

KEN PERLMAN

Clawhammer Banjo & Fingerstyle Guitar Solos



M
1629
P452
C618
1983

MUSIC LP

Banjo

SIDE 1

- | | |
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| 1. St. Anne's Reel/
La Renfleuse Gorbeil | 2:45 |
| 2. Humours of the Castle Comer/
The Blarney Pilgrim | 3:00 |
| 3. Beaumont Rag | 2:40 |
| 4. Johnny Cope | 4:35 |
| 5. Leather Britches | 2:30 |
| 6. Golden Keyboard/
Nine Points of Roguery | 3:05 |

Guitar

SIDE 2

- | | |
|---------------------------------|------|
| 1. Taylor's Twist | 1:55 |
| 2. O'Carolan's Welcome | 2:20 |
| 3. The Humours of Ballylaughlin | 2:30 |
| 4. Madame Bonaparte | 2:35 |
| 5. Don Tremain's Reel | 1:30 |
| 6. The Return from Fingal | 2:30 |
| 7. Planxty Lord Inchiquin | 3:00 |
| 8. Swingin' on a Gate | 1:30 |

I call Ken Perlman a musician's musician, but non-musicians will also find this first solo album an eye-opening introduction to the range and beauty of both the guitar and the 5-string banjo.

I first heard Ken at the 1979 Old Dominion Folk Festival in Norfolk, Virginia. He was an amazing instrumentalist then, and he keeps getting better.

Fans of his cuts on the now legendary Kicking Mule *Melodic Clawhammer Banjo* album will be delighted with all of the banjo cuts here. His "Beaumont Rag" just plain dances. On the guitar side, "Return from Fingal" especially pleases me. Not that I'll play favorites. I'll play the entire album—over and over again!

Lorraine Lee
South Natick, Massachusetts
Spring 1983

Through his recordings, instruction books and taped lessons, Ken Perlman has influenced the playing styles of thousands of guitar and banjo players. He appeared on the ground-breaking *Melodic Clawhammer Banjo* album (Kicking Mule Records, #KM209), and his *Melodic Clawhammer Banjo* book (Oak Publications, 1979) was acclaimed by *Bluegrass Unlimited* as "the definitive volume on the style." He has written two other banjo books—*New England and Irish Fiddle Tunes for Clawhammer Banjo* (Chappell Music Co., 1980) and *Clawhammer Style Banjo* (Prentice-Hall, 1983)—and recorded a clawhammer instruction series for Homespun Tapes (Box 694F, Woodstock, N.Y. 12498). Ken has also written three guitar books—*Fingerstyle Guitar* (Prentice-Hall, 1980), which has been translated into German (German title: *Fingerpicking perfekt*), *Fingerpicking Fiddle Tunes: Traditional Dance Music Arranged for Guitar* (Chappell, 1978), and *Fingerstyle Guitar, Vol. 2* (Prentice-Hall, due 1984).

CREDITS

All arrangements and variations:	Ken Perlman
Guitar Accompaniment (Side One):	Bob Jones
Producer:	Andy Polon
Production Assistance:	Bob Jones
Engineer:	Emile Zoghby

Recorded at O.R.A. Studio, New York, N.Y.

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KEN PERLMAN

Clawhammer Banjo & Fingerstyle Guitar Solos

A WORD FROM THE ARTIST

This album has been a long time in coming. Since Melodic Clawhammer Banjo was released in 1977, a number of record deals were agreed upon, only to fall through for one reason or another. Even this project was first contracted three years ago, and postponed time and again. Be that as it may, here - at long last - is my first solo album.

This is an all instrumental album of exclusively traditional material, so I'll take this opportunity to put into words what I'm trying to say and accomplish.

Most of the tunes on the album are Celtic folk-dance melodies. These tunes are certainly the purest, and arguably the most beautiful melodic form that our culture has produced. When played for listening (as opposed to dancing) on five-string banjo and guitar, they take on a new character - they lose a little drive and rhythmic punch, but the melodies shine out as the exquisite gems they are. This, in particular, is what motivated me to develop the playing style you hear on this album.

