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Flatpicking Guitar

Magazine

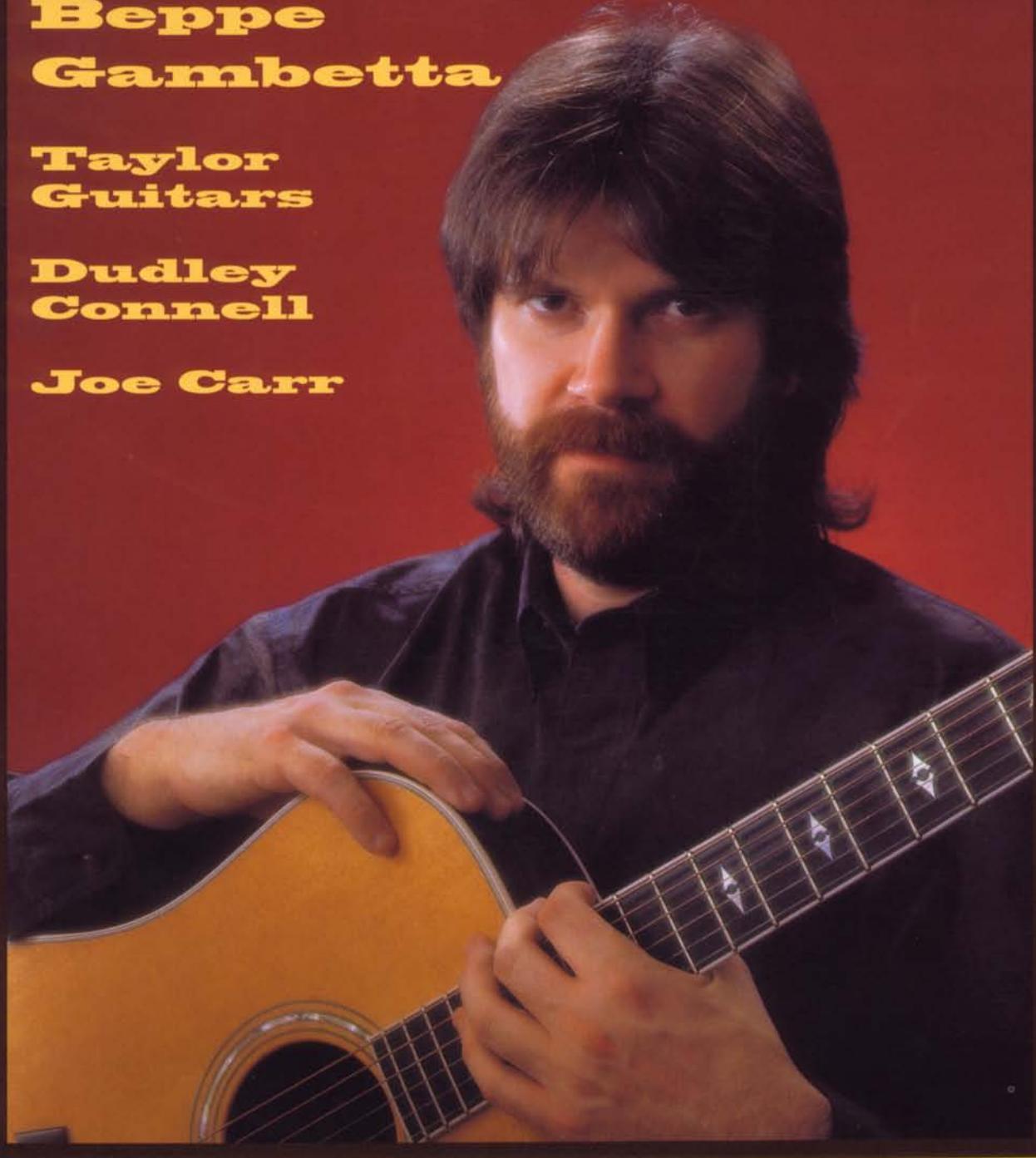
Volume 1, Number 4 May/June 1997

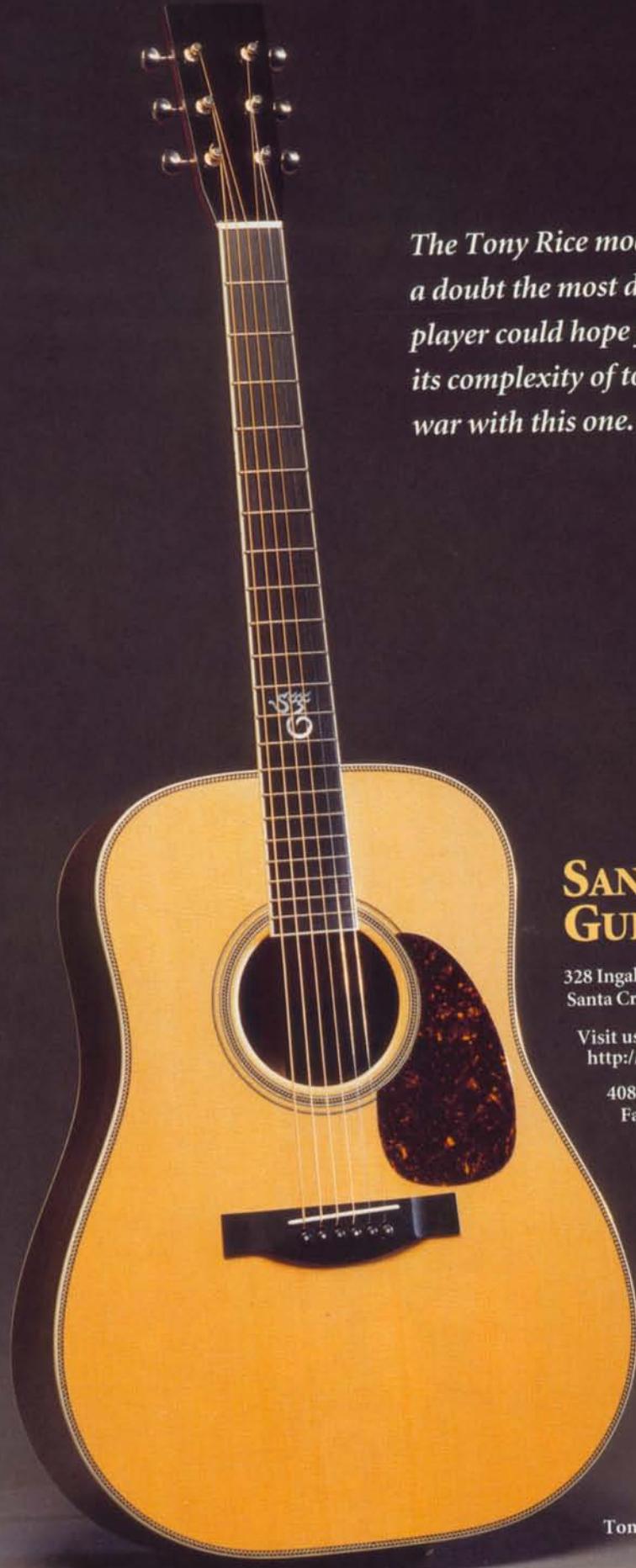
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Tony Rice Model



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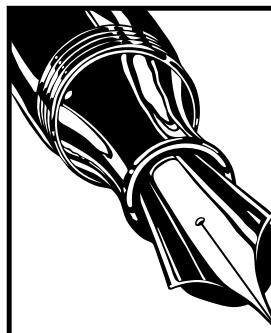
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EDITOR'S PAGE

In the first issue of this magazine we presented a full page of flatpicking related news. Since then it has been tough to fit in a news page. Our columnists have been doing such a great job with providing tablature and technical information, I would hate to sacrifice that for news items, so once again I'll let you folks know what is new in the flatpicking world here in this column:

By the time this issue of the magazine reaches our readers, the new Jack Lawrence CD "About Time" will be available. If you are interested in getting one, send a check or money order for \$16.50 (postage is included), made out to Jack Lawrence, to: Jack Lawrence, PO Box 2938, Huntersville, NC 28070.

Tut Taylor announces the release of a new CD called "Flat Pickin' In The Kitchen" with Tut Taylor and Norman Blake. This CD is scheduled for release approximately March 28th by Tuttee Records, 1627 Lisa Dr., Maryville, TN 37803. Tut tells me that the CD contains 24 selections featuring Tut and Norman flatpicking at their best (for those who don't know, Tut flatpicks the dobro). The material was recorded by Tut during the "Aeroplane era," about 1970. Besides Tut and Norman there are appearances from John Hartford, Sam Bush, Butch Robins and some others. This CD is volume one of a series "Tut Taylor Archival Releases." This, and the others Tut intends to release in this series, are projects that have merited public release for a long time. Tut finally has been able to accomplish it and I'm sure that everyone who hears these 25 year old recordings will be glad that he put forth the effort. Tut and Norman haven't done anything together for a long time, so this will be a very rare opportunity to hear them again. The CD's will hopefully be available at the *Flatpicking Guitar* booth at Merlefest and when you come by and see us, Tut might even be there to sign one for you. For more information, contact: Tut Taylor, 1627 Lisa Dr., Maryville, TN 37803, Ph (423) 977-8181, Fx (423) 982-5065, email: tutlee@usit.net.

Fans of *Flatpicking Guitar* columnist Chris Jones will be pleased to know that Chris has recently signed with the Rebel label and is anticipating a June release of the new Chris Jones and the Night Drivers CD. We will all be looking forward to that one.

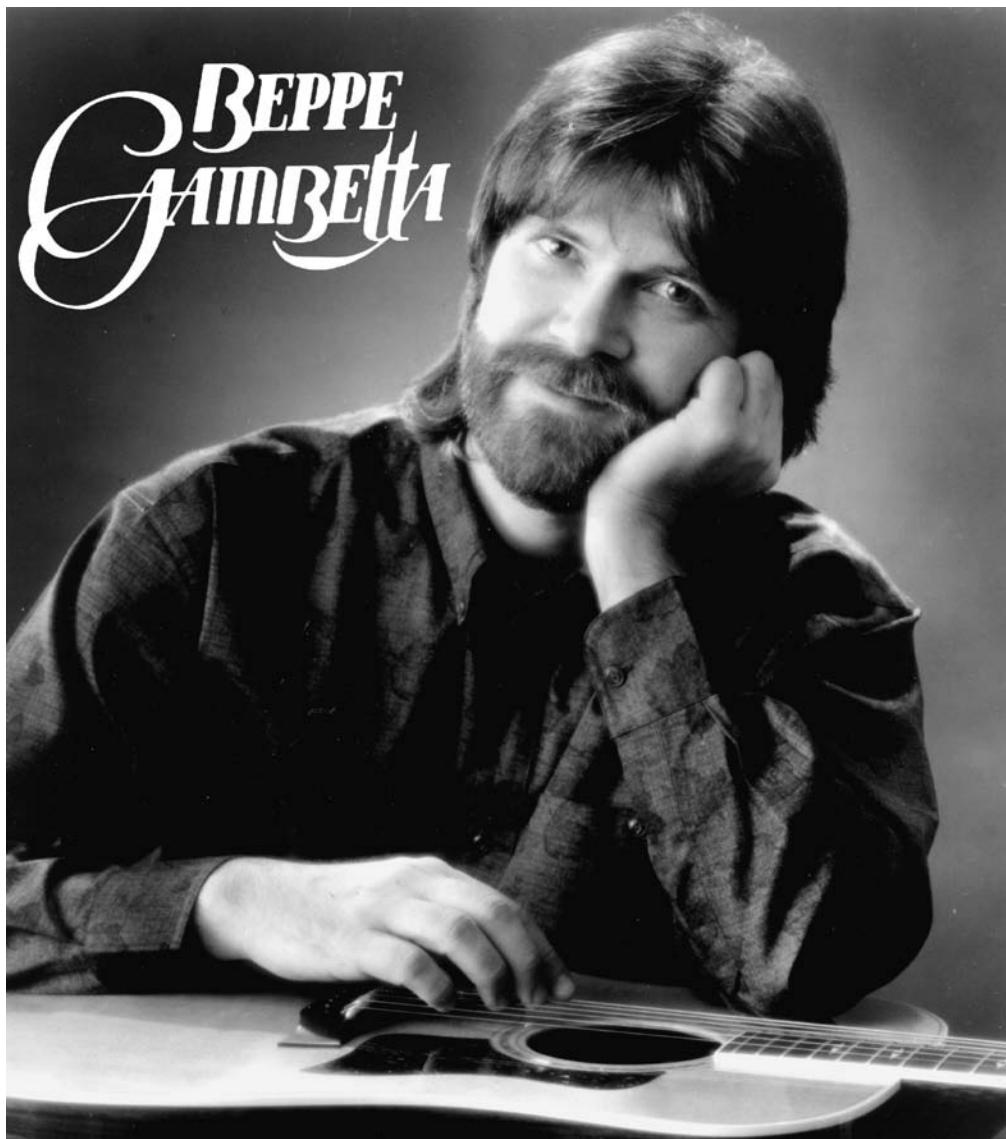
Flatpicking Guitar columnist Orrin Star has been signed on as an instructor at the California Coast Music Camp this July. Orrin will be teaching "Bluegrass Rhythm Guitar and Finer Points of Flatpicking" at the week long event. Call 415-306-0399 for details.

Thanks to everyone who came by to visit us at the Wintergrass Festival and we look forward to seeing many of you at Merlefest.

Dan Miller
Editor and Publisher

**ALWAYS
PUT IT BACK IN
ITS CASE.
THAT WAY THE
SONGS
CAN'T ESCAPE.**





From Pasquale Taraffo to Doc Watson and Back Again

Even before Italian flatpicker Beppe Gambetta began to learn how to speak English the soulful expression of his guitar easily transcended all verbal communication barriers. Of his first trip to the United States, ten years ago, Gambetta says, "I came here and did not speak one word of English. I started to pick in the parking lot at a festival. It was my turn and I started to play. People turned to me and speak English. I said, 'No, I don't speak English.' They realized that I was foreign, from far away, and they told me I play so well. Immediately they came with hamburgers and every kind of cole slaw. They fed me and adopted me because the music was speaking."

Beppe's music speaks a language that dances, sings, soothes, excites, laughs, and cries. A guitar in his hands not only speaks a universal language, his fluency and versatility allow his musical voice to adapt to accents which would sound familiar in places ranging from a turn-of-the-century Italian town square, to a gypsy tent camp, to an Irish pub, to an Appalachian barn dance. Additionally, his ability to tastefully blend these various folk music forms and guitar techniques have brought numerous exciting innovations to the flatpicking guitar world. In his music we find a preservation of tradition, a bridging of cultures, and an exploration of the future possibilities all delivered

with enthusiasm, humor, sensitivity, and a genuine love for his art. He has the personality and stage presence that captivates audiences and the musical fluency to take them on a journey around the world.

Beginnings

Although Beppe Gambetta did not hear his first Doc Watson record until he was about nineteen years old, he says, "I am a guitar freak since I was eleven years old." When he was a child in the Italian harbor town of Genoa, Beppe heard people playing the acoustic guitar on the train and was so attracted to its sound that he begged his father to buy him one. His father bought one for him and one for his sister. Shortly thereafter, Beppe joined a children's orchestra which played the classical plectrum music that had been popular in Genoa around the turn-of-the-century.

As Beppe grew older he had to leave the children's orchestra and he says, "I started to have my electric guitar." Like most sixteen year olds at the time, Beppe was listening to and playing rock music, however, even within the rock genre, the music that attracted him was acoustic. He says, "I was listening to Led Zeppelin because they have these incredible acoustic parts that make me fall in love. I was trying to play acoustic things that I found on any kind of record from "Stairway to Heaven" to any other kind of acoustic thing because it was the sound of the acoustic guitar that was my passion. I have the same story like Dan Crary. He was called to the instrument. He could not resist it. If you really are bound to play one instrument, you will see that instrument one day and it will drive you crazy. You need to play it and that's it."

Even though the sound of the guitar players on the trains in Genoa was enough to make Beppe "crazy" for the guitar when he was eleven years old, when he first heard the sound of Doc Watson's dreadnought, he really went nuts. Beppe says, "I heard one cut of Doc Watson on a Newport Folk Festival album and that changed my life. You just need to listen to this music one time and it will take you to it. The love for this music was so strong that as soon as I heard it with some friends, we started a bluegrass band. We could not resist!"

With a very limited source of bluegrass recordings to draw material from, and no one to teach them, Beppe and his friends

began learning everything by listening to all of the records they could find. He says, "You can imagine how difficult it was to figure out every little thing because there was not a source. We had to figure out everything by listening. In Italy, the first banjo player was playing for one year with a four string banjo because he did not know that the bluegrass banjo has five strings!"

Although it was difficult to try and figure out everything from listening to a limited number of recordings, Beppe is quick to point out that in this kind of music it is not such an unusual way to learn. Many of the great players of our era learned how to play by listening to the Grand Ole Opry on Saturday night. He says, "Probably for jazz, or some other kind of music, you need to be more technical, but this music is so instinctive and so based on the feeling that it can be learned by listening to and understanding the vibe from the record."

For the first two years of his flatpicking career, Beppe had just three or four records from which to draw material: Norman Blake's "Whiskey Before Breakfast," Doc Watson's "On Stage," and the "Will the Circle Be Unbroken" album. From these sources he not only learned every song note-for-note, (along with the lyrics, dialog, liner notes, photographs, and anything else he could absorb) he also tried to understand the mechanism of flatpicking because he was teaching this music and technique to others. Additionally, he wrote books on flatpicking. He says, "I have now written four books on flatpicking, but in my first book I had written the whole history of flatpicking, with a whole guitar method, a story of the ten most famous guitar players, one transcription for every guitar player, and a huge discography of one hundred titles, and all of this that I did was totally without seeing one real flatpicker in my life."

Meeting Other Bluegrass Musicians

After several years of listening to bluegrass records and figuring out the songs, Beppe and his group of friends, calling themselves "Red Wine," had become a respectable bluegrass band in Europe (and continued to perform together for 15 years). They were invited to play at some of the big bluegrass events held in Europe and Beppe had the opportunity to meet American musicians like Tony Trischka, the members of Hot Rize, Darol Anger, Mike Marshall, and others.

In 1986, Beppe crossed the Atlantic for the first time and attended some bluegrass

festivals here. He remembers, "I came here and did not speak one word of English. I had just the money and the ticket. I went to some festivals and was really silent. I went to Dahlonega, Georgia, to the festival there, and I was camping and listening to Tony Rice, Doc Watson, and Norman Blake from the front row and I was flying. I did not touch the floor for days. I was expecting some of the players to act as a star. It was a great surprise to see them really simple and nice. I could not speak English so I was just shaking hands."

Dialogs

Just one year after his first trip to the United States, Beppe returned to America with the intention of recording duets with some of this country's flatpicking giants. However, there were several large obstacles to overcome. First, he had never met many of the players he wanted to record with and they had never heard of him. Second, their locations were spread all across the country and Beppe did not have the funds to bring them all into one recording studio. Third, he only had about 24 days in which to accomplish the task. Lastly, Beppe still could not speak very much English and would have trouble communicating his

intentions once he contacted the players he wanted to record with. Again, the music spoke for him.

Fortunately, those musicians who had met Beppe at festivals in Europe knew him, knew his talent, and were willing to help out. Beppe says, "I had the big fortune to be a great friend with a jazz guy who is a sound engineer. He was a mandolin player with Mark O'Connor, Vassar Clements, and Norman Blake, his name is Rob Griffin. He told me, 'If you cannot bring them to the studio, you go to them with your studio.'"

Griffin had access to one of the first DAT machines and loaned it to Beppe. Beppe remembers, "That DAT machine was out just three months and there was no portable. It was a big thing. We got one of the first DAT machines in the United States. I was traveling with the big box and the microphones going to the house of every person doing this digital recording. It was sort of an avant garde thing (laughs)."

With the recording problem solved, the next hurdle was convincing some of the bluegrass and flatpicking greats to be involved in the project. Griffin, and the others who Beppe had met in Europe, helped out. Beppe explains, "Rob called



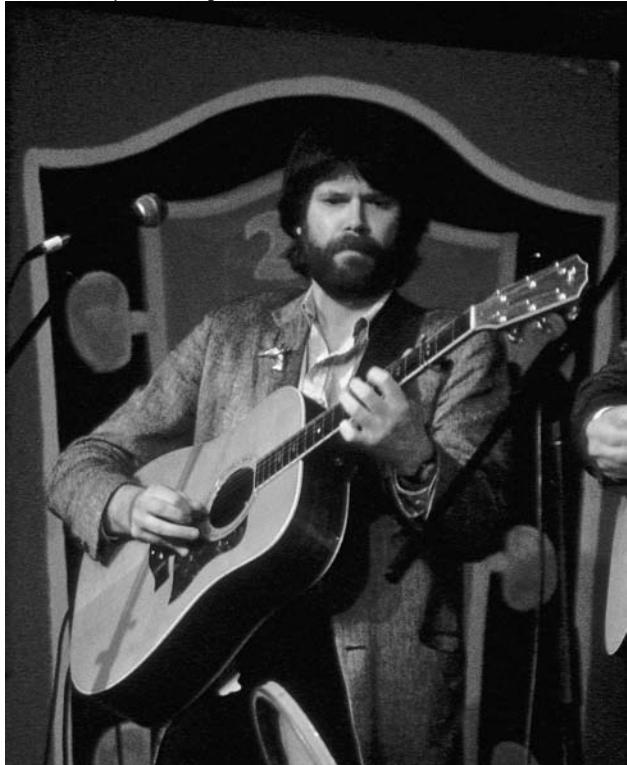
Beppe Gambetta performs with Steve Kaufman and Dan Crary at the Walnut Valley Festival in Winfield, Kansas, 1996

Norman Blake and he said, 'Well, I don't know.' Rob called him a second time and he said, 'Well, maybe Saturday I could be free.' Rob called a third time and Norman said, 'OK, let's do it next Saturday.' Once we made some arrangements with a few of the players like Norman Blake and Mike Marshall, the other players that I had not met before heard who was going to be on the CD and thought 'this guy might be good,' and they agreed to do it." In the end, the CD included duets with Danny Weiss, Norman Blake, Alan Munde, Mike Marshall, John Jorgenson, Dan Crary, Raul Reynoso, Rob Griffin, Charles Sawtelle, David Grier, Joe Carr, and Phil Rosenthal.

Beppe's intention in recording the *Dialogs* project was to record with some of the great acoustic instrument masters in the United States playing in duet with him and then bring the music back to Europe in order to introduce European audiences to the music he loved. Except for the hectic schedule, the inconvenience of traveling with so much equipment, and one small mishap in Los Angeles, Beppe was able to overcome all obstacles and accomplish his task.

Remembering the incident in Los Angeles, Beppe says, "Because I was carrying so much equipment, it happened that it was impossible to bring very many personal things. I only had the

Photo: Stephanie Ledgin



Beppe dazzles the Winfield crowd, 1996

guitar and this huge box of equipment, so I was putting clothes and things inside the guitar. I arrived in Los Angeles and did this recording with John Jorgenson. It was so exciting that I forgot to take all of the things out of my guitar. John Jorgenson was teaching me this tune he had composed for this occasion. It is called 'Incredible' and it is really nice. The guitar was not having enough volume and I was thinking that I was a wimp and that I must not have enough strength tonight. The day after, I was changing my strings and I look down inside my guitar and see a tie and a pair of gloves and I said, 'That's Incredible.' I recorded the cut of this song on the CD with a pair of gloves and a tie inside my guitar."

Many flatpickers who have listened carefully to the *Dialogs* CD have been amazed at how versatile Beppe's playing is on this project. It is as if he molds his style to each of the players he is playing with almost to the point where it is difficult to tell who is playing which break. When asked about this, Beppe said that when he first began learning how to flatpick he learned note-for-note from records and then began to teach what he had learned to others in Europe. Because it was not easy to obtain bluegrass albums in Europe, Beppe would introduce his students to the playing styles of the American flatpick-

ers by imitating those styles himself. He says, "When I did workshops I could play the version of Norman Blake, transform myself and play the version of Doc Watson, transform myself and play the version of Tony Rice, and so on."

When asked if he had intentionally patterned his breaks in the *Dialogs* CD to imitate the style of each of the players on the project, Beppe explains, "Probably it was intentional because that was close to ten years ago and I was still in the learning phase. There is a natural maturation of any artist where in the beginning you feel shy and tend not to play your own music. I was still in the learning process at the time. You can hear that the album is not technically perfect, but you can feel the

heart. There are a few mistakes, but the idea was to record the music and bring it back to Europe and try and promote it."

He continues, "Now I have to play my own music and I have to put in this music a touch of the place from where I come. It is good to not be a copy of someone else. I also respect the music from the place from where I come, so it comes naturally that I take from that tradition some ideas."

Good News From Home

In 1988 Beppe Gambetta returned to Italy with a DAT tape full of great American tunes performed in duet with great American players. His intention was to introduce traditional American music to Europe. In 1995 he proved that this bridge supported a two way street when he came back with *Good News From Home* and introduced Americans to music and guitar technique flavored with spices from all over the world. He demonstrated that in the seven years since recording *Dialogs*, during which time he had toured extensively in the United States and Europe and recorded *Alone and Together* with Tony Trischka, he had developed and mastered a style of music which was not only influenced by the musical traditions of his home and the flatpicking in America, but also plectrum forms from various other ethnic styles around the world.

Gambetta discovered that ethnic and folk music, regardless of its origin, "comes from people that like to hang together and dance." He says, "In Europe, and actually the rest of the world, there is a lot of folk music with the expression of flatpicking. It is good to think that flatpicking is a movement that started in the United States, but it is great to think that it is also something wider. It has a wider border. In Celtic music there are incredible plectrum players, and I would call them flatpickers. On *Good News From Home* the song 'Moravian Journey' is from a Czech gypsy ensemble and you can feel that the drive fits perfectly well."

In exploring the stylistic and technical connections of plectrum styles of acoustic instrument playing from around the globe, Beppe also discovered that Jesse McReynolds has a lot in common with the guitarists on the island of Sardinia. He says, "I did a lot of research and discovered that there is a type of flatpicking that was developed just in the island of Sardinia that is unbelievable. It is exactly in the traditional way. No one knows who started it. It is played on a special guitar that is two steps down, it is

really low. They do incredible dances to this music. The player uses a plectrum and uses a special sort of extended crosspicking style. It is so incredibly similar to the crosspicking of Jesse McReynolds, but it is not only on three strings, it is extended on the whole body of strings on the guitar. Some of my variations come from studying these players and it is really good to try and expand this music with this idea. It is possible to do some experimentation and if it fits and makes a nice variation, why not?" This style of Sardinian crosspicking can be heard on the song "Beyond the Breeze" on *Good News From Home* and is taught on Beppe's Homespun video "New Directions in Flatpicking: European and American Traditions" (see review on page 63).

More News From Home

Beppe's current project also includes music from his homeland. However, where *Good News From Home* provided us with Beppe's creative expression of uniquely blended musical traditions and flatpicking technique, his next project is more traditional and brings him back to the streets and alleyways of Genoa. Beppe explains his motivation behind his soon to be released project *Serenata* with mandolinist Carlo Aonzo:

"We are doing research about Italian string music from the beginning of the century because it is music that is out of fashion and almost totally forgotten. This music, which is not only Italian but comes from all over Europe, was played on mandolin, guitars, and harp guitars and it is almost totally lost. Rock and roll wiped everything out."

"We did this special project of bringing it back to life because if I am not doing this, no one else is doing it and all of the old men that are from that day are now ninety, so it really is going to disappear totally in five years. It is our duty now to try and hold this material before it is going to be lost totally. Technically the music is unbelievable and the energy is unreal. You can feel that many of these licks are the ones that Django Reinhardt will later develop."

"If you see a beautiful thing that is going to be abandoned, you need to fix it and it needs to be featured. I tried to reproduce it all with flatpicking even though this music was also played with the fingers."

