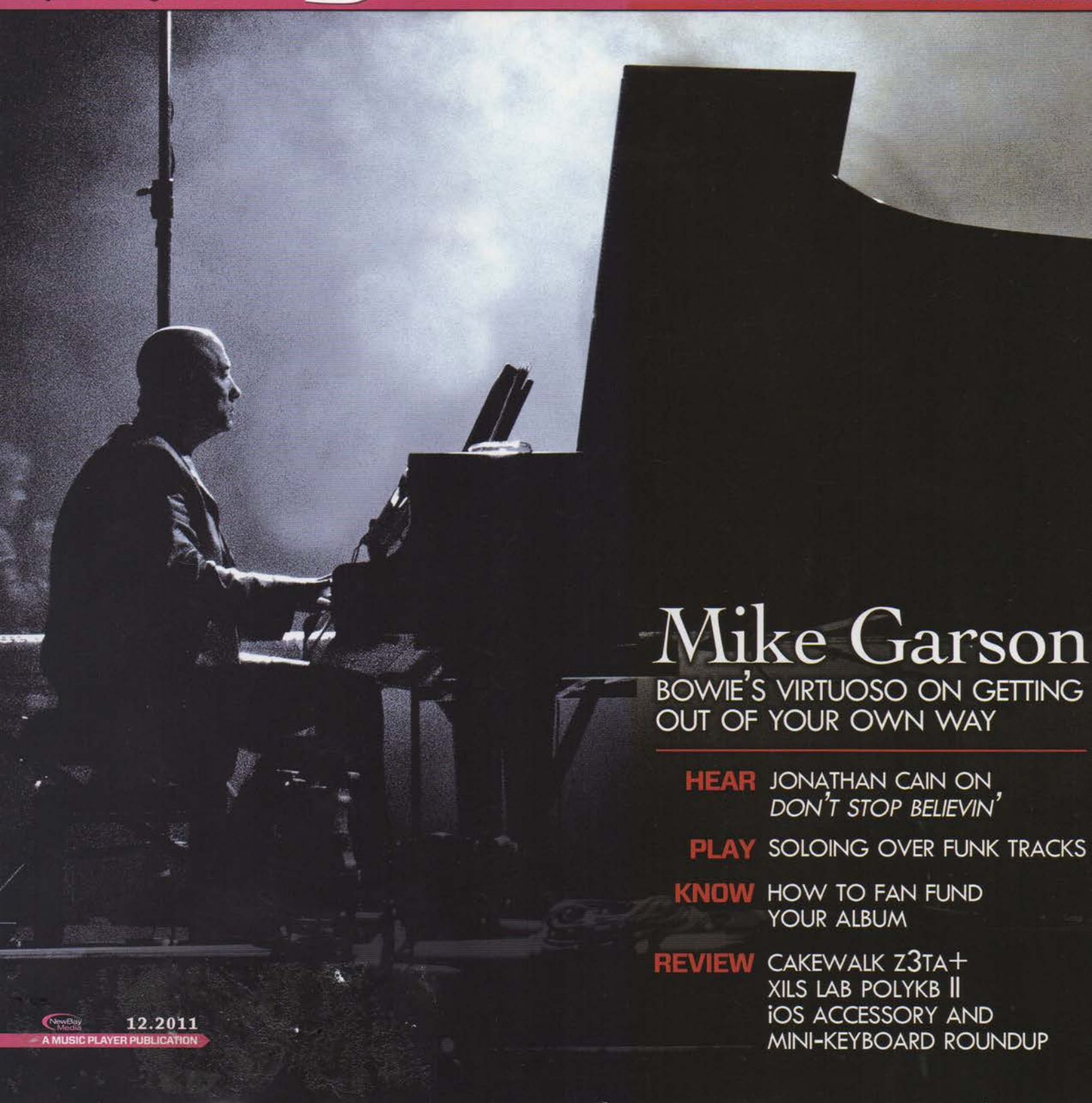


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When Less Is More

BY KOREL TUNADOR



KEYBOARDS CAN BE POWERFUL MELODY INSTRUMENTS (CUE EUROPE'S "The Final Countdown") as well as rhythm instruments. Often, however, keyboards serve as a connecting bridge between the rhythm and the melody, not unlike the bass player but in a higher pitch range. While it may seem counterintuitive for virtuosic players to play far less than they're capable of, any bandleader who writes songs will appreciate a keyboardist who makes the song priority number one. Here are my favorite chord strategies to help you be that keyboardist.

Since many pop and rock songs have familiar chord changes, a great way to make a song bigger without stepping on the vocal is to use open voicings. In **Ex. 1**, I play roots with my left hand while accentuating the chord guide tones with my right. Notice how I make small moving melodies out of the chord tones, starting with the third of some chords, then moving into the next chord change as smoothly as possible. As the progression develops, you can add other chord tones to introduce color and tension.

Another approach is to leave out the third. Yes, the third is important. It's the equivalent of the X or Y chromosome, giving a chord its most basic personality. But the third is so obvious and demanding of attention that it sometimes adds

clutter when you're playing in a band. There's a reason that rock guitar players rely on power chords with only roots and fifths: They're lean, mean, and open. In **Ex. 2**, I voice my chords using roots, fourths, and fifths, with tension notes used sparingly and octave roots in my left hand.

This next idea is simple and elegant. Sustaining the same notes while chords change around them (therefore changing the relation of the notes to each chord) can be a great way to tie chords together while adding tension and release to a sequence at the same time. In **Ex. 3** on page 46, I'm playing simple octaves in my left hand to show the root motion while I sustain common tones up high.

Stage Advice

"Touring with the Goo Goo Dolls and Katy Perry," says **Korel Tunador**, "I've learned that often, a keyboard player's main purpose is to serve the song without getting in the way of the vocal. In pop music, the bass player will be covering roots, so go easy on them, especially in the lower range of the keyboard."

When a more complex tonality is called for, you can still play a clean and uncluttered chord part while also adding color by playing upper structure triads built on different scale degrees of your chord. In **Ex. 4** on page 46, I'm using colors like *F/Gmin*, *C/Amin*, and *Amin/Dmin*. Remember that your bass player (and possibly your guitarist) is hammering away at the root of each chord, so play roots judiciously. This technique works well with lush pads and string sounds. 🎵

Ex. 1. Open Voicings

Ex. 1. Open Voicings. This exercise consists of two systems of piano accompaniment in G major. The first system shows chords A, G, D, A, G, D with open voicings. The second system shows chords A, G, D, A, Emin, D with open voicings.

Ex. 2. Leave Out the Third

Ex. 2. Leave Out the Third. This exercise consists of two systems of piano accompaniment. The first system shows chords A, B, A, B with 'Leave Out the Third' voicings. The second system shows chords C#min, A, E, C#min, A, E with 'Leave Out the Third' voicings.

Ex. 3. Sustained Common Tones

Musical notation for Ex. 3, Sustained Common Tones. The exercise is presented in two systems of piano accompaniment. The first system consists of four measures with chords: Amin C, G D, Amin C, G D. The second system consists of four measures with chords: F G, Amin, Dmin F, Amin. The bass line consists of sustained notes with some movement.

Ex. 4. Upper Structure Triads

Musical notation for Ex. 4, Upper Structure Triads. The exercise is presented in two systems of piano accompaniment. The first system consists of five measures with chords: Gmin, Amin, Dmin, Gmin. The second system consists of seven measures with chords: Amin, Dmin, B \flat , Amin, Dmin. The bass line consists of sustained notes.



Play along with Korel's original audio examples.

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