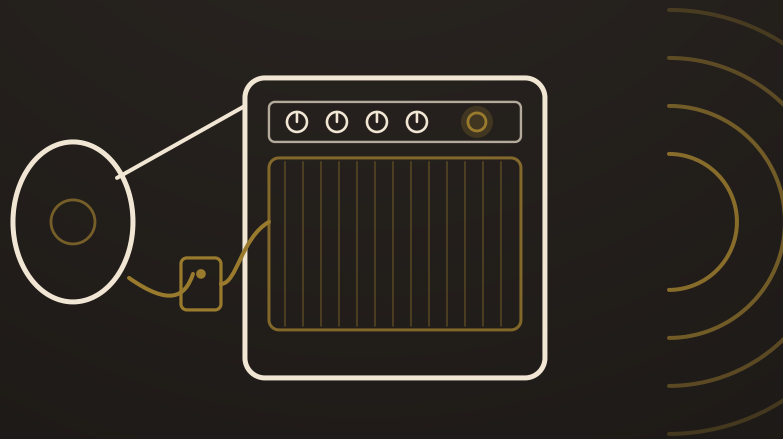


THE SIGNAL CHAIN · COMPANION

# THE TONE WORKBOOK

*Fifty Iconic Tones — How to Hear Them, Dial Them In, and  
Play Them*



JASON COLAPIETRO

JOHNNY SUEDE PRESS

THE SIGNAL CHAIN · COMPANION

# THE TONE WORKBOOK

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*Fifty Iconic Tones — How to Hear Them, Dial Them In, and Play Them*

by **JASON COLAPIETRO**

*You do not learn a tone by buying it. You learn it by chasing the sound in your own hands.*



FIFTY LESSONS · WITH TABLATURE

JOHNNY SUEDE PRESS

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PART A

# Foundations & Tweed



# “Solo Flight” • Charlie Christian

## AT A GLANCE

**Artist:** Charlie Christian (with the Benny Goodman Orchestra)

**Song:** "Solo Flight"

**Album:** Recorded c. 1941 for Columbia; widely collected on later compilations such as *The Genius of the Electric Guitar*

**The tone in one sentence:** Warm, dark, woody and hollow — a smooth, horn-like single-note voice sitting right at the edge of breakup but never crossing it.

**Difficulty:** Intermediate

**Key & tuning:** Standard tuning (E A D G B E); the piece lives mostly in concert **B $\flat$**  / **E $\flat$**  territory — we'll work it in a guitar-friendly key below so the concepts transfer cleanly.

This is the recording where the electric guitar stops being a rhythm instrument and stands up as a soloist. Everything you love about jazz, blues, and rock lead guitar starts in Charlie Christian's right hand and his sense of line. Learn this and you're not learning a style — you're learning the source code.

## | The Rig & Signal Chain

- **Guitar:** A **Gibson ES-150**, a large hollow archtop, fitted with the now-legendary "**Charlie Christian**" pickup — a single bar/blade magnet design (not a typical pole-piece humbucker). That long steel blade under all six strings is the whole personality of this sound: fat, even string-to-string, and rolled off on top.
- **Amp:** A small **Gibson EH-150 amplifier** (the commonly cited companion). Low wattage, a single speaker, no master volume — you got loud and dirty in one move, so players kept it clean by keeping it modest.

- **Strings:** Heavy flatwound-style sets of the era, wound third included. Big strings, low action relative to modern setups, played with a firm flatpick.
- **Mic / capture:** A single ribbon or dynamic mic on the amp into the period's mono chain. No effects. What you hear is guitar, amp, room.

A note on settings: nobody wrote down Charlie's exact knob positions, and the amps barely had knobs to write down. Treat any "settings" you see online as approximate. The honest truth is that the tone is mostly the **blade pickup** plus a **dark hollow body** plus a **small, clean-ish amp** — not a secret dial.

## | The Tone Recipe

You can get roughly 90% of the way there with modern, accessible gear.

### Substitutions:

- **Guitar:** Any hollow or semi-hollow with a neck humbucker. A **Gibson ES-335**, an Epiphone Casino/Sheraton, or an Ibanez Artcore all work. No archtop? A solidbody on the **neck pickup** with tone rolled back gets surprisingly close.
- **Amp:** A low-wattage tube combo (Fender Princeton/Deluxe type, or any 12–15W class-A) or a clean modeler set to a small American combo. You want warmth and a soft ceiling, not scoop.
- **Pick:** Medium-to-heavy flatpick (1.0–1.5 mm).

### Starting points (knobs out of 10):

- Pickup: **neck** position.
- Guitar tone knob: roll down to **4–5**. This is the single most important move — it mimics that blade-pickup darkness.
- Guitar volume: **8**.
- Amp gain/volume: push to **5–6** so the amp is just starting to compress and bloom — sustain with a hair of warmth, no audible fuzz.
- Amp treble **4**, mids **6–7**, bass **5**. Mids carry the horn quality.
- No reverb, or a whisper. No drive pedals.

**Touch:** Pick near the neck, with a relaxed wrist and a slightly buried, downward attack. Charlie's notes have *weight* but no spike. Aim for a thumbed-into-the-string feel even with a pick.

## | What's Going On Musically

Charlie's language is **proto-bebop**: melodic lines built from the notes of the chords (arpeggios), decorated with passing and approach tones, all delivered with a relaxed swing.

**Swing eighths.** Written as straight eighth notes, played long-short — closer to a triplet feel where the first note gets two-thirds of the beat and the second gets one-third. Say "doo-ba, doo-ba." That lilt is non-negotiable; it's 50% of the style.

**Guide tones.** Inside any chord, the two notes that define its quality are the **3rd** and the **7th**. (In a C7 chord that's E and B ♭.) Great jazz lines aim for guide tones on strong beats, because if you nail the 3rd and 7th, the ear hears the chord even with no rhythm section. Charlie is a guide-tone machine.

**The progressions.** Two engines drive this music:

- **ii-V-I** — the gravitational center of jazz. In C: Dm7 → G7 → Cmaj7. The ii sets up tension, the V (a dominant 7th) pulls hard, the I resolves home.
- **I-VI-ii-V** — the "turnaround," a four-chord loop that resets a section. In C: Cmaj7 → A7 → Dm7 → G7. You'll hear this everywhere from "Rhythm changes" to doo-wop.

**Form.** "Solo Flight" is essentially a feature built on blues- and riff-based swing harmony with the guitar carrying melody over the band. For our purposes, internalize the *turnaround* and the *ii-V-I*, because those two cells unlock the whole vocabulary.

**Chord voicings.** We'll touch a **drop-3** voicing later (a way of spreading a four-note chord so the second-highest note drops an octave to the bass), which gives that fat, woody comping sound on the lower strings.

## | Signature Moves

Three short, illustrative fragments — presented as commentary on the style, not a full transcription. Play them in the dark neck-pickup tone described above.

**1. The swung riff melody.** Charlie thinks like a horn section: short, repeatable, blues-soaked motifs that swing hard. Medium swing, ~180 bpm feel.

TAB

Swing 8ths (long-short) - medium swing

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|----3~-----3----3b4r3-----|
D|--3-5-----5--3-5-----5-----5-3---|
A|-----|
E|-----|
  doo ba  doo ba  "talk"
  
```

A riffy, vocal phrase that sits on guide tones and bends into the blue 3rd — pure Christian swagger.

**2. The chromatic approach lick.** The trick that makes lines sound "jazz": approach a target chord tone from a half-step below (or above) on a weak beat, landing on the target on the beat. Medium swing.

TAB

Approach from below - land on the &

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-----4----5-----|
D|--5--4h5--3--2h3-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
  chromatic walk-up into target
  
```

Each pair "leans" chromatically into a strong note. Notice the lift it gives even over a static chord.

**3. The arpeggiated line outlining changes.** Here Charlie spells the harmony with arpeggios so you hear the chords move — a ii-V-I in our key. Medium swing.

TAB

Dm7            |    G7            |    Cmaj7

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|--2-5-----4--3--2-----4~-----|
D|--3-----5-3-5-----5--3-5-----|
A|--5-----5-----3-----|
E|-----|
  D F A C G B F D E (resolve)
  
```

The line never strums a chord, yet you hear Dm7 → G7 → Cmaj7 because it targets the 3rds and 7ths. This is the whole game.

# | The Drills

Original exercises in Charlie's style. Loop slowly with a metronome (start ~90 bpm, swung), then push toward 180.

**Drill A — Swing-eighth phrasing over I-VI-ii-V.** Builds the long-short feel and teaches you to land guide tones on the turnaround. Keep it legato; let each note breathe.

TAB

```
Swing 8ths - I VI ii V (C A7 Dm7 G7), ~100 bpm
e|-----|
B|--5-----5-----6-----8-----|
G|---5--4~---6---5h6---5---7---7b8r7---5---|
D|-----5-----5-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
C: E G   A7: C#   Dm7: F A   G7: B D (resolve)
```

*What it builds: the swing lilt plus guide-tone targeting across four chords. Tone: neck pickup, tone knob at 4, amp just breaking up. If it sounds stiff, exaggerate the long-short.*

**Drill B — Chromatic-approach builder.** Trains your ear and fingers to decorate any target note from a half-step away. Same target (the 5th of C, the note G at fret 8 on the B string), approached four ways.

TAB

```
Swing 8ths - approach the target (G) from all sides, ~95 bpm
e|-----|
B|--7h8---9p8---6-7-8---8b9r8-----|
G|-----9---7-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
below   above   2-step   bend   encircle target
```

*What it builds: chromatic voice-leading and the habit of resolving ON the beat. Tone: same dark neck setting; pick softly so the half-steps glide. Move the whole shape to target the 3rd or 7th of whatever chord you're on.*

**Drill C — Comping a drop-3 dominant 7th.** A drop-3 G7 lives on strings 6-4-3-2 (root on the low E). This drill walks you through gripping it, then adds the swing "chunk" feel that pads a soloist. Let the band breathe — short, muted stabs.

TAB

Swing feel – drop-3 G7 then F7, ~100 bpm (let ring, then mute)

```

e|-----|
B|--6----6--x--6-----5----5--x-----|
G|--4----4--x--4-----3----3--x-----|
D|--3----3--x--3-----2----2--x-----|
A|-----|
E|--3----3--x--3-----1----1--x-----|
    G7 (chunk-mute)   F7 (chunk)
  
```

What it builds: clean four-note grips, Freddie-Green-style time, and the muted "chick" that defines swing rhythm guitar. Tone: roll tone to 5–6 so the voicing stays woody and doesn't clang; pick all four strings together with a relaxed downstroke, then choke the strings with your fretting hand for the x's.

## Make It Yours

The lesson here isn't "play 1941 jazz." It's that **melody beats speed** and **chord tones beat random notes**. Take any solo you already play — blues, rock, country — and try one Christian move: aim your phrase to land on the 3rd or 7th of the chord, approached by a half-step, on the beat, with a swung lilt. Suddenly your pentatonic licks sound intentional and harmonically aware. Roll your neck-pickup tone back and you'll hear how much *space* a dark, smooth voice gives your lines; you stop fighting the high end and start phrasing like a horn. Charlie did more with eight notes and a sense of swing than most players do with sixty-fourth-note runs. Steal the economy, not just the notes.

♪ LISTEN FOR

- The **swing lilt**: every pair of eighths should be long-short, not even. If you can't hear "doo-ba," slow down.
- **Guide tones on strong beats**: can you hum the chord change from the single-note line alone?
- **Chromatic approach notes** resolving cleanly onto the beat, never landing flat or sour.
- The **tone**: warm, hollow, no fizz — that blade-pickup darkness with the amp just *blooming*, not distorting.
- **Relaxation**: Charlie never sounds rushed. Aim for that unhurried, conversational feel even at tempo.

## LESSON 2

# “Johnny B. Goode” • Chuck Berry

---

### AT A GLANCE

**Artist:** Chuck Berry

**Song:** "Johnny B. Goode"

**Album:** Single, 1958 (later collected on *Chuck Berry Is on Top*, 1959)

**The tone in one sentence:** Bright, semi-hollow jangle pushed into the first hair of tweed breakup — clean enough to bite, dirty enough to growl.

**Difficulty:** Intermediate

**Key & tuning:** B  $\flat$  major on the record; standard tuning. Teach and practice in A (open, friendly) or B  $\flat$  (record-accurate, capo 1 or barre).

## | The Rig & Signal Chain

Berry's sound here is almost embarrassingly simple, which is the whole lesson: tone comes from the hands and a hot front end, not a pedalboard.

- **Guitar:** A **Gibson ES-350T** — a thinline, semi-hollow archtop — is the instrument most associated with Berry in this era, run on the **bridge pickup** for maximum cut and twang. (Berry also played other Gibsons across his career; the 350T is the signature late-'50s tool.)
- **Amp:** A **Fender tweed** combo, the kind built around 6V6 or 6L6 power tubes with that loose, touch-sensitive low end. The exact model is debated; what matters is the *behavior* — bright, springy, and breaking up the instant you dig in.
- **Pedals:** None. The grit is the amp clipping, not a distortion box. Any overdrive you hear is the speaker and tubes complaining.
- **Mic (if known):** Studio details from Chess Records in 1958 are not reliably documented at the knob level. Treat any "exact mic placement" claim as lore, not fact.

A note on accuracy: you'll see confident specs online for "Chuck's exact amp settings." Be skeptical. The honest version is *bridge pickup, tone up, amp loud enough to bark*.

## | The Tone Recipe

You can land ~90% of this with gear most players already own.

### Substitutions:

- **Guitar:** Any semi-hollow (Epiphone Dot, Gibson ES-335 style) is ideal. No semi-hollow? A Telecaster bridge pickup nails the twang; a Strat bridge with the tone backed off slightly works too. Single-coils and bright humbuckers both get there.
- **Amp:** A low-wattage tube combo (Fender Blues Junior, Princeton-style, or any tweed-voiced amp) cranked to the edge of breakup. Modeling rigs: pick a "tweed Deluxe" or "5E3" profile.

### Starting points (knobs out of 10):

- **Pickup:** Bridge.
- **Guitar tone:** 8–10 (you want jangle, not mud).
- **Guitar volume:** 8 — leave headroom so you can clean up by rolling back.
- **Amp gain/volume:** Push to 6–7 so the amp is just starting to compress and crunch when you hit hard.
- **Amp treble:** 7. **Bass:** 4. **Mids:** leave centered or high — this tone lives in the mids.
- **Pick attack:** Medium-to-firm with a medium pick. The breakup should respond to *how hard you hit*, so practice dynamics, not a fixed dirt level.
- **Reverb:** A touch (2–3) for room, or none. 1958 was nearly dry.

The target feeling: when you palm the strings lightly and dig in, it should spit a little.

## | What's Going On Musically

"Johnny B. Goode" is a **12-bar blues** in B  $\flat$  major, played at an up-tempo rock-and-roll **shuffle** (a triplet-based swing feel — count "1-and-a 2-and-a," leaning on the first and third of each triplet).

**The form (12-bar blues):** Three four-bar phrases built on three chords — the **I, IV, and V** (the first, fourth, and fifth chords of the key). In A that's A7 (I), D7 (IV), E7 (V). The classic grid:

TAB

```

| I | I | I | I |
| IV | IV | I | I |
| V | IV | I | V |   <- last bar is the turnaround

```

**The scale:** Berry's lead language is **major pentatonic** (the five-note major scale: 1-2-3-5-6) with a sly **flat-3 grace note** — he slides or bends from the minor 3rd into the major 3rd. That  $\flat 3 \rightarrow 3$  move is the entire "blues" flavor in one gesture: it rubs the sad note against the happy note. In A, that's brushing the C ( $\flat 3$ ) up to C# (3).

**Chord voicings:** The rhythm isn't strummed chords — it's the **boogie pattern**, a two-note shape that alternates the **5th and 6th** of each chord over a steady root. On A, you hold the root (open A or 5th-string A) and rock between the 5th (E) and the 6th (F#). That oscillation *implies* the chord and the bassline at once. It's why one guitar sounds like a whole band.

**Why it works:** Major pentatonic over dominant 7th chords gives you brightness; the  $\flat 3$  grace gives you grit; the boogie pattern gives you motion. Three simple ideas stacked into rock's founding vocabulary.

## | Signature Moves

These are short, illustrative fragments — characteristic gestures, not the full transcription. Study them, then build with the original drills below.

1. **The double-stop intro lick (bent double-stops).** Berry's calling card: two notes fretted together, the top voice bent. Up-tempo shuffle, played in A here.

TAB

```

Up-tempo shuffle (~160 bpm feel)
e|--5b6r5---5-----|--3-----|
B|--5-----5---5h7p5---|--5-----|
G|-----|-----|
D|-----|-----|
A|-----|-----|
E|-----|-----|
bent double-stop, then resolve down the B string

```

*Two strings ring together; the bend on the high E gives that vocal, crying push.*

2. **Rolling double-stop solo phrase.** Repeated double-stops that "roll" — the engine of his solos. Keep them even and percussive.

TAB

Driving shuffle, raked with the pick

```

e|--5--5--5--5--|--5--5--5--5--|
B|--5--5--5--7--|--7--5--5--5--|
G|-----|-----|
D|-----|-----|
A|-----|-----|
E|-----|-----|

```

let them ring; accent beats 1 and 3

Lock the two notes as one unit and pulse them — the groove is in the repetition.

3. The boogie two-note (5th-to-6th). The rhythm bed under everything, shown on the A (I) chord.

TAB

Steady shuffle, palm muted (PM)

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-----|
D|--2--4--2--4--2--4-|
A|--0--0--0--0--0--0-| PM throughout
E|-----|

```

5th (E, fret 2) rocks up to 6th (F#, fret 4)

This single pattern, moved to D and E, plays the whole rhythm track.

## The Drills

Original exercises in Berry's style. Practice slowly, then bring them up to a shuffle.

**Drill 1 — Double-Stop Bend Builder.** Trains the bent-double-stop grip and accurate pitch on the top voice. Bend the high E a half-step while the B note holds steady underneath.

TAB

Slow → up-tempo shuffle. Bridge pickup, tone 8, amp at edge of breakup.

```

e|--7b8r7--7--5b6r5--5--|--3b4r3--3--5--3--|
B|--7-----7--5-----5--|--3-----3--5--3--|
G|-----|-----|
D|-----|-----|
A|-----|-----|
E|-----|-----|

```

bend up (b), release (r), let the pair ring

*Builds: controlled half-step bends inside a double-stop. Dig in so the amp barks on the bend's peak.*

**Drill 2 — Boogie 5th–6th Around the 12-Bar.** Trains the rhythm engine across I, IV, and V in A. Palm-mute lightly and keep the wrist relaxed; this is an endurance and timing drill.

TAB

Steady shuffle, PM throughout. Bridge pickup, tone 7, light grit.

I (A):

```
e|-----|-----|
B|-----|-----|
G|-----|-----|
D|--2--4--2--4--2--4--|--2--4--2--4--2--4--|
A|--0--0--0--0--0--0--|--0--0--0--0--0--0--|
E|-----|-----|
```

IV (D):

```
e|-----|
B|-----|
G|--2--4--2--4--2--4--|
D|--0--0--0--0--0--0--|
A|-----|
E|-----|
```

V (E):

```
e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-----|
D|-----|
A|--2--4--2--4--2--4--|
E|--0--0--0--0--0--0--|
```

keep the root steady; only the top finger moves

*Builds: the boogie groove and chord-shape mobility. Lean into the shuffle so it swings, never marches.*

**Drill 3 — Berry-Style Turnaround.** Trains the last two bars of the 12-bar form — the phrase that resets the loop. Combines a descending double-stop idea with the  $\flat 3 \rightarrow 3$  grace and a V-chord kick.

TAB

Shuffle, slight ritard on the last beat. Tone 8, dig in on the final chord.

Bar 11 (I, A) → Bar 12 (V, E):

```
e|--5--5--3--3--|--3b4r3--x-----|
B|--5--5--3--3--|--5-----x-----|
G|--6--6--4--4--|------(4)-----|  <- AH or just let ring
D|-----|-----2-----|
A|-----|-----2-----|
E|-----|-----0-----|
```

descend the double-stops, brush  $\flat 3 \rightarrow 3$ , land on E (V)

*Builds: turnaround vocabulary and the  $\flat 3$  grace note. The descending pairs walk you home; the V chord at the end pulls you back to bar 1.*

## | Make It Yours

The gift of this song is that three ideas — major pentatonic with a  $\flat 3$  grace, the I-IV-V, and the 5th-to-6th boogie — unlock an enormous swath of rock and roll. Once the boogie pattern is in your hands, you can play rhythm for half the bar bands on earth: it's the spine of countless blues, rockabilly, and early-rock tunes. Take the bent double-stops and you've got the seed of Keith Richards, Angus Young, and a thousand solos since. Try moving the whole vocabulary to a new key by sliding the boogie shape up two frets, or swap the shuffle for a straight-eighth feel and you're suddenly in surf and garage territory. The deepest move, though, is dynamic: keep your amp at the edge of breakup and let your *pick hand* decide how dirty each phrase gets. That's the real Chuck Berry secret — the tone is a dial in your right wrist, not a pedal on the floor.

### ♪ LISTEN FOR

- The **shuffle swing** — your double-stops should lilt on the triplet, never sit stiff and even.
- The  **$\flat 3$  grace note** sliding or bending into the major 3rd — that rub is the whole blues flavor.
- **Two strings ringing as one** in the double-stops, with a clean bend on the top voice only.
- The **boogie 5th-to-6th** holding the groove so steadily it sounds like a bassist is in the room.
- **Amp breakup that tracks your attack** — soft passages clean up, hard hits bark, all from your hands.

## LESSON 3

# “Peggy Sue” • Buddy Holly

### AT A GLANCE

**Artist:** Buddy Holly

**Song:** “Peggy Sue”

**Album:** *Buddy Holly* (1957) — the single also predates the LP, released late 1957

**The tone in one sentence:** A bright, glassy clean Strat just starting to sweat at the edges, played so hard and so evenly that the *rhythm itself* becomes the hook.

**Difficulty:** Beginner

**Key & tuning:** A major, standard tuning (E A D G B E)

This is the lesson where you learn that tone isn't only knobs — it's *attack*. Holly's pick hand is the real effect here.

## | The Rig & Signal Chain

Holly was one of the first rock-and-roll stars to be visually and sonically married to the **Fender Stratocaster** — a sunburst maple-neck model, most often associated with him in the 1957–58 period. He typically favored the bridge pickup or a bridge-ish blend: that's where the glassy, cutting, slightly-honky midrange snap comes from.

Into the amp: a **tweed Fender** combo. The exact model on any given session is debated — tweed Bassman, Pro, and Deluxe-style amps all circulate in the lore — so treat any "it was definitely a [model]" claim as contested rather than settled. What matters is the *behavior*: a tweed-era circuit run loud enough to be bright and chimey on light playing, then to compress and gently break up when he digs in. That's the "light breakup" you hear pumping under the verses.

Pedals: essentially none. This is a late-'50s recording — guitar, cable, amp, room. The "effects" are the amp's natural compression and the slap of tape.

On the mic and room side, specifics are sparse and much of it is undocumented, so I won't invent a chain. The takeaway: the recorded guitar is close, dry, and percussive, sitting right up against that famous shuffling drum part.

## | The Tone Recipe

You can get ~90% there with very ordinary modern gear.

### Substitutions:

- *Guitar*: Any Strat or Strat-style single-coil guitar. No Strat? A **Telecaster** bridge pickup gets you a cousin of this tone — brighter and twangier, still correct in spirit.
- *Amp*: A small tube combo (**Fender Blues Junior**, Princeton-style, or any "tweed" voicing) or a clean modeling amp/plugin with a *Tweed Deluxe* or *Tweed Bassman* model.
- *Pedals*: None required. If your amp won't break up on its own, a light overdrive set almost clean (a Klon-style or a **Tube Screamer** with gain near zero) as a touch-sensitive boost will fake the tweed sag.

### Starting points (knobs out of 10):

- Pickup selector: **bridge**, or position 2 (bridge + middle) if the straight bridge is too thin for your room.
- Guitar volume: **10**. Guitar tone: **7–8** (keep the top, just shave the ice-pick).
- Amp: Gain/Volume **6**, enough that hard strums *just* start to grit. Bass **4**, Mids **6–7**, Treble **7**. Reverb **2–3** (a hint of room, not a cathedral).
- Pick: **medium to heavy** (0.73–1.0 mm). A thin pick will rob you of the percussive thwack this song is built on.
- Attack: dig in. Pick from the elbow and wrist together, near the bridge for snap. You should *feel* it.

The single biggest tone control in this lesson is **how hard and how evenly you strum**, not any setting above.

## | What's Going On Musically

“Peggy Sue” lives almost entirely on two chords in **A major**: the **I** chord (A) and the **IV** chord (D). “I” and “IV” are Roman-numeral shorthand for the *first* and *fourth* chords built off the major scale — in A,

that's A major (I) and D major (IV). A bridge section nudges toward the V chord (E) and related neighbors to create lift, but the engine of the song is that I–IV oscillation.

Why does something this simple grip you? Because the *information* in the track isn't harmonic — it's **rhythmic and dynamic**. The harmony stays put so your ear locks onto the relentless pulse and the drums' shuffling, paradiddle-like figure. Holly's guitar reinforces that pulse with constant eighth- or sixteenth-feel downstrokes, and the *song form* (verse / verse / bridge / solo / verse) keeps recycling the same two-chord bed so the groove never lets go.

A note on the **chords themselves**: you can play full open A and D, but Holly's drive comes from keeping voicings tight and consistent so every strum has the same mass. For the constant-strum feel, many players favor a partial A (just the top four strings) and a partial D, so the right hand can machine-gun without tripping over a six-string sweep.

One term to bank: **palm muting (PM)** — resting the edge of your picking-hand palm lightly on the strings at the bridge to choke the ring into a tight "chunk." Holly leans on the contrast between muted chunks and open, ringing strums to breathe dynamics into a static progression. That dynamic contrast is the whole game.

## | Signature Moves

### 1. The driving downstroke pulse

Feel: brisk, ~165–170 BPM shuffle underneath; all downstrokes, dead even.

TAB

```
A (tight, top strings, all down)
e|-----|
B|--2--2--2--2--2--2--2--2-----|
G|--2--2--2--2--2--2--2--2-----|
D|--2--2--2--2--2--2--2--2-----|
A|--0--0--0--0--0--0--0--0-----|
E|-----|
  ▼ ▼ ▼ ▼ ▼ ▼ ▼ ▼
```

*Caption:* Every strum is a downstroke (▼). Same chord, same intensity — the consistency IS the part. Keep the wrist loose and the tempo machine-steady.

## 2. The A–D change

Feel: same pulse, snap the chord change cleanly on the beat — no gap.

TAB

```
      A                      D
e|-----|-----2--2--2--2--2--2--2--2--|
B|--2--2--2--2--2--2--2--2--|-----3--3--3--3--3--3--3--3--|
G|--2--2--2--2--2--2--2--2--|-----2--2--2--2--2--2--2--2--|
D|--2--2--2--2--2--2--2--2--|-----0--0--0--0--0--0--0--0--|
A|--0--0--0--0--0--0--0--0--|-----|
E|-----|-----|
```

*Caption:* The whole tune pivots on this I→IV move. Practice the *transition* itself: the last A downstroke and the first D downstroke should be exactly one pulse apart, no hesitation.

## 3. Palm-mute to open dynamics

Feel: choke the verses, then release and let it ring — instant lift.

TAB

```
      A (PM)                  A (open, let ring)
e|-----|-----|
B|--2--2--2--2--2--2--2--2--|-----2--2--2--2--2--2--2--2--|
G|--2--2--2--2--2--2--2--2--|-----2--2--2--2--2--2--2--2--|
D|--2--2--2--2--2--2--2--2--|-----2--2--2--2--2--2--2--2--|
A|--0--0--0--0--0--0--0--0--|-----0--0--0--0--0--0--0--0--|
E|-----|-----|
PM . . . . .
```

*Caption:* Identical notes, opposite energy. Sliding the palm on (chunk) and off (bloom) is how Holly makes two chords feel like an arrangement.



## Drill 2 — Chunk & Bloom (palm-mute-to-open dynamics)

Original. ~150 BPM. Two muted bars, two open bars — exaggerate the contrast.

TAB

```

      A (PM, chunky)           A (open, ringing)
e|-----|-----|
B|-2-2-2-2-2-2-2-2-2-2-|-2-2-2-2-2-2-2-2-2-2-|
G|-2-2-2-2-2-2-2-2-2-2-|-2-2-2-2-2-2-2-2-2-2-|
D|-2-2-2-2-2-2-2-2-2-2-|-2-2-2-2-2-2-2-2-2-2-|
A|-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-|-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-|
E|-----|-----|
  PM . . . . . (release - let it sing)

      D (PM, chunky)           D (open, ringing)
e|-2-2-2-2-2-2-2-2-2-2-|-2-2-2-2-2-2-2-2-2-2-|
B|-3-3-3-3-3-3-3-3-3-3-|-3-3-3-3-3-3-3-3-3-3-|
G|-2-2-2-2-2-2-2-2-2-2-|-2-2-2-2-2-2-2-2-2-2-|
D|-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-|-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-|
A|-----|-----|
E|-----|-----|
  PM . . . . . (release - let it sing)
```

*Builds:* Conscious control of your palm as a volume/timbre lever, plus a clean I-IV change under constant strumming. *Dial it:* park the palm just forward of the bridge saddles for the chunk; the open bars should jump out noticeably louder. If there's no audible difference, you're muting too hard on the "open" bars — lift fully.

## Drill 3 — Rockabilly Answer Phrase (a simple solo lick)

Original. ~165 BPM, swung eighths. A major pentatonic with one cheeky chromatic note.

A

```

e|-----|
B|-----2--3--5-----|
G|--2--4--2-----4--2-----|
D|--2-----4--2-----4-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|

```

```

D                A
e|-----|-----|
B|--3--5--3-----|--2~-----|
G|-----4--2-----|-----|
D|-----4--2--|--2-----|
A|-----|-----|
E|-----|-----|

```

*Builds*: Phrasing that *answers* a vocal instead of overplaying — short, melodic, swung. *Dial it*: same rig as the rhythm part; the bridge pickup keeps the lick bright and present. Let the final A note ring with a touch of vibrato (~) and resist adding notes. The restraint is the style.

## | Make It Yours

The lesson of “Peggy Sue” transfers to *everything* you play: **rhythm is a lead instrument, and your picking hand is a tone control**. Take any two chords you already know — G and C, E and A, whatever — and run them through Drill 2's chunk-and-bloom treatment over a metronome. You'll discover you can build an entire song's worth of dynamics out of *one* change just by managing attack and palm mutes. Use this whenever a part feels boring: before you reach for more chords or a pedal, ask whether you're playing the rhythm hard enough, evenly enough, and *intentionally* enough. Holly built a classic on two chords. Constraint, played with total commitment, sounds like confidence.

## • LISTEN FOR

- Downstrokes that stay *dead even* in volume and timing — no note louder or earlier than its neighbors.
- The clean, gapless snap of the A→D change, landing exactly on the beat.
- The audible lift when palm mutes release into open, ringing chords.
- The bright, glassy bridge-pickup tone *just* starting to break up on the hardest strums.
- A solo that answers the vocal in a few singable notes — and knows when to stop.

# “Rumble” • Link Wray

---

## AT A GLANCE

**Artist:** Link Wray (and His Ray Men)

**Song:** “Rumble”

**Album:** Released as a single in 1958 (later collected on *Link Wray and the Wraymen*, 1960)

**The tone in one sentence:** Slow, menacing power chords drenched in tremolo and reverb, played through a deliberately damaged speaker so the sound snarls and frays at the edges.

**Difficulty:** Beginner

**Key & tuning:** Standard tuning; the riff sits around E, moving up to A and D — a I–IV–V world built almost entirely on root-and-fifth shapes.

“Rumble” is one of the most important two minutes in the history of electric guitar. It is an instrumental that got *banned from radio* despite having no lyrics — that is how threatening the pure sound was. For you as a player, it is the perfect first lesson in a truth that runs through this whole book: **tone is a musical decision, not just an equipment decision.** Wray did not stumble into distortion. He chased it.

## | The Rig & Signal Chain

- **Guitar:** Link most often played a hollow or semi-hollow electric in this era; he is strongly associated with a **Danelectro** and later a **Gibson Les Paul**. On the “Rumble” session the exact instrument is debated, but the sound is a single-coil-ish, mid-forward voice with plenty of bite.
- **Amp:** A small tube combo of the late-1950s breed — think a low-wattage **Premier** or similar student/club amp. Low headroom is the point; these amps break up early.

- **The famous modification (accepted lore, flagged as such):** The widely told story is that Wray **punched holes in his speaker cone with a pencil** to get that ragged, dirty, torn sound. This is the *accepted* origin story and Wray repeated it himself, but treat the precise method as lore rather than lab-verified fact — the broader point (he intentionally degraded the speaker to distort the tone) is what matters and is well supported.
- **Effects: Tremolo** (amplitude wobble, almost certainly from the amp itself) and a generous helping of **reverb**. The tremolo is slow and deep; the reverb is cavernous, giving every chord a tail that hangs in the dark.
- **Mic:** Session details are sparse. Assume a single dynamic on a small amp in a modest room — no need to chase a specific model.

Settings are not documented as exact numbers, and you should be suspicious of anyone who claims they are. Approximately: amp volume high enough to break up, tremolo slow and deep, reverb generous.

## | The Tone Recipe

You can get ~90% of the way there without destroying a speaker.

### Substitution list:

- **Guitar:** Any single-coil or P-90-equipped guitar. A **Telecaster** bridge pickup is ideal; a **Stratocaster** neck pickup gives the rounder, darker flavor. Humbuckers work — just roll some treble off.
- **Amp / breakup:** A low-wattage tube combo turned up until it grinds, OR a modeler/pedal set to a **late-'50s tweed-style breakup**. You want *amp* distortion — soft, sagging, slightly woolly — not modern high-gain.
- **Speaker damage** → **replace with a light overdrive:** A transparent low-gain overdrive (Klon-style or a simple boost into a cranked amp) recreates the fraying edge safely.
- **Tremolo:** Any tremolo pedal or amp tremolo. Set **rate** slow and **depth** deep.
- **Reverb:** Spring reverb, real or modeled. Set it **wet** — this is a surf-adjacent sound and reverb is load-bearing.

### Starting points (knobs out of 10):

- **Bridge pickup**, tone rolled back to about **6–7** so it is dark but not muffled.

- **Amp gain / drive:** 4–5. Enough to snarl on the power chords, still clean enough to hear the note attack.
- **Tremolo:** rate ~3, depth ~7. You want an audible, hypnotic pulse, roughly one wobble every beat or so at this slow tempo.
- **Reverb:** 6–7. Long tails.
- **Pick attack:** Medium-heavy with a thick pick, struck **back near the bridge** for menace. Dig in on the climaxes; let chords ring fully — silence and decay are part of the riff.

## | What's Going On Musically

The genius of “Rumble” is how *little* it uses. The harmony is essentially **I–IV–V in E** — the three primary chords of the key (E, A, D-ish movement) — but voiced as bare **power chords**: just the root and the fifth, with no third. A power chord (written **E5, A5**) is neither major nor minor because the third — the note that decides major vs. minor — is left out. That ambiguity is exactly why it sounds tough and open rather than sweet.

The **form** is a slow 12-bar-blues-derived progression, but stretched and darkened. Tempo is roughly a crawling **mid-60s BPM**, and the feel leans on **triplets** — three evenly spaced notes per beat — which give the track its swaggering, dragging-its-feet menace. Think of a slow boxer’s walk to the ring.

Two more devices do the heavy lifting:

1. **Space.** Wray leaves huge gaps. The reverb tail and tremolo pulse *fill* the silence so the guitar feels enormous. Learning to *not play* is half this lesson.
2. **The bend as a climax.** When tension peaks, Wray bends a low note up — a big, vocal, almost crying gesture against the dark chords. It is the one moment of "melody" in a riff made of blocks.

Scale-wise, your melodic moves live in the **E minor pentatonic** (E–G–A–B–D) and the **E blues scale** (add the b5, B ♭). If you know one pentatonic box, you already know the vocabulary for the fills.

## | Signature Moves

These are short illustrative fragments — characteristic gestures, not the full tune.

1. **The slow power-chord descent** Slow, ~64 BPM, let each chord ring full; heavy reverb fills the gaps.

TAB

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-----|
D|--7~---5~---2~---0~-----|
A|--7~---5~---2~---0~-----|
E|--5~---3~---0~-----0~---|

```

*Caption:* power chords (B5, A5, F#5, E5 region) walking down with heavy vibrato on every shape — that shake is the menace.

**2. The bent climax** Slow, with feeling; bend is big and vocal — let it cry.

TAB

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-----|
D|-----|
A|-----5b7~-----|
E|--0~---0~-----0~---|

```

*Caption:* a heavy whole-step bend on the A string answers the open-E menace, then resolves back down — the one "melody" note in a riff of blocks.

**3. The dirty open-chord stab** Slow triplet feel; hit hard, choke it, let the amp grind.

TAB

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|--1--1--1-----|
D|--2--2--2-----|
A|--2--2--2-----|
E|--0--0--0--x-----|

```

*Caption:* an open-position E-shape stabbed in triplets, then dead-noted (x) — the speaker fray turns each stab into a growl.

## | The Drills

These are my own exercises in the “Rumble” spirit — original, not transcriptions.

**Drill A — Power-Chord Vibrato Control** Builds: a steady, *intentional* vibrato applied to whole chords (not just single notes), which is the core of the tone. Set drive at 4–5, reverb wet. Fret the chord, then shake your whole fretting hand from the wrist evenly. Count "1-and-2-and" and add the vibrato only on beats 2 and 4 so it is controlled, not constant.

TAB

Slow, ~64 BPM. Wrist vibrato on the held chords only.

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-----|
D|--5---5~---7---7~---5---5~---2~~~~~|
A|--5---5~---7---7~---5---5~---2~~~~~|
E|--3---3~---5---5~---3---3~---0~~~~~|
  
```

*Caption:* trains let-ring chords with deliberate hand vibrato. Keep the shake the same speed on every chord — evenness sounds like authority.

**Drill B — Slow-Triplet Menace** Builds: triplet phrasing and the "dragging" feel. Count "trip-le-let" on each beat. Palm-mute (PM) the low single notes, then open up into the ringing chord. This is the rhythmic engine of the whole track.

TAB

Slow, ~66 BPM. Count "1-trip-let" per beat. PM the singles.

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-----|
D|-----2--2--2-----|
A|-----0--0--0--2--2--2-----|
E|--0--0--0--3--3--3--0--0--0--0--0--0-----|
   PM      PM      PM      PM
  
```

*Caption:* trains even triplets and the move from muted singles to open chords. Lock the triplets to a metronome before adding the tremolo pedal — sloppy triplets ruin the swagger.

**Drill C — Let-Ring vs. Palm-Mute Dynamics** Builds: dynamic contrast, the difference between a chord that *blooms* (let ring) and one that is *choked* (palm muted). Same shapes, two textures. Wray's power comes from withholding, then releasing.

Slow, ~64 BPM. First bar choked (PM), second bar let ring full.

```

e|-----|-----|
B|-----|-----|
G|-----|-----|
D|--2--2--2--2-----|--2~~~~~~|
A|--2--2--2--2-----|--2~~~~~~|
E|--0--0--0--0-----|--0~~~~~~|
    PM PM PM PM          let ring
  
```

*Caption:* trains palm-mute control against full sustain. Feel how the muted bar builds tension and the ringing bar releases it — that push/pull is the song.

## | Make It Yours

The lesson of “Rumble” is not “punch holes in your gear.” It is that a great riff can be built from three chords, a slow pulse, and a sound with attitude. Steal the *approach*: pick a single power-chord shape and find out how much music you can make with vibrato, space, and dynamics alone before you add a single extra note. Drop any progression to half its tempo and lean into triplets — instant menace. Crank your reverb and tremolo and let the chords decay into the dark instead of rushing to the next one. Most players add; Wray subtracted, and it made him sound dangerous. Learn to be that patient with a note, and you will sound like you mean it — on any song, in any style.

### ♪ LISTEN FOR

- The **tremolo pulse** breathing underneath every chord — can you hear (and play to) the wobble?
- **Vibrato on whole power chords**, not just single notes — the controlled shake is the signature.
- The **triplet drag**: slow, even, three-per-beat, never rushed.
- The **dynamic swing** between choked palm-muted stabs and chords left to ring and bloom.
- The **single bent note** rising out of the blocks like a voice — make yours cry, then resolve.

# “Mannish Boy” • Muddy Waters

## AT A GLANCE

**Artist:** Muddy Waters (McKinley Morganfield)

**Song:** “Mannish Boy”

**Album:** Released as a 1955 Chess single; later anthologized on collections like *The Best of Muddy Waters* and *His Best 1947–1955*.

**The tone in one sentence:** A raw, midrange-forward electric blues bark — fat, slightly overdriven, and dripping with attitude, more spoken than sung through the strings.

**Difficulty:** Beginner to Intermediate

**Key & tuning:** A major (dominant flavor), standard tuning. The whole thing lives on one chord.

## | The Rig & Signal Chain

Muddy's electric sound in this era came from a **Fender** solidbody — period photos and accounts put him on a **Telecaster** (and later a Strat-style guitar) — though on “Mannish Boy” the central guitar figure is famously *his*, with **Jimmy Rogers** and harp player **Little Walter** filling the room around him. The point isn't the exact serial number; it's the pairing of a bright single-coil guitar with a small, hard-pushed tube amp.

That amp was a **tweed Fender** — a Bassman or Deluxe-style circuit is the usual reference point. These amps don't have a master volume, so the grit comes from cranking the single volume knob until the power tubes start to break up. No pedals. The “drive” is the amp itself complaining, plus the player digging in.

Recording was done at **Chess Studios** in Chicago, typically with a single dynamic mic on the amp and the band tracking live in a room with concrete-and-tile slap. That room reverb is part of the tone — a short, hard echo that makes everything sound like it's coming off a wall.

Settings, as always, are approximate. A tweed amp for this sound is **commonly cited** as volume pushed to roughly 6–8 (where it just starts to sag and bark), tone full up or close to it. Treat that as a starting point, not gospel.

## | The Tone Recipe

You can get ~90% there with modern gear:

- **Guitar:** Any single-coil bridge pickup — Telecaster or Strat. No single-coil? A humbucker bridge with the tone rolled to about **6** approximates the woody midrange.
- **Amp:** A small tube combo (**Blues Junior**, Princeton, or any 5–15W amp) cranked into natural breakup. Modeling? Pick a “tweed Bassman” or “tweed Deluxe” model.
- **Pedal (optional):** If your amp won't break up at livable volume, a transparent overdrive (**Tube Screamer**-style) set low: **Gain 3, Tone 5, Level to taste**. You want *grit*, not distortion.

Starting points (out of 10):

- **Amp volume/gain:** 5 — just past clean, so hard picking pushes it over the edge and soft picking pulls it back. That dynamic *is* the tone.
- **Bass 4, Mids 7, Treble 6** — midrange forward. This is not a scooped sound.
- **Pickup:** Bridge. Tone knob about **7–8** so it barks without getting ice-picky.
- **Pick attack:** Heavy. Dig in with a medium-to-stiff pick near the bridge. Let the note speak with a slight snarl on the front end.
- **Reverb:** A touch of room/spring — short, not lush.

The single most important “setting” here is in your right hand. Set the amp so it lives on the edge, then control the dirt with how hard you hit.

## | What's Going On Musically

Here's the beautiful trick of “Mannish Boy”: **it never changes chords**. The entire song is a one-chord vamp on **A7** — a *dominant seventh* chord (the 1, 3, 5, and flatted 7 of the scale: A–C#–E–G). Most blues moves through I–IV–V changes; this strips that away and sits on the I chord the whole time. That tension of a dominant 7 that never resolves is what gives it its hypnotic, swaggering drive.

The melodic vocabulary is the **A blues scale**: A – C – D – Eb – E – G (root, flat-3, 4, flat-5, 5, flat-7). The flat-5 (Eb, the “blue note”) is the spice; you slide *through* it rather than land on it. Because the backing is dominant, you'll hear both the **C natural (flat-3)** of the blues scale *and* the **C# (major 3rd)** of the A7 chord rubbing against each other — that major/minor friction is the core sound of the blues.

**Form:** It's not a 12-bar. It's a **stop-time structure** — the band hits an accent, then *stops*, leaving a silent gap. Muddy fills that gap with a vocal line, the guitar answers, and the band slams back in. This is **call-and-response** in its purest form: voice calls, instrument answers, repeat. The riff is the hook, the spaces are the song.

Rhythmically, feel it as a slow, heavy **shuffle/half-time groove** — think long, dragging eighth notes with weight on beat 1.

## | Signature Moves

### 1. The stop-time riff

The iconic figure — a hammered move into the root with a punchy answer. Short fragment for study:

TAB

Slow, heavy shuffle. Let it ring, hit hard.

```
e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-----|
D|-----2~-----2~-----|
A|--0h2-----0---0h2-----|
E|-----|
    "Hooch-ie..."      (answer)
```

*Caption: The hammer from open A to the 2nd fret is the “spoken” part — it lands on beat 1 like a fist on a table, then the held note rings into the gap.*

### 2. The answering single-note lick

After the vocal phrase, the guitar talks back from the blues box:

TAB

Behind the beat, vibrato on the last note.

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|--2b--2--0-----|
D|-----2--0-----|
A|-----3~-----|
E|-----|

```

*Caption: A quick bend at the flat-7, walking down through the box to land on the root with wide vibrato. This is the “answer” to the vocal’s “call.”*

### 3. The slide-flavored bend

The vocal-imitating gesture — a bend that wails like a sung note:

TAB

Let the bend bloom slowly, then shake it.

```

e|-----|
B|--8b9r8~-----|
G|-----7~-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|

```

*Caption: Bend up a whole step, release, and add heavy vibrato — the goal is to make the string cry like a human voice. Use the wrist, not the fingers, for the shake.*

## | The Drills

### Drill 1 — The A7 one-chord vamp

Builds the foundational groove: locking a hammered riff into a heavy shuffle and leaving space.

TAB

Tempo ~80 BPM, half-time shuffle feel. Count the rests out loud.

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-----|
D|-----2-2-----2-2-----2-2-----|
A|--0h2--0--0h2--0--0h2--0--0-----|
E|-----|
  1 & 2   (stop)  1 & 2   (stop)  1 & 2   3   4

```

*Caption: This trains the stop-time discipline — your hardest job is the silence. Mute fully on the rests (palm rest on strings). Tone: amp on the edge of breakup, dig in on the hammer so it growls, ease off on the answer.*

### Drill 2 — Call-and-response phrasing

Builds the conversation: a fixed “call,” then your own improvised “answer” from the blues box.

TAB

Tempo ~80 BPM. Bars 1–2 are the CALL (fixed). Bars 3–4 ANSWER (vary it).

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-----5b6r5--2-----|
A|-----3-----3~-----|
D|--0h2--2~--0h2--2~-----2-0-----|
E|-----|
  CALL           CALL           ANSWER (your move)

```

*Caption: Play the call exactly the same twice, then improvise the answer differently each pass — that contrast is the whole art form. Keep the answer short; let it breathe. Tone: bridge pickup, heavy attack on the call, lighter on the answer for dynamic contrast.*

### Drill 3 — Blues-scale answers with wide vibrato

Builds vocal-style phrasing: bending, releasing, and shaking notes so they sing.

Tempo ~75 BPM, behind the beat. Vibrato = wrist, not fingers.

slow & vocal      build      cry it out      resolve

*Caption: Three phrases, each ending on a held, shaken note. Don't rush — the silence between phrases is as important as the notes. The flat-5 (the b6r bend passing through) is the blue note; pass through it, don't camp on it. Tone: roll tone to ~7, push the amp so sustained notes bloom and feed back gently.*

## Make It Yours

The deepest lesson in “Mannish Boy” isn't a riff — it's **restraint and conversation**. Most players overplay; Muddy proves that one chord, a handful of blue notes, and disciplined silence can carry an entire song. Take this anywhere: next time you solo over a static vamp or a one-chord jam, stop trying to fill every bar. Play a short phrase, *listen to the space*, then answer it like you're talking to someone. Borrow the major/minor friction (that C-natural-against-C# rub) for any dominant groove — funk, rock, soul. And get your amp barking from your hands, not a pedal: set it on the edge and let your pick attack be the gain knob. That single skill — dynamics from touch — will upgrade everything you play.

### ♪ LISTEN FOR

- The hammer-on landing *exactly* on beat 1, hard enough to growl.
- Real silence in the stop-time gaps — the band fully stops; so should you.
- Call-and-response: every guitar phrase answers the vocal, never talks over it.
- Wide, vocal vibrato on held notes — from the wrist, slow and deliberate.
- Grit that swells when you dig in and cleans up when you back off. That's the amp on the edge, controlled by your hands.

PART B

# British Invasion & 60s Amps



# “Ticket to Ride” • The Beatles

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## AT A GLANCE

**Artist:** The Beatles

**Song:** "Ticket to Ride"

**Album:** *Help!* (1965) — also released as a single in April 1965

**The tone in one sentence:** A bright, ringing 12-string chime layered with octave-doubled jangle, all open and shimmering, with just enough amp grit to feel alive.

**Difficulty:** Intermediate

**Key & tuning:** A major, standard tuning

## | The Rig & Signal Chain

The signature shimmer comes from the **Rickenbacker 360/12**, the electric twelve-string George Harrison made famous across 1964–65. Its compressed, bell-like top end — courtesy of Rickenbacker's bright single-coil "toaster" pickups and the unusual string pairing (the octave string sits *under* the fundamental, so your pick hits the high octave first) — is the whole identity of that intro motif.

Alongside it, Harrison and Lennon leaned on the **Epiphone Casino**, a fully hollow, P-90-loaded electric that the Beatles adopted around this era. The Casino's P-90s are fatter and grittier than the Rick's toasters, so it fills in the body underneath the 12-string sparkle.

Everything ran into **Vox AC30** amplifiers — the Top Boost circuit's chimey upper midrange is the third pillar of this sound. The AC30 is a Class A, EL84-powered combo that breaks up sweetly and bright rather than dark and compressed.

Settings are best treated as approximate. The AC30 is commonly cited as run fairly clean with the Top Boost treble well up; the Rickenbacker is usually played near its bright/treble pickup or a blended middle position. Specific board EQ and mic placements from the Abbey Road sessions aren't reli-

ably documented, so take any "exact knob" claim with skepticism — including the popular but debated lore about precisely how the 12-string was doubled or compressed to tape.

## | The Tone Recipe

You can get roughly 90% of the way there without a vintage Rick:

- **For the chime:** any electric 12-string into a clean, bright amp. No 12-string? An octave/shimmer approach won't fully fake it, but a bridge single-coil with the tone wide open and a touch of light compression gets you surprisingly close on the arpeggio parts.
- **Amp substitution:** an AC30-style or any "British clean" voicing. On a modeler, pick a Top Boost AC30. On a Fender-style amp, roll the bass back and push treble/presence.
- **Settings (out of 10):** Gain/Volume 4 (edge-of-breakup, not distorted), Bass 3, Mids 6, Treble 7–8, Presence 6, Reverb 2–3.
- **Pickup:** bridge or middle single-coil; tone full up. On a humbucker guitar, split the coil or use the bright in-between position.
- **Pick & attack:** medium pick, struck close to the bridge for sparkle. Play *lightly* — this tone lives on a relaxed, even attack, never dug-in.
- **Light compression** (low ratio, around 3:1, fast-ish) evens out the jangle the way the 12-string's own string-pairing naturally does. Add a hair of plate reverb. Skip drive pedals; let amp volume do the work.

## | What's Going On Musically

The song sits in **A major**, but the famous riff is built on a **drone** — the open or fretted A repeating as a pedal tone while other notes move above it. A *pedal tone* is a sustained or repeated note (usually the root) that everything else is measured against; here it anchors the whole intro so the moving notes feel suspended and chiming.

The harmonic color comes from **add9** and **sus** voicings. An **add9** chord stacks the 9th (the 2nd, up an octave) onto a plain major triad without removing the 3rd — for A that's A–C#–E plus B. The result is a sweet, ringing tension that never resolves to anything jazzy; it just glitters. A **sus2/sus4** swaps the 3rd out for the 2nd or 4th, giving that open, unresolved suspension the Beatles loved to brush past on their way to a full chord.

Two more devices define the sound. **Octave doubling** — playing the same line in two octaves, which the 12-string does *automatically* on its lower four courses — thickens every note into a chime. And **jangle**, in this context, means treating chords as **arpeggios**: instead of strumming all six strings at once, you let adjacent strings ring into each other so the chord unfolds note by note.

Form is classic mid-60s pop: intro riff → verse → a contrasting bridge ("I don't know why she's ridin' so high") → back to verse, with the lead motif stitching sections together. The verse hangs stubbornly on A (that droning insistence is the *point* — it mirrors the lyric's stuck-in-place feeling) before the chords finally move under the title line.

## | Signature Moves

### 1. The jangly lead motif

A bright, repeating figure up top, picked so each note rings into the next. Played here on six strings to capture the *shape*; on a 12-string every note doubles at the octave.

TAB

The jangly lead motif — bright, ringing, let notes overlap. J ≈ 124

```
e|-----|
B|--5--5--7--5-----5--5--7--5----|
G|-----6h7-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
```

pick lightly, near the bridge

*Short illustrative fragment — keep each note ringing into the next for the chime.*

### 2. The droning A figure

The verse engine: a fretted melody note alternating against a repeating high open string, so the A tonality drones while a line moves underneath.

TAB

The droning A figure – steady eighths, relaxed.  $J \approx 124$

```
e|--0-----0-----0-----0----|
B|----5-----3-----2-----0-|
G|-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
```

let the open high E ring through

*The open string is the pedal tone; everything else is decoration over it.*

### 3. The chiming top notes (add9 brush)

The shimmer that caps phrases: an A triad with the 9th (B) ringing on top, arpeggiated rather than strummed.

TAB

The add9 brush – slow brush, let it bloom.  $J \approx 124$

```
e|--0~-----|
B|--2-----|
G|--2-----|
D|--2-----|
A|--0-----|
E|-----|
```

roll the pick across the strings, don't strum hard

*That open high E over the A chord is the add9 chime — the song's fingerprint.*

## | The Drills

These are original exercises in the song's style. Each trains one specific skill.

### Drill A — 12-string-style arpeggio (on six strings)

Builds the *let-it-ring* picking and finger independence that makes six strings sound like twelve. Hold each chord shape and pick the strings one at a time, never muting.

TAB

Drill A – even eighths, every note sustains. ♩ ≈ 110

```
e|----0-----0-----0-----0--|
B|---2---2---3---3---2---2---0---|
G|--2-----0-----2-----1-----|
D|-----|
A|--0-----3-----|
E|-----3-----|
    Asus2      G/B      Aadd9      D/F#-ish
```

*Tone: bridge pickup, tone full up, light compression. Pick close to the bridge and let chords overlap into a wash. If your fretting is clean, you'll hear the "12-string" shimmer emerge from sustain alone.*

### Drill B – Add9 chime voicing shifter

Trains the hand to keep a high open string ringing while you move a chord shape — the core of the Beatles' jangle. The top two strings stay open and chiming throughout.

TAB

Drill B – brush each chord, let highs ring. ♩ ≈ 100

```
e|--0-----0-----0-----0----|
B|--0-----0-----0-----0----|
G|--2-----4-----6-----2----|
D|--2-----4-----6-----2----|
A|--0-----5-----7-----0----|
E|-----|
    Aadd9   Cadd9 Dadd9 Aadd9
    (open B & E ring as the 9th/5th color over each)
```

*Tone: clean AC30-style, treble up, gain at edge-of-breakup. Strike softly so the open strings stay louder than the fretted notes — that's where the chime lives.*

### Drill C – Droning pedal-tone riff

Builds the alternating motion of melody-against-drone in the verse. Your low open A is the pedal; a melody walks on the D and G strings while the A keeps pulsing.

