THE NEEDLE AND THE DAMAGE DONE

NEIL YOUNG

ROD SINCLAIR puts on the check shirt, flicks back the hair, gets on the back of a Crazy Horse and rides this classic Neil Young track from 1972.

KIL: Young's guitar style is so laid back that you might almost call him a 'loopy' player, but each note is played with such conviction that he can't fail to get his musical point across - the solo to Cinnamon Girl, for example, is only two notes!

The Needle And The Damage Done is one of many songs that demonstrate his strong rhythm style; it was first released on the Harvest album in 1972 and was re-recorded on the more recent Unplugged album. The song's simple structure is made up from a two right-hand sequences - the first (instrumental) version forms the intro, bridge and part of the coda, and the second sequence, which is always played twice, forms the accompaniment for the vocal lines.

CHORD SEQUENCE

In the intro of the song, Neil plays an oft-used descending sequence in D (Lennon's Dear Prudence is very similar, for example) - I've shown all the chord shapes you'll need in the fretboxes. The picking hand technique requires a relaxed strumming and fingerpicking pattern, with the plectrum jumping between bass notes, chords and the syncopated melody.

As the song develops, the picking gradually becomes more intense. I'venotated the bridge section which occurs at bar 25. This is similar to the intro but is played more loosely and with greater attack - on the record you can even hear the right hand slapping on the guitar body.

Next month I'll be transcribing the classic fingerstyle party piece Aja, as played by Bert Jansch, Paul Simon, and 'some way' nicked by George Harrison for While My Guitar Gently Weeps.

FRETBOXES

These are the four shapes you'll need to play the descending D pattern on which the song is based. The brackedeted open note is the ringing D that is occasionally added to these shapes during the picked sections.
NEIL YOUNG: The Needle And The Damage Done (intro and verse)

The intro and verse – as the song develops, the basic pattern remains the same but is played more freely.
NEIL YOUNG: The Needle And The Damage Done (bridge section)

The bridge section at bar 25 - this is pretty much the same as the intro but with more attack and some additional notes.

NEIL YOUNG: The Needle And The Damage Done (coda)

The four-bar coda section - the last chord is allowed to ring on (strictly speaking, the chord name is Gm6/3b due to the open E at the top of the chord).

NEIL YOUNG: The Needle And The Damage Done (chord sheet)

Intra & Bridge

The song structure in full - I've marked where the various sections begin. Make the picking more relaxed as the song develops.