

Quick Notes on “American Woman” by The Guess Who

Tempo: 92 bpm (based on when WE start this song)

I covered 3 “different” parts here, but really there are only 2 parts. The first part is basically the exact same idea as the rhythm guitar, but it's more of a riff run.

The tabs below are separated into the intro and the interlude/verse theme. You will “pick up” every time (and with every guitar) using EITHER the 2/4 – 5/7 (B – D) or the riffy version (same notes) so just remember to start the progression with that first. You would then move into E(5).

Here's the intro, which holds the “E” a bit instead of alternating back to the D:

The image shows musical notation for the intro of "American Woman". It consists of a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notation is divided into three measures. Above the staff, the chords are labeled: E, D E, and B D E. The first measure contains a quarter note E, followed by a dotted quarter note E, and an eighth note E. The second measure contains a quarter note D, followed by a dotted quarter note E, and an eighth note E. The third measure contains a quarter note B, followed by a dotted quarter note D, and an eighth note E. Below the staff, there are two empty staves. At the bottom, there is a guitar tab line with the following fret numbers: 7, 5, 7 7 7 7 7, 5 7, 7 7, 7, 5, 7 7 7 7 7, 7 7.

This plays a few times until you reach the interlude, which is reasonably distinguishable with the backing track. It helps to know the song a little, but this is one that I think we ALL hum in our heads. If not, you will soon!

Here's the interlude/verse theme:

The image shows musical notation for the interlude/verse theme of "American Woman". It consists of a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notation is divided into two measures. Above the staff, the chords are labeled: E and D E. The first measure contains a quarter note E, followed by a dotted quarter note E, and an eighth note E. The second measure contains a quarter note D, followed by a dotted quarter note E, and an eighth note E. Below the staff, there are two empty staves. At the bottom, there is a guitar tab line with the following fret numbers: 7, 5, 7 7 7 7 7, 5 7, 7 7 7 7.

This repeats over and over, with the noticeable difference being the constant D – E back and forth (unlike the intro)

Quick Point: If you're a little confused, you can start out playing EITHER above and as you listen to the backing track it will become a little easier to follow. The backing track includes the first B – D (or 7 – 5, depending on which one you play) but then drops out completely.

For practice purposes, I felt that I should leave that in there. You would start on the E(5) if playing along with the backing track in the same way I did. After you hear “duh duh” you come in. That's only on the first time though, so timing is crucial here :)

Now, the other guitar part, which is the main rhythm.

The main rhythm guitar mimics what you play from above, but it's fully chorded. As I said in the video, I REALLY played B5 – D5 – E5 – D5 – E5 (etc.) and not the full chord versions. However, what you see below still constitutes full barre chords even though the high E string isn't played. The high E string note that WOULD be played on any of the A style barre chords is already found within the chord shown in the tab.

Here's the intro rhythm theme:

E D E B D E

	9 9 9 9 9	7 9	9 9	4 7	9 9 9 9 9	9 9
	9 9 9 9 9	7 9	9 9	4 7	9 9 9 9 9	9 9
4 7	9 9 9 9 9	7 9	9 9	4 7	9 9 9 9 9	9 9
2 5	7 7 7 7 7	6 7	7 7	2 5	7 7 7 7 7	7 7

Again, it's that "E" that is held instead of running through. You CAN just use all downstrokes here, or you can modify your pattern in a way that I do, which is:

(B) – (D) - E [d-u-d-u-d] – D [d] – E [u - du] (repeat)

Here's the interlude/verse theme for the rhythm guitar:

E D E B D E D E B D

	9 9 9 9 9	7 9	9 9	4 7	9 9 9 9 9	7 9	9 9	4 7
	9 9 9 9 9	7 9	9 9	4 7	9 9 9 9 9	7 9	9 9	4 7
4 7	9 9 9 9 9	7 9	9 9	4 7	9 9 9 9 9	7 9	9 9	4 7
2 5	7 7 7 7 7	6 7	7 7	2 5	7 7 7 7 7	6 7	7 7	2 5

The same from above applies throughout, with the only difference being the constant D – E over and over instead of just E. There isn't really a chorus in know. G – just modifications of what you already know.

The last step MIGHT be to consider playing the leady interlude theme, which I chose to play using a tremelo bar (whammy bar) – but don't let that make it seem more complicated than it really is. If you have a whammmy bar, just wiggle it a bit when the vibrato shows on the staff. You can also use your fretting finger to do mostly the same thing. Fingerings are included below.

C Interlude

E D E B D E D E B D

1 3 *sl.* 1 4 3 1 *sl.*

E D E B D E D E B D

4 3 1* (* or 2) *sl.*

As with any and all fingerings I provide, I tend to mix up both what might be the best solution for you as well as things that I choose to do. You might find more comfort in using your 2nd finger for the 14th fret (D string) grouping above as well as the 16th fret (G string) grouping near the end. That's up to you. There's no real way to play the lead above anywhere else and make sense of it, so if you can't reach that area on your guitar, you will likely want to stick to the other parts. However, if you'd REALLY like to see the lead part above transcribed in a lower area, let me know and I'll take care of that for you.