

Beyond Boom-Chucka & Chattanooga

Adding Rests (subtracting beats) to Create Alternate Clawhammer Rhythms

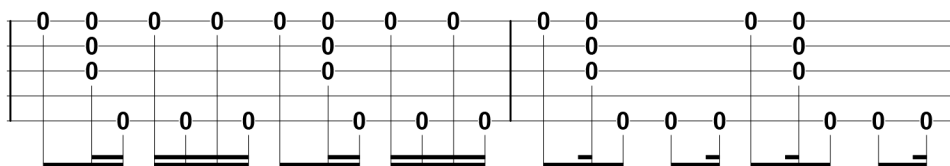
When we first learn basic clawhammer, we're mostly playing one of two rhythms - Boom-Chuck-A (1-rest-3-4) and Chat-Ta-Noo-Ga (1-2-3-4). Once you feel really solid with playing your basic strum, double thumb, and drop thumb in really good straight time, and with great drive and rhythm (which is something you could work on your life), you might want to look at some other rhythmic possibilities. The good news is, to do this, you don't have to put more in, you have to take things out. The bad news is, this means leaving more space in the music, which can be a real challenge (and one that can only be achieved if someone has very solid understanding and feel for straight time, and good technique).

Clawhammer style banjo is a very physical thing. There is a lot of body momentum involved. To me it's almost like dancing. This is one of the things that makes its drive and groove so unique. The problem with this momentum is, once we try and break the momentum (to take a note out, or rest), it can be hard to get back in with the same groove. The results can be quite underwhelming, and can really get a guy down.

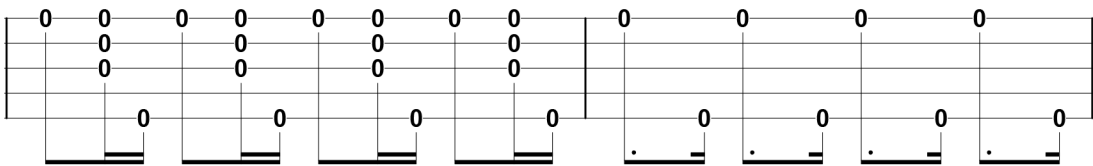
Luckily, there is a trick! The trick is simple - **keep the thumb going**. When you rest in clawhammer keep your thumb tapping on the fifth string (silently) as if you were playing double thumb through the whole rest. This means that the thumb will land and load, **but not play** the 5th string on beats 2 and 4. If you learn to do this, you'll be able to drop out for a whole bar or two of music and come back solid as a rock.

This will take some time to get, but once you do, you can start leaving more space in your clawhammer and then the next time you're waxing poetic about "less being more", you can put your money where your mouth is.

Ex. 1 - In the first bar it's boom-chuck-a, chat-ta-noo-ga. In the second bar, we've taken out beats 1 and 3 from the Chattanooga...so it's *boom-chucka, - ta- ga*



Ex. 2 - In this example we've taken out beat 3 from the basic strum. We're left with just beats 1 and 4. So, we're left with *boom-chuck-a, boom - - a*



Ex. 3 - In this example I've put them together and we're playing on beats 1 and 4, then 2 and 4.

