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The electric guitar rose to popularity in the 50s and hung on for dear life in the decades that followed. Arguably, it's still one of the most important, most popular instruments today, even though the dominance of EDM can't be denied. And through the decades, there have been plenty of incredible electric guitar songs that'll have you on the air guitar. In this guide, we look at 37, but it's honestly just scratching the surface. Still, we hope you enjoy our list, and maybe even find a few new favorites. Let's get into it.
Song year: 1991
Guitar tab Kurt Cobain was beyond self-deprecating when it came to the writing of "Smells Like Teen Spirit." And what he probably liked least of all was that the jocks and popular kids who ostracized him in school became the biggest fans of the song. Regardless of how Cobain felt about it, this "Teen Spirit" stands as a classic. And even though grunge music isn't extinct in vogue anymore, this song seems to stand the test of time. The guitar playing on "Smells Like Teen Spirit" is simple from top to bottom, though often misplayed by guitarists who don't have a knack for detail. Either way, this is one of those songs that calls for that ol' air guitar!
Song year: 1988
Guitar tab There are plenty of Guns N' Roses songs that make you want to pick up an air guitar and jam along with this. This power ballad, though, still seems to be the one that's remembered most fondly. To be fair, the guitar playing on this song isn't all that hard, so if you want to take it a step beyond and pick it up on real guitar, with patience and persistence, you can certainly do it. It's still kind of funny that the song basically started as Slash's finger exercise though.
Song year: 1971
Guitar tab Eric Clapton is known as one of the all-time greats, and his work with Derek And The Dominos, especially "Layla," is some of his most recognizable. From the main hook with layered guitars to the big bends, try not to play along on air guitar while listening to this unforgettable classic. This song, by the way, was originally a tribute to Pattie Boyd, George Harrison's wife. Clapton and Boyd eventually ended up together (for a while). Not so scandalous as it sounds within the context of the era, according to Clapton.
Song year: 1978
Guitar tab Upon its release, Van Halen's "Eruption" contoured and shocked guitar players everywhere. The late Eddie Van Halen's guitar playing features the kind of technique and speed never heard before. Today, it still stands as the template for the modern rock guitarist – a textbook on everything you need to know to become a successful pro guitarist. The tapped section in the middle is a major air guitar moment too.
Song year: 1965
Guitar tab "I Can't Get No Satisfaction" stands as one of The Rolling Stones' most popular tunes, and even one of the all-time best classic rock tunes. And what's kind of crazy about this is that the guitar riff is one of the easiest in rock history. But is it catchy? Yes. It is unforgettable? Yes. It is worth miming on air guitar? Yes!
Song year: 1973
Guitar tab When Deep Purple came up with "Smoke On The Water," I wonder if they had any idea how famous and infamous it would ultimately become. Guitarist Richie Blackmore was incredible at writing simple but memorable guitar hooks, and it's hard to think of riffs that fit criteria better than "Smoke On The Water." Plus, it's a lot of fun to play along with on air guitar too.
Song year: 1966
Guitar tab For every Rolling Stones or Beach Boys song, you can probably name a Beatles equivalent that was just as popular, if not more so. "Day Tripper" is to The Beatles what "I Can't Get No Satisfaction" was to The Rolling Stones. Its riff is classic – to put it mildly. In addition to being an air guitar favorite, this is one of those songs that probably inspired many people to pick up the guitar.
Song year: 1958
Guitar tab What would rock and roll be without Chuck Berry? I have no idea. Maybe there would be no such thing as rock and roll without him! And "Johnny B. Goode" was Chuck Berry's signature song. It features all the rock and roll clichés. Then again, Berry probably came up with most of them. Even if you prefer the Back to the Future version, which was also quite good, this song is so contagious, you'll find it hard not to play air guitar along to it.
Song year: 1969
Guitar tab The band that was supposed to go off like a lead balloon sure made a lot of great music. And "Whole Lotta Love" stands as a classic rock tour from their large catalog of brilliant tunes. Comedian Michael Winslow even created his own rendition of his song. It has a listen again factor for you, sure, but by 1979, it was a little dated. The role of guitar is more than a handful of songs played like "Highway to Hell," though, captures the rock and roll spirit perfectly. It doesn't matter if you're playing air guitar or real guitar, this song is a great one to play along with.
