

CLAWHAMMER ON LOW OR NO DOLLARS

an itinerant's guide to clawhammer banjo

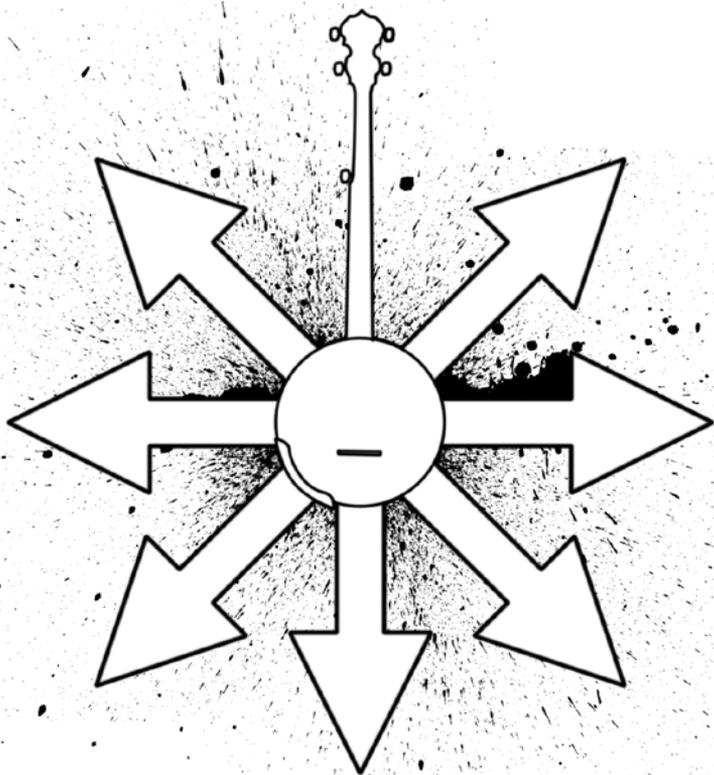


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Hi,

I'm **Joseph**, singer and banjist of the **Black Death All Stars**.

My hobbies include malt liquor, trains, dressing dogs in people clothing, DIY touring with my band, and playing **BLISTERING, FACE MELTING, SATANIC CLAWHAMMER**

The whole purpose of me writing this zine is because I feel that there's a lot of people out there wanting to learn or improve their clawhammer but don't have the option of either buying a 20\$ book off amazon.com or getting a teacher. This book is directed primarily towards traveling kids but of course it can apply to everyone that wants to learn banjo. The purpose of this book is less to be a real guide to beginner clawhammer and more of a useful reference people can carry around for years. It's meant to be able to fit in an instrument case. In essence, it's a bit of a busking manual. When you are on the road you need to make money. Crack spanging pisses folks (and cops) off, flying a sign is boring, and honest work just doesn't rear its ugly head most of the time. The best way to make a buck on the road in my opinion is with an instrument (or preferably a group of them) and an open case.. A lot of the tunes in here I included because I hear people playing them all the damn time on the street; you are more likely to be familiar with them and thus have an easier time learning them. I'm not saying they are or aren't worth learning, all I'm saying is that folks make money off them and you can too. Sure everyone is sick of Wagon Wheel, but if you are in a college town on a friday night and nothing else is working try whipping it out and see if you don't make *at least* enough for a 40.

Email me if you want about questions or if you want more copies of this or complaints or thanks or whatever: **Josephfaison4@gmail.com**
My band's myspace is **myspace.com/blackdeathallstars** you can hear my playing there. Look for us, we tour a whole, whole lot and we will probably come wherever it is you live.

NOTES ON CLAWHAMMER RECRUITMENT:

This Instructional booklet purports to teach you clawhammer. This is true, but some may beg to differ. A lot of people might define the style outlined here more as "frailing" than clawhammer because of the focus on chords. This book is more directed at the accompaniment-style banjo that I feel people would get the most use out of when busking. Clawhammer purists would point to the tab I have written for songs like Black Eyed Susie and Cluck Old Hen as more representative of clawhammer as an old time style. Personally, I think as long as it's all downstrokes with your one picking finger in syncopation with your thumb then you can call it clawhammer and be correct. However, as with about anything involving old time music this is a matter of contentious debate. The fact of the matter is that I could call the style taught in this book "Flap-diddly-dumptious" and it wouldn't make any difference. There are as many banjo styles as there are mountain towns and anyone could name the way they played whatever the fuck they wanted. So *there*.

Whats the difference between *Clawhammer* and *"Bluegrass", Three-finger, Scruggs Style, etc* you ask?

The latter is played with your thumb and two fingers (the third finger is your thumb, btw) and is the basis of almost all banjo you will hear on television, bluegrass records, and in popular culture in general. The style most would recognize as "Bluegrass banjo" is Scruggs style, named after Earl Scruggs. He invented the style and popularized it playing with Bill Monroe's Bluegrass Boys and later his own group Flatt & Scruggs. He made it so popular that clawhammer, which was the most common banjo style before the 50's, picked up its straw hat and ran back into the mountains. From this period on Grandpa Jones on Hee-Haw was about the only figure in pop culture still playing clawhammer. BUT, clawhammer

has been making a real resurgence in the last few decades. I've talked to a great deal of people who have told me they started out with Scruggs style. Eventually they saw someone playing clawhammer and then full on switched and never went back. The fact of the matter is the vast majority of beginner banjo books and banjo teachers are going to start you out on Scruggs Style. Ultimately, of course, you make the choice.

Why do you play clawhammer instead of Scruggs Style?

Because its cooler. And because I didn't grow up in the seventies.



WHAT YOU'S NEED:

There are three things you should definitely get, provided you are able, to help your banjo playing and busking along.

