



"A far Cry"

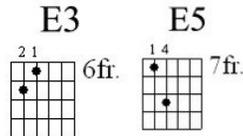
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Foreword

by Randy Ellefson

The rhythm guitar style on *The Firebard* emphasizes intervals (two notes) instead of chords (three or more notes) and uses these intervals quite specifically. The two most predominant intervals are that of a 3rd and a 5th (see Example 1). These intervals are often placed in opposition to each other as well as ornamented to create melodies. Since this approach is uncommon, it may be confusing and seemingly random at first, but there is structure to it, and study of the music is encouraged.



Example 1

NAMING CONVENTIONS FOR SECTIONS

Without lyrics, referring to music sections can cause confusion, so let's define some terms used herein.

If the first section has no lead guitar, it's called the **main riff**; otherwise, it's the **main theme**. There may be multiple **sub themes**, each with different rhythm and lead guitar parts, and often in different keys from other sections. A **chorus** is a kind of secondary main theme that is generally more dramatic and lyrical. A **transition** connects sections, while an **interlude** may be a quieter section or a break between solos. The **solo**, of course, differs from other lead guitar parts in being less thematic and more climactic and dramatic, and the **coda** may be new music or a recurring riff with a new lead theme.

These sections are always arranged to create a form of three groups. We'll define these as "Main", "Diversion", and "Recap".

The **main body** of music is the main riff, main theme, all sub themes, and the chorus. Whatever order these are presented in, they are generally repeated to familiarize the listener with the material and structure, and to create an expectation of impending change (the diversion).

After the main body appears twice, we are in need of a **diversion**, so depart, sometimes with a transition. All solo sections will generally be here, and sometimes multiple transitions into, within, and out of the diversion. On *The Firebard*, a key change usually occurs.

With the diversion over, anything goes in the **recap**, but usually the chorus or main theme (or both) is presented. Sometimes the entire main body is repeated, or a coda or closing theme appears.

A Far Cry

Main Body (E major)
 Main Theme, Sub themes 1 and 2, Chorus — Repeat
 Main Theme
 Diversion (A major)
 Solo
 Recap (E major)
 Coda (with main theme's riff)

Main Body

MAIN THEME

In the first 8 measures, if the low E string was removed, the music would suggest a key of G# minor (with a flat second) due to the bass line's shape, which not only begins on G#, but ends with a iv-v-i motion (C#-D#-G#) just before the lead guitar enters. Bear this in mind when performing both the bass guitar and rhythm, for G# should be presented as if it is the root note while the open E string (the true root) is less prominent as a background pedal tone. The main lead theme enters as a simple two-note motif (E-D#; see A_Far_Cry_Example_1). The initial statement is fully muted with the palm, though it becomes less so as more notes are added and the phrase grows. This minimalist approach to lead will continue. As a side note, the opening bass guitar line was written under the first guitar riff.



A_Far_Cry_Example_1

SUB THEME 1

In sub theme 1 (two phrases), notice how the two-note motif (E-D#) now appears in the riff on the B3 and C#m3 chords, and is transposed up to G#-F# on the D#m3 chord. D#m is vii in this key and functions similar to the V-I chord progression on the repeat. In the first phrase, the riff also has a walking bass line of B-C#-D# as the chords change, but the motif largely remains where it is; the two parts form counterpoint together. The final three chords of the second phrase (m. 24) are designed to satisfy the V-I progression (shown here as I-vii-I) while also leading away to the next section. The lead is again a simple melody of only a few notes, quoting itself to form a phrase.

SUB THEME 2

In sub theme 2 (two phrases), the two-note motif reappears throughout the riff albeit transposed to different pitches (and appearing inverted the second time). Notice the counterpoint in the rhythm guitar as it moves from the A6 to D#m3 chords (the 6th becomes a 5th before the parts converge on a 3rd). The last four notes of the riff are a direct quote of the two-note motif as the lead guitar originally performs it, except that it occurs on a different place on the beat. Nearly the same lead notes are used here and played on the same string to maintain a similar tone. The phrase in measure 28 is transposed up a diatonic third in measure 32. Notice how the lead phrase (A_Far_Cry_Example_2) in measure 29, beats 3-4, is down a step in measure 30, forming a sequence. This reappears again in measure 38.



A_Far_Cry_Example_2

CHORUS

The first four notes of the bass line is the motif, which will also be the basis for the solo section. Here, the chords are played in 5ths while they will be played in 3rds in the solo. The final B5 chord has an F# on the fifth string, which nicely leads into the G# of the main theme that always follows the chorus. At the same time, the B on the lowest string resolves to the E string as this V-I progression ends. Both melodic motions are examples of voice leading. The simple lead melody is on the first string until the concluding descending passage, where care must be taken to play smoothly. The lead in measure 35 is a quote of measure 20, which is also played upside down at measure 24. For the flourish at measure 37, be sure to be gentle despite the brief burst of speed. Notice how this flourish is nearly identical to the one in sub theme 2.

REPEAT

On the return of the main theme, a second lead joins the first a third above until the end where they play in unison. One guitar ends on a single note while the other ends on a double stop to add weight as the music moves to sub theme 1. The first lead starts a very simple melody focused on the pitch G# (partly because this is missing from the rhythm guitar) and doing a variation on the two-note motif. A harmony guitar drops in a third below and remains there as both guitars climb against a pedal tone with every note (including the pedal) in harmony. At the very end, one of the lead guitars disappears, making the lone falling passage sadder for its sudden isolation after the rich harmony. For sub theme 2, the first lead guitar plays only the first phrase before dropping out, while the second lead guitar plays double and triple stops of the same melody throughout. The final appearance of the chorus changes little before the main theme's return. This is once again presented in harmony, with more lead variations.

Diversion - Solo

The diversion consists only of a short, simple solo section of two phrases in the key of A major, the first key change. The riff presents the motif as a variation on the chorus bass line, only played using chords in 3rds this time. The motif also appears in less strict variations throughout, sometimes inverted. Towards the end, the chords are allowed to ring more freely, and as the rhythm melody ascends to a climactic note B, the chord changes to match. This B major chord is the V of the V-I progression as we head back to E major and the main riff next. The simple lead melody is played in double stops for the second phrase, resulting in a rich final chord.

Recap

The coda brings back the recognizable main riff, which is one reason for the different lead treatment. The main theme does not appear (we've heard it three times) and is instead replaced by a slow pedal tone passage on the B string. It consists of two phrases, one ascending and one descending. Notice how the ascending lead guitar is in contrary motion to the descending rhythm guitar and bass. At measure 101, the line from measure 29 reappears in the lead (A_Far_Cry_Example_3).



A_Far_Cry_Example_3