

Tchavolo Schmitt Licks from “Alors? ... Voila!”

Martijn Schutten, april 27th 2006

A great master to learn gypsy soloing and build your gypsy jazz vocabulary is Tchavolo Schmitt. He has a great sound and characteristic licks from which we can learn a lot. We will look at the songs from the album “Alors ? ... Voilà !”. If you do not have this CD yet, buy it so you know how all the licks sound and to hear the musical context (and it’s just a very nice CD).

Every lick in a song contains measure numbers, taken from my transcriptions (in Powertab and Guitar Pro format), so you can reference the licks for any purpose that might be useful. I included most of the solo material that Tchavolo plays on the songs, so you can also figure out the musical context in which the licks are played. So (almost) all measures can be connected to play a (almost) complete solo.

Harmonic material

The main tricks used by Tchavolo his solo’s are:

- Licks in minor
- Arpeggio’s in dominant major, major, minor and diminished
- Harmonic minor scale
- Chromatic passing tones

Tchavolo very often thinks of major or dominant major chords like minor chords, using chord substitution principles, e.g. plays a C minor lick over a Eb major chord, or a Gm lick over C7. He usually uses the same forms for playing his licks.

He uses a limited amount of licks, which he modifies slightly to the circumstances, e.g. the starting or the end note might be different, it might start at a different part of a measure or a triplet is added (using hammer on and pull off technique). You can find many of these variations in the licks here.

Tips to play like Tchavolo

- Play every note very clearly using gypsy picking. Make sure you play all notes equally loud (without strength). Image your pick lick a small hammer which you are holding extremely relaxed.
- Use a metronome to obtain perfect timing. Timing is always important but especially when playing Tchavolo-style.
- Play in a staccato-way: after playing a note, immediately release your finger from the fretboard. When doing this, you can hear all different notes in a lick very distinctively which is characteristic for Tchavolo’s style.
- To get the “aggressive type-writer” sound, play close to your bridge.
- Better play a couple of licks extremely well than a lot of licks with lousy technique/timing.

Remember to keep your right-hand arm and wrist relaxed (just like when playing rhythm)! Playing as loud as Tchavolo is a matter of (relaxed) technique, not strength.

Most important guideline: do not just learn the licks, but learn from the licks. So apply them in your solo’s, make up your own variations, understand what you are playing, play them on different chords and different keys, use harmonic substitution principles so e.g. you can play a Bm or an Fm lick over E7, or a Em or Bbm lick over A7.

For comments and questions mail me at martijn.schutten@planet.nl

L'indien

The next lick is very often used by Tchavolo, this time played on E7, starting with a chromatic line. This lick can be used on a 7th chord or a minor (7th or 6th) chord, in this case e.g. over a Bm7. The rule for this is you can usually play a 7th chord that is a fourth away from the minor, or a minor a fifth from its 7th chord.

1 E7 Eb

TAB: 10-9-8-7 | 10-7 | 7 | 9-8 | 7

Fingering: (3)(2)(1)(1)(3)(1)(1)(3)(2) (1)(2)(2)

When we check the chord forms from which this lick is constructed, we see the following structure:

Bm7:

You can see from the Bm7 structure that the lick mostly resembles this form. Note that over a 7th you can always play a 2nd and thus a 9th chord, which means in this case you can play a F#, which is also in the Bm7 chord.

The next lick is played over Eb. It is using a minor shape, similar to the previous lick. Thus, here we see that we can use the same minor lick for its similar major chord. In this case, we use a C minor chord for a Eb chord. So a minor lick can be used over a major a chord that is a minor 3rd away.

1 Eb D7

TAB: 12-10-9-10-12 | 8 | 10 | 7-8 | 10-8 | 11-8 | 8 | 10 | 6-7 | 10-9-8-7

Fingering: (3)(1)(1)(3)(1) (3)(1)(1) (1)(2)

Its corresponding shape is the following, starting with "jumping around" the C (10th fret on the 4th string):

Eb

Next, a D7 lick is played, followed by a Gm lick in measure 24. You can usually use the 'bouncing' lick (playing around the D-note) in measure 21 before playing your main lick.

D7

Gm7 C7

We see some familiar tricks: surrounding note figures in measure 21, chromatic run downward in measure 22 and a chromatic approach mixed with an arpeggio starting in measure 23. In measure we see a note above and below a note to land on the D-note.

Next a line in Gm following a familiar Gm chord shape in the 3rd position (played over a C7)

Over Eb, start with a partial Eb arpeggio, next a Cm lick, ending in a F, which is part of a Eb9 chord. Note that in the start of measure 36, we see a small rest. In any situation in which you do not know what to play, are 'lost', or simply need a small rest, better play nothing than play wrong notes. Pick up your solo after your 'rest' when you are sure you can play correct notes again (especially timing is crucial).

