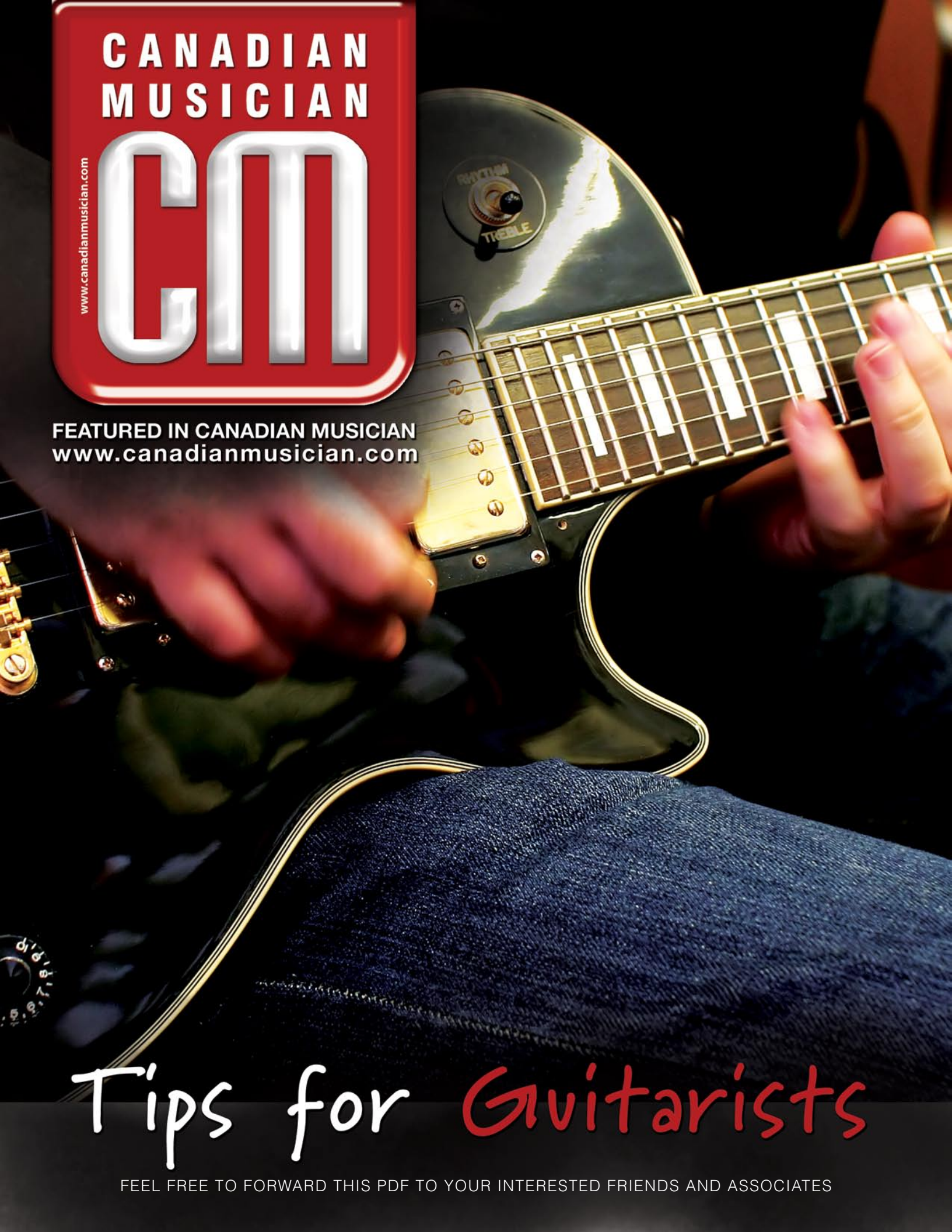
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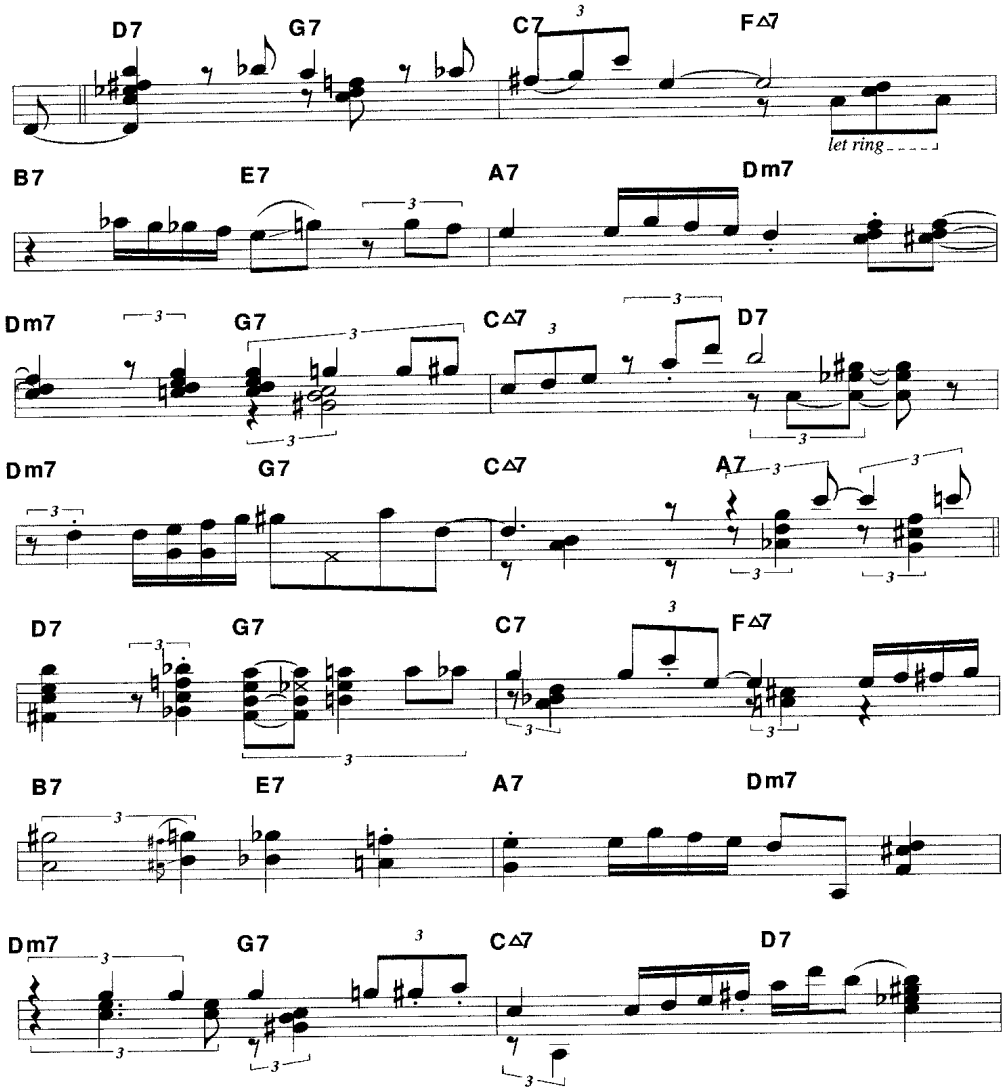
Prelude To a *Kiss*

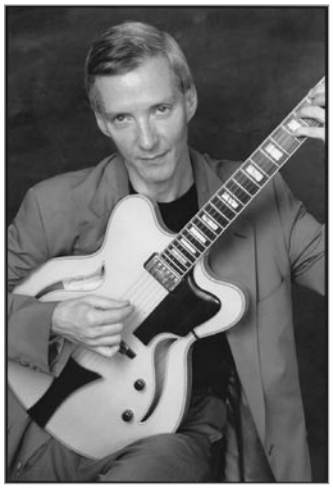
by John Stowell

Jazz musicians have been interpreting melodies since Louis Armstrong. Creative liberties have been taken both with popular tunes of the Great American Songbook and with more contemporary repertoire. I have developed my own ensibilities and methodology by using musicians such as Miles Davis, Sonny Rollins and Bill Evans as role models. In addition to being accomplished composers, all three of the aforementioned men were masters at creating their own versions of the melodies of jazz standards. To listen to Miles play "Bye-Bye Blackbird" or "Someday My Prince Will Come" is a revelation. Portions of the melodies are missing altogether in some instances. The additional space that is created defines the remaining phrases; Miles also adds new notes of his own that suggest the quality of the chord progression at that moment. To hear Sonny Rollins interpret "God Bless the Child" or Bill Evans finesse his way through "Nardis" is to witness equally creative re-inventions of written melodies. I encourage students to copy or borrow heavily from the masters to begin to get a feel for creating their own frame of reference in this area of the music.

For this article I am using my recording of the melody to Duke Ellington's "Prelude to a Kiss" (The Banff Sessions, Origin Records). In addition to being a great composer, Duke was a formidable jazz pianist and his writing often reflected his jazz sensibilities. In the case of "Prelude" however, the A section of the tune is primarily composed of quarter notes and the bridge is mostly comprised of eighth notes. While I didn't significantly change the original harmony and melody of the tune, beyond adding some embellishments and tensions to the existing chords, I did take substantial liberties with the rhythms. Note the use of triplets, sixteenth notes, rests and tied notes and compare my version to Duke's original.

For this recording of "Prelude" I was joined by the great bassist/pianist/vibraphonist Don Thompson. Much thanks to Kevin Smith for his transcription.





John Stowell is based in Portland, OR in the Pacific Northwest and has performed and taught internationally for over 30 years. He is a Hofner artist, playing a signature model Verythin JS and has a newly released book/DVD published by Mel Bay entitled Jazz Guitar Mastery. Questions or comments can be directed to John at jfstowell@earthlink.net.

Technique Versus Inspiration

by Vivian Clement

Last Summer I went down with a few musician buddies to one of the local watering holes to see this great guitarist perform. We all watched in awe as this guy ripped up and down the fretboard like he was the one who had actually invented the guitar. Although it was obvious that he knew his instrument inside and out, the most memorable thing was how he was so "in the zone" the whole night. He was the *epitome* of the zone.

Being in the zone, I would venture to say should be the goal of all musicians. If you haven't yet heard about the zone, it's that extraordinary place where you get totally immersed in the moment. Where every note played is effortless and magical. In his classic book *Effortless Mastery* author Kenny Werner goes to great lengths to convince the reader that playing in the zone is really the only way to go. Learning to play scales, riffs, chords and everything else you need to know to be able to manipulate our instrument, is only the introduction to our journey as musicians. The real object is to learn the necessary techniques, allow them to sink into your subconscious, then let go and let your playing take over. Warner explores the theory that our biggest obstacle is our ego: our need for approval by others and our fear of making mistakes. This mind-set causes us to focus on the wrong things. We are no longer playing music for inspiration's sake but to inflate our egos. We are playing to impress our friends and show them how great we are.

We've all experienced those moments by ourselves where we played for hours on end because we felt motivated to do so. We discovered that space where time disappears and we are infused with the intoxicating power of music. We felt at one with our instrument and when we finish we sense this deep contentment that is truly difficult to put into words. These experiences are the fuel that keep us hungering for more. The trap is when we shift our attitude over to where we use that inspiration to drive us to become better. Of course wanting to be better is part of evolving, but in our quest for improvement, we tend to abandon the habit of remaining inspired. It's easy to get out of the zone and elevate our technique above everything else. The shift is very subtle and its course causes us to deviate from our intended aim. It's similar to the proverbial parallel lines, where both lines start out at the same place but one line is slightly angled. If that line is then drawn out it will keep moving away from the other line so that eventually it is miles away from it's original point. The same applies to our growth in music. The straight line is our inspiration. This is the one that we know to be the most important. But our technique can be that curved line leading us down a path where our playing becomes mechanical and empty.

