

About this book

How to Use This Book

By looking at the table of contents, you can see that we have broken this book up into five sections. We hope that by arranging and grouping these sections as we have done, you will be able to use this book as a resource guide as you continue to grow in knowledge and experience on your journey of making beautiful dulcimer music.

Part I: Music Theory

The idea for this resource book was never to instruct or to teach different styles of playing or understanding the Hammer Dulcimer. From the beginning, the intention of this book was to be a resource or helpmate to the everyday player. The use of the Hammer Dulcimer in musical styles that now exceed that of folk music has forced Hammer Dulcimer players and teachers to open up to the possibility that the Hammer Dulcimer is growing in popularity in the realms of new age, country, contemporary and in great amounts of Christian and Worship music.

We included this Music Theory section as a simple guide to explain certain principles of music theory and to demonstrate how some of these theories apply to the diatonic Hammer Dulcimer. This section would help players on any level with specific questions that derive from theory. Our friend, Susan Jones, has been teaching music in schools for over 11 years. We took advantage of her knowledge and asked her to explain basic music theory principles that most musicians run into. Russell took these principles and described, when applicable, how they affect the Hammer Dulcimer. Remember, the content of this section is not imperative to playing the Hammer Dulcimer. But, you will find yourself pondering over creative words like pentatonic, diatonic, chromatic, arpeggios, and the like. When you find yourself in that situation, this section is at your service.

Part II: Snapshots

Why would anyone want to get inside of Russell Cook's head? We at Wood 'N Strings deal with that question daily! In the meantime, we offer this section to you. After 24 years of building and playing experience and literally tens of thousands of hours behind the dulcimer and in the studio creating over 13 albums, there has got to be something in Russell's head that is worth sharing. This "Snapshot" section is an attempt to share those pictures that Russell visualizes when he is playing the Hammer Dulcimer.

This section can help you in many ways. First, it gives you a picture, or a "snapshot" of how you should look at the dulcimer when playing, embellishing, or learning a new song. Second, it gives you an insight into Russell's playing style. Finally, these "snapshots" can help you to visualize certain hammer dulcimer concepts like a scale, chord, arpeggio or flam. This section could help you understand these concepts and apply them to your instrument.

Part III: Chord Charts

Where would the music world be without relative chords? Chords are fundamental to playing any instrument. Your knowledge of chords, or easy access to a resource like this one, can enable you to embellish most songs young or old. This section provides a thorough listing of chords from A to G of the musical alphabet. Here, we have provided you chord charts, mapped from top to bottom of the hammer dulcimer, for each note of the musical alphabet. Of course it wouldn't be thorough if we didn't add, not only the major and minor chords, but 12 versions or values of the most common chords used in music. If you come across a chord in music that is not mapped in this section, check out Part V.

Part IV: Common Chord Cheat Sheets

In Part IV, we have arranged common chords around their related key in order to give you easy access to the chords you will need while playing a song in a particular key. This will prove to be an invaluable resource for jamming or playing by ear.

Part V: Master Chord List

Part V is an exhaustive list of over 70 possible chords per key for the chromatic scale. This will be great for players as they expand their musical repertoire. As you begin to seek out more and more complicated or involved music, you will begin to incorporate these augmented, sustained, raised, and lowered chord compositions. Over time, you will learn to appreciate the difference even a half-step can make in setting mood and building emotion in your music.

There are so many items that you could put into a hammer dulcimer resource book that will probably, one day, begin to look like a set of encyclopedias on your shelf. Here, we have taken years of experience, not only from Russell's performing, recording, and building, but also from years of listening to what our friends and customers have been looking for in a hammer dulcimer book and wrapped it up in a nice little, but thick, package. It is our hope that this book is one that you will carry with you and use to its fullest potential. Although this book was not designed as an instructional book, we hope that you learn and absorb its content and apply it to your beautiful music. One of our main goals is to share how easy it really is to bless, not only yourself, but many others with beautiful music that you can create. So, enjoy, and happy hammering!