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Flatpicking Guitar

Magazine

Volume 1, Number 6 September/October 1997

George Shuffler

Del McCoury

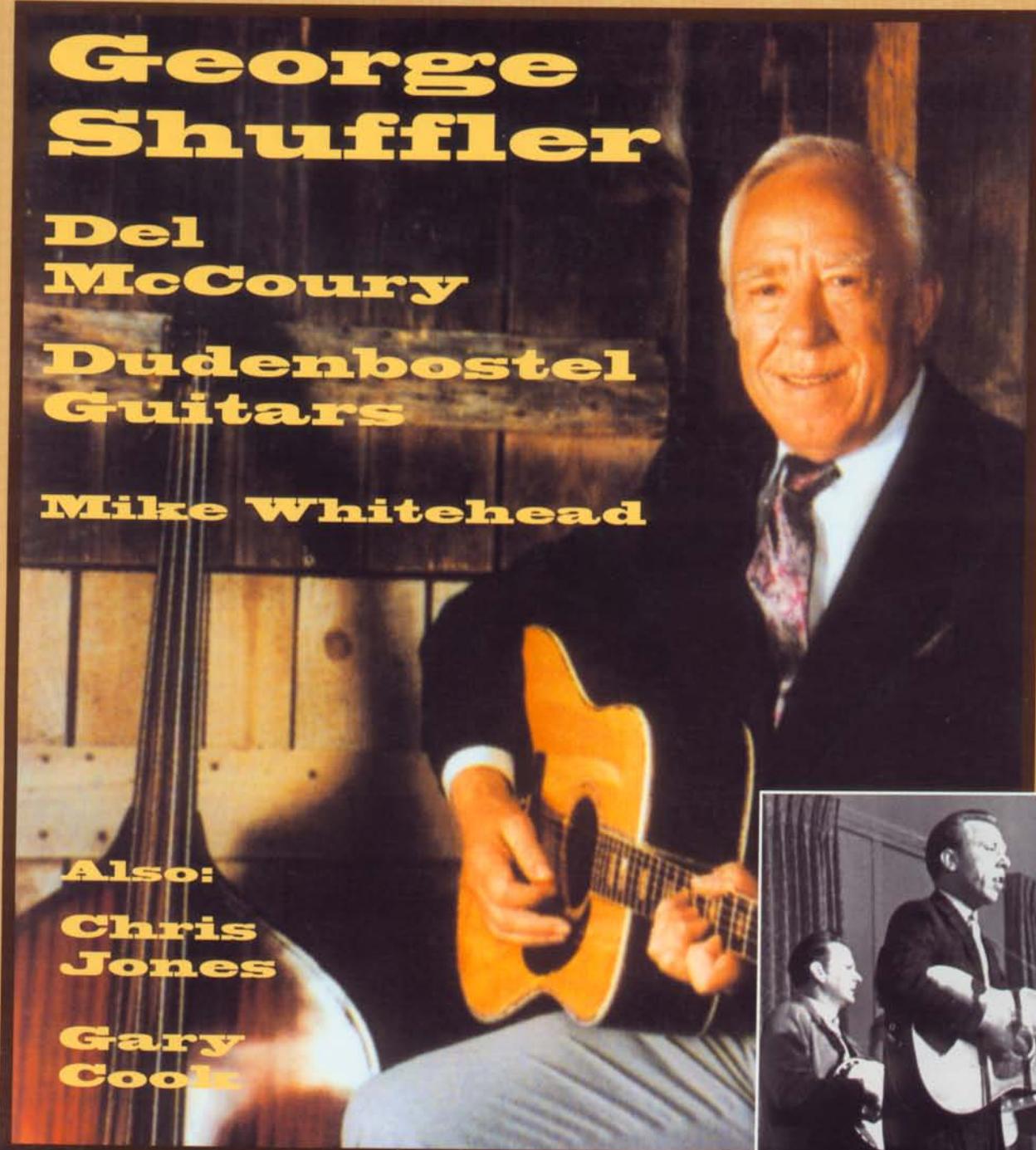
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Guitars

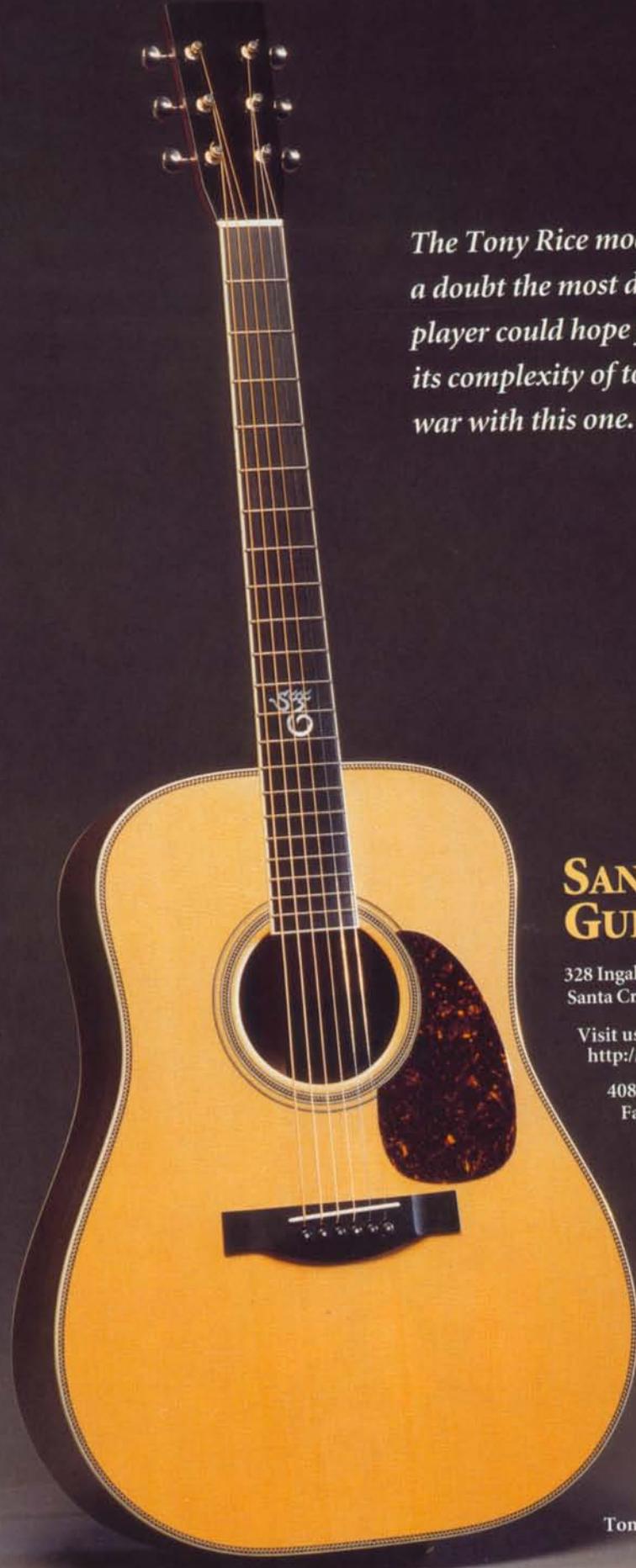
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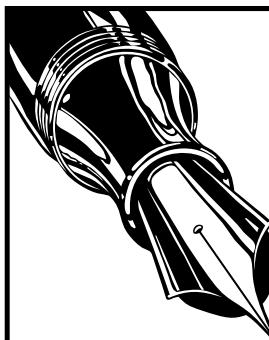
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EDITOR'S PAGE

Wow, it has been a busy couple of months. First I would like to thank all of our contributors and subscribers for helping us make our first year a successful one. This issue marks the end of our first full year of publication and I am happy to report that we are looking forward to a bright future and many more years of publication. We have learned some good lessons during our infancy and will take all of the comments, advice, suggestions, and recommendations of our readers and continue to improve the magazine to the best of our ability. Thanks for the feedback, and please keep it coming!

One of the projects we have recently completed is the production of our first CD. The most frequent comment we received from our readers was the request for an audio reference for the magazine. At this point it would be too costly and too time consuming to try and put out a CD with every issue, but we did the next best thing by putting together a CD featuring 21 tunes that have been presented in the magazine during our first year of publication. Details concerning this CD appear on the following page. The CD is not only a great audio reference for the tunes that we have presented in the magazine, it is a great "flatpicking sampler." We hope you will enjoy it and, if all goes well, we plan to put one out every year.

In addition to completing our first year of publication and first CD, I am also very proud to announce that on 18 June 1997 Mariann and I became proud parents once again with the birth of our daughter Sara. I had her holding a tortoise shell pick within an hour of her birth and she was a natural.

If any of you are going to be attending the Walnut Valley Festival in Winfield, Kansas, this year, please come by our booth and say "hello." We would love to meet you.

Dan Miller
Editor and Publisher

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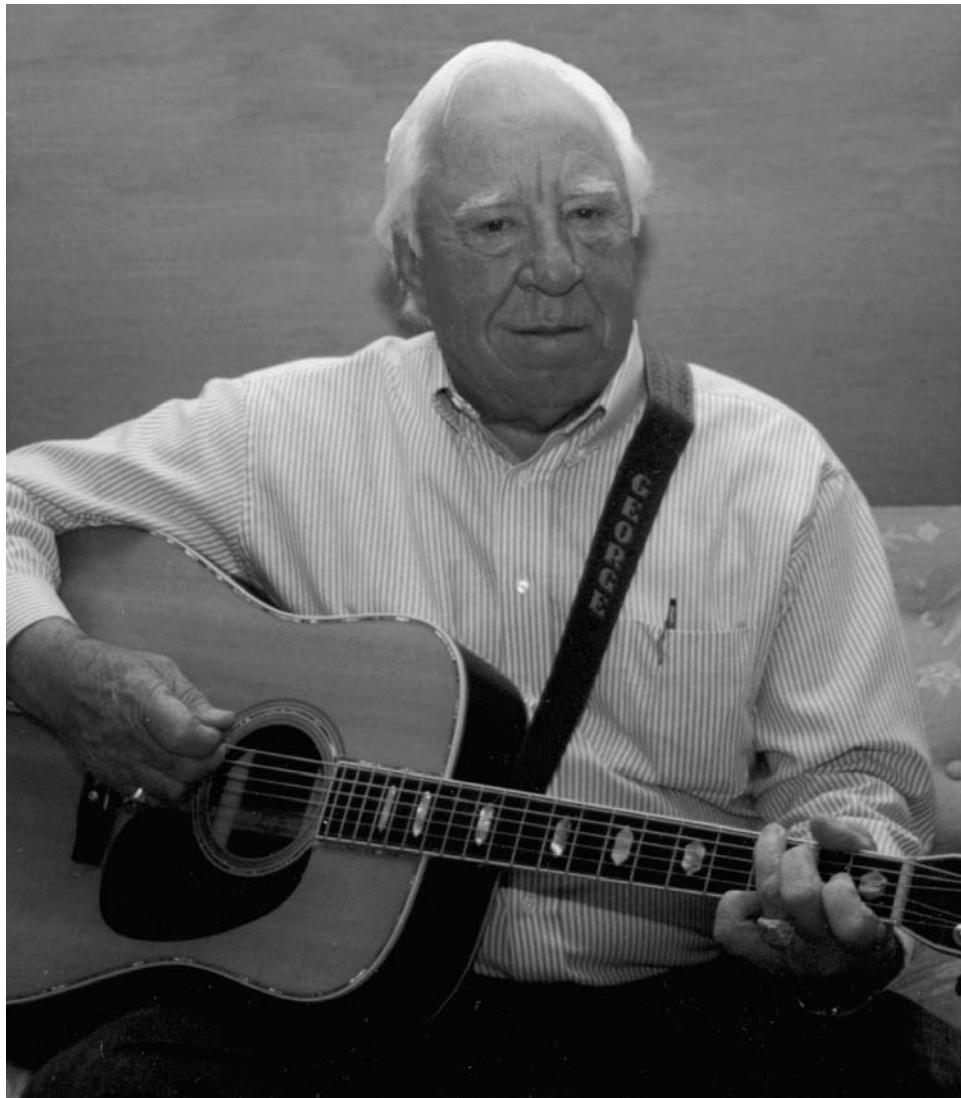
From Volume 1 Number 6

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- 17) Honeybee - John McGann
- 18) Bury Me Beneath the Willow - George Shuffler
- 19) Cowgirl's Sweetheart - Mike Whitehead
- 20) Western Standard Time - Gary Cook

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GEORGE SHUFFLER: FLATPICKING PIONEER



It has been said that we are living in the "golden era" of the guitar. Acoustic guitar builders are turning out the best new guitars we have ever seen, the guitar has stepped out of the rhythm section and become widely accepted as a lead instrument, and the pioneers, heroes, and legends who made it all possible are, for the most part, still around to show us how it is done. In bluegrass music, one of the men that led the way for the rest of us and made it possible for the guitar to take a leading role is George Shuffler. His lead guitar work with the Stanley Brothers starting in the 1950s, with its distinctive

"crosspicking" technique, gave a new texture to the music and paved the way for all other bluegrass guitar greats who would follow. When asked about George Shuffler, several of today's top pickers have had the same comment, "If he hadn't have, we couldn't have."

In the following interview, conducted at Merlefest '97 and at George's home in Valdese, NC, George talks about those early days and the development of his style.

When did you first become interested in learning how to play music?

I got my first guitar when I was twelve

years old. It was a Gene Autry model that my mother bought using money she had earned crocheting doilies. I didn't know nothing about it. There was an old guy across the creek over there who knew a few chords and he showed me three chords on the guitar. I came back home and, Lord, I practiced on those things until my fingers were so sore I couldn't even look at them or they would hurt. I didn't want to lose those chords. My mother sat by the fire and sang "Birmingham Jail" until she got so hoarse she couldn't talk that night. I was picking behind her singing so that my time would come out right.

How did you progress after learning those first three chords?

Daddy worked the second shift at the mill and after a long twelve hours he didn't want to be disturbed until it was time for him to get up at about nine o'clock to go back in at twelve. So I would take the cows way off down by the creek there and sit under this apple tree and pick that guitar and practice them three chords. After a while I got to thinking that there must be more to it than this, and I got to making up chords. I put my fingers in a place where the strings would sound and blend with the others. I got to where I was into barre chords and things like that.

There was a guy down below us there who was a powerful guitar picker and his daddy played the fiddle. My daddy had told them about me playing the guitar and they sent word that they wanted me to come down to pick with them on Saturday night. I was so anxious to go, and I was scared to go. I said, "My Lord, every chord I make is going to be wrong!" When I got there I turned my back with my guitar away from him and looked over my shoulder at the chords. I saw that he was getting the chords just like me. I got brave then. I turned around and laid it to him. He picked a little bit of lead guitar and I would play rhythm for it and the old man would play the fiddle. After that I got a little bit more confident and started experimenting more on the neck and doing a little lead myself.

When did you first start playing professionally?

When I was about sixteen there was a little band there and they invited me to come pick with them and play lead guitar. I'd gotten to where I could pick a few little things. I had a old Stewart guitar, got me a little pick-up to put on it and someone else had an amp they run it through. I'd kick-off and turn-around a little bit for them and do a little singing. It evolved from that. I went on to meet other pickers and eventually went to Nashville with the Bailey Brothers.

How did you get that job?

I was working in the bakery then and my boss man was a musician. The Bailey Brothers where in town and I wanted to see them, so I pled my case to the boss man and he said, "George, go on." So I went over there and Junior Huskey and another boy didn't show up. Charlie Bailey said, "Do you play the bass?" I had had a bass in my hand about three times and never really played one, but I said, "I'll try it." He said, "Well, just anything to fill in here. They are expecting a full band and we don't have it. There is just the three of us." So it was Dan and Charlie Bailey, an old time fiddler named Curly King, and me on bass. There was another boy there that played the dobro about like I played the bass and he helped fill in too.

I knew the fundamentals on the bass and I had an ear for music and timing, so I was able to find the "boom-boom" on the bass that night and played enough to get by. After the show they come in and said, "You've been kind enough to help us, would you finish out the week with us?" I said I would. I went back and told my boss man and he said, "George, you go on and finish out the week with them."

We were playing around Wilkesboro and Taylorsville and places like that, but they were staying in the hotel over in Hickory. I caught the bus down there the next morning and finished out the week with them. Before the week was out, Charlie called me over to the side and said, "I'd like to take you to Nashville with me. If you'll go, I'll give you a job." I had just turned seventeen, so I said, "Let me go home and talk to my momma and daddy and my boss man at the bakery."

I went and talked to them about it. I was making about twenty dollars a week at the bakery and daddy was making about twenty and my sister, who was spinning in

the cotton mill, was making about the same thing. Well, they offered me about sixty dollars a week with all my road expenses. That was as much as all three of us was making. That was my plea. It sounded good to them and they consented.

Where did you go from there?

My next job was with "Mustard and Gravy." I worked with them for a long while. They were a black-faced comedy routine that worked out of Wilson. They had made some pictures. We would travel with the pictures and perform. I stayed with them until they broke up and then I went on to work with Charlie Slade a good long while. We got hooked up with the Liberty Network working at the Carolina Theater in Spruce Pine. Jim and Jesse came down, and Hoke Jenkins was already there. Hoke had worked with Jim and Jesse down in Augusta, Georgia for a while. We formed a band while we were there and worked on that network until it folded.

We then went up to Asheville and worked on the old original "Farm Hour." Hoke had been up there before. We worked there for several months. It was a real bad winter and about snowed us out. The car just sat there for several weeks and we had to walk to the radio station. We had to call and cancel most of our dates because of all the snow up on that mountain. I came home on the 23rd of December. This was in 1950.

On the 28th of December, Carter Stanley called me and asked if I would like a job with them. They were leaving Bristol and going to WBLK in Versailles, Kentucky where Flatt and Scruggs had just left. Jodie Rainwater, who was booking for Flatt and Scruggs, gave us his date book with all of the schools, and courthouses, and theaters that they had played. It was a sent blessing because we would just call them to set up the dates. We played that out and then went to WOAY in Oak Hill, West Virginia, and worked a good long time there.

What do you mean when you say you "played that out?"

The good money at each station would last about six months. When you started repeating, it would burn out and we would move on to another station. From Oak Hill, West Virginia, we went to Pikeville, Kentucky and worked there on that station, then we went back to Bristol. After that the Stanleys went to Florida and I didn't go with them when they first went down,

but I went down later and spent four or five years down there.

After that, the records were big enough that we didn't need a home base to play out of so I moved back to Valdese. Most of our dates at that time were up north on the weekends, so they would come and pick me up and we'd go, or I would drive and meet them. A lot of the time it was just the three of us and we'd pick someone else up to play with us at the show.

I was with the Stanleys up until the time Carter died. I guess I rode the last miles with him. It was a hard, sad thing there. I guess I stayed on with Ralph for close to a year after that, but then I got road weary and I went back home. My second love was always livestock - the buying and selling of horses. We started doing that then and we are still doing it now.

I stayed home about a year and I went back with Ralph for another year after that, then I got a job with Harrell and Reno working the Wheeling Jamboree and we had a lot of dates up North and into Canada. I stayed with them two years. I came home for a while and then, bless to goodness, I went back with Ralph another year. After that we started the Shuffler Family Band with the children. We were doing gospel singing at churches and with that, you know, it is "chicken one week and feathers the next," so we didn't want to do that full time. But we hit that for twenty-two and half years. The children never did quit their jobs. We only played on weekends, but we went out about 50 weekends a year.

I heard that the Stanleys began to feature lead guitar on their records at the suggestion of a producer, is that true?

It was Sid Nathan. He liked the Delmore Brothers and said that they had made a good showing, so he suggested we use some guitar. Bill Napier was the Stanley's mandolin player at the time and he did that first album with them on lead guitar and I played bass on it. He done that "Old Mountain Dew" with quick wrist mandolin licks on the guitar and that is what Carter wanted me to play when I took over on guitar, but I wouldn't do it because that didn't fit the guitar as far as I was concerned.

How did you come up with your crosspicking technique?

When we went out a lot of times it was just the three of us, Ralph, Carter, and myself. Back then all there was on



George Shuffler with the Stanley Brothers at Oberlin College, March 11, 1962. Left to right: Chick Stripling, Ralph Stanley, George Shuffler, and Carter Stanley (hidden)

lead guitar was Maybelle Carter and Merle Travis, and neither one of those styles fit what the Stanleys sang. They sang those slow, mournful mountain songs with long dwells at the end of a line. That crosspicking roll filled in when they stopped to swallow and get their breath. Little single string stuff just wouldn't fill it in. The crosspicking roll would make it full and solid. Since it was just the three of us, God knows we needed all the help we could get. We had to make every lick count.

But Carter didn't like it. He said, "Is that all you can do?" I said, "Well, that is what I want to do." He wanted me to use that quick wrist single string stuff and I said that if he wanted that he needed to get him a mandolin player. I like to play what I like, and I didn't like to play that.

Soon after that we went to record and Chuck Sikes was the engineer. We were in there doing something and I was doing some crosspicking in the background. Chuck said, "George, my God, what are you doing there!" I said, "I'm messing up I guess. I don't know." He said, "Well I like that. That is filling in, put some more of that in there." After they liked it and the records came out, it got to catching on. If I had of known it was going to catch on

like that, I would have tried to have done it a little better!

When you were playing live shows I suppose that most people in the audience were not accustomed to hearing lead guitar in a bluegrass band. How was it accepted?

Oh, Lord 'O Mercy, they ate it up. I remember we played the big festival in Newport, Rhode Island, and we would do things like "Little Glass Of Wine," and by then my crosspicking was working, and I would take a break on that and there would be an uproar. They would scream and holler and applaud more than you ever saw. Then they would quiet down and listen to the verse and want me to pick another one. I would do it and here they come again. I didn't know whether they was liking it, making fun of me, laughing, with me, or at me. But I was having fun and come to find out that they were more serious than I was. They accepted it from the very start.

Did you always use the down-down-up pick direction?

Yes. That is the only way you can do it. There was another fella that did it a little different, but there was a jump, or a lopé,

in it. It wasn't solid. When you go "two down and one up" it is just as solid as a rock. The main thing is that you try to keep ahead on your chord progressions when you are going to change because you've got to break your lick. I've learned to change the chord and just keep rolling.

What are some of your thoughts about timing and rhythm?

If you don't have time, you don't have anything. Me and Carter and Ralph had talked about this a thousand times. I would rather have a man who could pick three chords and play them in time and be dependable, than to have one who could play all over the neck of the instrument but didn't have time. Ninety percent of it is timing. If you ain't got timing, you are fighting a lost cause.

There are some people that are absolutely born with no sense of time whatsoever. I've tried to play with them. They could pick, I mean burn it up, but they learned to play by themselves and they just come in and out when they want to and they even jump time on themselves. You can't play with them. There is no way.

