

Advanced Harmonic Applications on the Fretboard

By Mick Goodrick With Chris Buono

oice leading: switching from one chord to another with a minimum of fuss, using common tones, stepwise movement, and small leaps. It's what makes the simplest of ideas sound brilliant. Legendary guitarist and Berklee College of Music professor Mick Goodrick is an expert on the subject. The author of the groundbreaking book *The Advancing Guitarist*, Goodrick has also mapped out an exhaustive collection of voice-leading sequences in his *Almanac of Guitar Voice Leading* method books, starting with *Volume I: Name that Chord* and continuing with the equally in-depth *Volume II: Do Not Name That Chord* and a yet-to-be-published third volume. This exclusive lesson from the sage himself offers a handy overview of the almanacs. In order to better understand the concepts in this lesson, it would be a good idea to brush up on triad (three-part chords) and tetrad (fourpart chords) theory, as well as common scale formulas like major, melodic minor,

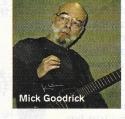
and harmonic minor. Goodrick suggests you play all the figures fingerstyle, both for clarity and to accommodate the chords that contain string skips. But most important, he hopes that these fresh sounds will provide you with new compositional ideas.

A great way to study voice leading while at the same time expanding your harmonic vocabulary is to play chord-scales in *cycles*—ascending or descending diatonic interval sequences. In Fig. 1, the C major scale (C–D–E–F–G–A–B) is harmonized in close-voiced triads set to the interval of a 2nd between each chord's root—let's call this "Cycle 2." This sequence is most commonly played in an ascending order with the voices moving in a linear (constant) motion (C–E–G, D–F–A, etc.), but here the movement is disjunct (C–D–E, A–D–F, etc.); this creates more colorful changes.

Since cycles are based on intervals, basic inter-

vallic principles like the concept of inversions also apply here—2nds become 7ths, 3rds become 6ths, and 4ths become 5ths. In Fig. 2A you've got a descending C melodic minor (C-D-E)—F-G-A-B) chord-scale in Cycle 3; its inverse—an ascending pattern in Cycle 6—appears in Fig. 2B. As you play through both cycles,

look for logical patterns in the voice leading, such as the two common tones found in each movement from one chord to another in Cycle





3 (C–*E*₀–*G*, B–*E*₀–*G*, etc.), which are mirrored in Cycle 6 (*C*–*E*₀–*G*, *C*–*E*₀–A, etc.).

Check out the C harmonic minor (C–D–E)–F–G–Ab–B) chord-scales arranged in Cycle 4 in Fig. 3A and in Cycle 5 in Fig. 3B. Notice the consistent pattern of voicings, starting from the first Cm chord in cycle 4—root-position Cm (C–E)–G), 2nd-inversion Fm/C (C–F–Ab), 1st-inversion B° (D–F–B), and back to root position. Cycle 5 works similarly—root-position Cm (C–E)–G), 1st-inversion G/B (B–D–G), 2nd-inversion D°/Ab (Ab–D–F), and so on. Examining the mechanics of the cycles will help you better understand how voice leading works on the guitar.

The concepts of voice leading and cycling can be applied to any chordal approach or scale type. Figs. 4A–B move from the triadic territory of the previous figures into *quartal harmony* (stacked 4ths), via the D Dorian mode (D–E–F–G–A–B–C), set in Cycle 2. To better allow for comping, Fig. 4A's descending sequence crosses different string sets for a minimum of fret-hand movement. Another option could be alternating between close and spread-voiced chords, as in Fig. 4B.

In Figs. 5A–B, the C harmonic minor chord scale, in Cycle 2, is enhanced with a diatonic passing tone between each chord. Fig. 5A starts out with a close-voiced Cm triad (C–E)–G) followed by the root note, C, moving down to the 4th-string B, which leads into the A) bass note of the 2nd-inversion D°/A) triad (A)–D–F). Fig. 5B follows the same idea with spread voicings. All of these embellishments produce a Bach-like effect, which sounds much more musical than straight chords.

As you progress into even deeper harmonic concepts, you'll notice that chord tones can move in contrary motion, as in the C major, Cycle 6, drop-2 (a voicing formula that takes the second-highest note from the top of a closed voicing and drops it an octave) spread clusters in Fig. 6A. Some of these four-note 9th chords will require intense stretches, so be sure to arch your fingers and fret the notes with your fingertips while exercising caution and taking it slow. Fig. 6B is an idea created by jazz-guitar wizard Joe Diorio based on his own explorations with the cycles, in which the chords are divided into a couple of two-note groupings that alternate in a call-and-response-type sequence.

Figs. 7A–D introduce a device called *grip slipping*, which uses common-tone voice leading with non-diatonic chords. Taking the four basic drop-3 (in which the third note from the top of a closed voicing is dropped an octave) Cmaj7 inversions in Fig. 7A, "slip the grips" into position—that is, move the fingerings down so that they all center around the 8th-fret C, as seen in the cool vamp of Fig. 7B. Notice that Fig. 7C, starting with the Cmaj7 chord, takes the same order but has a chromatically descending bass line. Finally, in Fig. 7D we see a triad-over-bass-note voicing approach with a recurring #4th-to-3rd melodic embellishment.

