

TAPPED ARPEGGIOS WITH STRING SKIPPING!

Two of the more difficult techniques in rock and metal guitar soloing are right hand tapping and string skipping; for this column, I'm going to show you how to play arpeggios licks that incorporate them both! It's very common for arpeggios to be performed on one string via tapping in groups of three notes – one note is tapped and the others are pulled-off or hammered-on. However, what's less common is to extend the range of the arpeggio by taking the single string tapping lick and transposing it up or down an octave. For maximum playability, this necessitates moving to a non-adjacent string (string skipping). This process can also be repeated to incorporate a further octave. The end result is an arpeggio with a much wider range, and since it involves right and left hand legato playing, the sound created is very fluid and piano-like. Two shred masters who use this technique are Guthrie Govan and Michael Angelo Batio.

EXERCISE 1

I've come up with two licks to demonstrate this technique, starting with an E minor triad. On the fifth string, tap the 14th fret with your right hand middle finger, pull-off to your first finger on the 7th fret, then hammer-on to the 10th fret with your third or fourth finger (then play this again). Now, move up two frets and skip to the third string, tapping the 16th fret. To play the next octave, jump to the first string and tap the 19th fret by moving the fingering up three frets. Repeat the third string pattern, and then repeat the whole lick. To play the E major version in bar two, simply move your fourth finger up a fret to play a G# instead of a G.

Here are some tips to help practice this technique:

- **Isolate each string:** Loop and repeat the tapped arpeggio on each string individually, making sure that the tap, pull-off, and hammer-on is clean.
- **Isolate each hand:** Practice fretting the right hand tapped notes without the left hand part. Likewise, practice the left hand hammer-on part on its own.
- **Go slow:** This goes without saying, but start off very slowly and gradually increase the speed.
- **Repeat each string:** When first putting it all together, it may help to play each one string tapped arpeggio four (or even eight) times. This gives you more time to prepare for the string skip/position shift.
- **Muting:** Use right hand palm muting and left hand finger muting to help prevent unwanted string noise.
- **Vision:** Use a wide gaze and try to watch both hands at the same time.

Em

E

TAB

16 9 12 16 9 12

19 12 15 19 12 15

16 9 12 16 9 12

14 7 10 14 7 10

16 9 13 16 9 13

19 12 16 19 12 16

16 9 13 16 9 13

14 7 11 14 7 11

EXERCISE 2

Whenever I explain advanced techniques like this, I'm always conscious to point out that a technical exercise on its own is not particularly musical. As such, I've written a solo passage that applies this technique to a I-III-VI-VII progression in E minor (Em-G-C-D). As in Exercise 1, the E minor arpeggio is tapped across the strings (although not repeated here). This moves up to a tapped G major arpeggio lick in the 10th position (also played only once). Then, to contrast the rapid flow of notes in the first two bars, I play a much sparser phrase involving bends and a simple descending scale run. By concluding with a more basic approach, it provides a nice balance to the craziness of the preceding tapped arpeggios.

The musical score for Exercise 2 is presented in two systems. The first system is for the E minor (Em) progression, starting at measure 1. The tempo is marked as ♩ = 120. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The notation includes a treble clef and a guitar staff with a 'T' (tapped) symbol above the notes. The first two bars feature rapid, dense tapping patterns with triplets and slurs. The third bar shows a transition to a G major arpeggio lick in the 10th position, also using tapping. The fourth bar continues with tapping patterns. The second system starts at measure 2 and covers measures 3, 4, and 5. Measure 3 features a G major arpeggio lick in the 10th position, followed by a descending scale run. Measure 4 is a sparser phrase with bends and a descending scale run. Measure 5 concludes with a basic approach. The tablature (TAB) is provided below the guitar staff, showing fret numbers and tapping symbols. The progression is labeled as Em, G, C, D, and Em.

To hear how these licks sound, head to www.australianguitarmag.com (I've recorded them fast and slow). Once you have the basic technique down, there are all sorts of other cool variations to try out!