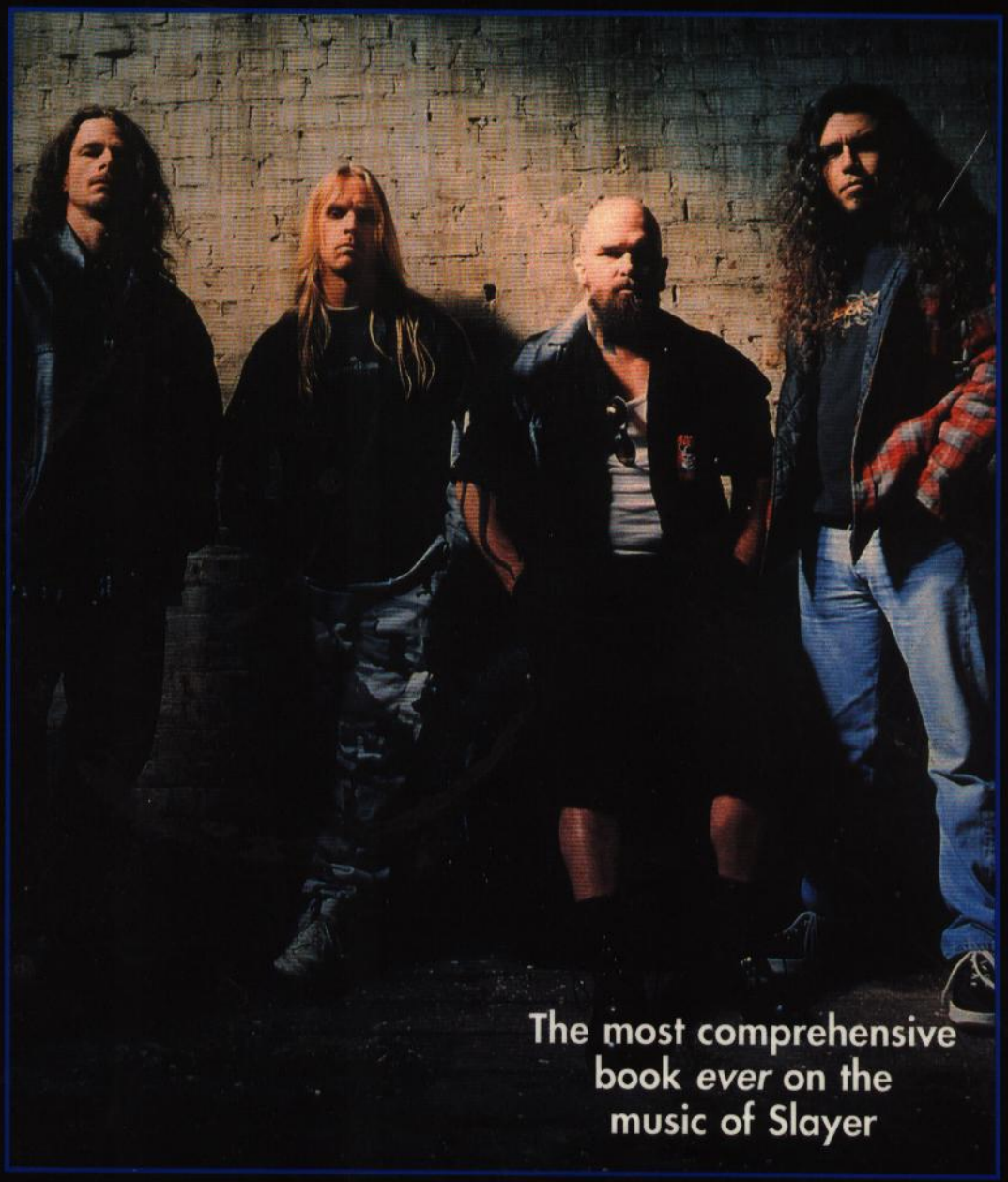
GUITAR • WITH TABLATU

SLAYER

Riff by Riff™

by Arthur Rotfe



The most comprehensive book *ever* on the music of Slayer

FEATURING

- Over 120 annotated, note-for-note excerpts from *Show No Mercy* through *Diabolus In Musica*
- Band History • Gear Setups • Photos

Cherry Lane Music

Authorized Edition

guita

History

Nineteen-eighty-two, the year of the synthesizer. MTV was coming up on its first year of broadcasting. The image-conscious American public was finally given a way to "see" music. But in Huntington Beach, California, there was a different scene emerging, spearheaded by double lead guitarists Jeff Hanneman and Kerry King and drummer Dave Lombardo in a group called the Huntington Hooligans. When they brought singer/bassist Tom Araya into the fold, Slayer was born and set on a mission to become the heaviest, fastest, loudest, and rudest metal band ever. Playing music no one else dared to play, Slayer capitalized on its unique mixture of punk sensibilities and metal music and took over the Los Angeles scene.

> *"We do what we do, we don't have to answer to anyone!"*
> —Kerry King

Brian Slagel, the owner of Metal Blade Records, offered Slayer a spot on an upcoming compilation, *Metal Massacre III*. The song "Aggressive Perfector" was submitted for the album and the world was introduced to Slayer. In 1983 *Show No Mercy* and the EPs *Haunting The Chapel* and *Live Undead*, Slayer's independently released recordings, caused metal fans throughout the world to take notice. Despite concert bannings in Canada and the United States, Slayer was gaining a well-deserved reputation for its unrivaled performances, which the band prepared for with exhaustive eight-hour rehearsals.

The August 1985 release of *Hell Awaits* consolidated Slayer's preeminence on the thrash metal front. With 100,000 copies sold almost immediately, major record companies began to swarm. Slayer signed with Rick Rubin of Def Jam Recordings and became the label's first metal band, alongside rap acts such as Run D.M.C., the Beastie Boys, and LL Cool J.

Slayer's third album, *Reign In Blood*, sparked massive controversy. Def Jam's distributor, Columbia Records, refused to have anything to do with the album, largely due to the lyrics of "Angel Of Death." Geffen Records, however, was quick to pick up distribution of the album in late 1986. Arguably the greatest thrash/speed metal album of all time, *Reign In Blood* sold well over 500,000 copies, and charted in the Billboard Top 100—despite lack of radio airplay.

Not as brutal and fast as *Reign In Blood* was 1988's *South Of Heaven*, which also achieved gold status. In 1990 Slayer released *Seasons In The Abyss*, their first platinum-selling album, and began their *Clash Of The Titans* tour with Alice in Chains, Megadeth, and Anthrax, among others.

In 1992, continued difficulties with Dave Lombardo's lack of dedication to the band prompted Kerry King to invite Paul Bostaph to audition. Bostaph fit right in, and the band embarked on the *Monsters Of Rock* tour in Europe, and also played the famous Donnington Festival and Mannheim Super Rock Show.

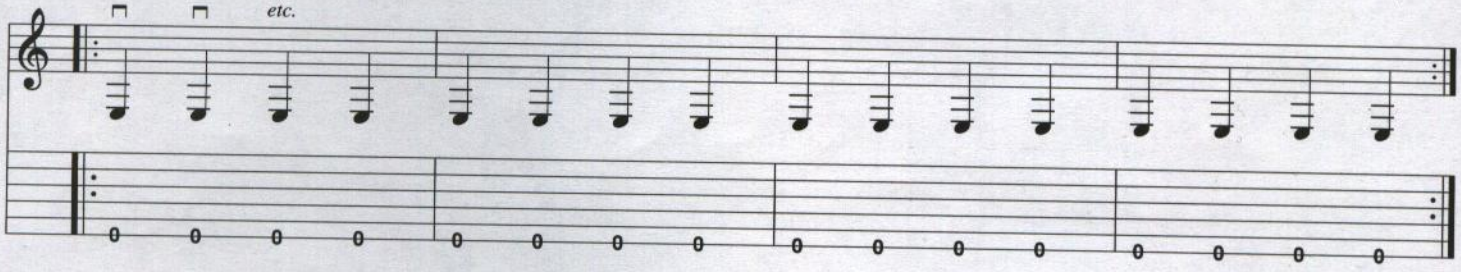
By 1994 most speed metal bands had disappeared, but not Slayer! *Divine Intervention* entered the Billboard chart at Number 8 and sold over 100,000 copies in its first week. After the highly successful punk-cover album *Undisputed Attitude*, 1998's *Diabolus In Musica* proves that Slayer is still at the top of the hyper-evil music empire, a land impervious to the trends and whims of today's changeable modern rock.

How To Achieve A Right-Hand Technique From Hell

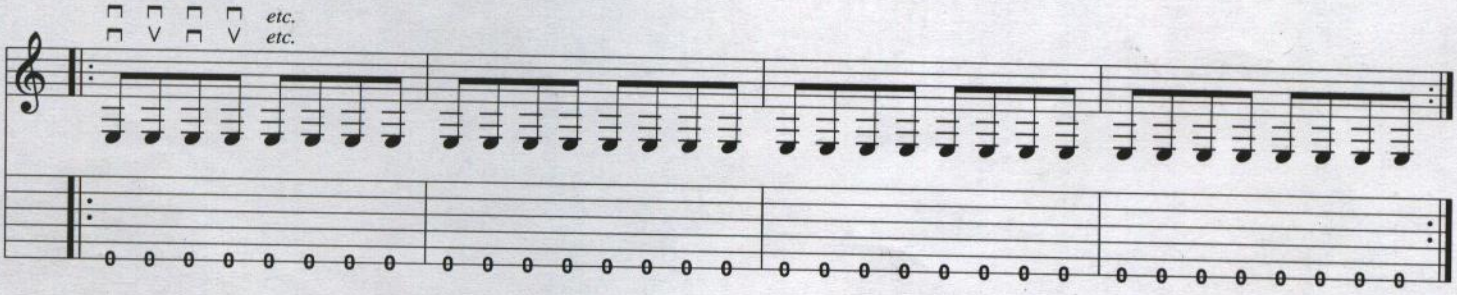
If nothing else, the one thing you must have to play Slayer's music is right-hand *velocity*. Tempos frequently exceed 200 beats per minute (♩=200), and many riffs are composed of difficult sixteenth-note figures. What follows are a number of exercises that will bring you up to speed; master these and you will be prepared to handle almost any Slayer riff that will come your way.

Don't expect to be able to play at extreme tempos right away; that would be like a neophyte jogger trying to run a marathon. Work diligently, every day, and increase your tempos gradually and comfortably. There are two basic rules for achieving great speed with accuracy: use subtle and short movements of the pick and keep your arm relaxed and in a comfortable position. Any tension in you hand or arm will ultimately hold you back from playing accurately at fast tempos.

Play this simple quarter-note exercise with successive downstrokes. Start at a comfortable tempo, perhaps ♩=120, and work up to ♩=208.

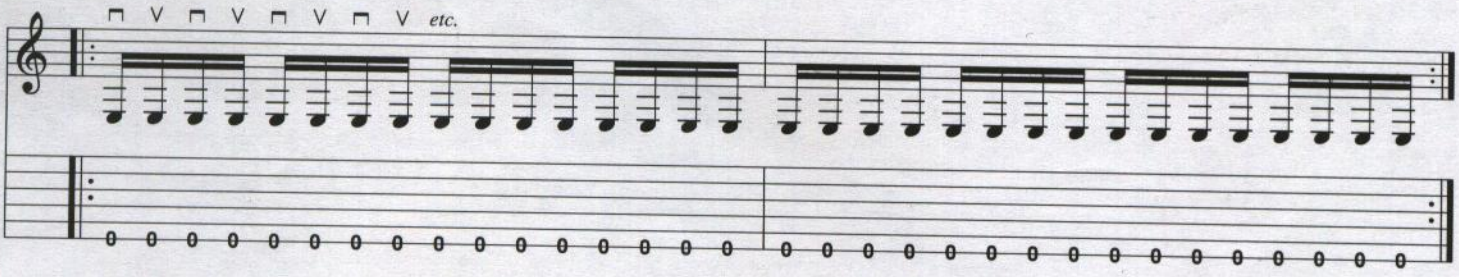


This eighth-note exercise can be played with successive downstrokes at slow to moderately fast tempos, but will require alternate picking once the tempo approaches the 200 mark. Start at ♩=80 and work up to 208.

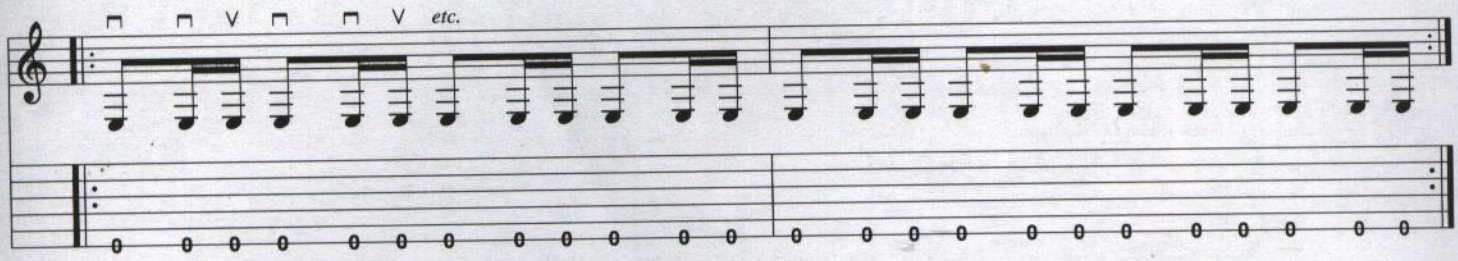


There are three important sixteenth-note patterns you'll need to master: constant sixteenths, the gallop, and the reverse gallop. Be sure to follow the notated pickings. (Downstrokes are shown as ⊓, upstrokes as ∨.) Try these figures on different strings and on various frets, with and without palm muting.

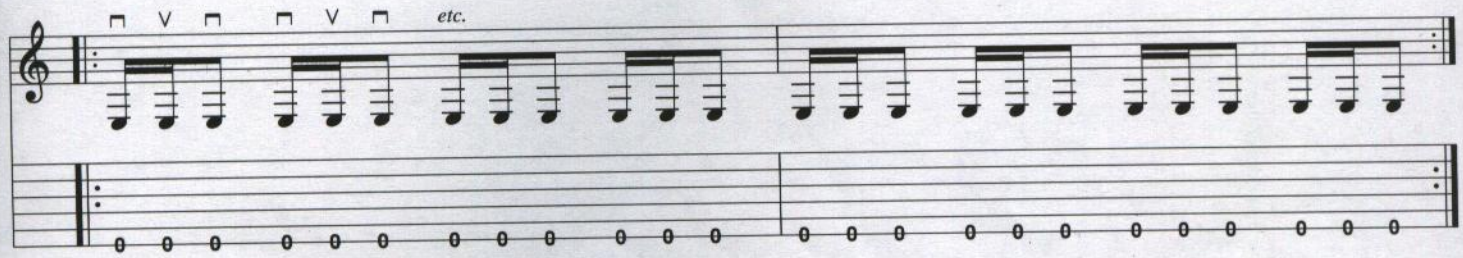
Constant Sixteenths



The Gallop



The Reverse Gallop



A metronome is a must-have for any musician, and it will come in quite handy when practicing these exercises, and for benchmarking your progress as you increase your speed. Accurate, electronic metronomes are available at any music store and are about half the price of an average distortion pedal.

If you are currently without a metronome you can use this sampling of Slayer songs and their *opening* tempos as a guide:

South Of Heaven	♩=54
Seasons In The Abyss	♩=64
Divine Intervention	♩=74
Dead Skin Mask	♩=109
Jesus Saves	♩=140
Black Magic	♩=164
Raining Blood	♩=178
Die By The Sword	♩=192
Angel Of Death	♩=210
War Ensemble	♩=220
The Antichrist	♩=240

The Antichrist

From SHOW NO MERCY

Words by Jeff Hanneman
Music by Jeff Hanneman and Kerry King
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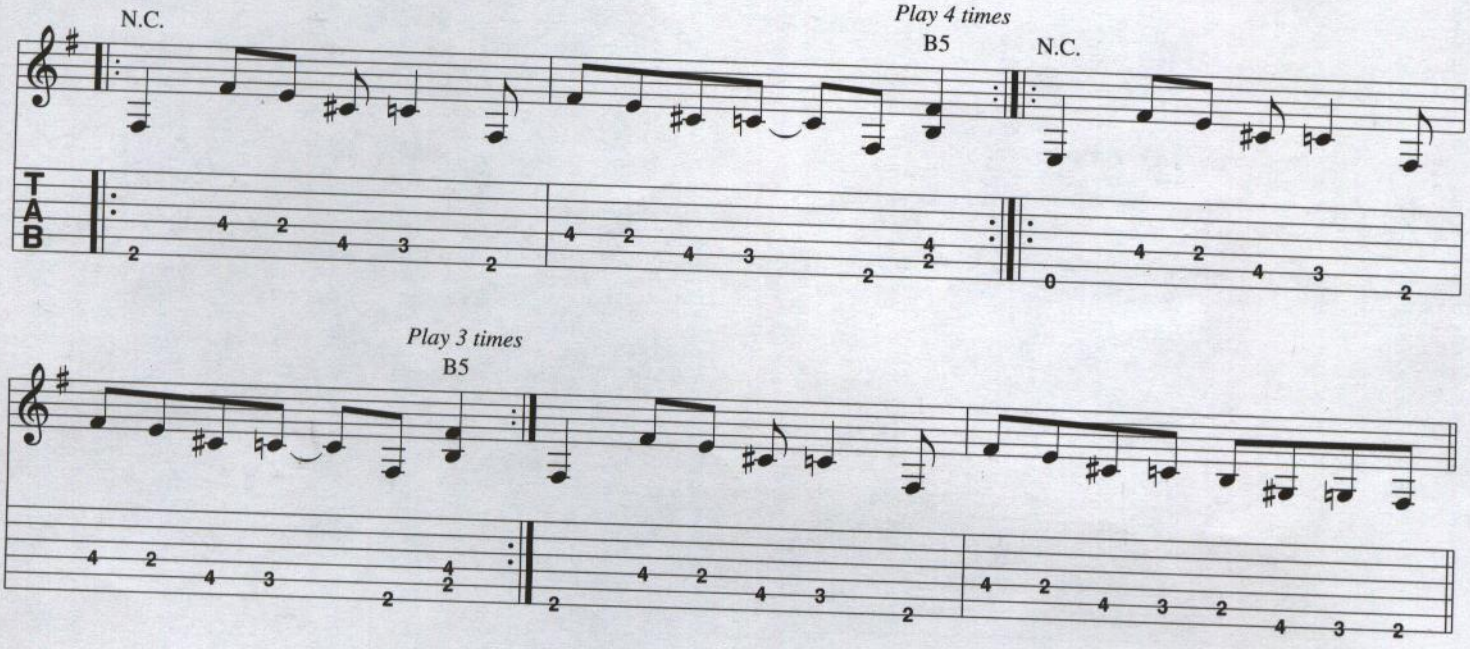
Incarnation Of Satan

Satan is given an earthly form in this riff, based on the F♯ blues scale (F♯ A B C♮ C♯ E). Slayer often places a heavy emphasis on the tritone (here F♯–C), the interval that in the Middle Ages was called ***diabolus in musica*** or "the devil in music."

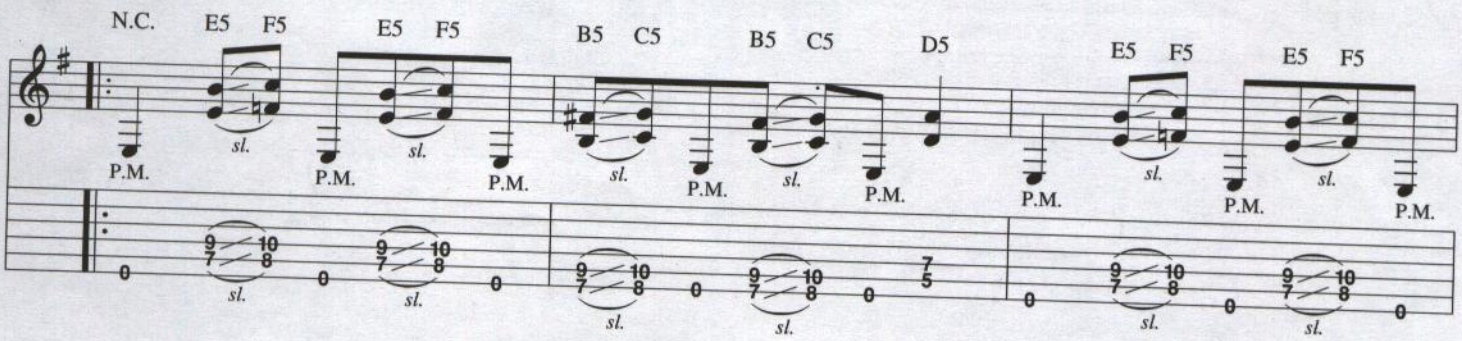
0:00

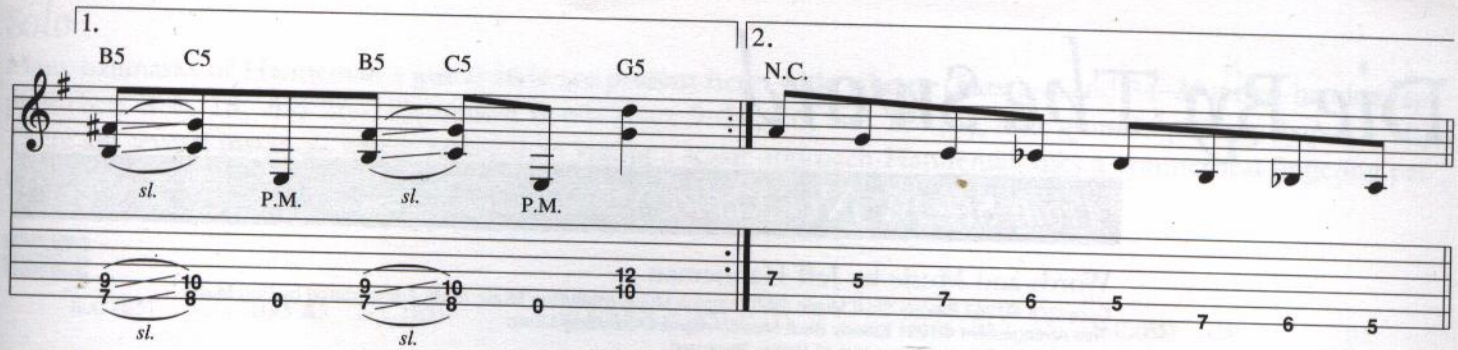


Intro Riff

Moving away from the F♯ tonal area of the previous riff, we are now centered in E. This riff, with its frequent F5's, is composed primarily from the E Phrygian mode (E F G A B C D) and forms the basis for the verses. Even though the B5 chord contains an F♯, it is not prominent enough to override the F♮.

0:16

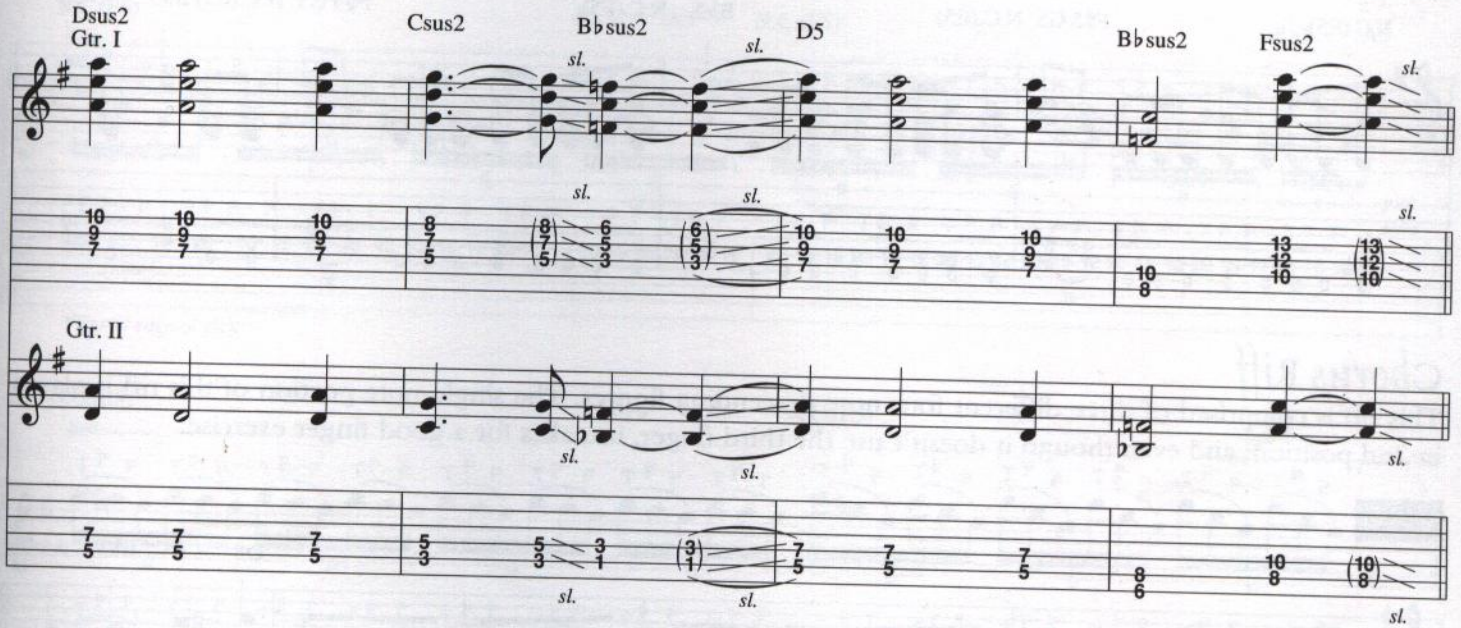




Chorus Riff

The wide, open sound of stacked 5ths predominates here: one guitar plays low power chords, while the other plays higher power chords, a 5th above, which results in a series of sus2 chords. For example, the first chord is made up of a D5 (D-A) in one guitar, and A5 (A-E) in the other, which fuse together as Dsus2 (D-A-E).

0:40



Die By The Sword

From SHOW NO MERCY

Words and Music by Jeff Hanneman

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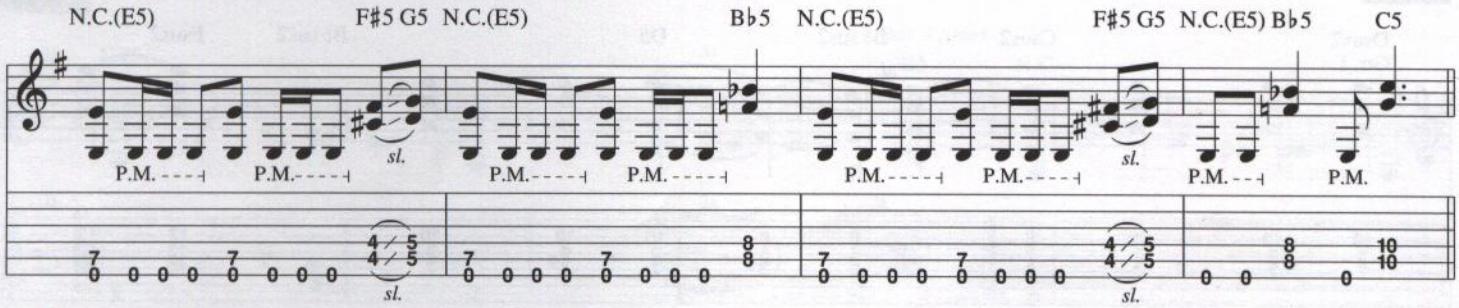
Intro Riff

Though it's played primarily in 5th position, this riff spans a wider fingerboard range. The double-stop slides (in bars 1 and 3) should be taken by the first finger, and the 8th and 10th fret double-stops (in bars 2 and 4) should be played with the third finger.

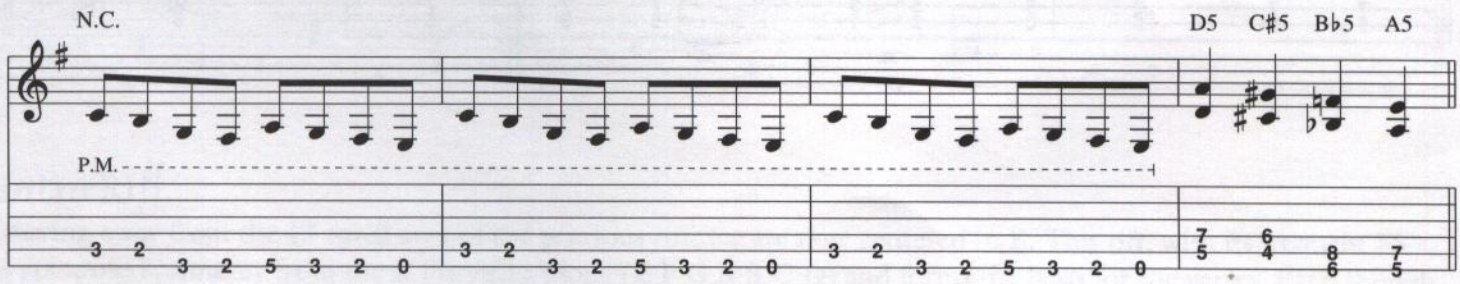
0:00



Chorus Riff

This riff is comprised of three different four-note descending figures. The single-note portion of this riff is played in 2nd position, and even though it doesn't use the third finger, it makes for a good finger exercise.

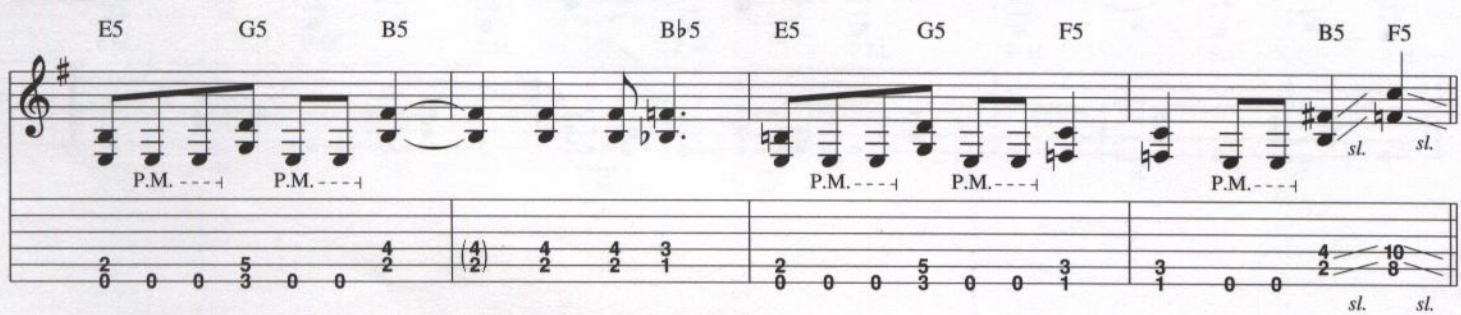
0:30



Bridge Riff

This riff, played beneath King's wailing tremolo bar work, is composed of two-bar phrases. Each phrase begins the same way, but changes in its second bar (bars 2 and 4). It is here that a similar, yet varied, sound occurs because of the altered scale degrees that these chords are built on: first the B♭ (♭5) and then F (♭2).

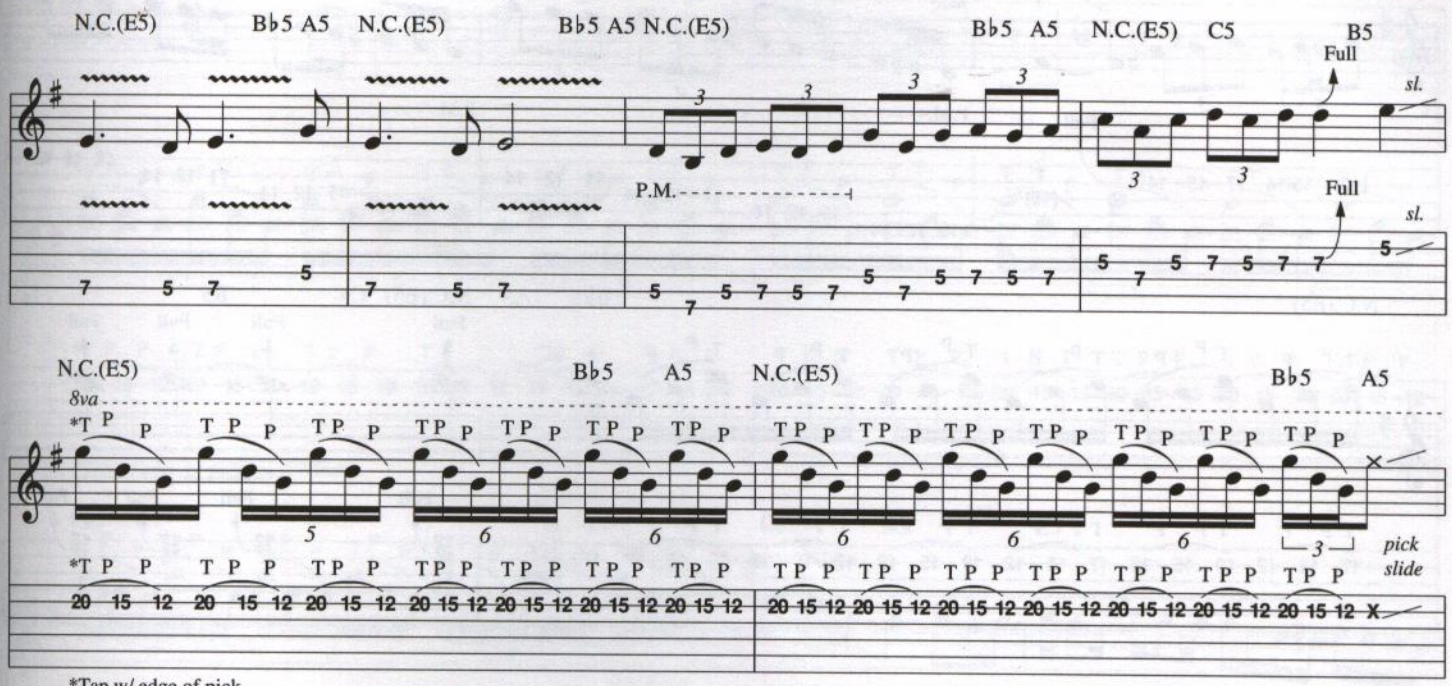
1:30



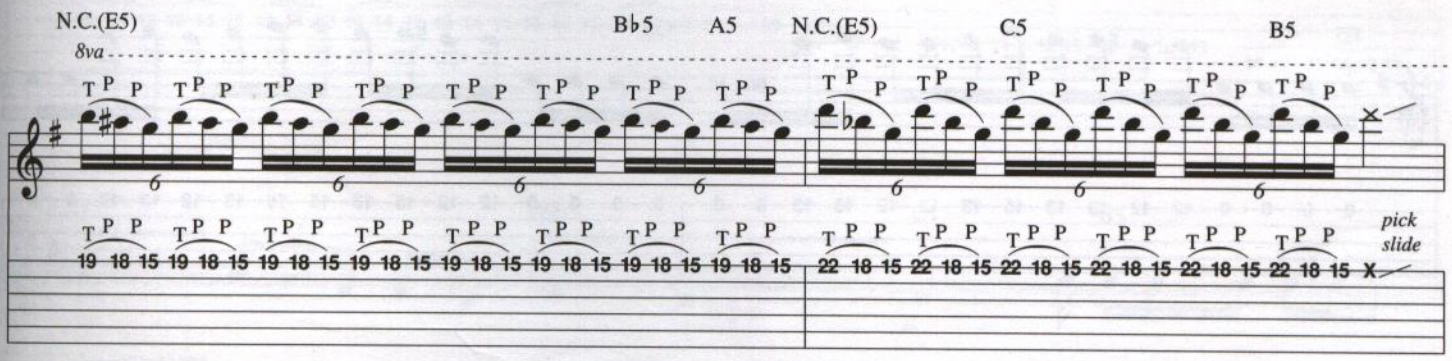
Solo

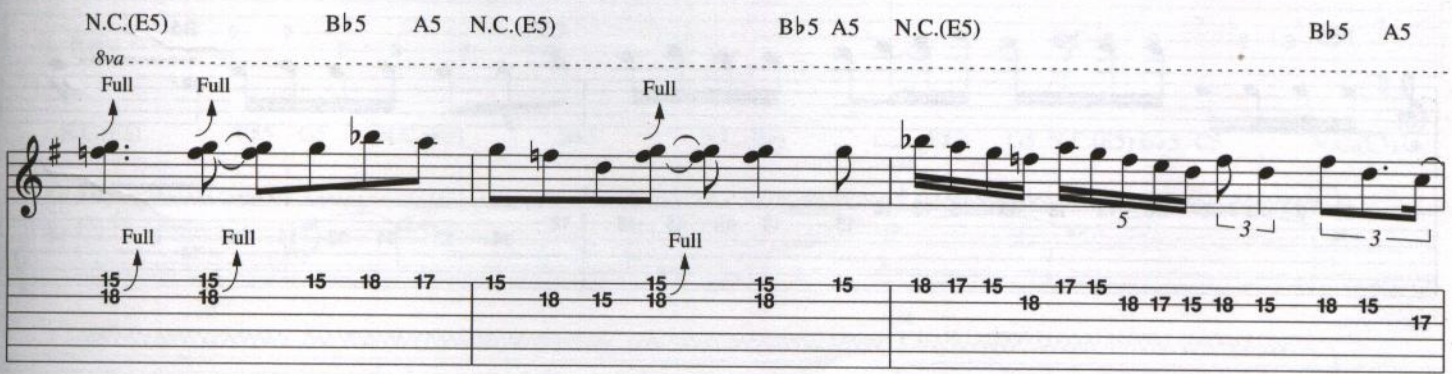
Many hallmarks of Hanneman's guitar style are present here: wide vibrato (bars 1–2 and 34–37), two-handed tapping (bars 5–8, 15, and 26–28), unison bends (bars 9–10, 16, and 22–24), and tremolo picking (bars 17–20). There are several instances where rather than taking a scalar approach Hanneman uses a symmetrical fingering pattern; this is evident in the triplet lick in bars 3–4.

2:27

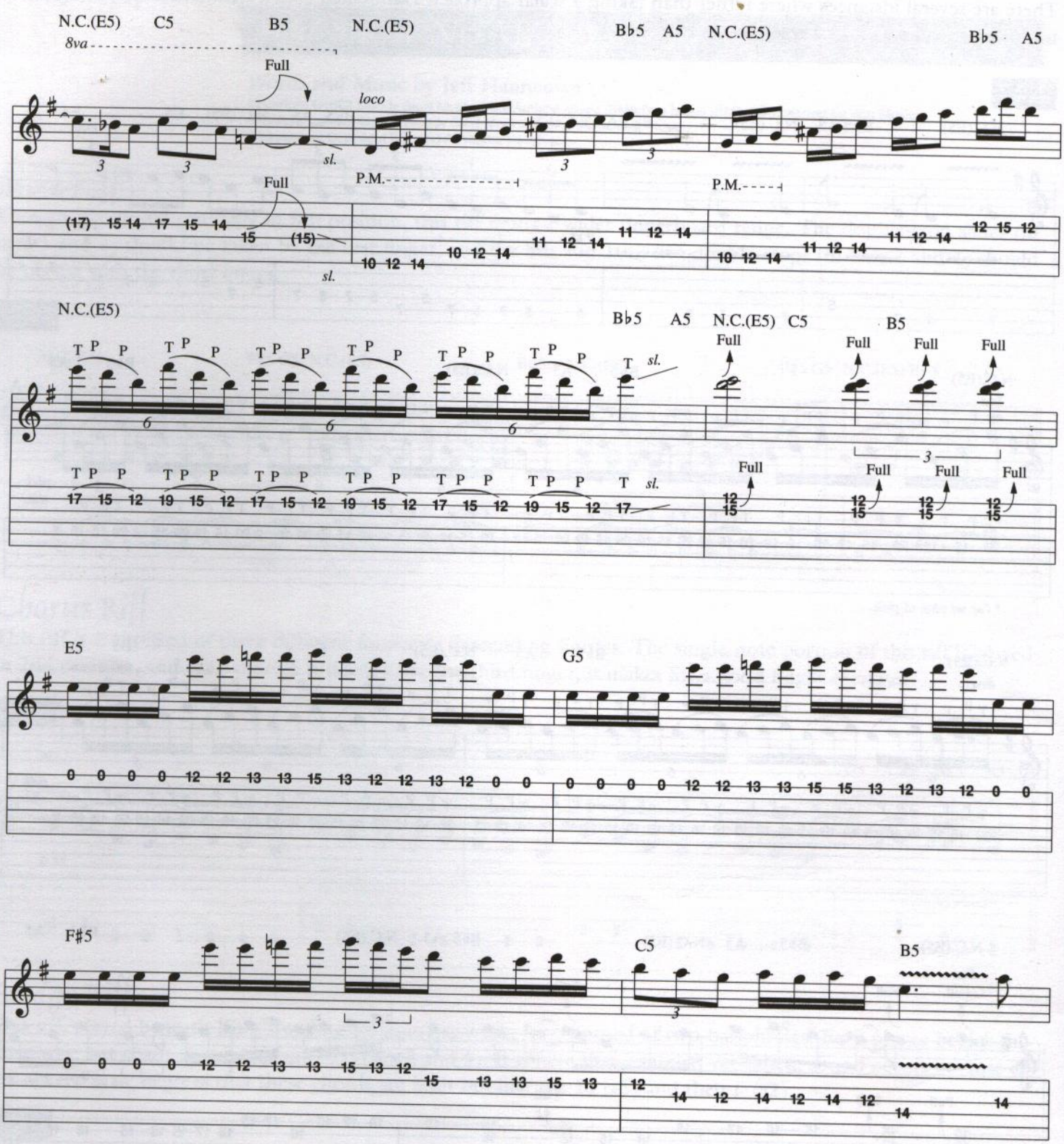


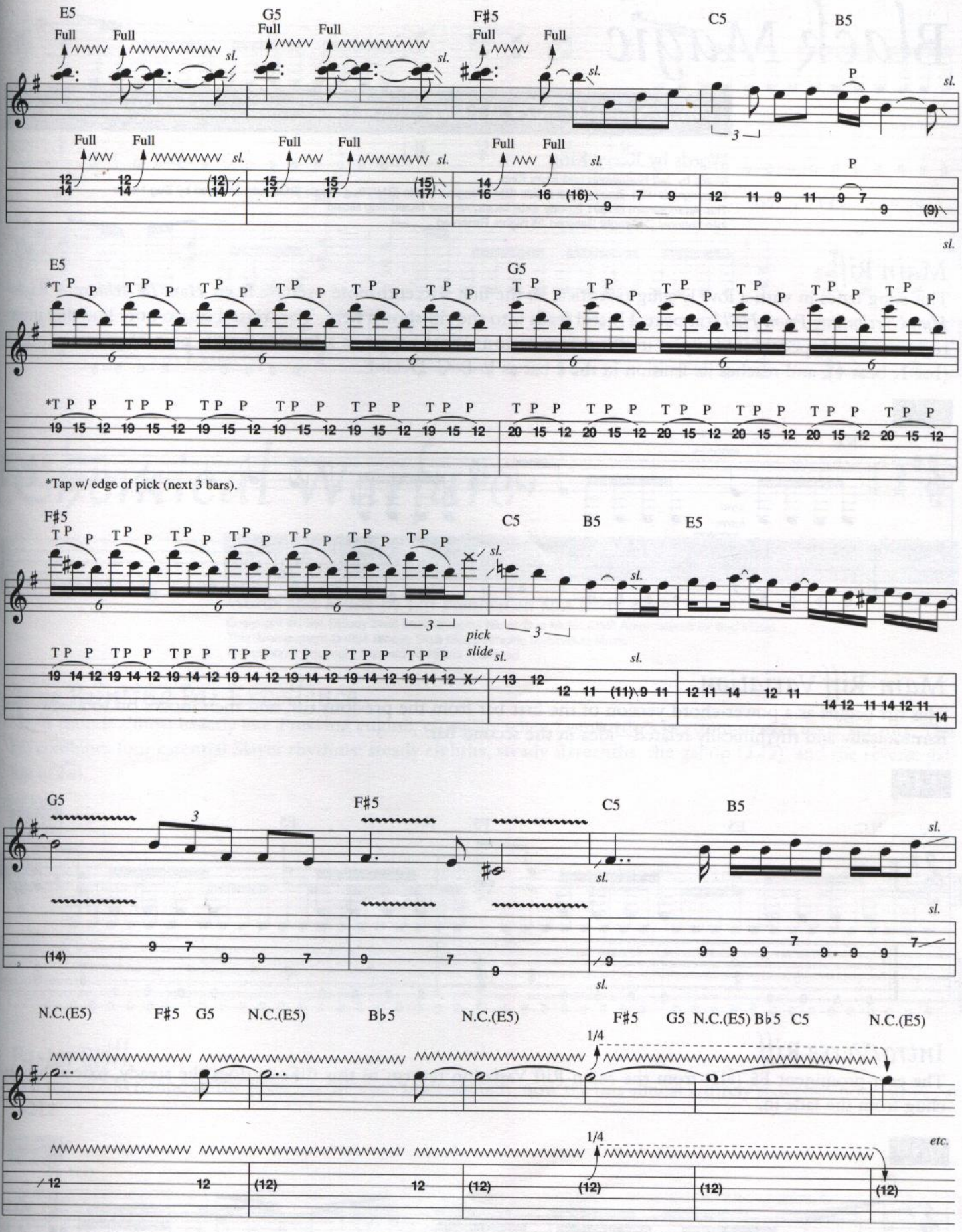
*Tap w/ edge of pick.





Die By The Sword (Cont.)




E5
G5
F#5
C5
B5
Full
sl.
P
E5
G5
*T P
T P P
*Tap w/ edge of pick (next 3 bars).
F#5
C5
B5
E5
pick slide
G5
F#5
C5
B5
N.C.(E5)
F#5 G5
N.C.(E5)
B♭5
N.C.(E5)
F#5 G5 N.C.(E5) B♭5 C5
N.C.(E5)
1/4
etc.

Black Magic

From SHOW NO MERCY

Words by Kerry King
Music by Jeff Hanneman and Kerry King
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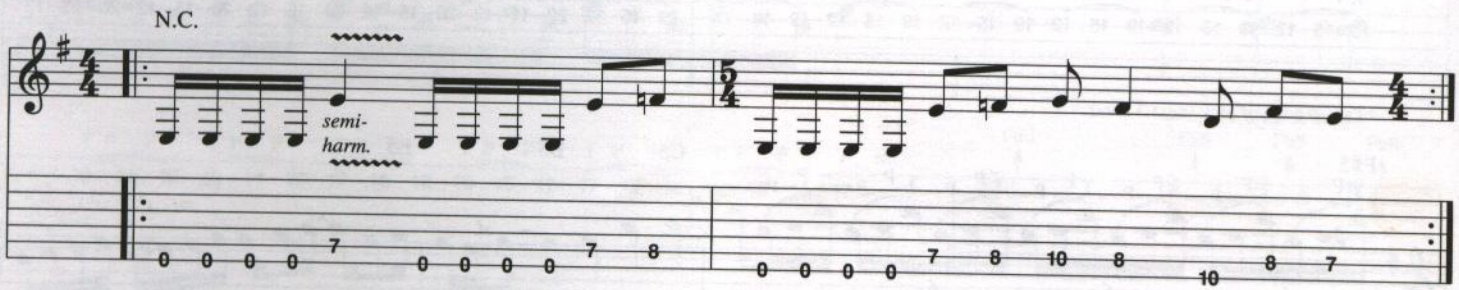
Main Riff

This song fades in with a low-E chug (identical to the first sixteenth-note exercise from *How To Achieve A Right-Hand Technique From Hell* [on page 4]) and leads into the riff shown here. The fretted single-note line that interrupts the low-E pedal builds upon itself on each return: What begins as a lone E (bar 1, beat 2) grows into E–F (bar 1, beat 4), and reaches its fruition in the 5/4 bar as E–F–G–D–G–E.

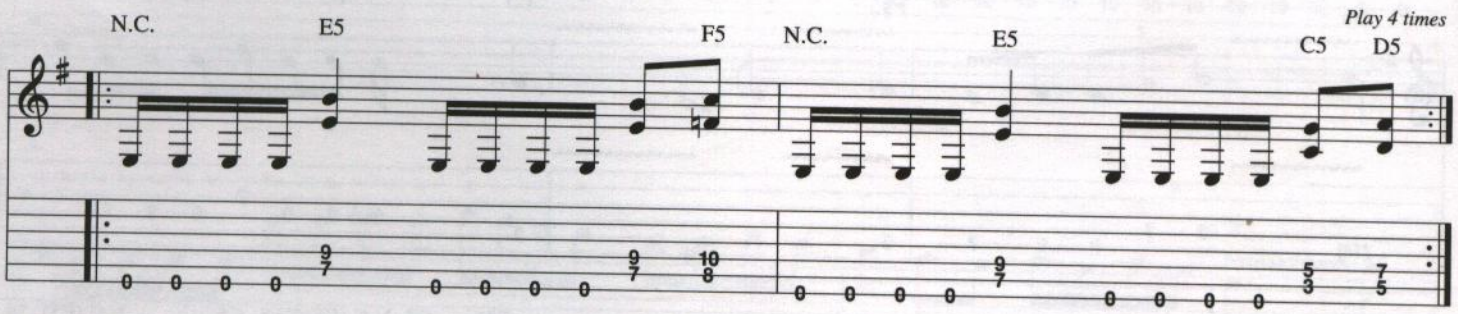
0:25



Main-Riff Variation

This riff begins as a power-chord version of the first bar from the previous riff, and then moves on to a new—yet harmonically and rhythmically related—idea in the second bar.

