Introduction

Dear TablEdit user,

My name is Tom Thomason and I've been asked by Matthieu Leschemelle to produce this tutorial in order to help you, the user, produce clearer, more easily readable tablature.

It's not my intention to attempt to teach anyone how to play guitar or create arrangements, as such (although, inevitably, some tips on these subjects are bound to pop up). There are far too many different styles of playing and arranging for this to be practical and, even if it were, to do so would require much too lengthy a document. My goal is simply to provide you with tips on how to use the software to produce better transcriptions.

Before we get started, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Matthieu for his continuing efforts in producing what, in my humble opinion, is the best tablature writing program available to guitarists today. Since I began using the software, I've seen new features added to it at an amazing rate and its development shows no signs of slowing down.

I've been writing tablature and teaching guitar for over 25 years now and I, like so many others, was introduced to the tablature system through the books produced by Stefan Grossman. I had the privilege of meeting Stefan at one of his concerts in Stockholm and then visiting him at his home in London, where he was living at the time. I then spent several years transcribing tablature for Kicking Mule records, meeting a number of the artists who recorded for us into the bargain.

In those, pre-computer, days, I transcribed each tablature by hand from originals provided by the artists (I still have these in my collection). It was tedious work, each tablature taking several days to write out neatly enough for publication, correcting them (as best I could) to agree with the recordings as I went along. This is, of course, no longer the case. Matthieu has provided us with a tool that, correctly used, makes the entire process painless and efficient.

Once again, thank you Matthieu for a wonderful program.

Tom Thomason
Gothenburg, Sweden
16 August, 1998

Supplementary introduction to Tutorial version 1.0

Six months have gone by since I released beta version 0.9 of this tutorial and many things have happened with TablEdit since then. Many new features have been added, an active support team has come into being, the basic *.tef format has been expanded and many new users have become members of the TablEdit family, contributing not only their arrangements to the TablEdit User Space but also participating actively by providing suggestions for improvements to the program.

The aim of this tutorial remains the same as it was from the beginning. To help users write the best tablatures possible. In order to produce this new version of the tutorial, I've been fortunate enough to enlist the aid of one of our best tablature writers, Larry Kuhns. Larry's responsible for the lovely graphics we've used and for writing several of the new sections as well as being instrumental in providing input for new ideas and curing me of a bout of "writer's cramp". Many thanks, Larry.

<u>DO NOT</u> make the mistake of thinking that this tutorial is a replacement for reading the TablEdit help file! Although there is, inevitably, some duplication between the two, the help file contains many points of technical information which are inappropriate in the context of a tutorial (and vice-versa). As a member of the TablEdit support team I constantly run into questions from users which boil down to common RTFM errors. Before sending us questions, at least try to find the answer to your problem in the help file.

Tom Thomason
Gothenburg, Sweden
March, 1999

Table Of Contents

  This section is intended for essays on the playing styles of various artists and suggestions as to solutions for transferring their work into tablature. We'll provide the initial articles in order to get the ball rolling in the hope that other TablEdit users will feel encouraged to write similar articles for inclusion in this tutorial.

Quick and Dirty

<u>Table of Contents</u>

During my years of teaching guitar (ragtime, fingerpicking and blues), It's been my experience that most students simply don't want to have to learn classical notation before they start playing their instrument. It's a relatively complicated system that can't be taught in a single, fifty minute lesson. To be honest, most beginners want to leave that first lesson playing "Dill Pickle Rag" or Robert Johnson style blues as if they have been practicing all their lives. It just ain't gonna happen! On the other hand, tablature, as I'm sure you've all discovered, can be understood on short notice and can be sight read after just a few hours of usage as compared to classical notation which can take months before it can be sight read, thus getting things off to a slow start.

Tablature has a number of advantages over classical musical notation (solfeggio) as regards fretted instruments. Classical notation is intended as a universal musical language but is, in fact, most suited to instruments where each, individual note is to be found at only a single position.   We don't have that luxury. It should also be kept in mind that most people using the tablature system do not sight read classical notation. If they did, they would use that instead!   More advanced students will usually have enough knowledge of the classical notation system to be able to interpret it slowly and painstakingly, but that's about it.

One of the great advantages of tablature is the fact that it's much more visual in its presentation. Rather than the abstract placement of symbols representing pitch, tablature provides concrete directions as to the exact placement of the fingers. The actual pitch value is, in fact, completely irrelevant! This last is very important to keep in mind when writing tablature.

This visual approach to notation places a certain amount of responsibility on the shoulders of the one doing the transcription, especially in the areas of note duration and rhythmic notation. Your primary ambition (in addition to making good arrangements available to all) should be to provide a transcription which is easily read. What is technically correct according to the rules governing the writing of classical scores does not, necessarily produce an easy-to-read tablature.

Before we get into the details of creating easy-to-read tablatures there are a couple of things concerning working habits that I'd like to point out.

Keyboard Entry

I don't intend to insult the reader's intelligence by providing instruction on how to enter numbers on the lines of the tablature grid. I will, however, point out that the most efficient method of entry is to use the keyboard shortcuts provided by the software whenever possible. Computer novices have a general tendency to become enamored of the mouse (I know I did) because of the simplicity of its use within unfamiliar programs. It does, however, cause you to lose time in moving your hand from the keyboard to the mouse and back again, not to mention the extra time required to open menus and select options.

Shortcuts have been provided in TablEdit for all of the more common functions such as changing note duration (this includes toggling the dotted and triplet functions on and off), the most common effects (slides, pull-offs, hammer-ons, muted notes), changing scale views, Cut and Paste operations, etc. A complete list of the keyboard shortcuts available is to be found in the TablEdit "Help" file. I guarantee you that learning the ones for the functions you use most often will simplify your life greatly.

Duration Errors

The most common errors in TablEditing are those involving note durations. Some of these are no more than simple entry errors while others are rooted in attempts to notate strictly by ear without an understanding of the structure of music (we'll get to this one a little farther down the page). A small tip here: the dynamics display can be toggled on and off (keyboard shorcut [v]) during note entry so that these markings don't obscure the true value of dotted notes. TablEdit contains a very efficient function to help you avoid at least some entry errors. The Display Options dialogue contains an option labeled "Duration errors". Activating this option (by marking the check box next to it) will cause duration errors along any given string to be displayed in red. If you see a note in red you'll automatically know that you've either given the note too long a value or that you've placed the following note incorrectly.

Now, on to bigger and better things...

Information

The first thing you should do when you open a new tablature sheet is to enter the name of the piece and the composer/artist credits in the Title Information dialogue. Don't forget to add your own name (and, perhaps, email address), as well. That way other users can contact you if they have questions or want to contact you because of shared musical interests.

