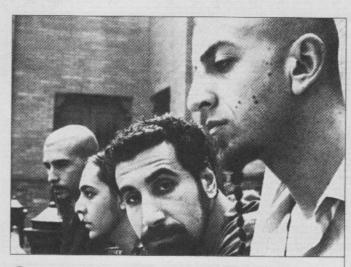
What's Between the Lines



System of a Down "Aerials"

By Michael Mueller

n 1998, when System of a Down released their self-titled debut, aggro metal was firmly planted on rock radio, with Korn at its kernel. Because SOAD's record was filled more with quirky delights than the unabated aggression of angry young males, the band didn't quite reach the same heights as some of their other contemporaries. As is generally the case, however, originality has overcome trend and hype. Now, as aggro metal is starting to fester faster than roadkill, SOAD's second effort, Toxicity, is gaining well-earned praise and respect. The record spawned the surprise hit of 2001 in "Chop Suey," and the title track, "Toxicity," recently followed suit. This summer you can catch the quartet sporting "Aerials" on the main stage at Ozzfest 2002.

TUNING

Malakian tunes to drop D, down one whole step (C-G-C-F-A-D) in "Aerials." However, in order to facilitate the sitar part (arranged for guitar) introduced at the interlude, tune your guitar to DADGAD, down one whole step: C-G-C-F-G-C, low to high. If you're playing this song in your band and have two guitarists, one can play an acoustic guitar tuned in this manner to simulate the sitar, while the electric

guitar is tuned to drop D, down one whole step.

WORK THE OBLIQUES

The intro to "Aerials" is comprised of a bass melody composed within the D minor scale (D-E-F-G-A-Bb-C). This melody is doubled by the guitar, which also adds A and D pedal tones. Together, the pedal tones and bass melody form oblique motion, a type of counterpoint in

which one melody is in motion while another remains stationary [Fig. 1]. This compositional tool is applied again with the sitar during the interlude. The easiest way to play the counterpoint figure in the intro is simply by moving your fret-hand's

index finger up and down the 6th string as necessary. As for picking, use all downstrokes with two exceptions: use an upstroke on the second 16th note (open 4th string) of beat 4 in measures 3 and 7.

For the sitar part arranged for guitar, again use your fret

hand's index finger to play all the notes on the 4th string. For the picking pattern, you can use a flatpick and downstrokes on strings 4 and 2 with an upstroke on string 1. Or-and this is much easier and efficient-you can use hybrid picking, thus avoiding worry about muting the 3rd string. For hybrid picking, use a flatpick on the 4th string, your middle finger on the 2nd string, and your ring finger on the 1st string [Fig. 2].

CHORUS OF PARALLELS

Where oblique motion was used

in Riffs A and B, the vocal line in the chorus sections moves in parallel motion with the bass melody. Parallel motion is defined as two melody lines having the same shape, or horizontal intervallic movement. A basic example of this is playing a

> melody line in octaves. The parallel motion idea is applied via power chords and vocals in the second chorus and outro-chorus. It's a good bet you've heard this type of vocal/instrument melodic pairing before-it's used all the time in church

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music. The organist, when accompanying the congregation on a hymn, will almost always play the vocal melody on one hand. Not a church-goer? Well then, thank goodness for System of a Down. Now you know. B



TONE ZONE

GUITARS: Solidbody

PICKUP/POSITION:

Humbucker/Bridge (dist.) Humbucker/Middle (clean)

GAIN: 6

E0: Bass/Mid/Treble: 7/4/7

EFFECTS: Slight reverb







As Recorded by System of a Down (From the American Recording TOXICITY)

Get note-for-note tab transcriptions for this song and 13 more in *Toxicity* (00690531, \$19.95). Contact Music Dispatch to order (800-637-2852, musicdispatch.com).

Written by Daron Malakian and Serj Tankian

DADGAD tuning, down 1 step: (low to high) C-G-C-F-G-C

Intro

Moderately Slow Rock J=80



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Aerials





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