ELECTRIC GUITAR CONCEPTS

- Richard Lundmark -

SHRED ACADEMY .com

Lesson 1:
Timing & Note Value Alteration

Table Of Contents

Foreword

Greetings and welcome to my "Electric Guitar Concept" series, and the first of my lessons for www.shredacademy.com. This first lesson will deal with timing and note value alteration. I hope that you will not only get some new ideas and lines to use in your own playing, but also that if you are not already doing so, that this will be a starting point for you to start thinking conceptually about guitar playing in general, and improvisation in particular. By approaching improvisation in this way, you will find that you can more easily cross genres in your playing, and that you will overcome insecurities that you might have had when being faced with certain tempos or styles, where "nothing I played seemed to work".

I hope you enjoy this lesson, and stay tuned for more! Feel free to contact me if you have any questions or comments about this lesson (or my music or what not).

Until next time, keep your groove on!!

Sincerely/
Richard Lundmark
www.fretdance.com
richard@fretdance.com

Timing Concepts & Note Value Alteration

The concept of timing is one of the essential parts of guitar playing in general, and improvisation in particular. Armed with good timing, note value understanding and conceptual thinking, you can take any idea or line you might have, and make it work in any style, tempo or key. Ask yourself, would you rather be able to say "Hey, I learned a new lick today, can you put that song on, I will play it for you". Or would you rather say "Hey, I learned a new idea today that I can conceptually apply on anything I choose so just put anything on, and I'll adapt and improvise around it".

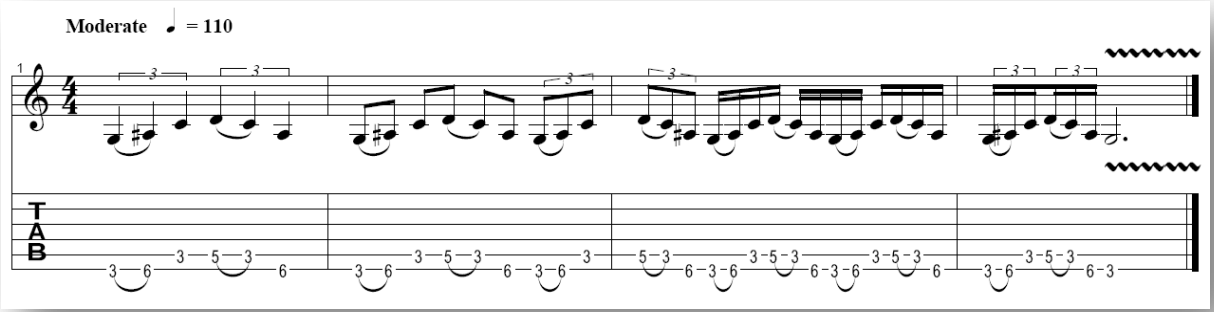
Tough choice? Didn't think so.
To be able to understand the concept of timing, and most importantly of all, to be able to practice and use it, we first need to familiarize ourselves with at least some of the basic note values at our disposal. Please look over at the very least the ones used in these examples, such as eight notes, sixteen notes, and triplets, and their corresponding rest values. Learn how to sing these note values, how to clap them, and how to play them, first using only one single note, and then going into examples such as mine. Why start this basic you might ask? Well, unless you are very comfortable with the sound and feel of a note value (at least as comfortable as you are with a scale sound, or chord sounds), you run the risk of only learning to use these note values in licks and pre-learned lines, and now being free to improvise with them. So start from the beginning, it will pay off in the end.

The examples in this lesson are to be seen as timing exercises, or more specifically, note value alteration exercises. The idea is to be able to take any idea, and play the idea trough any set of note values. In this way, you can use the idea in a myriad of ways. First, practice all ideas with a metronome or a drum loop until you have it down in all tempos. Second, practice the ideas over any backing or over any song you can lay your hands on, in all keys, tempos and styles, and adapt them accordingly. And finally, use the same concept and apply it on all your own ideas, lines and licks and watch the variations multiply… Ready? Let's go!