The next step is to set the correct time signature, key and instrument tuning for the piece. Unless you are planning to create a Performance Transcription, you should go to the Display Options dialogue and turn off the dynamics. This will allow you to see the actual note values more easily. Once these things have been done, you are ready to start your tablature transcription.

Note Duration and Rhythmic Notation

As I pointed out above, it's very important to keep in mind that tablature is a visual representation of what's actually taking place on the fingerboard of the guitar (I'll keep the discussion centered on the guitar despite the fact that the advice provided in this tutorial is equally valid for any fretted instrument). There are two areas in which this importance is most critical: note duration and rhythmic notation. These two areas are closely related in tablature.

When reading classical notation, note duration, along with dynamics, is the crucial factor in interpreting the music. Tablature, however, is read more in the sense of "on the beat/off the beat". This makes the appearance of the note stems the crucial factor.

Have a look at the following examples:

Although the total note values in these two tablature segments are identical as regards duration, the use of tied notes in example 2 has brought out the "on the beat/off the beat" nature of the measure and made it much clearer and easier to read.

Another thing that should be kept in mind is that TablEdit Doesn't automatically enter rests into the tablature although it does so in the musical stave. A good rule of thumb is that if a rest appears in the stave you should also enter it in the tablature. This will also provide the stems necessary to easy reading. Pressing [.] (period) will enter a rest of the current duration at the cursor location.

It could, in general, be said that notes with a value longer than that used for a whole beat (e.g. 1/4 notes in 4/4 time) should be avoided in the treble portion of the tablature, whenever possible, unless they fall exactly on the first or third beat of the measure. In this case, the note occupies exactly half the measure and remains easy to read. In the case of fingerpicking, the rule should be applied to the type of note used for the thumb. This isn't always the same thing as the type of note given to a beat in the time signature. For example, a ragtime piece in 2/4 time doesn't usually use 1/4 notes for the bass line but, rather, 1/8th notes.

Dotted notes should also, in most cases, be avoided. The exception would be when writing tablatures in 3/4 or 6/8 time where a dotted 1/2 note would cover an entire measure.

In both of the above cases, it's usually better to replace such notes with tied notes of shorter duration. There is a major exception to this rule! Many classical guitar pieces are written in such a way that converting notes of long duration into tied notes of shorter duration will actually make the tablature more difficult to read because the resulting arcs obscure both other notes and added effects. Simple common sense will tell you when this is the case.

In addition to providing a visual aid in the form of the above mentioned stems, tied notes probably contribute more to the creation of a "lifelike" performance sound than any other single element of a tablature (assuming, of course, that you've entered the correct basic note durations in the first place). An examination of the tablatures contributed to the TUS reveals that the vast majority are simply entered as straight, basic notes and that tied notes are, to a great extent, ignored. This often results in a sort of "music box" quality when the tablature is played back via the MIDI port.

Although the subject of tied notes properly belongs under the category of Performance Transcriptions, the subject is sufficiently brief that I'll include it here.

If you're working from a printed score, whether it be for piano or guitar, the rests and ties will usually be correctly shown so all you have to do is copy them.   If you are doing an arrangement of your own or transcribing someone else's arrangement by ear, there's one simple question you can ask yourself if you're in doubt as to whether or not to enter a rest or a tied note. "Do I lift my finger(s) from the fretboard at this point?". If the answer is "Yes" you can be pretty sure that a rest is in order. If the answer is "No", then you should think about whether or not you damp the note (with either hand) or replace it with another finger on the same string. If you damp it, this should be indicated by a rest, if you replace it with another note no rest is needed. The final judgement must, of course, be made by your own ears.

If the answer to the above question was "No" and you neither damp the note nor replace it with another note, the only remaining option is the use of tied notes.   Although it's convenient to just enter the notes as they're picked, this rarely reflects the true sound of the piece. If, for instance, you've picked an entire chord, the bottom notes don't simply disappear when you pick the next melody note. They continue sounding for an indeterminate period of time (exactly how long depends on your instrument and how hard you pluck the strings. it's usually sufficient to extend them for between an 1/8th and a 1/4. TablEdit automatically applies a certain amount of decay to tied notes. This relatively small adjustment in note duration will do wonders for the sound produced by your tablature.

A Note on Writing Duets

When learning duets it can be a real hassle to use a printout containing both guitar parts. In

the first place you have to turn the pages more often and in the second you have to read every other line of tablature. On the other hand, it's often valuable to be able to see both parts at the same time in order to see what the two instruments are doing in relation to each other.

The old solution was to write three, separate tablatures, one with the duet and a separate one for each instrument. With the advent of TablEdit's use of modules, all three can now be combined into a single file. Simply write out the duet version first, implementing the dynamics if these are a consideration, and then copy each guitar part to a separate module. The easiest way to copy the separate parts is to place the cursor on the first string at the very beginning of the tablature and then scroll to the end of the tablature using the scroll bar and click on the sixth string line at the last position while keeping [Shift] depressed.

Once you've copied the parts to the new modules, add text and chords as needed. Keep in mind that you can now create stereo modules by adjusting the "Pan" control in the MIDI Options dialogue. Simply set the "Pan" value of the first guitar to "0" and that of the second guitar to "15". Don't forget to turn the sound of either the duet or of both solo parts off.