One of the cuts on *Good News From Home*, "Nino e Pasquale" highlights this turn-of-the-century Genoan music and

comes from the repertoire of the greatest virtuosi of that era, guitarist Pasquale Taraffo and mandolinist Nino Catania. *Serenata* also centers around the music of Taraffo and Catania. *Serenata* is due to be released late summer on Green Linnet.

Other Good Stuff

Beppe Gambetta's musical journey has taken him from the classical guitar orchestras of his Genovese home to the Appalachian mountains and back again with numerous stops and explorations along the way. Through his music, he has brought America to Europe and Europe to America.

Beppe has taught Europeans how to pick American style in private lessons, group workshops, and an annual summer guitar camp in Slovenia. He has taught Americans how to pick Beppe style in his Homespun tape, his Taylor guitar sponsored clinics, and his workshops at festivals. His recorded music provides guitar players on both sides of the Atlantic with a course in tasteful innovation and heartfelt expression.

Beppe's live performances are not to be missed. His infectious enthusiasm, brilliant personality, good humor, and open hearted delivery form an uncommon bond between Beppe and his audiences. You laugh, you sing, you tap your feet, you cry, you reflect, you laugh again, and in the end you feel like you know this man standing on stage behind the guitar. You feel like you have a new friend. And he is the best kind of friend to have because not only can he play the guitar, but he can cook you a meal that you will never forget. As Dan Crary says in the introduction to Beppe's new cookbook *Beppe Cooks!: Recipes from the Homeland*, ". . . he is one of the best players in the current worldwide golden age of the guitar. And he is the best damned pasta cook who ever picked the 'Wildwood Flower'."

Beppe and Taylor Guitars

Beppe Gambetta's guitar of choice is the Taylor 810. When asked why he chooses to play a Taylor, Beppe says, "I use the Taylor guitar because I particularly like the natural sustain of every Taylor instrument, the great balance of notes in every range, and the crisp power of high notes, especially on the first and second strings after the seventh fret. The shape of the neck and the fretboard have a high level of 'playability' and I find the tone 'eclectic,' which means I can go easily in many different musical directions with the Taylor. Maybe the

Discography

Beppe Gambetta (1987) BG001

Red Wine: Full Taste (1989) - Red Wine 001

Dialogs (1988) - Brambus 199122 and Alcazar 123

Alone and Together (1994) - reissue of 1991 Brambus disc with Tony Trischka and Beppe Gambetta - Alcazar 118

Jammed If I Do, Dan Crary (1994) - Gambetta guests on Foggy Mountain Special - SH-CD 3824

Good News From Home (1995) Green Linnet 2117

Homespun Video: *New Directions in Flatpicking: European & American Traditions*

right word is 'versatile.' I also like the adjustability of the neck, with 'truss rod,' in different climate zones. I find the Taylor sound also suits particularly well for 'solo flatpicking' style."

Beppe says that he also likes playing a Taylor guitar because, "I like how Taylor assists his clients and I sincerely like the way Taylor helps music and musicians, and I like the style of the Taylor people. They are friendly, enthusiastic, they treat the workers well, etc."

Although the Taylor 810 is Beppe's main instrument, he also plays a 10 string harp guitar from Antonello Saccu (Italy), a guitar Buzuky from Heiner Dreizehnter (Germany) and a 12 string from A&M (Albert and Muller, Germany). He uses a 0.96 mm Dunlap 500 pick and Pirazzi Strings (from the Pirastro family in Germany).

Regarding his choice of strings, Beppe says, "Pirazzi strings are the very best I have ever played. They have a deep and pure acoustic tone. These strings, with their precision tuning and quick response, also provide a powerful sound. I can play really strong without worrying about the strings breaking. They keep their crisp tone and precision until the very end of every concert - even in the worst heat and humidity!"

On the following page we have presented Beppe Gambetta's arrangement of "Bully of the Town" as recorded on his *Dialogs* CD.

Capo 2

Bully of the Town

Traditional
Arr. by Beppe Gambetta

1 C C° C

5 F H D

9 G C

13 C° C

17 F D

Bully of the Town (con't)

21 G

C

H P

G

25

C

29

C7

F

D

33

G

C

37



How to Be Your Own Agent

by Craig Vance

One of the most undesirable situations for most musicians is to put themselves in control of their own income. We all feel that there is someone else out there to do that job, and why not pay them 10 or 15% to do that. Not much of a sacrifice, since there aren't too many of us who enjoy being talked down to, quizzed, or dickered with over the telephone. And besides, wouldn't it be nice to focus all of that time on keeping our licks in shape and learning new and different patterns to play out of. Certainly.

But if you have the information and follow through steps you need, why not avoid the middleman, know for certain what you are getting yourself into, and come home with a little more cash. In a nutshell, here are a few key tips. Use these to get started and add your own ideas.

1) ESTABLISH A CONTACT

Look through your local papers, weekenders, or local music periodicals and take note of clubs that have acoustic entertainment that could feasibly accommodate you or your band. If you know someone that has performed at a particular venue, check with them on pertinent details. Ask questions such as: Do the owners take the initiative to publicize the act? Do you get a flat rate, or a percentage of the door? Does the venue have an adequate sound system, or do you have to supply sound and/or a sound man? All of these things will figure into your price. And foremost, do you get paid the amount agreed to in your contract?

When dealing with anyone by phone, get their name, address, e-mail, fax, etc. Even if you don't have the setup to contact them in these ways, it's one small impression that can't hurt. (Your local mall or copy center can usually fax your documents at a nominal fee.)

2) SEND A DECENT PRESS KIT

Presentation is 90% of the game. In other words, if your press kit is exceptional, it will appeal to someone who may get hundreds of them a week. You will want a

nice 8X10 in color (if you can fit it in your budget), but B&W is still quite acceptable. Having your name, or your company name and phone number on the lower border of the photo is standard procedure. An uncluttered business card should be included.

A clean recording of you or your band with four or five songs from your repertoire should also be included. Provide a variety of fast, slow, loud, soft. You don't want to have four songs in the key of G that are all the same tempo and type of song. Think of the demo tape as a mini-set. Give them variety.

As for written material, you'll want to keep that sharp, but not too busy. Do not have too many pages of rambling, raving articles. Minimize reviews by extracting the best quotes. Do not include a low content item such as a picture from a newspaper with two lines under the photo such as "appearing tonight at Kurt's Bar & Gunshop." That photo might be something you'd be better off keeping in your scrapbook. Keep it simple and short, but impressive.

As these club owners or promoters may see many press kits in a week, they don't have time to read your 52 page life history and listen to your 120 minute cassette. Hit 'em with your best stuff, short and to the point. A short one page bio, a list of impressive venues you've played, and a page of a few key quotes and their sources is all you need for a written presentation.

3) FOLLOW UP

Give the press kit up to five days to be delivered and hopefully looked at, and then make a call back to reassure the package arrived. Many times you will get the response, "Yes, it's right here on my desk . . . and I was planning on getting to that this afternoon." This response comes with many different slants. Whatever line you get, you must be persistent, forsaking all possibilities of annoyance. It is also good to say that you still have some dates available for booking, and the sooner the better. This gives the buyer the idea that

you have got a plan, and that you are in business just like them.

If you get the response, "Yes, I received your package, but we're booked up five months ahead." Ask them politely to consider you should there be any cancellation, and tell them that you'll be in touch. Call them in two weeks to check on future considerations. Don't give up easily because these people receive an enormous amount of calls from musicians that are half as good as you. If you don't keep after them, your press kit will wind up in the circular file.

4) YEE-HA BOYS, WE GOT A GIG!!

Once the gig is confirmed, and everybody's done jumping up and down, draw up a CONTRACT. Now I don't want to scare you off just yet, but contracts are all too often not the solid protection you need. If this is a big gig (not a bar gig) for big bucks, ask for a retainer. This is protection for you while you're holding the date open. If the gig is an outdoor event without a rain date, definitely ask for a retainer fee. One third of the price is reasonable. You have offered your expertise without guarantee for that date, so you deserve that as a backup.

There are contract books available that you can find in your local library. They will offer several different types of contracts to use without permission. You may have other distinct requests that aren't mentioned there. Type them up, using the same sort of language used in the contract and attach that to the contract. This "rider" can be set up to whatever type of venue you're booking your act into. For a college concert, for example, you may want to have a specific area to change into your stage apparel. Or you may want to request some sodas and ice water, and crackers, carrots and celery, or whatever. If the venue is more like the club scene, best to stick with free drafts, and chicken wings or pizza. Just to be sensible. You aren't out to rip them off, and hopefully they're not there to use you up.

When you start doing better with the gigs and find that you haven't the time to keep up with the phone calls, that's where an agent might come in handy. Some outsider with a reputation for putting musicians to work in the way that they should be working. But until you reach that point, use some of these tips to become your own agent. Test the waters . . . if they're warm, jump in!

Beginner's Page

by Dan Huckabee



Hey Everybody!
I'm Self-taught!

or

How to Figure Out Licks Off of Records

This issue we are going to talk about some dangerous waters where beginners rarely dare to tread.

Figuring out your heroes' licks all by your lonesome, right off the record or CD, without anyone around to hold your hand, might seem to be frightening and even impossible, but with a few good do's and don'ts, you'll be on your way to independence and controlling your own musical destiny.

In 1965 (age 14), I figured out my very first lick, and boy was I proud (ok, shocked). It was a little D-chord position lick from "Mister Tambourine Man" by the Byrds. To be honest, it hadn't dawned on me (at the time) to even try to figure out music without my teacher to show it to me.

I was riding my Honda 50 step-thru over to a friend's when I saw a garage band working out on "Not Your Steppin' Stone" (by the Monkees), and I stopped to listen. After their mom made me get my bike off the lawn, I noticed that the Lead Man (Joe Rogers), was playing the little riff exactly the way it sounded on the record. In those days, there were no famous stars teaching video lessons, or books with "artist transcriptions". Only Mel Bay's "this is a pick", teaching you how to play the chords to "Froggy Went a Courtin". So I was puzzled how this 13 year old knew this guitar part from a song that had just been released on a new album.

I asked Joe who taught it to him, and he said that he figured it out by listening to the record. He took me in his room and showed me how he slowed down his record player from 33 to 16, which kind of "magnified the music", allowing him to search around on the guitar for the notes, taking one at a time. He said, he was

just curious and decided to try it, and it worked.

Man, that was the revelation of my life! That innocent little suggestion that Joe Rogers gave me in 1965, eventually led to me becoming the National Dobro Champion in 1976. There sure weren't any dobro books when I started learning, and I didn't even have any way to find out what tuning it was supposed to be in. How did I learn? By putting the record on the ol' turntable and doing a lot of huntin' and peckin'. Come to think of it, I've never so much as sent Joe a Christmas card in thanks for changing my life, but maybe he'll see this article or I'll run into him through e-mail and thank him that way.

In 1975, I discovered the first and only company that was putting a half-speed switch on a cassette machine, (which was a far cry handier than the ol' turntable method), so I bought one and became a dealer that same day, determined to tell the world about figuring out licks off of records. I started placing large 2-page spread adds, suggesting to figure out licks, and after about 10 years, a few other dealers started following suite as a result of customers calling them in response to my ads.

Today, several manufacturers have responded by producing machines especially designed for figuring out licks.

Don't get me wrong, people lifted licks from records long before I was born, I'm just responsible for bringing the concept "out of the closet", and Joe was responsible for turning me on to the phenomenon. What I've done for the past 20 years, is provided a place for people to call to get the machines, and ask questions about how you do it.

First of all, (and this is a big misconception) it's not just for the advanced pickers! Your ear needs to start developing on day one, right along with your fingers. This is very important! We start all of our beginning students with an elementary lick figuring out lesson, on their very first day! They bring a cassette recorder to their lesson, and we record a couple of simple

songs onto the tape. They take it home and try to figure it out. This is the essence of musicianship in its purest form. You hear a note on the tape, you stop the tape, you hum that note.

STOP IT RIGHT THERE! You hum that note? Hey, what have you just done? You've figured out that note on a musical instrument. What instrument? Right! The "vocal chords".

So next we want to take it from your voice, to your guitar.

Lets review:

1. Play it on the cassette machine
2. Try to hum it.
3. Try to find that note you are humming, on your guitar.

From cassette, to voice, to guitar. You have just witnessed the process that made famous people FAMOUS! You have just witnessed the process that develops your ear muscles. Listening, searching, getting it wrong.

When you hit the wrong note, is it too high or too low? Play every note on the whole #@\$* guitar if you have to. We're all tone-deaf at first. Arnold was skinny before he worked out for months and years. If you hit a wrong note, and you know it's too high, guess what? That's right, you got an ear for music! If you can't tell if it's too high or too low, you need to work out, by trying to find notes "one at a time", on your guitar.

If you get it right the first time, you already knew where it was, and you didn't get a workout. When you get it wrong, you are listening. Who judges whether it's right or wrong? You do.

So how did your voice find the note? Well, you tightened and loosened your vocal chords to make your voice high and low till your EAR told your voice that it found the note it wanted. Your voice is an instrument that you have somewhat "mastered", because you've been humming songs since you were a baby. Your guitar is a different story. You're not as confident or adept at finding notes on it as you are

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on your voice. That's my whole point. You need to peck out so many simple little melodies like "Mary Had a Little Lamb" and "My Country Tis of Thee," that finding notes on your guitar, becomes as easy as finding notes with your voice.

Trust me, as soon as you've pecked out (by trial and error), as many tunes on your guitar as you have with your voice, your guitar will become an extension of your ear. This will make you quite powerful! Your ear will have some big muscles! You will be able to play anything you can humm. And I mean, you'll be able to play it on the first try. You won't be looking around for it, your fingers will intuitively go to the right notes with no mistakes.

Just remember that figuring out licks from CD's is the same thing as searching for the melody notes to "Mary Had a Little Lamb". You take one note at a time, until you've gone from beginning to end. An advanced Tony Rice solo is no different than a simple children's melody other than it's faster and there are more notes.

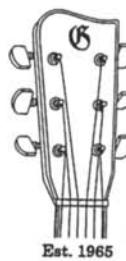
Anyway, this process is called "matching a tone". Actually it's the same thing a tuning up, (unless you're watching a tuning

meter). In that case you're tuning with your eye instead of your ear. If I put some tablature on figuring out licks at the bottom of this article, you'd be learning with your eye which would defeat the whole purpose of this article.

To learn to play the guitar really well, you must develop your ear, and you MUST spend some of your time away from tablature, teachers, and lesson videos, in order to challenge and exercise your hearing. Wasn't it Socrates who said, "That which is used develops, and that which is not used, wastes away."

I have recently compiled my 20 years of counceling people on the fine art of figuring out licks, into a 2-hour video called "How to Figure out Music From Recordings". It will provide you with everything you could ever want to know about the process, and it demonstrates all the machines, how they sound, and how they are used from a consumer's perspective. If you would like some free literature on it, you can call us at Musician's Workshop 800-543-6125.

So until next time, be curious, employ a little patience, and start developing those "ear muscles".



Gallagher Guitar's Birthday Party

May 16 & 17, 1997

— Celebrating 32 Years of Guitar Making —

FESTIVAL SCHEDULE

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8:00 a.m. Campgrounds & RV Area Open

FRIDAY, MAY 16:

8 a.m.-4 p.m. Arts & Crafts - Open

12:00 - 4:00 p.m. Open House Gallagher Guitar/Wartrace

6 p.m.-10:30 p.m. Performances

SATURDAY, MAY 17:

8:30 - 10:00 a.m. Breakfast - Gallagher Guitar Owners Walking Horse Hotel/Wartrace

12:00 - 10:00 p.m. Performances

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Local Heroes: Profile of Dale Adkins

When we began publishing this magazine last year, I expected that we would receive a good response from the southern Appalachian Mountain region of the country because it is the heartland of bluegrass music. I also expected that we might draw a good number of subscribers from the Missouri-Kansas-Colorado region, and as expected, we have received strong support from these states (thanks folks!). But what I did not expect was the overwhelming response we have received from the Pacific Northwest. Those folks in Washington and Oregon love their bluegrass and I soon also discovered that their favorite son on the flattop guitar is Dale Adkins of Salem, Oregon.

When we decided to include this "Local Heroes" column in the magazine I put an inquiry out on the internet asking flatpickers from around the country to recommend some of the local flatpicking legends who we might interview. I received many responses from all over the country (and we will try to get to all of them). One name that kept appearing over and over as I scanned through the email responses was Dale Adkins. In February we attended the Wintergrass festival in Tacoma, Washington, and I had the opportunity to see Dale play with his band "Out of the Blue." I now know why so many people recommend we feature him in this column.

Dale's solos are tastefully arranged and skillfully executed. His playing is clean, his tone is powerful, and his breaks are exciting. The majority of his solos during the band's performance at Wintergrass were met with a resounding round of applause from the audience.

Dale Adkins began playing music when he was just six years old. His instrument of choice was the ukulele. His dad taught him how to strum some chords and sing songs providing Dale with a good musical foundation. When he was around twelve he branched out and began playing the guitar and banjo. By the time he was 16 he was playing in a bluegrass band. The band already had a good banjo player so

Dale began focusing on guitar. Like many aspiring flatpickers, Dale learned his first licks by listening to Doc Watson recordings and trying to figure out what Doc was doing. Dale says he never slowed down the recordings when he was trying to figure out licks, he just listened over and over until he got it right. Dale says, "I was using my brother's tape deck and he would get mad at me because he thought I was going to wear it out."

Dale's early bluegrass career was put on hold when he went to college. In college he enrolled in a guitar course and began learning to play fingerstyle classical guitar. He says that this experience really opened up the fingerboard for him and taught him how to play "across the strings." He also says that his college professor inspired a lot of confidence in his playing. For instance, Dale had some trouble the B part to Doc Watson's version of "Bill Cheatum" because he felt it was too hard. His college professor told him that there was no reason he could not learn to play that passage well if he first slowed it down, played it clean and increased the speed gradually. That inspiration was enough to give Dale the confidence he needed to begin to expand his playing.

After graduating from college in 1985, Dale went back to bluegrass and has been actively playing in bands since that time. He also teaches biology and chemistry in high school and teaches guitar at a local music shop (Cartwright's Music).

Dale himself has never had a formal flatpicking lesson. He says that most of what he has learned has come from playing with and listening to other people. He especially likes to play with people who



**Dale Adkins playing at Wintergrass in
Tacoma, WA, February 1997**

he considers to have a superior skill level. When playing with other players, Dale says he likes to pay close attention to what they are doing in order to gain insights which will help improve his own playing. He credits a jam session he had with Peter McLaughlin a number of years ago as helping him break through many barriers in his playing. He said that Peter's economy of motion in his right hand, his punchy, percussive rhythm technique, and his use of open strings to get a full sound all had a big influence on him.

Dale also credits players like David Grier and Clarence White as having influenced him, but says that these days he does not try to pick solos off of records note-for-note. Today he says that when he listens to music, he tries to capture a "feel" instead of copying licks. In this context, what he has drawn from players like Clarence White and David Grier is the confidence to be adventurous on the guitar and explore possibilities. He also says that he has drawn from Grier's unique phrasing, fluidity, and the fullness of sound that Grier gets from his instrument. To provide an example, Dale picks up his guitar, plays a "weird" lick and says, "I did not get that exact lick

from David Grier, but that lick was inspired by the ‘weird’ things that David does.”

Today when Dale practices his guitar he says he concentrates more on getting good tone than on just playing the notes. He says, “notes are cheap, tone is tough.” He has observed that many intermediate players rush through the notes and don’t get good tone because they get too caught up in the process of playing the notes and don’t listen to what is going on.

Although Dale trained himself to play by ear, he says he uses both ear training and tablature when teaching students. He says, “Different people learn differently. Some people have to have it written down.”

When asked what teaching others has taught him about his own playing, Dale says that it has caused him to really examine what he does. Prior to teaching, he did not think too much about how or why he was playing something. He is very much a player who plays by feel, not analysis. He admits that sometimes it is very difficult to answer his students questions when they ask him why he chose to play a certain note, phrase, or lick. He says, “The students

usually do not have much trouble with the melody, it is the notes that you put between the melody notes that they want to know about. Since I play a song differently every time, it is sometimes hard for me to explain those things.”

Dale says that over the years his growth as a player has reached a number of plateaus. However, he has been able to break through each plateau with the help of various significant influences. The first was an exposure to Doc Watson, the second was the knowledge he gained from his guitar instructor in college, the third was his exploration of Tony Rice after gaining confidence from his college teacher, the fourth was his exposure to other players at bluegrass festivals, especially Peter McLaughlin. While Dale credits numerous players with having influenced his guitar playing and music, the influences listed above are the most significant to him because they helped him break through barriers he encountered in his progress.

Currently Dale is playing a 1939 Martin D-18 that he has owned since last June.

Prior to that he played a 1976 Martin HD-28. Dale says that before getting his pre-war D-18, he had always preferred Rosewood guitars, especially for rhythm. But he says that he gets great volume from his D-18 with less right hand effort, so much so that it has changed his playing style. He says that because he can get so much volume from the D-18 he doesn’t have to play as hard as he did on the other guitars that he has owned.

For the past five years Dale has been playing with an Oregon based band “Out of the Blue.” Their new release “Tacoma” has received rave reviews (see *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine*, Vol 1, No. 2, pg. 59). Dale and Out of the Blue have teamed up with Kate MacKenzie for 1997. They will be completing a European tour this Spring, can be seen this summer at festivals in New Jersey, Michigan, Minnesota, and they are performing at IBMA’s Bluegrass Fanfest in Louisville, KY, in October. The following transcription of Bill Monroe’s “Old Dangerfield” comes from the bands *Tacoma* CD, which can be purchased from County Sales, call (540) 745-2001.

Key Am Swing
Capo 2 fret

Part A

Old Dangerfield

Arranged by Dale Adkins

Part B

Old Dangerfield (con't)

11 C Gm D Gm C

Part C

16 Gm D Gm Gm P

H H S H P

21 D C Gm

P

26 Gm F Gm

S S S

30 Gm C D Gm

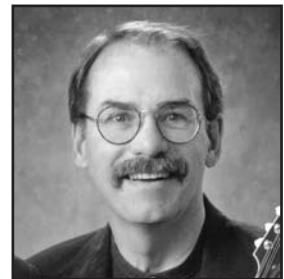
S S S



Flatpick Rhythm Guitar

H.O.

A fretboard diagram for a six-string guitar. The strings are labeled from left to right as 3, 0, 1, 2, 0, 0. The 1st string (high E) has a curved arrow above it, indicating a bend. The 2nd string (B) has a small circle above it, likely indicating a dot or a specific note. The 3rd string (G) has a small circle above it. The 4th string (D) has a small circle above it. The 5th string (A) has a small circle above it. The 6th string (E) has a small circle above it.



Tony Rice - Modern Rhythm Master

Tony Rice is revered as one of today's finest acoustic flatpicking guitarists. His lead style defines modern bluegrass guitar. So brilliant is his lead work that his equally masterful rhythm style is sometimes overshadowed. Rickie Simpkins, fiddler for the Tony Rice Unit, says of Rice, "He's my favorite rhythm guitarist - anywhere."

The transcription below is from "Nobody Loves Me," from The Bluegrass Album Band #4. I chose this cut because of its medium tempo (easier to transcribe, easier to learn) and the clearness of the recording. The fiddle on this recording is panned hard right in the stereo mix, so by turning off the right channel you get an earful of Tony's rhythm without much of those other annoying instruments. Even with this track, hearing all the rhythm strums is still a challenge. Below is my best estimate, after

many listenings. What I would give for the original studio multi-track tapes!

Behind the fiddle introduction, Rice plays a simple solid backup and saves the cool stuff for the fiddle solo. In measure one of the intro, there is an accented strum of the G chord on the first beat followed by an alternating bass/strum type pattern. Notice that instead of just a bass note on beats one and three, Rice often strums the bottom two or three strings together on those beats followed by the treble portion of the chord on beats two and four. What a big guitar sound! The intro ends with the big "G" run.

The rhythm behind the fiddle solo really has the Rice stamp. The lick in measure two (2nd fret, 3rd string) starts with an upstroke on the line and finishes with the root (C) falling on the "and" or "up" beat.

after "1." This type of syncopation is standard fare for Rice and if it is a new concept for you, take your time here. Rice is a master at playing with time (as was Clarence before him) and it may take some careful metronome practice before you can try this out at the next jam.

Measures 7 and 8 contain a real swell “D” lick that I believe is Tony’s own invention. The lick leading to the C chord in measure 10 starts on “and” after “2.” Notice that you arrive on the “C” note on the “and” after the “4” and hold it through beat “1” in the next measure. Tricky, huh? And of course, the section ends with that killer G run - a perfect opportunity to try out the new rest stroke you developed since last issue. You did work on it, didn’t you?

Next issue - David Grier plays rhythm on a Joe Carr original (I do have the multi-tracks for this one!)

Nobody Loves Me - Intro (Guitar Backup)

> = accented strum

Nobody Loves Me - Fiddle Break (Guitar Backup)

1 G

5 G

9 G

13 G

> = accented strum

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To own a guitar that has been hand built by a single master craftsman working for months in his small shop to build that one guitar just for you is many a guitar player's dream. For some who dream of the "hand-made" instrument, words like "technology," "automation," and "computerization," don't belong in the same paragraph with the mention of "finely crafted acoustic guitars." If you lean toward this way of thinking, I would say that a visit to the Taylor Guitar factory will probably change your mind, or at least open it a crack. It is an amazing place to visit. The quality of the Taylor guitars, combined with the expertise of the Taylor craftsman and the friendliness, professionalism and courtesy of the Taylor sales staff serves to make Taylor a large guitar factory with a "small shop" feel.

Everyone who works for Taylor guitars is a craftsman. So much so that many small shop builders from around the country come to Taylor's shop in order to work alongside the Taylor craftsman and improve their skills. But Bob Taylor and his team are more than just craftsman, they are innovators. Over the years, Taylor has thoroughly examined every aspect of guitar building and has come up with ingenious ways of improving the design, improving the quality and efficiency of the building process, and getting the most out of his highly trained work force. It is no small coincidence that as Taylor has become more and more successful, the quality of all acoustic guitars being built has improved across the board.

Taylor feels that the specifications and tolerances required in guitar building are closer to that of the aerospace industry than they are to cabinet building. He also feels that the technology required to consistently reach these design specifications has not been available until recent years. A quick tour of the Taylor factory reveals Baby Taylor guitar tops being cut out by lasers, innovative ultraviolet curing methods being applied to the guitar finishing process, and

What would you say is the greatest misconception among guitar players regarding a guitar that comes from a factory versus one that comes from a small builder's shop?

Bob: You cannot automatically assume that a factory makes a lesser quality guitar or a one man band makes a higher quality guitar. I think a guitar has two potentials to be great. The first potential is in its design. Without a great design, it can't be a great guitar. The second potential is your ability to produce that design. How you go about producing that design really does not matter as long as you produce the design. You can do a great job producing a bad design or you could do a bad job producing a great design. Neither one of those will yield a good guitar. I have seen plenty of bad guitars out of factories and I have seen plenty of bad guitars out of one man shops and I have seen plenty of good out of both too. I do think that, as a general rule, factory guitars are getting better and I think that Martin has always made great guitars, and they have been a factory forever.

Do you think that the factory guitars are getting better because of the factory technology or do you think that the factory builders are paying more attention to detail because there is competition from small builders these days?

Bob: I would not want to sound ultra-cocky, but I think we are the ones who have led the way in a lot of the competition. Without trying to take credit that isn't due us, I think as far as the factories go, we have set the competition pace for other factories to catch up to us. I think that small builders tend to compete against themselves more than they would against the factories. I think that over the past 20 years Taylor has raised the stakes in how good a guitar should be that comes out of a factory. The reason



CNC machinery cutting bridges, necks, and bracing to design specifications that could never be consistently duplicated by hammer and chisel. The technology helps build better guitars. However, where the hand work of a master craftsman is required, it is applied. At Taylor, old world craftsmanship and modern technology are expertly integrated and the result is the consistent production of high quality acoustic guitars.