The Examples

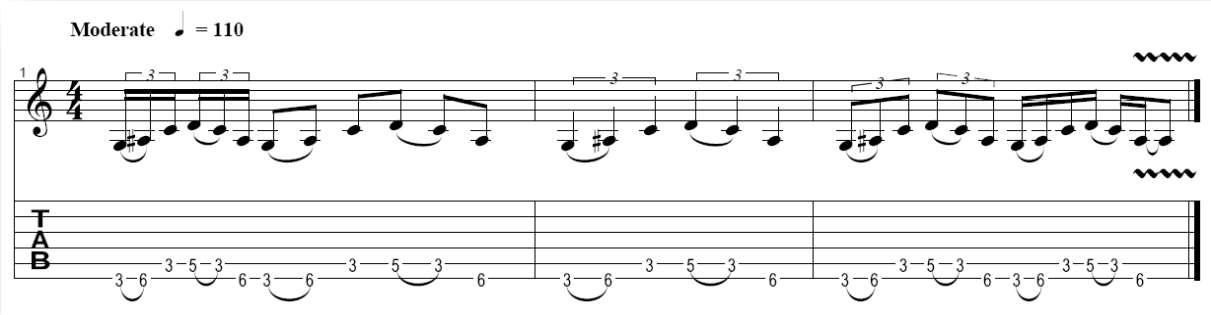
Example 1.a

Here you find a 6 note pentatonic idea in A-minor pentatonic first position. The idea is repeated by going through all the major note values mentioned above. Try playing them one after the other, but also try playing the idea over and over again, using the same note value, until you have it down. And also, always practice timing and note value alteration to a metronome, a drum machine, a backing track or other solid tempo. Also, make a habit out of stomping your foot to the beat, so that no matter what note value you are playing your ideas in, your foot will act as a metronome. This will ultimately make you have a feel for what different note values sounds and feels like, just as you may already have a feel for the sound of a certain chord or scale.



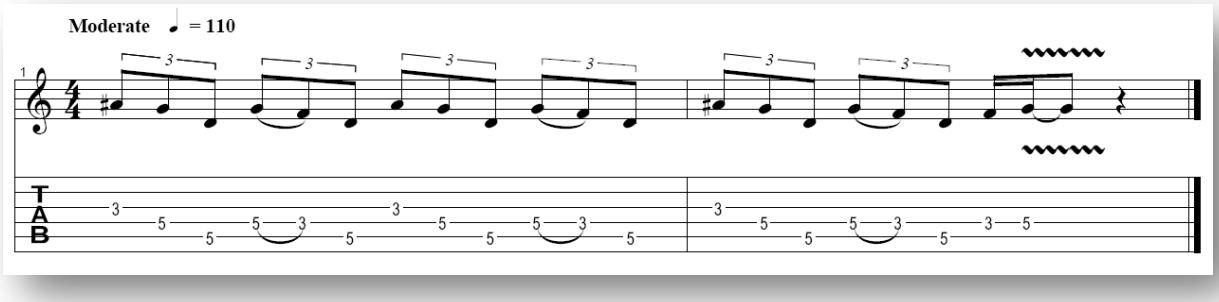
Example 1.b

Here is the same idea, but with the note values played in another order. The idea here is that you should be able to play any idea using any note value, but not only going from larger to smaller, but being able to mix them up when improvising. In this manner you will ultimately be able to improvise as much using note value alteration as you do using note choice.