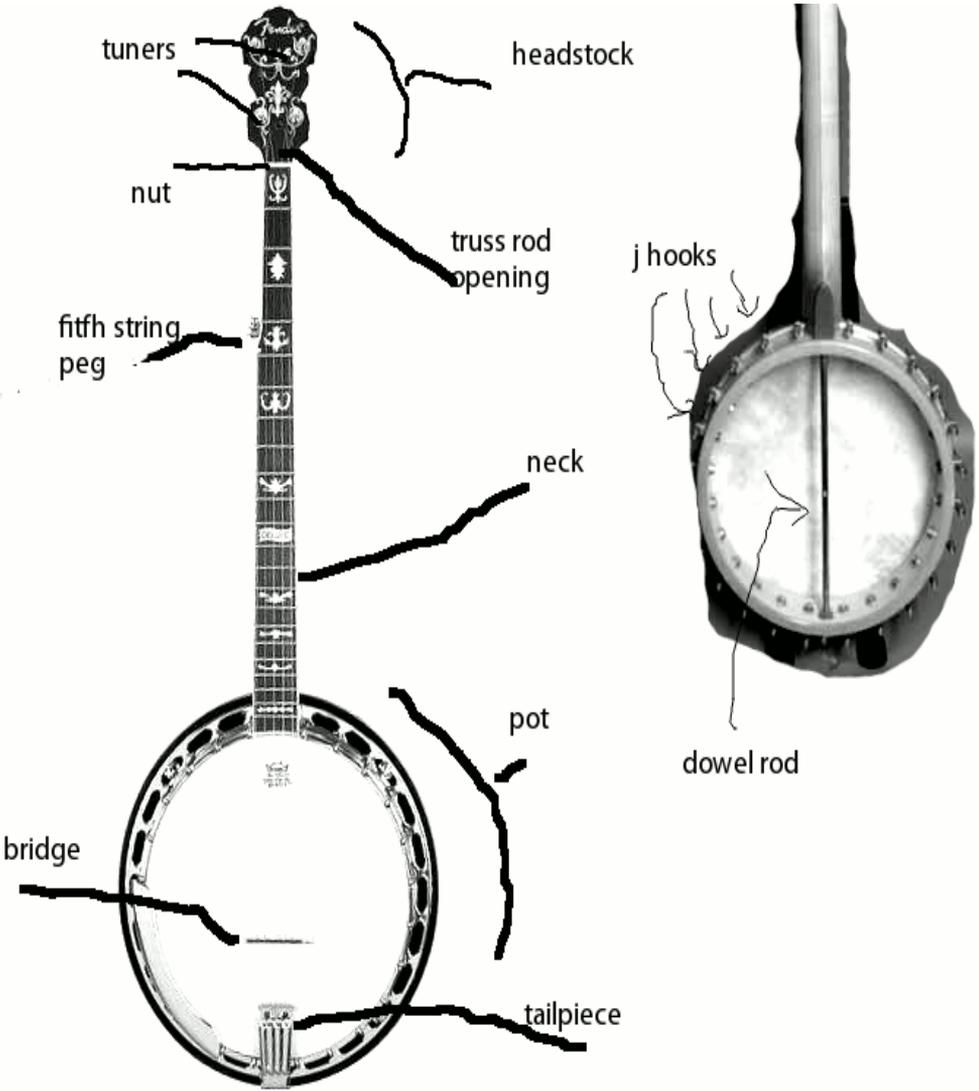
ONE: A tuner! I would especially, especially recommend one of those tuners that clips on to your headstock and tunes through vibration. You can use them to tune fiddles, upright basses, guitars, mandolins, and probably a damn harp if you wanted. I use them to check my intonation and bridge placement even. You can get one for about \$30. I know, I know, \$30 can get you two cases of King Cobra 40's, but tomorrow when you wake up those 40's probably won't be there. And that tuner will. *And* you will use the living SHIT out of it till you lose/break it a few years later.

TWO: a Capo. These are especially essential if you want to play old time. Sure you can play Little Sadie in G, but what about when you play with someone else? Most of the time people play that one in A. So, you stick your capo on the 2nd fret, tune your fifth string up from a G to an A, and problem solved. You play it just the same, and its in the right key. The bulk of popular old time fiddle tunes seem to be in A or D, particularly D. Most banjos just can't really handle tuning all your strings up a whole step that well. So you plop that capo on. I use mine constantly. It's not cheating. *And* mine has flowers on it.

A REMINDER ON CAPO'S: Always tune up your fifth string accordingly. Its great if your banjo has railraod spikes (the toy ones) or a fifth string capo to acomodate that, but most don't. I would recommend looking into one of these options.

THREE: I dunno. A strap helps (if you plan on busking a lot then **GET ONE**. Some places, like New Orleans, can arrest you for sitting down). So does a case (I've seen a bunch of great homemade ones out of backpacks, leather scraps and the like). I highly recommend getting a multi-tool such as a Leatherman. I use mine every day. You can take an entire banjo apart and put it back

together with most of them. I would also suggest getting a finger pick in case you wear your nail down (ouch).



DIY BANJO REPAIR

Banjos are finicky little guys. They need fairly regular maintenance. There was a point when I would have to work on my banjo every few weeks just to keep it in *decent* playing order. Thankfully, banjos aren't big blocks of wood glued together: you could take almost any banjo apart with just a screw driver and some pliers. Get to know your banjo well, especially if you are traveling around with it. Cold and hot will affect the wood quite a bit. A big drop could throw a lot of things off. If you want it to last you, treat it well and get some sort of case or bag for it. Don't leave it in the trunk of a car for a week in august or drop it down off the ladder of a coal train. Either way, unless you have a high quality instrument you are probably going to run into one of the following problems at some point:

The strings are way too high from the frets.

The height of your strings (height as in distance from the banjo fretboard) is called your action. Typically people want as low an action as possible. You can fix this a few different ways, few of which I recommend you do.

The easiest way is to get a new bridge. You could also sand down the feet of your bridge (rubbing it against the sidewalk works great for this if you don't have sandpaper around), or use an X-acto knife to lower the places the strings sit.

You can twist the big nut that's on your dowel rod one way or the other. This also works if your strings are too low. The dowel rod (also called a co-ordinator rod) connects the neck to the banjo and runs the length of the banjo pot (the round part), so this can make a significant difference in action. If this doesn't make enough of a difference for you, you can "shim" the neck. Loosen the strings and the nut on your dowel rod till your neck is a bit floppy. Take a little piece of plastic (credit card type material cut to shape works great) and jam it between the end of your fretboard and the rim of your

banjo. Tighten the nut and the strings, and see how this works. Sometimes you need to add more, sometimes less. At one point all I needed was two little pieces of the yellow bag Top tobacco comes in. At other points I've used two pieces of credit-card plastic. NOTE: this will affect the sound and feel of your banjo a bit, so be sure and experiment.

Strings are too low on the frets:

Look at the above entry. Sometimes you can fix this by adjusting the dowel rod nut. Sometimes you need to adjust the truss rod (see below). Also, make sure your banjo head is good and tight. Do this by tightening those J-hooks around your banjo in a star pattern: go from one side to the corresponding hook on the other side. Then shift over two or three hooks and repeat, doing this until all your j-hooks are evenly tight.

Banjo goes out of tune on some frets or as you play up the neck.

This is a really common problem for banjos that haven't been set up properly. It's called an 'intonation problem'

There are essentially two things that can cause this.

1. Improperly placed bridge
2. Warped neck

1. Most of the time, if you don't know how to properly place your bridge then there-in lies your problem.

The Banjo, in theory, should have an equal distance between the nut, the 12th fret, and the bridge. To make sure all is well lightly bar a finger across the 12th fret, making sure not to depress the strings. Your finger should just rest lightly on top of the strings over the metal fret bar. Now strum. You should get a harmonic, or chiming sound. Make the chime, then actually press down the strings, bar that 12th fret, and strum again. If your bridge is placed properly the harmonic and the fretted pitches should be EXACTLY the same. If, when you hit a note on the 12th fret and it is sharper than the

harmonic on that string, scoot the bridge back just a bit towards the tailpiece. If the note is flatter than the harmonic, scoot the bridge up closer. Continue this process, string by string, till the harmonic and the fretted 12th fret notes are exactly the same. Occasionally you will have to angle the bridge a little diagonal to achieve this. **BE CAREFUL:** I have broken older bridges in half doing this sloppily.