I brought to this music my blues guitar and old-time banjo training, and the result represents a blending of these great traditions. In other words, the guitar pieces represent an application of blues guitar techniques to Celtic dance melodies; the banjo pieces represent the application of Afro-Appalachian banjo techniques to the playing of these melodies.

One of my great pleasures is arranging (that is, "putting together") tunes like the ones on the album for guitar and banjo. It's like working on a jigsaw puzzle - how can this or that group of notes be fitted together so they can be played up to speed with life and expression? Once a piece is broadly arranged, it has to be perfected and practiced countless times to produce what I like to call a "well-crafted" or even a "handicrafted" tune (Gordon Bok of Camden, Maine calls them "handies"). In the midst of this process, I feel kinship with classical musicians and also with the tradition of fine American craftsmanship that flourished in this country right up to the end of World War II. When I'm really on and these "handies" are flowing out of my instrument, it satisfies a longing for beauty and order in the world - something that is hard to come by in popular culture these days.

For those of you who are interested, here is some technical information. My guitar is a Martin 000-28 made in the C. F. Martin and Co. custom shop in 1981. My banjo combines a Vega-tubaphone pot from the 1920s with a five-string

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neck made in 1980 by the Arthur E. Smith Banjo Company of Massachusetts. The music was recorded first on a one-half inch eight-track machine and mixed down to a one-quarter inch two-track machine. No "over-dubbing" or "punching in" was done on any of these cuts. What you hear is what was played.

I would like to thank Andy Polon for getting me off my duff and into the recording studio, Bob Jones for putting in many beyond-the-call-of-duty hours of rehearsal time, and Vic Curran for going out of his way to help set up the album photo. Helpful in lending their ears and opinions were all of the above, plus Lorraine Lee, Holly Staver, Gary Tabita, Martha Burns and Anton Pawlowski. Let me also take this opportunity to thank all those who, along the way, have supported and encouraged my musical endeavors.

Hope you enjoy the album.

Ken Perlman
New York, New York
Spring 1983

SIDE ONE

Banjo

1. St. Anne's Reel / La Renfleuse Gorbeil (tuning: gCGCD; capo: 2nd fret; key: D Major). "St. Anne's Reel" is considered a French Canadian tune by everyone but the French Canadians, who say that it's Scottish-Canadian. I play a scaled-down version the first time through, followed by a more complex variation with lots of triplets. Tablature for "St. Anne's" is in my Homespun Tapes series. I learned "La Renfleuse Gorbeil" ("The Snoring Mme. Gorbeil"), an undisputedly French Canadian tune, from the playing of fiddler Jean Carignan. Although the tune might seem to be the French Canadian sequel to the Irish reel "Drowsy Maggie," it is actually much closer to an Irish tune called "The Maid Behind the Bar."
2. Humours of the Castle Comer / The Blarney Pilgrim (tuning: gDGBD). People used to say that you couldn't clawhammer jigs. They were wrong. "Humours of the Castle Comer" is a haunting Irish jig that moves back and forth between the E Aeolian and E Dorian modes. Tablature for the tune is in Clawhammer Style Banjo. "The Blarney Pilgrim" is a three-part Irish jig in G Major. The second time through, I take it up an octave where the banjo has a compelling tonality. See Melodic Clawhammer Banjo for the tablature.
3. Beaumont Rag (tuning: gCGCD; key: C Major). There's never been a tradition of ragtime clawhammer, so this cut represents a lot of pioneering. The tune was first recorded in the 1920s by an anonymous group of musicians known to posterity as Smith's Garage Fiddle Band. It has since been recorded hundreds of times, but not, to my knowledge, on clawhammer banjo. To silence the skeptics forever, I play two original ragtime variations on the basic theme.

