Flatpicking Guitar Magazine
Free Monthly Lesson
January 2015

"Bluegrass Blues"

arranged by Mickey Abraham

Hello and welcome once again to *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine's* free lesson portion of our monthly newsletter. This month's lesson is based on flatpicking the blues. I have included three solos that will fit over Bill Monroe's classic blues entitled the "Bluegrass Stomp."

Although the tune is credited to Bill Monroe it is just a 12 bar blues form in the key of D. Bill's first solo can be considered the melody. The blues form is important for every flatpicking guitarist to know. The form is as follows:

I	I	I	I 7
IV	IV	I	I
V	V	I	I

This form is very simple and is very typical of the chords used to play bluegrass blues. Other similar styles will have slight variations to this form. Most guitar players play blues in the key of E. For this lesson we will be in the key of D, making our chords D, G, and A. I love this simple form and feel it makes blues tunes like the "Bluegrass Stomp" unique. There is more to the blues than riffing away in E minor pentatonic.

When I first learned to improvise over blues I was taught to play the minor pentatonic scale over all three chords (1, b3, 4, 5, b7, 1). I played this way for many years. This approach will not work when playing a blues like this. One must approach this like a jazz blues. You must change your scale/idea as the chords are changing. For a form that is so simple it certainly presents a worthy challenge to make cohesive solos.

What I find most interesting is the use of the major seventh in the melody (measures 2-4). Traditionally this note is not considered very bluesy. Learning blues melodies like this one really shed some light into what notes can actually be used in a blues solo. In reality, learning to play over a blues from is a lifelong process. Make sure to click on the included lesson mp3 to hear these ideas in action.

I hope you enjoy working on this rendition of the "Bluegrass Stomp." I know your picking buddies will love creating blues solos over this classic 12 bar form. As always if you have any questions or comments on this lesson just drop me a line at michabraham@comcast.net