You can learn some other little frillies if you've got time, but if you ain't got time, you don't have any base or foundation to go from.

Did timing come naturally to you, or did you work on it?

I have always had perfect timing. I have always had time that anyone could rely on. If I was playing bass and I set a time, they didn't pull me nowhere that I didn't want to go. The boys depended on that. Same with the guitar. I believe in timing on all of it. I hate to start playing a tune and someone starts speeding on me. That kills me. It is like trying to hold the whole world back. You can't pick unless you are at ease with it. You can't do that if you have to watch everyone around you.

In the Shuffler Family Band there was seven of us. We used to get in the practice room and I could tell if one voice was out a little bit or if one instrument was out of tune, or if someone missed a lick or something. They said, "How in the world can you listen to seven people all the time?" I said, "I don't know, but it is my responsibility. I'm not going to take you out of here half-cocked to half do anything. If we can't do it right, we'll stay at the house. That was the foundation for our success I think, was doing it right.

When you are singing harmony, there are four parts. I don't want no one coming over on me and I am not about to go over on anybody. Ralph Stanley said, "You roll with me better than anyone I ever sang with." I appreciated that about as much as any compliment I ever got. You know Ralph, he is like an elevator. I learned to roll with Ralph. I could tell if he was going to roll one up or roll one down and I would stay right on his back all the time.

What about your bass playing? I have heard people say that you brought the bass to a whole new level in bluegrass.

Well, at the time, everybody was just "boom-boom-boom." I figured that every time I hit down here with my right hand, there was a place for my left hand. On the bass scale, it might be a tenor note, it might be a baritone, it might be lead. But there is a drive there and there is a position on that neck every time you pick it down here with your right. So I kind of created that, they call it the "Shuffler bass." I was just looking for something that fit and something that everybody else wasn't doing.

So in developing your style on both guitar and bass you were really just looking for something that fit the music?

And something that was different. But it didn't come overnight. If you've got something you are interested in and want to do right, you are going to work at it and try to be a little different, but still do it in taste.

If you don't play the melody of a song, you can have it, I don't want it. This idea of getting up there just to show you how much I know on the guitar, it don't fit with me, I don't like it.

My philosophy all along has been that you just go by gut feeling. If you create you a little lick, try to adapt it to what you do. Don't go out and grab what other people do. If you got you something going, don't mess it up with someone else's thoughts and ideas.

Back then, everybody was a Maybelle Carter guitar picker and I said, "Well that just don't work with the Stanley Brothers. We ought to do something that will get attention." When I first went with them, Peewee Lambert had been singing with them and he was just about a Bill Monroe carbon copy. When he left they brought in Curly Seckler for a little while, but he

didn't stay long and they said, "What are we going to do?" I said, "Well, we can sing these things. Let's just drop it down. Ralph you sing a tenor and I'll sing a low baritone instead of a high baritone." We started singing it that way and people liked it.

When you were working to develop your style of playing, did you "woodshed" or did you just work things out while you were performing?

We didn't practice. That was a no-no with us. We didn't call no practice. We practiced every night on the stage. That kept it fresh. If we got a new one, Carter would say, "Well here's one we are going to try on you. Kick it off." And we would just dive into it. When it is fresh, you are going to give it extra attention. You are going to give it your very best while you are doing it because you are practicing it on stage. But the crowd don't know it unless you tell them. You learn a lot quicker when you miss it one time on the stage, you are going to come back and get that part of it the next time.

One time we was going to record two albums with twelve cuts on each album and I'd been at home for a while. My fingers were tender as could be. We were headed up to Cincinnati to record and about the time we got to Lexington, Carter turned around, looked at me in the back seat and said "Aunt," he called me "Aunt George," he said, "Aunt, what are we going to do? We got twenty-four songs looking us in the face." Well we got busy and got to scraping around there and we got the country album done and then come the gospel album. We did "Beautiful Star of Bethlehem" and all those good ole songs on there and we all got over there around the piano and wrote the one that Ricky Skaggs recorded "Hallelujah I'm Ready To Go."

So you all did not rehearse as a band, but did you practice on your own when you were back home?

No. When I got home I didn't want to see a guitar. I didn't want no part of a guitar. Most of the time we were only at home two or three days and then we were right back on the road again. If we come up on a new song maybe we would get back stage and work it up. It would come just like "Will You Miss Me." Carter started singing that one day and said, "This is a good old song here." He sung a verse of it

and looked over at me. I took a break on it and I never did change that break. The first time I done it, that suited me and that is the way I recorded it and that is the way it will go down in history. Then "Single Girl," the first time Carter sung that I just done a little break on it and we featured it that night. I never did change a lick on it. It is the same licks on the record as I did the first time out of the chute.

My practice was in my mind more than it was in my fingers because I could hear a tune and go over it in my mind and then I could do it. I knew my positions and my licks and the changes it would take to do it. So I could sit down and play it without a lot of problem.

When you played with the Stanleys you were playing a Gibson weren't you?

Yeah, it was an old J-45. I bought it for \$70 without a case. Buster Mathis ran a little jewelry store there in Longview, this side of Hickory, and he had access to Gibson instruments. He had ordered it for this boy that went into the service and never picked it up. I found out about it and went down there and he said, "Just give me my money back. I ordered it for him and now he is gone and I don't want it here gathering dust, so you can have it for the money." I had just turned seventeen and my daddy took me down there. I rode home with it between my knees afraid I would get it scuffed up. I still have that guitar.

Do you use a fairly stiff pick?

No, I like a limber pick. Its pretty light. I use a little old orange one that I have had for about fifteen years now. That one pick, if I'd lose it, I'd feel like quitting. I've got picks of all sorts that people give me, but I just use my little orange one.

What gauge strings to you use?

I like medium. I have a 1980 model Martin D-45 that I play now. It is getting well seasoned. Its getting to where it will jar your belly when you play on those low strings. There are people who have offered to buy it, but I think I'll keep it.

What do you want to be most remembered by in your bluegrass career?

It has nothing to do with music. I would want to be remembered as a fellow who was well liked and had friends who respected him.

Shuffler Crosspicking

In 1990, to satisfy fans and guitar players who wanted a big dose of Shuffler crosspicking, George recorded a cassette titled "Cross Picking." All of the ten tunes are instrumentals and George plays lead guitar, rhythm guitar, and bass on the recording.

So that our readers can get a good dose of crosspicking practice, we have provided the transcriptions to three of the tunes that appear on George's cassette, "Bury Me Beneath the Willow," "Will The Circle Be Unbroken," and "Will You Miss Me." Remember its "Down-Down-Up"!

The "Cross Picking" tape is still available directly from George. Send \$10 (includes postage) to:

George Shuffler
4897 Lakeview Acres Rd
Valdese, NC 28690

Bury Me Beneath The Willow

Arr. by George Shuffler
Transcribed by John McGann

Capo 2nd

1 G G C

5 G D7

9 D7 G C

13 G D G

□ = downstroke √ = upstroke

Will The Circle Be Unbroken

Arr. by George Shuffler
Transcribed by John McGann

2nd solo break

1 G G

5 C G

9 G G G

13 D G

20

▀ = downstroke \ = upstroke

Performance Notes by John McGann

The ‘forward roll’ is the main technique used in these pieces, which phrases groups of three notes on adjacent ascending strings—for example, strings 4,3 and 2, or D G B: down/down/up. As you may be aware, a bar of 4/4 time has eight 8th notes per bar, so to crosspick a one bar pattern, you’d need to ‘turn around’ the phrase to begin on beat one of the second bar, for example down/down/up down/down/up down/up. However, there are many ways to break up the pattern, and they are well illustrated

here.

Note that I have indicated pick directions for the first few bars, to get you started— you will get a feel for the crosspicking pattern and be able to apply it to the other groupings of three notes as you encounter them.

In “Bury Me Beneath the Willow” the first full bar features the 3 note pattern twice, and ends with a single quarter note down stroke. At bar 6, the pattern extends over 6 quarter note beats (12 eighth notes), it comes out evenly as $3 \times 4 = 12$. In the intro to “Will You Miss Me”,

the pattern extends over 3 bars—12 quarter note beats, or 24 eighth notes : $3 \times 8 = 24$. I doubt George was concerned with any mathematics, but it may help you to see how the pattern connects over time, and help give you a feel for applying the technique to your own ideas.

Look for other ways the 3 note pattern is used in these pieces. As always, the sooner you can get away from the written page and get the music ‘in your head’ and hands, the sooner you’ll absorb the feel for the music.

Intro and 1st break

Capo 4th

Will You Miss Me

Arr. by George Shuffler

Transcribed by John McGann

G

The tablature consists of six staves, each representing a string of the guitar. The top staff shows the melody line, while the bottom staff shows harmonic patterns. Chords are indicated above the staff at various points: D (measures 1-2), G (measures 6-7), G7 (measures 7-8), C (measures 11-12), G (measures 12-13), G (measures 13-14), D (measures 16-17), and G (measures 20-21). Measures are numbered 1 through 21 above the staff. Fret numbers are indicated below the strings for specific notes.



Evaluating Your Own Performance

by Craig Vance

In this article, I'm touching on the ways that you can effectively evaluate, or critique your own stage performance. It is something that we all should do following each engagement. A self-critique will help guide you through the rough spots and assist you in keeping your performance batteries charged. It will also help you mature as a musician and allow your abilities to expand to their full potential.

Two of the preferred ways of grading your performance are by video and/or audio tapes. If you have one or both of these devices available for your gig, I strongly suggest using them. Make advance arrangements with the sound person, and they can generally let you know if they can run the equipment through their system. If it is possible to run the deck (or decks) through the house system, that is your best bet. This will give you the clearest idea of what signal you were sending to through the house. If you have someone control a tape machine in the audience, you'll get a better idea of what was going through the speakers. This will give you a fairly good idea of what the audience heard. The difference between the two will boggle your mind.

Generally the board tape will give you the signal sound. This is sometimes the best source for picking things apart. The audience tape will tell you what adjustments need to be made on the more professional performance end. If you are in a band, pass the tape(s) around so the other band members can grade their performance as well. When everyone has listened to their parts and critiqued themselves sufficiently, get together and discuss what everyone felt about the show, and then fire the screwball . . . sorry, I mean work out all necessary changes that need to be made.

Using your ear throughout the actual performance is the best way to decide if you need to make modifications in your playing. Just keep in mind that you're most likely more critical of your playing than

the majority of the audience. If you aren't, then stop giving you mother free tickets to the show (sorry Mom).

You will probably have a few shows where you won't feel that you played as well as you could have. Afterwards someone in the audience may approach you and praise your playing. I've had this happen a few times. I used to say, "Thanks, but I thought I played like #*%?", until someone mentioned that by me saying that, they felt as if they didn't know what they were talking about. Now I just smile and say, "Thank you very much, I'm glad you enjoyed it." It's a good thing to keep in mind that your listeners are sensitive people and that you can easily send them the wrong message. Take the compliment and file it away someplace safe so you can reach back for it when you REALLY need it.

When reviewing your show, as soon as you locate the problem areas of your performance, make a note of them so you can later focus your practice time on them. We all tend to jump at the chance to learn a new hot lick or a tune from a new recording, and sometimes forget to attack the weaknesses during practice hours. You'll find that if you can get through the tough spots by laboring over them, the next hurdle is much less cumbersome. This is quality practice and is certainly the most productive, though it may get a little boring. However, it's okay to take the first fifteen or twenty minutes of practice by playing a familiar pattern. This will enable you to utilize maximum dexterity when you approach your "homework."

When it comes down to the basics, it's practice. The more you can pick up your guitar and run through a finger twister or two, the better off you'll be come show time. I hate to use the old adage that it's just like riding a bike, but it does apply. If you can maintain some form of consistency in your practicing, the less likely you'll fall down.

Keep a flatpick handy, and use it often!

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Beginner's Page

by Dan Huckabee



The hand that holds the pick is the hand that's holding the gun.

It's natural that when we watch the greats, we're looking at the flying fingers running all over that fingerboard. Actually we're watching a "magician" rather than a "musician", because his fingerboard hand is keeping you occupied while his pick hand is making the music. It's a trick.

My point is that the hand that holds the pick must be trained with very specific details that create efficiency, speed, volume, and flowing smoothness. We really don't just pick up the sport of golf and start swinging the club correctly. In golf, we take lessons. Flatpicking should be the same thing. You don't have to learn hundreds of

fiddle tunes and solos to "singing songs", you just have to learn to hit the ball, but you gotta get lots of details working together to be able to hit the ball, and have it fly up into the air.

You will be surprised that right hand technique required to allow you to perfect a fiddle tune, and get it up to speed, has as many details as a golf swing. The good news is, if you take the time and the patience to develop your "guitar swing", you'll only have to learn it once, and then you can use it on every song you ever learn.

Last issue we talked about pick direction, and it's part of the equation, but it's specific to each individual song. What we are going to talk about today, is how to hold the pick and swing it correctly. This "should"

be perfected before you ever learn your first song and if you've been playing for years, it should be done before your "next" song.

It starts with the right pick. A very heavy pick. Why? Because if your pick is flexible, you won't be! A stiff pick forces you to give, and a flexible pick allows you to stiffen up. You should use one of the two blunt corners of your pick rather than the pointed corner. Why? Because the pointed corner has a tendency to get "hung" in the strings.

Hold your hand out like you intend to shake hands, curl your fingers around about half way till they come within an inch of touching your palm, keep your thumb up, lay the pick down

on top of your pointer (you might call it the side of your pointer), point a blunt corner of the pick out toward your guitar, drop your thumb down on the pick.

Now, your pick is laying on the side of your finger (not pinched between the inside of your finger and thumb). Feels weird don't it! Now lay the big pad muscle of your thumb on the saddle of your guitar. Lift the lower end of your hand so that it doesn't touch the guitar, lay the pick on the 4th string, and relax. You are in position.

We are only going to allow movement from the wrist! Not from the thumb.....Not from the elbow.....Not from the shoulder. The wrist should turn only up and down, not side to side (like turning a doorknob). It will pivot from the lower thumb, which is anchored to the guitar. This anchor point will move up and down in a track so that you can move into position for the lowest and highest strings. All of the hand except the lower thumb will be free of the guitar to allow freedom of movement. Fingers are not "posted" to the fingerboard as in fingerpicking.

Never attack a string from a distance. Lay the pick on the string then simply turn your wrist till the pick is laying on the next string below. If your hand was relaxed, the pick "opened" a little between your fingers, and you heard the sound of the D string ring out. Now you are laying (resting) on the G string.

The follow-thru in flatpicking is "NO" follow-thru. A swimmer needs to use his arms above water as little as possible. He's not swimming till he gets his arms back in the water. Any expressive extra "show biz" movement will simply slow him down. Flatpicking guitar is a race. The fastest picker wins. The expressive flamboyant right hand loses. You lay on the string and your goal is to be resting lazily on the next lower string. That's how you play a note. That's how you swing the "guitar golf club". That's the "guitar swing".

Dazzling flatpicking!

--Billboard

Beppe Gambetta



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You'll see many players pick like they are turning a door knob. In other words, picking out away from the guitar. This creates a thin, quiet, narrow frequency range tone, and it gets you too far away from the next note you will be needing to play.

The only exception to follow-thru is when up-picking. In other words, all the above discussion is in reference to picking down. Setting up for picking down, sets the stage for your general positioning. When you pick up you don't follow-thru into the string above. You simply pick it. To clarify: everything is oriented from the down picking act and this sets the shape of your technique.

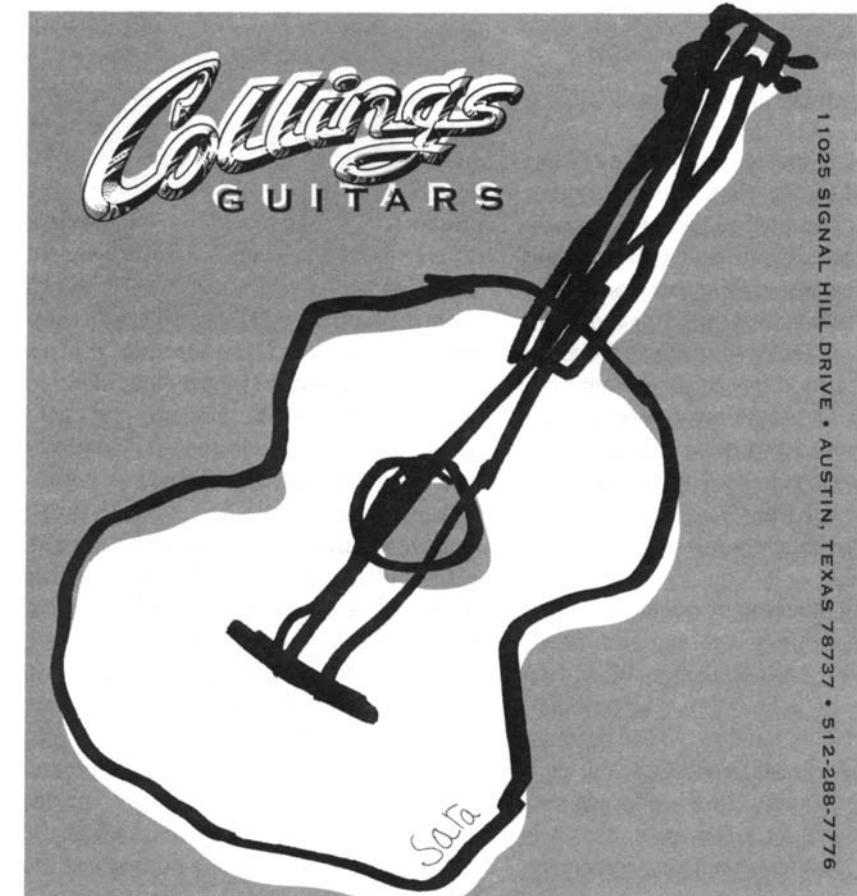
If you master this technique, you will have the most efficient pick technique possible, and any deviations from it will be more successful. Be forewarned that if your current technique is different, that you will be dropping your pick a lot until you get used to it.

I've had a dozen different swim, golf, archery and guitar teachers and all but one in each sport were drastically misleading me. There are many ways to skin the cat, and I have proven to myself from a lifelong study that all other methods are obviously less efficient. I've seen great body builders lifting weights wrong, but hey, I couldn't argue with their big muscles. Two of the worst pick techniques I've ever seen were on Jimi Hendrix and Doc Watson, but man do I ever worship and adore those two. I don't however, emulate either of their pick hands.

If any lesson needs video it's the above. If you'd like action video clarification, this lesson is in my video called simply "Bluegrass Guitar Video" by Dan Huckabee.

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Flatpick Profile: 1994 Winfield Champ Mike Whitehead

When you are at a show and the performer is introduced on stage as the "1994 National Flatpicking Champion," you know that you are probably about to be dazzled. So when I heard Maryville, Tennessee, native Mike Whitehead play at Steve Kaufman's first flatpicking camp concert series in 1996, I knew before he picked a note that his performance would be impressive. But what I was not prepared for was the wonderfully rich, full, fat, warm, and clear tone that filled the room once he set pick to strings. My first thought was, "What kind of guitar is he playing and how is he pulling this incredible tone out of it?"

I found out that the guitar was a John Arnold Brazilian Rosewood dreadnought with an Engelmann Spruce top, the pick was a medium thickness tortoise shell, and the strings were John Pearse medium 80/20. OK, that's a great start. But even given those tools, I wondered what he was doing with his right hand to entice Pearse, Tortoise, Brazilian and Engelmann to work so well together. What I discovered about Mike's right hand may surprise you.

Tone

When asked about his tone, Mike Whitehead says, "On any instrument that I play the things I have concentrated on the most are appropriateness of the notes within the song and tone. I have spent endless hours through the years working on nothing but tone."

Before Mike took up the guitar at seventeen, he had been a banjo player since the age of thirteen. He credits his banjo teacher, Bill Chambers, for teaching him about the importance of good tone. Mike says, "Bill would tab out an Earl Scruggs tune and I would come back and thought I could play it note-for-note. But Bill would say, 'No, you didn't play it note-for-note, listen closely.' He would point out the little accents, the positioning of the right hand, the angle the picks would hit the string, and other technical details about how to change the tone. So I got a great foundation for tone while playing the banjo."

Mike started playing banjo in a bluegrass

band when he was about fourteen. A few years later the guitar player had to leave the band and Mike took over on guitar because the band could not find another guitar player, but did find someone else who could play banjo. Incidentally, in addition to the guitar and banjo, Mike is also quite accomplished on the mandolin, fiddle, viola, mandola, and bass.

When Mike first started playing the guitar in the band, he had switched instruments, but he kept his banjo picks. He first learned to play guitar using Merle Travis fingerstyle leads and Lester Flatt style thumb and index finger back-up. About a year later, when he was eighteen, Mike met local guitar hero Steve Kaufman. Steve said, "Hey, have you ever tried to play that guitar with a flatpick." Impressed with Kaufman's playing, Mike took about three months of lessons from Steve in order to wean himself from the fingerpicks and learn the basics of flatpicking the guitar.

Now here comes the surprising part. Although Steve Kaufman had taught Mike how to hold the pick and attack the strings in the conventional flatpicking style (see Steve's column on right hand technique in Volume 1, Number 2), Mike has since totally reversed his right hand attack. When he executes a downstroke, the back edge of the pick hits the strings, and when he executes the upstroke, the forward edge of the pick hits the strings.

In other words, as Mike begins to push the pick down through a string, his thumb joint bends backwards about 90 degrees and the edge of the pick closest to his palm strikes through the string, and vice-versa on the way up. He says, "Ninety percent of guitar players will use the front edge of the pick on the down stroke and the back edge on the upstroke. Mine is just opposite. If you held the pick the normal way and then just started bending your thumb joint back to push the back edge of the pick



through the string, that is the way I hold the pick."

When asked about how he came up with his right hand technique, Mike said, "When I started playing guitar, the first year I was real frustrated with my tone. The second year I focused on very little except tone. My whole goal for that year on the guitar was to have improved my tone by the end of the year. A lot of that was listening closely in headphones to Tony Rice and Mark O'Connor and different people who I thought had nice tone. I was trying different picks, trying different hand positions, different finger positions, different body positions, different string pressures, and different types of strings."

Mike continues, "I would record the exact same sequence of notes holding my pick maybe three or four different ways with my hand in different positions, then switch picks and try the same thing with different picks. Finally, after a year, I decided that I was getting the tone I was looking for."

Mike discovered that while he was not able to get quite as much power and speed when utilizing his unorthodox right hand attack, his overall tone and efficiency improved by allowing the thumb joint on the right hand to provide much of the articulation. Mike states, "Between my fingers, wrist, and elbow, I would say that

fifty percent of my movement is in the thumb, forty in my wrist, and no more than ten in my elbow. My thumb joint moves constantly when I am playing."

