



GT132

50 Licks To Go

*Blues - Country - Funk - Fusion - Gipsy Jazz
Jazz - Latin - Metal - Prog Rock - Rock*

*Getting ready for some autumn gigs?
Here are a bucket-load of licks to turbo charge your chops
and get you sounding authentic in loads of styles!*

We all know that playing metal licks in a country standard will probably loose you the gig and sound lame to boot; this article will solve this problem by giving you authentic and cool licks in ten of the most popular styles.

We'll identify the main clichés, the basic tone characteristics, the scale/chord choice and the most important artists for each style.

For obvious reasons it's impossible to cover all this in depth for each style, so if you're a new to a style (e.g. Latin or Country), take it as dipping a toe into new musical waters...

PRO TIP

When studying licks it's important to keep in mind...

- 1. Understand what chords you can use the lick on.*
- 2. Find 2/3 other places where you can play the same notes (maybe in different octaves).*
- 3. Play the lick over a backing track. Improvise with it and try to incorporate it into your vocabulary (think of the analogy of learning to speak a new language. You learn a phrase and then you try to say the same thing slightly differently).*
- 4. Transpose it into other keys.*
- 5. Compose your own licks in that style.*
- 6. Analyse then develop the central 'idea' of the lick.*
- 7. Every time you come across a lick that you like, write it down and work on it!*



Blues

Traditional blues is based on a very simple chord progression, namely (I, IV, V) and all using the strong sounding dominant 7th chord (1-3-5-b7). Scale choice is also limited mostly to the blues scale.

The tone of the guitar is quite simple (valve amp and a good guitar) and should leave the player free to experiment with different dynamics (from clean to natural overdrive). One of the main characteristics is the use of very expressive vibrato and bending (also use of the slide).

The focus is very much on 'how to play' one note then to play too many notes. Some important names would be Robert Johnson, B.B. King, Albert King, Freddy King, Eric Clapton, Stevie Ray Vaughan and Robben Ford.

Lick 1: This lick is played using the slide but in standard tuning. The tone should be a crunchy valve-amp sound. The lick uses the G7sus4 arpeggio over the progression. This is a very popular approach for the ‘old school’ guys from the 1950’s, such Muddy Waters.

[illegible]

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Lick 2: This lick shows a development of the previous idea but without the slide. Again it's a G7sus4 arpeggio, although this time it's over the IV chord, C7. This lick is typical of Buddy Guy.

♩ = 100

D7 C7 G

let ring-----

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Lick 3: In the Memphis area, blues is characterized by a mixture of the major (country influence) and the minor pentatonic (blues from Mississippi). B.B. King, Memphis Slim and many other players use these kinds of licks.

♩ = 100

D7 C7 G

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Lick 4: This lick is in the style of Stevie Ray 'Texas Tornado' Vaughan. SRV was a walking encyclopedia for blues... This lick shows the use of D minor pentatonic (V degree in the key of G) over the D7; a common trick employed by Blues guitarists.

♩ = 100

D7 C7 G

full 1/4 full 1/2 full full

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Lick 5: This is a contemporary lick. Nowadays, many styles have incorporated influences from other genres and this one shows a more ‘jazzy’ approach. It works around the arpeggios of the chords. This lick is in the style of players such as Duke Robillard or Robben Ford.

♩ = 100

D⁷ C⁷ G

let ring- - - -|

T
A
B

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Country

Again a simple chord progression (I, IV, V) and scale choice (major pentatonic). The sound is more triad-ish than the blues; there's limited dominant 7 chords here.

The classic guitar is a Tele type, and most of the time is quite clean; go for 'twang'! Typical characteristics are fast, almost mechanical bending, use of open strings and hybrid picking. Some important names are Chet Atkins, Jerry Reed, James Burton, Albert Lee, Brent Mason and Brad Paisley.

Lick 1: This is a typical lick for a bluegrass player such as Doc Watson. The major pentatonic with the b3 (alternatively known as the 'country blues scale') and rapid picking are the main characteristics.

