

"Cross Road Blues (Crossroads)"

Cream

Recorded live at San Francisco's Winterland Ballroom in 1968, "Crossroads" (from the double album *Wheels of Fire*) captures Clapton at his all-time, blues-rock best. Over the course of four minutes and change, he weaves a hypnotic tapestry of hallmark riffs and licks that has wowed and inspired generations of guitar aficionados.

OPENING MEASURES

The 12-bar introduction speaks volumes on the ingenuity and finesse of Clapton's guitar prowess. ("Crossroads" is essentially a 12-bar blues in the key of A.) Check out how he embellishes the main riff (established in measure 1) with double-stop harmonies in measures 3-4 and 7-8. Also noteworthy are the syncopated arpeggios over the D7 chord change in measures 5-6. Finally, there's the intro-capping phrase in measures 10-12. Like many of the licks interspersed throughout the song, this one is carved from the A minor pentatonic scale with a passing major 3rd (C#) note (A-C-C#-D-E-G; **Fig. 1**) to create a bluesy "push-pull" quality.

CLAPTON'S COMPING

Clapton's rhythm playing during the verses is based on the tried-and-true Chuck Berry-style boogie pattern. Whereas most guitarists would stay with this straightforward comping style, Clapton uses it solely as a template, embellishing it with clever variations throughout the verses—all the time singing lead simultaneously! Careful analysis discloses the fine details Clapton put into his riffs and rhythm work. Take the time to work through the parts bar-by-bar (fingering suggestions are included in the notation staff), and probably discover some intriguing rhythm ideas you can employ in a multitude of situations.

THE SOLOS

Clapton opens the first guitar solo with an assortment of A major pentatonic (A-B-C#-E-F#) lines. In measure 4, he segues to A minor pentatonic for the remainder of the first solo. Drawing almost exclusively from the economic box patterns depicted in **Fig. 2**, he regularly injects a major 3rd rub (C# notes) by employing half-step bends from fretted C notes (♮3rd) in measures 7, 10, 11, 13-15, and 20. Use caution when employing half-step bends, as it's easy to overbend, thus causing the notes to go sharp.

FIG. 2

"Economic" box patterns of the A minor pentatonic scale

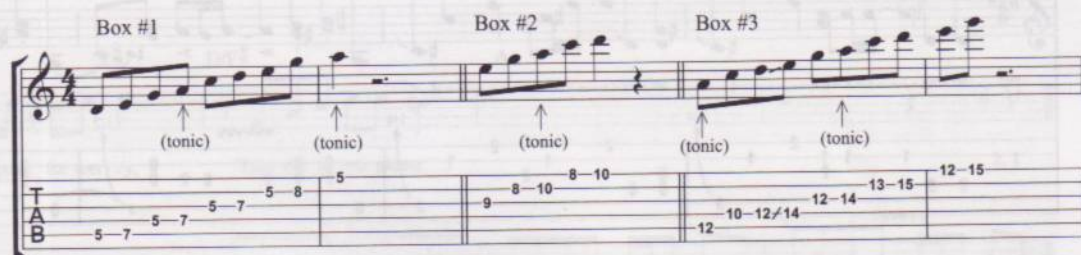
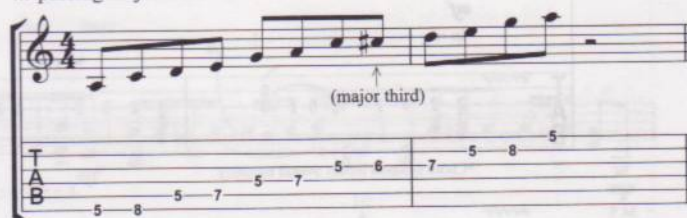


FIG. 1

A minor pentatonic scale w/ passing major third



Clapton pulls out all the stops in the second solo. Locking into the A minor pentatonic box at the 17th fret, he unleashes a flurry of bend-infused licks that seethe with energy and reckless abandon. To nail that wicked double-stop bend in measure 25, bar your third finger across the G and B strings and bend up, using your index and second fingers for support. If you keep the strings parallel to one another as you bend, the uneven increments (whole-step for the G string, half-step for the B string) will occur naturally.