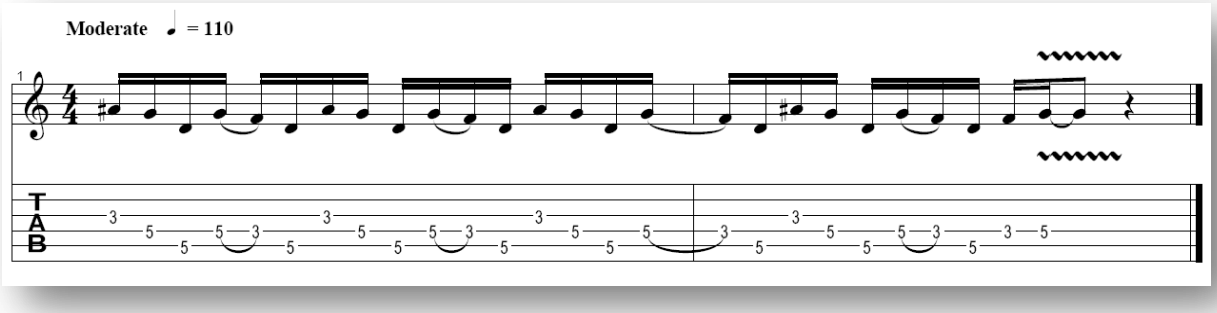
Example 2.a

Here you find another simple 6 note pentatonic idea, played in eighth note triplets. In coming examples I will show you some examples of how you can evolve this simple idea in to more complex ideas by using note value alteration.



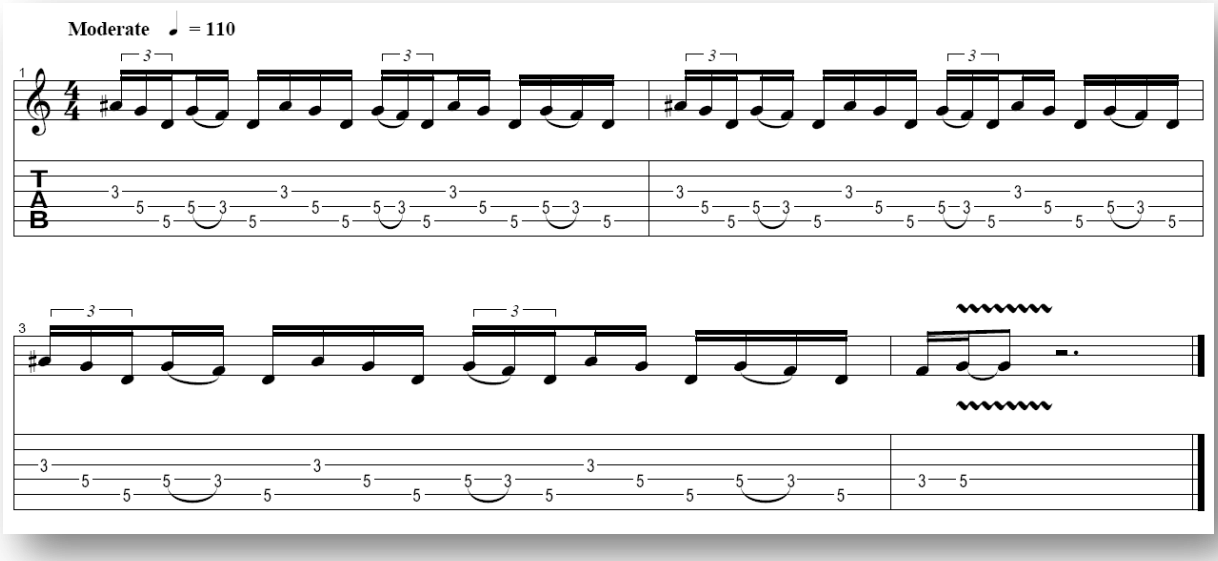
Example 2.b

Here is the same idea, this time played as a straight sixteen note idea. Notice how the accents change as the starting notes of the idea that were previously on the beat, now change to land off beat.



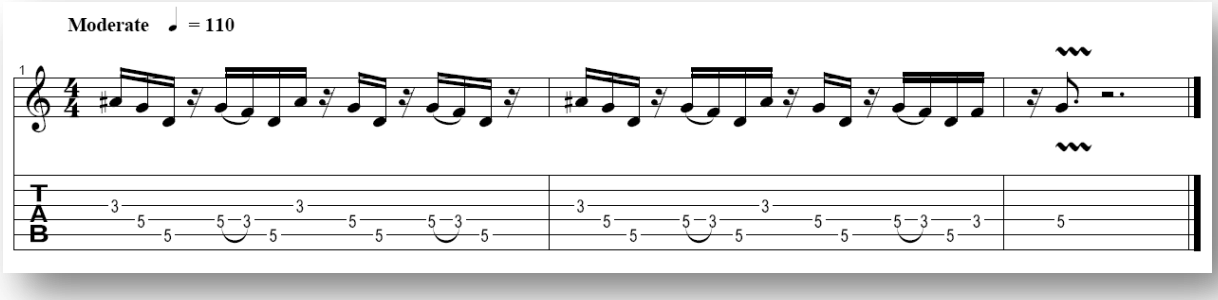
Example 2.c

Here is the idea, but now things are starting to happen. Here I have altered the idea by changing note values within the idea. The order of the notes remains the same, but as you can see, the rhythmical complexity has started grow.



