

# Progressive Music & Beyond

A discussion with Ivan Bertolla



## The Power Of Chord Inversions



Here is an example of how to develop chord progressions. This excerpt comes from the intro of the Doobie Brothers masterpiece "minute by minute". The 1st thing to look out for is the bass movement in the progression. Clearly the bass line here was predetermined and what the composer has done is inverted the relevant chords to match the bass movement. The composer Micheal McDonald put a foot in both the jazz and classical world with this one...In between his jazz thinking there is also a classical idea of using diminished 7th chords acting as "resolving chords" both when leading to the 5th and Dm7. This chord progression was not played on guitar but hey why not? My students are addicted to this because it is a real challenge. If you are really into it try doing the bass comping part that the keyboard player plays. This is an ideal way also to develop the technique of changing different chord shapes cleanly. But most importantly using bass lines and chord inversions as a device to write music.

### Developing An Ear

Without a doubt the biggest issue I see with guitar students these days is very poor aural skills. In an age where everything can be worked out for you via the internet, music software

etc less and less time is being spent by people actually sitting down analyzing and transcribing music by ear. In addition most of the tablature that my students download off the internet is wrong. Developing a good ear is as important as being able to read from manuscript. Why? Well if you can't find the score are you going to rely on tab some amateur uploaded onto a web site? A good ear will enable you to be able to transfer things onto your guitar. It will help you to transfer a musical idea from your head to the guitar. I have no idea how many tape recorders I destroyed as a teenager whilst transcribing guitar solos by ear. But this developed the skill of being able to immediately transfer what I hear on a CD to my guitar. An elementary technique is to go back to simple interval training. To start with the best thing to do is to find a song for each interval so that you recognize the note via the song. Here are a few examples. Play the interval ascending or descending until you match each piece of music. Sing it then match it to your guitar notes.

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When you have grasped this get your favourite guitar players solo's and work them out by ear. Transcribe as much possible. Don't be lazy but patient. Developing a good ear takes many years. Straight Ahead!

Interval	Perfect 5 <sup>th</sup>	C - G	Star Wars Theme
	Major 3 <sup>rd</sup>	C - E	Beethoven's 5 <sup>th</sup>
	Minor 2 <sup>nd</sup>	C - C#	Jaws Theme
	Perfect 4 <sup>th</sup>	C - F	Advance Australia Fair

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# Rocking The Foundation

Bass guitars with Tony Murray



## Bass – Rocking the foundation of harmony

### Chapter 9: MODULATION OR KEY CHANGE? HOW AND WHY



Modulation or key change, which as we will see are not exactly the same thing, are music's most powerful tool for expressing changing states of mind, or mood, or even abstract musical ideas. Take the climax of Ravel's Bolero – a famous example of a prolonged crescendo pushed over the top, as it were, by a change of key. After some thirteen relentless minutes of C major, the music crashes into E major just before the end – and then back to C for the last few bars. This is sometimes referred to as a modulation, but I would suggest it is really a key change. There is no preparation for the change to E in Bolero: it is meant to jolt the listener and at the same time adds enormously to the mounting excitement.

In modulation however the new key is anticipated within the present key: we use notes in common to connect the two musical areas in the hearer's mind. Simplest example: we want to move from C to F major. The note which

differentiates the two keys is B flat in the key of F. So we anticipate the B flat by using the following progression of chords: C, C7 (C-E-G-B flat), F. Now we're in F. To get back to C, we need to restore the B flat to B natural: so, F, Dm, G7 (G-B-D-F), C.

This process appears in a much more sophisticated form in Example 1 above, a passage from the song Autumn in New York by Vernon Duke. The song's 'hook' is the melody line in the first bar, falling like autumn leaves. At this point we're in B flat major, but the song is in F overall and so must return to the hook in that key eventually – look ahead to the last bar of the example. The writer wants to take

us through some bittersweet changes before returning home, however. His first digression is to B flat minor, which involves flattening the sixth and third degrees of the scale. The Cm7 (flat 5<sup>th</sup>) gives us the G flat and the D flat of B flat minor is introduced in the melody as a suspension over the F7 chord. The writer has made the process as smooth and gradual as possible in this instance. Now he heads for F minor, so the G flat needs to be raised back to G, using a Gm7 (flat 5<sup>th</sup>). Remember that the goal is the hook phrase in F major, and the writer wants to use the positive, uplifting effect of changing from F minor to F major, as opposed to modulating. The melody lingers

on the A flat of F minor until the last bar where it rises to A natural of F major, and we're home with exhilarating effect. Note that the momentum is enhanced by the preceding D flat chords, which I hear as an ornamentation of the F minor rather than a different key – but the movement from D flat to F major is a powerful statement in this context.

We do not have space here to do more than scratch the surface of this kind of musical sophistication. The above is only a fragment of a song and I have barely mentioned the lyrics which motivate the changes described. Suffice it to say that songwriting of this calibre is worth studying, and playing, in close detail.

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