In the following interview with *Flatpicking Guitar*, Bob Taylor and Kurt Listug speak openly about their factory, guitars, and craftsman:

that our guitars are that good is because I was good at it and I wanted them to be good.

Visiting here today, your “factory” is much different than I envisioned because of the degree of attention each guitar is given by individual craftsmen. Can you describe for our readers how things are set up here?

Bob: The first thing that you would expect a factory to look like is an assembly line. One guy binding, one guy kerfing, another guy shaping the neck, another guy spraying finish and so on. Where it hit me the most was when Martin had made some guitar that was a milestone guitar and they had everyone that worked on it sign the guitar. I looked at it in a magazine and saw that there was something like a hundred signatures. That is a lot of people to make one guitar.

I noticed that I had gone from working by myself with Kurt, to having a couple of helpers, to having fifteen to seventeen people working on each guitar. I thought, “You know, this is not the way I want to do it.” I would rather have parallel lines where people do a more vast and complete area of the guitar. The way we break it down now is that somebody makes the body, somebody makes the neck, another person finishes it, another strings it up. Then there is some support staff that gets wood in, dries it, cures it, gets it machined down to fingerboards and bridges and things like that. In the body department they get help with bending sides and bracing. So basically there are five or six people that make a Taylor guitar. If you pick up a Taylor at a store, you are holding a guitar that was made by five people. In reality, that is one reason we are able to get a high quality guitar. Here we are, a factory with the advantages of high tech and the resources of something that is bigger, but at the same time the guitars are being made one at a time by a small group of people.

One image people have of a factory is that the guitars are built by factory workers, not craftsmen. But this does not seem to be the case here. How are your people hired and trained?

Bob: It is a numbers game for us. We interview a hundred and end up hiring ten. We go through a skills test and a one week working interview to find the person that has a natural knack. Then we have a pretty

good training program that has manuals, videos, and individual trainers. Our people can also learn how to build guitars faster here because we are not just teaching them how to kerf. We are teaching them how to build a guitar body. If you want to teach a guy how to be a good buffer, you teach him how to spray, sand, and paste fill at the same time and he will get better at buffing than if he just buffed all day because he understands the whole scope from day one.

If you were to come to work here, you would be paired up with a trainer for eight hours a day and within two months you are at about eighty percent of your full capacity for production. It used to be something that would take us two years to do. We have learned how to select the right people, give them the necessary information, and set up an environment to where, if they are skilled, it will come quickly.

Many of the small builders from small shops have asked for the opportunity to come here and hang in a department with our workers so that they can go home and be more capable. They come here on tour and say, “I can’t believe how good a job your guys do and how fast they do it. It is unbelievable. We take ten times the amount of time to do that and it is no better when we are done.” In reality, we are training a lot of outside people how to build guitars because we are friendly about it and we feel that guitars should be better across the board. The consumer doesn’t know that.

So while they are arguing on the Internet about the craftsmanship ability of a certain builder, that builder might be at the Taylor shop honing his skills with one of our workers.

Kurt: The harder part of guitar building is hiring and training people that can do a good job. You get to the point where you have already hired the people you know are good and then you are bringing in strangers and trying to qualify them in terms of their character, ethics, skill level, and discipline, and train them how to do this craft and make world class quality guitars. That is a lot harder thing to do than just sit down and make a guitar.

When you first started building guitars twenty years ago, did you start by trying to copy some of the great guitars that had been made in the past, or did you try to make something that was different right off the bat?

Bob: We never took apart a guitar. We never even looked at other people’s guitars. I still don’t know Martin’s models, or Gibson’s models. When I made my first guitar in eleventh grade, I had a buddy who had an imported Conn guitar. On my first guitar, the peghead is shaped like that Conn guitar and the body is shaped like my friend’s Yamaha guitar. I had never seen a Martin at that point, I didn’t even know the company



Taylor founders Kurt Listug (left) and Bob Taylor (right) at the Taylor factory in El Cajon, CA



Dan Crary plays his custom Taylor guitar at the Walnut Valley Festival, 1996

existed. I had heard of Gibson. I had a \$35 Coronet guitar at the time. I did not know it then, but it was a copy of a Gibson Hummingbird. I liked playing guitar and I liked making things, so my project for the year was making a guitar. I read Irving Sloan's *Classic Guitar Construction*, which was the only thing available. It showed how to build a classical guitar. I drew the shape of a Yamaha and made a steel string with X-bracing because that is what the Yamaha had.

I had made three guitars in high school, and then I was in a music store and bumped into a case that had a Martin D-18 in it. I said, "Wow." I could tell, even through the glass, that it was well made. Tone? I played it and I liked the tone. But I was into the craftsmanship. I was trying to fashion a guitar and this thing was fashioned well. So I sold one of my motorcycles and bought a D-18. I was eighteen at the time. That is when I discovered Martin.

I then started working at a shop, which we bought a year later. Kurt and I both were working there. I had made maybe 4 or 5 guitars that year at that shop and then we decided to make Taylor guitars. We took a dreadnought mold that we inherited from

that shop and made the ugliest dreadnought that was on the market. It is the one we still make today and we have just recently redesigned it because we now have the resources to do so.

Your 400 series guitars have become quite popular because they provide the player with a high quality, great sounding instrument at a very reasonable price. How did the idea for the 400 series come about?

Bob: When we bought CNC equipment, we started making our regular guitars with it and we continued to develop new parts that were going onto that equipment. One day I looked up and realized that we had just pulled the labor out of the parts and components like fretboards, bridges, and necks. We were also able to make a few jigs to make things go faster.

When you hand make a guitar and you start a business, your only choice is to make an expensive guitar because your break even point is way up the price scale because it costs you so much money just to get a neck blank. It costs you so much money to put the work into it to where you basically

just have a shell that could become a guitar. You are not going to finish that shell out Spartan because it wouldn't be worth any money. So you fancy it up and you make it worth some money. The fancy you add to it is what paid you for all of the infrastructure you built just to get the skeleton of the guitar. Well, we had come up with a way to make the skeleton pretty darn fast. Fast enough to where we didn't have to get a lot of money if we left off the fancy. There is no reason why any given 400 couldn't stand out as the best guitar in the store, the same way that a particular 800 could stand out as the best guitar in the store, because it has all of the same backbone. It is the same guitar.

Kurt: It is a good value. We always keep a close watch on our sales and the orders we are writing to track what percentage are 400s versus everything above them. If we just switched over and made stuff in the price range of the 400s, we wouldn't be able to make a profit. We try to make the whole line a good value within its price range for the right features for the whole line to sell. That has to happen in order for us to make the 400s.

The 400 series guitars have the pinless bridge and the satin finish. Do these elements make a difference in the sound of the guitar?

Bob: As for the pinless bridge effecting the sound, I have two answers. One is "nothing," and the other is, "I don't know." Since I don't know, I'm going to have to choose "nothing." I haven't been able to tell a difference. Sound wise and quality wise, it is "six of one, half dozen of the other." When the 400 series first came out it was a money saving design feature, so that is why we did that.

When the 400 series first came out, I actually thought that they had a better potential of sounding good because the satin finish was thinner. I think a thinner finish always sounds better. The satin finish is still thinner, but it is less of a difference than it was before because we are now able to put such a paper thin finish on the gloss guitars with ultraviolet cured finishes.

Can you comment about your decision to design your guitar with a bolt-on neck versus a dove tail joint?

Bob: We started out making bolt-on necks

because they are easier to make. But the way things start out is not always the way they end up. Where it ended up is that it is adjustable. We have spent twenty years focusing on action and neck angles and we can micro-adjust our neck angles with a bolt-on neck in a way that you cannot do with a dovetail. We spend, per guitar, more time adjusting neck angles than any factory using dovetails ever does. They spend three or four minutes per guitar, they are fast at it and do a great job. But, they get it to an angle that is pretty good and then they move on because they cannot micro-adjust it. If they take one more stroke with the chisel they might pop over their adjustment and have to start over. We might adjust every neck five times until we get it perfect. It is also easy to take apart for repair. Does it hold on as good as a dovetail? Yes. Does it sound as good as a dovetail? Play it and you decide. I think it does.

You say that you have focused on action and neck angles for twenty years. What is it about that aspect of building that intrigued you?

Bob: It seemed more important to me than the tone. I am guilt free on tone. We made a tone, it was a tone, people liked it. You are not going to get everyone to agree on tone. One person loves their Taylor, thinks its the best sounding guitar they have ever heard. Someone else would completely disagree with them and says that they are wrong. I am not going to live in an area where it is "six of one, half a dozen of the other."

I don't care which way you describe it, for me, the tone was never the issue because we got the tone we liked after building our first couple guitars. The tone we've had has gotten us twenty-two years and fifty thousand guitars down the road. We have made some subtle changes over the years, but it is a one hour exercise to change the tone. But, what if you are making guitars and they play pretty good, but this one buzzes and that one doesn't and the strings are the same height, or maybe the strings are the same height and this one is hard to play and this one is easy, or what if I get it just right and the guy comes back a month later and it is all wrong? These are the things I focus on.

I have focused my attention on the construction of the guitar, the longevity of the guitar, the geometry of the guitar, the neck angles and the playability and those

kind of things. Our nice neck attachment made the study of those things possible. If we had been building dovetail joints, we wouldn't have been able to micro-compare different neck angles. You can't micro-adjust a dovetail.

What are the characteristics of the Taylor tone?

Bob: One thing people like about Taylors is that they have authoritative, distinctive notes across the range, and they are heard well in playing situations. Guitars that are really dripping rich with bass and overtones sound great when played by itself, but many people get disappointed as soon as they start playing in a band. It becomes muddy at that point. Of course, some people will say our guitar is a thinner sounding guitar with not enough bottom end. But our contingency of players are those that know the sound they want, they want it to cut through when they play, and they find our guitar does that. It solos well for them and they find that it is not too much sound.

How did the Dan Crary model come about?

Bob: We met Dan at a show. He liked our stuff and bought a twelve string. We became friends over that. He was down one time and I said, "Dan, you are playing that Mossman guitar, Mossman doesn't exist anymore. That guitar is starting to fall apart. What are you going to do? Besides that, the Mossman is ten times harder to play than that twelve string we just sold you." At the time Dan was a real "He-man" about playing guitars. "You don't need a good neck, you just need to practice and make your muscles strong!" This is kind of where he was at, but we have turned him into a wimp over the years. He can't play his other guitar anymore, he's grown soft.

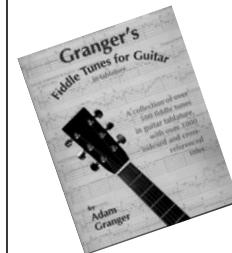
We said, "How about if you come down and we make a guitar that sounds the way you like it to sound?" He came down and we made superglue guitars. We were popping tops and making guitars in real time. We were playing a new one every fifteen minutes. We had two guitars and would keep the one we liked best. I'd take the other one, pop the top off, make a new one, stick it on with superglue and bind it with superglue and throw a neck on with superglue and he'd be playing it. Over a two or three day period we came up with

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a tone he liked.

If you tell me the tone you want, it really doesn't mean much because I don't know exactly what you mean by "mellow" or "rich" or "bassy." You have to play me something. So Dan played the Mossman and I said, "OK, I have a philosophy of how I can make that." His Taylor is basically a thin top guitar that is braced with tall rigid braces. His guitar is even less bassy than our other guitars. He detests the bass of the vintage Martin. Even the guitars we make which didn't have too much bass were too much for him. The whole goal of his guitar was to make something with mid-range and treble that went out there like a mandolin because he always thinks that there is enough bass.

Do you grade your top wood and adjust the thickness of the top accordingly?

Bob: Yes, different models are a different thickness, but in one model range they are the same thickness. We take care of that by grading the spruce into different piles, sanding to a thickness, and then moving on.

Ultimately I think it would be possible to make a machine that could flex a piece of spruce and weigh a piece of spruce, come up with a ratio, and then spit out the thickness or bracing pattern to put on that piece. I think I would just categorize them into just two or three steps. What would that get you? It would get your guitars sounding more consistent. But what would that get you? I have actually been successful making four guitars that sound exactly the same and I find that people turn their nose up at it.

Part of the pleasure of picking a guitar and perceiving its tone are those gentle nuances from guitar model to guitar model. So even though the idea exists to have a machine grade the wood, I'm not sure what benefit we would get from that. We may create something that no one wants, which is guitars that all sound exactly the same. People want to know that they got the best sounding guitar in that whole room. They want to go away with that. But then someone comes in right behind you and buys the other best sounding guitar in the room. That is part of the pleasure of the whole thing. Well, if they all sound exactly the same, how can one be the best sounding guitar?

So whoever is grading the wood, flexes it and decides which model guitar that piece of wood will go on based on how stiff it is?

Bob: Yes, I do that. It is my only job in the factory, production-wise. I grade the spruce. I can't teach someone how to do that. I am also making cosmetic assessments, but I am getting less and less interested in the cosmetic and getting more interested in the strength to weight ratio. I'm using wider and wider grained spruce all the time because I think it is better. I think it is more stable and I think it gives a better tone. I have handled the top of the last thirty or forty thousand guitars that we have made. Every single one. Through that you learn some things. I've noticed that wider grained spruce is equally as stiff, but it is lighter and I think lighter is better.

In conducting research for this article, I spoke with many guitar players, guitar enthusiasts, store owners, professional musicians, and guitar builders who had been to visit Taylor's factory and they all had the same, "That place is incredible," reaction. It is incredible not only because of the quality of the guitars, the expertise of the craftsman, and the innovative and cutting edge building technology, it is also incredible because you come away from this huge factory with that same feeling you might have when you walk away from a small builders shop in his backyard.

The people at Taylor give the same degree of attention to the individual owner, potential owner, guitar enthusiast, or small shop builder as they would their largest store account or most successful salesman. Taylor and his staff work hard to ensure that each individual with an interest in Taylor guitars is given the attention and care one might get from a small shop, and that makes a world of difference.

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Flatpicking & Folk/Acoustic Rock

by John Tindel



Serendipity. Now there's a great word, and a great concept. "Good fortune in finding things not sought for." There's a certain quirky beauty inherent in receiving a gift that you didn't even know you needed, isn't there? The trick is to make sure that our internal scanning systems are properly attenuated to pick up any incoming waves of serendipity that might be roaming the area. Allow me to illustrate:

A while back my two intrepid partners in RST, Geoffrey Rutledge and Lennox Smith, and I were working on the bridge of some song or another. We had reached one of those lulls that happen when you're all just sitting quietly gazing off into the distance waiting for the muse to stir itself once again. Out of nowhere, Geoffrey doodled a sinuous little drop-D riff very reminiscent of "Suite: Judy Blue Eyes" - era Crosby, Stills and Nash (see example A). Now, as you might imagine, being an acoustic, songwriting, harmony-rich trio, RST has gotten more than a few comparisons to those other three guys. So we all chuckled and agreed that we'd never be able to use anything so obviously derivative of their style. We were about to move on when I made the off-handed comment that it would be funny to sing a three part harmony lyric over that riff

consisting of references from Crosby, Stills, and Nash song titles and song. Well, we took right off with that and in about 45 minutes had written the bare bones of what was to become “We Are Not (Crosby, Stills and Nash).” We found the song amusing and considered it our own little joke to ourselves, something we’d play occasionally at parties for our friends. From these humble beginnings has grown one of our most-requested live songs. The song is the first track of our second CD, *How Do We Get There . . .?*, and earned us a place on the stage at the prestigious Kerrville Folk Festival three years running. We also had the opportunity to perform the song in front of 10,000 fine folks at the concert to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima in Santa Cruz, CA. Among the performers that day, including Jackson Brown and Bonnie Raitt, were none other than David Crosby and Graham Nash! As they watched us play “We Are Not” from the side of the stage with big grins on their faces, I thought back to the song’s unassuming beginning and promised myself to always be sensitive to life’s little undercurrents, those small, silly things that can sometimes blossom in the most interesting ways. Ah, serendipity!

I've included some tab for the basic rhythm riff, as well as a couple of the Steven Stills inspired lead breaks that happen as intro parts to the choruses. They utilize several of the bends and note combinations that we've discussed in previous columns. Once again, to hear a snippet of the tune, call the RST hotline at (408) 685-3736.

In closing, I am reminded of a story that John Stewart told me about the day in 1967 that he wrote "Day Dream Believer." He was in the process of leaving the Kingston Trio and was writing every day. He wrote the song and thought it was nothing special, just another song among hundreds. His journal entry for that day read, "All I did today was write a song called "Day Dream Believer," what a wasted day." Of course the song went on to be number one in the world and ended up keeping John in house and home for almost 30 years. The point is that he had no idea when he wrote it that it was anything special. Serendipity provides lessons for us all, if we will only "listen"

Until next time - play what you love and love what you play!

Example A: We Are Not - Rhythm Riff

Transcribed by Lennox Smith

The image shows a musical score for a guitar. The top staff is a treble clef staff in 4/4 time with two sharps, featuring a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes. The bottom staff is a bass clef staff in common time, featuring a harmonic bass line with eighth and sixteenth notes. The music is divided into measures by vertical bar lines.

Example B: We Are Not - Intro Lead

Transcribed by Lennox Smith

Drop D Tuning

Top D Tuning D

Note: At the beginning of this solo, pick the Low D string with your pick while simultaneously picking the high E string (fretted at the 5th fret and sliding to the 7th) with your middle or ring finger. Pick the rest of the notes in the solo with your pick.

Example C: We Are Not - Middle Lead

Example 3: Drop D Tuning

Transcribed by Lennox Smith

Note: The rhythm player begins to play the rhythm riff given in example A behind this lead by starting the riff on the D note (5th string 5th fret) shown above at the beginning of the second measure.

Kaufman's Corner

by Steve Kaufman

Due to a hectic schedule on the road and a malfunctioning lap top, Steve was unable to provide text to go along with this issue's column. However, he did send along the great arrangement of "The Gold Rush" shown below. Steve says that on the first part "let those notes ring, the key word is sustain." The B part will give you practice moving up the neck. Use the 7th position (1st finger on 1st string, 7th fret).

Key of G
Capo 2nd Fret

The Gold Rush

Arr. by Steve Kaufman

G G G D7 C G

1. G 2. G G C G

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NASHVILLE FLATTOP

By Brad Davis



Yes, it is very exciting learning a new song, but even more when learning how to improvise. Everytime you learn a new song certain licks and phrases are recorded in memory. Most pickers pull their favorite licks from memory and use them when improvising. For example, a basic G run is a very common lick many people use to improvise with. Below in the following examples are a variety of licks in several keys followed by two phrases.

The first phrase connects a random selection of licks together to form an improvised solo. The second phrase jumbles up the order of these same licks to show you how easy it is to change an improvised solo. If you can improvise you can just about play anything - meaning, that you take your memory bank of licks and apply them to any song you wish. As a professional musician I feel if your going to learn a lick you need to be

able to hum it or sing the melody do-da style. Singing it in your head can allow you the ability to slow the lick down and put it in any key you wish. The last measure of tab is the "Double-Down-up" lick of the month. Have fun!

NOTE: Individual back issue lessons of "Nashville Flattop" are now available w/companion tape for a \$7.00 fee that includes postage.

Licks for improvising (Ex.1 - key of G)

V V ^ V V ^ V V ^ V V ^ V V ^												V V ^ V V ^ V V ^ V V ^												
1	3	1	3	1			2	1	2	1				0	3	0	3	2	0	3	0			
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3					3				3															
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5																								
6																								
1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +												1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +												
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(Ex.2 - key of G)

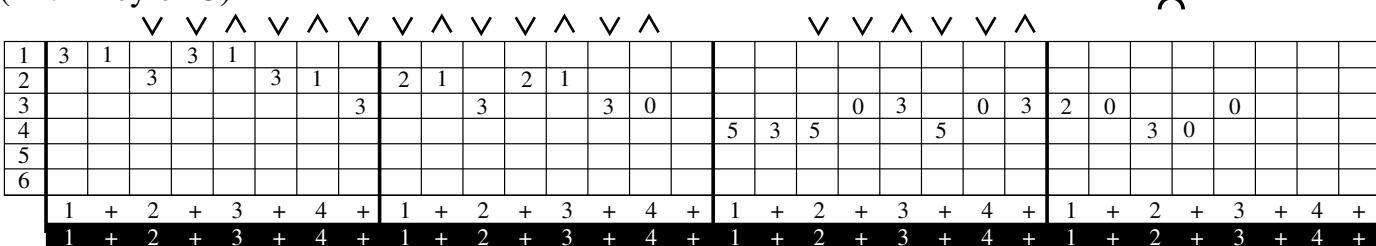
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1												0	3	1	0		3	1	0		3	1	4
2																							
3												0	2	0	2								
4												0	1	2	3								
5	0	2	3	2	3			3															
6																							
1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +												1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +											
1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +												1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +											

(Ex.3 - key of C)

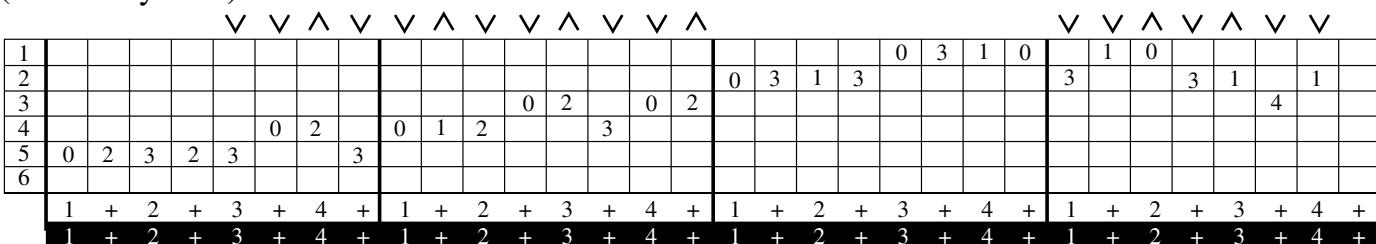
V V ^ V V ^ V V ^ V V ^ V V ^												V V ^ V V ^ V V ^ V V ^ V V ^											
1												0	3	1	0		3	1	0		3	1	4
2																							
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4												0	1	2	3								
5	0	2	3	2	3			3															
6																							
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Nashville Flattop Cont.

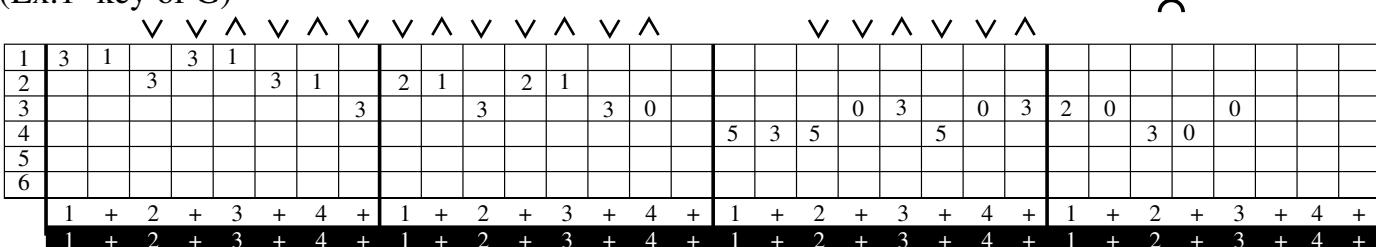
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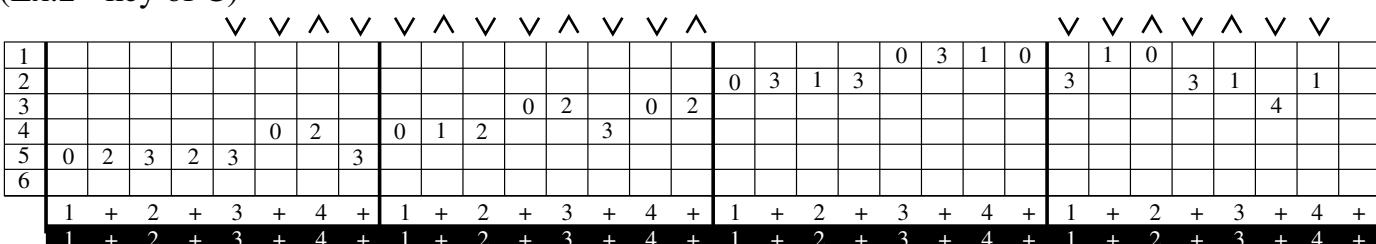
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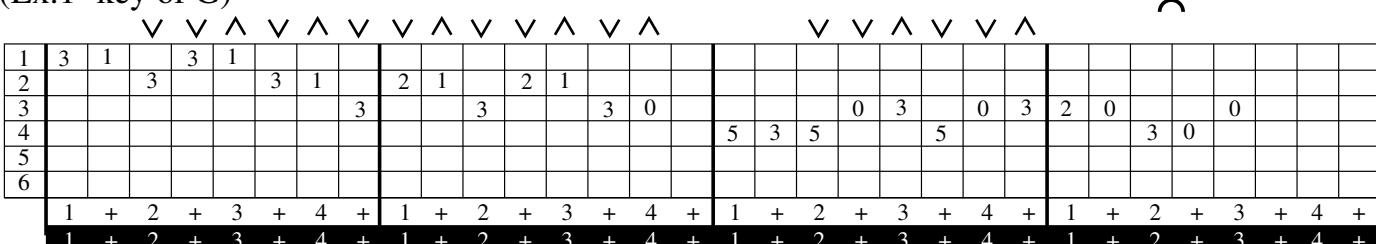
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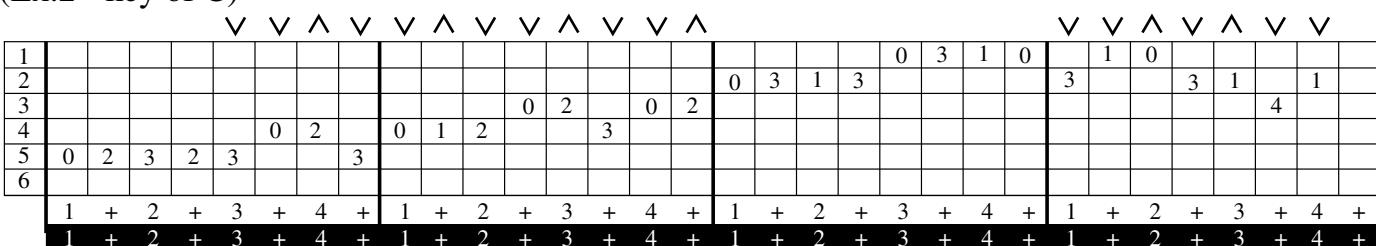
(Ex.2 - key of C)



(Ex.1- key of G)

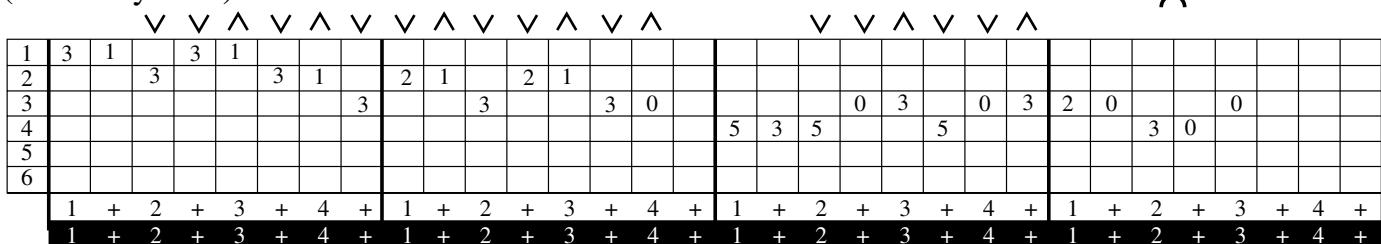


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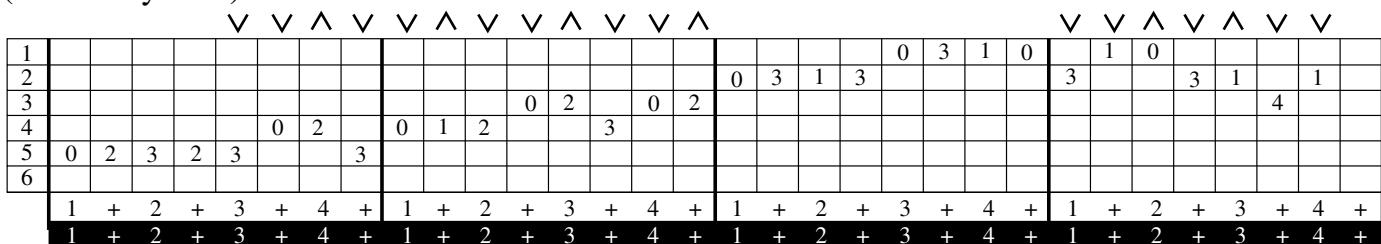
Nashville Flattop Cont.

