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AN ANALYSIS OF COMMERCIAL GUITAR STYLES
THROUGH THE STUDY OF NOTABLE LOS ANGELES SESSION MUSICIANS

By
EDWARD MITCHELL BENNETT

A RESEARCH PAPER

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Music in Commercial Guitar Performance
In the School of Music
of the College of Music and Performing Arts
Belmont University


NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

AUGUST 2021

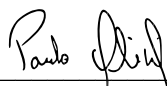
Submitted by Mitchell Bennett in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Music in Commercial Guitar Performance.

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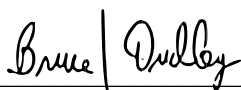
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Contents

Examples.....	iv
Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1: Methodology	5
Chapter 2: Steve Lukather	8
Chapter 3: Dan Huff.....	25
Chapter 4: Mike Landau	40
Chapter 5: Larry Carlton.....	56
Conclusion	74
References.....	78

Examples

Example 1.1. Measures 1-3 of the guitar solo “Running With the Night”	11
Example 1.2. Measures 4-6 of the guitar solo in “Running With the Night”	12
Example 1.3. Measures 7-9 of the guitar solo in “Running with the Night”	12
Example 1.4. Measure 1-3 of the guitar solo in “Back on the Road”	14
Example 1.5. Measure 4-6 of the guitar solo in “Back on the Road”	14
Example 1.6. Measure 7-9 of the guitar solo in “Back on the Road”	15
Example 1.7. Measures 1-3 of the guitar solo in “Physical”	15
Example 1.8. Measures 4-6 of the guitar solo in “Physical”	16
Example 1.9. Measures 7-9 of the guitar solo in “Physical”	16
Example 1.10. Measures 10-12 of the guitar solo in “Physical”	17
Example 1.11. Measures 13-15 of the guitar solo in “Physical”	17
Example 1.12. Measures 16-17 of the guitar solo in “Physical”	18
Example 1.13. Measures 1-3 of the verse in “Human Nature”	19
Example 1.14. Measures 7-12 of the verse in “Human Nature”	20
Example 1.15. Measures 13-15 of the Chorus in “Human Nature”	20
Example 1.16. Measures 17-19 from the intro to “Beat it”	21
Example 1.17. Measures 23-28 from the verse of “Beat it”	22
Example 2.1. Measures 1-3 of the guitar solo in “Angel with a Dirty Face”	27
Example 2.2. Measures 4-6 of the guitar solo in “Angel with a Dirty Face”	28
Example 2.3. Measures 7-9 of the guitar solo in “Angel with a Dirty Face”	29
Example 2.4. Measures 10-12 of the guitar solo from “Angel with a Dirty Face”	29

Example 2.5. Measures 13-15 of the guitar solo from “Angel with a Dirty Face”	30
Example 2.6. Measures 1-3 of the guitar solo of “Summer’s Comin’”	31
Example 2.7. Measures 4-7 of the guitar solo of “Summer’s Comin’”	31
Example 2.8. Measures 7-9 of the guitar solo of “Summer’s Comin’”	32
Example 2.9. Measures 10-12 of the guitar solo of “Summer’s Comin’”	32
Example 2.10. Measures 13-14 of the guitar solo of “Summer’s Comin’”	33
Example 2.11. Measures 16-17 of the guitar solo of “Summer’s Comin’”	33
Example 2.12. Measures 1-3 of the guitar solo in “I Don’t Wanna Live Without Your Love”	34
Example 2.13. Measures 4-6 of the guitar solo in “I Don’t Wanna Live Without Your Love”	34
Example 2.14. Measures 7-9 of the guitar solo in “I Don’t Wanna Live Without Your Love”	35
Example 2.15. Measures 1-3 of the verse in “Soul Provider”	36
Example 2.16. Measures 16-24 of the verse in “Soul Provider”	37
Example 2.17. Measures 1-8 of the verse in “Like a Prayer”	38
Example 3.1. Measures 1-3 of the guitar solo in “Bad Girl”	42
Example 3.2. Measures 4-6 of the guitar solo in “Bad Girl”	43
Example 3.3. Measures 7-9 of the guitar solo in “Bad Girl”	43
Example 3.4. Measures 10-12 of the guitar solo in “Bad Girl”	44
Example 3.5. Measures 13-15 of the guitar solo in “Bad Girl”	44
Example 3.6. Measures 16-17 of the guitar solo in “Bad Girl”	45
Example 3.7. Measures 1-3 of the guitar solo in “How am I Supposed to Live Without You”	46
Example 3.8. Measures 4-6 of the guitar solo in “How am I Supposed to Live Without You”	46

Example 3.9. Measures 7-9 of the guitar solo in “How am I Supposed to Live Without You”	47
Example 3.10. Measures 1-3 of the guitar solo in “They Danced”	47
Example 3.11. Measures 4-6 of the guitar solo in “They Danced”	48
Example 3.12. Measures 7-9 of the guitar solo in “They Danced”	48
Example 3.13. Measures 10-12 of the guitar solo in “They Danced”	49
Example 3.14. Measures 13-15 of the guitar solo in “They Danced”	49
Example 3.15. Measures 16-18 of the guitar solo in “They Danced”	50
Example 3.16. Measures 19-21 of the guitar solo in “They Danced”	51
Example 3.17. Measures 22-24 of the guitar solo in “They Danced”	51
Example 3.18. Measures 25-27 of the guitar solo in “They Danced”	51
Example 3.19. Measures 1-9 of the intro from “Wild Things Run Fast”	52
Example 3.20. Measures 11-15 of the verse from “Wild Things Run Fast”	53
Example 3.21. Measures 16-21 of the verse from “Wild Things Run Fast”	54
Example 4.1. Measures 1-3 of the guitar solo in “Kid Charlemagne”	58
Example 4.2. Measures 5-7 of the guitar solo in “Kid Charlemagne”	58
Example 4.3. Measures 8-9 of the guitar solo in “Kid Charlemagne”	59
Example 4.4. Measures 10-11 of the guitar solo in “Kid Charlemagne”	59
Example 4.5. Measures 12-13 of the guitar solo in “Kid Charlemagne”	60
Example 4.6. Measures 14-15 of the guitar solo in “Kid Charlemagne”	60
Example 4.7. Measures 5-7 of the guitar solo in “Kid Charlemagne”	60
Example 4.8. Measures 18-19 of the guitar solo in “Kid Charlemagne”	61
Example 4.9. Measures 21-23 of the guitar solo in “Kid Charlemagne”	61
Example 4.10. Measures 1-3 of the guitar solo in “Don’t Take Me Alive”	62
Example 4.11. Measures 4-6 of the guitar solo in “Don’t Take Me Alive”	62

Example 4.12. Measures 7-9 of the guitar solo in “Don’t Take Me Alive”	63
Example 4.13. Measures 10-12 of the guitar solo in “Don’t Take Me Alive”	63
Example 4.14. Measures 13-15 of the guitar solo in “Don’t Take Me Alive”	63
Example 4.15. Measures 16-18 of the guitar solo in “Don’t Take Me Alive”	64
Example 4.16. Measures 19-21 of the guitar solo in “Don’t Take Me Alive”	64
Example 4.17. Measures 22-23 of the guitar solo in “Don’t Take Me Alive”	65
Example 4.18. Measures 1-3 of the guitar solo in “Spiral”	65
Example 4.19. Measures 4-6 of the guitar solo in “Spiral”	66
Example 4.20. Measures 7-9 of the guitar solo in “Spiral”	66
Example 4.21. Measures 10-12 of the guitar solo in “Spiral”	67
Example 4.22. Measures 13-15 of the guitar solo in “Spiral”	67
Example 4.23. Measures 16-18 of the guitar solo in “Spiral”	68
Example 4.24. Measures 19-21 of the guitar solo in “Spiral”	68
Example 4.25. Measures 22-24 of the guitar solo in “Spiral”	69
Example 4.26. Measures 25-27 of the guitar solo in “Spiral”	69
Example 4.27. Measures 28-30 of the guitar solo in “Spiral”	70
Example 4.28. Measures 31-33 of the guitar solo in “Spiral”	70
Example 4.29. Measures 1-9 of the verse in “Help Me”	71
Example 4.30. Measures 10-15 of the verse in “Help me”	72

Introduction

In this research paper, I analyzed the careers of several of Los Angeles' most notable session guitar players. A session is a period of time that an artist or company books within a studio in order to make a recording. The musicians hired to play on the recordings are called session musicians. The session guitarists I selected to study are versatile across many styles as a matter of necessity. I set out to find the commonalities in their understanding of music and playing styles in order to better understand what is needed to be a successful session musician. The musicians included in this study have all had esteemed careers and have been able to transcend the changing landscape of being a session musician.

The guitarists included in this study are Larry Carlton, Steve Lukather, Dan Huff, and Michael Landau. For the chapters on each of these artists, several of their works will be analyzed in detail. Aspects of musicality will be discussed for each musician through the analysis of lead and rhythm parts that were transcribed from two or three recordings on which they played. Playing technique, tone, phrasing, and note choices will be analyzed for each guitarist.

In beginning this exploration into the careers of these acclaimed session musicians, it is important to first understand the industry in which they work. To understand the industry, one should understand how it began and the context in which it

currently exists. Commercial music has historically been produced in Los Angeles, Nashville, Muscle Shoals, New York, and Detroit. Each of these cities has a selection of large recording studios where a majority of the commercial music was recorded. Each city has a group of musicians that are associated with the sounds of the recordings produced there. The Nashville A-Team, The Wrecking Crew of Los Angeles, The Funk Brothers of Detroit, and The Muscle Shoals Rhythm Section are all historical examples of groups of session musicians that are synonymous with the sounds created in the cities in which they worked (Gilbert 2007). These groups of musicians often worked out of the same studio every day, recording music for various record companies. Eventually, their music was heard on the radio, television, and later in motion pictures. Studios directly employed groups of musicians as accompanists for their various customers. Recording time was “expensive” and as a result, the musicians had to be sharp and on-call as studios were often working around the clock. The recordings would often be recorded live with the band playing in the studio tracking room due in part to the limited recording technology of the 1950s and 1960s. These demanding conditions required musicians to be at the top of their game both with their reading skills and improvisation. The author Strandring said “A studio musician is hired to bring composed music to life spontaneously and creatively. He belongs to the small group of intelligent, responsible members of the music profession whose job is constantly on the line. It is often said that a musician is only as good as his last session” (Strandring 1994). For a session musician having the ability to play their line on the first take was a must. This level of musicianship became the standard that was expected of session musicians going forward.

In the music industry, there are bands and there are individual artists. Bands are made up of a group of musicians that create music together and are all generally involved in the recording process. The recording process for an artist is very different—they select the musicians they want to play on their recordings with the help of a producer. They select musicians based on the sonic characteristics they are looking for. Often, their choice of musicians can change from song to song and album to album. Unlike musicians that play together in a band setting, session musicians will often record with musicians whom they have not played with previously. They most often will not have heard the songs before the day of recording, which means they have to create their musical parts on the spot. Additionally, they have to handle criticism well. If they create a part that the artist doesn't like, they need to be able to drop it immediately and come up with a different idea. As a result, they need to have a strong understanding of musical language as well as the ability to take a person's verbal description of a musical idea and create it on their instrument. Session musicians need to be chameleons of style, able to play convincingly in any style that is requested. They also need to be able to create various tones on their instrument in an instant. Being a session musician requires a unique skillset. There are many great musicians and great performers, but not everyone is cut out to be a session musician (Laurier 2015).

As technology has advanced, the number of musicians needed has diminished. Great recordings can now be made from the comfort of one's home, therefore allowing session players to work efficiently and avoid traveling. As a result, first-call session musicians can play on even more recordings in a day. The result is that there is less

demand for new session players to join the industry. Musical tastes are also shifting in the pop music genre and the need for session musicians is diminishing due to the popularity of sampling. Sounds that used to require a full string section can now be created using a MIDI keyboard. Even though the industry is changing, the musicians I have selected continue to flourish.

I researched these guitarists so that insight could be developed into the elements of musicality that it takes to be a successful session musician. My research sought to examine what aspects of these artists' stylistic approaches developing guitar players should apply to their own playing. These guitarists are all virtuosos in their own right, but it often was not their displays of flashy, virtuosic playing that got them the call for these sessions (Bruner 1982). Therefore, what is it about their playing that made them the first call for songs that was sure to be a charting success? Are there factors in their being hired other than their musicianship? These are the questions that I sought to answer in my research.

