

— *Al Di Meola* —

Classics

Solos, Scores
and Missing Music
from 1976 - 1983

by Paul Bissell

- Go Fish Music -

3) The final trademark phrase is a combination of #2 above and a chromatic walking down on the E string. First appearing around the *Elegant Gypsy* time frame, it is even heard on *Kiss My Axe* from 1991.

Elegant Gypsy Suite measure 58

Ritmo de la Noche measure 63

Kiss My Axe measure 115

Rhythmic Trademarks

While much of the melodic shape of his solos are ‘classical’ by design, Di Meola fuses these structures with a variety of latin syncopated rhythms which have a looser feel when played over a steady pulse. In other words, while the tempo and prominent beat stays absolutely solid, the rhythms (melodic and improvisational) which are played on top of this pulse can shift slightly forward and backwards. This effect gives a smoother, sexier, more liquid quality to the music.

Land of the Midnight Sun

from the album Land of the Midnight Sun

Al Di Meola
Trans. Paul Bissell

Measure 44 "Repeat for solos"

1:48

8^{va}

T
A
B

(8)

T
A
B

(8)

T
A
B

Measure 49 "Repeat for solos"

2:20

Fma⁷ *Gma⁷* *Bm⁷*

T
A
B

♩ = ♩ **Half Time Rock Feel**

Gtr.

E. Gtr.

E. Bass

Gtr.

E. Gtr.

E. Bass

♩ = ♩ **Driving Double Time**

Gtr.

E. Gtr.

E. Bass

Gtr.

E. Gtr.

E. Bass

Kiss My Axe

While this composition doesn't fall within the years book-ended by the first 5 albums, the piece is a real looking back for Al with a mixture of 'classic' playing and a completely new sound and skills. While it would have sounded different due to changes in group composition, production techniques, etc, this song would have been quite at home on *Elegant Gypsy*, *Casino* or *Splendido Hotel*.

Once again, there is so much fantastic playing on this cut it is hard to know where to start. The first hint that we have something new happens in measure 21 where Al fires off an amazing (and amazingly cool!) sequence full of hammer-ons from open strings. This technique is not found ANYWHERE in his earlier music and it is a testament to Al's playing that he not only uses the technique, but that he shows such command of it and uses it in such a musical way. Note the open (ringing) strings in the first and second endings.

The break at measure 29 leads us into the middle eastern sounding section at measure 31. This is pure Phrygian mode with no alterations. During the transition back to the opening section (measures 43-44) Anthony Jackson plays a very nice descending bass line that sounds almost out of time until it re-syncs with the unison opening motive.

At measure 51 Al does some variations on the hammer-ons that he played earlier; and what variations he creates! Measure 55 in particular has a classic Di Meola sound even with the new technique by using both the G and G# over the E minor bass.

It is however measure 83 that brings us back. With an amazing opening gesture which spans almost 4 octaves, the guitar soars out of the fading piano solo. The rhythm in 85 and 86 is slightly simplified for ease of reading. The main idea here is that the notes accelerate as they ascend to the high E and *ritard* as they descend to the lower G. In fact, Al's use of rhythm is much 'looser' than any of the material presented in this book (except for maybe the cramming at the climax of *Land of the Midnight Sun*). Even the melodic material stated in measure 13 (and subsequent statements) has a spacious quality that seems to levitate off the beat while remaining 'in time'.

Also unique to this song is the use of the whole tone scales and fragments over certain chords such as in measures 98-99. One will notice throughout this solo and increased use of extended tertian structures (stacked thirds) which was hinted at in the *Sequencer* solo many years ago. Now, however, these shapes fill his melodic choices. Note measures 109 and 119 where the same 5-note sequence can be heard C,E,G,B,D. However new things are, Di Meola's style is still evident. In measure 115 you can see clearly signature phrase #3 being performed and in the final measures of the piece (again over a B minor) you can see patterns and shapes similar to those from the earliest pieces.

21

H H H H H H H H H

TAB: 0 9 0 11 0 9 0 12 0 9 0 7 0 4 0 7 0 7 0 9 11 11 ^{1/2}

Em⁹add⁴

23

1. 2.

TAB: 0 7 0 7 0 3 0 5 0 2 0 5 0 2 0 2 4 0 2 2/4

Bm/A

26

8va

TAB: 20 20 20 18 20 20 17 17 (18) 18 19 20 20 20 18 20 20 17 17 (18) 22 20

Gm⁹add⁴

69

T
A
B

71

T
A
B

74

T
A
B

77

T
A
B