

## Open String Techniques



Hi folks. This month let us look at various string pull off, hammer-ons and tapping exercises. You will notice they have 1 thing in common: "Open Strings". These techniques have been written around open strings to make the techniques sound faster and to facilitate the liquid phrasing of the notes. I suggest you also think carefully when writing songs and try and keep the songs in the keys of D, E, B and A. That's what these guitarists did. Why? Because these are the open strings on your guitar allowing you to incorporate solos and even parts of the composition using the open strings. It is no accident that most rock songs that involve some sort of advanced lead guitar technique are not written in the key of C. Obviously because C is not an open string. I see many of my students writing songs like their current favorite artists in drop C and C# tunings. These same students though love the 80s shred and then realize they are unable to use open string solos in standard tuning. I also advise that you listen to the original recordings because no tab or score will make you understand fully what is going on in the solos.

Figure 1 one of the hardest descending left hand pull off exercises I have ever come across but it is great playing it. Personally as a guitar player I know how warmed up I am when I play this exercise. If I can nail this at speed then I know I'm warmed up. It's an excerpt from Gary

Moore's End Of The World. The speed is furious and involves an incredible amount of strength and control in the left hand to create the effect. When executed correctly it sounds like you are picking every note when infact your pick isn't even being used. Notice how the open string pull of is a powerful device. Be aware that the open strings must have the same duration as the hammer-ons. This is what most people don't understand. So make sure you are conscious of it.

Figure 2 involves right hand tapping. It contains excerpts from the intro to Van Halen's Hot For Teacher. If you nail this technique perfectly you will notice once again the power of the open string used. I have avoided the hammer-on notations because of readability. Tap with right hand on 12. Use fingers 1, 2 and 4 of left hand to play the rest.

The beauty of this solo is that when executed perfectly you get another hidden sub melody within it. That tells you that you have nailed the technique. A great solo to learn before you start exploring your own tapping styles

Figure 3 is an excerpt from Satriani's "Always with Me". This one is slightly different but still challenging to execute perfectly. Tap the 12<sup>th</sup> fret with right hand. This one involves a lot more coordination and is rather confusing for a student initially.

Now Take It Further

Figure 4 is one of my tapping ideas using string skipping and also revolving around the open strings. Don't do this sort of stuff unless you are very warmed up because I don't want people sending me their medical bills. Once again tap the highest pitch of each phrase with right hand. This is written for the key of D major. This is an example of ideas that can be created after you have mastered everything from figures 1- 3. Ok now Straight Ahead!!!

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Figure 1

T P etc

Figure 2

H H T P P etc

Figure 3

T P T P H etc

Figure 4

T P H H H etc

## Rocking The Foundation

Bass guitars with Tony Murray

### Chapter 12: HARMONISING A MELODY - THE WRONG CHORDS ARE THE RIGHT CHORDS!



Let's say you want to put chords to a melody, just descended from heaven into your head. Often the notes of the melody will outline chords themselves, so some of your work is already done for you. But this is only a start, as most melodies contain repeated phrases and you might want to give each phrase a different harmonic context. And let's say you want to push the envelope, harmonically speaking.

Before we look at this I want to refer to a principle illustrated by the famous and ancient cadential six-four progression (EX 1). This sequence uses a dissonant (in the sense of unresolved) chord to create a feeling of strong movement towards a goal. In our example the dissonance is the chord of F with C in the bass – the six-four chord. The bass stays the same but the upper harmony changes to the dominant in the second chord and

then triumphantly back to the tonic F. The progression is never used in modern music – its sound is too characteristic of centuries of music past. But we can use for our own purposes its essential movement from tension to resolution.

Have a look and listen to the melody Ex. 2. From the second bar onward the first chord in each bar appears to be the *wrong* chord. In bar 2 the melody has the note G, but there is no G in a Dm7 chord. In bar 3 the melody hits the note C, clashing with the Gm7 chord below. And so on, in every bar to the end of the sequence. But you will see what's happening here – each time the clash is resolved in the second chord of the bar, so we get a repeated clash-fit clash-fit effect which gives the melody its momentum. The dissonances could be regarded as suspensions, except that usually we omit the clashing

interval in such chords, e.g. in Dmin7sus we *replace* the F with a G. As shown in EX. 2, the clashes are still intact. Note that bar 5 contains a slight softening of the process, by playing the note C against a Bflat maj7<sup>th</sup> chord, effectively a Bflat maj 9<sup>th</sup>.

If you play just the melody and the bass line the chord progression really does sound *wrong*. But with the chords added, the sound is rather agreeable, and the melody is actually easy to sing – how does this work? There are several factors in play here. As we have seen, the clashes are quickly and repeatedly resolved into simple chords, and the clashes are not all of the same kind – some are merely more complex chords than the others. To sing the melody you only need to learn a couple of simple phrases and you can force the notes against the chords – far from being a

distraction this is an exhilarating process. The chord progression is simplicity itself considered apart from the melody, having its own logical drive toward the dominant at the end of the sequence.

All these factors combine to make the alleged wrong chords *right*.

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