Each guitar part can now be printed out separately for practice or the duet can be viewed on screen (or printed out) for analysis.
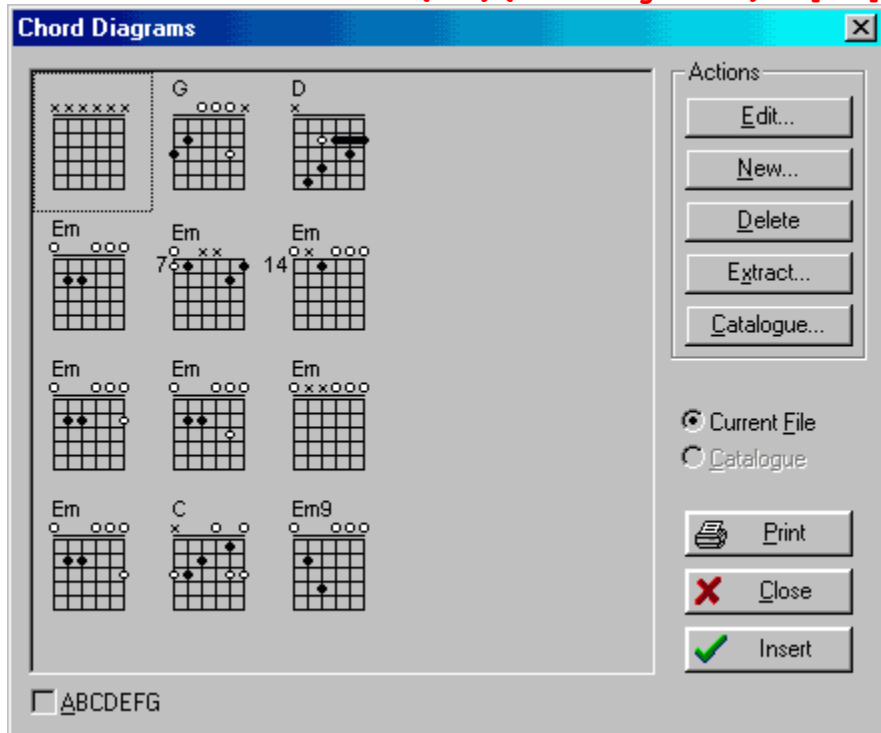
TablEdit
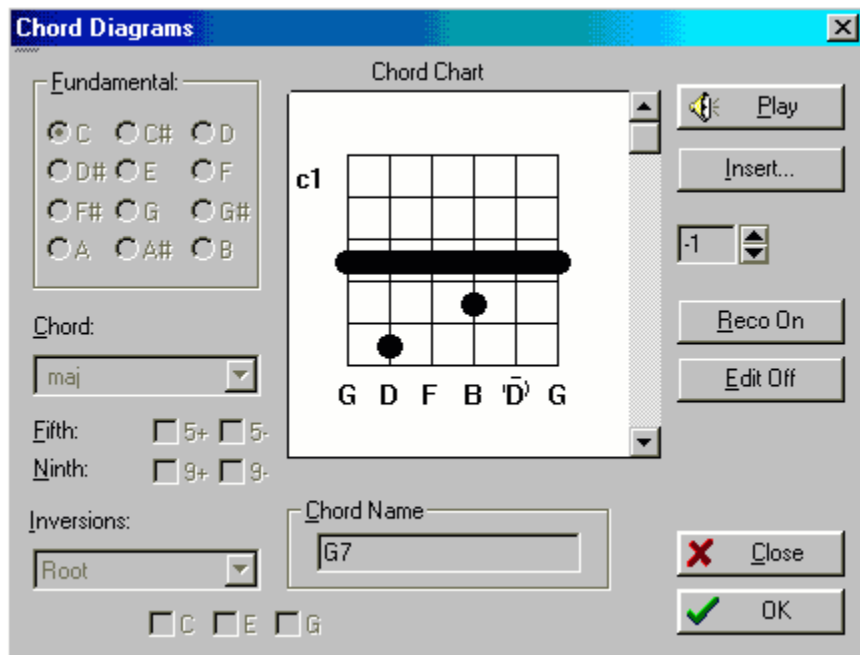Tablature Editor
http://www.tabledit.com/

Dialogues

Chord Diagrams Dialogue
Menu: {Edit} {Chord Diagrams...} or [Ctrl]+[d]

Chord Editor

Chord Builder
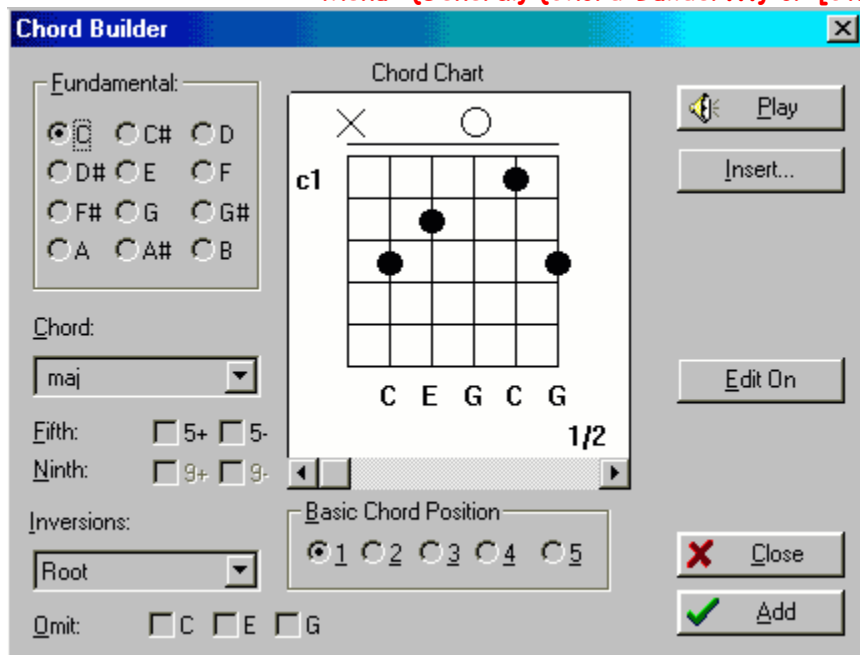
Crescendo/Diminuendo

Display Options

Display Options

Screen Mode:
- ( ) Tablature + Stave
- ( ) Tablature Alone
- ( ) Multitrack

Display:
- [x] Auto Chord Diagrams
- [x] Reading guides
- [x] Dynamics
- [x] Duration Errors
- [x] Automatic Rests
- [x] Stems: ( ) Top Down   ( ) Bottom Up
- [x] Patches

✓ OK
✗ Cancel

Fonts:
- Tablature: Arial, 10, bold
- Title: Comic Sans MS, 16, bold
- Small Font: Arial, 8
- Text 1: Arial, 9
- Text 2: Arial, 9

