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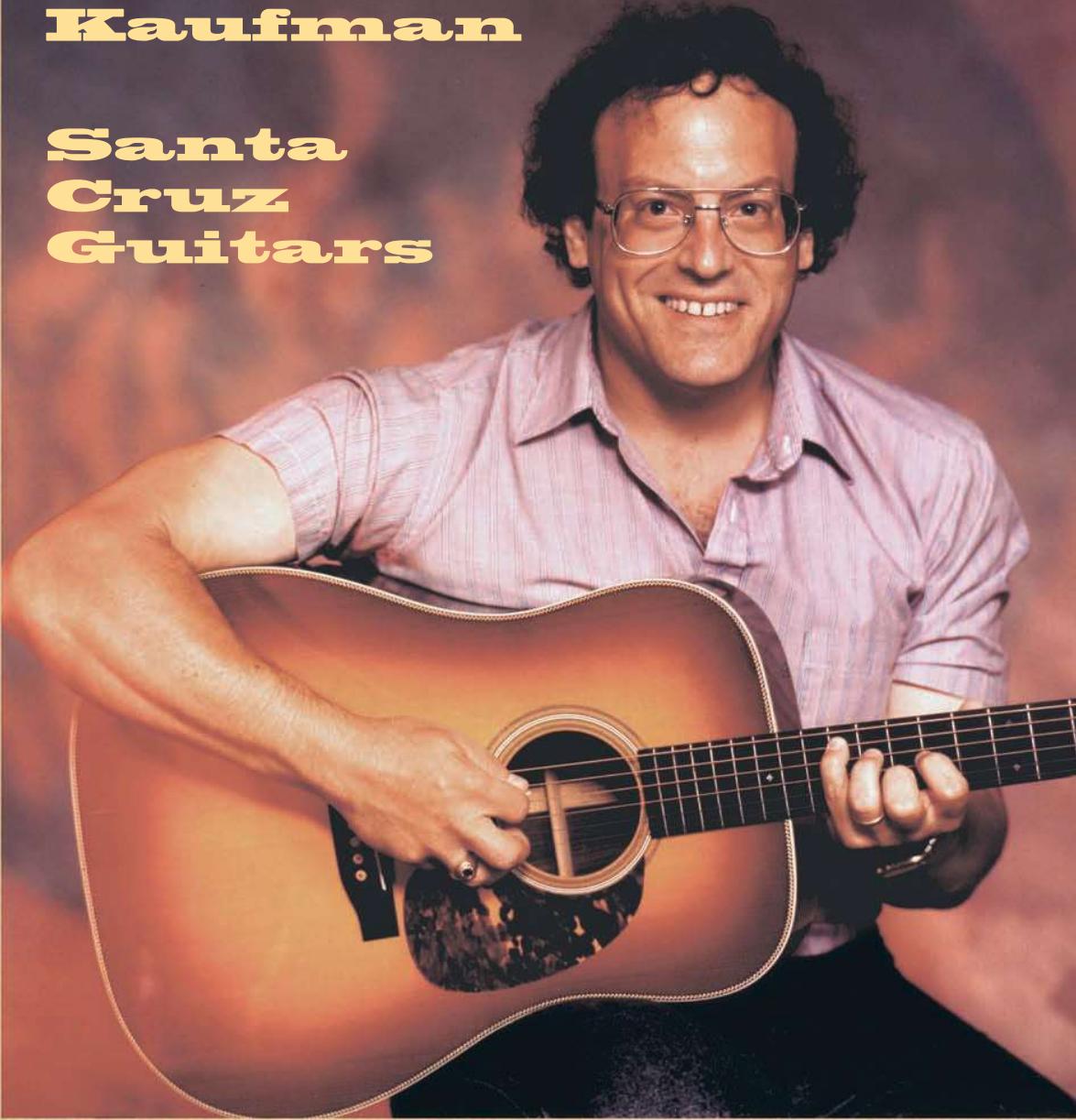
# Flatpicking Guitar

*Magazine*

Volume 1, Number 1 November/December 1996

**Steve  
Kaufman**

**Santa  
Cruz  
Guitars**

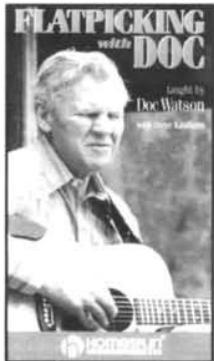


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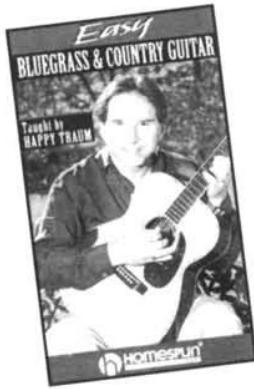
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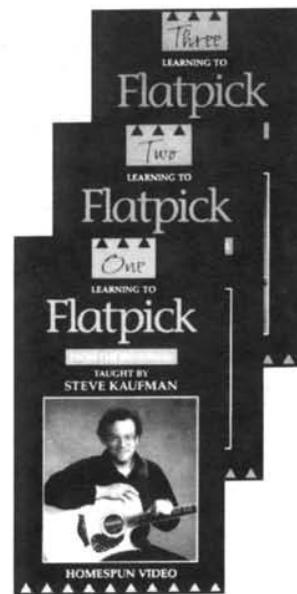
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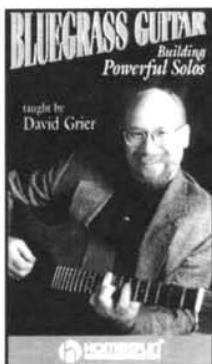
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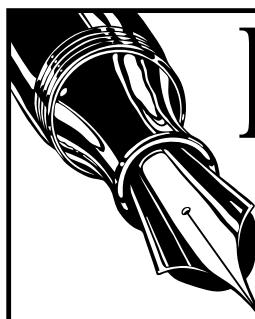
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# EDITOR'S PAGE

Welcome to the premier issue of *Flatpicking Guitar!* First and foremost, it is my hope that as you thumb through these pages, the magazine will inspire you to pick up your guitar and play. My goal in starting this new venture was to provide flatpickers with a learning tool. I want this magazine to be something that you read with guitar in hand. To that end, I have worked to bring together what I feel is a very impressive list of contributors from various musical backgrounds and playing styles who will provide readers of all ability levels with interesting and challenging new material.

We currently have fourteen contributors who will present you with a wide variety of flatpicking topics. Some of our contributors will be addressing the same topic in every issue, exploring that topic in more depth as time goes on, while other contributors will be presenting new topics in each issue. In addition to our regular columnist's contributions, we will also feature an interview with a top player, an interview with a guitar builder, coverage of flatpicking events, and reviews of CDs, instructional books, tapes, videos, and guitar gear. In this issue we feature Steve Kaufman, Santa Cruz Guitars, and Steve Kaufman's flatpicking camp. In the next issue we feature David Grier, Gallagher Guitars, and the National Flatpicking Championships at Winfield, Kansas. Our third issue will feature Jack Lawrence, Collings Guitars, and Merle Fest. So, we have plenty of great material coming to you in the next few issues and beyond.

Since this magazine is in its infancy, I expect that we will naturally need to grow, develop, and change as time progresses. To help us bring you what you want to see in this publication, we welcome your feedback. Tell us what you like, what you don't like, and what you would like us to do differently. We will gladly try to incorporate all suggestions.

To date we have received a number of requests to provide a CD with each issue of the magazine which contains the audio for the tablature presented in the magazine. This is a possibility for the future. However, I would like to say that the majority of our contributors are presenting tablature from their own CDs or instructional projects. What I would like to ask is that instead of paying extra money to have a CD sent with your magazine, that you support our columnists by buying their products. That way you will get to hear the break that is tabbed out in the magazine plus 45 more minutes of great flatpicking!

I would also like to comment on the tablature in the magazine. You will notice that there is not total consistency in the tab format. What I chose to do in regards to tab is to provide you with the tab in the same format which I received it from the columnist. Just as each of our columnists has their own musical taste and flatpicking style, some also have a different style to the written form of their music. I chose not to standardize the tab because I wanted to present each columnist's representation of the music in their own style. I want each contributor's column to be a full expression of their individuality. Plus, some of you who have never worked with the various tab formats, such as Brad Davis' *grid tab* or Adam Granger's *easy tab*, might find that you like it better than the tab you are currently using!

I hope you enjoy the magazine!

Dan Miller



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# Steve Kaufman:

National Flatpicking Champion

Entertainer

Instructor

Recording Artist

Author

Performer

## Does It All

Although Steve Kaufman has been the only three time winner of the prestigious National Flatpicking Championships at Winfield, Kansas, I don't think that when the Flatpicking history books are written this will be listed as his greatest accomplishment. I think that the jewel in his crown has been, and continues to be, his tremendous teaching method and his ability to show aspiring flatpickers that this stuff isn't really as hard as our heroes make it look. If you have an efficient practice method and you work hard, YOU can get it - this is Kaufman's message. Working hard to achieve his goals in this music is something Steve Kaufman knows all about. His degree of determination, dedication, self-motivation, and self-discipline in achieving his personal goals when he was a

young player and in teaching students over the past 20 years, would make even the staunchest Marine Corps Drill Instructor snap to attention and render a crisp salute of approval. His untiring work in developing and propagating his flatpicking instructional methods and techniques have made him one of the most widely respected and sought after guitar instructors in the country.

Steve Kaufman was born in New York City in 1957. His father was a jazz pianist who worked in the import business and his mother was a classically trained pianist who insisted the Kaufman boys begin piano lessons at a very early age. Although Kaufman's father passed away when he was only nine years old, he credits his father for giving him an awareness of improvisation

at an early age. Steve says, "We used to say that we wanted to go watch a TV show and Dad would start spontaneously playing the TV show theme on the piano. Looking back, I knew it was on the spot improvisation, and so we had that kind of improvisational influence."

Kaufman's experience with the guitar began in Junior High School when his older brother, Mike, taught him his first chords. However, he soon became bored with playing rhythm and put the guitar under his bed. He says, "I had learned to play some songs out of an old folk music book. I learned the chords and the strum patterns, but I didn't sing, so it wasn't doing me that much good." Later, his younger brother, inspired

by the Beverley Hillbillies theme, took to playing the banjo and asked Steve to back him up. Kaufman says that playing back up to a banjo was a bit more interesting, but he still had not become really hooked on guitar playing until his younger brother brought home the Flatt and Scruggs *Strictly Instrumental Album* which featured Doc Watson.

The first song Steve tried to learn was *Black Mountain Rag*. He says he picked it up by listening to a version played by Randy Scruggs on the *Earl Scruggs and Friends* album. A slight problem immediately arose because he was attempting to play the tune using his fingers in a classical guitar style. Using this method he couldn't seem to get the song up to speed, but he says, "I had heard Jose Feliciano playing *Flight of the Bumble Bee* at about 3 million beats per minute and I figured if he could do it with his fingers, so could I. I would just have to keep practicing." Steve continued beating his fingers to death trying to fingerpick *Black Mountain Rag* and make it sound like Doc Watson until one day his older brother came into his room and said, "You know they use a flatpick for that, idiot" and threw Steve a pick. That is how it all got started.

Steve Kaufman was 13 years old the first time he took a flatpick to a set of strings and it was then and there that he decided that playing the guitar was what he wanted to do when he grew up. Like most other teenagers who become fanatically interested in something, Steve spent all his spare time playing the guitar. However, the difference between Steve and most other kids his age is that he took his practice very seriously and stuck to a strict practice schedule and regime. Steve says, "I looked at playing guitar as my job. During the summer time, Monday through Friday, nine to five, I practiced guitar. I took one short break



Steve Kaufman with his 7-string Gallagher

in the morning, a lunch break, and a short break in the afternoon. While I was in school, I still practiced whenever I had time. I was lucky that I went to a very liberal school because I barely got by. But I knew I was not going to go to college, I knew I did not want to be trained for any other job." Steve organized his daily practice routine so as to have a specific time dedicated to practicing songs he already knew and a specific time dedicated to learning new material. Within each of these practice sessions he had developed various techniques, exercises, and drills to work on in order to improve all of his fundamental skills. He even kept notes to chart his progress.

In the Summer of 1975, just after graduating from high school, Steve Kaufman began the contest playing phase of his musical career. He had read about flatpicking contests in *Bluegrass Unlimited Magazine* and *Pickin' Magazine* and felt that this would be a good way to test his skills. He says, "Where I lived there was no one around to compare myself to and I thought that I was a hotrod. I wasn't. I was just as green as I could be." From the information he could glean from the magazines, Steve figured that the contest in Winfield, Kansas, was the biggest and so he hitchhiked with his guitar and backpack to Winfield in 1975. He says that there were about 20 contestants that year and he placed in the top ten (a thirteen year old Mark O'Conner was the winner). Kaufman says that the biggest thrill about being in Winfield that year was seeing all of the other flatpickers. After spending all of his high school years practicing from records and learning from a few friends, here he was in a place that was overflowing with other flatpickers. Norman Blake, Doc Watson, and Dan Crary were there performing that year, so Steve not only got to meet many new friends who had the same interests, but he got the chance to watch his heroes play. He says, "My greatest influences on the guitar were Norman, Dan, and Doc, and there they were. This was the Mecca!"

Although Kaufman had been primarily a self-taught player by the time he reached Winfield in 1975, he is quick to point out that he was not completely self-taught. He had been to a few festivals in New Jersey and says, "I had actually been copying quite a bit from a friend of mine. I think anyone who says that they never had instruction is either not being square with you or

they haven't reflected. My instruction came from the streets and I learned from everyone." Other than the professionals who were playing on the records Kaufman listened to, one of the individuals who he credits as being an early influence was his friend Mike Scappatilio. He says, "Mike is the one who got me to play with a bounce and a lift. A lot of the other guys had a straight ahead, sewing machine sound. But Mike had a jazzier background and a bouncier sound. I would follow him around with a tape recorder and tape everything he played. When I started sounding like him he finally said, 'No more tapes.' He played some with Pete Wernick and he could just flat wear it out. He was the best guitar player I had ever heard."

After Kaufman got a taste for big festivals and contests that first year at Winfield, he spent the next several years working in the winter to save money and then traveling to festivals and contests all summer. He hitchhiked everywhere he went and slept by the side of the road. When he arrived at a festival he would tell the promoters that he did not have money but would like to work at the festival in trade for attendance to the festival and an entry in the guitar contest. They would usually allow him to perform odd jobs around the festival in trade for admission. He says, "That first year I didn't even have a tent, I strung a shower curtain between two trees and that was it. I woke up in the morning, ate a can of beans and headed down the road."

In December of 1976 Steve settled in Maryville, Tennessee and has been living there since. When he first moved to Maryville, he began teaching and was playing in some local clubs. He says, "That was a fun time. You had no debt, no car, no nothing, but you are so happy, without a care in the world, because you don't owe anybody anything. I was living off of about eight or ten students a week, living in the basement of a house that had no windows, sleeping on a water bed that leaked. The room I rented had no bathroom, but there was a Texaco station down the street, and who cared!" Steve says that he was fortunate at that time because he met Red



**Steve Kaufman in his contest playing days**

Rector and his wife Parker who took him under their wing. Steve and Red did local shows together, Red was on every cut of Steve's first album, they toured Europe together and Red had also invited Steve along on some tours with Jethro Burns. Steve credits Red with teaching him a lot about dealing with people and about how to perform on stage. Steve said, "Red was a real veteran in the business, and like any veteran, he had a lot he could show you."

The first instructional book and tape project Steve put together was the first of a series for Homespun called, *Bluegrass Guitar Solos That Every Parking Lot Picker Should Know*. That project, completed in 1990, worked out so well that Homespun asked him to do several other flatpicking videos as well as further volumes of the "Parking Lot Picker" series. Currently, there are three volumes in that series and Kaufman is working on the fourth. In addition to the Homespun material, Steve has also completed a number of projects for Mel Bay. (Those who are interested in a complete list of Steve's instructional books, videos, tapes, and CDs can call 1-800 FLATPIK and receive a catalog, from outside the U.S. call 423-982-3808.)

By 1992, Kaufman was teaching nearly 85 students a week in Maryville. About that time a music store in Washington state called Steve and asked him what it would take for him to get out on the road

and teach. In order to cover his expenses, Steve arranged to teach and perform at several locations in Washington during that first trip. The trip was so successful that Steve began booking other similar workshop/performance trips to various parts of the country. As word of Steve's teaching and performing abilities spread, his weekend workshops have become so popular that he is now out on the road about 40 weekends a year.

Typically Steve's weekend workshops begin with a two hour introductory session on Friday evening. In this session, Steve introduces his teaching method, passes out some written material and tablature, gets a good feel for the ability level of the group he is working with, and solicits feedback regarding what each individual attending the workshop wants to learn.

On Saturday, the group will attend two sessions, both three hours in length. During these sessions the material Steve covers usually depends on the ability level of the attendees and the questions that are asked. Although this may seem like a loose structure, there is never any "dead" time. Steve has the ability to fill up every minute of the allotted time with valuable information. For every question that is asked, Steve presents a very detailed explanation of his approach, complete with practice exercises. If the group begins to run out of questions, Steve never allows a moment to be wasted. He takes control and begins to present something from the tab he has handed out, or suggests (after explaining the ten "jammandments") that the entire group jam on a given song. The written material or the jam will usually inspire more questions.

After Kaufman has given the group an information packed eight hours worth of seminar, he will usually conclude his trip with an evening concert. Sometimes he performs solo, other times he brings up a local musician to help him out with the show. Those who have attended Steve's workshops, from beginners to advanced professionals, will be the first to tell you that it was time well spent. I don't think



anyone walks away from a Steve Kaufman workshop without having collected enough new material to keep their practice time filled for months.

One of the nicest things about working with Steve Kaufman, as the people who have attended his workshops know, is that even after his tremendous success as a competition champion, performer, and instructor, he still thinks of himself as being, "Just one of the guys." Even though he has played on stage with Norman, Dan, Doc, Tony Rice and other greats, he still holds these individuals as his heroes. He is approachable, open, and is willing to sit and talk about guitar playing with anyone.

Through his hard work, dedication and over twenty years of experience teaching, Steve has developed a very practical and effective approach to teaching students how to flatpick the guitar. In the remainder of this article, we will present a few of the teaching concepts and techniques he uses in order to help students get over some of the

difficult aspects of flatpicking. However, please keep in mind that this is going to be an introductory article. In future issues of the magazine we will present Steve's ideas on other topics, such as right hand technique, crosspicking, learning breaks from recordings, and learning to improvise, in more detail.

#### **What is the most important recommendation you could make to someone who is learning to flatpick a guitar?**

What I tell people is to learn material for their level. If I was going to college to study math and my goal was calculus, or beyond calculus, and I didn't know algebra, I cannot get to my goal the first year. People have to learn to structure their time and take things at a pace that is easy for them and they will see progress. It does not take many years to do what we do, but you also have to realize that you cannot have it today. With my students, I gave them a new song every week that was not much harder than the song they had learned the previous week, but it incorporated the difficulties that they had with the last song. In doing that for twenty years, I was able to become proficient at teaching at the different levels.

#### **I noticed this is the approach you used in your "Parking Lot Picking" series for Homespun.**

Yes, "Parking Lot Picking" was the first book that I did. It was designed just as if you were taking private lessons. There are beginner, intermediate, and advanced breaks to each song. The majority of the time on the tapes is spent on the beginning level break because it is the beginner that needs the work. The intermediates need less time, but they still need to be knocked down to the beginner's level for a little bit just to get the motor skills. The advanced people just need the licks, so we don't stress the mechanics as much. It is designed to bring you all the way through the course if you do it systematically. If someone were to learn all 20 beginners breaks and then go back to learn the intermediate breaks, they

will see how to overlay an intermediate measure onto a beginners level measure and see how the run is interchangeable and melodic at the same time.

**Would you recommend that a beginning student work through all of the tunes at the beginners level before they try to play any of them at the intermediate level?**

I think it is important for someone to first learn a large repertoire of songs at their current ability level before they learn more difficult material. Here is the example, a guy calls me up and says, "In your newsletter, I got through your break to *Blackberry Rag*, so what level am I?" I said that it was written for an intermediate level. He said, "Good, that means I'm an intermediate player." I asked him how fast he was playing it and he told me he could get through it in about two minutes. I said, "Well, that is a 30 second break." At that point he realized what we were talking about. If I gave him a beginner version, he could probably learn to play it up to speed fairly quickly. I feel that if someone can play something up to speed so that they can play it with people in the real world, they are going to feel better about themselves and they can move on from there.

A lot of people come to me and they say that they have been working with the "Parking Lot Picking" books for nine months and they have made it through the first three songs. Right away I know that they are learning the beginning, intermediate, and advanced versions of the same songs and in doing that they are shooting right up the side of a mountain. It is too hard. I would rather have them spiral around that mountain by going through all of the songs at the same level before they move on.

**How do people know how to judge their own level?**

If you cannot get a song off of a piece of paper and committed to memory in about 20 minutes, then it is too hard for you. If you can get it in twenty minutes, then you can practice it for a week and have it up to full speed. If you devote enough time to that one song, then you don't have to practice it any more. You just know it. I recommend that once my students get the song off of the paper and committed to memory, they play it 50 times in a row without stopping. If the break is only 20 or 30 seconds long and you play it 50 times,

it will only take you 25 minutes of practice time. After twenty minutes of continuous practice on that one song, you will know it and can move on to another song.

**Once a beginner has memorized a beginner's level break, should they immediately try to get it up to speed, or are there some other things they need to practice first?**

First they should play slow and work on sustain, otherwise they will always sound choppy. Lack of sustain is one thing that makes a beginner sound like a beginner. A beginner can sound like an intermediate once they get the trick of sustain. To get good sustain, you have to hold the notes down long enough to get harmonic triggering and let the instrument actually get activated so that you can hear the sound of the wood and not just the sound of the strings. What happens with the beginner is that they think of the next note and they worry about getting their finger to that next note in time and so they don't hold any of the notes long enough to achieve good sustain. Of course they have enough time because they are playing slow, they have just not built up the motor skills. So, if the beginner can learn to sustain each note as he is practicing the song slow, it will sound a lot smoother.

The best thing I can tell you about sustain is to listen to the way you play. It doesn't matter what level you are at. Learn to play very slowly. There are several phrases used, one is, "Slow is smooth and smooth is fast." It is frustrating because everyone wants to play faster, and we can talk about that in a minute because there are some easy drills to practice if you want to learn how to play faster. But everyone should first learn how to play slow. For one thing, if you play slow and you have a tape recorder on, it is merciless. Every error that comes up is on that

tape when you listen to it. I've used tape recorders and played slowly when I was working on my contest stuff. When you slow things down, you can hear all of your little buzz notes, you can hear when your timing is out, and many other details that you might not catch if you are playing fast. If you play slow enough and have a timing error, you can go back and play along with that tape, catch when the timing is out, which is usually a right hand error, and figure out the problem. Playing slowly, and really concentrating on it, is one of the ways to learn how to play with sustain. Don't give yourself any slack.

