

Dario Cortese

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20 speed licks

20 SPEED LICKS



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by Dario Cortese

• Index	1
• Lick 1: Eddie Van Halen	2
• Lick 2: Greg Howe	2
• Lick 3: Randy Rhodes	2
• Lick 4: Paul Gilbert	3
• Lick 5: Nuno Bettencourt	3
• Lick 6: Yngwie Malmsteen	3
• Lick 7: Steve Vai	4
• Lick 8: Nuno Bettencourt	4
• Lick 9: Angus Young	4
• Lick 10: Jeff Beck/Jimmy Page	5
• Lick 11: Keith Urban	5
• Lick 12: Dick Dale	6
• Lick 13: Eric Clapton	6
• Lick 14: Alvin Lee	7
• Lick 15: SRV	7
• Lick 16: SRV	7
• Lick 17: Rockabilly	8
• Lick 18: Brian Setzer	8
• Lick 19: Country	8
• Lick 20: Pat Metheny	9

Needs for Speed? Fear not! We've got the solution for you! This article will boost your speed and it's guaranteed that you're gonna impress your mates at the next gig/jam session!

Are you tired of studying incredibly difficult licks and get no real results? Are you looking to boost your speed up a bit without going into the 'speed of light' area? Well, this article might be done specifically for you.

Before we start you need to find out what type of guitar player you are. The first type of guitar player is known as not-human. The not-humans are the incredible guitar Gods, the ones who can do everything with ease, the ones that make the most unnatural lick look like the easiest thing on the planet. Well, if you're not part of this category then you will fall - like the writer - into the second one: the humans. The humans are the ones who struggle through things but still would like to know how does it feel to be not-human for a day.

The aim of this article is in fact to provide the human readers some of the most used fast lick, the ones that not-humans use all the time, the 'must-know' ones... the secret licks!

First thing first: the goal. The goal is to achieve speed hopefully with a minimum effort. This is actually quite easy to do. There are techniques - like tapping for example - which let you play incredibly fast with a very small effort. So one solution would be tapping because amongst all the technique it has the highest ratio between the amount of work you put in and the speed achieved.

That brings out a second problem: style. The problem now is stylistic because I can't play tapping on a jazz tune! Well... on traditional jazz at least! So, what to do? The best solution seems to approach the most important styles and organize the licks in order of effort/speed ratio.

Great! Now, we know what to do! Just one little problem tho: it takes years to collect all those licks and organize them in this way! What a shame... we were nearly there! Wouldn't be great to just wake up one day and find out that all that work has been done for you??

Done.

In the next few pages you will find the most common fast licks in Modern Rock, Classic Rock, Blues, Country, Rockabilly and Jazz organized by effort/speed ratio.

- Licks 1-8 are in **Modern Rock** style. Technique focus in on Tapping, Legato, Sweep and Alternate Picking.
- Licks 9-12 are in **Classic Rock** style. Technique focus in on Legato and Alternate Picking.
- Licks 13-16 are in **Blues** style. Technique focus in on Legato and Alternate Picking.
- Licks 17-19 are in **Country/Rockabilly** style. Technique focus in on Legato and Hybrid Picking.
- Lick 20 is in **Jazz** style and the main technique used is Legato.

Some of the licks might look 'scary' on paper or sound 'unachievable' on the audio files (although the speed is suppose to be challenging but doable). Just spend a little bit of time to understand how the lick is actually played. This will save you from correcting mistakes later on and getting the most out of these licks.

Now, go and use your not-human powers wisely.

STONE SETTINGS

I've recorded everything through the Line 6 POD Xt. I've used the Music Man Luke for the modern rock examples, Les Paul for the classic rock, Albert Lee for the strats sound, my old Tele for the country example and the 175 for the jazz and rockabilly.

Of course any guitar would work fine through a good valve amp. You might need a high gain amp or a pedal for the modern rock style.

