



CASCADING PATTERNS ON GUITAR

Cascading Open String Scales on Guitar

I heard the great Fingerstyle guitarist, Adrien Legg, play this incredible scale lick at the end of song. I had never heard anything like it – the notes were overlapping each other in a completely ear-bending, harp sounding way.

After a bit of research, I realized he was mixing fretted notes with open strings and holding on to the notes so that they overlap each other.

This technique can be applied to a variety of licks and even combined with harmonics and hammer-ons and pull-offs to create even larger licks. Below are five of the most useful patterns.

Practice each lick slowly. Look carefully at the TAB. The fingerings seem awkward at first but with slow careful practice they will become easier and faster. Strive for each note to overlap the others.

Pattern 1: Pentatonic Scale Lick in C

This was the Adrien Legg lick. Let all notes ring together.

Cmaj9

② ① ① ① ① ④ ① ① ④ ① ① ① ① ②

T 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

A 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

B 8 7 7 10 7 10 7 0 7 0 7 0 8

Pattern 2: Pentatonic Scale Lick in G

A similar group of notes can work over a G chord forming an overlapping G major pentatonic scale.

G⁶₉

① ① ② ① ② ② ② ② ② ③ ② ② ② ② ② ①

T 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

A 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

B 3 0 7 7 7 7 8 0 7 0 7 0 7 0 3

Pattern 3: Descending E Major Scale

Need a quick lick in E? Here you go! Descending pull-offs are shown with the arc between notes.

Pattern 4: Ascending E Major Scale

This ascending scale in E uses hammer-ons and harmonics to create a great closing lick. The notes with the diamond notehead are to be played as harmonics at the fret indicated.

Pattern 5: Ascending Em Scale

A similar approach to the previous example can be used in Em to create a minor lick with harmonics.

Closing Thoughts

Experiment with creating ideas of your own. Focus on getting each string to overlap the others. This requires another level of control. But with slow, focused practice these patterns can add amazing sounds to your music. Learn all you can! – Steve