

Progressive Music & Beyond

A discussion with Ivan Bertolla



Clustered Chord



harmony with no harmonic function and really should be described as atonal .

For the purpose of this article I have not thought "tonally" . ie Some of these chords have different names in tonal music and yes can have have functional use especially if substitutions apply. I wanted to ignore that and instead concentrate in giving ideas on how chords can be layered in clusters . These chords are ideal if you want create open padded spaced out textures. They are ideal for arpeggios (playing them like a harpist) and they are also ideal if you to create plucked rhythmical ideas. They give you an eastern sound but also remind you of atonal music of early 20th century . You will notice that there are semitone groups in these chords. Eg. In figure 1 E and F ...The other thing to take note of is that probably for the 1st time in your life as a guitarist you are looking at chords that are not stacked up in pitch order. When you transfer the standard notation to tablature you will notice that as you look at the chord on your guitar neck the notes are not going from lowest pitch to highest pitch like every other chord you play . In other words the open E string in the chord is not the highest in pitch when looking at the score. This can confuse people. Because all the pitches are jumbled up it creates chaos. Just the way I like it !!!

Figure 5 is an example on how you can create a rhythmic idea with these chords and make it sound eerie and suitable for a sci-fi movie. Play these as quavers or even semi quavers if you like.

Figure 3 and 4 particularly give you a very large soundscape and many compositional ideas can derive from chords like this. These chords are good exercises for both barring and developing strength. Till next article straight ahead!!

You might not know what clustered chords are.... But you have definitely heard them . When you hear a pianist thump his elbow on a group of low notes then you might get an idea. In this month's column I wanted to explain how we guitarists are able to create chord clusters and hence open the door to new musical landscapes. For us guitarists there is a lot more thinking involved when working out chord voicings. For example on a piano there is only 1 place to play a C3. On a guitar there are numerous.. This is the reason why guitarists can't sight read complex scores on the spot without doing some analysis. So when we want to start playing altered chords like #9ths or more adventurous chords that have dissonance the thought process becomes more involved.

In figure 1 to 4 I have included some examples of chords which push the boundaries of

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Figure 1

Figure 2

Figure 3

Figure 4

Figure 5

Rocking The Foundation

Bass guitars with Tony Murray



Chapter 11: SUSPENSIONS AND THEIR VARIANTS



A correspondent asked me for help with transcribing Joy Division's *Love Will Tear Us Apart Again*, from which the famous phrase is shown in Ex 1 above. The tabs commonly available online interpreted the first chord as Em, but it didn't sound right when played as such. This raised a number of interesting questions about suspensions, and their many uses and interpretations. For indeed the note E on the word 'love' (the first one) is a suspension, as is the B on ('a-) part' in bar 3. It is, I think, a misunderstanding to read these chords as Em and Bm. What I hear on the first chord are the notes D (in the bass but in higher registers as well), A and the E in the vocal (doubled in the guitars and synths).

I do not hear the notes E-G-B, which would constitute a chord of Em. The thing is, an E

minor chord would be too conventional to produce the haunting sound we actually hear in the song. This brilliant effect is partly a matter of dissonance, as the E clashes with the third of the chord D, the note F#. However in the recording the F# is barely audible, so the clash is subtle and all the more effective for being so. The other contributing factor is context: most of the song is based on the bare fifth D-A which plays throughout and implies a continuous D chord, with the F# supplied intermittently in the vocal riff. When the suspension are held against this accompaniment, as on the words 'love' and ('a-) part', they achieve maximum effect.

Ex 2 shows the inverse as it were of the suspension principle, an example of a bass 'pedal'. In this case the bass note C is held constant while the chords change above it, and

the second chord contains notes B and D which clash with the C below. The ear follows the movement of the upper chords as a separate event, however, and the temporary dissonances are easily assimilated. Still, this rather ancient device, common in classical music and jazz, has not been taken to heart by modern popular music and remains uncommon these days.

An intermediate case is shown in Ex 3, from *Embraceable You* by George Gershwin. The melody holds the note B right through, but the relationship to the underlying chords is intriguing. For the first two bars of the example the note is actually part of the chord, i.e. Em and A9. Having 'prepared' the ear with a lot of repeated Bs, they continue into the next two bars with a blithe disregard for the chords below, i.e Am and D. So why not write the

latter chords as, say, Am9 and D6? I would say - too conventional. Gershwin has already done that in the previous two bars, now he wants a change of effect as the cadence moves toward the goal of G (not shown) . The melody is heard as a separate event from the chords below, clearly a different feeling from including the melody notes in the chords, and a different kind of suspension from the examples above.

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