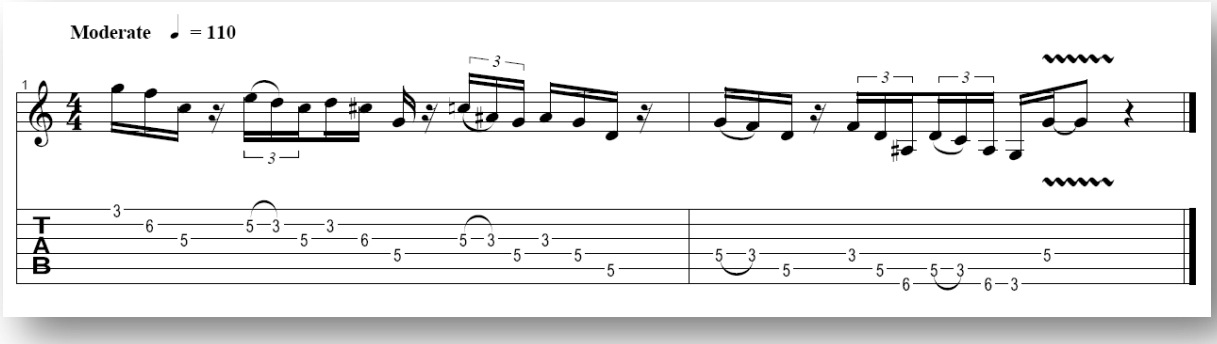
Example 2.d

In this example, I have taken a different approach to note value alteration. Instead of mixing two different note values as in example 2.c, keeping the line as a constant stream of notes, I have inserted rests into the line, thereby breaking it up. This makes the line much more rhythmical, and gives it some air, and groove. When playing funk, or fusion, this is something to keep in mind to be able to groove when improvising. In this way, you can make a simple line sound really funky. It's that easy!



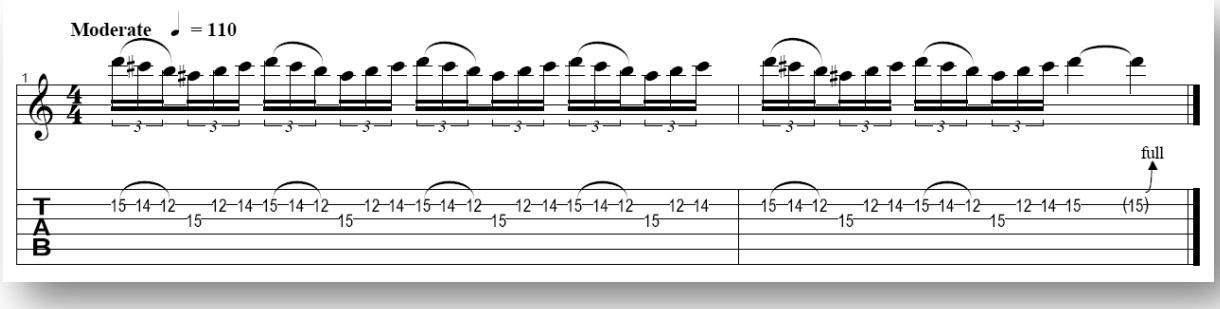
Example 2.e

And finally, here is an example where I combine it all, by altering the note value within the idea, inserting rests, and also taking the idea trough the entire box of the A minor pentatonic scale (first position). Here you can see how we have gone a long way from the simple, bluesy sounding example 2.a, to this more complex funkier example. Next assignment is for you to use this approach to all your own ideas and licks, and hopefully you will be improvising as much with rhythmical variation as with note choice, technique or scale variation. Get grooving!