(Ex.1- key of G)



P
C

(Ex.2 - key of C)



About the author: Brad Davis has many years of experience as an acclaimed bluegrass and country guitarist. With several albums to his credit, Brad's most widely heard flattop guitar work is on the Sweathearts of the Rodeo's new album titled "beautiful lies" on Sugar Hill Records, White Water debut album "No Gold On The Highway" and Brad's new flattop sampler album titled "Climbin' Cole Hill" both on Raisin Cain Records. Brad's most widely heard electric guitar work is on Marty Stuart's gold record "This Ones Gonna Hurt You" and on Marty's most recent album "Honky Tonkin's What I Do Best." Brad debuted his patented "Brad Bender," the string bender for acoustic/electric guitars, and the unique style it offers, on countless national television shows with the Sweathearts of the Rodeo - bluegrass band. Brad also spent several years on the road with the Forester Sisters. Songwriting, record production, and the production of instructional material for Z-TAPE instructional courses are wedged into his tight schedule. Brad's up and coming instructional course is a sixty page book complete with CD titled "The Acoustic Speed picking Blue book" featuring his incredible "Double-Down-Up" speed picking technique.

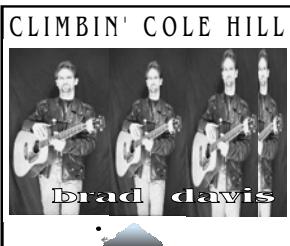
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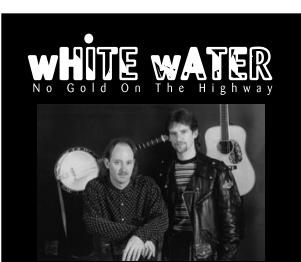
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Break Time

by Chris Jones



In this issue, I'd like to tackle the possibly touchy subject of playing breaks to slow songs. I say "possibly touchy" because I know there are plenty of guitar players out there who are more than happy to wail away on Train 45 at around 290 on the metronome, but it comes time for a break on a nice waltz, all of a sudden become shy, introverted, "I'm mostly just a rhythm picker" types (by the way, that's the line I use when someone kicks off Train 45 at trainwreck speed, so don't overuse it).

When you've devoted so much time to playing fast and then faster, it makes sense that slow playing can be a little foreign. In fact, slow breaks are difficult; I know because I've just had to play some in the studio on a new Chris Jones & The Night Drivers project. For one thing, there's all that space to fill up. Then there's the problem

of timing: longer spaces between the notes makes this a critical factor. Add to this the fact that your ideas really need to work because there's less opportunity for fudging them, and you've got a musical challenge.

If you play in a bluegrass band, the slow song is definitely something to get comfortable with, because lead guitar can add a lot of texture to that kind of material. If you're in a band that doesn't play slow songs out of the belief that they're boring or don't impress audiences enough, I would suggest the following: a) several fast songs in a row can have a mind-numbing affect on an audience, which is not the same as being impressed; b) if you never play a slow song, how will they know you're playing fast? c) impressing an audience should not be your primary musical goal anyway.

Three techniques I'll mention are very important to playing a slow break: One is the downstroke and particularly the down "rest stroke" covered very well by both Steve Pottier and Joe Carr in the March/April

issue. The down stroke is used much more often than the up stroke, partly because you're playing a lot of quarter notes, but also because using the sustain of a solid, resting down stroke is necessary when trying to fill more space, and for the overall feel of many slow songs. Second, is the double stop: playing two notes at once will add musical depth to your break. The third is crosspicking: even if it's only used sparingly it is ideal for filling up space without adding a lot of inappropriate notes. In the tab below, I have utilized all three of these in this half break to the beautiful gospel standard, "Angel Band" (the melody is the second half of the verse). Note that there are only two upstrokes in the whole break.

Finally I would add that while we've been talking about filling up space, you should not feel that all space is there to be filled. By improving on and using your sustain, you should grow more comfortable with spaces and learn to use them. After all, spaces in the music are what made Count Basie great (although I don't know if he ever did much with a flatpick). Remember, slow is beautiful and way easier on the wrist.

Angel Band

Arranged by Chris Jones

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Columnist Profile: Joe Carr

Before discovering that Joe Carr writes the best darn rhythm guitar column in print today, many readers may have only known him as "that guy that teaches bluegrass with Alan Munde at that college in Texas." Although Joe has been involved in the commercial music program at South Plains College in Levelland, Texas, for the past 13 years, he also currently tours in duo with Alan Munde. He and Alan have also recorded the Flying Fish release, "Windy Days and Dusty Skies," and have written a book for Texas University Press entitled *Prairie Nights to Neon Lights: The Story of Country Music in West Texas*. Joe has also recorded his own critically acclaimed solo guitar album, "Otter Nonsense" and prior to joining the teaching staff at South Plains College, spent six years with the legendary band Country Gazette. Additionally, he appears in over twenty instructional guitar videos and also teaches mandolin, fiddle, banjo, and ukulele via the video format.

Joe began playing guitar in 1964 when he was thirteen years old and became a

flatpicking addict in high school after hearing his first Doc Watson record. Although he is a self-taught musician, learning primarily from listening to records by "slowing down the licks and stealing them one by one," he lists the following people as being his greatest influences: Debbie Bridgewater ("A great flatpicker from Fort Worth who showed me the basics of flatpicking."), Gerald Jones ("A great guitarist and banjo player who has been a constant source of musical inspiration."), Clarence White ("flatpicking with heart, fire, and soul. His music speaks to me like no other guitarist"), Slim Richey ("He opened my mind and my ears to the music."), and Alan Munde ("A great artist, musical friend and mentor. Being around Alan keeps me on the path towards excellence.").

Carr began playing in bluegrass bands while in college in Denton, Texas, and continued to play in a variety of bands in the Dallas-Ft. Worth area before being asked to join Country Gazette in about 1978. When asked what he considers to be his greatest

experience as a performing musician, Joe says, "Playing music with great players is the biggest kick I can think of. One such experience was a concert in Colorado when Roland White, Roger Bush, and Billie Ray Latham (three quarters of the original Kentucky Colonels) asked me to play guitar with them for an impromptu set. During the set I suddenly realized I was Clarence White! Although I didn't even come close to filling his shoes, it was a great musical moment for me."

When asked about his guitar of choice, Joe responds, "I had a 1952 Martin D-18 which I played for several years. Around 1977, I bought the first Taylor guitar I ever saw. It had a large "D" type body and the fastest slimmest neck I had ever seen on an acoustic! I later sold that guitar . . . dumb move . . . and had a custom guitar built for me by Danny Ferrington. I played that guitar until I quit Country Gazette, moved to West Texas and started teaching at South Plains College. I now play a Bohannon 12 fret triple O style guitar built by Harry Miller of Oregon. Its sound is loud and beautiful and since I'm a small guy, its smaller body seems to suit me."

In the following interview, Joe Carr talks about the program and South Plains College and his guitar teaching methods:

Can you tell me about the program at South Plains College and how that got started?

South Plains College is a two year community college in Levelland, Texas, which is 30 miles west of Lubbock, and they teach the full range of freshman and sophomore courses that community colleges teach. In 1975 they started with a program of guitar lessons. That is essentially what it was. Not classical guitar lessons, but country, folk, whatever, and that quickly evolved into a commercial music program. A lot of the players liked bluegrass and would be playing bluegrass between classes. They just made it part of the course study. You can get an associates degree in commercial music now. Under that your specialty can be bluegrass, or top forty, or country, or whatever. I went to work in '84 after coming off the road with Country Gazette and Alan Munde came two years later in '86. Our bluegrass department now consists of Alan on the five string banjo, I teach flattop guitar and mandolin, Ed Marsh, who teaches music theory, is also a good fiddler and teaches fiddle lessons, and upright bass.



Joe Carr and Alan Munde perform at the Strawberry Music Festival in 1996

Where you the first faculty member that they brought in for the bluegrass?

Well, no they were doing that as early as '75. For instance, Tim McCasland, the fellow that teaches dobro and steel was a banjo player and before Alan came, he taught the banjo. My boss, John Hartin, taught the flattop guitar stuff. And he could do it, but it really wasn't his specialty. Ed used to teach mandolin, but once I got there, I pretty much took over all of the mandolin. It was a secondary instrument for him.

How did you get involved with the school?

Gazette played there at the college in '83. We did a concert and a small workshop and then the Gazette played there in early '84 without me, after I had left, and essentially they went, "Where is that guy?" So, Alan called me within a week and said, "They are looking to expand their faculty and understand that you are available, so why don't you give them a call." I was back in Dallas teaching lessons and sort of doing what I could to make a living off of the road. So I called them and wound up going to work for them in mid-'84.

At the college, do you have beginning level guitarists or does everyone coming to your class have some guitar background?

There is no minimum requirement. At the community college we have an open enrollment policy, so I get, typically, some generic guitar players that want to learn to strum some chords and play whatever is on the radio. So I do some amount of that as well, as do the six other teachers that do some guitar instruction. So all of us do some generic guitar instruction, here's a G, C, and D, that sort of thing. But we all have specialties and mine is usually a small group of students, maybe 5 or 6 a semester who are into the bluegrass thing. If they are at this level, we are transcribing Tony Rice solos or picking things off of records that they have, or in some cases taking the general idea of a solo and making it a little simpler so that they can actually do it. It is exciting for some of them to actually play Tony Rice solos, but if they are only playing it at a third speed and every time they go to their ensemble class they fail at it because it is just too fast for them, then I would much rather have them do something that is the shape and feeling of what Rice did, but doable. So I do a lot of custom tab writing, essentially arrangement of solos



Country Gazette alumni Byron Berline, Alan Munde, Joe Carr, and Roland White perform in Owensboro, KY, 1996

for songs.

For some players I wind up doing something like a Carter style bass lead and strums kind of break, even to a fast bluegrass song. I would rather see them have the success of actually being able to do it. There is always a difference between doing it at home and then getting up on stage with other people and trying to do it.

Generally you fall back a little bit when you go up on stage. If you take a simple break, you might have a little bit of trouble with it, but there is a much better chance of success. There are some breaks that there is no hope for the student, within the course of one semester, to get up to speed. At first they might want that, and I will give it to them, but then they realize that "I can't play Tony's solos, I can't play David Grier's solos to this. It is too challenging right now." But I think it is important to play through that stuff and put your fingers where they put them so you get a real sense of where you have to go.

Is the bluegrass guitar curriculum progressive over two years? Could someone take that course every semester?

The course is called the same thing and you can repeat it for credit. It is really individualized study. I take everyone in the class and work with them at their level,

especially in the private lessons. In the band settings material is being selected, but hopefully it matches the five or six people you have there. It is always going to be a little challenging for a couple of the people and old hat for others because that is just the way skills go. But if we have six bands a semester, we will have what we as teachers think of as the "beginning band," the "intermediate band," the "advanced band," etc. We don't really label them that way, but we do put people together that are of about equal ability.

At the first of the semester everyone plays for the teaching staff and then we put them in bands that seem to work. Sometimes there will be more than one of a given instrument in a band just because that is the way it works out. But it is not any easier out in the real world to put a band together. The beauty of our situation is that we, the teachers, are the bosses. What I notice is that in the real world most bands don't have clear bosses. It is sort of a democratic agreement. What is beautiful for us and for the students is that if someone is singing sharp as a tenor singer, or if the rhythm guitar playing is way off, I can, as the teacher, say, "Your rhythm guitar playing is way off." And they won't pack up their instrument and go home and quit the band. It works out pretty nicely that way.



Joe Carr (mandolin) with the band Roanoke, circa mid-1970s. Also pictured, Dan Huckabee (dobro), Mike Anderson (bass), and Gerald Jones (banjo).

Along with these music courses, the student are also taking typical first and second year college courses such as English and Math?

If you are taking our degree plan and want to graduate in two years, that is what you would do. You would be taking the basic core of academic courses and then you could move on to a four year school. However, I will say that not all students do that. We get a lot of older students who have found a time in their life where they can go and pursue this and they may take only music classes and load themselves down with that. They might take a lot of private lessons on different instruments or double up on lessons. Where I would typically see a student twice a week, there are some students who I might see four times a week.

Have you had some students who have gone through your program and then gone on to be successful in the music industry?

Yes. I would say that in the bluegrass world the ones that come to mind right away are Mike Bubb who plays bass with Del McCoury and Ron Block who plays banjo with Alison Krauss. Ron is also a really great guitar player and has a wonderful book that I wish someone would

get a hold of and do something with. He has put it out himself and it is called *Masters of Traditional Guitar*. It is all about people like Junior Blakeship, Larry Sparks, George Shuffler, Clarence White, Don Reno, etc., all of the traditional guitar playing, pre-Doc Watson. It is really great stuff. It is available when he takes the time to xerox it and punch the holes and everything. He used to sell it out of the back of his car. I have used those to teach in many of my private lessons and I have yet to find a mistake in any of the tablature.

I require my advanced students to transcribe material in order to develop their ear. I have most of it already transcribed, but for the ear training, I want them to do it on their own. For Ron it was pretty much a self-study. I would give him things to transcribe and he would come back the next week with a full transcription and it would be right.

So you think that the process of transcribing recorded material is valuable in developing the student's ear?

Yes. It is kind of an accepted thing, especially in the various jazz schools. Never mind that the teacher has twelve transcriptions of Charlie Parker doing this song, the point is the process of going through and transcribing it yourself in order to train your ear. If the student develops this skill, then when the new "so-and-so" album comes out, rather than hoping and crossing their fingers that someone will transcribe it and put it out, they can do it for themselves. But it is a lot tougher for some people than it is for others. It is one of the skills that I have honed over the years. I've been at the school for twelve years and I have gotten pretty good at pulling stuff off records and transcribing it. I use one of those Marantz recorders with two speeds, but still there are places that are tough.

Some players are easier to transcribe than others. David Grier's stuff is tough because there are so many subtleties.

If someone is interested in embarking on this ear training process, what material do you recommend that they start with?

I think a Doc Watson recording is good to start with. He is straight ahead and plays clearly. The notes are evenly spaced and you can hear them. In a lot of his recordings he is way out front, so it is easy to pick out what he is playing. Sam Bush was always my favorite mandolin player to transcribe and Doc on guitar.

Do you have any tips you could lend our readers in regards to transcribing?

Once you have done it for a while, you realize not to trust yourself to write down what you think they are doing, but to listen to what is actually being played. Music is real sneaky, you can sometimes think you are hearing something that is not there. You are usually hearing more than the player is actually playing. That is real eye opening sometimes. Here I am doing this rhythm transcribing and I think that the whole G run is there. I'll think, "This guy is so good because it is so fast." But then I listen and hear that they are not playing the whole thing, but the impression is there. It is a real clean efficiency and a lot of those early players did that, they didn't play the whole lick, but you thought you heard the whole lick because you were trained to expect it. To me that is a real eye-opener for rhythm players to realize that they don't have to get every lick in. Especially when you are playing "Train 45" and you are struggling to get out that G run but you can't quite do it at that speed. The best players on the old recordings didn't do it either. Even the Tony Rice stuff with the Bluegrass Album Band, on a lot of that stuff, there is less there than you think. It is played really well, it is placed perfectly, but it is not everything you think it is.

Is there a point in someone's learning process when you would recommend that they are ready to start learning by ear?

I like the students to have first played and had success with my transcriptions, or the ones that they have bought commercially, like Steve Kaufman's stuff, so that we can work through the technical problems. I like to suggest that they begin transcribing on their own when they have developed good

technical skills and they are ready to go out on their own. It is not something they will get over night. They will bring the tab in that they have worked on and we will look at it together. I will say something like, "Well, it sounds to me like he is hammering on from the open to the second fret, rather than picking both notes." Sometimes my ear is more adjusted and I know what I'm listening to and they will say, "Oh, now I can hear what a hammer-on sounds like." I might also make suggestions about fingering based on scale positions and give hints about listening for capo positions and how to recognize such things. A lot of times little clues like that will help them and they will say, "Don't tell me any more, I want to go home and work on it."

Speaking of technical problems, what kind of ideas do you have about the use of pick direction?

Almost without exception, I will use the alternating pick direction when I play. I have an arrangement of "Arkansas Traveler" in C that I have written out that is the most boring version ever because it is all eighth notes. It is truly not a performance version, it is an etude in the way that classical music has, and it alternates pick direction. I know that piece so well that I can watch a student who has memorized it and see when the pick direction is off. I tell them, start with a down stroke and you will end with a down stroke and if you messed up anywhere in the song you won't end with a down stroke.

There are some things that can be done for special effect where you will do consecutive down strokes on purpose. Clarence White used downstrokes as much as possible. I think he saw the apparent power in that down stroke so he used it a lot. I think Rice does that too. So there are exceptions for specific situations. But for straight out songs played pretty fast, alternate picking is where it almost has to be.

Do most of your students start with this "Arkansas Traveler" arrangement?

Yes, that is the first thing that they do. If they are not yet ready for a flatpicking tune, I might start them on a Carter style arrangement like "Wildwood Flower" or "Sunny Side of Life." That is a good place for folks to start. In a lot of books I've seen them start people out with what seems to be a simplified version of a song because they put a lot of quarter notes mixed in with the eighth notes. The problem I see there is that you are saying right away that there are

exceptions to the alternate picking method. You are saying, "These three notes are down strokes in a row and then now you are going to alternate for four beats." It is sort of confusing. So I give them something that may be a little bit harder, like the "Arkansas Traveler" arrangement, but there are no exceptions with pick directions.

You believe that gaining a solid foundation in alternating pick direction will help the student when they progress to faster and more complicated solos?

I think so. For those people who are interested in increasing their speed, I also encourage students to move onto a progressive metronome type of study. Some people really respond to it. They start with a slow tempo and then slowly increase the speed as they become more proficient. I will have the students play a tune, without the metronome, at the speed they can play it cleanly. We will find that speed on the metronome and then I will have them play at that speed with the metronome so they get used to not running out ahead of it or dragging behind it. Then we start pushing it up. A solo may only take 30 to 40 seconds to play, so in five minutes you can play it a lot and move up in increments. I like them to write down the speed they started at, say they could do it at 60 beats a minute cleanly, then after five minutes maybe they play it at 63 beats a minute cleanly. Eventually, they will push to 65 and it starts getting cluttered up and trashy, and they see that. What I see happen is that over a period of weeks, that bracket moves up. A month from now, they are starting at 70 and falling apart at 75.

The frustrating part for most of them is that the band is playing it up at 120 and they are still hovering down here at 70. But, there are two ways to look at it. One is that in six months I will be able to play the song at 110 clean, so I'm getting there. The band is still at 120, so when I play with them I am still sloppy. But I am getting there and I see that progress. A lot of the students respond well to this method. But as far as metronome work goes, I always tell the students to not make more out of it than it is. The music has to be fun and if you are not enjoying it, why did you get into it? We are not classical players that can play major scales and arpeggios for four hours. We don't have that kind of attention span. We want to hear a song. If you have learned "Wildwood Flower," you have learned a C

major scale, but you have learned it the fun way rather than just by rote.

Is there a point in the student's learning process when you will start to feed them information about different positions up and down the neck and more about theoretical music?

Hopefully it kind of goes along with what they are learning. We have a thing called a jury at the end of each semester. For majors it is like regular music schools where you go in front of a panel of instructors and perform some prepared pieces and you might be asked to play a B flat major scale or some deal like that. For a while we adopted the Berkeley book, the one that they use at the Berkeley school of music, for our guitar players. But I found that for my guitar players, the amount of time they spent working specifically on that material, in order to pass this little barrier, took away from the focus of what they were really here for. There is so much to learn, and I tend to try and teach the theory along with the learning of songs. For instance, if someone comes in and wants to learn "Blackberry Blossom" by Tony Rice, well the first eight notes are all played with your first finger at the 7th fret. The question becomes what is that thing? What is that place? Why are those notes there? They can memorize that, but I would much rather have them understand that there is a whole major scale fingering there.

We will learn a song in a closed position, or learn all of "Blackberry Blossom" in one position. They would never play it there, but going through that exercise gives them the understanding of the position. One of the best things I have seen is Orrin Star's *Hot Licks For Bluegrass Guitar*. The section he has on playing up the neck is great. I use that quite a bit and I highly endorse it.

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THE O-ZONE

by Orrin Star



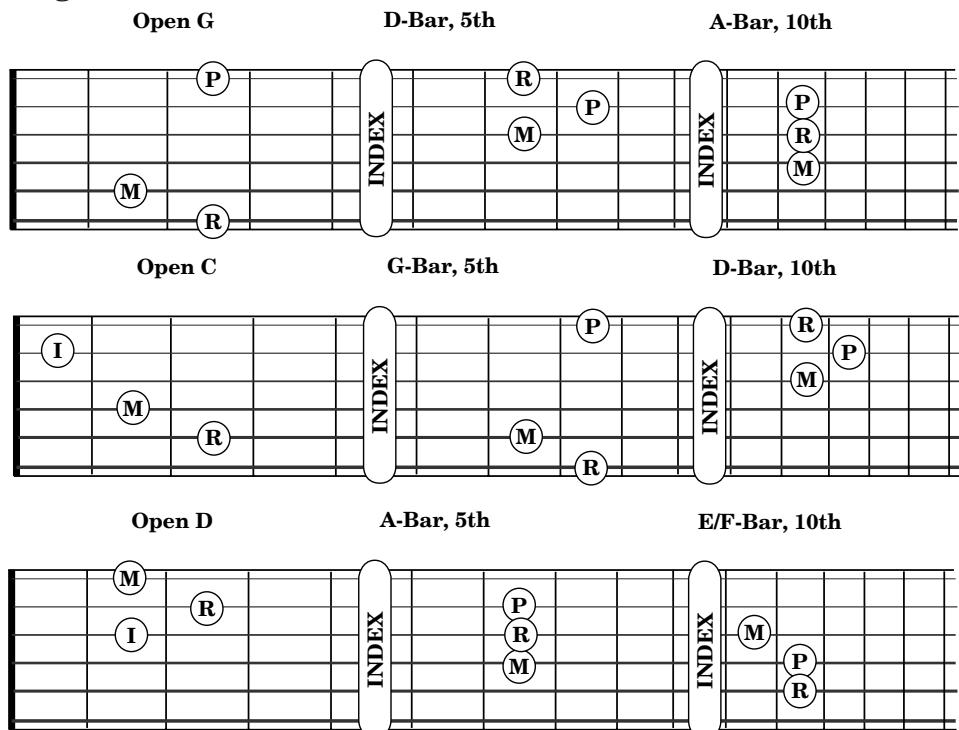
Playing Up the Neck - IV

Having mapped out the vertical relationships between the five primary positions last time, let's now turn to the horizontal connections between them. As with learning to visualize the various closed positions, the knowledge we already have of the way basic open licks and chords interact is our guide here.

Behold the three diagrams on the right: open chords followed by closed fifth and tenth fret positions in the keys of G, C, and D. Move down the page from any form on Diagram 1 (key of G) to those in the diagram(s) below and you will see the horizontal connections between the positions. Down from "Open G" you get "Open C" then "Open D"; down from "D-Bar, 5th" you get "G-Bar, 5th" then "A-Bar, 5th", etc. Three different ways of going G/C/D. This is how to start thinking like a mandolin player (i.e., somebody whose rhythm playing consists almost exclusively of shifting between closed positions).

Let's now string some licks over these chord changes:

Diagram 1



The image shows a guitar tablature for a blues-style lick. The top staff is a treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The bottom staff is a standard six-string guitar neck. The tab includes several chords labeled G, C, and D, along with specific string and fret markings. The first measure starts with a rest followed by a G chord. The second measure begins with a C chord. The third measure starts with a D chord. The tab includes various note heads, stems, and slurs. Fret numbers are indicated above the strings, and specific notes are marked with letters like S and P.

Fifth Fret Forms:

1 G C

5 7 8 5 7 5 S 8 9 5 7 5 8 7 5 6 7 5 7 8 5 6 7 5 6 7 5 7 5 5 7 5 5 9 5 6

6 D G

7 5 6 7 5 7 5 8 7 5 6 7 5 7 5 7 5 8 5 7 5 8 5 7 5 8 5 7 5 8 9 5 7 5

Tenth Fret Forms:

René Fret Forms.

The sheet music consists of two staves of tablature for a six-string guitar. The top staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp, and a common time signature. It features a series of sixteenth-note patterns with various fretting configurations, some of which are labeled with letters: G, H, H, P, C, D, G, and S. The bottom staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp, and a common time signature. It also shows sixteenth-note patterns with fretting labels: 10, 9 10 11, 12 11 12, 9 10 11, 10, 12 10, 10, 12 10, 11 9, 12, 12 10, 12 10, S, 13/14 10, 10, and 12.

In actual play our up-the-neck moves aren't usually so tidy; there are vertical motions happening as well (resulting in that lovely diagonal feeling). But I wanted to start with some pure horizontal movements in order to keep the forms/licks connections clear. Capeche?

Orrin Star has been performing professionally since the early seventies. His musical history includes three bluegrass bands, a summer with banjo great Bill Keith, and eight years in a duo with Gary Mehalick. In 1976 he won the National Flatpicking Championship in Winfield, Kansas. Star has appeared on A Prairie Home Companion, has three albums on Flying Fish Records,

and is the author of Hot Licks for Bluegrass Guitar. He currently performs both solo and with his group, Orrin Star & the Sultans of String. He lives in Brooklyn, NY, and can be emailed at orhay@aol.com. In July he will be teaching for a week at the California Coast Music Camp near San Francisco (415-306-0399).

Masters of Rhythm Guitar: **Dudley Connell**

There are as many great rhythm guitar players in bluegrass music as there are great bluegrass bands. It's a big part of what makes them great. The rhythm guitarist is the backbone of the band. Without his hard driving, rock solid rhythm and tasteful embellishment, the lead instruments would find it difficult to step out and shine, and the over all band sound would be a bit weak. The rhythm guitarist and the bass player are the time keepers. There is a fine line between a band with good time and one with great time. That is one reason why there are a lot of good bluegrass bands, but relatively few great ones.

Back in the mid-1970s a group of young Washington, D.C. area musicians got together and formed a band they called the "Johnson Mountain Boys." With a hard driving traditional bluegrass style reminiscent of the old radio days, this band of young men took the bluegrass community by storm, becoming one of the most popular bluegrass bands in the business. Dudley Connell was their backbone.

Background

Dudley Connell grew up in a musical environment. His mother sang and his father played guitar and banjo. At the age of fourteen, Dudley decided he wanted to learn how to play the guitar and although his parents were fans of old time country and bluegrass music, Dudley was drawn to the music of the singer/songwriters such as Bob Dylan, Neil Young and John Prine. Dudley says, "When I first started playing, I would just sit around with my friends and play Dylan-style tunes."

By the time Dudley turned eighteen he says that he had begun to become re-interested in bluegrass. He says, "My parents had these records around the house and I started listening to those, and then in 1974 I went to Ralph Stanley's Old Home Place Bluegrass Festival and that is when the bug really bit me hard. I hate to sound melodramatic, but it really changed my life. I got very passionate about wanting to play bluegrass. But actually, my first bluegrass instrument was the banjo.

