

Flatpicking Guitar Magazine's Free E-mail Newsletter Lesson March 2011

“Uncle Henry’s Reel” Arranged by Mickey Abraham

Hello and welcome to FGM’s free flatpicking lesson portion of our monthly newsletter. Each month, when you click here, you will find a great new tune to work on that will improve your flatpicking knowledge and technique. This month I have dug up an old fiddle tune that is not played very often called “Uncle Henry’s Reel.” I hope you have fun exploring this melodic fiddle tune on the guitar. Once you learn it, teach it to your friends and help spread this great tune around the world.

This tune came to me while teaching a summer fiddle camp with fiddler Shelley Wiess. I am always on the look out for “new” fiddle tunes to arrange on the guitar. By arranging tunes that are not so popular, I am sure to achieve an original version because I am not taking any ideas from other guitarists. In fact, I have never heard another version of this tune except for the one that Shelley was teaching at the fiddle camp.

The version that she taught at the camp was in the key of A. For this guitar lesson, I have worked up the tune in the Key of D using the “C” flatpicking position and a capo on the second fret. After exploring the tune in different positions I decided that I really enjoyed the way the tune felt in the “C” position. To me, it creates an almost Norman Blake/Carter Family sort of vibe. I chose to capo the tune at the second fret to help give the tune that authentic flatpicking feel that we all love so much. Try placing your capo at the third or fourth frets to achieve an even more authentic Carter Family sound.

When picking the melody, I feel it is important to see the chord shapes that the melody notes come from. Take a look at the chords written above the notes and notice how the melody notes fall very easily into the traditional chord shapes. Your hand will look like a “C” chord for most of the “A” section. When you get to the “B” part you will notice that the melody involves lots of crosspicking over very recognizable chord shapes (G, C, D, and then G again). Even though this melody sounds so simple, watch your right hand and make sure you are keeping your pick strokes correct. Crosspicking through chord shapes is not as simple as it sounds, but well worth the technical effort!

I hope you enjoy working on “Uncle Henry’s Reel.” If you have any questions, comments, or concerns on this e-lesson or great ideas for future e-lessons, don’t hesitate to contact me at michabraham@comcast.net

Uncle Henry's Reel

Arranged by Mickey Abraham

1 C G

5 C F G C

9 G C D G

13 C F C G C

TAB

The score is written in 4/4 time and consists of 13 measures. The first system (measures 1-4) is marked with a '1' and contains chords C and G. The second system (measures 5-8) is marked with a '5' and contains chords C, F, G, and C. The third system (measures 9-12) is marked with a '9' and contains chords G, C, D, and G. The fourth system (measures 13-16) is marked with a '13' and contains chords C, F, C, G, and C. The guitar tablature is provided for each system, with fret numbers indicated by numbers on the lines. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.