

Black Mountain Rag

by Mickey Abraham

Hello and welcome to FGM's free lesson portion of our monthly newsletter. This month it's time to tackle a Doc Watson inspired version of the famous flatpicking tune "Black Mt. Rag." There is no question that Doc made this tune famous amongst guitar pickers and his phrasing and inflections on this tune are yet to be equaled. He has, through the years, inspired so many of us to flatpick the guitar and his style has indeed paved the way countless acoustic guitarists.

For this lesson I have arranged two new versions of the tune. The first time through I tried to convey the melody in a way that was not too difficult. Then, the second time through I improvised a more intermediate/advanced break through the chord changes. This version is not transcribed from a Doc Watson recording, rather it is a collage of ideas with a clear Doc inspired feel.

"Black Mt. Rag" is not your typical AABB fiddle tune form. For the chord player, the first two sections are played the same, but there are two distinct melodies over the chords. To me, the first two sections are eight measure a piece with no repeats (AB). Then, there are C and D sections that are also eight measures a piece with no repeats. The chord player will play different turnarounds in these sections and the melody clearly has two new sections. Hence, the form of the tune is ABCD with each section being eight measures long.

When picking the melody you will find your left hand switching from third position to first position quite a bit. If there is an open string, then you can shift positions while the string is ringing. Otherwise, you must take extra care of the slides, for that is how you will move between positions smoothly. I do not like to stifle guitarists with too many fingerings, but you must slide with a finger that will allow yourself to grab the next note with an available finger!

For the second break, I took more melodic liberties. I tried to incorporate some cool ideas that sound hip are not too hard to play. You will notice how I enjoy using open strings to jump up to the eighth fret and back down quickly. This pattern covers a lot of musical space and the sound is impressive without being too challenging. Check out the mp3 to hear the effect open strings have on the ear. As always, it is not necessary to learn the solo note for note, rather pick out a few of your favorite ideas and try to work them into musical ideas that you may already know.

I hope you enjoy adding "Black Mt. Rag" to your list of tunes. I often run across "Black Mt. Rag" at jam sessions, especially flatpicking jams! If you have questions, comments, or concerns on this e-lesson, past lessons, great ideas for future lessons, drop me a line at michabraham@comcast.net

Black Mountain Rag

Arranged by Mickey Abraham

1

C G C

T
A
B

6

G C

S

10

G C

14

G C

18

F

H

Black Mountain Rag (con't)

22 **C** **G**

1 **H** 0 2 0 3 0 2 0 3 2 0 **S** 0 0 2 3 0 3 2 0 2 0 2

26 **F** **P**

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

30 **C** **G** **C**

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

34 **C** **G** **C**

2 0 2 0 2 1 0 4 5 4 0 5 8 5 0 5 6 5 0 4 5 4 0 3 0 3 2 0 3 0 1

38

2 0 2 1 0 4 5 4 0 5 8 5 6 5 5 0 4 5 4 0 1 2 1 0 3 2 0 3

Black Mountain Rag (con't)

42 G C

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

46 G C

0 8 7 8 6 5 7 | 5 6 5 7 6 5 7 5 | 5 0 5 5/4 5 4 4 0 | 3 2 0 3

50 F

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

54 C G

3 3 4 5 3 5 3 | 6 5 3 4 5 3 5 3 | 6/7 6 5 8 5 6 7 5 | 8 5 7 5 4 0 4

58 C F

5 4 5 0 5 3 5 6 | 3 4 5 4 3 6 3 4 | 5 4 3 6 3 3 1 4 | 1 4 3 3 1 2 1 3

Black Mountain Rag (con't)

62 C G C

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

P S P

Detailed description: This musical score is for the piece 'Black Mountain Rag (con't)'. It consists of two staves. The top staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It begins at measure 62. The first measure has a 'C' chord above it. The second measure has a 'G' chord above it. The third measure has a 'C' chord above it. The melody is written in eighth and sixteenth notes, with some slurs and ties. The bottom staff is a guitar fretboard diagram. It shows fingerings for the left hand, including a slash for a barre on the 4th fret, and numbers 0, 4, 3, 1, 3, 1, 2, 0, 1, 2, 0, 2, 2, 0, 1, 0, 0, 1/2, 0, 2, 0, 1, 1, 0, 2, 3. Above the fretboard, there are dynamic markings: 'P' (piano) above measures 2, 3, and 4; 'S' (sforzando) above measure 3; and 'P' (piano) above measure 4. The piece ends with a double bar line.