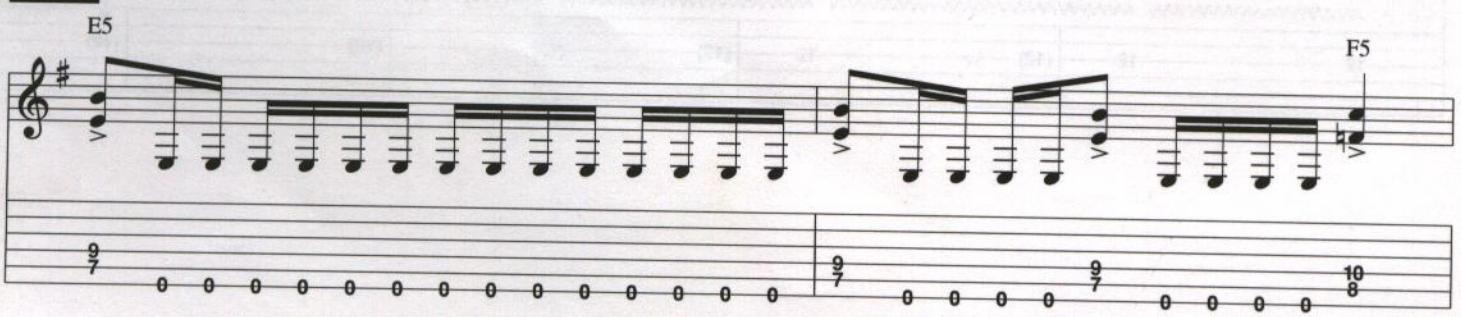
0:38

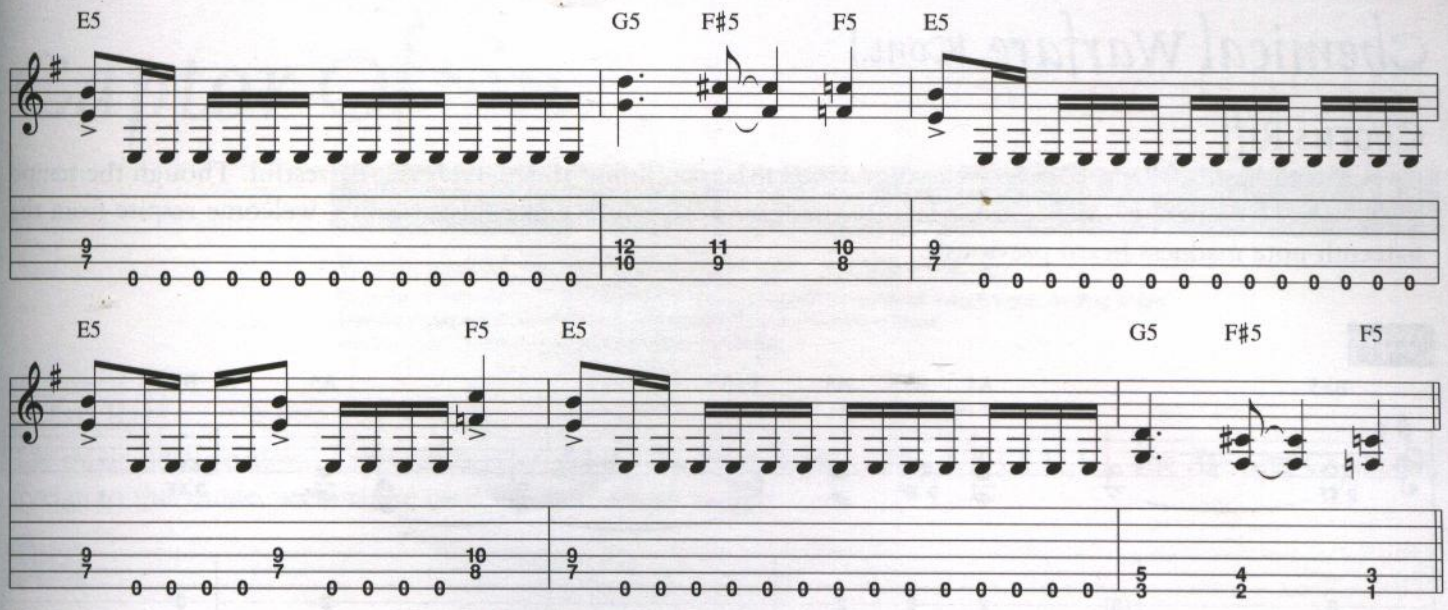


Intro/Verse Riff

The ever-prominent F5 (♭II) from the Main-Riff Variation returns in this riff—as does the steady, sixteenth-note chug from the fade in.

0:56





Chemical Warfare

From SHOW NO MERCY

Words and Music by Jeff Hanneman and Kerry King

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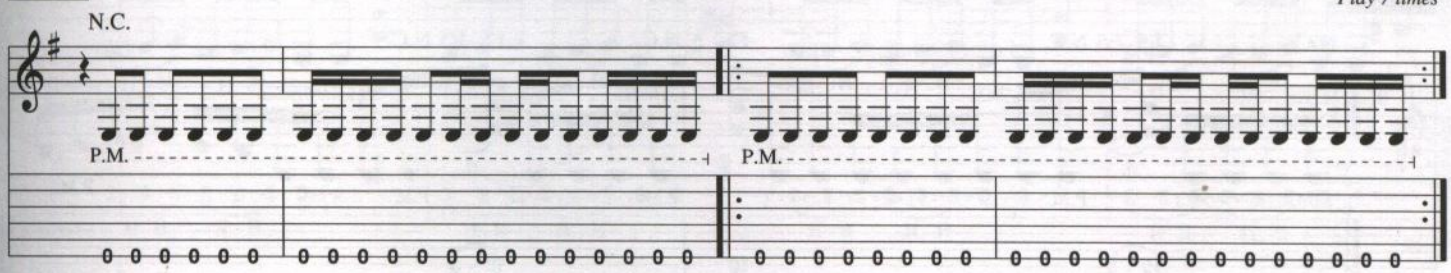
Tone Painting Par Excellence

Slayer sounds almost exactly like a revving engine, especially when Lombardo's low-tom strokes enter the mix. This riff combines four essential Slayer rhythms: steady eighths, steady sixteenths, the gallop (♫♫), and the reverse gallop (♫♫).

0:00

Play 7 times

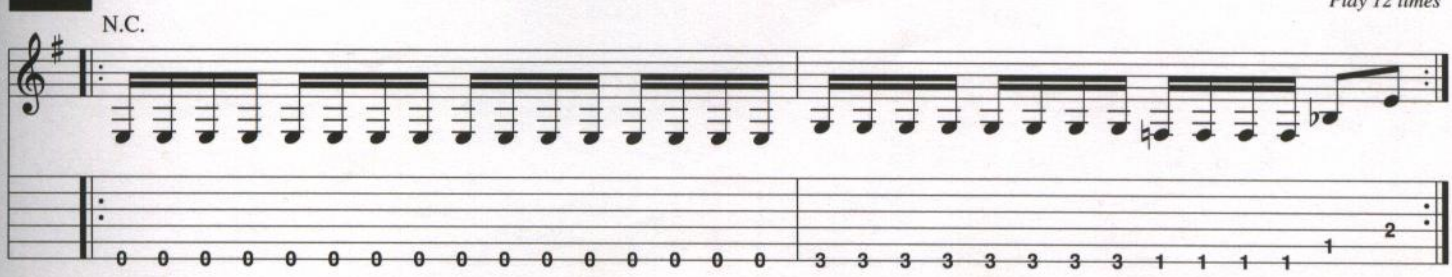


Faster Still

As if the ♩=200 tempo of the previous riff wasn't fast enough, now try this almost entirely sixteenth-note riff . . . at ♩=212.

0:21

Play 12 times

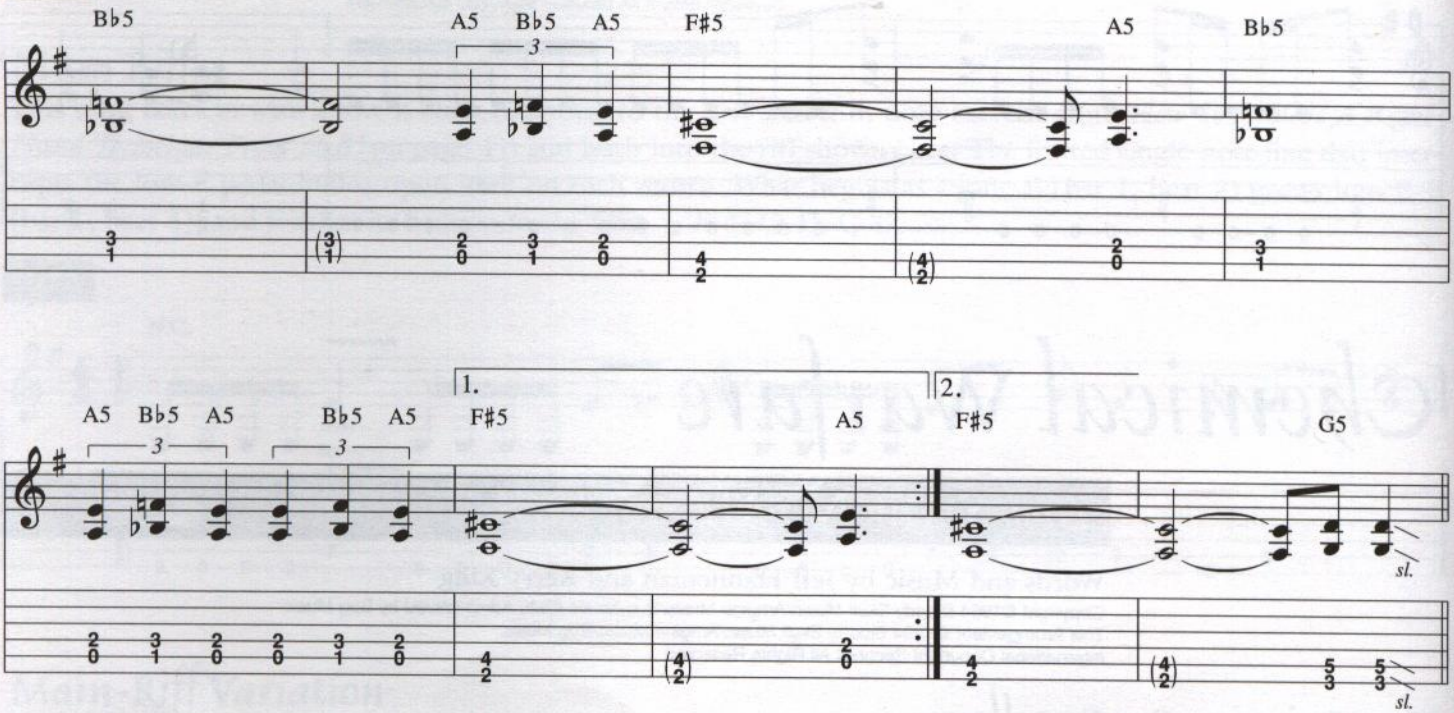


Chemical Warfare (Cont.)

Chorus Riff

If your hand hasn't fallen off after the two previous riffs, you'll find this one pleasantly restful. Though the tempo is still as fast as a harlot running from Hades, the long note values make this section a welcome respite from the sixteenth-note madness heard previously.

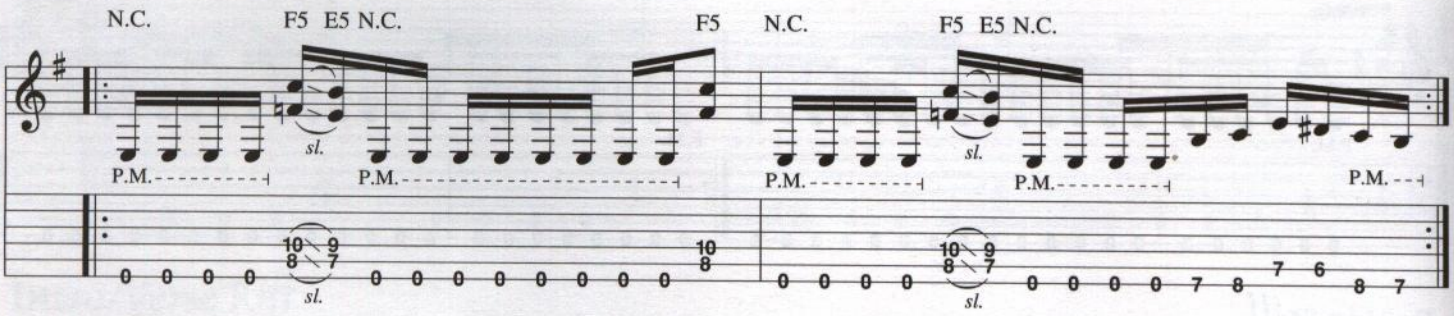
0:49



Bridge Riff

Most of this riff is pure E Phrygian (E F G A B C D), but the final menacing figure is from E harmonic minor (E F♯ G A B C D♯).

2:00



Captor Of Sin

From SHOW NO MERCY

Words and Music by Jeff Hanneman and Kerry King

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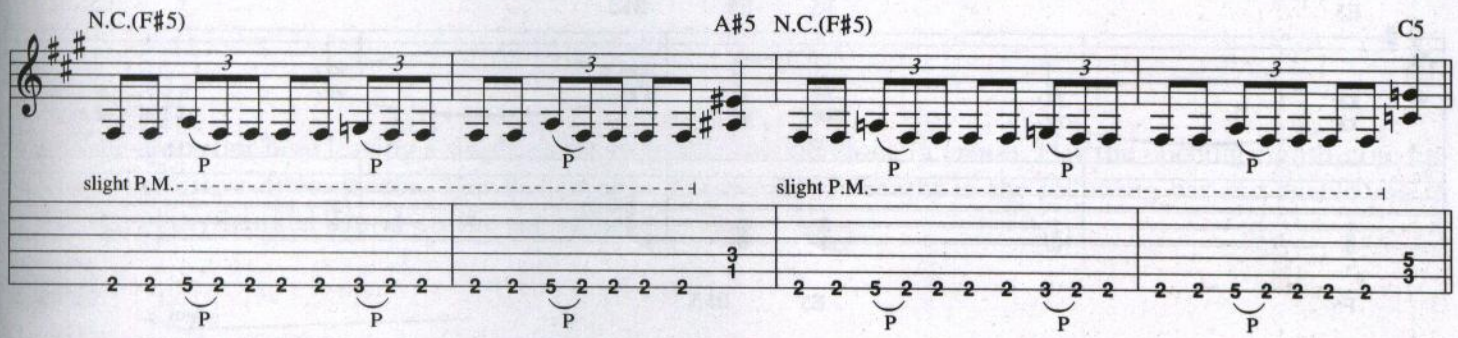
Intro Riff

The single-note portion of this riff is from the F♯ Phrygian mode (F♯ G A B C♯ D E). The A♯5 and C5 chords, foreign to this mode, seem to be used for mere shock value.

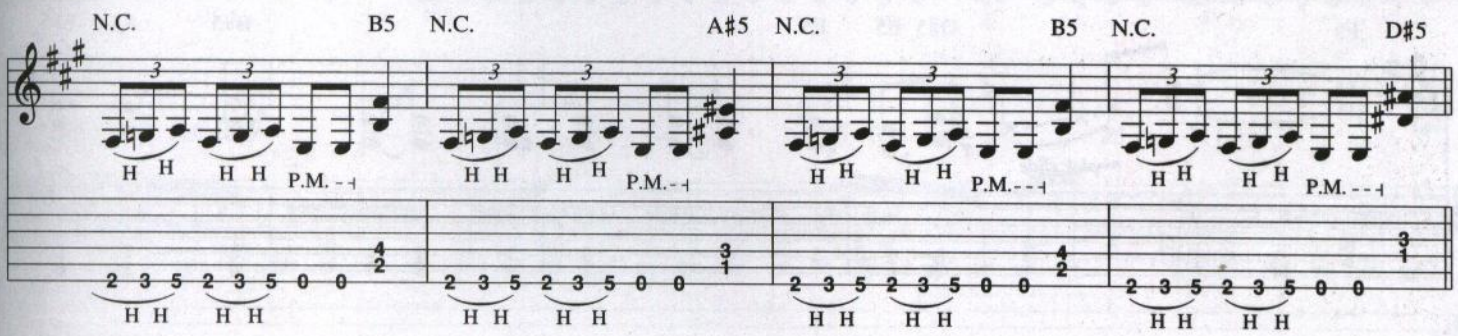
0:00



Verse Riff

This riff appears before Araya's vocal entrance, and is closely related to the Intro Riff. The harmonic function of the D♯5 chord is even more confounding than the A♯5 chord.

0:37



Hell Awaits

From Hell Awaits

Words by Kerry King
Music by Jeff Hanneman and Kerry King
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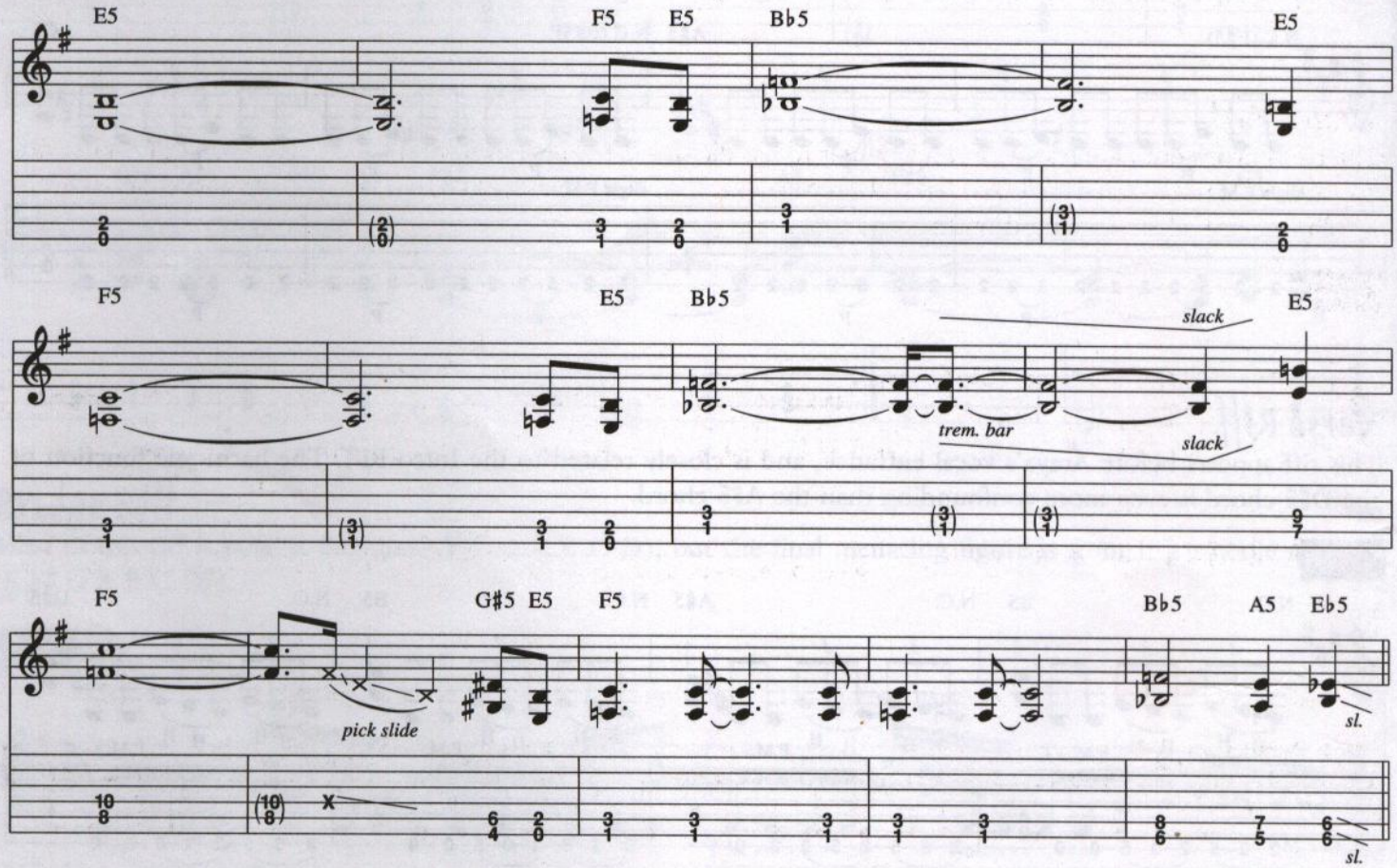
Intro Riff #1

This hell-born riff is played over a low-E pedal—which makes the F5 and B♭5 sound especially dissonant.

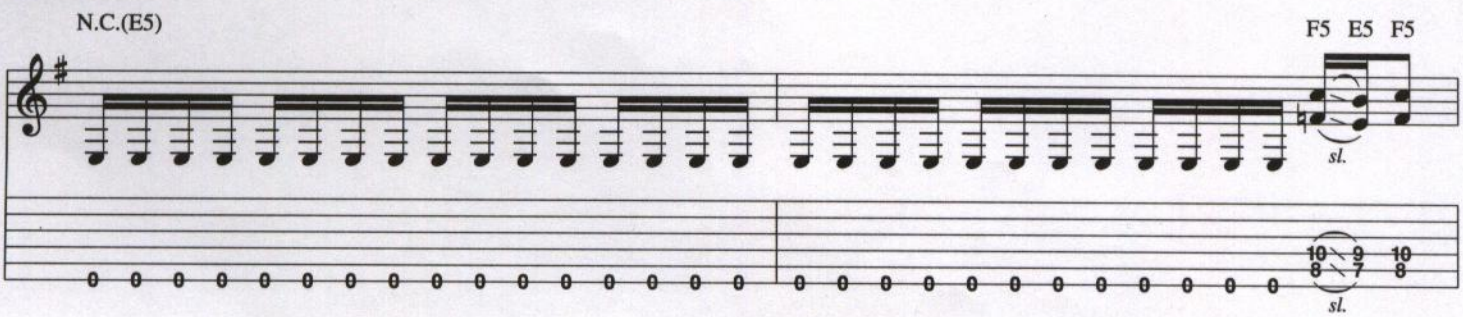
1:06

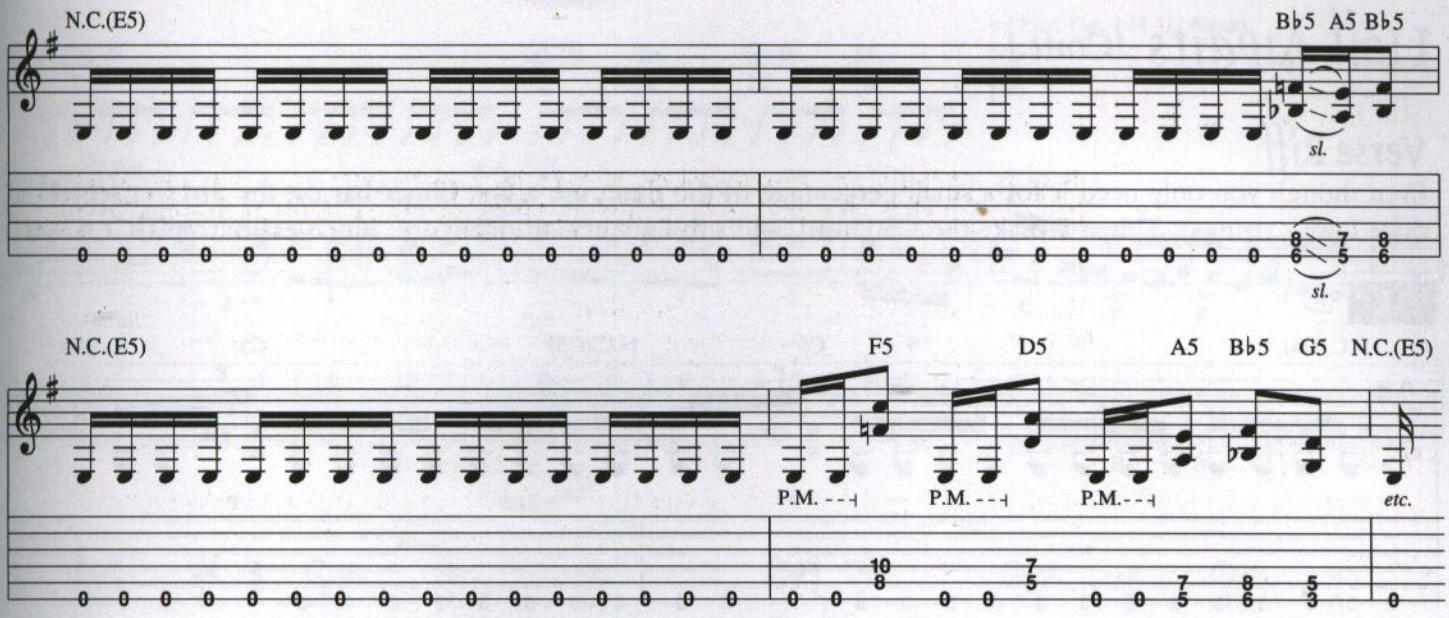


Intro Riff #2

A flustering effect is created because of the unpredictable placement of the chords that interrupt the low-E sixteenth notes.

1:36

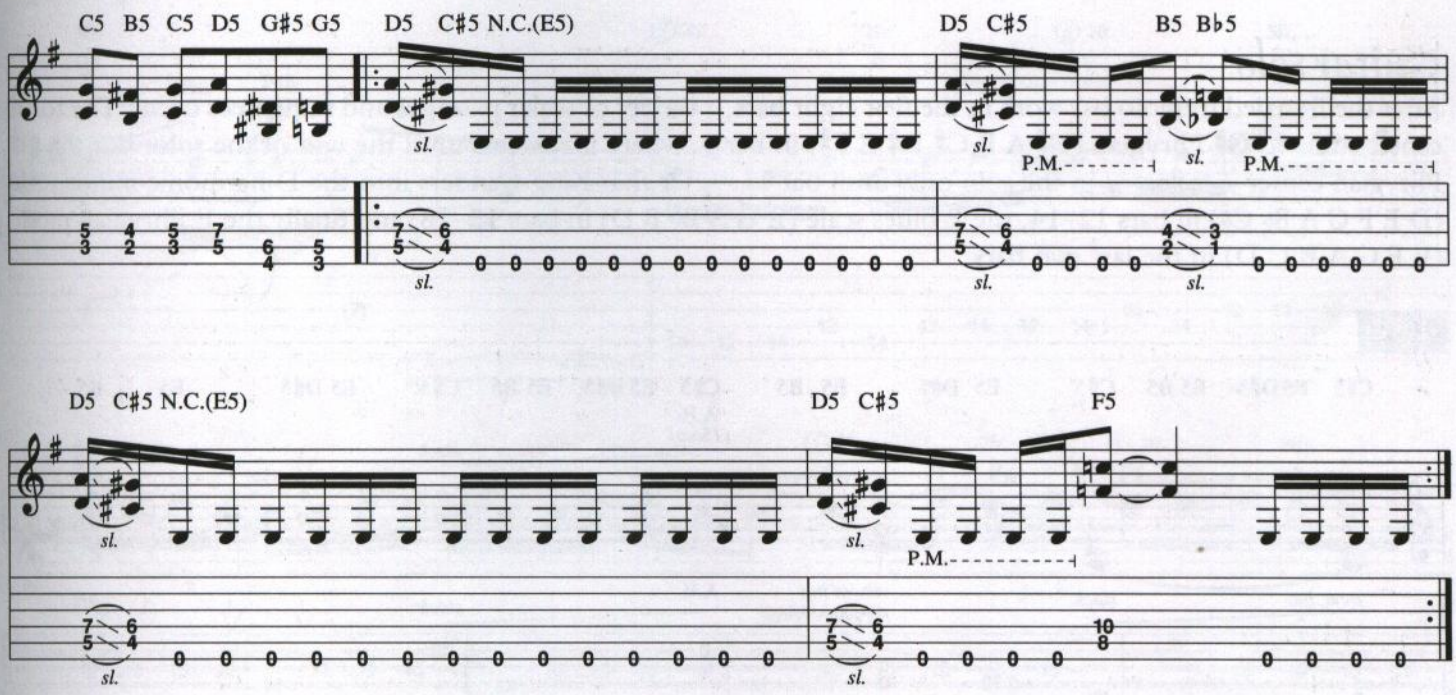




Break Riff

The band drops out here leaving a single guitar to handle this riff alone (a ***break***). Play the opening eighth-note figure with successive downstrokes: This will prepare you for the sixteenths in the following bar and enable you to match the heavy-handed sound on the recording.

3:02

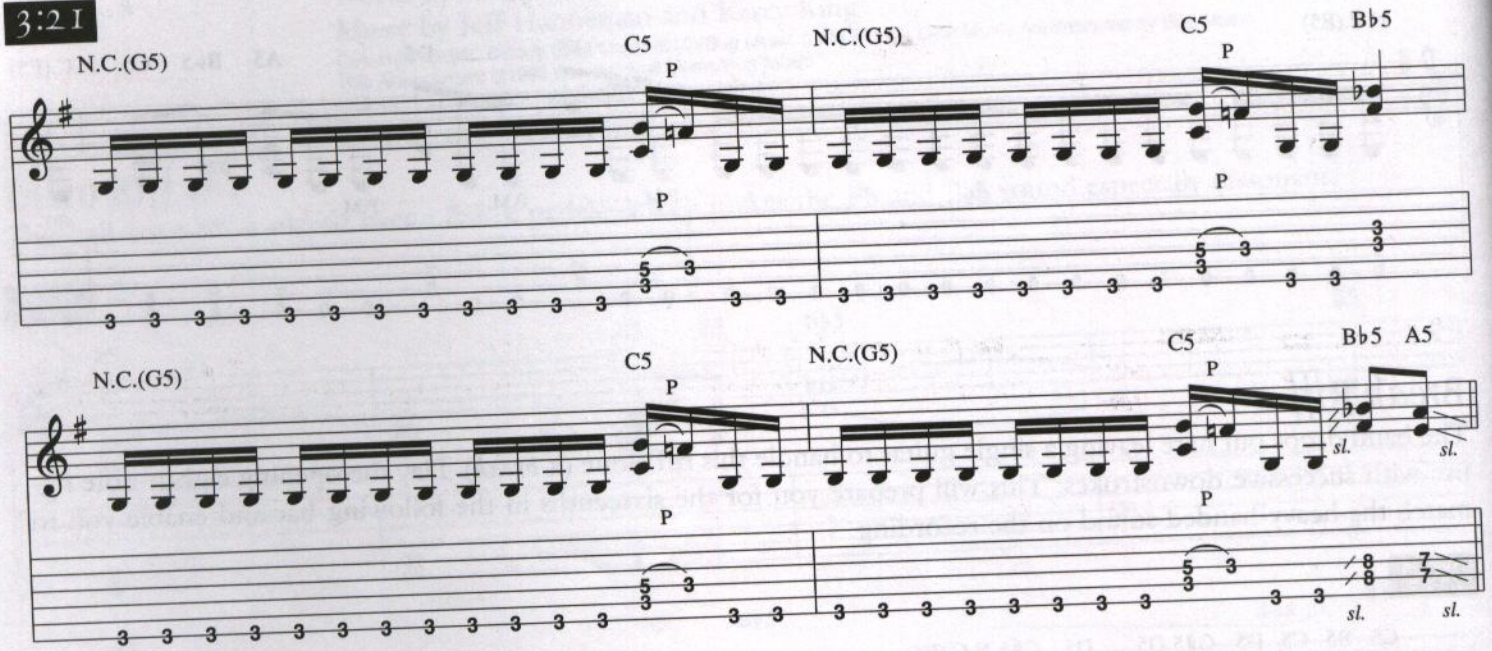


Hell Awaits (Cont.)

Verse Riff

Even though you only need it for a small percentage of the time, use a first finger bar on the 3rd fret (cover the three lowest strings): This will make the C5 chord, and subsequent pull-off figure, much easier to play.

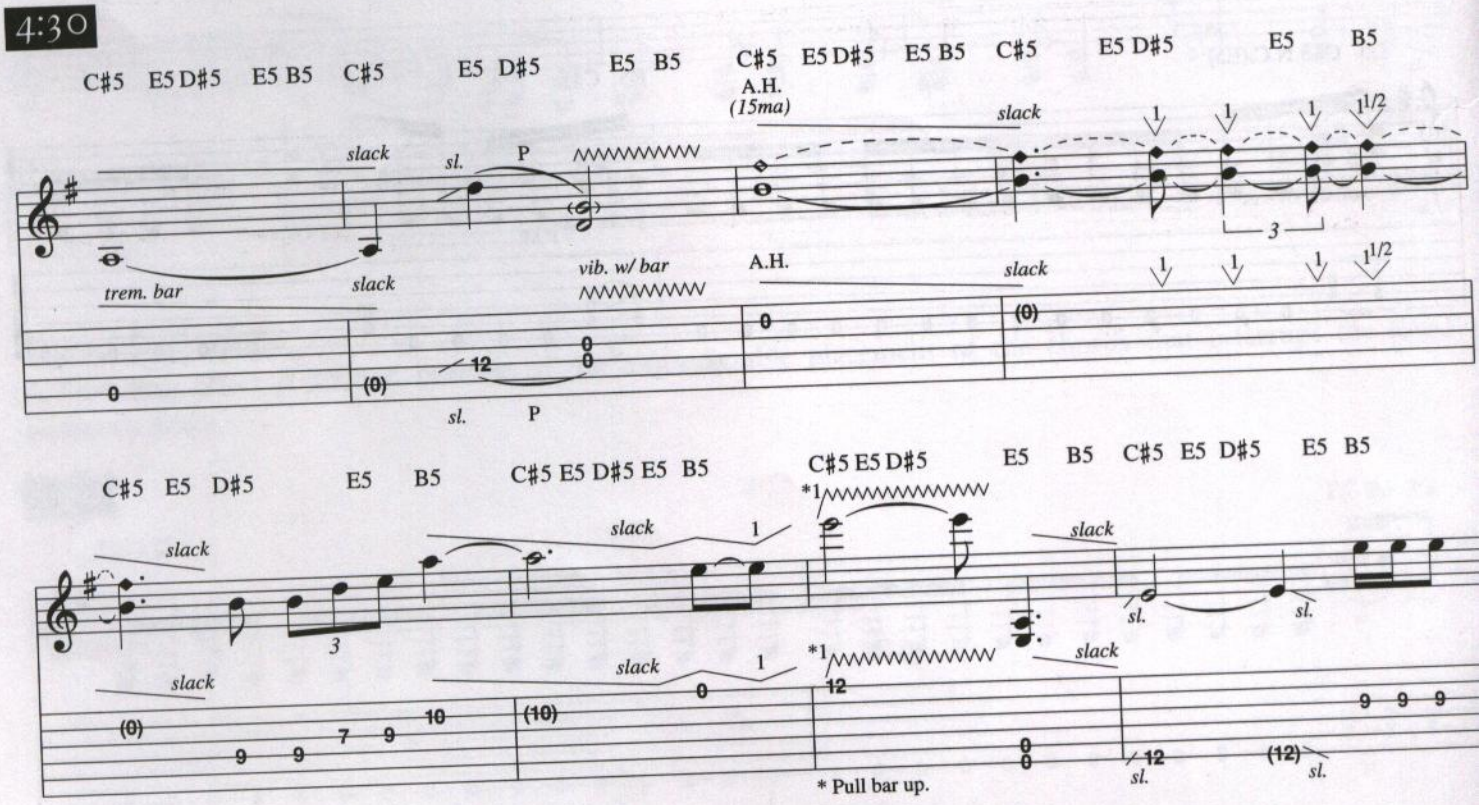
3:21

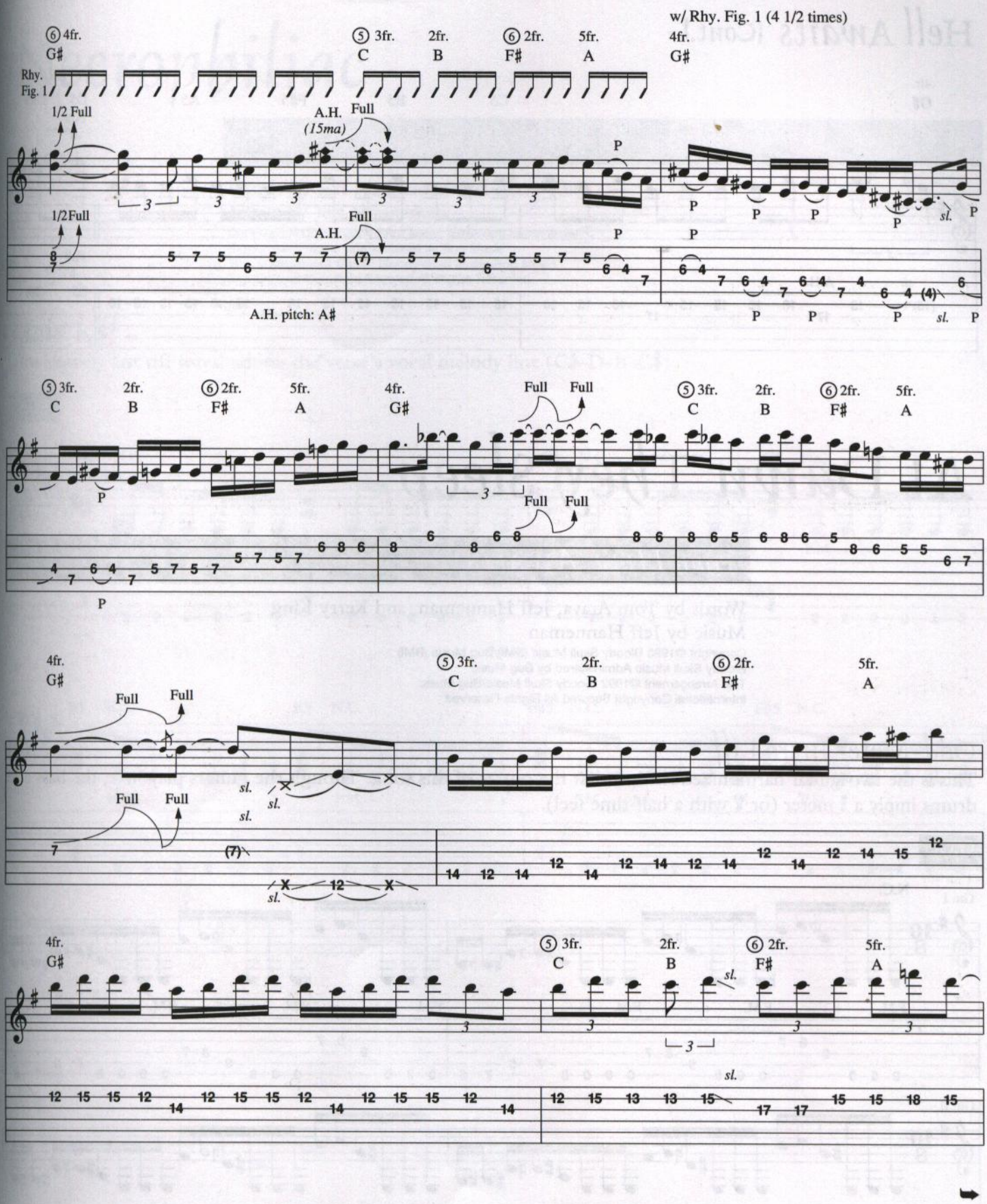


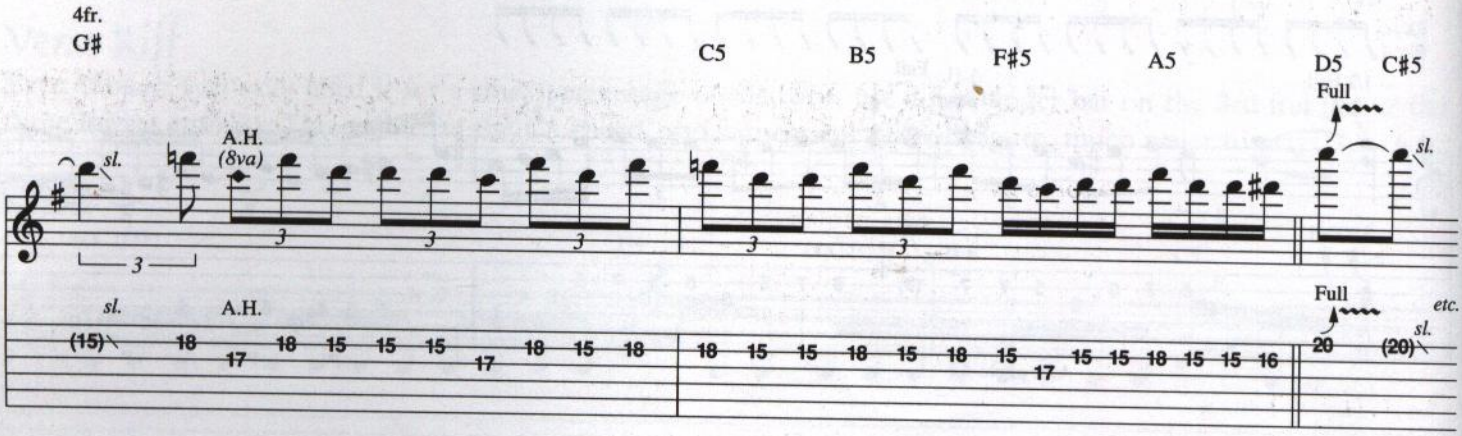
Guitar Solo

After the frenzied tremolo bar work in the first eight bars, a variety of scalar passages and sequences occur. The tonal center shifts to G♯ Phrygian (G♯ A B C♯ D♯ E F♯) in bar 9, where it remains until the end of the solo. But the G♯ Phrygian center is reflected in the solo only until bar 11. After that King wanders into the D harmonic minor scale (D E F G A B♭ C♯) in bars 12–14, the E blues scale (E G A B♭ B D) in bars 15–18, and finally the E Phrygian mode (E F G A B C D) in the last two bars.

4:30




w/ Rhy. Fig. 1 (4 1/2 times)
⑥ 4fr. G♯
⑤ 3fr. C
2fr. B
⑥ 2fr. F♯
5fr. A
4fr. G♯
Rhy. Fig. 1
1/2 Full
A.H. (15ma)
Full
P
1/2 Full
A.H.
Full
sl.
A.H. pitch: A♯
⑤ 3fr. C
2fr. B
⑥ 2fr. F♯
5fr. A
4fr. G♯
Full
Full
⑤ 3fr. C
2fr. B
⑥ 2fr. F♯
5fr. A
4fr. G♯
Full
Full
sl.
⑤ 3fr. C
2fr. B
⑥ 2fr. F♯
5fr. A
4fr. G♯
⑤ 3fr. C
2fr. B
⑥ 2fr. F♯
5fr. A
sl.



At Dawn They Sleep

From HELL AWAITS

Words by Tom Araya, Jeff Hanneman, and Kerry King
Music by Jeff Hanneman

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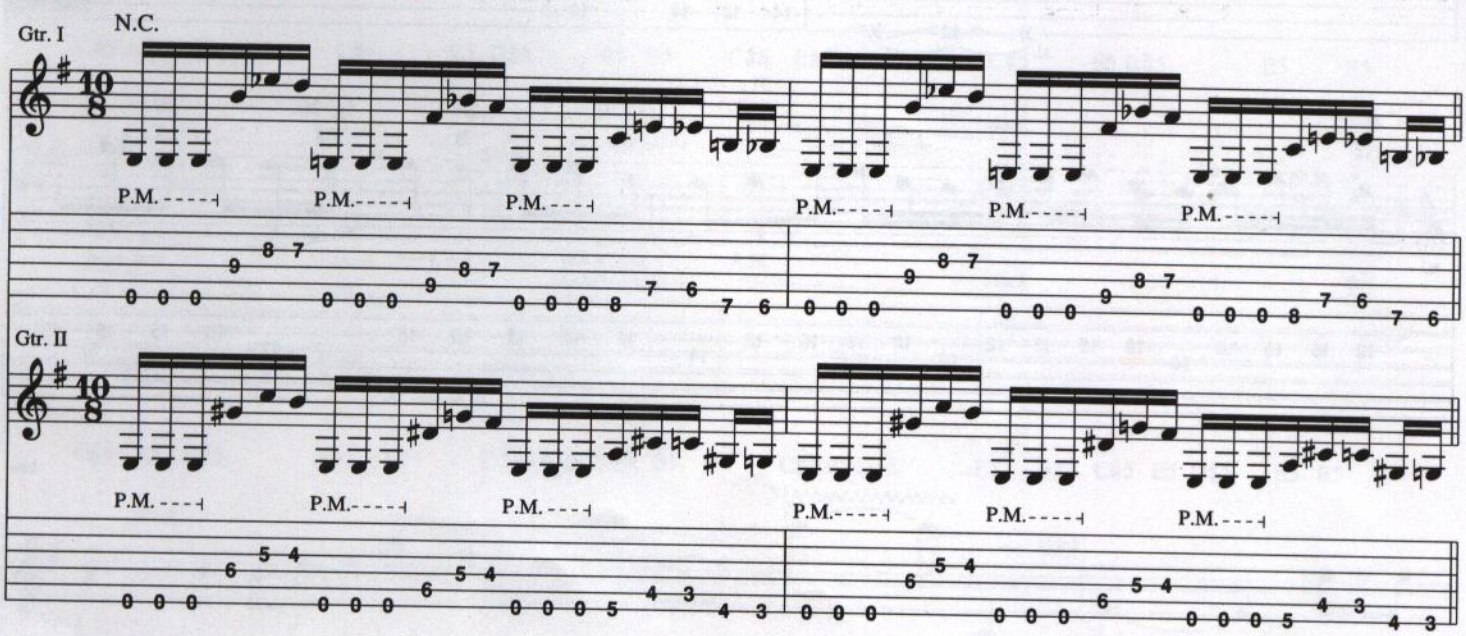
Odd-Meter Intro Riff

This is the two-guitar harmonized riff heard at the outset of this song. Though the guitars play in $\frac{10}{8}$, the bass and drums imply a $\frac{5}{4}$ meter (or $\frac{10}{8}$ with a half-time feel).

0:00



Necrophiliac

From HELL AWAITS

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Music by Jeff Hanneman
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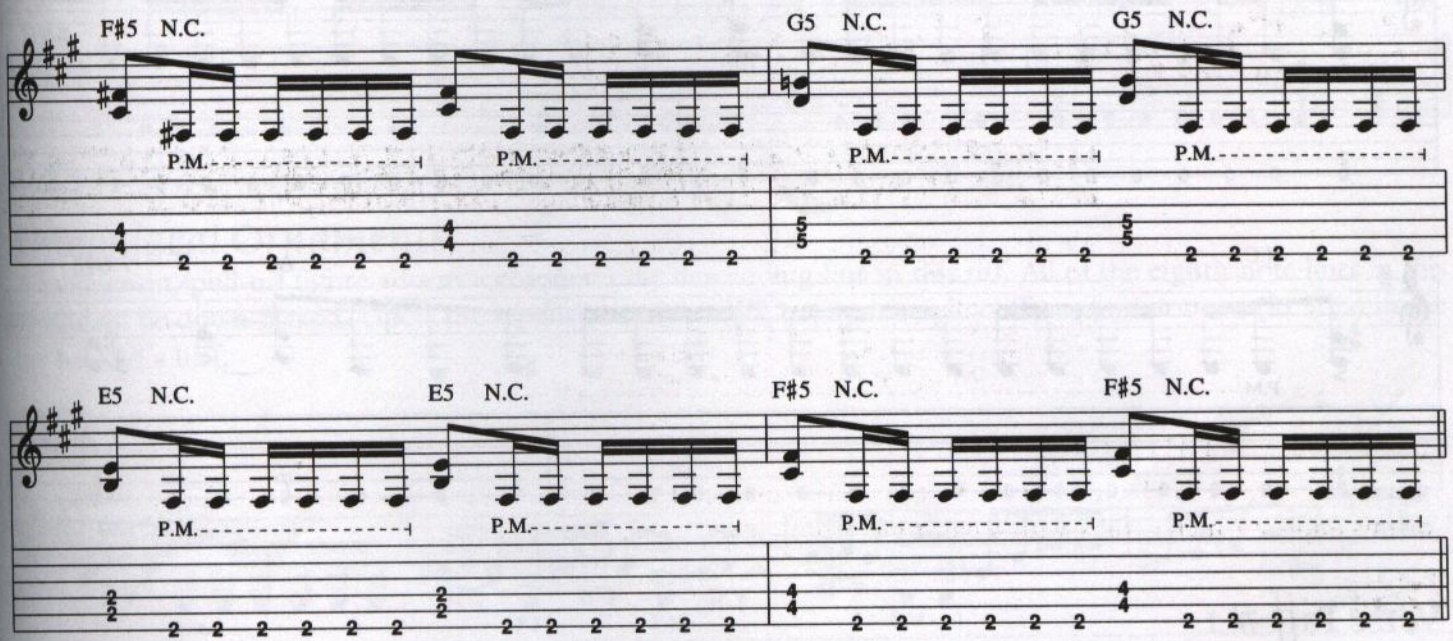
Main Riff

This insanely fast riff foreshadows the verse's vocal melody line (C♯–D–B–C♯).

0:03



Angel Of Death

From REIGN IN BLOOD

Words and Music by Jeff Hanneman
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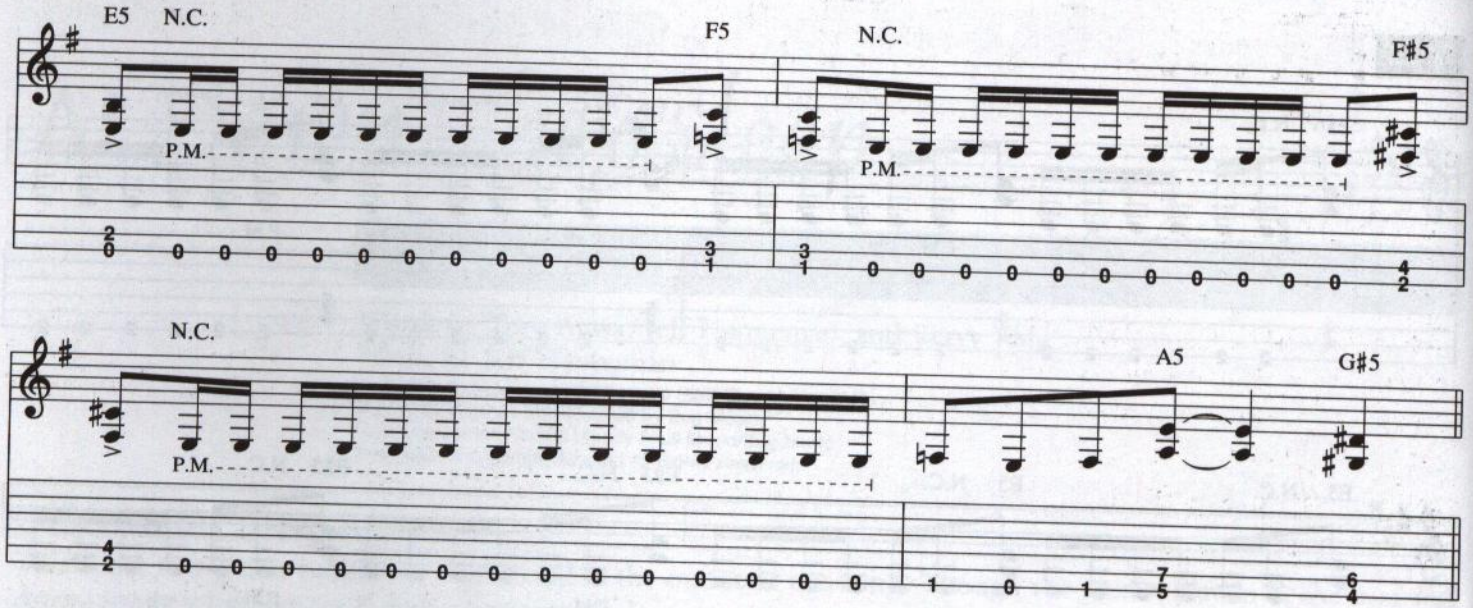
Intro Riff

This riff is composed of power chords rising out of a sea of palm-muted E's.

