

## "Stardust"

## Les Paul

While Les Paul is best known for his namesake guitar and his invention of overdubbing, he was also an accomplished jazz guitarist. Inspired by the fiery Gypsy guitarist Django Reinhardt, Paul was rather fleet-fingered on the instrument. But he also had a special way with the ballad, as is evident in this transcription of a 1947 radio performance.

### THE FORM

Like so many jazz and pop standards, "Stardust" lays out in a 32-bar form; however, unlike most standards, which tend to have an AABA form, its structure is ABAC, with each section containing eight measures. On the recording, after a four-bar intro (rehearsal letter A) Paul plays through the form once. To begin to understand Paul's solo, it's a good idea to get acquainted with the original melody. If you don't already know it, check out a lead sheet, like the one in *The Real Book—Volume II* (Hal Leonard). In comparing the two, you should see what good jazz improvisation is all about: embellishing the melody.

Jazz is all about a swing feel, too. Like vibrato, swing can be a highly personalized expression. But here are some basic guidelines for playing with a swing feel: In classical music a pair of consecutive eighth notes is played evenly, with a 1:1 ratio between the first and second notes (count: *One-and, two-and*, etc.), but swing is represented as a 2:1 ratio between the first and second notes (count: *One-and-uh, two-and-uh*). In actuality, though, swung eighth notes fall somewhere between a 1:1 and 2:1 ratio, depending on the tempo and mood.

Once you've thought about the form and the rhythm, you'll want to focus on the articulations. Don't be lazy when it comes to working through all of the slides, hammer-ons, and pull-offs, for they're almost as important as the notes themselves. These legato techniques are a big part of what makes the solo sound "jazzy."

### THE SOLO

In addition to absorbing what's in the transcription, it's a good idea to learn some chords for comping through the song—especially if you'd like to play it with another guitarist. **Fig. 1** contains a handful of stylistically appropriate grips. Play the E $\flat$ m7 chord where you see the E $\flat$ m symbol in the transcription and the A $\flat$ 7 $\flat$ 13 where you see A+7/D. Using Fig. 1's chords, you can probably figure out the other grips to play in the transcription. For an A13 chord, for instance, just move the entire A $\flat$ 13 shape up one fret.



FIG. 1

Figure 1 displays five sets of guitar chords and their corresponding fretboard diagrams. Each set includes a chord name, a fretboard diagram showing fingerings, and a tablature representation.

- E $\flat$ m7**: Fretboard diagram shows E $\flat$  on the 2nd fret, G $\flat$  on the 3rd fret, B $\flat$  on the 4th fret, and D $\flat$  on the 5th fret. Tablature: 2 1 3.
- G $\flat$ m6**: Fretboard diagram shows G $\flat$  on the 2nd fret, B $\flat$  on the 3rd fret, D $\flat$  on the 4th fret, and E $\flat$  on the 5th fret. Tablature: 2 1 3 4.
- D $\flat$** : Fretboard diagram shows D $\flat$  on the 4th fret, F $\flat$  on the 5th fret, A $\flat$  on the 6th fret, and B $\flat$  on the 7th fret. Tablature: 1 3 3 3.
- B $\flat$ 7**: Fretboard diagram shows B $\flat$  on the 4th fret, D $\flat$  on the 5th fret, F $\flat$  on the 6th fret, and G $\flat$  on the 7th fret. Tablature: 1 2 3.
- A $\flat$** : Fretboard diagram shows A $\flat$  on the 4th fret, C $\flat$  on the 5th fret, E $\flat$  on the 6th fret, and F $\flat$  on the 7th fret. Tablature: 1 3 4 2.

Below these are two more sets of chords and fretboard diagrams:

- D $\flat$ 7/A $\flat$** : Fretboard diagram shows D $\flat$  on the 4th fret, F $\flat$  on the 5th fret, A $\flat$  on the 6th fret, and B $\flat$  on the 7th fret. Tablature: 2 1 3 1.
- A $\flat$ 7 $\flat$ 13**: Fretboard diagram shows A $\flat$  on the 4th fret, C $\flat$  on the 5th fret, E $\flat$  on the 6th fret, and F $\flat$  on the 7th fret. Tablature: 1 2 3 4.
- E $\flat$ 7**: Fretboard diagram shows E $\flat$  on the 4th fret, G $\flat$  on the 5th fret, B $\flat$  on the 6th fret, and D $\flat$  on the 7th fret. Tablature: 2 1 3.
- A $\flat$ 13**: Fretboard diagram shows A $\flat$  on the 4th fret, C $\flat$  on the 5th fret, E $\flat$  on the 6th fret, and F $\flat$  on the 7th fret. Tablature: 1 2 3 4.
- D $\flat$ maj7**: Fretboard diagram shows D $\flat$  on the 4th fret, F $\flat$  on the 5th fret, A $\flat$  on the 6th fret, and B $\flat$  on the 7th fret. Tablature: 1 3 2 4.

### DIAL TONE

**What He Used:** Before Gibson launched Les Paul's famous namesake model, in 1952, the guitarist played his "Log"—a semi-solidbody with a Gibson neck, Epiphone body, and other cannibalized parts. He also played two similarly modified Epiphones.

**How to Get the Sound:** You can approximate Les Paul's sound on "Stardust" by using the neck pickup of either a Les Paul or a semi-hollowbody model such as an ES-335 (or similar), with the tone rolled back. Be sure to dial in a warm clean setting on your amp, with a fairly flat EQ setting.



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- Read Gibson's tribute to Les Paul at [gibson.com](http://gibson.com)



# Stardust

Words by Mitchell Parish  
Music by Hoagy Carmichael

from *The Jazz Collector Edition - Les Paul Trio*

Transcribed by Jeff Jacobson

**A**

Gtr. 1 (clean) Slowly ♩ = 74 (♩ = ♩)

(Piano & bass)

3

\* G<sup>b</sup> A<sup>b</sup> Am7<sup>b</sup>5

mf

8 9 10

T  
A  
B

\* Chord symbols reflect overall harmony.

**B**

E<sup>b</sup>m

G<sup>b</sup>m6 D<sup>b</sup> B<sup>b</sup>7

E<sup>b</sup>m B<sup>b</sup>7 E<sup>b</sup>m

rake - 4

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## Ab

[illegible]

\* Played as even eighth notes.



Db Bb9 Ebm Bb7 Bb7#5 Ebm

mf

**D** Gbm6 Db Db/Cb

\* Played as even eighth notes.

Bb7 Ebm Ab7

rake - -

A7 G7

rit.

Free time Dbmaj7

Free time