



Bob Dylan "Lay Lady Lay"

By Douglas Baldwin

Just as the Beatles launched entire careers with a single song ("Ticket to Ride" begetting the Byrds, for example), Bob Dylan proved capable of launching entire genres with an album or two. After popularizing the protest song, the introspective ballad, and folk-rock, the former Robert Zimmerman returned with *John Wesley Harding* (1967) and *Nashville Skyline* (1969), thus signaling the start of the country-rock boom. "Lay Lady Lay" was a Top 10 hit, sung by Dylan in a throaty, crooning voice that he'd never before used on record. His simple expression of sexual urgency wrapped in Southern formality remains a strummer's favorite to this day.

BARRE EXAM

If you're just starting to wrestle with barre chords, here's the ideal song to put them to use. A barre is formed by placing the fret hand's index finger across two or more strings. The index finger effectively functions in the same manner as the guitar's nut, allowing the other three fingers to play additional notes above it, often in shapes similar to familiar open chords. In chord box diagrams, a barre is shown as an arch connecting two or more dots. **Fig. 1** is an exercise to help build your barre chord chops. Be sure to play only the

strings that you are pressing down, and be sure that all the strings you press down can ring at once. Practicing these shapes for five minutes a day will virtually guarantee barre technique mastery in a week or two.

Now check out the barre chords used in "Lay Lady Lay." There are three shapes used, each of which can be traced back to a

common open chord. The A and G chords are based on the open E major chord, the C#m and Bm chords are based on the open A minor, and the F#m is based on the open E minor chord. As you switch from one chord to the next, think of your fret hand as a clamp, alternately locking down on the neck and releasing to move to the next position.

STRUMMING IT

"Lay Lady Lay" has an appropriately laid-back feel that lies halfway between an even 16th-note rhythm and a shuffle rhythm. This is emphasized by the click-clack of the percussion, along with the primary strumming figure. To recreate the rhythm, begin with an even eighth-note pattern played entirely with downstrums, as in **Fig. 2**. Then add the 16th-note upstrums shown in **Fig. 3**. The downstrums remain even, but the upstrums should drag a bit, almost as an afterthought. Note the choked strums, indicated with X note-

heads on the final 16th notes of beats 2 and 4. These are the moments when you switch chords, and they will naturally occur as you move from one chord to the next.

ADDING SOME NASHVILLE COLOR

Bob Dylan got some of the best musicians in the country music capital to play on *Nashville Skyline*. Many of their understated parts have become the signature riffs of country music. An arpeggiated acoustic guitar figure is a good one to add if you're playing with another guitarist. It's found within the A, C#m, G, and Bm barre chords we've already discussed, so simply picking the right strings will nail the part, shown in **Fig. 4**.


One great fill is first played by the pedal-steel guitar in answer to the lyric, "Whatever colors you have in your mind..." This two-chord fill is arranged for guitar in **Fig. 5**. Feel free to incorporate it into our arrangement. 



Fig. 1

Fig. 2

Fig. 3

Fig. 4

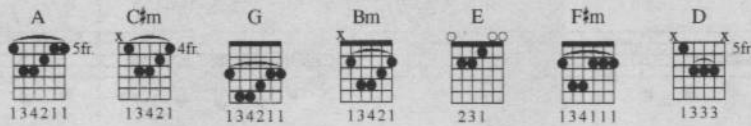
Fig. 5

LAY LADY LAY

As Recorded by Bob Dylan
(From the Columbia Recording NASHVILLE SKYLINE)

Arranged by Adam Perlmutter

Words and Music by Bob Dylan



Intro

Moderately ♩ = 78

Verse

A C#m G Bm A C#m

1. Lay, la - dy, lay.—
4. Lay, la - dy, lay.—

G Bm A C#m G Bm

Lay a - cross my big brass — bed.—
Lay a - cross my big - brass — bed.—

A C#m G Bm A C#m

Lay, la - dy, lay.— Lay a - cross my big brass — bed.—
Stay, la - dy, stay.— Stay while the night is still — a - head.—

G Bm E F#m A

What - ev - er col - ors you have — in your mind.—
I long to see you in the morn - ing light.

E F#m A

I'll show them to you, and you see them shine.—
I long to reach for you in the night.—

To Coda

Verse

A C#m G Bm

2. Lay, la - dy, lay.— Lay a - cross my big brass — bed.—

A C#m G Bm A C#m

Stay, la - dy, stay.—

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Lay Lady Lay

G Bm A C#m G Bm

Stay with your man— a - while.—

A C#m G Bm A C#m

Un - til the break of— day, let me see you make him smile.—

G Bm E F#m A

His clothes are dirt - y, but his, — his hands are clean.—

E F#m A

And you're the best— thing that he's ev - er seen.— 3. Stay, la - dy, stay.—

G Bm A C#m G Bm

Stay with your man— a - while.—

C#m E F#m A

Why wait an - y long - er for — the world to be - gin? —

C#m Bm A

You can have your cake and eat it, too.

C#m E F#m A

Why wait an - y long - er for — the one you — love, when he's stand -

C#m Bm

ing in front of you? —

D.S. al Coda

♩ Coda

A C#m G Bm A C#m

Stay, la - dy, stay.— Stay while the night — is still a - head.—

G Bm A Bm C#m D A