Often when we start out as musicians, we possess great passion. We are having such a wonderful time practicing, jamming and writing our own music that we hardly notice how much work we really need. But somewhere along the way we start to put more emphasis on our technique. We work tirelessly in order to improve our skills, and then are rewarded by seeing our hard work start to show up in our playing. People begin to comment on our improvement and this sets us off to work even harder. If we are not careful, we can lose sight of our initial intent. Many of us started playing because we saw someone perform who just blew us away and we knew we just had to have that same ability. Wasn't it inspiration that gave birth to our decision to buy a guitar and give it a try in the first place?

When I was in high school I took art classes. I learned how to paint with oils, acrylic and water. I learned about the different brushes to use to accomplish different effects. I didn't really care at the time about technique and brushes, I was just anxious to start painting and see what I could come up with. I enjoyed the creativity of art and the ability to be able to start with nothing and end up with something completely unexpected (sometimes *very* unexpected!). What I found was amazing about art, was the journey itself. It really didn't matter if I could paint or not, I was swept away by creativity. In this respect music is similar to art. Musicians must always endeavour to find that place of inspiration and play from that place. When we are in learning mode and are spending time on the nitty gritty, we must be quick to merge our new tools with our passion. It's easy to lift up technique on a pedestal. We must keep in the forefront that technique is only the vehicle used to get where we are going and not the goal itself.

Although I occasionally l take out my brushes to paint, I have never mastered the techniques required to be a great artist. I understand the importance of technique, particularly since I have studied guitar for quite a while. I know that inspiration and technique are both important components necessary to reach excellence. But I also know that technique alone is lifeless and mechanical. Inspiration and technique need to work in concert so we can be complete, balanced musicians.

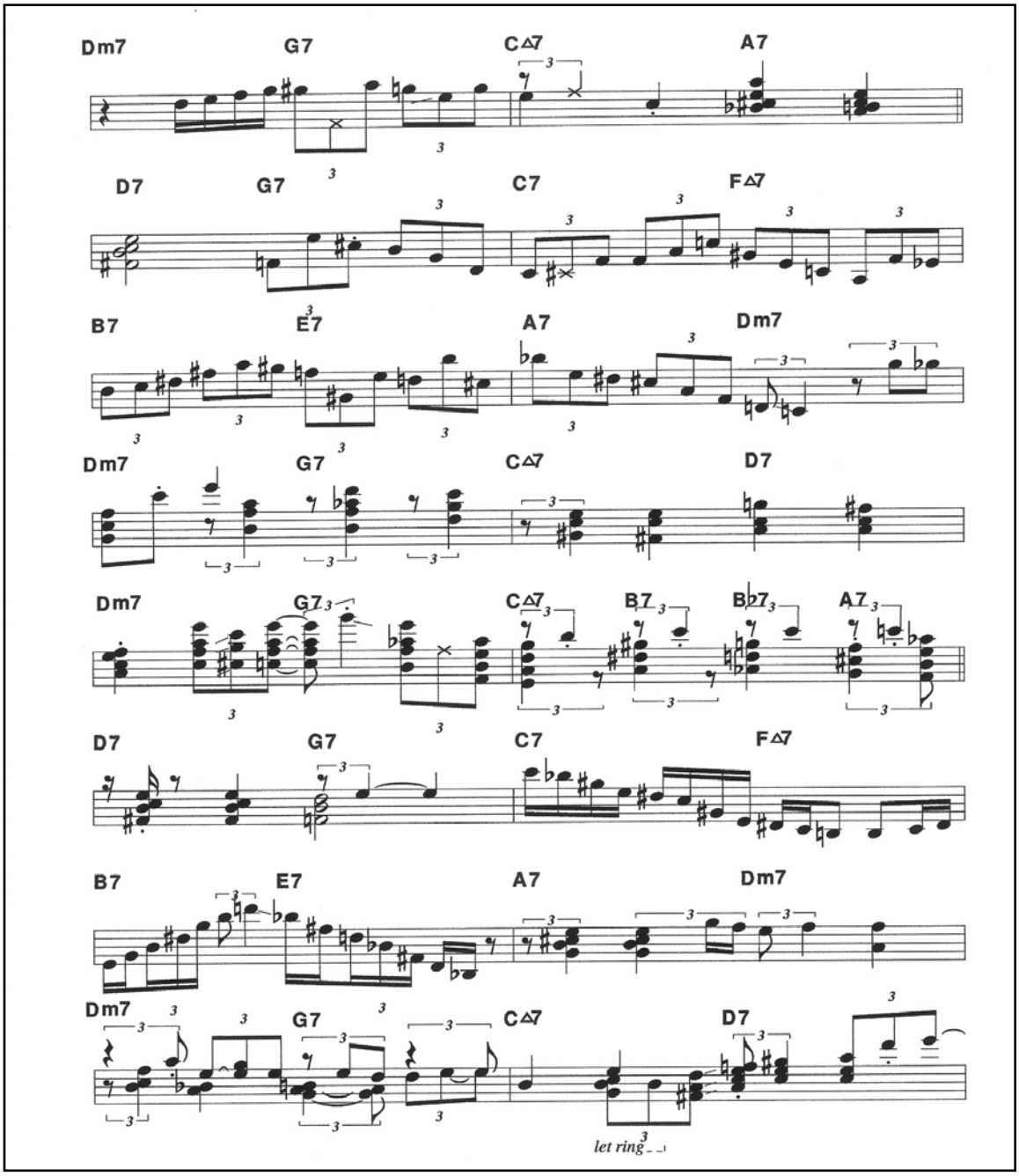
Vivian Clement is a jazz/blues guitarist performing in the Toronto area and recording in her studio "Exodus Studios" in Mississauga, ON. Her Web site is www.vivianclement.com or www.exodusstudio.ca.

"Prelude To A Kiss" Part 2

By John Stowell

In the August/September issue of *CM*, I discussed some different approaches that jazz musicians can take when interpreting a melody. By way of illustration, I used my own take on Duke Ellington's "Prelude To A Kiss," which I recorded with the great Canadian bassist/multi-instrumentalist Don Thompson (*The Banff Sessions*, Origin Records).

In this column, I'll use the first chorus of my solo on the same tune to demonstrate some of my ideas as an improviser. Some devices that I generally favour are the use of close intervals in my chords to create a pianistic effect on the guitar, and the use of wider intervals in my single line playing.



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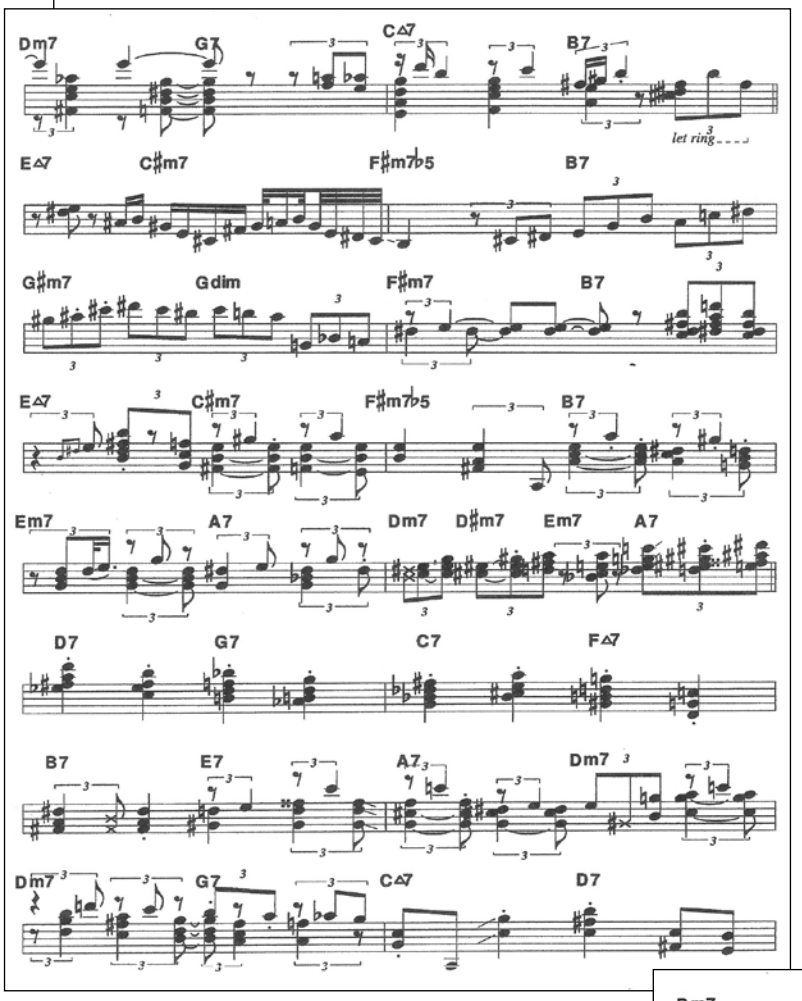

I've created some modified arpeggios by superimposing melodic minor chords, scales, and arpeggios over all of the various chord qualities (see my Mel Bay book/DVD *Jazz Guitar Mastery* for explanations of my approach here). I also favour using triplets and tied notes to play over the bar lines and free things up rhythmically. I'm more influenced by pianists and horn players in that regard. I tell my students to look to other instrumentalists and vocalists for their inspiration and ultimately find their own voice in the music. Don't panic when you see 16th and 32nd notes in my solo here; this is a ballad. The point of learning someone else's solo is to use their ideas as a way to discover your own creative voice. After repeating a learned idea often, variations will naturally suggest themselves. Take your time and try to have some fun with my ideas. Good luck.

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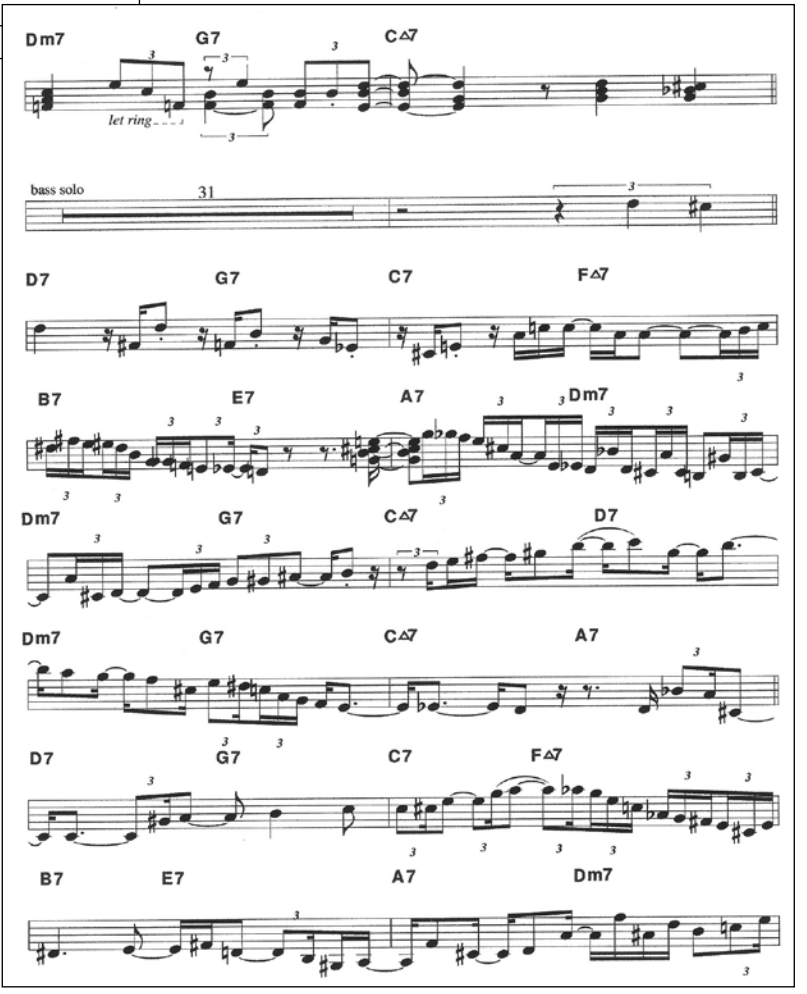


Guitarist John Stowell is based in Portland, OR, and has performed and taught internationally for 30 years. He plays a number of signature guitars, the Hofner Verythin JS, a Mike Doolin nylon string acoustic/electric, and he will soon be collaborating with Canadian expat (and luthier) Jim Soloway on a baritone guitar. Questions or comments can be directed to John at : www.johnstowell.com.

