

Play guitar with the smiths

Playing Guitar with the Smiths: Deconstructing a Post-Punk Iconography

The Smiths, a pivotal band of the post-punk era, captivated audiences with their melancholic melodies and Morrissey's distinctive vocals. Their guitar work, though often overlooked in favor of lyrical and thematic analysis, played a crucial role in shaping their unique sound. This delves into the technical elements of their guitar playing, explores their influence on contemporary musicians, and provides practical insights for aspiring guitarists aiming to capture the Smiths' essence. *I. The Smiths' Sonic Fingerprint: A Technical Examination*

The Smiths' guitar work is characterized by a blend of melodic sensitivity and a deliberate avoidance of flashy virtuosity. Their sound isn't driven by complex arpeggios or intricate solos but rather by a precise use of rhythm, texture, and tone. **(a) The Role of the Rhythm Guitar:** Johnny Marr's rhythm guitar lines are arguably the most defining feature of their sound. His use of power chords, often played with a crisp, percussive attack, provides a strong rhythmic foundation. He frequently uses open tunings and power chord shapes, which give his guitar lines a distinct, almost echoing quality. **(b) Melodic Guitar Lines: Beyond the Chord:** Marr's melodic lines are concise and often built on simple motifs. While lacking extensive improvisation, the phrasing is meticulously crafted. He uses a wide range of techniques including legato and staccato, creating a distinctive character. This is further explored through the examination of specific songs like "How Soon Is Now?" and "This Charming Man". The use of distortion and clean tones is also strategically utilized to manipulate mood and create atmosphere. **(c) Harmonies and Textures:**

While not overly complex, the Smiths often employed harmonies and textures to enhance the depth of their arrangements. The use of layered guitars and subtle chord voicings creates a rich soundscape. This is visually represented below: |

Song Title	Primary Chord Progressions	Harmonic Layers
How Soon Is Now?	Am-G-C-F	Open G chords, layered with simple arpeggios
This Charming Man	Dm-G-C-F	Sus chords, punctuated with a single prominent melody line

(d) Influence of Tuning and Effects: Marr's frequent use of open tunings (such as Drop-D or standard tuning with capo) significantly contributes to the band's distinctive sound. This allows for unique voicings and textures, further exemplified in their arrangements. He also employed fuzz, delay, and reverb to manipulate the overall tone, adding a distinctive sonic ambiance. The importance of effects is showcased in the table below: |

Song Title	Effects Used	Impact
"The Queen Is Dead"	Delay, Reverb, Fuzz	Creates a spacious and dreamy atmosphere
"Ask"	Distortion, clean tones	Creates contrasting textures for the same melodic line

II. Influence and Practical Applicability The Smiths' impact transcends musical genre. Their meticulous approach to guitar playing, coupled with their distinctive songwriting, has resonated with countless musicians, influencing indie rock, alternative, and even electronic artists. **(a) Contemporary Musicians:** Musicians like Alex Turner of Arctic Monkeys and other indie artists continue to be inspired by the Smiths' restrained, melodic approach and their use of open tunings and simple yet effective power chords. **(b) Practical**

Application for Guitarists: The Smiths' approach is valuable for aspiring guitarists seeking a sophisticated and nuanced sound. The emphasis on precise phrasing, concise melodies, and effective use of rhythm offers a blueprint for creating compelling and impactful guitar parts without resorting to virtuosity. Focusing on the emotional impact of the music, rather than the technical prowess, is another important take away. **III. Visualizing the Impact:** A graph displaying the correlation between Smiths' song popularity and their guitar style would show a strong positive correlation, showcasing the integral role of guitar. **(Graph Representation)** – *Illustrative graph displaying the potential relationship between Smiths' song popularity and guitar technique and style.* (A scatter plot would be suitable). The X-axis could represent a quantified measure of guitar proficiency (e.g., chord proficiency, melodic line complexity, effect use), while the Y-axis represents song popularity metrics (e.g., number of streams, chart positions). **IV. Conclusion** The Smiths' guitar work represents a powerful counterpoint to the post-punk era's general embrace of experimental and virtuosic techniques. Their ability to create a unique sonic fingerprint through concise melodies, precise rhythms, and strategic use of effects

provides a valuable lesson for modern guitarists. Their songs provide practical examples and inspiration for developing a sophisticated and impactful sound that transcends mere technical proficiency. By focusing on conveying emotion and evoking atmosphere, the Smiths' approach remains compelling and influential. **V. Advanced FAQs**

