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FUTURE

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TOTAL Guitar ANNUAL 2024

Welcome to the Total Guitar Annual 2024 – packed with the very best features, interviews, advice and more from the past year, it's essential reading for guitar enthusiasts of all levels and styles.

We kick off with an exclusive interview with legendary Queen guitarist Brian May, celebrating 50 years since the band's debut, followed by a guide to playing like the melodic maestro. There's also a whole host of other brilliant features on offer – discover the greatest guitar albums of all time, get top tips on improving your tone and take your acoustic playing to the next level. And that's not all! We also show you how to recreate the sounds of rock's greatest pioneers, relive some of metal's milestones, learn to play like the inimitable Stevie Ray Vaughan and much more! As well as the aforementioned Brian May, we also speak to Slash, Nuno Bettencourt, Nova Twins and Polyphia!

Whatever your skill level, we're also here to help – our tips, tricks and tutorials will give you the confidence to master your guitar and play like the legends. You'll find a wealth of easy-to-follow tab throughout this annual, complete with free audio, video and backing tracks. To get started, head over to bit.ly/tga2024audio to download or stream your audio or video. Enjoy!

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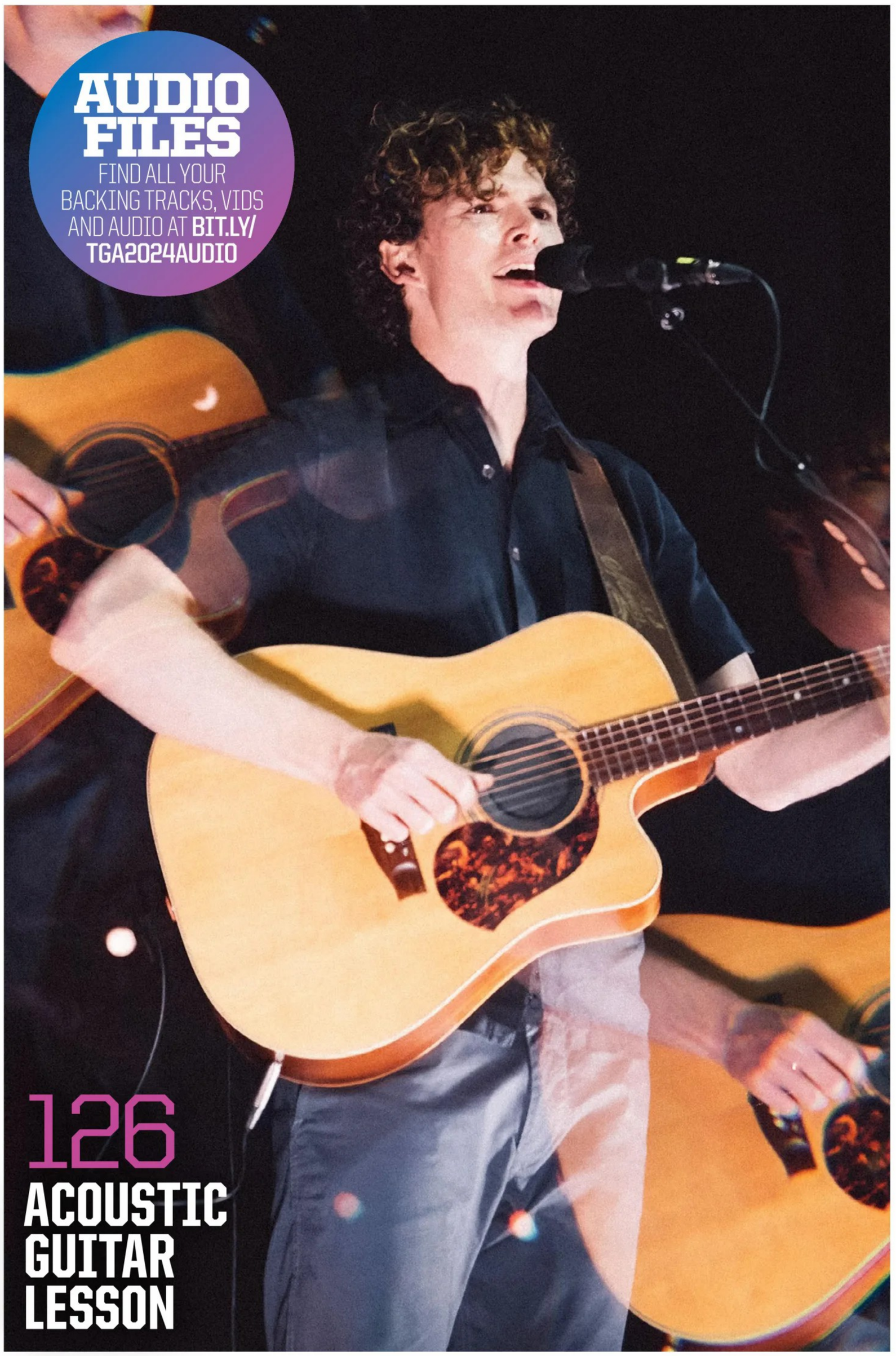

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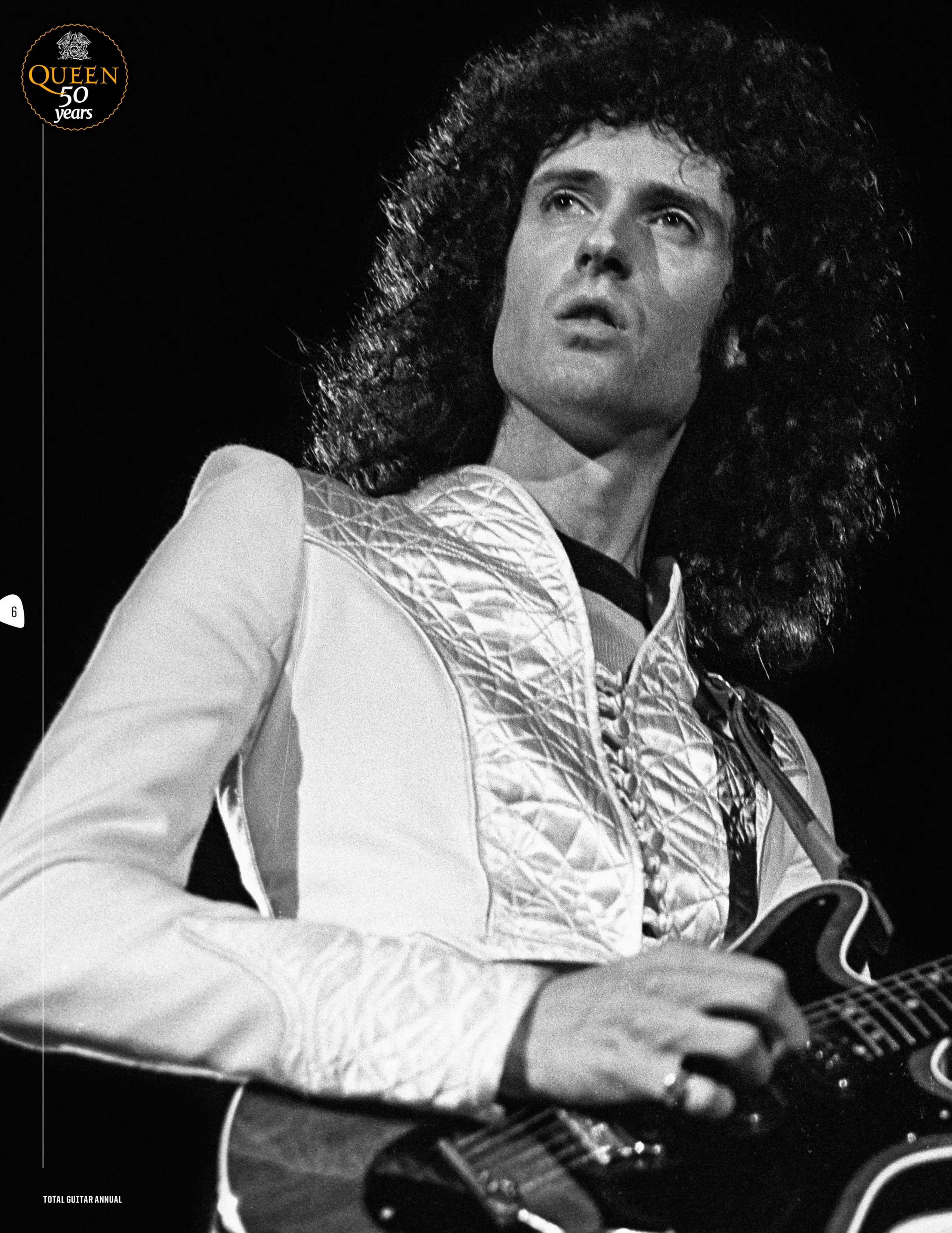


QUEEN 50 years

Brian May

THE INTERVIEW

"We were the right people together at the right time. We were very much in harmony, without even trying"

Interview Chris Bird **Photography** Neil Preston, Douglas Puddifoot © Queen Productions Ltd.

QUEEN 50 years

A new year brings another landmark in the life of one of the greatest guitar players of them all. "Fifty years," Brian May says with a smile and brief pause as he takes it all in. "It really is amazing when you think about it."

Half a century ago, the release of Queen's debut album was the beginning of an extraordinary journey for Brian and the three other founding members of the group: drummer Roger Taylor, bassist John Deacon and singer Freddie Mercury.

That first album, titled simply *Queen*, was not a success, peaking at number 24 on the UK chart. But by the end of 1975 they had their first global smash hit with Mercury's operatic rock masterpiece *Bohemian Rhapsody*, which held the number one spot in the UK for nine weeks, with a groundbreaking video that was years ahead of the MTV revolution. And from there, world domination soon followed.

Queen's stats are astonishing. More than 300 million record sales worldwide, including six million of their 1981 collection *Greatest Hits*, making it the biggest selling album of all time in the UK. More than one billion streams of *Bohemian Rhapsody* on Spotify alone. But those numbers are only a part of the story. The music made by the original line-up of Queen between 1973 and 1991 was dazzlingly creative, and as wide-ranging as it was far-reaching, encompassing everything from heavy rock to disco, gospel, funk and synth-pop. The big hits came from every member of the band: Mercury with *Killer Queen*, *We Are The Champions* and *Crazy Little Thing Called Love* as well as *Bohemian Rhapsody*; Taylor with *Radio Ga Ga* and *A Kind Of Magic*; Deacon with *Another One Bites The Dust* and *I Want To Break Free*: May with *We Will Rock You*, *Fat Bottomed Girls*, *Flash* and *I Want It All*. And as a live act, with Mercury a hugely charismatic frontman, Queen were the masters of stadium rock, as they proved in 1985 when they stole the show at the biggest music event in history, Live Aid.

In November 1991, the death of Freddie Mercury at the age of 45 was the end of Queen. Or so it seemed. In the following year, memorial concert staged at Wembley Stadium, the scene of Freddie's greatest moment at Live Aid, saw May, Taylor and Deacon performing Queen's classic songs with an all-star cast including David Bowie, Elton John, Robert Plant, George Michael and members of Guns N' Roses, Def Leppard and Metallica.

Soon after, John Deacon retired. But for Brian May and Roger Taylor there was, over time, a shared belief that Queen was unfinished business. Between 2005 and 2009, they worked with ex-Free and Bad Company singer Paul Rodgers, performing live and recording an album, *The Cosmos Rocks*, billed as Queen + Paul Rodgers. And in 2011, they enlisted Californian singer Adam Lambert, a runner-up in talent show American Idol, to front a first tour as Queen + Adam Lambert.

Another huge success came in 2018 with the movie *Bohemian Rhapsody*. Described as a 'biographical musical drama film', and starring Rami Malek as Freddie Mercury, it grossed over $900 million. And with each successive tour, Queen + Adam Lambert have played sold-out shows all across the world. The Rhapsody Tour, which wrapped last summer, included no less than 10 dates at London's O2 Arena.

So it is that after 50 years, Queen's music remains as popular as it ever was.

To mark this anniversary, Brian May is speaking to TG from his home in Surrey, where he sits in a surprisingly small and sparsely furnished office room. In a lengthy conversation, he talks primarily about the songs he wrote for Queen, from *Keep Yourself Alive*, the powerful opening track on the band's debut album, through to *The Show Must Go On*, the poignant grand finale from *Innuendo*, the last Queen album of Freddie Mercury's lifetime.

Brian's gear is well documented. The homemade Red Special guitar and the AC-30 amp have been his trusted tools in the vast majority of recordings from his long career. As he said last year, in a separate TG interview: "I'm so lucky that my guitar and amp have such a wide range of possibilities."

So in this new interview, the focus is on his development as a player, the key influences that shaped him, his education in the techniques of recording and production, his approach to live performance, and the art of songwriting in all those classic he created - channelling Led Zeppelin in *Now I'm Here*, inventing thrash metal with *Stone Cold Crazy*, matching the epic scale of *Bohemian Rhapsody* with *The Prophet's Song*, and composing the mother of all rock anthems in *We Will Rock You*.

And he begins by taking us all the way back to that first Queen album...

CAPED CRUSADER
Brian on stage in his mid-70s pomp

IN THE YEAR OF '73...

As the four members of Queen prepared to go into the studio to record the band's debut album, what kind of guitar player were you aiming to be?

What a great question! It was a combination of all the things that were in my head, starting from when I was a kid and listening to the birth of rock 'n' roll on my headphones - in my bed, hidden under the covers. And then there was everything that came in the late 60s. So it's a combination of Buddy Holly, James Burton, Hank Marvin, and then Jimi Hendrix and Jeff Beck and Pete Townshend. All the people who are still my heroes.

When I look back on it, I don't think I could have been born at a better time. As kids we were so lucky to have grown up in that period when things were bursting through and all the boundaries were being broken. When I first heard Little Richard, it was a moment of shock, but there was also the joy of realising that people could actually sing that way - they could scream their emotions, as opposed to being a smoothed-out crooner or whatever. It wasn't just singing tunes anymore. It was singing your

"IN A SOLO YOU WANT TO HEAR THE PERSONALITY, THE ATTACK, AND THE FEELING IN THE MOMENT"

passion, your anger, your love and your pain.

It was such a different world before rock 'n' roll, and both Freddie and I had a lot of influences from what came before, the jazz stuff like Glenn Miller and The Temperance Seven. So when we were growing up, those influences were in us as well as the emerging rock 'n' roll, and that gave us a perspective that almost nobody has these days.

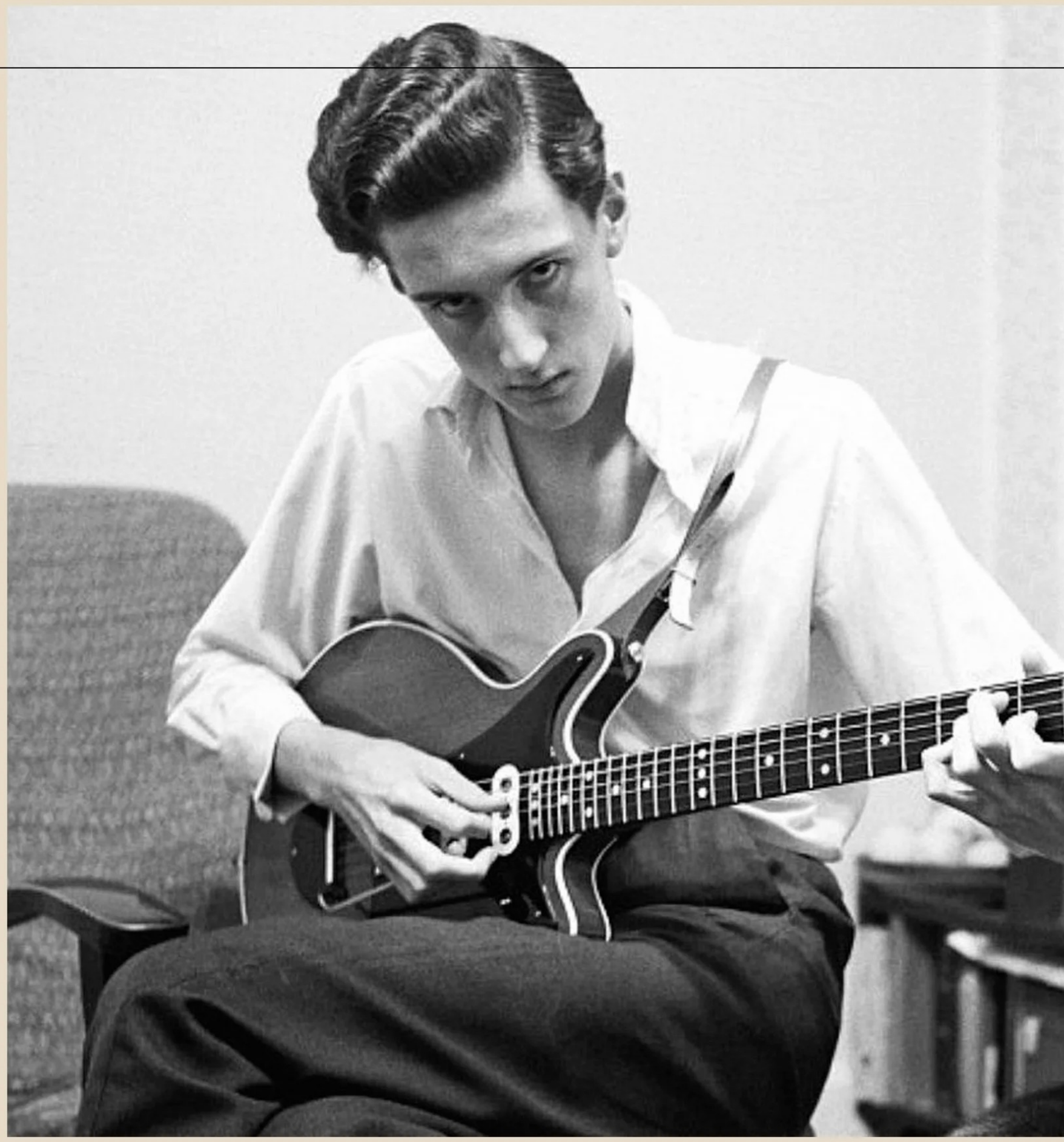
THE FIRST ALBUM

Queen's debut album was co-produced by the band with Roy Thomas Baker and John Anthony, and recorded at Trident Studios in London, with additional material from earlier sessions at another London studio, De Lane Lea. What did you learn from that whole experience?

Our major frustration was the sound of that first album, which we were never happy with. We were thrown into the studio and into a system which regarded itself as state of the art. Trident Studios were very emergent as a force in the world. And they thought they had it down. But the Trident sound was very dead. It was the opposite of what we were aiming for. So Roger's drums would be in a little cubicle, and all the drums would have tape on them. They'd all be dead and down. I remember saying to Roy Thomas Baker, 'This isn't really the sound we want, Roy.' And he said 'Don't worry, we can fix it all in the mix.' Which of course is not the best way, is it? And I think we all knew: it ain't going to happen!

Strangely enough, the demos we'd made at De Lane Lea Studios in Wembley were closer to what we dreamed of – you know, nice open drum sounds and ambience on the guitar and everything. That's much more the way we wanted it to go. So that's the major frustration with the first album. But there were other frustrations. Roy was doing a great job of kicking us into shape, but it didn't really sit very well with our way of playing. His idea of getting on track was do it again and again. And again. And again. And again! So there's no mistakes. But of course, by the time you've done that, you've lost all your enthusiasm for it. And it kind of shows.

"Much later we evolved these techniques of keeping ourselves fresh – particularly with *The Game* album [1980], where if the backing track sounded good, and you make a mistake, you'd just drop in on it. Then we said, 'Why didn't we do that before?' And it was because people told us it couldn't be done. But with those backing tracks on the first album, they got a bit tiresome. And I think you can hear it in some cases.



EARLY MAY
As a young man in the 60s, with his newly-built Red Special

How happy were you with the guitar sounds on the album?

That was a bit of a fight as well, because people had discovered multi tracking, and there was this feeling that everything ought to be multitrack. So you play a solo, and the first thing people say is, 'Oh, do you want to double track that?' And maybe you do. But maybe you don't – because sometimes you want to hear the personality, the attack, and the feeling in the moment when you do that one track. So there was an awful lot of overdubs on that first album, which I would say now was unnecessary, and perhaps made it a bit

"WE WERE NEVER HAPPY WITH THE SOUND OF THE FIRST ALBUM"

more stiff than it otherwise would have been. Having said that, I think the songs are very representative of where we were at the time. We were evolving. We had our heroes, as people always do. Anyone who tells you that they create in a vacuum is not telling the truth, because you have to create according to what you've grown up with. And I'll mention Buddy Holly again, because he was such a big influence on me. That's what got me excited in the beginning, I guess. But you can hear in the first album that we're finding our style.

Despite its difficult birth, are you proud of that album?

Oh, I love it! It encapsulates what we were at the time, and it's a declaration of where we were going. It's very emotionally-based and quite raw. But it's got a lot of melody and sh*tloads of harmonies. We were starting to flex our muscles. We were painting those

colours with vocals and with guitars. It's got all sorts of experimentation, which defines how free we wanted to be.

There's one song, *The Night Comes Down*, where we're doing something which people told us we couldn't do. People in those days used to say, 'You can't mix electric guitar with acoustic guitar.' Nowadays that sounds pretty funny, but it was a belief that people around studios had, you know? They would say the electric guitar is too loud for the acoustic and I went, 'Come on!' It's just a question of balancing in the mix. So with *The Night Comes Down*, it's based on acoustic guitar, my old beautiful old acoustic. But the guitar harmonies are all electric. And that was a beginning, sort of like a demonstration: 'Yes, we can do this, we can make our own rules!' So, yes, I like that first album, because it does define us. Absolutely.

KEEP YOURSELF ALIVE

As the first track on the first album, *Keep Yourself Alive* was effectively the band's mission statement. Was this also an important statement for you personally as a guitarist?

Keep Yourself Alive, you could write a book about in itself. It's got the first multitracked solo that I ever did. And I am happy with it. It's a song written by a boy who's becoming a man. It was meant to be ironic, but I discovered that irony isn't an easy thing to put into music, because people don't tend to connect with it. They tend to take it at face value. *Keep Yourself Alive* wasn't meant to be jolly. The message was meant to be: if keeping yourself alive is all there is, then what is life? That's kind of where I'm coming from. But people took it as something very joyful. And to be honest, I haven't fought that, because it's kind of nice. It seems to give people an uplift. All songs evolve after they've been made, not just before they've been made, and that's one of them, I think.

With this being such an important song, did you work that little bit harder in the recording and mixing of it?

I'll tell the whole story. We first put the song down in those demos that I told you about at De Lane Lea, and I was very happy with it. But of course we needed to re-record it for the album, and you know, when you're trying to recreate something, it's never quite the same. I never felt that the album version had the original ebullience that we got when we were first putting it down. But we worked on it very diligently. A lot of the multi tracking rhythm parts that we put in, I took off, but we couldn't mix it. We had Roy Baker, who is an absolutely first class engineer, and was quite experienced by that time. He's the guy who did *All Right Now* for Free. We had John Anthony, who had great ears as a producer. And then we had the four of us who are very precocious boys. And between all of us, we couldn't mix it. It just never sounded quite right.

"But then, one night, I happened to be left alone with the guy who was making the tea, and just becoming an assistant engineer – Mike Stone. I said, 'Should we just have a go?' Because that's the way it worked in those days. For guys like Mike it was an apprenticeship. They would sign on as tea boys and at night times they'd go in and work the desk and learn their trade. Well, he stepped up at that moment! The two of us worked through the night and produced a mix of *Keep Yourself Alive* which suddenly everyone was happy with. So that's quite a story and that was part of Mike Stone's blossoming. He became the most incredible producer and engineer. He worked with us on *A Night At The Opera* and *A Day At The Races*, *We Will Rock You* and *We Are The Champions*. Mike became a very treasured member of our family.

So I do like that mix of *Keep Yourself*

DEAR FRIENDS
Brian and Freddie on an early Queen tour

"WE WERE PAINTING THOSE COLOURS WITH VOCALS AND WITH GUITARS"

Alive. Really, the stuff we had in Trident Studios was incredibly primitive. We only had left, centre and right for a start when you're mixing, and you can hear that. Pan pots weren't invented, basically. You're mixing to three buses, and there's very limited outboard gear, so the phasing isn't some machine, it's real – you feed out your signal into a Revox in one corner, and you feed the tape over here to another Revox. I'm talking about the delays. But all that phasing is real – real tape phasing. But apart from that, there isn't much in the way of outboard gear. There's very primitive echo chamber like a plate which sits over behind the wall someplace. So, limited capabilities of the gear. But we had a lot of enthusiasm and a lot of will to make this thing sound epic.

THE SECOND ALBUM AND THE FIRST HIT

You returned to Trident Studios to make *Queen II*, and retained the services of Roy Thomas Baker, who worked as Queen's co-producer on three more albums in the 70s. After the difficulties with the first album, what was your approach second time around?

I remember saying to Roy as we were going back in: 'We don't want it to sound like that first album. We want to sound like we're in a room and it's live and real. We have to get rid of all that tape and get rid of the cubicles. And we'll put the drums in the middle of the room, so we hear the room.' In that respect, my dad was a great influence. He introduced me to the word 'ambience.' He said that's what was missing on the first album. And that ambience is the world. The noise you're making can seem very small. You hear a snare drum, it's very tight and dry. There's no character to it, really. But you step back, and you hear it in the room, and suddenly you hear a whole universe!

Like the first album, *Queen II* was very much a guitar-driven heavy rock record.

Yes. We used to go on these package tours to places like Luxembourg and Belgium with groups who were popular at the time – Showaddywaddy, the Rubettes and Geordie, who of course had Brian Johnson [later of AC/DC] as the singer. We also opened for Slade, and we were the new boys. We were the young band who hadn't had any hits, and all of these guys that had hits. So we felt a bit humble. But all those guys looked at us and said, 'We've heard your stuff, and you're not pop, you're not glam – you're a rock group. You're something which we wish we were.' Now that was a real shock to us. We didn't realise that people were already regarding us as something special.

And it was a track from *Queen II* that gave you that first hit, when Freddie's song *Seven Seas Of Rhye* reached number 10 in the UK.

Well, you know, of course, that *Seven Seas Of Rhye* was the last track on the first album, in embryo – a sort of statement that something's coming. But yes, the finished version was the first hit. Not that big, but the first hit.

***Seven Seas Of Rhye* is also quite unconventional for a hit single. It's not verse/chorus/verse, and it's got those little instrumental key changes in there. Were you surprised when it made the charts?**

I think it's fair to say we were surprised because we'd never had a hit up to that point, and until then it seemed impossible. But with *Seven Seas Of Rhye*, we worked at it very consciously. We'd thought with *Keep Yourself Alive*: this is going to be on the radio, it's going to be our first hit. But on the whole, people at radio didn't play it. We said, 'Why are you not playing our record?' They said, 'Well, it takes too long to happen – the intro is too long.' We didn't get into the verse until 30 seconds or whatever, and for a hit single everything needs to grab you quickly. So we said, 'Right, our next single will deliver what you people are asking for!' In other words, everything will happen in the first five seconds, and with *Seven Seas Of Rhye* it does. It's like the kitchen sink is in there – a little piano and wham, bang, harmonies, guitar harmonies, massive drum fills – everything! So it was designed to knock people dead in the first few seconds on the radio, and it worked. People went, 'Okay, yeah, we'll play that.'

Your hits were all about radio in those days and very little else. So yes, it was designed that way. But at the same time, we were not compromising on

the content of the song. It's very rock. It's not very pop, and as you say, there's all kinds of little intricate changes in there. It's quite a composition, really. And it was quite interactive between the four of us.

Freddie decided he didn't want to say it was written by anyone else but him, which is fair enough, because he wrote the lyrics. But it was a very co-operative thing in those days. And I do feel proud of it. I think it's a good rock pop creation. And it got us to that first rung of the ladder. Suddenly, we were an act that people would consider putting on the radio. And we liked it because we hadn't compromised, because it wasn't just a kind of soft pop song. It was something also that we could take on the road and be proud of.

And really, the magic of that song is in those key changes. They have an uplifting quality.

Exactly. It's a journey. We wanted to take people off into the stratosphere. It's always been that way with us. We were inspired by our heroes to do that, and I put The Who way up top of that list. Pete Townshend is the master of mood change, a master of the suspended chord. I owe so much to him.

BRIGHTON ROCK

The third album, *Sheer Heart Attack*, from 1974, is widely viewed as the band's first classic and the first quintessential Queen album. And the opening track, *Brighton Rock*, is one of your most defining songs as a guitar player. It's an explosion of excitement – and of course, the delay effect is in there. It's said that this song was written around the time of *Queen II*, but was held back for *Sheer Heart Attack*. What was the reason for that?

It was a slow burner, that song. It took shape gradually. And the solo stuff originated in a different place. When we were out on tour with Mott The Hoople, I played the beginnings of that solo in the song *Son And Daughter*, which is on the first album. And I built my own delays – I modified some Echoplexes and built long rails for them so I could produce those long delays. They were frighteningly unstable. They weren't roadworthy. So it was touch and go where they would work every night. And they didn't work every night!

I would experiment at that point with the delays, and got the idea of building up harmonies and counterpoint with the delays. It became an obsession, which actually is still there. I still find I'm sort of obsessed with this kind of stuff. These days, the delays are done digitally very easily. But there's a certain charm about the old tape delays. They didn't have a certain sound, because I started off with one delay, and then realised that if I had another delay of the same length, I could get three-part harmonies, and that's when I got really excited!

IN FOCUS
A keen student of photography, Brian has published several books on the subject, including *Queen In 3-D*

When did you switch to the to the double delay?

I don't remember exactly, but I think soon after the first album. As soon as we were out on tour – seriously on tour – I had the two delays.

So it's fair to say that people have never really heard *Brighton Rock* without the two delays?

No, probably not. It's just one on the album version. But by the time we get to [1975 album] *A Night At The Opera*, it's a staple thing. There's a lot of it in that album, and we're doing it with the vocals as well in *The Prophet's Song* – getting Freddie in there with the same kind of gear and encouraging him to experiment as well.

NOW I'M HERE

In addition to *Brighton Rock*, the *Sheer Heart Attack* album has another of your signature songs in *Now I'm Here* – powered by those long, winding riffs, in which there's an echo of Led Zeppelin's Black Dog...

I owe a lot to Jimmy Page, of course – the master of the riff, and the master of getting lost deliberately in time signatures. I think that song was inspired, definitely, by the spirit of Zeppelin. All those wonderful things that are happening when Bonzo [Zeppelin drummer John Bonham] is throwing in things which sound like they're in a different time signature – that stuff has always fascinated me.

Those guys were not far ahead of us in age, but the first time we heard Zeppelin, we thought, 'Oh, my God, this is where we're trying to get to, and they're already there!' So in a sense, there were times when we felt like we'd missed the boat – like we wouldn't be able to get our stuff out there. But our vision was slightly different from Zeppelin, musically. It's more harmonic and melodic, I suppose. But I would never be ashamed to say that Zeppelin were a huge influence on us, not just musically, but also in the way they handled themselves in the business, without compromising. The way they handled their image, the integrity, the way they built their stage show – so many things. I suppose between Zeppelin and The Beatles and The Who, you would see where we came from. That was the kind of platform that we bounced off.

STONE COLD CRAZY

And yet another landmark track from *Sheer Heart Attack* is *Stone Cold Crazy*, a song so fast and heavy that Metallica's version of it made perfect sense. Is this the definitive example of Queen at their heaviest?

I think so. *Stone Cold Crazy* goes back a long way. It was one of the first songs we ever played together, so it's interesting that it never made it onto

"I COULD HEAR IT IN MY HEAD: 'WE WILL, WE WILL ROCK YOU!' I WAS HOPING IT WOULD CATCH ON"

a record until the third album. That's quite unusual, isn't it? I think we were playing *Stone Cold Crazy* in our very first gigs. Freddie had written the lyrics with his old band, and the original riff was very different – it sounded like the riff in *Tear It Up* [from 1984 album *The Works*]. So that original version of *Stone Cold Crazy* sounded like a lot of other things which were around at the time, with quite an easygoing riff. It didn't have much pace to it. But I thought: these lyrics are kind of frenetic, so the music should be frenetic as well. So I put this riff on it, which people are telling me is the birth of thrash metal or something! I don't know about that. But was unusual at the time to play at that pace.

That song was a bit of fun, really. I don't think we regarded it as that serious, which is perhaps why it never made it onto an album until number three. But it's nice and heavy. I still remember going in to do the definitive version of it, and it was faster than ever – we just went for it! There's a lot of adrenaline: let's go for it! It really does burn. And I liked the sounds that we had in place by that time. *Stone Cold Crazy* is a good example of us recording in a live atmosphere but in the studio. And we started to have it down by that point. Once you get a grip on that kind of stuff, you can fool yourself into thinking it's live when you're in the studio. So it doesn't sound calculated – it sounds real and spontaneous. And we captured it. I think that's all one take. It's not like messing around doing take after take. We just did it. I'd say that's when we started to master the studio.

THE PROPHET'S SONG

On the most iconic Queen album, *A Night At The Opera*, there is a clear parallel between two grandiose, multi-movement songs: Freddie's epic, *Bohemian Rhapsody*, and your epic, *The Prophet's Song*. And it's evident that *The Prophet's Song* is one of yours, because it really rocks.

To be honest, I always regard it as a bit of a shame that *The Prophet's Song* got eclipsed – because *Bohemian Rhapsody* was always going to eclipse everything. So with *The Prophet's Song*, it's kind of a light that got hidden under a bushel. But the positive is that it's a deep side of Queen, which people get into when they start exploring. It's a nice thing for them to discover and get excited about. But yes, you're right, those two songs were kind of parallel.

TIE YOUR MOTHER DOWN

When it comes to ballsy rock 'n' roll songs, there is nothing in the Queen catalogue as ballsy and rock 'n' roll as *Tie Your Mother Down*, the opening track from the 1976 album *A Day At The Races*. What do you remember about writing that one?

I wrote the riff on a volcanic mountaintop in Tenerife. Really. And I thought, what am I going to do with this? And all I could hear in my head was *Tie Your Mother Down*, which didn't seem like a reasonable kind of song title. I remember bringing it back to the boys and saying, 'I've got this riff', which they all liked. When they asked what the song was about, I said, 'All I've got is this title – *Tie Your Mother Down* – which obviously we can't use.' And Freddie said, 'What do you mean, we can't use it? Yes we can!' And I started to think, okay, this is a song about growing up and being frustrated with your parents. And it's got a sense of humour to it. And it was quite quick to write those lyrics, which I'm quite proud of, because at that point I was still a boy, not quite a man. And that song is the cry of a boy's frustration.

It's a song that feels very free in the performance...

Yeah, there's a Rory Gallagher influence there – in the way I'm snapping those strings like that. And I loved Rory. Perhaps I should have mentioned him earlier, because he was a fantastic influence on me. What a wonderful guy he was, in every way.

WE WILL ROCK YOU

In 1977, the year of punk rock, Queen responded with *News Of The World*, an album of shorter, punchier songs – *We Will Rock You* the shortest and punchiest of all. It is, undeniably, the greatest rock anthem of all time. How did you create something so simple and effective?

The song was born one night in Bingley Hall in the Midlands. We were a group which was doing quite well, we had a good following, and we had this thing where people insisted on singing along to our songs. And I think we were quite irritated by it!

SILENCE! GENIUS AT WORK
"People insisted on singing along to our songs," Brian recalls. "And we were quite irritated by it!"

Seriously? Why?

Because we thought: 'People, just listen. We're working really hard, so bloody well listen!' But they were unstoppable. And this particular night, they sang every word to every song, which was rather novel in those days. I mean, I went to a Zeppelin concert and I don't remember people singing along to *Communication Breakdown* or whatever they were playing. When Zeppelin played, they *listened*. They banged their heads, and they listened. And I thought about our concerts: why don't you buggers listen instead of singing?

Anyway, that night at Bingley Hall, we came off stage and we all looked at each other in amazement, because all that singing from the audience was so extreme. And I said to Freddie, 'Maybe, instead of fighting this, we should be encouraging it. Maybe we should be harnessing this kind of energy which seems to be happening.' And we all agreed that this was something really interesting that we should experiment

with – letting the audience be a bigger part of the show.

I thought, what can you ask an audience to do if that audience is all crammed in together? There's not much they can do except stamp their feet and clap their hands, but they can also sing. And if they can chant, what would they chant? And with that, I could hear it in my head: 'We will, we will rock you!'

I was hoping that this would become something which would catch on. We would have a song which would be led by the audience. So that's why there's no drums on there – just the stamping and clapping that the four of us did. Very luckily, we found bits of an old drum riser lying around in the studio in Wessex in North London, which was perfect to stamp on. And with the help of Mike Stone, I evolved a whole business of multi-tracking with various prime delays to make it sound huge, but not echoey. There's no echo on that. So it sounds like you're in the middle of a thousand people stamping and clapping. Then we put other stuff on it.

Now, I was very nervous about this, because it seemed like it was kind of over-simplistic, maybe. And I wasn't sure if it was going to sound like a proper song. But as soon as I heard Freddie singing it, I started to be more confident, because he sounded like a kind of rabble-rouser. It sounded like he was going to encourage the audience to do this stuff. And so it was all aimed towards getting the audience involved. It was aimed towards the live situation. And somehow it worked.

Did the rest of the band share your belief in this song?

I remember Roger had severe misgivings about it. And he certainly didn't want to put it at the beginning of the album. He said, 'No radio station is ever going to play this! It doesn't sound like a rock song.' But I fought that corner. And generally I didn't win those arguments, but this time I won. So that was the beginning of the album. And it was also my thought that we should weld *We Will Rock You* and *We Are The Champions* together as a couple. And that worked out very well – partly because those songs both have the same end in mind, they're both enveloping the audience and involving the audience, treating the audience inclusively – and partly because it just made such sense musically. It just worked so well.

So that was the beginning of the album, and that was the single – the two tracks together. It was number four in America, a big hit all over, really. And this whole thing changed our lives radically. Because from that point on, we stuck to that resolution – we became a band that encouraged participation. And that's not the way we started off, but it became a great thing. It probably sounds all very obvious now, because everybody gets the audience to clap and sing along, but that's not the way rock 'n' roll was in those days. And I think it was a great bolt out of heaven. Looking back, it's a no brainer – but at the time it was a radical departure.

FUTURE FACING
"*One Vision* was a nice way of flexing our muscles and finding a new place"

In that sense, would you say that without *We Will Rock You* there would have been no *Radio Ga Ga*?

Yeah. And no *many* things. So many things. And of course, you never know how people are going to react to a song. But you can hope.

And the guitar solo in *We Will Rock You* – what was your thinking there?

I don't think it was planned. I just wanted to rock! But I did want to break that boundary as well – because everybody puts guitar solos in the middle of the song, and I didn't want to do that. I wanted this song to happen with the audience, and that would then lead me to the stage, so the guitar solo would be the climax of the song. That was pretty unusual at the time, and I can't actually think of another song that does that. So that was deliberate.

And that little riff that's in the middle there, I guess it must have been in my head someplace. But when I went in there to play that piece of guitar, I don't think I actually had a plan. We'd played and played through the song and I tried to visualise myself on stage: what would people want to hear, and what would I want to feel like? And I played for a few minutes, and we just picked the bits that we liked.

ONE VISION

The first Queen song released after Live Aid has a triumphant air to it. There is a sense in *One Vision* that the band has a new energy. Was that the feeling when it was written?

It was us going back into the studio and enjoying ourselves feeling very free. We also had a film crew in there with us, which actually changed the chemistry quite a bit. I think we were very conscious of the film crew. And when you see that footage, you can tell it's hard for us to be as relaxed and normal

as we otherwise would have been. Nevertheless, you see the song taking shape. It's built around a lyric of Roger's, which is basically about Martin Luther King, and he also took that idea into *A Kind Of Magic* [the title track from the band's 1986 album]. The lyrics in the two songs are similar. So that was our starting point, but it changed when we evolved the lyrics as we went along.

One Vision was a nice way of flexing our muscles, I guess, and finding a new place. We were back in Musicland [studios in Munich], which was very fertile for us creatively. It didn't do a lot for our private lives, because we all went off the rails in Munich. But creatively, it was always very good. And it was fun.

And again, you asked me about this earlier – with *One Vision* we're imagining it on stage from the beginning. We're imagining how this is going to be live, how it's going to be something that the audience will get into. And we're sort of designing it as an epic. But we couldn't resist sending it up at the end by singing 'fried chicken'. It's nice to have that other side to things, because we always took our work very seriously, but we didn't take ourselves too seriously. We didn't allow *each other* to take ourselves too seriously!

THE SHOW MUST GO ON

The *Innuendo* album was Freddie's last act. And in the album's final track there is so much emotion. Can you describe how this song was created, and how you worked with Freddie through such a dark time?

By now, of course, we're in a very different place, where Freddie knows that his time is probably running out. Nobody knows for sure. We are also aware of it. And he's determined that we will carry on. Business as normal. We will go in the studio, and we will forget everything and just be us creating. And it was a great vibe in the studio. Fred was very positive in how he managed it. I don't really know how. Nevertheless, he wasn't able to be there that much, because physically he was already suffering, and he had to go for his treatments. You never knew when he was going to come back at that time.

So with *The Show Must Go On*, I think I listened to Roger and John putting something down and something triggered in my head – this sort of circular riff. After a few days I did a demo of it, with no real words at that point. Then I played it to Freddie, and I said, I have this title, *The Show Must Go On*, but maybe that's too corny. I said to him, 'Do you think that's going to work? He said, 'Absolutely! It will work. Why don't we just pursue that?' And I had a fantastic afternoon with him, just working through that first verse, looking for lyrics and trying to figure out what it was all going to mean.

Songs are never about just one thing. *The Show Must Go On* was about a clown who was suffering inside but still had to paint his smile and make everybody jolly. That's what the song was about. There was no mention of the fact that this might be some sort of allegory about Freddie himself. But I think it was unspoken that we both knew what we were writing. Really it's about Freddie.

We had enough lyrics for that first verse, and Freddie said, 'I'll come back as soon as I can.' He didn't come back for a long time. But the song developed in my head. I started to think, well, maybe he isn't going to come back. And at the same time, I couldn't stop myself. For some reason, there was an energy coming into me. And I was writing something which I knew was good and I hoped he was going to be able to sing eventually.

So I mapped it all out. And that first verse, I split up into two bits, and wrote the verses around what we'd done together. Basically, I wrote the whole song around that little fragment which Freddie and I put together. I woke up one morning with this image of butterflies in my head, and I thought I would love to hear Freddie sing: 'My soul is painted like the wings of butterflies.' I thought: this is Freddie. And he's not going to write it for himself, because he wasn't going to thrust himself forward in that way, you know? But I can write it for him. I wanted to put those words in his mouth. And it was a gift from God. I don't even know where those lyrics came from.

So I presented it all to him the next time he turned up in the studio, and by that time he was suffering a lot. He could hardly stand. I played him some of the demo, with me singing, which went incredibly high and was very difficult. In the past, Freddie was always shouting at me, like, 'It's too f*cking high! You're making me ruin my beautiful voice!' So I thought he was going to shout at me this time. But he just heard it and said, 'I'll f*cking do that. Don't worry.' So he downed a couple of vodkas, neat, then propped himself up on the desk and worked his way through singing all of that song. And it was amazing.

I think he did three or four takes, and he absolutely smashed that vocal. It's like he reached into a place that even he'd never got to before. I remember saying to Freddie, 'I don't want you to hurt yourself. You know, don't force yourself to do this if it's not going to feel good.' But he said, 'I'll f*cking do it, Brian!' And he did. And it was beautiful. I think it's one of his finest performances of all time. It's incredible.

LATTER DAYS
Queen in 1989, just two years before Freddie Mercury passed away

Guitars & backing Jon Bishop

THE GENIUS OF... BRIAN MAY

Power chord riffing, harmony lead and much more: the multi-faceted and instantly recognisable guitar style of Queen's melodic maestro...

Welcome to our all-encompassing look at Queen's incredible guitarist Brian May and his various approaches to electric and acoustic playing. The aim of this lesson is to learn and apply some of the tried and tested concepts used by May during his stellar career.

The Brian May guitar sound is one of the finest and most recognisable in rock history. His many tones are the product of a unique combination of ingenious ingredients, all cooked up by Brian and his father – plus a little help from a wall of Vox AC30s, a Dallas Rangemaster treble booster and a funny little transistor amp put together by bassist John Deacon. Although upgraded and modernised here and there, most of these ingredients have remained pretty much unchanged for the best part of five decades.

Brian's 'Red Special' guitar was a custom one-off build by Brian and father Harold and features a chambered body with oak centre-block and three Burns Tri-Sonic pickups. The wiring is complex and allows each pickup to be turned on individually and the phase of each to be reversed. This provides a myriad of options, each with a sound of its own. Brian uses a sixpenny coin (minted from 1551-1980 and until 1947 made of solid silver) as a pick. The sixpence is fairly thin and provides a metallic bite. It also has a serrated edge so angling it provides lots of gritty attack.

The treble booster pedal is a handy tool for converting an already overdriven amp into a fully screaming monster. At the time Brian started performing, valve amps weren't really designed to produce hugely overdriven sounds. The Dallas Rangemaster treble booster was the way that Brian, Rory Gallagher and Ritchie Blackmore achieved their sustain and overdrive.

Brian also pioneered a creative approach to using multiple delays. His rig features three Vox AC30 amps. The first amp produces the direct guitar signal; the second has a single delay repeat at around 750ms and the third operates another delay repeat at around 1500ms. If the notes are carefully selected and timed, Brian can use the repeats to obtain his signature harmonised sound live, without the need for lots of studio overdubs.

To get you started we have recorded five licks and tips that focus on a key aspect of May's approaches. Then there are three awesome performance jam tracks to learn.

The first is a homage to Brian's acoustic guitar moments. The second is a fun-to-play workout that exploits his signature three-delay, harmonisation technique. To finish up there is an all-in jam track that puts together many of his top tricks into a single piece.

As ever, the TG audio contains the finished tracks and a backing track for each, so you can jam along. The notation includes details of all the pickup selections, volume control settings and tone used for each example – the good thing is that with a little thought and a good ear we can get pretty close to Brian's fingerprint tone with our own gear.

Once you have mastered the technique or approach in question, be sure to apply it to your own compositions. Take your time, but most importantly have fun with it!

BRIAN MAY'S GUITAR SOUND IS ONE OF THE FINEST IN ROCK HISTORY

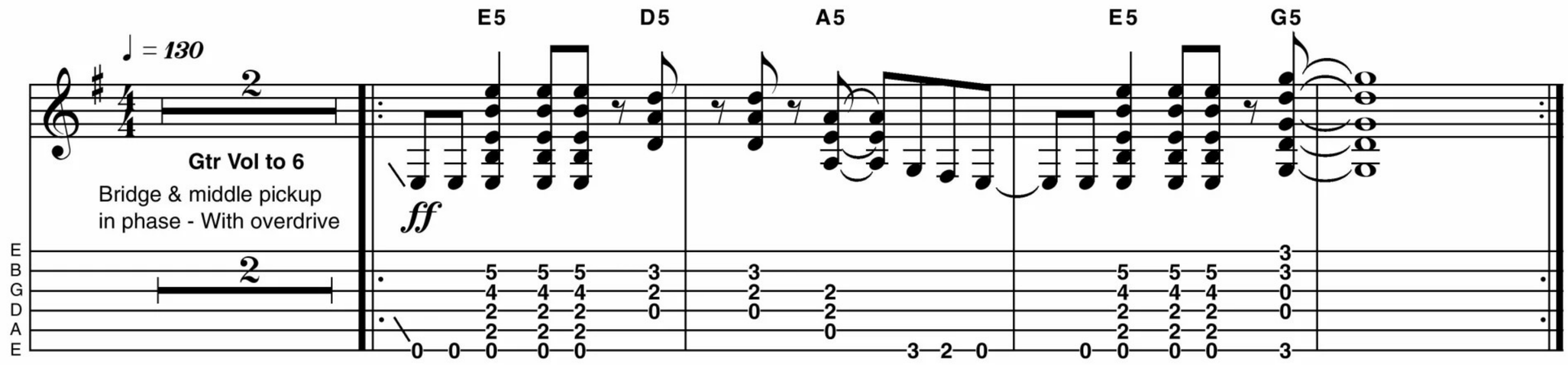
TECHNIQUE FOCUS
Vibrato and bending

Brian has one of the most articulate and musical vibratos in all of rock. While not as wide and pronounced as more modern players like Yngwie Malmsteen or Steve Vai, it's noticeably broader than that of, say, Eric Clapton or Jimi Hendrix. Brian's vibrato on unbent notes is smooth and languid and if you watch him you can see that the action is more in the rotating of the wrist than merely pushing the string up and down; in reality it's an intuitive combination of the two. A common May device is to bend the string and then pick it (pre-bend); this is usually followed by a lovely wobble. When bending strings and applying vibrato always support the bending finger with as many spare digits as you have available. This allows for a stronger vibrato and also helps keep your hand safe from injury.

Brian playing his legendary tone machine the Red Special

1 POWER CHORD RIFFING

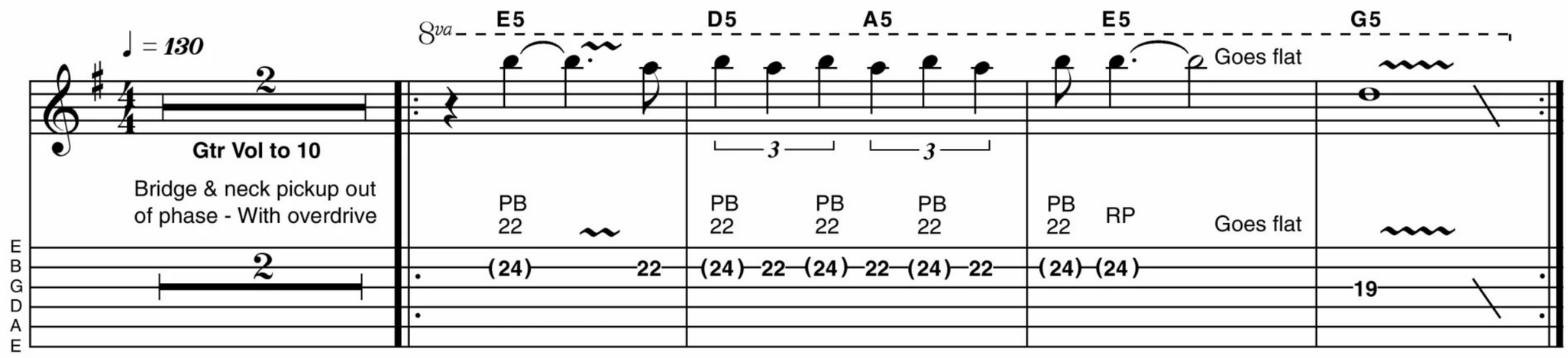
BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO



Brian is a power chord riff master and favours big-sounding fingerings. This E5 shape sounds huge, as does the open G5. Unlike players such as Eddie Van Halen whose tone is surprisingly clean by comparison (due to power amp volume rather than gain), Brian often adds lashings of overdrive.

2 OUT-OF-PHASE TONE AND PRE-BENDS

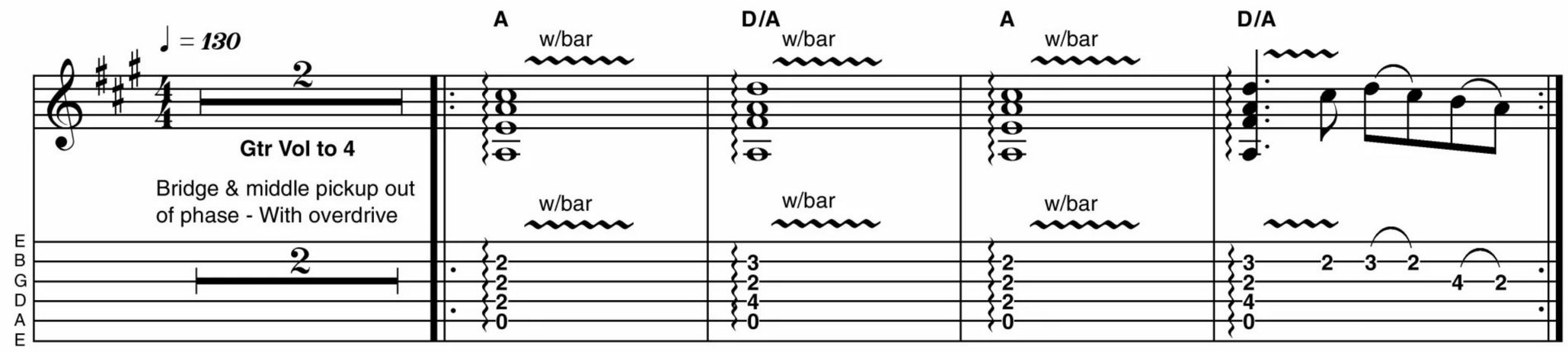
BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO



If you select the bridge and neck pickups on the Red Special and set them out of phase (or use bridge and middle on a Strat) the high harmonics are accentuated. If you find the sweet spot higher up the neck, with enough overdrive you can get that screaming lead sound heard on many Queen solos. The pre-bend is another key part of the BM sound. Pre-bending the note allows Brian to attach a 'vocal' vibrato that dips below and above the pitch.

3 OUT-OF-PHASE TONE AND SLASH CHORDS

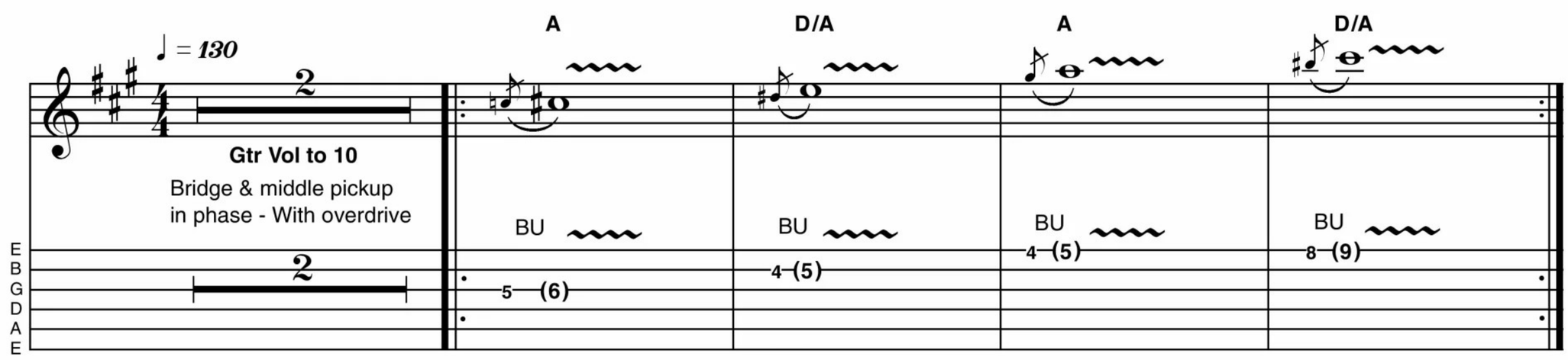
BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO



Brian is fond of the A to D/A chord pattern (or the equivalent in other keys) and uses it in many Queen classics including *We Will Rock You*, *Hammer To Fall* and *Kind Of Magic*. Slightly dragging the sixpence across the strings (do buy one and try it) provides that signature, metallic attack.

4 HARMONY LEAD

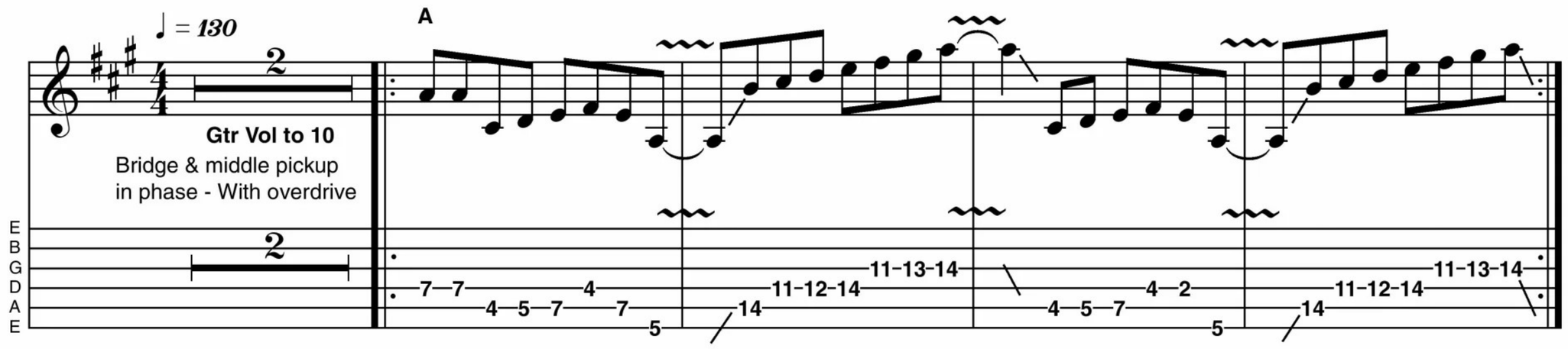
BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO



If you're talking about signature sounds then this is surely the one. Stacking up harmonies is essential to sounding like Brian. Here we go for the basic idea which is to stack diatonic 3rd intervals on top of each other. Just play the notes in the transcription and let the backing track do the work.

5 SINGLE-NOTE RIFFING AND THE MAJOR SCALE

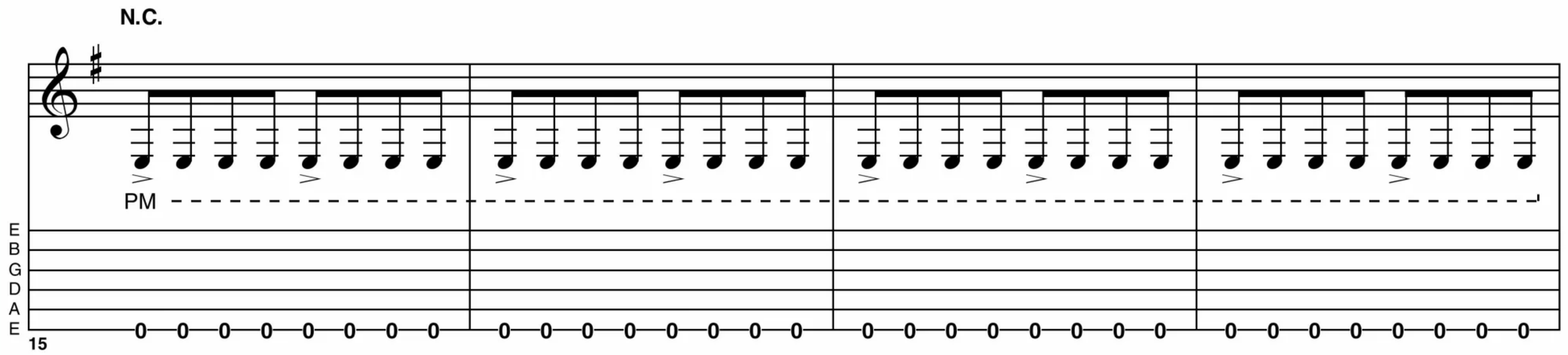
BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO



Brian has a knack of using the Major scale (R-2-3-4-5-6-7) for riffs and soloing. The Major scale can have a happy, bright sound, which is hard to make work in the heavy rock style. However, when Brian uses the Major scale with all his signature techniques it has a regal quality and works a treat.

PERFORMANCE TRACK 1 Delay

BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO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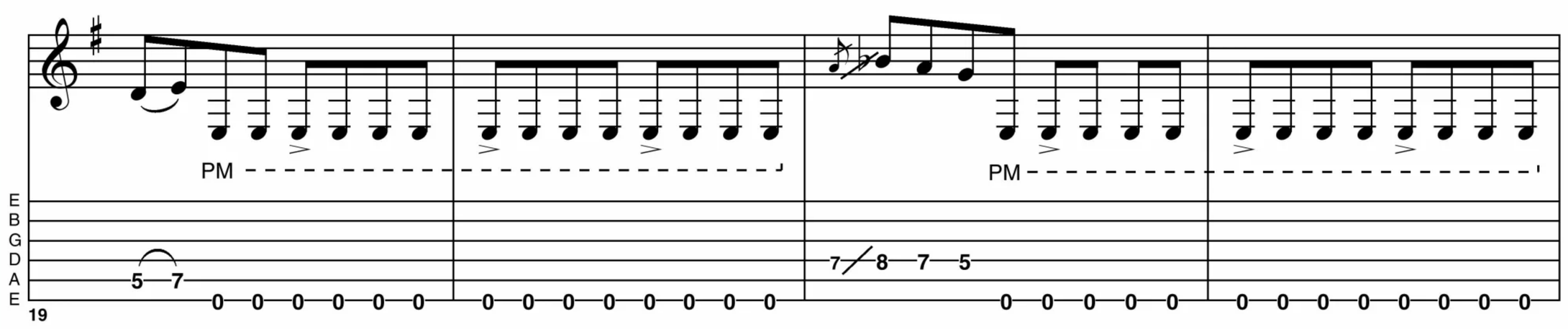
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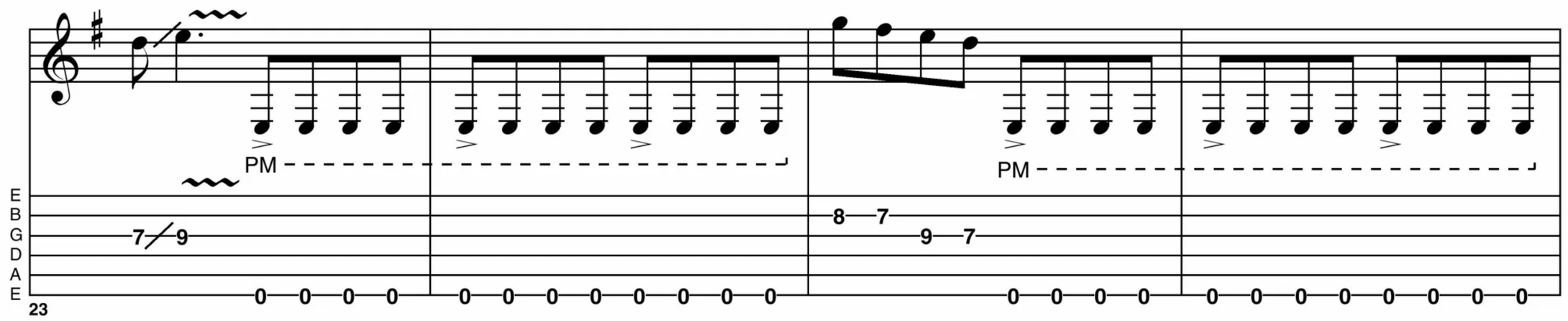
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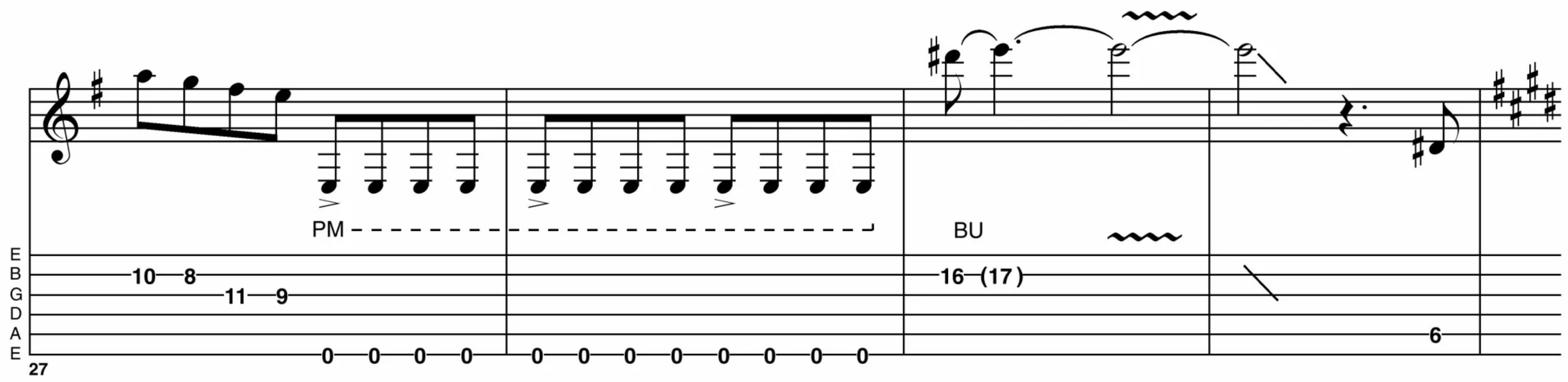
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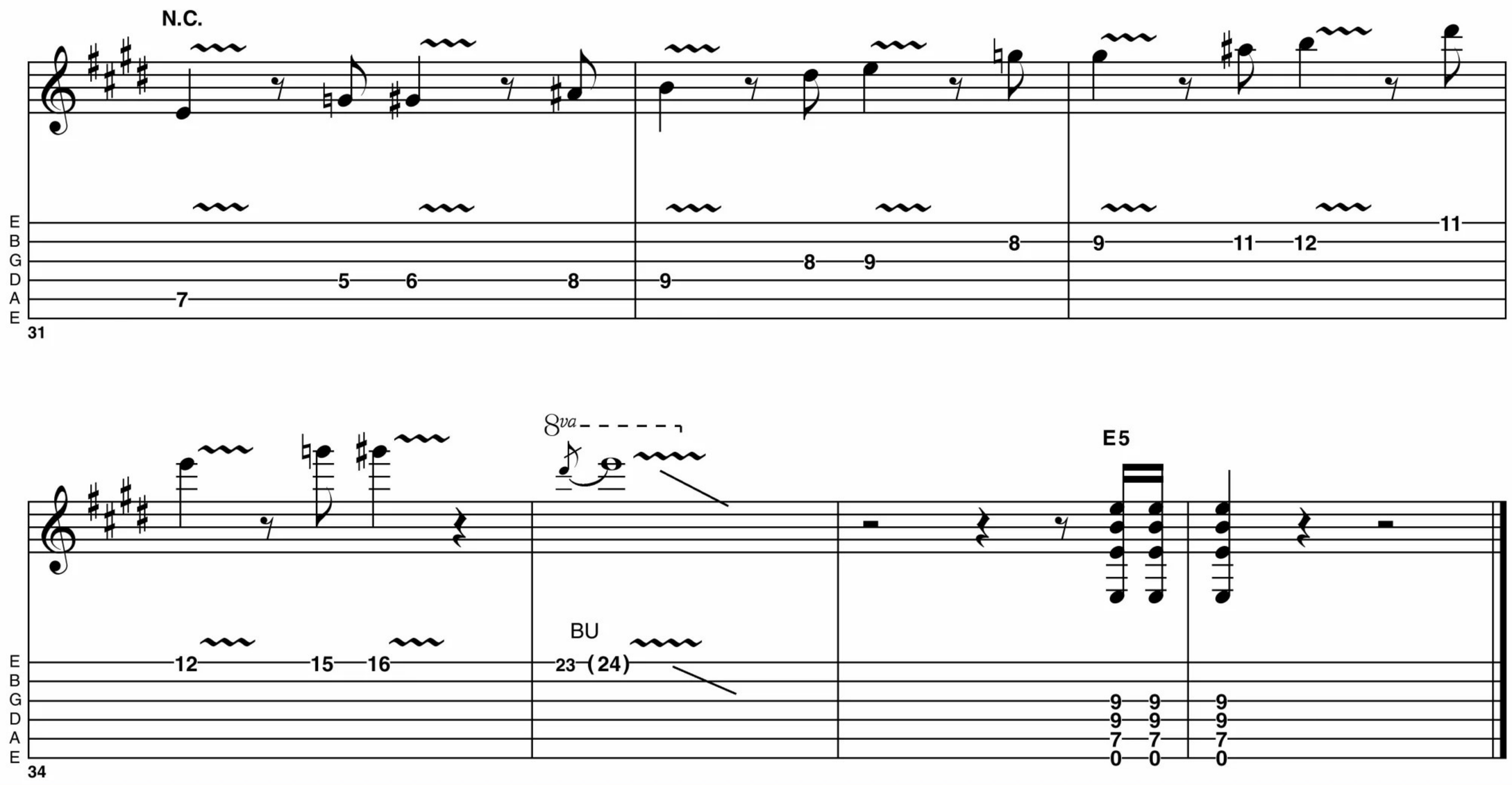
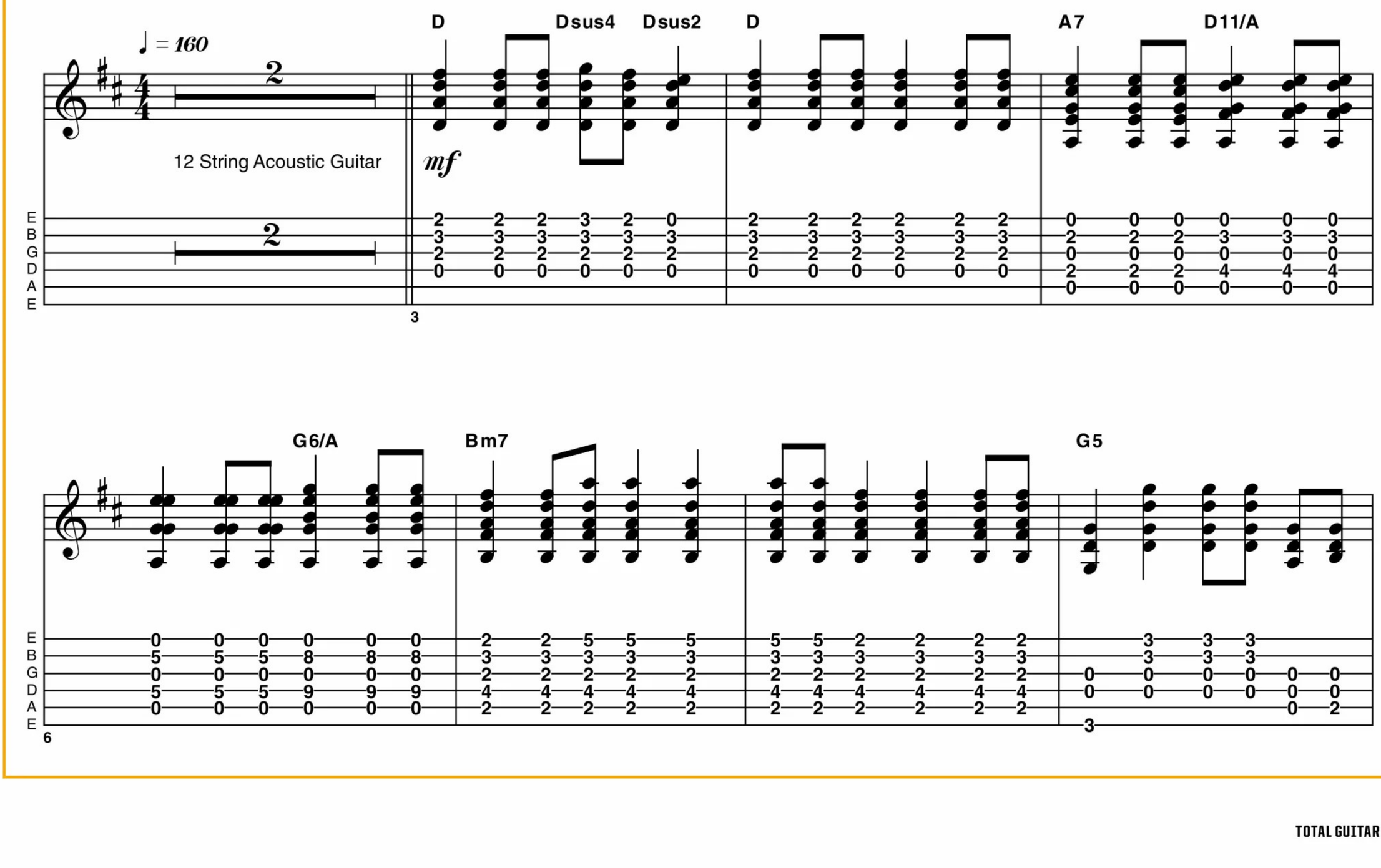
PERFORMANCE TRACK 1 Delay (Continued) **BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO**

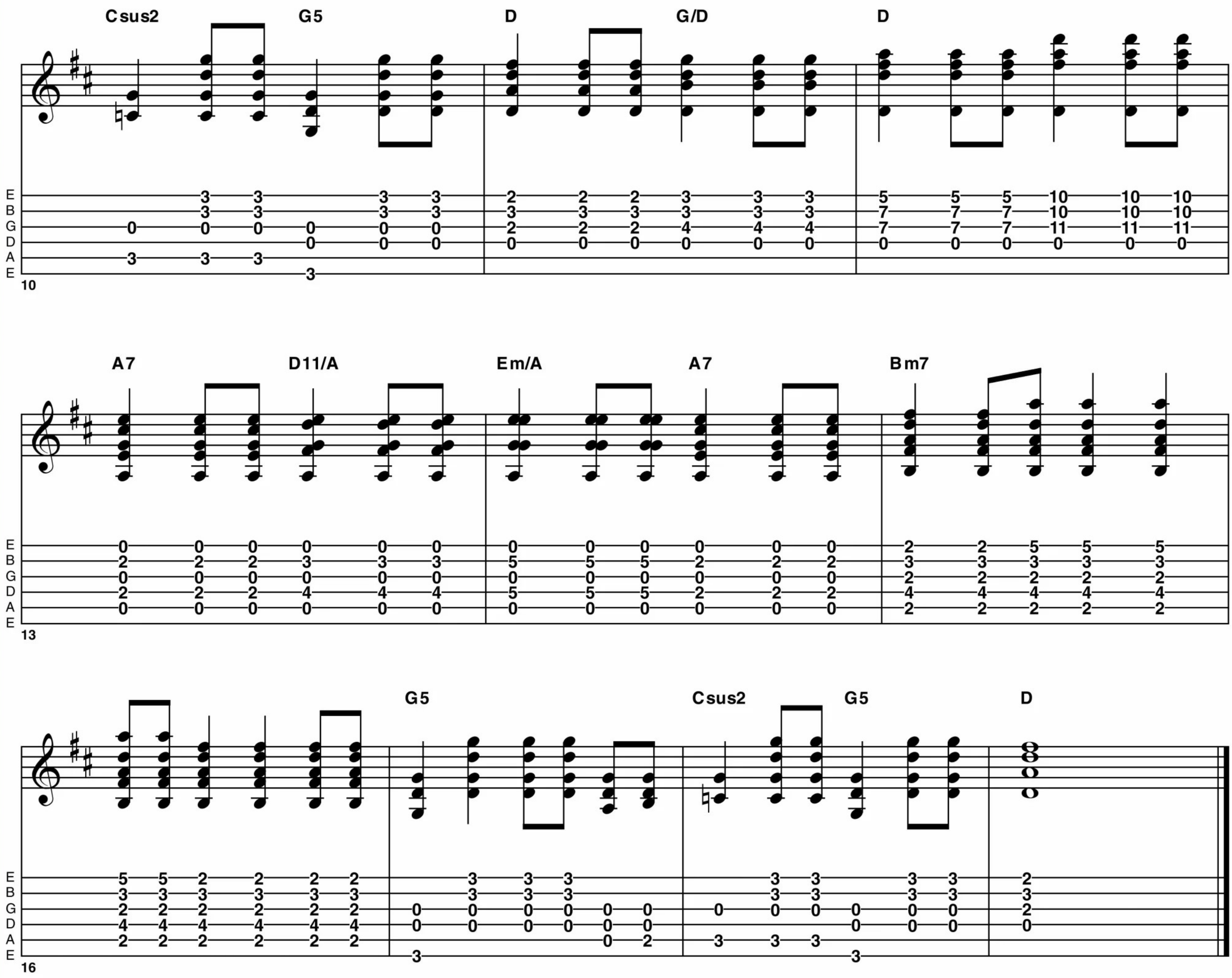


Brian pioneered a creative approach to using multiple delays, which first appeared on songs like *Brighton Rock*. For this you will need to set up two single-repeat delays. Set the first delay to repeat at around 750ms and the second to repeat at around 1500ms. Playing in time with the delay is the key here, so Brian often strums a chord to hear where the repeats fall. It can take some practice to lock in and find out which notes work. All the notes in our piece work together because they are from the same key and ordered in such a way as to produce harmonies when the repeats happen.

PERFORMANCE TRACK 2 Acoustic **BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO**

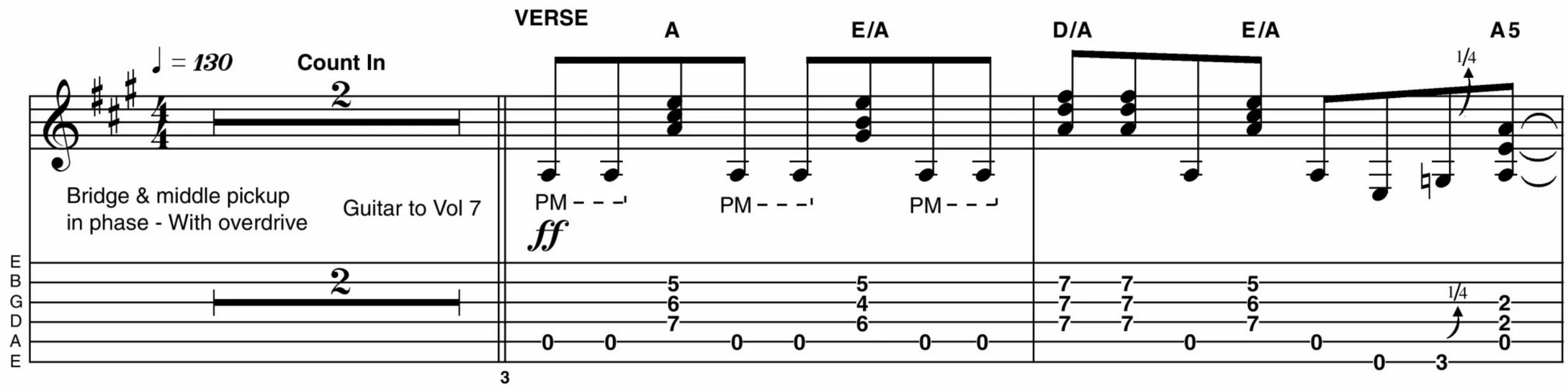


PERFORMANCE TRACK 2 Acoustic (Continued) **BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO**



Brain's acoustic work often has a folk or 'singer-songwriter' edge and he often performed songs like *Love Of My Life* and '*39* on his Ovation 12-string. For ease of playing we have notated the rhythms at the tempo of 160bpm. Ideas such as using a pedal tone (a repeating note against which others move) work a treat and various triad chords can be played with the pedal tone providing continuity. Aim for a relaxed strumming style and let the chords ring out.

PERFORMANCE TRACK 3 Full piece **BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO**



VERSE We open up with a riff constructed with triads from the key of A Major. The palm mute is used to thicken the attack on the open fifth string with a help from judicious drive. The chordal idea in bar 10 is classic Brian May.

PERFORMANCE TRACK 3 Full piece (Continued) **BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO**

GUITAR SOLO The solo uses the A Major scale (A-B-C♯-D-E-F♯-G♯) as Brian's home base. String bending high up the neck is often a key feature of Brian's soloing style and remember to add fluid vibrato when required. The idea in bar 13 is played by bending the string back and forth around the pick. The notes should be kept slightly short here.

PERFORMANCE TRACK 3 Full piece (Continued) **BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO**

BRIDGE This section uses the same concept as we looked at in Example 3, although the harmony has been changed to feature the B/A chord, another of Brian's favourites. He often surprises with a blues lick and the fast Blues scale run (A-C-D-D♯-E-G) in bar 31 is worth taking slowly at first.

