



JoniMitchell.com Transcription for Guitar

Overture – Cotton Avenue

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CACFGC, 'Joni' Tuning: C93525

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This is a difficult song to reproduce on the guitar for a few reasons. Firstly, there are several overdubbed guitar parts on the original. I'm fairly sure that these all use the same tuning but they don't play exactly the same parts, so there are contrasting notes and chords which thicken the sound. This is especially true in the introduction where there are (I think) four different guitars playing. The differences between the guitar parts give a rich texture to the introduction. There's no way to get quite the same sound on one guitar - what I've written out is the "essence" of the introduction, which should give the overall feel and sound of the intro.

More importantly, the original recording uses 12-string guitars. As usual on a 12-string, the lowest four pairs of strings are tuned in octaves and the top two pairs are tuned in unison. This means that the upper octave string of the 3rd pair actually has a higher pitch than the top pair of strings. In other words, on a 12-string tuned to CACFGC, when the open strings are strummed the highest pitch you hear is the F that comes from the high-octave string of the 3rd pair. This pitch is higher than the C of the top strings - it's equivalent to fretting the top strings at the 5th fret.

So what does this all mean? Playing the song on a 6-string guitar won't sound quite the same because the higher-octave notes from the 3rd-6th strings are missing. In particular, on the barre chords like 555555, the top note you hear on a 6-string won't be the same as the original - the octave strings on the 12-string make the difference.

For some parts, a 6-string will sound almost as good, but for other parts, and the introduction in particular, the high-octave notes from the 12-string are an important part of the sound. If you try it out, you'll see what I mean.

One way to approximate the 12-string sound might be to get a friend to play the same part but 12 frets higher! (Maybe not very easy though ...!)

One other variation on the guitars used for the original (just to make things *really* complicated!) is the fact that of the 4 guitars audible on the intro, 3 of them are normal 12-strings and the 4th sounds like it has *only* the upper octave strings for the 3rd-6th strings. In other words it's a 6-string guitar (in CACFGC tuning) with the bottom four strings tuned an octave higher than usual. I haven't tried restringing my guitar with the right strings to try this out, but it might be fun!

This guitar has a much higher and brighter sound than the other 12-strings because it doesn't play any of the low notes. There are parts of the intro where the other 12 strings come in and out of the mix, sometimes leaving this high-

strung 6-string on its own. You can hear a distinct change in sound at these points (e.g the bits labelled "Point A" and "Point B" below)

OK, onto the music. I've written out tablature for the intro, with the basic chord shapes that are used written above the tablature. In a few places I've added a note underneath the tablature to show where one of the other guitars plays an extra chord or note that is not in the "main" guitar part.

For the parts with singing I've mostly just written out the chords. The chords 5554xx and 8887xx are used quite a lot - I don't hear the open strings being played much with these shapes, but it doesn't make a big difference if you use the open strings and play 555400 888700.

For the short riffs on the bottom string that appear throughout the song you can get a somewhat 12-string like sound on a 6-string by playing them as octaves on the 4th and 6th strings. E.g instead of playing:

```
C-----  
G-----  
F-----  
C-----  
A-----  
C---0--3--5-5-5-5-5-
```

you can play:

```
C-----  
G-----  
F-----  
C---0--3--5-5-5-5-5-  
A-----  
C---0--3--5-5-5-5-5-
```

b indicates a bend
/ indicates a slide
<12> indicates a harmonic (e.g at the 12th fret)

x<77777> means play the top 5 strings as harmonics at the 7th fret.