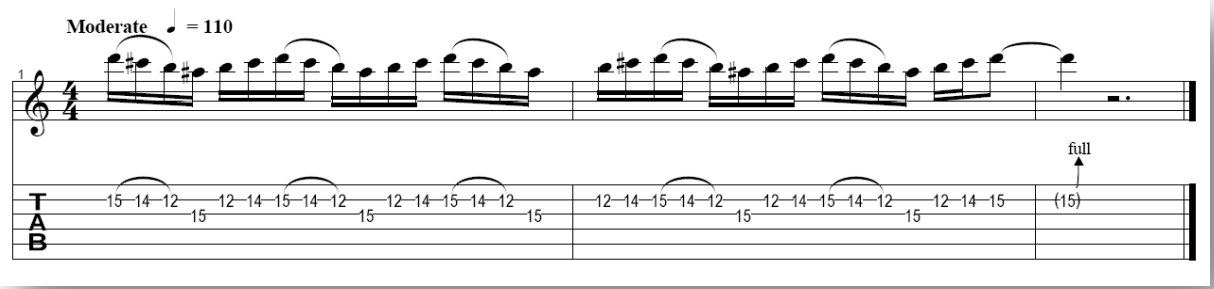
Example 3.a

In this example I have used a familiar pentatonic rock lick in E minor. I have added the natural sixth (C#) from the E Dorian mode. I have also added the flat fifth (Bb) from the blues scale. You will see that I have run this lick through the same type note value alterations as in example 2. First out is sixteen note triplets. As with example 2, try this with any or your familiar licks or lines.



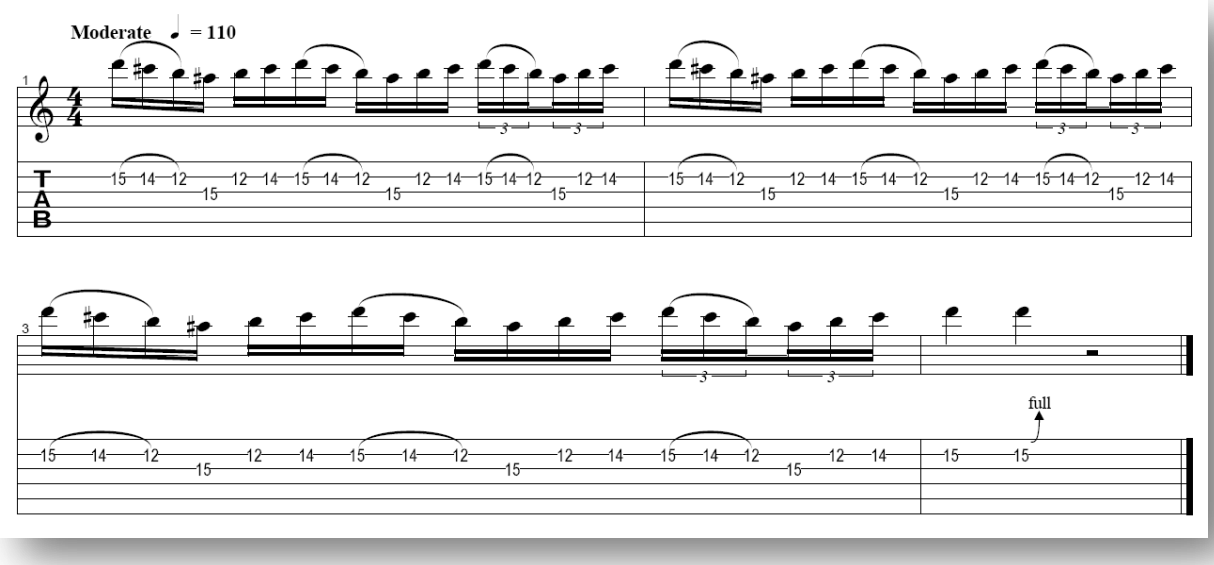
Example 3.b

In this example, the same idea is played using a straight sixteen note value. Not much more to say, just treat these examples in the same manner as the ones in example 2.



