

Progressive Music And Beyond

A discussion with Ivan Bertolla

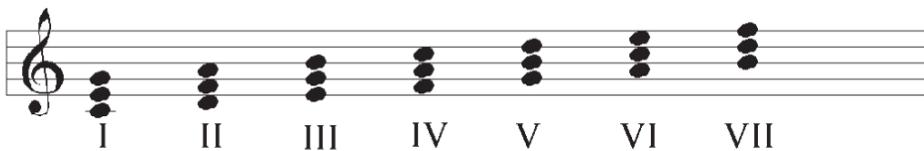


Ivan Bertolla is a Melbourne based composer/producer/guitar instructor who has released his debut CD worldwide of cinematic music "Beyond The Skies Eternity". He runs Mastermind Productions and Macleod Guitar School and can be contacted at his web site www.bertolla.com

Moving Away From I IV V

I want to discuss some compositional ideas this month based on the most important things in music. Diatonic Harmony and The Major Scale. 1st of all let us look at some elementary harmony. Diatonic Harmony in C Major. What a beautiful system it is !!!!

C Major Diatonic Harmony



What you probably write

Key = C	I	IV	V	I
	C	F	G	C

What you could write (moving away) – pivot chords

Key = C	I	IV	V		IV
	C	F	G		F
Key = Gm				I	VII
				Gm	F

The Point Of All This?

If you are short on ideas. Start looking into "pivot" chords. This is a short example of where you can go with a simple idea. Most pop music, for example, will stay within the chords of the same harmony. In other words using all the chords in the C major harmony listed above. I call this static music. But if you are looking to take the music elsewhere you can use something called the parallel minor as an example of a pivot. In this case, G major to G minor. The minor chord of the same letter is the most common place to pivot. You can then use all the chords in the G minor harmony to continue this melody. And if you notice I have listed that the F major chord in these 2 harmonies (C major and G minor). The F major is a perfect way to pivot back into C major and use as a cadence back to C. So it will sit nicely when moving from G minor to C major again. F major is the 7th chord in a G minor harmony and the 4th in a C major.

Here are some examples of pieces that use the parallel minor/major pivoting method :

While My Guitar Gently Weeps – George Harrison/Beatles (Am to A)

Spanish Ballad – Classical Guitar Standard (Em to E) Lagrima – Tarrega = (E to Em)

Have a listen to how the composer in each piece has used this device of pivoting to create the work.

Until next month ..Have fun with this. Thanks for the positive feedback I have had. Stay progressive!

CD Reviews

DUSTED ORANGE 'Concordia' – Independent



Well, well. Here we have yet another independent release cross my desk which leaves most of the major label crap for dead. Dusted Orange are an original Melbourne based act who have the knack to write not just great songs but absolute corkers, every one of them bristling with hooks and some truly memorable lines. Combine this with

all-the-right riffs, tasty wah-work and the odd keyboard flourish, and rather than being a bunch of competing sounds what you have is an interesting sonic tapestry which thrusts vocalist Sean Crowley's excellent vocal talents right out front where they deserve to be. Listen to the way the lead-lines supplement the main vocals while playing a totally different melody. I'll give you a reference, only because it'll help you place the band contextually. Think a mixture of Jeff Buckley 'Grace' and Incubus 'Morning View'. That said, the band have a definitive sound of their own. It's so good to hear a band making the effort to create intelligent textures and layers in their music, not to mention actually knowing their instruments. If a band like this are writing songs this good now, just imagine what they would do in five years. Give them a slog on the airwaves, a promotional budget and they would be one of the biggest bands ever. Log onto www.dustedorange.com Buy your own copy and bypass the major labels. It's where a lot of the good music is to be found these days. By Nick Snelling

ANTISKEPTIC 'Aurora' – Toupee Records/Shock

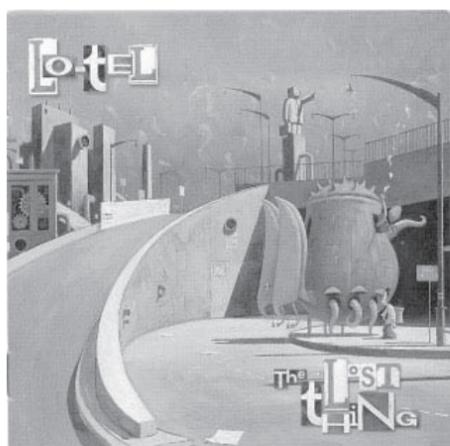


This is Antiskeptic's second album. The guys received a fair bit of praise and airplay with their debut and I'm sure this will be exactly the same. Their sound is almost immediately recognisable as fitting in with a lot of the melody soaked, super-clean American pop/punk/rock that is played on rock radio these

days (Jimmy Eat World, Sum 41, Unwritten Law). These guys do have talent though, and a thorough listen will impress you with their song writing and structure. The whole album has a very positive feeling to it and if this is your sort of music then you should buy the independent Australian alternative. Antiskeptic is as good if not better than their American brethren.