Intro:

(Free tempo)

222222

xx3333 555555

C---<12>-----5/7--7-----5-----2-----2--0--3--3--5-----
 G-----<12>-----2-----2-----2--0--3--3--5-----
 F-----2-----2-----2--0--3--3--5-----
 C-----2-----2-----2-----3--3--5-----
 A-----2-----2-----
 C-----2-----2-----2-----

^^^^^

2nd guitar plays
harmonic at the
5th fret, top string

^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^

slow strums from top
bottom string

222222

3333xx

x77xxx

C---5-----2--2--2-----
 G---5--5--2--2-----
 F---5--5--2--2-----3-----3-----
 C---5--5--2--2-----3--5-----3-----7--7--7--7--7--7--
 A---5--5--2-----3-3-3-3-3/7-7--7--7--7--7--7--
 C--5-----2-----2--0--3-----

0x7777

777777

C-----7--7--7--7--7--7--7--7--7--7--7--7--7--7-----7-----
 G-----7--7--7--7--7--7--7--7--7--7--7--7--7--7-----7-----
 F-----7--7--7--7--7--7--7--7--7--7--7--7--7--7-----7-----
 C-----7--7--7--7--7--7--7--7--7--7--7--7--7--7-----7-----
 A-----7-----7-----
 C--7--7--0-----7-----

^^^^^

Second guitar

^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^

slow strum from top

plays xx5555

to bottom string

à tempo:

777777

5554xx

3332xx

5554xx

C-----0-----
 G-----0-----
 F-----4--4-----2-----4--0-----
 C--7-----5--0--5--5--3--3-----3-----5--5-----
 A--7-----5-----5-----3--3-3-----5-----
 C-----0--5-----3-----3-----5-----

555555

222222

3332xx 5554xx

```

C--5-----5-----2-----
G--5--5-----5--5--5--5-----2-----
F--5--5-----5--5--5--5--0--2-----2--4-----
C----5-----5--5--5-----5--0--2-----3--5-----
A----5--5--5-----0--2-----3--5-----
C--5-----5-----0--2--2-2--0-2-2--0-2-2--3-----5-----

```

^^^^^^^^^^

Point A - sound changes as 12-strings enter

7776xx

222222

333333

555555

222222

2xxxxx

3xxxxx

5xxxxx

```

C-----2--2-----3-----5-----2-----
G-----2--2-----3-----5--5-5-5-----2-----
F--6--6--6-----2--2-----3-----5--5-5-5-----2-----
C--7--7--7--7-----2--2-----3-----5--5-5-5-----2-----
A-----7--7--2-----5--5-5-5-----2-----
C--7--7--7--7--7--2-----3-----5-----2--2-----0-3--3-----0-5--5--

```

077777

8887xx

777777

```

C----7--7-----7--7-----7--7-----7-----7-----7-----
G----7--7-----7--7-----7--7-----7-----7-----7-----
F----7--7-----7--7-----7--7-----7-----7-----7-----
C----7--7--7-7--7--7--7--7-----8-----8-----7--7-----7-----
A----7-----7-7--7--7--7--7-----8-----8--8-----7-----7-----
C--0--0-----0-----0-----0-8--8--8-----7-----7-----

```

^^^^^^^^^^

Point B - sound changes as 12 strings stop playing, leaving just the 6 string guitar

5554xx

x22222

x33333

x55555

(free tempo ...)

```

C-----2--2--2--3--3--3--5--5--5--5-----
G-----2--2--2--3--3--3--5--5--5--5-----
F----4-----4--4--4--4-----2--2--2--3--3--3--5--5--5--5--etc
C----5-----5-----5--5--5--5--etc-----2--2--2--3--3--3--5--5--5--5-----
A----5--5--5-----5--5--5--5-----2--2--2--3-----5-----
C--5-----5-----0--5--5--5--5-----5-----

```

^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^

here, one of the other guitars strums x776xx at the same time

x22222

xx3333

xx55555

x77777

```

C--0--2--2-----3--3-----5--5--5--5--5-----
G--0--2--2-----3--3-----5--5--5--5--5-----7-----
F--0--2--2-----3--3-----5--5--5--5--5-----7-----7-----
C---2--2-----5--5--5--5--5-----7-----
A---2-----7-----
C-----2-2-----3-5-----0--0-----

```

^^^^
 2nd guitar
 plays xxxxx12

^^^^^^^^^^
 2nd guitar
 plays xxx999

^^^^^^^^^^^^^^
 2nd guitar
 plays 5xxxxx

 The Big Bass Note comes here!