"I had a friend who played guitar and he and I would get together at my house and play for a couple of hours after dinner. It was really fun because we were both at the same level and both trying to learn how the music worked and how to sing harmony and everything like that. We played everyday. It is what we did for fun, and actually the Johnson Mountain Boys grew out of that."

Dudley says that his transition from banjo to guitar came when he realized that he was actually more interested in singing than he was in learning how to play the banjo. He says, "It was a lot easier for me to sing lead and play guitar than to try and do a banjo roll underneath my vocals and that is how I ended up playing guitar."

The Johnson Mountain Boys

Dudley met the other members of the original Johnson Mountain Boys band when he and his picking partner began performing at open mike nights at local clubs. He recalls, "When I was a teenager you could go hear bluegrass every night of the week. We'd get one guy to play banjo and another guy to play mandolin and we performed at these open mikes and we met a lot of people that way. Eventually we found a group of core musicians who were interested in the same kind of music. We decided to give ourselves a name when we went to play these open mike nights and my Dad had been in a group called the 'Johnson Boys.' Our name grew out of that."

When the Johnson Mountain Boys formed in 1976, contemporary bands such as the Seldom Scene and the Country Gentleman were popular in the Washington, D.C. area. Newgrass style bands, who began appearing on the bluegrass scene in the late 1960s, had also taken a strong hold, especially among the younger generation of bluegrass fans. However, the Johnson Mountain Boys broke with those bluegrass trends and patterned their band and their music after the pioneer bands such as Bill Monroe, Flatt and Scruggs, and the Stanley Brothers.

When asked to comment, Dudley said, "It wasn't really calculated, it was just what we liked to do and it ended up being a good thing. Washington has a more contemporary music scene. When we came along, we were just doing something we liked and really didn't aspire to do anything but that. At first people would come to hear the band and they were turned off because it wasn't the style of music that they were interested in. Fortunately, over a period of time, that audience was replaced by one



**The Johnson Mountain Boys performing in Denton, NC, 1985.
From left to right, Eddie Stubbs, David McLaughlin,
Richard Underwood, and Dudley Connell**

that was looking for something different. We had a set that was a bit unique for a bunch of young guys."

Much of the band's music was drawn from old live recordings taped at outdoor music parks back in the 1950s. Their stage show was also heavily influenced by what they found on these tapes. Dudley recalls, "We would take those things apart and analyze them. For instance, one thing we did from early on was when we were introduced we would literally come out playing and we would do two or three songs, boom, boom, boom, and just kind of hit people over the head with it. Flatt and Scruggs and the Stanleys had done the same kind of thing."

After becoming one of the most successful bluegrass bands on the circuit in the 1980s, the Johnson Mountain Boys quit playing together in about 1988. The band did get back together to play a few dates in the early 90s, but over the last few years they have not gotten together. Dudley explains, "Our lives had changed. As young men we could afford to play out a lot and not get paid much. But as time went by our responsibilities and priorities had begun to change. Several of us were married with children, car payments, and mortgages. We were also kind of burnt out on traveling and it was harder to live on the amount of money we were getting paid."

After the band stopped performing, Dudley admits that he really missed the interaction with the audiences. He also missed his friends and colleagues that he had made in the music industry. He says, "At the time I thought that I would be satisfied to just play guitar around the house and sing to my kids. But I found that I really missed that magic thing that happens between a performer and the audience. There is really nothing quite like it."

After spending years on the road with the Johnson Mountain Boys, Dudley went back to school and got a job with the Smithsonian in 1989, which he still holds today. And, luckily for his fans, Dudley's need for a musical outlet landed him a job with the Seldom Scene. Dudley explains how that came about: "I called John (Duffey) out of the blue one day. I saw in *Bluegrass Unlimited* that Chesapeake was going to make a go of it and that John and Ben (Eldridge) were thinking about retiring the band. I called John on a whim one day. I didn't even know him very well, but I called and suggested we get together and sing just to see what it feels like. We did and it



**Dudley Connell performing at the Wintergrass Festival
in Tacoma, WA, 1996**

felt really good." Dudley started playing with the Seldom Scene in 1996 and is on their newest Sugar Hill release "Dream Scene."

Since the death of bluegrass legend and Seldom Scene founding member, John Duffey, in late 1996, the band has been performing their scheduled dates with temporary fill in mandolin players. As for the future of the Seldom Scene, Dudley says that the band has made no plans to either retire or continue, they are going to just take things as they come and see what happens.

In the following interview, Dudley lends his thoughts on rhythm guitar playing to our readers:

Who are some of the players who influenced you when you first started playing guitar?

When I first started playing rhythm guitar, the people who I listened to were people like Lester Flatt and Carter Stanley. What I didn't realize early on was that they were playing with a thumb pick and an index finger pick. I tried to emulate that sound by emphasizing the bass notes followed by a light brush on the off beat. But as time went by and mandolin players came and went, my style changed a lot. I got much more percussive and into playing against the mandolin chop.

We were fortunate to have had really

good bass players in our band, so it didn't make a lot of sense for me to just play the beat. It made a lot more sense to try and fill in the holes and make the whole band move. I try to accent what other people are doing and play to the band. My rhythm playing will vary depending on the musicians I am playing with. When you are playing rhythm guitar, I really think that you have to play to suit your colleagues.

Can you give an example?

Well, for instance, Laurie Lewis and I did a tour with a group of banjo players hand picked by Joe Wilson, Director of the National Council for the Traditional Arts. It was called "Masters of the Five String Banjo." On the tour were old time banjo players, Will Keys and Kirk Sutphin, a wonderful melodic player, Carole Best, and my bluegrass hero Ralph Stanley. I would play different guitar under each of them.

When you are playing with different styles of players like that, do you try to listen carefully to what is going on and then change your style accordingly?

I actually do that to a fault, and I'll tell you why I say that. Not too long ago I was hired to do a recording session with someone and the person I was doing the recording for played bass and banjo on the record. He wanted to play banjo with the

band behind him. I found that I had the hardest time doing that. I could play in time, but what I did was that I played to sound good without a bass. I tried to make what was going down on tape sound as good as I could "live." Well, when the bass came into it, I realized that I was not playing what suited the band. I was playing what suited the band without a bass.

I feel that I am a pretty good listener and I try to listen to what is going on around me and I try to support that. That is my role. I am not a great lead player, I am a support guy all the way.

Earlier when you mentioned "filling in the holes," what kind of techniques do you use for that?

It really depends on the song and what kind of instrument is playing. Like if the mandolin is taking a break I will try to really accent the off beat and kind of lift my left hand up to dampen the strings to make a drum kind of sound. When the banjo takes a break, if the player is dynamic with the use of pinches and brushes and things like that, I try to anticipate when he is going to do that pinch and I will hit a full strum and let the strings ring. These techniques can often add excitement to someone's break. I try to make them sound as powerful as I can.

Do you use many bass runs as fills?

I do play a fair amount of runs, but again it depends upon the musicians. For instance, I have jammed a little with Tom Gray. Tom plays a lot of bass and a lot of runs, so if I am playing with him, I don't play any because he is doing that job.

When I work with Ronnie (Simpkins), there are places where he will play runs and fills and other places where he will back off and I will fill the spaces. It is wonderful to find a bass player that you enjoy working with. There is nothing quite like working together with someone who hears rhythm where you hear it and striving for that groove that makes music fun to play.

A lot of people have said that you have a great sense of time. Did you ever have a method of practice you used to work on that, or did it come naturally just from playing so often with the band?

I started out just playing with the band. But then sometime in the mid-1980s we did a recording session and we couldn't play in time to save our souls. It was just one of those things. Everybody got really

frustrated. Me especially, because I felt like a big part of my job was to keep the time. It was really kind of devastating to me. After that session I bought a metronome and started practicing at home with the metronome and I continue to do that to this day. I think it helps.

I don't like to record with a click track because I think it makes the music a bit on the sterile side. I think the music should naturally breath. But when I practice at home I do play with a metronome.

I also used to play along with records of people that I felt had real good timing like Quicksilver or Tony Rice. It is helpful to play with that kind of music because you can count on the timing being there.

Steve Pottier says that it is a real pleasure to play music with you because of your great sense of time and the "groove" that you can get into when backing up another player. Is there a trick to finding that "groove"?

Well, that is a very nice thing to say and I would have to throw the same thing back at him. Not all people are compatible that play music. There are a lot of intricacies in timing. Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs had wonderful time, but their timing was different than Jimmy Martin and the Sunny Mountain Boys, who also had a wonderful sense of time. It really depends on the musicians that you are playing with. Not everyone can get a groove like that, but Steve and I can, and Dave McLaughlin and Marshall and I can, and Ronnie Simpkins and I can.

But that is not to say that everybody would think that my timing was good because it is kind of where you hear the beat. I tend to play a little bit in front of the beat, or maybe right on top of it. I listen to a lot of blues music at home because I enjoy that kind of music for pleasure, but I can't play it worth a damn because their sense of time is that they play a little bit behind the beat and so I can't ever find it when I try to play that style. My natural sense, and maybe it just comes from playing bluegrass for so long, is right on the tip of the beat. There is really a fine line between dragging a bluegrass tune and speeding it.

Did your rhythm style change when you got the job with the Seldom Scene?

Getting this job was really good for me musically. I had played the Johnson Mountain Boys music basically all of my

musical life and had become somewhat complacent with it because I could do it standing on my head I had done it so long. When I went to work with the Scene I really had no background in their music. I had heard their records on the radio, but had not studied their music and did not know song one. So at forty years of age I had to start practicing every night. I had to listen to records and try to figure out changes because their music tends to be a bit more arranged than the music that I was accustomed to. I think it has really helped me to grow musically.

What kind of changes did you have to make?

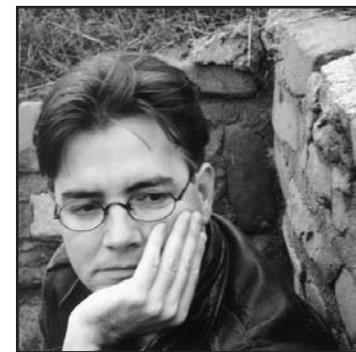
I did not have to change the bluegrass stuff very much because basically Ronnie and I have a similar sort of approach to that. Actually, I think they sort of changed more to suit us for that. That said, I find that doing a song like "Wait A Minute" that has a different sort of feel to it, is something I did have to make adjustments with, but I really enjoyed that. That was a new thing for me and it was something I had to work on. I like to be challenged.

What advice do you have for players who are trying to improve their rhythm other than playing with a metronome and playing along with records?

I'd also stress getting out and playing with other people as often as you can. If you can, try to play with people that are a little better than you and listen to what is going on. Don't go in with a preconceived notion about how you are going to play a tune, complement the musicians that you are playing with. Sometimes it is best to play real light until a groove is established. I love that groove. There is nothing like playing with a capo in B in that medium tempo bluegrass kind of beat and finding that thing that just rocks. There is nothing like it.

Dudley's Guitar

Dudley plays a 1941 Martin D-28 that he has owned since 1983. When asked about traveling with such a valuable instrument, he says, "You know, I had it appraised a few years ago and when I found out what it was worth, I really considered leaving it at home because it is almost too much of an investment to tote around. But I don't feel comfortable without it. This guitar is as much a part of me as my singing voice. I take it everywhere I go. I couldn't imagine not playing it."



The Joy of Noodling

The American Heritage Dictionary gives three definitions for the word “noodle.” The first describes the common food substance — “A narrow, ribbon-like strip of dried dough, usually made of flour, eggs, and water.” The two slang variants cited are “The human head” and “A person regarded as weak, foolish, or stupid”. Uh...let’s ignore this last definition and concentrate on the first two. Extrapolating on these two definitions and transforming the noun “noodle” into a verb applied to guitar playing we find, what? Yes, you’re right — “noodling” is that which a guitarist does while thinking about food. While it may never have occurred to any of you that you need any encouragement in the art of noodling, much less instruction, this column would like to speak to you for a moment about the art of structured noodling.

Practicing a little structured noodling is a good way to free yourself from old habits, expand your musical horizons and all of that other “release your inner power” blather beloved by modern day snake-oil purveyors. It’s also a great way to practice improvising.

First let’s distinguish structured noodling from actual music, and make sure you understand the difference between an exercise and an end. This is clearly an easy mistake to make, as we’ve all heard far too many guitar solos that sound like, well, to be kind... unstructured noodling. For those who have been wondering what I’m talking about, we’ll define noodling as “letting your fingers do the walking” — turning off your brain (maybe that other definition does apply) and letting your fingers meander about the fingerboard without the constraints of convention to see what they can find. The problem with this kind of noodling is that you normally just find what you’ve already found many times before. Your fingers, on their own, have no inherent adventurousness, and generally just want

to do the things they are used to doing. So we have to find ways to make them do new things.

One way, perhaps the most extreme, and not necessarily the most useful, is to try to forget you’ve ever heard of things like scales and arpeggios and try to make your fingers play “wrong notes” — notes you’ve probably spent years trying to train them to avoid. Now most of what you’ll play will sound bad to you, but you need to do some of this in order to let your guard down. Good improvisers have to be able to make fools of themselves, and not let it bother them. All improvisers make mistakes while performing; sometimes even huge, embarrassing, ego-deflating mistakes. Most truly egregious errors however, disappear in a flash — one of the advantages of music being such a temporal art. But if you allow yourself to dwell on your “clam” you risk losing your concentration, which may cause you to fall apart during the rest of your solo. Developing the knack of picking yourself up, and quickly “getting back on the horse” is essential to becoming a good improviser.

The other thing about seeking out wrong notes is that many people, too concerned about being perfect, have conditioned themselves to only hear certain notes as “right”. It may be that there are at least a few notes that will sound as good or better than the notes you normally expect will please your ears. It may be necessary to train your ears to hear these “new notes”, and one way to begin to hear them is to seek them out with a little structured noodling. It may sound as if this is the most unstructured variety of noodle, but it actually takes a lot of concentration to intentionally play “the wrong note.” You have to really listen to be able to know when you’ve stumbled upon a sound you like.

Another, and more obviously beneficial way to noodle is to set your self some boundaries. There are a number of ways to do this. One simple way is to choose one chord to noodle over — pretty self explanatory. Another, and very helpful way is to choose two chords to noodle over. An awful lot of mainstream jazz is played over linked “IIIm - V” (e.g., Am - D7 in the key of G) progressions. Most jazz musicians spend hours and hours exploring the possibilities of this simple progression. If you do this in a number of different keys, pretty soon you’ll be able to play through many standard jazz chord progressions. When you first begin this exercise don’t constrain yourself with bar lines or numbers of beats, just play freely. Then begin narrowing the parameters by playing two measures per chord, one measure per chord, and 1/2 measure per chord.

A more directed approach is to play over repeated chord progressions that occur in songs you currently play. Playing over a repeated I IV I V or I IV V I progression is simple and often mindlessly enjoyable, as good for warming up your fingers as it is for discovering new licks. Playing over chord progressions that are more unusual takes a little more concentration but is very important work if you’re playing songs that stray away from 1, 4 and 5. First just spend some time making connections between the chords. For instance, you may never have played over a IIIm chord (e.g. Bm in the key of G). Practice going from the chord that precedes the new chord and then practice going from the new chord to the chord that follows it. Do this until you get comfortable with the transitions before you start practicing over the entire sequence.

So far I’ve spoken mostly about noodling with a harmonic or chordal structure (or lack thereof). You can also do similar things

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with melodic and rhythmic parameters. Practice finding different ways from one note to another in a particular amount of time (e.g., from a G note in a C scale to the G note an octave higher in the space of one measure). Clearly the options of this exercise are almost endless. This is something I've found particularly helpful for myself. While most of my soloing is improvised to a greater or lesser degree depending on the tune, there is often a shape to each solo that I adhere to (particular places I want to be at specific times), while I change the way I get from one place to the next. This approach allows you to be spontaneous while still maintaining a structure within your solo.

Well, now we're starting to use the word structure a little too much for a treatise on "noodling". I'll save my thoughts on "theme and variation" type exercises for a later column. Oops, gotta go. The water's boiling.

Scott Nygaard has been the guitarist with Tim O'Brien's band, *The O'Boys*, since 1992, a plum position that followed three years with Laurie Lewis's band *Grant Street*. He lives in San Francisco with his wife Anne and son Josef, and can be heard on the West Coast house concert circuit with his band, *The Quirks*. He has recorded with Tim and Mollie O'Brien, Jerry Douglas, David Grisman, Chris Thile as well as much of the California bluegrass elite. Initially influenced by Doc Watson, Clarence White, Django Reinhardt and Riley Puckett. Nygaard spent many years wandering the sea of American music which includes bluegrass, jazz, Cajun, western swing and rock and roll. His second album '*Dreamer's Waltz*', was recently released to critical acclaim on Rounder Records.

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Jazz Blues Chords

by Dix Bruce



In my last column we explored the riff blues and worked a bit with moving melodies around in closed positions on the fretboard. In this column we'll look at some of the chords associated with these same jazz or riff blues progressions.

Though these types of chords are commonly referred to as "jazz chords," there's really nothing inherently "jazzy" about them. They're just plain chords that can be used in a wide variety of musical genres including jazz, rock, folk, etc. Typically they are played in closed positions with no open strings and are thus moveable. One chord form can be played at several different (sometimes twelve or more) locations on the fretboard. This offers the tremendous advantage of learning one form that yields many chords up and down the neck.

Closed position chords can present a temporary physical challenge to the beginning guitarist as they require a different type of fretting hand strength and coordination than the simpler open string chords. The difficulties these closed chords present are sort of a right of passage into intermediate and advanced playing techniques and are usually temporary. If you keep at it, you'll master it. High action will definitely delay your progress since it requires a great deal of finger force to press the strings to the fingerboard and sound clean notes. You may find that you need to lower your action in order to play these types of chords.

Here's a simple 12-bar blues progression like the one we worked with in my last column. Try to identify these chords by their Roman numeral rather than their letter names. Roman numerals are the standard way of defining and communicating chord progressions and they identify the function

of the chord in the progression or key. (If chord numbering is unclear to you, consult a good music theory text which explains scales, keys, and their associated chords. While it would be helpful for you to understand these concepts, it's not a prerequisite to working with this column, which will deal primarily with chord forms.) The simple blues progression below can be described in numbers as follows: One measure of I, one measure of IV⁷, one measure of I, one measure of I⁷, two measures of IV⁷, two measures of I, two measures of V⁷, two measures of I. In the key of G it looks like this:

```
| G (I) | C7(IV7) | G (I) | G7(I7) | |
| C7(IV7) | x | G (I) | x |
| D7(V7) | x | G (I) | x ||
```

Take a few minutes to transpose and write out this progression with letter and numeral designations in several other keys: Bb, C, A, F, etc.

Let's play the progression with the closed position chords shown below. The "x's" above the chord grids mean that you should dampen those strings with your

fretting hand so that they don't sound. The notes on these strings are not part of the chord. (The dominant seven form, when played at the first fret as C7, **can** use the x'ed notes as part of the chord [first string E and sixth string E], but as soon as you move from this first position these notes no longer fit. So, I suggest playing the C7 with the first and sixth strings dampened.)

The small "r" below the chord grids shows where the root or "one" of the chord is located in each chord form. For example, in the first chord form, the familiar barred G, the root or one is located on the sixth string. When you play that form and root at the third fret G note, the chord will be a G since the root identifies the chord. It is important that you know where the root is in each form and where the notes are on the fingerboard so you can move the form around. If you lower this chord form one fret, your index finger will be on the sixth string, second fret, and the root will be an F# note, the chord an F#. If you move the form back up two frets so that your root note is on the sixth string fourth fret, the chord will be a G# or Ab.

All of the following examples are shown with repeat markings and you should play each exercise through several times until

The musical score consists of four staves of 12 measures each, in common time (indicated by '4'). The key signature is one sharp (G major). The progression is: G (1 measure), C⁷ (1 measure), G (1 measure), G⁷ (1 measure), C⁷ (2 measures), G (2 measures), G⁷ (2 measures), D⁷ (2 measures).

Below the score are four chord diagrams for the key of G:

- G:** 3rd fret. Root (r) is the 6th string. Fret 1: 1, 3, 4. Fret 2: 2, 3, 4. Fret 3: 1, 2, 3, 4.
- C⁷:** 3rd fret. Root (r) is the 6th string. Fret 1: 1, 3, 4. Fret 2: 2, 3, 4. Fret 3: 1, 2, 3, 4. Fret 4: x (dampen 5th string).
- G⁷:** 3rd fret. Root (r) is the 6th string. Fret 1: 1, 3, 4. Fret 2: 2, 3, 4. Fret 3: 1, 2, 3, 4. Fret 4: x (dampen 5th string).
- D⁷:** 3rd fret. Root (r) is the 6th string. Fret 1: 1, 3, 4. Fret 2: 2, 3, 4. Fret 3: 1, 2, 3, 4. Fret 4: x (dampen 5th string).

you can change chords without slowing down or stopping. Obviously you will want to memorize these chords. When you play the final ending, be sure to resolve to the I chord, e.g. the G chord in the key of G, the Bb chord in the key of Bb.

Once you master these chords as written and can play them smoothly at a constant tempo, try moving the whole blues to other positions on the neck. You should be able to play it at ten or more different fret positions. Try the Bb version below but make sure that you experiment with several keys as well!

Exercise 2

Exercise 2

1 B \flat E \flat 7 B \flat B \flat 7

5 E \flat 7 B \flat

9 F7 B \flat

B \flat 6th fret E \flat 7 4th fret B \flat 7 6th fret F7 6th fret

r r r r

Now let's play around a little bit. Remember, we're guitar players: The world is our oyster and we can do whatever we want! In this example we're going to add a few chords (and lots of harmonic interest) by temporarily moving the forms chromatically up or down one fret. We can get away with this because we're using these chromatic changes as passing chords and we won't hang out on them long enough to pull the listeners' ears too far away from the home key. In the tenth measure we've substituted a C7 (IV7) chord for the second measure of D7 (V7). Likewise we've changed the twelfth fret by substituting a D7 (V7) chord for the second measure of G (I).

In measure 1 I named the second chord a Gb7. I could have called it F#7, which is the enharmonic equivalent of Gb7. Since my main chord and tonality here is the G7, I think of the second chord as a “flatted” G7 rather than a “sharped” F. I used this same approach throughout the exercises.

Exercise 3

Exercise 3

The tablature consists of three staves, each with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature. The first staff starts with a G7 chord, followed by Gb7, G7, C7, C#7, C7, G7, Gb7, G7, G#7, and G7. The second staff continues with C7, C#7, C7, C#7, C7, G7, Gb7, G7, G#7, and G7. The third staff concludes with D7, Db7, C7, Gb7, G7, Gb7, G7, D7, and G#7. Below the tablature are seven chord diagrams for the G7 progression. Each diagram shows a guitar neck with four strings and four frets. The diagrams are labeled with 'r' below them and numbered 1 through 7 above them. The chords are: 1. G7 (3rd fret), 2. Gb7 (3rd fret), 3. C7 (2nd fret), 4. C#7 (2nd fret), 5. Gb7 (4th fret), 6. D7 (3rd fret), and 7. Db7 (2nd fret). The diagrams show various fingerings: (1,2,3) on the top three strings at the 3rd fret; (1,2,3,4) on the top four strings at the 3rd and 2nd frets; (1,2) on the top two strings at the 2nd fret; (1,2,3,4) on the top four strings at the 2nd fret; (1,2,3,4) on the top four strings at the 4th fret; (1,2) on the top two strings at the 3rd fret; and (1,2,3,4) on the top four strings at the 2nd fret.

Once again, it's important that you move this progression all over the neck and explore the different keys. It's great practice to work with another guitarist and switch off playing lead and rhythm in the various keys. Remember, you can apply all the closed position riffs you learned in the last column to these chord changes. Meanwhile, try the key of C version on the next page.

Exercise 4

The musical score consists of three staves of flatpicking notation. The chords are: C⁷, C_b⁷, C⁷, F⁷, F_#⁷, F⁷, C⁷, C_b⁷, C⁷, C_#⁷, C⁷. Below each staff are seven guitar chord diagrams. The first diagram shows a C⁷ chord at the 8th fret. The second shows a C_b⁷ chord at the 7th fret. The third shows an F⁷ chord at the 6th fret. The fourth shows an F_#⁷ chord at the 7th fret. The fifth shows a C_#⁷ chord at the 9th fret. The sixth shows a G⁷ chord at the 8th fret. The seventh shows a G_b⁷ chord at the 7th fret.

This time we'll add a few more substitutions, mostly ninth chords for the dominant sevens. Again, we're using a lot of chromatic motion. In the fourth measure we've substituted a D minor seven for the first two beats of the G7. Since our movement is to the C chord, it's like we're temporarily modulating to the key of C with the Dm7-G7 change acting like a ii7-V ("two-five") into the key of C, which could be thought of as the new I. In the last two bars we're substituting a I-VI-II-V ("one-six-two-five") for the two measures of G.

Exercise 5

The musical score consists of three staves of flatpicking notation. The chords are: G⁷, G⁹, C⁹, C_#⁹, C⁹, G⁷, G_#⁷, Dm⁷, G⁷, C_#⁹. Below each staff are eleven guitar chord diagrams. The first diagram shows a G⁷ chord at the 3rd fret. The second shows a G⁹ chord at the 3rd fret. The third shows a C⁹ chord at the 2nd fret. The fourth shows a C_#⁹ chord at the 4th fret. The fifth shows a C⁹ chord at the 3rd fret. The sixth shows a G⁷ chord at the 3rd fret. The seventh shows a G_#⁷ chord at the 3rd fret. The eighth shows a Dm⁷ chord at the 3rd fret. The ninth shows a C_b⁹ chord at the 3rd fret. The tenth shows a D⁷ chord at the 3rd fret. The eleventh shows a G_b⁷ chord at the 2nd fret. Below the last four staves are four additional chord diagrams: G at the 3rd fret, E⁷ at the 5th fret, A⁷ at the 5th fret, and D_b⁹ at the 5th fret.

In the last example, we'll add even more substitutions. In measure two you'll see a C_#⁷ ("C sharp diminished seven"). In measure three we've added a D7. If you have several measures of I chords, you can usually add in a V for harmonic interest. In the following measure we have the ii-V move again. In measure six we've substituted C_#⁷ and E⁷ for the second measure of IV. If you play any diminished chord and move it up or down three frets, you'll get the next inversion* of the same chord. C_#⁷ is the same chord as E⁷, they just have different notes in the bass and are often named by their lowest note. However, any diminished seven chord can be named by any of its notes. The notes in the C_#⁷ chord are: C_#, E, G, Bb, and it can be named by either of those notes. In measure seven through ten we've substituted a I-VI-II-V with the basic movement from G to E7 to A7 to D7. Depending upon our melody and harmonic concept, we might have used a I-VI ii-V with a minor two chord. It depends upon the composition and what fits with the melody. In the last two bars we've done just that, but with a twist. In measure eleven we substituted a G_#⁷ for the E7 or VI we used in example 5. In the last measure we have the ii-V change to bring us back to the top of the form or to an ending on the I chord.

Exercise 6

It may take you awhile to feel comfortable playing these chords, especially if you've only played open string chords before. Give yourself time to understand the concepts and to train your fingers to play these forms accurately and cleanly. There is a great deal of material here and it may take you weeks or months to master any one of the examples above. Difficult as they might seem now, these moveable chord forms will open up your musical world and expand your understanding of the fingerboard, music theory, and the relationships between different keys, scales, and chords.

These examples make use of several different types of chords, chord movement, and substitution. There are thousands of variations possible and as you study and play you'll discover many more. Here's one example: You can also play the first dominant seven form shown (the C7 in the second measure of example 1) with one different note. Instead of playing the chord's root with your third finger on the

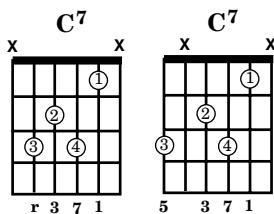
fifth string, play the chord's fifth tone on the sixth string. Numbers below the grid show where each note of the chord lies.

