BRON-YR-AUR

Page's unusual tuning—
A purposeful utility to facilitate ease in playing

This beautiful unaccompanied acoustic guitar solo of Jimmy Page's from "Physical Graffiti" is played in a unique alternate tuning: C A C G C E (from low to high). The easiest method of retuning your guitar from standard tuning, besides with a chromatic electronic tuner, is to tune your B or second string up a semitone to C, using the fifth fret of the third string if need be. Then lower the fourth string to C while sounding the open second string, which is now C an octave above the fourth string, for reference. The same procedure is repeated when you lower the sixth string except now you'll use the fourth string for reference.

From the standpoint of technique, Page uses hybrid picking (the pick in conjunction with the fingers), but if you're already into classical or any other kind of fingerstyle guitar then by all means use a format already familiar to you. If you opt for the hybrid picking approach then look through the entire piece for any points where there are two notes played on strings not directly adjacent to each other. For example, the G/B following the introduction has the fifth and second strings played on beat 1. It will necessary to play the lower note with the pick and the upper one with the middle finger of the picking hand (Fig. 1).

figure 1



For some of the ascending arpeggios, especially the opening figure, it's best to play the first three notes with one continuous downstroke and play the final higher note with the middle finger (Fig. 2).

figure 2



This approach was used by Jimmy Page on "Babe I'm Gonna Leave You" from "Led Zeppelin 1". After learning this piece you may feel inclined to pursue alternate tunings even further. We recommend picking up recordings by some other artists heavily into this area such as Michael Hedges, Bert Jansch, Joni Mitchell and Pierre Bensusan. You may even want to try doing some of your own composing in alternate tunings, so here's a little secret for overcoming writer's block and the inherent complexities of any new tuning. Just be adventurous and try some conventional chord shapes or even go as far as play portions of songs already in your repertoire. Examine the final measures of "Bron-yr-aur" and it will become evident that Page does some experimenting with this approach (Fig. 3).

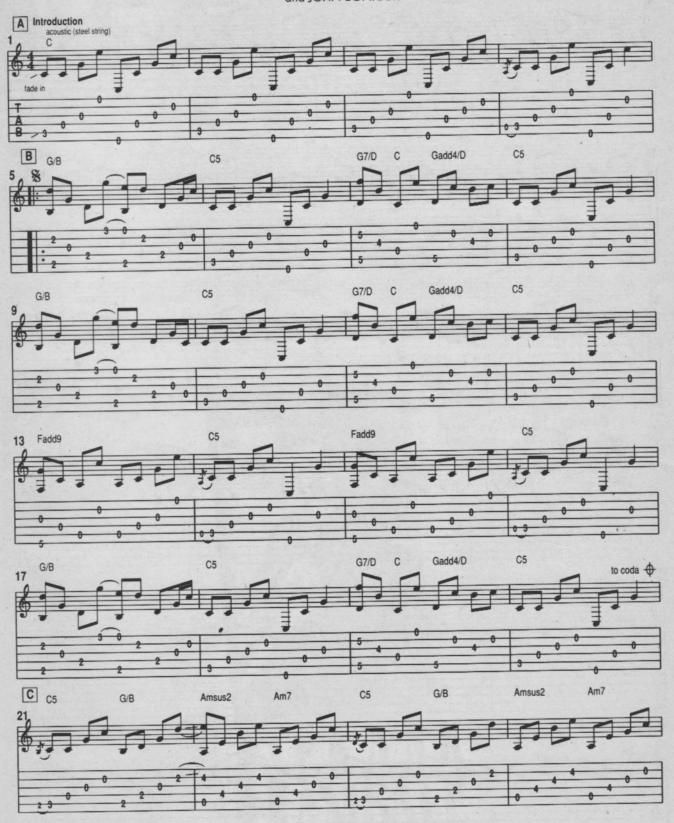
figure 3

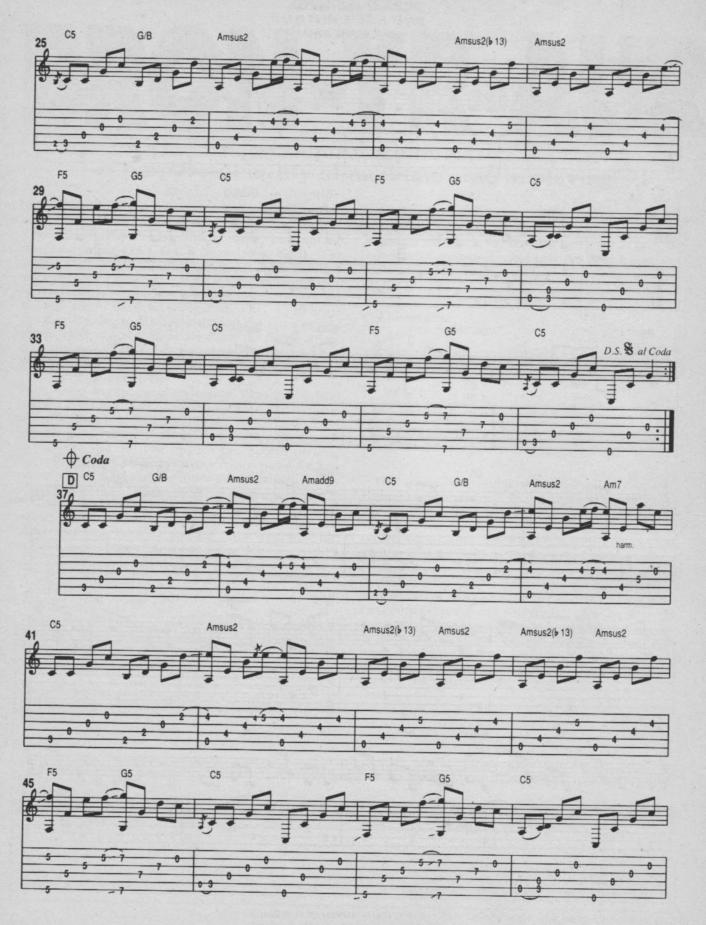


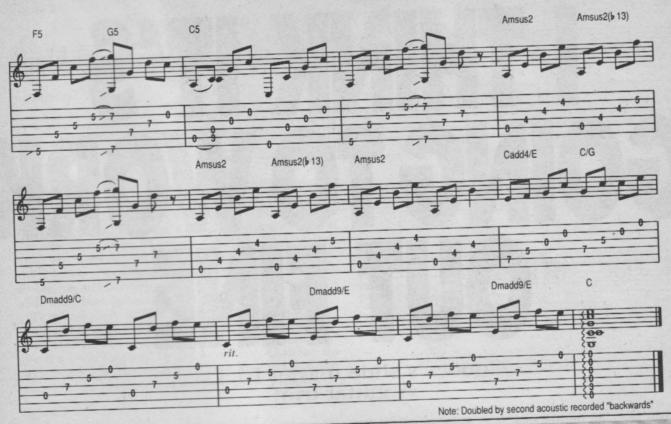
Note: Doubled by second acoustic recorded "backwards"

BRON-YR-AUR

Words and Music by JIMMY PAGE, ROBERT PLANT and JOHN BONHAM







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