



Basic Crosspicking Lesson I

with Mickey Cochran

Excerpt from "Mandolin Crosspicking Technique"

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Crosspicking mandolin has immense roots. A culmination of many styles, artists, and instruments inspires the technique of crosspicking. Because the mandolin itself dates back many centuries, as a member of the lute family, approaches to playing the mandolin have been myriad and varied. Usually the style of music would dictate the approach. As to crosspicking, many styles of music can be effectively played so that crosspicking itself dictates the style.

The mandolin has usually been categorized as an ensemble instrument. Many times a mandolinist will grapple when asked to play a piece unaccompanied. In spite of its capability as a lead instrument, the mandolin has always been underrated as a solo instrument-excluding certain classical mandolin pieces. With applied crosspicking technique, the mandolin becomes a forceful solo instrument capable of filling a room with colorfully supported melodies. Crosspicking bombards the listener with a barrage of notes. As is similar to Bluegrass banjo, crosspicking mandolin doesn't seem to pause for a breather. A continuous succession of notes pours forth establishing the melody while filling in all of the spaces with harmony notes. Not only does the mandolin support itself, with spaces filled harmonically, but crosspicking technique works effectively for supporting other lead instruments and vocals. As an accomplished mandolin player, you are or would be capable of varying the backup of an ensemble (band) with many colorful approaches; for example, one verse you may want to add tremolo backup while the second verse you could apply a crosspicking backup.

A Note on Developing Crosspicking Technique

How do you focus on a new technique and bypass the normal frustration involved with learning new habits and maybe even shedding old ones to accomplish the task? There are many approaches to playing the mandolin; many of them haven't even been invented yet! The more you can learn about your chosen instrument, the closer you come to actualizing your musical goals. Whether you play the mandolin as an accompanist or instrumentalist, your arsenal of licks, chords and techniques is what you depend on. If you haven't already, once you've incorporated crosspicking into your arsenal, you'll wonder how you've played so long without this colorful texture.

To become oriented in the task of learning crosspicking involves setting short-time goals. Reward yourself with the sense of accomplishment that follows after mastering a crosspicking exercise or arrangement. And, don't let anybody tell you that crosspicking is easy. There are times when you will hit the wall and feel like you're not getting anywhere fast. Your best strategy in this case is to go back over what you've learned up to this point and keep on practicing. Before long, you'll find yourself smoothly moving forward to other goals.

Right-Hand Position

There are as many ways as the right hand is positioned as there are mandolin players. Many of the positions limit the right hand from moving freely. This restricts the playing capability of the right hand and will limit speed and dexterity. With crosspicking, it is critical that the right hand is loosely positioned above the strings so that it can move completely free of any obstruction. For instance, many mandolin players rest the heel of the hand on the bridge; this restricts the right-hand picking movement and does not allow the hand to take advantage of playing closer to the fingerboard for a mellower tone.

Crosspicking technique can be accomplished efficiently by keeping the wrist loose. Imagine trying to jump from string to string for every other note with a stiff wrist. Although, it can be done, your whole forearm has to move for every note; whereas, with a loose wrist, the movement is much more concentrated and can be easily accomplished with minimal movement. The forearm does not need to be completely stationary, in fact, by playing with both a loose wrist and forearm you'll have optimal movement for speed and efficiency.

Wildwood Flower

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=====
E |-----0-----0-----|-----0-----0-----]
A |-----3-----3-----|-----3-----3-----]
D |-----2-----3-----|-----5-----7-----5-----]
G |-----|-----|-----]
  1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &          1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &
  
```

```

=====
E |-----0-----0-----|-----3-----3-----]
A |-----3-----0-----0-----|-----2-----2-----2-----]
D |-----2-----3-----2-----|-----0-----2-----0-----]
G |-----|-----|-----]
  1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &          1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &
  
```

```

=====
E |-----3-----3-----|
A |-----2-----2-----2-----|
D |-----5-----5-----0-----|
G |-----|-----|-----]
  1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &
  
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Eliminate this measure 2nd Time Play this measure instead
 First Time Go To Beginning | Second Time Through and Continue

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=====
E |-----0-0-----0-----1-----]
A |-----3-3-----0-----0-----]
D |-----2-2-----2-----3-----]
G |-----5-----|-----]
  1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &          1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &
  
```

```

=====
E |-----3-3-----3-3-----1-----]
A |-----7-----7-----5-----]
D |-----|-----|-----]
G |-----|-----|-----]
  1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &          1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &
  
```

```

=====
E |-----1-1-----1-1-----]
A |-----0-----3-----0-----]
D |-----5-----5-----5-----]
G |-----|-----|-----]
  1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &          1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &
  
```

```

=====
E |-----0-----0-----]
A |-----3-----3-----3-----]
D |-----0-h2-----0-h2-----2-----]
G |-----2-----5-----2-----]
  1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &          1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &
  
```

```

=====
E |-----3-----3-----]
A |-----2-----2-----2-----]
D |-----0-----2-----0-----]
G |-----5-----5-----0-----]
  1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &          1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &
  
```

```

=====
E |-----|-----|-----]
A |-----|-----|-----]
D |-----|-----|-----]
G |-----5-----|-----]
  1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &
  
```