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On the CD

ROD SINCLAIR takes you into the light of the dark black night with a full transcription of this fingerstyle 1968 McCartney favourite.

LACKBIRD is often the first complete fingerstyle piece that guitarists learn. It is relatively simple to play, is easily recognisable, and the guitar part stands up on its own without any accompaniment. Of course, if you can sing like McCartney, it does help...

The picking pattern isn't too difficult – it consists of two notes picked together using the thumb and one finger, alternating with a G 'drone' note on the open third string. The coda section can be played using thumb and two fingers - or as McCartney plays it, by brushing the first finger down over both strings then back up, hitting several strings with one finger, and giving the part a more strummed feel.

Blackbird isn't 'fingerstyle' in the true sense ie it doesn't use an alternating thumb pattern between two strings in the style of players like Chet Atkins or Bert Jansch. McCartney's technique here uses the thumb playing only four

notes to the bar, usually on just one string. All the syncopation and rhythmic interest is provided by two fingers or the strummed first finger technique described above. I've written out the whole of the guitar line and recorded it on this month's cover CD (CD TRACK 24). I've also included the tapped footsteps which appear on the White album version.

DONOVAN'S INFLUENCE

Paul McCartney and John Lennon learned their fingerpicking styles from 60's folk singer Donovan during 1968 when they were staying with the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi in India. Both guitarists took Martin D-28 acoustic guitars, which they had bought in 1967. As well as Blackbird, you can hear Donovan's influence all over the White album, particularly on Lennon's Dear Prudence and Julia, and McCartney's Mother Nature's Son and I Will. III

TRACK 24

Blackbird played at normal speed, with 'footsteps' accompaniment, as on the original 1968 recording.

The performance on the CD. you will notice, is much 'freer' than the notation implies, and closer to McCartney's original the first finger is brushing a couple of strings. Our transcription is designed to be easy to read, so we haven't shown each and every subtle note of the first finger strummed part. Learn the transcription, then try to add your own feel to the track.

The guitar used was a Takamine EN10C, recorded direct to tape through its own pickup, and a digital reverb was added.

Guitar: Rod Sinclair

THE LYRICS

Blackbird singing in the Take these broken wings and learn to fly All your life You were only waiting for this moment to arrive

Blackbird singing in the dead of night Take these sunken eyes and learn to see only waiting for this moment to be free

Blackbird fly Into the light of the dark black night





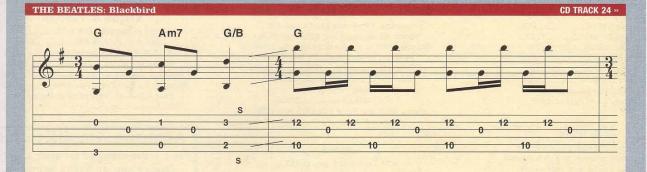
On the CD

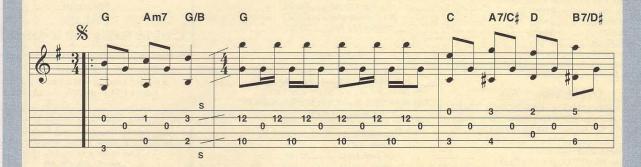
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Blackbird - full transcription

Where two notes occur together, they can be played with the thumb and either the first or second finger. For the open G drone note, McCartney uses a slight strumming technique with his first finger, making the part

a combination of fingerstyle and straight rhythm techniques - my recorded version on CD has approximated this as closely as possible, while remaining faithful to the transcription shown here.











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