OUTRO A new faster tempo is counted in and we are off to the races. This riff is like the one we looked at in Example 5. The chromatic line at the end leads into some harmony guitar. Just play the notes in the tab and let the backing track do the rest.

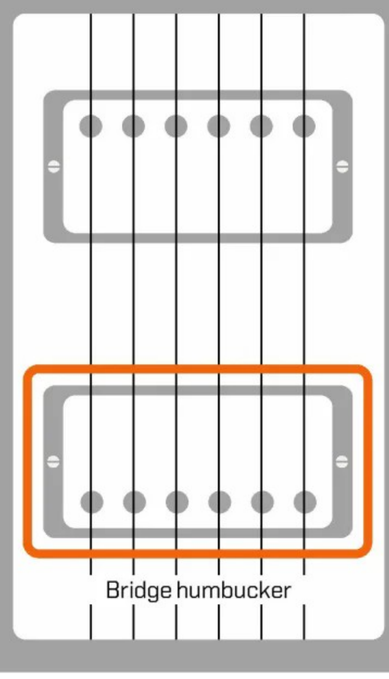
WHAT YOU WILL LEARN
- ✔ Thrash riffing
- ✔ Alternate picking
- ✔ Double stops

bit.ly/tga2024audio

GET THE TONE

CHANNEL **DISTORTED**

GAIN	BASS	MID	TREBLE	REVERB
7	5	4	6	0



This riff is played on a guitar with an active EMG humbucker in the bridge position, through a high-gain amp like a Diezel or Mesa Boogie. Use the edge of your pick to add cut to the notes and experiment with positioning your palm at the bridge for the tightest tone.

METALLICA

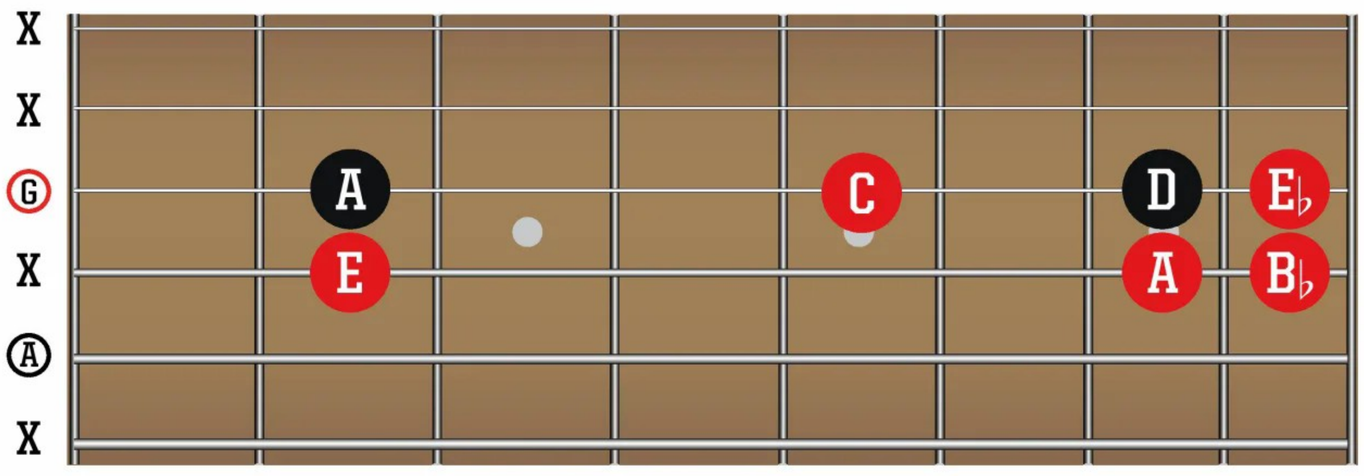
Lux Æterna

Lux Æterna was the first single from Metallica's recent album *72 Seasons*, and this chorus riff features some early-80s, alternate-picked thrash energy with added bluesy pull-offs.

Guitarists James Hetfield and Kirk Hammett start the riff on the 3rd string with a quick 3-note pull-off on frets 7 and 5 and the open sting, then play 7th fret on the 4th string and the open A string together for an octave dyad. Next, play six palm-muted open A notes with tight alternate picking, then play two double-stops on the middle strings on frets 7 and 8. This gives you a one bar cycle, which repeats eight times. After the 4th repeat, play four A5 power-chord stabs followed by the same two double stops, then return to the main riff.

CHEAT SHEET...

Appears at: 0:15-0:32
Tempo: 121bpm
Key/scale: A Blues
Main techniques: Pull-offs, alternate picking, palm-muting



This riff is based around an A Blues scale tonality [A C D E♭ E G] using the open A string as a pedal note. The B♭ more doesn't belong to the scale, but it works with the E♭ on the adjacent string to create a power chord inversion.

Photo Getty

Words Grant Moon

BLACK SABBATH

BLACK SABBATH

(1970)

How the young Tony Iommi harnessed the evil power of the flattened 5th to create the most influential metal song of them all

The story goes that when Black Sabbath were jamming material in their early days, bassist Geezer Butler was noodling around on the main theme of *Mars, The Bringer Of War*, from Holst's *The Planets*. He played the tonic note (G), the 5th (D), then, crucially, the flattened 5th (D♭) that gives Mars its dissonant, menacing feel. With his ears pricking up, the band's guitarist Tony Iommi then adapted it – G, G an octave up, then that nasty D♭ in between – thus minting the riff for *Black Sabbath*. The opening song on their 1970 namesake debut album, the band's self-titled song would not only define them, but also the crunching sound and doom-laden occult atmosphere that legions of metal bands have explored ever since.

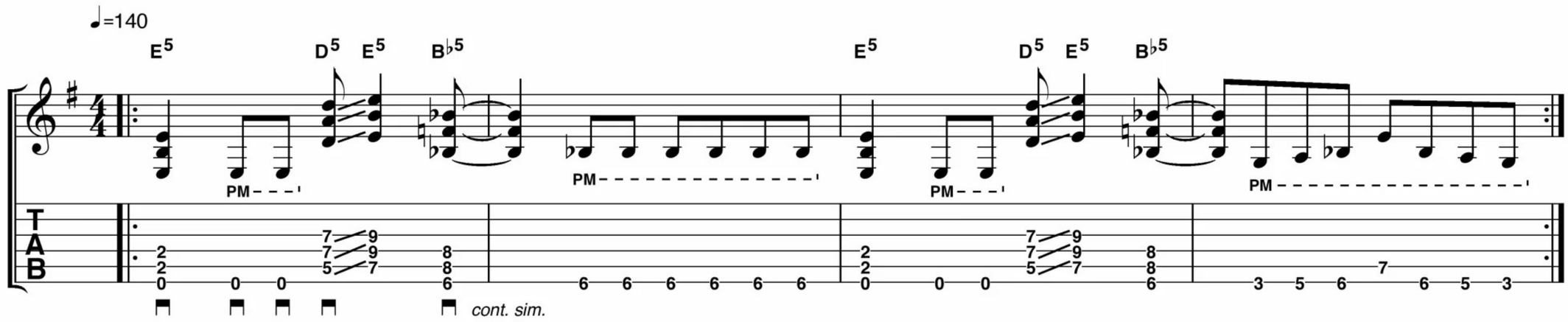
Emerging from the 60s blues/psych rock scene, Sabbath hit upon their own musical mood. The Summer Of Love had cooled and drained of colour, and into the 1970s there were new, darker places to explore. A storm was coming, and Black Sabbath opened with rain, thunder, and a tolling bell. Stark, powerful and heavy as hell, the song dripped with drama, with Butler, Iommi and drummer Bill Ward giving their captivating singer Ozzy Osbourne space to tell of a man visited by a terrifying demon ("A black shape with eyes of fire").

And that riff fit the Satanic story perfectly. With Butler doubling him, Iommi played it on his P90-equipped Gibson SG Special, through a 100-watt Laney head and 4x12 stack. In his hands, that flattened 5th had never sounded so damn *evil*, and his occasional hammer-on/pull-off trills between that and the natural 5th (D) rammed the point home.

The relationship between the I and ♭5 stretched back into musical history, past Holst and into the Middle Ages. Once called 'the devil's interval', it became a regular sound in jazz and blues (the ♭5 being the 'blue' note in the blues scale). It cropped up regularly in the work of the British blues explosion bands to whom Sabbath owed a debt. It's in the opening riff to Hendrix's *Purple Haze* and Cream's *Sunshine Of Your Love* (as well as Led Zeppelin's *Heartbreaker* and, later, Deep Purple's *Smoke On The Water*). But while the ♭5 was usually used as a passing note, in *Black Sabbath* it was central to the riff, the note to which the other two led. Played slowly, heavily and in parts, ear-shatteringly loudly, it was crucial to the sound and the aesthetic of the band, and the genre they helped spawn.

The ♭5 sound is everywhere in metal now – in Slayer's *Seasons In The Abyss*, Metallica's *Enter Sandman*, even the title track of the Osees latest, *A Foul Form*. That devilish tone suits metal's own subversive lore, but much of its early power was down to Black Sabbath themselves. They really were the full package. Tony Iommi's crunching tone has often been imitated but rarely surpassed, and this riff – on the title track of the album that started it all – is magic. Pure black magic.

THE ♭5TH INTERVAL **BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO**



Try out the clashing sound of the ♭5th here in our tab example inspired by tracks like *Black Sabbath* and *Symptom Of The Universe*. The B♭ note is the all-important ♭5th – one semitone lower than the fifth note of the E natural minor scale (E F♯ G A B C D), hence the 'flattened 5th' moniker. The B♭5 chord also includes an F – another note that's not in the scale, and, being a semitone higher than the root note, adds even more dissonance.

Photo Getty

LIVE EVIL.
Tony Iommi raising hell at the California Jam, April 6, 1974.

Words Jenna Scaramanga **Portraits** Corinne Cumming

"THE BASS IS SO LOUD. GUITAR IS THE TEXTURE"

How the **Nova Twins** created their heavy and unique sound – and why their pedalboards remain a closely-guarded secret

Nova Twins are the most exciting young band in the UK. Combining rap, punk, R&B and metal, they also have the filthiest synth sounds a stringed instrument has ever produced. They're the first band since Muse to have tones on their album that we genuinely don't know how to make. They're influenced by music many guitar bands don't even consider. And most importantly, their current album *Supernova* is stuffed with great songs.

THE POWER OF 2
Georgia South (left) and Amy Love

The Twins, guitarist/vocalist Amy Love and bassist Georgia South, have been a band since 2014 and are finally catching a buzz thanks to the support of Rage Against the Machine guitarist Tom Morello.

Georgia says Rage's support has been invaluable. "With them being a diverse band, they can kind of understand some of our experiences being women of colour. The success that they've had was really encouraging because there's so many times we'd hit a wall with people not getting it. Seeing a band like Rage Against The Machine, one of the biggest bands in the world, being fully diverse – it's inspiring."

In 2019 Nova Twins supported Prophets Of Rage, Morello's rap metal supergroup with members of Cypress Hill and Public Enemy, and were booked to open RATM's sadly cancelled 2022 UK dates.

"People wouldn't know about us if we didn't have big bands helping us," Georgia says, "because the industry at first weren't getting it. It was two girls playing heavy music looking the way we do, and it was a bit like 'we don't know where to put you.'"

The answer, for anyone still wondering where to put Nova Twins, is on big stages. They impressed at festivals across Europe this summer. Audiences, not worried about how to categorise the band, responded to their fat riffs and relentless energy. The Rage parallels are inevitable for bands combining riffs and rap, but Nova Twins also caught favourable comparisons to The Prodigy, Missy Elliott and even No Doubt. "They're incredible artists, so we always feel happy when we hear that," Amy says.

Although they've grown to make heavy music, their first influences weren't remotely rock. Like most kids, that began with their parents' record collections: Stevie Wonder and Donny Hathaway for Georgia, Toni Braxton and Whitney Houston for Amy. "Then the mainstream hits you," Amy continues. "People like Destiny's Child who were saying to us: you're beautiful, strong black women."

The heavy part of their sound came not primarily from their record collections, but from the bands they gigged with. "Playing on the rock scene from 13, sneaking into clubs, that's how I got into heavier music, playing with bands in my local area and experiencing it firsthand," remembers Georgia. Part of the reason the band sounds so exciting is that they are utterly steeped in live music. They didn't listen to a record and then try to copy it – they learned by doing it.

"It was amazing being on that live circuit," Amy says. "We came up through the punk scene really. That's where a lot of the punk aspect comes from, because we were surrounded by it, playing pit parties and Wonk Unit [DIY] festivals." With that kind of upbringing, performing is their natural habitat, and the heavy music they inhaled mixed with their early influences. "I moved from Essex to London which was dramatically different," Amy says, "and that's when I got introduced to bands like The MC5, New York Dolls, Kiss, The Sweet and Led Zeppelin. That's when I was like, 'F*ck! I love the feeling of live musicianship.'"

Georgia, meanwhile, namechecks Skrillex, Pharrell Williams' rock side project N.E.R.D. and R&B super-producer Timbaland. "I love Timbaland's beats and how he manipulates sounds. That was a big inspiration for me, not making it sound like a bass guitar but more electronic, how hip-hop producers would use their synths."

Thus began the journey to the unique sounds on *Supernova*, with Georgia experimenting until she found ways to recreate her favourite synth sounds. "I used to go to Denmark Street all the time with my dad and pick out pedals. I didn't know what I was looking for so I'd be that annoying person trying out the pedals in the corner and then I'd take one home with my savings. Towards the end of our first album when we wrote *Vortex*, that was a kind of lightbulb moment. It shifted when the bass sounded really electronic. We were like 'This is sick!' I think *Supernova* is the evolution of that."

TG only realised the centrality of South's bass to Nova Twins' sound when we caught their album launch show at Bristol's Rough Trade, where due to space restrictions Amy wasn't playing guitar. Georgia carried the entire show; we barely even missed the guitar for most of it. "When we first started the band, the core element was bass and vocals," Georgia muses. "Bass would be a lot of the track, then the guitar weaves into it. It's a dance. Before we had our own sound engineer, people used to mix us with the bass turned down so quietly. We're actually flipping it on its head. It's more like electronic music where the bass is so loud. Guitar is the texture in between."

LOUD AND PROUD

"When I got introduced to bands like The MC5, New York Dolls and Led Zeppelin," Amy says, "I was like: 'Fk! I love live musicianship!"**

Normally at this point, TG would reveal the gear behind the tones. On this occasion we can't, because Georgia and Amy are giving nothing away. Back in TG355, Amy told us how their secrecy began when a rival band photographed their gear without even talking to them first, so we can thank ill-mannered London guitarists for depriving us of this knowledge.

The Twins' reluctance to divulge their gear secrets reminds us of the young Eddie Van Halen turning his back to audiences and lying about modifications to his amp. In both cases, we find the secrecy understandable but unnecessary. Van Halen's tricks are now common knowledge but no one has come close to being EVH, and we doubt anyone else could be Nova Twins regardless of gear. We put this to the band, but they are not convinced. "Tom Morello revealed his secrets a lot later in his career," Georgia points out. "Maybe when we're his age then we'll do it. If people come around and have dinner at your Nan's you don't ask for the recipe! I haven't looked up how Tom Morello gets his sound. I don't want to know the magic. You have to find your own route because there's already a Tom Morello. When somebody idolises someone too much, you end up being like them but you'll never be as good as them."

Here's what we do know about the Nova Twins' sounds. We still wouldn't know where to start with some of them, but hearing Amy and Georgia playing in isolation makes it a little clearer what's going on. The synth-like bass sounds have a generous helping of analogue

"WE ARE OBSESSED WITH BEING ABLE TO PLAY EVERYTHING LIVE"

AMY LOVE

THE HOTTEST CUTTING EDGE GUITARISTS ON THE PLANET

phaser with the rate set fairly low, usually in combination with a huge fuzz sound.

Amy and Georgia wouldn't show us their pedalboards up close, but the clicking sounds when triggering octave up Whammy effects suggest they're using momentary footswitches rather than rocker pedals. That allows them to fix the rate of the Whammy sweep for a precise, mechanical effect. They always use combinations of pedals to create bespoke sounds; there's never just one pedal on at a time. "My feet are as important as my hands," says Georgia. "It's more like driving a car than playing bass. If I broke my leg it would be a disaster."

Both visually and sonically, Georgia's most visible gadget is The Ring, a MIDI controller she wears on her index finger to control effect parameters with gestures, a little like Matt Bellamy's use of a Kaoss Pad with his guitar. On the song *Toolbox* she rhythmically controls octave-up synth stabs by moving her hands away from the strings. "I don't know what it's intended for! I use it for a dubstep drop kind of vibe," she smiles.

Amy's guitar tone is a little more conventional, with less low end than usual to make space for those gargantuan basslines. Her main amp is Fender's perennial workhorse the Hot Rod Deluxe, sometimes supplemented by a Marshall Origin, although the dirt is from pedals. Her guitar, a P-90-equipped Mustang, also emphasises mids over bass frequencies. Meanwhile Georgia's Westone Thunder 1 bass is split between a Gallien-Krueger bass head and a Marshall Valvestate guitar amp set slightly dirty. Between them, they can cover all the *Supernova* sounds. "We are obsessed with being able to play everything live," Amy says. "We always felt we have to prove ourselves 10 times harder. Even now they'll be like 'oh there's so much on track, there's a laptop.' There isn't any guitar or bass on track at all."

Amy points to Jack White and St. Vincent as references for her approach to solos. "Their style of playing was really interesting because it wasn't always a blues lick. I just love being a bit in your face and untamed. If a pedal glitches or something, we don't try and take out all that noise. It's part of it. Sometimes we'll loop a glitch – that's f*cking sick!"

Supernova could only be made by a British band, so it's surprising that Nova Twins' influences are almost entirely American. When asked, Georgia says she was into the grime scene while she was at Lewisham College, but most attempts to relate them to other British acts are doomed. Reviewers have likened them to Skunk Anansie's frontwoman Skin, which Amy dismisses: "They're incredible live, and we've played with them, but as two bands we're completely different," she says. "The only association is obviously we're black women." Instead, they put the British sound down to being unapologetically themselves. "When you hear an American record, it sounds incredible sonically, but it's so perfect. We allow things to be how they are and that reflects in the mixes," Amy says. Georgia agrees: "Amy's doesn't try and twang into American. She keeps the British accent, which is cool."

GO YOUR OWN WAY
"Take yourself in the woods somewhere and see what comes out," Georgia says.

"MY FEET ARE AS IMPORTANT AS MY HANDS"
GEORGIA SOUTH

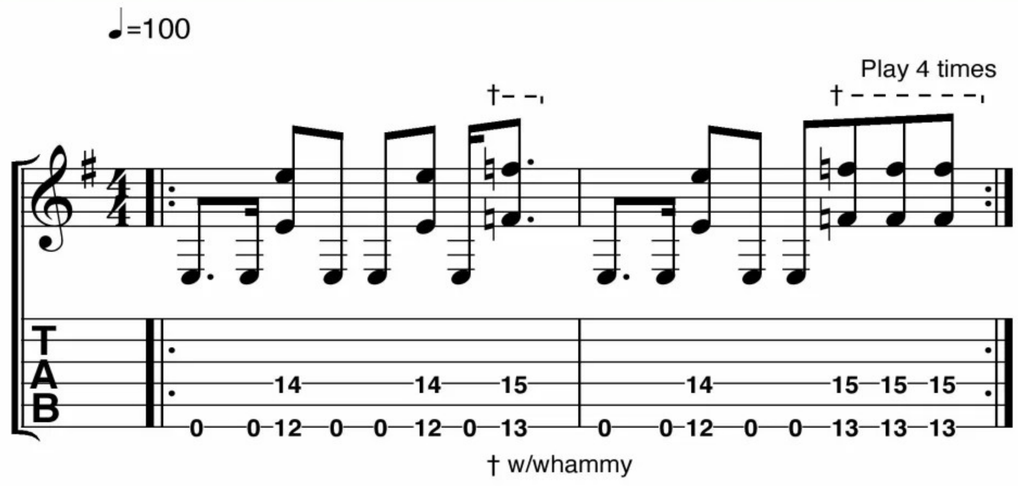
Although the innovative sounds are what you notice first about *Supernova*, there is enough substance to the songs that you can easily imagine them working with stripped down production. At Rough Trade, Amy joked that no one would want to hear Nova Twins unplugged, but we could get behind Nova Twins plugged straight into their amps. Although they've got no plans to try it, Georgia agrees it could work "because the riffs are so melodic." In fact, in the comparisons to rap metal, the importance of melody to Nova Twins' sound is sometimes overlooked. "When we first started it was way more melodic," remembers Amy. "As we were on the punk scene, we wanted to be more angular and jagged. With this new album there's more melody in there."

The source of that melody may surprise you. "A lot of the *Supernova* riffs were actually written on a keyboard," Georgia admits. "Part of it was laziness. I got a MIDI keyboard which is tiny, so you can literally have this in bed and write riffs on it. It ends up being more melodic that way. I find it takes you out of your comfort zone as well."

Leaving their comfort zones is a theme the Twins' keep returning to, and they're keen for other bands to do the same. "Don't listen to people you love for two weeks and your ideas will come through and that'll be totally original," suggests Georgia. "I think when bands are struggling to find their sound, they often run to play songs that they're influenced by, but you can hear it straight away. I think it's good to take yourself in the woods somewhere and see what comes out."

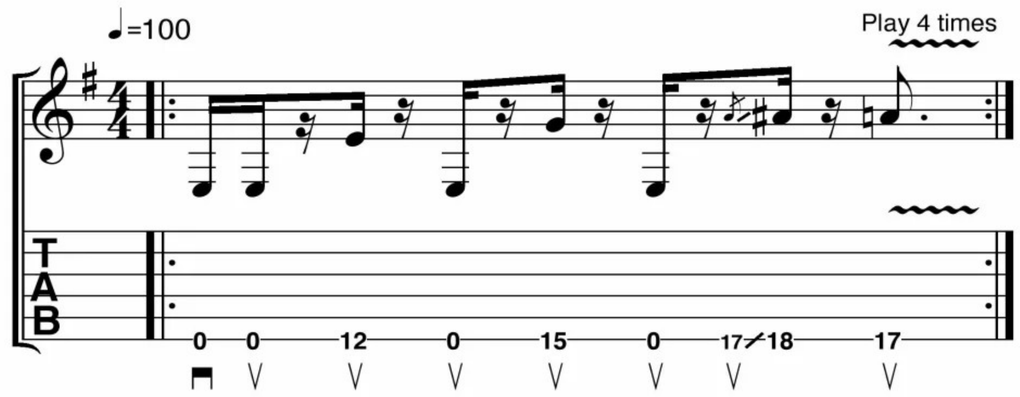
Amy says that it was in some ways easier for Nova Twins to find their own sound because as black women there were few obvious role models in rock and metal for them to follow. "Because we didn't have anyone easy to latch on to, it was all a mix of everything. That's why we went on our own journey discovering music and experimenting."

NOVA TWINS-STYLE WHAMMY RIFF **BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO**



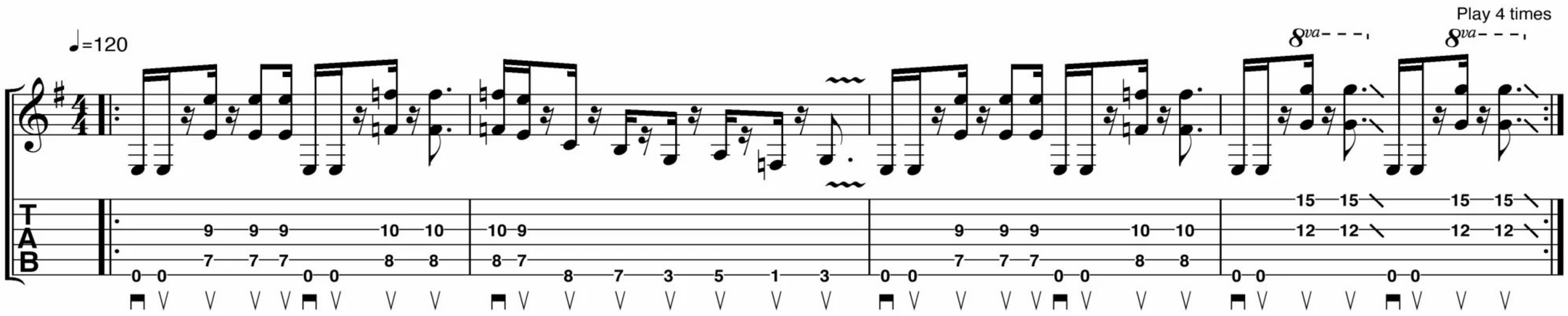
This riff uses just two notes, E and F, which creates a semitone interval. Use your first and fourth fingers to play the octave shape. If you have a Whammy pedal or a similar momentary-switched pitch shifter, set it to two octaves higher and engage it where indicated.

NOVA TWINS STYLE SYNCOPATION **BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO**



This riff is all about syncopation and hand synchronisation. Play the first two notes with a down- and upstroke, then play the remaining notes with upstrokes, all while bouncing your fretting fingers to keep the notes short.

NOVA TWINS LICK **BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO**



Here we put those elements together in a more complex line. Keep your picking hand moving down and up throughout the entire riff in order to maintain consistent timing and a solid groove. Play the octave shapes with first and fourth fingers and remember to use your fretting fingers to mute the unused strings so you can strum with lots of energy. An octave pedal set to an octave lower (at about 30 to 50 per cent mix) can beef up the sound if you don't have bass backing you up.

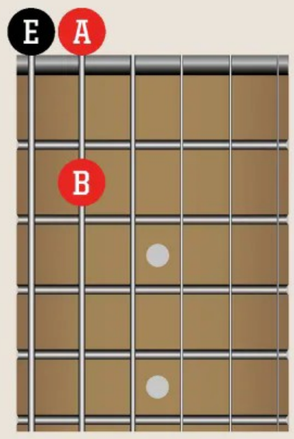
BLUES TIPS

Improve your blues guitar playing with our lessons on essential chords, progressions, soloing techniques and a couple of star tips. Plug in, and let's get your mojo workin'...

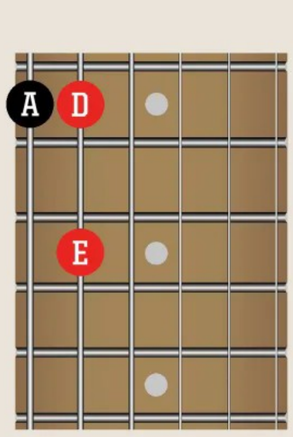
MASTER THE I-IV-V PROGRESSION

Get to grips with the most important chord progression and you'll always know where you are in any 12-bar blues jam

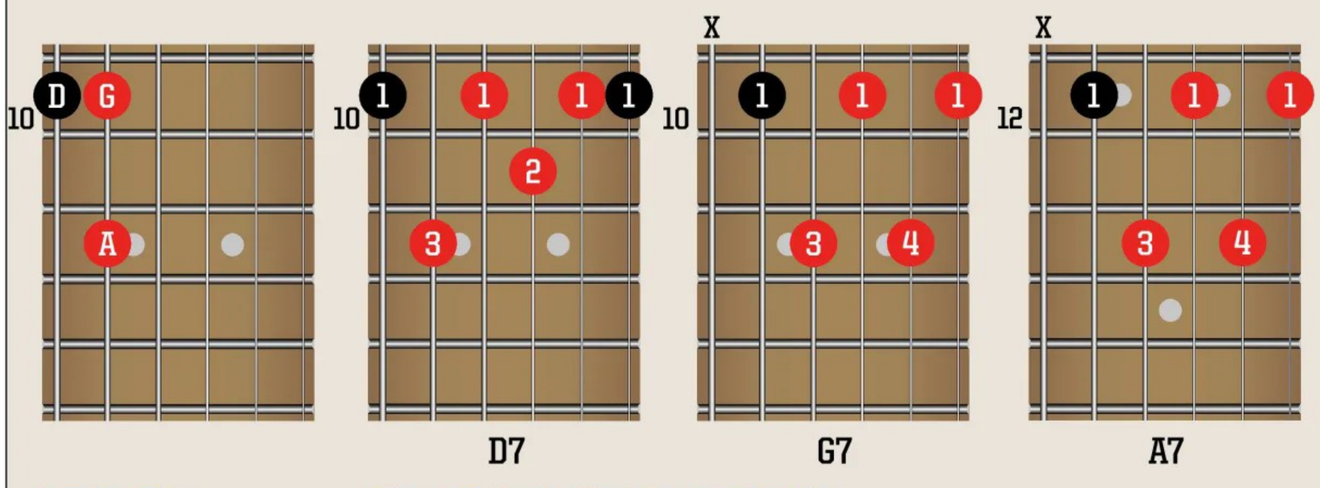
The most common blues chord progression is the I-IV-V (one-four-five), so called because the chords are built upon the first, fourth and fifth notes in the relevant major scale. So if we tell you that the notes in the key of C are C, D, E, F, G, A and B, it's easy enough to tell that a I-IV-V follows the C (first), F (fourth) and G (fifth) chords. Still with us? It's hard to remember the right notes for every key, but you can work out the right chords just by using the notes on the two lowest strings...



BLUES IN E
The notes in the key of E are E, F♯, G♯, A, B, C♯ and D♯, so a I-IV-V progression uses chords built on E, A and B as shown here.



BLUES IN A
In the key of A the notes are A, B, C♯, D, E, F♯ and G♯. Moving up the fretboard, you can see the notes are in the same relative positions as in E.



BLUES IN D
Starting on D, now you can work out where the I, IV and V root notes are without knowing the scale.

BUILDING THE CHORD SEQUENCE
Staying in D for now, you can use these chord shapes to build a I-IV-V progression. Obviously their root notes are the notes we just identified. So, with a pattern for the I-IV-V notes established and a chord for each note provided, all you need to play in any key is to move to the relevant starting point on the sixth string. Easy!

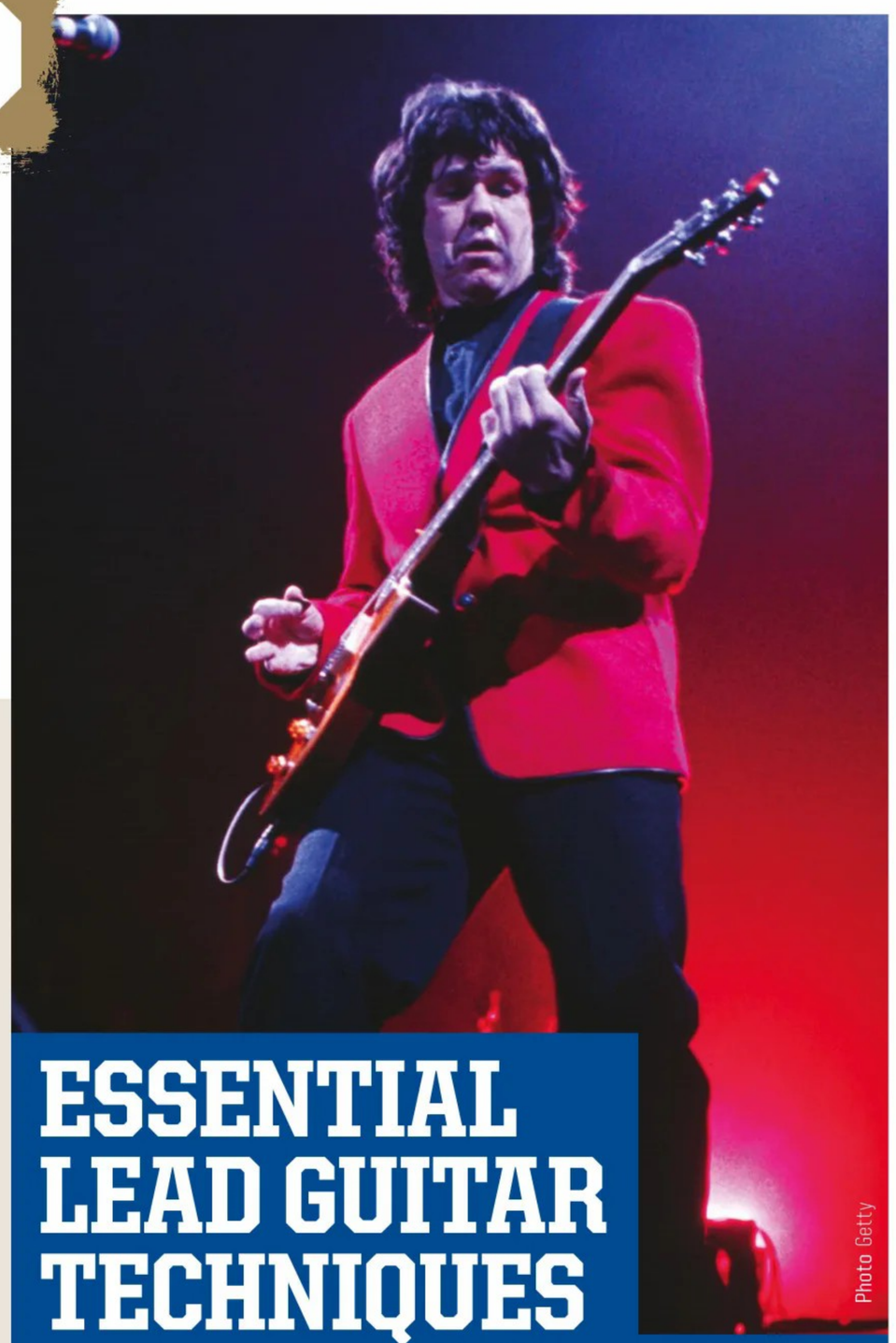


Photo Getty

ESSENTIAL LEAD GUITAR TECHNIQUES

Don't leave home without 'em! Five ways to improve your solos

UNISON BEND

1 Two strings are played at the same time, with the lower one bent up to the pitch of the higher string.

Hear it:
Jimi Hendrix – *Highway Chile* (0:00-0:14)

QUARTER-TONE BEND

2 The idea is to bend the string by roughly half a semitone. Listen carefully to the 'curl' on the C note in Buddy Guy's riff.

Hear it:
Buddy Guy – *Damn Right, I've Got The Blues* (0:10)

VIBRATO

3 It's rare to find a blues solo without vibrato. Instead of letting a note just ring out, give the string a wobble.

Hear it:
Gary Moore – *Too Tired* (0:07-0:10)

THREE- & FOUR-FRET BENDS

4 You risk snapping strings, but you can't beat the urgency and energy of these huge bends. Try using lighter strings and downtuning!

Hear it:
Albert King – *Oh, Pretty Woman* (1:29-1:31)

STRING RAKES

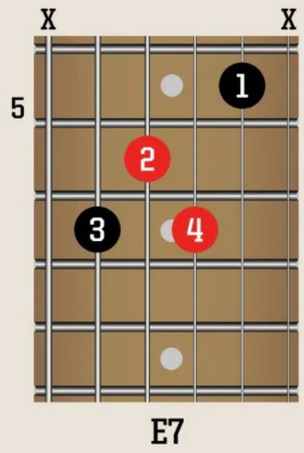
5 Drag your pick over muted strings as you target a normal fretted note at the end of the pick stroke.

Hear it:
Stevie Ray Vaughan – *Cold Shot* (0:00-0:18)

LEARN MORE CHORDS

Take your blues jams to the next level with 10 inspiring shapes

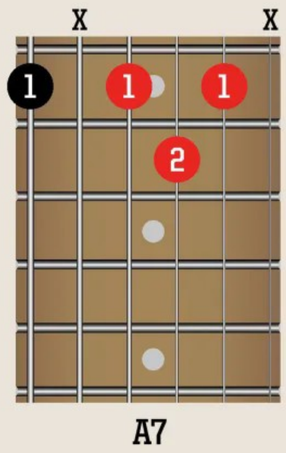
We've just looked at the good old E- and A-shape barre chords. They provide ample ways for you to jam over any chord progression you could ever be faced with. However, there are loads more inspiring shapes to try. Shapes with a little more authentic bluesiness about them. Here we've presented 10 shapes for you to try out in a I-IV-V blues progression in E – so, remember, that's E, A and B. Start with E, A and B chords you already know, then try substituting for some of these.



E7

C-SHAPE 7TH CHORD

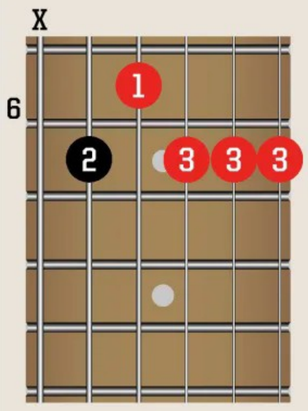
You might recognise this as a C7 shape when played at the 1st position. Keep the open strings quiet and it's a cool moveable shape that's great for blues and jazz.



A7

BARRE CHORD FRAGMENT

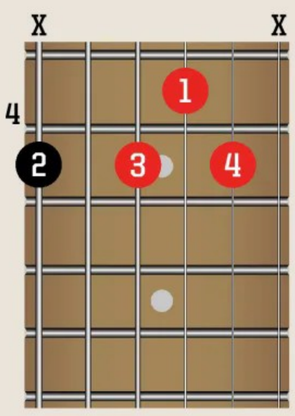
This one's based on a well known barre chord shape, but, by ditching the fifth string, the bass note has more clarity, and overall there's a less 'predictable' sound.



E9

ESSENTIAL 9TH CHORD

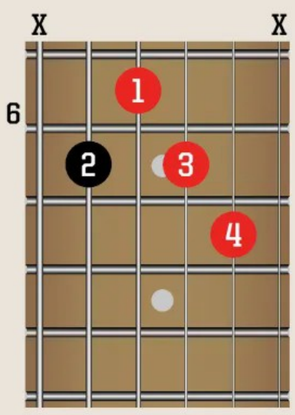
This 9th chord is well used but it sounds better than basic barre chords. Try sliding in from one semitone above or below in a slow blues.



A9

ALTERNATIVE 9TH CHORD

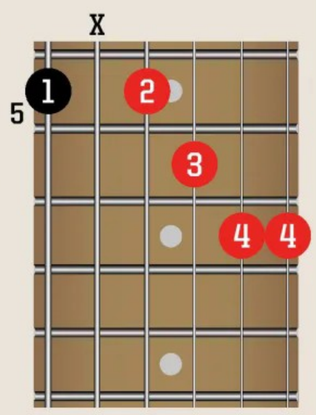
This shape benefits from the same clarity in the bass as our barre chord fragment, and for the same reason. Remove the fifth string for a clearer bottom end.



E7#9

THE HENDRIX CHORD

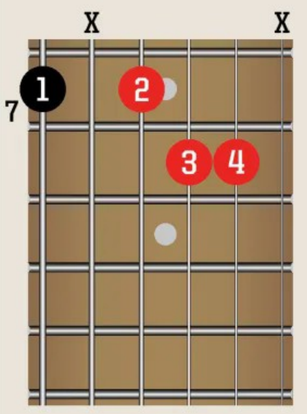
Hendrix is famous for using this chord in songs like *Purple Haze*. Forget that for now. The point is it sounds great as the V chord in a I-IV-V blues progression.



A13

SOPHISTICATED SOUNDS

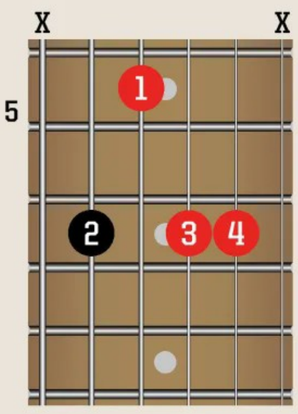
There's a rich, jazzy vibe to this 13th chord which lends itself to exposed guitar parts where its sophistication can be heard, perhaps in slow, soulful ballads.



B7#5

THE 'ALTERED' CHORD

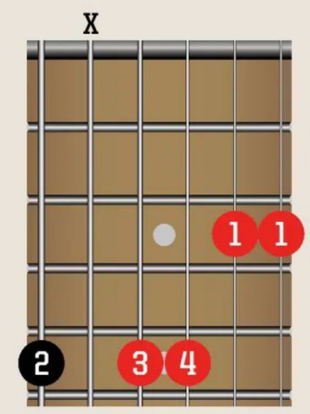
When a dominant 7th chord (B7, A7 etc) just doesn't have enough harmonic 'bite', try this one out. Its #5th adds more dissonance to proceedings.



Em9

MINOR BLUES I CHORD

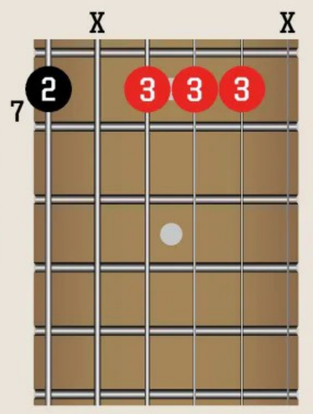
Switching to a blues in E minor (Em-Am-Bm) now, there's a laid back sound to this minor 9th chord that sounds great allied to a Dorian mode solo.



Am11

MINOR BLUES IV CHORD

You could stick to Am or Am7, but why not build on our minor 9th opener with this lovely minor 11th on the IV chord.



Bm7

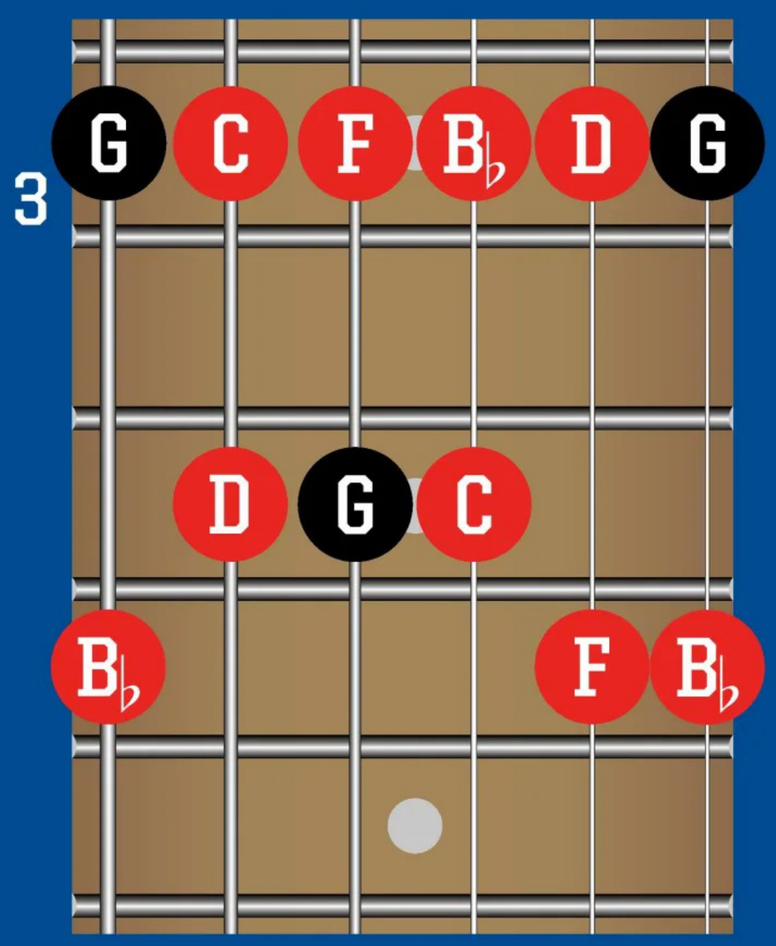
MINOR BLUES V CHORD

Rounding out the minor blues chords, you'll find it easy to vamp around this Bm7 with the Em9 because the two shapes share common notes.

UPGRADE YOUR IMPROVS

Terrified of an impromptu blues jam? Fear not! Follow our five improv tips and your ad libbed solos will soar...

Take a look at this pattern for the G minor pentatonic scale and get used to playing it one note at a time from the lowest note to the highest, then again from high to low. All our improv tips can be applied to this shape.



G minor pentatonic scale

SIMPLE SCALE RUN

1 A run through the notes consecutively is one of the simplest improv ideas. Try starting on the F, before playing G, B♭, C, D, F, then bending up to G.

BACKWARDS

2 Now play your scale run in reverse; it's a great way to develop a good idea. Remember, this is blues so it doesn't matter if it doesn't quite work the same way in reverse. Adapt it so it feels like a completed lick.

RETURN TO THE ROOT

3 Starting once again with your scale run, this time try playing the G root note in between every note or every other note.

THREE-NOTE GROUPS

4 Just look at the scale shape this time as we target some three-note groups. Play G-B♭-C, then B♭-C-D, then C-D-F and so on. Also try in reverse from high to low, G-F-D etc.

ONE-NOTE JAM

5 Develop complex rhythms by jamming on *just one note*! The root note is a logical start point but any note will do. Add more as your one-note rhythmic ideas take shape.

Photo Getty

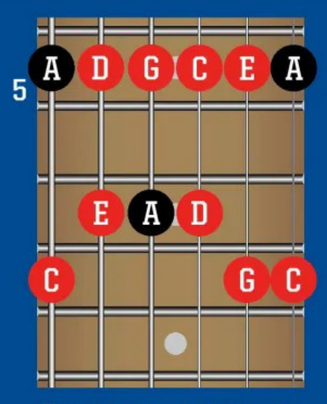
PRO TIP

JOE BONAMASSA ON SCALES

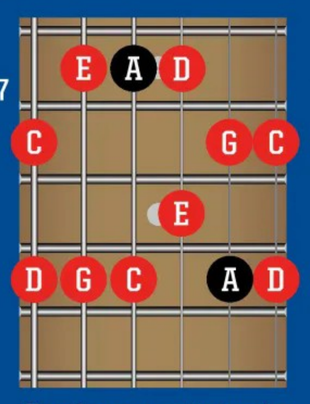
"I learned a lot of [scales] in blocks. So, when I play, my mind goes, I'm in this block, I'm in that block, I'm in this block, [pointing at different areas of the fretboard]; and then so on and so on. I learned how to play in every key on every fret and that was a big thing. You find a lot of these extra notes, just in the process of moving down the neck."

BUILDING THE CHORD SEQUENCE

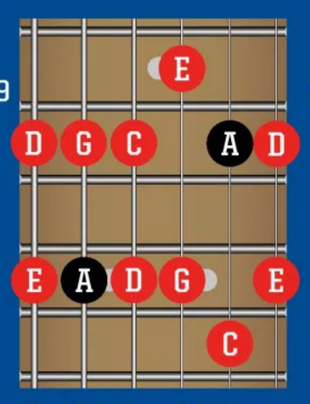
Learn these five pentatonic scale shapes and, just like Joe Bonamassa, you'll be able to improvise solos that cover the entire fretboard, thinking in blocks as you go. The most important thing to note is that all five shapes are the same scale; that's why you are guaranteed to be in one key across the whole fretboard. Simply move each shape up one fret to play in B♭ – move up another fret for B, and so on.



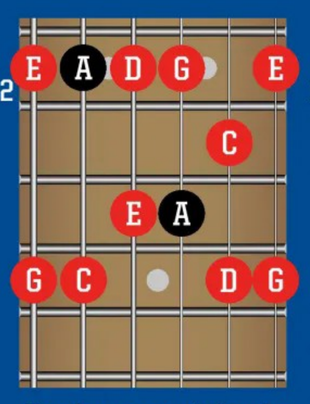
A minor pentatonic scale (shape 1)



A minor pentatonic scale (shape 2)



A minor pentatonic scale (shape 3)



A minor pentatonic scale (shape 4)

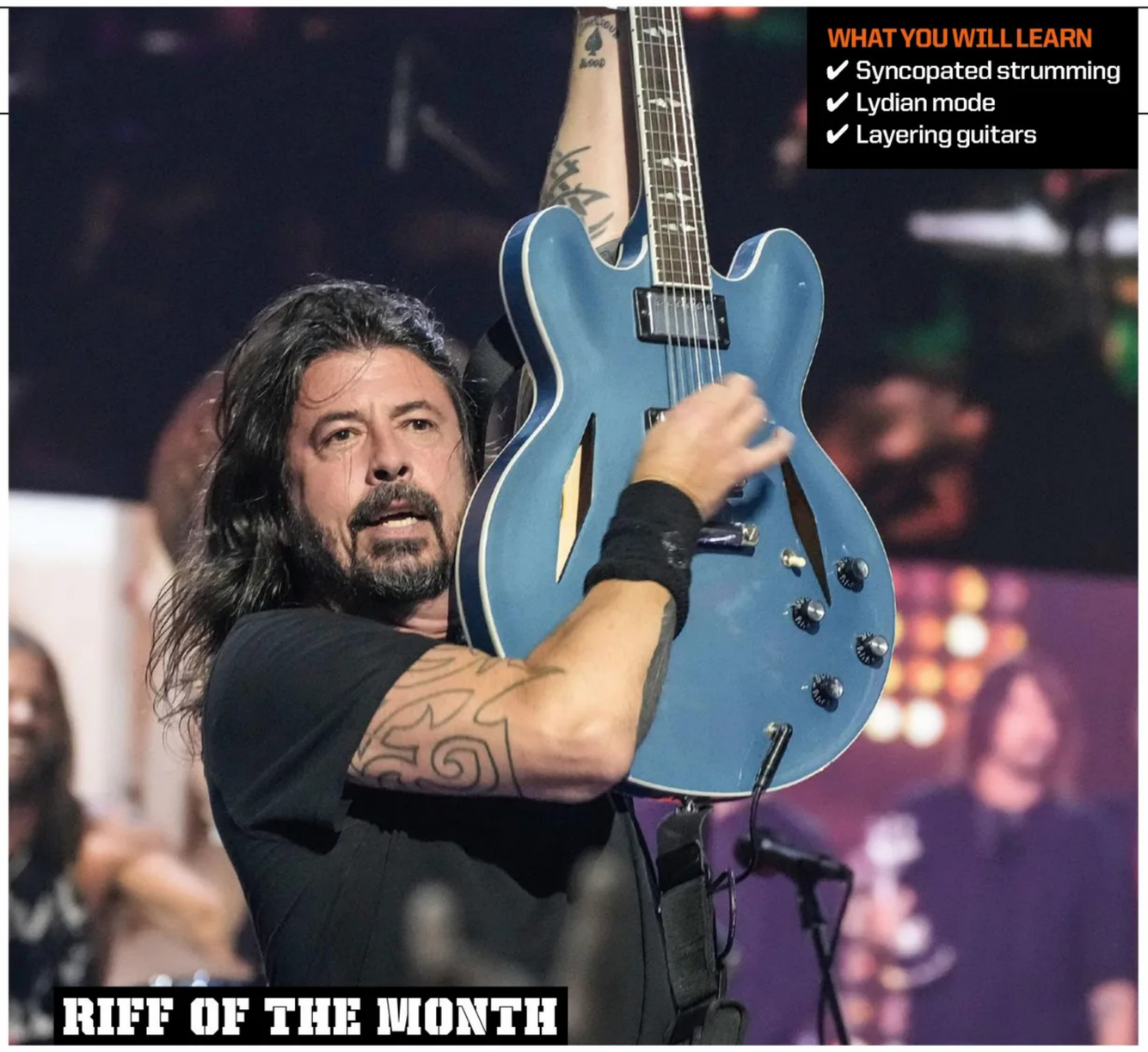
A minor pentatonic scale (shape 5)

PRO TIP

WARREN HAYNES'S SLIDE GUITAR MUTING TIP

"The biggest breakthrough for my slide playing was when I stopped using a pick and started playing with my fingers. [You use] the fingers that you're not plucking the strings with to mute out the strings that you don't want to sound. For example, if I'm using [my first] finger to play the B string, then my thumb is on the bottom strings below it muting out those strings, and my [second and third] fingers are muting out the top strings, so you're only hearing noise coming from the string that you want. It makes a huge difference because there's so much noise coming from the slide and all those overtones that are just horrible. The best way to eliminate those is learning this finger technique. So, if you watch my right hand you can see that I'm constantly muting out the unwanted notes. That's the most important part to becoming a better slide player."

Photo Getty



WHAT YOU WILL LEARN
- ✔ Syncopated strumming
- ✔ Lydian mode
- ✔ Layering guitars

RIFF OF THE MONTH

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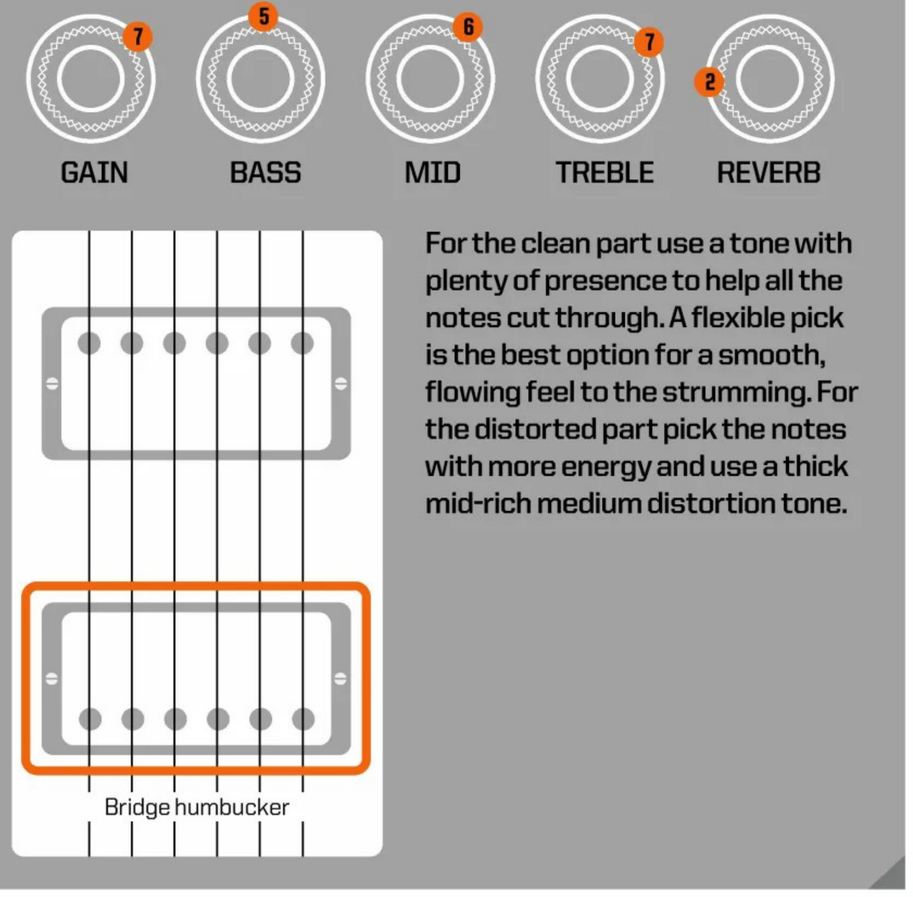
GET THE TONE

CHANNEL DISTORTION



For the clean part use a tone with plenty of presence to help all the notes cut through. A flexible pick is the best option for a smooth, flowing feel to the strumming. For the distorted part pick the notes with more energy and use a thick mid-rich medium distortion tone.

FOO FIGHTERS

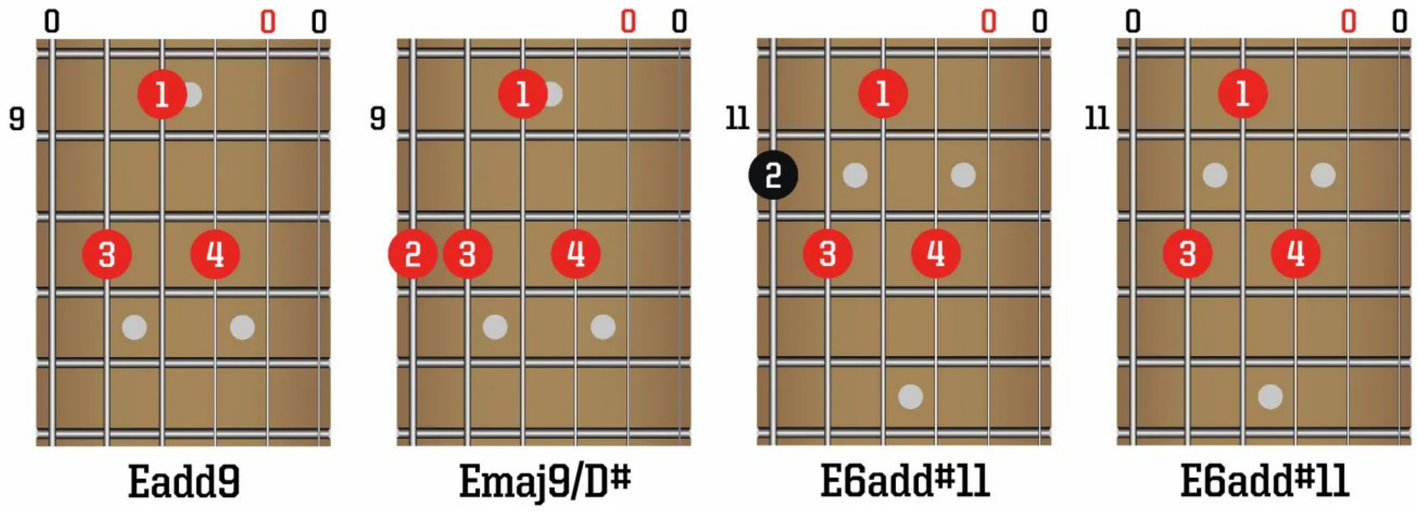
Rescued

This track is taken from the latest Foo Fighters album *But Here We Are* released in June. The intro features a two-guitar arrangement starting on lush, strummed clean chords before being joined by a heavier single-note riff. For the strummed clean part, keep your pick hand moving down and up across the strings to play the rhythm.

Use your first, third and fourth fingers to play the shape at the 9th fret, then move the shape two frets higher up the neck. As you play each chord, allow the open first and second strings to ring throughout. Make sure you add the sixth-string notes with your second finger at the 11th and 12th frets, respectively. For the heavy riff, you'll be playing the open sixth string plus notes at the 11th, 12th, 14th and 16th frets. Watch our video to see how both parts work together.

CHEAT SHEET...

Appears at: 0:00–0:26
Tempo: 148bpm
Key/scale: E Lydian mode
Main techniques: Strumming, open strings, single-note riffing



Essentially there are two chords to learn here, but each is played over two different bass notes, giving you four shapes in total. Keep an eye out to make sure you hit the right bass notes – they're at the 11th and 12th frets. The single-note riff played on the sixth string employs only four notes (D♯, E, F♯ and G♯), however, factoring in the notes from the chords and taking E as the tonal centre, the song is in E Lydian (E F♯ G♯ A♯ B C♯ D♯).

Photo Getty

Guitars and backing Jon Bishop

VINTAGE BLUES ESSENTIALS

See how early electric blues has influenced rock with our run through five classic riffs and licks

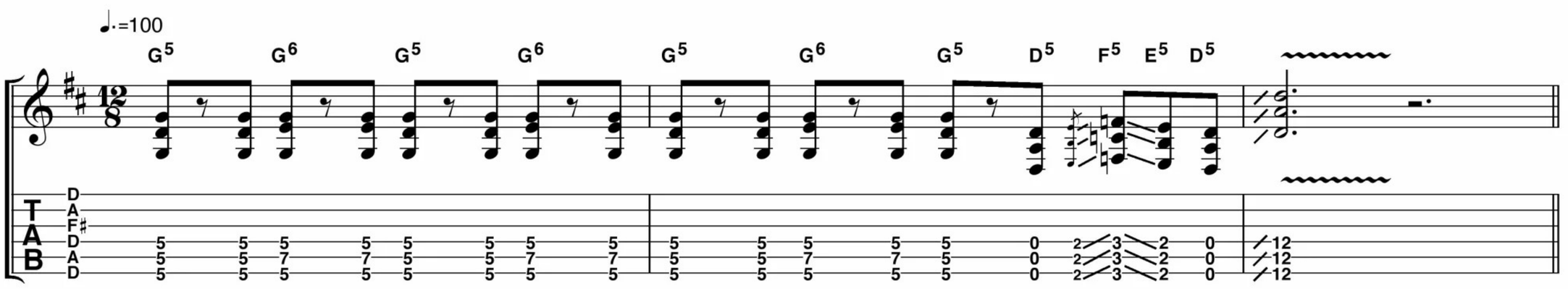
The 1940s and 50s saw an explosion of new blues acts. This was thanks to newly available electric guitars and amplification which made it possible to play at higher volumes and be heard over drums or other loud instruments. Essentially, this was the dawn of the modern band as we now know it.

Here, we're looking at some riffs and licks inspired mostly from the post-war 'plugged in' era – and the Chicago blues scene was a large part of this musical revolution. As such, we're taking our inspiration from greats like Elmore James, Otis Rush, Muddy Waters and Hubert Sumlin.

As you work through the tab it's worth seeing if you can play the licks as rock licks instead of blues – particularly with the lead guitar examples. It's an enlightening way to see how influential those early blues pioneers were!

BLUES BOOGIE RIFF

BIT.LY/TG355AUDIO

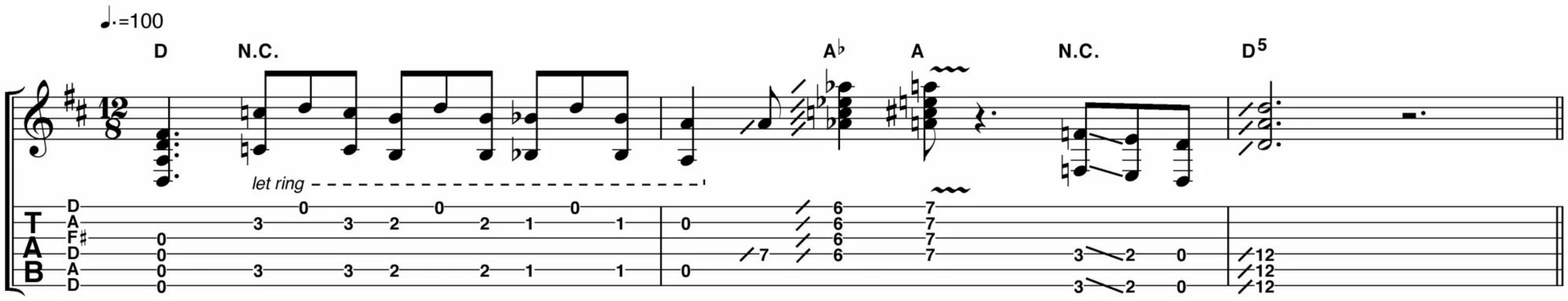


Taking inspiration from Elmore James, here's an example of how easy it is to play a classic blues/rock 'n' roll boogie riff in open D tuning. Simply barre the strings with your first finger and add the 'boogie' aspect with your third finger. A slide is optional here – our riff can be played with or without.

Photo Getty

FINGERSTYLE TURNAROUND

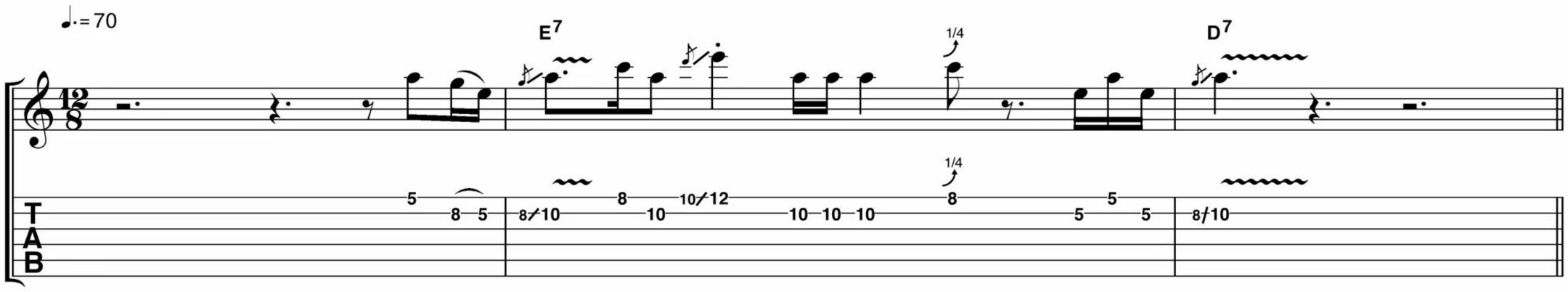
BIT.LY/TG355AUDIO



Another Elmore James idea here, but this classic turnaround is also similar to the kind of ideas that Robert Johnson used in the 1930s. These riffs have been handed down from the earliest blues players and are still used today by modern guitarists everywhere. Sounds great on acoustic or with a dirty, distorted tone.

POSITION SHIFT LEAD LICK

BIT.LY/TG355AUDIO



This example is collection of great lead guitar phrases that many of the Chicago greats would use. It's the kind of phrasing that would subsequently influence blues-rock greats such as Eric Clapton and Jimmy Page. Just watch out for the position shifts.

RHYTHMIC LEAD

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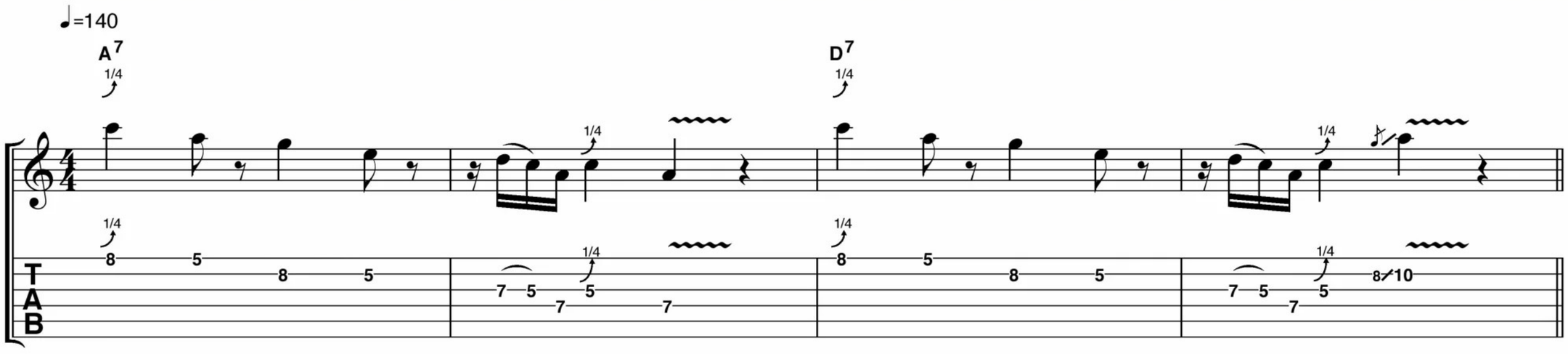

We're taking our inspiration from Otis Rush here in a catchy lick with a tricky rhythm. Like so many blues licks, this idea can be made to fit over any chord of a traditional I-IV-V progression,

DIAD RIFFS

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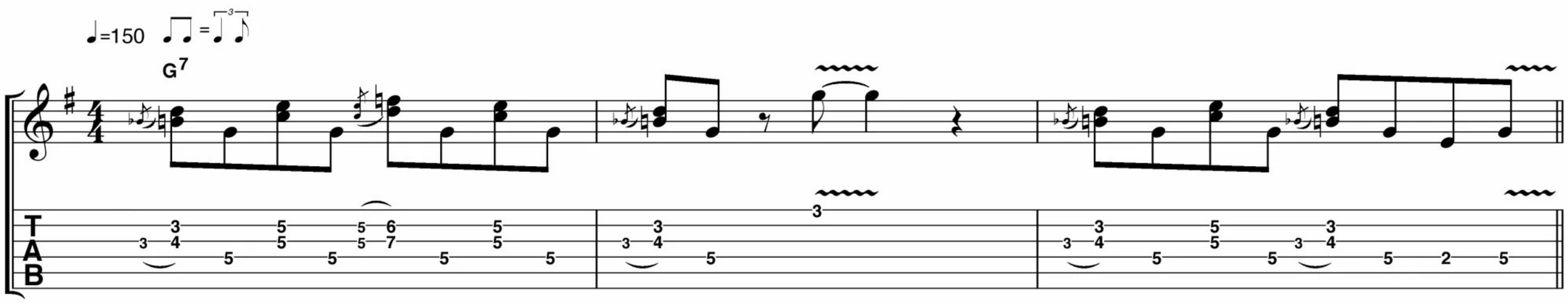


This example features a blues riff performed Hubert Sumlin style, and it's an idea whose influence can be seen in rock acts like Van Halen and AC/DC. For our bluesier purposes, aim for a light shuffle feel and use either fingerstyle or pick and fingers 'hybrid' style picking.

Guitars and backing Richard Barrett

STORY OF THE BLUES

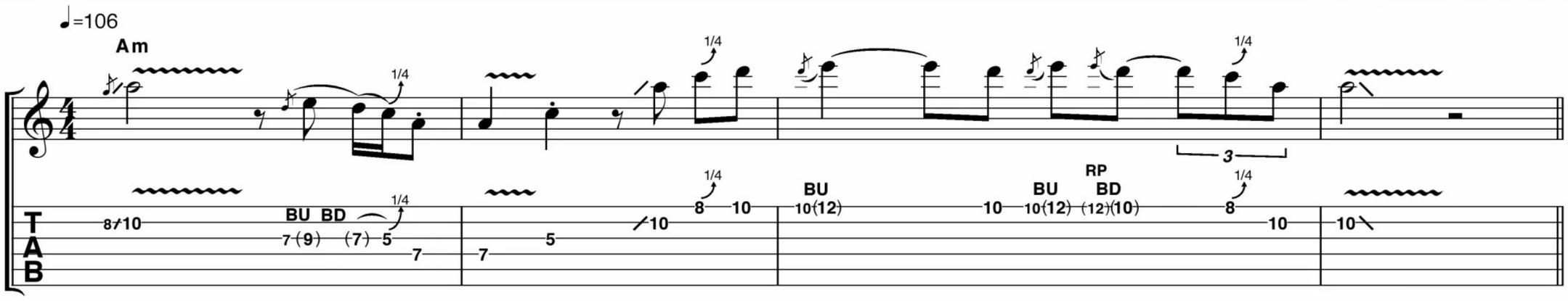
We chart the playing styles of five of the greatest blues players through the ages...

Here we're looking at the techniques and playing styles of five of the most important blues guitarists of all time. We begin with arguably the greatest of them all, BB King, moving through the 60s and 70s with Peter Green, the 80s with Texas blues icon Stevie Ray Vaughan, before wrapping up with the 'modern' styles of Gary Moore and Eric Gales.

Whatever style of music you play there's something to learn here, such is the depth of these players' abilities. From techniques to make your solos more expressive to cool chords that'll give your playing an edge in your next blues jam, there really is a huge amount covered here.

If you struggle with any of our licks, don't worry too much – blues can be reinvented and re-imagined. By which we mean, you can break these licks down, take a few choice phrases and them apply in countless different ways in your own jam sessions. Now, let's get started...

BB KING **BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO**



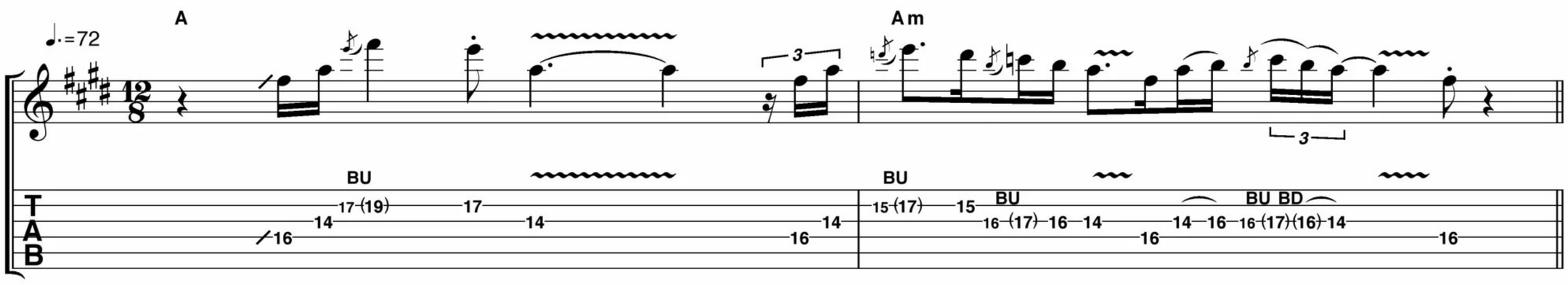
One of the most influential electric guitarists of any genre, BB King is best known for his 'question and answer' phrasing, trademark shallow vibrato and vocal-like string bends – and these are all at play here. As an exercise see if you can stretch our lick out over eight bars by using longer notes and phrases, and more space.

Photo Getty

FULL TRACK + BACKING (BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO)
This song comes with a full demo track and backing track. Enter the above link into your web browser of choice; press play and jam along, guitaraoke style!

PETER GREEN

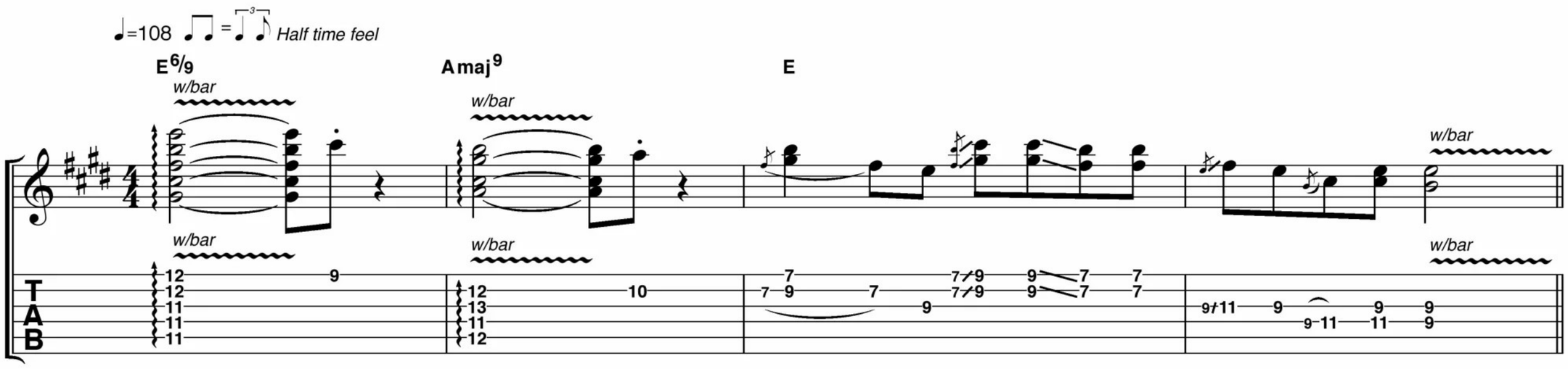
BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO



As one of many 60s blues icons who took influence from BB King, Freddie King, Muddy Waters and other post-war pioneers, Peter Green's style is often precise, with a considered note choice and a unique tone. You can hear that precision here in our lick which focuses on Peter's melodic style over a 12/8-time ballad. Emphasise the higher notes to really cut through. Bar 2 has a laidback feel, played 'late' against the pulse of the music.

STEVIE RAY VAUGHAN

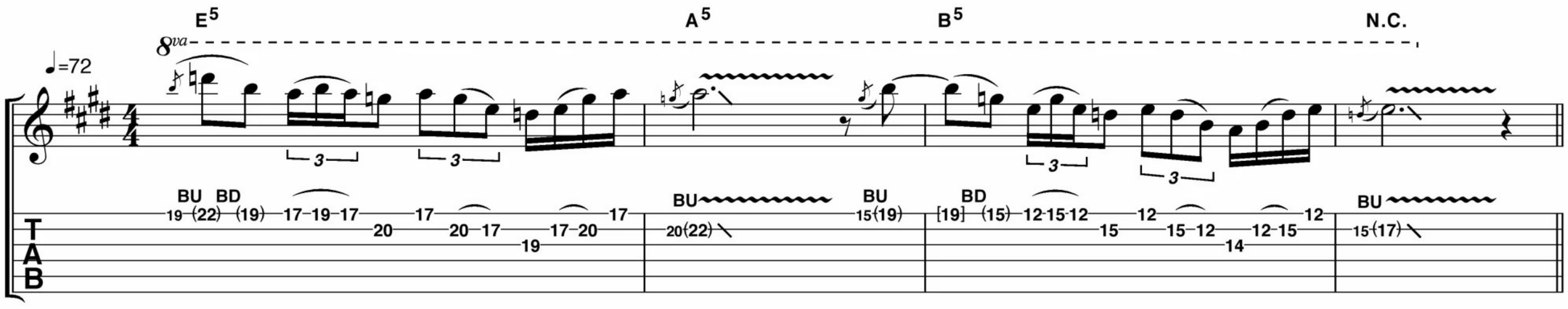
BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO



Probably known best for his fiery uptempo playing style, Stevie Ray Vaughan would also play with great sensitivity, and that's what inspired us here in a lick that showcases how chords can be used melodically in a blues ballad. The shapes may be unfamiliar at first but they are fairly easy to get to grips with. The Hendrix-style two-note shapes are another lovely way to play both melodically and chordally.

GARY MOORE

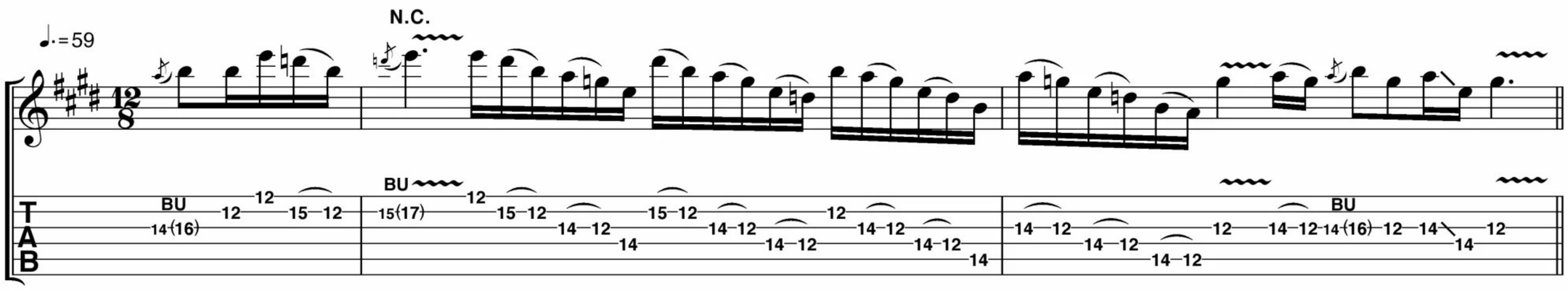
BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO



On 1990's *Still Got The Blues*, Gary Moore brought new levels of intensity and virtuosity to blues, arguably steering the entire genre in a new 'modern' direction. Our example showcases some wide, high-register string bends and the crucial rhythmic variation of triplets and 16th notes that are at the core of his style. It provides a hint of how Gary played those rapid-fire licks in tracks like *Walking By Myself*, using a mixture of picked notes with hammer-ons and pull-offs.

ERIC GALES

BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO



Eric Galeș is one of the finest lead players around today, channeling the authenticity of post-war pioneers and employing contemporary techniques to form his own powerful style. Here we're looking at an idea the Eric introduced to TG in a Guest Lesson back in issue 250: up the stairs, down the stairs. There's more 'downstairs' here in our lick, but you can see how he uses fragments of the minor pentatonic scale, starting on different notes each time to produce a complex melodic run.

JAM SESSION

Take everything you've learnt and get your mojo working as you jam over four awesome backing tracks

So here we are at the end of our big blues lesson, and this is where you put everything you've learned into practice! With that in mind, we've produced four jam tracks for you to play over. The chord charts are below. Start by familiarising yourself with the chords, but beware! Some of the tracks are more riff-based, so the chords only roughly outline the movement. If we have a tip, it's to try and learn a chord shape in the same area of the neck that you plan on soloing. This'll help you to target some chord notes in your solos so that you're not always thinking in terms of scale shapes. Each track is inspired by a blues icon – and we're following three different key signatures so you can really test yourself. Right, let's get jamming!