Song year: 1991
Guitar tab Metallica has more than a handful of very powerful electric guitar riffs. But "Enter Sandman" was a bit of a crossover hit, and probably has the most pop appeal of any tune in their catalog. The main hook recognizes to put it mildly, and there's no doubt it makes you want to pick up that air guitar and mine along. From there, there are plenty of great guitar riffs to follow.
Song year: 1973
Guitar tab This blues-rock classic is probably remembered for its repeated calls of "haw, haw, haw, haw" as much as it's remembered for its guitar riffs and solos. But the amazing thing about "La Grange" is that the rhythm is a hook as much as anything else, and that's a rare trait in a song, even if phrasing or rhythm sometimes plays a minor role in a hook. For those about to air guitar, have fun!
Song year: 1990
Guitar tab Extreme may have become known for gentle acoustic ballads like "More Than Words," but their mainstay, in their own words, was always "funk metal." Some might call it "groove rock." Either way, it was awesome. And "Get The Funk Out" is one of their catchiest songs in this vein. It even features some incredible guitar work throughout. The appeal may not be immediately obvious unless you play a bit of guitar, but we feel it's still deserving of a place on this list. And air guitar is always an option!
Song year: 1980
Guitar tab Guitarist Randy Rhoads is still revered one of the all-time greats in hard rock and metal, even though his life was cut short. "Crazy Train" may be a bit of a cliché 40 years later, but upon its release, it was brilliant. It was catchy. It was innovative. And it highlighted the genius and magic of Rhoads and Osbourne. Even if it's just air guitar, be sure to play along with this one.
Song year: 1993
Guitar tab You can't talk about guitar bands proper without bringing up Canada's own Harem Scarem. In their early days, they were obviously inspired by the likes of Journey, but they soon started tackling heavier subject matter, and when they did, their music grew in sophistication too. "No Justice" is an excellent example of what the band could do when they put their mind to it. And constant musical reinvention became the band's wont thereafter. Anyway, this is a great guitar song, which also makes it a great air guitar song.
Song year: 1979
Guitar tab As with most of the great rock and roll songs, this one is a little dated. The role of guitar is more than a handful of songs played like "Highway to Hell," though, captures the rock and roll spirit perfectly. It doesn't matter if you're playing air guitar or real guitar, this song is a great one to play along with.
Song year: 1991
Guitar tab AC/DC has more than a handful of songs that make you want to pick up that air guitar and jam along with this. One of the best is "Back in Black." It's a classic rock song that's still as popular today as it was when it was first released.
Song year: 1974
Guitar tab Boston was notorious for taking long breaks between albums. But in the 70s, listeners were treated with two of their first, self-titled albums was the gem "More Than a Feeling." The song starts kind of slow, sure, but it explodes into a big, catchy chorus, and the layered guitar work of Tom Scholz. It's pure ecstasy. Air guitar fodder? We think so.
Song year: 1986
Guitar tab Bon Jovi sometimes gets labelled as "shlock rock," which is somewhat understandable, but the band's longevity and extensive catalog finds them as a unicorn, a survivor from the so-called "hair metal" era. Well, "Livin' On A Prayer" is still on high rotation on radio today, and there's a good reason for it. It's catchy, it's fun, and its huge vocals and guitars are in your face and unapologetic. It's okay if this is a bit of a guilty pleasure. We get it. You can air guitar away in privacy.
Song year: 1982
Guitar tab What happens when you put King Of Pop Michael Jackson, Quincy Jones, Steve Lukather, and Eddie Van Halen in a blender? You get "Beat It." "Beat It" became a huge hit, along with the album it was on, Thriller. And if you want to find a song that you can look cool air guitaring to, you've found it. Look no further.
Song year: 1974
Guitar tab David Bowie probably would never have told anyone that he was the best anything... the best singer, saxophonist, or for that matter, guitarist. But he did what he did well. And, if called upon, he could write an insanely catchy guitar riff. And he did. That's what "Rebel Rebel" is. And this song still has legs to stand on based on the guitar riff alone. It's great for air guitar. No doubt.
Song year:

1984
Guitar tab "Rock You Like A Hurricane" has instant appeal to beginner guitarists. And no doubt, despite being simple, the main riff sounds great. And the lead guitar work, that floats on top of it all is quite stellar too. All these factors, along with the instantly recognizable chorus make this song great fodder for air guitar.
Song year: 1982
Guitar tab For the most part, you'll find that the guitar playing on "Smells Like Teen Spirit" is simple from top to bottom, though often misplayed by guitarists who don't have a knack for detail. Either way, this is one of those songs that calls for that ol' air guitar!
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