GLORIOUS NOISE

A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO RECREATING JIMI HENDRIX'S MIND-BLOWING WOODSTOCK RENDITION OF THE "STAR SPANGLED BANNER." by Andy Aledort



IMI HENDRIX'S PERformance of the "Star Spangled Banner" at the conclusion of the Woodstock Music and Arts Festival on August 18, 1969, is one of the great electric guitar moments in the history of rock. His remarkable artistic vision enabled him to create a musical and political statement that crystallized the tumultuous Sixties youth counterculture movement into one daring, iconoclastic masterpiece of personal expression-and in under four minutes.

Today, hundreds of different guitars, amplifiers and effects pedal are readily available to any guitarist who has a decent credit limit. Back in Hendrix's heyday, however, the choice of equipment was far narrower. It's further testament to Hendrix's genius that the resourceful guitarist painted the musical equivalent of Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel using a few pieces of off-the-rack gear.

For amplification, Hendrix generally used stock Marshall 100-watt Super Lead amplifiers, Model 1959, often referred to as a "Plexi" Marshall for its Plexiglas control panel. At Woodstock, Hendrix used two 100-watt tops with four 4x12 Marshall speaker cabinets, models 1960A (slant) and 1960B (straight). Each 100-watt head powered two 4x12 cabinets. Marshall 4x12 speaker cabinets from this era are often referred to as "basketweave" cabinets because of the heavy style of grille cloth they featured. Each housed four 25-watt Celestion "Greenback" speakers.

Hendrix's guitar at Woodstock was a stock white 1968 Fender Stratocaster with a maple fretboard. For the "Star Spangled Banner," Jimi set the toggle switch to the bridge pickup. He often purchased Fender Rock 'n' Roll light-gauge strings (.010, .013, .015, .026, .032, .038), but he also stated that he would use the .010 as a B string and use the A string from a tenor banjo (most likely a .009) for the high E string. Hendrix tuned his guitar down

one half step (low to high: Eb Ab Db Gb Bb Eb) for the Woodstock performance, as he did for most of his recorded songs. On the recording, his guitar sounds a hair sharp of this tuning, so you'll need to tune accordingly in order to play along.

Hendrix used three effect pedals at Woodstock: a Vox wah, a Dallas-Arbiter Fuzz Face distortion pedal and a Uni-Vibe modulation pedal that creates a pulsating sound. Hendrix used the Fuzz Face for the entire piece; the Uni-Vibe remained on for the first 2:33 and was turned on again at the very end, and the wahwah is turned on and off throughout.

In order to address the collage/barrage of sound that is Hendrix's reading of the "Star Spangled Banner," I have broken the piece into nine separate segments. Viewing the performance in this way lets you see how Hendrix used the tune's melodic content as "resting spots" between the many bursts of feed-

back, whammy-bar manipulation, screaming bends and pitch dives. As Hendrix performs much of the piece in "free time," the rhythms indicated in the transcription are subject to interpretation and reckoned in a way that reflects the guitarist's phrasing.

BARS 1-8: Hendrix begins the performance by playing the song's first theme, eight bars in length, in a fairly conventional way, although the immense volume, Fuzz Face-induced distortion and warbly Uni-Vibe effect lend the guitar a menacing, crushing sound. He chose to play the song in the guitar-friendly key of E, which, as you'll see, lends itself well to the use of open notes, something Hendrix employs liberally and to great effect throughout his performance.

This eight-bar melodic phrase is played freely rather than in strict time. As individual notes are sustained, splashes of harmonic and microphonic feedback are heard; the proximity of the guitar to the amplifier will have a bearing on which pitches are most prone to feedback.