♩ = 100

A

T
A
B

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Lick 2: This lick is in the style of Albert Lee and uses hybrid picking (pick, middle and ring fingers). The idea is to play with the pick on one string and use the fingers to cross the strings. Albert often mixes the major pentatonic with the blues scale or mixolydian scale.

♩ = 100

A

T
A
B

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Funk

The harmony here is predominantly static, typically over a dominant 7 or a m7 chord. Go for a Strat in position 2 and set up a clean tone, sometimes with wah or phaser. The focus here is more on rhythm than anything else; the common techniques are strumming and left and right hand muting.

Some names to check out are Jimmy Nolen, Wah-Wah Watson, Neil Rodgers, Al McKay, David Williams and Paul Jackson Jr.

Lick 1: This is a funk rhythm lick in the style of James Brown. The tone should be totally clean (maybe with a hint of compressor) and the left hand should release the pressure very quickly to get the short, staccato feel.

Swing ♩ = 100

D7
8va

T
A
B

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Lick 2: This lick is in the style of one of funk's legends, Nile Rodgers. He often plays block chords mixed with 'Motown fills' (typical of Hendrix too). The strumming hand should play with a wide movement and the fretting hand should mute the unwanted strings.

Swing ♩ = 100

D7

T
A
B

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Lick 3: This lick is in the style of another incredible player; Eddie Hazel from Funkadelic. The sound of the lick is around the D7sus4 chord and, again, a wide movement is needed.

Swing ♩ = 100

D7

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Lick 4: This lick is in the style of the Red Hot Chili Peppers. It's quite 'aggressive' for funk and heavily influenced by rock-blues players. To get the right tone try an MXR Dynacomp, a Strat and a valve amp.

Swing ♩ = 100

D7

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Lick 5: This lick is in the style of session supremo's Paul Jackson Jr or David Williams. Those guys are amazing! The lick uses a single note line played with a light palm mute and shows the use of 16th note triplets (on a Quartal triad).

Swing ♩ = 100

D7

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Fusion

This style is complex! The common cliché of fusion is a blending of jazz and rock; namely, the harmony of jazz and the technique of rock.

As it draws on Jazz the chord and scales choices are advanced and many; the modes of the melodic minor are very common, such as the altered scale. You can play fusion with any guitar and any sound (clean, distorted). Important names are Lee Ritenour, John McLaughlin, John Scofield, Scott Henderson and Allan Holdsworth.

Lick 1: The first lick is in the style of Scott Henderson. This lick shows two of the biggest Henderson influences: Wayne Shorter (quartal arpeggios) and Thelonius Monk (b9 and major 13). Over the G7alt it uses a Db triad and resolves on the 3rd of the 1st chord (another Henderson trademark).

♩ = 100

Dm¹¹ G7^{alt} Cmaj7(b5)

T
A
B

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Lick 2: This lick is in the style of Robben Ford when he was playing fusion with The Yellowjackets. It shows a clever use of minor pentatonic. For Dm11 Robben uses Am, for G7alt he uses Bbm and for Cmaj7(b5) he uses Bm. This is a common approach that Scott Henderson uses too.

♩ = 100

Dm¹¹ G7^{alt} Cmaj7(b5)

T
A
B

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Lick 3: This lick is in the style of fusion virtuoso Frank Gambale. It uses the sweep/economy picking techniques on arpeggios. Frank uses a Major9 arpeggio built over the 3rd of the IIIm7 chord, and the G7(#5) arpeggio.

♩ = 100

Dm¹¹ G7^{alt} Cmaj7(b5)

T 6 5 5 7 8 7 8 9 8 9 10 8 12 11 8 10 9 8 10 12 11 13 15 14 13 12

A

B

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Lick 4: This lick is in the style of John Scofield. John often uses unusual notes such as the tritone (F-B) over the IIIm7 chord. For the G7alt he plays an outside line that resolves on the b5 of the 1st degree. Scofield has a fantastic laid back feel, so try to emulate it.

♩ = 100

Dm¹¹ G7^{alt} Cmaj7(b5)

T 19 18 19 19 18 15 16 18 15 16 15 14 16 15 13 12 13 15 12 11

A

B

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Lick 5: This lick is in the style of one of the most important fusion players, namely Allan Holdsworth. Holdsworth is famous for playing in wide, stretched positions and for using long, fluid chromatic lines played legato. Over the IIIm7 chord he uses the Dorian mode whereas for the G7alt he plays an outside line that resolves again on the b5 of the Cmaj7(b5).