Chapter 1: Methodology

The guitarists included in this study were chosen based on their commercial success and musical abilities. Commercial success can be defined by the number of records sold, or where a particular song charted on Billboard's Top 100. The concept of defining a great guitar player presents a unique challenge as it is dependent on the listener's perspective. Beyond the subjective nature of preference, there are tangible elements of musicality and technique that can be analyzed to determine the skill level of a guitar player. Speed and complexity of rhythm are elements of technique that can be defined numerically. For instance, sixteenth notes executed at 220 beats per minute is a speed which most guitar players would find extremely challenging. Often, it is when a player has the ability to catch the ear of the listener and create memorable moments through their playing that they are considered skillful. Elements that catch a listener's attention include timing, phrasing, note choices, and acts of instrumental virtuosity.

The final measure of success that will be considered is the impact a player's body of work has had on other musicians. All of the guitar players in this study not only had a lasting impact on their respective genres but also inspired a future generation of musicians. It is important to note that all of the guitarists mentioned have launched solo careers from their work as studio musicians, which may also be seen as a token of success.

Chapters three to six start with a brief history of the session musicians' careers as well as the songs and records which they played on that achieved the most commercial success. Next, several compositions were chosen for each player that encapsulate the intricacies of their playing and the elements of what make them a great guitar player.

For each selection, a transcription of both rhythm and lead parts is provided as well as harmonic and melodic analyses. Areas of study included the layering techniques that often resulted in chord tones being omitted and added to create sounds and textures; the guitarists' use of space or the lack thereof; and what scales were used to create solos and lead lines, as well as how they relate to the overall harmony of the song. The guitar tone was analyzed to uncover what gear was used to achieve the sounds heard on the record. Guitar tone is another element of what made these musicians desirable to hire. Each guitarist has a unique sound that acts as their signature. However, they also must have the ability to craft a sound that fits the sonic characteristics of a particular song to meet the desires of the artist whom they are recording for. Through this analysis of melody, harmony, technique, and timbre, an understanding of the unique elements of musicality each player possessed will be uncovered and defined.

Examples of songs that will be analyzed for lead work include Clint Black's "Summer's Comin'," Michael Bolton's "How Am I supposed to Live Without You," and Maxus's "They Danced." These solos all feature elements of speed, time feel, phrasing, and tone that are associated with the session musicians that played them. Examples of songs that will be analyzed for rhythmic playing include Joni Mitchell's "Wild Things Run Fast," Michael Jackson's "Beat It," and Madonna's "Like a Prayer." These tracks are

all examples of how these players could create rhythm tracks that supported the groove and harmony of a song.

Finally, each chapter concludes by summarizing the commonalities found across their playing from several tracks. How the player approaches things such as phrasing, time feel, and tone will be addressed. From this, I will present some of the traits that made them a sought-after session musician.

Chapter 2: Steve Lukather

Background

Steve Lukather is a musician, guitarist, vocalist, composer, and producer who was born in Los Angeles in 1957. His interest in music started at a young age when he began playing guitar and later the piano and drums. Lukather's early musical inspiration was drawn from the Beatles after receiving a copy of "Meet the Beatles" at the age of seven. Lukather was a self-taught musician; he was later influenced by his older friends who would share their wisdom with him (Lukather 2018).

While attending high school, Lukather was introduced to fellow students Jeff Porcaro and David Paich. Porcaro and Paich had already started working as session musicians, which motivated Lukather to advance his own skills. At the age of fifteen, Lukather began to take lessons with Jimmy Wyble. The lessons focused on classical, jazz, and country playing. Lukather then learned to read music and began taking other music classes such as orchestration. It was at this point in his life that he became intrigued by the idea of being a session musician (Lukather 2018).

His friendship with Jeff Porcaro turned into a mentorship. Porcaro had already begun to work within the Los Angeles recording industry with the band Steely Dan. This meant that early on, Lukather was surrounded by world-class musicians. His high school band included John Pierce, Steve Porcaro, Carlos Vega, and Mike Landan—another musician that will be mentioned in this study of session guitarists. Being surrounded by

these other talented musicians had an impact on Lukather's development, but so did his location. The Los Angeles recording industry was booming during the 1980s, becoming one of the centers of music recording (Lukather 2018).

As a live musician, Lukather started his career touring with Boz Skaggs; this experience would lead him to create the band Toto with the same musicians that supported Skaggs. This group included David Paich, Jeff Porcaro, Bobby Kimball, and Steve Porcaro. The band served as an artistic outlet for Paich, Lukather, and Porcaro as they had become deeply entrenched in the session industry. All of them had become first-call musicians on their instruments and they were often hired to work together (Lukather 2018).

The number of albums on which Lukather is credited as playing is immense. Notable credits include albums by Diana Ross, Kenny Loggins, Olivia Newton John, Lionel Richie, Joni Mitchell, Cher, and Elton John among others. The greatest success in terms of album sales would be his work on Michael Jackson's *Thriller*, which would become one of the highest-selling albums to date (Clark 2020).

Gear

Steve Lukather's guitar tone is relatively simple in terms of its components. Like many players in the 1980s, he played a super Strat-style guitar. Guitars in this style reflect a Stratocaster body shape with a humbucking pickup in the bridge position and single coil pickups in the middle and neck position. This, paired with a Floyd Rose tremolo, makes for an incredibly versatile guitar used not only by Lukather but by many session musicians (Watson 2018). Additionally, the type of guitar strings that Lukather used were essential to his sound. Lukather played light-gauge strings, which allowed him

to bend notes in phrases very quickly and also achieve two-step bends with ease. These bends would be possible on heavier string gauges but would be incredibly difficult at the speed at which Lukather often utilized these bends (Guitar Techniques, 2011).

Lukather's choice of amplifier (often referred to as "amp") would change depending on the sound that was needed. The sound most associated with Lukather was created using a high wattage amp with plenty of available gain. Lukather is most noted for playing Mesa Boogie and Marshall amps throughout the 1980s. A loud, overdriven amp is necessary to achieve his tone. When you turn up the volume of an amp, you achieve greater harmonic complexity in the sound but also more sustain and feedback. This sustain was critical in Lukather's tone, formed by the relationship between the overdriven amp and his high-output pickups. This sustain allowed Lukather to play long, singing notes that would not lose volume as they rang out (Watson, 2018).

Pedals and rack-mounted effects were also crucial to his tone. Delay, reverb, and chorus were often applied to add different depths to the sound. Delay and reverb were used to add to the perception of "size" to the sound, making the guitar sound larger. They were also vital in smoothing out the tone and making notes flow together. This combination of effects removes the dead space in a lead line or chord by filling the space between with the previous notes being repeated or extended. The chorus effect was used to add movement and thickness to the sound. It works by doubling the guitar's sound and making the second one slightly out of tune with the first. As a result, a thicker sound can be heard, but one also perceives a small amount of movement from the two notes being out of tune. The result is a subtle warbling effect that is very musical. Chorus was used extensively with lead guitar sounds of 1980s pop and rock music. Finally, drive and boost

pedals may be added to push a guitar amp to further overdrive, increasing the harmonic complexity of overtones and adding sustain (Watson 2018).

Analysis

Lionel Richie: “Running With The Night”

This track was released in November 1983 and peaked at ninth on Billboard’s Hot 100 list (Billboard 2021). The guitar solo was removed when it aired on many adult contemporary radio stations. In a recent interview, Steve Lukather described an interaction with Lionel in which he plays the solo in a single take and Lionel insists that it be the one on the record saying “Lionel plays me the song, and I just started noodling through the whole thing. I said, ‘I think I’ve got it. Let’s do it.’ He said, ‘You just did.’ I said, ‘Come on! I was just kind of wanking my way through.’ He goes, ‘I love it. It’s fantastic! You don’t need to do it again.’ That was a 10-minute session” (Blackett 2020).

Example 1.1. Measures 1-3 of the guitar solo in “Running With the Night”

The image shows musical notation for the first three measures of a guitar solo. The top staff is a treble clef with a 4/4 time signature and an Am chord symbol. The bottom staff is a guitar fretboard diagram with strings T, A, and B labeled. The diagram shows fret numbers and bends: measure 1 has a bend from 15 to 15; measure 2 has a bend from 15 to 12, then a full bend to 17; measure 3 has a half-bend from 15 to 12, then a half-bend from 13 to 12.

The song is in the key of G and the solo starts 2:15. The solo is played over the changes of A minor (ii) and F major (flat-VII). The first measure of the solo utilizes notes from the G major pentatonic scale. The initial bend from D($\hat{5}$) to E($\hat{6}$) is a staple sound within the major pentatonic scale. The second measure has the bend release, further emphasizing the G pentatonic scale. The color within the Figure 1.0 comes from the half step bend from B($\hat{3}$) to C($\hat{4}$). This example takes a B note from G major pentatonic and

bends it into C, which is a chord tone of the A minor being played. Measure 3 emphasizes these same principles, showing a G major pentatonic with a passing chord tone C. Example 1.1 is an excellent example of the major pentatonic being used while also utilizing chord tones for additional color.

Example 1.2. Measures 4-6 of the guitar solo in “Running With the Night”

Example 1.2 starts by playing the change from A minor to F major. In measure 4, Lukather just plays the chord tones. To add flair to this simple melodic idea, he uses his tremolo bar to lower the G to F. The rest of Figure 1.1 consists of two different patterns within the G major pentatonic.

Example 1.3. Measures 7-9 of the guitar solo in “Running with the Night”

In Example 1.3, Lukather again uses the G pentatonic scale and ends by outlining an Am7 arpeggio. This, combined with the overlying harmony of F major, yields an Fmaj9 sound. The note choices throughout the solo emphasize the changes in a very

subtle way. Each time the F major occurs, a C is played, which is the only note outside of G major pentatonic played through the entire solo. The substitution of the C note instead of B yields a minor pentatonic sound at several moments within the solo.

This solo demonstrates a concept that can be heard in a lot of Lukather's solos: a slower melodic line followed by a burst of speed. It forms a build-up and release, creating contour within the solo. Measures 1-4 are lyrical and have a singable melody, which is followed by a short burst of sixteenth notes in measures 5-6. This is again repeated in the last four bars. This theme of a variation of melodic rhythm and virtuosity is evident throughout a lot of Lukather's work.

Another element of style that Lukather displayed in this solo is the technique of playing behind the beat. By placing the attack of the note slightly behind the beat, a laid-back feel is created within the lines. Paired with an underlying triplet subdivision, this behind-the-beat phrasing adds an extra level of emotion to the solo. Lukather routinely switched between a straight and swung feel within his solos which added sophistication to his lines.

Earth Wind and Fire: "Back on the Road"

"Back on the Road" features Steve Lukather on both rhythm and lead guitar. It's a blend of both rock and R&B styles. The intro features rock-guitar chording, which uses chords voiced across all six strings and is played with an overdriven guitar tone. Later, Lukather transitioned into a more traditional R&B sound. Elements of both of these styles are evident in the guitar solo that starts at 1:52.

Example 1.4. Measure 1-3 of the guitar solo in “Back on the Road”

The solo is in the key of C major with a modulation to B-flat major. It primarily alternates between C major and F major chords. Example 1.4 exhibits how the solo is based around notes from the C major pentatonic. The solo starts on beat two which gives the listener something they are not expecting. The solo primarily uses the pentatonic scale but every time the C major seven is played, B(7) is used to outline the major seven chord.

Example 1.5. Measure 4-6 of the guitar solo in “Back on the Road”

Example 1.5 denotes a speedy sixteenth note passage played by Lukather. Again, it is used between slower melodic material. Lukather uses a pattern within a C major scale to ascend the guitar neck, allowing him to access new musical ideas in a higher register. The speed of this passage is a great example of the flashy and virtuosic style that Lukather frequently demonstrated in his solos. In measure 6, Lukather plays whole step bends on eighth notes, a technique that is difficult to accomplish at high speeds.

