A stylistic analysis of Recess performed by Charlie Hunter from the DVD Right Now Live

Joshua De Silva

Edith Cowan University

Follow this and additional works at: https://ro.ecu.edu.au/theses_hons

Part of the Music Performance Commons, and the Music Practice Commons

Recommended Citation

This Thesis is posted at Research Online. https://ro.ecu.edu.au/theses_hons/1480
You may print or download ONE copy of this document for the purpose of your own research or study.

The University does not authorise you to copy, communicate or otherwise make available electronically to any other person any copyright material contained on this site.

You are reminded of the following:

- Copyright owners are entitled to take legal action against persons who infringe their copyright.
- A reproduction of material that is protected by copyright may be a copyright infringement.
- A court may impose penalties and award damages in relation to offences and infringements relating to copyright material. Higher penalties may apply, and higher damages may be awarded, for offences and infringements involving the conversion of material into digital or electronic form.
A stylistic analysis of *Recess* performed by Charlie Hunter from the DVD *Right Now Live*

Joshua De Silva

Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts

Edith Cowan University

This dissertation is submitted for the degree of Bachelor of Music Honours

2015
Use of Thesis Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

(i) Incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;

(ii) Contain any material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text; or

(iii) Contain any defamatory material.

I also grant permission for the Library at Edith Cowan University to make duplicate copies of my thesis as required.

Joshua De Silva, 6th of November 2015
Abstract

Charlie Hunter is a guitarist who has gained international recognition for his ability to perform guitar parts and bass lines simultaneously on his hybrid guitar. His ability to construct solos within the context of simultaneous bass line and chordal accompaniment, along with methods he employed to create percussive textures, were the central points of discussion for this dissertation. Hunter’s original composition *Recess* was selected from the Hunter DVD *Right Now Live*, which was transcribed and analysed.

This research is significant due to the lack of detailed analysis of Hunter's techniques in an unaccompanied setting, and to the researcher’s knowledge, there are no dissertations published which focus specifically on Charlie Hunter’s guitar techniques (in this context).

The methodology of the dissertation was based upon transcription and analysis, and driven by the following three research questions:

1) How does Hunter construct improvised solos within the context of his simultaneous bass line and chordal playing?
2) What guitar effects and techniques has Hunter used to create textures suited to the specific musical contexts in which Hunter performs?
3) What left-hand techniques/fingering approaches does Hunter use while simultaneously improvising over his real-time accompaniment?

The first research question was answered by identifying the basic musical material Hunter used to develop the solo. Next, the following research question was addressed by defining techniques (in relation to proper literature) and equipment

---

1 *Charlie Hunter Quintet Right Now Live*, (Artemis Records, 2004), DVD.
used by Hunter to create textures reflective of the genres he performs in. Hunter's left hand fingering approaches were presented within the explanations of the previous two questions.

By analysing his performance of *Recess*, it could be observed that though Hunter used complex harmonic ideas, he framed them within simpler melodic and rhythmic frameworks. Moreover, he used creative approaches to form and methodical applications of fingering to make his style more achievable. However, the strongest aspect of his style was evident in how Hunter changed the interdependency of his guitar parts, bass parts and percussive textures throughout the solo. It is hoped that the findings of this study will aid other musicians in adapting Hunter's technique.
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank God for giving me everything I have, especially the gift of music.

Thanks to my supervisor and tutor, Daniel Susnjar, for his support and guidance with
shaping my thesis and musical style.

I would also like to thank my other tutors this year, Freddie Grigson and Pete
Jeavons, for their musical guidance.

Finally, I would like to thank Charlie Hunter for bringing his beautiful innovation to the
guitar.
# Table of Contents

Use of Thesis Declaration ......................................................................................... i

Abstract ................................................................................................................ ii

Acknowledgements ................................................................................................ iv

Table of Contents ..................................................................................................... v

Table of Figures ....................................................................................................... vii

Introduction ............................................................................................................. ix

A. Rationale ........................................................................................................... x

B. Methodology ..................................................................................................... xi

Chapter 1: Charlie Hunter ...................................................................................... 1

1.1 Literature Review ......................................................................................... 1

1.2 Background .................................................................................................... 8

Notation Legend .................................................................................................... 9

Chapter 2: Analysis of Recess Solo ...................................................................... 10

2.1 Solo Construction .......................................................................................... 10

2.1.1 Melody ..................................................................................................... 10

2.1.2 Harmony ................................................................................................. 16

2.1.3 Rhythm ................................................................................................... 25

2.1.4 Form ....................................................................................................... 31

2.2 Tone .............................................................................................................. 37

2.2.1 Equipment ............................................................................................... 37

2.2.2 Conventional Techniques ....................................................................... 40

2.2.3 Extended Techniques ............................................................................. 46

Chapter 3: Summary ............................................................................................. 49
### Table of Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Use of the blues ideas: Bars 81 – 96</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Examples of F# from the C blues scale in the 6/8 section</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Soul jazz influenced phrases</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Chordal ideas framed with simple top voice melodies</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>C note motif</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Bass-line motif</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Bass-line fills: Bars 181 – 188</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Example of bass-line fill during melodic inactivity: bars 79–80</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Example of bass-line fills used to enhance tension: bars 65–72</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Basic improvisational framework of Recess solo section</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Superimposed arpeggios over A note pedal tone: Bars 9–16</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Excerpt of Example 7 from magazine article, and bars 45–46 from solo</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Excerpt of Example 10 from magazine article, and bars 131–132 from solo</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Examples of C# diminished scale used over dominant chords</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Sequenced and rhythmically displaced idea</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Non-symmetrical phrase: Bar 37</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Examples of quartal voicings in accompaniment</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Example of reharmonisation: Bars 241–248</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Examples of reharmonisation used thematically</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Primary rhythmic motif</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Alteration of the rhythmic motif</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Example of rhythmic idea used to create structural unity</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Instance of secondary motif: Bars 25–32</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Hemiola based rhythmic motif used in 6/8 section: Bars 145 and 146</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>The Afro-Cuban 6/8 clave</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 26: Examples of metric modulation used in the 6/8 section ...................... 29
Figure 27: Instances of metric modulation in the 3/4 section .......................... 30
Figure 28: Range of single-note melodies for each chorus .............................. 32
Figure 29: Chords, single notes and rest usage comparison in guitar part of Recess solo ......................................................................................................................................................................................... 33
Figure 30: Beat lengths and rests comparison within bass-lines of Recess solo ...... 34
Figure 31: Transition into 6/8 section: Bars 137 – 148 .................................... 35
Figure 32: Transition into last chorus of solo: Bars 233 – 240 .......................... 36
Figure 33: Likely example of volume pedal usage: Bar 233 ................................. 38
Figure 34: Examples of Bass-lines performed with assistance for right hand thumb 42
Figure 35: Example of ligado articulation: Bars 33 – 40 .................................. 42
Figure 36: Examples of different articulation techniques ................................. 44
Figure 37: Examples of Glissandi ........................................................................ 44
Figure 38: Examples of staccato chordal accompaniment over long bass notes .... 46
Figure 39: Examples of string slapping and rasgado: Bars 189 – 196 ............. 47
Introduction

The guitar, as noted in a book review from *The Economist*, is recognised “an ancient and ubiquitous instrument. Every culture has its version--or versions… and its practitioners tend to form a pan-cultural brotherhood, interested in the varied modes of expression their fellow players can produce.” ² Charlie Hunter is a notable example, known for performing guitar and bass parts simultaneously on his hybrid guitar. While it could be easy to consider him another type of novelty guitarist among various others, “there’s a reason Hunter has sustained a decades long career in music while 99 percent of these [other] guitarists never rise past online fame,” as Ethan Varian describes it. ³

The primary purpose of this thesis was to gain a deeper understanding of how Hunter used his technique to bring a musical outcome. This included both the practical and conceptual aspects of his style. It is hoped that the findings would inspire more musicians to adapt his technique. The main questions that drove and guided this research venture are:

1) How does Hunter construct improvised solos within the context of his simultaneous bass line and chordal playing?

2) What guitar effects and techniques has Hunter used to create textures suited to the specific musical contexts in which he performs?

3) What left-hand techniques/fingering approaches does Hunter use while simultaneously improvising over his real-time accompaniment?

These questions were used to gather the research in relevance to its audience.

A. Rationale

Despite Charlie Hunter's significant development of a relatively unexplored technique, very few academic researchers have undertaken to analyse it in detail, besides briefly mentioning it. To the researcher’s knowledge, there are no academic dissertations published which focus specifically on Charlie Hunter’s guitar techniques in a solo setting. This study discusses Hunter’s technique in a solo setting and provides insight into the core aspects of Hunter's style (insights that are relevant to the researcher’s interests of developing his own applications of similar techniques). Additionally, readers of this study (especially guitarists) could learn and apply elements of this technique to their own performances.

