

HAVE FAITH IN YOURSELF

Going solo with Journey's "Don't Stop Believin'"



In this month's installment of Unplugging, we'll take a look at Journey's classic hit song "Don't Stop Believin'," from the band's 1981 album, *Escape*. I

was inspired to "unplug" this song after hearing it used in the recent series finale of the hit HBO television show, *The Sopranos*, and came up with this cool, easy-to-play solo-guitar adaptation.

FIGURES 1a and 1b illustrate my simplified adaptation of the song's signature piano intro and its slightly streamlined variation that drives the song's first two verses. My goal here was to come up with an easy-to-play solo-guitar accompaniment that captures the defining melodic, harmonic and rhythmic elements of these parts. (A complete transcription of Journey's original recording of "Don't Stop Believin'" appears in *Guitar World* September 2006.) I perform this figure with pick and fingers, playing the bass-line melody with downstrokes while plucking the B and high E strings with the middle and ring fingers.

Playing two independent parts simultaneously requires mental and physical coordination, so proceed slowly at first, get acquainted with each part separately and then put them together, making sure all the notes line up properly. After going through the motions a few times, you'll feel the coordination set in, and it will become second nature, like learning to ride a bicycle.

In bars 1 and 3, you'll need to grab the high F# on the first string's second fret with your middle finger while reaching to the fourth fret with your pinkie, which requires a fairly wide stretch across five or six strings. You'll find that this span is not too difficult to negotiate and that mentally anticipating each stretch helps prepare your fingers to sufficiently spread apart and fret the notes cleanly.

For the song's pre-chorus (FIGURE 2), I switch to "pumping" downstrokes with the pick, mostly strumming staccato (short and crisp) chord accents over steady, palm-muted open bass notes. When fingering the staccato chords (indicated by dots above the tab numbers), be sure to quickly loosen your grip on the strings to prevent them from ringing after you've strummed them.

FIGURE 3 shows my adaptation of the song's rocking chorus, guitar solo and heavy riff section before the third verse. The feel is "wide-open," with full, unmuted chords and single notes, all played with downstrokes. In lieu of a fade-out, end on a big, fat open E chord. ●

"Don't Stop Believin'"

arranged for solo acoustic guitar accompaniment

B/A A E/A B/E E B E B A C#m G#m A

FIGURE 1a piano intro

E5 let ring B5 C#m7 Asus2

FIGURE 1b first- and second-verse variation

E5 B5 G#m7 Asus2

1st time:

2nd time: gradually louder

FIGURE 2 pre-chorus

B/A A B/A E/A B/E E B/E E B/E E B/E E

4. B E BEA E B C#m7 A E

1. 2. B G#m A E A

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