**What technique do you offer your students for them to learn how to play a tune up to full speed.**

As I said before, you first have to work on playing a break which is at your level. You then take the one song that you know best and you practice your break to that song at about twice the speed at which you can comfortably play it. You play it in the privacy of your own home with no one else



**Steve Kaufman teaching a workshop in  
Santa Cruz, CA**

around so that you are not inhibited. You know that you are going to make mistakes, but don't worry about it. You are going for raw speed in this exercise. You play the song at least six times through at this speed. Each time you go through the song, you "bubble sort" out your mistakes.

I recommend that my students make a rhythm track of themselves playing at this double time speed on one of those answering machine loop tapes and practice the lead along with that rhythm track. Of course this speed will be different for everyone. If you are just a beginner and can only play a song comfortably at 80 bpm, then you make the rhythm track of yourself playing at 160 bpm. More advanced players can play faster. When I demonstrate this at my workshops, I'll play a song like *Old Joe Clark* up at about 400 bpm. That is faster than I would play it in the real world at a jam session, but that's OK in the context of the exercise.

After about a week of practicing like this for 5 or 10 minutes a day, you will be able to play that song up to the speed of your rhythm track. Once you can play the song up to speed, you can then go back and work on timing, tone and technique to

clean those things up. But in the meantime you have raised your average speed and you can eventually get comfortable playing at the higher rates.

#### **How do you recommend flatpicking students use their practice time?**

If someone had an hour to practice, I would recommend that the first half hour they work on old material and the next half hour they work on new material. The "old" meaning that you are going to first start off very slowly with a wide right hand overswing to loosen up everything, get your tendons moving, and develop your power. Start playing a simple version of a song you know well at about 50 beats per minute. Do that for about three minutes, that is your warm-up. After that, you start going through your old material. What I did was I had a list of the songs I knew how to play and I would close my eyes, let my finger fall randomly onto the piece of paper, and wherever my finger landed, that is the song I was going to play. I would play through that song at least ten times and then move on. You randomly go through all of the stuff, otherwise, you will only end up playing the songs you like and not

the things you need. I also used to make a tick mark in my notebook for every time I played each of the songs. That way I could scan my list and know which songs I needed to work on.

The other half of your practice time is spent learning new material. You can sight read standard music, read from tab, or learn from records. Start by learning breaks to fiddle tunes which are at your level. I don't recommend beginners concentrate on scale work. If you are not ready for it, it is too hard. If you are ready for it, and you are playing fiddle tunes anyway, your scale work is found within your fiddle tunes.

*This has been a short introduction to Steve Kaufman's approach to learning how to play flatpick style guitar. In future issues we will bring you more of Steve's ideas, techniques, exercises, and arrangements. What follows is an arrangement of "Lost Indian" which Steve has put together for the upcoming fourth volume of the book and tape series from Homespun Tapes (1-800-33-TAPES, Box 325, Woodstock, NY 12498) entitled "Bluegrass Guitar Solos That Every Parking Lot Picker Should Know."*

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# Lost Indian

Arr. by Steve Kaufman

Key of D

Beginner Version

Bm      G      D      D      A7

1. D      2. D

D      Bm      G      D

## Lost Indian cont.

Intermediate Version

**1. D**

**2. D**

**Intermediate Version**

**D**      **A7**

**1. D**

**2. D**

**Bm**

**G**

**D**

**D**

**A7**

**1. D**

**2. D**

**D**

**D**

**D**

**D**

17

21

25

29

### Lost Indian cont.

Bm G D D A7

33 4 1 3 3 3 1 3 1 2 2 1 2 2 1 2 2 0 3 4

7 7 7 7 5 7 10 10 10 7 5 7 5 6 3 0 2 3 2 3 0 2 0 3 4

1. D 2. D D

37 5 3 0. 0 0 2 3 0 1 2 0 3 0 2

Advanced Version

D D Bm G

41 2 1 2 2 3 1 3 1 3 4 1 2 1 4 2 1 3

3 0 3 0 2 1 2 3 2 3 0 6 7 5 7 5 7 10 7 8 7 10 8 7 0 3 0

D A7 1. D 2. D

45 1 1 1 0 2 0 3 2 0 2 0 2 0 1 2 0 2 0 0 2 0 10 8

## Lost Indian cont.

**49**

**D** 1 3 1 2 4    **D** 1 2 4 1 4 2 1 2 1 3    **Bm** 1 3

**G** 7 9 7 8 10 7 8 10 7 10 8 7 8 7 9 7 9 7 7 10 12 10 12

**53**

**D** 4 1 3 1 3 1 1 3 1 3 1 2 2 1 3 1 1 3 1 2 3 1 3 1

**A7** 14 10 12 10 12 10 12 10 12 10 11 9 7 9 7 7 9 7 8 9 7 9 7

**56**

**1.D** 1 1 4 2 1 10 8 10 8 7 7

**2.D**

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# Overcoming the Dreaded Slump

by Craig Vance

From my earliest days as a young flatpicker, I remember the horrible slumps I would occasionally fall into in my attempts to progress. There would be those same stale licks with no sense of direction or achievement, and never, it seemed, a new place to begin. After struggling with this problem on numerous occasions, I would decide to try something new. In this article, I will describe a few of the techniques I have used to overcome slumps.

## Create Your Own Licks

If you find yourself in a slump, chances are you are playing by ear. In other words, you are simply copying other people's licks. This is what I was doing. The needle on my phonograph was being worked to death, constantly being picked up and dropped back to catch the lick that Doc or Norman or Tony was playing. Then it came to me . . . grasp what I can from the recording, and in place of the licks that just may be too far fetched to snag by ear, try something different. CREATE! This is a scary concept at first. However, once you can find the proper sounding filler for the section of licks that went over your head, you're on your way to becoming an improvisational flatpicker.

You may be steeped in the traditional method of note-for-note playing, but trust me, you'll learn more about the guitar neck if you explore instead of copy. You'll also learn more about basic theory, and you'll learn that YOU can create your own licks just like the best pickers do. It's going to be trial and error at the start, but if you've figured out the chords of the particular tune, you can adjust your playing field on the neck. The possibilities are vast.

## Practice Time

Another type of slump that I've encountered is caused by not setting aside enough time for focused practice. There

really isn't such a thing as enough. If you think there is, look at David Grier's fingertips the next time you see him. The man must play guitar as much as he breathes. If you can find the time, and have the energy to do just that, then the results will speak for themselves. If you force yourself to find at least a half hour where you can drop what you're doing and take hold of the guitar, and focus, you will improve steadily and overcome slumps.

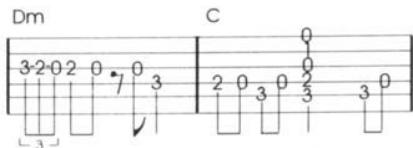
## Warming Up

Properly warming up is also another way to avoid frustration and wasted practice time. Maybe you like to warm up with scales, or maybe a really familiar lick. I always like the descending and ascending runs shown in on the next page (Figure 1) to warm up both the left and right hand. This exercise seems to loosen up the pick wrist rather well. I spend about three minutes on that, and then go on to whatever tune I've been working on.

Sometimes I find it beneficial to strum a chord pattern for a few minutes before even trying to jump in cold with licks. I learned that trick from Norman Blake years back and still use it quite often. Don't get discouraged if the speed isn't there. That is not the primary focus when you first pick up the guitar. Get your bearings straight,

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## Figure 1 - Descending and Ascending Warmup Exercises

Descending

Ascending

█ = down stroke

▽ = up stroke

start at a moderately comfortable pace and gradually pick it up. Clarity is the prime focus. You want every note to sound out and be clean. If you're picking with someone who wants to play fast, have them slow down until you're loosened up enough to execute each note with precision and accuracy.

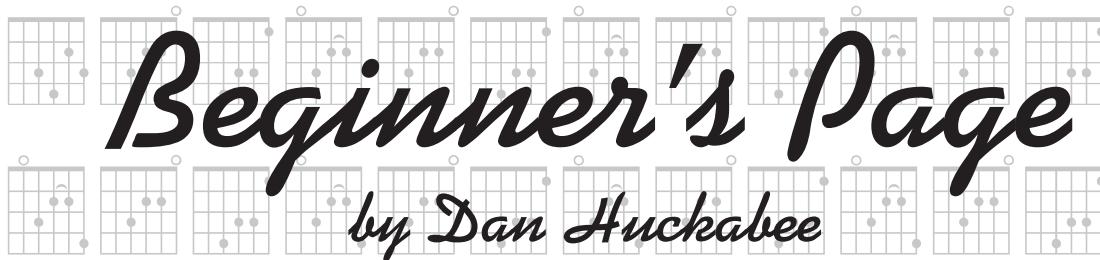
The main thing you want to keep in mind is that you will indeed get over the slump. Don't get discouraged and set your guitar down real hard on the pavement, driving the endpin up into the lower block. I can assure you from first hand experience, it will split the sides of the guitar. Patience is a key virtue in conquering any musical gridlock. Good luck!

**About the Author:** Craig Vance is currently the lead guitarist for The McKrells, an upstate New York based band which features a unique musical blend of Celtic, American folk, bluegrass and country. Craig began his career as a solo act playing warm-up sets for such noteworthy performers as Doc and Merle Watson, the Country Gentleman, and Berline, Crary, and Hickman. He has also performed on stage with master guitarist Norman Blake. Additionally, he has toured with Bill Keith and Frank Wakefield in the United States and Canada and plays on Bill Keith's recent Green Linnet release "Beating Around the Bush." Craig has taken first place honors in numerous guitar competitions, including the contests held annually at the Sugar Grove Fiddler's Convention and the Chilhowie Bluegrass Festival.

## Need More Warm-up Exercises? Try This:

If you would like to practice more warm-up exercises based on the descending and ascending runs shown above, and improve your knowledge of scales at the same time, try to transpose the G scale runs in this article to other keys and then try to play those runs in various positions on the neck. Try to transpose by ear so that you can also develop your ability to listen for these runs and patterns. Once these runs have become second nature to you, you can then begin to fit bits and pieces of these patterns into your solos.





# Beginner's Page

by Dan Huckabee



Remember your first time on Snow Skis? For me, it was like the gangsters had given me "concrete sneakers" so they could throw me over the bridge, cause I "knew too much". But then they get a better idea.... "Drowning is too good for this pest, lets shove him down a mountain of snow and watch him crash into a tree." Well, the skis are so foreign, the snow is so slippery, and the mountain is so steep, that we are immediately convinced that snow skiing is absolutely impossible. But for some stubborn reason, we keep trying and by the end of the day we start to get the hang of it. We become excited about our newly developing skill, and we realize that we can do it.

Almost everyone in the whole world decides to try to learn the guitar at one time or another, but only a small percentage continue, and eventually take it to a satisfying level of achievement. Probably the largest group of failures comes from that first experience of picking it up, and discovering that it's as impossible as snowskiing.

In this maiden column of the "Beginner's Page," in this brand new magazine, we are going to eliminate the problem that causes that "Impossible" feeling, that everyone has experienced the first time they picked up a guitar.

It's too hard to play! Why? For some it's too big (kids). For all of us, it's too hard to mash down the strings, it hurts our fingers, and we can't stretch far enough.

Lets just roll up our sleeves and fix all the problems for everyone, starting with the kids.

They make small guitars (3/4 size and smaller) especially for kids, but what can be an even better solution, is a ukulele. A uke, has only 4 strings but is tuned like the first 4 strings of the guitar. You make the same chords, but just omit the 5th and 6th strings. For a child (and in many cases an adult), to reach all the way to the 6th

string, is quite difficult until your hands have had time to stretch out with practice. Also, ukes have "softer" strings. The nylon and plastic strings will hurt a lot less than steel strings, and this will allow you to continue practicing much longer without pain. I've saved the best ukulele tip for last. They are a lot cheaper than guitars!

Next, guitars don't come fully adjusted when you buy them. Most come with the strings too far away from the frets. So the first thing you should do is take it to a guitar repairman down at your local music store, and have him "lower the action." This will make it easier to fret. He can adjust the angle of the neck, lower the nut, and lower the bridge. When he's done, your guitar will be much friendlier to your fingers, and you will be able to practice longer without pain.

Now, can we mix and match some of the above ideas? Sure. Ukes have nylon strings, so how about putting nylon strings on your regular guitar, no law against that. If you don't want to go that route, just get a "lighter" gauge of steel or bronze strings. Can a guitar repair man "lower the action" of a uke? Sure. Anything and everything is legal when you're just starting out, because the most important thing is to make it as easy to play as possible.

So the problems that we need to eliminate are: Strength, pain, and flexibility. Swartzenager didn't start out with heavy weights, he worked his way up slowly from very light weights. A guitar with heavy gauge strings, or with strings that are high off the frets, requires stronger

finger muscles.

Flexibility takes time too. So start out with a uke, a smaller guitar, or just start out by learning chords that only deal with the first 4 strings. This will prevent you from having to stretch so far right at first. Pain! Oh those sore fingertips. What's the solution? Right! Lighter gauge strings, nylon strings, lower action. The other solution is what we are trying to avoid in the first place....Practicing less. (not an option to consider)

One last word of wisdom on the subject. If you go too far with all this "easy play" stuff, your guitar can start to rattle and buzz. In that case, I'd recommend allowing a little extra rattle. I think you'll agree that a little rattle is better than a thud caused from beginning fingers not being strong enough to mash the fret fully.

Bottom line, make your guitar physically easy to play so you can be free to concentrate on the music.

So what do you say next issue we get into playing some music. Between now and then, if you care to discuss any problems you've encountered, write me in care of Flatpicking Guitar Magazine, e-mail me direct at: orders@musicvid.com, or call me at: 512-452-8348.

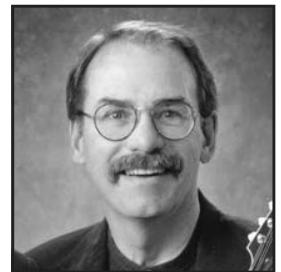
Here's the list for your convenience.

1. Lighter guage of strings
2. Nylon strings instead of steel
3. Have repairman lower the action
4. Get smaller guitar
5. Start with ukulele
6. Play on first 4 strings only

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## Edd Mayfield: King of Bass Runs

Edd Mayfield has been called the mystery man of bluegrass. He performed with Bill Monroe, the acknowledged father of Bluegrass music, for three stints during the 1950s. As Monroe's lead singer and guitarist, he contributed to classic bluegrass recordings such as *Scotland, Panhandle Country, The Last Whippoorwill*, and *Close By*. Mayfield died tragically at 32 of leukemia in 1958 while he was a member of Monroe's Bluegrass Boys.

Mayfield was a working cowboy who grew up in West Texas. He and his brothers started playing together in the 1940s and quickly adopted Monroe's style which they heard on radio. Mayfield played guitar with a thumbpick just as several of Monroe's

previous guitarists had done. His rhythm style features lots of interesting bass runs and few strums. Many of his licks have become staples of the bluegrass rhythm guitar style. One of his earliest influences was Riley Puckett of Gid Tanner's Skillet Lickers.

**Close By:** On the following page is a loose transcription of Mayfield's rhythm guitar playing on Monroe's *Close By*. Try flatpicking the bass notes with all downstrokes to closer approximate his thumbpick style. Be sure to give the dotted quarter note strum in measure 14 its full value (one and one half beats.)

**Panhandle Country:** *Panhandle Country* features one of the few recorded lead guitar solos in Bill Monroe's music. By today's standards, Mayfield's solo (shown on page 18) is plain, but it is excellent source material for developing flatpickers. Here we see the dotted eight note pattern in measure 2 as part of a lick and in measures 4 and 16 as a rhythm strum.

**Source:** Bill Monroe - Bluegrass 1950-1958 Bear Family Records BCD 15423 - This great four CD set includes some of Monroe's best recordings. Guitarists include Carter Stanley, Jimmy Martin, and Mayfield.

Next issue we will look at the early influential style of Riley Puckett.

**About the Author:** Joe Carr is a faculty member at South Plains College in Levelland, Texas, teaching guitar and mandolin in the unique commercial music program. He is a former member of the internationally known bluegrass group *Country Gazette* (1978-1984), appears on over twenty different instructional guitar videos for Texas Music and Video and Mel Bay, and currently continues to perform nationally in a duo with former *Country Gazette* leader and South Plains College colleague, Alan Munde. In addition to their *Flying Fish* album entitled, "Windy Days and Dusty Skies," Joe and Alan have completed a book about West Texas Country music called "*Prairie Nights to Neon Lights*" published by Texas Tech University Press.

In this column, Joe will be exploring the Rhythm playing of some of the greats in Bluegrass and Country Music, such as Edd Mayfield, Riley Puckett and Jimmy Martin, as well as other rhythm styles, patterns, and techniques which are of interest to the flatpicking guitarist.



**Bill Myrick and the Mayfield Brothers (early 1950's): Left to Right, Edd Mayfield, Smokey Mayfield, Herb Mayfield, and Bill Myrick**

# Close By

Edd Mayfield - Guitar  
Transcribed by Joe Carr

1 G D G

5 C

9 G

13 D G P. O.

= Strum

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# Panhandle Country

Edd Mayfield - Guitar  
Transcribed by Joe Carr

The sheet music consists of five staves of guitar tablature. The first staff starts at measure 1 and ends at measure 4. It features a treble clef, a key signature of three sharps, and a 4/4 time signature. The second staff begins at measure 5 and ends at measure 8. The third staff begins at measure 9 and ends at measure 12. The fourth staff begins at measure 13 and ends at measure 16. The fifth staff continues from measure 13. Measures are labeled A, D, E, A, D, and E respectively. Chords shown include A, D, E, and A. Fingerings and strumming patterns are indicated below the tabs.

# Flatpicking & Folk/Acoustic Rock

by John Tindel

I close my eyes and suddenly I'm back there in the warm Kansas night – my first National Flatpickin' Championship at Winfield almost 20 years ago. Lilt through the campfire smoke and stars overhead is the startling sound of Dan Crary's guitar, intertwined with fiddle and banjo, flying through some unknown music—some strange and wonderful alchemy of bluegrass and classical-sounding fiddle runs. What was this hybrid stuff where the acoustic guitar boldly holds its own as a lead instrument, played with speed, power and grace? On that night, the interior compass needle of my life inexorably swung to a new and different heading, pointing me in the direction of something exhilarating and inspiring.

The next day I saw and heard over 50 contestants vying for the top spots in the world of flatpicking. I was flabbergasted—there seemed to be lots of folks who could do this really well! I immediately returned to my fire and started laboriously learning "Blackberry Blossom" note for note, hooked for life.

In the two decades that followed I took a few side excursions into various electrified terrain, succumbing to the obvious influence of titans like Clapton, Page, Beck, and Hendrix. But weaving through the Firebirds and Marshall stacks was my Dad's Martin HD28 and the simple joy of the sound of steel strings driving the spruce soundboard of that old dreadnought. I discovered that when you take away the volume and distortion, what you're left with (besides ringing ears!) is technique and soul, precision and heart – some of the things I'll be pontificating on in future issues of this magazine.

While the more traditional aspects of flatpicking will be amply covered elsewhere in these pages, I hope to delve into the world of folk/acoustic rock as it applies to the flatpicker in us all.

I'll be talking about designing and executing lead breaks, offering tips on improvising, discussing how to be a tasteful

accompanist, demonstrating strengthening and speed-building exercises, answering specific questions from readers, and addressing anything else I can think of—including "How to Get Girls With Your Guitar!" (Well, maybe not....)

Let's start by talking a bit about building solos. In a perfect world, every solo we play would be very melodic, supporting the underlying structure of the song. It would involve tasty phrasing, evolving from simple to complex in an interesting way. There would be that magical sing-along quality that's always present in the solos you remember (how many of us can air-guitar to the last solo from Cream's "White Room" in its entirety?). Our ideal solo would employ solid technique without being excessively "flashy." As soloists, we're being given an opportunity to enhance the melody in an attempt to provide a glimpse into the musical heart of a song—not to say, "Look at me, how well I play!" Instead, we should try to say with our solos, "Listen; hear how wonderful this melody is? Hear how it would be even nicer with this little filigree here and that descending line there?"

Before we go into any of these concepts in greater depth, let's touch on an important, though often overlooked, part of the process: the Warm-Up. Here's an exercise that's become one of my staples – I use it every time I pick up my guitar whether for performance or rehearsal. If completed in its entirety, it'll help you play faster and with better dexterity (see tab on the next page).

Starting on your low E-string, place your 1st finger on the 1st fret. Using alternating up/down pick strokes, play every note up to the 4th finger, 4th fret on that same string. Without pausing, fret the 1st fret of the A-string with the 1st finger and go chromatically up that string to the 4th finger, 4th fret. Continue this pattern, using eighth notes, until you wind up on the high E-string, 4th fret. Slide your 4th finger up 1 fret and proceed down the high E



chromatically back to the 2nd fret; switch to the B-string with your 4th finger, 5th fret, and so on back down the strings to the low E, 1st finger 2nd fret. Slide your 1st finger up 1 fret to the 3rd fret and start the process over. Work your way up the neck in this fashion, always going from lower-pitched strings to higher leading with the 1st finger, and from the higher-pitched strings to the lower leading with the 4th finger. Go all the way up to the 12th fret with the 4th finger, and then reverse and start working your way down. As you work back down, you may feel your forearm and wrist starting to tighten up. Try to stay loose and focused and get all the way back to the 1st finger, 1st fret, 6th string (low E).

When you finish, relax your hands, hang them loosely down and shake them gently, like limp rag dolls. Flex your wrists and rotate them fully a few times. During this exercise, you've suffused your controlling musculature with blood and should now allow a minute or two for the tissue to replenish itself. You can repeat this exercise again as many times as you wish, building strength and speed as you go.

After the resting period, try playing a fast passage of any piece of music, and you'll be amazed at how much quicker you'll be able to play.

Here are some variations of this exercise:

- 1) Play with a metronome to work on your sense of timing and feel for rhythm;
- 2) Vary the accents on particular notes, or try to play them all very evenly, or use a triplet feel;
- 3) Focus on your right hand technique, tonal variations of different pick placements, and gripping the pick in ways that might lead to discoveries of faster or more efficient ways of picking;

## Chromatic Warm-up Exercise

4) Work on increasing or decreasing volume levels in phrases throughout the exercise, going from loud to soft in nice, smooth increments.

This is a great speed and endurance builder – try to increase the number of consecutive times you can go up and back before your arm self-destructs!

Now that we're nice and warmed up, let's get back to the business of building a tasty solo. The underpinning of any solid lead break should be the *melody*. It's always a good idea to start from a clear understanding of the melodic content of a given piece. A beautiful, simply-rendered statement of the basic melody of the song can be a great place to start a solo.

Consider the overall *feel* or style of the song on which you're soloing. How many times have we all heard inappropriate choices made: slow breaks that needed to be fast ones and vice versa. A little bit of thought prior to the execution of a solo can work wonders – "How can I best serve the style of this song? Hey! Let's try that Albert Lee break over the chords for 'Somewhere Over the Rainbow'!" Or, maybe not.

A related yet different point to keep in mind is the underlying *chord structure* or progression that you're soloing over. Listen for any passing tones or suspensions, any

idiosyncrasies in the chord changes that might be used to best advantage in choosing your lines. We'll be discussing more of this aspect in the next column.