ALBERT KING

BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO

D7 / / /	/ / / /	/ / / /	/ / / /
G / / /	/ / / /	D7 / / /	/ / / /
A / / /	G / / /	D7 / / /	A / / /	

Listen out for the bassline here. It really leads the ear, helping you to anticipate the chord changes and choose a suitable note to land on as you reach each new chord.

ALBERT COLLINS

BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO

D7 / / /	G7 / / /	D7 / / /	/ / / /
G7 / / /	/ / / /	D7 / / /	/ / / /
A7 / / /	G7 / / /	D7 / / /	A7 / / /	

This is a standard 12-bar blues pattern. Try using the D major pentatonic scale throughout, switching to D minor pentatonic for a more dissonant, biting sound.

JOHN MAYER

BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO

F#m7 / / /	/ / / /	/ / / /	/ / / /
B9 / / /	/ / / /	F#m7 / / /	/ / / /
C#7#9 / / /	B9 / / /	F#m7 / / /	C#7#9 / / /	

There's a funky vibe here. Try pushing or pulling against the tempo, playing ahead of the beat for a more urgent sound or laying back behind the beat for a relaxed feel.

GARY CLARKE JR

BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO

Gm / / /	/ / / /	/ / / /	/ / / /
Cm7 / / /	Eb / F /	Gm / / /	/ / / /
Dm7 / / /	Cm7 / /	Dm7	Gm / / /	Dm7 / / /	

There's more chord movement than our other tracks here. So, though you could stick to just the G minor pentatonic scale, it's worth trying out C Dorian over Cm7, and D natural minor over Dm7.

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Words Tim Tucker

HOW JIMI PLAYED THE BLUES

His mastery of the art in five landmark tracks

In the tradition of many itinerant bluesmen before him, Jimi Hendrix spent his formative years travelling around North America, from his upbringing in Vancouver and Seattle, down to the birthplace of the blues, the Deep South. "I was largely influenced by blues artists when I first started," he said, picking up inspiration from his father's record collection and other musicians. "The first guitarist I was aware of was Muddy Waters. I heard one of his old records when I was a little boy and it scared me to death. Wow, what is that all about?"

It was in the South, though, as a professional musician on the 'chitlin' circuit', that he developed his unique musical style, fused from a combination of Delta blues, R&B, rock 'n' roll and soul. He encountered many blues musicians on the way, including Albert King, who made a considerable impact on Hendrix's artistic development.

When his new manager Chas Chandler brought him to England, it was no surprise that the preeminent guitarists of the British Blues boom, including Eric Clapton, Jeff Beck and Brian Jones, considered him the real deal. He was immediately recognised as inspiration, competition, and a visionary pointing to the future of blues music.

And what a future that was: loud, sensitive, joyous, agonised and cosmic in its scope. The new blues sound Jimi forged was inspired by the electric performances of blues greats like Buddy Guy, channelled through the latest technology, including his Fuzzface distortion, Vox Wah pedal and 100 Watt Marshall stacks. It was a sound like nothing ever heard before.

Throughout his career, Hendrix incorporated all the blues guitar trademarks in his own inimitable style: simultaneous lead and rhythm playing, pentatonic licks, emotive trills, screeching solos and blistering shred-like runs. But more than anything, it was the feel of the blues that Hendrix inherited and passed on to a new generation.

As legendary blues guitarist John Lee Hooker said, quoted in the original CD booklet for the *Hendrix Blues* album: "He could play the hard blues. Anybody can put the clothes on, but everyone can't produce it. It's got to come from the soul. He was the greatest guitar player that was ever born. I can't say enough about him. He could play deep blues."

1 RED HOUSE

From Los Angeles Forum: April 26, 1969 *(2022)*

This Hendrix original first saw the light of day on the UK version of the Jimi Hendrix Experience's debut album, *Are You Experienced*. According to Hendrix it was excluded from the American release because he was told 'Americans don't like blues, man.' It was the first 12-bar blues of many that he would record, and immediately showcased his loose, effortless style, with notes, phrases and chords tumbling from his fingers. The song became a live favourite, prompting some of his longest onstage jams, very often going over ten minutes in length.

The version on the newly released *Los Angeles Forum* set was recorded during the band's last North American tour. Starting at a comfortable slow tempo, Jimi plays gentle arpeggios and sweet melodies on his 1968 Fender Stratocaster. The pace picks up in intensity, when Mitch Mitchell's drums thunder forward and Jimi pushes his futuristic fuzz and wah sound into the stratosphere. Later the band go into a jazz swing feel and Hendrix experiments with partial chord playing and funky scratching on muted strings, before returning with his sweet crying tone to see the song out.

2 VOODOO CHILE

From Electric Ladyland *(1968)*

Starting life as a version of the Muddy Waters-inspired *Catfish Blues*, this song was renamed by Hendrix after a review in *Rolling Stone* dubbed his last album 'the finest voodoo album that any rock group has ever produced.' There are plenty of legends about Hendrix's involvement with voodoo, including claims he developed his extraordinary guitar playing prowess after engaging in shamanic ceremonies in the Deep South blues scene, echoing legends of Robert Johnson's pact with the devil.

This early morning all-star jam session featured some of the best blues-inspired musicians of the rock scene, including Jack Cassady on bass and Traffic's Stevie Winwood on organ. Over 15 minutes of improvisation, Hendrix trades licks with Winwood, a blues master himself. The two virtuosos drive each other to greater heights, with Hendrix occasionally lifting off from planet Earth into another stratosphere through his soaring lead breaks. British writer Charles Shaar Murray called the performance 'a chronological guided tour of blues styles'. A day later it yielded *Voodoo Child (Slight Return)*, one of Hendrix's most enduringly popular recordings.

3 HEAR MY TRAIN A COMIN'

From Blues *(1994)*

This Hendrix original, which he often referred to as *Getting My Heart Back Together Again*, was recorded live and in the studio at various times, but never officially released during his lifetime. The opening track on the posthumous

Photo Getty

KIND OF BLUE
Jimi performing at the Royal Albert Hall in London in February 1969, two months before the LA Forum show was recorded.

Blues album features an acoustic version, recorded in December 1967 during a photo session for the filming of the documentary *Experience* (1968). The impromptu performance occurred when Hendrix picked up a nearby Zemaitis 12-string acoustic guitar, in standard C tuning, that happened to be strung for a left hander.

It's one of only two recorded examples of Hendrix's acoustic guitar playing, made all the more remarkable in that it's played on a 12-string acoustic. His dexterity with this unwieldy instrument provides a tantalising glimpse of what he could do with an acoustic, with triple time phrasing in the style of Tommy Johnson, and humming accompaniment in the John Lee Hooker style. The result is as close to authentic country blues as Hendrix got.

The final track on the Blues album is the definitive electric rendition of the same song, recorded live at the Berkeley Community Theatre in May 1970 with Billy Cox on bass and Mitch Mitchell on drums. The tempo is slow, the beat heavy, and Hendrix is at the height of his powers, commanding his classic 1968 white Stratocaster with alternating blues licks, chromatic runs and crying melodies.

4 KILLING FLOOR

From Live at Monterey *(1967)*

The moment Hendrix broke through in his homeland is captured on this recording of the legendary Monterey concert. Introduced by Brian Jones of The Rolling Stones as 'the most exciting guitar player I've ever heard', Hendrix appeared before an audience that barely knew him. By the end of his set, he'd pointed the way forward for blues rock.

Although The Who had played an explosive set earlier in the evening, they were followed by a relatively sedate forty minutes of psychedelic noodling by The Grateful Dead. So when Jimi kicked off with his take on the Howlin' Wolf blues classic *Killing Floor*, the audience was awakened to the presence of something entirely new. While white English musicians had been doing their best to reproduce the blues style of Chicago, Hendrix at once identified himself with its past, present and future: tripling the tempo, quadrupling the volume, before setting fire to it and birthing something completely fresh from its remains.

On this opening song of his set, Hendrix effortlessly shifts from rhythmic attack to throwaway licks and incendiary lead breaks, pushing his 1965/66 Black Fender Stratocaster way beyond its limits. Later on he switched to the hand-painted 1963/64 Strat for the shocking climax of his set, setting fire to his instrument and changing rock music forever.

5 CATFISH BLUES

From Blues *(1994)*

The Jimi Hendrix Experience recorded this blazing take of a traditional blues song in November 1967 at Vitus Studios, Bussem, Holland. This interpretation is inspired by Muddy Waters, starting with a slow, grinding groove, flamboyant trills and the sharp, abrasive riff, mixing in melody lines in unison with his vocal. At 2:25 he starts to take it in a new direction, with partial chords and screaming lead runs, before reigning it back in and dropping out for Mitch Mitchell's drum solo. At 5:25, Hendrix returns in full force, with his wah pedal and whammy bar providing fresh inspiration. At 6:30 he instigates a double-time gallop towards the song's incendiary finale, his guitar howling at full volume as it crashes to a close.

"JIMI COULD PLAY THE HARD BLUES. HE COULD PLAY DEEP BLUES"

John Lee Hooker

Photo Getty

JIMI'S GEAR

Jimi's blues gear could be quite different from his rock rigs

1951 EPIPHONE FT 79

Hendrix owned this for nearly three years, longer than any other guitar, picking it up in New York shortly after his Monterey Pop appearance. The unclear but footage is he appears to use it for a version of *Hound Dog* in one of only two known videos of him playing an acoustic.

1960S ZEMAITIS 12-STRING

The mesmerising acoustic performance of *Hear My Train A Comin'* that opens *Blues* employed this hand-built model by luthier Tony Zemaitis. It's tuned down to C standard for that Leadbelly-style recording. Little else is known about it, but some wood shavings purportedly from the guitar sold at auction for £90 in 2019.

DALLAS ARBITER FUZZ FACE

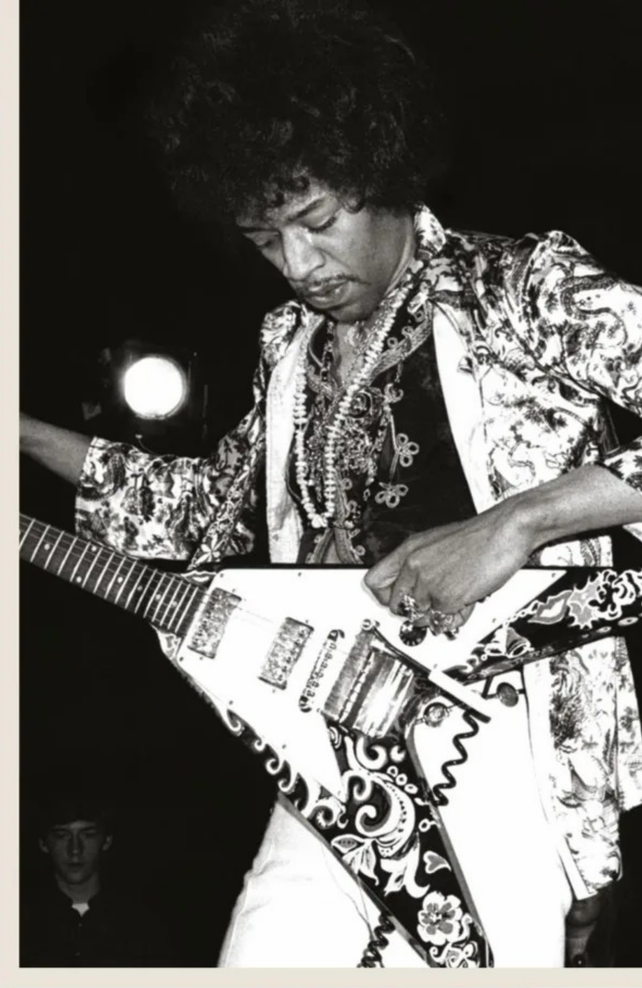
The secret of many of Jimi's sought after clean tones, such as the *Voodoo Chile* intro, is that he left his Fuzz Face on and rolled off his guitar volume. The Fuzz Face cleans up beautifully and adds a unique sparkle to the sound. Both germanium and silicon fuzzes work.

FENDER DUAL SHOWMAN

Multiple sources, including producer Eddie Kramer, agree Hendrix recorded with Fender amps, notably on *Voodoo Chile*. Sadly Kramer has told the same story about several amps, also mentioning Bassmans and Twins. The Dual Showman appeared on stage with Jimi though, notably at Monterey and on his 1968 US tour. Jimi's early Marshall JTM45s also used a modified Fender circuit.

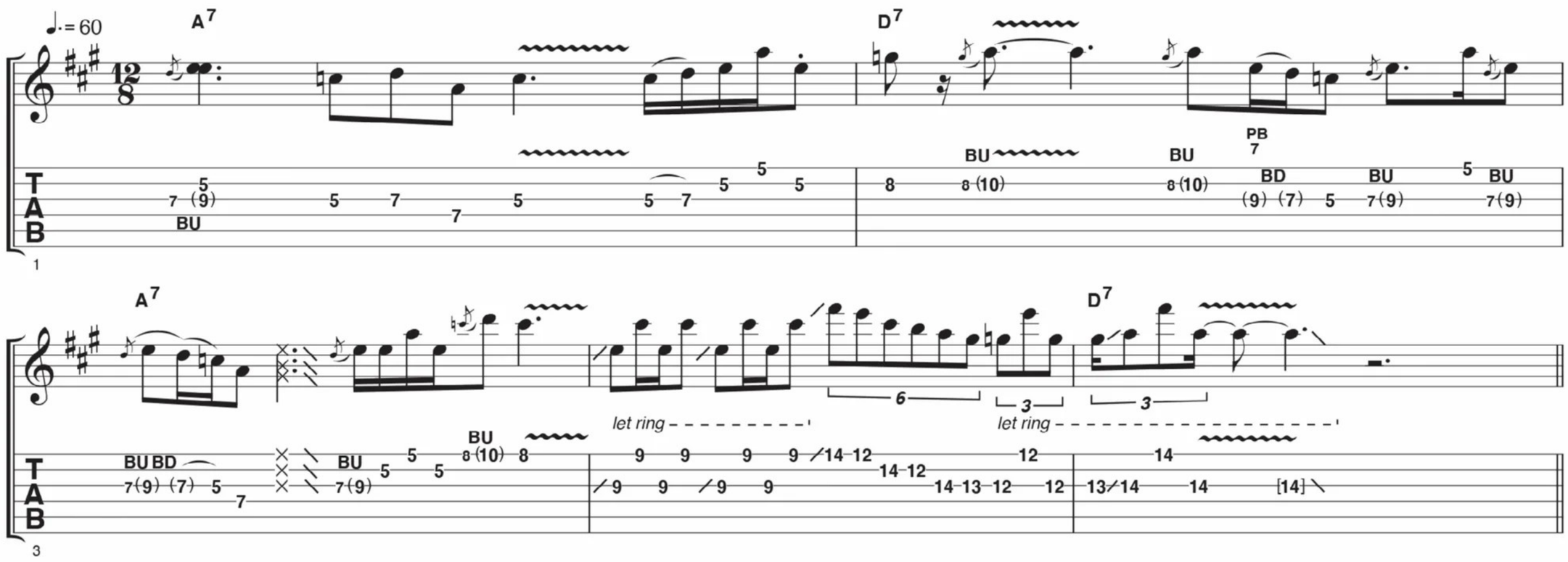
GIBSON FLYING V

Despite his love of the Strat, Jimi would often reach for the Flying V in his bluesiest moments. *Red House* and *Catfish Blues* in particular almost always came from the Flying V. Jimi was a fan of fellow left-hander Albert King, and replaced him as the V's most famous exponent.



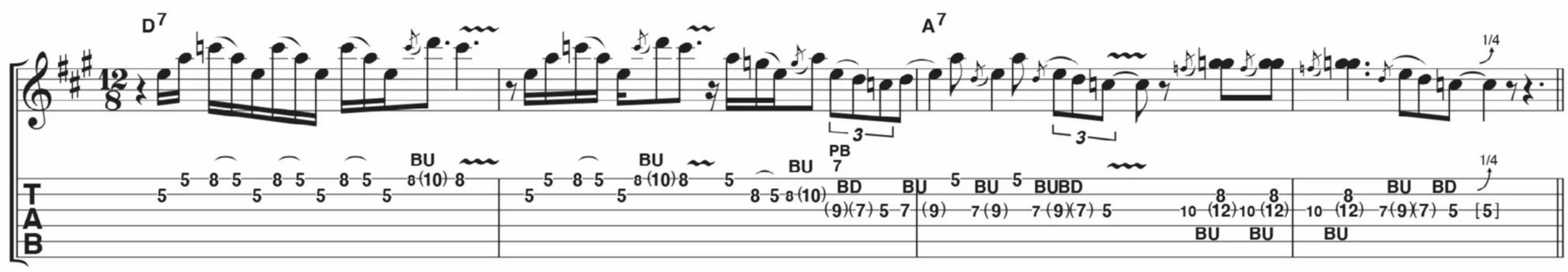
SECRET WEAPON
Jimi often used his Gibson Flying V for *Red House* and *Catfish Blues*.

FLUENT DELIVERY BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO



There are a few tricks at play here, giving a loose but fluid Hendrix-like sound in our first lick. Most important is that nearly every note lasts for its full duration and there are very few rests in the music – a great way to fill out the sound in a three-piece lineup. The ringing two-note shapes in bars 4 and 5 also help give a bigger, rounder sound.

USING REPETITION BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO



Repetition might not sound all that exciting as a concept, but it's something most of the great blues players use to some extent – you can't just play non-stop, unrelenting widdly pentatonics, after all! Our initial repeating part is a three-note idea found in bar 1. Bar 2 briefly restates the idea, before bars 3 and 4 take it somewhere new.

BEASTIE BOYS
Dave Murray (left) and Adrian Smith in perfect harmony

Words Grant Moon

HALLOWED BE THY NAME

IRON MAIDEN

(1982)

A perfect example of twin-lead guitar dynamics – in an epic track from the album that elevated Maiden to legendary status

Iron Maiden's bassist and chief songwriter Steve Harris once said that, if someone had somehow never heard the band and wanted to understand what they were all about, then *Hallowed Be Thy Name* would be the song to play them. *Metal Hammer* magazine voted it Maiden's greatest song in 2017, and it's been a mainstay of the band's setlist for over 40 years.

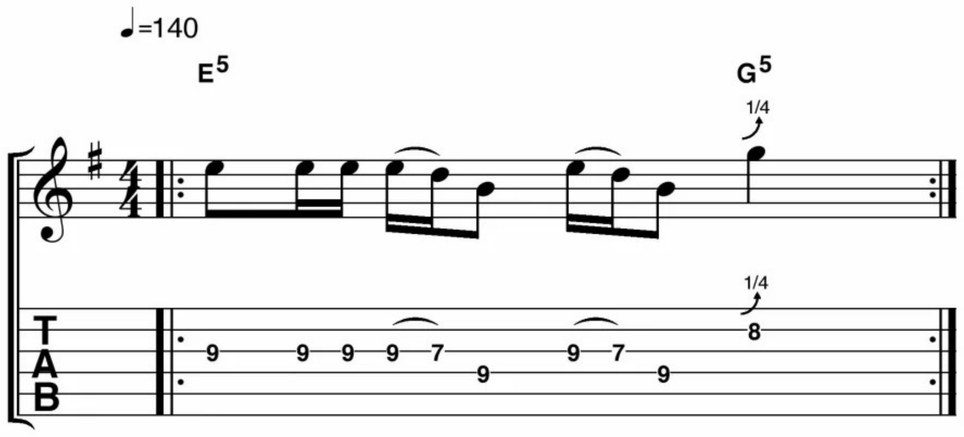
And rightly so. The grand finale to 1982's *The Number Of The Beast*, arguably Maiden's greatest album, *Hallowed Be Thy Name* is a devastatingly effective combination of musical form and lyrical theme, delivered by a band at the top of their game, bubbling with chemistry and driven by the sheer onward force of metal. The relentless, dramatic tune tells the story of a man reflecting on his life as sits in his cell awaiting his execution ("Cause at 5 o'clock, they take me to the gallows pole/The sands of time for me are running low…"). Making his debut for the band on this album, Bruce Dickinson's soaring voice sells the doomed character's tragic story, Harris and drummer Nicko McBrain are the engine room, while guitarists Dave Murray and Adrian Smith deliver a textbook demonstration of how two guitars can, and should, work together.

From the subdued intro (complete with none-more-metal tolling bell) the pair mainly play harmony lines based on the song's E minor key, occasionally substituting that key's seventh degree of D with D# (giving an E harmonic minor feel). They harmonise in 3rds, so when one plays the line E, F#, G, B, the other is adding G, A, B, D. Their lead motifs function as a pedal point, with the galloping bass/chords (Em, C, D, Em) changing beneath, giving those same notes fresh harmonic flavour. This, and the song's dynamically delivered repetition, amps up the relentlessness of the piece, cleverly representing the narrator's rising fear as his inevitable fate draws near. The song is a masterclass in the power of repetition and build-up, and over the years Machine Head, Cradle Of Filth and Dream Theater have all taken a swing at it.

The beauty of the twin lead approach exemplified here is the sheer clarity of the sound, the orchestral articulation of each part that only two players can bring – no diads or doublestops here, just smooth, heavy lines. Then there's the bonus of both Murray and Smith throwing in a guitar solo each, in their contrasting yet complementary styles.

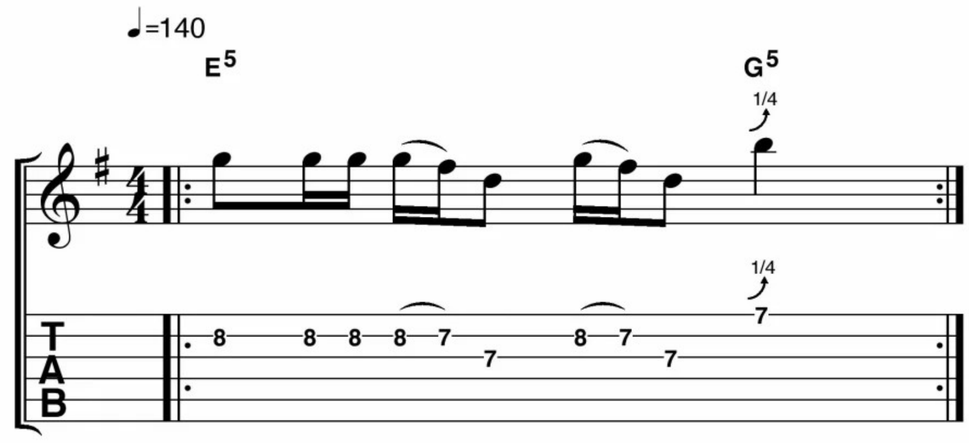
Of course, bands such as The Allman Brothers, Wishbone Ash and Thin Lizzy had made a virtue of having two guitarists before Maiden. Judas Priest also had their own brace of powerful guitar players in Glenn Tipton and K.K. Downing,. After them, the flood – Slayer, Metallica, Mastodon and countless other bands realised that the only thing better than one lead guitarist was two. For most, Maiden had shown them the musical and performance potential that the format could unlock, and *Hallowed Be Thy Name* remains a benchmark.

HARMONY LEAD LICK 1 BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO



Here we're looking at the very basics of Maiden style harmony. Tabbed above is a fairly simple lick. Aim for steady, even timing so that when you play the harmony part it all syncs together tightly.

HARMONY LEAD LICK 2 BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO



The idea here is to play the same lick as before but a 3rd higher in the scale. We're in E minor (E F♯ G A B C D), so where guitar 1 plays E, guitar 2 plays G. Where guitar 1 plays F♯, guitar 2 plays A, and so on.

Photo Getty

Guitars & backing Charlie Griffiths **Photo** Tim Saccenti

JUST RIFFS FOR ALL!

Dial in the distortion and warm up your strumming arm for the onslaught of our Metallica-style lessons

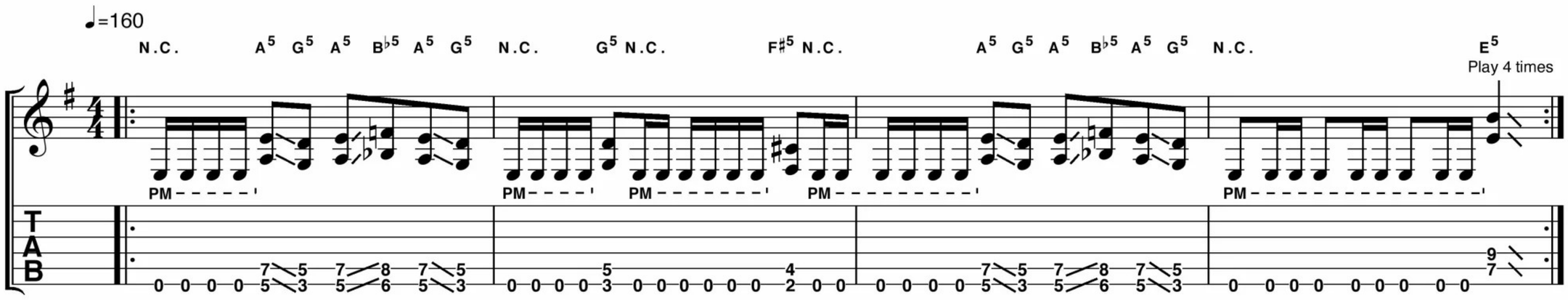
James Hetfield and Kirk Hammett have been kicking heavy metal ass for 40 years. In 1983 it was the band's mission statement, with their debut album originally planned to be titled *Metal Up Your Ass* until *Kill 'Em All* eventually stuck. And if their debut set the scene for the burgeoning thrash metal genre, their next three albums defined it until 1991, when their self-titled 'Black Album' sent the band to the stratosphere, hitting number 1 worldwide.

Like most guitar bands who reach their fifth decade, Metallica's back catalogue offers a wealth of riches for any six-string slinger on a mission to play better. The Phrygian and Aeolian modes are core harmonic essentials, with powerchords and downpicking techniques appearing in almost every song the band have ever recorded. But emulating their style is far from simple. Dual-harmony guitar lines are often more complex than mere 3rd- and 4th-interval affairs, and syncopated riffs at fearsome tempos provide serious technical workouts.

For now, plug in, crank up the gain and let's look at Hetfield and Hammett's most important techniques, as employed from their '83 debut right up to this year's *72 Seasons*. Wah is optional. Downpicking is essential!

1 POWERCHORDS AND GALLOPS

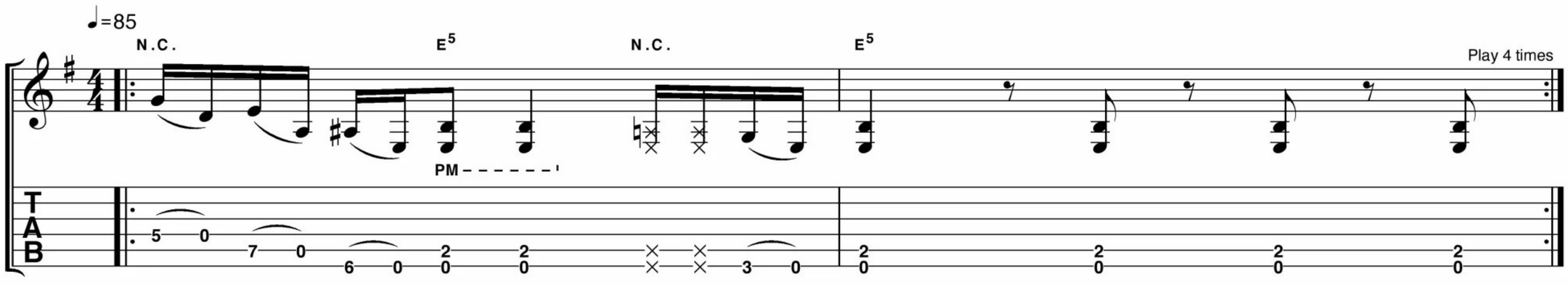
BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO



We're taking inspiration from 1984's *Fight Fire With Fire* and the title track from the band's latest release *72 Seasons* here. Use alternate picking and palm-muting to play the open sixth string, but lift your palm away from the strings for the powerchords. Strum these with downstrokes and use slides to shift between them where indicated.

2 SLOW STOMPING SYNCOPATION

BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO



Here we're showcasing the pull-off technique of *Sad But True* and the stomping syncopation of this year's *You Must Burn*. In bar 1, your aim is to sound only one note at a time, so make sure to mute each open string after you've played it. For bar 2, it's all about space. The syncopation comes from hitting those powerchords on the offbeat while staying dead silent in the gaps.

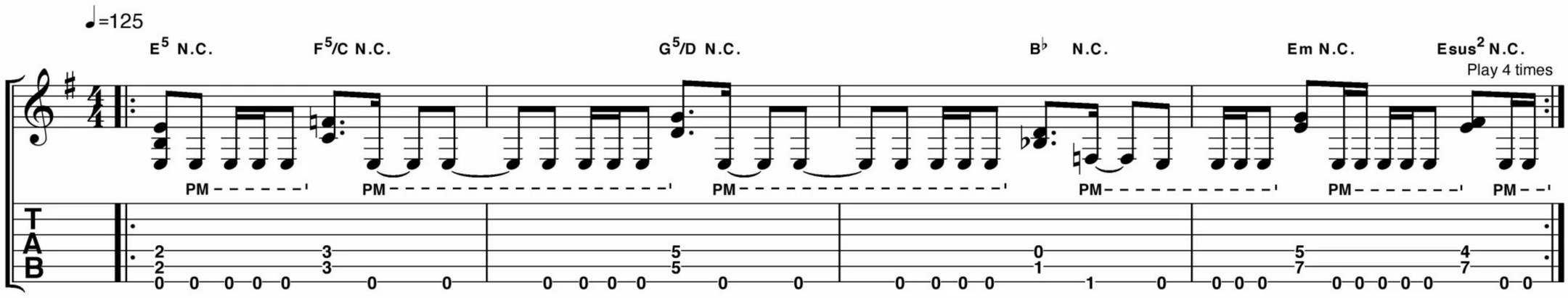
3 HIT THE POWERCHORDS

BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO

This riff demonstrates the kind of two-note powerchord shapes on display in tracks such as *Hit The Lights*, albeit in F♯ minor here. Play the doublestop shapes with a first finger barre followed by your third and fourth fingers together. Turn your hand from the wrist for the semitone bend and release.

4 BATTERY STYLE GALLOP

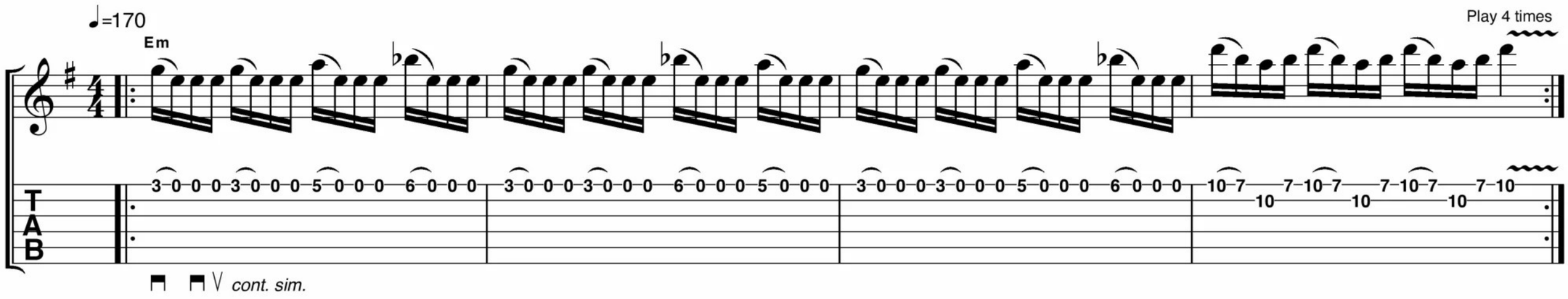
BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO



Use tight palm-muted picking to play the *Battery*-style galloping rhythm on the sixth string here. This is played with a combination of downpicking for the eighth notes and alternate picking for the faster 16ths. Use the tip of the pick to glide across the string for a consistent tone, and don't pick too hard.

5 JUSTICE STYLE BLUES SCALE SOLOING

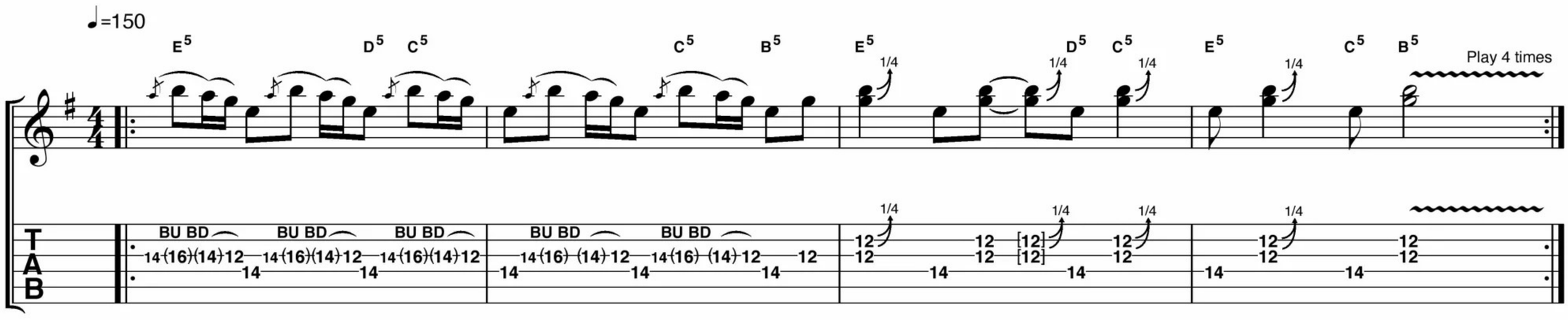
BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO



Kirk is a fan of soloing with the blues scale – and we're channelling *...And Justice For All* along with new track *Shadows Follow* here in a scalic line played along the first string. For our repeating four-note phrase, use a downstroke followed by a pull-off, then pick 'down-up'. Pull off with your first finger as you move up and down the neck.

6 CLASSIC HAMMETT REPEATING LICK

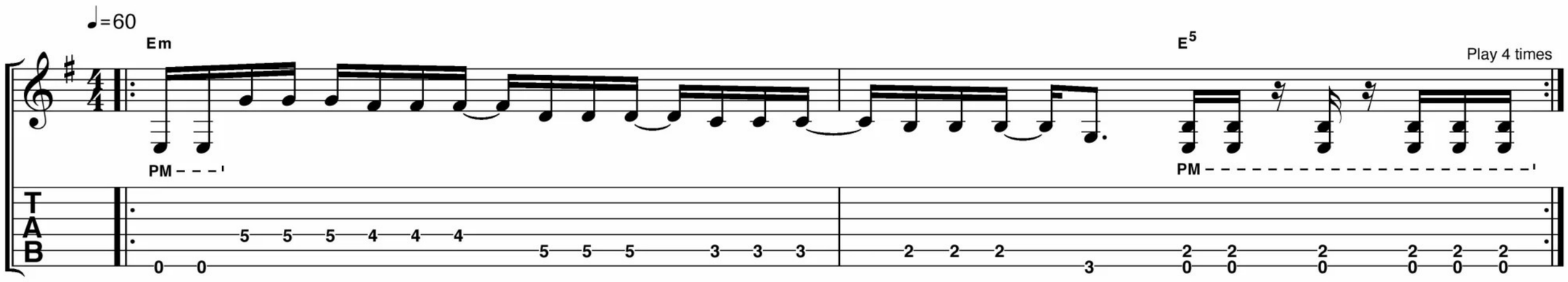
BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO



This repeating lick is a staple Hammett phrasing idea, appearing in one form in *Enter Sandman* and being reinvented recently in *Too Far Gone*. Play the repeating lick with a third-finger bend/release, pull off to your first finger, then finish with your third finger on the fourth string. This repeat is three beats long, but when played against the 4/4 drumbeat an interesting displacement happens.

7 HEAVY HARMONIES

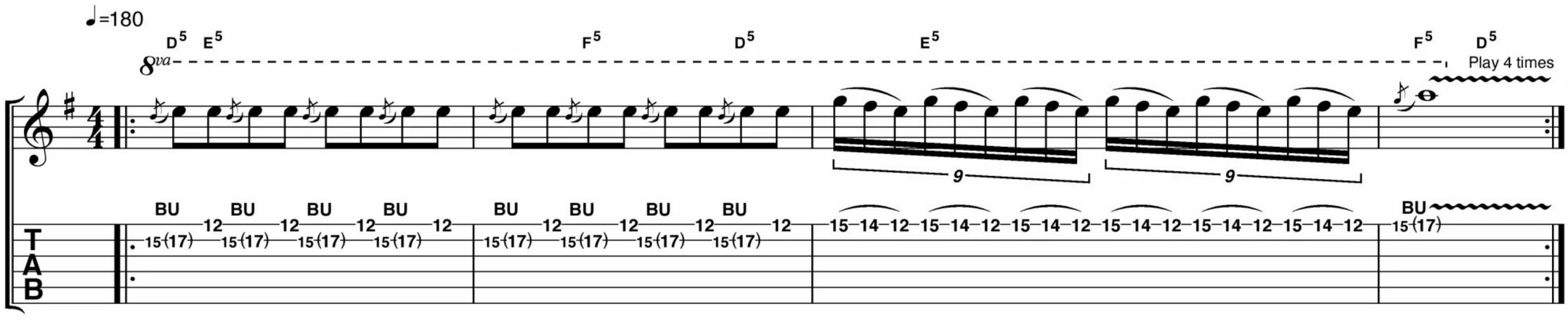
BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO



Harmony guitar parts have featured heavily in Metallica's recorded output, from 1984's *Fade To Black*, to 2016's *Atlas Rise* and new album track *Inamorata*. Our lick here is the higher part of a two-guitar harmony in E minor (E F♯ G A B C D). Listen to the guitar on the backing track to match the timing and intensity so the guitars blend as one.

8 TRIPLET-PHRASED LEADS

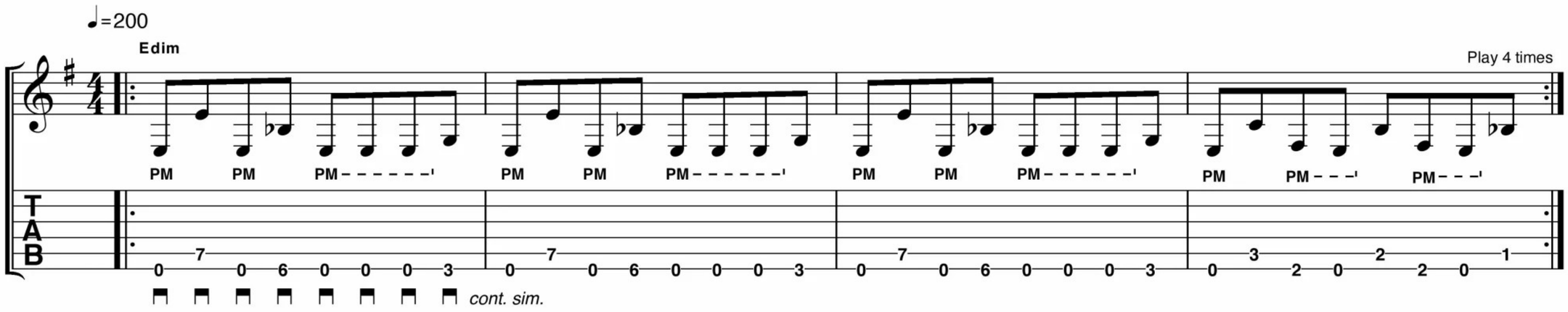
BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO



Recent single *If Darkness Had A Son* is our inspiration here as we home in on some repeating three-note phrases in bar 3. Use your third, second and first fingers respectively, picking each 15th fret G note before pulling off to the 14th (F♯) and 12th frets (E). Take care with the rhythm. Unusually, nine notes cover half a bar here.

9 JAMES STYLE DOWNPICKING

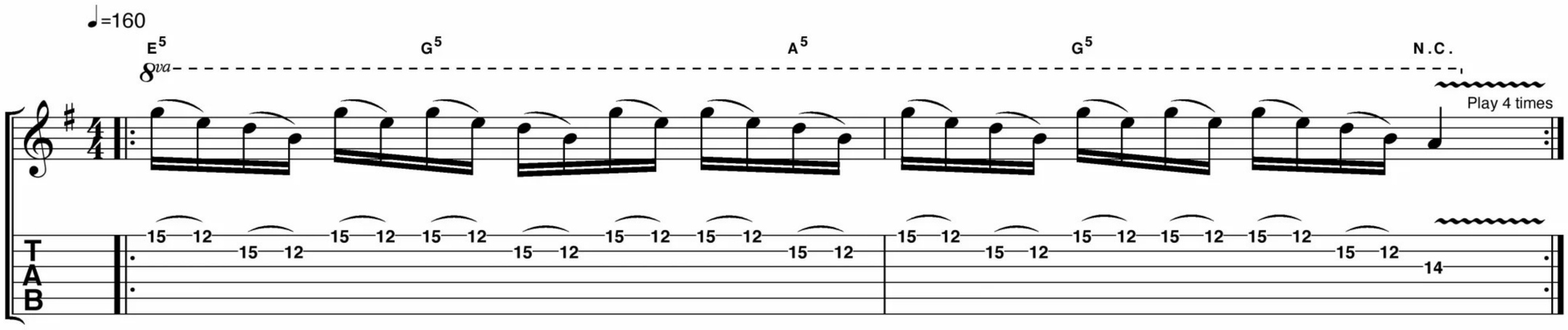
BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO



This riff is based on Heftield's legendary downpicking technique which he uses in eighth-note riffs around the 200bpm mark in *Master Of Puppets* and *Blackened*. Use your wrist to bounce the pick off of the string and keep your arm relaxed so as to maintain the movement for long periods. Your arm may feel more relaxed when straighter, so try playing in a standing position with your guitar slung low.

10 SHAPE 1 PENTATONICS

BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO



Kirk's soloing style draws heavily on pentatonics – and our lick here is the kind you'll hear in everything from *Hit The Lights* to *Room Of Mirrors*. It's a simple pull-off idea played on the two highest strings. Try adapting our lick through any two-note-per-string E minor pentatonic scale shape.

Find your videos here
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VIDEO

RIFF LESSONS

BECOME A MASTER OF PICKING WITH TG'S VIDEO LESSONS ON THREE AWESOME METALLICA RIFFS

CREEPING DEATH

This song is a prime example of the down-picking prowess on show in Metallica's back catalogue. The section we are focusing on outlines an E5 powerchord by alternating between the open sixth-string root note and the 5th/octave of the root on the fourth and fifth strings. To get the rhythmic definition and shape you'll need to palm-mute the notes on the sixth string and leave the notes on the fourth and fifth strings unmuted. Each phrase concludes with a single-note figure with picked notes played on the 2nd and 3rd frets of the fifth string. This is concluded by another picked note at the 2nd fret, a fast hammer-on to the 3rd fret, and pull-offs to the 2nd fret and open fifth string. Try to use minimal finger pressure as you move through the hammer-on/pull-off sequence, as this will help you to maintain the required pace. After eight cycles of the riff, the phrase changes to two palm-muted open sixth strings, followed by an unmuted G5 powerchord. This sequence is played twice before playing two more palm-muted open sixth strings and six palm-muted F# notes on the 2nd fret of the sixth string. To get the sound, use a decent amount of gain, a bridge position humbucker, and play every picked note with a downstroke.

Appears at: 0:19-0:56
Tempo: 200bpm
Key/scale: E minor
Main techniques: Down-picking, hammer-ons, pull-offs, powerchords, palm-muting

TG Tip: To get sufficient speed with your down-picking, angle your pick by bending the joint in the middle of your thumb, so it points upwards, allowing it to glide through the strings with less resistance.

SEEK AND DESTROY

Another Metallica classic here, and a song that'll see you shifting between an A minor and E minor tonal centre. The intro is based around A minor but leans on the ♭5th ($E_♭$) and ♭2nd ($B_♭$) for extra tension. The riff begins with two palm-muted A notes on the open 5th string. From here, you need to place your first finger on the 7th fret of the third string, strike the note then immediately hammer on the 8th fret with your second finger. This creates a grace note, from the D, before hearing the main $E_♭$ note at the 8th fret. To complete the phrase, re-pick the D note, at the 7th fret and let it sustain. Next, the sequence is repeated with a single palm-muted A note on the open fifth string, and the grace note, hammer-on, picked note figure moved down to the 7th and 8th frets of the fourth string. The riff concludes with a palm-muted A note on the open fifth string, followed by ascending two-note sequences on the 8th and 7th frets of the fifth string, 5th fret of the fourth string to the 7th fret of the fifth string, and 5th fret of the third string to the 7th fret of the fourth string. The riff repeats eight times before a run descending down an E blues scale. Dial in a moderate amount of gain, select your bridge pickup, and use downstrokes for every picked note.

Appears at: 0:00-0:29
Tempo: 140bpm
Key/scale: A minor/E minor
Main techniques: Grace notes, hammer-ons, down picking, selective palm muting

TG Tip: Palm-mute every note that lands on the fifth string but leave the other strings unmuted.

IF DARKNESS HAD A SON

One of Hetfield and co's most recent tracks, *Darkness...* is centred around the E Phrygian mode but leans on other modes for further mood changes. The riff we're focussing on uses the ♭5th ($B_♭$), rather than the natural 5th (B), bringing the intensity and drama of the Locrian mode. The opening notes move between the 12th and 13th fret of the fifth string, by means of a downstroke and hammer-on. Next, you'll move over to the 12th fret of the fourth string, followed by a string hop over to the 13th fret of the sixth string. Here, you'll need to keep the idle strings from ringing, by connecting the under side and tip of your first finger (fretting hand) against the neighbouring strings. The phrase finishes with E notes on the 12th fret of the sixth string, followed by a palm-muted, chugging sequence on the open sixth string. To contrast the melodic quality of the fretted notes, the open sixth-string notes are palm muted and introduce a 16th-note down-up-down picking sequence. This phrase reinforces the tonal centre of the riff and makes for some heavy, mid-tempo, aggression.

Appears at: 0:40-0:55
Tempo: 124bpm
Key/scale: E Phrygian/E Locrian
Main techniques: Hammer-ons, down-picking, palm muted 16th-note chugging

TG Tip: When playing the 16th-note chugging sequence, accent the downstrokes that land on the beat to add power while creating sonic landmarks that lock in with the groove.

Words Amit Sharma **Portraits** Kevin Scanlon

"GUITAR IS A MEANS TO AN END - THE END BEING GOOD MUSIC"

Two virtuosos, no rules: how **Polyphia** are redefining the possibilities for guitar music

THE HOTTEST CUTTING EDGE GUITARISTS ON THE PLANET

Every now and then, usually right around the time people are starting to feel like they've heard it all, an artist will come along and reinvent a sound or style in ways radically different to what came before, daring to dream and open up the floodgates for a new era of noise. These things can certainly be said of Polyphia – the Texan quartet led by Tim Henson and Scott LePage, whose combination of virtuoso guitar heroics and unabashed genre hopping has broadened their appeal to well beyond that of your average rock group. On latest album *Remember That You Will Die*, for example, they're collaborating with the likes of Rodney Jerkins (Michael Jackson, Lady Gaga), Y2K (Doja Cat) and Johan Lenox (Kanye West) – borrowing as much from the pop and hip-hop worlds as they do from six or seven-string heroes, and in the process creating guitar music for non-guitar listeners.

"These days I view us more as composers rather than guitar players, though obviously that hasn't always been the case," says Tim Henson, who started the predominantly instrumental group with LePage in 2010 when he was 17 years old. Since then, he's launched his own signature models through Ibanez and Archetype plug-in via Neural DSP. "I guess it's been something we've been always working towards – composing rather than showing what we can do with our techniques. We just happen to be playing guitar, and have done our whole lives, so that's where our skill set is. The guitar is a means to an end, the end being good music. It's just a tool to get the final product. The average music listener and enjoyer probably won't give a sh*t about the things guitarists do. So this time we've tried to think 'Is this enjoyable to listen to?' rather than 'Is this impressive to play?' I remember showing the track *Genesis* to Tosin Abasi and he was like, 'Ah, so this is your grown-up song!' I was like, 'We're not children anymore!'"

That's not to say all the guests involved on their latest body of work are from long-distant musical worlds. Deftones frontman Chino Moreno is the star guest for *Bloodbath*, while fellow Ibanez-endorsee Steve Vai makes his presence known on album closer *Ego Death* – undoubtedly one of the most epic guitar showdowns you'll hear this year. In many ways, the grand finale almost signals a changing of the guard or passing of the baton – from the instrumental mastermind who was a major protagonist in the original shred guitar movement of the mid-80s and early 90s, to the newcomers hijacking the art form through a musically limitless lens more informed by the youth culture of today. However, as much as the collaboration was a dream come true for Henson ("the dude's my motherf*cking idol"), it was also met with its fair share of challenges – starting off with Henson and LePage accidentally blowing up Vai's speakers before they'd even gotten started. Whoops indeed...

"Two years after asking him at NAMM 2020, we had *Ego Death* ready," Tim says, describing this as the new album's most technically challenging track. "Steve invited us over to his house and we showed him the song. But the file was simply too hot, so when it got to the part where his solo was supposed to come in, the 808s were booming so loud, they broke. We broke Steve Vai's speakers, it was really f*cked up! He had to call his tech to fix it and we felt pretty bad. He was totally cool about it and said he'd love to do the feature but didn't know if he would have time or what he would do."

As the Polyphia pair sheepishly made their exit, they felt like they'd blown not only the speakers but also their chance to work with a man often described as the greatest guitarist on earth. One week later, however, Vai surprised them completely out of the blue...

"He sent an email with all of his parts, telling us to do whatever we wanted with it... so I did!" Tim shrugs, almost as if he's reasoning the decision to himself. "I chopped it the f*ck up. Ivan Jackson from Brasstracks, who was featured on the song *Genesis*, helped make it the most epic thing ever. I sent it over to Steve and I think he was really taken aback. I don't know if anyone had ever done that to his guitars before... but he did tell me to do it! He emailed saying 'Wow, I've never heard myself so Polyphia-ised!' and then wrote something that was alarming to us. He was like, 'Let's go ahead and not do a feature, I don't feel like I did enough...'

"We were really sad so we wrote this long email saying 'Please, please, please!' and even changed it back to how he had it, keeping just a couple of the chopped bits. We were like, 'Yo dude, we didn't mean to offend or anything!' And he replied saying, 'Guys, if it means this much to you, of course, this is your thing and my gift to you, I'm happy to be featured!' We were like 'F*ck yeah, we dodged a bullet there!' The next time we saw him was when we filmed the video and the first thing he told me was how he felt the creative choices I made were the correct ones, he just needed time to sit with it. That gave me affirmation!"

When TG last caught up with Henson, it was for our summer Acoustic issue coinciding with the release of the new album's lead track *Playing God* – which got tongues wagging for its usage of nylon-strings in place of the usual Ibanez superstrats. Then in October came the official launch of Tim's second signature, the all-new TOD10N nylon electro-acoustic, featuring a solid Sitka spruce top with laminated sapele back and sides, a walnut fingerboard decorated by his Tree Of Death inlay, a Fishman Sonicore piezo and an Ibanez AEQ210TF preamp, plus

"YOU CANNOT PLAY IT FAST UNLESS YOU CAN PLAY IT SLOW"

TIM HENSON

THE HOTTEST CUTTING EDGE GUITARISTS ON THE PLANET

NEW RADICALS
Tim Henson (left) and Scott LePage.

a soundhole in its upper bout. From a technique standpoint, *Playing God* leans heavily on fast-picked harmonic minor and chromatic runs – ensuring that Henson and LePage's right hands aren't given many moments of rest. When and where exactly did they hone in on the mechanics of it all, we wonder, and did they turn to the same Paul Gilbert instructionals as the rest of us?

"I know exactly which Paul Gilbert DVDs you're talking about," Tim smiles, before admitting how he, like millions of others, struggled to keep up. "Scott got a lot further than I did, and throughout our career he's always been stronger at that stuff. I always felt like I sucked at alternate picking. It wasn't until I got into hybrid, finger and other types of picking that it brought me all the way back to alternate. That was when I started to feel like my right hand was up to par with my left. Everything before that was horsesh*t!"

He continues: "I had to learn all those other techniques to realise it's just down-up-down-up. In comparison to the other ways of picking, it's actually the most simple. All you need to do is slow it down, like dummy f*cking slow, and eventually it will start to feel natural. Some people like to say if you can play it slow, you can play it fast. I don't really agree with that. To me it's more like you cannot play it fast unless you can play it slow."

If *Playing God* is a piece you're hoping to learn, Tim says be warned. There many obstacles and challenges to consider when trying to nail it note-for-note, namely "because it's such a BPM-f*cker". It's a song that even he struggles with at full speed, to the point where he has to slow it down before building back up to the tempo of the recording. Don't be fooled by the calm front in the video – it's purely the result of intense and extreme practice...

"That song's at 137 [BPM], which is honestly quite tough. 128 is the classic EDM tempo that gets people moving. Using 16th notes anywhere between 128 and 140 is where things starts to get f*cked! A lot of people try to play it to speed and I don't even do that unless we're performing! I usually start off by slowing it down to 110 and building it up by five just to make sure the delivery of every single note sounds and feels good.

"There are a lot of techniques happening fast. For a lot of people, myself included, trying to play it at speed straight away will make it really sloppy. You need to spend hours drilling it out. I don't think I've ever practised a song more! In the video you see me doing it with my eyes closed and sh*t, almost looking like I'm sleeping, and that's simply because I put in so many hours with that song. It kinda begs for that. You can't play it without putting in the time. It forces you to brush up on every technique there is – hybrid picking, selective picking, hammer-ons from nowhere. All of those things make that song what it is."

As for other picking styles, Tim has also written his fair share of economy and sweeped lines – perhaps most famously on the track *400z* from 2017 EP *The Most Hated*. As well as jokingly referencing how controversially received their musical cross-pollinating had been within the guitar community – a whole four years before Henson's infamous 'boomer bends' comment, might we add – the song also showed us just how brilliantly creative they could be with long-established tricks of the trade.

"We've been sweep picking since we were children!" he laughs. "That's like

"WE BROKE STEVE VAI'S SPEAKERS, IT WAS REALLY FKED UP!"**
TIM HENSON

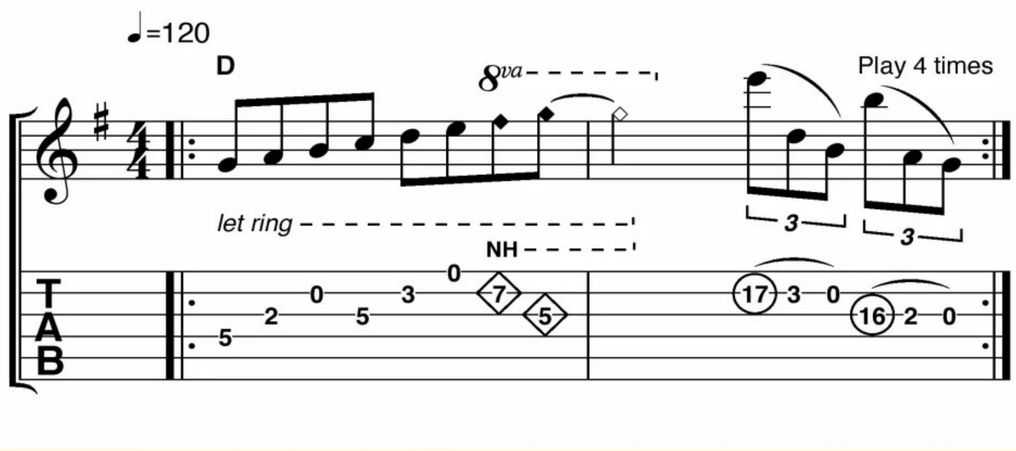
one of the first things you want to learn because everyone's like 'Can you sweep pick, bro?' When you start, the five-string C and A sweep shapes are where the money's at. I didn't get into six-string sweeps until *400z*. That ended up being one of our crowd favourites live so I had to get better at playing it.

"A good tip I learned from Jason Richardson is alternate pick your sweeps before you, um, sweep your sweeps! It sounds backwards, but like I was saying earlier, you need to understand everything before coming back to the beginning, so all the pieces make sense. Trust me, when you alternate pick the ideas you plan to sweep, you will understand what they sound like with note separation and everything even. Then you try to achieve that using sweeping. You have to dissect different techniques, learn how they work and then put them back together."

So, given his extensive research into the more ambitious and acrobatic side of guitar playing, what have been the most useful lessons and eye-openers in Tim Henson's journey thus far? As it turns out, the most revelatory insight came from legato-loving Canadian fusion guitarist Nick Johnston, whose own style blends the jazziness of Guthrie Govan with the atmospherics of Vai and Satch. When Henson was 21 years old, a private lesson from Johnston breaking down his hybrid mastery one-on-one helped develop the pick and fingers approach that's now become fundamental to the Polyphia sound.

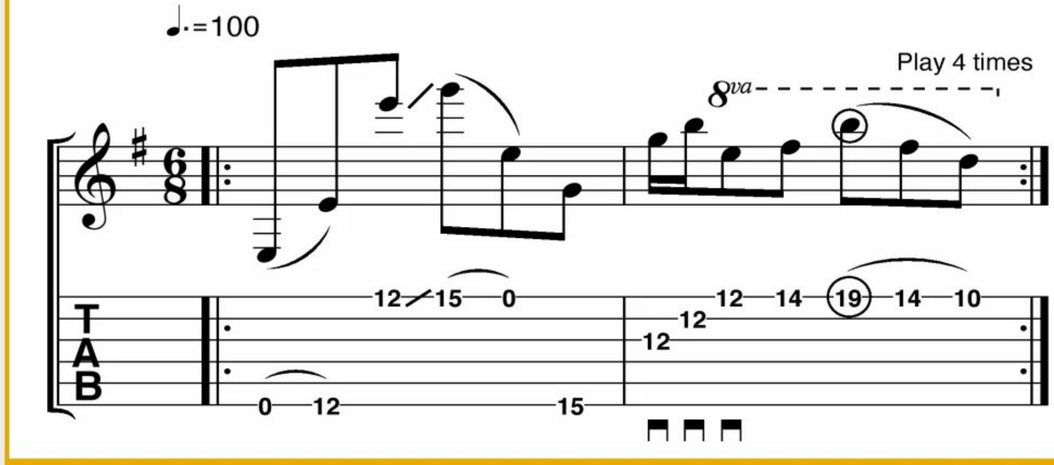
"Honestly, my best advice for anyone reading this would be brush up on your hybrid picking," concludes Henson. "That really changed the game for me. Nick Johnston showed me back in 2014. He could pick up a guitar and just play sh*t, hybrid picking everything. We were sitting in my bedroom in my parent's house and he taught me how to do it. Honestly it felt like having Guthrie Govan in my bedroom... that's how good Nick is! Watching him made me realise I wanted to get good at it. Now I would say hybrid picking is a huge staple of our music. It can make your playing a lot more fluid and give you a lot more control. It's the one thing I would encourage everyone to work on."

POLYPHIA-STYLE MAJOR SCALE **BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO**



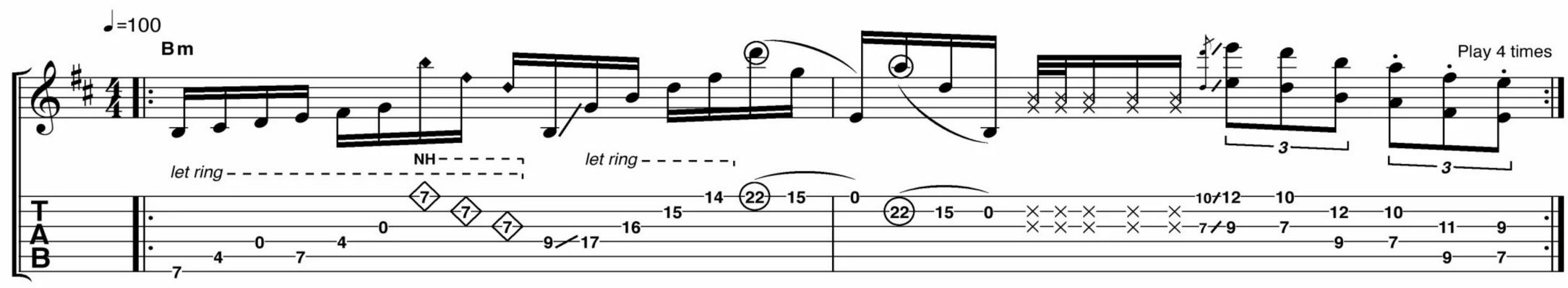
This is a G Major scale (G A B C D E F♯) played with typical Polyphia flair. Use hybrid picking to play the first six notes and let the notes ring together. Natural harmonics on the 7th and 5th frets complete the scale – but jumping an octave higher. We're finishing on a typical rhythmic flourish.

POLYPHIA-STYLE STRING SKIPS **BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO**



Start this lick with a hammer-on from open to 12th fret, then hop over to the first string 12th fret and slide up to 15th, then pull-off before jumping back down to the sixth string. Start bar 2 with a sweep pick at the 12th fret, 'rolling' your first finger across the strings to apply fretting pressure.

POLYPHIA LICK **BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO**

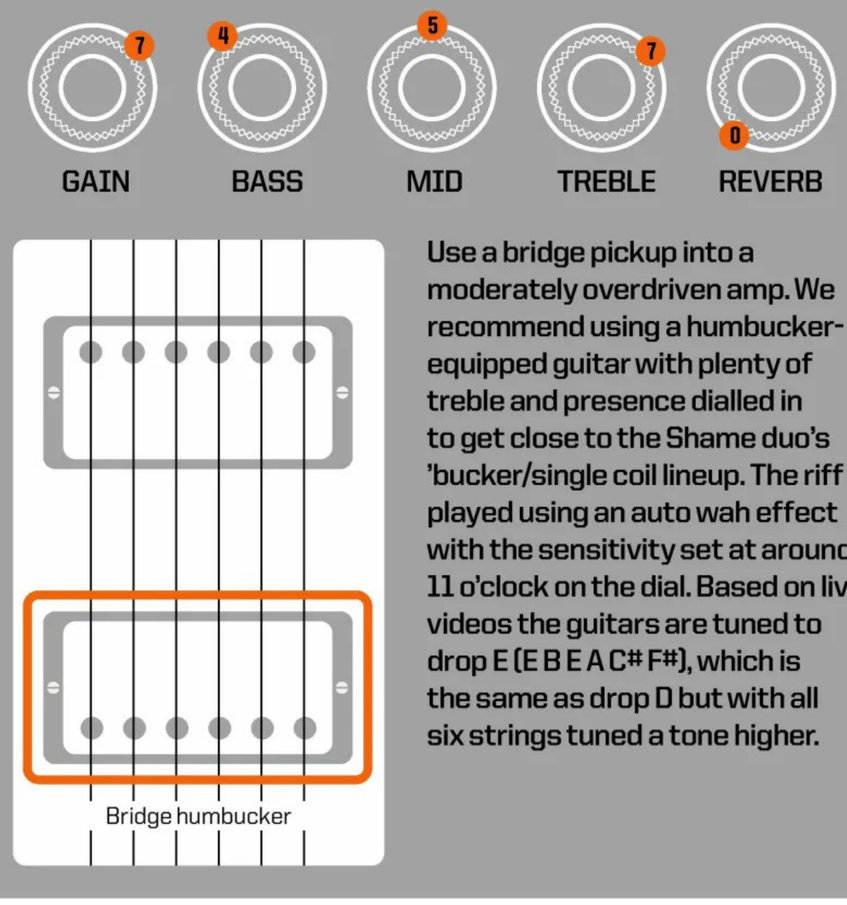


Here we've used a mixture of Tim and Scott's techniques. We start with the scale run. Use your first and fourth fingers here, keeping free of the open third and fourth strings. The following harmonics, arpeggios and tapped lines spell out a Gmaj7 chord – a richer, jazzier sound than a straight G major chord. The 32nd note rhythm on the muted notes in bar 2 is a typical trick. Wrap up with the octave melody.

bit.ly/tga2024audio

GET THE TONE

CHANNEL OVERDRIVE



Use a bridge pickup into a moderately overdriven amp. We recommend using a humbucker-equipped guitar with plenty of treble and presence dialled in to get close to the Shame duo's 'bucker/single coil lineup. The riff is played using an auto wah effect with the sensitivity set at around 11 o'clock on the dial. Based on live videos the guitars are tuned to drop E (E B E A C♯ F♯), which is the same as drop D but with all six strings tuned a tone higher.

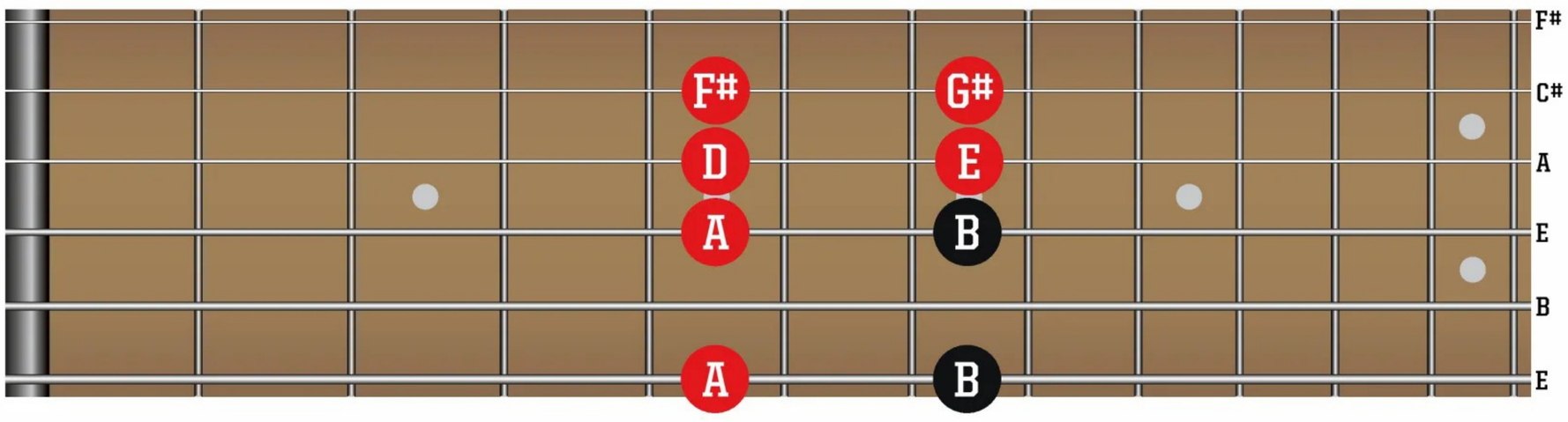
SHAME

Six-Pack

Six-Pack features on Shame's third album *Food For Worms* released in February 2023. Guitarists Eddie Green and Sean Coyle-Smith play this post-punk-style riff with high-energy strumming and an auto-wah effect. The riff is played with a fast triplet feel, so keep your strumming hand moving down and up with three strums per beat. You don't need to strum the strings continuously, but keeping your hand moving will help you lock into the feel with solid, steady timing. Start the riff with a hammer-on from A to B on the sixth string, then strum the three-string D triad, played with the first finger. Next repeat the hammer-on, then strum an E triad with your third finger. Play this C to D section three times, before finishing up by strumming the C chord in triplets. We've played slowly through the riff in our video so you can study the details.

CHEAT SHEET...

Appears at: 0:00–0:37
Tempo: 145bpm
Key/scale: B Dorian mode
Main techniques: Alternate strumming, string muting, triplet feel



The notes of this riff fit within the B Dorian mode (B C♯ D E F♯ G♯ A), which is a minor scale with a 'happy' sounding major 6th interval (the G♯ note) brightening things up. The notes on the sixth string are played as single notes, with a B acting as the root. Play the remaining notes (A D F♯) and (B E G♯) as D- and E-barre triads using your first and third fingers.

Photo Getty

Words Amit Sharma **Photography** Mitch Conrad, Ross Halfin, Jim Donnelly

"IT SOUNDED PERFECT... LIKE A GIFT FROM ON HIGH!"

At the age of 21, with a 1959 replica Les Paul in his hands, **Slash** lit up Guns N' Roses' classic debut album *Appetite For Destruction*. Now, as a connoisseur with hundreds of guitars in his collection, he picks out the ones he treasures the most – and reveals how his love for Les Pauls has inspired and shaped him as a player...

He begins with an apology, followed by the perfect excuse. "Sorry I'm late," Slash says as he connects with TG on a video conference call from his home in Los Angeles, 20 minutes after the scheduled start time. "I was actually just practising on one of my Les Pauls," he laughs, "and I lost track of time."

The legendary Guns N' Roses guitarist's new book, *The Collection: Slash* – the first release from Gibson's newly founded publishing arm – explores his museum-like vault of guitars in great detail. The range of instruments is vast, from the 1980 BC Rich Mockingbird seen in GN'R's *You Could Be Mine* video and the Travis Bean TB1000 used for the slide work on tracks like *Bad Obsession*, right through to his Guild doublenecks and mouth-watering acoustics, with even some Strats and Teles thrown in for good measure, including the Fender Bass VI heard on parts of *Welcome To The Jungle* and *Live And Let Die*. But there really is just one guitar we tend to picture in the hands of this particular guitar hero. As the man himself says: "When it comes to looks, tone and feel, Les Pauls have always been the guitar I'm most comfortable with."

As he discusses his love affair with Gibson's storied singlecut, there is an amusing moment when his focus turns to what he can see to one side of TG's correspondent – a 1969 Les Paul Custom. "I have to admit I've been sat here talking to you while looking at that guitar at the same time," he smiles. "It looks very cool."

But he starts by taking us all the way back to the early 70s, when as a young boy he was blown away by Jimmy Page's playing on Led Zeppelin's *Whole Lotta Love*, and got a Les Paul copy as his first electric guitar...

Do you remember the exact moment you realised these magical Les Pauls would be your instrument of choice?
They are definitely magical instruments, but that's actually a complicated question. I think all guitar players, or at least most of us, start off by trying to find the instrument we're most comfortable with. We all go through that period of trial and error. I think I ended up with the Les Paul because the first electric guitar I ever got was a Les Paul copy made by a company called Memphis Guitars. So I just naturally gravitated to a Les Paul not knowing that much about guitar sounds at the time. I really didn't have any experience or any real knowledge of what everybody was doing or about equipment in general. But it seemed like I was attracted to what I thought a Les Paul sounded like.

Which players had you seen holding a Les Paul at this early stage in your guitar journey?
There were a few guys who influenced me when it came to playing Les Pauls. I'd seen Eric Clapton holding one, as well as Jimmy Page, Keith Richards, Billy Gibbons… A lot of players who had a great sound using those guitars. I specifically remember hearing *Whole Lotta Love* from *Led Zeppelin II* when I was seven years old. And I attributed that sound – from what I felt was the coolest record I'd ever heard at that point in my life – to the Les Paul. Still, to this day, I'd say it's one of the coolest records ever made. And I knew it was a Les Paul making those guitar tones because I saw pictures of Jimmy Page holding one – so that's what made me associate the Les Paul with that kind of sound. Looking back now, I think that connection was pretty accurate! So I knew I was attracted to the sound of a Les Paul. I had that copy for a while and eventually it broke. I went through a myriad of different guitars to see what they sounded like, just exploring when it came to my tone. I ended up going back to the Les Paul and I've been with that ever since.

CROWN JEWELS
Above: Jessica, the 1987 Les Paul Standard that's been Slash's main live guitar for over three decades. Right: His most prized instrument of all – a 1959 replica made by Kris Derrig.

Jeff Beck is another player you've mentioned in the past – and while he was mainly known for playing a Strat, he used that Oxblood Les Paul in The Jeff Beck Group and on his earliest solo albums.
Yeah! Jeff Beck was another big one for me. I remember seeing the cover for [1975 album] *Blow By Blow* and thinking, 'Okay, he uses a Les Paul too!' Even though there's a lot of Strat on that record as well, at the time I didn't know any better!

Then, of course, there's Joe Perry of Aerosmith, and that amazing story about you buying his 1959 Dark Burst Standard for eight grand in Japan, only to return it to him many years later as a birthday present. It had belonged to Duane Allman before Joe, and Eric Johnson even owned it at one point, so you scored quite a deal there.
Yeah, Duane and Eric owned it too, which is crazy! I was in Japan when I got the phone call from the office in LA saying that there was a guy who had a guitar I might be interested in. I was a big fan of Aerosmith and I remember the *Live! Bootleg* record had a couple of pictures of a Les Paul that looked different. It wasn't your typical red sunburst finish. I thought it was just really faded and beaten up, because it had gone brown, but it was what we now call Tobacco Burst or Dark Burst. But anyway, I thought it was the coolest looking Les Paul I'd ever seen. So fast forward to Guns N' Roses' first tour of Japan and I got this phone call saying there's this guitar available and that it was an old '59 which had belonged to Joe Perry. I was like, 'Well, get them to send over pictures' – because I started to get pretty excited. I was wondering: could that possibly be that same guitar I know from the *Bootleg* record? When I got back to LA, in my mailbox was an envelope stuffed full of polaroids and it was that same f*ckin' guitar! So I bought it for eight grand! The guy probably didn't know what he had or just wanted to unload it. I kept that guitar for a long time and used it for various things. I used it in the *November Rain* video and some other stuff, but yeah, like you said, I eventually ended up giving it back to Joe.

So let's talk about what is arguably your most iconic guitar – a 1959 replica built by American luthier Kris Derrig years before Gibson even made 1959 replicas. It had pride of place at the very forefront of Guns N' Roses game-changing debut *Appetite For Destruction*, right next to Axl's vocals.
That Derrig '59 literally came in the eleventh hour when we were doing the

"THE DERRIG 59 HAS ALWAYS BEEN MY MAIN RECORDING GUITAR. ALWAYS THE BEST-SOUNDING LES PAUL IN THE ROOM"

"WHEN I HEARD WHOLE LOTTA LOVE, I KNEW I WAS ATTRACTED TO THE SOUND OF A LES PAUL"

SOLID GOLD
Slash and his 1956 Goldtop with P-90 pickups, serial number 6 1299.

Appetite record. We'd just finished the basic tracks and the guitars that I had at that moment in time just didn't sound right. They didn't sound good. I was thinking, 'What the f*ck am I gonna do?' Because I had to go in and do all the guitars in a week, and I had no idea what to use. The Guns N' Roses manager at the time, Alan Niven, brought this Les Paul to the studio for me, just as I was about to do all my guitar overdubs. And it was that Kris Derrig Les Paul. It just sounded f*ckin' perfect, man… like a gift from on high.

And it was that guitar through a rented 100-Watt Marshall half-stack, and occasionally a Dunlop Cry Baby for the leads, which essentially became your tone for that whole record.

Yeah, I had a rented Marshall 100-watt half stack and did the whole record like that. That guitar and amp ended up becoming my main sound as a guitar player – that was my tone. And I took the Derrig on the road for all of 1987 into 1988 and in that short span of time I beat the sh*t out of that guitar! I thought, 'You know, if I'm gonna continue using this, it really should just be a recording guitar'. So I bought a couple of factory second Les Paul Standards from Gibson. I took those on the road and retired the Derrig from touring. But I always use it – whenever I've gone in to do a record with Guns or Velvet Revolver or The Conspirators or any band I've been in, that's always been my main recording guitar. Why? Because it's always the best-sounding Les Paul in the room.

After *Appetite For Destruction* there were the two Guns N' Roses albums released on the same day in 1991 – *Use Your Illusion I* and *II*. It's not well known which songs from those albums also featured the Derrig. Care to enlighten us?
Oh f*ck! I used it on all kinds of stuff. There are so many songs across those two records. There's one called *Don't Damn Me* that I know I used the Derrig on. The same goes for *Bad Apples*. I could go on and on, I just can't remember all the names of the songs on those records! But it was definitely most of them. I did start branching out on those albums, using a lot of different stuff. There were so many songs and I wanted to get different guitar sounds. That's actually when I first started collecting guitars, while we were making the *Use Your Illusion* records. I had a sitar, a BC Rich Mockingbird, a couple of Strats… Different things I could apply in different places on the albums.

Another very famous model is the 1987 Les Paul Standard with a three-piece top and cigarette burns, known as 'Jessica' – which was one of the factory seconds you mentioned earlier.
Yeah, that's a guitar I picked up when I finally retired the Derrig. Back then I was pretty much a nobody, so Gibson sold it to me at cost! There were two of them – one I called Jessica, and the other was Stephanie. They are sisters. And I have them both on the road with me today. We have two rigs, so I have a whole bunch of guitars and amps that goes to one part of the planet and then another rig which is more or less identical, in theory, that goes to another part of the world. So I have Jessica in one and Stephanie in the other.

What kind of songs do you like to use them for?
Basically, most of the set will be done with Jessica or Stephanie. I guess they get used for most of the *Appetite For Destruction* stuff. Pretty much all the hard-hitting songs will be played on one of those two guitars, depending on whether I'm in a part of the world that has the A Rig or the B Rig. Stephanie is not actually in the new Gibson book, but Jessica is.

You picked up a 1959 Les Paul Standard back in the early 90s, which is probably the '59 you've used most in the studio – on the *Living The Dream* album with Myles Kennedy And The Conspirators, and on your 2016 cover of Elton John's *Rocket Man*…
That guitar, besides the one I gave back to Joe Perry, was actually the first '59 I purchased. At the time, it was just a '59 Les Paul that was available. But since buying it I've realised it's a guitar that *always* sounds amazing. It's one of those guitars that has that real magic tone to it. I mean, just because a Les Paul was made in 1959 doesn't necessarily mean it has to sound good. I've heard '59s that don't sound good and ones that sound *incredible*. I own a couple that sound really amazing, and this is one of them.

You're mainly known for using PAF-style pickups, but there's a 1956 Goldtop you used on *Living The Dream* with P-90s. What do they bring out in your playing?
In the studio I love P-90s because they're bright and kinda single-coily. I guess the best thing to compare them to is maybe a Strat, because you get this really bitey and thinner sound that's also very aggressive. I love using this one in the studio, and *Living The Dream* was the record I really featured it on, where I actually used it for a couple of different songs. That guitar just sounds great! But the problem with P-90s on the road is that they're really, really noisy, you know? They tend to buzz the entire time you have the volume up. So I don't really take this one out on the road, but I love having it with me in the studio.

Another rare specimen is your 1959 Les Paul Standard in Dark Burst – very similar to the one you gave back to Joe Perry. Very few were made in that finish.
So I gave Joe his guitar back in 2002 or around then. And I always wanted to find another one because Tobacco Sunburst really is my favourite finish for Les Pauls. So that was always in my mind, trying to source another Tobacco or Dark Burst from 1959. They only made a couple of those that year and obviously Joe now had one of them back with him. I noticed a lot of the Dark Bursts that are out there are actually sunbursts that have just gotten really dark over time. I started looking around to try and find one to replace the one I gave Joe. I finally came across one in mint condition from 1959 that [Gibson Brand President] Cesar Gueikian turned me on to. It was a collector on the East Coast who had it and he sold it to me… which was really nice of him, because he didn't necessarily want to or need to.

While we're on the subject of rare, you have a Les Paul Custom which interestingly has a rosewood fingerboard instead of ebony – closer to the Standards you're more associated with...
I actually had the Gibson Custom Shop make that for me. One of the reasons I don't use Customs more is that they tend to be very bright and a lot of that comes down to the ebony fretboard. So I asked Gibson to make me that Custom with a rosewood board and it sounds f*ckin' phenomenal! I got this in 2014 just after *World On Fire* [his second album with Myles Kennedy And The Conspirators] had been recorded, and I've only ever used it out on the road. It's part of my touring rig, though I haven't used it in the studio yet, but it sounds killer live, so we'll see!

