

"Unchained" Van Halen



By Douglas Baldwin

Some folks are Dave fans. Some side with Sammy. Personally, I wouldn't mind if William "American Idol Reject" Hung fronted Van Halen as long as Eddie played guitar. "Unchained" showcases the younger VH brother as master of the memorable riff and chieftain of supportive chunk.

THE MECHANICS OF THE MUSIC

If you're playing a guitar with a

Floyd Rose-type tremolo system (essential to Eddie Van Halen's sound) but normally play at standard pitch, "Unchained"'s alternate tuning (drop D, down a half step) will wreak havoc at first. The loss of string tension will cause the entire tremolo system to pull back, raising both your string height and the whammy bar itself. To compensate, loosen the tremolo springs by removing your guitar's back plate and locating the two

large screws that secure the spring claw. Give each screw one or two complete counterclockwise turns, then adjust your tuning. Alternate between loosening the springs and retuning the guitar until the tremolo returns to its correct position in the new tuning.

An effective palm mute is essential to playing "Unchained." Place the blade side of your pick hand directly behind your tremolo's bridge saddles, then roll your hand forward while holding the pick pencil-style. As a result, the bass strings should sound muted and percussive, while the higher strings should ring out more freely. Your tremolo system may taunt you, however, by going sharp when you palm mute. A simple Eddie-approved mod involves securing several machine washers or coins beneath the tail of the tremolo system to prohibit the pitch from being raised.

THE MUSIC ITSELF

The intro and chorus are built upon simple 2nd-inversion major triads. Apart from the D-Dsus4 move, which requires a 3rd-finger barre, the other chords are played with the 1st finger across strings 2-4, while the 2nd finger is added on the 2nd string to generate a sus4 chord. Dig how clev-

erly the verse uses the same basic progression, but replaces the D major chord with a single-note lick followed by 1st-inversion chords. Chord inversions are a great way to extend basic progressions; Fig. 1 shows a C major triad in all three close-voiced inversions.

The pre-chorus employs one of the trickiest rhythmic approaches you'll ever hear in pop music. Brothers Eddie and Alex lock into a pattern of seven beats, which they repeat three times and then slightly modify for a final kick into the chorus. This transcription sticks with seven measures of 4/4 time, but it could be notated—and perhaps more easily counted and learned—as four groups of 7/4, as shown in Fig. 2.

VAN HELLISH TECHNIQUE

Eddie Van Halen's solo statement is succinct, yet it's packed with many devilish Eddie-isms. Open-string harmonics are dropped with the tremolo bar, and then a flurry of fretboard taps fly by. A stuttering series of pull-offs leads to a legato-phrased chromatic blues passage and then a power-pop G major statement—all in about 10 seconds. While an entire article could be devoted to each of these techniques (and we often do just that!), Fig. 3 breaks down Eddie's fretboard tapping technique into three easy-to-digest steps. Throughout, keep your index finger on the 2nd string's 3rd-fret D. Start slowly at first, making sure that you can clearly hear each note, and that everything's evenly connected. **B**



Fig. 1 C (root position) C (1st inversion) C (2nd inversion)

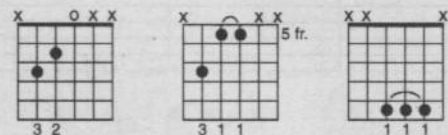
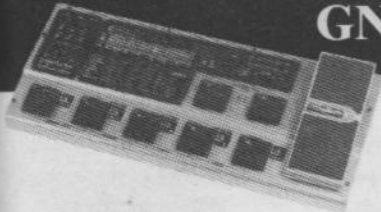


Fig. 2 Drop D tuning, down 1/2 step: (low to high) D4-A3-D3-G3-B2-E2

Fig. 3

TONE ZONE

GUITARS 1 & 2: Solidbody
 PICKUP/POSITION: Humbucker/Bridge
 GAIN: 8
 EQ: Bass/Mid/Treble: 8/3/8
 FX: Pre-EQ (with "frown" curve), flanger



UNCHAINED

As Recorded by Van Halen

(From the Warner Bros. Recording FAIR WARNING)

By Edward Van Halen, Alex Van Halen,
Michael Anthony and David Lee Roth



Lyrics

Verse 1

You say, "I cannot get there from here, baby."
Then I don't care where I'm goin'.
Here's to your thin red line,
Mm, I'm stepping over.

Pre-Chorus

Thought you'd never miss me till I got a fat city address.
Non-stop talker, what a rocker.
Blue-eyed murder in a size-five dress.

Chorus

Change, nothin' stays the same.
Unchained, and you hit the ground runnin'.
Change, ain't nothin' stays the same.
Unchained, yeah, you hit the ground runnin'.

