

# The Three Row Diatonic Melodeon A Comprehensive Guide

## Part 6 – The Left Hand

The left hand keyboard contains all the buttons you need to produce the notes and chords that accompany your right hand playing. The job of the left hand side of the instrument is to provide rhythm, accompaniment, harmony, fullness and drive to the overall sound. Having said all that, sometimes it's better just to play a simple tune on the right hand without any basses at all!

Remember the chart for this instrument can be found at [www.melodeon.net](http://www.melodeon.net) /home page.

The bass buttons from the chin-end down to the knee end give you six pairs of bass notes and an associated chord in two rows. The bass buttons on the outside row are arranged from the chin-end down to give you a two-chord trick for each of the three main keys.  
i.e.

### A major

A+/E+    A/E

### D major

D+/A+    D/A

### G major

G+/D+    G/D

You have seven major chords together with their single bass root notes:-

\*A major, B major, †C major, \*D major, E major, F# major & G major

\*These chords appear twice (on the push and the pull).

† This chord is available on the push and pull on the same button together with its bass root note.

Plus two minor chords together with their single bass root notes :-

B minor and E minor

With this set up you have everything you need to be able to play the usual three chord tricks for the three main keys of the instrument plus the keys of B and E major. These are the major chords built on the 1<sup>st</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> degrees of the major scales.

i.e.

Key of A major – A major, D major and E major

Key of D major – D major, G major and A major

Key of G major – G major, C major and D major

These three-chord tricks fall conveniently to hand:-

A major

A+/E+    A/E            D+/        D/

D major

                  D+/A+    D/A            G+/D+    G/D

G major

                                  G+/D+    G/D  
                                  C+/C+    C/C

...not so convenient...

B major – (B major, E major and F# major)

                  /E+    /E  
F#+/    F#/            B+/        B/

E major – (E major, A major and B major)

A+/E+    A/E  
                  B+/        B/

Plus....

the relative minor of D major (B minor)

and the relative minor of G major (E minor)

So three and four chord "tricks" are possible in these keys plus many other useful sequences.

e.g.

in D major - D Bm G A

in G major - G Em C D

As you can see there are only two minor chords but cross-rowing can yield some very useful minor seventh chords:-

C major with an A bass = Am7

Button 5 inside row + button 4 outside row on the pull

D major with a B bass = Bm7

Button 3 outside row + button 4 inside row on the push

A major with an F# bass = F#m7

Button 1 outside row + button 2 inside row on the push

Very often, Am7 and Am can be interchangeable. Likewise, Bm7 and Bm (although you already have one of these, albeit on the pull) and F#m7 and F#m. So, in this way, your pallet of minor chords can be expanded.

Many other chords are available in this way on the left hand such as G with a D bass, D with a C bass etc.

It is possible to play in minor keys on this box. You have a three chord trick available in B minor (B minor, E minor and F# major) - plus a two chord trick in E minor (E minor and B major).

Some melodeons have stops to take out the thirds in the bass chords to get "5" chords which work with both major and minor right hand runs. The

Hohner Compadre doesn't have this facility. If you know what you're doing inside the box you can always tape over them. This is semi-permanent as you won't get any full major or minor chords. I have never done this. I prefer the rich sound of the full major and minor chord. Some players prefer the more austere sound of thirdless chords to say nothing of the flexibility they offer.

So what bass chords should you use to accompany your right hand? Well if you are playing a piece of written music, you don't have to worry as this has already been sorted out for you. It's when you figure out tunes for yourself or even write your own that you need a bit of knowledge. Always sort your left hand out at the same time as the right as you may come unstuck if your lovely right hand tune doesn't have the required bass notes and chords in the bellows directions you have chosen.

Basically, any note on the A row apart from the accidentals will work when played against an A major chord. Similarly, D row notes work with a D major chord and G row notes work with a G major chord. Although you can't physically play the pull notes on these rows when playing the chord on the push and vice versa, these notes that don't form part of the major chord are often slotted in between the bass note and the bass chord in a typical oom pah or oom pah pah left hand rhythm.

Although the bass notes and chords are often played separately in this way it's also nice to play them simultaneously, sustaining the chords – almost organ style.

The left hand should be used to compliment, not overpower the right hand. Most boxes I have played seem to work fine in this respect, however you have to be careful if you play a single High reed on the right hand (as on a Hohner Xtreme) as it can be drowned out by the left.

If you are recording, you might want to turn yourself at a slight angle so that the mic picks up more of your right hand than your left.

Now go to Part 6a:-

The Three Row Diatonic Melodeon -  
A chart to show the actual pitches of the left hand notes and chords

Once you've had a look at that go to Part 7:-

The Three Row Diatonic Melodeon -  
Faults, Repairs and Tuning