- 1. How can I develop a similar melodic sensibility to Johnny Marr's?** Focus on simple, repetitive melodic patterns and explore the use of open tunings and specific voicings. Learn to manipulate phrasing and dynamics to create a distinct emotional impact.
- 2. What specific effects pedals would be recommended to emulate the Smiths' sound?** Fuzz pedals, delay pedals with adjustable time, and reverb effects would be ideal. Experimentation with combinations is crucial.
- 3. How can I translate the Smiths' rhythmic approach into my own playing?** Analyze the rhythm sections in their songs, paying particular attention to the percussive elements of the rhythm guitar and the way it interacts with the drums.
- 4. Beyond the obvious, what are some unexpected or obscure stylistic choices within Marr's playing that can be investigated?** Dig deeper into the use of legato and staccato techniques in his melodic lines, as well as how he subtly utilizes syncopation.
- 5. How do the Smiths' guitar playing principles compare and contrast with other post-punk bands or earlier bands?** Comparing their guitar playing with contemporaries like Joy Division or earlier acts (e.g., The Beatles) offers insights into stylistic development and evolution of guitar use in music history. This analysis underscores the enduring appeal and practical value of the Smiths' guitar playing, highlighting their lasting influence on music beyond the sphere of just "post-punk" categorization. Their approach continues to provide valuable inspiration and guidance for musicians seeking to create impactful, emotive, and meaningful guitar work.

Unlocking the Melancholy Magic: Playing Guitar with The Smiths

Ah, The Smiths. The very name conjures images of rainy Manchester afternoons, witty lyrics laced with existential dread, and of course, those iconic, jangly guitar riffs. For many, the allure of The Smiths isn't just in Morrissey's poetic pronouncements; it's in Johnny Marr's unparalleled guitar work. If you've ever found yourself humming along to "There Is a Light That Never Goes Out" or air-guitaring to "This Charming Man," chances are you've dreamt of picking up a guitar and recreating that magic yourself. But how exactly do you go about playing guitar with the spirit of The Smiths, and what does it take to capture Johnny Marr's distinctive sound?

This isn't just about learning a few chords. Playing guitar in the style of The Smiths is about embracing a certain sensibility, a delicate balance of aggression and sweetness, of intricate melodies and raw emotion. It's a journey that can be incredibly rewarding, offering a unique entry point into the world of alternative and indie guitar playing. So, grab your instrument, whether it's a classic Fender Jaguar or a more humble Telecaster, and let's dive deep into the art of channeling your inner Johnny Marr.

The Cornerstone: Johnny Marr's Unmistakable Guitar Style

Before we even touch a fretboard, it's crucial to understand what makes Johnny Marr's guitar playing so special. He wasn't just a guitarist; he was a sonic architect, weaving intricate tapestries of sound that became the backbone of The Smiths' enduring appeal. His style is characterized by a few key elements:

Melody is King

Unlike many guitarists who focus on power chords or shredding solos, Marr's primary focus was always on melody. His guitar lines are often as memorable and singable as Morrissey's vocal melodies. He approached the guitar as a lead instrument, not just a rhythm one. Think of the instantly recognizable opening riff to "How Soon Is Now?" – it's a melody in itself, instantly evocative and haunting.

The Art of the Riff

Marr was a master craftsman of the guitar riff. His riffs are not just catchy; they're often complex, incorporating intricate fingerpicking, hammer-ons, pull-offs, and a sophisticated understanding of harmony. He had an uncanny ability to create riffs that felt both uplifting and melancholic, often within the same song. "This Charming Man" is a prime example, with its signature arpeggiated figures that dance around the vocal line.

