

Christmas Lesson: "Carol of the Bells"
by Edgar Cruz

If you are a working solo guitarist such as myself, you find yourself every year at about Christmas time having to break out the seasonal repertoire. *Carol of the Bells* has long been a favorite of musicians in all mediums. I found it extremely enjoyable to play as a highlight to my holiday engagements.

Although I originally recorded this piece at an allegro tempo, you may choose to play it at a slower pace. This piece is much easier to play if you pay close attention to the fingerings. The first two bars (Example 1) are slightly dissonant with the B and C notes played on adjacent strings. Be sure to plant the 1st and 2nd fingers, and strike using free strokes:

Ex. 1



Start very quietly and gradually increase the dynamics as the piece gets more involved. Repeated passages will be more interesting when variations in dynamics, timbre and speed are applied.

The bass melody begins in bar 3, which is a passage toward the chordal section starting at bar 11. At this point you should begin increasing volume. Strumming is preferred at bar 15, but as an option, you may choose to do a quick arpeggio, doubling the thumb (p) on the two bass strings, as shown in Example 2:

Ex. 2



At bar 19 you'll break into the exposition of the piece where alternating the index (i) and middle (m) fingers facilitate speed in the subsequent passages. Note in bar 25 that the bass "A" is fingered on the 6th string, rather than the open 5th string so that it can be stopped from sustaining into bar 26 (Example 3):

