signature licks

THE BEST OF CLAPTON

A STEP-BY-STEP BREAKDOWN OF HIS GUITAR TECHNIQUE

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FOREWORD

Probably the best way to gain insight into the art of great improvising is to study the works of the masters. Beethoven spent years studying the master-pieces of Bach. Charlie Parker copped Lester Young's tenor sax solos note for note from his records. Eric Clapton studies recordings of blues guitar master B. B. King and his contemporaries. If you want to play convincing, authentic blues-rock guitar, you should study Eric Clapton.

There are two ways of studying a famous musician. First, there is the method of figuring out solos from records by ear. I recommend this to all musicians. Your "ear-chops" improve enormously by doing this. The other way is to transcribe solos onto paper and analyze them academically. Not only does this improve your ears, but it provides you with a written record of your efforts, and allows you to critically analyze the solo with consideration to scales and arpeggios, rhythmic phrasing, melodic contour, and harmonic implications. The ability to transcribe solos, however, is a very difficult skill and can be very time consuming. That's why books such as this one are invaluable tools for the developing musician.

INTRODUCTION

Eric Clapton is one of the founding fathers of rock guitar. He established a whole dictionary of standard licks and "hooks" that are such an integral part of rock. His musical heritage comes from the "Chicago school" of blues guitarists such as B. B. King, Buddy Guy, Otis Rush, Muddy Waters, and Freddie King. From these masters Eric learned when to wail, when to burn, and most important, when to pause. From there he went on to refine his tone and intonation, thus sounding more pleasingly in tune than some of his predecessors.

Eric Clapton has had a long, successful career as a guitar player, singer, and songwriter. He came on the scene in the early sixties with such bands as John Mayall's Blues Breakers and The Yardbirds. He became quite popular in the late sixties with Cream and Blind Faith. In the early seventies he formed Derek and the Dominos, who's hit "Layla" elevated Eric to superstar status. In the mid-seventies he pursued a solo career recording such hits as "Cocaine" and "Lay Down Sally." He's been performing and recording as a solo artist ever since, also making occasional guest appearances as a sideman.

ABOUT THE AUDIO

The one hour recording that accompanies this book amplifies the concepts and techniques highlighted in the book.

It contains further instruction on how to play Eric Clapton's licks and solos. It also has all the musical excerpts performed for you, so you can bet a closer look and listen to the guitar parts.

A bonus section on the recording contains all of the solos played at a slow tempo, for those of you who fell you would benefit by this. The solos are recorded on one track, and the rhythm part is on the other, so you can play along with the tape by turning off the solo track. These "slowed down" tracks of the solos are on the last ten minutes of side two of the cassette (tracks 12-17 of the C.D.).

It is suggested that you use the audio in the following manner:

- First listen through the audio as you follow along in the book.
- When you get to the last section (the "slowed down" tracks of the solos), play through them along with the recording.
- Go back and go through the audio, following along in the book. This time take the material as it's presented and work along with the recording.

I have found this procedure to give the best results. Have fun and enjoy.

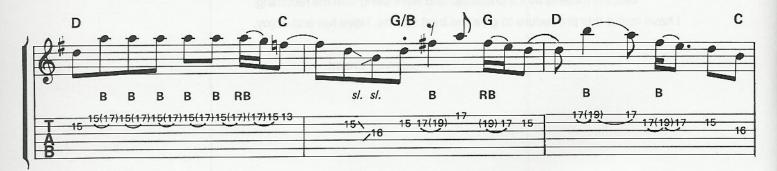
Jimmy Brown

THE CLAPTON SIGNATURE

Improvisation...

When soloing, Eric has an inexhaustible reservoir of improvisational ideas. Though he may not have the enormous melodic vocabulary of say, Charlie Christian, his phrasing is nothing less than poetic. The essence of his improvisational skill is to be found in his own use of scales and rhythm.

He is very fond of the pentatonic scale, both the major and its relative minor. Often, and with much success, he uses both forms interchangeably over the same tonality. Thus he combines the major and the parallel minor pentatonic scales. It is important to note, however, that this interchangeability only works in a major key. In a minor key, only the minor pentatonic scale sounds good. An example of such parallel use is in this excerpt from the "Badge"solo.

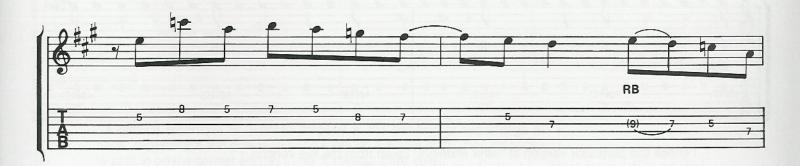


Eric is not a flashy player. His lines are feeling oriented, not technique oriented. I believe that when he solos, he's not out to impress anyone, but rather he's speaking to you through his guitar.

Rhythm...

One of the hallmark features of Eric's playing is his thoughtful approach to melodic rhythm when improvising. He has a superior talent for hearing his lines a split second before he plays them. When I listen to him, I can almost hear him thinking! His lines make sense, and they're very pleasing. One of the reasons for this is that he focuses on definite rhythmic subdivisions when he solos. By this I mean that he organizes his lines into nice, neat rhythmic phrases of eighth notes, eighth note triplets, or sixteenth notes, depending on what king of "feel" the rhythm section is laying down. This is something most guitar players overlook. (Have you ever heard someone improvising, perhaps yourself, and it sounds like the solo is just ending up where the fingers take it? Usually the result is an illogical, anti-climatic solo that has breaks and pauses in all the wrong places). Rather than "locking-up" with the drummer when soloing, most of us tend to ignore the rhythm section and

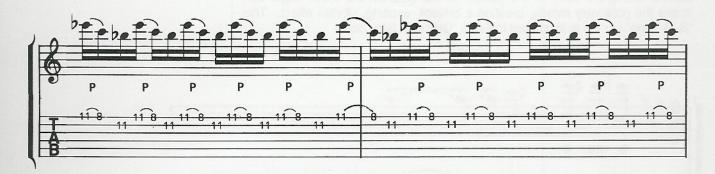
end up playing something that is best described as "pouring molasses" over the rhythm section, slowing down and speeding up with the frantic trills, giving no consideration to the tempo and feel. (If this is you, I recommend that you listen to Eric Clapton). A good example of his rhythm cohesiveness is found on the solo of "Lay Down Sally."





Notice his predominant use of "swing-eighths" in structuring his lines. It is an unusually quiet solo for Eric, but it is very musical. He finds dozens of ways to play something interesting, even though he's just playing over an A major chord throughout the entire solo.

Another exciting rhythmic technique Eric employs often is the use of hemiola. The effect is achieved by playing a series of notes of the same subdivision, for instance, sixteenth notes, while shifting the accent to say, every fourth note. This has the effect of grouping the sixteenth notes into threes, thus creating a quasi-triplet feel. An example of such use of hemiola is given in an excerpt from Eric's solo on "After Midnight."



In the beginning of his second solo, he groups sixteenth notes into groups of six by accenting every seventh note. This is a very dramatic effect.



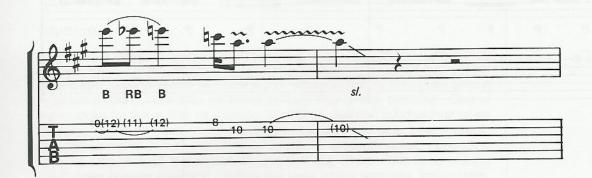
I chose this particular version of "After Midnight" taken from the live version instead of the more familiar version because of its rhythmically interesting structure.

String Bending And Vibrato...

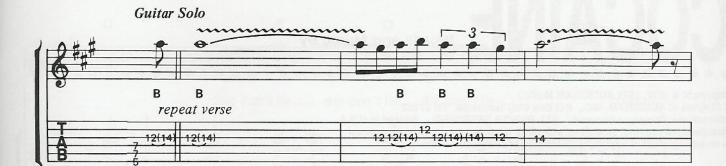
String bending is one of Clapton's most effective and distinguishing techniques. He even manages to bend as far as two whole-steps while keeping the notes sweetly in tune. This very expressive effect is called "overbending." Example five, an excerpt from his "Sunshine of Your Love" solo, shows Eric overbending the note F on the g-string, 10th fret up to an A and then down to a G.



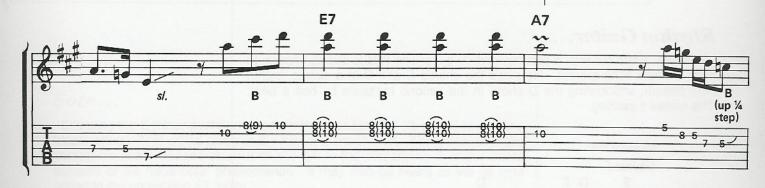
Eric uses a fast, "B. B. King" vibrato very successfully. This technique is executed with the index finger of the left hand. The hand pivots such that the palm is facing the body of the guitar. In this position the index finger can shake the note very rapidly, creating a brilliant, exciting, vibrato effect. This "B. B. King" vibrato is illustrated in Eric's "Crosscut Saw" solo.



Another vibrato technique that Eric does so well is to bend a string up (towards him) a whole step while also applying an even, controlled vibrato. This is a lot harder to execute than one would imagine. A good example of this is the beginning of the "Sunshine Of Your Love" solo.



A difficult technique to execute properly is the bending of two strings at once, especially if the goal is to bend them up a whole step. Eric manages to zero in on the correct pitches in his "Crosscut Saw" solo.



COCAINE

Words and Music by J.J. CALE

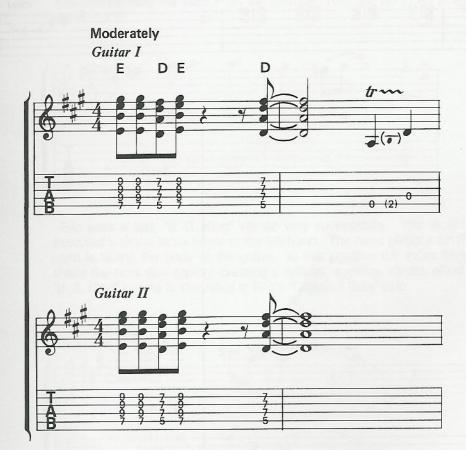
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Sound ...

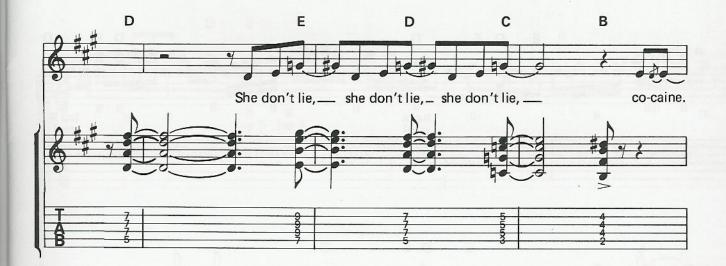
Eric uses a clean sound on this solo. He manages to get a throaty sound though by picking strongly. This helps bring more volume and sustain out of his guitar.

Rhythm Guitar...

This tune starts out with a punchy, rhythm guitar line that is strong enough to build a whole song around. He plays the chords E and D in a simple, eighth note pattern, anticipating the D chord in the second measure by half a beat. This makes it exciting.



He continues this vamp for the rest of the intro, adding tasty fills. The pattern continues during the verse until the release ("she don't lie, she don't lie, etc...."). Here again he anticipates the chords E, D, and C by a half a beat. If he didn't do this it might not sound so hip.



