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THE WHO
Sunrise
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SPECIAL FEATURE

SUPERCHARGE YOUR PLAYING!
Lead guitar...
Guthrie Govan takes you beyond the pentatonic to boost your lead playing today...
ON THE CD: TRACKS 4-9
Jason Becker's story is tragic, yet inspirational. This month Jamie Humphries hits the heights with a track that has been called the greatest piece of instrumental rock guitar ever recorded...

ABILITY RATING

INFO WILL IMPROVE YOUR
KEY: Bm
TEMPO: 78 bpm
CD: TRACKS 10-11
Advanced rock techniques
Oriental phrasing
Use of odd time signatures

MANY GREAT GUITARISTS emerged from the '80s shred era, but possibly the most gifted was Jason Becker. Becker's compositions included complex progressions, arrangements and time signature changes; and also showcased his immense abilities on the guitar; made even more amazing by the fact he was only in his mid teens when much of his material was recorded.

Jason was born July 22nd, 1969, and began playing guitar at the age of five. He became totally immersed in the instrument, practising for hours and finding influences in players as varied as Bob Dylan, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Jeff Beck, Robbie Robertson and Eric Clapton. Jason practised for hours and advanced quickly, and even at a young age performed at school and coffee houses. As he progressed he discovered a keener interest in classical composers such as Bach, Paganini, Stravinsky, Philip Glass and Bartok, as well as music from other cultures including Native American and Japanese.

By his mid teens Jason had reached such a level that he was even giving his music teacher lessons – he could play practically anything. This is highlighted by a jaw-dropping home video of him performing Black Star by Yngwie Malmsteen at a school concert (you can find it on the Legendary Guitar of Jason Becker DVD, which also includes other astonishing home videos of the young shredmeister).

When just 16, the young prodigy caught the attention of Mike Varney of Shrapnel records. Mike paired Jason with Marty Friedman to form the speed metal guitar duo, Cacophony. The band's debut, Speed Metal Symphony was released in 1987 and scored highly within the guitar community, the 16-year-old Becker earning legions of fans. Jason in turn became influenced by Marty, whose love for the more exotic approach inspired a trip Japanese tinged to his melodies and phrasing.

In 1988 Jason released Perpetual Burn, his finest hour: The all-instrumental album boosted eight tracks ranging from the anthem-like melodies and flawless arpeggios of Altitudes, to the blistering riffs of Temple Of The Absurd; and the clean, ethereal, multi-layered counterpoint classical piece, Air. In the same year Cacophony released their final album, Go Off, which also included another amazing Becker-written piece called Images.

During Cacophony's final tour of Japan, Jason developed a cramp in his leg that wouldn't go away – and at exactly the time he was invited to join Van Halen vocalist David Lee Roth's band, replacing Steve Vai. Becker's doctors diagnosed ALS, Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, or Lou Gehrig's disease, a degenerative illness that eventually paralyses the body. He was given only five years to live, but continued to play and complete Roth's album, A Little Ain't Enough. Jason became weak during the recording sessions and struggled to even play the guitar. By the time the album was completed he was walking on sticks. He returned home and began recording as much music as he could, and as his hands began to seize up he worked more on keyboards and a computer. Now in a wheelchair, he could barely move at all, and began to operate the computer by wearing a visor that he used to move the mouse. Yet he was able to compose a new album, and with the help from some old guitar tracks, other musicians, friends, and fellow guitarist Michael Lee Fickins, it was released in 1996. Eddie Van Halen secured the release of the album on Warner Brothers, and in 2001 Jason's music could again be heard by the world.

As his condition deteriorated, Jason lost the ability to speak, but with his family devised a system where he would spell words with his eyes. He also could barely breathe, and eventually needed a tracheotomy. Yet he still released more albums: The Raspberry Jams and The Blackberry Jams are a collection of previously unheard demo recordings that really gave guitar fans a chance to hear how Jason developed and

GET THE TONE

We have already seen what gear Jason used to record the track. I used my Custom Music Man Silhouette Special, fitted with a Fast Track Bridge Hot Rail and an Area 51 and 68 middle and neck single-coils. This was plugged into a Pro Tone Jason Becker signature Distortion pedal, and then into my Blackstar HT5 head. Delay was added in mix-down courtesy of a Line6 Echo pro. Aim for a saturated dirty tone, with plenty of highs and upper mids and a generous amount of delay. For the cleans, try working with a classic 'in-between' setting with a little compression for extra attack on the notes.