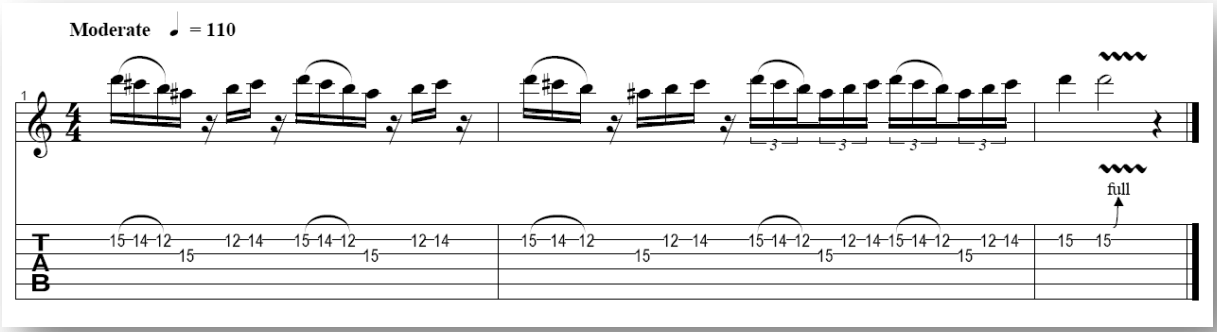
Example 3.c

In this example, I am mixing straight sixteen with sixteen note triplets. This is a bit easier to nail rhythmically than the same variation in example 2, since the lick starts over on the first beat of each bar. But still try adapting this way of alternating as well.



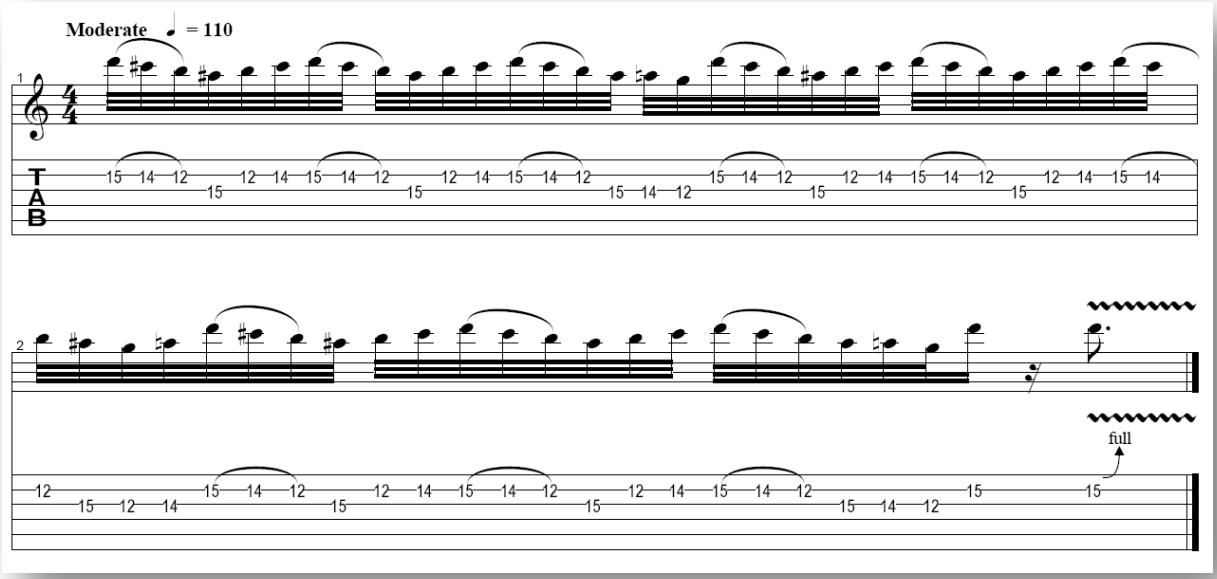
Example 3.d

Here I am inserting rests in to the mix, thus further expanding on the rhythmical complexity. Now we are closing on improvising using note values, and getting our groove on!



Example 3.e

And finally, I am giving an example of how I would approach "shredding" it up in this context. In any tempo I am in, I would aim for a note value that is still in line with the beat, and not "floating". However, if I would have been technically unable to play at this note value (straight 32:nd's in 110 bpm), I would then opt for another note value, say maybe groupings of nine, to keep it tight and in time.