Warming Up

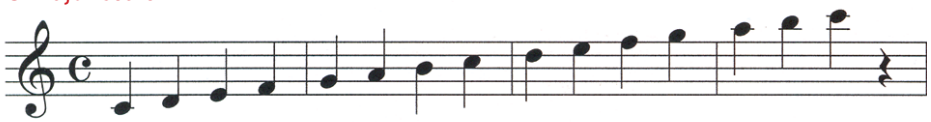
by Levon Ichkhanian

Warming up is a very personal experience, almost ritualistic. I once interviewed a world-renowned classical guitarist who told me that on the day of the performance he doesn't look at the music he will be playing. Instead, his warm-up is eight hours of scales and arpeggios.

As I played in *The Lord of the Rings* orchestra, I was part of a musical team that included brass, horns, strings, keyboards, accordion, and percussion. I was also surrounded by actors, dancers, and singers. It was very interesting to me to observe the variety of warm-up techniques used by all. I came to realize that there are many ways of warming up before a show that don't include the instrument.

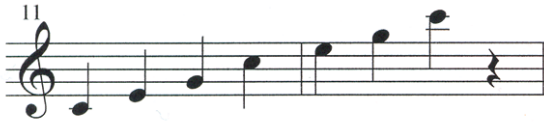
Before I get to what I learned through that experience, here are some examples of exercises to get your hands agile and ready on the guitar in C major.

Exercise 1
C major scale:



Exercise 2
An intervallic warm-up in major thirds:

Exercise 3
C major arpeggio:



How to apply these exercises:

- Warm up by using other intervals (fourths, fifths, sixths, sevenths, octaves...).
- Play all the exercises in all twelve keys.
- Play all these exercises at a slow tempo and increase it as you move along.
- All exercises should be practiced in ascending and descending patterns.
- Start by using only downstrokes and switch to alternate picking as you move along.
- Try a tremolo.

When I was working with *The Lord Of The Rings* orchestra, I was fascinated by everyone's warm-up rituals – the horn players warming up their lungs, percussionists warming up their arms and feet, string players bowing, keyboardists running drills, singers/actors/dancers stretching…

I learned that warming up before a performance goes beyond technique and practice. There are other things that you can do in body and in spirit, and I thought about how they could be applied into a guitarist's warm-up routine.

A warm-up could be:
(1) **Visual:** visualization of the music, fingerings.
(2) **Physical:** get your body relaxed and flexible through Yoga or stretching.
(3) **Aural:** sing your parts, so that you can commit them to memory.
(4) **Combine** all of the above.

When you are warming up for your next performance, consider how you can add these into your routine.

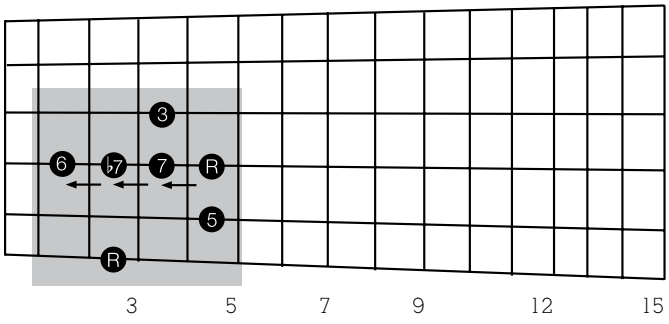
Levon Ichkhanian is a multi-instrumentalist. He plays guitars, oud, bouzouki, and banjitar. Contact: www.levonmusic.com.

CHORDS ARE US

by Vivian Clement

A few weeks back, I was sent an e-mail about a book that I had published several years back entitled *Fretboard Knowledge for the Contemporary Guitarist*.* The book is based on a method of categorizing patterns that are found on the fretboard for easier memorization. The e-mail asked if I had any suggestions for practicing these patterns. After responding, I thought it would be worth going through some practicing techniques for memorizing the fretboard. The key to mastering the fretboard is to have some form of system that can be used consistently during your practice time. This system should not only allow you to progress but act as a guide to propel you towards your goal.

Lets take a look at a basic chord. The illustration below shows the formula for a G chord at the 3rd fret: R (Root), 5, R & 3. Also included in this diagram are the numbers 7, ♭7 and 6. These three other numbers are added to the initial formula to make up three new chords Gmaj7 (R, 5, 7, 3), G7(R, 5, ♭7, G), and G6 (R, 5, 6, 3) consecutively. I have added these extra chords so you can memorize them all together as a group. By grouping together chords in this fashion you will be able to learn chords much more quickly – since they are pretty similar in their form.

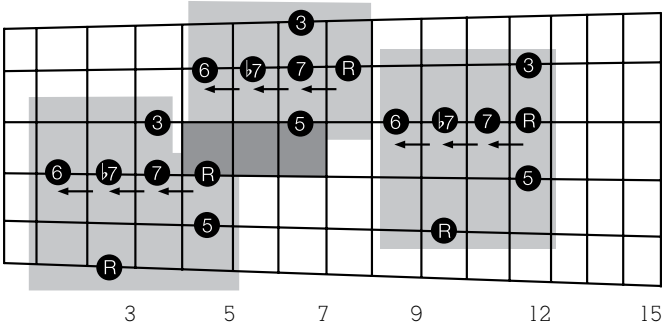


The following method uses as many memory senses as possible. Since memory works mostly by association, the more information you add on to any task, the easier it is to memorize. The first thing you want to do whenever you are working on learning a new chord is to pluck each individual string as you sing the formula. For instance, you would play each string of the G chord above by starting at the Root, then the 5th, then the root then the 3rd. Each time you play the string you will sing the formula: Root, 5, Root, 3. The next thing you would do is sing the actual alphabetical names of the chord, G, D, G, B. You would then close your eyes and visualize the notes in your mind and sing the formula and notes again, this time clearly seeing them without looking at your guitar. Once you have done this you repeat the same procedure for the Gmaj7 chord and sing: Root, 5, 7, 3 then G, D, F#, B. And again closing your eyes and visualize each note as you see yourself play them in your mind.

Believe it or not, memorizing chords in this manner actually saves you time in the long run. Initially, this approach seems a little tedious but with some practice you will discover that the entire technique can be done in around 30 seconds. The great thing about this way of practicing is that you are not only teaching yourself chord formulas, you are training your ear – as well developing visualization. Many great guitarists have often commented on the importance of ear training and visualization. Ear training allows you to identify whatever is going on in music at any given time. Visualization lets you see yourself playing the music as it unfolds. Eventually you will get to the point where you can be away from your guitar and hear the sound of any particular chord, as well be able to visualize exactly what it looks like. That is when you know that you really understand the chord, its formula, and its individual sound. By practicing chords this way you will truly be able to hear the difference between major, minor, diminished … or any chord for that matter.

Once you have mastered the following four chords (G, Gmaj7, G7, and G6), learn the two other forms below. Keep in mind that these chords are exactly the same chords with the same chord formula (except for the octave change). The reason they appear different is because the 2nd string (or B string) is tuned differently than the other strings. Otherwise the chord would be played with the exact same fingering, only on a different set of strings.

By practicing these three forms at the same time you are learning 12 new chords. Once you know these 12 chords, you should practice them in all keys (sharp and flat keys). Always try to memorize chords (or scales for that matter) by formula first. Notes and keys always change but formulas remain the same. By understanding formulas for chords, you will always know how to construct any chord no matter where you are on the fretboard. In addition, you can come up with your own unusual sounds or fingerings by experimenting with different positions … and experimenting and finding new sounds is what the guitar is all about.



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Vivian Clement is a jazz/blues guitarist performing in the Toronto area and recording in her studio "Exodus Studios" in Mississauga, ON. Her website is www.vivianclement.com or www.exodusstudio.ca.

Do Your Own Acoustic Thing

by David Gogo

I like guitars. I have lots of them, and sometimes I even play 'em! Playing came easy to me and I seemed to be able to get a decent sound right away, which is a good and bad thing. The bad thing was not having to learn proper techniques or how to read music because I felt that I didn't need to. I sometimes regret not having skills that I was either too impatient or too lazy to learn, but I suppose that my style has unique qualities that wouldn't have developed if I had stayed within certain parameters.

Although I can appreciate technically proficient guitarists who can fly up and down the fretboard with amazing ability, I much prefer hearing someone like Albert Collins hitting "that" note! Just one, from-the-heart, note! To me, music is about emotion and feel, not math and gymnastics. It's like comparing a Picasso painting to the schematics of television. I read that my hero, Guy Lafleaur, was terrible at doing drills at hockey practice but once the game started he jumped on the ice and created magic. I can relate!

I think the biggest breakthrough for me as a guitarist was recognizing my strengths and weaknesses and having faith in what I was capable of without trying to be someone I'm not. I'm not saying that you shouldn't explore various styles and genres (and some players can do it all and well!) but you don't have to be all things to all people! Find out what you do best and try to be the best at it. Try to develop a style and sound that is uniquely you! Not only will this help in defining you as a performing artist, but getting called in to do sessions to play on other peoples' recordings to be "you" is a good thing. Corner the market!

I'm known primarily as an electric guitar player, but my acoustic shows have recently become more prominent after the release of my lastest album, *Acoustic*. The transition from being a loud and proud shoot 'em up lead guitar star with a full band pumping behind you to becoming a sit-down solo artist armed only with two guitars older than my daddy can be daunting! Once again, I realized that to make this work I had to rely on my strengths and learn from people I admire. As much as I wish I could play fingerstyle as well as Ken Hamm, I don't! And it's a little late to start now, but that's OK. Why compete with someone who is out of your league at his own game?

I decided to look at this situation not as a disadvantage, but as a challenge to bring my strengths as an electric lead player to my acoustic show. This can be difficult without a band, but I've managed to adapt. After watching some of the top acoustic players do their thing, I've managed to get my own show together. After seeing Geoff Mulduar at a festival in New Mexico I learned to completely relax and find comfortable tempos and grooves that make you and the audience feel good. I had a tendency to let my nerves affect my sense of timing before this, but now I just try to chill out and let the music flow.

Another way to relax is to not worry about the sound being poor. The best way to achieve this is to control your environment by taking charge. Some purists may not like this but I run my acoustic guitars through a small amp. This way,

I'm in control of the tone and it's a no-brainer for the sound man. The amp also acts as a monitor that I'm in control of. Since I don't use the actual monitors at all, this is handy. A very simple setup: a vocal mic, an amp mic, and no monitors. Pretty hard to screw that up! I have a 1930 National Resonator guitar that I play in either open D or G, and an ancient Gibson L-Junior in standard tuning. If I play near home I use a Taylor 12-string for a couple of songs that I run through a DI.

As much as I love rocking with the band, there is a certain freedom that I enjoy when playing acoustic. It's a nice change of pace, and when I return to playing electric I find that my chops improve and my hands and fingers are stronger. And I can turn it up to 11!

