



SATANIC VERSES

How to rock out on the Rolling Stones' "Sympathy for the Devil"

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As promised in last issue's inaugural column of Unplugging, this month we'll tackle another tavern-tested offering from my solo act songbook: a rocking stand-alone arrangement of the Rolling Stones classic, "Sympathy for the Devil" (*Beggars Banquet*, 1968). If you listen to the Stones' studio version, you'll notice that there is no rhythm guitar part and that the groove is propelled by a cookin' bass line, piano and an ensemble of percussion instruments. Performed as if the song were in the key of D and with a capo at the second fret, my arrangement sounds in the original key of E and infuses elements of the recording's various instrumental parts into a finger-friendly stand-alone rhythm guitar part. As is almost always the case when performing an uptempo song without a drummer or percussionist backing you up, firmly tapping your foot in a steady pulse, in this case quarter notes, will definitely help you get into the groove better and "sell" the tune more convincingly.

FIGURE 1 presents my adaptation of the intro and first verse of "Sympathy for the Devil." The palm-muted open D notes in the repeated first bar emulate the conga and bongo drum parts heard on the Stones' arrangement and help establish the key, as well as the groove. I find that playing four bars up front (as opposed to the 10 bars heard on the recorded version) is enough of a build-up in this stripped-down format.

When playing this and all remaining figures, use what I call "16th-note pendulum picking/strumming," articulating any note or chord that falls on the first or third 16th note of the beat (this includes all quarter notes and eighth notes) with a downstroke and catching anything that falls on the second or fourth 16th note (the "16th-note upbeats") with an upstroke. This will help ensure a steady, flowing groove. I've included picking prompts above bar 1 of **FIGURE 1** to guide you. Also, palm mute the single bass notes in all the figures while allowing the chords to ring out on the treble strings. This will give the bass notes a fat, chunky sound and keep the busy, syncopated rhythms clear and articulate.

FIGURE 2 illustrates what I play for the song's chorus and includes an extra bar on the preceding D chord (the chorus begins on A in bar 2). The feel on the first

"Sympathy for the Devil"

arranged for solo acoustic guitar accompaniment; capo 2nd fret

All positions are relative to the capo.

All music sounds in the key of E, one whole step higher than written.



FIGURE 1 intro and first verse



FIGURE 2 chorus



FIGURE 3 remaining verses



"Sympathy For The Devil" Written by Mick Jagger & Keith Richards © 1968 ABKCO Music, Inc. As heard on *Beggars Banquet* (ABKCO) www.abkco.com

chorus is essentially the same as on the first verse—a funky groove that is somewhat subdued by the use of palm muting.

FIGURE 3 shows my arrangement of the song's remaining verse sections. An important note about musical dynamics (contrasts in volume and texture) is in order at this point: When performing this arrangement, make sure to not play every section at the same "hot and heavy" intensity level, as you'll risk wearing out

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your audience's ears/brains (yours included) before the song is over. Try to let the intensity level "breathe," or "ebb and flow" by backing off the volume of your picking/strumming and increasing the degree of palm muting at the beginning of each subsequent verse. If this sounds like too much to remember, just use your instincts and try to ramp up the intensity level throughout the song without reaching "11" prematurely. ●