

# Conversational Bluegrass Banjo

By Ritchie Mintz



How To Speak Fluent 5-String  
And Pick Like A Pro

Complete Instruction Guide  
Includes CD's

**Web Special !!!** As a public service and as my contribution to good banjo playing in the world, I freely offer you pages 9-14 of **Conversational Bluegrass Banjo**. These are the chapters on The Right Hand Rules of banjo picking and The Left Hand, Melody and Fraction Notation. This folio serves as a sample of the book and gives you an idea of the framework of how I play 5-string banjo. This free and informative sampler shows what it is like to learn from the book plus gives you your first Right Hand Roll for free! What a deal!! It also has some tips and tricks that are valuable on any instrument. *Ritchie Mintz*

## Conversational Bluegrass Banjo

© By Ritchie Mintz

### Contents

Introduction .....	3
Dedications.....	7
Right Hand Rules.....	9
The Left Hand, Melody and Fraction Notation.....	13
Banjo Chords.....	16
Lesson 1           The Incomplete Forward Roll.....	21
Lesson 2           Incomplete Forward Roll with 3 <sup>rd</sup> String Lead.....	25
Lesson 3           Incomplete Forward Roll with 4 <sup>th</sup> String Lead.....	27
Lesson 4           Incomplete Forward Roll with Wandering Lead.....	28
Song <i>Hard Ain't It Hard</i> .....	31
Lesson 5           The Complete Forward Roll.....	34
Song <i>Hard Ain't It Hard</i> in Complete Forward Rolls.....	39
Song <i>Boil 'Em Cabbage Down</i> .....	42
Song <i>Boil 'Em Cabbage Down</i> in Complete Forward Rol...	45
Lesson 6           On-The-Beat Roll.....	47
Law of Modular Substitution.....	55
Song <i>Boil 'Em Cabbage Down</i> Revisited.....	58
Song <i>Hard Ain't It Hard</i> Revisited.....	68
Lesson 7           Springing Off the 5 <sup>th</sup> .....	78
Song <i>Cripple Creek</i> .....	84
Lesson 8           Inside-Outside Roll.....	100
Lesson 9           Tags.....	106
Song <i>Roll In My Sweet Baby's Arms</i> .....	111

Kickoff Notes.....	113
Lesson 10          Thumb In-and-Out Forward Roll.....	121
Grace Notes.....	121
Lesson 11          Consecutive Roll.....	127
Song <i>Doin' My Time</i> .....	136
Lesson 12          2,3,3 Roll.....	141
Song <i>Foggy Mountain Breakdown</i> .....	147
Lesson 13          The Backward Roll.....	159
Song <i>Old Joe Clark</i> .....	168
Potatoes Kickoff.....	176
Shave and a Haircut... 2 Bits.....	178
Song <i>Dooley</i> .....	182
Lesson 14          Drop Thumb.....	183
Song <i>Bill Cheatham</i> .....	186
Lesson 15          Introduction to Melodic Picking.....	193
Lesson 16          Playing in Waltz Time.....	203
Song <i>All The Good Times</i> .....	205
Lesson 17          Single String Picking.....	210
Lesson 18          Playing Out Of C-Voicing.....	216
Song <i>Nine Pound Hammer</i> .....	223
Lesson 19          Up the Neck.....	231
Lesson 20          Backup.....	240
Lesson 21          Running Through The Beat.....	241
Ritchie's Royal Roll Roundup.....	253
Included Instructional CD.....	256
Putting It All Together.....	257
The Author.....	258
The Towne & Country Revue CD.....	258
<i>Bluegrass Bass – 21<sup>st</sup> Century Edition</i>	
<i>By Ned Alterman and Ritchie Mintz</i> .....	259

## **Conversational Bluegrass Banjo**

### **Introduction**

This book is exactly how I've taught hundreds of people to play the banjo since the mid-1960's when I was 15 years old. I have spent countless hours writing out rolls and chords on yellow pads for three generations of banjo enthusiasts. Now through the miracle of digital technology, those yellow pads are this book. It's like taking private lessons with me for a year!

The 5-string banjo is a deeply mysterious instrument that only makes sense when you enter into its own ironic world. It is the only instrument I have ever come across that has the highest string right next to the lowest string. Think about that. That's why the banjo only sounds right when it is played like a banjo. Gather 'round, because that is exactly what you will learn here.