David Gogo is a 2007 Juno-nominee and two-time Maple Blues Guitarist of The Year. His latest CDs Vibe *and* Acoustic *are available at record stores nationally and through his website at* www.davidgogo.com, *where you'll also find his instructional guitar DVD.*

How To Audition Effectively

by Peter Thorn

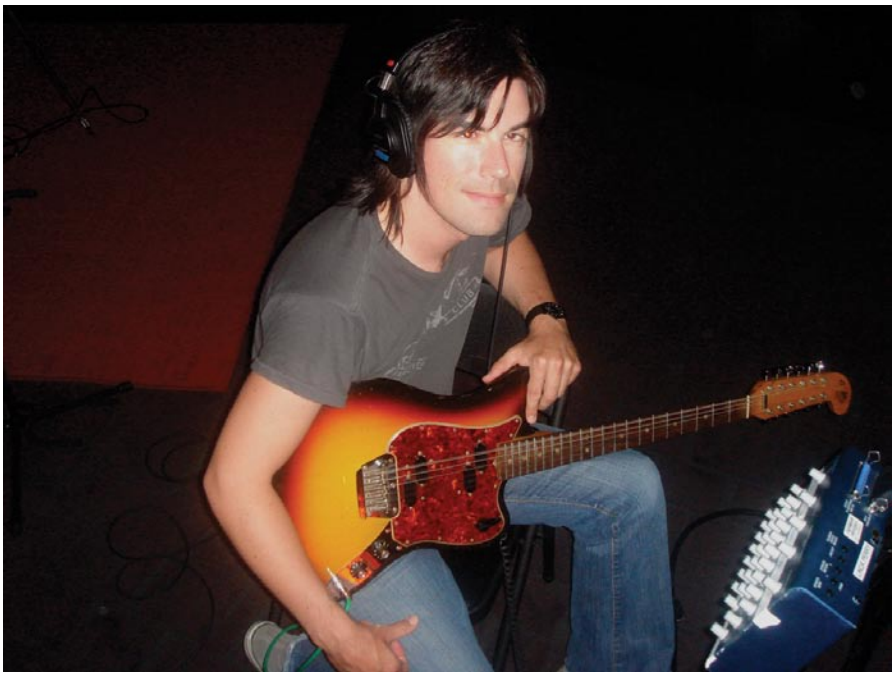
Auditioning effectively is one of the most important skills you can develop as a professional musician. If you want to join a band or tour as a sideman, chances are you are going to have to audition for a gig sooner or later. Just like with any job interview, your strategy going into an audition should be something you think about carefully!

Let's say you get the call to go down and audition for a touring gig. You inquire about the situation – when the tour starts, what the approximate pay is, whether or not there's a retainer, etc. If you decide it's something you'd like to try out for, you'll probably be asked to learn a few songs and you'll come to an agreement on a time to show up at a rehearsal studio for your audition.

Let's assume you are auditioning for a solo artist who is assembling a touring band to hit the road in support of his/her new album, which is about to be released.

Over time I've learned that you can usually guess the mindset of the artist under these circumstances. Try and put yourself in his or her shoes. Artists are usually very passionate about their work, and there's a certain amount of ego, coupled with anxiety and pressure involved in releasing a new album. Taking this into account, imagine you are that solo artist, with a big record deal. You've just spent anywhere from a few months to a year or more making a new album. You've been holed up in the studio, honing and shaping your tracks for hours and hours every day … you know those songs inside out, every detail, and you are almost ready to release your new album and (hopefully) go tour the world. The goal, of course, is to promote your new album, play killer shows, and hopefully move up to bigger and bigger venues, make money, and stay out on tour as long as possible. There's lots of stress and anxiety surrounding the album release, after all, this is your SHOT! There's just one thing left to do – hire a touring band…

So there's a psychological aspect I like to keep in mind going into an audition. When I take the artist's likely mindset into account, I can prepare for an audition more effectively. Which brings me to…



PREPARATION!

When I'm learning songs for an audition, I learn them as thoroughly as possible. I choose which effects and amplifiers are needed and I get my tones together along with my parts. I practice the parts at home as though I'm performing, switching effects in and out, etc. as though I was doing the audition for real. I learn and practice the background vocals, if there are any, and I have even booked a small rehearsal room with a PA for a couple days and set up my whole rig there – I play along with the material at full volume, while standing up and singing the backgrounds through a mic, in an attempt to mimic the exact conditions I'll be under when actually auditioning. And I'll always bring my own guitars, amplifiers, and effects to the audition.

Why go to these lengths?

There are a few reasons. Most importantly, I want to go into the audition completely at ease, confident and self-assured. Also:

1. I want the artist to feel like he or she could walk onstage with me and play a gig RIGHT NOW – and it would be great!
2. I also want it to be obvious that I put lots of effort into learning the material, and into preparing sounds and effects patches for the songs – this shows you are a hard worker and you pay attention to details, details about the artist's music! This strokes the ego a bit, never a bad thing…
3. And last, but obviously not least, I just want everything to sound awesome.

The last thing I'll mention, but certainly not the least important, is having good "people skills." You only get one chance to make a first impression, so when you first meet the artist you are auditioning for, shake hands, introduce yourself, and try and be at ease. Sounds easy, but it can be difficult if the artist happens to be a big rock star or someone you look up to. Just try and be at ease and make everyone feel comfortable around you. Being cooped up for months on end in a tour bus can be grueling, and if they pick up any bad vibes from you, it can hurt your chances of getting the gig before you even play a note.

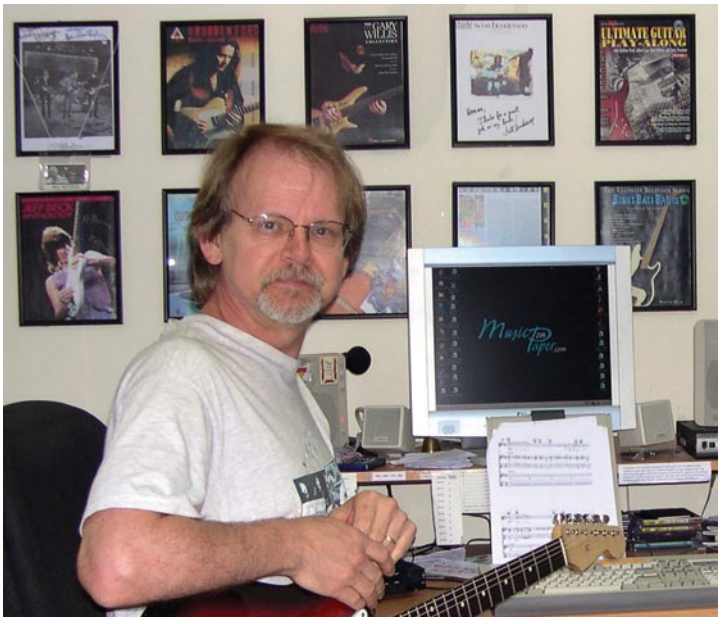
If you've prepared thoroughly, and you are at ease, you'll be able to have fun, rock out, and put your best foot forward … and THAT'S what will get you the gig almost every time.

Peter Thorn is currently touring with Chris Cornell and writing/recording with Courtney Love.

Lifting

by Hemme Luttjeboer

The art of transcription or lifting is the highly subjective modus operandi of notating music. What you hear and how you write it down for other musicians to read is a very interpretive process. Ideally, your years of playing experience and familiarity in various styles of music contribute to your skills and your level of success. Whether schooled or unschooled, you too can transcribe. The ability to notate music to a high level is a studied art that takes time and diligence. However, a good background in the machinations of creating an arrangement, knowing how to read along with an understanding of the rudiments and syllabus of music, is almost a requisite.



I make a living as a music transcriber, arranger, and engraver. With over 200 books in publication with all the top US companies such as Warner Bros. Publications, Hal Leonard, Music Sales, Mel Bay, and Alfred Publishing, I'd like to share my approach and experiences with this challenging alternative to making a living as a musician.

Over the past 18 years I have listened to and transcribed thousands of tunes in various styles. Everything from metal (shredders to grunge), country, hip hop, fingerstyle, ragtime, jazz, classical orchestration to big band; whatever the musical situation, I was up to the challenge. I initially used a no. 2 pencil to document my scores and graduated to computer software in 1997. With each upgrade, great opportunities presented themselves. Today, aside from transcription projects, I am hired for my skills as an engraver/typographer using Finale notation software. But I began with rather primitive and archaic equipment by today's standards. I started out using a cheap dubbing ghetto blaster that had some EQ but had the capability to play back at high speed. I recorded entire vinyl records on to my Akai reel-to-reel and then dubbed them to cassette at ½ speed. I would then play them back at high speed with the blaster and slow the tape down for difficult and/or speedy passages. It was very labour-intensive, but it got the job done. A few years and a few cassette players later I graduated to a Yamaha MT-120 4-track recorder. Currently I use a Superscope/Marantz PSD-230 CD player, however it's already out of production – but there are some great software applications available for transcribing as well.

A typical day of transcribing a new project begins in the morning with a focused listen of the music. Headphones plugged into the CD player works best for me. I use them instead of speakers, so I can best visualize the different instruments and where they lie in reference to the face of a clock. At times, guitars are positioned at 12, 3, and 9 o'clock; drums centre; vocals left/right, etc. By focusing on one instrument at a time, and notating it accordingly, I'll soon have a completed score. My CD player also has the ability to eliminate vocals from a track – a great feature when multi-guitar lines are buried. For fast phrases I can slow down the speed of the CD 50 per cent without altering the pitch. Sometimes there are those stubborn guitar lines that just need to be slowed down even further: then, I dust off my trusty Akai U4 Phrase Trainer for these.

After determining whether the guitars are in concert pitch, use an alternate tuning, or use a capo, I establish the proper key and create a vocal arrangement of the tune. This is where the form of the music is mapped out with verse, chorus, bridge, etc. Then I begin transcribing guitar parts note-for-note. Other important instruments (bass, piano, horns, etc.) are also arranged for guitar. When transcribing guitar, whether in pop, rock, country, or jazz, the sound of the instrument can determine the variable in chord construction. A heavily distorted guitar can give the illusion of a multi-fretted chord shape when all that is required is one or two fingers. A distorted guitar effect can bring out the overtones, which can affect how the music is to be written. Realizing and determining such factors play a huge part in transcribing. Eschewing pitches is one thing, but correct rhythms can be extremely tricky and time-consuming. Depending on the project at hand, everything is transcribed, regardless of difficulty. I persevere, with editing, until I am completely satisfied with the transcription before submitting it.

I've given you a simple overview of how I approach transcribing for guitar. You may have alternate methods, but, in the end, if the guy next to you can't play what you've written…

Since he first picked up the guitar in the late 1960s, Hemme B. Luttjeboer continues to decipher and unravel guitar parts. For more information about his hobby turned vocation visit his website at www.musiconpaper.com.

Expanding Your Chord Vocabulary

by John Stowell

I began to explore unusual chord voicings when I started to play informal solo guitar gigs in the late 1970s. Without any real game plan or strategy for learning inversions or creating arrangements, I gradually found myself attracted to the close intervals of the harmony of pianists Bill Evans and Herbie Hancock. By employing open strings and training my hands to stretch, I learned how to incorporate both close and wide intervals into my chord vocabulary.

There are many great resources available in print and online to aid you in learning new chords. In my experience as a player and teacher, the only way to retain unfamiliar fingerings is to place them in a context, i.e. a short cadence or chord melody arrangement. Once a given sequence has been executed numerous times, the shapes and sounds have become internalized; in the process you're simultaneously developing muscle memory and ear training. My newly acquired chords can then serve me in other contexts such as other arrangements, sounds to employ when comping, or as the basis for some single line ideas.

