TESLA

Unplugged and unwound, Tesla's dynamic duo proves that you don't need electricity to create excitement

So, the Marshall stacks are rolled away and you and your colleague

guitar, remember to let the vocal phrasing determine the rhythms.

-Paul Robinson

are handed acoustics. How do two unplugged pickers make a song rock with these instruments? Guitarists Tommy

Skoech and Frank Hannon do so by focusing on rhythm.

Hannon (Gtr.1) provides the "floating" rhythm, playing mostly eighth and 16th-note phrases. This role enables him to fill a lot. But playing hard isn't essential, since his function is not to nail down the rock rhythm, but to keep the pulse moving throughout the tune. Skoech (Gtr.2) provides the "driving" rhythm, emphasizing the quarter-note beats most of the time.

Another strong rock device employed by our two heroes is to gang up on the kicks in the choruses. Particularly effective is their use of 16th-note anticipations. Anticipation is a technique whereby you play a note or chord "early" to create a driving sense of forward motion. A good example of this occurs during the chorus in bar 11. Instead of playing the C chord on beat 3, they "kick" it one 16th note early ("Signs, signs, everywhere..."). This effect becomes more pronounced when the kick is held over into the next beat.

These devices become logical when heard in context with the lyrics. When accompanying a vocal line on an acoustic

BASS NOTES

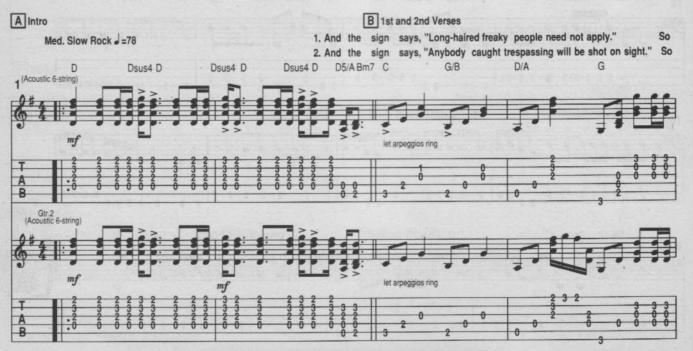
Not only does Tesla pay homage to early '70s rock with their live version of "Signs," but bassist Brian Wheat also pays tribute to Paul McCartney [see this month's Bass Explorations column for more on the master from Liverpool]. He even uses a Hofner Beatle bass popularized by McCartney in the '60s. Wheat jumps into the McCartney bag with both feet, playing rhythmically, melodically and relaxed while retaining his own style, which is more rhythmically inspired by McCartney than anything else. He really captures McCartneys busy, thumping style (listen to some late-'60s Beatles and you'll see what I mean).

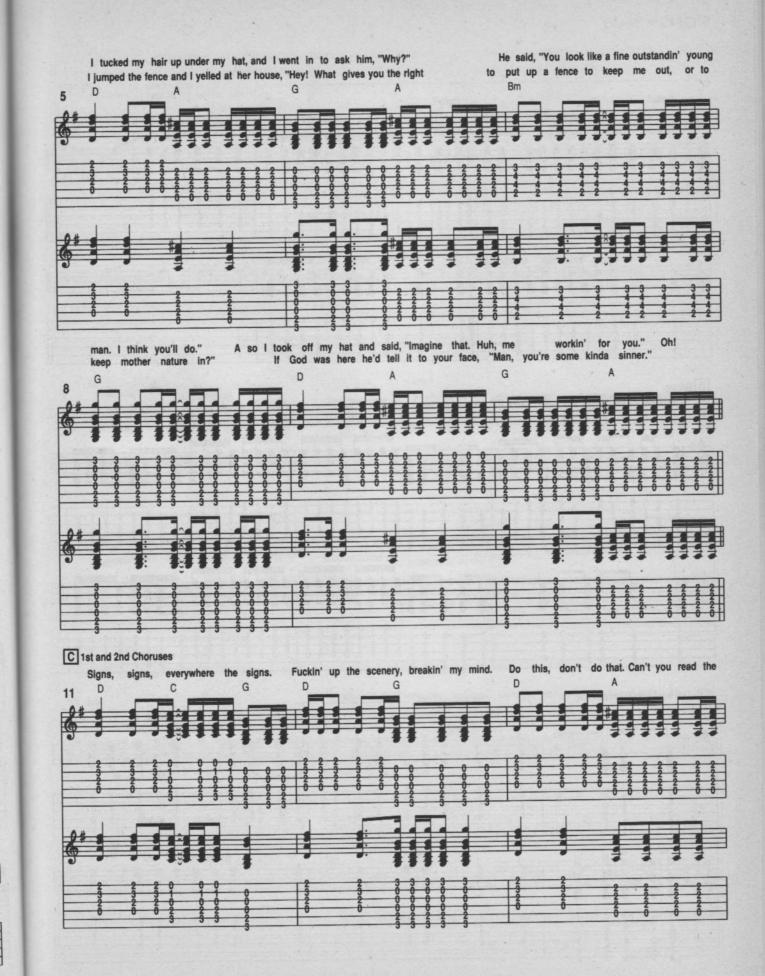
Don't let all the 16th notes make you nervous. The tempo is relatively slow so you don't need superchops to play this tune. You will, however, need a little PMA (Proper Mental Attitude). The goal here is to achieve a certain feel—an atmosphere. Remember where this song was recorded; in an intimate club setting, sitting down and not running around an arena stage at full volume. -Mike DuClos

From the Geffen recording FIVE MAN ACOUSTICAL JAM

SIGNS

Words and Music by L. EMMERSON Guitar Transcription by Paul Robinson





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