

ARPEGGIO-AGOGO

In this issue we will continue to look at some improvising approaches that will help you use arpeggios in your solos. The three approaches outlined in this column should make it easy to incorporate arpeggios into your solos straight away, and give you ideas on how to create solos that work in any style or genre you are trying to emulate. As discussed last issue, to become better at improvising it helps to have an understanding of music theory, a good ear, and a developed muscle memory through repetition of technical exercises. A system of self-evaluation is also important if you want to improve quickly or get yourself out of a rut, so being able to record yourself and then listen back to what you have done is invaluable. The more you get your head around all of these areas the better you will become at improvising and creating solos that are musical, not just a bunch of technical exercises and scale passages.

Hopefully by now you have broken your practice time into four parts that equally cover all of these areas. You should be dedicating a quarter of your practice time to technique practice. I like to break solos down into different soloing types – modal, arpeggios, pentatonic, triads and double stops. If you combine these different soloing approaches into a solo you end up with more than enough variation to keep the longest of solos interesting. If you transcribe any of your favourite solos it is almost always a combination of these different soloing approaches used together.

Theoretically speaking an arpeggio is the notes of a chord played individually. An arpeggio outlines the single notes of a chord as a melody and is a very useful way of outlining a chord progression. The challenge is how to incorporate arpeggios into your playing, especially given that often when we solo we think about what key we are in and which scale shapes fit the entire chord progression we are playing over. Hopefully one or all of the following approaches will help you to use arpeggios in your solos.

EXERCISE 1

Using the underlying arpeggios from the minor pentatonic and blues scale is a great way to start using arpeggios. Most guitarists learn the minor pentatonic scale box shape when they first become interested in learning how to improvise and solo. If you don't already know it now is a good time to learn it. Exercise 1 outlines the minor pentatonic shape in A minor, followed by the underlying A minor 7 arpeggio. Play the exercise from start to finish in a loop and familiarize yourself with both the scale and the underlying arpeggio.

EXERCISE 2

This next exercise shows how an arpeggio can be used in combination with the pentatonic scale. The arpeggio has been outlined in the introduction of the passage and the extra colours from the pentatonic scale have been used as passing tones until the melody is resolved to a chord tone. Exercise two is in the key of A minor but can easily be transposed to any key. The same passage can be transposed up an octave too, by starting on the 17th fret you can play the same passage, perhaps with a slight variation to get more mileage out of one lick.

EXERCISE 3

All five modes of the minor pentatonic scale feature an underlying arpeggio. Guitarists who are familiar with the CAGED system will already understand this concept. Exercise 3

outlines an arpeggio and pentatonic solo idea that bridges between different modes of the A minor pentatonic scale. In the first two beats of the first bar you can hear the arpeggio sound contrasting against the pentatonic sound in the second half of the bar and then resolving to the tonic in the second bar. This is a very basic example, try and come up with your own ideas based on this bridging concept.

Standard tuning

♩ = 120

N-Gt

1 Am

mf

2 Am7

T

A

B

5-8 5-7 5-7 5-8 5-8-5

5-8 7 5-7 5-8

Standard tuning

♩ = 120

N-Gt

Am

mf

1 2 3

T 5 5 7-7-7-5 7 5 5 7-7-5 7

A 7 7 7-5 7 5 5 7-7-5 7

B 7 7 7-5 7 5 8 7-7-5 7

Standard tuning

♩ = 120

N-Gt

Am

1

mf

2

T
A
B

5 5 8-12-8 10 9 12 14 12 10 12 14 14 12 12