Verse 2

I know I don't ask for permission.
This is my chance to fly.
Maybe enough ain't enough for you,
But it's my turn to try.

Breakdown

Woo-hoo! Take a look at this!
Hey, man, that suit is you!
Woo-wee! You'll get some leg tonight for sure!
Tell us how you do! Hoo-hoo-hoo!
Come on, Dave, gimme a break.
Heh, heh, heh, heh! One break, comin' up!

Gtr. 1: Drop D tuning, tune down 1/2 step:
(low to high) D \flat -A \flat -D \flat -G \flat -B \flat -E \flat

Gtr. 2: Tune down 1/2 step:
(low to high) E \flat -A \flat -D \flat -G \flat -B \flat -E \flat

Intro

Moderate Rock $\text{♩} = 138$

D Rhy. Fig. 1 B \flat C D F

Gtr. 1 (dist.)

The musical notation shows the guitar intro for 'Unchained'. It features two guitar parts, Gtr. 1 and Gtr. 2, in a 4/4 time signature. The key signature is one flat (B \flat). The tempo is marked as 'Moderate Rock' with a quarter note equal to 138 beats per minute. The intro consists of two lines of music. The first line starts with a D chord and a rhythmic figure (Rhy. Fig. 1), followed by B \flat , C, D, and F chords. The second line continues with C, D, B \flat , and C chords. The notation includes staff notation with dynamics like *f* and *P.M.* (pick mute), and guitar tablature for both guitars. The tablature shows fret numbers and picking patterns.

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A5 G5 A5 G5 A5 G5 A5 Ab5 G5 F5 D

P.M. -| P.M. P.M. -| P.M. -|

0:54
Chorus
 Gtr. 1: w/ Rhy. Fig. 1

To Coda 1.
 Gtr. 1: w/ Rhy. Fill 1

6

1:49
Guitar Solo

Gtr. 2 (dist.) C G5

8va
 Harm. -2½ -1½
 loco

w/ bar

5 (5) 3 (3) 0

Gtr. 1 P.M.

loco 15ma

P.H.

w/ bar T T T T 1/2

8 3 6 8 3 6 8 6 8 6 3 5 (5) 3 5 18-15 18-15 18-15 18-15 17

Unchained

8va -----

17 18 19 19 (19) 17 19 17 17 (17) 14 18 17 20 20 (20)

(3) 7 7 7 x x 7 5 7 7 5

D.S. al Coda

8va -----

Ab5 G5 F5 D

(20) (20) 17 19 20 17 20 19 20 19 20

x x 7 7 5 7 6 5 3 7 7 5

2:15 Breakdown

⊕ Coda

Gtr. 2

Dsus4 D

10 12 12 14 (14) 12 10 9 7 9 7 5 7 4 2

w/ bar

Rhy. Fill 2

End Rhy. Fill 2

Gtr. 1

P.M. P.M. - -

w/ fingers

(10) 11 10 10 8 10 9 10 10 10 0 0 0 12 12 12 12 11 11

*w/ vol. knob

Outro-Chorus

Gtr. 1: w/ Rhy. Fig. 1
Gtr. 2 tacet

A5

D

7

Gtr. 1: w/ Rhy. Fill 2

*Gtr. 1: w/ Rhy. Fig. 1 (1st 6 bars)

*omit ties on 1st chord

Gtr. 2

Musical notation for Gtr. 2. Chords: D, F, C, F, C, F. Includes fret numbers: (10), 12, 10, 12, 10, 12, 10, 12, 10, 12, 10, 12, 10, 9, (9), 10, 10, 10, 9, (13), 13.

Gtr. 1

Musical notation for Gtr. 1. Includes fret numbers: 7, 7, 7, 5, 8, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 10, 10, 10, 10, 8, 10, 10, 10, 10, 8, 10, 10, 10, 10, 8, 10, 10, 8.

Free Time

Musical notation for Gtr. 2 in Free Time. Chords: C, D. Includes fret numbers: (13), (13), 13, 12, 11, 10, 13, 13, (13), 10, 12, 10, 12, 10, 12, (12), 10, 12, 12, 12, 10, 11.

Musical notation for Gtr. 1 in Free Time. Includes fret numbers: (10), 10, 10, 10, 10, 8, 7, 7, 7, 5, 8, 10, 10, 10, 10, 8, 10, 10, 8.

Musical notation for Gtr. 2. Includes fret numbers: 10, 12, 11, 10, 9, 10, 12, 10, 9, 7, 5, 3, 0. Includes instruction: "w/ bar" and "slack".

Musical notation for Gtr. 1. Includes fret numbers: 7, 7, 7, 5, 0.