

IN SEARCH OF ALAN HOLDSWORTH

Chasing the Concepts of a Master

By Lindsey Boullt

On a journey not unlike Lewis & Clark mapping out the vast landscape that was North America so many years ago, we dare to carve a theoretical path through the artistic world of Alan Holdsworth. We begin with excitement, hope & inspiration, knowing the road ahead will become treacherous.

Holdsworth often mind-numbingly blisters through a passage, only to stop on a dime, and soar effortlessly, on the wind of melodic grace...

The Dotted Quarter-note (quarter-note triplet)-

Either through static or complex chord changes, the dotted quarter-note rhythm is an effective melodic tool. Executed through the use of scales, arpeggios, etc, it creates contrast for a soloist in any style of music, any tempo.

Example: (2 bar example A.H. "Devil take the Hindemost')

Melodic Theme & Variation-

Holdsworth will state a short musical motif (idea) & begin to develop the motif through the use of :

Prime- the statement of the motif

Inversion- the 'mirror image' (upside-down image)

Retrograde- motif stated backwards

Retrograde Inversion- it's mirror image, stated backwards

Augmentation- state motif in longer note values

Melodic Sequencing- *restatement of idea or motive at a different pitch level*

Once he has created a melodic motif and developed its' theme, Holdsworth often sequences that idea at wide intervals, creating tension of melody and rhythm.

The Flurry Into The Complex- *chromatic runs & targeting*

Holdsworth bridges between the serene & the complex with a combination of rhythmic acceleration & chromatic targeting, often starting the last half of a phrase and exploding into the downbeat of the oncoming changes.

And on he goes.....