Mike concludes his thoughts about tone by saying, "The one thing that I am probably most proud of in my playing is that I try to get a nice tone and clear, real meaty, notes. I am also very fortunate to have this awesome John Arnold guitar. It is almost like an extension of my body. It really plays for me. It has a real lively top and it just sings."

Although Mike loves his Arnold guitar, he is also very proud of his brand new Dudenbostel 000-size koa guitar built by Knoxville luthier Lynn Dudenbostel (see article on page 21 of this issue). Mike says, "Lynn Dudenbostel's workmanship is excellent and he was really flexible as far as adding the custom features that I wanted. The guitar has excellent tone and playability. It is everything I want in an instrument." In addition to the Arnold and the Dudenbostel, Mike has played a Gallagher "71 Special" and the Collings D2H that he won at Winfield in 1994.

Winfield

Mike Whitehead won the National Flatpicking Championship at the Walnut Valley festival in Winfield, Kansas, the first year he entered. Although he had been playing contests on various instruments since he was fourteen, he did not enter the Winfield contest until he was thirty years old.

When asked about his trip to Winfield, Mike says that in the Spring of 1994 three of his friends, Tim Harbin, and Danny and Alan Johnson, called and asked Mike if he wanted to go along with them to Winfield that Fall. Mike agreed, but had not intended to even enter the contest until some friends talked him into it. While the decision to enter the contest may have been casual, his preparation for the contest, once he decided to enter, was not.

Starting in the Spring of 1994, Mike spent the first month of preparation "getting his arm back in shape." He played the guitar for one hour every morning before work and then two more hours every evening after work. On weekends he began to book jobs whenever he could. During this first month of practice he tried to find six or seven fiddle tunes, out of the dozens that he knew, that would best express his music. He says, "I really never thought about winning the contest. I focused on playing

music that I thought would represent me. My only goal when I went was to have everyone enjoy my guitar playing."

After the first month of "getting back in shape," Mike spent the next two months working out arrangements of the six tunes he had chosen. He says that he did not limit himself to having every note planned out because he felt like that would make the music sound stale. Instead, he wanted to just get a feel for the direction he wanted each tune to go and have a rough outline of what he wanted to play. During this time period he played each tune at least twice a day and played them a little bit differently each day.

Mike says that weekends were his "trial and error" time. He would get together with a friend who would play rhythm for him and then purposely try to get himself lost while playing the tune. He says, "I would do something out of the ordinary and back myself into a corner just to make sure I could get out."

For the last two months before the contest Mike continued with a dedicated practice regime that included the use of an imaging technique. He says that every night before he went to bed he would run through each tune in his head while visualizing his hands, fingers, pick, and fretboard. He states the he feels like the intense visualization training helped as much as the practice time he spent with guitar in hand.

For final preparation, two weeks before the contest, Mike went to a local open mike night and played all of his contest tunes, which were: "Whiskey Before Breakfast," "Cuckoo's Nest," "Lime Rock," and "Beaumont Rag." Mike says that the net result of all his preparation was that he was very relaxed, comfortable, and confident when he walked up on the stage at Winfield.

As they say, "the rest is history." Mike was crowned Winfield champion for 1994. Due to his hard work, strict practice regime, and preparation, Mike not only won a new guitar and achieved the notoriety bestowed upon the National Champion, he became a better guitar player. Mike says, "The preparation for Winfield helped get me to another level with the guitar."

The Future

For the past few years Mike Whitehead has been mostly singing and playing guitar as a solo act. He says that three or four times a year he will also put on a variety show where he will play the guitar, fiddle,

and mandolin while bringing up various groups of band members to play and sing with him during the show. His material covers a broad range of Appalachian, Scottish, bluegrass, folk, acoustic jazz, and original material. He loves three and four part harmonies and always includes these vocal numbers in the show. In 1996 Mike recorded and produced a cassette tape highlighting his broad musical abilities and interests. The cassette, titled "Acoustic Timbre," features Mike on guitar, mandolin, fiddle, banjo, and vocals.

When asked about the future Mike said, "I am still trying to find my special niche in the music world. My goals this year are to learn a little bit more Celtic music and put together a solo show with just myself and my guitar. I have really shifted focus away from other instruments this year and concentrated on guitar and vocals. I would like to come up with a second tape by the end of 1998 and it will probably be about half instrumental and half vocal."

On the next page we have provided Mike's arrangement of "Cowgirl's Sweetheart" which appears on his "Acoustic Timbre" cassette.

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Cowgirl's Sweetheart

Arr. by Mike Whitehead

As played by Mike Whitehead on his release "Acoustic Timbre"

G

7 7 8 9 10 0 0 8 0 0 7 0 0 5 0 0 3 0 3 0 3 4 3 2

A

5 0 3 0 5 0 5 0 7 6 5 0 10 9 12 9 10 0 9 10 0 2 5 0 2 5 2 0 3 2 0

D

2 0 5 5 5 7 5 7 0 4 6 4 6 0 3 5 3 5 3 2 3 0 3 0 3 0 1 2 1 0 3

G

0 2 0 3 0 11 10 12 11 11 10 12 11 12 11 12 11 12 9 10 To fiddle break

Notes on the music

(by Mike Whitehead):

This is a Western song I have always liked. The guitar solo that came out of me on this cut is not typical of my playing style. I generally search for interesting, original ways to play around the melody of a song. However, this break is more like a series of small segments bonded together by chord changes. Part of the break was

influenced by a Suzy Bogguss version of the song and the rest was improvisation.

I tried to keep the song traditional so we all wore cowboy hats in the studio. Seriously, I wanted this to be a "happy" toe tapping version of the song that would make people feel good as they listened to it. The triplets in the middle of the guitar solo use a single down stroke of the pick for the 1st note with a hammer and pull of

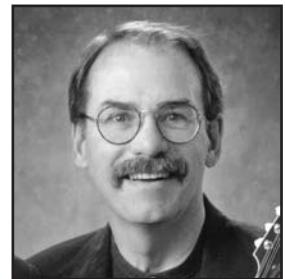
for the 2nd and 3rd notes of the triplet. I ended the break up the neck to help create a smooth transition area for the fiddle. This break ends 3/4 of the way through the 17th measure, which further substantiates my belief that the music world is inhabited by 3 kinds of guitar players – those who can count and those who cannot.

Flatpick Rhythm Guitar

H.O.



by Joe Carr



Del McCoury: A True Blueblood of Bluegrass

The passing of Bill Monroe has been a traumatic event for many bluegrass fans. Now that the father of the music is gone, what will happen to his music? With Del McCoury in the picture, however, fans have nothing to worry about and a lot to look forward to.

Born in 1939 in North Carolina, McCoury became a banjo player after hearing Flatt and Scruggs live. (See *Bluegrass Unlimited*, July 1997 for a feature article.) Although he became an accomplished player, he gave up the banjo to play guitar with Bill Monroe's group. During his short stint with Monroe in the early 1960s, McCoury recorded three songs including "Roll On Buddy, Roll On" (see next page). His singing with Monroe has been compared to the early recordings of Monroe with Jimmy Martin. For first time bluegrass listeners, McCoury's voice may sound extreme, but for hardcore fans he is the definition of bluegrass - high, edgy and lonesome. As many younger groups attempt to "smooth out" the sound of bluegrass, McCoury continues to produce new and exciting music with a strong traditional stamp. With the addition of McCoury's sons Ronnie and Rob, on mandolin and banjo respectively, the Del McCoury Band gained a youthful energy and drive while retaining the power and

tradition of Del's great voice.

McCoury's rhythm guitar playing is the perfect complement for his singing. His rhythm is strong with lots of interesting bass runs. On fast songs, his rhythm has a light feel that seems to float along between the mandolin and banjo. Played in this way, rhythm guitar helps create the drive that really good bluegrass bands have. Nothing kills that drive quicker than a heavy or sluggish rhythm guitar!

Notes to transcriptions: The first transcription is the uptempo Wilburn Brothers song "Roll On Buddy, Roll On." McCoury's driving rhythm really comes up in volume underneath Monroe's mandolin solo. Recorded in 1964 with perhaps only one or two microphones, Bill and Del probably stepped up to the microphone while the rest of the band took a step back.

McCoury takes a very traditional and straight forward approach to this standard. Try two rest strokes at the end of measure 3. The walkdown in measure 4 is very useful. Add it to your list. Notice there is no alternation in the bass during the C (4) chord. Try the rest stroke again between measures 11 and 12.

"Willie Roy" comes from the 1968 gem "Del McCoury Sings Bluegrass." This

slower song features a triplet figure in the recurring G run. Practice playing the triplet in measure 1 by itself. Slow down the hammer-on enough to get a definite "duh-duh-duh" or "tri-pul-et" sound to the lick. There is a great G to C lick in measure 2 and a bluesy C to D lick in measure 4. My favorite is the C to D lick in measure 12.

"The Bluest Man in Town" comes from "A Deeper Shade Of Blue." This Bill Monroe waltz epitomizes McCoury's classic lonesome bluegrass sound. This 1993 recording features the "bluegrass G" chord form (third fret, first and second string) giving the guitar a modal or less major sound. Notice the partial strum of the G chord on beat one of measures 1 and 2 instead of the more traditional single G bass note. This effect fills out the band and drives the music along.

Compare the G run in measure 3 to the one in measure 7. The second run uses an F note (third fret, fourth string) rather than the more common E (second fret, fourth string.) The F is the flat 7 note of the G scale and gives the lick a decidedly bluesy flavor. Listen for this kind of sound throughout McCoury's new music.

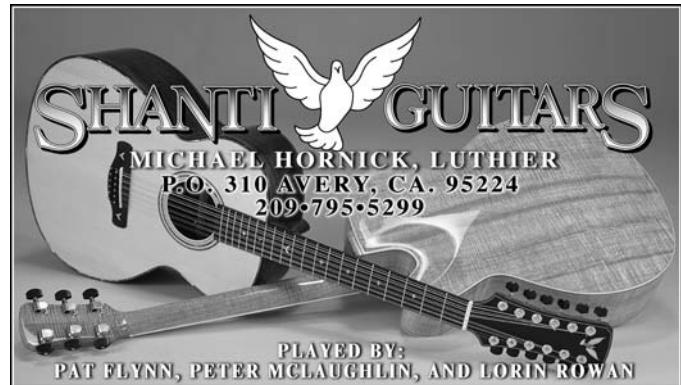
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The tablature consists of two staves. The top staff starts with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (G major), and a 3/4 time signature. The bottom staff starts with a bass clef, a key signature of no sharps or flats (D major), and a 5/4 time signature. Both staves feature six horizontal lines representing guitar strings. Fingerings are indicated above the strings, and strumming patterns are shown with vertical strokes. The top staff includes measures 1 through 10, with labels 'G', 'H', and 'G' appearing above certain measures. The bottom staff includes measures 1 through 10, with labels 'C', 'D', 'G', 'H', and 'G' appearing above certain measures.

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Dudenbostel Guitars

by Bryan Kimsey

You may have heard that the golden age of lutherie is here and now, I can guarantee you it's no rumor. Small, individual builders are building some incredible guitars and mandolins that match or exceed the best work ever done. In past issues, we've looked at Collings and Lucas guitars and this issue we're looking at another hot luthier: Lynn Dudenbostel, of Knoxville, TN.

Dudenbostel's guitars have received rave reviews. John Mickelson, the fossil walrus ivory king, recently sold all his vintage guitars upon receiving a Dudenbostel. "The search is over", he proclaimed to members of the Internet's Flatpick-L. Attendees at Steve Kaufman's 2nd Flatpicking Camp were impressed with Lynn's work as "Camp Doctor" and at least one student walked away with a new guitar. A story that Lynn likes to tell is about a customer who wanted one of his guitars. "Gruhn's had already been promised this guitar, so the customer and I drove to Nashville together, walked into the store, he bought the guitar, and we turned around and went home again!".

For someone who builds such high-quality instruments, Lynn is a relative newcomer, building his first guitar in 1989. He had very little previous experience in building instruments, although some might say that his background in engineering worked to his advantage. As Lynn tells it, he was offered an "early retirement" as a result of downsizing at Lockheed/Martin and took that as a sign and opportunity to go into instrument building full-time.

Though he may be relatively new to the field, Dudenbostel has done his homework. "I'm fortunate to have some friends who collect vintage instruments, and I've spent a lot of time putting calipers on the great



Luthier Lynn Dudenbostel of Knoxville, Tennessee

vintage guitars to get their critical measurements." Lynn has also spent a good deal of time in the company of fellow master luthiers John Arnold and Ted Davis. I cornered Lynn at the 1997 Merle Watson Memorial festival and we talked about wood, bone, and great guitars while the bands played away.

On the subject of top woods, Dudenbostel said "Englemann and red spruce are the best. I've built mostly with red spruce, and I feel like I know it the best. But really good Englemann is hard to beat and I've been working with it a lot recently. I feel like red spruce has the sound most people are looking for. A lot of guys

are looking for the sound of a mid 30's herringbone and to make it sound like a mid-30's herringbone, you gotta use the same materials." Sometimes mixing woods produces great results, too. "You can do a lot of tuning by what type of braces you use, too. Some of the old Martins used Sitka braces with a red spruce top, which doesn't make a lot of sense because they had red spruce back then, but for whatever reason, and maybe there wasn't a reason, they did mix the woods. Sitka braces can smooth out the sound of a red spruce top and give it a little more warmth. But red spruce braces and a red spruce top can give a little more cutting power." As for Sitka, Dudenbostel said "I haven't worked with Sitka that much. I'm more into the mid-30's Martin sound. I think you can get the sound out of Sitka, but it's harder to do it."

I asked Lynn about Brazilian rosewood versus Indian rosewood. "Old-growth Brazilian rosewood is the best, there's no doubt. But some of the newer Brazilian that I'm seeing is a much softer wood. I'd done some carving with each and you can really tell a difference

when you throw it on a lathe and put a tool to it. On the other hand, there's some really good Indian rosewood out there. I've seen some that exceeded some of the newer Brazilian I've seen. Another good wood, although I'm not sure of its continued availability, is Madagascar Kingwood. I built a guitar out of it and it looked like, felt like, and sounded like Brazilian. It even smelled like Brazilian! [laughs]"

For a guitar's running gear, Dudenbostel feels that ivory smoothes out the overall sound, but says that bone is an even harder material. He uses whatever suits a particular guitar, or whichever the customer prefers. He gave me an interesting source for great

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bone: go down to WalMart or a large petshop and find the bones sold for dogs to chew on. This is dense, hard, cheap bone, and you can get 2-3 saddles and nuts from a \$2.50 piece of bone.

While he'll build most anything (and I saw his serial number 0001 F5 mandolin, which was stunningly perfect), Dudenbostel's favorite instrument is the 12 fret dreadnought. He feels that "they're just better than 14 frets right off the bat, and they just get better as they age". The larger body of the 12-fret guitar gives it a bigger sound that is becoming increasingly popular. Gruhn's Guitars in Nashville carries Dudenbostel's guitars (that is, when customers don't ride up with Lynn to buy them!) and are currently the best place to find them. If you're in the market for a new guitar, or shopping for the ultimate instrument, you'll find a Dudenbostel guitar to be a required stop.

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Flatpicking & Folk/Acoustic Rock

by John Tindel

As I was working on a watercolor painting recently, I was struck by a sudden epiphany as to the importance of edges – those tricky areas where things brush up against each other. *Edge: a line where something begins or ends.* The treatment of edges can make or break a painting, among other things. Too much slop or blurring can make the image seem unfocused or indistinct; too sharp or crisp an edge can cause the shapes to look cut out, superimposed, not related to one another.

It occurred to me that guitar playing, metaphorically speaking, has its own “edges.” Areas of a song where the various parts and pieces rub up against each other – verse to chorus, chorus to bridge, etc. Indeed, one of the many definitions of the word edge is *a time interval or set of circumstances marking the beginning of a new state, condition, or action.* Which would tend to qualify intros (beginnings) and outros (endings) as areas to pay particular attention to as well. A little thoughtful planning around these margins and borders of songs can and will, as with watercolor painting, provide a more satisfying and integrated final result.

Visualize It

It is sometimes easy to forget that guitar playing, like all music, is created between the ears – what we are playing starts in the brain. Our fingers and hands are just a conduit through which something kind of magical happens. You can give your brain a hand (now there’s a strange image!) by applying some conscience forethought to the process.

I’m sure you’ve all seen athletes sitting quietly, mentally moving through the motions prior to executing a particular move – try this with a piece of music you’ve been working on and you will reap the benefits. With your eyes closed, start at the top and play through the song note for note. Visualize both hands at once like a split-screen video or one at a time, if

necessary. Feel free to stop, slow down, or rewind and play back. It is, after all, your mind; you have the power!

You’ll find that when your mind is freed from the task of actually physically playing the song, a certain shift happens which allows a slightly different angle or perception to occur. Be warned, however. If you try this on the subway or at parties, people may, based on your bizarre facial expressions, ask if you’re alright. Assure them that you’re hard at work, visualizing your latest opus. At which point they’ll no doubt feel loads of guilt for not being suitable diligent with *their* leisure time. Isn’t it nice setting a good example?

The “Taste” Factor

Here’s another rumination as to the connective tissue that threads the disparate sections of a piece together – the “taste” factor. Sure, you can play through a verse part and then proceed right to the chorus without doing anything fancy. However, it is sometimes nice to build to a chorus with a tasty little run that might, perhaps, be a subtle re-statement of an intro or “signature” part. Or perhaps use one of the techniques discussed on these pages in past columns; arpeggiating the chord implied by a suspended note in the tonic triad, an ascending or descending line played with an open drone string in the tonic key ringing away, or maybe a nice string bend.

But remember, if the piece in question is a vocal one, be sure not to “tromp” on the singer. Insert your brilliant little licks artfully *between* vocal phrases and in turn-arounds. Singers will tend to appreciate this, and will generally be nicer to you if you refrain from playing lead over their vocal lines. Go figure.

“Build it, and They Will Come . . .”

Imagine, if you will, that we are creating a structure, erecting a wonderful edifice with each song. Our construction materials,



our bricks, consist of the various parts of the composition; the intro, the verses, choruses, bridges, etc. We can choose to hastily apply a miserly layer of poorly mixed, bargain-basement mortar to cement our bricks together. Or, with a little forethought, we can take some time and mix and layer our mortar with care. How tastefully we join the sections of our songs together with this mortar determines the over-all strength and integrity of the finished structure, the song.

Seeing as how this wonderful magazine always has ample examples of tablature to sample already, I’ll ask you to instead refer back to the mental exercise discussed earlier. Pick out a piece you’ve been having trouble with and give it the “internal review treatment.” Try it, it works!

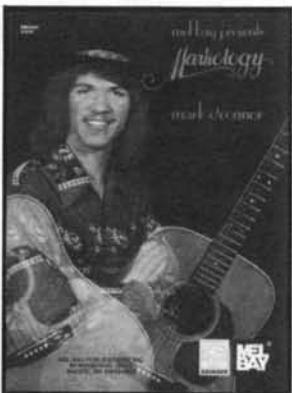
Speaking of this great publication, it’s time for a tip of the hat and kudos to our intrepid editor, Dan Miller, for being astute enough to recognize the need for this kind of magazine. And who selflessly and bravely risks his sanity daily by dealing with guitar players, a notoriously flaky bunch. Thanks and good going, Dan!

In closing, here’s one more definition for you of our word for the day, and an important on it is, too. *Edge: Something giving one person or side a position of superiority.* To keep your edge, utilize your mental game, use your head, get in the habit of thinking two or three measures ahead of yourself in a song. Be planning that next phrase or turn-around. Do that and you’ll be as sharp as the, well, *edge of a knife.*

Good playing!

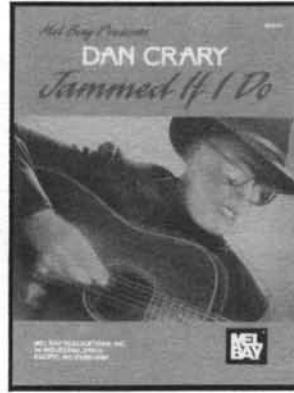
John Tindel (pictured above executing a perfect G chord at the Kerrville Folk Festival) can be found at any number of San Francisco Bay area clubs picking and/or grinning.

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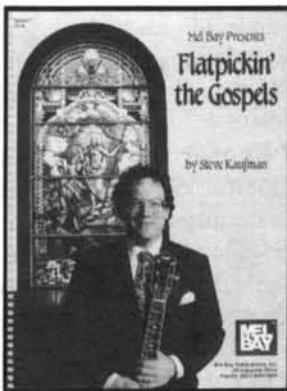


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Steve Kaufman's Flatpicking Camp '97

by Joel Stein

The scene is the waiting area in the Atlanta airport for a flight to Knoxville, Tennessee. It's a lazy Sunday afternoon. Two men and one woman, each cradling a guitar, each traveling alone until this point, realize they are all headed to Steve Kaufman's second annual flatpicking guitar camp. One of the trio has been there before, and the others start with questions. Soon the talk turns to guitars and favorite players. The seeds of a flatpicking community are sown. Some hour and a half later the trio joins up with another six guitar playing strangers in a crowded van headed to Maryville College to begin an intense week centered around the art and practice of flatpicking guitar.

Once at the Maryville campus some 140 guitarists check in, unpack their things and roam the campus, some looking for friends from last year, some looking for jam sessions. Virtually all the talk centers on guitars and guitar players. Come the next morning the students will be divided into seven groups ranging from beginners to advanced. By being with players of roughly the same level "the egos are checked at the door and it cuts down the intimidation factor in the classes" notes Kaufman.

The Steve Kaufman Flatpicking Camp goes into high gear. Students returning from last years inaugural camp were in for some changes, a slightly different group of instructors (Russ Barenberg, Beppe Gambetta, Dan Crary and Mike Kaufman--Steve's brother--are added to an already impressive line up of guitarists including Curtis Burch, Pat Flynn, Robin Kessinger and the ringleader of this six string carnival, Steve Kaufman), guest lecturers, a flatpicking contest and more.

Changes were made, says Kaufman, "based on the response in last year's evaluations. (People) asked for fewer, but longer classes with more downtime for jamming and resting." To accommodate these changes, Kaufman brought in seven instructors each of whom met with each group of students for one two-hour period. Students also had the opportunity to go ten-on-one for a more intimate lesson from one of the teachers. Mike Kaufman, arrived later in the week to teach music theory.

In addition, the concert series--each evening one of the instructors headlined a concert which also included Steve Kaufman, area bands and special featured performers

like Mike Whitehead, the multi-talented Winfield guitar champ in 1994--started a half hour earlier to allow for more evening jam sessions. Also added was a flatpicking contest, but more on that later.