2. If above didn't help, your neck may be warped. Check up at your headstock, where the tuning pegs live. See if there is a little piece of plastic screwed in between the nut and the first two pegs. If so, then you have a truss rod and you are in luck. Most fretted instruments now have these. It's sort of a banjo Darwinism thing because if you don't have a truss rod and your neck is warped then you're fucked, buddy. If your banjo does have a truss rod, you can adjust it and possibly help your intonation a bit. It can also fix problems with strings buzzing because they hit those metal frets. **However I DO NOT RECOMMEND FUCKING WITH THIS THING UNLESS YOU KNOW WHAT YOU ARE DOING.** If you overtighten it it can snap and ruin your neck. Get your friend that knows how to fix guitars/banjos to do it. At least if he/she ruins your banjo you have someone to blame it on. But if you're going to do it anyway, here is a what you need to know:

First try to get a good straight line of vision where you can look from the nut down the length of the neck. See if you can tell if the neck has bowed in slightly or arched back. This is a bit hard to do. By its nature the wood in your neck sort of shifts and warps over time and under different conditions. The truss rod is a metal rod in your neck that adjusts this. When the neck bows a little forward or the top of the neck seems a little too far back, you can tighten or loosen this rod to make small adjustments in the way the wood sits.

1. Unscrew the little plate on the headstock that covers it. Inside will be a nut for an allen wrench. Typically any type of place where there are a bunch of bicycles or bike people or bike people working on bicycles you can find the appropriate size allen wrench.

2. Make sure to keep your strings in tune, do not loosen them for this.

3. Put that wrench in, and when you make adjustments do them very gently, say an 1/8th of a turn at a time, then wait and let the wood settle for a minute or two before turning again if necessary (check and make sure every time).

3. Typically, turning the nut clockwise tightens it, arching the neck back or flattening the forward bow. Turning the truss-rod nut counter clockwise **LOOSENS IT** - puts more bow into it.

Rattle or buzz.

Shit, I dunno. Could be a truss rod problem (see above), could be a bent tuner, could be about a million things, you might need to show this to someone who knows about fretted instruments. But, first, check and make sure that all the various screws are screwed in tightly. I do this once or twice a month. You'd be surprised.

Banjo is too quiet.

Then get a new one. Once again I don't really know what to tell you here, too many variables. As instruments these things can vary in volume more than any stringed instrument *I'm* familiar with. It could be a problem with set up, it's possible if you took it to a banjo wizard they could adjust a few things and get it to the volume you wanted. However, your girlfriend/boyfriend/partner/road dog/roommate probably doesn't see this as a problem.

Banjo is too loud.

I've used two methods for this, the first being duct tape. I usually use strips of tape on the underside of the head that are parallel to the neck and on either side of the bridge, often with a piece of tape parallel to the bridge but an inch or two behind it. The second method, one that makes the most muting effect is to take your socks and stuff one inside the other like your momma did. Place this tube between the dowel rod and the head of the banjo. I like the sound

best when its right by the neck, but experiment and see what works for you. You could also do this with a towel or hoodie and really mute the thing if you want for *night practice*.

Fifth string peg fell out / tuning peg broke / head has a hole in it / about anything else

There is a wealth of information out on the Internet explaining how to fix all these problems, on average they really aren't too difficult. Often they just take a screwdriver and some glue. I've found as well that little parts, such as nuts, bridges, tuning pegs, etc; you can usually get for free from repairmen that work in instrument stores. Tell them you're on the road.

TU-NING: A CRAPPY CITY IN CHINA

P.S. I ripped some of this page off from EZFOLK.com. It's not like I'm writing my thesis for grad school.

The most typical banjo tuning is open G. Most bluegrass players stick to this tuning most of the time. I personally use it for almost everything except old time fiddle tunes. It's just what I'm most familiar with for doing anything involving chords. Unless noted, most of the tunes in this book are in open G tuning. You can also adapt this for playing in A and D simply by raising your fifth string to an A and using open G chords instead of a capo.

G tuning:

D - 1st string

B - 2nd string

G - 3rd string

D - 4th string

G - 5th string (the short string on top when holding the banjo)

SAWMILL -- This one is the shit. It sounds really creepy and it doesn't have a major or minor in it. Nonetheless, some people call it "mountain minor". Squares call it "G modal". Most banjo players I know call it "Sawmill".

1. D
2. C - From G tuning, tune the B note up to C.
3. G
4. D
5. G

Double C Tuning -- This tuning is very popular among clawhammer banjo players and is probably even more popular than G tuning for playing fiddle tunes. Many fiddle tunes are played in the key of D by fiddlers and banjo players will play along using this tuning and put a capo on the 2nd fret to get in the key of D. Notice that from G Modal tuning only one string is retuned.

1. D
2. C - From G tuning, tune the B note up to C.
3. G
4. C - From G tuning, tune the D note down to C.
5. G

For the more adventurous:

gGGBD this is often called triple G.

gDGAD Willie Moore tuning. Would you know I've never played it in that tuning, but oh well.

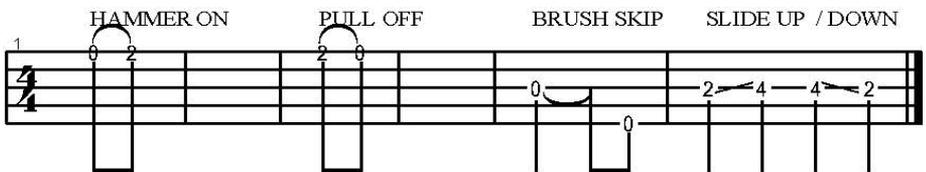
gDGA#D this is an open G minor.

f#DF#AD Graveyard, or Rueben's train tuning.

f#BEAD "Cumberland Gap" tuning. It's been said you can't play Cumberland Gap in a different tuning. McDonalds also says their burgers are made of meat.

gCGBD "Standard-C", "Single-C", "Drop-C", "C-tuning"

HOW THE TAB WORKS



Each line on the tab corresponds to a string, The top being your 1st string, down to the bottom, which is your fifth string (the shorter one).

The numbers on the lines correspond to the frets on the banjo neck, 0 meaning "open".

A **HAMMER ON** is when you sound the original note and then press your finger down hard on the next note without picking it with your right hand.

A **PULL OFF**: is the opposite of a hammer on, you would sound the first note and then pull your finger off in such a way as that the next note would sound without having to pick it.

BRUSH SKIP: pick the first note, then let it ring during the 'note with no name', and then sound the next note.

SLIDES: sound the first note, then slid either up or down into the next note. Pretty self explanatory.

The Bum Ditty, or Basic Clawhammer Stroke

This is the central motion of clawhammer, really, something you will need to learn first before you can move on to anything most people would refer to as “clawhammer”. It took me a good month of practice to really get this move down, but once you’ve got it then you are a clawhammer banjo player! Fame and fortune are sure to follow.

The standard clawhammer style I’m teaching here utilizes down-strokes using only a finger and the thumb of your right hand. This means you only use your picking finger’s nail and the pad of your thumb. Some players prefer to use their index, some use their middle. Whatever tickles your pickle; pick the one you feel most comfortable with. For the sake of convenience I’m going to say “picking finger” from now on.

NOTES ON RIGHT HAND POSITION: Hold your hand in a relaxed position with the fingers curled, sort of like you are holding a little maglite flashlight. Your thumb should stick out a bit. This is your claw, which you will be using to hammer the shit out of your strings. It doesn’t really change or move much as you play except up and down across the strings.

