

# BUILDING TUNES IN LAYERS

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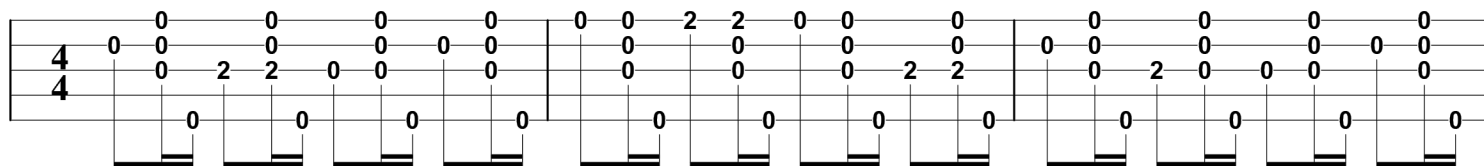
Here is a methodical way of building an arrangement of pretty much any tune. One of the cool things about this is, if you follow it step by step, you'll end up with several variations of the tune. While you're doing that, you'll probably get a better understanding of how all your clawhammer tools work, and what you can do with them. One of the tricks here will be to actually follow the steps, and not skip them because they seem too simple. Just because step one is the first step, it doesn't mean it's the easiest, or most obvious step. In fact, step one is just the basic strum (bum-ditty stroke), and in my my experience, that's a technique that most people just sort of glance over, and miss the full potential of.

The tune we're going to look at here is Arkansas Traveler. It is a very common tune, so it's a good one to work with, but like all "very common tunes", there are lots of different versions floating around, and this is just my take on it.

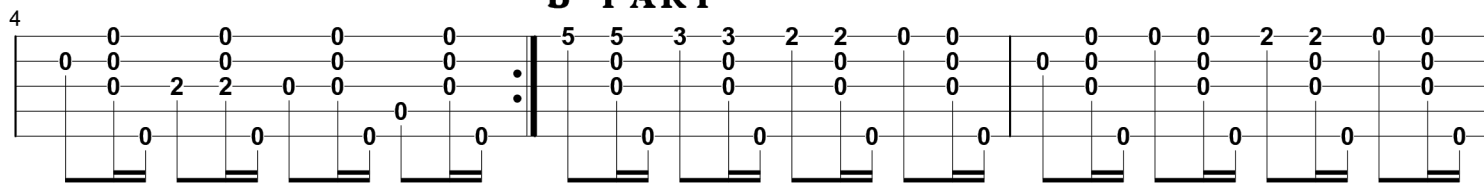
Step 1. - Make a version of the tune using only the basic strum and no left hand ornaments. Basically, you're going to pretend that all you know how to do is the basic strum with your right hand, and fret notes with your left hand (no hammer-ons, pull-offs, or slides). So, all you're really looking at is the first beat of your 4 note pattern, or the "boom" of boom-chucka. One trick to figuring this out is hum the tune and say the words "boom-chucka". Pay attention to the note you're singing when you say the word "boom". Find those notes on the banjo...- just those notes ...don't get lured in by any of the other ones. Once you figure out where those notes are, plug in your basic strum.

Here is what Arkansas Traveler might look like if you did that.

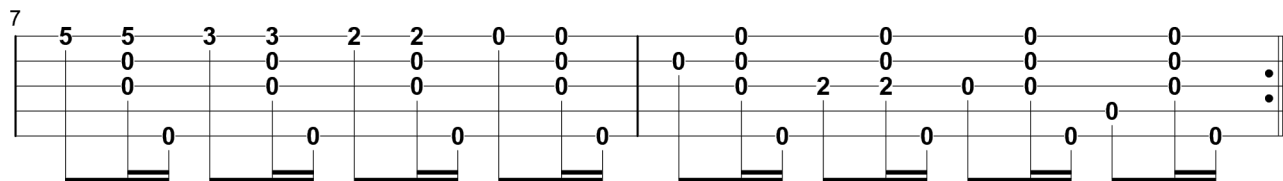
## A PART



## X2 B PART



X2



So, what you have here is the simplest way you could play Arkansas Traveler as a clawhammer tune. It's very skeletal to be sure, but if you played this along with a fiddler who was playing all the notes this would sound awesome, because what you're losing in melody, you're gaining in rhythm. If you played this way behind fiddlers on a regular basis, people would think you were some sort of Zen wizard, and you'd become the most popular old-time banjo picker in town. This might not make the best solo clawhammer tune, but it's closer than you might think...all we have to do is add some left hand ornaments....which brings us to step 2.