

Interstate Rag

Mandolin Discussion

Lesson Discussion

1. The tune is laid out in an "AABA" format. If you haven't run across this terminology yet, it simply means part I or A is played, then part A is repeated, followed by part B or what I like to think of as "the middle part", then part A again to finish. This completes one pass through the tune, then it's the next person's turn to take a break (solo).
2. Interstate Rag is in the key of D.
3. The first thing I suggest you do and this is for EVERY song I learn is, the chord progression. Once you understand the chords and the order they fall in, the melody will come together much more quickly.
4. The "A" part is standard crosspicking with a swing feel throughout the tune. There's always a little arguing about right hand downs/ups when you're crosspicking. There are 3 schools of thought. 1. DDU DDU 2. DUU DUU or 3. DUD UDU I subscribe to the last one. If I maintain the same DUDU pattern that I use for flatpicking in general, I don't have to alter the stroke of my right hand, regardless of cross or straight picking. If one of the other crosspicking directions works for you, fantastic. Just keep it smooth.
5. For each chord shape, hold the left hand position in place. In measures 2-3, use your middle finger to hold the F# on the "D" string while you bounce the other notes in and out. Hold the position and let the notes ring out as long as possible.
6. When we get to the "B" part, there's not a lot of melody. This leaves us A TON of room to play around in. Look at measures 11 & 12. This is a bluesy little "G" lick that's real easy and real handy. See how it rolls around the G chord, then rolls us right back into D. Measure 15 is the classic "G" run, just played in "E".
7. I used Coda phrases for this version. If you haven't run into this before, these are directional symbols, to cut down on a lot of unnecessary duplication. Here's how it works; Play through the tune normally, down to measure 18, where we see D.S. al Coda. D.S. roughly translates to "go to the sign". From here, go back to measure 2, where we see "the sign" (the funky looking "S"). Play to measure 7 (To Coda), skip 8-18 and pick it up again at measure 19 (Coda) and play to the end.
8. Remember to practice your rhythm playing as well as the solo. After you're done being the star, it's time to let someone else shine. That means they are counting on you to play SOLID rhythm. There's also a little thought and practice needed to jump from rhythm to melody and back to rhythm again, smoothly. You can do a lot with the rhythm beyond just playing on 2 and 4. On the rhythm stops, chop on beat 1 to stop with the band. On the reentry, chop beat 1, then go back to playing 2 and 4. An upstroke now and then keeps things interesting as well. Play with it.
9. Have fun and Keep Pickin', Rick