

Masters in Mechanics Inside the Volcano: Performance Notes SAMPLE

SECTION 1: Single-String Playing

Yngwie's vocabulary of single-string creations is one of his most fascinating contributions to virtuoso guitar. It would have been one thing to hatch such a clever idea, and to implement it as a special effect once or twice. But the sheer multiplicity of his single string ideas, and the seamless way he integrated them into his greater vocabulary of multi-string and swept innovations is really pretty amazing.

The most fundamental of all of Yngwie's single-string patterns, and the very atom, if you will, of many of the larger structures he then went on to create, is the venerable six-note pattern:

Volcano - Single String - 01 - Six-Note Pattern

We've already seen this pattern in Season 1, and also in Season 2 Episode 1, where its chunking suitability was the subject of the "brain machine" scene (S2E1, "Get Down for the Upstroke", 8:27). This simple repeating chunk bears all the design attributes of masterful engineering: an even number of notes, starting on a downstroke, and ending on an upstroke. Even its six-note length seems optimized for efficient chunking. Any shorter and the chunking interval quickly becomes more challengingly rapid. Any longer and the pattern risks being too long to effectively chunk before the hands drift apart.

In addition, the pattern's strong sixteenth-note triplet feel makes it even easier to anticipate when the chunking landmark note will arrive. Yngwie often plays free-time, but that's simply an example of how effectively the pattern can be reproduced once it's effectively chunked. But as a beginner,

associating the pattern with a strong rhythmic pulse like a metronome, a drum beat, or simply a tapping foot, will provide a very visceral indication of when the next landmark note will arrive. By simply focusing on the fretting finger that needs to hit that landmark, and the downstroke required to play it, you've provided a new opportunity every six notes to make sure the pattern is perfectly synchronized.

Note that chunking landmarks are conceptual, not physical. While it may be helpful in the early stages to hit landmark notes with more force, this can quickly become a habit that's hard to break, and not always what you're looking for artistically. Ultimately, the goal is mechanical transparency. The choice to impart a particular dynamic sensibility to your lead lines should be determined by the musical context, and not the behind-the-scenes chunking system you're using.

Yngwie plays a number of musically interesting variations on the six-string pattern. By shifting one position to the left, we find a fretboard location that Yngwie often uses to begin phrygian phrases, as we'll soon see:

Volcano - Single String - 02 - Six-Note Pattern Phrygian

And by extending the stock six-note pattern with longer fretboard stretches, Yngwie creates a classic arpeggiated figure which you can hear both on the REH tape, and throughout his recorded repertoire:

Volcano - Single String - 03 - Six-Note Pattern - Variation

Because of the longer stretch, this pattern is athletically challenging to do, particularly if you're not used to using the fourth finger in highly structured phrases like this. Staying close to the fretboard will help that finger strike the high note of the arpeggio without missing, particularly at elevated tempos.

We can also take this idea of a kind of moving melody note, and incorporate it with the phrygian position pattern. And because the stretch is smaller, it's a little easier to do, though no less flavorful:

Volcano - Single String - 04 - Six-Note Pattern Phrygian - Variation

This is a fantastic example of Yngwie's phrygian stylings, and you can hear a similar example around the 3:13 mark in the song *Little Savage*, a tour de force of phrygian songwriting. It's based on a melodic sequence of half step, whole step half step, that's distinctly phrygian in nature, and also one of the fundamental structures of the diminished scale. It's not common in mainstream rock soloing, and is a great way to add "outside" flavor that still fits over common dominant seventh chord progressions, especially in sparse arrangements with greater freedom for lead line excursions.

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