

The Cuckoo

Traditional, arranged by Harvey Reid and Joyce Andersen



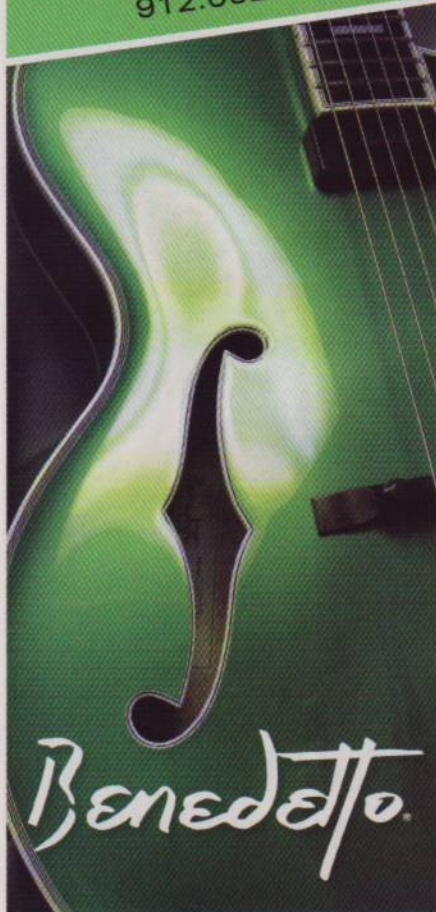
A common Appalachian song, "The Cuckoo" is as widespread as any of the old songs, although cuckoos have never been common in that area. The 1929 Clarence Ashley version ("The Coo-Coo Bird") was included in the 1952 *Anthology of American Folk Music* collection and caused some music fans to go in search of Ashley. When he was found in 1961, it led to the discovery of Doc Watson, who was playing in his band in North Carolina.

The song is most often done in a minor key, and the words are extremely different among the various versions. We collected and combined lyrics from quite a few places. On our recording, we do this with just the common Am and G chords, though it is often done in an odd banjo tuning and is often given a *mountain modal* tonality. We like it in a more plaintive mood with less drive than the usual banjo tempo. I play it with a bare-finger Travis-style fingerpicking and avoided the four-finger G chord, just using my thumb and the two fingers of my picking hand.

—HARVEY REID



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Chords



Fingerpicking Pattern

Capo III

Banjo Chords



Mando Chords



Chorus

Am G Am
Oh the cuckoo, she's a pretty bird, she warbles as she flies
Am G Am
And she never gets lonesome, till the fourth day of July

Am G Am
1. Gonna build me a log cabin on the mountain so high
Am G Am
So I can see the cuckoo as she goes flyin' by

Repeat chorus

Am G Am
2. It's trouble, it's trouble, it's trouble on my mind
Am G Am
If trouble don't kill me, I'll live a long time

Additional lyrics at AcousticGuitar.com/songtrain