*Phrasing*, in musical terms, is the grouping of notes into runs or passages, with spaces or "breaths" between them, like a singer who must pause for breath between phrases. It pleases the ear when this happens in a solo. An effectively placed rest or silence can be more powerful than even the best-played note. Listen to a well-played sax solo, or any of the great blues players, for examples of brilliant phrasing. I talk to a lot of great guitar players who tell me they're always trying to think like a sax player when they solo. There's something about the saxophone's ability to bring out the inherent beauty of a given melody line with the economy of long-sustained notes and tasty bends and slurs. Another interesting way to create nice phrasing is to sing out a scat vocal part and then find those notes on your

guitar. Start with simple, short phrases down low in your range, and build them up in pitch and complexity. This is a wonderful way to break out of your tired old pattern-based runs into something a little closer to the fluidity of a sax or horn line. It helps

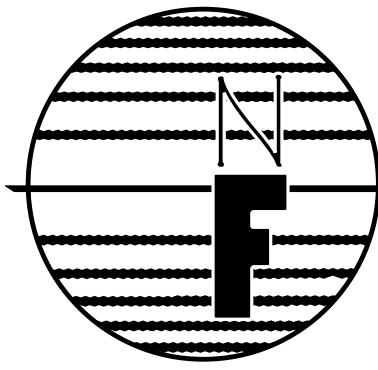
break through the hard chrome wall of your technique to free the organic glow of your innate musicianship. Always strive to let your knowledge be your rudder and your soul be your sail as you navigate through the shoals. Even if you are an advanced player, it can be beneficial to go back over some of these basic elements of constructing solos.

In this, the introductory article for this column, I wanted to introduce myself and share some of my general ideas about soloing. In the next issue, we will begin to sink our teeth into the meat of this column, designing flatpicking solos for folk and acoustic rock tunes.

Now, go bend some strings! And remember to Stay Tuned Cubed. By this I mean stay tuned three ways:

- 1) check these pages next issue;
- 2) check your B-string – it's a little flat;
- and 3) stay tuned mentally – it's your gray matter that matters in soloing!

**About the Author:** John Tindel plays guitar and piano in the Santa Cruz, California-based trio RST. He plays Martin guitars, or any other ones he can get his hands on. He also enjoys subjecting the unsuspecting world to his views on guitar playing and Life in general. Come visit down by the old Web Site for more on John or RST.



# NASHVILLE FLATTOP

by Brad Davis

There are two distinct types of flatpicking techniques commonly used in much of todays flatpicking – traditional down-up-down and crosspicking. I'm going to introduce you to a brand new flatpicking technique that will turbo charge your picking called the "double-down-up". I'll refer to this new technique as d-d-up. I accidentally stumbled upon it while jamming with my (banjo picking) brother – Greg Davis. Banjo players have always been able to play extremely fast with little or no effort. Well, I was tired of trying hard to keep up with these speed demons and that's when I stumbled on d-d-up. I soon figured out what I was doing and refined the technique only to come to the conclusion that I could not only play solos as fast and as clean as my sibling counter part, but I could play at speeds that left the very best of speed demons standing in a cloud of smoke!

It was incredible for many reasons, but the most important one was due to the fact that I was doing something totally brand new. I'll explain the d-d-up technique, but first I want to take a second to explain how to read the tab system I use then I'll jump into the basic d-d-up examples and expand from there.

I use a new tab system called "Grid Tab". It was invented by John Holman – the master mind behind my wonderful Collings Clarence White model D-28. The strings are marked on the left hand side by numbers. Each string occupies a horizontal string space. It's designed so that each note can reside in a designated beat space (1+2+3+4+). Each measure is divided into eight beats. These beats are marked below each measure by numbers and (+) signs. The numbers represent beats of down stroke pick movement and the

(+) signs are beats of up stroke pick movement.

(Ex.1) To get you started reading I've written out a basic G-run lick. Notice when there is a rest in the lick an empty beat space appears on beat space (2) which happens to be a (+) sign - an up stroke. Since the d-d-up has different pick direction than traditional down-up-down I will indicate pick direction above each measure where the d-d-up occurs. The d-d-up consists of two down strokes followed by an up stroke. Sounds easy, but it can be very confusing if you don't focus on every detail of the technique. (Ex.2) This example is using all open notes starting on the 4th or (D) string. The d-d-up is explained as follows: 1) First pick the 4th string with a down stroke until the pick

The Grid Tab -- (Ex.1) Basic G-run lick

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

The basic d-d-up pattern. -- (Ex.2)

▼	▼	^	▼	▼	^	▼	▼	^	

(Ex.3)

▼	▼	^	▼	▼	^	▼	▼	^	

The d-d-up pattern. -- (Ex.4)

▼	▼	^	▼	▼	^	▼	▼	^	

The d-d-up pattern. -- (Ex.5)

▼	▼	^	▼	▼	^	▼	▼	^	

burst of traditional  
d-up-d

▼	▼	^	▼	▼	^	▼	▼	^	
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--

burst of traditional  
d-up-d

▼	▼	^	▼	▼	^	▼	▼	^	
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--



is resting on the 3rd string (the rests are a key part of it). 2) Then pick the 3rd string with a down stroke until the pick is resting on the 2nd string. 3) Then pick the 3rd string again, but this time with an up stroke. That is the basic pattern.

(Ex.3) Now try a few fretted notes mixed with the open ones. (Ex.4) This exercise is written with open and fretted notes moving/alternating. (Ex.5) This one contains bursts of traditional down-up-downs interwoven with d-d-ups. When you involve traditional down-up-downs

with d-d-ups the possibilities are endless. I would suggest mastering the basic d-d-up technique before attempting the instrumental song in this article, because once multiple notes are thrown in to a d-d-up pattern it can get extremely complicated.

I've tabbed out one of my new original flatpicking instrumentals titled *Laurel Canyon* from my new instrumental CD *Climbin' Cole Hill* on *Raisin Cain Records* (release date scheduled for Jan. 97).

This song contains d-d-ups as well as d-up-ds. A mixture of the two techniques is what can really make an instrumental song super challenging. Laurel Canyon, as with the other songs on this CD, is written primarily with the d-d-up technique. Since this song is an original I recommend my audio companion cassette. (send to the address at the end of this article for your companion audio cassette - offered free in this first issue.)

### "Laurel Canyon" copyright 1996 Brad Davis Music BMI

#### Key of (G) Intro

Part 1 (G) (C) (D) (G)

Part 2(Em)

6

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

(C)

P

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

(G)

(D)

P

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

(Em)

(C)

P

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

(A)

(D)

P

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

Part 1 up the neck (G)

(C)

(D)

(G)

1																									
2	8						10	8										8	10		7	0	10		
3							9	7		7	9		7	9	11		8	10		7		8		10	8
4							10			10								11		11					
5																			11		11				
6																				1	+ 2	+	3	+	

Part 1 up the neck cont.

(G)

(C)

(D)

(G)

END

1																									
2	8							10	8									8	10	8	10	8	12	10	8
3								9	7		7	9		7	9	11		10	8	11	10	8	11		
4								10			10							11		11					
5																		11		11					
6																			1	+ 2	+	3	+		

To order the companion audio cassette send address to:

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"Remember the companion tape is free for this issue"

**About the author:** Brad Davis has many years of experience as an acclaimed bluegrass and country music guitarist. With several albums to his credit, Brad's most widely heard guitar work is on Marty Stuart's gold record "This Ones Gonna Hurt You." Brad debuted his patented "Brad Bender," the string bender for acoustic guitars, and the unique style it offers, on countless national television shows with the Sweethearts of the Rodeo. In addition to currently touring with Marty Stuart, Brad also spent several years on the road with the Forester Sisters. Songwriting, record production, and the production of instructional material for the guitar are also wedged into his tight schedule. Brad's up and coming projects include an instrumental cassette of eight original tunes called "Climbing Cole Hill," and a Bluegrass CD titled "Raising Cain" with his band Whitewater. He is also working on a sixty page flatpicking instructional book titled "The Acoustic Speed Picking Blue Book" featuring his "Double-Down-Up" speed picking technique.

# Break



# Time

As this is my first column in this inaugural issue, I thought I'd offer a brief introduction to some of the concepts that we'll be discussing and try to give you a feel for what the focus of the column will be.

In forthcoming issues I will be attempting to offer some ideas and tips for playing guitar in a bluegrass band, particularly for playing breaks in vocal tunes. Along the way we'll cover rhythm fills, and related topics.

I will be writing for pickers of all levels (unless you're really an expert, in which case you'll probably just laugh at this column). Seriously though, my hope is that advanced guitarists will find some simple concepts they may have overlooked, and that beginners will find useful information, while bypassing some of the more advanced techniques.

Like many of you, I started out flatpicking by learning to play instrumentals, especially fiddle tunes. When I first heard Doc Watson play *Blackberry Blossom*, and was told that actual humans could learn to do that (about a third as well), I was hooked. I'm also a singer, though, and the vocal side of bluegrass music was what drew me into playing in a bluegrass band. I didn't even need to sing, I just wanted to play guitar with people who were singing bluegrass.

**About the Author:** Bluegrass Veteran, Chris Jones, currently fronts an exciting new band Chris Jones and the Night Drivers, featuring great new material, some of bluegrass's finest instrumentalists and tight harmony vocals led by Chris's traditional, country flavored lead singing. Chris is known most recently for his work with The Lynn Morris Band and with Weary Hearts with whom he recorded the critically acclaimed "By Heart" album for Flying Fish Records. In addition, Chris has toured and recorded with groups as diverse as Chicago's Special Consensus and Warner Brothers Country hitmakers The McCarters. He has also performed on the Grand Ole Opry with Laurie Lewis, Lynn Morris and the Whitstein Brothers.

by Chris Jones



What I have found, is that many flat pickers can play the most sophisticated hornpipes, but when it comes to playing a break over a simple 2 or 3 chord melody, it feels like someone has just tied their hands and instructed them to play with their teeth: "Gee, I've tried to play the melody of *Bill Cheatham* over *I'll Stay Around*, but it doesn't seem to work!" It certainly felt that way to me, until I started thinking about the music a little differently and listening to some of the lead guitar played in early bluegrass bands.

We'll delve into this in detail in future issues, but the melody, and using it to

base what you play upon, is the key to not feeling lost and to playing a break that is appropriate to the song. Learning to identify and improvise on the melody of a song will eventually enable you to come up with your own breaks and even your own licks. Instead of memorizing a Tony Rice or Doc Watson break to a song, you can utilize the approach that helped create those breaks. This involves some very basic ear training and some techniques you may already be familiar with. Using these, you should be able to confidently execute a break to almost any bluegrass song that has fewer than 12 chords in it. In time, this will make you a valuable, contributing bluegrass band member, even if you don't sing or have any knowledge of auto mechanics. With practice and perseverance, a four figure annual income could be in your future!

I have tabbed out my break from *John Henry*, from my CD *Blinded By The Rose*. This break is partially influenced by Eric Uglum and George Shuffler, two great bluegrass guitar players. Note that this song has almost no chord changes and a very straightforward melody. The melody remains central to this solo throughout its simple and its more complex sections. Have fun!

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# John Henry

(As played by Chris Jones on his CD "Blinded By The Rose" (Strictly Country Records SCR-40)

Key of B • Capo 4th Fret

Traditional  
Arrangement by Chris Jones

1 G

HO PO HO SL

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

6 D G

SL SL PO PO HO HO SL PO

3/4 3 3 4 3 0 3 2 0 2 0 0 3 2 0 0 0 0 4 0 3 0 1 2 2 2 0 0 2 0 3 5 5 0 2 0

11

SL HO SL SL HO

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

16 D G

SL SL PO SL PO SL HO

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

# The Santa Cruz Guitar Company



After spending an afternoon with Richard Hoover at the Santa Cruz Guitar Company, the two words that were running through my head as I pondered writing this article were "quality" and "selection." I know, it sounds like overused ad copy, but there is no hype intended here. As a flatpicker, the most impressive aspects of this guitar company to me were the large selection of Santa Cruz models which are designed specifically for flatpickers, and the attention to detail which is used to insure that every guitar that comes out of the shop has an outstanding sound. I can think of no other way to describe this company to flatpickers but to say that they offer high quality and a great selection.



**Richard Hoover of the  
Santa Cruz Guitar Company**

Most flatpickers relate the name "Santa Cruz Guitars" with their Tony Rice Model dreadnaught because this is the guitar that Rice endorses and uses on about 90% of his recordings and thus this model has received the greatest exposure. However, if the contemporary sound of the Tony Rice model does not suit your taste, consider trying the Santa Cruz Vintage Artist model which was designed for Doc Watson's style of flatpicking. Doc himself owns the prototype model and helped with the design. Similarly, those of you who are Norman Blake fans should check out the Santa Cruz twelve fret D model, a big boomy box which received Blake's stamp of approval after he lent suggestions for improvements on the prototype.

For those who like playing a variety of musical styles and are looking for a versatile dreadnaught that has excellent volume, tone, and balance, the standard D model Santa Cruz might fit your needs. Lastly, you might take a look at the Santa Cruz OM. This is a small body guitar that many have found very suitable for flatpicking. With five flatpicking models to choose from, three of which received acknowledgment from the flatpicking legends listed above, Santa Cruz offers a model to suit most every flatpicker's taste.

In the following interview, Richard Hoover discusses how his company got started, how Santa Cruz maintains its reputation for high quality, their relationships with Tony Rice, Doc Watson, and Norman Blake and how their various dreadnaught styles are designed.

## **Can you tell me a little bit about how you got started building guitars?**

I started playing guitar when I was about fourteen. It was in Junior High when that was kind of the thing to do. I have always been a tinkerer and have always loved woodwork. My father did some woodwork, so that was in my background. After playing guitar for a little bit, it dawned on me that it would be really fun to make one. First, I thought that it would be really fun to take mine apart, then I thought it would be fun to make one. It really stuck with me, but it took me probably another six or seven years before I found someone that I could do an apprenticeship with. At the time there were no books out in English on guitar building and there was no networking for it.

## **What year did you start apprenticing?**

In 1969 I started my first dabbling in it and in 1972 I moved to Santa Cruz because I met a guy who lived here and built classical guitars. He was willing to let me come over once a week and learn the basics from him. I studied with him and I owe a great deal to him. However, he was building classical guitars and I wanted to build steel string and it is quite a different beast. I learned the basics of guitar building from him and he let me use his shop. Most of the stuff I learned beyond that was from on-the-job training and networking with other people.

## **You started to meet other steel string builders?**

Yes, I think that you will find that as you get involved in anything, networks begin to open up for you, however, at the time there were not very many people doing it. Steel string guitar building was kind of the domain of the factories at the time.

## **When you started building your steel string guitars, was it in this other person's shop?**

Actually, once I got a taste for it, I knew this is what I wanted to do. The man I was apprenticing with was not a full time guitar builder. He had a wife, three kids, and another full time job. When I decided I wanted to build guitars for a living I tried to get some partners to go in on the business with me. I started my own shop and did that for several years.

## **Was this the beginning of Santa Cruz Guitars?**

I was not calling it Santa Cruz Guitars at that time, I used my own name. Later, I had a couple of people approach me about wanting to go into this business. One had woodworking experience and the other had some money, so it worked out well. When they came on we were equal partners and it didn't set well with our kind of beatnik ideology to name the guitars after just one person, so we called it the Santa Cruz Guitar Company.

## **What year did you actually start making Santa Cruz Guitars?**

It was in about 1976, so this September will be 20 years.

## **Are there still any of the old "Hoover" Guitars out there?**

Yea, I know of one. Actually, I used to play professionally and my stage name was Otis B. Rodeo, so my guitar name was the "Rodeo."

## **What kind of music were you playing?**

I did country swing, a lot of old time country stuff, Jimmy Rogers, Hank Williams, things like that, some 1930s jazz influence.

## **Did you ever waiver between the performance career versus the building career, or did you know that the guitar building was what you wanted to do?**

I was headed towards a professional career in music, but I just got taken head over heels with the guitar building and that satisfied three passions, my love of music, woodworking, and the guitar itself.

## **In the early years, how many different models of guitars did you make?**

When I first started out I built dreadnaughts because that was the guitar I played and understood. I went up that

Photo: BILL WOLF



**Tony Rice and Norman Blake with their Santa Cruz Guitars**

ladder like everyone else from a Harmony to a Martin. Dreadnaughts were what I cut my teeth on. I was also trying to do some innovative stuff and I wanted to put it in a package that people could understand and the dreadnaught was the most powerful and the most popular model of guitar at the time. That sustained me for the first six years of building guitars.

## **What kind of things were you doing that made your guitars unique?**

It is real simple, and we still do it exactly the same to this day with a lot more experience behind us. At the time there were people building steel string guitars in factory situations making a set of pieces according to a dimensional formula and then assembling them. The quality was real sporadic. There were some good guitars and some bad guitars. In the classical guitars and violin builders you found people tuning and voicing the instruments as they built them and the quality was consistent. Plain and simply, my approach was to consistently make an exceptional sounding guitar. And this is not subjective stuff. The subjective nature of the sound of the guitar may be volume or balance or things like that, but sustain, complexity of overtones, those are quality issues that can only be achieved on every guitar we build by really trying hard to get them.

## **It was the attention to detail at every step along the way that made the difference?**

Yes, and choosing wood, voicing tops,

tuning guitar bodies, so that we knew each guitar was going to sound outstanding, rather than just making a good looking guitar efficiently, the way the successful factories did.

## **How did you learn about judging wood quality and these other things that go into building a good guitar? Did you learn these things from the man who you apprenticed with?**

I give him credit for a whole lot of the stuff that I learned, but many of these things I learned from on-the-job training. In other words, acquiring a body of knowledge from doing it, and doing it, and doing it. Luckily I hit on some good premises to start with and I was really determined to make the same guitar over and over again, only changing one thing at a time in order to really understand what was going on. And frankly, that is the only reason I took on partners. I wanted to accelerate the process of learning.

## **Did you take guitars that you thought sounded good to you and try and figure out why?**

Of course, and then we tried to do something different. In those days the pre-war D-28 wasn't prized the way it is today. It could be a pretty tubby guitar for a lot of applications and knowing that bluegrass would not be the only venue that we sold guitars in, I tried to design a guitar that was more even and balanced, one that was more versatile. However, the error we made



**Richard Hoover tests the deflection on a piece of top wood.**  
**All of the wood used on Santa Cruz Guitars is carefully chosen, naturally air dried, and tested for strength and flexibility.**

in the beginning was in trying to build one guitar for everybody and convince the world that that was right. We changed from that way of thinking when we built the first guitar for Tony Rice. He wanted a duplicate of his old "bone" and we built him one that we thought he would like better. It was one of the first departures from what we had been doing. So that was a good lesson for us in the beginning. You can't build one guitar for everybody, you have to make a variety of things.

#### **How did your relationship with Tony Rice come about?**

When I was building guitars on my own I also did a stint with Darol Anger. I was riding my bike down the street and saw some mandolin parts hanging in a window, so I stopped in and found him in the basement making mandolins. I introduced myself as making guitars. They were just putting together the Red Star Mandolin Cooperative, so I joined up with them for a little bit. It was Daryl who introduced me to Tony in about 1976. He brought Tony over and Tony saw the fourth guitar I had made. Tony liked the tone of it, but it was another few years before we actually got together and did something. I think we built the first guitar for him in the late seventies, seventy-eight or seventy-nine.

#### **Is that about the time you came out with the Tony Rice Model?**

No, I was dumber than the end of a stick. People would call up after Tony was out playing the guitar and say, "I saw the guitar you made for Tony Rice, could you make me one just like that?" We told people, "No we really don't make that model, that was a custom guitar." Luckily it dawned on us that that was bad marketing and we did start making the Tony Rice Model. Over all it has been our most successful guitar. We have been building that model since the early eighties.

#### **Why was it that he wanted another guitar? Did he want something he could travel with?**

Exactly. At the time he knew that his old guitar was getting worn out and he wanted something more durable to take on the road. He also wanted some subtle changes. In the years since the first guitar was built for Tony, his musical style has evolved and become more sophisticated and so has our design of the Tony Rice Model. Back then he wanted the big, boomy, bluegrass dreadnaught. Since then, his music and our guitar have evolved into something that records better and has better balance, more mid-range, and more treble.

#### **Is the Tony Rice Model you make today a lot different than the Tony Rice Model you made years ago, or are you only**

**speaking of his individual guitar that has gone through these changes?**

Over the years we have made probably six, going on seven, guitars for him. It seems that one guitar every three or four years is the average. Every time we change the guitar for him, we do not change the Tony Rice Model because the changes he wants to make might not stick with him, he might want to try something else. But yea, the Tony Rice Model we make now is different than what we did in the early to mid-eighties. It is more of a contemporary sounding guitar. We quit trying to strive for a copy of the pre-war dreadnaught that sounded as old and big right now as the old ones do. What we are making for him now is a lot more sophisticated than what we originally made because Tony's playing has developed and we have gotten a lot better at what we do.

All of our guitars have evolved over the years and it hasn't been sporadic, it has been a real continual evolution because when we improve the designs for one model, we might incorporate that design improvement into all of the guitars. The Tony Rice Model has evolved both because of our talents evolving and because of market demand. Players have gotten a lot more sophisticated and people appreciate good balance and tonality, they are demanding a better response over a wide range for playing higher up the neck, etc.

#### **When you made the first guitar for Tony, did he bring his Martin in for you to look at, play, measure, and attempt to copy?**

Yea, he brought it in and we looked at it. I had done some work on it early in my career. I reset the neck on it and re-fret it and did quite a bit of repair work on it. At the time, the guitar did not have the aura it has now. Had that guitar been priceless at the time I worked on it, it would have been real intimidating for me at that point in my career. It was a filthy old guitar that had been really hacked up. It had a lot of modifications, including the large sound hole, which was just something that Clarence White had done because the sound hole had gotten so chewed up. There was no intent to alter the guitar sonically. It was a pawn shop guitar that had been bought for about \$40 by Clarence, or Roland, or somebody in the family, and they didn't take it seriously. It had a BB hole in it, it had been picked with a 50 cent piece and the whole sound hole had been totally chewed up around the

edge, so he just carved it out to the second rosette ring, and there it was. Such are legends. The truth is though, the large sound hole does effect the sound.

#### **Did you make the larger sound hole in the Tony Rice Model?**

Yea, for Tony it was more superstition than anything. He wanted to copy the original. But I wanted to understand what we were doing. When you increase the aperture on a resonating chamber, it raises the fundamental pitch of the chamber. If you put a piece of cardboard over the sound hole and you tap on it, as you move it more and more open, the pitch rises and rises. So, we have a guitar that is a scalloped braced bluegrass dreadnaught and, because of its airspace and scalloped bracing, is really predisposed to bass response. The larger sound hole raises the fundamental pitch and thus helps bring out more of a balanced tone. Several things we do in the Tony Rice model, including the larger sound hole, bring out the mid-range and treble and more clarity. For Tony's style, using a lot of single line lead playing and some jazz phrasing, it makes a much better guitar than just a boomy old dreadnaught.

#### **Does he use his Santa Cruz in recording?**

He has told me that he uses the Santa Cruz almost 90% in recording. He uses his herringbone about 90% in performance because it is cool, its an old guitar and its his trademark. When it comes to putting the stuff down for posterity, he uses the Santa Cruz because it showcases his talents better. People in bluegrass might think that is sacrilegious, but just because a guitar is really old and been owned by famous people does not make it the best tool for every job.