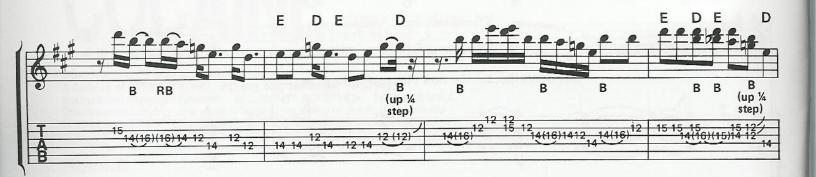
Solo ...

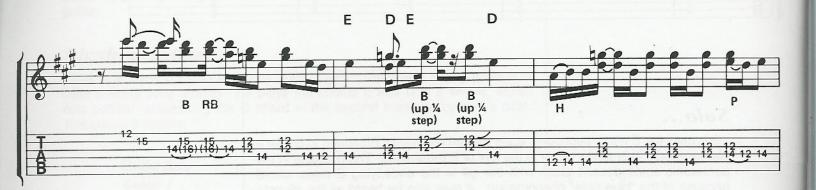
Eric uses the E minor pentatonic scale with an occasional Bb added to create a bluesy effect. This works nicely in the key of E mixolydian. The g natural in the pentatonic scale doesn't clash with the g# in the underlying E major chord because of the "blue note" phenomenon. It may also be heard as the #9 note added to the underlying E7 "color."

What transforms this E pentatonic-blues scale into a melody is the arrangement of notes and their rhythmic organization. Notice how he starts out using mostly eighth notes with occasional sixteenth notes, what I like to call "chicken clucks." As the solo develops he uses more sixteenth notes. This creates more tension, more drama.



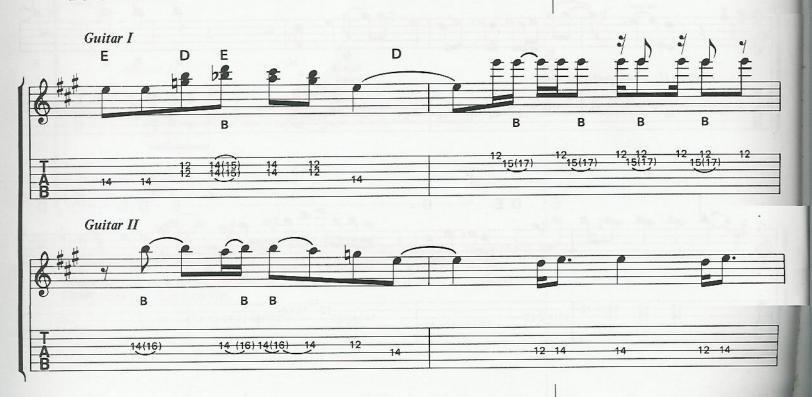


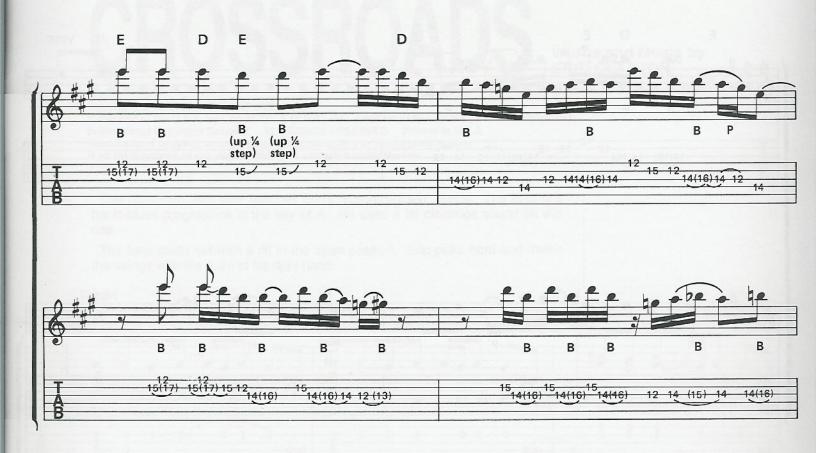


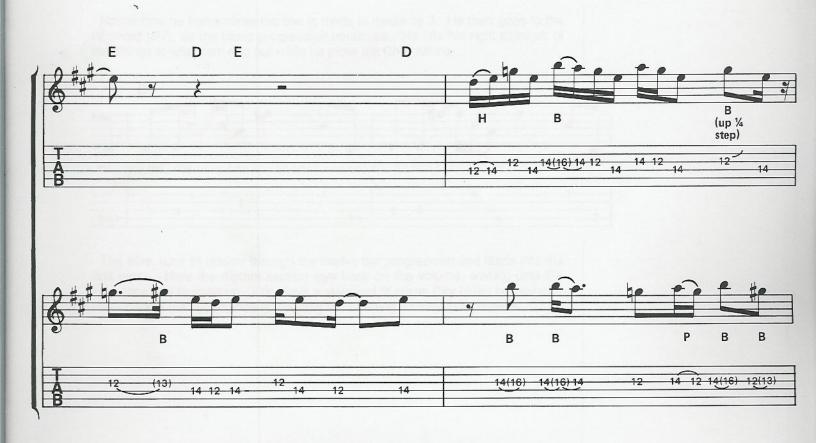


On the last chorus a second solo voice enters the scene and converses with the first voice. This is a masterful interplay between two lines. Notice how they at times overlap but never get in each other's way. They even follow each other up and down the register.

After the solo there is one more verse. The song fades out with Eric taking another solo over the vamp. The form of the tune (Intro, verse, verse, solo, verse, solo) makes this a satisfying experience for the listener, both musician and non-musician.









CROSSROADS

Words and Music by

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This up-tempo, jam tune features Eric's "chicken-pickin" chops. The tune is a basic-blues progression in the key of A. He uses a fat distortion sound on this one.

The tune starts out with a riff in the open position. Eric picks hard and mutes the strings with the palm of his right hand.

Bright



Notice how he harmonizes the line in thirds in measure 3. He then goes to the IV chord (D7), as the blues progression continues. He lifts his right palm off of the strings to lets them ring out while he picks ala Chet Atkins.

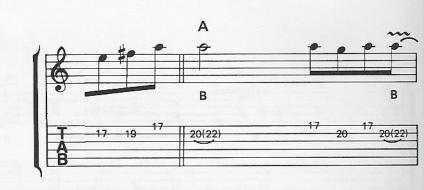


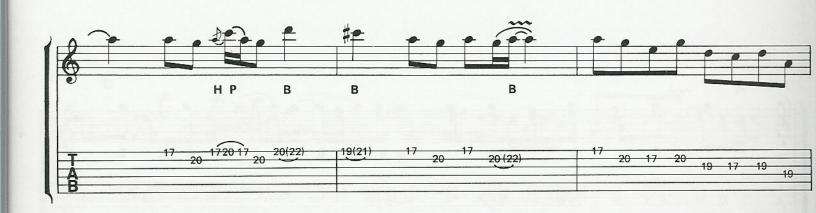
The intro. runs its course through the twelve bar progression and leads into the first verse. Here the rhythm section lays back on the volume, waiting until the solo choruses to open up. Eric plays a standard "Kansas City blues accompaniment behind the vocals, briefly inserting the opening riff between phrases.



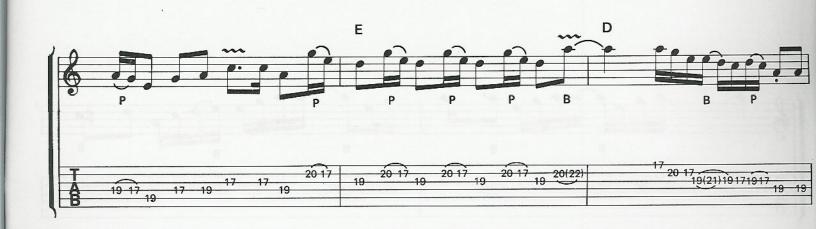
There are three vocal choruses, a guitar solo, another vocal chorus, a longer guitar solo, and a final vocal chorus to finish out the tune. Once again, here is an example of a nice arrangement. Remember, the form is the whole foundation of a tune and should be given a lot of thought when composing or performing the tune.

Let's look at an excerpt from Eric's second solo. The excerpt comprises two choruses of the blues progression. It is a very "singable" solo, with a lot of interesting rhythmic ideas such as the syncopation in the beginning of the second chorus (measures 13 and 14), and the use of hemiola in measures 17 and 18. He uses mainly the minor pentatonic scale, occasionally mixing it with the brighter major pentatonic scale, as in the last five measures of the excerpt.

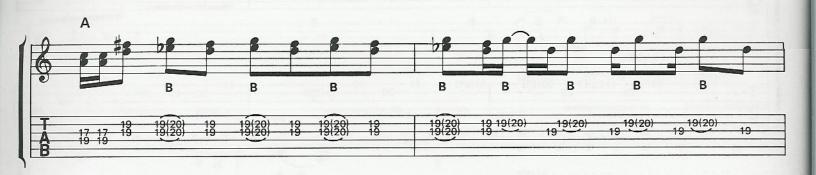






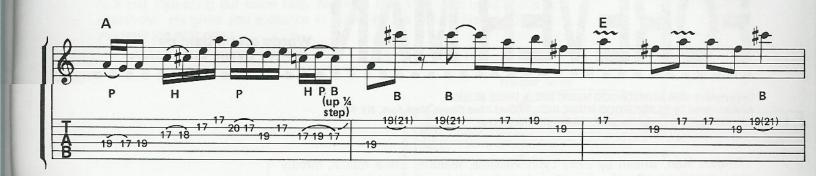


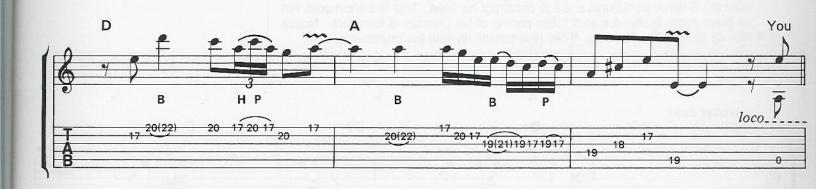












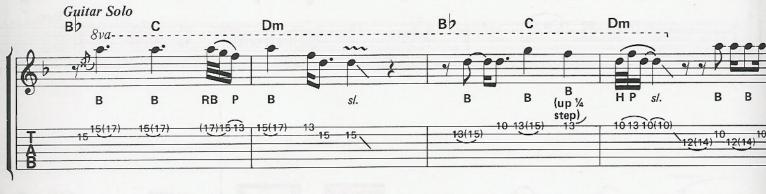
FOREVER MAN

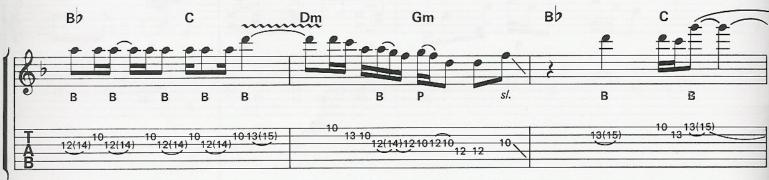
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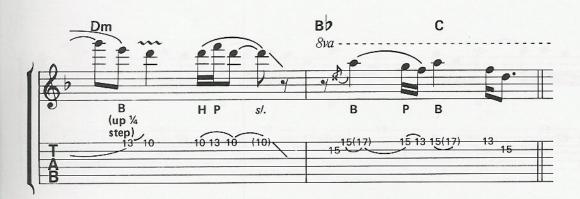
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Forever Man, written by Jerry Lynn Williams, features Eric's robust, throaty voice and his equally robust and throaty guitar. His heavily distorted stratocaster has a screaming, ballsy sound that really cuts through.