Jangle and Sparkle

The quintessential Smiths guitar sound is one of brightness and sparkle. This is largely achieved through his choice of equipment and effects. Marr famously favoured Fender guitars, particularly the Jaguar and Telecaster, known for their bright, chimy tones. He also utilized effects like chorus and reverb to add that signature shimmering quality, giving his playing a sense of space and airiness.

Layering and Textures

While Marr was often the sole guitarist in The Smiths, his arrangements often sounded as if there were multiple guitars at play. He achieved this through clever layering, using different guitar parts to complement each other, creating a rich and full sonic landscape. He would often double-track parts or use subtle variations in his playing to build complexity without sounding cluttered. This is a key element that contributes to the "fullness" of Smiths songs.

Getting Started: Essential Gear for the Smiths Sound

While talent and technique are paramount, the right tools can certainly help you get closer to that authentic Smiths sound. Don't worry if you don't have a vintage Fender Jaguar; there are plenty of excellent alternatives and approaches you can take.

Guitars: The Bright and the Beautiful

Johnny Marr's go-to instruments were often Fender Jaguars and Telecasters. These guitars are known for their single-coil pickups, which produce a brighter, more articulate tone compared to humbuckers. If you're looking for a similar feel, consider:

1. **Fender Telecaster:** A versatile workhorse with a bright, twangy sound that can easily capture the Smiths' jangle.
2. **Fender Jaguar:** Known for its unique switching options and often a slightly warmer but still bright tone.
3. **Squier Classic Vibe Series:** Squier offers excellent value, and their Classic Vibe Telecasters and Jaguars can get you remarkably close to the desired sound without breaking the bank.
4. **Other single-coil guitars:** Many other brands offer guitars with single-coil pickups that can achieve a similar bright, chimy tone. Experiment with Strats or other guitars with a clear, articulate sound.

Amplification: Clean and Clear

Marr typically favoured Fender amps, such as the Twin Reverb or Deluxe Reverb, known for their clean headroom and natural reverb. The key here is to aim for a clean, sparkling tone that won't easily break up. You want your guitar's natural tone to shine through.

1. **Fender amps:** If possible, a Fender amp is a natural choice.
2. **Other clean amps:** Many other amplifier brands offer excellent clean tones. Look for amps with a good amount of headroom, meaning they stay clean even at higher volumes.

3. **Avoid heavy distortion:** The Smiths' sound isn't about overdriven, crunchy tones. Keep your amp settings clean.

Effects Pedals: The Secret Sauce

While Marr's playing is complex, his pedalboard was often relatively simple, focusing on enhancing his core tone. The key effects for replicating the Smiths sound are:

1. **Chorus:** This is arguably the most crucial effect for achieving that signature jangle. A good chorus pedal will add a shimmering, swirling texture to your guitar signal, making it sound fuller and more ethereal. Brands like Boss (CE-2W), Electro-Harmonix (Small Clone), and MXR (Analog Chorus) are popular choices.
2. **Reverb:** A touch of reverb adds space and depth to your sound. Many amps have built-in reverb, but a dedicated reverb pedal can offer more control and a wider range of sounds. Aim for a natural, plate, or spring reverb.
3. **Delay (sparingly):** While not as prominent as chorus, Marr sometimes used delay for subtle echoes or rhythmic textures. A simple digital or analog delay can be useful.
4. **Overdrive (subtle):** Marr occasionally used a very light overdrive to add a touch of grit or to push his amp into a mild breakup, but this was never the dominant characteristic of his sound.

Mastering the Techniques: Beyond the Basics

Now that you have a grasp of the gear, let's delve into the techniques that define Smiths guitar playing. This is where the real magic happens, and it requires practice, patience, and a willingness to experiment.

Open Tunings and Capos: Expanding Your Sonic Palette

Johnny Marr was a master of utilizing open tunings and capos to create unique voicings and textures. This allowed him to achieve those ringing open strings and complex chord shapes that are so characteristic of his sound. While standard tuning (EADGBE) will get you far, exploring other tunings can unlock new possibilities.

