

Big River by Johnny Cash

by Johnny Cash, 4/4 time, capo to G on recording)

Use E major with G natural in bass for tension

E E E E
Now I taught the weeping willow how to cry,

E E7 F#7 B7
and I showed the clouds how to cover up a clear blue sky.

E E7 A7 A7
And the tears that I cried for that woman are gonna flood you Big River.

E B7 E E
Then I'm gonna sit right here until I die.

2. I met her accidentally in St. Paul (Minnesota).
And it tore me up ev'ry time I heard her drawl, Southern drawl.
Then I heard my dream was back downstream cavortin' in Davenport,
And I followed you, Big River, when you called.
3. Then you took me to St. Louis later on (down the river).
A freighter said she's been here but she's gone, boy, she's gone.
I found her trail in Memphis, but she just walked up the block.
She raised a few eyebrows and then she went on down alone.
4. Now, won't you batter down by Baton Rouge, River Queen, roll it on.
Take that woman on down to New Orleans, New Orleans.
Go on, I've had enough; dump my blues down in the gulf.
She loves you, Big River, more than me.
5. Repeat 1

BIG RIVER by JOHNNY CASH
 Tabbed by Matthew Eldon Verge
 2006

Luther Perkins, Johnny Cash's electric-guitarist, played this with a capo on the first fret . . . seeing as how this only makes a half step difference, I'm not clear why, but here it is anyway. You can play it with or without the capo, but it won't sound exactly like the song without it. The first bit is picked open, the second bit is palm-muted.

Intro:

E

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-2-2-2-2-----5--5--5-----2-2-2-2-----5--5--5-----|
-----2-0--3--3--3-0-----2-0--3--3--3-0-----|
Open          PM.....Open          PM.....
  
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Okay, now, remember that last part because it plays it many times through the song while he sings. I'm going to give what the rhythm guitar plays here first, just open chords strummed (listen to the song to get the rhythm, it's pointless trying to write it down here). This is what Cash plays, although there seems to also be a mandolin or another guitar capoed very high playing open chords as well. I'll put Luther's electric guitar part underneath. If you're playing this song by yourself, and not in a band, all you need is this. If you want your band to sound even remotely like the original, you want one acoustic guitar playing the open chords and an electric guitar playing Luther's part. Don't let the B chord scare you, I've shown you an easy way to play it at the bottom.

E
 Now I taught the weeping willow how to cry,
B7
 And I showed the clouds how to cover up a clear blue sky.
 EA
 And the tears that I cried for that woman are gonna flood you Big River.
EB7E
 Then I'm gonna sit right here until I die.

Solo (Played by Luther, rythm by Cash):

E

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-2-2-2-2-----5--5--5-----2-2-2-2-----5--5--5-----|
-----2-0--3--3--3-0-----2-0--3--3--3-0-----|
Open          PM.....Open          PM.....
  
```

AEB7E

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-----|
-----|
-----|
-2-2-2-2-----2--2-----4--4-----|
-----2-0--0--0--2-2-2-2-----5--5--5--2-2-2-2-2-2-----2--2--2--2-2-2-----|
-----2-0--3--3--3-0-----2-0--3--3--3-0-----2-0-----|
Open          PM..... Open          PM..... Open          PM..... Open
  
```

Now for Luther's parts during the song . . . they're very, very simple, in fact they're mostly power chords and variations on the intro. He does pretty much the same thing throughout the whole song. There's not really much of a bass line to this song, more of a thumping, and his guitar mimics a catchy bass line. What he does is almost like strumming open chords, only he just plays the two strings at a time. He has a clean sound with a tube amp, which still sound a bit rough.

Now I taught the weeping willow how to cry,

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--2--2--2--[continue until end of verse]5--5--5-----[revert to prior part]--
-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-----3--3--3--0-----
PM.....
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...cover up a clear blue sky.

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-----4--4--4--4-----
-----2-2-2-2-2--2-----2--2--2--2--[continue until chord change]-----
-----0-0-0-0-0-0-0-----
PM.....
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...gonna flood you Big River, then I'm gonna sit right here until I die.

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-----2--2--2-----4--4-----
-----0-0-0-0-0-0-0-[continue]-----2--2-----2-2-2-2-----2--5-5-5-----
-----0-0-0-0-----0--3-3-3-0-----
PM.....
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And here's the ending, played by Luther and Cash together.

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-----3-3-3-0--3-3-3-0-----
-----3-3-3-0--3-3-3-0-----
-[Luther Plays:]-----[Cash Plays:]---4-4-4-1--4-4-4-1-----
-----5-5-5-2--5-5-5-2-----
-----5-5-5-2--5-5-5-2-----
-----3-3-3-0--3-3-3-0-----3-3-3-0--3-3-3-0-----
PM.....
```

The chords for the rythm acoustic are as follows:

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E   B7   A
-0---2---0-----|
-0---0---3-----|
-1---2---3-----|
-2---1---3-----|
-2---2---0-----|
-0---X---X-----|
```