

10

Things
You
Gotta Do
to
Play
Like

THE BEATLES

(1962-1966)

BY JESSE GRESS

NEVER IN THE HISTORY OF ROCK AND roll has a band inspired more people to pick up a guitar than the Beatles. All talented players, each with a distinctive style, John Lennon, George Harrison, and Paul McCartney made acoustic and electric guitars practically irresistible. As guitarists, the three Fabs pioneered a brave new world devoid of the high-tech equipment available today. Besides basic amplifier distortion and fuzztones, all electronic effects were generated either at the mixing desk (EQ, compression, and echo) or the tape machine (flanging, delay, and automated double tracking or ADT). The Beatles took the guitar on an evolutionary journey from 1962 to 1970 that defined an entire vocabulary of styles, sounds, and textures that are still referenced and copied today. Essentially, they wrote the book.

As they evolved, the Beatles were always able to merge the new with the old, and their earliest influences remained evident on many later recordings. But as the band grew, they became frustrated by their inability to hear

themselves sing and play over throngs of screaming fans, so the Beatles retired from performing live with a final concert at San Francisco's Candlestick Park on August 29, 1966. Thus, the sound of the Beatles is the sound of their records, and the sound of those records was a result of the interaction between the band, their producer George Martin, and an imaginative and talented team of EMI engineers and techs, as well as the equipment they were recorded on and the rooms they were recorded in. With this team in place, the Beatles could constantly push the envelope and were limited only by their collective imaginations.

So, to really play like the Beatles, you have to study their entire catalog in chronological order. Today, that means not only scrutinizing their albums, but also exploring the vast amount of additional material that has been made available from official sources, as well as through fan trading networks. Join me as we dig deep for hidden Beatle treasure and excavate some of my

favorite magical mystery guitar moments ca. 1962-1966. First, you gotta...

1

PLAY LIKE JOHN

For a guitarist who described his own abilities as "primitive" and claimed to have never progressed beyond a certain level, John Lennon certainly knew how to express himself. Fully capable of whipping up a rhythm guitar frenzy, tenderizing a ballad with sensitive fingerpicking, or ripping an occasional lead (to say nothing of writing all of those songs!), Lennon's guitar playing goes back to his childhood and rebellious teens. Lennon bought his first Rickenbacker—a blond, early-version short-scale 325 Capri, later refinished in black—in Hamburg in 1960. Upon signing with EMI in 1962, Lennon and Harrison purchased matching Gibson J-160E acoustics with factory-mounted pickups, which the boys would play (both acoustically and plugged into their

amps) on every Beatles album. 1964 saw the addition of a Framus Hootenanny 12-string acoustic, a sonic blue Fender Stratocaster (see Play Like George), and later in 1966 a sunburst Epiphone E230TD Casino that Lennon would strip down to its natural wood.

Speaking of amps, the boys shared theirs freely, from a Selmer Truvoice in their Hamburg days, to Vox AC15 and AC30 Twins (the latter with Top Boost) in 1962, continuing in 1963 with AC30 Twins, and adding AC50 Super Twins and the AC100 Super DeLuxe in '64 and '65. A blonde 2x12 Fender Bassman intended for McCartney's bass appeared at EMI studios in 1965, and within a year it became Harrison's go-to amp for every album. Though the Beatles continued to endorse Vox amps through their last official live performance, in 1966 they switched to solid-state 7120's and began using Fender Showmans in the studio.