Ruler position: 24

Grace note

Grace note

Position: 1

✓ OK
✗ Cancel

Effect:
- ( ) None
- (•) Hammer / Pull-off
- ( ) Slide
- ( ) Bend / Release
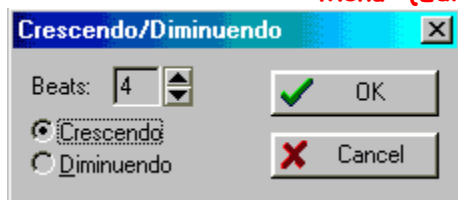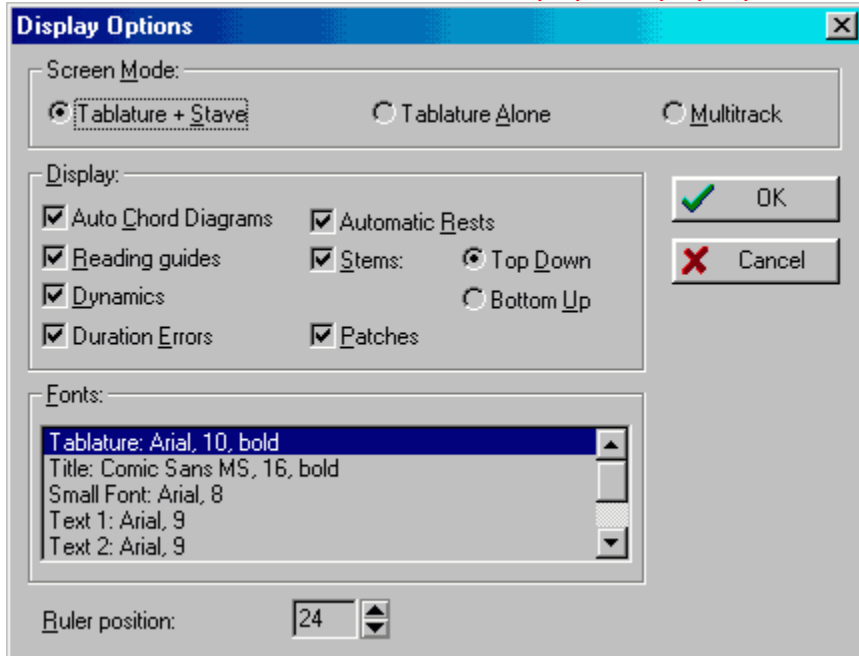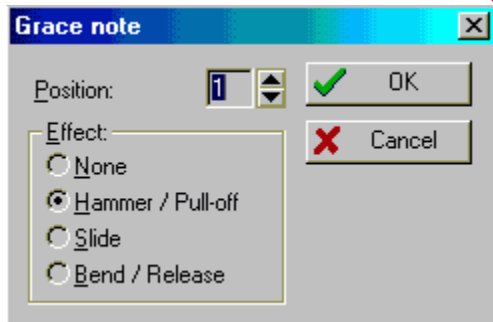
Insert Measures

Insert Measures

Number: 1
After: 1

✓ OK
✗ Cancel

Scan:
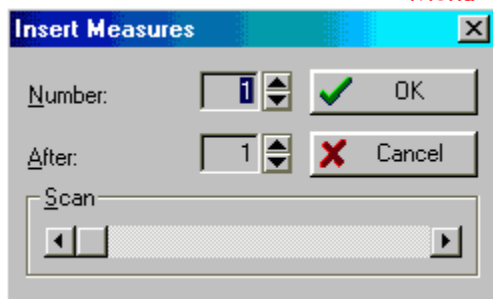
Instrument Tuning
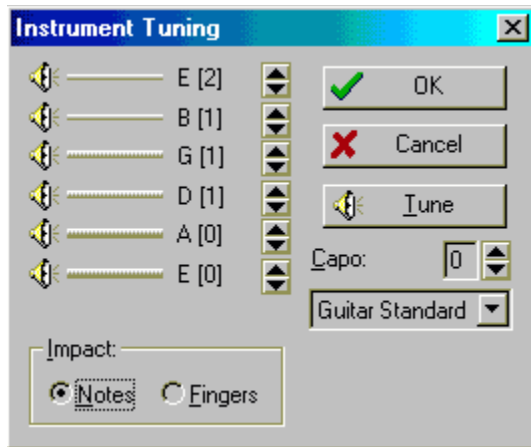
Key Signature

MIDI Options
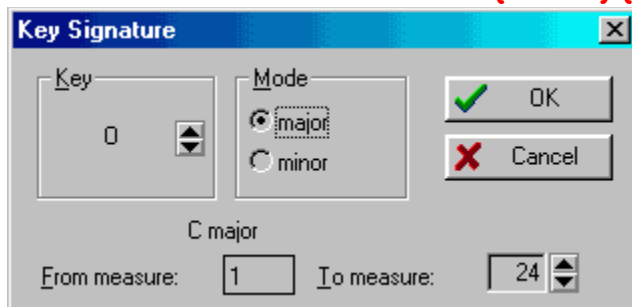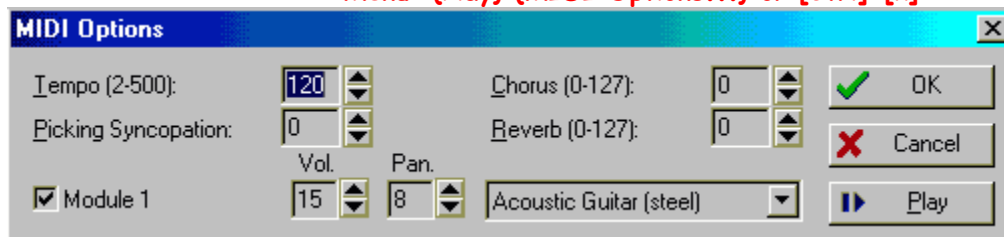
Module

Modify Measures

Modify Measures

4 ▼ Count	✔ OK	
4 ▼ Type	✖ Cancel	

From measure: 1
To measure: 1 ▲▼

Notes

Notes

☐ Print notes ○ L ○ C ○ R   ✔ OK   ✖ Cancel

📂 File...   ◄ �: ►

"Black Bottom Stomp", originally entitled "Queen of Spades", was first recorded on September 15, 1926 by "Jelly Roll" Morton and his Red Hot Peppers.

This guitar arrangement was done in 1979 for inclusion on the Kicking Mule album "King Porter Stomp" (SNKF 169), but was never recorded. The tune has since been re-arranged somewhat, this version dating from October, 1998.

Lasse has gone to great pains here to make the piece as playable as possible. Nevertheless, even intermediate level players will find it challenging to play. The results, however, are well worth the effort.

Preferences

Preferences

Fingers:	pima	✔ OK
Notes:	C D E F G A B	✖ Cancel
Effects:	H Po SI B T ~ R	Advanced...
	Restore	Cursor Color

Preferences Advanced Settings

Advanced Settings

☑ Long Filenames   ☑ 8 files in File menu history list   OK
☐ Auto-load last open File   ☑ Reset to last used Directory   Cancel
☑ Ledger Lines in notation   ☑ Inclined Beams in notation
☑ Fix Palettes   ☑ Save/Load Configuration with files
☐ Simulate Human Playing   ☑ Solo predefined Instrument
☐ Rollover Help

Pick strokes + Fingerings

Strokes + Fingering

Strokes:
- (•) None

Pick
- ( ) Downstroke
- ( ) Upstroke

Finger
- ( ) Thumb
- ( ) Other finger

✔ OK
✖ Cancel

Fingering:
- (•) None   ( ) 0   ( ) 1   ( ) 2   ( ) 3   ( ) 4   ☐ Above tab
- (•) None   ( ) T   ( ) I   ( ) M   ( ) A   ☐ Above tab

Print Setup

Print Setup

Vertical Stave Spacing: 14 ⬍ mm + 12 ⬍

Note Proportional Spacing: -1 ⬍

- ☐ Chord Diagrams
- ☑ Reading Guides
- ☑ Tuning beside tab
- ☐ No Proportional Printing

