

SHREDDED METAL

EMBELLISHING ARPEGGIOS

In metal guitar playing, sweep picked arpeggios are mainly played as simple major or minor triads (1-3-5 and 1-b3-5 respectively). While this can sound cool, it can also sound quite cool to extend these basic triads by adding in additional notes. This can help to create some more complex and interesting ideas. For this article I'd like to show you an easy way of doing this. Another thing to consider when sweep picking arpeggios is that quite often they are simply played straight up and down. While this definitely has its place, after a while, sweeping up and down arpeggios is going to sound quite monotonous. The second part of this article will focus on some different ways of breaking up arpeggios to create some more exciting and musical sounds.

EXERCISE 1

If you've been following these columns over the years, the following three shapes for sweep picking minor triad arpeggios should be familiar to you. The key here is that the three shapes are diatonic to the key of E minor (Em-Am-Bm = Im-IVm-Vm). Since the A minor and B minor chords are diatonic to the key of E minor, this means that you can simply combine parts of these shapes together to create extended arpeggios. Even if you're not sure what the final arpeggio/chord actually is (or what it would be called), just use your ears – if it sounds good then it is good!

The image displays three musical examples of sweep-picked arpeggios in E minor. Each example consists of a treble clef staff in 4/4 time and a corresponding guitar tablature (TAB) below it. The first example is labeled 'Em' and shows a sweep starting on the 12th fret, moving up to the 15th fret and then down back to the 12th fret. The second example is labeled 'Am' and shows a sweep starting on the 12th fret, moving up to the 13th fret and then down back to the 12th fret. The third example is labeled 'Bm' and shows a sweep starting on the 14th fret, moving up to the 19th fret and then down back to the 14th fret. The TABs use numbers 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 19 to indicate fret positions and include a dashed line with a 'V' for upstroke and a '-' for downstroke to indicate the sweep direction.

EXERCISE 2

The first lick utilises this concept by starting off with an E minor arpeggio and then switching to the top part of an A minor arpeggio at the third string. This adds in the extra notes of A and C to the original E minor arpeggio. If we were to analyse this, it could be considered Am9/E. The second arpeggio once again starts off with the notes of E minor (E-G-B) before switching to a B minor arpeggio shape. Along with an additional pull-off on the first string, by combining the Em and Bm shapes this perfectly spells out an Em9 arpeggio (1-b3-5-7-9). Try combining some of the other diatonic chords of the key together and see what licks you can come up with (in this case, the chords are: Em-F#dim-G-Am-Bm-C-D).

EXERCISE 3

Rather than simply going straight up and down, this lick loops through a small D major triad (the VII chord in Em) via hammer-ons/pull-offs, before continuing through an Am7 arpeggio on the first three strings. We could analyse this as being Am13/E. Looping smaller arpeggios within the larger one is a great way to break things up.

EXERCISE 4

This lick combines the Emin and Bmin shapes, but adds in the small Dmaj triad on the way up and down. This creates an Em11 arpeggio. I hope you will agree that it sounds much more interesting than just simply ascending and descending.

EXERCISE 5

In the style of the great Marty Friedman, this lick adds in even more variations on the way up and back down. The addition of a C# means that this creates an Em13 arpeggio. Practice this slowly and pay particular attention to the picking.

There are countless ways to play arpeggios besides the standard of just sweeping up and down triads. I hope these examples inspire you to come up with some cool ideas of your own.