What Kaufman has set up is the ultimate community centered around the guitar. From novice to the most advanced, it would be hard not to be floored by the evening concert series. Every night brought a surprise, a moment of magic that only occurs when so much talent, so much mutual admiration, so much passion for a form of expression, comes together. From the first concert where Curtis Burch was joined at various times by Tut Taylor, Robin Kessinger and Kaufman, it's clear that this was no ordinary concert series.

Beppe Gambetta, Italy's flatpicking ambassador, floored the audience with his unique blend of mazurkas and fiddle tunes. Gambetta, a Taylor guitar endorsee, was joined by fellow Taylor compatriot Dan Crary for some rousing picking. The concert series built momentum like a well thought-out guitar solo, each night pushing further than the night before.

The third concert opened with a strong and well received set from the band Hiwassee Ridge providing a balance of traditional bluegrass and contemporary song. Headliner Robin Kessinger was accompanied by his son Luke, and for one song, his wife Mary. The highlight of Kessinger's performance came when he asked Barenberg, Burch, Crary, Gambetta and Kaufman to join him for a few tunes. The version of "Midnight On The Water" blew everyone--including the performers--away. For many students not familiar to the contest circuit, the playing of Kessinger was an eye opener. The following concerts--Russ Barenberg, Pat Flynn, who performed with an extremely hot band he is producing, Crucial Smith (who burned the house down) and Dan Crary were equally amazing.

Because of the number of instructors, Kaufman limited his own performing. "It was the time for my guys (the teachers) to shine," he notes, "The concerts are for them. It was great to see them play together." As much fun as the concerts were for the listeners, the performers also realized it was something special. Kaufman recorded each of the concerts and is working on

putting a CD out featuring the best of the concert series--given the high quality of the concerts, we can only hope it is a multi-CD set.

Concerts aside, every day was crammed with talk and sounds of guitars. From the morning and afternoon classes, to the impromptu jam sessions at lunch and before and after dinner. Guitars were everywhere and a real community was being born centered around a shared passion, the guitar. Members of the Flatpick-L list on the internet got to meet in person instead of via modem, guitars in hand and ready to jam. Camp doctor Lynn Dudenbostel's repair room was crammed with jammers continuously. In addition to repairing instruments, Dudenbostel showed some of the exceptional instruments he is producing. People from all over the world got together and communicated in a common language.

"Steve is doing something here," said Allen Shadd, an advanced student, "that's going to matter in 20 years as far as flatpicking is concerned. Seeing all these people at different levels...It's like kids at a candy store. They're nearly giddy about being here. They're fifteen years old again for a week and doing what they love--picking a guitar." Shadd, a working guitarist who just released his first solo CD and a member of Clawgrass, maintains a day job as a plumber. Shadd (no stranger to the contest circuit) came to camp for reasons beyond the contest (which he won), the primary being the chance to spend a week with flatpicking guitarists of all levels. Observing Shadd at camp, during jam sessions, was to witness pure joy at work.

For Gene Workman, a returning camper from Michigan, it was "about perfect this year." As with many of the students, both Workman and Shadd praised Barenberg--a guitarist they were not overly familiar with. "I'll probably come back next year," Workman added. "I've learned a lot while I was here. It's great getting together with people who have the same love as you, and learn to play music together. I'll probably keep coming back as long as they have it. This year there were a lot of improvements, it was just about perfect. I just wish I got more sleep," he concludes echoing the most common refrain heard after six days of



Kaufman Flatpicking Camp Instructors (left to right)
Beppe Gambatta, Russ Barenberg, Robin Kessinger, Steve Kaufman,
Curtis Burch, Pat Flynn, Dan Crary

guitar intensive existence. Sleep was the major casualty in most players lives.

Kaufman, who along with his wife, Donna, coordinate and orchestrate the entire week, proudly stated that this year's addition was "nearly flawless. A lot of things on the interior--administrative stuff--needed attention. As for the campers, they didn't know about it." One of the problems was the poor health of guest lecturer and Martin guitar historian, Mike Longworth who had recently undergone surgery. "We weren't sure Mike could make it, and we had a plan if he couldn't. We're glad he could be here," Steve goes on, "he was like a little puppy out there." Kaufman paused as he talked about the camp to watch his four year old son pick up an inexpensive guitar and join a group of people in a jamming circle in the school's store (all the artists and camp sponsors had cds, tapes, instructional material and more for sale).

From the returning teachers perspective, the talk was equally full of praise. "It's very inspirational for me," noted Kessinger. "It's a learning experience for me as well as for other folks." Indeed, virtually all the teachers agreed that learning flowed in both directions. "Steve Kaufman is doing a great job with this flatpicking camp," stated Burch. "I think it's very inspiring for the students and it's inspiring for me."

For Beppe Gambetta, who learned to flatpick about as far away from the source as you could, in Italy, camp was "wonderful, especially in my situation. I'm always looking," he continued, "for people that

love this kind of music. To have this whole community of people that have my same passion. It was a deep and intense feeling." As for his fellow instructors, Gambetta noted "every instructor had a totally different personality. Everyone was bringing a different experience from the studio musician in Nashville to the maestro in California to the Italian point of view to the more traditional point of view," he continues. The teaching was a perfect balance. It could be my dream to be 20 years old and start again and have this (as a) starting point." Gambetta, in fact, joined one of the many (late) jam sessions that went on in the dorms after the evening concert.

On the final full day of camp, 12 students entered the first annual Steve Kaufman Flatpicking Camp guitar contest. The three winners received guitars and other prizes. The winner, Shadd, also won admission to the prestigious Winfield contest. The contest was essentially well received by the campers, though some griped about the competitive nature of the contest. Some felt the contest conflicted with the egalitarian nature of the camp. Perhaps they missed the point. Contests are a part of many major bluegrass festivals. Kaufman and Kessinger built their reputations on the contest stage. So did a number of other guitar players (Kenny Smith quickly comes to mind). What Kaufman offered with the camp was another facet of the flatpicking guitar experience. The final concert with Dan Crary, opened with a group of past Winfield winners, including Kaufman, Kessinger, Roy Curry,

and Mike Whitehead, as well as the top three winners. It was a joy to see fellow campers on stage holding their own. The crowd went wild.

After the Crary concert, last night jam sessions sprouted up everywhere; Robin Kessinger along with his son and some students ripped it up outside one building. Others hung around in awe of the performance turned in by Crary. Steve Kaufman and his wife (who worked hard to accommodate the campers and spouses needs all week) got ready to leave and thanked all for their help and participation.

A tired Crary leaned back into a well-worn sofa and mused about the past week. Crary, it should be noted, learned without the benefit of books, videos, guitar solos to copy; in fact his teacher was an accordion player. For Crary, camp presented him with the opportunity to do what he loves most--play and talk guitar. It also gave him the opportunity to get together with old friends, notably Flynn and Burch. "The atmosphere of this camp and the energy level is just amazing," he says. "It's such a great experience. It's a lot more than cool--it was powerful."

"The array of types of careers and lifestyles that are represented here is vast," continues Crary. "There are people whose social paths would never cross and in every immediate way the guitar brings them together. In some instances the social-economic rolls are reversed because the person who works an hourly job as a laborer, and is a better guitar player is higher status person here than a doctor or a lawyer and is not as good a guitar player." It's clear Crary has an almost mystical devotion to the guitar as he talks about some of his fellow instructors. "The force speaks differently though each one of them, but it is moving through them."

Kaufman already has some new twists for next year. Work on the 1998 camp starts in July with advertising set to start in December. One thing set for next year is the debut of a four day mandolin camp, leading into the guitar camp. Kaufman named some guitarists and mandolinists he'd like to see teach, but won't mention names until contracts are signed. One thing for sure, Kaufman will listen to the students and respond accordingly to the best of his and Donna's ability.

If only he could add a couple hours a day to accommodate sleep.



Ookpik Waltz

Ookpik Waltz has quickly become my current favorite waltz to play. It's such a soulful, mournful waltz- I'm sure you all will enjoy it. All waltzes are in 3/4 time. Some of you just said "Duh" but remember all levels of players read this magazine. Not all waltzes are slow but they have 3/4 time in common. This one goes pretty slow which is nice because we will be dealing with eighth note triplets and sixteenth notes. Don't worry. It'll sound impressive but when the tune is slow to begin with, the faster runs seem to fit in place easily (we hope). I would however, make a suggestion for you to either get the CD or make a rhythm tape to play along with. Make it slow but make it. You will need something to hear as you try to play the trickier sections of this piece.

Introduction: After the 3 pick up notes you'll find a double stop hammer on. You are to hold the "C" note on the second string and then hammer on an Am chord. Then hit a few strums and slide another double stop from the 1st and 2nd frets to the 3rd and 4th frets as 16th notes then slide back to the 1st/2nd frets.

The next place of difficulty is a series of eighth note triplets. Keep in mind that 3 triplet notes are equal to one beat. Play them by quickly thinking Da-da-da, Da-da-da, Da-da-da instead of Da-da, Da-da, Da-da. The first series (Da-da-da example) are triplets and the next are eighth note examples. This is awkward in timing. Play along with a practice tape.

Verse: This should not be too difficult. The hardest part is getting the right amount of **SUSTAIN**. You'll see where I am alternating my fretted notes against open drone strings as much as possible and strumming out the chords up to the melody notes. This is to achieve a fuller, smoother sound. Watch out for it.

Kaufman's Corner

by
Steve Kaufman

Measure 5 of the verse: You will see a triplet after the Em chord. Play it like **Da-da-da-Da**. The last "Da" was the first note after the triplets. This mental image will get you to the next note on time. There are no breaks between triplets.

Measure 6: Double stop hammer on. Hold the 1st finger on the 1st and 2nd strings third fret. Strike and then hammer the 3rd finger onto the 5th fret 2nd string. Put a little more accent on this hammer on. It's a good spot to emphasize. You are actually hammering onto a "C" position then releasing to a "G" position. Slide the 3rd string note back to the second fret with the 2nd finger. You will find these positions and type of run elsewhere in this arrangement.

Chorus: The chorus is arranged with lots of sustaining chords. The 3rd measure looks harder than it is. You have to hold down and hit a "Bm" chord. Play out of the chord briefly and then move it flat twice to an "Am" chord(4th measure). Hold down the "Bm" and then hit the strings that are marked. It will make this passage a little easier.

Watch out for the rest of the triplets that occur. By now you are a master of the triplets. After you play this tune for a few days, try to find your points of emphasis. Again, this is a very soulful tune and should not be played to sound flat or lifeless. Have fun with this favorite of mine and let me know how it goes.

<Symbol of a FLAT-PIK>

(Artist formerly known as Steve Kaufman)



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

Ookpik Waltz

From "Bullet Train" CD/Cass

Arr. by Steve Kaufman

Key of G

Introduction

1st Version- Verse

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For more variations to the tune- listen to my "Bullet Train" CD and check out my 1998 Homespun video release on the subject of Flatpicking Waltzes. - Steve

Ookpik Waltz (con't)

The music score consists of six staves of flatpicking guitar notation. The first staff starts at measure 21 in G major. The second staff begins with a Chorus section in Em. The third staff starts in Em. The fourth staff begins in Bm. The fifth staff starts in G major. The sixth staff starts in G major, then transitions to C major, then G major again, followed by D7, and finally "To 2nd Variation". Each staff includes a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp, and a time signature of common time. Fingerings are indicated by numbers above or below the strings. Chords are shown as vertical stacks of notes.

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NASHVILLE FLAT TOP

By Brad Davis



STARTING SOLOS

Do you often times wonder how to start a solo and/or what notes to use. Sometimes the way you start a solo can make or break the entire performance. You may find that you're one of those pickers that play really well but get hung up on using the some old starting licks and on the other hand you may be one of those fairly new flatpickers that just want to learn it right the first time! Well below are some examples I hope will help Ex.1 stair steps a (G) scale of notes up into a lick in the front of the solo. Ex.2 stair steps down a (G) scale of notes to a starting note (fourth string (D) which is in the (G) scale. It's always a good idea to play a solo with some content of the song melody and then branch off into your own set of licks. It's most common to start solos with so called "pickup notes."

Starting a solo with "pick up notes" means to use a short set of notes begining four or five, maybe as little as two beats ahead of the first down beat of the solo. These notes need to be in the key scale of the song-Ex.3. You can start a solo late (the opposite of using pick up notes) and the only basic guidelines are once again that you use notes in the key scale of the song and that the notes be played in meter. Some times it's a lot of fun to syncopate a solo start. Syncopating a solo start can feels like a race car spinning it's tires, burning rubber only to *blast out of the pit like a rocket*. It can really add excitement to a solo- Ex.4. Most importantly you should always play a solo with the thought of building intensity creating

melodic tension - high and low note sections. These can express your feelings to the listener. Notes can sound happy and sad and scary if you will? *When I'm in the studio in Nashville playing guitar on an album I have to choose my notes very carefully making sure that my solo paints a picture.* NOTE: sometimes leaving holes in solos can say as much as a thousand notes. It's knowing where and when to do it. It just takes experience. When writing a new solo try to think like a singer. They have to pause for a breath and that breath makes you want to hear more!! *For March/April and May/June issue companion tapes are now available for a fee of \$5.00 each. I apologize for the delay in their availability. Back issues (tape and article booklet) are available for \$7.00.*

Starting Solos

Ex.1(Key of G)

measure before solo

Lick starts
here

Ex. 2 (Key of G)

measure before solo

Lick starts
here

Starting Solos con't.

Ex.9(Key of C)
measure before solo-pickup notes

P

Lick starts
here

Double-Down-Up lick for September/October (key of C)

Y Y A Y A Y Y A Y Y A Y Y Y A Y Y A Y A

*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. 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. Touring and recording w/ Marty Stuart and White Water, songwriting, record production, and the production of instructional material for Z-TAPE (BDM Publishing) instructional courses are wedged into his tight schedule. Brad's up and coming instructional course is "40 Trick Licks" (for the flattop guitar) and "The Acoustic Speed picking Blue book" featuring his incredible "Double-Down-Up" speed picking technique.*

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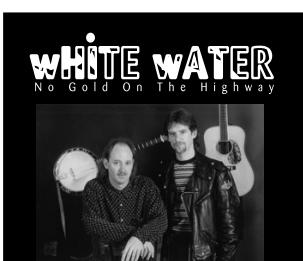
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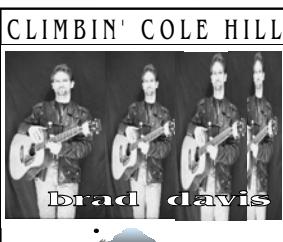
Double-Down-Up technique. This CD is flatpicking like you've never heard before!! Brad is also the column writer of "Nashville Flattop" for "Flatpicking Guitar Magazine" and is author of several audio/video instructional courses for Z-TAPE instructional tapes. Also available on cassette. CCH-1CD \$14.95 + \$2.00 Postage CCH-1CS \$10.95 + \$2.00 Postage. For free catalogue on Brad's instructional courses write: Z-TAPE / BDM Publishing, P.O.Box 890, Madison, TN 37116.

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Break Time

by Chris Jones

A Different Feel

In previous columns we discussed playing breaks and kickoffs for slow songs. In this issue we're going to expand on some of those themes and tackle the issue of playing slow or medium songs with different "feels" or, to use an even more technical term, different "grooves."

Drummers, and people who work with drummers, are fairly familiar with the differences between feels of songs because the drums lay the foundation for them, but we in the bluegrass world are not as well versed in these differences. Part of the reason for that is that we don't work too often with drums and also because in traditional bluegrass music we have usually had just one kind of feel for a slow 4/4 song or a waltz with only tempo variations, though different feels for songs have been implied.

In a traditional bluegrass 4/4 song, we usually hear a dotted eighth note feel. It wouldn't actually be written that way, but that's how it's played; this is the equivalent of the country shuffle. Take the Flatt & Scruggs, and later Ricky Skaggs, hit, "Crying My Heart Out Over You," as an example: When the drums are playing on it, the high hat is playing a "tah-ta-tah-tah-tah" type of pattern (this is also highly technical terminology). Without drums, the guitar is also playing this dotted feel.

Contemporary bluegrass, though, borrowing from country and other genres, has incorporated "straight" feeling (that is undotted) songs into the music. A well known example of this is Alison Krauss & Union Station's version of "When You Say Nothing At All." Note that the opening guitar notes are all given the same rhythmic emphasis (let's call it a "tah-tah-tah-tah" pattern, or if you prefer, "bling-bling-bling-bling"). When I was in the Weary Hearts band, we did a song called "She Once Lived Here" which also had a straight feel.

More uptempo songs can have this feel as well, such as "Those Memories of You"



by Alan O'Bryant, as recorded by John Starling or by "The Trio." It's a good idea to get accustomed to playing songs like this, even if you are only playing traditional bluegrass. It will add to your versatility, and if nothing else it's a good timing exercise.

The challenge in playing a break with this feel is that you need to straighten out your timing without making your picking sound mechanical. The space between notes becomes very important, but once you become comfortable with it you'll find you can relax and play around with the spaces and be creative, using double stops and slides without trying to fill the break with wandering eighth notes.

Please forgive the shameless self-promotion as I present a guitar break from my band's latest CD, "No One But You" (available in stores everywhere, please run out and buy five copies each, while supplies last, void where prohibited). Actually, this was one of the most readily available examples I had of a break on this kind of song, and I didn't have to get anyone's permission to use it. The break utilizes mostly down strokes, with lots of resting strokes and sustain, some of the techniques discussed in the column about slow songs, though this is actually more of a medium tempo tune. When I recorded this break, I unintentionally turned it into a tribute (okay, ripped off) one of my biggest guitar heroes, Larry Sparks, so there's plenty of blues in it. So, with apologies to Larry, here is "Stream of Love." If you make sure to give the first three A notes equal emphasis and good solid down strokes, you'll be off to a good start.



Stream of Love

by Chris Jones

as played by Chris Jones on the new Rebel CD "No One But You"

Key of D

X = muted string

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Columnist Profile: Chris Jones

by Dan Miller

Chris Jones is one of my guitar heroes. His name might not be as well known as Tony Rice or Doc Watson, but when I was first learning how to flatpick, it was Chris Jones who gave me exactly what I was looking for. Chris gave me solid instruction on how to figure out tasteful solos to bluegrass vocals. This is something he does very well.

Like most flatpickers, I love playing fiddle tunes. However, I was first drawn to the guitar because I love to sing. Chris Jones' guitar instruction course "Designing Guitar Solos for Bluegrass Songs," from Workshop Records, gave me a step-by-step method for figuring out how to create solos to vocal tunes which stick to the melody, yet sound interesting and exciting. That is exactly what I wanted to learn, so I will always list Chris as one of my main influences on guitar.

An extra added bonus to Chris' guitar course is that he sings the songs that he teaches. The bonus is not the fact that the course offers the vocal, the bonus is the opportunity to listen to Chris' singing voice. Since buying that course, Chris has become one of my favorite bluegrass singers and he always gets my vote for IBMA male vocalist of the year.

Chris Jones, guitarist, singer, and songwriter, may not be a household name in bluegrass yet, but with the formation of his new band "Chris Jones and the Night Drivers" and the very recent release of their first CD, "No One But You," I think he is on his way. The former sideman for well known bands such as Special Consensus, Whetstone Run, the Lynn Morris Band, and Weary Hearts, is now out in front of his own band and so I think you will be hearing a lot more of Chris Jones in years to come.

Chris got his first guitar as a Christmas present when he was about twelve years old. The first material he learned was out of a Elizabeth Cotten style instruction book. When he was about fourteen he became interested in bluegrass and heard Doc Watson. He was inspired and intimidated. He wanted to learn how to play like Doc, but figured it was just too hard for mere mortals. However, a short time later he saw a kid about his age playing some Doc Watson tunes and figured if this kid could do it, so could he. Chris began slowing down Doc Watson and

Norman Blake albums and teaching himself how to flatpick. He also took some lessons from a local New Mexico picker, Trish Eaves.

Although Chris lived with his mother, a singer and actress, in Suffern, New York, he also spent some time with his father in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and that is where he first began to meet other bluegrass musicians. By the time he was sixteen he was attending the festivals in Hugo, Oklahoma, and Winfield, Kansas, and by eighteen he was in his first band.

Chris had always loved singing and his first professional job was filling in with a group, led by Bob Mavian in upstate New York, who needed a lead singer. From there Chris went to college in Vermont and filled in with the popular Northeastern band "Banjo Dan and the Midnight Plowboys."

When Chris was about twenty-one years old he decided to make music his career when the opportunity came along to play with the Chicago-based group Special Consensus. Chris stayed with the band for four years and says that it was a very good experience for him. It was also during this time that he met Dan Huckabee of Workshop Records and produced his guitar instruction course.

Chris said that the band had been playing quite a bit in Austin, Texas, and Dan Huckabee would occasionally fill in on dobro. Dan liked Chris' guitar playing and approached Chris with the idea of creating a guitar course which would build a vocal break in progression from a simple melody to a stylized, tasteful, and driving guitar solo. Chris went to Austin and recorded the course as well as a bluegrass songbook in 1986. Both of these projects are still available from Workshop Records (800-543-6125).

After leaving Special Consensus, Chris moved to Pennsylvania and joined the band Whetstone Run with Marshall Wilborn, Lynn Morris, and Lee Olsen. That band played together for a few years before the members went their separate ways. After a short hiatus from playing on the road,



Chris then moved to Arizona to play with Weary Hearts.

Weary Hearts Band, which consisted of Chris on guitar, Ron Block on banjo, Butch Baldassari on mandolin, and Mike Bub on bass, won the SPGMA band contest and recorded for Flying Fish. Chris said that working with Ron Block was a real inspiration to him. He and Ron shared a love for guitar players such as George Shuffler and Larry Sparks and Ron's knowledge of these guitar styles influenced Chris' playing. In 1989 the Weary Hearts relocated to Nashville, but broke up about a year later.

Chris said that after Weary Hearts broke up he "played around Nashville" and also joined the Lynn Morris band for a short period of time. In 1995 he recorded his very well received solo album "Blinded By the Rose" and started his band Chris Jones and the Night Drivers. Chris and his band have toured quite extensively in Europe and with the release of their new Rebel CD, the future looks bright for this new band (for more information about the CD, please see the review on page 60).

Chris Jones has played a 1970 Gallagher G-70 model since finding it used in a music store in Vermont in 1980. He says he likes the guitar because of its versatility. Its both a good lead and rhythm guitar, it mikes well, and it is good in the studio. Chris uses GHS phosphor bronze strings in medium gauge and a Dunlop delrin pick (1.14mm).



THE O-ZONE

by Orrin Star

The Vision Thing

I kick off each of my flatpicking workshops with a song and then some introductory remarks. I mention that I will be sharing not only specific techniques but also ideas about how to think about playing — and that ideas can be important.

