

Playing Backup emphasis on EC

Attached are charts for four pieces. The chart shows the chord name and the bottom note (root) and the top note (fifth) of each chord. The first time through a piece we will accompany with the root note of the chord only. The goal is to proceed from simple to hard slowly and in addition to provide beginners with a method they can use to play backup in this workshop, and in jams. We will play some games where some of us take the downbeats and others take the back-beats.

For me, backup is easier than melody. When I am in a jam, I can guess at the chords. If I can figure out the chords, then I can play backup and this helps me rapidly learn the melody as well. All instruments are welcome in this workshop. If the exercises is too "English" oriented, you can always play the melody over and over for others to practice backing up.

Charts for the workshop:

My Own House and Road To Boston:

These outline the root and the fifth of each of the chords. It is not shown how these notes are used. We will learn this as we go along. One can use only the root of the chord to provide very simple but effective backups. One can also alternate these two notes to provide an "Alternating bass line". One can also play the two notes together for a "power chord".

Spootiskerry:

This is notated with a complete backup based on the power chords alone. If you can move between these four two-note chords, or even just the root of these, you can play this rhythmic based backup.

Reel de Montreal:

A complete backup is notated. It illustrates several techniques, alternating bass, two-note back-beats and some bass runs. This is not "THE BACKUP", it is only some possibilities. I would never play all these options together. The bass line (including runs) is marked with stems down, the back-beats with stems up, so you can choose a role or play both roles if you are so inclined.

The most important parts of a chord to learn are the root and the fifth. On the EC these are systematic and easy to find. One can add more notes from there and different inversions, but for easy backup learn these power chords first and how to get between them in the keys in which you most often play.

Backup is best as an ensemble technique used in bands and in jams with friends and so is hard to practice alone. You need either a person willing to play melody while you practice (sometimes known as a melody slave) or you can use a recording, but a real person is always best. You can also sing the melody while you play the backup. In this workshop we will spend as much time playing music and as little time talking about playing music as possible.

Have fun
Otto