#### **Does he come back to you with new ideas for each guitar he asks you to build?**

Yea, he likes to try new stuff. He will like the guitar he is playing better than anything he has ever had, but since he has the opportunity, why not try something else. I stay in pretty close touch with him. He used to live out here when he was working with Grisman. Now I talk to him once every few months and I see him about once a year. We play the guitar and talk about it and he always has some ideas.

#### **Does he keep all of the guitars you build for him and use them in different style settings or recordings?**

No, we kind of pride ourselves in never

having given a guitar away. The first guitar we built for Tony, we built in exchange for some payment and some promotional considerations, album credits and things like that. Of course, the relationship has been beneficial for us, and hopefully for him too. As he wants to change guitars, we will usually take his old one back in trade, or we will arrange for the sale of it. Whatever he gets paid, we get something out of it to cover making the new one. I actually know where all of the guitars went initially. If they have been resold, I don't know. So there are six of them out there scattered around.

#### **What can you tell me about the guitars you've made for Norman Blake?**

We've made two guitars for Norman. We made a prototype of our twelve fret dreadnaught for him. We don't have an agreement with him like we do with Tony. We don't have a "Norman Blake" model, but we have a model that is based on the prototype that we built for him, just like we have a model based on a prototype that we built for Doc Watson. Our Vintage Artist model was based on the prototype we built for Doc.

For Norman I wanted to design a guitar that had the qualities of the pre-war D-18,

just as our Tony Rice model is a modern D-28 style. So we built the guitar and sent it out to Norman. He usually stops in when he is playing in town or somewhere nearby. I had sent out the prototype for his evaluation and he wouldn't give it back.

One thing I want to say is that the relationship we have with Tony Rice as an endorser with the signature model is based on the fact that Tony genuinely believes in our guitars and plays them. He is very loyal to our guitars and has played them for years. Norman is the same way with his local builder. He has old guitars that he plays, but he also has a relationship with a builder that lives about 50 miles away from him. He was a little uncomfortable about hurting that guy's feelings by calling our twelve fret D the "Norman Blake" model, and I completely agree. It is the same with Doc. Doc said, "You want to call it the Doc Watson model, that is great." I know Don Gallagher personally and that is the big feather in their crown, working for Doc. So it just doesn't seem right for us to have a Doc Watson model. But it is nice that we have such a great relationship and get such good input from the "triple crown" of flatpickers.

Some of the things we did for Norman's personal guitar that are not practical from



**The bracing stock used on Santa Cruz Guitars is carefully chosen Sitka Spruce graded according to stiffness and density.**

**The guitar top above has scalloped bracing on the lower legs of the X-brace and on all other lower bracing. The upper legs of the X-brace exhibits tapered bracing.**

# Steve Kaufman



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a marketing perspective are things like bar frets and ebony nuts and things like that, but we did incorporate many of his suggestions and ideas in building our twelve fret D-18.

**So you did not send these guitars to Norman and Doc to get some kind of big promotion, you sent them to see what kind of suggestions they might lend toward making the guitars better.**

Yea, we also built these guitars at the request of Norman and Doc. I'll have to admit, I shamelessly wanted Doc's blessing on this guitar because he is a big mahogany fan and it means a lot. I didn't what to call it the Doc Watson model, but I don't mind telling guitar players I talk to on the phone that we made the prototype for Doc and he loves it. So there are some promotional considerations. The primary goal is ongoing improvement, and those are the people that can be of the biggest help, the people with a lot of experience in playing.

Both Doc and Norman had played our guitars. Doc had loved playing Tony's and Wyatt's instruments and like I said, Norman has been through here and they had both expressed interest in our guitars. The design of the twelve fret dreadnaught was inspired by Norman's style of playing. It is amazing. It has turned out to be a really versatile instrument. I thought it was going to be very limited to old time clientele.

**What are some of the differences in the design of these models?**

There are three things that you can break down the sound of the guitar into: volume, balance, and tone. Volume is obvious; balance is the bass, mid-range, and treble; tone is that characteristic that makes it sound bright or dark, but different from bass or treble. If you play close to the bridge you get a brighter tone, if you play over the sound hole, you get a warmer, darker tone.

All the dreadnaughts are loud, so really what it comes down to are tone and balance. The Tony Rice model is designed to have a very good bass response, but more mid-range and treble than traditionally found in a pre-war instrument. It is made for a more contemporary style of playing. It is not designed to be a rhythm instrument, it is designed to be a lead instrument.

The Vintage Artist is designed to have that old solid, rolling pre-war sound. It is, by intent, bassier and boomier. That is why we do it standardly in mahogany.

Mahogany has a brightness and adds snap and clarity to the tone of the guitar, which make it more distinctive.

The twelve fret dreadnaught is an unchained cannon, it is a huge sounding guitar. We have done some of the same things we did to the Tony Rice model to enhance mid-range and treble, so it is not just a bass machine. Also because of our style of building and tuning and voicing, it has a very rich overtone series and great sustain. They sound like little pianos to me, it is a very interesting and complex guitar to play.

Lastly, our dreadnaught, our model D, is our original guitar and is a designed to be really evenly balanced. The model D was something we did before the rise in popularity of small body guitars in order to give something of equal balance and volume in all ranges. Anyone of them can be flatpicked. The model D is very versatile.

The Vintage Artist has more of the pre-war bracing and design. The Tony Rice is more contemporary. As long as the music has been around, it has been a relatively short time since the guitar was brought out of the rhythm section. That put a whole new demand on the guitar. All of a sudden it was trying to play lead. The older guitars were predisposed towards bass and some tubbiness in that regard. When people tried to do the single line lead stuff it didn't have the clarity that would be desirable, so that is what the Tony Rice model can do. That is why Tony chooses it for recording.

I'd like to think we cover the whole selection for flatpickers. It is funny to hear someone say, "Oh, I played a Santa Cruz and I played a Martin, and one of them was better." I always wonder what guitar they played. With our style of building, we can, and have, built Martin sounding guitars. We have expanded that to five different models to give everyone a lot of choice.

I would like to think that if somebody wanted a flatpicking guitar that is exceptional, we have it. It is a matter of working with a real knowledgeable dealer and talking with me on the phone and seeing what their needs are and we could make the guitar they want. It is really hard to go into a store and find all five of the models. We hear it all the time, people will play our standard dreadnaught and walk away with the impressions that our guitars do not have good bass, but by design that model is not suppose to have great bass. But play the twelve fret D and it will knock your hat in the creek.

**What are some of the building and design techniques you use to ensure that each of your guitars has an exceptional sound?**

We insure consistency in tone in each guitar by choosing wood for its tonal potential, voicing the bracing, tuning the bodies, and just making it happen instead of it being happenstance. The first step in this process is checking the deflection, or flexibility, in a given piece of top wood. We take woods of similar grain patterns and sizes and check the deflection. The stiffer the piece is, the higher the fundamental pitch. So, on something like the Tony Rice model, or another large body guitar, we will use stiffer wood to help bring out the mid-range and treble. A more flexible piece of wood would be used on a small body guitar because, conversely, it will bring out the bass response.

There are two ways you can manipulate the top wood. You can make the top thicker or thinner, which makes it stiffer or looser. When we sand the wood, we actually make the treble side thicker than the bass side to make the bass side a little more flexible and the treble a little stiffer. That is reinforced by the configuration of the X-brace. On the dreadnaught models, with the exception of the Model D, the upper legs of the "X" are tapered and the lower legs are scalloped along with the rest of the lower bracing (see photo on page 29). The bracing wood is designed to allow the bass side freedom of movement and the treble side a degree of stiffness. Scalloping the braces enhances the bass range.

The scalloped bracing on the Vintage Artist and the Tony Rice is very similar, however, on the Tony Rice model we move the junction of the X-brace further back towards the bridge because it stiffens up the lower part of the top and brings out the mid-range and treble. In the Model D, which is designed to be evenly balanced, we have moved more mass to the treble side and have tapered all of the X braces.

The scalloping is all done by hand because as these braces are carved, you can listen to the increase sustain. Each of the different nodal points on the braces have a different note to them. The clarity and sustain are achieved when they are all in harmony. If they are discordant, the vibrations cancel and you loose sustain. Almost everybody that is successful at making guitars, except for us, has these things machined from a conventional formula, the top is always the same

thickness, everything measures the same, but since all wood is different, you will get a lot of variety in sound.

Our tops vary in thickness by probably as much as four tenths of a millimeter by design in order to make them stiffer or looser, and then the braces are voiced and tuned. The tuning is not about picking specific notes, its an overall tonal quality that you try to achieve as the end result. We listen for a real good tone and good sustain. You can feel it as well as hear it when you are tapping the wood.

There is a ton of other things that we do to insure that each guitar has a great sound, but selecting the top wood, adjusting its thickness, and voicing and tuning the bracing are the most critical. After the top has been selected, sanded and braced, the attention to detail has to be followed through at every step along the way as the guitar is built.

For instance, in order to insure that the guitar projects well, you need to insure that the string energy transfers to the top, but does not transfer into the sides and back and dissipate. The top has a fundamental pitch, as does the air space of the body. When you put the two together, they can agree or disagree, they can be in harmony, or the vibrations can fight each other. The bass wood slotted lining we use to attach the top and the use of wood purflings instead of plastic helps to isolate the top from the sides and bring out good response. Each important step of the building process has an influence on its sound and so to insure that every guitar is of exceptional quality, each individual instrument is fine tuned at every step of the construction process.

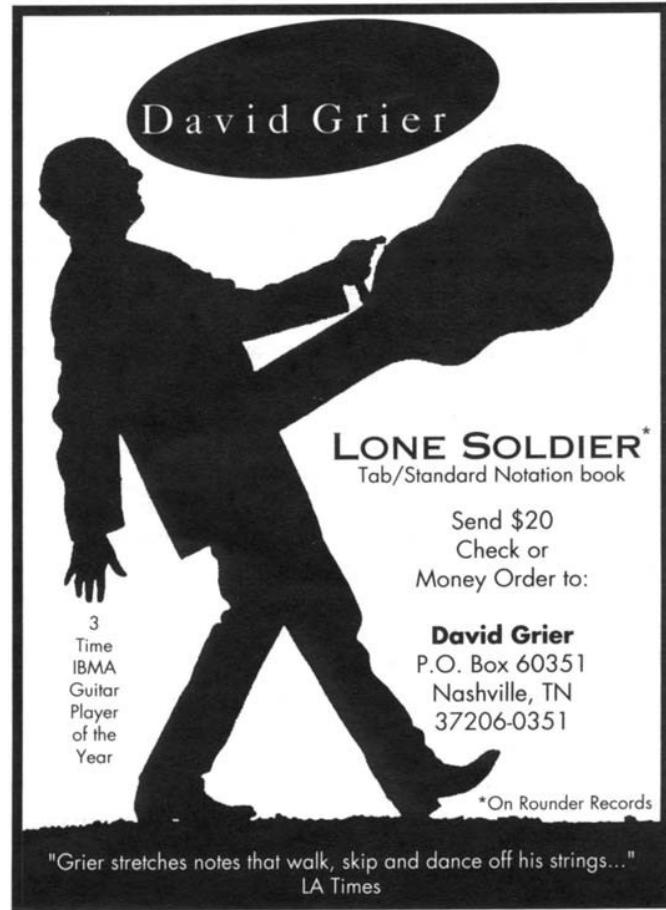
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LA Times

# POST-MODERN FLATPICKING

BY SCOTT NYGAARD



## NEW NOTES

Post-Modern Flatpicking? What the #\*!# does that mean? Looks like this Nygaard loony has stripped a tuning peg again." OK, you're right, it's a bit pretentious, rather obscure, and certainly less than crystal clear in defining what this new column in this new magazine will contain. Nonetheless, if you'll bear with me for a couple of minutes I'll explain why it is a pretty good name for a column that will attempt to explore the outer reaches and less traveled byways of music that can be played on an acoustic guitar with a flatpick.

We all know what modern art is, right? Those assemblages of squiggles, blobs and ragged shapes most often greeted by the amateur art critic with a sneering "I could do that." So what is Post-Modernism? Well, the short answer is that Post-Modernism is what came after Modernism. "Thanks a lot. Clear as mud." One aspect of Post-Modern art is that it pillages the entire history of art, older styles are grafted on to newer styles which co-exist with forms which had not previously been considered to be art (and probably still aren't by our amateur art critic), such as video installations and performance art. So Post-Modern Flatpicking would be what? Yes, you there in the third row, with the earring in the shape of a D-28 dangling from your left aural lobe. Correct, Po-Mo Flatpicking scoops up everyone in the history of flatpicking, from Riley Puckett and Maybelle Carter up through Clarence White and Tony Rice, and tosses them into a bin containing such heretofore unacknowledged flatpickers as Diblo Dibala, Amos Garrett, Jimmy Raney, Lonnie Johnson, Richard Thompson, Rafael Rebello, John Scofield and Arty McGlynn, to name a few.

Like many of you I'm sure, I first began to get serious about playing the guitar

after hearing Doc Watson. I grew up in Southern California, where bluegrass and old-time country music were not exactly burbling forth from beneath every oil derrick or palm tree. But, after stumbling upon Doc and attending a few local bluegrass festivals, flatpicking soon became an obsession, taking over my life to a somewhat unhealthy (at least fiscally) degree. Clarence White and Tony Rice became heroes along with a couple of local guitar stars in the Pacific Northwest where I attended college. I soon discovered, however, that being the guitar player in a bluegrass band didn't mean spinning out the sort of quicksilver guitar solos I was striving to perfect. It meant singing lead and playing rhythm. OK, the rhythm stuff I had a handle on, but singing? Sorry. Not a chance.

I found myself playing other kinds of music, mostly old-time music and jazz, that exhibited some of the same qualities that had drawn me to bluegrass, but that didn't require any vocal talent. Living in an open-eared musical community that didn't keep every style segregated, I eventually added Irish, Cajun, western swing, singer-songwriter introverted tootle, African pop, free jazz, rock and roll and Brazilian choro to the styles of music I had taken a whack at. Thus preparing the ground for a flourishing career as a post-modern flatpicker.

Now that I've tried to define the name of this column in about as verbose and roundabout a way as possible, I suppose I should say something about what I intend to do here. When people comment to me about some aspect of my style that seems unique to them they usually ascribe it to a jazz influence. This may frequently be the case (I did spend an awful lot of time trying to become a jazz guitarist — specifically one that didn't sound like a bluegrass guitarist trying to play jazz — only to return

to bluegrass sounding like a jazz guitarist trying to play bluegrass), but it may just as easily be that some other genre of music was the source for what they were hearing. As the lessons I've learned from playing all of these different styles of music have become jumbled-up in my head I don't always know specifically where my 'other-than-bluegrass' ideas come from.

So what I'll do in future columns is explore some music peripheral to mainstream flatpicking that I think would interest those of you holed up in your rooms with a dreadnought and a flatpick. Jazz will enter the picture on a regular basis, along with specific examples of some of the styles listed above and more general topics like the use of space, developing a personal sound and over-the-bar-line phrasing. I won't limit myself to examples of acoustic guitar music here either. Horn players, fiddlers, singers, mandolinists, banjoists, drummers and electric guitarists have had just as much an influence on me as acoustic guitarists have and in my humble opinion they should on you as well.

Now that I've used up a couple of months worth of my license to pontificate, I'll leave you with a transcription of a guitar break that seems to have made an impression on at least a couple of listeners: my first recorded bluegrass solo, Diamond Joe, from the album *Laurie Lewis and Grant Street Singin' My Troubles Away*, Flying Fish 70515. This break is a good example of the idea of using the shape of the melody to construct a solo. By the time it was my turn to play a break in this song, the banjo and the mandolin had already had a go at this odd-measure melody, so I figured that I had to come up with something a little unusual. I couldn't just state the melody, as they had already done that with their own unique flourishes, so I gave myself license to go notecrazy. I still followed the shape of the melody however;

if you were to hold a piece of tracing paper with the melody written on it over the transcription of my solo you would see that the guitar actually plays the melody notes at the point at which they would normally occur (along with perhaps a few too many other notes in between). Other than that, I don't have much to say about this solo,

except that I would encourage you not to get too confused by the strange, almost random, length of the song. If you do, just divide the song up by its chord changes and think of each piece as an example of something you could play over that

chord.

I'll end by quoting Bill Monroe, who once encouraged the fledgling pioneers of nuevo-instrumental bluegrass, Russ Barenberg and John Miller, with words that could be this column's creed: "You boys just keep on playing those new notes."

## Diamond Joe

Traditional  
Solo Arr. Scott Nygaard

Capo III

The sheet music for 'Diamond Joe' consists of six staves of guitar tablature. The first staff starts with a 1 and a sharp sign, indicating a key signature of one sharp. It features a mix of eighth and sixteenth note patterns. The second staff begins with a G chord, followed by G/F# and E minor chords. The third staff starts with an H chord. The fourth staff begins with an Em chord, followed by C and G chords. The fifth staff starts with an S (slide) and P (picks) pattern, followed by another S, P, and H (hammer-on) pattern. The sixth staff starts with a C chord. The seventh staff continues with C, P, H, and S patterns. The eighth staff starts with a C chord. The ninth staff continues with C, P, S, and S patterns. The tenth staff starts with a C chord. The eleventh staff continues with C, P, S, and S patterns. The twelfth staff starts with a C chord. The thirteenth staff continues with C, P, S, and S patterns. The fourteenth staff ends with a C chord.

16 C

P H S H P

2 2 0 2 0 3 0 1 2 0 1 0 3 5-5 3 4 5-5 5 5 3 4

G G/F# Emin

S P H S

5 3 3 4 2 0 0 2 0 3 2 0 0 1 2 0 0 4 5 0 5 4 2 2 4 0 2

Emin C G

H H S S H H

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

G

P H

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

**About the Author:** Scott Nygaard is one of the premier guitarists on the bluegrass/acoustic music scene today. He is in great demand among the cream of the crop of modern bluegrass artists, as a quick glance at his recording credits will attest. His solos, a seamless amalgam of bluegrass, folk and jazz influences, shift easily from breathtaking virtuosity to soulful melodic musings and his accompaniment is always intriguing, supportive and propulsive. He has been the guitarist with Tim O'Brien's band, The O'Boys, since 1992, a plum position that followed three years with Laurie Lewis's band Grant Street. Initially influenced by Doc Watson, Clarence White, Django Reinhardt and Riley Puckett, Nygaard spent many years wandering the sea of American music which includes bluegrass, jazz, Cajun, western swing and rock and roll. This diverse musical education, which primarily took place in the fertile Pacific Northwest, helped form a style which can truly be called Nygaard's own. He currently resides in San Francisco with his wife Anne and son Josef, though he is most often heard on the road at one of the top acoustic music festivals or venues around the globe. His long awaited second album 'Dreamer's Waltz', an intriguing mix of original and traditional tunes, was recently released on Rounder Records.



# THE O-ZONE

by Orrin Star

## Playing Up the Neck

*(Editor's Note: When I first approached Orrin Star about writing for Flatpicking Guitar, I had playing up the neck in mind: his coverage of this topic in his book Hot Licks For Bluegrass Guitar (Oak Publications) is perhaps the best I've seen to date. Several flatpicking instructors have told me they recommend the book to their students particularly for the way it introduces and demystifies this topic. Though the O-Zone will eventually cover other topics, we both agree that Playing Up The Neck was a topic worthy of several columns and a good place to start.)*

Learning to play up the neck is one of the more daunting hurdles which any well-rounded flatpicker needs to clear. It is also one of the least discussed facets of flatpicking; instructionally speaking it has been the dark attic of the style, a place where few venture (and fewer return). While working on my book I decided to try and renovate this attic—to take a determined look at how working flatpickers actually think about and represent the fingerboard in their minds.

In particular, I wanted to see how the process of envisioning the fingerboard begins and grows in a guitarist, since that is the real leap which novice players struggle to make. (And because pickers who've already made it often have trouble verbalizing that which is now second-nature to them; many an eye has glazed over at a festival workshop when an experienced player, responding to an up-the-neck question, says "Well, you've got your G-scale in the 7th position, which ties into this other scale....")

What I found was that:

- All of the licks and leads that are played on the guitar are based on positions defined by the shapes of the open chords that you already know (ie G, A, B, C, D, E and F).
- Playing up the neck is a matter of learning how to
  - i) form barred (closed) versions of these seven chords and to recognize the fingerings which they imply;
  - ii) anchor those closed positions at various locations around the fingerboard; and
  - iii) recognize the vertical connections between positions.

So, what is a position? If you play this lick:

You will immediately find yourself thinking "oh yeh, that G-run", since the G-position – the one defined by the open G-chord – is by far the most popular in bluegrass guitar; it's the first one we all learn.

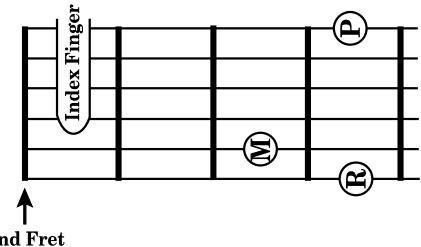
But consider more generally what just occurred: a group of seven single notes was played and a picture of a chord popped into your mind. This type of connection can occur anywhere on the fingerboard once you familiarize yourself with the closed positions.

Let's say we want to play our familiar G-run in the key of A. Our first and simplest solution is to slap a capo on the second



fret and do as we've always done. But say we want to do it without a capo? We would play:

But more importantly, we must learn to think about our beloved G-position two frets up. You can do this by making a barred G-chord: hold your index finger across the second fret (pretend IT is the capo) and then form a G over it using the three remaining fingers:



(This is a bit of a finger-stretcher; don't worry if you can't actually hold it; it's done mainly to illustrate the position.)

Now try the lick in A again. Do you see how the notes fretted by your index finger are the ones that used to be open strings? How everything has shifted over a finger? This is really the only practical change that

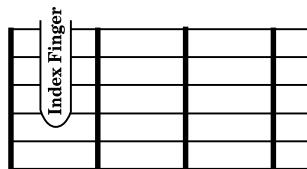
playing closed positions involves. And once you learn a lick in a closed position you can move it anywhere. Say for instance you wanted to play this lick in C. Simply locate your G-bar on the fifth fret and voila:

## C (G-bar on fifth fret)

The top part shows a musical staff with a treble clef and a '1' above it, indicating a single note. Below it is a fretboard diagram with the index finger (labeled 'Index Finger') placed across the first four strings at the fifth fret. The bottom part shows a tablature with the strings numbered 5, 6, 7, 5, 7, 5 from left to right.

What we're doing here is learning to think like a mandolin player: most mandolin chords are closed, and so mandolinists learn to riff around closed positions much earlier than guitarists do. One practical reason for this is that closed chords are much easier to form on the mandolin than on the guitar, since there are fewer string groups to depress. But there is a way around this: using more fingerable abbreviated versions of the full bar chord to help orient yourself. I call these mini-bars and use them all the time. For the G-position the mini-bar I use most is simply my index finger across the first four strings:

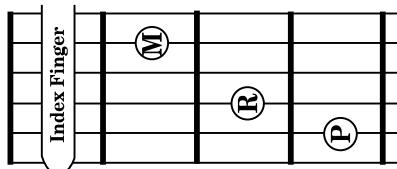
## The G-mini bar



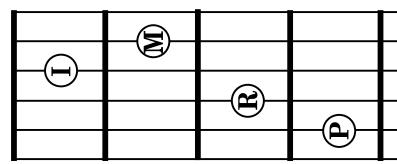
Executing the closed lick we introduced above properly in fact requires you to make this mini-bar starting at the fourth note. (Try it if you don't understand what I mean.)