The basic stroke is achieved like this: Move your claw down against the strings so that your Picking Finger strikes your G string. Your thumb should come to rest on the fifth string as soon as your finger makes contact. Pull your claw back up a little (btw, this is best done with the elbow, not the wrist) and then bring your hand down again and strum the top three strings with your picking finger. As you do this your thumb will once again come to rest on the fifth string, but this time continue your claw down just a bit so that your fifth string is sounded. And there you have it. The following exercise illustrates what should actually be happening in tablature form. This stroke is called the “Bum Ditty” because this is how the rhythm sounds. The

“Bum” is your first note, the “Dit” is the strum, and the “Ty” is your thumb. It has a syncopated, rhythmic feel, like the chug chug-a of a cartoon train picking up speed.

Exercise 1

bum dit ty bum dit ty bum dit ty bum dit ty

Exercise 2

Shit Tick- et Chew Bac- ca Buck Fid- dy Ass Mast- er

Exercise 3

Old Tim- er Crotch Nug- get Bear Fuck- er Bud- Wies- Er

I’ve included a few exercises. Try doing exercise 1 first, and try it over and over again slowly till you get it right before moving onto the other ones. Remember: practice doesn’t make perfect, perfect practice makes perfect. Do this slow and really work on picking out each string.

DROP THUMB

Drop thumb is a more advanced technique that was shown to me in New Orleans by a girl named Lexi. I had never heard or it nor seen it, and she could just barely do it then herself, but it blew me away. I came to realize later that this is one of the major fundamental techniques of the entire style. However, you could get away with never using it and still play basic accompaniment-style banjo. *But* if you want to do complex stuff and all those cool old fiddle tunes it's a must. It was a few months before I could throw this in there comfortably so don't be upset if it doesn't come overnight. I really practiced my ass off trying to get this, and the way I did it was by keeping a banjo with me all the time and running these exercises on the next page. I would mute the banjo with my left hand and do the right hand workouts while watching a movie or waiting for food to cook, etc.

The Pre-drop thumb exercise is something I thought would be a good precursor to the drop thumb. Some people call it "double thumbing" and it's something you are going to run into. Work on this, and make sure you have it *before* you really work on the drop thumb exercises. No sense in putting the cart before the horse.

The drop thumb move that seems to be the most used in accompaniment-style banjo is exercise 1. It's a good place to start. You can start peppering what you play already with it. Practice this by itself like I mention above and also inside songs you already play. Exercise 2 is sort of the meat and potatoes of drop thumb; bar 1 is how you would use it in a lot of old time pieces. The second and third bar of the exercise is there to strengthen your precision, and the exercises after that are real work outs.

Pre-Drop Thumb Exercise

1

4/4

Drop Thumb Exercise 1

Drop Thumb Exercise 2

3

4/4

5

4/4

Drop Thumb Exercise 3

Drop Thumb Exercise 4

7

4/4

HOW IT ALL WORKS TOGETHER:

Circle be Unbroken

In the following pages you will see how the fundamental clawhammer style taught here is built. Most people are familiar with the Carter Family classic Will the Circle Be Unbroken and its simplicity makes it a perfect place to start. I've included three versions: The first is just the melody, no embellishments or even the fifth string. If you really wanted, you could play this as a solo. The second is just the chords, as you would play them accompanying a vocalist. This is also to give you an idea of how you would use the chords that are written above the tab. Notice how each one corresponds to the chord chart on page 44. You could simply strum the chord, or use the chord + bass technique that I use here. On every song in the book I list the chords above the tablature for just this purpose. The third is the melody and chords combined. As a clawhammer player, this is in essence how I would play most tunes. I learn the melody and then combine it with the chords. Often I may just use the chords and sing the verse. Then, in between sung verses, play this third, combined version.

1 G C

will the cir- cle be un- bro- ken by and by lord by

4 G

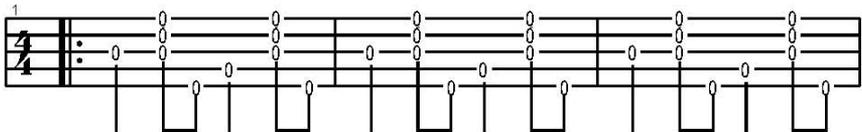
and by there's a bet- ter home a wait- ing

7 D G

in the sky lord in the sky

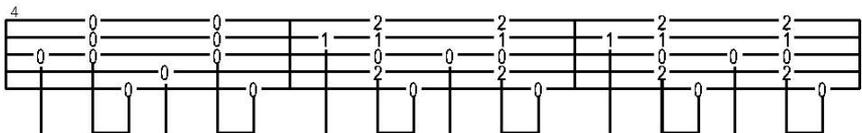
Circle be unbroken back-up

1



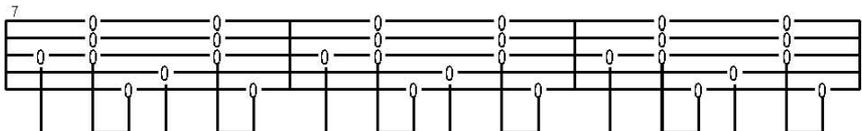
Stand- ing by my win- dow

4



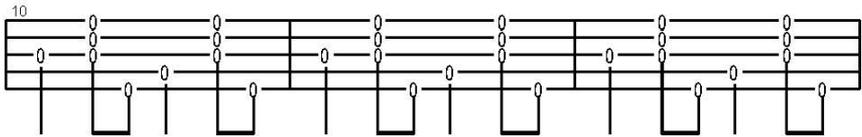
On one cold and clou- dy

7



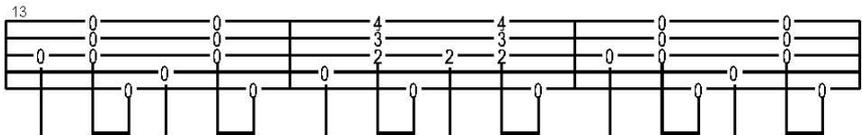
day When I saw that

10



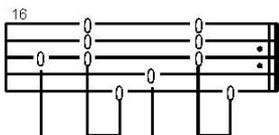
hearse come roll- ing For to

13



car- ry my moth- er a- way

16



Circle be Unbroken

1 G

May the Cir- cle be un-

4 C

bro- ken by and by lord

7 G

by and by There's a

10

bet- er home a wait- in

13 D7 G

in the sky lord in the sky

CIRCLE BE UNBROKEN (A.P. Carter)

I was standing by my window,
On one cold and cloudy day
When I saw that hearse come rolling
For to carry my mother away

CHORUS: Will the circle be unbroken
By and by, lord, by and by
Theres a better home a-waiting
In the sky, lord, in the sky

I said to that undertaker
Undertaker please drive slow
For this lady you are carrying
Lord, I hate to see here go

repeat chorus

Oh, I followed close behind her
Tried to hold up and be brave
But I could not hide my sorrow
When they laid her in the grave

repeat chorus

I went back home, my home was lonesome
Missed my mother, she was gone
All of my brothers, sisters crying
What a home so sad and lone

Cripple Creek

Part A

G C G

I got a gal at the head of the creek
 Kiss her on the mouth, just as sweet as any wine

Part B

G D G G

Go in up t' see her 'bout the middle of the week
 Wrap her self a round me like a sweet potatoe vine
 Go in down to cripple creek
 Go in down to cripple creek

D G D G

Go in in a run
 Go in in a whirl
 Go in down to cripple creek
 Go in down to cripple creek
 Have a little fun
 See my girl...

