Flatpicking Guitar Magazine
Free E-mail Newsletter Lesson
April 2013

"Danny Boy"

Arranged for Flatpicking Guitar Magazine
by Mickey Abraham

Hello and welcome once again to the free lesson portion of our monthly email newsletter. This past month I was able to catch up with *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine* creator and editor, Dan Miller. He and the great Tim May came through Tallahassee, Florida (where I live) doing one of their fantastic flatpicking workshops. The workshop was informative, inspirational, and fun — and I had a great time hanging and picking with Dan and Tim afterwords.

For this month's tune I have chosen a true classic. I'm not sure where I first learned or heard "Danny Boy" but it feels as though the melody has been with me forever, like it's been embedded into my head at birth. "Danny Boy" has been sung, played, and recorded by countless musicians. Even Tony Rice has done some pretty unreal renditions of this traditional Irish Ballad. For this e-lesson I have included two versions -- the first is arranged in open position while the second version is played up the neck. If you don't feel comfortable playing up the neck, not to worry, the first version is plenty cool!

The tune lays out quite nicely on the guitar and the lyrical quality of the melody makes it easy to memorize and play. Unlike fast fiddle tunes with a bunch of notes, tunes like "Danny Boy" really give you a chance to make every note mean something. Each note is crucial to the melody, so try to play them with beefy tone and feel.

The concept of less is more relates to the back-up for "Danny Boy" as well. When learning to play the chordal backup do not feel as though you have to fill up all the space. Their are certain points in the melody where the notes stop and it feels very natural to let the chords breath as well. One example of this is in measure 5 on the G chord. It feels good to let the chord ring out instead of strumming through it. You can also try to play the chord forms one note (string) at a time. The are many ways to break up the chord when doing this. Make sure to click on the included lesson mp3 to hear the effect leaving space and separating the notes in your rhythm playing has on the overall feel of the piece.

I hope you enjoy working on this cool version of "Danny Boy" and adding it to your tune list. I predict you will make a few people cry when you play it (hopefully because it's full of emotion and not due to your lack of practicing it). As always, if you have questions or comments on this e-lesson or if you have any cool ideas for tunes you'd like to see hear in the future just drop me a line at michabraham@comcast.net