---

4 This matter is detailed in the literature review.
B. Methodology

The methodology used for this dissertation was based upon transcription and analysis, using Western music notation and terminology. Some successful examples of this method include Nicholas Abbey's *Aspects of rhythm in the music and improvisation in six pieces by bassist Avishai Cohen*, 5 Frank Saladino’s *An examination of Eddie Lang’s technique and textural treatment in three selected solo guitar performances*, and Howard Allen Spring’s *The improvisational style of Charlie Christian*. 6 However, analysing Hunter’s fingering principles and percussive techniques required that certain elements of the methodology be tailored to suit. The information was summarised in a manner that is relevant and applicable for the reader.

With regard to Hunter’s performance techniques, material from the DVD *Right Now Live* 7 was chosen due to its excellent visual and audio recording quality. Out of the ten pieces performed on the DVD, Hunter’s original composition *Recess* 8 was selected for analysis. The tune was selected based upon diversity of technique, rhythmic subdivision and melodic content in an unaccompanied context. Moreover, since only one tune was selected, the researcher was able to present a more thorough investigation of Hunter’s techniques, especially his attention to form, while constructing a solo. Unconventional guitar techniques used by Hunter have been notated in this dissertation in manners adapted from the literature related to guitar technique discussed in the literature review. The three previously discussed central research questions have been addressed to structure how the transcriptions are analysed.

6 Howard Allen Spring, "The Improvisational Style of Charlie Christian" (M.A., York University (Canada), 1980).
7 *Charlie Hunter Quintet Right Now Live*.
8 Ibid.
Hunter's technique involves a high level of technical difficulty, due to the simultaneous task of creating improvised melodies while also providing bass lines and chordal accompaniment. Jude Gold, author of *Dr. Rhythm* said, “the way Hunter simultaneously handles bass lines, melodies, solos, and Jimmy Smith-style organ textures is truly mind-boggling.”

The first research question of this dissertation was asked in order to investigate the ways in which Hunter creatively addressed this situation. This particular section determined the significant musical ideas performed by Hunter with respect to solo construction for the transcription, and these ideas were categorised as predominantly melodic, harmonic, rhythmic or related to musical form, inspired by Jan LaRue’s *Guidelines for Style Analysis*. Additional exercises and playing concepts discussed in literature related to Hunter have also been referred to. Each idea’s significance was discussed in reference to overall solo construction. Analysing these aspects of Hunter’s style allowed his musical characteristics to be identified, as per Stefano’s dissertation: *Wes Montgomery's Improvisational Style (1959-63): The Riverside Years*.

Since the transcription could not effectively depict certain relationships between data, area graphs were used. These were partly inspired by the graph used in Stefano’s dissertation showing how Montgomery progressed from single-note lines to octaves and block chords during his solo on *Missile Blues* from *The Wes Montgomery Trio* album. Unlike Stefano’s chart however, the area graph was used to map the frequency of chords, single notes and rests Hunter used over the course of his solo –

---

12 Ibid.
in relation to each other. The data was gathered by first counting each occurrence of chords, single notes and rests within each chorus. That data was then entered into Excel as fractions of each chorus, and plotted as a 100% stacked area graph.

Another element of Hunter's technique worthy of discussion relates to the creation of textures within his playing, the focus of the second research question. For each piece, techniques and equipment used by Hunter have been discussed and analysed in accordance to the dissertations, books and articles outlined in the literature review. This also included explanation regarding the basic execution of Hunter's techniques. Similarly to the previous research question, the significance of various textures created by Hunter's techniques has been discussed in relation to the genres in which they are performed.

With regard to the third research question, Hunter's left hand fingering technique will be analysed (as per Saladino 13) on an aural and additionally on a visual level by means of video footage. To compare Hunter's technique to traditional guitar performance methods, left-hand fingering data will be discussed with reference to sources including Sherrod's dissertation about fingering. 14 This information will be dispersed among the sections regarding solo construction and texture-based techniques. Presenting the data in this manner (as per Saladino 15) allows readers to understand the significance of Hunter's left hand fingering techniques performed within a musical context.

---

15 Saladino, "An Examination of Eddie Lang's Technique and Textural Treatment in Three Selected Solo Guitar Performances."
Since this dissertation contains a large amount of information to process, summaries of Hunter's performance traits were presented to enable the reader to grasp the concepts behind his technique more easily. Any recurring and significant ideas identified in the solo were discussed, along with relationships between Hunter's technique and musical motivic ideas. Additionally, since Hunter's left-hand fingering techniques have not been discussed in separate sections of the analysis, they were conclusively summarised in the first section of the summary.

Hunter has expressed his musical philosophies and influences in various interviews and workshops. Discussing these philosophies and influences with regard to the analysis of his performances would perhaps allow readers to find a connection between his concepts and practical musical applications.

Even though the study contains confines, it still poses limitations to consider. The scope of this study is not large enough to explore all aspects of Hunter's technique. For example, from the ten pieces the DVD to be analysed, only Hunter's solo performance of Recess will be discussed. Although portions throughout the main melody of the tune contained improvisation, the primary area of analysis for this dissertation was the solo section (along with the preceding bridge section, which contributed toward the musical development of the solo section).

Since all research materials were gathered from the resources discussed in the literature review, and no interview was conducted between the researcher and Charlie Hunter for this dissertation, there were no ethical issues encountered while writing the thesis.
Chapter 1: Charlie Hunter

1.1 Literature Review

Although there were no academic dissertations published which focus specifically on Charlie Hunter’s guitar techniques in an unaccompanied setting, there are dissertations available that mention Hunter's techniques for playing hybrid guitar in an ensemble setting. Trudy Lile's *Creating New Standards: Jazz Arrangements of Pop Songs* \(^{16}\) contains a brief analysis of Hunter's arrangement of Nirvana's *Come As You Are* \(^{17}\) within the format of his ensemble. Similarly, Loren Kajikawa's *Centering the margins: Black music and American culture, 1980-2000* \(^{18}\) contains a brief analysis of Hunter’s accompaniment in the final chorus of D'Angelo’s composition *The Root*. \(^{19}\) However, proper appreciation of the significance within Hunter’s technique required a summarisation of the history that preceded Hunter within the solo jazz guitar tradition.

The unaccompanied solo jazz guitar tradition has been recognised even as far as the 1920s, since Eddie Lang. Although guitarist Lonnie Johnson was from the same time as Eddie Lang, Johnson’s solo style was more within the blues tradition, as Saladino noted in his thesis. \(^{20}\) Norman Morgan, author of *The History of the Guitar in Jazz* claimed that Lang was “practically solely responsible for the creation of the jazz.

\(^{16}\) Trudy Lile, "Creating New Standards: Jazz Arrangements of Pop Songs" (M.M., New Zealand School of Music, 2009).
\(^{17}\) Kurt; Vig Cobain, Butch, *Come as You Are, Nevermind* (California: DGC, 1992), CD.
\(^{19}\) Charlie; Archer D'Angelo; Hunter, Luther, *The Root, Voodoo* (EMI, 2000), CD.
\(^{20}\) Saladino, "An Examination of Eddie Lang's Technique and Textural Treatment in Three Selected Solo Guitar Performances."
guitar ... He was the first to make solo guitar recordings." 21 Saladino supported this statement, having described Lang as "considered to be the first true solo jazz guitarist." 22 Lang was recognised for having "not only expanded the harmonic horizon of the [guitar] instrument, but developed the single-string technique that was only to come of age several years later." 23 James Sallis, author of The Guitar in Jazz: An Anthology, described Lang's solo guitar recordings as containing "every signature of Lang's style" 24 – which would include the aforementioned techniques. According to Saladino, the only known solo guitar recordings made by Lang were April Kisses, A Little Love, A Little Kiss, and Rachmaninoff's Prelude. 25

According to Saladino, Lang was recognised by later guitarists like Carl Kress and Dick McDonough as "one of their main influences." 26 However, Mongan's account of Dick McDonough and Carl Kress described them as rarely soloing in single notes, but rather with the "crisp, full chords and pianistic approach are characteristic of the solo style widely used by big-band jazz guitarists in the thirties." 27 From recordings such as Kress' Peg Leg Shuffle 28 and McDonough's Chasing a Buck 29 it can be observed that these guitarists played in this manner within their unaccompanied solo performances as well, unlike Lang, who played "fast melodic runs" 30 within his solos (in addition to chords). Similarly, Django Reinhardt's guitar style followed Lang's tradition with his use of harmony and melodic runs. Even so, it contained a "Spanish

---

22 Saladino, "An Examination of Eddie Lang's Technique and Textural Treatment in Three Selected Solo Guitar Performances."
25 Saladino, "An Examination of Eddie Lang's Technique and Textural Treatment in Three Selected Solo Guitar Performances."
26 Ibid.
28 Carl Kress, Peg Leg Shuffle, Pioneers of Jazz Guitar 1927-1939 (Netherlands 1997).
29 Dick McDonough, Chasing a Buck, Pioneers of The Jazz Guitar (US 1992).
30 Saladino, "An Examination of Eddie Lang's Technique and Textural Treatment in Three Selected Solo Guitar Performances."
flavour,” as Mongan noted while reviewing Reinhardt’s unaccompanied solo rendition of his original *Improvisation*. However, by 1938 Charlie Christian “had removed the guitar from its solely rhythmic function, and had redefined its role as a frontline voice,” which caused guitarists to shift focus towards single note soloing. As Summerfield said:

“the power of amplification for a time made many guitarists forget that the guitar was more than a single note instrument. They were often quite content to play long flowing improvised single note lines ... neglecting the chordal and other harmonic aspects of the guitar.”

