

A Synopsis of Etude #1 by Jimmy Wyble

by David Oakes

This is a short overview of Etude #1 by Jimmy Wyble. This etude appeared in the “*Classic Country*” book back in the early 1970’s and is one of Jimmy’s more obscure etudes. I put the etude on page two and added measure numbers to it so that it will be easy to focus on different parts of the etude. These will be 13 of the most challenging measures of music that you will have ever attempted. Jimmy always wanted his students to learn this etude but that wasn’t the most important part for him. He was more interested in what you could draw from this composition and use in your own playing.

When the book, “*Classic Country*” was first published, a copy was sent to Chet Atkins. Chet sent the book back with a short note saying that it was too hard nobody will learn it. That was almost 40 years ago. It is interesting to note that in the past 40 years guitar players have evolved to where this music is still challenging but not way to hard to learn. The sounds are no longer just dissonant but now interesting as guitarists have continually been searching for new sounds and ways to play and improvise on the instrument. I would go as far as making this statement: “*Classic Country*” was 40 years ahead of its time!

I asked Jimmy what he thought about this etude and his answer was very simple. He said that he wanted this etude to be a study of 10th intervals. Every chord has a 10th interval in it between the root and the 3rd of the chord with an octave in-between. These notes are usually located on the 6th and 3rd strings. From there he wanted to come up with a line inside of that interval. All of the lines should end up in standard “vanilla” jazz guitar chord shape.

Overall, there are some interesting techniques and challenges in Etude #1. The first challenge will be in the right hand fingering. Notice that you will be alternating your thumb and index finger throughout this composition. The second challenge will be in the left hand fingering. No bar chords should be played at all. Every note needs to be held until the finger needs to move to another note. Think of it as playing a piano with the sustain pedal down for each chord shape. This helps to bring out the bar harmony as you are playing. The final challenge will be working this composition up to the quarter note = 144 tempo. I have used this piece quite often in my teaching and I have seen this work humble the best classical guitarist and jazz players in Los Angeles. Please practice this work slowly and try and be as consistent as possible with your fingerings. Good Luck!

First, listen to the first sound file. I have recorded etude in it’s entirety.

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ETUDE ONE

JIMMY WYBLE

$\text{♩} = 144$ SWING

1 *C7(ALT.)* 2 *FMAJ7* 3 *Gm7* *G#DIM7*

m a m a m a
p i p i p i p i p i p i p i p i

4 *Am7(b5)* 5 *D7(b9)* 6 *G7(ALT.)*

m p i p i p i a p i m p i p i p i m p i p i p i

7 *C7(ALT.)* 8 *FMAJ7* *Apm7* *D#13* *Gm7* *C7(#5)* 9 *FMAJ7* *A#13*

m a m a i a a m a m a a a a
p i p i p i p i p i p i p i p i p i p i p i

10 *Gm7* *D#MAJ7* *C7(b9)* 11 *G7(ALT.)* *C7(b9)*

m p i a p i m a m a m a
p i p i p i p i p i p i p i p i p i

13 *FMAJ7*

2 *a*
p

A Synopsis of Etude #1

Measure #1: This measure begins the etude with a beautiful broken augmented chord arpeggio. Jimmy has many different variations on this idea in the “*Classic Country*” book. It is easy to see how he took a basic augmented triad shape and broke it up into two note clusters. This is how many of Jimmy’s lines and contrapuntal ideas are created.

Example 1a: This is a great way to practice this idea by moving it up the fingerboard. This is a technique that I have witnessed Jimmy doing quite often. He is fully capable of moving all of these kinds of shapes all over the fingerboard and using them on the fly in the heat of improvisation. I tend to see this shape from the 2nd string root, (The first note that you play) but you could also see this line from the b5 of that note, (the note on the 6th string creatomng a dom9(#11) sound. This is the same concept that was in the lesson (*Harmonic Comparisons - page 2 example #4*) etc.

1a

m a m
p i p i

Example 1b: Here is an application of this idea. This could used be a chord melody introduction to the tune “*Black Orpheus*”. This idea is a real “head turner” when I play it around other guitar players. They do notice!

1b

m a m
p i p i

m a m
p i p i

A Synopsis of Etude #1

Example 1c - Measures 3 and 4: Here is a great IIm7(b5) – V7 line. Work this idea out on bars 3 and 4 of the tune “Bluesette” or in the last 8 bars of “Stella”. Try making some rhythmic alterations to it by turning some eighth notes into quarter notes so that the line can be played in common time. Try this line with a bossa feel as well.

The recorded example is a rubato improvisation over the changes to the bridge of “Alone Together”. Jimmy’s line hints at the melody and is sequenced down a whole step following the changes to the song. Notice the use of Etude #1 measure 2 over the F major chord and the use of measure 3 over the Em7(b5) change. Be aware of the fact that I am playing this arrangement in 3/4 time and not the standard common time feel. Also, I used some slides and a legato that were not in Jimmy’s original ideas. This entire arrangement is available in this same teaching section above Jimmy’s materials.

Example 1d Measure 5: This is one of my favorite licks of this etude. Jimmy starts with a 10th interval between the low G and the B on the 3rd string. He then runs a Db whole tone scale (which is also a G whole tone scale) right through that interval. I added two extra notes to the scale to make the run last for 4 beats in common time. I put a very standard minor 7th run in front of the phrase and resolved it to a G/C chord or a Cmaj9 chord.

A Synopsis of Etude #1

Example 1e: This solo uses this lick in an improvisation based on the changes to “Black Orpheus”. Notice the way this improvisation hints at the melody to “Black Orpheus”. There are other ideas of Jimmy’s in this improvisation as well.

- If you recognize the idea in measure 4, you were correct. Refer to the packet – 5 ideas from Jimmy Wyble, you will find this idea on page 7 as lick #5.
- The idea in bar 16 is also part of the same packet “5 ideas” page 6 lick #4.
- Notice the idea on the 3rd line 4th measure as measure #2 from etude #1.

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A Synopsis of Etude #1

Example 1f – Measure 7: This is a great idea based on a C7(#9) chord. When you are finished played this idea, you should wind up with a full voiced C7(#9) chord in your left hand. (R – 3 – b7 – #9). Keep your 3rd finger down on the Bb note on the 3rd string for the entire measure. Do not lift that finger up. This exercise moves that idea up in ½ steps.

Example 1g: The chord melody example is also an improvisation that also hints at the melody to the tune “Black Orpheus”. Notice the use of measure 7 over the E7(b9) chord change in 2nd measure of the last line. The E7(b9) change is the bar harmony not an accurate analysis of the line. This idea resolves beautifully with the melody over the E7(b9) change moving through both chord tones as well as the b9 and the #9 resolving to the root of the Aminor chord.

Final thought: I have learned this etude, the techniques in this etude, analyzed the harmonies, and moved shapes around on the fingerboard. I then found places in my own playing to use these ideas. I now count many of these ideas as part of my improvisational vocabulary. I hope that you make a similar effort to turn this short but very powerful etude into part of your playing style. As you can see, every measure has something in it that can be put to use in modern chord melody style guitar playing.