

"The Ocean" Led Zeppelin



By Lorne Behrman

Led Zeppelin's 1973 release, *Houses of the Holy*, wasn't as revelatory as the band's prior offering, *Led Zeppelin IV* (featuring "Stairway to Heaven," "Black Dog," and "Rock and Roll"), but it was a loud, fun, song-oriented hard-rock album. With the majestic "The Song Remains the Same," the gleefully tossed-off reggae of "D'yer Ma'ker," and the cheeky, James Brown-spirited "The Crunge," Zep was more under the influence than influential. The album's strutting finale was "The Ocean," an awkwardly funky tune with a challenging time-signature shift that is both visceral and cerebral.

SHIFTING TIME SIGNATURES

When most people think of "The Ocean," they think of its quirky two-bar opening riff—and part of what gives this figure its stuttering feel is a shift from 4/4 to 7/8. If you break down each measure into eighth notes—this is called *subdividing*—you have a measure of eight eighth notes followed by a measure of seven eighth notes. Eighth notes are counted "one-and, two-and, three-and, four-and"; trying picking a single note with this pulse, using downstrokes for the downbeats and upstrokes for the upbeats (the "and"s). Next, assign each "and" a number (be sure to keep the rolling eighth note feel); this yields "one-two, three-

four, five-six, seven-eight." Try one measure of this, and for the 7/8 bar, simply leave off the "eight."

Now that you're feeling the pulse, let's dissect this nifty riff. Jimmy Page built many, many memorable riffs and played many solos with the A minor pentatonic scale (A-C-D-E-G), diagramed in **Fig. 1**. (In "The Ocean," Page added a major 3rd [C#].) Learning this pattern thoroughly will help you to demystify many Zep classics.

Beat 1 of bar 1 features two rapid hammer-ons, from G to A. These G notes, called *grace notes*, are played so fast that, to the undiscerning ear, only the A note is heard. To learn the riff, start off slowly, hammering eighth notes against a metronome-anchored pulse. Beat 2 groups two 16ths with an eighth note; try playing this rhythmic coupling on just

one note before plugging the other notes of beat 2 into the rhythm. (Dig how a descending C major triad [G-E-C] is outlined here.) The first two beats of bar 2 form a hip rhythmic motif. On the final beat (the seventh eighth note), don't let that 16th-note rest scare you—leave some silence and play the E as though it's setting up the A of bar 1.

THE SOLOS

Page enters his first solo with a honking unison bend, which creates an attention-grabbing "here I am" clamor. He then spends much of this solo within the A minor pentatonic scale, stealing some notes from an 8th-position C major triad (also known as the "Albert King box"). The solo ends with some shrill bends at the 15th position. Pay attention to the shifting time feels here, and to how facile Page is as he navigates these different rhythms.

The festive second solo is full of inspired ideas. The opening phrase uses a technique called *raking*, achieved here by lightly depressing a D triad in 10th position (**Fig. 2**) and then dragging the pick across the strings, from the lowest note to the highest. This rake is followed by a *targeted bend*—use your 3rd finger to raise the 1st string's 12th-fret E up a whole step, to F#. Bar 11 of the solo features some harmonized playing that was originally done with overdubs—two guitars playing together in 6ths or 5ths. **Fig. 3** shows how you can play these intervals on just one guitar. ♪



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

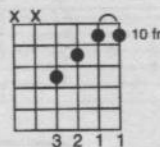
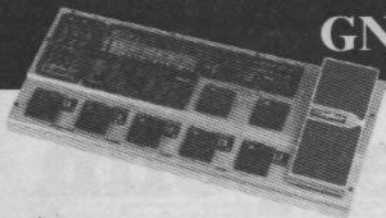


Fig. 3



TONE ZONE

GUITARS 1-6: Solidbody
PICKUP/POSITION:
Humbucker/Bridge
GAIN: 8
EQ: Bass/Mid/Treble:
8/7/4
FX: Fuzz pedal



As Recorded by Led Zeppelin

(From the Atlantic Recording HOUSES OF THE HOLY)

*Words and Music by John Bonham,
John Paul Jones, Jimmy Page and Robert Plant*

**TRACK 54**
ON THE CD

Lyrics

Verse 1

Singing in the sunshine, laughing in the rain.
Hitting on the moonshine, rocking in the grain.
Got no time to pack my bag, my foot's outside the door.
I got a date, I can't be late for the High Hopes Haila Ball.