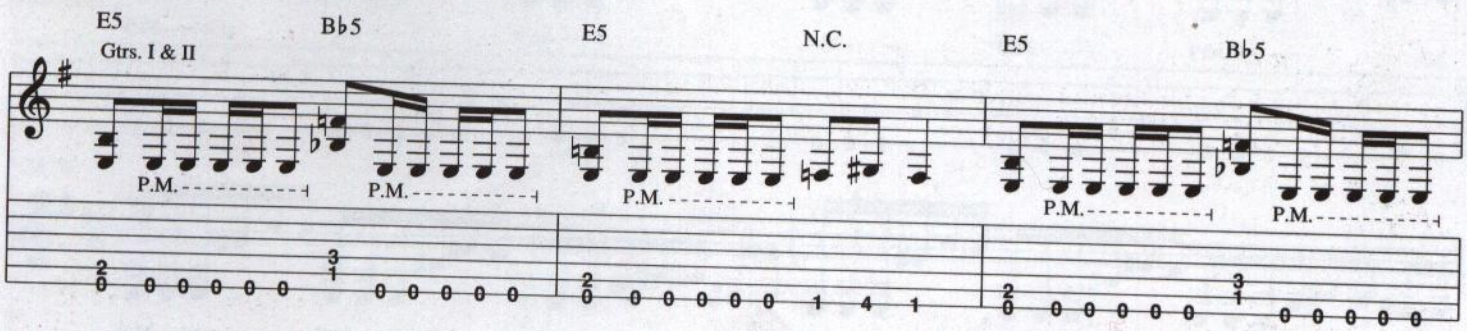
0:00

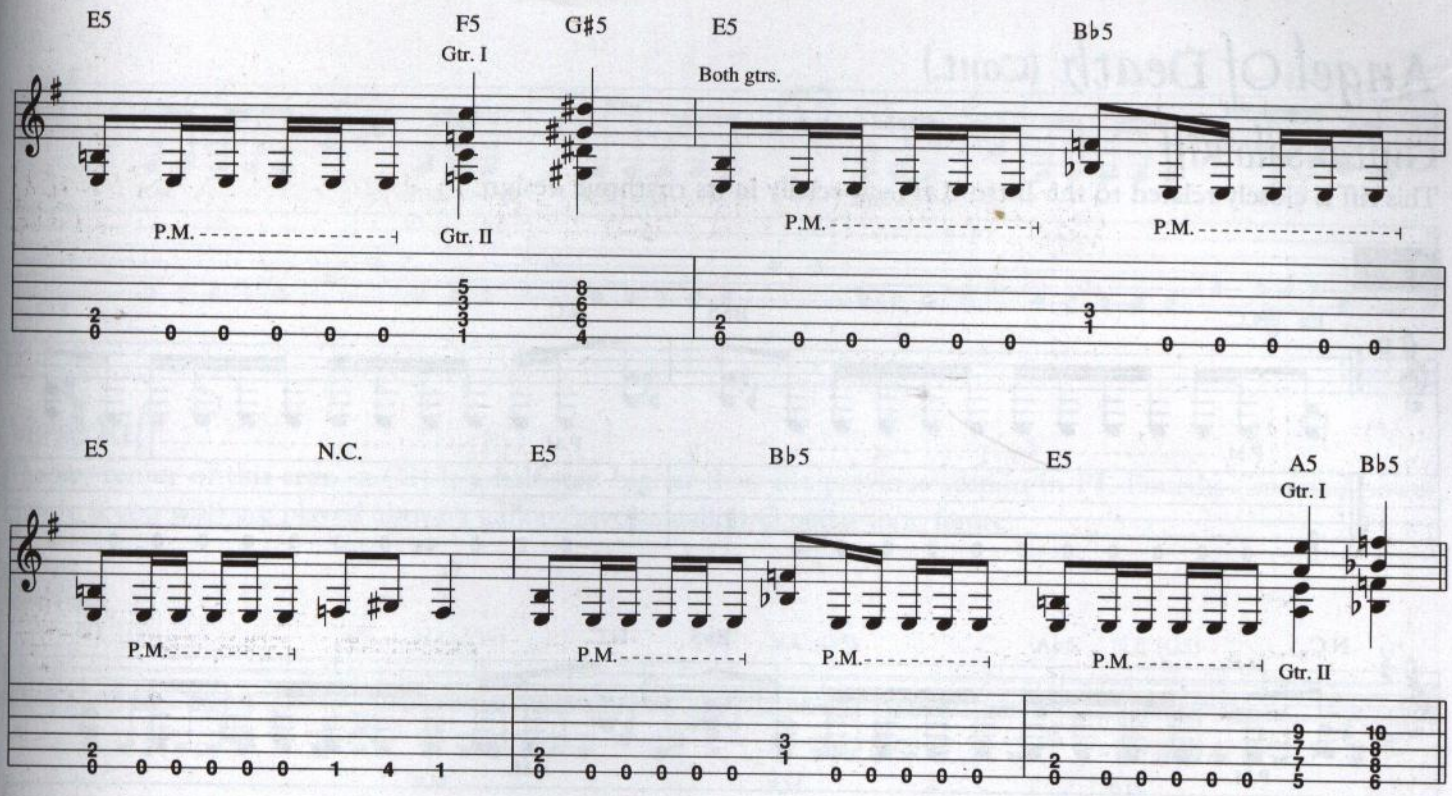


Verse Riff # 1

Hanneman places heavy emphasis on the tritone relationship between E5 and B♭5 in this barbaric riff, and he also adds hints of E Phrygian dominant (E F G♯ A B C D) in bars 2, 4, and 6.

0:29

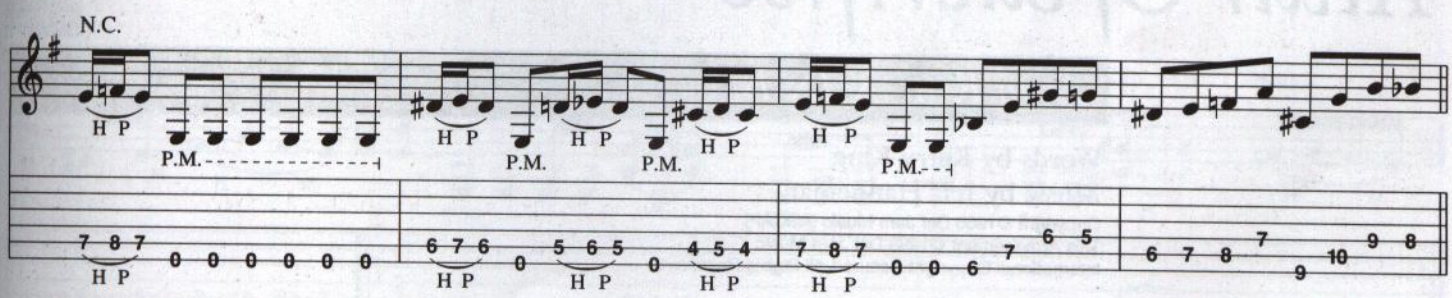




Demoniacal Ornaments

A hammer-on/pull-off figure adorns a chromatically descending line in this riff. All of the eighth-note lines in this riff should be down picked. Upon the repetitions of this riff, one guitar splits off to play harmony (in 5ths) in the last bar and a half.

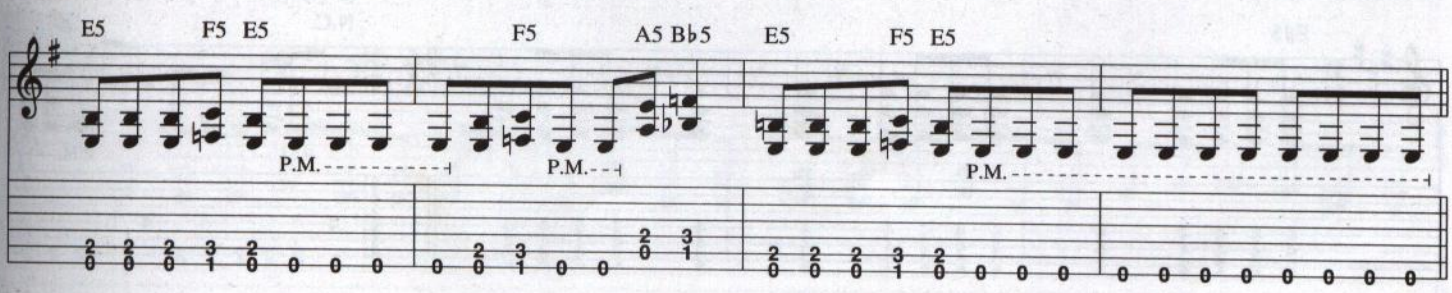
1:38



Verse Riff #2

This riff is used during the third and fourth verses. Like Verse Riff #1, this riff relies heavily on the E5 to B♭5 tritone relationship, but here there is no trace of the F and G♯ figure from E Phrygian dominant.

2:06

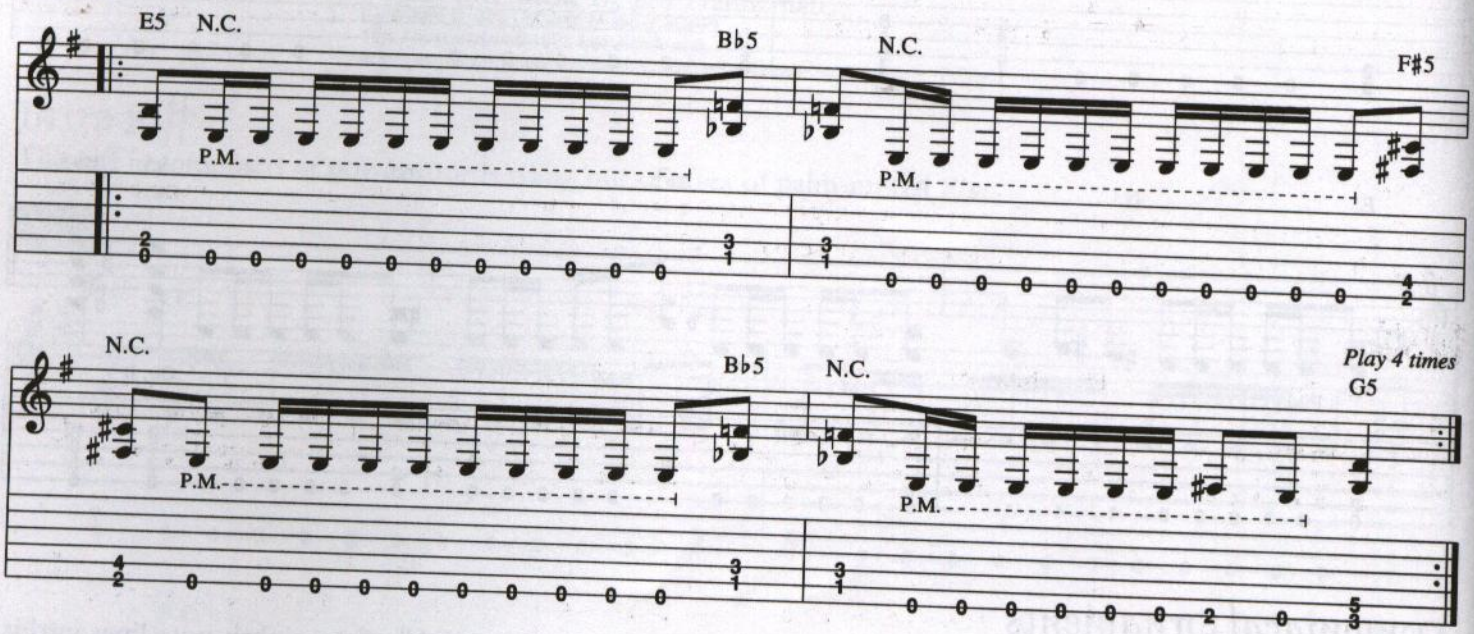


Angel Of Death (Cont.)

Guitar Solo Riff

This riff is closely related to the Intro Riff—especially in its rhythmic design.

3:35



Altar Of Sacrifice

From Reign In Blood

Words by Kerry King
Music by Jeff Hanneman

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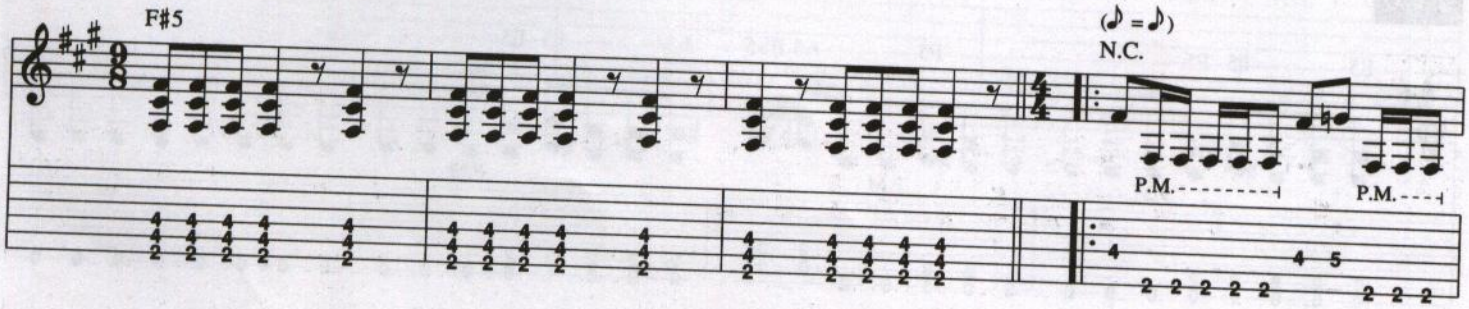
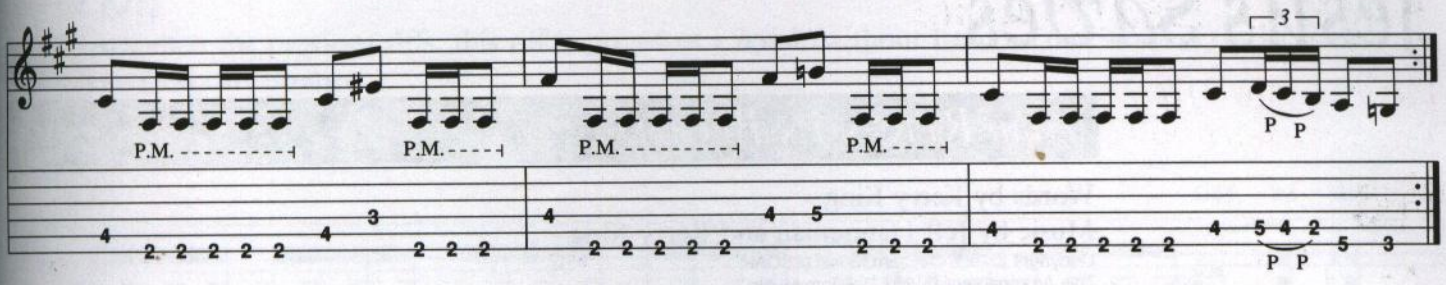
Intro Riff

The $\frac{9}{8}$ meter and riff that opens this song never returns, but gives us a clue that we might encounter some compound meter riff or section later. The intro riff finishes with a $\frac{4}{4}$ section in F♯ Phrygian (F♯ G A B C♯ D E), with hints of F♯ harmonic minor (F♯ G♯ A B C♯ D E♯) in bar 5.

0:00

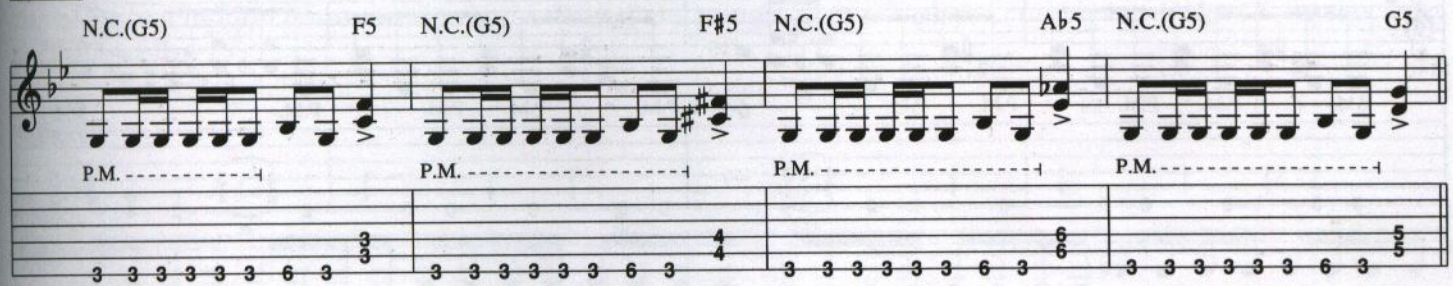




Verse Riff

The key center of this section (G) is a half-step higher than the previous section in F♯. Fourths (inverted power chords, if you will) are played above a gallop/reverse gallop G pedal-tone figure.

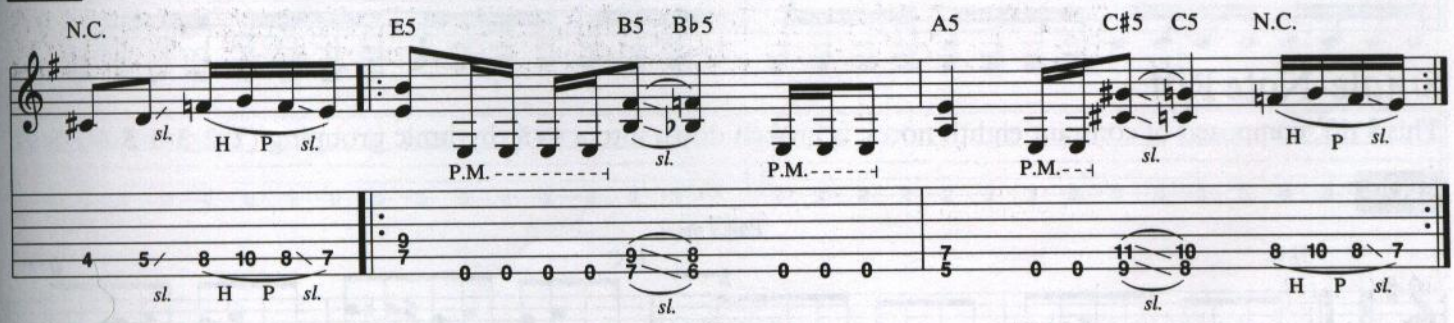
0:21



Chorus Riff

Slides are the name of the game in this riff, which retains the gallop/reverse gallop motive from the Verse Riff.

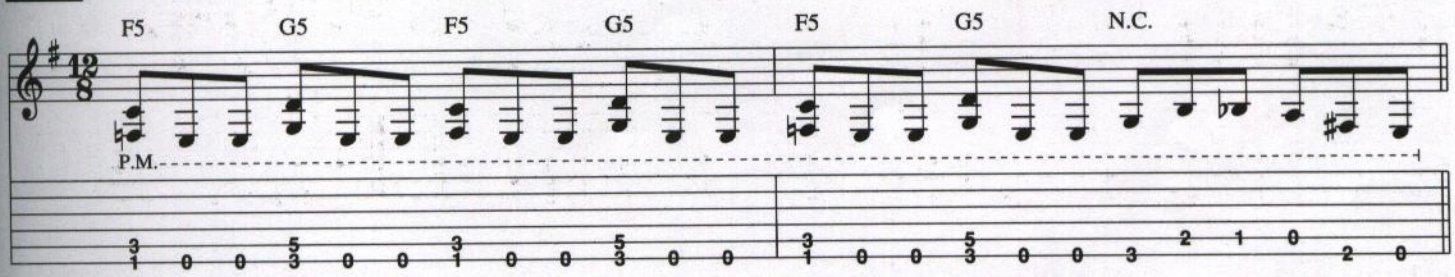
0:45



12/8 Riff

Sure enough, the compound meter idea from the intro has returned, albeit with new chords and rhythms.

1:35



Jesus Saves

From Reign In Blood

Words by Kerry King
Music by Jeff Hanneman and Kerry King
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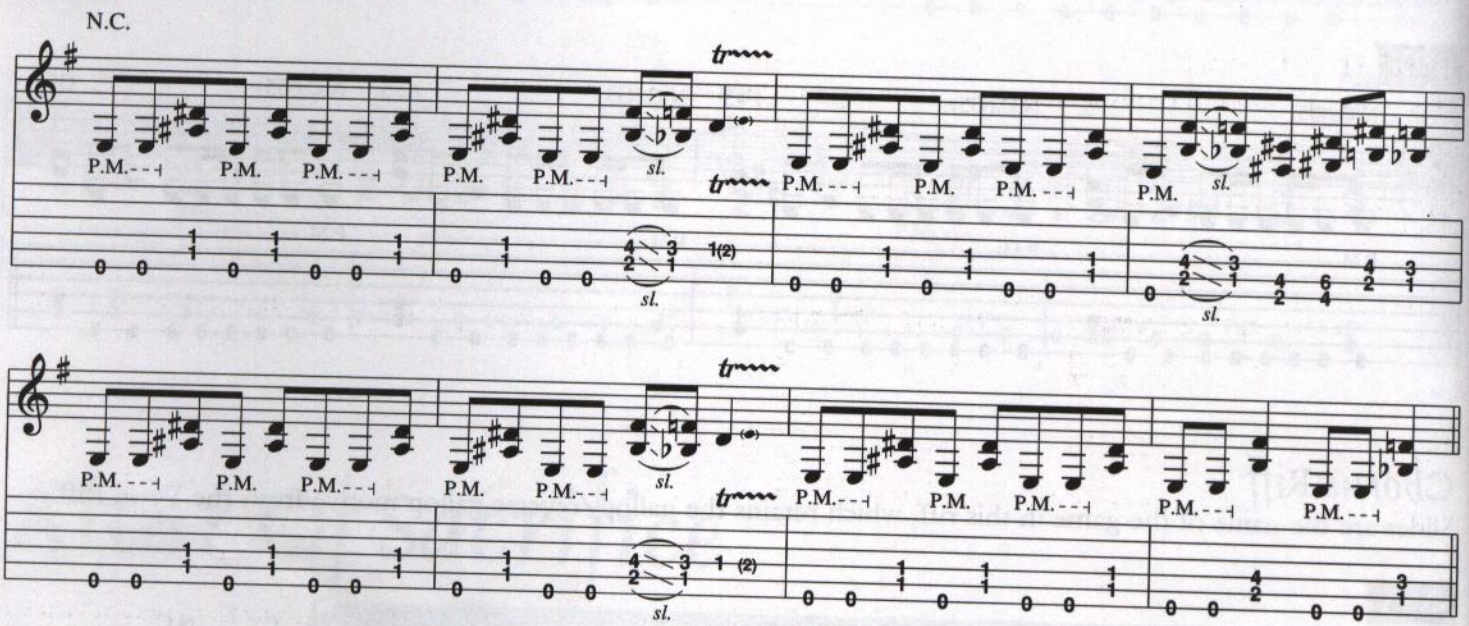
Intro Riff

Slayer surely loves those tritones—as evidenced in this most dissonant introduction.

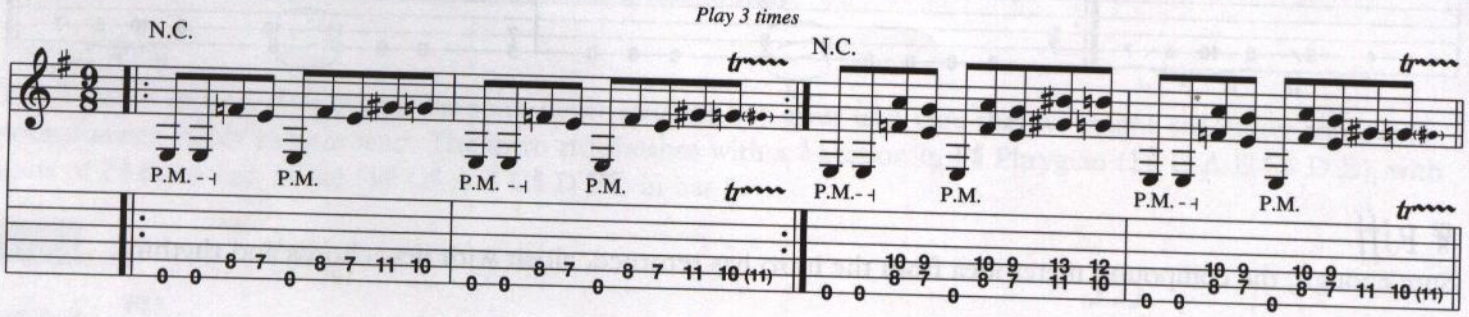
0:00



Single-Note Riff

This $\frac{9}{8}$ riff, composed of constant eighth notes, is broken down into a 4+5 rhythmic grouping (1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9).

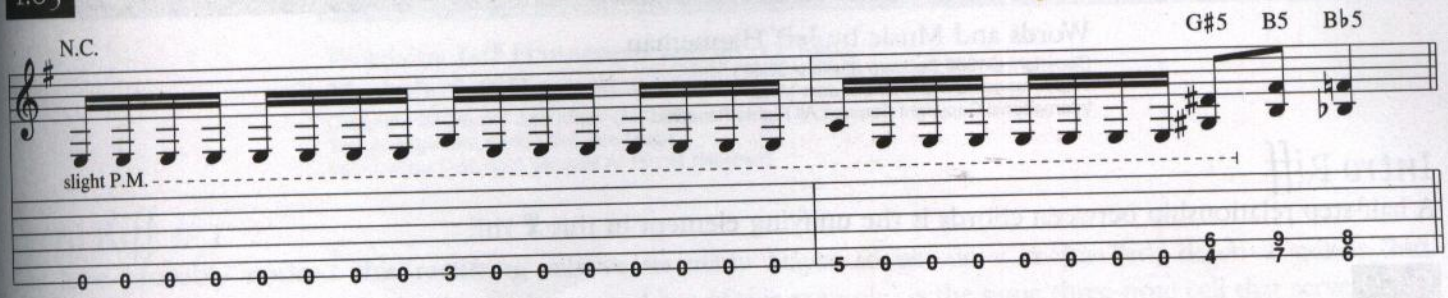
0:00



Verse Riff

Much faster than the previous riffs, this riff is played as a ***break*** (without band accompaniment) at its outset, just before Araya's vocal entrance.

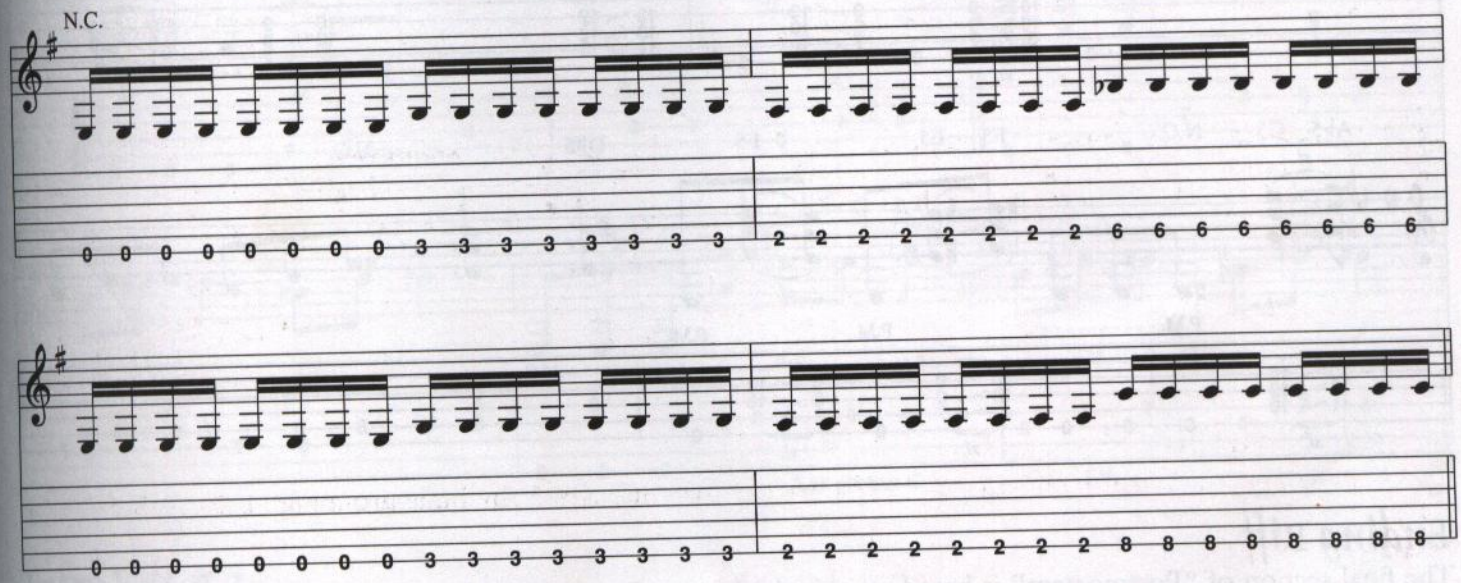
1:05



Guitar Solo Riff

This perpetual motion (constant sixteenths throughout) single-note riff, played entirely on the low E, accompanies the guitar solo.

1:58



Postmortem

From Reign In Blood

Words and Music by Jeff Hanneman

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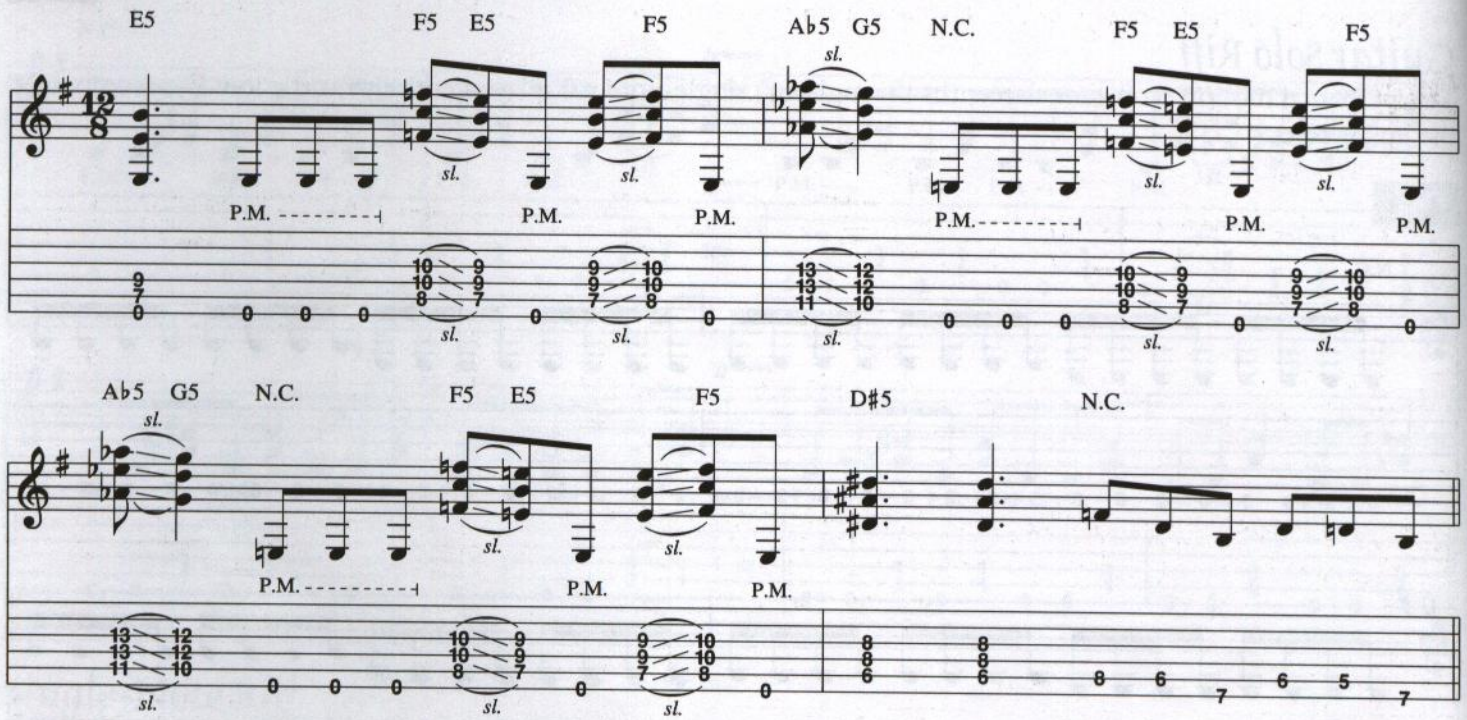
Intro Riff

A half-step relationship between chords is the unifying element in this $\frac{12}{8}$ riff.

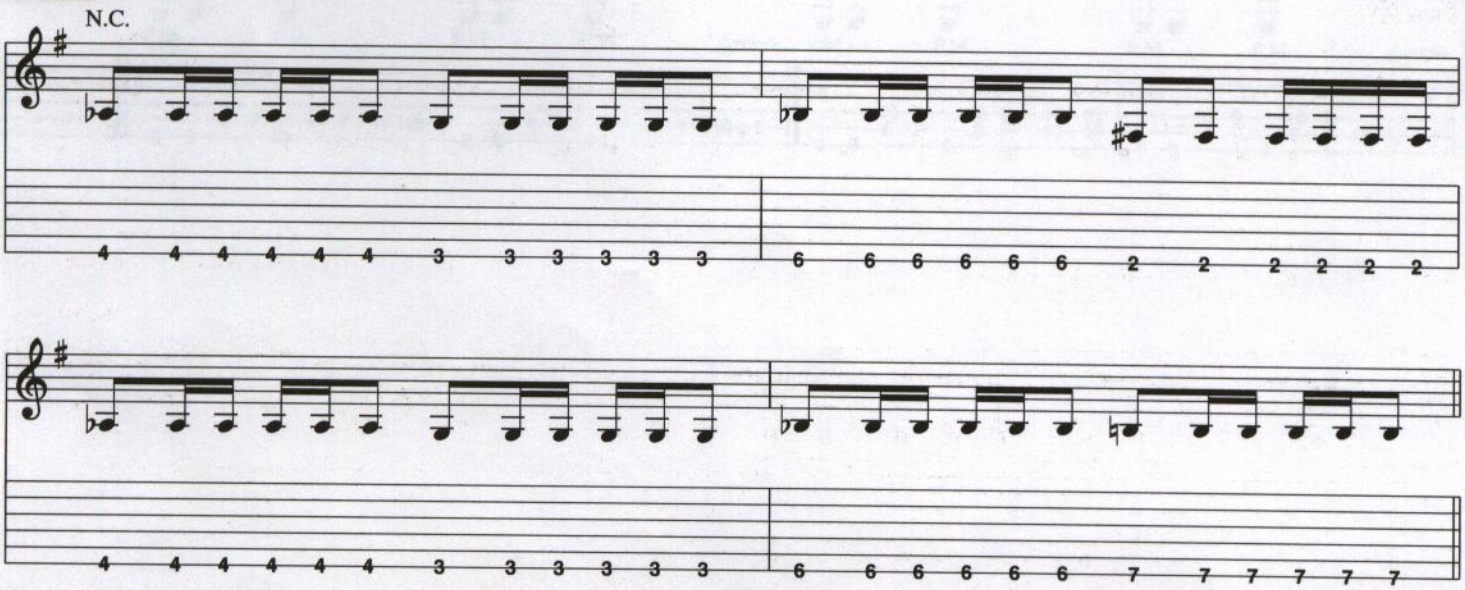
0:00



Ending Riff

The final section of "Postmortem" is based on this single-note figure. Unless you have already sold your soul for super chops, it will be necessary to learn this riff at a tempo more reasonable than Slayer's ♩=240!

2:45



Raining Blood

From REIGN IN BLOOD

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Music by Jeff Hanneman
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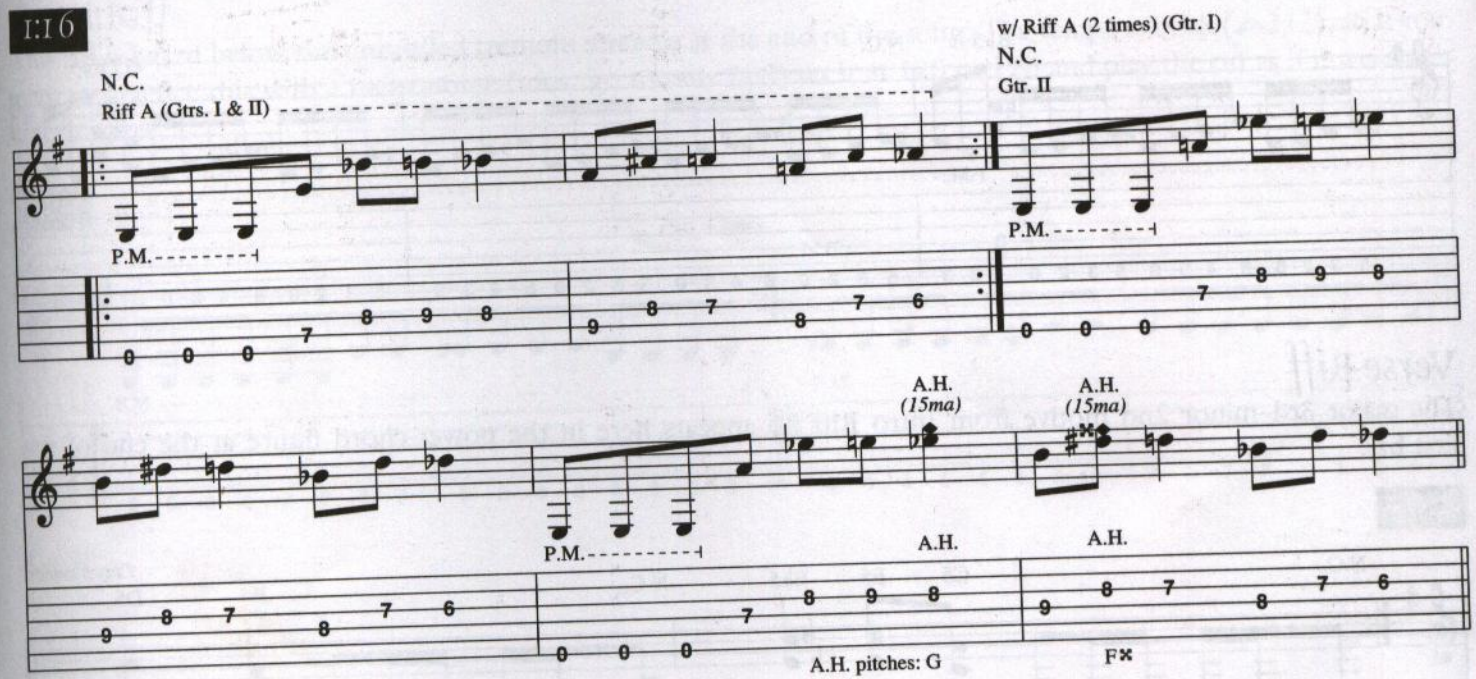
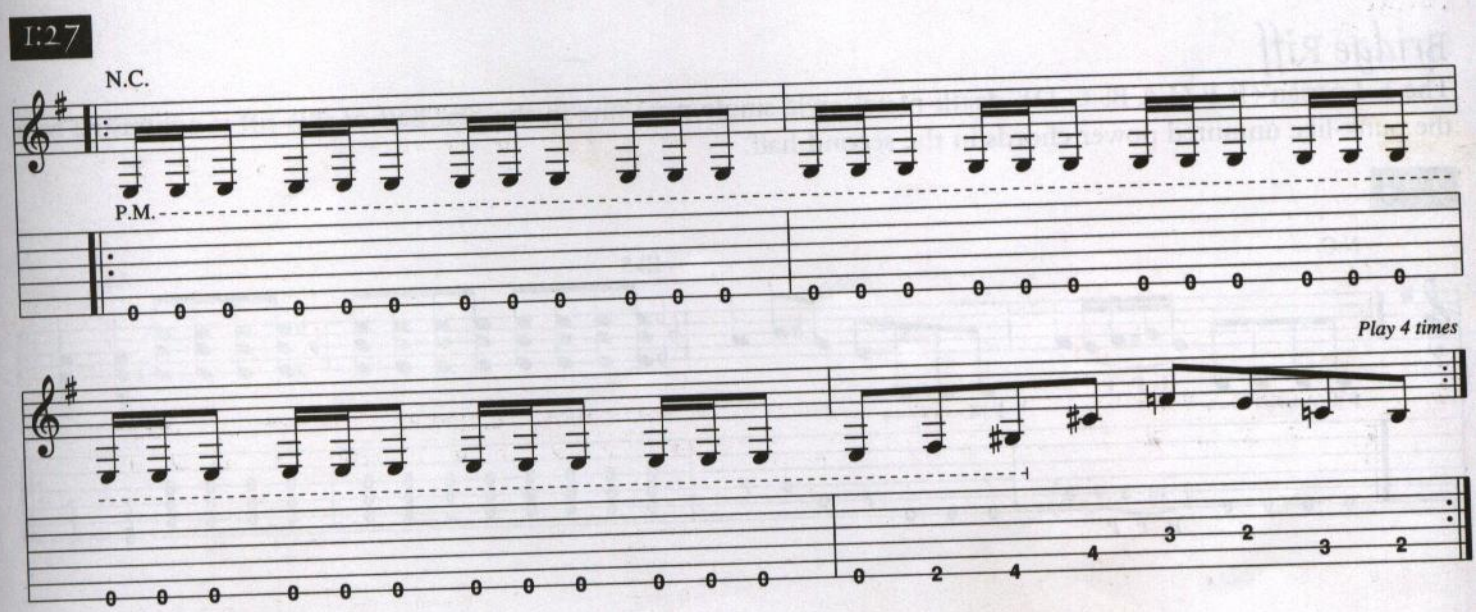
Intro Riff # 1

You have probably noticed this recurring motive in many Slayer songs: up a major 3rd, down a minor 2nd. Coincidentally, this pattern (heard twice in the second bar of this example) is the same three-note cell that serves as the building block for the 12-tone row that the early-20th century composer Anton Webern used for his Concerto op. 24.



Intro Riff #2

One of the prime examples of a reverse-gallop figure in Slayer's music, this riff ends with an eighth-note line drawn from a combination of E major (E F♯ G♯ A B C♯ D♯) and E Phrygian (E F G A B C D).

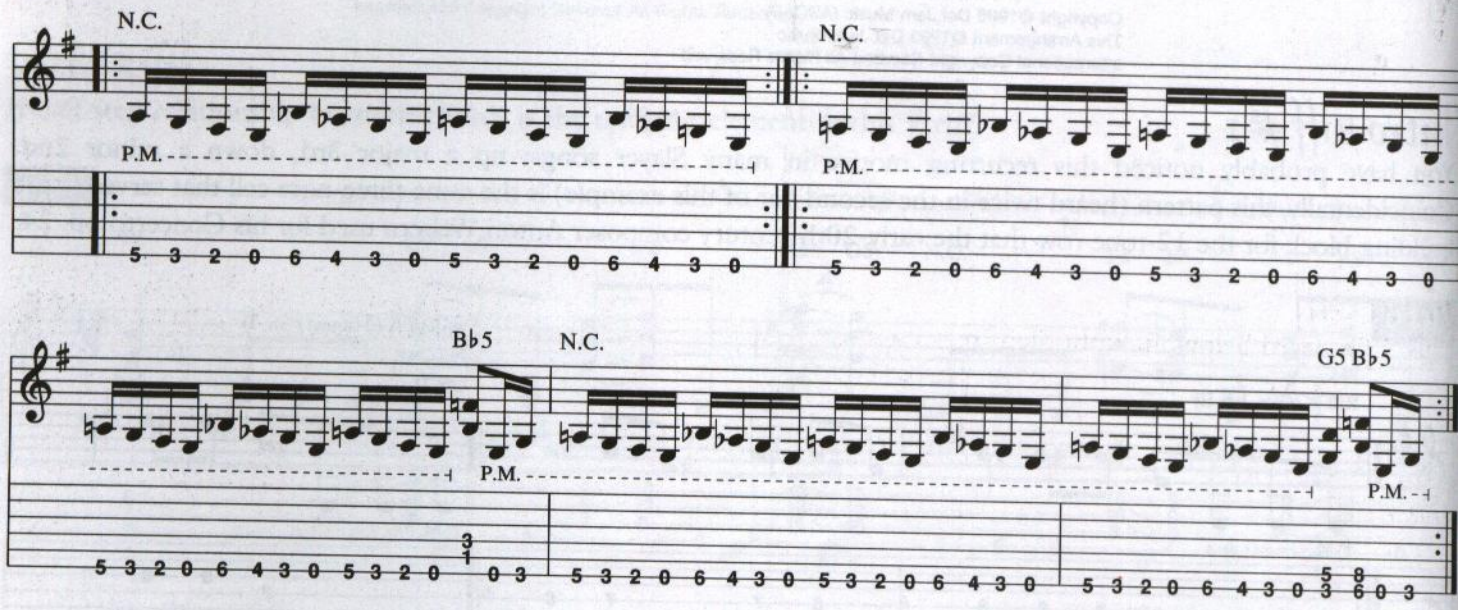


Raining Blood (Cont.)

Intro Riff #3

The only thing that makes this riff even close to playable is that it's all played on a single string. If you want to practice this riff with a metronome, start out at 108—roughly *half* of what Slayer's tempo is.

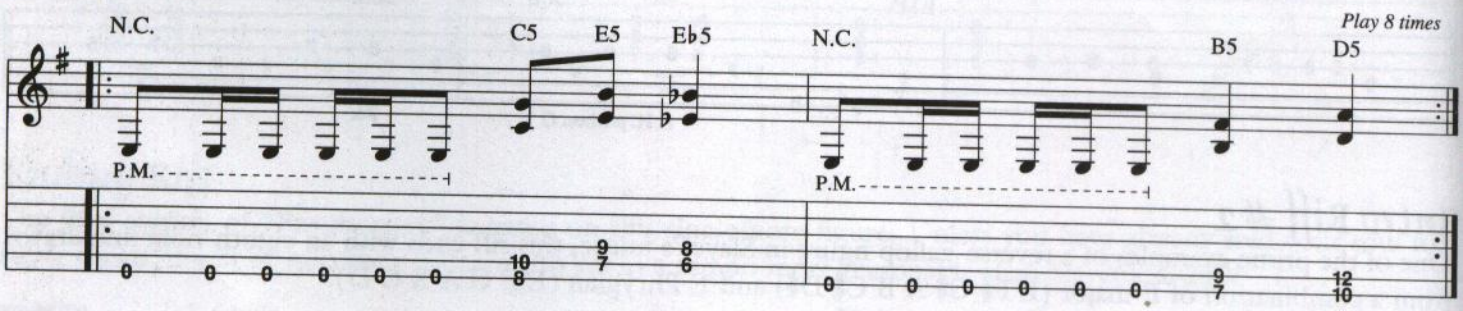
1:49



Verse Riff

The major 3rd–minor 2nd motive from Intro Riff #1 appears here in the power-chord figure at the end of the first bar.

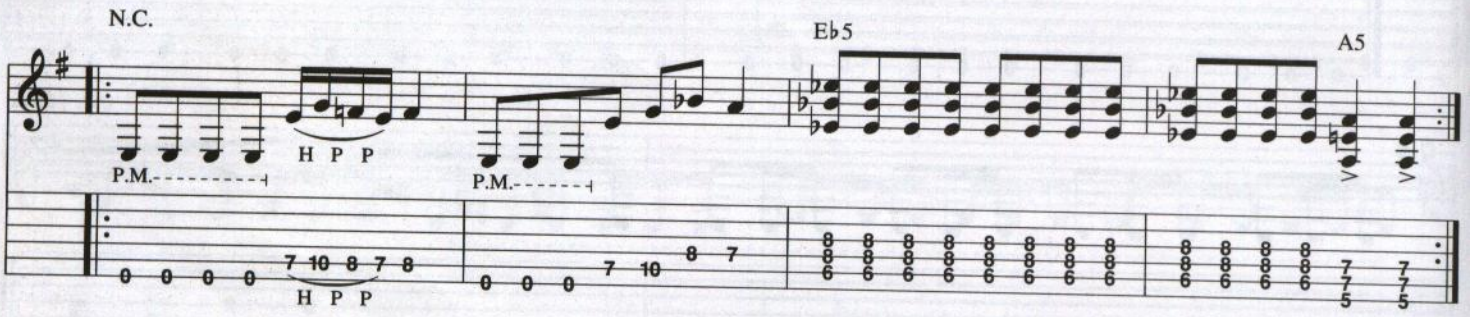
2:05



Bridge Riff

The E Locrian (E F G A B♭ C D), death metal–style single-note line in the first half of this riff is contrasted with the punk-like unmuted power chords in the second half.

