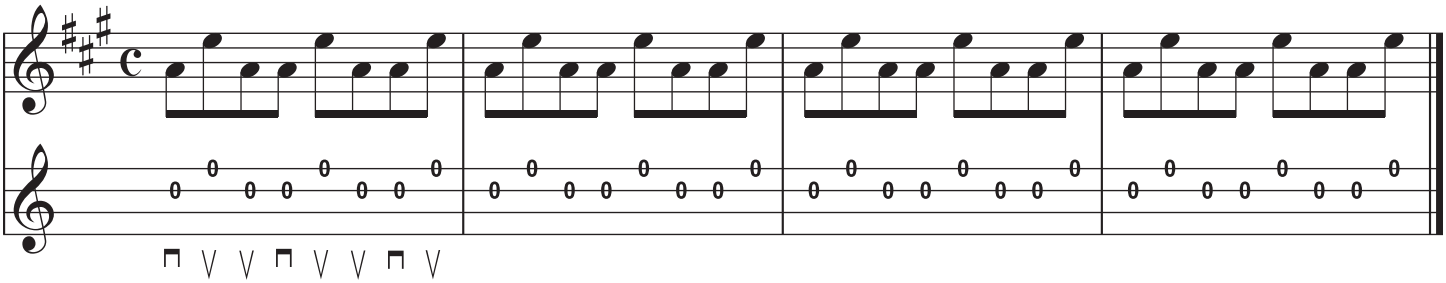
Two String Crosspicking?

by Gerald Jones

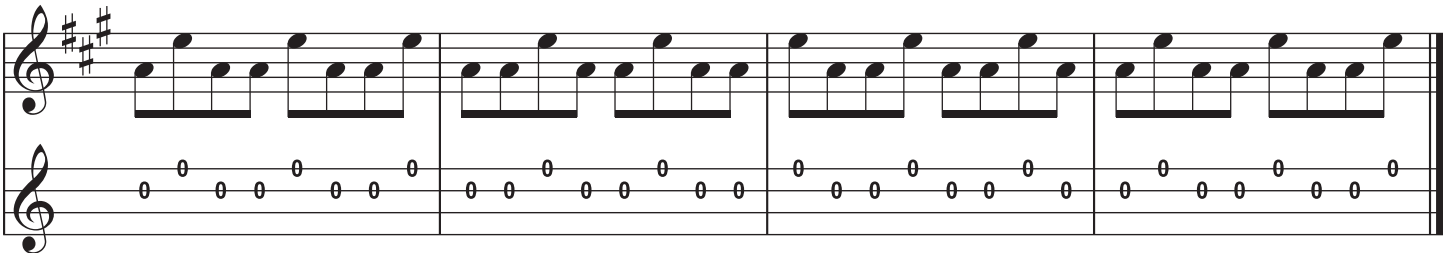
Is it still crosspicking if you only pick two strings? Sounds like it to me. In a concert in the late 1990s I got to play the *Vivaldi Concerto for Two Mandolins in G* with the late Dave Peters. In the first movement there is a section that gave me problems with speed and smoothness. Dave taught me the picking pattern below that he said he had learned from a classical mandolinist. It is basically the same as a three string crosspicking pattern collapsed down to two strings. Pick direction is very important. The right hand pick direction is a repeated Down Up Up (⊓ ∨ ∨) pattern. It can be played very quickly for a very banjo like sound. Think of it as "Lick Helper" for the mandolin. This technique enables you to extend and embellish a simple melody make it sound very different and more complicated. It's an easy way to create variations for your solos.