It's necessary to look at some other guitarists' chord melodies initially to give you some input and a point of departure. Copying and using other great musicians of the past as sources of inspiration is part of everyone's apprenticeship. Eventually, variations on what you've learned will suggest themselves, and your own voice will begin to emerge.

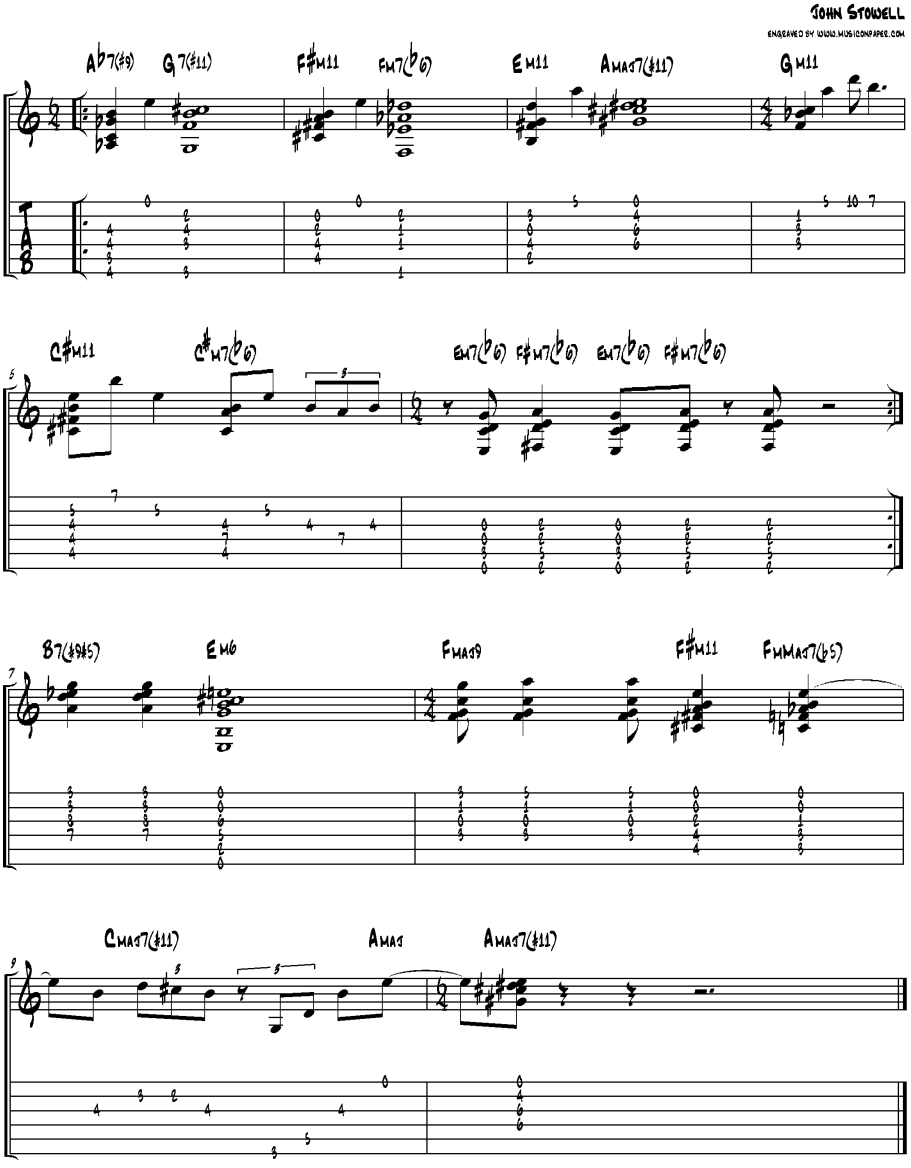
For this article, I've selected my original tune "Ghost in the Corner." When I compose, I always write on the guitar, essentially creating a chord melody a bar or two at a time. I begin with a few chords in a sequence that engages me harmonically and emotionally, and the melody always seems to flow from this small beginning (eventually).

A few things to point out here: the mixed meter of the tune might seem confusing initially, but the melody should guide you through the process of feeling the phrases after a few repetitions of the piece. Note the use of open strings, used in some cases to create tensions (the open high E string over the A♭ 7#9 and G7#11, both in bar 1) or consonance (the open high E again over the F#m11 in bar 2). I love the ringing, chime-like quality of open strings, especially when combined with fretted notes in a chord.

In bar 7, the B7#9#5 and Em6 both employ large stretches. My hands aren't large; I've learned how to use the sides as well as the tips of my fingers. As a result, I can accommodate close intervals. If you're not comfortable with these shapes, try playing a portion of the chords or fingering the inversions higher up on the neck.

If you'd like to hear recorded versions of this tune, I have an instrumental version with bassist Jeff Johnson and drummer John Bishop (*Scenes Along the Way*/ Origin Records) and a vocal version with singer Cheryl Hodge (*Heres or Theres*/ Jazz Boulevard Records).

I hope my thoughts and chord melody have given you some inspiration and food for thought. Good luck!



Engraving by Hemme Luttjeboer

Guitarist John Stowell is based in Portland, OR, and has performed and taught internationally for 30 years. His Mel Bay book/DVD Jazz Guitar Mastery *was published in 2006 and his Truefire CD ROM* Modern Chord Melody *will be released in late 2007. Questions or comments are welcome and can be directed to John at his website: www.johnstowell.com.*

Mediterranean Guitar Style

by Pavlo

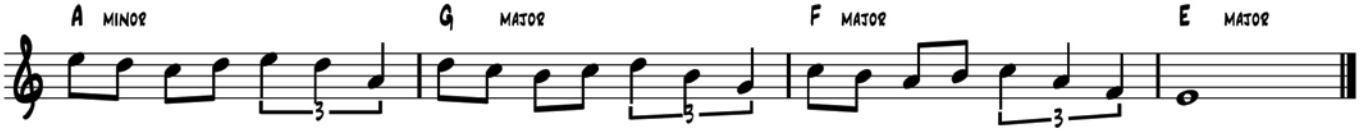
I have spent the last 20 years creating a style that I termed "Mediterranean Guitar" – an approach to the instrument combining influences from flamenco, classical, Middle Eastern, Latin, and Greek music. I obviously use many different types of instrumentation to achieve this sound, but for our purposes here I will discuss how it directly relates to the guitar.

I'll break it down into three main categories: Rhythms, Modes, and Technique.

Rhythms

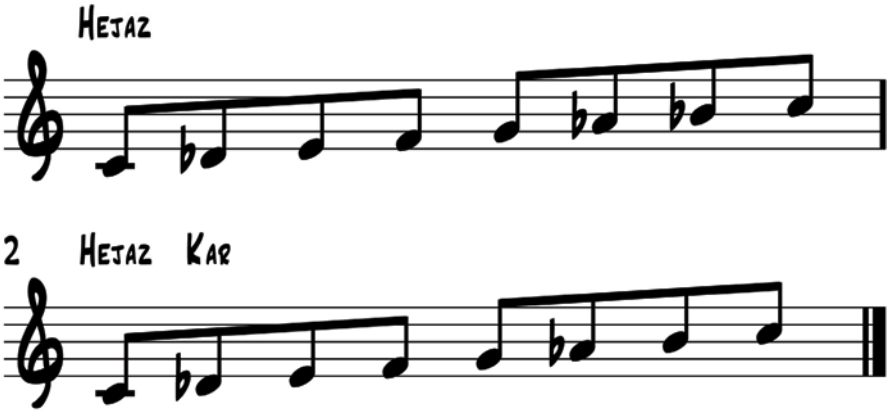
I commonly use 7/8 rhythms grouped 2+2+3. This is used in Eastern Europe and into the Middle East, specifically Greece, Bulgaria, and Turkey. My right hand would normally strike the chord with a rasgueado on the first and fifth beat, giving it a little bit of a swing feel. Rasgueado is a flamenco technique using your fingers to strike the strings, starting from your baby finger through to your index finger, all in one motion. Also, if the tempo increases, which it regularly does in my arrangements, you can still groove without sounding too mechanical. When soloing in this odd time signature, you must keep the accents in mind so that your phrasing will fall in line with the rest of the band.

Example 1) Creating riffs with a combination of triplet feel and sixteenths:



Modes

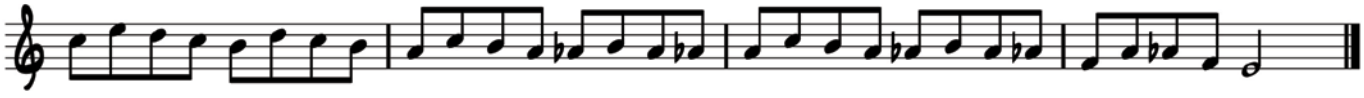
My two favourite modes in the world are Hejaz and Hejaz Kar. There is only one note that seperates these otherwise identical scales (minor 7th versus major 7th, respectively). I love to flirt between the two as I let the music dictate where I will end up. They have a very mystical, haunting sound to them that is uniquely their own. What I think attracts me the most is the interval travelling from the flat 2nd to the major 3rd. This is not common in western scales and that's cool!



Technique

I play the guitar in a very linear fashion. In a world obsessed with rapid-fire arpeggios, I have always preferred the opposite – ascending and descending up the fret board on one or maybe two strings. This approach comes directly from my heritage and from listening to a lot of Greek bouzouki music growing up. Now this goes against the Great Frank Gambale's "minimum movement" theory, but as I explained to Frank when I took a lesson from him once in Los Angeles, I sort of dance and play at the same time when I perform. Thus, it's very important to use the technique that accommodates your performance style. Of course, he laughed at me! He told me to choose whether I wanted to dance or play. I like to do both at the same time! Below is an example of a typical run that I may execute in my music.

Example 3) E Hejaz (The entire passage is on the first string, only starting on the 10th fret)



At the end of the day , even if you use this approach in only a few areas of your playing, it would be great to have it in your arsenal of stylistic riffs.

Pavlo has several albums, including two Gold Records in Canada. He tours around the world, performing 150-plus concerts every year. He is a Yamaha Artist. Please visit www.pavlo.net.

Rhythm Method

by Neil Boshart

Over the years of playing rock music, I have learned that playing tight rhythmically was as important as my pinky finger. In most rock bands, old and new, the rhythm guitar is most often overlooked or overshadowed by the lead guitar. A lot of people argue that the bass and drums have the most important duties of keeping rhythm and groove. In a lot of genres of music, this may be true, but in rock music, the rhythm guitar is just as important – if not moreso. The rhythm guitar keeps the time, and fills in the gaps with a lot more. Becoming a tight rhythm guitarist takes practice and concentration. First, you must be in touch with your inner metronome. There are many ways to exercise this.

Rhythm is everywhere you go in daily life. Even the way you walk; the timing of each step is in rhythm. It's funny, because even when walking you can practice your sense of timing, as silly as it sounds. When I am playing live, I sometimes find myself even breathing to rhythms I am playing. Inhaling and exhaling to the music is a good way to keep time and also to help you relax if you are stressed with the performance. Also, tap your damn toes! It's the classic way of keeping time. Some of these methods seem a little unusual to train you inner metronome, but combining all these methods will work wonders for you.

Okay, now lets apply this to actually playing guitar. Lets forget the left hand altogether and talk about the right. Strumming can be tricky business if you don't know the proper techniques. Lets assume that you already know how to hold a pick and that you play rock music like punk or metal. I'm going to come right out and say it: downstrokes are very important! Playing as many downstrokes as possible is key. I feel that if you can master downstroke palm-muting at blistering speeds, you can be a metal rock god! From my personal standpoint, I also feel that downstrokes help the overall tonality of the chords you play as well. The upstroke/downstroke combo, especially in punk rock music, sounds so weak to me. Don't get me wrong though, I'm not saying everything has to be downstrokes – but it just sounds better.

