



Progressive Music and Beyond

A discussion with Ivan Bertolla

Chromatic Chord Movement

In this month's column I wanted to illustrate some ways of modifying a well known chord progression such as Cmaj7, Am7, Dm7 and G7. Here it is in its original glory.

Figure 1 shows the original chord progression: Cmaj7, Am7, Dm7, and G7. It includes guitar diagrams for each chord and a musical staff showing the progression in 4/4 time.

The 2 examples below show how to move around this basic chord progression by adding 4 more chords. This creates a chromatic chord movement. The intention is to not make it sound as cliché as it was. Be aware that I have included chord diagrams that don't exactly match the notation. In other words use as many different chord shapes of the relevant chord as you want. These are just guides. I suggest sticking with the root note of the chord in the bass. When you get more competent try using inversions. Remember when using inversions there must be some voice leading occurring to enhance a smooth chord progression without abrupt textural jumps.

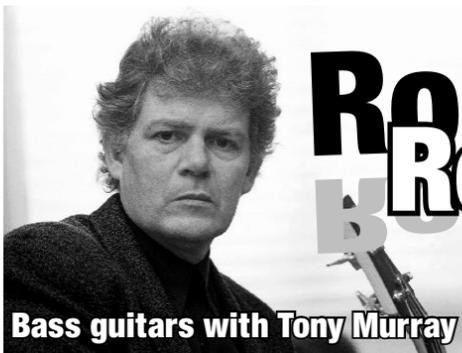
Ivan Bertolla is a Melbourne Based composer/producer/guitar instructor who has released his debut CD worldwide of Cinematic music *"Beyond The Skies Eternity"*. He runs Mastermind Productions and Macleod Guitar School.. Website www.bertolla.com

Cmaj7 Bbm7 Am7 Ebm7 Dm7 A7 G7 Dmaj7

Figure 2 shows how to approach the chord progression from a semitone above. eg Bbm7-Am7.

Cmaj7 G#m7 Am7 C#m7 Dm7 F#7 G7 Bmaj7

In figure 3 the movement occurs from a semitone below eg. G#m7-Am7. In both examples this concept repeats for the 3 remaining chords around our original chord progression. The purpose of all this is to start thinking about embellishments in your songs. As always play around with this. Stay progressive and see you next year!!!



Rocking the Foundation

Bass guitars with Tony Murray

Examples 1-4 show superimposed chords. EX 1: C, D7/F#, C/G, G7, C. EX 2: Ebm7/G, G/B. EX 3: E7(aug9). EX 4: F/G, C.

Chapter 6: SUPERIMPOSED CHORDS, BY WAY OF THE CADENTIAL 6/4

One of the oldest devices in western music is the cadential 6/4, which uses the second inversion of the major (or minor) triad, with the fifth in the bass, e.g. G-C-E in the key of C. It is considered dissonant in traditional theory and rarely used in popular music. However its history illustrates important points about the development of musical thought, and may point to modern usages in interesting ways.

A cadence is a sequence of chords suggesting movement towards a goal. A cadential 6/4 means a particular use of the second inversion triad which has the effect of withholding resolution at the climactic moment of a piece. (6/4 means 6 and 4 degrees of the scale above the bass, e.g. in C the bass is G, and the C is 4 notes up the scale, and the E 6 notes.) Hence the third chord in Ex. 1 has G in the bass, which suggests the dominant of the key, but the upper notes C and E represent the tonic chord. So although the tonic is present there is a sense of incompleteness or suspense, until the progression moves to the dominant chord G7 in root position (4th chord Ex. 1), and then with a flourish to the final tonic (5th chord).

For hundreds of years up to the early twentieth century this cadence was used for the strongest possible musical

statements, and towards the end of its run was elaborated into monumental passages of music – but its meaning was so particular that it is impossible to use today without a sense of parody, like the wigs worn by barristers in courts of law. However the superimposition of a tonic chord over a dominant bass gives a double meaning, which is an idea we might relate to other kinds of superimposed chords.

A second type is shown at Ex. 2. This is the famous stamping chord near the beginning of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*. In essence the bass is an E major chord (written as F flat for notational convenience) over which the composer has placed an E flat 7th chord, first inversion. The choice of the upper chord is intended to produce as many semitonal clashes as possible, to evoke the brutality and violence of ancient pagan rites. In this case the separate elements are meant to combine into one crunching sound: the ear can barely distinguish the notes from one another.

In Ex. 3 the two main components are more easily heard. This is the much-loved 'Jimi' chord from *Purple Haze*, sometimes labeled E7 (aug 9th). I hear this as a G major chord superimposed on an E major chord, with the following effects: two chords a minor third (the blues interval) apart simultaneously, and a major-minor ambiguity in E (both G# and G natural are heard). It's the ultimate blues statement in one sound!

In Ex. 4 the bass G suggests the dominant chord of the key C, but the upper notes constitute the sub-dominant, F. Once again we have two types of sound simultaneously – either the best of both worlds, or a confusion of ideas that overtaxes the ear. Sounds good to me.

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