

Modern Theory

with Reg Barber

This issue we look at a mash-up of two different fretboard mapping concepts – the CAGED system and the ‘three note per string’ scale system. Both methods work very well at giving us a clear map of the fretboard but both systems have their drawbacks. The CAGED system works by mapping out different voicings of the same chord. You start on an open C chord, then play an open A chord shape as a barre chord with a C root, then an open G chord shape with a C root etc. If that doesn’t make sense there is an overwhelming amount of information on the Internet about the CAGED system, which is definitely worth checking out. However, while the CAGED system is a great concept, it has one drawback in that each of the scale patterns that fall under each of the five CAGED voicings have an uneven number of notes per string. The ‘three note per string’ scale patterns are much better suited to improvising fast scale runs and sequencing patterns than the CAGED shapes are.

The following exercises borrow from both soloing concepts, and when combined will hopefully give you a useful map of the fretboard, without requiring too much memorisation of different patterns. Advantages of this combination of concepts are you can easily see all notes that belong to the key in each position. You can also move easily between chords with very smooth voice leading as notes are moving by a tone or semitone between chords and some chord tones are not moving at all. Arpeggios for each chord are easy to visualise and you end up with a much more musical result when using scale runs between chords.

To make the most of this concept it helps to have an understanding of music theory, a developed ear, and a developed muscle memory through repetition of technical exercises. Find yourself a good guitar teacher (www.regsguitar.com) and learn music theory. A system of self-evaluation is also important if you want to improve quickly, so being able to record yourself and then listen back to what you have done is invaluable. The more you get your head around all of these different aspects of musicianship, the better you will become at improvising and creating solos that are musical, not just a bunch of technical exercises and scale passages. www.regsguitar.com

EXERCISE 1

This first exercise shows a simple I-IV-V progression, using chords from one position of the CAGED system fitting within the ‘three note per string’ version of B Locrian mode. Play through exercise one, both the scale and the chords, until you become familiar with them. Try resolving your scale runs to the C note or create tension by hanging on the B.

EXERCISE 2

Exercise two takes it a step further by playing the I, IV and V chords, then the mode that belongs to each of the three chords. The idea here is that you can anticipate each chord with a scale run that will resolve to that chord’s tonic.

EXERCISE 3

Exercise three shows the combination of CAGED chords and ‘three note per string’ scales in action. You can easily decorate any diatonic chord progression with scale runs and see where

each chord arpeggio is. This concept can be taken even further but more on that next issue.

Standard tuning

♩ = 60

N-Gt

mf

TAB

8 10 8 7 9 10 8 10 12 10 8

9 10 7 8 10 7 9 10 7 9 10 8 10 12

10 10 9 7 8 10 7 9 10 7 9 10 8 10 12

10 8 7 8 10 7 8 10 7 9 10 7 9 10 8 10 12

Standard tuning

$\text{♩} = 40$

N-Gt

mf

C

G

F

8 8 8 8 8 8 8 8

9 9 9 9 9 9 9 9

10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10

8 8 8 8 8 8 8 8

8-10 7-8-10 7-9 8-10 9-7 10-9-7 10-9-7 10-8-7 10

4

8 8 8 8

9 9 9 9

10 10 10 10

8 8 8 8

8-12 10-8 10-9-7

The musical score for N-Guitar (N-Gt) is presented in two staves. The top staff is a treble clef with a 4/4 time signature. The melody begins with a C major chord (1) and a G major chord (2), followed by a F major chord (3). The bottom staff is a tablature (TAB) showing fingerings for each note. The dynamic marking *mf* is placed above the first measure. The tablature includes fingerings for the first three measures, with a '10' indicating a natural harmonic or a specific fretting technique.

The first system of the musical score for 'The Rose Tree' is shown. It consists of a treble clef staff with a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a common time signature (C). The melody is written in 4/4 time. The first measure contains a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a half note B4. The second measure contains a quarter note G4, a quarter note F4, and a half note E4. The third measure contains a quarter note D4, a quarter note C4, and a half note B3. The fourth measure contains a quarter note A3, a quarter note G3, and a half note F3. Below the staff, the lyrics 'The Rose Tree' are written in a stylized font. The notes are aligned with the lyrics: 'The' under the first measure, 'Rose' under the second, 'Tree' under the third, and 'The' under the fourth.