Now here's the positional dope on the second most popular bluegrass guitar chord-the C.

## The C-bar



## The C mini-bar



We'll finish up now with some horizontal action: a G-position-to-C-position lick played both open and then closed. (See Figure 1 below). Now here it is on the fifth fret (making it in the key of C - see Figure 2 below).

Learning how to play up the neck is a long-term endeavor. And it is one that involves using your fingers (especially the pinky) somewhat differently than you are used to using them. But the good news is that all of your current lick knowledge can be transported up the neck once you recognize the closed positions with which they are affiliated.

**About the Author:** 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.

Figure 1:

The top part shows a musical staff with a treble clef and a '1' above it, indicating a single note. Below it is a fretboard diagram with the index finger (labeled 'Index Finger') placed across the first four strings at the fifth fret. The bottom part shows a tablature with the strings numbered 0, 1, 2, 0, 2, 0, 0, 2, 0, 3, 2, 0, 1, 2, 0, 2, 0, 2, 3, 0, 2, 0, 1, 2, 0, 2, 3 from left to right. Below the tablature are two symbols: a square for 'down stroke' and a downward slash for 'up stroke'. The letters 'G' and 'C' are placed above the first and second measures respectively, with 'HO' (horizontal) placed between them.

Figure 2:

The top part shows a musical staff with a treble clef and a '1' above it, indicating a single note. Below it is a fretboard diagram with the index finger (labeled 'Index Finger') placed across the first four strings at the fifth fret. The bottom part shows a tablature with the strings numbered 5, 6, 7, 5, 7, 5, 8, 7, 5, 6, 7, 5, 7, 5, 7, 8, 5, 7, 5, 6, 7, 5, 7, 8 from left to right. Below the tablature is a symbol for 'HO' (horizontal). The letters 'C (G bar at 5th fret)' and 'F (C bar at 5th fret)' are placed above the first and second measures respectively.

Fingering Key: 5=index, 6=middle, 7=ring, 8=pinky

## Guitar Duet

# Wildwood Flower

by Dix Bruce

Jim Nunally and I had been planning to record a CD of guitar duets for quite some time. Our idea was not unique: we wanted to make a record of hot flatpick guitar classics, but with our own arrangements and stylistic idiosyncrasies. We'd prepared a number of flatpicked fiddle tunes, a couple

more traditional things, one or two tunes played in close harmony, and a few other pieces generally from the flatpick guitar repertoire. As we began sorting through possible tunes, Jim's father died suddenly and unexpectedly of a heart attack. The tragedy of Jim's loss was magnified by the fact that his father had taught him the guitar and they'd spent many afternoons and evenings playing traditional American country music around the kitchen table.

Though I didn't know Jim's father, I could feel the void his death had left in Jim's life and we both began to reflect on the music we loved, how important it was to us, how we'd learned it and from whom, and the depth of the debt we owed to our mentors in the previous generation for taking the time to teach us. Gradually the focus of our project changed out of a need to identify the musical legacy we'd inherited and pay tribute to those who'd given it to us.

Eventually the title "From Fathers to Sons" emerged and we found the project evolving to include vocals on songs that had special meanings for each of us, not just hot fast tunes. (Though we kept a bunch of those too!) We finally settled on a 16 cut collection which included "Tennessee Waltz," "My Bucket's Got a Hole In It," "Soldier's Joy," "The Crawdad Song," Flatt & Scruggs' "Foggy Mountain Special" with all the solos (banjo, fiddle, bass, mandolin & guitar) played on two guitars, a couple of early country duets, some fingerpicking, a medley of six fiddle tunes-all of which have the flat seven chord in them, and a couple of original tunes.

The first tune we recorded was "Wildwood Flower," which was fitting

since this was the very first tune Jim had learned from his father years ago. Jim's concept was to play the tune very simply at first, just as he'd learned it, then play a cross picked chorus, have me solo, and then play one more chorus.

Our first obstacle was key. He'd learned it in the key of C, I'd learned it in G. I took it as a challenge and actually found it quite easy to switch from an open G position to an open C. (Try it. If you know it in C, play it in G and vice versa.) After Jim's cross picking solo came my turn and I found that I had an irresistible urge to play a hot solo. I mean, he'd played the melody and then a beautiful cross picking solo, what else could I do? Unfortunately my hot solo didn't fit well with the simple tone of the tune. I decided to try to fingerpick the melody, that seemed to work, and that's what's on the CD!

The out chorus was planned to be a simple restatement of the flatpicked melody. For the sake of dynamics, I wanted to switch from fingerpicking back to the flatpick and there wasn't quite time for me to pick it up off my knee and resume the groove with just one chorus. So, we added another chorus which as soon as we played it, cried out for a tenor harmony. To get as close as I could to what Jim was playing, I recorded him playing the melody, took it home and worked on it until I was satisfied with the result. It took some subsequent rehearsals to lock the two parts together because suddenly neither of us had the freedom to improvise much melodically or rhythmically. Just like a vocal duet, neither party can stray much from the agreed line or the duet suffers. Of course the end result is not perfect, but who wants the boredom of perfection? (That reminds of one of the best quotes I've ever heard. It's from Johnny Gimble whom I once heard say: "You ain't much of a musician if you can't think of a good excuse!")

You'll notice that the harmony is not an exact clone of the melody played up a major third, though I did start by singing a simple tenor harmony along with his

melody to give myself a starting point on guitar. As I developed it, I simplified it and tried to tailor it to the specifics of his melody. In the final recorded version I let Jim do most of the rhythmic backbeats by himself (M 1-3, etc.) for the sake of rhythmic clarity. I also added a triplet figure in measures 3 and 13. I tried to match most of his hammers and let him set the agenda overall taking care not to overwhelm his concept of the melody. As we played it, we both tried for a blend and a pretty, relaxed sound.

**About the Author:** Dix Bruce is a musician, composer, writer and award-winning guitar player from the San Francisco Bay area. He edited Mandolin World News from 1978 to 1984 and has recorded two albums with bluegrass legend, Frank Wakefield. He recorded a solo folk recording, *My Folk Heart*, and has released a recording of string swing & jazz, *Tuxedo Blues*, with many of his original compositions. In 1995 he released his first duet CD of mostly traditional American music, with guitarist Jim Nunally entitled "From Fathers to Sons." To date Mel Bay Publications has published seventeen of Bruce's instructional book and tape sets along with three accompanying CDs and two instructional videos. He is a columnist for the Fretted Instrument Guild of America, was a frequent contributor to Frets Magazine and currently writes for Acoustic Guitar. He has performed on and teaches guitar, mandolin and bass.



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# Wildwood Flower - Melody

As played by Dix Bruce & Jim Nunally on their CD "From Fathers to Sons" (Musix 104)

The sheet music consists of six staves of music. The top two staves are for the treble clef voice, with the first ending in C major and the second ending in G major. The bottom two staves are for the bass clef voice, also with two endings. The bottom two staves are labeled with 'HO' (Horn Open) and '1.' (first position). The guitar tablature below each staff shows the strings and frets for each note. The music is in common time (4/4).

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The version of Wildwood Flower presented here is from the Musix CD/Cassette release "From Fathers to Sons" by Dix Bruce and Jim Nunally (Available from Musix, PO Box 231005, Pleasant Hill, CA 94523)

# Wildwood Flower - Harmony

As played by Dix Bruce & Jim Nunally on their CD "From Fathers to Sons" (Musix 104)

The sheet music consists of six staves of musical notation. The top staff is a vocal melody in G major, 4/4 time, starting with a quarter note followed by eighth notes. The second staff is a guitar part in G major, 4/4 time, with fingerings like 0, 2, 1, 3, 0, 0, 2, 0, 3, 2, 0, 3. The third staff is a vocal melody in C major, 4/4 time, with a section labeled '1.' and '2.'. The fourth staff is a guitar part in C major, 4/4 time, with fingerings like 0, 1, 0, 2, 0, 1, 0, 2, 0, 5, 1, 0, 5, 5, 3, 5, 5, 1. The fifth staff is a vocal melody in F major, 4/4 time, with fingerings like 0, 1, 0, 1, 1, 1, 1, 0, 0, 2, 1, 0, 2, 1. The sixth staff is a guitar part in F major, 4/4 time, with fingerings like 0, 1, 0, 1, 1, 1, 1, 0, 0, 2, 1, 0, 2, 1. The seventh staff is a vocal melody in G7, 4/4 time, ending with a triplet of eighth notes. The eighth staff is a guitar part in G7, 4/4 time, with fingerings like 0, 2, 0, 3, 2, 0, 3, 2, 0, 3.

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# Steve Kaufman's First Annual Flatpicking Camp

The first annual Steve Kaufman Flatpicking Guitar Camp was held on the campus of Maryville College in Maryville, Tennessee from the 9th - 16th of June 1996. Nearly 170 attendees were treated to a week of flatpicking instruction, concerts, and jam sessions which challenged and inspired everyone from the beginner to the advanced level players. Kaufman's goal of providing an environment where guitarists from around the globe could meet to "learn, play, eat, and sleep flatpicking" was fully reached.

In organizing this camp Kaufman assembled a teaching staff of some of today's finest flatpickers, including: Norman Blake, Steve Kaufman, Pat Flynn, Curtis Burch, Robin Kessinger, Jack Lawrence, and David Grier. With the exception of Norman Blake, who arrived Saturday to give a Masters class and Evening Concert, each of the above listed instructors taught everyday the entire week. Kaufman says that he wanted to put together a staff of instructors that he himself would want to learn from. He states, "I wanted to be both a teacher and a student at this camp."

Each day after breakfast the students



**Norman Blake Workshop**

attended a forty-five minute lecture given by various guest speakers. These lectures included: "The Art of Vintage Guitar Collecting" by Buddy Summer, "Guitar Construction" by Don Gallagher, and "Guitar Repair" by Ted Davis. The lectures inspired many intelligent and informative question and answer sessions between the lecturer and the audience. Luckily each of the lecturers was on campus for at least two days so that those individuals who still had questions pertaining to the lecture topics could meet with the lecturers informally and continue the discussions.

The morning lecture was followed by the first of three daily class sessions, one class before lunch and two classes after lunch. The student body was divided into six groups which were organized by ability levels. Each group attended a class given by one of the six instructors and then rotated to another instructor for the next class. This schedule was maintained from Monday through Thursday so that each student was able to attend two classes given by each of the six instructors. On Friday, the same class time schedule was maintained, however, students were able to select their own classes so that they would have another opportunity to work with their favorite instructors. In addition to the large group classes, every student had the opportunity to also attend a small "10 on 1" class with the instructor of their choice. Student were permitted to tape all instructional sessions.

Kaufman says that the type of class structure used in the camp was designed to allow each student exposure to all of the various teaching and playing styles presented by this diverse group of instructors. He notes, "When I was learning to play, I learned from everybody. I took input from a large variety of sources and used what worked for me. This is a good way to develop your own personal style."

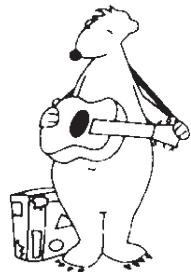
The instructors at the camp all had individual picking and teaching styles. There was variety in everything from the guitars they played, the picks and strings they used, the way they held the guitar, the way they attacked the strings, the pick directions they used, the instructional material they presented, and the teaching styles they utilized. The attitude of all the instructors concerning their individual styles and preferences was very open minded. Each would show you the way they executed a technique or talk about why they chose a certain guitar or pick, but they would also say that their way was not the only way to do it and it was best for each student to find a way to fit their own taste. This easygoing attitude was displayed by all of the instructors in all facets of instruction. All of the instructors were easily approachable.

With such a wide variety of instructors, and an even larger variety of personalities in the student body, there were naturally diverse opinions concerning which classes were the best and which instructors were the favorites. John Loven, a camp attendee from Pennsylvania had this to say about a few of the camp instructors:

"A class with Jack Lawrence is like finding out that your best friend is a super picker, and wants to know how to help you."

"Nobody could understand why Curtis Burch spent so much time on chord theory the first day . . . until the first night. He joined Jack Lawrence in the concert and blew everybody away with his Texas-swing rhythm backup to Jack's traditional fiddle tunes."

"Pat Flynn is in a class by himself. His persona is polished, intellectual, and very organized. Whenever he picks up the guitar,



even for a trivial demonstration, he goes somewhere else, and you see immediately where the firepower behind New Grass Revival came from."

"David Grier can't imagine why anybody would want him to talk about what he plays, when he can just play it for you. Forced by circumstances to talk, he avoids sentences and phrases - sort of talking one word at a time. If you listen slowly, and mentally glue words together, there are some gems there, but for folks who want their blinding musical insights on a silver spoon, it makes for impatience. I would call his class 'Zen and the Art of Flatpicking'.

In concert, Grier was fabulous, getting a standing ovation at the end and being called back for two encores. What's most interesting was that his performance out-did everyone else in the use of dynamics, even silences. He comes out in a white shirt, buttoned up with tie, and redefines what control and thoughtfullness mean to this music."

Paul Heath, a camp attendee from California, adds:

"Steve Kaufman was new to me as both a player and a teacher. I suspected he'd be great at both - since you can hardly open a Homespun catalog without Steve being right there. Sure enough, Steve is a great player and a great teacher. It is clear that he has done plenty of both, and is quite comfortable in either role. The tune on which I have been working most frequently, is from one of Steve's sessions – Flannery's Dream. Steve played it on stage with Robin during Robin's remarkable set."

"Robin Kessinger was the biggest surprise for me. He seemed a little overwhelmed by the sight of a full classroom of tape deck wielding pickers. His playing seemed at first to be somewhat toned down from the others - perhaps a little less flashy. He played a set Tuesday night that just blew everyone away. I saw Robin out jamming with folks on several occasions during the week. This guy just loves to play."

"Norman Blake was the only thing going on Saturday. He gave a two hour workshop in the afternoon, signed things for a while afterwards and did a solo show that evening. His workshop was excellent. Norman gave articulate, intelligent answers to all the questions, and when he didn't have an answer, or couldn't fill a request, he just

said so. There is this air of awe around Norman, and for me - and I'm sure most others, meeting him was one of the big highlights of the week. Norman's solo set that night was wonderful - a big change from the fast playing that had been characteristic of the week. He started on guitar, moved to a six string banjo with a huge head, then to the fiddle, then back to guitar. His set was the perfect way close the whole thing."

Each of the instructors had tabbed material prepared prior to the camp and the tabs were included in a thick student handbook which was given to each student upon arrival. Tunes, topics, and techniques varied. Curtis Burch focused on chords; chord structure, chord voicings, chord substitutions, chord progressions, backups and embellishments. Pat Flynn taught each and every one of us how to approach the art of flatpicking the guitar and how to add new dimensions to our tone, timing, technique, tuning, and taste. He was prepared, professional, intelligent, and articulate - an outstanding instructor.

The classes taught by Robin Kessinger, David Grier, and Jack Lawrence were mainly centered around the tabbed material they had presented in the student handbook and answering various questions which were inspired by those tunes. Robin presented many of the traditional tunes from his vast repertoire and great harmony and rhythm parts to "African Melody." David presented original tunes from his solo CDs and Jack gave us a mix of traditional and original material. In addition, Jack and David also added interesting and colorful stories from life on the road. Steve Kaufman also worked from the material he had prepared, but in addition, he also spent time discussing important fundamental flatpicking concepts such as right hand technique, crosspicking, learning to play from records, and various other topics inspired by questions from the students.

I think everyone who attended the camp went home with enough tape recorded information to fill their practice time for years to come. Having the ability to tape record each class, in addition to being



### **Impromptu jam session with David Grier and Robin Kessinger**

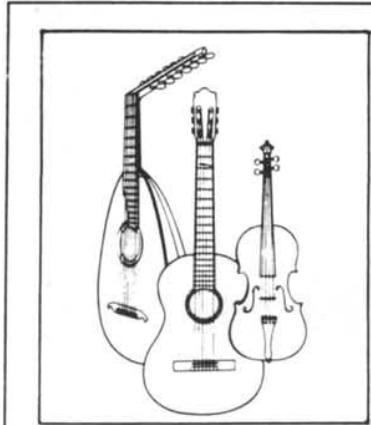
presented with a thick camp handbook, was an incredibly valuable asset at the camp. There is no way that any one of the camp attendees could have absorbed all of the information that was presented in that one week. However, having tapes of the classes and tabulation of all the songs and techniques that were presented gives attendees the opportunity to carefully review the material as often as they like in the privacy of their home.

Each evening after dinner students were treated to a concert series from 8:00 pm to 11:00 pm. Each night, the opening act featured a local East Tennessee bluegrass band, including, Hiwassee Ridge, Old Hickory, Strange Company, Hyper Drive, and Misty River. The opening act was followed by a short set with Steve Kaufman playing with various guests and friends.

The main event each evening featured each of the camp instructors, Jack Lawrence played Monday, followed by Robin Kessinger on Tuesday, Curtis Burch on Wednesday, Pat Flynn on Thursday, David Grier on Friday, and Norman Blake on Saturday. Guest pickers who came by to help out with the shows included dobro legend Tut Talor, Phil Leadbetter (dobro player for J.D. Crowe), Mike Whitehead (national flatpicking champion), and Gary Davis (great banjo player).

Impromptu jam sessions could be heard at all times of the day and night. In fact, many campers commented that the time spent learning from other campers during jam sessions was as valuable as the time spent in class with the instructors.

Steve Kafuman is already busy preparing



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**Pat Flynn lecturing at Steve  
Kaufman's Flatpicking Camp**

for next year's event, which promises to be even better than the first. He is working out some of the small bugs that inevitably arose at a first time event and evaluating all of the feedback that he received from this year's attendees in order to help make improvements where ever possible. Steve has added another instructor to next year's line up (so there will be seven instructors teaching all week) and he says next year's classes will be structured so that there will be more opportunity for the students to play their guitars in class. Next year's line up of instructors includes: Curtis Burch, Dan Crary, Pat Flynn, Beppe Gambetta, Steve Kaufman, Robin Kessinger, and Jack Lawrence. Steve's brother, Mike, who holds a master's degree in music, will also be on hand to give some music theory courses. Plus, Steve might have a few other surprises up his sleeve.

Another great addition to next year's camp is a flatpicking contest which will be sanctioned by the National Flatpicking Championships. The winner of the contest will receive an entry into the National Flatpicking Championships in Winfield, Kansas, and a 72 Special Cut-a-way Gallagher Guitar with Fishman Blender package installed. Second place will receive a Blue Heron case, a McIntyre pick up and \$300, and third place will win a McIntyre pick-up and \$200. The panel of judges will include three or four previous Winfield winners.

For more information about next year's event, call 1-800-FLATPIK.

# MUSIC THEORY

## BY DAVE BRICKER

This column began as an answer to a post on FLATPICK-L, a guitar oriented listserver on the internet. A number of people on the list expressed an interest in learning more music theory and I took on the job of supplying the information.

Music theory comes in many forms and some of them are more useful than others. I'm going to start with the very basics, and then proceed into some more advanced and hopefully useful concepts.

Before I begin, I'd like to share a little philosophy about what music theory is for. Music theory is a tool which will help you analyze music, conceptualize it and explain it to others. It gives names to certain sounds that you can train your ear to identify. It provides a tool for exploring new territory on the instrument that your ear might not normally lead you to explore if left to seek its own directions. It will make it much easier to write music down in such a way that another musician can easily understand your ideas. Theory can help you choose chord substitutions or scales to improvise with.

While I've studied music theory for many years, I'm not one of those players who is always aware of what chords and scales are happening as the music flies by. Music theory will not help you be more musical unless you use it to get new ideas into your head. If you had to think about subjects, verbs and indirect objects while you had a conversation, your English might be eloquent but your conversation would probably be boring. Think of music theory as the grammar of music - a combination of reading, writing, spelling and assorted rules and concepts which explain the behavior of the language of music.

Also, if you've ever been a victim of classical harmony, you can relax. Modern jazz theory can deal with blues and swing based music without all of those horrible roman numerals and slashes.

With that in mind, let's get into the basics - get a little vocabulary together and master a few simple concepts so we can move on to the fun stuff. Words to remember are printed in bold type.

### THE CHROMATIC SCALE

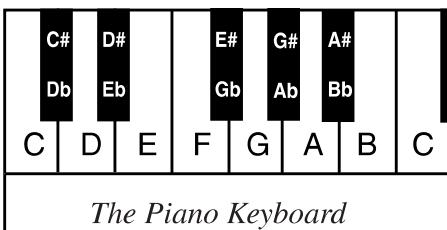
First off, let's just take all the notes. Essentially, in terms of guitar, the example

below is like starting with an open 5th string and just fretting up the neck fret by fret until you reach the 12th fret. This is called a **chromatic scale**:

A, A#/Bb, B, C, C#/Db, D, D#/Eb, E, F, F#/Gb, G, G#/Ab . . . and back around to A

Notice the following . . .

1. there are 12 notes
2. some of them have two names (D# is the same as Eb)
3. there are no sharps (#) or flats (b) between B and C or between E and F



The Piano Keyboard

It's very important that the note names have been set up in this way because when you finally transcend the utter illogic of this and manage to apply theory to actual musical situations, you will be able to get an ego boost that would not have been available if the notes had simply been named A through L. Actually, I won't dwell on the roots of this (or even profess to know them), but looking at a piano keyboard should give you a clue. There are black keys between some notes and not between others.

### INTERVALS

I'll get back to sharps and flats, but let's use the chromatic scale to introduce the concept of **intervals** which are the distances between notes. Intervals will become important because it is the intervals between notes in chords and scales that define their qualities and characteristics.

Starting with A (which is the **root** or starting note of an A chromatic scale);

The distance from A to A#/Bb is called a **minor second** or **half step** and equals one fret

The distance from A to B is called a **major second** or **whole step**

The distance from A to C is called a **minor third**

The distance from A to C#/Db is called a **major third**

The distance from A to D is called a **perfect fourth** (or just a "fourth").

The distance from A to D#/Eb is called an **augmented fourth**, a **tritone** or a **diminished fifth**

The distance from A to E is called a **perfect fifth** (or just a fifth).

The distance from A to F is called a **minor sixth**.

The distance from A to F#/Gb is called a **major sixth**

The distance from A to G is called a **minor seventh**

The distance from A to G#/Ab is called a **major seventh**

The distance from A to A is called an **octave**.

When we get into naming chords and scales, understanding intervals will allow you to find certain notes quickly by using their relationship to other notes as a reference.

### THE C MAJOR SCALE

Now, let's take our chromatic scale and use the twelve notes to create a major scale. Let's use a C Major scale as our first example. The major scale is your basic do-re-mi-fa-so-la-ti-do scale which we've all heard. We'll borrow our model from the piano keyboard and look at the intervals from one note to the next using only the white keys.