Bluegrass Stomp

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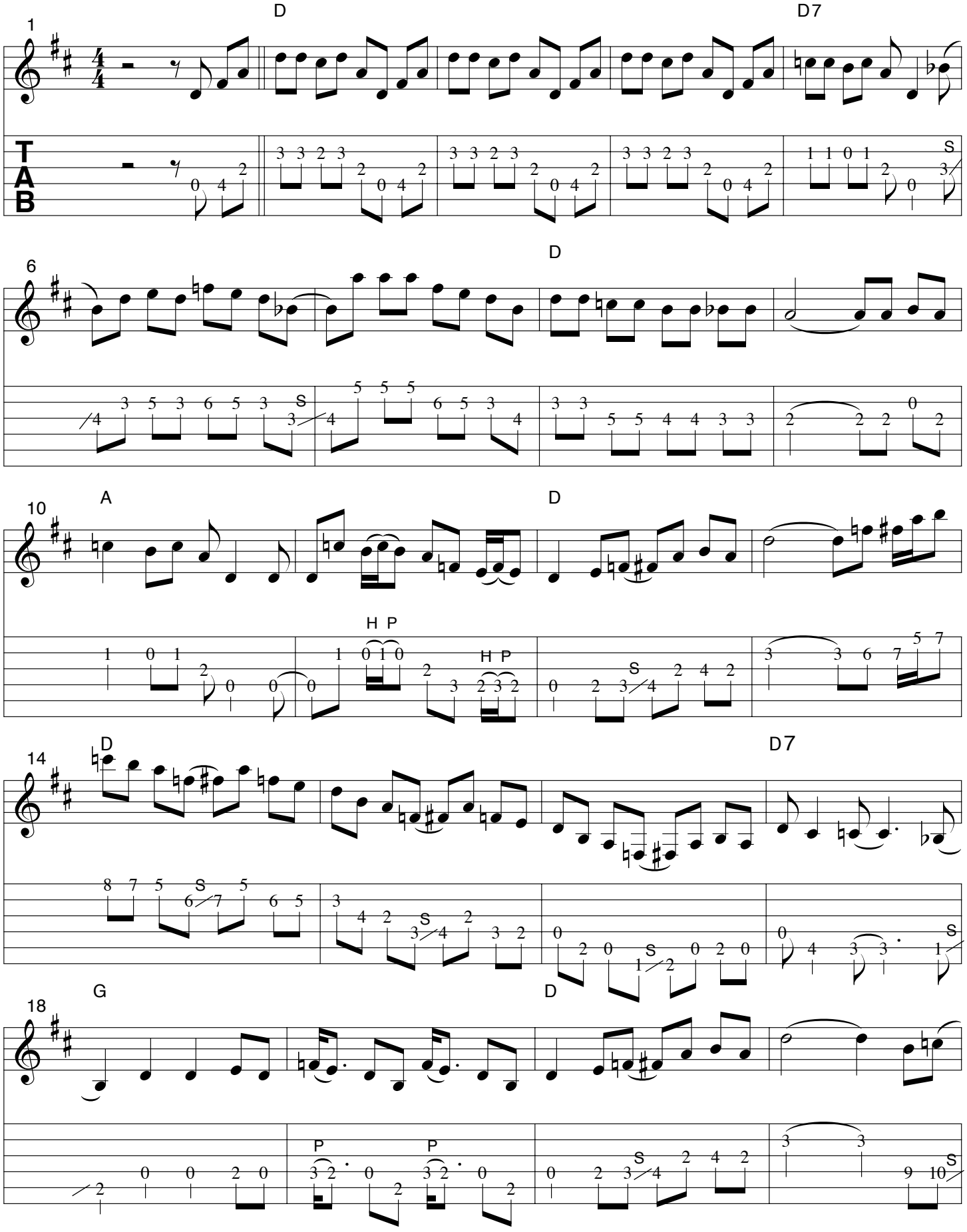
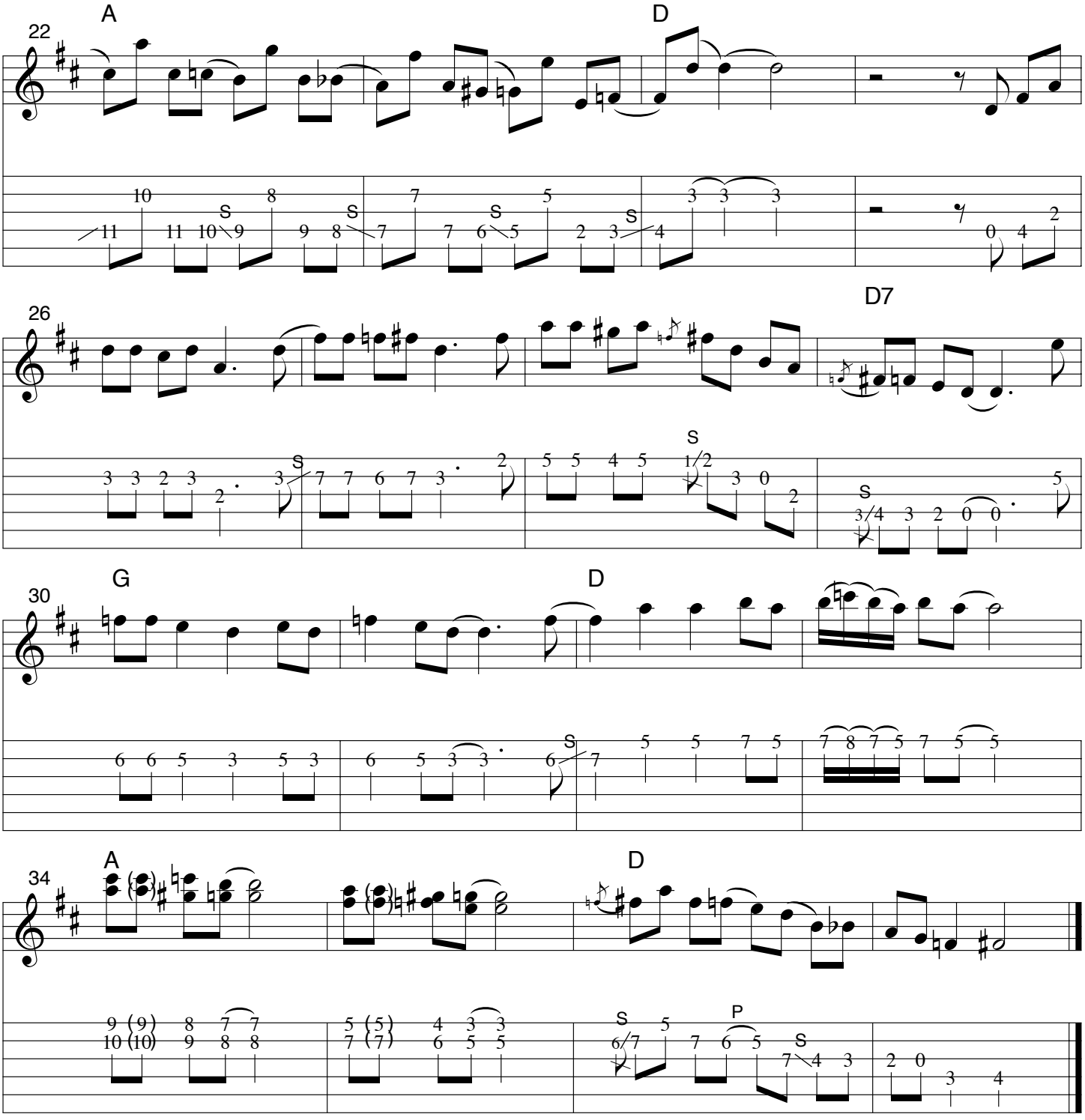
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