

## “Celtic” Alternating-Bass Scale Exercise

For a recent wedding I was asked to play an instrumental version of singer George Ezra’s uptempo tune “Budapest” as the recessional.

This was a fun little project, and a tune that fit right into an alternating-bass Travis-Picking form. The range of the melody suggested the key of D in drop-D tuning. (He sings it in F.) I put the capo on the second fret to approximate the original key (capo III was too high). Due to copyright restrictions, I will not print the arrangement here, but next best:

As I toyed with the melody I came up with the following exercises for my students. They provide the range of a key-of-D melody up to high A (the apex of Ezra’s vocal melody in the verses), with an alternating bass under it. It also demonstrates how you can play the melody in three different areas of the neck, with three different ‘sounds.’

The first example uses strictly fretted and open strings at the end of the neck. Pick this *m-i* with the thumb ‘pinching’ with the middle finger on every beat.

The second example moves to the middle of guitar neck, and incorporates more of a “Celtic” sound: the player is able to sustain open-string notes interspersed with fretted ones. This is actually the area of the neck where I played the verses of “Budapest.”

The third example moves up the neck to incorporate 12th-fret harmonics with both fretted and open strings - a beautiful “chiming” sound, as slack key players call it! Notice that I omit a couple of alternate bass notes as the melody moves onto lower-pitched strings. The picking sequence can be customized to your comfort zone. I would likely “pinch” with my middle and thumb on each beat that has two notes, then use the index between beats - except for the first-string notes, which I would pick with my ring finger.

Have fun with this little exercise. Perhaps it will inspire you to experiment with placement of notes in your arrangements. We are always looking for interesting and unique sounds!

*-Mark Hanson*

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# Alternating-Bass Scale Exercises

Alternating Bass - Drop-D Tuning

Arr: Mark Hanson

## End Of the Neck

Guitar

4 3 1 2 1 0 1

m p i etc.

5 3 2 0 3 2 0 2

0 2 3 0 2 3 5 3

2

0 0 0 0 0 0 0

## Interspersing Open Strings with Middle-of-the-Neck Positions

4

1 4 4

a m i p i m p i

5 8 7 0 7 6 0 7

0 6 7 0 7 8 5 8

7

0 0 0 0 0 0 0

## Interspersing Harmonics and Open Strings with Up-the-Neck Positions

7

10 11 0 11 10 11

12 12 12 12 12 12

0 0 0 0 0 0