

TAKING THE THIRDS OUT OF MELODEON CHORDS This short article discusses why you might want to have this done, and how.

Many expensive melodeons have a metal button on top of the bass end, and metalwork inside, so the bass end chords can have their 3rds removed/replaced at will. Most ordinary melodeons, eg Hohner Pokerworks, do not have this luxury – so, are you stuck with what was factory-installed?

On the bass end of melodeons, the buttons come in pairs.

Connected to the lower (to the ground) button of each pair are a couple of bass reeds, both producing the same low foundation note - G/D (blow/suck), C/C (blow/suck), D/A (blow/suck) and B/E (blow/suck).

Connected to the upper button in each pair are 3 reeds which play together and produce a chord. The G chord notes are G, B & D; the D chords are both D, F# & A; the C chords are both C, E & G.

The middle note of the chord (the 3rd, in musical parlance) is the one which determines whether a chord sounds as a Major or Minor.

In the A chord, the factory-supplied chord notes are A, C# & E, which means that you get the chord of A major. If you are playing something on the right hand end with a C note in it, which clearly needs an A Minor chord, the sounds will grate. Even if there is no C in the tune, you honking an A major chord against other musicians playing the tune in A minor may not be appreciated!

Similarly, in the B chord, the chord notes supplied are B, D# & F#, which means that you get the chord of B major. Anything with a D note in it, which clearly needs a B Minor chord, will also grate. The same principle applies, but rarely, to the E minor supplied by the factory, when you need E major.

Taking the 3rds out of all the bass chords takes **nothing** away, except a small amount of bass end volume. **You still get the same chords as before with the added advantage of, in effect, 2 extra chords – A minor & B minor** – both very relevant to your melodeon keys of G, D & Em, and increasingly useful to your playing as you learn how to use them.

Taking the 3rds out allows you the option to use more ‘pastel colours’ in playing rather than painting musical pictures only in primary colours all the time.

HOW IT IS DONE

On ordinary melodeons, there are bass chords of G major & D major (blow/suck), C major & C major (blow/suck), D major & A major (blow/suck) and B major & E minor (blow/suck).

By identifying the relevant 4 holes on the bass reedblock (B/F#, E/E, F#/C# & D#/G) and placing a piece of ½” square sellotape over each hole, those notes are muted and the 3rds taken out of the chords.

This causes no damage whatever to the melodeon, and can be reversed by just unpeeling the sellotape. I had mine done over a decade ago. Nearest melodeon repairer to me is Malcolm Smith, near Newark, on 01636-686835, who can do it while you wait.