1. **D Standard Tuning (DGCFA D):** Used on songs like "The Queen Is Dead."
2. **Open G Tuning (DGDGBD):** While not as heavily used by Marr as some other artists, it's worth exploring for its bright, resonant quality.
3. **Capos:** Marr frequently used capos to transpose songs and create different sonic colours. Experimenting with a capo on various frets will change the overall brightness and feel of your guitar.

Arpeggios and Fingerpicking: The Delicate Dance

The foundation of many Smiths riffs lies in intricate arpeggiated patterns. Instead of strumming chords, Marr would often pick individual notes within the chord, creating a flowing, melodic line. This requires developing your fingerpicking skills.

1. **Practice alternate picking:** Develop clean and precise alternate picking with your pick.
2. **Develop fingerstyle technique:** Learn to use your thumb and fingers to pluck individual strings. This is crucial for many of Marr's more intricate patterns.
3. **Listen and transcribe:** The best way to learn these patterns is to listen closely to the original recordings and try to transcribe them note for note.

Hammer-ons and Pull-offs: Adding Fluidity

These techniques are essential for creating smooth, legato runs and adding a sense of effortless movement to your playing. Marr often incorporated hammer-ons and pull-offs into his riffs and melodic lines, giving them a fluid and almost vocal quality.

1. **Practice cleanly:** Ensure your hammer-ons and pull-offs produce clear notes without buzzing.
2. **Integrate them into melodies:** Think about how these techniques can enhance the melodic contour of your playing.

Chord Voicings: Beyond the Standard

Marr's chord voicings are often unexpected and contribute significantly to the unique harmonic flavour of Smiths songs. He would frequently use suspended chords, inversions, and extensions to add colour and interest.

1. **Explore inversions:** Learn to play chords with different notes in the bass.
2. **Experiment with 7ths and 9ths:** These extensions can add a richer, more sophisticated sound.
3. **Listen to his chord changes:** Pay attention to how he moves between chords; it's often not the most obvious progression.

Learning Your Favourite Smiths Riffs: A Practical Approach

So, how do you actually start learning to play these iconic songs? Here's a step-by-step guide to help you on your way:

Choose Your First Song Wisely

Don't jump straight into the most complex piece. Start with something that appeals to you and seems manageable. Great beginner-friendly Smiths tracks include:

1. "There Is a Light That Never Goes Out" (a good intro to melodic playing)
2. "This Charming Man" (excellent for practicing arpeggios)
3. "How Soon Is Now?" (challenging but iconic, focus on the main riff first)
4. "William, It Was Really Nothing" (simpler chord structure, good for strumming practice)

Listen Intently and Transcribe

This is the most crucial step. Put on your headphones, crank up the volume, and listen to the guitar parts with extreme focus. Try to pick out the individual notes and rhythms. If you're struggling, look for reliable online tabs or tutorials, but always compare them to the original recording.

Break It Down

Don't try to learn an entire song in one go. Break each song down into smaller sections: the intro riff, the verse chords, the chorus melody, the bridge. Master each section before moving on to the next.

Focus on Technique

As you learn the notes, pay attention to how Marr is playing them. Is he using hammer-ons? Is it an arpeggiated pattern? Are there any specific chord voicings he's using? Practice these techniques in isolation and then integrate them into the song.

Add the Effects

Once you're comfortable with the basic notes and techniques, start experimenting with your effects pedals. Dial in that chorus and reverb to get closer to the authentic Smiths sound. Don't be afraid to adjust settings until it sounds right to your ear.

Play Along with the Record

This is where the real learning happens. Play along with the original recordings as accurately as you can. This will help you develop your timing, dynamics, and overall feel for the song. Don't be discouraged if you can't get it perfect immediately; it takes time and repetition.

Beyond the Riffs: Capturing the Smiths' Essence

Playing guitar with The Smiths is more than just replicating notes. It's about understanding the emotional core of their music. Marr's guitar playing often mirrors the lyrical themes of longing, melancholy, and defiant joy.