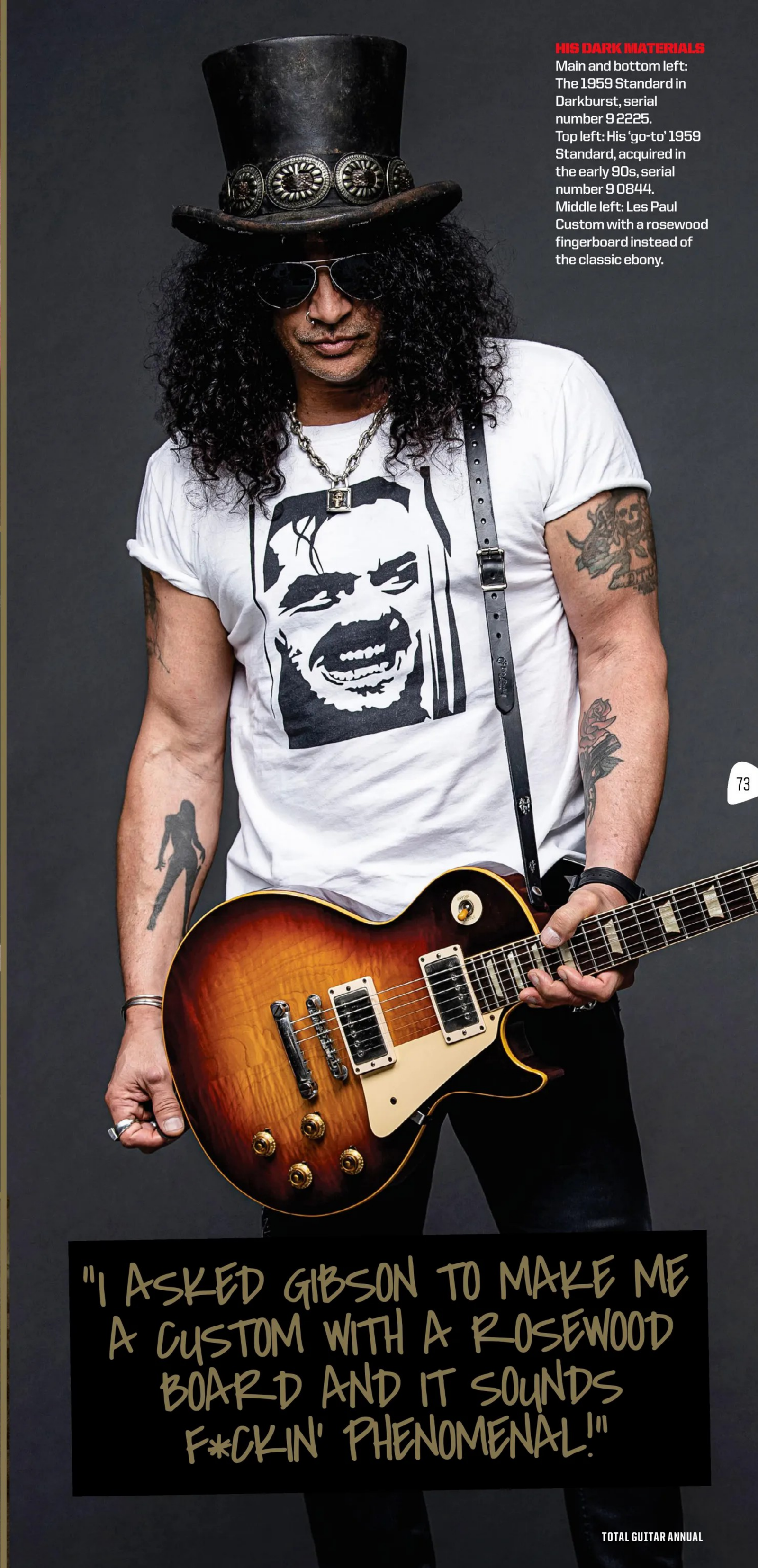
Moving away from Les Pauls for a second, what can you tell us about the 1959 Flying V with which you played the leads on GN'R's version of *Knockin' On Heaven's Door*? What does the korina sound like in your hands compared to the usual mahogany and maple cap?
I have a good friend called Albert Molinaro who is a guitar collector and aficionado, but also somebody who sells and trades instruments. I've known him since the 80s. Him and another guy called Howie Hubberman used to have this guitar store called Guitars R Us on Sunset Boulevard right next to Guitar Center when it was on the other side of the street. I've known those guys for years and Albert is someone I've kept in constant contact with. He sold me this Flying V when we were doing the *Use Your Illusion* records, as well as two '58 Explorers – all korina guitars, obviously. They just have this certain kind of tonal quality to them that I find to be very unique and attributable to that kind of wood. I used it on the fly, to be honest. I was going somewhere, I dropped by the studio really quick and laid down the guitar solos from *Knockin' On Heavens Door* with that Flying V because I'd just gotten it.

Well, you can't muck about when inspiration strikes!
Honestly, it was one of those one-take solos through the song with that one guitar. It was one of those moments where the guitar in your hands feels totally amazing and like you could do anything on it! I love how those solos ended up sounding. And '59 Flying Vs are hard to come by, because they're very rare and super f*ckin' expensive. As time goes by, they get more and more expensive. I've been holding onto this one for dear life!

Another collector's piece is your 1958 'First Burst' with a two-piece top, which is one of the first two sunburst Les Paul Standards ever made by Gibson in the Kalamazoo factory. It has some serious mojo, from the original frets to the sticker goo on the scratchplate. Some might even call it guitar porn!
Yeah, yeah! Guitar porn is a very good term for it. That's a very *sexy* guitar. I came across this one around 2011 or something like that. Somebody mentioned that these two guitars were available. I got really excited and sought them out. I bought one and somebody else bought the other. It's another great-sounding guitar and one I'm really proud to own because it's such a historical model in terms of Gibson Les Pauls.

Have you used it in the studio yet, and if so, which albums can we hear it on?
I have used it somewhere, either on *Living The Dream* or *World On Fire*. It's definitely on one of those two records. And it sounds great. Actually, I have

ON THE DOUBLE
The 1966 EDS-1275, as used on Guns N' Roses' version of Bob Dylan's *Knockin' On Heaven's Door*.



HIS DARK MATERIALS
Main and bottom left: The 1959 Standard in Darkburst, serial number 9 2225.
Top left: His 'go-to' 1959 Standard, acquired in the early 90s, serial number 9 0844.
Middle left: Les Paul Custom with a rosewood fingerboard instead of the classic ebony.

"I ASKED GIBSON TO MAKE ME A CUSTOM WITH A ROSEWOOD BOARD AND IT SOUNDS F*CKIN' PHENOMENAL!"

a session coming up in a couple of weeks I'm thinking about using it on...

Very interesting! Speaking of new music, what can you tell us about the guitars we're hearing on last year's Guns N' Roses tracks, *Hard Skool* and *Absurd*?
I used the Derrig on both of those tracks, which is funny because it ended up sounding completely different to how it normally does. I played through somebody else's Marshall and a small sort of Pro-Tools setup. For some reason, it came out sounding very different to how it would if I was using it through my own rig. But that's the Derrig you're hearing on both tracks.

Which goes to prove it really is your desert island guitar, to be perfectly honest...
It's definitely my main go-to because it's flexible and easy to use in a lot of different applications. And I feel comfortable playing it! There's all that history – it's a bit like a partner you've been with for such a long time. You know each other inside out!

Let's touch on the 1966 EDS-1275 Doubleneck seen in your hands for *Knockin' On Heaven's Door* on the *Use Your Illusion* tour. It was found by your tech Adam Day in a guitar store somewhere in Indiana back in 1990, and was originally sunburst before being refinished in black.
Yeah, and the colour is one of the reasons why I bought. I really needed a 12-string for application purposes. I wanted to avoid a switching guitars kind of situation if I could, so the 12/6 felt like a great idea. But at the same time, Jimmy Page made that guitar famous and I didn't want to look like I was trying to be him by using the exact same guitar, because it's so recognisable and unique. Adam told me about this doubleneck that was available and it was black, so I looked it up. It had its own kind of character and look to it, so I ended up buying that and have been using it ever since.

RARE BEAUTY
One of the first bursts ever made in 1958, serial number 8 3096.

Do you always keep the original PAFs in with your vintage guitars? How do you decide which guitars end up with your Seymour Duncan Alnico II set?
I don't put Seymours in any of the vintage guitars. Just because if a guitar has original PAFs in it, there's no reason to f*ck with that. And most of the vintage guitars I go for, nine times out of ten I'll be looking for something that's all original... or at least have the original pickups, you know? But in other guitars, yeah. I find that the Seymour Duncan Alnico IIs – that I actually got turned on to by the Derrig guitar because it just *happened* to have those in it – are still the greatest rock 'n' roll pickups you can get. I've been using them for a very long time. So they'll go into anything I buy, new or used, that's *not* vintage. And if there's anything I get new from Gibson, I'll always put those pickups in.

There are quite a few PAF Goldtops in the book. Which one have you used most?
Yeah, there are a couple of '57s in there, but the one I've used the most in the studio is the '57 Darkback, at least as far as Goldtops are concerned.

And your signature Les Paul Victoria model...
We really nailed it with the Victorias. I've got a couple of those on the road and they sound exactly like a vintage '57 would. I'm really happy with how that signature came out.

Similarly, you must be very pleased with this book.
I'm so impressed with it. And it's not even the fact that's it's my guitars or anything, just that the book itself is such a gorgeous package. They did a really great job. The funny thing is that I've gotten more guitars since then that I wish were in the book. It stops at a certain place and I've picked up about five or six guitars since the book was done, so now I'm thinking 'Oh sh*t, I wish this was in there!' So we'll probably put out a second book in about five or ten years from now!

"THE SEYMOUR DUNCAN ALNICO IIS ARE STILL THE GREATEST ROCK 'N' ROLL PICKUPS YOU CAN GET"

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN
- ✔ E minor pentatonic
- ✔ Chromatic passing notes
- ✔ Double-stops and single note riffing

RIFF OF THE MONTH

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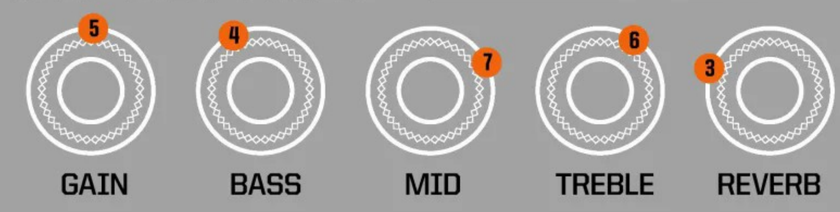
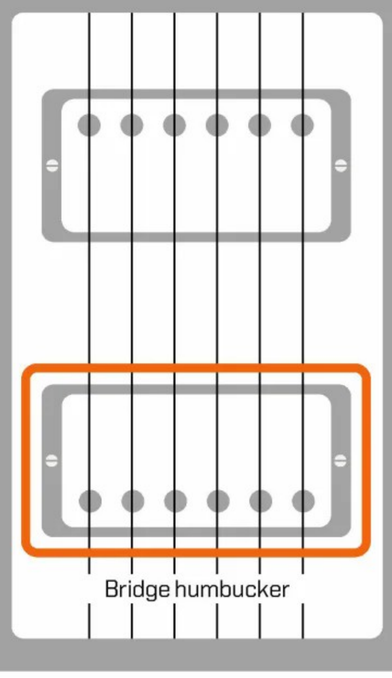
GET THE TONE

CHANNEL CLEAN





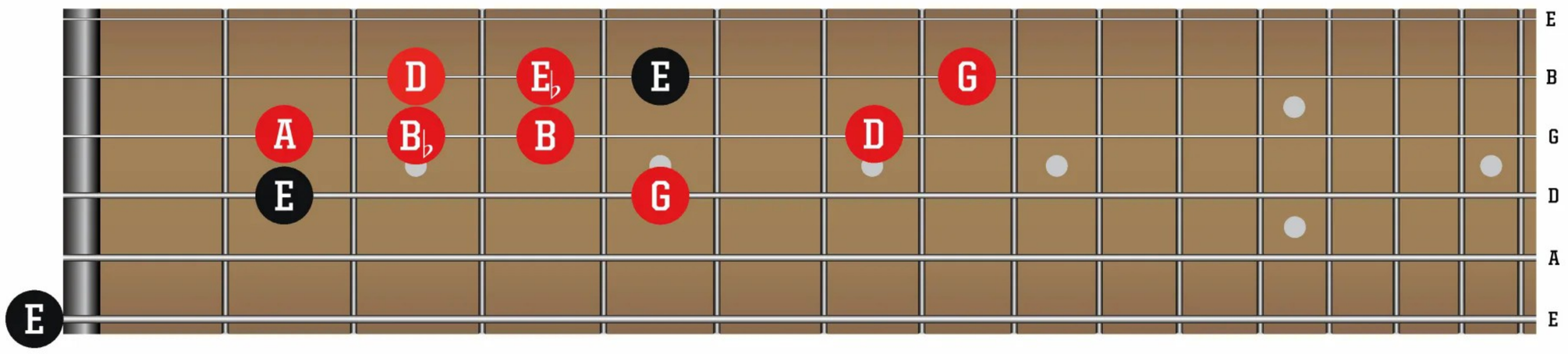
Use bridge pickup for a twangy attack and boost the mids for a retro and nasal tone. A tube clean amp such as a Fender twin would be the ideal amp for this tone. Add a short reverb to add a surf guitar-inspired slap-back to the notes.

TROPICAL GOTHCLUB

Needles

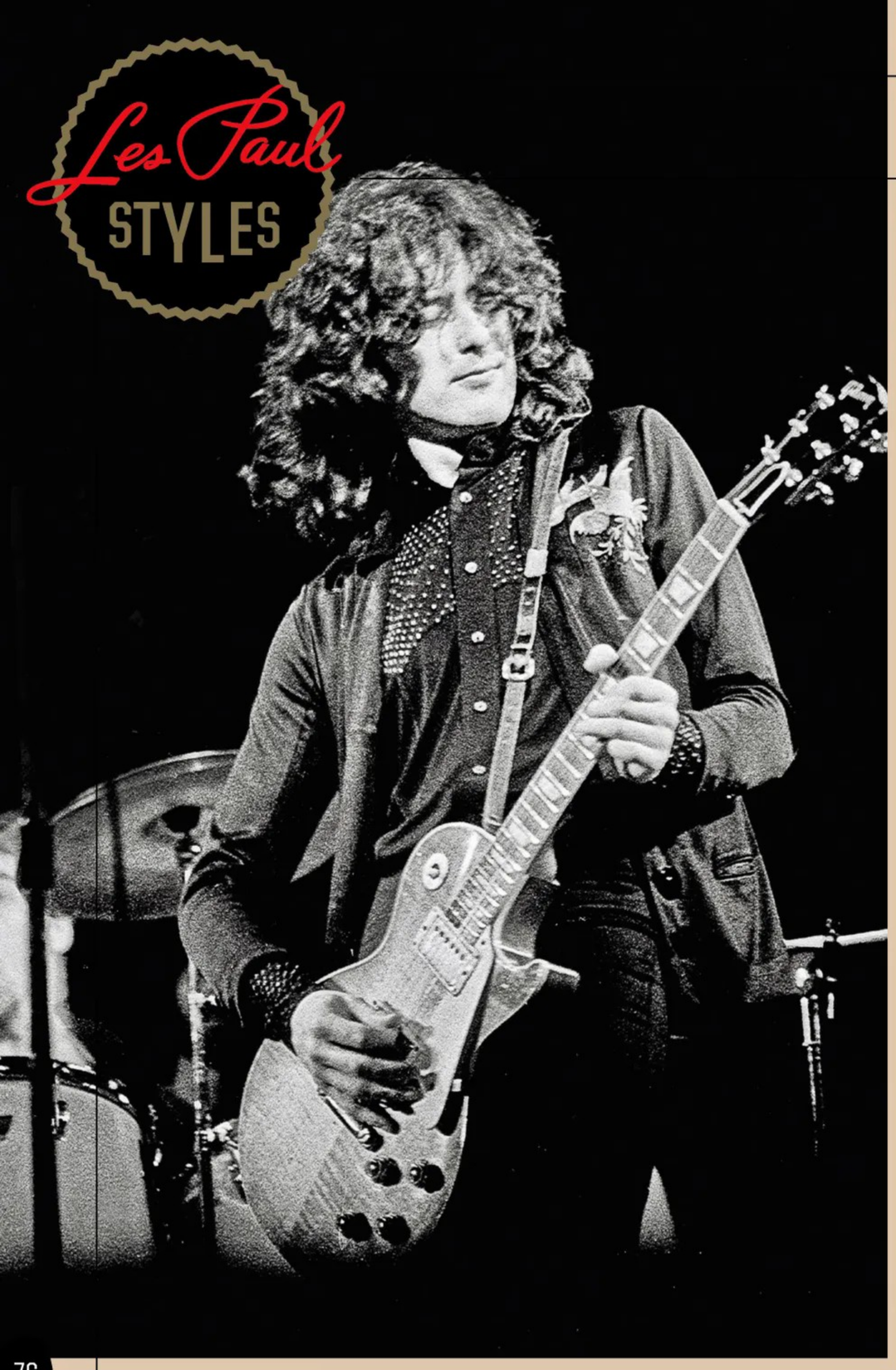
Tropical Gothclub is the self-titled debut album from Queens Of The Stone Age guitarist Dean Fertita's new solo project. Opening track *Needles* features a spooky, surf-style riff which begins with an open low E note, followed by a tritone double-stop using the notes E and B♭. Hold this position and use fingers 1 and 3 to add the B and A notes before replaying the low E note. Next play the 3 chromatic notes D E♭ and E on the 2nd string. Repeat first part of the riff, with 3 slightly different endings. For the first ending, bend the G note up and down. For ending 2, pick the G note three times and for ending 3, add a bluesy curl to the G note. The riff finishes with double-stops played on strings 2 and 3. Remember to watch our slowed down performance video to see exactly how the riff is played.

CHEAT SHEET...
Appears at: 0:08 - 0:21
Tempo: 150bpm
Key/scale: E minor pentatonic
Main techniques: Single note picking, string bending, double-stops



The main framework here is an E minor Pentatonic scale [E-G-A-B-D] played in one octave on strings 2, 3 and 4. The riff also uses the open 6th string E root, which is another octave lower. There are an additional two chromatic passing notes, E♭ and B♭, which adds a Blues scale quality. Use fingers 1 and 4 to play the 4th string notes and fingers 1, 2 and 3 to play the chromatic single notes and double-stops, finishing with a double-stop slide up to the 7th fret.

Photo Getty



Guitars and backing Jon Bishop

LES PAUL LEGENDS

Take a look at the signature styles of the greatest players ever to pick up a Les Paul

71 years have passed since the very first Les Paul rolled off the production line in 1952. Originally sold in gold and with P-90 pickups, humbuckers would come five years later, followed the very next year by sunburst finishes, thus birthing Gibson's template for the archetypal Standard model.

The Les Paul gained popularity in the 60s and 70s when soon-to-be guitar legends Eric Clapton, Paul Kossoff, Peter Green and Jimmy Page got their hands on the iconic singlecut. And soon enough, it would be seen in the hands of countless players worldwide – the legendary instrument we know today.

Here we take a look at the playing styles of a few of these great guitarists. We're branching out beyond the users of the double-humbucker Standard model, too, with a look at Custom and Junior model players. Of course, don't worry if you don't have a Les Paul. There's plenty to learn, musically speaking, so whatever your guitar of choice, plug in and play along, and have fun!

1 BILLIE JOE ARMSTRONG: POWERCHORDS

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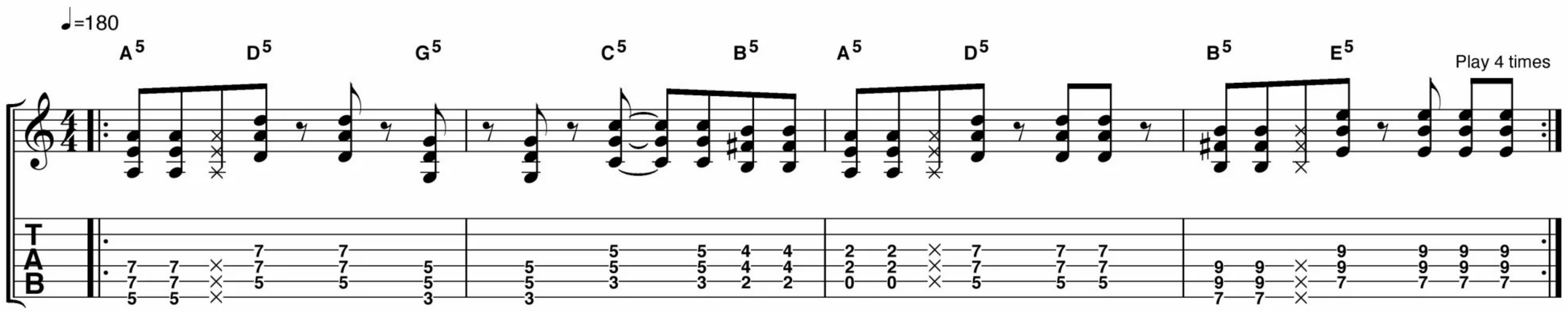

The Green Day frontman can often be seen rocking out on a Les Paul Junior equipped with a P-90 pickup which provides a tone and output somewhere between a single-coil and a humbucker. Our example combines weighty powerchords with a raunchy overdrive sound and is inspired by songs like *American Idiot*.

2 ACE FREHLEY: GLAM-ROCK RIFFING

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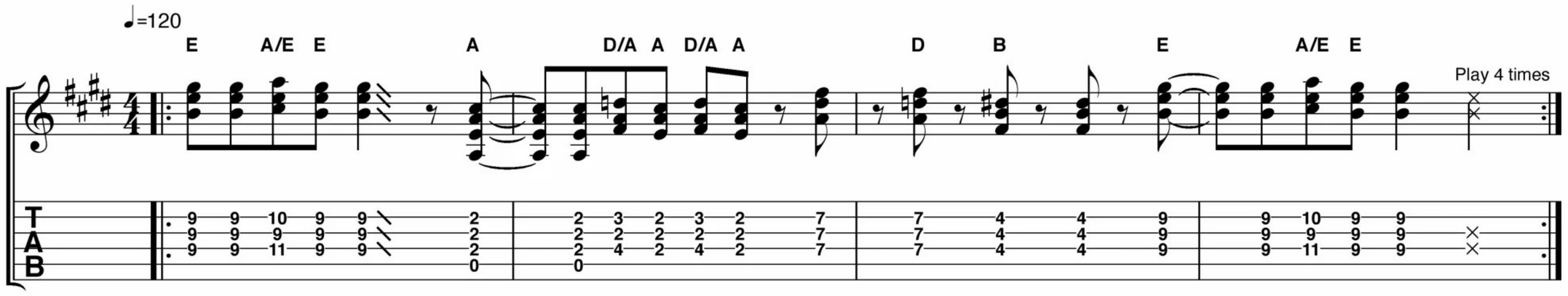

Kiss guitarist Ace Frehley often sports a three-pickup Led Paul Custom to play those iconic glam rock riffs. This type of riff uses the classic Rolling Stones method of adding in slash chords to make the riff more interesting. Our example is inspired by songs like *Crazy Crazy Nights*, and uses a medium overdrive setting to preserve the clarity of the notes in the chords.

Photo Getty

3 JIMMY PAGE: OUT OF PHASE LEAD LICKS

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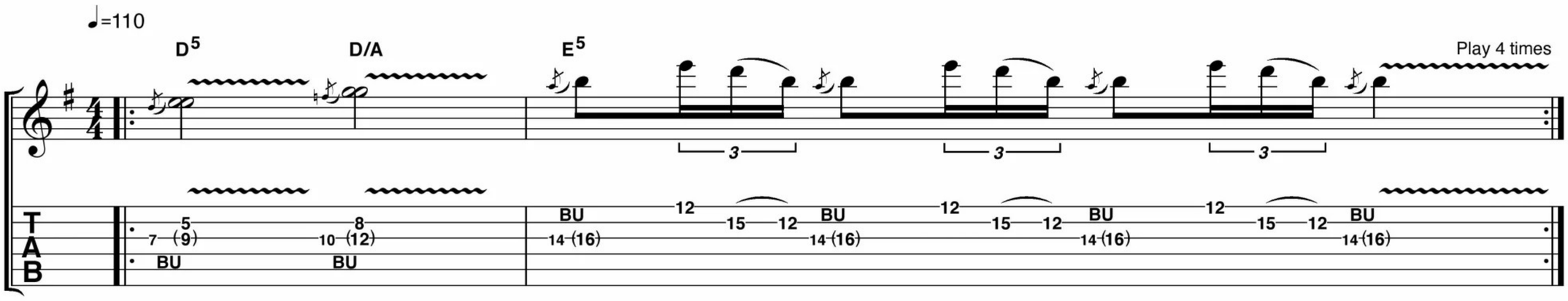

Jimmy Page's famous 1959 Les Paul, lovingly named 'Number One', was modified with a push-pull pot on the tone knob, which puts the two humbuckers out of phase with each other. This out of phase sound provides a distinctive 'nasal' lead tone. Our example is inspired by songs like *Whole Lotta Love* and *Communication Breakdown*.

4 JOHNNY MARR: INDIE JANGLE

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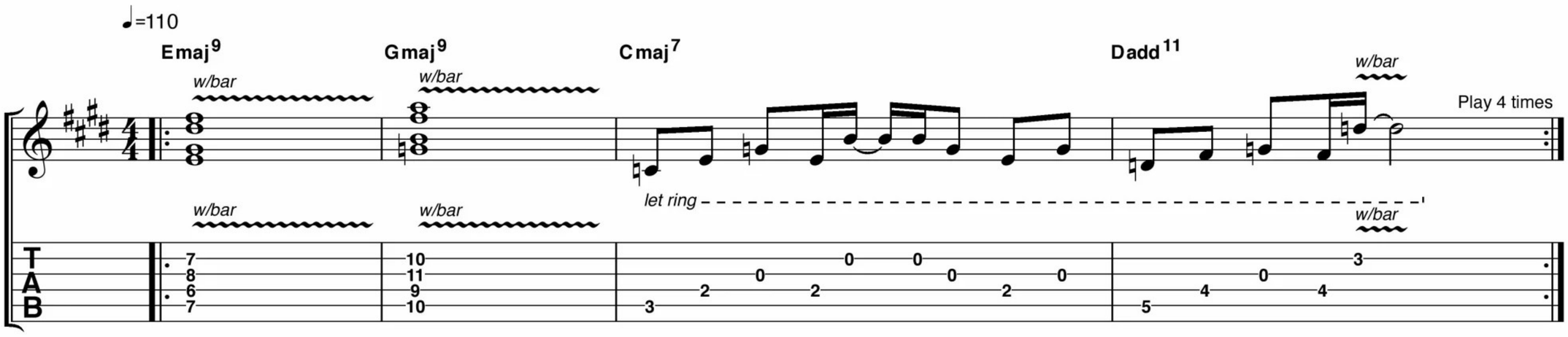

Johnny Marr often used a Les Paul with a Bigsby tremolo unit. Bigsbys don't generally offer as much movement as a "modern" tremolo, so aim to employ only a small amount of pitch change as you tackle our example. Dialing in a lush chorus sound and some delay will help to get that authentic 80s indie jangle.

5 ALEX LIFESON: PIEZO/MAGNETIC PICKUP BLEND

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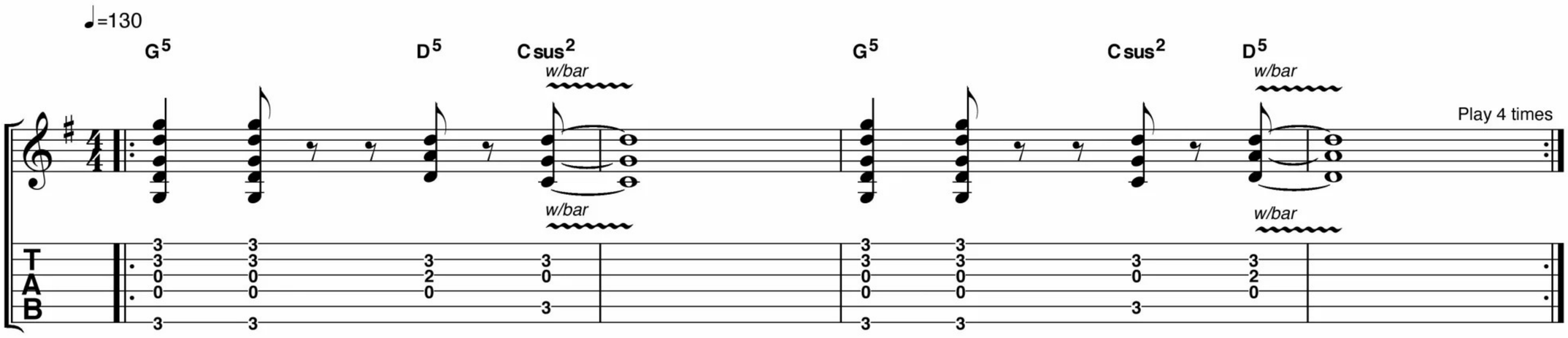

Our Alex Lifeson style example is inspired by live renditions of songs like *Presto*. To beef up the sound of Rush's three-piece format, Lifeson's signature LP is fitted with both standard humbuckers plus a piezo pickup to simultaneously provide an acoustic guitar-like effect. Lifeson's Les Paul is also fitted with a Floyd Rose Tremolo, which can provide vibrato to both the acoustic and electric sounds simultaneously.

6 SLASH: WAH WAH SOLOING

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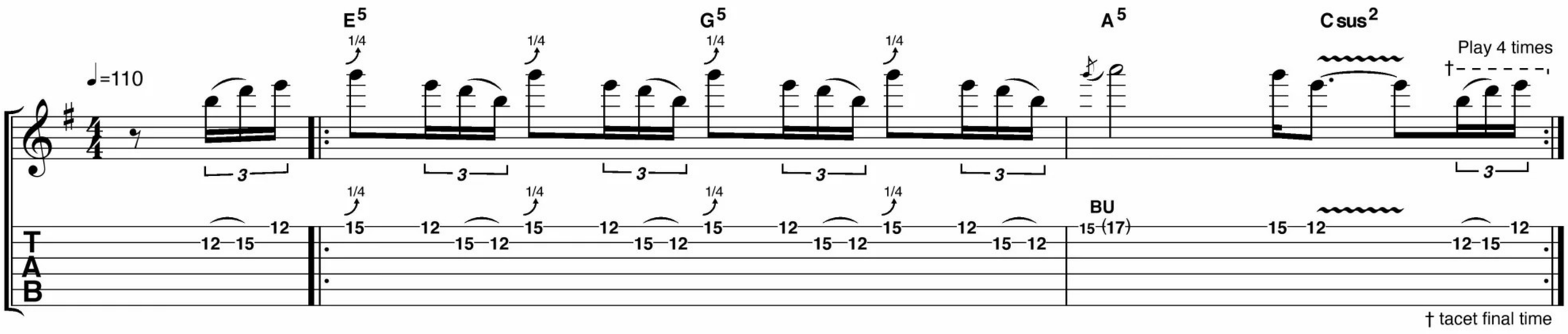

Slash is a fan of the wah wah pedal, which adds a funky edge to his frenetic lead work. Our example is inspired by tracks like *You Could Be Mine*, so we've combined a fast, repeating phrase with some high-register string bends.

7 FRANK ZAPPA: UNI-VIBE SOUNDS

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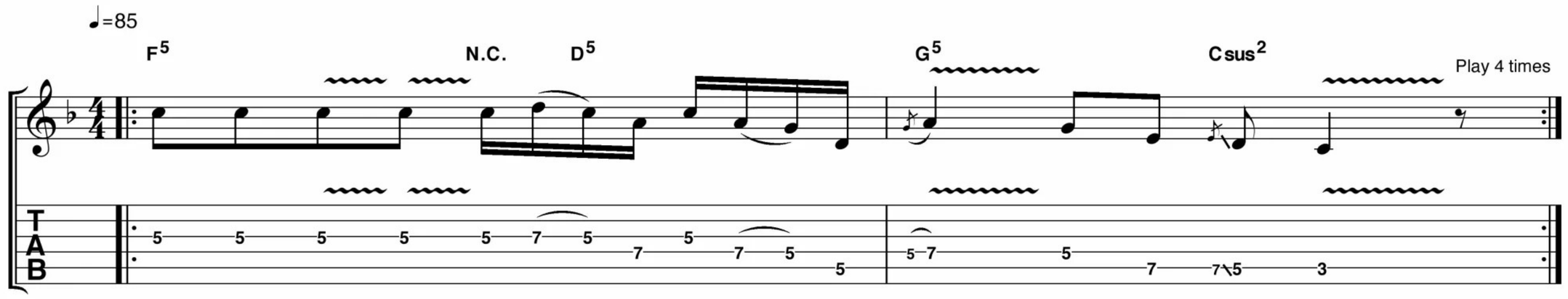

Wildman of rock Frank Zappa played a variety of guitars throughout his career, however for the album *Hot Rats* a Les Paul Custom was in favour. Our example is inspired by epic jam tracks like *Willy The Pimp*, and, to add that psychedelic flavour, the Uni-Vibe pedal is a great choice.

8 PAUL KOSSOFF: FAST VIBRATO

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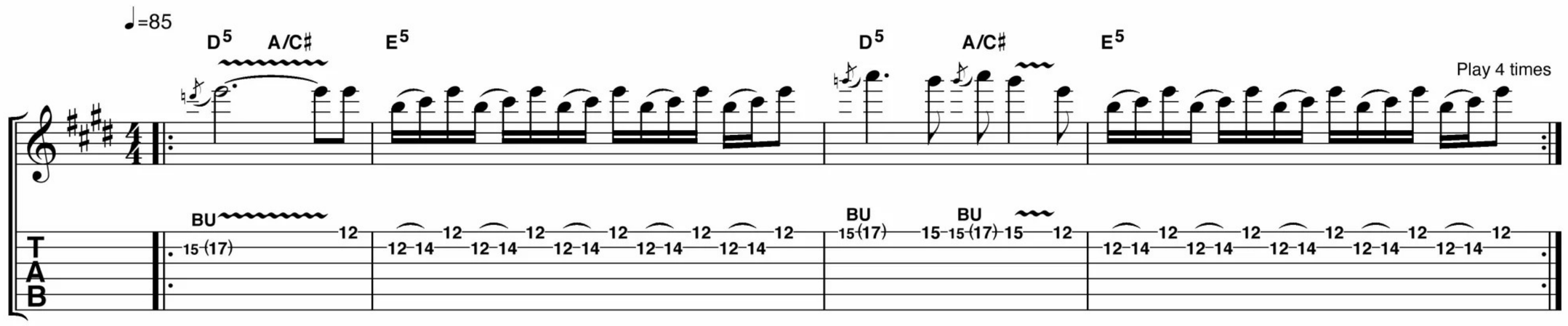

Paul Kossoff played a 1959 Les Paul Standard for his work with Free and is well known for a trademark fast finger vibrato technique. Our lick is inspired by songs like *All Right Now* and *Wishing Well*. The three-note repeating phrase is a classic line and can be reused in almost any blues-rock context.

9 KEITH URBAN: EMOTIVE COUNTRY-ROCK SOLOING

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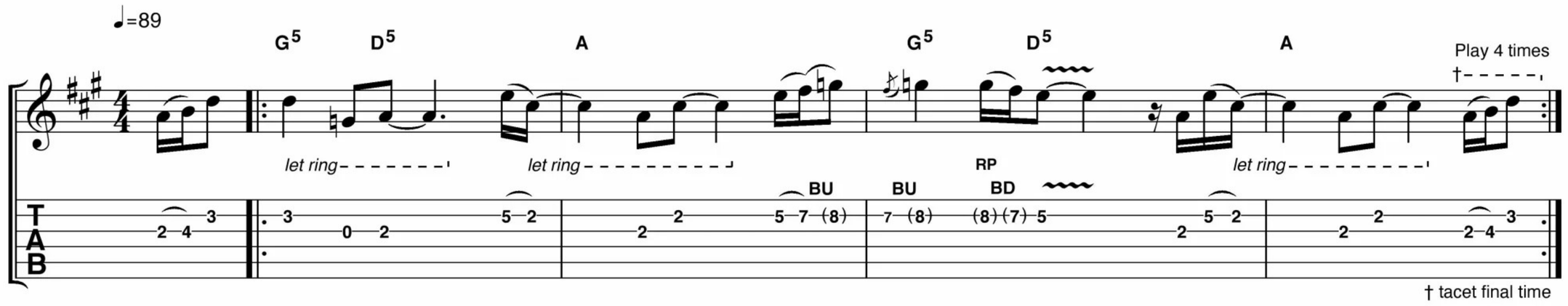

Country rock icon Keith Urban uses a Les Paul junior to great effect. The bridge P-90 pickup provides a bit more bite, which is perfect for that country twang. Our example is inspired by live tracks such as *Stupid Boy*, and adds in the open strings to fill out the sound. Hammer-ons and pull-offs can be used to create a more fluid delivery.

10 JERRY CANTRELL: MELODIC SOLOING

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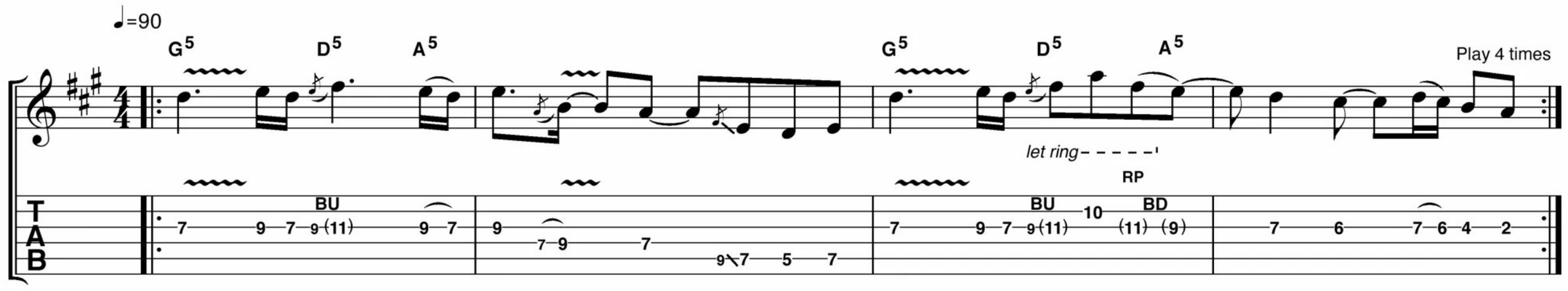

Our final example is inspired by live renditions of Jerry Cantrell solo songs like *Prism Of Doubt* which feature Jerry rocking out on his Wino Les Paul. We've written a simple grunge-rock-style lead line. The doublestop bend in bar three adds a country edge, too.

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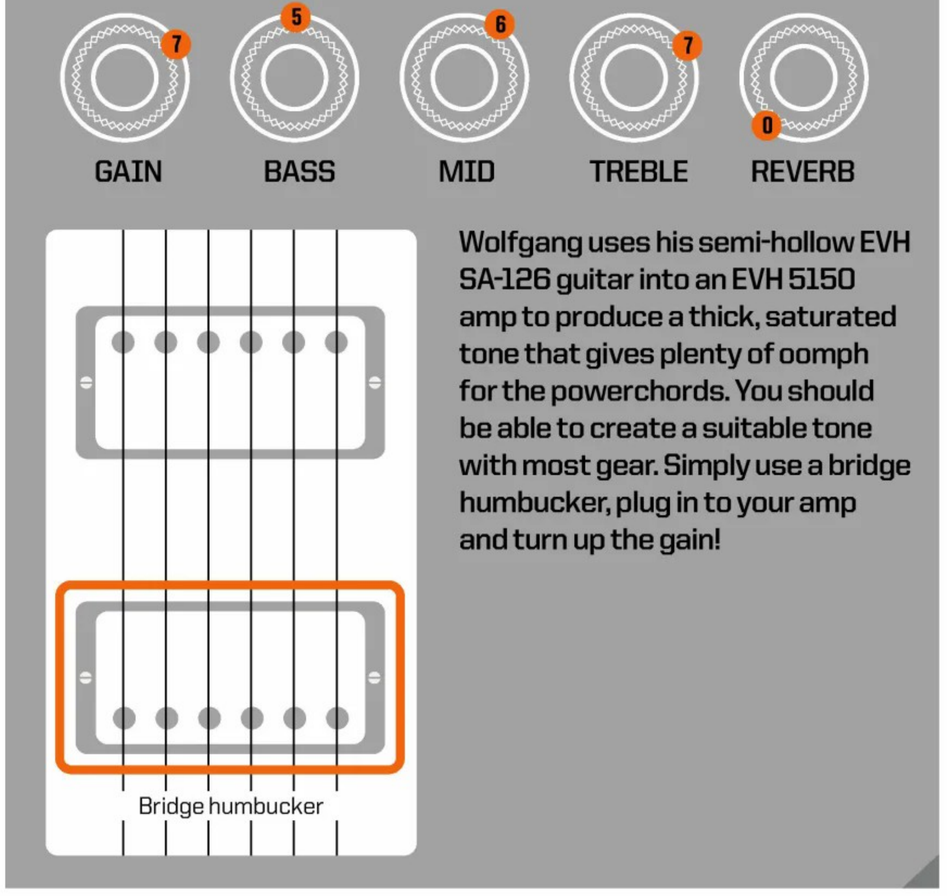
GET THE TONE

CHANNEL OVERDRIVE



Wolfgang uses his semi-hollow EVH SA-126 guitar into an EVH 5150 amp to produce a thick, saturated tone that gives plenty of oomph for the powerchords. You should be able to create a suitable tone with most gear. Simply use a bridge humbucker, plug in to your amp and turn up the gain!

MAMMOTH WVH

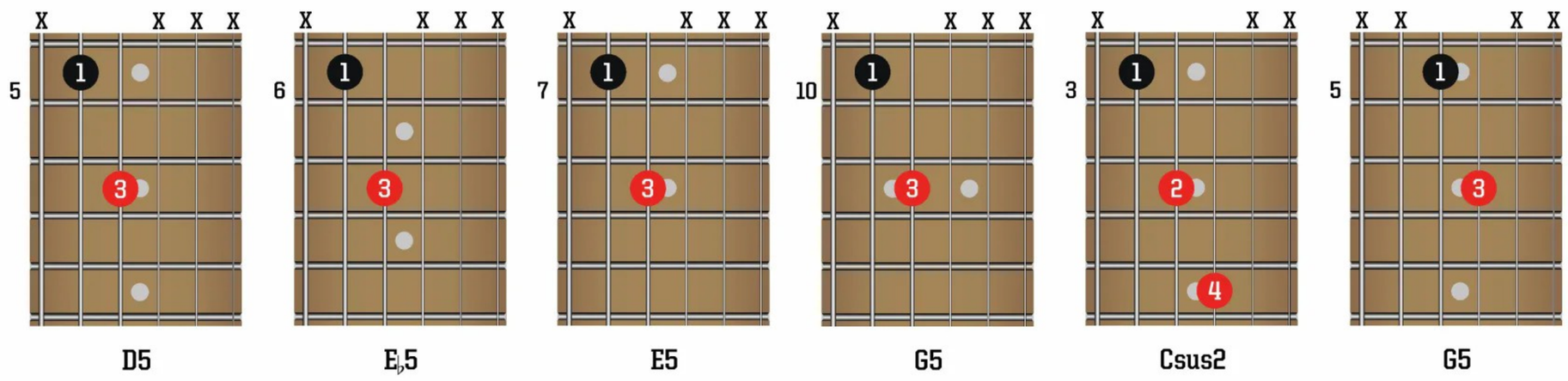
Another Celebration At The End Of The World

Another Celebration At The End Of The World is taken from the album *Mammoth II* and features this rocking Wolfgang riff which uses the open sixth string and shifting powerchords. Most of the powerchords are played with a fifth-string root note, so you can keep your first finger on this string throughout, except on the final G5 chord which is played over a fourth-string root. The other odd chord here is a Csus2, played with three fingers at the 3rd, 5th and 7th frets – a bit of a stretch, but worth persevering with for its clearer, punchier sound than its open-chord alternative, which would include a 'looser' sounding open string.

To keep everything sounding clean, use the underside of your first finger to lightly touch the idle higher strings to keep them muted. This way you can strum with full commitment and not have to worry if you hit the wrong string.

CHEAT SHEET...

Appears at: 0:24-0:35
Tempo: 192bpm
Key/scale: E natural minor
Main techniques: Powerchords, position shifts



This riff is based in the key of E minor (E F♯ G A B C D), with an added E♭5 passing chord. It's primarily played with one powerchord shape, so practise the position shifts first, then focus on landing on the tricky Csus2 chord.

Photo Getty

Guitars and backing Jon Bishop

JEFF BECK GUITAR MASTER

Inside the style of the influential guitar icon

In a career spanning nearly 60 years, Jeff Beck can truthfully be said to have pushed the boundaries of contemporary electric guitar playing consistently and beyond the expectation of his fans. Often cited as the guitar hero's guitar hero, he would wow audiences and fellow musicians alike with his unique playing style, which evolved so much through the years. We could fill the mag many times over with lessons on Jeff's style, so what follows is just a taster of some of his key techniques, starting with a pictorial demonstration of his approaches to playing fingerstyle. Our tab lessons begin with a look at Jeff's musical style in the Yardbirds, before taking in some of his 70s fusion era and culminating in his whammy bar- and volume swell-infused fingerstyle lead lines. Try out the tab examples and then jam over the backing mixes we've provided.

JEFF'S PICK HAND TECHNIQUE

It all starts here! Get to grips with Jeff's unusual fingerstyle lead technique and you'll soon be playing his signature fluid, expressive lead lines

1 From his efficient movements you'd be hard pressed to tell just how much is going on when it comes to Jeff's picking.

2 Jeff generally fingerpicks using just his thumb and first finger. This gives the best economy of movement, and...

3 ...picking with his thumb and first finger, Jeff can operate the whammy bar with his remaining fingers.

4 Jeff's efficient technique leaves him with fingers free to give the volume knob a spin for a wailing 'violining' sound.

5 With just a short move, Jeff will press the bridge plate down for 'upward' bends, gargles and vibrato.

1 THUMB-FRETTED BASS NOTES

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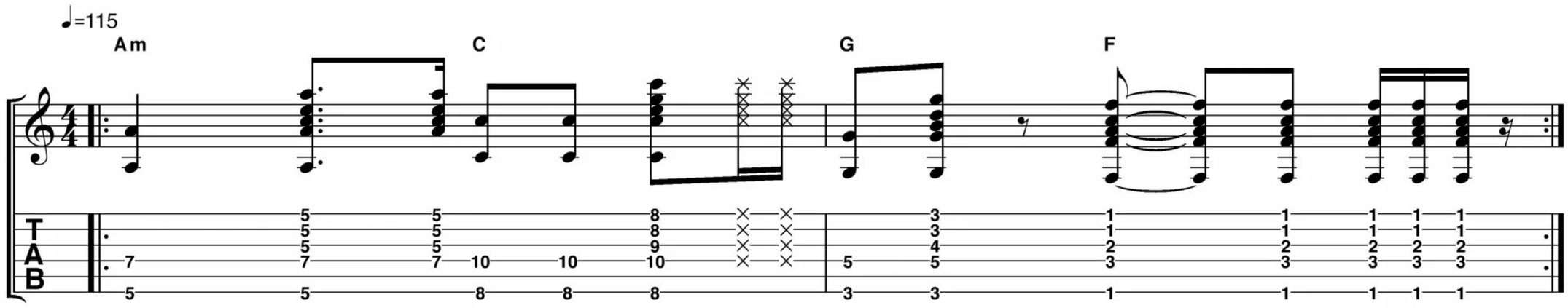

Jeff often hooks the thumb of his fret hand over the top of the neck to fret sixth-string bass notes. These type of barre chord fingerings sound great, partly because there's often more clarity in the bass frequencies thanks to the fifth string staying idle. Check out Jeff's playing on *For Your Love* by the Yardbirds for an example.

2 YARDBIRDS-ERA FAST TRILLS

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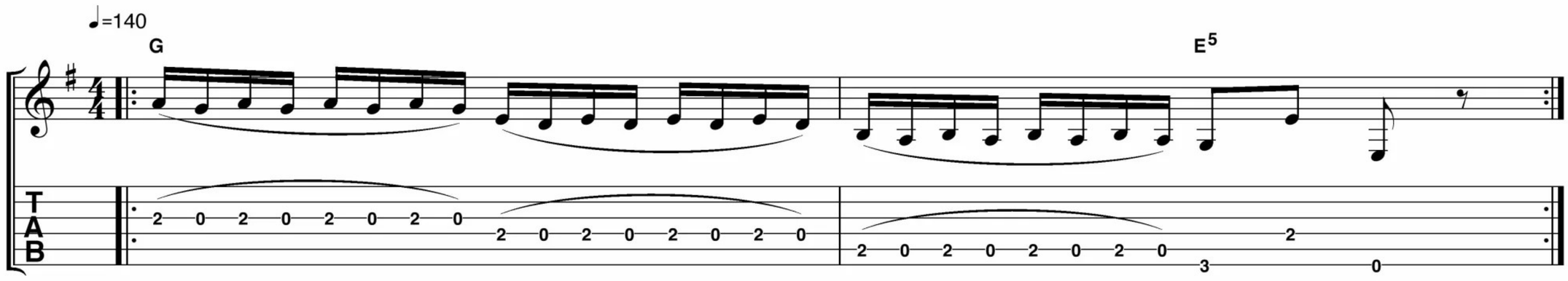

Another technique Jeff perfected during his days with the Yardbirds – for example, in *Jeff's Boogie* – is the fast trill. This works particularly well on an open string, but can be played anywhere on the fretboard. The main thing is to develop is a clean hammer-on and pull-off technique without scuffing any of the idle strings.

3 SLIDE TECHNIQUE

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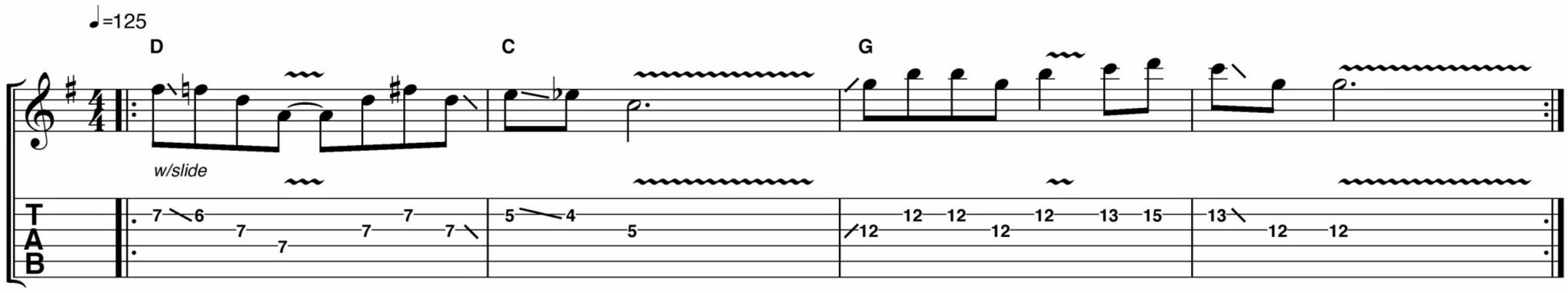

Jeff is no stranger to the bottleneck slide and taking inspiration from *Rice Pudding* on *Beck-ola*, our example uses some classic, blues-style phrasing. The picking hand fingers provide good facility and tone that's perfect for slide guitar playing.

4 FAUX SLIDE STYLE

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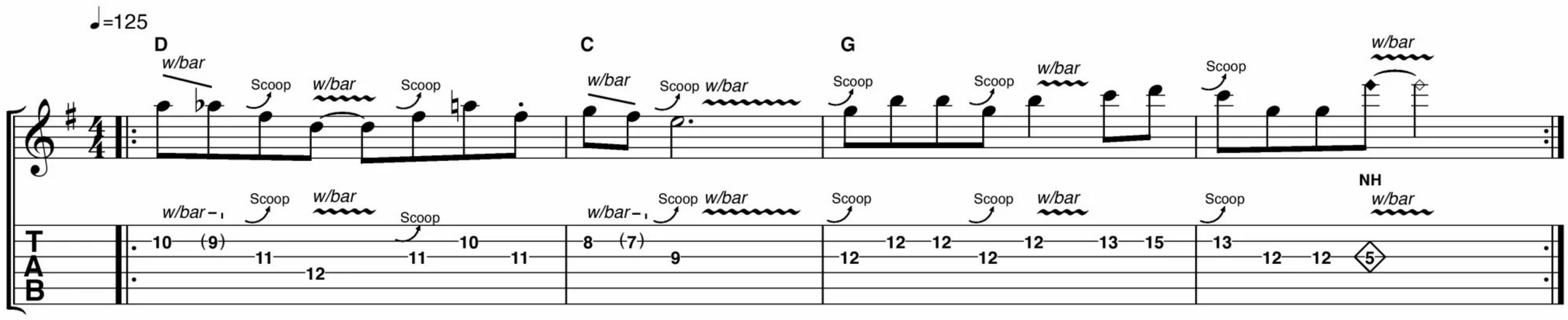

This is a version of the previous lick but played using the whammy bar to execute the pitch shifts instead of with a slide. It's something Beck does extensively, but we're taking inspiration from 2010's *Never Alone*. The natural harmonics work particularly well with the whammy bar as the notes tend to sustain better than fretted notes.

5 FUZZ TONE RIFFS

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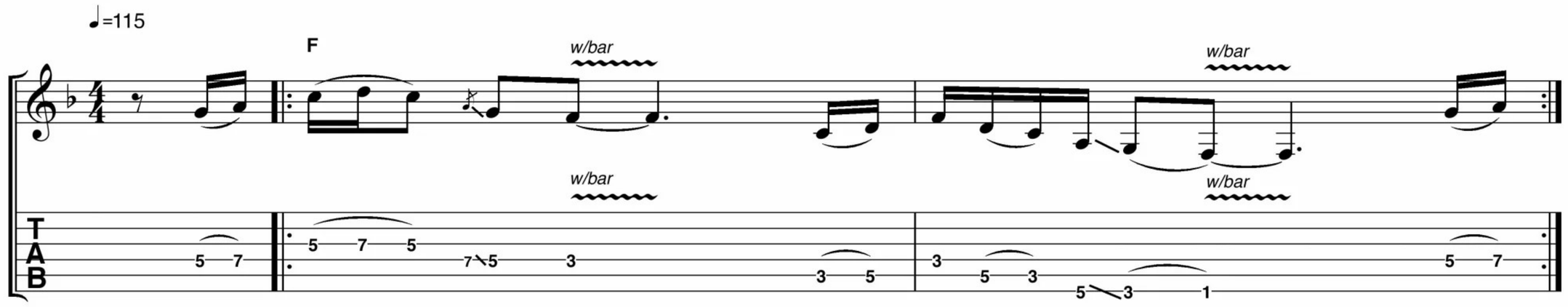
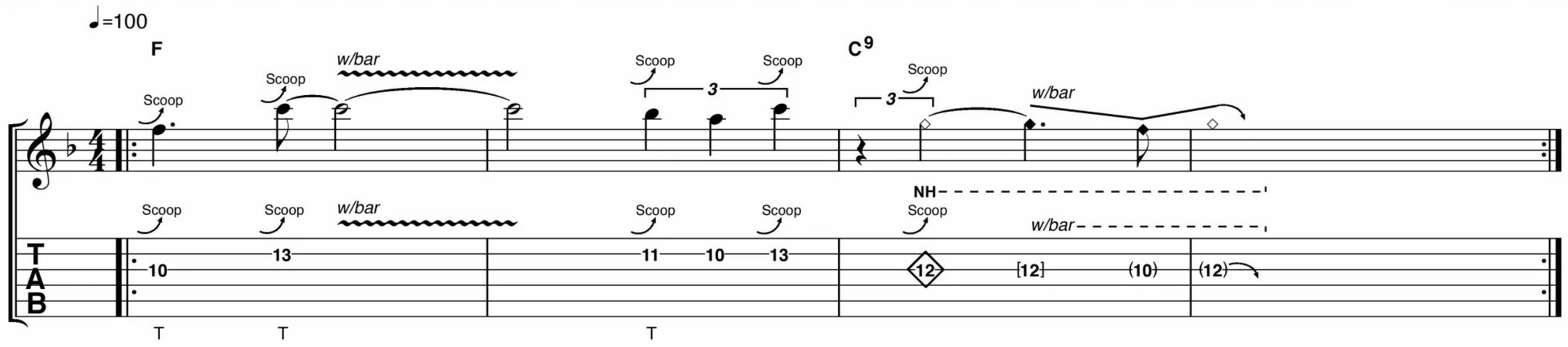


Chaotic sounding fuzz tone riffs are at the heart of Jeff's middle period albums. Tracks such as *Led Boots* and *Hammerhead* typify this. For this one, select a bridge pickup and really dig in with the fingers of your picking hand.

6 THUMB DOWNPICKING

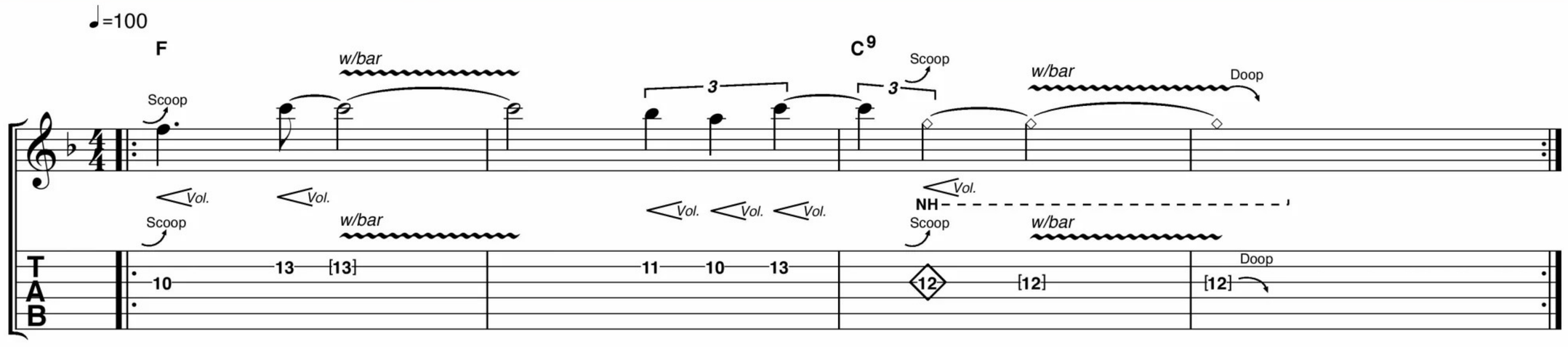
BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO



From the 80s Jeff's style is predominantly fingerstyle, often with the surprisingly simple approach of using just the thumb to pick with. Fingers one, two and three are then free to manipulate the whammy bar and the pinky can adjust the volume and tone controls. Most of the examples in our lesson use a thumb downpicking technique.

7 VOLUME KNOB SWELLS

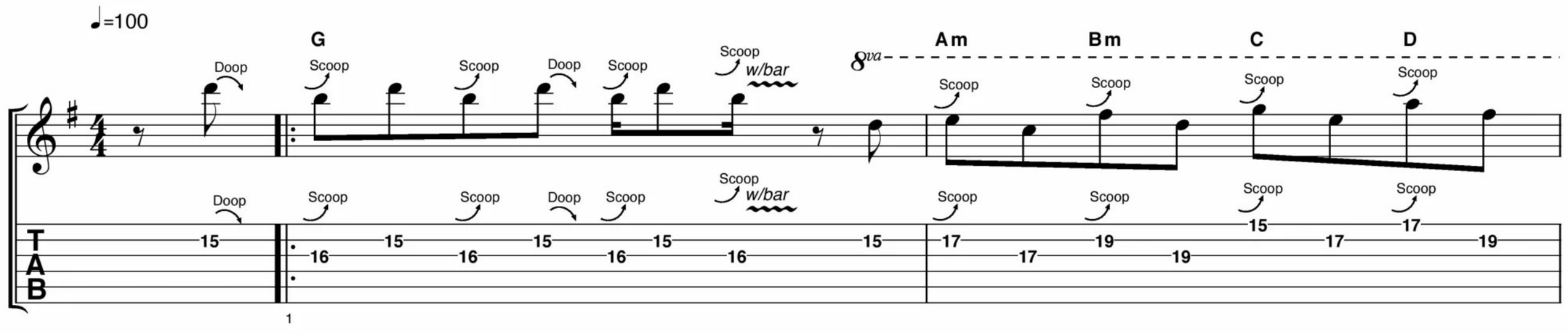
BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO



Swelling the volume knob helps to blur the characteristic attack of guitar strings. The result is a softer, more keyboard-like delivery and the technique is particularly effective when combined with delay and effects. It's another technique found extensively in Jeff's live performances, particularly from the 80s onwards.

8 WHAMMY BAR SCOOPS

BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO



8 WHAMMY BAR SCOOPS (cont'd)

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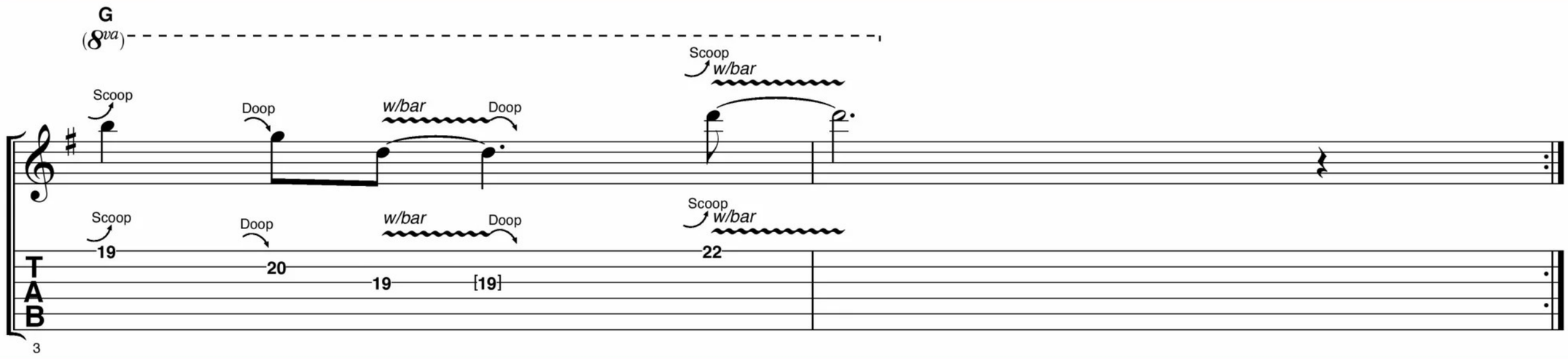

Hopefully you're getting the idea by now that a huge part of Jeff's genius lies in how he adds texture and colour to almost every note played. Here, we're looking at his whammy bar scoop technique – the idea being to depress the bar just before picking the string, then gradually raise into the note. Pure Beck!

9 NATURAL HARMONIC RUNS

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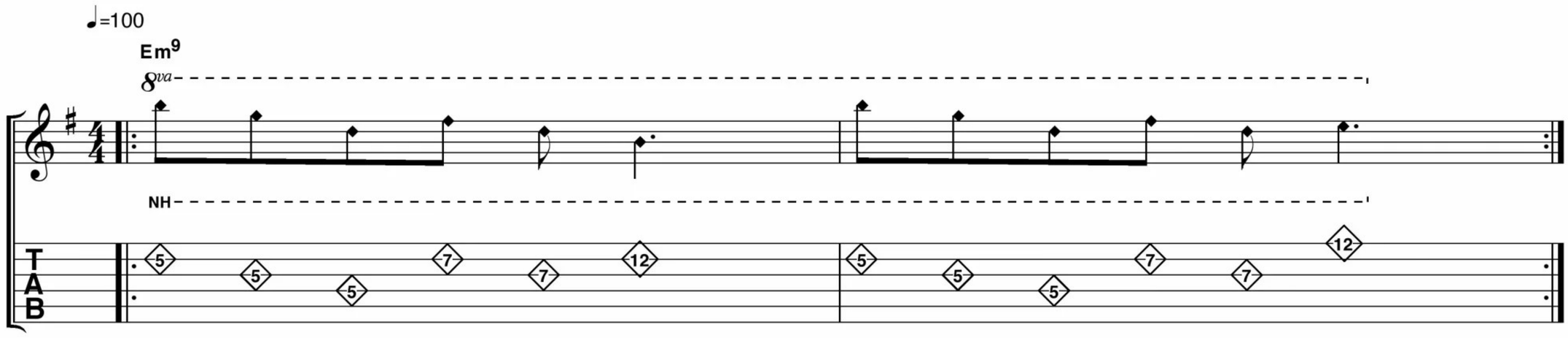
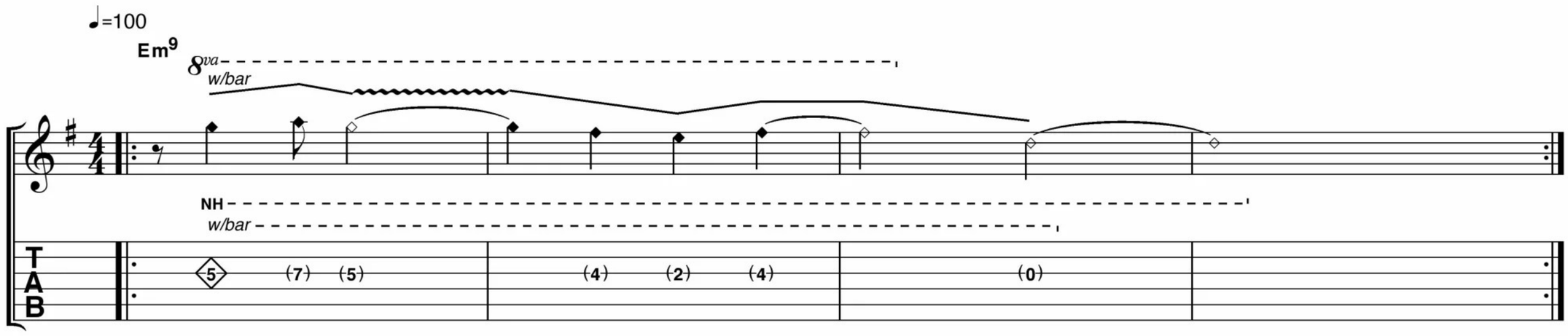


Jeff would often use harmonics for a fresh texture in melodic lines. The challenge lies in mapping out and eventually memorising where the harmonic notes appear on the fretboard. Here we're using the most commonplace 5th, 7th and 12th position harmonics. Simply touch the string over the fret (instead of pressing down) as you pick.

10 WHAMMY BAR MELODIES

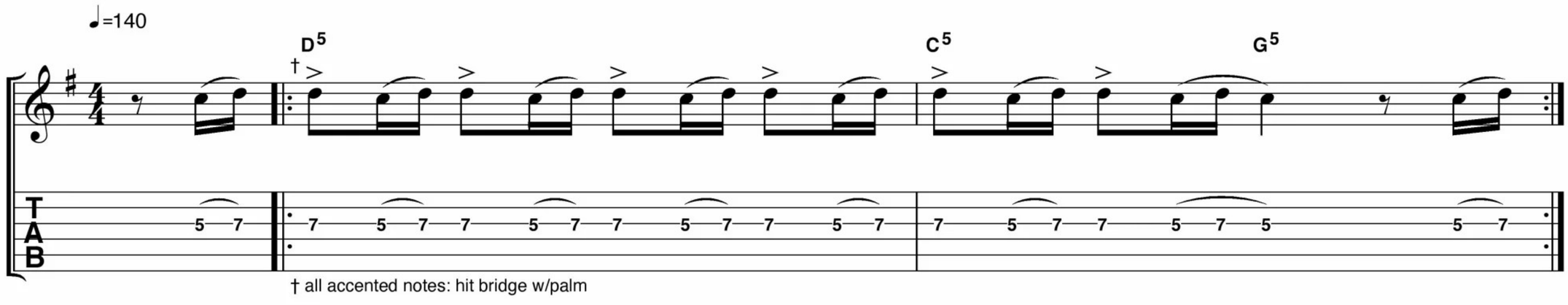
BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO



No lesson on Beck's style is complete without a look at whammy bar melodies – and 1989's *Where Were You* stands as a study piece in the technique. One key ingredient is sustain, so this idea works best with resonant open-string notes and harmonics, with the all-important drive tone also helping to keep those notes ringing.

11 BRIDGE STRIKES

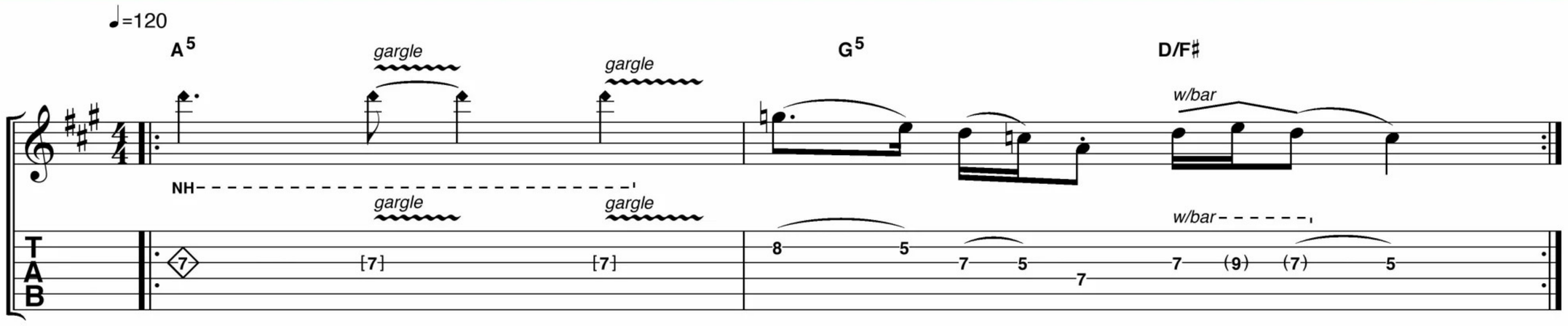
BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO



Floating tremolos allow the strings to go both flat and sharp – and Jeff utilises this facility to tap out rhythms on sustained notes and chords. We've notated this with an accent sign over the relevant notes. We're striking the bridge for an upward pitch shift, but down-pitch hits work too. Just strike the whammy bar in its 'home' position.

12 WHAMMY BAR GARGLES

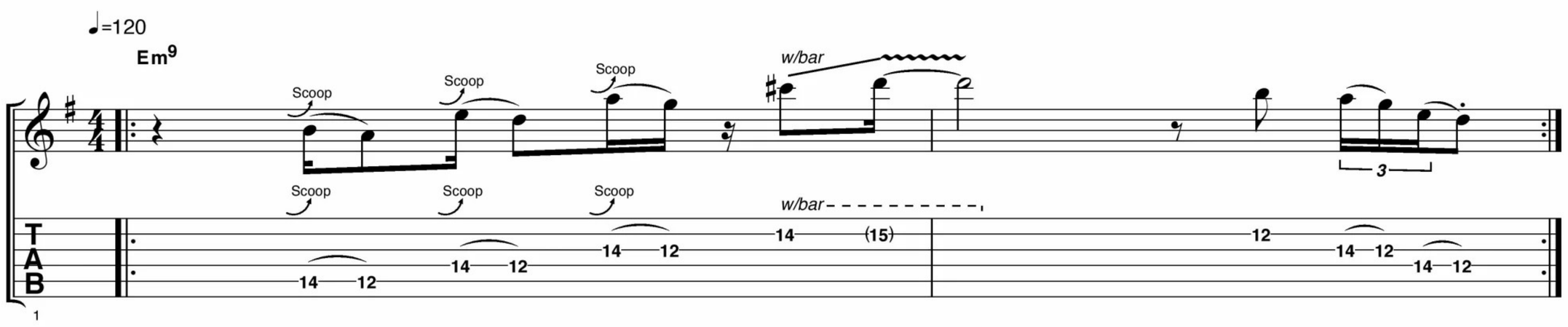
BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO



Yet more whammy bar goodness here in a technique that can be heard in some of the frenetic moments of the track *Guitar Shop*. Simply raise the bar (or dip it!) then let your finger slip off the end. The sudden release of tension will cause the block to vibrate and the rather excellent whammy gargle is born.

13 USING PULL-OFFS

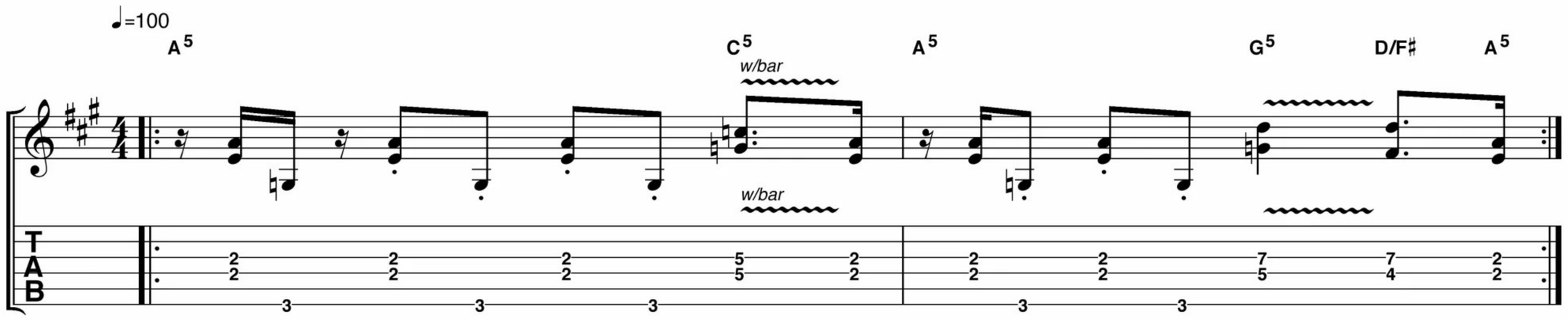
BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO



This example demonstrates a simple pentatonic pattern that is made possible with the use of pull-offs. First scoop the whammy bar into the 14th fret and as the note sounds pull off to the 12th. The same technique can be repeated through the pentatonic scale which conveniently has two notes per string.

14 BOOGIE RIFFS

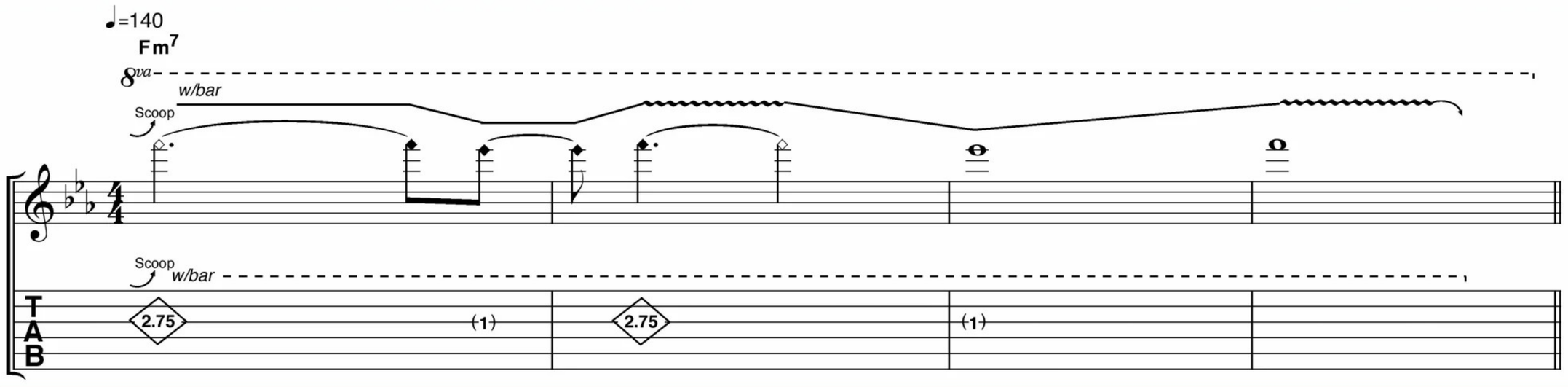
BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO



Jeffs fingerstyle technique provides great facility for this alternative take on the classic boogie riff. The crunch tone is created by boosting the middle frequencies, selecting a bridge pickup and turning the guitar's tone pot right down. Jeff is also fond of leaving the wah wah pedal on with the treadle in the 'sweet spot' to act as a filter.

15 SUPER-HIGH HARMONICS

BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO



Another Jeff Beck trademark is the use of high-pitched harmonics, which can be articulated with a variety of techniques. For our example we're using a slightly hard to find natural harmonic on the third string in between the 2nd and 3rd frets. It may take a little experimenting, but eventually you should find a super-high F harmonic note. A bridge pickup and lots of sustain will help, and use the whammy bar to scoop in and out of the various notes if required.

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN
- ✔ Minor pentatonic scale
- ✔ Thumb fretting
- ✔ Swing feel

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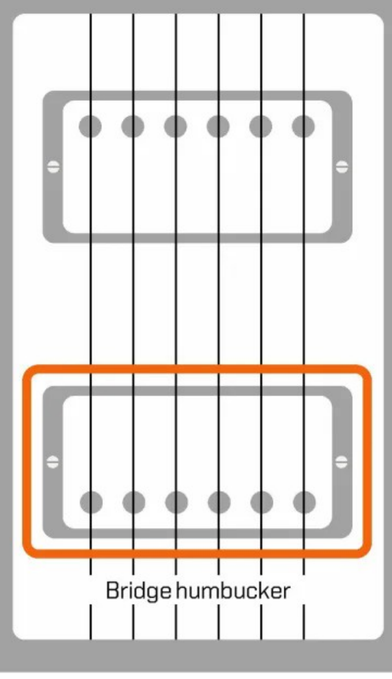
GET THE SOUND

CHANNEL DISTORTION



This riff is played on a humbucker-fitted strat with an overdriven, Big Muff-style fuzz tone. Dial in the gain just enough to give your tone some attitude, but without getting too far away from the blues roots of the sound. Finally, add a subtle short reverb to add a slight slap-back to the notes.

LARKIN POE

Bad Spell

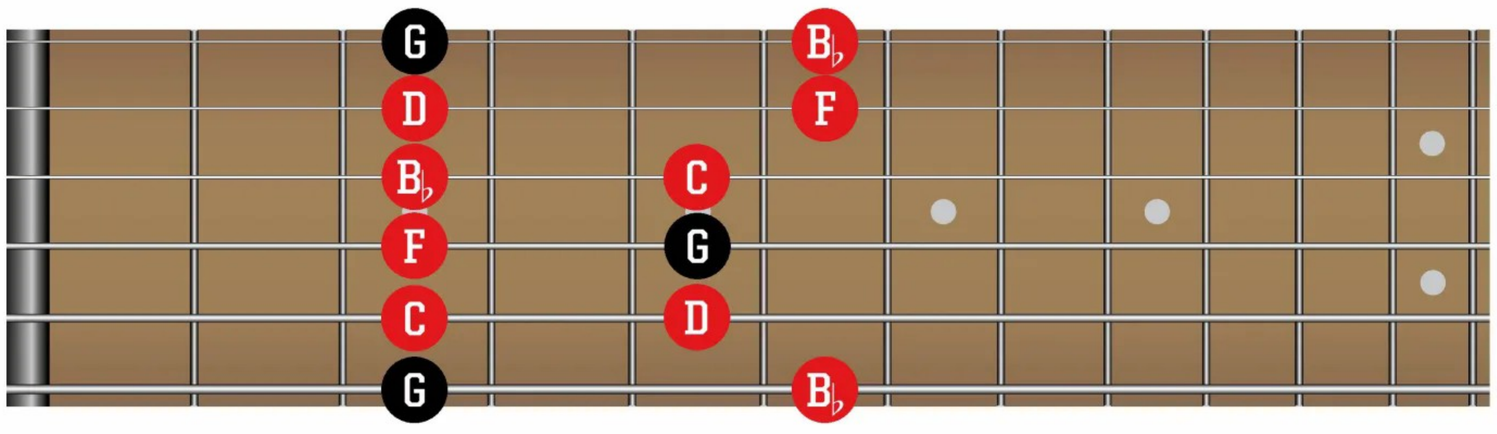
Bad Spell is taken from Larkin Poe's recent album *Blood Harmony*. Sisters Megan and Rebecca Lovell play the riff with a combination of guitar and lap steel. Here, we take a look at Megan's guitar riff, which is played within the G minor pentatonic scale.