How you use any form will be determined by context and your sense of musical invention. One wouldn't necessarily play the number of variations we've included above in any one tune. They are included here for demonstration purposes and you should use them to familiarize yourself with these few possibilities.

If you are moving toward jazz and swing, I highly recommend the book "Rhythm Guitar Chord System" by Mel Bay (MB 93214). This is a great book at a wonderful price! When I first bought one, it cost about \$3.00. Now I think it's up to about \$5.00. It teaches **all** the chords systematically, dominant seven, diminished, minor seven, minor sixth, ninth, augmented, etc. in four positions on the fretboard: first with the root in the bass, like the first G7 above, then with the third in the bass, then the five in the bass, and finally the seven in the bass. Ultimately you learn where **any** chord can be played in **any** region of the neck! The book points out where the root of each form is located and how each extended chord relates to a basic form. For example, it teaches the ii7b5 chord ("two minor seven flat five") by comparing it to the ii7

("two minor seven"). Seeing them both side by side shows the relationship between the two chords and one can easily see how the movement of one finger down one fret produces the new chord. Most of the chords in the system don't use the first or the fifth string (again like the first G7 above) and the resulting chord is strong and beefy—like you'd want in a traditional jazz or swing combo. Some of the chords I've given you above don't use the first or fifth string, but I mixed in some others that do. Of course there are many great chord methods out there, I mention this one because it was the one that really lit the light bulb above my head about chords. Your goal should be to learn how to make all the closed position extended chords at several locations on the fretboard. It won't happen overnight but once you're there, you'll have a tremendous musical vocabulary of all types of chords literally at your fingertips. And, that's just where you want them!

(*) Inversion refers to the order of notes in a chord. The first inversion of a chord usually has the root in the bass, for example, the first inversion of the G triad is G B D. The second inversion would be B D G, and the third would be D G B.



MUSIC THEORY - DEMYSTIFYING WRITTEN MUSIC BY DAVE BRICKER

This issue, I'd like to make a temporary detour around the world of scales and modes to explore the world of written music.

Guitar playing - especially in non-classical styles has always been an aural tradition. Especially in this world of recorded music, most guitarists are content to learn most of their material by ear, either through copying recordings or exploring ideas they hear in their heads.

There's nothing wrong with this approach. Some, if not most, of our favorite flatpickers play by ear and can't read their way out of a wet paper bag. Certainly, we can't slight their musicianship or ability if they can't read music. If you want to play like Tony Rice, you can work through all the transcriptions you want, but you still need to listen to a lot of his playing and do a lot of learning by ear. There's no substitute.

Still, if you can understand some form of written notation, you can often speed up learning new material considerably. A perfect example is the music in this magazine; the contributors all have musical ideas to share and have developed a variety of ways to share that information on a printed page. Another wonderful thing about printed music is it has made it possible for guitarists around the world to easily and quickly share ideas over the internet. So now that we all have some great musical idea to communicate with the world, we have to figure out which of the many notations systems to use. Essentially, they are all variations on either tablature or standard notation, each of which offers certain advantages and disadvantages.

To be effective, a notation system should be able to communicate as many musical parameters as possible. Most important among them are time and pitch (what notes do we play and when do we play them?). Beyond this, we can communicate dynamic information (how loud or soft?) and technical information (how do I finger this thing?). For centuries, standard "classical" notation has served the purposes of guitarists but the guitar has some special idiosyncrasies; one of the important ones being that the guitar often gives you two or three places to play the same note. Standard notation can accommodate this technical information but tends to get bogged down a bit with numbers and symbols. Given that we flatpickers tend to use very unusual fingerings at times, it's

been more often the case that tablature is the system of choice. Tablature basically gives you a line for each string and a set of numbers which tell you what fret to play. It's simple to learn, requires no special knowledge of music and has the additional advantage that it requires no special symbols - only numbers and lines - which means that it lends itself well to being shared via e-mail. (For the uninitiated, there are huge archives of tablature available for free on the internet and members of the Flatpick-L list routinely exchange licks and transcriptions in tab form. There's a huge universe of guitar playing information available and a supportive and enthusiastic community of players which includes a number of recording artists and Winfield Champions.)

Tablature is a great system but it also has its disadvantages, mostly in its ability to convey rhythmically complex passages.

While tablature is sufficient for most fiddle music, I'd like to provide a basic overview of both systems and some support for my contention that for guitar music in general, a mix of the two systems is the ideal way to put our music on paper (or get it off the paper and back inside the guitar). Also, having a basic understanding of both systems will hopefully empower you to get the most out of this magazine and other instructional materials. Let's start with standard notation. If you want to become a proficient reader, I recommend buying a classical guitar instruction book such as the one by Christopher Parkening which will walk you through learning to read with simple exercises. The examples here should provide an overview of the system.

Standard notation provides a time signature for each measure which consists of two numbers, one over the other at the beginning of each measure. The upper number tells us how many beats are in one measure and the lower tells us what kind of note will get one beat. The time signature lets us know what the rhythmic feel of the music is. Here are a few examples;

4

4 is often denoted by a C at the beginning of the measure which stands for "common time." There are four beats in a measure and a quarter note gets one beat. One.two.three.four.One.two three.four.One.two . . .

6

8 is another common time signature. There are six eighth notes in each measure. It sounds like; Did-dl-ee.dood-dl-ee.Did-dl-ee.dood-dl-ee

12

8 usually means four groupings of three eighth notes. It's a bit like four/four time but has a shuffle feel; Did-dl-ee.dood-dl-ee.dood-dl-ee.dood-dl-ee.Did-dl-ee.dood-dl-ee.dood-dl-ee.dood-dl-ee.

Once they become familiar, time signatures will become less of a math exercise. Their purpose is to suggest a feel - how the music bounces or swings and how often the pattern repeats.

Key signatures have been described in a previous column, but essentially, they place appropriate numbers of sharps and flats on the appropriate places on the staff to communicate which key the music is in.

Standard musical notation is written on a staff of five lines. The funny symbol at the beginning of the staff is called a treble clef and simply indicates the range that the music is played in. Guitar music is always written in the treble clef range though the sound of guitar music is actually an octave higher than written on the staff. (There are other clefs for bass and viola ranges, and piano music is written on a grand staff which encompasses both bass and treble clefs.) Since this treble clef won't change for your music, understand what it is and then forget about it.

Each line or space above or below the staff implies a certain pitch. One advantage of this is that we can get a graphic visualization of how the musical lines flow. We can easily see if a line is moving along a scale or arpeggio or if there is an abrupt change in pitch. Depending on the note heads and stems, we can express the rhythmic value of that note. Commonly, we'll have six or eight eighth notes in a measure, but we might have one note that sustains for a longer (or shorter) duration, in which case we might use a quarter note or half note or tie the eighth note to another note.

The important thing is that standard notation gives us a means with which to express key, time, rhythm and pitch. Here is an example of how standard notation works.

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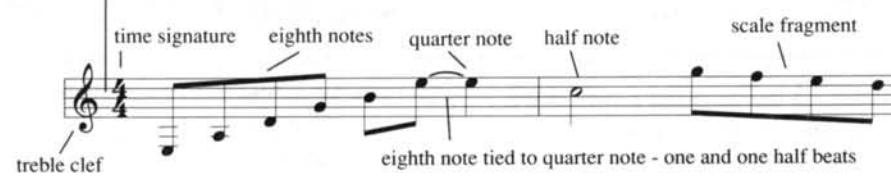
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key of C - no sharps or flats in key signature



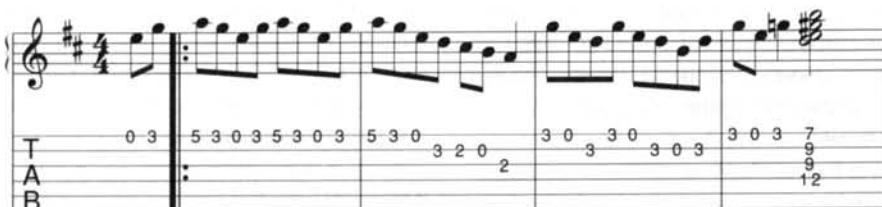
Now let's look at some tablature for the same musical phrase;



The system itself is simple. There is one line for each string and the numbers denote which fret is played on which string. The little lines above the TAB staff indicate where the beat is and enable us to visualize which notes fall on the beat and which fall between the beats. You'll see a number of variation on this theme within *Flatpicking Guitar* based on the preferences of the contributors. Sometimes, the notes are put in rows and columns or boxes of one sort or another. The idea is the same; to communicate which fret is played when on what string.

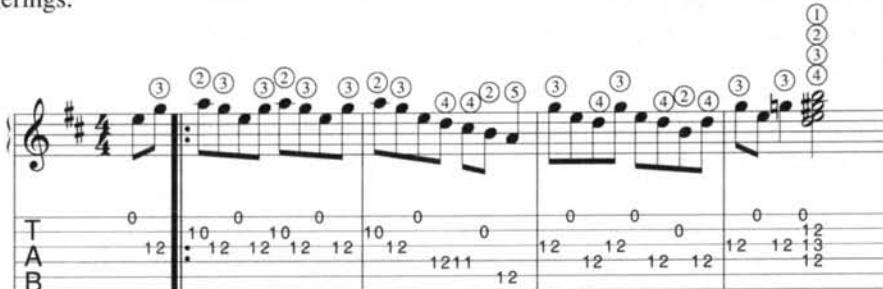
The primary difference is that standard notation describes the music itself while tablature describes how to technically perform the music.

Let's look at some more examples and explore the limitations of each system. Here's a basic arrangement of the first phrase of "June Apple" - a common fiddle tune. The notation and the tab are pretty straightforward and there are no complicated rhythms.



The problem is that the guitar presents us with a unique predicament. There are other ways to play the exact same pitches and rhythms. In flatpicking, where the style is largely based on the sound of open strings ringing with fretted strings, the choice of fingering has a dramatic effect on the overall sound. Unless we add string numbers (as below) or position (fret) numbers to our notation (which clutters it), the standard notation fails to communicate the technical essence of the arrangement.

Conversely, the tablature below jumps around and gives us no visual clue about the shape of the melody. It is virtually impossible to imagine the sound of the piece by imagining the fingerings.



But now that we've punched a hole in standard notation, let's examine some of the problems with tablature. Here's a lick in G written in standard notation. The p's are pulloffs and the s's are slides (see next page).



The fingerings are assumed to be near the open position since there are no indications to the contrary. By looking at the rhythms and the contour of the notes, we can see how each of the four beats in each measure is broken down and get a feel for how the line will sound. Now let's look at the tab.

The fingerings are clear but the rhythms are a bit complicated to read. We have triplets (three eighth notes in the space of two), sixteenths, sixteenth notes and quarter notes, none of which are beamed together or spaced proportionately enough to imply the rhythm. If we had a phrase where many of the notes fell between the beats or where we had unusual groupings and tied notes, the tablature can get completely bogged down. But if we put the two systems together, we have a perfect language with which to describe the music and the special fingerings and techniques which are unique to the guitar and the flatpicking style.

Each tabbed note corresponds to a rhythm and pitch on the treble clef above. Neither system is cluttered and the music is described both musically and technically. For those unfamiliar with either system, I would recommend making a five minute investment in learning to understand tablature. I've had a number of people tell me they couldn't read tab just because they had never had it explained to them. It's nothing but strings with fret numbers - simple and elegant.

Learning to read and write standard notation is a much more laborious process than learning tab but can be worth the trouble. For most guitarists' purposes, it's probably not necessary to become a sightreader but there is a lot to be gained by developing some basic reading skills. There's great music out there that hasn't been tabbed for guitar and some great arrangements can be made by adapting tunes directly out of music written for fiddles and other instruments.

On higher levels, standard notation offers numerous ways to express dynamics and a variety of other expressions. If you write guitar music and wish to convey your musical intentions with accuracy, you'll find that a combination of standard notation and tablature will eliminate many of the surprises you might otherwise hear when somebody else performs your work.

Scott Nygaard is one of the most eclectically satisfying acoustic guitar players around these days. As a sideman with Tim O'Brien and Laurie Lewis, he's dazzled fans around the world with his blend of melodic inventiveness, harmonic sophistication, and technical virtuosity. On his second Rounder release, Scott blends all of his influences -- bluegrass, old-time, Cajun, Irish, bebop, and even Brazilian choro -- into a tasty blend that consistently delights the listener as it challenges expectations. Features Tim O'Brien, Mark Schatz, Tony Furtado, and Jerry Douglas among others.

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Guitar Making by Don Gallagher

ACOUSTIC DESIGN

Last issue we talked about the relationship of wood and moisture. Certainly the first step in making an instrument is selecting good quality wood. This wood must then be cured properly. The curing process should stabilize the wood and also enhance its natural tonal characteristics. The next major consideration is the design of the guitar.

Instrument design can be approached from two different points of view. Design may refer to the aesthetic qualities of the instrument; that is, those design features which will enhance the appearance of the guitar; such as, fingerboard inlay patterns, type of soundhole and purfling inlay, shape of headstock, color of finish, etc. Design may also refer to the functional qualities of the instrument; that is, those design features which will make the instrument tonally responsive while maintaining structural integrity.

Functional design is a fundamental step. If the instrument does not sound well, and does not hold together well, fancy inlays will not make it a good instrument.

Functional design should be an ongoing process for an instrument maker. Modifications should be made to instrument designs by makers as feedback comes back on instruments out in the field. This means accurate records should be maintained. We maintain a ledger which contains the model, serial number, original owner's name, and date of purchase. Whenever an instrument changes hands and we know of it, we update the ledger. Whenever an instrument comes back into the shop for repair work, we make a notation in the ledger. This gives us an idea of what is happening with our instruments. By tracking repair work we are sensitive to any recurring types of problems that may indicate the need for a design modification. For example, in the mid-seventies we noticed that a number of instruments which were made in the late sixties and early

seventies were developing cracks in the bridges. The bridges were apparently not strong enough to withstand the stress of the strings. The bridges were made slightly thicker behind the string holes, and the problem was corrected.

The specific design of each component of the instrument should take into account the role that particular component plays in the entire guitar. In this column, we will address the roles of the top, back, and their relationship with the strings. In subsequent columns we will consider construction techniques, but for now let's address how these parts function as a unit.

One source of sound of an instrument comes when the strings are stroked. The oscillation of the strings set up sound waves which move through the soundhole striking the back. The back acts like a reflector bouncing these sound waves toward the top. The braces of the back are cut on radii. Counting from the neck end of the guitar the braces are numbered 1, 2, 3 & 4. The 1, 3 & 4 braces are cut on a 16 foot radius. The #2 is cut on an 8 foot radius. This arch produces a slight tension in the back, making it more responsive. This design works somewhat like the head on a banjo (forgive me, Steve). The more tension on the banjo head, the more responsive it is. Likewise, the slight tension on a guitar back makes it more responsive. Therefore, the back is better able to reflect the sound waves toward the top. The arch of the back produces a slight parabolic effect. The sound waves bouncing off the back are being concentrated at a particular focal point, thus amplifying their effect. The extremely rounded back of the Ovation guitar is a design feature to enhance this parabolic effect. The arch of the back also makes it considerably stronger than if it were flat.



Of course, the type of wood the back is made of will have an important impact on the sound. Typically, Rosewood will produce a deeper, bassier sound; Brazilian Rosewood will produce a boomier sound than East Indian Rosewood; Mahogany will be a warmer sound; and Maple a brighter sound.

Another source of sound occurs when the strings are stroked causing vibrations to be transmitted to the top via the saddle and bridge. These vibrations radiate from their point of contact at the bridge toward the perimeter of the guitar in concentric circles. Visualize dropping a rock in the middle of a very quiet pond of water. The waves produced by the impact of the rock will radiate out in concentric circles toward the edge of the pond. In the same way the vibrations in the top will radiate from the bridge toward the edge of the guitar. The braces are cut so they are thicker in the middle of the guitar. The braces taper down thinner as they get closer to the edge of the top. As the vibrations move toward the edge of the top they become weaker. Since the braces are tapered, the vibrations meet with less and less resistance and therefore can be sustained longer. This effect helps a guitar ring, instead of having a thuddled sound. Also, with the braces thin on the ends the top can function like a diaphragm, pumping the air inside the chamber to produce the sound. The ability of the top to pump the air inside the chamber plays a major role in the volume and projection of the guitar.

Obviously, anything in the design of the guitar that will facilitate the movement of the top will help produce a more powerful sounding instrument. The harder the back wood is the better it will reflect the sound waves to the top causing more movement. The stiffer the neck is, the less it will absorb vibrations and the better it will

bridge, saddle and bridge plate will have a bearing on the effectiveness of the top to do its job.

The top has to move freely. There is about 130 lbs. of pull on the top exerted by the strings. A major design consideration is constructing the top so it is flexible enough to be sensitive to the pull of the strings, yet strong enough not to buckle under their stress.

All the braces of the top are cut on a 25 foot radius, except the transverse brace located under the end of the fingerboard. The transverse brace is cut on a 16 foot radius. The X-brace crosses underneath the top directly in front of the bridge. The point where the X-brace crosses is the apex of the arch of the braces. This creates an upper force vector directly in front of the bridge. This upper force vector serves to counteract the torquing action of the bridge caused by the pull of the strings over the saddle. The neck of a guitar is like a long lever. The pull of the strings at the nut, with the neck block acting like a fulcrum, causes a downward force to be created at the soundhole end of the fingerboard. The 16 foot radius in the transverse brace counteracts this downward force. Designing the bracing to control the innate forces caused by the pull of the strings helps prevent the guitar top from caving-in around the soundhole and pulling up behind the bridge. A bracing design which provides strength and stiffness to the top allows the top and top-braces themselves to be made thinner and lighter. A thinner and lighter

weight top will transmit vibrations better, and pump the air inside the chamber more effectively. A technique to lighten up the X-braces is called voicing or scalloping. This simply means removing wood on these braces in areas which do not structurally weaken them, yet which lightens the top so it can be more responsive to the pull of the strings.

Designing the top braces to be thicker in the center of the guitar and thinner as they approach the edge to allow the vibrations emanating from the bridge to be sustained longer, works well structurally too. The greatest amount of strength is needed in the center of the top. The closer to the edge, the less strength is needed because the sides give support. A straight taper design for braces provides maximum strength with minimum weight.

Remember instrument design is an ongoing process. It is important if you want to continually improve your instruments to formalize your design; i.e., your patterns and specifications. This will give you a point of reference from which to make improvements.

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PICKIN' FIDDLE TUNES

by Adam Granger

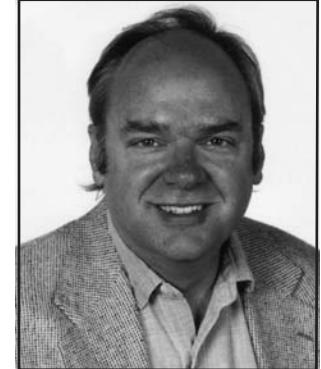
VARIATIONS ON FOUR FLATPICK FAVORITES

Hello pickers! I hope you have all been faithfully buying *Flatpicking Guitar*, because this column refers to stuff we've covered in a couple of my past columns.

In the first issue, I offered *Soldier's Joy* in a stock form and with some variations, and talked a bit about what makes a variation a variation.

In the last issue, I offered up four flatpick standards. In this column, I'll continue my discourse on variations, and offer up those four "standards" as musical guinea pigs.

(Now don't panic, all of you Johnny-and Jane-come-latelys: back issues are available—there's an ad in this issue.)



When is a variation not a variation?

Because it's so germane to our discussion here, let me again offer Granger's Acid Test for Fiddle Tune Variations (which would heretofore be referred to as GATFFT—pronounced "ga-TIF-i-tive"—if I were going to refer to it again, which I'm not):

If I walk into a room and I recognize the tune you're playing, then you're either playing a "straight" version of the tune or a variation of the tune. If I don't recognize it, then you're jamming to the progression, inserting and weaving licks into the version which match the progression. (Of course, some tunes, such as *Blackberry Blossom*, are recognizable by their progressions alone.)

Please remember that, as mentioned below, a tune needn't be all variation or all licks; in fact, rarely do we pickers *not* mix the two.

READING EASY-TAB

Easytab is like conventional tablature, except that timing notation has been streamlined and simplified. Since fiddle tunes are comprised mainly of eighth notes, *Easytab* uses the eighth note as its basic unit. An eighth rest is indicated by a dot. Therefore, a note with a dot after it is a quarter note, and a note with three dots after it is a half note. There are a total of eight notes and rests per measure.

FOR BEGINNERS

Pick with an alternating style: down-up-down-up-down-up etc. The first note of each measure should be a downstroke, the last an upstroke. Include rests in this alternating pattern. This keeps you "in sync", playing downstrokes on the beats, so that, no matter what the configuration of notes and rests in an eight-unit measure, the right hand plays them down-up-down-up-down-up-

A FEW WORDS OF CLARIFICATION

I have, on a couple of occasions, tipped my hand as preferring variation playing to lick playing. This is born of the fact that by both circumstance and preference I've spent the last 25 years of my life picking fiddle tunes. While I have also put in decades in bluegrass bands, I'm not what you'd call a fast picker. I therefore feel more at home in the Texas-tempo fiddle tune arena than in the ten-notes-a-second bluegrass battleground.

That having been said, I hasten to add that I don't mean to suggest that one must be exclusively either a lick player or a variation player. I don't think a picker could be found who was all one or the other. I will freely confess that I possess a large catalog of licks, and admit to being the perpetrator of frequent incursions into lickitude (lickiness?). Licks are like handguns: if you're going to have them around, know how and when to use them (and how and when not to!).

ELEMENTS OF VARIATION

A comparison of the variations of the four tunes on the following pages with the standard versions offered in the last issue will speak volumes about how variations are made. Let me point out a few of the principal elements of variation:

•Where a series of quarter notes is present in a standard tune version, one can add "filigree", creating a series of eighth

notes. I've done this in the first measure of the second part of *Red-Haired Boy*.

•Where unison notes are present, as in the last measures of both parts of *June Apple* (i.e., the tags), the same type of ornamentation can be used.

•Where a "melodic theme" is present, such as in the third and fourth measures of the first part of *June Apple*, one can slightly

You'll notice several areas in these variations where I insert pure licks and runs that stray significantly—or even completely—from the melody. The saving grace here is that I return to the melody *idea* on a regular basis, thereby retaining the tune's identity. Calling myself a variation player, then, refers to my philosophical orientation, and not exclusively to the content of my solos.

alter and extend that theme, as I've done in the variation. It still looks and smells like *June Apple*, but it's a variation.

•Notice that I've kept the first two measures of *June Apple* as they were in the standard version. Don't be afraid to keep part of a variation the same as the original: it allows a little more latitude when you do stray from the melody.

The fifth and sixth measures of *Salt Creek* consist of a linear ascending run. The success of this run depends much more on where and when it starts and ends than on what notes are played within the run. I start the run on a low tonic (an A note: the “main note” in the key of A) placed on the downbeat (first note) of its measure. I end the run on the tonic of the G chord which accompanies the downbeat of the seventh measure.

This creates a run seventeen eighth notes in length: two full eight-note measures and the downbeat note of the measure following. I have mixed scale and chromatic notes to make this run: the first six notes are major scale, the next two are chromatic, the next two major scale, the next five chromatic, and the final two major scale. There is an infinite number of ways to get from point a to point b; your success in

doing so rests with your dexterity and your knowledge of scales.

These are only some of the devices we use in composing or playing variations. Other common elements are pieces of scale, pieces of folded scale (see the third and fourth measures of the first part of *Salt Creek*), bits of other melodies thrown in (usually tongue in cheek), drones, unison notes, octaves and arpeggios. All are useful tools when playing a variation.

THE VARIATIONS

JUNE APPLE—variation

I

KEY:
A (capo 2)
G

II

F G

June Apple starts the usual way, but by the third measure it's taken on a life of its own, going into a descending four-note “folded” pentatonic scale: four notes down and three back up, four more notes down, three more notes back, etc.

The next two measures repeat the first two, then we tag (end) the part with a little fancier tag than the original one.

The second part starts with a “*June Apple-ish*” theme that is carried all the way through. This is an excellent example of

a melody-based variation, if I do say so myself. Play it through and then play the standard version presented in the last issue. Compare and contrast, and please limit your essays to 400 words. Oh, and by the way, neatness counts.

WHISKEY BEFORE BREAKFAST—variation

I

KEY: D
G D A D

II

D A Bm A G D A D

The first part of *Whiskey before Breakfast* is, again, a good example of a melody-based variation: it embodies the theme—the idea—of the tune while being quite different. This continues into the second part. Note the 3rd measure, where the 7-5-3-7 passage gets you up to the B note without actually having to move to an upper neck position.

(I call the zeros right before and after the sevens “float points”: open notes that fit the melody line and allow a left hand position change).

In the second half of the second part, the ship pulls into Guam and the troops hit the streets with three-day passes. These last four measures are, in essence, one big long

lick. This is a cliche—an established line: more than a few pickers have put it on albums. It's an arpeggio-based theme which employs, for best results, a different backup progression than the standard (although it works with standard backup also). As you pick through this part, notice how the 4-note arpeggios parallel the accompaniment chords.

SALT CREEK—variation

KEY:
A (capo 2)

Salt Creek starts with the aforementioned filigree and folded scale, ending with the original tag with a slight variation on the second measure of the tag.

Then, just to show that I am capable of doing so, the second part strays totally from the melody. The first two bars are a combined major scale-chromatic scale

run (see “Elements of Variation”), moving into an elegant Fmaj7 arpeggio in the third measure, and then on into a descending four-note folded scale in the fourth.

The rest of the part is a merging of, in this order, lick, chromatic scale, descending folded pentatonic scale, descending two-note folded scale and variant tag.

DID YOU KNOW...

Red-Haired Boy is also known as Gildroy*, Gilroy, Little Beggar Man, Old Soldier with a Wooden Leg, Red-Haired Irishman and Wooden Leg

*not to be confused with Norman Blake's Gilderoy

RED-HAIRED BOY—variation

This entire *Red-Haired Boy* variation is a great example of “filigreeing” the quarter-notes in a melody (not to be confused

with “filleting” the quarter notes, which is what happens when things don't go well). Compare the original (in the last issue) with

this variation, and see how the variation sort of cavorts around the simpler original melody.

AND FINALLY, DON'T THINK TOO MUCH, IT'S ALL RIGHT...

Well, it's been fun writing this column on variations: I laughed, I cried... But since I've just spent three pages literally deconstructing these variations to describe what makes them tick, I feel it important to emphasize that the goal in variation playing, as in improvisation, is to play as unconsciously as possible.

I can identify and articulate the elements that comprise my variations and improvising because I've taught this stuff for twenty-five years, but when I sit down to pick, I try to clear my head of literal thought and specific elements and where a run starts or stops and all that, and I strive to play off the top of my head.

My success at doing so is proportionate to my level of preparation, my mental acuity, and, frankly, to how good or bad a player I am. When I achieve that unconscious state, it makes my playing sound like music: it gives it flow and life and, sometimes, excitement. When I don't, I feel like a typist—a pretty good typist, but still, a typist.

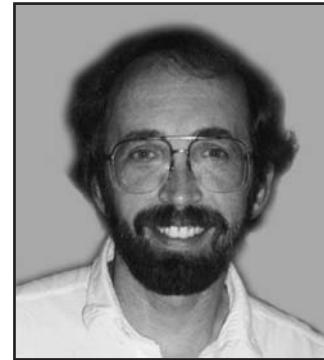
Adam Granger has been playing guitar since Ike was president. He worked on *A Prairie Home Companion* for three years, as leader of the house band, *The Powdermilk Biscuit Band*. He has judged the National Flatpick Guitar Contest in Winfield, Kansas, and serves on the faculties of *The Puget Sound Guitar Workshop*, *Camp Bluegrass* in Levelland, Texas and *The Stringalong Workshop* in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He has recorded seven albums.