This book is like nothing I've ever seen before. There is no music to read, not even tablature. It teaches by the Right Hand Rolls, which are the words, sentences and paragraphs that we call songs. In this book, you will learn the vocabulary of this language so that you can "speak" Conversational Bluegrass Banjo.

Each book comes with two instructional CD's where you can hear me playing the techniques and songs of this book. You can play along with me. In the old days, we slowed down records to learn banjo. No need for that here. You can set your CD player to repeat mode to listen and play *until you get it!*

My life's vital mission is to leave behind a record of how I play so that anyone interested can do it too. Music is magic. But behind all magic is a trick. This book contains my best banjo tricks. These tricks are the training wheels of playing Bluegrass Banjo. Learn them and you will be able to ride on your own. Then, the sky's the limit.

Whether onstage, in a backyard jam or around a campfire, everyone loves good banjo playing. It is a happy instrument that some people say is what makes bluegrass music sound bluegrassy. Whether you are a rank beginner or an accomplished musician looking to expand into other instruments, this book is for you.

*From Page 9*

## **Right Hand Rules of Scruggs-Style Banjo Picking**

***First Rule: The banjo is not a 5-string guitar***

### **Rolls – The Keys to the Kingdom**

Right-hand guitar techniques do not translate to the 5-string banjo. On the guitar, the thumb keeps the beat by playing *rocking bass*. This means that the right thumb strikes the bass strings on the downbeat and the offbeat while the index and middle fingers (or even the ring finger and pinky) play the melody notes.

But, notice that on the 5-string banjo, the highest string (# 5) is right next to the lowest string (# 4). On the banjo, if you attempt to “keep rhythm” with a rocking-bass thumb, you will be constantly alternating between extremely high notes and extremely low notes. This does not work and it is not banjo picking. If you want to play the banjo like a banjo, you must learn the rolls.

### **Note Groupings**

For the most part, there are eight notes to a banjo-picking roll. To make these eight-note rolls easier to learn and play, I divide them into three note grouping categories. If you were just listening to someone playing these different patterns in a song, you would not be able to tell them apart unless you knew what you were listening to. Playing the rolls trains the ears.

The three note grouping categories are mostly a learning tool that makes the banjo-picking rolls sound less like a shower of notes, less of a mystery to the ear and easier to learn. Each of the rolls you will learn will be in one of these three note grouping categories:

**3,3,2** – This means that the eight notes are distributed as three notes, three more notes and then two notes. Written as a generic roll, this would look like: XXX, XXX, XX.

**4,4** – This means that the eight notes are distributed as four notes and then four more notes. Written as a generic roll, this would look like: XXXX, XXXX.

**2,3,3** – This means that the eight notes are distributed as two notes, three notes and then three more notes. Written as a generic roll, this would look like: XX, XXX, XXX.

## **Domain of the Right Hand**

Scruggs-style banjo rolls are played with the first three fingers of the right hand. Each finger is allowed to play only on certain strings:

Thumb (1) The thumb is finger number 1 and plays strings # 2, 3, 4, 5

Index (2) The index finger is finger number 2 and plays strings # 2, 3, 4

Middle (3) The middle finger is finger number 3 and plays only string # 1

## **Inside Strings and Outside Strings**

Strings # 2, 3 and 4 are the *inside* strings.

Strings # 1 and 5 are the *outside* strings.

Looking above at the domain of the right fingers, notice that the middle finger (3) only plays on an outside string (string # 1).

Notice also that the index finger (2) only plays the inside strings (strings # 2, 3 and 4).

The thumb (1) is the only right finger that is allowed to play both inside strings (# 2, 3, 4) and an outside string (# 5).

This is confusing. If I were to write “1”, you would know to strike a string with your thumb but you would not know whether to strike an inside string (# 2, 3 or 4) or an outside string (# 5). So, to clarify this confusion, I will always designate when the thumb (1) is supposed to play an inside string by calling its note *1-in*.

When you see *1-in*, that means the thumb is supposed to play its note on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> string.

When the thumb (1) is supposed to play the 5<sup>th</sup> string, I will designate that note as *1-out*. When you see that the thumb is supposed to play *1-out*, that means to strike your thumb on the 5<sup>th</sup> string.