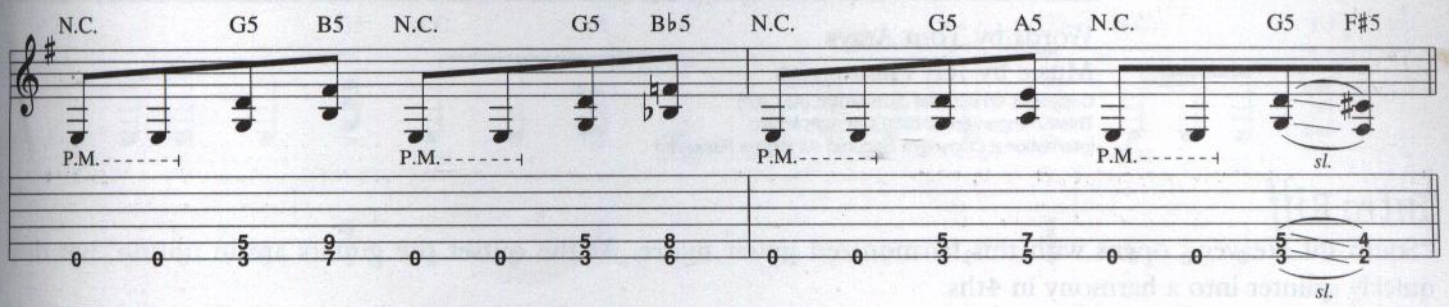
2:23



Chorus Riff

The most important facet of this riff is the "hidden" descending power-chord line (B5–B♭5–A5–G5–F♯5) that hits on the "ands" of beats 2 and 4.

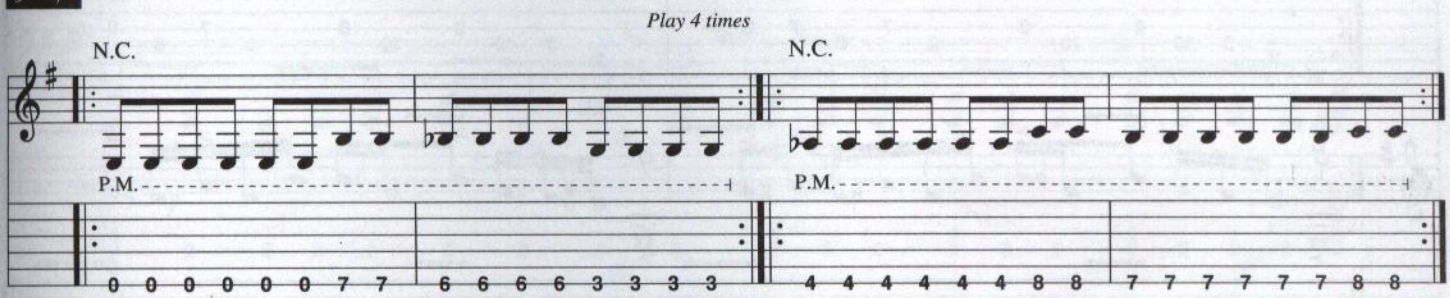
3:21



Final Riff

This riff is heard below the unbridled tremolo screams at the end of the song. The tempo is brisk (♩=247), so if you want to practice this with a metronome (most go to only 208) set it at 120 or 126 and play the riff as if it were sixteenth notes.

3:27



South Of Heaven

From SOUTH OF HEAVEN

Words by Tom Araya
Music by Jeff Hanneman

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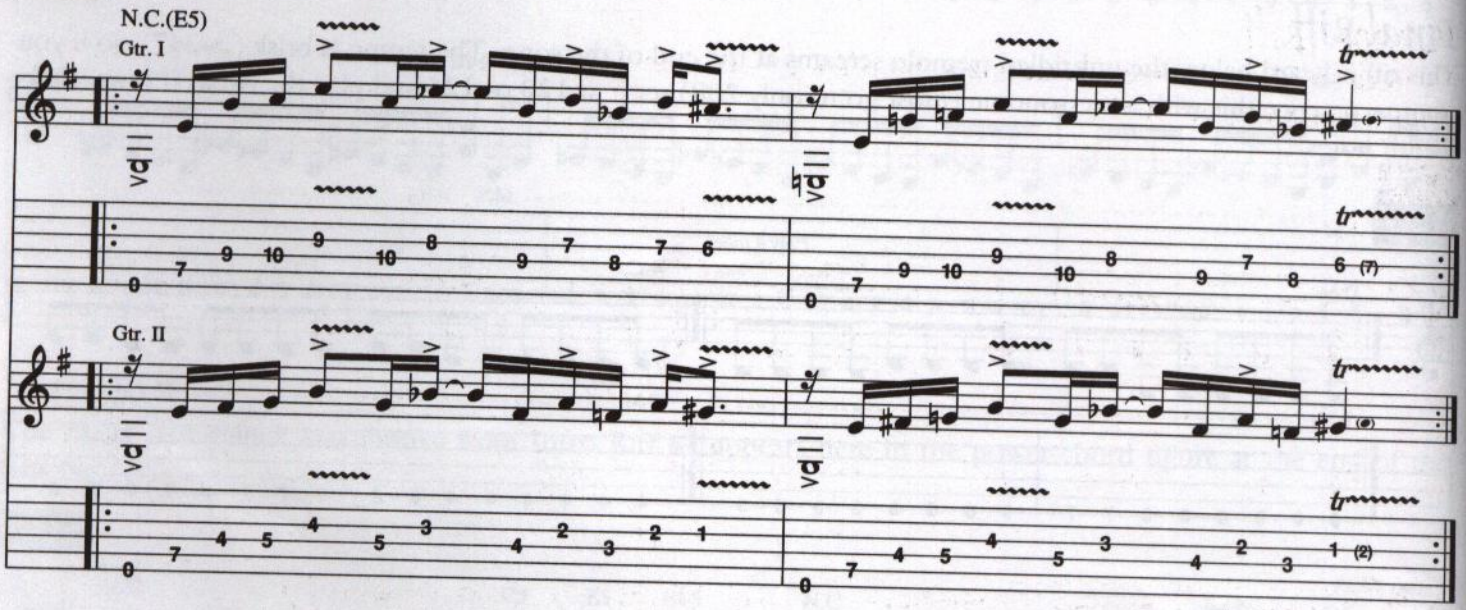
Intro Riff

"South Of Heaven" opens with this harmonized guitar figure. At the outset the guitars are in unison, but they quickly splinter into a harmony in 4ths.

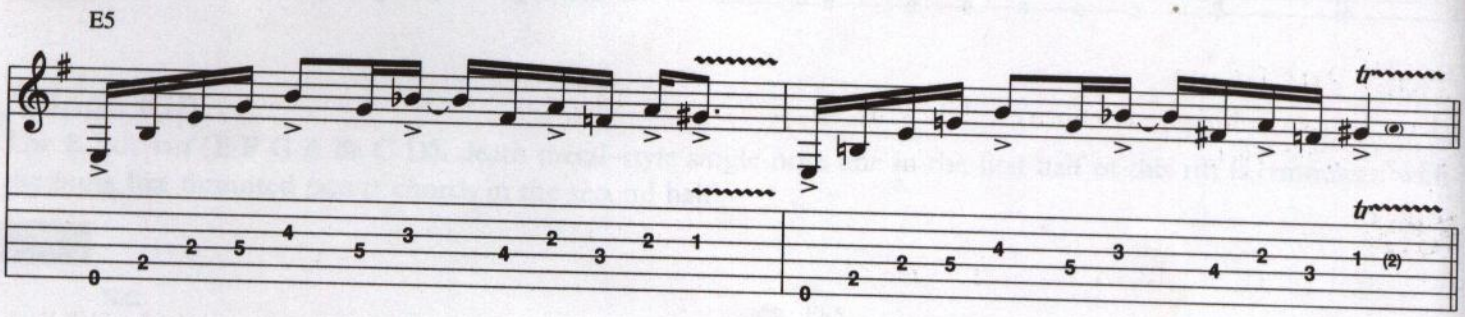
0:00



Intro-Riff Variation

This riff is almost the same as the lower part from the previous riff, but notice the subtle pitch changes Hanneman incorporates in the beginning of the first bar.

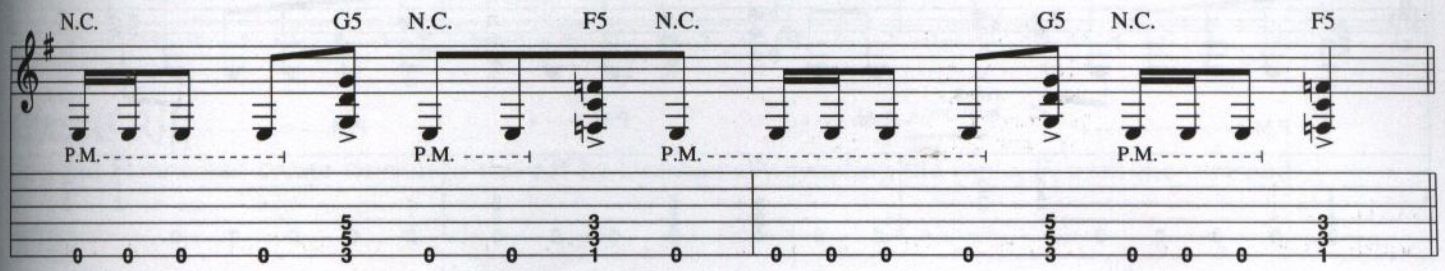
0:36



Second-Verse Riff

Another infernal item in the long line of reverse-gallop riffs from the Slayer oeuvre, this time the sixteenth-note pattern is interrupted by eighth-note figures with added accents on off-beats (2½) and on weak beats (4).

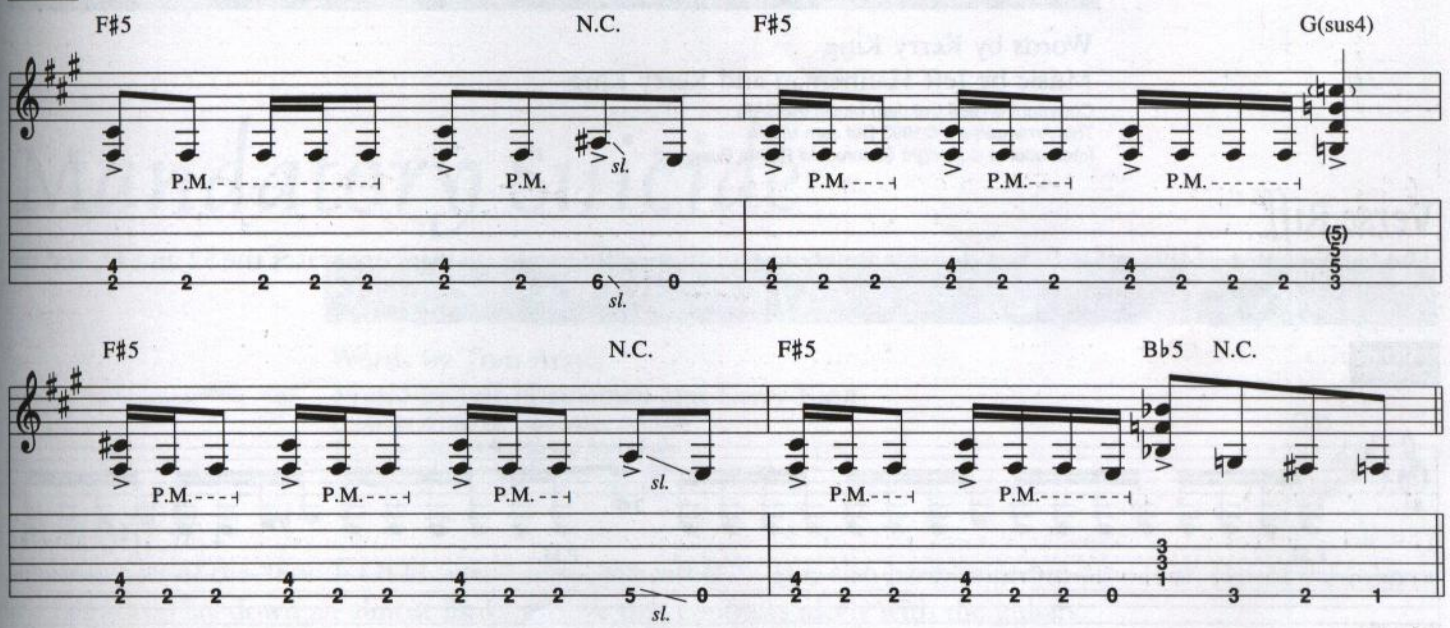
1:42



"Chaos" Riff

A shift to an F♯ tonal center characterizes this riff in the section preceding the chorus. Play the slides on beat 4 of bars 1 and 3 with your third finger.

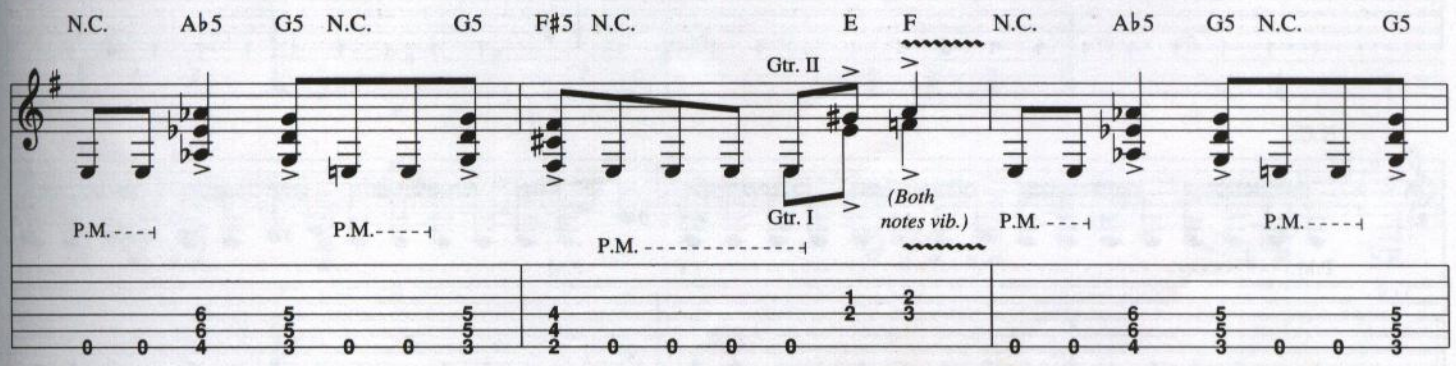
1:56



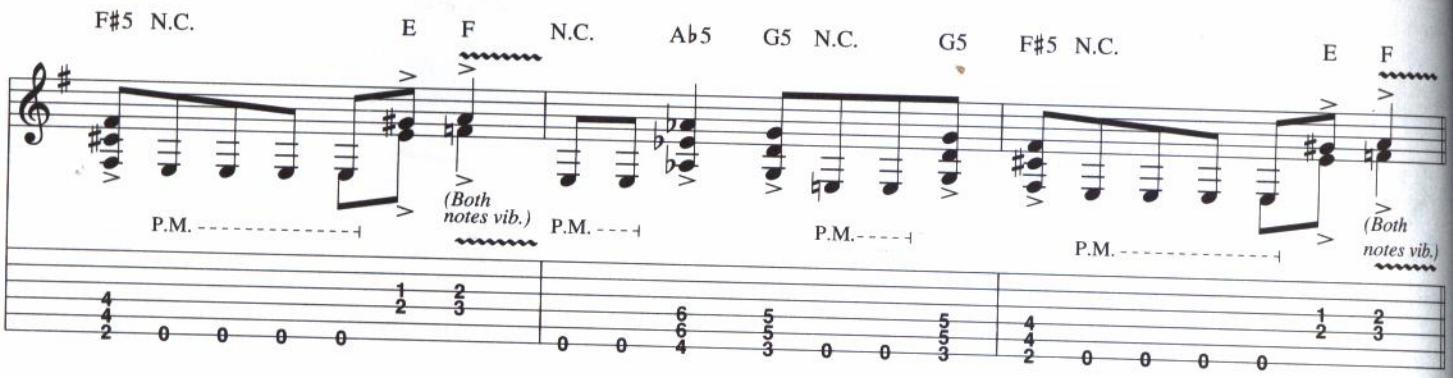
Tight But Loose

This riff, played during the chorus, exhibits an ebb and flow in the tempo, slightly accelerating and decelerating over a four-bar cycle.

2:47



South Of Heaven (Cont.)



Ghosts Of War

From SOUTH OF HEAVEN

Words by Kerry King
Music by Jeff Hanneman and Kerry King

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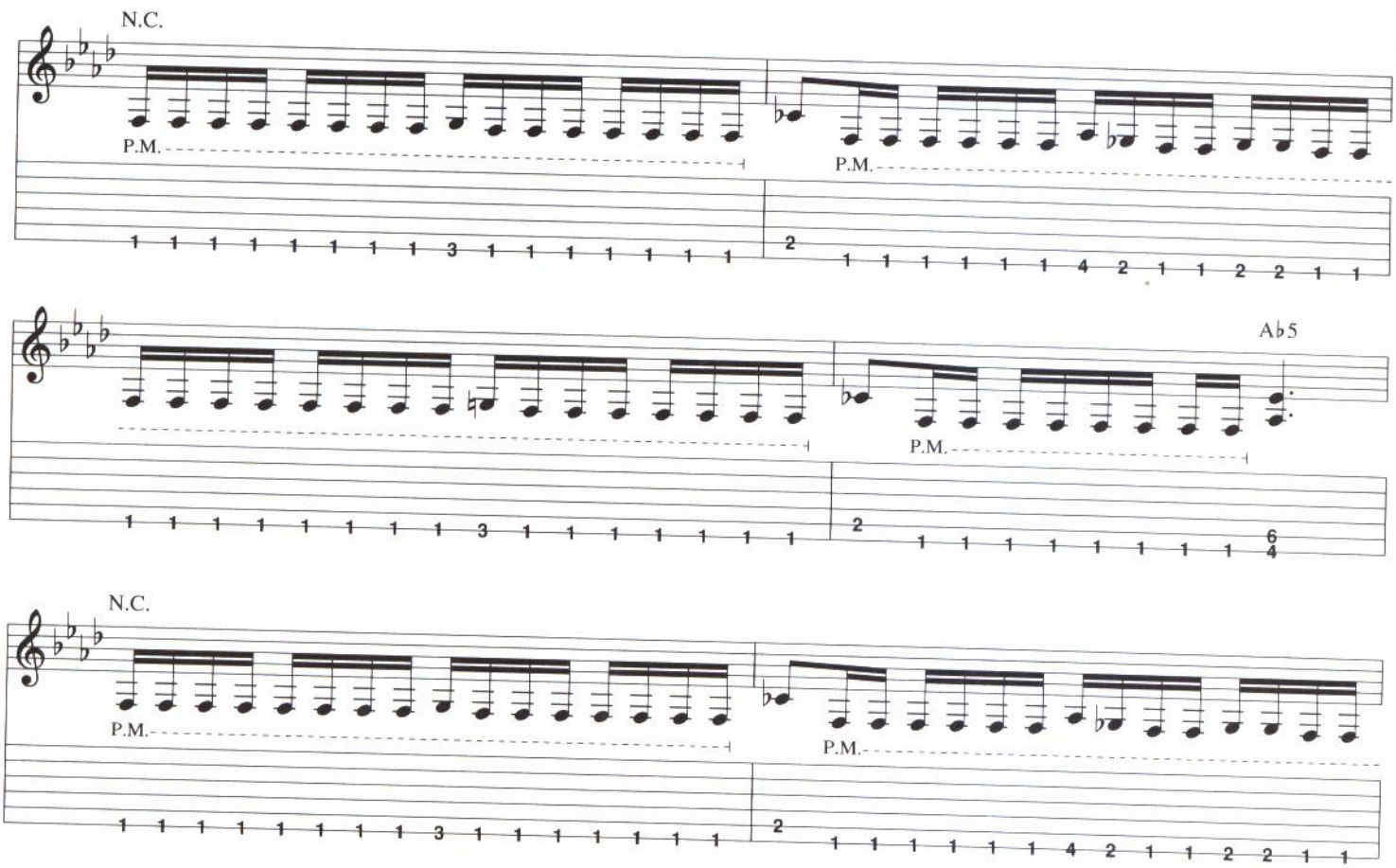
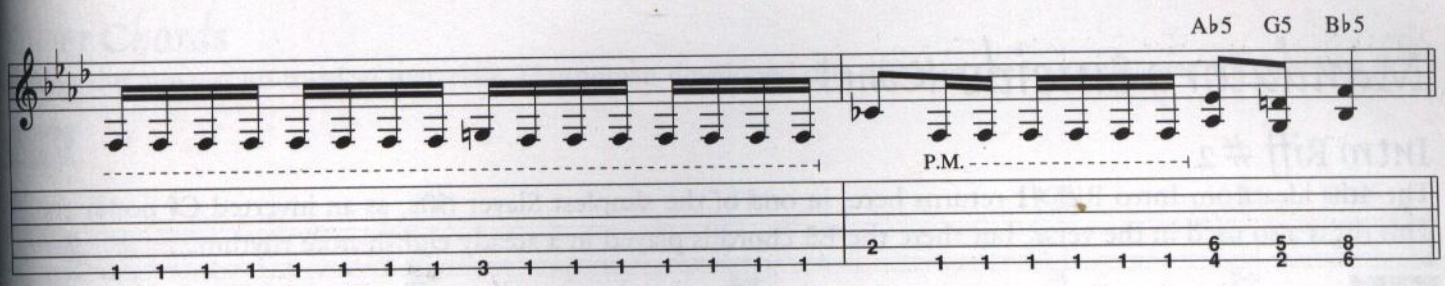
Verse Riff

The tonal center of this riff is F, but doesn't stay true to any specific mode, as it incorporates the ♭2 and ♮2, and the ♭5 and ♮5.

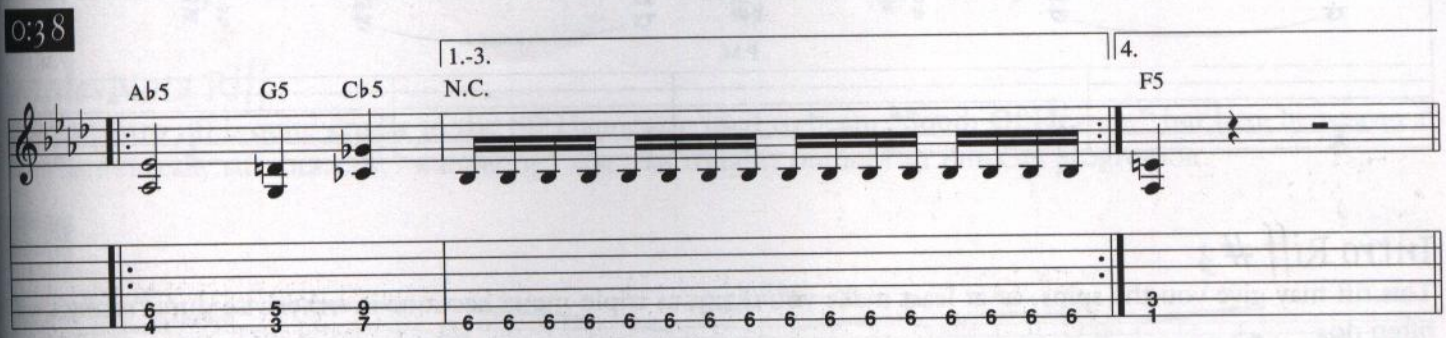
0:20





Chorus Riff

King and Hanneman create tension in this riff by intentionally avoiding the tonic, F, until the very end.



Mandatory Suicide

From South Of Heaven

Words by Tom Araya
Music by Jeff Hanneman and Kerry King

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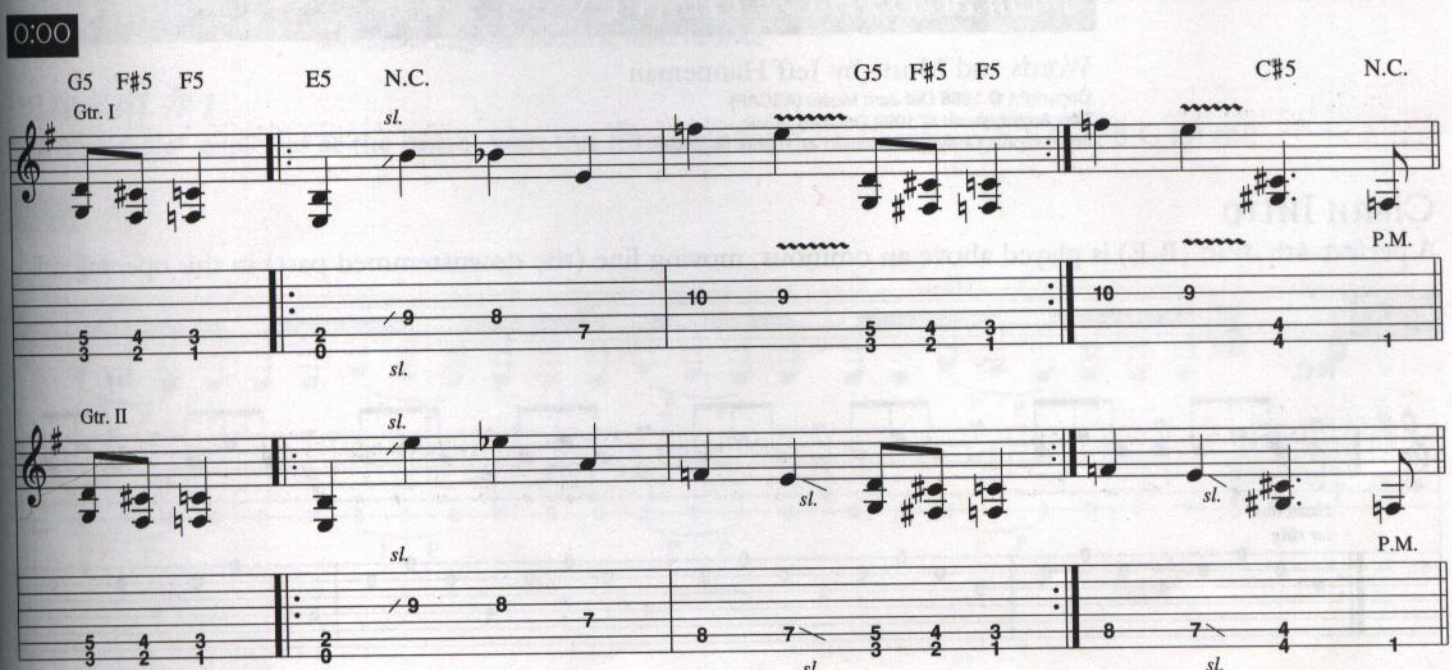
Intro Riff # 1

Similar to part of the "South Of Heaven" intro, this riff (Gtr. I) is also harmonized in 4ths (Gtr. II). At 0:14 Araya and Lombardo lay down an almost funky groove that contrasts nicely with the guitars.

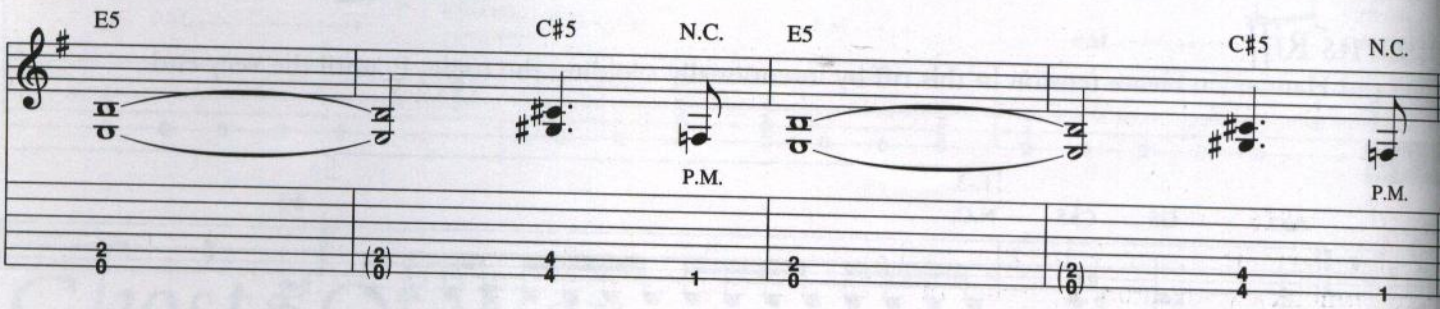


Mandatory Suicide (Cont.)

Intro Riff #2

The 4ths idea from Intro Riff #1 returns here, in one of the simplest Slayer riffs, as an inverted C♯ power chord. This riff is also used in the verse, but there the E5 chord is played in a steady eighth-note rhythm.

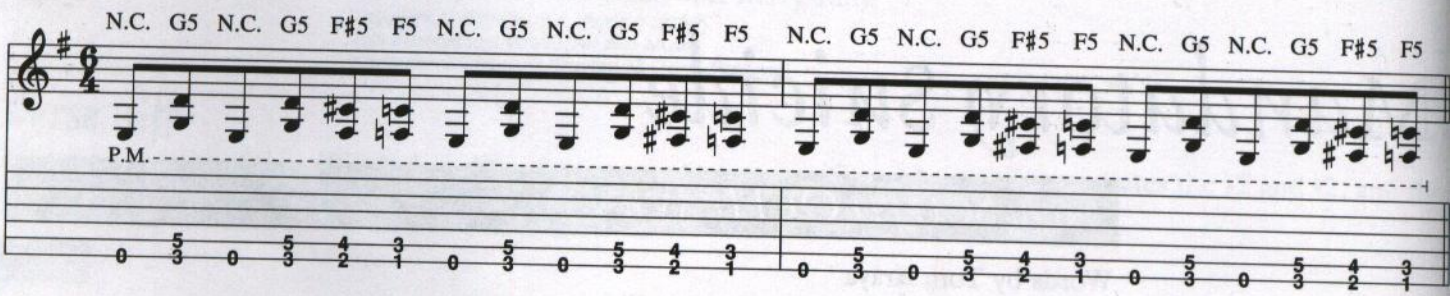
0:26



Intro Riff #3

This riff may give you the spins, or at least make you dizzy, as triple-meter sections in otherwise duple settings will often do.

0:39



Spill The Blood

From South Of Heaven

Words and Music by Jeff Hanneman
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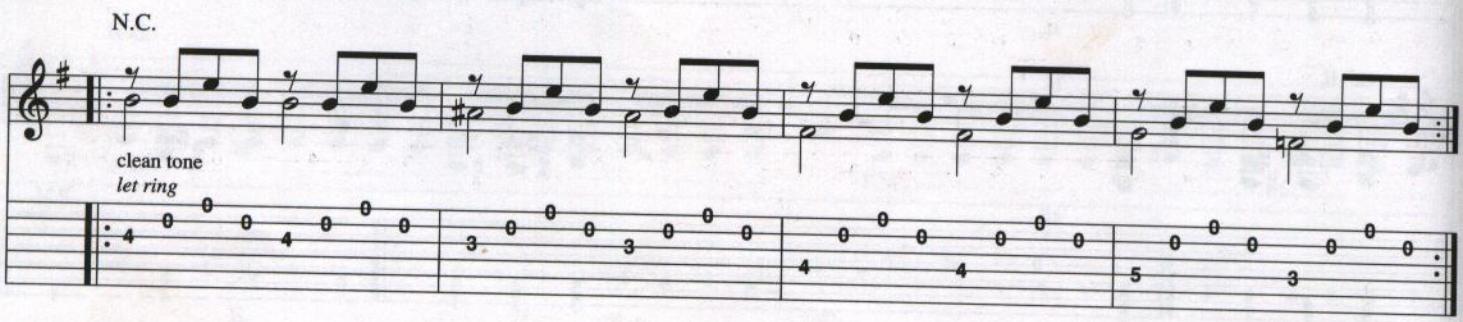
Clean Intro

A perfect-4th dyad (B-E) is played above an ominous, moving line (the downstemmed part) in this opening riff.

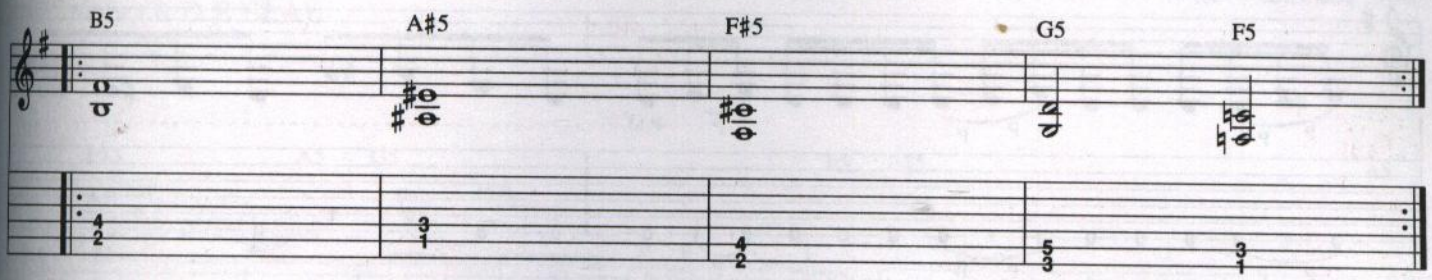
0:00



Power Chords

Making the most of his musical materials, Hanneman developed this riff from the lower voice of the previous riff.

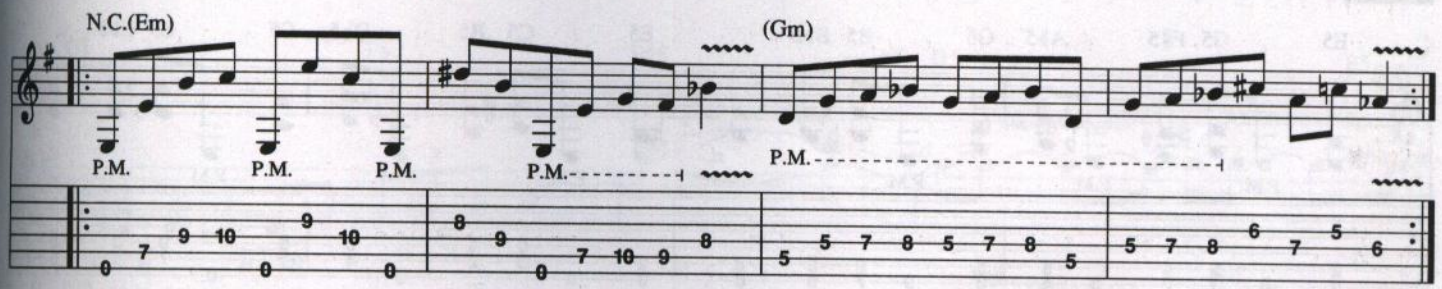
0:29



Single-Note Riff

This final intro riff is quite similar to the riff Hanneman used to begin "South Of Heaven," but here he weaves a more harmonically adventurous, "wandering" line that roughly outlines an Em–Gm progression.

0:42



War Ensemble

From Seasons In The Abyss

Words by Tom Araya and Jeff Hanneman
Music by Jeff Hanneman

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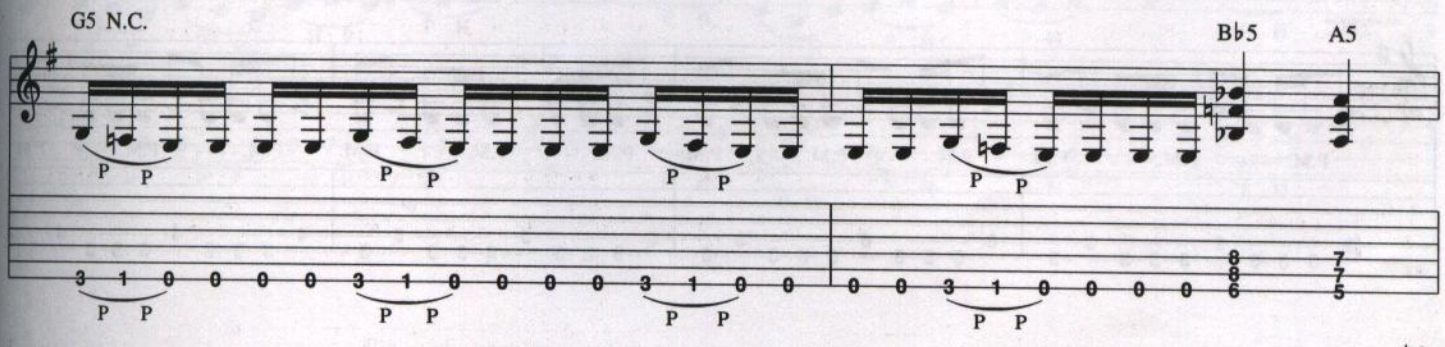
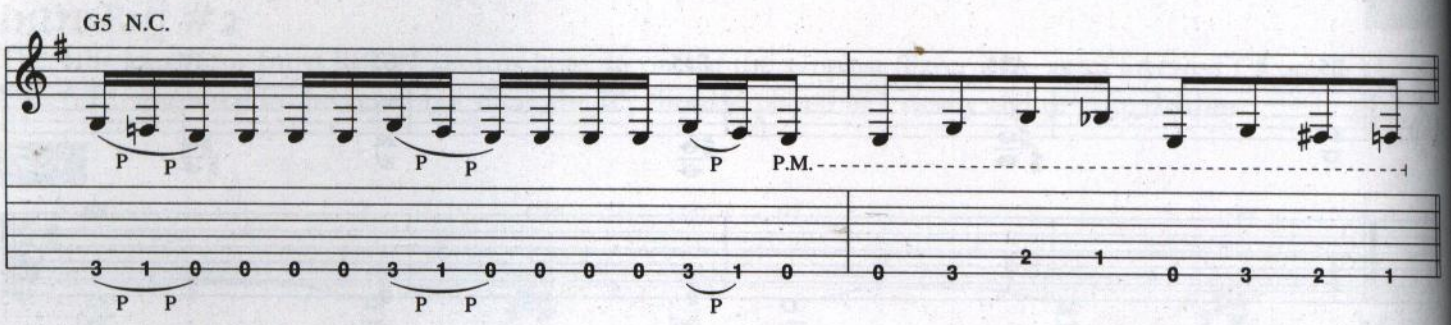
Intro Riff # 1

"War Ensemble" explodes at the outset with this fittingly nihilistic E Phrygian (E F G A B C D) riff.

0:00



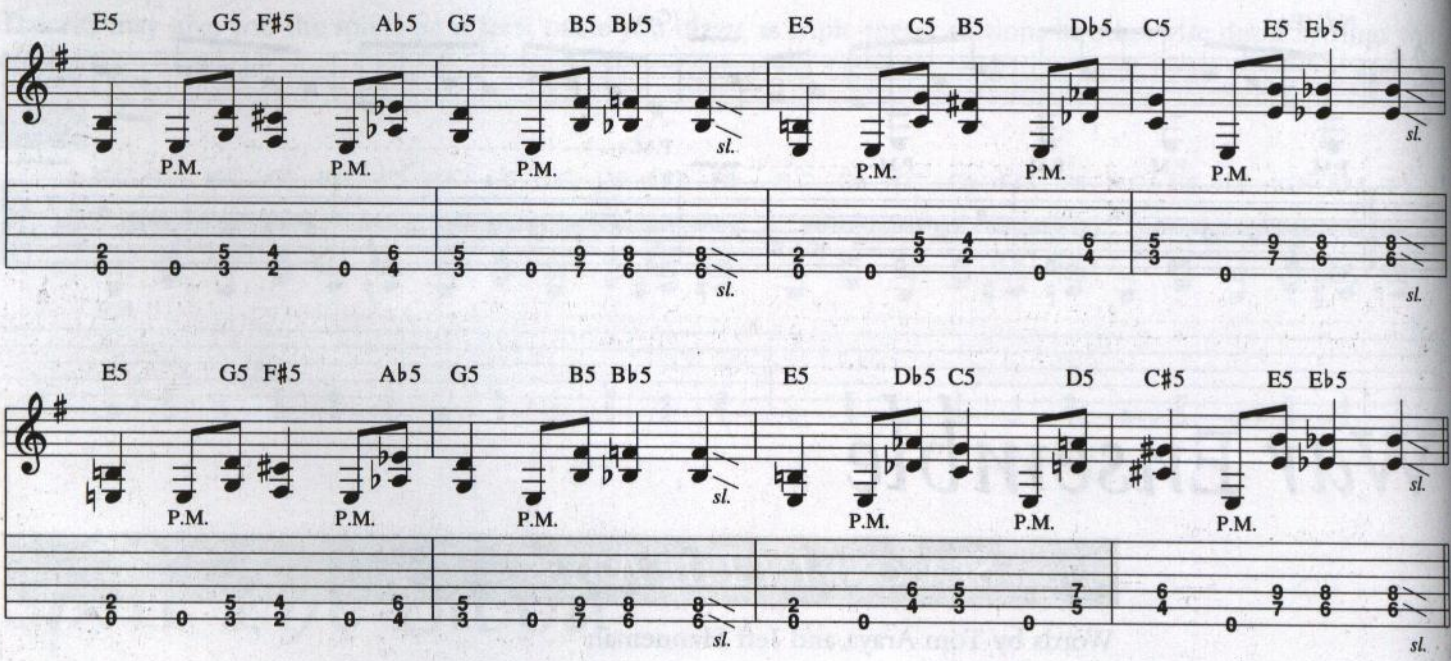
War Ensemble (Cont.)



Intro Riff #2

A motive, consisting of two power chords a minor 2nd apart, ascends chromatically above an E pedal in this vehemently played riff.

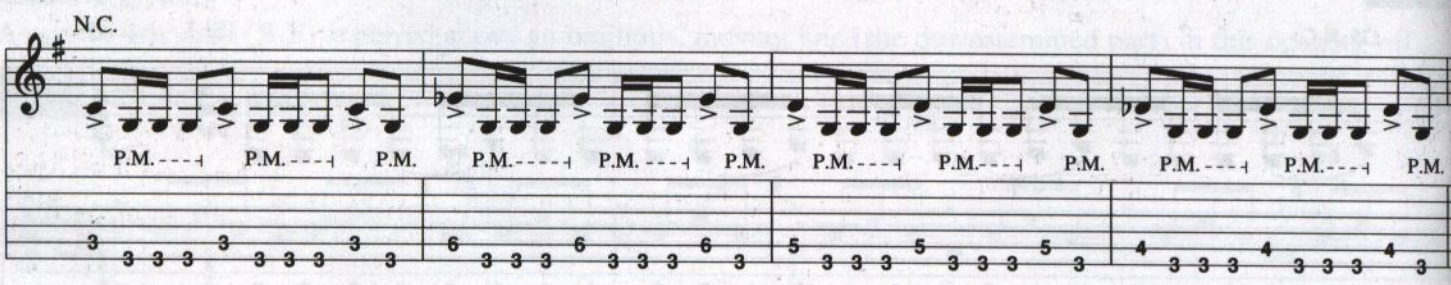
0:18



Verse Riff

This single-note riff is composed of a C minor–based line above a G pedal. The rhythmic figure of this phrase (♪♬♪♬♪♬) has the character of a military snare drum part.

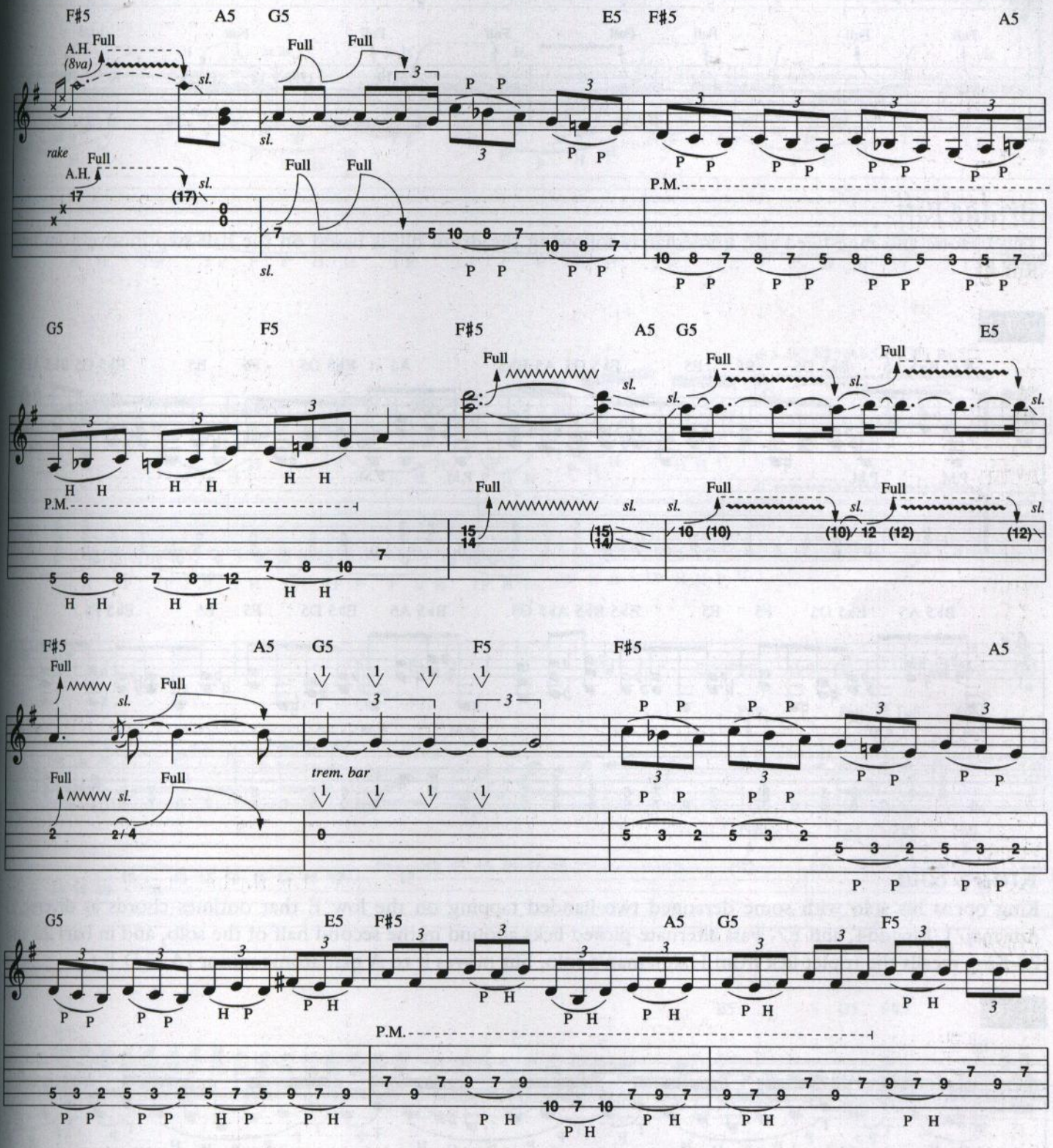
0:27



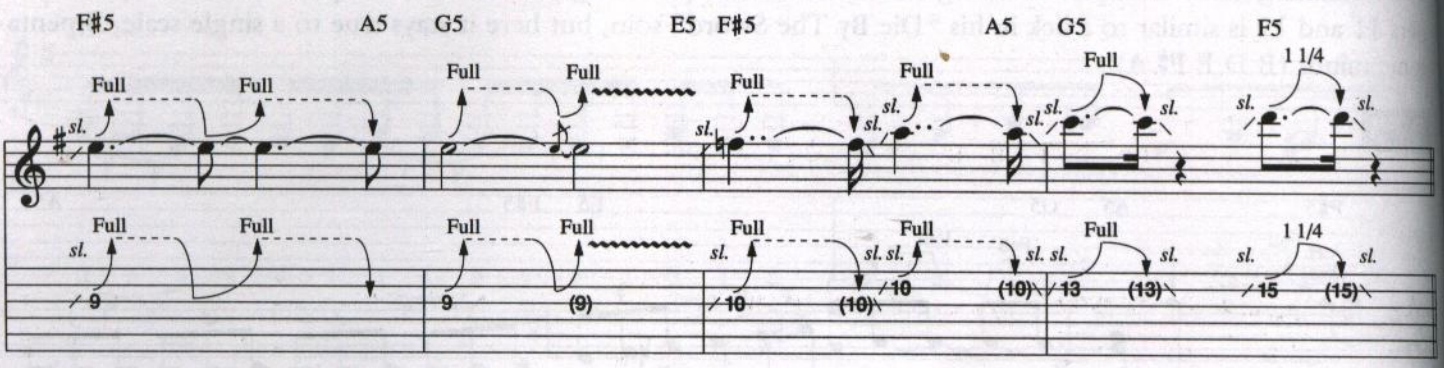
Hanneman's Solo

This is one of Hanneman's most savage solos—perfectly matching the unwavering intensity of the rest of the song, and containing many examples of his signature three-notes-per-string hammer-ons and pull-offs. The triplet lick in bars 11 and 12 is similar to a lick in his "Die By The Sword" solo, but here it stays true to a single scale, B pentatonic minor (B D E F♯ A).

0:27



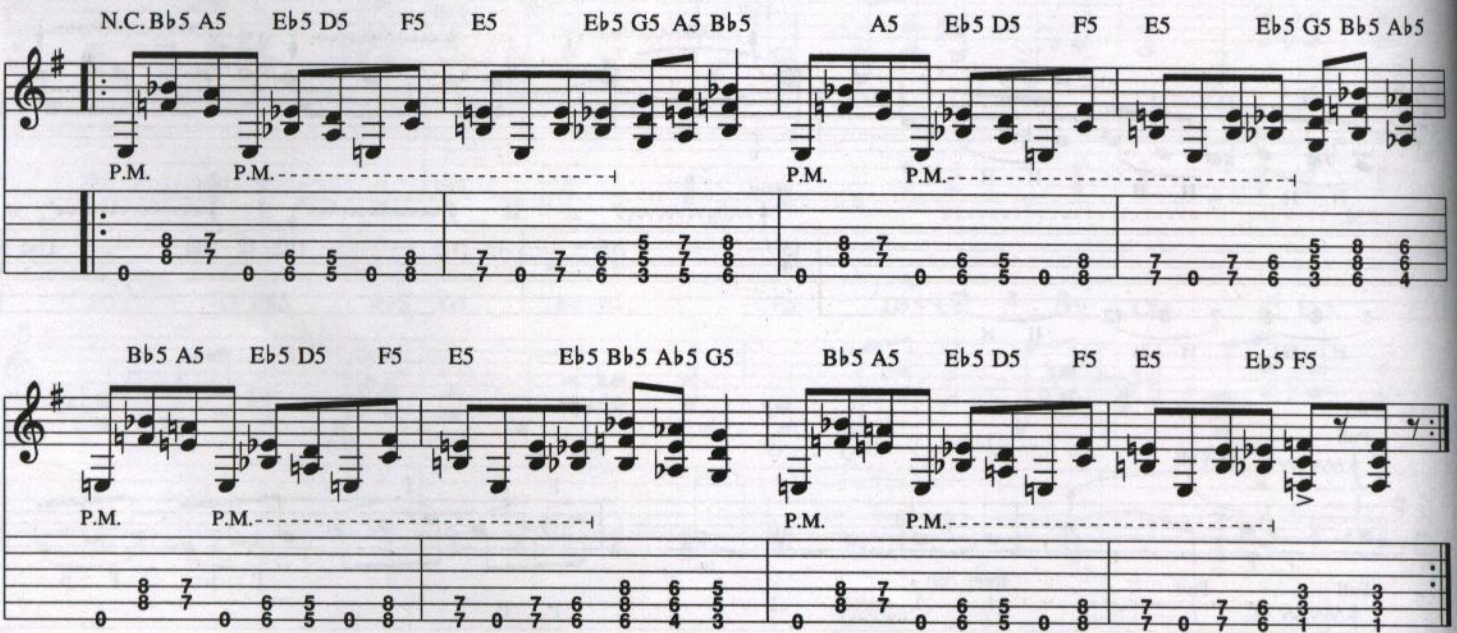
War Ensemble (Cont.)