Example 1.6. Measure 7-9 of the guitar solo in “Back on the Road”

The image shows musical notation for measures 7-9 of a guitar solo. The top system covers measures 7-9. Measure 7 is in C major (Cmaj7 chord), featuring a C major pentatonic scale (C, D, E, G, A). Measure 8 continues the pentatonic scale. Measure 9 is in B-flat major (Bbm7 chord), featuring a B-flat major pentatonic scale (Bb, C, D, F, G). The notation includes a treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. The guitar tablature staff shows fret numbers: (19) 17 20 17 20 20 (20) 20 18 17 18 19 for measure 7; 15 14 14 17 16 18 20 for measure 9. A 'full' pickup is indicated in measure 8. The bottom system shows measures 10-11, continuing the B-flat major pentatonic scale. The notation includes a treble clef staff with a key signature of two flats (Bb, Eb) and a 4/4 time signature. The guitar tablature staff shows fret numbers: 18 20 20 11. A '1/2' pickup is indicated in measure 10.

In Example 1.6, Lukather plays material based on the C major pentatonic before navigating the key change to B-flat using triads from the underlying harmony.

Olivia Newton John: “Physical”

The song “Physical” was recorded in 1981 as the first single for Olivia Newton John’s twelfth studio album. “Physical” would become a chart-topping success, spending ten weeks at the top of Billboard’s Hot 100 list. The song would later go on to be Billboard’s song of the year in 1982 (Caulfield 2016). The overdriven rhythm parts and the solo were recorded by Lukather. The guitar solo is in the key of C major and starts at 2:15.

Example 1.7. Measures 1-3 of the guitar solo in “Physical”

The image shows musical notation for measures 1-3 of a guitar solo. The top system covers measures 1-3. Measure 1 is in E minor (Em chord), featuring an E minor triad (E, G, B). Measure 2 is in C major (C chord), featuring a C major pentatonic scale (C, D, E, G, A). Measure 3 continues the C major pentatonic scale. The notation includes a treble clef staff with a key signature of no sharps or flats (C major) and a 4/4 time signature. The guitar tablature staff shows fret numbers: 5 7 5 7 9 7 8 for measure 1; 8 (8) 10 7 10 8 for measure 3. A 'full' pickup is indicated in measure 2. The bottom system shows measures 4-5, continuing the C major pentatonic scale. The notation includes a treble clef staff with a key signature of no sharps or flats (C major) and a 4/4 time signature. The guitar tablature staff shows fret numbers: 8 10 7 10 8.

Example 1.9 features Lukather using a pattern to ascend up a G major scale using only the B and E strings. This technique allows him to quickly traverse up the guitar neck, which is a great display of technical proficiency while also serving practical purpose of allowing him to reposition on the neck and access new musical ideas. The transition in measures 8-9 from duplet to triplet feel adds an instant feeling of forward propulsion. Once again, Lukather is playing behind the beat for this entire line, causing the line to feel relaxed even though it is fast and complex.

Example 1.10. Measures 10-12 of the guitar solo in “Physical”

Example 1.9 is the beginning of a buildup Lukather created for the end of the solo to become the climax. He is again using the G major scale over the C major chord which creates a Lydian sound. The B note is emphasized in measures 10 and 12, implying a major-seven harmony.

Example 1.10. Measures 13-15 of “Physical”

Example 1.10 is a further development of this build into the climax of the solo. The bends in measure 14 are where the climax begins. The one and a half step bends create a boisterous and unhinged sound when combined with the quarter note triplets.

Example 1.11. Measures 16-17 of “Physical”

The image shows musical notation for measures 16 and 17. The top staff is a treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). Measure 16 contains a quarter note triplet (F#, G, A) followed by a quarter note (B) with a flat (Bb), then a quarter note (C), and a quarter note (D). A wavy line above the first two notes is labeled 'gva'. A triplet bracket is under the first three notes. Measure 17 contains a quarter note triplet (E, F#, G) followed by a quarter note (A), then a quarter note (B), and a quarter note (C). A wavy line above the first two notes is labeled 'full'. The bottom staff is a guitar tablature with strings labeled T, A, B. Measure 16 has fret numbers (14), 15, 17, 17, 15, 16. Measure 17 has fret numbers 7, 10, 7, 10, 7, 8, 7, 9, 7, 9, 7, 10, 9, 7, 10, 7.

The final system of the solo is the climax. A fast, blues-inspired lick in measure 16 that uses dissonance and alternation between a duplet and triplet feel leads to a speedy run down an E minor pentatonic with F-sharp passing tones. This short blast of energy is used to bring the song into a chorus.

Rhythm Guitar

Finding examples of session work where Steve Lukather is listed as the only electric guitar is difficult. Often the backing tracks would be made in advance, and Lukather would be hired to come in and play the solos rather than him playing the rhythm and lead work. For the purpose of this study, only works in which he was a hired player are being considered. Listening to Lukather’s work with his band Toto can provide a more complete understanding of what his rhythm guitar style is like. His rhythm guitar abilities were vast, just like his leads. He was able to adapt to the genre of the song and write a part that was fitting for it.

Michael Jacksons: “Human Nature”

This song was originally written by Toto but would later be recorded by Michael Jackson in 1982. Originally, there was no guitar on the track—only keyboards—but the producer Quincy Jones asked that guitar be added (Blackett 2020). The guitar sound is clean and out of phase, meaning it was likely recorded on the neck and middle position pickup. There is a very light chorusing effect added which gives depth and thickness to the single note lines that may otherwise sound small and shrill.

Example 1.12. Measures 1-3 of the verse in “Human Nature”

The image shows a musical score for electric guitar in 4/4 time, covering measures 1 through 6 of the verse. The notation is split into two systems. The first system contains measures 1, 2, and 3. The second system contains measures 4, 5, and 6. Above the staff, the chords for each measure are indicated: Gadd9, A, Fmaj7, Em7, Gadd9, and A. The guitar part consists of single notes, often beamed together. The fretboard is shown with fingerings: 3-4 for Gadd9, 0-2-3-4 for A, 5-5-3-4 for Fmaj7, 7-5-5-4 for Em7, 3-4 for Gadd9, and 0-2-3-4 for A.

The intro features small voicings that target the third and fifth of major chords as well as the fifth and seventh of major and minor seven chords. These voicings draw the most sonic value out of the chords. Additionally, they keep the guitar out of the way of the bass which is playing the root notes and the piano which is playing more complete voicings. The syncopation used here plays an integral role in the groove and harmonic rhythm throughout the song.

Example 1.13. Measures 7-12 of the verse in “Human Nature”

Example 1.13 shows the musical notation for measures 7-12 of the verse in “Human Nature”. The notation includes a treble clef staff with a melodic line and a guitar tablature staff below it. Chords are indicated above the staff: Gadd9, A, Gadd9, A, Gadd9, A, Gadd9, A, Em7, A. The tablature shows fret numbers for strings T, A, and B.

The song is in the key of D, but no D chords are used in the verse. This alternation between G add nine (IV) and A major (V) gives the verse a very open and tonically ambiguous sound. The syncopated rhythmic line that Lukather is playing is firmly rooted in D, as his note choices primarily stem from D major pentatonic. The exception to this is the C-sharp which he is using to highlight the chord change from G add nine to A major. As the saying goes, less is often more, and this rhythm part displays exactly that. The combination of syncopation and a simple melodic line create an infectious groove.

Example 1.14. Measures 13-15 of the Chorus in “Human Nature”

Example 1.14 shows the musical notation for measures 13-15 of the Chorus in “Human Nature”. The notation includes a treble clef staff with a melodic line and a guitar tablature staff below it. Chords are indicated above the staff: Gadd9, A, D, D/C#, Bm, A, Gadd9, A. The tablature shows fret numbers for strings T, A, and B.

The chorus applies all of the same principles that were used in the verse. Selective chord voicings that emphasize the color tones and avoid roots are used. Riffs using the D major pentatonic scale are interjected between chord voicings. In the chorus, the guitar

also doubles the vocal line for the song's hook which occurs in measure 14. The harmony and bassline descend with the hook, creating a memorable musical moment.

Michael Jacksons: "Beat It"

Toto is referenced as “practically being the house band” on Michael Jackson’s *Thriller* album (Lukather 2018). This song is a good example as it again features Lukather, Porcaro, and Paich, all members of Toto. The guitar solo on this track features Eddie Van Halen, but all the other guitar tracks were played by Lukather (Lukather 2018). The song has an aggressive rock feel with a riff that is instantly recognizable. The song also maintains Michael Jackson’s signature pop sound. The song was a huge commercial success, but “Beat It” would never make it to the top of the Billboard's Hot 100 list as that spot was already occupied by “Billie Jean,” another song From Jackson's *Thriller* album (Billboard 2021).

Example 1.15. Measures 17-19 from the intro to “Beat it”

The image shows musical notation for measures 17, 18, and 19. The top staff is a treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). Measure 17 starts with a quarter note G4, followed by quarter notes A4, B4, and C5. Measure 18 starts with a quarter note B4, followed by quarter notes A4, G4, and F4. Measure 19 starts with a quarter note E4, followed by quarter notes D4, C4, and B3. The notation includes a dynamic marking 'f' (forte) under the first note of measure 18 and the first note of measure 19. Below the treble staff is a guitar tablature staff with six lines. The notes are represented by numbers: (0) 3 2 2 4 for measure 17, (4) 2 0 for measure 18, and (0) 3 2 2 4 for measure 19. The letters 'T' and 'B' are written vertically on the left side of the tablature staff, indicating the guitar and bass parts.

The guitar enters after a synth percussion intro. The bass and guitar enter together playing the same motif that will be repeated throughout the song. The song is in the key of E-flat major, so the guitar tuning is dropped to E-flat to make the open strings available to play. The notation in Example 1.15 reflects the tablature, not the sounding pitch. This riff is based in the E major pentatonic scale and uses syncopated rhythms. It is simple yet memorable and because it is doubled by the bass, it sets the groove of the song. The rest in the second bar is vital to the groove as it sets up the re-entry of the same

riff on the “and” of beat four. This is an example of how space can be more impactful.

This same motif is used through the intro, breaks, and choruses.

Example 1.16. Measures 23-28 from the verse of “Beat it”

1st Verse

23 24 25

26 27 28

The voicings in the verse were created using power chords, a popular guitar technique which involves only playing the root and fifth of a chord, omitting the third. In this instance, Lukather uses syncopation to offset the harmonic rhythm. As a result, the chords don’t change on the big beat; instead, they change on the “and” of four. This is what keeps the song feeling like a pop song rather than a straight-ahead rock tune.

Example 1.17. Measures 1-3 of the second guitar in the verse of “Beat it”

1 2 3

od.guit.

T
A
B

2 0 2 0 2 2 | 0 2 0 2 4 2 0 2 | 2 0 2 0 2 2

Halfway through the verse, a second layer of rhythm guitar is added which uses notes from the E minor pentatonic scale. The guitar tone is cleaner and is palm-muted which makes it sit back further in the mix. This line, although simple, helps build energy for the transition into the chorus.

Conclusion

The appeal of Lukather as a guitarist comes from his ability to mix simplicity and complexity in the creation of his guitar lines. His solos always have multiple layers of musical development. Consistently, he creates a simple melodic idea that builds into a blast of speed and virtuosic playing. Lukather is capable of delivering consistent blistering speeds, but his solos also feature more detailed elements of musicality.

Lukather played in a style that was informed by the blues, indicated by the underlying swing feel. In most of his playing, Lukather plays behind the beat which gives his lines a laidback feel. He often switches between swing and straight feels within a musical idea, mixing duplet and triplet subdivisions within a single bar. He gravitates toward pentatonic scales for many of his solos. Lukather pays careful attention to incorporating chord tones of the underlying harmony to highlight the chord changes. Many of his extended runs are created using patterns within a major or pentatonic scale. He would also alternate between major scales and pentatonic scales within the same passage.

Lukather uses bends in fast passages that most players would avoid, such as a whole-step bend in the middle of a run of eighth notes. He also does not shy away from one and a half step and two step bends, occasionally at speed but often slower to create dramatic effect. He often used a single fret to achieve several notes with bends and releases.

