



## You Can Learn A Lot From A Simple Lick

**M**any guitar players tend to overlook simple riffs or licks that come their way, not knowing that there is a lot of musical information that can be used to build technique, repertoire, solo ideas, and rhythm ideas all at once. After all, if you are practising things you can't use when performing, jamming, or entertaining yourself, then it is really a waste of time.

The lesson here is not so much about being able to perform the licks I've written out for you, but in the concepts taking place. Starting something simple like an easy lick and playing it to the best of your present abilities, before moving on to something more difficult, is something we need to get used to. Notice I said, present abilities, more advanced skills come with time and practice.

You don't have to practice these licks presented here, you could instead use any easy licks that you already have yourself. Then expand on them in a similar way.

Taking half of the first scale guitarists learn, the A minor pentatonic seen in Ex 1. If you are not familiar with it then give it a bit of practice.

Ex 2 is a simple lick that uses a few notes from that scale but also has a hammer on, on beat 2 and a pull off on beat 4. Those hammer ons and pull offs are not easy to do for most people – you need to practice being

able to get the second note of each technique to sound the same volume as the first. Many players overlook this part but it does need a lot of practice to get it sounding correctly.

Just keep repeating the lick until you start to get it sounding good. Playing it over a backing track of A7 will help make it sound cool and negate the boredom some of these exercises can bring.

In Ex 3 there is a triplet with hammers and pulls which makes the lick sound different, but is a bit trickier to perform as there is a double movement of a hammer on immediately followed by a pull off. Make sure to take it slowly and get both hammer and pull notes sounding out.

For more experienced players, Ex 4 takes the simple lick a step further. Not only are you expanding on the hammers and pulls but also doing a slide with vibrato to finish off. When you start combining techniques like this the difficulty level can ramp up. If so, just break it down into manageable steps for yourself.

The hammer and pulls are like the last exercise, but now we have a slide up to the last note with a vibrato. Make sure to practice the sliding action first and get that correct before practising the vibrato part. They are two separate techniques and need to be

practised separately.

Ex 5 takes the simple lick concept even further and is an example of a Jimmy Page lick heard in *Whole Lotta Love*. Keep your ears open as Jimmy has used this technique a lot during his career. The hammer pulls have been done earlier but now we have a bend on the D up to an E. Again, practice the sliding to the D separately before bending to the E. Bending strings is difficult if you're not used to it, so practice plenty to get it sounding in tune. There is nothing worse than hearing bends out of tune.

Now the exciting part happens, you need to put these ideas into your playing immediately. Don't wait. Anything new you learn needs to be put into your playing as soon as you can get it sounding great and you can integrate it with other techniques.

So, as you can now see, a simple lick like in Ex 2 can easily expand into something more complicated, and that is why starting by learning simple licks and working on improving them is so valuable.

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