## **2-3-2 Not Allowed**

2-3-2 means index-middle-index. This is an awkward pattern that is difficult to play strongly. So, instead, we play a *shift*. A shift is where we substitute a thumb (*1-in*) for the second 2.

Thus, instead of 2-3-2, we play 2-3-1<sup>in</sup>

I have noticed throughout my long years of playing and observing, that the world's best banjo players shift. This means that they do not play 2-3-2. They substitute the thumb and play 2-3-1-*in*.

### **Rhythm**

Tap your foot in 2/4 time. It is very important to keep time and, although it is awkward at first, tapping your foot is the best way to keep in rhythm. Tapping your foot in 2/4 time means that you are tapping your foot in half-time to the music. This is important because Bluegrass music frequently moves so fast that it is impossible to tap in 4/4 time, which is every beat.

As I write out the rolls, I will mark the note where your foot should tap with an *accent* ( ` ). This is the *downbeat*. This is where your foot should come down. The accents help coordinate the right hand picking with the rhythm of the music.

### **Learn The Rolls By Their Names**

Each right hand roll has a name. You should learn your rolls not only by heart but also by name. You should always know the name of the roll you are playing.

### **Bounce**

My favorite banjo players play with *bounce*. Playing with bounce is a trick of rhythm. Although there are eight notes to a roll, each note does not get equal time value. To my ears, playing eight equally timed notes to a roll sounds staccato and mechanical. To play with strength, spirit and character, I divide the timing of my notes in a very special way. I *syncopate*.

Syncopation means that some notes ring longer than others and some notes ring for a shorter period of time. The exact timing of good banjo picking is extremely complex. To properly represent this complexity on paper would involve some sophisticated music notation (as in *reading music*). But, my banjo method does *not* require the ability to read music. Instead, there is a *trick* that makes it all easy. Can you say *Chattanooga*?

**Chattanooga** -- You do not need to read dotted-64<sup>th</sup> notes to play good, bouncy, jaunty banjo rolls. All you need to do is time the notes to sound like the word *Chattanooga*.

Notice that in the natural pronunciation of the word, the four syllables do not receive equal time value. If they did get equal value, it would sound like *Chat --ta – noo – ga*. But when said in a normal conversational voicing pattern, the word *Chattanooga* has its own lilting rhythm. Some of the syllables last longer and some last shorter.

*Chattanooga* -- This is how your rolls should sound. Just time the notes like you say the word *Chattanooga* and your rhythm will be right-on. This is the phrasing trick to playing with bounce.

Listen to the included instructional CD to hear the exact timing of this very important rule.



Roger Sprung – my banjo grand teacher

*From page 13*

## **The Left Hand, Melody and Fraction Notation**

Throughout history, music has been written in “notation”. We all know notation as notes written on a staff of five lines and four spaces. Music for most instruments is written on the treble clef. For bass instruments like the bass fiddle, the music is written on the bass clef.

Personally, I never got the hang of reading music. And I’m not alone. Many people feel the same way and it stops them from playing. Then, in the 1960’s, a new way of writing music for instruments emerged. It was called *tablature*. Tablature (“TAB”, for short) was advertised as the way of “reading music without reading music”. But, for me, it was no better. It only substituted one form of music reading for another. I still found it very hard to read TAB.

I knew that if I wanted to instruct rookies to play banjo *by ear*, that I would have to concoct a way to convey music notes without reading it from lines and spaces. So, I invented *fraction notation*.

The reason I like fraction notation is that, when combined with the banjo picking rolls, it *speaks to the right hand*. This is important because both music notation and TAB *speak to the left hand*. To play from TAB, you must first interpret from the lines and spaces which string is being played and at which fret. This tells you where to place your left fingers on the fingerboard to play the note that is being indicated. The right hand is almost an afterthought. To me, especially for banjo, this is backward and confusing.

So, I learned and teach banjo by *the rolls*. This makes a song into a series of modular, pre-learned, eight-note, right hand finger patterns (rolls) instead of a series of separated notes to be searched for by the left hand. The fraction notation appears below the right-hand fingers of the roll that is being picked and it tells those right fingers where to find the correct string. Once you know which string to pick, the fraction notation tells you how far to shorten that string by selecting the correct fret. By combining the right-hand rolls with the fraction notation, it gives you an easy way to “roll” your way through the melody of a song.

