

# Progressive Music & Beyond

with Ivan Bertolla



## Sweep Picking Arpeggios

### Making Them Interesting

This month I wanted to expand on previous "sweep picking" arpeggio ideas. For the novice player sweep picking refers to picking a group of notes in the same direction and at the same time detaching the notes. The effect is to almost "strum" the passage in an economical way... When I approach sweep picking techniques I try and make it sound interesting and not a simple up and down sweep.

In the example below I have created a sweep picking theme across a very common chord progression in classical music. In recent times this chord progression can be found in the verse of say "Hotel California" by the Eagles. So if you have the CD at home handy jam over it with this exercise.

What you will notice is that I have created

2 different patterns. Pattern 1 is in bars 1-2. Pattern 2 is in bars 3-4. This pattern structure continues thereafter. The point of using 2 different patterns was so that I did not sound repetitive and monotonous. This technique involves a high standard of rhythm and technique. What most of my students have found with this exercise is the difficulty of staying in time within the chord changes because there are rhythm issues. In other words having to adjust from triplets to 16th notes in a very quick movement. Have fun with this!!

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# Rocking The Foundation

Bass guitars with Tony Murray



## Why Do We Need Rules?

### Chapter 7

"I don't care about history (Rock rock, rock n' roll high school)  
That's not where I wanna be (Rock rock, rock n' roll high school)" The Ramones.

If you are repelled by the crudity of the musical example below, you might as well stop reading right now. I'm looking this month at the use of harmony as a blunt instrument, and one of the most deliberately primitive examples known to me occurs in the Ramones 'I Don't Wanna Walk Around With You'. When I first heard this in 1976 I actually laughed out loud, although for my musical friends the joke wore out in about 6 seconds - well before the end of the song, in fact.

Harmony depends on a balance of parts moving in contrary (opposite) or parallel (in the same direction) motion. The rule says, if the melody or upper part moves up, the bass should

generally move down, and vice versa. It is the hallmark of the beginner songwriter to have the melody crudely shackled to the motion of the chords - it sounds amateurish and indeed, unmusical. So of course the Ramones' song takes this to its logical extreme (Ex. 1). Not only do the bass line and melody (shown by the oblique lines) move in the same direction, but the guitar does exactly the same. The effect is enhanced, or exacerbated if you prefer, by all the parts leaping a fourth from A to D - an inelegant gesture in melodic terms.

The Ramones knew exactly what they were doing in committing this apparent musical atrocity. They are deliberately breaking a rule known instinctively to all musicians, which begs the question, why does the rule exist? One answer might be, if all the parts are going to move together, why have harmony (chords) at all? You might as well have a succession of loud

unisons on A-D-G-A in all the instruments and voices, which is more or less what the Ramones are doing here. Note however, that this only part of a song, the rest of which is completely musical if expressed in a simplistic style. Furthermore other songs show considerable refinement: see the melody of 'Rock n' Roll High School', which is beautiful in the terms of its simple idiom.

Suppose we make a tiny attempt to 'improve' the phrases according to the rule book. In Ex. 2 those ridiculous block chords have been replaced by individual parts which move smoothly from note to note, and the bass line is made more melodic and contoured to eliminate that leap from A to D (which is actually not uncommon in bass lines anyway). A moment's thought will show that this sort of refining is not improving the concept at all. The original is a gag - it's funny because as music it's

aggressively primitive.

The Ramones were one of the most influential bands in the history of popular music - history may not be 'where they wanna be' (refer Rock n' Roll High School' above), but ironically, that's where they are. Perhaps it's because they showed that an idea, even if it appears to be anti-musical, combined with witty lyrics (including 'I Don't Wanna Walk Around With You!'), will often outlast its musically more sophisticated rivals.

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