2 PLAY LIKE GEORGE

George Harrison, the man who put the "lead" in "lead guitar," brought a lot to the Beatles party. From twangy rockabilly runs, Latin stylings, and volume pedal swells, to double-tracked parts, half-speed and backwards guitar solos, and revolutionary usage of the 12-string electric and sitar, Harrison's licks and tricks were the ones that made you want to play guitar! A bit of a child prodigy, Harrison had already developed a sophisticated style and technique by the time he joined Lennon and McCartney in the Quarry Men. His sequence of guitars began with an Egmond acoustic, followed by a Hofner President (which Harrison fitted with a single pickup), a Hofner Club 40, and a Futurama Strat copy. Harrison's fifth ax was a score—a black Gretsch Duo-Jet purchased in 1961 from a sailor in Liverpool. He also began playing a Gretsch 6122 Country Gentleman around 1963, and bought a Rickenbacker 425 that same year that he would play on "She Loves You." Also pivotal to the Beatles sound was a 1963 Rickenbacker 360-12 12-string electric gifted by the company during the Beatles U.S. stay for the Ed Sullivan Show. A Gretsch 6119 Tennessean was also added to the armada in '63, and in '64 Harrison started a playing Jose Ramirez nylon-string acoustic. Harrison and Lennon acquired in 1964 a pair of identical sonic blue Fender Stratocasters, which can be heard throughout '65's *Rubber Soul* and '66's *Revolver*. Finally, Harrison brought a Gibson SG Standard into the fold in 1966.

3 PLAY LIKE PAUL

Though he wouldn't be recorded as a guitarist until the Beatles third album, Paul McCartney always considered acoustic guitar as his first instrument. His first electric was a Rosetti Lucky Seven paired with an Elpico amp (designed to handle mic and gramophone inputs), both of which he took to Hamburg and played until the guitar fell apart. Stuck without an instrument, McCartney was forced onto the Kaiserkeller's stage piano where he developed his keyboard chops purely by default. When Stuart Sutcliffe left the Beatles, McCartney switched to bass, acquired his iconic violin-shaped Hofner, flipped it over and the rest is history. (He began playing a Rickenbacker 4001S bass in 1965.) Guitar-wise, McCartney preferences were a 1964 Epiphone Texan FT-79 acoustic and a Bigsby-equipped sunburst '64 Casino, both of which he still plays today. Defining characteristics of Sir Paul's guitar style include his signature acoustic strum pattern as well as a wild, Hendrix-influenced approach to electric soloing. He began playing guitar on Beatles records in 1964. And speaking of records, it's time to ...

4 PICK APART PLEASE PLEASE ME

Following the order of the original U.K. LP and 1993 U.S. CD releases, our journey begins with *Please Please Me*, recorded in a single day on February 11, 1963. The U.K. albums did not contain the band's singles, beginning with 1962's "Love Me Do," a song that reflects the earliest recorded Beatle sound with a Lennon harmonica intro played over a skiffle-style acoustic (G.H.) and electric (J.L.) strumming pattern reminiscent of *Ex. 1a*. For best results, voice a G on top of the C chord. (Note: Many of the following examples have been notated in half time.) Lennon's acoustic guitar was a powerful rhythmic force in the early Beatles catalog, driving songs like the title track with energetic figures similar to the one in *Ex. 1b* and setting up crucial single-note Harrison breaks like the song's definitive E-to-octave-E-to-B riff. Harrison's early solos displayed among many traits a knack for thirds harmonies, as depicted in the I-IV-V-IV "Twist and Shout"-meets-"La Bamba" concoction in *Ex. 1c*. The single-note bass-register line in *Ex. 1d* evokes the bridge figure to "Boys," one of

the album's six cover tunes and an early model for many future Beatle riffs from "Hold Me Tight" to "Lady Madonna." "She Loves You," the lads' first #1 U.K. single, provided Harrison with a golden opportunity to put his shimmery instrumental stamp on the song's "yeah, yeah, yeah" vocal line using the three chords shown in *Ex. 1e*, and to flaunt some badass Hammond organ-style fourth intervals like those in *Ex. 1f*. (Tip: Anticipate the first double stop on the "and" of beat four.)

