

When The Levee Breaks – Led Zeppelin

WARNING: THIS IS NOT FOR BEGINNERS!

TUNING: F-A-C-F-A-C

Notes on playing slide guitar: This one was quite difficult to get to sound right for me. The acoustic is so much more difficult to play slide for this song than the electric. I had an issue with going sharp too much. In this song, you WILL need an actual slide. I am using a "Blues Bottle" and unfortunately it was for thicker fingers. Here's what I did: I took a cigarette butt and stuck it inside the bottle to form a tighter fit. I used a cigarette butt because it was handy – especially after this song! I recommend putting it on the 3rd finger, because you'll need your 1st and 2nd fingers for the riffs. This one is NOT easy to play and sing – MUCH harder than "Kashmir."

Useful tips: The slide needs to almost go PAST the fret of choice. It is NOT used during riff 1. The slides there are actual hand slides. However, you don't NEED to slide with riff 1 if you don't want to. They are slides from 'nowhere' so they can be avoided. A slide from 'nowhere' means that you will slide from the open strings to the desired frets. It's that easy. Playing isn't. The idea is.

If you are sliding to the 8th fret as seen in riff 2, you almost want the slide to touch the 9th fret. Just not quite there. It's going to take practice. You just ALMOST go past the desired fret. Aim for the actual fret spacer and you should be ok. You'll need a high-action guitar to do this or it will be very difficult. You can tell a high-action guitar by turning it up to look at the strings from the Low E string down to the High E string. If there is a lot of space between where the strings come close to the fretboard, you'll have a high enough action on your guitar. I did my best with this, but singing it and playing it was TREMENDOUSLY difficult.

Riffs Used

Riff 1:

sl. sl. sl. sl.

You just need to use your 1st finger on this riff.

Riff 2:

This is one of the slide parts. The slide is recommended on the third finger.

Riff 3:

This one is weird. You'll be using your 2nd finger for the notes on the fifth frets. Barre them. Use your 1st finger for the notes on the third frets. If you can't quite open that third fret note don't worry about it. Just do your best to barre the third fret notes. It's challenging!

Riff 4/5:

The timing here is key. I've included the notes.

Just think: Dum, DUH DUH, Dum, DUH DUH, Dum Duh Duh, Duh Duh Duh....

The Song!!!!

Ok. This is confusing to explain, but I've noted PICK UP lines based on fret number to make it as easy as possible. These indicate the frets being played. They are only LOOSELY added in there for pickups though. Practice the riff over and over and THEN start playing it. This should take you a while.

Intro Order: Riff 1 – Riff 2 – Riff 3 – Riff 2 – Riff 3*

On the last "riff 3" rest a whole note (or four beats)

Verse (riff 1):

(3) (3) (3) (5) (3)
If it..... keeps onrainin'.....levee's.....gooooingto break
(5) (3) (3) (3) (5) (3)
If it keeps on rainin', levee's goooooing to break
(5) (3) (3) (3) (5) (3)
A-when the levee breaks, have no place to stay

(Repeat riff 1 without vocals....)

Verse (riff 1):

(3) (3) (3) (5) (3) (5)
Mean old levee, taught me to weepand moan
(3) (3) (3) (5) (3) (5)
Mean old levee, taught me to weepand moan
(5) (3) (3) (3) (5) (3)
It's got what it takes to make a mountain-man leave his home
(5) (3) (3) (3) (5)
Oh, well-a

Riff 2 – Riff 3 – Riff 2 – Riff 3 – Riff 4/5

Verse (riff 1):

(3)
A-don't it make ya feel bad
(3) (3) (5)
when you're tryin' to find your way home
(3) (3) (3) (5)
and ya don't know which way to go
(3) (3) (3)

If you're goin' down south and they've no work to do
(5) (3) (3) (5) (3)
then ya don't know 'bout Chicago, ah, 'eah, 'eah, hey

Riff 1 - Riff 2 - Riff 3 - Riff 2 - Riff 3

(rest @ 4 beats or whole note)

Verse (riff 1):

(3) (3) (3) (5) (3)
Cryin' won't help ya, prayin' won't do ya no good
(5) (3) (3) (3) (5) (3)
Now, cryin' won't help ya, prayin' won't do ya no good
(5) (3) (3) (3) (5) (3)
A-when the levee breaks, mama, you got to move, a-woo-hoo

Riff 1

Verse (riff 1):

(3) (3) (3) (5) (3)
All last night, sat on the levee and moaned
(3) (3) (3) (5) (3)
All last night, sat on the levee and moaned
(3) (3) (3) (5) (3)
Thinkin' 'bout my baby and my happy home, oh-hoh

Riff 2 - Riff 3 - Riff 2 - Riff 3 - Riff 4/5

Verse (riff 1):

(this is all adlib and wasn't about to count it all out...just play the riff 1 and enjoy!)

Goin', I'm goin' to Chicago, goin' to Chicago
Sorry, but I can't take you
Goin' down, goin' down, now, goin' down, a-goin' down, now
Goin' down, goin' down, goin' down, goin' down, yeahh
Goin' down, goin' down, now, goin' down, goin' down, now
Goin' down, goin' down, now, goin' down
Goin' down, down, down, down, down
Ooh-woo-oooh, ooh-woo-oooh

Logical ending: you can end this on the (3) if you want. I played this over and over a hundred times so I just cut the video. It was so repetitive and I was worried about space.