

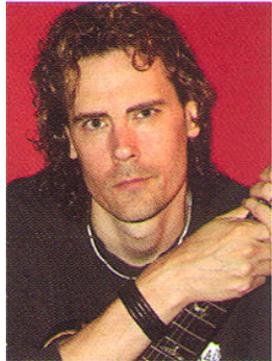
Movable Patterns

How to Break Out of the Box



LEAD GUITAR INVOLVES MOSTLY POSITIONAL PLAYING. IN other words, it relies on scale shapes that lie across the strings in just one area of the neck. For example, when you're playing the A minor pentatonic box at the 5th fret, you're playing in 5th position. But if all your licks are drawn from positional shapes, you're likely to get locked into them and never explore the rest of the fretboard. So, how to break out? Here are a few ways to free yourself from "box" playing.

Fig. 1 starts on the top two strings of the first A minor pentatonic box, then shifts up aggressively through the higher boxes in the style of Zakk Wylde. After you get the hang of this, change rhythms and/or move the patterns up and down the neck to create your own licks.



The descending lick in **Fig. 2** starts with the E blues scale at 12th position, then goes mobile on the 3rd string, shift-ing down to another E minor pentatonic box shape. Moving diatonically on string 3 like this is a trick I'll often use to bridge between common pentatonic shapes.

You can also shift up and down the neck on a single string while sticking exclusively the pentatonic scale. The Steve Vai-in-spired **Fig. 3** climbs the A minor pentatonic with string bending, then heads back down in a sequence of three-note groups arranged in 16^{ths}. Feel free to try this idea on different strings, in different keys, or in reverse.

Fig. 4 is a three-note-per-string exercise a la Paul Gilbert. Notice how the position shifts allow each sextuplet to use two three-note-per string sets continuously. This makes it easier to play fast, since the picking pattern simply repeats. Of course, you're not finished until you apply this idea to string sets 1-2 and 5-6 as well, and try it in at least a few other keys.

In **Fig. 5**, the approach is legato (hammers and pulls), but due to the uneven rhythmic groupings, the difficulty has gone up a notch. Don't pay too much attention to the rhythm here; just put the downbeat on the top of each cycle and cram in the rest of the notes as evenly as possible. At slow tempos, it's actually harder to play with a click, so I'd suggest practicing without one until you get the pattern under your fingers. For extra credit, figure out a way to make the pattern descend.

Fig. 1 Track 76

♩ = 120
Am

Fig. 2 Track 77

♩ = 120
Em

Fig. 3 Track 78

♩ = 88
Am

Fig. 4 Track 79

♩ = 100
Gm

Fig. 5 Track 80

♩ = 90
Am