



SENTENCE STRUCTURE

How to play Extreme's "More Than Words"



This month's CD-ROM includes video footage of Nuno Bettencourt demonstrating how he performs "More Than Words" (*Pornograffiti*), the 1991 hit acoustic ballad from his former band, Extreme. To supplement his lesson, I'm going walk you through the song's main parts. To play along with the video or the original studio recording, you'll need to tune your guitar's strings down one half step (low to high: E \flat A \flat D \flat G \flat B \flat E \flat).

Bettencourt performs "More Than Words" fingerstyle and begins the song with the repeating two-bar phrase shown in **FIGURE 1**, which also serves as the accompaniment for the first part of each verse. "I always thought 'More Than Words' was the simplest song to play because it's all first-position chords," Bettencourt says. "But people always tell me they have problems with the right-hand part. I've never analyzed what I'm doing until now. I'm just making this 'kung-fu' grip and doing a quirky little percussion thing." He picks all the bass notes with his thumb and sounds most of the chords with an upstroke brush of his index finger, occasionally picking the top three strings with the index, middle and ring fingers, which produces a tighter, more piano-like articulation. He explains, "I pick the strings together whenever the chord changes come faster."

The guitarist adds a percussive, hand-clap-like backbeat to his accompaniment during the 16th-note rests that fall on each eighth-note upbeat in **FIGURE 1**, "slapping the guitar between the chords to create a backbeat and rhythmic pocket." Bettencourt taps his guitar's body in the area between the pickguard and bridge with the tips of his pick hand's pinkie and middle and ring fingers. To execute this move, simply collapse the fingers onto the strings and pickguard with a brisk, snapping motion.

After playing **FIGURE 1** four times, Bettencourt moves on to some different chords during the second part of the verse, which segues into the chorus. **FIGURE 2** shows this section; note that the G5 chord at the end of **FIGURE 1** is here substituted with a tied Em chord. As indicated in bar 3 of **FIGURE 2**, the guitarist stops momentarily on the Em chord the second time he plays this part and knocks on the guitar three times. He ends the figure both times by gently strumming Am7 and D7 with his thumb, the second time sliding the D7 shape up

Tune down one half step (low to high: E \flat A \flat D \flat G \flat B \flat E \flat).

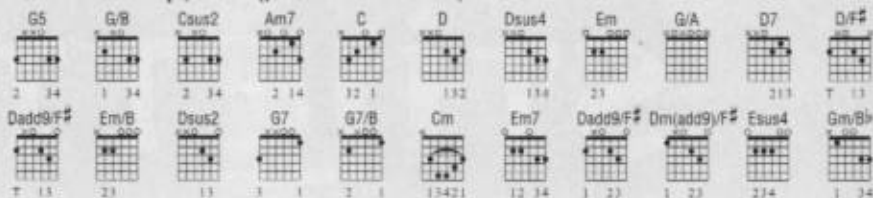


FIGURE 1 intro

Moderately ♩ = 93

Chords: G5, G/B, Csus2, Am7, C, D, Dsus4, G5

Acout. Gr. fingerstyle

FIGURE 2 second part of verse and first part of chorus

Chords: Em, G/A, Am7, D7, G5, D/F#, Dadd9/F#, Em, Em/B, Am7, D5, Dsus2, D, G7, G7/B, C, Cm, G5, Em7, strum Am7 then D7

Tap pickguard

knock on guitar

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three frets (sounding D7 \flat 9). This section is followed by an extension of the chorus. Here, Bettencourt, employing a similar fingerstyle accompaniment pattern, introduces a new, repeating chord sequence—G5 - G/B - G5 - G/B - D/F# - Em - Bm - C - C5/B - Am7 - D - D7 - G—that is played twice. The entire verse/chorus cycle is then repeated and followed by an outro vamp on the popular radio-edit version of the song, Bettencourt simply slows down on the last beat, pauses on D, then strums a full

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open G chord deliberately. The album version of "More Than Words" is a bit more drawn out, with a flashy two-hand tapping cadenza that "nobody cares about these days," says Bettencourt, sandwiched between two arpeggiated descending chord sequences. The first sequence is played G5 - Dadd9/F# - Dm(add9)/F - Esus4 - Am7. This leads into the tapping lick over an implied D chord, which is followed by the second arpeggiated chord sequence: G - Csus2 - G/B - Gm/B \flat - Am7, and finally ending with a strummed G chord. *

Photo by Mark Snow

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