

Flatpicking Guitar Magazine's Free Monthly Lesson October 2010

Shady Grove

Arranged by Mickey Abraham

Welcome to FGM's free lesson portion of our monthly newsletter. This month I have chosen to arrange a haunting old melody that many folk musicians have played and recorded over the years. I love "Shady Grove" because of its dark minor key and its infectious old-timey groove. "Shady Grove" has proven to be open to musical interpretation as seen by the many different versions that are out there. Both the lyrics and the chords seem to have lots of "traditional" versions. I have even heard interesting versions that have major chord progressions and a completely different melody (but it is clearly the same tune).

With tunes that have so many variations, most folks lean towards one version that they identify with. My arrangement is based on the recording by Jerry Garcia and David Grisman on an album they recorded entitled "Shady Grove." The recording features Jerry singing his heart out and has lots of cool solos by Jerry and David. Although picking this arrangement sounds absolutely amazing, it is fairly simple and easy to master!

The Chords:

The chordal backup for "Shady Grove" is very strait forward. The whole tune is accomplished with just two chords (Dm and C). These two chords sound great together and may remind some of you of the famous "A" section to Vassar's "Lonesome Fiddle Blues" (also in the key of D minor). It continues to amaze me how a song can be so convincing with just two chords. Perhaps it is the simplified chord progression that helps convey the song's message so directly. I am a big believer in "less is more" when it comes to music, and the chords to "Shady Grove" are a perfect example of this.

The Melody:

The "Shady Grove" melody is very memorable and, to me, really brings out what Peter Rowan calls the "ancient tones." I think he's referring to the spiritual effect certain old-time harmonies have on the listener. Once you get this melody under your fingers, you too will see the effect it has on you and your listeners. I'm not sure if it can be explained, but you will know it when you hear it!

While picking the melody, my left hand goes between first and second positions quite a bit. These two positions are sometimes a grey area as some guitarist prefer one fingering while others another. I enjoy utilizing the fifth fret in places where some guitarists would probably prefer using the open string one string away. Feel free to alter the fingerings to fit your playing style.

"Shady Grove" is a song that many folks will know and perhaps even know some of the words. Once you learn it, call it at the next jam and I know your picking buddies will be glad you did. If you have any questions or comments on "Shady Grove," or any great ideas for future e-lessons, just drop my an email at michabraham@comcast.net. Have fun practicing and hope to see you soon.

Shady Grove

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1 **Dm** **C** **Dm**

5 **C** **Dm**

9 **Dm** **C** **Dm**

13 **C** **Dm**

TAB

S $\frac{3}{5}$ 0 5

0 2 0 2 3

S $\frac{3}{5}$ 0 2 3 0 2 2

2 5 2

0 2 0 2 3

0 2 5 2 5 2 0

2 5 2

0 2 0 2 3

0 2 5 2 5 2 0