In my own musical development, for example, I will never forget the day I met Woody Mann. I was 16, pursuing fingerstyle blues guitar (my first musical love), and had come into Manhattan to visit my former camp counselor, Roy Bookbinder. He introduced me to his roommate Woody, who had a guitar in his hand and who inspired instant jaw descention on my part with his note-for-note playing of Blind Blake stuff I had only heard before on old records. "Where did you learn that?", I asked, and his reply floored me: he said "from the record."

It had simply never occurred to me before that that could be done. So then I started taping and slowing things down on my reel-to-reel recorder and, haltingly, began the long process of discovering that it was possible for me to do likewise. Hence, mental tools like ideas, images and analogies can prove very helpful in our musical quests. And it is with this in mind that the O-Zone now takes a philosophical tack and seeks to address the 'inner' flatpicker.

What is the sound of good flatpicking?

Anyone who pursues this demanding style grapples with this question. When I was starting out the answer was simple: Doc Watson. Put more generally, most of us first define good flatpicking as the sounds of the great flatpickers that we hear. As with many oral traditions, learning to flatpick is primarily an exercise in imitation and emulation; you try and play like those whose playing inspires you. (And how successfully you can do this provides the earliest indication of how successful you

might be as player in your own right.)

Another way to define good flatpicking is through language — to describe it using words. 'Timing', 'tone', 'articulation', 'drive', 'originality' (i.e. those you always see on the 'How the Judges Will Be Scoring You' sheets at contests) are some of the key ones. Having such a vocabulary can help us draw a bead on good sound in a conceptual way; it provides added tools for determining why our 'Old Grey Mare' doesn't sound just like Norman's.

(As a veteran guitar instructor I've long pondered why some students progress faster than others. Some would attribute it simply differences in "talent". Others would go the physiology route, saying "he's got great fingers". My own formulation is that those who excel have 'discerning ears' — the ability to hear the differences between what they are playing and what they are trying or being asked to play. (And who usually won't rest content until those differences are minimized.))

But there is yet another way to think about good flatpicking. It is one that is the centerpiece of my playing and which is actually inherent in the style: the primal rhythm of American fiddle music.

Fiddle music has a distinctive beat which animates it and which has inspired generations of barn dancers. That is the sound from which flatpicking derives. If you're trying to flatpick, might it not make sense to intimately acquaint yourself with the source?

As I mentioned I first learned to flatpick by copying Doc. But what did Doc have in mind when he played "Black Mountain Rag", "Billy In the Lowground" and the other intrumentals I was imbibing? It's no mystery: he was thinking fiddle!

And that's what I'm thinking when I play as well; I'm trying to be a fiddler on



the guitar. Only half of my focus is on the melody notes I'm playing — the rest is on communicating a coherent and danceable rhythm through my leads. This is, in my book, the critical hurdle to flatpicking excellence: having your leads make as obvious a rhythmic statement as they do a melodic one. Now, in order to make a statement, you have to have something to say. In this instance, you need to have a solid vision of rhythm to guide you. And what I'm suggesting is that the underlying sound of fiddle music can provide that vision in spades.

(For extra credit get some dance vision as well: attend some square or contra dances, and experience how dances inspired by fiddle music feel. Believe me: if you learn how to waltz you will be better equipped to play a waltz than you would be otherwise.)

So, what are you thinking and trying to communicate when you're playing a fiddle tune on the guitar?

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.



Masters of Rhythm Guitar:

Del McCoury

by Dave Bricker

While Del McCoury has long been renowned for his distinctive tenor voice, his tasteful and rock solid rhythm guitar playing has also been a source of inspiration to bluegrass guitarists since he joined Bill Monroe and the Bluegrass Boys back in the sixties. Today, the Del McCoury Band (which includes Del's sons Rob on banjo and Ron on mandolin) is about the hardest driving band in bluegrass. There's something exquisite about the time; the way the band plays right on top of the beat and pulls the music ahead.

The Del McCoury Band collected six International Bluegrass Music Awards (IBMA) this past year, Del himself winning the Male Vocalist and Entertainer of the year awards. Each of the band members were also nominated individually for IBMA awards on their specific instruments, a first in IBMA history. Del's son Ronnie won the award for Mandolin Player of the Year and Mike Bub won the IBMA Bass Player of the Year award. Such a tremendous showing at the IBMA event not only proves that Del and his band are one of the hottest bands in this music today, but also shows they have an enormous following of loyal fans.

Del McCoury took a little time to share some of his experiences and talk a bit about rhythm guitar and the importance of good time.

What first motivated you to play guitar?

When I was about nine, I learned to play guitar. My older brother played guitar and at the time he was playing and singing - a lot of Ernest Tubbs songs and Roy Acuff - and he was a good guitar player. He was nine years older than me. G.C. taught me my first chords and showed me how to play rhythm. In those days I was mostly playing to back up singing and he liked to play lead and wanted me to play rhythm guitar for him. I learned a lot of lead from him too, but I didn't stay with the guitar long.

I was about eleven when I heard Earl Scruggs. My brother used to buy a lot of records and one day he brought home a copy of "Roll in My Sweet Baby's Arms."

When I heard that, it was something new to me. We'd been playing mostly country stuff and I heard this and said, "This is something different!" It must have been around 1950.

I didn't think about anything but playing the banjo from then until I got a job with (Bill)

Monroe in 1963. I was 24 years old. Bill said, "I need a lead singer and a guitar player in the worst way," but he'd already hired Bill Keith to play banjo. I went to get the job playing banjo with him, and I don't know why he thought I could sing. I guess I'd done a show or two with him before playing banjo and singing baritone, but he wanted me to try out playing guitar (and I never told him I'd ever played one). I tried out and I knew how it should be played.

I thought, "well . . . I'll work a lot but I won't enjoy this job." All I could think about was I wanted to play the banjo. But through the years when I played with bands, we could never get a guitar player to play good rhythm. I knew what a lead player needed in a rhythm man because I did it for all those years.

When Monroe put me on the guitar, in the beginning when I was learning to play, it was hard for me to tell who was speeding up, but I can now. I thought, "I'll try all that stuff that I think should be there," and it seemed to work. Bill's band was easy to play with too because the timing was already there. Bill was playing it the way I thought the music should be played.

The thing about Monroe was he liked the guitar player to play a lot of runs, I guess he figured he could hold the time with the mandolin chop and the bass. I probably played more runs then than I do now.

Did you ever go back to playing the banjo?



I got to really enjoy playing guitar and singing. Even after I quit Bill, I never did go back to playing lead on banjo or guitar or anything. When I got my own band, I realized how important it was because most of the guys in the band were playing to my guitar. I played rhythm guitar pretty hard so they'd have something to follow. Today, musicians have better timing and I don't have to play as hard, but back then it kept the band together.

Who are some of the rhythm guitar players you admired?

Even back before I went to work for Bill, the guy who I admired most was Lester Flatt. I noticed back when I was learning to play that he could play really good rhythm. I probably patterned my rhythm playing kind of after him. Then I heard Jimmy Martin with Bill Monroe and after that with his own band. In those days, they were probably the two best rhythm guitar players around. Their timing was just perfect and the tone - the way they played their rhythm - was unique. At the same time, they were both a little different.

Part of it was that Lester Flatt played with a thumb and fingerpick. After playing banjo, that would have been comfortable for me to do, too but I knew a lot of guys who had worked for Monroe before and they said, "after Lester Flatt, Bill Monroe won't ever let anyone play with a thumb and fingerpick anymore." It turned out that Ed Mayfield, who'd been in the band shortly before me, played with strictly a thumb pick. I never realized that then, but the talk was that after

Lester Flatt, Bill hated guitar players who used a thumbpick. I figured if I was going to work for Bill, I'd have to use a flatpick so that's how I learned to flatpick again.

Was that difficult after playing banjo for so long with your fingers?

It was hard to get used to. You'd be up there playing and all of a sudden you'd lose your pick!

Do you have any special picks or materials you prefer, like tortoiseshell?

I've used all sorts of picks through the years. The best thing for me is a round pick. The more perfectly round it is, the better off it is. It can move around in your hand and it doesn't matter. There's no sharp corner to catch and pull it loose.

Back when I was with Bill, I used to use tortoise shell. It was easier to get back then. Back in those days, plastic picks would break real easily. These days they don't, so I use just a regular three-corner pick. Ronnie uses a three-corner pick and when it gets worn down a little bit and he doesn't like it, he gives it to me. I have some that are perfectly round. I play them until they get too small to be useful.

For a long time I used Perko nylon picks but I like a stiff pick and I found they'd be fine when they were cold but when your hand warmed them up, they'd get limber. Also, I hate new strings because they start eating into your pick. You make a run and those new strings seem to grab on to your pick and they won't let it go. A long time ago, I used to use a flatwound G string. It was real smooth and you could play it hard and it wouldn't break.

What kind of strings do you prefer?

To me, all strings have fairly similar tone, but I'd sacrifice a little tone if they were smoother and wouldn't break. D'Addario makes a semi-flatwound string that I'm looking forward to trying out.

I used to use heavy gauge strings but now I just use regular mediums. It's a little easier on the top and neck of a guitar to just use medium strings.

What do you look for in a good rhythm guitar?

Mostly tone. I've been playing this '36 D-18. The bass strings aren't as bassy (as a D-28) but it's clear. I won't hear the D-18 as much if I'm standing here playing with somebody, but it works better through a

sound system. I also have two early 50's D-28s, but I started playing this D-18 maybe four years ago. It's not as loud as my D-28s. I like them because of the volume.

I like a rhythm guitar where each note is real distinct within a chord but then it dies real quick - a more percussive sound. I've played some guitars where if you play them fast, all the notes just run together.

Do you have any special advice for people who are learning to play?

I learned to play with records. If you can play with a record and play right on the beat with that record, you know you're at least playing in time with it. It's a great way to develop timing - it doesn't matter who it is. I didn't know what a metronome was when I started, but that's another thing I think is really good for people trying to learn. I remember these two banjo players and one said to the other, "sit down and play with this metronome." The second guy sat down for a while and finally said, "I can't play with that thing. It's not in time!" The metronome will really show you where your timing is at!

If you play, try to play with people who have good timing. It's good to play a lot of notes but the very first thing is to work on your rhythm and time. You'll find out pretty soon if it's you or whoever you're playing with that's not playing right. I played for so many years with people who couldn't play but always wondered if the problem was me or them. When I got to Bill's band, it was real easy to play with him because everyone had good time.

There are a lot more musicians who play in time now than when I was starting out, but people were more isolated then. The only thing I had to listen to for banjo was the records and the radio. I listened to the Opry on Saturday night and WWVA in Richmond and the Barn Dance they had. I could turn to either one of them on a Saturday night and get a bluegrass band. There were Flatt and Scruggs and Bill Monroe and Mac Wiseman and Reno and Smiley in Richmond and they had Jimmy Martin on WWVA and the Osborne Brothers and Red Allen. That and records were all I had.

Today, there's just a lot more bluegrass then there was. People can get out and hear more live music and there are a lot more people to play with. Young musicians have a lot more opportunity to get together with

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The Del McCoury Band - Left to right: Jason Carter, Rob McCoury, Mike Bub, Del McCoury, and Ronnie McCoury

other musicians. I didn't know any other banjo players when I was learning to play. Nowadays, there's more good bands to listen to.

When I was learning in the 50's, the kids all listened to Elvis Presley which just wasn't anything like Flatt and Scruggs or Bill Monroe in my book.

One question I hear people ask quite a bit is this: "I practice with a metronome and I can stay in time but when I rehearse with a band, I find the tempo just keeps drifting up and up." Do you have any suggestions for dealing with this kind of group situation?

That's a tough problem, but I can figure it out pretty quick. In some of the good bands I've had, I've had guys who would just barely drag a little bit or they'd start picking up. What I would do is just play a harder downbeat on the guitar when I'd hear it happening, especially if someone is starting to speed up. It's funny - it'll pull 'em back every time. I don't know why but it does. For someone who drags a bit, I'd start playing on the "on-beat," just push it and stay right ahead of him.

A lot of musicians tend to do this (rush or drag) and a lot of times they don't know it. I had a banjo player once who was really good and I told him, "you're dragging, especially on the backup." Back then, we only had one mic on stage and if he was behind me when I was singing and couldn't hear my rhythm, the banjo backup would just start dragging. I finally had a long talk with him one night after a show and he just

didn't realize it. He just couldn't tell. There was no use trying to work with him if he couldn't tell his time was out.

Are you listening to everybody in the band and exactly which way they're interpreting the beat?

I guess I am unconsciously, even when I'm singing - you have to sing right to that beat. But with the band I have now I don't have to worry about it. I can just drop out and they'll keep going right in time. It's easier for me. I don't have to work as hard and I don't have to think about so many things, but I imagine if I were to change one or two musicians in the band, I'd have to start thinking about those things again for a while.

In the beginning, when I was learning to play, it was hard for me to tell who was speeding up, but now I just know.

Do you still practice? Do you sit around the house and work on new material or do exercises?

You know, I don't and it's a shame. But when we're getting ready to record, we'll all practice and work on songs and parts and finding keys and all that. I'm probably the worst one in the band to get to do a new song because I've got to learn all the words. The boys usually remember their arrangement or whatever it is they have to do. It's pretty easy for them.

Usually, we'll just tune up and warm up and maybe someone will call a tune and maybe I'll write a few notes on top of my guitar. Sometimes we'll record a song and

then forget it for maybe six months until it's released and then you say, "Oh man, we've got to perform these songs," and I've got to learn 'em all over again. Some songs we start performing before they're released and then others we have to learn again. Sometimes we'll record a tune and just never end up performing it, though with this band we've pretty much performed everything we've recorded.

Most of my rehearsal is just learning the lyrics. Sometimes, if I'm not familiar with a tune, I'll write the first word or two or three of each verse on an empty string pack and tape it to the side of my guitar. It just helps me remember the words.

Did you work on timing with (your sons) Ron and Rob?

Actually, I never had any trouble with them. I had instruments around the house and they started playing young. They've always had good timing, but I gave them some advice when they started listening to music. Like Rob, I said, "listen to Earl because he played that thing right." I told Ron to listen to Monroe because young guys tend to listen to other young guys but I told 'em, "if you really want to hear how it's done, listen to Scruggs and Monroe and play along with their records."

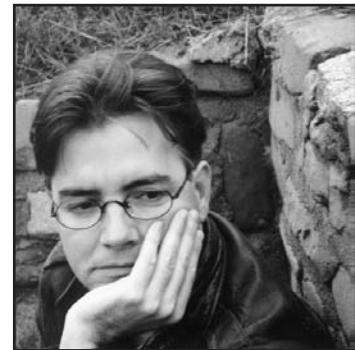
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POST-MODERN FLATPICKING

BY SCOTT NYGAARD



Request Time

One of the marks of a good performer is to honor as many requests as possible in the course of a show, especially when they can't think of anything to do anyway. I find requests to be especially gratifying when the request is something I both enjoy playing and have either written or recorded myself. So I can't resist the urge to fill this particular request.

Here is a solo from the song "Icewater" which just happens to be from my most recent album, "Dreamer's Waltz". I first heard this great song on a Peter Case album, played as an acoustic rocked-out Delta blues, and as the melody reminded me of the Bill Monroe classic "Rocky Road Blues", I thought it might make a good bluegrass song. Of course, with Tim O'Brien singing, the tag on the underside of your mattress would make a good bluegrass song.

The solo transcribed here is the final guitar solo, a re-statement of the melody. After a flurry of virtuosic activity from Jerry Douglas, Mike Marshall and Tim O'Brien I thought it wise to play a bit of the melody (measures 2-3 and 10-11) before winding down. Other than that I don't have much to say about this solo, other than it is a good example of the way I play bluegrass, influenced as much by banjo players as guitar players (notice a number of passages that look like cross-picking — groups of three notes played across the strings).

So, in order to keep this column from grinding to a halt after only three paragraphs, I think it's time to fan the flames of the slow-boiling pick-direction controversy. Scan the pages of last month's FGM and you find Dan Huckabee claiming that down-up, strict alternating picking is law, as he puts it, "a precise, sacred and mandatory science." I must admit I couldn't agree more. I even had to suppress

the urge to raise a frosty one and mumble "here-here" under my breath, even though I have been caught transgressing said law a time or two. But a few pages later we have Brad Davis exhorting one and all to adopt his jaw-dropping Double-Down-Up pick technique. Now I haven't had the good fortune to hear Brad play, but David McCarty's glowing review of his new album in the same issue certainly has me intrigued. It's a good thing that a few pages separate these two or we might have had some unfortunate mail-box conflagrations.

I also seem to remember Steve Pottier talking about Clarence White using back-to-back down strokes to good effect. Watch the Muleskinner video closely and you can see this for yourself. Now I'm certainly not about to issue picking tickets to Clarence White. And then there's George Shuffler's cross-picking, which also utilizes the down-down-up approach. And I've noticed most good Irish players play jigs using a down-up-down, down-up-down pattern. And wait, didn't Charlie Christian play with all down-strokes? And Wes Montgomery with his thumb? What's going on here? Do you mean these heroes of mine are all scofflaws? Did I really waste a major portion of my life trying to perfect a fluid down-up technique for nothing? Have all those students I've coerced into maintaining a strict alternating pattern wasted their money? (Don't answer that.)

If I may now toss my own two cents into the fire, my opinion is that, as basic flat-picking technique, strict alternating picking is indisputable. This is how you learn to control the pick, plain and simple. Once you've gained control of your pick, you can ignore the technique and start doing what musicians are supposed to do — make music. If you play good music, I don't really care how you do it. Play the guitar with your nose or feet for all I care. Just show me the money.

But if you haven't yet learned to bend a flatpick to your will, then the alternating

style is the best way to start. I've had countless students show up on my doorstep, pleading with me to tell them what they are doing "wrong". "Why isn't my picking smooth and fluid?" "Why can't I play fast?" "Why is my timing off?" Well, 99% of the time, it's pick direction. I can tell instantly when someone has flipped the beat in their playing and started playing up-strokes on the down beat and vice versa. Sometimes this makes for embarrassingly short lessons. "You mean that's it? I just have to use alternating picking? I just have to pay attention to my right hand?" "Yup, that's it." "So is the lesson over?" "Guess so." "Great, how much do you charge for a three minute lesson?"

Of course, the difference is that Brad, Clarence, George, Steve, Charlie and Wes all presumably know that they are defying the law. They aren't letting the pick lead them around by the nose. They've got it on a sturdy leash and are using it to create the music they want to hear. The other thing is that exceptional musicians are frequently able to use inefficient technique because they just happen to have naturally strong or dexterous hands. Watch Sam Bush or Mike Marshall play the mandolin and you might think that moving your right hand a full 12-18 inches every time you strike a string is the best way to play the mandolin. Well, it may work for them, but mere mortals might be better advised to stick to a less flamboyant stroke.

With that in mind I've painstakingly notated my pick direction on this solo. Keen eyes will notice the occurrence of a number of up-strokes played without any intervening down-strokes. Rather than signifying the existence of another odd-ball picking style, this confirms me as a strict down-upper. All the consecutive up-strokes occur because either a held note or a slur is taking the place of a down-stroke. And as I tend to use a lot of slurs, mostly beginning

on the off-beats, I end up playing a lot of up-strokes in a row. The prevailing wisdom has always been that — owing to another indisputable law: gravity — down-strokes

are naturally stronger than up-strokes. Yet I maintain that it is possible and desirable to make your up-strokes just as strong as down-strokes, though naturally it will take

a great deal of practice. Gravity is certainly a significant force, but its effects can be overcome. Just ask the birds...or better yet...The Byrds.

Icewater

Arranged by Scott Nygaard

Capo IV

Legend:

- = downstroke
- ▽ = upstroke

The Wayfaring Stranger - Part 2

by Dix Bruce

Last time we explored "The Wayfaring Stranger" in the key of A minor and in the process moved the melody up an octave to a second open position and then up the neck to a closed position. Review the closed position A minor version. We'll use it as the basis for our further explorations in this column.

Many times you'll find that you have learned a song in one key and everybody else seems to know it in another. Capoes come in handy in situations like these, but sometimes they are impractical and it's nice to know how to transpose a melody or chord progression without a capo. In this column we'll first transpose "The Wayfaring Stranger" into C minor in a closed position. Then we'll move that version back down the neck. Finally we'll recall the original A minor version we worked with last time and transpose it over one string to the key of D minor.

I'm assuming that you have the complete version from the last issue. Play it until you have the note and fretting hand positions memorized. Now try playing the whole thing up one fret while keeping the same fretting hand positions you used in the closed A minor version. You're now in Bb minor and the melody should sound the same, just one half step higher. Once you've accomplished this, move the melody up two more frets to play it in the key of C minor. Again, the secret to doing this is to maintain the same hand position you learned in the A minor version. Sometimes it helps me to move my hand to the new position and then close my eyes as I play imagining that I'm at the known or original position. It feels about the same and with my eyes closed I don't get confused by the fret dots. Here's what the whole thing looks like in C minor (see example 5 on the next page).

This can be quite a challenge since it's so far up the neck, but again, give your self time to get used to it. When you can play the closed position C minor version from memory, go on to the next exercise.

Let's go back down the neck to another C minor position, this one starting on the third string fifth fret. Use your third finger.

Again, as you did when we moved the open A minor melody up to the closed position melody, try to figure out the C minor melody at this position. You already have it memorized from before so hunt around and see how much of it you can find. Compare your version with the one on page 45.

Let's do one last exercise with "The Wayfaring Stranger." This time we'll refer back to the first A minor version from the previous column which begins on the open fifth string A. Look back at the last issue to refresh your memory.

Let's move this same basic melody over one string and play the first melody note on the open fourth string D. Our original version began on an A note and we said it was in the key of A minor. If this one begins on a D note then it must be in the key of what? Right, D minor.

If you play the exact same fret positions moved over one string (beginning on the fourth instead of the fifth string) you won't have any problems until the last note of measure sixteen. If the patterns were completely transposable, we'd expect this note to be played on the open second string. But in reality, it needs to be a C, not a B note. If the guitar strings were all tuned a fourth apart, it would work out fine, but the interval between string three and two is a third, not a fourth. (Think of when you tune and how you match the sound of the open fifth string to the sound of the sixth string at the fifth fret, an interval of a fourth. This tuning scheme works for string pairs five and four, four and three, and two and one. When you tune strings three and two however, you match the sound of the open second to the sound of the third string at the fourth fret, an interval of a third.) Don't think of it as a limitation or obstacle. We're guitarists, after all! A clarinet player could never deal with such a thing! But I digress... You'll have to account for the jog of the third and hunt around a bit for the proper notes. By now you have them firmly in mind so it shouldn't be too difficult. After you've figured it out on your own, compare what you have with what's shown on page 46.



After you've mastered the D minor version above, go back to the previous A minor version and move it over one string in the other direction with your first note the open sixth string E. What key will you be in? E minor. Things will just roll along for you until you get to the last note of measure fourteen when you run out of string! Play it up an octave or improvise some other note.

