

“Stolen Moments” Guitar Accompaniment

by [Dennis Winge](#)

I. The Magical Power of Transcribing

A few words on the power of transcribing before we get to the actual transcription. Don't skip this part because it's more important than the transcription itself.

Nowadays, when there is so much information everywhere and you can get detailed transcriptions instantly and often for free, advancing musicians often neglect the process of transcribing music themselves. Ear training is not a glamorous subject, and it requires lots of patience and time. You can't immediately tell how your musicianship has advanced by doing it, unlike learning a riff or a lick that you can show off to your friends or use on a gig.

In addition, the process of transcribing is also messy. It requires you to listen and re-listen, many times over, to hear and write down the passage correctly. Not only is that process slow and sometimes agonizing, but once that process is complete, you now have to find a good fingering to play the passages on your instrument, and of course practice at slower tempos and gradually bring them up to tempo.

No wonder this is a neglected practice! Our instant-gratification society has no interest in all this hard work. If only musicians could know how developing their ears through transcribing could benefit them long-term. If only you who are reading this could know that, by spending time transcribing, your musicianship grows by leaps and bounds.

Not spending any time transcribing would be like a biology student who graduates college never having studied an actual cadaver. He or she passed all the tests by reading about them in books, but never got up-close-and-personal enough to take samples and study them in a microscope. How effective a biologist do you really think they are going to be in the real world?

II. When Fake Books Fail

I personally like fake books. Someone requests a tune you don't know on a gig, so you open up the book and “fake” it. (This is how those books got the name). Then there came “real” books whose name meant to suggest that they were more accurate and valuable.

However, there are times when having just the chords, melody and lyrics cannot be enough. Obviously, larger ensembles need a full arrangement, but even in smaller ensembles, the fake book can be lacking. In certain instances, leaving the spontaneous arrangement to the experience and musicianship of the performers is unrealistic.

The head of “Stolen Moments” is one of those instances. If you (the guitarist) just play chords while someone else (in my case a bass-flautist) plays the melody, it just falls flat. I checked the internet for free stuff, and I also seriously considered buying a big-band arrangement, a piano score, etc. for the song. But I knew that I would still have to spend time adapting those scores to the guitar anyway, and of course I knew that transcribing has other long-term benefits.

III. Making Decisions

The original recording has 4 horns plus piano, bass and drums. If I wanted to map out the whole thing using 4-note chords, it would have likely resulted in some very difficult voicings that would either take way to long to perfect, or I might have had to simply compromise by leaving out some of the more out-of-the-way notes. I chose two-notes at a time because

- a) I could much more easily get them up to tempo
- b) I could go for the 'juicier' notes
- c) the resulting sound, combined with the melody, would still technically be a "chord" (which is 3 or more notes)

The middle step, picking out the notes that really stuck out to my ear, was the fun part. In any given passage, which notes really define the character of the piece as well as facilitate the movement through the piece.

An example of this is the e and b notes halfway through bar 4. The e note is not unusual because in a minor blues, you can often make the I chord a dominant in bar 4 to set up forward motion to the IV chord (i.e. in a C minor blues, which essentially this tune is, you can play | C7 | or | Gm7b5 C7 | to take you to | Fm | in bar 5. However, the b note in Oliver Nelson's arrangement is a surprise, making the chord Cmaj7, a momentary resting place before much more tension ensues.

IV. Using technology

Transcribing has never been easier because there are so many choices nowadays to use software that can slow down the music while still keeping the same pitches, for example. Or you can just select a second of the music and "loop" it so you can really get it in your ear. And this is just scratching the surface. But let's close our discussion by saying that more seasoned musicians will use technology to make certain work easier, but not to find a way to get out of the doing the work. Work whose returns may be slow to yield, but that is virtually guaranteed to always pay big dividends, is the work of transcribing.

Below is the arrangement, and you can also hear a [performance of it here](#).

Stolen Moments

Oliver Nelson

Clean Guitar

Standard tuning

♩ = 112

(♩ = ♩³)

Cm9 Cadd11 Cm9 Cadd11

1 2 3 4

Cm

5 6 7 8

Fm Cm

9 10 11 12

Dm11 Ebm11 Em11 Fm11 Gbm11 Fm11 Em11 Ebm11 Dm11

13 14 15 16

Ebm11 Em11 Fm11 Cm G7

el.guit.

fl.

T (6) 7 8 (8) 9 8 10 8 12 10 8 7 (7)
 A (5) 6 7 (7) 8 8 10 8 12 10 8 7 (7)
 B (5) 6 7 (7) 8 8 10 8 12 10 8 7 (7)