5 WEAR OUT WITH THE BEATLES

In stores by November of '63, the second Beatles' LP—its U.S. counterpart, *Meet the Beatles*, was released in January, 1964—coincided with the release of their first U.S. top-40 single, "I Want to Hold Your Hand," which held the #1 position for seven weeks. The album's opening cut, "It Won't Be Long," is one of the first Beatle tunes to feature a single-note bass-register riff like the one paraphrased in *Ex. 2a* as a song's signature instrumental hook, a compositional technique they would revisit many times. Also of note is Lennon's relentless rhythm guitar assault on "All My Loving," where he propels the song's F#m-B-E/G#-C#m-A-F#m-D/F#-B7 progression with a seemingly endless barrage of uninterrupted eighth-note triplets at 156 bpm! Harrison's faux-fingerpicked IV-I lick in *Ex. 2b* reflects his fondness for Carl Perkins and Scotty Moore, while *Ex. 2c* illustrates a single-note bass figure that covers the IV (A) and VIIm (C#m) chords in E à la "I Call Your Name." (Bonus: Adapt bar 1 to an F-Bb-G-C progression and you've got "Hold Me Tight.") One of several Beatles tunes featuring a Latin flavor, the band's cover of Meredith Willson's "Till There Was You" finds Lennon providing a cha-cha acoustic rhythm bed beneath a remarkably sophisticated Harrison solo. *Ex. 2d* depicts how G.H. navigated the song's changes with jazzy scale-based lines, arpeggios, and chord melody runs. And check out bar 3's D harmonic (a happy accident?) and flat-five-based chord substitution (C13/F# = F#7b5#5#9). Yikes!

6 TAKE A HARD LOOK AT A HARD DAY'S NIGHT

The Beatles first LP of original material was released in tandem with their first feature film in June, 1964, and the album's opening chord from the title track has been a controversial

Ex. 1a

♩ = ca. 84 (♩ = ³♩)

w/double-time feel

G5 C

Acous. and elec. gtrs.

let bass notes ring

Ex. 1b

♩ = ca. 138

Play three times E

G IIIpos. B VIIpos.

A Vpos.

6th time

Ex. 1c

♩ = ca. 61

w/double-time feel

D G A G D/F#

Ex. 1d

♩ = ca. 130

*Tune down 1/2 step (E|B|D|G|B|E|b)

E

Ex. 1e

♩ = ca. 76

w/double-time feel

Em Em(add9) G

Ex. 1f

♩ = ca. 152

Ex. 2a

♩ = ca. 134

E

Ex. 2b

♩ = ca. 60 (♩ = ³♩)

w/double-time feel

A(IV)

w/pick and fingers

th on ⑥

Ex. 2c

♩ = ca. 126

E(I) A(IV) C#m(VI)

Ex. 2d

♩ = ca. 61

w/double-time feel

C9 F F#dim7 - Adim7 G#dim7 Gm7 Gm9 Gm9 Bbm9 Bbm9 A ⑥5fr. A ⑥4fr. Gm7 C9

Acous. gtr. (J.L.)

Nylon-string acous. (G.H.)

F F9 Bb 1:24

C9 F F#dim7 G#dim7 Adim7 Gm7

Gm9 Bbm7 Bbm9 Am7 Abm7 F9

subject for decades. Studio documentation reveals that a single, low-D piano note provided the foundation for Harrison and Lennon's "mystery chords." Dr. Jason Brown has a different theory and detailed his studies on the matter in the Jan. '05 issue of *GP*. Brown surmised that George Martin added at least a D, F, and G on piano to Harrison's newly acquired Rickenbacker 360-12 12-string and Lennon's electric 6-string voicings. To my ears, the G7sus4/D in **Ex. 3a** nearly does the job, but it's missing the clearly audible octave As present in its cousin Fadd9, so I'd guess both were played simultaneously. Harrison had trouble playing his 12-string electric solo during basic tracking, and ended

up overdubbing the part an octave lower at half-speed. **Ex. 3b** simulates the solo's trickiest bit at playback speed. This album also marked McCartney's first recorded guitar performance on a Beatles song. **Ex. 3c** approximates an accompaniment figure from "And I Love Her," which (along with "I'll Be Back") marked the first recordings of all three Beatles playing acoustic guitars. Here, L & M hold down another cha-cha figure on steel-string acoustics while Harrison arpeggiates the F#m-to-C#m (or E6) changes on a Ramirez nylon-string. (Tip: Check out George's solo for a textbook example of how to base a solo on a song's melody.) The 12-string riff in **Ex. 3d** recalls how "The Word" blurs major and minor tonal-

ities by alternating Bbs and Bs over a G tonal center. Finally, Harrison used his "I Feel Fine" solo (See *GP* 8/04 for a full transcription.) to paraphrase the classic "Memphis, TN" riff with the slippery moves in **Ex. 3e**. (Fact: Lennon's unprecedented feedback intro was "played" on an amplified Gibson J-160E acoustic.)