BARS 9-19: Hendrix repeats the first theme across these bars, but here he takes more liberties with the melody by adding sustained trills

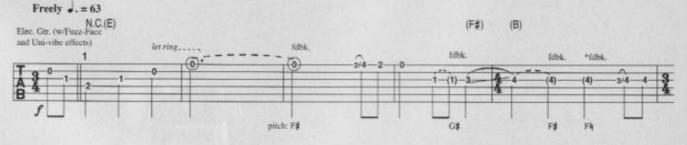
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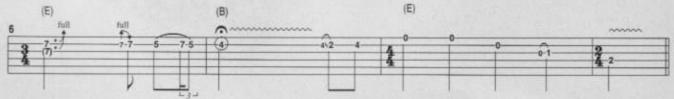




A First Theme (0:01)

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BARS 28-30: Hendrix begins this segment (at 1:25) with an F# chord voicing in the second position that he pulls off to the open strings. He follows this with a high Fm voicing, played by barring across the top three strings at the 13th fret, which he tremolo strums quickly. Bits of random feedback are followed by a middle-finger slide up the bottom two strings to the 14th fret, at which point Hendrix bends the two strings up one half step while simultaneously depressing the whammy bar. At 1:34, Jimi briefly returns to the song's melody.

BARS 31-33: At 1:38, Hendrix cleverly

BY THIS POINT IN HENDRIX'S CAREER, HE HAD ALREADY BEEN CRAFTING ABSTRACT EXPLOSIONS OF SOUND LIKE THESE FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS.

emulates the sound of a "British ambulance" by alternately hammering on to Bb (fourth string, eighth fret) and E (fifth string, seventh fret) in a steady rhythm. (These two notes form what's known as a tritone interval, so called because they are three whole steps apart.) He follows this with a middle-finger

barre across the D, G and B strings at the eighth fret, sounding an Eb triad, which he then alternates with open strings, via pull-offs and hammer-ons. Hendrix then allows the open D and G strings to ring as he proceeds to repeatedly depress and release the whammy bar in varying increments.

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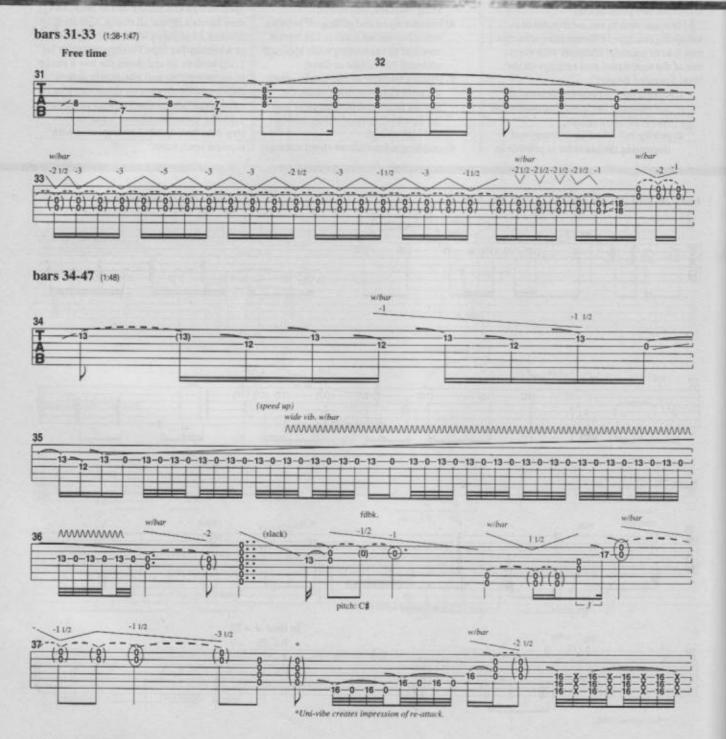
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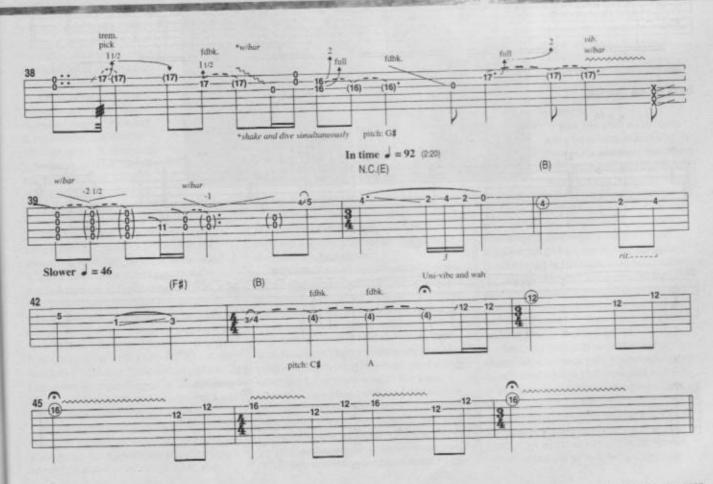
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BARS 34-47: In bar 34 (1:48), Hendrix plays another "British ambulance" lick, here on the B and G strings at the 13th and 12th frets, and slowly depresses the whammy bar, creating a sound akin to the Doppler effect. Then, in bar 35, he quickly hammers on and pulls off between the 13th fret on the G string and the open G note while violently shaking the whammy bar. Random open strings ring as Hendrix manipulates the whammy bar, recreating the Doppler-effect sounds of fighter jets and the whistles of falling bombs. Hammerons and pull-offs between the 16th fret and the open bass strings in bar 37 are followed in bar 38 by random high-pitched bends on the top two strings and groups of open strings that are treated with whammy-bar manipulations. Hendrix momentarily comes back down to Earth in bars 40-43 (2:20) with a statement of the final phrase of the song's second theme. He follows this in bars 43-47 with a threenote melody from "Taps," which is based on the notes of an E major triad (E G# B).