Drill C – drive it, even and relaxed. ♩ ≈ 124

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-----2-----2-----|
D|-----2-----4-----2-----0-----|
A|--0--0--0--0--0--0--0--0--0--0--|
E|-----|

```

keep that open A repeating like a heartbeat

*Tone: add a touch more amp volume for grit on the low strings. Palm-mute the open A very lightly (PM) if it rings too long; the melody notes stay open and bright. Lock the repeating A to the click before you add the moving line.*

## | Make It Yours

The lesson of "Ticket to Ride" isn't the exact lick — it's the *philosophy*: pick a root, refuse to leave it, and let everything sparkle on top. Take any chorus you're writing and try drowning it in a droning open string. Swap a plain G or D for its add9 and arpeggiate instead of strumming. If you don't own a 12-string, you've now got the two tricks that fake it — sustained, overlapping picking and a high open string left ringing through chord changes. Use a capo to move these add9 shapes into other keys and you'll find the Beatles' jangle lives all over the neck, not just in A.

### ♪ LISTEN FOR

- The **octave shimmer** on the intro riff — on a 12-string each note rings doubled; on six strings, chase it with sustain and light compression.
- The **droning A** under the verse that *refuses to move* — feel how the harmonic stillness creates tension.
- The **add9 chime** (open high E over an A chord) capping phrases — that's the fingerprint.
- **Arpeggiated, overlapping** notes rather than blunt strums — every string rings into the next.
- A **bright, edge-of-breakup amp** — chimey, never distorted, never dark.

# “You Really Got Me” • The Kinks

## AT A GLANCE

**Artist:** The Kinks

**Song:** "You Really Got Me"

**Album:** *Kinks* (1964); released as a single in August 1964

**The tone in one sentence:** A buzzing, ragged, mid-forward wall of distorted power chords that sounds like the amp is physically tearing apart — because it nearly was.

**Difficulty:** Beginner to Intermediate

**Key & tuning:** Standard tuning (E A D G B e); the riff lives in **F** and slides upward through the verses (commonly taught from F5–G5).

## | The Rig & Signal Chain

Here's the famous part, presented straight because it's genuinely documented and confirmed by Dave Davies himself: there's no fancy fuzz pedal here. Dave got the sound by taking a small, cheap green **Elpico** amplifier — a little practice amp the size of a lunchbox — and slashing the speaker cone with a razor blade. A torn cone flaps instead of moving as one rigid piston, so it breaks up violently and adds that spitting, frayed buzz. He then ran that mutilated little amp's output into a larger **Vox AC30** to push real volume into the room. The Elpico did the dirty work; the Vox did the loud.

The guitar for the era was a **Harmony Meteor** (a hollowbody electric) into that chain. The signal path, in plain terms:

### TAB

Guitar → razored Elpico (distortion source) → Vox AC30 (amp & volume) → studio mic

Settings are not really the point on this record — the distortion came from physical speaker damage, not knob positions, so don't chase "secret" dial numbers that don't exist. If you want a hedge for the curious: the Vox would have been run hot, volume well up, but the character is in the torn cone, not an EQ curve.

A note on lore: the razor-blade-speaker story is one of the rare tone legends that is *true* and on the record from the player. Treat it as fact. (Contrast that with the debated Jimmy Page / Supro amp story or the Van Halen brown-sound Variac claims — those you should flag as contested. This one stands.)

## | The Tone Recipe

You are not going to razor a speaker. Here's how to get ~90% there with gear you can actually buy and a band that won't evict you.

### Substitution list:

- **Distortion source:** A gnarly, slightly "broken"-sounding overdrive or fuzz. A germanium-style fuzz, a Boss FZ box, or even a cranked **Marshall**-style drive pedal all work. You want hair and rattle, not smooth modern high-gain.
- **Amp:** Any low-wattage tube combo pushed into breakup, or a clean amp set as a flat pedal platform. A **Vox**-voiced amp (or a modeler's AC30 patch) gets the chimey, mid-rich British character closest.
- **Guitar/pickup:** Bridge pickup, ideally a single-coil or a low-output humbucker. You want clarity and bite so the two notes don't turn to mud.

### Concrete starting points (knobs out of 10):

- Drive/Fuzz: **7–8**. Enough to fray, not so much it compresses into a smooth sustaining wall.
- Amp gain: **5–6**, just at the edge of natural breakup so the pedal stacks on top.
- Tone/Treble: **6–7** — bright but not icy.
- Bass: **4** — keep it tight; this riff dies if it's boomy.
- Mids: **7** — push them. The whole sound is midrange.
- Pickup: **Bridge**.
- Pick attack: Dig in. Hard, fast **downstrokes** near the bridge with a stiff pick.
- Volume: As loud as is responsible. This tone wants to move air.

## | What's Going On Musically

The engine of this song is the **power chord** — a two-note (sometimes three-note) shape made of just the root and the fifth, written like F5 or G5. Because it has no third (the note that makes a chord sound "major" or "minor"), it's harmonically neutral, which is exactly why it sounds so blunt and aggressive when distorted. Distortion adds extra overtones; if you feed it a full major chord, those overtones clash into mush. Feed it a power chord and it stays clear and punishing. This single is one of the foundational documents of *why rock guitar uses power chords at all*.

The riff is built on two power chords a whole step apart — F5 to G5 — hammered in a driving rhythm and then **slid up the neck** through the verse. Sliding a fixed two-finger shape up the fretboard means every chord keeps the same root-and-fifth structure; you're just transposing the same interval, which is why beginners can play the whole progression with one hand shape. The verse follows that rising motion, and the movement between chords a whole step apart gives the song its restless, chromatic-flavored push (it isn't strictly chromatic — half-step — but the relentless stepwise climbing creates that tense, climbing feeling).

The **form** is classic mid-60s pop-rock: a tight intro riff, verses built on the rising power-chord motion, a hook ("girl, you really got me now...") that sits right on top of the riff, and a short, frantic guitar solo before the final verses. The whole thing is under two and a half minutes and almost never lets the tension off.

For soloing, the vocabulary is the **minor pentatonic** (the five-note box most beginners learn first: root, b3, 4, 5, b7) with bluesy bends and a lot of repeated, hammered notes played at the edge of control. Davies' solo is famous less for "correct" lines than for sheer wild energy — fast, slightly ragged, very much in the moment.

## | Signature Moves

### Move 1 — The F5–G5 engine

*Feel: driving eighth notes, hard downstrokes, ~138 bpm.*

TAB

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-----5---5-----|
D|--3--3---5---5---3--3--|
A|--3--3---5---5---3--3--|
E|--1--1---3---3---1--1--|
    F5 F5    G5  G5  F5 F5

```

*Caption: The F5–G5 engine — the two power chords the whole song is built on.*

*The whole record grows from this: two power chords a whole step apart, pounded with relentless downstrokes. Keep the wrist loose and the notes short.*

## Move 2 — Sliding the shape up the neck

*Feel: aggressive, let the slide be audible, ~138 bpm.*

TAB

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|--5--5--/7--7---8--8~---|
D|--5--5--/7--7---8--8~---|
A|--3--3--/5--5---6--6~---|
E|-----|
    G5      A5      B5

```

*Caption: Sliding the shape up the neck — G5 to A5 to B5, same fingering throughout.*

*Same hand shape, marched up the fretboard. The slide into each chord is part of the sound — don't pick the destination cleanly, drag into it.*

## Move 3 — The frantic solo burst

*Feel: barely-contained, fast, slightly ragged, ~138 bpm.*

TAB

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|--7p5--7p5--7p5--7--5-----|
D|-----7--5-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|

```

*Caption: The frantic solo burst — repeated pull-offs tumbling down the box.*

*A short illustrative taste of the solo's energy: repeated pull-offs hammered out fast and loose, more about attitude than precision. Let it sound a little wild.*

## | The Drills

These are original exercises in the style of the song — build them slowly with a metronome, then push the tempo.

### Drill A — Power-chord shifting under pressure

*Trains: clean, fast position jumps without losing the rhythm. Tone: drive at 7, bridge pickup, short choppy downstrokes.*

TAB

```
e|-----|
B|-----|
G|--5--5--7--7--9--9--7--7--5--5--7--7--5--5--|
D|--5--5--7--7--9--9--7--7--5--5--7--7--5--5--|
A|--3--3--5--5--7--7--5--5--3--3--5--5--3--3--|
E|-----|
```

C5 D5 E5 D5 C5 D5 C5

*Caption: Drill A — power-chord shifting (C5–D5–E5–D5–C5–D5–C5).*

*Start at 90 bpm, all downstrokes, muting cleanly between chords so each shift snaps into place. Add the slide (/) into a couple of the jumps once it's solid. Push toward 138.*

### Drill B — Downstroke stamina engine

*Trains: pure right-hand endurance — the thing this song actually demands. Tone: same as the record, dig in near the bridge.*

TAB

```
e|-----|
B|-----|
G|--5--5--5--5--5--5--5--5--5--5--5--5--|
D|--5--5--5--5--5--5--5--5--5--5--3--3--3--|
A|--3--3--3--3--3--3--3--3--3--3--3--3--|
E|-----1--1--1--|
```

G5 (x4) G5 (x4) F5 (x3)

*Caption: Drill B — downstroke stamina, two bars of G5 then a drop to F5.*

*Every note is a downstroke — no alternate picking allowed. Two bars of steady eighths, then a drop to F5. Begin at 100 bpm; the goal is to keep the forearm relaxed for a full minute without the tempo sagging. If your wrist tightens, you're gripping the pick too hard.*

## Drill C — Raw pentatonic solo lick

*Trains: bluesy, energetic phrasing in the A minor pentatonic box with bends and pull-offs. Tone: bridge pickup, drive slightly lower (6) so notes speak; let it be a little ragged.*

TAB

```
e|-----|
B|-----|
G|--7b9r7--5----7p5-----5~-----|
D|-----7-----7--5--7-----7--5-----|
A|-----7--5~--|
E|-----|
```

*Caption: Drill C — a raw pentatonic solo lick in the A minor box at the 5th fret.*

*This sits in the A minor pentatonic shape at the 5th fret. The opening full-step bend (7b9r7 — bend up two frets' worth of pitch, then release) sets the attitude; the rest tumbles down the box. Play it fast and loose rather than surgically clean — Davies' solo energy lives in that controlled sloppiness. Start at 100 bpm.*

## | Make It Yours

The deep lesson of this record isn't the riff — it's that *limitation plus aggression equals a new sound*. A teenager with a broken amp invented one of the templates for distorted rock guitar by leaning into damage instead of hiding it. You don't need rare gear; you need commitment in the right hand and a willingness to let things sound a little ugly. Take the two-notes-a-whole-step-apart idea and write your own riff with it: pick any power chord, add the chord one whole step above (two frets up), and pound them with hard downstrokes. Slide the shape to new spots on the neck for instant variation. The moment you stop trying to be clean and start trying to be *forceful*, you're playing in the spirit of this song.

▶ LISTEN FOR

## • LISTEN FOR

- The frayed, buzzing *rattle* in the distortion — that torn-speaker character, not a smooth modern crunch.
- Strict **downstrokes** driving the riff; you should hear the uniform attack, no softening on the upbeats.
- The audible **slide** as the power-chord shape climbs the neck through the verses.
- The two-notes-a-whole-step-apart tension that never fully resolves until the song ends.
- A solo that sounds barely controlled — energy and attitude winning over precision.

## LESSON 8

# “Pinball Wizard” • The Who

---

### AT A GLANCE

**Artist:** The Who

**Song:** “Pinball Wizard”

**Album:** *Tommy* (1969)

**The tone in one sentence:** A bright, ringing acoustic-plus-electric blend that opens with chiming suspended chords, then detonates into wide-open, slightly overdriven British power chords played with full-arm windmill attack.

**Difficulty:** Intermediate

**Key & tuning:** B major (moving through related keys); standard tuning (E A D G B E)

## | The Rig & Signal Chain

Pete Townshend famously layered an acoustic and an electric for the *Tommy* sessions, and that doubling is half the secret of this track. The shimmering intro is built on a strummed acoustic — Townshend has spoken of a **Gibson J-200**-style flat-top in this era — recorded close and bright so the suspended chords sparkle.

The electric muscle is classic Townshend: a **Gibson SG Special** with **P-90** single-coil pickups, the bridge P-90 giving that midrange honk and bite that cuts without sounding fizzy. Into the amp, this is the **Hiwatt** and **Marshall** period of the band — big, clean-ish British heads pushed loud through 4×12 cabinets so the power tubes start to break up on transients rather than from a fuzzy preamp. Note that the *exact* studio amp for this specific track is debated; The Who's stage rig in 1969 leaned Hiwatt, and that loud-but-clean headroom is the sound to chase.

There is little to no pedalboard trickery here. The grit is amp and hands. Settings are only ever **commonly cited** as "amp up loud, tone wide open" — treat any precise dial positions you read online as approximations, not gospel.

## | The Tone Recipe

You can get ~90% there with gear most players can reach.

### Substitutions

- *Acoustic*: any bright dreadnought or jumbo with fresh strings; capo not needed. If you only have an electric, a clean bridge-pickup tone with a touch of compression fakes the chime.
- *Electric*: a P-90-loaded guitar is ideal (SG, Les Paul Special, or a P-90 Telecaster). A bridge single-coil or a coil-split humbucker also works.
- *Amp*: any amp with a clean-to-edge-of-breakup British voice. A non-master-volume head cranked, an attenuator, or a quality plugin/modeler set to a "JTM/Hiwatt clean-ish" patch all land in the zone.

### Starting points (knobs out of 10)

- Gain/Drive: 4 — you want it to break up only when you dig in. If it's fuzzy at rest, back off.
- Bass: 5 · Mids: 7 · Treble: 6–7 · Presence: 6. Push the mids; that's the British honk.
- Pickup: **bridge** P-90/single-coil for the verses; you can roll to the middle for the intro chime.
- Pick attack: hard and from the wrist *and* shoulder. This tone lives on transient bite.
- Reverb: a little plate or spring; keep it short so the rhythm stays tight.

Double-track if you record: one clean/acoustic-bright pass, one cranked-electric pass, panned apart. That layering is the *Tommy* sound.

## | What's Going On Musically

The intro is the lesson in miniature. A **suspended chord** replaces the 3rd of a major chord with another note: a **sus4** swaps the major 3rd for the perfect 4th, and a **sus2** swaps it for the major 2nd. Because the 3rd is what tells your ear "happy or sad," suspending it creates tension that *wants* to resolve back to the plain major chord. That resolve — sus4 → major — is the emotional engine of the opening.

The famous progression descends. Built around **B**, the chords step down through a **Bsus4 / B** figure and then walk down (think B → A → G area) so the bass line falls under ringing top notes. A descending root motion like this feels like a slow exhale; pair it with suspensions on top and you get that "the floor is gently dropping away" feeling before the band crashes in.

When the verse hits, Townshend switches to **power chords** — root-and-5th shapes (often with the octave added) that have no 3rd at all. With a 3rd, a loud overdriven chord gets muddy and clangy; strip it to root-5th-octave and the chord stays clear and punchy even at full volume. That's *why* power chords rule loud rock: they're harmonically neutral, so they take distortion cleanly.

The form is verse-driven storytelling (it's a rock opera, so the lyric carries the narrative) with the chordal hook recurring as a refrain. Harmonically you're mostly inside B major and its neighbors; the drama comes from *texture and rhythm* — sus embellishments, dynamic windmilling — more than from exotic chords.

## | Signature Moves

1. **The suspended-chord intro.** A tempo around quarter = 122, steady eighth-note strum, let it ring.

TAB

```

Bsus4      B      Bsus4      B
e|--7----7----|--7----7----|--7----7----|--7----7----|
B|--7----7----|--7----7----|--7----7----|--7----7----|
G|--9----9----|--8----8----|--9----9----|--8----8----|
D|--9----9----|--9----9----|--9----9----|--9----9----|
A|--7----7----|--7----7----|--7----7----|--7----7----|
E|-----|-----|-----|-----|

```

Caption: The 4th on the G string (fret 9) pulls down to the major 3rd (fret 8). That tiny finger move is the whole hook — make it sing.

2. **The descending refrain.** Same feel, let the bass walk down underneath the ringing top.

TAB

```

B      A      G      (let ring)
e|--7----7----|--5----5----|--3----3----|--3-----|
B|--7----7----|--5----5----|--3----3----|--3-----|
G|--8----8----|--6----6----|--4----4----|--4-----|
D|--9-----|--7-----|--5-----|--5-----|
A|--7-----|--5-----|--3-----|--3-----|
E|-----|-----|-----|-----|

```

Caption: One barre shape sliding down the neck. Keep the top two strings ringing for continuity while the roots descend.

### 3. The power-chord verse / windmill. A tempo, hard downstrokes, dig in on beats 1 and 3.

TAB

```

      B5           A5           E5
e |-----|-----|-----|
B |-----|-----|-----|
G |--4---4---4-|-2---2---2-|-----|
D |--4---4---4-|-2---2---2-|-2---2---2-|
A |--2---2---2-|-0---0---0-|-2---2---2-|
E |-----|-----|---0---0---0-|
  
```

*Caption: Root-5th-octave shapes, no 3rd. All downstrokes for weight; the windmill is just an exaggerated, full-arm version of that downstroke.*

## The Drills

These are original exercises in the style of the song — use them, not the excerpts above, as your main woodshedding material.

**Drill A — Sus4 / sus2 embellishment strumming.** Builds the finger independence to color a held major chord without losing the strum. Tone: clean-to-edge, bridge or middle pickup, light reverb, let everything ring.

TAB

```

      A   Asus4 Asus2 A   |   D   Dsus4 Dsus2 D
e |--0---0---0---0---|-2---3---0---2---|
B |--2---3---0---2---|-3---3---3---3---|
G |--2---2---2---2---|-2---2---2---2---|
D |--2---2---2---2---|-0---0---0---0---|
A |--0---0---0---0---|-----|
E |-----|-----|
  
```

*Caption: Move the suspension (pinky adds the 4th, lift to open the 2nd) while the strum stays even. Keep eighth notes steady at ~120; the chords change underneath the constant right hand.*

**Drill B — Windmill power-chord rhythm.** Trains weight, accent placement, and palm-mute control for that crashing verse feel. Tone: gain ~4, mids up, bridge pickup; mind the PM sections.

TAB

```

      G5          F5          C5
e |-----|-----|-----|
B |-----|-----|-----|
G |-----|-----|--5--5--5-|
D |--5--5--5-|--3--3--3-|--5--5--5-|
A |--5--5--5-|--3--3--3-|--3--3--3-|
E |--3--3--3-|--1--1--1-|-----|
  PM---      PM---      PM---
  
```

*Caption: Alternate an open ringing accent (beats 1 & 3) with palm-muted chugs (the "and"s). All downstrokes. Start at 100 bpm, push to 130. The windmill is theater on top of this exact muting pattern.*

**Drill C — Descending chord-progression exercise.** Trains smooth barre-shape shifts down the neck while sustaining the top voices, just like the refrain. Tone: clean and bright, a little compression, let ring throughout.

TAB

```

      D          Csus2      Bm7          Asus2      G
e |--2---2---|--0---0---|--2---2---|--0---0---|--3---3---|
B |--3---3---|--3---3---|--3---3---|--0---0---|--3---3---|
G |--2---2---|--0---0---|--2---2---|--2---2---|--0---0---|
D |--0---0---|--0---0---|--0---0---|--2---2---|--0---0---|
A |-----|--3-----|--2-----|--0-----|--2-----|
E |-----|-----|-----|-----|--3-----|
  
```

*Caption: Descending root motion (D-C-B-A-G) with sus and m7 colors kept in the top strings for continuity. Shift cleanly; aim for zero gap between chords. Quarter = 116, ringing.*

## | Make It Yours

The transferable trick here is **suspension as a verb, not a noun**. Don't think "play a sus4 chord" — think "lift or drop one finger inside a chord I'm already holding." Drop the 4th to the 3rd to resolve; raise the 3rd to the 4th to build tension. That single moving voice over a static shape instantly makes a plain strummed progression sound intentional and grown-up, whether you're playing folk, indie, or arena rock.

The second takeaway is **the power-chord-plus-windmill philosophy of dynamics**: clear, 3rd-less chords give distortion room to breathe, and your *body* — not a pedal — is the dynamics control. Practice hitting hard on 1 and 3 and easing off the "and"s, and your rhythm playing gains push and

groove even on a clean amp. Townshend's genius wasn't complexity; it was committing fully to simple shapes.

#### ♪ LISTEN FOR

- The G-string finger drop in the intro — fret 9 (sus4) resolving to fret 8 (the 3rd). You should hear the chord "settle."
- The bass line *descending* under ringing top notes in the refrain, not just chords changing randomly.
- Power chords that stay **clear** at volume — if yours sound muddy, you've left a 3rd in, or your gain is too high.
- The dynamic punch on beats 1 and 3: the windmill is an accent, not constant noise.
- The layered brightness — acoustic chime over electric grit — that makes the whole track shimmer and shove at once.

# “Misirlou” • Dick Dale

---

## AT A GLANCE

**Artist:** Dick Dale (and His Del-Tones)

**Song:** "Misirlou"

**Album:** *Surfers' Choice* (1962); the single also circulated in '62

**The tone in one sentence:** A wet, splashy single-coil Strat blasted through a loud, clean Fender amp drenched in spring reverb, with a knife-edge staccato melody machine-gunned by relentless tremolo picking.

**Difficulty:** Advanced (the picking hand is the whole game here)

**Key & tuning:** E Phrygian-dominant; standard tuning (E A D G B E)

## | The Rig & Signal Chain

Dale was a left-hander who famously played a right-handed guitar flipped over and restrung, and he worked hand-in-hand with Leo Fender to build amps loud enough to keep up with him.

- **Guitar:** A **Fender Stratocaster** with its stock single-coil pickups. The bridge pickup is the signature surf voice — bright, glassy, cutting. Dale played with extremely heavy-gauge strings (commonly cited as a wound third and gauges climbing past .060 on the low E), which is part of why his attack reads so thick and percussive. You don't need that to learn the part.
- **Amp:** A **Fender Showman** (the piggyback design Dale helped Leo Fender push to higher wattage to survive his volume). Set loud but essentially **clean** — surf tone is about headroom, not breakup. Tone controls are commonly cited as bright-forward with treble pushed up.
- **Reverb:** The defining ingredient — an outboard **Fender Reverb Unit** (the standalone spring-tank box, a 6G15-style circuit). This is the "drip." Dale is often credited as the player who made the

wet, splashy spring tank the sound of surf. Dwell and mix are approximately high; that long, metallic decay trailing every note is the tank working hard.

- **Pick & mic:** Heavy pick, dug in hard. Studio miking specifics from 1962 aren't reliably documented, so treat any "exact" mic-placement claim as guesswork.

A note on lore: you'll read confident stories about Dale's "secret" string gauges and amp settings. Real string gauges aside, treat the precise knob numbers as unknown — nobody saved Leo's settings sheet. Aim for the *behavior* (loud, clean, very wet) rather than chasing numbers.

## | The Tone Recipe

You can land ~90% of this with modern, affordable gear. The two non-negotiables are a **single-coil bridge pickup** and a **big spring (or convincing spring-emulation) reverb**.

### Substitutions:

- **Guitar:** Any Strat-style or single-coil guitar. Bridge pickup. A **Telecaster** bridge works too — slightly more bite, still authentic-adjacent.
- **Amp:** Any clean Fender-voiced amp (**Blues Junior, Deluxe Reverb, Hot Rod**) or a clean modeler patch. The Deluxe Reverb's onboard tank is genuinely excellent here.
- **Reverb:** Onboard spring reverb if you have it; otherwise a spring-emulation pedal (a dedicated surf/spring reverb is ideal). Outboard tank boxes exist if you want the real thing.

### Starting points (knobs out of 10):

- Amp: Gain/Volume set for **clean** with just a hair of liveliness — 4–5. Bass 4, Mid 5, **Treble 7**, Presence 6. Brightness is the point.
- Reverb: **Mix 6–7, Dwell/Decay 7–8**. You want a long, audible splash after each note, not a subtle room.
- Guitar: Bridge pickup. Volume 10, Tone 8–10 (keep it bright).
- **Pick attack:** Hard and close to the bridge for extra snap and articulation. A heavy pick (1.0mm+) helps tremolo picking stay even.
- **Gain placement:** Keep it clean. If anything breaks up, back off — distortion smears the staccato attacks that make this part read.

## | What's Going On Musically

"Misirlou" is an old Eastern Mediterranean melody (Greek/Middle-Eastern roots) that Dale, of Lebanese-American heritage, electrified. The exotic flavor comes from one scale.

**The key is E Phrygian-dominant:** E – F – G# – A – B – C – D. Think of it as the fifth mode of A harmonic minor, or as an E major-ish scale with a **flat 2nd (F)** and a **flat 6th (C)**. The magic interval is the gap between the **♭2 (F) and the major 3rd (G#)** — that's an *augmented second*, a jump of three frets, and it's the sound your ear hears as "snake-charmer," flamenco, klezmer, or Middle-Eastern. Phrygian-dominant means: the moody Phrygian flat-2nd, but with a *major* 3rd that gives it a brighter, more aggressive pull. (For comparison: natural minor would give you a flat 3rd and a natural 2nd — none of the exotic tension.)

**Harmony:** The tune is largely melody-driven over an implied E tonal center. The two pillar chords you can imply are **E major** and **F major** — that I to ♭II move is the harmonic fingerprint of the Phrygian family. You don't need lush voicings; power chords or simple triads on E and F do the job because the *scale* is carrying the exotic color.

**Form:** Stripped to essentials, it's a repeating melodic statement that climbs, peaks, and resolves, separated by the dramatic glissando runs that rocket up and down the neck. The structure is built around theme-and-restatement, with the slides acting as transitions and exclamation points.

**Why the technique matters:** A slow melody in this scale already sounds Middle-Eastern. But Dale plays each note as a *burst* of rapid repeated pick strokes — **tremolo picking** — so a single melody note becomes a sustained, vibrating, machine-gun tone. That sustain-by-repetition, plus the reverb tail, is what turns a folk melody into a wall of surf adrenaline.

## | Signature Moves

### 1. The Tremolo-Picked Main Melody

The opening theme walks up the E Phrygian-dominant scale, but every note is sustained by continuous down-up picking. The numbers below are the *melody pitches*; the picking is many strokes per note.

TAB

Tempo ~ fast (think frantic, even sixteenth-note tremolo).  
Each note = continuous alternate picking for its full duration.

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-----|
D|-----|
A|--7---8---10---8---7---6---7-----|
E|-----|
    E   F   G#  F   E   D#  E

```

*Caption — Tremolo-picked theme:* Hold each pitch and tremolo-pick it for its full duration. Hear the augmented-second leap from F (8) to G# (10) — that's the exotic hook. Keep the wrist loose; the goal is an even buzz, not individual notes.

### 2. The Long Glissando Run

The famous "diving" gesture — a fast chromatic-style slide rocketing down (and back up) the string, smeared by reverb.

TAB

Tempo ~ as fast as you can stay clean. One continuous slide; let reverb blur it.

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-----|
D|-----|
A|--12\|3-----|
E|-----|
    pick once, then SLIDE the fretting hand all the way down

```

*Caption — Diving glissando:* Pick the top note hard, then drag your fretting finger down the string in one motion. The reverb tail does the rest. The drama is in the speed and the wet trail, not in hitting every fret cleanly.

### 3. Staccato Bursts Between Phrases

Short, clipped stabs — pick the note, tremolo briefly, then *choke it dead* so the reverb splash rings out alone.

TAB

Tempo ~ fast. Burst, then mute with the palm so only the reverb tail sustains.

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-----|
D|-----|
A|--7-x---7-x---10-x---8-x-----|
E|-----|
  each number = tremolo burst;  x = hard palm-mute choke

```

*Caption — Staccato choke:* The "x" is a hard palm-mute choke right after the burst. That sudden silence — filled by the wet spring decay — is the surf signature. Control the *stop* as much as the *start*.

## The Drills

These are original exercises in the surf idiom. Build them slowly with a metronome; tremolo picking rewards patience over weeks, not minutes.

**Drill A — Tremolo speed & evenness (the engine).** Train a smooth, sustained tremolo on a single note, then add a string change without breaking the buzz.

TAB

Tempo: start 70 BPM, sixteenths. Push up 5 BPM only when EVEN and clean. Down-up the whole time. Aim for a steady buzz, no flams, no gaps.

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-----|
D|-----5-----|
A|--7-----7-----|
E|-----|
  one note, sustained --> change string, no break

```

*Builds:* Wrist stamina and a consistent attack. *Tone:* Bridge pickup, clean amp, reverb up — let the wet tail expose any unevenness in your picking. If it sounds ragged, slow down.

**Drill B — The Phrygian-dominant shape (the vocabulary).** Lock the E F G# A B C D scale under your fingers in one position so the exotic intervals become muscle memory. Note the three-fret jumps that create the augmented-second flavor.

TAB

Tempo: 60 BPM, one note per click (no tremolo yet – learn the map first).  
Then repeat WITH tremolo on each note.

```

e|-----0--1-----|
B|-----0--1--3-----|
G|-----0--1--2-----|
D|-----0--2--3-----|
A|---0--2--3-----|
E|0--1-----|
  E  F  G# A  B  C  D  E  F  G# A  B  C  D  E  F
                        (ascending two octaves)
  
```

**Builds:** Internalizing the  $\flat 2$  (F) and  $\flat 6$  (C) plus the G# major 3rd. **Tone:** Same surf setting. Once memorized, improvise short licks using only these notes — everything you play will sound "Misirlou."

**Drill C — Staccato-with-reverb control (the sing-and-stop).** Alternate a tremolo burst with a hard choke, leaving space for the spring tank to splash. This trains the *off* switch.

TAB

Tempo: 80 BPM. Burst for one beat, choke on beat 2, let reverb ring into the gap.  
Move the burst up the Phrygian-dominant scale each bar.

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-----|
D|-----|
A|--7-x-----8-x-----10-x-----|
E|-----|
  burst + choke, then let reverb ring through each rest
  
```

**Builds:** Dynamic control and the surf "drip-in-the-silence" effect. **Tone:** Crank the reverb mix and dwell so the tail clearly fills each rest. The musicality is in what happens *after* you stop.

## | Make It Yours

You now own three transferable tools: a scale that instantly evokes the exotic, a picking technique that turns any single note into sustained intensity, and a reverb-and-choke dynamic that creates drama from silence. Drop the **Phrygian-dominant** shape over a static E or a minor vamp in your own writing and a plain riff turns cinematic. Use **tremolo picking** sparingly elsewhere — on a held bend, the top of a solo phrase, the last note of a chorus — and it becomes a thrilling exclamation point

rather than a one-trick gimmick. And steal the surf lesson that most players miss: tone lives in the *spaces*. A wet reverb tail ringing into a hard-cut silence is as expressive as any note you actually play. Master the stop, and you've understood the genre.

#### ♪ LISTEN FOR

- A **smooth, even tremolo** with no flams or gaps — a steady buzz, not a stutter, on every melody note.
- The **augmented-second leap** (F to G#) landing clearly — that three-fret jump is the exotic hook; make it sing, not blur.
- The **glissando** smearing into the reverb tail — one confident motion, drama over precision.
- **Hard staccato chokes** that leave the spring splash ringing alone in the gaps.
- A **clean, bright, very wet** overall tone — bridge pickup, no breakup, reverb dwell high enough to drip.

# “Apache” • The Shadows

---

## AT A GLANCE

**Artist:** The Shadows (Hank Marvin, lead guitar)

**Song:** “Apache”

**Album:** Originally a UK single (1960); later collected on *The Shadows* (1961)

**The tone in one sentence:** A glassy, clean Stratocaster neck-pickup melody draped in deep tape echo and spring reverb, sung through a gentle whammy-bar wobble.

**Difficulty:** Beginner to Intermediate

**Key & tuning:** A minor / A major, standard tuning (E A D G B E)

“Apache” is the song that taught Britain the electric guitar could *sing*. There are no power chords, no distortion, no shredding — just a single voice playing a memorable tune, supported by echo that turns one note into a small choir. If you want to understand where Brian May, Mark Knopfler, and a thousand surf and instrumental players got their sense of melody, you start here.

## | The Rig & Signal Chain

Hank Marvin's sound is one of the most documented in British guitar history, and the broad strokes are reliable even if exact knob positions are not.

- **Guitar:** A **Fender Stratocaster** — famously a Fiesta Red model imported into the UK (Marvin's was reportedly the first Strat in the country, though "Apache" itself may predate his receiving it; sources differ on which guitar cut the actual single). The defining choice is the **neck pickup** (sometimes the neck-and-middle position), which gives that round, vocal, treble-without-ice quality.

- **Amp:** A **Vox AC15**, later AC30 — the chimey, slightly compressed Class-A British clean that became the Shadows' signature. Bright, present, never harsh.
- **Echo:** A **Meazzi Echomatic** — an Italian tape/disc echo unit. This is the secret ingredient. Marvin used a single repeat (sometimes two) timed to the tempo so each note is shadowed by a clean copy a beat or so behind it. The slap is distinct and rhythmic, not a wash.
- **Reverb:** Spring reverb, soft and short, sitting under the echo.
- **Vibrato arm:** The Strat's tremolo (whammy) bar, used for slow, shallow pitch dips — never a dive, just a quiver at the ends of notes.

Settings are best described as *approximately*: amp clean with treble up and a touch of the cut/tone control backed off; echo set to one clear repeat at roughly a dotted-eighth-to-quarter feel against the tempo; reverb low. Treat any "exact" Hank settings you read online as enthusiast reconstruction, not gospel.

## | The Tone Recipe

You can get ~90% of the way there with very ordinary modern gear, because the magic is mostly *clean amp + neck pickup + timed echo + light vibrato*.

### Substitution list:

- **Guitar:** Any Stratocaster-style single-coil guitar. Select the **neck pickup**. (A humbucker neck pickup with the tone rolled to ~6 gets surprisingly close; it just won't have the same air.)
- **Amp:** Any clean amp with a bright/Class-A voicing. A small Vox-style combo is ideal; a Fender clean works too with treble up. Modelers: pick an "AC15/AC30 clean" or "Vox top boost" model.
- **Echo:** A **digital delay** with a tape mode. Set it to a *single, audible repeat* — feedback low. Time it to the song (see below). Even a simple analog-voiced pedal works.
- **Reverb:** Spring or plate, low mix.

### Starting points (knobs out of 10):

- Amp: **Gain 2–3** (stay clean — no breakup), **Bass 4**, **Mid 5**, **Treble 7**, **Reverb 2–3**.
- Guitar: **Neck pickup**, **Volume 10**, **Tone 6–7** (back it off so the top isn't glassy-sharp).
- Delay: **Mix 4–5**, **Feedback 2** (one or two repeats), **Time ~430–460 ms** as a dotted-eighth feel near the original ~115–120 BPM. Tap-tempo to the track and nudge until the repeat lands like a

second guitarist.

- Pick attack: **medium-soft, near the neck**, flatpick. Let notes ring full value; the echo fills the space, so don't rush.
- Gain placement: all the warmth comes from the *amp staying clean* and the *neck pickup* — resist adding drive.

The single most important dial is **delay time**. Get that locked and you're most of the way home.

## | What's Going On Musically

“Apache” is built on the tension between **A minor** (the verse/theme) and **A major** (the brighter answering phrases), a move that gives the tune its cowboys-and-open-plains drama. Define two terms first: a **triad** is a three-note chord (root, third, fifth) — the basic building block of harmony; an **arpeggio** is those chord tones played one at a time rather than strummed. The melody of “Apache” is essentially **arpeggiated triads** — you are spelling chords out as a tune.

The core progression of the main theme moves around **Am – G – F – G** (a very natural minor / A Aeolian motion), with the **A natural minor scale** (A B C D E F G) supplying the melody notes. The “A Aeolian” label just means the natural minor scale treated as its own mode. Later sections lift to **A major** chords for contrast and a sense of resolution and triumph.

The form is a simple instrumental verse/refrain structure with an intro and repeats — there's no sung chorus, so the *guitar melody is the vocal*. That's the whole lesson of this song: phrasing matters more than notes. Each phrase has a clear beginning, a peak, and a landing, and the spaces between phrases are as important as the phrases themselves (the echo lives in those spaces).

Because the melody is triadic, knowing your **A minor and C major triads up the neck** unlocks almost the entire tune. If you can find A–C–E and C–E–G as little three-note shapes on the top strings, you can improvise convincingly in this style immediately.

## | Signature Moves

### 1. The echo-laden theme

*Feel: relaxed, ~116 BPM. Let every note ring; the delay answers you.*

TAB

```

e|-----|
B|-----1--0-----|
G|-----2-----2-----2-----0-----|
D|--2-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|

```

*Caption: An illustrative fragment of the triadic minor theme — notes drawn from an Am shape. Play it once, then imagine the echo restating it a beat behind.*

## 2. The whammy dip

*Feel: hold the note, then ease the bar down a touch and let it float back.*

TAB

```

e|-----|
B|----1-----1-----|
G|-----2~~~~-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|

```

\dip bar-vib

*Caption: A sustained note gets a slow, shallow bar dip (a quarter-step or less) and a gentle quiver at the end — the Strat's vibrato arm doing what your finger can't.*

## 3. The major-key answer

*Feel: brighter, confident, same tempo.*

TAB

```

e|-----0-----|
B|-----2-----2-----2-----|
G|----1-----1-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|

```

*Caption: Arpeggiating an A-major-flavored shape to "answer" the minor theme — the same picking touch, a happier harmony.*

# The Drills

These are my own exercises in the Shadows style — short, playable, and each one trains a specific skill the song demands.

## Drill A — Phrasing locked to echo

Set a single delay repeat at a dotted-eighth feel (~430 ms at 116 BPM). Play the melody slowly enough that you can *hear your own echo land between your notes*. The goal is to leave deliberate gaps.

*Feel: ~108 BPM to start; rest where the rests are written — the echo fills them.*

TAB

e|-----|  
B|---1-----1-----3-----1-----|  
G|-----2-----0-----2-----0---2~-----|  
D|-----|  
A|-----|  
E|-----|  
play (echo) play (echo) land+vib

*Caption builds: economy and patience. Trains you to phrase with space so the delay becomes a second instrument instead of mud. Tone: neck pickup, amp clean, delay mix ~4, one repeat.*

## Drill B — Controlled whammy vibrato

Three sustained notes, each treated differently: straight, then a shallow downward dip-and-return, then a slow bar vibrato. Keep dips small — this is a sigh, not a scream.

*Feel: free time. Hold each note its full length.*

TAB

e|-----|  
B|---1~-----1-----1~-----|  
G|-----|  
D|-----|  
A|-----|  
E|-----|  
finger-vib \ / bar-vib (slow)  
dip&return

*Caption builds: bar control and pitch awareness. Trains a light, musical right hand on the tremolo arm so your vibrato stays in tune. Tone: short reverb, low delay, so you hear the pitch movement clearly.*

## Drill C — Triadic melody builder

Walk three small triad shapes on the top three strings — Am, C, then back — arpeggiating each. This is the actual engine of “Apache”-style melody: think in three-note chords, play them one note at a time.

*Feel: ~112 BPM, even and singing. Each group is one triad.*

TAB

```
e|-----0-----0-----|
B|-----1-----1-----1-----1---|
G|--2---2---0---0---2---2---|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
  |--Am--|  |--C--|  |-----Am-----|
                        (resolve)
```

*Caption builds: fretboard knowledge and melodic vocabulary. Once these shapes are under your fingers you can compose your own Shadows-style themes anywhere on the neck. Tone: neck pickup, tone rolled to ~6, delay timed to tempo.*

## | Make It Yours

The deepest takeaway from “Apache” isn't a lick — it's a philosophy: **one clean note, well-placed and well-timed, beats a flurry of busy ones.** Take any simple melody you know (even a nursery tune) and play it on the neck pickup with a single timed delay repeat and a whisper of bar vibrato. Suddenly it sounds *intentional*, cinematic, adult. Use this approach when you want a guitar part to feel like a vocal — on a ballad intro, a film-style cue, or the answer phrase in a song's arrangement. Steal the *space*, the *timing*, and the *restraint*, and you can apply Hank Marvin's lesson to rock, country, ambient, or pop without ever sounding like a 1960 throwback.

▶ LISTEN FOR

## • LISTEN FOR

- The **single, clearly-timed echo repeat** trailing each note like a second guitarist — not a blurry wash.
- The **neck-pickup roundness**: present and clear, but never icy or sharp on top.
- **Full-value notes with real gaps** between phrases — the silence is part of the part.
- The **shallow, slow whammy quiver** at the ends of held notes, staying in tune.
- The **minor-to-major shift** giving the tune its wide-open, dramatic arc.

PART C

# Fuzz, Wah & First Effects



# “(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction” • The Rolling Stones

---

## AT A GLANCE

**Artist:** The Rolling Stones

**Song:** “(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction”

**Album:** *Out of Our Heads* (US, 1965)

**The tone in one sentence:** A thick, buzzy, near-square-wave fuzz playing a three-note hook that sounds halfway between a guitar and a brass section.

**Difficulty:** Beginner

**Key & tuning:** E major; standard tuning (E A D G B E)

This is one of the most important three notes in rock history, and the beautiful part is that it's genuinely easy to play. The whole lesson is about *touch* and *tone*, not finger gymnastics. Keith Richards reportedly woke up in the night, mumbled the riff into a cassette recorder, and went back to sleep — the tape was forty minutes of snoring after that. He always said the fuzz was a placeholder; he heard a horn line, a Stax-style brass stab, and reached for the **Maestro FZ-1 Fuzz-Tone** to sketch it until real horns could be cut. The horns never came. The placeholder became the legend. That's your first lesson in tone: sometimes the "wrong" sound is the right one.

## | The Rig & Signal Chain

- **Guitar:** Keith is most often cited as using a **Gibson Les Paul** (a sunburst he had at the time) for the riff, into the studio chain at RCA Studios in Hollywood. Pickup details are not definitively documented; treat any "exact" claim with suspicion.

- **Fuzz:** The **Maestro FZ-1 Fuzz-Tone** — a battery-powered, three-transistor germanium fuzz made by Gibson. This is the star of the recording. It produces a gated, sputtery, hard-clipped sound that's bright and a little ragged at the edges, very different from a smooth modern fuzz.
- **Amp:** Studio amplification from 1965 is not reliably documented for this specific take. You'll see confident claims online; most are guesswork. What matters tonally is that the fuzz is doing the heavy lifting — the amp is mostly a clean-ish platform.
- **Settings:** No verified knob settings exist. The FZ-1 had minimal controls anyway (level and an "attack"/sustain control depending on the unit). Anything presented as Keith's "secret settings" is invented.

A note on lore: the FZ-1's commercial life was modest until this record, after which it sold out. That part is well documented. The specific guitar/amp pairing on the master take is *not* — so I'll hedge it, and you should too.

## | The Tone Recipe

You can get 90% of the way there for very little money, because this is a *fuzz-forward* tone — nail the fuzz character and the rest follows.

- **Fuzz pedal:** Any germanium or silicon fuzz with a raw, gated voice. Modern reissues of the FZ-1 exist; a generic "Fuzz Face"-style germanium pedal gets you close, as does almost any cheap fuzz with a tight, buzzy character. You do *not* want a smooth, creamy modern fuzz with tons of sustain — you want a little spit and gate.
- **Guitar:** A humbucker (Les Paul, or any HH guitar) gives the right thickness, but single-coils work fine and sound great too. The riff is on the low strings, so warmth helps.
- **Amp:** Set the amp mostly clean — let the fuzz be the distortion. A small tube amp or a clean modeler patch is perfect.

### Starting points (knobs out of 10):

- **Fuzz gain/sustain:** 6–7. Enough to clip hard, not so much it turns to mush.
- **Fuzz level/volume:** 7–8, pushing the amp slightly.
- **Amp gain:** 2–3 (clean), **bass:** 5, **mids:** 6, **treble:** 6.
- **Pickup:** neck or middle for warmth; bridge if your fuzz is dark.

- **Pick attack:** firm and even, near the bridge for definition. Dig in — fuzz rewards a confident pick hand.
- **Guitar volume:** roll it down to ~7 to start, so you have room to clean up and dirty up with the knob (more on that in the drills).

## | What's Going On Musically

The song lives in **E major**, and the riff is built from the **E major pentatonic** scale — a five-note scale (E, F#, G#, B, C#) that sounds bright and "happy" compared to its bluesy minor cousin. The hook itself is dead simple: it leans on **E**, lifts up to **F#**, then to **G#**, and resolves back home. Three notes, all from that major-pentatonic family, arranged as a call that *demand*s an answer — which is exactly why it works as a faux horn line. Brass riffs love that rising-then-resolving major shape.

Underneath, the verse rides an **E major** chord, and the song moves to the **A major** (the IV chord) and **B** region (the V) as it builds — classic **I-IV-V**, the three-chord backbone of nearly all early rock and blues. In E, that's **E (I) – A (IV) – B (V)**. Once you know those three chords you can play a thousand songs; this is one of the cleanest examples.

The form is verse / pre-chorus / chorus, with the fuzz riff acting as the connective tissue — it bookends sections and drives the intro. Notice that the riff is **rhythmic** as much as melodic: it's syncopated, punchy, and locks with the snare. The genius isn't the notes (a beginner plays them in a minute); it's the *insistence* — the same figure hammered with attitude until it becomes a hook you can't shake.

One term to bank for the whole fuzz section of this workbook: **square-wave clipping**. A clean guitar note is a smooth, rounded waveform. Fuzz slams the signal so hard that the tops and bottoms get chopped flat, turning the wave nearly square. Square waves are rich in **odd harmonics**, which is why fuzz sounds buzzy, vocal, and brass-like — and why it reads as a horn section here instead of "a distorted guitar."

## | Signature Moves

### 1. The three-note fuzz hook

This is the DNA. Short, illustrative — play it slow and *mean it*.

**TAB**

Moderate rock, ~136 BPM. Heavy fuzz, firm pick attack.

```

e|-----|-----|
B|-----|-----|
G|-----|-----|
D|--2--2--4--4-----|--2--2--4--4--6~-----|
A|--2--2--4--4-----|--2--2--4--4--6~-----|
E|--0--0--0--0-----|--0--0--0--0-----|
    E    F#          E    F#    G# (vibrato)
  
```

*Caption:* The motif rises E → F# → G#, all major-pentatonic tones. Let the fuzz gate slightly between hits so each note "pops." The note with vibrato is the resolution of the call — lean into it.

## 2. The driving low-string rhythm

Between hook statements, the part keeps the engine running with a chugging E.

**TAB**

~136 BPM. Steady eighths, palm muting optional for separation.

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-----|
D|-----|
A|--2--2--2--2--2--2--2--2--|
E|--0--0--0--0--0--0--0--0--|
    PM throughout (light)
  
```

*Caption:* This is groove glue. Keep your pick hand relaxed and even; the fuzz turns a plain power-chord pulse into something urgent. Light palm muting (PM) tightens the low end.

## 3. The answer phrase

The riff doesn't just repeat — it answers itself a half-bar later, pushing back up.

TAB

~136 BPM. Same fuzz; pick slightly harder on the climb.

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-----|
D|-----4-4-6-6-----|
A|-----4-4-6-6-----|
E|--0-0-0-0-0-0-----|
  E pedal  F#    G#

```

*Caption:* Notice the call-and-response feel: a low E pedal launches the line, then it climbs back to that G#. This conversational shape is what makes three notes feel like a full melody.

## | The Drills

These are my own exercises in the spirit of the tune — original lines built to train exactly what this song demands. Use the same fuzz tone for all three.

### Drill A — Fuzz riff phrasing (gate & pop)

Trains clean note separation through a gated fuzz, so each attack speaks.

TAB

~130 BPM. Pick firmly; let go just enough for the fuzz to gate between notes.

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-----|
D|--2-2-4-4-2-2-0-4-4-6~-----|
A|--2-2-4-4-2-2-0-4-4-6~-----|
E|--0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-----|

```

*Caption:* Builds the rhythmic "stutter" that makes a fuzz riff sound like a horn stab instead of a smear. Aim for crisp gaps between each pair of notes. Tone: gain at 6, guitar volume up around 8 so the fuzz stays lively.

### Drill B — Volume-knob dynamics into fuzz

The single most useful fuzz skill: a germanium fuzz *cleans up* when you roll your guitar volume down. Train your pinky to ride the knob.

TAB

~120 BPM. Same riff twice: first soft (vol ~4), then full (vol ~9).

```

e|-----|-----|
B|-----|-----|
G|-----|-----|
D|--2--2--4--4--2--2-----|--2--2--4--4--2--2--6b8~-----|
A|--2--2--4--4--2--2-----|--2--2--4--4--2--2--6b8~-----|
E|--0--0--0--0--0--0-----|--0--0--0--0--0--0-----|
  guitar volume LOW (cleaner)   guitar volume HIGH (full fuzz)

```

*Caption:* Builds the dynamic control that real fuzz players live on — the pedal stays on, your knob does the work. Roll down for an almost-clean verse, roll up and dig in for the payoff (note the bend up to 8 at the end). Tone: a germanium fuzz responds best; silicon cleans up less.

### Drill C — Major-pentatonic riff builder

The hook is pure E major pentatonic. This drill walks the scale on the low strings so the shape lives under your fingers.

TAB

~125 BPM. Even eighths; stay in position, all notes from E major pentatonic.

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-----|
D|-----2--4--6--7--6--4--2-----|
A|-----2--4--6--7-----7--6--4--2-----|
E|--0--2-----|

```

*Caption:* Builds melodic vocabulary in the major-pentatonic box on the bass strings — exactly where these horn-style hooks live. Once it's smooth, improvise your *own* three-note hook from these notes. Tone: same fuzz settings; pick near the bridge for clarity.

## | Make It Yours

The lesson of “Satisfaction” isn't the riff — it's the *attitude toward sound*. Keith reached for a fuzz to fake a horn section and accidentally invented a hook. So borrow the move: when you write, try the “wrong” tool on purpose. Put a fuzz on a melody that “should” be clean. Take a three-note idea and refuse to let it go — repetition plus a great tone *is* a hook. And practice the volume-knob trick until

it's invisible; once you can clean up and dirty up without ever tapping the pedal, your fuzz stops being a one-trick switch and becomes a genuinely expressive voice. Most beginners leave fuzz on full and wonder why it sounds flat. You'll know better.

#### ♪ LISTEN FOR

- The slight **gate** between notes — each fuzz attack should "pop," not blur into the next.
- The **rising three-note shape** (E → F# → G#) sounding like a horn line, not a guitar lick.
- **Even, confident pick attack** on the low strings; fuzz exposes a sloppy right hand.
- The riff's **rhythmic insistence** locking with the beat — groove over flash.
- Your **volume knob** cleaning up the fuzz when you roll back, full buzz when you dig in.

# “Voodoo Child (Slight Return)” • Jimi Hendrix

## AT A GLANCE

**Artist:** Jimi Hendrix (Experience: Hendrix, Noel Redding, Mitch Mitchell)

**Song:** "Voodoo Child (Slight Return)"

**Album:** *Electric Ladyland* (1968)

**The tone in one sentence:** A vocal, throat-of-God Strat through a swept wah and barely-tamed fuzz, where rhythm and lead are the same conversation.

**Difficulty:** Advanced

**Key & tuning:** E (E minor pentatonic with Dorian and major-third color). Standard tuning, often tuned down a half step (Eb) on Hendrix records — try standard first, then drop everything a semitone to match the recording pitch.

## | The Rig & Signal Chain

This is the textbook late-'60s Hendrix front line, and most of it is well documented.

- **Guitar:** A **Fender Stratocaster** — right-handed body flipped and restrung for a lefty. That flip matters tonally: the bridge pickup ends up slanted with the *bass* strings closer to the bridge, which subtly brightens the low strings and fattens the highs versus a standard Strat. Pickups were stock single-coils of the era.
- **Wah:** A **Vox wah** (the **Clyde McCoy**/early Cry Baby lineage). The whole intro lives and dies on the wah's voice — a midrange peak you sweep with your foot.
- **Fuzz:** A **Fuzz Face** — Hendrix used both the germanium-transistor and later silicon versions. On *Electric Ladyland*-era recordings the fuzz is present but not a wall of mush; it's gated, spitty, and reacts hard to your guitar's volume knob.

- **Amp:** Cranked **Marshall** stacks (100-watt Super Lead "plexi"-style heads into 4x12 cabinets), run loud enough that the power section is contributing its own breakup on top of the fuzz.
- **Mic:** Studio details vary by source and aren't reliably pinned down; assume close-miked 4x12s in the room. Don't trust any "exact mic placement" claim for this specific take.

A note on settings: Hendrix rode his guitar's volume knob constantly to move between clean-ish and full fuzz, so there is no single "secret" dial position. Treat any precise plexi or Fuzz Face setting you see online as *commonly cited as around halfway-to-cranked*, not gospel.

## | The Tone Recipe

You can get ~90% there with a pedalboard and a small tube combo or a good modeler.

### Substitutions:

- **Guitar:** Any Strat-style single-coil guitar. Use the *bridge* pickup for bite, the *neck* for the warmer fills. No Strat? A humbucker split to single-coil works; a full humbucker will be too thick under the fuzz.
- **Wah:** Any quality wah with a strong midrange peak (a Cry Baby, or a Vox-voiced wah). The cheaper the wah, the more it can "honk" — sometimes a feature here.
- **Fuzz:** A Fuzz Face clone (germanium for warmth, silicon for cut) or any fuzz that *cleans up when you roll your volume back*. That cleanup is the whole technique.
- **Amp:** Edge-of-breakup tube amp, or an amp/modeler set to light crunch so the fuzz stacks on top instead of fighting a clean platform.

### Starting points (knobs out of 10):

- Amp: Gain 4, Bass 5, Mid 7, Treble 6, Presence 6. You want midrange so the wah has something to sweep.
- Fuzz Face clone: Fuzz 7, Volume to unity (matches bypassed loudness).
- Guitar volume: keep it at about 7–8 as your "home." Roll to 4–5 to clean up for chords, push to 10 for screaming leads. **This knob is an instrument.**
- Pick attack: medium-hard with the edge of the pick. Dig in for the leads; lighten up and let notes bloom for the sustained bends.
- Wah: park it slightly toward the toe-down (treble) side for solos; full sweeps for the intro.

Signal order: **guitar** → **wah** → **fuzz** → **amp**. Wah-before-fuzz is the classic Hendrix order and gives that vowel-like "wah-fuzz" interaction. Try fuzz-before-wah too; it's smoother and less aggressive.

## | What's Going On Musically

The song sits in E and draws almost entirely from the **E minor pentatonic** scale (E-G-A-B-D) — the five-note "box 1" shape most players learn first, rooted at the 12th fret on the low E string (or the open position).

What makes it *Hendrix* and not generic blues is the color he mixes in:

- The **major third (G#)** sliding against the minor third (G), the classic blues "smear" between sad and happy.
- A **Dorian** flavor — that's the minor scale with a raised 6th (here, a C#). Dorian is brighter than natural minor; think "minor, but hopeful." The C# peeks out in the fills and gives them their funky lift.
- **Double-stops**: two notes played at once, usually a 4th or 3rd apart on adjacent strings. Hendrix uses these constantly to thicken single-note lines into mini-chords.

The intro and verses ride a riff built on **E7#9** territory — the "Hendrix chord" (E-G#-D-G), which crams a major third *and* a minor third (as the #9) into one voicing. That deliberate clash is the harmonic engine of his whole style.

**Form**: loose 12-bar-blues-derived structure in E, but stretched and elasticized — Hendrix treats the form as a frame, not a cage, dropping into open-string fills and stop-time hits at will. The genius is that **rhythm and lead are not separate jobs**. He'll strum a chord, answer it with a lick, slide back into the groove — all in one breath. That integration is the real lesson here, more than any single scale.

## | Signature Moves

### 1. The wah-swelled chordal intro

Slow, free, rubato. Rock the wah heel-to-toe on each strum.

TAB

```

e|-----|
B|--8b-----8---7-----|
G|--9-----9---7-----|
D|--9-----9---7-----|
A|--7-----7---5-----|
E|-----|
  ^wah open  ^toe ^heel

```

*Caption: An E7#9-ish stab, opened up by sweeping the wah across the strum so the chord "talks."*

## 2. E pentatonic lick with wah inflection

Moderate, swung sixteenths. Toe-down on the accented notes.

TAB

```

e|-----12b-----12-----|
B|-----12---15-----15~---|
G|--12h14-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|

```

*Caption: Box-1 E minor pentatonic up high; the wah's treble peak gives the bend its vocal cry.*

## 3. Rhythm-into-lead fill

Funky, in the pocket. The fill answers the chord like a second voice.

TAB

```

e|-----|
B|--8--8-----12b-----|
G|--9--9---7h9---9b-----|
D|--9--9-----|
A|--7--7---x-----|
E|-----|
  chord  >>> fill >>>

```

*Caption: A chord stab, then the hand slides down into a single-note answer — one gesture, not two.*

## | The Drills

These are original exercises in the song's style. Tone for all three: bridge pickup, fuzz on, guitar volume around 7, wah engaged.

### Drill A — Sixteenth-note wah rhythm

Builds foot-hand independence: your strumming stays steady while your foot pumps the wah in a fixed pattern.

90 bpm. Strum constant 16ths. Wah: toe-down on beats 1 and 3, heel-down on 2 and 4. Count "1-e-and-a."

TAB

```
e|-----|
B|--9-9-9-9--9-9-9-9--9-9-9-9--9-9-9-9-----|
G|--9-9-9-9--9-9-9-9--9-9-9-9--9-9-9-9-----|
D|--9-9-9-9--9-9-9-9--9-9-9-9--9-9-9-9-----|
A|--7-7-7-7--7-7-7-7--7-7-7-7--7-7-7-7-----|
E|-----|
    T . . H   T . . H   T . . H   T . . H
    (T = toe-down   H = heel-down)
```

*Caption: Once the pattern locks, mute slightly with the fret hand for a percussive "chank." The goal is your foot becoming a metronome you stop thinking about.*

### Drill B — Rhythm-and-lead combining

Trains the core Hendrix skill: answering your own chords without stopping the groove.

85 bpm, swung. Play the chord, then immediately roll into the lick from the same hand position. Don't reposition — reach.

TAB

```

e|-----|
B|--8-8-----8-8-----|
G|--9-9---7h9--9b---9-9---7h9-9-7-----|
D|--9-9-----9-9-----9-----|
A|--7-7---x-----7-7---x-----5h7-----|
E|-----|
    CHORD >fill>    CHORD >>> longer fill >>>

```

*Caption: The trick is to keep your thumb relaxed over the neck so you can grab the chord shape and the single notes from one anchored position. Roll guitar volume up a touch as you enter the fill for extra cry.*

### Drill C — E pentatonic with wah inflection

Pairs your bends with wah movement so the pitch and the filter cry together — the vocal quality at the heart of the tone.

80 bpm. On every bend, sweep the wah toe-down as the note rises; release both together.

TAB

```

e|-----12b---12-10-----|
B|-----12--15b--15-----13|
G|--12h14--14b--12-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
    pent. box-1    bend+wah    bend+wah    ~

```

*Caption: End on a wide finger vibrato (~) with the wah parked toe-down. Match the speed of your wah sweep to the speed of your bend — that synchronization is the whole illusion of a "talking" guitar.*

### | Make It Yours

The portable lesson here isn't the licks — it's the *attitude* that rhythm and lead are one job. Next time you're comping a groove, stop waiting for a designated solo section. Strum your chord, then answer it with two or three notes from the same shape, then fall back into the groove. Use your guitar's volume knob as a dynamic pedal: rhythm at 6, leads at 9. Add a wah and let your foot phrase the way a singer breathes — push toe-down on the notes you'd lean into vocally. Even on a clean amp with no

fuzz, that conversational call-and-response will instantly make your playing sound less like "chords then a solo" and more like one human talking.

#### ♪ LISTEN FOR

- The wah "vowel" — can you hear the chord change shape as the filter sweeps, like a mouth forming sounds?
- The volume-knob cleanup — fuzz that goes from creamy to clear without touching the pedal.
- The seam (or lack of one) between rhythm and lead — your fills should feel like answers, not interruptions.
- The major/minor-third smear (G against G#) giving licks that bittersweet Hendrix ache.
- Bends and wah cresting *together* — pitch and filter rising as one vocal cry.

# “White Room” • Cream (Eric Clapton)

## AT A GLANCE

**Artist:** Cream (Eric Clapton, guitar)

**Song:** “White Room”

**Album:** *Wheels of Fire* (1968)

**The tone in one sentence:** A thick, vocal Gibson-into-cranked-Marshall lead voice run through a wah pedal — burned-in midrange, long sustain, and a crying upper register that sings the way a human throat does.

**Difficulty:** Intermediate to Advanced

**Key & tuning:** D minor tonality (intro riff in 5/4; D Dorian/Aeolian color); standard tuning, A440

## | The Rig & Signal Chain

Clapton in the Cream era is the textbook “woman tone” rig: a humbucker-loaded **Gibson** into a loud tube **Marshall**, with a **wah** stomped in front for the solo. On *Wheels of Fire* he was moving between a Gibson SG (the famous “Fool” SG, painted by the Dutch art collective The Fool) and Les Paul / ES-335 style guitars; the bridge humbucker is the heart of the sound either way.

The amp is a Marshall — commonly cited as a 100-watt plexi-era stack — run hot enough that the power tubes are doing the distorting. There’s no fuzz box here doing the heavy lifting; the grit is amp overdrive plus a guitar volume that’s most of the way up. The wah is a **Vox/Cry Baby**-type pedal, the same family that defined the late-’60s lead vocabulary.

Settings are best treated as ballpark, not gospel. The “woman tone” idea (Clapton’s own term from the period) is commonly described as the **bridge or neck humbucker** with the guitar’s **tone control rolled well down** toward the dark end, into an amp pushed loud. Treat any “exact” knob

photo as approximate. The wah on the solo is used as a slow tonal sweep and an envelope, not the fast funk-rhythm chop — park it and rock it across phrases.

## | The Tone Recipe

You can get ~90% there with modern, affordable gear.

- **Guitar:** Any humbucker guitar — an Epiphone Les Paul/SG, a used Gibson, or any HH superstrat. Use the **bridge humbucker** for bite, or the neck for a rounder cry.
- **Amp/drive:** A cranked-Marshall voice. A real Marshall combo (DSL/Origin) on the crunch channel, a Plexi-style pedal (Wampler Plexi-Drive, JHS Charlie Brown) into a clean amp, or a “Brit 800/Plexi” amp model.
- **Wah:** Any **Cry Baby** or Vox-voiced wah. A vocal-voiced wah (Cry Baby 535Q, Vox V847) gets you closest.

Starting points (knobs out of 10):

- Amp: **Gain 6–7**, Bass 5, **Mid 7–8** (this is the whole game — keep mids forward), Treble 5–6, Presence 4, Master as loud as you can stand.
- Guitar volume **8–9**; **Tone rolled down to ~3–4** for the woman-tone darkness, then back up toward 6–7 if it gets muddy in your room.
- **Pick attack:** moderate, near the neck pickup, with the flesh of the thumb riding the pick for warmth. Dig in on bends; lighten for the legato.
- **Gain placement:** Let the amp do most of it. If you use a drive pedal, set its own gain at noon and lean on the amp.

The trap is too much treble and too little midrange — that gives you a thin, fizzy modern tone, the opposite of Clapton’s warm bark. When in doubt, add mids and roll tone down.

## | What’s Going On Musically

The song centers on **D minor**. “Minor key” just means the tonic chord is minor (D–F–A), and the melody leans on the minor third (F) that gives it that wistful, serious color.

The intro and verse riff sit in **5/4** — five beats per bar instead of four. Count it “1-2-3-4-5, 1-2-3-4-5.” It lopes; it never quite squares up, which is exactly the unsettled feeling the song wants. When

the chorus (“In the white room...”) arrives, the band drops into a normal 4/4, and that shift from off-kilter 5 to grounded 4 is half the song’s drama.

Harmonically the verse rides a descending line over D — moving through **D, C, B ♭** type chords (a *i- ♭ VII- ♭ VI* motion, the same brooding descent you hear in a lot of ’60s minor rock). Two scales color the lead:

- **D Aeolian** (natural minor): D E F G A B ♭ C — the dark, “all the sad notes” choice, with that B ♭.
- **D Dorian**: D E F G A **B** C — same as Aeolian but with a **natural 6th (B instead of B ♭)**. That one raised note brightens the minor just slightly and is a Clapton/blues favorite.

Over the wah solo, Clapton mostly works the **D minor pentatonic** box (D F G A C) — your standard five-note minor blues shape — and reaches up into the high register, bending and adding wide vibrato so each note behaves like a sung syllable. The form is a verse/chorus song with an extended outro solo, the wah crying all the way to the fade. The theory takeaway: a strong minor tonality + odd meter + pentatonic phrasing voiced through a wah = a lead that feels like it’s *talking*.

## | Signature Moves

Short, illustrative fragments — analysis, not the full chart.

### 1) The 5/4 intro riff (feel it in 5)

TAB

Slow, heavy — count 1-2-3-4-5 per bar

```
e|-----|-----|
B|-----|-----|
G|-7--7---5--5---3-|-7--7---5--5---3-|
D|-7--7---5--5---3-|-7--7---5--5---3-|
A|-5--5---3--3---1-|-5--5---3--3---1-|
E|-----|-----|
  1  2  3  4  5   1  2  3  4  5
```

Power chords descending *D-C-B ♭* over a five-beat bar — the lopsided pulse that makes the intro unmistakable.

### 2) Wah-drenched lead phrasing

TAB

Moderate – rock the wah with each note (toe-down on the bends)

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|--7b9r7---5~---7b9r7---5---7---|
D|-----7---|
A|-----|
E|-----|

```

Bend, release, and let the wah sweep open as the note rings — the pedal acts like a second vibrato, opening the vowel on the sustained notes.