Lick 1 (Eddie Van Halen Style): The first lick is in the style of guitar virtuoso Eddie Van Halen and features the picking hand tapping technique. This has the best ratio between effort and resulting speed, in other words probably the easiest technique to achieve speed and play arpeggios. [back to index](#)

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Lick 2 (Greg Howe Style): This lick is in the style of Greg Howe and features the same technique as the previous example but it's applied in a slightly different way. It's again a very easy lick to do and the result just sound great. In the second bar play the 17th fret with the picking hand, pull off to the 15th fret - that is played by the fretting hand - and bend the string up a whole tone. [back to index](#)

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Lick 3 (Randy Rhodes Style): This is a typical neo-classical lick in the style of Randy Rhodes. The technique is exactly the same as the previous two examples but this time there a hand movement involved which makes things just a little more difficult. Fear not, after a few runs through it you should get the idea on how this works and things will get easier. [back to index](#)

♩ = 120

Am G

8^{va}

T
A
B

F E7 Am

4 (8)

T
A
B

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Lick 4 (Paul Gilbert Style): This lick features one of Paul Gilbert's favourite lick. It's built around the A minor pentatonic shape and it's a great lick for modern rock/blues phrasing. It features the fretting hand legato technique which makes the speed more achievable than Paul's picked version of the same lick! [back to index](#)

♩ = 120

A7

T
A
B

full

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Lick 5 (Nuno Bettencourt Style #1): This lick shows another great way to play arpeggios. This particular one seems to be one of Nuno Bettencourt's favourite arpeggios. The picking hand work is reduced to minimum picking just the first note of each sextuplet, whereas the fretting hand incorporate some tapping idea. [back to index](#)

♩ = 110 *8va*

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Lick 6 (Yngwie Malmsteen Style): We couldn't miss Yngwie's favourite diminished arpeggio lick! The lick features the sweep technique but only on the top three strings which makes the lick quite doable. The fretting hand pattern is exactly the same moved three frets up each time. Ah, good old days when one shape was all we needed! [back to index](#)

♩ = 130

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Lick 7 (Steve Vai Style): Steve Vai is not known as a ‘sweeper’ but he does play this one in many songs and different harmonic situations. For many this lick has been one of the first ‘sweep’ lick ever learned. John Petrucci has also used this shape extensively in Dream Theater’s Imagine & Words. [back to index](#)

Em⁹
♩ = 120 8^{va}

TAB: 22 19 20 20 15 15 14 17 10 7 8 8 3 | 3 4 5 4 5 6 4 5 6 5 6 7 5 6 7 6

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Lick 8 (Nuno Bettencourt Style #2): This is another lick from Extreme’s Nuno Bettencourt trick bag. You actually need to use just one finger from the fretting hand (of course you can use more than one if wanted!) while the picking hand just pick constantly on the top E string. An idea that someone called Blackmore has used before apparently... [back to index](#)

♩ = 150 E⁷

TAB: 12 0 0 0 8 0 0 0 10 0 0 0 7 0 0 0 | 8 0 0 0 5 0 0 0 7 0 0 0 4 0 0 0

3 Am

TAB: 5 0 0 7 0 0 8 0 0 10 0 0 8 0 7 0 | 5

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Lick 9 (Angus Young Style): If Lick 8 is too hard for you then this one should be ok. This time it's just fretting hand. The picking hand just mutes (fingerstyle) the adjacent strings to avoid unwanted noise. No pick allowed. [back to index](#)

♩ = 140 B7

w/legato throughout

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Lick 10 (Jeff Beck/Jimmy Page): This is probably one of the most common fast lick ever. It has lots of variations but the bottom line is that is often played on the first few frets and that incorporates open strings. Very simple, very strong and effective, very rock'n'roll. [back to index](#)

♩ = 180 E5

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Lick 11 (Keith Urban Style): This lick is taken from country/pop star Keith Urban's arsenal. He actually plays this idea very often in solos. You can decide if you want the two strings ringing together or not but this is the case where you would let everything ring out - which also makes it easier for the fretting hand. [back to index](#)

♩ = 110

D *8va* ----- Em

T
A
B

T
A
B

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Lick 12 (Dick Dale Style): From the 'King of Surf' guitar this is a very effective line on the bottom E string. The example is built using the tremolo picking (constant picking). Pick the string as close as possible to the bridge with quite a wide and relaxed movement. Try to avoid the 'entire-arm-stiff' kinda movement. Speed is the result of relaxation and constant work, not tension and pure strength. I found quite helpful keeping a movement that lets each note fall on a down stroke. [back to index](#)