Steve Lukather's rhythm guitar style adheres to the same mix of simplicity and complexity as his lead playing. In moments where more depth was needed, he added layers to the track rather than complexity to a single line. He allowed the bass and piano

to provide the primary elements of harmony, solidifying it with voicings that emphasized color. His rhythms are often syncopated and consist of single-note lines. These lines helped develop the groove and emphasized the tonal center in passages where the tonic chord was avoided. Sometimes less is more and Lukather definitely knows when to employ this tactic.

Chapter 3: Dann Huff

Background

Dann Huff was born and raised in Nashville, Tennessee where he was surrounded by music from a young age. His father, Ronn Huff was a composer and arranger who wrote for television and movies. He also worked as the pops conductor for the Nashville Symphony from 1994 to 2002 (Sutherland 2018). At a young age, he was in the studio with his father watching sessions take place. As a result, he was inspired to be a session musician, Saying “I didn’t care for the idea of playing for a band, I only aspired to work sessions Initially” (Redmond 2020). Huff attended Belmont University where he further sharpened his skills playing with different groups of musicians. After university, Huff moved to Los Angeles to pursue a career as a session musician. Steve Lukather had just found massive success with his band Toto. Lukather’s absence made work available to Huff who was one of the other up-and-coming guitar players in the session scene (Redmond 2020).

After six years of constant session work from 1982-1988 working with artists such as Michael Jackson, Kenny Rogers, Madonna, Whitney Houston, Chicago, Olivia Newton-John, Michael Bolton, and many others, Huff decided he wanted to try something new and front his own band. Thus, the band GIANT was formed; they made music similar to the hard rock bands of the early 1980s such as Motley Crue, Def Leopard, and Guns and Roses. The band would go on to be moderately successful, but they came into the genre too late. Grunge had become all the rage and the big hair and guitar solos of the 1980s had fallen out of fashion. This inspired Huff to move back to Nashville in 1990 where he would continue to play sessions as a guitar player. As a

result, his skillset expanded from the virtuosic solos with which he was previously associated to a sound that was more suited to Nashville. He learned to play in the chicken-picking style on a Telecaster guitar and his session work reflected this shift in style. Later in his career, Huff would begin producing music and playing on some of the music he produced. The Nashville portion of his career featured him playing with artists such as Reba McEntire, Glen Campbell, Clint Black, Clay Walker, Tim McGraw, Shania Twain, and Keith Urban (Redmond 2020).

Gear

Session work as a guitar player requires having the right tool for every job. Huff's gear would reflect the needs of the session on which he was playing on. Throughout the 1980s, he played large high gain amps such as the Mesa Boogie MK II and a Soldano modified Marshall amp. These loud high-gain amps allowed him to get the feedback necessary for long-sustained notes in solos, as well as the crunchy tone associated with rock rhythm guitar playing. When Huff transitioned to playing country-style guitar, his choice of amp reflected this new sound and he would reach for a Fender Deluxe or a Vox Ac30. These amps have a lot of headroom, meaning they can be turned up very loud before they start to distort. Additionally, the amps also have a very desirable high end that fits well within the mix of typical country instrumentation (Watson 2018).

Huff's choice in guitar for his rock and pop music was primarily a super Strat-style guitar made by either Tyler Guitars or Tom Anderson. Huff reached for the super Strat for the same reasons mentioned in previous chapters; the super Strat offered the necessary versatility with the combination of humbucking pickups, single-coil pickups,

and Floyd Rose tremolo system. For music that was in the country genre, Huff would use more traditional instruments such as the Telecaster or a Gibson 335.

Dann Huff utilized the regular toolbox of effects used by session musicians. The Tri Stereo chorus was a large part of Huff's sound and was used on a majority of his rock and pop recordings. Like many of the other 1980s session players, he used a selection of rack-based delays and reverbs to add further complexity and size to his sound. He also utilized a variety of "joker pedals" that were stompbox-style pedals. He used these to create unique sounds outside of the regular palate of tones (Watson 2018).

Analysis

Lou Gramm: "Angel with a Dirty Face"

"Angel with a Dirty Face" is featured on Lou Gramm's 1989 album *Long Hard Look*. The song peaked at #42 on Billboard's Hot 100 list on January 6, 1990 (Billboard 2021). Dann Huff played all the guitars parts on this song. The song starts with a sound that is reminiscent of 1990s country, but as it progresses, it transitions into a more typical power ballad.

Example 2.1. Measures 1-3 of the solo from "Angel with a Dirty Face"

The image shows a musical score for guitar in 4/4 time, key of E-flat major. The score is divided into three measures. Measure 1 is in the key of E-flat (Eb) and contains a melodic line with notes G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4, and a triplet of G4, A4, Bb4. Measure 2 is in the key of A/C and contains a melodic line with notes G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4, and a triplet of G4, A4, Bb4. Measure 3 is in the key of Bb and contains a melodic line with notes G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4, and a triplet of G4, A4, Bb4. The score includes a treble clef, a key signature of two flats, and a 4/4 time signature. The guitar part is written on a six-line staff with a 'T' for treble and 'A' and 'B' for bass. The fretboard is indicated by numbers 8, 9, 11, 9, 8, 8, 8, (8), 8, 10, 8, 10, 8, 11, (11), 11, 8, 11, 10. There are also some annotations like 'P.H. ...' and 'fill' with arrows pointing to specific notes.

The song is in the key of E-flat and begins at 2:14. The entirety of Example 2.1 is based around the E-flat major scale. In the second measure, there is an emphasis on E-flat which is the fifth of the IV chord that is being played. In the third measure, Huff uses a

pinch harmonic to achieve a B-flat two octaves above what is written. Pinch harmonics are a technique where the thumb on the right hand touches the string lightly immediately after the string is picked, creating a high harmonic. Different harmonics are created depending on what note is being fretted as well as where your right hand thumb touches the string. Huff combines this pinch harmonic with a dive on his tremolo bar, which creates what could be compared to a vocal scream on the guitar. It is imperative that the guitar tone be highly overdriven to achieve this. At the end of Example 2.1, Huff executes a swung figure, which contrasts with the straight eighth notes that he had previously played.

Example 2.2. Measures 4-6 of the solo from “Angel with a Dirty Face”

Example 2.2 begins with a continuation of the swung triplet figure, emphasizing the chord tones of the IV chord and using the E-flat major scale. In measure 5, Huff bends B-flat to C as a way of anticipating the chord changing back to IV.

Example 2.3. Measures 7-9 of the solo from “Angel with a Dirty Face”

In Example 2.3, Huff again implements quarter note triplets which contrast against the straight feel of the previous measures. His note choices in measure 8 utilize the highest possible frets of a guitar, providing a piercing, attention-grabbing sound that marks the climax of the solo. In the Eighth measure, a ii chord occurs for the first time in the solo and the lead line emphasizes the F note. In measure 9, Huff runs up an E-flat major pentatonic scale with triplets.

Example 2.4. Measures 10-12 of the solo from “Angel with a Dirty Face”

Example 2.4 presents the most lyrical ideas Huff plays within this solo. His melodic ideas emphasize the chord tones of the underlying harmony. For these measures, he steps away from the major pentatonic sound that he had been using in the previous figures. In measure 10, Huff highlights the chord tones of A-flat major (IV) and on the “and” of four, he anticipates the movement to B-flat major (V) with the slide from E-flat

to F. In measure 11, Huff uses a half step bend from the A(7̂) to the B-flat(1̂). The A natural is outside of the key of E-flat; therefore, it adds a small amount of tension to the line while the rest of the line definitively outlines the V chord.

Example 2.5. Measures 13-15 of the solo from “Angel with a Dirty Face”

The solo ends with a descending lick that both emphasizes the chord tones on the IV chord A-flat major, while also incorporating a descending run through E-flat major. Instead of ending on the tonic, Huff elects to continue down through the scale past the tonic and end on sharp five, which is the fifth of the new key E major.

Clint Blacks: “Summer’s Comin’”

Clint Black’s “Summer’s Comin’” represents a different chapter in Huff’s life in which he returned to his Nashville roots. He shifted his playing style to match that of what was trendy at the time. The chicken-picking style, most often played on a Telecaster, it is a percussive playing technique where both a pick and fingers are used on the right hand in an alternating fashion. The fingers are used to grab a hold of the strings in a manner that a pick cannot; as a result, you get a percussive sound from the notes. The song was released in March 1995 and it quickly ascended to the top of Billboard’s Hot Country Charts in June of the same year (Billboard 2021).

Example 2.6. Measures 1-3 of the guitar solo of “Summer’s Comin’”

The image shows the musical notation for measures 1-3 of a guitar solo. The top staff is in treble clef, key of A major (two sharps), and 4/4 time. Measure 1 starts with a flat 7 (G) and a 7 (A), with a half-bend (1/2) indicated. Measure 2 features repeated A notes (1) with a 'full' bend. Measure 3 uses notes from the minor pentatonic scale over the A major I chord, with a 'P' (piano) dynamic marking. The bottom staff shows the guitar tablature with fret numbers and pick/finger indications.

The solo begins at 1:08 and is in the key of A major. Example 2.6 begins with a bend that is typical of the country sound, flat seven to seven. The interchange of major and Mixolydian sounds is commonly used in country guitar lines. When Huff is changing between strings, he alternates between using his pick and his fingers. In the second measure, there is a percussive nature to the repeated A(1) notes that are played. Lastly, in the third measure, Huff uses the notes from the minor pentatonic scale over the major I chord.

Example 2.7. Measures 4-7 of the guitar solo of “Summer’s Comin’”

The image shows the musical notation for measures 4-7 of a guitar solo. The top staff is in treble clef, key of A major, and 4/4 time. Measure 4 repeats the percussive chicken-picking lick from measure 2. Measure 5 returns to the A minor pentatonic scale. Measure 6 features a triplets (3) and a double stop (D). Measure 7 continues the double stop (D). The bottom staff shows the guitar tablature with fret numbers and pick/finger indications.

Example 2.7 starts with a repetition of the same percussive chicken-picking lick from the second measure. Shortly after, measure 5 returns to the use of the A minor pentatonic scale. The next technique that Huff employs is a staple in country-style guitar; double stops. Huff uses double stops from the D Mixolydian scale to play over the IV chord. When playing double stops in a country style, the right hand fingers are used to pull on the strings rather than a pick. As a result, a more percussive sound is achieved.

Example 2.8. Measures 7-9 of the guitar solo of “Summer’s Comin’”

The image shows musical notation for measures 7-9 of a guitar solo. The top staff is in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). Measure 7 starts with a D major chord (D, F#, A) and a half-step double stop bend on the D string (7th fret). Measure 8 features a sixteenth-note run through a D Mixolydian scale (D, E, F, G, A, B, A, G, F, E, D) with chromatic passing tones (F# and G#). Measure 9 continues the run. The bottom staff shows guitar tablature with fret numbers and techniques: half-step bends (1/2), full bends, and pull-offs (P). The strings are labeled T (Treble), A (Acoustic), and B (Bass).

Example 2.8 begins with a half-step double stop bend which creates some tension as the D-sharp clashes against the D major chord. In measure 8, Huff starts a sixteenth note run through a D Mixolydian scale while also utilizing some chromatic passing tones. Throughout this run, Huff is consistently pulls off to the F-sharp the third of the D major he is playing over.

Example 2.9. Measures 10-12 of the guitar solo of “Summer’s Comin’”

The image shows musical notation for measures 10-12 of a guitar solo. The top staff is in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). Measure 10 starts with an A Mixolydian scale (A, B, C, D, E, F, E, D, C, B, A). Measure 11 features a half-step bend on the A string (5th fret). Measure 12 features ghost notes (X-X) and slides (sl.). The bottom staff shows guitar tablature with fret numbers and techniques: half-step bends (1/2), full bends, pull-offs (P), slides (sl.), and ghost notes (X-X). The strings are labeled T (Treble), A (Acoustic), and B (Bass).

Example 2.9 starts by ascending the A Mixolydian scale. Huff uses the staple country passing tone of flat three to three. In measure 12, he demonstrates another technique to achieve a percussive sound out of the guitar; ghost notes. A ghost note is a technique where the left hand mutes the strings while the right hand picks the strings. This provides an effect that is much different than palm-muting, which is also notated with the same symbols. Huff’s approach to ghost notes provides a percussive sound rather than the muted, scraping sound of the pick.