You should also practice moving the closed position C minor melody around to other locations on the fretboard. See if you can figure out a closed position melody in a lower octave beginning on the bass strings.

The point here is to use what you know to discover what you don't know. As I mentioned previously, work any lick or melody you learn through as many octaves, positions, and keys as you can. Not only will you learn those specific things in a variety of places, you'll find that your general knowledge of the fingerboard, melodies, and music theory will snowball as you pursue the effort. As always, you can send your comments and questions to me c/o Musix, PO Box 231005, Pleasant Hill, CA 94523 or e-mail me at MUSIX1@aol.com

Dix Bruce is a musician and writer from the San Francisco Bay area. His latest project is arranging and recording several songs for the CD Rom driving game entitled "The Streets of SimCity" for MAXIS, due to be released in late summer. The style is basic bluegrass and the band includes Dix on guitar, mandolin and vocals, Jim Nunally on guitar and vocals, Darol Anger on violin, and Avram Siegel on banjo. The group will be featured on a virtual radio station within the game. Dix Bruce can be reached at Musix, PO Box 231005, Pleasant Hill, CA 94523. E-mail: MUSIX1@aol.com.

Exercise 5**The Wayfaring Stranger**

Traditional, arr. by Dix Bruce

The sheet music consists of eight staves of guitar tablature. The first staff starts at measure 1 in C minor (Cm) and ends at measure 10. It includes fingerings (3, 1, 1; 3, 1, 1, 3; 1, 3; 3, 1, 3) and a 'S' (slide) symbol. The second staff begins at measure 11 in F minor (Fm). The third staff begins at measure 15 in G7, followed by Cm. The fourth staff begins at measure 22 in A♭, followed by E♭. The fifth staff begins at measure 28. Measures include: 1, 4; 4, 1, 4, 1, 4; 1, 3, 1, 1; Fm, G7, Cm; S; 8, 8, 8; 10, 10, 8, 10; 8, 8, 11; 8, 11, 8, 11, 11; 11, 8, 8, 11; 10, 8, 10, 8, 10; 8, 8, 10, 8, 10; 8, 10, 8, 10, 8, 10; 10, 8, 10, 8, 10; 8, 10, 8, 10, 8, 10.

Exercise 6**The Wayfaring Stranger**

Traditional, arr. by Dix Bruce

The sheet music consists of six staves of six-line staff notation. The first staff starts in Cm, followed by Fm, then back to Cm. The second staff continues in Cm. The third staff begins at measure 15, starting in G7 and transitioning to Cm. It then moves through A♭, E♭, and back to Cm. The fourth staff begins at measure 22, starting in A♭ and transitioning to G7, then Cm. The fifth staff begins at measure 28, starting in Fm and transitioning to G7, then Cm.

Fingering: The first staff includes fingerings such as 3 2 1, 4 1 1 3, 1 4, and 3 2 4. The second staff includes 1, 3, 5 5 4, 3 3 3, 6, 4 3, 5 5, 5, 3 3 3, 6, 5 4 6. The third staff includes 1, 4 4, 3 3 6, 8, 8 6, 8 6 6, 6 8 8. The fourth staff includes 1 1 4 2 1, 3, 3 5 4, 3, 5 5 4, 3, 3 3 6. The fifth staff includes 4 3 5, 5, 3 3 3, 6, 6, 5 3, 5, 3 3 3, 6.

Exercise 7

The Wayfaring Stranger

Traditional, arr. by Dix Bruce

1 Dm Gm

8 Dm Gm

15 A⁷ Dm B_b F

22 B_b A⁷ Dm

28 Gm A⁷ Dm

S S P



The Bottom Line - Thinking Like a Bass Player

Some people think bass players have it easy - just pound out those half notes and keep the time. However, aside from the fact that keeping time in a band full of banjo players, guitarists and mandolinists (who usually can't tell the difference between a thousand miles an hour and two thousand) is a formidable task in itself, the bass player's harmonic responsibilities are deceptively important.

Even if you never play bass, learning to think like a bass player can give you a much more solid foundation for improvising and will give you something else to play when you're jamming with others. Either you're the sixth guitarist to join the jam and there's no need for another rhythm player or you're playing with one other guitarist and he's soloing in the lower registers. In either case, having the ability to play bass lines that imply the chord changes will allow you to support the soloist harmonically without covering up his low notes.

The bass player has to choose his notes very carefully so they convey what chords are being played. At the same time, the bass line should be interesting and musical. In bluegrass music, creating a good bass line can be extra challenging because the chord progressions tend to be simple and it's more difficult to put variety into the lines. There are a number of different approaches to turning chord changes into a bass line.

Let's look at the chords to "Way Downtown." We'll build some bass lines for the chords and then use the same approach to develop some melodic ideas for soloing. (Each note's relationship to the chord is written under the note.) Remember that each of these techniques works best when mixed with the others. Each example only illustrates the sound of one particular approach.

The simplest approach to making bass lines is to play the roots and fifths of the chords:

Another approach is to use the notes of the chord. Notice that I've opted to use the dominant seventh (b7) to add character to some of the chords:

Another technique is to use passing tones that are a half step above or below the note you're going to. These passing tones may not be part of the scale or chord but they can create a momentary tension which resolves when you play the "target" note on the next beat.

Finally, we base our lines on the scales appropriate to each chord. To change chords, we either use passing tones, continue up (or down) the scale into the target note or use a note that might not be part of the chord but which relates to the chord we're about to change to. Generally, we use chord tones on the downbeats and use scale tones to connect them.

Now let's use the same chord progression and the same harmonic techniques but instead of playing half notes, we'll think like a jazz bass player and make some "walking" bass lines that use four beats to the bar. Where there are another set of scale degrees indicated in parentheses, the first line shows how the notes relate to the chord and the second line shows how the notes relate to the next chord.

The top set of tabs shows a walking bass line with quarter notes. The bottom set shows eighth-note patterns. Both sets include fingerings and note relations.

Just for fun, let's transpose this same line up an octave and make our quarter notes into eighth notes.

The top set of tabs shows a walking bass line with eighth notes. The bottom set shows sixteenth-note patterns. Both sets include fingerings.

We end up with a melody line that is derived entirely from the structure of the chord progression. It's not the world's greatest guitar solo but it can stand by itself without any accompaniment whatsoever. Even if you like to play lines that are a bit more "outside," learning to play lines based on the chord changes can help you add some contrast and variety to your improvisation. "Outside" lines can be more effective against a backdrop of harmonically straightforward information. Also, if you're playing solo, these kinds of lines can be the equivalent of playing the chords and improvising a melody at the same time.

Let's look at our final melody line and examine some of the techniques used.

In the first two measures, we go right down the scale (in this case a C mixolydian

mode which is just C major with a flattened seventh. This implies a C7 chord). At the end of measure two, we move into our G chord by moving chromatically (in half steps) from the flat seventh (F) to the root (G).

Measure three starts moving right up the chord tones (R,3,5) and then plays with scale tones that lead into the D in measure 5. Measures five and six are similar and then measures seven and eight run down the G (mixolydian) scale until the end where they start to move into the C at measure 9. Measures 9 and 10 move up and down the scale and then move into the G at measure 11.

Measures 11 and 12 also use scale tones with a passing tone at the end into the D at measure 13.

Measure 13 is deceptive because the line starts on the fifth of the chord instead of the root. From here, it continues up the scale and then starts to move into the G chord at measure 15.

Measures 15 and 16 use chord tones and then move back towards the C chord at the top of the next verse.

Using bass line techniques to construct guitar solos is a great way to get the sound of good voice leading in your ears. Playing melodies based on the chords is also a good way to break out of playing solos that sound like they're all derived from the same scale. It's just one more way to make your solo relevant to the tune you're playing instead of just a bunch of notes that happen to fit.

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Guitar Making

by Don Gallagher

Neck Fitting

Last issue we focused on certain neck considerations primarily related to neck construction. We discussed the types of woods commonly used in necks, the types of neck rods, and related items concerned with the construction of the neck proper. In this article I want to take a close look at the way the neck is joined to the body.

Fitting the neck to the body is one of the most critical operations in the entire construction process. The precision with which the neck is fitted to the body can very easily make or break the overall quality of the guitar.

A properly fitted neck will enhance the guitar's playability, sound quality, and longevity.

One of the oldest and strongest woodworking joints is the dovetail joint. This type of joint, by the very nature of its design, if properly fitted provides an extremely strong joint. A dovetail joint provides a mechanical coupling between two pieces of wood that is not dependant upon glue to hold it in place. Glue may deteriorate over time, but the dovetail joint will continue to provide strength and stability. Examine an old piece of furniture where the draws have been assembled with dovetail joints. Even after 100 years these joints continue to hold firm. In a guitar, the strength of the joint which attaches the neck to the body is critical. The neck of a guitar functions as a long lever. The pull of the strings is magnified but the lever action of the neck, resulting in a great deal of force being exerted at the base of the heel of the neck. If the neck joint is not tight and strong at the base of the heel, over time with the constant pull of the strings, the base of the heel may pull away from the body allowing the neck to raise up. The end result is that the string action will raise to an uncomfortable playing height. Unlike the high action which may result because the neck has developed a bow, which can be relatively easily corrected by adjusting the neck rod, the high action which results from the neck joint falling creates a major job of resetting the neck and refitting the joint. For a guitar to give many years of

trouble free service, it is imperative that the neck joint be well made.

A guitar made of good quality solid woods will improve in sound quality over the years as it is played. One of the many factors which will determine the ultimate sound of the guitar is how the neck was initially installed in the body. Back in the 1960's I noticed that there was a relationship between the height of the strings off the top of the guitar and sound. Generally the higher the strings were off the sound board the better projection and volume the guitar had. Of course, on these old instruments the high string height was due to warped necks, which meant these old guitars were very difficult to play.

One objective in setting the neck, became to set the neck angle in such a way as to maximize the height of the strings off the sound board while minimizing the height of the strings off the fingerboard. That is to say, the neck should be set in the body at an angle which would help produce the best sound and also achieve the most playable action.

After the dovetail is cut in the body and the matching dovetail is cut in the neck by using a router and jig, the final fit of the dovetail joint is accomplished by a little hand work. Sanding off either the right or left shoulder of the dovetail the neck alignment can be moved accordingly. A long straight edge is placed along the center line of the top and extended over the neck as it is resting in the dovetail of the body. Reference to the straight edge to the center line of the neck indicates the direction the neck need to be shifted to properly center it on the body. If the neck of a guitar is centered on the body, the fret position where the neck joints the body will be in correct alignment with the binding on the guitar on either side of that fret. Also, if the neck is well centered on the body the corners of the fingerboards will strike the soundhole rosette at the same point.

Sanding off the top part of both shoulders of the dovetail the neck can be pitched up. As the neck is pitched up the height of the strings off the sound board is lowered.



Also, as the neck is pitched up the height of the strings over the frets closer to the body raises. If the neck is pitched up too high the projection of the guitar will be lessened and it will become difficult to play the higher up the fingerboard one moves.

Conversely, sanding off the bottom part of both shoulders of the dovetail the neck can be pitched back. The more the neck is pitched back the higher the height of the strings off the soundboard will be. If the neck is pitched back too much, two problems can occur. First, as the neck is pitched back the height of the strings over the frets closer to the body lowers up to the point where the neck joints the body. To prevent the strings from buzzing on the frets as the notes are made closer to the body, a higher saddle in the bridge is needed. If the saddle has to be made excessively high to provide sufficient clearance for the strings over the frets closer to the body, there is potential for problems. A saddle which protrudes above the top of the bridge too much (i.e., only one-third or less of the saddle is within the slot) will tend to lean forward or warp causing the intonation of the guitar to distort. There is also a greater chance that the bridge will crack because of the extra force exerted by lever action of an extra high saddle.

The second problem with a neck pitched back to far is the excessively high string action over the body. If you sight down a neck which has been pitched back sharply, you will note what appears to be a hump where the neck joins the body. With a sharply pitched back neck, what you are actually seeing is the change in direction of the fingerboard as it pulled down to the top of the body. The end of the fingerboard is pulled down to the top of the body, but the

Tech Tips

by Chuck Powers

If you ever have to install an under-saddle pickup in your acoustic guitar (or replace an existing jack), you will probably find that reaching in through the soundhole and fumbling around trying to slide the jack into the enlarged endpin opening can be a real pain. If the soundhole is a little smaller than normal (or your arm is a little bigger), you are going to have a real problem reaching the endblock so you can push the jack through. You also run the risk of pulling one of the wires loose, or bending the pins they are soldered to.

Try this to save some time and aggravation.:

First, you will need one special tool in addition to those recommended by the pickup manufacturer. I personally find that an old G string does the job nicely.

Following the manufacturer's instructions; when the wires have been soldered and you are ready to install the jack, insert the string through the endpin opening from the outside and pull it up through the soundhole. On most jacks, there will be a radial hole drilled through the necked-down end that you will use for tightening after the jack is in place. Slide the string through this hole and take 2 or 3 wraps of the short end of the string around the long portion. Lower the jack through the soundhole. Hold it at about the level of the endpin opening and move it as close as you can with comfort while taking up the slack in the string with the other hand.

When you have the jack aligned, simply pull the string straight back through the endpin opening. The jack will follow the string through and should slide into place easily.

Chuck Powers
Powers Acoustic Instruments
6159 Greens Corner Rd
Galway, NY 12074

strings continue on in a straight line to the saddle leaving a wide space between the strings and frets over the body. The high action over the body becomes a real point of concern when the guitar is cut-a-way. If the guitar is not playable passed the fourteenth fret the cut-a-way body is not much use.

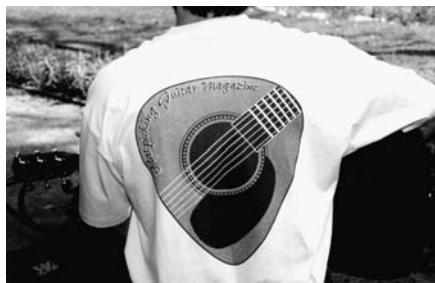
Although, there are inherent problems with a neck that is pitched back to far, the extra string height over the sound board does seem to enhance the projection and volume of the guitar. This may occur because the angle the strings break over the saddle are increased thereby increasing the torque on the bridge. This increased torque or rotation on the bridge drives the top more and therefore makes it more responsive. As the neck angle increases, the angle which the strings break over the saddle also increases. Apparently, as the angle the strings break over the saddle increases the string tension increases. Higher string tension means the strings will not oscillate as much when stroked and therefore a lower action can be obtained without buzzing.

Two small design changes can overcome the inherent problems of a sharply kicked-back neck, while capitalizing on its' advantages. A wedge shaped piece of ebony under the end of the fingerboard will allow the fingerboard to continue straight as it runs out over the body. The string action over the body can thereby be kept very playable.

Elevating the front end of the bridge will allow the saddle to be appropriately high, while providing the necessary support to prevent problems which occur when the saddle protrudes to far above the bridge.

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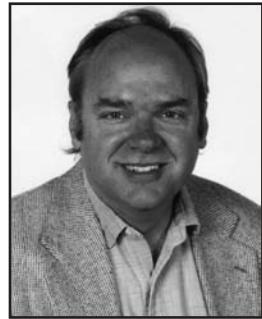
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About the Author:

Don Gallagher operates a small family business engaged in guitar making located in Wartrace, Tennessee. Don's father J.W. Gallagher, first began woodworking as a furniture maker in Wartrace in 1939. Don literally grew up working in his father's shop. In the early 1960's Don closely assisted his father in the development of the guitar business. In 1976 Don assumed the responsibility of operating the family business.

PICKIN' FIDDLE TUNES

by Adam Granger



TWO GOOD TUNES

Hello pickers, one and all! This time we're going to look at two fiddle tunes, one a flatpick standard and the other a flatpick not-so-standard (but a great tune nevertheless). True to SOP, let's look at the second one first:

The old-time tune *Blue Mule* is in open D (please note that "open D", as used here, refers not to a retuning to open D, but rather to the fact that the tune is played in the key of D but is not capoed).

Play this tune in the second position (i.e., with fingers of the left hand "zone covering" the second through fifth frets). Now, the way you'd know this if I'd unexpectedly dropped dead before writing that last sentence is to look at the lowest and highest frettings called for. There are no first fret notes, and only one note above the fifth fret. This screams out, "Second position! Second position!"

BLUE MULE

I

KEY: D

II

A TUNE BY ANY OTHER NAME...

Step right up, folks
Learn one tune, you've learned eighteen. . .
Everybody's a winner!
That's right, *Blue Mule*, being the old-time chestnut that it is, is known by no fewer than seventeen other titles, and here they are:

Buffalo Nickel
Chinky Pin
Darling Child
Fourth of July
I'm over Too Young to Marry
I'm over Too Young to Marry Yet
I'm over Young to Marry
Lead Out
Love Somebody
Midnight Serenade
My Love Is but a Lassie-O
My Love Is but a Lassie Yet
Old Lady Tucker
Shoot the Turkey Buzzard
Sweet Sixteen
Ten Nights in a Barroom
Too Young to Marry

Let's get back to that one exception we mentioned, which is the first note of the third measure of the first part. This is to be played by your little finger, which has just played on the fifth fret of the same string. It's almost a slide, except that it's separately picked.

Experiment with placing the pick action at different points and see how different it makes the figure sound. I like to pick the seventh fret note while my little finger is actually enroute to it, thus making the figure a true slide. Wherever you choose to pick within this window of opportunity, the figure will have some degree of slidiness. (No, you won't find "slidiness" in the current Webster, but it'll be in their next edition—they watch this magazine like a hawk).

Try this multinominal piece on for size and we'll chalk the cuffs and sleeves and get it back to you in four days, or your next tune is free.

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-down-up.

For those theme buffs and conspiracy theorists among you, note how many of the titles have a "too young to get hitched" idea. This is a trademark of a tune that's really old; it's been around long enough to have adopted all sorts of alternate-but-related titles. Note also, though, that fully half of the other titles have no relationship to the cradle-robbing theme, nor, for that matter, to each other.

A PEP TALK ABOUT THE LITTLE FINGER

Picture six gorgeous cheerleaders (of both genders, of course) prancing around in front of you, pom-poms in hand. Now imagine they're leading a cheer:

Play that tune!
Hit that zinger!
And don't forget your
Little finger! Yaaaaaaaaay!

All right, I confess: I'm a strong advocate for full utility of the little finger. Yeah, sure, you can play almost anything in the first position with your first three fingers, but let me ask you a whole bunch of questions:

What do you do when you get to a tune like *Blue Mule*, hmm? You say you slap a capo onto the second fret and play it out of C? Oh yeah? Well, what if you forget your capo? What if it breaks? What if aliens take it out of your pocket when you're not looking? And while

we're at it, what if aliens take it out of your pocket when you *are* looking? Use that little finger, folks. God didn't just give it to you to put big ugly expensive rings on.

"Where do I start?" I hear you ask. Try playing fourth-fret notes in first-position

tunes that you already know with your little finger instead of your third. This will keep you in true first position: first finger, first fret, second finger, second fret, etc.

Okay, that's the pep talk. Now go out there and pick one for the gipper!

Let's move on to our next victim, the Texas classic *Beaumont Rag*. We flatpickers usually play this tune in C, but it's originally an F tune, and most fiddlers you run into will play it in that key. To do this also, you can either capo on the fifth fret, or you can try transposing into the key of F. Although I wouldn't blame you for suspecting me, I'm being serious here. You see, just as there is a close relationship

BEAUMONT RAG

KEY: C

I

II

between the fingerings of a melody in G and C, there is that similar relationship for the keys of C and F. This is because G and C are a fourth apart and C and F are a fourth apart, and most of the strings on a guitar are tuned a fourth apart. If you didn't understand what I just said, forget it for now and just take a stab at picking the tune in F.

Beaumont Rag starts on the five chord (here I go with the numbers again).

This is a common characteristic of rags, one which disables our usual safe assumption that a tune's first chord is also its key.

Beaumont Rag's second part is a classic (maybe *the* classic) crosspicked guitar part. I'm going to define crosspicking here as a repeating three-note arpeggio pattern. Most of the time, though, "crosspicking" refers to a deviation from straight alternation. In this case, then, the crosspicking pattern would be "down-

down-up-down-down-up-down-up". I play the sequence using straight alternation because that's the way I learned it.

Upshot: While you have the option of picking this sequence using a "down-up-down-up" pattern, know that there are some who would say that crosspicking ain't crosspicking unless it's crosspicked.

On that note, I bid you a fond adieu and I encourage you, as I'm showing myself to the door, to keep on picking!

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 has served on the faculties of *The Puget Sound Guitar Workshop*, *Camp Bluegrass* in Levelland, Texas and *The Stringalong Workshop* in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

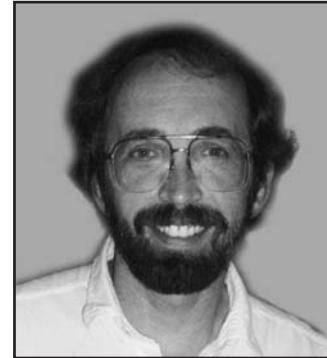
He has recorded seven albums, including "Twin Picking", an all-instrumental flatpick album with Dudley Murphy, two with *The Powdermilk Biscuit Band*, two solo albums of original material, and a swing album with mandolinist Dick Nunneley, as the Eclectic Brothers.

His 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 tape of the tunes in this column, send \$10 to Granger Publications, Box 26115, Shoreview, Mn 55126 or, for charge orders, call 1-800-575-4402

Beginning Clarence White Style Bluegrass Guitar

by Steve Pottier



The Django Connection

I don't know how Clarence White got turned on to Django Reinhardt, the great Gypsy jazz guitarist, but when he did, he tapped into several lifetimes' worth of inspiration and invention. I've heard stories about boxes of Django tapes that he lugged everywhere. It certainly shows in

Clarence's music, as he used a Django lick for the famous stop time in "Beaumont Rag" (Julius Finkbine's Rag), and several adaptions of Django-isms in "Alabama Jubilee." I've heard one tape of a live performance of "Farewell Blues" where he quotes a whole section from a horn player

on one of Django's records! And certainly I can hear Django's influence on his later versions of "Good Woman's Love" and "Shiek of Araby." If you haven't had a chance to sample Django Reinhardt's music, correct that omission A.S.A.P.!

Example 1

Here is one of the ideas that Clarence borrowed from Django, the famous lick in "Beaumont Rag", but he used it in several songs, notably "Alabama Jubilee" and "Farewell Blues."

Slide with your first finger on the 3rd string. Fret 5 is the C note, and that's the chord you're in. As you try moving this idea around, start by thinking of your first finger sliding into the note that names the chord. The high string is doing a very simple chromatic run down then back up. Try for a real bubbly sound.

