



Progressive Music and Beyond

A discussion with Ivan Bertolla

Harmonizing Scales

If you are looking to put more color in your lead guitar solos (like they used to do in the good old days) it is worth talking about harmony. There are many ways to harmonize. Whether it be above or below the melody. It can get very exciting when doing 3 or 4 part harmony. But let us this month concentrate on a simple harmony above and below the main melody or theme. Below is an example of the C Major scale harmonized in thirds in an appropriate register for lead guitar.

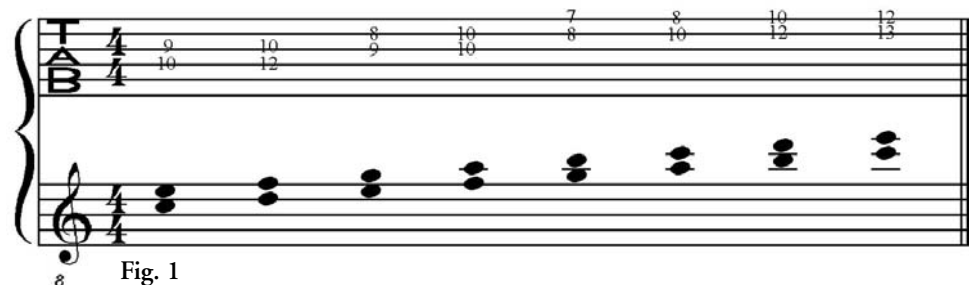


Fig. 1

You will notice here that each note is harmonized (Fig.1) with a note from the same scale that you are in .. i.e. C major. Also of interest here is how the harmonies work. The major third harmonies exist on the C, F and G.. Interesting that .. Because it's the same principle for triad chords in diatonic harmony (i.e. major on I, IV, and V). The minor third intervals exist on D, E, A and B. This opens many possibilities. So here is "Waltzing Matilda" harmonized in 3rds (Fig.2) (be aware that this time not all the notes are within the same scale). In this example I have harmonized in 3rds below the original composition so try it on lead guitar. The original melody is in bar 1-4. Its harmony is in bar 5-8. If you can overdub guitars in your home studio then try firstly to record the original melody then harmonize it. Bear in mind that this will only sound good on distorted electric guitar by recording both melodies separately. However on clean sounding guitar they will sound good playing them together finger picked in a jazz style. i.e. acoustic guitar style. You will notice how much richer the melody sounds now. This principle does not have to relate just to guitar. You can harmonize a guitar melody with a keyboard. Try and create different textures and harmonies in your music using different instrumentation. The beauty of orchestral music for example is how harmony works using different parts of an orchestra.

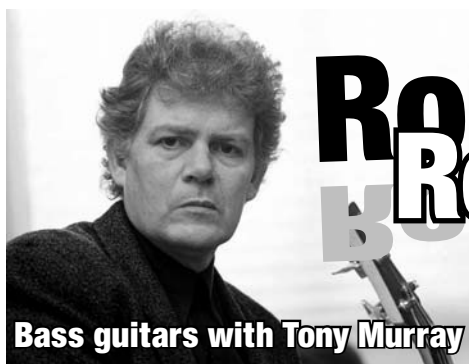
There is not enough harmony happening on guitar these days purely because of the lack of knowledge that the average guitarist has in harmony (let alone modes) especially in Australia. How many guitar solo's have you heard in the last 5 years that don't revolve solely around the minor pentatonic scale? It is purely because



