

# C'EST LA VIE ( Emerson, Lake & Palmer )

Written by Greg Lake and Peter Sinfield in the key of Dm in 4/4 time and 3/4 time  
 Released on Album: Works Volume I ( 1977 )  
 C'est La Vie on [Wikipedia](#) | [Live](#) | [Studio](#)  
 Fingerstyle version for single acoustic guitar in **Drop D tuning**

thumb: x Hammer on: h Bend up: ) break: p  
 index: a Pull off: p Bend down: (  
 dirty: b Slide up: / Press but don't play: !  
 ring: c Slide down: \ Staccato: :  
 pinky: d Strum (Arpeggio): ~~~ Mute: m

Greg is flatpicking this song on a 12 string acoustic guitar in Drop D tuning  
 You'll have to cope with a lot of 5-string arpeggios  
 For fingerpickers, I suggest the following picking pattern:

x - x - a - b - c - b - a - x

If [another pattern](#) suits you better, you're welcome

## INTRO



Dm( add9 ) ( 5th fret )

C'est la ...

e-----0----- -----0-----	picking pattern:
b-----6b-----6b----- -----6b-----	x - x - a - b - c - b - a - x - a ~~~
g-----7d-----7d----- -----7d-----p-----p-----p-----	
D-----7c-----7c----- -----7c-----	
A-----5a-----	
D---0-----	
	¼    ¼    ¼    ¼

## 1ST VERSE

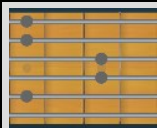
||:



Dm( add9 ) ( 5th fret )

1... vie ... have your ...  
 2... love ... and then ...

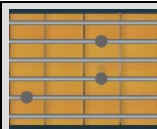
e-----0----- -----0-----	picking pattern:
b-----6b-----6b----- -----6b-----6b-----	x - x - a - b - c - b - a - x ( 2x )
g-----7d-----7d----- -----7d-----7d-----\-----	
D-----7c-----7c----- !-----7c-----7c-----\-----	
A-----5a-----	! : grab 5a
D---0-----	



Csus2 ( 3rd fret )

1... leaves all turned to brown ... will you ...  
 2... how am I to know ... if you ...

e-----3a-----3a----- -----3a-----3a-----	picking pattern:
b-----3a-----3a----- -----3a-----3a-----	x - x - a - b - c - b - a - x ( 2x )
g-----5d-----5d----- -----5d-----5d-----5d-----	
D-----5c-----5c----- -----5c-----5c-----\-----	
A-----3a-----	
D-----	
<----- half or full barré ----->	



Gm13/Bb ( 1st fret )



C( add9 ) ( 1st fret )

1... scatter them around you ...  
 2... don't let your love show for me ...


e-----0----- -----0-----	picking pattern: <a href="#">Hint</a>
b-----3d-----3d----- -----3c-----3c-----	x - x - a - b - c - b - a - x ( 2x )
g-----0-----0----- -----0-----0-----	
D-----3c-----3c----- -----2a-----2a-----	
A-----1a-----	
D-----	



1. Dm ( 1st fret )

1... c'est la vie ... Do you ...

e-----0lap0----- -----0h1a-----	picking pattern:
b-----3d-----3d----- -----3d-----	x - x - a - b - c - b - a - a ~~~
g-----2b-----2b----- -----2b-----p-----p-----p-----	
D-----0-----0----- -----0-----	
A-----	
D---0-----	
	play ad libitum    ¼    ¼    ¼    ¼




2. Dm( add9 ) ( 5th fret )

2... c'est la vie ...

e	-----0-----	-----0-----	
b	-----6b-----6b-----	-----6b-----6b-----	
g	-----7d-----7d-----	-----7d-----7d-----	
D	-----7c-----7c-----	-----7c-----7c-----	
A	-----5a-----	-----5a-----	
D	-----0-----	-----0-----	

picking pattern:  
x - x - a - b - c - b - a - x ( 2x )

||  
**CHORUS**  
||:




Gsus2 ( 5th fret ) Note: Greg Lake plays a Gm chord on the 10th fret ...

1... Oh, oh, c'est la ...  
2... Oh, oh, c'est la ...

e	-----5a-----	-----5a-----	
b	-----8d-----3a-----	-----8d-----8d-----	
g	-----7c-----7c-----	-----7c-----7c-----	
D	-----5a-----5a-----	-----5a-----5a-----	
A	-----5a-----5a-----	-----5a-----5a-----	
D	-----5a-----	-----5a-----	

<----- full barré ----->

picking pattern:  
x - x - a - b - c - b - a - x ( 2x )




Dm( add9 ) ( 5th fret )


1... vie ... who ...  
2... vie ... who ...

e	-----0-----	-----0-----	
b	-----6b-----6b-----	-----6b-----6b-----	
g	-----7d-----7d-----	-----7d-----7d-----	
D	-----7c-----7c-----	-----7c-----7c-----	
A	-----5a-----	-----5a-----	
D	-----0-----	-----0-----	

picking pattern:  
x - x - a - b - c - b - a - x ( 2x )



( 5th fret )




( 5th fret )

... knows, who cares for ...


e	-----0-----	-----0-----	
b	-----6b-----6b-----	-----6b-----6b-----	
g	-----7d-----7d-----	-----7d-----7d-----	
D	-----5a-----5a-----	-----6a-----6a-----	
A	-----5a-----	-----7c-----	
D	-----0-----	-----0-----	

picking pattern:  
x - x - a - b - c - b - a - x ( 2x )

!: grab 6a



Asus4 ( 5th fret )




A ( 5th fret )

