

## Performance notes

### Mr Wonglepong

This composition, dedicated to my son Joshua, won me my first Golden Guitar award for Instrumental of the Year in 1999. Much requested in concerts, it is my musical interpretation of a cheeky toddler's personality. It has some tricky moments, so watch the fingering carefully, especially as it moves to the higher positions on the neck. Try to play it with a smile on your face. MF

*Promise* (EP, 1999); *Transfixed* (2000); *Rewind* (2007)

'Mr Wonglepong' is a perfect example of the Australian country vibe that Michael brings to boom-chick guitar playing. You will need a solid thumb groove to pull this off with the melody sustaining over the backing. Bars 20 through 23 are Jerry Reed-inspired counterpoint lines and will require some attention to fingering if you're to coordinate them smoothly. Also, the cascading run in bar 28 needs to be played with all the notes ringing into one another until the last possible moment to sound correct. JM

### Stringin' the Blues

'Stringin' the Blues' is a fingerpicking tour-de-force for fans of Atkins/Travis style playing. The piece pays homage to those great masters of fingerpicking, with its use of many tricks and devices that Chet Atkins and Merle Travis employed throughout their careers. These are cleverly mixed in with a number of Michael's own trademark licks.

Opening with natural harmonics, alternated with a standard descending blues intro, it proceeds to follow a typical blues progression, but cleverly varies the approach with each pass. Look out for the mini open string roll that forms part of the turnaround. You need to start this roll with your index finger and follow with thumb and then middle finger if you want to get the sort of effect that Michael achieves.

The descending bass line against a repeated blues bend in the main theme gives the illusion of two guitars playing, and will test your ability to keep the bass rock steady whilst playing the melody in more of a legato manner over the top. Also, check out the subtle way Michael varies the lead-in to the 5 chord in each of the verses. 'Stringin' the Blues' is unmistakably Michael Fix, but stamped with an illustrious pedigree. GS

*Transfixed* (2000); *Rewind* (2007)

### Sunrise Over Alice

This perennial audience favourite was composed in 1992 after my first visit to Central Australia, touring with Graeme Connors. I have recorded it a number of times since it first appeared as an electric guitar and band performance on *Fingerpaintings*, and here you see the solo guitar arrangement that I have been performing live since 1994. The key is to make that melody really float over the bass groove that acts as an anchor. Try it with some reverb and delay to enhance the floating feeling. MF

*Fingerpaintings* (1994); *The Heart Has Reasons* (1996); *Transfixed* (2000); *Rewind* (2007)

'Sunrise' is deceptively simple in some ways. The chord shapes for the central melody need to be re-fingered accordingly for each bass note change so that the melody can still 'float' over the top and ring smoothly. Bar 34 might prove to be a stretch for some time with the extension of the little finger to the 12th fret whilst still holding the Fmaj7/C chord. JM

### Right Place, Right Time

This deceptively simple tune is rather tricky to play, even though it landed in my hands very quickly, and was easy to write. (I figured I must have been in the right place at the right time when this tune floated past). The trick is to get the right groove going, and not to play it too fast. Tempo is critical with this one. MF

*Web of Dreams* (2003); *Rewind* (2007)

Don't play this one until you've warmed up! I've always loved this tune for its seamless flow as it takes the listener where they want to go when they didn't know they wanted to be there! The harmonics towards the start may be a new technique to some players so spend some time 'sharp shooting' those artificial harmonics over the chord and don't try to play them too loud to keep up with the normal fretted notes, but rather play the fretted notes softer to balance the two timbres out. The Eadd9 chord at the start of the theme will probably be the biggest stumbling block but persevere with it as it is a beautiful chord. Bar 27 is also interesting to get a hold of. The Bb note in this bar is held down with the thumb of the left hand, which may require some practice to get used to. The phrasing is quite important in this tune and, whilst it has been notated as played, it might be a good idea to listen to the way Michael plays the tune on the CD as you go. Have fun! JM

## Promise

Written in 1998 after the birth of my youngest son, Joshua. A tender tune about potential, as well as commitment. Play it gently and sweetly and try to make the melody stand out and sing above the chordal rhythm. MF

*Promise* (EP, 1999); *Web of Dreams* (2003); *Rewind* (2007)

'Promise' is a great tune to get your teeth into with a beautiful melody and chord structure that provide a satisfying sound from the outset. The right hand plays a big part in the arpeggiating of the chords – that is, the way that they are played in broken fashion quite quickly by the right hand. The key here is to be able to roll the fingers of your right hand one after the other in quick succession into your palm to get that brushed sound that makes the backing so expressive and piano-like. It's important that the melody rings clearly above the backing so get that ring finger popping out the melody just a bit louder than the other parts. JM