- ☑ Tablature
- ☑ Musical Notation
- ☑ Slurs in Notation

Print Scale adjustment (+/-) -1 ⬍

🖨 Print
✖ Cancel
🔍 Preview
Page Layout
Printer Setup

Special Effects

Special Effects

- (•) None
- ( ) Hammer-On [h]
- ( ) Pull-Off   [p]
- ( ) Slide   [s]
- ( ) Choke   [c]
- ( ) Brush
- ( ) Natural Harmonic
- ( ) Artificial Harmonic

- ( ) Muted note [m]
- ( ) Tapping
- ( ) Vibrato
- ( ) Tremolo
- ( ) Simple Bend
- ( ) Bend + Release
- ( ) Roll (arpeggio)
- ( ) Dead Note

- ( ) Ringing note
- ( ) Slap
- ( ) Rasgueado
- ( ) Ghost note

Combination
- (•) None
- ( ) Hammer-On
- ( ) Pull-Off
- ( ) Brush
- ( ) Roll
- ( ) Natural Harmonic
- ( ) Artificial Harmonic

✔ OK

Syncopation Change

Syncopation Change

| 0 | ✔ OK |
| | ✖ Cancel |

Tempo Change

Tempo Change

| 120 | ✔ OK |
| | ✖ Cancel |

Time Signature

Time Signature

| 4 ▼ Count | ✔ OK |
| 4 ▼ Type | ✖ Cancel |

☑ 4/4 = C

Title Information

Title Information

Title: format 2.00

Black Bottom Stomp

Sub-Title:

Ferdinand "Jelly Roll" Morton (1926)

Comments:

Arr: Lasse Johansson (1979 - 1998)
TablEdited by Lasse Johansson (1998)
Additional TablEditing by Tom Thomason (1998)

| ✔ OK | ✖ Cancel |

Performance Transcriptions

Performance transcriptions demand more work than simply entering the individual notes. It becomes your responsibility to enter the appropriate chord diagrams and fingerings as well as the dynamic values which will bring the song to life and really show how you think the song should be played.

When I first began writing tablatures, it was assumed that the user had access to audio recordings of the song in order to be able to hear the phrasing and emphasis used by the original artist. In fact, the original Grossman style tablatures that I worked with didn't use traditional bar markings at all but, rather, sections corresponding to phrases. With TablEdit, tablature takes on a life of its own. Instead of relying on external sources, most of this audio information can be written directly into the transcription itself by the use of dynamics.

One of the things that strike me as I go through the hundreds of tablatures available on the TablEdit User Space (TUS), is that many TablEditors don't bother to identify themselves in the Title Information dialogue. Doing this serves two purposes. In the first place, you've done a lot of work to produce a tablature for the pleasure and benefit of others and you deserve some credit for it. In the second place, identifying yourself gives others the opportunity to contact you if they have questions about the arrangement, musical sources or simply because they want to exchange views with someone who enjoys the same styles of music as themselves.

The second thing that strikes me is the lack of historical information supplied in this dialogue. It's no more than common courtesy to give credit to the original artist or composer whose work you've arranged or documented if the information is available to you.

Last, but certainly not least, I would like to see more use made of the Notes dialogue in TablEdit. Although tablature is an excellent medium for communicating guitar information visually there are, inevitably, always details that need extra emphasis or description. This dialogue is ideal for this purpose.

Using Dynamic Modifiers

<u>Table of Contents</u>

After note duration and sustain, dynamics are the single most important factor in making your tablature at least approximate the sound of an actual performance. No performer plays every measure, let alone every single note with exactly the same emphasis. One might say that dynamics function as a sort of volume control which is applied to individual notes.

Tabledit provides a <u>Dynamic Modifiers</u> palette with eight levels ranging from **fff** (forte-fortissimo, very loud) to **ppp** (piano-pianissimo, very soft). The setting that is active when the TablEdit is terminated will be the default the next time the program is launched. The two lowest dynamic settings are **ppp** and **pp**. The sound provided by these two settings is very faint and is, in general, of very little use. Even the **p** setting should be used sparingly.

When writing <u>Performance Transcriptions</u>, you should set the initial dynamics level to either **f** (fortissimo) or **mf** (mezzo-forte) before you begin note entry. Either of these settings provide enough dynamic space to allow you to alter the volume of the individual notes by several steps in either direction. If you are working from a printed score you should, of course, set the dynamic level to match that of the beginning of the score. You should also make sure to activate "Dynamics" in the <u>Display Options</u> dialogue.

There are no simple, straightforward rules to tell you exactly how to use dynamics. Every interpretation of a piece will make use of them in its own way. You simply have to listen to the way you (or the artist whose work you are transcribing) emphasizes notes and chords. However, several small tips may be of help:

- Chords used as endings are often played 1-2 dynamic levels higher than the main body of the section they belong to and are often preceded by one or more beats.

- Muted bass notes should be lowered one dynamic level compared to the unmuted notes above them.

- Harmonics should be lowered two dynamic levels to create more of a bell like tone

- Chords of four to six notes should be lowered one dynamic level

There are several levels of implementation of dynamics. The lowest is to simply ignore them and write everything with the same setting. This is what has been referred to as the <u>Quick and Dirty</u> method of transcription.

The second level is to use the general dynamics provided in the original score. A good

transcription in classical notation will normally provide a general indication of dynamic level and, perhaps, add further markings for the emphasis of individual notes or runs. Classical solo guitar transcriptions are among those most likely to provide detailed information. Piano scores will also often provide this information. These are, however, often only general indicators although they usually provide enough variation to bring your transcription to life. Attention should be paid to any incidental dynamic markings provided. These take the form of markings for individual notes or chords and do not outlive the notes they are applied to. The two most common are '^' and '>'. In general, the '^' should increase the dynamic level two steps while '>' is weaker and should increase the level by one step.

The final level is to fine tune every individual note. Instead of trying to get into a long involved explanation of this, I recommend you take a look at Bruce Mock's transcription of Jonathan Burchfield's version of "No One Ever Cared For Me Like Jesus" (no_one.tab) which is to be found on the TablEdit archive under "Gospel" tunes. Also, the first part of the "Tips.tef" included with the TablEdit distribution is devoted to application of dynamic modifiers.

Crescendo and Diminuendo

These two related effects allow you to produce smooth transitions between areas of a song having different dynamic levels or to introduce emphasis in a particular measure or measures. Placement is everything in the implementation of these effects in TablEdit. A number of TablEditors have attempted to place crescendos or diminuendos with the best of intentions but whom, either through carelessness or misunderstanding of the correct procedure, failed to achieve the desired result. The dynamic value assigned to the affected notes must remain at the initial level throughout the length of the crescendo/diminuendo symbol. The first note following the effect determines the amount of volume change to be applied.