7 BREAK DOWN BEATLES FOR SALE

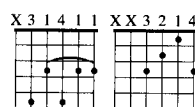
The fourth Beatles album was recorded two months after "A Hard Day's Night" and released just before Christmas of 1964. Originals such as "I'm a Loser" (**Ex. 4a** approximates an excerpt from Harrison's rockabilly-flavored solo) and "Baby's in Black" share disc space with Carl Perkins (whose "Honey Don't" intro is invoked in **Ex. 4b**), Chuck Berry, Leiber and Stoller, and Buddy Holly covers. "Yes It Is" was Lennon's second attempt at writing a Smokey Robinson-style song (the first was "This Boy"), and **Ex. 4c** illustrates the simple 12/8 accompaniment and common I-IV-II-V progression that frame Harrison's innovative use of a volume pedal to fade into and out of the natural harmonics shown in **Ex. 4d**. (Tip: Play the first three over a static E intro, then lay the remaining ones over B7 to E.)

Ex. 3a

Ex. 3b

♩ = ca. 140
12-str. elec.

G7sus4/D Fadd9



Musical notation for Ex. 3a and 3b. Ex. 3a shows a 12-string electric guitar riff in 4/4 time, featuring a G7sus4/D and Fadd9 chord progression. Ex. 3b shows a similar riff, but with a different fingering and a different chord progression (F and G).

Ex. 3c

Ex. 3d

Ex. 3e

♩ = ca. 115
Acous. gtrs. 1 & 2

Musical notation for Ex. 3c and 3d. Ex. 3c shows an acoustic guitar solo in 4/4 time, featuring a F#m and C#m(E6) chord progression. Ex. 3d shows a 12-string electric guitar riff in 4/4 time, featuring a G7sus4/D and Fadd9 chord progression.

♩ = ca. 65
w/double-time feel
12-str. elec.

♩ = ca. 90 (♩ = ³♩)
w/double-time feel

Ex. 4a

Ex. 4b

♩ = ca. 89 (♩ = ³♩)
w/double-time feel

♩ = ca. 83 (♩ = ³♩)
w/double-time feel

Musical notation for Ex. 4a and 4b. Ex. 4a shows an acoustic guitar solo in 4/4 time, featuring an Am(II) and D6(V) chord progression. Ex. 4b shows a 12-string electric guitar riff in 4/4 time, featuring a G7sus4/D and Fadd9 chord progression.

Musical notation for Ex. 4c and 4d. Ex. 4c shows an acoustic guitar solo in 4/4 time, featuring a G7sus4/D and Fadd9 chord progression. Ex. 4d shows a 12-string electric guitar riff in 4/4 time, featuring a G7sus4/D and Fadd9 chord progression.

8

HOLLER FOR HELP!

Both the U.K and U.S. versions of the Beatles' fifth album were released in August, 1965, but the title track hit the U.S. charts that July and held the #1 slot for three of its 12-week listing. Buried within the intro are Lennon's Townshend-esque 12-string acoustic flourishes simulated in **Ex. 5a**, a cool detail I'd never noticed. Harrison provided the song's signature instrumental break, but again had a difficult time recording the part during basics, and eventually overdubbed it in real time at his own pace. **Ex. 5b** shows the four fingerings used to play the lick, which bears no small resemblance to a blues turnaround in A. To play the lick,

simply arpeggiate each grip from low to high with even, not swung, sixteenth-notes. Let 'em ring and you're there. **Ex. 5c** invokes Lennon's pre-verse A-Asus2 rhythm figure, which can easily be adapted to the A-C#m-F#m-G-D-A verse progression. McCartney's breakout number, "Yesterday," features Sir Paul accompanied by his Epi Texan and a string quartet, and was the first Beatle song to be recorded by a single band member. It's also a great example of his trademark fingerstyle strumming pattern. Tune down a whole step, finger an open G5 chord (actually F5), play the bass note in **Ex. 5d** with your thumb followed by three up-down-up index-finger brushstrokes on the upper notes of the chord, then repeat to complete the measure. Adapt this picking pattern to the grids

below, and play two chords per bar (grids with parenthesized bass notes count as two) to form the song's unique 7-bar progression. McCartney's first recorded electric guitar showed up in the end-of-verse and outro fills in "Ticket to Ride" with bend-y runs like the one in **Ex. 5e**. (Tip: Try starting it on beat two.) Finally, **Ex. 5f** proves that a great guitar riff holds its own forward or backwards. Surprise!