Adam's book, *Granger's Fiddle Tunes for Guitar*, is the largest collections of fiddle tunes in guitar tablature, and, along with the accompanying set of recordings of the 508 tunes, it comprises the largest source of fiddle tunes for flatpickers in the world.

For a cassette tape of the tunes in this column, send \$10 to Granger Publications, Box 14277, Mpls, Mn 55414

Beginning Clarence White Style Bluegrass Guitar

by Steve Pottier



In the last column I wrote about the rest stroke and its importance to bluegrass style guitar playing (Joe Carr also wrote about it in his column, and we didn't know until we turned our columns in to Dan that we wrote on the same topic!). I mentioned briefly that it was used in the down-down-up George Shuffler style of cross-picking, which Clarence White favored. This time I would like to describe this style and how to go about getting it going smoothly.

Cross-picking is a style of flatpicking where you play a picking pattern across 3 strings (usually). Here's a sample of cross-picking patterns played on a C chord:

Pattern 1 is commonly used in the second part of Beaumont Rag:

The common way to play this picking pattern is down up down up (at right), which gives it a real ragtime flavored rhythm. In the George Shuffler style, this is played down down up, which gives it a smoother rhythm, with more emphasis on the lower notes. This is perfect for playing a tune like Bury Me Beneath the Willow when the melody lies on the bass strings.

Before I go into an example tune, I want to talk about some ways to get this pattern going smoothly. You will remember from the last column that a rest stroke is done with the pick at about a 45 degree angle to the face of the guitar. The pick is pushed through the string, and snaps down, coming to rest on the next higher string. Begin with this rest stroke, then continue down through the next string, but for this second note, you don't use a rest stroke- the pick just glides over the top of the last string, which it picks on the way back down to the lowest string. Here is a sequence of exercises to get this pattern going:

Beaumont Rag Lick:

Exercise 1

In **Exercise 1** the idea is to get a quick flick of the pick from the highest string in the pattern to the lowest string in the pattern, landing in a rest stroke. Try for an economy of motion with the pick stopping solidly on the middle string.

In **Exercise 2** we have the same pattern extended back one note. The first two notes are played down up as in a standard fiddle tune, and the third note is a rest stroke. Try playing it in a loop (a repeating pattern that you can play again and again without breaking the rhythm), it has the feel of a gallop. If you use a metronome, set it to about 80 clicks per minute, and play so you hit the rest stroke on each click. Do this 10 times in a row, then rest a minute and repeat.

In **Exercise 3** we have the pattern completed, but done as tripletts and stopping every time through to emphasize the rest stroke. Play to the rhythm “bottle of rum. bottle of rum. bottle of rum...”

In **Exercise 4** there are no stops, just a continuous triplet rhythm (think “bubble-ty bubble-ty bubble-ty bubble-ty..”). When you get exercise 4 going smoothly you are ready for the syncopation that results when you play a pattern of 3 (no triplets)against 4(notices per bass strum).

Exercise 5 is the George Shuffler pattern with a down up at the end of each measure to make the beat come out even, similar to a Scruggs banjo roll. We'll start with that pattern, but keep in mind that it can (and should be) considered a starting point, and later you can break out of the pattern at will.

On the next page we will use a crosspicking version of “Wildwood Flower” to put some of these ideas and exercises together in a song.

Some final thoughts: keep it light but firm. A common error is to use a seperate attack for each note instead of pushing the first two notes as though they were an arpeggio played with one downstroke. Also, note how the basic pattern gets boken up when you play the pattern of down down up more than twice in a row. Some good examples of this style are on *The Stanley Brothers of Virginia Volume 2* (County 739) and *Clarence White and the Kentucky Colonels* (Rounder 0098).

Exercise 2

X = eighth note rest □ = down stroke √ = up stroke

Exercise 3

X = eighth note rest □ = down stroke √ = up stroke

Exercise 4

□ = down stroke √ = up stroke

Exercise 5

□ = down stroke √ = up stroke

Wildwood Flower

Traditional
Arranged by Steve Pottier

X = eighth note rest □ = down stroke √ = up stroke / = strum

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New Release Highlight

Mark Cosgrove - "Good Medicine"

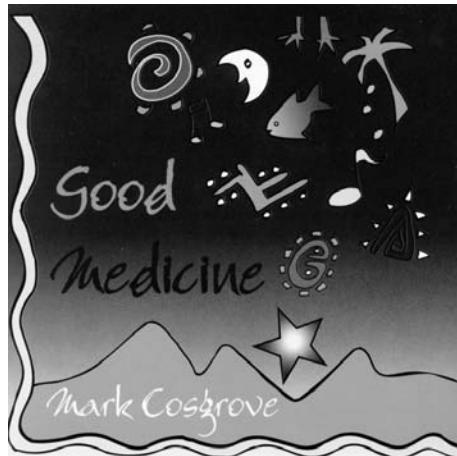
Reviewed by Bryan Kimsey

It seems like folks have nothing but good things to say about Mark Cosgrove. Jim Baggett, owner of Mass. St. Music, said "Man, that guy is a wonderful guitar player!". National fingerstyle champ Rolly Brown says "When Mark starts playing, the music comes rolling out of that big guitar like a bulldozer." After taking 2nd place at the 1994 and 1st at the 1995 Flatpicking Championships in Winfield, the buzz around the campfire was that Cosgrove was a very deserving recipient of the prize. No doubt about it, Mark Cosgrove can really play and he somehow projects a friendly attitude at the same time.

Cosgrove first competed at Winfield in 1987 and didn't place. Using the experience as a learning opportunity, he realized he needed to focus a little less on improvising and more on arranging. The focus was obviously successful because when he returned to competition in 1994 at the Doc Watson Guitar Championship at MerleFest, he took 1st place. Later that year, back in Winfield, he won a very credible second place. The following year, Mark reached the pinnacle in flatpicking contests when he took first place at Winfield.

Although he's made a mark at contests, Cosgrove is a seasoned and well-rounded musician. At 40 years old, he has been playing guitar about 25 years and started right off with a flatpick. "I had a teacher who was a good steady musician and got me started with a flatpick. I was playing all sorts of music, though, including electric guitar." Cosgrove actually spent a good deal of his younger years playing electric guitar in country swing bands. "It wasn't until the early 80s that I hooked up with the Lewis Brothers, a real good bluegrass band out of Philadelphia, that I really started playing bluegrass." Mark cites the usual influences, "Doc, Dan, Clarence. Also, David Bromberg was one of my first acoustic guitar influences." He now does mostly solo or freelance gigs, but does have a loose band in progress, with Tony Trischka occasionally guesting on banjo.

Contest playing provided Mark with his two main guitars, a Collings D2H that he won at Winfield in 1995 and a Gallagher Doc Watson model he won at Merlefest in 1994. For sound reinforcement he uses a Fishman Matrix pickup with a Rane blender.



"That's a real good system for concert situations. Sometimes in clubs it's tough because it has a tendency to feed back if you try to get too much gain out of it." Even though the Collings and the Gallagher are Cosgrove's main guitars, he says "my favorite guitar, probably, is the guitar I used to win Winfield. It's a LoPrinzi that my mother gave me when I was 17 years old. I don't take it out very much anymore. Mark uses a fairly high action because "I hit the guitar pretty hard. I can't have it too low or it just won't ring." He uses tortoise picks that he makes from shell a friend finds washed up on the beach. For strings, he uses John Pearse medium.

When practicing, Cosgrove works on arrangements of tunes and tunes he's learning. "I'm a pretty good improviser, but after the first time at Winfield, I realized I needed to work more on coming up with set arrangements, or at least arrangements where I had an idea of what I was going to do, instead of just blowing through the changes." He practices several times a day for 5-20 minutes as time allows. "You're not going to get good because you have to practice and it's time for your lesson or something. You'll get good when you want to practice, because you want to hear your guitar, and you're bitten by the bug."

With one CD out and two major contest wins under his belt, Mark's plans for the future include more of the same. He's playing several gigs with fellow Winfield champion, fingerstylist Rolly Brown, booking gigs with his bluegrass band, doing solo gigs, and teaching students. He also has a section in the upcoming Mel Bay book

"Winfield Flatpicking Champions" and will soon be featured in a Mel Bay instructional book/CD combination.

Good Medicine by Mark Cosgrove.
Noisy Neighbors Music,
6853 Tohickon Hill Road,
Pipersville, PA 18947.

"Good Medicine" is Mark Cosgrove's first CD. Recorded in 1994, it features Mark on guitar, mandolin and vocals, Tony Trischka on banjo, Barry Mitterhoff on mandolin, John Toney on bass, and Mark Arrington on fiddle, with other guests on some cuts. Two of the 11 songs are Cosgrove-penned and 3 are vocals. The rest range from standards to little known picking vehicles. As with most first outings, this one has a few quirks, most noticeably a bass-heavy mix. This is particularly noticeable on the first bass note of the first cut. After a bit, though, your ear will adjust and Mark Cosgrove's excellent guitar playing will shine through. Cosgrove has great tone, tremendous speed, and most importantly, his own licks. He doesn't really sound like anybody I can think of off-hand. His licks are pretty impressive, but the melody always maintains the upper shelf.

The tunes I particularly enjoyed included a Latin-ized version of "Ragtime Annie", "Bye Bye Blues", Merle Watson's "Interstate Rag", and Cosgrove's own "Good Medicine". I also liked his vocals- he sings in a relaxed style that matches his material. The versions of "Bye Bye Blues" (tabbed out in this issue - see the next page), "Alabama Jubilee", and "Interstate Rag" are very close to Mark's contest arrangements, providing a good source of reference for aspiring contestants. As to be expected with musicians of their caliber, the non-guitar support is excellent.

Overall, this album is highly recommended, especially to guitarists looking to expand their listening horizons. Mark doesn't sound like the "same ol', same ol'" and introduces hot flatpicking to some contemporary musics. Hopefully, his next album will have the mixing bugs worked out, but don't let that stop you from getting this one.

Bye Bye Blues

Arranged by
Mark Cosgrove

1 C

A♭⁷

C

6 A⁷

D maj 9

P

11 G

C A D

16 G

A♭⁷

H P

21 C

A⁷

D maj 9

/ = lightly brush

Bye Bye Blues (con't)

26 D^{maj 9}

G C A♭

31 C C A♭

36 C A⁷

D G C

H P P

46 A⁷ D G C

Bye Bye Blues (con't)

Sheet music for guitar solo, measures 51-61.

Measure 51: Key signature A♭ major (two sharps). Chords: A♭, C, A⁷. Fingerings: 9, 8, 10, 9, 10; 12, 9, 10, 9, 8, 9; 1, 3, 0, 1, 3, 1, 0, 3; 5, 3, 0, 5, 8, 5; 5, 8, 5. Pizzicato (P).

Measure 56: Key signature D major (one sharp). Chords: D, G. Fingerings: 5, 6, 7; 4, 2, 0, 2, 3; 0, 2, 3, 3; 4, 2, 0; 3, 2, 0, 2, 3; 0, 3, 2, 3, 2, 0, 7.

Measure 61: Key signature C major (no sharps or flats). Chords: C, A♭, C. Fingerings: 0, 1, 2; 3, 1, 1; 1, 1, 7; 3, 0, 1, 2, 0; 3, 0, 2, 3.

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Reviews

CD/Audio Tape Reviews

Solas Shanachie 78002



Reviewed by David McCarty

It's all too easy to let our interest in flatpicking guitar music be caught up in expressions of technical skill or astounding dexterity, and lots of great music emerges at the hands of the virtuosi. But every once in awhile, a CD comes along that rises above such surface brilliance to tap the heartroot of emotion we all share for moving, evocative music.

Solas could easily be seen merely as a brilliantly talented band of Celtic musicians who've taken traditional Irish music to a pinnacle of technical excellence. But this CD is so much more, a work that opens the heart of the listener to a wealth of joys, sorrows, conflict and victory embodied in the music of Ireland. For flatpickers, John Doyle's guitar work here will amaze and enlighten, especially if you haven't looked beyond bluegrass and fiddle tunes for the majority of your listening material and repertoire.

Led by Seamus Egan, a musician so talented he's won the All-Ireland Championships on no fewer than eight instruments, this band performs with such dynamic cohesion Solas at times sounds like a collective mind rather than five individual musicians. In concert, the group plays with such connection and intuition that it races through precisely harmonized ensemble passages where even the ornamental trills and grace notes are executed perfectly in

harmony by the three soloists.

Right from the start, this CD grabs the listener and draws them in with the power and emotion of its music. Egan, accordianist John Williams and fiddler Winifred Horan all play superbly here. For FGM readers, however, John Doyle's work is the standout.

His backup guitar playing simply revolutionize the role of flatpicked guitar in Irish music, in my opinion (although FGM's Irish rhythm guitar columnist John McGann, another amazing guitarist in this genre, is better able to make that kind of assessment). Listening to Doyle's syncopated, sophisticated rhythm guitar here is a revelation. Walking chord solos and jazz-influenced partial chord substitutions give his playing a complexity and intuition rarely, if ever, achieved in Irish music to date.

It's almost as if a guitarist with the musical knowledge of Joe Pass had brought that insight and revelation to the demands of backing contemporary Celtic music. However you describe it, Doyle's work is simply inspired and breathtaking.

Listen to his great, driving rhythm guitar behind "The Flowering Bowl" and "The Yellow Tinker" to hear a tour de force of rhythm guitar. Doyle embodies Solas with a huge, open guitar sound with resounding bass, resulting from playing in DADGAD tuning and other altered tunings.

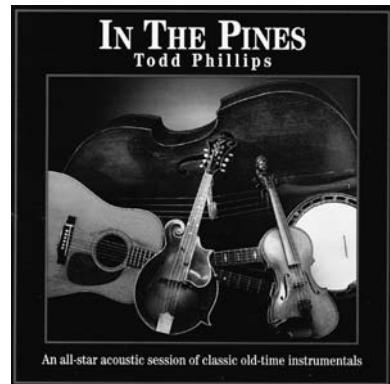
His powerful, driving work on "Dougie MacDonald's/Maire Breathnach's #2" will simply amaze any guitarist who appreciates the critical (and usually underappreciated) role of rhythm guitar in a band. Filling the roles of bass player, percussionist and guitarist, Doyle's work redefines the role of guitar in traditional Celtic music.

Beyond his enormous skills as a rhythm guitarist, he also brings a sensitive, lyrical approach to flatpicking to this CD. Doyle's simple, yet heartbreaking, flatpicked guitar introduction and accompaniment to "Johnny's Gone For Soldier" and "I Wonder What's Keeping My True Love Tonight" set off Karan Casey's gorgeous voice perfectly. Never overplaying or going for a flashy lick at the expense of a gorgeous melody, Doyle's taste always defines his technique instead of the other

way around.

As a debut CD, Solas may well signal a breakthrough in the evolution of contemporary Irish music that combines the traditions of the past with a new sense of musical vision and exploration. Anyone

In the Pines - Todd Phillips



Reviewed by Mike Wright

Todd Phillips is one of the best known bassists in acoustic music. He has recorded in a variety of styles from traditional Bluegrass to Dawg music and jazz. In this case, it's strictly traditional instrumentals.

This recording includes guitarist Scott Nygaard, which is why I am reviewing it here. The other musicians are also from the top level of acoustic music — Darol Anger, Laurie Lewis, Stuart Duncan, and Tim O'Brien on fiddle; John Reischman and Mike Marshall on mandolin; and Tony Trischka on banjo. Marshall also plays rhythm guitar on one cut.

In addition to the traditional fiddle and banjo tunes, such as "Rye Straw", "Liza Jane", and "Sally Ann", there are a number of songs that are usually done as vocals. This use of vocals on all-instrumental albums seems to be a trend, and it's one I like a lot. Vocals lend themselves to a variety of arrangements that might not be appropriate to the average fiddle tune. My favorites among these are "Down in the Valley to Pray", "I Truly Understand", and "In the Willow Garden".

Nygaard's playing is uncluttered and clear. It never sounds rushed at any speed, and the notes always get their full values

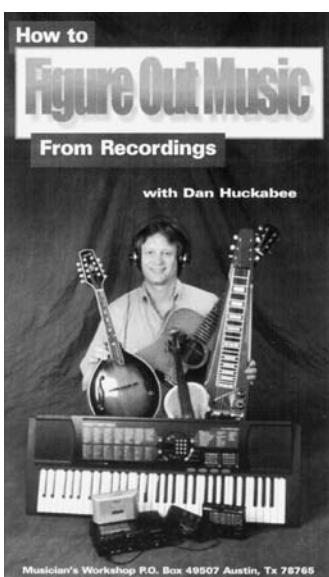
and tone. His playing on the vocals is particularly full of feeling and expressiveness. He only plays on eight of the 14 tunes, but those are worth the price of the album even if you are only interested in guitar parts. On the other hand, there is nothing to complain about in the tunes that do not include guitar. It's always possible to learn something from great musicians playing other instruments. Besides, they are all fun to listen to.

The Tunes:

Rye Straw
 Train on the Island
 Bury Me Not on the Lone Prairie
 Liza Jane
 Midnight on the Stormy Deep
 Sugar in the Gourd
 Down in the Valley to Pray
 In the Pines
 untitled (The first transcribed and published banjo piece.)
 Spotted Pony
 I Truly Understand
 Whistlin' Rufus
 In the Willow Garden
 Sally Ann

Video Tape Reviews

How to Figure Out Music From Recordings - Dan Huckabee



Reviewed by Mike Wright

David Grier

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"Grier stretches notes that walk, skip and dance off his strings..."
LA Times

In this two-hour video tape, *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine* columnist Dan Huckabee breaks down the process of transcribing music from recordings into a few simple procedures and techniques. If you would like to be able to transcribe a break off your favorite picker's CD, but don't know where to begin, Dan will put you on the right track.

Rather than just explaining transcription techniques, Huckabee actually sits down and does it right in front of you. He transcribes full breaks on acoustic guitar, electric guitar, mandolin, and keyboard. Watching him go through the process removes all the mystery. In this case, that is a *good thing*.

Among the topics discussed on the video

are how to prepare a recording for analysis using stereo panning and tone control or an equalizer; how to figure out the key of the recording; how to figure out chord progressions; special problems related to guitar fingerpicking, harmonica, bass, and drums; transcribing breaks done in unusual guitar tunings; and developing artistry and originality. He also talks a bit about the usefulness of the transcription process as a kind of ear training.

In addition to all this, Dan goes into a lot of detail about several electronic devices that can be used to make transcription easier. He discusses four such devices in detail - the Marantz PMD221 cassette recorder, the Akai Riff-O-Matic, the Ibanez Cassette Rock & Play, and the Ibanez Digital Rock & Play. He discusses the use of such features as half-speed playback, pitch control, pitch correction, freeze-framing, quick review, memory rewind, frequency filtering, and looping. He explains how these features are used in aiding transcription, discusses the pros and cons of each, and expresses his own preferences about which are the most useful. At the end of the tape, there is an announcement of the upcoming release of the Ibanez RP500, which is similar to the Cassette Rock & Play with a couple of enhancements.

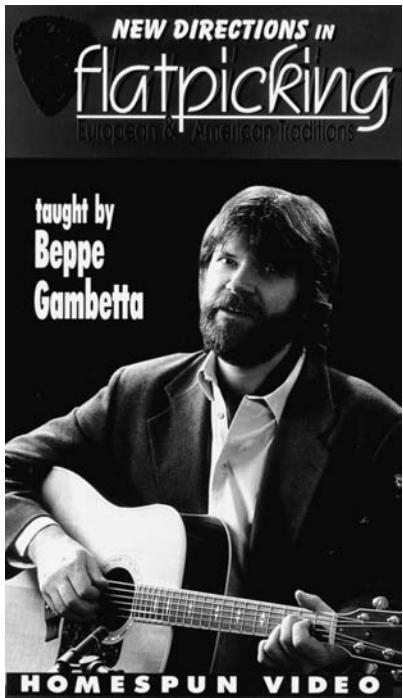
Even if you have done some transcription, the information on electronic devices and their features is very worthwhile.

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New Directions In Flat-picking - European & American Traditions
Taught by Beppe Gambetta 1995
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Reviewed by David McCarty

Since first arriving on American shores earlier this decade with his D-28, a small digital tape recorder and an English vocabulary of about 20 words, Beppe Gambetta has convinced thousands of American bluegrass fans that even Genoa, Italy can produce a great flatpicking guitarist.

Having played with Beppe and seen him perform many times at Winfield, I can tell you no one loves playing guitar more than he, whether it's performing till the wee hours at Stage 5; jamming with the likes of Richard Greene, Tony Trischka, David Grier, Dan Crary and Steve Kaufman; or just sitting by himself with the guitar cradled in his arms.

His first video instruction tape concentrates on the techniques he's developed that enable him to perform as a solo guitarist, since that's the format he most typically performs in. Lacking any accompaniment, Beppe frequently employs altered tunings to flesh out his sound or to help him play a particular tune without having to resort to

awkward or inhibiting left-hand positions.

As a result, he plays a lot in the popular DADGAD tuning, as well as employing special tunings for his unique arrangements of traditional tunes like "Salt Creek," which in its stately, reverential arrangement here becomes his trademark tune, "Slow Creek."

Two uptempo tunes from his "Good News From Home" album, "Iride" and "Czardas" are presented in standard tuning with Artie Traum playing backup guitar. Both tunes reflect Beppe's obvious European heritage and influences, and create some interesting new possibilities for flatpickers in the New World. Beppe's use of Italian guitar/mandolin compositions and Hungarian folk melodies as the source for flatpicking guitar material is every bit as valid as Irish fiddle tunes and other repertoires more commonly explored by flatpickers in the country.

The tape is done in Homespun's typically excellent fashion, with good lighting and audio, effective camera work and adequate editing. Like all analog media, the viewer must scroll through the tape to find any individual selection. The addition of title slides at the start of each new section, or the inclusion of those transparent logos many networks now superimpose over running video would greatly improve the ease of use for this type of instruction material.

For the flatpicker, Beppe's material on solo playing is probably of greatest value here. He's a true master of the style, wringing gorgeous tones out of seemingly simple chord positions and licks. Throughout the tape, he offers a wealth of good advice, such as making sure to add a little emphasis to the melody note when playing through a full chord and taking special care "not to kill the sound of any string" to achieve the fullest, richest sound possible.

Perhaps his greatest accomplishment has been the creation of a new voice in flatpicking guitar, something few players

ever achieve. "I think it is really important to be the teacher of yourself," he explains. "It is an important part of the process of growing. It is most important, I think, to be unique and not to be a copy of someone else."

Flatpickers working through the material presented here will be a little further down that road of discovery and self-creation. Ciao!

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Almost Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Flatpicks

Consider the humble flatpick- made of everything from turtle carapace to milk jug bottoms to colorful celluloid, the flatpick is our friend. But it hasn't always been that way; there actually was a time when flatpicking as we know it did not exist. Will Hoover, in his book *Picks*, credits Nick Lucas as the first guitar player to gain commercial acceptance using a plectrum. The standard Fender teardrop we are all familiar with was first emblazened with Lucas' name and the shape developed by D'Andrea. Early picks were made from tortoise-shell, but by the early 1900's were being replaced by celluloid. Tortoise made a strong comeback during the 30's and was preferred by discriminating pickers, but celluloid remained king to the masses. When the rock 'n roll boom hit and flatpicks became even more popular, other materials, including phenolic plastics, nylon, Delrin, acetyl polymers, composite plastics, metal, and even stone were pressed into service as flatpicks. Today, there is a bewildering array of picks, but the old standby of celluloid and tortoise remain popular, challenged by Delrin, phenolic plastics, and close guarded variations.

In the old days, picks were hand-punched from sheets of material. Today, the stamping is done by machine. Today, D'Andrea- the largest pick manufacturer in the world- uses basically the same process, with machinery doing the hard work. Celluloid material is made in 2" x 5" sheets which are then cut into narrower 2" wide strips. These strips are fed into the machine and picks are stamped out. The fresh-cut picks go into a series of tumblers for polishing. All picks are inspected before leaving the factory. Materials such as Delrin and nylon are generally poured into molds instead of being stamped.

A flatpick must meet several requirements. First, it must have good "memory", meaning that it snaps back to its original shape quickly and precisely. This is particularly important when playing at high speeds where a pick that doesn't snap back quickly hinders the player. Another requirement is that the pick sound good against the

strings. Many metal picks have great memory (particularly if they're so stiff they don't even bend!), but don't sound good against a guitar string. A good pick will give a rich, complex, musically satisfying tone and, indeed, is a primary component in producing that tone. Once these two primary requirements are met, the individual picker's preferences like feel in the hand, thickness, grip on the strings, size, and shape are important.

There are some rules of thumb attached to flatpicks. Thicker picks are generally stiffer, but tend to produce a denser and less bright tone, while thinner picks offer a brighter sound. Thicker picks often have less string noise, though, and may offer greater dynamics, depending upon the picker's abilities. Because stiffer picks deflect less than more flexible ones, it's often easier to play fast with the former, although a supple picking motion is a requisite. A beveled edge on a thicker pick can offer the best of both worlds; a beveled edge will give any pick extra crispness and help the pick slide off the strings, while still maintaining the stiffness of the pick.

In addition to thickness, there's the matter of which part of the pick to use. Many guitarists like the pointy end of a teardrop pick, while others use the round edge, or even the back of the pick. Of those who use triangular picks, some prefer a rounder edge and some prefer a sharper edge. In any case, a pointed end will tend to give a crisper, more trebly sound while the rounder points give a fuller, deeper tone.

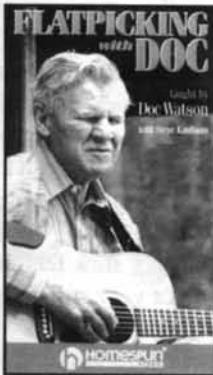
Perhaps the most important component of a flatpick is the material. Tortoise-shell has traditionally been a favorite of acoustic musicians because it is stiff- and yet thin for its stiffness, produces a complex tone and feels great in the hand. "Tortoise" comes from the shell of hawksbill sea turtles, which are currently on the Endangered Species List. Sale of tortoise-shell is therefore very restricted and rightly so (see sidebar). This paucity has encouraged the development of other materials of which celluloid is the grandaddy and still one of the best. The

familiar Fender/Nick Lucas/D'Andrea pick is celluloid. In recent years, other excellent alternatives have been developed of which Jim Dunlop's Tortex and Clayton's "Gold" (officially called Ultems) are standouts. Shell-like natural materials such as water buffalo horn, bull horn, and coconut shell have also been used, with varying success.

I queried members of the Internet's Flatpick-L mailing list about their pick choices and found the average thickness pick to be just over 1.0 mm. Clayton "Golds" were the most popular pick, followed by real tortoise, and Tortex. Other popular choices included Golden Gate, John Pearse, and Fender teardrops. Teardrops, triangles, and pointed/rounded edges are all about equally favored with many members switching between picks and edges as the situation demands.

I also asked numerous professional pickers about their choices. Charles Sawtelle uses the point of a Dunlop 500 in 1.14 mm, although he'll also use the edge of the pick for crosspicking gospel number where he wants a fuller sound. Steve Pottier, columnist for this magazine, also uses this pick. Keith Little, of Kathy Kallick's Little Big Band, uses tortoise in a triangular shape. Triangular tortoise is also the choice of Tony and Wyatt Rice. Peter McLaughlin likes Fender heavys and uses the rounded edge of a teardrop. Steve Kaufman uses Tortex yellows in 0.73 mm and likes them so much he has them made with his name on them (so nobody will steal them?). Kaufman uses the pointed end of the pick and drives it well into the strings, thus a more flexible pick is a key component to his technique. David Grier is almost a direct contrast to Kaufman in that he uses the very thick, stiff, and rounded Golden Gate pick and floats on the strings (except when digging in for special effects). Most of the pros commented that pick choice was a highly personal matter and that most listeners probably couldn't tell a difference. Even so, many of them had some very definite opinions on their choice of pick!