Outro Improvisation

To conclude this first lesson, I have improvised over a Funk-Blues in G, and transcribed the entire improvisation. Note that this is an actual first-take improvisation, and not a rehearsed solo. Because of this, there might be some minor screw-ups in there, but the reason for me transcribing one of my improvisations in not to show an example of a studio-recorded, note for note perfect solo, but rather to give you an example of how I improvise as much with note value alteration as I do with note choice and techniques. As you can see, I start out the improvisation by playing through the examples 2a-e, to give you a feel for them in a real-live musical context. After this, I am going into a full blown improvisation. I will not break this improvisation down bar by bar, to analyze scale and note choice, or technique, since the topic of this lesson is timing and note value alteration (That my friends, are a topic for upcoming lessons, so stay tuned!). I do however, want to point out some parts of my improvisation that I feel exemplifies note value alteration at work, and that I think is worth some closer examination.

First, let's take a look at 21-22. Here you will see how I have taken the idea from example 2.e (played in bars 17-18) and tweaked it both harmonically (simply shifting the G pentatonic up a half-step to G# to better suit the turn-around), as well as rhythmically. You can also see how I have embellished the line by adding the 32:nd note slurs as well. This is a good example of how I generally would treat a turn-around if I am in the first position of the pentatonic scale.

A similar transition can be seen in bars 28-29, where the backing moves from the I-chord to the IV-chord of the Blues. This is an excellent place to throw in some altered or diminished lines to "jazz" things up a bit. Use your ear, because you can get away with playing pretty "outside", as long as you keep it together rhythmically, and land properly "inside" on the next chord (as I do in bar 29). In bar 28, you can also see how I mix note values, using once again 32:nd note slurs, to keep the line moving forward, and striving for the IV-chord.

When the next turn-around come along I use a more chromatic idea in bars 33-34, which you should also try to convert into triplets for a different feel. This is true for any lines you might find interesting in this improvisation. Try playing them in another note value, in other keys, and in other tempos. Never rest on you layers!

Next up is bars 39-40, which contains one of the more technically challenging runs in this improvisation. Here you can see that it starts our pretty ordinary, with a triplet note value and a pretty triplet feel pattern in bar 39. However, when entering bar 40, I change the accent of the line, by using a 4-note pattern, but still staying in the triplet feel. Remember, this is not something I rehearse. The patterns I use are of course often the result of practice, and a part of my "lick-library", but the not value and alteration I use them in, changes whenever I improvise, to suit the context I am in. At the end of bar 40, there are som stringskipping, where you can see that I have played two note (A# or Bb and G) to bring the pattern into a playable transition as I move into playing the triplet pattern familiar from example 3.e. Here I use the G pentatonic by playing it as a three note-per-string pattern.

Finally there are some rhythmical displacements in bars 48-50 (played using both pick and fingers). You can also once again find the example from 3.e used more "as is" in bar 52. Finally, there is a longer tapping run in the end of the improvisation, where I use a nine note grouping to play a triplet diminished pattern. This because in this tempo, I tend to fall in to this note value as a "golden middle road" between sixteen note triplets and straight 332:nd's. Using this note value, I can opt for some flow and speed, but still retain some of the triplet feel of the idea using the nine grouping that is basically just a 8-note triplet with each note divided in two.

I will leave you with that, and see you again soon for my next lesson.
Until then, keep your groove on!!!

