

TRAVIS PICKING WORKSHOP
OCTMA

This diagram is an aid for learning Travis picking. It was drawn by a musician named Tirk Wilder. It will help you develop a solid technique that will allow you to progress into your own style of playing.

To use:

The Roman Numerals represent the sequence of the stroke.

The number in parenthesis corresponds to the number of each finger on the diagram of the right hand.

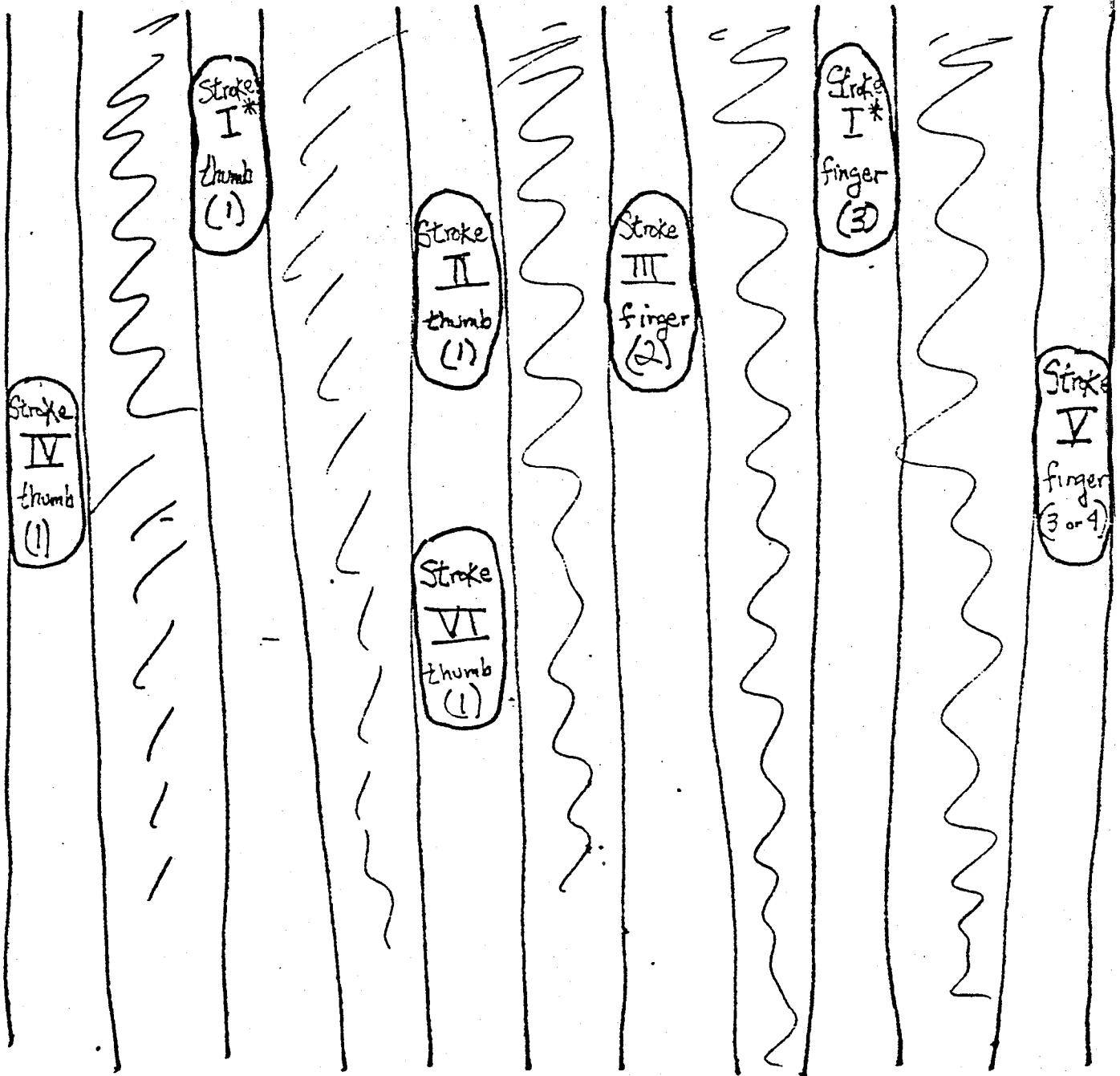
Stroke I is a 'squeeze' which means you pluck the A string and the B string simultaneously.