Danny Boy

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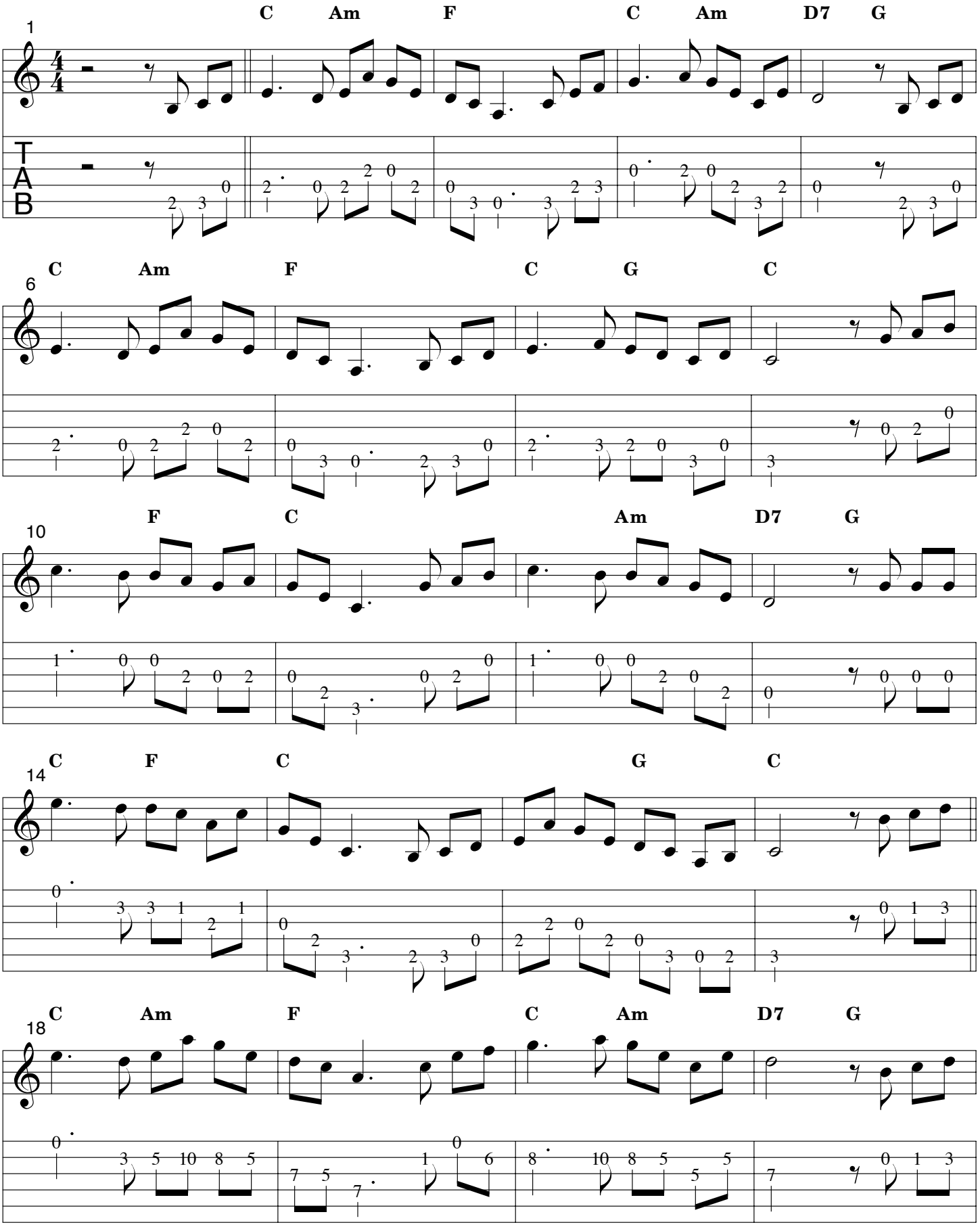
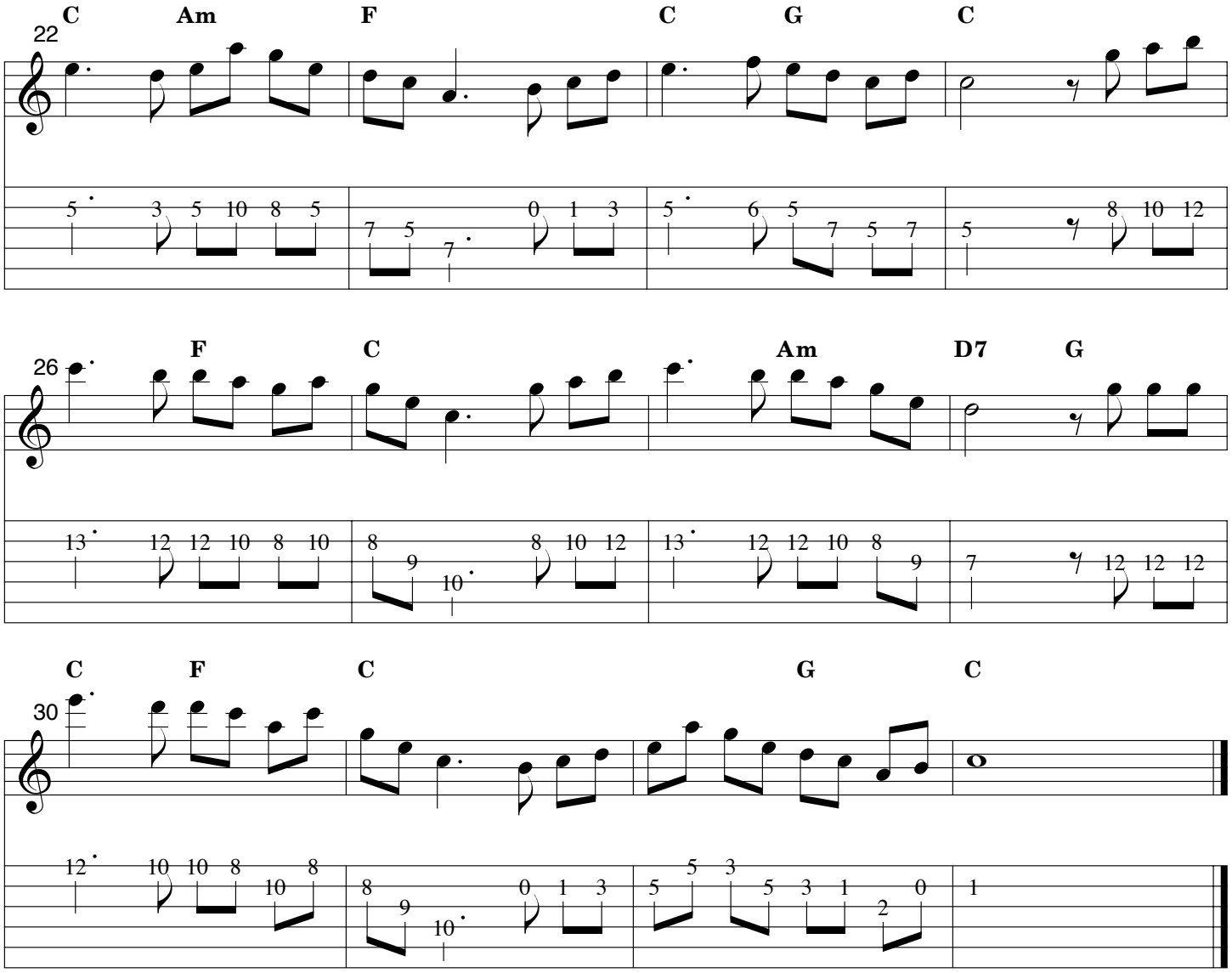
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