

Billy in the Low Land

Traditional

Arrangement (c) copyright 2011 by Donald J. Borchelt

G

D
A
G
D
G

2
4

Em

G

5

C

1. D7 See notes G

2. D7 G

9

C

D7

G

13

C

1. D7 G

2. D7 G

17

Up the neck break

Po

Em

21

G

See notes

Po

Po

1. D7 G

25

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2. D7 G See notes C Billy in the Low Land - Traditional

29

33

1. D7 G 2. D7 G ⊕ D7 G

37

This is a Henry Reed tune that I decided I had to learn after hearing Alan Jabbour and Ken Perlman play it at a recent concert. It is on their Southern Summits CD. This is not the same tune as the more widely known Billy in the Lowground. I have set my arrangement in G Variant tuning, which has the 2nd string tuned down to A.

Measures 10 and 11, the last measure of the low part, features a melodic "double stop," plucking two strings at once in the middle of a melodic phrase. This instance will require using the middle finger to pick the open 2nd string, while the thumb picks the open 4th string. Measures 19 and 20 provide an alternative approach, without the double stop.

The transition from measure 24 to 25 employs on the banjo something Jabbour calls "anticipation." This is a common Appalachian fiddle technique where the first note of a melody is advanced into the rhythmic area usually reserved for pick up notes. In this case, a slide is involved, but often the note itself is held into the beginning of the next measure.

In the up the neck break, I have simplified the melody substantially in several places, in order to preserve a clear ringing tone. Note measures 26, 30, 34, and 36; the melody has been reduced to the most essential eighth notes, the intermediate 16th notes of the fiddle rendition have been dropped. In converting from a fiddle tune to a banjo tune, generally simple is better.