**In fraction notation, the top number is the string to be picked and the bottom number is the fret to be played on that string.**

Example:  $\frac{2}{0}$  means second string open (not fretted)

$\frac{2}{1}$  means 2nd string, 1<sup>st</sup> fret

$\frac{2}{3}$  means 2<sup>nd</sup> string, 3<sup>rd</sup> fret

$\frac{3}{0}$  means 3<sup>rd</sup> string, open (not fretted)

$\frac{3}{2}$  means 3<sup>rd</sup> string, 2<sup>nd</sup> fret

$\frac{3}{4}$  means 3<sup>rd</sup> string, 4<sup>th</sup> fret

$\frac{4}{0}$  means 4<sup>th</sup> string, open

$\frac{4}{2}$  means 4<sup>th</sup> string, 2<sup>nd</sup> fret

$\frac{4}{4}$  means 4<sup>th</sup> string, 4<sup>th</sup> fret

Let's look at an example using the first roll that is to be taught and learned – the Incomplete Forward Roll.

out out  
`2 3 1, 2 `3 1, 2 --  
 $\frac{2}{0}$   $\frac{2}{0}$   $\frac{2}{0}$

If you look closely and remember the Right Hand Rules (Domain), you will notice that all of the “3” notes are the middle finger (3) playing on its only allowable string, the 1<sup>st</sup> string.

out

All of the 1 notes are the thumb (1) playing on the only *outside* string it is allowed to strike – the 5<sup>th</sup> string.

This leaves only the index finger (2) to wander across the three inside strings (# 2, 3 and 4). The fraction notation in the example above tells the right hand to play these notes on the 2<sup>nd</sup> string, open (0 = unfretted).

When you combine the rolls with fraction notation, it gives you an easy way to roll through a song and pick out the strings and frets that have the melody of the song imbedded within.

*from page 55*

### **Law of Modular Substitution -- Equals Plus Equals Are Equal**

I call this book *Conversational Bluegrass Banjo* because the right hand rolls are like phrases and sentences of a language. When we speak and write, we string phrases and sentences together into paragraphs that tell a story. Bluegrass banjo picking is the same way.

I have said that right hand picking rolls are *modules*. Imagine that you are moving from one house to another and you are loading your possessions into a pickup truck. All of your boxes are the exact same size and shape. One box is filled with dishes, another with silverware, another with clothes, another with kid toys, etc. Since all the boxes are the same size and shape, each box is a *module* that takes up the *same amount of space* as any other box.

Let's say that on one trip, you decide not to take the silverware because you need to transport the clothes first. So, you unload the silverware box from the truck and, in the exact same place and space, you substitute the clothes box. Even though the new box has completely different stuff inside it from the old box, it takes up the same amount of space. You have just demonstrated the *Law of Substitution*.

In exactly the same way, this is how we substitute one roll (or part of a roll) for another. In the Law of Substitution, we can remove any module we want from any space of time and insert (substitute) any other module that has the same space and time. In mathematics, this is called *Equals Plus Equals Are Equal*.

In banjo picking, we build up a *vocabulary* of musical words, phrases and sentences that are modules that we can swap and switch at will as long as each module takes up the same amount of time. When you tell a story to a friend, maybe you have noticed that you might begin a sentence without having chosen every word in advance. You might start a sentence without knowing in advance exactly which words you will be using at the end of the sentence. This leaves us a lot of latitude about how exactly we tell our story.

This is precisely how I play the banjo. Over the years, I have built up a large musical vocabulary. That is how I am able to play a song and never play it exactly the same way twice. The larger story (song) is the same each time I tell (play) it, but my words and phrases (roll modules) might be different each time. As long as I always *substitute equals for equals*, I will always be okay.

You might not have thought about it in exactly this way, but in doing this, you are already demonstrating your first flirt with the Modular Law of Substitution.

Up to this point, you only know *one way* to play the songs we have covered. **But**, let's look at what you have learned so far and see that you already know enough musical phrases to substitute equal modules for equal modules. This will be your first *banjo conversation*.



Bill Monroe – The Father of Bluegrass Music (1911-1996)  
Photo by Steve Tannenbaum, Circa 1963

*from page 257*

### **Putting It All Together**

This book has, in part, been an attempt to answer the following questions:

- ❖ How do you learn to play bluegrass banjo by ear?
- ❖ How can you get control over the very strange string arrangement of an instrument with the highest string right next to the lowest string?
- ❖ How do you manage an instrument that has very little sustain and which requires a constant outpouring of energy to keep it moving?
- ❖ What is Bluegrass music? What makes it Bluegrass and not just hill country string band music? Could it be the addition of Earl Scruggs and his revolutionary picking that sparked Bluegrass music into life?
- ❖ Can music be called Bluegrass without the 5-string banjo?