♩ = 170

T
A
B

T
A
B

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Lick 13 (Eric Clapton Style): Even Captain 'slow-hand' has a lesson to teach us on speed. This lick is very easy and can be easily moved across the minor pentatonic position where is built from. [back to index](#)

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Lick 14 (Alvin Lee Style): Anyone remember Woodstock? Alvin Lee made his performance memorable in 1969 and for many he was the icon of 'flashy' licks. Well this lick is the kind of lick that he played in that performance. Since then lots of other players including Ritchie Blackmore have used this device extensively. [back to index](#)

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Lick 15 (SRV #1): This lick looks horrible on paper but it's actually quite easy to do. The basic idea is to thrill (fast hammer on and pull off between two notes) around the minor pentatonic shape. Now, instead of just picking the first note you need to play a reverse rake (kinda trademark of SRV) leading into that note. Basically if you drive an aeroplane it's very easy... [back to index](#)

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Lick 16 (SRV #2): Another example in the style of the much beloved SRV. This one features the tremolo picking (as example 12) but this time is applied to small chords on the top three strings. Again, keep the movement very relaxed. As soon as you the tension kicks in you will hear a drastic drop in the quality of the sound and tone. [back to index](#)

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Lick 17 (Rockabilly Style): Ok, the first requirement to play this lick is... the haircut. Well... not really! (I would have been left out!!). Very simple and effective lick. Let everything ring out and try to lock in with whatever the tempo you're playing at. [back to index](#)

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Lick 18 (Brian Setzer Style): This lick is the country/rockabilly version of lick 10. Probably one of the most used and abused lick in this genre. [back to index](#)

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Lick 19 (Country Style): This lick incorporates some hybrid picking technique so I wouldn't suggest it if you are completely new to this technique. If you've got the basic idea and movements down then this lick should be very easy to do. Albert Lee, Brent Mason, Brad Paisley and many more have all played similar ideas. Keep middle and ring fingers on the G and B strings while the pick stays on the D string. [back to index](#)

♩ = 140 E7 A7

T
A
B

3 3 3 3 3 3 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2

4 0 4 0 4 0 4 0 4 0 4 0 5 5 5 5 5 5

6 6 6 6 6 6 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

3 D7 G

T
A
B

1 1 1 1 1 1 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

2 0 2 0 4 2 0 4 2 0 2 0 4 2 0 4 0 0 0 0

4 4 4 4 4 4 3 0 1 2 2 0 0 3 3

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Lick 20 (Pat Metheny): For the jazz/fusion lovers this is a very easy idea that you can use to create some tension in your improvisations. This lick is built using one single shape that is moved down in the neck. Metheny often takes a shape like this and moves it around. If you are clever enough to hide it well it just sounds fantastic and unpredictable. [back to index](#)

♩ = 130 A7alt. Dm9

T
A
B

8 8 8 8 8 8 8 8 8 8 8 8 8 8

9 9 9 9 9 9 9 9 9 9 9 9 9 9

8 11 8 11 8 11 8 11 8 11 8 11 8 11

8 9 7 6 7 5 6 5 8 7

9 8 7 10 7 6 5 8 7

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Enjoyed the lesson?

Have a look at the Country Essentials series!

	<p><u>GT175: 20 Rock Licks</u></p> <p>In this lesson you'll find 20 Rock licks from the traditional 'must-know' licks to some the hottest licks of modern players. Check out the licks from Slash, Jimmy Page, Dann Huff, Andy Timmons and many more.</p>
	<p><u>GT175: 20 Country Licks</u></p> <p>In this lesson you'll find 20 Country licks from bluesgrass to some of the latest licks played by Brent Mason and Brad Paisley. If you're looking forward hot country licks this is it.</p>
	<p><u>GT152: Jeff Healey Tribute</u></p> <p>This lesson is about the style of the Jeff Healey. You'll find two complete solos featuring some of Jeff's favourite licks and the backing tracks to practice. This is a FREE lesson on the website.</p>
	<p><u>GT139: Session Secrets - Booster/Overdrive/Distortion</u></p> <p>This lesson is part of the Session Secret Effects series. This particular one is on how to use a Booster, Overdrive and Distortion pedals. You'll find a few cool examples along with the backing tracks to practice them.</p>

[back to index](#)