Example 2.10. Measures 13-14 of the guitar solo of “Summer’s Comin’”

Example 2.10 is an example of how Huff plays over the V chord of a twelve-bar blues. In this instance, he uses a combination of the E Mixolydian scale and chromaticism to highlight the dominant seventh sound of the V chord. In measure 14, he uses double stops with chromatic passing tones while descending down the chord tones of E7.

Example 2.11. Measures 16-17 of the guitar solo of “Summer’s Comin’”

The solo ends with a lick that descends the fretboard using the A Mixolydian and then the A minor pentatonic scale, ending on flat seven. On the descending triplet notes, Huff uses pull-offs which make the notes of the triplet slur together. This gesture emphasizes the root note D in the arrival. In this instance, it solidifies the IV chord that is played in the turnaround.

Chicagos: “I Don’t Wanna Live Without Your Love”

“I Don’t Wanna Live Without Your Love” was recorded in 1988 and was featured on Chicago’s record *Chicago 19*. The song would go on to peak #5 Billboard’s Hot 100 list (Billboard 2021). The song features Dann Huff on lead guitar.

Example 2.12. Measures 1-3 of the guitar solo in “I Don’t Wanna Live Without Your Love”

Example 2.12 shows the first three measures of the guitar solo. The notation is in 4/4 time. The treble clef staff shows notes and rests, with chords C and Am indicated above. The bass clef staff shows fret numbers: 12, 13, 13, 12, 13, 14, 8, 6. Annotations include 'full' and 'vibrato' markings.

The song and solo are in the key of C and the solo starts at 2:25. The beginning melodic material in this solo uses notes from the C major scale. Huff adds vibrato to the D note in the third measure using his tremolo bar.

Example 2.13. Measures 1-3 of the guitar solo in “I Don’t Wanna Live Without Your Love”

Example 2.13 shows the first three measures of the guitar solo. The notation is in 4/4 time. The treble clef staff shows notes and rests, with chords Dm, G, and C indicated above. The bass clef staff shows fret numbers: 5, 6, 7, 7, 5, 5, 6, 8, 6, 5, 6, 5, 7, 5, 4, 4, 5, 7, 3, 3, 5, 7, 5, 7, 5, 5. Annotations include 'P.H.', 'w/bar', and 'full' markings.

In Example 2.13, Huff plays behind the beat, creating a laidback feel. As the solo progresses, he shifts his time feel to play more on top of the beat. In the fifth measure, Huff uses two different pinch harmonics to create notes that ring out high above the rest of the melody. On the second pinch harmonic, Huff uses his tremolo bar after striking the

pinch harmonic to create a dive bomb which has a similar effect to a vocal scream. The melodic material Huff plays in Example 2.15 is from the C major scale.

Example 2.14. Measures 7-9 of the guitar solo in “I Don’t Wanna Live Without Your Love”

The image shows musical notation for measures 7-9 of a guitar solo. The notation is in a key signature of one flat (Bb) and common time. The solo is divided into three measures: measure 7 (Am), measure 8 (Dm), and measure 9 (G). The notation includes a treble clef staff with a key signature of one flat and a common time signature. The solo is marked with 'full' notes and triplets. Below the staff is a guitar tablature with fret numbers for each string (T, A, B). The solo ends with a thirty-second note run up a two octave C major scale, shown in a separate staff with a C major key signature and a common time signature.

In Example 2.14, Huff’s phrasing shifts to be slightly ahead of the beat. By doing this, he creates energy to end his solo. Throughout Example 2.14, he also switches frequently between duplet and triplet subdivisions. The melodic material is all diatonic to the key of C major. The solo ends with a thirty-second note run up a two octave C major scale. Even though the tempo of the song is slow, the final thirty-second run is incredibly difficult to execute.

Rhythm Guitar

Michael Boltons: “Soul Provider”

“Soul Provider” was recorded by Michael Bolton in 1989 and features Huff on the rhythm guitar. In this song, you can hear Huff playing in two distinct styles. In the first, he helps solidify harmony, and in the second he aids in the groove of the song.

Example 2.15. Measures 1-3 of the verse in “Soul Provider”

The musical score for guitar is presented in four systems. The first system (measures 1-3) is labeled 'Verse' and includes chords F, Am7, and Bb. The second system (measures 4-6) includes chords Bb/C, C, F, and Am7. The third system (measures 7-9) is labeled 'Pre Chorus' and includes chords Bb, Bb/C, C, and Am7. The fourth system (measures 10-12) includes chords Gm7 and Csus4. The notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of one flat, and a 4/4 time signature. The guitar part is written on a six-string staff with a capo on the first fret. Fingering numbers (1-5) are provided for various notes and chords. Slurs and accents are used to indicate phrasing and dynamics.

In the verse form and pre-chorus form of the song, Huff plays lines that complement the harmony. He plays double stops including the thirds and sevenths of the chords. In instances when he plays a chord for a full bar, he elects to play the chords in an inversion rather than in root position, adding additional color to the rhythm track. Additionally, these voicings assist him in distancing from the synth and bass to avoid over-clouding the mix. Huff also interjects single note lines between chords to emphasize the chord changes. In the pre-chorus, Huff chooses to play even less using a triads and an arpeggiated chords.

Example 2.16. Measures 16-24 of the verse in “Soul Provider”

Chorus

Measures 16-24 of the chorus in “Soul Provider” are shown. The score is in F major and 4/4 time. The guitar part features a syncopated groove in the chorus, primarily using the F major pentatonic scale. The tablature shows various techniques such as triplets, slurs, and accents.

In the chorus section, Huff plays a syncopated groove using the F major pentatonic scale. Here, his playing does not aid the harmony, as he doesn’t always prioritize chord tones. Instead, Huff’s playing deepens the groove and adds a percussive element in the chorus; this also creates a contrast in relation to the verses. To bring the energy down at the end of the chorus, Huff returns to playing diads and triads to support the harmony.

Madonnas: “Like a Prayer”

Originally recorded in 1989 by Madonna, “Like a Prayer” was a chart-topping success around the world, spending six weeks at the top of Billboard’s Top 100 list. The song features rhythm guitar tracks performed by Huff (Billboard 2021).

Example 2.17. Measures 1-8 of the verse in “Like a Prayer”

The musical score for electric guitar consists of three systems. The first system covers measures 1-3, the second system covers measures 4-6, and the third system covers measures 7-8. The key signature is one flat (B-flat major), and the time signature is 4/4. The score includes a treble clef staff with a melodic line and a guitar clef staff with a bass line. Chords are indicated above the staff: F (measures 1-3), C (measures 4-6), and Bb (measures 7-8). The bass line features a syncopated rhythm with triplets and slurs. Fingering numbers (1-5) are provided for the bass line. A capo is indicated at the first measure.

On this track, the electric guitar is only used in the chorus, adding an additional lift of energy to the chorus. Huff’s guitar tone is pristinely clean and his playing utilizes syncopated rhythms, this combined with the chords voiced on the top three strings helps lift the energy of the chorus. The triads that Huff plays are primarily inversions, which ensures that the electric guitar floats above the underlying harmony.

Conclusion

Dann Huff’s lead guitar playing is rooted in the use of the pentatonic scale. Notably, when Huff plays over diatonic chords, he emphasizes a chord tone that is also found in the pentatonic scale.

Contour is an important element to any guitar solo. Huff clearly demonstrates a distinct style featuring a build and release of energy. In supporting this release of energy, the majority of his solos included ascending passages of sixteenth notes or triplets

followed by a slower and more melodic passage. Many of his solos end with a virtuosic run and a high sustained note.

The way a guitar player phrases their lines is essentially like a signature — everyone's phrasing is unique and can become part of their playing identity. Huff plays primarily with an underlying triplet feel. What he plays is often swung, but in a very subtle sense. He plays both behind the beat and on the beat; this adds different characteristics to the lines. Huff tends to play more on top of the beat than Lukather or Landau. He often mixes duplet and triplet subdivisions within the same measure, which adds rhythmic complexity to his lines. Huff uses his tremolo bar sparingly to scoop into notes, compared to other players in this study.

Dann Huff's rhythm guitar playing is grounded in harmony and rhythm. His choices of voicings are often simple but fit in the mix perfectly within each song. As seen in rhythm examples 2.14 and 2.16, his higher-register voicings float above the rest of the band. Huff's other rhythm guitar style is rooted in groove and energy. Huff uses syncopation and staccato notes to develop lines that support the harmony without emphasizing the harmony; rather they add to the groove and feel of a section.

Chapter 4: Michael Landau

Background

Michael Landau was raised in a musical family in Los Angeles. His grandfather played woodwinds and arranged music during the swing era, playing with groups such as the Dorsey Brothers and Benny Goodman. In his early teens, Landau became interested in jazz and electric music like Weather Report, Pat Martino, and Jaco Pastorius. This interest in jazz paired with his early influences of The Beatles, Jimi Hendrix, and Cream would help him create the sounds for which he became famous (Landau 2014).

Landau's attention moved quickly to the guitar. He started at age Eleven and was playing at clubs in Los Angeles by age 16. Shortly after, he began touring the West Coast with Robben Ford and his band that included Jimmy Haslip and Russell Ferrante. His work as a touring musician would continue later when he joined Boz Scaggs. Landau's long-time friend and high school bandmate, Steve Lukather, recommended him for some studio work, which was only the start of his notable career (Landau 2014).

Landau is credited with playing on over 700 records spanning genres from country to jazz fusion including groups such as Pink Floyd, Miles Davis, Joni Mitchell, BB King, James Taylor, Ray Charles, Rod Stewart, and Tim McGraw (All music 2021).

Gear

Landau's guitar rig was a typical example of the trends that were taking place in the 1980s: large rack units filled with effects and preamps. The use of effects pedals had declined in

popularity when Landau was busiest in the studio; instead, musicians were turning to rack-mounted effects.

This is a common denominator between both Steve Lukather and Michael Landau. Throughout the 1980s, Lukather and Landau famously used rack units created by Bob Bradshaw. These racks would allow them access to what at the time was massive amounts of signal processing power. Common effects that would be found in these racks included time-based effects such as delay and reverb, as well as modulation effects like flanger, phaser, tremolo, and harmonizer. This era of guitar was synonymous with thick, heavily-affected guitar sounds and the large rack systems associated with those tones (Watson 2018).

Landau's amp choice changed depending on what was needed for the track. For clean tones, Landau would reach for a Fender-style amp. For overdriven sounds, he would use a Marshall or Soldano. Most often, Fender amps would be paired with single-coil guitars and clean sounds. For distorted and high gain sounds, the Marshall or the Soldano would be paired with humbucking pickups. Later in his career, Landau transitioned to using primarily Fender amps, as well as his Dumble ODS (Watson 2018).

Landau was associated with different types of guitars. Throughout the 1980s, he was most noted for playing super Strat-style guitars from a custom builder, Tyler Guitars. The super Strat guitar provided him the sonic versatility of both single coil and humbucking pickups as well as a tremolo bar, both of which are elements of his signature sound. Later in his career, he became best known for playing his 1963 Stratocaster (Watson 2018).

Analysis

David Garfield and Friends: “Bad Girl”

“Bad Girl” was recorded by David Garfield and Friends in 2001. The album was a soundtrack created for a Japanese anime, *Riding Bean*. The album features legendary Los Angeles session musicians Carlos Vega, Jimmy Johnson, and Michael Landau (Discdogs 2001).

Example 3.1. Measures 1-3 of the guitar solo in “Bad Girl”

The song and solo are in the key of D major with the solo starting at 2:04. In Example 3.1, Landau uses notes from the D major scale. The way Landau approaches the notes in Example 3.1 is indicative of his style. Landau uses a combination of slides, tremolo bar, and behind-the-beat phrasing to create a line that is fluid. A definitive pick attack isn't heard at the beginning of the notes; instead, the listener hears the end of the slide or the tremolo bar returning to neutral on the head of the beat.

Example 3.2. Measures 4-6 of the guitar solo in “Bad Girl”

Example 3.2 starts with Landau outlining the notes of the D major over which he is playing. This is followed by a passage of notes from D major pentatonic. His note choices outline the chord tones of the overlying harmony. On the half notes, Landau bends up a whole step into a chord tone with heavy vibrato; he also strikes the note following the bend before deadening the previous note. Additionally, he uses very minimal pick attack throughout the line. The combination of these techniques makes the line flow freely within the beat.

