READER'S CHALLENGE

Acoustic Slap Rock

by Dan Morris

Turns out we can learn a thing or two from that guy at the back of the stage with the huge four-string guitar... bassists often use picking-hand slapping and popping techniques to add punch to low-string notes, and occasionally these techniques translate well to guitar. This passage uses percussive techniques to add some power to a hard-rock riff: the sixth-string notes are slapped with the thumb of the picking hand, and the fourth- and fifth-string notes are "popped" finger-style with the middle and index fingers. On the pops, try to get as much power from your wrist as you can, so the strings really snap back down toward the body. This style sounds great on an acoustic guitar, since you often get some extra "snap" from the contact between your hand and the guitar on the slaps, which resonates with everything else. Heavy strings will maximize the percussiveness of your sound and often make the execution of percussive techniques a little easier.

Harmonically, this passage uses parallel fourth movement among the double-stops on the fourth and fifth strings to create a dark hard rock sound. It finishes with a tense major third; the passage is roughly in A minor, so the implied E major chord at the end provides a dark cadence.

