

Sweep Picking

Part 3 of 4: Five- and Six-String Shapes

By Troy Stetina

LAST MONTH, WE REACHED the halfway point of our sweep-picking clinic. By now you should have a handle on the basics of sweeping, and you should be able to execute three- and four-string sweeps at moderate speed. Please note that I said moderate speed; with sweeping even more than with other techniques, you have to exercise patience and allow the speed to come slowly. It's all about synchronization. Since this technique actually requires less physical effort than most, it's even easier to "blow past" the point of control—making you crash and burn that much faster. For that reason, I'm still holding the tempos down a bit for now, while continuing to ramp up the difficulty of the sweeps themselves.

This month's installment introduces five- and six-string **arpeggio** shapes. If you're a truly insatiable shredhead, you'll want to apply other arpeggio shapes to the progression in Fig. 4; there's no need to use the same shape all the way through. You should also feel free to embellish with scale contours, tapping, and so forth. But as I said before, keep the tempo reasonable, so you're playing notes, not garbage!



Our first sweeps this month are five-string major [Fig. 1A] and minor [Fig. 1B] shapes. The hardest part here is to keep the notes played with your 3rd finger from ringing together. You can accomplish this by using your pick hand to palm-mute slightly and/or by rolling your 3rd finger across the strings (on the way up, start with the fingertip pointing directly down on the D string, then gradually turn the finger on its side; reverse the motion for the descent).

A common alternative approach for the minor shape

FIGS. 1A-C • TRACK 24 Some players prefer to use their 2nd finger rather than their 3rd for the notes on the D, G, and B strings in the major arpeggio shape of Fig. 1A. Try it both ways and use whichever is more comfortable to you.

♩ = 80

A Am Am

Fret-hand fingering:

1 4 3 3 3 1 4 1 3 3 3 4 1 1 4 3 3 2 1 4 1 2 3 3 4 1 4 2 1 3 2 1 4 1 2 3 1 2 4 2 1 3 2 1 4

TOP: NEIL ZLOZOWER; RIGHT: LARRY MARANO

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is to incorporate a position shift [Fig. 1C]. After the first three-string sweep, slide your 3rd finger up to the octave A without picking. On the way down, slide your 1st finger down to the E without picking. In doing so, you avoid the simultaneous-ringing problem of the previous shapes, but at a price—this version is tougher to execute. Ideally, you should master both approaches. Each has its place, and neither is more "right" or better than the other.

Fig. 2A starts with the minor arpeggio shape of Fig. 1C but stays in one position, with no finger slides. To get the high A note, tap it with the middle finger of your picking hand, while holding the pick between your thumb and index finger. Fig 2B is the major counterpart. This time I've included a little descending scale line (in A Mixolydian) to shed some light on how you can combine these sweeps with runs. Note that the sweep-picking approach continues with added hammer-ons and pull-offs; this is often referred to as "economy picking."

Next we move on to six-string shapes. Figs. 3A-B present full major and minor arpeggios. You can also shift positions; Fig. 3C leads you down that road with one diagonal idea. Try transforming it to major by making all the Gs into G#s.

Now let's apply these sweeps to the progression we used in the last issue, [Pachelbel's Canon in D](#). For a little variety, this time we'll do it in the original key. The progression is D-A-Bm-F#m-G-D-G-A. Fig. 4 shows only the first four chords, but by now you should be able to find G-D-G-A somewhere on the [fretboard](#) to complete the sequence.

FIGS. 2A-B • TRACK 25 For phrases that include a higher tapped note, begin your sweep across the strings near the location of the tapped note, to diminish the physical distance your pick hand must travel to perform the tap.

FIGS. 3A-C • TRACK 26 In Fig. 3C, you can alternatively try using your 2nd finger for the hammer-ons on the E and D strings. Then use your 1st and 2nd finger on the G- and B-string notes, respectively.

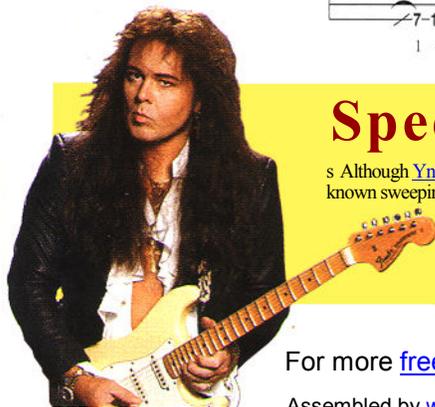
FIG. 4 • TRACK 27 Using all the arpeggio shapes you've learned so far, play this figure in all 12 keys for a killer sweep-picking exercise.

Speedy Sweeping Swede

Although [Yngwie Malmsteen's](#) best known sweeping technique is the three-string diminished -7th arpeggio, the first full five- and six-string arpeggio shapes I learned

came from his Rising Force album, specifically on "Far Beyond the Sun," a must-learn for all aspiring shredders. Malmsteen's idol Ritchie Blackmore also deserves a mention for his sweep picking; check out measures 10-11 of his solo

"Knocking at Your Back Door," from Deep Purple's 1984 album *Perfect Strangers*, a song I had the pleasure of covering for Hal Leonard's *Deep Purple's Greatest Hits Signature Licks* book/CD. Other players who use these super-sized sweeps include both Eric Johnson and Chet Atkins, which nicely illustrates that this technique isn't bound by style.



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