### 3) The climactic bend (top of a phrase)

TAB

Big, vocal – full step, then hold and shake

```

e|-----15b17~~~~~15b17---|
B|--15-----15-|
G|-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|

```

A full-step bend at the top of the box, held with wide vibrato — the “cry.” The wah parked toe-down here adds the peak nasal vocal edge.

## | The Drills

Original exercises in the song’s style. Start with the wah-vocal phrasing tone above for all three.

### Drill A — 5/4 riff trainer (counting + groove)

TAB

Slow at first (~70 bpm feel) – say “1-2-3-4-5” out loud

```

e|-----|-----|
B|-----|-----|
G|--5--5--5--7--7--5--3-|-5--5--5--7--7--5--3-|
D|--5--5--5--7--7--5--3-|-5--5--5--7--7--5--3-|
A|--3--3--3--5--5--3--1-|-3--3--3--5--5--3--1-|
E|-----|-----|
  1  2  3  4  5  +  +   1  2  3  4  5  +  +

```

*Builds internal time in 5/4. Notice beats 1-2-3 stay put, then 4-5 move — train the “stay, then walk down” feel until you stop counting and just feel five. Palm-mute lightly and keep the right hand mechanical.*

### Drill B — Wah-as-vibrato phrasing

TAB

Moderate — one wah rock (down-up) per slashed note

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|--5b7r5---7~---5---3~---/5---7b9r7---5~---|
D|-----5~---|
A|-----|
E|-----|
  
```

*Trains the core Cream move: stop fretting vibrato and let the foot do it. On every held note, rock the wah toe-down-then-up once, slowly, so the note “speaks.” Roll your guitar tone to ~4 to thicken each syllable.*

### Drill C — D minor pentatonic with wide vibrato

TAB

Free time — bend in tune, then SHAKE wide and slow

```

e|-----10b12r10-----|
B|-----10---13b15~---13---|
G|----7--10b12~---12~|
D|--7-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
  
```

*Builds vocal vibrato and bend accuracy in the D minor pentatonic box (D F G A C, rooted at the 10th-fret D on the high E). Check every bend against the target pitch first, then add a wide, slow shake from the wrist — not the fingers. This is the difference between “playing the notes” and singing them.*

## | Make It Yours

The lesson of “White Room” isn’t the licks — it’s the *attitude*: a fat midrange voice, a wah used as expression rather than a wah-wah gimmick, and bends that behave like a singer. Steal three habits. First, **roll your tone knob down** and crank your amp’s mids; let yourself sound dark and let the speaker bark. Second, **park-and-rock the wah** under sustained notes instead of chugging it on rhythm — it becomes a second vibrato and instantly makes simple pentatonic lines sound vocal.

Third, **count in 5** for a week; writing one riff in 5/4 will permanently loosen your sense of time and make your 4/4 feel more deliberate. Do these over a i- b VII- b VI minor vamp in any key and you've got the Cream toolkit working in your own music.

#### ♪ LISTEN FOR

- The lope of the 5/4 — can you play the intro riff without counting out loud?
- **Woman tone:** dark, thick, mid-forward — no fizz, no ice-pick treble.
- The **wah as vibrato** — slow sweeps opening on held notes, not fast funk chops.
- **Vocal bends:** every bent note arrives in tune, then gets a wide, slow shake.
- **Sustain that sings** — notes bloom and hang rather than dying on the attack.

# “Purple Haze” • The Jimi Hendrix Experience

## AT A GLANCE

**Artist:** The Jimi Hendrix Experience

**Song:** “Purple Haze”

**Album:** *Are You Experienced* (1967) — released as a single in March 1967; track listing differs between the UK and US editions

**The tone in one sentence:** A snarling, slightly broken-up Strat soaked in germanium fuzz, with a ghostly octave-up shimmer on the lead that sounds like two guitars stacked into one.

**Difficulty:** Intermediate

**Key & tuning:** E (with a strong blues/Dorian flavor); Hendrix typically tuned a half-step down (Eb), but this lesson is written in standard E so you can play along in concert pitch or detune to match the record.

## | The Rig & Signal Chain

Hendrix's core rig here is one of the most documented in rock, and also one of the most mythologized — so let's separate what's solid from what's lore.

- **Guitar:** A **Fender Stratocaster**, played right-handed-strung but flipped for a left-hander. That flip matters tonally: the staggered pole pieces and the slanted bridge pickup end up reversed, which subtly changes the high end. The bridge pickup does most of the work on the riff and lead.
- **Fuzz:** A **Fuzz Face** — period units used germanium transistors, which are touch-sensitive and clean up dramatically when you roll back the guitar's volume knob. This is the single most important pedal in the chain. It's woolly, a little unstable, and reacts to your hands.
- **Octave:** An **Octavia** (built by Roger Mayer), an octave-up fuzz that adds a ring-modulated, upper-octave ghost note. You hear it most clearly on the solo, where single notes high on the neck

bloom into that piercing, alien doubling.

- **Amp: Marshall** stacks — commonly cited as 100-watt heads (the Super Lead family) pushed loud. Settings are usually described as bright and near-full, but treat any "exact" numbers you see online as approximate; the surviving documentation is thin.
- **Mic/room:** Recorded at Olympic Studios with engineer Eddie Kramer. Exact mic choices and placements for this track aren't reliably published, so I won't invent them.

One thing to flag: there's a popular story that the intro's swirling quality came from specific studio trickery. What's well-supported is the *Octavia* on the lead. Be skeptical of overly precise claims about "secret" settings — the magic here is mostly fuzz + a Strat + a loud Marshall + Jimi's hands.

## | The Tone Recipe

You can get ~90% there with accessible modern gear.

### Substitutions:

- **Guitar:** Any Strat-style guitar with single-coils. Use the **bridge pickup**. If you only have a humbucker guitar, split the coil or roll tone back to soften it.
- **Fuzz:** A modern silicon or germanium Fuzz Face clone (Dunlop makes affordable ones), or any two-knob fuzz. A Big Muff works but is darker and more "wall-of-sound" — fine, just less snarly.
- **Octave:** Any octave-up fuzz (a Roger Mayer Octavia reissue, or budget clones). For the riff you don't need it; engage it only for the solo.
- **Amp:** A cranked-clean or lightly-driven amp set bright. A small tube amp at the edge of breakup, or a clean amp with the fuzz doing the dirty work, both get you there.

### Starting points (knobs out of 10):

- Fuzz pedal: **Fuzz at 7–8, Volume to unity** (matches bypassed level).
- Guitar volume: **8–9** for the riff (so you keep some clean-up headroom), back to ~6 if it's too fizzy.
- Amp: clean-ish, **Bass 5, Mids 6, Treble 7**, master loud enough to feel it.
- Tone (guitar): **7–8**. Fuzz can get shrill; this tames it.
- Pick attack: **medium-hard with the edge of the pick**. Dig in for the riff; the fuzz rewards aggression.

- Gain placement: let the **fuzz** be your main gain source, amp relatively clean. That's the Hendrix order.

Key move: practice rolling your guitar volume knob. Fuzz-cleanup is the secret handshake of this tone.

## | What's Going On Musically

The song lives in **E**, but not plain major. Hendrix is working a blues/rock vocabulary built around the **E minor pentatonic** (E–G–A–B–D) and the **E blues scale** (add the b5, Bb), while the chords lean on **E7#9** — the famous "Hendrix chord."

**Why E7#9 sounds the way it does.** A dominant 7 chord (E7 = E–G#–B–D) wants both a major 3rd (G#) and a flat 7 (D). The "#9" adds an F-double-sharp, which is enharmonically **G** — the *minor* 3rd. So you're stacking a major 3rd (G#) and a minor 3rd (G) in the same chord. That major/minor collision is exactly the sound of the blues: the vocal "blue note" frozen into a chord. It's tense, gritty, and unresolved — which is why it became shorthand for funk, psych, and hard rock.

**The tritone.** The intro hook is the interval **E to Bb** — three whole steps apart, a *tritone* (historically nicknamed "the devil in music" for its instability). It's the most dissonant interval in the octave and it refuses to sit still; your ear wants it to move. Hendrix exploits that restlessness as a hook before the riff even starts.

**Form.** Loosely verse / refrain over the main E-based riff, with the guitar solo featuring the Octavia. The harmony is more *riff-and-mode* than functional chord changes — think of the riff as the harmony.

## | Signature Moves

Short commentary excerpts below — fragments for study, not full transcriptions.

- 1) **The tritone intro (E ↔ Bb)**

TAB

Feel: heavy, swung eighths, ~108 BPM. Let it ring and lurch.

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-----|
D|-----|
A|--7~--6~--7~--6~--| <- Bb on the A string
E|--0--0--0--0--| <- E pedal underneath
    Bb   A   Bb   A

```

Caption: That clash of open E against Bb is the tritone — dissonant on purpose. Add slow vibrato (~) and let the fuzz growl.

### 2) The main riff (E blues vocabulary)

TAB

Feel: aggressive, slight swing, ~108 BPM.

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-----2-----|
D|-----2--4h5--2-----|
A|--0h2-----0-----0-----| <- the riff lands on an E7#9 stab
E|-----0-----|

```

Caption: Pentatonic motion underneath, resolving to a stabbed E7#9 voicing. Pick hard; this is where the Fuzz Face earns its keep.

### 3) The E7#9 voicing (the Hendrix chord)

TAB

Feel: short, funky stab. Mute the low E with your thumb/finger.

```

e|--x--|
B|--8--| <- G (the #9 / minor-3rd "blue note")
G|--7--| <- G# (the major 3rd)
D|--6--| <- D (the b7)
A|--7--| <- E (the root)
E|--x--|

```

Caption: Both 3rds (G# and G) in one grip — that's the entire emotional payload of the chord. Stab it, mute, repeat.

# The Drills

Original exercises in the style of the song — your practice material.

**Drill A — 7#9 + R&B embellishment** Builds the funk-comping reflex Hendrix used everywhere: hold the chord, decorate it with hammer-ons and muted scratches.

TAB

Feel: funky 16ths, ~104 BPM. PM the dead strokes lightly.

```
e|--x--x-----x--x-----x--x-----|
B|--8--8-----8h8-----8--8-----|
G|--7--7-----7--7-----7--7-----|
D|--6--6-----6--6-----6--6--6/7-6--|
A|--7--7-----7--7-----7--7--7-----|
E|--x--x-----x--x-----x--x-----|
    > >                               > >   slide tag
```

*Tone:* Bridge pickup, fuzz at 6–7, guitar volume rolled to ~6 so the chord stays defined instead of mushing out. Keep the strumming hand moving in constant 16ths; let the pick skim muted strings between hits.

**Drill B — Tritone riff** Trains the E-against-Bb tension move and locks in a swung, lurching feel.

TAB

Feel: heavy swing, ~108 BPM. Dig in.

```
e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-----7-----|
D|-----|
A|--7~----6----7----7----6----7~----6----|
E|--0----0----0----0----0----0----0----|
    Bb   A    Bb           A    Bb   A
    (tritone)           (resolve up to D then back)
```

*Tone:* Same as the intro — fuzz growling, guitar volume ~8 for bite. Let the open E ring under everything so the dissonance stays in your ear. The brief jump to D (G string, fret 7) gives the line somewhere to breathe before it falls back into the clash.

**Drill C — Octavia-style lead lick** Trains high-neck single-note phrasing with bends, where an octave-up fuzz sings hardest.

Feel: vocal, behind the beat, ~108 BPM.

```

e|--12b14r12-----12-15-12-----|
B|-----15--12-----15b17~-----|
G|-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
    bend & release      run down      wail + vibrato
  
```

*Tone:* Engage the Octavia (or octave-up fuzz) and use the bridge pickup. The octave effect tracks cleanest on single notes above the 12th fret, so keep the lines high and avoid full chords. Bend slowly and add wide vibrato — let each note bloom into its ghostly upper octave.

## | Make It Yours

The takeaways here travel far beyond this one song. First, the **E7#9 grip** is a permanent addition to your vocabulary — drop it as a funk stab, a turnaround chord, or the last hit of any blues. Second, **fuzz-cleanup**: practicing your volume knob turns one pedal into a whole pedalboard, from clean-ish sparkle at 4 to full snarl at 10, all without tap-dancing. Third, the **tritone** is a tension tool you can sprinkle into any riff — pit a root against its b5 and let your ear feel the pull. And the **Octavia lead** approach teaches a broader lesson: some effects only shine in a specific register, so write your phrasing *around* the effect's sweet spot rather than fighting it. Steal these four ideas and you've got the DNA of a sound, not just a cover.

## • LISTEN FOR

- The **tritone clash** (E against Bb) in the intro — can you hear the dissonance refusing to resolve?
- Both **3rds ringing together** (G# and G) when you stab the E7#9 — that's the "blue note" living inside the chord.
- The **fuzz cleaning up** as you roll your guitar volume down — the grit should melt to clarity without your foot moving.
- The **octave-up ghost note** blooming on the high lead lines — present on single notes, gone when you play chords.
- Your **right-hand attack** driving the fuzz — dig in for the riff, ease off for the comping, and let the dynamics breathe.

# “Paranoid” • Black Sabbath

---

## AT A GLANCE

**Artist:** Black Sabbath (Tony Iommi, guitar)

**Song:** "Paranoid"

**Album:** *Paranoid* (1970)

**The tone in one sentence:** A lean, midrange-forward, slightly-fuzzy roar that cuts through everything because a treble booster is slamming a cranked amp into focused saturation.

**Difficulty:** Intermediate

**Key & tuning:** E minor; standard tuning (E A D G B E) on this track — the famous down-tunings came later.

## | The Rig & Signal Chain

The core of Iommi's 1970 sound is brutally simple, and that simplicity is the lesson.

- **Guitar:** A **Gibson SG** (a cherry 1965-era SG was his main axe in this period), loaded with humbuckers. Worth knowing the backstory: a sheet-metal accident sliced off the tips of two fingers on his fretting hand, so he wore homemade thimbles and switched to extremely **light-gauge strings** to reduce the effort of fretting and bending. Light strings plus low-ish action are a real part of why his vibrato and fast runs sound the way they do.
- **Booster:** A **Dallas Rangemaster Treble Booster** (or a Rangemaster-style circuit) sat in front of the amp. This is the secret weapon — a germanium-transistor box that boosts upper-mids and treble while adding hair. It doesn't sound "fuzzy" on its own; it *makes the amp* sound saturated and focused.
- **Amp:** A cranked **Laney** (Iommi famously championed the British brand) — think a hot, mid-rich British head pushed loud. Earlier Sabbath sessions also saw Marshall-style heads; the point is a

loud tube amp run near the edge of breakup, with the booster doing the rest.

- **Mic / room:** Standard 1970 dynamic-on-grille close-miking (a Shure-type dynamic on the cone). Nothing exotic — the tone is in the chain, not the room.

A note on lore: people love to over-specify "the exact Iommi rig." Treat precise pot values, secret resistor swaps, and "this one amp on this one day" claims as **debated**, not gospel. The reliable facts are: SG + humbuckers, a treble booster, light strings, and a loud amp. Everything else, hedge.

## | The Tone Recipe

You can get ~90% there with accessible gear:

- **Guitar substitute:** Any humbucker guitar. An SG copy is ideal; an inexpensive Les Paul-style or even an HH superstrat works. Use the **bridge humbucker**.
- **Booster substitute:** A modern **treble booster** clone (many boutique and budget makers build Rangemaster-style pedals) OR a clean boost / light overdrive with the tone rolled bright. In a pinch, a Tube Screamer-type with **Drive low, Tone high, Level past noon** mimics the "push the amp" behavior.
- **Amp substitute:** A British-voiced amp or amp model (Plexi / Laney / "British crunch") set to the edge of breakup. Real tube amp: crank the master to get power-tube grit; modeler: pick a cranked-Plexi preset and back the gain off slightly.
- **Strings:** Try **.009s** if you normally play .010s. The lighter set will make the fast riffing and wide vibrato noticeably easier — and that is the technique here.

Starting points (knobs out of 10):

- Amp **Gain** ~5–6 (you want grit, not modern high-gain mush), **Bass 4, Mids 7–8, Treble 6, Presence 5**.
- **Booster:** kick it on and let it do the saturating — set its level so the amp jumps into focused breakup.
- **Guitar volume 10, tone 7–8** (leave a little top off so it growls instead of fizzes).
- **Pick attack:** firm, near the bridge, mostly **downstrokes** for the riff. Palm mute (PM) lightly so notes are tight but still ring.

The target isn't scooped or scary-heavy. It's **focused and midrange-rich** — a tone engineered to be heard, not just felt.

## | What's Going On Musically

"Paranoid" lives in **E minor**, and almost everything you need is in the **E minor pentatonic** box at the 12th fret (E–G–A–B–D) plus the open low E string.

- **The riff** is built on **power chords** — two- or three-note shapes (root + 5th, sometimes + octave) with no 3rd, so they're neither major nor minor and stay punchy under distortion. The main figure hammers an **E5** and walks up using close chromatic neighbors.
- **Chromatic** means moving by half-steps (one fret at a time), notes *outside* the key used as connective tissue. Sabbath uses brief chromatic slides to create tension and that signature "creeping" motion before resolving home to E.
- **Form:** a tight rock structure — intro riff, verse over the riff, a sung chorus hook, then a frantic solo, and back. The whole song is fast (roughly 160-ish BPM, felt in driving eighth notes) and short. There's no fat on it.
- **Why it works:** the absence of 3rds (power chords) keeps the harmony ambiguous and aggressive; the minor pentatonic gives the vocal and solo a dark, bluesy pull; and the relentless eighth-note pulse makes the tune feel urgent. The booster's focused midrange is what lets a *simple* riff sound enormous.

A term to keep: a **power chord ("5 chord")** is just root + perfect 5th. "E5" = E and B. Stack the octave E on top and it's still E5, just thicker.

## | Signature Moves

Short, illustrative fragments — analysis, not a full transcription.

**Move 1** — The driving **E5 main riff (gallop the downstrokes)** ~160 BPM, all downstrokes, light palm mute on the low E

TAB

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-----|
D|--2--2-----4--4-----2--2-----|
A|--2--2-----2--2--4--4-----2--2--5--5|
E|--0--0-----0--0--2--2-----0--0--3--3|
      PM          PM      PM

```

Root-position power chords pounded in eighths; the move up to the 4th-fret shape (G5) and back is the hook's engine.

**Move 2 — Chromatic connecting climb** Steady eighths, let each note bite, then snap back to E

TAB

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-----|
D|-----|
A|--2--3--4--5-----|
E|--0--0--0--0-----0--|
      walk up chromatically  resolve

```

Half-step motion on the A string against the droning open E — tension that "creeps" before it resolves home.

**Move 3 — Frantic solo gesture (pentatonic + fast pull-offs)** Fast, aggressive, near-bridge pick attack

TAB

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|---14b15r14p12-----|
D|-----14--12~-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|

```

A bent-and-released wail dropping into pentatonic pull-offs, capped with vibrato — the booster keeps this singing instead of fizzing out.

## | The Drills

All original — written in the style of the song to build the exact skills it demands.

**Drill A — Palm-Mute Riff Stamina ("the engine")** Builds: down-pick endurance, tight muting, even eighths. Start 100 BPM, push toward 160.

TAB

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-----|
D|--2-2-2-2--4-4-4-4--5-5-5-5--2-2-2-2-|
A|--2-2-2-2--4-4-4-4--5-5-5-5--2-2-2-2-|
E|--0-0-0-0--2-2-2-2--3-3-3-3--0-0-0-0-|
      PM      PM      PM      PM
  
```

All downstrokes. Keep the heel of your palm anchored on the low strings — notes should be tight but still ring, not choked. Tone: bridge pickup, booster on, gain ~5. If your forearm burns, that's the point; rest and repeat. Loop it until 160 feels lazy.

**Drill B — E-Minor-Pentatonic Speed Lick ("the run")** Builds: alternate-picked and pull-off velocity in the 12th-fret box. Start slow, metronome mandatory.

TAB

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-----12-14-----|
D|-----12-14-12-14----14-12-----|
A|-12-15---12-15-----14-12-----|
E|-12-15-----15-12~-|
  
```

Two notes per string going up, pull-offs coming down, end on a vibrato'd low E. Aim for clean, even spacing before you chase speed — sloppy-fast is worthless here. Tone: roll the guitar tone to ~7 so fast notes stay defined.

**Drill C — Booster-Focused Lead Phrase ("make it sing")** Builds: expressive bends, release control, and vibrato — the stuff the booster rewards. Slow and vocal.

TAB

```

e|-----|
B|--15b17r15--12-----12~------|
G|-----14b16r14--14-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
  
```

*Bend up a whole step, release in time, land on a target tone, finish with slow controlled vibrato. The treble booster is what keeps a sustained bend from thinning out — lean on it. Tone: bridge pickup, tone ~8, the peak of the bend should bloom, not squeal.*

## | Make It Yours

The big takeaway from "Paranoid" isn't the riff — it's the **architecture of the tone**: a midrange-focused boost slamming a cranked amp. Steal that idea and apply it to your own playing. Put a treble booster or a bright, low-gain overdrive in front of an amp that's already breaking up, and suddenly *simple* riffs sound massive and your leads sing without a wall of gain. Try writing your own riff using only open-position power chords plus one chromatic walk-up — keep it to three or four notes, all downstrokes, and let the focused tone carry it. The discipline of Sabbath's sound is **subtraction**: fewer notes, less gain than you think, more midrange, more conviction in the right hand. Master that and you'll cut through any mix.

### ♪ LISTEN FOR

- The **midrange focus** — Iommi's tone cuts through *because* it's mid-heavy, not bass-heavy. If your tone is scooped, you've missed it.
- **Tight, even downstrokes** on the main riff — every eighth note the same length and weight, palm mute controlling the ring.
- The **chromatic creep** resolving back to E — hear the tension build and release.
- **Singing, focused leads** — bends that bloom and sustain instead of fizzing out; that's the booster working.
- **Light-string feel** — fast runs and wide vibrato that sound effortless, the way thinner strings let them.

PART D

# Classic Rock: Marshall & Les Paul



# “Whole Lotta Love” • Led Zeppelin

## AT A GLANCE

**Artist:** Led Zeppelin (Jimmy Page, guitar)

**Song:** “Whole Lotta Love”

**Album:** *Led Zeppelin II* (1969)

**The tone in one sentence:** A dry, biting, midrange-forward single-coil snarl — overdriven but not saturated, with enough clarity that every note in the riff cuts like it was carved.

**Difficulty:** Intermediate

**Key & tuning:** E (riff centered on E, blending E major and E minor pentatonic); standard tuning (E A D G B E)

## | The Rig & Signal Chain

The studio guitar most often attributed to this track is a **1958 Fender Telecaster** — the famous “Dragon” Tele gifted to Page by Jeff Beck — run through its **bridge single-coil pickup**. That bridge pickup is the whole story of this tone: it is twangy, aggressive, and full of upper midrange, which is why the riff sounds like it has teeth rather than fur.

The amp is where the lore gets contested. The widely repeated story is a small **Supro** combo cranked into the red. That Supro claim is *debated* — Page has told versions of it, but engineers and historians have questioned which amp actually tracked which parts across *Zep I* and *II*, and a **Marshall** stack (and possibly other amps) very likely featured in this era too. Treat “it was definitely a Supro” as plausible studio legend, not settled fact. What is *not* in dispute is the result: a small-to-medium amp pushed hard, mic’d close, with very little of the scooped, high-gain voicing we associate with later rock.

For the recording, engineer Eddie Kramer and Page leaned heavily on creative miking and tape effects (the famous theremin-and-backwards-echo freakout in the breakdown is a separate world). For

the *riff itself*, think one guitar, one cranked small amp, close-mic'd with something like a dynamic up against the grille.

**Settings** are best given as approximations: amp volume high enough to break up naturally (think 7–8 of 10), tone relatively open, and minimal-to-no studio EQ scooping. No overdrive pedal is necessary — the breakup is the amp.

## | The Tone Recipe

You can get ~90% there with a Tele-style guitar and almost any honest tube or modeling amp.

- **Guitar substitution:** Any **Telecaster** or Tele-style partscaster on the **bridge pickup**. No Tele? Use the bridge single-coil of a Strat, or a Les Paul bridge humbucker with the tone rolled to about 7 and volume backed slightly to clean up the lows.
- **Amp substitution:** A low-wattage tube combo (Fender Champ/Princeton, Vox AC-style, or any 5–15W amp) cranked to natural breakup; or a modeling amp's "tweed" / "small combo crunch" model. Avoid high-gain channels.
- **Overdrive (optional):** If your amp won't break up at bedroom volume, add a light **Tube Screamer**-style or treble-booster pedal — gain low (3/10), level to taste, tone open. You want *grit*, not *fuzz*.

### Starting points (out of 10):

- Gain/drive: 4–5 — overdriven, still articulate. If chords turn to mush, you've gone too far.
- Bass: 4 · Mids: 7 · Treble: 6–7 — push mids, this tone lives there.
- Guitar volume: 9, tone: 8 (open but not ice-pick).
- **Pick attack:** Dig in hard with a medium-to-heavy pick near the bridge. Much of this "tone" is right-hand aggression.
- **Where to set gain:** Just past the point where a hard-struck open E rings into light, musical breakup. Then back off your guitar volume to verify it cleans up — that headroom is the sound.

## | What's Going On Musically

The song is in E, and the riff is a masterclass in tension between two scales over a single tonal center.

The **E minor pentatonic** scale (E–G–A–B–D) gives you the bluesy, dark notes. The **E major pentatonic** (E–F#–G#–B–C#) gives the brighter, "happier" notes. Page famously blends them — the riff leans on the  $\flat 3$  (**G**) for blues grit but resolves with major-flavored motion, so it sounds neither purely happy nor purely sad. It sounds *mean*. That deliberate collision of major and minor thirds (G# vs. G) over an E root is the single most important theoretical idea in this lesson; guitarists call it the **major/minor pentatonic blend**, and it is the backbone of rock-blues lead playing.

**Form:** The song is essentially a one-chord vamp on E for the verses — the riff is the harmony. There is no busy chord progression to navigate; the drama comes from the riff's rhythm and the call-and-response between Page's guitar and Robert Plant's vocal. After the verses comes the psychedelic breakdown (theremin, panning, drums), then a guitar solo built largely from **A minor pentatonic** / **E blues** vocabulary, and back to the riff.

**Syncopation** is the other engine. The riff doesn't sit squarely on the beat — it pushes and pulls against it, with accents landing in the gaps. That rhythmic displacement is what makes it groove instead of march.

A quick term, defined once: **syncopation** means accenting the "weak" parts of the beat (the off-beats / the "ands") instead of the strong downbeats. It's why funk and great rock riffs feel like they're leaning forward.

## | Signature Moves

### 1. The main E riff (the descending answer figure)

The riff alternates a low open-E pulse with a descending blues figure up the E string. Here is a short, illustrative fragment of the *answering* gesture — not the whole riff, just the characteristic descent.

TAB

Feel: medium rock, ~90 bpm, swung 16ths, dig in near the bridge

```
e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-----|
D|-----2~-----|
A|-----2--0---3-----|
E|--0-----3--0~-----|
```

*Caption: The low E pulse "asks," the climbing A/D-string move "answers." Let that 2nd-fret D note ring with vibrato — it's the major-leaning color against the minor pulse.*

## 2. The descending pentatonic fill

Between vocal lines, Page drops fast descending pentatonic flurries. Here's a short E-minor-pentatonic descent in that spirit.

TAB

Feel: ~90 bpm, raked and slightly loose – let it blur

```
e|-----|
B|-----|
G|--2--0-----|
D|-----2--0-----|
A|-----2--0-----|
E|-----3--0~-----|
```

*Caption: A box-1 E-minor-pentatonic cascade. Don't play it too clean — a little sloppiness in the rake is the vibe. Land on the open E with vibrato.*

## 3. The call-and-response

The defining trick: a short guitar stab "answers" the vocal phrase. Two tiny phrases trading — voice, then guitar.

TAB

Feel: ~90 bpm, leave space – the silence is half the phrase

```
e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-----4b6r4-----|
D|-----|
A|--2~-----2----|
E|--0----- (vox) -----0-----|
```

*Caption: Guitar plays a fragment, the vocal answers in the gap, then the guitar replies with a quarter-step-ish bend up at the 4th fret of the G string. Conversation, not monologue.*

## | The Drills

These are original exercises in the song's style — built to train the exact skills "Whole Lotta Love" demands.

## Drill A — Riff phrasing & the low-E pulse

Trains the push-pull between a droning open-E "engine" and a melodic answer. Keep the open E steady and even; make the answer phrase speak.

TAB

Feel: ~85 bpm, palm-mute the open E pulses lightly (PM), accent the answers

```
PM.....          PM.....
e|-----|-----|
B|-----|-----|
G|-----|-----2-----|
D|-----2--0-----|-----2--0--2~---|
A|---0--2--3-----3---|---0--2--3-----|
E|--0-----0~---|--0-----|
```

*Caption: Builds the core riff feel — a steady low pulse interrupted by climbing fills. Dial the tone with gain at 4–5 and the bridge pickup; palm-muting the E keeps the low end tight so the answer notes pop.*

## Drill B — E major/minor blended pentatonic lick

Trains the signature G# vs. G collision. You'll hammer from the minor 3rd (G) up to the major 3rd (G#) and use both as flavor over the E root.

TAB

Feel: ~90 bpm, deliberate — hear each note's "color" against the open E

```
e|-----|
B|-----|
G|--0h1---1--0---0h1~-----|
D|----2-----2-----2--0-----|
A|-----2~---|
E|--0-----|
```

*Caption: The 0h1 on the G string is the heart of it — G to G#, minor third sliding into major third. This is the "Whole Lotta Love" attitude in miniature. Keep gain moderate so the half-step move reads clearly; too much fuzz blurs the two thirds together.*

## Drill C — Syncopated riff exercise

Trains the offbeat accents that make the groove lean forward. Count "1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &" out loud and accent only the marked notes (>).

**TAB**

Feel: ~90 bpm, accents on the OFFBEATS (the "ands") – count aloud

> > > >

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-----|
D|-----2-----2-----|
A|-----2-----2-----3-----3-----2--0-----|
E|--0-----0-----0-----|
  
```

*Caption: The whole point is displacement — the accented hits land between the beats, not on them. Practice slowly with a metronome on beats 2 and 4 only. Tone: bridge pickup, gain 4–5, mids up — you want each accent to bite, not bloom.*

## | Make It Yours

The portable lesson here is bigger than one riff: **a one-chord vamp plus a major/minor pentatonic blend plus syncopation equals a riff that sounds like a song.** You don't need a chord progression to write something memorable — you need a strong tonal center, the courage to rub the major and minor third against each other, and rhythmic accents that pull against the beat. Take any open-string root (E, A, D), set up a low droning pulse, and write a four-note "answer" that climbs back to home. Then move the accents off the downbeats. Do that with a bright pickup and a small amp on the edge of breakup, and you've absorbed not just Page's tone but his compositional instinct: economy, attitude, and groove over complexity.

### ♪ LISTEN FOR

- The **bite**, not the gain — the riff is overdriven but every note stays distinct. If it's mushy, back off.
- The **G-to-G# rub** (minor third into major third) that gives the riff its swagger.
- **Offbeat accents** — feel how the riff leans forward instead of marching.
- **Call-and-response space** — the silences where the vocal answers are as important as the notes.
- **Right-hand aggression** near the bridge — prove to yourself that half the tone is in your pick attack, not your settings.

# “Stairway to Heaven” • Led Zeppelin

## AT A GLANCE

**Artist:** Led Zeppelin

**Song:** “Stairway to Heaven”

**Album:** *Led Zeppelin IV* (1971)

**The tone in one sentence:** A clean, woody fingerpicked figure that blooms across a 12-string body and finally ignites into a singing, wide-vibrato lead — three distinct guitar voices telling one story.

**Difficulty:** Intermediate

**Key & tuning:** A minor, standard tuning (E A D G B E)

## | The Rig & Signal Chain

Three guitars do three jobs here, and that division of labor is the arrangement.

The fingerpicked intro is most often cited as a **Harmony Sovereign H1260** acoustic — a flat-top dreadnought-style guitar with a midrange honk that lets each arpeggiated note stay separate rather than smearing into a wash. The body and chorused sections lean on an electric **Fender Electric XII**, frequently described as Page's 12-string of choice, which gives that shimmering, octave-doubled fanfare its width.

The solo is where the lore gets thick. The widely repeated story is a **Fender Telecaster** (the same "Dragon" Tele gifted by Jeff Beck) plugged straight into a small **Supro** combo. Treat that as **debated, not gospel** — Page himself has given inconsistent accounts over the years, some interviews point to a Marshall, and the exact "secret" solo rig has never been nailed down. What's *not* in dispute is the result: a cranked small amp pushed into natural, compressed breakup, with the guitar's volume and the player's hands doing the rest. No high-gain pedal, no scooped metal voicing — just a hot amp at the edge of its headroom.

For amp settings, the honest answer is that no verified knob positions exist. Commonly cited approximations for the solo voice: gain pushed to the point of soft clipping, treble and mids forward, bass moderate so the single notes stay focused.

## | The Tone Recipe

You can get roughly 90% of the way there with gear you already own or can rent cheaply.

**Intro (clean fingerstyle):** Any decent steel-string acoustic, or a hollow/semi-hollow electric on the neck pickup, **tone rolled back to ~7**. If you're on an acoustic-electric DI, add a touch of room reverb (2/10) — nothing more. The magic is *clarity*, so let strings ring and don't over-damp.

**Body (12-string shimmer):** No 12-string? Use a 6-string bridge-or-middle pickup into a light **chorus pedal** (rate ~3, depth ~4) to fake the octave doubling, plus a hair of reverb. Clean amp, **volume 6, treble 6, mids 5, bass 4**.

**Solo (the hot small-amp sound):**

- **Amp:** A low-wattage tube combo (Fender Champ/Princeton, Supro reissue, Vox AC4, or any "lunchbox" head) cranked until it breaks up on its own. No distortion pedal — let the power section sag.
- **Gain/volume:** Master/volume around **7–8**, where single notes compress and sustain.
- **EQ:** Treble **6**, mids **6–7** (mids are what make it sing, not scream), bass **4**.
- **Pickup:** Bridge single-coil (Tele) or bridge humbucker rolled to **~7 on the volume** to clean up the attack.
- **Pick attack:** Medium-hard with the flat of the pick, digging in for the bends. The bloom comes from amp compression reacting to your dynamics.
- **Reverb:** Light spring (3/10). Avoid delay — the original solo is drier than people remember.

## | What's Going On Musically

The whole piece lives in **A minor** — the natural minor (Aeolian) mode, the white-key minor scale built on A.

The intro's signature is a **descending bass line under sustained upper voices**. While your fretting hand holds a high A and C ringing on the top strings, the bass walks down chromatically. Spelled out, the recurring move is roughly:

**Am → G#aug (G#–B+) → Am7/G → D/F#**

That means: an A minor chord, then the bass slips down a half step to G# (creating an **augmented** sound — a chord built from two stacked major thirds, which feels tense and "lifting"), then to G (turning it into Am7), then to F# (which colors it as a D chord in first inversion). One held shape up top, a moving floor underneath. That contrary motion — top voice steady, bass descending — is the emotional engine. Composers have used it for centuries; here it sounds inevitable.

**Form:** the song is a slow accumulation. Fingerpicked intro → verses with recorders/12-string → a 12-string-driven build → the famous fanfare → the solo → the heavy outro. Each section adds instruments and energy without ever resetting, which is why it feels like a single long crescendo.

The **solo** is almost entirely **A minor pentatonic** (A-C-D-E-G), the five-note minor scale you likely already know as "box 1" at the 5th fret. Page occasionally brushes the natural minor's B (the 2nd) for color, but the phrasing — not exotic notes — is what makes it iconic: repeated motifs, answered phrases, and bends that resolve to chord tones.

## | Signature Moves

### 1. The Arpeggiated Am Intro

*Slow, ~70 BPM, fingerstyle (p-i-m-a). Let everything ring.*

TAB

```
e |-----5--7----|-----3--5----|
B |-----5-----5--|-----5-----5--|
G |-----5-----5-|-----5-----5-|
D |----7-----|-----/|
A |--/------(7)-|--2-----|
E |--5-----|-----|
```

*Caption: The held top notes sing while the bass descends — that contrary motion defines the whole intro.*

### 2. The Solo Opening Phrase

*Free, expressive, A minor pentatonic, 12th-position box.*

TAB

```
e|-----|
B|-----13b15r13---13~---|
G|--12b14r12-14-----14-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
```

*Caption: Note the wide, vocal bends and the long vibrato at the end — the amp's compression makes a single held note bloom.*

### 3. The 12-String Fanfare

*Bold, strummed, ringing — the climax before the solo.*

TAB

```
e|-----|
B|--5---3---1---0---|
G|--5---0---2---2---|
D|--7---0---2---2---|
A|--7---2---0---0---|
E|--5---3-----|
```

*Caption: Big open voicings — let each chord sustain its full value so the octave-doubled strings shimmer.*

## | The Drills

These are my own exercises in the song's style — practice them freely, then bring what you learn back to the real parts.

### Drill A — Descending-Bass Arpeggio (Intro Engine)

Trains independent voicing: a steady top line over a walking bass.

*Slow, fingerpicked, ~70 BPM. Keep the high notes ringing at constant volume while the bass moves.*

TAB

```

e|-----8-8-----8-8-----8-8-----8-8----|
B|-----8-----8-----8-----8-----8-----8-----8-----8----|
G|-----9-----9-9-----9-9-----9-9-----9-9----|
D|-----7-----6-----5-----4-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
  
```

*Builds: thumb-led bass control and the contrary-motion feel. Tone — clean, tone knob ~7, a whisper of reverb. The win is even volume across all six picked notes.*

### Drill B — A-Minor-Pentatonic Phrasing (Solo Voice)

Trains *call-and-response* and bend accuracy, not speed.

*Free time, then lock to ~80 BPM. Bend to pitch and hold the vibrato.*

TAB

```

e|-----|
B|--8b10r8-----8---8h10p8-----|
G|-----10--7-----7--9b(full)~~~-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
  
```

*Builds: the habit of stating a phrase, then answering it. Match each bend against the unbent target note first. Tone — cranked small amp, bridge pickup, mids up around 6-7.*

### Drill C — 12-String-Style Ringing Figure

Trains clean arpeggiation of wide, open voicings so they shimmer instead of clutter.

*Medium, ~90 BPM. Pick each note distinctly; let them overlap and ring.*

TAB

```

e|-----0-----0-----0-----0--|
B|-----1--1---0--0---1--1---3---3|
G|-----0-----0-----0-----0----|
D|-----2-----2-----2-----0---|
A|-----3-----0-----3-----|
E|-----|
  
```

*Builds: right-hand evenness across moving open-string voicings — the texture the Electric XII supplies. Tone — clean with light chorus (rate 3, depth 4) to imitate octave doubling.*

## | Make It Yours

The lesson of "Stairway" isn't the notes — it's **architecture**. Page builds a song from one quiet idea by adding instruments and intensity in stages, never resetting the climb. Steal that. Take any chord loop you like and add a descending bass line underneath a static top voice; you'll instantly get that "lifting" feeling. Then practice playing the *same* lick three ways — clean and quiet, with chorus and width, then through a cranked amp — and you'll understand that tone is a narrative tool, not a single setting. When you solo, resist filling space: state a short phrase, leave a gap, answer it. That patience is what makes a pentatonic box sound like a melody instead of an exercise.

### ♪ LISTEN FOR

- The **contrary motion** in the intro: top notes holding steady while the bass walks down — can you keep both voices even?
- **Bloom**, not gain: the solo's sustain comes from a hot small amp compressing, not a distortion pedal.
- **Wide, vocal vibrato** on held notes — slow and deliberate, never nervous.
- The **dynamic build** across the whole arrangement: each section louder and fuller than the last, with no reset.
- **Note separation** in the 12-string parts: shimmering and ringing, never a muddy wash.

# “Smoke on the Water” • Deep Purple

---

## AT A GLANCE

**Artist:** Deep Purple (Ritchie Blackmore, guitar)

**Song:** "Smoke on the Water"

**Album:** *Machine Head* (1972)

**The tone in one sentence:** A thick, slightly dirty, midrange-forward Strat-into-Marshall growl — round on the bottom, gritty on top, with just enough hair to make two notes sound enormous.

**Difficulty:** Beginner

**Key & tuning:** G (G blues), standard tuning (E A D G B E)

## | The Rig & Signal Chain

Blackmore played a **Fender Stratocaster** through **Marshall Major** amplifiers ("Pig" 200-watt heads) on the *Machine Head* sessions. The persistent piece of lore — repeat it, but flag it as *debated* — is that the iconic riff tone was shaped by running the signal through an **AKG tape machine** acting as a pre-amp/limiter, fattening the front end before it hit the amp. It's a great story and plausibly true in spirit, but treat the exact chain as contested rather than gospel.

A few things we can say with confidence about how the sound behaves:

- **Pickup:** A single-coil neck or neck-ish position, giving that round, vocal, slightly hollow quality rather than a bright bridge bark.
- **Amp:** Marshall, cranked enough to break up but nowhere near a high-gain scream. This is *edge-of-breakup* territory, not metal saturation.
- **Mids:** Pushed. The whole tone lives in the midrange — that's what lets two-note double-stops fill a stadium.

Settings should only ever be cited as approximate. Commonly cited as: amp gain low-to-medium, treble moderate, mids high, bass moderate. Don't chase a secret EQ number — chase the *behavior*: warm, fat, just-broken-up.

## | The Tone Recipe

You can get ~90% there with very ordinary gear. Here's the substitution map and the starting points.

### Gear substitutions:

- **Guitar:** Any Strat or Strat-style single-coil guitar. No Strat? A humbucker guitar with the tone rolled back to ~6 and the neck pickup selected gets you in the neighborhood.
- **Amp:** Any tube or modeling amp set to *low-gain crunch*. A Marshall-voiced model (plexi/JTM/JCM800 on a low gain setting) is ideal. A cranked Fender with a light overdrive in front also works.
- **Pedal:** If your amp is clean, put a **light overdrive** (Tube Screamer-style, or a Klon-style) in front. Set gain low — you want grit, not fuzz.

### Starting points (knobs out of 10):

- Amp/overdrive **gain:** 4 — enough to make a held double-stop sustain and bloom, not so much that it gets fizzy.
- **Treble:** 6, **Mids:** 7–8, **Bass:** 5. Mids are the secret. If it sounds thin, add mids before you add bass.
- **Pickup:** Neck position. On a Strat, position 2 (neck + middle) is also lovely here.
- **Guitar tone knob:** 7–8. Roll a hair of brightness off so the top sounds smooth, not glassy.
- **Pick attack:** Medium, fleshy, slightly behind the bridge. Dig in for the riff so the double-stops speak with authority.

The goal: strike two notes a fourth apart and have them sound like one fat, singing voice. If it sounds brittle or buzzy, you have too much gain and not enough mids.

## | What's Going On Musically

The whole song lives in **G**, and the famous riff is built from the **G blues scale**: G – B ♭ – C – C # (the "blue note") – D – F. (A *blues scale* is the minor pentatonic with an added flat-fifth — that chro-

matic C# between C and D is the bluesy tension.)

Here's the teaching point that trips up almost every beginner: **the riff is parallel fourths, not power chords.**

A *power chord* (a "5" chord) is a root plus the note a fifth above it — three or four frets apart on adjacent strings, played with one finger barring or a root-and-fifth shape. The "Smoke" riff is *not* that. Each stab is **two notes a perfect fourth apart**, played as a double-stop. A *perfect fourth* is the interval you hear at the start of "Here Comes the Bride" — five semitones. On adjacent strings in standard tuning, that lands on the **same fret on both strings** (because the strings themselves are tuned a fourth apart, except G-to-B).

So when you see the riff written on the D and G strings at the 5th fret, both notes are on fret 5 — D-string fret 5 is G, G-string fret 5 is C. G up to C is a perfect fourth. That's the sound: open, suspended, neither major nor minor, which is exactly why it feels so primal and so *huge*.

**Why fourths instead of fifths?** Fourth is hollow and more ambiguous than fifth. A power chord sounds settled and rock-solid; parallel fourths sound restless and mean. Blackmore's choice gives the riff its menace.

**The form** is a straight-ahead blues-rock structure: the main riff cycles as the foundation (verses ride it), there's a contrasting section for the chorus ("Smoke on the water..."), and Jon Lord's organ and Blackmore's solo trade the spotlight in the middle. For your purposes, master the riff and the answer phrase and you own the song's DNA.

## | Signature Moves

### 1. The fourths riff (the famous opening)

TAB

Tempo ~112 BPM. Quarter-ish, deliberate – let each stab ring.

Both notes of each pair = a PERFECT FOURTH. Fret with fingers, NOT a barre power chord.

```
e|-----|
B|-----|
G|--5---8---10---5---8---11-10-----|
D|--5---8---10---5---8---11-10-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
```

*The whole legend on two strings. Pick both notes together, cleanly; the magic is the fourth interval, not volume.*

## 2. The answer (resolving back home)

TAB

Tempo ~112 BPM. The second half of the phrase – it climbs, then settles back to G.

```
e|-----|
B|-----|
G|--5---8---10---8---5-----|
D|--5---8---10---8---5-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
```

*Same shape walking back down. Hearing the phrase rise and fall is what makes it feel like a sentence, not a list.*

## 3. A solo-style lick (G blues, in the box)

TAB

Tempo ~112 BPM, swung sixteenths. Vocal – vibrato on the last note.

```
e|-----|
B|-----8b10r8-----|
G|-----7-----7b9r7--5-----|
D|--5h7-----7~-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
```

*Blackmore's solo voice: hammer-ons into bends, all sitting in the G blues box around the 5th–8th frets. Attack hard and let the bends cry.*

## | The Drills

These are original exercises in the song's style — built to train exactly what the recording demands.

## Drill A — Parallel-fourths riff trainer (correct fingering)

TAB

Tempo 90 BPM (slow), building to 120. Use index + ring for each pair so the SHAPE stays locked.  
Goal: clean, even double-stops, both notes speaking equally.

```
e|-----|
B|-----|
G|--3---5---7---5---3---7---8---10---8---7--|
D|--3---5---7---5---3---7---8---10---8---7--|
A|-----|
E|-----|
```

*Builds the fourth-interval grip and stamina. Keep both fingers parallel and move them as one block — never let the two notes flam (arrive at different times). Tone: gain at 4, mids up, dig in.*

## Drill B — G blues scale, one box, both directions

TAB

Tempo 80 BPM, straight eighths. Say the blue note (C#, the  $b5$ ) out loud when you hit it.  
G blues box: G B $b$  C C# D F.

```
e|-----3-6-----|
B|-----3-4-6-----|
G|-----3-4-5-----|
D|-----3-5-----|
A|--3-5-6-----|
E|--3-----|
```

*Builds the scale that every fill and solo in the song is drawn from. Memorize the shape and where the  $b5$  (C #, the "blue note") lives — that one note is the whole flavor. Tone: same dirty-but-clear setting.*

## Drill C — Riff rhythm pocket (lock to the beat)

TAB

Tempo 100 BPM. The rhythm is the riff. Count a "1 . . 2 . . 3 . 4" feel — uneven, conversational.  
x = dead/muted stab for groove. Keep the right hand steady.