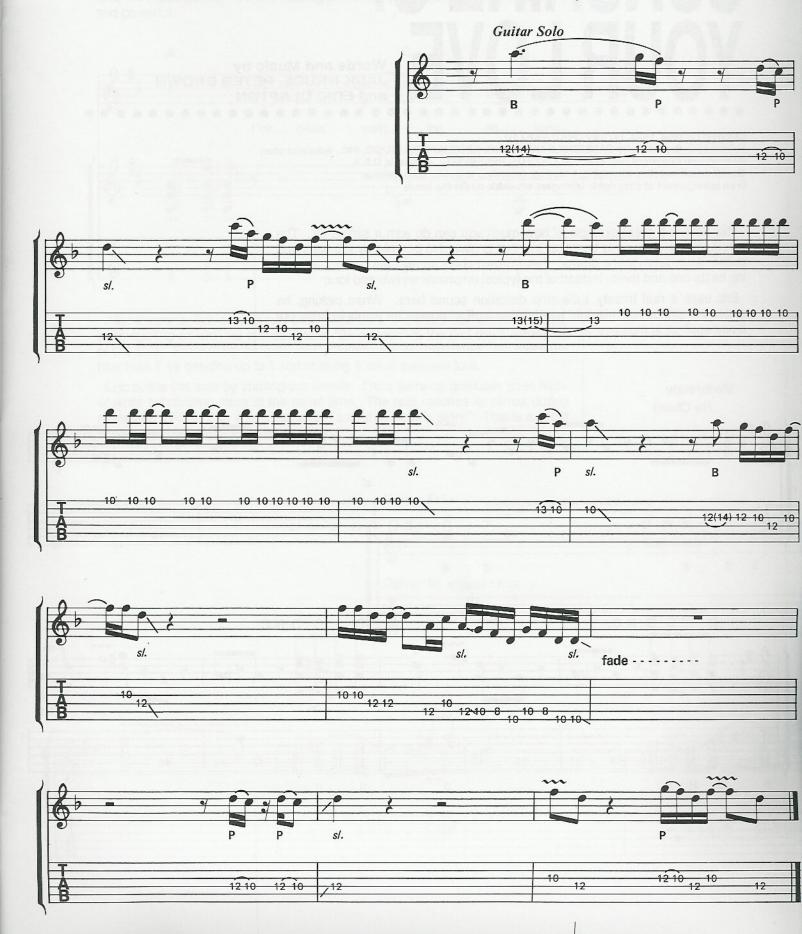
I'll just focus on his guitar solo here because he doesn't play much rhythm guitar on this cut. The solo is over a progression in the key of D aeolian minor. Eric uses the D minor pentatonic scale to construct his lines. This is a short solo, but he plays some really nice stuff. The pacing of his phrases is excellent. Notice how he uses sixteenth notes. They fit in beautifully with the drummer's "feel."







After a return to the verse, the song ends with another guitar solo. Actually, he's just squeezing out some tasty sixteenth note fills. Eric uses space very effectively. He gives you a chance to reflect on the line he just played before you hear the next one.



SUNSHINE OF YOUR LOVE JAC and

Words and Music by JACK BRUCE, PETER BROWN and ERIC CLAPTON

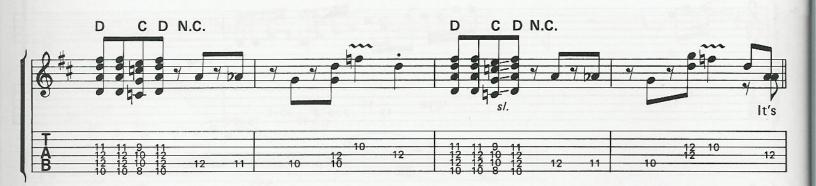
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This tune is a great example of how much you can do with a simple riff. The introduction exposes this haunting line that is played in octaves by the bass and guitar. Also, listen to the drums. Peter Brown plays an unusual pattern, accenting beats one and three, instead of the typical emphasis on two and four.

Eric uses a real throaty, tube-amp distortion sound here. When picking, he mutes the strings with his right hand, lifting it off whenever he wants to bring out a part such as in measure seven below.

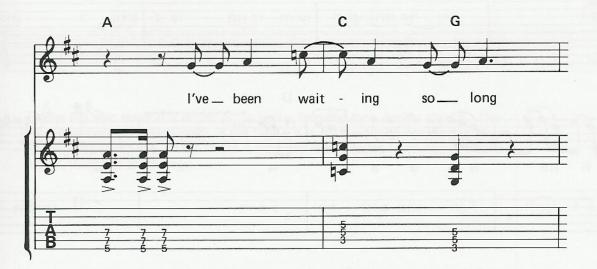






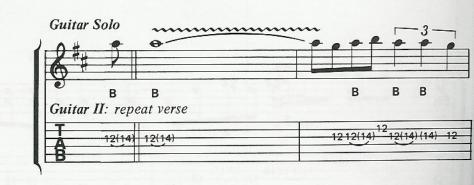
You can feel all the energy being held in check, waiting to be released in the guitar solo.

At the bridge, Eric plays the "power-chords" A, C, and G, voicing each chord root, fifth, and octave. It's this voicing that makes the chords sound so punchy and powerful.

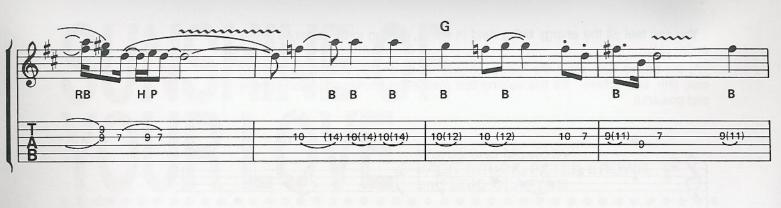


After 2 verses, Eric plays a real slick guitar solo. He starts out, almost sarcastically, quoting an old, old standard tune "Blue Moon" in the first three measures of the solo. From there he gets more rhythmically sophisticated. He milks the blue note F by bending up to it and shaking it, as in measure four.

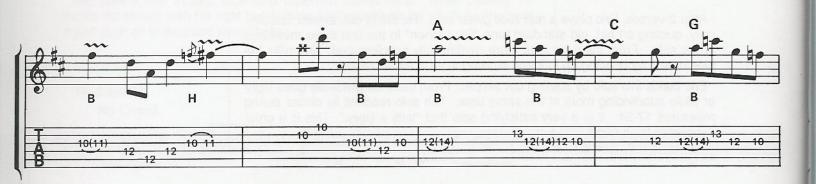
Eric builds this solo by starting out simple. From there he gradually goes higher while subdividing more at the same time. The solo reaches its climax during measures 17-24. It is a very satisfying solo that "tells a story." This is a great concept to think about when improvising.

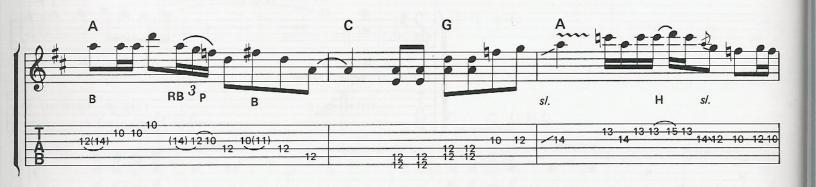




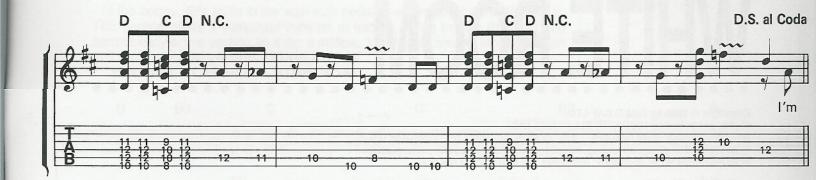












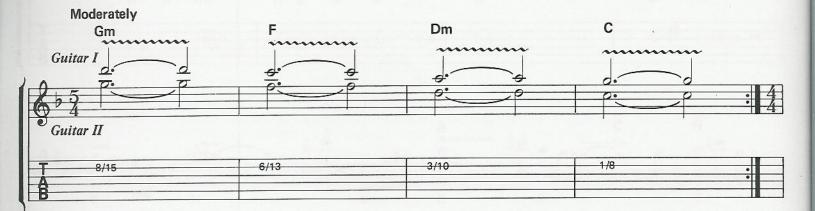
After the solo there is a return to the verse, followed by a double chorus. This is another dramatic high point in the tune. It is followed by a very imaginative ending, repeating the power chord A until the record fades to silence —a nice effect, thanks to technology.

WHITE ROOM

Words and Music by JACK BRUCE and PETE BROWN

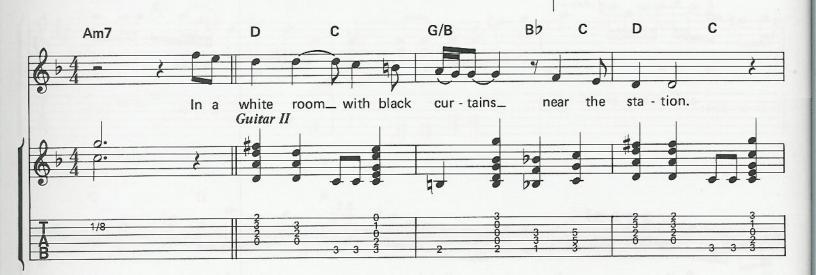
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This classic tune starts out with an "orchestral-sounding" introduction. It is in E time, and tympani are used. This creates a suspenseful mood. The chord changes (Gm, F, Dm, C) have a very dark sound.



Notice that the lead guitar is overdubbed. The two voices are parallel fifths apart. This creates an eerie, medieval sound. That's because they actually used a lot of open fifths back then.

The vocal pick-up to the verse sets up the key and the tempo. Here Eric lays down a happening rhythm guitar line in the key of D. The chord changes and the vocal melody suggest a dorian modal flavor.

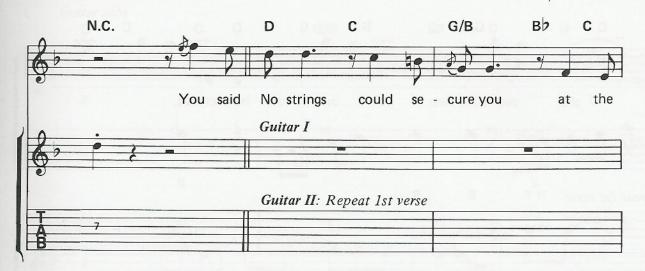


Notice that the open guitar chords have a very bright sound. The contrast between the G/B chord and the following Bb chord is very effective. The G/B chord, taken from the Dorian mode, sounds "warm." The Bb chord is from the Aeolian or pure minor mode. It casts a temporary "dark cloud" on the progression.

At the bridge, Eric kicks in the wah-wah pedal over simple whole note chords. This section offers a wonderful contrast in texture, going from a rhythmic and harmonically active section, to a more mellow, "catch your breath" kind of section and then back again.

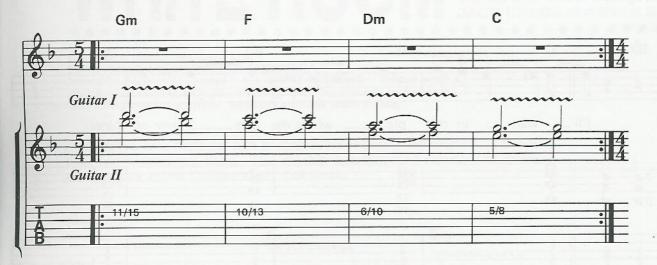


This bridge section leads back into another verse. This time Eric lays down some nice guitar fills in between the vocal phrases. Notice how his guitar doesn't interrupt the vocal line.