This could possibly explain the perceived lack of development within the solo jazz guitar tradition (until Bill Harris’ recording debut).

In 1956, Bill Harris released a self-titled album which became “the first unaccompanied jazz guitar album ever.” Moreover, Harris was probably the first to record solo jazz guitar “using classical guitar technique on the classical instrument” but “never achieved international recognition for his unique jazz talent,” according to Summerfield. Nonetheless, the 1970s heralded a new era in the solo jazz guitar tradition, as guitarist Joe Pass began to perform unaccompanied solo performances at concerts with Oscar Peterson, leading to his solo guitar album release in 1974: *Virtuoso*. According to Andy Ellis:

With his series of Virtuoso albums, the late Joe Pass redefined the art of unaccompanied jazz guitar. His ability to juggle bebop phrases, walking bass lines, and altered chord progressions inspired – and often baffled – players of all ages and musical backgrounds.

---

32 Ibid., 87.
34 Mongan, *The History of the Guitar in Jazz*, 149.
Following this, Pass’ solo guitar style influenced later guitarists, including Martin Taylor. Ultimately, Hunter developed the concepts Pass ‘juggled’ between while playing unaccompanied, to result in a technique that allowed him to use them simultaneously, as seen on Recess.

The methodology for this dissertation has been inspired by a number of academic papers specialising in guitar techniques. For example, Frank Saladino’s previously mentioned doctoral thesis involves a detailed analysis of three Eddie Lang solo guitar recordings with regard to guitar fingerings, voice-leading and texture of voicing. Additionally, The music of Michael Hedges and the re-invention of acoustic fingerstyle guitar by Donovan E. Raitt demonstrated ways in which extended guitar techniques (including percussive textures, de-tuning of strings and uncommon tunings) could be articulated and analysed. Reno De Stefano’s methodology used in his thesis on Wes Montgomery was also adapted for the thesis (particularly the solo construction section), as it directly relates to my first research question.

With regard to the analysis of Hunter’s musical approach on the three selected pieces, guitar techniques will be defined with inspiration taken from specialised guitar literature. For example, Roshan Samtani’s thesis Structure and strategy in Flamenco guitar performance, The classical guitar: An orchestration handbook for the composer by Stuart Granville Fox and Method for the Spanish Guitar by Ferdinand Sor provide reliable sources on traditional guitar technique. Methods by guitarists

---

39 Saladino, “An Examination of Eddie Lang’s Technique and Textural Treatment in Three Selected Solo Guitar Performances.”
40 Donovan E. Raitt, “The Music of Michael Hedges and the Re-Invention of Acoustic Fingerstyle Guitar” (M.M., California State University, Long Beach, 2010).
41 De Stefano, “Wes Montgomery’s Improvisational Style (1959-1963).”
including Greg Horne, Ralph Denyer and Chris Woods include documentation of contemporary guitar techniques. Additionally, there are magazine articles available discussing contemporary guitar techniques used by Tuck Andress, who Hunter cited as an influence with regard to “articulating guitar technique.” This includes *A Private Lesson With The Amazing Tuck Andress: Radical Fingerstyle Jazz* written by Andress himself. Additionally, *A Guide to the Fingering of Music for the Guitar* by Ronald Jerone Sherrod provides information about the physiological properties of the hand that was useful in analysing the fingering combinations Hunter used. This balance of literature aided in explaining the musical significance of the guitar techniques Hunter employs.

It is important to understand that the percussive elements of Hunter’s performances have little or no formal notational symbols. As John Schneider explained:

> Some of the advanced techniques described in the following pages will be new territory for many, but even the most basic techniques of composing for the guitar are not readily at the fingertips of composers. This is because the instrument is not covered in most traditional orchestration classes or texts, due to its “secondary” or “folk” status.

Frederik Munk Larsen from the Royal Academy of music in Denmark supported this idea by saying that “beyond the notation of the most basic playing-techniques there is no shared standard.” However, he also mentioned that modern scores have “appendixes that explain how to perform certain passages,” providing the notation legends of composers like Carlos Mastropietro and Helmuth Lachenmann as

---

46 Tuck Andress, "A Private Lesson with the Amazing Tuck Andress: Radical Fingerstyle Jazz," *Guitar Player*.
47 Sherrod, "A Guide to the Fingering of Music for the Guitar."
The notation legend formed for this thesis has been made while drawing inspiration from John Schneider's book *The Contemporary Guitar* and Robert Lunn's thesis *Extended Techniques for the Classical Guitar: A Guide to Composers*, in respect to layout and some of the symbols used.

There are also magazine journal articles (in addition to those about Andress) that contain useful information for this thesis, including articles co-written by Hunter himself. *Jazz Guru Charlie Hunter* contains notated technical exercises provided by Hunter, as does *Picks are for kids: A funky fingerstyle jazz lesson with Charlie Hunter*. Other articles including *Growing Pains* also additionally contain biographical and conceptual information about Hunter.

YouTube videos will be included in this thesis. They are important because they contain Hunter himself explaining his musical influences, philosophies and techniques (including demonstrations of them). Examples of these include a series of videos from a clinic of the Woodwind and Brasswind YouTube channel. These videos were chosen from official YouTube channels to prevent ethics issues.

The selected webpages and newspapers intended for use in this essay provided information that supplements the videos and journal articles. A webpage from JamBase was used for biographical information that is not covered in the videos or

---

51 Ibid.
52 Schneider, *The Contemporary Guitar*.
53 Robert Allan Lunn, "Extended Techniques for the Classical Guitar: A Guide for Composers" (The Ohio State University, 2010).
magazine articles. Moreover, newspaper articles like The Wall Street Journal's An Odd Kind of Guitar Hero contained Hunter expressing his musical philosophies. Information drawn from other Hunter interviews available in webpage format was used, including Charlie Hunter – Life in the Pocket.

---

1.2 Background

Since his emergence onto the music scene, Charlie Hunter has gained international recognition with his ability to perform bass line and guitar parts simultaneously. In order to accommodate this approach, Hunter plays a hybrid guitar consisting of three bass guitar strings and four (or sometimes five) guitar strings. Hunter developed his distinctive style mainly through combining guitar influences (such as Robert Johnson, Huddie William Ledbetter aka Leadbelly, B.B King, Freddie King, Joe Pass and Tuck Andress) with jazz organ influences (including Jimmy Smith, Larry Young and Big John Patton), as well as pursuing a natural talent for simultaneously combining bass and guitar parts within a strong rhythmic framework. Born from these influences, his style is a result of combining conceptual elements of the guitar, bass and drums. He has released thirty-six albums with many independent recording labels including five Blue Note albums. This particular study of Hunter's technique was conducted in reference to Hunter's live DVD album Right Now Live, released in 2005 under Ropeadope Records.

---

61 Ibid.
62 Guitar Technique | Charlie Hunter Clinic.
63 "Charlie Hunter Bio, History, Info on Jambase".
64 Fusilli, "An Odd Kind of Guitar Hero."
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Ligado" /></td>
<td>Ligado</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Glissandi" /></td>
<td>Glissandi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Pizzicato" /></td>
<td>Pizzicato</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Surface Pizzicato" /></td>
<td>Surface pizzicato</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Ghost Notes" /></td>
<td>Ghost notes (non-percussive)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Staccatissimo" /></td>
<td>Staccatissimo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="String Slap" /></td>
<td>String slap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Rasgado Up Stroke" /></td>
<td>Rasgado up stroke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Rasgado Down Stroke" /></td>
<td>Rasgado down stroke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Artificial Harmonics" /></td>
<td>Artificial harmonics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 2: Analysis of Recess Solo

2.1 Solo Construction

2.1.1 Melody

One of Hunter’s more obviously used melodic devices includes his use of blues-based ideas throughout his solo. In the third chorus for example, he began by using a repeated F note idea and then Eb and C from the C blues pentatonic scale in bars 81 – 83. In bars 84 – 88, Hunter provided a contrasting chordal phrase an octave below that used Eb, F and F# from the C blues scale to frame the top line. The following 8 bars (89 – 96) repeated the same idea of the single-note and chordal idea. Hunter used single notes phrases in alternation with chordal phrases to create a sense of call and response (figure 1).