Consider the contrast in "Girlfriend in a Coma" – the upbeat, almost jaunty guitar riff belies the dark lyrical content. This juxtaposition is a hallmark of The Smiths. As you play, try to inject that same emotional nuance into your performance. Think about the dynamics: when should you play softly and delicately, and when should you add a bit more edge?

Learning to play guitar like Johnny Marr is a rewarding journey that will not only teach you valuable guitar techniques but also deepen your appreciation for one of the most influential alternative bands of all time. So, practice diligently, listen intently, and let the melancholy magic of The Smiths guide your fingers on the fretboard. You might just find yourself creating your own beautiful, jangly anthems.

Immerse in the Intimate Sound of The Smiths: A Guide to Playing Guitar with Their Legacy

The Smiths' music occupies a unique and enduring space in the world of rock, not only for their poetic lyrics and Morrissey's distinctive vocals but also for the raw, emotive guitar work that underpins their sound. For aspiring guitarists, playing with The Smiths is more than just learning chords—it's an invitation to connect deeply with a timeless musical aesthetic rooted in melancholy, introspection, and rhythmic authenticity. This article explores what it means to embrace their guitar style, the insights it offers, how to apply these techniques, the lasting benefits, and what the future holds for guitarists inspired by this legendary band.

Understanding The Smiths' Guitar Language: Raw Feel Over Technical Perfection

At first glance, The Smiths' guitar work may appear understated—relying not on flashy solos or rapid runs, but on a restrained, expressive approach that captures emotional nuance. The rhythm guitar, often played with a muted, fingerpicked or walking bass pattern, anchors Morrissey's vocals with a steady, soulful heartbeat. This rhythmic foundation is central to The Smiths' signature sound, creating a conversational, almost storytelling quality in every song. Rather than showcasing technical virtuosity, the guitar serves as a vessel for mood and meaning—each strum and pause carefully placed to enhance lyrical intent. Understanding this philosophy means shifting focus from precision to emotional authenticity, allowing the guitar to breathe and respond to the song's emotional arc.

Key Guitar Techniques and Approaches to Emulate

To truly play like The Smiths, guitarists should prioritize tone, timing, and textural sensitivity. The band's tone is defined by a warm, slightly compressed guitar sound—often achieved through analog gear, warm amps, and a natural, organic recording style. Emulating this involves selecting a guitar with a balanced midrange and subtle saturation, using clean or

lightly distorted tones that emphasize clarity and warmth. Rhythmically, mastering the subtle walking bass patterns—common in tracks like “How Soon Is Now?” or “There Is a Light That Never Goes Out”—helps maintain the song’s propulsive yet introspective groove. Equally important is the use of dynamic variation: letting notes breathe, allowing space between chords, and using rests to amplify emotional weight. These techniques, though simple in concept, require attentive listening and a deep connection to the music’s emotional core.

Applications and Creative Uses Beyond Replication

While emulating The Smiths’ signature style is a rewarding foundation, the real power lies in adapting their principles to personal expression. The rhythmic restraint and emotional economy of their guitar work inspire guitarists across genres—from indie rock to singer-songwriter—where understated intensity often resonates more deeply than overt showmanship. These techniques encourage mindful playing, fostering patience and intentionality in every note. Moreover, studying The Smiths’ approach opens doors to experimenting with layering textures, using subtle effects like reverb and delay to create atmosphere, and crafting guitar lines that serve the song’s narrative rather than overshadow it. This mindset transforms guitar playing from a technical exercise into a form of storytelling.

Benefits for Guitarists: Emotional Depth, Discipline, and Artistic Growth

Playing in the spirit of The Smiths cultivates profound musical and personal growth. By focusing on emotional authenticity, guitarists develop a deeper sensitivity to dynamics, phrasing, and musical context—skills that enhance all aspects of performance. The discipline required to master rhythmic precision and subtle tone shaping builds a solid technical foundation while fostering artistic maturity. Additionally, engaging with this legacy nurtures a unique voice, inspiring musicians to blend technical skill with heartfelt expression. Ultimately, this approach enriches the creative process, turning guitar playing into a meaningful, reflective practice that transcends mere technique.

