

"Disarm" Smashing Pumpkins



By Douglas Baldwin

With its sole acoustic guitar, pocket orchestra, tympani, and chimes, "Disarm" may be an atypical Pumpkins release, but it's certainly indicative of Billy Corgan's reach. Since the Smashing Pumpkins, er, *smashed* after their smashing success in the '90s, it's been rather clear that the head Pumpkin was the band's mastermind, capable of employing everything from walls of guitar to orchestral textures in service to his imagination.

Currently (and perhaps ironically), Corgan is presenting new material in a solo acoustic setting, having just recorded a set of songs loosely based on his home city of Chicago.

THE STRUMMING

The fingerings for the chords shouldn't present a problem to most guitarists. What's notable about them is the use of the 3rd finger to hold down the D note on the 2nd (B) string throughout most of the song. This has become a trademark of '90s and

new millennium rock, from Creed to Green Day. Remember as you're learning the song to keep your 3rd finger down throughout, and it will be one less finger placement to worry about. An interesting parlor game can be made of this approach, where a single note is held with the same finger over increasingly remote chords. Try this with other notes and other fingers, and even with open strings, and you'll be amazed where it will take you.

Scan the transcription carefully and you'll see that throughout the song, the 1st (high E) string almost never rings. In light of his energetic strumming, how does William the Pumpkin achieve this? Simple: "wrong" technique. To develop a flexible strum, it's important to disengage the strumming hand from the face of the guitar. However, by deliberately breaking the rule and locking the strumming hand's 3rd and 4th fingers on the 1st string, Mr. Corgan manages to create a slightly darker voicing. This strumming motion can be emulated using what's often called a "pencil grip." Hold the pick between your

thumb and first two fingers, and strum with a slight sideways motion of your wrist and forearm. Stronger strums will actually lead the pick right into your 3rd and 4th fingers.

THE COUNTING

Even with strum-hand fingers rooted as such, it's still quite possible to generate the throbbing rhythm that fuels "Disarm." In fact, the entire rhythmic tale is well told in the first four measures of the transcription. After a rapid

down/up strum for the first pair of 16th notes (counted "and-uh"), Billy plays evenly down-strummed eighth notes (counted "one-and, two-and, etc."), pushing ahead the chord change to Cadd9 by an eighth note, so that it lands on the "and" of the fourth beat. These

three rhythmic devices—the 16th-note flourish, the even eighth notes, and the "pushed" change—make up virtually all of the acoustic guitar work in "Disarm"; Fig. 1 illustrates this point. As you become more comfortable with the song, listen for the occasional accents, as well as for the crescendos that lead to the G-D/F#-Em7 cadences. Dynamics like these can be dictated by your pick grip: held loosely, the pick generates a quiet strum; held firmly, it generates a forceful strum.

THE ORCHESTRATION


Billy Corgan's orchestral touches are worth recreating on guitar. The dramatic tympani-plus-chimes flourish that announces the first verse can be played fingerstyle with a double-octave grip, as shown in Fig. 2. Pick the 6th string with your thumb and the 1st string with either your 1st or 2nd finger. Meanwhile, Fig. 3 shows the two-part line that enters at the first chorus. Play this with a clean or warmly overdriven tone, picking the notes just before the indicated attack, and try adding swells with either a volume pedal or your guitar's knob. 



Fig. 1

Strum:
 Count: "And - uh, one - and, two - and, three - and, four - and."

Fig. 2

w/ fingers
 T 15-14 12
 A 15-14 12
 B 15-14 12

Fig. 3

w/ fingers
 T 5 3 5 4 7 5 3 3 5
 A 5 4 5 4 6 7 3 3 5
 B 5 4 5 4 6 7 3 3 5

DISARM

As Recorded by Smashing Pumpkins
(From the Virgin Recording SIAMESE DREAM)

Words and Music by Billy Corgan

Intro

Moderate Rock ♩ = 132

Em7 Rhy. Fig. 1 Cadd9

Gtr. 1 (acous.)

mf

T 3 3 | 3
A 0 0 | 0
B 2 2 | 2
0 0 | 0

G D/F#

(On repeat): 1. Dis

End Rhy. Fig. 1

*T-----|

3
0
2
3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

Verse

Gtr. 1: w/ Rhy. Fig. 1 (3½ times)

*T = thumb on 6th str.

Em7 Cadd9 G

arm you with a smile and cut you like you want
arm you with a smile and leave you like they left

D/F# Em7 Cadd9

me to. Cut with that lit - tle child in -
me here to with er in de ni - al. The

G D/F# Em7 Cadd9

side of me and such a part of you } Oo,
bit - ter - ness of one who's left a lone.

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To Coda ⊕

in my shoes. _____

End Rhy. Fig. 2

Gtr. 1: w/ Rhy. Fig. 2 (2 times)

Em7

D/A

And what I choose _____ is my choice. _____ What's a boy—

C

sup - posed to do? _____

Em7

D/A

The kill - er in me _____ is the kill - er in you. _____ My love, —

C

I send this smile _____ o - ver to you. _____

Em7

D/A

Em7

D5/A

Gtr. 1