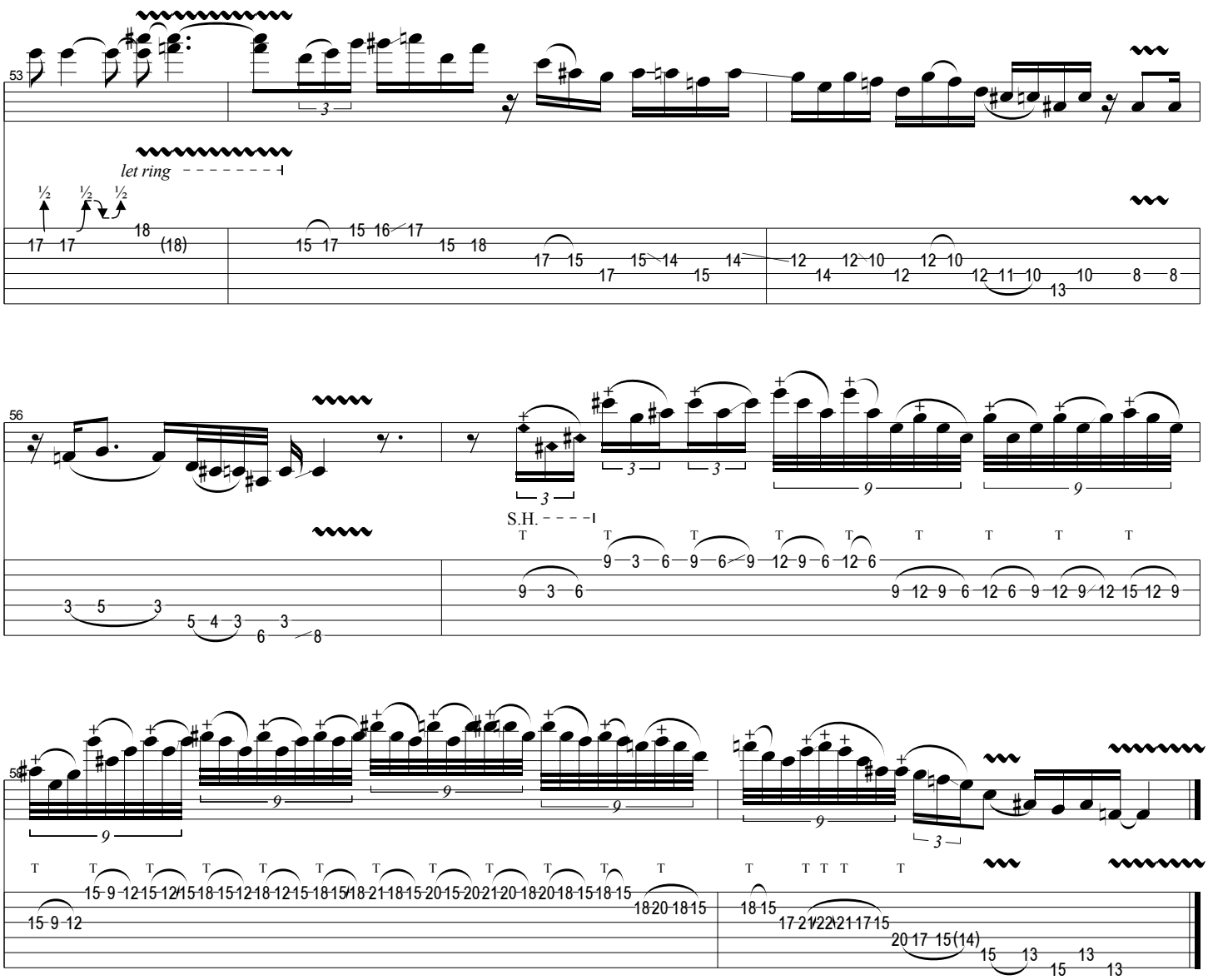
Sincerely/
Richard Lundmark


Moderate ♩ = 105
A.H. ¼
A.H. ½


19
23
S.H. S.H. S.H. S.H.
M
26
A
M
28
30


32
34
full
36
A M
38
40


41
full
P.M.
44
47
let ring
M A M M A M
49
let ring
5


53
let ring
½ ½ ½
17 17 18 (18)
15 17 15 16 17 15 18
17 15 17 15 14 15 14
12 14 12 10 12 12 10 12 11 10 13 10 8 8
56
3
S.H.
T T T T T T T T T T T T
9 3 6 9 6 9 12 9 6 12 6
9 3 6
9 12 9 6 12 6 9 12 9 12 15 12 9
3 5 3 5 4 3 6 3 8
58
15 9 12 15 12 15 18 15 12 18 12 15 18 15 18 21 18 15 20 15 20 21 20 18 20 18 15 18 15 18 20 18 15
18 15 17 21 22 21 17 15 20 17 15 (14) 15 13 15 13 13

ELECTRIC GUITAR CONCEPTS

- Richard Lundmark -
richard@fretdance.com