

## Breaking the Speed Limit, Part 2

### "Flight of the Bumblebee," Sections A-B



LAST MONTH, WE USED A FEW GENERIC EXAMPLES to work on speed picking. Now, we'll take on the great classical speed drill—and chromatic nightmare—"Flight of the Bumblebee" (Fig. 1). The best way to learn "Flight" is to break it down into a series of exercises. Take the first bar's first beat, for instance, and play it again and again, raising the tempo gradually with each pass. Use the small, fast pick motion you worked on last month, as well as the top-down approach, to break through any speed barriers. You might also try playing beat 1 in an assortment of positions and on each of the six strings. You could, say, move the 4-3-2-1

fingering back and forth between the 6th (frets 6-9) and 8th (frets 8-11) positions on string 2. As you can see, one beat can become fuel for dozens of exercises. Also, when working on beat 1, vary the dynamics—play hard on some four-note groups and soft on others, perhaps adding some palm muting.

Now, to get your pick and fret hands totally synchronized, let's slow things down. Play beat 1 using all hammer-ons and pull-offs, making sure that the notes sound evenly as you increase your speed. Then, once you're at top speed, start picking each note, which should result in everything sounding with greater clarity.

Next, extend this exercise to include beat 2, and when you're comfortable with that, add beat 3. (There's a string change between beats 3 and 4, so tackle these beats together in a separate drill.) Finally, practice all of bar 1 as a repeating figure, bringing it up to 190 bpm. Do the same with measures 2 through 4, separately, and then string all four bars together.

The theme of "Flight" begins at measure 5. A potential problem spot occurs on beat 2, where you'll have to roll your 1st finger from string 6 to string 5 at the 8th fret, and then stretch to hit the 6th string's 12th-fret E with your 4th finger. When rolling between the two strings, you'll want to make sure that the notes don't bleed together. With this in mind, isolate beat 2 and practice it until you can play it cleanly at 190 bpm. Then work on beats 1 and 2 together, using the above

**Fig. 1** Track 66

**A** Intro  
♩ = 190

12-11-10-9-10-9-8-7-8-7-6-6-8-7-6-8-7-6-7-6-10-9-10-9-0-7-11-10-9-8

Fret-hand fingering: 4 3 2 1 etc. 4 3 2 1 2 1 4 3 4 3 2 1 4 3 2 1

FM

**B** Theme

12-11-10-9-8-12-11-10-9-8-9-10-11-12-11-10-9-8-7-8-9-10-11-7-8-7-11

4 3 2 1 1 4 3 4 3 2 1 1 2 3 4 4 3 2 1 1 4 3 4 3 2 1 1 2 3 4

FM

12-11-10-9-10-9-8-7-8-9-10-11-9-10-11-12-11-10-9-8-12-11-10-9-8-9-10-11-11

4 3 2 1 4 3 2 1 1 2 3 4 4 1 2 3 4 3 2 1 1 4 3 4 3 2 1 1 2 3 4

FM

12-11-10-9-10-9-8-7-8-9-10-11-7-8-7-11-12-11-10-9-10-9-8-7-8-9-10-11-11

4 3 2 1 4 3 2 1 1 2 3 4 1 2 1 4 4 3 2 1 4 3 2 1 1 2 3 4 1 2 1 4

approaches until you can play through all four beats without stopping.

In the sixth measure, a variation appears—beat 4 requires some cross-string picking. Again, isolate this beat, making sure that the adjacent-string notes sound separately

before tackling the whole measure. Once you've got a handle on bar 6, the rest is easy: the last three measures of the B section are basically the same as the first three, only they're played on the next-higher string set and are centered around the note A. ♪



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