THE BOYS OF SUMMER

ON RAMP



Written by Eagles front man Don Henley and longtime Tom Petty lead guitarist Mike Campbell, "The Boys of Summer" was the first single from Henley's 1984 solo album, *Building the Perfect Beast*. The song swiftly broke into the top 10.

Ostensiby the protagonist in the song is singing and reminiscing about a lost love. Many have further interpreted the song to be about how this lost love is spending the summer by having flings with several guys (hence the title). But really the overarching theme is longing for a time that has long passed and can never be lived anew.

ROADMAP

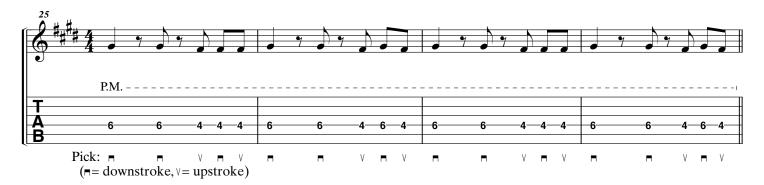


The song is played as if it were in the key of C# minor/E major, with a capo at the 2nd fret transposing everything up one whole step to the key of D# minor/F# major. Keep in mind that all fretboard positions are relative to the capo, meaning everything is actually played two frets higher than written.

This song features Campbell's tastefully understated, soulful lead playing. The guitarist's signature style is all about feel and making his instrument sing, as opposed to playing at blazing speeds. While he can rip when he wants to, as he does at the end of Petty's "American Girl" (also featured in this book), it is Campbell's full tone, organic touch, and polished string bending and vibrato techniques that make his lead guitar playing so appealing and musical. "The Boys of Summer" features some of Campbell's most tasteful lead playing and serves as a great example of how to make your guitar sing.

When playing the song's intro, the key thing to focus on is producing a smooth, vocal-like *vibrato*. Depending on which position the hand is in, different fingers may be used for the technique, but no matter which finger is used, every vibrato in this song is produced by gently bending the string, pushing it up and away from the palm in an even, controlled rhythm. Don't do it too fast—you don't want to make the vibrato sound nervous or spastic. Be sure to use the ring finger in bars 6–8 to slide into the notes and shake them. The index finger performs the vibratos in bars 16–18 and 22–24, and the middle finger is used in bar 21. These licks and fingering suggestions should serve as models for the remaining vibrato licks that occur later in the song.

The background palm-muted single-note riff heard during the verses provides a nice, supportive percussive feel to the mix without drawing too much attention from Henley's singing. To get the desired feel, be sure to use the picking strokes shown in the following example and remember to palm-mute the strings (as indicated by the abbreviation P.M.) by resting the fleshy part of your palm on them just in front of the bridge as you pick.

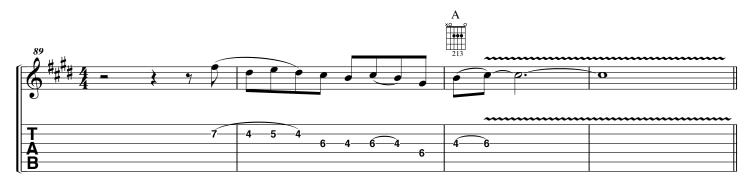


It's worth emphasizing how important palm muting is and how it can really help you get a better connection to the notes and get into the groove. This technique becomes especially important during the song's interlude section, during which you'll need to barre the index finger across the D, G, and B strings at the 2nd fret (relative to the capo).



Again, be sure to use the pick strokes indicated and to let that palm sit on the strings. Doing so will help keep the notes separate and distinct and make them sound nice and chunky. Practice this passage slowly at first, keeping the note durations short, then gradually work it up to the full tempo. If it'll help to practice along to a recording, remember that you can slow down the provided sound-alike with the TNT software included on the CDs.

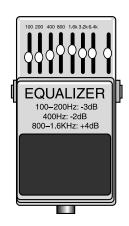
The tasty lead phrase Campbell plays in bars 89-92 is a great study in legato (smooth, rolling) phrasing.



This lick features hammer-ons and pull-offs used in combination, and can be deceptively tricky to execute cleanly, requiring a bit of thoughtful practice to nail. The goal is to maintain an even flow of eighth notes and to make the notes that are hammered or pulled ring with the same volume and clarity as the picked ones. Hammer on firmly, and when pulling off, flick the string slightly in toward your fret-hand palm as the finger lets go of it. This is necessary in order to keep the string vibrating, and to produce sufficient volume.



With the exception of a single distorted (and tasty) guitar lick that punctuates the end of the instrumental interlude, Mike Campbell plays a semi-clean electric guitar that features a touch of compression, especially evident on the arpeggios in each chorus section.





ROAD WARRIORS



A native of Texas, drummer Don Henley moved to Los Angeles in 1970 where he grew close to guitarist Glenn Frey while they were both in Linda Ronstadt's band. Together with guitarist Bernie Leadon and bass player Randy Meisner, Henley and Frey formed the Eagles and issued their self-titled debut album in 1972. Somewhat unusual for a drummer, Henley sang the lead

vocal on many of the Eagles' best-known songs, including "The Best of My Love," "One of These Nights," "Hotel California," "Life in the Fast Lane," and "The Long Run." After a string of multi-platinum albums and a series of personnel changes, the Eagles disbanded in 1980. Henley began his solo career with *I Can't Stand Still* (1982) which featured his biggest hit, "Dirty Laundry." His next album, *Building the Perfect Beast* (1984), spawned no less than five top 20 hits including "The Boys of Summer." Henley's follow-up to that, *The End of the Innocence* (1989), again scored a slew of hits and, to date, has sold more than six million copies.



Don Henley has been an outspoken advocate for land conservation, and his environmental activism includes founding both The Walden Woods Project in Massachusetts and the Caddo Lake Institute in Texas. Henley was awarded the National Humanities Medal in 1997 by President Clinton.

FORK IN THE ROAD



In addition to his solo career, spearheading the many Eagles reunions, involvement in occasional lawsuits, and long-standing championing of environmental causes, Henley established the Recording Artists' Coalition to provide legal assistance to musicians who may have been exploited by major record labels. He married in 1995 and Henley and his wife have three children.

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Words and Music by
DON HENLEY and MIKE CAMPBELL

