

Dixie Hoedown

Mandolin Discussion

Dixie Hoedown is a relatively simple song that sounds the coolest when it's not going 500 miles an hour. This was written by Jesse McReynolds, www.jimandjesse.com. For this one, we've got a lot to do. I've arranged a plain Melody version, a Harmony version, and a Variation version. Download and print all 3 PDF versions or this discussion won't make much sense.

The Lesson

- The tune is AABB format and is in the key of G.
- I recorded this with a "swing" or "shuffled" feel.
- Part A is straight forward picking, while Part B is all, or partly crosspicked.
- Remember a basic "rule", if the note you're going to play falls on beat # 1, 2, 3 or 4, you play a downstroke with your pick hand. If the note falls on an "and", it's an upstroke. The string you're on or the string you're going to or from does not change your pick hand direction.
- As always, learn the chords and the chord progression well. The melody comes right out of the chords, especially the crosspicked section. "See" the chord your in as you pick through each version.
- The Melody version is fairly plain and repetitive, in order for the Harmony version to work well.
- In measure 15 of the Harmony version, start with your middle finger. This way, you'll only have one position shift at the end of the measure.
- The Variation version is where we get to have a little fun expanding on the melody. We're still following the AABB format. The "A" part, 1st time through, is basically the plain, stated melody. The "A" part 2nd time is where we begin to deviate from the norm, playing licks around the chords. The "B" part 1st time, again is pretty much normal melody. The "B" part 2nd time is where we start to do our own thing again. After you've learned this version, you'll see why I didn't write a harmony version of the variation. You'd never be able to play it with anyone unless they learned *my* variation.
- Measure 26—29 of the Variation version, we use a little tremolo. Some folks will tremolo just like eighth notes, others will move the right hand as fast as they can go. It's up to you. Just don't change the timing or the tempo. In measure 30, it's pinky time. If you've been avoiding using your pinky, knock it off. It's an asset and a usable finger (trust me). Using the pinky will allow you to stay in 1 position without unnecessary left hand shifts.
- Find someone else's version to learn as well. Once you have 2 or 3 versions of a tune, you can start mixing and matching parts to come up with your own version.

“Seeing” Chord Shapes

Mandolin

This is what I’m talking about with the phrase, “seeing the chords”. Let’s look at the Melody version of Dixie Hoedown, part “B” or “2”, measures 11—14. As you crosspick through the melody, “see” the entire chord that would be played at that time. Don’t grab the entire chord, only hold the notes you need. The black and red dots together, represent the entire chord position or shape. The red dots represent the notes needed to play the section. Also, don’t put one finger down at a time. Hold all of the needed notes for each chord, down at the same time, then pick through them, changing to each chord at the correct time. Let your notes ring as long as possible.

