshop...
  - a) Repeat of last year's workshop, but there's a Part-2 that I'll be doing later this weekend.
  - b) More visibility to popularity of accordion world-wide (non-US): "Accordion Players" Facebook Group.
  - c) Fact: Accordion can be found in "classic" Rock/Pop/Folk music, even though it may not be featured. Examples: Billy Joel, Mumford & Sons, Styx, Paul Simon, Bruce Springsteen, Rolling Stones, John Mellencamp, Aerosmith, Shakira, Beatles, The Who...many more!
  - d) New resources available: Spotify, Pandora, Google, Online Sheet Music, etc...
  - e) So... what to do with this workshop?
  - f) This workshop (Part I) - broad focus on:
    - i. Things to do / avoid, what works / doesn't work... with examples
    - ii. Various techniques to consider... with examples
    - iii. Examples using accordion solo only as well as singing while playing
  - g) Next workshop (Part II) – More technical workshop where we actually break down a classic rock song and arrange it for accordion, using techniques in this (Part I) workshop.
  - h) What I tell you today isn't absolute truth... this is what works for ME.
2. But before we go further, here's an example of what NOT to do when playing rock... ever!
3. Why should anyone play Rock music on the accordion?
4. Why do I personally play Rock music? Why am I doing this workshop?
  - a) NOT to start a revolution, or begin a crusade to ban guitars from Rock music and replace with the accordion.
  - b) Have fun playing & performing the songs that I like
  - c) Play in a way that preserves the original spirit, essence & attitude of the original recording
  - d) Show that the accordion is more than its stereotype and is capable of playing all styles of music
  - e) Enjoy the look of disbelief on people's faces and hear them say "Dude...that accordion rocks!"

## General Tips (with examples / demonstration)

1. Focus on the songs, era, & genre that you like.
2. Look for songs that work well with accordion - some don't. Here's why...
3. REALLY Focus a LOT of attention on the Left Hand (Bass)
  - a) Don't play it like a Polka! This is the biggest mistake most accordionists make!
  - b) Accordion Books as a Kid... All Bass-Chord-Bass-Chord
  - c) 3 Major things:
    - 1) Left Hand = Bass Guitar & Drums...
      - i. Accordion bass notes can also mimic Bass Drum or toms
      - ii. Use Chords on left hand as your snare drum or high-hat symbol
      - iii. Together they establish the right rhythm
    - 2) Learn basic Rock/Pop/Country bass patterns to establish a better "beat" & "feel".  
Good Basic Rock Beat (fast or slow):



For Country: Don't accent bass, alternate bass, and make it a swing beat:



Or:



- 3) Use Accurate Bass notes & runs, and Bass/Chord combinations (get help from online sheet music)

What does C/G mean?

Two musical staves in 3/4 time signature. The top staff shows chords: C, G/B, Am, C/G, F, C/E, D7, G, C, G/B. The bottom staff shows chords: Am, C/G, F, G, C, F/C, G/C, C, F/C, G/C. The bass line consists of quarter notes: G2, A2, B2, C3, D3, E3, F3, G3, A3, B3, C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5, A5, B5, C6, D6, E6, F6, G6, A6, B6, C7, D7, E7, F7, G7, A7, B7, C8, D8, E8, F8, G8, A8, B8, C9, D9, E9, F9, G9, A9, B9, C10, D10, E10, F10, G10, A10, B10, C11, D11, E11, F11, G11, A11, B11, C12, D12, E12, F12, G12, A12, B12, C13, D13, E13, F13, G13, A13, B13, C14, D14, E14, F14, G14, A14, B14, C15, D15, E15, F15, G15, A15, B15, C16, D16, E16, F16, G16, A16, B16, C17, D17, E17, F17, G17, A17, B17, C18, D18, E18, F18, G18, A18, B18, C19, D19, E19, F19, G19, A19, B19, C20, D20, E20, F20, G20, A20, B20, C21, D21, E21, F21, G21, A21, B21, C22, D22, E22, F22, G22, A22, B22, C23, D23, E23, F23, G23, A23, B23, C24, D24, E24, F24, G24, A24, B24, C25, D25, E25, F25, G25, A25, B25, C26, D26, E26, F26, G26, A26, B26, C27, D27, E27, F27, G27, A27, B27, C28, D28, E28, F28, G28, A28, B28, C29, D29, E29, F29, G29, A29, B29, C30, D30, E30, F30, G30, A30, B30, C31, D31, E31, 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Another Example:

The image shows a musical score for piano accompaniment in 4/4 time. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The score is divided into two measures. The first measure contains four chords in the right hand, each with an accent (>) above it, and a bass line in the left hand consisting of quarter notes. The second measure contains two chords in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand consisting of quarter notes. The chords are labeled as Ab/Bb, Eb, and Eb7/Db.

4. Listen to the recorded classic hit. Analyze and try to replicate:
  - a) Melody
  - b) Bass
  - c) Beat (Drums)
  - d) Harmony & Chord structures
  - e) Instrumentation
  - f) Significant / interesting background lines
5. Focus on what YOU hear when you listen to a song.
6. Song Selection: Take advantage of those songs that naturally fit the style of an accordion
  - a) Slow songs sound good on accordion – use the most out of such an expressive instrument.
  - b) Simple 3/4 or 4/4 Bass-Chord Pattern: accordion was made for this! (many country hits)
  - c) Hits that use Harmonica or Organ
  - d) Songs with expressive sustained notes that can crescendo, decrescendo, swell (Piano & Guitar can't do that)
  - e) Learn great rock classics that people like to sing along to!
7. Get a list of classic Rock n' Roll, Pop, R&B, Country, etc... hits. Make your own "hit list" of songs you want to analyze & learn.
8. Approach to learning a song
  - a) Use printed or online music as a guide & starting point to learn get the melody, the bass and the chord composition.
  - b) Listen over & over again to the original recorded hit – become familiar with it (Spotify or Pandora)
  - c) Breakdown & analyze what you hear – what do you hear besides just the melody that you want to bring out when you play?