

Flatpicking Guitar Magazine

Free Monthly Lesson - October 2019

Buffalo Gals

Arranged by Mickey Abraham

Hello and welcome once again to Flatpicking Guitar Magazine's free lesson portion of our monthly newsletter. This month I offer two arrangements of the classic song "Buffalo Gals." The first pass is a very simple melody while the second pass is more difficult and includes some cool flatpicking licks and phrases. While "Buffalo Gals" does originally have lyrics, the form seems to lend itself to being an incredible instrumental fiddle tune.

To me "Buffalo Gals" is a perfect tune. While it is simple it showcases all the components of a well thought out and memorable melody. The rhythmic question-and-answer nature of the first three phrases is clearly evident. Next, I like how the B part introduces just one new phrase. Everything else besides the first two measures stays the same. I wonder if there is a name for this kind of tune in which the A and B sections differ by only the first phrases. A couple other examples of a tunes that do this are "Greensleeves" and "The Girl I Left Behind Me." The melodic content is so strong and distinct that it can be used in both sections and still propel the tune forward.

Another significant point on the melody of "Buffalo Gals" is how it stresses the 6th scale degree (E note) over the I chord (G) and the b7 (C note) over the V chord (D or D7). The inclusion of the sixth in the melody adds a level of harmonic sophistication even in this melody's most simple form. In measure 6 the downbeat really emphasizes that sixth and gives the "Buffalo Gals" its unique character.

Of course it's natural to hear the b7 stressed over the V but the reason I mention it is because these are the notes that I'm targeting in the second variation. The combination of landing on the 6th at the right time and incorporating the b7 over the D chords helps the solo retain the flavor of the melody. If one were to improvise licks over these chords one may run the risk of having it not sound like "Buffalo Gals." While any bluegrass G lick will theoretically work over a G chord I suggest using a lick that stresses the 6th. Take a listen to the included lesson mp3 to hear the chords and melody in action.

I hope you enjoy working on "Buffalo Gals" and adding to your list of great flatpicking tunes. As always should you have any questions or comments on this lesson just drop me a line at michabraham@comcast.net

Buffalo Gals

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1 **G** **D** **G**

T
A
B

6 **D** **G** **G**

T
A
B

11 **G** **D** **G**

T
A
B

15 **D** **G** **G**

T
A
B

20 **G** **D** **G**

T
A
B

Buffalo Gals (con't)

24 **D** **G**

0 4 0 2 0 2 0 3 0 3 0 3 0 0 1 3 0 1 2 0 0 2 4 4 0 0 2 0 0 2

28 **D** **G**

0 2 4 3 5 4 3 5 3 4 0 2 3 4 2 1 0 3 1 2 3 0 3 5 3 0 0 2

32 **D** **G**

0 2 0 0 3 0 3 0 3 0 3 2 1 3 0 1 2 0 1 2 4 0 0 2 0 0 2

36 **D** **G**

3 3 2 0 3 0 3 0 3 0 0 1 3 1 3 1 2 1 2 1 0 3 0 3 0 0 2

40 **D** **G**

3 2 3 2 0 3 0 3 0 3 2 0 2 1 0 2 4 0 3 0 4 2 0 0 0 0 2 4

Buffalo Gals (con't)

44

D G

0 4 5 4 2 0 1 2 1 0 3 2 2 1 0 3 0 1 2 0 2 0 2 1 0 2 2 0 2 4

3 3 3

48

D G

0 4 2 4 0 2 0 1 2 1 0 3 2 1 2 3 0 2 0 3 2 3 0 2 3 3 4 4 5 5 5 5 3 3

3 3