

# Progressive Music & Beyond

A discussion with Ivan Bertolla

## Arpeggios In Stereo



This month we are looking at ways of creating exciting lead guitar sounds ideas using both musical knowledge (harmony) and production knowledge (your sequencer). I have given you instructions in previous articles on how to sweep

pick. If you missed them visit my website. This is important and I will not go through the technique here so refer to those articles... The below exercise involves the same sweep picking idea. What you will notice here is that I am creating harmonized arpeggios over different chords. The order of the chord harmonies are as follows for each crotchet beat. A Minor, E Major, G Major, D Major, F Major, C Major. Now when you have nailed playing them in a lightning fast efficient way (via sweep picking) record them into your sequencer individually. The final step is to "pan" one file fully left and the other fully right... I personally like panning the upper harmony to the right... Now you will notice some exciting stuff coming out of your speakers... I hope that this simple idea opens up new sonic territories for you. Until next time straight ahead

**Pan Fully Left**

TAB: 8 5 5 7 4 5 7 3 3 4 10 7 7 7 10 6 5 7 8 5 5 5

**Pan Fully Right**

TAB: 12 8 10 9 10 7 9 9 10 7 8 7 10 5 7 7 8 5 6 5 8 3 5 5

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# Rocking The Foundation

Bass guitars with Tony Murray



**EX 1**

Nev - er thought I'd be the one to break down etc.... Caught Up etc....

EX 1

## Chapter 10: BASSLINE AND MELODY

This month I thought we could check out an example of what's currently tearing up the Top 40 charts, at least in some parts of the world – a song by Usher called *Caught Up*. Ex. 1 shows parts of the vocal melody line and bass line so that we can look at the relationship between them. These are shown in simplified form because the arrangement is too intricate for detailed discussion here. On the other hand the harmony is simple and is shown only as chord names for the sake of brevity.

The segment shown is effectively the last four bars of the 'verse' and the first four bars of the 'chorus'. The two sections are subtly

distinct because the former uses B flat major (bars 3 and 4) and the latter B flat minor (bars 7 and 8). Often this distinction is crashingly obvious and overplayed, but in this case the major scale D natural only occurs in the vocal – a nice understated touch.

The rhythmic pattern in the bass is interesting too. In the first bar the pattern is highly syncopated in the manner of the vocal but against the rhythm of the words. From then on, the bass notes tend to be more long held and generally on the beat, while the vocal line weaves around it. Note that when the vocal hits the D natural in bar 3, the bass is holding a big long B flat to anchor it and give it maximum impact. The second time the long B flat occurs in the bass, in bar 7, the vocal line gives us the d flat of the

chord of B flat minor. The effect is the usual darkening of mood that goes with a minor key, but in this case with subtlety because of the light instrumentation. Brass instruments enter with a short blast at bar 5, and then a longer note at bar 7, giving a weighty effect but avoiding the D flat of the minor scale, which we hear only in the vocal.

Throughout this section a keyboard instrument plays what at first sounds like a sustained high B flat (2 octaves above middle C) – the note is of course contained in all these chords. Listening more closely, however, we find not a sustained long note but a constantly changing 16th note pattern, in keeping with the general rhythmic feel of the song. The sound is mixed so that the 16th notes are most audible just as the hook

words 'Caught Up' occur in the chorus. This is a remarkably subtle way of highlighting of the key words of the song – it could be a form of merchandising (subliminal advertising?), but it's a musical idea as well.

The genre to which this song belongs, sometimes called R & B (not the Muddy Waters variety), comes in for a lot of criticism in some musical circles. But there is an enormous amount of musical creativity in these songs and arrangements, even if the cultural background is fairly remote from the Australian experience. Which is another reason to remain open-minded in these matters - unlike Rimsky-Korsakov, who said of the alarming implications of Debussy's music in the early twentieth century: 'Better not listen to this stuff, one might grow to like it'.

Tony Murray is a composer and songwriter with BA (Music Major), working in Melbourne. He is currently playing bass with Melbourne group *The Glory Boys*, whose new EP *More Requests*, including two songs written by Tony, was launched at the Corner Hotel, Richmond on 22 Sept 2004. He can be contacted at: [tonymurray@pacific.net.au](mailto:tonymurray@pacific.net.au)