

INTERMEDIATE

HOW TO PLAY LIKE...

ALLAN HOLDSWORTH

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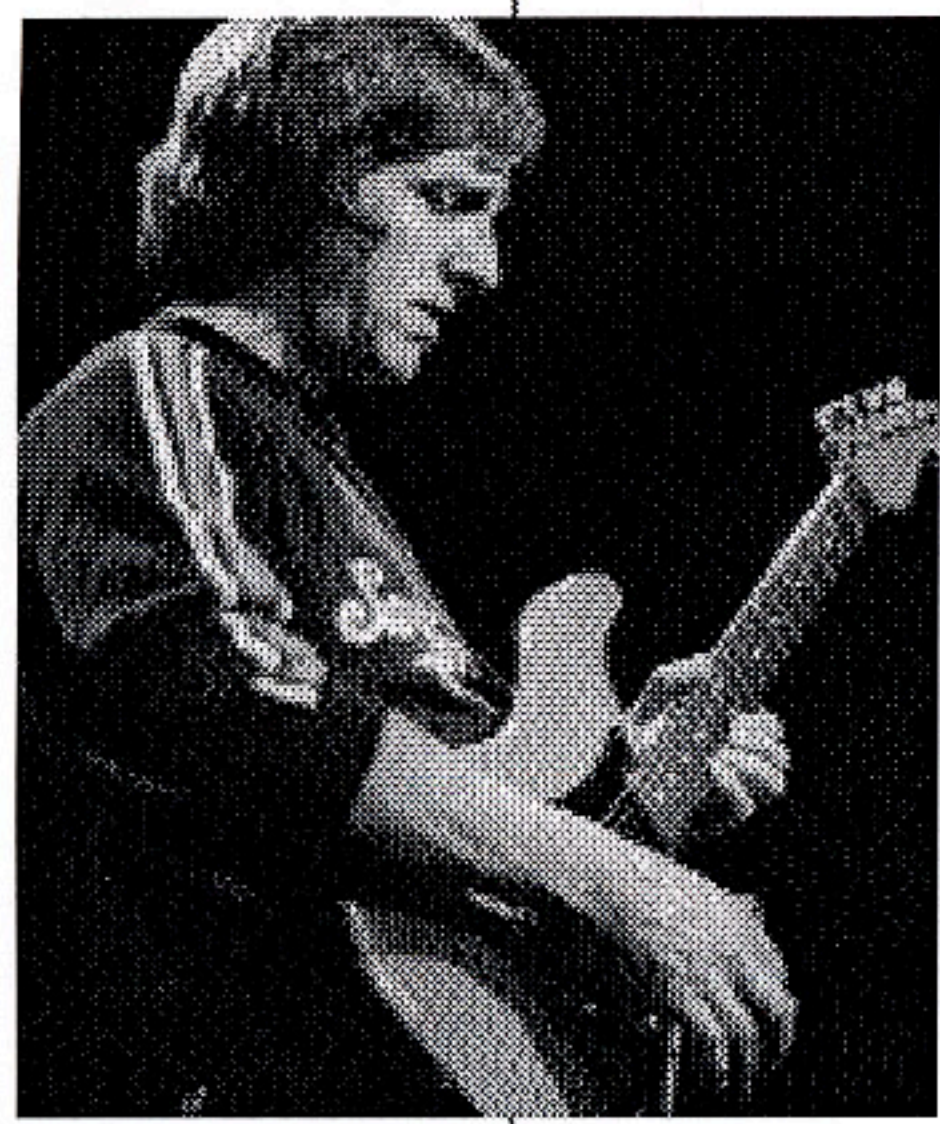
If you've ever taken a solo in public, you've probably experienced the simultaneous joy and terror associated with the art form we call melodic improvisation. Luckily, the more you perform, the more that fear tends to give way to joy. Also, the more you play, the more you'll come across playing techniques that suit your style and your sound.

One guitarist who's comfortable with a wide range of electric guitar techniques is Allan Holdsworth, undeniably one of the greatest improvisers the guitar has ever known. And if there's one playing approach he absolutely *owns*, it's legato technique. With low action, light-gauge strings, and an abundant use of slurs (i.e. hammer-ons, pull-offs, and slides), he proves that guitar riffs can sound as slippery-smooth as liquid mercury. Nobody plays legato lines with the power and grace of Holdsworth, and his profound influence on Eddie Van Halen, Joe Satriani, Shawn Lane, Jimmy Herring, and other guitar greats is testament to that fact.

A staple of Holdsworth's sound is the way he accelerates from graceful whole-note lines to complex flurries of pitches with utmost precision. These blistering

legato runs often take flight in the last half of a phrase, exploding into the next big downbeat, as suggested by Ex. 1. This intricate and searing line employs only two pick attacks. The rest of the notes are generated with precise hammers and pulls, and one slide. Try this over your next D minor groove and you'll see how good legato technique can launch solos into the stratosphere.

One flashy tactic Holdsworth often employs is the practice of playing the same note on two different strings, as is demonstrated by the whole-tone lick in Ex. 2. Notice that G# appears both at the 13th fret of the third string *and* at the 9th fret of the second string. This simple fingering tweak allows G# to sound three times in a row on different strings. For more of this cool approach, check out Ex. 3, which again employs "clone tones" on the second and third strings. Harmonically, though, this phrase is more *inside*, as it's diatonic to the keys of both C major and A minor. Take it from Holdsworth: Whether you're playing slow or fast, "in" or "out," an adventurous fingering can dramatically jolt a melodic phrase into the next level of sonic bliss. 🎸



EX. 1

Fluidly Dm7

EX. 2

Quickly E9

EX. 3

Fast Cmaj7 or Am11