Fast Car

TRACY CHAPMAN

Despite being one of only two major UK hits for Tracy Chapman, Fast Car became an overnight classic. KIT MORGAN selects reverse gear and heads back a decade.

The original note guitar part for this tune, from Tracy Chapman's debut album, is staggeringly simple. It's almost mantra-like in its repetitiveness - but there can be no denying that it's still a great sounding riff. In fact, it's so simple that I just couldn't bear it, so for this arrangement I've added the bass line to the guitar part for a fuller sound. If you want to play it as per the record, simply ignore the bass notes and stick to the two string riff.

TECHNIQUE

It's possible to play the song using a plectrum (as the original) or you can play bass notes using either hybrid picking or fingerstyle. You'll probably find that however carefully you play, occasional open notes will ring out accidentally, but this is okay; I didn't transcribe these notes because they came out at random throughout the record.

When you eventually get to the middle section, bear in mind that it's strummed rather than picked, so don't worry about hitting the exact number of notes on each beat as noted in the transcription - as long as it is rhythmically correct, you can adopt a fairly loose feel.

THE LYRICS

You got a fast car, I want a ticket to anywhere
Maybe we make a deal
Maybe together we can get somewhere
Any place is better, starting from zero get nothing to lose
Maybe we'll make something
But me myself I got nothing to prove
You got a fast car, and I got a plan to get us out of here
I been working at the convenience store
Managed to save just a little bit of money
Won't have to drive too far
Just cross the border and into the city
You and I both get jobs
And finally see what it means to be living
You see my old man's got a problem
He live with the bottle, that's the way it is
He says his body's too old for working
I say his body's too young to look like his
My mama went off and left him
She wanted more from life than he could give
I said somebody's got to take care of him
So I quit school and that's what I did
You got a fast car
But is it fast enough so we can fly away
We gotta make a decision
We leave tonight or live and die this way
I remember we were driving driving in your car
The speed so fast, I felt like I was drunk
City lights lay out before us
And your arm felt like wrapped 'round my shoulder
And I had a feeling, I belonged
And I had a feeling I could be someone, be someone...
You got a fast car
And we go cruising to entertain ourselves
You still ain't got a job
And I work in a market as a checkout girl
I know things will get better
You'll find work and I'll get promoted
We'll move out of the shelter
Buy a big house and live in the suburbs
You got a fast car, and I got a job that pays all our bills
You stay out drinking late at the bar
See more of your friends than you do of your kids
I always hoped for better
Thought maybe together you and me would find it
I got no place I can't go nowhere
So take your fast car and keep on driving

REPEAT CHORUS

Track Chapman: Fast Car [intro/verse riff]
- TRACK CHAPMAN: Fast Car (intro/verse riff) – cont

Note the 2nd fret capo – the chords (as they actually sound) are shown above the treble clef. The chord shapes you play are shown in brackets above.

TRACK CHAPMAN: Fast Car (strummed middle section)

Don't worry about playing the exact strings shown here, as long as you can still manage to avoid playing strings which aren't part of the current chord.