Example 3.3. Measures 7-9 of the guitar solo in “Bad Girl”

Example 3.3 starts with a quarter note triplet. In this bar, Landau digs into the notes and a defined pick attack is heard; as a result, the notes feel more firmly in time. Landau follows this with a contrasting line. In measure 8, he begins a single-string line that is slurred together. Landau uses a firm grip on his left hand to keep the note sustained throughout the figure. Using quarter note triplets combined with sliding up and down the neck Landau creates a legato line.

Example 3.4. Measures 10-12 of the guitar solo in “Bad Girl”

In Example 3.4, Landau ascends to the higher register of the guitar for the last part of his solo. In measure 10, he uses a chromatic passing tone F. This is the first use of a non-diatonic note within the solo. Example 3.4 ends with a descending pattern through a D major scale using eighth note triplets. This is the beginning of the climax which Landau creates at the end of the solo.

Example 3.5. Measures 13-15 of the guitar solo in “Bad Girl”

In Example 3.5, Landau begins his ascent up the fretboard using the D major scale. Landau repeatedly uses whole step bends to bend into chord tones.

Example 3.6. Measures 16-17 of the guitar solo in “Bad Girl”

Example 3.6 by continuing with the whole step bend into chord tones while ascending the D major pentatonic scale. By the end of the solo, Landau is bending a whole step on the twenty-second fret (the last fret on most guitars). This delivers a piercing high note that makes for a climactic end to a solo. Throughout the entire ascent up the D major pentatonic scale, very little pick attack is heard on the heads of the notes. This creates a very smooth sound that allows the top of the bend to sound like the head of the note. Throughout this passage, it is the peak of the bend that sits on the head of the beat; this is created by Landau starting the bend behind the beat.

Michael Boltons: “How Am I Supposed to Live Without You”

Michael Bolton’s “How Am I Supposed to Live Without You” was originally recorded in 1982 by Laura Branigan; it was and later re-recorded by Michael Bolton in 1988. Both recordings of the song would top Billboard’s Top 100 chart for multiple weeks (Billboard 2021). Michael Bolton’s version of the song would then go on to win him a Grammy for Best Male Vocal Performance. The song features Landau playing the guitar solo.

Example 3.7. Measures 1-3 of the guitar solo in “How am I Supposed to Live Without You”

The guitar solo begins at 2:42 and is in the key of B-flat major. Landau primarily uses notes from the B-flat major pentatonic scale. While using the B-flat major pentatonic scale, Landau also prioritizes landing on and bending into chord tones. There is an underlying triplet feel throughout the entire solo, giving it a swung feel.

Example 3.8 Measures 4-6 of the guitar solo in “How am I Supposed to Live Without You”

In measure 4, Landau demonstrates his ability to play behind the beat. The technique of playing behind the beat paired with the sliding between multiple notes on the same string gives the lead line a very fluid sound. The addition of the underlying triplet feel makes the line rhythmically ambiguous. In measure 5, Landau’s use of quintuplets in a blast of speed draws the listener’s attention as they contrast the duplet and triplet subdivisions of prior measures. All of Landau’s note choices within this figure stem from the B-flat major pentatonic scale. Example 3.8 demonstrates Landau’s

masterful phrasing which is rooted in being tastefully behind the beat and feeling an underlying triplet under every groove.

Example 3.9. Measures 7-9 of the guitar solo in “How am I Supposed to Live Without You”

Example 3.9 shows measures 7-9 of a guitar solo. The notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of one flat (B-flat), and a 4/4 time signature. The melody is written in a single staff with a guitar tablature below it. The chords are B \flat /E \flat , Fsus4, E \flat /G, F/A, B/F \sharp , and F \sharp . The tablature shows fret numbers for the top two strings (T and B).

Prior to the key change, Landau again uses B-flat major pentatonic to navigate the diatonic changes while also outlining them. In measure 8, Landau navigates a key change to B by sustaining a common tone (E-flat/D-sharp) in the first bar of the new key. The solo ends in the following measure on a whole-note B which helps solidify the new key.

Maxus: “They Danced”

“They Danced” is from Maxus’ self-titled album recorded in 1981. This track featured Michael Landau playing both rhythm and lead parts (All music 2021).

Example 3.10. Measures 1-3 of the guitar solo in “They Danced”

Example 3.10 shows measures 1-3 of a guitar solo. The notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of two flats (C minor), and a 4/4 time signature. The melody is written in a single staff with a guitar tablature below it. The chords are Fm7 and G7. The tablature shows fret numbers for the top two strings (T and B). The notation includes slurs, accents (sl.), and dynamic markings (full).

The solo is in the key of C minor and starts at 2:14. Example 3.10 starts with a pickup note that anticipates the swung triplet notes of the passage that follows. Measure 2 ascends up the C minor pentatonic scale using a sequence. The line was harmonized in

thirds using a layering technique in the recording process. Landau's phrasing on the triplets is behind the beat. On beat one of measures 2-3, Landau plays a chord tone which highlights the chord changing. The last note of measure 3 anticipates the chord change to C minor by bending into G(♭5).

Example 3.11. Measures 4-6 of the guitar solo in "They Danced"

In Example 3.11, Landau continues his use of triplets using notes from the C minor pentatonic scale. In measure 6, Landau plays a series of swung eighth notes that are played further behind the beat than previous measures. He begins his use of the C blues scale as displayed with his use of G-flat in measure 6; he continues to use C blues throughout the solo.

Example 3.12. Measures 7-9 of the guitar solo in "They Danced"

In Example 3.12, the V^7 chord is outlined with the additional use of a pinch harmonic at the fourth fret, creating a pitch two octaves above what is written. At the end of measure 7, Landau again plays a pickup note that anticipates the swung feeling of the

In Example 3.16, Landau concludes the motif and plays a series of small licks with a swung feel using the C minor pentatonic scale. Example 3.16 is the beginning of a slow build to the end of the solo.

Example 3.17. Measures 22-24 of the guitar solo in “They Danced”

In Example 3.17, Landau uses a run of sixteenth note sextuplets to navigate through the C blues scale, ending by descending through a C minor triad. In measure 24, Landau restates another C minor pentatonic idea that he had used in Example 3.16.

Example 3.18. Measures 25-27 of the guitar solo in “They Danced”

Landau chooses to end his solo with a display of energy that he creates using speed and technicality, noted in Example 3.18. Throughout Example 3.18, Landau shifts positions on the neck multiple times. This is combined with the use of string skipping, making it an incredibly difficult passage. The solo ends by descending chromatically greater than an octave from E to C.

Joni Mitchell: “Wild Things Run Fast”

This track is from Joni Mitchell’s album *Wild Things Run Fast* and was recorded in 1982. The track “Wild Things Run Fast” features Landau on the rhythm guitar.

Example 3.19. Measures 1-9 of the intro from “Wild Things Run Fast”

The musical score for the intro of "Wild Things Run Fast" is presented in three systems. The first system covers measures 1-3, the second system covers measures 4-6, and the third system covers measures 7-9. The key signature is E-flat major (two flats), and the time signature is 4/4. The guitar part is labeled "od. guit." (overdriven guitar). The first system shows a melodic line in the treble clef with bends and a bass line in the bass clef with octaves. The second system continues the melodic line with bends and the bass line. The third system features a palm-muted eighth-note rhythm in the bass clef, with the treble clef showing a melodic line. The score includes chord diagrams for E-flat major and D-flat major, and a palm-mute (P.M.) section for the final measures.

Landau starts the song with a line that acts as both lead and rhythm parts. His line outlines the chords while the bass plays the root notes. On the E-flat major and D-flat major chords, he bends scale degree three a half step to the fourth to create a suspended sound. His tone for the introduction is overdriven and sits at the top of the mix, making it sound like a lead line. The introduction ends with palm-muted eighth notes on D-flat major with an overdriven sound before the key is lowered one half step to C.

Example 3.20. Measures 11-15 of the verse from “Wild Things Run Fast”

Verse

The score for Example 3.20 shows measures 11 through 15. Measure 11 starts with a D-flat major chord (D \flat) and a volume swell. Measures 12 and 13 are in C major. Measure 14 continues in C major, and measure 15 features an F major chord. The guitar part includes chords and single notes, with a bass line that is mostly root notes. Fingering is indicated by numbers 1-5 on the strings.

In Example 3.20 when the verse starts, Landau implements a volume swell into the chord tones. Landau’s playing in the verse helps solidify the harmony as the bass is only playing the root notes. In between double stops, he occasionally interjects short lines that are diatonic to the key of C major and occur in moments absent of vocal lines.

Example 3.21. Measures 16-21 of the verse from “Wild Things Run Fast”

The score for Example 3.21 shows measures 16 through 21. Measure 16 starts with a C major chord (C) and a volume swell. Measures 17 and 18 are in C major. Measure 19 features an F major chord (F). Measure 20 features an F-sharp suspended 4 chord (F \sharp sus4). Measure 21 features a D-sharp suspended 4 chord with a G-sharp (D \sharp sus4/G \sharp). The guitar part includes chords and single notes, with a bass line that is mostly root notes. Fingering is indicated by numbers 1-5 on the strings.

The structure of the song is atypical as there is no defined chorus. At the end of the verse, Landau adds rhythmic density and overdrive to his guitar tone. Throughout this track, Landau favors suspended harmonies. In measure 18, Landau elects to omit the root and let the bass play it instead playing a suspended four (sus4) voicing. On the third beat of measure 19 he elects to add the suspended four (sus4) voicing while the bass maintains the root. The verse ends with a bar of rest which helps bring the energy back down for the next verse.

Conclusion

When analyzing the work of Michael Landau, one finds that the way he approaches phrasing is what made his playing so unique. His phrasing is consistently behind the beat and it often has an underlying triplet feel. In many instances, Landau will change how much swing he is feeling within a single system; Example 3.11 is an example of that. He often used a thick chorusing effect in his tone, which takes away a lot of the initial pick attack. This combination of phrasing and effects makes his lines float freely within the bar, which is difficult to notate. When bending strings, the peak of his bends will often be at the head of the beat as a result of playing behind the beat; this adds an additional layer of musicality to his bends. The speed at which Landau executes bends is challenging. He also connects the notes he plays very carefully which creates remarkable legato lines.

In these examples, it can be seen that Landau favored the use of pentatonic scales and the blues scale over diatonic chords. Landau often emphasizes the chord he is playing over by repeating a note within the pentatonic scale of the overarching harmony.

Additionally, Landau used chromatic passing tones and chromatic runs to create some tension between consonant material, such as what is notated in Example 3.13.

Landau's rhythm playing favors simplicity while adding to the harmony. In Example 3.19, Landau adds suspension to the harmony by including the motion from third to the fourth. Throughout the entirety of Example 3.20, Landau favors the additional color of the suspended voicings. Landau primarily avoided playing the roots of the chords and left them to the bass player; this also helped his voicings sit in their own sonic space.

Chapter 5: Larry Carlton

Background

Larry Carlton was born and raised in Southern California. His interest in guitar began at the age of six and continued through his teenage years. During this time, Carlton was introduced to jazz with the music of The Gerald Wilson Big Band; with the album, *Moment of Truth*, Carlton took a special interest in the playing of Joe Pass. Additionally, John Coltrane, B.B. King, and Barney Kessel are also referenced by Carlton as being some of his early influencers (Carlton 2021).

Carlton released his first LP in 1968, titled *With a Little Help From My Friends*. The release of this album allowed him to gain some industry recognition and was the catalyst for his career gaining him the opportunity to start writing jingles for radio commercials. It also provided him with the opportunity to be the musical director of the Mrs. Alphabet where he showcased his skills both as an actor and musician, performing as the co-star “Larry Guitar” (Carlton 2021).

People were quick to notice Carlton’s prowess on the guitar after his tenure with a band called The Crusaders through 1976. This opened the door for his career as a session musician and he developed a sound that people wanted to have on their records. Carlton was associated with the sweet sounds he created on his Gibson Es-335 and his trademark volume pedal technique. Artists such as Michael Jackson, Joni Mitchell, Dolly Parton, Sammy Davis Jr., and John Lennon all hired Carlton to play on their tracks. Carlton’s

work would be featured on more than one hundred gold albums. Having played more than 3,000 sessions by the early 1980s, Carlton still had a desire to create his own music and worked on albums such as *Mr. 335*, *Eight Times Up*, and *Strikes Twice*, concurrent to his work as a session musician. The success of his solo career would draw him away from his work as a session musician in 1985, although he would continue to be featured on albums throughout his career (Carlton 2021).