Ex. 4c

♩ = ca. 106

1st time E(I) A(IV)
Acous. gtr. 2nd time F#m7(II) B7(V) (to E)

Ex. 4d

8va

① 12fr. ② 12fr. ① 4fr. ① 12fr. ① 7fr. ① 5fr.

w/volume pedal < > < > < > < > < >

Ex. 5a

♩ = ca. 95 (♩ = ³♩)

w/double-time feel

1st x Bm G
2nd x G
3rd x E

12-str. acous Play three times

3rd time

Ex. 5b

X 3 1 0 0 X X 3 1 0 0 X X 3 1 0 0 X X 3 1 0 0 X

Ex. 5c

♩ = ca. 95 (♩ = ³♩)

w/double-time feel

A A A

12-str. acous Asus2 Asus2

Ex. 5d

♩ = ca. 98

*Tune down 1 step (DGCFA D)

G5

Acous. gtr. V V

w/fingers let ⑥ ring P i sim.

Ex. 5e

♩ = ca. 63

w/double-time feel

E(V) (to A(I))

B R B1/4 10 12 (14) 2 10 12

10 (12) 10 8 9 10/12 12

Ex. 5f

♩ = ca. 69

w/double-time feel

E

2 0 4 2 0 2 4 3 0

F#m B7 Em(D) Cmaj7 D7 G5(F#) Em7 A C G5

1 3 4 1 1 1 X 2 1 3 0 4 X X 2 0 0 0 X 3 X 0 0 0 X X 0 2 1 3 2 X 0 0 0 0 2 3 0 4 X X 0 1 2 3 0 X 3 2 0 1 X 2 X 0 0 3 4

*All notes and chords sound 1 step lower than written.

their most mature songwriting and advanced playing to date. The album's dry production was intentional and lent even greater intimacy to songs like Lennon's "Norwegian Wood" (which featured Harrison's debut on sitar and kicked off a raga-rock craze) and McCartney's "Michelle." Lennon's acoustic playing on "Wood"—a droning, modal chord-melody figure derived from an open-position

D chord shape can be broken into two elements: the 6/8 rhythmic motif in **Ex. 6a**, and a series of melodic moves within the D grip similar to the ones depicted in **Ex. 6b**. (Shades of "Frères Jacques"!) The song's bridge figure suggested by **Ex. 6c** alternates between straight 3/8 accents on Dm and four-against-three 3/16 accents on G. (Tip: Capo the last three examples at the third fret.) Speaking

Ex. 6a

♩ = ca. 60 D

Acous. gtr.