Play the first G root with your thumb over the neck, and use your first finger to play a doublestop on the first and second strings. Next, ascend the lower octave of the scale, picking the notes in a swing feel. Now repeat the initial G chord, then use your third finger to hammer on to 5th fret of the third string, letting the second string ring before descending the scale.

The final element is the repeating 5th and 7th fret pattern on the third, fourth and fifth strings, which is played with alternate picking in a straight 16th note feel. Make sure to watch our slowed down video to see how these elements are combined.

CHEAT SHEET

Appears at: 0:00–0:23
Tempo: 85bpm
Key/scale: G minor pentatonic
Main techniques: Hammer-ons, pull-offs, doublestops, thumb fretting



The entire riff is based within the G minor pentatonic scale shown here. Prepare yourself to tackle the riff by playing up and down the scale, one note at a time, using all four fingers in a one finger per fret fashion. Try naming the notes as you go if you like. Notice there are only five different notes over two octaves.

Photo Getty

FROM HELL
Dimebag rides the lightning

Words Amit Sharma

COWBOYS FROM HELL

PANTERA

(1990)

The reinvention of Pantera: how the band found its groove and a new level of heaviness, and Dimebag became a guitar hero

Pantera had already released four albums by the time they got to major label debut *Cowboys From Hell*, but this album's opening title track would serve as the band's mission statement for a new era of brutality in the 90s. Phil Anselmo had taken over from original singer Terry Glaze on previous album *Power Metal*, which saw a shift from glammy hair metal to Judas Priest-inspired heaviness. But it was on *Cowboys From Hell* that the band homed in on the groove metal sound they would become known for – a sound which would inspire generations of heavy bands to come.

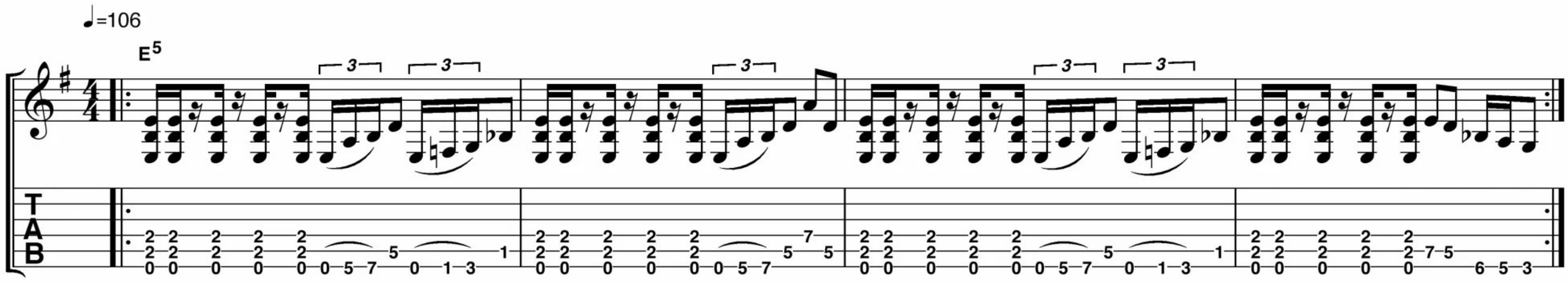
For the recording, guitarist Dimebag Darrell used his 1981 blue Dean From Hell guitar fitted with a Bill Lawrence XL500 pickup in the bridge and a Seymour Duncan '59 in the neck through his solid state Randall RG100H, with the mids dialled out for an aggressive scoop.

Often incorrectly tabbed around the 7th fret, the title track's opening riff is played an octave up at the 12th position, snaking through the E minor pentatonic scale with an added blue note on the 13th fret of the fifth string. That same idea gets transposed down to open position, before a palm-muted idea riding off the low E string leads into the verse sections – using the groove and swing of the rhythms rather than the note choices to create an intoxicating, swaying sense of heaviness. Chromatics are employed in places to add to the tension – three ascending notes on the A string in the verses as well as the more intensely strummed palm-muted powerchords in the bridge. There's also a sense of chromaticism to the riff for the solo, an E powerchord is followed by a C that climbs to C#m and D, allowing Dimebag to run wild with some of the note choices in his leads.

The are many reasons why this is considered one of his greatest solos – from the simplistic opening line which, much like the main riff itself, gets transposed over to a different area of the neck to the more outside-sounding and technically ambitious runs using the 11th, 12th and 15th frets across all six strings. The legato stretches get even wider from there, to the point where they almost sound like they're tapped, before Dimebag reverts back to his opening lick using the flat 5th against the root and a few bluesy phrases in the same area high up the neck. To end his solo, he plays chromatically ascending 6th intervals on the highest strings, climaxing with one final thunderous bend on the 22nd fret.

The riff that follows uses double picked palm-muted low E chugs against a higher octave and minor 7th, ending each cycle with a pinched harmonic on the 5th or 7th fret of the D string, and a descending line in E Dorian that gets played once and then twice an octave higher, delivered with no shortage of character and charisma. Its impact cannot be overstated – heavy metal would never be the same again.

GROOVE IN METAL **BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO**



Brutal tone and technical prowess are to be expected with Pantera, but here we're looking at a lighter aspect: groove – and the mix of rhythm and timing required. Before you play our tab example, listen closely to the eighth notes, 16th notes, and the triplets, too. You'll be swapping between these rhythms frequently, so aim to have a clear idea of how they sound before you start.

Photo Getty

THE GREATEST GUITAR ALBUMS OF ALL TIME

...as chosen by you!

Illustration Magic Torch

Back in May 2022, TG conducted a **series of polls on GuitarWorld.com**. A staggering number of votes were cast – **just over 150,000, in fact** – and in TG issue 360 the results were revealed as we presented readers with The Greatest Guitar Albums Of All Time.

Now, because we wanted to **represent every era**, from **early classics** to **contemporary guitar heroes**, we divided up our polls decade by decade from the **1960s all the way through to the 2010s and 2020s**.

In the TG Annual 2024, we bring you an abridged version, featuring the number one album from each decade, with each getting an **in-depth examination**, either from the guitarist who made the record or a player notably influenced by it. And if you're feeling inspired to plug in and rock out, **we've provided some lessons** to help you play like the winners, too!

Turn the page, and let's get started!

Words Jenna Scaramanga

"IT'S MIND-BOGGLING!

Samantha Fish hails Hendrix's inspirational debut

01 ARE YOU EXPERIENCED
THE JIMI HENDRIX EXPERIENCE
(1967)

SAMANTHA FISH

The debut album by The Jimi Hendrix Experience is many things. As modern blues star Samantha Fish says: "*Are You Experienced* is historically important, innovative, and such a creative album. He took us to places that I don't think music had been [before]."

But if anything, she slightly understates it. Beginning with this album, Hendrix reinvented guitar. It's easy to miss the extent of his genius because many of his innovations are now taken-for-granted guitar techniques, but guitar playing pre-Hendrix was a markedly less interesting world. And no one could sound like him.

We don't just mean this in the boring sense that every player is unique. Literally no one could sound like Jimi, because Hendrix's playing required impractical volume levels. In 1967, that type of amp distortion and feedback couldn't happen any other way. The Jimi Hendrix Experience were kicked out of recording sessions because of noise complaints, or else producers didn't know how to record such intense sound pressure levels. An engineer for John Mayall's Blues Breakers had described Eric Clapton as "unrecordable", and that was only a 30 watt combo. Hendrix used a 100 watt stack. It was only when they moved to Olympic Studios that they found Eddie Kramer, a collaborator with the talent to capture Jimi's full sonic fury.

"I can't make a Strat sound like Jimi Hendrix," Samantha Fish admits. "When I think of Stratocasters in general I think of Stevie Ray Vaughan, and that's the kind of twang that I get out of it when I when I pick it up. Jimi's tone was so aggressive. It screams in a way that I can't make a Stratocaster scream, and I think a lot of guitar players might agree with me."

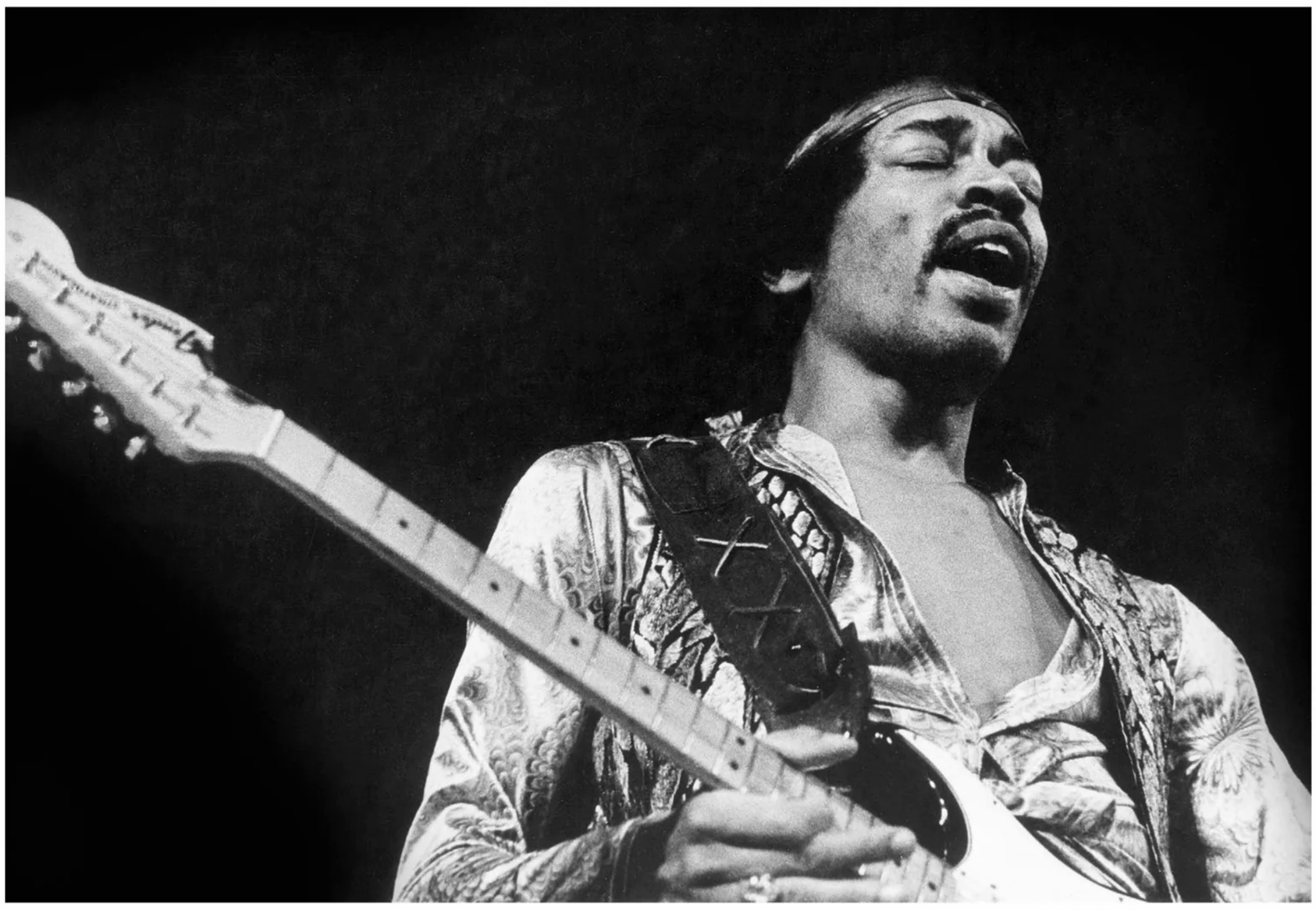
There were precursors to Hendrix. Buddy Guy had been performing live with distortion and feedback for years, but his label boss Leonard Chess refused to record that way. Hendrix, a veteran of 'chitlin circuit' blues clubs, would have seen the likes of Guy at their unfiltered best. In his session days, Jimi worked as a sideman to Curtis Mayfield, who particularly influenced Jimi with his clean playing and his signature take on chord-melody playing. But none of this detracts from Jimi's status as a visionary.

Growing up in Kansas City, Samantha Fish was a fan of Hendrix's songs before she even knew who he was. "Like most kids in the 90s, I heard Jimi Hendrix on the radio,' she recalls. "We didn't really have a big record collection, but I had heard all the hits. As I got older I realised 'holy hell, all these songs are from the same album!' I can't imagine being 25 and putting out something so prolific. I just think about myself at 25 and the tone he has, the presence he has, the command he has over the guitar – the songs are just so well thought out."

Samantha's career began at blues jams, and when she performed *Red House*, a cornerstone track from *Are You Experienced*, audiences groaned because there song had been covered so often. "I would hope that he'd be tickled by that," she laughs. Like Hendrix, Fish is rooted in the blues but crosses genres. "I just write songs and the blues the blues part of it comes through my playing and singing," she says. "It comes from my foundation and how I learned how to play guitar. If I write a progression that's kind of poppy I'm going to try and bring this other element to make it something else. I can only imagine Jimi was just writing good songs and putting them out there."

As to whether *Are You Experienced* is a blues album, she states: "It's blues and beyond. Jimi was paving his own way and creating his own sound. I don't think genre can really can really confine him or describe him. He has some blues licks, some blues phrasing and feeling the way he sings, but he was writing the book on rock'n'roll. There have been so many prolific guitar players in the blues historically and I think I think he fits into that too just by way of being so damn beastly on the guitar."

Are You Experienced was notable for the number of new sounds Hendrix pulled from his guitar. The title track has a noise that sounds like record scratching,



Photos Getty

a full decade before hip-hop DJs were around, and *Third Stone From The Sun* has a solo that barely sounds like conventional music, with Hendrix manipulating and controlling feedback using his Strat's tremolo. This is an inspiration for Fish's approach: "He was so innovative with the guitar. Even today people aren't doing the things that he was doing, even via recording and how he was utilizing the instrument as a pure effect. Like on the title track, it sounds like a remix. Just using the guitar not in the traditional sense. He's putting a texture and a tone on there that gives the song a certain vibe that you can't get from a solo or riff or guitar chords. He using it in different ways and making it talk. I think every guitar player spends a fair amount of time trying to figure out how the hell he did that. That's something that I really like to do, and Jimi is the godfather of doing stuff like that."

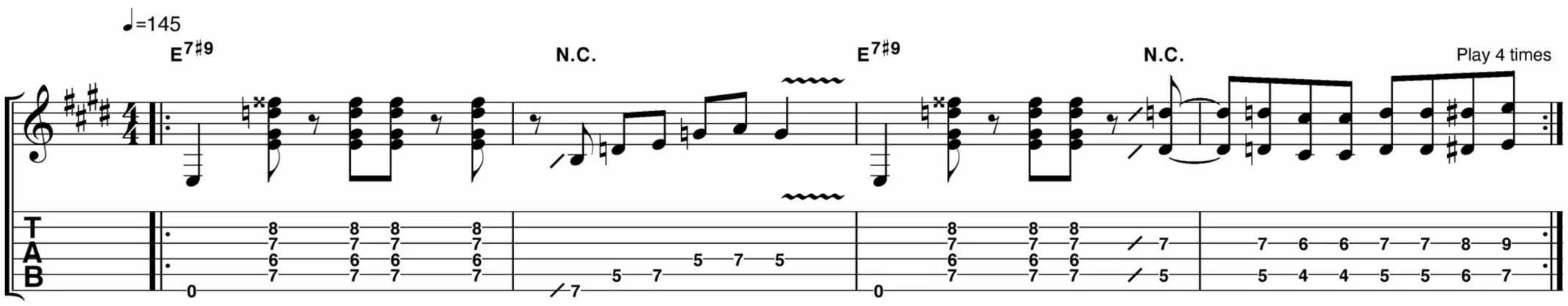
Another example was Hendrix's pioneering backwards guitar. As Samantha says: "He wasn't the first to record backwards guitar solos, but he did it in a pretty iconic way." George Harrison had beaten Hendrix by a year with *I'm Only Sleeping*, but it had been a painful process. In his memoir, Beatles engineer Geoff Emerick says of the nine-hour session "We all wished we had never come up with the concept of backwards sounds." Hendrix, by contrast, had spent time listening to his guitar recorded backwards to learn how it would sound, and put the *Are You Experienced* solo together with apparent ease.

Samantha Fish grew up with the US release of *Are You Experienced*, which added three classic singles – *Purple Haze*, *The Wind Cries Mary* and *Hey Joe* – omitted from the UK release. She admired Hendrix's way of weaving lead lines around chords. "I think *The Wind Cries Mary* is one of the most beautiful songs ever written," she says. "It's just so delicate and well put together. He's not just throwing licks out there, he's playing really melodically and delicately through different chord structures and building memorable melodies. That's definitely something I strive to do with my solos."

As a singer-guitarist, Samantha recognises that much of Jimi Hendrix's genius was in the interplay between his voice and guitar. "The way that he arpeggiates chords, like in *The Wind Cries Mary*. He's sliding up to different chords and his voice is this kind of counterpart to these really intricate guitar patterns. On some of his rougher songs there's so much call and response between his singing and his playing, it's like two voices talking to each other. BB King is the king of that, but Jimi did it in such a bombastic way that I think goes over a lot of people's heads. The amount of work he's doing and the amount of energy he's putting out by singing and playing – it's mind-boggling."

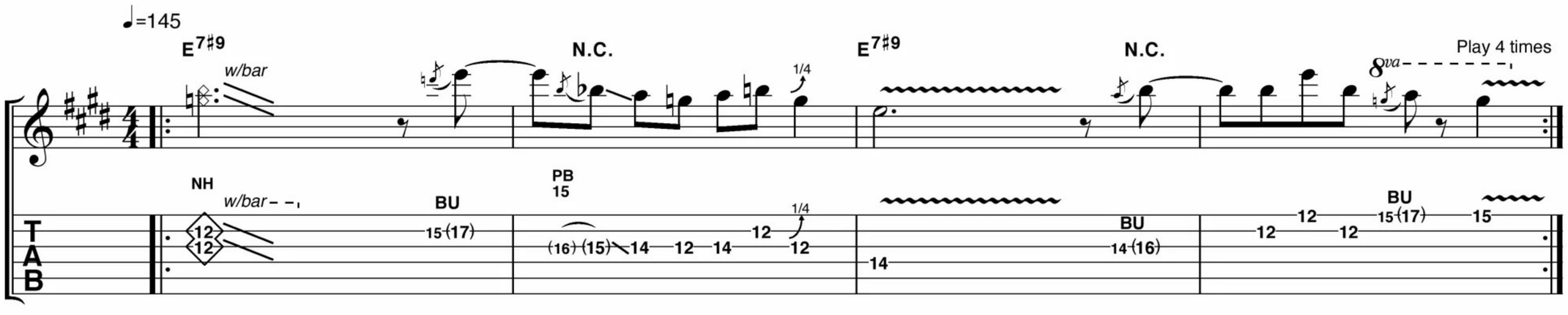
> "IT'S BLUES AND BEYOND. JIMI WAS WRITING THE BOOK ON ROCK'N'ROLL"

ARE YOU EXPERIENCED CHORDS AND OCTAVES **BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO**



Here we're using the classic 7♯9 sound – a chord that Jimi made his own, so much so that most people call it the 'Hendrix chord'. Our E7♯9 chord shape was used on *Purple Haze* (as featured on the US edition of *AYE*), and it's implied in the key of F♯ on *Foxy Lady*, too. The octaves in bar 4 are a handy way to thicken up the sound of a melodic run.

ARE YOU EXPERIENCED OCTAVIA EFFECT AND PENTATONICS **BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO**



First up, let's talk tone. One key element of Jimi's sound was an Octavia pedal, which combined fuzz distortion with an octave-up effect – you can hear it in the solos to *Fire* and *Purple Haze*. Listen to the effect it has on the opening whammy bar dive in our lick, and notice its distinct sound in the Hendrix-style pentatonic licks that follow.

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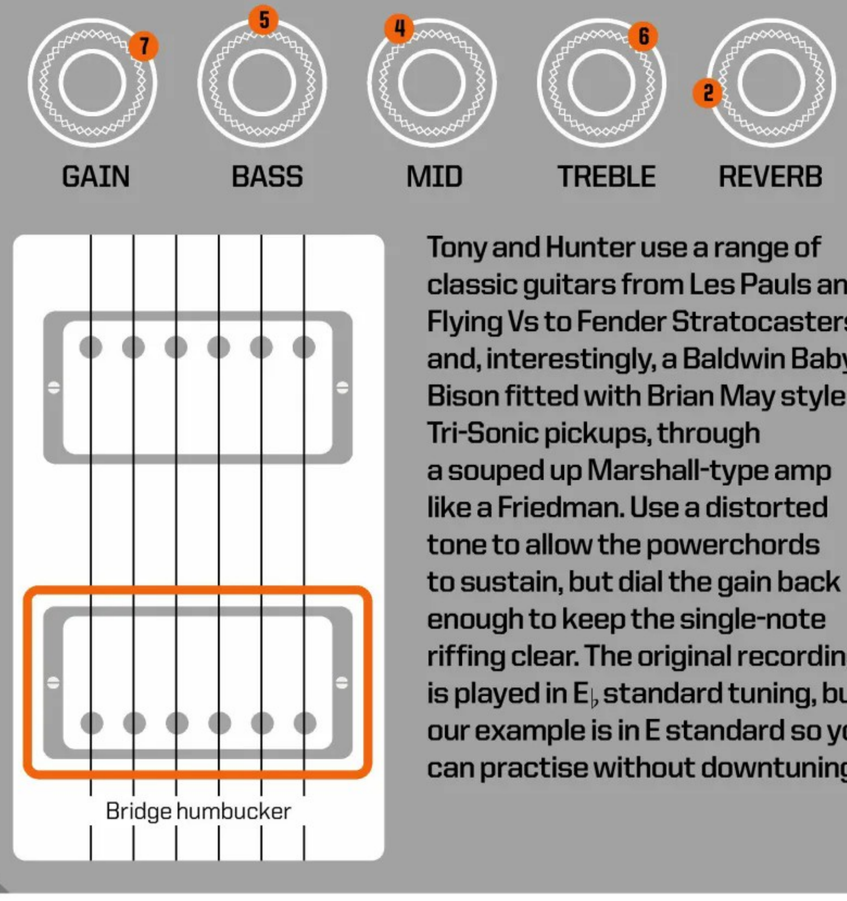
GET THE TONE

CHANNEL DISTORTION



Tony and Hunter use a range of classic guitars from Les Pauls and Flying Vs to Fender Stratocasters and, interestingly, a Baldwin Baby Bison fitted with Brian May style Tri-Sonic pickups, through a souped up Marshall-type amp like a Friedman. Use a distorted tone to allow the powerchords to sustain, but dial the gain back enough to keep the single-note riffing clear. The original recording is played in E♭ standard tuning, but our example is in E standard so you can practise without downtuning.

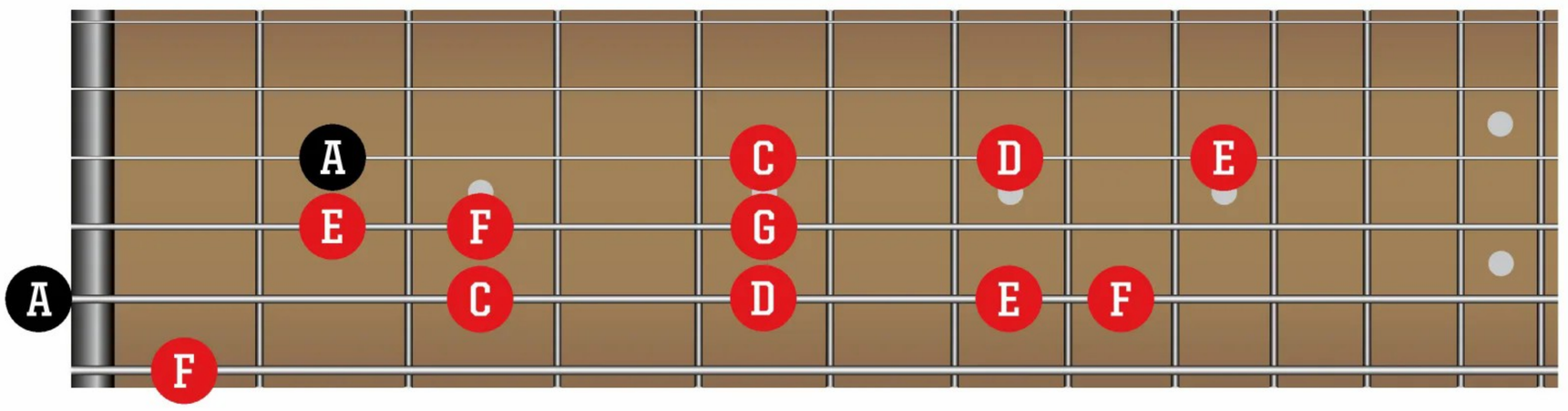
WHITE REAPER

Pink Slip

This track is taken from White Reaper's fourth studio album *Asking For A Ride*, released in January 2023. Frontman Tony Esposito and guitarist Hunter Thompson play the high energy pop-punk riff using a combination of single notes and powerchords. The riff outlines the chord progression C–F–Am, but instead of being played as chords, we use the chord tones to arpeggiate and form the riff. The first four notes are based around a C major sound, then the riff moves down to the 1st fret for an F powerchord shape played as single notes before landing on an A5 powerchord. The A5 powerchord is then spiced up with some melodic notes based in the scale. The first time, play the melody by sliding on the third string, then on the second time use the open fifth string to play a pedal-note melody.

CHEAT SHEET...

Appears at: 0:00–0:23
Tempo: 167bpm
Key/scale: A Aeolian
Main techniques: Single-note picking, string muting, arpeggios



This riff is based on notes from the A natural minor scale (A B C D E F G) – though the B doesn't appear. Try to identify the notes that outline the basic C-F-Am chord progression, as well as the notes that go farther afield. This is a great opportunity to learn where the notes are on the fretboard, so try naming the notes as you play the riff.

Photo Getty

Words Jenna Scaramanga

“WE WERE FIRING ON ALL CYLINDERS!”

Jimmy Page reveals how he created the masterpiece that topped our 70s poll

01 LED ZEPPELIN IV
LED ZEPPELIN
(1971)

Led Zeppelin III was hardly a flop, but Jimmy Page took criticism of it personally. The guitarist refused interviews for the next 18 months and resolved to let the music do the talking in the most dramatic way possible. The next album would have no accompanying words – not even the band's name on the cover. The resulting untitled effort, known universally as *Led Zeppelin IV*, is the most devastating answer a band has ever given their critics.

"It was a really good and serious summing up of where we were," said Jimmy Page of the album. "Each song has its own character. It gives all the different colours and textures of the band. We were moving the acoustic aspect of what we'd done on the third album into these more intimate areas with *Going To California* and *The Battle Of Evermore*. The music kept expanding."

It was in 1970 that Page, singer Robert Plant, drummer John Bonham and bassist John Paul Jones began the first recording sessions for the album at Island Studios in London, but the magic was not happening. According to Page, an early version of a key track, *When The Levee Breaks*, sounded "laboured". The guitarist decided a new working environment was required.

He wanted somewhere the band could live, write, and record, so Led Zeppelin retreated to Headley Grange, a disused workhouse for the poor in Hampshire. Renting the Rolling Stones Mobile Studio to capture the results, the band dug in. "I liked the idea of everybody being in the same house and really working with the whole band," Page recalled. "It was an old Victorian house, very imposing. It was in the countryside, so you weren't going to have neighbours complaining. If it didn't work we'd go into a studio, but in actual fact it was great. It was like everybody's creative energies all joined. That's what the whole magic of the environment was like."

The band used cupboards and stairwells around the house as isolation booths for amps, setting up temporary studios ad hoc. They were constantly setting up in different locations, lending each track its own ambience. As Page said, "We used the acoustics of the house. We were playing in this drawing room to begin with, and then John Bonham has another drum kit turn up, and it's in the hall, with this really high ceiling. When he started playing it was like, 'right, we'll have to do something in here now,' with the drum sound like that, because it was just huge. You've heard it – on *When The Levee Breaks*."

Levee was Zeppelin's thunderous reimagining of a 1929 Memphis Minnie tune. Although the melody does draw on the original, it's unlikely anyone would have recognised the song if Plant had bothered to change the lyrics. Memphis Minnie's tune was an up-tempo blues with a bright fingerpicking part. The original follows standard 12-bar chord changes, but Page's ominous, droning riff never modulates, designed to invoke a trance. He played it on his Fender Electric XII in Open G tuning, but it sounds like Open F because Page slowed the track with varispeed. "If you slow things down, it makes everything sound so much thicker," he told author Brad Tolinski. "The only problem is, you have to be very tight with your playing because it magnifies any inconsistencies."

Working quickly, Zeppelin captured ideas while they still sounded spontaneous. "We didn't over-rehearse things," Page emphasised. "We just had them so that they were just right, so that there was this tension – maybe there might be a mistake. But there won't be, because this is how we're all going to do it and it's gonna work!"

The record sounds fresh because it is. If a song didn't come together quickly, they simply moved on. As Page recalled: "We'd get it up to a serious speed, so it's really firing on all cylinders, and then you'd start recording. With the red light on there's even more urgency to it. We'd arrive at those takes in a pretty short time – just a handful of takes, maybe. If a song started to labour, and it just wasn't working, there's no point in just recording it. We'd just stop it and do something else, and then return to it later."

Guitar solos were always the last thing recorded. "I wanted it to be totally in character of what's going on with the lyrics and a summing up of my guitar playing for that particular song," Page explained. "What I'd do is just limber up and then, okay, put the red light on. And again, those solos weren't done over hours and hours. They were pretty much improvised. They weren't worked out note for note. Never. The solos were always: take a deep breath and go for it! For the spontaneity. I might have worked out how I might start it off. But that's it."

With a combination of inspiration and ruthless efficiency, Zeppelin's fourth was essentially complete by the end of their month-long residency at Headley Grange. Three tracks remained unfinished: *Four Sticks* (a rhythmic number on which Bonham on played with, yes, four drum sticks); *Black Dog*, the heavy hitter that would serve as the album's opening salvo; and lastly, the song that many consider the greatest of all time.

"I had the sections for it. It was a question of piecing them together," said Page of writing *Stairway To Heaven*. "By nature of the fact that it had acceleration through it, it needed some work on it. Definitely it was the sort of thing where you wanted to be all around each other. Because of the amount of overdubs that were going to go on it, it needed to be done in a studio." Returning to London, Page picked Island Studio 1 for its ambience and clarity.

The rich arrangement for *Stairway to Heaven* includes all of Page's main guitars. The intro was his beloved Harmony Sovereign H-1260, a budget acoustic used to write the first four albums, while the lush electric rhythms came from two different 12-strings, DI'ed and panned left and right. His Fender Electric XII was joined by the Vox Phantom he'd used on *Led Zeppelin II* and earlier, in his previous band The Yardbirds, for the song *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Sailor*. They were recorded straight into the desk and compressed. Outro riffs came from his Les Paul, while the solo was played on the legendary Dragon Telecaster, a gift from Jeff Beck he'd used to record all of Led Zeppelin's debut. The Gibson ES-1275 double neck didn't arrive until after the song was recorded, when Page needed one guitar that could reproduce all the parts live.

The solo used the same approach as the others, Page preparing the opening lick and a few link phrases before improvising the rest. He says the solo came together easily, in about three takes. Producer Andy Johns, however, remembered things differently in a 2009 interview with Rhythm. "There was a bit of a struggle on the solo. He was playing for half an hour and did seven or eight takes. He hadn't quite got it sussed. I was starting to get a bit paranoid and he said, 'No, no you're making *me* paranoid.' Then right after that he played a really great solo."

Page is notoriously reticent to give details of the amps used on specific tracks, sometimes complaining that after he mentions using a particular amp with Led Zeppelin they become impossible to buy. He has variously claimed the *Stairway* amp was a Marshall or a Supro. We do know that his Number 1 Les Paul Standard and Marshall 1959 Superlead head remained his main rig for the Headley Grange sessions. That tone didn't work for *Black Dog*, however, and Page

Photo Getty

recut those guitars at Island with Andy Johns.

Despite his association with cranked Marshalls, Page is no valve amp purist. After the bass and drums were completed at Headley, Page cut the Black Dog guitars at Island Studios, using a direct box to plug straight into the desk. Andy Johns cranked the gain on the mic input to create distortion, and put the signal through two Universal 1176 compressors in series. The riff was triple-tracked, with one take panned left, one right, and one centre. Page has compared the resulting tone to an analogue synth.

For the solos in *Black Dog*, Page took a more orthodox approach. As he told *Guitar World* in 1993. "I wanted something that would cut through the direct guitars – I wanted a totally different tone colour. So I ran my guitar through a Leslie and mic'ed that in the usual way." This "usual way" of mic'ing was actually pretty unusual for the time. While most engineers close mic'ed cabs, Page would position an ambient mic anywhere from six to 20 feet from the speaker, depending on the room's sweet spot. As with Bonham's drums, Page followed his mantra "distance equals depth" for recording guitars.

The last completed track was *Four Sticks*, whose intricate overdubs also required the clarity of a recording studio. Along with *Stairway*, Page felt *Four Sticks* came the closest to fulfilling his artistic vision. He told Steve Rosen in 1977: "My vocation is more in composition, really, than anything else. Building up harmonies, orchestrating the guitar like an army – I think that's where it's at, really, for me. I'm talking about actual orchestration in the same way you'd orchestrate a classical piece of music. Instead of using brass and violins, you treat the guitars with synthesizers or other devices; give them different treatments, so that they have enough frequency range and scope and everything to keep the listener as totally committed to it as the player is.

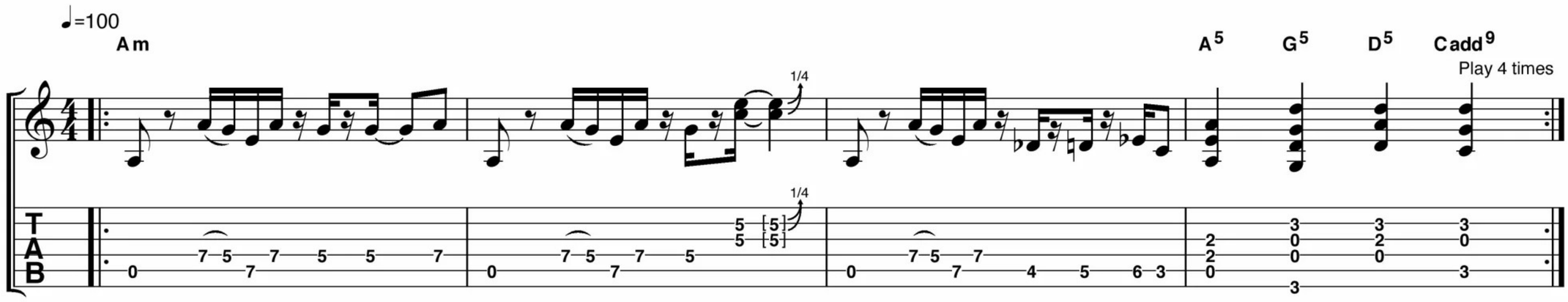
"THE SOLOS WERE ALWAYS: TAKE A DEEP BREATH AND GO FOR IT!"

I can see certain milestones along the way, like *Four Sticks*, in the middle section of that. The sounds of those guitars – that's where I'm going."

Recording complete, Page mixed the album at Island with Johns after a disastrous ten days at LA's Sunset Sound produced only one useable mix, *When the Levee Breaks*. What remained was sequencing the album – crucial for a band determined not to release singles. "We were crafting albums for the album market," he said. "It was important, I felt, to have the flow and the rise and fall of the music and the contrast, so that each song would have more impact against the other. I thought that *Levee Breaks* just had to finish the overall picture of what we'd done – the sonic picture – because it was just so ominous. After you've caressed them with *Stairway*, now you're going to disturb them!"

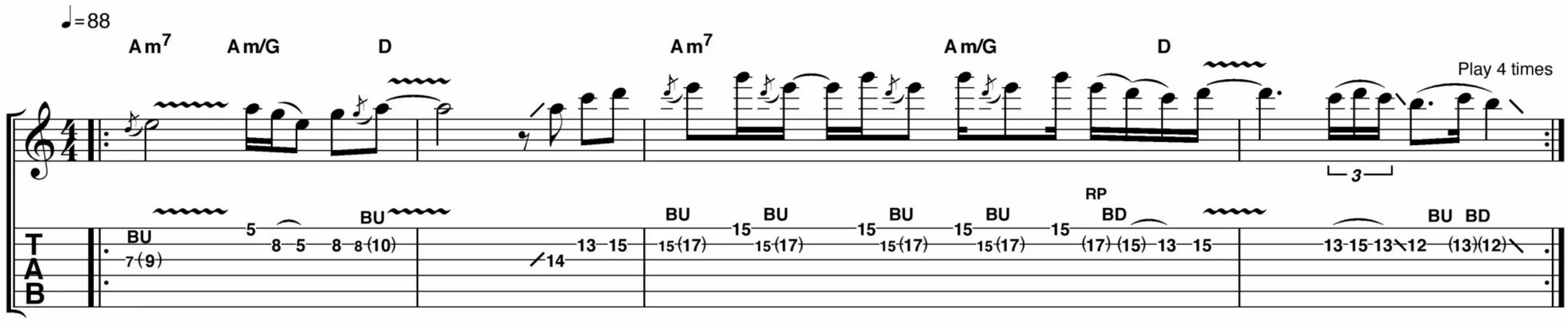
Led Zeppelin IV is not just the greatest guitar album of the 70s, but the benchmark for every guitar band ever since.

LED ZEPPELIN IV MINOR PENTATONIC PLUS... **BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO**



This example showcases some of the techniques used in tracks like *Black Dog* and *Four Sticks*. By adding extra notes to the basic A minor pentatonic framework there's a more sophisticated sound than you'd get if you stuck rigidly to the scale. Clever Jimmy!

LED ZEPPELIN IV EPIC SOLOING **BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO**



This example is inspired by Page's epic solo in *Stairway To Heaven* – so here we're looking at what makes his style so grand. First, he moves around the fretboard, starting low and building to a peak higher up the neck. The string bends in bar 3 ring out slightly; it's not dissonant, but there's a bit of a clash which gives attitude. Finally, the vibrato is smooth and expressive, but you could play more aggressively if you want to.

Words Jenna Scaramanga

"IT SOUNDS LIKE SO MUCH FUN!"

Joe Satriani hails the genius and the spirit of EVH

01 1984 VAN HALEN

(1984)

Van Halen's sixth album, 1984, was the climax of a battle for creative control between Eddie Van Halen and the band's producer Ted Templeman. After 1981's *Fair Warning* – Van Halen's heaviest album – produced no hit singles, Templeman pushed for covers on 1982 follow-up *Diver Down*. It yielded hits, but Eddie was unhappy.

"I would rather bomb with my own music than make it with other people's music," Eddie told *Guitar World* in 2014. "Ted felt that if you redo a proven hit, you're already halfway there." To wrest control from Templeman, Eddie and engineer Don Landee converted a racquetball court at Van Halen's house into a studio. They named it 5150, and the *1984* album was its first project. Ironically, the album made entirely on Eddie's terms became Van Halen's most commercially successful effort. Templeman resisted recording at 5150, but relented after he heard the song *Jump*. "He didn't care much about the rest of the record," said Eddie. "He just wanted that one hit."

With Eddie, a classically trained pianist, playing the main riff on synthesizer, *Jump* put a new twist on Van Halen's sound. As Joe Satriani says now: "*Jump* sounded really fresh. The simple major chords that we've heard a million times just for some reason sound new. I would say that's like Mozart. There's a history of amazing classical music before him, so what did he do? He used the same chords as everybody else, but the way he did it made you go 'Oh! I like the way he goes I–IV–V.' *Jump* has that same thing. It's just I–IV–V, but it sounds great."

With Templeman pacified, Van Halen got serious. Limited space at 5150 made for an unusual working environment. The Marshall Plexi sat in one corner behind isolation panels, and Eddie sat on a stool in front of brother Alex's drumkit and did not even wear headphones. There wasn't space for cymbals, which were overdubbed later. Only the snare was live; Alex used electronic Simmons drums for everything else. "Can you imagine what it sounded like in the room?" laughs Satriani. "This is insane. He'd do a drum fill and where there should be a crash at the end, there's nothing. How did they work that out? Just the monitoring, so that they could do something like *Hot For Teacher* and make it sound so perfect?"

The visual connection between the Van Halen brothers was essential. As Eddie recalled of *Hot For Teacher*: "I distinctly remember sitting in front of Al on a wooden stool and playing that part during my solo where it climbs. Well, I can't count, so Al needs to follow me. I'd sit right in front of him, and then he'd look at me like, 'Now!'" Satriani is thrilled by this story. "No wonder it sounds like so much fun!" he enthuses. "They were sort of autonomous and yet they were totally linked together."

JOE SATRIANI

As Satriani sees it, the sound of the brothers playing live was essential to the Van Halen sound. "That sound of Alex's snare drum, I just hear that as something that pulls the whole album together. There are a couple of drummers out there that do that. Watching the *Get Back* documentary [2021], I realised The Beatles were not The Beatles until Ringo started playing. When he was off having a cup of tea, it just sounded like John, Paul, and George as individuals. It didn't sound like The Beatles. Ringo starts to play and it's this gigantic thing. Van Halen is the same way. We've all heard Eddie jamming with other people and it's nowhere near the same."

Joe discussed the recording of *1984* with Van Halen bassist Michael Anthony when they worked together in the supergroup Chickenfoot. Since 5150's live room only had space for Eddie and Alex, Anthony overdubbed his bass later. "Mike told me every song you'd have to find out where Eddie was tuned, because you never knew what take they used and whether anything was tuned at the time," Joe says. "What makes this album so interesting is the fact that there are guitars that are not totally in tune – but good luck trying to get as good a take as that!"

Eddie's *1984* tone is distinct from his early sound, but it used largely the same gear. The Frankenstrat was largely retired for this album in favour of the banana-headstocked Kramer 5150, but the magic Marshall Plexi was still his only amp. Eddie did use his Eventide harmoniser on every song, but it was not as prominent as it would become on later albums. "I used it mostly to split my guitar signal so it came out of both sides," he commented.

Photos Getty

The guitars are still single-tracked with few overdubs, making it unique among rock albums of the time. As Joe comments: "There's not like rhythm guitar left and right. I'm always adding a Tele and a Strat and a Les Paul, but because David Lee Roth's voice was so charismatic, they didn't have to. They left space for each other."

Templeman's lack of concern for album tracks left Eddie and Alex free to stretch themselves creatively. As Joe says: "When you make albums, there are songs that the band likes but from the production point of view it doesn't have commercial potential, suddenly people start to work on it differently. Everyone plays differently. They say, 'Well, it's not gonna be a single so we can do this instead of having to edit that part.' I love *House Of Pain* so much. It's not as complete as *Jump* or *Panama*, where you can tell they worked on it because it had single potential. The verses are so out there. When I try to imagine one of the four parts not being there, it doesn't work. I remember just listening to that over and over again, thinking 'This is a moment.'

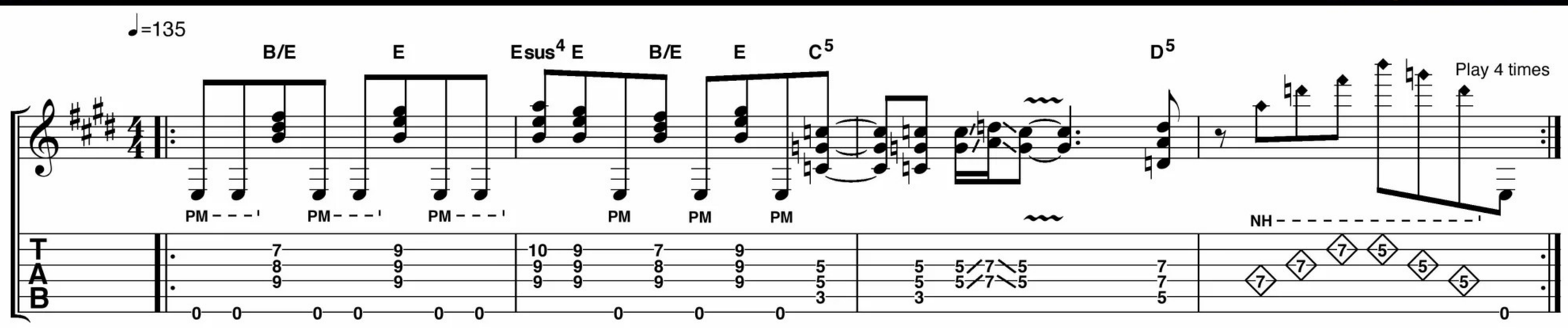
"GUITARS ARE NOT TOTALLY IN TUNE – BUT GOOD LUCK TRYING TO GET AS GOOD A TAKE AS THAT!"

"What I really like about that first the first version of Van Halen was that they all seem to be playing separate parts with separate accents, yet they came together so well. Eddie never really went for that triple-tracked, all playing the same thing, the drums and bass are doing the same thing. It's a different kind of music altogether. It's both whimsical and deadly serious, and you just have to be so good to pull that off."

Joe still recalls Van Halen's seismic impact on America's guitarists. "When Eddie came on the scene it scared the sh*t out of so many guitar players," he says. "I saw it as a total vindication of what I liked to play and what I liked to listen to, whereas people in other styles were feeling, 'This is bad competition. I don't want to have to deal with someone who can play that good.' I always thought Eddie is going to be great for guitar. I was keen not to copy something that Eddie had done. Like, 'I'm not going to get in his territory. What's my contribution?' When I wrote the two-handed piece *Midnight* for *Surfing With The Alien* I was thinking, 'Guys like Eddie and other two-handed players – what did they *not* do?'"

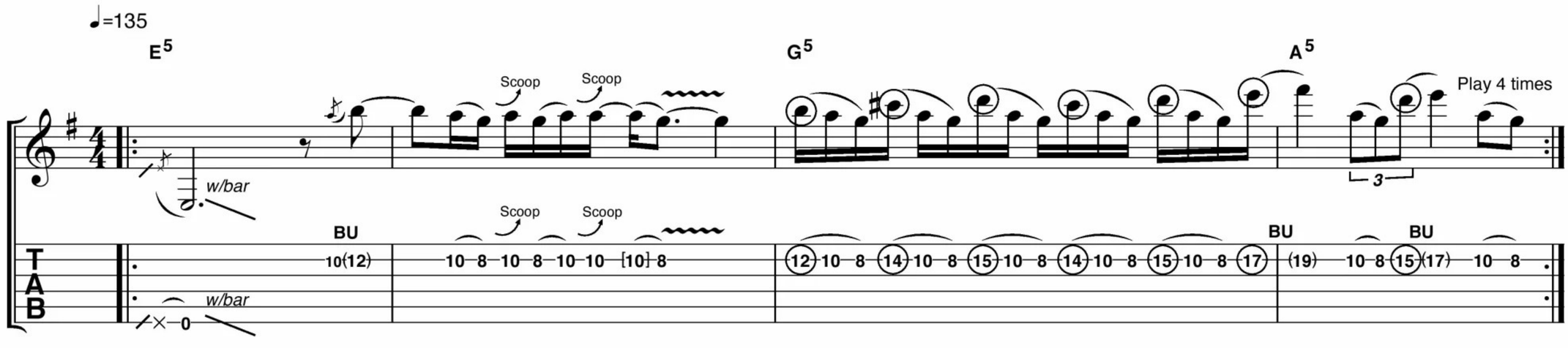
For Joe Satriani, *1984* exemplifies great music. "The music we listen to decade after decade is the stuff with character and love in it. You can't get that just by sitting down with the metronome and trying to get one click faster. The thing we should be practising is just playing music. Eddie and Alex jammed for hours until they hit upon something so unique that is so perfectly natural. It jumps out of the album."

1984 PANAMA-STYLE CHORDS — BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO



Though this is ostensibly a study of Eddie's rhythm part in *Panama*, it's worth noting that he uses the chord/bass-note method (bars 1 and 2) on other VH classics, too. Check out *Girl Gone Bad* (on *1984*) and *Running With The Devil* (from 1978's self-titled debut). Use downstrokes for a solid, chugging sound with the chords and bass notes. The harmonics in bar 4 need a deft touch, but it's pure EVH.

1984 JUMP IN THE DEEP END — BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO



A bit like the solo in *Jump*, this is a tough example but it does cover a lot of Eddie's style, so practise each bar on its own to get a feel for each technique. The opening whammy bar dive is simple but the scoops in bar 2 need careful timing to fit in with the fretted notes. Bar 3 is a great example of Eddie's signature tapping style, culminating in a couple of tapped string bends.

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN
- ✔Syncopated strumming
- ✔Powerchords
- ✔Single-note riffing

RIFF OF THE MONTH

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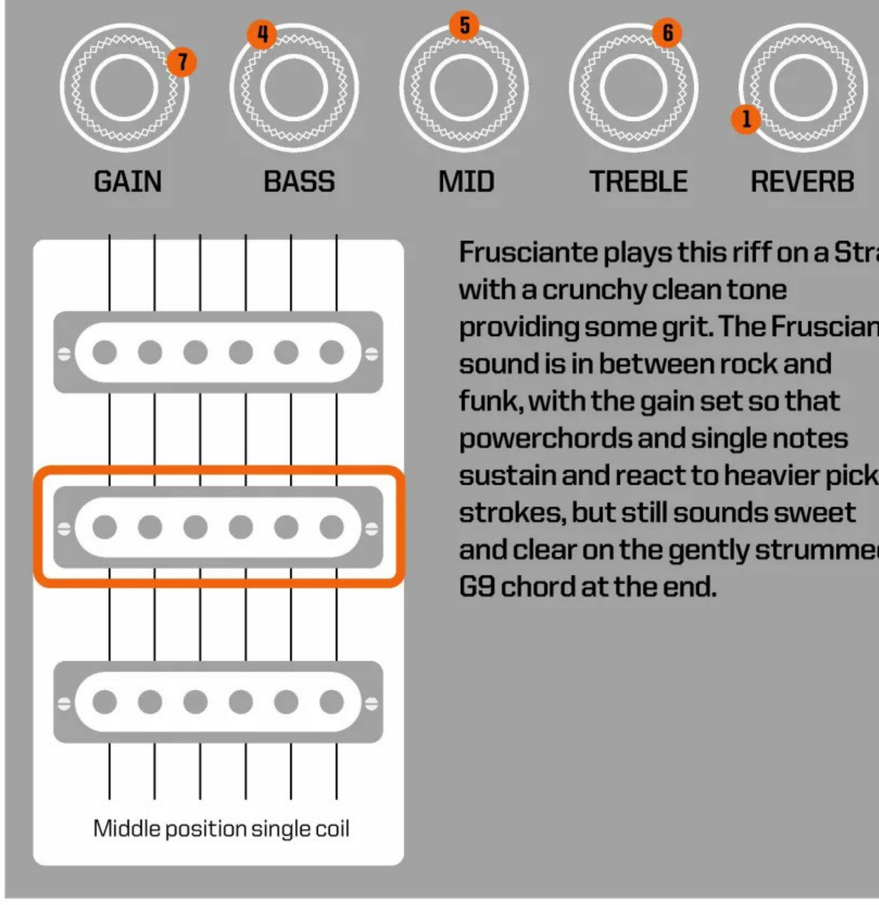
GET THE TONE

CHANNEL CLEAN



Frusciante plays this riff on a Strat with a crunchy clean tone providing some grit. The Frusciante sound is in between rock and funk, with the gain set so that powerchords and single notes sustain and react to heavier pick strokes, but still sounds sweet and clear on the gently strummed G9 chord at the end.

RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS

Tippa My Tongue

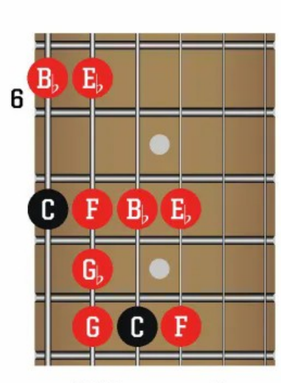
This riff comes from the lead single on the Red Hot Chili Peppers' unexpected second album of 2022, *Return Of The Dream Canteen*. The song features John Frusciante playing this typically funky riff which combines syncopated powerchords with single notes.

The riff starts with A♭5 and B♭5 powerchords played with palm-muted alternate strumming. The rhythm here is syncopated and the accents fall on both down and upstrokes, but keep your hand moving down and up throughout to maintain the groove.

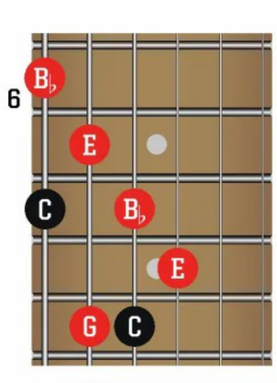
The single-note line snakes around a few fret positions, but, in general, you can frame it around your first, second and third fingers, which you can move as a block from position to position. No big stretches here! Just be ready to switch from single-note playing to the 10th position G9 chord at the end of the riff. Make sure to follow our slowed down play-through of the riff, which should make it all clearer.

CHEAT SHEET...

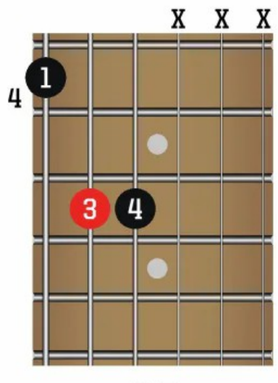
Appears at: 0:48–1:10
Tempo: 88bpm
Key/scale: C blues scale / C7 arpeggio
Main techniques: Alternate strumming and picking, hammer-ons and pull-offs



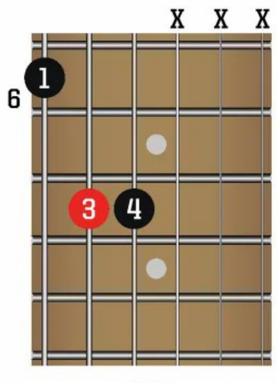
C blues scale



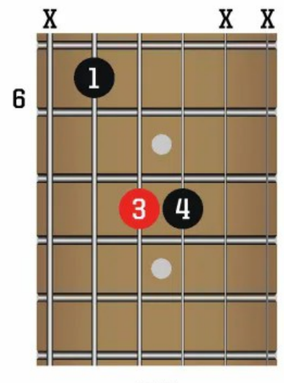
C7 arpeggio



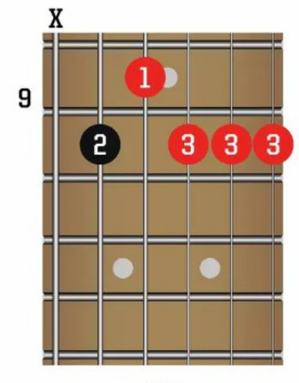
A♭5



B♭5



E♭5



G9

This single-note lines are a mixture of major and minor sounds built around a C root note. They include a combination of C blues scale (C E♭ F G♭ G B♭) and a C7 arpeggio (C E G B♭). The riff is also made up of three powerchords (A♭5, B♭5 and E♭5), plus a final G9 chord played at the 9th and 10th frets.

Photo Getty

Words Jenna Scaramanga

"IT'S A PHENOMENON!"

Bullet For My Valentine's Matt Tuck salutes The Black Album

01 METALLICA
METALLICA
(1991)

The standout guitar album of the 90s. The best-selling heavy metal album of all time. A sonic and creative benchmark for the genre. Metallica's self-titled fifth album, forever known as The Black Album, is also the inspiration for countless young guitarists, with lead single *Enter Sandman* an essential riff for every new player. And for Matt Tuck, leader of British metal stars Bullet For My Valentine, the influence of this album is profound.

"They were a big band before that anyways," Matt says, "but as soon as they released The Black Album it went stratospheric. They've been untouchable ever since, as far as getting an album to connect with as many people as they did. The amount of sales, how relevant it is 30 years later – it's just a phenomenon!"

Tuck tells a story millions of metal fans can relate to: "I was fourteen years old. We had just got Sky installed so we had MTV. We put it on and there was this music video on of a truck smashing through a man's bed, with all these crazy low-end toms raging. It was *Enter Sandman*. The moment I heard it I was like 'What the f*ck is this?' I was hooked from that moment. Within a couple of weeks I went out and bought my first ever album, Metallica's Black Album."

In that moment, Matt Tuck's future was set. "I started to learn to play guitar by myself that year, off the back of that album," he continues. "I learned some basic chords, then put on that album and started to work it all out. I wanted to be James Hetfield!"

In the early 80s, Metallica had risen to cult status as pioneers of thrash metal, a super-fast, super-heavy hybrid of metal and punk. After a doggedly anti-commercial start to their career, they had made their first MTV video, for the song *One*, in 1988. The following album would be a risky move into the mainstream. For this they enlisted producer Bob Rock, best known for working with Mötley Crüe and Bon Jovi. James Hetfield's touring guitar had long been emblazoned with a "Kill Bon Jovi" sticker, and some Metallica fans were nervous.

BFMV'S MATT TUCK

Rock was famously demanding in the studio. Tensions between band and producer are visible in the *Year In The Life Of Metallica* documentary, and there were times during the making of the album when band and producer were barely on speaking terms.

Matt Tuck compares the process to working with producer Don Gilmore (Linkin Park) on Bullet's 2010 album *Fever*. "We've never had that kind of ascendancy," he says, "but *Fever* felt like a big stepping stone for us. That took us from Brixton Academy to Wembley. Up until that point, nobody questioned the songwriting. Don Gilmore was the only guy that really challenged me as a writer and I didn't like it! He's trying to get us to take out double kick patterns and not dumb it down, but just try and make it a little bit more Black Album."

Matt can understand Metallica's difficulties with Rock. "It's such an intimate long-term personal process. The first time you work with these guys you don't know them, there's no relationship, there's no trust. It's only really when the dust settles and you can look back on it a couple of years later that you actually appreciate the process."

The Black Album's monochrome cover both earned its nickname and invited comparisons to AC/DC's *Back In Black*. The albums have more in common than just their ultra-noir sleeves. Both were made at the turn of a decade by bands in mourning (AC/DC for singer Bon Scott, Metallica for bassist Cliff Burton). Both bands had begun with cult followings and made steps towards the mainstream with *Highway To Hell* (1979) and *... And Justice For All* (1988) respectively. For both bands, though, black albums marked the leap to global stardom, securing their places in the rock pantheon – even if diehard fans still prefer their earlier work.

The AC/DC connection was conscious. Drummer Lars Ulrich told *Uncut* magazine's John Robinson in 2020 that they listened to the Australians when writing The Black Album: "We thought about the art of simplifying and writing shorter songs... A little more bounce, to make the music more physical than cerebral." Where Metallica's trademark in the 80s had been fast

Photos Getty

and furious, AC/DC often made songs heavier by slowing down.

The Black Album was notable for establishing scooped mid as the dominant metal guitar tone. The main rhythm amp was a Mesa/Boogie Mark II-C++ as it had been since *Master Of Puppets*, but a modded Marshall JCM800 and a Boogie Mark V were among the other amps to hand. On Hetfield's Mesa mid control was at 0 and the amp's graphic EQ was a shaped in a V, with the middle 750Hz band all the way down at -12dB. There were two further parametric EQs in the FX loop, cutting mids at 900Hz and 1.2kHz and boosting presence at 4.2kHz and 6kHz. By now Metallica were using ESP guitars with EMG pickups.

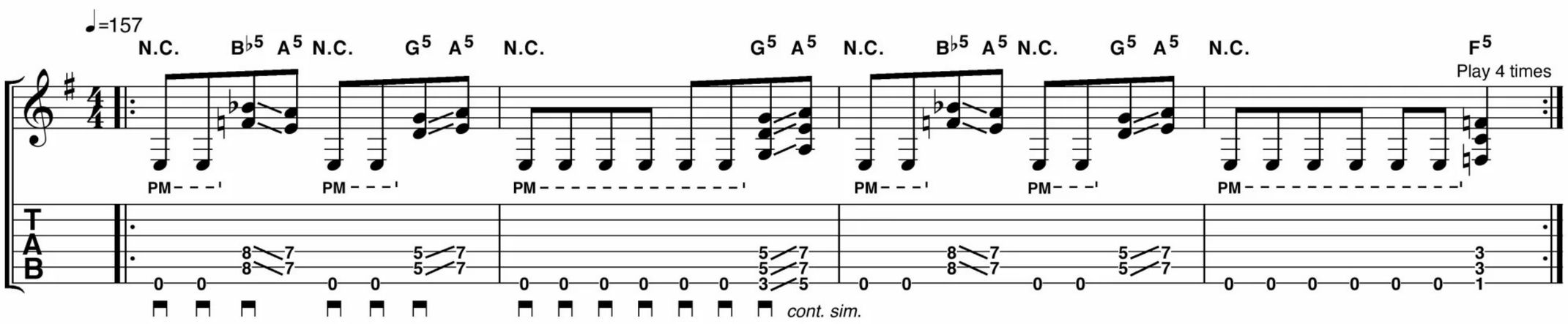
It was directly the opposite of classic mid-heavy tones from bands like Black Sabbath and Iron Maiden, but Metallica did strategically replace some of the lost mids with the Marshall amp. Rock's JCM800 was modified by Jose Arredondo, famous because Eddie Van Halen had claimed (falsely, it later emerged) he had modded Ed's famous Plexi. "James wanted crunch," Bob Rock told Reverb.com. "Crunch to me is upper mids. Crunch to him is that resonance when he palm mutes and it goes *gonk*! It's the sound of the room we made for the guitar sounds, it's not all close mic'ed."

Rock's input on the guitars was huge. He suggested they tuned down to D Standard for *Sad But True* after noticing all the songs were in the same key. He pushed Kirk to try harder on solos, insisting on him laying down an improvised solo with every live take of each song. When lead guitarist Kirk Hammett recorded the final solos, they used the improvised takes for inspiration. Rock rejected Kirk's initial idea for *The Unforgiven*, and suggested Kirk fingerpick the clean half of the solo – "really pull on the strings and slap them against the frets," as Kirk recalled to *Guitar World*. His insistence paid off, and Kirk can be seen grinning in *A Year In The Life...* "It's pretty much the type of guitar solo I've been trying to do for the last five or six years," he said, "and I'm really proud of that." It was also Rock who gave James the confidence to pursue the ballad *Nothing Else Matters*, notable for Hetfield's first Metallica solo.

The Black Album forever positioned Metallica as metal giants. And for Matt Tuck, is still stands tall as a masterpiece. "We've managed to play a few festivals and shows with Metallica," Matt smiles. "It's always a bit of a headf*ck, I'm not gonna lie. They're such a huge part of my life from such an early age and they've defined me as a person and my career. It's as big as that for me. So for them to pass me in the corridor at a festival and go 'Hey, Matt!' just blows my mind. They're the most important metal band there's ever been, and The Black Album deserves every accolade. They are the kings."

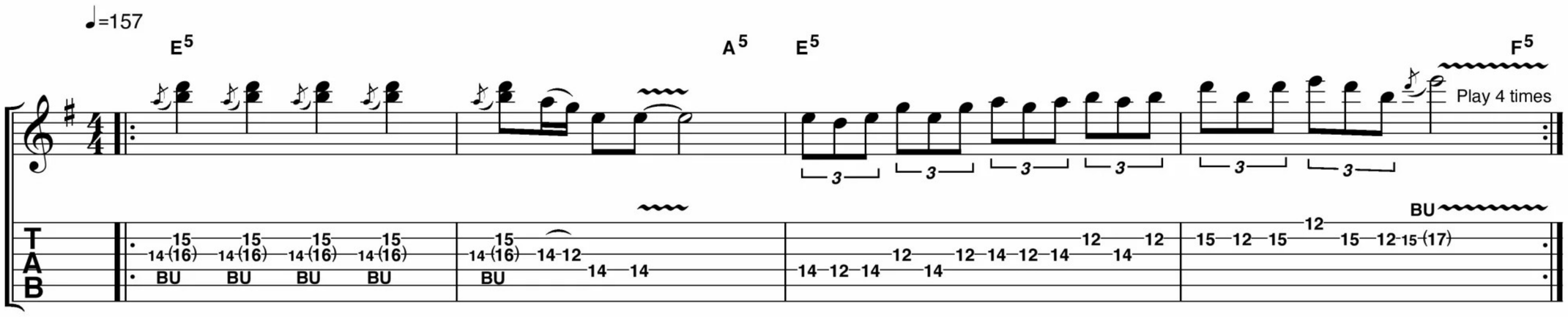
"METALLICA ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT METAL BAND THERE'S EVER BEEN..."

THE BLACK ALBUM HETFIELD-STYLE RIFFING **BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO**



James Hetfield's rock-solid riffing is all over The Black Album. Our example gives you a rundown of all the most important techniques in his arsenal, from aggressive downpicking, palm-muting and sliding powerchords to the essential Metallica-esque E to F move (implying the Phrygian mode, theory fans!) at the end.

THE BLACK ALBUM HAMMETT-STYLE LEAD **BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO**



Inspired by the solos in *Enter Sandman* and *Holier Than Thou*, the doublestop bends in bar 1 are a KH trademark and work well with a wah wah pedal. The E minor pentatonic is the scale of choice here, and the ascending groups of three pattern in bar 4 is another classic Hammett trademark. The overall emphasis here is on feel and emotion more than the pinpoint accuracy.

Words Amit Sharma

"IT HAS A LOT OF EMOTION"

Mark Tremonti on the album that saved Alter Bridge

Photo Getty

01 BLACKBIRD
ALTER BRIDGE
(2007)

It was the album that paved the way for Alter Bridge to become the arena-conquering giants we know today. But when guitarist Mark Tremonti recalls the making of *Blackbird*, he refers to this period as the group's "darkest moment", and perhaps the only time it felt like their future was truly in question.

"We honestly didn't know if we'd survive as a band back then," he says. "We fought with our initial label and had to argue to get out of the deal when we felt we weren't getting the support we needed. We were without management or a label, so it was a very in-between phase, just four guys trying to hang on to their career. We were desperate to continue, and luckily we had all the time in the world to write and prepare."

For this, the band's second album, they chose to partner up with producer Michael 'Elvis' Baskette for the very first time. The creative chemistry was so strong that he would go on to produce every Alter Bridge album thereafter, as well as all of the solo releases from both Tremonti and AB frontman Myles Kennedy.

Recalling the *Blackbird* sessions, Mark describes the producer as something of a mad scientist, working from within a jungle of chaos, surrounded by towers of pedals and amp heads in the control room, with no shortage of equipment to help bring their ideas to life. "When we had something like a whammy bar dive," Mark says, "he'd find the coolest tones by mixing all these crazy pedals to make it roar".

After tracking drums at Blackbird Studios in Nashville, the group ended up recording the bulk of the album at a house on Virginia Beach – a good 40-minute drive away from the distractions of local bars and restaurants. The isolation did them wonders...

"The control room was the family room and I was in the bedroom right next to it," Mark recalls. "I remember writing some of the solos as the bass was getting tracked. It felt a very real moment – we were all together, locked away and fighting for survival. Looking back now, it's one of the best records I've ever been part of. The fingerpicked verse in the title track is probably my favourite guitar moment on the record. When I pick up a guitar to test my clean tone, nine times out of ten I'll be playing that. It just sounds and feels good. I had that part lying around for a few years and wanted to use it in a song... I finally got my chance!

"I grew up listening to Metallica and learning stuff like *The Call Of Ktulu*, so that's where it all came from. And I didn't know it at the time but Myles pointed this out, Frank Hannon from (Californian band) Tesla ended up being a huge factor in that stuff, too. Those influences are where a lot of those fingerstyle intros came from."

The solo section from the title track is also one of Tremonti's proudest achievements. The leads start with Kennedy before Tremonti takes over for the second half, both of them sticking with tasteful bluesy lines from the F# minor pentatonic scale. The song is one of the band's most enduring anthems, and it's the duality between the two very different players that exemplifies the power of their partnership.

"The *Blackbird* solo was the last one I wrote right as the album was being made, so the pressure was on!" Mark laughs. "I knew it needed an extra good lead and I think what I played really ended up serving its purpose. I didn't want to fail that song because I always knew it was going to be important. *Brand New Start* is another one I love. I'm really into leads that start half clean with a slightly overdriven sound that gets boosted as the solo goes. It tells a story rather than just blasting you from beginning to end, it's more of a journey. And actually the song track as a whole is one of my favourite Alter Bridge songs in general.

"*Wayward One* is also a favourite. The guitar solo has a lot of emotion. I remember doing a play-through of it on Instagram, and a lot of people said it was their favourite solo from that record."

In the studio, Tremonti's main axe of choice was his signature PRS in Charcoal Burst, which, unlike most Les Paul-inspired singlecuts, also featured a tremolo bridge. As the group started tuning lower on later albums, it eventually got phased out of rotation.

"We were mainly playing half a step down on *Blackbird*," Mark says. "Either in standard or dropped D, with only a couple of songs in drop B – and what I mean by that is only the sixth string tuned down, the rest are still just a semitone below concert pitch. That Charcoal Burst

was good for that record, but on other records we started tuning even lower and the floating bridge didn't work too well."

The Charcoal Burst PRS was fed into an open-back Fender Twin for the clean sounds, a Bogner Uberschall and Mesa/Boogie Dual Rectifier for the rhythms and a Bogner Ecstasy for the leads. If the tones sound expensive, that's because they were.

"Though I still have it, the Ecstasy doesn't really suit my playing these days," admits Tremonti, who released his own signature, the MT-15, through PRS in 2018. "I prefer a bit more of a modern palm-mute chug sound. It's a great amp for what it is, but I need an amp that sounds like it's a bully, something that just ruins all the other amplifiers!

The Ecstasy is more of an elegant thing.

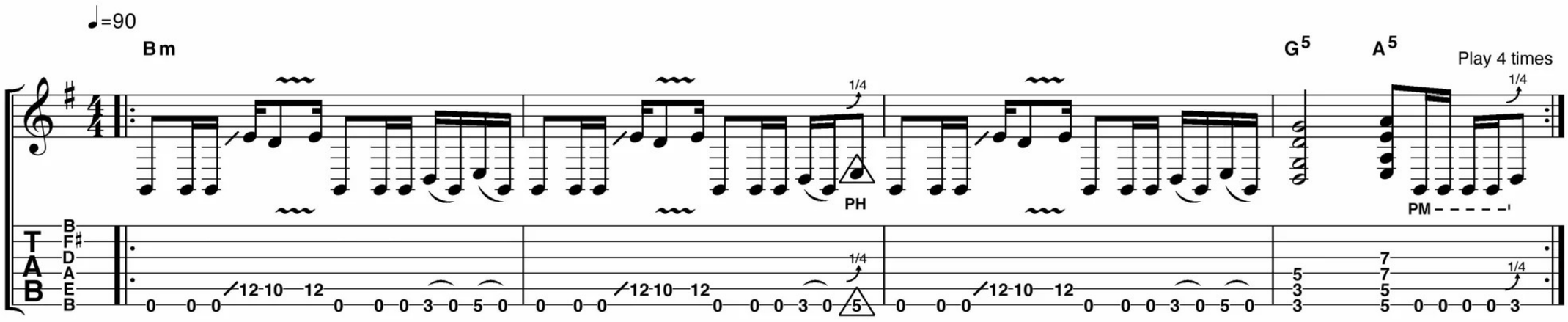
"As for the rhythm tracks, my Uberschall got mixed with my 'Rev G' Dual Rectifier – which is one of the most common from the 90s era ones. It's what I played back in the Creed days. I don't think I'd found my 'Rev F' yet, I got one of those later and they're like the holy grail of Dual Rectifiers. I've watched them go from $1800 to $4000 to whatever anyone wants to ask these days. If you find a decent-priced one, grab it! Those things are awesome. And then it was a '65 Fender Twin reissue for the cleans, which has always been my favourite clean tone since I was young. It's very hard to replicate the sort of sound you get from an open-back twin but I think we got there on the new MT-100s which will be coming out soon. I'd go as far as saying it has the best clean channel I've ever heard on a higher gain head."

"THE FINGERPICKED VERSE IN THE TITLE TRACK IS MY FAVOURITE GUITAR MOMENT ON THE RECORD"

The *Blackbird* album was also notable for the group finding their "secret weapon" for the studio in the form of a pink Kramer bass with active pickups, which was used to mirror the riffs somewhere in between Tremonti and Kennedy's guitars and Brian Marshall's bass. It remains in their sonic arsenal to this day.

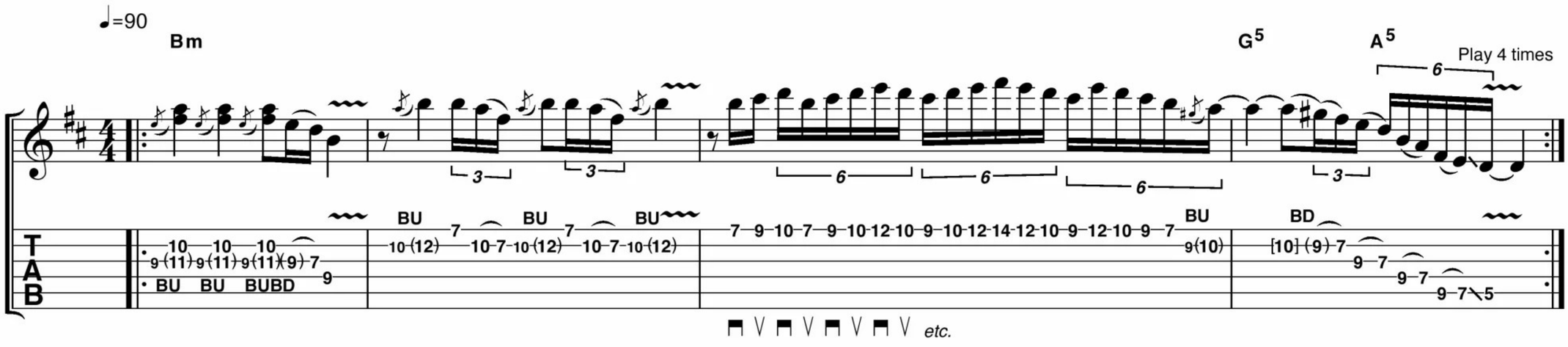
"My guitar tech Ernie [Hudson] got hold of that pink Kramer bass," Mark explains. "We put it through all kinds of fuzz and octave pedals after tracking twice with me and twice again with Myles. We'd do single line runs underneath our guitars to make the riffs sound even bigger. I remember after making the record, the person who owned the bass wanted it back but we managed to talk him out of it. And just recently while we were making our new record *Pawns & Kings*, it was still there in the studio... we had to hang on to that thing!"

ALTER BRIDGE RIFFING — **BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO**

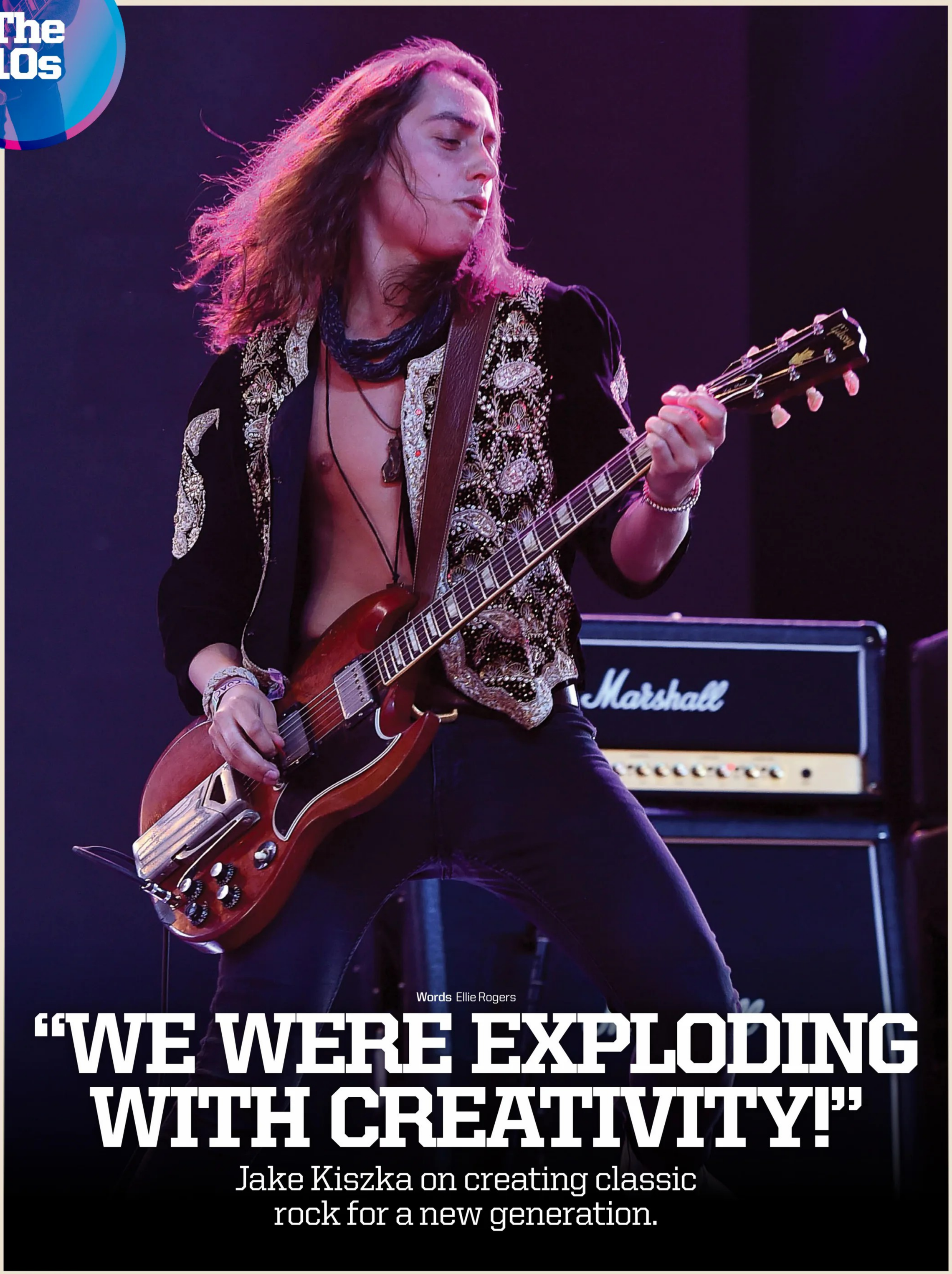


To create the Alter Bridge signature brand of heavy riffs, guitarist Mark Tremonti has used pretty much every tuning in the book, and we're using B E A D F# B here – which is standard tuning five semitones lower, aka standard baritone tuning. Other tunings that feature on the album are B♭, A♭, D♭, G♭, B♭, E♭, (*Come To Life*), DGCFAD (*Ties That Bind*) and C# G# C# F# A# D# (*Buried Alive*).

ALTER BRIDGE LEAD — **BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO**



Mark Tremonti often brings his solos to life with the wah-wah pedal. Here, we're back in standard tuning and we throw in some faster lines to increase the excitement. The run in bar 3 is tough, so make sure to slow it down and practise in bite-sized phrases.



Words Ellie Rogers

"WE WERE EXPLODING WITH CREATIVITY!"

Jake Kiszka on creating classic rock for a new generation.

Photo Getty

01 ANTHEM OF THE PEACEFUL ARMY

GRETA VAN FLEET

(2018)

By the time the Michigan-based band of (mostly) brothers were preparing to make their first full length studio album, Greta Van Fleet already had two celebrated EPs under their belt, and their singles *Highway Tune* and *Safari Song* had both perched atop Billboard's Mainstream Rock charts in the USA.

