

THE DRONE SYSTEM: THE CHORDS OF E MAJOR

contemporary chord voicings commonly used in worship music

First of all, this is not an exhaustive list of voicings for the guitar in E Major. Here I simply compare doing conventional barre chords with using what I call the "Drone System." Notice the chord substitutions listed below their barre chord counterparts. Every chord in this system uses two pedal tones that ring out throughout, namely the open E and B strings. While the bulk of the chord changes as you switch chords, you hear those two notes drone out for an interesting, resonant, sometimes dissonant and unresolved effect. Of course, the other benefit of using this system is it is very easy. I believe it can be an effective tool, but should not be an excuse to ignore barre chords or other possibilities. Use your ear. If it does not work with a particular style, try something else.

Also, the chords listed here are all diatonic or native to the key of E Major. I did not list any borrowed dominants or any other chords using accidentals (try plugging in a D Major or F# Major chord). Also, the leading tone chord (half-diminished: D#°) does not work so well with the drone system, so I left it out here.

The terms "Root 6" and "Root 5" identify the string number that the bass note (the lowest root note in the chord) is on. "6" just stands for the 6-string (the low E-string). "5" stands for the 5-string (the A-string).

Basic Triads

Tonic I	Supertonic ii	Mediant iii	Subdominant IV	Dominant V	Submediant vi	Leading Tone vii°
E	F#m	G#m	A	B	C#m	D#°

Root 6 Chords (barre chords)

E 2 3 1	F#m 1 3 4 1 1 1	G#m 1 3 4 1 1 1	A 1 3 4 2 1 1	B 1 3 4 2 1 1	C#m 1 3 4 1 1 1	D#° 2 3 4 1
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Root 6 Chord Substitutions (drone system)

E 2 3 1	F#m11 2 3 4	Eadd9/G# 2 3 4	Aadd9 1 3 4 2	Badd4 1 3 4 2	C#m7 2 3 4
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Root 5 Chords (barre chords)

E 1 3 3 3 1	F#m 1 3 4 2 1	G#m 1 3 4 2 1	A 2 1 3	B 1 3 3 3 1	C#m 1 3 4 2 1	D#° 1 3 2 4
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Root 5 Chord Substitutions (drone system)

E5 1 3 4	F#m11 3 1 4	Eadd9/G# 3 1 4	Asus2 3 4	Bsus4 1 3 4	C#m7 - or - C#m7 1 3 4	C#m7 3 1 4
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