Gear

Larry Carlton, like most session musicians, had the gear to fit any musical situation in which he found himself in. Notably, he used a Fender Telecaster and Valley Arts super Strat-style guitar. As he progressed as both a session musician and solo artist, he became associated with a particular sound both inside and outside the studio. Larry Carlton's sound is created with a Gibson ES-335 through a Dumble Overdrive Special. His guitar tone is revered amongst the guitar community as one of the most desirable guitar tones. He is also noted for his use of a volume pedal on rhythm guitar parts. Joni Mitchell referred to his volume pedal effect as "fly fishing" because of how the forward and backward motion resembled the action of swinging a fly. Carlton was also known to use a variety of different rack-based effects such as reverb, delay, chorus, and phase (Heidt 2010).

Analysis

Steely Dans: "Kid Charlemagne"

"Kid Charlemagne" is from Steely Dan's album *The Royal Scam* that was released in 1976. The song reached eighty-second on the Billboard Charts (Billboard 2021). The song is a fusion of funk, jazz, and rock and roll and features a solo by Carlton.

The solo has become recognized by the guitar community as one of the best guitar solos of all time (Peirce 2019).

Example 4.1. Measures 1-3 of the guitar solo in “Kid Charlemagne”

The image shows the musical notation for measures 1-3 of the guitar solo in "Kid Charlemagne". The notation is in 4/4 time and includes a guitar solo starting at measure 1. The chords are Dm, Dm/C, Bm7(b5) E7, Am, and G6. The solo begins with a rest in measure 1, followed by a series of notes in measure 2, and continues through measure 3. The notation includes fingerings (7, 5, 7, 7, 7, 9, 8, 10, 8, 10, 8, 10) and dynamics (full, H, P).

The song and solo are in the key of C major with the solo starting at 2:15. The solo begins over a Dm chord while Carlton plays a series of notes from the C major pentatonic scale over it. The next measure is a II V of VI where he sustains a D note with vibrato. D is a chord tone of both B minor seven (flat5) and E seven chords. In the last measure of Example 4.1, Carlton plays a series of notes from the C major pentatonic scale.

Example 4.2. Measures 5-7 of the guitar solo in “Kid Charlemagne”

The image shows the musical notation for measures 5-7 of the guitar solo in "Kid Charlemagne". The notation is in 4/4 time and includes a guitar solo starting at measure 5. The chords are Fmaj7, Em7(#5), Dm7, B7, and Em7. The solo begins with a series of notes in measure 5, followed by a series of notes in measure 6, and continues through measure 7. The notation includes fingerings (8, 10, 8, 9, 10, 10, 13, 10, 11, 14, 11, 14, 14, 12, 15, 12, 14, 14, 12, 12) and dynamics (sl, 8va, 1/2).

In the second measure of Example 4.2, Carlton ascends a D minor nine arpeggio before voice leading both the third and fifth of B seven. This sets up a brief modulation to E minor using the B seven (V^7) chord. In the final measure of Example 4.2, he uses the E minor scale over the E minor seven chord.

Example 4.3. Measures 8-9 of the guitar solo in “Kid Charlemagne”

In Example 4.3, Carlton uses an inversion of a D sus two over the D major chord. In the following measure, he uses the G major pentatonic scale over the C major seven chord. By playing a major pentatonic a fifth above a major seventh chord, a major nine /thirteen sound is created.

Example 4.4. Measures 10-11 of the guitar solo in “Kid Charlemagne”

In Example 4.4, Carlton ascends an E minor seven arpeggio and then a B minor arpeggio in the same position. In the final measure of Example 4.4, the tonality shifts back to the original key of C major. On the A minor chord, Carlton again emphasizes the ninth (B).

Example 4.5. Measures 12-13 of the guitar solo in “Kid Charlemagne”

Example 4.5 starts by outlining a G six chord using an E minor arpeggio. In the following measure, Carlton ascends an A minor pentatonic scale while maintaining an E pedal tone.

Example 4.6. Measures 14-15 of the guitar solo in “Kid Charlemagne”

The image shows musical notation for two measures. Measure 14 is marked with a **B \flat 7(13)** chord. The melody consists of notes C, D, E, F, G, A, B, C. The guitar part has fret numbers 11, 8, 9, 8, 8, 9, 10, 9, 8. Measure 15 is marked with **F9** and **G** chords. The melody consists of notes G, A, B, C, D, E, F, G. The guitar part has fret numbers 5, 7, 5, 5, 7, 5, 7, 9, 7, 8, 7, 8. Techniques 'P' and 'sl.' are indicated.

In the first measure of Example 4.6, Carlton uses a technique which he is noted as extensively employing in his solos: playing upper structure triads over a chord to utilize all of its extensions. In this example Carlton plays a C triad over B-flat seven (thirteen). By using the C triad, he captures the Lydian dominant sound of B-flat seven add thirteen. In the last bar of Example 4.6, he ascends the C major pentatonic scale.

Example 4.7. Measures 5-7 of the guitar solo in “Kid Charlemagne”

The image shows musical notation for three measures. Measure 5 is marked with **Am** and **G6** chords. The melody consists of notes G, A, B, C, D, E, F, G. The guitar part has fret numbers 8, 10, 10, 9, 7, 7, 9. Measure 6 is marked with **Dm7** and **G6** chords. The melody consists of notes G, A, B, C, D, E, F, G. The guitar part has fret numbers (9), 7, 7, 7, 9, 7, 7, 7, 9. Measure 7 is marked with **F6** and **G** chords. The melody consists of notes G, A, B, C, D, E, F, G. The guitar part has fret numbers 7, 10, 7.

In Example 4.7 Carlton starts by outlining the chord tones of the G six, chord. In the last measure, he accentuates the sound of the minor ninth with the repeated E over the Dm7 chord. Additionally, Carlton ends the last measure with a pickup to the beginning of a phrase in Example 4.8 using notes from E minor pentatonic.

Example 4.8. Measures 18-19 of the guitar solo in “Kid Charlemagne”

In Example 4.8, Carlton plays a line using the E minor scale with the inclusion of chromaticism between scale degrees three-four and four-five. The run ends on a B-flat which anticipates the C7 chord in the following bar and is sustained throughout the measure.

Example 4.9. Measures 21-23 of the guitar solo in “Kid Charlemagne”

In Example 4.9, Carlton concludes his solo. Many other players would play a fast run up the neck to end a solo; however, Carlton chooses to play an understated line that supports the harmony. Carlton may have elected to play less at this moment because the bass part has an interesting line that sits in the register that the guitar would normally fill. Carlton taps in the last measure on the fourteenth fret while bending at the seventh fret, making a B-flat sound that emphasizes the seventh of the C seven that he is playing. It is also notable that this is an example of tapping being used before it was popularized by Eddie Van Halen, who is often credited with the creation of tapping.

Steely Dans: “Don’t Take Me Alive”

“Don’t Take Me Alive” is from Steely Dan’s album *The Royal Scam*, recorded in 1976. The song starts with a guitar solo from Larry Carlton which is an unusual convention in commercial music.

Example 4.10. Measures 1-3 of the guitar solo in “Don’t Take Me Alive”

The image shows musical notation for measures 1-3 of the guitar solo. The key signature is C minor (two flats) and the time signature is 4/4. The treble clef staff shows a G7(#9) chord in measure 1, followed by a melodic line in measures 2 and 3. The bass clef staff shows the corresponding guitar tablature with fret numbers and fingerings.

The song is in the key of C minor. Carlton starts the solo by arpeggiating a G seven (sharp nine). This chord creates suspense to begin the song and solo, as by its nature it needs to be resolved. The third is sustained for two measures until the chord changes to C minor seven, which creates resolution.

Example 4.11. Measures 4-6 of the guitar solo in “Don’t Take Me Alive”

The image shows musical notation for measures 4-6 of the guitar solo. The key signature is C minor (two flats) and the time signature is 4/4. The treble clef staff shows a series of double stops and a bluesy solo line. The bass clef staff shows the corresponding guitar tablature with fret numbers and fingerings.

In Example 4.11, Carlton plays a series of double stops using notes from the C minor pentatonic scale. Carlton approaches this solo with a blues sensibility while still incorporating some of his jazz influence.

Example 4.12. Measures 7-9 of the guitar solo in “Don’t Take Me Alive”

In Example 4.12, Carlton ascends the C minor pentatonic scale and includes a sustained D note to anticipate the change to the G major chord. The remainder of Example 4.12 is played using material from the C minor pentatonic scale.

Example 4.13. Measures 10-12 of the guitar solo in “Don’t Take Me Alive”

In Example 4.13, Carlton continues to use the C minor pentatonic scale to navigate more complex harmony consisting of minor and dominant ninth chords.

Example 4.14. Measures 13-15 of the guitar solo in “Don’t Take Me Alive”

In Example 4.14, Carlton starts by ascending the C minor pentatonic scale. He then uses the F note repeatedly which fits with the chord progression changing to F. This

is accompanied by a whole step bend into D over the C minor seven chord. Again, this is Carlton reaching for the added tonality of the ninth. The same whole step bend to D provides a major seventh sound over the E-flat chord.

Example 4.15. Measures 16-18 of the guitar solo in “Don’t Take Me Alive”

In Example 4.15, Carlton starts by highlighting the chord tones of G by bending into G and then F, implying the V^7 tonality. The remainder of Example 4.15 is based around the C minor pentatonic scale.

Example 4.16. Measures 19-21 of the guitar solo in “Don’t Take Me Alive”

Example 4.16 starts by ascending the C minor scale. In measure 20, D is repeated to achieve the minor nine sound on the C minor chord. In the second measure of Example 4.16, Carlton bends into a chord tone but then sustains an $A(\hat{6})$ to achieve the C minor six sound.

Example 4.17. Measures 1-3 of the guitar solo in “Don’t Take Me Alive”

The solo ends with a superimposition of G minor seven over the C minor chord of the underlying harmony.

The Crusaders: “Spiral”

“Spiral” is from The Crusader’s album *Those Summer Nights*. This song was recorded in 1976 and is an early example of Carlton’s playing. In this track, Carlton’s playing exhibits the influence of the blues.

Example 4.18. Measures 1-3 of the guitar solo in “Spiral”

The song and solo are in the key of B-flat minor; the solo starts at 1:15.

Throughout the solo, Carlton favors the B-flat minor pentatonic scale and the B-flat Blues scale. In Example 4.18, Carlton gravitates to the B-flat minor blues scale. Throughout the entirety of the solo, Carlton plays using a swing feel.

Example 4.19. Measures 4-6 of the guitar solo in “Spiral”

In Figure 4.18, Carlton uses B-flat minor pentatonic to play through the changes. To emphasize the chord changes, he repeats chord tones that exist within the pentatonic scale that correspond with the underlying harmony.

Example 4.20. Measures 7-9 of the guitar solo in “Spiral”

The first measure of Example 4.20 starts with a lick using notes from the B-flat minor pentatonic scale. At the end of measure 7, Carlton sets up a lick that he repeats for one measure. The repeated G-flat note works as it's the third of E-flat minor seven and the seventh of A-flat seven. The repeated F note brings out the minor ninth sound on the Ebm7. Over the A-flat seven sus four chord, it adds the additional sound of the thirteenth. The figure ends with material that uses the B-flat minor pentatonic scale.

Example 4.21. Measures 10-12 of the guitar solo in “Spiral”

In Example 4.21, Carlton bends into the root of F minor seven repeatedly. He follows this with a series of repeated notes. By repeating B-flat and A-flat, he emphasizes the seventh and the root of the B-flat minor seven of the underlying harmony. When the chord changes to E-flat minor seven it emphasizes the B-flat(5̂).

Example 4.22. Measures 13-15 of the guitar solo in “Spiral”

Throughout Example 4.22, Carlton plays material based in B-flat minor pentatonic played with a swung feel. He then repeats the same notes of A-flat and B-flat; this time, he plays them in sextuplets for two measures. Repeating this set of notes allows him to both play chord tones on the B-flat minor seven and play extensions of eleven and five on E-flat minor seven as well as the root and nine on A-flat seven sus four.