```
e|-----|
B|-----|
G|--5---5---5---x---5---8---8---x---10---10|
D|--5---5---5---x---5---8---8---x---10---10|
A|-----|
E|-----|
  1 . 2 . & 3 . . 4 &
```

*Builds time and feel — the thing beginners skip. The riff is famous for its lazy, behind-the-beat swagger. Practice with a metronome until the spacing is automatic, then play it slightly relaxed. Mute with the fretting fingers for the x stabs.*

## | Make It Yours

The lesson hiding inside "Smoke on the Water" isn't the riff — it's the *interval*. Once you can grab parallel fourths cleanly, you have a new color that most rock players ignore in favor of power chords. Try moving fourth shapes through any progression you already know: where you'd normally stack a fifth, stab a fourth instead and hear how much hungrier it sounds. Riff over a one-chord vamp using only the G blues box and fourth double-stops, and you'll start writing things that *feel* like classic Purple without copying a note. The bigger principle — fat tone + a strong interval + relaxed time = enormous-sounding simplicity — is the whole game of great rock guitar.

▶ LISTEN FOR

## • LISTEN FOR

- Both notes of every double-stop landing *exactly together* — no flam, no one note louder than the other.
- The hollow, suspended quality of the **perfect fourth** (not the settled sound of a power chord).
- Edge-of-breakup tone: grit and sustain, but each note still clearly audible — never fizzy.
- The relaxed, slightly-behind-the-beat *feel* of the rhythm — swagger, not stiffness.
- The **blue note** (C#) ringing out in your fills, giving the G blues scale its bite.

# “Sweet Home Alabama” • Lynyrd Skynyrd

## AT A GLANCE

**Artist:** Lynyrd Skynyrd

**Song:** “Sweet Home Alabama”

**Album:** *Second Helping* (1974)

**The tone:** A bright, woody, just-barely-breaking-up clean — Southern-rock chime with enough grit to sound alive but never saturated.

**Difficulty:** Intermediate

**Key & tuning:** D (Mixolydian flavor over a D–C–G cycle); standard tuning, often referenced around G  $\approx$  445–446 Hz (slightly sharp of A440, so a hair "up" if you play along to the record).

## | The Rig & Signal Chain

Skynyrd were a three-guitar band, and the recording is a layered conversation between players, so there's no single "the guitar." The lead/intro work is most associated with **Ed King**, with **Gary Rossington** and (live) **Allen Collins** filling the chordal and slide roles.

- **Guitars:** A **Fender Stratocaster** is the voice most cited for the famous intro lick — that glassy, slightly nasal single-coil quack is a Strat fingerprint. The rhythm and fatter layers lean on a **Gibson Les Paul** (Rossington's "bottleneck"-era Les Paul is part of his signature). Pickup: Strat neck or neck-plus-middle for the intro; Les Paul bridge or middle for body.
- **Amp:** Period-appropriate **Fender** combos (blackface/silverface-era Deluxe/Twin-style circuits are commonly cited). The sound is amp-clean pushed to the edge, not pedal distortion.
- **Pedals:** Minimal. Tone is fingers-and-amp. Any "drive" is the amp's own clipping plus pick attack.
- **Mic:** Standard close-mic'd cab (a dynamic like an **SM57** in front of the speaker is the era's default), blended with room.

Treat any knob numbers below as **approximate** — the exact studio settings aren't documented, and I won't invent them.

## | The Tone Recipe

You can land ~90% of this with modest gear.

- **Guitar:** Any Strat-style single-coil for the intro; any humbucker guitar (Les Paul, SG, even an HH Tele) for rhythm. No Strat? A Tele neck pickup gets very close.
- **Amp:** A clean Fender-voiced amp or model (Deluxe Reverb / Twin Reverb / "blackface clean"). Set it loud enough to bloom.
- **If you only have a dirty amp:** Roll your guitar volume to ~7 and pick lightly — single coils clean up fast.

Starting points (out of 10):

- **Amp:** Volume 5–6 (so it just frays on hard picks), Treble 7, Mid 6, Bass 4–5, Reverb 2–3. Bright switch on if you have one.
- **Guitar:** Volume 8–9, Tone 8. **Strat: neck pickup** (position 1) or neck+middle (position 2, the "quack") for the intro.
- **Pick attack:** Medium-light with the fingers helping — much of this part is **fingerstyle/hybrid**, thumb-and-fingers, which softens the front of each note.
- **Gain:** Just at the edge of breakup. If it sounds saturated, you've gone too far. You want a clean note with a slightly hairy edge when you dig in.

## | What's Going On Musically

The whole song lives on a three-chord loop: **D – C – G**, repeating. Played in the key of D, that C chord is the giveaway — in a "pure" D major key you'd expect C#, not C natural. Lowering that one note (C natural instead of C#) is what gives you **D Mixolydian**: a major scale with a flatted 7th. Mixolydian is the bluesy-but-bright sound of countless rock vamps — major and happy, but with a rootsy, unresolved pull.

Quick definitions:

- **Mode:** a scale built by emphasizing a different "home" note. D Mixolydian = the notes of G major, but treating D as home.
- **Double-stop:** two notes played together (a partial chord), the country-rock workhorse.
- **Call-and-response:** one phrase "asks," another "answers" — here, the guitars literally trade.

The D major pentatonic (D E F# A B) sits perfectly over this loop, and because the backing never leaves D as the tonal center, you can stay in one box and sound right the whole time. Add the open strings (especially open G, B, D) and you get that ringing, banjo-ish sustain that defines the intro. The **G chord** at the top of the cycle is your moment of brightness and lift; the **C** is the "down-home" color; the **D** is home base.

Form is verse/chorus over the same vamp, with the famous spoken count-in and that conversational guitar intro acting as the hook before a word is sung.

## Signature Moves

**Move 1 — The open-string intro lick** (feel: relaxed, ~98 BPM, let notes ring).

TAB

```

e|-----|
B|-----3-----1-----|
G|--0h2--0--0--0h2--0--0--0h2--0-----|
D|--0--0-----0-----0--0~-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|

```

Open-string D-pentatonic answer over D-C-G

*A short illustrative fragment of the descending D-pentatonic answer over D-C-G — note how the open strings overlap the fretted notes for that chiming sustain.*

**Move 2 — Chordal embellishment on the D** (feel: loose, add the 4th, hammer it).

TAB

```

e|-----|
B|--3---3---3---3---|
G|--2---2---2---2---|
D|--0h2--0---0h2--0---|
A|-----|
E|-----|

```

The "G-string hammer" inside an open D

The classic "G-string hammer" inside an open D shape — a country-rock staple Rossington leans on to make a held chord breathe.

**Move 3 — The harmonized answer** (feel: two guitars in 3rds).

TAB

```
e|-----|
B|--3----1----0-----| upper voice
G|--2----0----0-----| lower voice, a 3rd below
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
Twin-lead harmony stacked a 3rd apart
```

Two guitars stacked a 3rd apart over the cycle — the harmonized "twin lead" sound that became the Southern-rock signature.

## | The Drills

**Drill 1 — Open-string pentatonic cascade** (builds ringing sustain and ring-finger independence).

TAB

```
Feel: relaxed eighth notes, ~98 BPM. Let EVERY note ring into the next.
e|-----|
B|-----3-----1-----0-----|
G|---0h2---0---0---0h2--0---0---0h2--0---0~---|
D|---0---0-----0-----0-----0---|
A|-----|
E|-----|
Original lick in the style of the intro
```

Original lick in the style of the intro. Train your fretting hand to keep notes sustaining while open strings cascade underneath. Tone: neck pickup, edge-of-breakup, dig in slightly on the hammer-ons so they bloom.

**Drill 2 — Country-rock double-stops over D-C-G** (builds clean string pairs and slide accuracy).

TAB

Feel: swung sixteenths, medium tempo. Slide INTO the target double-stop.

	D	C	G	
e	7/9---9b(10)r9	5/7---7	3/5---5	3---
B	7/9---9	5/7---7	3/5---5	3---
G	-----			
D	-----			
A	-----			
E	-----			

Double-stop etude tracing the D-C-G cycle

My own double-stop etude tracing the chord cycle. Each pair slides up from a fret below — the lazy, vocal slide is the whole vibe. Bend the high pair a half-step and release on the D for that crying-pedal-steel effect. Tone: neck or middle pickup, tone knob rolled to ~7 to round the top.

**Drill 3 — Comping the D-C-G cycle with the hammer trick** (builds rhythm-guitar groove and the "breathing chord" move).

TAB

Feel: steady quarter-note pulse, ~98 BPM. Hybrid-pick: thumb on low strings, fingers up top.

	D	C	G	
e	2---2---2---2	0---0---0---0	3---3---3---3	
B	3---3---3---3	1---1---1---1	3---3---3---3	
G	0h2---0---0h2	0---0---0---0	0---0---0---0	
D	0---0---0---0	2---2---2---2	0---0---0---0	
A	-----3---3---3---3			
E	-----3---3---3---3			

Original comping pattern through the full cycle

Original comping pattern through the full cycle. The hammer on the G string keeps the chords alive instead of static. Practice it fingerstyle first — Skynyrd's rhythm parts pluck more than they strum. Tone: bridge or middle humbucker, amp just barely breaking up so chords stay defined.

## | Make It Yours

The lesson hiding inside this song is bigger than the riff: **one chord cycle + one pentatonic box + open strings = an endless conversation.** Take any three-chord loop you like (try A-G-D, or E-D-A) and apply the same toolkit — slide into double-stops, let open strings ring against fretted notes, and answer your own phrases a beat later as if a second guitarist were there. The Mixolydian trick (flat the 7th of your major key) instantly gives any vamp that rootsy, never-quite-resolving lift. And

remember the tone secret isn't gear, it's *touch*: keep the gain low, let your fingers do the dynamics, and pick *lighter* than feels natural. That restraint is the whole sound.

#### ♪ LISTEN FOR

- The open strings *ringing over* fretted notes in the intro — sustain, not staccato.
- The C natural in the cycle (Mixolydian) — that's the "down-home" color; make sure you hear it, not C#.
- Edge-of-breakup, never saturated — a clean note with just a little hair when you dig in.
- The vocal, lazy *slides into* double-stops — arriving slightly behind the beat.
- Two-guitar call-and-response: phrase, answer, phrase, answer — even when you're playing alone, imply it.

# “Back in Black” • AC/DC

---

## AT A GLANCE

**Artist:** AC/DC (Angus Young on lead/the main riff; Malcolm Young on rhythm)

**Song:** "Back in Black"

**Album:** *Back in Black* (1980)

**The tone in one sentence:** A Gibson SG plugged straight into cranked, non-master-volume Marshalls — no pedals, no tricks — so the sound is all wood, fingers, and power tubes pushed just past the edge of clean.

**Difficulty:** Intermediate

**Key & tuning:** E major (E Mixolydian / E major pentatonic). Standard tuning, A440 — no drop tunings, no half-step down.

## | The Rig & Signal Chain

This is the most important sentence in the lesson: there is almost nothing in the chain. That is the point.

**Guitar:** Angus plays a **Gibson SG** loaded with PAF-style humbuckers. The SG's thin mahogany body and set neck give a bright, woody, slightly aggressive midrange — less low-end thump than a Les Paul, more cut. Malcolm's rhythm side famously came from a stripped **Gretsch** (his "Salt-and-Pepper" Jet) for that tight, percussive chunk, but for *your* purposes, treat the riff as humbucker-into-Marshall.

**Amp:** Cranked **Marshall** non-master-volume heads — the 1959 "Plexi"-lineage Super Lead family is the commonly cited reference — run loud enough that the power section, not a gain knob, is doing the distorting. There is no master volume to cheat with; the breakup is the volume. That is why the tone cleans up the instant you back off your pick or your guitar volume.

**Pedals:** None on the core sound. No distortion box, no overdrive, no EQ pedal. What you hear as "gain" is a loud amp at the edge of breakup plus the natural compression of power tubes working hard.

**Mic (as commonly documented):** Producer Robert John "Mutt" Lange and engineer Tony Platt captured the cabs with close dynamic mics (an SM57-class mic on the grille is the standard account) blended with room/distance mics for size. Settings on the amps are best treated as *approximately* "everything up, presence high" — do not trust any chart claiming exact secret dial positions. The honest description is: loud, mid-forward, lightly broken up.

## | The Tone Recipe

You can land ~90% of this with a humbucker guitar and one good amp (real or modeled).

### Substitutions:

- **Guitar:** Any humbucker-equipped guitar. An SG copy is ideal; a Les Paul works (roll the tone down slightly to tame low end); even an HH Tele gets there. Use the **bridge pickup**.
- **Amp:** A Marshall-voiced amp or model — JCM800, Plexi, "Super Lead," or any "British crunch"/"Brown"/"Plexi" amp-sim profile. A cranked **JTM/JCM**-style combo at gig volume is the real thing.
- **Drive (if you must be quiet):** A transparent boost or low-gain overdrive (Tube Screamer-style with the **gain near zero, level high**) into a clean-ish amp will fake the power-tube push at bedroom volume. Keep total gain modest.

### Starting points (knobs out of 10):

- **Gain / Preamp:** 4–5. Seriously. This tone is far less distorted than people remember. If your power chords sound like a metal band, you have too much.
- **Bass:** 4 · **Mids:** 7 · **Treble:** 6–7 · **Presence:** 6–7. Push the mids — that is the whole identity.
- **Guitar volume:** start on 10, then practice riding it down to 7–8 for verses.
- **Pick attack:** medium-heavy pick, hit firmly, near the bridge for the stabs. Dynamics come from your right hand, not a pedal.
- **Reverb:** a touch of room only. This is a dry, in-your-face sound.

The test: play one open E5 chord, then stop. If it rings, breathes, and cleans up when you pick softer, you are there. If it's a wall of fuzz, turn down the gain.

## | What's Going On Musically

The song lives in **E**, and the magic is which "E" it uses.

Two scales matter:

- **E major pentatonic** — E G# A B C# (a five-note major scale, the bright, happy box). Angus's licks live here.
- **E Mixolydian** — E F# G# A B C# D — a major scale with a **flatted 7th** (D instead of D#). "Mixolydian" just means *major scale, but with a lowered 7th degree*. That D natural is the bluesy, rock-and-roll note. It's why the riff sounds major and confident but never sweet or "classical."

The riff's architecture is a lesson in itself. It alternates two ingredients:

1. **Chord stabs** — short, muted **power chords** (root + 5th, e.g. E5, D5, A5). A power chord has no 3rd, so it's neither major nor minor — pure, neutral muscle.
2. **Open-string ring + pentatonic answer** — between the stabs, open strings ring and a quick lick replies.

The genius is the **space**. The riff is maybe 50% silence. Each stab is followed by a beat of nothing (or a ringing open string) before the next event. That breathing room is what makes it heavy — the gaps frame the hits.

**Form:** classic verse / pre-chorus / chorus rock structure, mid-tempo around 92–96 BPM with a heavy backbeat (snare hard on 2 and 4). The riff anchors the intro and verses; the chorus opens up to bigger sustained chords.

**Why guitar-into-amp simplicity makes the tone:** with no compression pedal flattening your dynamics and no gain box masking your attack, *every* nuance of your right hand reaches the speaker. Loud and clean-ish means the amp reacts to you. That dynamic responsiveness is the sound. Add pedals and you bury it.

## | Signature Moves

### 1. The main riff — stab + open-string answer

Mid-tempo, ~94 BPM, heavy and patient. Let the open strings ring; the rests are part of the riff.

TAB

Feel: ~94 BPM, swagger, leave the gaps alone.

```

e|-----|-----|
B|-----|-----|
G|-----|-----|
D|--2-2-----|-----2-----|
A|--2-2-----0---2h4-----|--2-2-0-----|
E|--0-0-----0---0-----|--0-0-0-----|
    E5  E5      open lick      E5      open (space...)

```

Short illustrative fragment: notice how each chord stab is answered by ringing open low strings and a tiny pentatonic move, then silence. The hammer (h) at the 5th-string adds the bluesy lift.

## 2. The rhythmic space — what you DON'T play

Same tempo. The point of this excerpt is the rests. Count out loud.

TAB

Feel: ~94 BPM, count "1 - rest - 2 - rest" and mean it.

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-----|
D|--2-----2-----|
A|--2-----2-----|
E|--0-----0-----|
    stab      stab      (rest)

```

Two identical stabs separated by a full beat of air. Mute with your fretting hand right after each hit. The groove is in the gaps.

## 3. A blues-rock fill

Mid-tempo, ~94 BPM. A quick E-major-pentatonic flourish of the kind Angus drops between phrases.

TAB

Feel: ~94 BPM, snap it, slight vibrato on the landing.

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-----1b(2)~-----|
D|----2---4-----|
A|--2h4-----|
E|-----|

```

from the E major pentatonic box

A short ascending run resolving with a half-step bend and vibrato. Bend **1** here means push the note up roughly a half step; the **~** is finger vibrato on the held note.

## | The Drills

These are **original** exercises in the style of the song — not transcriptions. Dial in the tone from the recipe above (humbucker bridge pickup, gain ~4–5, mids up) before you start.

### Drill A — Stab-and-Answer phrasing

Builds the core call-and-response: a tight muted chord stab, then a ringing open-string answer with a tiny lick. Trains right-hand muting and the *handoff* between rhythm and lead.

TAB

~88 BPM to start. Mute each stab dead; let the open strings ring full.

```

e|-----|-----|
B|-----|-----|
G|-----|-----|
D|--2-2-----2-----|--5-5-----4-----|
A|--2-2-----0-0-2h4-2-----|--5-5-----0-0-2h4-4-----|
E|--0-0-----0-0-0-0-----|--0-0-----0-0-0-0-----|

```

E5            open    lick            A5            open    back

What it builds: clean separation between a percussive stab and a singing answer. Goal: the stab is short and choked, the open strings ring clearly, and the **2h4** hammer pops without a second pick. Keep gain low so the muted stabs stay tight, not fizzy.

### Drill B — Dynamic space control

Trains the thing pedals can't fake: controlling loud/soft and silence with your hands. Same chord, four times, but each is articulated differently. The rests are written in — honor them.

TAB

~92 BPM. R = right-hand mute (silence). Vary pick force as marked.

```
e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-----|
D|--2---R---2---R---2---R---2---|
A|--2---R---2---R---2---R---2---|
E|--0---R---0---R---0---R---0---|
    HARD (off) soft (off) HARD (off) soft
```

*What it builds: amp responsiveness. On a cranked/edge-of-breakup tone, the HARD hits should distort more and the soft hits should nearly clean up — same chord, two different voices, all from your right hand. If everything sounds identical, your gain is too high or a compressor is flattening you. Back both off.*

## Drill C — E major pentatonic lick builder

A run through the **E major pentatonic** box ( E G# A B C# E ) to stock your fill vocabulary, ending on a bluesy bend like Angus's. Trains position playing and a controlled, in-tune bend.

TAB

~90 BPM. Stay in the box; keep it bouncy, not legato. Bend in tune.

```
e|-----|
B|-----2--5b(7)r5-----|
G|-----1--4-----|
D|-----2--4-----|
A|--2--4--7-----|
E|-----|
    ascend through the box ... bend & release
```

*What it builds: fast, accurate movement through one position plus a money-note bend. The **b(7)** means bend the 5th-fret note up until it sounds like the 7th fret (a whole step); **r5** releases back. Match the bent pitch to a fretted reference first so it lands in tune every time. Tone: same low-gain bridge-pickup setting — the lick should sing, not buzz.*

## | Make It Yours

The deepest lesson here isn't a riff — it's **subtraction**. Most players reach for more gain, more pedals, more notes. "Back in Black" reaches for less and hits harder. Steal three habits: (1) **Build riffs around space** — write a two-bar idea, then delete half the notes and let rests do the work. (2) **Push your mids and cut your gain** — find the edge-of-breakup zone where the amp answers your pick,

and live there; it's punchier in a band mix than scooped high-gain ever is. (3) **Make your right hand the volume pedal** — practice riding pick attack and guitar volume so one pickup gives you clean verses and grinding choruses without touching a pedal. Drop any one of these into your own playing and it'll instantly sound more confident.

#### ♪ LISTEN FOR

- The **gaps** — the silence between stabs should be as deliberate and audible as the notes.
- **Edge-of-breakup grind**, not full distortion — chords should bloom and clean up when you pick softer.
- **Forward mids** — the tone cuts and barks; it is not scooped or bassy.
- **Open strings ringing** under and between the stabs, giving the riff its width.
- A **bend that lands in tune** with vibrato on the fill — the difference between a pro lick and a sloppy one.

# "The Boys Are Back in Town" • Thin Lizzy

---

## AT A GLANCE

**Artist:** Thin Lizzy (guitars: Scott Gorham and Brian Robertson)

**Song:** "The Boys Are Back in Town"

**Album:** *Jailbreak* (1976)

**The tone in one sentence:** Two Les Pauls into cranked Marshalls, locked together in diatonic harmony — warm, vocal, mid-forward, just enough breakup to sing without turning to mush.

**Difficulty:** Intermediate to Advanced

**Key & tuning:** A major; standard tuning (E A D G B E)

## | The Rig & Signal Chain

The blueprint here is the classic British twin-guitar setup. Both players favored the **Gibson Les Paul** — a mahogany body with a maple cap and two humbuckers — run through **Marshall** valve amplifiers (the 100-watt Super Lead family of the era is the usual reference point). The magic isn't a secret box; it's two of those rigs panned hard left and right, playing complementary parts.

Pickup choice matters. The lead harmony lines live mostly on the bridge humbucker for cut and presence, with the neck pickup available for the warmer, rounded melodic moments in the solo. Humbuckers are the engine of this sound: they're hotter and thicker than single coils, and they push a tube amp into smooth, compressed overdrive without the buzzy fizz.

Settings are best treated as ballpark, not gospel. Period accounts and live footage suggest the amps ran loud and fairly clean-to-edge-of-breakup — gain commonly cited as moderate rather than high, with the guitar's own volume knob and pick attack doing a lot of the dynamic work. There's little evidence of heavy pedalboards on the core tracks; the distortion is largely amp and tube, not a stomp. If a treble booster or overdrive was in the chain at points, treat the specifics as undocumented rather

than confirmed. Mic'ing on the record is the standard close-mic'd cabinet approach of the day; exact mic models aren't reliably documented, so don't trust any source that states them with certainty.

The takeaway: this is a *parts* tone before it's a *gear* tone. Two humbucker guitars, two loud-ish tube amps, hard panning, disciplined unison-and-harmony playing.

## | The Tone Recipe

You can get ~90% there with very accessible gear.

### Substitutions:

- **Guitar:** Any humbucker-equipped guitar — an **Epiphone Les Paul**, a humbucker-loaded Tele or SG, anything with a hot-ish bridge pickup.
- **Amp:** A British-voiced tube combo (a **Marshall Origin** or DSL, or a plugin amp sim set to a "plexi/JCM" model). A cranked low-watt tube amp or a good Marshall sim both nail it.
- **Drive:** A transparent overdrive (a **Tube Screamer**-style or Klon-style pedal) pushing the front end — set as a boost, not a fuzz.

### Starting points (knobs out of 10):

- Amp: Gain **4–5**, Bass **5**, Mids **7**, Treble **6**, Presence **5**, Master loud enough to feel.
- Overdrive (if used): Drive **3**, Tone **6**, Level **6** — just to thicken and add sustain.
- Guitar: **Bridge pickup** for the harmony hook; roll to **neck** for the solo's singing lines. Guitar volume at **8–9** so you can clean up with the knob.

**Feel:** Pick with a medium attack near the neck for warmth on melodies, move toward the bridge for bite on the hook. The single most important move is to set the **gain lower than you think**. This tone lives at edge-of-breakup, where two guitars stay distinct instead of blurring. If you can't hear both harmony notes clearly, your gain is too high.

## | What's Going On Musically

The song sits in **A major**. The whole framework is built from the A major scale (A B C# D E F# G#) and the chords that scale generates.

The central idea — the thing that makes Thin Lizzy *sound like* Thin Lizzy — is **diatonic harmony**. "Diatonic" means "using only the notes in the key." When you harmonize a melody diatonically, you

take each melody note and add a second note that's a fixed number of scale steps above it, *staying inside the key*. You don't shift the interval by a fixed fret distance; you shift it by a fixed number of scale degrees, which is why the gap between the two parts breathes — sometimes a major third, sometimes a minor third, depending on where you are in the scale.

**Thirds** (harmonizing a 3rd above) give a sweet, tight, close sound. **Sixths** (a 6th above, which is just a 3rd flipped upside down) give a wider, more open, often more wistful sound. Thin Lizzy uses both, and the famous instrumental hook leans on this stacked-interval approach.

**Voice-leading** is the discipline underneath it: as the melody moves, the harmony part moves as smoothly as possible, usually by step, so the two lines feel like two singers rather than two machines. That smoothness is why the harmonies sound *musical* and not mechanical.

**The solo** is melodic rather than shreddy. It treats the guitar like a voice — phrases with breath, repeats, and bends that resolve to chord tones (the root A, the third C#, the fifth E). The form is verse / chorus driven, with the harmonized guitar figure serving as the instrumental hook between sections. Learn the harmony first; it's the band's signature.

## | Signature Moves

### 1. The harmonized hook — Part 1 (lower / harmony)

TAB

Tempo ~100 BPM, straight eighths, even and confident

```
e|-----|
B|-----|
G|--6--6--4--6--/9--6--4-----|
D|-----6--7--6-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
```

*The lower voice of the twin lead — note the slide into the 9th for a vocal swoop.*

## 2. The harmonized hook — Part 2 (upper, a diatonic 3rd above)

TAB

Tempo ~100 BPM, lock TIGHTLY to Part 1 – same rhythm

```
e|--9---9---7---9---/11--9---7-----|
B|-----9---10--9-----|
G|-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
```

Stack this over Part 1: each note is a diatonic 3rd up in A major. Two guitars, hard-panned, one hook.

## 3. Melodic solo phrasing (single guitar, vocal bends)

TAB

Tempo ~100 BPM, let it breathe – space is the point

```
e|-----|
B|--10b12r10---10--8~-----8--10--8-----|
G|-----9-----9~-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
```

Bend up to the note, release, let it ring — phrase like a singer taking a breath.

## | The Drills

These are original exercises in the song's style — your practice material, built to train exactly what this track demands.

### Drill A — Harmonized 3rds, both parts stacked

Play the lower line until it's automatic, then the upper, then record one and play against it. The goal is hearing *thirds in A major* as one sound.

TAB

A major – harmonized in 3rds. ~90 BPM, swing slightly.

UPPER VOICE (3rd above):

```

e|-----|
B|--10--10--12--13--12--10--12--10-----|
G|-----11--9--11--9-|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|

```

LOWER VOICE (melody):

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|--9--9--11--11--11--9--11--9-----|
D|-----11--9--11--9-|
A|-----|
E|-----|

```

*Builds: hearing and fretting diatonic 3rds. Tone — bridge pickup, gain 4–5, both guitars panned wide.*

### Drill B – The Sixths exercise

Sixths are wider and trickier to fret because the two notes sit on non-adjacent strings (skip a string). This walks up A major in 6ths, then back. Watch the interval *breathe* — some are major 6ths, some minor, all diatonic.

TAB

A major, ascending/descending in 6ths. ~80 BPM, let each pair ring.

```

e|-----|
B|--10--12--14--15--17--15--14--12--10-----|
G|-----|
D|--7--9--11--12--14--12--11--9--7-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|

```

*Builds: clean string-skipped sixth shapes and smooth voice-leading. Tone — roll the tone knob to ~7 for sweetness; pick softly so both notes balance.*

### Drill C – Melodic A-major lead

A vocal solo line that targets chord tones (A, C#, E) and resolves with bends. Aim for *singing*, not speed. Every phrase should sound like it could be hummed.

**TAB**

A major lead - ~100 BPM, breathe between phrases. Neck pickup.

```

e|-----|
B|--10--12b14r12--10-----10--12--10~~-----|
G|-----11--9-----11b13r11~~-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|

```

*Builds: phrasing, target-note bends, and vibrato control. Tone — neck pickup, gain 4, a touch of reverb; lean into the vibrato by hand, not gain.*

## | Make It Yours

The real lesson of Thin Lizzy isn't the licks — it's the *concept* that a single melody becomes a signature the moment you harmonize it in the key. Take any lead line you already play and add a second voice a diatonic 3rd above it; instantly it sounds like an arrangement, not a noodle. Loop a phrase, record it, and play the harmony on top — even on one guitar with a looper, you'll hear the architecture. Then steal the *discipline*: lower gain so the lines stay distinct, hard-pan when you can, and phrase melodies like a vocalist who needs to breathe. This approach works in any key and any style — country double-stops, metal twin-leads, and pop hooks all run on the same diatonic engine you just learned.

### ♪ LISTEN FOR

- Two distinct guitars in the hook — if they blur into one fuzzy wall, drop the gain.
- The harmony interval *breathing* (major 3rd to minor 3rd) as the line moves — that's diatonic, not parallel.
- Slides used as vocal swoops, not just position shifts.
- Bends that land dead in tune on a chord tone (A, C#, or E).
- Space between solo phrases — the silence is part of the melody.

PART E

# 70s Pedals, Modulation & Sustain



# “Comfortably Numb” • Pink Floyd

## AT A GLANCE

**Artist:** Pink Floyd (guitar by David Gilmour)

**Song:** “Comfortably Numb”

**Album:** *The Wall* (1979)

**The tone in one sentence:** A singing, violin-like lead — thick fuzz sustain wrapped in spacious delay over a glassy, clean amp — that breathes more than it shreds.

**Difficulty:** Advanced

**Key & tuning:** B minor (relative to D major); standard tuning (E A D G B E)

This is the lesson where you stop measuring solos in notes-per-second and start measuring them in *intention per note*. Gilmour's outro solo is one of the most loved in rock not because it's hard to fret, but because every bend lands exactly on pitch, every note is allowed to bloom, and the whole thing climbs like a story with a beginning, a middle, and a roof-raising end. Your hands can probably play these notes today. The work is in the *patience*.

## | The Rig & Signal Chain

Gilmour's late-'70s lead rig is well documented, though specific knob settings from the sessions are not — treat any numbers below as ballpark.

- **Guitar:** A **Fender Stratocaster** (his famous black Strat), typically using the bridge or bridge-plus-middle pickup positions for leads. Single-coils are central to this tone — that glassy attack is doing real work.
- **Fuzz:** An **Electro-Harmonix Big Muff** (the violinist's secret weapon here) for that endless, vocal sustain. The Muff is a fuzz, not a tube-amp overdrive — it compresses hard and sings.

- **Delay:** Tape/analog-style **delay** for the wide, rhythmic repeats that make the solo feel three-dimensional. Gilmour has long favored long, musical delay times synced loosely to the song.
- **Compression:** A touch of **compression** (he's a known **MXR Dyna Comp** user across this era) to even out sustain and round the attack.
- **Amp:** **Hiwatt** heads run clean and loud, providing a big, uncolored clean platform so the pedals define the dirt. Often paired with **WEM** cabs/speakers live.

The signal philosophy matters more than the brands: *dirt from a pedal, cleanliness from the amp, space from delay*. That's the template for the whole genre of soaring lead tone.

## | The Tone Recipe

You can get ~90% there with very accessible gear. The point is the *relationship* between fuzz, clean amp, and delay — not boutique exotica.

### Substitutions

- **Guitar:** Any Strat-style single-coil guitar, bridge pickup. No Strat? A humbucker works, but roll the tone back to ~6 and reduce gain — you're chasing glassy, not dark.
- **Fuzz:** Any Big Muff variant (EHX makes several cheap ones) or a Muff-style clone. In a pinch, a high-gain overdrive into a clean amp gets you in the area, just with less bloom.
- **Delay:** Any delay pedal with a long time and a few repeats. Aim for ~430–480 ms, feedback for 3–5 audible repeats, mix moderate.
- **Compressor:** Any simple comp (Dyna Comp style). Optional, but it really helps sustain.
- **Amp:** Any amp set *clean* with headroom. A clean Fender-style channel is perfect.

### Starting points (knobs out of 10)

- Big Muff: Sustain (gain) ~7, Tone ~4–5 (back off the fizz; the Muff's tone control is dramatic), Volume to match unity.
- Compressor: light — Sustain ~4, Output to taste.
- Delay: Time long, Repeats ~3–4, Mix ~3–4 (present but not washing out the dry note).
- Amp: clean, bright but not harsh; treble ~6, mids ~5–6, bass ~5.
- Pick attack: medium-soft, near the neck for the warm leads; let the note ring and add finger vibrato rather than digging in.

- Gain placement: all the dirt comes from the Muff. Keep the amp clean so the fuzz can bloom instead of mush.

## | What's Going On Musically

The famous outro solo sits over a repeating loop in **B minor: Bm – A – G** (with the verse/body of the song moving through D, A, C, G, and back to D — that D-major center is the song's "home," and B minor is its relative minor, so they share the same notes).

Your core scale is **B minor pentatonic** — the five-note minor box you already know, rooted at B (7th fret, low E string). The magic ingredient Gilmour adds is **Dorian color**. Dorian is a minor scale with one bright note raised: the **major 6th**. In B Dorian that raised 6th is **G#**. Hitting a G# over the A or G chords gives that hopeful, lifted, "not-quite-sad" sound that keeps the solo from feeling like a generic blues.

Here's the chord-tone map you'll target (this is the whole secret to *why* his notes sound "right"):

- Over **Bm**: aim for B, D, F# (the chord tones — root, minor 3rd, 5th).
- Over **A**: aim for A, C#, E.
- Over **G**: aim for G, B, D.

When the chord changes, a great soloist changes their *target note* to match. That's why Gilmour's lines feel like melodies that belong to the song rather than scales sprayed on top. **Targeting chord tones** — landing your held/bent notes on a note that's *in* the underlying chord — is the single highest-value skill in this lesson.

**Form (outro)**: the band loops the Bm–A–G progression while the solo builds across multiple passes — low and conversational at first, then climbing in register and intensity to a sustained, repeated-bend climax. Think of it as paragraphs, not one run-on sentence.

## | Signature Moves

Short, illustrative fragments below — presented as analysis. The bulk of your playing today is in **The Drills**.

1. **The conversational opener (call-and-answer phrasing)**. Slow, vocal, lots of space between phrases.

TAB

Tempo ~63 BPM, free and breathing. Leave the gaps.

```

e|-----|
B|--10b12r10--7~-----7--10b12~-----|
G|-----9~--9-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|

```

Fig. 1 – Phrases that pose a question (the first bend) and answer it (the resolution), with silence carrying the line. Let the delay fill the gaps.

2. The soaring sustained bend. One note, bent to pitch, held until it sings — this is the Big Muff and the compressor doing their job. Your job is the vibrato.

TAB

Tempo ~63 BPM. Bend slow, hold, add wide vibrato.

```

e|-----|
B|--15b17~-----|
G|-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|

```

Fig. 2 – Push the 15th-fret B up a whole step to the target pitch, then sustain. Don't rush the vibrato in – let the note bloom first, then shimmer it.

3. The climactic repeated bend. The roof-raiser: the same high bend hit again and again, rhythmically, building tension.

TAB

Tempo ~63 BPM, urgent. Each bend full and in tune.

```

e|--15b17~--15b17~--15b17~--15b17~-----|
B|-----|
G|-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|

```

Fig. 3 – Repetition is the payoff. Every repeat must hit the exact same pitch – wandering intonation kills the climax. Dig in slightly harder each pass.

# | The Drills

These are original exercises in the song's style. Play them clean first to nail the pitch, then switch the fuzz on.

**Drill A — Sustained bend-to-pitch with delay.** Trains intonation and patience. Set delay long with a few repeats.

TAB

Tempo ~60 BPM. Reference the target, then bend to match it.

```
e|-----|
B|--15--15b17~-----15--15b17~-----|
G|-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
```

Builds: pitch-perfect whole-step bends. Trick – first fret the destination note (17) and listen, then bend the lower note (15b17) and make it match exactly. Tone: Muff Sustain ~7, delay mix ~4 so the repeats reinforce your sustain.

**Drill B — B minor pentatonic chord-tone targeting.** Trains landing on the right note when the chord moves. Loop Bm–A–G underneath (or imagine it).

TAB

Tempo ~70 BPM. Land on the marked note as each chord hits.

```
          (Bm)          (A)          (G)
e|-----|-----|-----|
B|--10b12~--10----|--10--7-----|-----|
G|-----11----|--9--7~-----|--7~--9--7-----|
D|-----|-----|-----9~-----|
A|-----|-----|-----|
E|-----|-----|-----|
target: F#/D    target: C#/A    target: D/G
```

Builds: hearing the chord under your line. The held notes are chord tones of each chord – that's why the line sounds "composed." Tone: a hair less gain than the climax so the note changes stay articulate.

**Drill C — Long-phrase building (the narrative arc).** Trains stamina and dynamic shape: start low and quiet, climb, and peak. One continuous four-bar idea.

TAB

Tempo ~63 BPM. Start soft and low; build register and intensity each bar.

```

e|-----|-----|
B|-----|---15b17~~~~~|
G|--7~--9--7-----9b11~--9-----|
D|-----9--7--9-----9~--7-----|
A|-----|-----|
E|--7~-----|-----|
  
```

**Builds:** solo architecture – the discipline of saving your highest, loudest note for last. Play it three times in a row without stopping; the high bend should feel earned, not early. **Tone:** ride your volume knob up as you climb for a built-in crescendo.

## | Make It Yours

The lesson of “Comfortably Numb” transfers to *any* solo you’ll ever play: **slow down, bend in tune, and target the chord.** Next time you take a lead break, try giving yourself a one-note rule for the first phrase — bend to pitch, hold it, add vibrato, and *stop*. Let the silence (and a little delay) do the talking. Then build from there, raising your register and intensity only as the section repeats, so you always have somewhere left to go. The Big Muff sustain is fun, but the real tone here is *restraint*: a clean amp, a held note, and the confidence to let it ring. Steal the architecture, not just the licks — and your own pentatonic boxes will suddenly sound like songs.

♪ LISTEN FOR

- Bends that arrive *exactly* on pitch — no flat, no sharp, no creeping up to it.
- Notes that bloom and sustain (fuzz + compression + clean amp), not stab and die.
- Delay that adds width and rhythm without washing out your dry attack.
- A genuine arc: the solo climbs in register and intensity toward a clear climax.
- The repeated climactic bend hit identically every time — that consistency is the payoff.

# “Shine On You Crazy Diamond” • Pink Floyd

## AT A GLANCE

**Artist:** Pink Floyd (David Gilmour, guitar)

**Song:** “Shine On You Crazy Diamond” (Parts I–V are the front half; the famous lead enters in Part III–IV)

**Album:** *Wish You Were Here* (1975)

**The tone in one sentence:** A liquid, singing fuzz-lead that floats in oceans of delay and reverb — every note placed like a brushstroke, never a hurry.

**Difficulty:** Intermediate

**Key & tuning:** G minor; standard tuning (E A D G B E)

The lesson of this song isn't speed or flash. It's *patience*. Gilmour says more with four notes than most players say with forty, and that restraint is the whole technique. We're going to learn the famous phrase, the tone that carries it, and — most importantly — how to leave space.

## | The Rig & Signal Chain

- **Guitar:** Gilmour's black **Fender Stratocaster** (“The Black Strat”), most often voiced on the neck pickup for the warm, vocal lead sound here. The bridge/middle blend shows up on the funkier rhythm parts of Parts VI–IX.
- **Fuzz:** an **Electro-Harmonix Big Muff** is the heart of the sustaining lead voice across the *Wish You Were Here* era. Gilmour layered fuzz with clean tones constantly, so the fuzz isn't always full-tilt — it's often a thickening agent under a fairly clean core.
- **Delay:** a tape-style echo (Gilmour famously used **Binson Echorec** units and later solid-state delays) set to a long, dotted-feeling repeat that fills the gaps between phrases. The delay is *part of*

*the composition*, not a garnish.

- **Amp: Hiwatt** heads (the DR103 family) running fairly clean and loud into WEM/Fender-style cabs, letting the Big Muff and the room do the dirty work. Clean, powerful headroom is the point — the amp stays out of the way so the fuzz can bloom.
- **Settings (hedged):** these are *commonly cited as* a long delay (roughly 400–500 ms, several repeats, moderate feedback), Big Muff with sustain high but tone rolled toward the middle, and the amp clean and loud. Treat all of these as approximate — the exact studio chain and settings are debated and were tweaked constantly.

A note on lore: you'll read precise “secret settings” for Gilmour's rigs all over the internet. Take them as starting points, not gospel — the recordings were built from layered takes, multiple amps, and studio processing that no single pedal setting reproduces.

## | The Tone Recipe

You can get roughly 90% of the way there with very accessible gear:

- **Guitar:** any Strat-style guitar with single coils. Use the **neck pickup**. No Strat? A neck humbucker rolled back on tone gets surprisingly close.
- **Fuzz/drive:** a Big Muff clone (tons exist) or even a smooth overdrive pushed hard. Set **sustain/gain at 6–7**, **tone at 4–5** (just south of noon, to tame harshness), volume to match your amp.
- **Delay:** any delay pedal. Set **time to a long quarter-note-ish repeat** (~430 ms is a great starting point at this tempo), **feedback at 4–5** (3–4 audible repeats), **mix at 3–4** so echoes support but don't wash out the dry note.
- **Reverb:** a touch of hall or plate, **mix at 2–3**. This glues everything together.
- **Amp:** clean platform, **gain low**, a little master volume so notes bloom. Bass 6, mids 5–6, treble 5.
- **Attack:** play with the **fleshy pad of the pick** and a soft grip. Let notes ring fully. Pick *into* the string, not at it.

The single biggest tone control here is your **left-hand vibrato and your patience**. Two players with identical rigs will sound completely different on this song based on how they bend, sustain, and wait.

## | What's Going On Musically

The piece sits in **G minor**. The opening lead material lives mostly in the **G natural minor scale** (also called the **Aeolian mode** — the minor scale you get by playing the white keys from A, transposed to G: G A B $\flat$  C D E $\flat$  F) and the **G minor pentatonic** (G B $\flat$  C D F — the five-note “box” most rock players already know).

The famous motif is built from a falling gesture inside that minor sound. What makes it haunting is *where* the notes land: Gilmour leans on the **flat-6 (E $\flat$ )** and resolves through the **5th (D)** down to the root **G**, then leaps up. That flat-6-to-5 move is the sound of longing — it's the same pull that makes a lot of sad, beautiful music work.

The harmony underneath moves slowly through **Gm**, with **F**, **B $\flat$** , **Dm**, **C**, and **E $\flat$**  colors appearing as the suite develops (the chord cycle that anchors the long lead section centers on a **B $\flat$  – F – Gm** kind of motion, with **C – Dm – E $\flat$  – F** turns). Two terms worth defining:

- **Motif:** a short musical idea (here, the four notes) that gets repeated and varied — like a sentence the song keeps coming back to.
- **Development:** restating that motif with small changes — different rhythm, an added bend, a new ending — so it grows without becoming a new idea.

The form is patient and cinematic: long instrumental sections, the four-note motif as a recurring anchor, then bluesy elaboration over the slow chord cycle. The genius is structural — the song *earns* its emotional payoff by withholding, then giving.

## | Signature Moves

### 1. The four-note motif

This is the most famous phrase in the Floyd catalog. Four notes, enormous space around them.

TAB

Slow, ~64 BPM, half-time feel. Let every note ring full. Wait.

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-----3~-----0~-----|
D|---5~-----5---3~-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
  Bb      D   Bb  C   G

```

The Bb–D leap, then the descent — played slowly, with vibrato on the held notes. The rests are as important as the notes.

### 2. Bluesy development of the motif

Once the motif is established, Gilmour starts bending and decorating it, pulling minor-pentatonic blues phrasing into the same register.

TAB

Slow, vocal phrasing. Push the bends slowly into pitch.

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-----|
D|---5b7(b7)r5---3~-----|
A|-----5---3~-----3-----|
E|-----6~-----|
  bend up  release  walk down

```

Same neighborhood as the motif, now with a whole-step bend and a slow release — the blues vocabulary entering the minor landscape.

### 3. The sustained bend

The emotional peak of Gilmour's vocabulary: one note bent up and held, vibrato applied to the bent string, riding the delay tails.

Very slow. Bend, hold, add vibrato AT the top of the bend.

```

e|-----|
B|---8b10~-----|
G|-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
    bend up a whole step, then shake it and let it sing
  
```

*This is the whole song in one gesture: a slow bend, sustained, vibrato shimmering on top while the delay repeats fan out behind it.*

## | The Drills

These are my original exercises in the song's style — built to train the exact skills the recording demands.

### **Drill A — Motif & variations (developing one idea)**

Train the core skill: stating a four-note idea, then varying it three ways without abandoning it.

~64 BPM, half-time. Same tone as the lead: neck pickup, fuzz, long delay.

Statement:

```
e|-----|
B|-----|
G|---3~-----0~-----|
D|--5-----5---3~-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
```

Variation 1 (add a bend):

```
e|-----|
B|-----|
G|---3b5r3-----0~-----|
D|--5-----5---3~-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
```

Variation 2 (change the rhythm – push the last note late):

```
e|-----|
B|-----|
G|---3~-----0~-----|
D|--5-----5-3~-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
```

Variation 3 (new ending – resolve down to the root):

```
e|-----|
B|-----|
G|---3~-----0-----|
D|--5-----5---3-----5-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
```

*Builds motif development and ear-led variation. Play each line, then pause a full two beats before the next. Tone: keep the fuzz blooming and let the delay carry the gaps.*

## Drill B – Space & timing (the metronome of silence)

The hardest skill in this song is *not playing*. This drill forces rests.

TAB

~60 BPM. Count out loud. The empty bars are SILENCE you must feel, not rush.

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|--5~-----|-----|-----7~-----|
D|-----|-----5~--/--7~-----|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
  play... wait 2 beats... slide... wait... answer

```

*Builds phrasing and patience. Set a long delay so the silences fill with echo — you'll hear how the gaps “breathe.” If you feel the urge to add notes, don't. The wait IS the part.*

### Drill C — G minor pentatonic with wide vibrato

Gilmour's vibrato is slow, wide, and perfectly in tune. This drill isolates it inside the G minor pentatonic box.

TAB

~66 BPM. Each note gets DELIBERATE vibrato – slow, wide, returning to pitch.

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-----5~-----3~-----|
D|-----5~--3~-----5~-----|
A|--5~--3~-----6~-----|
E|-----|
  G  Bb C  D  Bb G      ...climb and shake

```

*Builds vibrato control and intonation. The goal: vibrato that's a slow ocean swell, not a nervous flutter. Roll the tone back, push the fuzz, and make each note sing for its full value before you move. Record yourself — wide vibrato is easy to overdo.*

## | Make It Yours

The transferable lesson here is **economy**. Most of us play too many notes because silence feels uncomfortable — Gilmour built a career on getting comfortable with it. Take any solo you already play and cut it in half. Find the one note that matters most and *sustain* it. Add a slow bend where you'd normally add a run. Set a long delay and let it answer you, so you're trading phrases with your own echo. This works in any minor key, over any slow ballad, in blues, in ambient music, in a worship set.

The four-note motif idea is a composition tool, not just a Floyd lick: state a small idea, leave room, then develop it. Do that and you'll sound musical even with a tiny vocabulary — which is the whole point.

♪ LISTEN FOR

- The four-note motif placed in space — count the *rests*, not just the notes.
- The flat-6 (Eb) to 5 (D) pull resolving toward G — that's the longing.
- Vibrato that is slow and wide and lands perfectly in tune at the top of every bend.
- The delay acting as a second voice, filling the gaps so the dry notes can breathe.
- A fuzz tone that *sings and sustains* without turning harsh — bloom, not buzz.

# “Bridge of Sighs” • Robin Trower

## AT A GLANCE

**Artist:** Robin Trower

**Song:** “Bridge of Sighs”

**Album:** *Bridge of Sighs* (1974)

**The tone in one sentence:** A Stratocaster swimming in slow phase modulation and warm fuzz — watery, throbbing, and so sustained it feels like the notes are breathing.

**Difficulty:** Intermediate

**Key & tuning:** A minor, standard tuning (E A D G B E)

This is a tone built on *patience*. Trower plays fewer notes than you'd expect and lets the rig do the singing. Your job is to set up the modulation, then phrase slowly enough that the listener hears the pulse move through every sustained note.

## | The Rig & Signal Chain

- **Guitar:** A **Fender Stratocaster**, Trower's lifelong signature. The neck and middle positions dominate this track — rounded, vocal, never icepick-bright.
- **Modulation:** A **Univox Uni-Vibe** (or close cousin). The Uni-Vibe is a four-stage phaser built to imitate a rotating Leslie speaker; its sweep is deliberately uneven and lopsided, which is exactly why it sounds liquid rather than mechanical. Set slow, it produces that signature throb you hear across the whole record.
- **Fuzz/drive:** A **fuzz unit** — Trower's tones of this era are commonly associated with germanium-style fuzz and, later, his **Fuzz Face**-type pedals. On this track the drive is moderate: singing sustain, not a wall of distortion.

- **Amp:** A cranked **Marshall** stack, run loud enough for the front end of the power section to compress and add sustain.
- **Mic:** Specific mic and exact placement on this 1974 session aren't reliably documented — treat any "secret" mic claim with skepticism.

A note on settings: contemporary accounts describe the Uni-Vibe running on its slow, chorus-style sweep with a deep, prominent throb, but **exact dial positions from the session are not documented** — anyone quoting precise numbers is guessing. Set by ear.

## | The Tone Recipe

You can get roughly 90% of the way there with gear you can actually buy.

### Substitutions:

- *Guitar:* Any Strat-style instrument with single coils. Use the **neck pickup** (position 1) or the neck+middle blend (position 2) for that hollow quack.
- *Uni-Vibe:* A modern Uni-Vibe clone — there are many faithful pedals now, plus the MXR/Dunlop and Fulltone-style takes. A decent multi-FX "vibe" or "rotary" setting works in a pinch.
- *Fuzz:* A germanium or silicon Fuzz Face clone, or any warm, mid-rich fuzz. Avoid scooped, gated metal fuzz.
- *Amp:* Any cranked tube amp or a good plexi-style amp model. The goal is sustain through compression, not high gain.

### Starting points (knobs out of 10):

- *Vibe:* Speed ~2 (slow — you should be able to count the pulse), Intensity/Depth ~7–8 (you want it obvious), mode set to **vibrato/chorus** depending on the pedal — pick whichever throbs more on sustained notes.
- *Fuzz:* Gain ~5–6. Enough to sustain a held note for several seconds, not so much that it turns to mush. Roll your guitar volume back to ~7 to clean it up.
- *Amp:* Bass 6, Mids 6, Treble 5, Master loud enough to feel it. Keep treble down — this tone is dark and round.
- *Pick attack:* Medium-soft, fingers near the neck pickup. Let notes bloom; don't dig.

- *Signal order*: Guitar → Fuzz → Vibe → Amp is the classic placement (fuzz first preserves the fuzz's response, vibe smears it). Try vibe-first too; both are valid.

## | What's Going On Musically

The song lives in **A minor** and moves slowly — think roughly half-time blues feel, spacious enough that every note rings out.

The core harmonic colors are the **i chord (Am)** and a heavy lean on the **♭VI and ♭VII** region (F and G), the chords built on the 6th and 7th notes of the natural minor scale. That F-to-G-to-Am motion is the sound of *natural minor* (also called the **Aeolian mode** — the major scale started from its 6th degree). It gives you that brooding, unresolved, doom-laden gravity without needing a single complicated chord.

For soloing, your main vehicle is the **A minor pentatonic scale** — the five-note box every blues-rock player learns first: A–C–D–E–G. Here are the notes from box 1 at the 5th fret:

### TAB

A minor pentatonic – box 1 (root on 6th string, 5th fret)

```
e|-----5--8--|
B|-----5--8-----|
G|-----5--7-----|
D|-----5--7-----|
A|-----5--7-----|
E|--5--8-----|
```

Add the **♭5 (E♭)** as a passing "blue note" between D and E and you've got the **A blues scale**, which Trower drops in for tension. The magic here isn't the note choice — it's *duration*. Because the Uni-Vibe's pulse takes a couple of seconds to complete a sweep, a note has to last long enough for that pulse to wash over it. Short notes hide the effect; long, bent, vibrato'd notes *reveal* it. That's the whole secret: the modulation is a slow tide, and you write your phrasing around the tide.

**Form**: a slow, riff-anchored verse structure with extended instrumental space. There's no busy chord progression to track — it's mood, repetition, and dynamics.

## | Signature Moves

These are short, illustrative fragments presented for analysis — not the full part.

**1. The vibe-soaked chordal stab.** Trower hits a chord, lets it hang, and the Uni-Vibe does the rest. The gesture is *strike and wait*.

TAB

Slow, half-time feel – let each chord RING into the vibe sweep

```
e|-----|-----|
B|--5~~~~|--6~~~~|
G|--5~~~~|--5~~~~|
D|--7~~~~|--7~~~~|
A|-----|-----|
E|-----|-----|
  (Am-ish) (F-ish)
```

*Caption:* Two- and three-note partial voicings, struck and held. The wobble you hear is the vibe, not your hand — keep your fretting still and let the pedal move the air.

**2. The sustained bend that showcases the pulse.** A single note, bent up and held while the modulation breathes underneath.

TAB

Slow – bend, hold, and listen to the vibe wash across the note

```
e|-----|
B|--8b(10)~~~~~|
G|-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
```

*Caption:* Bend the B-string 8th fret up a whole step to the pitch of the 10th, then hold dead still for a full count. The longer you hold, the more the Uni-Vibe throbs through it. This is the core Trower move.

**3. The slow pentatonic answer.** A short, vocal phrase that resolves down to the root.

TAB

Slow, behind the beat – leave space between phrases

```
e|-----|
B|--8--5-----|
G|-----7b(9)r7--5----|
D|-----7~~~~|
A|-----|
E|-----|
```

*Caption:* Note how few notes this is — each one gets room. The bend-and-release on the G string is your expressive peak; the landing on the D string root (7th fret) is the exhale.

## | The Drills

These are my own exercises in Trower's style — original, playable, and built to train the specific skills the song demands.

**Drill A — Bend-and-hold against the pulse.** Trains pitch-accurate bends and the *discipline to wait*. Set the vibe slow and deep; the point is to hear the modulation complete its sweep on each held note.

TAB

Slow (~60 BPM, half-time feel). Each bend held 2 full beats minimum.

```
e|-----|
B|--8b(10)~~~~~10b(12)~~~~~8b(10)~~~~~|
G|-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
```

target: hold dead-still, no extra vibrato until beat 2

*Builds:* Bend accuracy and stillness. *Tone:* Neck pickup, fuzz at ~5, vibe speed low and depth high. If you can't hear the throb, your notes are too short — slow down.

**Drill B — Aeolian chord stabs.** Trains the strike-and-let-ring chordal vocabulary using the i- $\flat$  VI- $\flat$  VII colors that define the tune.

TAB

Slow. Strike each, let it ring its full bar into the vibe.

```
e|-----|
B|--5~~~~6~~~~8~~~~5~~~~|
G|--5~~~~5~~~~7~~~~5~~~~|
D|--7~~~~7~~~~9~~~~7~~~~|
A|-----|
E|-----|
```

Am F G Am

*Builds:* Clean partial-chord voicings and patience. *Tone:* Roll guitar volume back to ~7 so the chords stay defined under fuzz; let the vibe smear the sustain. Don't re-strike early — the silence-into-swell is the sound.

**Drill C — Slow pentatonic phrasing with space.** Trains vocal, blues-scale phrasing where rests matter as much as notes. The  $\flat 5$  (E  $\flat$ , 6th fret G-string) is your tension note — touch it, don't park on it.

**TAB**

Slow, behind the beat. The dashes are rests — honor them.

```
e|-----|
B|--8--5-----5--8b(10)r8--5-----|
G|-----7--5--6--5-----7~~~~~~|
D|-----7-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
```

phrase 1 ... (breathe) ... phrase 2 ... land on root-ish

*Builds:* Phrasing, restraint, and use of the blue note. *Tone:* Same dark Strat-and-vibe setup; let the last bent/held note ring long enough for one full vibe sweep. Count the rests out loud at first — most players rush them.

## | Make It Yours

The lesson of this tone isn't really about the Uni-Vibe — it's about *committing to sustain and space*. Any time you have a modulation pedal (phaser, chorus, rotary, or vibe) and a sound that sustains, you can borrow Trower's approach: play half the notes you think you need, hold them twice as long, and let the effect become the second instrument. Try it on a clean chorus tone for a dreamy clean lead, or with a fuzz on a slow blues — the principle travels. The most transferable skill here is *waiting*: trusting a held note to be interesting. Most players fill silence out of nerves. Train yourself to leave it, and your phrasing will instantly sound more mature, more vocal, and more like you mean every note.

## • LISTEN FOR

- The slow **throb of the vibe** completing a full sweep across a single held note — if your notes are too short to hear it, you're rushing.
- **Pitch-perfect whole-step bends** that arrive and then sit *dead still* before any vibrato.
- The dark, round **neck-pickup voice** — no icepick treble, all warmth and body.
- **Space between phrases** — count the rests; the silence is part of the music.
- Chordal stabs that **bloom and swell** rather than chop — strike, then let go.

# “More Than a Feeling” • Boston

## AT A GLANCE

**Artist:** Boston (Tom Scholz, guitars & production)

**Song:** “More Than a Feeling”

**Album:** *Boston* (1976)

**The tone in one sentence:** A glassy, octave-doubled, lightly chorused electric voice that sounds like sunlight through a stained-glass window — clean-edged in the verses, soaring and saturated in the chorus, and always *huge* because it's layered.

**Difficulty:** Intermediate

**Key & tuning:** Standard tuning; the song centers on **G major** with the chorus pivoting to a **D-major** feel (more on that below).

## | The Rig & Signal Chain

Tom Scholz is an MIT-trained engineer who treated the guitar like a circuit to be solved, so the "rig" here is half gear and half invention.

- **Guitar:** A **Gibson Les Paul** (gold-top, commonly cited) running the bridge humbucker for the big parts. The bridge pickup's midrange focus is the backbone of that chorus wall.
- **Amp:** A **Marshall** (often described as a 100-watt plexi-era head) pushed for the lead and rhythm saturation. Scholz famously rebuilt and modified his amps; he later turned that obsession into the **Rockman**, the headphone-amp that defined his sound on later records. On this 1976 album the core grind is Marshall, not Rockman — that's a frequently muddled point of lore, so treat any "it's all Rockman" claim as **debated/incorrect for this song**.
- **Pedals & studio tricks:** The "chorus" shimmer is the *debated* part. Scholz has said much of the doubling and width came from **layered overdubs and his own outboard processing** rather than

a single stomp-box chorus. So the lush, slightly-detuned movement you hear is a combination of (1) doubled guitar tracks panned wide, (2) octave-doubled melodies, and (3) modulation. Don't assume one magic chorus pedal — assume *layering first, modulation second*.

- **Mic:** Specifics aren't reliably documented. Assume a close dynamic on the cab; don't trust anyone quoting an exact mic position as gospel.

A note on honesty: Scholz guards his exact settings, and a lot of "secret Scholz rig" detail online is invented. Everything above is hedged on purpose.

## | The Tone Recipe

You can get ~90% there with modern, affordable gear. The secret isn't the amp — it's **doubling and octaves**. Track the part twice and pan it hard, and a mediocre rig suddenly sounds enormous.

### Substitutions:

- **Guitar:** Any humbucker-bridge guitar (an **Epiphone Les Paul**, an SG, even a Strat in position-2 with a touch more gain). Humbucker preferred for the chorus.
- **Amp:** A mid-gain "British" amp voicing — a real low-watt Marshall-style combo, or a modeler's "plexi" / "JCM" patch. Edge-of-breakup, not metal.
- **Modulation:** A simple analog **chorus pedal** (CE-style) set *subtle*, or a stereo chorus in the DAW. Rate low, depth low.

### Starting points (knobs out of 10):

- Amp: Gain **5–6**, Bass **5**, Mids **6–7** (mids carry this tone), Treble **6**, Presence **5**, Master loud enough to feel a little power-amp give.
- Chorus: Rate **3**, Depth **3**, Mix **3–4**. If you hear "wobble," you've gone too far. You want *width*, not seasickness.
- Pickup: **Bridge humbucker** for chorus and intro melody; roll to neck for warmth on softer fills.
- Pick attack: Medium pick, struck cleanly near the bridge. The intro arpeggio wants a *gentle* attack so the notes bloom; the chorus wants a firmer dig.
- Gain placement: Set gain so a single chord is *almost* clean but a hard strum just breaks up. Then let the *doubling* create size — don't crank gain to compensate.

**The one trick that matters most:** record (or loop) the part twice and pan one take left, one right. That stereo double is the Boston sound.