For example, the first note of a crescendo is played at the initial level and the following notes are gradually increased in volume until the end of the transition, at which point the last note is very slightly softer than the level of the first note following the crescendo symbol. The diminuendo works just the reverse with a volume decrease. Changing the dynamic level of any of the intervening notes nullifies the effect completely. To apply a crescendo/diminuendo, place the cursor on the beginning note, activate the Crescendo/Diminuendo dialogue, select either "Crescendo" or "Diminuendo" and set the total number of beats for the duration of the effect.

From a audio point of view, there's little or no point in making use of crescendo/diminuendo markings a single beat in length if the amount of the change is of two dynamic levels or less. The duration of the event is simply too short. It's just as easy to simply raise the dynamic level of each successive note by one level manually. However, it can be useful as a visual indication of a volume change. Nor is it of any use to apply a crescendo/diminuendo effect if the note following the end of the effect is at the same level as the initial note, another common mistake.

# Special Effects

TablEdit provides a rich set of playing effects that can be applied to the notes in the tablature. To apply an effect, highlight the note(s) in the tablature and either left mouse click on the desired button in the "Special Effects" palette, activate the effect in the Special Effects dialogue or use the keyboard shortcut, if available. Ceratin effects can be combined and applied to a single note or notes. For instance, you may apply a brush effect and a choke effect to the same note. Multiple effects can be applied only from the Special Effects dialogue.

To clear previously applied effects, highlight the note(s) and click on the "No Effect" button or select "None" from the Special Effects dialogue.

	Effect	Shortcut	Description
	Hammer-On	h	Apply a hammer-on to the next note on the same string.
	Pull-Off	p	Apply a pull-off to the next note on the same string
	Slide	s	Follow the link for detailed description.
	Muted Note	m	Produce a muted or muffled effect to a note, indicated by small "x" in the standard notation. If set during note entry, the notes on the three bass strings will entered as muted as the default.
	Choke	c	Apply a 1/4 note bend to the highlighted note.
	Bend		Follow the link for detailed description.
	Release		Follow the link for detailed description.
	Natural Harmonic		Follow the link for detailed description.
	Artificial Harmonic		Follow the link for detailed description.
	Brush Stroke		Apply a brush stroke arrow to a group of notes. The direction of the arrow (up/down) depends on which note of the group is used for the effect.
	Roll		Apply a quick finger roll to a group of notes. During playback,there will be a slight delay in the sounding of each note.
	No Effect		Clear all effects from highlighted note(s).

Dead Note Produce a dead note (snare drum sound) to a note, indicated by a number enclosed in a square in the tablature and a small "x" in the standard notation.

Rasgueado Causes, in effect, a series of brushes performed by the opening of the right hand from an initial fist. The basic effect is a downward brush from bass to treble and should be attached to the lowest bass note. Applying a second instance of the effect to the highest note will produce a "continuous" rasgueado including both up and down strokes.

Ringing Note Follow the link for detailed description.

Ghost Note Follow the link for detailed description.

Slap Adds a slight percussive sound to the note.

Tapping This is, in effect, a hammer-on where only the second note of the combination is struck (rather than plucked).

Tremolo This doubles the note within the indicated duration. Tremolo speed can be controlled by breaking up the principal note into shorter durations using tied notes and applying the effect to the ties.

Vibrato Causes the pitch of the affected note to vibrate within a 1/4 tone interval at a speed equal to a 1/16th note.
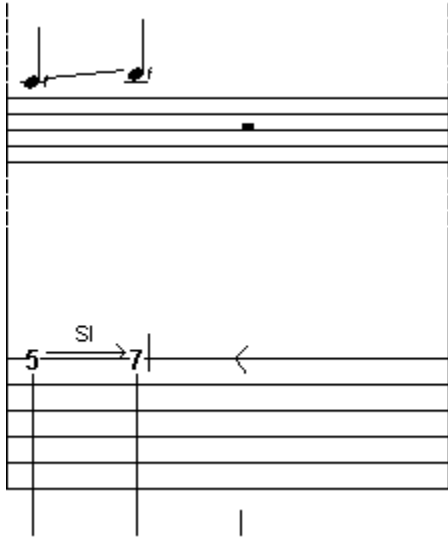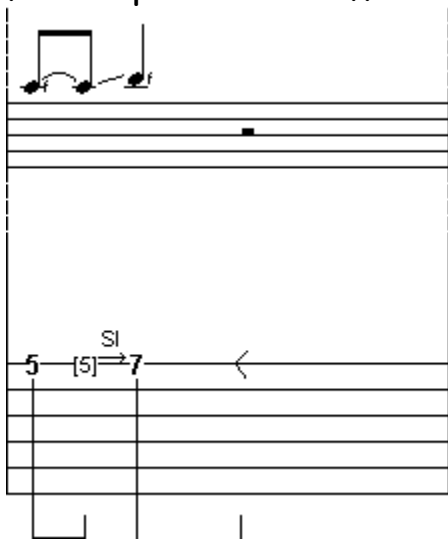
Slides

The default is a **simple slide** (glissando) where the first note is picked and then continues to sound as you move up or down towards the destination fret. To enter a slide, place two notes on the same string, place the cursor on the first one and then select slide from the Special Effects palette or use the keyboard shortcut [**s**].
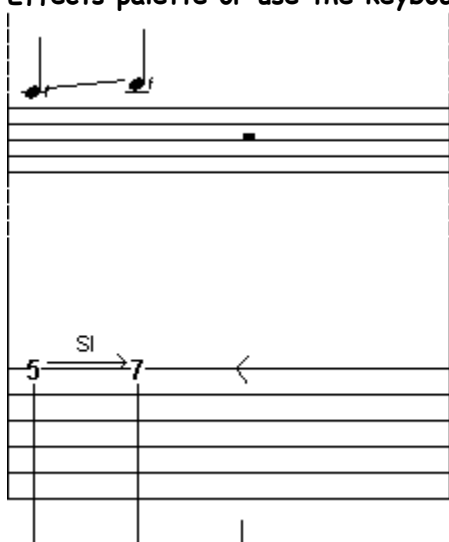
Another common playing technique is the **slide-pick** , where a note is picked, a slide takes place and the destination note is plucked on arrival. The first step is create a <u>simple slide</u>, and then highlight the ending note. Finally, click on one of the pick stroke indicators on the lower left of the <u>"Hand"</u> palette or select "Thumb" or "Other Finger" from the <u>Pick Strokes & Fingerings</u> dialogue. This will place a pick stroke indicator (a vertical line) to the right of the note.