Example 4.23. Measures 16-18 of the guitar solo in “Spiral”

In measure 17, Carlton plays over the E six chord using the E major pentatonic scale. In measure 18, Carlton navigates the D6 chord using the D major pentatonic scale; he also uses A-flat as a chromatic passing tone.

Example 4.24. Measures 19-21 of the guitar solo in “Spiral”

In Example 4.24, Carlton approaches all of the slash chords as V7sus chords. Carlton imposes upper structure harmony to navigate the chord changes. Over the D-flat/E-flat he plays A-flat (the eleventh), C (thirteenth), E-flat (the one), which emphasizes the suspended sound through the repeated A-flat. Over the E-flat over F chord, Carlton plays B-flat (the eleventh), D (the thirteenth), F (the one), and B-flat (the eleventh); this again emphasizes the suspended sound through the repetition of B-flat (the eleventh). In measure 20, you can see Carlton continue to apply the same principles of creating arpeggios using upper structure harmony by continuing to emphasize the

elevenths of the underlying harmony. Carlton plays chord tones and the addition of a ninth over the E six chord in measure 21.

Example 4.25. Measures 22-24 of the guitar solo in “Spiral”

Example 4.25 shows measures 22-24 of a guitar solo in B-flat minor. The key signature is three flats. The solo is played over a series of chords: D6, D \flat /E \flat , E \flat /F, F/G, and G \flat /A \flat . The notation includes a treble clef staff with a *gva* marking and a guitar tablature staff with strings T, A, and B. Fingering numbers are provided for each note. Arrows labeled "full" indicate specific notes in measures 22 and 23.

In Example 4.25, Carlton plays the chord tones over the D six chord with the addition of the ninth. In measure 23, Carlton again navigates the changes using upper structure harmony to get the most color out of the chords over which he's playing. In measure 24, Carlton also targets the sevenths and ninths while also adding some additional chromatic passing tones.

Example 4.26. Measures 25-27 of the guitar solo in “Spiral”

Example 4.26 shows measures 25-27 of a guitar solo in B-flat minor. The key signature is three flats. The solo is played over a series of chords: B \flat m7, E \flat m7, Fm7, and B \flat m7. The notation includes a treble clef staff with a *gva* marking and a guitar tablature staff with strings T, A, and B. Fingering numbers are provided for each note. Arrows labeled "full" indicate specific notes in measures 25, 26, and 27.

In Example 4.26, the song returns to the key of B-flat minor. With that change, Carlton returns to playing material based on the B-flat minor pentatonic scale. It is important to note the difficulty of playing that high up on the fretboard of a guitar which is made even more difficult at the speed at which he is playing.

Example 4.27. Measures 28-30 of the guitar solo in “Spiral”

In Example 4.27, Carlton returns to his use of the B-flat blues scale, which is seen with the repetition of the note E (sharp four) throughout measure 28.

Example 4.28. Measures 31-33 of the guitar solo in “Spiral”

Carlton concludes his solo with more material based from the B-flat minor pentatonic scale. In measure 32 for the first time in the solo, he alternates between duplet and triplet-based subdivisions.

Joni Mitchells: “Help Me”

“Help Me” was the first of many tracks that Carlton would play on for Joni Mitchell. Mitchell had seen Carlton play at the Baked Potato one evening in Los Angeles and was very impressed. The following day she invited Carlton and the band he was playing with into the studio. They recorded this track in a few hours. Carlton references

that track as a moment in his career where he began thinking more like an arranger (Bosso 2021).

Example 4.29. Measures 1-9 of the verse in “Help Me”

The image shows a musical score for an acoustic guitar, labeled "od.guit." on the left. The score is in 4/4 time and consists of three systems of staves. The first system shows measures 1 and 2 with rests, followed by measure 3 which begins the "Verse" with a **Gmaj7** chord. The second system shows measures 4, 5, and 6. Measure 4 starts with a **Gmaj7** chord, followed by a melodic line with a slur and a breath mark (H). Measure 5 starts with an **Fmaj7** chord and continues the melodic line. Measure 6 continues the melodic line. The third system shows measures 7, 8, and 9. Measure 7 starts with an **Fmaj7** chord. Measure 8 starts with a **Cmaj7** chord. Measure 9 starts with a **G** chord and continues the melodic line with slurs and breath marks (H). Each system includes a treble clef staff with notes and a guitar staff with fret numbers and chord diagrams. The guitar staff for measure 3 shows a **Gmaj7** chord diagram with frets 7, 7, 7, 9, 10. The guitar staff for measure 4 shows an **Fmaj7** chord diagram with frets 7, 7, 7, 9, 10. The guitar staff for measure 5 shows an **Fmaj7** chord diagram with frets 5, 5, 5, 7, 8. The guitar staff for measure 7 shows an **Fmaj7** chord diagram with frets 5, 5, 5, 7, 8. The guitar staff for measure 8 shows a **Cmaj7** chord diagram with frets 3, 4, 4, 5, 3. The guitar staff for measure 9 shows a **G** chord diagram with frets 4, 5, 3, 4, 5.

The beauty lies in the simplicity of Carlton’s playing on this track. Mitchell had a unique style of playing the acoustic guitar in which it is always in a form of open tuning. To accompany her style, Carlton elects to play root position chords without any omissions. Carlton plays the chord almost as if it was an arpeggio so that all of the voices can be heard, ringing out individually. When chording, Charlton applies a very subtle amount of volume swell to the beginning of each chord which creates a blooming sound. In between chords, Carlton interjects short melodic ideas that complement the vocal line.

Example 4.30. Measures 10-15 of the verse in “Help me”

The musical score for Example 4.30 consists of two systems of music. The first system covers measures 10 through 12. The guitar part (top staff) plays a melodic line with slurs and fingerings (H, H, 3, 4, 5, 4, 5). The piano part (bottom staff) provides harmonic accompaniment with chords G, Cmaj7, G, A, Dmaj7, and Dmaj7, indicated by fret numbers and string numbers (T, A, B). The second system covers measures 13 through 15. The guitar part (top staff) plays a melodic line with slurs and fingerings (sl. 8, 5, 6, 8, 6, 6, 5, 5, 5, 5, 5, 8). The piano part (bottom staff) provides harmonic accompaniment with chords Bbmaj7, Fmaj7, and Fmaj7, indicated by slurs and fingerings (sl., H, P, P, P).

Again, in Example 4.30, Carlton uses root position chords to help solidify the harmony against Mitchell’s open-tuned guitar. In measure 13, Carlton plays a line that includes the ninth of B-flat major seven (C) and in measure 14, sustains the ninth of Fmaj7 (G).

Conclusion

Throughout his career, Larry Carlton was able to create a sound that was definitively his. It became his identity and what he was hired to create in the studio. On all three lead examples, his playing shows a melding of blues and jazz styles. In “Don’t Take Me Alive” and “Spiral,” you can hear the influence of the blues in his phrasing and his note choices. He favored the tonality of the minor pentatonic and blues scales. In Carlton’s lead and rhythm playing, he often chose to include the ninth in his lines. In the track “Kid Charlemagne,” Carlton makes extensive use of the available diatonic extensions of the chords over which he is playing to expand the harmony.

Carlton's rhythm guitar playing is ambient and rooted in harmony. When playing with a large group, Carlton is conscious to play his parts in a manner that supports what the others are played. His parts blend into the mix and do not draw away from the vocalist.

Carlton's phrasing is heavily influenced by his jazz roots, which can be heard in the underlying swing feel with which he plays. He also alters the amount of swing feel he plays within a song; Example 4.4 is an example of this. Example 4.4 has a stronger swing feel than the rest of the solo. Carlton favored lines with a duplet subdivision in these examples. Carlton's phrasing sits subtly behind the beat, much closer to the head of the beat than the other players in this study.

Carlton's guitar tone has a lot of presence, and the breakup (distortion) is organic and not compressed. None of the previous examples had any modulating effects on them, which also contrasts with the other players in this study.

When Carlton is developing melodic contour in his solos, he uses rests and held notes to separate his melodic ideas. His playing does not follow the generic curve of a slow introduction, fast middle section, and a conclusion of a fast virtuosic run as the other players did. His solos maintained the same complexity for their entirety. For instance "Spiral" is primarily eighth and sixteenth notes for its duration.

Conclusion

All of the players analyzed in this study had their own unique style and approach to the guitar. While they were all different, they also had many similarities. These similarities contributed to their success as session musicians.

All of the musicians in this study have impeccable time feel. They each possess the ability to shift their time feel within phrases, shifting from playing behind the beat to on the beat and ahead of the beat. This ability to control their time feel allowed them to control of the energy they were contributing to a song. By playing behind the beat, the guitarists could create a sense of groove and a relaxed feel. By playing ahead of the beat, they could create energy and intensity. The level of control they had of their time feel made it seem as if every note they played was placed methodically within the beat. It also added an additional confidence to the delivery of each note. They all had tendencies as to how far they would play behind the beat in their usual phrasing. Lukather and Landau played more consistently behind the beat, while Huff played slightly closer to the head of the beat. Carlton would choose to play behind the beat less often than the other players, favouring a more on-the- beat approach. This understanding of groove and feel and how they are related to beat placement is essential to the success of a session guitar player.

In most of the examples in this paper, the guitarists were playing with a swing feel, consistently feeling an underlying triplet subdivision. They possessed the ability to switch freely between swung and straight feel, routinely switching between duplet and

triplet subdivisions within a single measure or phrase. This added additional complexity to the lines they were playing. All of the musicians studied for this paper had different jazz and blues players influence on their playing. Their study and interest in these jazz and blues players likely strengthened their understanding of playing with a swing feel. Swing is essential to a lot of the grooves in western music; therefore, it is crucial that session musicians have a strong understanding of the fundamentals of swing.

Calling up a great guitar tone that fits the mix and is pleasing to the ear is an essential element of being a session musician. It requires a variety of gear to create the sounds that the artist requires for the track. For many of the examples within this study, the guitar of choice was the super Strat. This guitar gave the musician a variety of different sonic options without changing instruments. A recording artist will want their songs to have a certain sound. In most cases, they want their sound to be on-trend with songs that are having radio success. In the case of the majority of the players in this study, that was the reasoning behind the heavy chorusing effect they used. Chorus had become an integral part of the lead guitar sound in the 1980s. It is a session musician's responsibility to understand the current soundscape of music and be able to recreate sounds with ease.

These musicians all created memorable moments within their playing, creating lines that would draw the listeners attention to them. These players would use contour in their solos to create and release energy. A lot of the solos analyzed were very similar and formulaic. The solos would start with slower melodic material often played behind the beat in order to achieve a more relaxed feel. As the solo progressed, they would increase

rhythmic density and begin shifting their time feel closer to on the beat. They would then end the solo with a fast passage of notes, which was often a run faster than anything they had played previously. They would most often end their solos with a long-sustained note high up the fret board of the guitar. This approach to soloing created solos that illustrated both the virtuosity of the player and their musicality.

All of the players in this study are virtuosos on their instrument. Throughout the analysis, techniques such as pinch harmonics, tapping, and extensive tremolo use were examined. These techniques all pushed the boundaries of what is capable on a guitar and became staples of the electric guitar sound thanks to their extensive use by these players. These guitarists created unique sounds that people were not used to hearing on the guitar. The players also played virtuosic passages of fast runs with unique phrasings that are incredibly difficult to duplicate.

During the period that these examples were recorded, the electric guitar was considered “cool” and people wanted it in their recordings. Van Halen released Van Halen I in 1978. On the album, Eddie Van Halen pushed the envelope of guitar playing with his techniques, tone, and virtuosic speed. After its successful release, artists wanted to have this kind of playing on their recordings. People wanted to hear virtuosic runs and extended guitar solos. These players were able to deliver modern playing techniques, speed, and feel in their playing.

In conclusion, there is more to these players than the speed and swagger of their playing. It was their deep understanding of complex elements of musicality such as time feel, phrasing, and tone that made them such desirable studio musicians. Lukather, Huff,

Landau, and Carlton created memorable musical moments on their instruments. This made them essential as guitarists that artists needed to have on their tracks to ensure they were a charting success.

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