

Disc
1

Track
1

Key **E**

Chords **E A**

Guitar Key **D**

Tuning **Standard**

Capo **"Drop E"**

Singer **Harvey**

Guitar **Harvey**

RECORDINGS

Kelly Harrell (1925), Ernest Stoneman, Wade Mainer, Cisco Houston, Woody Guthrie, Lonnie Donegan, Jim Reeves, Tennessee Ernie Ford, Burl Ives, Hedy West, Bob Dylan, Mac Wiseman, New Lost City Ramblers, Ramblin' Jack Elliott, The Everly Brothers, Marty Robbins, Larry Sparks, Buck Owens, Jerry Garcia, Simon & Garfunkel, Dave Dudley, Sally Rogers, Hank Thompson

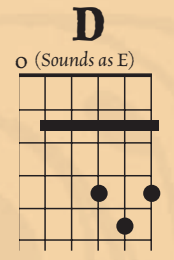
ROVING GAMBLER

(Traditional)

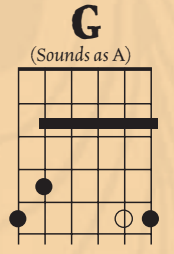
This is a quite widespread old song that shares roots with "The Cuckoo" and "Jack of Diamonds" songs. It was conspicuously absent from the 1960 Alan Lomax collection "Folk Songs of North America." It seems to have spread around after a recording by cowboy singer Carson Robison in the 1930's, and as a result of being sung by Woody Guthrie, Cisco Houston and that influential clique of folk music trendsetters. Simon & Garfunkel even recorded it for their best-selling 1966 album "Sounds of Silence," but it was not released until 2001. Our version resembles the earliest recording by Kelly Harrell in 1925. Bob Dylan has played the song for decades, and wrote some nice new verses to it you might try. He opened his concert with it on his return to the Newport Folk Festival in 2003, 40 years after his famous and quite controversial performance there with a rock band.

GUITAR TIPS

In the old versions they don't repeat the last line of the verses as a refrain. You most often hear it done now in bluegrass, with an added relative (6th scale degree) minor chord in the repeat line. (You would need a barre chord Bm here.) I like the non-chordal note you get when you sing the 6th against the 4 chord on the repeat line. I use a trick on the guitar that gives a fuller sound, though you can of course play D and G chords, or even E and A with no capo. I slide the capo sideways so it clamps only the top 5 strings at the 2nd fret. (You can also saw off a capo or buy a partial capo that does only this.) The D chord sounds as an E with a nice rich low bass string. The G chord is unchanged and played normally. Use all 6 strings on both chords. If you sing higher than E, use 2 capos.



1 chord



4 chord

Chord Progression

Verse:
1 1 1 1
1 1 4 1 1

Refrain:
1 4 1 1 1
1 1 4 1 1



Disc

1

Track

2

Key

D

Chords

D

A

Guitar Key

D

Tuning

Standard

Capo

None

Singer

Joyce

Guitar

Joyce

RECORDINGS

Grayson & Whitter* (1927), Bob Dylan, Tim O'Brien, Mick Jagger, Richard Thompson, Mike Seeger, Martin Simpson, The Strawbs, Bill Morrissey, The Carter Family, The Stanley Brothers, Doc Watson, The Country Gentlemen, Wade Mainer, Norman Blake, Ian & Sylvia, Flatt & Scruggs, Mom's Home Cookin', Lou Reid, Jim Post, The Deighton Family, Hylo Brown, Kate McLeod

HANDSOME MOLLY

(Traditional)

"Handsome Molly" first showed up in the earliest days of recordings of folk music in the late 1920's, and over the years it has been done by quite a number of folk, country & bluegrass artists, both high and low profile, ranging from Ian & Sylvia to Mick Jagger. The versions are not widely different, and they all have pretty much the same chords and melody, with only minor variations in words. It seems to be a descendant of the Irish songs "Farewell Ballymourrie" and "Loving Hannah" with which it shares several verses and the plot. (English guitarist Nic Jones recorded a stunning version of this old song on his "Penguin Eggs" album.)

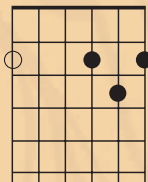
GUITAR TIPS

We decided to give it a more "modern" rhythm and forego the faster and bouncier way the old-time and bluegrass people often do it. Joyce adds some rhythmic interest with full-chord "hammer-ons," which means she strums the strings open and then quickly presses the fingers down to sound the chord. The verse and chorus have the same chords and melody, so it is a very simple, yet engaging song. The chords don't change too fast, and the words don't "pull" the song into faster tempos like they do on a lot of songs. It's a choice how long to pause on the 1 chord between sections of the song.

"...Can I read notes? Hell, there are no notes to a banjo. You just play it."

