



## Eleven Things I Learnt from Carl Verheyen

**E**arlier this year I was in Los Angeles and caught up with the amazing guitarist Carl Verheyen (pronounced Ver-high-in) at Village Recorders in Santa Monica, where he was working on and producing an album for Felipe Tarantino. Part of the band Supertramp, Carl is a leading session guitarist in LA and runs his own Carl Verheyen Band.

Apart from having a heavy schedule of studio bookings, stadium and club tours, Carl is still a student of guitar, believes in learning something new every day, plays a wide variety of styles, is a great arranger and producer, and a great guy. With the amount of talent that he possesses there's plenty he can pass on to us more modestly capable guitar players. Here are 11 of the things I learnt from and about Carl Verheyen.

Even amazing technique still requires practice – To maintain his technique and abilities up on guitar Carl plays and practises every day, and says that if he misses a day he doesn't feel good. Some of the parts he has to play within the settings he's exposed to demand some things you don't play every day, like that of a solo acoustic concert. The stuff he practises and finds very fulfilling is the solo and rhythm ideas he makes up and adds to his lick book.

Most of his ideas stem from his Lick Book concept – Carl has many books that hold all the ideas he has collected over the years and goes back to them to get new ideas all the time. How he adds new ideas to his lick book goes like this. Whenever he comes up with something that sounds good to him (and most importantly doesn't sound like anyone else), he'll add it to the book. Licks he knows stem from other guitar players don't get in there, only his original ideas. He writes them down in music notation with the frets and fingering included.

He only practises things he can perform – Carl is not a fan of practising scales, arpeggios, etc., he only likes to practice things that are relevant to him for the studio or performing live. He likes to get practice in whenever he can, but that varies because of his busy schedule.

He's big on good arrangements – Carl is really into the textures and tries not to crowd the mid-range too much. He also uses many different amps for varying effects like using a different guitar and amp for solos, different amps for the many different rhythm parts, etc. That explains why he owns so many guitars, amps, pedals, etc., as studio players need to get any sound the musical director wants pretty instantly. On this day he had around 20 guitars, 10 amps, and various other stringed instruments.

Most guitarists don't know enough about arranging – If you want to be great at arranging you must listen to many of the big records of the day and going well back in time in your listening. You should be able to tell when the different instruments come in, what they are doing during the verse or chorus, etc. You should also be able to tell if a guitar is using a capo, what the tuning they are using is, what strings notes are being played on, by ear. Also, we need to listen to the tones they are using in those songs.

One of Carl's favourite producers and arrangers is Jeff Lynne, the great producer for the Travelling Wilburys, Tom Petty and many others. The TP and the Heartbreakers stuff that Lynne produced is all amazing to check out, and a great study of where the guitar fits in.

You need to learn to read music – If you can read music notation and understand music theory up to high levels you will get a lot more gigs and studio work, and Carl says he wouldn't get half the work he gets if he couldn't read.

"So many guys go, 'No I don't want to read music as it will affect my playing,' or something. That is such a load of crap."

He often has to double parts with the violins, cellos, horns, etc., and you can't do that unless you can read music. Likewise, many of the solos and other parts he has to play are carefully notated. There is NO tab anywhere in the professional guitar world of LA.

He plays in stereo on stage – On stage with his Carl Verheyen Band he gets an amazingly full sound by playing in stereo and having delays, chorusing, etc., divided between the two amps. There are many other things going on as well, which you might want to check out some of the YouTube video clips of his stage set up.

You need to have a good command of rhythms – Learning to read music notation helps you with your rhythm skills. Understanding rhythm and being able to apply it is another thing many guitarists are not very good at.

He transcribes a lot – Although saying he used to transcribe a lot of solos in his formative years, he mainly only transcribes snippets of them today. He also transcribes horn, organ, piano, and string parts to learn on guitar.

He has surprisingly wide taste in music – Carl is a master of most musical styles, plays fingerstyle and pick style, multiple stringed instruments, and can play with amazing ease through chord parts, solos, backups, etc.

And some amazing chord voicings – The chord voicings Carl uses a lot are unique in that he takes a triad and moves the middle note up one octave to create some very different sounds.

(Find my edited full interview with Carl online at [NZMusician.co.nz](http://NZMusician.co.nz))

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