By Golly

LO-TEL 'The Lost Thing' –SONY/Murmur



Let me begin with something both profound and profane. You can't polish a turd. The best thing about this album is the artwork and we can thank award-winning Shaun Tan and his children's story-book called 'The Lost Thing' for that. Yeah, yeah – it's great to see a band do something different with the artistic medium of

the compact-disc inner sleeve, blah, blah, blah...but, correct me if I'm wrong, but isn't this supposed to be about the music? If I was Shaun Tan, I'd be spewing that my story's soundtrack sounded so lame. Now, some people are going to say this is too harsh, and okay there are a few redeeming tracks – namely 'Complacent' and the single 'Angel'. Yes, I admit – these are polished pop songs, as was Lo-tel's great 'Teenager of the Year'. But as you listen, you realize three things. Putting heaps of string-sections on everything, adding harmonies and then 'producing the shit out it' does not maketh a great album. The second thing is vocalist and songwriter Luke Hanigan has a weak-as-piss, boring voice with a limited range. Thirdly, with the exception of the string arrangements, the instrumentation is both bland and rudimentary. Is there any wonder record companies profits are plummeting when they invest in such mediocrity? I can't help but listen to the production efforts on this album and think if it could be better spent on another band. Say, Dusted Orange, for example. That said, I am a bit of a rock fiend, so maybe it's the fact Lo-tel just don't have enough balls for my liking.

By Nick Snelling

SOMETHING FOR KATE 'The Official Fiction' – SONY/Murmur



It has taken me a long time to build an appreciation for Something for Kate. I was once of the school that they were the musical equivalent of a liver cleansing Diet. But somewhere between the 2nd album *Beautiful Sharks* and the much acclaimed *Echolalia*, I began to hear a depth and maturity that is quite rare in contemporary song writing.

The Official Fiction is the fourth album by S4K and it is an album which sets out to renovate the distinct and undeniable sound they have been crafting over the past 10 years.

From the first strum of the strings on *Max Planck*, you feel like you are home again with a familiar friend. Like all S4K releases you find yourself hooked on melodies that you never even knew were there in the first few listens. The first single *Deja Vu* however, gets you right away and second track *Best Weapon* is layered with subtle instrument embellishments. The album ebbs and flows with purpose to serve as a playground for S4K regular, Canadian producer Trina Shoemaker (Wilco, Queens of the Stone Age, Sheryl Crow).

The Official Fiction sees Paul Dempsey's lyrics move from his normal introspective sentiments to more general and global concerns. Drummer Clint Hydman must be a very patient performer, waiting for the cue to introduce his far from conservative rhythms. The carefully placed backing vocal, (Caitlin Cary, Lisa Germano and Grant Lee Phillips) combine with the subtle string arrangements to form a sublime resonance on tracks like *Kaplan/ Thornbill* and *Reverse Soundtrack*. *No Man's land* brings the album to full conclusion with a cheeky remix of the songs chord progression, insisting you leave the cd player on repeat to go around again.

by Jay Dillon

ALIEN ANT FARM 'truANT' – Dreamworks/Universal



It's a shame Alien Ant Farm are probably best known for that mega-successful cover of Michael Jackson's 'Smooth Criminal'. Fact is, Alien Ant Farm are so much more than that cheesy single. In fact, 'Anthology' was an excellent album, rich with killer riffs and quirky, catchy melodies that stood up to (in fact, demanded) multiple

listensings. Now, with the new album 'truANT', Alien Ant Farm truly deliver and can no longer be regarded as a mere novelty act. There's no point in discussing individual tracks on this album – they're all just as great as they are diverse. Funnily enough, guitarist Terence Corso cut his teeth playing in speed-metal bands, but the only hint of that is in the tightness of his chops, and the little gallops and skips he throws into every riff. Stylistically the band move from heavy rock through reggae, latin guitar, funky ska and back to rock. But make no mistake – Alien Ant Farm are no white-boy wanna-be funkster rap metallers attempting another awkward collage. No sir, these are real songs and most nu-metal bands could only wish they were as good as musicians as these guys. Undoubtedly, drummer Mike Cosgrove and bassist Tye Zamora are one of the best rhythm sections around. More importantly, the songwriting and lyrical dexterity of vocalist Dryden with his trademark melodic yelp make this an album full of cross-over potential. The question is - is it too pop for the metal-heads, or too musical for the masses? Only time will tell. I just hope their record company even knows how to market music this good. Buy it. Then go and buy their last album. Call it an investment in your ears.

By Nick Snelling