

Flatpicking Guitar Magazine's Free Monthly Email Newsletter Lesson December 2010

“Bill Cheatham”

by Mickey Abraham

Hello and welcome once again to FGM's free lesson portion of our monthly newsletter. I hope you all had a wonderful holiday season filled with family, food, and flatpicked fiddle tunes! For this month's e-lesson, I have chosen another time tested classic from the flatpicking vault. “Bill Cheatham,” is a wonderful old fiddle tune that is picked by many guitarists and, I can see why this tune is so popular; great melody, easy chords, and lots of room for improv and variations. Enjoy!

My lesson includes two versions of the tune. If you are new to this melody, you will find the first version very melodic and not too tricky to get under your fingers. Warning: this melody is addictive. If you already play this tune you may find some interesting ideas in my second solo. Feel free to take just the ideas you like the most, and incorporate them into your already existing versions.

Notes on version I:

This rendition is fairly straight-forward and designed with ease in mind. I often come across arrangements of this tune that have a cross-picking/up the neck version for the “B” part. Although I love these versions they often seem to be an awkward technique for beginning flatpickers. Hence, I have designed my “B” part to stay away from the cross-picking idea in favor of a more first position picking kind of thing. To me, it keeps this tune in the same world as other eighth notes based fiddle tunes and not one notch harder.

Notes on version II:

As with many flatpickers, I enjoy using the chords and melody of tune to explore cool and hip variations and solos. This version is designed to be more difficult and experimental than the first, but still retain quite a bit of melody. This way, your friends can't rag on you for just playing “a bunch of licks.” I would like to draw your attention to the third measure of the “A” section. When playing the hip lydian sounding idea, I am fingering the phrase as a chord shape so all the notes can ring out together. I am using the open “G” string to shift my hand from first position to the 4th position chord shape and back again. The effect is a smooth and seamless shift. Listen to the lesson mp3 to hear the lick in action.

Have fun practicing this classic jam session number. Remember to practice slowly and with good technique, this way you can achieve your musical goals faster! If you have any questions on this e-lesson or cool ideas for future e-lessons, please drop me a line at michabraham@comcast.net.

Bill Cheatum

Arranged by Mickey Abraham

1 **G** **C**

T
A
B

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

6 **G** **C** **D** **G** **D** **G**

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

11 **G** **C** **D** **G** **C** **G** **D**

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

15 **G** **C** **D** **G** **C** **D** **G**

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

20 **G** **C**

3 2 1 S 3 4 3 2 4 0 4 2 4 0 2 0 1 S 2 0 4 5 7 0 7 5 4 0 1 2 3 2 1

Bill Cheatum (con't)

24 **G** **C** **D** **G**

28 **G** **C**

32 **G** **C** **D** **G**

36 **G** **C** **D** **G** **C** **G** **D**

40 **G** **C** **D** **G** **C** **D** **G**

Bill Cheatum (con't)

44 G C D G C G D

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

48 G C D G C D G

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