

WALK THIS WAY

Words and Music by Steven Tyler and Joe Perry

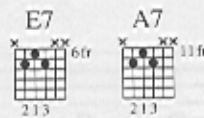
Figure 9 – Intro and Verse

The defining song on *Toys in the Attic* was unquestionably “Walk This Way.” Sporting one of the funkier rock riffs of all time, and representing an Aerosmith high-watermark, it epitomized and transcended the mainstream hard rock sound of the seventies. An immortal and truly malleable riff and tune, “Walk This Way” resurfaced over a decade later in a Run DMC-Aerosmith collaboration, demonstrating its timeless R&B ethic was equally at home in the burgeoning rap idiom. The cover version reached #4 in August, 1986, while the original single scored the #10 position in 1976—pretty good for a song which was inspired by a throwaway line in Mel Brooks’s *Young Frankenstein*.

At the core of “Walk This Way” is its insistent main riff. Combining tight, R&B-inspired rhythmic phrasing with an interesting, but terse chromatic melody and percussive guitar noise, Joe Perry fashioned a tough figure equivalent to Steven Tyler’s strutting stage show—filled with attitude and sexual tension. The signature riff is found throughout the song—in the intro, in the interludes between verses, and behind the outro. It is based entirely on the E blues scale (E-G-A-A♯-B-D) and is marked by thematic repetitions of its four-note, largely chromatic motive (A-A♯-B-E) and quirky, wide-interval jumps (octaves and sixths) which produce unique contours in the melody line. Notice the clever rhythmic displacement of the four-note motive. It begins on beat 1 and is repeated on the second sixteenth note of beat 2. The punch on beat 4 of the second measure emphasizes the riff’s backbeat feel and puts it “back in the pocket” rhythmically.

In the verse (0:13), a percolating palm-muted riff is played by two interlocking guitars and forms the perfect background for Tyler’s rhythmic, proto-rap lyrical delivery. This figure is nothing less than a sly twist on the age-old R&B comping pattern popularized by Chuck Berry, and the legion of guitar players which followed. Notice the single-note outlining of the C5-C6-C7 dyads, the quirky octave jump, and the characteristic rootsy rock ‘n’ roll rhythms incorporated into the pulse of the figure.

Fig. 9 “Walk This Way”



19 **Featured Guitars:**
Gtr. 1 meas. 1-18

20 **Slow Demos:**
Gtr. 1 meas. 3-8

Intro
Moderate Rock ♩ = 120

1 (drums) 2 N.C.(E5) Gtr. 1 (dist.)

T
A
B

0 1 2 2 0 1 2 2 0 x 0 1 2 2 0 1 2 2 3 0

5 A5

let ring - - - - let ring - - - - let ring - - - - let ring - - - -

0 1 2 2 0 1 2 2 0 1 2 2 0

Verse 0:13

7 N.C.(C7)

1. Back - stroke lov - er al - ways hid - in' 'neath the cov - ers, "Can I talk to you," my dad - dy say. _ He said,

Gtrs. 1 & 2 (dist.)

f
P.M.

8 8 8 10 10 12 10 8 10 10 13 10 12 10 8 8 8 10 10 12 10 8 10 10 13 10 12 10

9

"ain't seen noth-in' till you're down on a muf-fin and you're sure to be a-chang-in' your ways." _ I met a

P.M.

8 8 8 10 10 12 10 8 10 10 13 10 12 10 8 8 8 10 10 12 10 8 10 10 13 10 12 10

Rhy. Fill 1
Gr. 3 (dist.)

f

T
A
B

7 8 9 10
7 8 9 10
5 6 7 8

11

cheer - lead - er, was a real young bleed-er on the times I could rem - i - nisce, _ 'cause the

Rhy. Fig. 1

P.M. -----

0 8 8 8 10 10 12 10 8 10 10 13 10 12 10 8 8 8 10 10 12 10 8 10 10 13 10 12 10

13

best things in lov - in' with her sis - ter and her cou - sin on - ly start - ed with a lit - tle kiss, _ a - like this!

End Rhy. Fig. 1

P.M. -----

0 8 8 8 10 10 12 10 8 10 10 13 10 12 10 8 8 8 10 10 12 10 8 10 10 2 2 0

Interlude

Gtr. 1 N.C.(E5)

15

Gtr. 2 *divisi*

P.M. -----

0 1 2 2 0 1 2 2 0 X X X 0 1 2 2 0 1 2 2 0 3 0 2

17

Gtr. 3: w/ Rhy. Fill 1

Gtrs. 1 & 2

P.M. -----

0 1 2 2 0 1 2 2 0 X X X 0 1 2 2 0 1 2 2 2 2 0

Interlude 1:15
N.C.(E5)

8

A-like this! A5 Oo.

Gr. 1
Gr. 2 *divisi*
P.M. - - -

full (11)

0 1 2 2 0 1 2 2 0 X X X 0 1 2 2 0 1 2 2 0 3 0

11

Uh. A5

Gr. 3: w/ Rhy. Fill 1
Gr. 1 & 2
P.M. - - - - -

0 1 2 2 0 1 2 2 0 X X X X X X 0 1 2 2 0 1 2 2 0

Figure 11 – Guitar Solo II and Outro

Joe Perry's second four-measure solo (2:26) elaborates on the ideas introduced in the first solo. The same edgy attitude prevails, as does the quirky rhythmic phrasing, uncommon rock cliché variations, wide interval jumps, and sinewy string bends. What is different in this outing is he leans toward the dominant, or Mixolydian, tonality. Check out the tell-tale use of the major third (E) mixed with the minor third (E \flat) in measures 1 and 3. The overt outlining of the C7 arpeggio in measure 2 is also a dead giveaway Joe is playing off the C Mixolydian mode (C–D–E–F–G–A–B \flat), as this is its defining sound.

The outro (2:35) contains one of Perry's finest moments. Played over a varied form of the main riff, it provides a definitive look at his no-nonsense soloing style. He builds the outro solo dramatically, beginning with restraint and a sparse, bent-string opening melody in the first eight measures. In this section, a four-measure theme is played, beginning in the middle register and then repeated an octave higher. From measure 9 on, it is a Joe Perry no-holds-barred guitar attack, showcasing his unpredictable timing, unique linear approach, jagged phrasing, angry string bends, and mutated rock and blues clichés. Note the consistent synchronized rhythmic punches in the lines which lock in tightly with the background A7 chord on beat 4 of every second measure. Clearly, he's thinking, or—more accurately—feeling rhythmically as well as melodically in these improvisations. The lines are based on a spontaneous combination of the E minor pentatonic scale (E–G–A–B–D), the E Blues Scale (E–G–A–B \flat –B–D), and the E Mixolydian mode (E–F \sharp –G \sharp –A–B–C \sharp –D).

Fig. 11 "Walk This Way"

23

Featured Guitars:
Gtr. 3 meas. 1-28

24

Slow Demos:
Gtr. 3 meas. 1-28

Guitar Solo 2:26

Gtrs. 1 & 2: w/ Rhy. Fig. 1

Gtr. 3
1 N.C.(C7)

Outro Guitar Solo 2:35

Gtrs. 1 & 2: w/ Riff A, till fade

N.C.(E5)

Riff A Gtrs. 1 & 2

Gtr. 4
(dist.)

E7

mf

A7

Gtr. 3
13

E7

A7

15

E7

A7

17

E7

A7

19 *loco*

21

E7 A7

Begin Fade

23

E7 A7

25

E7 A7

Fade Out

27

E7 A7

let ring