Time signatures. Get to know them. They are your friends. There are three time signatures that we often use in my band, Silverstein. These are: 4/4, 5/4, and the fabulous 6/8. If time signatures confuse you, I will explain them simply. 4/4 means that one bar is timed as four quarter notes or four beats. 5/4 is also in quarter notes and counted as five beats. 5/4 can get you pretty lost sometimes, so make sure you are concentrating on counting in your head. 6/8 is one of my favourites because it has a swing feel to it. 6/8 put simply, is counted as six eighth-notes in a bar. The easiest way to keep time with this is to count to yourself "1 2 3, 1 2 3" to get a feel for it, and accent the "1" count. Examples of 6/8 can be heard in our songs "Discovering the Waterfront" or "Red Light Pledge."

Photo Credit: Andrew King

Okay, so lets take what we've learned and apply it to a session with a drummer. If you know an awesome drummer, great, because they are hard to come by. My band is lucky enough to have an amazing drummer. Paul Koehler has been playing consistently for years and has honed his skills to the max! When we play together in a jamming situation, it's like we have this unspoken communication with each other. It's as if I know exactly which direction he is going in with his beats and he knows where I am going with my riffing. This being said, you and your drummer need to have this unspoken communication between you. First, you need to recognize the accents the drummer is playing. Listen to cymbal crashes or snare hits – those are most likely the accents you should follow. Second, make eye contact with your drummer; he will want to let you know how the groove is going. Third, if you somehow get lost and lose your rhythm, the worst thing you can do is panic or stop playing altogether. Just remain calm, look, and listen closely to the drums and find your way back.

Lastly, if you really want to work hard at being a great rhythm player, learn from heavy metal. Those guitar players can teach copious amounts of different rhythms and playing styles. Even if you aren't too keen on the metal genre, respect the fact that those guitarists pushed the limits of guitar playing. Learn from Hetfield, Dimebag, and Van Halen. Thats all, happy riffing!

Neil Boshart plays guitar in Silverstein, currently touring its latest record, Arrivals & Departures. *Check out the band at www.silversteinmusic.com.*

HEY KID, WHAT TUNING IS THAT?

by Gordie Johnson

Why do we start kids off learning guitar in standard tuning? "Standard," as in most songs written and performed on the guitar are in this classically-based tuning: EADGBE. In order to be able to play and understand this huge catalogue of music, a player should have a grasp of this tuning. It's good enough for Slash, it's good enough for Segovia, it's good enough for you! Or is it?

Any kid who has a fascination for the guitar will at one point or another fool around with detuning the strings really low to sound like a bass or tune all the strings to one pitch and slide a kitchen knife across the neck. (Or, in my case, a stir stick from an Austrian crystal martini set. Sorry Dad!) Kids love to make noise, a.k.a music. I am the father of two wee ones and derive no end of pleasure hearing my six-year-old pound out preschool death metal on his drums. I was uniquely impressed to see him at age four rocking for an hour on my Gibson SG, left out and plugged into an amp. An hour! In standard tuning this would have meant sore little fingers – not to mention parental ear torture. But the guitar was in open tuning. "Ah ha," said the four-year-old, "when I pull the strings it sounds just like Papa!" (I guess that's a compliment!) That instant ability to make the guitar sound good can boost a kid's confidence and enthusiasm.

Kids, not knowing the rules, are great candidates for breaking them. This could be why youth is a key component in the development of new musical styles. Take rock and roll, for example. Forty years ago, you would have been hard-pressed to find open-tuned guitars in your pop record collection. Then Keith Richards of the Rolling Stones introduced a lot of people to open G: DGDGBD by way of great Mississippi bluesmen like Son House, Charley Patton, and Robert Johnson. Jimmy Page of Led Zeppelin brought DADGAD to rock and roll, derived from traditional music of the British Isles and English folk artists of that time like Burt Jansch. Jimi Hendrix … wait a minute, didn't he play in standard tuning? Well not exactly, and here is an example or two of the childlike curiousity for altered tuning I spoke of earlier. A few guys in the late 1960s played their guitars detuned by a half step: "E♭A♭D♭G♭B♭E♭" (Hendrix), or like Tony Iommi of Black Sabbath, a whole step down: DGCFAD. They did this not because these tunings were based on some earlier folk music but because it made an electric guitar sound really awesome. You need a better reason?!

The intuitive alteration of standard tuning has had the most profound influence on modern guitar styles. The entire heavy metal genre and all of its many subcategories (speed metal, death metal, stoner metal, norwegian black metal, etc.) would probably never have happened if we had all stuck to the "Mel Bay Guitar Method." Some players have even altered the design and construction of the guitar itself to accommodate some extreme tunings, for example: Munky from the band Korn with a low B-string on a 7-string guitar and Matt Pike of High On Fire with a 9-string guitar – three low strings plus three sets of double strings on the treble side.

Okay, so let's say that you are not the "Dark Lord of Heavy Metal." In standard tuning, you can rock along with AC/DC, and you've written some pretty cool songs to jam to – but your playing is kind of in a rut. Grab your low E-string and detune it a whole tone down. It should sound an octave below your D-string. Dude! Now you can play power chords with one finger, and how bad-ass is that regular old D chord with that low note in it?

Altering your tuning from standard can do a lot of things for ya. It can make a song more accommodating to your hands, change the colour of those same three chords you've been rocking, and open your ears to new musical possibilities. I have found it especially good for rekindling that initial fascination with an instrument that has become so familiar in my hands. So grab a couple of tuning pegs and start twisting. Who knows?

Gordie Johnson is best known for his work with Canadian rock group Big Sugar. He has produced and recorded dozens of records for artists such as Gov't Mule, Taj Mahal, Joel Plaskett, The Trews, and Nashville Pussy. He is presently living in Austin, TX and can be seen with his new band GRADY rocking out in open C: CGCGCC.
www.shadygrady.net.

Colours Of The Melodic Minor Part I

by John Stowell

Guiratist John Stowell is based in Portland, OR. He has taught and performed internationally for 30 years. He plays three signature custom guitars made for him by Hofner (sigature model Verythin JS) and luthiers Mike Doolin and Jim Soloway. His Mel Bay book/DVD Jazz Guitar Mastery *was published in 2006 and his CD ROM* Modern Chrod Melody *was released by Truefire in 2007. Questions or comments can be directed to John at his website (www.johnstowell.com).*

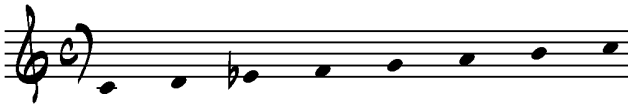
The melodic minor scale as it is applied in jazz (Example 1) is simply a major scale with the third flatted. The basic arpeggio (Example 2) uses the chord tones of a simple minor major 7th chord (1-mi3rd- perf5th- maj7th). These are very useful sounds because they have many applications as substitutions, assuming completely different harmonic identities in a wide variety of settings over different chord qualities. By labelling and breaking down different component parts of the harmony, I'll help you find some wonderful sounds and give you the tools to access and use the information creatively. When playing anything new, my advice is to play slowly to give your ears and fingers a chance to absorb what you're executing.

Repetition of any pattern generates muscle memory and ear training simultaneously.

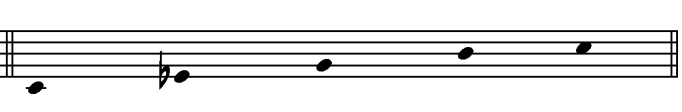
The most straightforward application of the melodic minor is over a minor chord. Sometimes a melodic minor is called for in a progression, usually specified as minor major 7th. I frequently use that sound when I see a minor chord in a chart, using the major 7th as a passing tone if the interval is not contained in the chord. Example 3 illustrates an idea taken from the melodic minor alone, and Example 4 combines the melodic minor with the dorian minor utilizing major and minor 7th intervals together over a minor chord. Generally, my preference in soloing is to use the wider intervals of arpeggios.

You will develop your own set of parameters as you experiment and listen to other players. In addition to playing the melodic minor in the same key over a minor chord, I will also use the melodic minor a whole tone below. This is the 2nd mode of the melodic minor (dorian flat 2 or phrygian 6). In Example 5, I'm combining B♭ melodic minor and C minor 7 (dorian), in the process generating a C minor with a flat 2. I'll use this sound frequently over a minor chord; the combination of the the flat 2 and major 6 is a nice colour. I'll also use melodic minor chords in the same key and a whole tone below a minor to create some variations on basic minor chords. Example 6 uses C m maj7 and B♭ m maj7 to illustrate some possibilities.

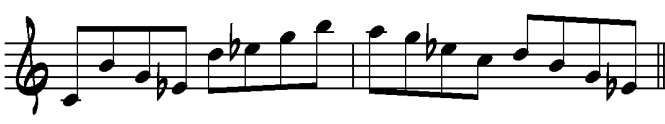
Ex. #1



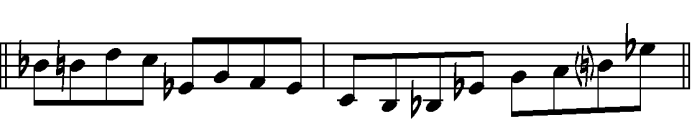
Ex. #2



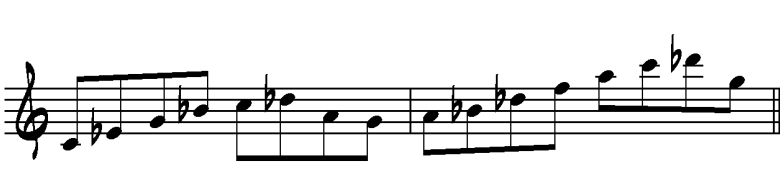
Ex. #3 C Melodic Minor



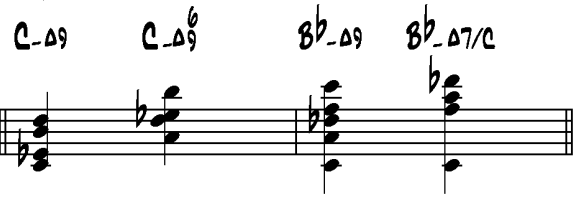
Ex. #4 C Melodic Minor combined w/C Dorian Minor



Ex. #5 B♭ Melodic Minor/C Dorian



Ex. #6



Colours Of The Melodic Minor Part II

by John Stowell

The melodic minor creates some interesting embellishments/tensions over a major chord. The third mode of the melodic minor is lydian augmented, and this translates to using the relative melodic minor over a major chord. The raised 5th is a more dissonant tonality than the flatted 5th, but both sounds are used extensively in modern jazz.

I utilize this harmony frequently over a major chord, referencing the altered 5ths as passing tones if necessary. Example 7 uses A melodic minor played over C major and Example 8 combines A melodic minor and C major; the perfect 5th and raised and lowered 5th are all employed.

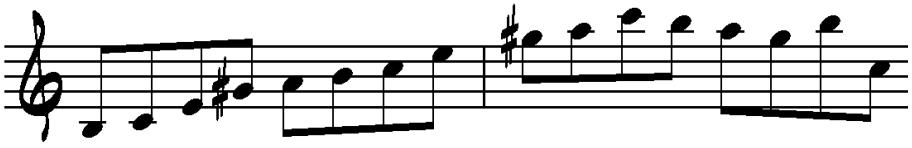
The sixth mode of the melodic minor is locrian #2; using my reasoning, this translates to using the melodic minor a minor third above a half-diminished chord. The flat 2 of the original locrian scale becomes a major 2nd in the process. Example 9 illustrates this sound, combining C locrian and E♭ melodic minor.