Their rise had been meteoric, but had also attracted more than its fair share of burdensome remarks. One side of the music press hailed Greta Van Fleet as the next great saviours of rock'n'roll, while claims that the band were little more than a Led Zeppelin rip-off act bounced around like heckles hurled from the darkest corners of a crowded concert hall.

When *Anthem Of The Peaceful Army* dropped in October 2018, it sold over 80,000 copies in the first week and debuted at number 3 on the US Billboard 200. Its collection of rambunctious rockers and pastoral acoustic numbers demonstrated the band's ability to rise above the chatter and simply do what they do best: make great rock music.

Guitarist Jake Kiszka reflects: "The objectives really were to create something raw and organic. There was nothing else out there quite like it at the time. Even now, it stands independently from that decade – specifically as very guitar-driven rock'n'roll music."

The record's widespread, intergenerational appeal perhaps boils down to the fact that *Anthem Of The Peaceful Army* captured a sound that feels simultaneously refreshing and revivalist. It's a sound no doubt informed by the classic rock titans of yesteryear, but powered by the animate force of the band's youth. "I suppose it was a collection of many of the things that we'd created musically at the time," Jake says. "We'd been a group for a while, and we'd been building a sonic direction and a spectrum of sound. It all came to one point on *Anthem Of The Peaceful Army*."

The boys cut the record at Blackbird Studios in Nashville in what would turn out to be a particularly prolific session. "We were exploding with creativity," Jake recalls. "It was interesting because we did bring a handful of material and had everything mapped out, but it turned out that being in a certain environment catered to the essence of off-the-cuff creativity."

> "IT STANDS INDEPENDENTLY FROM THAT DECADE – AS VERY GUITAR DRIVEN ROCK'N'ROLL MUSIC"

With previously penned tracks out the window and fresh ideas whirling around the studio, the band began tracking what Jake describes as "a seemingly limitless list of songs and musical concepts" the good old fashioned way – with everyone in one room, all playing together. "I think a lot of that live energy translates," he says with satisfaction.

Testament to the abundantly creative headspace the band found themselves in, not only were they able to produce 10 killer tracks – plus a bonus, extended version of *Lover, Leaver (Taker, Believer)* – for *Anthem*, but they took home the seeds that would germinate into their next great record. "Through the course of jamming and all the time that we had in the studio, there were tons of extra musical bits," Jake says. "We left with a lot of material that didn't even make the record that was revisited and given a different life when we developed *The Battle Garden's Gate*."

Jake brought longtime staple of his live and recording rigs into the studio – his trusty 1961 Gibson Les Paul SG. To clarify a little, the guitar has the SG shape, but still sports the 'Les Paul' name because it was made during the time when Gibson hadn't quite ironed-out the finer details of its nomenclature after introducing the SG as the double-cut successor to the Les Paul. Still equipped with its original stock PAF humbuckers, it's Jake's number one for a breadth of different tones and tasks. "It's sort of a default for me," he explains. "If I'm working with a bunch of different guitars not getting what I want, I can go there and know that I can achieve what I'm hearing in my head."

This being said, Jake's mind was open to exploration. He recalls: "The beautiful thing about getting in the studio for me is that I'm not using anything that I'm particularly familiar with, which sort of gives me a wider range of creative elaboration. I get to pick up a guitar I've never picked up before and see what happens."

For one of the record's standout tracks, *Watching Over*, he did just that, and grabbed a nearby Coral Electric Sitar to try out on the song's intricate, mystically tinged solo. Not one to overthink a good thing, he laughs: "It was really cool, so I just kept it." Of course, the resulting sound has those late-60s bohemian associations, but as Jake postulates, "The coolest part of picking up a guitar that I'm maybe unfamiliar with is that it sort of guides my hand and forces me to play in an alternative way."

The sitar wasn't the only example of this. "There's a Telecaster on that record as well, which I've never talked about much," he reveals with the sort of glee you might expect from a magician upon giving up his secrets. Tonally, it's a very different beast to his usual weapon of choice, and he explains how the switch from Gibson to Fender – and from humbuckers to single coils – wasn't quite as radical a leap from his normal palette of influences as it might at first seem. "Some of the sonic associations with it were the British Invasion. You know, really early stuff like Jeff Beck and Page. Even Clapton. Those were some of the reference points for me."

Fittingly, for a rock album recorded in the world capital of country music, and at a studio that's seen the likes of Dolly Parton, Tim McGraw and Sheryl Crow pass through, he adds, "There's also this early American country music association as well, so it was somewhere in between."

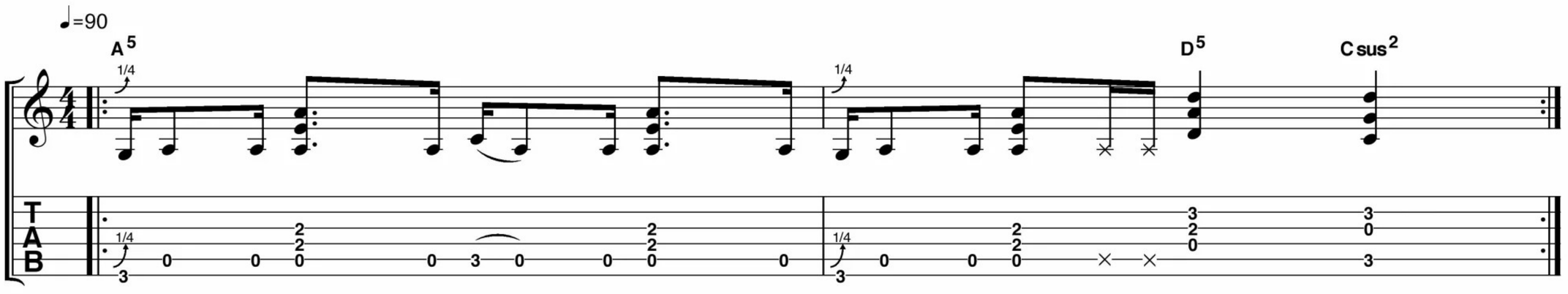
Similarly, there were also British and American forces at work in the amp department, and Jake used a 1960s Vox AC30 as well as a selection of Marshall and Fender amps that the studio's owner, John McBride, had to hand. With little else in the way of pedals and effects, the timeless sound of gutsy riffs and lofty solos played through cranked valve amplifiers

is what characterises much of the album. Simply, "the goal was to make it very stripped and very naked, in that sense."

The spirit of simplicity was by no means extended to the actual playing, however. Jake shows off his considerable slide chops on *Mountain Of The Sun*, performs the catchy yet complex riff of *When The Curtain Falls* with precision and grit in equal measure, and his incendiary solo on *Lover, Leaver* is again reminiscent of Jimmy Page at his eyes-shut, spontaneous best.

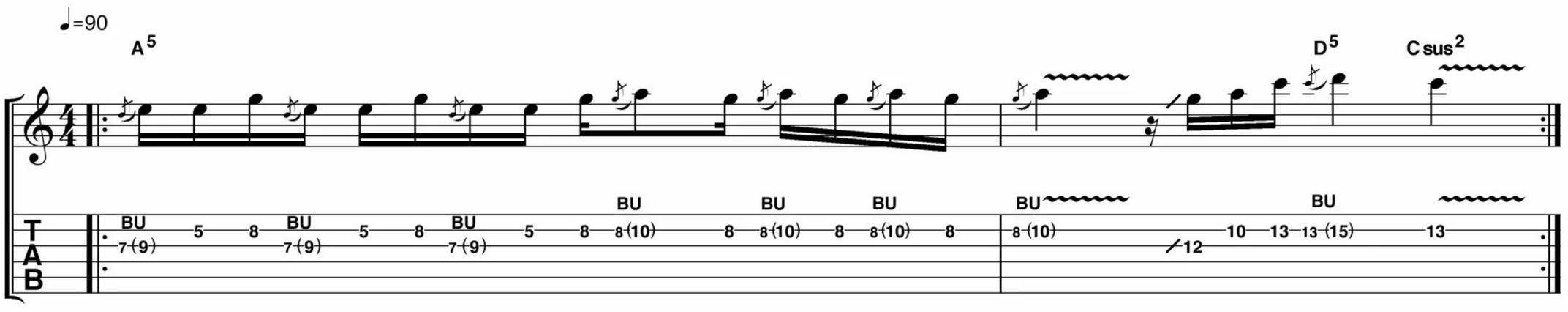
As for the performance he's personally most proud of, Jake singles out the epic *Brave New World*. "It's one of my favourites because of the type of guitar playing. It's very interesting and very avant-garde. I was sort of going out of my way to do something that no other guitar player would do – just making it strange intentionally."

ANTHEM OF THE PEACEFUL ARMY CLASSIC ROCK-INFLUENCED RIFFING **BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO**



This is tried and tested phrasing dating back to the classic rock heyday of bands like Led Zeppelin and AC/DC – and you can hear echoes on GVF tracks such as *The Cold Wind* and *Lover, Leaver*. The G and C notes can be bent slightly sharp to add an authentic blues/rock flavour.

ANTHEM OF THE PEACEFUL ARMY BLUESY LEAD STYLE **BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO**



Using a repeating lick is a great way to build the excitement in a solo. Here we start with a classic blues-rock style repeating phrase that uses string bending on the third string. Adding finger vibrato to string bends helps the notes to sing out and adds a more vocal aspect to the delivery.

Photo Getty

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN
- ✔ 7/4 time signature
- ✔ Straight eighth notes
- ✔ Alternate picking

RIFF OF THE MONTH

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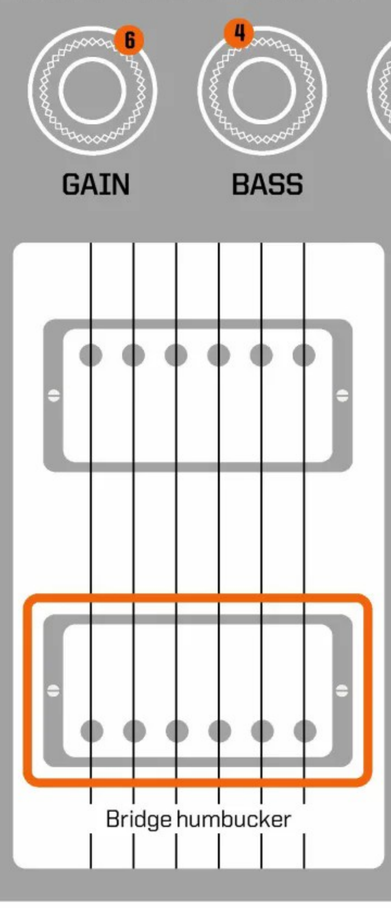
GET THE TONE

CHANNEL OVERDRIVE



This riff is played with a valve-style overdrive on a humbucker-equipped guitar; possibly a Gibson Les Paul into an Vox AC30 with a drive pedal to shape the tone. Dial in the EQ so the pick attack is accentuated, but without the treble becoming too harsh. Use just enough gain to help the notes sustain fully, but try not to use more than you need.

FOO FIGHTERS

Times Like These

Times Like These appeared on Foo Fighters' 2003 album *One By One* – the first to feature Taylor Hawkins on an entire album (he had previously shared drumming duties with Dave Grohl) as well as being the first Foos appearance for guitarist Chris Shiflett, who plays this riff.

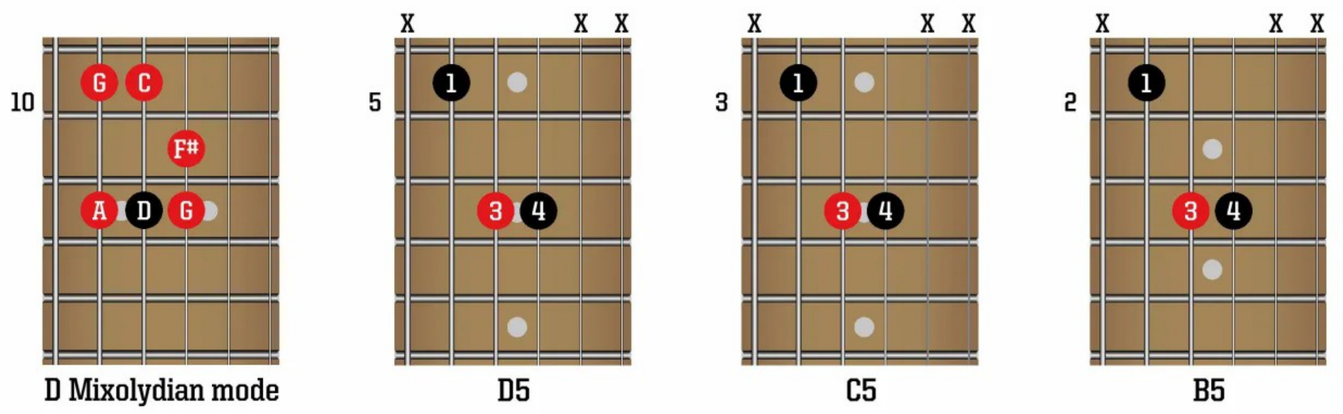
The part is a repeating 14-note motif played on the 10th, 11th and 12th frets, along with some open strings. First, play the open D, then frets 12 and 10, before playing the open G followed by frets 12 and 11. This six-note phrase is played twice.

Finally, play a two-note tag on the end on frets 12 and 10 on the fourth string. This brings us to 14 notes played, which, when repeated, adds up to the song's 7/4 time signature. Or in other words there are seven downbeats before the cycle repeats again.

Underneath the riff are three powerchords (D5, C5 and B5), each played for one bar. Check out our video where we play slowly through the riff for you.

CHEAT SHEET...

Appears at: 0:13–0:40
Tempo: 145bpm
Key/scale: D Mixolydian
Main techniques: Alternate picking



The tonal centre of this riff is D and the surrounding five notes (G, A, C, F♯ and another G) create the intervals: root, major 3rd, 4th, 5th, ♭7th. The major 3rd gives you a big clue to the mode being used – we know it is one of the major modes. The presence of the ♭7th is also important, indicating that we're in the Mixolydian mode (D E F♯ G A B C / 1 2 3 4 5 6 ♭7).

Photo Getty

Stevie Ray VAUGHAN

Words Amit Sharma Photography Getty

"He is going to shake the world!"

In the early 80s, when Eric Clapton first heard **Stevie Ray Vaughan** play, it took his breath away. What David Bowie heard was the most exciting guitarist since Jeff Beck...

When the legendary Jeff Beck passed away in January, he was remembered as a player who epitomised 'feel' in just about every conceivable way. Summarising the profound sense of loss for the guitar community, TG noted how Beck was truly in a class of his own. The same is true of another player we lost more than 30 years ago: Stevie Ray Vaughan.

SRV had that same magic touch that all guitarists strive for, never running out of ideas that could amaze the listener at every turn. As with Beck, you got the sense that this was a musician speaking through their instrument, conveying deep emotions and telling stories via the means with which they were most at ease – a rare gift in being able to effortlessly move audiences through honesty, passion and charisma.

Many guitar players will remember hearing the song *Lenny* for the first time and feeling like their eyes had just been opened – Stevie Ray Vaughan using sophisticated sixth voicings, Hendrixian doublestops and mouth-watering pentatonics to pay tribute to his wife Lenora Bailey, who bought him the 1965 Strat also named after her. Then there are tracks like *Scuttle Buttin'* which saw him defining what would become known as the Texan sound, ripping through open position blues runs at speeds few had ever dared.

From early fan favourites like *Pride And Joy*, *Texas Flood* and *Cold Shot* to latter works like *Crossfire*, *Tightrope* and the jazz-influenced masterpiece *Riviera Paradise*, SRV was in many ways the Jimi Hendrix of the 1980s, paying tribute through renditions of Hendrix classics *Voodoo Child (Slight Return)* and *Little Wing*, and also by tuning half a step down. "I loved Jimi a lot," Stevie told *Guitar World* in 1984, noting how Hendrix "could do anything" and "was so much more than just a blues guitarist", while also adding how he'd been learning various parts and "trying to expand on it – not that I can expand on it a whole bunch – but I try".

Like his biggest hero and influence, SRV was a daredevil who would throw himself into the eye of the storm in order to conjure up magic, taking risks as an improviser and somehow managing to never set a foot wrong or run out of gas. Comparisons can also be made to the late great Eddie Van Halen, and the sheer sense of technicality that they both brought to their respective genres – SRV taking the innovations of Albert King, B.B. King and Freddie King to new virtuosic heights, more aggressive than any blues artist before him and leading the charge for a whole new wave of harder-hitting players. His range of dynamics was as wide as it gets, going from furious tremolo picking and wailing bends to breath-taking moments that were as quiet as a whisper, making the listener lean in and almost strain to hear the ghost notes he may or may not have been playing.

As Eric Clapton once said of SRV: "I don't think anyone has commanded my respect more." On that fateful night in 1990 when Stevie died in a helicopter crash, he and Clapton had performed together on stage mere hours earlier. In a heartfelt tribute, Clapton recalled: "The first time I heard Stevie Ray, I thought, 'Whoever this is, he is going to shake the world'. I was in my car and I remember thinking, I have to find out, before the day is over, who that guitar player is. That doesn't happen to me very often. I remember being fascinated by the fact that he never, ever seemed to be lost in any way… It was as though he never took a breather or took a pause to think where he was gonna go next, it just flowed out of him. It's going to be a long time before anyone that brilliant will come along again."

But it wasn't just SRV's playing that took the world by storm – it was also his tone, a glassy edge-of-breakup kind of sound that almost every blues player on earth will have ended up chasing at some point in their life. And, all in all, his was a fairly simple rig: positions four and five on his Strats were often his favourites, usually fed through an Ibanez Tube Screamer (he used TS808s, TS9s and TS10s at various points of his career), along with a Vox V846 wah that once belonged to Jimi Hendrix and a couple of high-powered Fender amps. And let's not forget the man's dress sense – given his love for black hats, flamboyant shirts, cowboy boots, conchos and ponchos, he was someone who looked every bit the guitar legend.

He was born Stephen Ray Vaughan on October 3 1954 in Dallas, Texas, and as a young boy he was guided towards music by his older brother Jimmie, who went on to become famous in his own right as guitarist of The Fabulous Thunderbirds.

For his seventh birthday, Stevie was given a toy guitar from Sears, and a couple of years later he was donated a Gibson ES-125T from his brother, which he'd use to mimic the immortal lines he'd heard played by Albert King and Muddy Waters. "Jimmie would leave his guitars around the house and tell me not to touch 'em," Stevie once revealed. "And that's basically how I got started. I actually wanted to be a drummer, but I didn't have any drums. So I just go into what was available to me at the time."

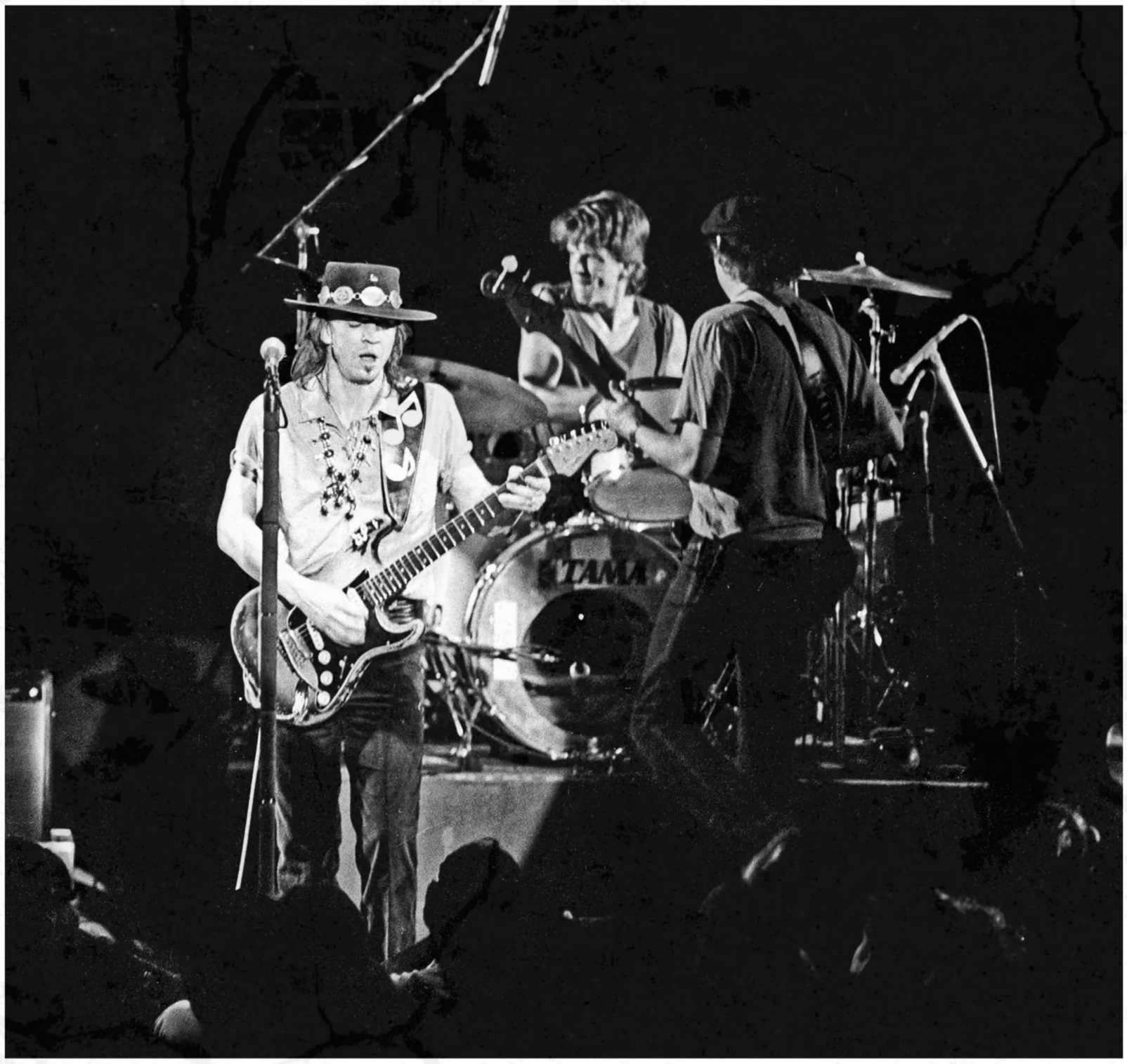
Through his early teens he performed with a number of bands – The Chantones, The Brooklyn Underground, Southern Distributor and Liberation, the latter supporting ZZ Top at Dallas' Adolphus Hotel and even jamming on stage with them. By this point, Stevie had lost interest at school and had ultimately decided what he was going to do with the rest of his life. He joined Cast Of Thousands, with whom he made his very first studio recordings, and then formed his own group, Blackbird, followed by stints in Krackerjack and then The Nightcrawlers.

BLUES POWER
Stevie inspired a new wave of harder-hitting blues players.

But it was The Cobras that helped him cast his name as a Texan blues legend, and it was during these years that he wound up guesting with heroes like Buddy Guy, Hubert Sumlin, Lightnin' Hopkins and Albert King at famous Austin blues nightclub Antone's. After some personnel changes the band was renamed Double Trouble, eventually settling with Chris Layton on drums and Tommy Shannon as the bass player.

In 1982 the trio got their big break after being invited to perform at the prestigious Montreux Jazz Festival in Switzerland, but the set wasn't particularly well received thanks to the amount of sheer volume coming from the stage. As Stevie would recall of the booing they received, "It wasn't the whole crowd. It was just a few people

"I LOVED JIMI. HE COULD DO ANYTHING"
STEVIE RAY VAUGHAN



sitting right up front. The room there was built for acoustic jazz. When five or six people boo, wow, it sounds like the whole world hates you! They thought we were too loud, but shoot, I had four army blankets folded over my amp, and the volume level was on two. I'm used to playin' on 10!"

Some good came out of it, however. One of the people watching happened to be one of the most famous musicians in the world, David Bowie, who later said of SRV's playing: "It completely floored me." Bowie was reminded of witnessing Jeff Beck play live in the 60s in one of his early groups. "I hadn't been so gung-ho about a guitar player since seeing Jeff Beck with The Tridents," he raved.

And that wasn't the only music contact that the band acquired during their first overseas visit. The night after the festival, the trio performed at Montreux Casino where singer-songwriter Jackson Browne was in attendance. Browne was so impressed he offered them free use of his Los Angeles recording studio, and it was during these sessions, for what would become debut album *Texas Flood*, that Bowie called to invite Stevie to play on his album *Let's Dance* – produced by legendary guitarist Nile Rodgers of Chic.

SRV played lead on six of the eight tracks on *Let's Dance*, a major contribution comparable to those of other great guitarist who had worked with Bowie in the past, including Mick Ronson, Robert Fripp and Carlos Alomar. The album's title track and lead single was more of a funk-pop number than the 12-bar turnarounds SRV had cut his teeth playing, which is perhaps what made his contributions so striking – taking the influence of blues to new places and winning himself new fans in the process, while also landing a deal with Epic for his solo releases.

The collaboration with Bowie came to an abrupt end, however. After he had been picked to play in Bowie's backing group for a world tour on which he and Double Trouble were lined up as the opening act on selected dates, the offer was retracted, leaving Stevie with no choice but to throw himself into his own music. So that's precisely what he did.

Texas Flood signalled the arrival of a new kind of blues that was less loose and free, and instead more focused, sharp and energetic. The album's opening track *Love Struck Baby* sounded like *Johnny B. Goode* on steroids, while *Pride And Joy* and *Testify* had an irresistible swing to them thanks to SRV's right hand strum. Elsewhere, a stylish cover of Buddy Guy's *Mary Had A Little Lamb* demonstrated a mid-tempo slickness to show how Stevie was much more than a one-trick pony, with the beautiful *Lenny* ended the album on an apex of vast emotional intelligence, pulling at the heartstrings like few guitarists had done before him. Stevie Ray Vaughan had arrived. Guitar music was never to be the same again…

RULE OF THREE
Stevie with Double Trouble drummer Chris Layton and bassist Tommy Shannon.

Guitars and backing Jon Bishop **Photography** Olly Curtis

20 THINGS SRV TAUGHT US!

Get inside the Texas blues icon's style with TG's lesson on his incendiary playing

40 years on from his incredible debut release, *Texas Flood*, Stevie Ray Vaughan's jaw-dropping recorded works and high-octane live shows continue to inspire guitarists to play blues. Four decades may have passed, but he can still be considered the archetypal 'modern' blues player. Rock 'n' roll attitude and wicked tone are part and parcel of blues in the 2020s – qualities Stevie had in spades, and at a time when blues had fallen out of fashion. Some call him a pioneer. The bottom line is if you play electric blues today you'll likely be tracing some of SRV's line of influence.

Here, we're looking at 20 ways Stevie played the blues, including a breakdown of some of the techniques he used. Though not essential, you'll get the most out of our lessons if you use a guitar equipped with a neck single-coil pickup through a lightly overdriven amp. Keep a Tube Screamer-type drive pedal on hand for a biting lead tone. Right, let's get this house rocking!

1 THE 7#9 CHORD

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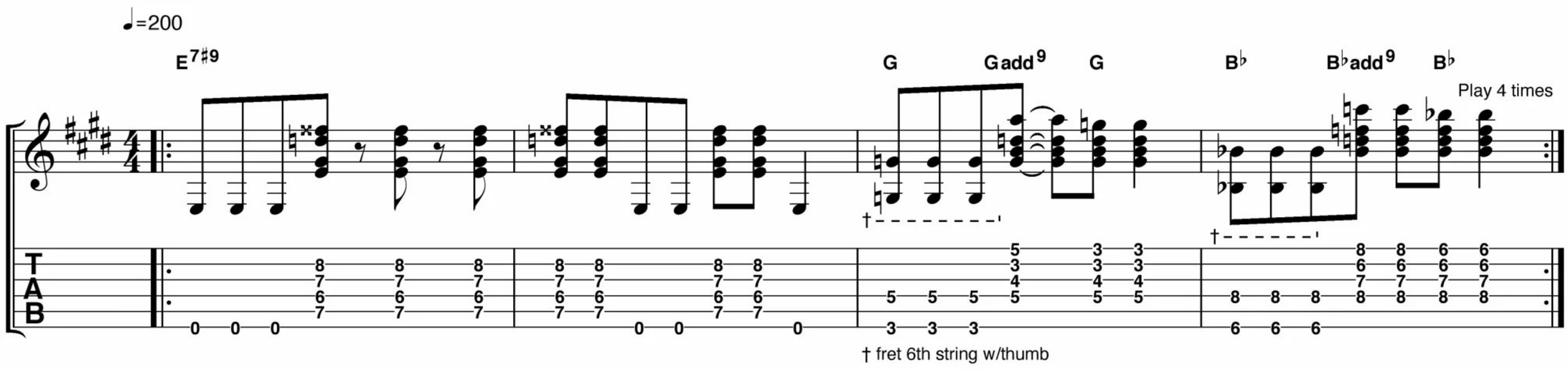

Our opening example cashes in on the classic Hendrix 7#9 chord. Hear SRV perform his take on it in songs such as *Testify* and *Scuttle Buttin'*.

2 FIRST-FINGER BENDS

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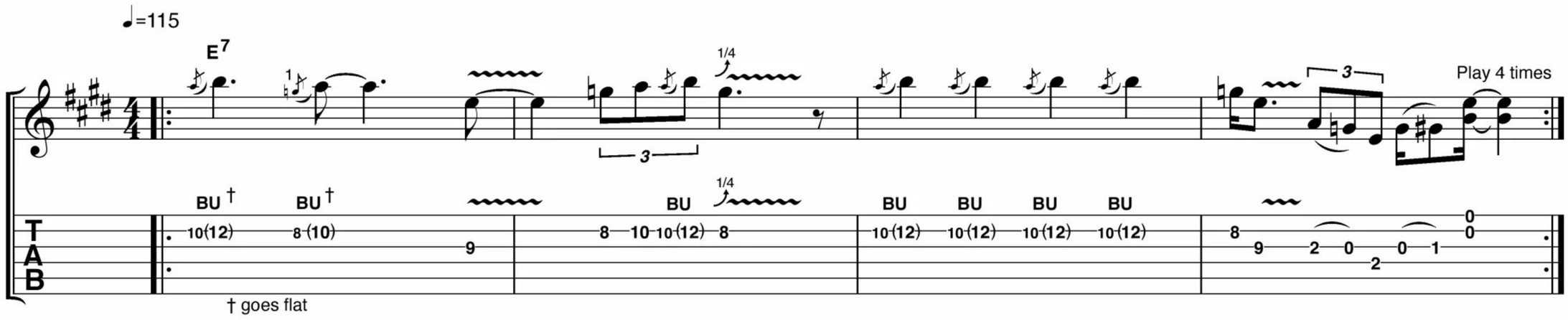

Albert King was a huge influence on Stevie, with the Chicago blues icon's string bending techniques providing a wealth of expressive phrasing to draw on. Here, we're using the first finger to bend the first string. It may feel hard to achieve, but that's sort of the point – you get a certain loose frailty to the slightly shakily performed bend.

3 BLUES TURNAROUND LEADS

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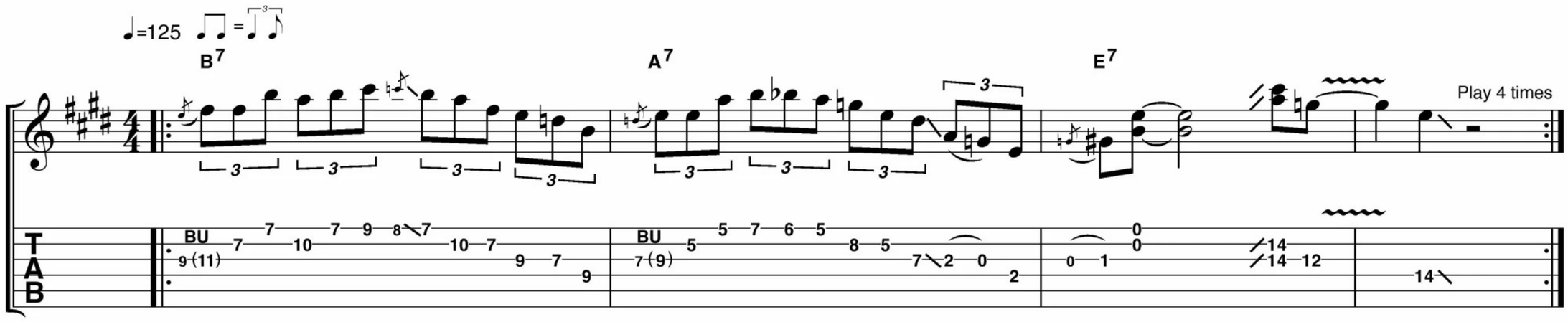

Here we're looking at how SRV navigated blues turnarounds in songs like *Texas Flood* and *Pride And Joy*. Here we move with the chords, employing shape one of the B minor pentatonic scale over the B7 before shifting the shape down two frets for A7. For E7 we've used the notes of the chord (E-G♯-B), plus a blues hint at the Dorian mode with the two-note shape at the 14th fret.

4 USE A TRADITIONAL PICKING TECHNIQUE

SRV employed a standard pick grip between the thumb and first finger, with a little angle applied as needed. His fingers would be relaxed and fanned out for both strumming and picking and this also put his fingers in the perfect spot for pick-and-fingers style 'hybrid' picking. A relaxed grip it may be, but be sure to really dig in and mean every note you play!

5 HENDRIX-STYLE EMBELLISHMENTS

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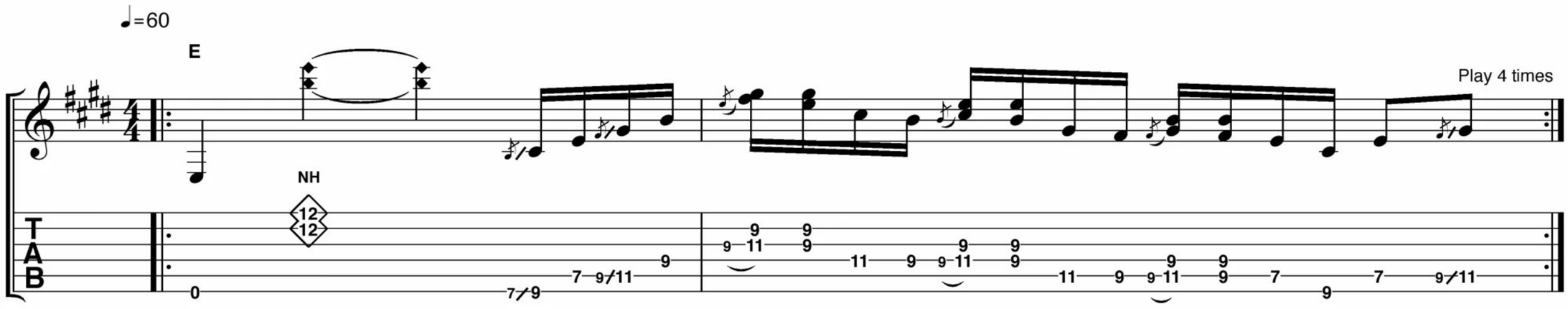

By adding hammer-ons to doublestops it's possible to create Hendrix-style chord fills – a typical SRV trick. Our example starts with natural harmonics at the 12th fret and is inspired by tracks like *Lenny* and, of course, *Little Wing*.

6 MINOR 2ND BLUES LICKS

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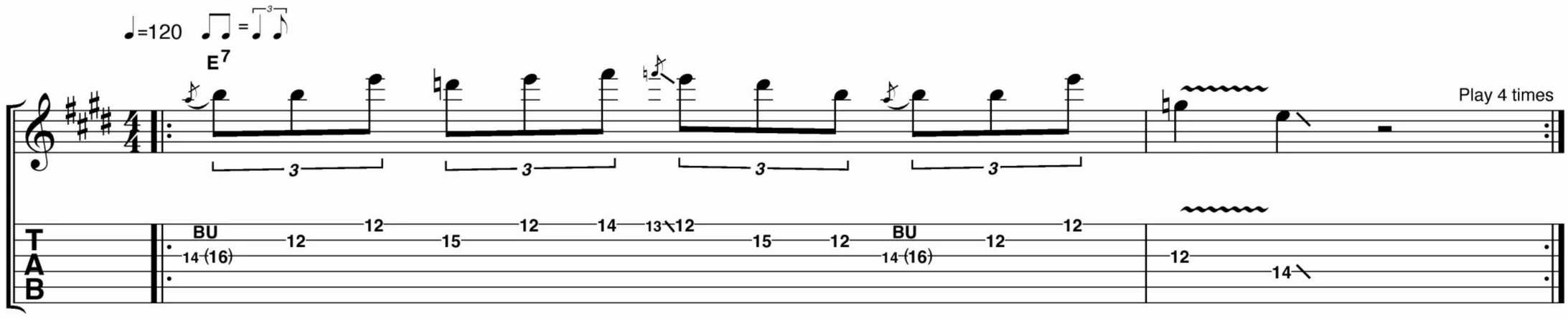

The minor 2nd interval doesn't appear in the major scale, the natural minor scale or the minor pentatonic scale. So what? Well, it's a dissonant clashing sound against the root note – hence it's a staple in metal, but used sparingly elsewhere. Stevie would often use this colourful tone to add tension to familiar-sounding pentatonics, for example in *Mary Had A Little Lamb*. Try adding in your own licks!

7 ALBERT KING-STYLE STRING BENDS

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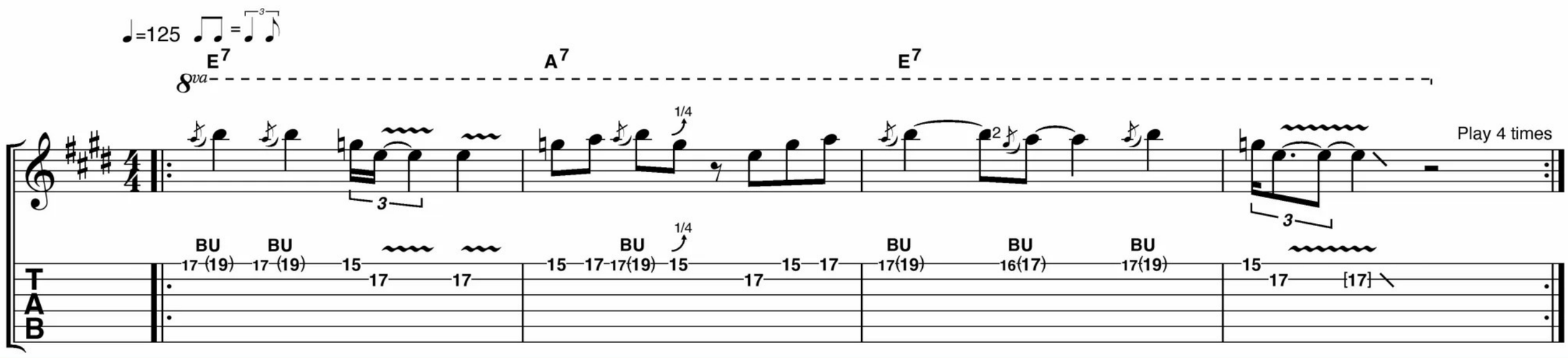

This one is inspired by SRV's lead work on his cover of the classic Albert King track *The Sky Is Crying*. The main aspect here is to concentrate on keeping the string bends in tune with a vocal-like delivery. All the phrases are played in the classic Albert King string bending position.

8 FRET-HAND SHOWBOATING

Flair and fire are at the core of Stevie's legacy – and a generation of blues-rockers arguably owe their careers to his lasting influence. Ape the excitement of SRV's aggressive blues with this cool trick. Just flip your fret hand over the top of the neck and barre across a few strings or play a two-note pull-off to an open string.

9 BLUE-NOTE DIADS

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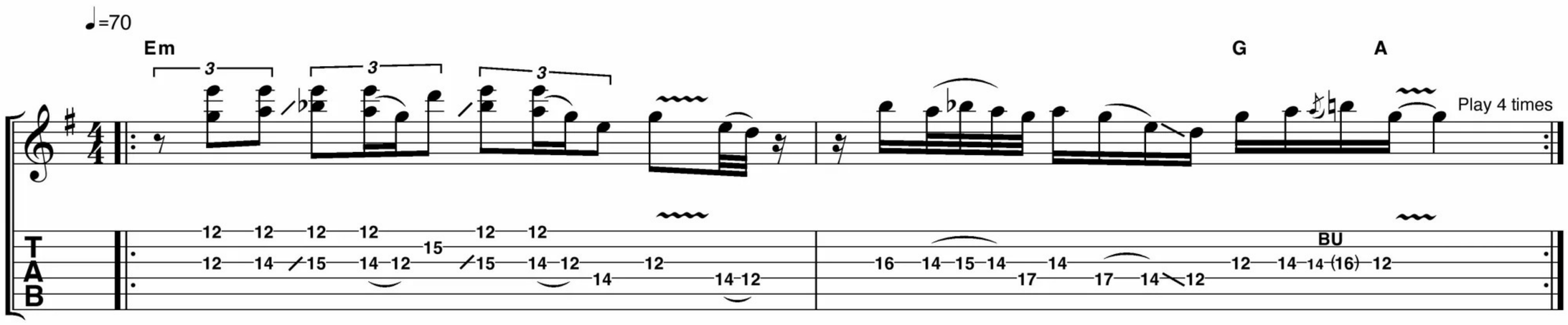

Bar 1 demonstrates Stevie's beautiful use of the 'blue note' (AKA the ♭5 interval) in diad phrases, for example, around 1:28 in *Riviera Paradise*. The all-important ♭5 in our example is the 15th-fret B♭ note. Take note of the structure of these diad shapes and how the ♭5 is enclosed within.

10 ROCK 'N' ROLL STYLE DOUBLESTOPS

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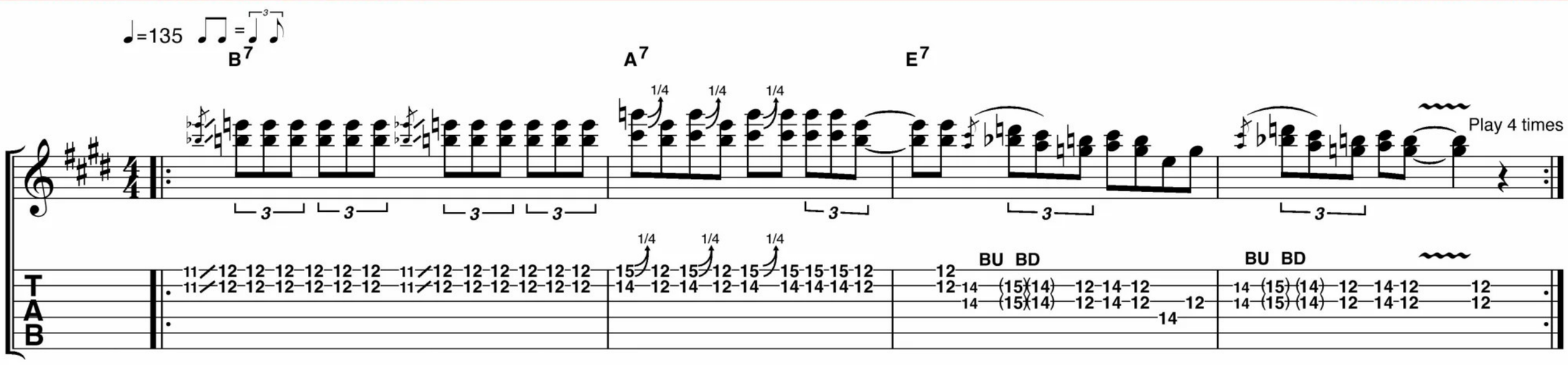

For this example we are using classic rock 'n' roll doublestops to beef up the sound. This sounds particularly effective in a power trio lineup, and Stevie used it on many tracks, including *Love Struck Baby* and *Empty Arms*.

11 SCALE PLAYING

Pentatonics are at the core of Stevie's scale-based playing. In general, his thumb would be rested on the top of the neck, providing an anchor point for string bends and finger vibrato. His first, second and third fingers are employed most, but the key element is to keep your hand relaxed, ready to deliver those scorching Texas blues licks.

12 TEXAS SHUFFLE REPEATING LICKS

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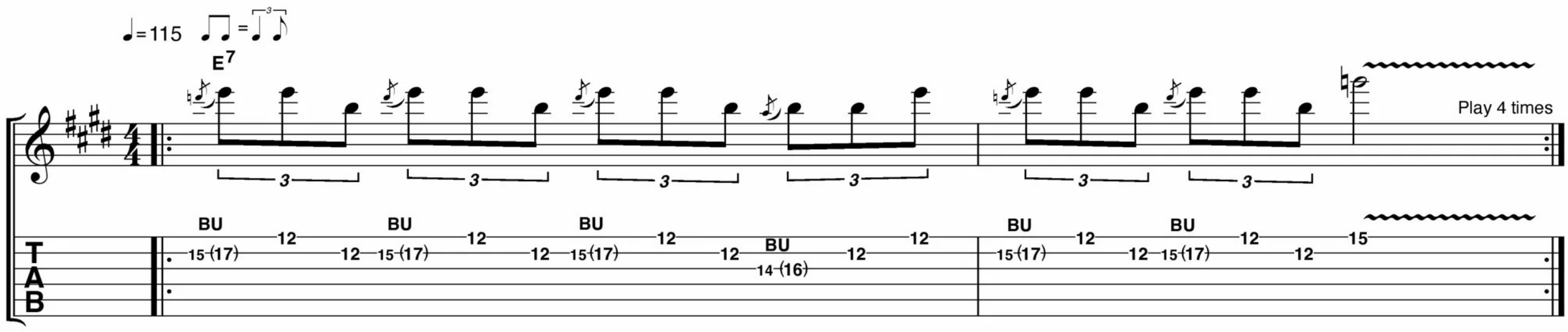


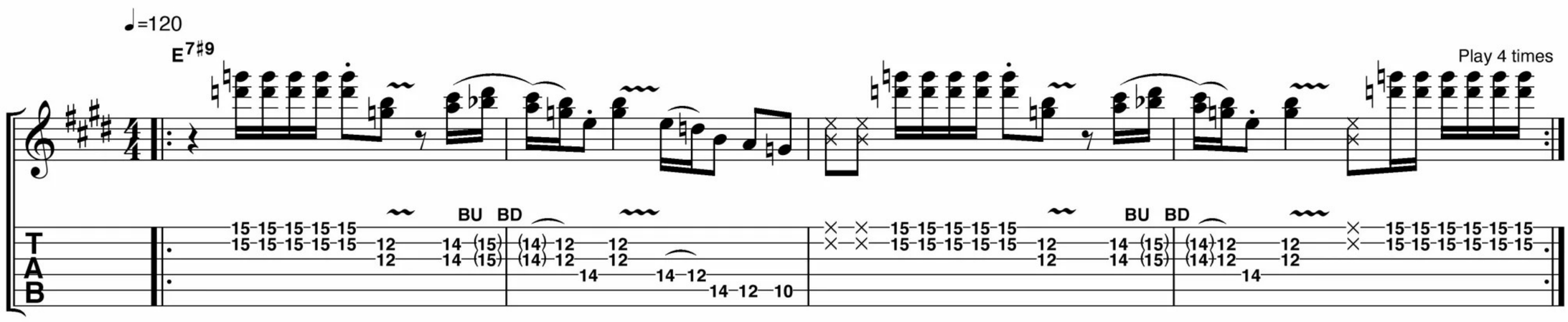
This three-note lick fits nicely into the triplet feel of the shuffle groove. Repetition might sound like a byword for boring, but it's a strong improvisational tool, allowing you to hook your listener's ear before developing the theme or finishing with a flourish. It's a feature of songs like *I'm Cryin'*.

13 FOURTH FINGER

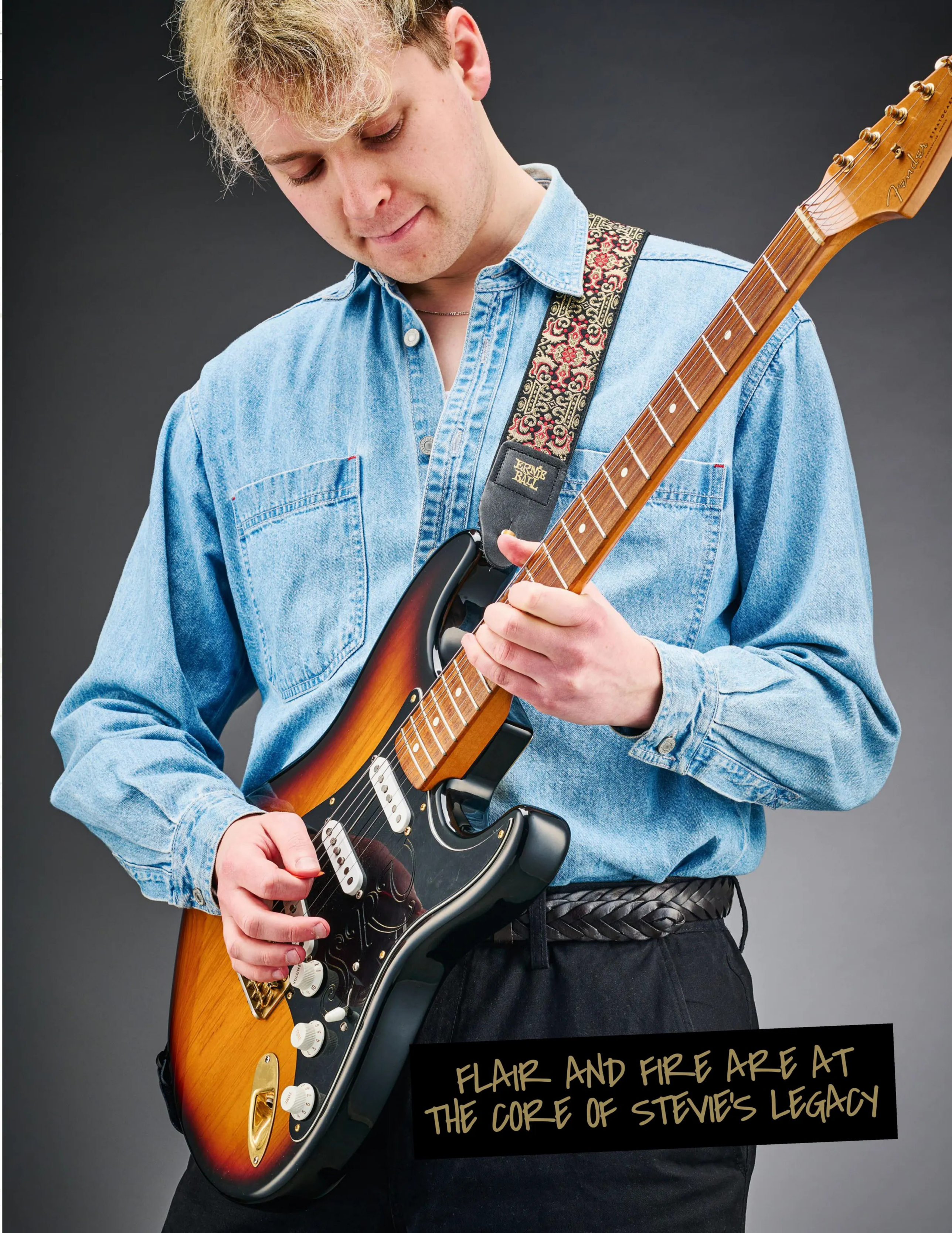
SRV copyists should major on their first, second and third fretting fingers – they're the strongest digits, perfect for blues phrasing and that trademark vibrato and bending. Still, don't neglect your fourth finger. Be ready to place it on the first string, particularly while bending the second or third. Known as an 'oblique' bend, you can hear it at 2:25 in Stevie's version of *Little Wing*.

14 FUNKY 16TH-NOTE STRUMMING

bit.ly/tga2024audio



SRV was a fan of adding in funky strumming to his rhythm parts, and this is key feature of songs like *Telephone Song* and *Couldn't Stand The Weather*. The main aspect to concentrate on is maintaining accuracy when delivering the 16th-note strumming patterns.


FLAIR AND FIRE ARE AT
THE CORE OF STEVIE'S LEGACY

Stevie Ray VAUGHAN

15 SHUFFLE RIFF MUTES

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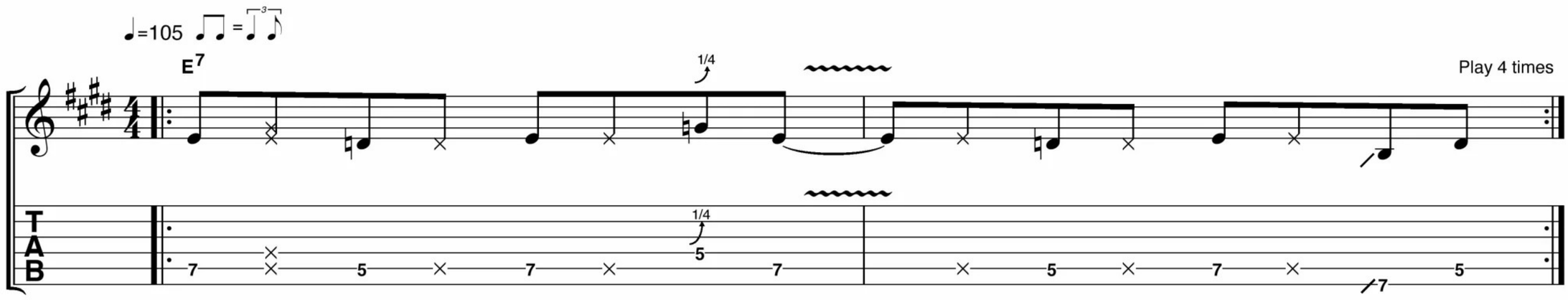

Stevie's shuffle riffs in *Pride And Joy* and *Cold Shot* are the stuff of legend, and these parts both feature one of the Texan ace's trademark techniques: the pick rake. The idea is to rake across muted strings as you target each single note. Each note is played on the downbeat, with muted strokes on the offbeat.

16 OPEN STRINGS IN FAST RUNS

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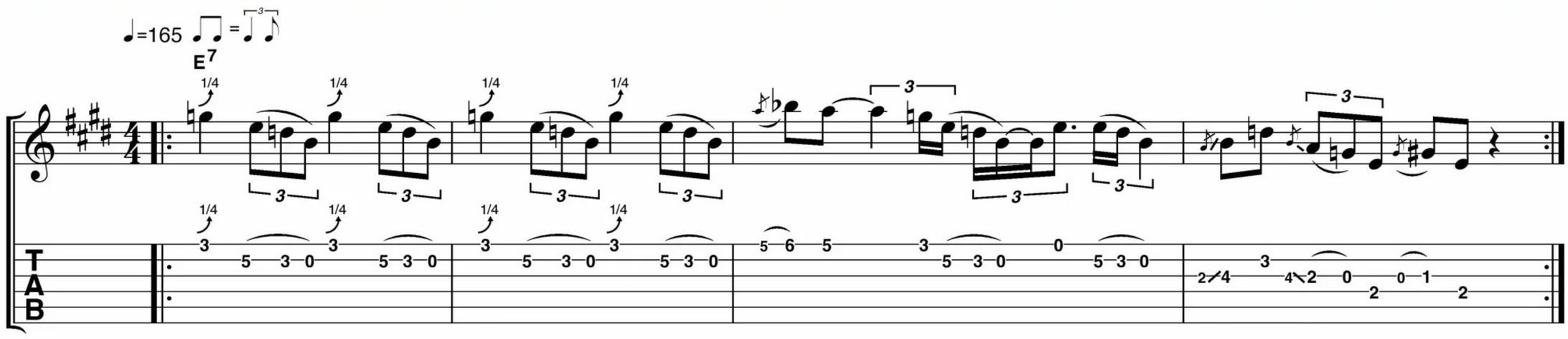

Including fast flourishes of notes is ear-grabbing, and SRV did this to great effect on tracks like *Scuttle Buttin'*. Using the open strings makes the fast pull-offs slightly easier to articulate.

17 THUMBED BASS NOTES

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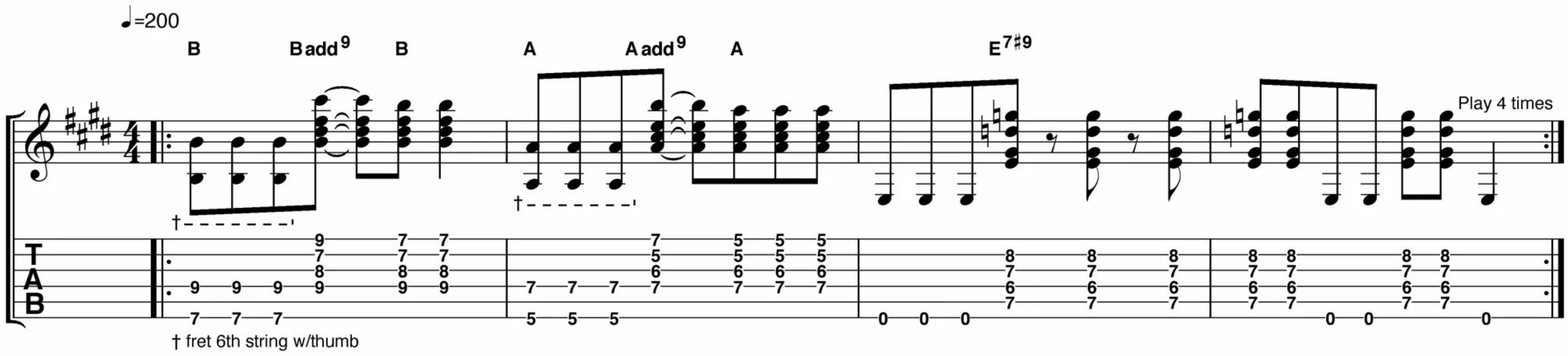

Again, the Jimi Hendrix influence shines through as here we're looking at how Stevie would use his thumb to fret bass notes in barre chords. Simply reach over the top of the neck to fret the notes on the sixth string.

18 FINGER VIBRATO

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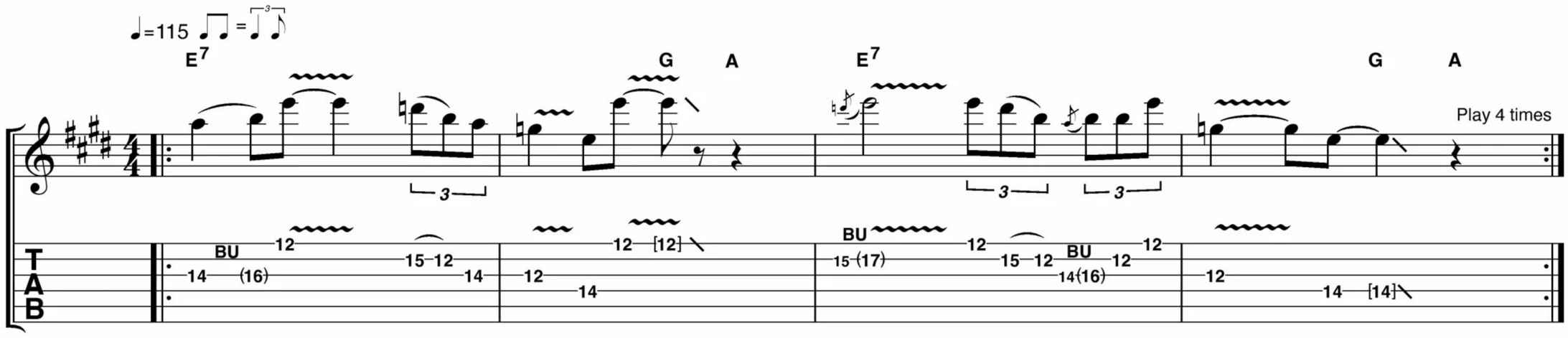

Here we showcase different ways SRV would employ vibrato. He'd often go for an aggressive touch, so it's worth really getting to grips with this and digging in with your fretting fingers. Use your first finger on the 12th fret and your third finger for the 15th-fret bend in bar 3.

19 MUTED SLIDES

A simple finger slide down the bass strings, this idea is more commonly seen in hard rock, where high-gain tones accentuate the 'scratchy' sound of the wound strings. For our purposes, it's an extension of SRV's high-position sliding technique, but also part and parcel of groove and punctuation of his shuffle riff mutes. Playing a shuffle riff? Start with one of these!

20 HIGH-POSITION SLIDES

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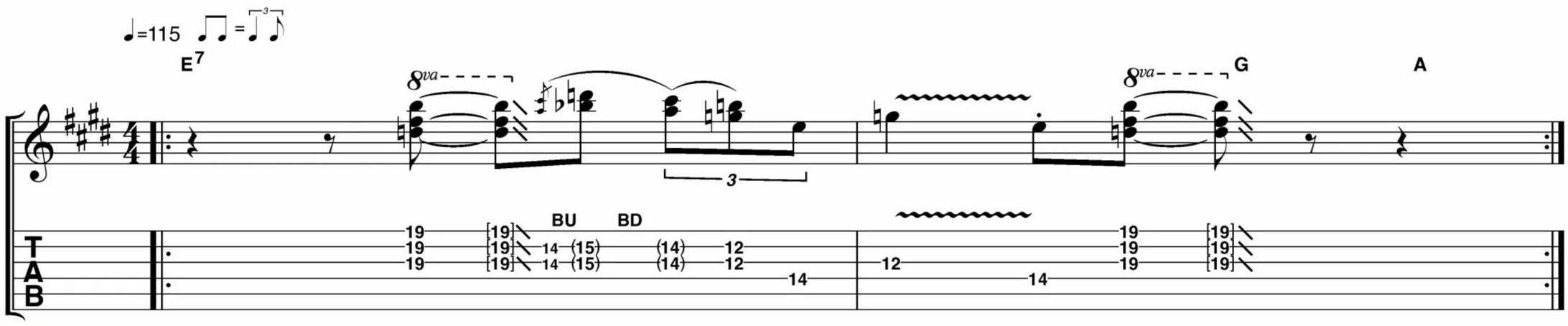


SRV used this simple idea to add a punctuation point to lead into a more complex lick. Just barre across the top three strings, strum, then slide down. Maintain the pressure as you slide to maintain the ear-grabbing effect.

Words Grant Moon

BLIND KORN

(1994)

With detuned seven-string guitars and a hip-hop influence in the mix, the boys from Bakersfield delivered the big bang of nu-metal

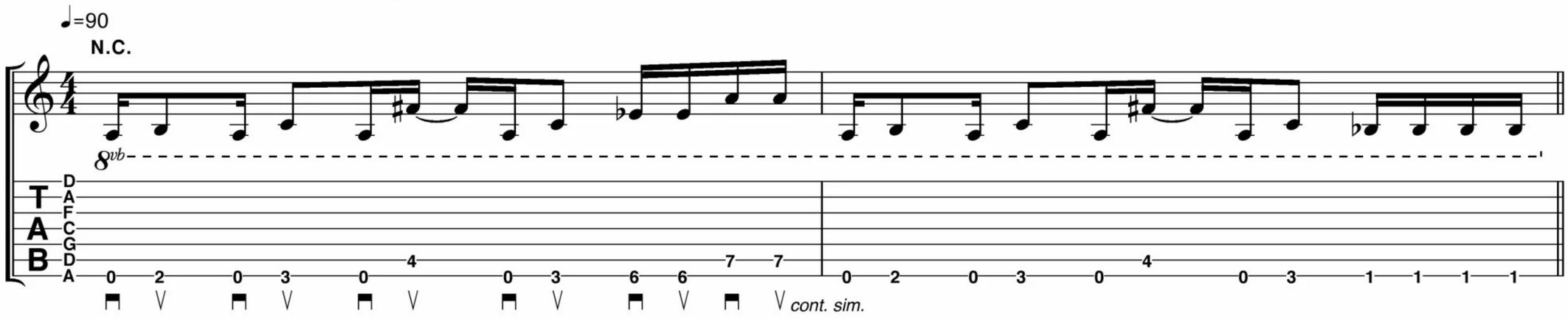
When Californian nu-metal pioneers Korn released *Blind* as their debut single in 1994, they were well aware they'd created something bold, powerful and new. That said, even by their own admission, they had no idea it would start a whole movement of heavy bands from the mid-90s onwards. And a sizeable amount of that sonic originality could be attributed to the instruments in the hands of guitarists James 'Munky' Shaffer and Brian 'Head' Welch – the very same Ibanez Universe seven-strings which had been co-designed by Steve Vai a few years prior, although rarely seen outside of the world of shredders.

As Munky put it, *Blind* "hit people over the head with the sound of detuned seven-string guitars" in a way that was "like nothing they'd ever heard before". But it needed the right introduction – the kind of thing that would have first-time listeners perched nervously on the edge of their seats, drowning in the all-encompassing suspense and unable to process what might be coming next. "I specifically remember we wanted listeners to be really taken off by starting really small," Munky revealed. "So, we thought let's start really unusual with the ride cymbal. Who starts a song with the ride cymbal?"

Then there's that scratchy D tritone chord that Munky repeats, with Head and bassist Reginald 'Fieldy' Arvizu responding in due course with their own individual lines. It's a musical conversation that takes the listener right into the band's sweaty practice room – like front row seats to witness a song coming to life. "There's that dissonant chord I do," Munky explained, "which is some D diminished whatever, played through an old Silvertone amplifier that was built into a case. By the time Jonathan [Davis] sings, 'Are you ready?', you're gonna get clobbered by this arsenal of giant guitars!"

Clobbered is certainly the right word for it. With their DiMarzio-equipped Ibanez seven-strings tuned an extra step down to ADGCFAD, the near-galactic weight of powerchords played down low turned Korn into one of the most talked about metal bands on the planet. To make their tones even more gargantuan, high gain Hughes & Kettner and Peavey amps were cranked for maximum muscle. It wasn't all just sub-sonic riffing, either – the Phrygian-flavoured verse sections, much like many of the band's anthems to come, would involve atmospheric lines for one of the two guitarists higher up the neck. And then of course there's the outro, which takes more cues from hip-hop than anything metallic, where guitars used more like a sound effect or sample, bearing closer resemblance to a police siren than a string instrument. As opening gambits go, few songs have encapsulated a band's greatness as precisely and succinctly as *Blind* did for Korn. Imitated but never duplicated, *Blind* was groundbreaking.

LOW-STRING RIFFS (SEVEN-STRING) BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO



We've tabbed our Korn-inspired riff in the band's signature seven-string A tuning (ADGCFAD). We're only playing on two strings, so you could in theory use a down-tuned six-string to play our riff – but some pickups can sound a bit woolly in this range. You need to strike a balance though: the loose flabby sound of the downtuned string is key to the nu-metal tone.

Photo Getty

MUNKY BUSINESS
James 'Munky' Shaffer pioneered the use of 7-strings for metal

FINGERPICKING TECHNIQUE

The easiest way to fingerpick is to use your thumb to pick the three bass strings, and your index, middle and ring fingers for the third, second and first strings, respectively. You can play a lot of music without any variation on this approach.

Words Jon Bishop Photos Abigail Shii

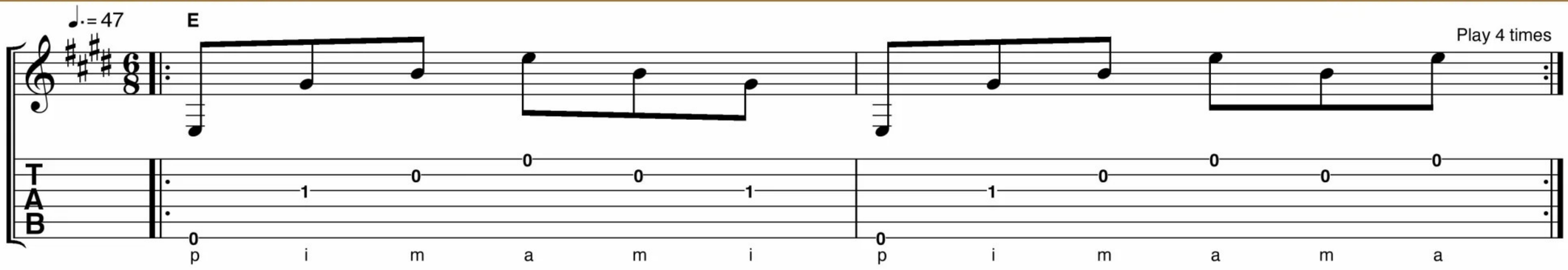
ACOUSTIC GUITAR LESSON

Take your acoustic guitar playing to the next level with our multi-styled technique lesson. We begin with a crash course in the essentials of fingerstyle...

To kick things off, we have three exercises designed to improve your fingerstyle technique. We're talking essential basics here – there's nothing *too* challenging to play, but the exercises will help you get used to the core techniques of players as diverse as Chet Atkins, Tommy Emmanuel, and contemporary pop acts like Vance Joy and Passenger. To allow you to concentrate on your picking hand all our examples use the easy to finger open E chord as a foundation.

1 BASIC 'PIMA' TECHNIQUE

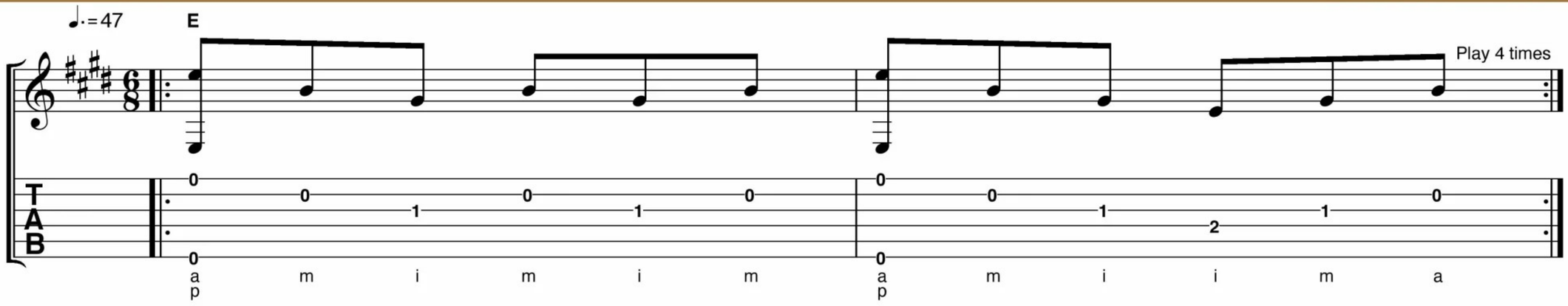
BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO



This first example is designed to get all your picking fingers working together. In traditional music notation the picking hand is labeled p for the thumb, then i, m and a for the first, second and third fingers.

2 THE PINCH

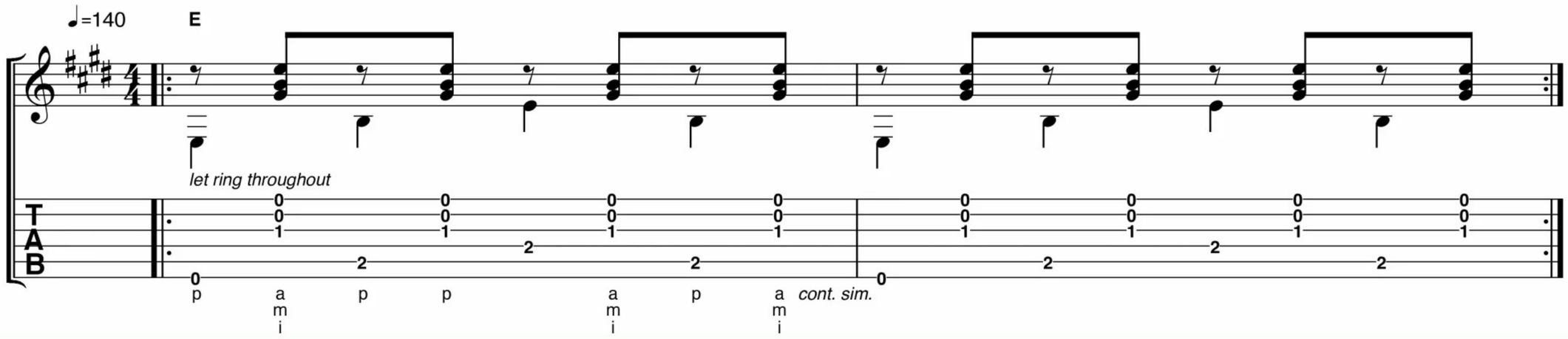
BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO



This example opens with two notes picked at the same time – a technique known as a 'pinch'. It's an essential ingredient of fingerstyle technique and allows for the melody notes and basslines to be played together. Notice in bar 2 how the i, m and a fingers are moved to play on the D, G and B strings.

3 BASS & CHORDS

BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO



Again, we're using an open E chord as our foundation here. This example will help to develop your thumb facility by introducing a simple bassline across the three low string. Each bass note is followed by a plucked chord played on the top three strings.

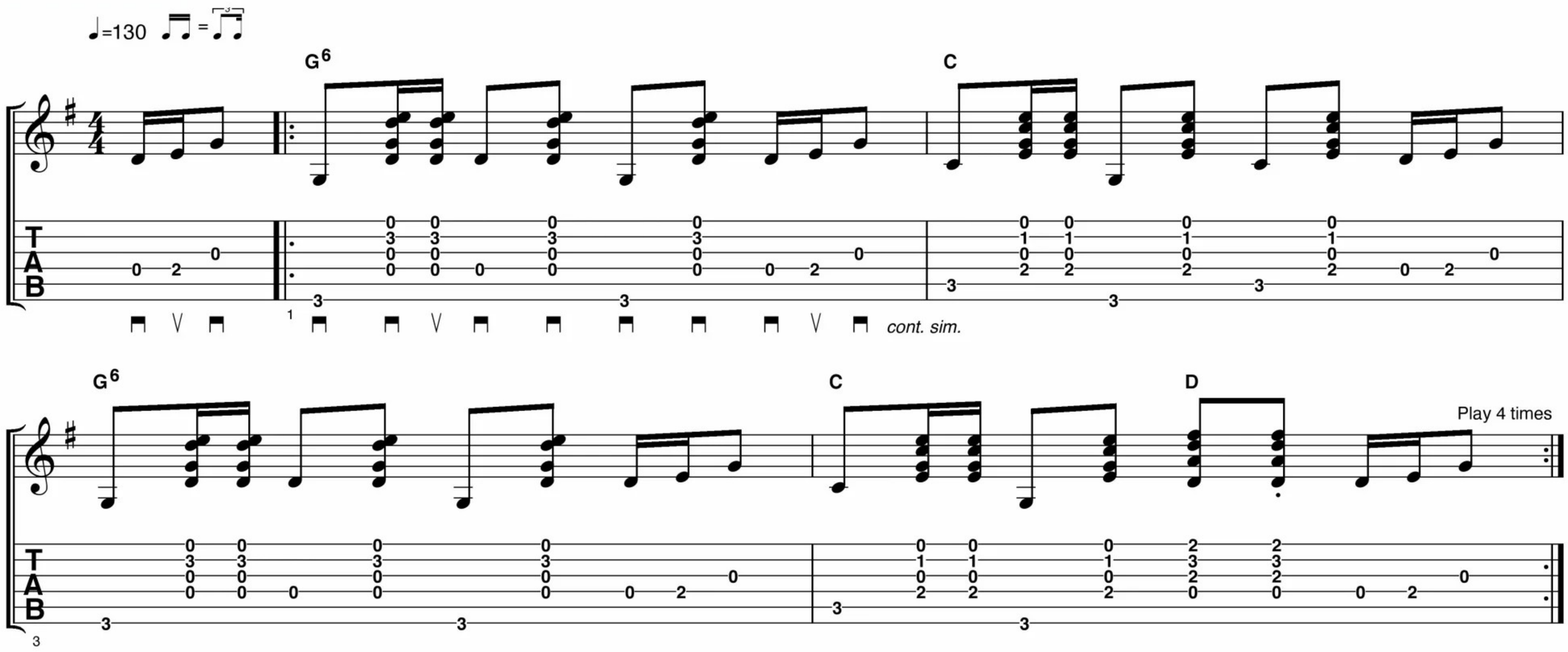
PLECTRUM PICKING

That little piece of plastic is the key that'll unlock your playing potential. Improve your picking skills now!

For many players, how we use our picks isn't a crucial part of our everyday guitar playing. We strum and pick, but don't necessarily think too hard about the technical side. However, picking becomes more important when you encounter a song that goes beyond basic strumming. Perhaps there's a bassline mixed in with some chords you're playing, or a quick melodic run. Take a look at our tab examples to help hone these skills, with the perspective of acoustic guitar playing.

1 STRUMMING WITH EMPHASISED NOTES

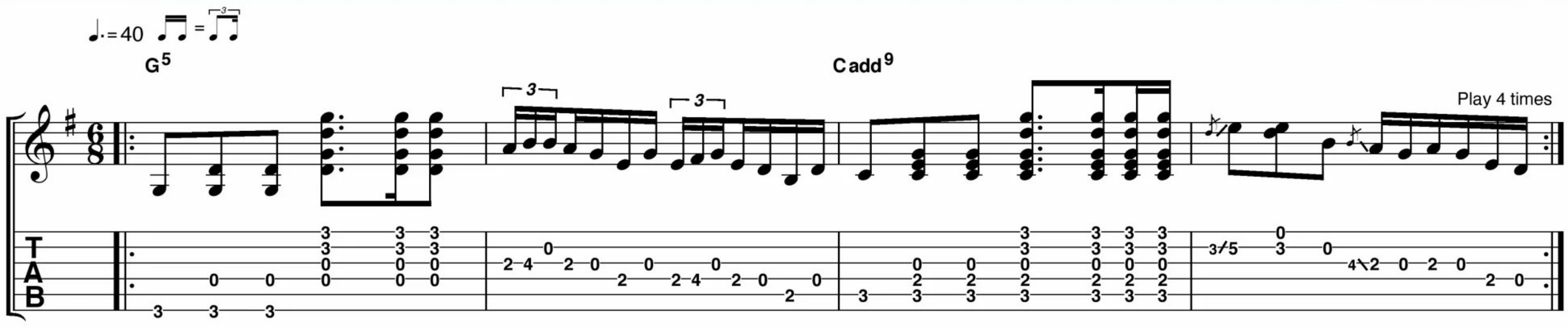
BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO



Here we're breaking out the 12-string acoustic for a line inspired by songs like Tash Sultana's MTV Unplugged performance of *Coma*. You don't need a 12-string, though. Any steel-string will do. We've played our single-note phrases quite distinctly, but you can easily let more of the chord tones ring out with this technique.

2 FLATPICKING

BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO



Bluegrass stars like Molly Tuttle and Billy Strings are monster flatpickers (a fancy term for picking with a plectrum), and, though we suspect it'd take most of us a few years of practice to get to their level, there's still plenty to try out. Here we're keeping to a manageable tempo as we look at how to mix chords with flatpicked lines.

Photo Getty

NYLON STRING GUITAR

Dust off that old nylon-string and take a look at some creative ways to use it in your music

Hands up who has a classical guitar gathering dust in the loft or locked away in a cupboard? Okay, now put your hand down and go and show your neglected nylon string a little love, just as we are here with a couple of lessons that'll help you think differently about this oft-overlooked instrument. We've taken our inspiration from Polyphia's 2022 track *Playing God* and from the modern flamenco sounds of Jake Bugg's *The Happiest Man In The World* soundtrack album.

NYLON STRING CLASSICS...

