

"Knockin' on Heaven's Door" Guns N' Roses



By Klokke Grossfeld

Guns N' Roses pay respectful tribute to Bob Dylan with their cover of "Knockin' on Heaven's Door," released as a studio version on their LP *Use Your Illusion II*, and most recently on their *Greatest Hits* album. Played in a relaxed, bluesy style and highlighted by blazing guitar solos, a choral interlude, and what is plausibly a phone call from the Almighty, "Knockin'" finds the band really

letting loose. Indeed, the cut nicely shows off the strengths of the individual members.

THE RHYTHM WORK

The intro opens with a single flanged electric guitar arpeggiating a I-V-IV (G-D-C) chord progression in the key of G major. The chords in **Fig. 1** serve as an outline for the verses. Each of these shapes is held for the duration of the chord, so that all the notes can ring for as long

as possible. As for your picking approach, these arpeggios can be played either fingerstyle—with your thumb covering the 6th and 5th strings, and your index, middle, and ring fingers taking the 4th through 1st strings—or by using your pick to outline the chords one note at a time.

While the chorus is composed of the same basic I-V-IV progression as the intro and verse, the voicings in this section have been pared down to distorted G5, D5, and C5 three-note (root-5th-root) power chords (**Fig. 2**), and are now played in longer rhythms.

In both the verse and the chorus, an electric guitar plays higher-pitched octaves that complement the vocals. For the verses' octaves, which fall on strings 2-4, use the shape shown in **Fig. 3A**, making sure that your index finger mutes the 3rd string while also fretting the 4th string. Do the same for the chorus's octaves, but fret all the higher notes there with your 3rd finger (**Fig. 3B**).

THE SOLOS

Following the chorus is an eight-bar solo in which Slash has a thing

or two to say with the G major pentatonic scale, in 12th position (**Fig. 4**). The second solo also starts off with this scale, before launching up the neck to the fretboard's edge. Note that G major pentatonic is identical to E minor pentatonic (E-G-A-B-D), only it uses the G as its root, or "home," note. Alternatively, G major pentatonic can be viewed as the G major scale (G-A-B-C-D-E-F#) without the 4th (C) and 7th (F#)—notes that Slash employs to add tension as he makes his way up to the 20th fret (in both solos).

In his second solo, Slash plays some melodious, country-style bends. Appearing in the last half of the second bar, the first bend is best played with your 4th finger on the 1st string's 15th-fret G and your 3rd finger on the 2nd string's 15th-fret D. First, play the G; then, keeping your 4th finger depressed, bend the D up to E. If necessary,

you can target the note E by playing the 2nd string at the 17th fret; keep that note in your mind's ear as you bend the 2nd string's D up a whole step to match its pitch. Also, be sure to reinforce the 2nd-string bend by placing your 1st and 2nd fingers behind your 3rd finger, thereby execut-

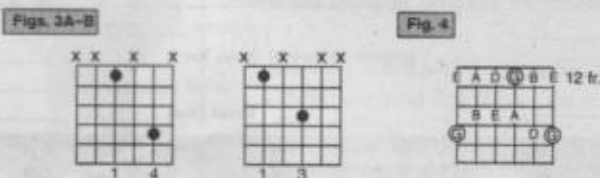
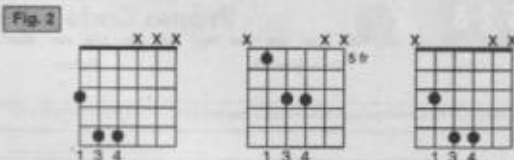
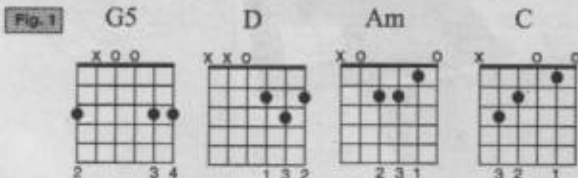
ing the bend with all three fingers.

