

Flatpicking Guitar Magazine
Monthly Free Flatpicking Lesson
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Willaford

by Mickey Abraham

Hello and welcome once again to *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine's* free lesson portion of our monthly e-mail newsletter. As many of you know, when you click here each month, you never know what style of flatpicking tune your going to find. From bluegrass to swing and Irish to klezmer—I try to keep an open mind and offer tunes from all genres and styles of flatpicking. “Willaford” is no exception as it originates from the Scottish fiddling tradition.

I learned “Willaford” from Florida fiddler Aisha Ivey. After hearing her play the tune one time I found myself humming it all day. This is the mark of a great melody. If it can hook me in one listen it must be doing something right. As I have stated in previous e-lessons, I enjoy learning melodies from fiddle players as it ensures an authentic and unique guitar version. I have enjoyed learning and arranging “Willaford” for guitar and I’m certain you will see and hear why I have chosen this tune to share with all of you.

“Willaford” is a wonderful alternate picking study. While the melody does not consist of steady eighth notes, it does contain melodic picking patterns that require correct pick direction to get the feel of the tune. When picking the melody to “Willaford” you will encounter phrases that begin on up-strokes. The last three notes of measure 2, for example, are picked up-down-up (see pick direction notation in the tablature).

This cool picking pattern is heard throughout the tune and helps give the tune its bouncy and addictive feel. Please refer back to my free “pick stroke theory” lesson if you have any questions about the how, why, and when of proper pick direction as it applies to flatpicking.

In addition to the unique note groupings found in the melody, “Willaford” also contains a set of really hip and enlightening chord changes. Instead of relying solely on the traditional I, IV, V chords (D, G, and A in the key of D), “Willaford” introduces some well placed I, vi, ii, V (D, Bm, Em, A) progressions. This chord progression (D, Bm, Em, A) is often called the 50’s rock and roll progression and is found in countless oldies rock tunes such as “Earth Angel” and “Blue Moon.” When used in a fiddle tune, it gives the melody a really cool sound that still resembles that 50’s rock and roll groove. Most of us find this sound quite pleasing.

Make sure to click on the lesson mp3 to hear the melody and chords in action. I hope you enjoy working on this neat melody and adding to your ever growing list of flatpicking tunes. As always, if you have any questions or comments on this e-lesson or great ideas for tunes you’d like to see featured here in the future just drop me a line at michabraham@comcast.net

Willaford

Arranged by Mickey Abraham

1

D G D Bm Em A

T
A
B

6

D G A D D

T
A
B

11

D Em A D Bm Em A

T
A
B

15

D G Em A D D

T
A
B

▣ = downstroke

v = upstroke