4. Johnny Cope (tuning: gCGCD; capo: 2nd fret). Originally an eighteenth century Scottish ballad about a hated English general, the melody crossed into Ireland, where it evolved into a two-part hornpipe (parts one and six of this version). The tune intrigued musicians so much that a number of variations were added, of which four are presented here. Five of the six sections are in the A Dorian mode. The exception (part 2) moves through no less than four modes (C Major, A Dorian, A Mixolydian, C Major), before resolving back to A Dorian. Most musicians play parts 3 and 4 in reverse order, but I like it better this way. Many musicians play the tune like a hornpipe, but this slow-reel version, which I learned from fiddler Kathleen Collins, is more poignant.
5. Leather Britches (tuning: gDGBD; key: G Major). This is a pretty standard Southern fiddle tune. Since its melody ranges down to low G on the fiddle, I had to take the basic tune up an octave so it would fit on the banjo. Then, I made up a variation for the banjo's low register and one for its high register. The tune has an un-folky surprise ending.
6. Golden Keyboard / Nine Points of Roguery (tuning: gCGCD; capo: 2nd fret). "Golden Keyboard" is an Irish reel in the E Dorian mode. I learned it from New York fiddlers Andy McGann and Paddy Reynolds. "Nine Points of Roguery" is an Irish reel in D Mixolydian, which I patterned after a version by Irish fiddler Tommy Peoples. I use the fifth string here for rhythmic punctuation - akin to the use of regulator valves by uilleann bagpipers.

SIDE TWO

Guitar

1. Taylor's Twist (sixth string tuned to D, key: D Major). I learned this Irish hornpipe from the playing of Paddy Reynolds. It's called a "twist" because of all the little twists and turns in the melody. Both tab and standard notation for this tune will be in Fingerstyle Guitar, Volume 2.
2. O'Carolan's Welcome (standard tuning, key: A natural minor). This is one of Turlough (rhymes with Sherlock) O'Carolan's many compositions. O'Carolan was a blind Irish harpist of the early eighteenth century who was very influenced by Baroque music. This tune in particular shows a tension between these Baroque ideas and his Irish folk roots. I try to make the guitar sound like a harp by getting the melody across the strings - like Keith-picking on a banjo. Tablature and standard notation for this one will be in Fingerstyle Guitar, Volume 2.
3. The Humours of Ballylaughlin (sixth string tuned to D). I learned this four-part Irish jig, named for the town of Ballylaughlin (pronounced bal-ly-lock-lin) from Kathleen Collins. Parts 1, 2 and 4 are in the D Mixolydian mode. Part 3 ventures into D Major. Truly a gem of a tune.

4. Madame Bonaparte (standard tuning; key: A Major).
The Chieftains, from whom I learned this tune, say that it was written in early nineteenth century Ireland as a tribute to the Empress Josephine. "Madame Bonaparte" closely resembles a hornpipe, but is officially classified as a "set dance" because of its extra-long second section.
5. Don Tremain's Reel (sixth string tuned to D; key: D Major). This Northern New England reel is heavily influenced by French Canadian music. Getting in all the notes of Part 2 up-to-speed was a real challenge to my ingenuity.
6. The Return from Fingal (standard tuning; key of E Dorian). According to legend, this one was written by the harpist of Brian Boru, the eleventh century Irish king who defeated the Danes at the Battle of Clontarf. Again, I use "Keith-picking" to make the guitar sound like a harp. Tablature and standard notation are in Fingerpicking Fiddle Tunes.
7. Planxty Lord Inchiquin (sixth string tuned to D, key: D Major). This is another O'Carolan composition. "Planxty" is Gaelic for "in honor of." Lord Inchiquin was a prominent nobleman of O'Carolan's day. O'Carolan, and most other artists of that era, subsisted by means of a patronage system - trading "dedications" to the rich and powerful for what amounted to long periods of room and board. Since our current ruling classes only pay money for advertising jingles, I'm convinced that the old bards had the better of the deal by far. The Baroque influence is strikingly evident in this tune, tablature and standard notation for which are in the first volume of Fingerstyle Guitar.
8. Swingin' on a Gate (standard tuning; key: G Major). This is another reel from New England. It's a very nice tune, but it has the misfortune of being tied to a contradance of the same name. During the course of this dance, the tune is played through at least 25 times, which is enough to make any self-respecting musician insane. On the other hand, if you've never heard the tune before you can easily learn it in the course of a single dance. Here, I mercifully play the tune but twice.