DIAL TONE

What He Used: Clapton called his prized 1964 Gibson ES-335 TDC the "Crossroads guitar," when he auctioned it off in 2004, which seems to indicate he used it for this recording.

How to Get the Sound: If you don't have a semi-hollow guitar like a 335, a Les Paul- or SG-style (also Clapton favorites of that era) guitar will do fine. Use the neck/bridge pickup combination with the bridge volume and tone controls rolled down about halfway. Plug into a British-voiced tube amp (e.g., Marshall or Hiwatt) with the gain set around 8, and your bass, midrange, and treble controls set around 8, 7, and 7, respectively, and you should be ready to rock.



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- Get more Eric Clapton guitar tabs at GuitarInstructor.com
- Get the "Crossroads" jam track at GuitarInstructor.com
- Buy the Eric Clapton *Guitar Anthology* tab book at MusicDispatch.com
- Download "Crossroads" and other classic songs from Cream's *Wheels of Fire* at iTunes
- For more on Eric Clapton, check out his official web site EricClapton.com
- Check out the Gibson Custom ES-335 Block Inlay at Gibson.com

Cross Road Blues

(Crossroads)

Words and Music by Robert Johnson

from Cream - *Wheels of Fire*

Guitar: Eric Clapton

Intro

Moderately fast ♩ = 130

Gtr. 1 (dist.)

*A

*Chord symbols reflect overall harmony.

D7

A

E

D

A

E

Eric Clapton: 1. I went down ...

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Verse

The musical score for 'Down by the River' is presented in three systems. The first system shows the vocal melody with lyrics: '... to the cross - roads, fell down on my knee. ... Down by the river.' The second system continues the vocal melody and includes a guitar accompaniment part. The third system shows the guitar accompaniment part with a capo position of 2 and a key signature of one sharp (F#).

to the cross - roads fell down - on my knee.

The musical score is for the hymn "The Lord's Prayer." It is written for voice and piano. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#), and the time signature is 4/4. The score is divided into two systems. The first system contains the vocal melody for the first two lines of the prayer, with lyrics "Asked the Lord a-bove for mer-cy," and "Take me if you please." The second system contains the piano accompaniment, which includes a right-hand melody and a left-hand bass line. The piano part is marked with a piano (p) dynamic and includes a section marked "P.M." (Piano Moderato). The score concludes with a final chord and a fermata.

§ Verse

A D A
 went down to the cross - road, tried to flag a _____ ride. Down -
 _____ go-in' down to Rose - dale, take my rid-er by my side. Go -
 4. Go - in' down to Rose - dale, take my rid-er by my side.

Riff A
 P.M. *simile on repeats* *mf* *mp* P.M.

2 0 0 0 2 2 0 2 3 7 5 4 5 4 3 2 1 2 0 2 0 2 0 2 0 7 5

CROSS ROAD BLUES

[illegible]

E D/F#

To Coda

A

bod-y seemed to know _ me, ev'ry-bod-y passed by. _
still bar-rel-house, ba-by, on the riv-er-side.

End Riff A

P.M.

T

mf mp P.M.

1/2

[illegible]

The musical notation for the 'let ring' section is shown on a single staff. It begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody consists of several measures of music, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. A bracket labeled '1/2' is placed over the first measure. The text 'let ring ---' is written below the staff, indicating a long note or a rest. The notation continues with more musical notes and rests, ending with a final note.

CROSS ROAD BLUES

[illegible]

Outro-Verse

Gtr. 1: w/ Riff A (simile)

5. You can run, you can run, tell my friend, boy, Wil-lie Brown. —

Run — you can run, — tell my friend boy, Wil-lie Brown. —

And I'm stand-in' at the cross - road, be - lieve I'm sink - in' down.

Free time

Free time

A7

3

let ring

chords

7th

NC.