

I have been playing guitar since I was 16. As I approach my 40th birthday, I have had the opportunity to reflect on a lot of things. Mostly things that are deeper than this, but it popped into my mind, so I gave it time!

When I started playing guitar, I learned three chords. G, C and A. I had a little acoustic guitar that my Mum bought me in a car boot sale for £6. She told me that if I could learn to play a song and play it well, she would consider going halves on an electric guitar with me. I went

So, I got a chord book and started to teach myself basic chords. I soon discovered that the combination of G, C and A sounded just like Wild Thing by the Troggs. I did some research and found the correct chords for the full song, learned it and went and played it to my Mum. The next week, we went and got a cool looking Charvette guitar with a reverse dinky headstock. It looked the mutts nuts and sounded amazing (to my ears at least).

however, I quickly realised that mastery of three chords was not going to be enough, so I started to learn more and more and more and more and after a couple of years, I was pretty good. I had a few lessons, but mostly just played with a few friends.

Fast forward 24 years and I have started to really dig back into playing properly and am quickly realising that I missed a lot by not formalising my learning a bit more. I find that the theory I chose to ignore, has held me back for years and now I am having to learn it whilst overcoming bad habits that are now deeply ingrained.

Unless you are Status Quo, 3 Chords just isn't enough!

How does this relate to gamification?

Well, my buzz for this year in gamification is research and education. The majority of experts in the field started just like me, with an idea that they investigated and began to evolve over time. Others then took these ideas and made them their own, using them liberally - often in ways that were never intended. As things go wrong, the original experts are blamed, because their theories did not work. The truth is, these ideas were implemented without the correct understanding in the first place.

Rather than learning the theory, people just learned three chords (Points, Badges and Leaderboards) and kept using them. Some then learned a few scales so that they could improvise a little, but still did not fully understand what the core of the theory was, so still struggled to get beyond simple improvisation.

As we move through 2018, I urge anyone in gamification to take stock of their understanding and see what they could learn by going back to the source materials and the original research that everyone else based their intermediary theories on. Learn how the scales and the chords can be used, what does work and what doesn't - based on the deeper information available. There is more and more research available every week on resources like [Research Gate](#). Don't be afraid to go there and ask researchers for the full texts of their work - they are all awesome and happy to share!

3 chords will get you a long way, if you are innovative, have amazing stage presence, have a huge catalogue of success stories and have great PR, like Status Quo... but for most of us, we need to learn more than that to truly be exceptional.

On that note - if you are learning guitar, here is my tutorial on tuning your guitar by ear! (How slick a transition was that!!)