

Rob Balducci

The Altered Dominant Pentatonic

BY JOHN MCCARTHY

WHEN IT COMES TO GREAT INSTRUMENTAL GUITAR MUSIC, you probably think of Steve Vai or Joe Satriani. Well, native New Yorker Rob Balducci is a player that can give these guys a run for their arpeggios. Balducci's last two CD's, *The Color of Light* and *Violet Horizon* were released on Steve Vai's Favored Nations label and received great reviews worldwide. His ability to create interesting compositions full of memorable melodies makes his music as appealing to guitarists as it does non-musicians. Balducci describes his music as drenched in layers of sonic colors, each representing a tangible emotion, desire, depth, feeling, thought, and mood.

I worked with Rob creating an instructional program showing his style, and found a few reasons he stands out from other players: his melodic phrasing, scale choices, and ability to use effects pedals to enhance melodies. As an instrumental guitarist, the biggest challenge is to separate melody from lead. You can't just create a rhythm and start blowing chops all over it because it will sound like a long, boring, four-minute solo. You have to separate the lead and melody and make them have a personality of their own. Balducci uses wah and Whammy pedals masterfully to give unique sounds to different sections of his songs, making certain sections sound like a vocalist and others like a seasoned lead guitarist.

In this lesson, I want to show you one of Rob's signature scales, the altered dominant pentatonic, that he uses often in his music. In Ex.1, you find the various positions of this scale. Play through these and get the sound of them in your ears. This is a dominant pentatonic scale. However, it is not the traditional form, which is root, 2, 3, 5, b7. Rob's version contains the root, 3, 4, 5, b7. The altered version replaces the major 2nd degree with a perfect 4th.

This scale can be used in place of a Mixolydian mode in your improvisations. If you were to add a major 2nd and a major 6th into the scale, you would have the Mixolydian mode (root, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, b7). It is important as a musician to realize that any seven-tone scale can become a pentatonic scale by removing any two notes and making a five-note scale. Remember, "penta" means five and "tonic" means tone, so any five-tone scale is essentially a pentatonic scale.

In Ex.2 you find the chord progression from Balducci's song "The Essence" from *Violet Horizon*. Play these scales over this progression and you'll really get an idea of how they sound when applied in a lead context. You can download the backing track from this lesson at rockhousemethod.com/robbalducci. Happy shredding!

John McCarthy is the creator of the Rock House Method.

Ex.1

Ex.2

Ex.3

Ex.4

Ex.5

Ex.6

	Bsus4	Bsus4/A
T	0	0
A	4	4
B	2	0