



Melody, feel, taste: one bloke's got it all. Douglas Noble delves into some classic vinyl to bring you a Gilmour techniques special inspired by some of his greatest moments

David Gilmour

GUITAR TECHNIQUES

Drafted into Pink Floyd to compensate for an increasingly erratic Syd Barrett, David Gilmour quickly became an integral part of the band. He briefly played alongside Barrett, then replaced him one fateful night when the band decided not to pick up Syd for a gig. As Floyd drummer Nick Mason observed: 'After Syd, Dave was the difference between light and dark. He was into form and shape, and he introduced that into the wilder numbers we'd created. We became far less difficult to enjoy.' Gilmour commented: 'My role was to try to make it a bit more musical, help create a balance between formlessness and structure, disharmony and harmony.'

Much of Gilmour's formative years were spent listening to blues. 'I had a lot of blues records when I was young. Blues is a distinct and large part of my influence, yes, but all sorts of other things are as well. My last album *On An Island* is a blues album - my sort of blues. The blues is really black American folk. I'm a poor white boy from England. Well, not so poor... but at least trying to express myself the best way I can, and that's what the blues is about. I don't want to restrict myself to a 12-bar form or anything like that.'

Besides his arranging skills, songwriting and mastery of tone and guitar effects, Gilmour is also a formidable soloist. In the studio he often

pieces solos together from different takes, as with his epic second solo in *Comfortably Numb* from *The Wall*. 'I just followed my usual procedure, which is to make a chart, putting ticks and crosses on different bars as I listen - two ticks if it's really good, one if it's good, and a cross if it's no-go. Then I follow the chart, whipping one fader up, then another, jumping from phrase to phrase and trying to make a really nice solo all the way through.'

While his playing is rooted in the blues, Gilmour has used a vast array of effects to recreate the wide range of sounds on Pink Floyd albums. When asked, though, he'll insist that 'it all comes from the fingers'.

Ex 1: Pentatonic minor scale

4/4 Time

Ex 1
BPM = 100
NC (Gm)

Clean toned electric

Much of Gilmour's lead work uses the pentatonic minor scale, shown here in the key of G minor - the notes being G, Bb, C, D, F, G. The pentatonic minor

scale and the closely related blues scale (the pentatonic minor plus the flattened fifth degree of the scale) are closely associated with blues

improvising. If Floyd's music uses unusual song structures and time signatures, Gilmour's blues-based leads provide an point of instant access.



Ex 2: Stock blues licks

4/4 Time

Ex 2

BPM = 140

Gm

D5

BPM = 104

Dm

Clean toned Stratocaster
Chords indicate basic tonality of accompaniment

Clean toned Les Paul

BPM = 66

D

B5

A5

PH

PH - Pinch Harmonic

BS - Bend Sharp

Overdriven Stratocaster

Here we look at three stock Gilmour licks using the pentatonic minor scale. The first lick is from *Shine On You Crazy Diamond* at 5:33, using the G pentatonic minor scale from Ex 1 but an octave higher. The second is a slightly longer lick, and is similar to the start of the solo from *Another Brick in*

the Wall Part 2 at 2:08. Again, it's the pentatonic minor scale but in the key of D minor, with the first finger at the 10th fret. Notice how at the end of the phrase the last note is sustained before vibrato is applied - one of Gilmour's trademarks. The phrasing in the final lick looks pretty complicated, but that's

mainly due to the slow tempo of BPM = 66. Similar to the start of the epic second solo in *Comfortably Numb* at 5:00, this time he's using the B pentatonic minor scale with first finger at the seventh fret. Note the first note of a pinched harmonic which creates an ear-catching start to the solo.

Ex 3: Compound bends

4/4 Time

Ex 3

BPM = 104

Dm9

Dm

Clean toned Les Paul
Chords indicate basic tonality of accompaniment

On *Another Brick in the Wall Part 2* Gilmour uses multiple compound bends on the second string at 2:29, and we've written this exercise to illustrate his approach. The initial bend is a regular-sounding bend from the flattened seventh note of the D pentatonic minor scale up to the root note on the second string - but then it all changes. The bend is

then released back to the initial C pitch, then, without re-striking, the string is pushed up two frets to E at the 17th fret where it is sustained for two beats before being pushed up a further fret to F, so the overall bend is from C to F, making a perfect fourth. The bend is finally released back down to C then bent up to the D root note. Besides the

accuracy of all of these bends, the hardest part is sustaining the string throughout all this bending and releasing with only one pluck of the string. Gilmour takes bending a step further on *Marooned* from *The Division Bell*, on which he uses the Digitech Whammy pedal to create bends that would be impossible to create in the normal fashion.

Ex 4: Double stops over minor chords

4/4 Time

Ex 4

BPM = 104

Dm

Clean toned Les Paul
Chord indicates basic tonality of accompaniment

Gilmour frequently uses double stops in his lead work, helping fill out the sound. This exercise is similar to a phrase in *Another Brick in the Wall Part 2*

at 2:20, and uses the common pentatonic minor double stop of the flattened third and fifth degrees of the scale on strings three and two, plus the root

note on the fourth string. Notice the syncopation between the double stop and the root note, giving forward momentum and an almost funky feel.