The thumb (1) will maintain an alternating rhythm on the E, D, and A strings throughout the pattern. The bass strings you play will vary from chord to chord but this will come to you as you experiment with the pattern.

Practice the pattern until your chord changes are smooth and you can start each chord with the right bass note.

The rhythm pattern is illustrated on the GUITAR WORKSHOP sheet on the back page. (A) This rhythm applies to Tirk's diagram but the method is a little different. It uses the thumb and two fingers which you may find easier but I prefer the three finger style for more versatility.

GOOD LUCK AND HAVE FUN!



"B" or "E"
6 or 3

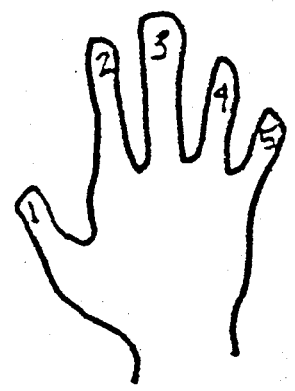
A
or
5th

D or 4th

G
3 or 2

B
2 or 1

F
1 or 2



* Simultaneous "A" and "B" Stroke

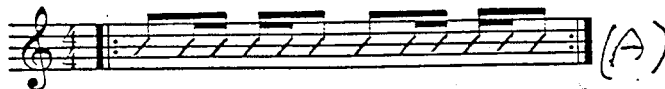
GUITAR WORKSHOP

TRAVIS PICKING

by Joe Knowlton

It's always nice to be able to translate a guitar technique to a practical application of it right away, and one of the songs in this issue, "Dust In The Wind", is a perfect example of the subject of this workshop. "Travis Picking", named after Merle Travis, who supposedly originated the style, is quite versatile, and can be played either fast or slowly. In the original recording by the group "Kansas", a Travis-picked guitar provides virtually the entire musical background for the song, played fairly slowly. Peter, Paul and Mary's version of "Don't Think Twice, It's All Right" is an example of rapid Travis-style.

The basic pattern, rhythmically, is this:



Usually, only three fingers of the right hand are used: the Thumb, Index and Middle Fingers. We'll abbreviate them as T, I, and M. The Thumb will play the three bass strings, the Index finger will play the third string, and the Middle finger will play the second string. Here is the basic pattern again, with the fingers of the right hand added:



You will see both the Thumb and Middle finger playing the first beat, which is just what happens. The Thumb plucks down on a bass string while the Middle finger plucks up on the second string, in a "pinching" motion. Then, for the second beat, the thumb moves to the next bass string. In general, the Thumb will alternate between two bass strings, as we'll see in the next example. For this exercise, just play a C-Major Chord, and play as slowly as you have to for a smooth, continuous rhythm. The first beat of each measure, the "pinch" with Thumb and Middle finger, should be stressed.



Having mastered that, let's look at the first four measures of the song itself, with the Travis-style accompaniment more or less the way it's played on the record.

C G/B Am

I close my eyes

M T M T I T M T M T I T

G Dm7 Am G/B

on - ly for a mo - ment and the mo - ment's gone.

M T M T I T M T M T I T M T M T I T M T M

If you can play this smoothly, go ahead and play through the song using the pattern. A variation of this pattern suggests itself in the last figure of the preceding example, while playing the A-Minor chord. Look again at this figure in Example 4, in which the second half of the figure is all sixteenth notes. Playing this occasionally does add variety, and makes the over-all pattern less choppy. It is difficult to follow the four sixteenth notes with the Thumb and Middle finger "pinch", so just play that beat

with the Thumb. This variation on the basic Travis-Style can be called "Double-Thumbing", since you are alternating the Thumb with one of the two fingers. One danger to double-thumbing for too long is that you may lose the rhythm, but a little here and there can't hurt.

There you have Travis-Picking. It may take a while to get it smoothly, but it's worth spending the time to get it right, because you'll probably use this technique quite often.

The musical examples in this article are available on cassette from Sheet Music Magazine's Tape Service.