Figure 1: Use of the blues ideas: Bars 81 – 96

---

66 Kernfeld Barry, "Call and Response," *Grove Music Online*. 
This can also be seen in the throughout the 6/8 section of the music. Even though Hunter used dominant chords based on jazz harmony, he framed the upper voice with the blues scale, as can be seen throughout the fifth chorus – especially when using the F# from the C blues scale. Hunter’s use of the F# from the blues scale is also evident in bars 224 – 227 of the seventh chorus, for example (figure 2). By using call and response as well as the blues scale, he gave his melodies a blues sensibility. As Vic Hobson stated, the blues is “an essential ingredient in the authentic jazz mix.”  

Hunter’s use of the blues made his solo more reflective of the jazz idiom.

![Figure 2: Examples of F# from the C blues scale in the 6/8 section](image)

Hunter’s soul jazz influences were also evident in bars 165 – 167 and 193 – 200 (figure 3), where he treated the dotted crotchet beats as crotchet beats, and used glissandi inflections “modelled on the speech inflections of African-American preachers in the sanctified churches.”  

By incorporating soul jazz into his solo, Hunter connected the solo with the main melody, since the head to Recess is characterised by this style.

---

68 Kernfeld Barry, "Soul Jazz," *Grove Music Online.*
Even so, Hunter has also used simple melodic ideas to frame more complex chordal ideas (figure 4). In bars 25 – 31 for example, even though Hunter used a contrapuntal idea in which the lower voice was not moving in a parallel manner to the other voice, the top voice was simple and repetitious (using notes from the C Aeolian scale). Similarly, even though the chordal ideas in the fourth chorus (bars 113 – 128) involved complex reharmonisation, the top voice of all the chords formed a simple melody centred on the C note. Hunter used less pitches and repetition to make these complex chordal ideas melodic.
Hunter returned to this motif leading into the sixth chorus, as shown in figure five. This idea was centred on the C note, and was continued until bar 189. The seventh chorus resumed the use of the C note pitched an octave lower, and began by outlining the Afro-Cuban 6/8 (compound duple) clave rhythm.  

Even though the rhythm is then altered throughout the chorus, the C note remains the staple pitched note. Ideas like these not only contrasted the more complex phrases of the simple triple time sections, but also allowed simpler left hand fingered approaches. Additionally, this allowed Hunter to deliver more complex ideas within his bass-lines.

Hunter’s bass-lines within the 6/8 section were very melodically and rhythmically varied. The opening two bars of the fifth and sixth choruses (as well as bars 161 – 164) show the use of a bass-line motif, which have notes placed on the first and last quavers of the first bar, and then the second of the second bar (figure 6). This motif is intervallic in nature. Additionally, Hunter used a lot more fills in the bass-lines, like those in bars 181 – 188, and they were often different from each other (figure 7). Even in the areas where there was little rhythmic variation, Hunter used different pitches within the bass-lines. He made it easier to vary the bass-lines by mainly using his index finger to hold the chords; leaving his other fingers free to play different bass note pitches (as can be observed on the DVD). This amount of melodic

---

70 Witmer Robert, "Fill," Grove Music Online.
variety raised the bass-lines to the status of a counter-melody, adding to the contrast of the 6/8 section (as opposed to the 3/4 section).

Figure 6: Bass-line motif

While Hunter’s bass-lines in the 3/4 sections were not as creatively used as those of the 6/8 section, they provided stability and shape to the solo (see figure 8). The bass-lines usually consisted of root notes and fifths played as dotted minims, and were usually rhythmically varied to create fills in areas of melodic inactivity, as in bars 79 and 80 for example (amongst others). In other instances, like in bars 65 – 72, they were used to enhance the tension within melodic lines (figure 9). While discussing pedal tone exercises in *Picks are for kids: A Funky Fingerstyle Jazz Lesson with Charlie Hunter*,

---

Ellis, "Picks Are for Kids: A Funky Fingerstyle Jazz Lesson with Charlie Hunter."
suggested exploring the same concept with the second and third fingers holding the pedal tone. On the DVD it can be observed that Hunter mostly alternated between his index and middle fingers to fret the bass-lines, following this principle to an extent. Additionally, bass-lines played using unfretted open string notes allowed all left hand fingers to be free to play melodies. Playing simpler and repetitive bass-lines based on concepts he practiced (like the exercises over pedal tones) allowed Hunter to provide more complex harmonic ideas and chords.

Figure 8: Example of bass-line fill during melodic inactivity: bars 79–80

Figure 9: Example of bass-line fills used to enhance tension: bars 65–72
2.1.2 Harmony

Understanding Hunter’s liberal use of harmony required identification of the *Recess* solo section’s basic improvisational framework. For the purposes of analysis, the basic chord progression has been summarised in figure 10 using Roman Numeral Analysis. 72 The solo section consists of a 32 bar form in the key of C major. Even though the basic chord progression is quite static, it has a structure that builds tension. For example, while the first and second groups of 8 bars within the solo section have similar chord progressions, the third group of 8 bars (bars 17 – 24 in figure 10) provides contrast, especially with the use of the Bb dominant seventh chord. Finally, this leads to the last 8 bars of the solo section, which contains the most movement of chords, contrasting the previous parts of the solo section. The contrast in chord progressions between different parts of the solo section created variety, inspiring different ideas within Hunter’s performance.

Moreover, the basic chord progression consists of basic harmonic materials found in jazz and blues. The ii-V-I progression, the “the most common progression in jazz” 73 can be observed at various points within the solo section (bars 5 – 7, 13 – 17 and 29 – 31 in figure 10 for example). Similarly, the end of the solo section (bars 27 – 30 shown in figure 10) consists of a “iii-vi-ii-V jazz turnaround,” 74. However, movement to the F dominant seventh chord (as shown in bars 3, 11, and 21 of figure 10) reflects the 12 bar blues progression. Andrew Dubock supported this statement, saying: “to play most blues songs, you only need three chords – the I, IV and V,” 75 and “In blues music, major chords work fine, but it’s also very common to use dominant-seven

---

74 Ibid.
chords.” During the course of his solo, Hunter incorporated complex harmonic ideas, while always returning to this basic improvisational framework.

![Figure 10: Basic improvisational framework of Recess solo section](image)

Hunter’s use of different harmonic structures is evident even from the beginning of his solo. In Bars 11 – 14 for instance, Hunter alternated between outlining Eb major and Eb minor for each bar over an A pedal tone, thereby rapidly building and releasing tension within the phrase (see figure 11). In the article discussed previously, Hunter suggested that guitarists explore pedal tones, and offered numerous examples of arpeggios scales over C note pedal tones. Andy Ellis, co-

76 Ibid.
77 Ellis, "Picks Are for Kids: A Funky Fingerstyle Jazz Lesson with Charlie Hunter."
writer of the article, explained that Hunter had offered the exercise “as a way to
develop finger independence while honing improv [sic] skills and expanding your
ear.”

He used harmonic material in the solo by drawing upon exercises and patterns he
has practiced, and incorporating them in very small amounts. Hunter also suggested
selecting different modes and practicing diatonic chords as ascending and
descending arpeggios over a pedal tone, providing an example (Ex. 7) with left hand
fingering as well.\textsuperscript{78} Moreover, Ellis further articulated: “Hunter, who is more
concerned with results than rules, cycling patterns within scales is an important
improvisational technique.”\textsuperscript{79} Bar 45 shows Hunter beginning a phrase with a Dm7
arpeggio (with an approach note from below to the tonic), for which the fingering
seems to have been derived from the exercise previously mentioned (figure 12).

\textsuperscript{78} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{79} Ibid.
Besides the arpeggiation in bars 11 – 14 (as previously discussed), there are also many instances of arpeggiation involving superimposed triads, as seen in bars 70 and 71 for example. Hunter also used an F augmented arpeggio in bar 132, which could have been derived from another exercise featuring augmented arpeggios over a pedal tone bass (Ex 10, illustrated in figure 13). Incorporating technically demanding practiced ideas like these added another level of contrast to the solo, while only including small amounts of such material disguised its less melodic nature.

In the magazine article, Hunter also noted the usefulness of patterns within scales, especially the diminished scale, providing various examples to suit (Ex. 11 – 13b).
Within this solo, there are small melodic fragments that are possibly based on the diminished scale. For example, the 3rd beat of bar 35, and the whole of bar 36 reflect the C# diminished scale over dominant chords, as does bars 129 – 131 (from the 3rd beat of bar 129 onwards, as shown in figure 14). These examples show how using diminished scale over dominant chords can be used to create tension.