BARS 48-56: Hendrix initiates the song's final theme ("outro") at 2:43. While playing this simple melody, he quickly turns the wah pedal on and off by rocking it back and forth, engaging the on/off switch each time he steps forward on the pedal. This is hard to do! Hendrix would facilitate this technique by removing the little rubber spacers at the front



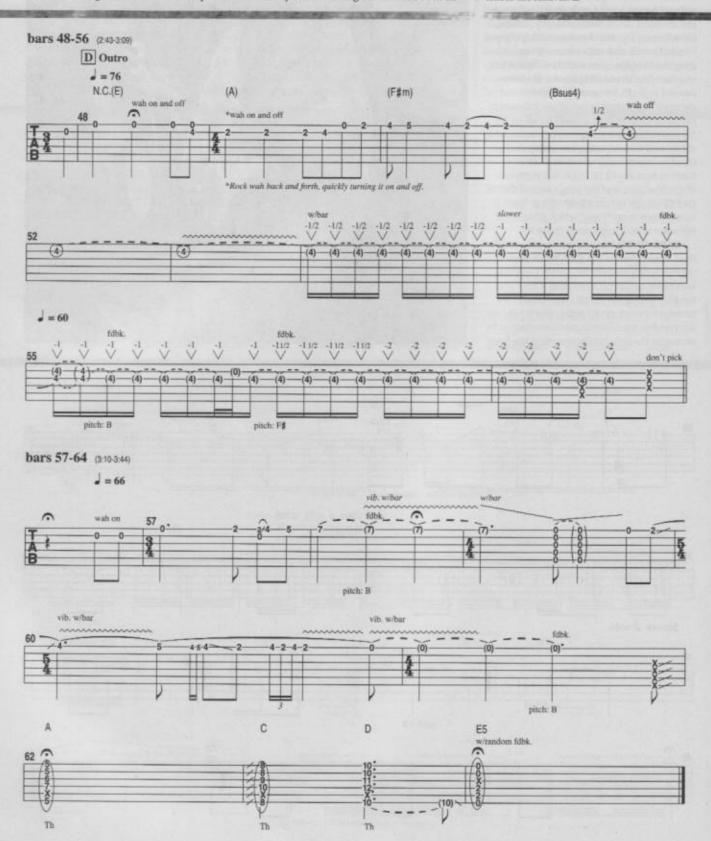


of the rocker pedal, but it is still difficult to turn a wah on and off with each movement, as he does.

At bar 52, Hendrix sustains a D# note at the fourth fret on the second string and holds this note through a series of feedback pitches while pumping the whammy bar in steady 16th-note accents.

BARS 57-64: At 3:10, with the engaged wah creating dense washes of feedback, Hendrix states the last six bars of the song's melody before turning the Uni-Vibe back on

and playing an ascending sequence of major chords (A, C and D) with thumb-fretted bass notes, culminating with a crashing open E5 chord that feeds back gloriously. Hendrix then leads the band into "Purple Haze," which concludes the festival.



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