Cripple Creek (traditional)

Cripple Creek's wide and Cripple Creek's deep
 I'll wade old Cripple Creek before I sleep
 Roll my britches up to my knees,
 I'll wade old Cripple Creek when I please

Girls up on Cripple Creek about half grown
 Jump on a man like a dog on a bone
 I'll roll my britches up to my knees
 An' wade in ol' Cripple Creek when I please

This Land is Your Land

1

this land is your land this land is

4

my land from cal- i- fom- ia

7

to the new york is- land from the red wood

10

for- est to the gulf steam wa- ters

13

this land was made for you and me

This is an old Woody Guthrie tune everyone learns in primary school. I think most everyone knows the lyrics. I decided, for shits and giggles, to include lyrics that I wrote to the song (with a little help & inspiration from ex-Landslide Lisa). I play it this way with my band the Black Death All Stars.

THIS VAN IS YOUR VAN

Take off your Carhartts and your bandana
Your name aint suitcase your name's Amanda
You haven't bathed since you left Montana
Cuz you're in to trains and anarchy

I met you spanging outside of Boston
You said my knuck tats were fucking awesome
You stole a space bag, we dumpstered pizza
Cuz you're in to trains and anarchy

You bought a crew change and pierced your septum
No longer straight edge, but you respect them
You got a dog but you just neglect him
Cuz you're in to trains and anarchy

You learned some train songs on ukulele
You eat at bum feeds because you're lazy
You got a pet rat named Patrick Swayze
Cuz you're in to trains and anarchy

This van is your van, this van ain't my van
From old new Orleans to staten island
We could have spanged at some travel plazas
But your father paid for you and me

Wagon Wheel

1

Rock me mama like a wa- gon wheel Rock me mame an- y

4

way you feel hey ma- ma

7

Rock me

This is an Old Crow Medicine Show song ripped off from a Bob Dylan chorus.

****DISCLAIMER****

Ok, ok, I know this song is the Free Bird of busking. I'm sick of it, everyone else is, and to be honest if you jam with some other players and pull it out, chances are they are going to look down their nose at you. I know I would. Fact of the matter is that even though this song is played out amongst buskers and folk musicians, drunk college kids on the street still think it's the coolest thing since natty ice. Most people know this one. It's simple, catchy, and if taken out of context a pretty nice tune.

WAGON WHEEL (Dylan/Secor)

Headed down south to the land of the pines
And I'm thumbnin' my way into North Caroline
Starin' up the road
And pray to God I see headlights

I made it down the coast in seventeen hours
Pickin' me a bouquet of dogwood flowers
And I'm a hopin' for Raleigh
I can see my baby tonight
Chorus

Runnin' from the cold up in New England
I was born to be a fiddler in an old-time stringband
My baby plays the guitar
I pick a banjo now

Oh, the North country winters keep a gettin' me now
Lost my money playin' poker so I had to up and leave
But I ain't a turnin' back
To livin' that old life no more

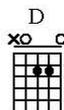
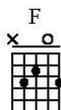
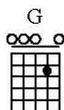
Chorus

Walkin' to the south out of Roanoke
I caught a trucker out of Philly
Had a nice long toke
But he's a headed west from the Cumberland Gap
To Johnson City, Tennessee

And I gotta get a move on fit for the sun
I hear my baby callin' my name
And I know that she's the only one
And if I die in Raleigh
At least I will die free

Cluck Old Hen

sawmill tuning



PART A

G F G F G F

My old hen she's a good old hen she lays eggs for the

PART B

D G G Bb G F

rail road men Cluck old hen cluck and squall

G D G

aint laid an egg since way last fall

Cluck Old Hen and the following two tabs are in Sawmill tuning, which is one note off of open G (its gDGCD). See the notes on tuning for more on page 13.

Cluck Old Hen (traditional)

My old hen's a good old hen
She lays eggs for the railroad men
Sometimes 8 and sometimes ten
That's enough for the railroad men

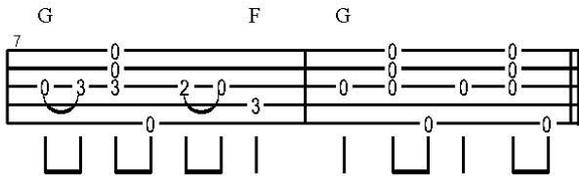
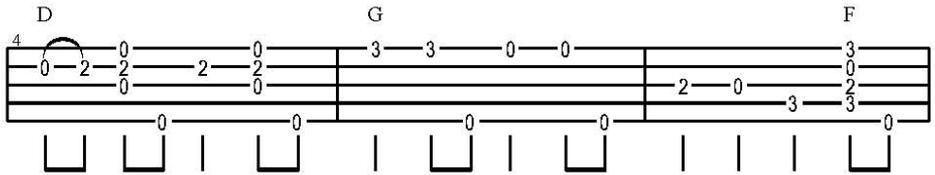
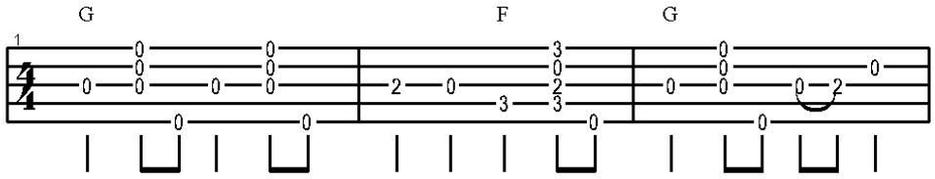
Cluck old hen cluck and sing
You ain't laid an egg since late last spring
Cluck old hen cluck and squall
Ain't laid an egg since late last fall

My old hen she's a good old hen
She lays eggs for the railroad men
Sometimes 1 sometimes two
Sometimes enough for the whole damn crew

Cluck old hen cluck when I tell you
Cluck old hen or I'm gonna sell you
Last time she cackled cackled in the lot
Next time she cackles cackle in the pot

Shady Grove

Sawmill tuning



Shady Grove, my little love
 Shady Grove I say
 Shady Grove, my little love
 I'm bound to go away
 Cheeks as red as a bloomin rose
 And eyes are the prettiest brown
 She's the darling of my heart
 Sweetest girl in towm
 (chorus)
 I wish I had a big fine horse
 And corn to feed him on
 And Shady Grove to stay at
 home
 And feed him while I'm gone

Went to see my Shady Grove
 She was standing in the door
 Her shoes and stockin's in her hand
 And her little bare feet on the floor
 (chorus)
 When I was a little boy
 I wanted a Barlow knife
 And now I want little Shady Grove
 To say she'll be my wife
 (chorus)
 A kiss form pretty little Shady Grove
 Is sweet as brandy wine
 There ain't no girl in this old world
 That's prettier than mine