There are also instances in which Hunter used more complex harmony within phrases that have more consecutive notes and near identical repetition of fragments. In bar 129 for example, the exact phrase from bar 39 is repeated, but it is sequenced a tone higher, displaced by a quaver, and played with a C bass note instead of Bb (figure 15). Repeating the idea in this manner created subtle familiarity, while the harmonic nature of the idea created tension.
As Ellis further explained, exercises of this nature would eventually develop the skills to even play non-symmetrical phrases over steady bass-lines. Bar 37 contains a good depiction of an intervallic, non-symmetrical line of consecutive 8th notes based on the F mixolydian scale (figure 16). Even though the idea’s construction is less formulaic, the technical complexity required to perform the phrase suggests that it is the result of Hunter’s development of dexterity and exploration harmonic material within practice. He used harmonic phrases like this to contrast his rhythmic and simpler melodic ideas.

For his chordal playing, Hunter drew from his practiced concepts inspired by organists like Larry Young. As Hunter said in the article:

Larry Young got a lot of stuff from McCoy Tyner—they’re from the same ear—but Larry put it on Hammond … he only had the stretch for a three-note fourth voicing. On guitar, these are simple chords to finger, plus they create a lot of tension and sound so hip. He also advised guitarists to learn the fourth voicings on the different string sets. However, Hunter often even used portions of the voicings; playing two notes on the guitar strings and the bass notes (figure 17). He used these voicings with syncopated rhythms to create holistic, yet interesting accompaniment throughout his solo.

---

80 Ibid.
81 Ibid.
Hunter also applied his voicing concepts to the rhythmic motifs he used to solo. In the article he also explained his approach to playing cadences without using “traditional 7-to-3 resolutions,” replacing some guide tones with extensions. Hunter argued that “all guitar players voiced their II-V-I cadences accordingly, but we’ve heard that so many d**n times it’s not necessary anymore. And Larry Young never does it…” This could explain Hunter’s liberal approach to his voicings, in addition to the freedom of his unaccompanied solo setting. While Hunter used this chordal soloing approach throughout the solo, the last chorus contains the clearest example of its use, in which Hunter applied combinations of quartal voicings and chords with extensions to the main rhythmic motifs of the solo (shown in figure 18). Hunter used these concepts to create a variety of harmonic colours that were still reflected the modal jazz tradition.

82 Ibid.
Hunter also made further use of reharmonisation in a motivic context, albeit sparingly (figure 19). This can be seen in the beginning of the fourth chorus where he based his voicing selections primarily on the fifth mode of the F harmonic major scale, using Db, F and G within the voicings. Hunter continued this idea throughout the chorus, changing to a linear approach at bar 129, and resolving the idea at bar 133. He returned to this idea during the 6/8 section in bars 183 – 186. These voicings were used to build tension and form connections within different sections of the solo, in addition to being a melodic device.
Due to the technically demanding nature of the style, it was almost necessary for him to rely on harmonic material that he had developed the dexterity to play (especially in terms of left hand fingering). Additionally, Hunter used these ideas to contrast the rhythmic and melodic concepts he used.
2.1.3 Rhythm

Motivic improvisation can be defined as using one or more ideas as the basis for a section of a piece, or an entire piece.\(^8\) One of Hunter's obvious tools of solo construction includes his use of rhythmic motifs. His ideas were usually formed with short rhythmic figures that conform to the simple triple time signature. A good example of this is the rhythmic motif Hunter introduced in bar 6, consisting of two quavers, a quaver rest and a quaver (figure 20). Hunter used this rhythm as a primary motif upon which his solo was formed. He developed the theme by using ornamentation, repetition, pitch alteration, and rhythmic displacement. In bar 9 and 10 for instance, Hunter repeated the rhythm as a single note melody with different pitches, while also having altered the rhythm in the following two bars (figure 21). In bar 13 Hunter introduced the first instance in which the rhythm has been displaced by a quaver. However, there are clearer repetitions of the motif used from bars 69 – 71, as well as in conjunction with the original rhythm at bars 29 – 32 as an example (amongst many others). Hunter used these methods to create interest within the motifs of his solo.

\[\text{Figure 20: Primary rhythmic motif}\]

\[\text{Am11}\text{b5} \]

---

\(^8\) Bruno Nettl et al., "Improvisation," in Grove Music Online.
Hunter also used this motif in different sections to create structural unity across the whole solo. For example, the first four bars of the first chorus expressed further development of the primary motif by adding a string of consecutive notes of a bar’s length before the idea. This consecutive note-based variation of the primary motif is further developed in the beginning of the third chorus (figure 22). In other instances, Hunter used the primary motif to begin or end phrases, as seen in bar 41 and 45, as well as the end of the third chorus. Additionally, the motif was used within the last chorus of the solo. Though subtle, dispersing rhythmic ideas across different sections helped to make the whole solo appear cohesive. Repeating the ideas in these means also gave familiarity to the phrases.

A secondary motif frequently used included a rhythm containing two dotted crotchets. It was developed in similar manners to the primary motif, but was used to contrast or
complement the main motif. The idea’s first main use could be seen in bars 26 – 28 (figure 23), in which the rhythm of the primary motif follows the rhythm of the secondary motif, while the melodic material is kept reasonably constant. However, when the idea was used in bar 57, it contrasted the rhythmic phrase in the preceding eight bars. Similarly, the beginning of the fourth chorus contrasts the previous three choruses because it used a variation of the dotted crotchet idea. In all instances, the longer length of the dotted crochet rhythms contrasted the quaver-based ideas, thereby adding variation to the solo. Yet another example of this dotted-crotchet motif was evident in bars 165 and 166, as well as bars 193 – 200. However, in these locations the motif was used in a more rhythmic sense – not being held out for its full value. Furthermore, it not only contrasted the other rhythms, but it also linked the 6/8 section with the 3/4 sections.

Figure 23: Instance of secondary motif: Bars 25–32

Figure 24: Hemiola based rhythmic motif used in 6/8 section: Bars 145 and 146

The 6/8 time signature also led Hunter to use a different set of ideas. These ideas most likely resulted from the more chordal nature of the fifth chorus, which implied accompaniment more than soloing. For example, Hunter underpinned the chordal
accompaniment of this section with a rhythmic motif based on the superimposition of three crotchets over two dotted crotchets – a hemiola (figure 24). The rhythm is referenced throughout the 6/8 section. Additionally, the accompaniment-based nature of this section allowed Hunter to create bass-lines that were more syncopated and threaded between the spaces of the guitar parts, as can be seen in the sixth chorus. The rhythm also outlined portions of the Afro-Cuban 6/8 clave (figure 25). Hunter used bass-line centric motifs to rhythmically contrast those played in the guitar part and introduce more Afro-Cuban based ideas.

![Figure 25: The Afro-Cuban 6/8 clave](image)

Hunter also used metric modulations in the 6/8 section. Hussain Jiffry, the author of an article from *Play Bass! Magazine*, said:

> It is believed that clave was born out of 6/8 rhythms. When you hear Afro-Cuban music, listen closely to its underlying 6/8 feel, and check out how the rhythm section seems to weave in and out between the 4/4 and 6/8 feels seamlessly and with some elasticity.

Hunter’s application of this concept can be clearly seen in bars 215 and 216, where he changes time signature for two bars and outlines the rhumba clave. In other instances, such as bars 149 – 150 and 233 – 235 (figure 26), while the Afro-Cuban clave is not outlined, these metric modulation ideas functioned as fills which contrasted the 6/8 section while adding continuity (since the idea is repeated).

---

84 “Hemiola or Hemiola,” *The Oxford Dictionary of Music*.
Hunter also made use of metric modulations as motifs within the 3/4 sections of the solo, albeit sparingly (see figure 27). This can be seen in bars 62 – 66 where Hunter uses metric modulation, treating dotted quaver beats as swung 4/4 crotchet beats. This idea is repeated in bars 135 and 136, and both instances feature harmonic superimposition over dominant chords. In contrast, though the metric modulation in bars 75 and 76 is of the same kind, its melody is harmonically simple and based on the blues. As with the previously discussed metric modulations, these ideas function as fills, while creating structural unity on a micro level.
Nettl argued that the “repetition and development of motifs provides an element of coherence and stability, which in a sense fill the same role as a conventional theme.”

Despite the complex manners in which Hunter intertwined these ideas, the motifs provided familiarity and variation within the solo. Additionally, they allowed Hunter to use simpler left hand fingering approaches, since most ideas were also melodically simple.

---

86 Nettl et al., "Improvisation."
2.1.4 Form

Despite its subtlety, Hunter’s attention to form played a very significant role in how he developed his solo. It is an important part of Hunter’s improvisational style, as he stated in an interview:

A lot of the improvisation I try to do is not necessarily linear improvisation; it may not feel like it’s improvisation to people, because I’m not doing really fast lines or anything, it’s just I’m kind of improvising vertically, so to speak. I’m really improvising the feel and the counterpoint, the dance between the two or three different parts, the way that feels, kind of improvising with that, I guess compositionally improvising.\(^{87}\)

Primarily, this can be seen by how Hunter strategically introduced concepts throughout the course of his solo, particularly his chordal concepts. The opening chords of the bridge leading into the solo were a paraphrase of the main melody of the song. Excluding this, Hunter began his solo with improvised single-note melodies. He then used more chords with two-note voicings, and more chords with three-note voicings in the second chorus\(^{88}\). As Hunter progressed through the solo, he used more chordal material, as illustrated in figure 29. By slowly increasing the frequency and density of the chords in this manner, Hunter managed to build a gradual climax throughout his solo.