From C to D is a Major 2nd (M2)

From D to E is a Major 2nd (M2)

From E to F is a minor 2nd (m2)

From F to G is a Major 2nd (M2)

From G to A is a Major 2nd (M2)

From A to B is a Major 2nd (M2)

From B to C is a minor 2nd (m2)

The C major scale is a row of half steps and whole steps (major and minor seconds) in the following order;

M2 M2 m2 M2 M2 M2 m2

or if we think whole and half steps:

whole whole half  
whole whole whole half  
or:  
1 1 1/2 1 1 1 1/2

Notice how the 1's almost look like the black keys on the keyboard with their groupings of two and then three. It also makes sense because the whole step intervals all have a black key between them whereas B and C or E and F do not.

I'm using different ways of expressing the scale intervals on purpose in order to familiarize you with some of the different ways of thinking and talking about them.

## OTHER MAJOR SCALES AND WHAT IS A KEY?

Now that we have our intervals named and we've gotten a C major scale charted out, let's look at what goes into making a G MAJOR SCALE and some others.

1. Let's start on G
2. Let's use the same pattern of whole and half step intervals that we used to create a C MAJOR SCALE.

1 1 1/2 1 1 1 1/2

Use the keyboard diagram if you need to.

Starting on G we add a **whole step** so the next note is **A**

From A we want to go up another **whole step** so we pass A# and go to **B**

From B we just add a **half step** but since there's no such thing as B# we go directly to **C**

From C we add a **whole step** and find that the fourth note is **D**

From D we jump up a **major second** to **E**

From E we need to go up a **step** which brings us to . . . well, there's no E sharp so a half step would bring us to F and then another half step would make a whole step so the seventh note is **F#**

Adding the final **half step** brings us back around to **G**

Our G MAJOR SCALE ends up being;  
G A B C D E F# G

It has almost the same notes as our C MAJOR SCALE except it starts in a different place and has an **F#** instead of a plain F which we call an **F natural**.

So, let's put this picture together.

## 1. Every major scale has a unique

**number of sharps OR flats which is called it's KEY SIGNATURE.** For example, the key of Bb has two flats, the key of E has four sharps.

## 2. Every major scale is built off of the same interval pattern;

1 1 1/2 1 1 1 1/2

Start on any note, add notes according to this formula and you'll get a major scale in the key of your starting note.

## SO WHY IS C# ALSO CALLED Db

A scale uses each letter name once which is part of the reason that the black keys each have a sharp name and a flat name. For example;

The key of Bb MAJOR is  
Bb C D Eb F G A Bb

Since A# is the same as Bb, we could make an A# MAJOR SCALE but . . .

A# B# C## D# E# F## G## A#

This is technically correct but looks like an ink smudge - an unholly mess that would frighten away the most determined musician. That's why we have flat keys and sharp keys and flat(b) and sharp(#) note names to accommodate them.

Now (and I promise to keep homework to an absolute minimum), try to work out at least a few major scales before you go on to the next section of the article. There are only twelve. Try F and D major to see if you have the concept down.

## THE MAJOR SCALES AND THEIR KEY SIGNATURES

Here are the 12 MAJOR SCALES

C	D	E	F	G	A	B	C
D	E	F#	G	A	B	C#	D
E	F#	G#	A	B	C#	D#	E
F	G	A	Bb	C	D	E	F
G	A	B	C	D	E	F#	G
A	B	C#	D	E	F#	G#	A
B	C#	D#	E	F#	G#	A#	B
Db	Eb	F	Gb	Ab	Bb	C	Db
Eb	F	G	Ab	Bb	C	D	Eb
Gb	Ab	Bb	Cb	Db	Eb	F	Gb
Ab	Bb	C	Db	Eb	F	G	Ab
Bb	C	D	Eb	F	G	A	Bb

So what is it good for? In jazz bands when they call a tune, very often the

band leader will quietly stick a number of fingers up or down to call the key. Two fingers down is Bb. One finger up is G.

When we begin to turn our scales into chords (and you'll soon see that they're really the same thing in a different order), knowing the differences between scales will help your improvised melodies imply the chord changes. A good jazz player can improvise a line that outlines every chord in a tune. Very often it's just guitar or sax and a bass and drums. With nobody playing rhythm chords, the only way to get through is to know what you're playing. It can be done by ear, but knowing your theory will help you train your ear to deal with those kinds of situations.

As a bit of an aside regarding major scales, when the first keyboard instruments came out, they were tuned to sound perfect in the key of C Major. As you got further away from C and introduced more sharps and flats, the songs would get more and more out of tune. In the early 1700's, somebody figured out how to tune a keyboard so that all of the keys were equally in tune by averaging out the tuning. This is called equal or well-tempered tuning and is standard for pianos and guitars today. J.S. Bach wrote *The Well-tempered Clavier*, a series of pieces in each of the twelve major and minor keys just to prove to the world that the new tuning system worked.

While we all play in a number of different keys (whether we know what's happening theory-wise or not), anyone who has experimented with open tunings can hear that there is a special richness to the sound. If you tune to open G tuning (D G D G B D), you might notice that you have to tweak the B-string just a bit to get everything in tune. That's because the guitar is now in G PURE tuning. If you try to play outside of G, you may find that some of the notes are out a bit out.

Some experimental guitars have even been built which use individual frets for each string so that each fret is actually divided into six pieces as it crosses the fingerboard. This is to facilitate playing in certain pure keys while trying to preserve the rich resonances of open tuning. Also, just to make things really weird, some experimenters have tried carving up the octave into more than twelve pieces so that there are more notes between the notes and so on. I'm told that some pieces written for a guitar which had seventeen divisions of the octave were really haunting and beautiful.

So, now that we've gotten to a point

where we can talk about major scales where they came from, let's play a few of them.

Some of the common flatpicking keys are presented here. Remember notes are sharpened or flattened in the key signature (at the beginning of the staff) always sharped or flatted in the music even though they are not written that way.

As you play these scales and learn the fingerings (and you might find alternative fingerings that you prefer), skip the picc note at first until you can hear the sound of where the scale begins and ends. A pickup measure has been added to show you where the scale descends below the lowest root note available on the guitar. For example, in the key of F, the picc note is E natural which is the seventh note in the key of F. When you do get to pickup measures, remember to start with an upstroke if the measure begins on upbeat.

In the key of D where the scale goes six notes below the lowest D on the guitar I've brought the scale down to low E and then jumped back up to the open D string. As many fiddle tunes are commonly played in D, you might consider learning some fingerings in dropped D tuning (low E tuned down to D) as well. The deep low D note can really complement a arrangement of Soldier's Joy or Arkansas Traveller.

Finally, I've put together an example of major scales running up and down over a fairly common blues chord progression. If it seems like a rather bland solo, don't worry. We'll add some ammunition to our improviser's arsenals soon enough. For now, observe how subtle changes in what notes are sharp or natural affects the sound of the line being played. Practice switching scales as chords change and try to develop some lines that highlight the chord changes emphasizing the differences between scales.

### C major

Guitar tablature for C major scale in 4/4 time. The scale starts on the 6th string (Low E) at fret 0. It consists of the notes E, F, G, A, B, C, and D. The tab includes a staff with note heads and a six-string guitar neck with fret numbers. Fingerings are indicated below the strings: T (thumb), A (index), and B (middle).

T		0 1 3	5 3 1 0		
A		0 1 3	0 1 3	3 1 0	
B	0 1 3	0 2 3	3 0 2	2 0	3 2 0

### G major

Guitar tablature for G major scale in 4/4 time. The scale starts on the 6th string (Low E) at fret 0. It consists of the notes E, F#, G, A, B, C, and D. The tab includes a staff with note heads and a six-string guitar neck with fret numbers. Fingerings are indicated below the strings: T (thumb), A (index), and B (middle).

T		0 1 3	0 2 3 2	0	
A		0 2 3	0 2 4	2 0	3 1 0
B	0 2	3	0 2 3	2 0	4 2 0

### D major

Guitar tablature for D major scale in 4/4 time. The scale starts on the 6th string (Low E) at fret 0. It consists of the notes E, F#, G, A, B, C, and D. The tab includes a staff with note heads and a six-string guitar neck with fret numbers. Fingerings are indicated below the strings: T (thumb), A (index), and B (middle).

T		0 2 3	5 3 2 0	3	2 0
A		0 2 4	0 2 3	2 0	4 2 0
B	0 2 3	0 2 4	0 2 4	4 2 0	3 2 0

### A major

Guitar tablature for A major scale in 4/4 time. The scale starts on the 6th string (Low E) at fret 0. It consists of the notes E, F#, G, A, B, C, and D. The tab includes a staff with note heads and a six-string guitar neck with fret numbers. Fingerings are indicated below the strings: T (thumb), A (index), and B (middle).

T		0 2 3	0 2 4 5 4	2 0	3 2 0
A		0 2 4	1 2	2 0	2 1
B	0 2 4	0 2 4	0 2 4	4 2 0	4 2 0

### F major

Guitar tablature for F major scale in 4/4 time. The scale starts on the 6th string (Low E) at fret 0. It consists of the notes E, F, G, A, B, C, and D. The tab includes a staff with note heads and a six-string guitar neck with fret numbers. Fingerings are indicated below the strings: T (thumb), A (index), and B (middle).

T		0 2 3	0 1 3	1 0	3 2 0
A		0 1 3	0 2 3	3 1	3 2 0
B	0	1 3	0 2 3	3 2 0	3 1 0

### Scale Exercise

Guitar tablature for a scale exercise in G major. The scale starts on the 6th string (Low E) at fret 0. It consists of the notes E, F#, G, A, B, C, and D. The tab includes a staff with note heads and a six-string guitar neck with fret numbers. Fingerings are indicated below the strings: T (thumb), A (index), and B (middle).

T		0 2 3	0 2 4	0	2 0 3 2
A		0 2 3	0 2 4	2	0 1 3
B	3	0 2 3	0 2 4	0	1 3

### D

Guitar tablature for a scale exercise in D major. The scale starts on the 6th string (Low E) at fret 0. It consists of the notes E, F#, G, A, B, C, and D. The tab includes a staff with note heads and a six-string guitar neck with fret numbers. Fingerings are indicated below the strings: T (thumb), A (index), and B (middle).

T		0 2 4	0 2 3	0 2 3 5 3 2 0	3
A		0 2 4	0 2 3	0 2 3 5 3 2 0	1 0
B	0	2 4	0 2 3	0 2 3 5 3 2 0	2 0

**About the Author:** Dave Bricker lives in Miami, Florida where he owns a graphic design and marketing company. He studied jazz guitar and bass at the University of Miami School of Music and plays in a variety of styles.

# PICKIN' FIDDLE TUNES

## by Adam Granger

### SOLDIER'S JOY

Hello flatpickers one and all! Welcome to the Pickin' Fiddle Tunes column, where we do just that: pick fiddle tunes.

Let's take a look this time at the old chestnut *Soldier's Joy*. We'll kick it around a little and see if it jumps, and talk about variations and how they're made.

Notice that I've set *Soldier's Joy* in open (that is, uncapoed) D. Those of you who have always played this tune out of a C-capo-two position take note of Granger's Big Flatpick Truth Number One: Most D tunes are as easy—or easier—to play in open D than in a capoed C position. *Whiskey before Breakfast* and *Arkansas Traveler*, for example, lay just as nicely

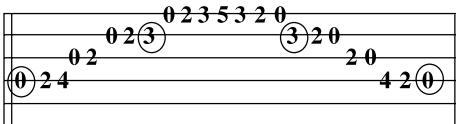
uncapoed as capoed. *Fisher's Hornpipe*, on the other hand, is a popular exception.

A quick scan of this tune will reveal that all notes are in the D scale, and that all notes, accordingly, fall between the second and fifth frets. (See "Tips for Playing in Open D" below). This makes fingering easy, because we can use "zone coverage": The first finger covers the second fret, the second finger the third fret, and so on.

Pick through this version of *Soldier's Joy*. There shouldn't be any big surprises; it's your basic garden variety *Soldier's Joy*. When you feel comfortable with things, whether that be in an hour or a year, move on to the variations.

#### TIPS FOR PLAYING IN OPEN (UNCAPOED) D

1. Learn the first position D scale notes (roots are circled) as shown in the tab at right.
2. Make the second through fifth fret the "default setting" for your left hand.
3. Almost all melody notes in D tunes will fall in this area.



### SOLDIER'S JOY - BASIC VERSION

### ABOUT VARIATIONS

I have a simple definition of a fiddle tune variation: If I walk into the room and you're playing *Soldier's Joy* and I recognize the tune, you're either playing a basic version of the tune or a variation thereof. If I don't recognize the tune (or if I recognize it only by the chord progression), then you're jamming to the progression, i.e., playing nonthematic licks that fit the

progression but that don't as a rule refer to the melody in a coherent way. This is what I call "lick playing".

There's nothing wrong with lick playing (some of my best friends are lick players!) I find a special delight and challenge, however, in developing recognizable inventions and interpretations of tunes, and I'll spend a lot of time in this column exploring the elements and techniques that make these inventions and interpretations (i.e., variations) possible.



#### READING EASYTAB

*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.

DID YOU KNOW...	... <i>Soldier's Joy</i> is also known as:
	French Four
	I Love Somebody
	The King's Head
	Love Somebody
	Love Somebody Yes I Do
	Wild Bill Reel and
	Yellow Peaches

## VARIATION ONE

This variation adheres so faithfully to the “stock” version that it could really be seen as just another basic version. It loops back around in different places, but is still very much *Soldier’s Joy*. This is the way I might play this tune the second time through in a solo performance: it takes the tune one step further into fanciness.

Note that in the second measure of the first part the first rest falls on a downstroke, so the notes before and after are picked with upstrokes. Of course, if you’re religiously following the alternation rule (see “FOR BEGINNERS” above), you’ll discover this yourself, but we tend to settle into an assumption when reading tab that rests fall on upstrokes, since they almost always do (exceptions are rags and syncopated passages, which is what this passage is).

## VARIATION TWO

Here we’re taking the fanciness factor one step higher yet. We’re now using the type of elements that Texas style fiddling uses: long, uninterrupted strings of jazzed-up eighth notes (note that there are no rests in this variation until the ends of the parts), use of accidentals and chromatic runs and ornamentation created by hammer-ons, pull-offs and hammer-on pull-offs.

Once you learn all three of these versions of *Soldier’s Joy* and can play them back to back, you’ll have a better sense of what makes variations tick, and of how to make your own.

Assuming that you’ve now been bitten by the variation bug, try experimenting

This tune starts with a sixteenth-note triplet effected by a pull-off of the first intro note. The small “1” above the pull-off indicates that the figure has a value of one note, so pick the 3 with a downstroke, pull off to the 2, then pick the open with an upstroke. The hammer-on pull-off at the end of the line has a value of two notes (two notes is the default value of hammer-on pull-offs), so pick the first open with a downstroke, hammer on the 2 and pull off

the open, then pick the last 3 with another downstroke.

The second part of this variation pirouettes on the boundary between variation and lick playing. It’s a fancy little series of hammer-on pull-offs that sound and look harder to play than they are. Just remember to always come back in with downstrokes after each hammer-on pull-off and you’ll be fine.

with your favorite tunes. One good way to start is to learn, note for note, other people’s versions of the same tune.

You can also “fill in the blanks” by substituting a quarter note with two eighth notes and you can add hammer-ons, pull-offs and hammer-on pull-offs (don’t forget

the kitchen sink).

Good luck! Next time, we’ll look at some jigs and get you playing in 6/8 and 9/8 time. Until then, keep pickin’ . . .

For a cassette tape of the music in this column, send \$8 to: Granger Publications, Box 26115, Shoreview, Mn 55126.

# Beginning Clarence White Style Bluegrass Guitar

by Steve Pottier

"I like to fool with time" was Clarence White's answer when asked about his guitar style. No kidding. From his unshakable rhythm guitar to his inventive and soulful lead playing, his sense of time and his play with time carved a unique and unmatched style in bluegrass, country and country rock guitar. His guitar work on the classic Kentucky Colonels album *Appalachian Swing*, made when he was a teenager, remains to this day far ahead of its time (no pun intended). Just for fun, try listening to *John Henry* or *I Am a Pilgrim* at half speed a few times, just to savor Clarence's playing as he "fools with time."

Clarence White style bluegrass guitar is not an easily accessible style to learn. There is no comfortable flow of continuous eighth notes to keep you in time. Lots of important notes come on the upbeat, phrases often start or end on an upbeat and so on. But there are ways to begin to get a handle on this style that can reap some immediate rewards.

What I propose is to learn a variation of the famous Carter strum, which I call the Doc Watson strum. It has a great full sound, and gives you access to all parts of the beat, including the upbeats so well used in the White style. The sound is a bubbly "bum-pa-chuck-a-bum-pa-chuck-a." Try it with just a C chord: down on the bass note, pick up on the next higher string, light strum down on the 3 highest strings, then strum up catching just the highest one or two strings (see example 1 below).

## Example 1:

Try for an even, bubbly sound, little or no volume differences between the four parts of the strum. Listen to just the down picked bass notes for awhile, then just to the up picked bass notes, then to the down strums and finally to the up strums. Isolating each part by intentionally focussing your attention on it is a great way to isolate problems.

Here is a basic (square) bass melody line to *Bury Me Beneath the Willow*. It's not the exact melody, but it will serve our purposes here (see example 2 on the next page).

With the Doc Watson strum going smoothly, apply it to the basic bass line melody of *Bury Me Beneath the Willow* shown in example 2. With the strum applied it looks like example 3 (shown on the next page).

A couple of technical points: as you work on example 3, try to hold a full C chord and a 5 string F chord as much as possible. To get the open strings on the F chord lift both your little and ring fingers together as a unit, pressing them together as you lift (see illustration B). This will help keep your fingers close to the fingerboard and make overall execution less complicated. Also note in the illustration A that the fingers point down the inside of the forearm. This is more pronounced as your hand moves closer to the nut. This keeps your tendons in line, with less stress on your hand. Watch top flight guitarists like Doc Watson and Tony Rice and you will see they do the same thing. As you go further up the neck (or as you move the position of the guitar to the right) your fingers will be more and more perpendicular to the fingerboard.

Well, so far this is a nice full sound, but the melody line remains on the downbeat. Try reversing the order of the bass note pairs so that the melody bass note is on the upbeat. This is shown as example 4 (on page 50).

Interesting, but not THAT interesting. How about mix and match? See example 5 (on page 50).

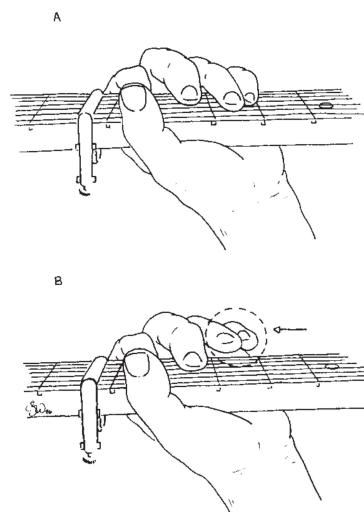
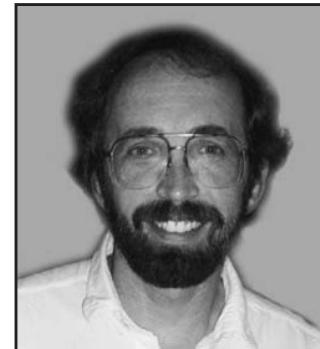


Illustration by C.J.Wedel

Now it's starting to sound like a real tune. A couple of things to note in this example. At the end of the first C section, both bass notes are on the same string. This is legal and good. At the end of the first F section the two bass notes form a short run down to the following C chord melody note. In the first G section there is a hammer on instead of individually picked notes, also legal and good. As the melody starts the second half things get a little more complicated. To get the feel of the first phrase that doesn't include a strum, first think of the basic rhythm-bum-pa-chuck-a, and try and match it to the run: bum-( )-chuck- a-bum-pa. Two more hints: watch for pick direction, keep it down on the downbeat and up on the upbeat, and listen for the basic melody line from example 2. Try to make those melody notes a touch louder than the others, just enough so they stand out as the melody line.

Time to do your own mixing and matching. "Fooling with time" on your own will make you more comfortable with it, and help you hear the sense of phrases that begin and end in non-standard places.

(copyright 1996 Steve Pottier)

**Example 2:**

Guitar tablature for Example 2, featuring four staves of chords and strumming patterns:

- Staff 1: C (1), F (2), C (5), G (3), C (9), F (2), C (13).
- Staff 2: C (5), G (3), C (9), F (2), C (13).
- Staff 3: C (9), F (2), C (13).
- Staff 4: C (13), G (3), C (9), F (2), C (13).

A legend at the bottom left indicates that a diagonal line with a slash (//) represents a strum.

**Example 3:**

Guitar tablature for Example 3, featuring four staves of chords and strumming patterns:

- Staff 1: C (1), F (2), C (5), G (3), C (9), F (2), C (13).
- Staff 2: C (5), G (3), C (9), F (2), C (13).
- Staff 3: C (9), F (2), C (13).
- Staff 4: C (13), G (3), C (9), F (2), C (13).

This example includes vertical bar markings and horizontal bar markings under certain notes, indicating specific strumming or picking techniques.

**Example 4:**

**Example 5:**

**About the Author:** Steve Pottier has been playing bluegrass music for more than 25 years. He has recorded with High Country and Done Gone, as well as his most recent project with Sandy Rothman "Bluegrass Guitar Duets" on the Sierra label. He currently plays a 1948 Martin D28. His main guitar inspirations are Doc Watson, Clarence White, and Larry Sparks.

## New Release Highlight

# Peter McLaughlin's "Cliffs of Vermilion"

Reviewed by Dave McCarty

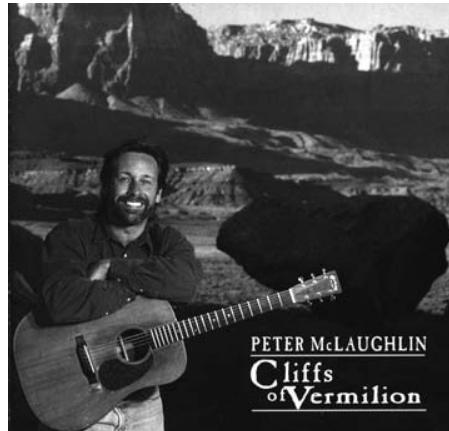
In each issue of *Flatpicking Guitar* we will highlight a new release by a flatpicking artist and provide a guitar break to one of the tunes on the CD. In this issue we feature Peter McLaughlin's first solo project, "Cliffs of Vermilion." Special thanks to Peter McLaughlin for providing the tab to his original tune "Augusta Ridge."

On the cover of his first solo CD, Peter McLaughlin stands in the middle of the Sonoran desert holding his beloved 1930s D-18. Against a striking Arizona landscape in reds and ochres, McLaughlin wears the smile of man doing what he loves and enjoying it completely.

That enthusiasm and love of flatpicking guitar music infuses nearly every track of "Cliffs of Vermilion" with a sense of discovery and delight, inspiring not only McLaughlin but the other musicians joining him on this project. Together, they've produced a CD that combines the best sounds of flatpicking guitar with the freedom and exhilaration of the Southwest desert's endless vistas. McLaughlin, for the past several years, has held the guitar chair with Laurie Lewis and Grant Street, one of the top acoustic music performers today. Peter's great rhythm playing and lyrical flatpicking style appeared on several cuts on *The Oak and the Laurel*, last year's superb duet CD from Laurie Lewis and Tom Rozum.