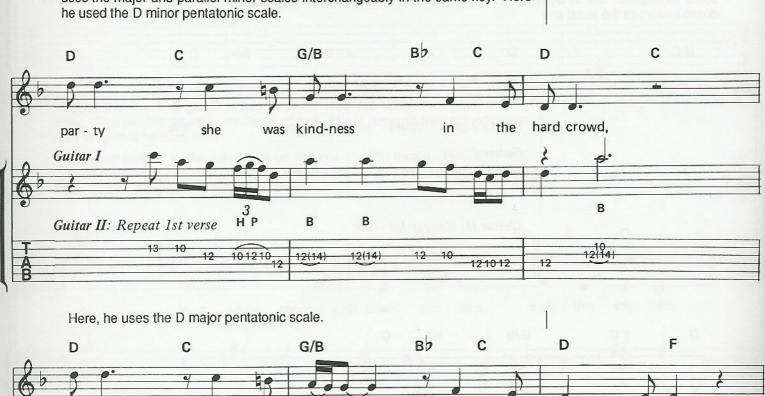


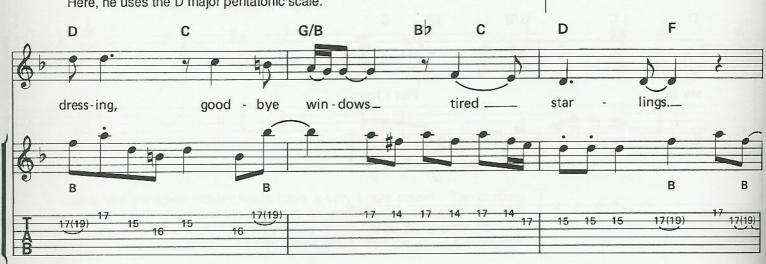


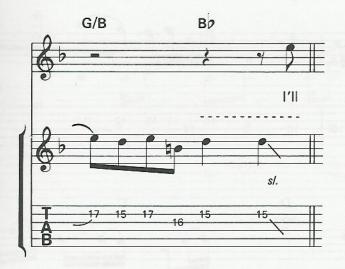
After the second bridge section, the ominous Introduction returns. This time Eric harmonizes the two lead tracks in thirds. This sounds more harmonious and less raw than the open fifths.



During the third verse Eric plays some longer fills. This time they overlap with the vocals, but the two "voices" blend beautifully. This interaction though, does create suspense and drama. As mentioned in the beginning of this book, Eric uses the major and parallel minor scales interchangeably in the same key. Here he used the D minor pentatonic scale.





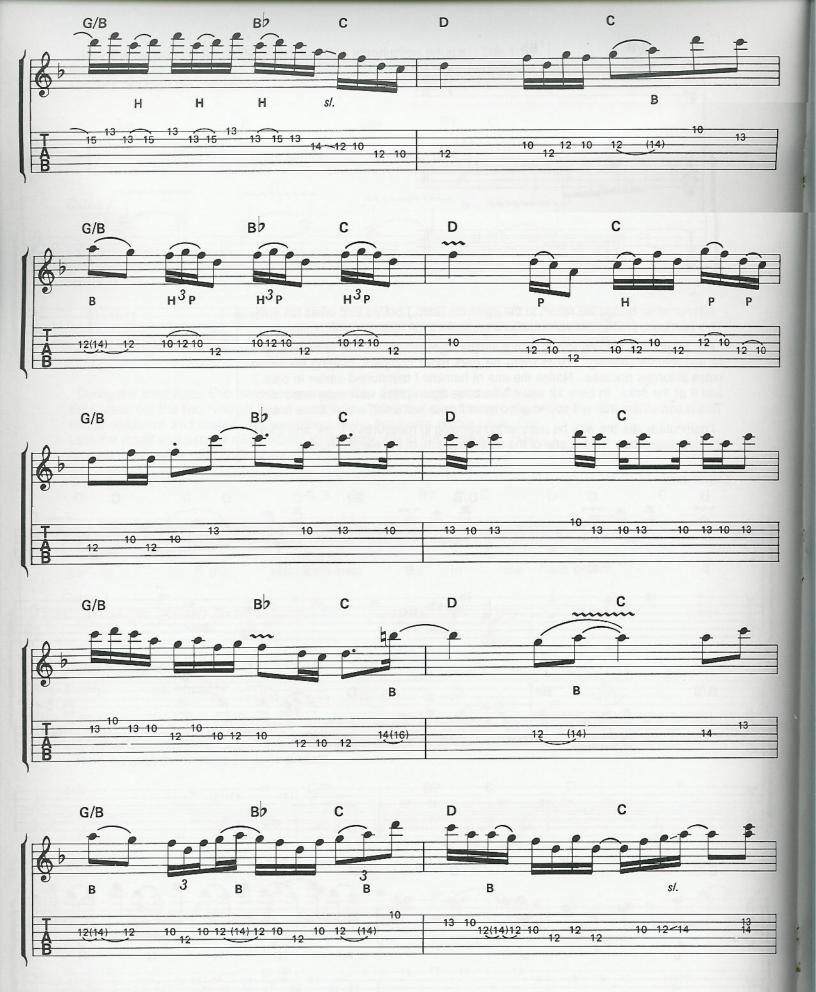


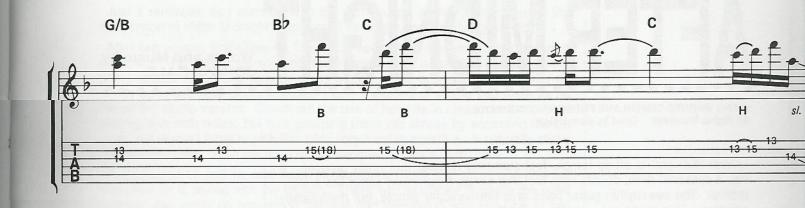
After another bridge we return to the interlude (intro.) before Eric takes his solo. This interlude, placed between each verse, makes the form very interesting.

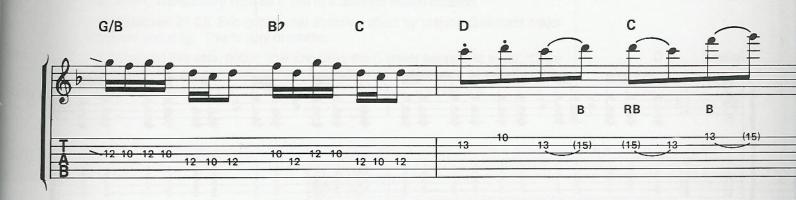
Eric begins his solo by toying with a simple rhythmic idea. This is an example of find melody-making! From there he gets more complex, playing sixteenth notes in longer phrases. Notice the use of hemiola I mentioned earlier in bars 7 and 8 of the solo. In bars 12 and 13 he once again plays with a rhythmic idea. This is something that will sound good even if your just using two or three notes.

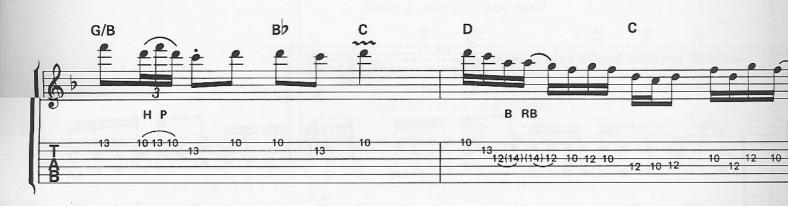
I particularly like the way he uses string bending in measures 21, 24, and 25 as the solo fades out. This is one of the nicest aspects of the electric guitar.

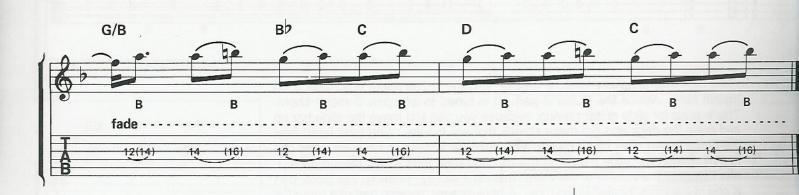








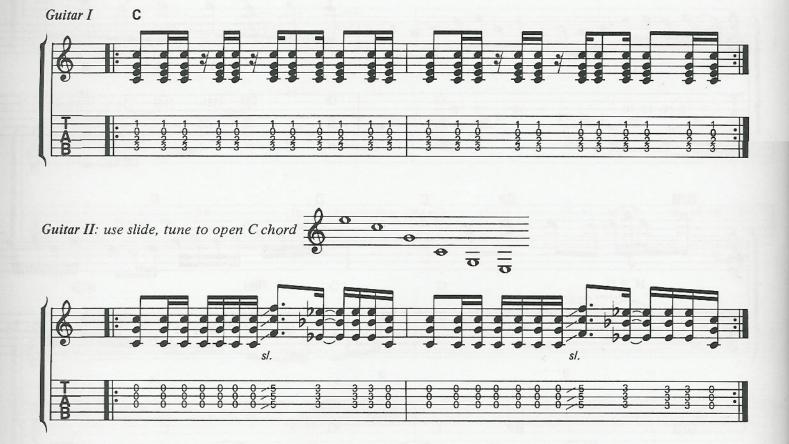




AFTER MIDNIGHT

Words and Music by

"After Midnight" is an up-tempo, foot-stomping number that really grooves. It has a sixteenth note, double-time feel that keeps it humming along like a locomotive. The two rhythm guitar parts ares harmonically simple, but rhythmically complex. Eric starts out vamping on a C major chord, strumming a complex 16th note pattern. (See Guitar I)



This harmonic simplicity let's the groove "breathe." The major emphasis is on rhythm here. Notice the Guitar II part. It is tuned to an open C major chord. This is great for slide guitar playing, because you can just move the slide bar up and down the neck and get major chords that are in tune. See (and hear) how the Guitar II part goes up to F5 and Eb5, then back down to C5? He does this just by moving the slide bar up to the fifth and third frets. This motion up to F and Eb colors the tonality of the vamp, making it bluesy. Actually, this guitar part is one of the main "hooks" in the tune. A hook is a memorable part of a tune that the listener goes around whistling it afterwards. It is what sells the song. It can be a vocal line, a guitar riff, or any thing.

One of the things that makes this particular hook so catchy is the anticipation of the Eb chord by a quarter of a beat. If it were played right smack on the downbeat, it might not sound so cool. Anticipations are commonly referred to as "kick" in the language of rock 'n' roll.

Just a reminder, as I mentioned in the introduction of this book I've used the live version of "After Midnight" because of its longer, more active guitar solo.

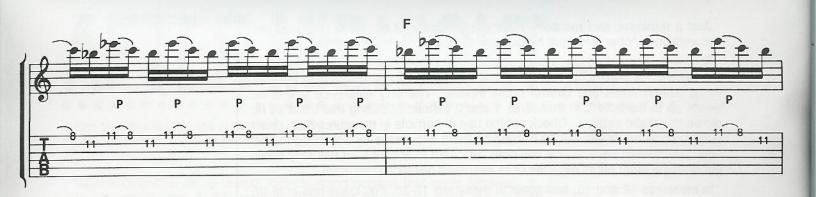
After two verses, Eric takes his first guitar solo (there are two solos in this performance). He begins his solo the same way that he began the studio version, using quarter notes and quarter notes triplets. The only difference is that he bends up to the note C in measures 1 and 2 instead of sliding into them as he did on the studio version. Check out the use of hemiola in measures 8-11. He's playing sixteenth notes, but he's grouping them into threes by accenting the Eb note. He doesn't have to pick this note very hard to accent it. It naturally sticks out from the other notes because of its intervallic distance from them.

In measures 12 and 13, and again in measures 18-20, Eric takes one note (g) and rides on it, toying with the rhythm. These two examples illustrate the point that you can really do something musical and interesting with just one or two notes! Measure 13 is really neat because he takes a rhythmic idea, (the first 4 notes) and immediately repeats it, but in a different metric location.

