



John Petrucci *Wild Stringdom* Chromazones 12 Tones To Glory

Before Dream Theater took off I used to teach a lot, and one of the things my students often asked me was how to apply the chromatic scale to practical playing situations. You see, their other teachers would give them chromatic warm-up exercises without providing any explanation of how important and versatile this scale actually is. For the next few months, I'd like to show you how to use the chromatic scale, not just as a tool to build chops but as a melodic device to add color to your playing.

FIGURE 1 shows the chromatic scale in the 1st position, beginning on F. Since the chromatic scale is built on consecutive half-step intervals (and therefore contains all 12 tones used in Western music), it has no true tonal center. This means that, used judiciously, it can fit over any chord.

FIGURE 1 Chromatic Scale

l.h.fing: 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1

AUDIO FILES FIGURE 1 (75 bpm)

[AIFF Audio File](#) (Macintosh)

[WAVE Audio File](#) (Windows)

Before you can apply chromatic ideas to scales and arpeggios, you have to get the chromatic scale itself under your fingers. You should learn it up and down the neck, and become comfortable with the fingerings. Here are a couple of chromatic exercises that will build up your technique and get you moving all over the fingerboard. Once you master the technique, applying it will be a lot easier.

index finger and play four chromatic notes up again. That's the pattern. Then, keeping your hand in the 4th position, jump over to the A string and start all over again. By the time you finish the pattern on the high E string, you'll be in the 14th position!

FIGURE 3
(F#m)

l.h. fing: 1 2 3 4 / 4 3 2 1 / 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 / 4 3 2 1 / 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 / 4 3 2 1 / 1 2 3 4

AUDIO FILES FIGURE 3 (75 bpm)

[AIFF Audio File](#) (Macintosh)

[WAVE Audio File](#) (Windows) 

FIGURE 3a is just Figure 3 played in reverse, descending to the 2nd position. Follow the left-hand fingerings indicated beneath the tablature and you shouldn't have a problem. Both figures sound good over F#m, but they can work over any chord. Experiment.

FIGURE 3a
(F#m)

l.h. fing: 4 3 2 1 \ 1 2 3 4 \ 4 3 2 1 4 3 2 1 \ 1 2 3 4 \ 4 3 2 1

AUDIO FILES FIGURE 3a (75 bpm)

[AIFF Audio File](#) (Macintosh)

[WAVE Audio File](#) (Windows) 

Next month, we'll explore how to incorporate chromatic passages into various modes. Until then, so long!

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