The melodic minor works in four keys over a dominant chord. The seventh, second, fifth, and fourth modes of the scale (super locrian, sus flat 9, mixolydian flat 6, and lydian dominant respectively) all generate different amounts of tension which can be used to move away from and back to the original dominant sound, or be employed to create resolution if the chord is functioning as a V chord. I think of using the melodic minor a half step above (super locrian, all of the tensions), whole tone below (sus flat/#9), 4th above (Mix. flat 6), and 5th above (lydian dominant).

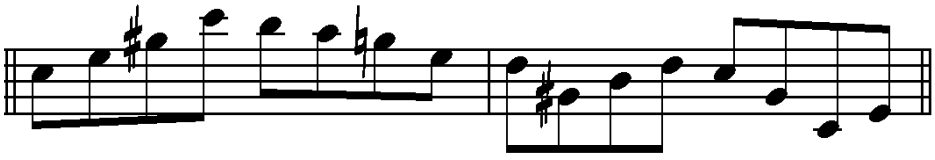
With enough repetition, the theoretical understanding of the melodic minor as a substitute scale is replaced by an ability to locate and ultimately apply all of the extensions and alterations creatively and intuitively. Hopefully, my ideas will serve as catalysts for your own explorations of extended harmony. Practice in a shared learning environment with friends – discussing theory and applying new harmony in the context of a tune to give you some practical applications. Create an atmosphere in which it's fun to practice and play, and your improvement will happen organically. Good luck.

Guitarist John Stowell is based in Portland, OR; he has taught and performed internationally for 30 years. He plays three signature custom guitars made for him by Hofner (sigature model Verythin JS) and luthiers Mike Doolin and Jim Soloway. His Mel Bay book/DVD Jazz Guitar Mastery *was published in 2006 and his CD ROM* Modern Chord Melody *was released by Truefire in 2007. Questions or comments can be directed to John at his website (www.johnstowell.com).*

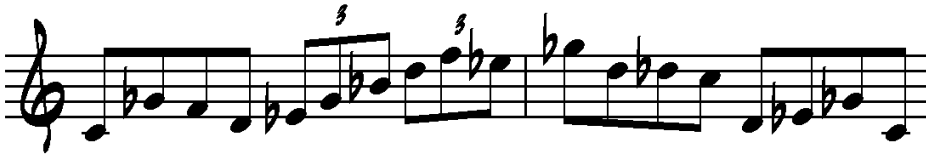
Example 7 A Melodic Minor As CMAJ7



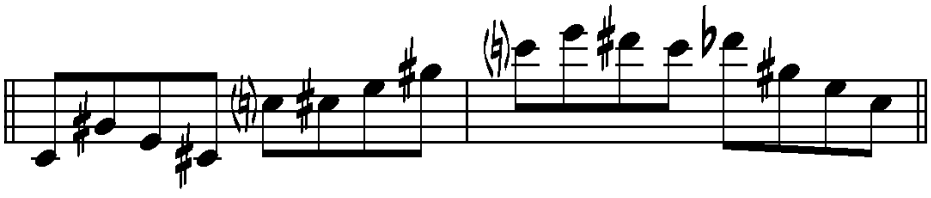
Example 8 A Melodic Minor As w/CMAJ7



Example 9 C Locrian w/E♭ Melodic Minor



Example 10 C Dominant 7 w/C# Melodic Minor



Adjusting The Truss Rod Part I

by Juan Coronado

A few days ago, I was at the repair department of a large musical instrument store waiting to buy some parts that I needed. In front of me, there was an irate man raising his voice about the guitar that he kept bringing back to fix because the neck was bent and the action on the guitar was horrible. This customer was demanding a new guitar, insisting that his was defective.

What he did not know was that when you live in a country with seasons that bring drastic changes in humidity, chances are that the necks of your guitars and bass guitars are going to bend just about every six months.

I'm surprised to see so many people afraid of tweaking and fixing their own instruments. If you are one of these people – have no fear. Hopefully, you won't need to surrender your guitar for weeks to the tech guys at your favourite music store because you'll learn how to do it yourself. Once you get good at this, it'll only take a few minutes to make the needed adjustments.

I teach guitar and one of the first things I like to share with my students when we talk about maintenance is to not be afraid of damaging your guitar. It is made of a big, strong piece of wood and it takes a lot to destroy it. You would have to hit it very hard and more than once to crack it open.

In order to set up your guitar, you'll need to learn about the parts that make up the guitar, what they are for, and how they work. After that, all you need is a bit of common sense.

It is very important to check your guitar's neck, because just about every summer and winter your guitar might need a neck adjustment.

Why it's important to adjust your guitar's neck:

1. A straight neck will improve your guitar's intonation.
2. A well-adjusted neck will allow you to lower your action without getting a buzzing sound.
3. Your guitar will feel great, and it will be easier and more comfortable to play.

How to check your guitar's neck:

1. Hold the guitar in playing position.

2. To examine the neck's curvature, simultaneously press any one string on both the first and last fret of that string using both hands. (I usually check the 1st and 6th strings.)

Juan Coronado made Guitar Player *magazine's "Top Ten Guitar Heroes" list in 2005 and 2007. He won the award for Best Instrumental Album from the Durham Region Music Society in 2005, Best World Music from the Ontario Independent*

3. Look down towards the middle of your guitar's neck.

4. If the string is too far from the fretboard, it means the neck is bent in a concave way (also known as an underbow).

5. If the string is touching all the frets, then the neck could be bent in a convex way (also known as an overbow).

Adjusting The Truss Rod Part II

by Juan Coronado

What to do if the neck is bent:

1. Locate the truss rod. The truss rod is used to stabilize and adjust the lengthwise forward curvature of the neck. It is a steel rod that runs inside the neck and has a bolt that can be used to adjust its tension.

2. Access the truss rod. The truss rod can be accessed and adjusted through an adjustment bolt. This bolt is usually located at the heel of the neck by the headstock. Some guitars have it located on the other end of the neck towards the body. In some acoustic guitars, the access point is in the sound hole. Sometimes the bolt is exposed, and sometimes it's behind a cover plate. If it's covered, the plate simply needs to be unscrewed.

3. Understand how a truss rod works. When the truss rod is loosened, it allows the neck to bend a little in response to the tension of the strings. When the truss rod is tightened, it straightens the neck by resisting the tension of the strings.

4. Get the right tool to adjust the truss rod. The truss rods of most guitars can be adjusted using an allen key. Some guitars use hex keys. When in doubt, find out which tool you need by checking the website of your guitar manufacturer. It is very important to get the exact size, or you run the risk of ruining the bolt's socket. If the key feels a bit loose, get a larger key.

5. Adjust the truss rod. To correct an overbow (convex neck shape), loosen the truss rod and decrease the tension by turning the adjustment bolt counter-clockwise. To correct an underbow (concave neck shape), turn the bolt clockwise. Don't turn the bolt too much at once. After each 1/4 turn, examine the curvature of neck by doing the same the same test as before (simultaneously pressing one string on both the first and last fret of that string using both hands and then checking). When you adjust the truss rod, make sure that the strings are not touching every fret. You know you're done when you can see just enough space to be able to pass a hair between the test string and the centre frets while testing the neck's curvature. This hair space is needed to keep the neck straight enough to be almost flat while ensuring that you don't go too far and end up with an overbow.

I've outlined the basics of adjusting truss rods. You should be able to find more information on any specific problems you may encounter with your particular guitar model on the web. It would be a good idea to check your manufacturer's website for set-up recommendations for your specific guitar. I have created a short video version of this article, which can be seen at www.juancoronado.com. All the best as you learn how to set up your guitar! You'll see that you could have saved time and money all along by adjusting the truss rod yourself. Also know that you'll only get better with each adjustment you do.

Juan Coronado made Guitar Player *magazine's "Top Ten Guitar Heroes" list in 2005 and 2007. He won the award for Best Instrumental Album from the Durham Region Music Society in 2005, Best World Music from the Ontario Independent Music Awards in 2007, and was named the Best International Artist by the Orange County Independent Music Awards in 2008. His CD* Renewal *is available on iTunes, CD Baby, and at his website: www.juancoronado.com.*

Solos

by Alex Lifeson

It's really just trying to get a sense of excitement and pacing. That's the way I look at all my solos.

In a song like "Freewill," I'll try to play that solo the same every night. I was always disappointed to go hear bands and a favourite part of the song was the solo – and they'd play it completely differently. So, in Rush, we've always tried to be pretty close to what the recording was unless we felt we were making it better.

I suppose I have as much room as I want to take, but I like the challenge of being consistent from night to night and staying within the context of what the true nature of the song is. It's especially true in a song like "Freewill" or "Limelight," for example, because fans would be disappointed to hear something else there when you fully expect that part to be there. And Rush fans are pretty … you know.

In some of the earlier stuff like "Working Man," for example, there's a little more freedom, but, again, quite honestly I try to stick to what the solos were originally meant to do in every song.

We all depend on each other to be consistent.

Live Mix

To be honest with you, I don't think the other members of the band listen to my solos very much. Everybody's got a different mix in his monitors. Neil has very little guitar in his mix at all, and Geddy has a very clean, very low mix of guitar in his monitors as well. We don't really need each other for those sorts of things. Generally, Geddy and I need kick, hi hat for tempo, and the rest is whatever you'd like it to be. We all have very different kinds of set-ups.

Myself, I like a very natural sound – what you'd imagine a live performance would be. I have drums and I have guitar split on the left with a 12-millisecond delay on the right, so I have a pseudo stereo. Even though we run stereo on stage, I take that stereo right side and delay it a bit to get a double-tracking type of thing with the right side down a little bit and the left side up, with bass and vocals in the middle. Geddy's mix is quite different. It's very dry with a lot of vocal, bass, hi hat, kick, a snare, a little bit of the other drums, and, as I said, a very little bit of guitar. Neil's mix is almost all drums with some vocals, a tiny bit of bass, and a tiny bit of guitar.

Photo by: Andrew McNaughton

Signature Settings

I'm pretty set in my ways these days. I use a TC Electronic 1210 for my chorus. I've always used that unit and it does a great job – I must have had that same unit for 15 or 18 years now. Delays – they vary between probably 100 milliseconds to 700 milliseconds, depending again what the song is. I think generally 375 to about 450 milliseconds is my range for most of our songs and the tempos that I use. I get a little bit of flanging from the G-Force as well, but my effects set-up is pretty simple these days.

I use three channels on the Hughes & Kettner. There's a clean channel, and a crunchy, all-purpose channel in which I do everything, in fact. I like to roll down the volume on the guitar and then bring it up for solos. The third channel is extremely over-driven, and I use it mostly as an effect. Basically, I rely on those first two channels that I mentioned. I wouldn't even need that third channel if it died or something – wouldn't even miss it.

Inspiration In The Studio

I don't know if there's one thing I listen to before anything else. I listen in context of what the point of the song is, what the emotional value of the song is, and what the song is about lyrically. I try to make my solos connect to the song – it's not just trying to be flashy and throwing something around. I've always thought of the solo as a very integral part, a musical part, of the song. Geddy and Neil play off that as well. When we're running things down and doing just a mock solo just to have something to refer to, they'll work their parts out around that. Quite often, when the time comes to do the real solo, I already have a really good foundation of what I'm going to play over, rhythmically and note-wise.

