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THE "GETAWAY" LICK

by Tom Brislin

When learning the keyboard parts for a cover gig, once in a while you come across a certain lick or phrase that is just *nasty*. Take, for instance, the Earth, Wind & Fire funk classic, "Getaway." Nailing the groove is a challenge in itself, but there's a blazing synth break at around 2:20 that demands some special attention. Let's grab this lick from the record and get it under your fingers.

EWF keyboardist Larry Dunn presumably played this line on a Minimoog, which uses up to three oscillators to produce its sound. If you have a 3-oscillator analog (or analog modeling) synth, use saw waves and set Osc 1 to the 32' register (-2 octaves) to get the deep bass component of the sound. Set Osc 2 to 8' for the heart of the lead voice, and Osc 3 to 4' (+1 octave) also tuning it up a minor third (frequency +3 on a Mini). Keep Osc 3's level lower than 1 and 2,

just to add the right touch of dissonance.

Haven't done much of your own transcribing before? Bands need players with keen ears, and transcribing your own parts is a great way to develop your own listening and playing skills. Fast licks such as this lick from "Getaway" are a great workout to transcribe.

But how do you get started? There are plenty of computer programs for slowing music down without changing pitch, but you may already have one – a free one, at that – without realizing it. The unassuming and ubiquitous QuickTime Player from Apple (www.apple.com) is a free download for Mac and Windows. Under the Windows tab, there is a window called "A/V Controls," which has useful functions for transcription, including a rewind jog control, and pitch and time controls.

If reading music is your strong suit, try transcribing the phrase directly from your ears to the page by writing notes as you hear them, then check each note with the keyboard. If you don't like notation, I recommend selecting a few notes at a time, and alternating between listening and playing each group of notes. There may be spots where it's difficult to make out a note or two over the rest of the track, but not to worry. You want accuracy, but if you're close enough, you can capture the style, sound, and articulation of the lick and still be effective. ☑

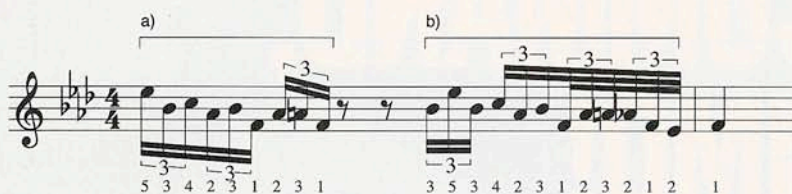


Earth, Wind & Fire,
Best Of, Vol. 1
(Sony)

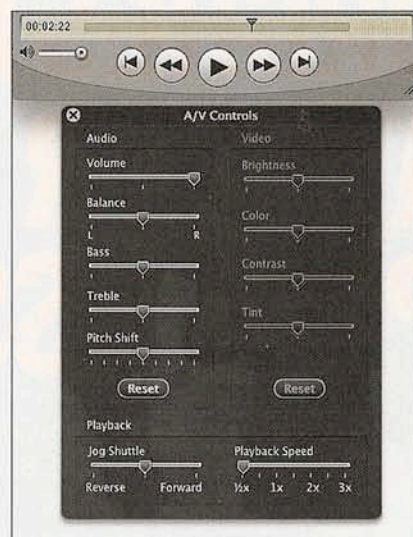


Earth, Wind & Fire,
Spirit (Sony)

Ex. 1. Here's the "Getaway" lick, broken down into two component phrases. Both are cascading *F* minor pentatonic flourishes. Practice each part slowly, use the fingerings shown, maintain a very even rhythm, and use punchy staccato phrasing. Gradually speed it up as you get comfortable with each tempo level. When you feel each part is under your fingers, put the two phrases together, as in Example 2.



Ex. 2. You'll notice as you listen to the recording that the lick seems to have a different sense of time than the rest of the song. It's likely that Larry Dunn was laying back on the tempo to highlight the phrase, while the band kept stricter time. The result looks more complex than it really is. Just keep your sextuplet rhythm steady, and aim for hitting beat 1 with the rest of the band.



Got some hot licks to learn? Apple QuickTime Player, a free download for Mac and Windows, lets you slow down audio, change the pitch, and rewind brief passages easily.