Yes, the 5-string banjo is a deeply mysterious instrument. Playing it is more like speaking a language than reciting memorized lines of a play. The rolls and phrases taught here in this book teach that language. Then, you are speaking banjo like the pros!!

My hope here is that I have done much more than just teach a few old tunes. I hope that I have provided a framework that explains the soul of the 5-string banjo so that you can figure out stuff on your own. I hope that when you see someone playing the banjo, you can recognize what is being played, see how it works and learn from it. I hope you can hear organized rolls and patterns instead of just a shower of notes. I hope that by learning organized, patterned rolls, your fingers will learn what flows and what leads you down blind alleys. Of course, playing music is a life-long endeavor. My most fervent wish is that you can learn on your own from here.

The banjo is not hard but it is different. It cannot be played like a guitar. There are right-hand rules that must be learned and followed. Learn the rolls well. You will reach a point where you no longer think of them, you just play. Then you're speaking Conversational Banjo! Practice your vocabulary and have it handy at all times. Pick your leads deliberately with snap and bounce and authority. Get good tone out of your instrument. Always be in tune. Listen to the rhythm and play in time; don't slow down and speed up. Honor the other lead players and the singers by blending your volume so as not to drown them out. Play tasty backup that enhances the band without taking over. Have fun!!! Finally, always be true to your true friends and don't let your deal go down.

*From page 256*

### **Included Instructional CD**

I play the music of this book on the CD's in the order it appears in the book. I play all of the rolls with their signature features. You can listen as I play the parts of each song and then the whole song all put together.

In each example on the CD's, I announce the name of the musical passage and the page where it is found in the book. That way, you can read in the book the progression of the musical skills you are learning and then hear them on the CD's. Each lesson, song or section is a separate cut on the CD's so you can listen to them in the order of the book as you learn and then go back to any section at a future time.

If you should ever lose the CD, contact the Pickin Ranch at our website to order or download a new one. [www.AustinPickinRanch.com](http://www.AustinPickinRanch.com)



**Ritchie Mintz** picked up a guitar at age 8 and banjo at 12. He was teaching both by 15 and has taught hundreds of people to play. Ritchie has played in many bands in Boulder and in Austin, most notably The Towne and Country Revue. Ritchie is the co-author of *Bluegrass Bass – 21<sup>st</sup> Century Edition*.

Ritchie is an Advanced Practitioner of Rolfin® Structural Integration. He is expert in the field of human physical structure and spends a lot of his non-musical hours straightening up people's bodies and aligning them with gravity. [www.TXschoolforSI.com](http://www.TXschoolforSI.com)

**\*\*\* The Towne & Country Revue -- *Live at Mountaineers***

Buy **Conversational Bluegrass Banjo** and receive a free mp3 download of the Towne & Country Revue with Ritchie Mintz and Ned Alterman, co-authors of **Bluegrass Bass – 21<sup>st</sup> Century Edition**.

## The Towne & Country Revue

Available at [www.AustinPickinRanch.com](http://www.AustinPickinRanch.com)

