

SHREDDED METAL

PEDAL POINT LICKS

In simple terms, a pedal point (or pedal note/tone) is a sustained or repeated note played against a melody. Its origins come from 'classical' music and it was used by composers such as Bach and Mozart (the term originated from the sustain provided by an organ's pedal keyboard). In heavy metal, pedal points are used quite frequently. Eg. Thrash metal riffs that pedal off the low E string, or riffs where the bass player stays on the low E while the guitars do something more intricate. For metal/shred lead guitar (as I will be looking at in this column), pedal point is most commonly associated with Yngwie Malmsteen and the neoclassical movement of the 1980s. The following examples are in the key of A minor and primarily use the harmonic minor scale.

EXERCISE 1

This is a trademark Malmsteen-style pedal point lick. Starting on an off-beat, the pedal tone here is the fifth degree of A minor (E), which you should fret with your fourth finger. Use your other fingers to play the simple ascending/descending melody whilst continuously playing the first string E note in-between.

12 10 12 8 12 7 12 10 12 9 12 10 12 7 12 8 12 10 12 8 12 7 12 10 12 9 12 10 12 7 12 10

EXERCISE 2

Contrary to the first example, here the pedal tone (E) is the lowest pitched note in the lick. While technically you can pedal off any note, using strong chord tones (root, third, fifth) will generally sound the best. Use strict alternate (down/up) picking for this exercise (and all the others).

5 5 7 5 8 5 10 5 8 5 7 5 5 9 5 5 5 7 5 8 5 10 5 8 5 7 5 5 9 5 5

EXERCISE 3

Another popular way of using pedal point for shred guitar soloing is to use two pedal notes instead of just one. In this lick, the pedal tones are A (root) and G# (major seventh), played in a three note grouping (A-G#-A). As the higher part on the first string ascends and descends, you keep going back to the pedal notes on the second string, using the same fingering (1-2-1) throughout.

8 10 9 10 10 9 10 | 12 10 9 10 13 10 9 10 | 12 10 9 10 10 9 10 | 8 10 9 10 7 10 9 12 | 10

EXERCISE 4

In Exercise 4, the pedal point concept is applied to a descending sequence using note groupings of four. For the first pattern, the starting pedal note is A. This moves to G for the second pattern, F for the third, and E for the last bar of the sequence. The scale used here is A natural minor, but it changes to harmonic minor at the end for a stronger resolution.

17 15 17 13 17 12 17 | 15 15 13 15 12 15 10 15 | 13 13 12 13 10 13 8 13 | 12 12 10 12 8 12 9 12 | 10

EXERCISE 5

The final lick is a bit more difficult, involving wide string skips and two different pedal notes. It begins by pedalling off the first string E note and descending to the fifth string tonic using notes from A harmonic minor and an A minor arpeggio. After a brief connecting phrase, the pedal tone changes to A on the fifth string while the melody climbs to conclude on the third string A root note.

12 10 12 8 12 10 12 | 9 12 12 12 12 | 12 11 12 14 15 12 15 12 | 14 14 13 16 14 | 12 12 12 12

These are just a few pedal point examples to get you started. Try coming up with your own using different keys, scales, and styles.