

Power

For A Large Number Of Electric Guitarists

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Power is a piece intended for a large number (greater than 12) of electric guitarists and electric bass players, based around power chords, played on different neck positions and strings, lasting at most 10 minutes. Each individual guitarist plays essentially the same chord (note for bassists) throughout, but *Power* is arranged so that different groups come and go, moving from a sparse sound to a massive wall of noise, and back again. *Power* is intended to be playable by guitarists no matter what their ability.

Power is fundamentally a simple piece. These instructions go through step-by-step what is needed to perform *Power* at its best.

Tuning

Players are advised to tune their guitars EBEEBE. Relative to conventional EADGBE tuning this involves raising the A string two semitones to B, raising the D string two semitones to E, lowering the G string three semitones to E, and leaving the others as usually tuned. This will make it easier to play the ringing power chords and sustained sounds that make up the piece and make any mis-hit open strings sound good. Bass players should retune to EBEE.

Tone

Each guitar player should find a good moderately distorted dirty sound that they like which is suited to power chords. Avoid very saturated 'maxed out' tones. Each player should also find a good ringing clean tone. If possible, these tones should require only the use of the amplifier, the guitar's volume control, and playing technique. You need not use a distortion pedal. Bass players should find a clean, smooth low tone. Players can use a pick or just their fingers.

Notes

Each player is a member of one of four groups and stays in their group for the duration of the performance. Different groups play different chords/sounds. Each guitarist plays just one power chord for the whole duration of the piece (one note for bass players).

Group 1 guitarists play power chords low on the neck (i.e. no higher than the 7th fret) or with open strings. Chords should be three note EB power chords (EEB, EBE). Explore the neck to discover the different places the power chords can be found and easily played. Each guitarist should select a power chord and keep with that for the duration of the piece. As a group, the guitarists in Group 1 should cover the allowed range, so some negotiation may be required. But each individual will play just one chord. Similarly for bass players, as a group there should be a variety of Es and Bs, but each individual sticks with their note.

Group 2 guitarists play power chords around the octave fret. Chords should have just three notes mixing E and B. Group 2 guitarists can have an open string in their chords but no more than one. The overall sound of their chords should be higher than those in Group 1. Bassists play E or B at the octave. As with Group 1, each guitarists should select a single chord (single note for bassists) and stick with it, making sure that the group cover the range.

Group 3 guitarists play power chords high on the neck, above the octave fret. Chords can be two or three notes mixing E and B. Group 3 guitarists should not have open strings in their chords. Guitarists with 24 fret guitars can play at the very top of the neck in this group. The overall sound of Group 3 chords should be higher than both Group 1 and Group 2. Bassists play E or B in a high neck position. As with Groups 1 and 2, each guitarists should select a single chord (note for bassists) and stick with it, making sure that the group cover the range.

Group 4 guitarists play sustained sounds using E and B in various positions on the neck. These can be single notes, or two or three note power chords. Each player sticks with their selection throughout the piece while the group should vary within itself, e.g., with some players playing low on the neck, some high, some playing single notes, some power chords. Exactly how guitarists in Group 4 sustain their sounds is described in the next section.

Technique

For Groups 1, 2 and 3, the main technique is the same. The player hits their power chord aggressively and lets it ring, listening as it dies away, pauses for a few seconds in relative silence, and then hits the chord again. And repeat. It is expected that there will be 15 to 30 seconds between hits. Players should probably rest in silence a little more for their clean chords than their dirty ones as distorted sounds are likely to sustain longer. Rests may also need to be longer with very many participants. If a player finds their sound is sustaining too long or feeding back, then they should adjust their guitar volume and/or move away from the amp. Players should not get too distracted by what others are doing. It is not necessary to play chords in unison with other players. It is also not necessarily to be completely regular. There is no need for players to count to themselves. The point is to have an overall sound in which chords sometimes start together, sometimes overlap, sometimes are spaced apart, in a fluid fashion, as if by chance.