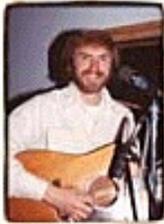
### THE TOWNE & COUNTRY REVUE: LIVE AT MOUNTAINEARS

1. **TRAVELIN' PRAYER** (3:31) BILLY JOEL / ASCAP A MODERN BLUEGRASS CLASSIC FROM BILLY JOEL'S FIRST ALBUM. KEELY SINGS LEAD, NED PLAYS BANJO, AND ON BASS, THE ONE AND ONLY STEVE CARNES!
2. **THE HOT BURRITO BREAKDOWN** (2:38) BYRON BERLINE & ROGER BUSH / ASCAP HOT HOT HOT! HABANERO HOT. THIS TUNE TYPFIES THE HIGH ENERGY BLUEGRASS PICKIN' THAT MADE THE T&CR ALMOST SEMI-FAMOUS. IT'S PEDAL TO THE METAL ALL THE WAY, FIRST ONE TO THE FINISH LINE WINS!
3. **I'LL NEVER SEE MY HOME AGAIN** (2:43) DILLARD & JAYNE / LANDSDOWNE WINSTON PUBL. / ASCAP NED SINGS LEAD. HIS HOT TUB IN THE WOODS WAS A STEAMPOWERED THERAPY ZONE FOR MANY OF US IN THE LATE SEVENTIES. AND IF YOU LISTEN CAREFULLY, YOU CAN ACTUALLY HEAR GEESE CALLING IN THE BACKGROUND. WE IMPORTED THEM JUST FOR THIS SESSION. WATCH WHERE YOU STEP.
4. **AGGRAVATION** (1:31) B. BERLINE / ASCAP AN AGGRAVATING LITTLE INSTRUMENTAL THAT ASKS THE AGE-OLD MUSICAL QUESTION, "CAN THESE GUYS COUNT TO 4?" YOU BE THE JUDGE.
5. **SHE SANG HYMNS OUT OF TUNE** (2:36) JESSE LEE KINCAID; PREACHER / BMI A HAUNTINGLY MYSTERIOUS SONG. SEE IF YOU CAN FIGURE IT OUT. KEELY SINGS THE LEAD, AND WE ALL JOIN IN AT THE END, WHICH MAY OR MAY NOT BE A GOOD THING.
6. **WHEN THE STORM IS OVER** (2:29) BOB LUCAS - ZEKE ON LEAD VOCAL. WE LEARNED THIS ONE FROM NEWGRASS REVIVAL. THEY WARNED US NOT TO ATTEMPT IT WITHOUT A NET.
7. **THERE IS A TIME** (2:53) DILLARD & JAYNE / LANDSDOWNE / WINSTON MUSIC PUBLISHERS / ASCAP ANOTHER GEM FROM THE DILLARDS. BEN WRITES: "I THINK THIS IS ONE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL BLUEGRASS SONGS EVER WRITTEN. I USED TO CRANK UP THE DISTORTION ON MY STEEL GUITAR TO ADD AN ETHEREAL SORT OF OVERLAY TO THE TUNE." KEELY SINGS LEAD.
8. **LOOK DOWN THAT LONESOME ROAD** (2:09) TRADITIONAL / P.D. / BANJO ARR: ALAN MUNDE ONE OF RITCHE'S FAVORITES. WITH A COUPLE OF SLICK KEY CHANGES THROWN IN TO ACCOMMODATE THE VOCAL. KEELY LEARNED THE WORDS FROM HIS DAD. RITCHE'S COMMENT: "ALAN, IF YOU'RE OUT THERE, THIS IS FOR YOU!"
9. **GENTLE ON MY MIND** (3:15) JOHN HARTFORD / BMI GLEN CAMPBELL HAD A HUGE HIT WITH THIS SONG, AND IT CATASTROPHED JOHN HARTFORD TO STARDOM AS WELL. JOHN WAS ONE OF THOSE AMAZING PEOPLE THAT COULD STRING WORDS TOGETHER IN THE MOST MINDBOGLING COMBINATIONS. LEAD VOCALS BY KEELY.
10. **JUBILEE** (2:23) A. BELLING / ARR: BERLINE & MUNDE - A JUBILANT INSTRUMENTAL TUNE! JUBILEE IS THE PERIOD IN THE BIBLE EVERY FIFTY YEARS WHEN ALL DEBTS ARE FORGIVEN AND EVERYBODY GOES HOME. IT'S A TIME OF FESTIVALS AND EATING AND DRINKING - SHOOT, THAT SOUNDS LIKE EVERY BLUEGRASS FESTIVAL WE'VE EVER BEEN TO!

