

**Flatpicking Guitar Magazine**  
**Free Monthly Lesson**  
**March 2022**

**“Old Brown Case”**

**Arranged by Craig Vance**

The following arrangement of “Old Brown Case” is from the *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine* archives in Craig Vance’s column that spread across two consecutive issues of the magazine. We are bringing this one out in honor of Norman Blake who is celebrating his 84th birthday this month.

Below you will find Craig’s introduction to both of the articles and then the arrangement on the following pages.

**Old Brown Case**

By Craig Vance

Part 1

Here is a Norman Blake masterpiece that I recorded on my recent CD. Since the tune is so long and varied, I am breaking it up into two separate columns. Here I will present the first part and then continue in the next issue.

When I first heard this tune some thirty plus years ago, I put myself to the test and task of learning it. I took it a section at a time, which if you’re a rather new picker, you may also choose to do. So anyway, after I finally got it down, I played it practically every day. I have to add that this tune helped inspire me to improvise more often. There’s plenty of space available to really get creative.

About ten years after I learned it, I had the opportunity to play it with Norman in a session. I was touring with mandolinist Frank Wakefield in my band Summit. We were taping a program for the Nashville Network, and so were Norman and Nancy and The Rising Fawn String Ensemble. Afterwards we wound up at a gathering and played a few tunes, ending with “Old Brown Case.”

I have never seen Norman play it the same way twice. The tune itself has a plethora of dynamic changes, and an abundance of pull-offs. I’ll be back next issue with the conclusion, which takes a major twist.

Part 2

Here is the rest of Norman Blake’s “Old Brown Case.” As you now realize from the major twist as we take it from A minor into A major, there are more dynamic changes in this part of the tune. If you take a look at the 30th and 31st measures, you will see that we go from zero to twelve in one short step. The secret to that is once you go from the 5th fret on the high E string to the open high E, start making that move before the pick strikes the open E. You can be at the 12th fret right on time.

This is a great solo guitar piece that is guaranteed to turn heads. There are plenty of places to interject your own ideas in this piece. I heard Mark O’Connor do a ripping version on an old D-28 back in the mid-70s. I just about tossed all of my picks in the trash, but I stopped myself and took the challenge. Hope you all do the same!



Audio CD  
Track 5

# Old Brown Case (Part 1)

1 **Am**

T  
A  
B

6 **Am**

P

11 **Am**

P

16 **Am** **Dm** **Am** **Dm** **Am**

P S P

21 **Dm** **Am** **E** **Am**

P S

# Old Brown Case (Part 1— con't)

Musical notation for measures 26-28. Chords: Dm, Am, Dm, Am. Includes a piano (P) dynamic marking.

26

Dm Am Dm Am

P

Musical notation for measures 29-32. Chords: Dm, Am, E, Am. Includes a piano (P) dynamic marking.

29

Dm Am E Am

P

# Old Brown Case (Part 2)



Audio CD  
Track 4

Continued from previous issue...

1 **G** **Am** **G**

6 **F** **E** **Am** **Bm** **C** **D**

11 **E**

16

21 **A**

**TAB**

**H** **S** **P**

Bend

Bend

Bend

**H**

# Old Brown Case (Part 2— con't)

26 **D** **A** **E** **A** **D** **A**

31 **E** **A** **D** **A**

35 **A** **D** **A**

39 **E** **D** **A** **Bb**

44 **A** **Bb** **A** **E**

ad lib on low E note, then return to beginning of tune (as shown in the last issue)