Example One:



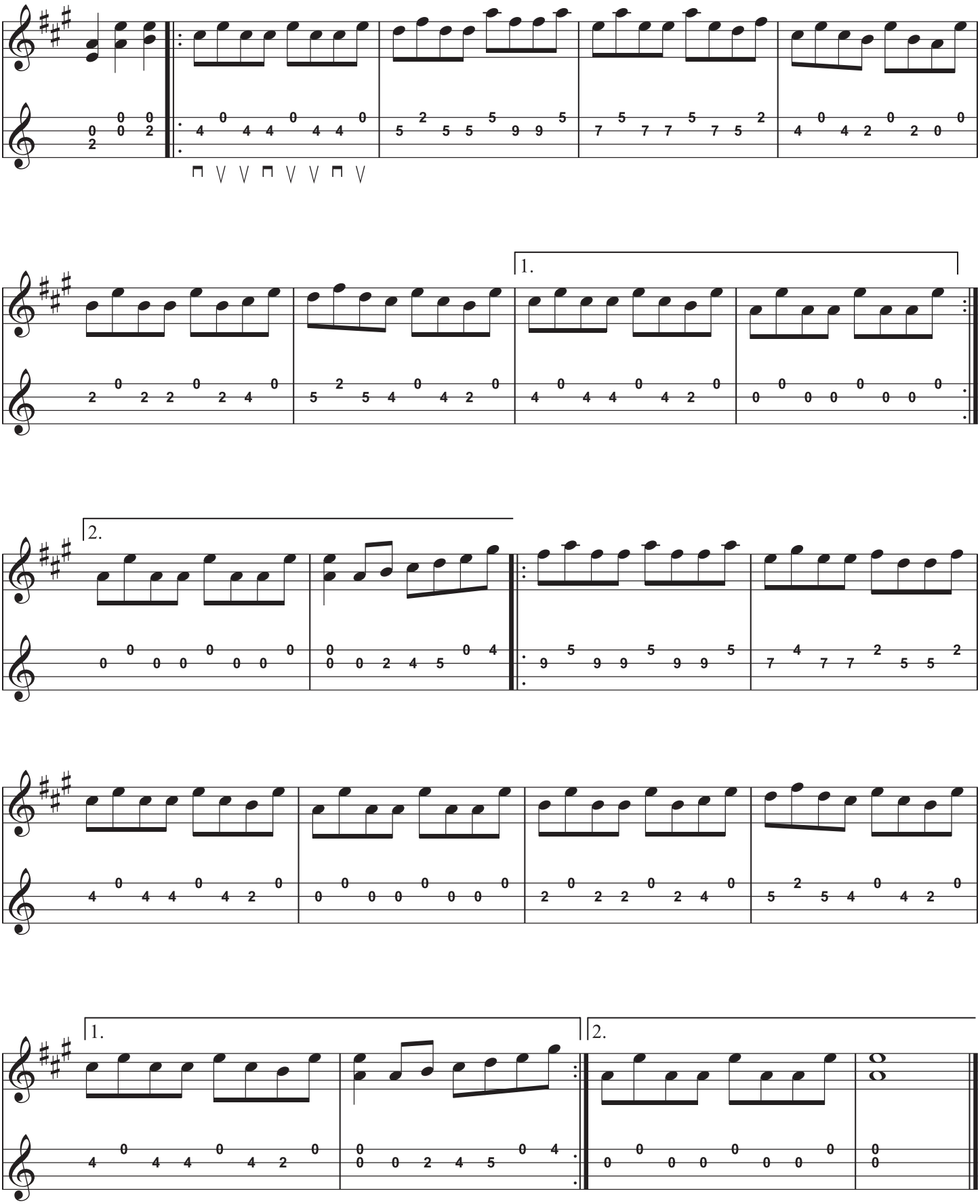
In example one above the pattern repeats every eight notes. It works well with tunes that the melody changes at each measure. *Bile 'Dem Cabbage Down* is a good example. I use this almost exclusively in *Home Sweet Home* on the next page.

Example Two:



Example two sounds more seamless because it maintains to pattern continuously instead of starting over every eight notes. This one doesn't repeat until the fourth measure and takes twelve measures before the pattern starts over on the downbeat at the start of a section. Now let's try using this pattern in a tune, *Home Sweet Home*.

Home Sweet Home

Two String Crosspicking Style

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