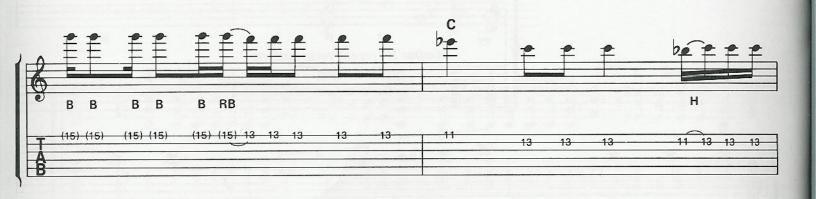
In measures 21-25, Eric gets a real abrasive effect by playing dissonant major seconds (f and g). This is very dramatic.

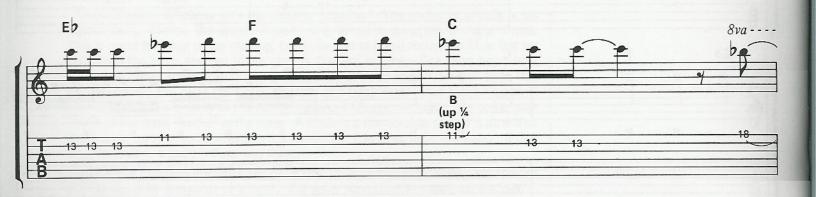
Throughout this solo, notice how Eric uses the C minor pentatonic scale. Once again, with the risk of repeating myself, see how musical he can be with this simple five note scale! It's in the way he phrases his lines, rhythmically.

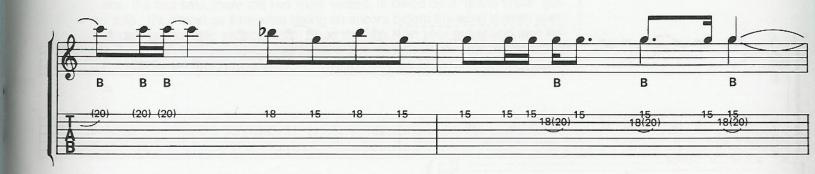


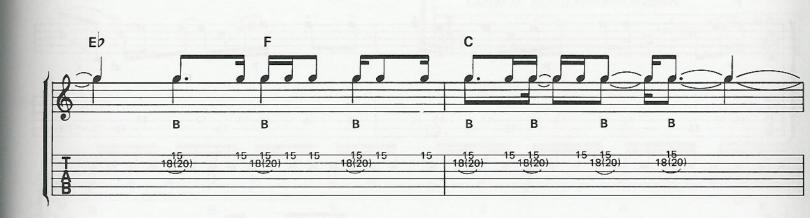


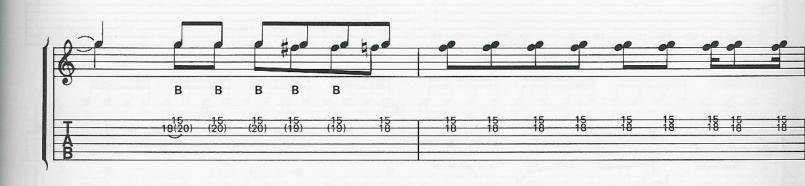










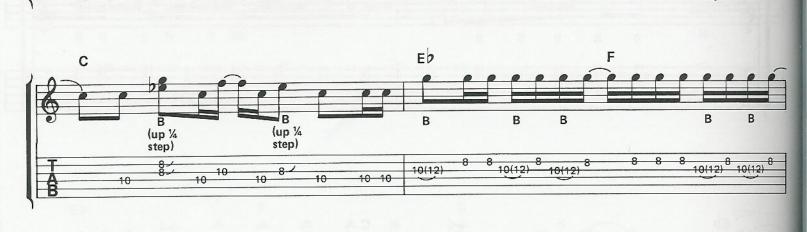


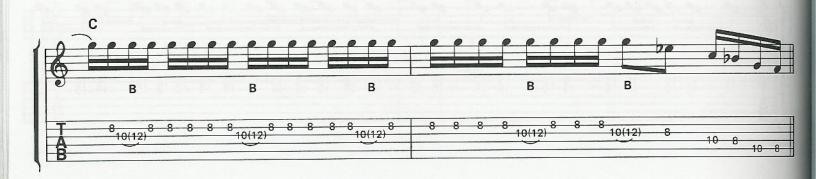




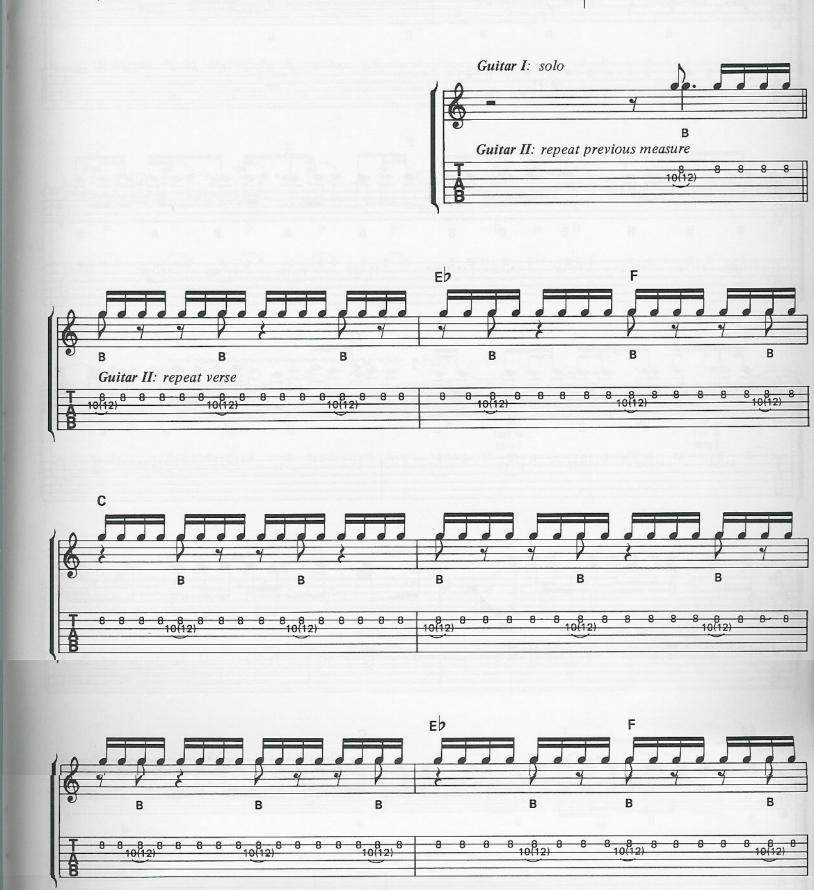


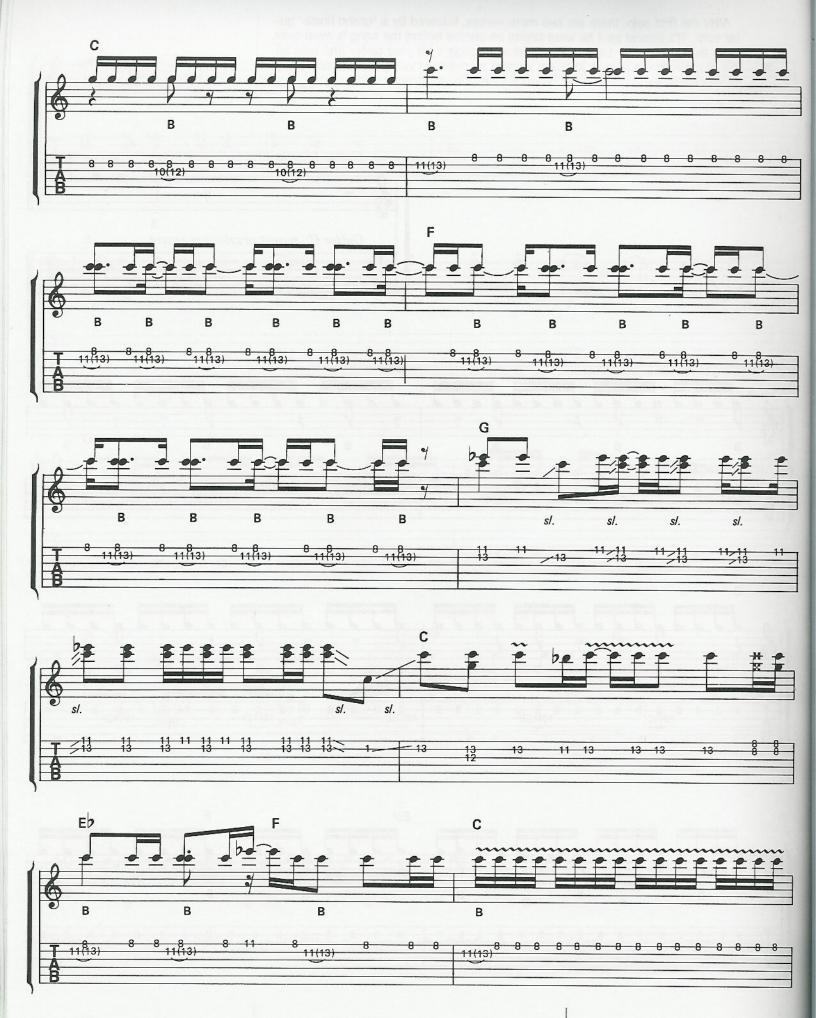


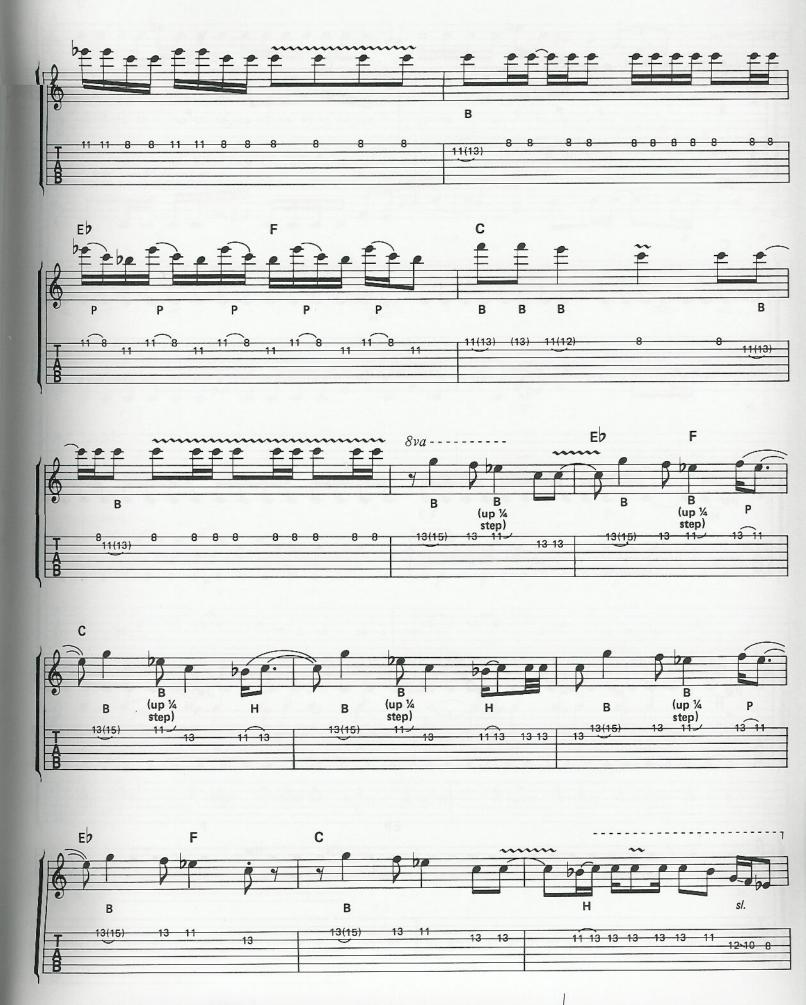


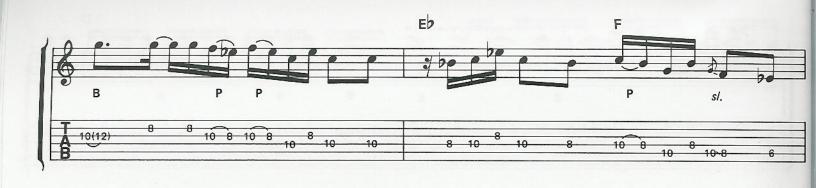


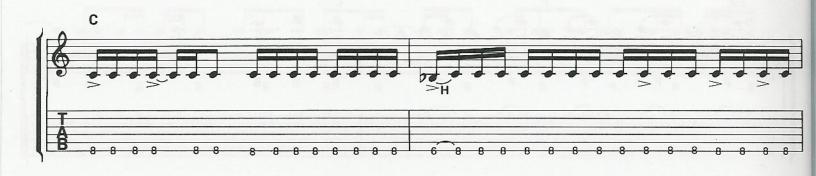
After the first solo, there are two more verses, followed by a "grand finale" guitar solo. It's almost as if he were taking an encore before the song is even over. Here is the final solo transcription. Read through it on your guitar and also follow along with the record, keeping in mind everything I've said about use of the pentatonic scale, hemiola, and overall rhythmic inventiveness.