## | What's Going On Musically

The song lives in **G major**. The G major scale is **G A B C D E F#**. Build chords on those notes and you get the song's vocabulary: **G, C, D, Em** (the relative minor), and the bright open shapes that ring against the high E and B strings.

**The intro** is an *arpeggio* — a chord played one note at a time instead of strummed. Scholz uses open-position voicings and lets the open strings sustain into each other so the chord "smears" beautifully. Hearing **D, C,** and **G**-flavored shapes ring out over a steady eighth-note pulse is the whole hook.

**The chorus** leans on the **D major** area, which makes it feel like it *lifts* — D is the **V chord (the dominant)** of G, and the V chord pulls upward and creates tension that wants to resolve home to G. That "rising" sensation under the vocal "*I see my Marianne walkin' away*" is pure dominant lift plus the **power-chord** wall behind it.

**Power chord** = root + fifth, no third (e.g., the notes G and D for a "G5"). No third means it's neither major nor minor — it's harmonically neutral, so it sits cleanly under a busy vocal and stacks well when doubled with distortion.

**Octave doubling** is the signature texture: the melody is played, then *doubled an octave higher* (or by a second guitar an octave apart). Two of the same note an octave apart reinforce each other and read as one fat, glowing line — the ear hears richness, not two separate parts.

**Form** is classic verse–chorus–verse–chorus with a bridge/solo and the famous double-time outro. Simple bones; the *production* is the genius.

## | Signature Moves

### 1. The arpeggiated intro

*Feel:* ~110 BPM, steady eighths, let every note ring (*laissez vibrer*). Gentle pick attack.

TAB

```

e|--3-----3-----0-----0-----3-----3-----|
B|--3-----3-----1-----1-----3-----3-----|
G|-----0-----0-----0-----0-----0-----0-----|
D|-----2-----2-----|
A|-----3-----3-----|
E|--3-----3-----|
  
```

Caption: Open-string shimmer over moving bass notes — the strings overlap and bloom. Don't mute; let it wash.

## 2. The octave melody

Feel: chorus tempo, smooth and vocal. Mute the in-between string with the underside of your fretting finger.

TAB

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|--7-----5-----7-----9-----7-----5-----|
D|--x-----x-----x-----x-----x-----x-----|
A|--5-----3-----5-----7-----5-----3-----|
E|-----|
  
```

Caption: An octave shape (root on the A string, octave on the G string, dead string between). Same melody, double the weight.

## 3. The soaring chorus power-riff

Feel: ~110 BPM, firm attack, ring out. This is the "lift."

TAB

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-----7~-----|
D|--5-----7-----9-----7~-----|
A|--5-----7-----9-----5~-----|
E|--3-----5-----7-----|
  
```

Caption: Power chords climbing through the D-area lift, then a held, vibrato'd D5 voicing up the neck for the soar.

## | The Drills

These are **original** exercises in the Boston style — not transcriptions. They train the three skills the song demands: ringing arpeggios, clean octaves, and the climbing chorus push.

### Drill A — "Ringing-Chord Bloom" (arpeggio control)

*Builds: independent picking with full sustain; teaches you to let open strings overlap without muting. Tone: clean-edged bridge humbucker, subtle chorus, gentle attack.*

TAB

```
e|---0-----0-----3-----3-----2-----2-----0---|
B|---1-----1-----3-----3-----3-----3-----1-|
G|---0-----0-----0-----0-----2-----2-----0
D|-----2-----2-----|
A|--3-----3-----0-----0-----|
E|-----3-----3-----|
```

*Dial it in: let nothing stop ringing — your goal is a wash of overlapping notes. Pick from the wrist, even and soft.*

### Drill B — "Octave Ladder" (octave-melody technique)

*Builds: clean octave shapes moving across the neck while the middle string stays dead; this is the core of Boston's doubled lines. Tone: bridge pickup, medium gain, firmer attack so each octave speaks.*

TAB

```
e|-----|
B|-----|
G|--5-----7-----9-----10-----9-----7-----5---|
D|--x-----x-----x-----x-----x-----x-----|
A|--3-----5-----7-----8-----7-----5-----3---|
E|-----|
```

*Dial it in: keep the muted D string silent — lean the fretting fingers flat to deaden it. Pick both notes together for one fat tone. Then record it twice and pan wide to hear the magic.*

### Drill C — "Chorus Climb" (the soaring power-riff)

*Builds: stamina and clean shifts on ascending power chords, ending on a held, vibrato'd voicing — the "lift and soar." Tone: gain at 6, mids up, ring everything, add vibrato from the wrist on the final chord.*

TAB

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-----9~|
D|--5---7---9---10---9~|
A|--5---7---9---10---7~|
E|--3---5---7---8---|
  
```

Dial it in: each chord rings into the next (no gaps). On the last shape, let it hang and add slow, wide vibrato — that sustained ring is the Boston soar.

## | Make It Yours

The lesson of Boston isn't a pedal — it's a *philosophy*: **size comes from layering, not from gain**. Take any clean or lightly-driven part you already play and try three moves. First, **double it** — record the same part twice and pan the takes left and right; you'll hear an instant wall. Second, **add the octave** — play your melody, then play it again an octave up (or have a friend do it) so the line glows. Third, **let it ring** — resist the urge to mute; Scholz's tone breathes because notes overlap and bloom. Keep the chorus *subtle* (width, not wobble) and push your mids so the tone cuts. Do this on a folk-rock progression, a worship-style anthem, or a pop chorus and you'll find that "huge" is an arrangement decision long before it's a gear decision.

♪ LISTEN FOR

- The **stereo width** of the intro — two guitars overlapping, not one. Try to *hear* the doubling.
- **Octaves locking** as a single fat line in the melody, with the dead middle string staying silent.
- The **dominant lift** into the chorus (the D-area pulling upward toward G) — feel the rise.
- **Sustained, blooming notes** — nothing choked or muted; the tone breathes.
- **Subtle modulation** — shimmer and width without seasick wobble. If it sounds like a wet chorus pedal, dial it back.

# “Walking on the Moon” • The Police

## AT A GLANCE

**Artist:** The Police (Andy Summers, guitar)

**Song:** "Walking on the Moon"

**Album:** *Reggatta de Blanc* (1979)

**The tone in one sentence:** A clean, chorus-shimmered Telecaster chord stab thrown into a vast, dotted-rhythm echo so the guitar feels like it's floating in low gravity.

**Difficulty:** Intermediate

**Key & tuning:** D major (with a heavy modal/Dorian flavor); standard tuning (E A D G B E)

The whole magic here is restraint. There is barely any guitar in this song — and that's exactly the point. You're learning to play *one chord beautifully* and let the room and the delay do the rest. That's a real skill, and most players never practice it.

## | The Rig & Signal Chain

Andy Summers' main instrument in this era was a heavily modified **1963 Fender Telecaster** with a humbucker added in the neck position and an onboard preamp/phase circuit. For the airy clean voice on this track, the bridge-and-neck blend with the brighter Tele snap is the foundation.

The amps were typically a pairing of a **Marshall** head and a **Fender** combo (a Twin Reverb-style clean platform is the usual reference) run fairly clean so the effects could breathe.

The effects are the headline:

- An **Electro-Harmonix Electric Mistress** flanger/chorus — the source of that liquid, slightly seasick shimmer. (Summers is closely associated with the Mistress in this period; some sources

also cite a dedicated chorus. Treat the exact unit on this specific take as *commonly cited* rather than documented to the serial number.)

- An **analog delay** set to a long, dotted-eighth-feel echo — this is the part that makes the song breathe. On the record it sits as a big quarter-note-ish repeat with long feedback; players most often recreate it as a dotted-eighth to lock against the groove.

Settings are best treated as *approximate*: amp clean with a touch of edge, Mistress at a moderate rate with deep-ish depth, delay time long with two or three audible repeats. Do not trust any source quoting "exact secret settings" — those are reconstructions.

## | The Tone Recipe

You can get roughly 90% of the way there with a modest modern board.

### Substitutions:

- **Guitar:** Any Telecaster or Tele-style guitar. No Tele? Use the bridge pickup of a Strat, or split a humbucker. You want glassy top end with body, not mud.
- **Amp:** Any clean amp or clean channel. A Fender-voiced clean (real or modeled) is ideal. Set it to "almost breaking up but not."
- **Chorus/flanger:** A modern chorus pedal, or a flanger with a *slow rate and shallow regeneration*. A digital "Mistress-style" or "dimension"-type chorus works great.
- **Delay:** Any delay with a tap-tempo or a time knob. Set it to dotted-eighth if your pedal has subdivisions; otherwise dial a long repeat by ear.

### Starting points (knobs out of 10):

- Amp: Gain 2–3, Bass 5, Mid 5, Treble 6–7, Reverb 3.
- Chorus: Rate 3, Depth 5–6, Mix 5. You want shimmer, not warble.
- Delay: Mix 4–5, Feedback 4 (two to three clear repeats), Time = dotted-eighth of the song tempo (~131 BPM puts the dotted-eighth around 343 ms).
- Pickup: neck or neck+bridge blend. Tone rolled back slightly (7–8) to take the ice off.
- Pick attack: soft to medium, near the neck. Let the chord *bloom* — don't dig in.
- Gain: keep it clean. If you hear hair on the note, back off.

The single most important setting is **space**. Play less than you think you should.

## | What's Going On Musically

The song lives in **D**. The signature chord is a **Dadd9** — a D major chord with the 9th (the note E) added on top, without removing the 3rd. (An *add9* means you stack the 9th onto a normal major triad; a *sus2* would *replace* the 3rd with the 2nd. Summers hovers right between those colors, which is why the chord sounds open and unresolved — neither fully major-sweet nor fully suspended.)

That ambiguity is the emotional engine. An add9/sus voicing has a built-in "question mark." It rings without telling you where it's going, which is perfect for a song about weightlessness.

Harmonically the verse leans on a **D-to-lower** motion with a strong **Dorian** flavor (D Dorian is the D major scale's notes reorganized so the mood goes slightly minor-cool and jazzy — think a natural 6th over a minor-ish center, though here Summers keeps the major 3rd in the chord, creating that hovering tension). The bass (Sting) carries the actual harmonic movement; the guitar mostly *colors* one or two chords and lets them hang.

**The form** is verse / chorus with the iconic "walking on the moon" hook section. Throughout, the guitar plays on the *off-beats* and in the *gaps* — a reggae-derived approach where the strong downbeat is often left empty and the chord lands on the "and." The delay then fills the silence the guitar deliberately left.

The theory takeaway: **negative space is an instrument**. The chord choice (add9) and the rhythmic placement (off-beat) only work because of what *isn't* played.

## | Signature Moves

### 1. The Dadd9 stab

*Feel: ~131 BPM, half-time and patient. Let it ring full.*

TAB

```
e|--0-----|
B|--3-----|
G|--2-----|
D|--0-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
hit & let bloom
```

That open high E (the 9th) ringing against the B string (the 5th, here voiced inside the 3rd/9th cluster) is the whole song. Strike it, lift your pick hand away, and let the chorus and delay carry it.

*Caption:* One chord, all space. The note you don't play next is as important as this one.

## 2. Off-beat placement with the delay answering

*Feel:* chord on the "and," silence on the beat. Count "1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +."

TAB

```
      +      +      +
e|-----0-----0-----0-----|
B|-----3-----3-----3-----|
G|-----2-----2-----2-----|
D|-----0-----0-----0-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
      (rest on each downbeat)
```

Play the stab on the upbeats only. The delay repeats land *between* your hits, so the guitar and its echo trade places like two players.

*Caption:* You play the "and"; the echo plays the "1." Hands stay still on the beat.

## 3. The sparse voicing slide

*Feel:* lazy, behind the beat. One move, then wait.

TAB

```
e|--0~-----|
B|--3-----|
G|--2\0-----|
D|--0-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
      vibrato, then ease down
```

A tiny inner-voice slide on the G string adds motion without adding notes — the kind of micro-gesture that makes a static chord feel alive.

*Caption:* Movement from a single finger. Everything else holds.

# | The Drills

These are my own exercises in the song's spirit — not transcriptions. Each trains a specific skill the track demands.

## Drill A — Add9 / sus2 chord stabs (the bloom)

*Builds: clean attack, letting chords ring, hearing the add9 vs sus2 color. Tone: chorus on, delay low, amp clean.*

TAB

```
           let ring           let ring           let ring
e|--0-----|--0-----|--0-----|
B|--3-----|--0-----|--3-----|
G|--2-----|--2-----|--2-----|
D|--0-----|--0-----|--0-----|
A|-----|-----|-----|
E|-----|-----|-----|
   Dadd9       Dsus2       Dadd9
```

Strike each chord once per bar. Listen to how bar 2 (the B string moved to the open 2nd, an A note = sus2) loses its 3rd and floats higher, then bar 3 brings the sweetness back. Same shape family, different emotion. Lift the pick hand after each hit and *do nothing* until the next bar.

## Drill B — Dotted-eighth delay lock-in

*Builds: rhythmic relationship with your delay; playing in the gaps. Tone: delay at dotted-eighth, feedback for 2–3 repeats, mix even with your dry signal.*

Set your delay to dotted-eighth. Play a single chord figure so you can clearly hear where the repeats fall:

TAB

```
      1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +
e|--0-----0-----|
B|--3-----3-----|
G|--2-----2-----|
D|--0-----0-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
   play only on beats 1 and 3 – let the echo fill 2 and 4
```

Play the chord *only* on beats 1 and 3. If your delay time is right, you'll hear ghost chords appear on the "and" of 2 and the "and" of 4, weaving a busier part than you're actually playing. Adjust the delay time until those echoes sit musically. This is the core illusion of the track.

## Drill C — Sparse rhythm control (the discipline of rests)

*Builds: confidence with silence, off-beat accuracy, dynamic consistency. Tone: same as the song — clean, chorused, delayed.*

TAB

```
      1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +
e|----0-----0-----0-----|
B|----3-----3-----3-----|
G|----2-----2-----2-----|
D|----0-----0-----0-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
      stabs on the +s of 1, 2, 3 - full bar of rest on 4 +
```

Hit the upbeats of 1, 2, and 3, then leave the "and of 4" and the downbeat of the next bar *completely empty*. Count out loud through the silence. The hardest part of this music is trusting the gap and keeping every stab at the same soft, even volume. Use a metronome or drum loop — the empty beats are where amateurs rush.

## | Make It Yours

The real lesson of "Walking on the Moon" isn't a chord shape — it's a philosophy. Take any clean part you already play and try removing half the notes, then push what's left onto the off-beats. Add a chorus for width and a long delay for depth, and suddenly a simple idea has atmosphere and momentum it never had when it was busy. This approach transforms ballads, ambient intros, verse beds behind a vocal, and anything that needs to feel *big without being loud*. Train your ear to treat the delay as a second guitarist you're duetting with, and your phrasing will instantly sound more deliberate. Play one great chord, mean it, and let the air around it do the work.

▶ LISTEN FOR

## • LISTEN FOR

- The **add9 shimmer** — the open high E ringing as the 9th, neither fully resolved nor suspended.
- **Negative space** — count the beats where Summers plays *nothing*; the silence is composed.
- The **dotted-delay weave** — your stabs and their echoes trading on and off the beat.
- **Off-beat placement** — chords landing on the "and," leaving the downbeat to the bass and the echo.
- **Even, soft dynamics** — every stab the same gentle volume, blooming rather than struck hard.

# “Sultans of Swing” • Dire Straits

## AT A GLANCE

**Artist:** Dire Straits (Mark Knopfler)

**Song:** “Sultans of Swing”

**Album:** *Dire Straits* (1978)

**The tone in one sentence:** A bright, percussive, vocal Stratocaster clean — every note attacked by bare fingertips so the strings *snap* and *cluck* instead of merely ringing.

**Difficulty:** Advanced

**Key & tuning:** D minor (Dm — F — C — Bb — C progression in the verse), standard tuning (E A D G B E).

This is the lesson where you stop thinking about your *amp* and start thinking about your *right hand*. Knopfler's tone is famous, but the tone is 80% technique. Get the fingerstyle attack right and almost any clean Strat will do the rest.

## | The Rig & Signal Chain

- **Guitar:** A Fender Stratocaster — Knopfler famously favored a red 1961 Strat in this era, played on the **neck and middle pickups** (the in-between "position 2" notch on a modern 5-way gives you that hollow, quacky cluck). Single-coils are doing the brightness; nothing here is humbucker territory.
- **Amp:** A clean amp run loud enough to be lively but not breaking up — sources commonly cite a **Fender Twin Reverb** and/or a **Music Man** combo from his late-70s setup. The point is *headroom*: the note has to stay clean while you dig in hard.

- **Compression:** Light compression is part of the sound, evening out the wild dynamic swings of bare-finger attack so the quiet notes don't disappear and the loud snaps don't spike. Reports vary on whether it's amp, console, or a pedal — treat the *exact* chain as debated rather than documented.
- **Mics/room:** Studio close-mic on the amp; the airy top end is single-coil plus a healthy dose of room and console EQ. Don't chase a "secret" mic — chase the attack.

I'll flag the lore honestly: the precise pedal-and-amp chain for the 1978 sessions is reconstructed from interviews and gear archaeology, not a verified studio log. Settings below are *approximate starting points*, not Knopfler's secret numbers.

## | The Tone Recipe

Get ~90% there with accessible gear:

- **Guitar substitution:** Any Strat-style guitar with single-coils. A **Squier Classic Vibe** or a Mexican **Player Strat** nails it. Use **position 2** (neck + middle). No Strat? A **Telecaster** on the neck pickup gets surprisingly close; just roll a touch of brightness off.
- **Amp substitution:** Any clean platform with headroom — a Fender-voiced combo, a "Deluxe/Twin" amp-sim, or a clean channel set so it *won't* break up when you dig in. Tone target: bright but not brittle.
- **Compressor substitution:** Any clean comp (an **Origin Cali76**-style or a simple **Boss CS-3**). Set it gentle.
- **Starting points (out of 10):**
- Amp: **Bass 4, Mid 5, Treble 7, Reverb 2–3**. Keep it sparkly. Gain low enough to stay clean at full pick — sorry, full *finger* — attack.
- Compressor: **Sustain/Comp 3, Level to unity, Attack medium** (fast enough to tame the snap, slow enough to let the transient *click* through). Too much comp kills the percussion — back off until you hear the cluck return.
- Pickup: position 2.
- Pick attack: **none** — **fingers only**. Thumb (p) on bass strings, index/middle (i, m) on the high strings, nails and fingertip flesh combined for that snap.
- Gain: set it clean. If it breaks up when you dig in, turn down.

The single biggest tone move is free: **play with your bare hand and attack hard**. That's the recipe.

## | What's Going On Musically

The song lives in **D minor** — specifically the **D natural minor** scale (D E F G A Bb C), also called the **Aeolian mode** (a "mode" is just a scale built starting from a particular note of the parent major scale; D Aeolian is the relative minor of F major).

The verse rides a four-chord loop: **Dm — C — Bb — C** (sometimes voiced **Dm — F — C — Bb — C** with a passing F). Knopfler doesn't strum these flat; he plays them as **chord-melody fills** — holding a voicing while picking little melodic answers out of the top strings between vocal lines. That call-and-response is the whole personality of the verse.

The chorus shifts to a brighter **F major** feel (F — C — Bb — F), F being the relative major, so the song breathes from shadow (Dm) to light (F) and back.

For soloing, your home base is the **D minor pentatonic** (D F G A C) — the five-note box you already know — with the **Bb and E added** to spell full D natural minor when you want the extra color. The famous outro solos float D minor pentatonic over the changes, leaning on **chord tones** (the notes inside the chord under your fingers) at phrase ends so every lick lands "inside."

**Form:** intro riff → verses with chordal fills → chorus → repeat → extended outro solo over the verse loop, where the lead really takes flight.

## | Signature Moves

Three characteristic gestures — short illustrative fragments, presented as commentary.

### 1. The intro fingerstyle figure (Dm into the turnaround)

**TAB**

Tempo ~148 BPM, swung 16ths, fingers only (p i m), let notes ring.

```
e|-----|-----|
B|-----|----3---3-----|
G|---2---2---2---|---2---2---2---|
D|---0---0---0---|---0---0---0---|
A|-----|-----|
E|-----|-----|
    p   i   m           p   i   m
```

*Bare thumb on the D string, index/middle plucking the G and B — the snap on each attack is the sound, not the notes themselves.*

## 2. An outro-style pentatonic lick (D minor pentatonic, 10th position feel)

TAB

Tempo ~148 BPM, swung, dig in with fingertips.

```
e|-----|
B|-----6b8r6-----|
G|-----5h7-----7~-----|
D|--7-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
```

*That quarter-step-to-half bend (b) then release (r), capped with vibrato (~), is pure Knopfler vocal phrasing — sing it before you play it.*

## 3. A chordal verse fill (answering the vocal)

TAB

Tempo ~148 BPM, hold the Dm shape, pick the top voices.

```
e|-----|
B|----3----3----1----|
G|----2----2----2----|
D|----0-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
    p    i    m    m
```

*Hold the chord, pluck a tiny melody out of its top — chord-melody in miniature, the engine of the whole verse.*

## | The Drills

Original exercises in the style of the song. Tone for all three: position 2, clean, light comp, **fingers only**.

**Drill A** — The String-Snap Trainer (builds the percussive attack).

**TAB**

Tempo 90 BPM, fingers only. Pull the string UP off the fretboard so it SLAPS back – you want an audible "snap/cluck," not a smooth pluck.

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|--2x--2--2x--2--2x--2--2x--2--|
D|--0--0x--0--0x--0--0x--0--0x--|
A|-----|
E|-----|
  p   p   p   p   p   p   p   p
  
```

Alternate a clean note and a dead/snapped note (x). The goal is dynamic control: make the snap pop without the clean note vanishing. Roll compression back until you can hear the cluck clearly, then nudge it up just to the edge.

**Drill B — D Minor Pentatonic with Hybrid Picking (builds finger independence for fast lines).**

**TAB**

Tempo 100 BPM, swung 16ths. Thumb (p) plays the low string, middle (m) snaps the high string – train them as a team.

```

e|-----5-----5----|
B|-----6h8-----6----6h8-----6--|
G|--5h7-----5--5h7-----|
D|--7-----7-----7--|
A|-----|
E|-----|
  p i m i m p p i m i m p
  
```

Hammer-ons (h) keep the line legato and vocal while your plucking hand stays light and accurate. Start at 100, ratchet up 4 BPM at a time. Keep the amp clean so every hammer-on still speaks.

**Drill C — Chord-Melody Verse Riff (builds the call-and-response feel).**

**TAB**

Tempo 95 BPM, swung. Hold each chord; pluck the melody out of its top.

```

          Dm                C                Bb
e|-----|-----|-----|
B|--3--3--1--|--1--1--3--|--3--3--1--|
G|--2--2--2--|--0--0--0--|--3--3--3--|
D|--0-----|--2-----|--0-----|
A|-----|--3-----|-----|
E|-----|-----|--1-----|
  p   i   m   m       p   i   m   m       p   i   m   m
  
```

Three bars of the verse loop in miniature. Let the chord ring under the moving top voice — that sustain under motion is the trick. Add a hair of reverb, keep the attack snappy, and breathe between phrases like you're answering a singer.

## | Make It Yours

The lesson of "Sultans" isn't a tone you flip on with a pedal — it's a *way of attacking the string* you can carry into any style. Drop the pick for a verse of a song you already know and feel how the dynamics open up: suddenly you can whisper and shout within a single bar, voice a chord and a melody at the same time, and make a clean amp sound *alive*. Use the chord-melody idea anywhere you'd normally just strum — hold the shape, pick a little tune out of the top three strings, and answer the vocal. Even if you never play this song, the bare-finger snap and the "sing-it-first" bending will make every clean tone you own more expressive.

### ♪ LISTEN FOR

- The *cluck* — an audible percussive snap on the front of each note, not a smooth pluck.
- Position-2 quack: that hollow, slightly nasal Strat in-between tone.
- Dynamics within a phrase — quiet notes that don't disappear, loud notes that don't spike (light comp doing its job).
- Chord-melody motion in the verses: a chord ringing *under* a moving top-string melody.
- Vocal bends in the solo — quarter/half-step bends with vibrato that you could hum before you played them.

PART F

# Blues & the Tube Screamer



# “Pride and Joy” • Stevie Ray Vaughan

## AT A GLANCE

**Artist:** Stevie Ray Vaughan & Double Trouble

**Song:** “Pride and Joy”

**Album:** *Texas Flood* (1983)

**The tone in one sentence:** A thick, biting, bell-clear Stratocaster bridge sound — gritty enough to bark, clean enough to hear every string — driving a relentless Texas shuffle.

**Difficulty:** Advanced

**Key & tuning:** E (E blues / E Mixolydian feel). SRV famously tuned **down a half step** (Eb standard), but you can learn it in standard E and it works perfectly.

## | The Rig & Signal Chain

The heart of this is a **Fender Stratocaster** — SRV's "Number One," a hard-played early-'60s-spec Strat with a fat neck and (debated, but widely reported) some swapped pickups over the years. The defining feature is the **strings**: famously heavy gauges, commonly cited as .013 sets and up, tuned down a half step to keep the tension manageable. Heavy strings are a big part of why his tone has that piano-like fundamental and refuses to sound thin.

Into the front of the amp went a **Tube Screamer** — the green Ibanez overdrive (TS-808 / TS9 family). SRV used it less as a "distortion" box and more as a midrange-pushing, signal-fattening boost: it tightens the lows, bumps the mids, and shoves a clean-ish tube amp into early, touch-sensitive breakup.

Amps were **Fender** — a **Vibroverb** and/or **Super Reverb** (he ran multiple amps live; the studio sound on *Texas Flood* is a loud Fender combo with natural power-tube grit). Pickup selection sits on the **bridge** for the rhythm bark, with neck and middle positions available for fatter lead moments.

Settings are best treated as *approximate*. The amp is commonly described as run loud and fairly clean-to-edge-of-breakup, letting the Tube Screamer and his right hand do the dirty work. Avoid anyone who quotes you exact "secret" dial positions — those are guesses.

## | The Tone Recipe

You can get ~90% there with very accessible gear.

### Substitutions:

- **Guitar:** any Strat-style guitar with single-coils. Bridge pickup is home base.
- **Strings:** go up at least one gauge from your norm — try .010s or .011s. You don't need .013s to start, but heavier strings genuinely change attack and sustain. If you tune to Eb, you can go heavier comfortably.
- **Overdrive:** any Tube Screamer-style pedal (TS9 reissue, or countless clones). A "green overdrive" with a mid hump is the sound.
- **Amp:** any Fender-voiced clean amp (Blues Junior, Deluxe Reverb, or a quality clean modeler patch) pushed to the edge of breakup.

### Starting points (out of 10):

- **Tube Screamer:** Drive 3–4, Tone 5–6, Level 6–7. You want fatness and bite, not fuzz. The Level being up past noon is what pushes the amp.
- **Amp:** Bass 5, Mids 6–7, Treble 6, Reverb 3, Volume as loud as you can stand — power-tube compression is part of the feel.
- **Pickup:** bridge single-coil.
- **Pick attack:** dig in. This tone lives in the right hand — play hard, near the bridge, with a stiff pick.
- **Gain placement:** keep most of your dirt coming from amp and pick attack; the pedal is the *flavor*, not the whole meal.

## | What's Going On Musically

This is a **12-bar blues** in E, played as a **shuffle** — a swung, triplet-based feel where each beat divides into a long-short "dah-da" rather than even eighths. The "Texas shuffle" is a particularly driving, full

version of that.

The key center is **E**, and the vocabulary is the **E blues scale** (E – G – A – Bb – B – D) layered over a **dominant** harmony. Because each chord in a blues is a dominant 7th (E7, A7, B7), the underlying color is **E Mixolydian** (the major scale with a flatted 7th: E – F# – G# – A – B – C# – D). The magic of blues is rubbing the bluesy minor-3rd (G) and b5 (Bb) against the major-leaning chords — that friction is the sound.

The form, in E:

TAB

```
| E7 | E7 | E7 | E7 |  
| A7 | A7 | E7 | E7 |  
| B7 | A7 | E7 | B7 | (last bar = turnaround)
```

What makes SRV special isn't the form — it's that he plays **bass, chords, and lead simultaneously**. The thumb and low strings imply a walking bassline while the upper strings stab chords and fills. A **double-stop** (two notes at once) gives those fills their thickness. And everything is glued together with enormous **vibrato** — a wide, vocal, finger-and-wrist shake that's as much a part of his signature as any note choice.

## Signature Moves

### 1. The Texas Shuffle Engine

The rhythm is a moving bassline under a chord stab — a boogie pattern that walks E–G#–A–Bb-ish while the high strings answer. Keep it *swung*.

TAB

Shuffle feel, medium-up (hard swing, triplet pulse)

```
e|-----|  
B|-----|  
G|-----|  
D|-----2---2---4---5-----|  
A|---2---2---2---2---2-----|  
E|0---0---0---0---0-----|
```

(let the low E ring, walk the A string)

*Caption: A two-bar fragment of the boogie engine — thumb and low strings imply the bass while the pulse stays swung. Palm-mute lightly for punch.*

## 2. The Turnaround

The last two bars resolve the form and set up the repeat. This descending figure over E is a blues staple SRV peppers with grit.

**TAB**

Slow, deliberate, swung

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|--3-----2-----1-----0-----|
D|--2-----2-----2-----2-----|
A|--2-----2-----2-----2-----|
E|--0-----0-----0-----0-----|
    E7          (chromatic descent)    B7
  
```

*Caption: A classic turnaround shape — the top voice steps down chromatically over a held E, then you'd land on B7 to restart. A short illustrative fragment.*

## 3. Raked Double-Stop Fill

SRV "rakes" — dragging the pick across muted strings into the target double-stop so the notes arrive with a percussive *scrrr-CHANK*.

**TAB**

Punchy, swung 16ths into the hit

```

e|-----5b6-----|
B|--x--x--x-----5-----|
G|--x--x--x-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
    (rake the dead strings)
      (bend the top note up)
  
```

*Caption: The rake (xxx) is the run-up; the double-stop with a slight bend on the high E is the payoff. The dead-string scratch is the attitude.*

# | The Drills

These are original exercises in SRV's style — built to train the exact skills the song demands.

## Drill A — Shuffle Independence

The hardest part of this music: keeping a steady swung bass while stabbing chords on top. Thumb (or pick) hits the bass note; fingers and pick answer on the upper strings on the off-beat.

TAB

Hard swing, slow until locked (~80 bpm, then push)

```
e|-----|
B|--3-----3-----3-----3-----|
G|--4-----4-----4-----4-----|
D|--2-----2-----4-----5-----|
A|-----|
E|--0-----0-----0-----0-----|
    BASS stab  BASS stab  (walk D string up)
```

*Builds: bass and chord independence plus a rock-solid swing. Dial the tone with the bridge pickup, palm-mute the low E for thump, and let the stabs ring. Start painfully slow — the groove is in the spaces.*

## Drill B — Raked Double-Stops Up the Neck

Trains the rake attack and double-stop intonation across positions. Each rake (xxx) leads into a clean two-note hit.

TAB

Swung, aggressive pick attack (~90 bpm)

```
e|--x--x--5/7~-----x--x--7/9~-----x--x--9/10~-----|
B|--x--x--5/7~-----x--x--7/9~-----x--x--9/10~-----|
G|-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
    rake  slide+vib  rake  slide+vib  rake  slide+vib
```

*Builds: the percussive rake, double-stop sliding, and vibrato on TWO strings at once. Push the Tube Screamer's Level so the rake scratches bark. Keep both fingers parallel so the slide stays in tune.*

## Drill C — E Blues Lead with Wide Vibrato

The vibrato exercise. The whole point is the *shake* — slow, wide, vocal. Don't rush past the held notes.

TAB

Slow blues, milk every bend (~70 bpm)

```
e|-----|
B|-----8b9r8-----5~-----|
G|--7b9~-----7-----7-----|
D|-----9-----9~-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
    big bend+vib    blues phrase    land + WIDE vib
```

*Builds: the SRV vibrato — wrist-driven, wide, and patient — plus full-step bend control. Use the neck pickup for a fatter lead voice. The held notes with ~~~ are the lesson: make them sing, don't just touch them.*

## | Make It Yours

You don't need .013s, an Eb tuning, or a Vibroverb to absorb what makes this great. The transferable lessons are three: **play hard**, **swing everything**, and **commit to your vibrato**. Take the shuffle independence idea into any blues — even implying a single bass note under a chord stab instantly makes your rhythm playing sound like a whole band. Steal the rake as an accent on any double-stop fill; it turns a polite lick into a statement. And spend real time on a slow, wide vibrato — it's the single fastest way to sound like a player with a voice rather than a player running scales. Apply these to a I–IV–V in *any* key and you're speaking SRV's dialect, even on a stock guitar through a small amp.

▶ LISTEN FOR

## • LISTEN FOR

- A **swung, triplet** pulse — never straight eighths. If it sounds even, slow down and re-feel it.
- **Bass and chords at once** — the low strings walking while the top stabs answer.
- The **percussive rake** into double-stops: that *scrrr-CHANK* of dead strings before the hit.
- **Wide, vocal vibrato** on held notes — slow and deliberate, from the wrist, not a nervous wiggle.
- **Bite with clarity** — a bridge-pickup tone that's gritty and thick yet lets every string ring.

# “Texas Flood” • Stevie Ray Vaughan

---

## AT A GLANCE

**Artist:** Stevie Ray Vaughan & Double Trouble

**Song:** "Texas Flood"

**Album:** *Texas Flood* (1983)

**The tone in one sentence:** A fat, slightly overdriven Stratocaster neck-pickup voice — thick and vocal but still glassy at the edges — pushed by a loud tube amp on the verge of breakup.

**Difficulty:** Advanced

**Key & tuning:** G (slow 12-bar blues). SRV famously tuned a half-step down (Eb standard), but learn it in concert pitch first; the tab below assumes standard tuning so you can play along with your own backing.

## | The Rig & Signal Chain

The heart of this tone is a **Fender Stratocaster** — primarily SRV's "Number One," a parts-Strat with a worn '60s-era body and vintage-style single-coils. The neck pickup does most of the talking on the soft passages; he rolls toward the bridge for bite on the loud answers.

The amp is the other half. For *Texas Flood*-era tone, a blackface **Fender Super Reverb** (4x10) is the canonical reference — loud, with that scooped-but-singing 10" speaker chime and natural power-amp compression when you crank it. SRV ran multiple amps live, but for this recording think "mostly amp": the drive is the tubes working hard, not a wall of pedals.

Pedals on this particular tune are minimal. A bit of his trademark **Tube Screamer**-style overdrive (he favored the **Ibanez TS808 / TS9** family) may be set as a clean-ish boost rather than a fuzz, plus occasional spring reverb from the amp. The contested lore: people argue endlessly about exactly which amps, which speakers, and which Tube Screamer revision were used on which take — treat

any "secret settings" claim with suspicion. What's not contested is the *approach* — heavy strings, hands-on dynamics, and an amp doing the heavy lifting.

The strings matter as much as any pedal. SRV ran very heavy gauges (commonly cited as roughly .013 on top, sometimes heavier) — part of why his vibrato and bends sound so muscular. You do not need to go that heavy to start.

## | The Tone Recipe

Get 90% of the way there with gear you can actually buy:

- **Guitar:** Any Strat-style single-coil guitar. Use the **neck pickup** for the quiet phrases; flip to the **bridge** (or neck+middle) for the loud answers.
- **Amp:** Any clean-ish tube combo (Fender-voiced ideal) edged into breakup, or a Tube Screamer / Klon-style drive into a clean amp. A **TS-style overdrive** is the key tone-shaper.
- **Settings (out of 10):** Amp clean but loud — Bass 6, Mid 5, Treble 6–7, Reverb 3. Tube Screamer: Drive 2–3 (low!), Tone 5, Level 6–7. You want *push and thickness*, not saturation.
- **Pick attack:** Dig in. SRV played hard with a heavy pick (often the rounded edge). Volume comes from your hand, not the knob — so play the soft licks lightly and the loud answers like you mean it.
- **Where to set gain:** Right at the edge of breakup, so a soft note stays nearly clean and a hard-struck note growls. That dynamic window is the tone.
- **Strings:** Go up one gauge from your norm (try .011s). Heavier strings = fatter bends and that thick vibrato.

## | What's Going On Musically

This is a **slow 12-bar blues in G**, and the form is the bedrock. Over twelve bars, the chords move I–IV–V using dominant 7th shapes:

- **Bars 1–4:** G7 (the I chord)
- **Bars 5–6:** C7 (the IV)
- **Bars 7–8:** G7
- **Bar 9:** D7 (the V)

- **Bar 10:** C7 (the IV)
- **Bars 11–12:** G7, then a **turnaround** back to D7

A **dominant 7th** chord (e.g., G7 = G B D F) contains both a major 3rd and a flat 7th — that built-in tension is why the blues sounds like the blues.

Your main vocabulary is the **G blues scale**: G – Bb – C – Db – D – F. It's the minor pentatonic (G Bb C D F) plus the "blue note" Db (the b5), the note that gives the scale its crying, in-between-the-cracks quality. SRV constantly bends *into* the major 3rd (B) and *up to* the root, mixing major and minor color — a hallmark of Texas blues.

At a slow tempo (this sits around 65–70 BPM), **space** is a chord tone. The silence between phrases is where the listener leans in. SRV phrases like a singer: a statement, a breath, an answer. Lock that **call-and-response** logic into your ear and you're already playing the style, even before the notes get fancy.

## | Signature Moves

Short, illustrative fragments — analysis, not transcription. Play them in the style; don't treat them as the record note-for-note.

**1. The vocal opening statement.** Slow, behind the beat, lots of air. Notice how a phrase ends and *waits*.

TAB

Slow blues, ~66 BPM – let it breathe, don't rush the resolve

```

e|-----|-----|
B|--8b10r8-----|-----8--6-----|
G|-----10--7-----7-----|--7b9r7-----7~-----|
D|-----9--7-----|-----|
A|-----|-----|
E|-----|-----|
    bend, cry, release          let it sit
  
```

*Caption:* A whole-step bend on the B string (the b3 reaching up) answered by a descending tail into the root — the classic SRV "say something, then breathe."

**2. The climactic bend.** When the energy peaks, he leans on one high note and shakes it.

TAB

Loud answer – dig in, full-step bend held with wide vibrato

```

e|-----|
B|--10b12~~~~~10b12r10-----|
G|-----9~~~~|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|

```

push it and hold the vibrato

*Caption:* Bend up a whole step on the high B, sustain it, then add slow, wide vibrato *from the wrist*. The vibrato is the signature — a held bend without it sounds flat by comparison.

**3. The answering phrase (the comedown).** After the peak, a quick descending lick resolves the tension and resets the conversation.

TAB

Quick fill answering the high bend – relaxed sixteenths, then land

```

e|-----|
B|--8--6-----|
G|-----7--5-----|
D|-----7--5-----|
A|-----7--5-----|
E|-----8--5--3-|

```

tumble down

land on the root (G)

*Caption:* A raked descent through the G blues box that lands squarely on the low G — the "I'm done talking for now" cadence.

## | The Drills

These are **original** exercises in SRV's style — built to drill the specific skills "Texas Flood" demands. Dial the tone as in the recipe: neck pickup soft, bridge for the loud bits, amp on the edge of breakup.

**Drill A — Phrasing & Space (the hardest skill).** Two-bar call, two-bar response, with a full bar of *rest* built in. The rests are written as the goal, not a gap to fill.

TAB

Slow blues, ~66 BPM – count the rests out loud; resist filling them

```

e|-----|-----|
B|--8b10r8~-----|-----|
G|-----7-----7~-----|-----| bars 1-2: CALL
D|-----9-----|-----| (then SILENCE)
A|-----|-----|
E|-----|-----|

e|-----|-----3~--|
B|-----6--8b10r8-----|--6-----|
G|--7b9r7~-----7-|-----7--5-----5-----| bars 3-4: RESPONSE
D|-----|-----7-----7--5-----| (land on G)
A|-----|-----|
E|-----|-----|

```

*Builds:* Vocal phrasing and the discipline of leaving holes. If you can play this and *enjoy* the silence in bar 2, you've unlocked the style.

**Drill B — Big Bends with Vibrato.** Train accurate pitch and a controlled, wrist-driven shake. Bend slowly, check the target pitch, then add vibrato only once you're in tune.

TAB

Free time at first, then ~66 BPM – pitch FIRST, vibrato SECOND

```

e|-----|
B|--8b10(hold)~~~~--10b12(hold)~~~~--13b15r13~~~~|
G|-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|

```

match the target    go higher    bend-release-vibrato

*Builds:* Bend intonation (the b10 must hit a true whole step) and the slow, wide SRV vibrato. Use two or three fingers behind the bend for strength; push from the wrist, not just the fingertip. Heavier strings make this sing.

**Drill C — G Blues Scale Over the 12-Bar.** One targeted idea per chord so the scale starts to *follow the changes*, not just run boxes. Aim for the chord tone marked under each phrase.

TAB

Slow blues, ~66 BPM – one phrase per chord, hit the target note

G7 (bars 1-4)		C7 (bars 5-6)	
e ----- -----	e ----- -----	e ----- -----	e ----- -----
B --8b10r8-----8-----	B --8-----8b10-----	B --8-----8b10-----	B --8-----8b10-----
G -----10-----7--5-----	G -----7h8-----	G -----7h8-----	G -----7h8-----
D -----5-----	D -----	D -----	D -----
A -----	A -----	A -----	A -----
E -----	E -----	E -----	E -----
target: G / B (major 3rd)		target: C / E	
G7 (bars 7-8)		D7 (9)	C7 (10)
G7 turnaround (11-12)			
e ----- -----	e ----- -----	e --8--6-----	e ----- -----
B --8--6-----	B --10b12r10--	B --8--6--	B --8--6-----
G -----7--5-----	G --7~-----	G -----7-5-	G -----7--5--7b9r7~-----
D -----7--5-	D -----	D -----	D -----5-----
A -----	A -----	A -----	A -----
E -----	E -----	E -----	E -----
target: D	target: F#	target: C	resolve to G, then D7

*Buils:* Hearing the changes through a single scale. The magic isn't the notes — it's *landing* on the chord tone (especially bending up to the major 3rd over the I and IV) right as the chord arrives.

## | Make It Yours

The deepest lesson in "Texas Flood" isn't a lick — it's the **dynamic range built into your hands**. SRV could whisper and roar on the same pickup, same knob setting, just by how hard he hit the string. Practice that first: set your amp on the edge of breakup and play one phrase soft, the next loud, and hear the tone change *itself*. Then steal the phrasing logic — statement, breath, answer — and apply it to any blues, any key, any tempo. You don't need the half-step-down tuning or the .013 strings to sound like you mean it; you need to commit to every note and respect the silence between them. One vocal bend with real vibrato beats a hundred fast notes that say nothing.

## • LISTEN FOR

- The **dynamic swing** — soft, nearly clean phrases against loud, growling answers, all from pick attack.
- **Vibrato that arrives *after* the bend lands** — wide, slow, and in tune, not a nervous wobble.
- **Space.** Count how long he waits between phrases; the rests are part of the solo.
- **Bending into the major 3rd (B over G7)** — that major/minor blur is the Texas-blues fingerprint.
- Phrases that **land on chord tones** as the 12-bar changes underneath — the solo follows the form.

# “The Thrill Is Gone” • B.B. King

## AT A GLANCE

**Artist:** B.B. King

**Song:** "The Thrill Is Gone"

**Album:** *Completely Well* (1969)

**The tone in one sentence:** A sweet, round, essentially clean hollowbody voice that sings like a second vocalist — no grit hiding behind, just touch.

**Difficulty:** Intermediate

**Key & tuning:** B minor, standard tuning (E A D G B E)

This is the lesson where you learn that tone is mostly in the hands. There's almost no gain here. What makes B.B. sound like B.B. is *what* he plays, *when* he plays it, and the impossibly wide vibrato on the notes he chooses to hold. Strip the distortion crutch away and you have nowhere to hide — which is exactly why this song teaches more about real guitar playing than a hundred shred etudes.

## | The Rig & Signal Chain

B.B.'s guitar by 1969 was **Lucille** — a **Gibson ES-355**, a semi-hollow with a maple body, a center block, and (on his) the Varitone rotary tone selector and stereo wiring. He famously had the **f-holes filled** on his later Lucilles to fight feedback, since he played loud and clean, but the *Completely Well*-era instrument was a more-or-less stock 355. Pickups were Gibson **humbuckers** — warm, fat, low-output by modern standards.

Into the amp, the signal stayed clean and loud. B.B. used a rotating cast of amps over the years; **Fender** combos and later **Lab Series L5** solid-state amps are the most commonly cited. For *this* record, assume a clean tube amp pushed to a polite, barely-breaking level — the natural compression of a tube amp near the edge, not overdrive.

There are effectively **no pedals** in the classic B.B. chain. The lush quality you hear is largely the room, the arrangement (those strings are real strings on the record), and tasteful studio reverb. Settings are best given as ballpark: a tube amp's bass and treble near the middle, volume up enough to get a little bloom, tone rolled back slightly on the guitar so the high notes are round rather than glassy. Don't chase a "secret" EQ — there isn't one.

## | The Tone Recipe

You can get 90% of the way there with very accessible gear.

### Substitutions:

- *Guitar*: Any **semi-hollow** (Epiphone Dot, Ibanez Artcore, a 335-style copy). No semi? A solidbody on the **neck humbucker** with the **tone knob rolled to about 4** gets startlingly close.
- *Amp*: Any clean amp with real headroom. A Fender-voiced clean channel is ideal. Set it **just** below breakup.
- *Reverb*: A touch of **spring or hall reverb** — enough to feel a room, not a cathedral.

### Concrete starting points (knobs out of 10):

- Amp: Gain/Volume **3–4** (clean, with a little bloom), Bass **5**, Mid **6**, Treble **4–5**, Reverb **3**.
- Guitar: **Neck pickup**, Volume **8–9**, Tone **4–5** (this is the single biggest move — it rounds off the highs into that vocal "voice").
- Pick attack: **medium-soft**, picking nearer the neck for warmth. Many players nudge toward fingers-and-pick or bare thumb here; B.B. picked with a pick but had a gentle, fleshy attack.
- Where to set gain: **as low as you can stand it**. If you hear sustained fuzz, you've gone too far. You want the note to be naked enough that your vibrato is the only thing dressing it.

The mantra: **clean amp, neck pickup, tone rolled back, volume in your hands**. Roll the guitar volume down for verses, up for the climactic bends.

## | What's Going On Musically

The song is a **minor blues in B**. A standard blues is 12 bars long and built on three chords — the I, the IV, and the V. In a *minor* blues, those chords are minor (or dominant), and the whole thing leans sad and smoky instead of swaggering.

In B minor, your chords are:

- **i = Bm** (B minor) — home.
- **iv = Em** (E minor) — the four chord.
- **v = F#m** or **V = F#7** — the five chord, the one that pulls you home. Using **F#7** (a dominant chord, with a raised third) sharpens that pull; you'll hear that tension resolve back to Bm.

A common minor-blues form runs: **Bm (4 bars) | Em (2) | Bm (2) | F#7 (1) | Em7 (1) | Bm (1) | F#7 (1)**, looping. The arrangement adds a lush minor-key sophistication with the strings, but underneath it's still a 12-bar.

Your main scale is **B minor pentatonic** — five notes: **B – D – E – F# – A**. Add the flat-5 (**F**) for a passing "blue note" and you have the **B blues scale**. The magic chord-tone over the home Bm is **D** (the minor third) — landing on it, then shaking it with vibrato, is the saddest, most vocal thing you can do here.

The deeper lesson is **phrasing as speech**. B.B. plays *single notes*, almost never chords in his leads, and he phrases in short sentences with **space** between them — **call-and-response** with himself, like a singer trading lines with the band. Theory makes the notes legal; phrasing makes them *talk*.

## | Signature Moves

### 1. The opening minor-blues statement.

TAB

```
Tempo ~98 BPM, slow 12/8 feel – let it breathe
e|-----|
B|-----10b(12)r10-----|
G|--7b(9)~-----9-----9--7-----|
D|-----9-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
```

A wailing bend up high, a release, then a sigh back down into the box — the whole phrase is one spoken sentence, not a run.

### 2. The signature wrist vibrato.

TAB

Free time – hold the note and SHAKE from the wrist

```

e|-----|
B|------(15)|
G|--7~-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|

```

One held D, vibrato'd wide and even like a fluttering hand. This is THE B.B. fingerprint — read the drill below for how to do it.

### 3. The answering lick (the "response").

TAB

Tempo ~98 BPM – quieter than the call, like an answer

```

e|-----|
B|---10--8-----8-----|
G|-----9b(11)r9--7~-----7-----|
D|-----9~-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|

```

Lower and softer than the opening statement — B.B. always answers his own loud line with a hushed one. Mind the gap of silence before it.

## | The Drills

**Drill A — The B.B. Box, four-note vocabulary.** The "B.B. box" is a small position up the neck (around the root on the high strings) where B.B. lived. For B minor that's around the **10th–12th fret region** on the top three strings. This drill walks the four sweetest tones — root, b3, 4, 5 — and forces you to bend *into* the b3 with feeling.

TAB

Tempo ~92 BPM – phrase it, don't race it

```

e|--10-----10-----|
B|---10b(12)r10-----10b(12)~-----|
G|-----9~--7-----|
G|-----11b(12)-----|
D|-----9~-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|

```



## | Make It Yours

The transferable skill here isn't a lick — it's **restraint plus commitment**. Take any solo you already play and cut the note count in half; then take the notes that remain and commit to each one with real vibrato and a beginning/middle/end. Roll your tone knob back, get your amp clean, and force yourself to *say something* with four notes before you earn the right to play forty. Steal the wrist vibrato and the call-and-response habit and they'll improve every style you touch — blues, rock, country, even a clean jazz line. B.B. proved that the loudest thing on a record can be the silence you leave, and the most expressive can be a single bent, shaking note. Play fewer notes; mean them more.

### ♪ LISTEN FOR

- The **single-note vocal phrasing** — count how rarely he plays more than a few notes before leaving a gap.
- The **wide, even wrist vibrato** on every held note; aim for uniform pulses, not a nervous wiggle.
- **Call-and-response** with himself: a loud line answered by a soft one.
- The **clean, round tone** — no distortion; all the warmth comes from the neck pickup and a rolled-back tone.
- The way he **lands on the b3 (D)** over the Bm and lets it cry — that's the saddest, most "in the key" note in the song.

# “Still Got the Blues” • Gary Moore

## AT A GLANCE

**Artist:** Gary Moore

**Song:** "Still Got the Blues (For You)"

**Album:** *Still Got the Blues* (1990)

**The tone in one sentence:** A thick, creamy Les Paul humbucker pushed into a singing, near-violin sustain by a screaming front-end boost and a cranked Marshall — every note dripping with vocal vibrato.

**Difficulty:** Advanced

**Key & tuning:** A minor, standard tuning (E A D G B E)

## | The Rig & Signal Chain

The bones of this sound are simple and brutal: a great humbucker guitar slammed into a loud valve amp, with a boost out front to tip it into sustain.

- **Guitar:** Moore famously played a 1959 **Gibson Les Paul Standard** (the legendary "Greeny," originally Peter Green's, later sold to Kirk Hammett) and other late-'50s Standards through this era. The voice you want is the **neck PAF-style humbucker** — fat, vocal, slightly compressed.
- **Boost/overdrive:** Moore's blues-era front end is associated with the **Ibanez Tube Screamer** family and, on various recordings and live rigs, a **Marshall Guv'nor**. The job of the pedal here is mid-hump and sustain, not the main distortion.
- **Amp:** A cranked **Marshall** — Moore used various models live and in the studio across this period. The core is a hot, midrange-forward valve amp doing the heavy lifting on the dirt.
- **Mic:** Not reliably documented for this specific track; a close **dynamic on the cabinet** (the classic Shure SM57-on-grille approach) is the safe assumption. Treat any "exact studio settings" lore as

unconfirmed — Moore was not in the habit of publishing his dials, and the famous Greeny "out-of-phase reversed-magnet middle pickup" detail applies to the middle position, not the neck-heavy lead sound you mostly hear here.

Settings are commonly cited approximately as: amp gain high but not fizzy, mids up, presence moderate; pedal with **low drive, high level**, tone around noon — used as a clean-ish kick into the amp rather than a fuzz.

## | The Tone Recipe

You can land roughly 90% of this with a humbucker guitar, one green overdrive, and any amp that breaks up.

- **Guitar substitute:** Any **neck humbucker** — Epiphone Les Paul, an SG, a humbucker-loaded semi-hollow, even an HH Strat on the neck. Roll to the **neck pickup**.
- **Overdrive substitute:** Any **Tube Screamer-style** pedal (TS9, TS808, or a clone), or a Guv'nor-style mid-boost.
- **Amp substitute:** A cranked midrange amp, or a Marshall-flavored amp model / plugin.

Starting points (knobs out of 10):

- **Tube Screamer:** Drive **2.5**, Tone **5–6**, Level **7–8**. You want it adding sustain and mids, not its own grind.
- **Amp:** Gain **6–7**, Bass **5**, Mids **7**, Treble **5.5**, Presence **4**, Master loud enough to feel the speaker compress.
- **Guitar:** Neck pickup, tone knob **7–8** (roll off harsh top), volume full.
- **Pick attack:** Medium-soft, fleshy. Pick a little toward the neck for roundness. Let the gain and the amp do the work — dig in only on the peaks of phrases.
- **Set gain so:** A single fretted note rings and *blooms* — it should sustain and very slightly swell, not buzz out. If it sounds fizzy, lower the pedal drive first, then the amp gain. Add a touch of **reverb** (hall/plate) and a hair of slow delay for the studio depth.

## | What's Going On Musically

The song is in **A minor**, and its emotional engine is a **descending chord progression** that walks downward and leans on borrowed harmony.

The core verse motion runs roughly:

**Am – Am/G – D/F# – Fmaj7 – E7 – Am**

Two ideas make this hurt so good:

- **The descending bassline.** Am to Am/G to D/F# is a chromatic-ish walk down (A → G → F#). An **inversion** (a "slash chord" like D/F#) just means the named bass note isn't the chord's root — here, F# in the bass keeps the descent smooth.
- **Borrowed/secondary color.** The **D major** (or D/F#) is a brightening surprise — in plain A minor you'd expect D minor. Borrowing **D major** is the **Dorian** flavor (raised 6th = F#). Then **E7** is the **dominant** of A minor: its G# pulls hard back to A, the classic minor-key resolution. So the tune slides between **A Aeolian** (natural minor, with F natural in the Fmaj7) and **A Dorian** (with F#) — that push-pull between F and F# is the song's signature ache.

For soloing, your home base is the **A natural minor / A Aeolian** scale (A B C D E F G) and the **A minor pentatonic box** at the 5th fret. Color it by:

- Bending or targeting **F# (the Dorian note)** over the D chord.
- Hitting **G# (the major 3rd of E7)** as the dominant arrives, then resolving to A.

Form is a slow **12/8-feel ballad** (count it in lilting triplets): intro theme, verses, and an extended outro solo where the melody just keeps climbing. Tempo sits around a slow, breathing **~60–66 BPM** (felt in 12/8).

## | Signature Moves

Three gestures define the tone: the vocal main theme, the soaring bend, and a fast connective run. These are short illustrative fragments only — study them, then build your own with the drills.

**Move 1 — The vocal main theme** (*slow 12/8, ~63 BPM; let every note ring*)

TAB

```

e|-----|
B|-----8--10--8-----8~|
G|--9-----9--7--5--7~|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|

```

Caption: The opening statement — sing it in your head first. The notes breathe; the closing ~ is a wide, slow vibrato, not a fast wiggle.

**Move 2 — The soaring bend** (*rubato*; bend slow and in tune, then add vibrato at the top)

TAB

```

e|-----|
B|-----10b(12)~~~~~|
G|--7b(9)-----9-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|

```

Caption: Bend up a full step, hold at pitch, THEN shake. The vibrato is applied to the already-bent note — that's the vocal cry. Check the target pitch by playing the destination fret first.

**Move 3 — The fast connecting run** (*a tempo*, even triplets; legato)

TAB

```

e|-----|
B|-----8--10b(12) r10-----|
G|--7h9--7--9h10--9-----9~|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|

```

Caption: A quick legato fill linking two sung phrases. Hammers and pulls keep it smooth so it contrasts with the long held notes around it.

## | The Drills

Three original exercises in the style of the song. These are yours to practice — they train the exact skills "Still Got the Blues" demands.

**Drill A — Sustained vocal-vibrato bends** (*slow, ~60 BPM; one note per beat, all the time in the world*)

TAB

```

e|-----|
B|--8b(10)~~~~--10b(12)~~~~--8~~~~|
G|-----9b(11)~--|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
    
```

*Builds: pitch-perfect full-step bends and controlled, finger-from-the-wrist vibrato applied AFTER you reach pitch. Dial the tone with neck pickup + TS for sustain so the note blooms while you shake it. Record yourself and check every bend lands dead in tune.*

**Drill B — A-minor melodic phrasing** (*12/8 lilt, ~63 BPM; leave gaps — silence is part of it*)

TAB

```

e|-----|
B|-----10--8-----8--10--8-----|
G|--9-----9~--9-----9--7---7~-----|
D|-----9b(10)--|
A|-----|
E|-----|
    
```

*Builds: composing vocal lines from A Aeolian (A B C D E F G) with breathing room. The final half-step bend (G to G#-ish into A) mimics a dominant-to-tonic vocal sigh. Keep gain moderate so dynamics speak; dig in only on the phrase peaks.*

**Drill C — The legato run** (*a tempo, even sixteenth-note triplets; minimal picking*)

TAB

