



## System of a Down "Aerials"

By Michael Mueller

In 1998, when System of a Down released their self-titled debut, aggro metal was firmly planted on rock radio, with Korn at its kernel. Because SOAD's record was filled more with quirky delights than the unabated aggression of angry young males, the band didn't quite reach the same heights as some of their other contemporaries. As is generally the case, however, originality has overcome trend and hype. Now, as aggro metal is starting to fester faster than roadkill, SOAD's second effort, *Toxicity*, is gaining well-earned praise and respect. The record spawned the surprise hit of 2001 in "Chop Suey," and the title track, "Toxicity," recently followed suit. This summer you can catch the quartet sporting "Aerials" on the main stage at Ozzfest 2002.

### TUNING

Malakian tunes to drop D, down one whole step (C-G-C-F-A-D) in "Aerials." However, in order to facilitate the sitar part (arranged for guitar) introduced at the interlude, tune your guitar to DADGAD, down one whole step: C-G-C-F-G-C, low to high. If you're playing this song in your band and have two guitarists, one can play an acoustic guitar tuned in this manner to simulate the sitar, while the electric

guitar is tuned to drop D, down one whole step.

### WORK THE OBLIQUES

The intro to "Aerials" is comprised of a bass melody composed within the D minor scale (D-E-F-G-A-B-C). This melody is doubled by the guitar, which also adds A and D pedal tones. Together, the pedal tones and bass melody form oblique motion, a type of counterpoint in

which one melody is in motion while another remains stationary (Fig. 1). This compositional tool is applied again with the sitar during the interlude. The easiest way to play the counterpoint figure in the intro is simply by moving your fret-hand's index finger up and down the 6th string as necessary. As for picking, use all downstrokes with two exceptions: use an upstroke on the second 16th note (open 4th string) of beat 4 in measures 3 and 7.

For the sitar part arranged for guitar, again use your fret hand's index finger to play all the notes on the 4th string. For the picking pattern, you can use a flatpick and downstrokes on strings 4 and 2 with an upstroke on string 1. Or—and this is much easier and efficient—you can use hybrid picking, thus avoiding worry about muting the 3rd string. For hybrid picking, use a flatpick on the 4th string, your middle finger on the 2nd string, and your ring finger on the 1st string (Fig. 2).

### CHORUS OF PARALLELS

Where oblique motion was used

in Riffs A and B, the vocal line in the chorus sections moves in parallel motion with the bass melody. Parallel motion is defined as two melody lines having the same shape, or horizontal intervallic movement. A basic example of this is playing a melody line in octaves. The parallel motion idea is applied via power chords and vocals in the second chorus and outro-chorus. It's a good bet you've heard this type of vocal/instrument melodic pairing before—it's used all the time in church

music. The organist, when accompanying the congregation on a hymn, will almost always play the vocal melody on one hand. Not a church-goer? Well then, thank goodness for System of a Down. Now you know. **B**

### TONE ZONE

**GUITARS:** Solidbody

**PICKUP/POSITION:**

Humbucker/Bridge (dist.)

Humbucker/Middle (clean)

**GAIN:** 6

**EQ:** Bass/Mid/Treble: 7/4/7

**EFFECTS:** Slight reverb

Fig. 1

Standard Tuning

let ring throughout

T  
A  
B

Fig. 2

DADGAD tuning, down 1 step:  
(low to high) C-G-C-F-G-C

let ring throughout

\*m a m a m a a a

T  
A  
B

\*m = middle finger  
a = ring finger



# AERIALS

As Recorded by System of a Down  
(From the American Recording TOXICITY)

Written by Daron Malakian and Serj Tankian

Get note-for-note tab transcriptions for this song and 13 more in Toxicity (00690631, \$19.95). Contact Music Dispatch to order (800-637-2852, musicdispatch.com).

DADGAD tuning, down 1 step:  
(low to high) C-G-C-F-G-C

## Intro

Moderately Slow Rock ♩ = 80

(strings) Gtr. 1 (clean) Dm Riff A

(approx. 9 sec.) mp let ring throughout

## End Riff A

## Verse

Gtr. 1 tacet  
2nd time, Gtr. 3 tacet  
B♭5

1. Life is a wa - ter - fall, — we're one in the riv - er and one — a - gain af - ter the fall. —  
Gtr. 2 2. Life is a wa - ter fall, — we drink from the riv - er, then we turn a - round and put up our walls. —  
(dist.) Rhy. Fig. 1

*f*

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# Aerials

D5 G5 D5 F5 D5 E5 D5

End Rhy. Fig. 1

P.M. -----| P.M. -----| P.M. -----| P.M. -----|

12 10 9 7

Gr. 2 : w/ Rhy. Fig. 1 (2½ times)

Bb5

1., 2. Swim-ming through the void— we hear— the word,— we lose our-selves— but we find— it all.—

D5 G5 D5 F5 D5 E5 D5

'Cause

Bb5

we are the ones that wan - na play,— al-ways wan-na go but you nev-er wan-na stay.—

D5 G5 D5 F5 D5 E5 D5

And

Bb5

To Coda ⊕

we are the ones that wan - na choose,— al-ways wan-na play but you nev-er wan-na lose.—

## Interlude

Gr. 1: w/ Riff A  
Gr. 2 tacet  
Dm

\* Gr. 3 Riff B (clean)

*mp*  
let ring throughout

3 2 0 0 0 0 5 3 2 2 2 2

\*Sitar arranged for guitar.



# Aerials

G5 F5 E5 F5 G5 A5 Bb5 A5 G5 F5 E5 D5

End Rhy. Fig. 2

## Chorus

Gtr. 2: w/ Rhy. Fig. 2 (2 times)

Aer - i - als in the sky  
Aer - i - als, so up high

When you lose small mind, you free your life  
When you free your eyes, eternal prize

Gtrs. 1 & 3: w/ Riffs A & B (2 times)

Gtr. 2 tacet

Dm

Aer - i - als in the sky  
Aer - i - als, so up high

When you lose small mind, you free your life  
When you free your eyes, eternal prize

## Outro

Gtrs. 1 & 3: w/ Riffs A & B (1 1/4 times)

Ah, ah, ah,

Gtr. 3

Gtr. 1

W

B.E.  
"H"

By Dave  
O  
O  
ti  
He is the  
eration  
early 15  
Walker  
Chicago  
his lead  
players  
of string  
Riley  
Bena, M  
1925. B  
Lonnie  
influen  
Django  
catch hi  
in 1952  
in 1970  
chitin'  
"The Th  
That  
a live al  
in Illino  
a super  
him the  
amp bey  
ducers  
the stud  
pushed  
on his C  
created  
a blues  
effect wa  
on this e  
Can You  
nally cut