Example 1

Example 2 is a variation I've heard Clarence play where he puts in a chromatic run on the lower string as well, so there is a run going in exactly the opposite direction of the one on the higher string!

Example 2

Example 3 is a similar lick in G which Clarence would use in "Alabama Jubilee." Use the first and third fingers, and the move together up and back down, a slight variation of the idea in Example 1.

Example 3

Here's some more ways to move this idea around (see examples 4 and 5).

Try moving this around, see how many keys you can work it out in, then try applying it here and there. I've been able to incorporate it in fiddle tunes as diverse as "Ragtime Annie" and "Clinch Mt. Backstep." I'll leave you with "Flop Eared Mule," an example from my CD "Bluegrass Guitar Duets" with Sandy Rothman. Measures 25-26 are where I put this Clarence-from-Django idea in.

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Example 4

Example 5

4th Break

Flop Eared Mule

Arranged by Steve Pottier

As played by Steve Pottier on the Steve Pottier and Sandy Rothman CD "Bluegrass Guitar Duets"

Flop Eared Mule (con't)

16 C G D G

0 0 0
0 0 0
0 0 0
2 2 2

3 0 1 2 0 2 0 0 2 0 2 0 4 0 4 0 0 2 4 3 3

21 D G

3 4 3 4 3 5 3 S 5 4 0 2 4 2 0 4 2 0 2 4 2 4 5 0 5 4 S 5 7 0 5 6 0 5 5

26 D G

0 5 4 0 5 3 2 3 2 3 2 3 2 3 2 3 2 3 2 3 2 3 2 3 2 3 2 0 2 2 3

30 D G C

2 0 0 2 0 2 0 2 0 3 2 0 2 0 0 3 2 0 3 2 0 3 2 0 3 2 0 3



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New Release Highlight

Gary Cook - "Western Standard Time"

Reviewed by Dave McCarty

Mosey on into the Bar-D Chuckwagon restaurant in Durango, Colorado most days between June and September and you'll find a tall, smiling guitarist effortlessly playing a Collings D1 so fast and clean you'd swear he was being paid by the note. Look closely at his belt and you might see one of the two custom buckles he's earned by winning the National Flatpicking Guitar Championships at Winfield, Kansas twice. Ask around and you'll learn that after winning the guitar title at Telluride three years in a row, festival organizers decided to invoke a wait-out period for contest winners so someone else would have a chance to win.

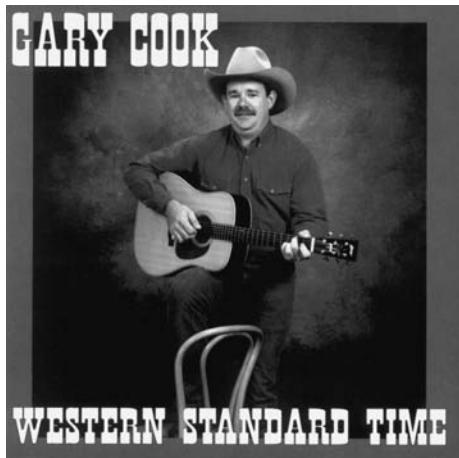
But go up to Gary Cook and you'll likely hear nothing of his contest achievements. He'd much rather talk about guitars and his passion for flatpicking, swap festival stories or converse about his experiences playing with some of the great singers of western cowboy music.

"I'm pretty lucky," he says affably. "I've gotten to play with lots of great guys over the years." Newly married and a recent homebuyer in his adopted hometown of Durango, Gary Cook is without question one of the top flatpickers in the country. He's also the only guitarist with a shot at breaking Cal Ripken Jr.'s streak of consecutive appearances, having played the Chuckwagon for nine years straight without missing a day.

"I'm the only lead instrument, but I also play mandolin and banjo sometimes," Cook explains. "It's great for one guy to do that and have all that responsibility."

Gary started playing guitar at age four and, for the most part, hasn't put the instrument down since. His older brothers also are professional musicians, and his aunts and uncles also played music. "My parents really encouraged us all to play," he says, "and we always did it as a family." Following his high school graduation, Gary hit the road fulltime. "That worked out fine for me. I played all over the country in bands, backing up country music stars. Nowadays, I'm playing acoustic guitar for a living, and I can't see doing anything else."

Fans of hot flatpicking guitar can't see Gary Cook doing anything else either. A



master of many styles, he plays everything from bluegrass banjo breakdowns to hot Western swing to lyrical fills and trills backing up four-part cowboy crooners harmonizing on "Tumblin' Tumbleweeds" or "Cool Water." On contest-style tune arrangements like "Dixie Breakdown" and "Beaumont Rag," his playing is fast without sounding frantic and his command of the instrument's musical vocabulary allows him to spin off clever, intricate melodies that sound like he's composed each break after days of practice.

But, of course, that wouldn't be Gary Cook's approach to music or to life. "Holing up in motel rooms and practicing four tunes for a contest; I've never done that," he reports. "I go to have a great time. A lot of guys get too nervous to even speak before a contest, but they're not going to play to the best of their abilities if they're too tense to have a good time and be musical about it."

In contrast to the "gunslinger" image being reported on Internet discussion groups lately, Cook takes a totally relaxed approach to even a major contest like Winfield. "I just play what I'm comfortable with. I don't have a list of set tunes; I just play what feels good that day," he told Flatpicking Guitar.

Now that he's won Winfield twice, Gary says contests have become less important to him from a personal and career standpoint. "I can't say I'm finished with contests. It's been a good thing for me. But if I don't ever enter another one, I'm pretty satisfied," he feels.

More important to him now, he adds, is being regarded as a total musician and entertainer. He's begun branching out to conduct guitar workshops as time allows, and he's also planning on accepting new guitar students. Just recently, he's begun working with a Florida educator on a series of children's video tapes teaching math and work skill games. "They wanted American acoustic music," he explains, adding, "It's hard to sit in a studio and figure out what would make a pre-schooler listen, what's intriguing enough to them." Gary says if the project works out, the tapes will be distributed to libraries and schools, doctors' offices and other outlets where they would reach young children.

That attitude of trying to please and intrigue his listeners also extends to his new CD, "Western Standard Time." Unlike a few of his past recordings which primarily featured the faster and flashier side of his playing, this new work reflects his growth and a musician and entertainer. "It's mostly request songs from the audience at the Chuckwagon. People want to hear what's familiar to them, so I have to be careful. There're some selections on it that I wouldn't necessarily put on it because I want to play them, but that's okay," he says agreeably. "I'm fortunate to do what I do, and the crowd plays a big part in that. I like to entertain, not just be holed up playing guitar."

The CD features some familiar bluegrass jam songs like "St. Anne's Reel" and "Whiskey Before Breakfast," but also highlights Gary's ability to create novel flatpicking arrangements of favorite songs like "William Tell Overture," "Malaguena," and "Grandfather's Clock." Think of Steve Kaufman's playing on tunes like "Tammy's Waltz" and "Star of the County Down" and you'll have an idea what Gary's trying here.

On the tune presented here, "Western Standard Time," Gary Cook amply displays his command of "American acoustic music," tossing in bits of his beloved swing music, fiddle tune runs, hot flatpicking licks and some gorgeous crosspicking. An accomplished mandolinist who's also been a top three finisher at Winfield's equally demanding mandolin championships, Gary

can't resist using this catchy original tune as a platform for some tasty mandolin work.

Gary says his remarkable speed comes mainly from the sheer number of hours he plays guitar each week, not from dedicated speed drills or other practice. "I try not to be mechanical," he explains. "In order to be musical, you have to make it flow along.

In the Western swing music we do, we try to get into that groove and the feeling of the music. We do a lot of melodic and pretty things that make the music work. I figure, as long as it's soothing and pleasing to me, other people will enjoy it too."

So if your travels bring you anywhere near Durango's high mountain country during the summer months, or if you happen

across a man in working cowboy boots and jeans making a Collings guitar sound like a machine gun firing perfect bubbles of notes into the thick night air deep in the Walnut River Valley outside Winfield this September, just mosey on up and introduce yourself. Because for Gary Cook, it's always Western Standard Time.

Western Standard Time

by Gary Cook

As played by Gary Cook on his CD "Western Standard Time"

The sheet music consists of six staves of mandolin tablature. Staff 1 starts with a D6 chord. Staff 2 features a solo section with a 'H' label. Staff 3 includes chords Em and A. Staff 4 shows a complex solo section with fingerings like 8, 7, 8, 5, 8; 7, 8, 7, 5, 7; 6, 6; and 5, 8, 5, 7, 8. Staff 5 starts with a F#7 chord. Staff 6 concludes with a G chord. Staff 7 begins with a D7 chord. Staff 8 ends with a C# chord.

Western Standard Time (con't)

Sheet music for guitar, 2 staves:

- Staff 1 (Top):** Key signature: D major (2 sharps). Time signature: Common time (indicated by 'C'). Measure 22. Chords: D, G, Em. Bass line notes: 5, 5, 5, 7, 67, 67, 7, 7, 67, 7, 5, 7.
- Staff 2 (Bottom):** Key signature: A major (1 sharp). Time signature: Common time (indicated by 'C'). Measure 28. Chords: A7, D, Em, F#m, A. Bass line notes: 7, 67, 7, 7, 7, 9, ., 7, 6, 9, 7, 7.



**For more information about
2-time Winfield Champ**

Gary Cook
visit his web page at:

http://www2.aros.net/~tboy/cook/
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Reviews

CD/Audio Tape Reviews

Chris Jones and the Night Drivers "No One But You" Rebel 1739



reviewed by Bryan Kimsey

Chris Jones' voice has been described as a cross between Tony Rice and Randy Travis, and I'd say that's a pretty accurate description. He's definitely not one of those "tighten your belt and do it a key higher" singers, preferring instead to stick with the lower registers. But that's fine with me, because he sounds good there, and his singing and songwriting are right up front on his new album "No One But You."

"But what about his guitar playing???", you ask. Well, it's here too, but only on about half the songs. Chris is a good enough picker that he could have taken a break on every tune and I would have wanted more. On the tunes he does take a solo, it's easy to see why he's *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine's* columnist. His solos are powerful, melodic, interesting, and to the point. He steps into his solos with authority and steps out of them with decisiveness. With only Doug Knecht on banjo, Jesse Brock on mandolin, and guests Ron Stewart and Rob Ickes on fiddle and dobro, there's plenty more room for Chris to punch the six-string. But hey, he sings on every song, so I guess he didn't want to hog the spotlight too much!

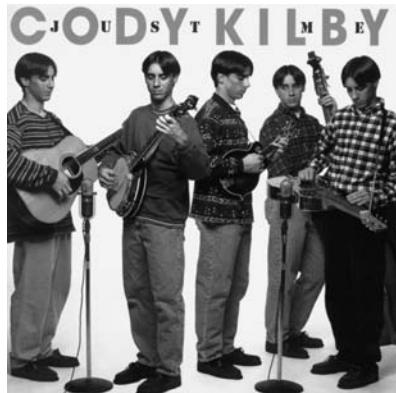
On the whole, this is a very nice album and I enjoyed listening to it. It's good, somewhat country-flavored, bluegrass, featuring some great songs, all of them fresh and new, sung by an excellent vocalist who

happens to also be an excellent guitarist. Sounds like a pretty good combination to me.

Song List:

Ribbon Of Darkness
No One But You
I'm Not That Good At Goodbye
Stream Of Love
My Baby's Just Like Money
Sweetest Love
Only My Heart
Model Prisoner
Close The Door
In A Mansion Stands My Love
Shaky Ground
Whispering Now

Cody Kilby - Just Me Rebel 1736



reviewed by Mike Wright

Although Cody Kilby is a young player, he's a very mature musician. Any professional band would be happy to have someone who could play guitar like Cody—or mandolin, banjo, or bass, since he plays all the instruments on this recording. He also writes some pretty decent tunes.

Cody's guitar playing is clean, clear, and tasteful. His style is not obviously derivative of any of the more famous flatpickers, which is very refreshing for someone his age. His picking shows energy and confidence. "St. Anne's Reel" demonstrates his ability to come up with lots of interesting variations on a standard fiddle tune. He can play about as fast as anyone I've ever heard, but he can also play slowly without becoming boring, and without his rhythm

falling apart.

The musical styles on this CD include his own slow, modern-sounding tunes, like "Memories of You" and "Tune for Poppy," the Latin "El Cumbanchero," the Texas-style "Tom and Jerry," the speedy "One Legged Gypsy," and a variety red-hot Bluegrass numbers.

Cody is just as good on the mandolin and banjo as he is on the guitar. This is immediately apparent with the first tune on the CD, Cody's own "Backstep." The lead instruments weave in and out around each other at blazing speed, and his rhythmic control is obvious by the way all the instruments mesh together seamlessly.

His dobro playing is not bad, though not nearly up to the level of the other lead instruments. But what the heck, nobody's perfect, are they?

Song List:

Backstep
Roundup
Memories of You
St. Anne's Reel
El Cumbanchero
Washington County
Ocoee Surprise
Monroe's Hornpipe
One Legged Gypsy
Tune for Poppy
Shenandoah Breakdown
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Tom and Jerry

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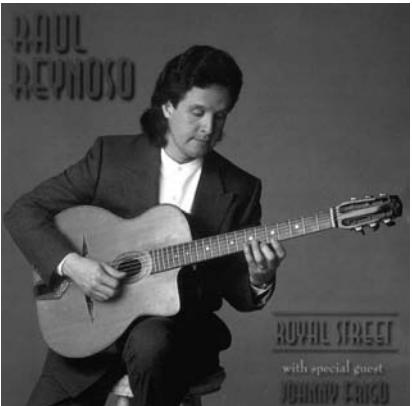
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Raul Reynoso - Royal Street RD CD001



reviewed by David McCarty

The sound drifts back like the scent of French cigarettes and strong espresso on a sultry night along the Seine in 1936, the sound of Parisian cafe socialites drinking Pernod and champagne in the world-famous Hot Club of France to the virtuosic musicianship of the world's first string jazz band led by the flamboyant Gypsy guitarist Django Reinhardt. The original guitar hero, Reinhardt and musical soulmate violinist Stephane Grappelli forged a musical style that has endured, albeit fitfully, through a World War, the emergence of rock 'n' roll and the creation of a worldwide pop media culture.

Today, we're seeing a remarkable renaissance in Gypsy jazz, Europe's answer to American-style flatpicking guitar. Led by an entourage of talented Europeans like Stochelo Rosenberg and Birelli Lagrene, this revival also includes some great American players like Paul Mehling (author of a new Homespun Tapes series to be reviewed next issue), John Jorgenson and Raul Reynoso.

On his new solo CD, "Royal Street," Reynoso artfully recreates and reinterprets Reinhardt's astounding melodic and technical abilities on 13 classic and original songs. As a flatpicking guitarist, Reynoso generates great tone on his guitars, an original 1940 Selmer Modelle Django Reinhardt (serial #485), a 1995 Maurice Dupont Modelle Selmer and a 1982 Ibanez Maccaferri replica. In turn he swings (literally) from blazingly fast runs of linked arpeggios and chromatics to sweetly inspired waltz's like his originals "Alicia Waltz" and "Waneta's Waltz."

On the Django original's here, his playing never mimics the master but

gracefully devises his own lines that stay within the scope of the style. Listen to his lovingly played rendition of the immortal melody "Nuages" for a firsthand lesson in bringing out the soulful, tone-laden potential of the acoustic guitar.

Like his musical template, the original Quintet of the Hot Club of France, Reynoso works in close quarters with other exceptional solos. Here's it's Chicago's fabled jazz violinist Johnny Frigo, who adds brilliant solos and backups throughout the CD. During the war when Grappelli fled to England to escape the Nazi regime, Django stayed behind and played with a clarinetist instead, and Reynoso also revives that sound in his work here with the inspired playing of Bob Reitmeier. A talented vocalist as well, Reynoso effectively sings 1930s and '40 swing tunes like "Lock My Heart And Throw Away The Key" and "Exactly Like You" to give the CD a broader sound.

"Royal Street" is, to use a timeworn cliche, must listening for any fan of Gypsy jazz and the Reinhardt style of guitar. Few American artists have captured the light-hearted gaiety and effervescence of the original Hot Club recordings as well as Raul Reynoso and his talented cohorts of this CD. Play on, mon ami!

Song List:

Matelot
Exactly Like You
Royal Street
Blues For Dixie
Daphne
Raul's Rhumba
Alicia Waltz
Nuages
I'm Gonna Lock My Heart
Valse Marguerite
Dinah
Sambali

Raul Reynoso, 17300 17th Street #J-304,
Tustin, CA 97780

Dean Magraw- Broken Silence Red House Records RHR CD 69



review by Bryan Kimsey

This was my first listening exposure to Dean Magraw. A frequent picking partner of Peter Ostroushko, Magraw comes from a wide and eclectic background. Listening to his album, I heard influences from just about every type of music; those varied influences make it hard to pigeon-hole this album, but I have to try, anyway. It's sort of cross between Windham Hill, Latin fusion jazz/rock, Dawg, fiddle tunes, and a bunch of other stuff that's equally hard to classify. If you're thinking "Aw, wimpy music", you're wrong! There's some pretty powerful stuff on this album and Magraw digs in with pick and fingers and really pops those strings from time to time. His tone is strong at times, mellow at others, brittle when called for, and smooth when appropriate. Seven of the 11 tunes were penned by Magraw. Most of the tunes starts slowly and build in intensity, although a few, like "Gracie's Reel" kick off with a bang. In any case, Magraw's command of dynamics is impressive and used to great effect.

Supporting musicians include Peter Ostroushko on mandolin, Marc Anderson on percussion, Jim Anton on electric bass, and Steve Tibbets on 12-string guitar. On "Broken Silence" they're definitely supporting musicians and the focus is clearly on Dean. Overall, this is a great album that fans of acoustic jazz-oriented non-classifiable music will probably like. It's certainly been spending a lot of time in my CD player.



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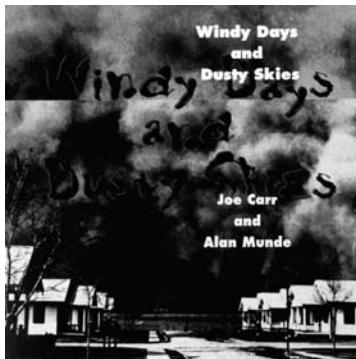
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Joe Carr and Alan Munde-
Windy Days and Dusty Skies
Flying Fish Records, FF 70644



reviewed by Bryan Kimsey

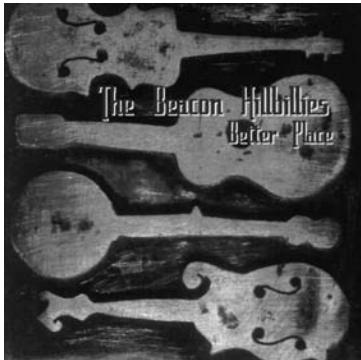
If you're going to teach the art of bluegrass at a college, as Joe Carr and Alan Munde do at South Plains College in the aptly named Levelland, Texas, you'd better have what it takes to play The Bluegrass Music yourself. On "Windy Days and Dusty Skies" Joe and Alan demonstrate that, yes indeed, they're quite qualified in the picking and singing department. Of course, they get a little help from friends like Lynn Morris, David Grier, Beppe Gambetta, Roland White, fellow instructor Ed Marsh, "Texas Shorty", and others, but this album still gives them a chance to strut their stuff. Carr handles vocals, mandolin, and guitar with Munde on, what else?, banjo. The tunes on this album are bluegrass tinged with a generous flavoring of Western Swing.

Either Carr or one of the guests takes a guitar break on just about every tune, offering quite a bit to flatpickers. When Carr relinquishes the lead guitar role, he does so to pickers such as Beppe Gambetta, David Grier, and Gerald Jones. Carr's own playing is versatile and adapts itself to the tune at hand. He can go from swingy on "Little Tumbleweed" to bluesy on "Blue Skies, Blue Water" and both at the same time on "Texas Blues".

I liked this album. It's a fun, bouncy album with a lot of good flatpicking, a wide spread of variety, and a collection of tunes you don't hear very often. Check it out.



The Beacon Hillbillies-
Better Place
East Side Digital, ESD 81092



reviewed by Bryan Kimsey

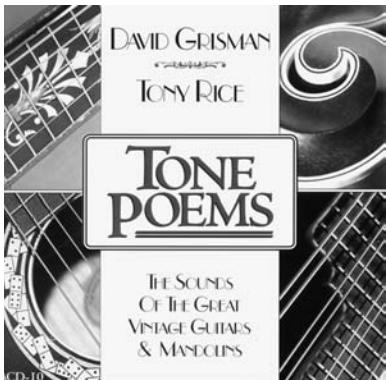
Flatpicking Guitar Magazine columnist John McGann plays guitar with The Beacon Hillbillies and they sound like a wild bunch of guys who probably spend as much time listening to The Allman Brothers as they do to Bill Monroe. The music on "Better Place" is hard-driving with that indescribable "push" that the more aggressive bands seem to have. Part of the reason for this is the driving bass, but some of can be attributed to the energy the soloists put into their breaks. In addition to McGann on guitar and vocals, the band features Jimmy Ryan on mandolin and vocals, Jim Whitney on bass, and Lauck Benson on banjo.

Eight of the 12 songs are vocals, although there's plenty of picking on these. I thought the vocals were pretty good in a husky, bluesy sort of way, but my wife didn't like them. Oh, well—she doesn't like the Allman's either. Instrumentally, this band tends more toward rhythmic sort of solos and in mood-building than they do in toward the AABB fiddle tune style. This rhythmic emphasis is particularly apparent on "Evil Eye", a bluesy McGann-penned tune that happens to one of my favorites on the album. "Huggin' the Rail" comes closest to the fiddle-tune style and it's a kicker. McGann's guitar playing is strong and punchy and cliche'-free. His Zeidler cutaway sounds crisp and bright, and cuts through the mix well. He certainly doesn't seem to have any trouble coming up with the right notes for the situation, and blasts them out like grass clippings from a side-throw lawnmower.

If you like newgrass, blues, and rock 'n roll in addition to old-time and bluegrass, you'll probably like the Beacon Hillbillies and "Better Place". They certainly have the drive and energy required to hold my ear's attention.

CD/Book Combination Reviews

David Grisman and Tony Rice - Tone Poems Acoustic Disc (ACD 10)



reviewed by Mike Wright

If you have ever bought a new CD and upon first listening became really excited about learning the licks, but then felt frustrated because you couldn't figure them out, Mel Bay has come to your rescue. The Mel Bay Publishing Company has begun offering CD and transcription book combination packages for some of the best flatpicking CDs available. They already offer CD/tab book combinations to classics like Mark O'Connor's "Markology" and Dan Crary's "Jammed If I Do," as well as the CD/book we will focus on here, "Tone Poems" featuring David Grisman and Tony Rice.