```

e|-----|
B|-----8h10p8--10--13b(15)r13--10--|
G|--7h9h10--9h10p9--7--9h10-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
    
```

*Builds: fluid legato fills that connect held notes — hammers/pulls do the work so only the first note of each group is picked. Ends on a bend-and-release back into the box for a vocal landing. Set drive for sustain (TS into a cranked amp) so the legato notes don't die; practice slow, then bring it up to the lilting tempo.*

## | Make It Yours

The lesson of this tone isn't the gear — it's **restraint plus commitment**. Moore plays *fewer* notes than you'd expect and pours everything into each one: a slow bend that arrives exactly in tune, then a wide vibrato that turns a guitar into a voice. Take that to any blues or slow rock you play. Pick one phrase tonight and obsess over it: nail the bend pitch, sustain the note, add the shake last, and leave space on either side. Steal the F-versus-F# trick too — over a IV chord in a minor blues, try the Dorian F# for a moment of light before falling back to the darker natural minor. The rig gets you the *bloom*; your ears and your left hand get you the *cry*. That's the whole game here.

### ♪ LISTEN FOR

- **Bend accuracy** — every full-step bend lands dead in tune, with no wobble on the way up.
- **Vibrato as the final ingredient** — applied *after* the note reaches pitch, wide and slow, never frantic.
- **The bloom** — single notes sustain and slightly swell; if they die or fizz, fix the gain, not your fingers.
- **Space** — silence between phrases; the melody breathes like a singer taking a breath.
- **The F/F# push-pull** — hearing the moment the Dorian F# brightens the line before A minor pulls it home.

PART G

# High Gain, the 80s & Shred



# “Eruption” • Van Halen

## AT A GLANCE

**Artist:** Eddie Van Halen

**Song:** "Eruption"

**Album:** *Van Halen* (1978)

**The tone in one sentence:** A liquid, singing, gain-saturated lead voice — the legendary "brown sound" — that stays clear and vocal even at maximum aggression, wrapped in a touch of phase shifter and tape echo.

**Difficulty:** Advanced

**Key & tuning:** Tapping section centers on A minor / D; standard tuning, often tuned roughly a quarter-step to a half-step flat on the original record.

## | The Rig & Signal Chain

Eddie built his own guitar, the **Frankenstrat** — a homemade Strat-style body with a single humbucker (often cited as a PAF-style pickup he'd rewound or potted himself) wired straight to one volume knob, no tone control, and no neck pickup in play for this. Bridge: an early **Floyd Rose**-style locking tremolo on later versions, though the *Van Halen* album predates his fully locking setup; the dive-bombs you hear came from a heavily abused vintage-style synchronized trem.

The amp was a **Marshall Super Lead** (Plexi-era, 100 watts) cranked to the wall. In front of it sat an **MXR Phase 90** for that swirling, rotating shimmer, and an **Echoplex** tape delay providing a short, dark slapback that thickened single notes into something three-dimensional.

Now the contested part. The famous **brown-sound Variac** story — that Eddie used a Variac auto-transformer to *lower* his wall voltage and "brown out" the amp into a sweeter, more compressed saturation — is debated. Eddie gave varying accounts over the years, and engineers have argued that lowering voltage actually reduces headroom and clarity rather than improving it. Treat the Variac as lore,

not gospel. The most reliable through-line: a great pickup into a maxed Marshall, mic'd close, played by an extraordinary right hand. The "secret rig" mythology around exact settings and hidden boxes is similarly unverified — chase the *result*, not the rumor.

## | The Tone Recipe

You can get ~90% there with accessible gear.

- **Guitar:** Any solid-body with a hot-but-clear bridge humbucker (a PAF-voiced or moderate-output Alnico humbucker, not a ceramic monster). HSS Strats and any superstrat are ideal.
- **Amp/sim:** A Plexi-style channel — real Marshall, a Friedman/Plexi pedal into a clean power amp, or any "Brown"/"Plexi" amp-sim model. Set it to *just barely* breaking up too much, then back off.
- **Phaser:** Any phaser in the Phase 90 family. One knob, set the rate slow-to-medium.
- **Delay:** Short slapback, ~120–180 ms, low feedback, rolled-off highs to mimic tape.

Starting points (out of 10):

- **Gain:** 6.5–7. The trap is too much gain — it mashes the tapping and kills the pick attack. Brown sound is *medium-high* gain with huge volume, not infinite distortion.
- **Bass:** 5 · **Mids:** 7 · **Treble:** 6.5 · **Presence:** 5.
- **Guitar volume:** roll to about 8 so you have room to clean up.
- **Phaser rate:** ~3–4. **Delay mix:** ~3.
- **Pick attack:** firm but not stiff; let notes bloom. Bridge pickup, with the fretting hand doing most of the legato work.

Dial the gain by playing fast trills: if they smear into noise, turn gain *down* until each note re-articulates.

## | What's Going On Musically

"Eruption" is a free-time showcase, not a strict song form — an intro flourish, a middle melodic/bluesy passage, and the climactic two-hand tapping section.

The tapping centers on **A minor** moving to **D**. Eddie outlines triads — three-note chords (root, third, fifth) — but spreads them across more than an octave by adding a high tapped note. Take an **A**

**minor triad:** A–C–E. Fret the low pair on one string (say, an A and a C), then *tap* a high E far up the neck with your picking hand. Now you've got a wide, harp-like arpeggio impossible to play with one hand in that range. Slide the tapping finger to reshape the chord and you imply **A minor**, then **C major**, then back — all the diatonic colors of the **A natural minor scale** (A–B–C–D–E–F–G).

The shift to **D** brings a brighter pull. Against an A-minor center, leaning on D and its triad (D–F#–A) gives a momentary **Dorian** flavor (a minor scale with a raised 6th) — that hopeful lift inside the darkness.

The earlier melodic section is pure **A minor pentatonic** (A–C–D–E–G) phrasing with bluesy bends — the "box 1" shape you likely know — just played with ferocious articulation and that vocal sustain.

## | Signature Moves

### 1. The Tapping Arpeggio Pattern

A tempo: fast, even triplets — feel three notes per beat. "t" = picking-hand tap; "p" = pull-off; "h" = hammer-on.

TAB

```
e|-----|
B|-13t-p8h10---13t-p8h10---13t-p8h10---13t-p8h10-----|
G|-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
```

*Caption: Tap fret 13, pull to your fretted 8, hammer 10 — a repeating three-note cell that outlines an arpeggio on one string. This is the engine of the whole section.*

### 2. The Divebomb

Feel: hit the note, let it ring, then drop the bar to the floor.

TAB

```
e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-7~~~~~\ (dive to floor)-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
pick -> vibrato -> whammy down
```

*Caption: A fretted note with vibrato, then push the tremolo bar down until the string goes slack and the pitch falls away into a growl. The Echoplex tail makes it howl.*

### 3. The Opening Flurry

Feel: explosive, slightly behind-the-beat rubato — like it's tumbling out.

TAB

```
e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-7h9p7-----7h9p7-----5h7p5-----|
D|-----9h7-----9h7-----7h5-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
legato, accelerating
```

*Caption: Cascading hammer/pull figures rolling across two strings — the sound of a player warming up and detonating at once. Keep the picking hand quiet; legato does the work.*

## | The Drills

These are original exercises in the style of "Eruption" — build the technique without copying the record.

### Drill A — Two-Hand Tapping Arpeggios (Am → D)

Trains: clean tap-pull-hammer cells and moving the shape to outline two chords.

TAB

```

      A minor                    D major
e|-12t-p5h8-12t-p5h8-----14t-p7h10-14t-p7h10---|
B|-----|
G|-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
Am: 12/8/5 = E,C,A           D: 14/10/7 = E,B,A

```

```

      A minor                    D major (raised 3rd)
e|-12t-p5h8-12t-p5h8-----15t-p7h10-15t-p7h10---|
B|-----|
G|-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
repeat, then bar across      raise tap to 15 = F# (D maj 3rd)

```

*Caption: Keep the picking-hand tap firm and rhythmic — it's a percussion stroke, not a stab. Start at half speed with a metronome; only speed up when all three notes ring equally loud. Tone: medium gain (~6.5), delay low, phaser optional. Too much gain hides sloppy taps — keep it honest.*

### Drill B — Tremolo-Bar Divebomb Control

Trains: pitch control on the way *down* and a clean recovery so the dive lands musically.

TAB

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-9~~~~\5(bar)~~~~/9~~~~\0(floor)-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
ring -> dive ONE step -> return -> full dive out

```

*Caption: First dive only a whole step down to fret-5 pitch and bring it back in tune — that's the hard part, controlling the return. Then go again and bomb it to the floor. Add wide vibrato before each dive so the note is already "alive." Tone: full gain is fine here; the Echoplex-style slapback (~150 ms) is what makes the tail sing — add it.*

### Drill C — Fast Pentatonic Trills

Trains: even, machine-gun trills and the right-hand discipline that keeps high gain from smearing.

## TAB

A minor pentatonic, box 1 – trill each pair 4x, then move

```
e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-5h7p5h7p5h7p5h7---7h5h7h5-----|
D|-----5h7p5h7p5h7p5h7-7h5---|
A|-----|
E|-----|
```

strict 16ths, accent the first of every 4

*Caption: Pick the first note of each trill only — everything after is hammer/pull. Accent beat-starts so the line breathes instead of buzzing. If notes blur together, your gain is too high: drop it a notch until each trill re-articulates cleanly. This is the single best test of whether your "brown sound" is set right.*

## | Make It Yours

The lesson hiding inside "Eruption" isn't the tricks — it's that *clarity and aggression can coexist*. Eddie set medium-high gain and gigantic volume, then let his right hand supply the dynamics. Steal that. Pull your gain back from where you think it should be, turn up, and make your pick attack do the talking. Take Drill A's tapping cell and drop it over a song you already play — outline the chords you're sitting on instead of running a memorized lick. Use the divebomb as *punctuation*, once, at the end of a phrase, not constantly. The brown sound is a philosophy: huge but articulate, wild but in control.

## ♪ LISTEN FOR

- Each tapped note ringing at *equal volume* — no weak pull-offs, no buried hammers.
- The trills staying *articulate* at speed, not smearing into mush (your gain-level litmus test).
- A dive-bomb you can *steer* — pitch controlled on the way down and a clean return when you want one.
- The phaser swirl and short tape-style slapback present but never washing out the note.
- Clarity *and* aggression at once — that's the real brown sound, not just more distortion.

# “Ain't Talkin' 'bout Love” • Van Halen

## AT A GLANCE

**Artist:** Van Halen

**Song:** “Ain't Talkin' 'bout Love”

**Album:** *Van Halen* (1978)

**The tone in one sentence:** A flanged, swirling power-chord riff with biting Marshall crunch and tons of open-string air — equal parts menace and bounce.

**Difficulty:** Intermediate

**Key & tuning:** A minor; standard tuning (the record sits very slightly flat, but standard works fine — tune to a reference and don't worry about it).

## | The Rig & Signal Chain

Eddie's setup on the first record is one of the most chased — and most mythologized — sounds in rock. Keep the facts and the lore separate.

The guitar is the **Frankenstrat**: a homemade single-humbucker Strat-style body Eddie wired himself. The bridge pickup is widely reported to be a **Gibson PAF-style humbucker** (the exact donor pickup is debated — various PAFs and a rewind unit have been cited over the years). One volume knob, no tone control, one pickup. That radical simplicity is part of the sound: it's all bridge humbucker, all the time.

The amp is a **Marshall Super Lead** (a 100-watt plexi-era head) into a 4×12. Here's where the lore starts. The famous “brown sound” story says Eddie ran the amp through a **Variac** to lower the wall voltage and tame/saturate the output stage. He's described doing this in interviews, but how much it shaped *this specific 1978 record* — versus simply cranking a plexi flat-out — is debated. Treat the Variac as part of the legend, not a setting to copy. The core truth is simpler: a plexi turned way up, masterless, living on power-tube saturation.

The signature swirl is an **MXR Flanger** (the big script-logo box) out front. On this track it's set for a slow, deep, jet-plane sweep — not a fast warble. Eddie also used an **Echoplex** tape unit in his chain, partly for its preamp coloration, though the riff itself reads fairly dry.

Settings? Commonly cited as "everything cranked" on the Marshall. Don't trust anyone quoting exact secret dial positions — Eddie famously obscured his. Approximate and use your ears.

## | The Tone Recipe

You can get ~90% there with a modern crunch amp and one flanger.

### Substitutions:

- **Guitar:** any humbucker-bridge guitar — an HH Strat, an SG, a Les Paul. A hot-but-not-metal PAF-style humbucker is ideal.
- **Amp:** a cranked Marshall-voiced amp (DSL, plexi reissue, or a good "British" amp model). On modeling rigs, pick a plexi/Super Lead and push the power amp.
- **Flanger:** MXR M117R reissue, or any flanger with rate/depth/regeneration controls.

### Starting points (out of 10):

- **Gain:** 6–7. This is *crunch*, not modern high-gain. You want pick attack and string detail to survive. If palm mutes turn to mush, you've gone too far.
- **Bass 6, Mids 7, Treble 7, Presence 6.** Mids are your friend here — scoop them and the riff disappears in a band.
- **Guitar volume:** full. Then clean up by backing off to ~7 if you want the verse to breathe.
- **Flanger:** Rate slow (around 8–9 o'clock), Depth high (3 o'clock), Regeneration moderate (noon). You want a long, gliding sweep — roughly one full cycle every couple of bars.
- **Pick attack:** firm, from the wrist, edge of the pick. Dig in on the downstrokes.
- **Where to set gain on the chain:** flanger before the amp's drive. The sweep should ride *on top of* the distortion, not get buried under it.

## | What's Going On Musically

The song lives in **A minor** and leans on the **A natural minor scale** (the white-key minor: A B C D E F G) and the **A minor pentatonic** (A C D E G) for the leads.

The riff is built on two power chords. A **power chord** (the "5" chord) is just a root and a fifth — no third — so it's neither major nor minor on its own; it borrows its mood from context. Eddie's pair moves between an **A5** area and a chord up around the **G/D** region, but the magic is what rings *around* them: open strings left to scream while the fretted shapes move. That collision of fretted power chords against open strings creates **add9** color.

An **add9** chord is a major or minor triad with the 9th (the same note as the 2nd, one octave up) added — no 7th in between. On an A chord, the 9th is **B**. When an open B string rings against an A-rooted shape, you get that suspended, hungry, unresolved shimmer that defines the verse. It's not a "pretty" extension here; it's tension you can chew on.

**Form:** intro riff → verse (riff-driven) → pre-chorus build → chorus ("I been to the edge...") → solo → out. It's compact and riff-first; the vocal rides the same harmonic engine rather than moving to a separate progression.

Why it works: the open strings give you a drone, the moving power chords give you motion, and the flanger gives you a third dimension of movement *in the tone itself*. Three kinds of motion stacked — that's the whole trick.

## | Signature Moves

### 1) The flanged power-chord riff

#### TAB

Moderate rock, swung eighth feel, ~144 BPM — let the open A ring

```
e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-----|
D|--7-7-----5-5-----|
A|--7-7--0--5-5--0--0--0-----|
E|--5-5--0--3-3--0--0--0-----|
    PM          PM
```

*Two power-chord stabs answered by open low strings; the flanger sweeps across the whole bar.*

### 2) The add9 ring

TAB

Free, let it bloom

```

e|-----|
B|--0-----| <- open B = the 9th against A
G|--2-----|
D|--2-----|
A|--0-----|
E|-----|

```

Hold the shape and let the open B clash with the A root — that suspended shimmer is the song's signature color.

### 3) A solo burst (A minor pentatonic)

TAB

Fast, aggressive, ~144 BPM

```

e|-----|
B|-----8b10r8-----|
G|-----7b9r7-----7-5-----|
D|--7h9-----9-----7---|
A|-----|
E|-----|

```

A short pentatonic flurry with quick bends and a pull back into the box — Eddie's leads dart in, say their piece, and get out.

## The Drills

### Drill A — Riff with an add9 voicing (open-string control)

TAB

~120 BPM to start. Mute cleanly between stabs.

```

e|-----|
B|-----0-----0-----|
G|--7-7-----2-----5-5-----2-----|
D|--7-7--0-0-2-----5-5--0-2-----|
A|--7-7--0-0-0-----5-5--0-0-----|
E|--5-5--0-0-----3-3--0-----|
    PM             PM

```

Builds the core skill: chunky muted power chords answered by a ringing add9 shape. Tone: gain at 6–7, palm-mute the stabs hard, then lift your palm completely so the add9 rings open. Flanger on, slow and deep.

### Drill B — Flanger-friendly rhythm (sustain for the sweep)

TAB

~132 BPM. Hold each chord a full beat; feel the flanger glide.

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|--9~-----7~-----5~-----4~-----|
D|--9~-----7~-----5~-----4~-----|
A|--7~-----5~-----3~-----2~-----|
E|-----|
  
```

Trains you to let chords sustain so the flanger has room to do its work. Short stabs hide the effect; long held chords reveal the whole sweep. Tone: same crunch, flanger Depth high, Rate slow. Add light vibrato from the fretting hand on each chord.

### Drill C — A minor pentatonic solo lick (Eddie-style bursts)

TAB

~144 BPM. Start slow, then snap it up to tempo.

```

e|-----|
B|-----8b10r8-8---5-----|
G|-----5-7b9r7-7-----7-5-----|
D|--5h7-7-7-----7-5-----|
A|-----7-----|
E|-----|
  
```

Builds bend accuracy, hammer-on speed, and the "say it and leave" phrasing of Eddie's leads. Practice the bends in isolation first — bend to pitch, check it against the target fret, then release cleanly. Tone: gain at 6–7, neck or bridge pickup full, dig in.

## | Make It Yours

The transferable lesson here isn't the exact riff — it's the *three-layers-of-motion* idea. Take any two power chords you like, find a nearby open string that clashes (an add9 or a sus tone), and let it ring while the shapes move. Now add a modulation pedal and let chords sustain long enough for the effect to breathe. Suddenly a simple two-chord idea has harmonic motion, rhythmic motion, and tonal motion all at once. You don't need a Variac or a homemade guitar; you need a cranked crunch tone, a flanger, and the discipline to palm-mute tight and then *let go* completely so the open strings sing. That contrast — clenched, then open — is the whole personality of this song.

▶ LISTEN FOR

## LISTEN FOR

- The flanger's slow jet-sweep gliding across each riff cycle — not a fast warble, a long glide.
- The hard palm-muted stabs snapping against fully *open*, ringing low strings.
- The add9 shimmer (open B clashing with the A root) in the verse — tension that never quite resolves.
- Crunch, not mush: every pick attack stays audible. If you can't hear the strings, turn the gain down.
- Solo phrasing that darts in, fires a quick pentatonic burst, and gets out of the way.

# “Crazy Train” • Ozzy Osbourne (Randy Rhoads)

## AT A GLANCE

**Artist:** Ozzy Osbourne (guitar by Randy Rhoads)

**Song:** "Crazy Train"

**Album:** *Blizzard of Ozz* (1980)

**The tone in one sentence:** A bright, tight, midrange-forward Marshall crunch with a hard edge of pedal distortion on top — aggressive but articulate, so every fast note reads.

**Difficulty:** Advanced

**Key & tuning:** F# minor (verse pivots toward A major); standard tuning, no detuning.

This is the song that taught a generation that metal could be *educated*. Rhoads brought classical phrasing, real harmonic logic, and clean alternate picking to a style that, in 1980, was mostly about attitude. Learn this one slowly and your whole right hand improves.

## | The Rig & Signal Chain

Rhoads' sound on *Blizzard of Ozz* came from a fairly simple but very loud chain, and a few of the specifics are debated, so treat the lore carefully.

- **Guitar:** A **Gibson Les Paul Custom** (the cream-colored one) is the most commonly cited guitar for the album sessions, with humbuckers. The famous **polka-dot Flying V** and the white Jackson "Concorde" V became his live and visual signatures slightly later. Either way: humbuckers into a hot amp.
- **Amp:** Cranked **Marshall** heads — typically referenced as 100-watt Super Lead-style plexis/JMP-era stacks — run loud enough that the power section is doing real work. Settings are usually

described only as "everything fairly high with the presence up," which is why the tone is so bright and forward.

- **Drive pedal:** An **MXR Distortion+** is the classic pairing, used to push the front end harder and tighten the attack. Think of it as a boost-into-distortion that adds fizz and sustain rather than the whole gain structure.
- **Modulation:** A **chorus** (an MXR-style stereo chorus is commonly cited) for the clean/arpeggiated and lead sections, giving that slightly shimmering, doubled width.
- **Mic:** Standard close-mic'd 4x12 cabinet practice for the era (a dynamic like an SM57 on the grille is the safe assumption); exact mic choices for these sessions aren't reliably documented, so don't trust anyone who quotes you a model with certainty.

A note on lore: producers and engineers have given slightly different accounts of the exact heads and settings over the years. The honest summary is "loud Marshall plus Distortion+." Anyone selling you a single magic knob position is guessing.

## | The Tone Recipe

You can get ~90% there with a tube amp (or a good amp sim) plus one drive pedal.

### Substitutions:

- **Guitar:** Any humbucker-equipped guitar. A Les Paul, an SG, or even an HH Strat-style work. Use the **bridge** pickup for everything except where noted.
- **Amp:** A Marshall-voiced channel — a JCM800, a plexi sim, or any "British crunch" model. If you only have a clean amp, an overdrive set to crunch gets you close.
- **Drive:** A **Distortion+ clone** (or any yellow-box op-amp distortion) into the amp. No clone? A Tube Screamer or generic OD works — you lose a little fizz, keep the tightness.
- **Chorus:** Any analog-voiced chorus for the clean intro arpeggios.

### Starting points (knobs out of 10):

- Amp: Gain **6**, Bass **4**, Mids **7**, Treble **7**, Presence **6–7**. The mids and presence are the whole personality — do not scoop them.
- Distortion+ clone: Output **5**, Distortion **4–5**. You want tightening and edge, not a wall of mush.
- Pick attack: Firm and even, picking from the wrist, close to the bridge for the riff to keep it tight.

- Where to set gain: Less than you think. This tone is *clear*. If your fast runs blur together, cut gain before you do anything else.

## | What's Going On Musically

The song lives in two tonal centers that share the same notes, and understanding that is the key to the whole tune.

The main riff is in **F# minor** (also called F# Aeolian — the natural minor scale: F#, G#, A, B, C#, D, E). The riff is built on the **F#5 power chord** (a "5 chord" is just the root and fifth, no third, so it sounds neither major nor minor — perfect for riffing) and walks a line underneath that mixes scale tones and chromatic passing notes (notes outside the key used to connect two scale notes smoothly).

The verse pivots to imply **A major**. Here's the trick: A major and F# minor are **relative keys** — they contain the exact same seven notes, just centered on different home pitches. So when the riff sits on F# it feels dark and minor; when the verse leans on A, E, and F#m chords it brightens into major. That major/minor flip inside one set of notes is a big part of why the song feels both heavy and uplifting.

**Form:** Intro riff → verse (the famous "A-A-A" sung over A/E motion) → pre-chorus → chorus → riff → repeat, then a clean breakdown and the solo. The chord motion under the vocal is essentially **A – E – F#m** territory, classic and singable.

Rhoads' solos draw on the **F# minor pentatonic** (the five-note box you know: F#, A, B, C#, E) but constantly *add* the full scale's 2nd (G#) and 6th (D) to get that "classical," composed sound, plus the occasional **harmonic minor** flavor (raising the 7th from E to E# against a dominant chord) for a darker, more "European" tension. That mixture — pentatonic muscle plus full-scale color — is the lesson.

## | Signature Moves

Short fair-use fragments for study. Render slowly first, then to tempo (the record sits around 138 BPM, driving eighths).

**Move 1 — The riff's chromatic walk** (feel: tight, palm-muted eighths, ~138 BPM)

TAB

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-----|
D|-----4-----4-6-7-|
A|-----4-4-5-6-7-4-6-7-|
E|--2-2-2-----2-----|
    PM PM PM

```

The low F#5 chugs, then the line climbs a chromatic/diatonic staircase up the A and D strings — that ascending walk is the song's calling card.

**Move 2 — Verse "A" pedal motion** (feel: open, ringing, bridge pickup)

TAB

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-----|
D|--7-7-7-7-2-2-2-2-4-4-4-4-|
A|--7-7-7-7-2-2-2-2-4-4-4-4-|
E|--5-5-5-5-0-0-0-0-2-2-2-2-|

```

A – E – F#m as power chords under the vocal. Same seven notes as the riff, but the major brightness comes through. Let these ring more than the muted riff.

**Move 3 — Classical-flavored solo turn** (feel: legato, expressive, slight push)

TAB

```

e|-----|
B|-----10-9-----|
G|-----9-11-9-----11h13-----11~--|
D|--9-11-----11-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|

```

A scalar descent that mixes F# minor scale tones with a hammer-on flourish and ends on vibrato — the "trained" phrasing that separates Rhoads from blues-only players.

## | The Drills

These are my original exercises in the song's style — not transcriptions. Practice each with a metronome, slow to fast.

### Drill A — Palm-mute-plus-open engine (builds: the right-hand control the riff demands)

Train switching between dead, muted low notes and ringing higher notes without losing the eighth-note pulse. Tone: bridge pickup, gain at 6, pick near the bridge. Start at 80 BPM, target 138+.

TAB

```
e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-----|
D|-----4-4-----4-6-7-4--|
A|-----4-4-4-4-5-6-7-----4-6-7-4--|
E|--2-2-2-----2-2-2-----|
   PM PM PM             PM PM PM
```

The muted low F# notes must be choked tight (palm on the strings near the bridge) while the open ascending notes ring clean. If they blur, you're palm-muting too lightly or running too much gain.

### Drill B — F# minor / A major run (builds: connecting the two tonal centers on the neck)

A two-octave-ish line that starts dark in F# minor and resolves bright onto A, so your ear learns the relative-key flip. Alternate pick strictly. Tone: bridge pickup, Distortion+ on, gain still moderate so notes separate.

TAB

```
e|-----5-7-9-7-5-----|
B|-----5-7-9-10-----9-7-----|
G|-----4-6-7-----6-----|
D|-----4-6-7-9-----|
A|--4-7-----|
E|-----|
```

Begins rooted on F# (low string), climbs through the shared scale, and lands its peak phrase around A/C#/E — the A-major color. Say the home note out loud as you start and as you land to internalize the shift.

**Drill C — Classically-flavored sequence** (builds: the "three-notes-then-step" pattern that drives Rhoads-style runs)

A descending four-note sequence (a *sequence* = a melodic shape repeated as it moves down the scale) in F# minor, finishing with a harmonic-minor lift (E# against an F# tonic) for that European tension. Legato where marked. Tone: neck pickup softens it; bridge keeps it cutting — try both.

```

e|-----|
B|--10--9--7-----|
G|-----9--7--6-----|
D|-----9--7--6----7--6--4-----|
A|-----7-----7--4--5h7p5--|
E|-----|

```

Each cell drops one scale step lower, so the pattern feels like it's tumbling. The closing **5h7p5** on the A string brushes the raised 7th (E#) for a half-step of harmonic-minor bite before you resolve. Keep the tempo even — sequences expose any rushing.

## | Make It Yours

The transferable lesson here isn't the notes — it's the *attitude toward gain and clarity*. Rhoads proved you can play heavy without drowning everything in distortion. Dial your gain back until fast lines separate, push the mids, and let your right hand do the aggression instead of the amp. Then steal the bigger idea: take a riff or solo you already play in minor pentatonic, and add the full scale's 2nd and 6th in a couple of spots. Instantly it sounds more "composed." Want the classical edge on top? Raise the 7th by a half step against your root for one note and resolve it — that's the harmonic-minor color that makes a phrase sound trained rather than bluesy. Apply that to your own playing in any key and you've absorbed the real Rhoads vocabulary.

### ♪ LISTEN FOR

- The riff's chromatic walk staying **tight and palm-muted** while the open notes still ring clearly — no blur.
- The **major/minor flip**: the dark F# minor riff brightening into the A-major verse, same notes, different center.
- **Even alternate picking** at tempo — every fast note articulated, none swallowed.
- The **classical phrasing** in the leads: full-scale color and harmonic-minor tension, not just pentatonic boxes.
- Overall a tone that is **bright, mid-forward, and clear**, with the distortion adding edge rather than mud.

# “Master of Puppets” • Metallica

---

## AT A GLANCE

**Artist:** Metallica

**Song:** “Master of Puppets”

**Album:** *Master of Puppets* (1986)

**The tone in one sentence:** A bone-dry, mid-scooped wall of tightly-gained rhythm guitar where every palm-muted downstroke lands like a hammer on an anvil.

**Difficulty:** Advanced

**Key & tuning:** E minor / E Phrygian center; standard tuning (E A D G B E), often a hair sharp on the original but tune to concert A=440 for practice.

## | The Rig & Signal Chain

James Hetfield's *Master of Puppets* rhythm sound is one of the most studied tones in metal, and the broad strokes are well documented even if the exact studio chain stays partly in shadow.

The core was a **Mesa/Boogie Mark series** preamp (the Mark IIC+ is the one most consistently cited for this era) blended with **Marshall** power and cabinets for thump and air — a layered approach producer Flemming Rasmussen has described in interviews. In front of the amp, Hetfield is widely associated with an **Ibanez Tube Screamer** (the green overdrive) used not for extra gain but to push the front end and tighten the low end. Guitars for the era centered on the **Gibson Explorer** loaded with hot humbuckers (his white Explorer is the famous one); EMG active pickups became his signature shortly after, so on this record you're hearing the cusp of that transition.

Settings should be treated as approximate. The sound is commonly cited as a heavily mid-scooped EQ — bass up, mids pulled back, treble and presence bright — but be careful: a fully scooped tone disappears in a band mix, and what you hear on the record is many layered takes. Hedge everything.

Treat published "Hetfield settings" as starting points, not gospel, and ignore any chart claiming exact secret knob positions.

## | The Tone Recipe

You can get to roughly 90% with accessible gear and disciplined hands. Honestly, the hands matter more than the amp here.

### Substitutions:

- **Guitar:** Any humbucker-equipped solidbody with a tight low end. A mahogany body helps. Active pickups (EMG 81 in the bridge) get you closest; a hot passive ceramic humbucker also works.
- **Amp:** A high-gain channel on any modern amp or modeler — Mesa Rectifier/Mark models, or sims like the "Recto" and "USA Lead" profiles in plugins/floor units.
- **Overdrive:** A Tube Screamer clone (TS9/TS808 type) or any "green" OD. This is the secret handshake of metal rhythm tone.

### Starting points (knobs out of 10):

- TS in front: **Drive 0–2, Level 8–10, Tone 5–6**. You want volume and tightening, almost no added dirt.
- Amp gain: **6–7, not 10**. Over-gaining smears the chug. Less gain + tight technique reads as *heavier*.
- Amp EQ: **Bass 6, Mids 4–5, Treble 7, Presence 6**. Resist scooping mids to zero. Keep enough midrange that the chug has body and cuts.
- Pickup: **bridge humbucker** only.
- Pick: a stiff pick (1.0mm+), struck with the tip, palm resting on the bridge saddles. Attack is percussive and even.
- Reverb/effects: essentially **none** on rhythm. The dryness is the sound.

## | What's Going On Musically

The song lives in **E**, but the flavor is **E Phrygian** — the third mode of C major, which means an E-rooted scale with a *flat second* (F natural). That semitone between E and F is the single most impor-

tant interval in the whole song. It's the sound of menace, the "Spanish/metal" darkness. Spell it: E – F – G – A – B – C – D – E.

Two ideas to internalize:

- **Power chords (5 chords):** root + fifth, no third. E5 is E–B. They're tonally neutral, which is why they sit so well over a modal riff — they don't fight the b2.
- **The b2 pull (F over E):** moving E5 up a single fret to F5 and back is the Phrygian signature. Your ear hears tension-release instantly.

The form is huge and through-composed — far more than verse/chorus. Roughly: a clean intro, the main downpicked riff, verses, a pre-chorus that climbs, the title chorus, then a famous **clean harmonized interlude** in a brighter tonal area before a melodic guitar solo and a return to the heavy material. The harmonized clean section works because two guitar lines move in parallel **thirds and sixths** (an interval a third or a sixth apart, tracking the same shape), giving that mournful, hymn-like lift against the surrounding aggression.

The engine under all of it is **rhythmic precision**. The riffs aren't harmonically complex; they're *rhythmically* demanding. Sixteenth-note palm-muted Es, broken by stabs and chromatic runs, all downpicked.

## | Signature Moves

### 1. The main downpicked E5 chug

The defining gesture: a galloping bed of palm-muted low E sixteenths, punctuated by open stabs and the Phrygian b2.

#### TAB

Tempo ~212 BPM – all downstrokes, palm muted (PM) on the chugs

```
e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-----|
D|-----2--2-----|
A|-----2--2---3--3--|
E|--0--0--0--0--0--0--0--0-----1--1--|
  PM . . . . . (F5 -> G5 stabs)
```

Caption: Low-E sixteenths run under everything; the move up to F5 (1st fret) is the Phrygian b2 that gives the riff its dread.

## 2. The chromatic figure

A creeping, fully chromatic line — each fret in sequence — that slithers up the low strings. It's the "something is crawling toward you" moment.

TAB

Tempo ~212 BPM — picked evenly, downstrokes, light PM

```
e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-----|
D|-----|
A|-----5--6--7---|
E|--5--6--7--8----6--7--8-----|
    chromatic ascent (one fret at a time)
```

*Caption: No scale logic — pure chromatic motion. The tension comes from refusing to resolve to any key center until the riff slams back home.*

## 3. The harmonized clean interlude (gesture)

A short two-voice clean phrase moving in parallel thirds — the emotional eye of the storm. Bridge pickup off; neck pickup, clean, a touch of reverb.

TAB

Tempo ~84 BPM (half-time feel) — clean, let ring, two voices in 3rds

```
e|-----|
B|-----5-----3-----|
G|---4-----4-----2---|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
    upper voice (B str) / lower voice (G str), a 3rd apart
```

*Caption: Two lines track the same contour a third apart. The brightness and ring are a deliberate contrast to the bone-dry chug — same guitarist, opposite tone.*

## | The Drills

These are original exercises in the song's style. Build them slowly with a metronome; speed is a byproduct of clean repetition, never the goal itself.

## Drill A — Downpicking stamina ladder

Trains the forearm endurance the main riff demands. **All downstrokes, no exceptions.** Start at 100 BPM in eighth notes, then push the tempo in small steps. The instant your wrist tightens or notes get uneven, stop, shake out, restart slower.

TAB

Tempo: start ~100 BPM (8ths), climb to 160+ — ALL DOWNSTROKES, PM

```
e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-----|
D|-----|
A|-----5-5-5-5-----|
E|--0-0-0-0-3-3-3-3-----0-0-0-0-----|
```

PM throughout — even volume on every single down

*Caption: Builds the picking-arm engine. Tone: amp gain at 6, TS pushing the front. If the chug sounds mushy, you're over-gained — turn the amp gain DOWN, not up.*

## Drill B — Palm-mute chug precision (the on/off switch)

Separates dead palm-muted notes from ringing open stabs. The skill is *control of mute pressure* — heavy palm for the PM chunks, palm lifted instantly for the accented open hits.

TAB

Tempo ~120 BPM (16ths) — downstrokes; toggle PM on/off as marked

```
e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-----|
D|-----2-----2-----|
A|-----2-----2-----|
E|--0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-----0-0-0-0-0-0-----|
```

PM: on on on on      OFF on on on      OFF  
      (chug)            (stab)(chug)        (stab)

*Caption: Builds the dynamic contrast between buried chugs and barking accents. Tone: keep it dry — no reverb. The clarity must come from your right hand, not the amp.*

## Drill C — E Phrygian riff builder

Drills the b2 sound and gets the F-natural under your fingers. Built entirely from E Phrygian (E F G A B C D), it pivots between the open E pedal and Phrygian color tones above.

Tempo ~140 BPM (8ths) – downstrokes on the pedal, alt-pick the runs

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-----|
D|-----2-4-5-----|
A|-----2-3-5-----5-3-2-----|
E|--0-0-0-0-1-3-5-----0--|

```

E pedal -> F(b2)-G-A ... ascend Phrygian ... resolve to E

*Caption: Builds Phrygian fluency. Hear how F (1st fret, low E) sits a half-step above the open E — that is the whole mood. Tone: bridge humbucker, tight gain, mids present so the F-against-E grind reads clearly.*

## | Make It Yours

The lesson of this tone isn't "scoop your mids and crank the gain" — it's the opposite. *Master of Puppets* proves that heaviness is a **rhythmic and dynamic** achievement, not a gain setting. Two things transfer to everything you play: first, downpicking with even attack makes any riff sound twice as authoritative — practice it as a baseline discipline, not a party trick. Second, a single half-step (the b2) can give a riff an entire emotional identity; drop a Phrygian b2 into your own E-based ideas and listen to how the mood darkens. And pull the gain back. Dial in *less* dirt than feels right, then let your palm and your pick do the heavy lifting. Tight hands plus a Tube Screamer beats a maxed gain knob every time.

### ♪ LISTEN FOR

- Downstrokes so even you can't hear individual pick attacks varying in volume — a seamless, machine-tight wall.
- The palm-mute "thunk" cleanly separated from open, ringing stabs — control, not blur.
- The Phrygian b2 (F over E): that half-step is the song's dread; make sure your ear catches it.
- A bone-dry rhythm tone — if you hear reverb wash, you've added too much.
- Mids that are present enough to cut, not scooped into oblivion — heaviness you can feel *and* hear.

# “Cliffs of Dover” • Eric Johnson

## AT A GLANCE

**Artist:** Eric Johnson

**Song:** “Cliffs of Dover”

**Album:** *Ah Via Musicom* (1990)

**The tone in one sentence:** A violin-smooth, glassy Strat lead that sustains like a horn and sparkles like a clean bell, sitting in a deep three-dimensional reverb-and-echo wash.

**Difficulty:** Advanced

**Key & tuning:** G major; standard tuning (E A D G B E), reference A=440.

This is the Everest of clean-ish lead tone. Johnson's playing here is built on a small handful of devastatingly well-executed ideas — a cascading pentatonic picking pattern, fluid legato lines, and a singing diatonic theme. The notes aren't impossibly fast; the *evenness*, the touch, and the tone are what take years. We'll break down the mechanics, then build original drills that train the exact skills the track demands.

## | The Rig & Signal Chain

Eric Johnson is famous for one of the most obsessive signal chains in rock, and "Cliffs of Dover" is the showcase. The core elements, widely documented across interviews and gear features:

- **Guitar:** A **Fender Stratocaster** (Johnson favored late-'50s examples). The lead voice rides primarily on the **neck pickup** — that's the source of the round, vocal, "violin" quality. The intro and rhythm sections move to in-between and bridge positions for bite.
- **Drive:** A **Tube Driver** (the BK Butler / Chandler-style 12AX7-based overdrive pedal) is the heart of the lead gain — a thick, amp-like push rather than a fizzy clipper. It's the single most associated

pedal with this sound.

- **Echo:** An **Echoplex** tape delay (EP-3 era), used not only for the repeats but for the preamp coloration its buffer adds — a subtle high-end gloss many players forget is part of the EJ "shimmer."
- **Amps:** A classic **wet/dry** approach — **Marshall** heads (often cited as plexi-era 100-watt) carrying the overdriven lead/dry signal, with **Fender** amps (Twin Reverb territory) handling the clean and "wet" effected side. Multiple amps, mic'd and blended, create the width.
- **Mic:** Typically dynamic mics (e.g., a Shure SM57 class) on the cabs in standard close-mic practice; exact studio placement isn't publicly nailed down, so treat any "secret mic chain" claim as unconfirmed.

A note on lore: Johnson's reputation for hearing differences in battery brands and the *exact* knob positions of his rig is real folklore. Take any "his settings were exactly X" claim as **debated** — he tweaks constantly, and published numbers are approximate at best. The principle to trust isn't a magic number; it's *neck pickup + thick tube overdrive + tape echo + clean amp blended underneath*.

## | The Tone Recipe

You can get ~90% there with accessible gear. The goal is **round, sustaining, but still articulate** — not scooped metal gain.

### Substitutions:

- **Guitar:** Any Strat-style with single coils. If you only have humbuckers, roll tone down and use the neck pickup.
- **Drive:** A modern Tube Driver clone, or a transparent-ish overdrive with body (think a mid-forward OD). Even a Tube Screamer-type works if you back off the mids honk and add an EQ after it.
- **Echo:** Any tape-style delay (analog or a tape emulation). A touch of plate/hall reverb behind it.
- **Amp:** A clean-to-edge-of-breakup amp (Fender-voiced clean channel). Let the pedal supply the gain.

### Starting points (knobs out of 10):

- **Pickup:** Neck single coil for leads.

- **Guitar tone knob:** ~6–7. This is the secret — rolling the tone *down slightly* is what removes the "ice pick" and gives the violin roundness. EJ is known to live below 10 on the tone control.
- **Overdrive:** Drive ~6, Tone ~5, Level to taste (push the amp a little). You want sustain and singing feedback potential, not buzz.
- **Amp:** Clean channel, Bass 5, Mid 6, Treble 5, Reverb 3.
- **Delay:** ~400–550 ms, feedback for 2–3 audible repeats, mix ~25–30% — present but not muddy.
- **Pick attack:** Light to medium with a rounded pick. Pick *closer to the neck* for the leads to soften the transient.

Dial gain so a held note blooms and sustains when you add a little vibrato, but a fast run still speaks clearly note-to-note. If individual notes blur, you have too much gain or too much delay.

## I What's Going On Musically

The tune is firmly in **G major** (notes G A B C D E F#). The melodic vocabulary draws on three closely related sources, and knowing how they overlap is the key to improvising in this style:

- **G major pentatonic** (G A B D E) — the bright, "happy" five-note scale. This is the engine of the cascading runs.
- **E minor pentatonic** (E G A B D) — the *relative minor* of G major pentatonic. **Relative** means it shares the exact same notes, just centered on a different home tone. So your familiar minor-pentatonic box at the 12th fret (E shape) is G major pentatonic — same fingerings, different emphasis. That overlap is why EJ's lines feel both bluesy and major-bright at once.
- **G major (Ionian)** — the full seven-note scale, used for the singing theme, adding the C and F# that pentatonic leaves out.

Harmonically, the piece moves through bright diatonic progressions and cadences that resolve strongly to G, with passing motion toward the IV (C) and V (D), and the relative E minor for contrast. The signature *open, ringing* quality comes from voicings that let open strings or wide intervals breathe rather than dense barre chords.

A bit of theory that makes the magic: Johnson frequently arpeggiates **triads** (three-note chords — root, third, fifth) and adds the **6th** or **9th** as color tones. A G major triad is G–B–D; add the 6th (E) and you get the sweet, almost country-meets-fusion sound that pervades the track. Hearing where the third (B) and the sixth (E) fall is more important than raw speed.

The form is a multi-section instrumental — a rubato intro flurry, the stated main theme, developmental solo sections, and returns of the theme — closer to a through-composed piece than a verse/chorus pop song.

## Signature Moves

These are SHORT illustrative fragments for analysis — characteristic gestures, not the full part.

1. **The cascading pentatonic "fives."** EJ's trademark: groups of five notes that cascade *down* through G major pentatonic, descending one string-pair at a time. The five-note grouping pushes the accents across the beat so it shimmers instead of marching.

TAB

Feel: fast and even – groups of 5, light pick near the neck

```
e|-----|
B|--15-12-----|
G|-----14-12-----|
D|-----14-12-----|
A|-----14-12-----|
E|-----15-12-----|
5 : 5 : 5 : 5 : 5
```

*Caption: Each descending cell is five notes; let them ring slightly and keep the volume of every note identical — evenness is the whole game.*

2. **The legato theme answer.** The melodic statements lean on hammer/pull legato so the line *sings* rather than picks. Note the rounded, vocal phrasing and the vibrato landing on a chord tone.

TAB

Feel: lyrical, vibrato on the held note

```
e|-----|
B|--8h10p8--7-----|
G|-----9--9b(11)r9-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
```

*Caption: Pick only the first note of each slur; the bend-and-release on the G string is a vocal "cry." Resolve to a G-major chord tone.*

3. **The intro flurry tag.** A quick open-position-flavored burst that announces the tune — fast, but built from pentatonic shapes you already know, with a slide for fluidity.

TAB

Feel: rubato, breathe before the downbeat

```

e|--12-15-12-----|
B|-----15-12-----|
G|-----14/16~-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|

```

*Caption: The slide-and-vibrato finish sells the "liquid" quality. Don't rush — the flurry sounds best when it lands loose and confident, not metronomic.*

## | The Drills

These are my original exercises in EJ's style — not from the recording. Master each at slow tempos with a metronome before adding speed. Dial the tone as described under each.

**Drill A — Pentatonic Fives Trainer (string-crossing + accent displacement).** Original descending pattern in G major pentatonic. Pick the first note of each five-note cell, then let hammers/pulls and economy picking carry the rest. The point is *evenness*: record yourself and check that no note jumps out.

TAB

Tempo: start 70 bpm (eighth notes), target 130+. Neck pickup, tone ~6.

```

e|-----|
B|--15-12-10-----15-----|
G|-----12-9-7-----12-14-----|
D|-----12-9-7-----9-12-----|
A|-----12-10-7-----|
E|-----|

```

5 : 5 : 5 : (turn) : ascend back up

*Builds: clean string crossing and the displaced-accent shimmer. Tone: light overdrive, pick near the neck, every note equal volume — that consistency IS the EJ sound.*

**Drill B — Triad-with-6th Cascade (the sweet color tones).** Outlines G major triad (G-B-D) plus the 6th (E), then the same idea over C and D. Trains your ear to *find the 6th and 3rd*, the notes that give EJ his bittersweet glow.

TAB

Tempo: 80 bpm, legato. Neck pickup, tone ~7, delay ~30%.

```

G(add6)          C(add6)          D(add6)
e|-----|-----|-----|
B|--15h17-15-----|--13h15-13-----|--15h17-15-----|
G|-----16-14-----|-----14-12-----|-----16-14-----|
D|-----17-----|-----14-----|-----16-----|
A|-----|-----|-----|
E|-----|-----|-----|
  
```

*Builds: arpeggio fluency and color-tone awareness. Tone: round neck pickup, just enough gain to bloom on the top note; add vibrato to the last note of each bar.*

**Drill C — Smooth String-Crossing Legato (the "violin" right hand).** Minimal picking, maximum slur. The skill is making a *picked* note and a *hammered* note sound identical in attack — the core of EJ's seamless lines.

TAB

Tempo: 75 bpm, even sixteenths. Pick ONLY where shown (\*).

```

e|-----|-----|
B|--*12h15p12-----*13h15p13-----|
G|-----*12h14p12-----*12h14p12-----|
D|-----|-----|
A|-----|-----|
E|-----|-----|
  
```

one pick per beat – the rest are legato

*Builds: legato evenness and left-hand strength so slurred notes match picked ones. Tone: roll the guitar tone to ~6 and pick softly near the neck; if hammered notes are quieter than picked ones, fret harder, don't pick harder.*

## Make It Yours

The deep lesson of "Cliffs of Dover" isn't the lick — it's the *standard of execution*. Take any pentatonic run you already play and apply three EJ filters: pick near the neck for a rounder transient, roll your tone knob down a notch or two, and make every note exactly the same volume. Suddenly a tired blues box sounds glassy and expensive. Then borrow his harmonic trick — when you land, aim for the **3rd** or **6th** of the chord instead of the root, and your lines gain that sweet, lyrical lift. Use these ideas in any major-key context: country, fusion, pop solos, even ambient cleans. You don't need his exact rig; you need his *touch and his target notes*.

▶ LISTEN FOR

## • LISTEN FOR

- The **violin-like attack** — can you make a fast run sound like it has *no* pick noise, just bowed-smooth notes?
- **Perfect evenness** across the cascading fives — no single note pokes out in volume or timing.
- The **bloom and sustain** on held notes, with vibrato that starts subtle and widens.
- Resolution to **color tones** (3rd, 6th) rather than always the root, for that bittersweet EJ glow.
- A **three-dimensional space** — dry pick articulation up front, tape echo and reverb breathing behind it.

# “Surfing with the Alien” · Joe Satriani

## AT A GLANCE

**Artist:** Joe Satriani

**Song:** “Surfing with the Alien”

**Album:** *Surfing with the Alien* (1987)

**The tone in one sentence:** A creamy, vocal, sustaining lead voice riding a punchy palm-muted riff — high gain that stays articulate, glued together with delay and bent into life with the whammy bar.

**Difficulty:** Advanced

**Key & tuning:** B tonal center, standard tuning (E A D G B E)

## | The Rig & Signal Chain

Satriani's mid-'80s sound is built around an **Ibanez** electric — by the late '80s his signature **JS** line was taking shape, but on this record he was largely playing modified superstrat-style Ibanez guitars loaded with a humbucker in the bridge (a **DiMarzio**-style hot bridge pickup is the right ballpark). The critical hardware feature is the **double-locking tremolo** (an Edge/Floyd Rose-type bridge), which is what lets the whammy gestures dive and return to pitch.

Amplification on the album is commonly cited as high-gain tube amplifiers of the era pushed hard; the exact studio chain is debated and has shifted across reissues and interviews, so treat any “this exact amp on this exact track” claim as lore rather than fact. The defining colors beyond the amp are **delay** (a clear, rhythmic repeat — think a digital or analog delay set to a dotted or quarter-note feel) and a touch of **chorus/modulation** to widen the lead.

Settings, hedged: gain is high but not buried — approximately 7–8 on the amp, enough for effortless legato sustain while still letting pick attack speak. Mics on a 4×12 in the studio would have been

close-placed dynamics (an **SM57**-class mic is the safe assumption). Do not trust any "secret" knob chart for this record; Satriani's own descriptions have varied over the years.

## | The Tone Recipe

You can get ~90% there with a modern humbucker-equipped guitar and one good high-gain channel.

### Substitution list:

- **Guitar:** any superstrat with a hot bridge humbucker and a Floyd-style trem. No Floyd? You can play everything except the deepest dive-bombs.
- **Amp/drive:** a modern high-gain channel (5150-style, or a Mesa/Marshall hot channel), or a quality amp sim. A **Tube Screamer**-type overdrive in front tightens the low end and is very period-correct.
- **Delay:** any delay pedal/plugin. Set repeats so they support, not smear.

### Starting points (out of 10):

- Bridge humbucker selected.
- Amp gain **7**, bass **5**, mids **6**, treble **6**, presence **5**. Roll mids up if the lead disappears.
- Tube Screamer in front: drive **2**, tone **6**, level **7** (it's there to firm up the attack, not add hair).
- Delay: time set to a quarter note at the song tempo (~135 bpm), feedback **3**, mix **3**.
- Pick attack: moderate and even. Let the gain do the lifting — dig in only for accents and the riff's muted chugs.
- Set gain at the point where a single fretted note rings 4+ seconds with light vibrato but a *muted* chord still sounds tight, not woolly. That balance is the whole secret.

## | What's Going On Musically

The track lives around a **B tonal center**, and the soloing leans into **modal color** rather than plain minor pentatonic. Two modes do the heavy lifting:

- **Lydian** — a major scale with a raised 4th. Over a B chord that's B C# D# **E#(F)** F# G# A#. That sharp 4th is the bright, "floating," sci-fi sound Satriani loves; it's the pitch-axis trick where you keep a root pedal and change the surrounding mode for mood.

- **Mixolydian** — a major scale with a flat 7th (B C# D# E F# G# A). It's bluesier and more grounded than Lydian and gives the bends their swagger.

A *mode* is just a major scale started and centered on a different degree, which shifts which notes feel "home" and which feel "colorful." The riff itself is built from punchy, syncopated power-chord-and-single-note stabs with heavy palm muting, leaving space that the melody answers — classic call-and-response form across riff, melody, and solo sections. The reason it all coheres: everything orbits B. Whether Joe is in Lydian brightness or Mixolydian grit, the ear keeps hearing B as the anchor, so even the "outside" notes resolve home.

## | Signature Moves

Three gestures define the sound. Short illustrative fragments only — study the feel, then build fluency with the original drills below.

1. **The riff (palm-muted, syncopated, B-centered).** Tight downstrokes, heavy PM, gaps left wide open.

**TAB**

Tempo ~135 | heavy palm mute, even downstrokes

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-----|
D|-----|
A|--2-2--2-2---5-----|
E|--0-0--0-0---3---0-0-0---|
    PM.....      PM.....
  
```

*Caption: chunky low-string stabs with rests — the silence is part of the riff.*

2. **A legato run (pitch-axis, mostly left hand).** One pick stroke per string; the rest is hammers and pulls.

**TAB**

Tempo ~135 | pick only the first note of each string

```

e|-----7h9h11-|
B|-----7h9h10-----|
G|--6h8h9-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
    legato - let the gain carry it
  
```

*Caption: smooth, vocal ascent — no pick attack after the first note of each string.*

**3. A whammy gesture (dive and return).** A held note, dipped with the bar, then scooped back up — only works with a locking trem.

TAB

```
Tempo ~135 | hold, dip with bar, return to pitch
e|--12~~~~~|
B|-----|
G|-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
w/bar: \dip/ ...return... add vibrato
```

*Caption: vibrato first, then a bar dip and scoop — the note "sings" and "talks."*

## | The Drills

Original exercises in the song's style. Start at 80 bpm, push toward 135.

**Drill A — Legato strength builder (B Lydian fragment).** Trains left-hand independence and even hammer/pull volume so legato lines stay loud without picking.

TAB

```
Tempo 80→135 | pick ONLY where marked *, all else h/p
e|-----*7h9h11p9h11-|
B|-----*9h11h12-----|
G|-----*8h9h11-----|
D|*6h8h9-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
```

*Caption: builds finger 3 and 4 stamina. Tone: gain ~7 so the hammered notes ring; back the bridge pickup tone knob to ~8 if it gets shrill.*

**Drill B — Riff engine (palm-mute precision around B).** Trains tight muting, downstroke control, and rhythmic gaps. Keep the palm anchored; chokes should be dead-silent.

TAB

Tempo 80→135 | all downstrokes, heavy PM, watch the rests

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-----|
D|----2-2-----4-----2-----|
A|--2-2-2-2--0--4--5-5--2-0--|
E|--0-0-----0--2--3-3--0-0--|
    PM.....    PM.....

```

Caption: builds the "chug-and-stop" engine. Tone: Tube Screamer in front, gain ~7; the muted notes should thump, not buzz.

**Drill C — Modal switch lick (Mixolydian grit into Lydian lift).** Trains hearing the difference between the bluesy flat-7 and the bright sharp-4 over the same root. Bend with support; finish with bar vibrato.

TAB

Tempo 80→130 | bend full, hold, then float up to the #4

```

e|-----|
B|--12b14r12--10-----12~~~~-----|
G|-----11h13--11h13/(14)-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
    ^Mixolydian (b7)    ^Lydian (#4) w/bar vib

```

Caption: builds modal ear and expressive bends. Tone: full gain for sustain on the held notes; add delay (mix ~3) so the tail blooms.

## | Make It Yours

The real lesson here isn't the notes — it's the *philosophy*. Pick one root and stay on it (a single B power chord or an open low string droning), then cycle your scales over the top: minor pentatonic, then Mixolydian, then Lydian. Listen to how the mood changes while home never moves. That's pitch-axis thinking, and it'll transform your soloing whether you play metal, blues, or country. Then layer in Satriani's two physical signatures: legato to make lines *flow* like a voice, and the whammy to make single notes *talk*. Even on a fixed bridge, you can fake the bar's expressiveness with finger vibrato and pre-bends. Steal the approach, not just the lick.

▶ LISTEN FOR

## • LISTEN FOR

- The riff's **silences** — the palm-muted gaps are as defining as the notes; if your muting buzzes, the groove dies.
- **Legato evenness** — hammered and pulled notes should match picked notes in volume; no dropouts mid-run.
- The **#4 (Lydian) "lift"** — train your ear to catch that bright, floating note and land on it intentionally.
- **Vocal whammy** — bar dips that return *exactly* to pitch, with vibrato that sounds like singing, not shaking.
- **Sustain without mud** — a single note rings for seconds, yet a full muted chord still sounds tight and articulate.

PART H

# Alt, Grunge & Modern Rock



# “Smells Like Teen Spirit” • Nirvana

## AT A GLANCE

**Artist:** Nirvana

**Song:** “Smells Like Teen Spirit”

**Album:** *Nevermind* (1991)

**The tone:** A flat, slightly hollow clean chorus that detonates into thick, mid-scooped distortion the instant the chorus hits — the whole song is that contrast.

**Difficulty:** Beginner → Intermediate

**Key & tuning:** F (functionally F minor / mixolydian-flavored rock); standard tuning, A440 (the studio take sits very close to standard — no detuning needed to play along).

## | The Rig & Signal Chain

Cobain's live and studio setup was famously cheap and rugged, which is great news for you — none of this is boutique.

- **Guitar:** A **Fender Mustang** (his go-to around *Nevermind*) or a **Fender Jaguar**, both short-scale offsets with single-coils, though he often swapped a humbucker into the bridge. Single-coils give the verse its glassy thinness; a hotter bridge pickup feeds the chorus.
- **Distortion:** A **Boss DS-1** (and later the **Boss DS-2 Turbo Distortion**) is the most-cited dirt box. This pedal is the heart of the sound — a hard-clipping, mid-forward distortion that he reportedly ran fairly aggressive.
- **Amp:** In the studio, a **Mesa/Boogie** (a Studio .22 is commonly cited) paired with **Fender** amplification for the cleans; live he leaned on Fender combos and solid-state heads. Cleans came from the amp; grit came from the pedal slamming the front end.