Verse 2

Singing to an ocean, I can hear the ocean's roar.
Play for free, play for me and play a whole lot more, more.
Singing 'bout the good things and the sun that lights the day.
I used to sing on the mountains, has the ocean lost its way?

Verse 3

Sitting around, singing songs till the night turns into day.
Used to sing to the mountains, but the mountains washed away.
Now I'm singing all my songs to the girl who won my heart.
She is only three years old and it's a real fine way to start.

Intro

Moderate Rock ♩ = 88

Gtr. 1 (dist.)

N.C.
Riff A

play 4 times
End Riff A



*4th time,
note omitted

0:20

Verse 1

D

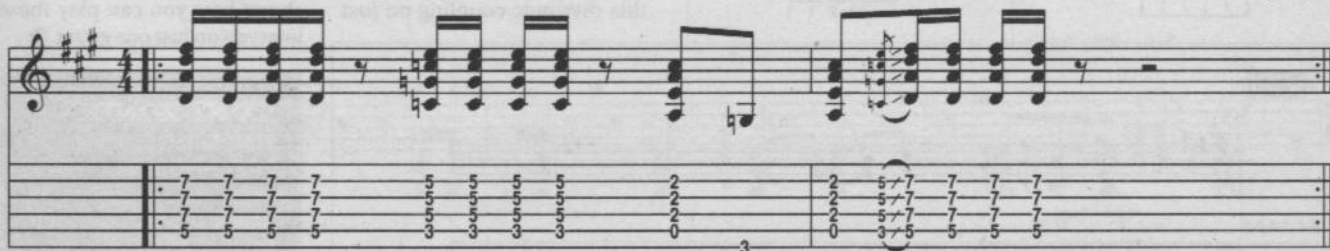
C

A

D

Rhy. Fig. 1B

play 3 times
End Rhy. Fig. 1B



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D Rhy. Fig. 1A C A D End Rhy. Fig. 1A

0:50 Interlude

N.C. Riff A1 play 4 times End Riff A1

1:11 Verse 2

D Rhy. Fig. 1B C A D play 3 times End Rhy. Fig. 1B Gtr. 1: w/ Rhy. Fig. 1A

1:32 Guitar Solo

Gtr. 1: w/ Riff A (4 times) N.C. Gtr. 2 (dist.)

The musical score for 'The Rose Tree' is presented in two systems. The first system contains the melody in treble clef, 4/4 time, with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody is written on a single staff and includes various musical notations such as eighth notes, quarter notes, and a triplet. The second system contains the bass line in bass clef, 4/4 time, with a key signature of one sharp. The bass line is written on a single staff and includes various musical notations such as eighth notes, quarter notes, and a triplet. The score is divided into two measures by a double bar line.

1:53 Interlude

Gtr. 1: w/ Rhy. Fig. 1 (3½ times)
Gtr. 2 tacet

Gtrs. 3 & 4 (dist.)

D

C

A

D

D

[illegible]

Gtrs. 5 & 6 (dist.)

Fill 1
Gtr. 1

Gtr. 1

Gtr. 1

2 5 7 7 7
2 5 7 7 7
2 5 7 7 7
2 5 7 7 7
0 3 5 5 5

4 7 5 7

2:36

Verse 3

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

Choru

Gtr. 1: w/ Riff A1 (4 times)

3:18 **Outro/Guitar Solo**

Faster ♩ = 126 (♩♩ = ♩³♩)

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

HOLIDAY 2004 » G1 The Magazine You Can Play 109

The Ocean

Gtr. 2

A D E

Gtr. 1

Rhy. Fig. 3

End Rhy. Fig. 3

Gtr. 3

Gtr. 1: w/ Rhy. Fig. 3

Gtr. 2

Gtr. 3: w/ Rhy. Fig. 2 (4 times)

Gtr. 3: tacet

A D E

D E D

E D E

8va

The Ocean

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

A D E

loco

Gtr. 2

Gtr. 3 *divisi*

Gtr. 1: w/ Rhy. Fig. 2 (4 times)
Gtr. 3 *tacet*

Gtr. 2

D E D

E D E

D E

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

A D E

Gtr. 2

Gtr. 3 *divisi*