



Breaking Up Christmas by Seth Austen

For this holiday issue of Mandolin Sessions, we're going to play Breaking Up Christmas. This is a classic old time fiddle tune, recorded by Tommy Jarrell and Fred Cockerman, as well as many other artists. Many old time fiddlers play this in cross tuning.

I really enjoy using cross tunings on mandolin, so we'll take this opportunity to try one of these tunings together. This tune is in the key of A, and uses AEAE, low to high. This is one of the most used open tunings, and is sometimes called sawmill tuning. Some players tune down to GDGD. I generally do this, preferring the archaic sound of the lower tuning. Either way the fingering is exactly the same, it just sounds in key of G instead of A.

Cross tunings make it particularly easy to use double stops or drones. I didn't notate where to add the double stops, however the entire tune can be played with open strings droning either below or above the melody. Add them in wherever it sounds good to you. I sometimes start a measure or phrase with a full open strummed chord, and let it ring through while playing the melody.

One variation I often do is to slide up to the seventh fret E on the A string with my 4th finger, and play that note in unison with the open E. Here's an example. I don't play it every single time, but use it to increase the impact of that note when wanted.

In the first phrase of the B part I play the open A string. As a variation I sometimes play that same note at the 5th fret of the D string. Measure 9 uses the open A, and I wrote the variation in measure 13. You can mix it up however you wish. There are a number of other slight variations to the melody. I didn't write them all in, but played some of them on the recording so that you can hear them. Some people play the two parts reversed, so the B part happens first, followed by the A. I've included the lyrics; these are sung to the B part. I hope you enjoy playing Breaking Up Christmas. Happy Holidays!

Hoo ' ray Jake and Hoo ' ray John,
Breakin' Up Christmas all night long.

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Way back yonder a long time ago
The old folks danced the do-si-do

Way down yonder alongside the creek
I seen Santy Claus washin' his feet.

Santa Claus come, done and gone,
Breaking up Christmas right along.

Breaking Up Christmas

trad. arr. Seth Austen

AEAE

Musical notation for measures 1-4. The piece is in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a common time signature (C). The melody is written on a single staff. The guitar accompaniment is shown on two staves, with fret numbers indicated by numbers 0-5. The guitar part consists of a steady eighth-note pattern in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand.

Musical notation for measures 5-8. Measure 5 is marked with a '5' above the staff. The notation continues with the melody and guitar accompaniment. Measure 8 ends with a double bar line and repeat dots. The guitar part includes some variations in the bass line, such as a 4/5 fret in measure 6 and a 3/4 fret in measure 8.

Musical notation for measures 9-12. Measure 9 is marked with a '9' above the staff. The notation continues with the melody and guitar accompaniment. The guitar part maintains a consistent eighth-note pattern in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand.

Musical notation for measures 13-16. Measure 13 is marked with a '13' above the staff. The notation continues with the melody and guitar accompaniment. Measure 16 ends with a double bar line and repeat dots. The guitar part continues with the eighth-note pattern and bass line.