11. **UTAH MOON** (4:32) MICHAEL MCGINNIS & KELLY MCNISH / ASCAP BEN DOES A GREAT JOB SINGING THIS SONG. THE HIGHLIGHT IS WHEN HE STARTS SCAT SINGING ALONG WITH HIS PEDAL STEEL BREAK AND KEEPS IT GOING THROUGH AN ENTIRE VERSE AND CHORUS! ZEKE WAS PLAYING FIDDLE MORE DURING THIS PERIOD AND WE THOUGHT IT GAVE THE RIGHT FEEL TO THIS SONG. KIND OF AN OLD-TIME WESTERN SWING SOUND.
12. **CHARMAINE** (3:10) ERNO RAMEE & LEW POLLACK / ASCAP / BMI THEME SONG FROM THE 1927 MOVIE "WHAT PRICE GLORY," STARRING DOLORES DEL RIO AS THE SULTRY FRENCH GIRL CHARMAINE. ON THIS SONG WE ALWAYS THOUGHT OF THE BANJO, MANDOLIN AND STEEL GUITAR AS BEING LIKE THE HORNS AND CLARINET IN A DIXIELAND BAND, TRADING SOLOS THROUGHOUT THE TUNE AND PLAYING TOGETHER SEPARATELY ON THE LAST CHORUS.
13. **MR. BOJANGLES** (4:30) JERRY JEFF WALKER / ASCAP KEELY SINGS LEAD. BEN WRITES: "I DON'T KNOW HOW WE GOT INTO SIMULATING A CALLOPPE FOR THE INTRO, EXCEPT THE CARNIVAL FEEL FITS WITH THE IMAGE OF A BROKEN DOWN DANCER. I ALWAYS IMAGINED A SWIRLING MERRY-GO-ROUND DREAM-SEQUENCE SORT OF FEEL TO THIS SONG. RITCHE WOULD HAVE CLICKED HIS HEELS BUT HE WAS WEARING EARTH-SHOES."
14. **DIXIE BREAKDOWN** (2:15) DON RENO & JIMMIE LUNSFORD / ASCAP NED JOINS RITCHE ON 5-STRING FOR A TWIN BANJO SPECTACULAR. IN TRUE BREAKDOWN STYLE, NEDO KICKS THE TUNE OFF FAST. ZEKE AND BEN RISE TO THE OCCASION WITH HOT "HEADIN' FOR THE BARN" SOLOS! THAT'S RITCHE TAKING THE 2ND BANJO BREAK. THE BIG BANJO FROM BOULDER PERFORMS A RISKY FLYING MELODIC DISMOUNT AND STICKS THE LANDING! FOR THE FINALE, IT'S TWIN BANJOS IN CONTRARY MOTION AND ONE OF OUR FAVORITE TOWNE & COUNTRY ENDINGS.



**NED ALTERMAN**  
GUITAR, VOCALS (BANJO  
ON "TRAVELIN' PRAYER"  
AND "DIXIE BREAKDOWN")



**KEELY BRUNNER**  
GUITAR, VOCALS



**STEVE CARNES**  
BASS AND VOCALS



**ZEKE LITTLE**  
MANDOLIN, VOCALS  
(FIDDLE ON  
"GENTLE ON MY MIND")



**BEN CARNES**  
PEDAL STEEL GUITAR  
VOCALS



**Ritchie Mintz**  
Banjo, Guitar, Vocals

**Conversational Bluegrass Banjo**  
is a BPH Production

[www.AustinPickinRanch.com](http://www.AustinPickinRanch.com)

[www.RitchieMintz.com](http://www.RitchieMintz.com)



# Conversational Bluegrass Banjo

By Ritchie Mintz

Co-Author of *Bluegrass Bass --  
21<sup>st</sup> Century Edition*

## Complete Instruction Guide To Playing 5-String Banjo

**Banjo is a Language.....  
Learn To Speak It Here**

**Includes Instructional CD's**

Features: 21 Lessons, 12 Right Hand Rolls, 11 Songs

Chapters: Picking Rolls, Chords, The Left Hand, Tags, Drop Thumb, Melodic Picking, Waltz Time, Single String Picking, Voicings, Up The Neck, Backup, Right Hand Rules, Substitutions, Tips & Tricks.....  
Much More

“This book is like nothing I’ve ever seen. There is no music to read, not even TAB! It’s like taking personal and private lessons up close with me so you can pick those strings like a house on fire.”

*Ritchie Mintz*

“Excellent!! A whole new way to learn banjo.”

*Alan Munde – Banjoist Extraordinaire, Alan Munde Gazette  
Professor of Bluegrass Music (ret)*

“Clever and unique...the way of the future.”

*Slim Richey – Master Guitarist and Bluegrass Historian  
Founder of Ridge Runner Records*

ISBN

978-0-9793617-2-2

BPH Productions, Inc.  
[www.AustinPickinRanch.com](http://www.AustinPickinRanch.com)