TRACK RECORD Check out all of Jason's recordings from the Cacophony material - Speed Metal Symphony and Go Off - and of course his solo albums Perpetual Burn, The Raspberry Jams, The Blackberry Jams, Perspectives and Collection, plus A Little Ain't Enough with Dave Lee Roth. Also available are tribute albums, Warmth In The Wilderness, Vol I, and Vol II, featuring Vinnie Moore, Paul Gilbert, Steve Vai and others.
natural finished Peavey guitar, which features brightly coloured pickups and numbers on the fretboard. Also available is a Jason Becker signature distortion unit, produced by Pro Tone Pedals, which features a design painted by his father. Jason also has the aforementioned DVD available through Hotlicks (The Legendary Guitarist of Jason Becker), which includes an entire clinic at the Atlanta Music Institute. There are also performance videos and some amazing home video of a very young Jason.


even with his disabilities he says he is blessed. I received the following email from him when I informed him that we were running his track in GT. Despite all his difficulties he got back to me and told us this about the number: "I used my white and black Hurricane guitar with a Marshall 100-watt amp and Boss Super Overdrive pedal. For the clean parts I went direct. I was very inspired by Marty Friedman and Eddie Van Halen, also a bit by Joe Satriani and the musical Phantom Of The Opera by Andrew Lloyd Webber. I wanted this time to have a mix of my style of shredding, and emotional gut-wrenching melody. I always loved it when Jeff Beck and Roy Buchanan would play beautiful melodies and ‘cry’ with their guitars. I also loved Yngwie’s interpretation of the Albinoni piece and wanted to incorporate my newfound arpeggio technique. All of this makes it sound like I thought it all out before writing it, but it just came out of me - it was all a natural progression." Thanks, Jason.

TECHNIQUE FOCUS

LINKING ARPEGGIOS

In this track there are many great techniques, but one of the most difficult yet harmonically satisfying is the use of arpeggios. Just from watching Jason’s DVD you get an idea of his thought processes, and the fact that he uses some slightly different fingerings. It was after close examination of this piece that I realised Jason did some pretty unusual shifts during shapes to perform his arpeggios. Sometimes, he uses an approach that makes the arpeggio slightly awkward to start with, but once your fingers are accustomed to this new approach they are definitely more defined, and this way also allows you to play sequences as opposed to straight ascending and descending lines. Jason uses both major and minor versions of these shapes and makes them, playing them not only as larger shapes covering the entire fretboard, but as smaller bite-size tricks that he performs in sequences. To perform this track with ease I would advise looking at the five CAGED arpeggio shapes to start with, and then breaking them down into these three shapes that are easy to sweep. It is also worth mentioning some of the slightly unusual arpeggio types Jason uses in this track, including Bnadd, Bnadd11, Bsus2 and an A7sus4. Jason also makes use of some interesting sequences, linking diminished arpeggios.

Marty Friedman was the obvious influence here, so for more on this be sure to checkout an early Marty instructional video called Exotic Metal Guitar.

WORKING WITH JASON ON PERPETUAL BURN, BY DRUMMER ATMA ANUR

I worked with Mike Varney extensively from 1985 to about 1999, recording around 18 CDs for the Shrapnel guitar label and met Jason when he was just 18, in 1988. Mike first introduced me to Marty Friedman, then we got together with Jason and began working on a new project which was to become Cacophony. I was already working with Peter Marino in a band called Le Mans, Jason and I hit it off quite well and had a wonderful and creative couple of years working together. I found him to be the most naturally talented of Mike’s many incredible guitar discoveries. He was already virtuosic in terms of technique when we met, and he very quickly absorbed my polyrhythmic influence. We began working with various odd-time signatures and odd groupings in a heavy metal format. Jason was always up for any new challenge and brought great joy and excitement to some pretty hard work. The Perpetual Burn sessions were amazing; it was just Jason and me in the studio with Mike Varney and Steve Fontano in the control room - lots of hard work done very quickly, with basically no “rehearsal.” Mike liked to work super fast in the studio. Jason showed me parts and I came up with the appropriate drums, wrote my charts, and we were off. Mike brought the best out of both of us for sure and I think Perpetual Burn is some of my best work for Mike Varney. Of course, despite Jason’s illness, to this day he continues to write amazing music and have a wonderful, positive and inspiring attitude. What a blessing he is!

constructed ideas. In 2008 he released Collection, which included re-mastered older songs, plus newly written material by Jason performed by Marty Friedman, Greg Howe, Joe Satriani, Michael Lee Firkins, Steve Vai and Steve Hunter. Although today Jason cannot move or speak, he is able to communicate with his eyes, so his father can play things as closely as possible to what he was thinking; then using Logic, he edits the ideas, gets together with (my friend and co-producer), Dan Alvarez, and works on arrangements and sounds. Musician friends then record the parts.