A **timed slide** can be created to select the exact point within the duration of a ringing note to begin the slide. The normal behavior in TablEdit is for a slide to begin immediately after the note is picked. For example, a slide starting on a 1/4 note from fret 5 to fret 7 will result in 3 tones spread equally over the duration of the note. To create a timed slide, split the original note into shorter note durations using tied notes in such a way that the last tied note is located at the point from which you want the slide to begin and apply the slide effect to the last tied note. Using the slide from the previous examples, to start the slide on the second half of the beat, enter two eighth notes on the fifth fret, tie the second note to the first and place the slide effect on the second eighth note.

The final slide effect is the **grace note slide**. The first step is to enter a note at the desired final pitch. Then from the <u>Grace Note</u> dialogue, activate the "Slide" effect, and set the "Position" field to the desired starting fret. The result will be a small number with a short straight line to the left of the note in the tablature and a small grace note in the standard notation. The small number represents the starting point of the slide.

Harmonics

Table of Contents

A harmonic is a chime like tone that is produced by lightly touching a string with a finger and then removing the finger at the instant the string is plucked. There are two types of harmonics, natural and artificial. Both types may be created in Tabledit by highlighting a note and applying the corresponding special effect, for a natural harmonic and for an artificial harmonic. They may also be applied by selecting the appropriate effect from the Special Effects dialogue. To reproduce the chime like sound during playback, it is recommended that the volume of harmonics be set one to two levels lower than the base volume.

Natural harmonics are played on open strings with the most common being at the 5th, 7th and 12th frets. Other natural harmonics can be played at the 3rd, 4th, 9th and 16th frets but the tone quality is poor and difficult to produce in actual playing conditions. The graphic below shows the notes that are produced by playing natural harmonics on the 5th, 7th and 12th frets. Note the small diamond to the right of the numbers in the tablature indicating a natural harmonic.


Tone produced is two octaves higher than the tone on the open string.

Tone produced is one octave higher than the tone on the fretted 7th fret.

Tone produced is one octave higher than the tone on the open string.

Artificial harmonics are played by fretting a string with the left hand and then touching the string with a right hand finger 12 frets higher on the fretboard. The right-hand finger is removed at the instant the string is plucked while the left hand maintains its position on the fretted string. The sound produced is exactly one octave higher than the normal fretted sound. Note the small dot above the numbers in the tab indicating an artificial harmonic.
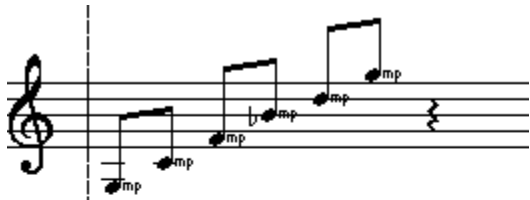
Tone produced is one octave
higher than those on the
fretted string.
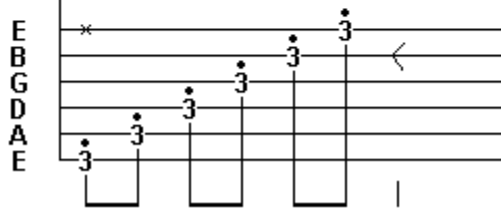
Custom Chords & Fingerings

The chord positions used in an arrangement are directly related to the playability of the piece. Certain licks may require the use of specific, often unorthodox, chord shapes.

Although TablEdit contains an advanced automatic chord function, it cannot always handle the positions necessary to a particular arrangement. In fact, by its very nature, an automatic computer algorithm cannot be expected to treat even common chords correctly under all possible circumstances. This isn't the fault of the programmer, it's just that the algorithm can only deduce chord positions from the notes actually entered by the user. If it only has two or three notes to work with, I can guarantee you that any program is going to end up showing an incorrect chord at least half the time. The same applies to the chord names assigned to various diagrams. Given the fact that any given three note combination (the minimum number of notes required to name a chord) will usually have at least two correct chord names there is also the problem of whether a barré chord is, for example, an Ab or a G# (enharmonic chords).

There are two solutions to this problem. One is to create and name custom chords of your own and the other is to use custom chords which have been included in other tablatures or collected into chord catalogues. The Chord Editor in TablEdit, although not completely without fault from the user's point of view, provides you with a highly advanced tool for this purpose.

Before we get into the discussion of these two alternatives, there is one point which must be made. TablEdit contains two controls for the inclusion or exclusion of chord diagrams. The first, "Auto Chord Diagrams", is found in the Display Options dialogue and relates to the display of the chord diagrams automatically generated by the program. The other is located in the Print Setup dialogue and relates to BOTH automatic and custom chord diagrams. If "Auto Chord Diagrams" is not selected in the Display Options dialogue, they will not be be included in your printouts, even if the "Chord Diagrams" option is selected in the Print Setup dialogue. Custom chords are always included in the screen display but are printed out only if "Chord diagrams" is selected in Print Setup.

Given that the aim of the present exercise is to produce performance tablatures, we assume that you plan to make use of custom chords. If this is the case, it's probably best to turn "Auto Chord Diagrams" off but leave "Chord Diagrams" active in the Print Setup dialogue.

Since inserting a custom chord diagram automatically prevents the display of automatic diagrams within that measure, there remains only one, possible problem: that of mixing

automatic and custom chords. Although this can, at times, be handy, it's not without its drawbacks. You may not wish to have chords included in all parts of the tablature. For instance, it would seem rather unnecessary to print out identical, repeated sequences of chords throughout the entire tablature. If you leave the "Auto Chord Diagrams" function turned on, the program will display automatic diagrams of chords you've may have replaced elsewhere. This means you either have to insert the correct chord diagram (or an empty one, see below) in each instance. This is, in the end, a lot more work than doing custom chord diagrams in the first place.

If you should decide to mix automatic and custom chords, make sure to create a completely empty custom chord diagram. That is to say one where all the strings are marked with an "x" at the top (not played) and no chord name is assigned to the diagram.
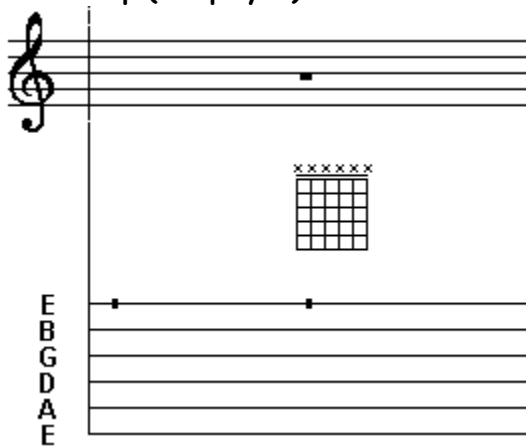
When this diagram is inserted into the tablature, it will exclude any incorrect automatic diagrams from the measure and prevent their appearance on subsequent printout.

