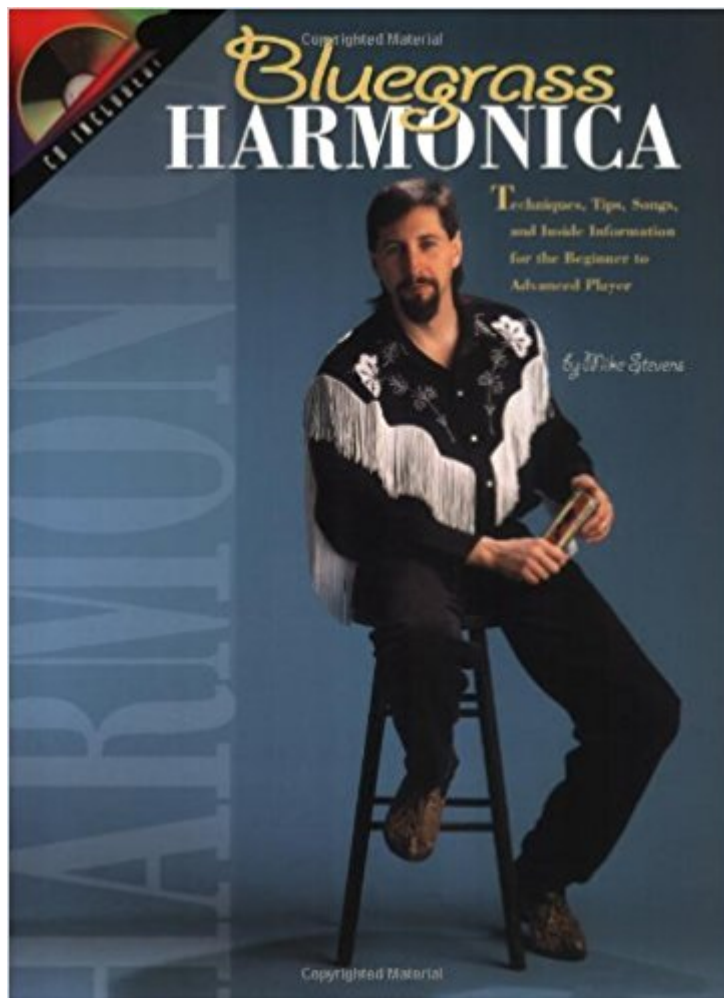


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Bluegrass Harmonica



Synopsis

(Harmonica). Extraordinary harpist Mike Stevens has been named Central Canadian Bluegrass Entertainer of the Year five years in a row. In this book, he teaches all the techniques, tips and inside information you need to know to play bluegrass harmonica. He covers: holding the harp, lip pursing, tongue blocking, draw bending, vibrato, attacking the notes, wind chops, and a lot more. The CD features practice tunes for beginning, intermediate and advanced players, including two versions of some of the intermediate and advanced tunes: one at standard tempo, and one slowed down for easier learning.

Book Information

Paperback: 64 pages

Publisher: Centerstream Publications (August 1, 1997)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1574240455

ISBN-13: 978-1574240450

Product Dimensions: 9 x 0.2 x 12 inches

Shipping Weight: 4.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.7 out of 5 stars 4 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #557,879 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #41 in Books > Arts &

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Customer Reviews

This guys technique is amazing and if you like Bluegrass or oldtime music at all, this book, along with the indispensable Rock n' Blues Harmonica by Jon Gindick and the Blues Harmonica Collection (both top sellers) will definitely improve your technique as well as your way of looking at the diatonic harmonica. That is, much of the technique and approach here is to play the diatonic harp chromatically, using bends of course. As the cover states, this book goes from beginning to advanced and it's not one of those books you check out for a day or two and put away. If your interested in really learning how to play harmonica there's alot of technique and great tunes in this book and cd. Don't be put off if you're not really into bluegrass. It is more country oriented than most harp books to be sure but alot of the tunes in here are traditional and originals by Stevens. The techniques however are incredible and learning what this guy has to teach will vastly improve your

playing even if you only want to play blues harp. I can't help but have the same thought as the other reviewer that this guy not only wrote a great instruction book but is one of the best harp players in the world.

This book is in no way a book for beginners. As one reviewer said the very first song requires blow bends. The book is basically Mike playing some of his incredibly impressive solos with the music tabbed out. Unfortunately the tab system, like a lot of harmonica tabs, doesn't have any kind of rhythm notation. While I found this to be an issue because a lot of the examples on here are very fast it doesn't in any way make the tabs useless. Also at the end of the CD Mike plays many of the examples at a slower tempo so that helps a lot. Don't get me wrong there is some good information in this book and if you learn all these songs you will greatly improve your playing, but it is going to take you sometime to do so. I still would highly recommend this book to someone who wants to learn bluegrass harmonica. Frankly there isn't very much material out there for this genre on the harmonica and Mike is a master of it. Just keep in mind you need to have some basic skills down before this book will be much use.

Make no mistake Mike Stevens is an impossibly good player. However, this book is not a great instruction book. I wanted to like it--it has many nuggets of really good information, along with tabs for some impossibly complicated things. But Stevens really needs an editor and producer, and, really, a plan. This book could have been so much better. He isn't very systematic, and his discussion of techniques is way too brief to prepare you to play the examples he gives. Any book that requires blow-bends to play the easiest song in it is simply not for beginners. For the hard songs you are going to need overdraws and overblows. He gives maybe three paragraphs on these techniques, and then you are on your own. It's a little ridiculous to discuss how to get a single note out of your harmonica on one page, and then, on the very next page, be discussing how to do blow-bends. He also plays his examples too fast--even when he is trying to play slowly. For example, he runs through three octaves on the harmonica in under ten seconds. Another example of how this book falls short: He tells you to listen to some banjo rolls and emulate them. This is a great idea, but a much better approach would have been to work through a couple of examples step by step and then say, "You could do this for any banjo roll. Just listen really carefully." But because he doesn't walk you through it--or even give examples--he makes it harder than it needs to be. After only a dozen pages or so, you get the the main part of the book and CD, which are simply tabbed out versions of the incredibly difficult solos on his records. I've been playing harmonica for a year or

two, and am decent, but these are pretty difficult--even those labeled "beginner". If you stay after them, you'll be extremely good, but they aren't beginner pieces by any stretch of the imagination. I'll eventually get them, but I'm past beginner level for any other of the half-dozen harmonica books I have bought--I'm not even able to play the easiest song in this book, after having had it for a week. All that said, there is a lot of good stuff here. He might play the three-octave example way too fast, but this is the only place I've ever heard it. He has excellent (if too brief and insufficiently demonstrated) discussions on chugging and other ways the harmonica can fit into a bluegrass band. In short, I would love to see a second edition, with a slower pace, with better examples, and a more gradual progression of difficulty. Or at least drop the beginner description. This book had potential, but it was kind-of botched.

I was reluctant to buy this book because it was about bluegrass music, since I am learning blues. This was, that is, before I heard a song played by Mike Stevens. In this book and CD, he teaches and plays all of the techniques that have made him one of the best harp players in the world, if not the best. The book uses a simple tablature notation that makes learning the techniques a pleasure. The author's comments are also simple and to the point making it a snap to understand his style. However, the techniques themselves are not easy, they are professional level material. Anyone will greatly profit from this package. If you really want to find out what can be done with a ten hole harmonica in the right hands, then this book will show you.

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