Eb

34 36 37

6 9 10 8 | 8 11 7 10 8 11 8 | 8 10 8 10 9 8 7 10

① ② ③ ① | ① ③ ① ③ ① ③ ① | ③ ② ① ① ④

Starting with a D7 lick over the D7 chord, and next a Gm lick over the Gm chord

D7

38 39

7 8 7 6 7 8 7 6 7

① ② ① ① ① ② ① ① ②

Gm7

39 40

7 5 8 7 6 8 6 8 7 | 10 8 10 8 10 8

② ① ② ① ① ② ① ② ① | ④ ① ③ ① ① ③ ①

It is constructed from the next chord shapes

D7

A C

F# C D A

Gm9 (F is the 7th, A the 2nd of the Gm chord)

A AH

F F# G D A AH

G D A AH

Next line over Cm7 and F7:

we can see the following shapes are used
Cm

F13

Over a Bb chord a Bb arpeggio with chromatic surrounding notes:

from the shape

Cm lick over Eb

Of course you can just play an arpeggio when going to a certain note, here from D7

D7

① ② ① ③ ③ ③ ①

to Gm, with a repeated extension note of a 7th chord, such as in this example over C7 (the repeated note is a b9th of a C7):

Gm7 C7

Haïde Tchavolo

On Bbm6, a lick starting with a (harmonic) minor scale and a 6th (the E-note is a chromatic ornament for going to the 5th (F note))

Bbm6

T
A
B

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

(2) (3) (1) (1) (3) (1) (3) (1) (1) (1) (3)

thus it uses the following form

also over Bbm6, using the same form, but now with a 7th

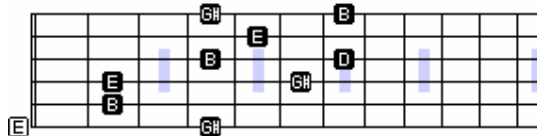
8-6 5-6 9-6 6-8-6 8-7-6-5

next (still in Bbm6), we get a chromatic line going up and down, with always the same interval, so it's not had to play. Note that in order to make it swing, your timing is crucial. Note that after the notes played on the third string, you can add ghost notes (leave them out if the tempo is too high to play them).

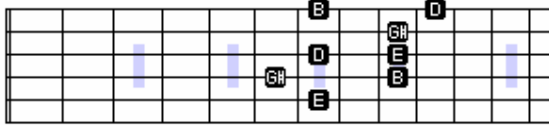
8-6-7-5-6 6-7-7-8-6-7-5

Before the song goes to an Am, an E7 chord (its dominant 7th) is used to indicate this transition (V-i), using an arpeggio form and chromatic passing tones. Below are some variations of licks you can use when a V-i chord progression is played.

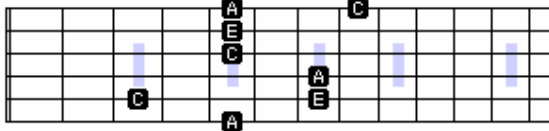
E7



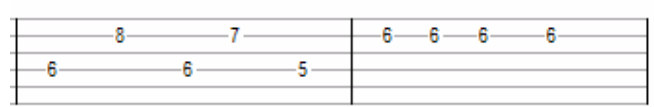
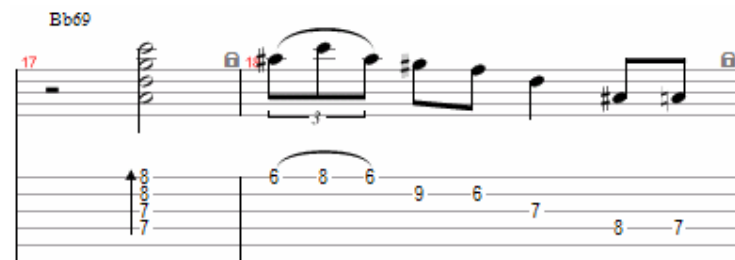
Followed by another E7 shape



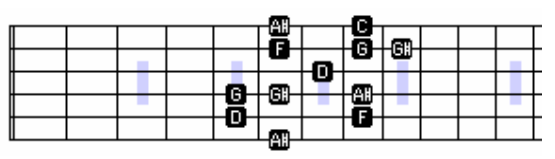
and the Am shape



In Bb a lick is played using a dominant 7th arpeggio



it is constructed from the following Bb13 shape



when the Bb chord is replaced by a Bb7, Tchavolo plays a famous django lick (with no swing)

Bb7

The next line are actually notes from the E7 resolving to an Am

Am6 E7 Am6

it uses the following shapes:

Am

E7

Two licks on Am, with a surrounding note figure, first with a major 6th(F#-note), then a minor 6th (F-note):

Am6

and a repeating lick in the same shape:

31

32

5-7-5 7-4 5-7-5 7-4

You can see the the familiar minor 6 shape here

A
E
C
G

F#

A
E
C

G

Alors? Voila!

When starting his solo, he plays the next line in G

G

in fact he plays a dominant 7 (the F note) a number of times, which should actually not be played since we do not play a G7, but it is resolved later. Jazz players often use dissonant notes which are resolved later to the “correct” note (in this case, an E note, a 6th of G).