Little Sadie

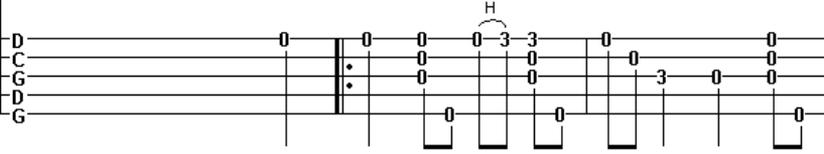
Clawhammer Banjo - G Modal Tuning (gDGCD) - Level 3

Arrangement by Richard Hefner
<http://www.ezFolk.com>
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G Modal



4



Went out last night, to make a little round,

F



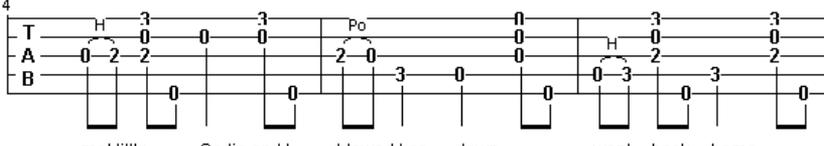
G Modal



F



4

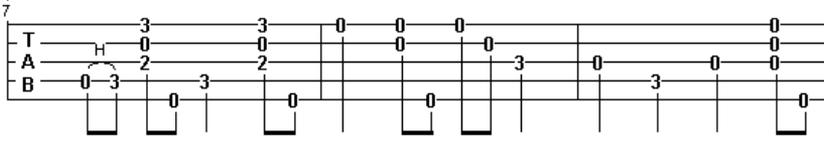


met little Sadie and I blew her down, went back home,

G Modal

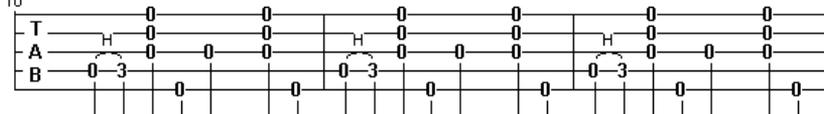


7



got into bed, for-ty four smoke-less under my head.

10



LITTLE SADIE

I stole this tab from ezfolk.com. Why? Because its pretty much verbatim how I would have tabbed it out, so why waste the time. Except I probably could have written my own in the time it took me to copy paste and format it. My personal favourite recording of this is by Clarence Ashley & Doc Watson.

Went out last night to take a little round,
I met my Little Sadie and I blowed her down.
I run right home and I went to bed,
A forty-four smokeless under my head.

I begin to think what a deed I done,
I grabbed my hat and away'd I'd run.
I made a good run, just a little to slow,
They overtook me in Jericho.

Standing on the corner a-ringing a bell
And up stepped the sheriff from Thomasville,
Says, 'Young man, is your name Brown?'
Remember the night you blowed Sadie down.'

'Oh, yes, Sir, my name is Lee,
I murdered little Sadie in the first degree,
First degree and second degree,
Got no papers, will you read 'em to me?'

Took me downtown and dressed me in black,
They put me on a train and they sent me back,
Had no one for to go my bail,
Crammed me back in the county jail.

Judge and the jury took their stand,
Judge had his papers in his right hand.
Forty-one days, forty-one nights,
Forty-one years to wear the ball and the stripes.

Country Blues

adaptation of a Dock Boggs tune

Double C tuning

1

Come All You good time pe- e-

4

eo- ple while I Got

7

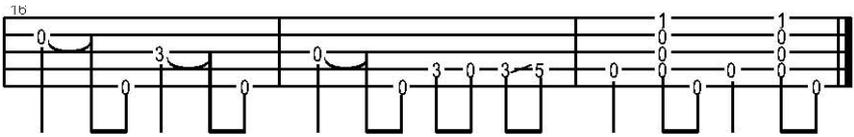
mon- ey to spend

10

to- o- mor- ow Might be mo- on-

13

day and i Ain't Got a Doll- ar or a



friend

This version isn't actually the way that Dock Boggs plays this song, he tunes his banjo to f#CGAD which give it more of a major sound than in this tune. He also uses a three finger type technique that is a little bizarre. Double C isn't often used for minor songs, but I thought it would be fun to include this.

Country Blues (aka Hustling Gamblers) (traditional, with some verses by Dock Boggs)

Come all you good time people,
 While I have money to spend,
 Tomorrow might be Monday
 And I neither have a dollar nor a friend.
 When I had plenty of good money, good people,
 My friends were all standing around,
 Just as soon as my pocket book was empty
 Not a friend on earth to be found.
 I've gambled all over Kentucky, good people,
 I've gambled part of the way through Spain.
 Going back to old Virginia
 For to gamble my last card game.
 Last time I seen my little woman, good people,
 She had a wine glass in her hand,
 She's a drinking down her trouble
 With a low-down sorry man.
 I wrote my woman a letter, good people,
 I told her I was in jail.
 She wrote me back an answer
 Saying "Honey, I'm a-coming to go your bail."
 All around this old jailhouse is haunted good people,
 Forty dollars won't pay my fine.
 Corn whisky has surrounded my body, poor boy,
 Pretty women is a-troubling my mind.

Boys, if you don't quit your drinking
Some time you'll be just like me;
A working out your living
In the penitentiary.
Oh my daddy taught me a-plenty, good people,
My mama, she told me more.
If I didn't quit my rowdy ways
I'd have trouble at my door.
In the bottom of the whisky glass,
The lurking devil dwells.
It burns your breast to drink it, boys;
It'll send your soul to Hell.
Go dig a hole in the meadow, good people,
Go dig a hole in the ground.
Come around all you good people
And see this poor rounder go down.
When I am dead and buried
And my pale face turned to the sun,
You can come around and mourn, little woman,
And think the way you have done.

Black Eyed Susie

Capo. 2 fret

Basic Melody A Part

1

5 5 5 5 3 3 3 0

May get Drunk May Get Woozy

Detailed description: This is the first staff of music, labeled 'Basic Melody A Part'. It begins with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. A double bar line with repeat dots is placed after the first measure. The notes are: G4 (5), A4 (5), B4 (5), C5 (5), B4 (3), A4 (3), G4 (3), and a whole rest (0). A slur is placed over the last three notes. Fingering numbers 5, 5, 5, 5, 3, 3, 3 are written above the notes. Below the staff, the lyrics 'May get Drunk May Get Woozy' are aligned with the notes.

Basic Melody B Part

3

2 2 2 0 2 0 2 0 5 5 5 5

May wake up with lit- tle Black Eyed Su- sie Hey

Detailed description: This is the second staff of music, labeled 'Basic Melody B Part'. It starts with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. The notes are: G4 (2), G4 (2), G4 (2), F4 (0), G4 (2), F4 (0), G4 (2), F4 (0), G5 (5), G5 (5), G5 (5), and G5 (5). A double bar line with repeat dots is placed after the eighth measure. A slur is placed over the first three notes. Fingering numbers 2, 2, 2, 0, 2, 0, 2, 0, 5, 5, 5, 5 are written above the notes. Below the staff, the lyrics 'May wake up with lit- tle Black Eyed Su- sie Hey' are aligned with the notes.