à tempo:

8887xx

77777x

5554xx

444444

```

C-----4-----
G-----4--4--4-----
F---7-----7--7-----4--4-----4--4--4--4--4-----
C---8-----8--7--7--7--7-----5-----5--4--4-----4--4-----
A-----8--7--7-----7--7-----5-----5--4--4-----4--4-----
C---8-8---7-----7---5-----5---4--4-----4-----

```

5554xx

8887xx

030200

5xxxxxx

```

C-----0-----
G-----0-----
F---4--4--4---7-----7-----X--2-----
C---5--5--5--5---8-----8-----X-----
A---5--5-----5---8---8--8-----X-----
C---5--5-----5---8---8--8---0--X-----0-3---5-5-5-5-5---

```

x<55555>

x<77777>

5xxxxxx

x<12 12 12 12 12>

x<55555>

x<77777>

```

C---<5>-----<7>-----<12>-----<5>---<7>---
G---<5>-----<7>-----<12>-----<5>---<7>---
F---<5>---X---<7>-----<12>-----<5>---<7>---
C---<5>---X---<7>-----<12>-----<5>---<7>---
A---<5>---X---<7>-----<12>-----<5>---<7>---
C-----X-----0-3---5-5-5-5-5-----

```

0xxxxx 3xxxxx 5xxxxx 7xxxxx 077777
 (free tempo ...)
 C-----7--7--7--7-----
 G-----7--7--7--7-----
 F-----7--7--7--7--etc-----
 C-----7--7--7--7-----
 A-----7--7-----7-----
 C--0---3--5-5-5---0--5-5---0--7-7---0-----

xx2222 xx3333 xx5555 xx2222 xx3333 xx5555

C--2---3---5--5--5--5---2---3---5-----2---3--5--5--5--
 G--2---3---5--5--5--5---2---3---5-----2---3--5--5--5--etc, ad lib
 F--2---3---5--5--5--5---2---3---5-----2---3--5--5--5--
 C--2---3---5--5--5--5---2---3---5-----2---3--5--5--5--
 A-----
 C-----5-----

xx9999 xx5555

C--9---5-----
 G--9---5-----
 F--9---5-----
 C--9---5-----
 A-----
 C-----

The above two chord are played just at the point where the vocals start singing "eeeeeeeeeee"

Drums enter:

à tempo:

3xxxxx 0xxxxx 3xxxxx 5xxxxx x<55555> x<77777> 0xxxxx 3xxxxx 5xxxxx

C-----<5>---<7>-----
 G-----<5>---<7>-----
 F-----<5>---<7>-----
 C-----<5>---<7>-----
 A-----<5>---<7>-----
 C--3---0---0--3--5-5-5-5-5-----0--3---5-5-5-5-5---

xx<12 12 12 12> x<55555> x<77777> 0xxxxx 3xxxxx 5xxxxx 7xxxxx

C---<12>-----<5>----<7>-----
G---<12>-----<5>----<7>-----
F---<12>-----<5>----<7>-----
C---<12>-----<5>----<7>-----
A---<12>-----<5>----<7>-----
C-----0-----3-----5-5-5-----0--5-5-----0--7-7-

VERSE:

077777 333333 555555

A red sun came rolling down a grey sky

5554xx

8887xx

And the frogs and dogs and night birds then started up singing

3xxxxx 0xxxxx

sweet country lullaby

C-----
G-----
F-----
C-----
A-----
C--0--3--5-5-5-5-5---

077777 333333 555555

You see that patch of city lights, somewhere in there's Cotton Avenue

5554xx

8887xx

That's where I'm going to take myself tonight

3xxxxx 0xxxxx

With a spit shine on my dancing shoes

C-----<5>---<7>-----
G-----<5>---<7>-----
F-----<5>---<7>-----
C-----<5>---<7>-----
A-----<5>---<7>-----
C--0--3--5-5-5-5-5-----0-3---5-5---0--5-5-