Bridge Riff

This chaotic and rage-filled riff, immediately following the drum fill, is based on the half-step motive from Intro Riff #1.

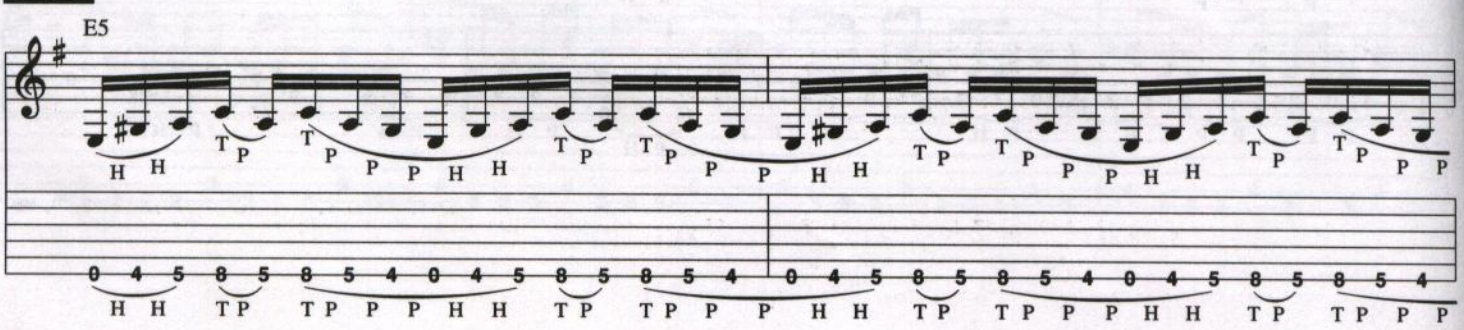
2:14

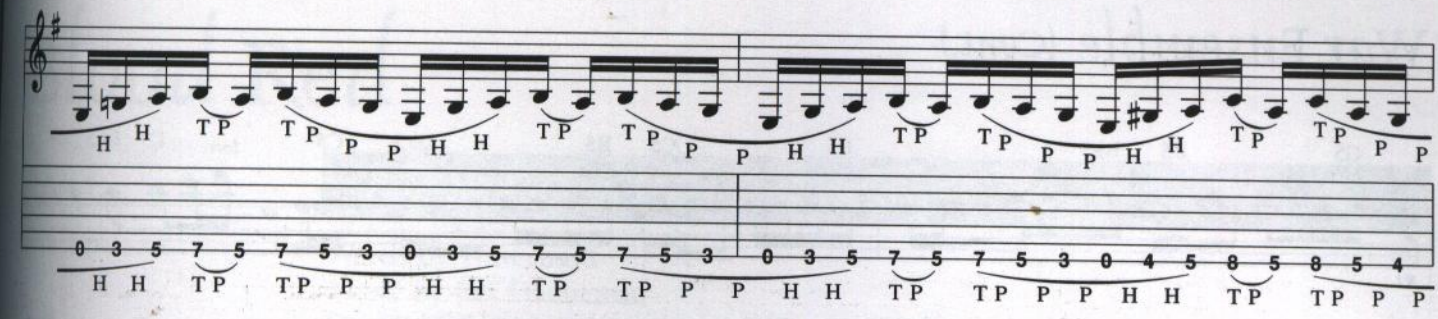


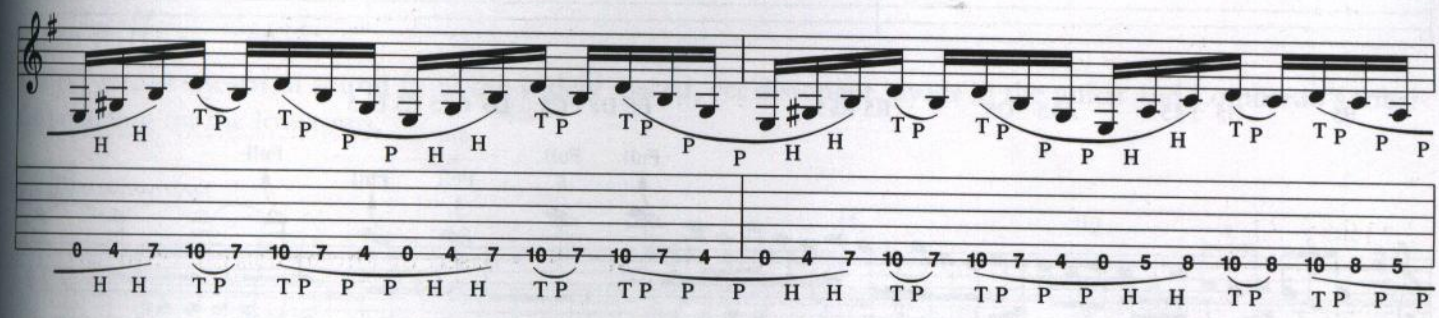
King's Solo

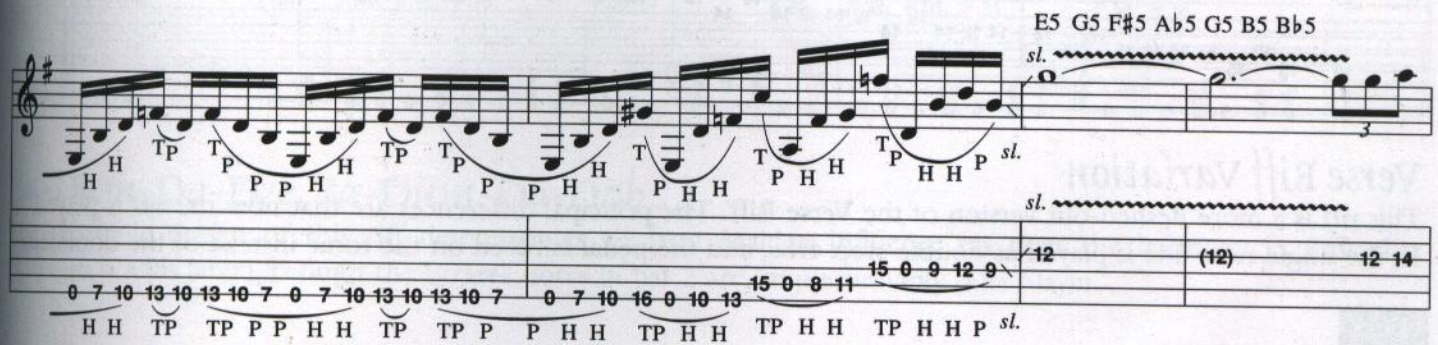
King opens his solo with some deranged two-handed tapping on the low E that outlines chords as diverse as Am(maj7), Emadd4, and E7. Fast alternate-picked licks abound in the second half of the solo, and in bars 22 and 23 King recalls the triplet lick from Hanneman's solo, but moves it to A pentatonic minor (A C D E G).

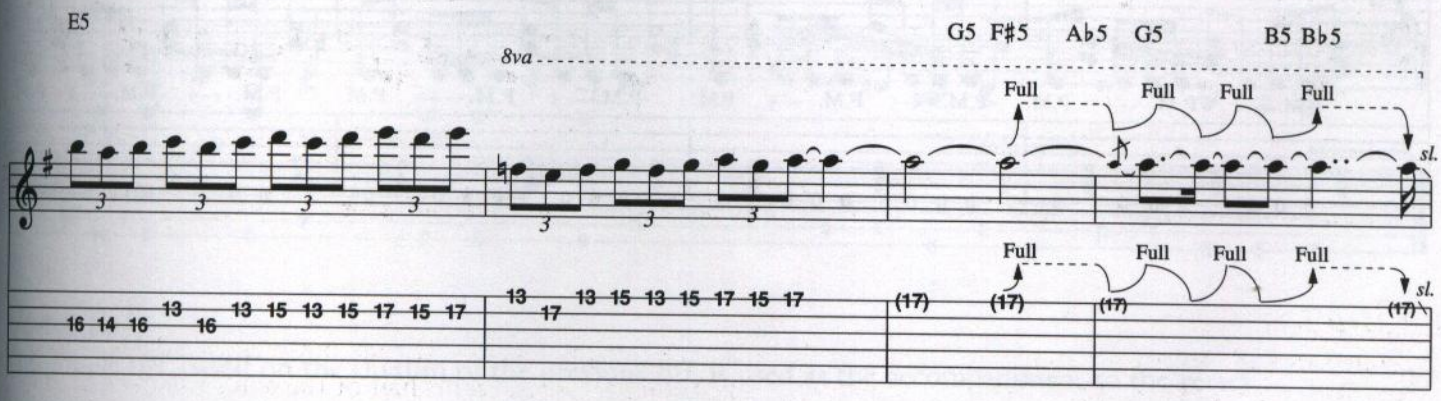
3:35

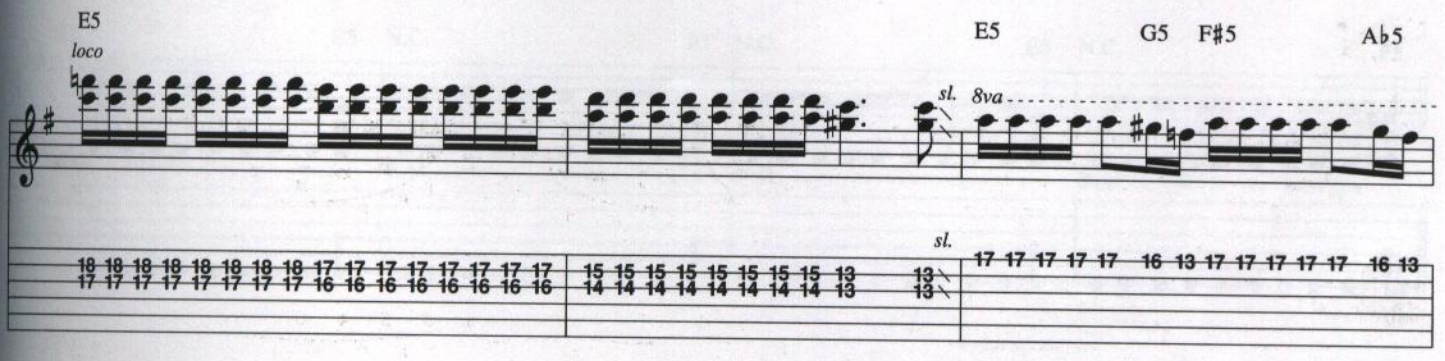




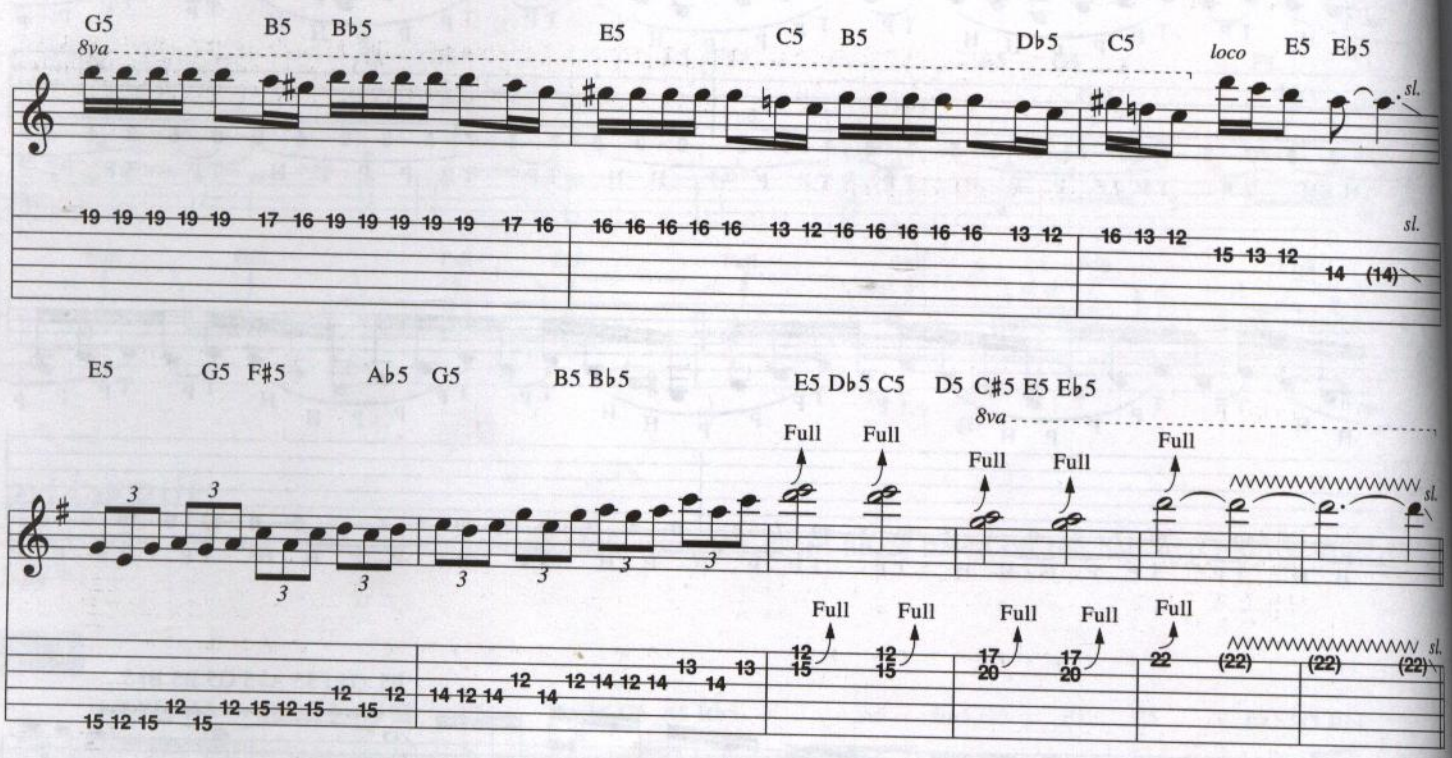



E5 G5 F♯5 A♭5 G5 B5 B♭5
sl.
sl.
sl.
sl.


E5
8va
G5 F♯5 A♭5 G5 B5 B♭5
Full Full Full Full
sl.
Full Full Full Full
sl.


E5
loco
E5 G5 F♯5 A♭5
sl.
8va
sl.

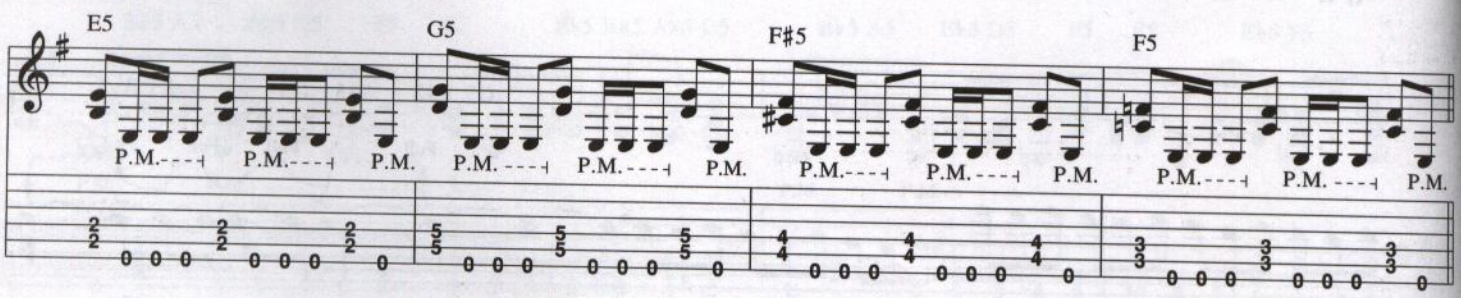
War Ensemble (Cont.)



Verse Riff Variation

This riff is a more fleshed-out version of the Verse Riff. The principal differences are that now the riff is played in E, the single-note line is played as double-stop 4ths, and the pedal is based on the tonic instead of the dominant.

4:05



Blood Red

From Seasons In The Abyss

Words by Tom Araya
Music by Jeff Hanneman

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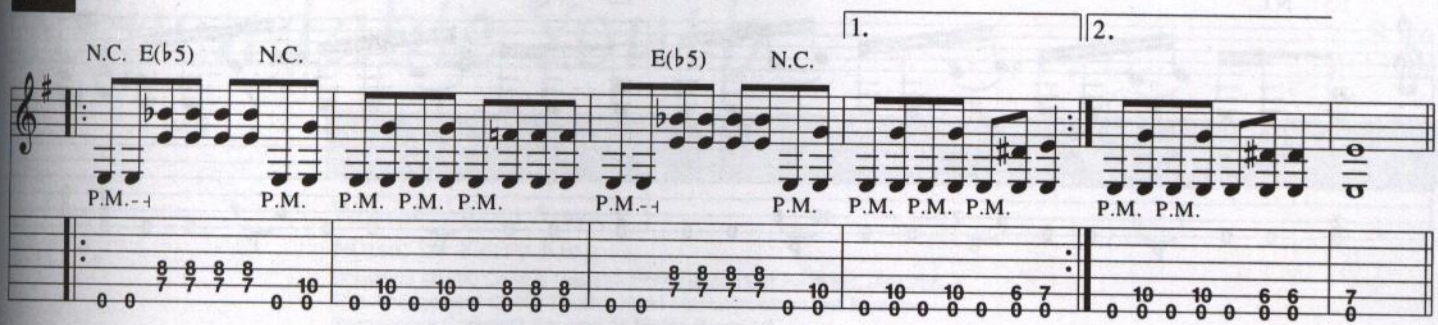
Intro Riff

This riff gets its theatrical sound from the widely spaced, yet dissonant, dyads in the guitar and Lombardo's tribal-like pounding on the low toms.

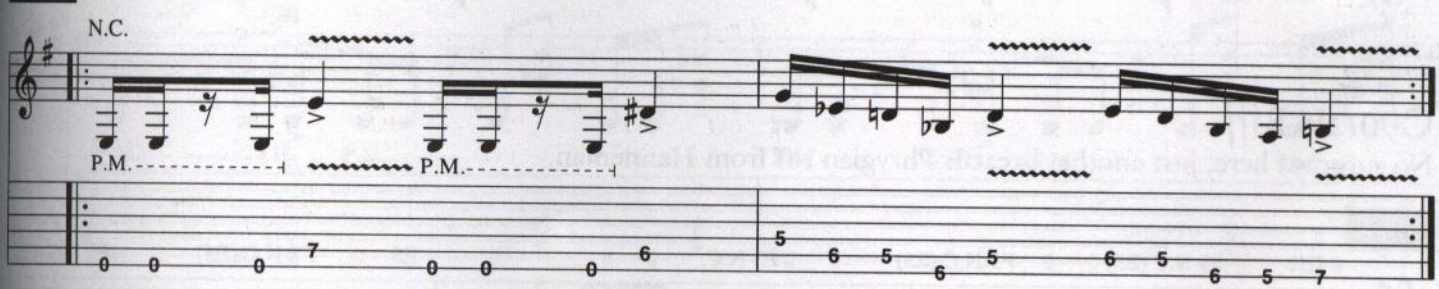
0:00



Ba-Dum-Da-Dee, Ba-Dum-Da-Dah ...

The rhythmic design of this riff demonstrates an Iron Maiden influence (as does the harmony in 3rds that Hanneman adds later), though the bizarre notes in bar 2 are unquestionably pure Slayer.

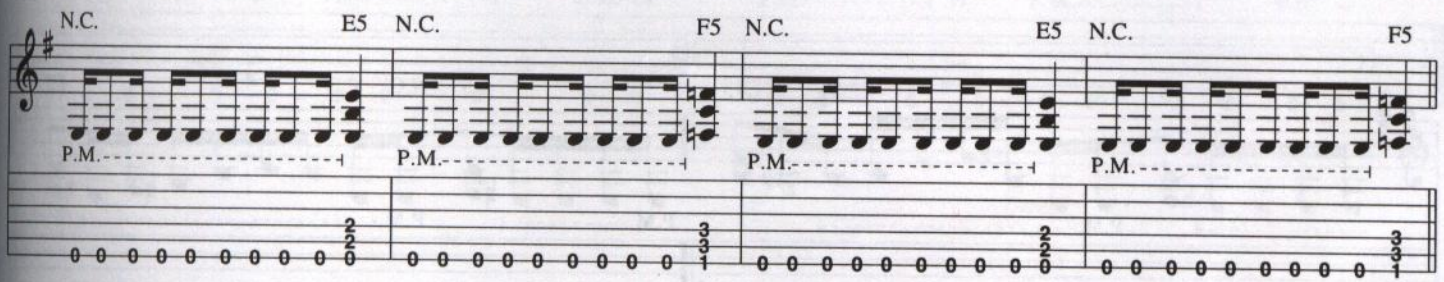
0:17



Verse Riff

This simple riff, based on the rhythm of the previous riff, is used as the accompaniment to the verses.

0:31



Spirit In Black

From Seasons In The Abyss

Words by Kerry King
Music by Jeff Hanneman

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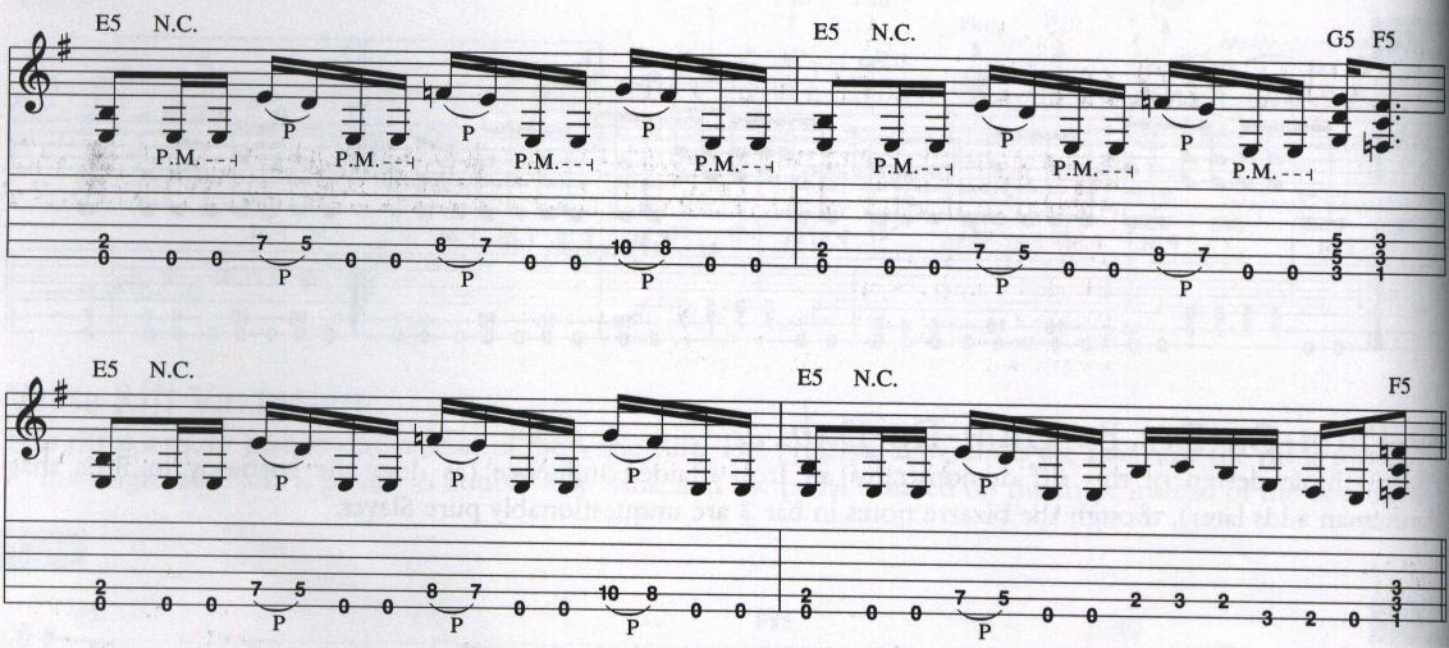
Rising Minor 2nds

A series of minor 2nds rises sequentially through the E Phrygian mode (E F G A B C D) in this intro riff.

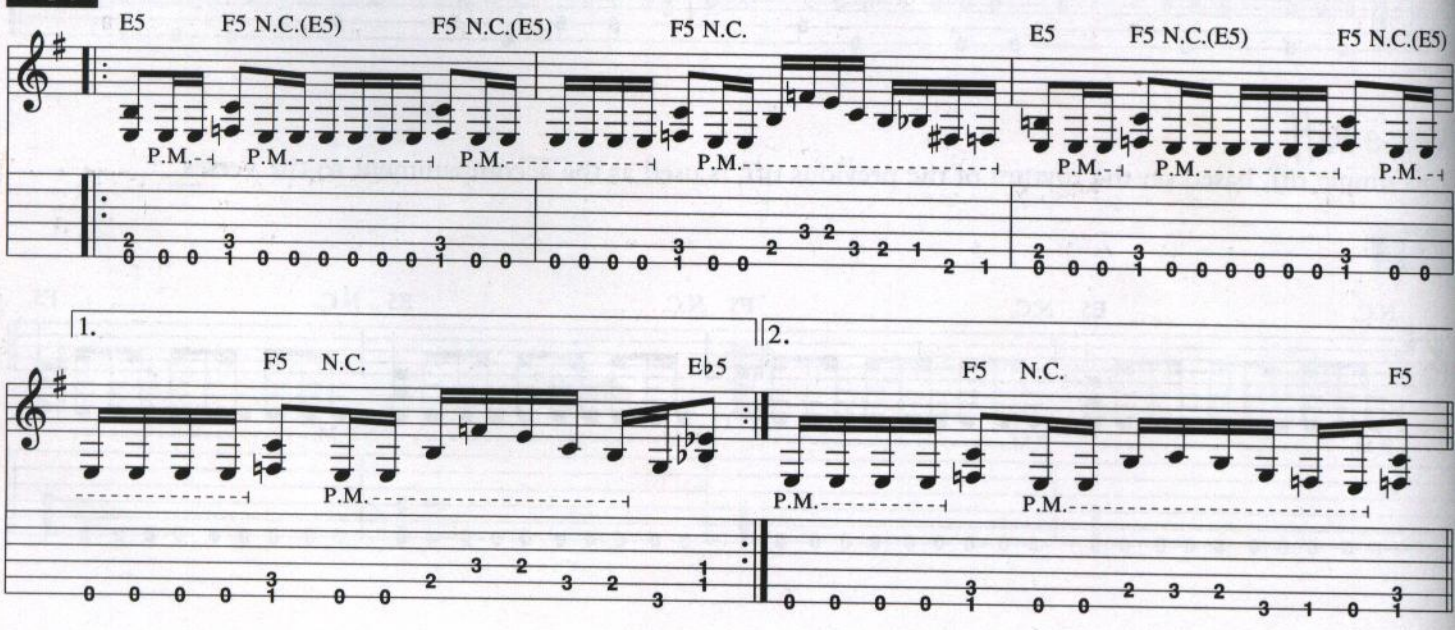
0:00



Chorus Riff

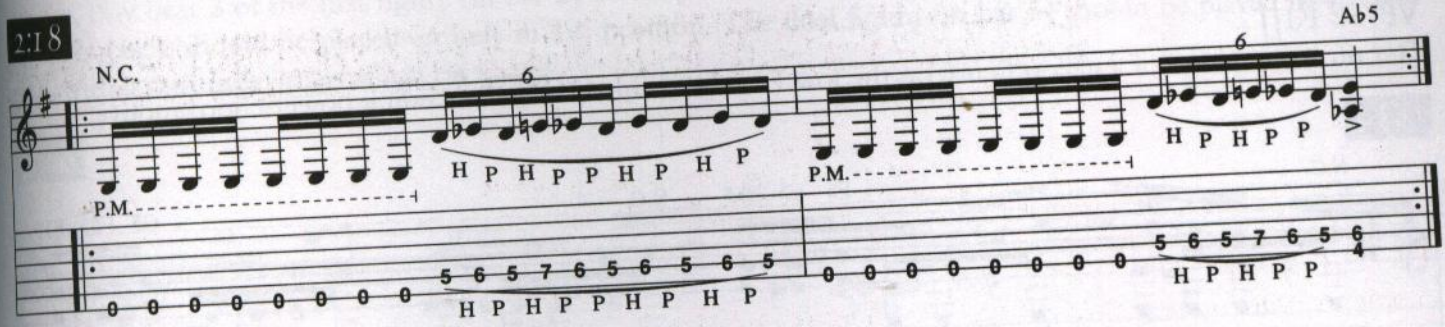
No surprises here, just another great E Phrygian riff from Hanneman.

0:35



Bridge Riff

This riff gets its snarling sound from the quick hammer-on/pull-off figures.



Expendable Youth

From Seasons In The Abyss

Words by Tom Araya
Music by Kerry King

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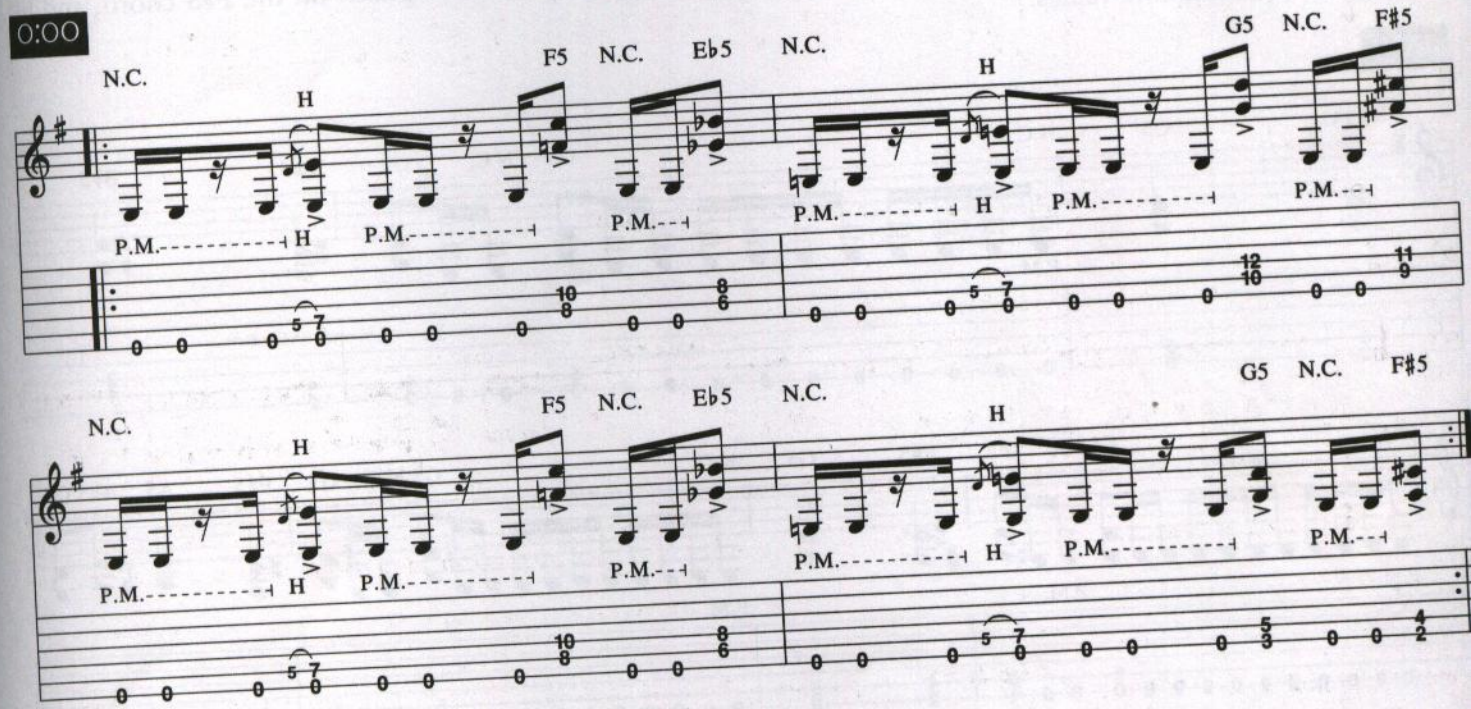
Intro Riff

This riff is comprised of a ♪♪ rhythmic pattern (only ¾ of a beat) that is cycled over the first three beats of each bar, thus forming a highly syncopated figure.

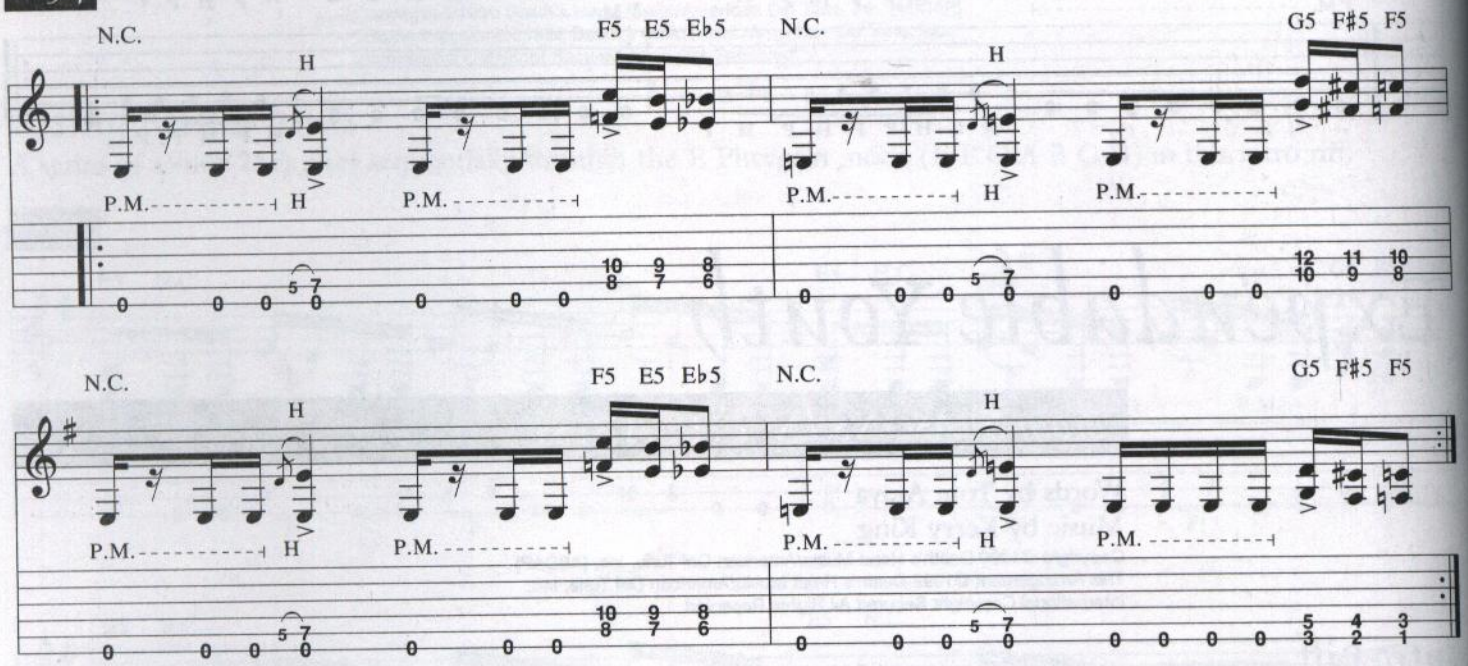


Expendable Youth (Cont.)

Verse Riff

This riff is composed of a gallop figure on the low E and a chromatically descending power-chord motive.

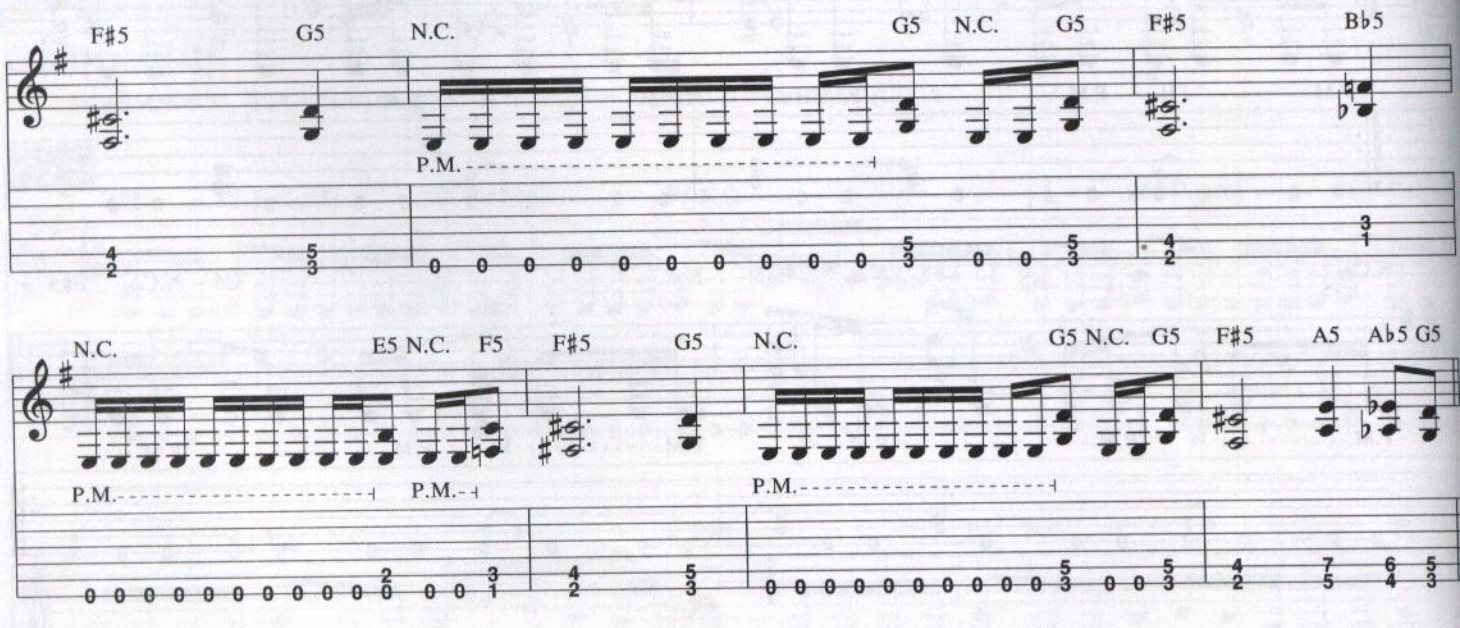
0:34



Chorus Riff

Contrast between the verse and the chorus is achieved here by placing a firm emphasis on the F♯5 chord, and by the use of long, held note values.

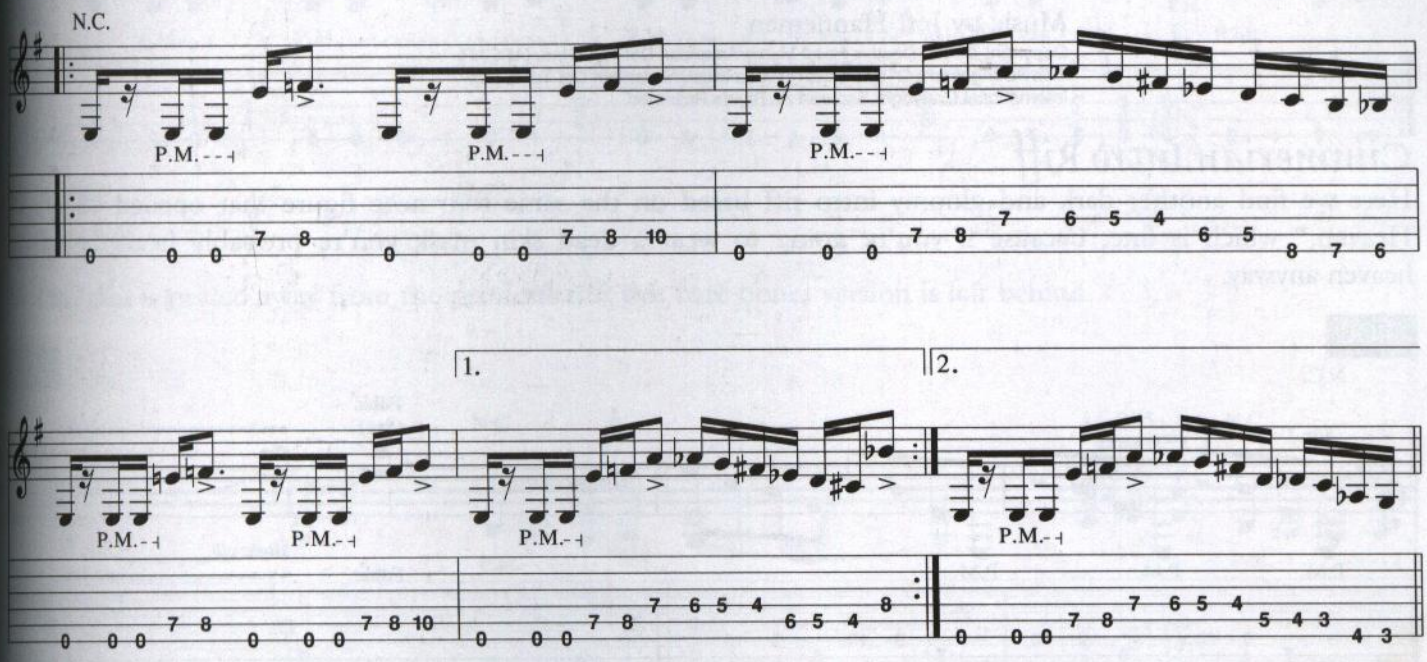
1:09



Pre-Solo Riff

This riff is relatively easy to play, except for the steady sixteenth-note figures on beats 3 and 4 at the ends of each phrase. Play beat 3 of the first figure (in bar 2) in 4th position, then quickly switch to 5th position on beat 4. The figure in bar 4 should be played entirely in 4th position. The final figure (in bar 5) should be played in 4th position, with a shift into 3rd position on beat 4.

2:16



Dead Skin Mask

From Seasons In The Abyss

Words by Tom Araya
Music by Jeff Hanneman

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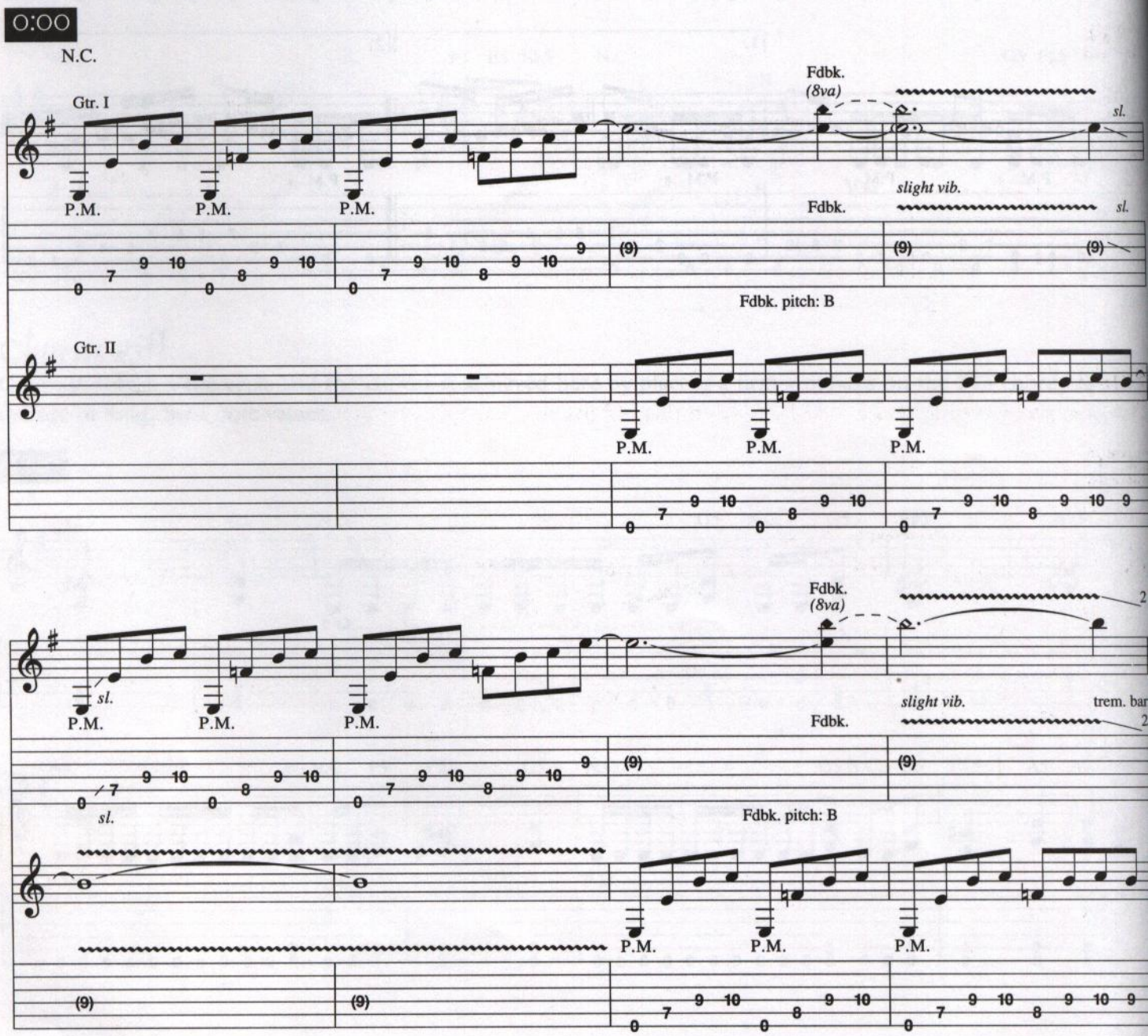
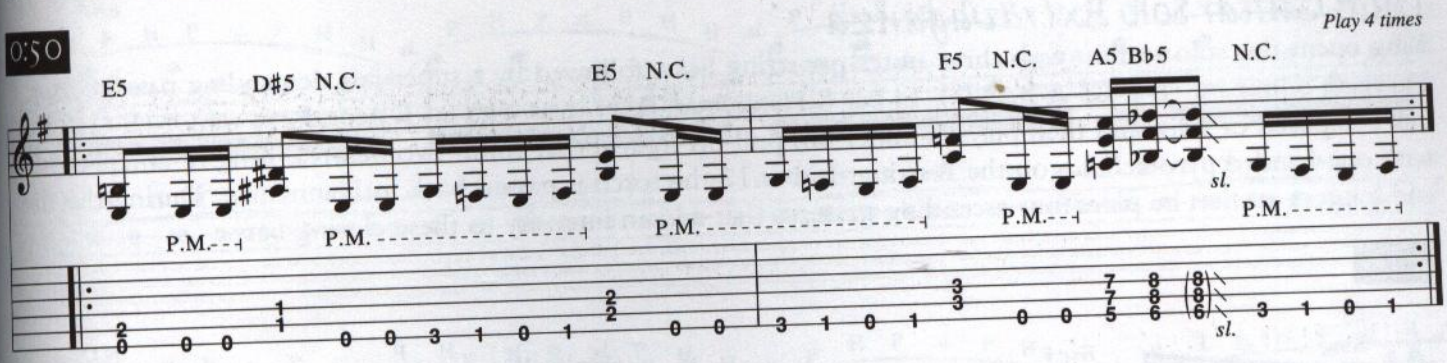
Cimmerian Intro Riff

Here we find another dark and gloomy intro riff based on the same four-note figure that opened "South Of Heaven," which is fine, because if you're going to wear a dead skin mask you're probably headed south of heaven anyway. . . .



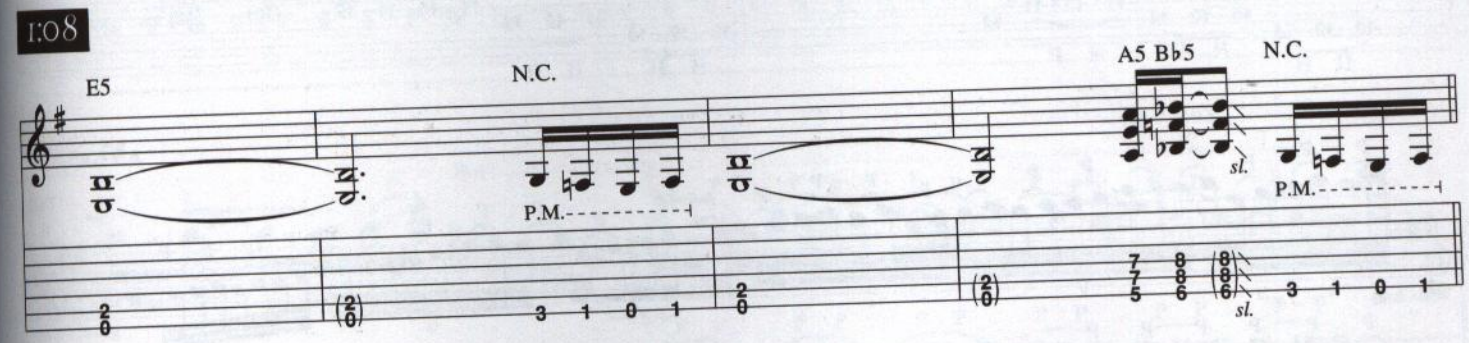
Pre-Verse Riff

Hanneman breaks the monotony of the repeated gallop figures by introducing sixteenth notes in unpredictable places.



