

"I'm Tore Down" Freddie King



By Jordan Baker

Freddie King (1934-76) was one of the finest electric blues guitarists of his day. His style, a neat hybrid of blues and rock, continues to be revisited and reshaped by icons such as Eric Clapton, who cites King as a major influence. King developed an interest in the blues while growing up in Texas, but it wasn't until he moved to Chicago, where he carefully studied local players, that he found his own voice on the instrument. After beginning his recording career in the '50s with session work, King saw continued success from 1960 onward, weaving together timeless guitar and vocal melodies on tunes like "I'm Tore Down,"

"Lonesome Whistle Blues," and "Have You Ever Loved a Woman." King also recorded various instrumentals, and enjoyed taking the opportunity to branch out musically into R&B and funk, a move that helped him maintain vitality even late into his career.

THE TONE

There wasn't much in the way of high-gain devices in 1961, when "I'm Tore Down" was recorded. So to best approximate King's sound, keep your gain knob around midway or lower, and then boost your mids and cut your lows for a nasal bite. This will also put more dynamic control into your picking, so be

sure to maintain a consistent attack to make the notes sing in the same way that King's do. Of course, the benefit of having to put a little more work in for the louder notes is having the quieter end of the spectrum more readily available, so take the time to toy with different picking strengths as well as positions while tweaking your amp for that perfect bluesy over-drive.

12-BAR BLUES

"I'm Tore Down" is based on the 12-bar blues form consisting of the I7, IV7, and V7 chords (D7, G7, and A7 in the key of D). The pattern, bar by bar, is D7-D7-D7-D7-G7-G7-D7-D7-A7-G7-D7-D7, with the only exceptions occurring in the third and fourth verses, where the first D7 chord is extended to eight bars, pushing the basic blues form to 16 bars. Over the swinging rhythm section, which maintains chordal movement throughout the song, King builds lines from the D blues scale (D-F-G-A-B-A-C), as shown in Fig. 1, while occasionally adding notes like the major 3rd (F#) and major 6th (B). The rhythmic stops at the beginning of certain verses are aided by King's tritone-based double stops [Fig. 2A]. While these aren't full chords, they do comprise the chords' 3rd and 7th degrees, or *guide tones*, which create the same type of tension as moving between D7 and A7 chords [Fig. 2B] does; King also uses

the double stops to close the song, implying a quick A7-D7 transition.

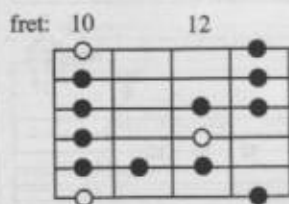
THE SOLO

King tastefully limits his solo to just one pass of the 12-bar progression while maintaining the vocal-like quality of previous licks. After moving up to 13th position, he works in a three-note chromatic motif amid wailing 3/4-step bends; these may initially prove difficult to execute, as they can't be targeted with a fretted note. You can start with the easier task of bending the 1st string's 16th-fret A_b up a quarter step, making sure to fall just short of A; then, once your ear is locked into that pitch, move down one fret and try the larger bend. This technique can be taken further, of course—Stevie Ray Vaughan, for one, used microtones (intervals less than a half step) to great effect. A typical SRV lick might involve bending the 1st string's 13th-fret F up 1-3/4 steps. In any event, leading out of the solo, King maintains continuity by sticking with the same four-note lick heard in the verses. **B**

TONE ZONE

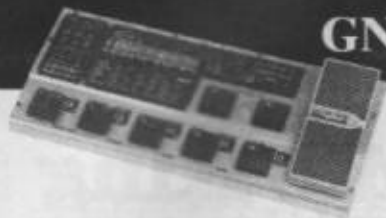
GUITAR 1: Solidbody
PICKUP/POSITION: Single-coil/Bridge
GAIN: 5
EQ: Bass/Mid/Treble: 4/7/6

Fig. 1



Figs. 2A-B





I'M TORE DOWN

As Recorded by Freddie King

(From the Rhino Recording HIDE AWAY: THE BEST OF FREDDY KING)

Transcribed by Jordan Baker

Words and Music by Sonny Thompson



Lyrics

Verses 1 & 5

Well, I'm tore down, I'm almost level with the ground.
Well, I'm tore down, I'm almost level with the ground.
Well, I feel like this when my baby can't be found.

Verse 2

Well, I went to the river to jump in.
My baby showed up and said, "I will tell you when."
Well, I'm tore down, I'm almost level with the ground.
Well, I feel like this when my baby can't be found.

Verse 3

I love you, baby, with all my heart and soul.
A love like mine will never grow old.
I'll love you in the morning and in the evening too.
But every time you leave me I get mad with you.
Well, I'm tore down, I'm almost level with the ground.
Well, I feel like this when my baby can't be found.

Verse 4

I love you, baby, with all my might.
A love like mine is out of sight.
I'll lie for you if you want me to.
I really don't believe your love is true.
Well, I'm tore down, I'm almost level with the ground.
Well, I feel like this when my baby can't be found.

Intro

Moderate Swing $\text{♩} = 132$ ($\text{♩} = \text{♩}^3$)

A7 G7 D7

Gtr. 1 (slight dist.)

f

12 10 13 13 13 10 10 13 10 12 12 10 12

TAB

0:07

Verse 1

D7

2

Well, I'm tore down...

