

LICK OF THE WEEK

Howlin Wolf (Hubert Sumlin) *Smokestack, Lightnin'*

This week's lick is the classic one that is played all through Howlin Wolf's famous tune, "*Smokestack Lightnin'*". The tune has only 1 chord – E7. No changes to the IV or V chords, just the I chord.

The lick itself, played by Hubert Sumlin on the recording, is taken from the notes of the E pentatonic minor scale, for a very stark blues sound. As I mentioned above, the lick is played over and over, throughout the song, with only slight variations. On the selected audio there are two. One begins on the tonic note (E) and moves up to the minor 3rd of the scale, before the slide from A to B in the 2nd measure. In the second variation, you move down to a D from the tonic E note. The rest of the lick is identical. Played incessantly, the lick has a kind of hypnotic effect.

Smokestack Lightnin' can be found on the Chess album, *Moanin' in the Moonlight* (Chess Records CHD 5908), a double album compilation of the Wolf's first two albums for the label. It is a great addition to any blues collection.

Enjoy.
JG