That's the story on Our Friend The Flatpick. It's a fairly simple device that's responsible for a good portion of your final sound. If you're not getting the sound you want, a different pick or change in grip might help. If you're looking for the perfect pick, consider some of the choices suggested by Flatpick-L members and professional guitarist (many of these are reviewed on the following page).



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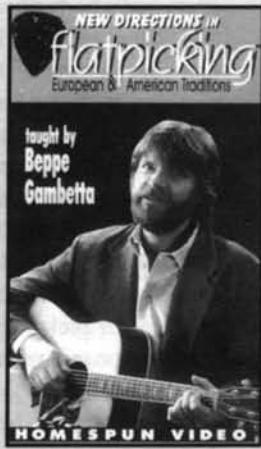
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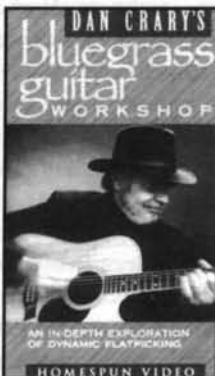
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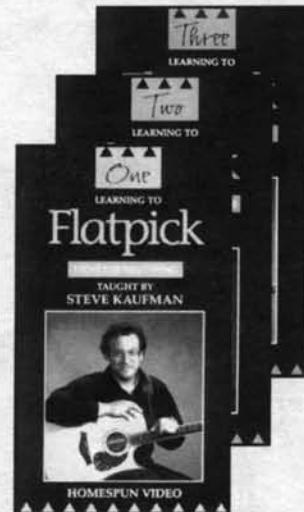
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Pick Comparision

Following are my observations from testing some picks in my collection. With a few exceptions, all are of comparable thickness (1.0-1.14 mm). Remember that everyone's body chemistry is different, and a pick that feels slick to my hand may feel just fine in yours. Also, your attack may produce more or less pick noise- several Flatpick-L members mentioned that the Clayton Gold, my personal favorite besides tortoise- has too much noise. Others found the David Grisman/Saga picks to their liking, whereas I couldn't get as good of a treble response from them as I could from some other picks. Hopefully, though, this comparison will point you toward the perfect pick.

Celltex- good sound, comparable to Clayton Gold. Raised surface makes it feel thicker than it is, and also makes it a bit tricky to "point".

Clayton Ultem ("Gold") 1.07- stiffest pick for thickness. Very comparable to tortoise, including pick noise. Nice crisp tone, excellent feel. My favorite synthetic.

Clayton White 1.14- softer than Clayton Golds, treble a bit more muted, slicker feel.

D'Andrea celluloid 0.96- very good feel, not quite as bright as some, but mellow without being dull.

D'Andrea ProGrip 1.0- surprisingly slick to feel. Not quite as stiff, a bit more clicky.

D'Andrea Brite 1.0- Good feel, just a little slick. Very crisp sound.

D'Andrea Delrex 1.0- virtually indistinguishable from Clayton Ultems. Nice feel.

D'Andrea Spectra 1.0- superb feel. Not quite as stiff as some. Would be excellent in a 1.14 mm, but next size is 1.5 mm, which was also quite good.

D'Andrea ProPlec 1.5- excellent feel and shape. Crisper than the comparable David Grisman/Saga pick.

David Grisman- great feel and shape. Treble was a little muffled, though. Smooth, beveled edges.

Dunlop 500 1.14- excellent tone, slick feel and slightly smaller shape than standard. Beveled edges.

Fender delrin 1.14- good feel, but treble is a little muted.

Fender Neon 1.14- good treble, a little thin sounding, slick feel, beveled edges.

Fossil walrus ivory- highly variable. One point sounds good, the others are muted. Availability is "iffy".

JD 207- great feel and shape, surprisingly crisp sound for such a thick pick. Thickness was noticeable between strings on a regular neck, though. Also, difficult to control and tired my wrist out. I thought it was great as sort of a "practice bat".

JD Nylon- warm sound, slick feel in spite of raised surface. Not very stiff for thickness.

John Pearse- excellent feel, slightly weak treble. Neat lopsided shape.

Mark Edward's horn pick- good sound, but extremely thick. Wears fairly fast, too, giving a raspy sound.

Saga Golden Gate- same as Grisman, but not quite as stiff or polished.

Steve Kaufman yellow- (same as Tortex yellows) bright tone, but difficult to get dynamics if used to stiffer pick. Pick noise was noticeable ("clicky"), especially on rhythm. Works for Steve, though.

Tortex black 1.14- good tone, but slick feel. Feels a little stiffer than equivalent purple Tortex.

Tortex purple 1.14- not quite as crisp as Tortex black.

Tortoise- rich complex sound with plenty of treble. Lots of pick noise too. Great feel in the hand.

What about tortoise?

Long a favorite of flatpickers and the standard by which most other picks are judged, "tortoise" is actually the outer layer of shell from any of the large sea-turtles. The best shell comes from hawksbill turtles, which are protected by the Endangered Species Act. To get the official scoop on tortoise-shell, I called the US Fish and Wildlife Service in Portland and spoke with a senior officer there. I was informed that it is illegal to sell tortoise in interstate commerce or to import it across national borders. This means that you can buy tortoise from someone face-to-face and then transport it across state lines to your home, but it is illegal to buy it through the mail, unless it can be proven to be "pre-act" shell. You're safe looking for tortoise in flea-markets, antique shops, and old music shops, but anything else may put you in violation of the Endangered Species Act. However, I'm not your lawyer, nor do I play one on TV, so if in doubt about the legality of something, don't do it.

Vintage Voice

by Buddy Summer



As any guitar enthusiast probably does, I often fantasize about being able to go back in time to the 1930's when I could have had the opportunity to purchase some of those wonderful sounding guitars being built during that decade. The simple facts are, that one cannot unring a bell.... have a second chance to make a good first impression . . . nor turn back the hands of time. Usually after a few moments thought, I realize that I really wouldn't like to return to a time before refrigeration was abundant, before Jonas Salk found the cure for polio and before all the advantages we take for granted today came about through advanced technology. After another few moments thought, I realize that today we do have all the advantages derived from more than sixty years of advanced technology since the 1930's plus the opportunity to obtain the very finest acoustic guitars ever built . . . before, during or since the 1930's decade.

A guitar's acoustic value is its sound. In addition to patience, time, pride and craftsmanship that go into the construction of a high quality guitar, sound is also highly dependent upon the wood from which the guitar is constructed. One reason the 1930's guitars had such a good, distinctive tone and such great volume is because their tops were made from Adirondack Spruce wood. Adirondack Spruce is often referred to as "Appalachian Spruce" or "Red Spruce" and grows in the Appalachian Mountain range from North Georgia to North of the state of Maine and at different elevations according to the latitude. In the southern-most part of the Appalachian Mountain Range the tree grows at about the 4000 foot elevation range while in the northern-most part at sea level. Adirondack Spruce is often considered by many to be an excellent tone wood from which guitar tops can be made and was the choice of wood of the Gibson Guitar Company and the C.F. Martin Guitar Company for their guitar tops until well into the 1940's. The lack of availability of Adirondack Spruce during the mid-1940's

led to a change to other forms of spruce wood for guitar tops by these guitar companies.

Sitka and Engelmann Spruce are also excellent tone woods for guitar tops and have mostly been used for guitar top construction since the mid-1940's. A school-of thought is that in order to get that extra punch and drive for the tone and volume of the 1930's guitars one needs an Adirondack Spruce top guitar. Until the last few years Adirondack Spruce wood for guitar tops was so scarce it simply wasn't used on more than a handful of tops and wasn't found on any factory-built guitars.

East Tennessee master craftsman and luthier, Ted Davis, of Loudon, Tennessee has provided a great service to players, listeners and builders alike by bringing Adirondack Spruce back in to the guitar marketplace. Until very recently, Ted was about the only source of Adirondack Spruce. It has been said that Ted has done a lot of study on this particular spruce . . . about ten years worth of research before cutting his first Adirondack Spruce tree. Many of the highly noted guitar makers, both individual and old, established companies, get their Adirondack Spruce from Ted. An October 1996 trip with Ted and John Arnold of Newport, Tennessee, on an Adirondack Spruce tree harvesting trip for guitar tops was one of my most enjoyable and guitar educational experiences. These high quality guitar builders are highly educated individuals with mechanical engineering backgrounds and as much as twenty years of formal education. They build very high quality guitars and do expert repair work. There are none better.

Given is the fact that more than sixty years of advanced technology since the 1930's has produced better glues, better finish materials, better fret wire, better building environments with controlled temperature and humidity, better tools and better knowledge. All this is coupled with years of combined experience and improved

procedures such as adjustable truss rods, pickguards on top of the finish, shorter bridge saddle, etc. Some of the tone wood that is available today is equal to or superior to the tone wood used in the 1930's guitars. An example of this superior tone wood of today can be seen by comparing the wood grain in the Adirondack Spruce top on the original 1928 "000-45" guitar that the C.P. Martin Guitar Company built for "America's Blue Yodeler" Jimmie Rodgers in 1928, to the wood grain in the Adirondack Spruce top of the C.F. Martin 1997 "000-45JR" Guitar Martin will reissue during 1997. The original guitar is in the Jimmie Rodgers Museum in Meridian, Mississippi and the reissue guitar will be available within a few months as part of Martin's Guitar-of-the-month Program for 1997. Since 1997 is the 100th year since the birth of Jimmie Rodgers' "The Singing Brakeman," one hundred of these guitars will be reissued with Adirondack Spruce tops. In comparing the wood grain of the original 1928 top with the wood grain of the reissue 1997 top, what will be noticed is that the grain of the 1997 top is much more quartered . . . therefore, a superior top. I've visited the museum and seen the original and I saw the reissue tops before they were shipped to the C.F. Martin Guitar Company. They are part of "The Smokies Wood" as written about in the last issue of *Flatpicking Guitar*. I actually own a Brazilian Rosewood "000-45" type guitar with this "Smokies Wood" Adirondack Spruce top that was built by luthier Lynn Dudenbostel of Knoxville, Tennessee and there simply is no better guitar anywhere from any time period. I also have several mid-1930's type dreadnought size herringbone guitars with this "Smokies Wood" tops and they are all incredibly good sounding guitars. I have the best of the 1930's type tone wood plus more than sixty years of improvements and all this equals better guitars than the 1930's.

The bottom line so far in this article of "Vintage Voice" is: For all of us looking for

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that very special sounding guitar of "days gone by," the opportunity is pounding on the door today please go open the door. I have mine more than a dozen times.

During the last few issues of *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine* I've introduced a "Vintage Guitar Checklist." Hopefully this checklist will be of some aid in making a sound investment when selecting a guitar to purchase. I've also elaborated on some of the checklist items and will continue to do so until each item is covered. Once all check list items have been completed I would like to publish the checklist in its entirety in an issue of *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine* for anyone who may have missed an issue or two and would like the entire checklist along with a few comments about each item. And now . . . on with elaborating on the checklist items.

Vintage Guitar checklist Item #9: **Check to see if pickguard or bridge is loose by trying to insert a business card around edges.** Pickguards on vintage Martins were introduced in the very early 1930's as an option and became standard in 1932. Until early 1967, the pickguards were tortoise shell colored plastic material and were installed under the guitar's lacquer finish until the mid 1980's. Early on in 1967 the pickguard material changed from the tortoise shell color plastic material to a flat black plastic material. Pickguards from the mid to late 1980's have been installed on top of the guitars lacquer finish with some being tortoise colored and some being black.

The pick guards of today are also the self-adhesive type or are installed using double-sided tape whereas the vintage pick guards were glued on before the guitar's finish was applied. The change to the "on top of the finish" pickguard was made to alleviate the pickguard top cracks, and this it did. Over time the plastic pickguard material begins to shrink and with the pick guard material being glued onto the guitar top, often times the stressed top wood would crack before the glue would loosen and allow the pickguard to begin to free itself from the guitar top. It's much more desirable for the pickguard to become unglued from the guitar top than to crack the top wood in the general area of the pickguard. When the pickguard has loosened itself from the guitar top it's almost impossible to reglue the same pickguard back unless its detected very early on that the pickguard is beginning to loosen and

immediate corrective action is taken. Once impurities get under a loose pickguard one cannot carefully slip additional glue under the raised pickguard edge, clamp a piece of wood the same size and shape of the pickguard over the pickguard and let dry overnight. One then has to remove the original pickguard and install another one. The problem with replacement is that the original type material is no longer available and any other material tends to "stand out." Anything, including the pickguard, that interferes with the top vibrating to the maximum takes away from the acoustic value of the guitar . . . therefore, the smaller the pickguard the better. Although the guitar would be a better acoustic instrument without a pickguard, if one was originally installed, it needs to stay installed to maintain originality. An undamaged pickguard from a destroyed top can be carefully removed, carefully cleaned underneath and carefully reinstalled on another top.

Just about everyone has a business card on them and this is often a good tool to use to check for a pickguard that's beginning to turn loose. This would also be a convenient time to check for a loose bridge using the same business card tool. The problems associated with a loose bridge were discussed in Vintage Guitar Checklist Item #7 and need no further discussion.

Vintage Guitar checklist Item #10: **Check fingerboard inlay for dots or diamonds and squares.** Check the center back strip for style. The cosmetics of the guitar add no value whatsoever to the acoustic value of the guitar. After all, the acoustic guitar is an acoustical instrument. On vintage Martin Guitars of style 28 built prior to late 1944, the top "x" braces and tone bars inside the guitar box were scalloped and the fingerboard inlay was mother-of-pearl "diamonds and square." Scalloped top braces inside the guitar box and "diamonds and squares" inlay on the fingerboard of vintage style 28 Martin Guitars are synonymous. Graduated size mother-of-pearl dot inlays were used on the non-scalloped top braced 1945 Martin Herringbone D-28's and uniform sized mother-of-pearl dot inlays were used on the 1946 Martin Herringbone Guitars. (It's important to note that 1946 was also the year that the spruce used for the top was Sitka rather than Adirondack as had always been used before.) Different sized mother-of-pearl dot inlays returned in 1947 and continue even today except on Martin's

vintage reissues. The mahogany back and side guitars, any style less than style 21, use the graduated size mother-of-pearl dot inlays on the fretboard from before the 1930's until the present time. It's just helpful to know how the cosmetics should be in order to know if the guitar has been altered from original. It's just nice to know for any reason.

The center back strip on vintage Martin Guitars built before 1947 was of the "zipper-type" mostly. Some style 45 guitars had a more ornate center back strip inlay. This center back strip inlay helps join the two piece back together. During 1947 three different style center back strips were used. The early 1947's used the "zipper type", the mid 1947's used a narrow version of the type used today and the late 1947's used the type still in use today. The center back strip adds no acoustic value to the guitar . . . it's just nice to know and helps date the instrument.

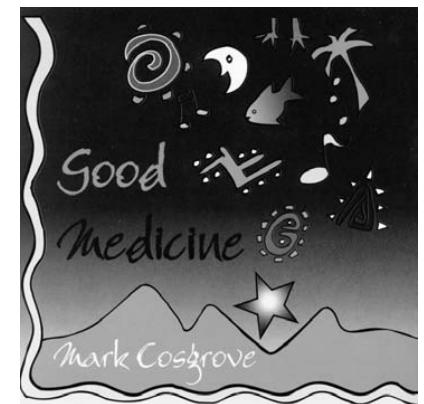
Vintage Guitar checklist Item #11:
Check for plugged jack hole on aft treble side and pull the end pin out in order to check condition. Occasionally, someone will install an electric pickup on an acoustical guitar. When this is done, a small hole, about the size of a dime, will be cut into the aft treble side of the guitar body to accommodate the amplifier cord jack and sometimes the end pin hole is enlarged to accommodate the amplifier cord jack. Of the two choices, the end pin hole modification alters the guitar to a lesser degree and is easier to restore the guitar back closer to original. When the electric pick up has been installed and then removed from the guitar the amplifier cord jack hole on the aft treble side needs to be plugged to prevent side cracks from occurring. The cracks would radiate from the side hole if not plugged. The end pin hole having been enlarged and then inserting an oversized end pin would create much less of a potential crack problem because of the end block inside the guitar body. Neither modification to the guitar has much of a detrimental effect on the acoustic value of the guitar, but it sure does wonders to the originality. Most guitar enthusiasts, like myself, would prefer that the guitar be as original as possible. If these type modifications have been made one should at least be made aware of it through a careful inspection of the guitar . . . preferably before the purchase is made.

Vintage Guitar checklist Item #12:

Check binding for style. The guitar's binding falls into that category of things "nice to know." It doesn't contribute to the acoustics of the guitar, but does help to protect the guitar's body. This plastic trim around the guitar's body edges serves as a bumper and helps prevent wood cracks in the event the guitar is inadvertently bumped against another object. The most likely place one would bump the guitar is on its edge so that's the best place to put this plastic binding. The binding also helps dress up the guitar where the top and sides or back and sides are glued together. It just looks nicer. Some less ornate, more affordable vintage Martins, such as my 1939 "00-17" have no binding and are rather plain looking.

The binding on style 18 and style 21 guitars was plain black binding until about 1932 at which time tortoise binding began to be integrated with the black binding. Soon tortoise binding was used exclusively until about 1966 then black binding was reintroduced. On style 28 and higher guitars, ivory binding was used until 1919 and then replaced with ivoried (celluloid) binding. This type binding was used until 1966 when a plainer type white binding was introduced. Tortoise type binding is sometimes used today on Martin's styles 18 and 21 vintage reissue guitars and likewise ivoried type binding is sometimes used on Martin's style 28 and higher vintage reissue guitars. Once all this knowledge about binding is learned, one could just put it in one's pipe and smoke it for all the practical good it does, but again, it's nice to know and could be used to help date a vintage guitar.

Again, I'd like to express my appreciation for this opportunity to write about one of my favorite subjects and I anxiously await your feedback at 423-983-5533.



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Irish Fiddle Music on Guitar

by John McGann

Jenny's Chickens

I recorded this Sligo fiddle tune while on tour with Celtic Fiddle Festival in 1992. Unfortunately, it wasn't released on the CD. This gives you the opportunity to seek out the original Michael Coleman recording (re-released on Shanachie) to hear it played in its original form by this acknowledged grand master of Sligo-style fiddle. In terms of his influence, Michael Coleman is the Bill Monroe of Irish fiddle music and anyone interested in Irish music will enjoy his recordings.

As mentioned earlier, learning tunes from written music is only half the job- it really is important to go beyond the notes and rhythms and to hear and feel the style of the music. It all comes in through your ears first, your eyes should be a distant second.

I play this tune keeping the original fiddle turns intact. The turn is an ornament that replaces a single quarter note with a series of four notes- the original quarter note (I think of as the target note), the 2nd note a tone above (an "upper neighbor" tone), the 3rd the target again, the 4th a tone below the target (a "lower neighbor"

tone). This is a speedy sequence, and sounds best (to me) as a "slurred" sequence-down/hammer/pull/up. The down and upstrokes occur (more or less) in the same rhythmic space they would in a stream of eighth notes, in other words, your right hand doesn't have to break the alternate picking flow to execute the ornament, your left hand "just throws in" the notes. The standard alternate picking (down/up, with downstrokes on the down beats) applies to the unornamented sections.

You can pick each note, but the articulation would be as though the fiddle played each note with a separate bow stroke—not very smooth. The idea is to have the naturally percussive guitar emulate the smoothness of the fiddle.

In the third part we have a traditional "picked triplet", the kind most often heard in Irish banjo styles. The usual technique is to play the triplet down/up/down and then to follow through with another down stroke on the next beat, to get the right hand back into the alternate picking flow. You can practice this triplet with open strings to get used to it (I'd suggest playing with a metronome or drum machine and varying the tempo).

There is some controversy over the chords to this piece as some players prefer to have Bm the foundation of all three sections. On the Coleman recording, the accompanist plays F#m for the 1st part and Bm for parts two and three, which is how I like to hear it. Note how the modes change-The A part uses G naturals, while the B and C parts use G#.

Some tunes fall easier on the fingerboard than others. "Jenny's Chickens" is a fairly guitar-friendly tune. I finger out of 2nd position (meaning the index finger is based at the 2nd fret). Most of the 1st two sections of the tune are played with the left hand index and second finger. I begin the third part in 4th position, playing the 7th fret 4th finger, 5th fret 2nd finger, and 4th fret 1st finger, then returning to 2nd position for the next phrase. I respectfully urge those of you who are tab readers to consider spending the short amount of time it takes to learn standard notation, if only to be able access "O'Neill's Music Of Ireland" as a starting point of reference for building a repertoire of Irish fiddle tunes. With a very basic knowledge of chord construction (in standard notation), you can see as well as hear how chords are implied by melodies. I will explore this concept in a future article.

Jenny's Chickens

Adapted from the playing of Michael Coleman by John McGann

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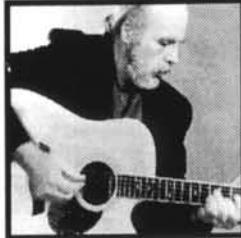
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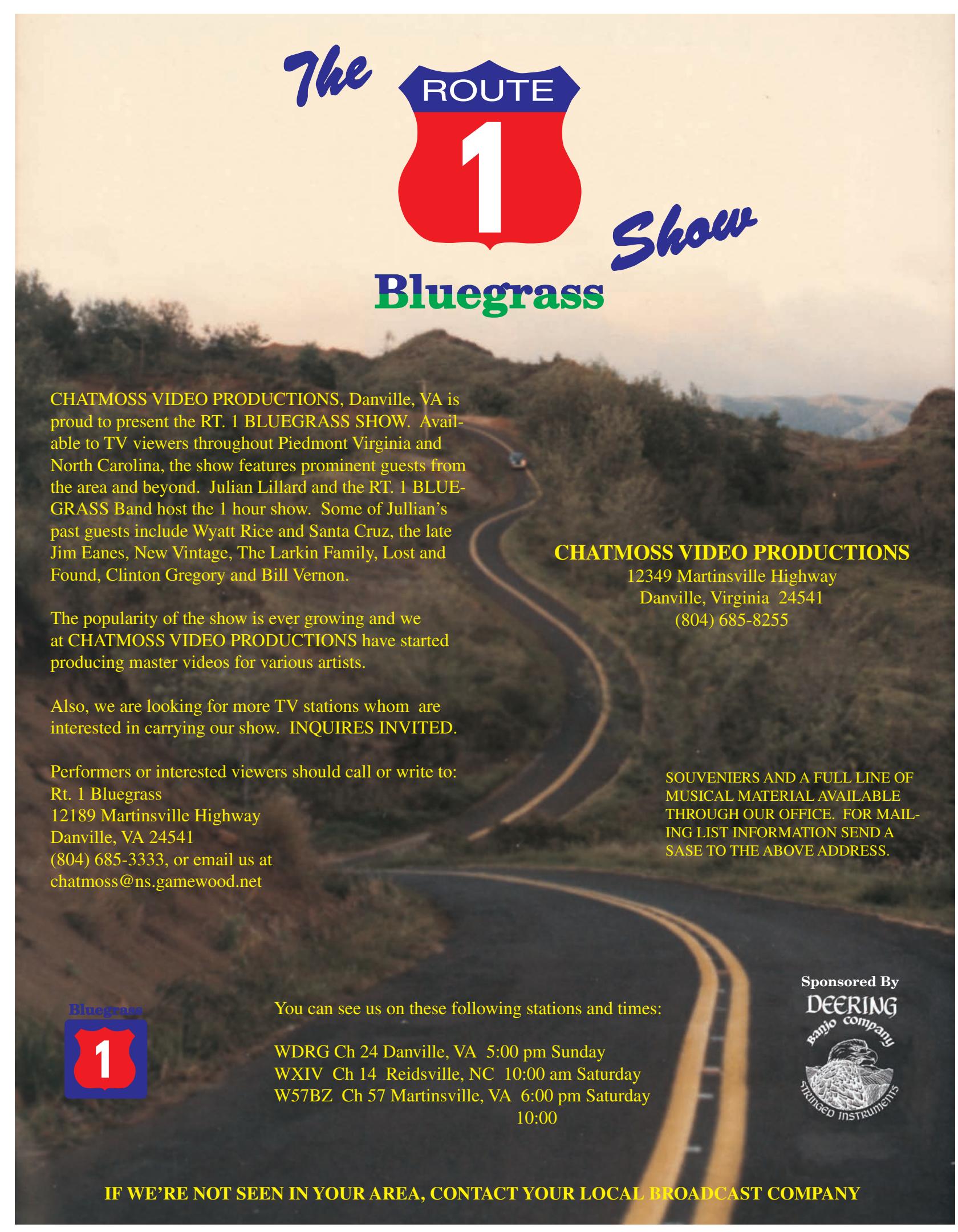
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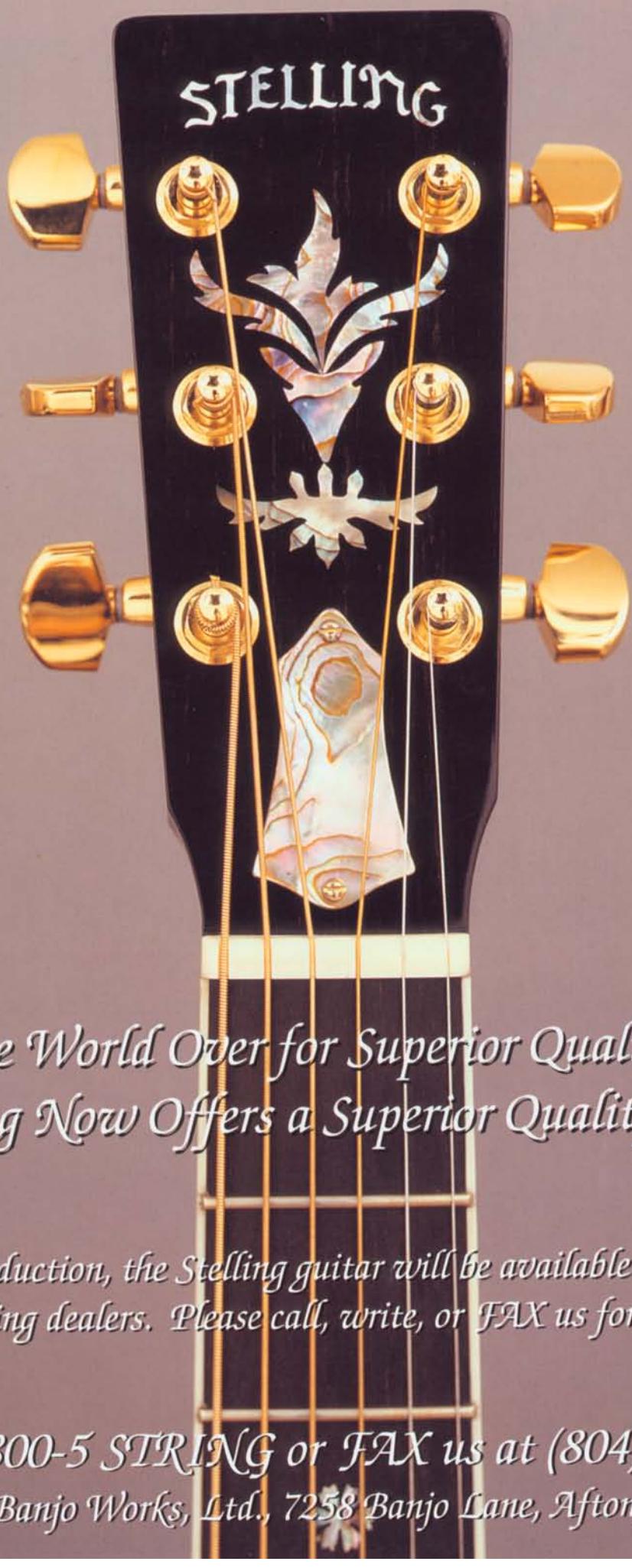
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