

BEGINNER'S CORNER

More Forward Motion

Eddie Collins

This month we continue discussing the Forward roll. To review, the word forward is used to describe the motion of the right hand as it plays the Thumb, Index and Middle fingers consecutively (*Example 1*). On banjo, a standard measure in 4/4 time is generally made up of eight eighth notes, which most of us equate with being a complete roll—a pattern that fills up a “complete” measure. By trying to fit a pattern of three notes into an eight-note measure, we come up

with three possible ways to play a forward roll. We studied the first possibility in last month's article: a pattern of 2, 3 and 3, meaning: TMTIMTIM (*Example 2*). Another possibility would be to have the two notes in the middle of the measure: TIMT-MTIM (*Example 3*). The final possibility, which we will focus on this month, would be TIMTIMTM (*Example 4*).

Many players consider the pattern in *Example 4* to be the essential forward roll as most often every note played by the

Thumb is a melody note. One unusual aspect of the pattern is that if every Thumb note is a melody note, the Thumb never strikes the 5th string, which instantly creates a different kind of sound.

Syncopation: Like the pattern studied last month (*Example 2*), use of the forward roll in *Example 4* creates a strong sense of syncopation—where accented (melody) notes are pushed to unaccented beats, or the “&” of the beat. Using this month's tune, *Do Lord*, *Example 5* shows how the first line of the song could be performed using an alternating roll. The highlighted notes represent melody notes, all of which fall on the beats. Compare *Example 5* to the first line of the complete tab for the song, which uses our new forward roll. Notice the melody notes that once fell on the third eight-note stem of the measure now are on the fourth, or beat 2&.

Extending the roll: As mentioned last month, once you get the Forward Roll going, it is hard to stop. If you extend this month's pattern “across the bar line,” you could come up with a useful pattern referred to as the “*In the Mood*” pattern (*Example 6*) as it will sound like the theme from the classic big band tune. Be sure to play the pattern with plenty of bounce. Earl Scruggs often uses variations of this roll in his back-up, especially when playing high back-up.

The only tip you'll need to perform *Do Lord* is to use your 2nd finger to perform the 2-4 slide then return your 2nd finger to the 2nd fret. The 2nd finger also plays fret 3 on string 4 as it leads easily into the

Do Lord

Key of G. Tuning: g DGBD

Arrangement by Eddie Collins
Available as an Mp3 at www.banjoncews.com