Contrastingly, Hunter developed his single-note phrases quite rapidly, since his focus was mainly on single-note lines during the first four choruses of the solo. This can be seen in the way Hunter used combinations of complex harmonic and rhythmic ideas within the single-note phrases of these choruses (as discussed in the previous sections of the analysis). Additionally, this can also be seen in the large ranges within the single-note melodies in each chorus (figure 28). However, Hunter significantly reduced the amount of single-notes he used in the last four choruses, as shown in


\(^{88}\) The amount of notes in the voicings only include those in the guitar part, not the bass part.
figure 28. By emphasising the single-note lines of the first four choruses, he created a stronger contrast against the last four choruses.

Since Hunter performed his bass and guitar-parts simultaneously, he seemed to be more aware of the relationship between the two parts, and how they could be interwoven. While he used complex single-note phrases in the first four choruses for instance, he used simpler bass-lines consisting of longer rhythms, and very little rests (as shown in figure 30). In the few instances in which Hunter used smaller rhythms, he used them to either create fills in inactive areas or to intensify melodic ideas in the guitar part (as discussed in the previous harmony section of the analysis). This provided a stable base underneath Hunter’s improvised melodies and chordal accompaniment.

By the beginning of the fifth chorus, Hunter had transitioned to a triplet-based feel in a 6/8 time signature at a slower pace. This setting allowed him to form different ideas and contrasted the previous four choruses, which were in a mid-tempo jazz 3/4 swing style. This could have been drawn from the soul jazz tradition, in which the main melodies were “occasionally in 6/8 meter.” Additionally, Hunter’s previously discussed “compositionally improvising” concept could also explain Hunter’s decision to change the time signature.

---

89 Barry, "Soul Jazz."
90 "Interview".
The fifth chorus also signalled a conceptual change in Hunter’s soloing approach. Hunter’s use of more simplified melodic material allowed for more recognisable bass-line ideas that provided more than just accompaniment, but not quite enough to be considered a bass solo. This is evident in the fact that Hunter used significantly less single-notes while using more chords and rests in the guitar part during the fifth, sixth and seventh chorus (figure 29). Within the rests of the guitar part Hunter delivered less repetitive, syncopated bass-lines. These bass-lines were made with smaller rhythmic units, as depicted in figure 30. However, he also used rests within the bass-line, which allowed focus on the chordal accompaniment.

![Figure 29: Chords, single notes and rest usage comparison in guitar part of Recess solo](image)

Additionally, Hunter quite consistently used percussive textures on the fourth beats of nearly every bar within the 6/8 section. While all three elements are in focus, neither is in focus in particular. This closely resembles the philosophy coined by Joe Zawinul from the Weather Report band: “we always solo, we never solo.” 91 Moreover, this also resulted in a contrasting fingering approach, since the bass part was now more

improvised, as opposed to only the guitar part. By threading his guitar and bass parts, Hunter emulated a sense of musical interplay between more musicians.

Figure 30: Beat lengths and rests comparison within bass-lines of Recess solo

Hunter further emphasised the contrast between the different sections by using creative transitions between them. He also used the transitions as inspiration for different ideas. The first transition can be seen in bars 137 – 144 (figure 31), where Hunter begins to imply the triplet feel of the next section, while also gradually slowing down from 220 to 210 beats per minute (this is shown as 140 dotted crotchets per minute in the transcription). By using a slower tempo Hunter created a more relaxed feeling within the 6/8 section, enhancing the contrast between the previous 3/4 sections as well.
In contrast, the transition into the final chorus began with metric modulations in bars 233 and 234 at a softer dynamic, featuring a gradual speeding up until bar 241 (see figure 32). The metric modulations and softer volume created a temporary sense of ambiguity that was resolved when Hunter began to increase speed. Hunter continued these ideas by increasing speed (as shown in bar 262) and experimenting with dynamics throughout the last solo. The increases in speed gave the final part of the solo a forward momentum that went smoothly into the main theme (the main melody) at the end. In addition to being used as creative stimuli and to amplify the contrast between different sections, Hunter used these unpredictable transitions to capture his listener’s attention.
All of these aspects of Hunter’s playing (in respect to form) can be understood within the context of his need to provide bass and guitar parts simultaneously. Rather than attempting to produce complex ideas all the time in both parts simultaneously, he gradually moved between different musical concepts, all while balancing them with simplicity. Ultimately, this approach to form not only gave Hunter a simpler approach to a complex style of performance, it also produced a dynamic solo that could hold its listeners attention throughout the course of the solo.
2.2 Tone

2.2.1 Equipment

While Hunter's tone depends on his guitar technique, a significant amount also relies on the equipment he used. First of all, this includes Hunter's hybrid guitar. Co-designed by Hunter and built by luthier Ralph Novak, the guitar combines the lower three strings of a bass guitar with the top five strings of an electric guitar. Including three bass strings in the design was important because it gave a larger range of bass notes within a smaller span of frets, allowing Hunter to access more notes by moving vertically across the guitar fretboard rather than horizontally (which is more efficient and ergonomic). During his solo on Recess, it can be observed on the video that Hunter's left-hand remained largely in one area of the guitar's fretboard, from which he could reach both C notes on the bass strings (C minor being the key of the tune).

However, the most important aspect of the guitar's design includes the fan-fret system patented by Novak himself, which allows each string to be of different lengths. In the magazine article Growing pains: Charlie Hunter's evolution from boy wonder to mature artist, Hunter explained its importance to his style:

"I need the low end to get a real bass tone, and I need the shorter scale on the top end so I can get a decent guitar tone. If the strings were all the same length, either the bass would end up sounding like a rubber band or the guitar would sound like a banjo."

Furthermore, the guitar also featured custom Bartolini guitar and bass pickups. The guitar's design gave Hunter an ergonomic way to simultaneously produce guitar and bass parts with a convincing tone.

---

93 Charlie Hunter Quintet Right Now Live.
94 "Novax Guitars: Instrument Models: Charlie Hunter Solidbody 8-String".
95 Levy, "Growing Pains."
96 "Novax Guitars: Instrument Models: Charlie Hunter Solidbody 8-String".
Hunter also took advantage of his hybrid guitar’s separate outputs for the bass and guitar pickups, using both a bass and guitar amp. While he sent his bass signal straight into an amp, he used some effect pedals with his guitar before sending it through to the guitar amp. This included a volume pedal and more importantly, a Leslie cabinet simulator. In respect to the solo, Hunter most likely used the volume pedal to further control his dynamics (see figure 33), in addition to using his fingers. While it is hard to observe which pedal Hunter uses as a Leslie cabinet simulator, it is most likely a Hughes and Kettner Rotosphere pedal, since he was for using one near the time of the DVD’s recording.  

Hunter used this effect throughout his performance of *Recess* to emulate the sound of organists. Additionally, the pedal helped Hunter to produce a tone with a stronger attack, reflecting the lively character of the piece.

![Figure 33: Likely example of volume pedal usage: Bar 233](image)

He further shaped his sound by using bass strings wrapped in black nylon. The nylon coating gives the bass strings a darker sound (with less treble frequencies), which Novak describes as “what a really dead string does.” Hunter justified his reasons for using the strings by describing treble and bass as “the only thing in the universe that should be segregated.” According to Brian Fox, “whether it’s to cop

---

98 Ellis, "Picks Are for Kids: A Funky Fingerstyle Jazz Lesson with Charlie Hunter."
Paul McCartney’s semi-hollow woof or James Jamerson’s P-Bass thump, tapewound strings have long been a go-to for electric bass players longing for a more woody, upright-like tone.” ¹⁰¹ These qualities make tapewound strings more suited to the funk-based tunes that Hunter performs, or resembling a dark organ pedal tone, as Ellis described. ¹⁰² Additionally, the darker timbre made Hunter’s bass-lines more distinct tonal separation from his guitar parts.

By carefully selecting his equipment, Hunter crafted his unique sound while also finding an efficient way to deliver his music. Nevertheless, it was ultimately his technique and creativity that made the equipment useful.

