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with each successive measure.

Let's apply a shuffle bow to a common traditional jam session tune, "*Down The Road*". If you're not familiar with this, listen to one of the many versions on YouTube, or even better, find the original Flatt & Scruggs version of this classic traditional tune. For the moment, ignore how we came up with these particular notes for the fiddle break.

Here's the bare-bones melody for the tune as it might be sung:

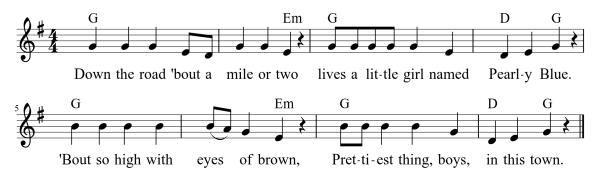


Figure 27: Down The Road - vocal

Here's the most important bit of advice you will ever hear about bluegrass fiddling: *Know the melody before you start to learn or create a fiddle break!*Ralph Stanley used to say to his musicians, "*Play it like you'd sing it.*" Of all the instruments, the violin (and that includes the fiddle) comes closest to being able to imitate the human voice in all its subtle shadings, slides and dynamics. The best players are the ones who can mimic the tones of the human voice. To do that, you need to be able to hear the song in your



Figure 28: Paul Warren, Bill Harrell (guitar), Kenny Baker, Alice McClain (hidden, on mandolin), Curly Ray Cline, Roy Lee Centers (guitar). Delaware Bluegrass and Old-Time Festival, 1972.

head, which is why I insist on my students being able to reproduce the melody before they start learning to play it on the fiddle. Now, the student may not have much of a singing voice but they can hum it or whistle it or play it on a kazoo. The point is to internalize the tune before you start trying to reproduce it.

So go listen to the tune, several different versions if you can, and notice the subtleties of the vocals. There are vocal slides into and out of certain notes. Those will be important later.

Having listened to the tune, we'll assume you can now hum or sing this simple melody. Go ahead and try to play the fiddle break in Figure 29. Most of it is done with a shuffle bow, and a few parts without. This gives it some variety.

First, take a deep breath here before you start. This is the first time we've attempted a break to a tune, and all those notes look *intimidating*! As a rule, you should break this down into small, manageable, bite-sized pieces, perhaps a half measure or a measure long, until you understand it. Listen to the recording of this example on the CD and focus on the part you are trying to learn. Remember that the notation is only one of the tools you use to learn bluegrass fiddle. Trust your ear. The notation will help you to decipher the order of the notes; your ear will tell you how they should be played. OK, let's move on to the example.

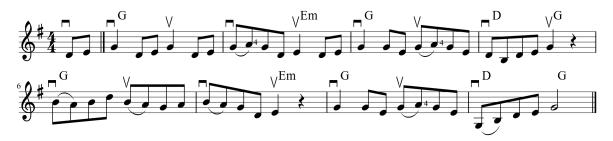


Figure 29: Down The Road - fiddle break, single line only

The first measure is what's called a *pick-up measure*, a way of leading into the melody and establishing the rhythm. The shuffle bow is a long bow followed by two shorts. The long bow can contain (in this time signature) a quarter note (e.g. M2) or two eighth notes (e.g. beginning of M3). In order to play the two eighth notes on the long bow (M3) we play the A *not* on the open A string, but rather with the 4<sup>th</sup> finger on the G string. Note M5, where the chord changes to D briefly; that is not a shuffle bow, since we have to cross strings on it, but is instead a series of short bows.

When you play this, the tune should swing and bounce. It should have a sprightly, slightly clipped feel to it.

## With Drone Strings

Now, this is a perfectly acceptable break for this tune, but one of the things we're aiming for is to produce a full sound from the fiddle. So to this we'll add what's called a *drone string*.