♩ = 100

Dm¹¹ G7^{alt} Cmaj7(b5)

T 1 3 4 1 2 4 1 2 4 1 4 2 1 2 1 2 1 4 3 1 3 2 1 4 2 1 1 3 2 1 3

A

B

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Gypsy Jazz

This style can, confusingly, be both easy and complex at the same time! On the 'easy' side you'll find simple triads and dominant 7 chords, whilst on the 'hard' side you'll find all that complex jazz harmony in the scale choices.

This genre is played on an acoustic type (Meccaferrri) guitar. One of the characteristics is very fast picking; sometimes alternate and sometimes economy.

Django Reinhardt, Bireli Lagrene, Gary Potter and the Rosenberg Trio are all important names.

Lick 1: This lick is in the style of the most important Gypsy Jazz player: Django Reinhardt. It is based on the arpeggio of the chord, and uses the semitones above and below each note as approach notes.

Swing $\text{♩} = 100$

A⁷ Dm

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Lick 2: Another lick in the style of Django. This time it shows the use of a diminished 7 chord to create a A7(b9) chord. Over the Dm (I) he uses the major 6th and major 7th to create that typical Gypsy sound.

Swing $\text{♩} = 100$

A⁷ Dm

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Lick 3: This lick is in the style of Bireli Lagrene. This incredible player is not only an amazing jazz and fusion guitarist, but he's also one of the most important Gypsy players! This lick again shows the use of diminished arpeggio over the V (A7) and the use of major 6th over the I (Dm) to create a minor 6th sound.

Swing $\text{♩} = 100$

A7 Dm

T
A
B

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Lick 4: This lick is in the style of Gary Potter and shows how important it is to work around the arpeggios of the chords. Again, note the heavy use of the semitones above and below.

Swing $\text{♩} = 100$

A7 Dm

T
A
B

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Lick 5: This lick, in the style of the incredible Rosenberg Trio, is played using alternate picking. It's actually very common to play economy picking in this genre. It shows how to combine diminished arpeggios, chromatic lines (over the V) and major 6th and 7th's over the I. The last bar should be played sliding the finger from the 4th up to 10th fret while the right hand keeps picking in triplets.

Swing $\text{♩} = 100$

A7 Dm

T
A
B

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Jazz

The general rule here is that Jazz is complex; many different types of chord and scale can be employed. Technique wise, avoid bending or vibrato, but use slides and legato (and that doesn't mean in the 'Satch' way...).

The phrasing is more focused on arpeggios/chord tones than scales, and the guitar is ideally a hollow body on the neck pickup. Use flatwound strings and roll the tone control almost totally off. The amp needs to be clean and clear and can be a good transistor amp.

Important players are Wes Montgomery, George Benson, Jim Hall and Pat Metheny.

Lick 1: This first lick is in the style of the most important jazz guitarist ever; Wes Montgomery. Over the $\text{IIm}7$ it uses arpeggio notes and a chromatic line to land on the 3rd of the $\text{V}7$ chord. Then it plays the diminished arpeggio and augmented arpeggio to land on the 3rd of the $\text{Imaj}7$ chord. For authenticity, this example should be played using the thumb only; no pick allowed!

Swing ♩ = 110

The musical notation for Lick 1 is as follows:

Staff 1 (Treble Clef):

- Measure 1: D4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), B4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), D4 (quarter).
- Measure 2: D4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), B4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), D4 (quarter).
- Measure 3: D4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), B4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), D4 (quarter).
- Measure 4: D4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), B4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), D4 (quarter).

Staff 2 (Guitar Fretboard):

- Measure 1: 5, 6, 7, 8, 6, 7, 5, 8.
- Measure 2: 9, 7, 10, 9, 8, 9, 10, 8.
- Measure 3: 9, 7, 10, 9, 8, 9, 10, 8.
- Measure 4: 9, 7, 10, 9, 8, 9, 10, 8.