¹⁰² Ellis, "Picks Are for Kids: A Funky Fingerstyle Jazz Lesson with Charlie Hunter."
2.2.2 Conventional Techniques

Despite using many extended techniques, Hunter did not fail to make use of standard guitar technique. Unlike most contemporary guitarists, he used his right hand fingers to pluck the strings instead of a plectrum. According to Robert Allan Lunn, “This traditional approach to the instrument can be found in the guitar music from the 19th century”. 103 However, Hunter grew up listening to blues records of fingerpicking guitarists, before listening to guitarists like Joe Pass and Tuck Andress. 104 These musicians most likely influenced his decision to play fingerstyle. Moreover, he also reasoned that using fingers allows for more control over dynamics and timbre. However, while the classical guitar tradition involves the use of right hand fingernails to pluck the strings, 105 Hunter only uses the flesh of his fingers. 106 In a magazine article, Tuck Andress explained that he did not use his nails while playing electric guitar because it produced too much treble within the tone. 107 By using the flesh of his fingers, Hunter produced a more mellow timbre.

More importantly, the fingerstyle technique enabled Hunter to approach his instrument with a polyrhythmic approach – generally appropriating his thumb to play bass-lines, and his other fingers to play chords and single-note lines, as Adam Levy, author of Growing pains: Charlie Hunter's evolution from boy wonder to mature artist described. 108 Additionally, this can also be seen throughout his performances on the DVD. This fingerstyle technique not only played an important role in the basic execution of his sound, but also in providing various textures throughout the solo.

Even so, Hunter had to further refine his technique in order to deliver convincing bass-lines on his instrument. This involved using a technique called rest-stroke with

---

104 Guitar Technique | Charlie Hunter Clinic.
106 Levy, "Growing Pains."
108 Levy, "Growing Pains."
the thumb. Stuart Granville Fox describes the rest stroke as a method of plucking in which "the finger leaves the plucked string and continues across to the neighbouring lower (pitched) string where it comes to rest briefly without sounding the string" \(^{109}\) (the direction is opposite when using the thumb for rest stroke). Sherrod described rest-stroke as what produces "the maximum volume and fullest tone of a guitar string." \(^{110}\) While giving a clinic, Hunter stressed the need to play "stronger" with the thumb on the bass notes, demonstrating the more convincing tone that came from playing the bass-lines with rest stroke as opposed to free stroke. \(^{111}\) Hunter used this technique throughout *Recess* to effectively project his bass-lines.

Additionally, while Hunter generally executed his bass-lines with his thumb, there were instances in which Hunter also used some of the other fingers on his right hand (generally the index finger) to play certain bass-line ideas that are difficult to play with just the thumb (figure 34). Hunter explained that he used the thumb mostly for the bass, the middle finger for the guitar and the index as "the helper finger" which "goes to either side." \(^{112}\) This can be seen in bars 65 and 67 (as examples among many), where Hunter plays a quaver at the end of each bar with *staccatissimo* articulation. In order to satisfy the faster execution, string crossing and articulation needed, Hunter used his index finger to play the quaver notes. In some instances however, like bars 26 and 27 for example, the same rhythmic idea is used, with a different articulation pattern, in which the last quaver beat of bar 26 is plucked with the thumb, but the following note in bar 27 is hammered on with the left hand rather than plucked. This instance did not require the use of the index finger, since Hunter used his left hand to aid his thumb instead. Regardless, the shorter length of the quaver in all instances of this rhythm was used to emphasize the swung subdivision of the piece thereby reflecting the jazz tradition.

---


\(^{110}\) Sherrod, "A Guide to the Fingering of Music for the Guitar."

\(^{111}\) *Guitar Technique | Charlie Hunter Clinic.*

\(^{112}\) Ibid.
Hunter also made his guitar phrases sound more authentic by using articulation patterns reflective of the jazz guitar tradition, especially ‘ligado’ (see figure 35). Mark Gilbert defines ligado as:

A guitar technique in which a note is sounded either by pulling sideways or by hammering down on a string on the fingerboard using a finger of the fretting hand. In this way a note may be made more continuous (“ligar” is Spanish for “to bind”) with its predecessor and smoother phrasing produced. The technique has been employed extensively by jazz guitarists.\(^\text{113}\)

In respect to swing, Howard Spring’s explains: "legato articulation is generally preferred in a series of swing eighth notes. Accented offbeats are typically slurred into on-the-beat notes, although this can vary within acceptable limits." Hunter used the technique in this manner to make his phrases with consecutive 8\(^{\text{th}}\) notes smoother, as seen in bars 35 – 37 for example (amongst others). In combination with the previously discussed bass-line fills, this type of articulation in the guitar part significantly contributed to emphasising the swing subdivision within *Recess*.

\(^{113}\) Gilbert Mark, "Ligado," *Grove Music Online*. 
Hunter also used different articulation techniques to create contrasting textures, as seen in when Hunter played repeated consecutive 8th notes, for example (figure 36). A simple way he employed this was by accenting notes by using the right fingers with more strength, as seen on the first, third and fifth quavers of the bar. He also used the pizzicato technique in bars 209 and 210 (recognised by the note heads marked with crosses) by lifting his left hand fingers. John Schneider quoted Fernando Sor’s description of pizzicato:

To damp or check the sounds, do not employ the right hand, but place the fingers of the left hand, so as to take the string on the fret which determines the note, pressing it with less force than usual, but not so lightly as to make it yield an harmonic sound. The manner of damping or buffing requires great accuracy in the distances, but produces true suppressed sounds. 114

Hunter added a further level of texture by using a technique described by Gilbert Biberian as “surface pizzicato.” 115 This differs from the standard pizzicato in that while the left hand fingers rest on the strings, no strings are pressed towards the fretboard, producing “unfretted sounds” (having a more percussive function, without reference to pitch). The technique has been notated by using plus symbols over the affected notes in combination with cross note heads, as seen on the 2nd beats of bars 18 and 20, for example. Hunter used the aforementioned techniques to create contrasting textures while also implying percussive ideas, making the solo more interesting.

114 Schneider, The Contemporary Guitar.
115 Ibid.
Another textural technique Hunter used was glissandi, as can be seen in bars 47 – 53 for example. Schneider describes the technique as "sliding the left hand along the string to change pitch." He also further explained the significance of the glissando: "A guitar glissando has the psychological effect of creating a sustained tone: after the string has been plucked, the glissing tone is still giving the listener information as the
pitch changes, engaging the attention throughout the decay time.” ¹¹⁶ In addition to emulating a sustained tone, the glissando has been used to reflect the soul jazz style (as seen in bars 193 and 196 in figure 37), since it can be effectively used to imitate the “speech inflections of African-American preachers in the sanctified churches.” ¹¹⁷ Even though guitarists other than Hunter even commonly use most of these techniques, he relied on the techniques to create contrasting textures, adding interest to his solo.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.
¹¹⁷ Barry, "Soul Jazz."
2.2.3 Extended Techniques

Nonetheless, Hunter's style required the use of more than just the aforementioned techniques. In regards to playing solo contemporary and jazz fingerstyle guitar, Tuck Andress further explained:

"solving arrangement and groove problems usually requires unorthodox techniques that go beyond standard right-hand approaches (including pickstyle and classical methods) and conventional left-hand fingerings. If you work out the music in this article only with orthodox techniques, something will be missing in the way things feel, even though you play all the right notes." 118

One of the ways in which Hunter had to extend his technique was by developing what Andress described as the “independence of duration”. “How long each note of multi-part guitar solo gets held is an element that is typically overlooked. The possibilities range from ultra staccato (short) to ultra legato (long)” he explained. This required extra development of dexterity in regards to Hunter’s application of the left hand, since some fingers are less independent than others, as Sherrod indicated in his thesis. 119 It is for these reasons that the technique is considered extended. Nevertheless, Hunter’s application of the technique allowed him to play more independent parts, which can be observed in how his staccato chordal accompaniment contrasted his longer bass-lines (figure 38).

Figure 38: Examples of staccato chordal accompaniment over long bass notes

Andress, "A Private Lesson with the Amazing Tuck Andress: Radical Fingerstyle Jazz.

Sherrod, "A Guide to the Fingering of Music for the Guitar."
The most obvious extended techniques that Hunter used included those heard in the 6/8 section. Of the two techniques described, the more common is what Chris Wood calls “string slapping.” 120 Woods explained that the technique is executed by using the right hand thumb to slap against the strings, giving a percussive “tick.” It bears some resemblance to the classical guitar technique called “tambora.” 121 Hunter’s application of this technique in the transcription was notated using the symbol shown on the fourth quavers of bars 189 – 192 (figure 39). In the 6/8 section, Hunter used it to emulate a snare drum whenever he didn’t play pitched notes.

![Figure 39: Examples of string slapping and rasguedo: Bars 189 – 196](image)

However, in order to emulate the consistency of a drummer, he had to use another extended technique. This technique can be best compared with a Spanish guitar technique called “rasguedo.” Roshan Samtani defines rasguedo as “a right hand technique that is best described as a style of strumming akin to drumming.” 122 Of the two ways in which Stuart Fox describes that a rasguedo can be performed, the second is closer to Hunter’s technique: “Here the index finger, or sometimes two or three fingers stroke both down and up. When it is done quickly and smoothly,

---
120 Woods, Percussive Acoustic Guitar.
122 Samtani, "Structure and Strategy in Flamenco Guitar Performance."
especially on two or three strings, it is like a moderately fast bowed tremolo.”¹²³

Hunter performs this technique with a fast and powerful attack, producing a sound similar to a snare drum. However, since the technique brings the right hand fingers across the strings, he used it to play pitched-notes at the same time (he may have used his left hand to mute strings when unwanted as well).