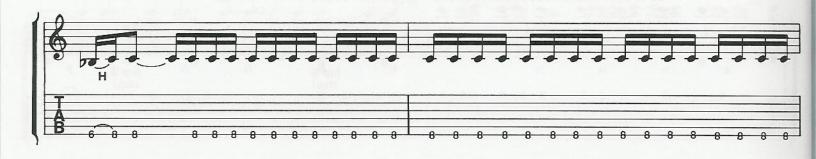


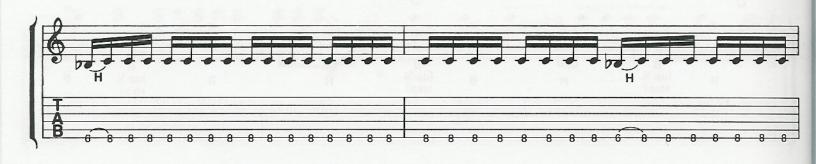


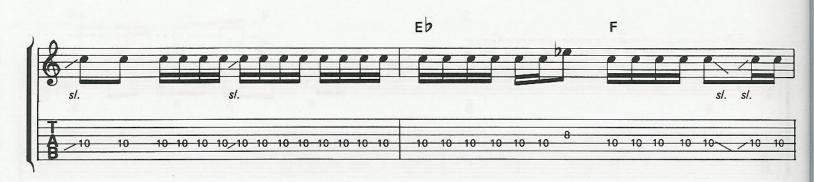


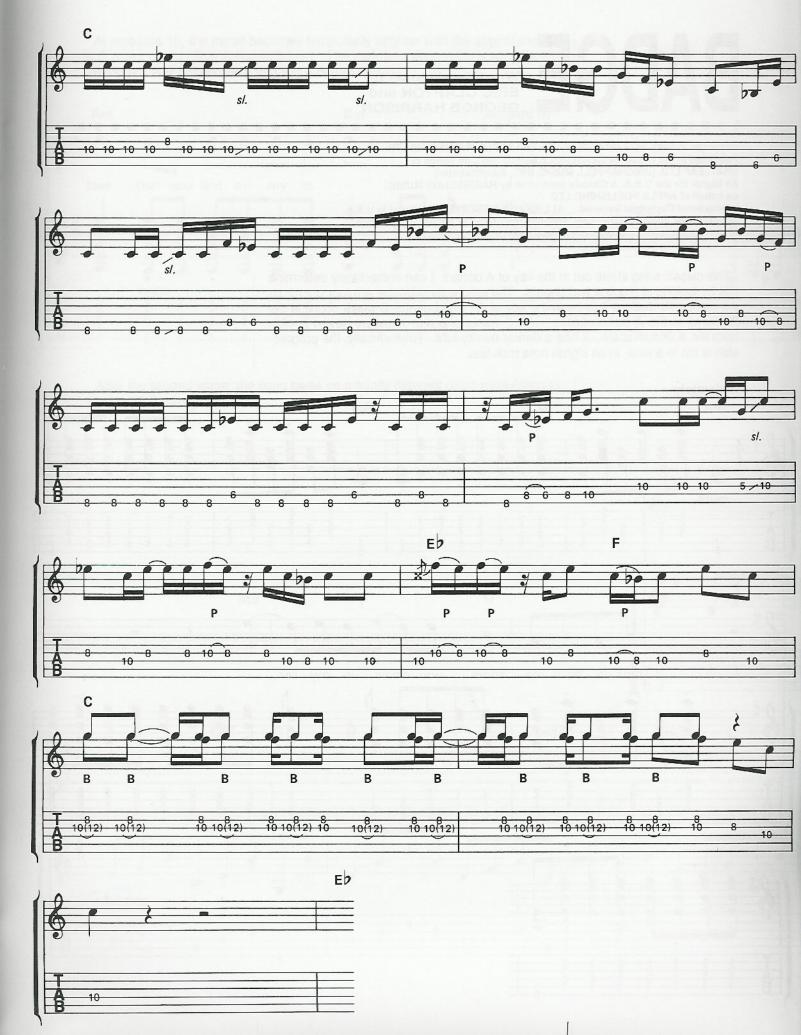










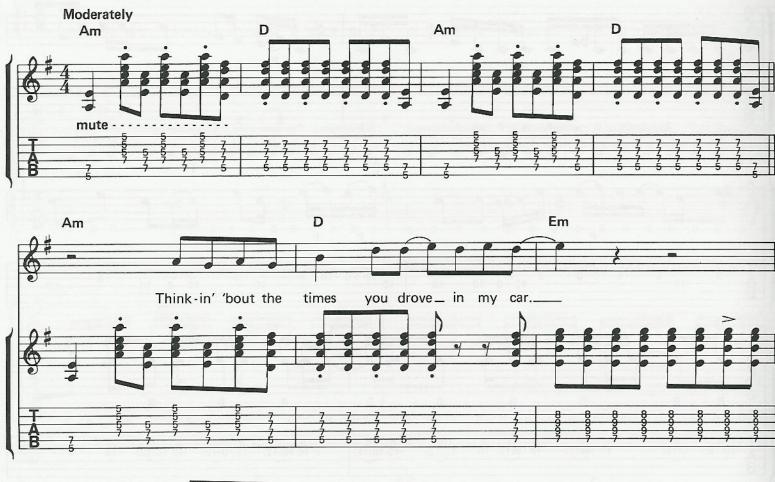


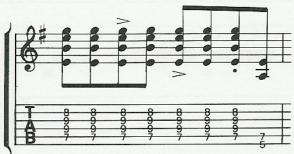
BADGE

Words and Music by ERIC CLAPTON and GEORGE HARRISON

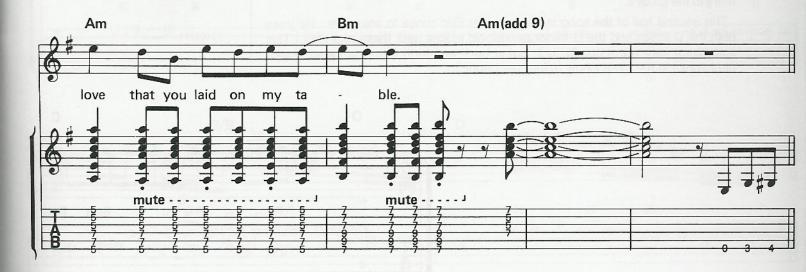
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This classic song starts out in the key of A dorian. I can immediately determine this by looking at the first two chords. The emphasis is on the A minor chord, so we can easily declare it to be in the key of A. The brighter D major chord is the IV chord of the A dorian scale. The E minor chord in measure seven is also from the A dorian scale. It has a darker quality to it. Rhythmically, the progression is set to a nice, even eighth note rock feel.





At measure 13, the mood becomes temporarily brighter with the appearance of a C major chord (III in A dorian minor). The darkness soon returns with the following Am and Bm chords (i and ii in A dorian minor).



After the second verse, the song takes on a totally different color, modulating to the key of D mixolydian.

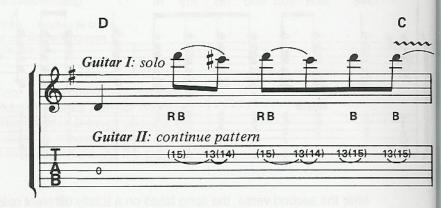


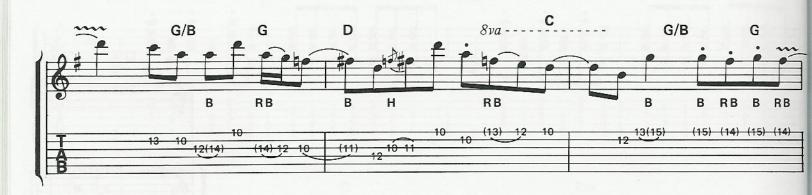
D

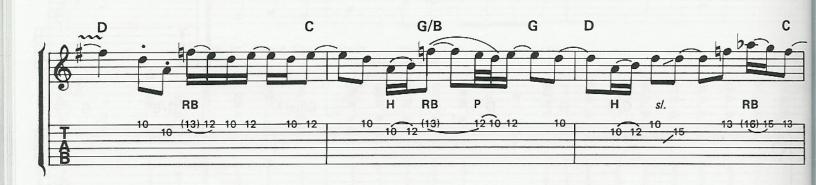
Cmaj7

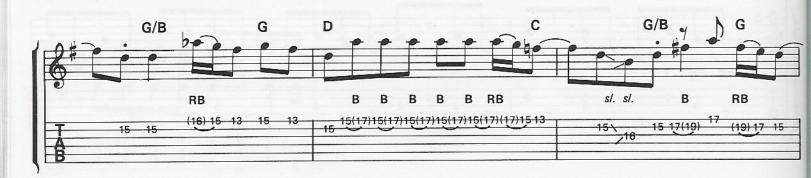
Eric uses open chords here to further brighten the mood. He plays even arpeggios, picking close to the bridge for a twangy sound. Notice how he anticipates the C and G/B chords by a half a beat. These anticipations add excitement to the groove.

This second half of the song is the part that Eric chose to solo over. He uses both the D major and the D minor pentatonic scales over these changes. This solo has a very warm quality to it, going back and forth from the sweet (major pentatonic) to the melancholy (minor pentatonic).