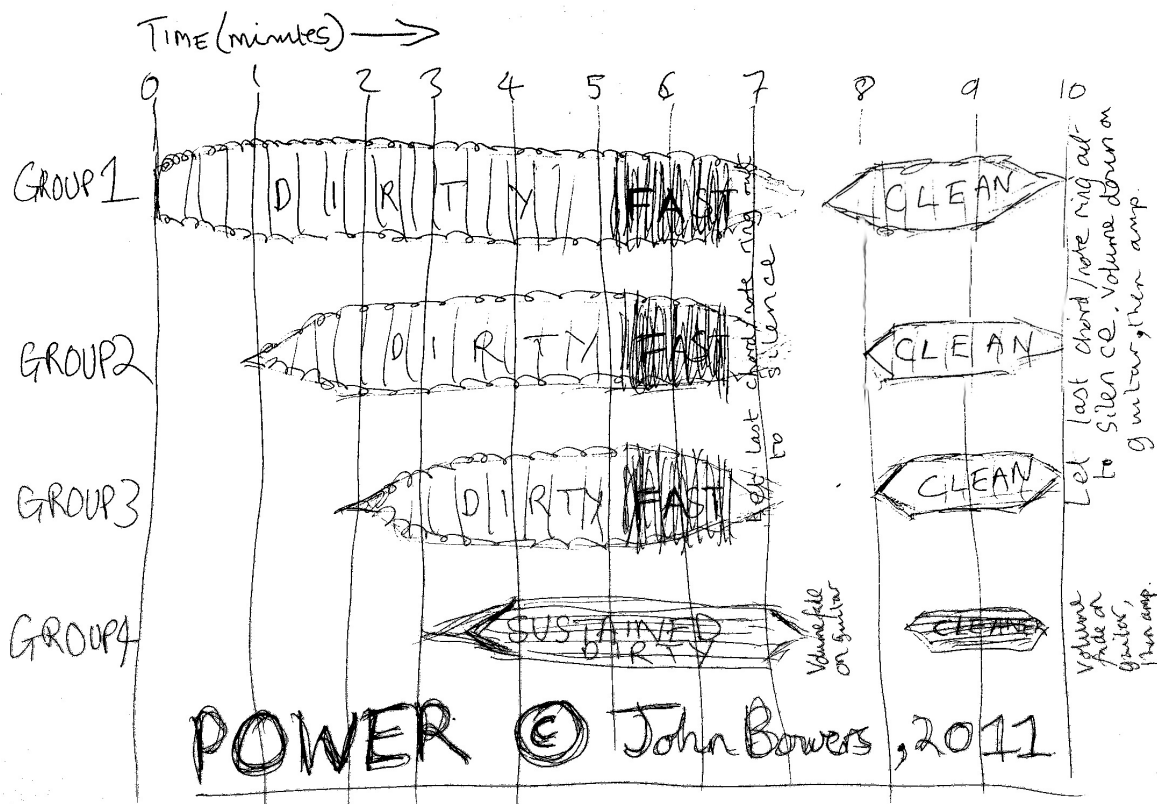
Bass players in Groups 1, 2 and 3 should have the same technique with their single notes. Hit them hard, let them slowly die down, pause, repeat.

Just over halfway through the piece, Groups 1, 2 and 3 will play their power chord over and over again as fast as they can. Only downstrokes should be used when picking or plucking. As usual, it is not necessary to play in unison with other players. This, the highpoint of the piece in some ways, should be a wall of noise.

Group 4 plays sustained sounds. Players should position themselves and their guitars near their amps so that they can make notes sustain and feedback. Placing the guitar's headstock on the top of the amp/speaker cabinet will also help. Do not use delay or sampling pedals to get a sustained sound. The technique is for players to hit their power chord with the guitar volume turned down and then gently raise it so that the sustained sound is heard and continues to be heard. The sustained sound can be varied using the guitar volume and tone controls, through changes of position of the guitar relative to the amp/speaker, or with an occasional thump to the guitar's body. Do not use a whammy bar though. If the sound dies away, turn the guitar volume down and start again. Bass players in Group 4 should have the same technique with their single notes.

The Score

Power is simple for individual players. The piece is arranged around the different groups and different sounds coming and going at different times. This creates an effect of building to a climax, easing off, and then having a small build-up again at the end, a coda. The diagram (graphical score) below shows this. Timings are approximate. It is better to follow the overall feel of a performance than be slave to the clock. Also, not everyone in a group has to start or stop at exactly the same time. It is better for individuals to enter and exit when it feels right.



Group 1 begins *Power* playing the dirty, distorted versions of their chords. Group 2 enter with their dirty chords after this, then followed by Group 3. Finally, Group 4 start their sustained dirty sounds. Somewhere just after half way into the piece, Groups 1, 2 and 3 start to play their chords as fast as they can. They keep this up for about a minute and each player then lets their last chord ring and fade to silence. When Groups 1, 2 and 3 have mostly faded, Group 4 fade their dirty sustained sounds by turning the guitar volume down.

About three-quarters in, the piece should be relatively silent. At this time, Group 1 return with clean versions of their chords, shortly followed by Groups 2 and 3, and then Group 4 playing cleaned up versions of their sustained sounds. All players fade to silence by about ten minutes, first by turning their guitar volumes down and then their amps down. The piece finishes when all players have turned their amps down to silence.