



Cutting a Groove in the Festive Spirit

The festive season is here again and a great way to celebrate is to learn a traditional Christmas song. Jingle Bells was written around 1850 by James Lord Pierpont, and at around 150 years old is still one of the most popular festive songs there is.

I have arranged this song as a chord melody – meaning you can hear the chords and melody all at the same time. This is a simple arrangement, but it might take a bit of practising if you haven't played chord melody before. In NZM's April/May 2007 edition I wrote a lesson titled 'Introduction to Chord Melody' which featured the song Aura Lee so you might want to take a look at that as well. If you don't have a copy it is online at www.guitar.co.nz and www.nzmusician.co.nz

While many of the arrangements in this style tend to lean towards jazz and classical, the more melodic pop songs and movie themes are also very popular performed this way. Most rock players are unfamiliar with chord melody playing, but if you have a desire to get out of your comfort zone, or a hunger for playing in a new style, then you will have a lot of fun with this lesson. Three of the best players to listen to who use this approach are Tuck Andress, Joe Pass and Johnny A – they all perform in different genres.

If you are a beginner you can play the melody alone. To achieve that just pick the top notes in the arrangement and you will hear the tune.

The full arrangement uses triads with an added melody note on top so make sure you get the top note of each chord to sound. The key is C major and the chords are mostly C, F, and G7 using open chord voicings, but some fingerings might be different to what you are used to – like using the 4th finger for added melody notes. The bars with the repeat sign and brackets with 1 and 2 inside them are called 1st and 2nd ending bars, which means to play the bar with 1

The image shows three systems of musical notation for guitar. Each system consists of a treble clef staff with a 4/4 time signature, and three guitar-specific staves labeled T (Treble), A (Acoustic), and B (Bass). The notation includes chords, single notes, and fingerings. The first system covers measures 1-6, the second system covers measures 7-12, and the third system covers measures 13-18, including first and second ending brackets.

the first time, but on the repeat miss it out and play the bar numbered 2 to finish.

Although the music or tab might look difficult, I have written this arrangement in an easy playing style. However, if your level of playing or reading music is still at the beginners' level then it is best to start very slow and play each bar round and round about 10 times before moving to the next. Make sure you get all the chords and the melody to sound clearly

and to have the first eight bars going well before you move onto the next eight, which have a few extra jazzy chords attached.

Have fun with this and I hope you have a great Christmas and New Year.

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