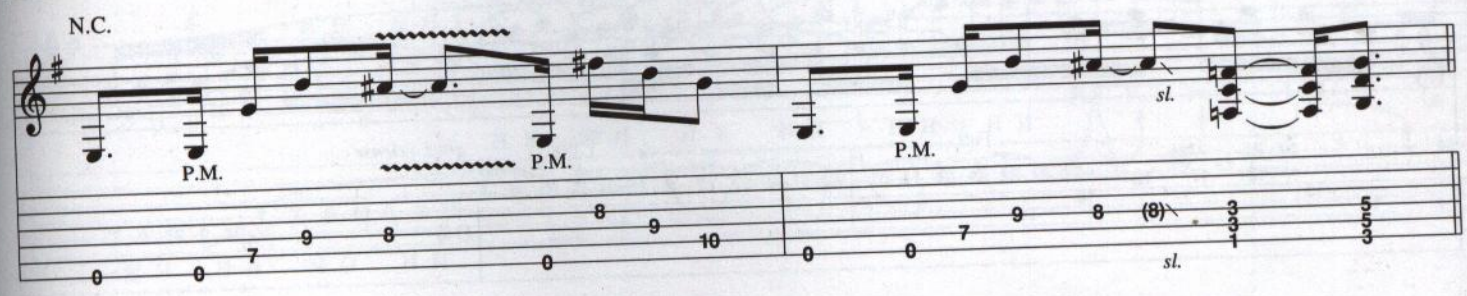
Verse Riff

After the skin is peeled away from the previous riff, this bare bones version is left behind.



Bridge Riff

The syncopated rhythms (♫♫‿♪ and ♪‿♫.) in this riff give it a deranged sound, and make it fun to play as well.

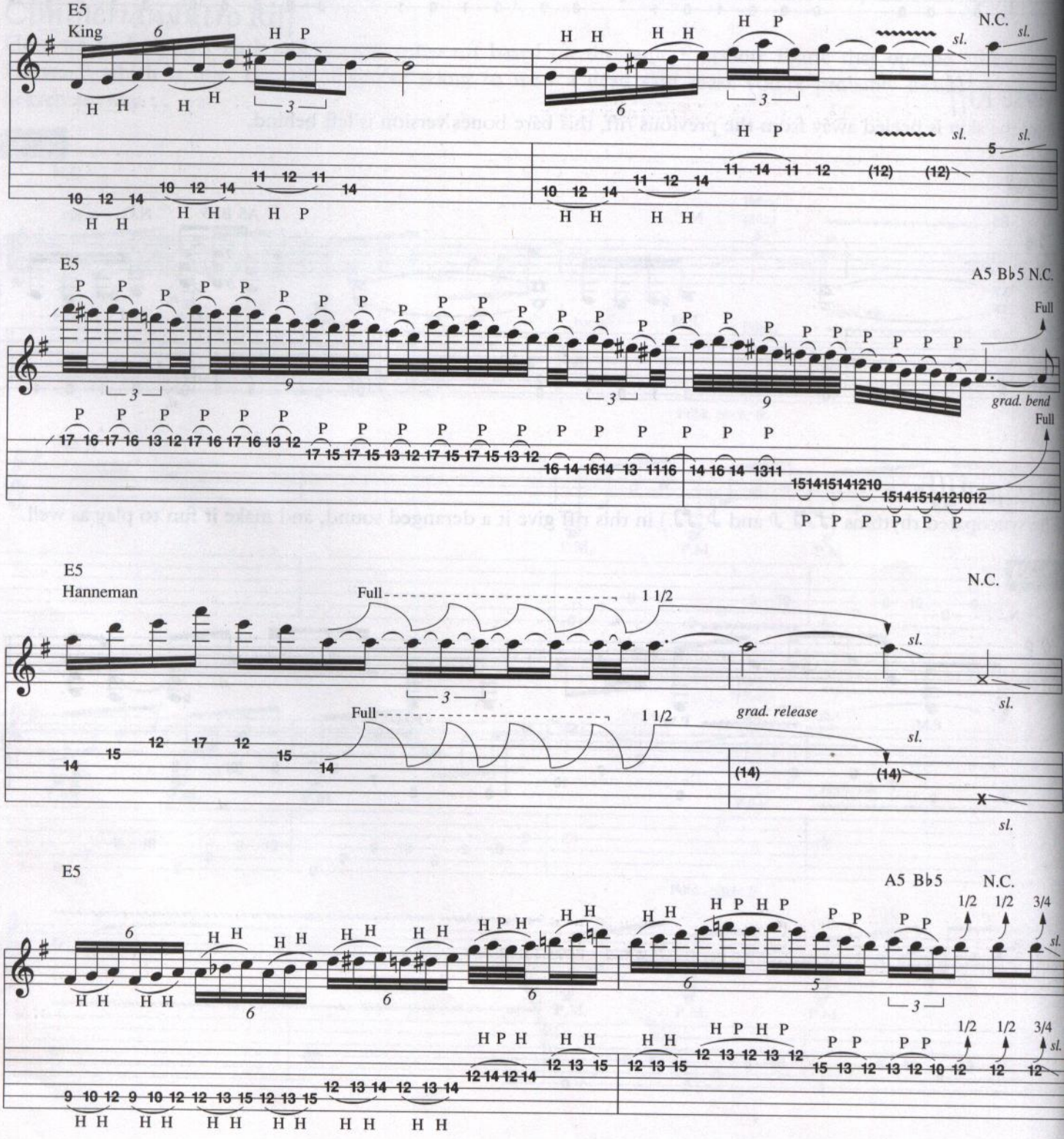


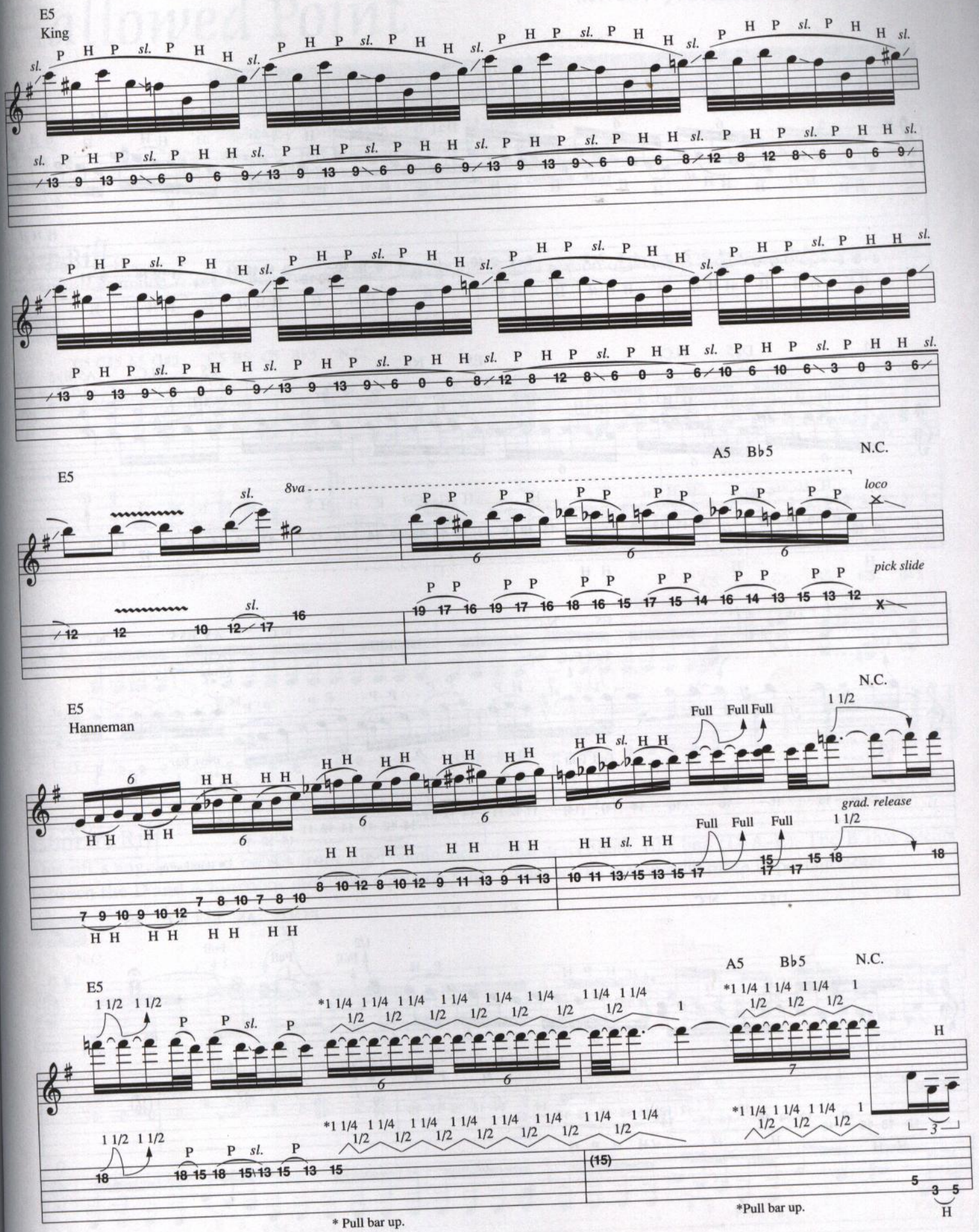
Dead Skin Mask (Cont.)

Dual Guitar Solo Extravaganza

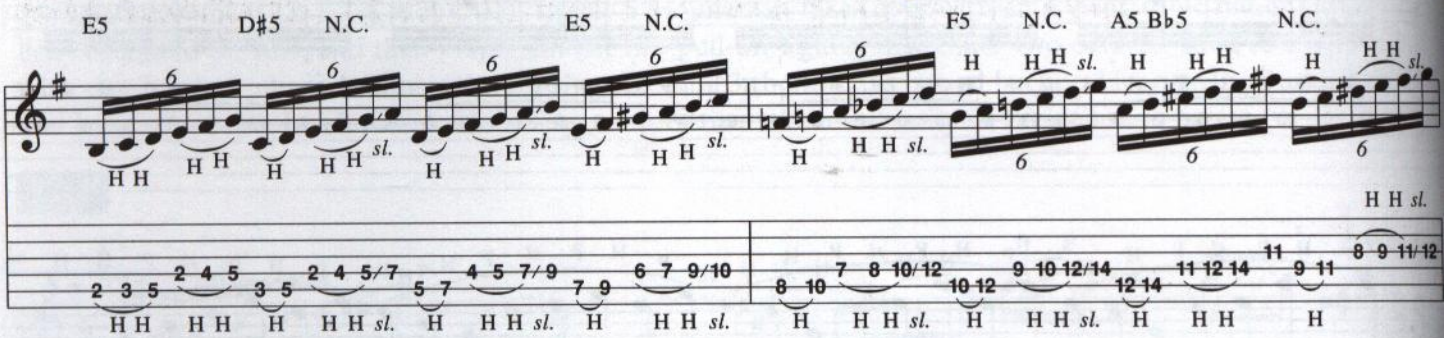
King opens this solo section with three-notes-per-string licks, followed by a super-fast descending passage from E Phrygian dominant (E F G♯ A B C D). In bar 5 Hanneman takes over with an E pentatonic minor (E G A B D) lick composed of 4ths, and then plays hammer-on/pull-off figures that climb two octaves. King re-enters in bar 9 with one-handed pyrotechnics on the B string. In bar 13 the torch is passed back to Hanneman. During this final, and longest, section he plays four ascending gestures that add an intensity to these closing bars.

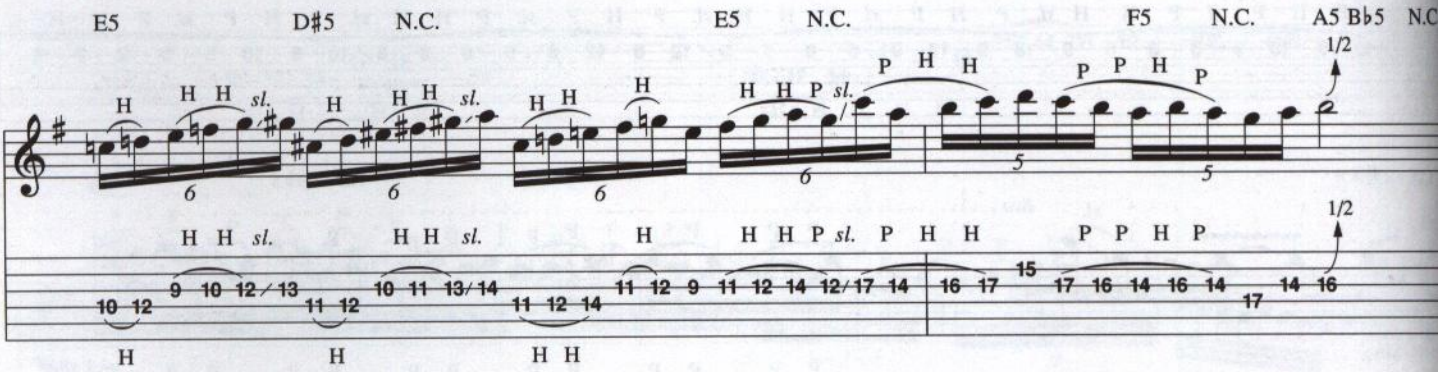
2:18

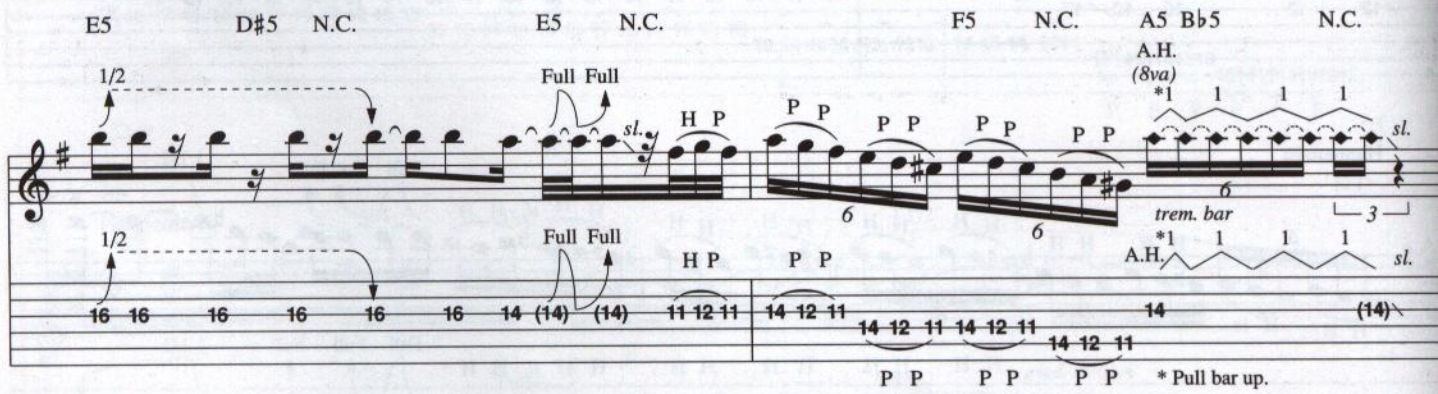


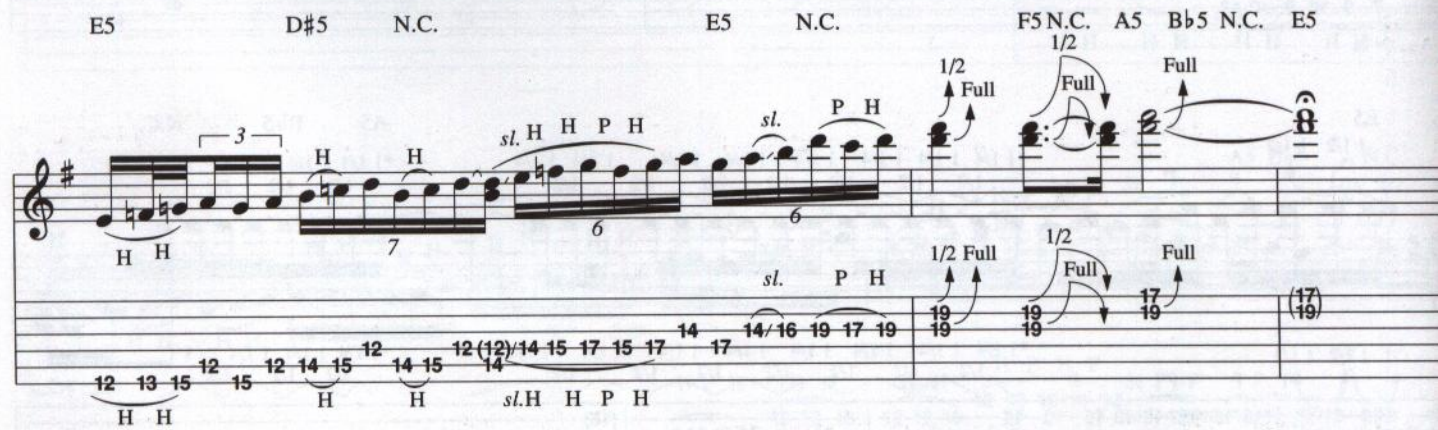

E5
King
sl.
P H P sl. P H H
13 9 13 9 6 0 6 9 13 9 13 9 6 0 6 8 12 8 12 8 6 0 6 9
P H P sl. P H H
13 9 13 9 6 0 6 9 13 9 13 9 6 0 6 8 12 8 12 8 6 0 3 6 10 6 10 6 3 0 3 6
A5 B♭5 N.C.
E5
8va
loco
pick slide
12 12 10 12 17 16
19 17 16 19 17 16 18 16 15 17 15 14 16 14 13 15 13 12
N.C.
E5
Hanneman
H H
6
Full Full Full
1 1/2
grad. release
7 9 10 9 10 12 7 8 10 7 8 10
8 10 12 8 10 12 9 11 13 9 11 13
10 11 13 15 13 15 17
A5 B♭5 N.C.
E5
1 1/2 1 1/2
P P sl. P
*1 1/4 1 1/4 1 1/4 1 1/4 1 1/4 1 1/4 1 1/4 1 1/4
1/2 1/2 1/2 1/2 1/2 1/2 1/2 1/2
1
*1 1/4 1 1/4 1 1/4
1/2 1/2 1/2
7
H
3
18
18 15 18 15 13 15 13 15
(15)
5 3 5
H
* Pull bar up.
*Pull bar up.

Dead Skin Mask (Cont.)









Hallowed Point

From Seasons In The Abyss

Words by Tom Araya and Jeff Hanneman
Music by Jeff Hanneman and Kerry King
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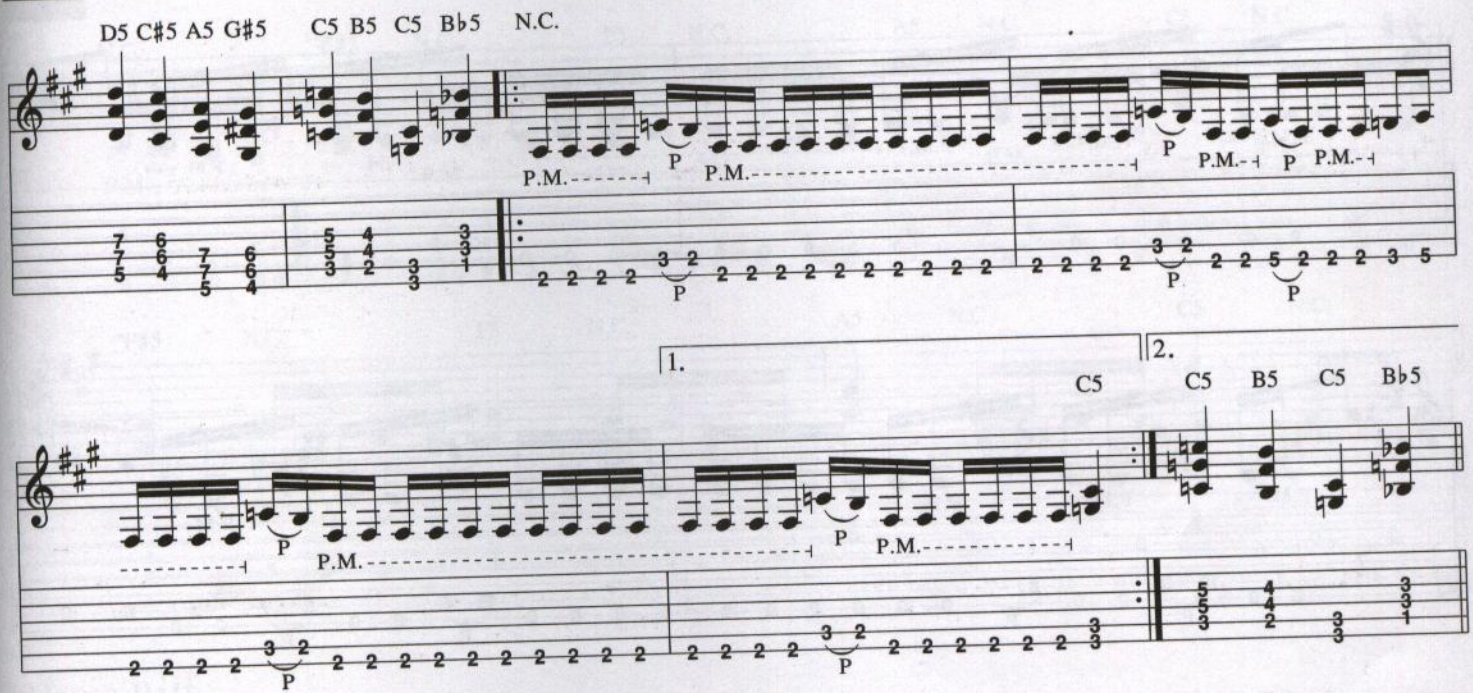
Intro Riff

Movements in minor 2nds pervade this extremely fast riff, the central section of which is used to accompany the verses.

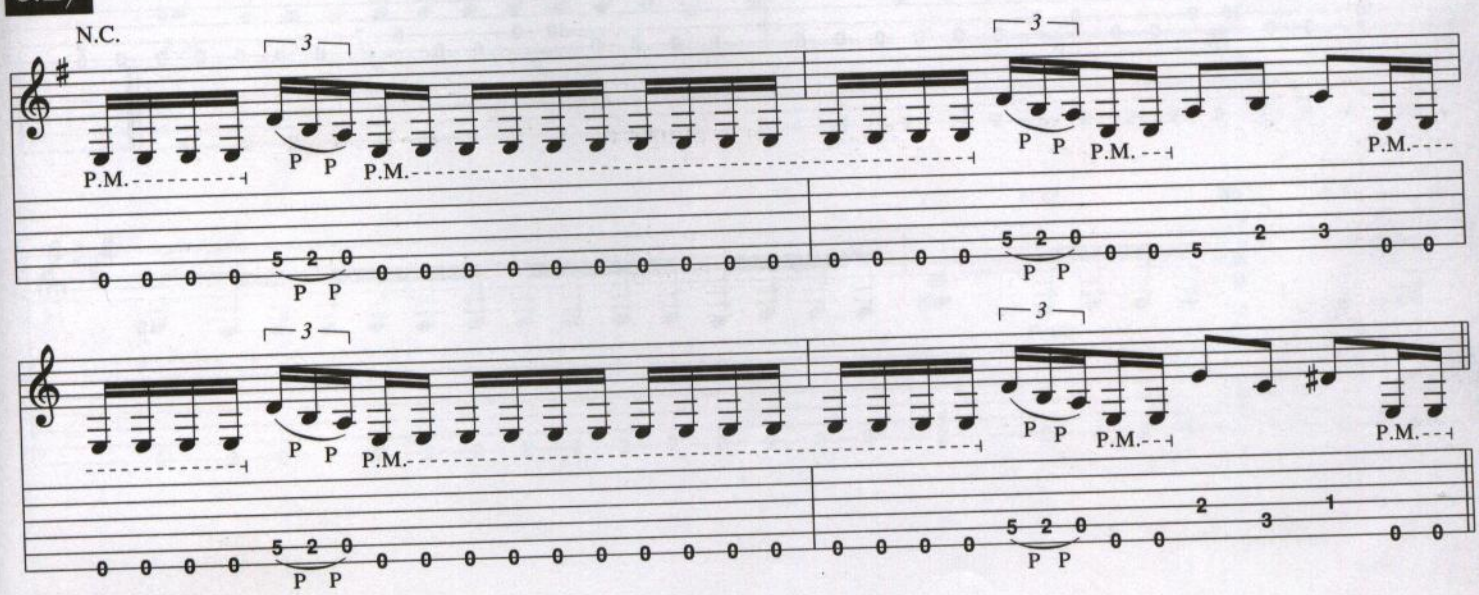
0:00



Chorus Riff

This riff's angular sound comes from the prominence of the descending-4ths line (D–A–E). The B that occurs between the D and A functions more like a passing tone, a filler to the melodically more important notes.

0:27

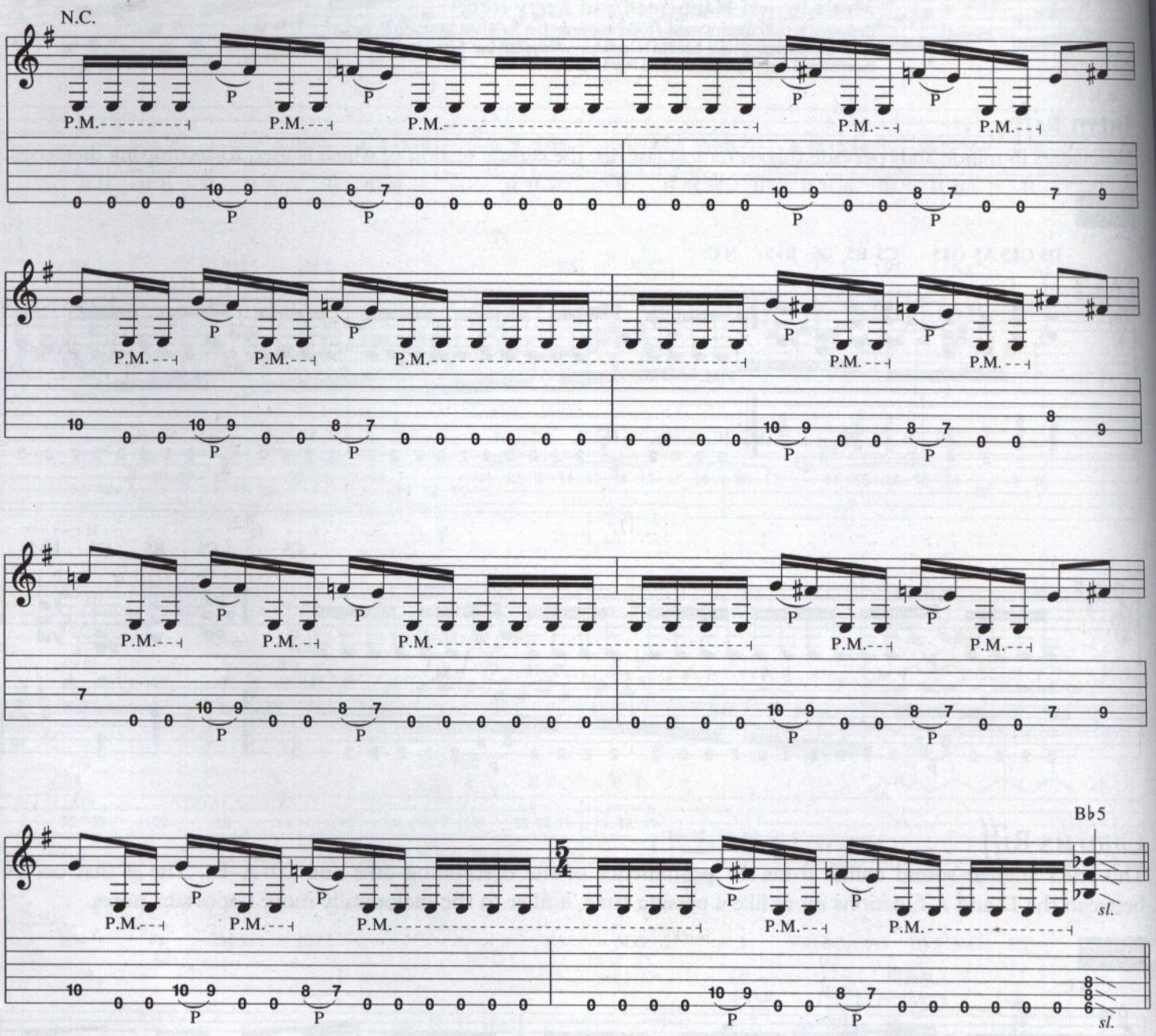


Hallowed Point (Cont.)

Bridge Riff

This riff's savage sound comes from the viperous pull-off figures on beats 2 and 3.

I:I I



Born Of Fire

From Seasons In The Abyss

Words by Kerry King
Music by Kerry King and Jeff Hanneman
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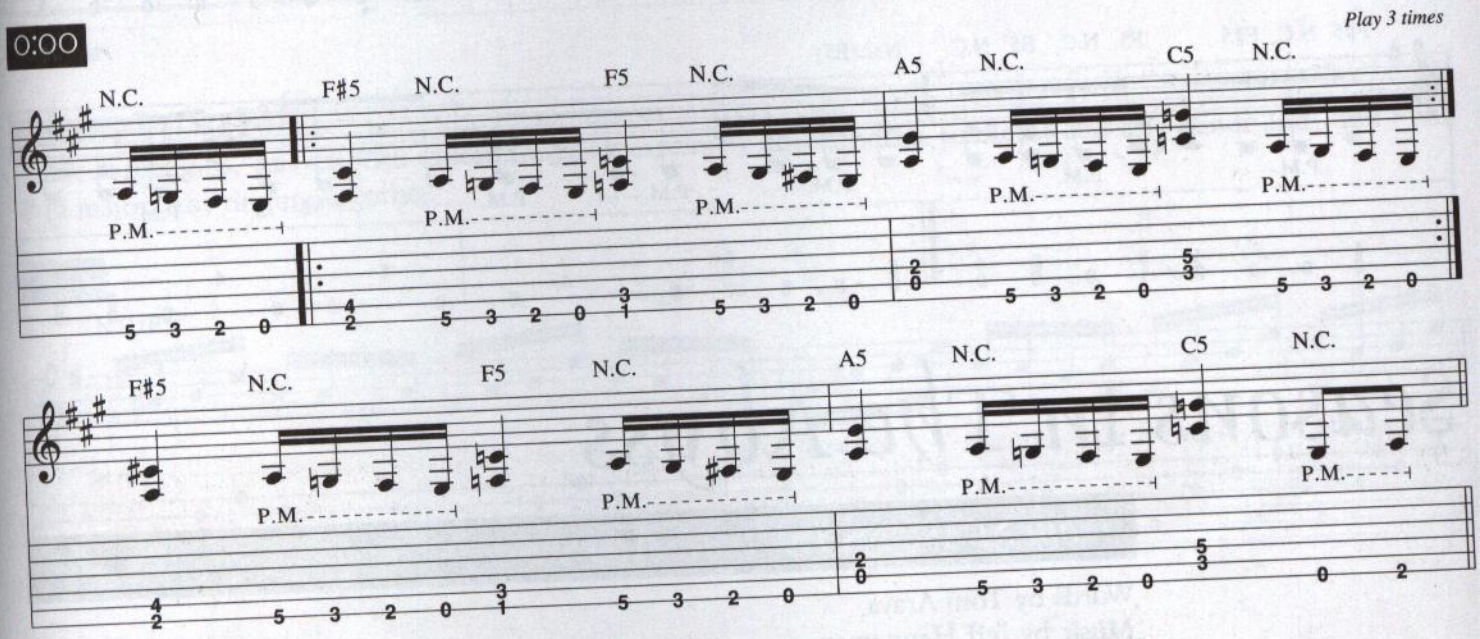
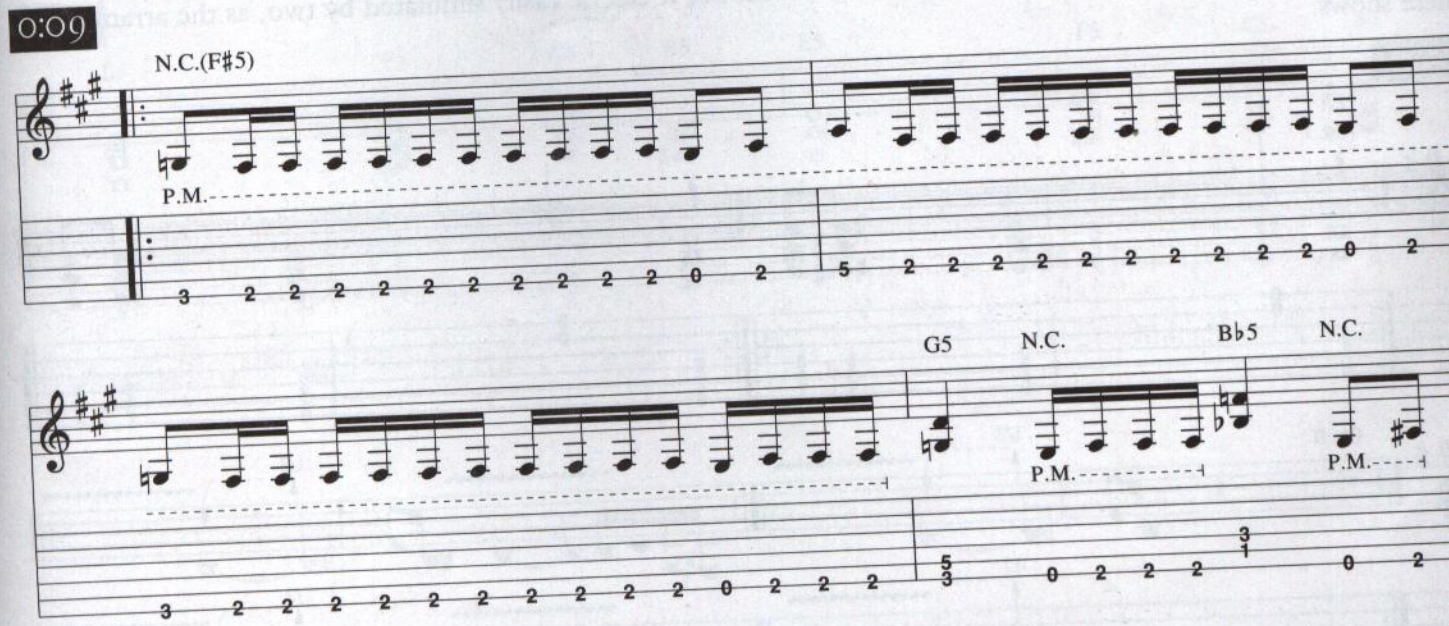
Intro Riff

The descending sixteenth-note figures, heard pummeling into beats 1 and 3, give this riff a rage-filled sound.



Verse Riff

An almost purely F♯ Phrygian (F♯ G A B C♯ D E) riff, only one chord is foreign to the mode: the B♭5 in the final bar.

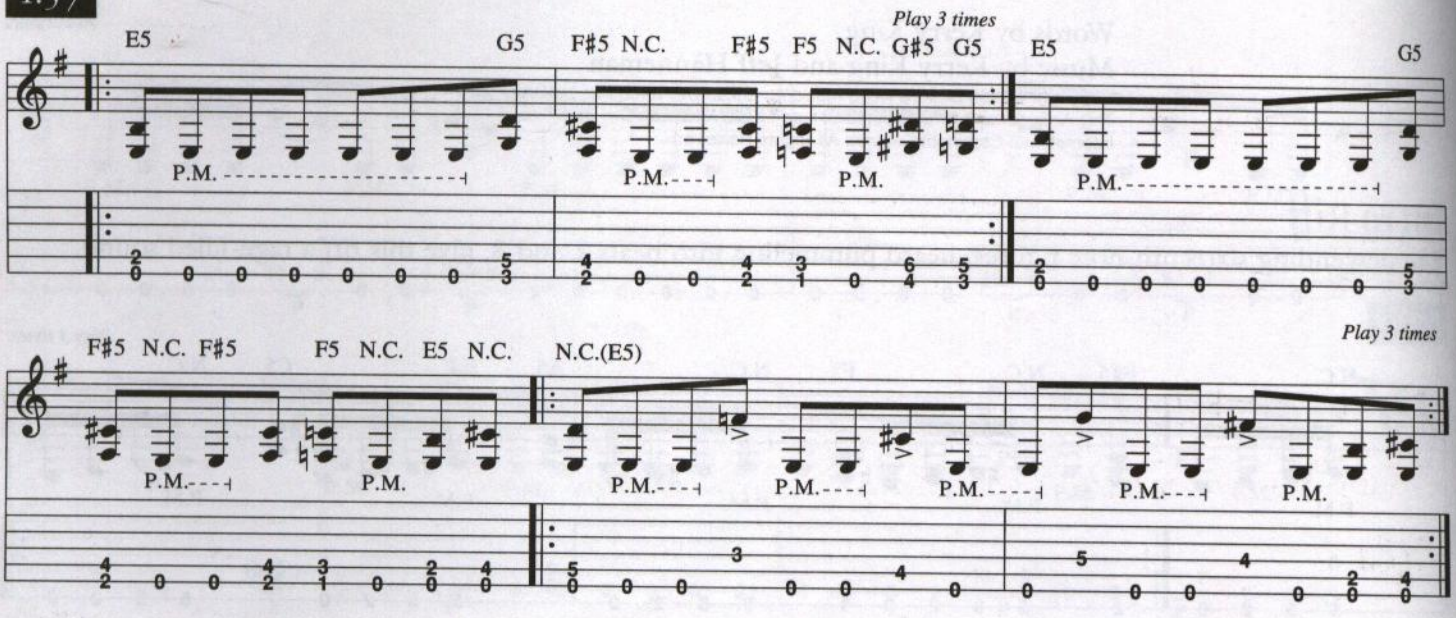


Born Of Fire (Cont.)

Bridge Riff

This riff is in two sections. The first half makes use of a descending minor-2nd motive. The second half is composed of an E pedal with a stabbing single-note line that is in rhythmic unison with the vocal line.

1:57



Seasons In The Abyss

From Seasons In The Abyss

Words by Tom Araya
Music by Jeff Hanneman

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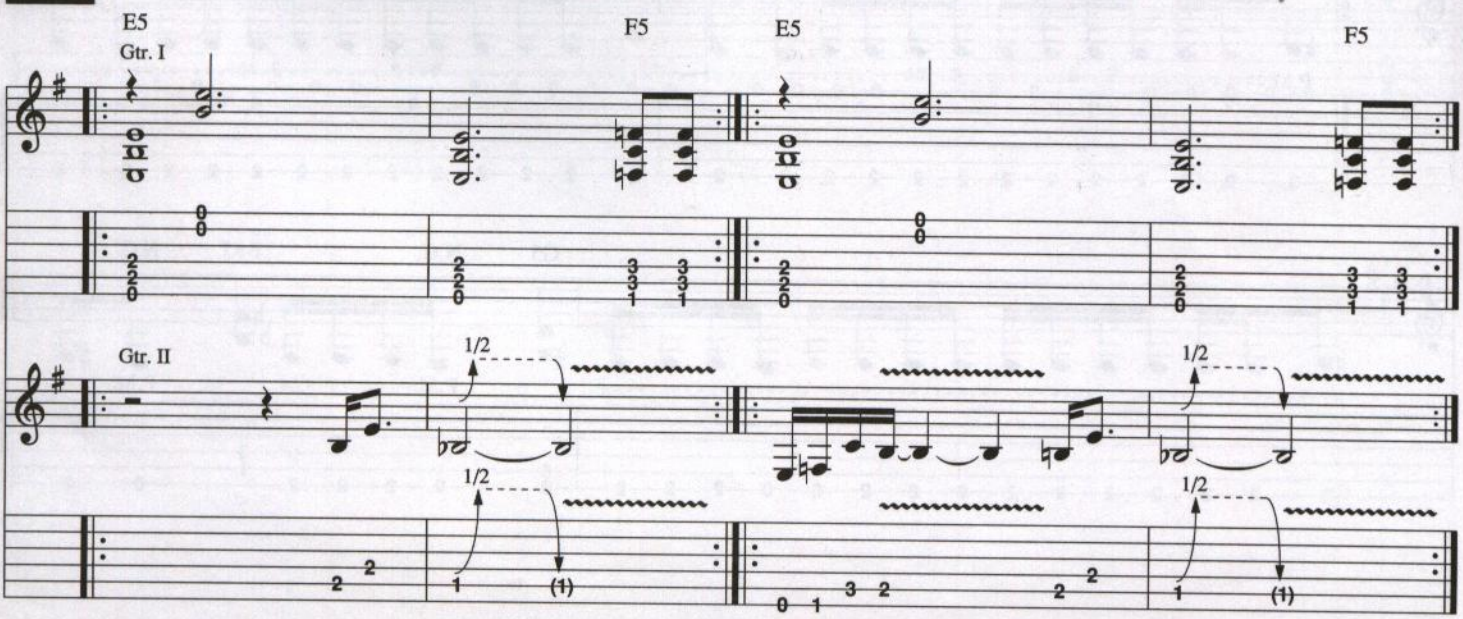
Layered Intro Riff

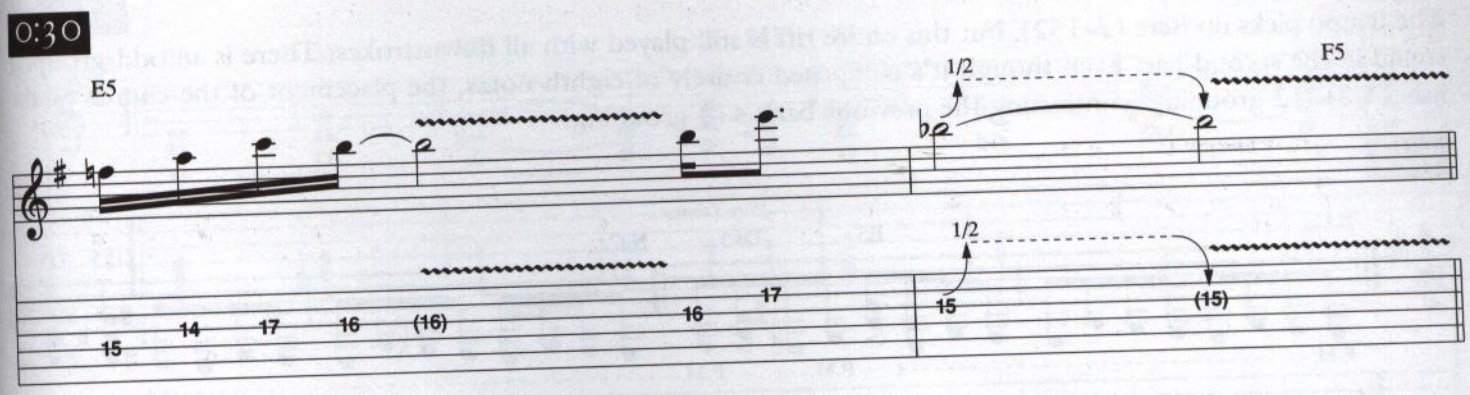
There are four guitars present in this tenebrous intro riff, but it can be easily simulated by two, as the arrangement here shows.

0:00



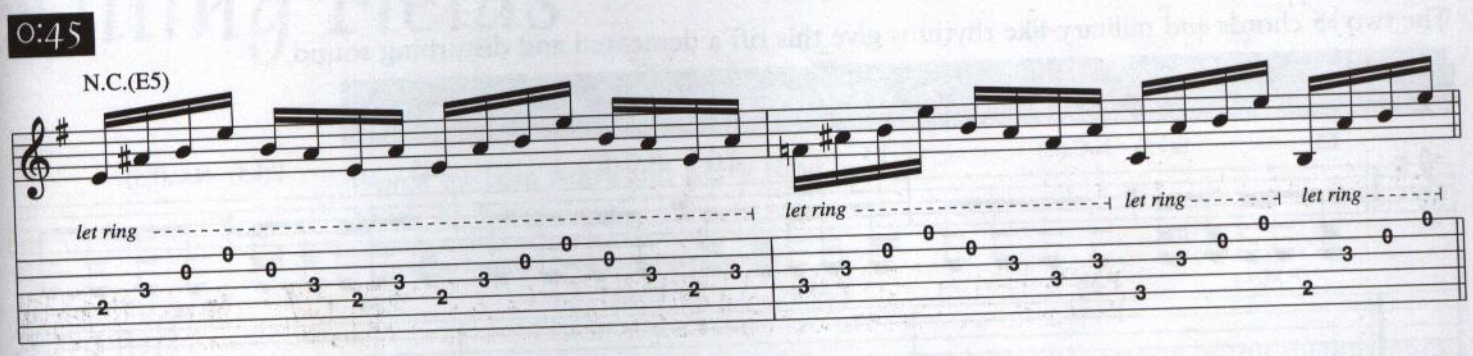
Octave Doubling

This figure doubles Gtr. II from the previous riff, but sounds two octaves higher, and adds an even more nightmarish quality.



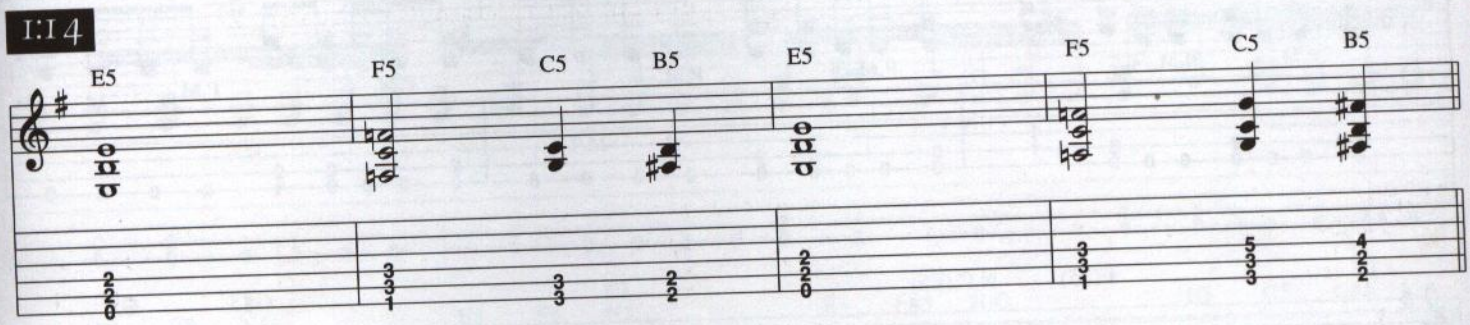
Clean Intro Riff

These "arpeggios," played with a clean tone, are extremely dissonant due to the A♯ and B (a minor 2nd), and F and E (a major 7th) ringing together.



Doom And Gloom Riff

This E Phrygian (E F G A B C D) riff, played at the same slow tempo as the previous part of the intro (♩=64), is composed of the lowest possible voicings: The C5 and B5 are inverted (5th in the bass) for the deepest possible sound.

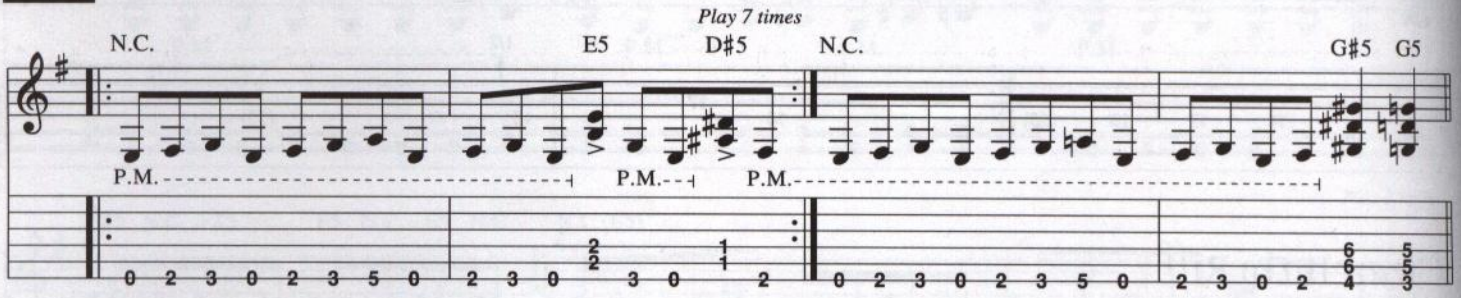


Seasons In The Abyss (Cont.)

Eighth-Note Riff

The tempo picks up here (♩=152), but this entire riff is still played with all downstrokes. There is an odd-grouped sound in the second bar: Even though it's composed entirely of eighth notes, the placement of the chords establishes a 3+3+2 grouping, contrasting the previous bar's 4+4 grouping.

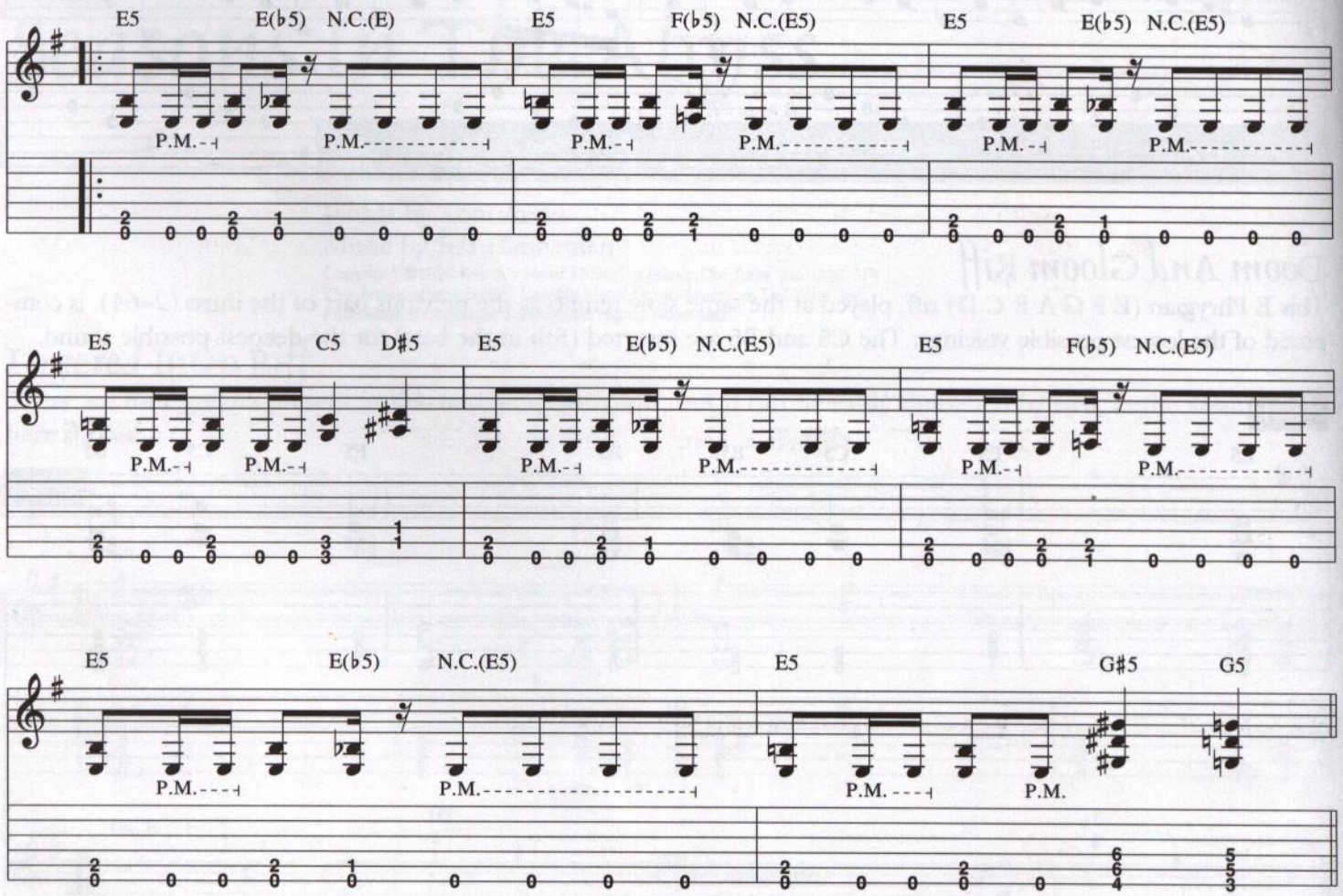
1:44



Verse Riff

The two ♭5 chords and military-like rhythms give this riff a demented and disturbing sound.

