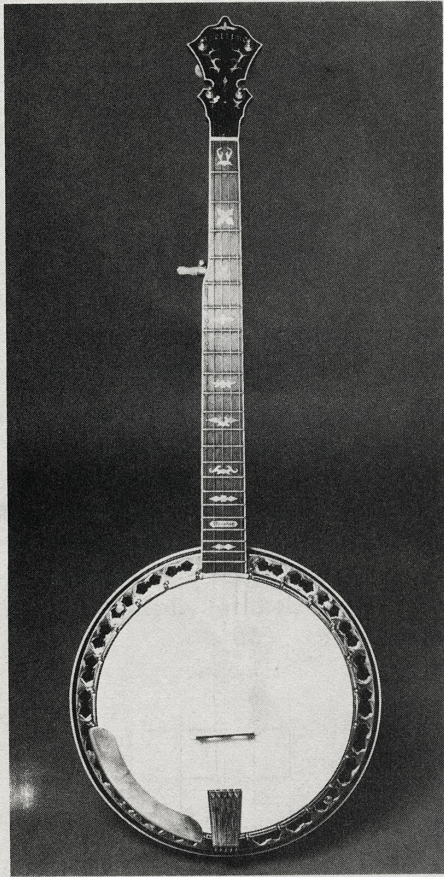


# Introduction



Right now the five-string banjo is experiencing a greater popularity than at any other time in its history. Thanks to *Dueling Banjos* (from *Deliverance*), *Foggy Mountain Breakdown* (from *Bonnie and Clyde*), and a flood of commercials that feature five-string, banjo mania is reaching epic proportions. At the heart of all this excitement is a smooth, driving style which has the power to dramatically vary the texture of a bluegrass band. Rippling gently at first during the backup, the banjo can suddenly explode into a torrent of notes on the lead break and then quietly recede once more into the background. This book will show you how to get these sounds and use them effectively in a band context.

You'll start with the absolute basics: tunings, chords, etc. Then you'll move step-by-step through the three major bluegrass styles: Scruggs—the essential three-finger approach named after its developer, Earl Scruggs; Reno—a hot swing style created by Don Reno, a contemporary of Earl's; and melodic—the fiddle tune style popularized by Bill Keith in the early 60s. From there you'll turn to sections on backup, tunings and improvisation. In addition, there will be some twenty-five songs, many of them bluegrass standards, arranged with the basic melody on one line and the lead break just below it. This will make it easier for you to learn the unfamiliar songs and will also show you how the bluegrass style embellishes a melody.

One more fringe benefit: there are four other books in this series, covering the guitar, fiddle, mandolin and bass. Since they have a number of songs in common with this book, you might consider getting together with a guitar player who has the guitar book, or a fiddle player who has the fiddle book, and begin trading licks. Of course, you'll have to learn how to play first, so let's get started.