

The full solo on “Send In The Clones” is available online. Keep up with Scott at scottkinseymusic.com and on Facebook @KinestheticMusic

THE ART OF SYNTH SOLOING

Scott Kinsey

A player who lives in the moment

BY JERRY KOVARSKY

I have been a fan of Scott Kinsey for decades now: he is an artist with a unique musical voice who loves group improvisation, and he melds funk, fusion, jazz, world music, and more with ease. His love for the music of Joe Zawinul is obvious (they worked together for many years in the studio), and he has absorbed that influence, (along with another favorite, Ahmad Jamal) taking those elements into his own unique musical space. I was always impressed by his later work with Tribal Tech, where the band would go into the studio and improvise/jam and then build songs out of that material, not unlike Miles Davis’ work of the very late ’60s and ’70s. Their ensemble playing was often telepathic. His solo and more recent group projects all share that exploratory nature, and I recommend them highly. Scott has a unique “voice” on synthesizer, and is a fan of Nord synths (Nord Lead 2), as well as many virtual instruments.

A RAVE UP!

My first example is a burning modern fusion cut called “Rave”, from Scott’s second solo release *Near Life Experience* (2016). On dual Oberheim SEM modules, Scott plays a funky and angular solo, as seen in **Ex. 1**. The solo section is basically a B minor jam, and he makes use of the octave switches on the SEM modules to jump ranges in real-time as he plays. His note choices are more interesting than basic pentatonic scales, and I especially love the phrase that starts at bar 4. Bar 5’s use of the C

natural and G notes seems to imply another chord (C? G major?), and then resolves back. In bar 9 he superimposes a C dominant seventh color over the groove, using the Lydian Dominant mode. Bar 11 seems to morph into playing C major over the B minor, and things get more slippery through bar 12, with more C Lydian Dominant work, but emphasizing an F-sharp minor seventh outline from the scale. Some more wide interval work in bars 13-14 help to bring the solo to a close. Certainly no clichéd “licks” in that workout!

♩ = 138

Bm

Ex. 1. Scott Kinsey's funky solo on "Rave" from his 2016 solo record *Near Life Experience*

♩ = 106

C

Ex. 2. Scott can channel the vibe and attitude of Joe Zawinul's later-era world music, while making it his own. This excerpt is from "Essaouira", from his 2011 Human Element release

♩ = 159

E♭/G

B♭maj7(♯11)

Dm(b6)

G♭maj7(♯11)

F/A

A♭maj7(♯11)

D7(sus4)

D♭maj7(♯11)

G/B

E♭maj7(♯11)

F♯m(b6)

B♭maj7(♯11)

A/C♯

C♭maj7(♯11)

Ex. 3. Scott masterfully navigates complex chord changes in his solo on "Send In The Clones", from Seamus Blake's 2015 release *Superconductor*

CHANNELING HIS INNER ZAWINUL

As I mentioned earlier, Scott and Joe Zawinul were close friends, and Joe respected Scott so much that he asked him to be the one to carry on his musical legacy, which he does with the Zawinul Legacy Band. In every show he plays you'll hear nods to Joe's musical outlook and keyboard timbres/textures. But Scott has long ago absorbed and made these influences his own. He goes others places, and for me, even deeper than Joe did, which I think is as Joe would have wanted.

Ex. 2 comes from the Human Element band project, from their 2011 self-titled release. "Essaouira" draws on the Gnawa style of music from North Africa, and is the type of piece that the Zawinul Syndicate might have done. Scott solos on an open C major groove, using a major pentatonic mode, with a deep swing feel. This type of sing-song melodicism is vintage Zawinul, but Scott quickly takes some interesting turns. The little glitch figure at the end of bar 2 adds some interest, and then his line in bar 5 climbs just a little further chromatically than a usual bluesy lick. The strong F notes in bar 10 are another nod to Joe, but then in bar 14 Scott starts superimposing a D major tonality over the groove, and then from bar 15 to the end of the example he seems to have shifting to E minor, including the notes of the dominant seventh of that key (B7), using both F-sharp and D-sharp. Listen to the whole cut, the tune changes up nicely just after my example.

BLOWING HARD THROUGH CHANGES

Don't assume that all of Scott's music is based on one-chord jams. He pointed me to a solo he took on a Seamus Blake release from 2015 (*Superconductor*) on a track called "Send In The Clones". I was so floored by it that I had to transcribe the whole solo (played using Arturia's Matrix 12V plug-in), which we've posted online at keyboardmag.com. It's a burning jazz tune with a long, complicated, and non-clichéd set of changes to blow on.

Ex. 3 shows only part of his second chorus, as he masterfully navigates the changes with flowing, melodic lines. The descending run in the first bar resolves onto a colorful B-flat for the second chord. He treats that minor-flat sixth chord like a B-flat major seventh, and then plays a wonderful phrase over the G-flat chord resolving into the major seventh of the F major chord. Throughout the solo he makes excellent use of color tones, and rarely touches on the root, or even basic triad tones. At bar 30 he arpeggiates a B minor seventh chord and then a G major seventh, over a Dsus chord — great colors. I'll leave the micro-analysis here, it's a great solo that we all can learn from. ■