Next, some chromatic and chord tones are used, and a bend from F to F# to get the major 7th in our G chord. Note that G/B and Bbo are just to indicate the Am chord is coming next, we can still play things in G major. Am7 and D7 can substitute each other, so any lick from Am7 can be played over D7 or vice versa.

G/B Bbo

The following line shows a diminished chord shape which looks very much like an Am6 shape (and which like all dim shapes, can be moved any number of times 3 half steps above or below the shape). Next, over the Em, a B7 arpeggio is played and only after that, notes from Em are played.

Am7 B7

Em

11 12

7 6 9 9 8 7-10 8-10-8 7-8 7-9-14 14

② ① ③ ③ ③ ① ③ ① ① ② ① ③

The following lick is a chromatic run using octaves that is very often used by Tchavolo.

B F#7

13 14

14-13 13-12 12-11 11-10 10-9

9-11 10 9 8 7 6

B D7

15 16

9-8 8-7 7-6 6-5 5-4 4-5

5 4 3 2 1

From arpeggio notes over G to C, using repeating triplets to go to chord tones, in this case a 6th (A-note).

G

17 18

4 3-5-3 4 5

2-3 2-5 5 4

C

19 20

4 3-5-3 2-4 3-5-3 2-2

Next a line over Cm7, a combination of chromatic notes and arpeggio notes of Cm6/9, (the same notes are in a F9 chord). The F7 is a substitution of Cm7 the lick can be played on both chords.

Cm7 F7

① ② ③ ③ ① ② ③ ② ① ① ② ① ③ ①

When encountering many chords, you can always simplify them by leaving out chords by recognizing substitution chords. E.g. in the chord progression Bm7, E7, Am7, D7, we can also just play E7 and Am7, so we can just play a lick over Am.

Bm7 E7 Am7 D7 G

A G arpeggio over G

G

A run using diminished chord shapes over Eb7

Eb7

② ① ③ ① ② ③ ① ②

The next example shows too many chords to play something differently over each chord. The main point to keep in mind is we are moving from G to D7 to G, so our solo should be constructed this way (here using chromatic notes).

G Em C D7 G

Over G we play the now familiar Em7 shape. Look at measure 35 and 36 for an example of simplicity: any simple notes sound well if the timing is ok.

G

G G/B Bbo

Playing around the C note for Am7 (or its substitution chord D7)

Am7 D7

Am7

Use notes from B7, chromatic passing notes and the familiar triplets

B7 Em

The next lick runs chromatically downwards, using intervals of fifths. It uses the familiar minor shape (this time Em in 12th position). You can add ghost notes if the temp allows you to.

F#7

B F#7

B D7

A G major arpeggio using triples a half note below.

G C

49 50 51

3-2-3 2-1-2 5-4-5 5-4-5 4-3-4 3-2-3 5

An Am69 line over C major

C

51 52

5 4-5 7-5 8 5 5 5 7-6-5-4

Chromatical run using the maj 69 shape (from Gmaj69 containing the notes G,B,D,E,A, the first shape contains B,E,A,D, the last shape consists of the notes E,A,D,G).

Bm7 G

55 56 57

-X	X	X	10	X	11	0	10	0	10	11	12	13	14	15
-X	X	X	10	X	11	0	10	0	10	11	12	13	14	15
-X	X	X	9	X	10	0	0	0	0	10	11	12	13	14
-X	X	9	X	10	0	0	0	0	0	10	11	12	13	14

It had to be you

G to E7: use octave intervals with chromatics as passing tones

G

1

2

T
A
B

6-7

10-10-9-10

E7

3

4

7

4-5-6-7-6-7-8-6

A7: First an Em arpeggio, next a line with chromatic notes around the first note from which we want to start the diminished run (we see the A7 as a A7b9 = Bbdim = Gdim = Edim = C#dim). In measure 7, keep in mind that our target note is a C# (so we 'play around' this note).

A7

5

6

7

9-7-10-9

① ③ ① ② ①

7

8

12-11-10-6-7-8-9-7-10-8

11-12-11-10-12-10-8

③ ② ① ① ② ③ ③ ① ③ ① ② ① ③ ①

In measure 8, the notes from an A7+5 are played, in the following form

More A7 lines. Play the First triplet with fingers 1 and 2 and the notes in measure 13 with your first finger.

Em7

A7

D7

① ② ③ ③

Notes from Gmaj9

G

The First F7 is an enrichment of E7 (e.g. in minor swing, you can add a F7 before playing the E7) so you can play the things you would normally play over E7:

F7

E7

A7: using arpeggio notes, a A7 arpeggio in measure 22 to get the 7b9 sound and chromatic passing notes.

A7

21 22

5 X 6 7 6 5 4

③ ② ① ①

23 24

3 4 7 5 6 7 6 5 7 X 6 X 5 5 4

① ② ③

C

25

5 5 5 5