

Dobro Crash Course 3
Bonus Q&A Session June 29

No big notes about class – just check the recording. I covered the formulations of minor chords again, went into the keys of Gm and Dm briefly, looked at how to apply some licks we learned to other songs, demoed and discussed “You’ll Never Leave Harlan Alive” in the keys of Gm and Am, etc...

You’ll Never Leave Harlan Alive: Another great minor key song that goes to the relative major for the chorus. We were listening briefly to this version by Patty Loveless w/Chris Stapleton and Darrell Scott: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IPhR4c3jwl8>

I’m providing backing tracks and chord charts in Gm, Am, and Em for you to goof around with....

Strum Machine

I forgot to mention that I make my backing tracks with Strum Machine, a website/app made by our bluegrass buddy, Luke Abbott. It’s also my favorite practice tool. Luke is always improving the app to make it easier, more intuitive, and more functional. I can whip up a chord chart/backing track in a minute or two, and there are a ton of bluegrass and old time tunes already in the Strum Machine library. With any Strum Machine chord chart, you can instantly transpose to any key. You can also adjust the style and feel of guitar strumming, adjust the levels and panning of the guitar/mando/bass mix, and if you like, download tracks as mp3s. I routinely use the auto-speedup function, which plays back a song incrementally faster at whatever increment you choose. I usually use +1 beat per minute per iteration of the song if I’m trying to get my speed up on a difficult piece. If you start slowly and speed up 1 bpm each time, or even every second time through the song, you’d be amazed how quickly you can be playing faster. You can also download the standalone app, which lets you use Strum Machine when you’re offline. Luke gave me a url you can use to get an extended free trial to see if it might be worthwhile for you to get a subscription: <https://strummachine.com/ivan>

My next workshop series for Nashville Acoustic Camps will be.....[drum roll].....

Solo Dobro Part 1—Wednesdays at 7:30pm Central this fall: Oct 30, Nov 6, 13, 20

This is a big and complicated subject and can’t be packed into just one four-part series, so I’ll spread it out into two or three. If you’ve taken Dobro Crash Courses 1 through 3, you’ll have the right foundation to move into this new dimension of Dobro playing.

It’s very challenging to play chords, rhythm, and melody sufficiently in such a way that the song holds together with no other accompaniment, and some right-hand dexterity is required. The trick is that you need to train your picking hand to do certain moves on autopilot. I’ll start you off the first week with a slew of exercises to train your picking hand to play a number of arpeggios, scale notes with bass drones, and some right-hand grips for

certain sets of strings to catch various chords and double-stops. We'll also go deeper into using minor chords built off a root on the B strings, a concept which is very helpful and liberating when playing unaccompanied. You'll want to set aside a lot of practice time after that first class so you're ready for Week 2.

Then for weeks 2 through 4, we'll put these ideas to work on a few songs. I'm not sure what songs I'll teach yet; I have two solo Dobro albums (nearly three—I'm almost done with another) and plenty of ideas for repertoire, but it'll take some forethought to plan the right blend of songs at the right level of complexity. For this workshop series, I'll probably do one song with vocals so we can discuss backing oneself up while singing, and two or three instrumentals.

Nashville Dobro Camp (in person!), Oct. 3-6, 2024 with Abbie Gardner and me

I think there are still two open spots. This is my favorite Dobro event on earth—it's essentially a vacation retreat with Dobro buddies. Lots of learning and jamming, a surprise mystery field trip in Nashville, great meals, good times. What could be better? Sign up at <https://www.nashvilleacousticcamps.com/dobro-camp.php>

Lessons

I have a really busy July, but as of August, I'll have time for occasional private lessons via Zoom if anyone's interested. Shoot me an email to discuss at ivanDrosenberg@gmail.com. I also may do a couple of one-off Zoom classes between now and then—if so I'll let you know...

Thanks Megan!

Thanks again to Megan for being a bluegrass education superstar, hosting these workshops, and doing all the admin work that would make me go completely bonkers.

Have a great summer!

Happy dobro pickin' everyone, and thanks for taking this workshop series with me—I hope you got a lot out of it!

Ivan