In the third bar, there's a slightly different country-style bend. Here, bar strings 1 and 2 at the 15th fret with your 4th finger, and keep it there throughout the measure. Do all of the 14th-fret bends with your 3rd finger (again, reinforced by your 1st and 2nd fingers), and, if necessary, reference the 3rd string's 16th-fret B—the note to which you'll be bending. **3**

TONE ZONE

GUITARS 1-3: Solidbody
PICKUP/POSITION: Humbucker/Neck
GAIN: 2 (clean), 8 (crunch)
EQ: Bass/Mid/Treble: 6/4/6
FX: Chorus

LARRY BUSACCA/RETNA



As Recorded by Guns N' Roses
(From the Geffen Recording GREATEST HITS)

Transcribed by Adam Perlmutter



Verse 1

Verse 1
Mama, take this badge from me,
I can't use it anymore.
It's getting dark, too dark to see.
Feels like I'm knockin' on heaven's door.

Chorus

Chorus
Knock, knock, knockin' on heaven's door [repeat].

Verse 2

Verse 2
Mama, put my guns in the ground,
I can't shoot them anymore.
That cold black cloud is comin' down.
Feels like I'm knockin' on heaven's door.

Breakdown

Breakdown
Well, you just better start sniffin' your own
Rank subjugation, Jack, 'cause it's just you
Against your tattered libido, the bank, and
The mortician forever, man, and it wouldn't
Be luck if you could get out of life alive.

Tune down 1/2 step:
(low to high) E-A-D-G-B-E

Intro

Slow Rock ♩ = 64

Slow Rock ♩ = 64

Gtr. 1 (clean)

G5 D C

mf
let ring throughout

TAB

3 3 0 3 2 3 2 0 3 2 3

0 2 3 0 1 0 2 2 0 1 0 0 2 3

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Knockin' on Heaven's Door

G5 D C

Feels like I'm knockin' on heaven's door.

3 3 0 3 3 2 0 3 2 0 | 1 0 1 2 0 1 2 0 0 2 0 0

1:00

Chorus

Gtrs. 1 & 3 tacet
G5 Rhy. Fig. 1
Gtr. 2

Knock, knock, knockin' on heaven's door, hey, hey, hey, hey...

End Rhy. Fig. 1

P.M. -

7 7 5 3 3 3 3 3

Gtr. 2: w/ Rhy. Fig. 1 (2 1/2 times)

G5 D5 C5 G5 D5

w/ dist.

12 11 9 9 7 7 5 5 4 5 4 12 11
10 9 7 7 5 5 3 3 2 3 2 10 9

C5 G5 D5 C5

*Gtr. 3
Gtr. 2 divisi

2nd time, Gtr. 3: w/ Fill 1

To Coda 1 ⊕
To Coda 2 ⊕

12 16 14 12 12 10 5
10 14 12 10 3

*left of slash

Fill 1
Gtr. 3

8va

1/2

12 13 12 13 12 15 14

12 10

Knockin' on Heaven's Door

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1:28

Guitar Solo
Gtr. 2 tacet
G5

Gtr. 3

*Rhy. Fig. 2

Gtr. 1

End Rhy. Fig. 2

*doubled by acoustic guitar

Gtr. 1: w/ Rhy. Fig. 2 (3 times)

Gtr. 3

D.S. al Coda 1

2:50

Coda 1

Guitar Solo

Gtr. 2: w/ Rhy. Fig. 1 (4 times)

Gtr. 3

3:25

Breakdown

[illegible]

*Sustain note for 2 bars

Knockin' on Heaven's Door

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Gr. 2 C5 Bb5 G5 D5

Gr. 3 tacet

C5 G5 D5 C5

3:53 Chorus G5

Gr. 2 tacet

3

Knock, knock, knockin' on heaven's door...

Gr. 3 G5 D C G5 D C

Gr. 1

w/ clean tone
w/ pick & fingers

Gr. 1 tacet

G5 D C5

Gr. 3

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Gtr. 3 tacet
G5

D

C

Gtr. 1

0 7 7 7 7 7-5-6

Gtr. 1 tacet

G D C

Gtr. 3

10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 8

12 12 12 12 12 11 11 11 11 11 11 11 11 11 11 11 11 9

D.S.S. al Coda 2

G

Gtr. 3 tacet

C5

Gtr. 2

P.S.

P.M. - 1

Ⓢ Coda 2

Gtr. 3

C5

G5

6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16

Gtr. 2

6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16