Five great nylon-string guitar songs

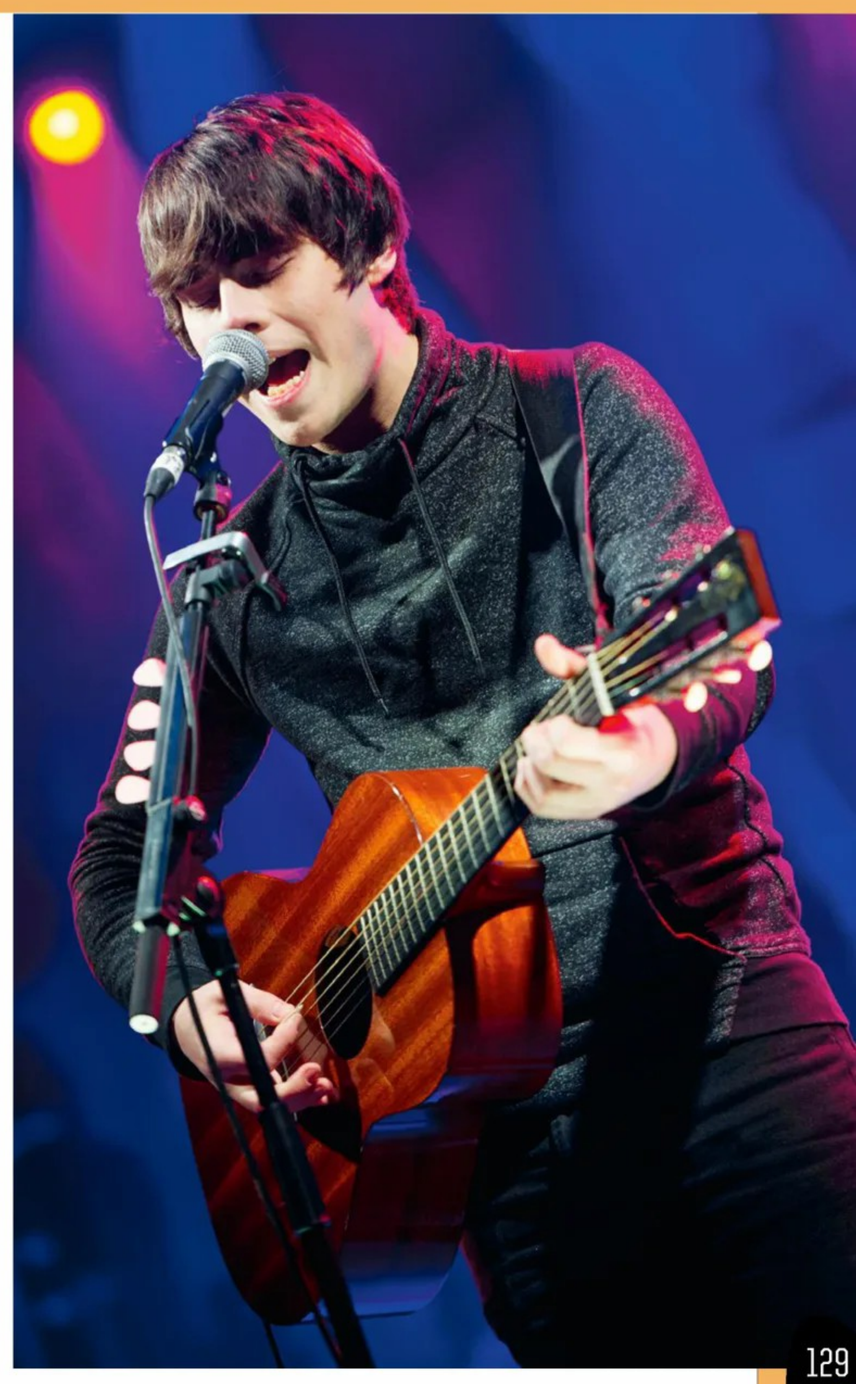
Eric Clapton – *Tears In Heaven*
Eric's *MTV Unplugged* hit is one of the biggest guitar songs of the 90s, and a great fingerstyle piece to learn.

Ben Howard – *Keep Your Head Up*
Howard is a highly accomplished fingerstylist. This EADGAD-tuned track from his debut might be enough to keep you practising for weeks.

Dire Straits – *Private Investigations*
A beautiful, epic track with Mark Knopfler using the nylon-string guitar as a lead instrument instead of accompaniment.

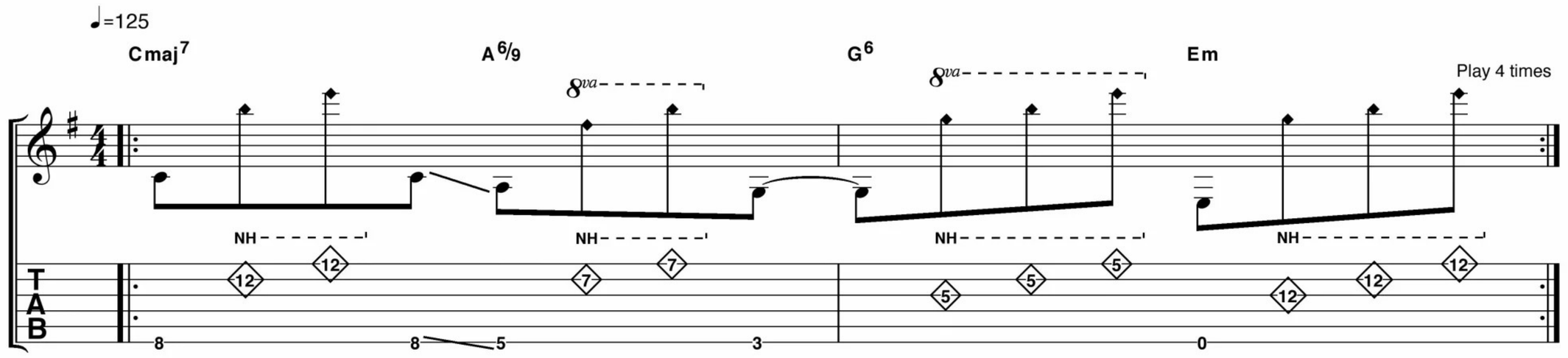
José Gonzales – *Heartbeats*
A cover version it may be, but for most this 2003 cut by the Swedish singer-songwriter remains the definitive arrangement.

Opeth – *Porcelain Heart*
This epic tune from the Swedish prog-metal titans features the dark, ambient moods of reverb-soaked nylon-string guitar.



1 POLYPHIA-STYLE HARMONICS

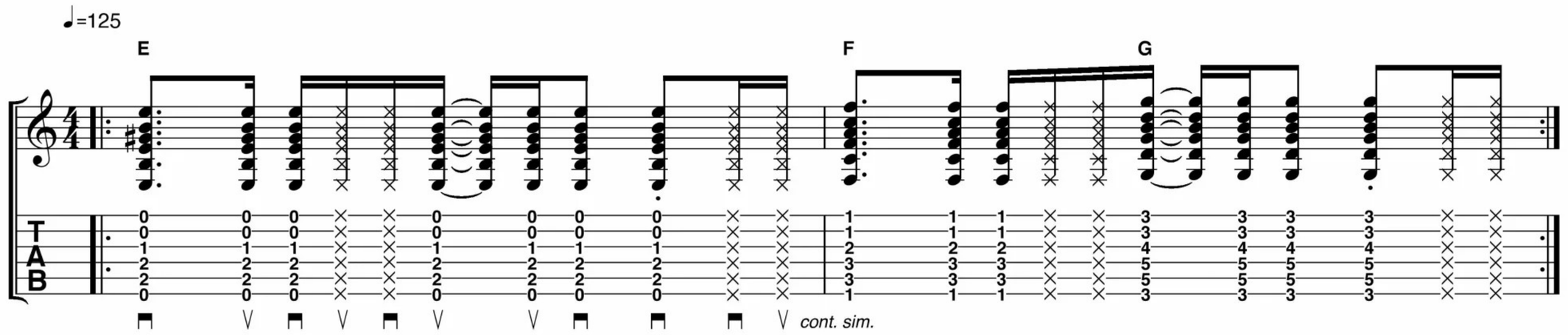
BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO



Here, we're combining a simple bassline with natural harmonics, Polyphia style. The natural harmonics are played by lightly touching the string above the fret indicated in the tab. The challenge is getting them all to ring out cleanly as you change positions. Practise just the harmonics at first and add the bass notes as you gain confidence.

2 JAKE BUGG-STYLE MODERN FLAMENCO

BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO



An unexpected turn from Bugg, his soundtrack album for *The Happiest Man In The World* features a raft of nylon-string pieces covering, samba, jazz and flamenco – and that's what we're looking at here. For an authentic tone, the fingers are used for strumming. Aim for a relaxed strumming motion to help provide a consistent delivery.

ED SHEERAN-STYLE RHYTHM GROOVES

He's probably the most famous acoustic guitarist in the world. Take a look at some of Sheeran's signature techniques

Perhaps the most notable aspect of Ed Sheeran's acoustic guitar playing style is the way he uses his pick hand. Generally preferring not to use a pick, Ed has a loose style that allows him to combine fingerpicking, thumb strumming, finger strumming and basic percussive techniques into an unconventional playing style. The secret sauce is of course a looper pedal: Ed loves to layer up these techniques into a huge wall of sound. Here we look at some of his trademark approaches.

1 16TH NOTE STRUMMING

BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO

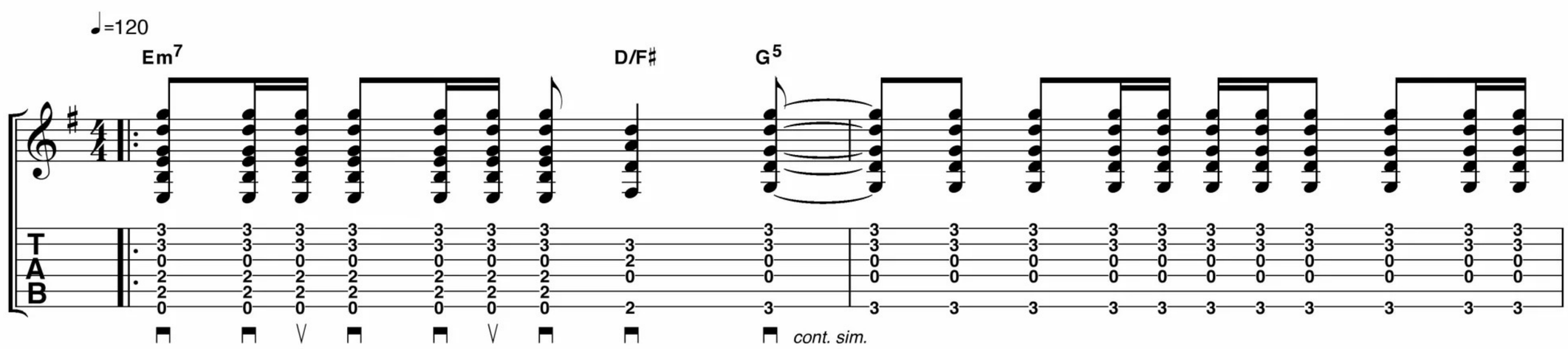


Photo Getty

1 16TH NOTE STRUMMING (cont'd)

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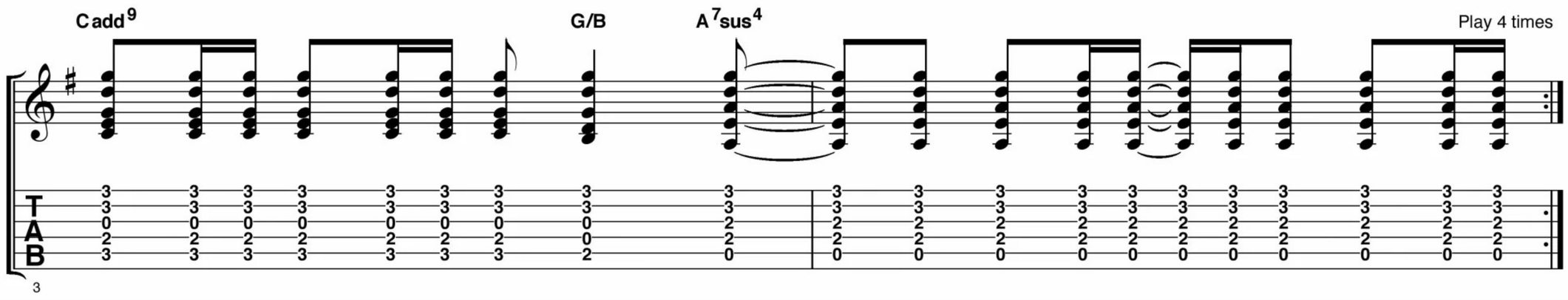

Ed often uses frenetic strumming to create the excitement in his live shows. Our example is in the style of Ed's live acoustic versions of *Castle On The Hill*. Ed generally favours strumming with the picking hand fingers as opposed to using a plectrum. If you've got a looper pedal, start with a part like this, then add riffs over the top.

2 4TH-FRET CAPO

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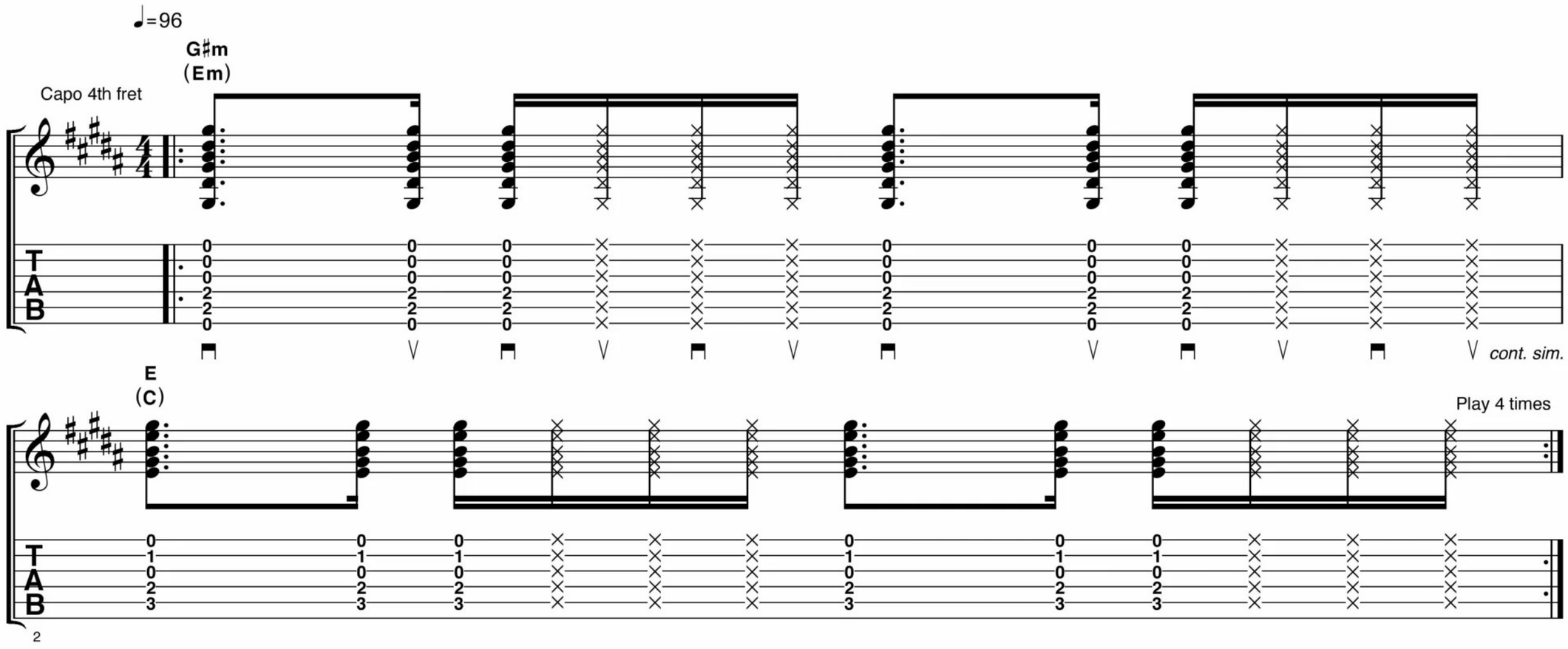

Here, the capo helps open position chord fingerings to sit within Ed's vocal range and as an added bonus it also drops the action down, making everything a bit easier to play. The muted strokes add a percussive quality.

3 FINGERSTYLE AND BACKBEAT GROOVE

BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO

This example features a modern-sounding fingerstyle loop combined with a slap on the backbeat. The fingerstyle arpeggio can be slightly arpeggiated by spreading the picking fingers as you pluck. The percussive slap on beats two and four is created by hitting down on the strings with the picking hand. Simple!

ACOUSTIC BLUES

Get your mojo working with the sweet sounds of slide and some soulful fingerstyle blues

Here we're taking a look at two core techniques in blues: slide guitar and fingerstyle. The former can be particularly tricky if you've never tried it, but there are some key tips which we've outlined below.

Perhaps most important is to use an open tuning (we've used open G in our tab example). By tuning your guitar's strings to the notes of a simple major chord, you're assured of a sound that 'works' as you lay the slide over several frets at once.

SLIDE GUITAR BASICS

1 Wear your slide on your third finger
Use a different finger if you prefer, but the third finger is easiest to control and you can fret notes higher or lower than the slide if you need to.

2 Mute the strings for a cleaner sound
Tame excess string noise and make slide lines sound clear by keeping your first and second fingers in contact with the strings behind the slide.

3 Aim to play directly over the frets
Play in tune by positioning your slide directly over the frets, not above or below them where you usually place your fretting fingers.

4 Float with your slide... or don't!
For a smooth, floating sound, rest the slide on the string without pressing down. For a more aggressive sound press down with your slide, Derek Trucks style.

1 KEB MO-STYLE SLIDE LICK

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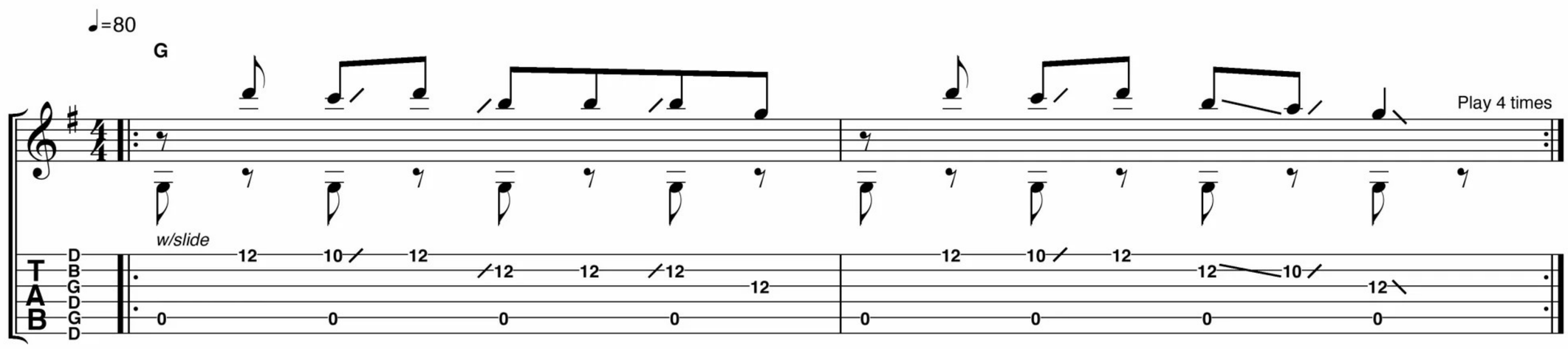

For this slide example, we break out our open G (DGDGBD) tuned resonator guitar (though any steel string acoustic will do). Notice that the bassline is a regular quarter-note open-string note. This allows you to practise the top slide line on its own and only bring in the bass notes as you get comfy.

2 JACK JOHNSON-STYLE POP/BLUES

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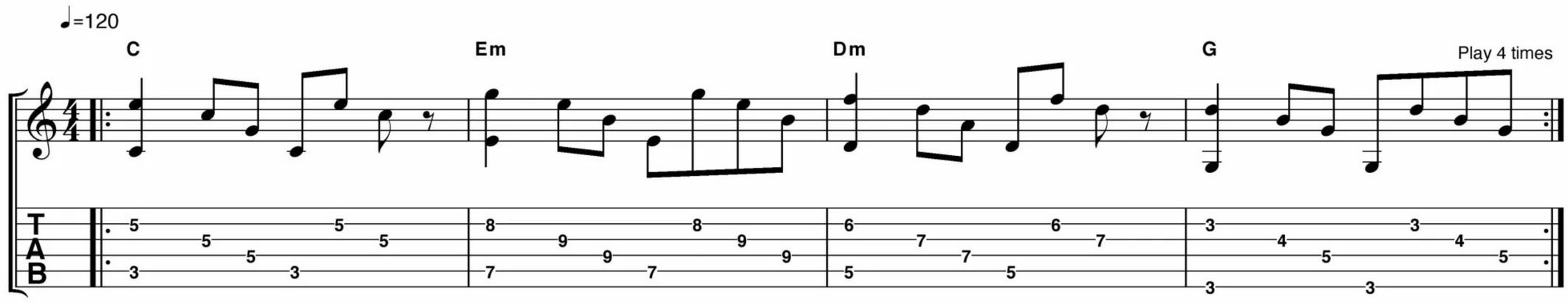

Jack Johnson's laid back blues-tinged acoustic pop guitar lines and catchy vocals have made him a global star for over two decades. Our example uses a one-bar fingerstyle pattern that features the pinch technique The picking pattern is repeated throughout, except on a small variation in bar 4.

Photo Getty

MODERN FOLK

Try out a handful of creative fingerstyle and percussive guitar ideas...

Maybe it's the influence of Ed Sheeran over the last decade or so, but the folk scene appears to be in rude health – which can only be great news for us guitarists as there's a wealth of artists to take inspiration from. Whether you're an aspiring fingerstylist who prefers a 'traditional' approach, or if you're looking to develop some upbeat body-bashing percussive guitar techniques, we've got you covered with our straightforward lessons.

BOOM! THWACK! TING!

Your essential percussive guitar guide...

Whether you take inspiration from greats like Michael Hedges and Preston Reed, or if you prefer the current crop of artists like Jon Gomm, Marcin Patrzalek and Alexandr Misko, there's one common element to percussive guitar: creating pitch-approximate strikes akin to a kick drum, a snare and hi-hats. In reality, this is only a rough starting point. You could think of the mid-pitch strikes as snares, toms, congas, even bongos – it's not an exact science! And where to strike the guitar to get these sounds varies from player to player, song to song. Here's what you need to know to get started.

1 Kick drum
Strike using the fleshy part where your hand meets your wrist to produce a low thud like a bass drum. We're targeting the guitar body above the strings near the soundhole.

2 Snare drum
You need a cutting sound without too much bass for a snare drum vibe. Jon Gomm and Newton Faulkner will often flick the pickguard area with a middle finger.

3 Hi-hat
For the full drum kit effect you'll need to include a sound in the treble range. Pat the strings down against the frets with your fretting hand for a hi-hat vibe.

1 REPEATING PATTERNS

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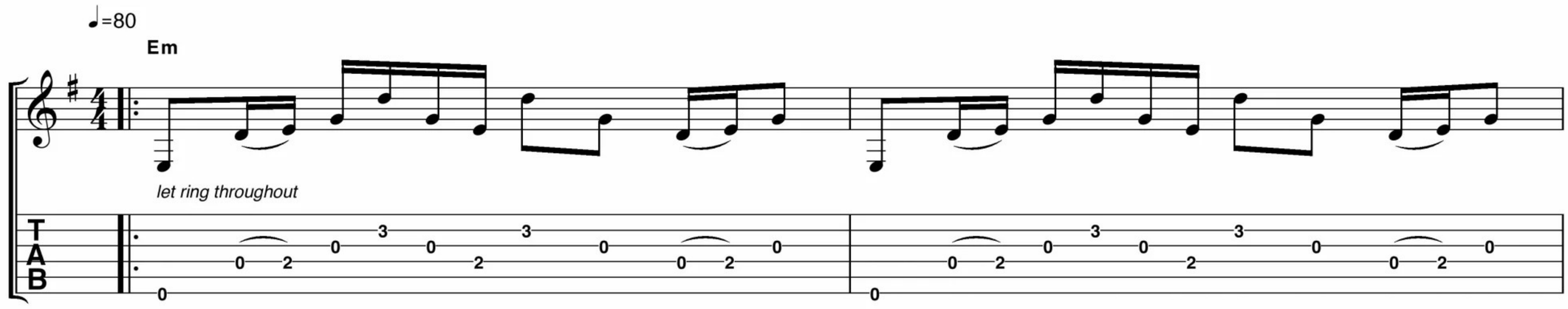

Photo Getty

1 REPEATING PATTERNS (cont'd)

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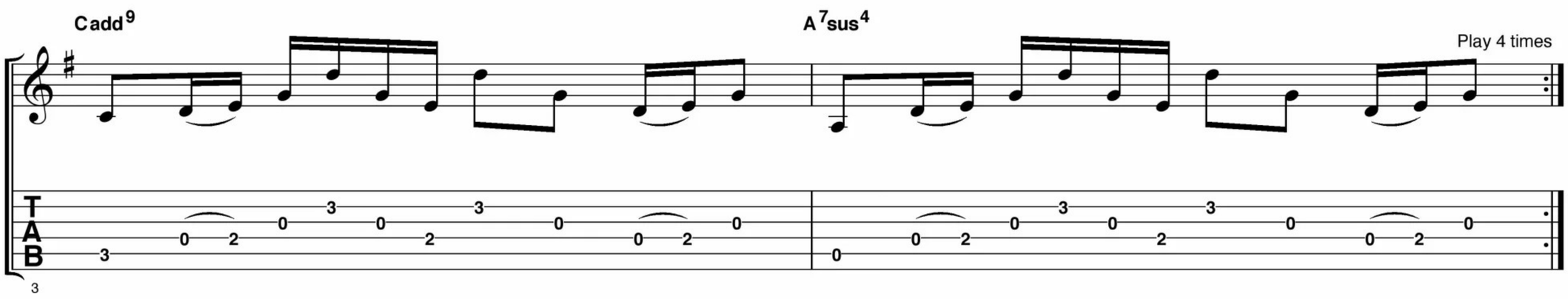

This example uses a repeating pattern – it's the kind of thing you'll hear Ben Howard, Ani DiFranco and countless other players do. Our bassline is a little awkward to finger, and it is included on the backing track, so perhaps practise the pattern on the top three strings before finally adding in the low notes.

2 HAMMER-ONS IN FINGERSTYLE

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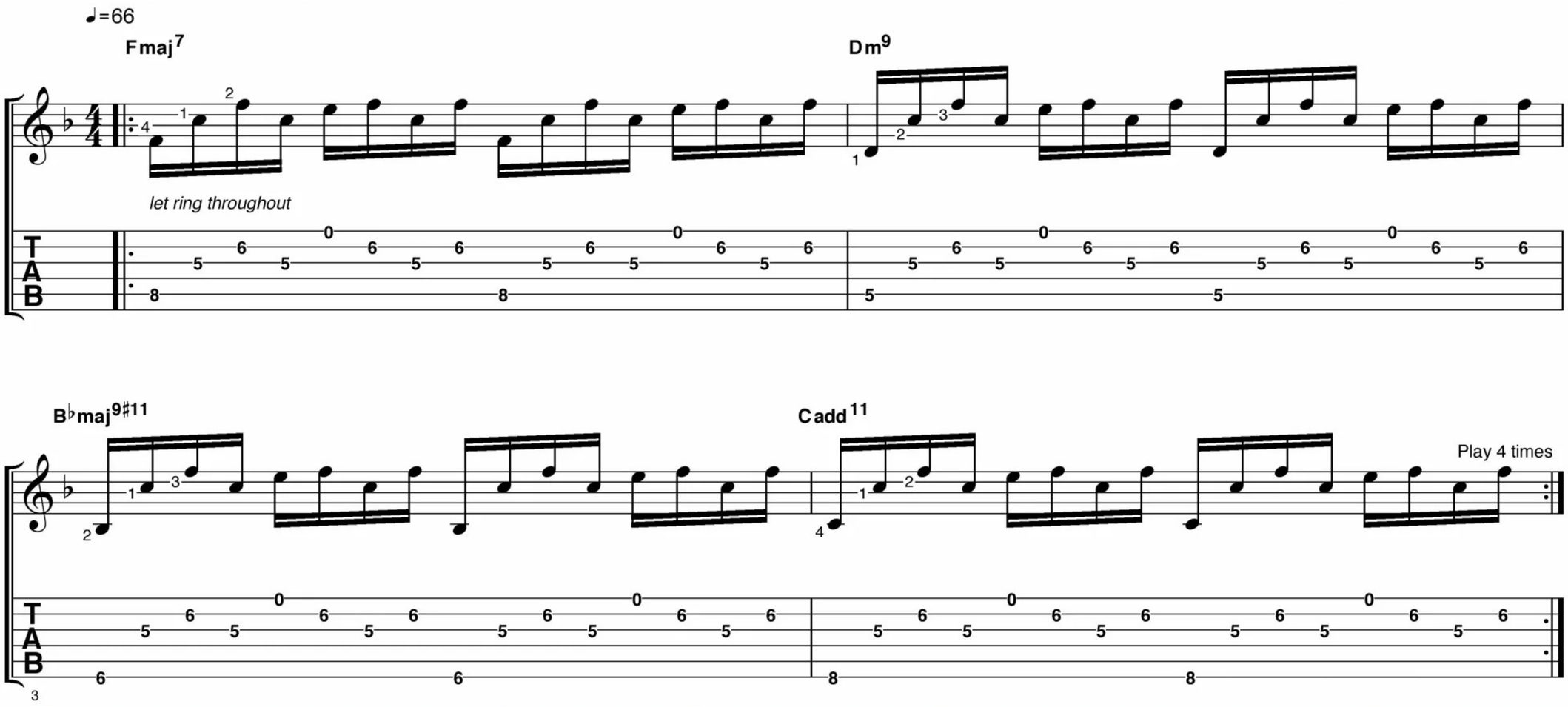
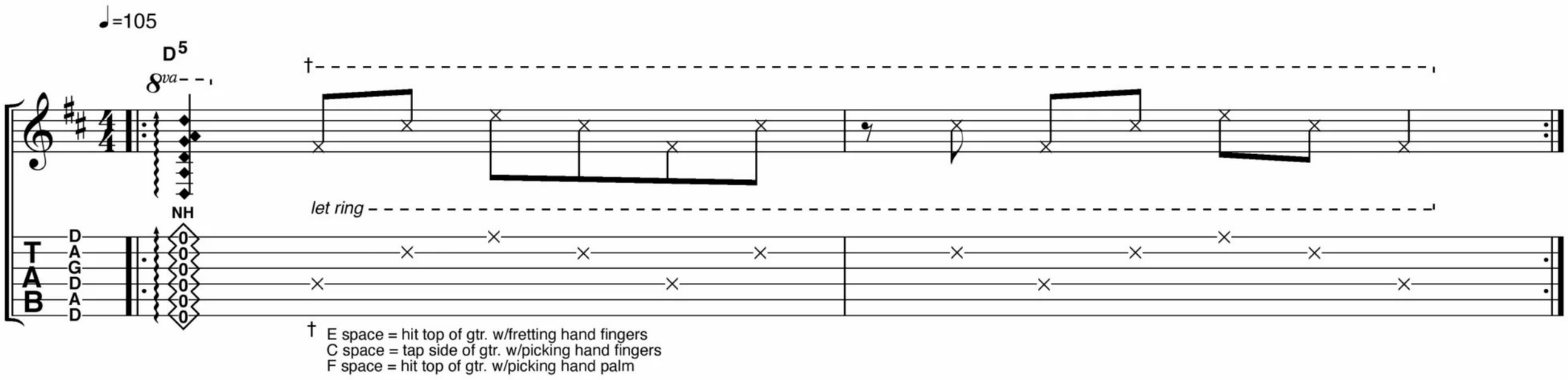


For this example, we are building hammer-ons in to a fingerstyle pattern. It's a commonplace technique used by everyone from greats like Jimmy Page to contemporary pop acts like George Ezra. Worthy of a little of your practice time then! For best results here, try to keep all the notes ringing out at all times.

3 PERCUSSIVE GUITAR

BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO



For our percussive exercise, the guitar is tuned to DADGAD – which sounds great (and, crucially, neither major nor minor) when open strings ring out. We're using three strikes: a low-ish hit, equating to a kick drum, and two in the midrange – snares or toms. The bass is shown low down, with the midrange strikes shown higher up.

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN
- ✔ Triplet feel
- ✔ Alternate picking
- ✔ Drop C tuning

RIFF OF THE MONTH

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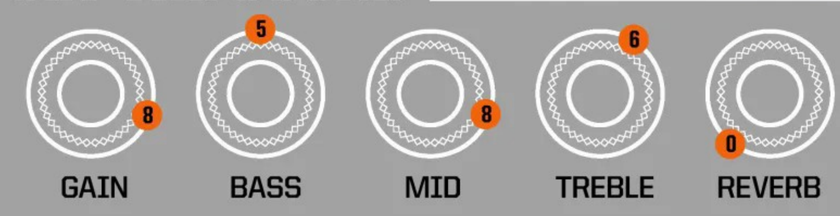
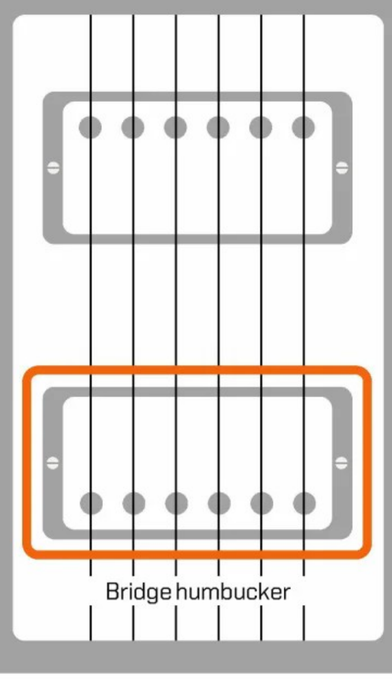
GET THE SOUND

CHANNEL DISTORTION





Mark plays his signature Jackson Dominion and Willie an ESP Eclipse, both through a variety of Mesa Boogie amps. Although the tone is high gain, the low end is very tight and the mids are very present, giving the notes a precise and quick attack that punches through the mix. You'll need to tune to drop C (CGCFAD from low to high). If you usually keep your guitar in standard tuning you'll either need to use a set of strings that are a couple of gauges heavier than your usual set or, alternatively, practise the riff in drop D (DADGBE).

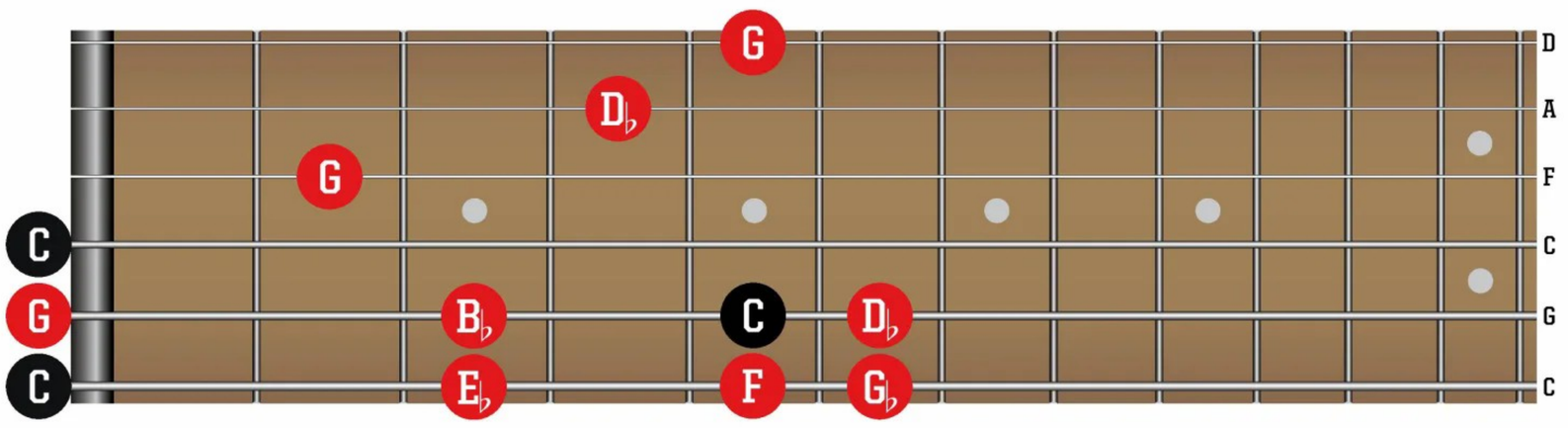
LAMB OF GOD

Nevermore

Here in the lead single from their latest album, *Omens*, guitarists Mark Morton and Willie Adler return with their trademark tight, articulate riffing style – *Nevermore* combines a heavy blues sound with the darker mood of the Phrygian mode. The riff has a triplet feel which adds to the heaviness of the groove. The bulk of the riff takes place on the open sixth string and at the 3rd, 5th and 6th frets – the first four notes of the blues scale. Throughout the riff these intervals are played both as single notes and as barred powerchords. In addition, a G tritone stab is played on the highest three strings. The riff has a repeating four-bar structure but with two different endings. The first uses the 3rd and 5th frets on the fifth string, staying within the blues scale structure; the second incorporates a D♭ on the 6th fret, hinting at the darker sounding Phrygian mode. Be sure to follow our slowed-down performance in the video for a clearer idea of how the riff is played.

CHEAT SHEET

Appears at: 0: 59 to 1:29
Tempo: 120bpm
Key/scale: C blues / C Phrygian
Main techniques: Alternate picking, palm muting, one-finger powerchords



As the riff is played in drop C tuning, the notes fall differently on the guitar compared to standard tuning. The tonal centre of the riff is C and the majority of the riff leans on the root, ♭3rd, 4th and ♭5th intervals, giving it a blues scale sound. The tritone chord played on the higher strings introduces the D♭ note, a ♭2 interval which adds the darkness of the Phrygian mode.

Photo Getty

Words Jenna Scaramanga **Photos** Jaime Ballesteros

"The first note I play, I miss the whole string completely!"

It's the guitar solo that everyone is talking about – but as **Nuno Bettencourt** now reveals, it starts with a mistake...

With his solo in the new Extreme song *Rise*, Nuno Bettencourt has animated the entire guitar community. "F*cking hell, that's a ridiculous solo!" gasped Justin Hawkins of The Darkness on his YouTube channel. Rick Beato's video breakdown of the solo rapidly garnered 1.5 million viewers. DragonForce's Herman Li and a host of YouTube faces produced reaction videos proving Beato's point that this is "the solo everyone is talking about".

As Nuno tells TG: "When *Rise* came out, we thought, 'OK, decent song, decent guitar solo', but the reaction that it got was something else. When Rick Beato posted his video breaking down the solo, and he's saying that Steve Lukather's calling, and his brother is calling and Phil X is calling saying, 'Have you heard the Nuno solo?', it was really surreal for me. It's that scenario that you fantasise about as a kid. He's saying things like, 'Other than Eddie, he's the guy!' You're like 'OK, hold on a second!' I had people I admire texting me, like Phil Collen from Def Leppard, Brian May reaching out and talking about it. You have to take a step back and go 'What's actually happening here?'"

Since the guitar Internet has blown up with people talking about it, Nuno has been trying to rationalise the response. He has some bold ideas about what it is – and isn't – about. "Mateus Asato hit me up like, 'What the f*ck did you just do?' and I'm thinking 'What do you mean what did I just do? You do this in your f*cking sleep!'" he laughs. "I realised that it's not about being able to do it. Anybody can play the solo. I'm not even joking. You break that thing down and there's not much going on technically, really."

If that's Nuno's idea of what anybody can play, we would suggest he holds off giving beginner guitar lessons for now, but his ideas about why *Rise* has struck such a chord are more convincing. "I believe the difference is that I never played the end of the *Rise* solo slow. I didn't calculate it. I had no clue what was happening because while I was recording it I decided that I want the rhythm section to guide me to whatever I'm about to do. I'll do a whole pass, and I might go, 'What did I just do?' I might break it down for myself and then do another pass, but it's got to be passionate and live at that time, even if you comp the solo from different takes. If you really want to break it down, I think it's the first note I play, I miss the whole string completely, I was so excited. It made a sound that I've never even heard before, like a kick drum mixed with a guitar note mixed with a car accident! My 18-year-old self would have fixed that, but now I was like, 'Oh my God I couldn't recreate that if I wanted to.' It went through me, and that's what I'm looking for."

As Nuno is quick to point out, it is not as though we are living through a drought of good guitar solos. "There's no lack of players in the world right now. As a matter of fact it's at a bar that's beyond belief. It's exhausting almost. Every day I wake up and scroll to Instagram. There are players that your jaw drops. You're like,

"ANYBODY CAN PLAY THAT SOLO. I'M NOT EVEN JOKING"

'I couldn't play that if I wanted to!' But what was missing was a band that puts out an album, and more importantly a video. Why a video? Because all these amazing guitar players are incredible technically, but most of them are sitting down. The rock 'n' roll culture, the passion, the fire, the danger and the joy – the physical part of it is missing. I think when somebody saw me actually *performing* a guitar solo, not just playing a solo, that's what inspires people. They want to do something that makes them go, 'F*ck this is exciting!' It's on a stage, going all-in. It's a physical-but-emotional way to play."

Even more important, he contends, is that unlike social media videos, this solo belongs in a song. "I had a little listening party with Steve Vai, Tom Morello and some of my peers. Of course when you put yourself in that position, those guys are gonna say, 'Yeah man, great album!' They're not going to tell you you suck, but what I was getting from everybody was it was a *rock* album. It's just a f*cking rock album in a time where my genre of albums don't come out that often. One of the things Rick Beato was most animated about was to see a solo in a song and in an arrangement. There's harmonies underneath. What the f*ck! What is this sorcery?"

Nuno says he didn't know the theory behind the chord progression until Beato explained it. "Those chords underneath the *Rise* solo – I did it as a vocal thing because I just heard it in my head. When Rick broke it down, I felt really smart. 'He's doing the bass over the perverted ninth' or whatever the f*ck it is. I thought for a minute, 'Oh my God, I know what I'm doing!' I probably wouldn't have done it if I'd known; it was 'wrong' in a way. But that's what's makes that second half of that thing flourish."

A couple of tasteful effects choices enhance the climax of the solo. Nuno is disappointed that no one has so far commented on the first. "Nobody's noticed it yet, but there's a higher octave on the second half of it. It was actually a plug-in because I couldn't find an octave-up pedal that I liked. The flurry at the end, it almost sounds like these harmonics are happening which I think is making people even think it's better than it is. It's just an octave up at like 20 or 30 per cent to make it grow."

The second effect was inspired by a surprise visitor to the studio. "I never record with anybody in the room," he says. "I need to black out when I play. I don't want somebody asking me if I want a f*cking cup of tea because then it wakes me up from where I am as a player and creatively. Gary [Cherone, Extreme singer] went to lunch and I go, 'Yeah, come back around one or two and I should be done with this solo.' During the recording my phone is blowing up, and it's p*ssing me off because Gary knows not to bother me while I'm recording. He keeps calling me, then he's texting me, 'Come downstairs, I'm in the front.' After the third time I'm like, 'I'm gonna punch this dude out! Something must be going on.' I go down, open the door and it's Edward Van Halen!"

Gary Cherone was Van Halen's singer in the mid-90s, featuring on the band's 1988 album *Van Halen III*. "Gary went to lunch with Edward, so I'm now talking with Edward in front of my house," Nuno continues. "He's like, 'You guys working on an album?' I said, 'Yeah, but I don't want you to come up and hear it yet. When it's done will you come back?' Stupid now in retrospect, not letting him come up and listen, but it wasn't meant to be. So maybe that's why afterwards when I was finishing that solo, I patched in the Phase 90 at the front. I've never used one my entire life until this album, because we all know the second you punch in a Phase 90 and you play the way I do, it's like 'OK, it's one thing to be influenced by Eddie, but now you're *being* Eddie.' From 1978 onward, from the day we heard *Eruption*, he owns the Phase 90. It's not MXR, it's an *Edward* Phase 90."

Nuno is at least as famous for his acoustic playing as for his shredding. There is an entire section of the public that only knows him for *More Than Words*. On Extreme's new album *Six*, that playing is exemplified on the ballad *Hurricane*. "It's about one of my best friends that I lost in a motorcycle accident about three or four years ago," he reveals. "I think I do one note on that solo. After the first bend it goes away for like four bars. It's one of my favourite parts of soloing on the album because the space is telling you the story about the pain that you're feeling, that you don't even want to play anything. I'm almost tearing up telling you about it

Nuno's Guitar Dictionary

simplexity

n. Technically advanced playing concealed by the no-nonsense spirit of rock.

"We all know rock and roll is simple, especially in my generation. It's a pentatonic world. That's why Edward Van Halen was so special, and that's why Jimmy Page was so special. We're not playing jazz, we're not John McLaughlin. How do we get creative with something so simple? Like with Yngwie Malmsteen, when I first heard Jim play with Alcatrazz, we go back and go 'Wait a second. I know this is just an E minor, but why is it so special? Why did it go through me and why did it make me want to go back and play it 20 times in a row?' The complexity of it is there, but it's hidden in the fire and the passion and the emotion. If you peel back the layers, there's a complexity. So it's *simplexity*. I think that's what rock 'n' roll is: a three-and-a-half-minute song with no science going on. We got to tell the story in two verses and touch somebody. You know how difficult that is? An eight-minute song, no problem, but you gotta touch somebody and write about something that's been written for the last 60, 70 years and still get them to cry, laugh, move them. And you wonder why we don't just spit out albums?"

"ALL MY SOUNDS HAVE TO BE REALLY WARM AND PERCUSSIVE"

EXTREME MEASURES
"If it turns me on, I play it," Nuno says. "If it's too heavy, f*ck you!"

right now, that's how much I was feeling. When I went to play it, I couldn't. I thought I can go back and fill those gaps in, or I can just leave what I felt at the time that meant something. Maybe somebody will feel that as well."

What may shock longtime Extreme fans is that for *Six*, they left the funk out. One song, *Thicker Than Blood*, has a syncopated chorus riffs that remind us of early Extreme, but as Nuno admits, "That's about it." That wasn't a calculated move, though. "We didn't even notice when we were choosing out of the 40, 50 songs we wrote how much funk there *wasn't*, but it really occurred to me as a producer. Actually I think that's good news. I think that's what it needed to be, when an album sews itself together on its own and says where we are at right now. I'm actually super excited about the next album because of it. I've gotten really inspired." He scrolls through his phone, showing TG dozens of voice notes. "They're all new song ideas. Ironically enough it's so funky! I don't know why – not even metal-funk, but *funk* funk, straight up. We even have a working album title that we're talking about. So the idea is that we don't go away for 13 years again. If we're excited, let's keep it going."

With the absence of funk and the presence of heavy drop D riffs, you might think this was Extreme's attempt at sounding modern, but Nuno insists that wasn't the plan. "The label were like, 'Great, we can cross over with this!' I didn't do it on purpose. I grew up on Metallica and bands of that generation that already did some of this sh*t. It's coming out now because it turns me on. Or maybe it's Disturbed I listened to, or maybe it's Five Finger Death Punch, subliminally. I'm not definitely not trying to be them because this is like babysitting compared to how heavy they are. We're so self-centred and in such a bubble that I don't care. If it turns me on, I play it. If it's too heavy, f*ck you! If it's too light, f*ck you. I really don't care what's happening out there right now, what's modern or what's old or what's new. I'll listen to stuff but I've never sat down and gone, 'Let's make a more modern-sounding album.'"

Certainly, Nuno's choices of gear were not more modern, being the same rig he's used on tour for the last decade. "I've always been very boring when it comes to this. There's no exciting Les Pauls or juicy stuff. It's just the Washburn N4, that block of wood with no finish that I've always played. I used my version of a Tele, the Nele that Washburn put out for me. I used it on a couple of songs. They're pretty obvious when they come up, like on *Small Town Beautiful*."

Nuno's amp is a Marshall DSL100. "A lot of people go, 'Really? We don't really like the way those sound.' The way I use it probably isn't what most people do. I have the amp pretty loud but I hate harsh sounds. All my sounds have to be really warm and a bit more percussive. When I hired a new tech he was like 'Somebody f*cked with your settings!' The presence, treble and midrange are at like one-and-a-half/two. The bass is like four or five, and it's just loud. When you turn it up it feels just right to me. You can make sh*t scream without people going 'We got to leave the building.' And you can play rhythm in a way that's really punchy and really warm."

The secret sauce is his ProCo Rat. "When I was on the Generation Axe tour with Zakk Wylde, Steve Vai, Yngwie Malmsteen and Tosin Abasi, they were like, 'What is the Rat pedal doing? You have the distortion almost all the way off.' I had every guitar player come up like, 'I don't get it, Bettencourt. It doesn't do anything.' I said 'Play the way I play for a second. Play muted, make it go like *gunk gunk gunk*.' It tightens up all the floppiness of any Marshall, any bottom end and just makes it feel like more of a kick drum. I cannot play without it. If you take that thing out of my rig, of course I'll play but it'll be a very unhappy show for me."

Nuno's Guitar Dictionary

murn

v. To play a solo that is both melodic and shredding at the same time.

"In the studio in the 80s when you're gonna go shred on the song, it was a 'burn' solo. Then on another song it's a 'melody' solo... So along with simplexity the word back then was 'murn'! If you can still make it fun and joyful and interesting for a guitar player but still keep the melody there, you've accomplished something. That's why I like my solo on *Other Side Of The Rainbow*, because it's got fire, but there's still something there to sing." Classic Nuno 'murn' solos include *Decadence Dance* and *Rest In Peace*, while on the new album *Mask* and *#Rebel* are standout murns. "The best instrumental albums always do the same thing," says Nuno. "Whether it was Beck, whether it was Satriani or even Steve Vai. You get a *Passion And Warfare*-type album, and the majority of the piece is melody driven."

"IT'S GOT TO BE PASSIONATE AND LIVE – EVEN IF YOU COMP THE SOLO FROM DIFFERENT TAKES"

The MXR Phase 90 makes another showing on album closer *Here's To The Losers*, a kind of anti-*We Are the Champions* anthem. "I was just like, 'f*ck, let's have Brian May and Edward come together and see what happens!'" he smiles.

The Brian May influence also comes out hard in the acoustic-driven mid-tempo number *Other Side Of The Rainbow*. "There's some phrasings right at the end of it that I should go to jail for even using. It's just Brian all day. Not on purpose, though – it's just in me now forever. It's a virus, the Brian May disease! I even sent it to him and said, 'I apologise for the solo. I know you're going to want it back. I'm just borrowing it for a minute!' It shows you that when I go to the melody side of things, that automatically comes out. Brian May is the most beautiful and most iconic string-bender of all time. When he bends a note it goes through you, and that's what I always picked up from him. I think that's my favourite solo on the album. It's easier when you're playing a crazy song and you're gonna go nuts. Maybe it's technically not easier, but it's to me it's a lot more difficult to hang with a melodic song and do something interesting."

Another lead guitar highlight is *Thicker Than Blood*, and Nuno is taken by surprise when we suggest it sounds like Prince. "Oh yeah, very *When Doves Cry*, even with the phrasing and stuff!" he grins. "Wow, I didn't even think of that and I'm a massive, massive Prince fan." It turns out both songs use the same octave pedal. "To me there's never been a better octave pedal than the Boss OC-2," Nuno asserts. "It just has a sound."

Overall, this album may not sound like Extreme's previous efforts but, as Nuno points out, that's always been true. "One song would be heavy and then it'd be like *More Than Words* and then it'd be a Frank Sinatra track. People were like, 'What is wrong with these guys? They can't decide who they want to be.' Somebody said to me Extreme fans aren't gonna like this. That this isn't Extreme. There was a part of me that went, 'Is that so?' Every album we've released, every song, I've heard, 'This is not Extreme! This doesn't work!' I said, 'You're basically telling me that it belongs on the album.' Every year the Extreme album ad should always be the same: expect the unexpected."

Extreme's Six is out now.

“I always see the solo as its own song”

How to play better solos, by Nuno Bettencourt

1 LET THE SONG TELL YOU WHAT TO PLAY

My first piece of advice is that the song always wins. Always. If you abandon the song and you become a guitar player first, you’ve lost already. To me that’s what was amazing about Edward Van Halen, and about Jimmy Page and all the greats: they still somehow stayed in the culture, the tonality and the melody of the song. The song is giving you three-and-a-half minutes of clues and inspiration. You have vocal melody, you’ve got lyrics, so you get what the song’s about. There’s a mood; there’s a tone. If you go rogue, it’s going to be just you on your own, and that’s hard to carry. If you say ‘A bunch of horses are going and I’m gonna ride with you,’ then you have them all with you, riding a posse of melody and strength and power. #*Rebel* is a great example. The melody when I’m doing the fast descending tapping part is the same as the backing vocal melody of the previous bridge section. I ripped it off because it was there to be taken and to keep building off. The song just gave you a foundation. Don’t go in on a mission to make yourself look good and sound good. Surrender to the song and it will do it for you.

2 THE SONG’S ARRANGEMENT CAN MAKE A SOLO BETTER

One of the main reasons the end of *Rise* works is because it went to half-time. It was a downshift. If I’d kept that going at full speed people would be like, ‘Oh, it’s just like a Racer X/Yngwie, whatever.’ Those holes, that space to allow that thing to happen is everything. You have to play the culture of the song. It’s like *Hurricane*, a song about my best friend that passed away. When somebody loses somebody, what are you gonna do – come in and f*cking rip through it? No, you’re gonna hit that one note like I did.

3 ONLY SOLO WHEN YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY

I always see the solo as its own song... and I always make it long enough to make sure it’s a song! The band’s like, ‘Come on, dude, can’t you do a 20-second solo?’ I’m like, ‘All right, I’ll try that... nope!’ I can’t do it. Well, I do it in a couple of songs. In *Here’s To The Losers* I’m actually just answering the vocal. It’s how much the guitar player has to say. Don’t do length because you want to play more. I only give myself the usual eight or 16 bars around, but then I feel like I might have more to say. If I can be creative within that I’ll leave it. There were two or three songs on this album that I actually cut back the solos, because it’s not saying anything anymore. If it’s not turning me on in the room, it’s not going to turn you on when you’re listening to it.”

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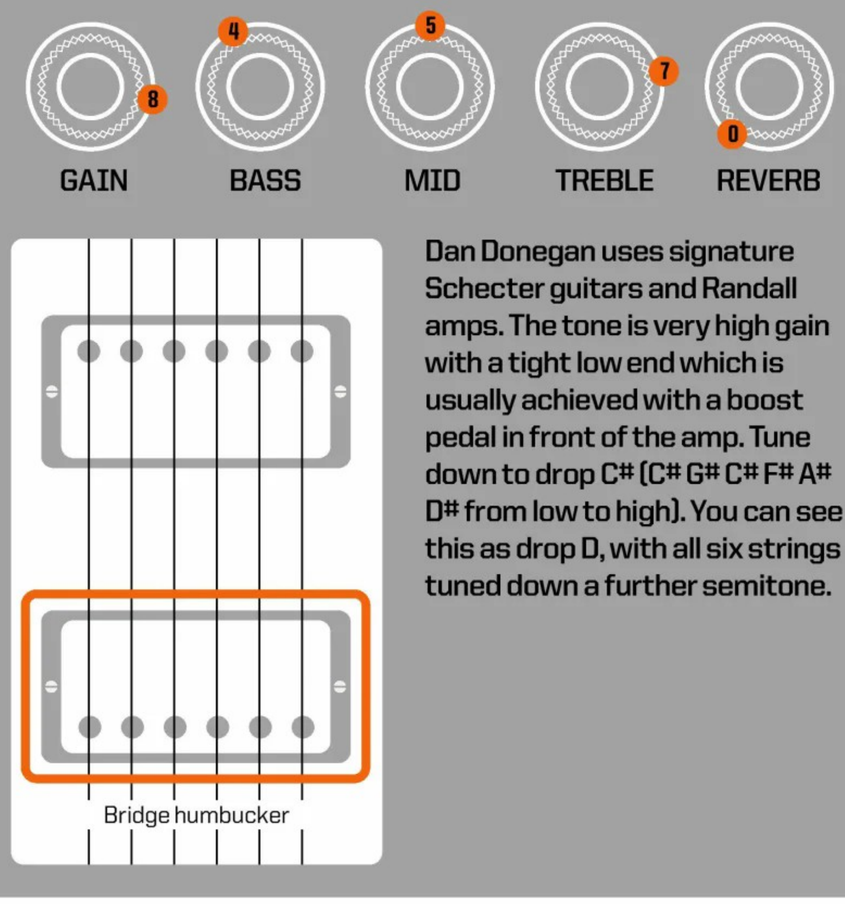
GET THE TONE

CHANNEL DISTORTION



Dan Donegan uses signature Schecter guitars and Randall amps. The tone is very high gain with a tight low end which is usually achieved with a boost pedal in front of the amp. Tune down to drop C# (C# G# C# F# A# D# from low to high). You can see this as drop D, with all six strings tuned down a further semitone.

DISTURBED

Unstoppable

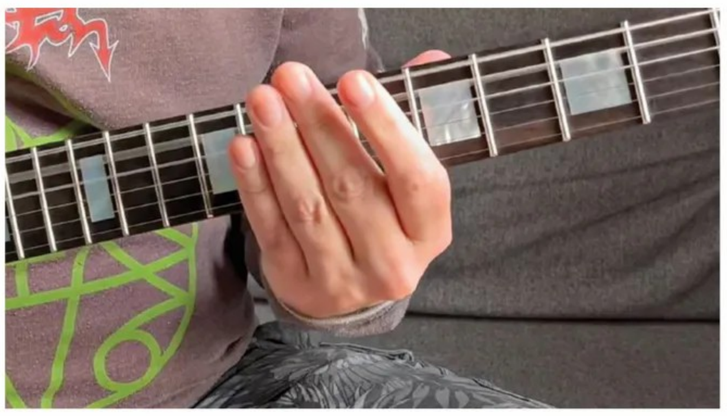
Unstoppable is the second single from the eighth Disturbed studio album *Divisive*. Dan Donegan plays this syncopated groove riff in drop C# tuning, using notes from the C# Locrian mode (C# D E F# G A B).

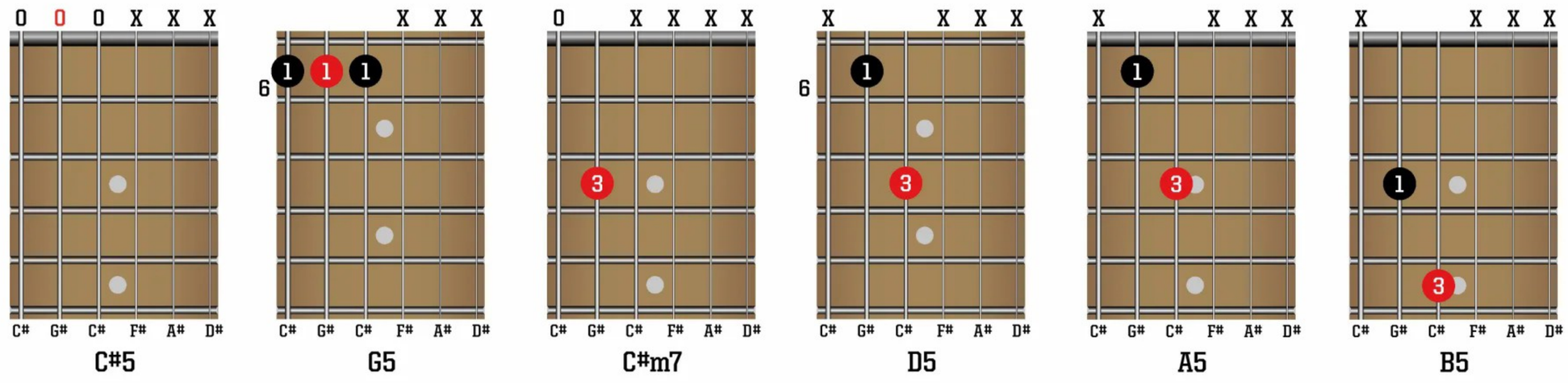
The opening pattern starts with a C#5 powerchord played with four alternate strums, followed by two palm-mutes. This repeating six-note phrase played against the 4/4 backbeat creates an interesting syncopated groove. Next play a G5 powerchord at the 6th fret with eight alternate strums. Go back to the open C#5 for four more strums, then play single notes on the 6th and 5th frets, followed by a dissonant sounding minor 7th chord using the open sixth string and 3rd fret fifth string together. The riff repeats twice with two different endings using the D5, B5 and A5 powerchords on the fifth string.

Make sure to watch our slowed down video to see how all the elements fit together in the riff.

CHEAT SHEET...

Appears at: 0:00–0:16
Tempo: 120bpm
Key/scale: C# Locrian
Main techniques: Alternate strumming, palm-muting, powerchords





The bulk of this riff pivots around a C#5 powerchord across the fourth, fifth and sixth strings. The rest of the chords are G5, D5, B5 and A5 powerchords, plus a two-note shape which we'll call C#m7 as an approximation. The shapes are simple, so it's mostly a matter of committing them to memory.

Photo Getty

Solos SPECIAL

SOLO MISSIONS

15 ways to play in the styles of today's masters of the guitar solo

Guitars and backing Jon Bishop

Welcome to the mega TG lead soloing feature. Over the following fifteen examples we are taking a whistle-stop tour through contrasting mix of musical genres of the 21st Century, with the aim of identifying just what has made these styles and their solos so great. Work through our tab examples and you too will soon be soloing with confidence in a variety of musical settings. We've ordered our examples roughly starting with the easiest to play, so why not challenge yourself to work through them all and see how far you can get?

To keep you on your toes we have used a variety of keys and time signatures, keeping our examples stylistically relevant to the tracks, bands and genres we've referenced for inspiration. For example, you can expect math-rock to use plenty of odd time signatures, so we have experimented with the unusual feel of 5/8 time.

There's a backing track for each example and each tabbed part is played four times to give you a chance to settle in and get the feel when practising. For the more technically challenging examples you may need to start slowly before playing with the track. Of course, our tab lessons are intended as springboards for your own ideas, so if you find a technique or motif that you like here, try using it in your own solos.

1 GARAGE ROCK

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Our first example is inspired by Garage Rock acts of the early noughties, such as The Strokes. A simple catchy melody is played on the second string. When this hook line is repeated the chord changes, giving it a new lease of life. Our solo is finished off with some exciting sounding rock 'n' roll style doublestops. Bending the third string and playing a doublestop on the second and first strings is an idea that can be traced back to the early rock 'n' roll guitar pioneers. The techniques we used for this example can be heard in the solos for songs like *Last Nite* and *Barely Legal*.

2 INDIE ROCK

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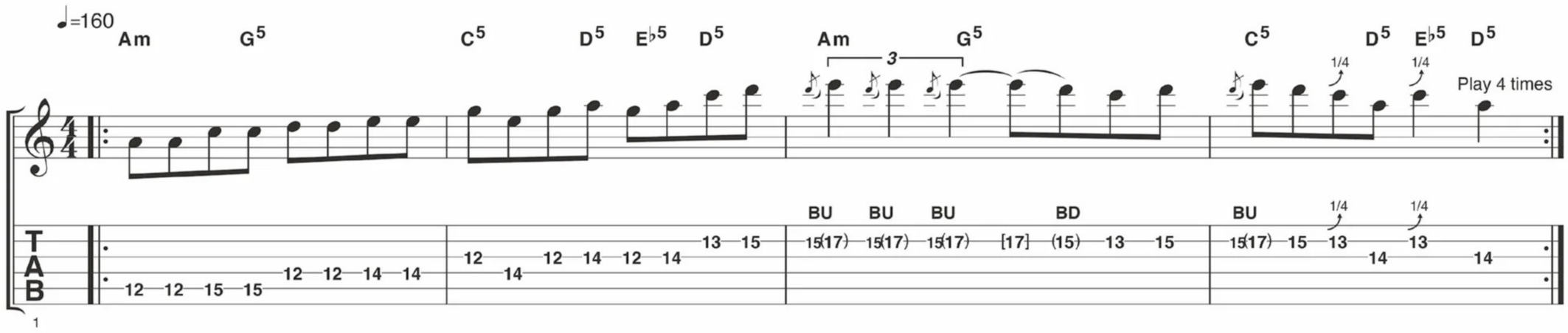
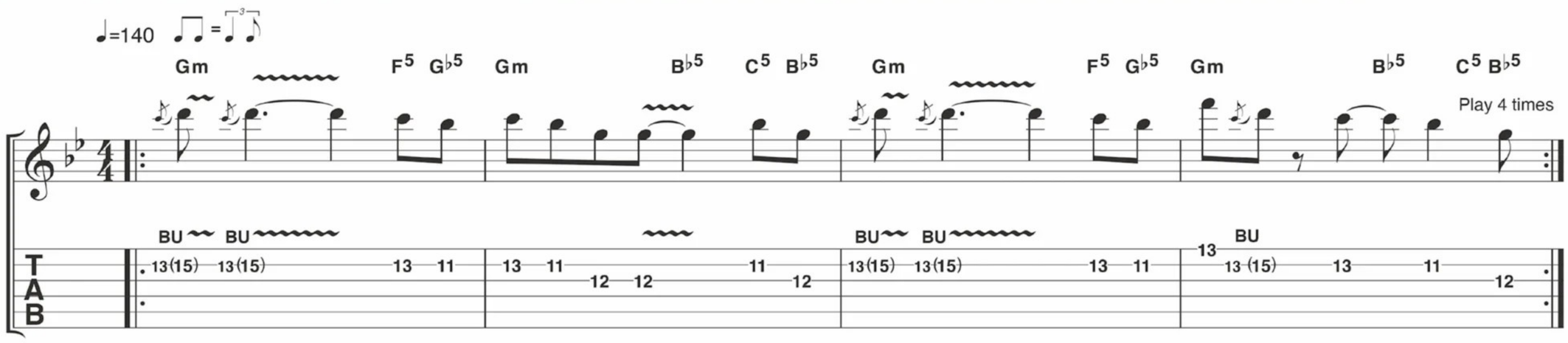


Our next example is inspired by indie rock bands like Arctic Monkeys. The minor pentatonic scale can be heard in the solos for songs like *Teddy Picker* and *I Bet You Look Good On The Dancefloor*. To maintain an even feel, try alternate picking the ascending A minor pentatonic line. Any C notes can be bent slightly sharp by a quarter-tone and this provides a bit of a blues-rock flavour.

3 PROGRESSIVE BLUES-ROCK

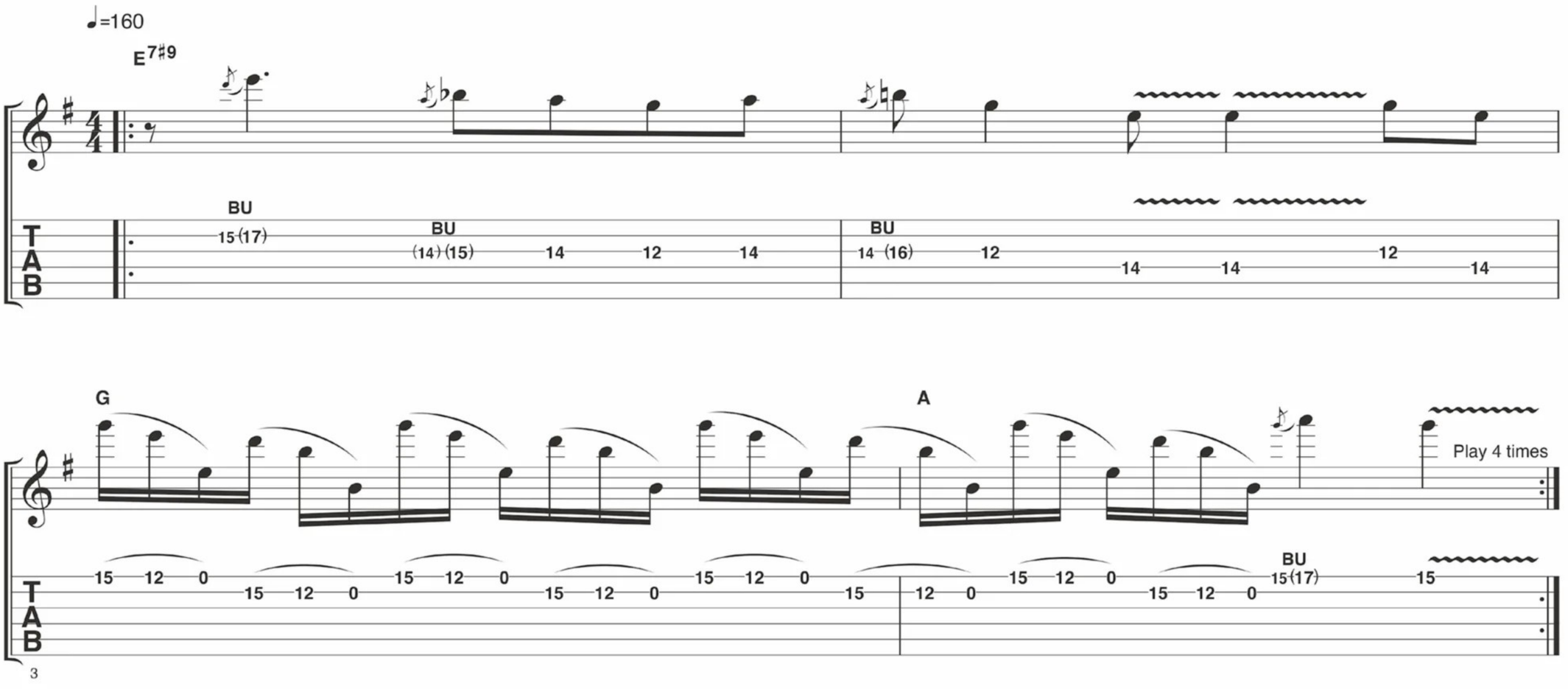
BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO



We're referencing Jack White's recent solo material here, with tracks like *Fear Of The Dawn* and *What's The Tricks* acting as our inspiration. A raspy fuzz tone is essential here. The phrasing is inspired by classic blues-style 'question and answer' ideas. The main technique to concentrate on is the string bending intonation. When practising the string bends first fret the D note (15th fret, second string) for reference and then try bending in tune from the 13th fret up to the D note.

4 UPTEMPO BLUES

BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO



Our next example is inspired by modern day blues heroes like Eric Gales. Eric is not shy of undertaking the odd Jimi Hendrix style wig-out, so this one is in the style of tracks like *Rattlin' Change*. We're using the E minor pentatonic scale at the 12th position, and any of the open strings can be included. The main idea here is to pull off from the 15th fret to the 12th and then onto the open string in one motion. This creates a run of three notes that can be repeated as many times as required. In the key of E minor, this type of idea can be played on any string as long as the pentatonic scale shape is adhered to.

5 PSYCH-ROCK

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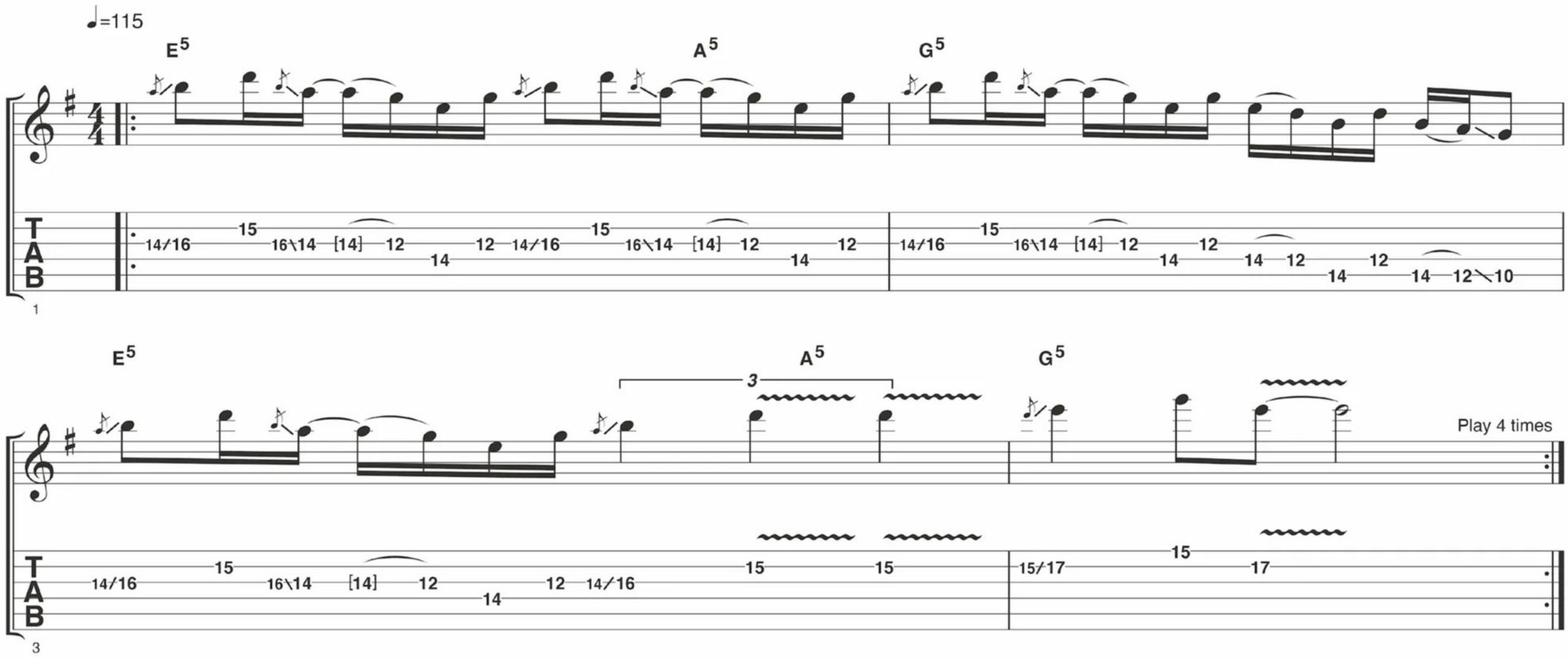

Today's psych-rock boom is spearheaded by acts like King Gizzard And The Lizard Wizard and Mdou Moctar. Typically, there is often plenty of room for long passages of guitar soloing. Repetition is key here, providing a hypnotic effect when done well. To provide that psychedelic swirl in our track we used a chorus effect with the rate on fast. You can also experiment with effects like a phaser.

6 ROOTS ROCK

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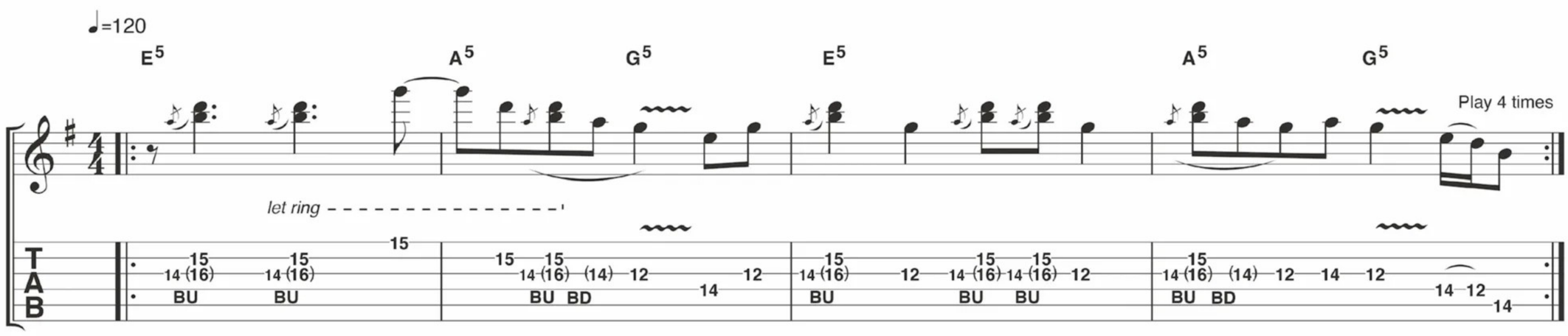

Blending elements of classic rock guitar and country guitar, Southern rock remains a traditional, rootsy style, with acts like Larkin Poe and Samantha Fish adding a modern slant. For our example we are using some classic country-style doublestop bends. These bends can be supercharged by adding a bit of overdrive.

7 NEO-SOUL

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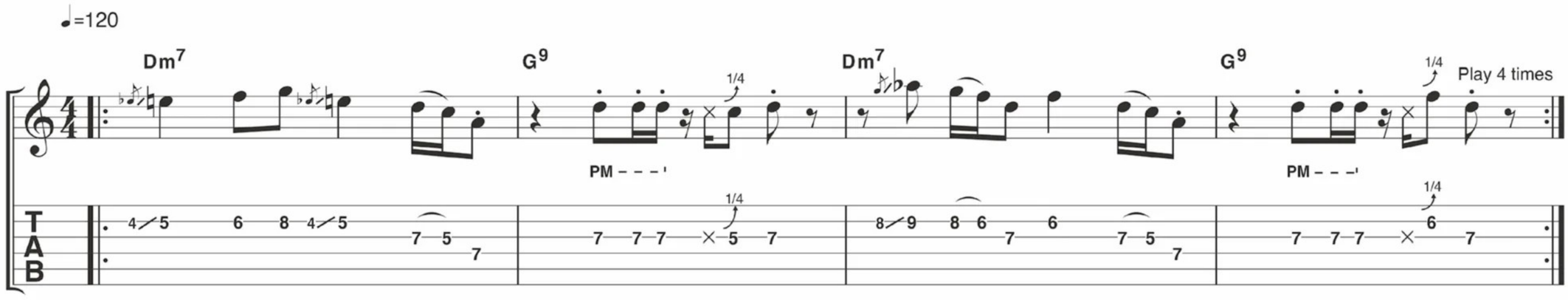
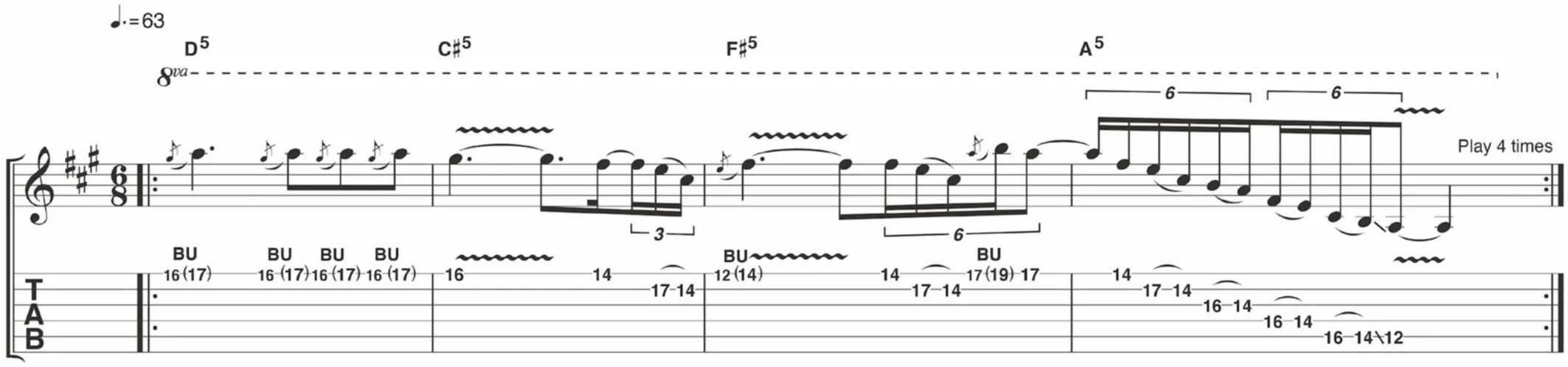


Here we're taking inspiration from neo-soul maestro Tom Misch's *Disco Yes*. The finger slide can be used to emulate the way a jazz saxophonist swoops into notes. To get this effect, simply slide into any note from a semitone below. Palm-mutes provide a more percussive attack to popping lines. To get the all-important tone, try selecting the neck pickup on your guitar and also roll the tone control off a bit.