The Future of Playing The Smiths: Evolution and Enduring Influence

As music continues to evolve, the ethos of The Smiths—rooted in emotional honesty and restrained power—remains profoundly relevant. Contemporary guitarists increasingly seek authenticity over spectacle, finding inspiration in bands that prioritize mood and meaning. The continued resurgence of analog recording, warm tones, and singer-songwriter narratives reflects a lasting demand for the spirit The Smiths embodied. While new artists may reinterpret their sound through modern lenses, the core principles of thoughtful rhythm, expressive restraint, and emotional depth endure as timeless guides. For future generations, playing with The Smiths is not about imitation, but about embracing a philosophy—one that values music as a vessel for connection, vulnerability, and enduring artistry.

Unlocking the Smiths' Sound: A Deep Dive into Playing Guitar with the Smiths

The Smiths. The very name conjures images of melancholy introspection, witty lyricism, and a sound that, while undeniably unique, remains a potent source of inspiration for guitarists worldwide. For many, the dream isn't just to listen to Morrissey's poignant pronouncements or Johnny Marr's intricate guitar tapestries, but to actively participate. To *play guitar with The Smiths*. While the band’s active tenure may be in the past, their musical legacy is very much alive, and learning to emulate Marr’s distinctive playing style is a rewarding journey for any aspiring guitarist. This article delves deep into the nuances of recreating The Smiths’ guitar sound, exploring techniques, gear, and the underlying philosophy that made them so special.

Johnny Marr: The Architect of The Smiths' Guitar Sound

At the heart of The Smiths' guitar brilliance lies Johnny Marr. Often cited as one of the most influential guitarists of his generation, Marr's approach transcended the typical rock guitar hero mold. He wasn't about shredding solos or heavy riffs; instead, he wove intricate, melodic lines that served as the emotional core of the songs. His playing was characterized by a shimmering, almost orchestral quality, blending jangly Rickenbacker tones with complex arpeggios and inventive chord voicings. Understanding Marr's fundamental contributions is the first step to truly **playing guitar like Johnny Marr**.

The Art of Jangly Arpeggios

Perhaps Marr's most recognizable technique is his masterful use of arpeggios. These aren't simple up-and-down strumming patterns; they are carefully crafted melodic fragments that weave around Morrissey's vocals. Think of the opening of "This Charming Man" or the intricate patterns in "How Soon Is Now?". To replicate this, focus on:

1. **Fingerpicking Prowess:** While not exclusively a fingerstyle player, Marr often employed fingerpicking techniques to separate notes within chords, creating a more delicate and layered sound. Practicing alternate picking and hybrid picking will be invaluable.
2. **Chord Voicings:** Marr rarely stuck to basic open chords. He frequently utilized suspended chords, add9 chords, and other extensions to create richer, more evocative harmonic landscapes. Experimenting with different inversions and voicings of common chords is key.
3. **Melodic Interplay:** Marr's arpeggios often acted as a counter-melody to the vocal line. Listen closely to how his guitar lines interact with Morrissey's – they're in conversation, not just accompanying.
4. **Rhythm and Syncopation:** Despite the melodic focus, there's a strong rhythmic pulse to Marr's playing. Pay attention to the subtle syncopations and accents that give his parts their driving energy.

The Smiths Guitar Tone: That Signature Shimmer

The sound of The Smiths' guitars is as iconic as their songwriting. Marr's tone was clean, bright, and incredibly articulate, often described as "jangly" or "shimmering." Achieving this signature sound involves a combination of guitar choice, amplification, and effects.

Choosing Your Weapon: Iconic Guitars of The Smiths

Johnny Marr was famously associated with a few key guitars, most notably his Rickenbacker 330/12. This 12-string electric guitar, with its distinctive chime, played a significant role in shaping the band's sound. However, he also wielded Fender Jazzmasters, Jaguars, and Telecasters, demonstrating that versatility was important.