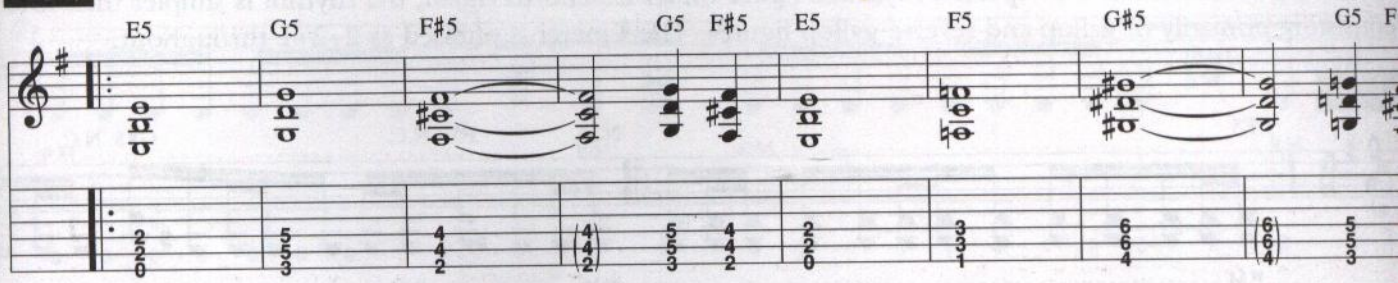
2:09



Chorus Riff

One of the catchiest of Slayer choruses, this riff is split in two four-bar phrases, each with a different melodic harmonic contour.

2:34



Killing Fields

From DIVINE INTERVENTION

Words by Tom Araya and Kerry King
Music by Kerry King

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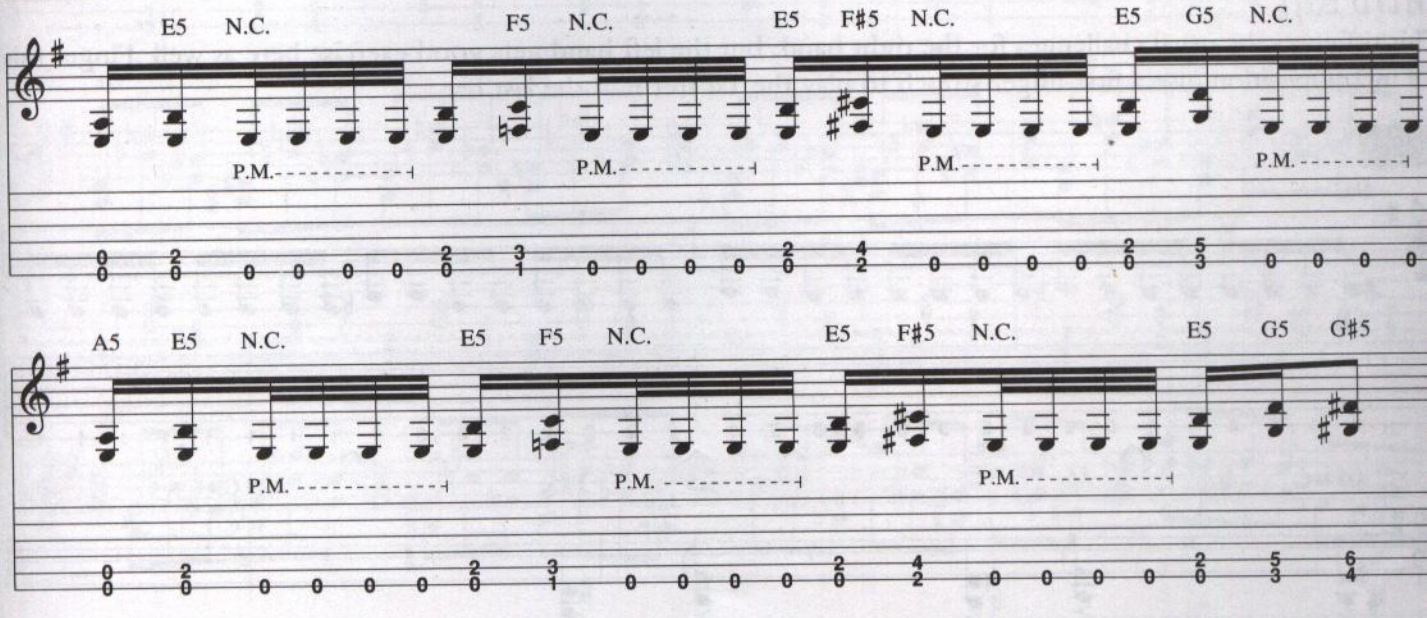
Intro Riff

Even though the tempo is moderate (♩=100), this riff is anything but. Don't let the notation of this rhythm intim idate you; it's simpler than it looks. Thirty-second notes are unusual in Slayer riffs, so if you want you can cour this riff in double time (♩=200) and think of this rhythm as 𝅘𝅥𝅯𝅘𝅥𝅯𝅘𝅥𝅯𝅘𝅥𝅯, instead of 𝅘𝅥𝅯𝅘𝅥𝅯𝅘𝅥𝅯𝅘𝅥𝅯𝅘𝅥𝅯𝅘𝅥𝅯.

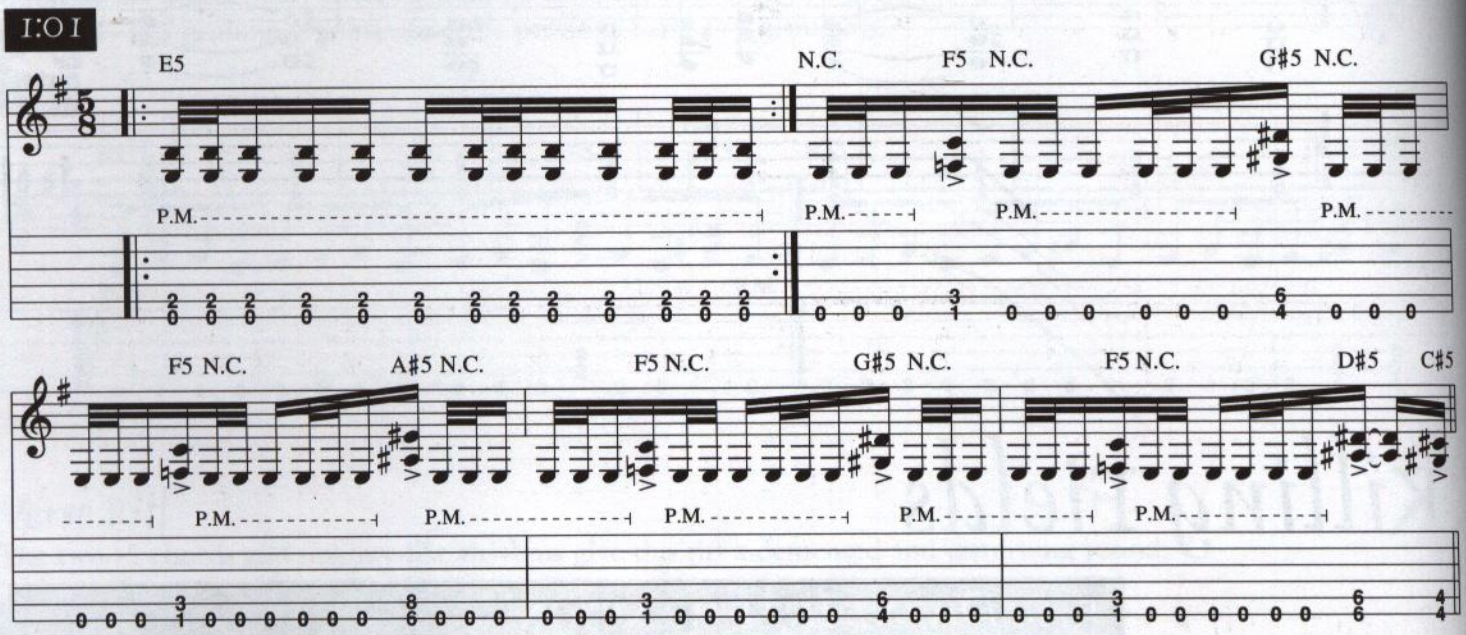
0:14



Killing Fields (Cont.)

Intro/Verse Riff

The first part of this riff is a repeated rhythmic figure on an E5 chord. Again, the rhythm is simpler than it looks, consisting primarily of gallop and reverse-gallop figures. The $\frac{5}{8}$ meter is phrased as 2+2+1 throughout.



Dittohead

From DIVINE INTERVENTION

Words and Music by Kerry King

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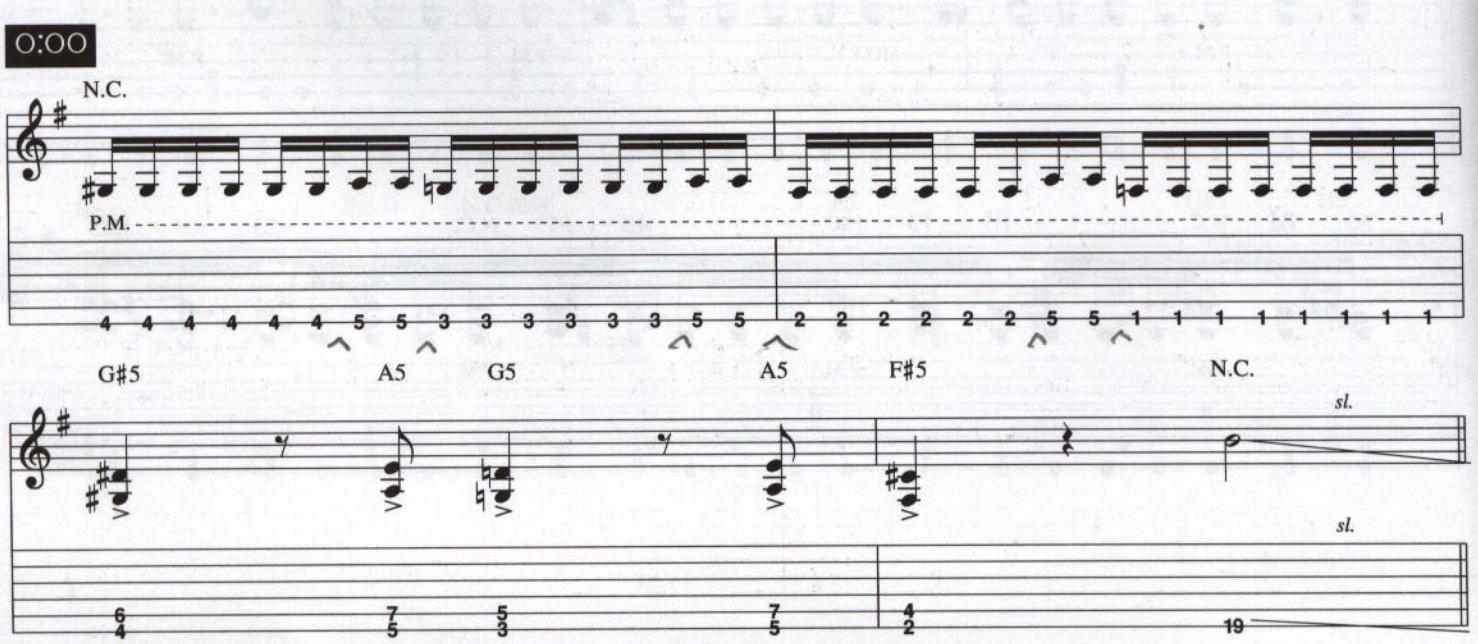
Intro Riff

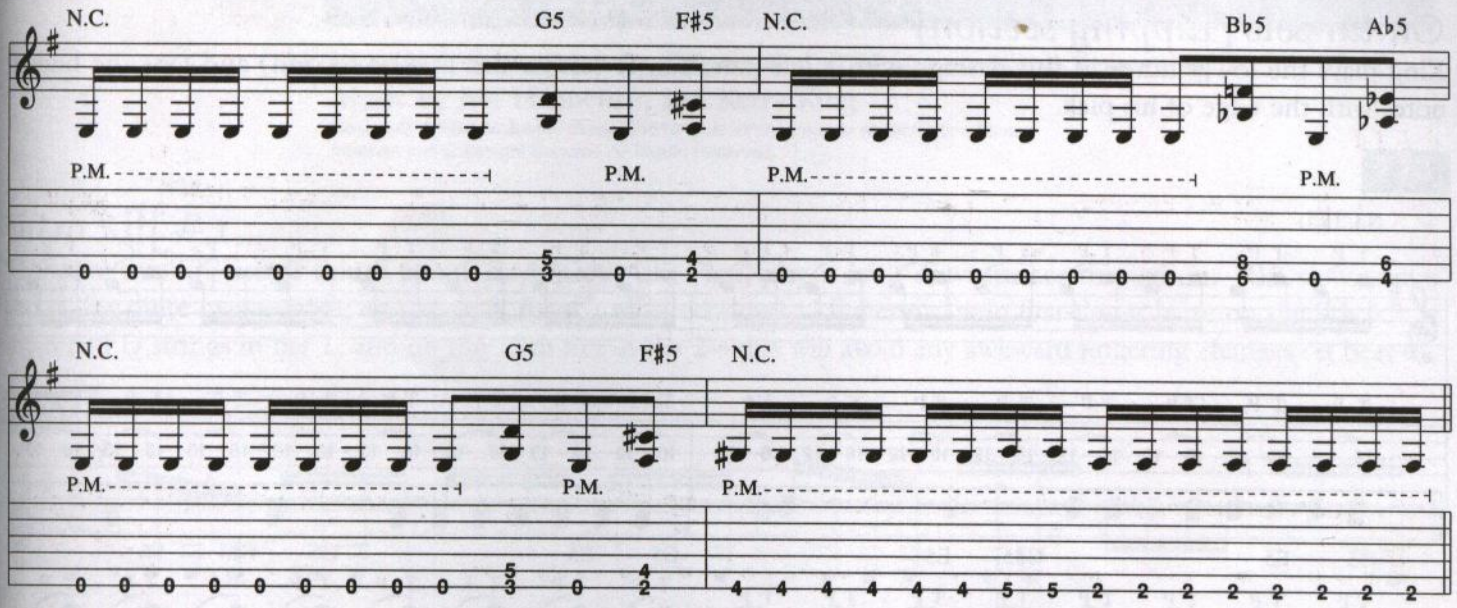
This riff poses the usual challenges for the right hand, but the left hand gets good exercise here as well. Finger this riff in 2nd position, use a first-finger stretch to play the 1st fret F in the last bar.



Verse Riff

Not only is the tempo already an almost unbelievable ♩=228, but here it's given a double-time feel!

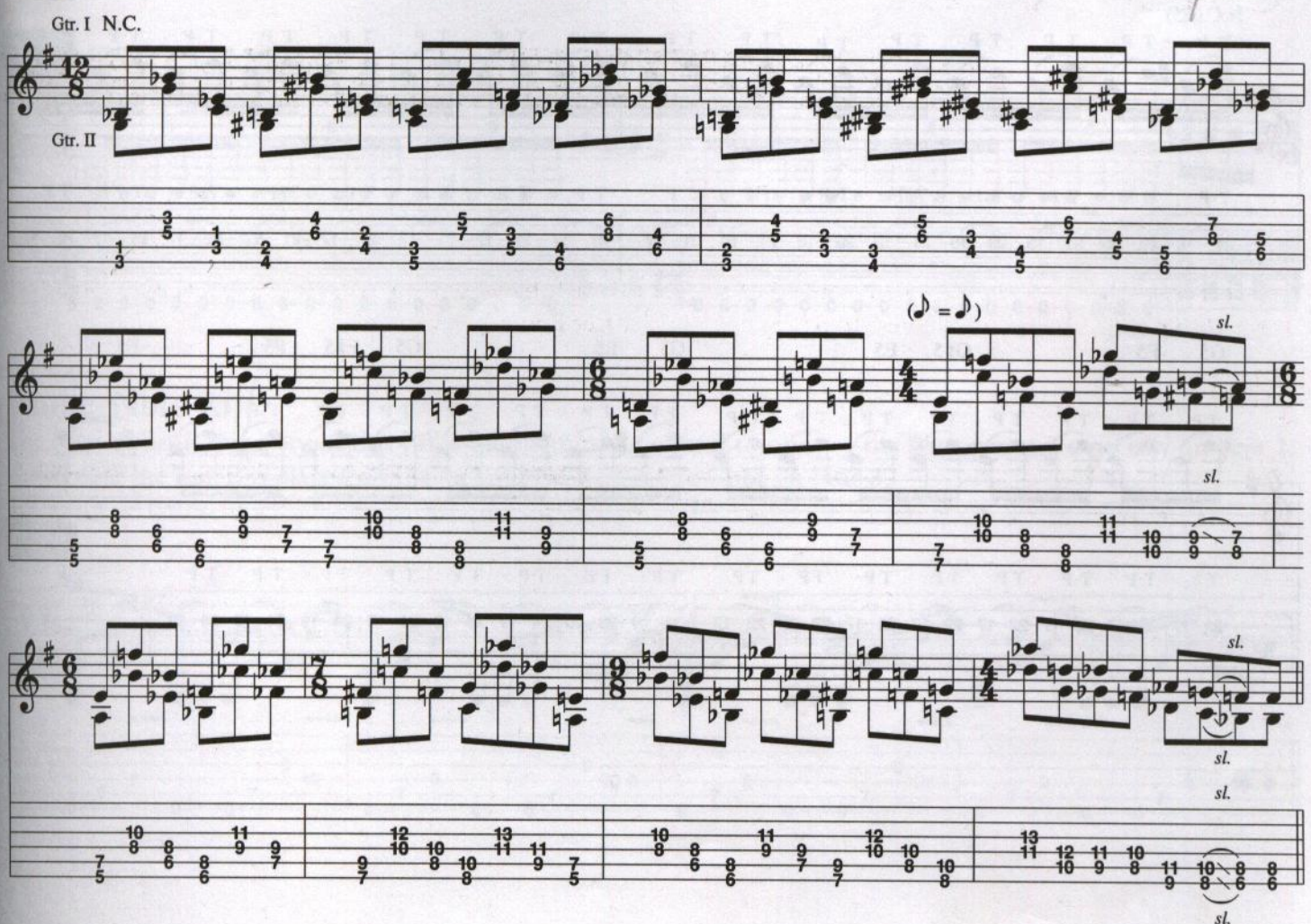
0:04



Harmony Riff

This two-guitar section is composed entirely of parallel harmony. It begins with minor 3rds, then splits into perfect 4ths, and finishes with perfect 5ths.

1:44

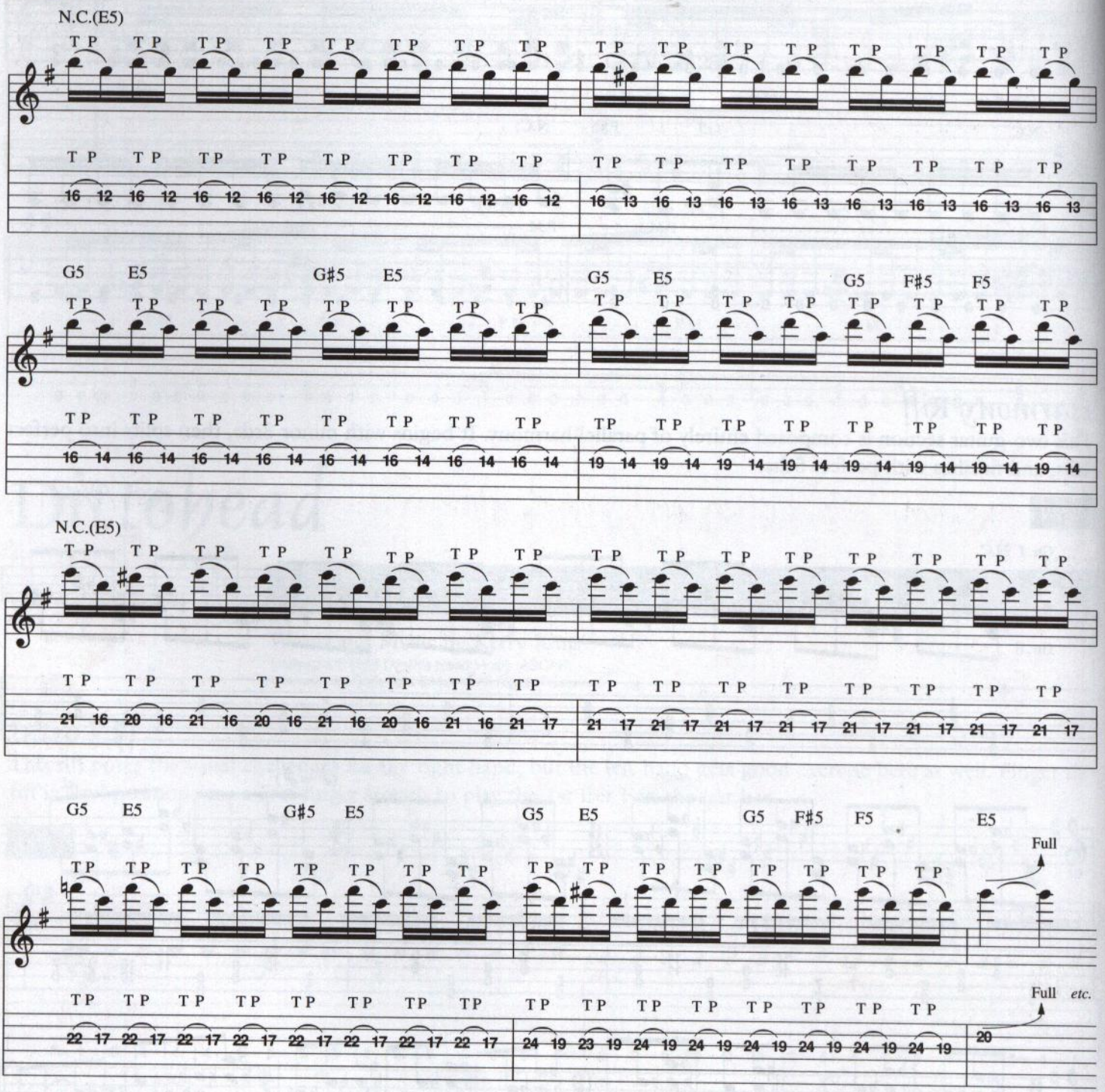


Dittohead (Cont.)

Guitar Solo (Tapping Section)

King plays the lower notes in this passage with a left-hand finger (either the first or second) and taps the higher notes with the edge of his pick.

1:55



Divine Intervention

From Divine Intervention

Words by Tom Araya, Paul Bostaph, Jeff Hanneman, and Kerry King
Music by Jeff Hanneman and Kerry King
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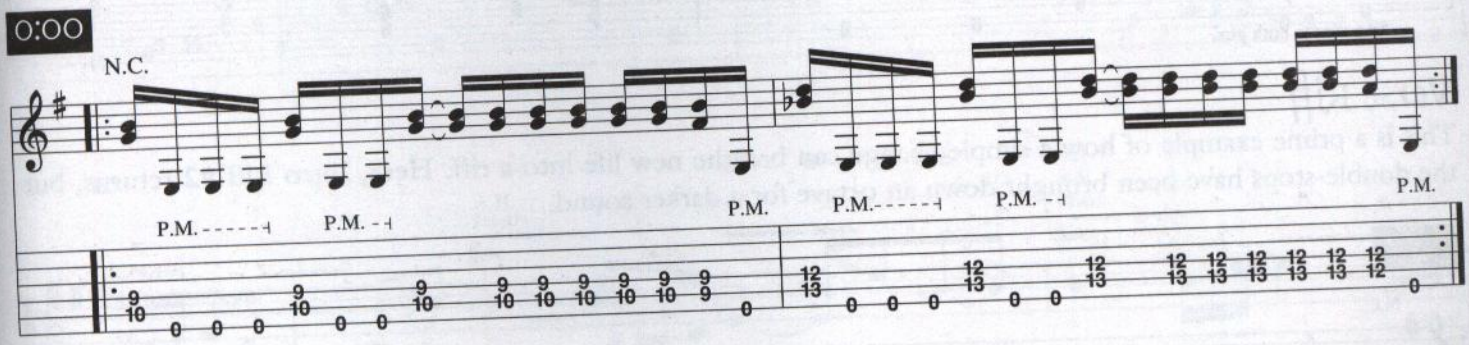
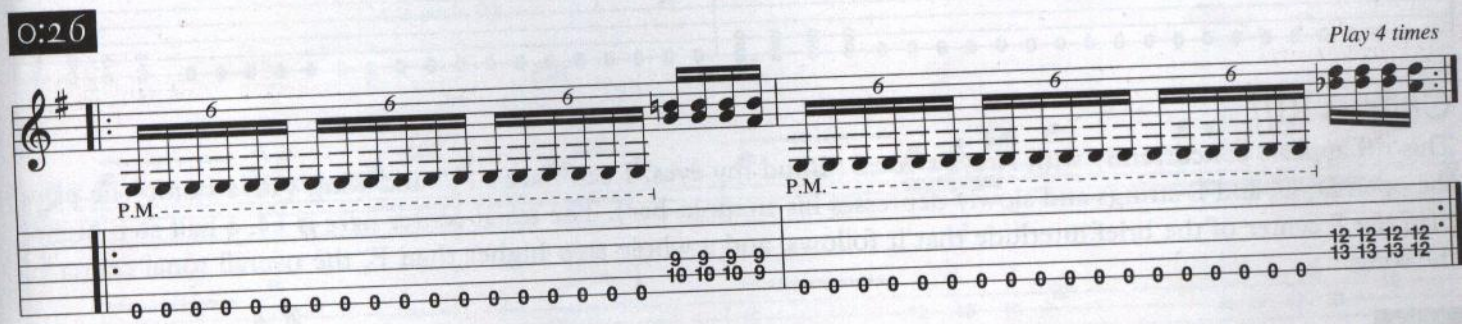
Intro Riff #1

There are two important things about playing this riff: First, play it with downstrokes throughout—the slow tempo makes this quite manageable; and second, for the most economical fingering use a first-finger barre on the 9th fret of the A and D strings in bar 1, and on the 12th fret in bar 2—this will avoid any awkward fingering changes on beat 4½.



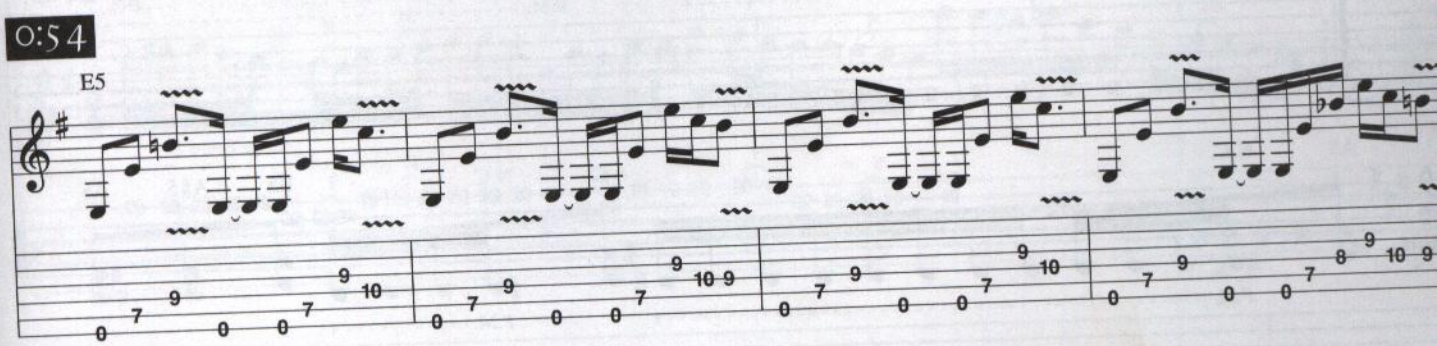
Intro Riff #2

This riff is quite similar to Intro Riff #1, as it too consists of a low-E pedal and double-stops on the A and D strings.



Single-Note Riff

The most difficult thing about this riff is the rhythm. Be careful to observe the syncopations, especially on beat 2: Notice that the low E is played on the "a" of beat 2 (2-e-&-a), not on beat 3.

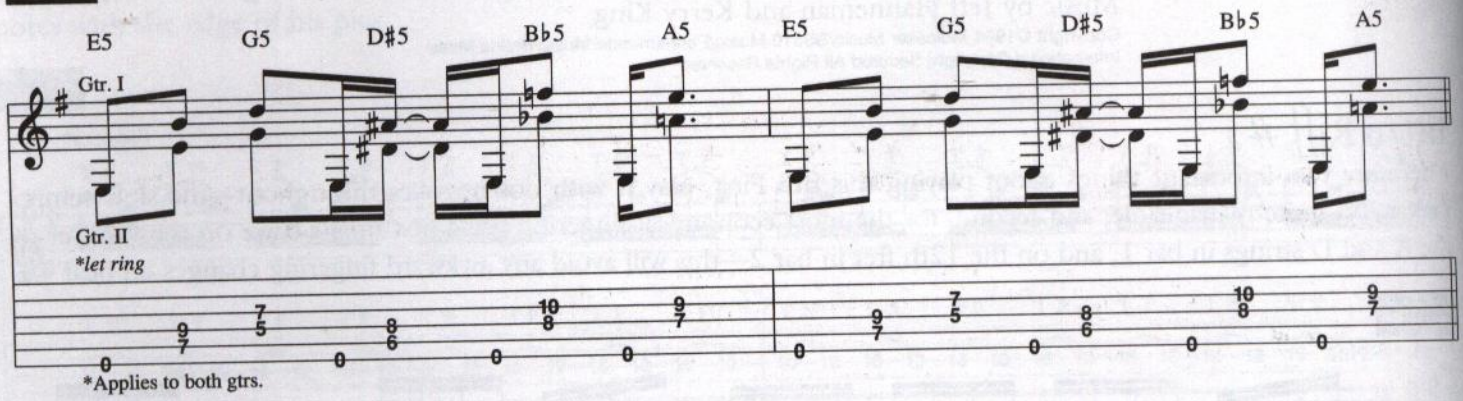


Divine Intervention (Cont.)

Pre-Verse Riff

This riff, played with a clean tone, is composed of five different power chords played above an E pedal.

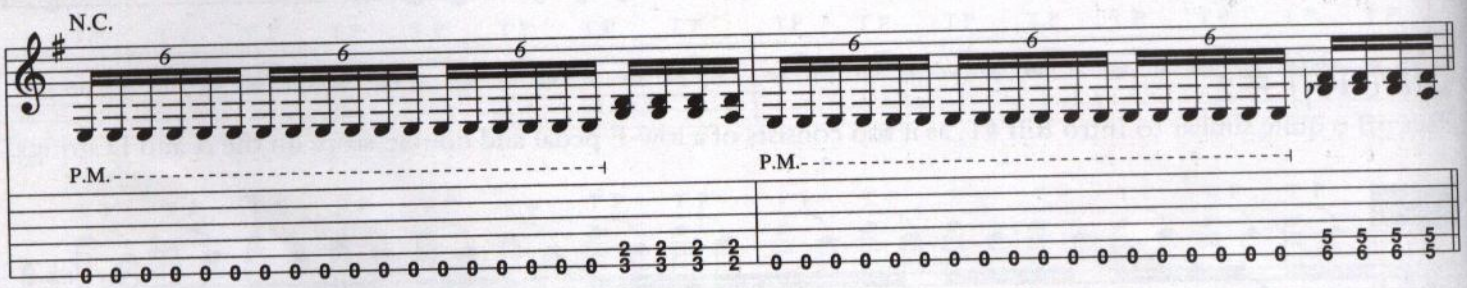
1:22



Verse Riff

This is a prime example of how a simple change can breathe new life into a riff. Here, Intro Riff #2 returns, but the double-stops have been brought down an octave for a darker sound.

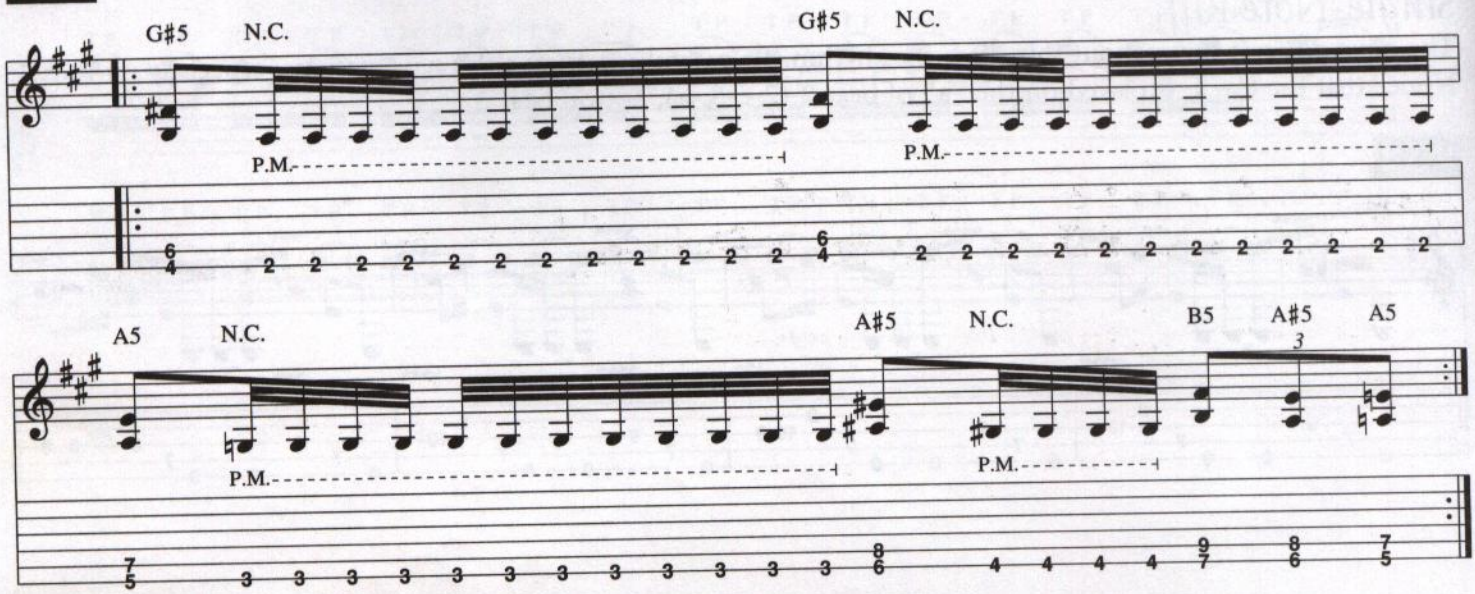
1:22



Chorus Riff

This riff appears concurrently with Araya's vocal "Blind my eyes, I can't see . . ." and King's dive-bomb (he plays the open D, G, and B strings and slowly depresses his tremolo bar). The tonal center here is F♯, a half step higher than the F center of the brief interlude that it follows, and a whole step higher than E, the overall tonal center of the song.

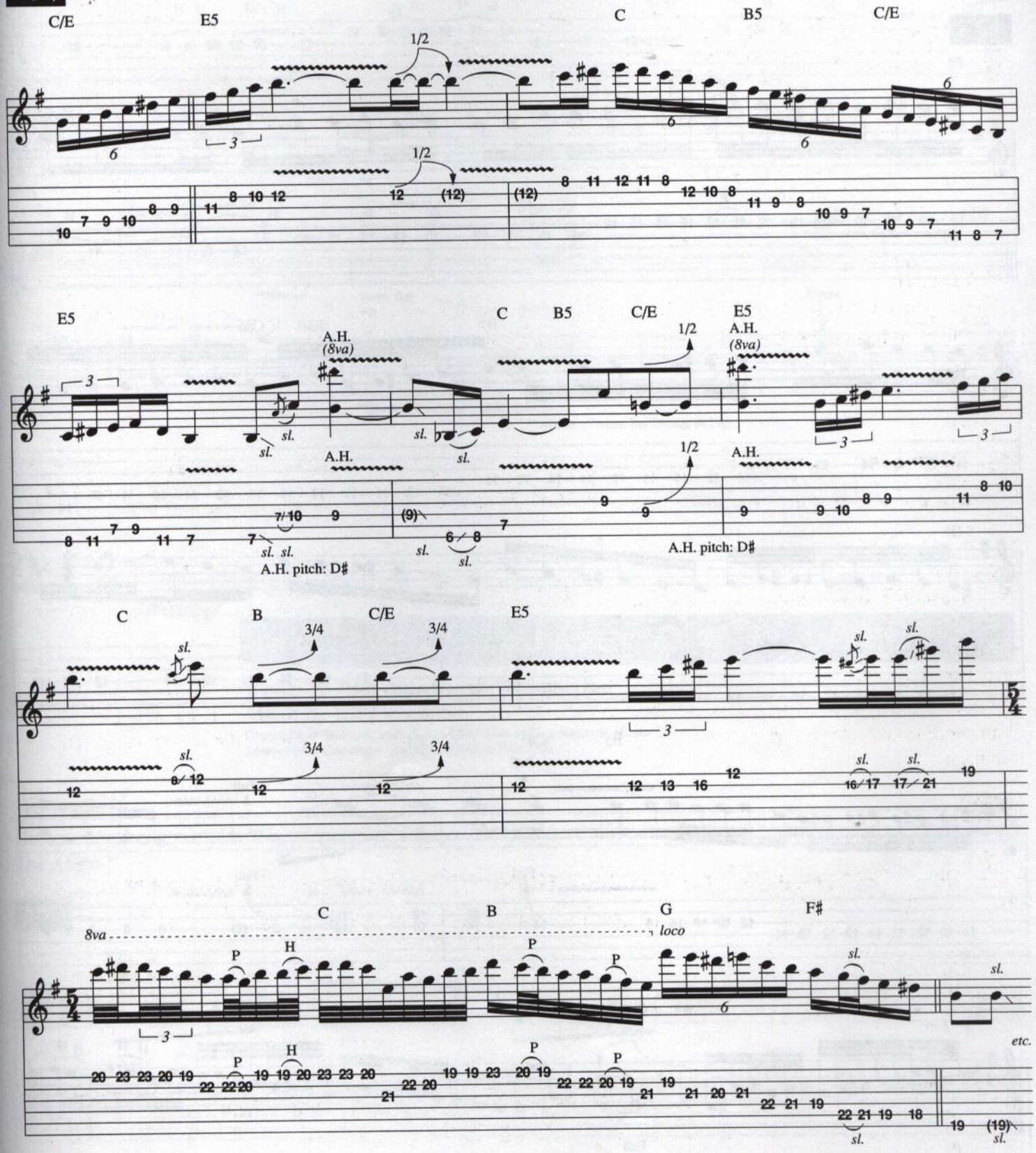
2:13



King's Solo

The best thing about this solo is the use of recurring melodic ideas (motives) that are constantly evolving, yet always recognizable. In fact, all of the slow passages in the solo are related—the fast scalar work serves only as a means to join together King's more profound melodic work. To ensure that the D♯ artificial harmonic sounds, play closer to the rhythm pickup than the bridge pickup.

2:54

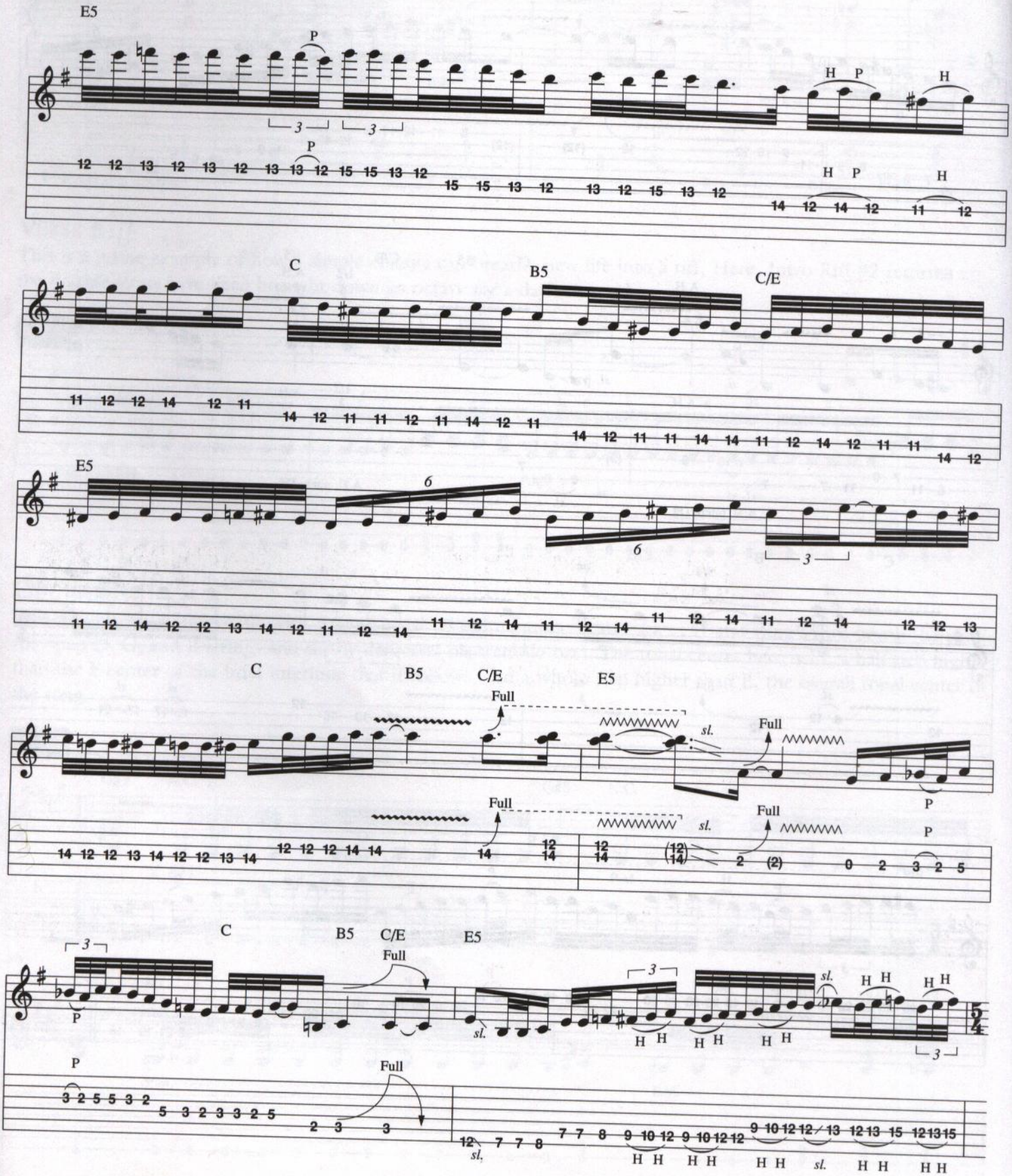


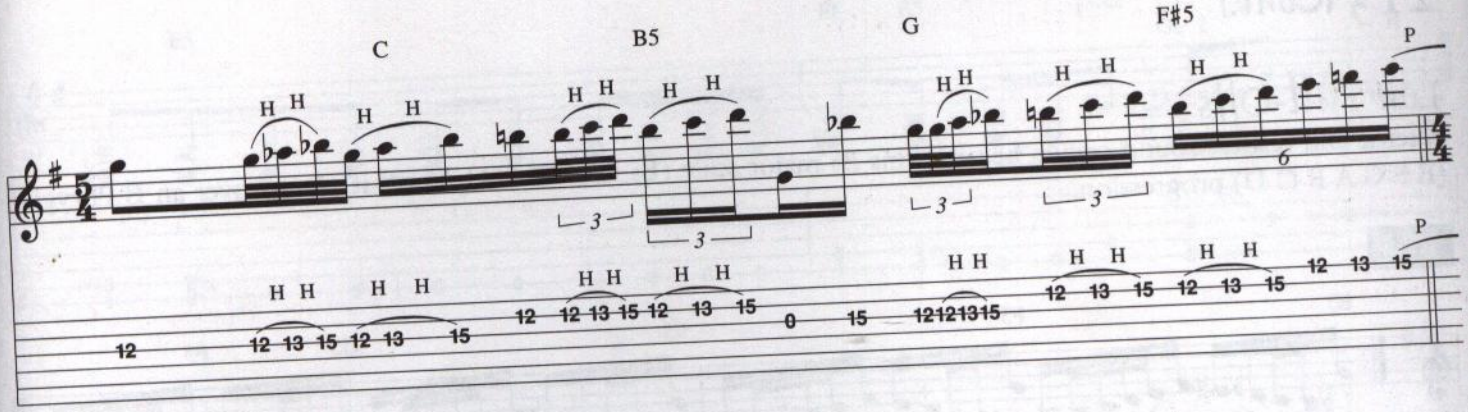
Divine Intervention (Cont.)

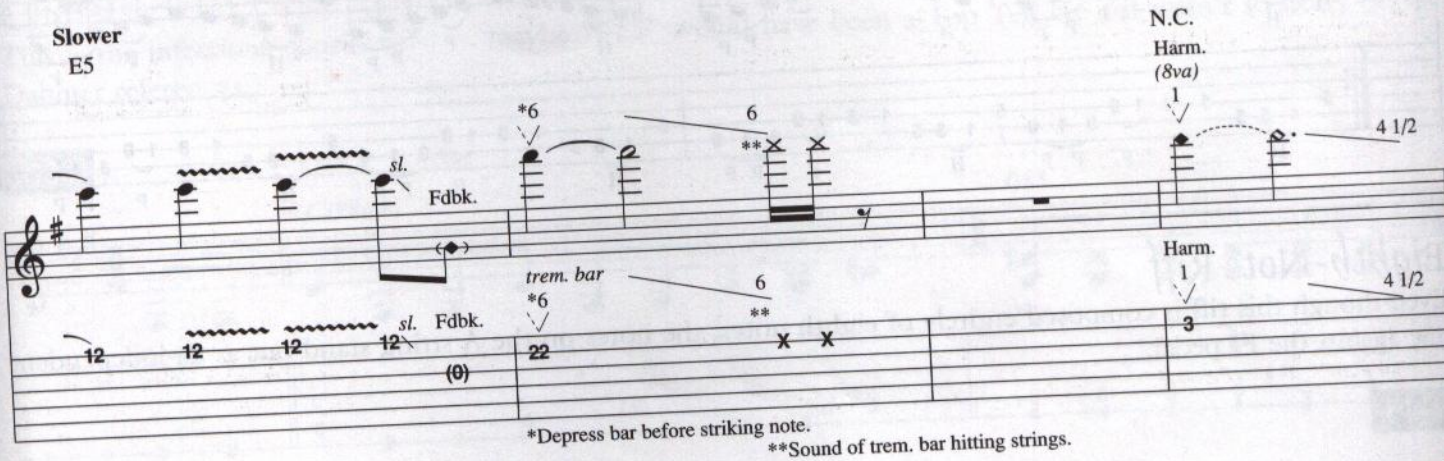
Hanneman's Solo

Unlike King, who adhered exclusively to E harmonic minor (E F♯ G A B C D♯), during his solo, Hanneman is playing too quickly to think about scales—sometimes more than 13 notes per second! He is definitely playing in E, but his adherence to fingering patterns (see bar 2) negates any specific scale reference.

3:15







*Depress bar before striking note.
**Sound of trem. bar hitting strings.

213

From DIVINE INTERVENTION

Words by Tom Araya and Jeff Hanneman
Music by Jeff Hanneman

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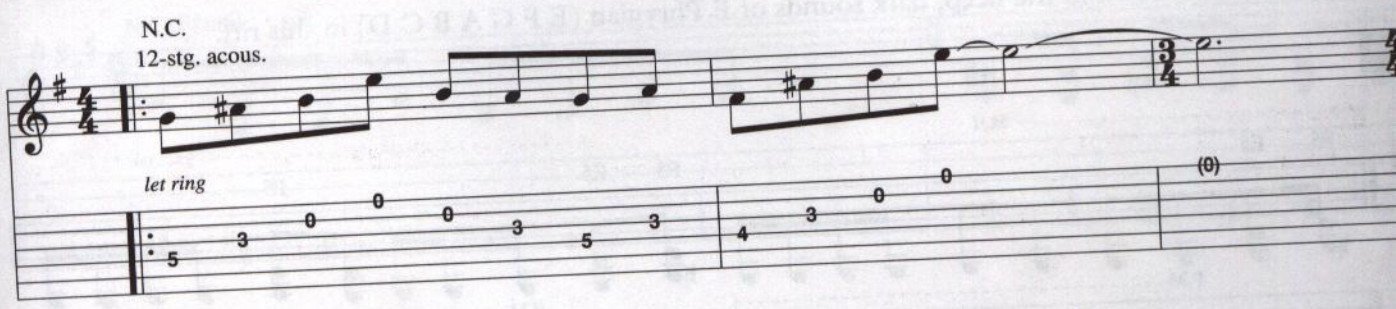
Intro Riff

Here is another example of an arpeggiated intro composed of dissonant "chords" reminiscent of "Seasons
The Abyss."