Fig. 2

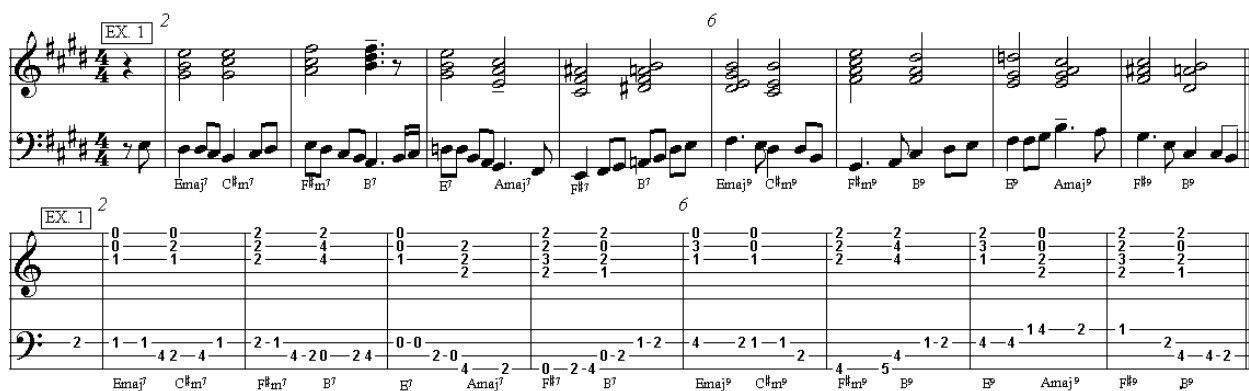
guitarists in Australia are generally of much lower standard than in say Sweden or Germany. In those countries the education system is disciplined, with an emphasis on classical music studies in early school years...and Universities do not close musical departments like in Australia. Which is disgraceful!!! The debacle is highlighted by current musical trends, which try and ignore harmony all together and Australian radio stations that are obsessed with playing just US product. Have you ever noticed how much more harmony is happening in European music? even pop!! Having said that I anticipate the return of harmony. Remember this is only the start of what you can do with a lead guitar solo. Three and four part harmonies can take your music to another world. In the meantime straight ahead!!

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. Website www.bertolla.com



Bass guitars with Tony Murray

Rocking the Foundation



So in the first run through of the progression each chord has a seventh as the bass note. It may sound a little strange at first, or at least different from most pop and rock music. We are already a long way from the root note of each chord and hence from the driving, elemental sound which is the aim of a would-be hitmaker. Major seventh and minor seventh chords and so on are not unheard of in Top 40 hits but in that context they would be firmly underpinned by the root note. Otherwise the record company exec will be saying, 'I don't hear a hit here - you got something with chords in root position?'

After a couple of repetitions, our example starts to sound logical and even possibly interesting to the ear, considering the progression itself is quite conventional. Now at bar 6 we move to a succession of ninth chords, with the ninth in the bass no less - and yet the result is not so hard to grasp as harmony. The effect strikes me as rather distant and mysterious - if you play it that way. If you play it aggressively, the clashes become pungent and biting - another kind of expression latent in this simple principle.

It must be admitted that our example rather overdoes the idea of continuous extreme inversion - using one kind of chord at length for its own sake is an unnecessary limiting of the harmonic tools available to us. However the example illustrates that the boundaries of harmony can be pushed a long way in the interests of expression, without losing sight of the musical principles underlying the process.

Chapter 5: INVERSIONS - HOW FAR CAN THEY GO?

In this article we'll consider how far we can move away from the root notes of chords in a progression before - well, before we don't like what we're hearing. To make the point clear we'll use a basic chord progression with two different types of inversion. Bars 2-5 will use the seventh of each chord as the bass note, and bars 6-9 repeat the progression but with ninths added - in the bass.

I first need to explain a bit of the significance of inversions. The major chord in root position, say a C major chord (C-E-G ascending from the bass), is the basic element of most music in one way or another, and everyone knows what it sounds like. The first inversion of C major

means that the bass note of the chord is E, the third note of the scale: hence E-G-C (actually the order of the other notes in the chord is irrelevant). The sound is less decisive than the root position chord and the inversion is less commonly used in popular music except as a passing chord, i.e. as a step to another root position chord. The second inversion chord has the fifth in the bass (G-C-E) and is considered dissonant in traditional theory - again it is rare in popular music. Third inversion chords imply four notes, e.g. C7 with the 7th in the bass: B flat-E-G-C. This is where the progression in Ex. 1 starts from, and then we move to fourth inversion (5 note chords) when it repeats from bar 6.

BIO

Tony Murray is a composer and songwriter with BA (Music Major), working in Melbourne. He is currently playing bass with Melbourne group *The Glory Boys*, whose new EP *More Requests*, including two songs written by Tony, was launched at the Corner Hotel, Richmond on 22 Sept 2004. He can be contacted at: tonymurray@pacific.net.au