Well, I'm

1/4 1/4

10 12 10 12 12 10 10 12 10 (10)

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I'm Tore Down

A7

G7 D7

2

tore down...

Well, I feel like this when my

13 10 13 10 13 12 10 12

1/4

G7 D7

1/2

1/4

baby can't be found.

Well, I

12 10 10 13 10 12 10 12 10 12

0:29

Verse 2

D7

went to the river

to jump in. My baby showed up and said, "I will tell you when." Well,

10 9 11 10 10 9

G7 D7

2

I'm tore down...

Well, I

13 13 10 13 10 13 12 10 12

1/4

A7 G7 D7

1/2

1/4

feel like this when my baby can't be found.

12 10 10 13 10 12 10 12 10 12

I'm Tore Down

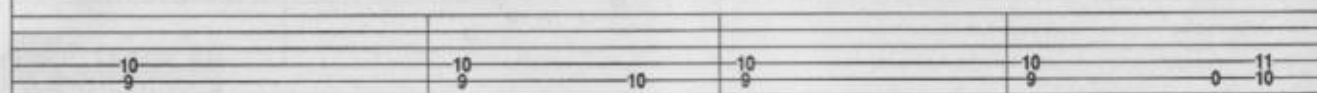
0:51

Verse 3

D7



I love you, baby, with all my heart and soul. A love like mine will never grow old. I'll



G7

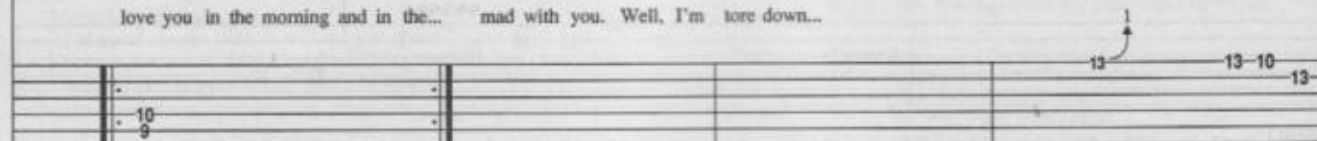
D7

play 3 times

2

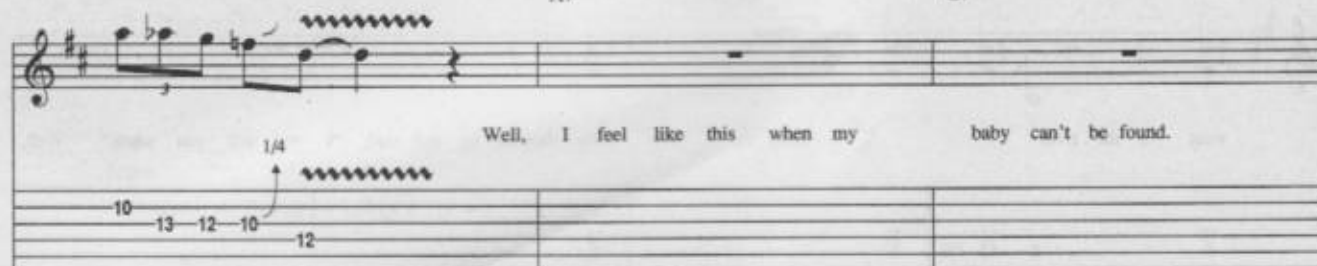


love you in the morning and in the... mad with you. Well, I'm tore down...

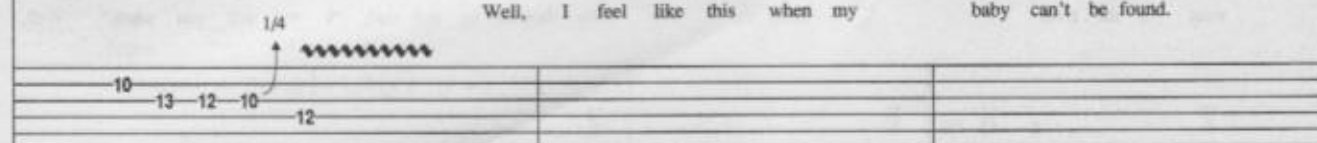


A7

G7



Well, I feel like this when my baby can't be found.



D7



1:20

Guitar Solo

D7
8va



I'm Tore Down

8va G7

D7 *8va*

8va A7 G7 *loco*

D7

1:42

Verse 4

D7

play 3 times

I love you, baby, with all my might... I'll lie for you if you...

I'm Tore Down

DigitTech Guitar Workstation Powered

Download presets at www.digittech.com

G7 D7

love is true. Well, I'm tore down... Well, I feel

13 13-10 13 10 13-12-10 12

A7 G7 D7

like this when my baby can't be found. Well, I'm

12 10 10 13-10 12 10 12 10 12

2:12

Verse 5

D7 G7

tore down... Well, I'm tore down...

13 10 13 10 13 10-13

D7 A7

Well, I feel like this when my

13 13 (13)-10 12-10 12

G7

baby can't be found.

10 13 10-12 12 10-10 12 0 11-10 9

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