Ex 5: Double stops over major chords

4/4 Time

Ex 5
BPM = 80
F

Clean toned electric

Em7
BPM = 60
G

Acoustic guitar

David Gilmour also often uses double stops over major chords. The first phrase here is similar to a particular phrase in *Shine On You Crazy Diamond* which can be heard at 9:20, and is played entirely on the top two strings. Sticking solely to the top two

strings gives this lick a consistent tone - bright and crisp, due to the fact that both strings are unwound. The second phrase is in the key of G major, and although it starts over an Em7 chord it's firmly aiming towards that G and B double stop at the start

of the second bar, which coincides with the G chord in the accompaniment. This phrase is full of sliding fourths, and is similar to a phrase played on acoustic guitar in the song *Wish You Were Here* at the 1:07 mark.

Ex 6: Gmin7add6, Emadd9, A7 and A7 (type 2) chords

These voicings are used in *Shine On You Crazy Diamond*, as explored in Ex 7, and *Breathe In The Air* from *Dark Side Of The Moon*, which we'll look at in Ex

8. The formula for Gmin7add6 is root, flattened third, sixth and flattened seventh, and contains a flattened second interval between the open top

string and the second string, sixth fret. Emadd9 also contains a flattened second, this time between the open third string and the fourth string, fourth fret.

Ex 7: Shine On signature arpeggio

4/4 Time

Ex 7
BPM = 46
Gm7add6

Let notes ring

Clean toned Stratocaster with Leslie effect

'I stumbled upon that one by accident'. Gilmour casually says of the famous four-note signature arpeggio from *Shine On You Crazy Diamond*, first

heard at 3:54. We've sketched a version here using the Gm7add6 shape from Ex 6. Make sure the notes are allowed to ring on by leaving the fingers on the

strings. This arpeggio is highly atmospheric, and although it consists of only four notes it forms the basis for much of this song.



State Of The Art: Gilmour's Gear

David Gilmour's mainstay is his Black Strat, the subject of a book by Gilmour's tech Phil Taylor. We told the Black Strat's story in *Guitar & Bass* in March 2008, Vol 19 No 3. Amongst Gilmour's collection is a '54 maple neck Strat, serial number 0001; while not the first Strat made, it still dates from the first year of manufacture and is a very valuable instrument that is rarely used in public. Touring in 2006, Gilmour used his '69 Strat, a 1984 '57 reissue Strat, a Gibson '56 Les Paul goldtop with a Bigsby and a 2006 Fender Custom Shop Strat. He played through two Hiwatt Custom DR103 heads, an Alessandro Redbone

Special and three WEM 4x12" cabs. Gilmour's effects and pedalboards would merit a book themselves: in 2006, he used a Pete Cornish pedalboard with a Boss CE-2 Chorus, a Boss GE-7, a Boss delay, a Roland SDE-3000 delay, a Uni-Vibe, a Dunlop CryBaby, a Demeter Compulator, two Electro-Harmonix Big Muffs, two BK Butler Tube Drivers, a Digitech Whammy, and a T-Rex Replica. For acoustics he played a '58 Gibson Country and Western and a Taylor NS74 nylon string, although his favourite acoustic is thought to be a Martin D-28, purchased in 1968.

Ex 8: Breathe In The Air vamp

4/4 Time

Ex 8

BPM = 126

Emadd9 A7 A7 (type 2)

Let notes ring

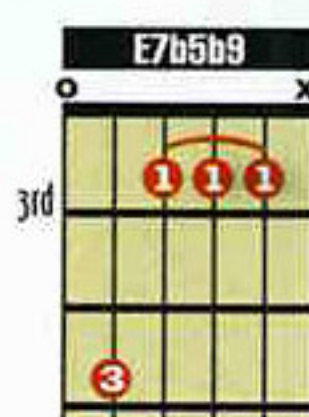
Clean toned Stratocaster

In *Breathe in the Air* Gilmour uses the Emadd9 chord from Ex 6, arpeggiating it in a similar manner to the way shown above to exploit a flattened second or

minor second interval between the third and fourth strings. Gilmour often plays guitar parts that are more straightforward than guitarists think. In this

part, he creates a new sound simply by moving the basic open A7 shape up the fretboard by 12 frets or an octave to create the A7 (type 2) chord.

Ex 9: E, E7b5b9 and Emaj7 chords



Here we have the basic open E chord plus two rather more unusual voicings. The voicing of E7b5b9 in the middle could also be thought of as a

Bb/D chord on the middle four strings - that is, a Bb chord but with D at the bottom - all played over open bottom E (see Ex 10). Finally, far right is a

voicing of Emaj7 which is unusual in that there is a gap of an octave between the top two notes - open B, and B on the top string, seventh fret.

Ex 10: Arpeggios in the key of E

4/4 Time

Ex 10

BPM = 120

E E7b5b9 E Emaj7

Let notes ring

Electric or acoustic guitar

If you were slightly puzzled by the last two chords above, fear not: both E7b5b9 and Emaj7 are used by Gilmour on his solo album *On an Island* in the key of E, and this final exercise illustrates how each chord

can be used in conjunction with the key chord of E. E7b5b9 is used in *Take A Breath*; Emaj7 is used in *The Blue* and is essentially the only chord for the first eight bars, setting the mood and feel of the

song in a similar way to Gm7add6 in *Shine On You Crazy Diamond*, although it has to be said this voicing of Emaj7 does not fail under the fingers quite as nicely.