

Chris Wood



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Chris Wood

Chris Wood's solo on Traffic's "Freedom Rider" features some first-rate blues and jazz flute.

Chris Wood was born Christopher Gordon Blandford Wood on June 24, 1944 in Quinton, a suburb of Birmingham, England. From early childhood, he had an interest in music

and painting and at age 15 taught himself how to play the saxophone. He bought a flute and started to teach himself after he was inspired by the flute playing in the movie *Jazz on a Summer's Day* in 1960. He attended the Stourbridge College of Art, called the Birmingham School of Art at that time, and was awarded a grant to attend the Royal Academy of Art,

beginning in December 1965. He soon became a busy player in several bands, including Perfect, Sounds of Blue, and – during 1965–66 – Locomotive.

Wood's younger sister was the clothes designer for the Spencer Davis Group. It was via this connection that Wood was first introduced to band member Steve Winwood. Along with Winwood, Jim Capaldi, and Dave Mason, Chris founded the band Traffic. They were first signed with Island Records. Their earliest single "Paper Sun" was released in the summer of 1967, reaching No. 5 on the U.K. charts. By the end of the year, Traffic's first album, *Mr. Fantasy*, was released.

For the most part, Wood played flute and saxophone, but occasionally performed keyboards, bass, and vocals. His most notable contribution was as co-writer, with Steve Winwood and Jim Capaldi, on "Dear Mr. Fantasy." He also played on Jimi Hendrix's *Electric Ladyland* album in 1968 and the album *The Autumn Stone* (1969) by Small Faces.

In 1970, Wood introduced the 17th-century traditional song "John Barleycorn" to the band. It became the title song of their 1970 album *John Barleycorn Must Die*. It peaked at No. 5 on the *Billboard* 200 and has been certified a gold record by the RIAA. The single "Empty Pages" spent eight weeks on the *Billboard* Hot 100, peaking at No. 74. After enlisting top session players to the line-up, Traffic toured both the U.K. and the U.S., where a live recording of their version of "Gimme Some Loving" – originally recorded by Steve Winwood's old band, the Spencer Davis Group – made the charts. Further

“I think a lot of people came into rock ’n’ roll to try to change the world. I came into rock ’n’ roll to make music.”

—Steve Winwood



Traffic albums were released in the early 1970s and were big sellers: *The Low Spark of High Heeled Boys* and *Shoot Out at the Fantasy Factory*. By 1974, the band members had begun to pursue solo careers, so over time the group broke up. They reunited in 1994.

Chris Wood remained with Traffic from the time of its 1970 reformation until its 1974 breakup. While Winwood temporarily joined supergroup Blind Faith in 1969, Wood, Mason, and Capaldi teamed up with Mick Weaver – otherwise known as Wynder K. Frog – to become

Mason, Capaldi, Wood, and Frog. He then went on to tour the United States with Dr. John, where he met his wife-to-be, singer Jeanette Jacobs (formerly of the 1960s girl group, the Cake).

Throughout the '70s, Chris was in demand as a session musician. His immediately identifiable flute or saxophone playing cropped up on albums by Rebob Kwaku Baah, Tyrone Downie, Fat Mattress, Gordon Jackson, Crawler, the Sky, Bobby Whitlock, and others.

Woods died of pneumonia on July 12, 1983 in Birmingham, England. He was working on a solo album at the time that was to be titled *Vulcan*. (It was released by his family in 2008.) After Wood's death, Traffic recorded one more studio album, *Far from Home* (1994). The album is dedicated to him, and the central figure on its front cover is a stick figure of a man playing flute.

The four original members of Traffic were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2004.

How to Play It

This is a great bluesy solo that allows you to show off your technical skills. There is another opportunity to flutter tongue in measure 7, though this time it is in the middle register, which makes it a little easier. Keep the air going, as usual. In measure 15 of the original, a second flute was added to the track for a call-and-response effect (not included here).

In measures 21–22, Woods uses fast-note flurries that don't really have pitch notation, but rhythm. Just play the rhythms shown and articulate a bunch of high notes as fast as possible. Listen to the recording for ideas. It's almost impossible to notate. Also, take notice of the useful blues lick in measure 24.

Vital Stats

Flute player: Chris Wood

Song: "Freedom Rider"

Album: *John Barleycorn Must Die*

Age at time of recording: 26

Freedom Rider



2:20

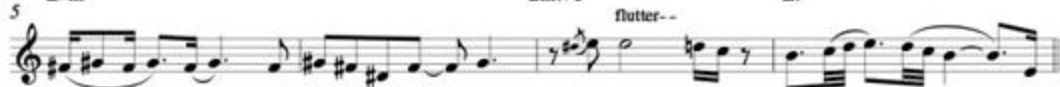
Rock (♩ = 116)

Am



Am9

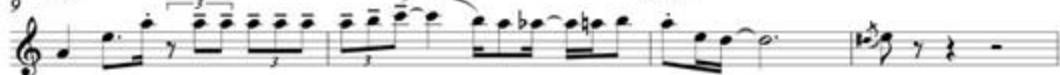
5 Ebm



Bm7b5

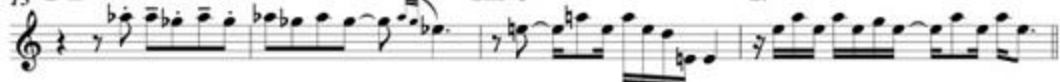
E7

9 Am



Am9

13 Ebm



Bm7b5

E7

17 Am



Am9

20 Ebm



Ebm

Bm7b5

24 E7



Am

27 Am9



Ebm

30 Bm7b5



E7

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Unknown

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Everyone
Collin Tilton

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Unknown

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