8 HARD ROCK / METAL

BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO



Often the heavier guitar styles are synonymous with guitar soloing, and here we look to bands Alter Bridge and Avenged Sevenfold for inspiration. Here, a wah-wah helps bring our lick to life, and the fast, descending run provides a nice challenge. We have used a churning 6/8 feel here so the count in is six clicks followed by a one-bar fill.

9 STONER ROCK & METAL

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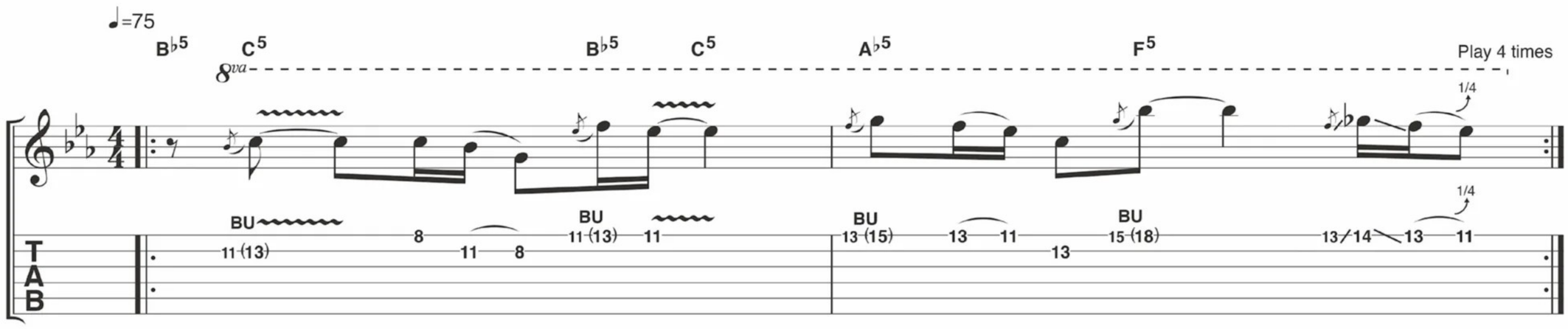

Blues influences and, indeed, the blues scale are commonplace in stoner rock and metal, for example in Mastodon's *Teardrinker* – and we're in C blues here in our example. The big bends can be tricky to execute, so if you are new to three-fret bends be sure to warm up first, and take care not to snap a string!

10 REVIVALIST BLUES-ROCK

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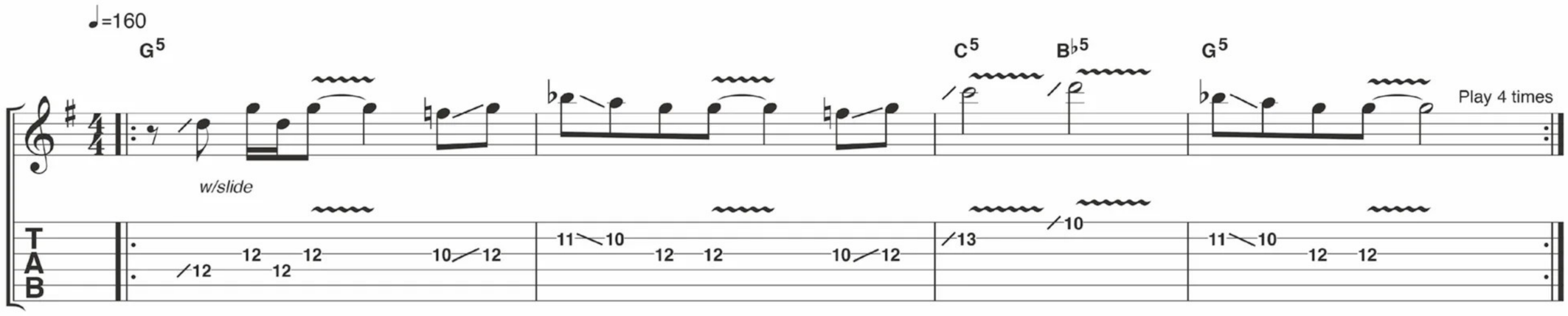

Inspired by Rival Sons' *Do Your Worst*, we're breaking out the bottleneck slide here. If you're new to slide playing, make sure your slide is directly over the indicated fret – not behind it. The other aspect of clean slide work is muting unwanted string noise. The fingers of both hands can rest on the strings as you play.

11 PROG METAL

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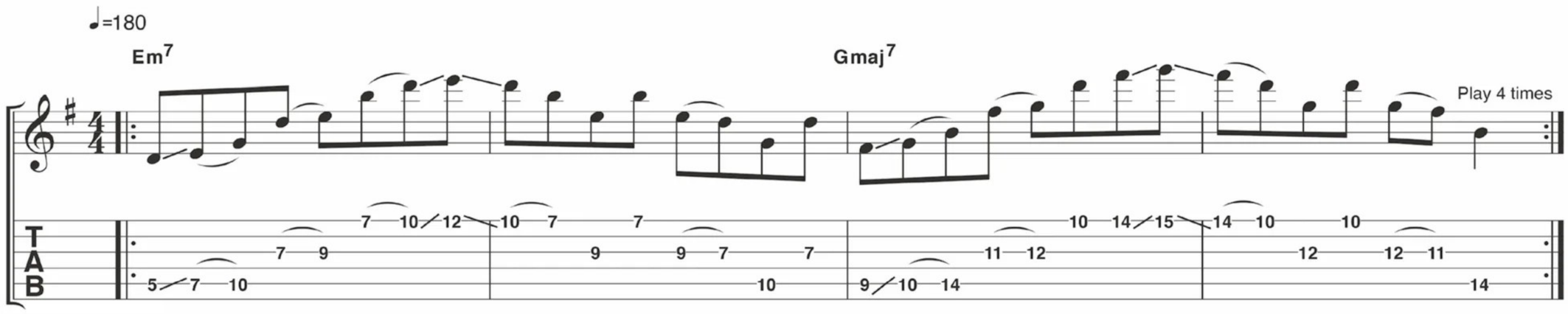
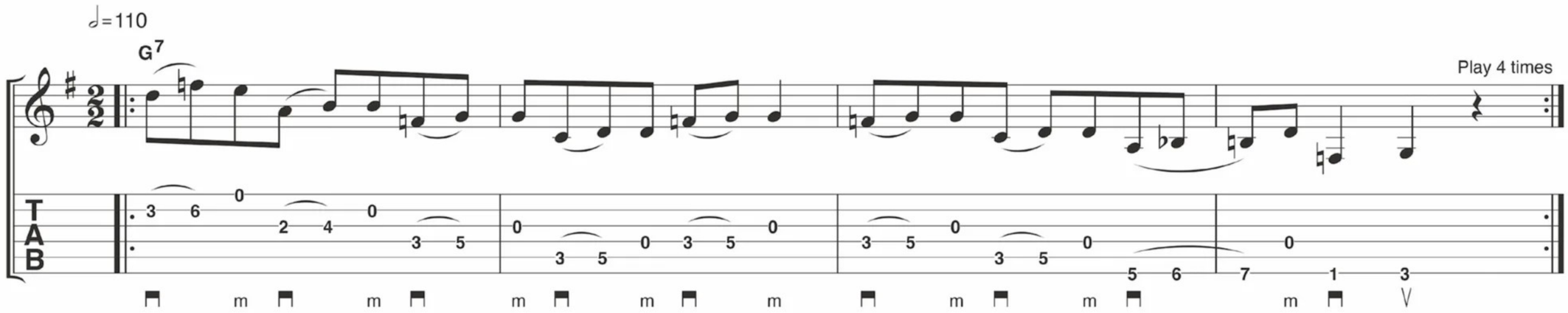


The string-skipping technique can be used to provide ear-grabbing leaps in pitch. Here in our prog-metal style lick, inspired by Periphery's *Scarlet*, we've linked the Em7 arpeggio to a Gmaj. Pointing the headstock towards the ceiling at 45 degrees can help with the ease of fingering.

12 UPTEMPO COUNTRY

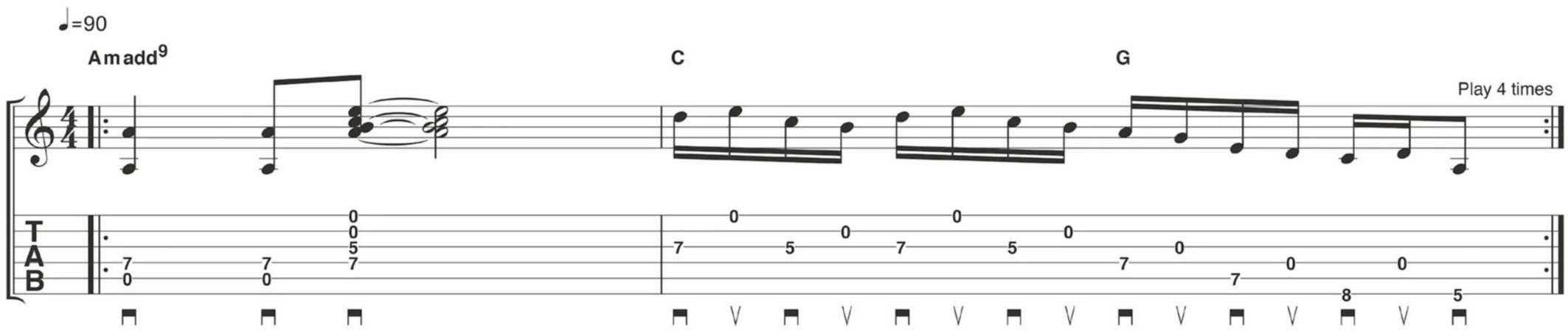
BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO



Country often features high-octane solos with plenty of fast chickin' picking. In our example we're using 'pick and fingers'-style hybrid picking as employed by virtuosos like Johnny Hiland. The same picking pattern is repeated to create a flowing lick. The picking pattern goes: downpick, hammer-on, then fingerpick the open string.

13 ACOUSTIC FLATPICKING

BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO



The flatpicking technique just means to use a plectrum as opposed to playing fingerstyle. Our example is inspired by the fast flatpicking abilities of guitarists like Molly Tuttle and Billy Strings. Notice how open strings are used to create a flowing, cascading lick.

14 VIRTUOSO INSTRUMENTAL SHRED

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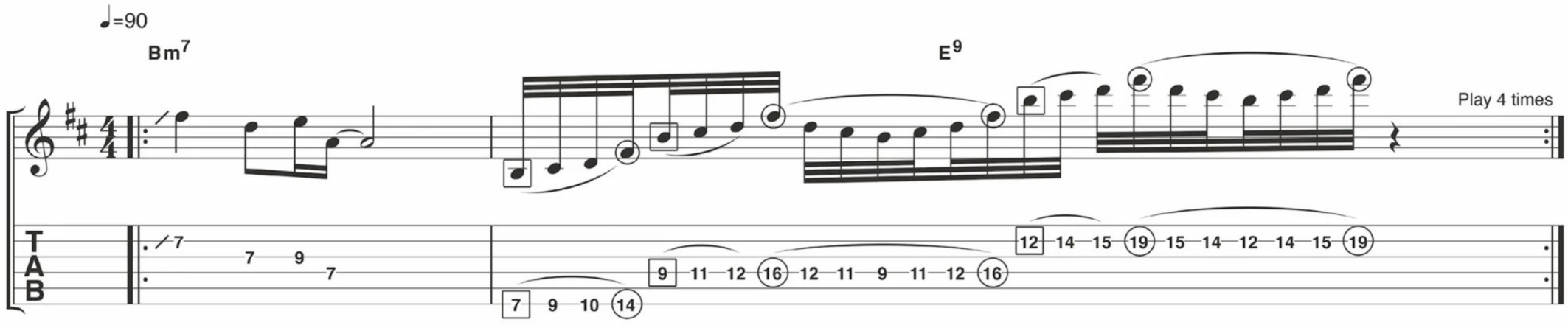

For this example, we're increasing the wow factor by introducing a bit of two-handed tapping – a mainstay of contemporary shredders like Plini and Guthrie Govan. The idea here is to use a four-note-per-string fingering on the sixth, fourth and second strings. The first finger hammers on and is followed by fingers three and four.

15 MATH-ROCK

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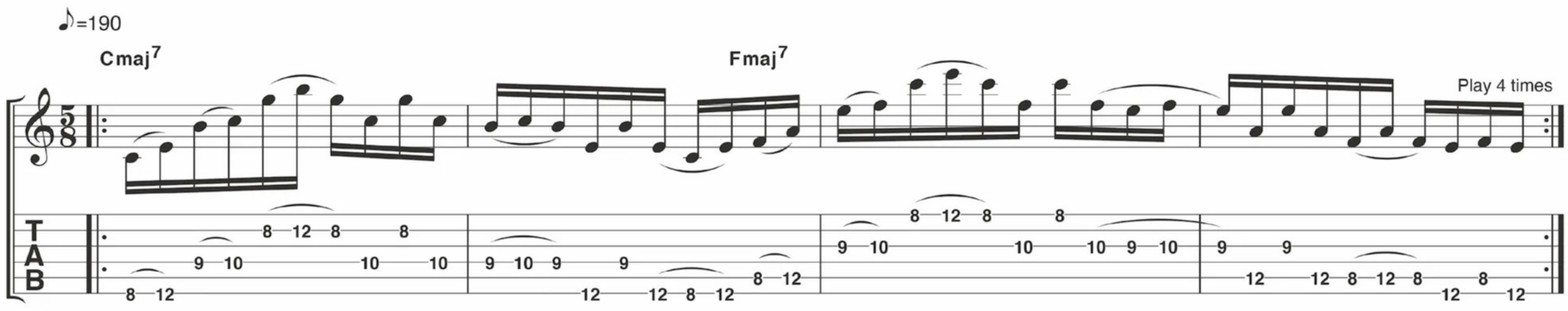

For this final example we're using the rather math-rock time signature of 5/8, as used by Covet in songs like *Lovespell*. To create a flowing line we have linked the Cmaj7 and Fmaj7 arpeggios. The string-skipping element makes these arpeggios easier to play in patterns, as opposed to just straight up or straight down.

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN
- ✔ Vibrato
- ✔ String muting
- ✔ Whammy pedal soloing

RIFF OF THE MONTH

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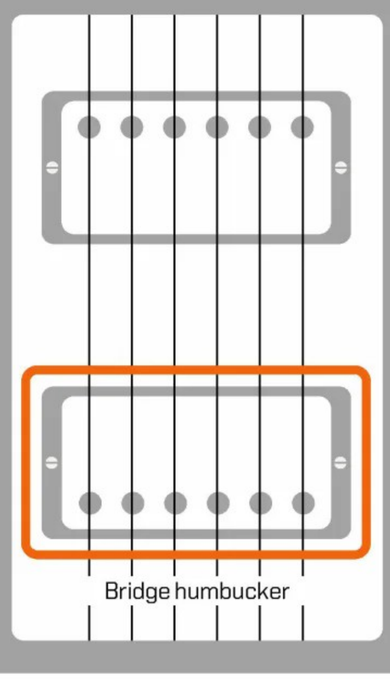
GET THE TONE

CHANNEL **DISTORTION**

GAIN	BASS	MID	TREBLE	REVERB
7	6	4	6	0



Use the bridge pickup on your guitar for a full, clear distorted tone, with plenty of sustain. Set your Whammy pedal or similar pitch shifter (most treadle-equipped multi-fx pedals should have a suitable effect) so its heel-down position is at standard pitch and its toes-down position raises the pitch by two octaves. That's the equivalent of playing an open string followed by the same string at the 24th fret.

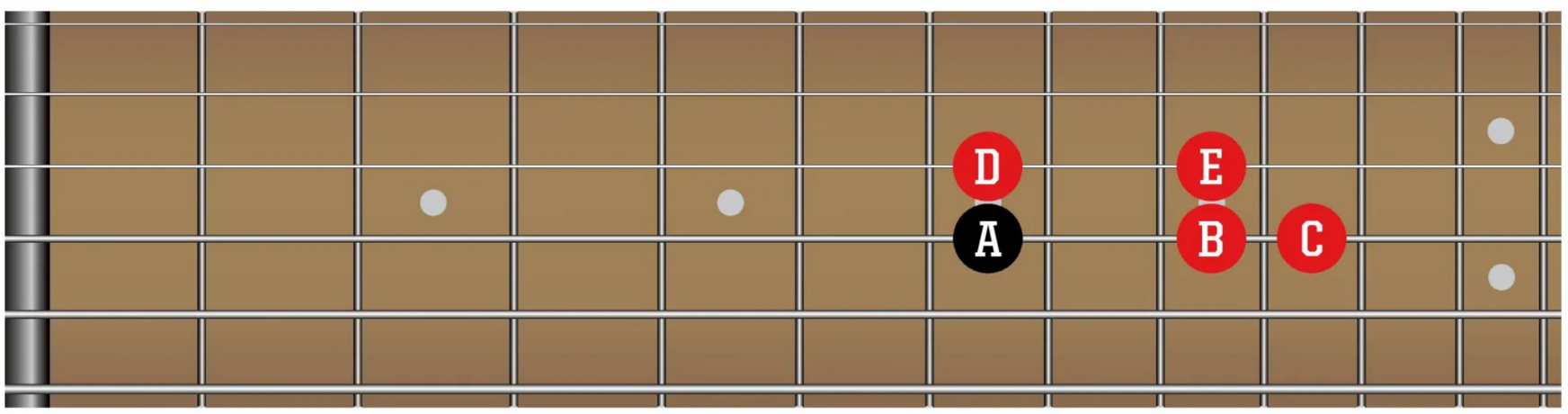
MÅNESKIN

Gossip

Taken from Måneskin's third album *Rush!*, this track features some bouncy A minor riffs from guitarist Thomas Raggi, plus a guest appearance by Rage Against The Machine guitarist Tom Morello, who delivers the trademark Whammy pedal solo that we're looking at here. Keep Tom's single-note melody clean and clear by using the underside of your fretting finger to silence the treble strings, and the side of your pick hand palm to mute the bass strings. As you pick each note, push forward with your foot on the pedal evenly to bend each pitch an octave higher. Note that each three-note phrase ends with standard *finger vibrato* – it's not executed with the Whammy. Be sure to watch our slowed down video of the riff where we demonstrate both picking/fretting, plus you can see the pitch shifter pedal operation up close, too.

CHEAT SHEET...

Appears at: 1:08–1:22
Tempo: 140bpm
Key/scale: A minor
Main techniques: Vibrato, Whammy pedal, string muting



At first glance, this riff hints at the basic A natural minor scale (A B C D E F G). However, the backing riff suggests that the A harmonic minor scale (A B C D E F G♯) should be used, thanks to the presence of a G♯ note instead of a G. In fact it's a moot point because, as you can see, no G note of any kind is employed in this melody. Use your first finger to play the 7th fret notes and third and fourth fingers reach the remaining fret positions.

Photo Getty

V FOR VICTORY
Brent Hinds with his Silverburst Flying V

Words Amit Sharma

MARCH OF THE FIRE ANTS

MASTODON

(2002)

Heaviness with a vast sonic range – achieved with an unorthodox approach to tuning and a classic sense of two-guitar harmony

There are numerous Mastodon tracks composed entirely out of top-tier riffs, from the early greatness of *Blood And Thunder* and *The Last Baron* through to more modern musings such as *Andromeda* and *More Than I Could Chew*. But, in many ways, it's the second track and only single from their 2002 debut *Remission* that felt like the first big taste of the sound they'd become known for and later expand upon – mixing elements of sludge, groove and progressive metal in ways few had ever dared to before them.

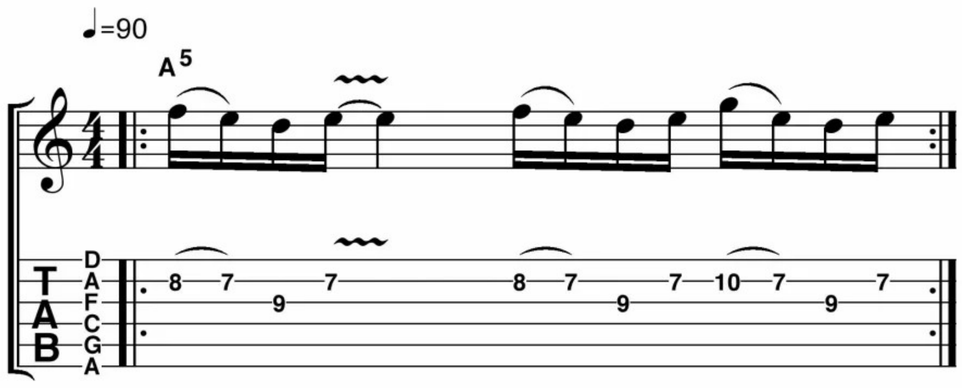
On *March Of The Fire Ants*, as well as other early tracks like *Where Strides The Behemoth* and *Mother Puncher*, they also helped popularise a tuning very rarely used in metal at the time, with the guitar dropped down a whole step and then the sixth string tuned all the way down to A. This allowed them to play standard powerchords on the two heaviest strings and produce a lower octave instead of the typical root and perfect fifth, deeply extending the lower range of their guitars without sacrificing much of the higher register, as would be the case from tuning all strings down in relation to that low A.

In *March Of The Fire Ants*, the first 50 seconds take full advantage of having two wildly talented players in the group, Bill Kelliher first allowing his chords to ring out through the pauses and then harmonising around the main riff played by Brent Hinds. They also layer up heavily during the interlude that follows the second chorus, the Iron Maiden-esque top line being doubled an octave up before a harmony playing the same idea seven frets down gets thrown in for good measure. The melodic stretch gives way to furious discordance in the section that comes next, dialling up the heaviness with arguably the song's most jarring riff – which once again uses the low A against higher open strings to cover a vast amount of sonic range and twist the ear in the most unexpected of ways.

Similarly, there are some really interesting clashes in parts of the verse, where Kelliher attacks the third fret of his third string as the two higher strings ring out open before eventually resolving one fret higher. He's purposefully drawing attention to the note that's out by a semitone and that's precisely what makes the part sound so atmospheric and menacing, later taking it to further extremes by playing the same kind of idea an octave up around the 15th fret.

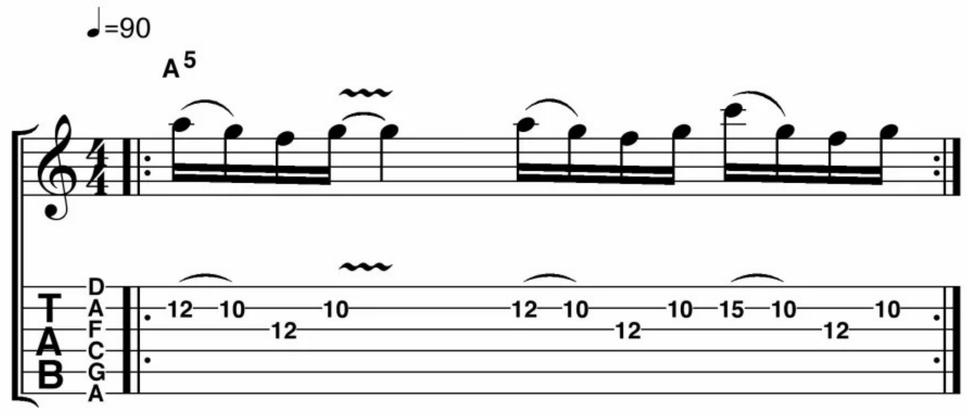
In the *March Of The Fire Ants* video, Hinds can be seen with the white Gibson Flying V he relied on heavily during their early years through a Marshall JMP while Kelliher can be spotting holding another old favourite, a Gibson Les Paul Custom Silverburst, going through a JCM series Marshall – which is most likely what we're hearing on the recording.

HARMONY GUITAR 1 (AGCFAD TUNING) BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO



Though Bill and Brent used a mixture of harmonies in *March Of The Fire Ants*, we're looking at a fairly simple idea here. Take note of the 10th fret G note on beat 4. We'll come back to that...

HARMONY GUITAR 2 (AGCFAD TUNING) BIT.LY/TGA2024AUDIO



All the notes here harmonise in diatonic 3rds with guitar 1 in the key of A minor. Except, that is, for the 15th fret C note on beat 4 which is a 4th interval above the G in guitar 1.

Photo Getty

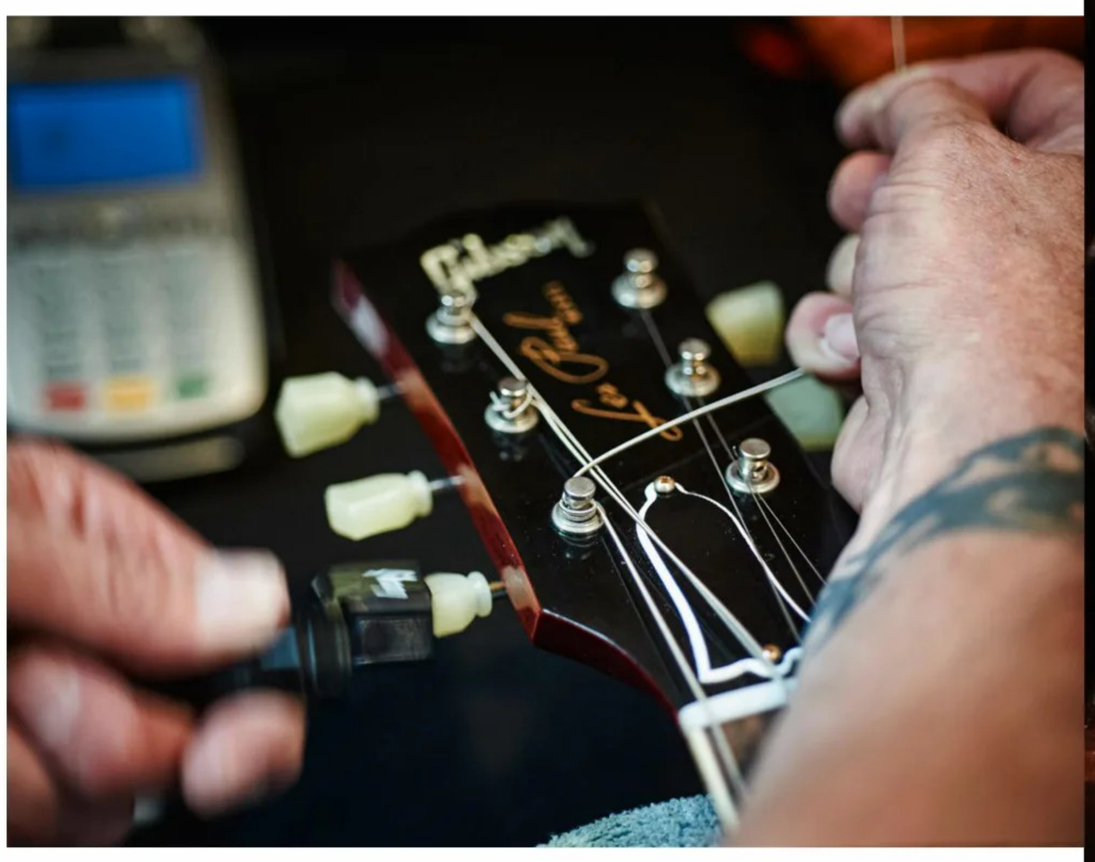
Words Chris Bird, Rob Laing, Stuart Williams

18 WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR TONE

It's the most hotly-debated aspect of guitar playing! Read on as we look at the best ways to optimise your setup and get more *TONE*!

01
Change your pick

Your choice of pick fundamentally affects your tone. Gently-strummed acoustic parts laid back in the mix of a soft rock ballad generally benefit from thin picks with some give, so plastic, tortex or similar are order of the day here. Alternatively, if you want a Queen- or ZZ Top-style harmonic-rich biting electric sound, the ring of a metal pick on metal strings is best. Experiment with a variety of picks to see what works best for you.



02
Try different string gauges

Some people will insist that heavier strings sound better. They may be right. They may however be wrong. What we know for sure is that you can expect a different tone from two otherwise identical string sets of a different gauge. Stevie Ray Vaughan strung his Strat with fingertip-busting 0.013s. His fellow Texan tonehound Billy Gibbons has used strings as light as 0.007s. So there's really no right or wrong, only what's best for you.

04
Leave bass frequencies to the bass guitar

Sorry to disappoint you, but more bass in your guitar tone doesn't necessarily equate to a fatter live sound. At least not if there's a bass player in your band, stealing most of the low end in the mix. Don't try and compete! Give the bass its space and be happy occupying the midrange. You'll find it easier to mix your band's sound and you'll cut through with ease.

03
String materials/ construction

The gauge of string isn't the only deciding factor in its tone. String companies offer strings mode of various alloys and with different construction methods too. The size of the core and the shape of the wire wrapped wound around it all affect feel and tone. It can be a bit of a journey to find what works for you, but keep in mind that flatwound strings are super-smooth, and generally used for jazz. Roundwounds are more general purpose. And, for those who can't make up their minds, there are half-rounds.

05
Cut saturation at high volume

Pedalboard settings carefully crafted at home often don't transfer perfectly to a loud live setting. Once you crank your amp's volume up loud you'll probably need far less distortion than you did at neighbour-friendly levels – especially if you're using a valve amp, where power-amp distortion comes in to play. If you practise in a rehearsal room, spend some time auditioning your tones at stage levels.

06
Use an EQ notch filter to banish feedback

If playing loud or with high gain is part of your act, you've probably encountered the shrill screaming sound of feedback on many occasions. One solution is to keep a multi-band EQ pedal on your 'board. In general, the more bands your pedal has the better – and the Boss EQ-200 is a good option. You want to make a narrow-band EQ cut that matches the frequency of the feedback. Bear in mind that feedback tends to be different in every room so be prepared to tweak every time you play.

07
Top-wrap your tune-o-matic bridge

Insert strings the 'wrong way' into your Les Paul's tailpiece (i.e., so they point away from the headstock) then wrap them over the top, across the bridge and then attach as normal at the machine heads. You'll probably need to screw the tailpiece most, if not all the way down to the body to get optimal string tension over the bridge – but that's the point. Many LP players (Joe Bonamassa, for example) insist you'll increase the resonance of your guitar with this simple setup tweak.

08
Volume control treble bleed mod

Standard guitar volume controls can cause a loss in treble when you turn them down. That's because, as a side effect of altering volume, they act as a low-pass filter. To get round this, you can do a treble-bleed modification. This is either a capacitor, or a resistor and a cap, wired, usually in parallel, to the pot. Popular combinations are a 150k resistor with a 0.001uf cap, or 100k/0.002uf.

09
Give your Strat a bridge tone pot

This one's massive, and won't cost you a bean (assuming you own a soldering iron). Vintage-style Strats use the second tone pot for the middle pickup, but it's the bridge pickup that's often a bit shrill. It's easy to swap the tone control from middle to bridge by locating the wire connecting the second tone pot to the middle pickup on the selector switch. Move it one tag towards the middle of the switch, changing it from the middle to the bridge pickup.

10
Raise your guitar's action

Sure, it's easier to shred like a demon when your string height is low, but if burning up the fretboard isn't your MO you may want to consider asking your local guitar tech to raise your guitar's action a tad. You see, the lower you go, the more you'll encounter the dreaded string buzz. And you really only have to raise it a tiny bit to hear an improvement in your tone.

11
Get your pedals in order

Follow these signal chain golden rules to get great tone without trial and error. Wah pedals come first, before preamps and distortion/drive pedals. Plug these into your amp's input. If your amp has an effects loop, add delays, modulations and reverb pedals in that order here. These effects create copies of the signal hence they usually sound better after gain. Compressors are usually best placed either first in your chain (great for taming spiky funk chops) or last (more akin to studio compression; great for smooth lead tones). Of course, rules are made to be broken, but this is a hassle-free starting point.

12
Adjust pickup height

This is one of the most under-appreciated tips of all. Raising your pickups closer to the strings should, in theory, increases the output level. However, pickups raised too close to the strings can cause "wolf notes", when the magnetic field of the pickup interferes with the natural vibration of the string resulting in unpleasant sounds. Aim for the sweet spot where the balance of output level and tonal purity meet!

13
Use string-mutes for cleaner leads

Ask yourself, how clean is your playing, technically speaking? If the honest answer is that it could be cleaner, well, there is help at hand until you've got those shred skills up to speed. A fretwrap is a soft wraparound length of fabric that you can use either on the fretboard behind your fretting fingers (or even behind the nut) to minimise string noise. For the driest of dry sounds you can place a piece of foam between the bridge and tailpiece of a Les Paul-style tune-o-matic bridge.

14
Get buff

Lengthy cables and long chains of effects pedals can degrade your tone. Solve this by adding a buffer to your 'board. If you own a lot of pedals there's a good chance one of them already has an onboard buffer. If a super-long cable is the offending item (and assuming you can't replace it with a shorter length alternative), placing the buffer at the start of your signal chain will help. And if changing effect order isn't viable, a dedicated buffer pedal is an affordable item.

15
Try a clean boost

A secret weapon on any gigging guitarist's pedalboard, a clean boost will increase your signal level – usually by around 15-20dB – but without the extreme sonic colouration of a distortion pedal. If you love your valve amp's tone and don't want to fundamentally change it, a boost pedal is for you. Use one as a temporary boost for soaring solos, or as an 'always-on' brightness/EQ bump.

16
Get your guitar set up

Maybe this is obvious, but keeping your pride and joy ship shape and in tip top condition will help you get the most out of it. We recommend paying your local guitar tech a visit once a year.

17
Identify your tonal "problem" first

Perhaps we should've opened on this slightly philosophical point, but, suffice to say, it's important not to go too far down the rabbit hole of the quest for tonal nirvana. If you liked the sound of your gear when you bought it, ask yourself whether you really, truly need to upgrade it. Sometimes optimising the gear you already own is all you need to do...

18
Use the right-sized amp

Valve amps need to be working at their 'sweet spot' to sound best. Weirdly, for most Marshalls and Fenders, that seems to be anywhere from four to eight on the master, in our experience! If you find a valve amp sounds somehow 'cold', 'brittle' or harsh, it might be that it's just not turned up enough to be working at its best. Joe Perry of Aerosmith, for example, uses small amps, suitably mic'd up, even for stadium gigs.

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN
- ✔ Powerchords
- ✔ Octave shapes
- ✔ Minor triads

RIFF OF THE MONTH

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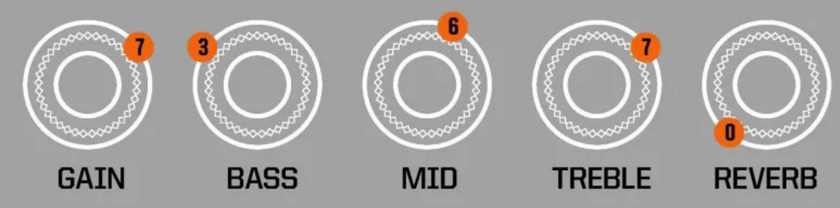
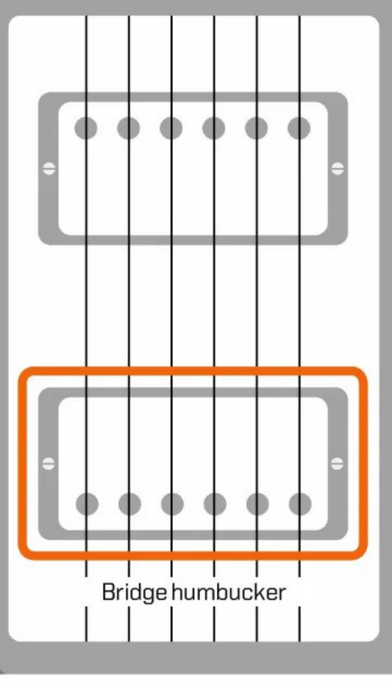
GET THE TONE

CHANNEL OVERDRIVE





The tone of this track is created by a combination of two guitars, one panned left and the other to the right. In the left speaker the guitar is a clean-ish single-coil tone, probably Arson's Telecaster Custom bridge pickup, and he's known for playing Fender amps. The right speaker has a gritty fuzz pedal engaged. Carlstroem has been seen playing his Epiphone Coronet, which is also equipped with a single-coil, but a fatter sounding P90-esque New York unit.

THE HIVES

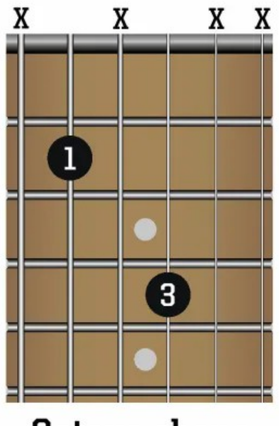
Countdown To Shutdown

Taken from the band's sixth studio album *The Death Of Randy Fitzsimmons*, the intro to The Hives' *Countdown To Shutdown* features a two-guitar arrangement comprised of pounding fuzz-tone octave shapes by Vigilante Carlstroem, panned to the right side, and a sequence of cleaner minor triads thrashed out by Nicholaus Arson and panned to the left.

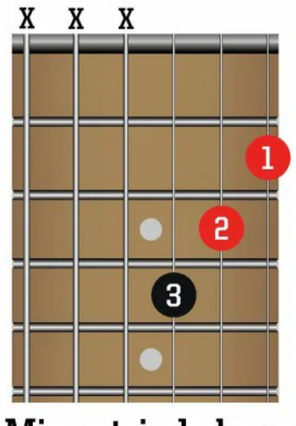
Play the octaves for the opening four-note chromatic pattern with your first and third fingers; the phrase starts on the 3rd fret and is repeated at the 8th fret. This riff is mirrored by minor triads played from the same root notes. Then, the triad part diverges, moving up to the 13th fret as the octave part returns to the 3rd. For the next section, both guitars play the same part, starting with an A5 powerchord at the 5th fret. Keep your hand fixed in position as you move around the fretboard, with root notes outlining the A natural minor scale (A B C D E F G). Watch our slowed-down video performance to see how both guitar parts work together.

CHEAT SHEET...

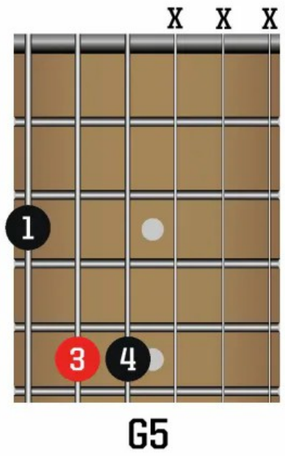
Appears at: 0:00-0:20
Tempo: 142bpm
Key/scale: Chromatic/A minor
Main techniques: Octave shapes, powerchords



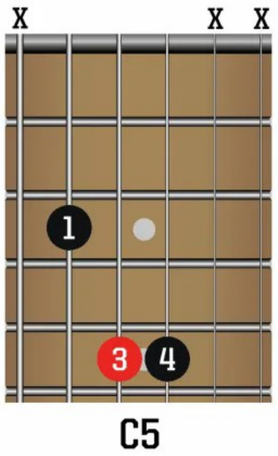
Octave shape



Minor triad shape



G5



C5

There's not room to show everything here. However, the octave shapes are played at every position between the 2nd and 10th frets (except for the 6th). The triads are played with their third-string root notes at every position between the 4th and 21st frets (except for the 8th and 17th frets). There are two powerchord shapes played variously between the 3rd, 5th 7th and 8th frets.

Photo Getty

ROCK'S GREATEST PIONEERS

Get inside the playing styles of rock's most influential guitarists, from trailblazers Jimi Hendrix and Eric Clapton to later mavericks like Tom Morello and Matt Bellamy

This lesson, we take a whistle stop tour through the playing styles of the most influential rock guitarists of all time. We'll be concentrating our efforts on highlighting their key contributions – and that means you'll be looking at the most important techniques that have steered rock and influenced later generations.

We start off in the 1960s with players like Jimi Hendrix and Eric Clapton who took the vocabulary of the blues and supercharged it with Marshall stacks and no desire to turn them down. Next up are godfathers of hard rock and heavy metal, Ritchie Blackmore and Jimmy Page. Their influential riffing would go on to inspire generations of heavy rockers right up to the present day.

Other guitar innovations we look at come in the form of Eddie Van Halen's tapping technique, Tom Morello's kill switched rhythms and Matt Bellamy's use of the Whammy pedal.

With a mixture of rhythm and lead, clean and crunch, humbuckers and single coils, hopefully there's something for everyone… **Plug in and let's rock!**

1 JIMI HENDRIX: FIERY FUZZ LEAD

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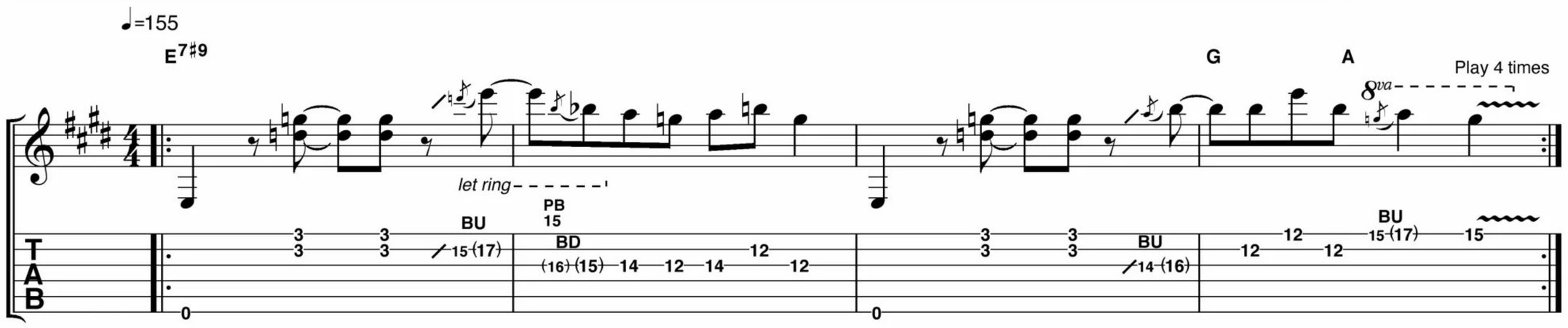

Possibly *the* single most important innovator in rock, Jimi Hendrix popularised techniques and effects that still inspire guitarists today. Our example combines a raspy fuzz distortion with a psychedelic sounding Uni-Vibe 'wobble'. Take care as you switch between the opening E7#9 chord and the high position minor pentatonic licks.

2 ERIC CLAPTON: BLUES-ROCK PHRASING

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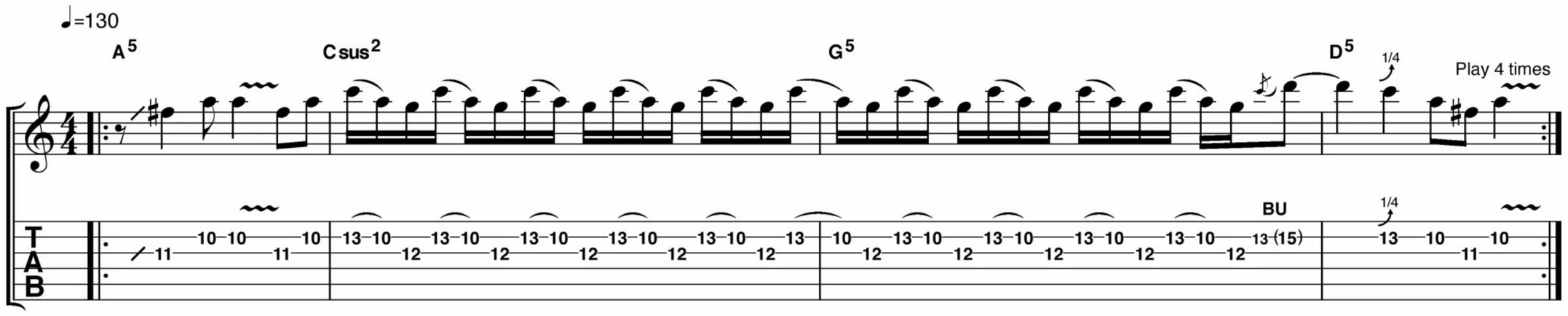

One of the most influential figures of the 1960s British Blues Invasion, Clapton was one of the early greats to authentically employ classic blues phrasing in rock. Typical techniques on show here in our lick are finger vibrato, string-bending and a simple repeating pentatonic phrase – which can serve as a canvas for further experimentation.

3 JIMMY PAGE: HARD ROCK RIFFING

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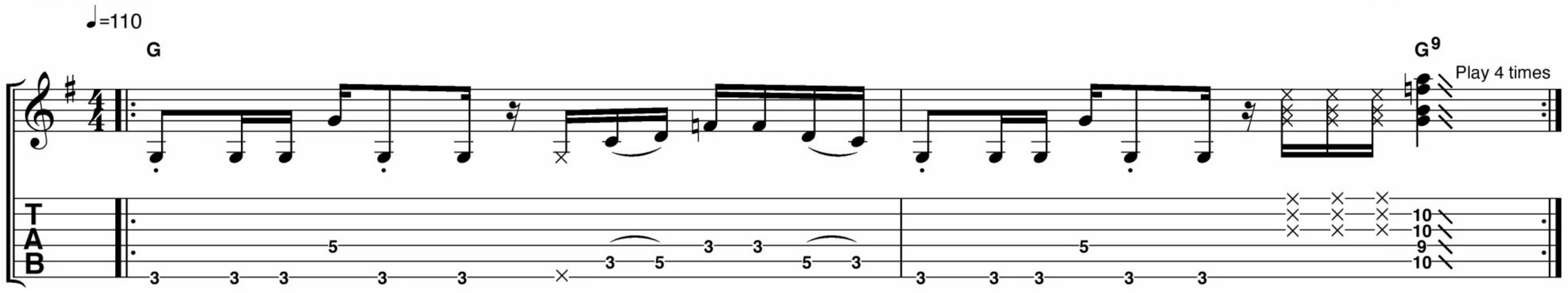

Led Zeppelin riff machine Jimmy Page helped lay the foundations for hard rock, and our example takes inspiration tracks like *Immigrant Song* and *Whole Lotta Love*. The fast picking on the sixth and fourth strings may take practice, so we recommended starting slowly. The funky 9th chord is heard in some of Zeppelin's bluesier tracks.

4 RITCHIE BLACKMORE: VIRTUOSO SOLOING

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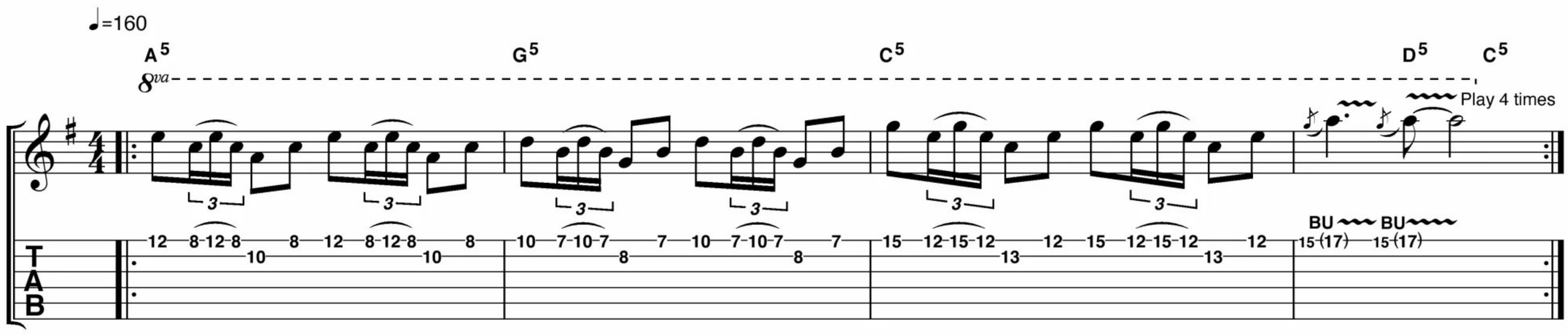

One of rock's first virtuosos, Deep Purple and Rainbow guitarist Ritchie Blackmore incorporated classical influences into his soloing, influencing a new wave of neo-classical shredders such as Yngwie Malmsteen. Our example is inspired by songs like *Highway Star*, and uses fast triad arpeggios that outline the chords.

5 DAVID GILMOUR: MELODIC PHRASING

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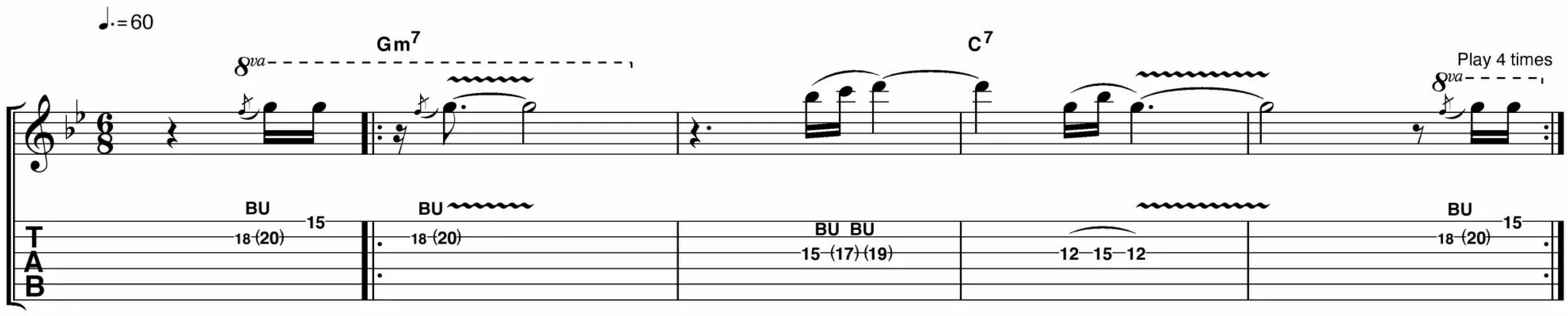

Pink Floyd's guitarist David Gilmour is a master of the melodic lead solo, blending authentic blues phrasing into the band's psychedelic backdrops. Our lick is inspired by clean-tone soloing on classic tracks *Shine On You Crazy Diamond* and *Echoes*. Watch out for the trademark Gilmour double bend, here pitched from B♭ to C to D.

6 EDDIE VAN HALEN: THE ALL-ROUND TECHNICIAN

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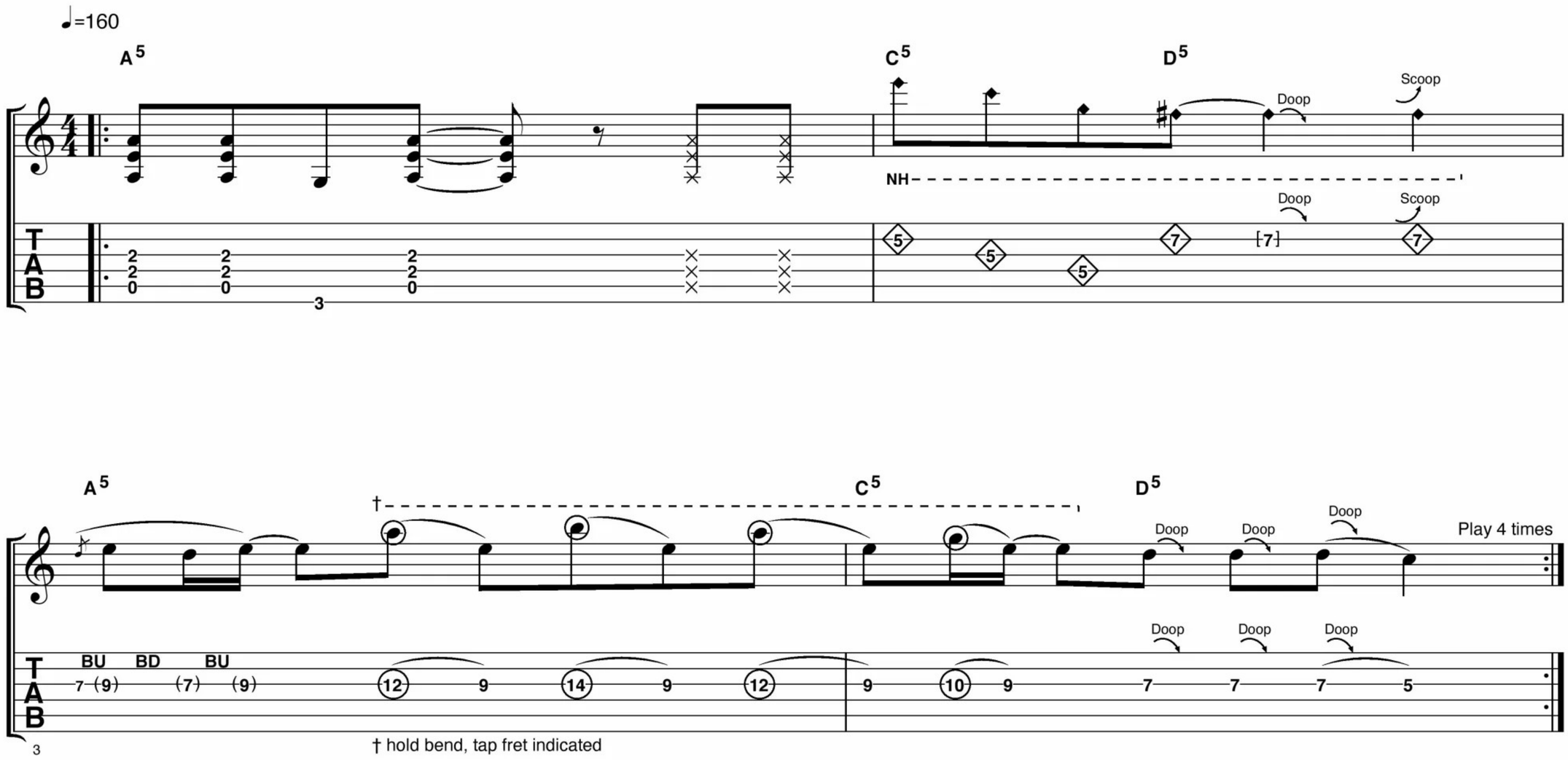

After Hendrix, Eddie Van Halen is surely the most influential rock guitarist of all time, pioneering and popularising techniques that inspired a generation of shredders – and there's plenty to get your teeth into here! We recommend breaking our example down bar by bar and working on each individual technique.

7 AC/DC: MALCOLM YOUNG-STYLE SPARSE RHYTHM

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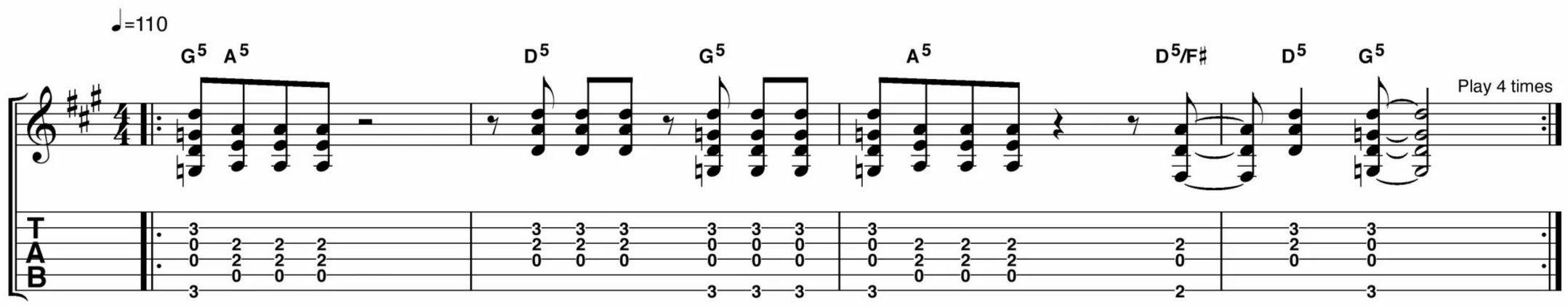

Very much the engine room of the band, Malcolm Young's sparse, driving rhythm guitar work is the core of AC/DC's sound. Our example is inspired by *Rock N Roll Train* and showcases Malcolm's 'less is more' approach. The open position powerchords ring out and the inherent sustain of open strings allows for less overdrive to be used.

8 AC/DC: ANGUS YOUNG-STYLE HIGH OCTANE LEAD

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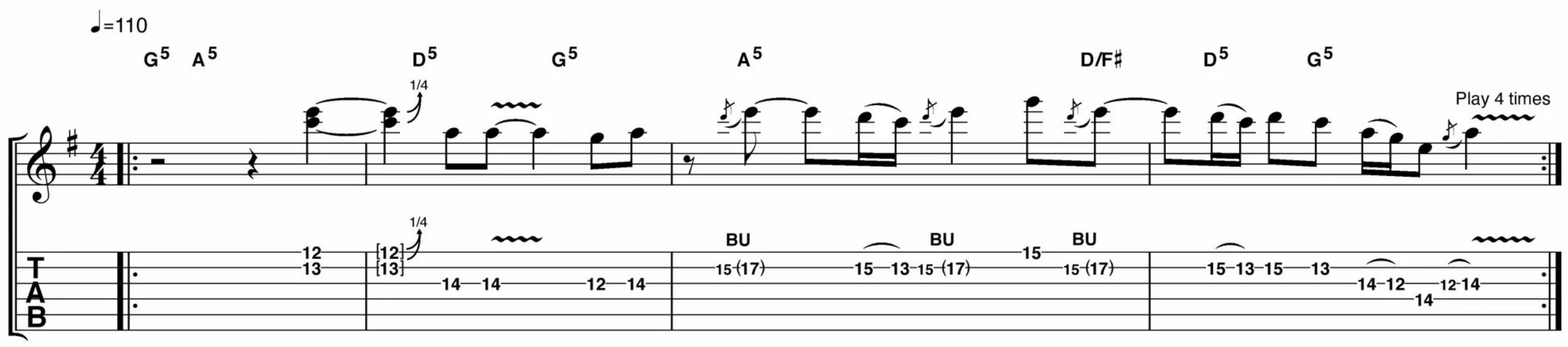

Here in our Angus Young-inspired lick we're using the trusty A minor pentatonic scale – as indeed Angus does. Played over the previous riff, this lead line begins in the gaps between the powerchords in a 'question and answer' style. It's typical AC/DC stuff and a great way to showcase the interplay between two guitars.

9 SLASH: UPTEMPO PENTATONICS

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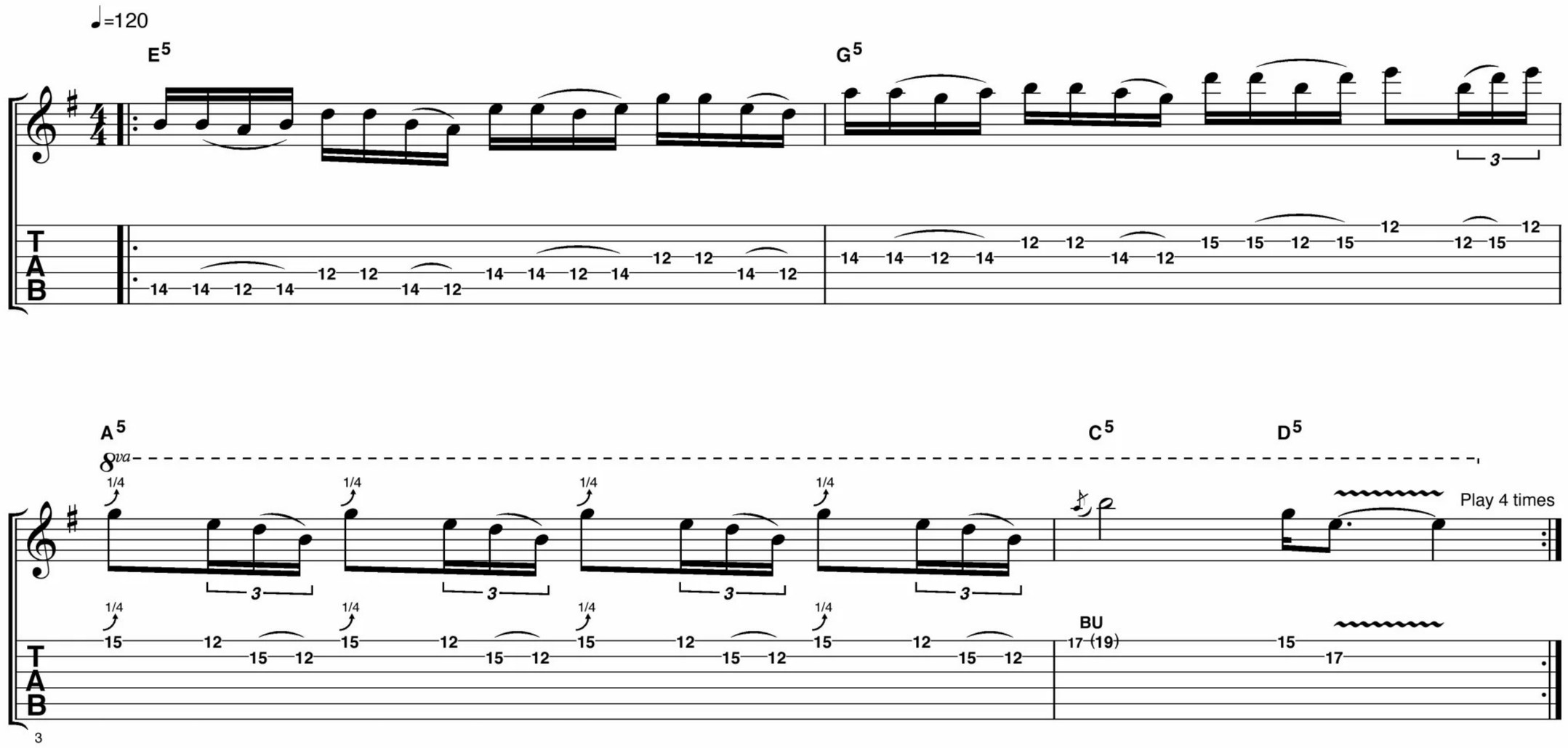

Like Angus Young, Slash is a heavy user of pentatonic scales. Our example is inspired by the outro solo in *Sweet Child O' Mine* and starts out with a cool way to break up the pentatonic scale for ascending runs. The first note is double-picked then followed by a pull-off, and the pattern is repeated up through the scale. The final repeating phrase in bar 3 is a classic and well worth practising slowly at first.

10 MARK KNOPFLER: QUESTION AND ANSWER PHRASING

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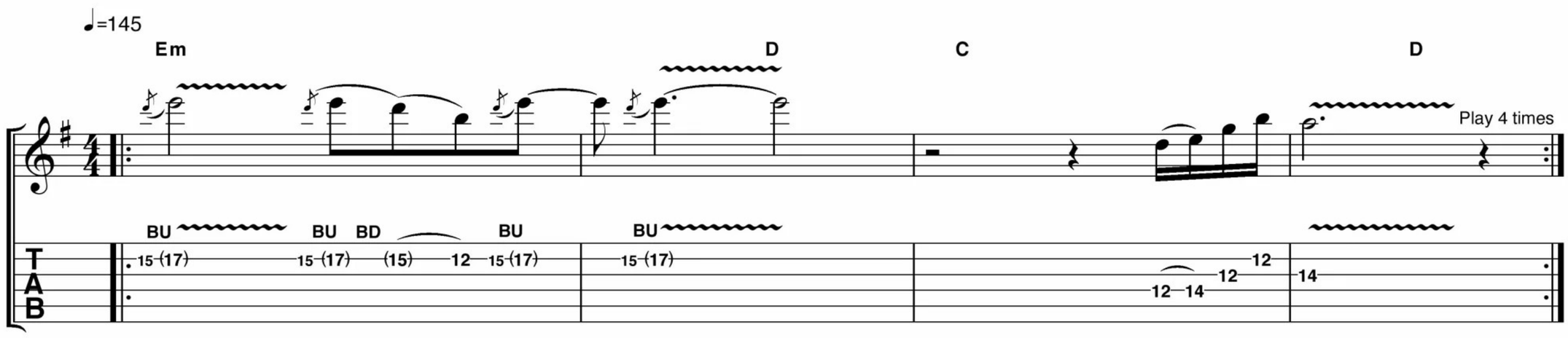

This Dire Straits style example is inspired by songs like *Lady Writer* and *Sultans Of Swing* where guitarist Mark Knopfler sings a phrase then follows up with a lead fill. The use of the fingers to pick the notes is an essential ingredient for the tone so pop your pick to one side for this one!

11 JOHNNY MARR: INDIE JANGLE

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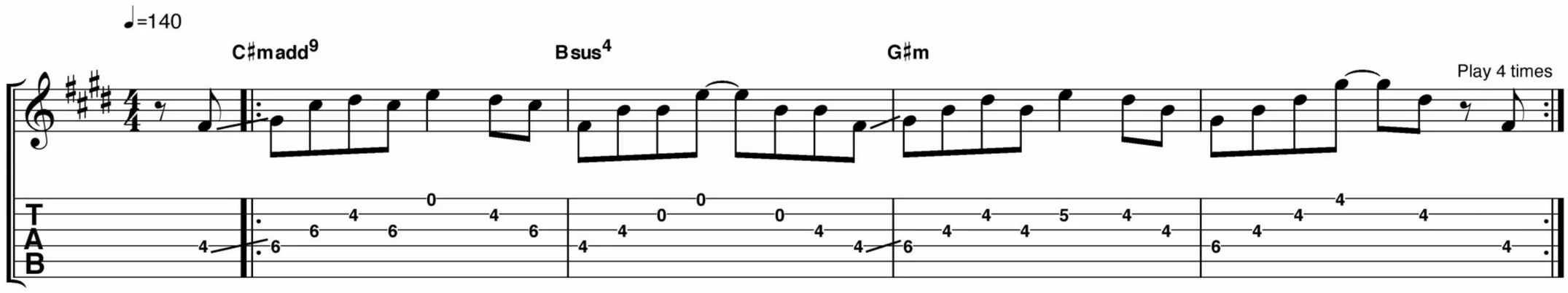

At a time when hair metal reigned supreme, guitarists like The Smiths' Johnny Marr provided an indie alternative. Johnny used ringing clean arpeggio lines and plenty of overdubs to create intricate soundscapes. Our example is inspired by tracks like *Some Girls Are Bigger Than Others* and utilises fast picking. Employing the ringing open strings where possible helps to provide that trademark jangle.

12 THE EDGE: DOTTED EIGHTH NOTE DELAYS

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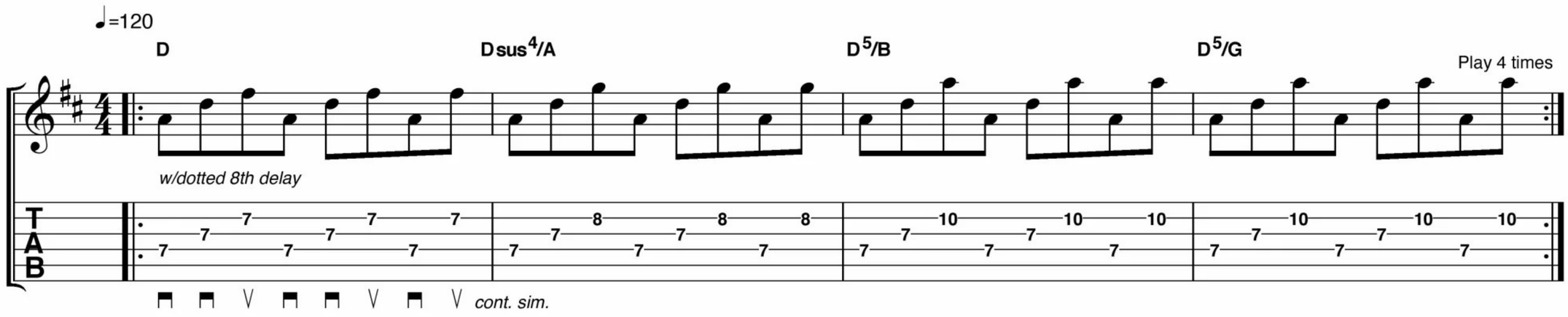

Inspired by classic U2 songs like *Where The Streets Have No Name* and *With Or Without You*, here we're recreating The Edge's trademark arpeggio soundscapes. At our riff's 120bpm tempo the delay time should be set to 375ms to create the dotted eighth-note rhythm. Keep the repeat volume high, preferably with a modulation effect added, and allow roughly six or seven repeats before the sound dies out. If you have a second delay pedal at your disposal, set it to 125bpm (a 16th note).

13 KURT COBAIN: PUNKY POWERCHORDS AND DISSONANCE

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Grunge giants Nirvana changed the landscape of rock almost overnight, disposing with the excesses of high production 80s rock in favour of a more emotionally direct, alt-rock approach. Our example, inspired by *Smells Like Teen Spirit* and *Scentless Apprentice*, combines punky powerchords with a dissonant unison bend. In true Nirvana style this bend sounds most effective played slightly out of tune.

14 PEARL JAM: STONE GOSSARD-STYLE LAYERING

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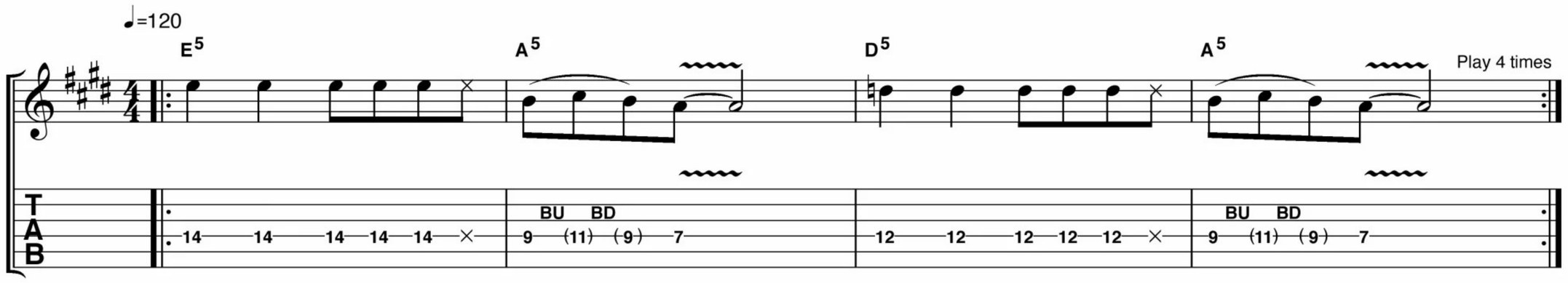

Grunge isn't really a musical genre – and Pearl Jam always sounded substantially different to Nirvana, taking more influence from classic 70s rock than punk and 80s alt bands. There are some really magical harmonies thanks to Stone Gossard and Mike McCready's layered guitars, and our example is inspired by songs like *Jeremy*, *Black* and *Alive* from the band's debut album *Ten*.

15 PEARL JAM: MIKE MCCREADY-STYLE LAYERING

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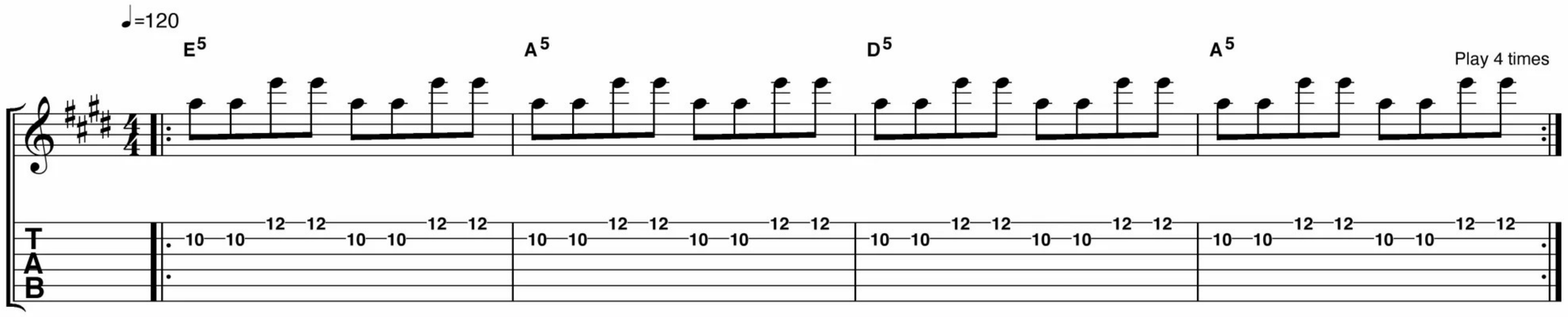

Building on our previous riff, here we add in extra layers using a simple four-note repeating pattern which can be played exclusively with downpicking.

16 TOM MORELLO: KILL SWITCH RIFF

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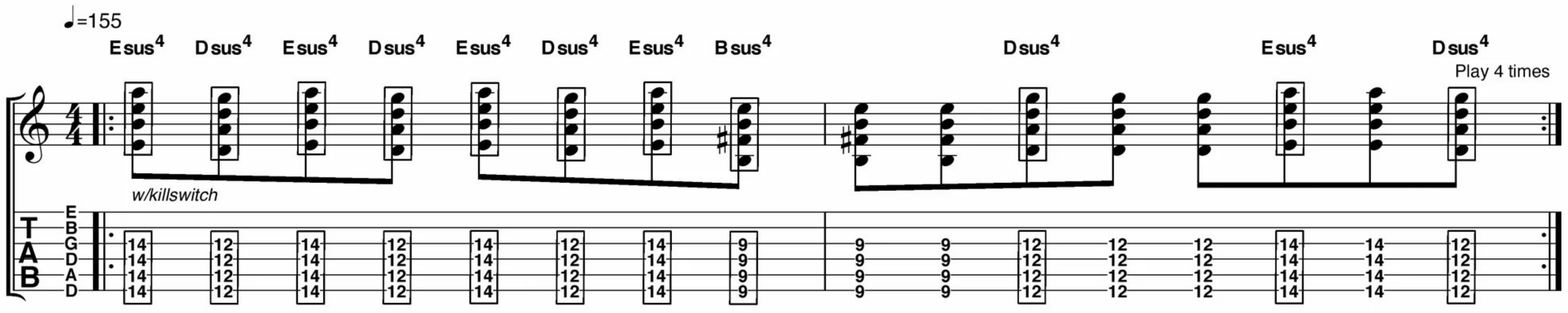

This riff is inspired by songs like Rage Against The Machine's *Know Your Enemy*, where a kill switch is employed to create rhythmic effects with a metronome-like stuttering quality. No kill switch? No problem! Use a two-pickup, two-volume-knob guitar (such as a Les Paul Standard), lower one volume knob and use the selector switch to toggle between the active and silent pickups.

17 MATT BELLAMY: NEO-CLASSICAL CHORD PROGRESSIONS

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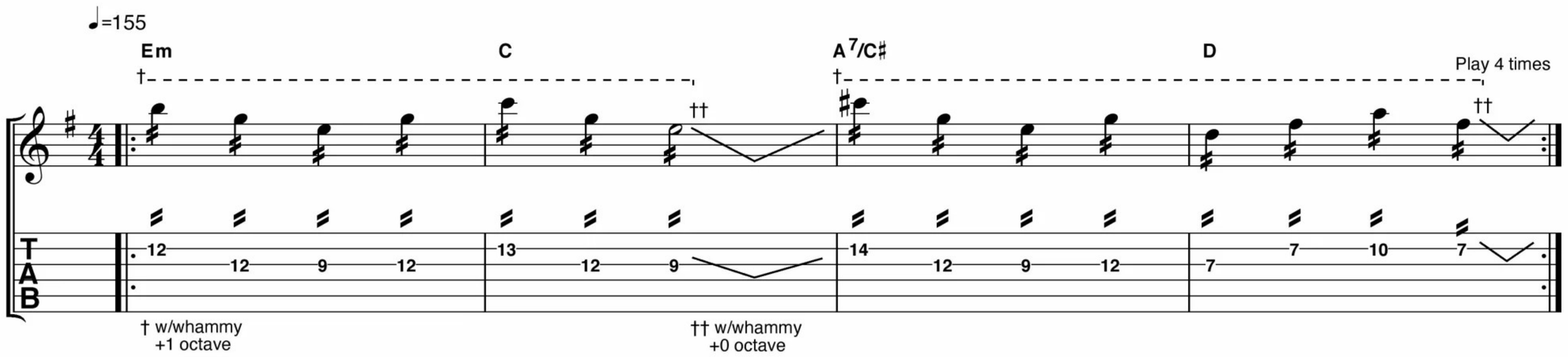

This classical style chord progression is a tried and tested Bellamy trick and you can hear similar ideas in Muse songs *New Born* and *Plug In Baby*. We're using a Whammy pedal set to one octave up (though you can practise without one) and playing tremolo picked arpeggios to outline the progression. There's an implied chromatic melody running through the progression, starting on a B note in the Em chord before following C, C♯ and D with the subsequent chords.

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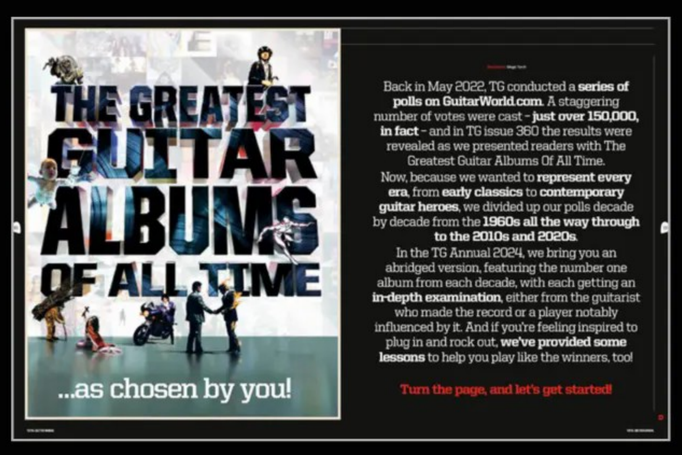
PLAY BETTER NOW WITH THE BEST OF TG

TOTAL Guitar ANNUAL 2024

YOUR ESSENTIAL GUITAR GUIDE FEATURING THE BEST OF TOTAL GUITAR FROM THE PAST YEAR

18 TIPS TO IMPROVE TONE



Back in May 2022, TG conducted a **series of polls on GuitarWorld.com**. A staggering number of votes were cast – **just over 150,000, in fact** – and in TG issue 360 the results were revealed as we presented readers with The Greatest Guitar Albums Of All Time.

Now, because we wanted to **represent every era**, from **early classics** to **contemporary guitar heroes**, we divided up our polls decade by decade from the **1960s all the way through to the 2010s and 2020s**.

In the TG Annual 2024, we bring you an abridged version, featuring the number one album from each decade, with each getting an **in-depth examination**, either from the guitarist who made the record or a player notably influenced by it. And if you're feeling inspired to plug in and rock out, **we've provided some lessons** to help you play like the winners, too!

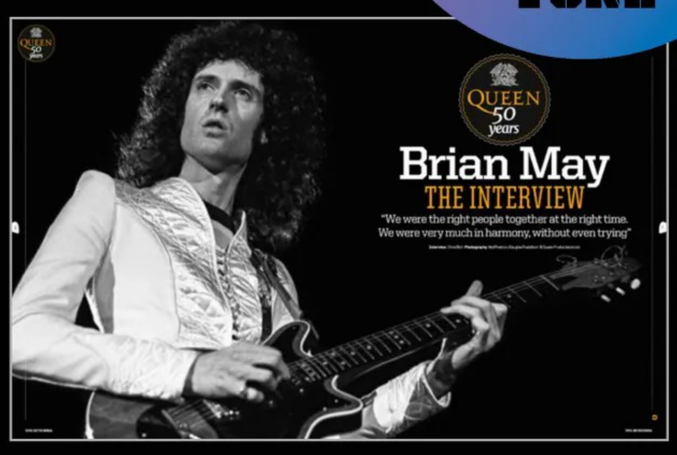
Turn the page, and let's get started!

ESSENTIAL FEATURES

From the greatest guitar albums to metal milestones and acoustic guides, we've got all the must-read TG features

TIPS & TECHNIQUES

Get the best of our tutorials and lessons, complete with easy-to-follow tab and audio files



EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEWS

We sit down with guitar legends Brian May and Slash, as well as the hottest new acts, Nova Twins and Polyphia

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