

**Say Old Man**  
 Can You Play the Fiddle Arrangement (c) copyright 2003, by Donald J. Borchelt.  
 All rights reserved

The sheet music is written for a fiddle in 2/4 time. The key signature is one sharp (F#), indicated by the chord symbols. The music is organized into measures, with measure numbers 6, 10, 14, 18, 22, and 26 marked at the beginning of their respective lines. Chord symbols are placed above the staff to indicate the harmonic structure: Em (Dm), D(C), and E(D). The notation includes various techniques such as slurs, accents, and grace notes. Specific techniques are labeled with 'SI' (slurs) and 'H' (accents). Measure numbers are placed above the notes to indicate fingerings. The music consists of a single melodic line on a five-line staff.

30 D(C) E(D) D(C) E(D)

34 D(C) E(D) D(C) E(D)

38 D(C) E(D) D(C) E(D)

42 D(C) E(D) 1. Em (Dm) D(C) Em (Dm)

46 D(C) Em (Dm) D(C) Em (Dm)

50 D(C) Em (Dm) D(C) Em (Dm) D(C) Em (Dm)

55 D(C) Em (Dm) D(C) Em (Dm)

60

D(C) Em (Dm) D(C) Em (Dm)

64

D(C) Em (Dm) D(C) Em (Dm)E(D) D(C)

69

E(D) D(C) E(D) D(C) E(D)

74

D(C) E(D) D(C) E(D) D(C) E(D)

79

D(C) E(D) D(C) E(D) 2.

Several years ago I ran across a very old practice tape with a version of this tune on it. I liked the way it sounded, but couldn't remember the name of the tune, the tuning I used, or how I got the notes. That can be frustrating. Anyway, I heard the tune again, Say Old Man, Can You Play the Fiddle, and made the connection, and worked it up again, although this new version turned out quite different from the first one.

This tune has basically three parts. The first two are in E Dorian mode, while the third part is in E Mixolydian. Thus, the first two parts use the minor third scale interval, while the last part use the major third, but both use the natural seventh interval. I have written this in the open D version of mountain minor, with the third string tuned up to G. To play with the fiddle, and play along with this MIDI playback, you will have to capo up two frets. The chords in parenthesis are the chords when played open, in D modal.

This arrangement makes liberal use of low drone notes, both the tonic, the open fourth string, and the dominant, the open second string. These should be played with a soft touch.

The back-up arrangement played the second time through is a very simple, almost improvisational harmony part. I generally work these out by noodling around the lead instrument, and often at the end of the phrase resolve back to the tonic, along with the lead instrument. For old-time music, I think that sometimes sounds better than ending the back up on a harmonizing note.