6

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

Black Eyed Su- sie Hey Lit- tle Black Eyed Su- sie

Detailed description: This is the third staff of music, continuing the 'Basic Melody B Part'. It starts with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. The notes are: G5 (0), F5 (5), F5 (5), E5 (2), D5 (4), E5 (5), F5 (5), F5 (5), F5 (5), F5 (5), E5 (5), D5 (4), and G5 (0). A double bar line with repeat dots is placed at the end. Fingering numbers 0, 5, 5, 2, 4, 5, 5, 5, 5, 5, 5, 4, 0 are written above the notes. Below the staff, the lyrics 'Black Eyed Su- sie Hey Lit- tle Black Eyed Su- sie' are aligned with the notes.

Var A1

9

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

Detailed description: This is the fourth staff of music, labeled 'Var A1'. It starts with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. The notes are: G4 (5), G4 (5), G4 (5), F4 (0), G4 (3), G4 (3), G4 (3), A4 (4), G4 (2), G4 (2), G4 (2), F4 (0), and G4 (3). A slur is placed over the first three notes. Fingering numbers 5, 5, 5, 0, 3, 3, 3, 4, 2, 2, 2, 0, 3 are written above the notes.

Var A2

12

2 0 5 5 5 7 3 3 5 3 4 0

Detailed description: This is the fifth staff of music, labeled 'Var A2'. It starts with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. The notes are: G4 (2), F4 (0), G4 (5), G4 (5), G4 (5), F4 (7), G4 (3), G4 (3), G4 (5), F4 (3), E4 (4), and G4 (0). A slur is placed over the first two notes. Fingering numbers 2, 0, 5, 5, 5, 7, 3, 3, 5, 3, 4, 0 are written above the notes.

Black Eyed Suzie (traditional) is one of my favourite songs to play in Double C. Maybe one of my favourite old time songs in general. I always capo up to D for this. The melody is simple and catchy, but as you see there are millions of variations. I decided to throw in a handfull of more advanced homespun variations. I will mix these variations and the melody all together and throw them in and out whenever I like. One of the funnest parts of old time music is variation, harmony, and improvisation on the melody (Read: NOT soloing). Some folks stick to the stiff repetition of the melody just the way they learned it as a kid playing in the Kentucky Opry Junior Pros (take THAT Crystal), but wheres the fun in that? When the music is lively and you are having fun, its going to sound the best *and* make you the most money on the street. The way this works is that you would play the A twice, then the B twice. Often you sing one of these call outs on one of the A parts and leave the other instrumental. Typically then someone will sing a B part, then the next A and B sections are all instrumental.

Call outs:

I got a girl, lives in a holler
She won't come, and I won't call 'er...
Old man, old man, I want your daughter
To carry my wood and carry my water...
Black eyed Susie went to town
All she wore was a gingham gown...
I love my wife, I love my baby
Love my biscuits sopped in gravy...
Up red oak and down salt water
Some old man gonna lose his daughter...
All I need to make me happy, Two little boys to call me pappy
Black eyed Susie went huckleberry pickin', Boys got drunk and she
took a lickin'

12. G D G Cm

me Way down by the

12. stream How sweet it will seem Once

G G F# F E A7 D7 Let ring then rep

15. more just to dream In the moon light My honey+I

This is another one that's a little played out I suppose but it's a damn good song. Notice some of the jazzier chords here and more complex progressions. It's a fun song to play and sounds great with that classic two part vocal harmony. My favourite recording of this will always be Steve Martin's Ukulele version from the movie The Jerk. That version's a little different and more interesting than what most play, but oh well.

TONIGHT YOU BELONG TO ME

I know (I know)
You belong to somebody new
But Tonight you belong to me
Although (although) we're apart
Your part of my heart
And tonight you belong to me

Way down by the stream
How sweet it will seem
Once more just to dream
In the moonlight
My honey I know (I know)
With the dawn that you will be gone
But tonight you belong to me

Way down, way down along the stream
How very, very sweet it will seem
Once more just to dream
In the silvery moonlight
My honey, I know (I know)
With the dawn that you will be gone
But tonight you belong to me
Just to little old me

Brother can you spare a dime

1 Am E7 A7 Dm G7

Once I built a railroad made it run, made it race against

4 C E7 F7 E7 Am F7 *let ring*

time. Once I built a- rail- road now it's done.

7 Dm6 E7 Am E7 Am A

Brother can ya spare a dime? Dressed Up In uni- form Gee We looked swell

11 A# A A7 Dm

full of that yankee doodle dumb. Half a Million boots go

14 F7 E7

slog in through hell I was the kid with the drum

BROTHER CAN YOU SPARE A DIME

I love this song; it's a bit of a standard. There are a lot of versions floating around and seems like almost everyone plays the **B** section different. Notice two things about this tab: 1. its in the key of **A** minor but uses an open **G** tuning, which means you will need to tune your little fifth string up a whole step from **G** to **A**. 2. It doesn't use the aforementioned fifth string. Why? Well, the song has a lot different of a feel than most clawhammer stuff. When I play it I don't really use my thumb and I use a shuffle type feel. However, the chords in the proper order are listed there and you should play it however you feel most comfortable, clawhammer thumb or not. In the original there was a slow introduction with lyrics about "Building a dream". I don't play that, and I've actually never played with anyone who has, so I chose not to include those chords for the sake of brevity.

Once I built a railroad, I made it run, made it race against time.

Once I built a railroad; now it's done. Brother, can you spare a dime?

Once I built a tower, up to the sun, brick, and rivet, and lime;

Once I built a tower, now it's done. Brother, can you spare a dime?

Once in khaki suits, gee we looked swell,

Full of that Yankee Doodly Dum,

Half a million boots went slogging through Hell,

And I was the kid with the drum!

Say, don't you remember, they called me Al; it was Al all the time.

Why don't you remember, I'm your pal? Buddy, can you spare a dime?

Major Chords

Major Chords, 1st Position

G	C	D	A	E	B	F
	2-13	-123	1111	21-3	1111	3214

1

Major Chords, 2nd Position

G	C	D	A	E	B	F
3214	1111	1111	3214	3124	3214	3124

5

Flat/Sharp Major chords

G#/Ab	C#/Db	D#/Eb	A#/Bb	F#/Gb
1111	3124	3124	1111	3214

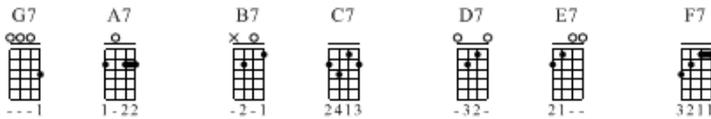
9

CHORDS: Minor, 7, m7, 6, m6, augmented(+), diminished

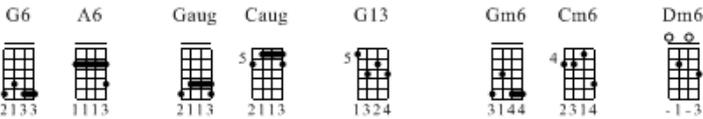
Gm **Am** **Bm** **Cm** **Dm** **Em** **Fm**