1. **Rickenbacker 330/12:** The quintessential Smiths guitar. Its 12 strings provide a natural chorus-like effect and a bright, chiming tone. If you're serious about **learning to play The Smiths songs**, a 12-string Rickenbacker should be high on your wishlist, though it's a significant investment.
2. **Fender Jazzmaster/Jaguar:** These offset Fender models offered a different sonic palette, with their unique pickups and vibrato systems. Marr used them to achieve slightly warmer, yet still articulate, tones.
3. **Fender Telecaster:** A workhorse for many guitarists, the Telecaster's bright, cutting sound was also a part of Marr's arsenal, particularly in earlier recordings.
4. **Acoustic Guitars:** While not as prominent, acoustic guitars also featured in some Smiths tracks, adding another layer to their sonic tapestry.

Amplification and Effects: The Sonic Palette

Marr's amplifier choices were crucial for his clean, articulate tone. He favored Fender amplifiers, particularly the Fender

Twin Reverb, known for its pristine clean tones and ample headroom.

1. **Fender Twin Reverb:** This amp is a legend for a reason. Its clean channel is impeccable, providing the perfect platform for Marr's intricate playing without breaking up prematurely.
2. **Clean Tone is King:** The foundation of Marr's sound is a clean, unadulterated tone. Avoid high-gain amplifiers if you're aiming for authenticity. Focus on cranking a clean amp to a respectable volume to elicit natural warmth and sustain.
3. **Subtle Effects for Shine:** Marr wasn't a heavy pedal user, but he employed select effects judiciously to enhance his sound.
4. **Chorus:** A touch of chorus is essential for that shimmering, doubled guitar sound. Think subtle, not overwhelming. Brands like Boss CE-2 or Electro-Harmonix Small Clone are good starting points.
5. **Reverb:** Natural room reverb or a spring reverb on the amplifier adds space and depth.
6. **Delay:** Used sparingly, delay can add a subtle echo to arpeggiated lines, enhancing their melodic quality. A simple analog delay pedal can be very effective.
7. **Compression:** A light touch of compression can even out the dynamics of arpeggiated parts and add sustain, contributing to that polished sound.

Deconstructing Iconic Smiths Guitar Parts

To truly master **playing guitar with The Smiths**, studying their most famous songs is paramount. Each track offers a masterclass in Marr's technique and songwriting.

"This Charming Man": The Arpeggio Blueprint

"This Charming Man" is arguably the most definitive Smiths guitar song. Its opening arpeggiated riff is instantly recognizable and a fantastic entry point for learning Marr's style. The riff is built on a relatively simple chord progression, but Marr's intricate fingerpicking and melodic embellishments elevate it to something extraordinary. Pay close attention to the hammer-ons, pull-offs, and the way individual notes within the chords are emphasized.

"How Soon Is Now?": The Echoing Tremolo

This track showcases a different facet of Marr's genius. The iconic, echoing tremolo effect, achieved through a combination of vibrato and extensive reverb and delay, creates a hypnotic, almost psychedelic atmosphere. Learning the iconic tremolo picking pattern and understanding how to layer effects to achieve that vast sound is a challenging but rewarding endeavor. Marr's ability to create such a massive sound with seemingly simple elements is testament to his innovative spirit. This song is a great example of how to **learn The Smiths guitar solos**, even if they aren't traditional shredding.

"There Is a Light That Never Goes Out": Melodic Sophistication

Here, Marr's guitar work is more about providing a beautiful, melodic counterpoint to Morrissey's soaring vocals. The interwoven guitar lines, often played on different strings, create a rich harmonic texture. The song demonstrates Marr's ability to craft a memorable guitar part that is both supportive and stands on its own. It's a masterclass in melodic construction within a song structure.

"Bigmouth Strikes Again": Power and Precision

While still melodic, this track features a more driving, almost aggressive guitar presence. Marr's playing here is tighter, with a greater emphasis on rhythmic attack. It showcases his versatility and ability to adapt his style to the emotional arc of a song.

Tips for Aspiring Smiths Guitarists

Beyond technical proficiency, understanding the ethos behind The Smiths' music can significantly enhance your ability to **play songs by The Smiths** authentically.

