



HOLIDAY SERENADE

How to play "Silent Night"



THIS MONTH I present two fingerstyle instrumental solo arrangements of the classic Christmas song "Silent Night." The first, shown in **FIGURE 1**,

presents the song in standard tuning in the key of G, and is played using the traditional chords. The second arrangement (**FIGURE 2**) is a bit more harmonically ambitious, with a few interesting musical twists and chord substitutions that you may find appealing and preferable to the simpler and more straight-ahead version.

FIGURE 1 is performed fingerstyle, with the thumb and ring finger picking bass and melody notes and the index and middle fingers picking arpeggiated chord tones that fill out the accompaniment. Try to let the notes ring as much as possible. Survey the chord shapes shown above the tab and refer back to them as you play through and get acquainted with the piece, making sure to use the prescribed fingerings. The fourth- and fifth-position D7 chords present a technical challenge for both hands, requiring care to form cleanly. Be careful not to inadvertently pick the open B string in bars 5 and 17.

The most challenging aspect of playing this arrangement is executing the position shifts smoothly. When "jumping" to a new chord, grab the melody and bass notes first, followed by the inner notes. Fortunately, "Silent Night" is traditionally played at a very slow, "lullaby" tempo, which buys you valuable time to negotiate these transitions.

The advice given for **FIGURE 1** applies to **FIGURE 2** as well, with its additional chords and position shifts, most of which occur in bars 18-20. The A9 chord in bar 20 can be a bit of a finger-twister at first, but you'll find it easier to form once the muscle memory sets in. To achieve the expressive rolling effect on this five-note chord (indicated by the vertical squiggly line), either strum the strings with your thumb or pick each string individually with a different finger in quick succession (thumb, index, middle, ring, pinkie).

These two arrangements are excerpted from the recently released *Play Christmas Songs on the Guitar DVD*, which features yours

truly performing and teaching a variety of instrumental and accompaniment arrangements of eight classic Christmas songs (including basic strum-style

Senior music editor **JIMMY BROWN** is a veteran sideman, solo performer and private guitar teacher in the NY-NJ-PA area. A "formally trained ear player," Jimmy leads dual lives, writing and editing lessons and transcriptions by day and playing for wedding cake and tips by night.

accompaniments for "Silent Night" in three different keys). The DVD can be purchased at most newsstands and bookstores nationwide. ●

"Silent Night"

FIGURE 1 fingerstyle solo in G

FIGURE 2 alternative arrangement w/chord substitutions

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