

Lonesome Fiddle Blues

Mandolin Discussion

Lonesome Fiddle Blues is one of my all-time favorite grass tunes. It was written by the bluegrass great, Vassar Clements. If this is your first exposure to his music, visit www.Vassarcléments.com for a very detailed look into this fiddling giant.

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. LFB is in the key of Dm with a key change to D at the start of the "B" part.
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. Look at the first 2 measures of the tune. It's in Dm. I know, "DUH", it says so right on the page, but I want you to **see** the Dm chord as you play the melody. Don't actually play the Dm, just see it on the neck. Now look at measures 3 & 4. As you play the melody line, can you envision the C chord as you pick around it? As you play all of the parts of this and EVERY other tune, see the chords as you pick. This is where a lot of the fodder for putting licks and phrases into other songs, comes from.
5. 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 19 & 20. Again, see how the melody notes roll around the C chord, then roll us right back into Dm.
6. Put hammer-ons, pull -offs and slides anywhere that you think is appropriate. I don't always put them in the same place, which is why I didn't line them out for you. Also the tempo and feel of a song has a lot to do with H/P/S placement. I'll use these techniques more in faster tunes, less in slower tunes. DON'T let the use of H/P/S, mess up your right hand direction. Whether you pluck a note or not, your right hand should not deviate from Down/Up Down/Up Down/Up Down/Up or 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &.
7. 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.
8. This arrangement has several rhythmic stops while the melody continues. Stops and reentries usually occur on beat 1, which is not the typical beat for mandolins to play on. At measures 7- 8 and 23 -24, play on beat 1 and 3, then resume your 2 & 4 chop. At measure 15, chop on beat 1 and let it ring for 8 counts. Come back in on beat 1 of measure 17, then resume your 2 and 4 chop. This allows the whole band to go out and come in strong and full.
9. Have fun and Keep Pickin', Rick