



The River  
Full Song

# THE RIVER

By Joe Bonamassa and Bob Held

Open E tuning, up 1/2 step:  
(low to high) F-C-F-A-C-F

**Intro**  
Free time  
N.C.

Gtr. 1  
(National steel)

2

Down by the riv - er,

let ring -----

4

that's where I broke down and cried. \_\_\_\_\_

let ring -----

## Dust Bowl

### From *Dust Bowl*, 2011

Fresh off the heels of *Black Rock*, Joe returned to its namesake, a luxury villa/recording studio in the Greek island of Santorini, for the recording of *Dust Bowl*. The session was booked and studio heavyweights Anton Fig (drummer), Carmine Rojas (bass), and Rick Melick (organ) were chomping at the bit, waiting for Joe to deliver the songs to be recorded. However, just fresh off a tour, the well was dry and Joe had nothing ready to go. Then, when the studio aces were out for food and drinks, a mini tornado passed across the window in Joe's writing room. It evoked images of John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* and the American Dust Bowl. Inspired, he grabbed a mid-'50s Gretsch Country Club that was lying around and "Dust Bowl" was born.

### Intro and Verse

Tremolo (on Gtr. 2) and a moody Dorian tonality all add to the spaghetti-Western feel of "Dust Bowl." The main riff (Gtr. 3) and the rhythm guitar part (Gtr. 1) are derived from G# Dorian. (Note that live Joe plays the song in A Dorian with a capo on fret 5.) The melodic fragments are derived primarily from the following two shapes of G# Dorian.

#### G# Dorian

fret: 3 5 7 9 12

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⊙ = root

The move from F# down to E# in measures 2 and 3 (Gtr. 3) conveys the signature Dorian melodic motion of b7 to 6, a gesture that is heard prominently in everything from Carlos Santana's "Oye Como Va" to Thelonius Monk's "Round Midnight."



Dust Bowl  
Example 1

G#m

Gtr. 3 (clean)

*mf*  
w/ reverb

b7

6

w/ bar

w/ bar

T  
A  
B

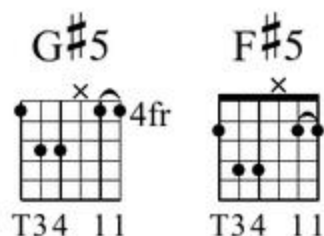
4 2 4 3 6 4 6

Even the rhythm guitar part (Gtr. 1) accentuates the Dorian flavor by emphasizing the 6th degree (E#). Here, that note is repeated on the D string against a moving figure on the A and E strings. Finger it with a one-finger-per-fret scheme starting with the index finger on fret 2. This figure is a little tricky to play when moving from fret 4 on the E string to fret 4 on the A string. Be careful not to unintentionally muffle the D string when you make this move. Play on your fingertips.

This rhythm guitar part continues for four repetitions into the verse while Gtr. 2 (with tremolo engaged) plays very sparse, single-note figures of very long duration. The moral of the story here is that, yes, in most cases, less is more. Sometimes, something as simple as slow single notes can be the perfect choice.

## Chorus and Interlude

The guitar parts for the chorus are fairly straightforward on the studio version, with keyboard rhythmic figures filling up a lot of the space. Gtr. 2 plays a simple triad shape high up on strings 1–3 played as dotted half notes, while Gtr. 4 plays a simple half-note figure based on power chords fingered as full minor and major barre chord shapes. Barre chords are very common and are shapes that every guitarist needs to know. However, Joe plays them slightly differently. He uses his thumb to fret the sixth string, and the index finger barre only covers strings 1 and 2. The third string normally containing the 3 of the chord isn't sounded with this fingering strategy, thus the chord shape is neither major nor minor. Muffle the third string by allowing the fret-hand finger on an adjacent string to lightly touch it.



The main riff recurs in measure 24 and leads us to the interlude, which mostly comprises of material from the verse. In measures 27–28, the main riff is fleshed out and extended with a melodic descent played by Gtr. 3.