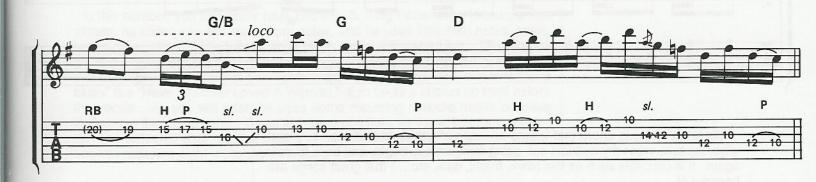


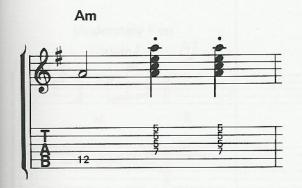






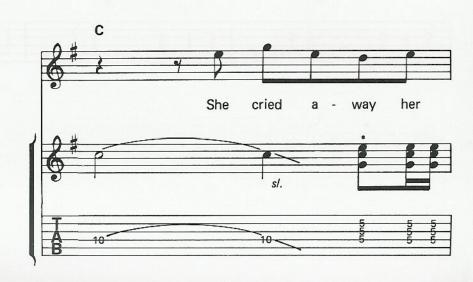


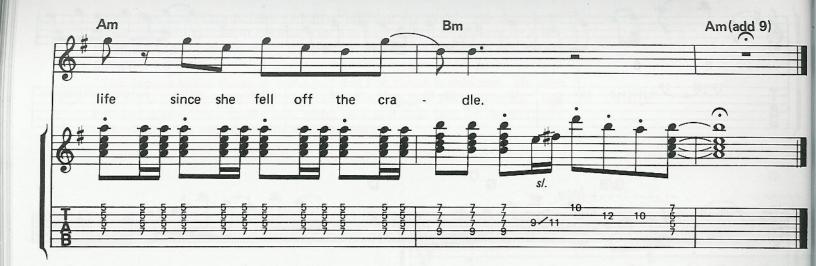




He brings the energy level and the mood back down to its original level for the final verse in A dorian minor. Notice how he does this by playing a descending stream of sixteenth notes in the last two measures of the solo. His last note is a low A. This was a slick way to end the solo and make the transition back to A dorian minor.

The final verse comes to an abrupt conclusion with the sustained Am (add 9) chord.





This is an ominous chord that leaves an eerie afterthought to the tune. Form wise, the tune was very well laid out, going from dark, to bright, and back to dark again. It is concepts such as this (dark, bright, dark, etc....) that great songs are born out of.

CROSSCUT SAW

Words and Music by R.G. FORD

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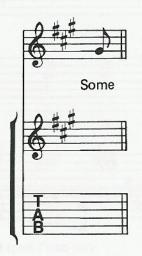
In this number, you can really hear Eric's B. B. King influence. He uses a fast vibrato, he slides into and away from notes, and he uses little 16th notes, snips, or "chicken clucks." The tune is an A blues set to a rhumba beat. The rhumba gives it a light-hearted, almost humorous feel. If you check out the lyrics, you'll probably agree with me that this "feel" is appropriate. This isn't a real "serious blues" like "Have You Ever Loved A Woman." Eric takes a chorus up front before the vocals. As you will hear, he uses some recurring melodic motifs or ideas throughout the whole song. These little recurring licks tie the whole thing together. The sixteenth note run that begins at the end of measure seven and continues into measure eight is probably the song's strongest "hook." Check it out.

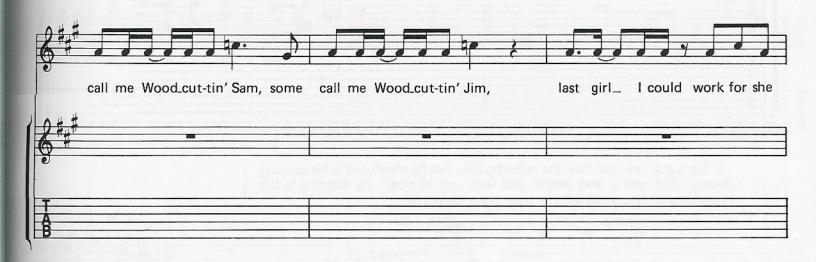




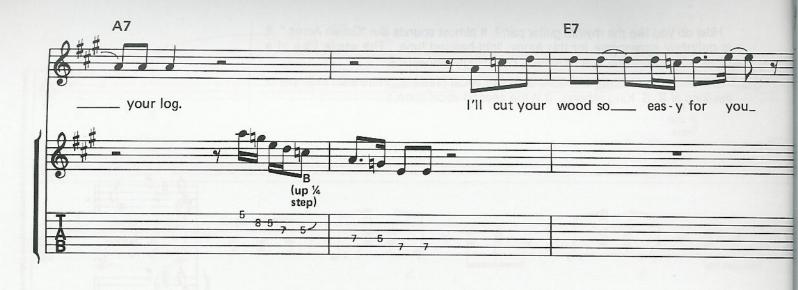
How do you like the rhythm guitar part? It almost sounds like "Green Acres." It is definitely appropriate for this funny, light-hearted tune. The whole idea of a blues progression set to a rhumba is charmingly sarcastic.

Eric uses short, sweet little licks between vocal phrases. Here's an example of this kind of B. B. King playing. It is the second vocal chorus.



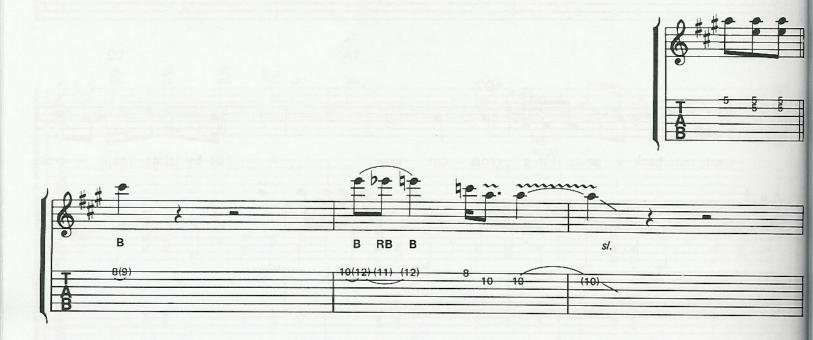


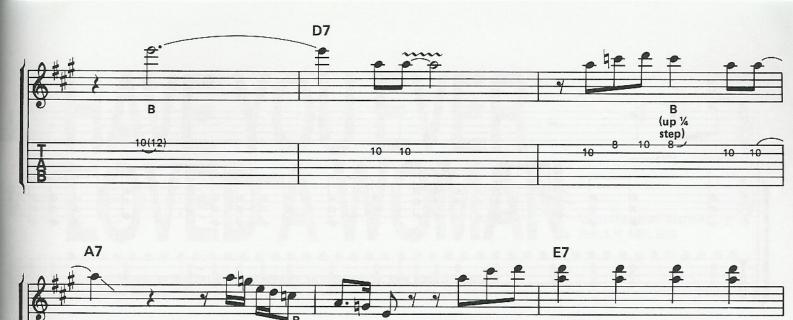




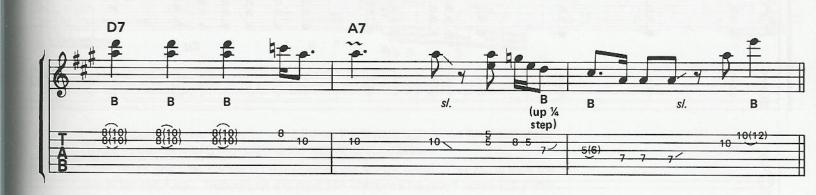


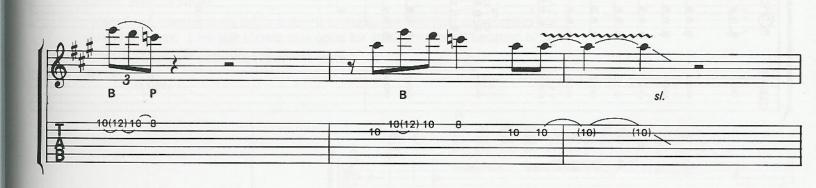
In Eric's solo, you can hear the recurring licks that he introduced in his opening chorus. This solo is very simple, and very, very musical. Try listening to the record and singing along with the solo. Have fun with it!

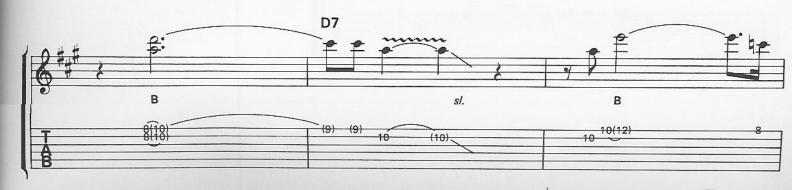


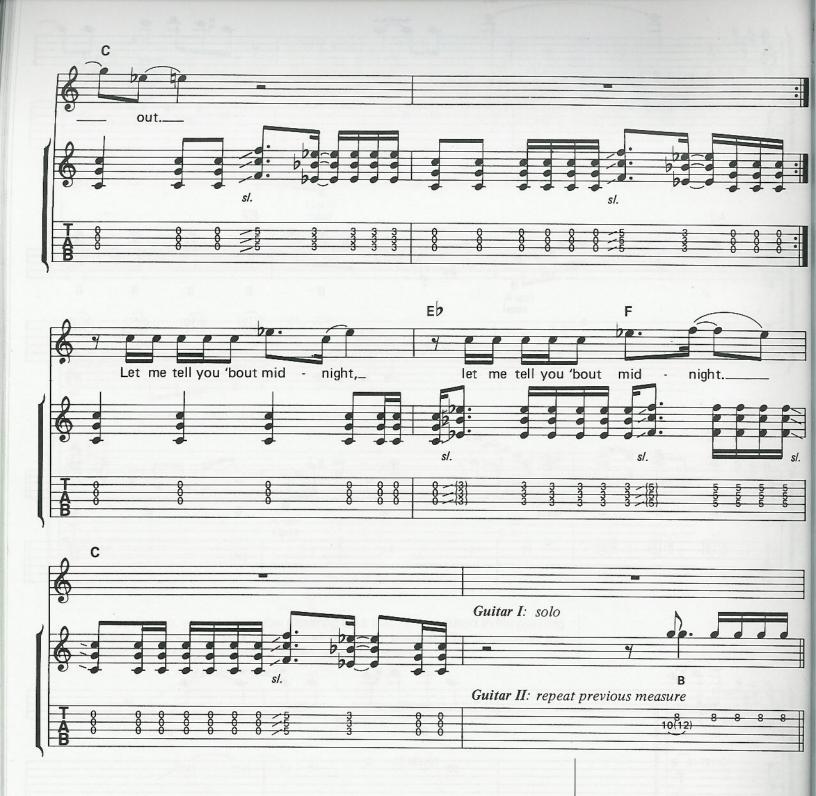












HAVE YOU EVER LOVED A WOMAN

Words and Music by BILLY MILES

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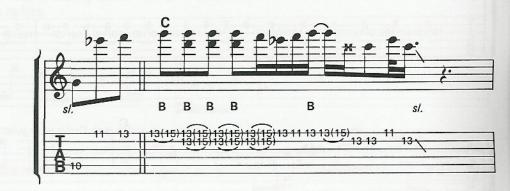
This tune was made for Eric to play on! It is a slow 12/8 blues tune in the Chicago tradition. He starts the tune off with a three note pick-up that sets the whole tempo and mood. This also cues the other musicians when to come in, and how fast. After they've come in, Eric is able to take liberties with his rhythm. He can accelerate and decelerate and be really expressive.

