

Holdsworth: "City Nights"

Creating mayhem with a common-tone approach

THIS WAS TO BE a retrospective on Allan Holdsworth's stylistic growth, with an analysis of his music via excerpts from various songs and solos. Then, at the last minute, Allan kindly supplied a rough mix of several of the songs he just completed for his new lp, *Secrets*. Allan selected this cut because, unlike his music previously appearing in print which contained solos with static harmonic motion, this piece sees him playing through a lot of changes.

Let's first analyze the head and see how it relates harmonically to the accompanying progression. Note that Holdsworth has ingeniously taken a simple one-measure, three-note motif and used it as a basis for creating a majestic series of harmonic structures. For example, in measure 1, D represents the seventh of E♭maj7, A is the suspended second of G/sus2 and G is the seventh of Am7add4 (a chord often mistakenly referred to as Am11; the ninth is not present). The chords themselves seem to be unrelated to one another, but closer examination reveals common tones. E♭maj7 and Gsus2/B have two, G and D. In the final two chords in measure 4, B♭m7 and Emaj13, you'll note that the progression becomes extremely angular, as the intervallic movement of their roots is an augmented fourth. Still, this poses no harmonic problem to our common-tone scenario, since the third and seventh of B♭m7 are the enharmonic equivalents of the thirteenth and third of Emaj13.

Measures 5-6 consist primarily of arpeggios, flawlessly executed with sweep-picking in conjunction with slurs. The first arpeggio (A E B F♯), composed entirely of perfect fifths, exemplifies Allan's penchant for wide intervallic skips. He follows on beat 3 of measure 5 with an arpeggio pattern based on Am13 (A C E G B D F♯) and commences to play various permutations of the chord. Then, in measures 8-11, there is a recapitulation of the theme, only this time the chord progression is reversed in each of the two-measure segments, and Em7add4 is substituted for B♭69/D.

Measures 12-23 introduce the progression that makes up the bulk of this piece. Throughout his first "chorus," Holdsworth plays through the changes with an uninterrupted, syncopated flow of primarily tied dotted eighth and

sixteenth notes. The fluidity can be attributed partially to his smooth legato technique (using slurred slides, pull-offs and hammer-ons), but even expertise in this area would be of little consequence if not for Allan's gift for melodic development. Some of the same characteristics of the introductory chord progression also apply to melody. For example, the common-tone idea is used in measure 17 by virtue of the tied-C note (the third of A♭ and the seventh of D♭) and with the tied D♯ note (the third of Bmaj7 and the enharmonic equivalent of the seventh of Fm7add4) between measures 22 and 23.

The most important aspect of a good melody is that it doesn't break abruptly as the tonal centers shift below it. One device Allan uses is to begin a descending chromatic line on a harmonic or chord tone of one chord and ultimately resolve it on a harmonic tone of the next. This is the case in measures 20-22, as he plays through A7sus4 to B♭bmaj9 by going chromatically from G, the seventh of A7sus4, to F, the fifth of B♭bmaj9, then going from B♭6/F to Bmaj7 with a slightly longer chromatic line from D, the third of B♭6, to A♯, the seventh of Bmaj7.

The next chorus opens with a flurry of notes played within an extended scale pattern continuing unison notes he shifts along with the various tonal centers. In fig. 1-4 are examples of other extended scale patterns Allan uses. The first is the familiar E minor pentatonic, but with extended fingerings that result in groups of unison notes, as in measures 24-25. Figures 2a and 2b are patterns he used in the solo for "In The Dead Of Night" with U.K. Figure 3 is an ingenious symmetrical pattern based on the E 1 + 2, or half/whole tone diminished, scale appearing as part of a recurring theme in "Checking Out" [I.O.U.]. It will work against an E7 (especially if the voicing contains a ♭5, ♯9, ♭9 or ♯11 in conjunction with an unaltered thirteenth). Figure 4 is based on the same scale, but consists of a three-intervallic pattern moving in augmented fourths.

In measures 32-33 there are some extended fingerings, this time with a melodic pedal point on a high D, a common tone to Bm7add4, A7sus4, F69 and B♭69. In measure 35 Holdsworth approaches Amaj7 and Dmaj9 polytonally by playing the E major pentatonic (E F♯ G♯ B C♯) against them. This is not really an "outside" move because it contains various harmonic extensions of each chord. In fact, as you analyze this piece in greater depth, you'll see that most of Allan's playing is within the confines of the proper chord/scale relationships. That is, until measures 41-42, when he decides to take an adventurous extended "outing" that sounds like a manic twelve-tone row.

fig.1 E minor pentatonic

fig.2a E dorian, a la "In The Dead Of Night"

fig.2b

fig.3 E 1 + 2 diminished scale, a la "Checking Out"

8va

Fingers: 1 3 4 simile

T

A

B 12 15 18 12 15 10 12 15 18 12 15 10

fig.4 E 1 + 2 diminished scale, a la "Letters Of Marque"

Fingers: 1 3 4 simile

T

A

B 4 7 9 5 8 10 6 9 11 7 10 12

BY GARY HUSBAND

"City Nights"

