

Banjo

for beginners

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An Easy
Beginning
Method

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Chapter 1

Getting Started

Listen

First of all, listen, listen, listen! If you already have some favorite banjo players, get their sounds in your ears. In other words, absorb as much as you can. Just let the music wash over you. When I was starting out, I would sit for hours by the family turntable listening to Flatt and Scruggs's classic *Foggy Mountain Banjo*, staring at the artist's depiction of Earl Scruggs's talon-like fingerpicks and letting the warm yellow of the cover add to the electrifying musical ambience coming from the grooves. Unfortunately, times are different now. If you're as busy as I am, you'll probably do most of your listening in your car. Get your dose of listening wherever you can. (See page 47 for some CD sources.)

Listening will enable you to make connections. For instance, after you learn *Cripple Creek* (page 39), you'll find yourself playing a particular lick on the 3rd string. Once you've listened to other tunes, you'll hear this lick popping up all over the place; at the beginning of Earl Scruggs's recording of *Shucking the Corn*, for example, it occurs three times. You will begin to realize that bluegrass tunes are built of phrases that occur in many different songs. The mystery begins to fall away.

Parts of the Banjo