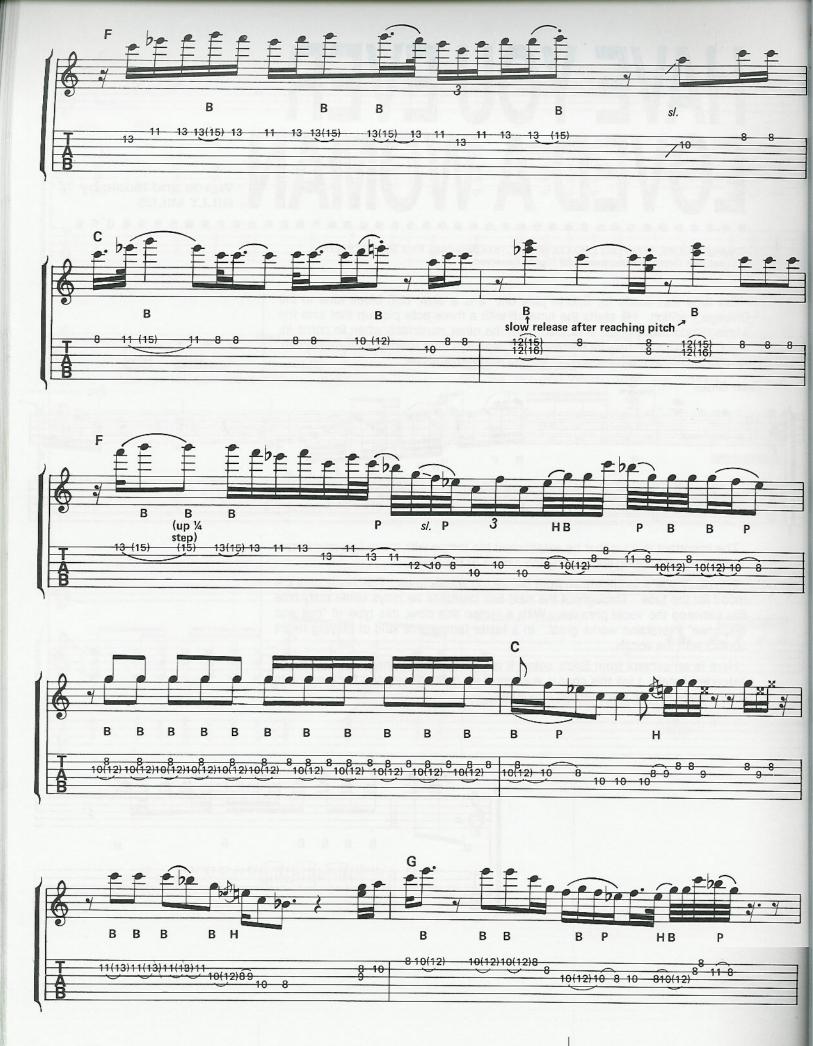


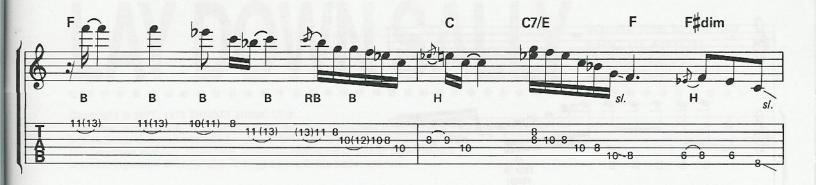
The important thing is that he established the tempo with those first four notes. There's nothing wrong with stating the simple or the obvious.

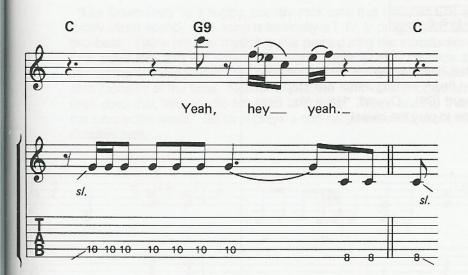
Eric plays one solo chorus up front before the vocals enter. This really sets the mood for the tune. Throughout the next two choruses he plays some tasty little fills between the vocal phrases. With a tempo this slow, this type of "call and response" interaction works great. In a faster tempo, this kind of playing might conflict with the vocals.

Here is an excerpt from Eric's solo. It is the fourth and final chorus from his extended break. I felt this chorus was good for making my point because of its rhythmically simple, but effective structure.



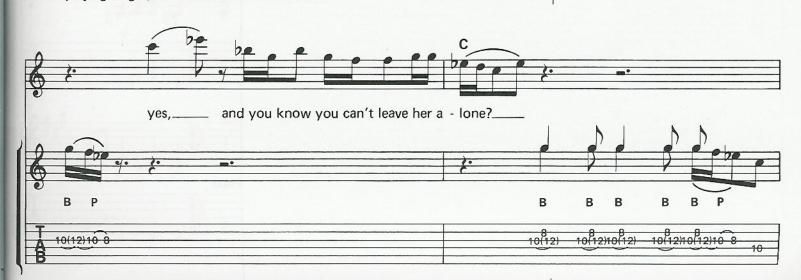


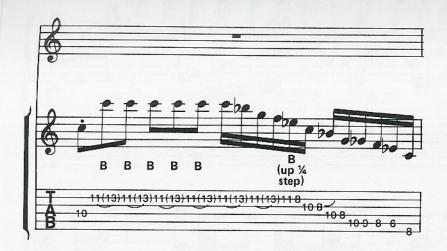




In a slow 12/8 groove such as this, sixteenth notes sound great. They make the "feel" really swing. Eric uses this subdivision sparingly, but tastefully in pacing this solo. Remember, in this context, you don't want to get too notey. The goal is to express emotion and to sing on the guitar. Eric does just that. He uses the C minor pentatonic scale for the most part. Notice how he bends up to the fifth (g) in measure six of the excerpt. In measure three he bends up to the third (e). This is a very lyrical effect. When bending, or when picking in general, you get the most volume, tone, and sustain by picking hard. This is what gives Eric his wailing sound that really cuts through.

After the solo, Eric continues with that same interplay between the vocal and lead guitar. The guitar has more of a presence now after the solo than it did before. In this short excerpt from the final chorus, you can see (and hear) him playing longer, more intricate fills than before.





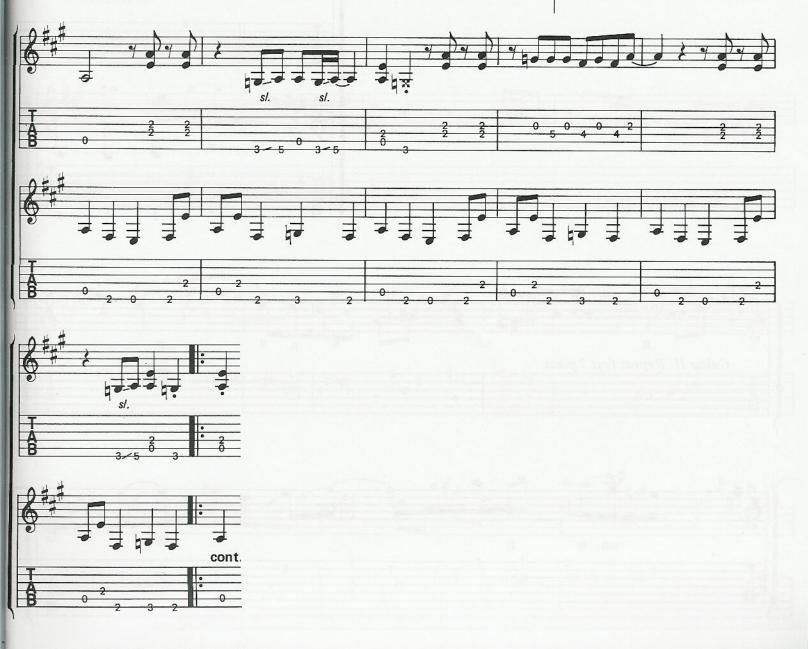
The tune closes with a standard ending that has the rhythm section taceting (stopping) for a brief vocal cadenza, and then finally ending with a half-step shift between the flat II (Db9) chord and the I chord (C9). Overall, "Have You Ever Loved A Woman" is an excellent lesson in how to play the blues!

LAY DOWN SALLY

Words and Music by ERIC CLAPTON, MARCY LEVY and GEORGE TERRY

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"Lay Down Sally" is a happy, country-rock tune that features Eric soloing with a totally clean sound. The song is basically a I, IV, V progression set to a country two-beat. There are two rhythm guitar parts during the introduction and verses. One plays low, and the other plays high. Together they produce a rhythmically interesting accompaniment for the vocals. Harmonically, they define the mixoly-dian modality of the tune. Notice how Guitar I in the intro. plays an A chord and then does that little noodle between G and F#. These are the 7 and 6 tones of the mixolydian scale. Guitar II plays a mid-range bass line that uses the F# and G notes also.



Eric sings two verses and choruses, and then takes a solo. He does some interesting things in this quiet little solo. Keep in mind that he's just playing over an A7 vamp for the entire solo. This may seem like the easiest situation in the world to solo in, but it's not. It can be the most taxing on your creativity. You have to make a melody that moves along without the help of a forward-moving set of chord changes. Eric is very skilled at doing this.

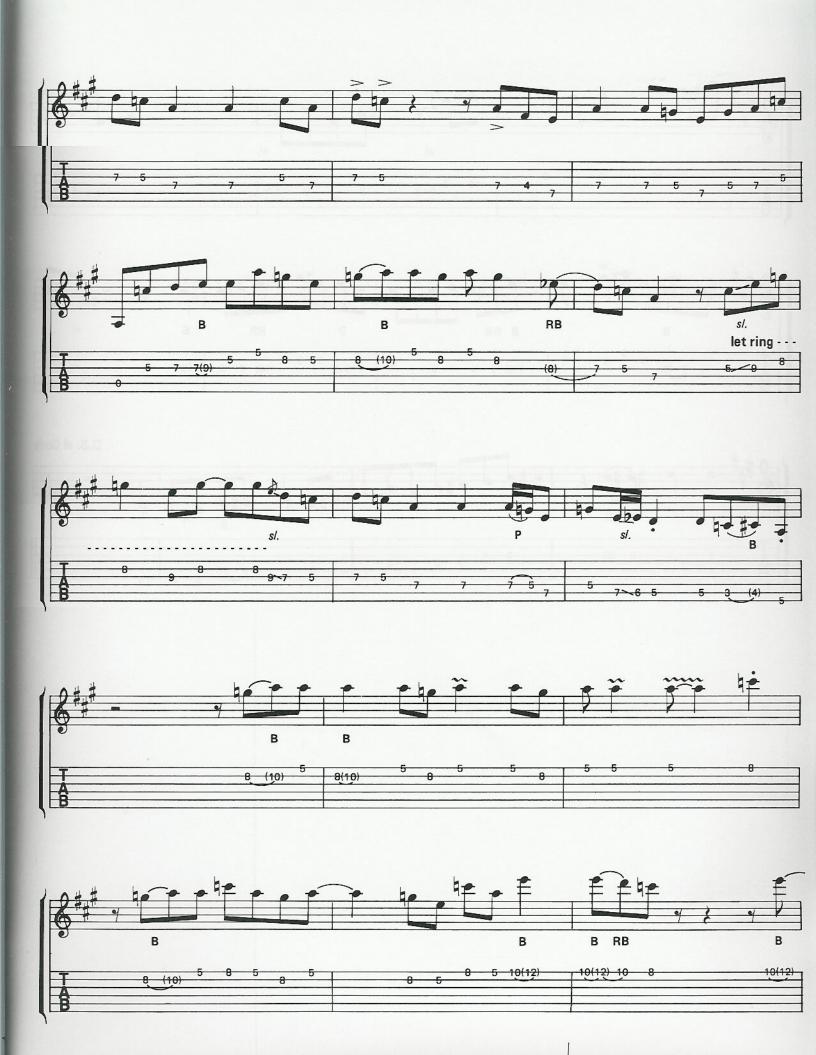
In the first two measures of his solo he combines the mixolydian scale with the minor pentatonic, plus the "blue-note" Eb. Try to think of this as combining different "colors." His canvass is the key of A, and his colors are the mixolydian scale, the minor pentatonic, the parallel major pentatonic, and whatever other notes he decided to play. In measure five he uses the dorian minor scale, another nice color.

Rhythmically, Eric's using swing eighths. His phrasing here is like a jazz musician's. This would be an excellent solo to memorize and sing along to!















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