Dust Bowl  
Example 2

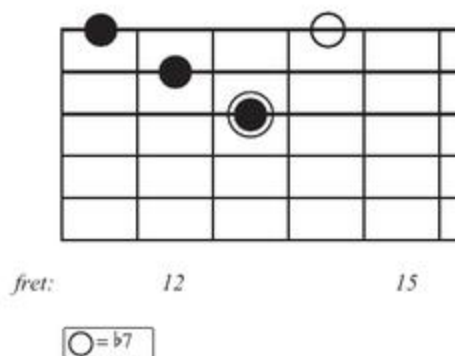
Gtr. 3 (clean) G#m

## Guitar Solo

For the solo section, Joe runs both a Strat and a Les Paul into a Marshall amp in separate places to achieve tonal variety. Starting off with slide (Gtr. 6), Joe creates a strong sense of thematic continuity by emphasizing certain chord notes via repetition. He repeats the 5th (fret 12 of the B string, relative to the capo on fret 4) three times in measure 42. Then, the  $\flat 7$  (fret 15 of the B string, relative to the capo on fret 4) becomes a focal point as he uses it to start each of the phrases on beat 3 1/2 of measure 43, beat 4 1/2 of measures 45 and 46 (harmonized with a note a 3rd lower in measure 46), and beat 4 of measure 47.

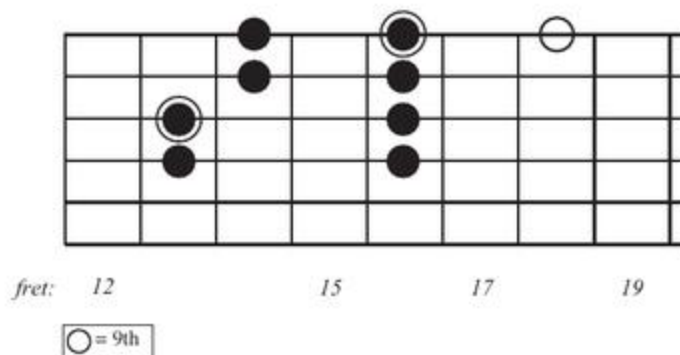
In measure 49, Gtr. 7 enters with a delay set for a dotted eighth-note regeneration (with one repeat) and plays several bent notes before a quick G#m7 arpeggio figure in measures 51–52. This arpeggio shape is the same shape played by Gtr. 2 in the chorus but with the b7 added on the high E string, fret 14.

### G#m7 Arpeggio



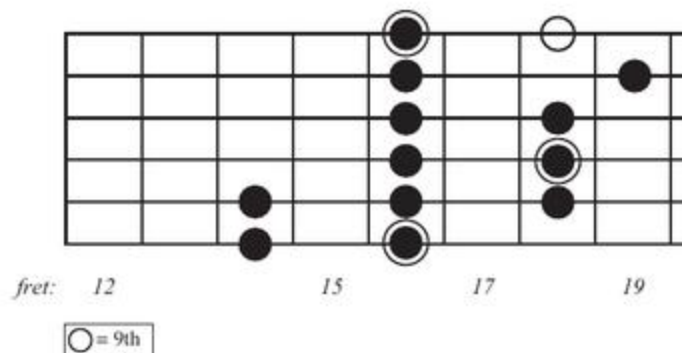
He then unleashes a G# minor pentatonic in measure 54 flurry based on the following shape, finishing his run on the 9th—a note not in the minor pentatonic but contained in several minor modes like Dorian. Joe often likes to mix the 9th into minor pentatonic runs for a little extra color. Doing this creates a minor hexatonic scale, which we discuss later in this book in the “Essential Licks” section.

### G# Minor Pentatonic Fragment with Added 9th



Joe plays some Eric Johnson-type sequences in measure 57, derived from the G# minor pentatonic shape up high in 16th position with an added 9th on fret 18 of the high E string. This phrase is pretty tough, so work on it slowly if need be, carefully watching when to pick the notes and when a pull-off is employed. He concludes the lick by sliding down to the 14th position and bending the final, low note on fret 14 with dramatic vibrato added.

### G# Minor Pentatonic with Added 9th





Dust Bowl  
Full Song

# DUST BOWL

Words and Music by Joe Bonamassa

Gtr. 6: Open Em tuning, capo IV:  
(low to high) E-B-E-G-B-E

\*G#m

Gtr. 3 (clean) (Kybds.) 10 sec.

*mf*  
w/ reverb

Gtr. 2 (dist.) 10 sec. Rhy. Fig. 1

*mf*  
w/ tremolo

let ring -----

Gtr. 1 (dist.) 10 sec. Riff A

*mf*

End Riff A

\*Chord symbols reflect basic harmony.

3

Gtr. 1: w/ Riff A (3 times)

Gtr. 3

w/ bar

Gtr. 2

let ring -----