

Flatpicking Guitar Magazine

Email Newsletter

Free Lesson

May 2011

A Kind of Irish

Written by: Adam Spencer
Arranged for FGM by Mickey Abraham

Hello and welcome back to FGM's free flatpicking lesson portion of our monthly newsletter. This month I have arranged a simple version of a tune written by one of my students! I teach a lot of lessons; from private lessons to festival workshops. In addition to teaching my students classic traditional melodies, I always encourage musical creativity and often challenge my students to write a tune.

When this piece was presented to me at a lesson one week, I was blown away by the completed nature of the tune. So simple, yet so profound. It had the perfect AABB structure, memorable phrasing, and a melodic hook. "Dude, you wrote a fiddle tune!" I said as my student finished layin' this one on me. I asked him if he minded if I used it for my FGM e-lesson this month. He said "sure!"

"A Kind of Irish," as Adam calls it, is an AABB fiddle tune with an Irish/minor vibe. Let's take a look. You will notice, by looking at the tab, that the first fret is not used at all in the tune while the second and fourth frets show up a lot. Try using second position for your left hand (Index for second fret, middle for third, ring for fourth, and pinky for fifth) to grab all the notes with ease. This means in the B section you will be using your pinky for the fifth fret. If you stick to this fingering you will find that all the notes are "right there."

Next, let's quickly review your right hand pick direction. When picking measures with continuous eighth notes, alternate the strokes (down/up picking), but when you arrive at consecutive quarter notes, repeat down strokes. Please refer back to my "Pick Stroke Theory" e-lesson for a more in depth look at why and when to use the correct pick strokes. Once you understand why, you will begin to feel the inner pulse of the down and up beats. For the last note in measure 7 you will, of course, be using an UPSTROKE. If you are not sure why, you will benefit from looking back at the pick stroke lesson. After you get your left hand playing the correct frets with the correct finger, and you get your pick going down and up in the right places, I know you will find this melody really fun to play.

While I was jamming this tune with my student, I stumbled upon a couple interesting chord substitutions. In the B section I replaced the Em in the fourth measure with an A7 and replaced the Em in the fifth measure with a C9. Listen to the e-lesson mp3 to hear the harmonic interest these subs add to the melody (I used them on the repeat). I learned the A7/ Em sub relationship from listening to the rhythm guitar of the great John Doyle who uses these ideas kinds of ideas when backing up fiddler Liz Carroll. My friend Aaron O'Rourke also never passes up the opportunity to sub an A7 in an Em flavored Irish tune. It sounds so cool.

I'd like to thank my student Adam Spencer for letting me use his simple yet amazing tune as my lesson this month. Please use this as inspiration to write your own fiddle tunes! It does not need to be fast or flashy. This tune exhibits all the qualities of an amazing tune with simplicity, melody, and form. Have fun practicing and teaching this one to your friends. If you have any questions or comments this e-lesson or any great ideas you'd like to see featured here, just drop me a line at michabraham@comcast.net.

A Kind of Irish

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1 **Em D C9 G D C9**

TAB

5 **Em D C9 G D Em**

9 **Em D Em**

13 **D Em**