

Getting to know the sound of 3rds, 4ths and 5ths

Training your ears to recognise these harmonies begins with noticing them in famous songs and trying to determine which belongs in which category. Here's some to get you started.

The sound of [major] 3rds

Thirds are probably the most common harmonisation in pop music. They sound sweet and upbeat. Songs using thirds include:

Summer Holiday – Cliff Richard and the Shadows

Brown Eyed Girl – Van Morrison

To Be With You – Mr Big

The sound of 4ths

Fourths are darker and more tense. Popular in rock, metal and jazz. Songs using fourths include:

Smoke On The Water – Deep Purple

Lie to Me – Jonny Lang

Fool for Your Loving – Whitesnake

Good Feeling – Reef

The sound of 5ths [power chords]

Fifths are neither major or minor so they'll work over everything. You would have heard many harmonised guitar solos using them and in the context of chords, they are also the basis of the power chord. Written A5, D5 etc. Songs include:

Fields of Joy – Lenny Kravitz

I Believe in a Thing Called Love – The Darkness

Can't Get Enough – Bad Company

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TAB examples: 3rds, 4ths and 5ths

The sound of 3rds

Summer Holiday - Cliff Richard and the Shadows (Original recording in F#)

	9	9	7	6	9	9	7		9	9	7	6	9	9	7
	11	11	9	7	11	11	9		11	11	9	7	11	11	9
Fingers	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	3	3	3	2	3	3	3		3	3	3	2	3	3	3

Brown Eyed Girl - Van Morrison (Original recording in G)

7	8	10	8	7	12	13	15	13	12	7	8	10	8	7	5
8	10	12	10	8	13	15	17	15	13	8	10	12	10	8	7

The sound of 4ths

Smoke On The Water - Deep Purple (Original recording in A)

0	3	5	0	3	6	5	0	3	5	3	0	0
0	3	5	0	3	6	5	0	3	5	3	0	0

Lie To Me - Jonny Lang (Original recording in C)

3	5	5	3	5	3	5	5	3	5	8	10	10	8	10	8	10	10	8	10
3	5	5	3	5	3	5	5	3	5	8	10	10	8	10	8	10	10	8	10
Hammer On					Hammer On					Hammer On					Hammer On				

The sound of 5ths

Fields of Joy - Lenny Kravitz (Original recording in B)

4	4	x	x	x	x	7	7	x	x	x	x	9	9	x	x	x	x	5	x	5	7
2	2	x	x	x	x	5	5	x	x	x	x	7	7	x	x	x	x	3	x	3	5

Can't Get Enough - Bad Company (Original recording in D)

			13	12				13	12		
			12	12				12	12		
7	5	5	12	12	12	7	5	5	12	12	12
5	3	3	10	10	10	5	3	3	10	10	10
Let ring			Let ring			Let ring			Let ring		