 2113 2314 2314 2314 -122 1--2 2113

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

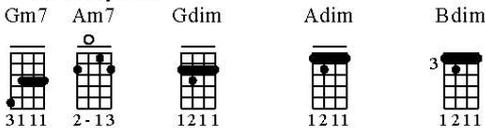
G7 **A7** **B7** **C7** **D7** **E7** **F7**

 ---1 1-22 -2-1 2413 -32- 21-- 3211

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

G6 **A6** **Gaug** **Caug** **G13** **Gm6** **Cm6** **Dm6**

 2133 1113 2113 2113 5 3144 2314 -1-3

9 4 10 6 11 12 7 13
 5 2 5 6 7 5 4 3
 4 2 4 6 7 5 4 2
 5 2 5 6 7 5 5 0
 | | | | | | |

The Tricky Shit

Gm7 **Am7** **Gdim** **Adim** **Bdim**

 3111 2-13 1211 1211 1211

14 2 2 1 3
 0 1 4 2 0
 0 2 5 3 0
 5 2 2 1 3

NOTES ON CHORDS

Banjo chord theory is a fickle beast. All of the chords I've listed are in standard, open G. What makes chords difficult is that in that standard G you only really have four strings to work with, and two of them are the same note, making it impossible to make more complex chords without having to drop a note here or there. It took me years to figure out the chord system I've listed here, there just isn't a lot of chord theory literature out there dedicated to five-string banjo in an open tuning past basic chords. I'm giving you the short cut, I guess I could say. This stuff is really useful when you are playing with other people and they have chord charts, especially if they are playing jazzier stuff. Don't go to New Orleans without this!

DISCLAIMER In these chords I ignore completely the fifth string. You can retune it for different keys, etc, but this is not the section to discuss that. Ignore it especially in the discussions on theory that follow.

On short cuts:

In the major chord section I give all the major chords in their first and second positions. I then give the sharps and flats of each chord in the first position. From there on for the sake of economy I will not deal with sharp or flat chords. Remember, if you know a G chord then you can move it up one fret and it becomes a G# chord, which, of course, is the same as an Ab chord. If you play a B chord and move the position down one fret you get a Bb or A# chord. Move a B chord up and you get a C. If you are confused on this, ask anyone you know who has played music for a bit and they should be able to explain it better.

So, you notice I skip the sharps and flats on the minors and 7's. But hey, you can figure that out.

So here is the gist: In this system, to save time I grouped the lesser

used chords into just two forms: 4th string chords and 3rd string chords. 4th string is where the root of the chord is on the 4th string, 3rd string is where the root of the chord is on the 3rd string. If its an E chord, E would be your root. If its an A, then A would be your root. In the diagrams I will show you the 4th string chord first and then the 3rd string chord second. You can use one of these two formations to make your chord. All you have to do is scoot the chord up or down your neck so that the root rests on the note of the chord you want.

THE TRICKY SHIT

Here's where music nerds get excited and nerd out with their sword out. Here is also where many people give up on music theory entirely. But trust me, it's not so difficult. It follows simple logic. If you can count to 13, you can understand music theory.

Notice your Gm7 chord. It's just like the Gm chord, but it has an F. Here you have all the notes you need to make a proper Gm7: the root, the flat third, the fifth, and the flat seventh. Now look at Am7. Notice it doesn't have an A. To make a proper Am7 you would need the root, the flat third, the fifth and the 7, right? Well, you've got everything except the root. To have your root there in its proper place on the 3rd string and still have your flat seventh (essential for the "m7" chord) you would have to either retune or play a normal Am and stretch your pinky all the way to the fifth fret on the first string. Could you do it? Maybe. Comfortably and easily? Probably not. Now play the chord in the diagram. Sounds familiar, eh? That's because it's a C major chord. It's also an Am7, but because there isn't a root in there, it sounds like a chipper Cmajor, not the mysterious and brooding Am7. Because of the way the banjo is tuned, you can't realistically make a true m7 there. If you are playing with other musicians and they play an Am7, you can also play your Am7 and it will sound right, even if it sounds like a C major when you are by yourself.

Confusing? I'll admit, it kind of is. However, you can turn this tuning weakness into a strength. How about if I tell you that all the minor chords on your banjo also substitute as major7 chords? I play Cmaj7 and Em the exact same. WhooooHoooo! Makes it a lot easier to memorize chords when only a handful of shapes cover just about all of them. However, often you will have to leave out one of the notes that forms the chord, thus making the chord sound a little strange when played by itself. You win some you lose some.

Side note, the Aug chords stand for augmented, sometimes they are written as G+, sometimes as G+5.

And here's some more fun theory constructions: diminished chords. Written on chord chart people usually either write Gdim, G^o, or a G^o that has a line through the little circle. Those two circle chords are actually slightly different in normal theory (diminished and half diminished), but because of our tuning disabilities with the banjo we will group them together as diminished. Because of the peculiar construction of this chord, Your Gdim is also an Edim, an A#dim, and a C#dim. This position can be used for any of these chords, or you could move that shape up three frets. Or, if you'd like, up another three frets again. All of these are the same chord, constructed of the same notes, just in different places on the neck. As such your Adim is also Cdim, D#dim and F#dim. Your Bdim is also Ddim, Fdim and G#dim. Those three shapes in the chord diagrams cover every diminished chord possible.

P.S. I threw that G13 in there just for shits and giggles. It makes a fun ending chord sometimes. The only time I've ever really used it was when I figured out the piano part to Billy Joel's "My Life"

+++

What I've covered in this book just skips across the head of the banjo. If you want to dig deeper, especially into the more advanced techniques of clawhammer, banjo fixing, three finger styles and a wealth of tunes about the easiest way to do that is through the internet. In fact, I highly recommend you check out these sites if you want to grow as a banjo player. I have learned quite a bit from most of them.

1. First and foremost, if you are interested in getting a full clawhammer guide I would recommend "Rocket Science Banjo"
<http://www.rocketsciencebanjo.com/>

You can download this guy's book for free off the website. He is a much better explainer-of-method than I and he's got a lot of tunes on there as well. I finally learned the coveted *chuck* technique after reading his book as well as the Galax lick; Two things i don't touch on at all in this zine but that any old-time player would want to know eventually. Nice guy too.

2. Mike Iverson's website is a great source of tunes
<http://www.bluesageband.com/Tabs.html>

His style is a bit too clean, sure, but the tabs none the less are challenging and worth the effort. I practically learned how to play in double C from those tabs.

3. The banjohangout clawhammer forum is also nice:
<http://www.banjohangout.org/>

you can get almost any question you have answered within a day on there, be it on technique, a question on song identification, or how to take the frets off the neck of your banjo. I get on there every once and again under the name mr special.

4. You tube is also a great resource. Type a song name in there (for instance anything in this book) and you will get a few different people playing it a few different ways. Granted, half the time they will annoy the piss out of you but you still get a good sense of the tune and may learn a lick or two to boot.

The Old-Time community's presence on the internet is small. The busker's presence on the internet is nada. So good luck. Get out there and try to jam with banjo players you think are better than you.

**WRITE SOME SONGS PEOPLE TEACH YOU ON THESE
BLANK PAGES**

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