Ex. 6b

Freely

Ex. 6c

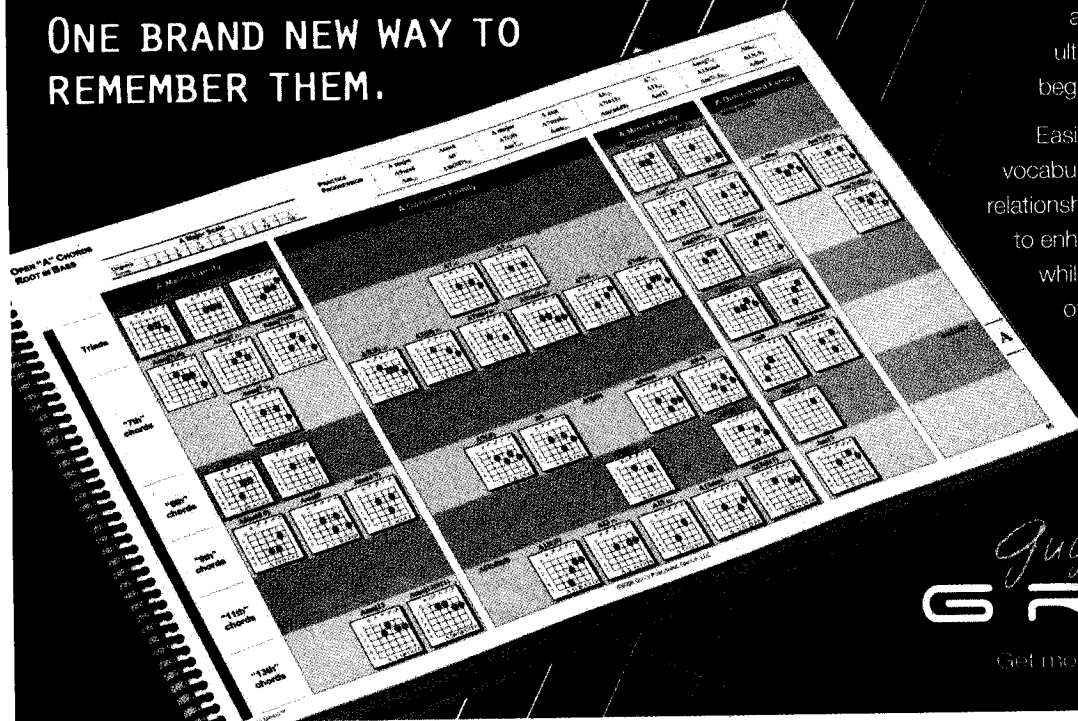
♩ = ca. 60

Play four times

(1st, 2nd x) Dm

(3rd, 4th x) G

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10 Things You Gotta Do to Play Like The Beatles

LESSONS

of "Michelle," Ex. 6d paraphrases one of my fave hidden Beatle moments—the last phrase of Harrison's mellow, jazz-toned solo ends with a slightly discordant flat-five interval due to the inclusion of an open *D* on the last note, creating an ambiguous *Fm6* tonality. Intentional or not? You decide. Lennon's "Nowhere Man" contains one of the Beat-

les' loveliest solos. Harrison claims that he and Lennon tracked the solo in unison, but the tracking is *so* tight that this seems unlikely. Regardless, the sonic blue Stratocasters on the tune were top boosted and compressed, and, according to McCartney, run through three sets of faders set to full treble for maximum pop and sparkle, and

Ex. 6d

♩ = ca. 60

w/double-time feel

C Bdim7 C Fm

T
A
B

2 1 0 3 2 3 0 2 3 0

Ex. 6e

♩ = ca. 122

E9(no3)/B

w/heavy compression and top boost

T
A
B

2 1 2 2

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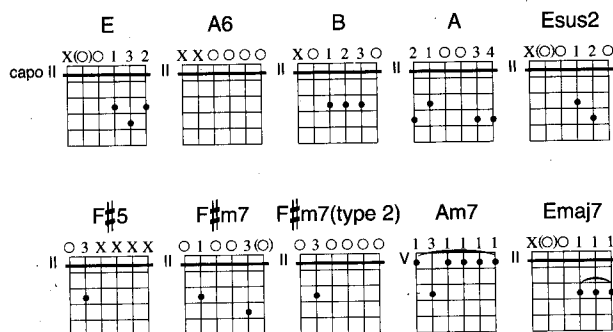
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Ex. 6f



Ex. 6e gives us a taste of things to come with an exquisite end-of-first-verse fill. Ex. 6f presents the entire solo in all its shimmering glory along with Lennon's capoed acoustic accompaniment.

10

REVEL IN REVOLVER

The last Beatle album for which the U.K. and U.S. versions differed was recorded between April 6 and June 21, 1966, and was characterized by brilliant songs and revolutionary experimental recording techniques brainstormed by both the band and their production team. Band members' roles blurred as McCartney became lead guitarist on Harrison's "Taxman," leaving George to play razor-edged D7 "chops" like those in Ex. 7a, while Paul spewed raga-like stream-of-consciousness fuzztone runs similar to the moves in Ex. 7b.

♩ = ca. 120

0:48 *Acous. gtr. 1 **Elec. gtr.