Chords: $\text{Dm}7$, $\text{G}7$, $\text{Cmaj}7$

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Lick 2: This lick is in the style of Joe Pass and shows his wonderful approach to chord melody. He plays the Dm7 and then a diminished chord (substitution for D7b9 which is a secondary dominant) to get to the V where he plays G13sus4 and G13b9. It seems very complicated but when you play it, everything makes perfect sense!

Swing ♩ = 110

Dm7 G7 Cmaj7

T 6 5 6 8 5 8 12 12 12 12 8 8
A 5 4 5 7 10 10 10 10 9 9 8 7
B 7 6 7 7 10 10 10 10 9 9 7 7

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Lick 3: This is a lick in the style of another Jazz giant: George Benson. The lick demonstrates, again, the use of arpeggios but this time it's combined with a very clever approach to the outside notes. Again it lands on the 3rd of the first chord.

Swing ♩ = 110

Dm7 G7 Cmaj7

T 6 5 5 7 5 4 7 6 4 4 5 3 6 5 3 2
A 6 5 5 7 5 4 7 6 4 4 5 3 6 5 3 2
B 6 5 5 7 5 4 7 6 4 4 5 3 6 5 3 2

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Lick 4: This lick is in the style of Pat Martino. It's a fast line that uses Dorian mode and upper extension over the G7 (b9, #9). A constant, strong picking technique is required to nail this.

Swing ♩ = 110

Dm7 G7 Cmaj7

T 9 11 12 9 10 12 10 13 10 13 12 10 11 12 11 13 12 10 9 12 10 11 10 13 12
A 9 11 12 9 10 12 10 13 10 13 12 10 11 12 11 13 12 10 9 12 10 11 10 13 12
B 9 11 12 9 10 12 10 13 10 13 12 10 11 12 11 13 12 10 9 12 10 11 10 13 12

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Lick 5: This lick is in the style of one the most important contemporary players: Pat Metheny. The lick shows a 'be-bop' approach to the third (first 4 notes) and how he plays around the b9 and #9 of the G7. This is a trademark of Metheny: he uses the legato technique to add a natural 9 which creates a chromatic line.

Swing ♩ = 110

Chord progression: Dm⁷ G⁷ Cmaj⁷

The lick is written in 4/4 time. The first measure is Dm⁷ (D-F-A-C). The second measure is G⁷ (G-B-D-F). The third measure is Cmaj⁷ (C-E-G-B). The melody is: D4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), F4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), F4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), D4 (quarter), C4 (half). The fretboard positions are: 2 5 4 2 3 2 5 5 (for Dm7), 3 4 5 6 7 5 6 5 4 6 4 4 3 6 3 4 5 (for G7 and Cmaj7).

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Latin

For Latin we're thinking essentially nylon-string samba and bossa nova. Using jazz chord vocabulary and beautiful 'voice-leading' chord sequences, the leading lights in Latin guitar include Antonio Carlos Jobim and Jao Gilberto.

Lick 1: The first lick is a rhythm pattern in the style of the father of Bossa Nova: Antonio Carlos Jobim. It's a fingerstyle piece and should be played on the nylon string or acoustic guitar. This lick will work as a backing track for the following licks.

♩ = 110 D^ø G⁷alt Cm⁹

T 6 6 6 4 | 4 4 4 | 3 3 3 3 | 3 3 3

A 5 5 5 4 | 4 4 4 | 3 3 3 3 | 3 3 3 3

B 5 6 6 3 | 3 3 4 3 | 3 1 1 1 | 3 1 1 1

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Lick 2: This lick is in the style of Earl Klugh and it's played on the acoustic guitar. Over the first chord he uses a chromatic approach that leads him to the #9 of the G7. Then he plays the G7 arpeggio and uses the b6 (Aeolian mode) of the Im7 chord to create that 'sad' feel. Also, a heavy and laid back feel is required.

♩ = 110 D^ø G⁷alt Cm⁹

T 3 6 5 4 5 | 8 | 8 9 5 3 | 6 5

A 8

B 8 9 5 3 6 5

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Lick 3: Another lick in the style of George Benson. This one shows his incredible approach to arpeggios and his incredible melodic sense. The lick lands on the 9th of the Im7 chord which is a typical and traditional tool.