Lewis returned the favor this year by producing McLaughlin's CD, and all the Grant Street members appear here. Other musical luminaries helping out include banjo heroes Tony Trischka, Craig Smith and Tom Adams, brother David McLaughlin, New Acoustic icons Mike Marshall and Darol Anger, Sally Van Meter, and bassist Todd Phillips.

"I've wanted for a few years to get something out," McLaughlin told *Flatpicking Guitar*, "but Laurie keeps the band so busy it was hard to find time to go into the studio. I'm very grateful she took time off last winter as a conscious effort to give the band enough time off to do some projects of their own and I was able to spend a few weekends in the Bay Area



recording and mixing. So I had plenty of time to think about the songs I wanted to record and who I wanted on it, like Craig Smith, who's a great banjo player. A few people were too far away for me to get on the record, like Rob Ickes."

The CD, he adds, emerged as something different than what he first envisioned. "It definitely added to have Laurie produce it. If Laurie hadn't produced my album, it would have been more traditional. Laurie and I are both 'traditional' in our approach, but it was nice to explore some other areas with this project. I definitely appreciate that from her."

Being on the road since 1991 with Grant Street also helped McLaughlin appreciate the finer points of earning a living as a musician. "I also learned from Laurie how important it is to have a product to sell to make road trips more profitable. Many times, having CDs and other products to sell is the only way to do more than just break even on the road."

The eldest son of a very musical family, Peter grew up hearing his father, Bill, play guitar and sing. His younger brother, David, also took up music and eventually joined the Johnson Mountain Boys and the Lynn Morris Band. Peter's introduction to guitar music came through classical and fingerstyle guitar and playing electric rock and roll guitar, but like so many other flatpickers before him, one experience forever changed his musical pathway.

"I heard Doc Watson's version of *Black Mountain Rag*, and about same time I

heard *Beaumont Rag* and his medley with *Ragtime Annie/Whistlin Rufus*, Peter recalls. Then my Dad took me and David to hear Doc live at the Smithsonian in mid-'60s, and that was kind of the final blow. I had to learn how to flatpick."

Grabbing one of his Dad's old steel-strings, Peter began meticulously deciphering Doc's solos by putting his albums on an old photograph with a 16 rpm speed setting that slowed Watson's lighting runs down and dropped the music exactly one octave. "I just picked out the notes that way and that made it easier to learn. Of course, there was no such thing as tab back then," he says.

Moving to Arizona to attend college, Peter fell in love with the Southwestern desert landscape and also became a mainstay of the local bluegrass scene. As brother David recalls, "When Peter was very young his guitar playing was blowing people away at bluegrass festival jam sessions. Before long, he was winning guitar contests."

In 1986, Peter finished second to Steve Kaufman in the National Flatpicking Guitar Championships in Winfield, Kansas. Two years later, he walked off with the winner's trophy and the most prestigious title in flatpicking guitar. "The fact that I won Winfield probably added some legitimacy and credibility to my playing," he says.

The same clear-headed, melody-oriented style that won over the notoriously fussy Winfield judges has formed the foundation of Peter's playing ever since. On *Cliffs of Vermilion*, one listen to his Winfield-winning arrangement of *Cotton Patch Rag* or his pulsating rendition of *St. Anne's Reel/Fisher's Hornpipe* instantly demonstrates not only his technical skills, but more importantly the taste and maturity he brings to the music.

Part of that legitimacy comes from his belief in going back to the original source of a tune and working up his own arrangement. "I usually go back to the fiddle," he reports. "For example, if I were learning *Big Mon* and wanted some ideas, I wouldn't listen to Tony Rice's version (although he did take lessons from Rice

during the 1970s), I'd go back to the fiddle on the original version." That's exactly what he did to learn *Cotton Patch Rag*, which came from a recording by Texas swing fiddler Lewis Franklin on an old County Records album of Texas swing music. Of course, trading licks and exchanging musical ideas with guitarists at Winfield and other festivals also "rubs off" on his playing, he adds. "There's a lot of trading going on at Winfield."

Peter also calls on his own pre-flatpicking experience on guitar for inspiration. He says he "definitely" incorporates ideas from his classical and fingerstyle playing into the gorgeous crosspicking passages he uses so well. "I also do some of what Clarence (White) used to do, although some might call it cheating, where I throw in the third or fourth finger now and then to get an extra note. Peter's backup work and solos on the jazzy swing tune *It Ain't Right* on his CD clearly show that influence, and careful listening will uncover other examples sprinkled tastefully throughout the record.

Peter also occasionally flatpicks in altered tunings. *Quaking Aspen*, the final tune here, is played with a capo at the second fret across the first five strings leaving the 6th string at E, but then drop-tuning the 1st string back to its natural E.

"I don't play too often outside standard tuning, and that was definitely a tune Laurie brought to the CD and convinced me it would be a good one to record," he explains.

In addition to his appreciation of fiddle tunes, Peter also displays strong writing skills here as the composer of two instrumentals and a vocal tune. "Sometimes I just sit with the guitar. I may have something running through my head, or I may just fool with rolls and crosspicking until I find something I like," he explains. *Picking Peppers*, a beautiful tune with some New Acoustic influences emphasized by the use of Mike Marshall and Darol Anger on the track, utilizes a cross-picked descending line in 6/8 time as the main melodic vehicle. "It sort of sounded like a fiddle tune to me," Peter says, adding that the tune was something he started humming one day while tending the fiery *habanero* peppers he raises in Tuscon.

Peter's rollicking opening cut, *Augusta Ridge*, was "inspired by an area I grew up in where my folks have a place. Sometimes you can get the idea for even an instrumental from something visual. I could go to the Grand Canyon and sit on the rim and think of something that somehow, to me, would relate to the scenery, the rocks, the river. Sometimes it's just a melody running

through my head."

Flatpicking guitar fans will find many of the melodies on *Cliffs of Vermilion* running through their heads after hearing this excellent solo effort. It's a broad musical effort here; not an album of nothing but flatpicking, but a complete musical statement with Peter singing lead on several tunes and several more gorgeous tunes sung by Laurie Lewis and Tom Rozum. There's even a touching tribute where Bill McLaughlin joins his son to sing an old favorite tune.

That family connection will continue on his next solo effort, which Peter says will be a duet album with his brother, with more contributions from their father. "It's the next thing I want to do. It'll be more traditional,

more than what my album shows." And no doubt when they do get together, the three musical McLaughlins will be sitting in the setting sun holding their instruments and smiling broadly over their reunion, a smile any guitarist hearing Peter's work already understands.

Dog-Boy Records,  
P.O. Box 57233,  
Tuscon, AZ 85732

**Peter McLaughlin  
Habanero Music (BMI)**

## Augusta Ridge

(As played by Peter McLaughlin on his CD "Cliffs of Vermilion" (Dog Boy Records DB-02)

I

1

G Em G C G D

6 G Em G C D G 3 Em

■ = down stroke    ▽ = up stroke

## Augusta Ridge (Con't)

11 G C G D G Em

This sheet music for flatpicking guitar consists of six staves of music. The first staff shows a melody line with chords G, C, G, D, G, and Em. The second staff provides tablature for the left hand, with specific fingerings like 3, H, P, and II indicated above the strings. Measures 11 through 19 are shown, followed by a repeat sign and measures 20 through 28. Measure 29 begins with a new section starting on Em. The music is in common time, with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The tablature uses standard guitar notation with six vertical lines representing the strings and horizontal dashes for note heads.

15 G C D II Em

20 D C D Em C

25 D G Em D C D

30 Em C D G

# Reviews

## CD/Audio Tape Reviews

### The Bluegrass Album Band Bluegrass Instrumentals, Vol 6 ©1996 Rounder Records Corp.



Reviewed by Bryan Kimsey

#### Song List

Wheel Hoss  
Misty Morning  
Ground Speed  
Stoney Lonesome  
Lonesome Moonlight Waltz  
Brown County Breakdown  
Tall Timber  
North Country Waltz  
Foggy Mountain Chimes  
Monroe's Hornpipe  
Home Sweet Home  
Roanoke

The Bluegrass Album Band (Tony Rice, J.D. Crowe, Doyle Lawson, Bobby Hicks, Todd Phillips, with Jerry Douglas and Vassar Clements) has reconvened once again to bring us more of their smooth, tight, hard-driving bluegrass. This album, as the title states, is strictly instrumental in the style of Monroe's *Bluegrass Instrumentals*, and Flatt and Scruggs' *Foggy Mountain Banjo*. High on the features list is the twin fiddling of Vassar Clements and Bobby Hicks, two of the best and most experienced fiddlers to ever drag the horsehair. J.D. Crowe's banjo playing is flawless, as usual, and it's a real treat to hear him play straight-ahead bluegrass. Todd Phillips remains my favorite bass player with his rock-solid timing, rich tone, and impeccable taste in choice of notes. Doyle Lawson provides the woody mandolin chop and inventive solos, while Jerry Douglas' Dobro adds a

contemporary touch, particularly on the Monroe tunes.

So, what does this album offer flatpickers? Tony Rice takes solos on only 4 tunes, but those few moments are real gems. If you've been disappointed by the non-melodic approach Rice has taken on some of his albums and in concert in the past few years, you will be pleasantly surprised by his playing on this one. In addition, I haven't heard his guitar sounding this good on disc in some time. The guitar is mixed well and his solos jump out loud and clear with great tone and definition. Rice's break on Lawson's *Misty Morning* is relatively straightforward and sparse, but with tone, articulation, and melodic content to spare. Other Rice solos appear on *Stoney Lonesome*, *Monroe's Hornpipe*, and *Home Sweet Home*, with Rice kicking off the first two. *Stoney Lonesome's* flat-VII progression suits Rice's bluesy style well and features an unusual guitar-banjo introduction. Good as that tune is, I particularly liked the guitar solos on *Monroe's Hornpipe* where Rice takes three breaks and manages to throw in plenty of his signature licks while still keeping the tune headed firmly down the melodic path, and on *Home Sweet Home* which features a terrific syncopated crosspicked solo.

Besides the solos, though, there's Rice's fabulous rhythm guitar work which I personally can never get enough of. Very, very few guitarists can produce the full, driving rhythm which Rice so effortlessly provides to this and his other recordings. His store of bass runs seems endless and fits the tunes rather than just being runs between chords, and his crosspicked strum with its percussive upbeat adds an extra fullness to the music. Rice's rhythm guitar plays a large part in giving this music its ferocious drive and should be required study for all upcoming flatpickers.

In sum, this is not an album of flatpicked guitar, but rather is an album of great classic bluegrass music of which the guitar is an integral part. If that sort of thing strikes your fancy, you have to get this album.

### Dialogs - Beppe Gambetta

©1995 Alcazar Productions



Reviewed by Mike Wright

#### Song List

Slow Creek - with Danny Weiss (guitar)  
Bully Of The Town - with Norman Blake (guitar)  
Model 400 Buckboard - with Joe Carr (guitar)  
The Arkansas Traveller - with Phil Rosenthal (guitar)  
Home Sweet Home - with Alan Munde (banjo)  
Siegel's Candy Shop - with Mike Marshall (guitar)  
Incredible - with John Jorgenson (guitar)  
Gold Watch And Chain - with Dan Crary (guitar)  
Ragtime Annie - with Raul Reynoso (guitar)  
Scotland - with Rob Griffin (guitar)  
The Storms Are On The Ocean - with Charles Sawtelle (guitar)  
Randy Lynn Rag - with David Grier (guitar)  
All You Need Is Love - with Mike Marshall (mandolin)

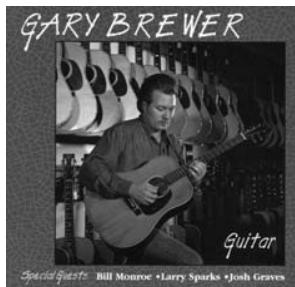
I prefer intensity in my music. I will choose a technically deficient performance with lots of raw emotion over a proficient but bland performance any day of the week. Fortunately, it is not necessary to make such a choice in this case.

The title, *Dialogs*, is very accurate. Gambetta engages in true musical dialogs with some of the hottest pickers in the US. In spite of the range of material – from slow tunes like Gambetta's own *Slow Creek* to a speedy *Randy Lynn Rag*, and from traditional numbers like *Bully of the Town* to modern compositions like *All You Need is Love* - Gambetta works with his various partners to produce music that is both exciting and interesting. The word "dialog" does a good job of describing the complex

interplay in these numbers, contrasted with the standard alternating between solo and backup that we often see in guitar "duets".

The CD liner notes are informative, including a bit about each of the participants as well as a note on each of the songs. The liner also states, "The book with the transcription of the duets and solos is available." I suspect this will be of interest

**Gary Brewer - Guitar**  
©1995 Copper Creek Records



Review by Mike Wright

Song List

The Ozark Rag  
Old Unlucky Devil  
Steel Guitar Rag  
Don't Let Your Deal Go Down  
The Old Kentucky Blues  
Greensleves  
Green Green Grass Of Home  
The Old Minor Joe Clark  
Dust In The Wind  
Touring With Monroe  
Roan Mountain Ramble  
The Old Brown Case  
White Horse Breakdown  
Tom Rock Twist  
White Oak Swamp  
The Stretch Blues  
Bringing Mary Home

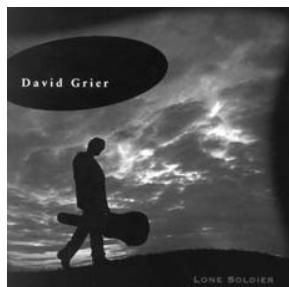
Not everyone can get Bill Monroe, Josh Graves, and Larry Sparks to play as sidemen on their CD — much less get the loan of the Big Mon's mandolin for one of the tunes. Gary Brewer manages that and complimentary liner quotes from Norman Blake and George Shuffler, as well.

Brewer plays a variety of material on this recording, moving from straight-ahead, rather spare pieces through slower fingerpicked songs to more complex and rhythmic compositions of his own. Instrumental combinations include an almost standard Bluegrass mix on *Touring With Monroe* — achieved by multiple recording of Brewer on guitar and mandolin,

and Ron Stewart on fiddle, banjo and bass, guitar duets with Larry Sparks on *Steel Guitar Rag* and *Bringing Mary Home*, solo guitar on Norman Blake's *Old Brown Case* and Monroe's *White Horse Breakdown*, and just about every combination in between.

My favorites of the lot are Brewer's own pieces *Touring With Monroe*, *Roan Mountain Ramble*, and *Tom Rock Twist*. I also liked the Norman Blake and Bill Monroe tunes, and, though I probably shouldn't say so in this magazine, the fingerpicking on *Greensleaves*.

**David Grier - Lone Soldier**  
©1995 Rounder Records Corp.



Reviewed by Mike Wright

Song List:

Smith Chapel  
Eye of the Hurricane  
Tarnation  
The Meeting  
Porkchops & Applesauce  
'R Somethin'  
Engagement Waltz  
Big Dirt Clod  
That's Just Perfect  
Alphabet Soup  
Lone Soldier  
Lone Soldier, Reprise

As almost everyone who is interested in flatpicking knows by now, David Grier is a phenomenon — a natural genius. He doesn't read standard music notation, and he is rather uncomfortable trying to explain how he does what he does. Considering what it is that he does do, this is no wonder! There is a lot of crosspicking, some Tony Rice-like fluidity, and a refreshing lack of identifiable clichés.

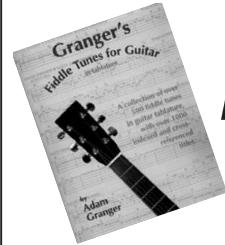
The Lone Soldier CD contains eleven Grier compositions and one, *Tarnation*, by Don Reno. The Grier material can be New Grassy, like *The Meeting*; jazzy, like *Porkchops & Applesauce*; Bluegrass, like *Big Dirt Clod*; or stylistically indescribable, like *Lone Soldier*. To tell the truth, in

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terms of the high degree of virtuosity demonstrated by Greir on this CD, they are all indescribable.

One thing that is especially impressive about David Grier, in addition to his obvious virtuosity, is how well he works with a full Bluegrass-style band. The texture of the music benefits especially from the beautiful fiddle work of Stuart Duncan, but there are also some great mandolin and banjo moments, as well. Still, none of the fine solos from the other instruments take away from the fact that this is a showcase for David Grier and his guitar.

Additionally, David Grier is offering a complete tab book for this CD, with all of the songs transcribed in standard notation and tablature. (See ad on page 33.)

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## Scott Nygaard - Dreamer's Waltz

Rounder CD 0397



Reviewed by Steve Palazzo

Scott Nygaard's long awaited second solo disc is here. And, boy, O'Boy, was it worth the wait! Familiar to many of us through his guitar work with Tim O'Brien (as well as a three year stint with Laurie Lewis and Grant Street), Scott is one of the absolute cutting-edge players in today's acoustic music scene. He delivers here a huge dose of flatpicking in a variety of settings.

For his second solo disc on the Rounder label (No Hurry - Rounder CD 0267 was the first) Nygaard assembled an all-star cast of musical cohorts such as Tim O'Brien, Mark Schatz, Jerry Douglas, John Reischman, Todd Phillips, Mike Marshall, Ruthie Dornfeld, Dirk Powell, and Tony Furtado.

Whether swapping nasty blues licks with Jerry Douglas' dobro behind Tim O'Brien's vocal on *Icewater*, playing blistering fast unison lines with Dornfeld's fiddle on the traditional *Crockett's Honeymoon* and *Indian Nation*, or sculpting the melody on the dreamy *Dreamer's Waltz*, Nygaard's playing is always highlighted by his gorgeous tone and exquisite phrasing.

The combination of Ruthie Dornfeld (fiddle), John Reischman (mandolin), and the wonderfully versatile Dirk Powell (banjo, fiddle, accordian, bass), worked particularly well. This unit plays with an infectious rhythmic groove that really underscores their exuberance and understanding of providing music for contra dancing.

Scott's ample abilities as a

composer are also displayed here as well. About half the tunes are originals. Ranging from a jazzy-Celtic flavored *The Lost World*, to a somewhat Dawgish *Mind the Gap*, to a snaking Brazilian choro-influenced *Fog and Flame* (*Nevoerio e Fogo*).

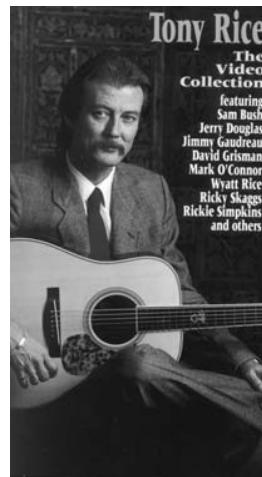
Taking flatpicking into new directions while still maintaining a strong reverence for its roots is quite a balancing act. It takes a player with both various influences and prodigious abilities to pull off such an endeavor. Scott Nygaard's wonderfully expressive guitar playing shows he's up for the task.

Nab this one!

## Video Tape Reviews

### Tony Rice- the Video Collection

© 1995 by Vestpol Productions



Reviewed by Bryan Kimsey

When I first started playing guitar about 18 years ago, Tony Rice was already a legend, but also somewhat of a mystery. He seldom played live performances (at least in my area). Ironically enough, I moved to Lexington, Kentucky just as Rice left to join the David Grisman Quintet in California), and no videos or tab of his playing were available. I knew of no one who'd actually seen him play, and I would scrutinize the occasional photo of him in hopes of picking up some details of his amazing playing techniques.

Fortunately, that situation has changed dramatically and video lessons taught by Rice himself are now available (Homespun Tapes, 1-800-33-TAPES), as well as performance videos from the Merle Watson Memorial festival. Footage for this new video comes exclusively from the

latter festival, and includes Rice in three different contexts: leader of 2 all-star jams, and with his own *Tony Rice Unit*. The footage is mostly unique and not available on any of the other videos from the festival (*Legends of Flatpicking Guitar*- Vestapol 13005, and 1992 Merle Watson Festival-North Carolina Public Television).

The first all star jam features Tony with a complete band consisting of Sam Bush, Mark O'Connor, Jerry Douglas, Bela Fleck, and Mark Schatz. The musicianship, as you might expect, is exemplary and everyone takes numerous improvisatory solos. In fact, this segment is probably as interesting to other musicians as it is to flatpickers. The second all-star jam features almost two complete bands; we get to hear less of Rice than in the previous jam, but enough to make the inclusion of this segment worthwhile. The final segment features Rice with his band doing less jamming and more set material.

Throughout the tape, we see many close-ups of Rice and are clearly able to see his technique in action. In fact, I found this video almost as useful as an instructional tool as a entertainment package. There are several excellent close-ups of Rice's legendary D-28, too. Rice's voice, while not quite up to par of his earlier work of a few years previous, was in good shape during this festival. The sound quality of the tape itself is very good, although I'd prefer it to be mixed a little hotter. Running the tape through a hi-fi VCR and home theater provides an experience almost as good as being at the festival itself!

I did note a few minor faults, though. On several occasions, the camera is slow to pan to the soloist, or fails to show the soloist at all. I made the best of these moments though, and used them to study the backup technique of the on-screen musician. Some interesting facial expressions are recorded during these moments, too! Another minor quibble- previously noted by Dave McCarty concerning the *Legends of Flatpicking*- is the lack of historical perspective of the video. All the footage comes from a single festival and we don't get to see Rice with the Grisman Quintet, or with J.D. Crowe, two events which would enhance this tape dramatically.

In spite of these complaints, *Tony Rice- The Video Collection* is an essential part of any flatpicker's video collection. Legends of Flatpicking may offer a better overview of flatpicking in general, but for *Tony Rice*

fans, *The Video Collection* adds a generous dollop of very tasty icing to the cake.

## Instructional Material Reviews

### Tony Rice Teaches Bluegrass Guitar A Master Picker Analyzes His Pioneering Licks and Solos

© 1996 by Homespun Tapes



Reviewed by Mike Wright

As far as Bluegrass is concerned, Tony Rice has to have the most distinctive and recognizable sound of any guitarist on the planet. This book is certainly an excellent way for the intermediate flatpicker to get a handle on some of the characteristic elements of that sound.

The tunes are first played up to speed, and then slowed down to something a bit more reasonable for the average learner. Rice also plays variations on some of the tunes, breaks down the left-hand fingering for the more difficult parts, and discusses elements of technique, such as picking direction and the use of slides, hammer-ons, and pull-offs.

The selection of tunes is excellent. The songs are likely to be familiar to most pickers, but each one has been chosen to illustrate different techniques and keys. There are lots of runs way up the neck, with Jerusalem's Ridge being played almost entirely in closed position. In addition to fiddle tunes and song breaks, Rice includes a few scale and rhythm exercises, along with several variations on the classic G run. He also plays backup for several of the tunes to give the student something to play with.

I have worked with instructional records,

tape cassettes and videos, but this was my first experience with an instructional CD. I really liked it. The music and tablature in the book are keyed to the tracks on the CD, making it very easy to find and repeat specific passages with just a few pushes of a button.

