Categories Of Information In The Catalog Listing

The categories of information in the catalog listing are designed to allow you to select songs that are well suited to your guitar playing skills and your musical goals and preferences. The reference number, time, and title for each song are self-explanatory and therefore require no further explanation. The seven other categories of information are detailed below.

style of play

The two basic styles of play on the steel string acoustic guitar are flatpick (Flat) and fingerstyle (Fs). In flatpick styles, the strings are struck with a small plastic device, usually in a rounded triangular shape and about the size of a quarter, called a flatpick. Flatpick styles of play in which individually flatpicked notes are interspersed with strums are called pick and strum (P+S) styles. In fingerstyles, the strings are plucked with the tips of the thumb and fingers (usually the index and middle fingers, and sometimes also the ring finger) of the playing hand, or with metal or plastic picks that fit over the thumb (thumbpick) or fingers (fingerpicks). Fingerstyles of play that are based on an alternating (up and down) bass pattern played with the thumb are called fingerpick (FP) styles.

tuning

The standard (STD) tuning for the guitar, spelled from the open (unfretted) 6^{th} (lowest in pitch) string through the open 1^{st} (highest in pitch) string, is E – A – D – G – B – E. The use of alternate tunings can serve a variety of purposes, including but not limited to lowering the overall pitch of the instrument (D STD tuning, or D – G – C – F – A – D),

allowing for simpler chord fingerings or more manageable alternating bass patterns, and allowing for the use of interesting and different-sounding chords derived by experimentation. You can click here to view a glossary of alternate guitar tunings, including all the tunings required for songs featured on this website, all of which are likewise spelled from the open 6th through the open 1st string. The use of a capo also affects the tuning of the guitar by transposing the notes produced on each string upward according to where the capo is placed. For example, every note and chord is transposed upward by three half-steps when the capo is placed at the third fret. The use of a capo is indicated in the catalog listing by a parenthesized Roman Numeral following the name of the tuning.

key of play

The key of play is given in the catalog listing for every song played in STD or D STD tuning. The most common Major keys of play on the guitar are G, A, C, D, E, and F. The most common minor keys of play on the guitar are a, d, and e. When a capo or D STD tuning is used, the key of play given is based on the chords played on the guitar, rather than on the transposed chords that are actually sounded. More than one key of play indicates that the key of play modulates (changes) at least once during the song. A key of play is not given for songs that are played in alternate tunings, with the exception of low D tuning (STD tuning except with the 6th string tuned to D), for which the key of play is invariably (but not necessarily) D or d. For songs played in other alternate tunings, the key of play is usually (but not necessarily) implied by the tuning used.

common chords

In the rhythm guitar component of the visualinear tablature guitar series, I developed a basic vocabulary of 18 common chords that are among the most frequently used guitar chords in standard tuning. The chord diagrams and chord doc for these 18 chords can be accessed on the About Chords page of this website. In the common chords column of the catalog listing, the number of common chords used in playing the song is given first, and the total number of chord fingerings used is given second. For example, 5 of 7 in the common chords column indicates that of the 7 chord fingerings required for playing the song, 5 are common chords.

barre chords

Barre chords are chords that are fashioned by laying the index finger of the fretting hand across all the strings, thus creating a barre above which chord shapes can be formed. The barring index finger is identical in function to a capo, in that it transposes chords upwards by the corresponding number of half steps. In theory at least, any chord shape can be formed above a barre, provided the guitarist has enough fingers and sufficient strength and dexterity. But in practice, the chord shapes that are most often formed above a barre (and they are also among the easiest chord shapes to form above a barre) are the common chords E, E7, e, A7, a, and am7. Although barre chords are an important (but not indispensible) component of the chord vocabulary of an intermediate level guitarist, barring technique seems to come much more easily for some than for others. For the benefit of those who have not yet mastered barre chord technique, the barre chords column of the catalog listing contains a simple yes or no indicating whether or not barre chords are required for playing the song.

vocals

The recorded arrangements for a good many of the songs contained in the catalog include vocal harmonies, usually only on the choruses, but for a handful of songs on some of the verses as well. The use of vocal harmonies is indicated in the vocals column of the catalog listing by a 1 followed by the number of vocal parts when vocal harmonies are sounding. For example, a 1,3 in the vocals column indicates that a solo vocal sounds through some parts of the song (usually the verses), and three-part vocal harmony sounds through other parts of the song (usually the choruses). A 1 in the vocals column indicates that the song features a solo vocal throughout, with no vocal harmonies. A 2 or a 3 in the vocals column indicates that the song features a vocal duet or a vocal trio throughout.

meter

The simple meters of 4 and 3 are the two most frequently used meters, in all of music as well as for the songs contained in the catalog, with 4 (otherwise known as common meter) being used at least 2 or 3 times as frequently as 3. Because the meters of 12 and 9 are the compound meters of 4 and 3, music in 12 or 9 is characterized by the bouncing rhythms suggested by ternary (in thirds) division of the beats. A meter of 2 generally indicates a slower tempo, and 6 is usually (but not necessarily) a compound meter that is in effect a meter of 2 with ternary division of the beats. If more than one meter is given for a song in the catalog listing, the meter changes at least once during the song, and in many cases the meter changes often enough to create an altogether unique-sounding flow of rhythm.