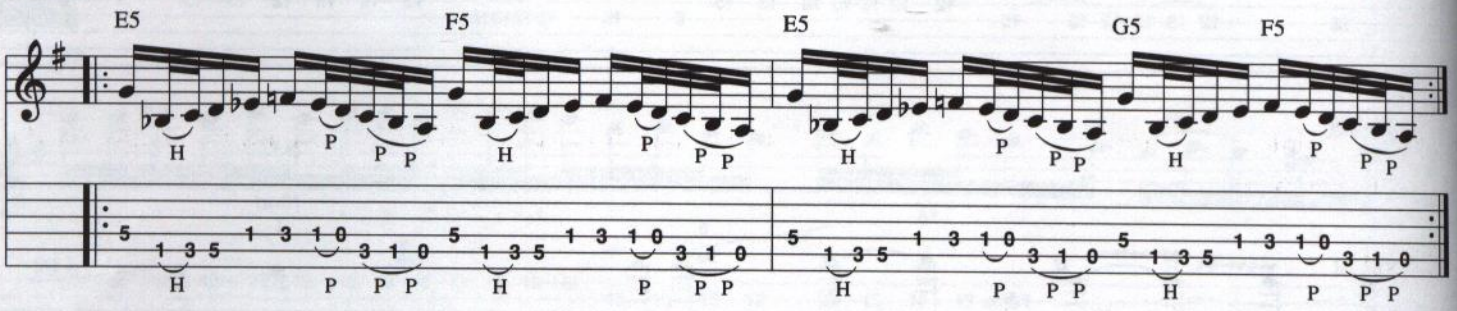
0:00



Low Pull-Offs

A tense and restless sound occurs because this B♭ major scale (B♭ C D E♭ F G A) riff is played over an E Phrygian (E F G A B C D) progression.

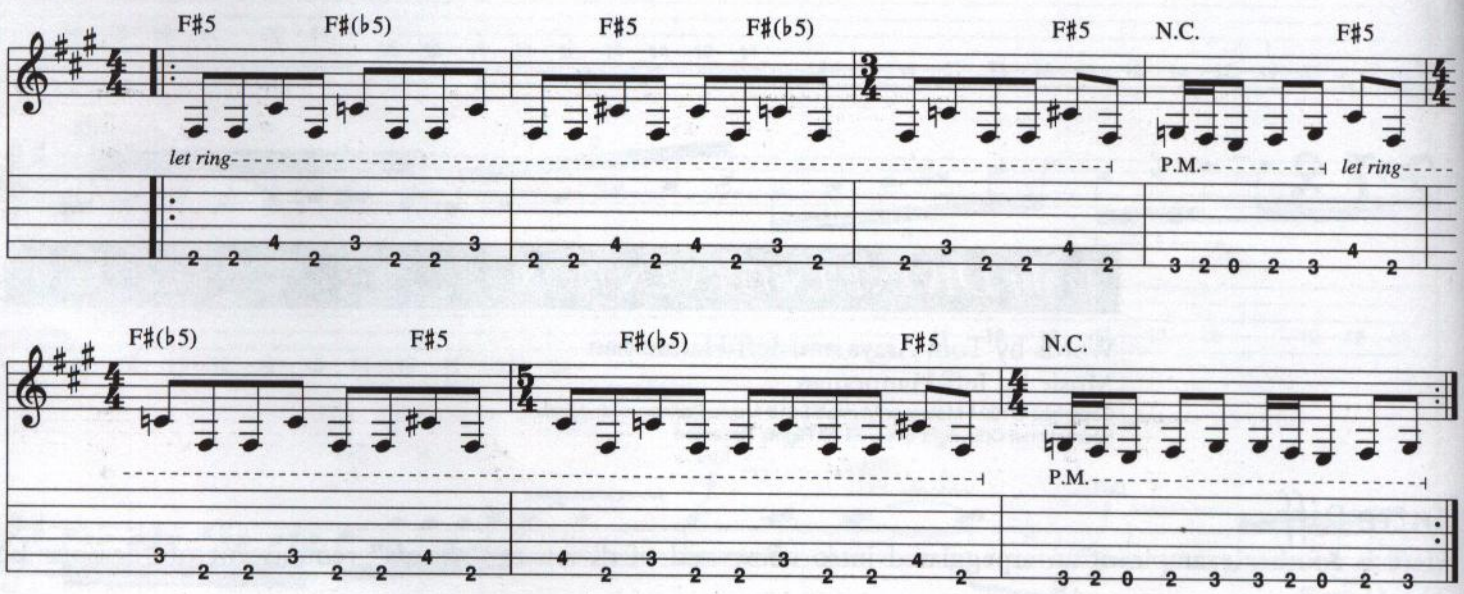
1:23



Eighth-Note Riff

Even though this riff is composed entirely of eighth notes, the notes on the A string stand out as an independent line against the F♯ pedal.

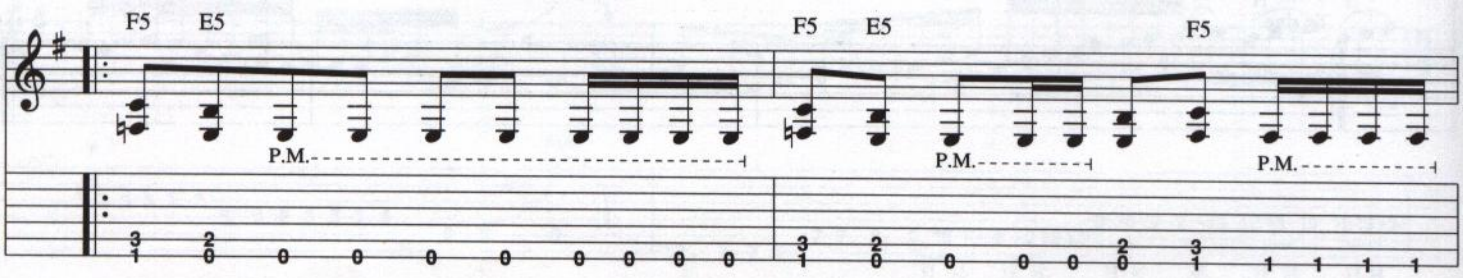
1:43

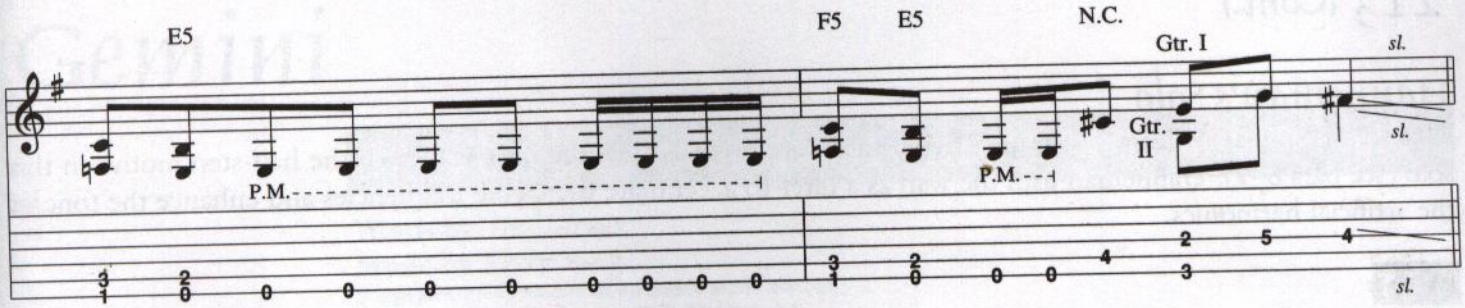


Verse Riff

Hanneman sinks back down to the deep, dark sounds of E Phrygian (E F G A B C D) in this riff.

2:06

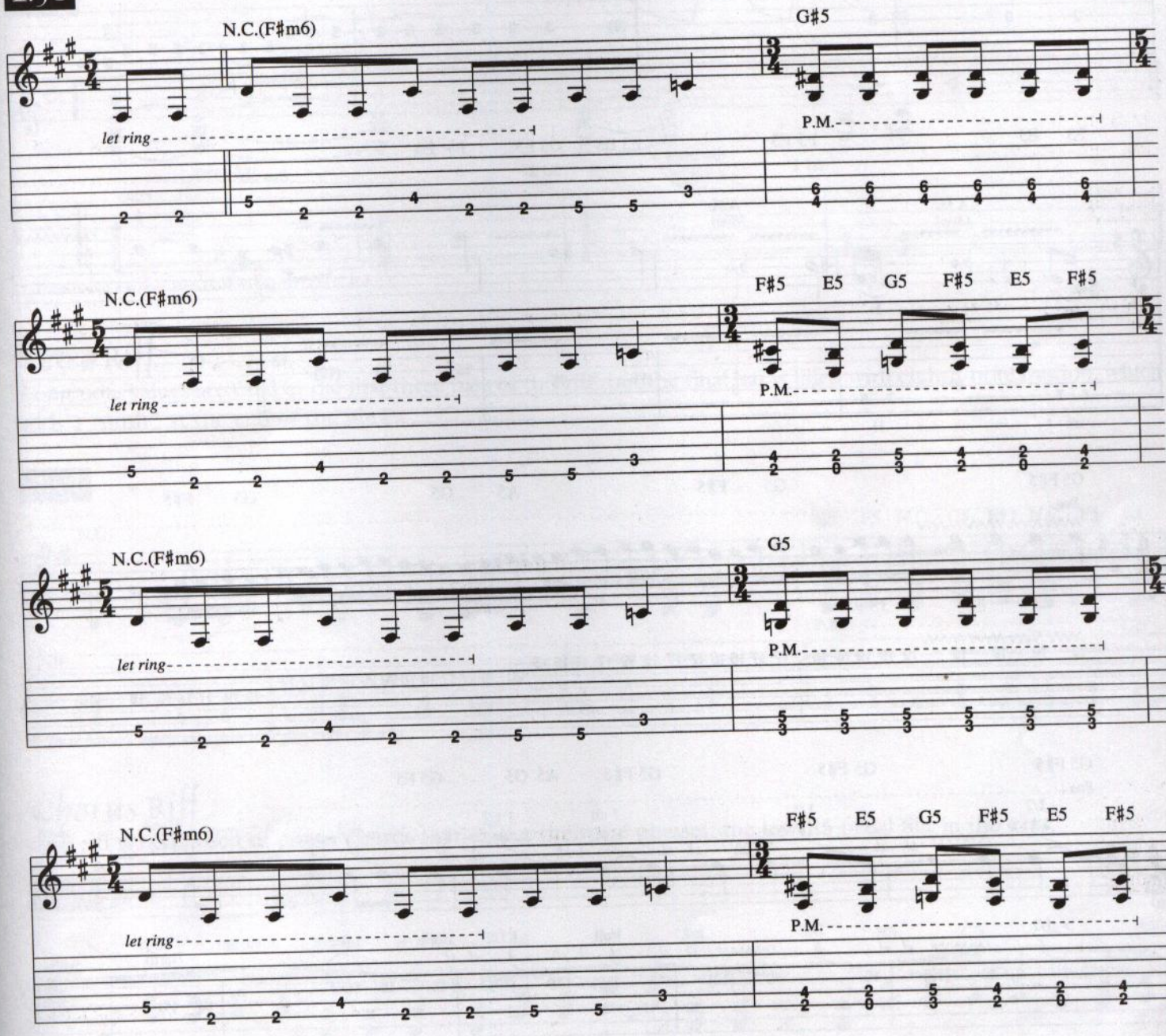




Chorus

This is the infectious chorus riff . . . maybe "213" would have been a Top Ten hit if it wasn't so heavy on the Dahmer references.

2:31

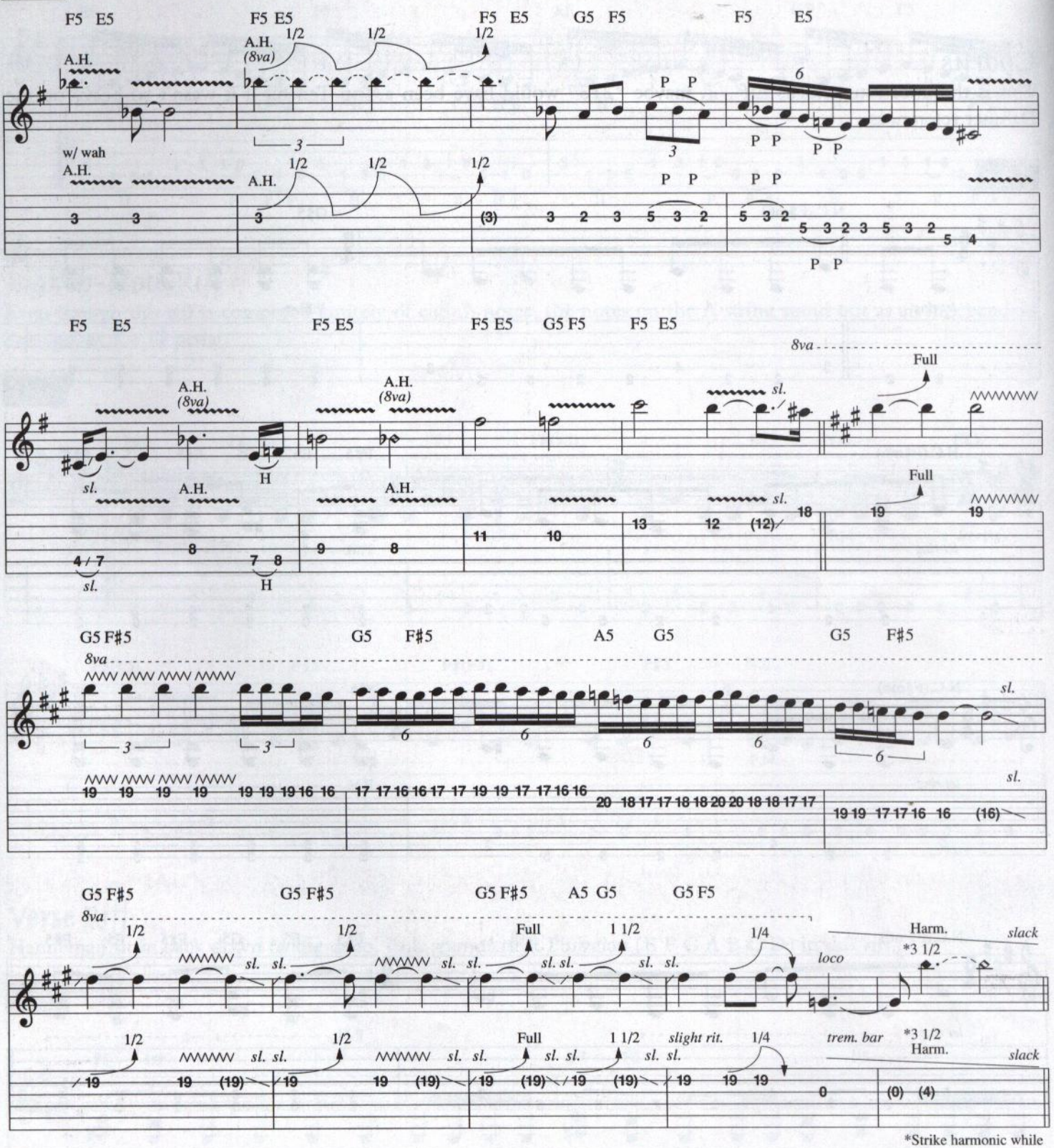


213 (Cont.)

Hanneman's Solo

This solo is similar to King's solo in "Divine Intervention." Notice the importance of the half-step motive in this solo (see bars 6–9). Hanneman uses the wah as a filter to accentuate the treble frequencies and enhance the tone of the artificial harmonics.

3:28



*Strike harmonic while depressing bar.

Gemini

From UNDISPUTED ATTITUDE

Words by Tom Araya
Music by Kerry King

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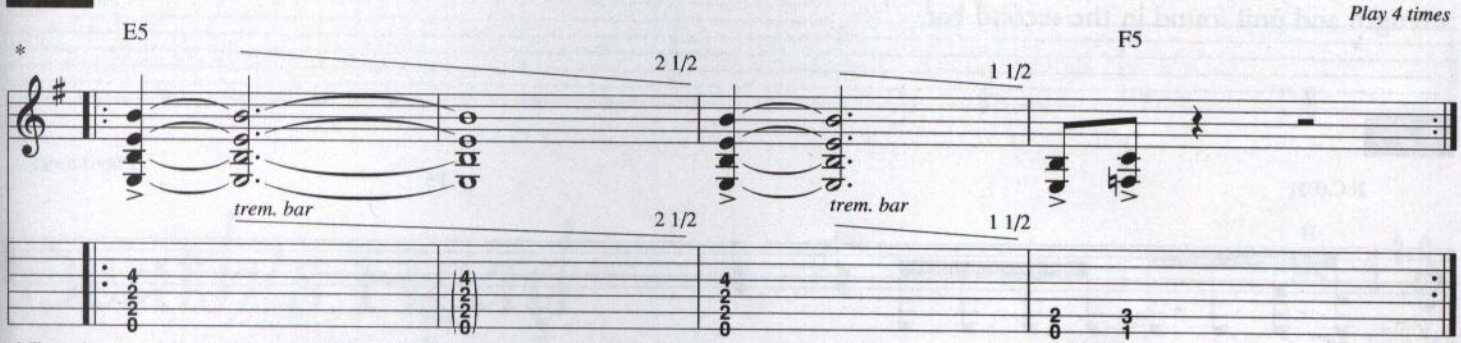
Intro/Outro Riff

The most difficult thing about this riff is making sure that the rising of the tremolo bar is not heard (at the end of bars 2 and 4). This problem can be solved in this way: Hold the chord until the last possible moment, and just before you release the bar, mute the strings with your left hand.

0:00

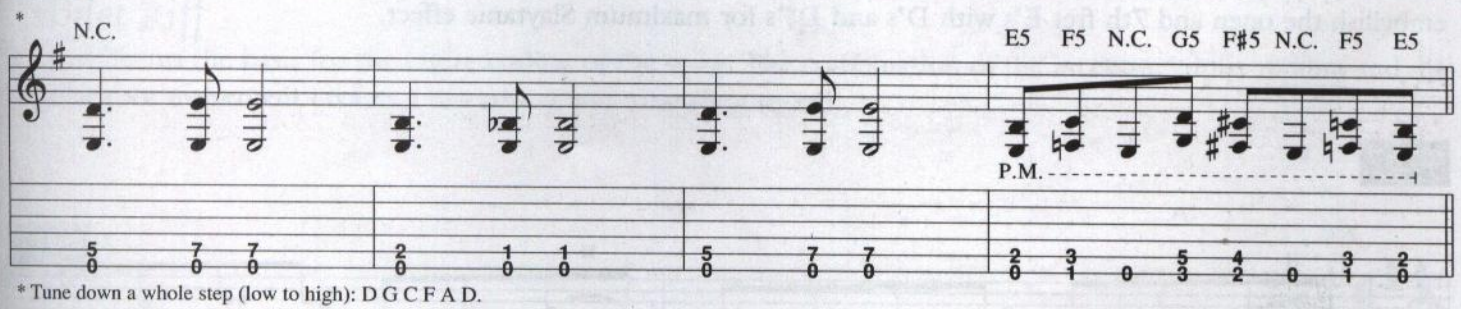


* Tune down a whole step (low to high): D G C F A D.

Verse Riff

Long note values are used in the first three bars of this riff, but the final bar is filled with eighth-note motion, which adds a "push" at the end of the phrase.

0:51

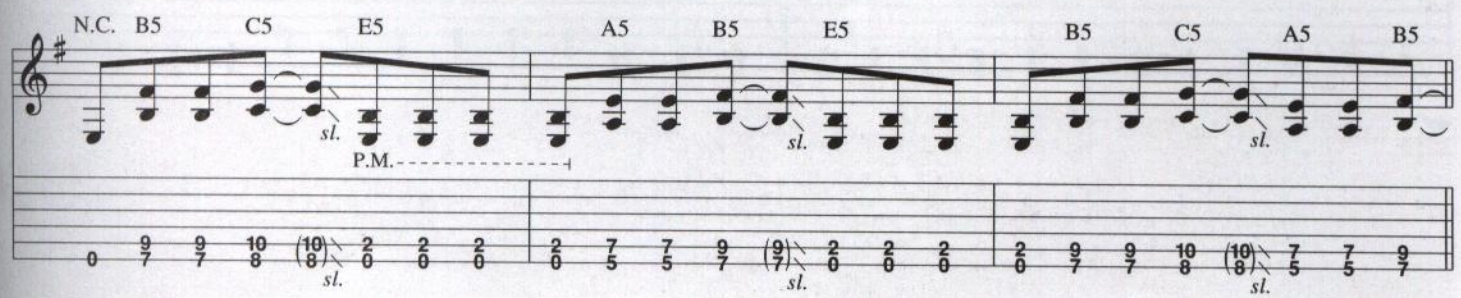


* Tune down a whole step (low to high): D G C F A D.

Chorus Riff

This riff is composed of power chords that mirror the vocal phrases; the low E5 pedal fills in the gaps.

0:31



Bitter Peace

From DIABOLUS IN MUSICA

Words by Jeff Hanneman
Music by Jeff Hanneman
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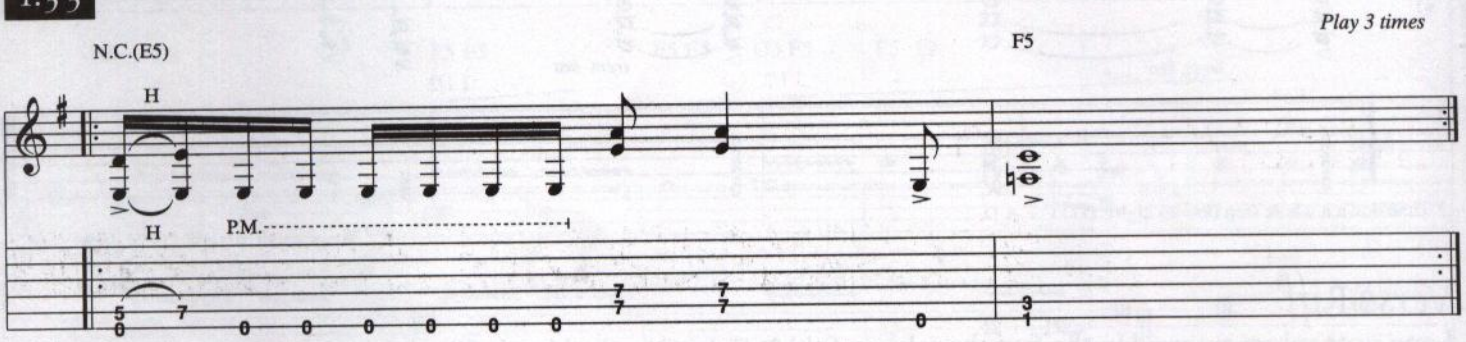
Fast Riff

Just after the slow introduction, this powerhouse riff is unleashed. The first bar is, essentially, just an ornamented E5 chord. The F5 chord, in bar 2, is the ♭II in this key. The sound of the ♭II chord is so striking and tension filled that Hanneman simply lets it ring out, thus contrasting the rhythmic vitality of the first bar with the brute harmonic strength and pull found in the second bar.

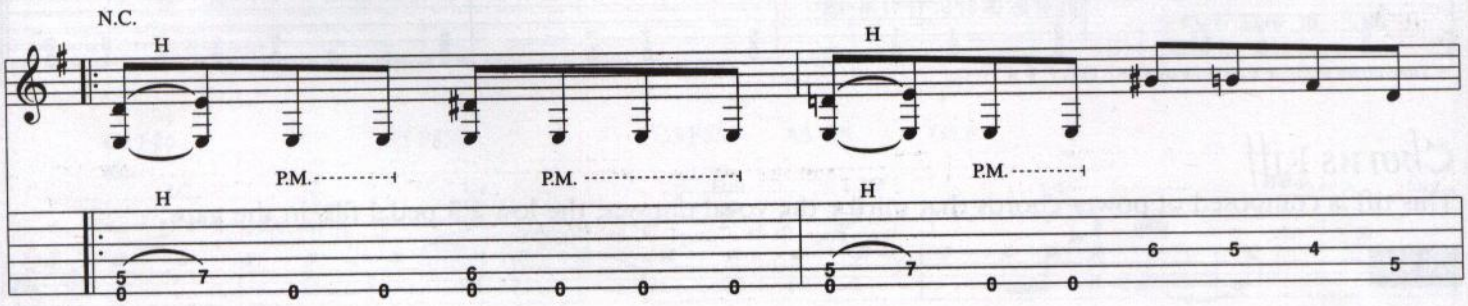
1:33

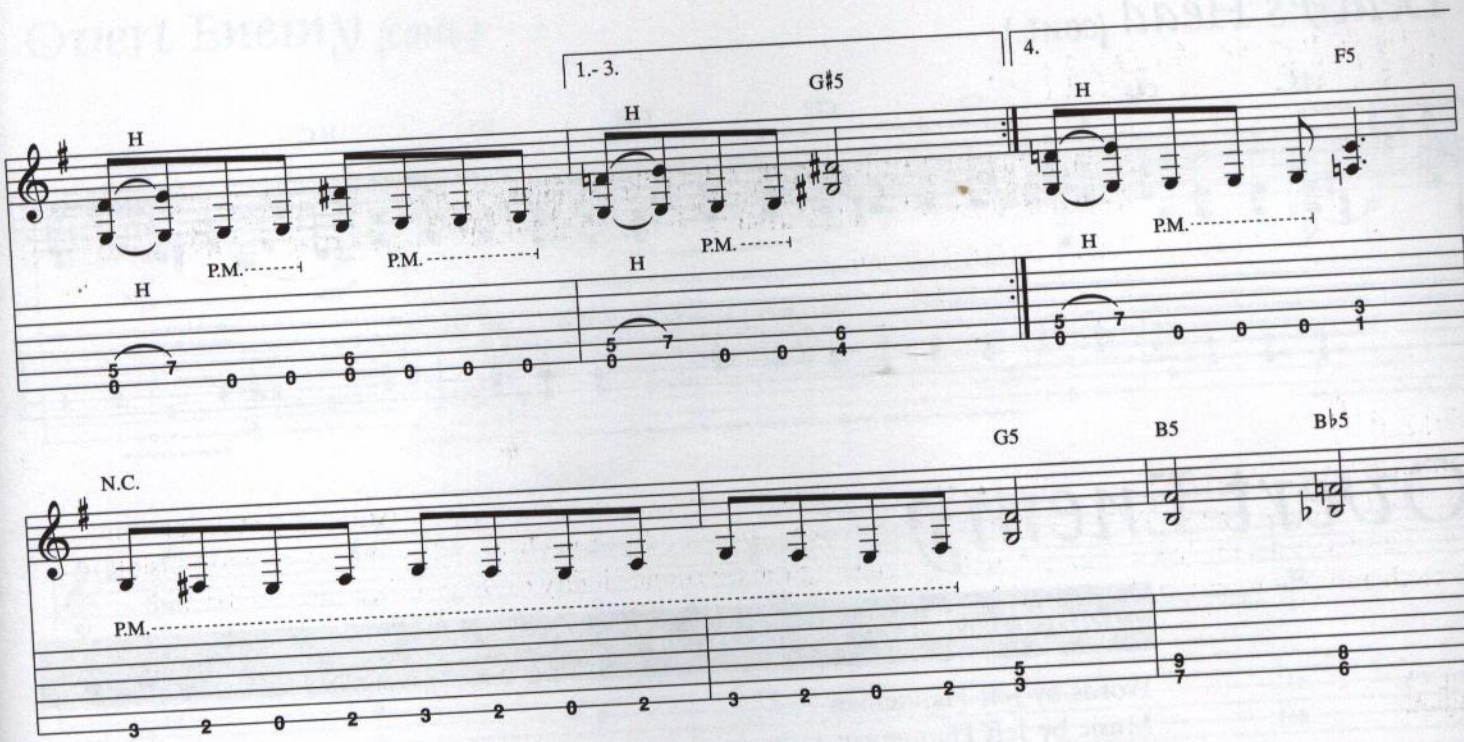


Bridge Riff

Lesser men might simply play the opening bars of this riff as octave E's . . . not Hanneman and King. Here they embellish the open and 7th fret E's with D's and D♯'s for maximum Slaytanic effect.

3:27





Death's Head

From DIABOLUS IN MUSICA

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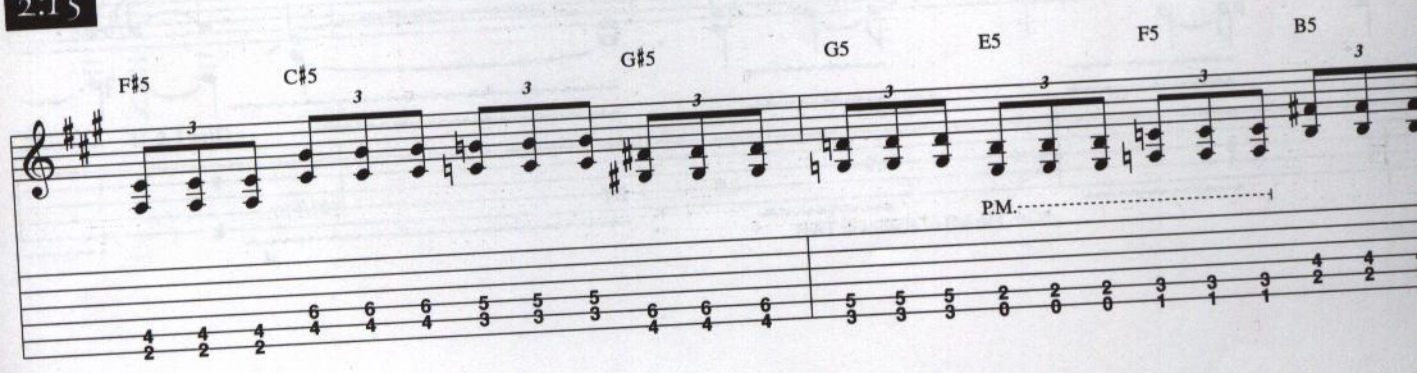
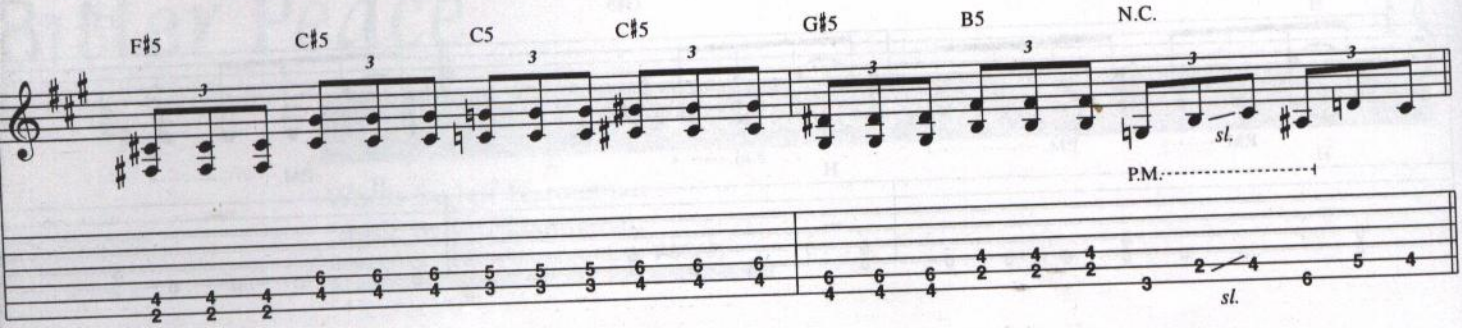
Triplet Riff

This riff forms the basis for the entire ending of the song. The combination of the incessant triplet rhythm and th
angular root movement creates a disturbing and unsettling mood.

2:15



Death's Head (cont.)



Overt Enemy

From Diabolus In Musica

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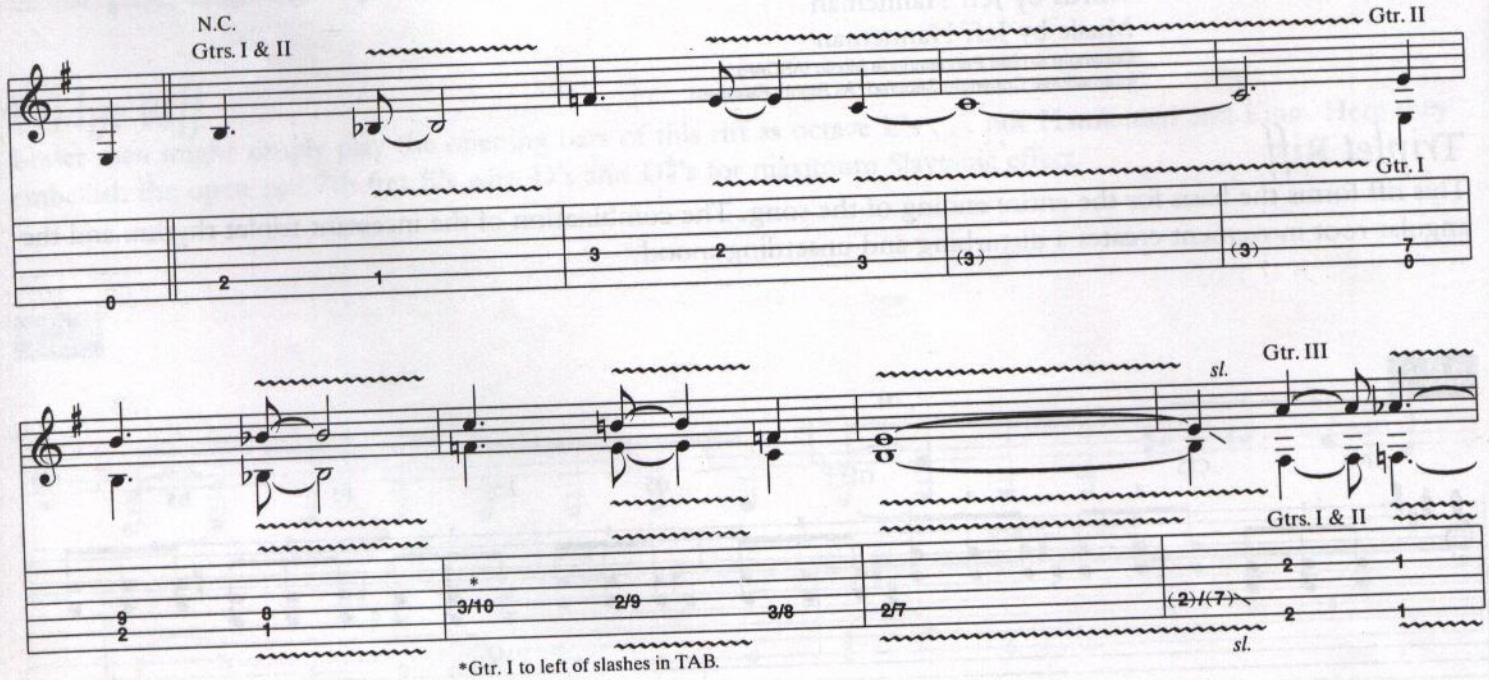
Motivic Intro Riff

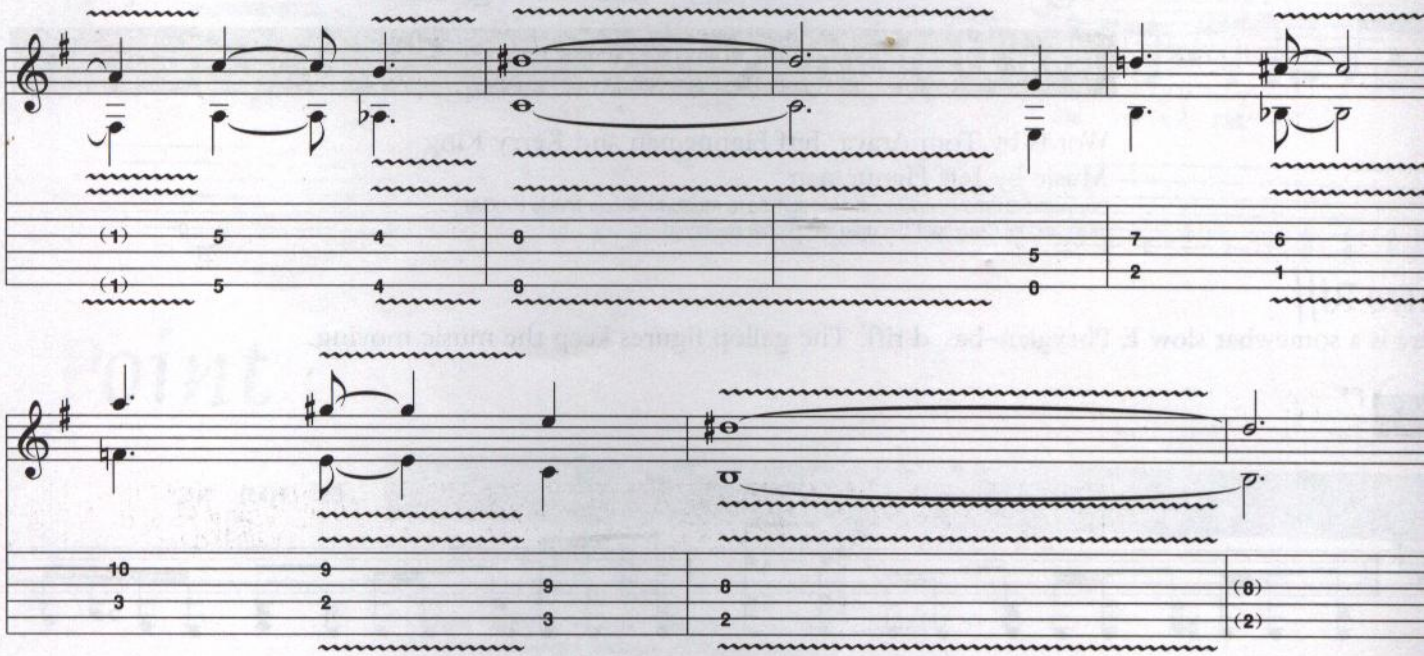
Notice how Hanneman develops a simple motive (an upward leap followed by a downward step) into a large-scale introductory section. The guitars begin in unison but soon split into octaves, followed by 5ths, 4ths, and (finally) a brooding, *Twilight Zone*–esque section in major and minor 10ths.

0:26



*Gtr. I to left of slashes in TAB.

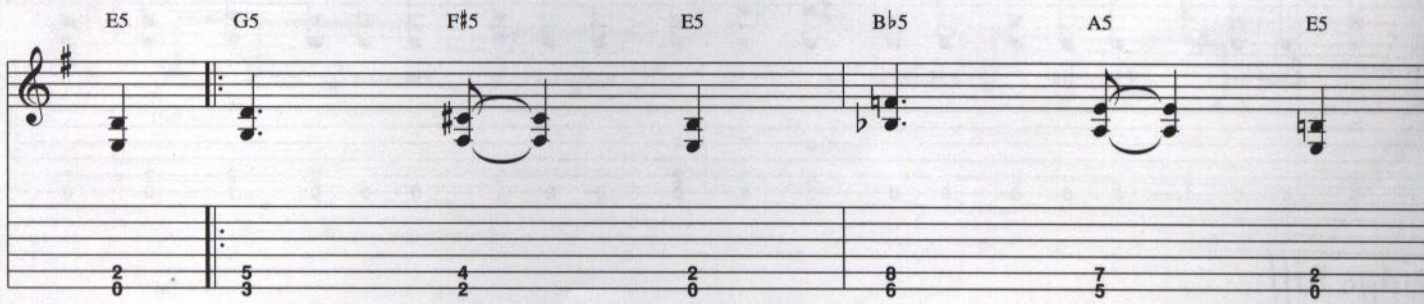
Overt Enemy (cont.)



Verse Riff

Taking a cue from forebears Black Sabbath, Hanneman crafts this power-chord riff that doubles the vocal line.

1:05



Screaming From The Sky

From DIABOLUS IN MUSICA

Words by Tom Araya, Jeff Hanneman and Kerry King
Music by Jeff Hanneman
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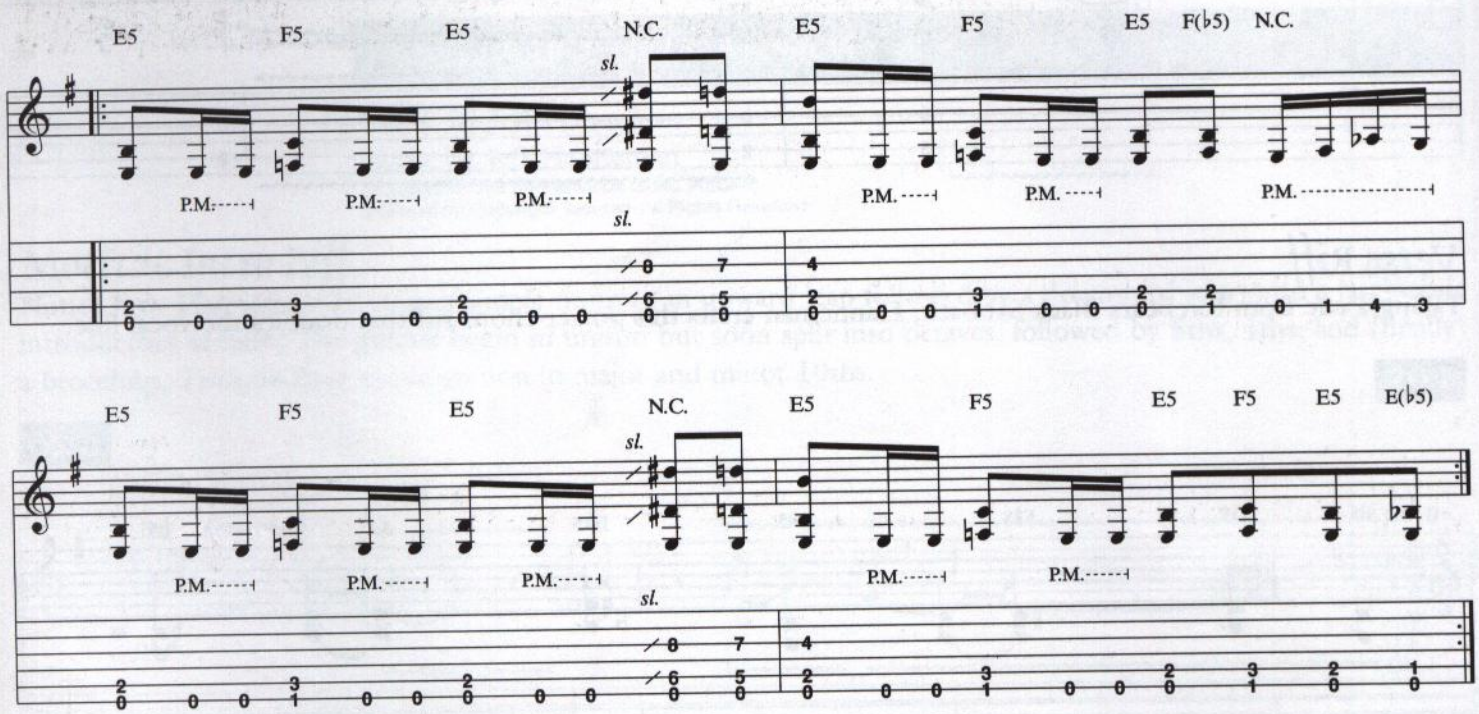
Intro Riff

Here is a somewhat slow E Phrygian–based riff. The gallop figures keep the music moving.

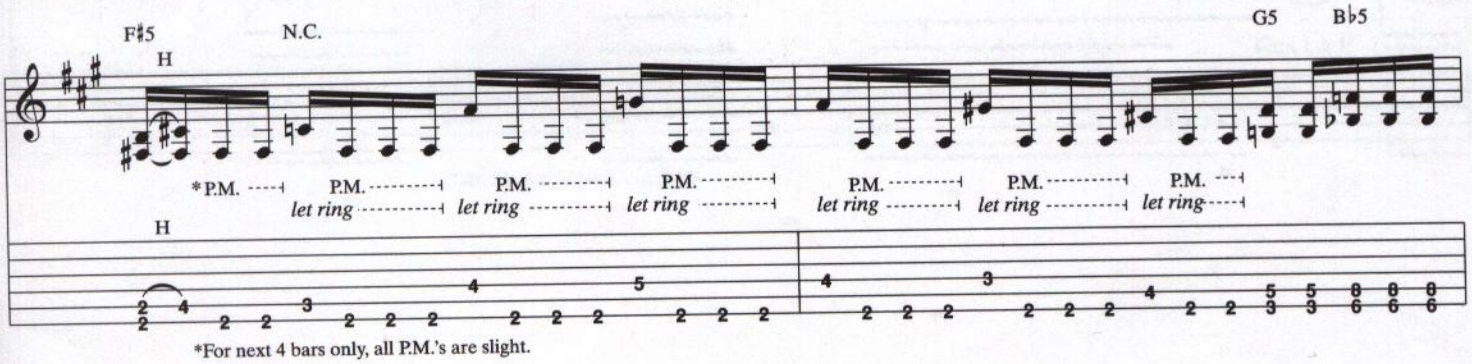
0:01



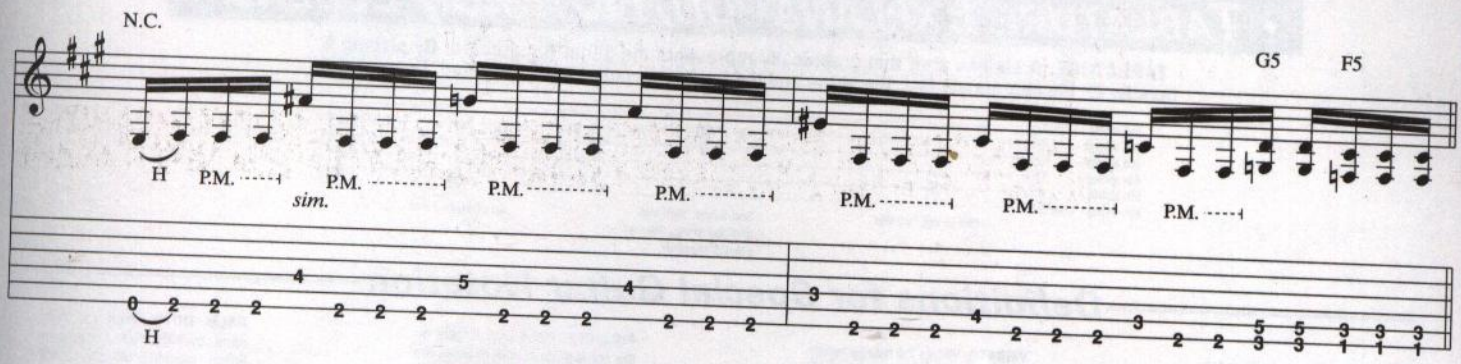
Bridge Riff

A demented melody on the 5th and 4th strings jumps out from the pulsing F♯'s on the 6th string in this no-nonsense riff.

2:19



*For next 4 bars only, all P.M.'s are slight.



Point

From DIABOLUS IN MUSICA

Words by Kerry King
Music by Jeff Hanneman

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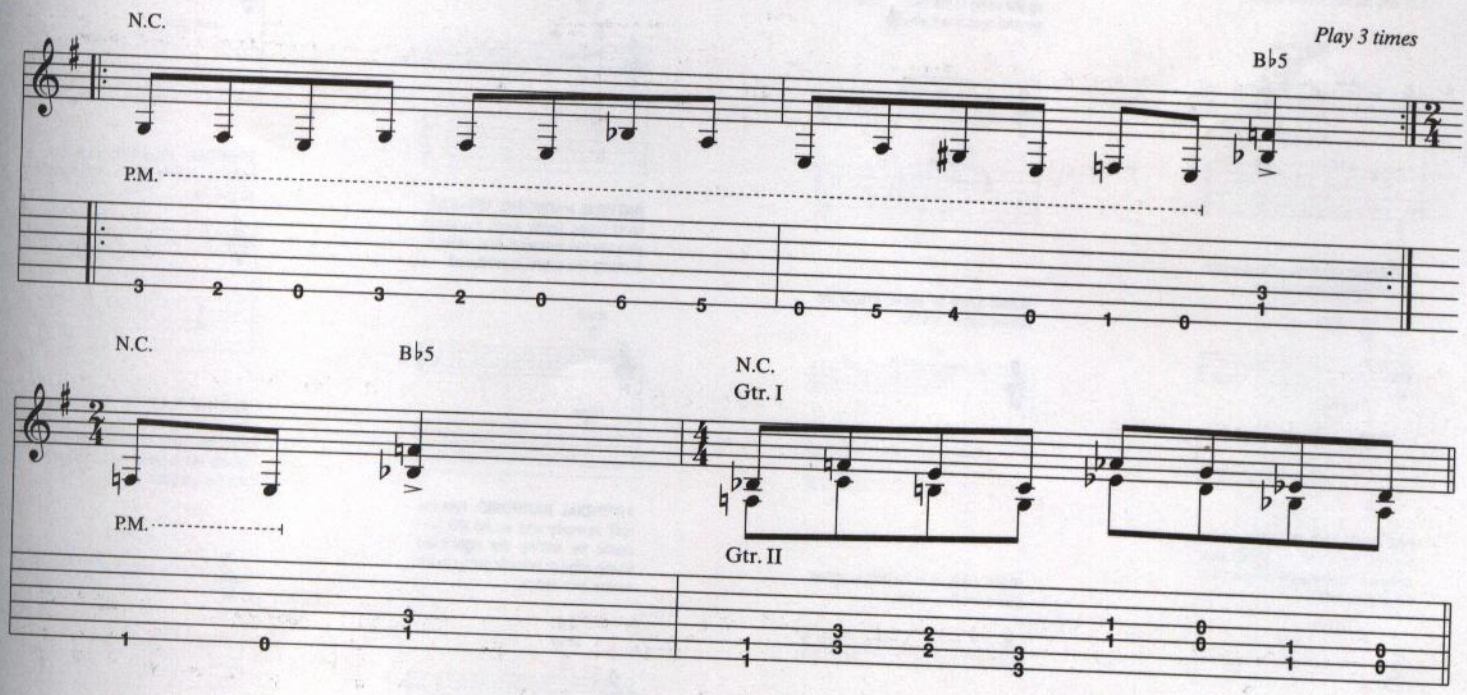
Bridge Riff

This riff is comprised of a three-note "rotation" figure (which spins out to a halt on the ♭V chord at the end of bar 2) that is counterbalanced in the last bar by more symmetrical four-note figures.



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