meet your guitar tutor:

Eric Roche

Eric is Head of the Guitar at the London Music School, where he teaches sight-reading, theory, ear training and acoustic guitar techniques. His debut album, The Post, is available now through Membranes Music Productions at EYE - BOX 1090, CROYDON CR9 4PP priced £15.00 incl. P&P. He has also written a number of guitar folios available through Music Sales Ltd. You can e-mail him at innerEAE@music@hotmail.com

A classic example of Mark Knopfler’s songwriting skill: a solo arrangement of Dire Straits’ ‘Why Worry’

This Dire Straits classic appeared on their 1985 album Brothers In Arms. The simple harmony and melody are good starting points for the development of a solo guitar arrangement. Even in the original arrangement, the vocal melody line intertwines effortlessly with the guitar part (a common feature in many of Knopfler’s parts).

Performance Notes

For the arrangement I chose to use a nylon strings guitar. I felt that the calming sound and texture of the vocal and guitar parts would translate better on a nylon string rather than a steel string instrument. I decided to keep the original key of E major as it allowed me to use the open E and A strings which predominate in the song. The voicings are reasonably standard. The opening shape is a partial C major voicing with a barre at the fourth fret. As long as you keep an eye on the barre markings along the top of the standard notation staff, the shapes shouldn’t prove to be too problematic.

In bars 8 the artificial harmonic might require some practice. See last month’s acoustic instalment for a detailed explanation and examples of some advanced artificial harmonic playing. Briefly, you place your left-hand index on the 7th fret, first string. Then, with your right-hand index finger, you lightly touch that string at the 9th fret. Still touching (but not pressing) you pluck the string with your right-hand middle...
finger. Some players choose to pluck with the right-hand thumb. Adapt the technique to suit your hand position, size, etc.

This artificial harmonic appears a number of times throughout the piece. The other area to watch out for is the descending keyboard line at bars 46-47. It can all be played in seventh position using a full barre. There are many other ways to play that line, but it is difficult to keep that low B note ringing.

The original end section goes on for some time, but I've just transcribed a few bars. Feel free to improvise or develop it as you please. It is essentially a mixolydian passage; the B acting as the new tonic (key centre) chord. The song closes on a B chord that confirms that section's change of tonality.

See you next month with a much more, shall we say, seasonal piece.

sound advice

Outstanding Ovation
An Ovation nylon-string cutaway was used for the recording. This was recorded direct to hard disk with minimal EQ.

jargon buster

mixolydian

The fifth mode of the major scale. It is essentially the same as a major scale with the seventh degree flattened.

REMEMBER terms and signs are fully explained on page 84.

‘Why Worry’ Words & Music by Mark Knopfler
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