Jason also now has a signature instrument courtesy of Paradise guitars. It is based on his
PLAYING TIPS

[Bars 1-9] The main intro section is based around the B harmonic minor scale (B C D E F G A#), fast neo-classical figures and wide vibrato. Pay attention to the string bends and notice how Jason makes them sound dramatic, by lowering a bend by a semitone before returning it to pitch. Bar 9 includes a very tricky violin style lick based around some string and position-shifting three-notes-per-string lines.

[Bars 10-19] Here we see the introduction of a G/B time signature, with the tempo lifting slightly. Once again more dramatic bending and aggressive vibrato, all included in our melodic theme. Pay attention to the whammy bar scoops during the slippery legato phrase at bar 13.
Hot Licks: The Legendary Guitarist of Jason Becker

CD TRACK 10

[Bars 20-35] The clean solo sees the piece shifting back to 4/4 time. This section has an almost D flat tone, and makes use of some Japanese inspired phrasing and whammy bar vibrato. Take care at bar 35 where we kick in the heavy distortion and conclude this section with a fast 1/16th note triplet harmony picking sequence.
PLAYING TIPS

[Bars 36-47] This arpeggio section is very difficult, so be sure to approach it in small sections and at a slow tempo to start. All of the arpeggios should be performed with sweep picking. Be sure to read up on the arpeggio section in our Technique Focus (page 25), as this discusses Jason's approach.
[Bars 49-52] Some fast scale lines here, so once again make sure you break this into small sections and gradually build up the speed. Also take care with the many position shifts during these extended runs and pay attention to the 2/4 bar at bar 52.

[Bars 53-60, next page] This next theme has a Japanese sound and is a sequence based around the B Hirajoshi scale (R 2 b3 5 b6 – B C F D F# G). This sequence is very difficult to play at speed, so break it down and practise slowly to start with. This section concludes with more extended scale runs that cover large portions of the neck.
PLAY: SHRED

PLAYING TIPS

[Bars 61-68] Things slow down a little here, so time to catch your breath before the onslaught begins again - see how Jason introduces dynamics by not simply going at it like a bull at a gate. This section includes some interesting whammy bar diving ideas at bars 67-68.
Another arpeggio sequence, but with the sixteenth-note rhythm this section is a little more manageable. Jason does use some rather unusual arpeggio types and so there are a couple of tricky moments. Once again, take it slow and steady at first.
PLAYING TIPS

[Bars 85-92] Here's a blues style solo from Jason, using notes from the G# minor pentatonic scale (G# B C# E F#). Pay attention to the use of pinched harmonics and palm muting in this section.

[Bars 93-104] Here we head back into neo-classical territory, with Jason executing some slippery legato lines and more sweep picked arpeggios. Take care with the fast position shift, plus the whammy bar scoops between the legato runs. This section concludes with a deadly run, so tackle it slowly and break it down into smaller sections if required.
[Bars 105-108] There are some pretty scary arpeggio ideas here. Pay close attention to the fast position shifts during the two-bar G diminished sequence.

[Bars 109-110] A fast harmony picking sequence links the two sections here. Take care when counting this section as it uses a 7/8 time signature.
PLAYING TIPS

**Bars 111-132** The outro melody includes more Japanese style lines. To perform this section swing the whammy bar round so it hangs off the back of the guitar. The bar is then pushed back, making the note rise slightly in pitch. Use fretting hand hammer-ons, leaving the picking hand free to manipulate the bar. A little Steve Vai influenced.

**Bars 133-134** A blistering free-time B Aeolian run (R 3 b3 4 5 b6 b7 - B C # D E F G A) concludes things - plus more whammy bar scoops in the final descending line. This is one of the most difficult tracks GT has ever transcribed, so extreme care should be taken when tackling it - any discomfort, rest for a few minutes, shake out and resume with caution.