## Opposites Attract

This piece is like a conversation between a man and woman where they are saying the opposite, hence the bass line (male) moving upwards, while the treble line (female) moves downwards. Some tricky manoeuvring in the climb up from bar 25 to 32. I use my left hand thumb to fret the bass notes. MF

*Something's Cooking* (2005)

Here the moving bass line comes into nice effect to give the tune a strong groove to support the bluesy melody. Very Jerry Reed-ish in parts and there's some finger-twisting fun to be had here. The trick is to match the notes from the bass and the melody up together and play both lines very slowly until muscle memory takes over. Take note also of the bent G natural notes in the main theme of the tune. They're bluesy quarter note bends and it adds a great deal to the expression of the melody if you can add them in. The bridge starting at bar 25 is a tricky little passage and ought to be practised slowly, getting used to holding down the bass with the thumb. It's very important to catch hold of the swing feel of the tune, so listen to Michael playing the tune and get the phrasing ingrained in your mind before you play it. JM

## Waltzing Matilda

I've changed some of the major chords to minor in my arrangement of 'Waltzing Matilda'; when you study the lyric, it's actually a pretty sad story!

To get those long stretch chords, the fingering is crucial. (I tend to do long stretches between my first and second fingers because my pinky is short.) Remember that every note in every chord should be nice and clean, and ring out. Playing slowly is a good way to test whether you are doing this. MF

*Something's Cooking* (2005)

What a top arrangement of this classic song! The counterpoint lines at the start offer a great dark flavour to the familiar melody, though they are a bit of a handful to get your fingers around quickly so take it slowly. The whole first section features a lot of minor 9ths and flat 2nds that add tension to the piece and the run at the end ought to be played with the right hand alternating between thumb and index finger strokes. Getting the next section to swing is important to the change in the mood of the piece and on the recording the bass stays quite solid so it's worth listening to to get it right. I would recommend playing the whole of this piece in small sections as there are stacks of chord changes to remember. The arpeggio in bar 71 will be a challenge, and on its own is a good exercise for developing your right hand. JM

## Two Left Feet

I don't dance. I can't dance. So in 2002 I wrote a tune about it. I can only do the Australian two-step, a complex movement where you hop from one foot to the other, slightly out of time to the music. Try to play with a very bouncy feel, and don't forget to smile! MF

*Web of Dreams* (2003); *Rewind* (2007)

'Two Left Feet' is a favourite of mine. The heavy, stomping groove always makes people smile when I've seen it played live. It's neat the way the melody fits into the extended D chord in the main crux of the tune so fingering shouldn't be too much of a problem there. The fills that are used like the one in bar 11 are worth listening out for as they are popped with the index finger to get a funky chicken pickin' kind of sound. Bar 15 also has interesting phrasing played between the thumb and the index finger to give it a staggering kind of feel towards the next bar. The movement of the bass line under the simple melody adds interest to this tune so again it's worth taking it slowly in bars 13 to 14 and also bar 21 to make sure you get the two parts to sound like two distinct parts. JM

## Bourée in Em (swing)

I love to come up with arrangements for the 'classic classics' and this J.S. Bach piece is a favourite, as just about every fingerpicker learns to play 'Bourée' at some time. I decided to make it swing with a walking bass-line, just to be different. MF

Unrecorded at time of writing.

Doing this TAB was a real pleasure for me. Michael is a great musician, performer and very creative guitarist. When I first heard his swing version of 'Bourée', I told him: 'This one sounds as if Merle Travis had an encounter with J.S. Bach.' As a German fingerstyle guitarist, it was a delight to transcribe this wonderful piece of music. To all guitar players: have fun learning and playing this great swing version of 'Bourée'. SM

## Where are You Now?

This is a romantic ballad, so should be played tenderly and sweetly. Tricky fingering in the key change section. Play it for your loved one, served with a nice glass of merlot. MF

*Something's Cooking* (2005)

Another beautiful ballad. There are some nice chords here that require some stretching, starting from bars 2 to 3. Bar 3 in particular is a stretch but it's worth keeping these shapes to substitute in your own musical arrangements as they incorporate open strings and some interesting notes. The key here again is melody, melody, melody. It has to ring out strongly above the backing so practise changing between the chords until they're smooth and you don't have to think about them too much, and focus on popping out those high notes and letting them ring into one another. There are quite a few areas in the tune where you can let it breathe – hold off a little longer on playing a phrase or put some rits in different spots to change the dynamic a little. Bar 24 uses the left hand thumb to hold the bass note F. JM



Photo by David Collins