♩ = 110

D[∅] G⁷alt Cm⁹

T 8 9 10 12 10 9 7 10 9 8 8 9 10 7 10 10

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Lick 4: This lick is in the style of one of the most interesting Contemporary Jazz players: Bill Frisell. One of the trademarks of Bill Frisell is the use of clusters of closely spaced notes. Let the notes ring as much as possible.

♩ = 110 D[∅] G⁷alt Cm⁹

T 13 10 12 9 9 7 6 8 11 8 12 10

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Lick 5: Another lick in the style of Pat Metheny and another trademark! It's built using a kind of arpeggio featuring 5th and 2nd intervals and he moves that shape up and down to the fret board, changing the notes when the harmony changes. Incredible!

♩ = 110 D[∅] G⁷alt Cm⁹

T 8 10 8 9 9 11 13 15 13 15 12 12 15 11 11 13 10 11 12 10 11 10 9 10 8

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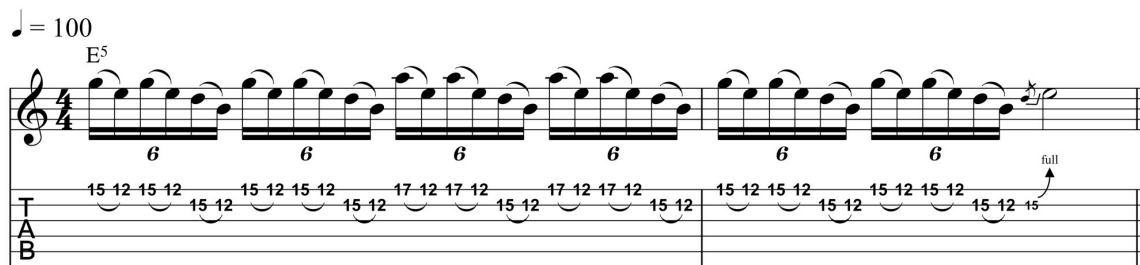
Metal

Metal harmony is quite simple, even if there's no 'common progression' present. Power chords and single note lines, often moving around the diminished 5th interval, are very common. The cliché sound is minor, such as the Aeolian mode, or darker still the Phrygian or Locrian modes.

The focus here is definitely on chops; tone wide vibrato, tapping, sweeping, legato, alternate picking, harmonics and whammy bar stunts. The tone is heavily distorted with a 'scoop' in the middle frequencies.

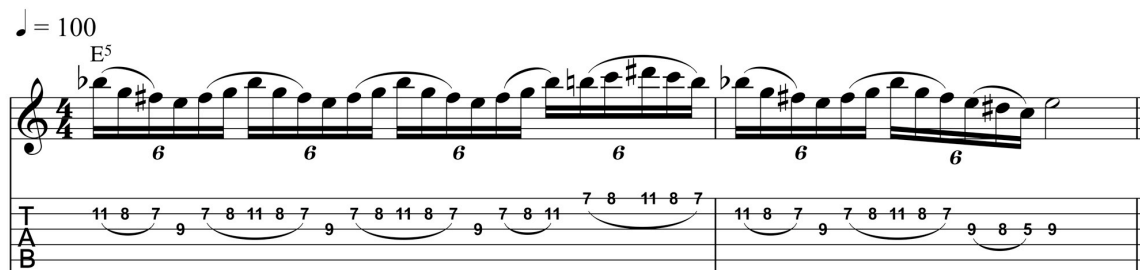
Important names are Black Sabbath, Metallica, Megadeth, Slayer and Pantera.

Lick 1: The first lick is one the most common rock-metal licks ever. It's in the style of Kirk Hammet of Metallica, but it's been used by most of players. It's based on sextuplets from the E minor pentatonic using legato.