Hunter’s use of the rasguedo and string slapping to emulate a snare drum can be generally seen on the second dotted crotchet beats of the bar in the 6/8 section. Additionally, most of Hunter’s bass-lines featuring consistent outlining of the first beat of each bar in the 6/8 section, emulating a bass drum (to an extent). Hunter’s consistent application of this technique in the 6/8 section created a sense of drum accompaniment, enhancing the nature of interplay in the fifth, sixth and seventh choruses.

Chapter 3: Summary

3.1 Left hand fingering principles

Hunter’s approach to fingering involved both conceptual and physiological considerations, which he addressed by following creative and logical principles. This can be observed in how Hunter used the stronger left hand finger combinations to play during the *Recess* solo. Ronald Jerone Sherrod, author of *A Guide To The Fingering Of Music For The Guitar* concluded that: “1) the alternating abilities of finger combinations 1-2, 1-3, and 1-4 are strong; 2) finger combination 2-4 is moderately strong; and 3) finger combinations 2-3 and 3-4 are weak,” \(^{124}\) in relation to playing the guitar. As generally observed on the DVD, Hunter followed these guidelines to an extent, by mainly using his 1\(^{st}\) or 2\(^{nd}\) (index and middle) fingers to fret the bass notes, allowing maximum flexibility within the remaining fingers to play single-note melodies while his focus was on the single-note and chordal melodies.

Similarly, Hunter mostly used his first finger to play chords in the 6/8 section, giving his fingers more freedom to play varied bass-line ideas. Using open strings in the bass-lines allowed even more flexibility, not requiring any left-hand fingers to hold any notes. However, it is likely that a lot of the finger combinations Hunter used would have been weaker because he used all his fingers all the time. Nevertheless, by combining practiced dexterity and following these principles, Hunter made his technique efficient enough to focus more on musical ideas during the solo.

Hunter further simplified his style by balancing complex ideas with simple ones. This is evident in how Hunter used simpler bass-lines while playing complex melodies and chordal ideas in the 3/4 sections, and using simpler accompaniment when playing

\(^{124}\) Sherrod, "A Guide to the Fingering of Music for the Guitar."
more complex bass-lines in the 6/8 section. Simplifying his style in this manner not only allowed simpler fingering concepts, it also made Hunter produce more creativity during his solo.
3.2 Stylistic traits

Throughout his solo in *Recess*, Hunter made use of melodic ideas, rather than technical feats of speed. While he voiced his chordal ideas using complex harmonic structures including quartal harmony, reharmonisation and non-traditional ii-v resolutions, he framed these ideas with top voicings based on simple melodies. Similarly, while Hunter frequently used superimposed arpeggios, large ranges and diminished scales as a basis for his single-note melodies, he framed his ideas with the simple, repetitive rhythmic motifs he used throughout the solo. He also formed ideas based on blues and soul jazz inflections, using them to reference the main theme of the tune. By intertwining complex and simple ideas, Hunter created a solo that built tension and contrast while still being unified and melodic.

However, Hunter’s improvisational strength was most evident in his treatment of the form. This can be seen in how he used chords, single-note melodies and rests to gradually build his solo, for example. Additionally, Hunter’s use of contrasting 3/4 and 6/8 sections, and his transitions between them, provided platforms for different ideas. The 6/8 section also highlighted a change in focus from complex melodies, to a complex emulation of interplay between Hunter’s guitar, bass and percussive ideas. Ultimately, Hunter used these ideas to give his solo a creative structure that keeps its listeners engaged.

Hunter funneled all these ideas through various textures. Firstly, this included Hunter’s hybrid guitar, used with carefully selected effects pedals and bass strings to produce a unique, but clear sound. Despite his unusual equipment, he used conventional articulation techniques like ligado to convincingly replicate the jazz idiom, while using pizzicato to create more percussive textures. However, Hunter’s use of extended techniques, especially the string slapping and rasguedo techniques,
gave Hunter's playing a consistent percussive feel comparable to that of a drummer. Ultimately, Hunter brought all these elements together to produce an engaging solo, as heard in *Recess.*
Chapter 4: Conclusion

Despite being possibly recognised by some as a novelty act because of his style, Hunter has established a musical style that involves more than just providing simultaneous guitar and bass parts. The core of this style was found in how the interdependency of the guitar and bass parts were explored, within a tasteful framework. This could be seen in how he framed complex harmonic ideas within simpler melodic and rhythmic ideas. More importantly however, Hunter did not fail to shape his own musical voice in the process of developing this technique. In a review of Hunter’s latest album, *Let the Bells Ring On*, while noting the importance of knowing how to physically play the guitar, Hunter still said, “if you don’t have the deeper musical message, it’s going to ultimately be pretty meaningless.”

The analysis of his solo on *Recess* described the various ways in which Hunter achieved this. However, there are various aspects that have not been included within the scope of this thesis, including the other solo pieces he performed, and how he employs the technique in an ensemble setting. Additionally, Hunter has changed his style to reflect guitar-based styles more since his release of the *Right Now Live* DVD. Analysing these aspects of Hunter’s playing could offer further areas of research and study.

Hunter’s style resulted from combining guitar influences (including Joe Pass and Tuck Andress) with organ influences like Larry Young. His approach to music relies on a framework of melodicism and simplicity, creating textural nuances that play an important role in adding variety to his style (though subtle). In addition to using

125 Jordan, "Interview".
127 Varian, "Charlie Hunter on Discovering His Rhythm and His New Trio Album, ‘Let the Bells Ring On’".
128 Charlie Hunter Quintet *Right Now Live*. 
creative and logical approaches to his instrument, he drew from his influences to become a pioneer of his own style.

Consequently, Hunter has paved the way towards further creative options for guitarists in solo and ensemble settings. This can be seen in the artists he has influenced, including guitarists Nate Lopez, Thomas Mauerhofer and Torsten Turinsky for example. Though lesser known, these artists use hybrid guitars with a similar technique to that of Hunter's. Hunter also influenced another seemingly unlikely artist: John Mayer. He has given high appraisal to Hunter, calling him and Steve Jordan two of his “favourite musicians of all time.” Mayer can also be heard using an eight string Novax guitar with Steve Jordan in a video on YouTube, which he used as a compositional tool. However, Hunter’s influence on the artist can be best seen in Mayer’s solo guitar performances of *Neon*, an original he performs which has intertwined bass-lines, guitar parts and percussive techniques, as well as an improvisational solo that reflects Hunter’s style. This could be considered a good example of how a guitarist could apply Hunter's technique to the normal six-string guitar.

Despite this, Hunter’s standard within his technique remains largely unmatched (as of writing). Developing the technique would require guitarists to develop unfamiliar techniques, and purchase equipment to follow suit. Nevertheless, the technique would allow more artistic possibilities to those who practice it. After all, when least expected, Hunter took the unique technical foundation set by Tuck Andress and used it to develop his own style. Guitarists can now do the same, using the technical and musical foundation Hunter has laid to explore new ways of playing the guitar.

129 “Nate Lopez 7&8 String Guitarist | Studio Albums, Video & More!!!,” http://natelopez.com/
132 johnmayerVEVO, John Mayer - John Mayer "in Repair." One Song, One Day.
133 John Mayer, *Stitched up - Slight Return*.
134 John; Cook Mayer, Clay, *Neon, Where the Light Is* (Columbia, 2008), CD.
Bibliography


Andress, Tuck. "A Private Lesson with the Amazing Tuck Andress: Radical Fingerstyle Jazz." Guitar Player.


———. "Soul Jazz." Grove Music Online.


Cobain, Kurt; Vig, Butch. Come as You Are, Nevermind. California: DGC, 1992. CD.

D'Angelo; Hunter, Charlie; Archer, Luther. The Root, Voodoo. EMI, 2000. CD.


*Kuitar Technique / Charlie Hunter Clinic*. 2011. [http://youtu.be/-0sNTnpnwEg](http://youtu.be/-0sNTnpnwEg).

"Hemiola or Hemiolia." *The Oxford Dictionary of Music*.


"Interview: Charlie Hunter on Public Domain."


JohnmayerVEVO. *John Mayer - John Mayer "in Repair: One Song, One Day*. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= eWrQzNJqC8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= eWrQzNJqC8).


Ph.D., University of California, Los Angeles, 2009.


Mayer, John. Stitched up - Slight Return.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=08qni_VAUmE.


"Roman Numeral Analysis." 2010.


CD.


* This C note is the result of pulling the string with left hand – not ligado.