It's a little more instinctive than running scales and modes over certain things. It's more emotionally driven. Typically, I would do maybe a half-dozen or eight takes, then we would comp a solo out of that, and then we would have another go. It depends on my mood and what we've done. Lately, I've been getting a lot of my solos in rehearsals when we were writing. We sort of grow used to them and they become a little more precious, and therefore they stick around to the end. But like I said, I want it to be a part of the song – I don't want it to be just an exercise in notes.

Alex Lifeson is the guitarist in the iconic Canadian rock band Rush, as well as a producer, an Officer of the Order of Canada, and a trustee of the Domenic Troiano Guitar Scholarship.

Versatility & Your Own Style Part I

by Luke Doucet

Regardless of whether you ask people or not, when you're a young musician there are always people around you giving you advice, whether it's solicited or not. The advice would range from "Don't learn anybody else's guitar parts because then you'll sound like them" to "Learn as much of other people's work as you can. You'll enrich your palette and then your personality will eventually trumpet." You're often torn in the early stages. I've dealt with that too – I wanted to learn Albert Lee, Charlie Christian, Mark Knopfler, Stevie Ray Vaughn, and Brian Setzer because it's fun – yet I didn't want to just end up sounding like somebody else.

My father was a jazz guitarist. We actually had a gigging cover band together when I was 15. We got a gig where we needed an adult to be responsible for us, and as soon as he joined the band we basically became a blues band overnight. We were playing Albert Collins, B.B. King, Albert King, Freddy King, Little Charlie and the Night Cats, Jimmy Witherspoon, and Robin Ford. There was a whole bunch of Stevie Ray in there because, of course, this was the late '80s and I was a teenager, so how could you not be into Stevie Ray? I learned everything I could by these artists and more.

I later moved to Vancouver, and I didn't tell anybody out there that I played blues at all. I didn't want to do that. I was finding myself, specifically looking for a new voice. I ended up throwing my Stratocaster in the closet and playing a couple of really beat-up Harmony guitars. All of a sudden, I found all the things that I had been practicing for years were no longer relevant. All the country licks and all the blues licks fell away, and slowly, over the years, I started to find the things that I did that didn't sound like anybody else.

Here are some techniques that I've studied and eventually evolved into something of my own:

Travis Picking

I think there are two important things. First, I don't think you can really get into the modern "alt country" world without having a fair grasp of the Merle Travis fingerpicking approach, where the thumb is alternating bass lines. I think of it as in terms of groupings of four stings. Let's say you've got a C7 chord: I would focus on A-, D-, G-, and B-strings. Your thumb is alternating between the A-string and the D-string, and your index finger and your middle finger are alternating between the G-string and the B-string. It doesn't have to be fancy, but it can be. If you're interested in that world, being able to walk around through basic country songs (Johnny Cash stuff) with the thumb continuously moving bass notes is an important thing to be able to do.

Second of all, because I was learning from people like Albert Lee, Mark Knopfler, and Stevie Ray when I was a kid, it was really important to me to not just use a pick. That's obviously key to the whole chicken-picking vibe – you've got a pick going or just your thumb if you've got a long enough nail, but you also have to involve your fingers. I do the hybrid picking style: I use my pick (any kind of chromatic runs tend to just be the pick) and then when I want to jump strings I'll use my index finger or my ring finger. I have acrylic nails that I go to the local chop shop to get done. You can buy the stuff at Shoppers Drug Mart and do it yourself, but I've never done that. It's pretty funny – I walk in, get strange looks, and people eventually say, "Oh, you play guitar!" Yeah, so I have pretty long fake nails, but I don't always like the way they sound. In the studio it's a bit clicky, but it definitely enables me to do certain things live that I would not otherwise be able to do.

Slide

When I'm playing my own shows and singing, I don't play slide much because I find that it's a bit of a jump if you're playing rhythm guitar and then you want to go to slide. Maybe I'm just lazy!

I tend to play slide more when I'm working with other people on their material. I approach slide initially the Duane Allman way, where I play in standard tuning, and I've found that's been a really great way to become more familiar with chord inversions. I still practice it a lot. I'll play Bb in first position, and then play all of them. When you're playing with a slide, you're obviously limited to anything that can happen in a straight line unless you're playing notes behind the slide – sort of Sunny Landreth-style. Typically, I'm playing a basic first-position A shape with my slide and that's my home base for my major chord, and then your basic E minor chord will be my minor. So, on the G-, B-, and E-strings I can slide on the minor chord.

When I'm playing slide in more of a rootsy or a Delta approach, I use D, A, D, F#, A, D tuning. I'll use open G like Keith Richards to a lesser degree. I'm more fond of the open D, but that's probably just because I tend to sing in E more than I sing in G – I can use open D or I can D major chord and then put a capo at the second fret. Lately, I've been just tuning the A-string up a whole tone, the D-string up a whole tone, and the G-string up a semitone, which gives you an E major chord – same intervals, same fingering as the D, A, D, F #, A, D, but it's E, B, E, G#, B, E. It's basically an E major triad and I'll use that for slide.

Play a couple of notes when they're appropriate. If you're playing blues, for example, have yourself in a tuning like one of the tunings I've referred to, and two or three well-placed notes are really all you need. Listen to Ry Cooder or Bonnie Raitt – they don't play very much.

Most young people just getting into discovering an instrument tend to overplay because you play more when you lack confidence. This is sort of ironic because I overplay constantly – and I've been doing this for 15 years. That's the beauty of the slide!

Luke Doucet has toured extensively throughout the US, Canada, and Europe and/or recorded in various capacities (performer/producer/songwriter) on albums with the following artists: Sarah McLachlan, Danny Michel, Blue Rodeo, and many others. Luke Doucet and the White Falcon is set to continue touring Blood's Too Rich *in 2009.*

Luke Doucet is a Canadian singer-songwriter and guitarist.
Visit www.lukedoucet.com for more information.

by Luke Doucet

VERSATILITY & Your Own Style Part II

For the issue of whether I learn other people's stuff or try to find my own sound, I think that to try and answer that question before it's time is not helpful. I'm a firm advocate of learning from as many different sources as possible, because eventually your thing will come out. All the greats learned from the people before them.

The Dick Dale Surf Sound

In my world, it's all pick. In fact, arguably the only reason I still use a pick is when I want to hit the low E and A strings and make them really sing the way Dick Dale would. To capture that sound, play as far back towards the bridge as you can without getting in the way of the bridge plate or back pickup. I find single coil pickups are almost essential for this sound, although I'm using a Gretsch, which technically has humbuckers, though they're low-output humbuckers.

As far as effects go in terms of surf, the only thing you want is reverb. I know people will use a snapback echo sometimes, though I think in terms of tonalities, a dry amp with a snapback echo, like somewhere between 100 and 160 milliseconds, is really great for rockabilly, whereas for surf, a Fender amp with a spring reverb is the way to go.

Maintaining Your Tone On The Road

I do a lot of gigs where I fly and I'm using back line gear, and my request is a vintage or reissued black-faced Deluxe Reverb, but I can make due with just about any amp that has reverb. I don't use effects. What I want is an amp that has tubes in it that's small enough that I can turn the volume up past five or six, so that it's just on the cusp between clean and dirty. When I play light, it's clean, and when I hit it hard it breaks up a little bit.

I used to carry around a pedal board with delays, tremolos, compressors, and all the bells and whistles. Now, the central component to my rig is the Tonebone Switchbone, which enables me to switch between amps. The great thing about the Switchbone, especially when using single coil pickups through amps on the brink of breaking up, is that it has a clean boost function where you can either boost it 5dB or 10dB. It's just a question of adding a second amp when I want a bit of oomph.

Writing Around Leads

I do play acoustic guitar a lot and I write a lot of my stuff on acoustic guitar, but because I've spent so much of my life as a side player for other people, I'm pretty quick to take a song that's got whatever shape of chords and completely rewrite it or transpose it into something different. Doing this, I can formulate electric guitar parts to something fairly quickly.

If the song is written with a capo at the fifth fret and I'm playing in C, which up there is in F, I'll play the electric guitar part in the first position and I'll write something around that. Then, when I sing the song live, I'll probably perform it as a lead guitar player in a sense that I'll perform it in standard tuning even though it was probably conceived with a capo or something to that effect.

When I do write with the electric guitar, which is not uncommon, it's usually because I've written some kind of a riff or some kind of a hook and the song springs from that. I think it's a really integral component to the song – at least with the kind of music that I love, which is largely rooted in classic rock. By classic rock, I mean country, blues, rock, and folk rock. Those are the things that I like and so most of that music has some kind of a hook. I mean, you listen to "Paperback Writer" and there's this unbelievably fantastic hook. I think it's key.

Sometimes the hook is lyrical, sometimes it's a vocal melody, but I try and find an opportunity for the guitar to play a hook. I don't just mean so I can solo – I mean so that I can have a singable melody. When I go back into the guitar melody of a song like "Emily Please," which is from my second solo record *Broken (And Other Rogue States)*, people respond. I can feel people in the room responding because they recognize the hook. It's more fun to play hooks than it is to solo, so I'll often base my songwriting on those special hooks.

GUITARISTS READING SUGGESTIONS

30-DAY GUITAR WORKOUT BY JODY FISHER

30-Day Guitar Workout includes: daily warm-ups; lessons on right- and left-hand technique; exercises for chords, single notes, pickstyle and fingerstyle; a 30-day technical development plan for all guitarists.

https://www.musicbooksplus.com/30-Day-Guitar-Workout-p/ap196.htm

333 BOOK BY MIKE IHDE

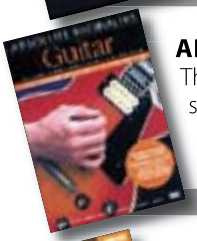
333 Licks, Tricks, and Techniques Every Guitarist Should Know.

https://www.musicbooksplus.com/333-Book-p/mlb1467.htm

A MODERN METHOD FOR GUITAR, VOLUME 1 – DVD BY LARRY BAIONE, WILLIAM LEAVITT

You will be guided through 14 complete lessons with Larry Baione, chair of Berklee's guitar department. It's like a year's worth of private guitar lessons at Berklee College of Music!

https://www.musicbooksplus.com/A-Modern-Method-for-Guitar-Volume-1-DVDb-p/hl5460.htm



ABSOLUTE BEGINNERS GUITAR DVD

This easy-to-follow guitar DVD tutor will take you step by step from first day exercises to playing along with a professional backing track.

https://www.musicbooksplus.com/Absolute-Beginners-Guitar-DVD-p/ms780.htm

BERKLEE JAZZ GUITAR CHORD DICTIONARY BY RICK PECKHAM

This chord dictionary from the assistant chair of Berklee's guitar department includes 100+ chord forms, from basic 7th chords to guide tone chords and triads over bass notes.

https://www.musicbooksplus.com/Berklee-Jazz-Guitar-Chord-Dictionary-p/hl6707.htm

BLUES GUITAR STEPS 1 & 2 DVD BY KEITH WYATT

Blues Guitar illustrates everything you need to get you started in the basics of the blues and features on-screen graphics and tablature plus a great band to demonstrate each point.

https://www.musicbooksplus.com/Blues-Guitar-Steps-1-2-DVD-p/wb908.htm

ELECTRIC GUITAR: THE ULTIMATE ELECTRIC GUITAR COURSE BY JOHN MCCARTHY

This program includes over 45 lessons with clear, easy-to-read explanations, photos and TAB diagrams; two CDs backing up each lesson; and 24/7 online lesson support.

https://www.musicbooksplus.com/ELECTRIC-GUITAR-The-Ultimate-Electric-Guitar-p/ms1190.htm

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Take your playing from ordinary to extraordinary with this all-encompassing book/CD pack for guitarists.

https://www.musicbooksplus.com/Stuff-Good-Guitar-Players-Should-Know-p/hl7502.htm

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