E A6 B A6 A^{⑥5fr.} A Esus2 A6

let ring string noise l.r.

T A B

Diagram showing musical notation for Ex. 6f, measures 1-4. The notation includes guitar parts for acoustic and electric guitar, with fingerings and dynamics indicated.

*Acous. gtr. w/capo at 2nd fret.

**Elec. gtr. w/heavy compression and top boost.

F#5 F#m7 F#m7 Am7 A6 Emaj7 Esus2

1:04

8va

string noise l.r. w/fret buzz

T A B

Diagram showing musical notation for Ex. 6f, measures 5-8. The notation includes guitar parts for acoustic and electric guitar, with fingerings and dynamics indicated.

Ex. 7a

♩ = ca. 138

D7

Play four times

D7(♯9)

w/fuzz 3

B R

let ring

T A B

Diagram showing musical notation for Ex. 7a. The notation includes guitar parts for acoustic and electric guitar, with fingerings and dynamics indicated.

Ex. 7b

♩ = ca. 69

w/double-time feel

D7(♯9)

3

let ring

T A B

Diagram showing musical notation for Ex. 7b. The notation includes guitar parts for acoustic and electric guitar, with fingerings and dynamics indicated.

"She Said She Said" begins with Harrison's great *B \flat* -based fuzztone lick leading into a capoed Lennon rhythm figure a la **Ex. 7c** that casts his funky, rockabilly fingerpicking in an entirely new context. The harmonized intro to "And Your Bird Can Sing," which Harrison recalled playing with either Lennon or McCartney, is a twin-guitar masterpiece. **Ex. 7d**, arranged for a single ax, gives you all

of its elements, including thirds harmonies during the first three beats and English fox-hunt intervals (i.e., major third to Perfect fourth to minor sixth to Perfect fifth to major third) on beat four. (Tip: for total authenticity, displace the lick to start on the second sixteenth beat.) We'll wrap up with a variation on Harrison's classic "I Want to Tell You" intro riff. Reverse the order of notes in

the triplet on beat three, move the riff up one string group to the key of *A*, and you're good to go!

Revolver set the stage for the Beatles' retirement from live performance and paved the way to a new era that would allow the boys to record anything they could imagine. Join us next month as we continue the journey from 1967 through 1970. Cheers! ■

Ex. 7c

♩ = ca. 110

A7

let ring

m p p i p m i p

T 2 0 2 2 0 2

A 2 2 2 2 2 2

B 0 2 2 2 2 2

Ex. 7d

♩ = ca. 66
w/double-time feel

E

0 7 5 7 5 4 5 4 2 2 4 2 1 4 1 0 2 4 5

T 9 7 5 7 5 4 5 4 2 2 4 2 1 4 1 0 2 4 5

A 9 8 6 8 6 4 6 4 2 6 4 2 4 1 1 0 5

B 6 4 2 4 1 1 0 5

Ex. 7e

♩ = ca. 62 (♩ = $\frac{3}{4}$)
w/double-time feel

E

let ring

2 0 2 0 0 0 5 4 0 0

T 2 0 2 0 0 0 5 4 0 0

A 2 0 2 0 0 0 5 4 0 0

B 0 2 0 2 0 2 0 2 0 2

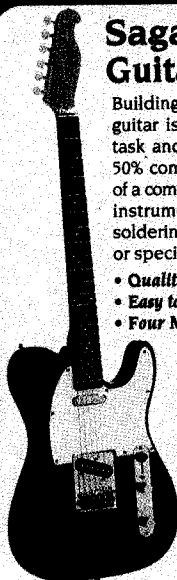
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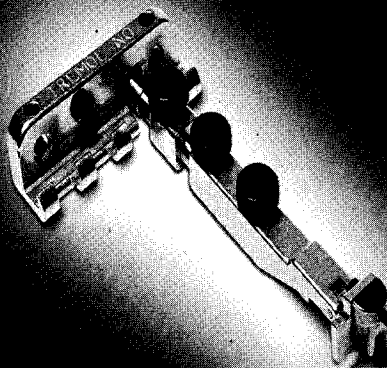
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