Railroad Bill (Bob Dylan version)

Words & Music: Traditional American Tabbed by Eyolf Østrem (From Bob Dylan's "Minnesota Party Tape" (May 1961))

This fabtab of the Dylan version was so impressive, I had to include it.

Eyolf's performance notes: "The accompainment here is fingerpicking, but not in its more common, steady-thumbed version. The alternating thumb is there, but played quite irregularly: lots of thumbstrokes are left out, and the accent pattern is reversed, so that the accented strokes are placed on usually unaccented beats, which gives the syncopated feel to the piece. The ground pattern is what is found in the second and third C-major chords in the first line. It's a very neat way of combining a melody in the upper voice, with a syncopated rhythm in the lower (including the index-finger stroke on the 3rd string in the bass line). Another unusual feature is the mixture of fingerpicking and strumming, especially in the F chord parts. The tab here is just an approximation."

c	: :	:
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-	·	·
E	. :	:
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0-0		
	2 -0h3	- 3
C G	C	
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-0		
3		
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:	. :	:
: :	3 /55	- -3
	2 (4)4	-
-33 -33		

E		F	
· · · ·	. 		
			-11-11(1)
	-0h1 2		
		'	
	G		
:	: (3)	: -0	:
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:	:	:	
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C
Railroad Bill, he ain't so bad,
E
F
killed his mommy, shot a round in his dad.
C
G
C
Ride old Railroad Bill.

[2 instr. verses, 2nd with harp]

Railroad Bill took my wife. If I'd said a word, he'd have taken my life Ride old Railroad Bill.

[harp verse]

Railroad Bill he was comin' down the hill Lightin' cigars with a ten-dollar bill Ride old Railroad Bill

[quitar verse + harp verse]

Ten policemen, all dressed in black, coming out of nowhere, walking down the tracks, and they're looking for Railroad Bill

[guitar verse]

Railroad Bill, comin' round the fence Robbin' a passenger train for 16 cents I'm gonna ride old Railroad Bill

[guitar verse]

Railroad Bill got in a gamblin' game shot a man down, though he was to blame when you lose your mind, let it [turn?] loose

[harp verse]

He's down in a jailhouse singin' railer's blues Same old pants on your passenger shoes When you lose your mind, let it loose

[wicked harp verse + guitar verse]

Railroad Bill he's a mighty bad man Shot the lantern from a brakeman's hand Just to see that man suffer pain.

[two lines of instrumental, then:] ride, ride, ride, ride.

Additional verses from other versions

Early one morning, standing in the rain 'round the curb come a long freight train

Railroad Bill, a-comin' on soon Killed McMillen by the light of the moon

Kill me a chicken, send me the wing, They think I'm working, lord, I ain't doin' a thing

Kill me a chicken, send me the hip Think I'm workin', Lord, I'm laying in [deep]

Got a great long pistol, 'bout as long as your arm, I'm gonna shoot everybody ever done me harm

Got a .38 special on a .45 frame. How can I miss when I got dead aim

Gonna drink my whisky, gonna drink it in the wind the doctor said it'd cure me, but he didn't say when

Going up on the mountain, going out west. Thirty eight special sticking out of my vest.

Honey honey, think I'm a fool. Think I would quit you when the weather is cool.