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(drums freely)

1 Eb maj7 Gsus2/B Am7add4 Bb⁶/₉D Bb maj7 F⁶₉ Bmaj7 F#maj9 G#m7

f

T

A

B 5-7 7 5 7 7 5 8 8 6

4 Fm7sus4 Bb m7 Emaj13 Am7 Am7add4/G

w/bar

T

A

B 8-8 8 6 0 12 14 16 19 14 15 14 15 16 14 15 12 15 14 16 15 16 14 15 12 16

6 Am7add4/G 8va Bb maj7 F#m7add4 Em7add4 Bb maj7 Fmaj9 Eb maj7 Gsus2/B Am7

w/bar

8va

T

A

B 14 17 17 22 17 17 17 21 24 21 15 14 12 15 14 12

TRADING LICKS

10 Fm7sus4 Bb m7 Emaj9 Bmaj7 F#maj9 G#m7 Aadd9 Dmaj9 Gm7add4

w/bar
w/bar
w/bar
w/bar

in time

13 15 15 13 15 15 13 14 12 14 12 11 12 13 14 14 12 10

14 C/E Am7 Dmaj7 D6 D Bb 6add9/F Bb 6 Ab maj7 Ab 6 D 6

w/bar
w/bar
w/bar
w/bar

(12) 12 10 9 9 11 11 (11) 12 (12) 10 8 12 10 8 10 (10) 12

18 G/B G/F Eb maj7 Bm7sus2 A7sus4 Bb maj9 Bb 6/F

12 10 9 12 10 10 10 12 10 9 12 11 10 9 12 11 10 9

22 Bmaj7 Fm7add4 Aadd9 Dmaj9/F#

11 9 0 11 13 13 10 12 11 9 14 9 14 9 14 9 14 10 11 10 10 11 9 14 14 9 12

25 Gm7add4

17 12 17 12 10 15 10 15 10 12 17 12 17 12 10 15 10 15 12 10 12 15 10 15 12 10 12 15 10 13 15

26 C/E Am7add4 Dmaj9

Full 6

15 10 13 15 13 10 11 12 13 12 11 10 14 13 11 10 13 10 13 10 12 (10) 12 10 12 10 15 10 9

28 **Bb add9 Eb maj9 N.C. Ab maj9 Db maj7 G/B F6₉**

Full

12 10 (10) 8 13 11 10 11 10 12 13 17 16 16 19 14 17 14 17 13 15 13 17 14 5 12

31

12 15 13 10 13 12 8 12 10 8 10 10 10 10 12 14 14 12 10 12 12 14 12 14 12 14

33 **F6₉ Bb 6₉ Bmaj7**

10 10 10 15 15 14 14 12 12 10 9 10 12 10 9 9 12 10 12 10 8 8 12 10 8 10 12 13 11 9 11 9 13 11 13 10 13 11 13 9 11 9 14 9 9 11 9

35 **Fm7add4 Bb sus4 Amaj7 Dmaj9/F#**

8 11 10 9 11 11 9 9 12 12 9 12 9 11 9 9 11 9 11 11 9 11 11 9 11 12 9 12

37 **Gm7add4 8va C/E Am7**

15 17 15 17 15 17 17 15 17 15 15 17 22 17 20 20 15 13 12 15 10 13 12 10 13 10 10 13 10 12 12 10 12 10 12 12 10 12

-1 1/2 1/2

39 **Dmaj7 Bb 6₉ Eb maj9**

10 14 10 14 9 14 11 9 12 9 9 14 12 9 12 7 8 7 10 7 10 8 10 11 10 8 8 11 10 12 10 9 8 7

TRADING LICKS

41 **A \flat maj7** **D \flat 6** *w/bar* **D \flat add#11** **N.C.** **Gsus2/B** **Gsus2/F**

0 0 11 0 10 11 10 0 13 11 10 0 11 (10) 10 12 12 12

43 **E \flat maj7** **Gsus2/B** **Am7sus4**

14 17 14 15 14 14 13 13 15 14 13 13 14 16 14 12 16 14 13 12 14 15 12 15

44 **Em7#5** **B \flat maj7** **F 6/9** **8 va**

15 15 13 15 14 16 15 12 12 17 15 17 14 15 14 17 16 15 14 17 10 15 17 16 18 19 10

45 **Bmaj7** **F#maj7** *loco* **G#m7** **F#6/9** **B \flat 6/9** **8 va** **Emaj7** **Asus4** *loco*

16 16 19 16 19 16 18 20 18 10 18 16 16 16 18 16 16 18 16 18 16 18 17 14 16 12 14 14 13 16 12 15 14 12 11 14 12 10 14 12

47 **Gsus4** **B \flat maj7** **F#7sus4** **Em7add4** **B \flat maj7** **Fmaj9** **E \flat maj7** **Gsus2/B** **Am7**

10 7 9 7 7 5 6 7 7 5

*actual pitch is D

51 **Fsus4** **B \flat m7** **E** **Bmaj7** **F#maj7** **G#m7** **C# \flat 5 (no 3rd)**

6 0 0 0 0 0 4