Chorus:

555555 077777

If you got a place like that to go you just have to go there

333333 10 10 10 10 10 10 3xxxxx 0xxxxxx

If you got no place special, well then, you just go no place special

C-----<5>---<7>-----<12>---<5>---<7>-----
G-----<5>---<7>-----<12>---<5>---<7>-----
F-----<5>---<7>-----<12>---<5>---<7>-----
C-----<5>---<7>-----<12>---<5>---<7>-----
A-----<5>---<7>-----<12>---<5>---<7>-----
C--0--3--5-5-5-5-5-----0-3---5-5-5-5-5-----

C-----
G-----
F-----
C-----
A-----
C---0--3-5-5-5---0-5-5---0-7-7-----

Bridge

8887xx 777777

I guess it's just the summer in the young blood

5554xx 444444 5554xx 8887xx

Ripe and juicy in the young blood, teasing to go down to ...

077777

Cotton Avenue

C-----
G-----
F-----
C-----
A-----
C--0--3---5-5---0--7-7-----

8887xx 777777

To hear the shiny shiny music

5554xx 444444 5554xx

See all the shiny people dancing to it

8887xx 3xxxxx 0xxxxxx

Anytime you go to Cotton Avenue

C-----<5>---<7>-----
G-----<5>---<7>-----
F-----<5>---<7>-----
C-----<5>---<7>-----
A-----<5>---<7>-----
C--0--3--5-5-5-5-5-----0-3---5-5-5-5-5-----

Chorus:

555555

If you got a place like that to go

077777

You know you got to go there

333333

If you got no place special

10 10 10 10 10 10 3xxxxx 0xxxxxx

Well then, you just go no place special

C-----<5>--<7>-----<12>--<5>--<7>-----
G-----<5>--<7>-----<12>--<5>--<7>-----
F-----<5>--<7>-----<12>--<5>--<7>-----
C-----<5>--<7>-----<12>--<5>--<7>-----
A-----<5>--<7>-----<12>--<5>--<7>-----
C--0--3--5-5-5-5-5-----0-3--5-5-5-5-5-----

C-----
G-----
F-----
C-----
A-----
C--0--3-5-5-5---0-5-5--0-7-7-----

Bridge

8887xx 777777 5554xx

You see that summer storm brewing in the southern sky

444444 5554xx 8887xx

By the time it hits here I'll be dancing high and dry

3xxxxx 0xxxxxx 5xxxxx 7xxxxx

To rhythm and blues on Cotton Avenue

8887xx 777777

Poor boys'll be hanging around outside in the street

5554xx 444444 5554xx

They got all the latest words, they're dancing to the latest beat

8887xx 3xxxxx 077777 5xxxxx

While they're hustling and sizing you on Cotton Avenue

C---<5>-----<7>-----
G---<5>-----<7>-----
F---<5>-----<7>-----
C---<5>-----<7>-----
A---<5>-----<7>-----
C-----0---3-----5-5-5-5-5-

Chorus:

555555

077777

If you got a place like that to go you just have to go there

333333

If you've got no place special

10 10 10 10 10 10

3xxxxxx 0xxxxxx

Well my dear you just go no place ... special

C-----<5>---<7>-----<12>---<5>--<7>-----
 G-----<5>---<7>-----<12>---<5>--<7>-----
 F-----<5>---<7>-----<12>---<5>--<7>-----
 C-----<5>---<7>-----<12>---<5>--<7>-----
 A-----<5>---<7>-----<12>---<5>--<7>-----
 C--0--3--5-5-5-5-5-----0-3---5-5-5-5-5-----0--3-5-5-5-

C---<5>---<7>-----
 G---<5>---<7>-----
 F---<5>---<7>----- repeat several times
 C---<5>---<7>-----
 A---<5>---<7>-----
 C-----0-3---5-5-5-5-5---

C-----
 G-----
 F-----
 C----- repeat and fade
 A-----
 C--5b6---5-5-5----5b6---5-5-5----