

GT144

Brett Garsed

Masterclass 1

In the first of a three-parter, Dario Cortese meets up with Australian guitar virtuoso Brett Garsed for hybrid picking explanation...

In March of this year I had the pleasure to sit down and have a chat with one of the most influential fusion guitarists of the last two decades Brett Garsed. Brett is not only a guitar virtuoso but he's also a very generous person who's happy to share his considerable experience and understanding with the audience (to see him in action with myself and the house band at the clinic, check out on the video page).

Brett was born in a small Australian town called Victoria, and began playing guitar at age 12 after hearing Deep Purple's 'Speed King'. At that time his main influences were rock players such as Blackmore, Jeff Beck, Jimmy Page, David Gilmour and Jimi Hendrix. In later years he expanded his influences to more diverse styles such as Leo Kottke, Rory Gallagher and Joe Walsh (his main inspirations for slide guitar) and Edward Van Halen.

After taking classical guitar lessons for about a year he started to expand his right-hand hybrid picking technique, and soon after he started to blend this approach with the legato technique of the fretting hand. This eventually led him to the music of Allan Holdsworth, which in turn exposed him to more fusion oriented artists such as Larry Carlton and Scott Henderson.

Eventually, Brett's professional career took off (finally giving up his job as a licensed plumber!) performing and recording with Australian superstar John Farnham. After relocating to LA for a period, Brett now has a long list of recordings and collaborations with some of the most important fusion players on the planet, including Frank Gambale, Shawn Lane and T.J. Halmerich. He also has produced an instructional DVD and a solo album, released in 2002. His style is a combination of hybrid picking for super-clean arpeggios, legato technique often used in combination of odd groupings (5, 7, 9, etc), slide playing, and a distinctive approach to playing 'outside'.

This month's feature will concentrate mainly on Brett's picking hand, taking you step by step through a series of exercises that aim to develop your hybrid picking dexterity. In the video Brett explains that this technique came about naturally, it hadn't been something that he consciously developed. The simplest way to think of it is that whatever strings the pick plays, the fingers play the adjacent strings. He started with pick and middle finger and

soon after he incorporated ring and little finger for an arpeggio type of approach (as shown in FIG 5).

Trying to incorporate fingers into your playing is something that needs time and constant work, and one of the main problems to solve is the articulation of ring and little fingers. Brett took the idea from classical guitarists and applied it to his personal approach: basically the idea is to play, for example, a scale using only the index and middle, then middle and ring, and last ring and little finger (as shown in FIG 1-4, 6-8).

Of course this is just the starting point to develop control (not necessarily speed) but as Brett said: once you've got the idea, it's better to come up with your own exercises!

For this first part, I also asked Brett to demonstrate his technical approach in a solo: he played over an E Lydian vamp (just one chord, namely Esus#4/add9). As you can see from the transcription he often plays groups of 7 (instead of the more common 6 or 8) which create unusual rhythms in his phrasing.

Fig 1: Brett plays the D Mixolydian mode to explain his basic picking hand approach.

FIG 1 (00:25)

T
A
B

5 7 4 5 7 4 5 7 5 7 8

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Fig 2: A short lick using the idea shown in FIG 1. The tempo is free and Brett increases the speed up from the second bar. Everything is written in 16th notes just to keep things clear.

FIG 2 (00:32)

accel. - - - - -

T
A
B

7 5 7 5 7 4 4 4 4 4 7 5 5 5 7 8 7 10 7 8 7 9 7 9 9 7 9 7 10 7

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Fig 3: This is just the A major scale in one octave playing using groupings of two fingers (for the fretting hand) at a time. Index/middle, middle/ring and ring/pinky.

FIG 3 (08:11) Not on the video -----|

T
A
B

5 7 4 5 7 4 6 7 :|| 5 7 4 5 7 4 6 7 :|| 5 7 4 5 7 4 6 7 :||

i m i m i m i m m r m r m r m r r c r c r c r c

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Fig 4: Two octave A major played with ring and pinky only.

FIG 4 (08:26)

T
A
B

5 7 4 5 7 4 6 7 4 6 7 5 7 4 5 4 7 5 7 6 4 7 6 4 7 5 4 7 5

r c r c r c r c r c r c r c r c r c r c r c r c r c r

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Fig 5: E major arpeggio using groupings of 4 strings (for the picking hand). Note the fretting hand fingerings on the bottom two strings.

FIG 5 (08:50)

T
A
B

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

4 5 4 5 4 5 4 4 6 4 6 7 7 6 4

7 6 6 6 6 7 7 7 7 6 4

m r c m r c r m c r m c r m m r c

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Fig 6, 7 and 8: Chromatic exercises combining pick (down stroke always) and one finger at time (middle, ring or pinky). It's a 'picking' exercise, not a legato one, and aim to develop control on picking hand. This technique is actually a country technique (more on this in later issues).

FIG 6 (09:10)

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FIG 7 (09:35)

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FIG 8 (09:39)

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LYDIAN SOLO

Bar 1: This is the chord of the backing track. E Lydian is the 4th degree in the B major scale. Bmaj7; C#m7; D#m7; Emaj7; F#7; G#m7; A#m7/b5.

Bars 2-6: Brett starts his solo playing a couple of phrases around Bmaj7 and G#m7 arpeggios.

Bars 7-10: In bar 7 he starts a long phrase using arpeggios, legato lines and septuplets grouping. It's interesting to note that he starts with two notes per strings for the 16th notes and move to three notes per strings for the septuplets.

Bars 11-14: After the introduction with 4 note per strings (Holdsworth influence), he plays a fragment of the B maj pentatonic and then a quick run that ends on the D# (maj 7 of E).

Bars 15-18: This is the last lick of our transcription and Brett plays some outside line (again around G#m arpeggio) and then a long phrase in septuplets featuring F#7 and Emaj7 arpeggios.

$\text{♩} = 100$ Esus^{#4}add⁹

T
A
B

T
A
B

T
A
B

T
A
B

T
A
B

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First system of musical notation for guitar, featuring a treble clef staff with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and a time signature of 3/4. The melody includes a triplet of eighth notes, followed by a dotted quarter note, and then a series of eighth notes. A dashed line labeled "8va" indicates an octave shift. The tablature below shows fret numbers: (14) 12 12 14 11 12, 16 12 12 14, 12 14/16, 14 16 14, 16 17 16, 16 17 19, 16 19 18 16, 16 18 19 21.

Second system of musical notation for guitar. The treble staff continues the melody with a triplet of eighth notes, a quarter note, and a half note. A bracket labeled "(8)" spans the first two measures. The tablature shows fret numbers: 21, (21), 23, (23), 21 19, 19 18, 19 18, 20 17 19 16, 16 18 16, 15 16 15.

Third system of musical notation for guitar. The treble staff features a series of eighth notes, some beamed together, and a final quarter note. The tablature shows fret numbers: 18 17 16 15, 14 13 14, 13 15 16 15 13, 16 15, 14 12 11 12, 13, 14 13 9, 9 11 13 11.

Fourth system of musical notation for guitar. The treble staff shows a series of eighth notes, some beamed together, and a final quarter note. The tablature shows fret numbers: 9 13 9 13 11 9, 12 11 9 0 2 3 4, 2 4 2 4 2 4 1 2, 4.

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