- **Mic:** Producer Butch Vig tracked guitars at Sound City, close-miking cabs with the usual workhorse dynamics. Exact mic placement is studio lore — treat specifics as approximate.

Settings are best given as ranges. The DS-1 is **commonly cited as** Dist around 7–8, Tone around 5–6, Level to taste. Amps sat **approximately** clean-to-edge so the pedal did the clipping. Do not chase a "secret" patch — there wasn't one.

## | The Tone Recipe

You can get ~90% there for very little money.

### Substitutions:

- Any offset, or even a Strat/Tele with a bridge humbucker, works. No Mustang? A Squier with a hot bridge pickup nails it.
- DS-1 unavailable? Any hard-clipping distortion (not a smooth overdrive) — a ProCo RAT, a Boss MT-2 dialed back, or a digital DS-1 model.
- Amp: any clean platform — a small tube combo or a modeler set to a clean Fender/Mesa.

### Starting points (knobs out of 10):

- **Amp:** clean. Gain 3, Bass 6, Mid 4, Treble 6, Reverb 2.
- **Distortion pedal:** Drive 7, Tone 5, Level matched so the volume jumps slightly when engaged.
- **Pickup:** neck or middle single-coil for verses (thin, bell-like); bridge for chorus (fat, aggressive).
- **Pick attack:** verses — light, let chords ring and breathe, almost lazy. Chorus — dig in hard, full downstrokes, let strings rattle.
- **Gain placement:** keep the amp clean and let the *pedal* be your distortion. That separation is what lets you go quiet-to-loud just by stepping on a switch.

The mid-scoop people chase isn't extreme — the DS-1 is actually mid-*present*. The "scoop" is really the contrast against the hollow clean verse. Don't over-scoop the amp or the chorus loses its punch.

## | What's Going On Musically

The entire song rides **four power chords: F – Bb – Ab – Db**. A power chord (written "5," e.g. F5) is just root + fifth — no third — so it's neither major nor minor, which is exactly why it sits so well un-

der distortion (thirds get muddy when overdriven).

Spell those roots out — F, Bb, Ab, Db — and you get a sound centered on **F**, colored by the flatted scale degrees of F minor (the Ab and Db are the b3 and b6 of an F-minor world). The progression doesn't resolve in a tidy classical way; it loops as a *riff*, which is the point.

**Form** is textbook loud-quiet-loud (the "soft verse / loud chorus" architecture Pixies pioneered and Nirvana perfected):

- **Intro:** the four chords, clean, then once with full distortion.
- **Verse:** stripped to a two-note figure and bass; guitar nearly drops out.
- **Pre-chorus:** builds tension on a held chord.
- **Chorus:** all four power chords, full distortion, full attack.

The **solo** is the lesson's secret weapon: Cobain plays the *vocal melody* of the verse almost note-for-note. It's not a flashy shred solo — it's a sung line on guitar. That's a huge compositional move: when you don't know what to play, play the melody. It always belongs.

The two-note verse figure exploits **octaves and dyads** — small two-string shapes that imply the harmony without filling it in, leaving space for Krist Novoselic's bass to carry the low end.

## | Signature Moves

### 1. The four-chord engine

TAB

Feel: ~117 BPM, half-time push. Heavy, even downstrokes.

```
e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-----|
D|--3---8---6---11-----|
A|--3---8---6---11-----|
E|--1---6---4---9-----|
   F5   Bb5  Ab5  Db5
```

*Caption: The whole song in four shapes. Clean and palm-muted in the verse, slammed wide-open in the chorus — same fingers, opposite dynamics.*

## 2. The dynamic drop (verse)

TAB

Feel: ~117 BPM. Pickup to neck, attack soft and loose.

```
e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-----|
D|-----|
A|--6---6---4---4-----|
E|--x---x---x---x-----|
    PM   PM   PM   PM
```

*Caption: Reduce to a single dyad and dead-note scratches. The guitar almost disappears so the chorus can explode.*

## 3. The melodic solo (idea)

TAB

Feel: ~117 BPM. Bridge pickup, full distortion. Phrase like singing.

```
e|-----|
B|--4---4---4---4---6---4---|
G|-----3--1-|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
```

*Caption: Tracks the verse vocal contour. Don't rush it — let each note land where a sung syllable would.*

## | The Drills

These are original exercises in the song's style — built to drill the exact skills it demands.

### Drill A — Clean/Dirty Dynamic Switch

Train the loud-quiet reflex. Play four bars clean and muted, then the same shapes wide open. If you have a footswitch, stomp the distortion on beat 1 of the loud bars.

TAB

~117 BPM. Bars 1-2 PM + clean. Bars 3-4 dig in, distortion ON.

	(quiet)	(loud)
e	-----	-----
B	-----	-----
G	-----	-----
D	--3--3--6--6--8--8--6--6--	--3--3--6--6--8--8--6--6--
A	--3--3--6--6--8--8--6--6--	--3--3--6--6--8--8--6--6--
E	--1--1--4--4--6--6--4--4--	--1--1--4--4--6--6--4--4--
	PM (clean)	(open, hard downstrokes)

Caption: Builds dynamic control — the single most important skill in this song. Tone: amp clean, pedal off for bars 1-2, on for 3-4. The volume jump should feel violent.

### Drill B — Power-Chord Shape Shifting

Lock in clean position changes across the neck so the chorus never stumbles. All root-fifth shapes; minimize finger lift between them.

TAB

~110 BPM. Slow, deliberate. Slide into each shape.

e	-----
B	-----
G	-----
D	--1--/3--5--\3--6--/8--6--\4----
A	--1--/3--5--\3--6--/8--6--\4----
E	--x--x--x--x--4--/6--4--\2----

Caption: Builds smooth, accurate shifts and slide articulation under the chord. Tone: light crunch so you can hear cleanly whether every shape rings true.

### Drill C — Sung-Line Soloing

Teach yourself the "play the melody" move. Hum any short phrase, then find it on the B and G strings in one position. This original line stays in an F-centered minor pentatonic box.

**TAB**

~117 BPM. Bridge pickup, full distortion. Sing it, then play it.

```

e|-----|
B|--6--6--4--6--8--6--4-----|
G|-----5--3--5--3--|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
  
```

Caption: Builds melodic phrasing and the discipline to play a vocal line instead of running scales. Tone: same as the chorus — let the distortion sustain each note like a held vowel.

## | Make It Yours

The real lesson here isn't four chords — it's that **dynamics are a songwriting tool, not just a volume knob**. Take any progression you already know and try the loud-quiet architecture: strip a section to two notes and a whisper, then detonate the next section with full chords and full attack. The contrast does the emotional work. Pair that with the "play the vocal melody" trick for solos and you have two ideas that will outlast any specific tone. Keep your amp clean and let a pedal be your dirt — that one habit gives you an instant quiet-to-loud switch under your foot.

### ♪ LISTEN FOR

- The volume and texture *jump* the instant the chorus lands — clean verse to thick distortion with no gradual fade.
- Power chords with **no third** — full, open, neither major nor minor under the dirt.
- The verse guitar nearly disappearing, leaving bass and a couple of dead-note scratches.
- The solo *singing* the verse melody rather than shredding over it.
- Loose, almost careless attack in the quiet parts vs. hard, committed downstrokes when it's loud.

# “Come as You Are” • Nirvana

---

## AT A GLANCE

**Artist:** Nirvana

**Song:** “Come as You Are”

**Album:** *Nevermind* (1991)

**The tone in one sentence:** A submerged, watery clean riff — chorus-soaked single-note lines low on the neck that bloom and waver like sound heard through water.

**Difficulty:** Beginner to Intermediate

**Key & tuning:** F# minor flavor; guitar tuned down a whole step to **D standard** (low to high: D G C F A D). All tab below is read against that down-tuned guitar, so the riff sounds a whole step lower than the same shapes at standard pitch.

## | The Rig & Signal Chain

The signature is the chorus, full stop. Cobain's chain for the verse riff is commonly cited as an **Electro-Harmonix Small Clone** chorus running into a **Boss DS-1** distortion, then into the amp. On the record the verses sound essentially clean with the chorus dominating, and the distortion is leaned on harder in the choruses and the bridge.

- **Guitar:** A Fender-style offset is the usual association — Cobain favored Mustangs and Jaguars, often with humbucker swaps in the bridge. The riff sits on the wound strings, so the exact pickup matters less than the chorus painted over it.
- **Chorus:** The Small Clone, commonly cited with the rate switch in the slower/wider position for that thick, seasick wobble rather than a fast shimmer.
- **Distortion:** The DS-1, approximately moderate — present in the loud sections, nearly absent in the quiet verses.

- **Amp:** Studio amplification on *Nevermind* is debated; treat any specific "secret" amp claim as lore, not fact. Aim for a clean-ish American-voiced platform that stays tight in the low end when you drop to D.
- **Mic:** Producer Butch Vig layered and doubled guitars throughout the record; exact mic placements aren't publicly nailed down, so don't chase a magic position.

Treat all knob positions here as "approximately." The published rig is well known in outline; the precise dial settings are not, and anyone quoting exact numbers is guessing.

## | The Tone Recipe

You can get roughly 90% of the way there with very accessible gear.

### Substitutions

- **Chorus:** Any analog-voiced chorus (a TC, an MXR Analog Chorus, an EHX Neo Clone, or a good modeler's "CE/Clone" patch). This is the non-negotiable box.
- **Distortion:** A DS-1 if you have one; otherwise any mid-forward overdrive/distortion. You only need a modest amount.
- **Guitar:** Anything with a usable bridge pickup. A humbucker tightens the low D; a single-coil gives more glassy wobble.

### Starting points (knobs out of 10)

- **Chorus:** Rate ~3, Depth ~6–7. You want a slow, wide seasickness — the pitch should audibly drift, not flutter. If your pedal has a single Depth knob (like a Small Clone), set it past noon.
- **Amp:** Clean channel. Bass 6, Mids 5, Treble 5–6, Reverb 2. Keep it just shy of breakup so the chorus stays legible.
- **Distortion (verses):** Off or barely on. **Distortion (choruses):** Drive ~4, Tone ~5, Level matched so it doesn't jump in volume.
- **Pick attack:** Medium, fleshy, slightly behind the bridge pickup. Let the notes ring their full value — this riff lives on sustain and the chorus blooming across it.
- **Where to set gain:** Low enough that single notes stay clear and the chorus modulation is the loudest thing your ear notices.

## | What's Going On Musically

The tonal center sits in **F# minor** territory (with the guitar tuned down a step, your fretted shapes are lower than standard pitch, but we'll name notes by what you finger). The verse riff is the whole hook, and it's built on one of the simplest, most effective devices in rock: a **chromatic descending line** on the lowest strings.

*Chromatic* means moving by half-steps — one fret at a time — rather than skipping through a scale. That stepwise slither is exactly what gives the riff its creeping, unresolved feel. Underneath the chorus wobble, your fretting hand is essentially walking a bass line down by single frets and letting an open string drone against it.

The song form is classic loud-quiet-loud, the dynamic that defines this whole section of the workbook:

- **Verse:** Sparse, clean, chorus-drenched riff. Lots of space.
- **Chorus ("come doused in mud..."):** The band leans in. Power chords, more distortion, more weight — but the same harmonic world.
- **Bridge/solo:** The melody is essentially the verse riff played up an octave — Cobain often doubled or echoed the vocal/riff line rather than shredding.

A **power chord** (the "5 chord," e.g. F#5) is just root plus fifth, no third — so it's neither major nor minor, which is why it slots cleanly over the ambiguous minor-ish verse. The genius is restraint: two or three pitches, a drone, and a chorus pedal doing the heavy emotional lifting.

## | Signature Moves

### 1. The watery verse riff

Feel: mid-tempo, ~120 BPM, eighth notes, let everything ring. Chorus ON, clean.

TAB

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-----|
D|-----|
A|--2--2--2--1--1--1--0--0--0--1--1--1|
E|--0--0--0--0--0--0--0--0--0--0--0--0|

```

The verse riff: open low-string drone under a 2 → 1 → 0 → 1 chromatic walk.

The low open string drones while the note above it steps down 2 → 1 → 0 then back up to 1. That tiny chromatic walk, smeared by the chorus, is the entire identity of the song. Keep your picking even and relaxed; the pedal supplies the drama.

## 2. The octave-up answer (bridge feel)

Feel: same tempo, played higher to "answer" the verse. Chorus ON.

TAB

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|--2--2--2--1--1--1--0--0--0--1--1--1|
D|--0--0--0--0--0--0--0--0--0--0--0--0|
A|-----|
E|-----|

```

The same shape moved up one string pair — the hook restated an octave higher.

Same shape, moved up one string pair. This is how the song restates its hook without adding notes — a great lesson in saying more by changing register, not content.

## 3. The loud-chorus power chords

Feel: push slightly harder, palm-muted attack, distortion up. PM = palm mute.

TAB

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-----|
D|--4--4--6--6--7--7-----|
A|--4--4--6--6--7--7-----|
E|--2--2--4--4--5--5-----|
      PM      PM      PM

```

Three palm-muted power-chord shapes that give the chorus its weight.

Three power-chord shapes, root on the low string, chunked with a palm mute so the chorus section hits with weight against the airy verse. Keep the *same* chorus pedal engaged — the modulation riding on distortion is part of why the loud sections still sound like this song and not a generic grunge chorus.

## The Drills

These are original exercises in the song's style — build the technique without copying the record.

### Drill A — Chromatic drone walk (fretting independence over a drone)

Chorus ON, clean. Slow, even eighths, ~110 BPM. Let the low string ring the whole time.

TAB

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-----|
D|-----|
A|--3--3--2--2--1--1--0--0--1--1--2--2|
E|--0--0--0--0--0--0--0--0--0--0--0--0|

```

Drill A: a steady open drone while the finger above descends and climbs chromatically.

Trains the exact gesture the verse demands: a steady open drone while the finger above descends and climbs chromatically. Focus on letting *both* notes sustain cleanly so the chorus has two voices to swirl. Dial the tone with chorus Depth past noon and zero distortion — if it doesn't sound underwater, raise Depth before anything else.

### Drill B — Register flip (saying it twice, an octave apart)

Chorus ON, clean. ~115 BPM. Play the low phrase, then the same phrase up a string pair without stopping.

TAB

```
e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-----|2-2-1-1-0-0-1-1-----|
D|-----|0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-----|
A|--2-2-1-1-0-0-1-1-----|-----|
E|--0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-----|-----|
```

*Drill B: the low phrase, then the same phrase up a string pair with no gap.*

Builds the verse-to-bridge skill: relocating a riff up an octave to create contrast with no new notes. Keep the chorus identical in both halves so the listener hears "same idea, new height." Practice the jump between string pairs cleanly with no gap in time.

### Drill C — Quiet-to-loud transition (dynamic and gain control)

Bar 1 clean & chorused (verse). Bar 2 add distortion, palm-mute, push (chorus). ~120 BPM.

TAB

```
e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-----|
D|-----|2-2-4-4-5-5-5-----|
A|--2-2-1-1-0-0-1-1-----|--2-2-4-4-5-5-5-----|
E|--0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-----|--0-0-2-2-3-3-3-----|
                                PM  PM  PM
```

*Drill C: a sparse clean line in bar 1, palm-muted power chords in bar 2.*

This is the heart of the whole loud-quiet-loud form: move from a sparse single-note line to palm-muted power chords without a volume lurch. Set your distortion's Level so the chorus section gets *heavier*, not louder — gain and density carry the lift, not raw volume. Keep the chorus engaged across the seam so both halves clearly belong to the same song.

## | Make It Yours

The transferable lesson here isn't a riff — it's a philosophy: **let an effect be the song**. Most players treat chorus as garnish; "Come as You Are" treats it as the lead instrument and writes the simplest possible part underneath. Try it. Take any boring open-string idea you already know, drop your tuning a whole step for that thicker, slacker low end, set a slow wide chorus, and play *less*. A two-note chromatic walk over a drone will sound enormous when the modulation does the work. Then steal the structural trick — restate your hook an octave up instead of adding notes, and reserve distortion for the moment you want the floor to drop. You'll learn more about dynamics from this one song than from a month of fast pentatonic runs.

### ♪ LISTEN FOR

- The slow, wide chorus *wobble* — pitch should audibly drift, not flutter fast.
- A clean low-string drone ringing under the chromatic 2 → 1 → 0 walk, both notes sustaining together.
- The octave-up restatement of the same riff in the bridge — same shape, higher register.
- The loud chorus arriving *heavier*, not just louder — distortion and palm-muted power chords doing the lift.
- The chorus pedal staying engaged through the distorted sections, tying quiet and loud into one voice.

# “Cherub Rock” • The Smashing Pumpkins

## AT A GLANCE

**Artist:** The Smashing Pumpkins (Billy Corgan, guitars; James Iha, guitars)

**Song:** “Cherub Rock”

**Album:** *Siamese Dream* (1993)

**The tone in one sentence:** A towering, candied wall of stacked-fuzz guitars — saturated and enormous, yet weirdly articulate, with note definition surviving inside a hurricane of overdrive.

**Difficulty:** Intermediate

**Key & tuning:** Centers on B (B Mixolydian / B major feel); standard tuning, E A D G B E.

## | The Rig & Signal Chain

The *Siamese Dream* guitar sound is one of the most-discussed walls in rock, and most of what made it happen is well documented by Corgan and producer Butch Vig.

- **Guitar:** Corgan's main instrument on the record was a 1970s **Fender Stratocaster** loaded with **Lace Sensor** pickups (the "Gold" voicing he favored). Single-coils into massive fuzz is counterintuitive — humbuckers are the "heavy" cliché — but the Strat's tighter, glassier output is exactly why the wall stayed defined instead of turning to mud.
- **Fuzz:** The signature element is the **Electro-Harmonix Big Muff** — specifically the early-'90s "civil war"-era reissue is the one most often cited. Corgan famously *stacked* multiple distortion/fuzz units and **layered many takes** of the same part to build thickness, rather than relying on one massive amp blast.
- **Amp:** Studio amps on the record are commonly cited as including a **Marshall** (for body and grind) blended with cleaner platforms; much of the size comes from layering and doubling rather

than a single "hero" amp setting.

- **Method (the real secret):** The wall is *production*, not a single pedal. Corgan multi-tracked rhythm parts — by his own account, sometimes many passes — and panned them wide. That density is why no bedroom rig reproduces it from one amp: you build it.

Treat any single "magic setting" as approximate. Corgan has described the obsessive layering openly; he has *not* handed out a secret knob chart, so don't trust one.

## | The Tone Recipe

You can get ~90% of the way there with accessible gear and a little discipline.

### Substitutions:

- **Guitar:** Any Strat-style single-coil guitar. A bright humbucker in the neck works if you roll tone back. The key is *not* a dark, high-output bridge humbucker.
- **Fuzz:** Any Big Muff-style pedal — EHX Big Muff Pi, Nano, or a clone. A Muff-voiced plugin (in a DAW) is genuinely excellent here because you'll be *layering*.
- **Amp:** A clean-ish amp with headroom (Fender-style) so the *fuzz* makes the distortion, not the amp. Pedal-platform settings.

### Starting points (knobs out of 10):

- Big Muff: **Sustain 7–8**, **Tone 5–6** (noon-ish; back off if it gets fizzy/ice-picky), **Volume to taste**.
- Amp: clean-ish, **Gain 3–4**, **Bass 6**, **Mids 5**, **Treble 5–6**. Let the Muff supply the dirt.
- Guitar: **bridge or bridge+middle** pickup, **Volume 10**, **Tone ~7** to tame fizz.
- Pick attack: medium-firm, pick toward the bridge for definition. Dig in for the riff; ease off slightly for the lead so it blooms.

**The layering trick (this is the lesson):** Record the rhythm part **twice**, identically, and pan one take hard left, one hard right. Now record it **again** and tuck those quieter in the center. Four passes of the *same* riff = the wall. One Muff into one amp will sound thin by comparison — that's expected, and it's the whole point.

## | What's Going On Musically

The song lives around **B**. The main riff and verses pull from **B Mixolydian** — a major scale with a *flattened 7th* (so in B: B C# D# E F# G# **A**). That A natural (instead of A#) is what gives the riff its slightly raw, bluesy, un-sweet rock flavor instead of a polished major-key sound. *Mixolydian* = "major scale, but the 7th is lowered one fret"; it's the default mode of classic riff rock.

The harmony leans on **power chords** (root + 5th, no 3rd — written like "B5"). Power chords are mode-neutral: because they leave out the third, they don't commit to major *or* minor, which lets that fuzz sit on top without clashing. That's a big reason walls of distortion use fifths — add a full major chord under heavy fuzz and the overtones turn to porridge.

Form is broadly **intro** → **verse** → **chorus** → **verse** → **chorus** → **bridge/solo** → **chorus** → **outro**, with that famous quiet, almost-marching intro that *explodes* into the full band. The whole track is a dynamics lesson: the loud parts only feel huge because the intro is restrained. **Dynamics are a tone, too** — the wall hits hardest right after a moment of space.

Rhythmically, the riff is built on **eighth notes** with **palm-muted** low strings punctuated by open, ringing stabs. The contrast between choked (muted) and open notes is what keeps a fuzz riff from becoming an undifferentiated drone.

## | Signature Moves

**Move 1 — The main fuzz riff (low-string engine).** Built around B5 with palm-muted chugs opening into ringing fifths. Keep it tight; the fuzz wants to smear, so *you* provide the rhythm.

TAB

Tempo ~100 BPM, half-time push feel. PM = palm mute, let open hits ring.

```
PM----- PM-----
e |-----|-----|
B |-----|-----|
G |-----|-----|
D |---9---9-----|-----9---9-----|
A |---9---9---7p5---|-----9---9-----|
E |---7---7---5-----|--0--0--7---7---5/7--|
    B5 chug, walk down    open low-E pulse, slide up
```

*Caption:* Choked muted fifths against ringing open hits — that muted/open contrast is the riff's entire personality. Don't let the Muff blur it.

**Move 2 — The wall-of-guitars chorus (wide fifths).** Bigger, open voicings rung out and *doubled* in the studio. Played once it's a chord; played four times panned wide it's the wall.

TAB

Tempo ~100 BPM. Let every chord ring full. Strum down, dig in.

```
e |-----|
B |-----|
G |---9-----4-----6-----|
D |---9---9---4---6---6-----|
A |---7---9---2---6---4-----|
E |-----7-----4-----|
      E5      B5      C#5      ... ring and double
```

*Caption:* Same shapes, multiple takes, hard-panned. The "thickness" you hear is *track count*, not gain.

**Move 3 — A soaring lead fragment.** Corgan's leads on this record favor long, sustained, vocal bends over fast runs — the fuzz does the singing.

TAB

Tempo ~100 BPM. Let notes bloom; ride the sustain. b=bend, r=release, ~vibrato.

```
e |-----|
B |-----12b14r12-----|
G |---11b13~-----11~-----|
D |-----|
A |-----|
E |-----|
      full bend, hold   bend & release, land + vibrato
```

*Caption:* Sustain and vibrato carry it. The note isn't fast — it's *held*, and the fuzz keeps it alive.

## | The Drills

**Drill A — The Fuzz-Riff Engine (palm-mute control).** Original riff in B that trains the muted/open contrast the song demands. Lock the PM chugs tight, then *release* the mute on the accented fifths so they ring out.

TAB

Tempo 96–104 BPM. Strict eighth notes. PM the bracketed notes; ACCENT (>) the open ringing ones.

```

      PM----- >          PM----- >
e |-----|-----|
B |-----|-----|
G |-----|-----|
D |---9-9-9-9-----|---9-9-9-9-----|
A |---9-9-9-9---7-----|---9-9-9-9---5-----|
E |---7-7-7-7---5\----|---7-7-7-7---3/7~--|
      chug x4      let ring      chug x4      slide + ring
  
```

*Builds:* Right-hand mute/unmute switching and rhythmic tightness inside heavy fuzz. *Tone:* Sustain 7, Tone noon, bridge pickup. If chugs blur together, you're muting too lightly — rest the palm heavier on the bridge.

**Drill B — Building the Wall (stacked-fuzz layering).** This is a *recording* drill. Record the four-bar progression below **four separate times**, as identically as you can. Pan takes 1 and 2 hard L/R; tuck takes 3 and 4 quieter in the center.

TAB

Tempo 100 BPM. Ring every chord fully. Record 4 passes, pan wide. Same shapes each time.

```

e |-----|
B |-----|
G |---9-----6-----4-----2-----|
D |---9-----6-----4-----2-----|
A |---7-----4-----2-----0-----|
E |-----|
      E5      C#5      B5      A5      (each chord = 1 bar, let ring)
  
```

*Builds:* Consistency between takes (intonation, timing, attack) — the actual skill behind the *Siamese Dream* wall. *Tone:* Identical settings on every pass. The magic appears only when the takes stack; a single pass is *supposed* to sound thin.

**Drill C — The Sustained Lead (bend, hold, bloom).** Trains long-tone control and pitch-accurate bends over fuzz, in the song's vocal-lead spirit.

Tempo 92 BPM. Each note HELD for a full beat+. Match bent pitch to the target fret first (check it). b=bend, r=relea

```

e |-----|
B |-----12b14~~~~12-----15b17r15--12~~~~|
G |---11b13-----14-----14~---|
D |-----|
A |-----|
E |-----|
    bloom    bend+vib  step  bend/release land+vib

```

*Buids:* Sustain management and vibrato consistency — keeping a note alive and in tune while fuzz pushes it. *Tone:* Sustain 8 for maximum sing, neck or bridge+middle, guitar Tone ~6 to round the fizz. Play *behind* the beat slightly; let each note bloom before moving.

## | Make It Yours

The portable lesson from “Cherub Rock” isn't a pedal — it's **density through layering** and **definition through restraint**. Want a huge rhythm sound for your own songs? Stop hunting for one giant patch and instead double-track a *modest* fuzz two to four times, panned wide. You'll get more size *and* more clarity than any single high-gain amp can give you, because the width comes from track count, not saturation. Then borrow the dynamics: build a quiet, exposed moment so your loud section detonates by contrast. And keep your low-string riffs articulate with palm-mute/open contrast — that's what lets a wall of fuzz still *groove* instead of drone. Single-coils into a Muff is also a tone worth stealing wholesale: it stays glassy and defined where humbuckers go murky.

## • LISTEN FOR

- The **muted-vs-open contrast** in the main riff — choked chugs answered by ringing fifths, never a continuous drone.
- **Width that comes from doubling**, not gain: hear how the chorus is many guitars panned wide, not one massive tone.
- **Note definition surviving inside the fuzz** — the single-coil glass keeping chords from turning to mud.
- **Dynamic detonation** — how restrained the intro is, and how much bigger the band hits because of it.
- **Vocal, sustained leads** — long held bends with steady vibrato, the fuzz doing the singing.

# “Black Hole Sun” • Soundgarden

## AT A GLANCE

**Artist:** Soundgarden

**Song:** “Black Hole Sun”

**Album:** *Superunknown* (1994)

**The tone:** A liquid, faintly seasick clean tone — detuned strings swimming through a rotary-speaker swirl, equal parts lullaby and warning.

**Difficulty:** Intermediate

**Key & tuning:** Verse centers on G major; chorus turns dark and chromatic. Tuning is commonly cited as drop-tuned a half- to whole-step below standard — for practice, **Eb standard (down a half step)** gets you there comfortably; many tab sources also use a low-D drop. We'll write in standard-position numbers so the shapes transfer.

## | The Rig & Signal Chain

Chris Cornell wrote and tracked much of the song, and Kim Thayil's guitar work defines its psychedelic shimmer, so the "rig" here is a blend of both players' tools.

- **Guitar:** Thayil's signature instrument is a **Guild S-100**, a mahogany solidbody with hot humbuckers — thick, slightly dark, with a midrange honk that cuts through the swirl. Cornell tracked guitars too; various **Gibson**-style humbucker guitars are part of the era's sound.
- **Amp:** Thayil is long associated with **Mesa/Boogie** amplification, with **Marshall** in the mix across the *Superunknown* sessions. The clean verse leans on amp headroom, not gain.
- **The signature effect:** The watery, rotating quality is the centerpiece. It's widely described as a **Leslie rotary speaker** (or a rotary/chorus simulation) — that doubling, pitch-smearing wobble is

the whole identity of the clean tone. A **chorus** is layered into the lushness as well. The exact rotary unit and speed settings are debated; treat any single "secret setting" claim as lore, not fact.

- **Mic:** Studio specifics aren't reliably documented; assume close-miked cabs in a pro room. Don't trust any cited exact mic chain.

Settings are approximate and contested. What's *not* debated: low tuning, humbuckers, headroom, and a rotary-style modulation doing the heavy lifting.

## | The Tone Recipe

You can land ~90% of this with modest gear and one good modulation pedal.

### Substitutions

- **Guitar:** Any humbucker guitar — a Les Paul, an SG, an Epiphone, or an HH Strat. Neck pickup for the verses.
- **Amp:** Any amp with a clean channel and some headroom; a modeler's "blackface" or "AC30 clean" works great.
- **Rotary:** A **rotary/Leslie sim** pedal is the magic ingredient. No rotary? A lush **chorus** plus a touch of **vibrato** approximates the wobble. Even a chorus alone gets you in the neighborhood.

### Starting points (knobs out of 10)

- Amp: Gain 2–3 (clean, just breathing). Bass 6, Mid 6, Treble 5, Reverb 3.
- Rotary pedal: slow/"chorale" speed, depth around 6, mix 60–70% wet so the dry note stays defined.
- Guitar: neck humbucker, tone rolled back to 7 for that rounded, underwater top end.
- Pick attack: medium-soft, closer to the neck, fingers relaxed. Let the modulation move the note for you — don't dig in.
- Tuning: down a half step (Eb) is the easy entry; drop to D-standard or lower if you want the record's full weight.

For the solo, switch to the bridge pickup, push amp gain to 6–7, and add a **wah** parked or swept, plus — if you have one — a **whammy/pitch** or vibrato bar for the dive-bombs.

## | What's Going On Musically

The genius of this song is the gap between its sweet surface and its uneasy bones.

**The verse** sits in **G major** but refuses to stay put. The progression slides between major chords whose roots move in unexpected steps, creating a sense of constant, gentle drift. A key device is **non-diatonic** motion — chords borrowed from outside the home key (for example, a major chord built on a flattened scale degree). Borrowing like this is called **modal interchange**, and it's why the verse feels dreamy rather than resolved: your ear keeps expecting "home" and keeps getting nudged sideways. Layered over that, the rotary effect smears the pitch a few cents up and down, so even a held chord shimmers.

**The chorus** flips the mood. The melody and chords turn **chromatic** — moving by half steps — and darker. Where the verse floated in major, the chorus leans on tension intervals and downward motion, the harmonic equivalent of a cloud crossing the sun. That contrast (bright verse / ominous chorus) is the entire emotional engine of the track.

**Form** is roughly verse — chorus — verse — chorus — solo — chorus(es) out, with the title hook hammered repeatedly at the end.

**Theory takeaway for players:** you don't need exotic scales here. You need *good major chord voicings*, an ear for half-step movement, and the discipline to let an effect — not your fingers — supply the motion. The **major pentatonic** (the five-note major scale: 1-2-3-5-6) covers most of the melodic content; the solo reaches into **blues/minor pentatonic** with the flatted "blue" notes for grit.

## | Signature Moves

These are short, illustrative fragments for study — characteristic gestures, not the full chart.

### 1) The verse drift — let chords ring and modulate

Slow, dreamy (~half-time feel); let every chord ring, rotary on

```
e|--3-----3-----2-----3-----|
B|--3-----3-----3-----3-----|
G|--4-----4-----2-----4-----|
D|--5-----5-----0-----5-----|
A|--5-----5-----x-----5-----|
E|--3-----3-----2-----3-----|
    let ring  let ring  let ring  let ring
```

*Big, slow, ringing voicings sliding between bright major shapes — the rotary does the shimmering for you.*

## 2) The chorus turn — half-step darkness

TAB

Heavier, push the strum; notice the chromatic slip downward

```
e|-----|
B|-----|
G|--7--6--5-----5--4--3-----|
D|--7--6--5-----5--4--3-----|
A|--5--4--3-----3--2--1-----|
E|-----|
    walk down, half steps   darker, resolve heavy
```

*Power-chord shapes creeping down by half steps — the menace under the pretty melody.*

## 3) Psychedelic bend phrasing — vocal, wide vibrato

TAB

Bridge pickup, gain up; bends are slow and singing

```
e|-----7b9~~~~~|
B|-----8b10r8-----8-----5~~~~~|
G|--7b9-----7-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
    reach the pitch, then let the vibrato bloom
```

*Slow full-step bends held into wide vibrato — the solo "sings" rather than shreds.*

## | The Drills

These are my own exercises in the song's style — not transcriptions. Tune down a half step for the right weight.

### Drill A — Modulated clean voicings (ear + ringing chords)

TAB

Slow, rotary/chorus ON, neck pickup, tone at 7; let everything ring

```
e|--3-----2-----0-----3-----5-----3-----|
B|--3-----3-----1-----3-----5-----3-----|
G|--4-----2-----0-----4-----6-----4-----|
D|--5-----0-----2-----5-----7-----5-----|
A|--5-----x-----3-----5-----7-----5-----|
E|--3-----2-----x-----3-----5-----3-----|
    ring   ring   ring   ring   ring   ring
```

*Builds: control of big six-string major voicings and the patience to let modulation move the chord. Strum once, hands off, and listen to the rotary smear the pitch. If the wobble overwhelms the note, drop the pedal mix to 55%.*

### Drill B — Half-step chorus crawl (chromatic motion)

TAB

Mid-tempo, heavier pick, slight breakup; even quarter notes

```
e|-----|
B|-----|
G|--9--8--7--6---6--7--8--9---5--5--5--5-----|
D|--9--8--7--6---6--7--8--9---5--5--5--5-----|
A|--7--6--5--4---4--5--6--7---3--3--3--3-----|
E|-----|
    down, half steps back up      land + dig in
```

*Builds: comfort moving power chords chromatically and hearing how half-step descent creates dread. Keep the rhythm dead even — the menace comes from steadiness, not speed. Add a hair of amp gain so the moving shapes growl.*

### Drill C — Singing bends with vibrato (solo phrasing)

TAB

Bridge pickup, gain ~7, wah parked bright; phrase slowly, breathe

```
e|-----|
B|--8b10r8--8b10~~~-----8-----5-----|
G|-----7b9~~~7b9r7-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
    hit pitch hold + shake   release cleanly, leave space
```

*Builds: bend accuracy (always check you reach the true target pitch), and wide, slow vibrato — the difference between a melody and noise. Play it like a vocal line: phrase, rest, phrase. If you have a vibrato bar, add a gentle dip on the last note for that whammy-laced finish.*

## | Make It Yours

The transferable lesson here isn't a scale — it's a philosophy: **let an effect do the moving, and let space do the talking.** Take any plain major progression you already know, slow it to half speed, run it through a chorus or rotary, strum once, and *stop playing*. Listen. You'll discover that restraint plus modulation sounds enormous. Steal the half-step crawl for your own choruses when you want sweet-

ness to curdle into unease. And in solos, copy Cornell-and-Thayil's patience: a single bend held into wide vibrato, with silence around it, beats a flurry of notes every time. Pretty on top, dark underneath — that tension is yours to use anywhere.

#### ♪ LISTEN FOR

- The **rotary/chorus wobble** — the pitch should visibly "breathe" on held chords without drowning the note.
- The **mood flip** from bright major verse to **chromatic, darker** chorus — make your ear (and your pick attack) sell both.
- **Ringing, unhurried voicings** in the verse — no rushing, full sustain, hands off after the strum.
- **Singing bends** that actually reach pitch, then bloom into **slow, wide vibrato**.
- Overall **space**: the part that *isn't* played is as important as the part that is.

# “Killing in the Name” • Rage Against the Machine

---

## AT A GLANCE

**Artist:** Rage Against the Machine

**Song:** “Killing in the Name”

**Album:** *Rage Against the Machine* (1992)

**The tone in one sentence:** A scooped, brutally tight drop-D crunch with a screaming wah and pitch-shifted noise textures, where the *texture is the riff*.

**Difficulty:** Intermediate

**Key & tuning:** D (drop-D); low string tuned down a whole step, E→D.

## | The Rig & Signal Chain

Tom Morello's tone here is famously minimalist on paper and wildly creative in practice. The core:

- **Guitar:** His "Arm the Homeless" custom (a homemade body with a humbucker in the bridge and a hot, single-coil-ish neck) plus, on much of the first record, a stock **Fender Telecaster**-style guitar for cleaner moments. The aggressive rhythm is the bridge humbucker.
- **Amp:** A **Marshall JCM800 2205** (50-watt) head into a 4x12 — the dry, mid-forward British crunch that anchors the whole record. He runs it loud and fairly clean-into-crunch, letting the pickup and pick do the dynamics.
- **Pedals:** A **Dunlop Cry Baby wah** (often parked or used rhythmically) and a **DigiTech Whammy** (the original WH-1) for octave dives and the squealing pitch textures. A **noise gate** tightens the palm mutes. That's essentially it — the legend is that the chaos comes from technique, not a giant board.

Settings are best described as *approximately*: amp gain moderate-to-high (commonly cited around 6–7), bass and treble up, mids present (this is a Marshall, not a metal scoop pedal). Treat all numbers as starting points, not gospel — exact studio settings aren't publicly confirmed, and some of the gear lore around his rig is debated.

## | The Tone Recipe

To get ~90% there with accessible gear:

- **Guitar/pickup:** Any solidbody with a hot **bridge humbucker**. Select the bridge pickup and leave it there.
- **Amp/sim:** A Marshall-voiced channel — a real JCM800, a DSL, or a "Plexi/800" amp sim. Avoid the ultra-scooped high-gain metal presets; you want grind and midrange, not mush.
- **Drive:** Gain at **6/10**. Enough to sustain a power chord and make palm mutes chug, but low enough that single-note lines stay articulate. If your amp is cleaner, add a light overdrive (Tube Screamer-style) in front at low gain.
- **EQ (out of 10):** Bass **7**, Mids **6**, Treble **7**, Presence **6**. Keep the mids — they cut.
- **Wah:** Any Cry Baby. Practice *parking* it (holding it in one spot) for that nasal mid-honk, not just sweeping.
- **Whammy/octave:** A DigiTech Whammy if you have one; otherwise any pitch-shift/octave pedal set to **+1 or +2 octaves** for the squeals.
- **Pick attack:** Hard, from the wrist, with tight palm muting at the bridge. The "tone" is 50% in your right hand here.

## | What's Going On Musically

Drop-D tuning lowers the 6th string from E to **D**, so the bottom two strings are now D and A — a perfect fifth. That means you can play a full **power chord** (root + 5th + octave) on the bottom three strings with *one finger* barred across strings 6, 5, and 4: in drop-D the root, 5th, and octave all line up under a single fret. That one-finger power chord is the engine of the whole song. It lets Morello move chunky chords around fast and keep the low D ringing as a pedal tone.

The riffing sits in **D** and leans on the **D minor pentatonic** flavor (D–F–G–A–C) plus the open low D as a drone. A *pedal tone* is a repeated note (here, low D) that stays constant while other notes move against it — it's what gives the verse riff its hypnotic, grinding tension.

Harmonically the song is simple on purpose: it's built from a handful of power chords and a syncopated rhythmic figure, not from fancy chord changes. The sophistication is **rhythmic and textural**, not harmonic. The form is loose verse/build/breakdown rather than strict verse-chorus, climaxing in the famous repeated outro. The lesson for you: *groove and placement* carry this music. Where you put the note matters more than which note it is.

## | Signature Moves

**Move 1 — The main drop-D riff.** Tight palm-muted low D drone broken up by stabs. The whole thing lives on the bottom string with syncopated accents.

**TAB**

Feel: ~89 BPM, heavy 16th-note swagger, palm muted throughout

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
D|-0-0-0-3-0-0-5-0-0-0-3-0-0~|
  PM .....
```

*Caption:* One finger frets the higher stabs (3, 5) on the low string; everything else is the muted open D. The accents land off the beat — that syncopation is the hook.

**Move 2 — The wah/whammy texture.** Not a melody — a *gesture*. A pinch/squeal pushed up an octave with the Whammy while the wah honks, treated as percussion.

**TAB**

Feel: free, rhythmic stabs over the riff; Whammy set +1 oct, wah parked mid

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|--7~--x-x--7~--x-x-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
D|-----|
  ^ pitch-shifted up, scratchy
```

*Caption:* Hit the note, rock the Whammy up, add dead-string scratches (x) for grit. You're playing *noise as rhythm*. Aim for attitude, not accuracy.

**Move 3 — The bend riff.** A muscular bend-and-release figure that answers the main riff with a vocal, taunting quality.

TAB

Feel: ~89 BPM, aggressive, let the bend "talk"

```
e|-----|
B|-----|
G|--7b9r7--5----7b9r7--5-----|
D|-----7-----|
A|-----|
D|-----|
```

*Caption:* Bend the G-string up a whole step (7→9 pitch), release, then resolve down. The vibrato and the slightly-behind-the-beat placement are what make it sneer.

## | The Drills

Original exercises in the style of the song — not transcriptions.

**Drill A — Drop-D syncopation engine.** Builds palm-mute control and off-beat accent placement, the heart of the groove.

TAB

Feel: ~88 BPM, all palm muted, accent the > notes hard

```
e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
D|-0-0->5-0-0-0->3-0->5-0-0->3-0-0-0~--|
PM .....
    >    >    >    >
```

*Tone tip:* Gain at 6, tight gate, pick hard at the bridge. Practice with a metronome on beats 2 and 4 so the syncopated accents float against a steady pulse. Start at 70 BPM and only speed up when every muted note is even.

**Drill B — The bend-talk workout.** Trains controlled whole-step bends, clean releases, and adding vibrato — the "vocal" move.

TAB

Feel: ~85 BPM, deliberate; match each bend to the target pitch

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|--7b9r7~--7b9r7--5b7r5--5~--7b9~-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
D|--0-----0-----0-----0-----0-----|
    
```

*Tone tip:* Play the un-bent target note first (fret 9) to hear where the bend should land, then make the bend match it exactly. Keep the open low D ringing underneath for that drone-plus-melody texture. Add the wah parked around the middle of its sweep to fatten the bends.

**Drill C — Texture/noise as rhythm.** Builds your ability to use scratches, dead notes, and pitch-shift as *percussion*, freeing you from the idea that every sound must be a clean note.

TAB

Feel: ~90 BPM, groove-based; x = muted scratch, Whammy up on the held notes

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|--x-x-7~x-x--x-x-7~x-x--x-x-9b~-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
D|--0-----0-----0-----0-----0-----|
    
```

*Tone tip:* Mute the strings lightly with the fretting hand and rake the pick for the x scratches; punch in the real notes with a Whammy shove (or octave pedal). Lock it to the kick-drum feel in your head. The goal is *swagger* — make the noise groove.

## | Make It Yours

The deepest lesson of this track isn't a riff — it's a philosophy: **the right hand and the rhythm are the instrument.** Take any one-finger drop-D power chord you already know and spend a week doing nothing but moving it around over a tight palm mute, accenting off-beats. You'll find that a single power chord, placed with conviction and syncopation, hits harder than a flashy run. Then start treating "wrong" sounds — scratches, pick squeals, parked-wah honks, pitch dives — as legitimate notes in your vocabulary. That mindset, more than any pedal, is what makes Morello sound like Morello. Steal the *approach*, not just the part, and it'll show up in your own songs.

▶ LISTEN FOR

## • LISTEN FOR

- The **low D drone** ringing continuously under the stabs — the groove must never lose its pulse.
- **Off-beat accents** that sit slightly behind the click; the swagger lives in the placement, not the speed.
- Palm mutes so tight they sound like a kick drum — even, controlled, no ringing mush.
- **Bends that "talk"** — landing dead in tune, with vibrato and attitude.
- Noise used as rhythm: scratches and Whammy squeals that *groove* instead of just squeal.

# “Under the Bridge” • Red Hot Chili Peppers

## AT A GLANCE

**Artist:** Red Hot Chili Peppers

**Song:** “Under the Bridge”

**Album:** *Blood Sugar Sex Magik* (1991)

**The tone in one sentence:** A warm, glassy, almost vocal clean Strat — soft pick attack and high chord voicings that ring like a held breath, then snap into dry funk for the verse.

**Difficulty:** Intermediate

**Key & tuning:** Intro centers on E major; verse/chorus settle into D major. Standard tuning (E A D G B E).

## | The Rig & Signal Chain

John Frusciante built this one out of warmth, not volume. The bones of the rig:

- **Guitar:** A **Fender Stratocaster** on the **neck pickup** — that's the heart of the sound. The neck single-coil gives you the round, woody, slightly hollow voice that lets each chord-melody note bloom instead of bite.
- **Amp:** A **Marshall** (Frusciante's mainstay of this era is commonly cited as a Marshall Major / Silver Jubilee-type head into a 4x12). Set clean-to-edge-of-breakup, not crunchy. The grit you hear is mostly the amp barely working, plus pick dynamics.
- **Effects:** Largely a naked signal for the intro — this is a *fingers-and-pickup* tone, not a pedal tone. A touch of room/reverb in the mix. Frusciante's broader rig of the period included a **Boss DS-2** and an **Electro-Harmonix Big Muff**, but the iconic intro and verse are essentially clean.
- **Mic / recording:** Tracked at "The Mansion" with producer Rick Rubin; an **SM57**-class dynamic on a cranked-but-clean cab is the usual assumption. Treat any specific mic placement as approximate

— the recording details beyond the basics are not precisely documented.

A note on lore: you'll see exact amp settings quoted all over the internet. Treat those as *commonly cited approximations*, not gospel. The reliable facts are the Strat neck pickup and a clean-ish Marshall.

## | The Tone Recipe

You can get ~90% there with very accessible gear. The trick is committing to a **clean** setting and a **soft, fleshy attack**.

### Substitutions:

- **Guitar:** Any Strat-style or HSS guitar with a usable neck single-coil. No Strat? A humbucker on the neck rolled back to ~7 on tone gets surprisingly close.
- **Amp:** Any clean-headroom amp — a Fender-style clean works beautifully; a Marshall-voiced clean adds a little more midrange chime. Modeler users: pick a clean "American" or "British clean" channel.
- **Reverb:** A small room or spring reverb at 15–20%. Nothing huge.

### Starting points (knobs out of 10):

- Amp: **Gain 2–3, Bass 5, Mids 6, Treble 6, Reverb 2–3.** Volume up enough that the amp has a little life.
- Guitar: **Neck pickup, Volume 8–9, Tone 7–8** (back the tone off slightly to round the top end).
- **Pick attack:** Light. Use the soft pad-side of the pick, strum from the wrist, and let the chords *speak* rather than punch. For the funk verse, dig in a hair more and keep it dry.
- **Where to set gain:** Just below breakup, so a hard strum *almost* dirties up. That dynamic edge is the whole vibe.

## | What's Going On Musically

The genius of this song is **chord-melody**: you hold a chord shape and let the **top note** (the highest string in the voicing) move to create a melody *inside* the harmony. Your thumb-side fingers anchor a chord; your pinky and ring finger sing on top.

The **intro** lives in **E major**. Frusciante voices chords high on the neck — around the 7th–12th frets — so the strings ring bright and bell-like. The moving top notes outline an **E major scale** frag-

ment (E F# G# A B), descending and resolving, so even though you're playing chords, your ear hears a *tune*.

The verse and chorus drop to **D major**, built on warm open-ish and barre voicings: **D**, **A**, **E** (yes, an E in a D-centered passage — borrowed brightness), and **G**, moving with a relaxed, syncopated funk strum. "Funk" here doesn't mean slap; it means **rhythmic clean strumming with dead notes** (x) — muted scratches between chords that create groove without adding pitch.

Two terms to bank:

- **Top note** — the highest-pitched string actually ringing in a chord; the note your ear follows as melody.
- **Partial chord** — playing only some strings of a shape (often the top three or four), so the voicing is light and the melody note stays exposed.

The form is loose verse–pre-chorus–chorus, but for our purposes it's two textures: **shimmering chord-melody** and **dry funk strum**. Master those two and the song is yours.

## | Signature Moves

### 1. The intro chord-melody (E major)

Slow, free, ~ quarter = 84. Let everything ring. Soft attack, neck pickup.

TAB

```
e|--7-----5-----4-----0--|
B|--9-----5-----5-----0--|
G|--9-----6-----4-----1--|
D|--9-----7-----6-----2--|
A|--7-----7-----6-----2--|
E|-----5-----4-----0--|
```

Tab 1 — Intro chord-melody in E major. High voicings with a descending top note; the melody hides in the highest string. Hold each shape and let it bloom.

## 2. The clean funk verse strum (D major feel)

Mid-tempo, ~ quarter = 84, 16th-note groove. Dry and rhythmic — ghost the **x** notes.

TAB

```
e|--2--2-x-2----0--0-x-0--|
B|--3--3-x-3----2--2-x-2--|
G|--2--2-x-2----2--2-x-2--|
D|--0--0-x-0----2--2-x-2--|
A|-----0--0-x-0--|
E|-----|
      D          A
```

Tab 2 — Clean funk verse strum (D major feel). Strum from the wrist, keep it light, and let the muted scratches drive the groove between chord hits.

## 3. The high partial voicings (moving shapes)

Relaxed, ~ quarter = 84. Three-string partials; pinky carries the top.

TAB

```
e|--7-----9-----10----12--|
B|--7-----9-----10----12--|
G|--8-----9-----11----13--|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
```

Tab 3 — High partial voicings (moving shapes). Only the top three strings ring. The shape slides up the neck while the voicing stays compact and vocal.

## | The Drills

These are **original exercises** in the song's style — not transcriptions — built to drill the exact skills the track demands.

## Drill A — Moving Top Notes Over a Held Shape

Trains your pinky and ring finger to sing a melody while the lower fingers stay planted. This is the core intro skill.

Slow and even, ~ quarter = 80. Hold the lower two notes the whole bar; move only the top string.

TAB

```
e|--7-----9-----10-----9-----7--|
B|--9-----9-----9-----9-----9--|
G|--9-----9-----9-----9-----9--|
D|--9-----|
A|--7-----|
E|-----|
```

*Drill A — Moving top notes over a held shape. Builds finger independence and the "melody-inside-a-chord" feel. Tone: neck pickup, clean, soft attack, let each note ring into the next.*

## Drill B — Clean Funk Sixteenths with Dead Notes

Builds the dry, percussive right hand that the verse lives on. Keep your strumming hand moving in steady 16ths; let the **x** notes be muted scratches.

Strict tempo, ~ quarter = 90. Right hand never stops — down-up-down-up. Mute with the fretting hand for **x**.

TAB

```
e|--2-x-2-2-x-2---0-x-0-0-x-0--|
B|--3-x-3-3-x-3---2-x-2-2-x-2--|
G|--2-x-2-2-x-2---2-x-2-2-x-2--|
D|--0-x-0-0-x-0---2-x-2-2-x-2--|
A|-----0-x-0-0-x-0--|
E|-----|
      D           A
```

*Drill B — Clean funk sixteenths with dead notes. Builds groove, dynamic control, and clean-funk feel. Tone: dry (little reverb), neck or middle pickup, dig in slightly more than the intro but stay clean.*

## Drill C — Partial Chords Climbing the Neck

Trains you to find compact three-string voicings up the fretboard and connect them smoothly — the "voicings up the neck" skill.

Easy and ringing, ~ quarter = 84. Top three strings only. Let each shape sustain before sliding.

TAB

```
e|--5-----7-----9/12---10-----7-----|
B|--5-----7-----9/12---10-----7-----|
G|--6-----8-----10/13--11-----8-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
```

*Drill C — Partial chords climbing the neck. Builds neck familiarity and smooth voice-leading. The / is a slide — keep the chord shape intact as you move. Tone: neck pickup, clean, tone knob ~7 for warmth.*

## | Make It Yours

The portable lesson here isn't the song — it's the **method**. Take any chord you already know and ask: *what's my top note, and where can it go?* Hold the shape, move just the high string up or down the scale, and you've written a chord-melody. Try it on a campfire G or C and you'll hear your rhythm playing turn melodic instantly. The other half is **right-hand restraint**: the same chords sound completely different played soft-and-ringing versus dry-and-percussive. Learn to flip between those two textures on command — shimmer for the intro feel, scratch-funk for the groove — and you've got two whole emotional registers from one pickup and one clean amp. Frusciante's signature was never about gear horsepower; it was about *touch*. Steal the touch.

▶ LISTEN FOR

## • LISTEN FOR

- The **neck-pickup warmth** — round and woody, never brittle, even up at the 9th–12th frets.
- **Moving top notes** singing a melody while the chord underneath stays held.
- The **soft, vocal attack** in the intro — chords that bloom rather than punch.
- The **dry, muted scratch** of the funk verse — groove built from dead notes, not extra gain.
- The **dynamic edge**: a clean amp set just below breakup, so hard strums almost growl.

PART I

# Atmosphere & Delay



# “Where the Streets Have No Name” • U2

## AT A GLANCE

**Artist:** U2 (The Edge, guitar)

**Song:** “Where the Streets Have No Name”

**Album:** *The Joshua Tree* (1987)

**The tone in one sentence:** A bright, glassy six-string chime that a dotted-eighth delay multiplies into a shimmering, self-harmonizing cascade — the delay isn't an effect here, it's the second guitarist.

**Difficulty:** Intermediate

**Key & tuning:** Built around D major; standard tuning (E A D G B E). The opening organ pad and guitar build sit around D, sliding up through a I–IV–V world.

## | The Rig & Signal Chain

The Edge's sound on this track is one of the most studied in rock, and most of the chain is well documented.

- **Guitar:** A **Fender Stratocaster** for the bright, spanky single-coil attack is commonly cited for the main figure, though The Edge owned and used several guitars on the record. The clarity and glassy top end you hear point to single-coils, bridge or middle position.
- **Amp:** A **Vox AC30** — the defining amp of his career. The AC30's chimey top-end and natural compression are baked into this tone. Settings are usually described as relatively clean with the amp's character doing the work; treat any specific dial positions as approximate.
- **Delay:** This is the heart of everything. The Edge famously used a **Korg SDD-3000** rack delay (and earlier a **TC Electronic 2290** in some live rigs) set to a *dotted-eighth-note* repeat — a single,

distinct echo timed to fall between his picked notes. Commonly cited as roughly two repeats with the feedback moderate, not a wash. The delay is the compositional engine, not seasoning.

- **Other:** A touch of compression and the AC30's own response handle dynamics. Reverb is modest; the delay creates most of the space.

A note on lore: the *specific* delay times and settings get quoted as gospel all over the internet. The underlying *technique* (dotted-eighth, low-to-moderate feedback, clean chiming source) is solid and audible. Treat exact millisecond claims and knob positions as approximate and debated rather than fact.

## | The Tone Recipe

You can get ~90% of the way there with a clean amp and any decent digital delay that shows you milliseconds or has a tap-tempo with a dotted-eighth subdivision.

### Substitutions:

- **Amp:** Any clean, bright amp — a Vox-style modeler, a blackface-style Fender clean, or a clean amp-sim patch. Aim for chime, not crunch.
- **Guitar:** Any single-coil or single-coil-sized pickup. Bridge or middle position. A humbucker will work but roll the tone back and pick lighter — it'll be darker than the record.
- **Delay:** A digital delay with a dotted-eighth setting (most modern delays — Boss DD-series, Strymon, MXR Carbon Copy if you set the time by ear, or any DAW delay). You want clean, bright repeats, not dark analog mush.

### Starting points (knobs out of 10):

- Amp: Gain **2–3** (clean with just a hair of grit), Treble **7**, Mids **5**, Bass **4**, Master to taste.
- Guitar volume **10**, tone **8–9** (keep it bright).
- Delay: Time set to **dotted-eighth** of the song tempo (math below). Feedback **3–4** (about 2–3 audible repeats). Mix **35–45%** — loud enough to feel like a second guitar, not so loud it smears.
- Pick attack: **Light to medium**, near the bridge for sparkle. Let the notes ring; don't dig in. Consistency of attack matters more than power.

## | What's Going On Musically

The song lives in **D major**. The big build at the top is essentially a slow I–IV–V swell: think **D — G — A** territory, often voiced as suspended chords that resolve, which is where that yearning, "lifting" quality comes from.

A **suspended chord** replaces the 3rd of a chord with either the 4th (sus4) or the 2nd (sus2). A D chord normally is D–F#–A. A **Dsus4** is D–G–A (the F# becomes G); a **Dsus2** is D–E–A (the F# becomes E). Because the 3rd is what tells your ear "major or minor," removing it makes the chord feel open and unresolved — it *wants* to move. The Edge leans on this constantly: ringing open strings that aren't quite the home chord, creating tension that the band's build releases.

The main guitar figure is a fast, even stream of arpeggiated notes — single notes from the chord played one at a time — over the held chords. On its own it's a simple repeating pattern. The magic is what the **dotted-eighth delay** does to it: the echo lands a calculated distance behind each note, so the repeats interlock with the notes you're playing to *create a melody neither hand actually plays*. This is the central trick of the lesson.

The form is a slow-burn build: organ pad, then the guitar figure enters and repeats while the band layers in, then drums and bass lift the whole thing into the verse. There's no clever modulation — the power is in **dynamics and repetition**, the figure churning while everything around it grows.

