

## Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs

Em October 2010  
Revised April 2021

### Scruggs's break

I M T I

G

D

G

## Crowe's break

16

Em G D G

19

Em G D

23

G

Another break

26

Em G D

30

G Em

33

G D G

36

1. The first break is my attempt to capture, as close to note-for-note as I could get it, the feel of Earl Scruggs's approach to "Down the Road," from his 1949 recording. Note how he drives it along with forward rolls. Note also that in the first Em, Scruggs plays the fourth string with his index finger. I know this is heretical, but it's how I hear him playing it.

The second break captures the feel of J. D. Crowe's approach to the tune, from the Bluegrass Album Band's recording in the 1980s. Note the subtle differences from Scruggs's break -- for example, Crowe plays the fourth string second fret by itself, without pivoting on the open first. This sets him up for a driving slide up the fourth string, a characteristic of Crowe's style. Note also that he employs forward-backward rolls, in contrast to Scruggs's simpler and more consistent forward rolls.

The third break is my variation on the theme, to the best of my recollection inspired by Bobby Hicks's fiddle breaks on the BGAB's recording.

2. Pay particular attention to the right hand pattern on the boogie-woogie run at the end of Scruggs's break. It works much better if you alternate between the index and middle fingers, as opposed to alternating between the index and thumb. Trust me, you will have greater speed and fluidity if you employ the index-middle pattern.

3. Every self-respecting scrugg will know that Earl and J. D. rarely play a break the same way twice. So consider these tabs a snapshot of how they might have played it once, and feel free to improvise.