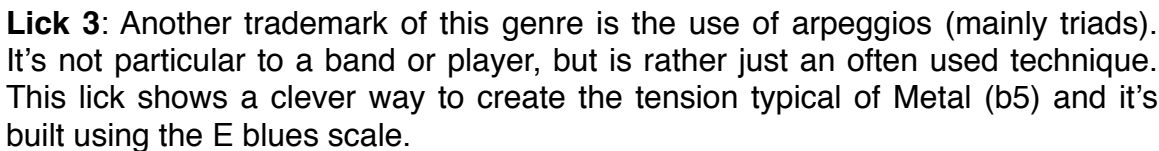


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Lick 2: This lick is in the style of Marty Friedman (Megadeth). Marty has a very personal approach which is heavily influenced by exotic scales. This lick shows a long repetitive line using legato.



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[illegible]

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♩ = 100

E⁵
15^{ma}-

15^{ma}-

w/bar-----| P.H.-----|

T
A
B

4 ----- 9 8 10 12 10 9

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Prog Rock

This style is, in some respects, closer to orchestral classical music than to popular song form. The compositions typically are very long, feature many different sections with odd meters, and a wide range of instrumentation; you may hear a sweet nylon string guitar section, followed by a brutal distorted riff.

A few important names: Yes, Genesis, Rush and Dream Theater.

Lick 1: The first lick shows a riff in the style of Rush's Alex Lifeson in 7/8. When working with odd meters, try to avoid the mathematic approach and make the riffs musical! This lick shows a rhythm pattern that can be used with two chords. Note the use of open strings. This lick will work as backing track.

♩=180 (♩=90)

Gsus² Dmaj⁷/F[♯] Gsus² Dmaj⁷/F[♯] Gsus²

T A B

3 5 0 2 4 0 3 5 0 2 4 0 3 5 0

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Lick 2: This lick in the style of Steve Howe and Alex Lifeson. This time it's an arpeggio which is one of their trademarks. Note again the use of open strings and how the pattern fits in the rhythm.

♩=180 (♩=90)

Gsus² Dmaj⁷/F[♯] Gsus² Dmaj⁷/F[♯] Gsus²

T A B

3 0 0 3 7 5 7 5 3 0 0 3 6 5 5 3 3

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Lick 3: This is a very simple line typical of a band like Yes, or even Pink Floyd. This lick is based around the B minor pentatonic with an added 9th (C#). Again the rule is to find something simple that fits in the rhythm perfectly.

♩=180 (♩=90)

Gsus² Dmaj7/F# Gsus² Dmaj7/F# Gsus²

T
A
B

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Lick 4: This is a lick that shows another trademark of the genre: playing harmonized lines with the keyboard player. This line is mixture of Yes's and Tool's styles and shows more freedom on the rhythm. Again, note the use of open strings.

♩=180 (♩=90)

Gsus² Dmaj7/F# Gsus² Dmaj7/F# Gsus²

T
A
B

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Lick 5: This lick is a bit harder than the previous ones, but it's not as hard as it looks! It's in the style of contemporary bands and players such as John Petrucci and Dream Theater. It's built using power chords in the upper register and played using hybrid picking and needs a bit more attention than usual but once you get it on board, it's great! It sounds like a whammy pedal!

♩=180 (♩=90)

Gsus² Dmaj7/F# Gsus² Dmaj7/F# Gsus²

T
A
B

V m V m a m m m m a m V m a m m m m a m m

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Lick 3: This lick is in the style of Ritchie Blackmore. Even though the notes are different, the repetitive idea is still taken from Berry. Blackmore plays on the blues scales and adds the major 6th; a sound that is common in contemporary players such as Paul Gilbert.

♩ = 160 A

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Lick 4: This is a lick in the style of Eddie Van Halen. Eddie's incorporated all of the previous ideas, but all executed with his incredible tapping technique. This lick is quite easy harmonically and it's played almost entirely on one string. Play the first note, tap the 12th fret then, with the left hand, play a bend on the 7th fret while still tapping the 12th. Basically, don't bend with the right hand, just tap; it's the left hand that executes the bend.

♩ = 160 A

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hold bend-4

Lick 5: This lick is in the style of a contemporary player such as Steve Vai. It starts with the minor pentatonic and moves to the Gmaj7 arpeggio (Mixolydian mode) to create a modern sound. At the end there are couple of slides (another trademark of Vai) to end on the b7 of the chord.

♩ = 160 A

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