## | Signature Moves

### Move 1 — The dotted-eighth delay trick (the math)

This is the concept the whole song is built on. Here's the arithmetic, then the diagram.

To find a quarter-note in milliseconds:  $60,000 \div \text{BPM}$ . A dotted-eighth is  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a quarter-note, so:

$$\text{Dotted-eighth (ms)} = (60,000 \div \text{BPM}) \times 0.75$$

At ~100 BPM:  $60,000 \div 100 = 600$  ms per quarter;  $\times 0.75 = 450$  ms for the dotted-eighth.

Now the part that matters: when you play **steady eighth notes** and the delay repeats a **dotted-eighth** later, each echo lands one sixteenth-note *after* the next note you play. Your notes plus the echoes together make a galloping triplet-feel pattern. Here's what you PLAY vs. what is HEARD over one bar (a dot is a sixteenth-rest slot):

TAB

Sixteenth grid: 1 e + a 2 e + a 3 e + a 4 e + a

You PLAY (steady 8ths): P . P . P . P . P . P . P . P . P .

The DELAY echoes (d.8th): . . E . . E . . E . . E . . E .

What you HEAR (combined): P . E P . E P . E P . E P . E .

The takeaway: you play simple, even eighths, and the echo *fills the gaps* to produce that rolling, three-against-the-bar shimmer.

### Move 2 – The cascading arpeggio

Feel: bright and even, ~100 BPM. Pick steady eighths; let the delay do the rest.

TAB

```

e|-----|
B|-3-----3-----3-----3-----|
G|----2-----2-----2-----2-----|
D|-----0-----0-----0-----0-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|

```

Over a D-based chord; even 8ths, delay at dotted-8th.

A short three-note shape (B-string 3 / G-string 2 / open D) rolled in a loop. Alone it's plain; with the echo it cascades.

### Move 3 – The chord build (sus colors)

Feel: slow, swelling, let each ring.

TAB

```

e|--3----3----0----0-----|
B|--3----3----3----3-----|
G|--2----0----2----0-----|
D|--0----0----2----2-----|
A|-----0----0-----|
E|-----|

```

Dsus4 Dsus2

Open, ringing voicings under the figure.

The 3rd keeps shifting (sus4 → sus2), so nothing fully resolves — that's the lift.

# | The Drills

These are original exercises in the style of the song. Set your delay as described in each caption.

## Drill A — Dotted-eighth lock-in

Set delay time to dotted-eighth of your metronome (use the math above), feedback ~3, mix ~40%. Play these **even eighth notes** and listen for the echo filling the gaps. Your job is *perfectly even timing* — the trick only works if your eighths are metronomically steady.

TAB

```
e|-----|
B|-3---3---3---3---3---3---3---3---3-----|
G|---2---2---2---2---2---2---2---2---2-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +
Steady 8ths, no rushing.
```

Builds: rock-solid eighth-note timing and the ear-training to hear yourself plus the delay as one part.  
Tone: bright single-coil, clean amp.

## Drill B — Sus2/sus4 arpeggio shapes

No delay first (play it clean and clear), then switch the delay on. This trains the chord shapes that give the song its open, unresolved color. Notice how the note on the G string moves 0→2 (sus2→sus4) and back.

TAB

```
e|-----|
B|-3-----3-----3-----3-----|
G|---0---0---0---0---2---2---2---2-----|
D|-----0-----0-----0-----0-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
Dsus2 cell ----- | Dsus4 cell -----
```

Builds: clean fretting-hand independence and an ear for suspended tension and release. Tone: keep the tone knob up; let strings ring into each other.

## Drill C — Play against the repeats

Delay on, dotted-eighth, feedback up slightly (~4-5) so the echoes are clearly present. Here you deliberately leave a hole on beat 3 and let the *delay* answer you. Play only the notes written; the gaps are intentional — the echo "plays" them.

TAB

```
e|-----|
B|-3---3-----3---3-----3---3-----3---3-----|
G|-2---2-----2---2-----2---2-----2---2-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
```

1 + 2 + (3) + 4 + | 1 + 2 + (3) + 4 +

You rest where the parentheses are – the delay fills it.

Builds: the most important U2 skill — *composing with the echo* by leaving space for it instead of playing over it. Tone: as the record; clean, bright, ~40% mix.

## | Make It Yours

The lesson here is bigger than one song: a **delay set to a musical subdivision is a songwriting tool, not a garnish**. Once you can hear what a dotted-eighth does to a steady stream of notes, try it on your own riffs — play *fewer* notes than you think you need and let the repeats build the density. Move the trick around: set the delay to a quarter or a dotted-quarter for a different gallop, leave deliberate gaps for the echo to answer, or arpeggiate a chord progression of your own with one or two ringing open strings to get that suspended lift. The discipline that makes it sing is even timing and restraint — play less, let the effect speak, and treat the delay as your duet partner.

▶ LISTEN FOR

## • LISTEN FOR

- The echo landing *between* your picked notes, turning steady eighths into a rolling three-feel pattern.
- Perfectly even pick attack — every note the same volume, no rushing, so the delay stays locked.
- Suspended chords that never quite resolve, creating the song's "lifting" tension.
- Restraint: you playing *less* than the texture suggests, with the delay filling the gaps.
- The slow dynamic build — the figure churning unchanged while the band grows around it.

# “With or Without You” • U2

## AT A GLANCE

**Artist:** U2

**Song:** “With or Without You”

**Album:** *The Joshua Tree* (1987)

**The tone in one sentence:** A weightless, vocal, infinitely sustaining single-note lead that swells out of silence on a bed of digital delay, sitting on top of a hypnotic four-chord pulse.

**Difficulty:** Beginner to Intermediate

**Key & tuning:** D major, standard tuning (E A D G B E)

This is a lesson about restraint. The Edge plays almost nothing here — a handful of notes across the whole song — and yet the guitar is the emotional spine of the track. The hard part isn't the notes. It's the *patience*, the timing of each swell, and the discipline to leave space. If you can play a clean major scale and you own a volume knob, you already have the raw material. What you'll build is taste.

## | The Rig & Signal Chain

The lead voice on this track is famously **The Infinite Guitar**, a one-off instrument built by Canadian inventor Michael Brook. It uses controlled feedback circuitry to make a single string sustain indefinitely — the note never dies, it just hangs in the air. The Edge has spoken about it in interviews, and it's the secret behind the endless, bowed-cello quality of the swells. There were reportedly only a couple of these instruments in existence, so do not expect to buy one.

Into that, the signature ingredients commonly cited are:

- A **Korg SDD-3000** rack delay — The Edge's long-standing primary delay around this era — set to a relatively long, single repeat with the timing tied to the song's tempo. The exact figure is

debated, but a dotted-eighth or long quarter-note feel is the right neighborhood.

- A clean, headroom-rich amplifier — **Vox AC30** territory is the classic Edge platform, though the swell tone here is so processed that the amp is more canvas than color.
- Light, even compression to smooth the attack and help notes bloom.
- Studio reverb on top, adding to the sense of an enormous, empty room.

A note on honesty: settings from this session are not publicly documented down to the dial, and you should treat any "exact" numbers you see online as approximate. The *behavior* — long sustain, one clean repeat, swelled attack — matters far more than chasing a serial number.

## | The Tone Recipe

You can get roughly 90% of the way there with a pedalboard and a volume knob. Here's the substitution map:

- **Infinite sustain** → an **EBow** (handheld string driver) held over one string, OR a **sustainer/feedback pedal**, OR — the budget route — simply your volume-knob swell plus a long reverb. The EBow is the single most authentic cheap upgrade you can make for this tone.
- **SDD-3000 delay** → any good digital delay (a **Boss DD-8**, a **TC Electronic Flashback**, or a **Strymon** if you have one). Set one clear, audible repeat with the time tied to tempo.
- **AC30** → any clean amp or clean modeler patch with plenty of headroom so swells don't distort.

Concrete starting points (knobs out of 10):

- **Amp:** Gain 2, Bass 5, Mid 6, Treble 6, Reverb 4. Stay clean — if it breaks up on a hard pick, back off.
- **Delay:** Mix 5, Feedback 2 to 3 (you want maybe one or two repeats, not a wash), Time set to a dotted-eighth or long quarter at the song's pulse (the track sits around 110 BPM).
- **Pickup:** Neck pickup, tone rolled back to 6 or 7 for a rounder, hornlike voice.
- **Pick attack:** Soft, or none at all. With volume swells you'll pluck with the volume off, then ride it up — so the pick noise vanishes entirely.
- **Compression (optional):** light, just enough to even out the bloom.

## | What's Going On Musically

The whole song is built on a **four-chord loop in D major: D – A – Bm – G**. That's the I, V, vi, and IV of the key — one of the most-used progressions in pop history. (Roman numerals just label which scale degree each chord is built on: D is the 1st degree, so "I"; A is the 5th, "V"; and so on. Lowercase "vi" means it's a minor chord.)

What's striking is that the chord pattern *never changes* for the entire song. There's no bridge, no key change, no surprise. The drama is created entirely by **dynamics and arrangement** — instruments entering and dropping out, and the guitar swells getting more insistent — rather than by harmony. That's a huge lesson on its own: you don't need a clever progression to write something monumental.

The bass anchors a pedal-tone feel (lots of low D and A holding underneath), which makes the loop feel hypnotic rather than repetitive. Over the top, The Edge selects notes from the **D major scale (D E F# G A B C#)** — but he uses almost none of them. He'll camp on the 5th (A) or the major 3rd (F#), let it sustain across two or three chords, and let the shifting chords *recolor* that single held note. That's the central trick: one note sounds different over each chord beneath it. Hold an A note over D and it's the 5th (stable); over Bm it becomes the 7th (yearning); over G it's the 2nd/9th (open and floating). Same pitch, four different emotional meanings.

The song form is essentially: intro (bass and swells build) → verses → choruses → a long, soaring instrumental peak → a quiet comedown. All over the same four chords.

## | Signature Moves

### 1. The Sustained Lead Swell

*Feel: slow, ~110 BPM. Volume off, pluck, then swell the knob up over a full beat. Let it ring across the chord change.*

TAB

```
e|-----|
B|--10~-----|
G|-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
```

D                    A                    Bm                    G

Hold one note (A) across all four chords.

One note (A, 10th fret of the B string), swelled in and held across all four chords. The chords change underneath; the note stays. That's the song.

## 2. The Sparse Arpeggio

*Feel: gentle, let every note ring into the next. Delay fills the gaps.*

TAB

```
e|-----5-----|
B|-----7-----7-----|
G|-----7-----7-----|
D|--0-----0~-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
      D                ringing
```

Notes from a D shape, picked one at a time and allowed to bloom. The delay repeats catch the spaces, so it sounds twice as busy as your hands actually are.

## 3. The Build (Climbing the Peak)

*Feel: intensifying. Each swell a little higher, a little more urgent, but still patient.*

TAB

```
e|-----|
B|--10~-----13~-----|
G|-----14~-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
      build...      higher...      peak
```

The instrumental climax simply walks the held note up the scale — A to D to E — each new pitch swelled in over the loop. Higher note, same restraint.

# | The Drills

## Drill 1 — Volume-Swell Foundation

Build the core mechanical skill: plucking with the volume off and riding it up smoothly so there's zero attack. Set your pinky on the volume knob. Pluck silently, then roll up over one full beat. Aim for a glassy, attackless bloom every single time.

*Feel: ~90 BPM, one swell per bar. Pluck on "1" (silent), volume reaches full by "3."*

TAB

```
e|-----|
B|--12~~~~--|--10~~~~--|--8~~~~--|
G|-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
    swell up      swell up      swell up
```

*Builds: the volume-knob technique itself. If you hear any "pluck" at the front of the note, you're rolling up too late — start the swell sooner. Tone: neck pickup, light reverb, one delay repeat.*

## Drill 2 — One Note, Four Colors

Train your ear to hear a single sustained note change meaning as the chords move. Hold an A note (10th fret, B string) and play it across the full D – A – Bm – G loop. Listen to how it feels stable, then resolved, then tense, then floating. Then do it again on F# (7th fret, B string) and notice a completely different set of colors.

*Feel: ~100 BPM, hold each note across two chords, swell the attack.*

TAB

```
e|-----|
B|--10~~~~--|--7~~~~--|
G|-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
    D          A          Bm          G          (repeat)
    (note=A)          (note=F#)
```

*Builds: harmonic awareness and sustained phrasing. You're learning that note choice over a loop is about relationship, not flash. Tone: roll tone back to 6 for a vocal, hornlike sustain.*

### Drill 3 — Sparse Melody With Space

The hardest discipline in this style is leaving silence. This drill forces it: you play only on beats 1 and 3, and you rest — fully rest, hands still — on 2 and 4. Let the delay carry the gaps. Resist the urge to fill them.

*Feel: ~100 BPM. Play on 1 and 3 only. Silence (and delay) on 2 and 4.*

TAB

```
e |-----|
B |--10~-----|-----|--9~-----|-----|
G |-----|
D |-----|--7~-----|-----|--10~-----|
A |-----|
E |-----|
   D       .   A       .   Bm      .   G       .   (loop)
```

*Builds: phrasing with rests, and trust in your delay to do half the work. Count out loud. The rests are the music. Tone: delay mix up to 6, feedback for one strong repeat that lands on the empty beats.*

## | Make It Yours

The transferable lesson here is bigger than any one song: **a held note over a moving chord progression is one of the most expressive tools you have, and it costs you almost no technique.** Take any loop you already know — even a basic G–D–Em–C — and instead of strumming, pick one note from the scale, swell it in, and let the chords change underneath. Then move that note up a step and feel how the emotion shifts. You'll start to hear songs as *relationships between a melody and its harmony* rather than as walls of notes. And the volume-swell technique alone will transform how you play ballads, intros, ambient passages, and any moment where you want the guitar to breathe instead of bark. Less really is more — but only when every note you do play is placed with intention.

▶ LISTEN FOR

## • LISTEN FOR

- A note that begins from *silence* — no pick attack at all, just a swell blooming in.
- One sustained pitch holding steady while the chords change color underneath it.
- The single delay repeat landing in the gaps, making sparse playing sound full.
- The patience: real rests, real space, no rushing to fill the silence.
- The slow build of the climax — same restraint, higher notes, more emotion.

# “Paranoid Android” • Radiohead

## AT A GLANCE

**Artist:** Radiohead (Jonny Greenwood, Ed O'Brien, Thom Yorke on guitars)

**Song:** "Paranoid Android"

**Album:** *OK Computer* (1997)

**The tone in one sentence:** A three-act suite that travels from fragile, chiming clean arpeggios through a snarling fuzz riff to a scorched, atonal solo — texture and dynamics doing the work that a chorus normally would.

**Difficulty:** Intermediate to Advanced

**Key & tuning:** Standard tuning (E A D G B e); a shifting tonal center that orbits G minor in the intro before lurching elsewhere; built on odd-meter phrasing (the verse breathes in groupings of 7).

## | The Rig & Signal Chain

Radiohead never used one rig for one part, and "Paranoid Android" is the proof — it was assembled in sections, so the "chain" is really three chains.

**Intro / clean arpeggios:** Most accounts credit a **Fender Telecaster** (Jonny's well-documented main electric of the era, frequently cited as a Tele Plus with a Lace Sensor in the bridge) into a clean amp with a touch of spring reverb. The picking is fingerstyle-leaning, soft, very even. Some sources place a nylon-string or acoustic doubling underneath; treat the exact doubling as debated rather than settled.

**Heavy middle riff:** This is where the fuzz lives. Jonny is closely associated with a **Marshall Shredmaster** distortion pedal across *OK Computer* — a key part of his bite — and the band leaned on Fender (Twin/Deville-style) and Vox amplification live. The wall of grind in the "rain down" section comes from layered guitars rather than one monster amp.

**Solo / chaos:** Jonny's lead is deliberately abrasive — pinched, atonal stabs sitting on top of the riff. Live, Ed O'Brien's textural layers and Jonny's aggressive picking combine; the harmonically "wrong" notes are the point.

Amps and mics for the record have never been published in fine detail. Anyone quoting exact dial positions or a specific mic placement is guessing — so dial by ear, not by myth.

## | The Tone Recipe

You can get ~90% there with a parts-bin modern setup.

**Guitar:** Any **single-coil bridge** instrument (Tele or Strat) for the intro's glassy clarity. A humbucker works for the heavy section if you roll some treble back.

### **Intro (clean):**

- Amp: clean channel, slight breakup. Bass 5, Mid 6, Treble 6, Reverb 3.
- A short **spring/plate reverb** is plenty; no need for delay here.
- Pick attack: soft, fingers or a light flatpick. Aim for *even* note volume — no note pokes out.
- Volume knob around 7 so the clean stays open and dynamic.

### **Heavy riff:**

- Substitute the Shredmaster with any **mid-forward distortion or fuzz** — a Rat-style distortion, a Tube Screamer pushing a cranked amp, or a ProCo/Marshall-voiced pedal.
- Gain 6–7 (it's gritty, not metal-saturated). Tone 6. Level to match the clean section's perceived loudness, then a hair louder.
- Bridge pickup, pick hard near the bridge for snarl.

### **Solo:**

- Same dirt, maybe gain to 8, and add a slap of short reverb. The harshness is musical here — don't smooth it out.

## | What's Going On Musically

The genius of "Paranoid Android" isn't a clever scale; it's **dynamics and texture used as compositional structure**. The song is a suite — three contrasting movements stitched together, more like a

mini-symphony than a verse/chorus pop tune.

**The intro** sits around **G minor**. The arpeggios (an arpeggio = the notes of a chord played one at a time instead of strummed) outline minor chords with added color tones, letting a high open string ring against fretted notes so you get suspended, bell-like clusters. That ringing dissonance — two notes a step apart sounding together — is the "fragile" feeling.

**The meter** is the other trick. The verse phrases feel like they're in **7** (count "1-2-3-4-5-6-7" instead of a square 8). That missing eighth beat is why the groove feels like it's tripping forward, slightly anxious. You don't have to intellectualize it; feel it as "a beat short."

**The heavy section** drops to a blunt, **riff-driven** minor tonality — power chords and a chromatic (moving by half-steps) descending line. Power chords are just root + 5th, no 3rd, so they're neither major nor minor; that ambiguity makes them slam regardless of key.

**The solo** abandons "correct" notes on purpose. Jonny plays against the harmony — sharp 9ths, half-step rubs, pinch harmonics — so it reads as a system breaking down. Theory-wise: dissonance with intent.

The form, roughly: clean intro → odd-meter verse → build → heavy "rain down" riff → guitar solo → return. Composition by contrast.

## | Signature Moves

Short, illustrative fragments — analysis, not full transcription.

**1. The arpeggiated intro figure** — *Gentle, fingerstyle, let everything ring (~82 bpm feel).*

TAB

```
e|-----|-----|
B|--3----3-----|--1----1-----|
G|---3---3-----|---0---0-----|
D|----0---0-----|----0---0-----|
A|-----|-----|
E|--3-----|--1-----|
```

*Caption: Notice how a held high note stays put while the bass moves underneath — that's the suspended shimmer.*

**2. The descending heavy riff** — *Hard pick, palm-muted attack into open ring (~82 bpm, half-time feel).*

TAB

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-----|
D|--5--4--3-----|
A|--5--4--3--3--2--1-----|
E|--3--2--1--1--0-----|
    PM PM PM

```

Caption: Power chords walking down chromatically — the blunt object after the delicate intro.

### 3. The chaotic solo stab — Aggressive, deliberately "wrong" (free, on top of the riff).

TAB

```

e|-----|
B|--8b10r8--6~-----|
G|--7-----5----7p5-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|

```

Caption: Bend into a note that fights the chord, then a pinched, vibrato'd rub — tension as the goal.

## | The Drills

My own exercises in the song's spirit — not transcriptions.

**Drill A — Static-top arpeggio control.** Builds the even, ringing right hand the intro demands. Clean tone, soft fingers, every note equal volume, let all ring.

TAB

```

e|-----|
B|--3-----3-----1-----1-----|
G|--3-----3-----0-----0-----|
D|-----0-----0-----0-----0-----|
A|-----|
E|--3-----1-----|
    1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +

```

Caption: The top note never gets louder than the bass. Record yourself; if one note jumps out, slow down. Reverb low, no delay.

**Drill B — Counting in 7.** Trains the odd-meter feel so the lurch becomes natural. *Clean or light grit. Count out loud: 1-2-3-4-5-6-7, repeat.*

TAB

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|--0--0--0--0--0--0--0--0--0--0--0--|
D|--0--0--0--0--0--0--0--0--0--0--0--|
A|--5--5--5--5--5--5--5--3--3--3--|
E|-----|
    1  2  3  4  5  6  7   1  2  3
  
```

*Caption: The chord change lands cleanly on beat 1 of the next bar of 7. Tap your foot on 1 only — feel the "missing" eighth beat.*

**Drill C — Soft-to-savage dynamic flip.** The whole song in miniature: control the jump from clean to crushing. *Bars 1–2 clean and quiet; bars 3–4 stomp the dirt and dig in hard.*

TAB

```

e|-----|-----|
B|--3-----3-----|-----|
G|--0-----0-----|-----|
D|-----0-----|--5--5--4--4-----|
A|-----5-----|--5--5--4--4-----|
E|--3-----|--3--3--2--2-----|
    clean, fingers      PM, pick HARD
  
```

*Caption: Match the perceived loudness across the switch, then let the dirt feel bigger through attack, not just volume. This trains the hands that make Radiohead's contrasts land.*

## | Make It Yours

The lesson of "Paranoid Android" is bigger than any lick: **let dynamics and texture carry the song.** Most players reach for a new chord or a faster lick to create interest. Radiohead reaches for a *change in feel* — soft to loud, clean to filthy, square to lopsided. Steal that. Take a simple progression you already know and play it three ways in a row: fingerstyle and whisper-quiet, then power-chorded and loud, then deliberately ugly with a few clashing notes. Try dropping a beat from a bar to make a section feel restless. Use your volume knob and your pick attack as composition tools, not afterthoughts. You'll find you can write something that *moves* without ever leaving three chords.

▶ LISTEN FOR

## • LISTEN FOR

- The top note of the intro arpeggios staying *perfectly even* while the bass shifts beneath it.
- The forward-tripping pulse of the odd-meter verse — feel where the bar lands "a beat short."
- The blunt, chromatic descent of the heavy riff hitting like a different song entirely.
- The solo's *intentional* wrong notes — tension you can hear is being chosen, not avoided.
- The seamless loud/quiet transitions: matched in level, but worlds apart in feel.

# “Gravity” • John Mayer

---

## AT A GLANCE

**Artist:** John Mayer (with the John Mayer Trio)

**Song:** "Gravity"

**Album:** *Continuum* (2006); first released live on *Try!* (2005)

**The tone in one sentence:** A warm, vocal, glassy Strat neck-pickup sound that sings on sustained bends and breathes in the spaces between phrases.

**Difficulty:** Intermediate to Advanced

**Key & tuning:** G major (with heavy blues borrowing); standard tuning, E A D G B E

## | The Rig & Signal Chain

Mayer's *Continuum*-era sound is one of the most studied "modern blues" tones out there, and the broad strokes are well documented even if the exact dial positions are not.

- **Guitar:** A **Fender Stratocaster** — in this era his signature Strats with custom **Big Dipper** or vintage-voiced single-coils. The defining choice is the **neck pickup**, often blended toward the middle (positions 2 and 4), which gives that round, hollow, vowel-like quality.
- **Overdrive 1:** A **Klon Centaur** — used as an "always-on" clean boost and mid-hump that thickens the signal and pushes the amp without sounding obviously distorted.
- **Overdrive 2:** An **Ibanez Tube Screamer** (TS-style) — stacked for the lead sections to add gain, compression, and a vocal midrange bump.
- **Amp:** A **Two-Rock** (Dumble-inspired) amplifier, the cornerstone of his clean-but-singing platform. Earlier live versions leaned on Dumble-style and **Fender**-style amps as well.

- **Mic:** Commonly a large-diaphragm or dynamic on the speaker; specifics for the album cut aren't publicly confirmed, so treat any "exact" mic claim as debated.

Settings are best described as: amp clean but on the edge of breakup, Klon gain low with output up, Tube Screamer drive low to moderate. Anyone quoting precise secret numbers is guessing — hedge accordingly.

## | The Tone Recipe

You can get roughly 90% of the way there with very accessible gear. The magic here is more in the hands and the EQ than in any one rare box.

### **Substitutions:**

- Strat → any Strat-style guitar with single-coils. A neck humbucker can work if you split it or roll the tone back.
- Klon → any transparent overdrive/boost (Klon clones are everywhere; a Timmy, a quality "transparent" OD, or even a clean boost).
- Tube Screamer → any TS-style mid-pushing overdrive (a real TS, a Boss SD-1, a budget green clone).
- Two-Rock/Dumble → any clean tube amp with headroom and a sweet midrange (a Fender Deluxe/Princeton, or a modeler's "Dumble"/"Two-Rock" profile).

### **Starting points (out of 10):**

- Pickup: neck, or neck+middle (position 4).
- Guitar tone knob: roll down to about 7–8 to tame single-coil glassiness.
- Amp: Bass 5, Mids 7, Treble 5–6, Reverb 3 (a touch of spring), Volume up enough to feel air.
- Transparent OD: Gain 2, Tone 5, Level 6 (always on).
- TS-style OD (for solos): Drive 3–4, Tone 5–6, Level to taste — kick it in for leads only.
- Pick attack: medium-soft, with the fleshy side of the thumb or a rounded pick edge; dig in only on the peaks.
- Set gain so a hard pick stroke just breaks up and a soft one stays clean — that dynamic window is the whole point.

## | What's Going On Musically

"Gravity" lives in **G major** but borrows constantly from **G minor**, which is the heart of its bluesy, gospel ache.

The core progression cycles around a I–IV-flavored slow groove in G, with a descending move toward the V (**D**) and frequent **G7**, **C9**, and **D7** colors. The "7" and "9" chords add the dominant tension that gives blues its forward lean. A **9 chord** (like **C9**) simply stacks a 9th — the note two scale steps above the root, an octave up — on top of a dominant 7th; it sounds lush and soulful rather than harsh.

The lead language blends two scales:

- **G major pentatonic** (G A B D E) — bright, sweet, "happy" notes.
- **G minor/blues pentatonic** (G Bb C D F, plus the bluesy Db) — the crying, vocal notes.

Mixing these is the **major/minor pentatonic blend**, and it's the single most important concept in this lesson. Over a G chord, you lean on the major 3rd (**B**) for sweetness and bend up to it from the minor 3rd (**Bb**) for that "smiling through tears" sound. The most-used home shape is the minor pentatonic box at the 3rd fret, with the major-3rd and 6th added in.

The form is a slow 12/8-feel ballad (triplet subdivisions — count "1-and-a, 2-and-a"). Tempo sits around a heavy, patient 40 BPM in 12/8. The genius of the arrangement is restraint: Mayer leaves enormous **space**, letting each phrase ring and decay like a sung line before answering it.

## | Signature Moves

Below are short, illustrative fragments in the style of the song's gestures — presented as commentary, not full transcription.

1. **The opening vocal phrase.** Stated, then left to hang.

TAB

Slow 12/8, ~40 BPM. Let each note breathe.

```
e|-----|
B|-----|
G|----7b9~----5-----3~-----|
D|-----5-----5-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
      bend&hold  answer  resolve
```

A held bend up to the major 3rd, then a quiet falling answer into chord tones.

**2. The soulful overbend.** A wide, slow bend that he leans on past the target and back.

TAB

Behind the beat. Bend slow, vibrato at the top.

```
e|-----|
B|--8b10---(10)~-----8-----|
G|-----7b9-|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
```

reach the top, sit, then sing

Push to the note, hold it dead-still for a beat, THEN add vibrato — the delay is the soul.

**3. The chord-tone resolution.** Landing a phrase squarely on a note in the underlying chord.

TAB

Over a G chord. Aim for B (the major 3rd).

```
e|-----|
B|-----8~-----|
G|--5--7--5h7-----|
D|-----5-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
```

run up      land on the 3rd

The line resolves to B on the B string — the major 3rd of G. Targeting the chord tone is what makes it sound "right."

## | The Drills

These are my own exercises in the style of "Gravity," built to train exactly what the song demands. Dial the tone as above: neck pickup, clean amp edge-of-breakup, OD on for leads, lots of space.

**Drill 1 — Vocal slow-blues phrasing (call and response).** Trains you to play a "sung" line and then answer it, leaving silence between. Count the rests out loud.

**TAB**

Slow 12/8, ~44 BPM. The rests are MUSIC – don't fill them.

```

e|-----|-----|
B|-----|-----|
G|--7b9~-----5-----|--3~-----|
D|-----5-----|-----5-----3-----|
A|-----|-----|
E|-----|-----|
CALL (let ring)           RESPONSE (quieter)
  
```

*Builds phrasing and patience. Play the call, breathe a full beat, then answer softer. If you can't hear silence, you're rushing.*

**Drill 2 — The major/minor blend over G.** Trains your ear and fingers to move between the sweet (major) and crying (minor) 3rds in one phrase.

**TAB**

Steady triplets, ~60 BPM. Lean into the bends.

```

e|-----|
B|-----8b(9)r(8)-----|
G|--5b7~-----5--3--5-----5--3-----|
D|-----5-----5-----5--3-|
A|-----|
E|-----|
Bb->B bend   minor box   back home
  
```

*The opening bend pushes the minor 3rd (Bb, 5th fret G) up to the major 3rd (B). Then you walk the minor pentatonic and resolve. This is the core "Gravity" vocabulary in one bar.*

**Drill 3 — Vibrato and space.** Trains a slow, wide, controlled vibrato AND the discipline to stop. One note per bar, all expression.

**TAB**

Free time. One note, all the feeling. Wait between bars.

```

e|-----|-----|
B|--10~-----|--8~-----|
G|-----|-----|
D|-----|-----|
A|-----|-----|
E|-----|-----|
hold, then vibrato   lower, repeat
  
```

*Builds finger strength and vibrato control. Strike the note clean, let it sustain a full beat with NO movement, then add slow, even, pitch-perfect vibrato from the wrist. Silence between notes is mandatory.*

## | Make It Yours

The deepest lesson of "Gravity" isn't the notes — it's the willingness to play fewer of them. Take any solo you already know and cut half the notes out; hold what remains longer and add vibrato. Then practice the major/minor blend until bending the minor 3rd up to the major 3rd over a chord feels automatic, because that one move will color every blues and soul phrase you ever play. Steal the dynamic, too: set your rig so soft picking stays clean and hard picking blooms, and let your right hand control the intensity instead of a knob. Whether you're playing a Strat or a Les Paul, into a tweed or a modeler, the recipe travels — round neck-pickup tone, edge-of-breakup gain, chord-tone targeting, and above all, space.

### ♪ LISTEN FOR

- The held bend that reaches the major 3rd and *stays still* before any vibrato arrives.
- Real silence between phrases — the answer waiting a full beat after the call.
- The neck pickup's round, vowel-like "ah" quality, not a bright bridge bite.
- Slow, even, pitch-perfect vibrato from the wrist — no nervous wobble.
- Lines that resolve onto chord tones (especially B, the major 3rd of G) so every phrase sounds "landed."

PART J

# Tone Showcases



# “Bohemian Rhapsody” • Queen

## AT A GLANCE

**Artist:** Queen

**Song:** “Bohemian Rhapsody”

**Album:** *A Night at the Opera* (1975)

**The tone in one sentence:** A creamy, vocal, midrange-saturated singing lead — a treble-boosted EL84 amp pushed into smooth sustain — layered into a multi-tracked "guitar orchestra" of harmonized triads.

**Difficulty:** Intermediate to Advanced

**Key & tuning:** Standard tuning (E A D G B E), concert pitch. The guitar solo section sits in **E-flat major** (the relative-minor feel pulls toward C minor).

## | The Rig & Signal Chain

Brian May's sound is one of the most identifiable in rock, and it comes from a deeply personal chain.

- **Guitar:** The **Red Special** — the guitar May built with his father in the early 1960s from mahogany, oak, and a blockboard body. Its three single-coil pickups can be switched individually and, crucially, flipped in and out of phase, giving a wide palette of nasal, hollow, and full voicings.
- **Pick:** A **sixpence coin** instead of a plastic pick. The hard, serrated edge gives a bright, immediate attack and lets May "scratch" the string for a vocal, almost bowed articulation — a huge part of the tone, not a gimmick.
- **Booster:** A **Dallas Rangemaster** treble booster (or one of its close variants) slammed into the amp's front end. This is the secret weapon: it's a germanium booster that shoves a narrow upper-midrange band hard, so the amp distorts in a focused, voice-like way rather than as a broad fuzzy wall.

- **Amplifier: Vox AC30** combos (often several, run together), the EL84 power section cranked to where the amp itself is breaking up. The booster plus cranked AC30 interaction is the whole game.
- **Mic (commonly cited):** Close-miked AC30s, with producer **Roy Thomas Baker** and the band stacking many guitar passes for the orchestral sections. Exact mic placements for this 1975 session are not reliably documented, so treat any specific claim as debated.

Settings are best described loosely: the amp is approximately at the edge of breakup-to-saturation, treble high, and the booster doing most of the gain-shaping. May famously favors the neck-and-middle pickups out of phase for that honky, vocal midrange — but the precise switch combination per overdub is not something to state as fact.

## | The Tone Recipe

You can get roughly 90% of the way there without a hand-built guitar.

- **Guitar substitution:** Any bright single-coil instrument helps, but a humbucker on a Les Paul-style guitar rolled toward the neck pickup works too. If you have a coil-split or out-of-phase option, use it for the orchestral parts. Tone knob around **7** — bright but not glassy.
- **Booster substitution:** A modern treble booster (germanium-style boost pedals abound) or a clean-ish overdrive with the tone pushed up and gain moderate. Set boost **6–7**, level high enough to drive the amp.
- **Amp substitution:** An EL84-style combo (AC15/AC30-voiced) or a modeled "top boost" channel. Gain to the **edge of breakup (5–6)**, treble **7**, mids **6–7**, bass **4** so it stays focused.
- **Pick:** Try a thick coin-style or a 2mm+ pointed pick, and experiment with letting the edge graze the string. This single change moves you closer than any pedal.
- **Where to set gain:** Just enough that a held note blooms and sustains, but you can still hear pick attack. If it sounds buzzy, back off — May's grit is smooth, not fizzy.

## | What's Going On Musically

The guitar solo lives in **E-flat major**, the song's central key for this section. E-flat major is the scale E ♭–F–G–A ♭–B ♭–C–D. Because the surrounding harmony leans on its relative minor, **C minor** (the same seven notes starting on C), the solo reads as bittersweet and vocal rather than bright.

May doesn't shred — he **sings through the guitar**. The solo is built from short, breath-length phrases that target chord tones: the root, the third, and the fifth of whatever chord is underneath. Landing on a **third** (the note that defines major vs. minor) is what makes a line sound "right" and melodic. Define it once: a *chord tone* is a note that belongs to the current chord, so it sounds resolved when you land on it.

The orchestral guitar passages use **harmonized triads** — three-note chords (root, third, fifth) — voiced across separately recorded tracks, plus simpler **harmonized thirds** (two lines a third apart moving in parallel). Stacking these on multiple overdubs is what creates the "guitar choir" illusion: no synths, just many disciplined passes of the same Red Special.

The song form is famously sectional: ballad, operatic mock-aria, hard-rock guitar section, reflective outro. Your job in this lesson lives in the rock and orchestral guitar moments, where melody and harmony do the heavy lifting.

## | Signature Moves

These are short, illustrative fragments — analysis, not transcription. Play them, then steal the *idea*.

### Move 1 — The singing solo opening (vocal phrasing).

TAB

Feel: moderate rock, ~72 bpm half-time; let notes bloom, light vibrato

```
e|-----|
B|-----|
G|--8b10r8--8-----|
D|-----8-----10b12~-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
```

Move 1 - vocal-phrased solo opening (Eb major)

*The line breathes like a vocal: a bend up to a chord tone, a release, then a sustained note with vibrato — phrase, breathe, phrase.*

### Move 2 — Harmonized thirds (the guitar-orchestra idea).

TAB

Feel: stately, even quarter-notes; two parts a third apart, in Eb major

```

e|-----|
B|--6---8---6---4-----| upper voice
G|--7---8---7---5-----| lower voice (a 3rd below)
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|

```

Move 2 - parallel harmonized thirds in Eb

Two parallel lines a third apart create instant harmony. On the record these would be separate overdubs panned wide.

### Move 3 — Stacked triad stab (the orchestral chord hits).

TAB

Feel: bold, on the beat; let each triad ring, palm off before the next

```

e|--3---6---3-----|
B|--4---8---4-----|
G|--3---7---3-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|

```

Move 3 - stacked major-triad stabs

Three-note major triads (root-3rd-5th) hit as block chords. Recorded as layered passes, they become the "horn section" of the guitar orchestra.

## The Drills

These are my own exercises in the style of the song — practice them, then dial the tone as noted.

**Drill A — Vocal phrasing builder.** Trains breath-length phrasing and landing on chord tones with vibrato.

TAB

Feel: ~72 bpm, half-time; sing the line out loud first, then play it

```

e|-----|
B|-----|
G|--8b10r8---6~-----8b10---8-----|
D|-----10~-----8b10r8-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|

```

Drill A - vocal phrasing builder

*Builds: legato bends, controlled release, and ending phrases on a held, vibrato'd note. Tone: edge-of-breakup gain so each note sustains; tone knob ~7; pick near the bridge for attack, then let it ring.*

**Drill B — Harmonized thirds in E-flat.** Trains parallel-third harmony you can later double-track.

TAB

Feel: stately, even 8th-notes; play the top line, record it, then add the lower

```
e|-----|
B|--6--8--10--8--6--4--6--8--6-----| upper voice
G|--7--8--11--9--7--5--7--8--7-----| lower voice (3rd below)
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
```

Drill B - harmonized thirds in Eb major

*Builds: hearing and fretting two-note harmony in motion. Tone: clean-to-light-grit so the intervals stay clear; pan the two passes left/right to hear the orchestra effect.*

**Drill C — Triad arpeggio orchestra.** Trains the major-triad shapes that build the stacked sections.

TAB

Feel: flowing 8th-notes, ~84 bpm; let each triad ring, no palm mute

```
e|-----3-----5-----7-----3-----|
B|----4----4--6----6--8----8--4----4-----|
G|--3-----5-----7-----3-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
```

Drill C - triad arpeggio orchestra

*Builds: smooth movement between major-triad voicings up the neck, the raw material of May's choir. Tone: moderate gain with strong upper-mids; coin/hard-pick attack so each note speaks; tone knob ~7 for clarity in the stack.*

## | Make It Yours

The lesson of Brian May isn't "buy a Rangemaster." It's *commit to one voice and orchestrate it*. Two transferable habits will change your playing immediately. First, **phrase like a singer**: play a line, then actually sing it — if you can't sing it, simplify until you can. Solos that land on chord tones and breathe will always beat faster ones that don't. Second, **harmonize yourself**. Take any melody you already know and add a second line a third above or below, then record both. You don't need a guitar orches-

tra — even one harmony pass turns a riff into an arrangement. May's whole sound is discipline plus layering, and both are free.

#### ♪ LISTEN FOR

- The *vocal bloom*: each sustained note swells and holds rather than dying — that's amp saturation, not volume.
- Pick attack that "scratches": the coin gives a bright, percussive front edge to every note.
- Harmonized lines moving in **parallel thirds** — hear two guitars locked a third apart.
- The "guitar orchestra" depth from many stacked overdubs, panned wide — no keyboards.
- Phrases that *breathe*: short, melodic ideas with space between them, landing on chord tones.

# “Hotel California” • Eagles

---

## AT A GLANCE

**Artist:** Eagles

**Song:** “Hotel California”

**Album:** *Hotel California* (1976)

**The tone in one sentence:** Two warm, clean-to-edge electrics in conversation — a chiming twelve-string voicing the arpeggios and a singing, mid-forward Les Paul harmonizing the outro in thirds, all wrapped in plate reverb and Southern-California air.

**Difficulty:** Advanced

**Key & tuning:** B minor; standard tuning (capo behaviors discussed below)

## | The Rig & Signal Chain

This song is a two-guitar architecture, so think of it as two rigs answering each other.

**Don Felder** handled the intro arpeggios and the lower harmony line. The intro is widely credited to a **twelve-string electric** (often cited as a Fender Electric XII), with a **Telecaster** also figuring into Felder's parts on the record. The shimmering, slightly metallic chime of the intro is the doubled-octave-string sound of a twelve-string, not a chorus pedal — that's the single most misunderstood fact about this tone.

**Joe Walsh** carried the upper harmony and the more vocal, sustaining lines using a **Gibson Les Paul** through cranked amps. The amp brands are debated in the lore — various **Fender** and other tube combos/heads have been named over the years — so treat any single "this exact amp" claim as contested rather than settled.

Settings, honestly hedged:

- Amps approximately at the **edge of breakup**, not high-gain. The grit you hear on the leads is mostly tube compression and a hot humbucker, commonly cited that way in interviews and analyses.
- Reverb is prominent — period studio **plate/chamber reverb**, not a stomp. Approximately a long, smooth tail with no obvious slap.
- No exact "secret" knob numbers exist in any reliable source; anyone quoting them precisely is guessing.

## | The Tone Recipe

You can land roughly 90% with very ordinary modern gear.

### Substitutions:

- *Twelve-string chime (intro)*: a real **12-string electric** is ideal, but you can fake it convincingly with a six-string into a subtle **octave/shimmer** or a light **chorus**, neck pickup, tone rolled slightly back. A bright single-coil (Tele/Strat neck) sells it better than a humbucker.
- *Walsh's leads*: any **humbucker-loaded guitar** (Les Paul, SG, or an HH) into a tube or quality modeling amp set to **edge-of-breakup**.
- *Reverb*: a **hall or plate reverb** (amp built-in or pedal), generous but clean.

### Starting points (knobs out of 10):

- Rhythm/arpeggio guitar: neck pickup, **Gain 2, Bass 5 · Mid 6 · Treble 6–7**, tone knob ~7, light **chorus** (Depth 3, Rate 3) if no 12-string.
- Lead guitar: bridge humbucker, **Gain 4–5** (just breaking up — let your pick dynamics push it over), **Bass 4 · Mid 7 · Treble 5, Reverb 4**.
- *Pick attack*: arpeggios use a **soft, even** attack (or fingers/hybrid). Leads want a **firmer, fleshier** pick grip near the neck for that vocal roundness.
- *Where to set gain*: low enough that palm-muted notes stay tight; the sustain on the outro comes from **volume and the amp's natural compression**, not a distortion pedal.

## | What's Going On Musically

The song lives in **B minor**. The famous progression is:

**Bm – F#7 – A – E7 – G – D – Em – F#7**

Two things make this loop hypnotic.

First, it's a descending logic with a twist. Notice the **borrowed major chords** (A, E7, D) — chords you wouldn't expect from a strict natural B-minor scale. That **E7** in particular (the IV chord borrowed from B *Dorian*, the minor scale with a raised 6th) injects a bittersweet lift right in the middle of the gloom. **Dorian** = a minor scale that sounds slightly brighter because its sixth note is raised; it's the flavor that keeps this from being a sad-sack progression.

Second, the bass and the chord roots **cycle through almost every diatonic degree**, so the ear never quite settles — perfect for a lyric about a place you can check out of but never leave.

**Form:** Intro (full progression, arpeggiated) → Verses (same loop) → Chorus → and the long instrumental **outro** that repeats the loop while the two guitars harmonize and trade.

**For soloing**, your home base is the **B natural minor / B Aeolian** scale (B–C#–D–E–F#–G–A) and the **B minor pentatonic** box at the 7th fret. Over the **F#7** chords, raising the A to **A#** (the major third of F#) is the secret sauce — it's what makes the melody "agree" with that dominant chord instead of clashing.

## | Signature Moves

### 1) The arpeggiated chord intro

The intro doesn't strum — it **rolls** each chord one note at a time, letting strings ring into each other. This is a short illustrative fragment of the first two chords' contour.

TAB

Tempo ~75 BPM · let every note ring · pick softly and evenly

```
Bm          F#7
e|-----2-----|-----2-----|
B|-----3-----3-----|-----2-----2-----|
G|-----4-----4-----|-----3-----3-----|
D|-----4-----4-----|-----4-----4-----|
A|-2-----|-----4-----|
E|-----|-----|
```

*Caption: roll low-to-high then back; the overlapping ring is the whole point — never mute between notes.*

## 2) The harmonized outro — in thirds

The outro's signature is **two guitars a third apart**. Here are both parts stacked: the lower part (Felder) first, then the upper part (Walsh), so you can see how they move in parallel.

TAB

Tempo ~75 BPM · two guitars · smooth, vocal phrasing

LOWER part (Gtr 1):

```
e|-----|
B|---10---10b12r10-----10-----|
G|-----11---9-----9~-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
```

UPPER part (Gtr 2):

```
e|---13---13b15r13-----13-----|
B|-----13---12-----12~-----|
G|-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
```

*Caption: the two lines stay a diatonic third apart and bend together — lock the timing of the bends or the harmony smears.*

## 3) The trading lick (call-and-response)

Late in the outro the guitars **answer** each other — one plays a short phrase (call), the other replies (response), often the same shape moved or harmonized.

TAB

Tempo ~75 BPM · CALL then RESPONSE · leave space between them

CALL (Gtr 1):

```
e|-----|
B|-10b12r10-8-----|
G|-----9~-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
```

RESPONSE (Gtr 2):

```
e|-----|
B|-----13b15r13-12---|
G|-----14~-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
```

Caption: the response echoes the call's rhythm a third higher — phrase it like a conversation, not a race.

## The Drills

These are **original** exercises in the style of the song — yours to drill, not transcriptions.

### Drill A — Arpeggio Roll & Ring (right-hand control)

TAB

```
Tempo ~70 BPM · let ALL notes ring · neck pickup, tone ~7
Bm                                A
e|-----2-----|-----5-----|
B|-----3---3-----|-----5---5-----|
G|-----4-----4-----|-----6-----6-----|
D|-----4-----4-----|-----7-----7-----|
A|-2-----|-----0-----|
E|-----|-----|
G                                D
e|-----3-----|-----2-----|
B|-----3---3-----|-----3---3-----|
G|-----4-----4-----|-----2-----2-----|
D|-----5-----5-----|-----0-----|
A|-5-----|-----|
E|-3-----|-----|
```

*Builds: even arpeggio timing and sustain across four chords of the loop. Set a clean tone with light chorus; the test is whether each chord blooms without your fretting hand choking it.*

### Drill B — Harmonized Thirds Climb (two-part lock-in)

TAB

```
Tempo ~75 BPM · play UPPER, then LOWER, then both (or loop with a friend)
UPPER (B Aeolian, a third above):
e|-----|
B|-12---10---12---15---12-----|
G|-----14---12-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
LOWER (a diatonic third below):
e|-----|
B|-----|
G|-9---7---9---11---9---11-9-|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
```

*Builds: hearing and fretting parallel thirds cleanly. Dial edge-of-breakup with reverb. Record the lower part, then play the upper over it — if the harmony sounds "wrong," check that each interval is a third within B minor.*

### Drill C — Call-and-Response Trade (phrasing & space)

TAB

Tempo ~75 BPM · CALL = 1 bar, RESPONSE = 1 bar · breathe between them

CALL:

```
e|-----|
B|-10b12r10---8---10~-----|
G|-----9-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
```

RESPONSE (answers a third up):

```
e|-13b15r13---12---13~-----|
B|-----13-----|
G|-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
```

*Builds: trading-solo instincts — matching rhythm and answering a third higher. Keep gain moderate so the bends speak from your fingers. The skill is the silence between call and response; don't fill it.*

## | Make It Yours

The deepest lesson here isn't the notes — it's **harmonized-third thinking** and **two-guitar conversation**. Take any minor-key riff you already play and add a second line a diatonic third above it; suddenly a single-guitar idea sounds like an arrangement. Use the arpeggio approach — rolling a chord instead of strumming it — to turn boring backing parts into something that shimmers. And steal the call-and-response framing for solos: play a short phrase, *leave a hole*, then answer it. That restraint, plus a clean amp pushed just to the edge, is more "Hotel California" than any specific lick. The tone is humbucker warmth and plate reverb; the *magic* is two voices that listen to each other.

▶ LISTEN FOR

## • LISTEN FOR

- The **chime of the intro** — that doubled, slightly metallic ring is a 12-string, not chorus; can you reproduce its bloom?
- **Parallel thirds** locking in the outro — both bends arriving at exactly the same instant.
- **Edge-of-breakup** sustain on the leads, driven by volume and pick attack, not a fuzz pedal.
- The **A#** over the F#7 chords — the note that makes the harmony resolve instead of clash.
- **Space** in the call-and-response — the silence is part of the part.

# “Black Magic Woman” • Santana

## AT A GLANCE

**Artist:** Santana (Carlos Santana, lead guitar)

**Song:** "Black Magic Woman / Gypsy Queen" — a Peter Green / Fleetwood Mac cover, fused with Gábor Szabó's "Gypsy Queen"

**Album:** *Abraxas* (1970)

**The tone in one sentence:** A creamy, vocal-like sustain — a thick neck-pickup Gibson pushing a cranked amp into smooth singing overdrive, every note bent and shaped with deep, slow vibrato.

**Difficulty:** Intermediate

**Key & tuning:** D minor (D Dorian flavor over the modal vamp); standard tuning (E A D G B E)

## | The Rig & Signal Chain

Carlos's *Abraxas*-era sound is the holy grail of "the guitar that sings." The core ingredients:

- **Guitar:** A **Gibson** — around this period most often a **Gibson Les Paul** (and, depending on the track and era, an SG). The crucial detail is the **neck (rhythm) humbucker**, which gives that round, dark, hornlike voice. Carlos lived on the neck pickup with the tone control rolled back a touch.
- **Amp:** A cranked amp run hot enough to bloom into natural overdrive. On *Abraxas* the lore points to a **Fender** combo and, soon after, his lifelong partnership with **Mesa/Boogie** (Randall Smith's "hot-rodged Princeton" that Carlos famously declared "really boogies"). The Mesa Mark series became the definitive Santana lead amp — high-gain but liquid, not fizzy. Exactly which amp cut which solo on the record is debated, so treat amp attribution as contested lore rather than fact.

- **Drive:** The overdrive is mostly the amp itself, plus the guitar's volume working the front end. Carlos's sustain comes from volume in the room and the amp's compression, not a stompbox stack.
- **Mic:** Studio close-mic on the speaker (commonly a dynamic like an SM57-class mic) is the typical setup of the era; specifics for this session aren't reliably documented, so don't take any "exact" claim at face value.

The single most important "setting" here isn't a knob — it's *commitment to volume and sustain*. The note has to bloom and hang.

## | The Tone Recipe

You can get ~90% there with very accessible gear. The goal is **thick, dark, compressed, singing**.

### Substitutions:

- **Guitar:** Any humbucker-equipped guitar — Epiphone Les Paul, a cheaper SG, even an HSS Strat on the humbucker. Use the **neck pickup**.
- **Amp/drive:** A tube amp turned up, or a **Tube Screamer-style overdrive** (TS9/TS808 clone) into a clean-ish amp. The mid-hump of a Tube Screamer is *exactly* the right color for this — it fattens the midrange and smooths the top.
- **Sustain helper:** A touch of compression in front, or simply standing closer to the amp, helps notes hang.

### Starting points (knobs out of 10):

- Pickup: **neck humbucker**, tone rolled to about **6–7** (take the glassy edge off).
- Overdrive pedal: Drive **5**, Tone **5**, Level **6–7** (enough push to sustain, not so much it gets fizzy).
- Amp: Bass **5**, Mids **7** (mids are the secret), Treble **4–5**, Reverb **3**.
- Gain target: set it where a single fretted note, played at moderate pick attack, sustains for a couple of seconds and *blooms* slightly rather than dying. That bloom is the whole game.
- Pick attack: medium-soft, near the neck, with the side of the pick. Let the amp do the work; you supply phrasing, not aggression.

## | What's Going On Musically

The vamp lives in **D minor**, and Carlos colors it with **D Dorian** — the natural minor scale (D E F G A Bb C) but with a **raised 6th (B natural instead of Bb)**. That single raised note is what gives the solo its hopeful, jazzy, slightly Latin lift instead of pure dark minor. (*Dorian* = a minor-type mode that brightens the 6th degree.)

The progression behind the famous section is a slow, hypnotic sway between **Dm** and **Am** — i and v in the key — with a **G** (the IV chord, again featuring that B natural) appearing in the turnaround. Two-chord modal vamps like this are *invitations*: nothing is rushing you, so note *choice* and note *shaping* carry the music.

Core voicings to know:

- **Dm**: x x 0 2 3 1 (or the open Dm) — the tonic, home base.
- **Am**: x 0 2 2 1 0 — the v chord, the place of gentle tension.
- **G**: 3 2 0 0 0 3 — the IV, where the Dorian B natural lives.

Form-wise the tune is intro → verses → the long instrumental → it slides into the faster "Gypsy Queen" section. For our purposes, the lesson is the *slow* part: how to make two chords and a six-note scale sound like a voice telling a story.

The theory that makes it work: over **Dm**, target chord tones **D, F, A** and let the **B natural** pass through as color. Over **Am**, the note **C** becomes especially sweet (it's the b3 of Am and the b7 of Dm). Bending *into* these target tones — rather than just hitting them — is the Santana signature.

## | Signature Moves

These are short illustrative fragments for study, not full transcriptions.

### 1. The opening lyrical phrase (slow, ~rubato, let each note breathe)

TAB

Tempo: slow, ~115 BPM feel, very legato

```
e|-----|
B|-----6h8---8b(10)r8-----|
G|----5b(7)~-----7~-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
```

*Caption:* A vocal entrance — bend up to a target note, add slow vibrato, then descend. Notice how few notes there are. Space is part of the phrase.

## 2. The sustained "singing" bend (this is THE sound)

TAB

Tempo: slow, hold and shake

```
e|-----|
B|--8b(10)~~~~~|
G|-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
```

*Caption:* Bend a whole step up to the target pitch and *sustain it*, adding wide, slow vibrato by re-pushing and releasing the bend. The note must hang and bloom — that's all amp sustain plus hand.

## 3. A D Dorian descending lick (notice the B natural)

TAB

Tempo: slow, even eighths, relaxed

```
e|-----|
B|--10-8-----|
G|----9-7----7-----|
D|-----10-7---10-7-----|
A|-----10-8-----|
E|-----|
```

*Caption:* This run leans on the B natural (the Dorian color) and resolves down toward D. Play it loosely — it's a sigh, not a sprint.

## | The Drills

These are my original exercises in the style of the track. Dial in the **neck-pickup-into-overdrive** tone described above for all three.

**Drill A — D Dorian phrasing in position (builds: scale fluency + space)**

TAB

Tempo: 90 BPM, quarter and eighth notes, leave gaps

```

e|-----|
B|-----6-8-10-----10-8-6-----|
G|-----5-7-----7-9-----9-7-----7-5-----|
D|--7-9-----7-9-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
    
```

*Buils:* Hearing the raised 6th (B natural at B-string fret 10 / G-string fret... think of it as the bright note) inside the D minor home. Play it, then deliberately *stop* and let silence sit before the next phrase. Tone: neck pickup, tone at 6, medium attack.

**Drill B — Sustained vibrato bends (builds: the singing note)**

TAB

Tempo: free, no click - listen to the bloom

```

e|-----|
B|--8b(10)~~~~~r8~~~~~10b(12)~~~~~r10~~~~~|
G|-----|
D|-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
    
```

*Buils:* Pitch-accurate whole-step bends plus slow, controlled vibrato on a *held* note. Practice matching the bent pitch to the next fret up (fret it, then bend to it — they should be identical). Push your amp/overdrive until each bend sustains 3+ seconds. This drill is the heart of the lesson.

**Drill C — Lyrical lead over Dm-Am (builds: target-tone phrasing over the vamp)**

TAB

Tempo: 100 BPM, swung feel, two bars per chord

(Dm)

(Am)

```

e|-----|
B|--6h8~-----8b(10)r8-----10-8-----|
G|-----7-----7~-----5-7-7~-----7~-----|
D|-----7-----|
A|-----|
E|-----|
    
```

*Buils:* Outlining each chord as it passes — landing on F/A over Dm, then leaning into C and A over Am. The bend in bar 1 resolves to a Dm chord tone; the phrase over Am favors that sweet C. Tone note: keep mids up, tone rolled back, and shape every long note with vibrato.

## | Make It Yours

The lesson of "Black Magic Woman" isn't notes — it's *patience and voice*. Take any two-chord minor vamp you like (Em–Bm, Am–Em, Dm–Am) and loop it. Then forbid yourself from playing fast. Set up your neck pickup into a singing overdrive, play **one note**, and make it last — bend into it, hold it, shake it, let it bloom and decay like a singer holding a phrase. The Dorian raised 6th is your secret spice; drop it in over the minor tonic and the whole thing lifts. Once the long notes feel like a voice, *then* connect them with short, vocal runs. Carlos's genius is that he plays like he's *singing* and listening to himself sing. Steal that, and you'll sound like you, only deeper.

### ♪ LISTEN FOR

- The **bloom**: a single bent note that swells and sustains for several seconds, not a quick stab.
- **Slow, wide vibrato** — felt in your wrist/forearm, never nervous or fast.
- The **Dorian B natural** lifting the D minor vamp out of pure darkness.
- **Space**: silence between phrases that lets each line land like a sung lyric.
- A **dark, midrange-forward tone** — neck pickup, tone rolled back, all push and no fizz.