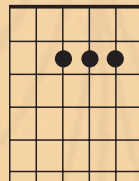
REPLY MADE BY AN OLD-TIME BANJO PICKER, INTERVIEWED AROUND 1850, WHEN ASKED IF HE COULD READ MUSIC (FROM PETE SEEGER'S "HOW TO PLAY THE 5-STRING BANJO" BOOK)

D



1 chord

A



5 chord

Chord Progression

1 1 1 5
5 5 1 1



Disc

1

Track

3

Key

E

Chords

E

D

Guitar Key

E

Tuning

Standard

Capo

None

Singer

Harvey

Guitar

Harvey

RECORDINGS

J.J. Cale* (1971), Waylon Jennings,
Bill Wyman, Giles, Dr. Hook & the
Medicine Show, Harvey Reid

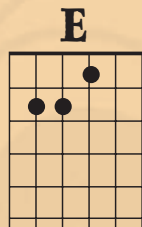
CLYDE

(JJ Cale/W. Beavers)

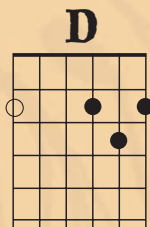
Tulsa, Oklahoma rocker J.J. Cale has provided both Mark Knopfler and Eric Clapton with a big part of their guitar sound and shuffle rhythm feel, and he also has written songs that have become hits for many artists. This one came from his debut album “Naturally” in 1971 (which also included “After Midnight” and “Call Me the Breeze”) and was a country hit for Waylon Jennings in 1980. I have known this song for years, and recorded a fingerpicked Open D slide guitar version about 11 years ago. I completely overlooked the fact that it is a 2-chord song until late in this project.

GUITAR TIPS

I had to boil down the full-band sound to just an uncomplicated acoustic guitar, and ended up doing it with no muting or backbeat, and just a steady strum with a rather light pick. The verses are all just an E chord, and for the “instrumental” break between verses it goes back and forth to the D chord. Cale even used a fiddle on his original version, so it was a natural thing for Joyce and me to work it up as a guitar-fiddle duet. It’s of course not simple to generate a rockin’ rhythm like this, but it’s good to have songs like this in your head to give you something to aim for. This is almost a *mixolydian mode* song because of the D or “drop” chord, but the verses don’t really go there and are really just pentatonic blues.



1 chord



b7 chord

Chord Progression

Verse

1	1	1	1
1	1	1	1
1	1	1	1
1	1	1	1

Break

b7	1	b7	1
b7	b7	1	1
1	1		



Disc

1

Track

4

Key **G**Chords **G D**Guitar Key **G**Tuning **Standard**Capo **None**Singer **Joyce**Guitar **Joyce**

RECORDINGS

John Carson (1924), Henry Thomas, Lonnie Donegan, Josh White*, Bill Monroe*, Bruce Springsteen, Odetta, John Lee Hooker, Harry Belafonte, Paul Robeson, Pete Seeger, Leadbelly, Flatt & Scruggs, Merle Travis, Charlie Daniels, Burl Ives, John Hartford, Fred McDowell, Doc Watson, The Stanley Brothers, Woody Guthrie, Hot Rize, Peg Leg Sam, Jimmy Martin, John Renbourn, Taj Mahal, Bill Broonzy, The Mammals, David Grisman, Arvella Gray, Johnny Horton, Bob Gibson, John Fahey, John McCutcheon, Brownie McGhee, Etta Baker, Furry Lewis, Jerry Lee Lewis

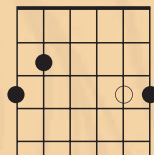
JOHN HENRY

(Traditional)

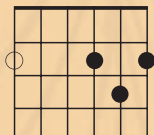
John Henry is probably the most widespread ballad in American folk music, and among the most important. It is not really possible to trace its path, since it spread significantly long before recordings or radio, but it seems to have been first sung on work gangs throughout the South. It tells an apparently true story of a contest between man and the steam drill, probably in the 1870's, where a man named John Henry died after outperforming a steam-driven rock drill in the building of a railroad tunnel. It was usually thought to have happened in West Virginia, though some suggest it was Alabama. It is also unclear if he was a convict being leased to the railroad or a free working man. Perhaps the ongoing industrial and technological revolution has made the American people receptive to this primal story, as they lose their jobs to mechanization and feel powerless. The details of the song vary quite a bit among the hundreds of versions, but in general the heroic theme is constant. Some of the blues versions imply that John Henry was more of a victim than a hero (which may indeed be the historical fact) but the truth remains that the epic nature of his struggle and his death resonates with working people everywhere.

GUITAR TIPS

This is usually done either as a 1 chord blues (often in Open D tuning) or as a 2-chord song with a 1-5 change, though some add a 4 chord. There are very few versions sung by women, so Joyce merged the Josh White and Bill Broonzy versions with some verses and notions from other places. We gave it an unusual tempo that is pretty much a "Memphis Minnie" beat, that reminds us of the incredible Ed Lewis version, where he is chopping wood while singing. I play some fingerpicked Open G leads and rhythm slaps.

G

1 chord

D

5 chord

Chord Progression

1 1 1 5

1 1 1 1

1 1

