



# GT131

## Session Secrets

*Coldplay*

*In his fifth appointment with the session secrets, Dario Cortese brings you to a session with Coldplay*

This month we will recreate the expansive soundscapes typical of Coldplay. The London foursome first came to public attention in 1994 with a sound that's often associated with Travis, Jeff Buckley and Oasis. This month's approach can be applied in two types of situation; working in a band and working for a band as a hired musician. Sometimes, although it doesn't happen very often, you may be called to augment an existing band.

If you are a member of a band you know exactly what kind of sound you're after and what kind of dynamics and space you need to leave for the other musicians. One of the hardest things to do, especially in a band like Coldplay, is to play for the song and never for your instrument. The guitar parts, and the sound of the guitar, should always reflect the band's 'identity' and try to translate the meaning of the lyrics.

If you are a hired musician, ideally, you should be familiar with a band's entire discography and the guitar gear employed! Sometimes, a guitar or an amp can define a sound that is instantaneously recognizable. Balancing this, you have been hired to bring something new to the sound of the band.

The reference tracks for this month are two of the band's previous hits; 'In My Place' and 'Don't Panic'. They're looking for an intro that will set the vibe for the entire song.

Here's the chart:





The first two guitars recorded would be the acoustic and electric playing strummed chords. It's a very 'British band tradition' to have an acoustic or electric strummed in this very straight forward way. The sound should reflect this simplicity: no effects, expect maybe some compression, allowed! Try a dreadnought and a Tele. It's important to avoid playing exactly the same voicings on both guitars; play the electric in the first position and the acoustic with a capo somewhere else.

The second guitar is the clean arpeggio part that's typical of Coldplay. Here we need a fatter sound so grab a Les Paul or a 335, select the neck pick-up, use two small British combos (for a stereo sound) and a very thick pick (2mm). We need a clean dry sound; the reverb, which is very important and we'll touch on later, will be added afterwards.

The arpeggio should be quite simple and should reflect the harmony of the song. Instead of simply playing the arpeggio of each chord, a common technique is to choose some common notes found in all chords and find a very simple melody that mainly focuses on those (the Edge is a master at these type of parts too). When recorded, add a warm, long reverb from the desk.

The last part is on a slide guitar that works in contrast, or in answer, to the arpeggio. The band has used this texture before, but never in combination with strummed acoustic and electric, and an arpeggio part. Again, try the Les Paul but this time on the bridge pickup, for some contrast, and add some gain to the small amp. Again, reverb is added to this track.

Finally, it's very important how all the guitars will be panned in the stereo imagine. Ideally it should be, electric strumming (middle left), acoustic strumming (middle right), arpeggio (top left and top right) and slide (center).

## **TONE SETTINGS**

When setting a reverb you should keep in mind a couple of tips.

Firstly don't add too many high frequencies to the reverb. Highs frequencies on the reverb are typical thing of the 'digital era'. A valve reverb has more middle freq, so keep that in mind if you're looking for a warm sound.

Secondly set the pre-delay in the reverb. The pre-delay parameter sets, in milliseconds, the gap between the note played and



**Electric 1:** The Tele through a small Brit combo, simple chords played in a quite confident way.

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**Electric 2:** With this part, the challenge is playing it as clean as possible and trying to keep the volume even. A kind of light laid back feel would be ideal for this track.

**Electric 3:** I used a glass slide for this. Make sure that everything is very clean and every note gets to the right pitch at the right time.

3 Dm Am G Fmaj7

let ring-----

15 13 13 12 10

14 12

15 12 10

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