

Blackberry Blossom

By Mickey Abraham

Hello, and welcome once again to FGM's free lesson portion of our monthly e-newsletter. This month I have chosen to share an arrangement of one of the most popular flatpicking tunes of all time: the iconic and incomparable "Blackberry Blossom." This was the first fiddle tune I ever learned on the guitar—to some, picking this tune is almost like a right of passage or flatpicking anthem of sorts. Someone would be hard pressed to claim to be a flatpicker, if they have not dabbled with this tune.

For this lesson I have presented two versions of the tune. First, I have arranged a version that, to me, sticks very close to the traditional melody of the tune. Next, I feel you will enjoy working on my more complex variations based mostly on chord arpeggios and crosspicking techniques.

Within my "melody" version I have offered both the A and B sections in two different octaves. One thing I would recommend is to turn this into two completely different versions (even before tackling my variations). The high register version is a little less common but, to me, actually portrays the real melody as would be heard by a fiddle or mandolin. My low register version is slightly more common and is typical of how flatpicking guitarists have interpreted this tune in the past. This tune has been played and recorded so many times that I have picked up on my own certain Blackberry-isms. With a tune this popular, you will find many versions of the melody. Two guitar recordings of interest would be Mark O'Connor's version heard on his famous guitar record *Markology* and Tony Rice's version heard on *Manzanita*.

If you are up for a challenge that can be met, then my "Blackberry Blossom" variations are for you! I purposely composed this version to feel like an exercise. This way, you can take the ideas that you like and plug them into the melody. In some ways, I am not expecting these variations to be a completed version of the tune. I would be more proud if you were to steal some of the cooler ideas and insert them into your own playing. I particularly enjoy the descending Em phrase heard in the second half of the B section. You may, of course, learn the variation in its entirety as well.

If you have been keeping up with all my past lessons, you will note that I am a big fan of "less is more" and leaving space when it comes to music. This variation of "Blackberry Blossom" is the exact opposite of that – it is nothing but non-stop eighth notes. To make this version sound more musical and less exercise like, attempt to leave certain notes out. Beginning phrases on the second note of each measure on an upstroke can sound very cool. Leaving out certain notes in the eighth-note runs (keeping your picking strokes correct) will turn straight eighth notes into more sophisticated phrases.

You will no doubt run across this tune in flatpicking circles. It is a legend of a melody and shows no signs of slowing down. If this tune is not in your repertoire than get working, if you already have a version of this tune then the variations would be the perfect place to begin. As always, feel free to drop me a line at michabraham@comcast.net with any questions, comments, or concerns on this e-lesson, past e-lessons, or if you any ideas you'd like to see featured hear in the future. Happy Holidays!

Blackberry Blossom

Arranged by Mickey Abraham

1

G D C G C G A D

TAB

5

G D C G C G D G

TAB

9

G D C G C G A D

TAB

13

G D C G C G D G

TAB

Blackberry Blossom (con't)

25 **Em** **B7**

The image shows a musical score for the song "The Sound of Silence" by Simon and Garfunkel, specifically measures 25 through 28. The score is written for guitar and includes a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature (C). The guitar part is written in a single staff, with the left hand indicated by numbers 0-4 and the right hand by a slash (/). The chords are indicated by the letters "Em" and "B7" above the staff. The melody is written in the treble clef, with notes and rests. The guitar part consists of a series of chords and single notes, with the left hand playing a sequence of notes (0, 2, 3, 0, 0, 3, 0, 2, 4, 2, 0, 3, 0, 2, 4) and the right hand playing a series of notes (0, 2, 3, 0, 0, 3, 0, 2, 4, 2, 0, 3, 0, 2, 4). The chords are Em and B7.

Blackberry Blossom (con't)

33 G D C G C G A D

0 4 3 4 2 3 4 | 0 2 3 2 0 2 3 2 | 3 2 3 4 0 2 3 2 | 0 4 2 4 2 0 3

37 G D C G C G D G

2 0 5 0 4 2 0 4 | 2 0 2 4 0 4 3 4 | 5 2 0 5 4 2 0 4 | 2 0 4 2 0

41 G D C G C G A D

0 0 2 0 3 0 4 2 | 0 2 3 2 0 4 0 | 2 3 2 0 4 2 0 4 | 2 0 4 2 0 3 2 0

45 G D C G C G D G

3 0 2 3 2 3 0 2 | 0 2 3 2 3 4 0 2 | 3 0 2 0 4 0 5 | 4 3 2 4 0 0 4

Blackberry Blossom (con't)

49 **Em** **B7**

2 0 2 0 2 0 2 4 | 0 4 2 0 2 0 3 2 | 0 2 2 2 0 2 0 2 | 0 3 0 3 0 3 2 0

53 **Em** **C** **G** **D** **G**

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

57 **Em** **B7**

0 4 0 3 0 3 0 S | 2 0 2 0 2 0 0 2 | 0 2 3 5 3 2 0 3 | 0 4 2 5 2 4 0 0

61 **Em** **C** **G** **D** **G**

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