... me ... c'est la ...

e	-----5a-----	-----5a-----	
b	-----5a-----5a-----	-----5a-----5a-----	
g	-----7d-----7d-----	-----6b-----5a-----	
D	-----7c-----7c-----	-----7c-----p-----	
A	-----0-----	-----0-----	
D	-----0-----	-----0-----	

picking pattern:  
x - x - a - b - c - b - a - x  
x - x - a - b - c

¼ ¼



Dm

... vie ... In the ...

e	-----0hlap0-----	-----0hla-----	
b	-----3d-----3d-----	-----3d-----3d-----	
g	-----2b-----2b-----	-----2b-----p-----	
D	-----0-----	-----0-----	
A	-----0-----	-----0-----	
D	-----0-----	-----0-----	

picking pattern:  
x - x - a - b - c - b - a - a ~~~

¼ ¼ ¼ ¼

**2ND VERSE** ( same tab as 1st verse )

... night ... do you ...  
... light a lover's fire ... do the ...  
... ashes of desire for you ... re- ...  
... main ...

... Like the ...  
... sea ... there's a ...  
... love too deep to show ... took a ...  
... storm before my love flowed for you ...  
... c'est la vie ...

**CHORUS** ( same tab and lyrics as above )

**INSTRUMENTAL**

It follows an instrumental part, where Keith Emerson plays Musette on an accordion, accompanied by Lake on guitar  
The song changes from 4/4 time to 3/4 time

Greg Lake plays some chords in the upper fret positions that are hard to analyse but who cares?

You can achieve the same results on the lower frets as well

The following tab is the best solution I have found so far

||:

Dsus2/E		Dsus2/Db		
e-----0-----0-----	-----0-----0-----			picking pattern:
b-----3c-----3c-----	-----3c-----3c-----			x - a - b - c - b - a ( 2x )
g-----2a-----2a-----	-----2a-----2a-----			
D---0-----	-----			
A-----	---4d-----			
D-----	-----			
Dsus2/C		Em7		
e-----0-----0-----	-----0-----0-----			picking pattern:
b-----3c-----3c-----	-----13d-----3d-----			x - a - b - c - b - a ( 2x )
g-----2a-----2a-----	-----0-----0-----			
D---0-----	-----			
A---3b-----	---2b-----			! : grab 2c
D-----	-----			
Em7-5/Bb		Am7		
e-----0-----0-----	-----0-----0-----			picking pattern:
b-----3d-----3d-----	-----1a-----1a-----			x - a - b - c - b - a ( 2x )
g-----0-----0-----	-----0-----0-----			
D---0-----	-----			
A---1a-----	---0-----			! : grab 2b ( Am7 )
D-----	-----			
Dsus2/E				
e-----0-----0-----	-----0-----0-----			picking pattern:
b-----3c-----3c-----	-----3c-----3c-----			x - a - b - c - b - a ( 2x )
g-----2a-----2a-----	-----2a-----2a-----			
D---0-----	-----			
A-----	-----			
D-----	---0-----			

:|||:

Gm				
e-----3a-----3a-----	-----3a-----3a-----			picking pattern:
b-----3a-----3a-----	-----3a-----3a-----			x - a - b - c - b - a ( 2x )
g-----3a-----3a-----	-----3a-----3a-----			
D---5d-----	-----			
A---!-----	-----			! : grab 3a ( Gm )
D---!-----	---5c-----			repeat tab 1x
<----- full barré ----->				
Dsus2/E				
e-----0-----0-----	-----0-----0-----			picking pattern:
b-----3c-----3c-----	-----3c-----3c-----			x - a - b - c - b - a ( 2x )
g-----2a-----2a-----	-----2a-----2a-----			
D---0-----	-----			
A-----	-----			
D-----	---0-----			repeat tab 1x

:||

Gm					
e-----3a-----3a-----	-----3a-----3a-----			picking pattern:	
b-----3a-----3a-----	-----3a-----3a-----			x - a - b - c - b - a ( 2x )	
g-----3a-----3a-----	-----3a-----3a-----				
D---5d-----	-----				
A---!-----	-----				
D---!-----	---5c-----				
<----- full barré ----->					
E7/Gb					
e-----0-----0-----	-----0-----0-----			picking pattern:	
b-----3d-----3d-----	-----3d-----3d-----			x - a - b - c - b - a ( 2x )	
g-----1a-----1a-----	-----1a-----1a-----				
D---0-----	---2c-----				
A-----	-----				
D---2b-----	-----				
A7sus4					
e-----0-----0-----	-----0-----0-----			picking pattern:	
b-----3d-----3d-----	-----3d-----3d-----			x - a - b - c - b - a ( 2x )	
g-----0-----0-----	-----0-----0-----				
D---0-----	---2a-----				
A---0-----	-----				
D-----	-----				
A					
e-----0-----0-----	-----0-----0-----			picking pattern:	
b-----2b-----2b-----	-----2b-----p-----p-----p-----			x - a - b - c - b - a - a ~~~	
g-----2a-----2a-----	-----0-----p-----p-----p-----				
D---!-----	---2a-----				
A---0-----	-----			! : grab 2a ( A )	
D-----	-----			ritardando	
		¼	¼	¼	¼

**3RD VERSE** ( same tab as 1st verse )

Like a ...  
... song ... out of ...  
... tune and out of time ... all I ...  
... needed was a rhyme for you ...  
... c'est la vie ...

Do you ...  
... give ... do you ...  
... live from day to day ... is there ...  
... no song I can play for you ...  
... c'est la vie ...

**CHORUS** ( same tab and lyrics as above )