1. **Listen Intently:** The most crucial step is to immerse yourself in their discography. Listen to Marr's guitar parts in isolation, then in the context of the whole song. Pay attention to the nuances of his phrasing, timing, and tone.
2. **Learn by Ear:** While tabs and tutorials are helpful, try to develop your ear. Transcribing Marr's parts yourself will deepen your understanding of his musical language.
3. **Focus on Melodicism:** Remember that Marr's guitar playing is primarily melodic. Think about singing a melody with your guitar rather than just playing chords or solos.
4. **Embrace Simplicity and Complexity:** Marr's genius lay in making complex ideas sound effortless and simple. Don't be afraid to experiment with intricate voicings and arpeggios, but also understand the power of a well-placed, simple melodic phrase.
5. **Practice Regularly:** Like any skill, mastering The Smiths' guitar style requires consistent practice. Dedicate time to working on arpeggios, chord voicings, and learning their songs.
6. **Find Your Own Voice:** While emulating Marr is the goal, the ultimate aim is to absorb his influences and integrate them into your own playing. Don't just be a carbon copy; be inspired.

The Enduring Legacy of The Smiths' Guitar Music

The Smiths may be a band of the past, but their influence on guitar music is undeniable. Countless artists have cited Johnny Marr as a formative influence, and the techniques and sounds he pioneered continue to resonate. Learning to **play guitar with The Smiths** is more than just learning covers; it's about understanding a unique approach to guitar playing that prioritizes melody, texture, and emotional resonance. It's about unlocking a sound that, even decades later, continues to charm and captivate.

So, pick up your guitar, find a clean amp, and delve into the shimmering, intricate world of The Smiths. The journey of playing their music will not only hone your guitar skills but also offer a profound appreciation for one of rock music's most distinctive and beloved guitarists. Whether you're aiming to strum "There Is a Light That Never Goes Out" with friends or dissect the intricate patterns of "This Charming Man," the rewards of exploring The Smiths' guitar repertoire are immense.

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Questions & Answers About play guitar with the smiths

No	Question	Answer
1	What makes The Smiths' guitar work so distinctive?	The Smiths' guitar sound is largely defined by Johnny Marr's intricate, chiming Rickenbacker riffs, jangly open-tuned chords, and melodic, often arpeggiated solos. He masterfully blended influences from folk, glam rock, and new wave to create a unique, instantly recognizable style.
2	Where's the best place to start learning to play guitar like Johnny Marr?	Begin by focusing on Marr's early work with The Smiths, like 'This Charming Man' or 'Heaven Knows I'm Miserable Now.' Learn their distinctive open tunings and practice his clean, arpeggiated picking patterns. Many online tutorials break down his techniques effectively.
3	Do I need a specific type of guitar to play The Smiths' songs?	While Johnny Marr famously used Rickenbacker guitars, you don't strictly need one. His sound relies more on technique, open tunings, and a clean tone with a touch of chorus or reverb. A good quality electric guitar that can achieve bright, articulate sounds will work well.
4	What are some essential Smiths guitar chords or techniques to master?	Experiment with open tunings like DADGAD or C G D G B E. Focus on arpeggiated picking, fingerpicking melodic lines, and using open strings to create that signature jangle. Learn to incorporate hammer-ons and pull-offs for fluid melodic runs.

5	Are there any beginner-friendly Smiths guitar songs to learn?	'There Is a Light That Never Goes Out' is a great starting point, featuring a relatively straightforward chord progression and iconic melody. 'Ask' also offers approachable chord shapes and a memorable riff.
6	How can I capture that melancholic yet upbeat Smiths guitar vibe?	It's a balance! Use a clean tone, often with a touch of chorus or delay for shimmer. Focus on melodic phrasing that mirrors Morrissey's vocals. While the chords can be bright, inject a sense of yearning and introspection into your playing through note choice and dynamics.
7	What guitar pedals are associated with Johnny Marr's Smiths sound?	While Marr's playing is primarily tone and technique-driven, pedals like a chorus (e.g., Boss CE-2) and a touch of reverb were often used to enhance the chime and atmosphere of his guitar parts. Clean boost pedals were also employed to push his amp.

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