The CD (Acoustic Disc):

It seems like a waste of time to say that Grisman and Rice are master musicians, so I won't bother to write about how great the musicianship is on this album. In this magazine, it would be like "preaching to the choir." On this CD Grisman and Rice give us what you would expect from Grisman and Rice.

In "Tone Poems," Grisman and Rice play 17 duets on as many different vintage guitars and mandolins. The dates of manufacture range from 1891 to 1993. The tunes were selected to match the instruments in style or period, and there is as much variety in the tunes as there is in the instruments.

In a way, this recording reminds me of the classic "Skaggs and Rice" recording of vocal duets. For the most part it is very spare, yet exciting. Unlike what we hear

on many duet albums where performers concentrate on taking turns playing lead and backup to fiddle tunes, there is not much simple chordal backup. Instead, there are harmonies and counterpoints.

The CD includes a 40-page booklet showing all the instruments, with notes on each of the guitars written by luthier Dexter Johnson of Carmel Music Co., and notes on the mandolins by David Grisman. The booklet is printed on slick paper and has excellent photos of all the instruments, taken by Eric Harger.

There was much talk on the FLATPICK-L mail list a while back about which of the guitars had the best sound. I'm sorry, but you'll just have to get a copy and decide for yourself.

The Transcription Book:

The CD I have came with a spiral-bound book of guitar music and tablature, published by Mel Bay Publications. The transcriptions were done by John Carlini. The book provides a very thorough coverage of the Tony Rice style as played on this CD.

The Tunes:

Turn of the Century
The Prisoner's Waltz
Sam-Bino
Grandfather's Clock
Good Old Mountain Dew
I Am a Pilgrim
Mill Valley Waltz
Vintage Gintage Blues
I Don't Want Your Mandolins Mister
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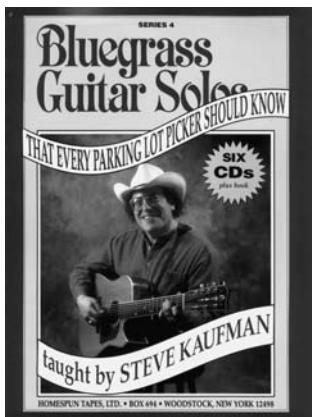
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Instructional Material Reviews

Bluegrass Guitar Solos That Every Parking Lot Picker Should Know Series 4 Homespun Tapes, Ltd.



reviewed by Dan Miller

I'll have to admit right off the bat that the majority of flatpicking solos I know have come from Steve Kaufman's "Parking Lot Picking" series. But that is easy for me to admit because I know I'm not alone. At almost every festival I attend I will inevitably get into a jam session where another guitarist in the group is playing the exact same solos as I am because we both got them out of Kaufman's books. At Wintergrass last year *Acoustic Musician* publisher Jim Jessen and I sat a jammed for a while and we ended up playing the same solos back and forth at each other because he had also learned all of the tunes out of Kaufman's books. I later told a friend that if you look in the dictionary under "redundant" there is a picture of Jim and I picking.

On the internet Flatpick-L list, whenever a newcomer asks about the best instructional material available, as many as a dozen responses will come back recommending Kaufman's "Parking Lot Picking" series. Believe it or not, I've even been to guitar contests and heard contestants playing tunes right out of Steve's books.

Why are these books so popular? I think there are several reasons:

1) All of the tunes (20 in each book) are the standards that you will always hear when you go out to jam sessions. If you learn the 80 tunes presented in these four books, you will be able to play the majority

of the tunes you will run across at any bluegrass jam session.

2) All of the tunes in every book are presented in three levels of difficulty; beginning, intermediate, and advanced. This not only allows each guitar player to find something that suits his or her level, it also helps players learn about arrangement and improvisation.

If you learn the beginners version of each song, which is simple and sticks to the melody, yet not so simple that it is boring, then when you go on to the more difficult versions of the same song you can study how Kaufman builds the simple version into a progressively more complex solo. This kind of study not only helps to teach the student how to eventually design his or her own solos, it also provides variations that can be played as either they are presented or in combination.

3) The cassettes (or CDs) that accompany the books provide far more information than just a fast and slow version of the tune. Steve puts over twenty years of teaching experience on this tapes and CDs. He steps you through each measure of each song and gives you pointers that will help you over every potential stumbling block. It is almost as if you get a private lesson with Steve on every tune. A rhythm track of each song is also provided so that you can practice.

4) If you run into difficulties with a tune, call Steve, he answers his own phone (1-800-FLATPIK)

For those of you who have already bought one of the books in the "Parking Lot Picking" series, you already know why this series is so great. I will tell you that if you liked one, two, and three, you will love number four because the presentation and tablature is better and this volume comes with six CDs instead of cassettes. The CDs make it a lot easier to find and review material. The detailed table of contents also makes it very easy to find every track on the CD.

The songs which appear in volume 4 are as follows: Angeline the Baker/ Back Up and Push/ Bonaparte's Retreat/ The Cuckoo's Nest/ Fire On The Mountain/ Flowers of Edinburgh/ Leather Britches/ Lost Indian/ Miller's Reel/ Molly Bloom/ New Camptown Races/ Over The Waterfall/ Paddy on the Turnpike/ Road To Columbus/ Rickett's Hornpipe/ Sailor's Hornpipe/ Silver Bells/ Spinning Wheel/ Whistlin' Ruffus/ Woodchopper's Reel

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Gear Review

by Bryan Kimsey

Gig Bags

Tired of carrying a heavy hard-shell case around the festival grounds when you really just need light protection for your guitar? Need to carry your guitar and have your hands free? Have to carry the 6-string a long ways? A gig bag might be what you're looking for. Gig bags are typically covered with tough Cordura or canvas, padded with an inch or so of high density padding, have backpack or carry straps, and outside pockets. They're designed for carrying your guitar in situations where hard cases are over-kill. Some folks, like Steve Kaufman, even take their gig bags on commercial airlines and store them in the overhead bins..

Colorado Case Co.: The Colorado Case Company bag is made from waterproof Cordura. Seams were tucked inside the bag and nicely trimmed with a contrasting color. The accessory pocket is flush with the case front and closes with a single horizontal zipper. There's no internal storage pocket, although the manufacturer is considering making one. A standalone "pick pocket" is available that could clip to a strap or inside the case. The Colorado Case uses a two-way zipper that runs completely around to the back of the case - when un-zipped the case lays completely flat. The zipper is protected by a storm flap. The case interior is nylon, and the peghead area is reinforced with Cordura. The backpack straps unclip at the bottom and can be moved to a several locations on the bag. The straps themselves are softer nylon, backed by Cordura in the shoulder area, with Fastex adjusters. Some older cases do not have carry handles, but the newer one I reviewed had lightweight, unobtrusive dual handles. A removable coat hanger hook is supplied. The bag's foam is adequate, about the same as the Blue Heron bag, but not as stiff as the Reunion Blues.

Reunion Blues: The Reunion Blues gigbag is also heavy Cordura, and also features tucked in seams, although it doesn't have contrasting trim. The exterior accessory pocket is square, bellowed, and sewn to the

outside of the bag, closing with hook and loop material. No internal storage pocket is supplied, although a "banjo parts bag" is available. The one-way zipper runs around the headstock. The case interior is a soft velvet-like material, and both peghead and bridge area are reinforced with leather. The Reunion Blues bag uses heavy duty canvas backpack style straps and dual hand-holds which are also leather, backed with nylon. The backpack straps are riveted in place and are adjusted by a simple thread-through adjuster. The bag's foam is thicker than the other gig bags reviewed and quite stiff. There's a hanging loop and front hand-hold. All attachments (straps, handles, etc.) are reinforced with leather.

Blue Heron: In keeping with the competition, the Blue Heron case is also Cordura. Seams tuck outwards and are covered with a second layer of contrasting material. The external accessory pocket stretches from edge to edge, bellows outwards, and is closed with a zipper. An internal accessory pocket is optional and fits nicely beneath the neck. The bag uses a two-way zipper that runs around the headstock. The case interior is nylon and the peghead area is reinforced with Cordura. A single strap can be fastened to a variety of points, allowing the bag to be carried over neck and shoulder like a bandolier or over a single shoulder like a handbag. The strap is adjusted via a metal thread-through adjustment. A single handle on the bag's side folds almost flat and is handy yet non-obtrusive. The bag's foam is about the same as the Colorado Case Company's.

Overall Impressions

The Colorado Case Company bag impressed me with its clean look. The protected zipper, integral outside accessory pocket, and contrasting trim give the case a streamlined and attractive look. The Blue Heron, by contrast, was the boxiest and least attractive case with its outward protruding seams, and bulging accessory pocket. The Reunion Blues was right in the middle, look-wise. It has clean-looking seams, but the double-loop handles, bulky

backpack straps, and square exterior pocket hurt its streamlining. While the Colorado Case had the cleanest looking pocket, it won't hold as much gear as the outwardly bulging pockets of the other two cases- it's fine for sheet music and capos and such, but don't expect to stuff the kitchen sink in it. Of course, putting the kitchen sink against the top of your instrument isn't such a hot idea, anyway, and I didn't feel the shallower pocket was a drawback at all.

The softer backpack straps and Fastex adjusters of the Colorado Case Company bag allow you to adjust the bag while it's being carried, whereas the Reunion Blues straps have to be adjusted beforehand. Also, the Colorado Case Company straps were spread wider apart at the shoulder area than the Reunion Blues, making them more comfortable for wide-necked, broad-shouldered people. The Reunion Blues straps, to their credit, are very heavy duty

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and will probably last forever. Also, the Reunion Blues straps are riveted to the bag, whereas the Colorado Case Company bag uses nylon connectors which sometimes turned sideways. The Colorado Case Company strap could be completely and easily removed, and fastened in several different locations. The Reunion Blues had the least versatility in strap positioning since the riveted straps can't be removed or clipped to different areas, but they are positioned well. The Blue Heron's single strap system was versatile and could be clipped in a number of different ways, but I thought the top fastener was too high, making the bag ride too low on my body. Also, I would prefer nylon fasteners to the shiny metal ones used on the bag.

I preferred the soft lining of the Reunion Blues bag to the nylon linings of the Blue Heron and Colorado Case Co. bags. Nylon is tough and easily cleaned, but I felt that it might be abrasive to thin finishes over the years. The Reunion Blues was the only bag to protect and reinforce both the peghead and bridge areas. The foam in the Reunion Blues bag also felt stiffer and thicker than the other two bags, although it was a small difference and all three bags had adequate padding. I appreciated the longer zipper

on the Colorado Case Company and Blue Heron bags because they let the bag lay completely open. The Colorado Case Company bag zipper was the only one protected by a storm flap. The double handles of the Reunion Blues bag were a bit bulky, but they could hold the bag close in case of zipper failure. The softer handles of the Colorado Case Co. bag weren't as comfortable for carrying the instrument, but were fine for simply maneuvering the case. You'd probably use the backpack straps to carry it more than 10 feet anyway, and I liked the way the hand-holds stayed out of the way when not needed. The Blue Heron's single

strap was well-padded, comfortable, and non-obtrusive; the only beef I had with it was that it wouldn't hold the case closed if the zipper should ever break a long way from home. That's an unlikely situation, of course, but zippers are notorious in my household for failing at exactly the wrong time!

All 3 bags are excellent and I can recommend any of them. Look over their features carefully and pick the ones that most appeal to you. For a trim, streamlined case with easily adjustable backpack straps, the Colorado Case Company bag is my first choice. If you carry a lot of gear in the bag, the Blue Heron, with its external expanding pocket and internal under-neck storage is an excellent choice, particularly if you're comfortable with its strap positioning. The Reunion Blues has the nicest interior, best padding, and most indestructible straps and is the one I'd most like to carry a delicate instrument in.

The Ultimate Case

I've mentioned this idea to a couple of the gig bag manufacturers, but I'll bring it up here, too. What I'd really like to see is a hard-shell/gig-bag case combination where the gigbag fits inside a hard-shell case. You could use the hard case in the car while traveling, and then remove the gigbag at the festival. I don't feel comfortable carrying my guitar in a gigbag inside my fully-loaded festival-bound Suburban, and that means I have to carry both a hard-shell and gigbag which just takes up more room. At the festival, I have to switch all my capos, strings, tuners, etc., etc. from one case to another and invariably forget something. Thus, it would be great to have just one case to deal with. Since the gigbag has its own padding, the hard case could be unpadded. I did experiment with this on my own and found out that a Colorado Case Company bag will fit inside a Everest dreadnought case with the padding and storage box ripped out of the latter. Still, it would be nice to see a major case company offer a pre-made combination case. What do you think?

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JOHN McGANN'S ECLECTIC ACOUSTIC



My apologies for the incomplete "Jenny's Chickens" which was printed in Volume 1, Number 4. You will find the tune reprinted on the following page with the missing 3rd part.

I've decided to call this column "Eclectic Acoustic" since I'm going to cover a wide range of musical styles relating to flatpicked guitar.

This month I'd like to present an original tune called "Honeybee", which I recorded on my Green Linnet solo CD "Upslide" (GLCD 2118). I wanted to write a guitar feature with a bluegrass/fiddle tune flavor. It's a fairly straightforward A section; the end of the B part, with the triplets, is the only technically difficult section. On the recording, I play it slowly at first, solo acoustic guitar, until the B where I am joined by Jim Whitney's bowed bass playing a D "pedal tone" rather than the chord changes, up until the last 4 bars of B, where the tempo increases to set up the second chorus of melody. The 2nd time, the melody is played on the Telecaster. Yes, flatpicker's repertoire can work great on electric guitar! Solo electric guitar does generally lack the warm presence of the acoustic, but in a band context it can be a wonderful color.

I tend to prefer the sound of slurs (hammers and pulls) mixed into picked notes; I read an interview with jazz flatpicker Pat Metheny mentioning how picking every note can sound a bit like typing, and I agree. It's good to be able to pick every note, but sonically, I think melodic lines have a more natural flow when they emulate the rise and fall of a speaking voice. You wouldn't want to speak in monotone, so why play that way?

I didn't notate every hammer and pull, but did put in a few places where

I'd be likely to slur. I feel it differently from performance to performance; it's an expressive device that is a form of improvisation. You needn't play the same slurs I did. It's good to experiment with your favorite fiddle tunes, playing a variety of slurred phrases to make the lines speak differently.

Classical musicians think about this kind of expression, as their energies are not going into improvising notes or rhythms; they are improvising with the phrasing, tone, and expression of the music. Often, artists will re-record the same pieces, many years apart, and it is fascinating to hear how the interpretations vary. One of my favorite musicians is English classical guitarist Julian Bream, who has recorded some wonderful Bach pieces several times. We flatpickers can also learn a lot from his use of tone color on the instrument.

As a composer, I find that tunes present themselves in various ways- sometimes, you 'just hear' something and follow it. Sometimes, you think of a specific situation (a nice chord change, for example) or style of music, and write a melody to fit. If you've never tried to write a tune, I encourage you to try. It can be very satisfying, besides, no one else can write or play exactly like you.

John McGann is the 1986 National Mandolin Champion and 1985 2nd place winner for both guitar and mandolin. He has performed and recorded a variety of music with Beacon Hillbillies, Celtic Fiddle Festival, Matt Glaser, Frank Ferrell, Seamus Connolly and others, and has a solo CD "Upslide" featuring a blend of Celtic-American roots music, on Green Linnet.



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Jenny's Chickens

Arr. by John McGann
adapted from the playing of
Michael Coleman

1 F#m F#m E F#m

5 A E Bm A

8 Bm A Bm

11 A Bm D A

■ = downstroke ▽ = upstroke

Honeybee

1995 John McGann/Arbor Vitae-ASCAP
from Green Linnet CD "Upslide" GLCD 2118

The sheet music consists of six staves of flatpicking guitar notation. The first staff shows a melodic line with grace notes and chords G, C, G, D, G. The second staff begins with a slide (H) and a pick (P). The third staff starts with a chord C, followed by G, D, C, G. The fourth staff features a slide (H), a pick (P), and a hammer-on (H). The fifth staff begins with a slide (H) and a pick (P). The sixth staff starts with a slide (H), followed by a pick (P) and a hammer-on (H).

1 4 | : G C G D G

HP P P P

6 C G D C G

HP P P P

11 G H C G

HP P P P

16 D C G G

HP H P P P

21 G D F C G F C

HP HP HP S P

Scott Nygaard

Dreamer's Waltz

Rounder 0397

Scott Nygaard

Dreamer's Waltz

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Vintage Voice

by Buddy Summer

The greater the time span between a guitar's construction and the present, the greater the chance that the guitar has been neglected, abused, damaged, altered and/or repaired. When one is inspecting a potential purchase, one needs to know how the guitar should be so as to be able to determine to what extent the guitar is original. As the worth of a clean, original vintage guitar continues to climb, the greater the likelihood that more counterfeit guitars will appear.

It may be interesting to note that a fellow I know very well once purchased a "very fine" pre-war C.F. Martin D-45 guitar with beautiful Brazilian Rosewood back, very clean, crack-free spruce top and very straight grained Indian Rosewood sides. The 1941 serial number was stamped into a neck block that was beveled unlike any I've seen before or since. It's almost as if a 1970's Martin D-45 had its Indian Rosewood back removed, the original serial number shaved off the neck block and a different serial number stamped into the neck block. After the serial number change, a Brazilian Rosewood back was re-installed. It surely was a "very special" pre-war D-45 . . . Oh well, life goes on.

I also know of a vintage instrument dealer who many years ago traded several fine instruments for an original Gibson F-5 Lloyd Loar Mandolin that turned out not to be so original. Fortunately for the dealer the trade was undone with the help of a law enforcement office.

The point is that one needs some product knowledge of a potential purchase and the aid of an outline, guide, or checklist to help one determine the soundness of the instrument. It's an absolute necessity. In all my years of buying guitars, and I've bought several in my time, I've never seen an outline, guide, or checklist to assist one in this endeavor. The old cliche "necessity is the mother of invention" takes on a whole new meaning as I have humbly offered the eighteen point checklist, with

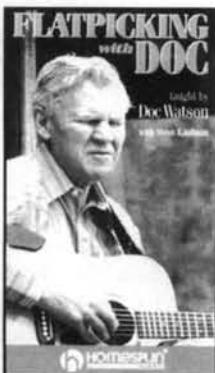


all its shortcomings, in this column over the course of the past five issues of this magazine.

As my wife Nancy and I plan an extended vacation over the next several months, the next few issues of "Vintage Voice" will be contributed by my good friend and close associate Bill Bush. Bill has the enthusiasm the readers of "Vintage Voice" are accustomed to, more knowledge of fine guitars than would fill a book, and is a very talented writer. Having been very closely associated with a very old, well established guitar manufacturer for many years, Bill has accumulated a sizeable collection of wonderful vintage and limited edition guitars and should offer his valuable insights from a different point of view.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the readers of "Vintage Voice" who have taken time to share with me their thoughts and ideas and who have encouraged me along the way. Special thanks goes out to John Arnold of Newport, Tennessee, Ted Davis of Loudon, Tennessee, and Lynn Dudenbostel of Knoxville, Tennessee, for their invaluable assistance as I called on them from time to time to assist me with the finer points of detail in the checklist.

As always, I look forward to your feedback on "Vintage Voice" at 423-983-5533. I am always most happy to share my experiences and knowledge with the readers of *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine* at anytime. If anyone should desire a copy of my vintage guitar checklist in a booklet form, please write or call.



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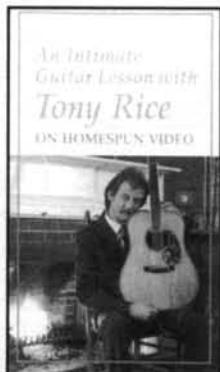
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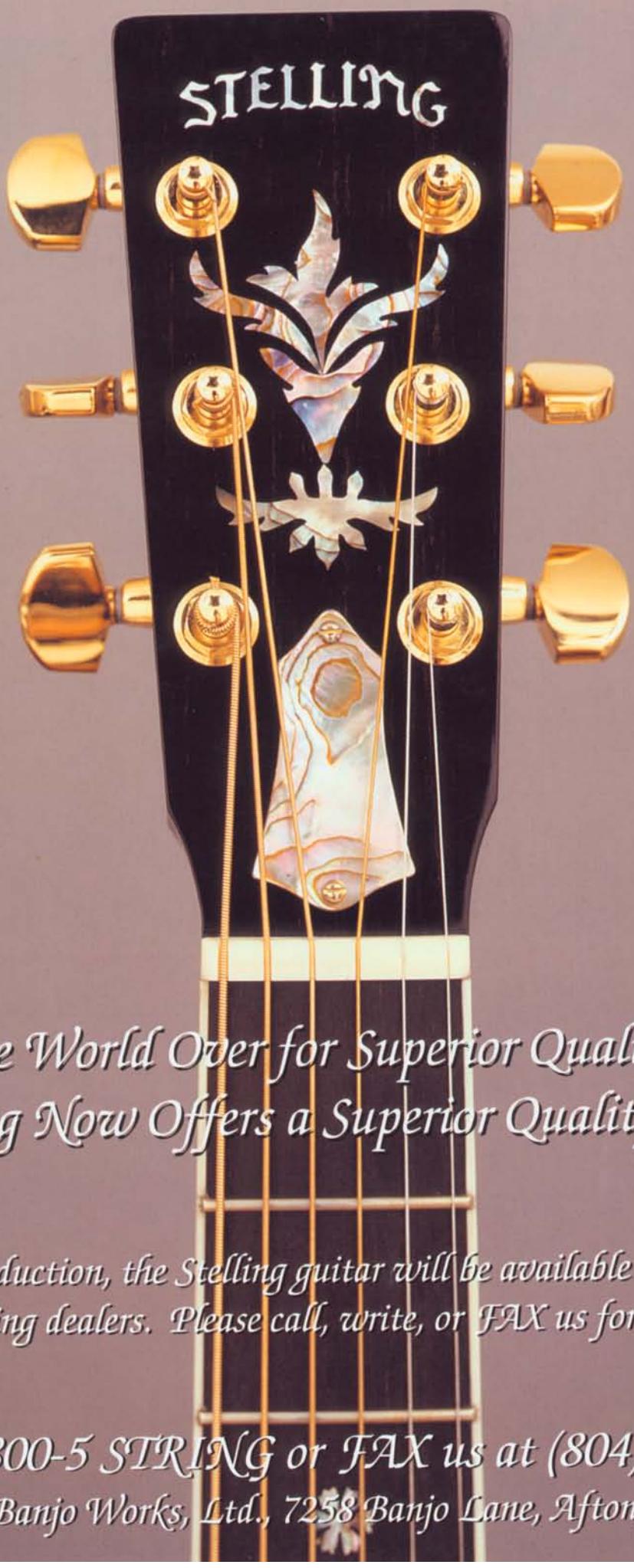
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