

MISIRLOU

"Misirlou" is the quintessential surf instrumental and Dick Dale's sonic signature -- or is that redundant? In any case, rock history acknowledges this tune as the first surf genre piece to feature the "wet" sound of Fender's reverb unit. Coupled with Dale's furious upside-down Strat attack through the newly designed, and immediately overdrive, 100-watt Dual Showman stacks, it is absolute dynamite. For most, it's the definitive surf sound. "Misirlou" has unusual origins for a seminal piece in American rock. Its roots are in Middle Eastern music, and it was a 1940s pop hit in Turkey (and a Greek folk dance) two decades before Dick revived and reinvented the piece in 1962 -- when he gave it a high energy twist by performing it on electric guitar with his band, the Del-Tones. It was rediscovered in the '90s when it appeared as a leading cut from the *Pulp Fiction* soundtrack.

THE TUNING

Tune up a quarter step. Probably the result of tuning to a sharp instrument at the session or of a faster moving tape machine.

TREMOLO PICKING

"Misirlou" is a study in *tremolo picking*. In fact, it is an ideal introduction and application of the technique that provides an excellent picking warm-up piece for guitarists of all levels. Tremolo picking is fast and constant alternating picking -- in surf guitar jargon, "double picking" -- largely confined to one string at a time. It has appeared in the playing of Eddie Van Halen, Kirk Hammett, and Stevie Ray Vaughan, and countless other players over the years. To get a grip on the technique, choose an open string to double pick. The outside two are easiest (either the low E or high E) since they have only one adjacent string to avoid, and, not coincidentally, are the only two used throughout the main sections of "Misirlou." Concentrate on producing a smooth alternating upstroke and downstroke motion when attacking the string. There should be no perceptible difference between upstrokes and downstrokes. Keep the articulation moving until you feel an even, purring sort of effect take place in your pick stroke.

THE MELODY

The central focus of the piece is a classic case of a linear melody played solely on one string, which favors the tremolo picking attack. The scale of the theme melody has a decidedly ethnic sound, which gives "Misirlou" its haunting Middle Eastern quality. Called a "synthetic scale" in our Western culture, it has an unusual symmetrical layout which uses two augmented second (one and a half steps) intervals (F to G#, and C to D#) and four minor second (half step) intervals (E to F, G# to A, B to C, and D# to E) in its structure (Fig. 1). This is a great alternative to the more typical modes like Phrygian or Phrygian Dominant [Fig. 2], which are more conventionally used against the E to F chord progression. Budding composers, take note. These sorts of melodies yield striking results in a rock context, as players like Vai, Satriani, Holdsworth, and many others have already discovered.

FIGURE 2

	$\frac{1}{2}$	Aug. 2nd	$\frac{1}{2}$		$\frac{1}{2}$	Aug. 2nd	$\frac{1}{2}$			
Misirlou Scale:	(E)	F		G \sharp	A	B	C		D \sharp	(E)
Phrygian Mode:	(E)	F		G	A	B	C	D		(E)
Phrygian Dominant:	(E)	F		G \sharp	A	B	C	D		(E)

	$\frac{1}{2}$	Aug. 2nd	$\frac{1}{2}$		$\frac{1}{2}$	Aug. 2nd	$\frac{1}{2}$	
Misirlou Scale:	(E)	F	G \flat	A	B	C	D \flat	(E)
Phrygian Mode:	(E)	F	G	A	B	C	D	(E)
Phrygian Dominant:	(E)	F	G \flat	A	B	C	D	(E)

-- Wolf Marshall

As Recorded by Dick Dale & His Del-Tones
(From the album MUSIC FROM THE MOTION PICTURE PULP FICTION/MCA Records)

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Music by Nicolas Roubanis*

Gtr. 1 (clean)

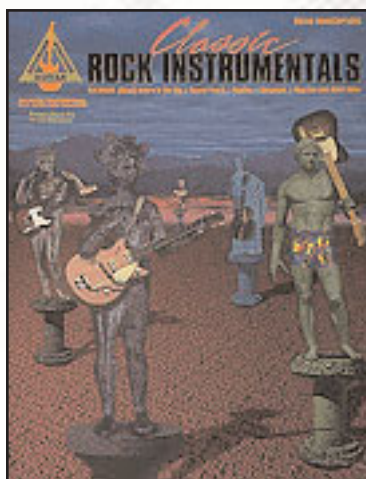
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FENDER PLAYERS CLUB DICK DALE

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FENDER PLAYERS CLUB DICK DALE



"Misirlou" complete guitar tab available in:
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by Fred Sokolow

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