I wouldn't advise simply learning to play all these tunes exactly like Tony Rice, since his style is so distinctive, but the intermediate player can learn a lot about technique and freedom of expression from this package.

#### The Songs:

The Red Haired Boy  
Little Sadie  
Your Love Is Like A Flower  
Old Train  
Blue Railroad Train  
Home From The Forest  
Wildwood Flower  
Wild Horse  
Jerusalem's Ridge

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# Gear Review

## Review of Climate Case by Bryan Kimsey

Rapid changes in heat and humidity are proven guitar killers which can cause severe damage to your beloved instrument. Finish checking, cracks, loose joints and braces, and warped necks are all potential effects of rapid heat or humidity changes. Unfortunately, the average guitar case doesn't protect your instrument very well against these dangers, and to make matters worse, most cases are black: the worst possible color for reflecting heat!

The Climate Case is one response to this problem. Made of a heavy "space-blanket" material, complete with padding, zippers, and internal pockets, the Climate Case is designed to fit over your current guitar case. A high-quality item, the cases are designed to fit over a variety of guitar and mandolin cases. Guitar cases cost \$119 direct and are also available from



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retailers, including CF Martin and Elderly Instruments. The manufacturer claims that it will reflect 90% of heat in hot weather and retain 90% of warmth in cold weather, in addition to keeping humidity stable. Of course, your instrument has to start at room temperature; the Climate Case can only retain temperatures, it can't create heat or cold.

I tested the Climate Case using a stock black Martin case and a plywood Everest case with tweed covering. I've been using tweed Everest cases for several years because of their reasonable cost, additional strength, and light coloration compared to standard plastic instrument cases. However, as my instrument collection ebbs and flows, buying new cases and junking perfectly good ones gets expensive. I was hoping to use one Climate Case on whichever guitar case leaves the house, rather than buying a new case for each instrument.

To test the effectiveness of the Climate Case, I placed three cases (a tweed Everest, a black Martin, and another black Martin in the Climate Case) in direct sunlight (sans guitars, of course!). I used a previously calibrated Radio Shack thermometer/hygrometer to check conditions inside and outside each case at 1/2 hour intervals for a total of 2 hrs. All cases started with interiors of 78 degrees and 48% relative humidity (RH).

In spite of its black exterior, the unprotected Martin case did a surprisingly good job of keeping the instrument cool. With an outside temperature of 93 degrees and RH of 27%, the interior of the Martin case was 92 degrees and 44% RH after 1 hour in direct sun. The outside of the case, however, was extremely hot and I had to remove the case after 1 1/2 hours because it started to warp and bubble. At that time, the interior of the case was 94 degrees and 38% RH. The tweed Everest case was equally hot inside, although its RH stayed up near 44% after two hours. The outside of the Everest remained relatively cool whereas the unprotected Martin case became almost too hot to touch. After two hours of blistering sun, the second Martin case inside the Climate Case was also cool to the touch. The interior of the

protected case was 83 degrees with RH of 44%, a difference of 9 degrees from the unprotected Martin case, and an increase of just 5 degrees from its starting point.

Even though I didn't match the protection levels claimed by the manufacturer, I suspect that the Climate Case's temperature would have continued to rise rather slowly, and I suspect that the unprotected Martin case's temperature would have risen quite rapidly had I decided to leave it in the sun. At the very least, the Climate Case did an excellent job of protecting the guitar case itself from thermal damage.

While it is probably not going to prevent damage from negligence, the Climate Case certainly seems to offer an additional measure of protection, particularly for dark-colored cases. I know I worry a lot less about heat and cold damaging my guitar while it's in the Climate Case and considering that it will fit any of my current and future guitar cases, the peace of mind provided by Climate Case is certainly worth the price of admission.

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*Titles include:* PURINA SHOW, 1955: The Poor People Of Paris, Side By Side, Makin' Believe • OZARK JUBILEE, 1958: Villa, Say Si Si • NORWAY, 1963: Levee Walking, Wildwood Flower, Yes Ma'am, Malaguena, Medley: Greensleeves/Streets Of Laredo, Peanut Vendor, Tiger Rag • NORWAY (NASHVILLE CAVALCADE), 1973: Alhambra, Black Mountain Rag, Medley: Windy & Warm/ Back Home In Indiana/Country Gentleman/Mr. Sandman/Wildwood Flower/Freight Train, Medley: The Three Bells/I Can't Stop Loving You/Java/He'll Have To Go/When You're Hot You're Hot/Oh Lonesome Me, Just Another Rag, Mr. Bojangles, Missionera, Wheels PORTER WAGONER SHOW, 1973: Muskrat Ramble VESTAPOL 13027 \$24.95

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*Titles include:* No Vacancy (1946), Nine Pound Hammer (1951), Mus'r Rat (1951), I'm A Natural Born Gamblin' Man (1951), Too Much Sugar For A Dime (1951), Spoonin' Moon (1951), Lost John (1951), Dark As A Dungeon (1951), Petticoat Fever (1951), Sweet Temptation (1951), John Henry (1951), I'll See You In My Dreams (1960), Midnight Special (1968), Cannonball Rag (1970), I Am A Pilgrim (1971), Sixteen Tons (1977), Smoke, Smoke That Cigarette (1977), Barbecue Rag (1981), I'll See You In My Dreams (1981) VESTAPOL 13012 \$24.95



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*Titles include:* SOUNDS, 1946: Silver Spurs, Texas Home, Why Did I Fall For Abner, Old Chisholm Trail, Catalogue Cowboy, Night Train To Memphis • THE OLD AMERICAN BARN DANCE, 1951: Lost John • RANCH PARTY, 1957: Nine Pound Hammer, John Henry, Wildwood Flower, When My Baby Double Talks To Me, Sixteen Tons, Cannonball Rag • FIVE STAR JUBILEE, 1961: Dark As A Dungeon, Rockabye Rag • PORTER WAGONER SHOW, 1967-1971: That's All, Wildwood Flower, Lost John, Nine Pound Hammer NASHVILLE SWING, 1979: Cannonball Rag, Who's Sorry Now • THOM BRESH'S HOME, 1981: Way Down Yonder In New Orleans and Backwater Blues VESTAPOL 13034 \$24.95



## TONY RICE THE VIDEO COLLECTION

Tony Rice has practiced his flatpicked art to great acclaim in both traditional bluegrass and innovative acoustic circles. He is perhaps the greatest innovator in acoustic flat-picked guitar since Clarence White. This video presents Tony in three different settings recorded at the 1992 Merle Watson Festival. Featuring Ricky Skaggs, Sam Bush, Mark O'Connor, Jerry Douglas and others.

*Titles include:* TONY RICE ALL STAR JAM Red Haired Boy, Blue Railroad Train, I Wonder Where You Are Tonight, White House Blues • TONY RICE & FRIENDS The Old Home Place, Bluegrass Breakdown • TONY RICE UNIT Dusty Miller, He Rode All The Way To Texas, Salt Creek, Another Lonesome Day, Nine Pound Hammer, Darcy Farrow, Crazy Creek, Little Sadie and Shadows VESTAPOL 13058 \$24.95

## Doc's GUITAR JAM

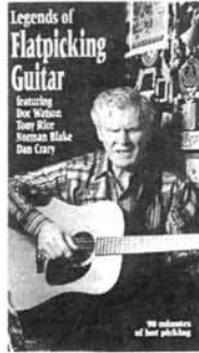
Recorded at the 1992 Merle Watson Festival this incredible jam session brings together five masters of flatpicking guitar — Doc Watson, Tony Rice, Dan Crary, Jack Lawrence and Steve Kaufman.

*Titles include:* DOC WATSON, TONY RICE, DAN CRARY, STEVE KAUFMAN & JACK LAWRENCE Ragtime Annie, Blue Ridge Mountain Blues, St. Anne's Reel, More Pretty Girls Then One, Walk On By, Little Sadie, Black Mountain Rag, Lime Rock, Billy In The Longround Going Down This Road Feeling Bad • DOC & FRIENDS What Does The Deep Sea Say, Ramshackle Shack DOC WITH TONY RICE, STEVE KAUFMAN, JACK LAWRENCE & T. MICHAEL COLEMAN Wildwood Flower. VESTAPOL 13055 \$24.95



## LEGENDS OF OLD TIME MUSIC

*Titles include:* ROSCOE HOLCOMB Across The Rocky Mountain • CLARENCE ASHLEY Free Little Bird, The Cuckoo SAM MCGEE Wheels, Mississippi Sawyer • DOC WATSON, CLINT HOWARD & FRED PRICE Way Downtown, Daniel Prayed, Lee Highway Blues • PETE STEELE Pay Day At Coal Creek, Coal Creek March, Galilee SOMMERS, YOUNG & HOLCOMB Red Apple Rag TOMMY JARRELL John Henry, Drunken Hiccups ROSCOE HOLCOMB Little Birdie, Graveyard Blues, Little Grey Mule SOMMERS, YOUNG & HOLCOMB Bile Them Cabbage Down • CORBETT GRIGSBY Pretty Polly • JEAN RITCHIE The Cuckoo TOMMY JARRELL John Brown's Dream THE WALKER FAMILY Bowling Green, Hangman, Rollie True Love, I'll Be Somewhere Listening • ROSCOE HOLCOMB ohn Hardy • JEAN & EDNA RITCHIE My Pretty Little Miss, The Four Marys • SOMMERS, YOUNG & HOLCOMB Grey Eagle VESTAPOL 13026 \$24.95



## Legends Of Flatpicking Guitar featuring Doc Watson, Tony Rice, Norman Blake & Dan Crary

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# Vintage Voice

by Buddy Summer



[I welcome the opportunity to provide this article for the premier issue of Flatpicking Guitar. Having had the pleasure of meeting Dan Miller, the editor, at the First Annual Steve Kaufman Flatpicking Camp held on the beautiful campus of Maryville College in Maryville, Tennessee during June 1996, I have been given the opportunity to share some experiences I've had with Flatpickers and some of the instruments they use.

First of all, it seems most appropriate that I should introduce myself and to offer some insight into my background. I was born in Columbia, South Carolina on April 10, 1942 and was named Stanley Lee Summer. From day one I've always been referred to as "Buddy." My childhood and formative years were spent in this central city of South Carolina. Having graduated from Columbia High School in 1960, I attended evening classes at Columbia College during the evenings and worked a full time day job. A transfer to the University of South Carolina as a full time day student was made in 1962. An unusually passionate interest in aviation resulted in my terminating my attendance at USC just short of earning my degree. During the next several decades I received much formal education and training in the field of aviation and recently retired from one of our nation's leading airlines. At the time of my retirement, and for more than a decade before, I was serving as First Pilot on board a Boeing 727/200 aircraft. During my aviation career, I taught various forms of flying at various flight schools flew for an airline for almost three decades. I currently hold an Airline Transport Pilot License and am type-rated on several multi-engine turbo jet airline transport category type aircraft.]

A passion of mine has always been country-bluegrass music, the folks who flat pick it and the instruments they use. As often as we can, my wife and I attend music festivals, jam sessions, bluegrass camporees, back porch pickings and any other event where this music is played and enjoyed. There are many such events here in East Tennessee where we now live.

During my career as an airline pilot and now as a retired pilot, I have played

the guitar some, but not as well as I would like. As a youth, I had an opportunity for exposure to this music. I lived close to some of the very best string musicians that ever lived, went through school with their children, visited in their homes and attended church where they attended. Country-bluegrass music was all around me and I enjoyed so much of it.

One of the local groups "WIS Hired Hands" performed weekly throughout the midlands of South Carolina. I lived very close to Home "Pappy" Sherrill, the fiddle player for the "Hired Hands," and attended public schools with his children through the late 1940s and 50s. As a family friend, I got to tag along on some of their performances. This helped to cultivate a genuine love and appreciation of this music that has lasted more than forty years. Being "back-stage" at the Irmo High School Auditorium in the mid-1950s while the "Hired Hands" performed on stage to a full house, left a strong and lasting impression on me.

I visited "Pappy" Sherrill in his home about two years ago and again he fiddled *Listen to the Mockingbird* for me as he had done forty years earlier for the audience that night at Irmo High School – perfectly. Dwight "Snuffy" Jenkins is gone now, but in my mind, I still visit him from time to time and hear those clear, crisp banjo notes ring out when he was on center-stage or listen to him keep time on that old wash board.

Occasionally we'd drive from Columbia, South Carolina to Charlotte, North Carolina to attend a Martha White Flour sponsored "Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs Bluegrass Show." This was a special experience and the admission price was reduced by fifty cents upon presenting the Martha White Flour bag label. Those were great days because they were filled with great music.

New multi-instrument talents such as Randy Lucas . . along with some of the "Old -timers" such as Randy's father, Harold Lucas, and "Pappy" Sherrill keep

the music going in the South Carolina midlands today.

Although I spent my youthful years perfecting my skills as an aviator, I sometimes wish I'd spent some of my time trying to master the use of the guitar, mandolin and other string instruments. Usually though, several times a day, I am reminded that my career in aviation has provided me with a comfortable life.

I moved away from South Carolina in the early 1960s to seek my fame and fortune in aviation, but I took the love of the music, the performers and the instrument with me. Today that same great music rings loud and clear from the hills and hollows of the Great Smoky Mountains.

Here in East Tennessee, the music of greats such as fiddlers Charlie Acuff and Fred Bealer, the mandolins of Ernie Holbert, Sidney Croft and G.B. Tullock, the guitars of Steve Kaufman and Kenny Dotson, the banjo of Gary Gregory and many other very fine musicians are an almost daily occurrence. In East Tennessee you can visit Ross Steele's Medicine Show in Madisonville, Tennessee on any late Thursday afternoon or evening or visit Cades Cove in the Great Smoky Mountain National Park on the first Saturday of May or the last Saturday of September of any year and you'll see what I mean. The world of country-bluegrass music and of those who professionally flatpick are wonderful and make each day more exciting than the last.

The local groups are kind enough to allow me to join in on their jamming sessions and a couple of flatpickers and myself have performed at a variety of functions from time to time, mostly for the residents of our local nursing homes. My flatpicking skills would, without a doubt, have improved ten-fold if I'd spend half as much time practicing my guitar as I spent collecting used and vintage guitars. This is a subject about which I'd like to share some of my experiences.

Although there are many other wonderful instruments available, C.F. Martin Flattop Guitars have the most appeal to me and I actively seek these on a daily basis. Over the past few years I've accumulated several Martin Herringbones from the 1930s and 1940s, along with several Martin Guitars from the 1950s and 1960s. I also collect some new limited edition Martin Guitars from C.F. Martin's "Guitar of the Month" Program. My wife Nancy and I proudly display our collection of vintage and limited edition C.F. Martin Guitars every chance we get. Our desire is to share these fine pieces of American Heritage with people who have similar interest and quite often we invite people to play and enjoy these instruments from our display. I've named my hobby of collecting and displaying vintage guitars "Nancy's Music Box" so as to differentiate us from more common named collectors.

I also use part of my retirement benefits of "space available" free airline travel to search the United States for desirable vintage guitars. I'm happy to report that this makes for easier collecting as I'm able to collect guitars that otherwise might not be available. There are several people around the United States that help me find guitars and I've flown from East Tennessee to San Francisco and back to East Tennessee on the same day to pick up a couple of old Martin Guitars from one of my spotters.

Having spent several decades of my adult life as a team member and having been programmed to use a check list for everything that was done, I've formulated a checklist that I use when inspecting a guitar to purchase. This checklist helps determine a guitar's desirability and whether or not it is a good investment. Hopefully, this vintage Guitar Checklist will help you in your selection of a solid, sound investment. Add to or take away from the checklist as the situation dictates. It is by no means perfect . . . remember, it's only a guide.

#### VINTAGE GUITAR CHECKLIST

**1.** Finish original? - Look for (a) finish cracks (b) sanding of finish (c) indentations filled with lacquer (d) overspray (e) scratches (f) wood cracks (g) capo and belt buckle marks.

Smell for new lacquer odor and feel finish consistency over entire guitar. Check for rounded corners that should be square. (A perfect old guitar may have been

refinished)

**2.** Check tuners for originality, C.F. Martin decal on peghead and/or C.F. Martin stamp on back of peghead.

**3.** Check for "E" string and/or pick guard cracks. Look inside box and under pick guard for splices, cleats, excess glue, cracks on top, sides, back, peghead, etc.

**4.** Check for neck reset. How does neck join the box? The neck and box are finished separately so there should be a clean seam at neck joint. Is the neck bowed?

**5.** Check the action. A nickel at the 12th position and string check at the 1st and 14th positions. Fingerboard, frets, and nut check. Open string buzz means nut is cut too deep or saddle has been shaved too much. Worn frets need to be replaced. Bar frets or "T" frets?

Fingerboard not cut at 12th fret or 14th fret for neck set.

**6.** An old Martin should have quartered Brazilian Rosewood and not slab cut. Slab cut wood mostly started in mid 60's.

**7.** Check saddle, bridge, bridge pins and end pin. Pin dot color should match pick guard material color. Check for belly job with straight edge over top of guitar. Older bridge width is one (1) inch at wings. Long saddle until early 1965's.

**8.** Look inside box for original braces, bridge plate, position of "x" braces, tone bars, neck block and end block. Look for excess glue, serial number originality and check serial number with code card. Make sure neck block is beveled like it should be. Check carefully that serial number has not be changed or covered over with different number. Check the C.F. Martin stamp on the long, flat back brace that runs from neck block to tail block, "Made in U.S.A." stamp was added about 1960. An old, musty smell inside the box is a good indication that the instrument is also old.

**9.** Check to see if pick guard or bridge is loose by trying to insert business card around edge.

**10.** Check fingerboard inlays . . . dots or diamonds and squares. Check the back zipper for style. 1947 transition year for turners and back zipper.

**11.** Check for plugged jack hole on aft treble side. Pull the end pin out to check condition. An oversized pick guard, bridge, or bridge pad usually is to cover something up.

**12.** Check binding. White ivoroid binding until about 1966.

**13.** Check for loose braces by tapping on

back of guitar. Check for hairline crack in bridge between bridge pin holes. Check for thickness of bridge wings.

**14.** Check to see if bridge is on straight by checking center seam line of top to fall at proper place between bridge pins. Check to see if decal is correct and on straight.

**15.** Check guitar top carefully – it's 90% of guitar - check for type of wood used in top (Red Spruce until 1946), way top is braced and straightness of wood grain in top wood. The straighter the better.

**16.** Be sure to play the guitar for playability, tone, feel, etc.

**17.** Case original? Black Tolex outside and purple inside until about 1940. Green inside until late 60s. Blue inside until early 70s and then switch to molded cases.

**18.** Ask as many questions about the guitar as you can think to ask. Refinished? Oversprayed? How long have you had it? Why do you want to sell it? Any work done that you know of? By whom? Do you know anything about the guitar that I should know, but don't?

During the next several issues of this magazine I'd like to elaborate some on each checklist item and share some of my experiences in being able to locate guitars that are for sale. I'd also like to share some of my buying experiences in hopes of helping someone else avoid the mistakes I've made. I certainly by no means claim to know everything, but I hope my knowledge in purchasing several vintage guitars will help guide you.

Until the next issue I look forward to sharing this wonderful hobby with anyone who has similar interest in these splendid pieces of American Culture.

*Editor's Note: I'd like to personally thank Buddy Summer for his willingness to display his splendid guitar collection and allow players to pick-up, examine, and play these instruments. Some collectors hoard their instruments and lock them away in cases, keeping them strictly as financial investments. Because Buddy loves the instruments, the music, and the people who play the music, he has allowed many players to have a once in a lifetime playing experience. I know that I will never forget the 15 or 20 minutes I spent playing one of Buddy's 1946 HD-28's. Thanks Buddy!*

# Flatpicking News

## New Doc Watson and David Grier Videos from Homespun

**Doc Watson Video:** Take a lesson with one of the premier flatpickers of our time! Doc and fellow-flatpicker Steve Kaufman trade licks and play duets, and Doc slows down some of his most requested songs and instrumentals so that you can follow along. You'll learn to play ballads and bluegrass songs, as well as the lead, back-up and "twin" harmony parts to fiddle tunes and country classics: *Little Sadie, More Pretty Girls Than One, New River Train, White House Blues, Open Up Them Pearly Gates, Salt Creek, Ragtime Annie, Goodnight Waltz, When It's Peach Pickin' Time in Georgia and Sweet Georgia Brown*. As an extra treat, Doc and his grandson Richard Watson perform three blues-based songs: *Walk On, Boy; Chicago Blues and Summertime*.

**David Grier Video:** An award-winning guitarist's blueprint for successful soloing!

David Grier outlines a variety of techniques necessary to establish a solid guitar style and play hot bluegrass solos. He takes all the elements of his dazzling style—slides, hammers, pulls, crosspicking, pick-and-fingers style, bends, double-stops, raking and other devices—and pulls them together into outstanding solo pieces. Songs include *Liberty, Bill Cheatham* and a spectacular version of *Nine Pound Hammer*, Grier originals *Engagement Waltz* and *The Meeting*, will give you additional insights and direct you toward reaching your guitar playing potential.

## New Releases from Rounder

Here are a few of Rounder's Fall releases that may be of interest to Flatpickers:

IIIrd Tyme Out, *Living on the Other Side*  
Rounder 0393

The Del McCoury Band, *Cold Hard Facts*  
Rounder 0363

Dry Branch Fire Squad, *Live, at Last*  
Rounder 0339

Wyatt Rice & Santa Cruz,  
*Picture in a Tear*  
Rounder 0372

## California Coast Music Camp

California Coast Music Camp held its fifth annual camp in July 1996. The week long camp in Sonoma County, CA covered a full range of unplugged music styles, including much to interest a flatpicker.

Several of the 20 instructors had flatpicking backgrounds or interest - Dix Bruce, Keith Little, Jim Nunnally, Robin Flower and Radim Zenkl among them. Each instructor taught 2 classes per day and there were also workshops and lots of jamming.

One of the things that makes CCMC special is the informal interaction among students and staff. Teachers spent a lot of time jamming with students. Some of the students were themselves very accomplished musicians and teachers. You could find a good jam at almost any time of day or night, and you would be welcome to join. Probably learn something, too.

CCMC is an annual event. Next year's dates are July 6th through July 12th. To find out more write CCMC, P.O. Box 936, El Granada, CA 94018-0936, call (415)306-0399 or visit <http://www.infopoint.com/orgs/ccmc/>

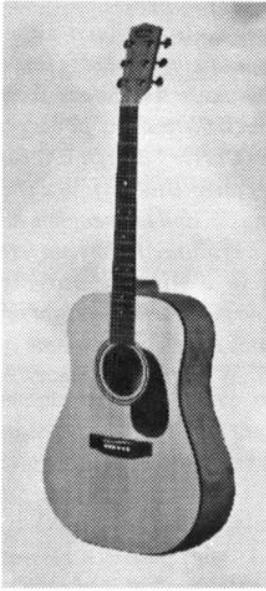


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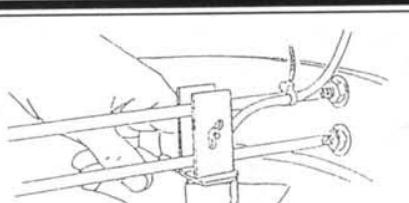
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