The empty custom chord diagram you've created can be used to exclude automatic chord diagrams from measures where you don't wish to add an explicit custom chord diagram but don't want the automatic diagram, either! Only the anchor point will be visible on the screen and it doesn't appear at all on the printout. Please note that the illustration above has been specifically edited for demonstration purposes.

Creating custom chord diagrams can be a long and tedious chore. A lot of this work can be avoided by importing diagrams you've already created for another tablature or, even better, by creating one or more chord catalogues containing often used chords. Importing chords from an existing tablature has the disadvantage that all the chords used in the earlier tablature are imported into the current project, even those that you may not need. This is, however, very practical for creating chord catalogues. These are simply standard TablEdit .tef files that can be accessed directly from within an active tablature via the Chord Manager. The chords they contain are not imported into the current tablature until you insert them individually. Thus, you can have a chord catalogue containing hundreds of chord diagrams available to you at all times without having to save all the diagrams with your tablature.

A basic "Standard" chord catalogue (standard.tef) is included in the TablEdit distribution

package. This contains a number of common chords in standard tuning (EADGBE). A look at this tablature reveals that it contains only a single, empty measure but that the Chord Manager contains 93 chord diagrams. These diagrams cannot be edited while being used as a catalogue in another tablature (although they can be edited as usual once imported). You can, however, load "standard.tef" in the same way as any other TablEdit file in order to add, modify or delete diagrams. This allows you to create catalogues (i.e. separate .tef files) for each tuning you use or special catalogues for the work of specific artists known to use "exotic" chord shapes.

The custom Chord Editor can be accessed in one of two ways. To access the editor, open the Chord Builder dialogue and select "Edit on", or open the Chord Manager and select "New". The latter is the method you'll find yourself using most often.

The editor allows you to create two kinds of chord diagrams, one type using numbers to indicate fingerings within the diagram grid and one which uses filled and open circles to indicate position only. TablEdit allows you to combine both types within the same tablature. You cannot, however, use both numbers and circles in one diagram. The choice of type depends on your own preferences and on the particular situation.

Creating standard chord diagrams using filled and open circles is a fairly straightforward process. Left-clicking on a given fret position inserts a filled circle and right-clicking on one inserts an open circle. Clicking on the characters at the top of the grid toggles between "X" for unused strings and "O" for open strings. The scroll bar at the left of the grid allows you to access higher positions on the neck. It can't get any simpler. Filled circles are used for indicating basic positions and open circles for showing "added" or "supplementary" notes.

Due to the automatic functions included in the editor, barrés may suddenly appear where you don't want them or, conversely, you may have trouble getting a barré to be displayed where you want one. This can, in most cases, be corrected easily. These problems are most common in connection with chords that need to be fingered using the thumb of your fretting hand but also occur in chords where a secondary barré is to be used above the primary, for instance a C chord with a full barré at the 3rd fret where the 2nd, 3rd and 4th strings are to be held as a partial barré by the ring or little finger at the 5th fret.

An unwanted barré can be removed by defining any of the affected strings as open. If, however, this string is to be fretted at any position above the barré, that particular fingering MUST be defined by an open circle (right-click). In the case of the C chord above, a right click on either end of the secondary barré will break it up to indicate that each string should be fretted by separate fingers.
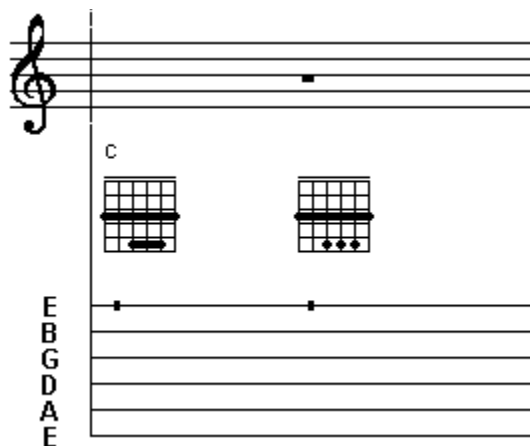
Forcing a barré where one is not automatically displayed is slightly more involved. The barré is forced by entering the principal notes as usual and then adding a supplementary note (right-click) anywhere along the path of the desired barré. The only thing you have to remember is that placing the supplementary note on a given string means that you won't be able to add further supplementary notes on that string. If you need to be able to do so, you'll have to select another string for the placement of the added note which forces the barré. I've found very few cases where collision is so great that the desired diagram can't be created but it does happen. The best solution for this part of the problem is to indicate the fingering for the supplementary note below the tablature using the Fingerings (Hand) palette.
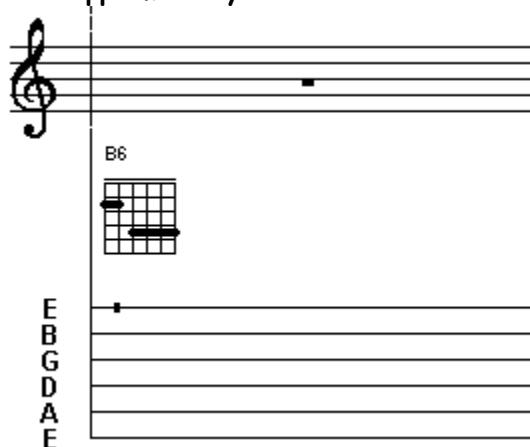
This technique can also be used to create multiple partial barrés such as those found in chords where the thumb of the left hand frets the 5th and 6th strings while another finger forms a partial barré on the upper strings.

Diagrams using numbers to indicate both position and fingering are created by setting the value in the little editable field to the right of the main editing window to an appropriate value before using the mouse buttons to enter the number into the grid. The default setting is -1 which produces filled and open circles as described above. Changing the value in the field to "0" causes the entry of a "T" (for Thumb") in the grid. The values 1, 2, 3 and 4 enter these numbers at the desired location. The result may be affected by your choice of fonts.
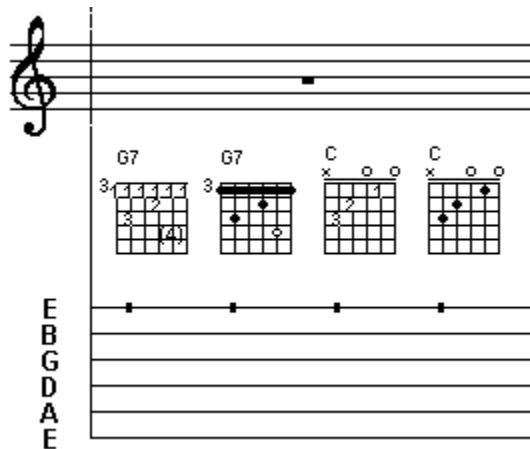
If you've accessed the editor window from the <u>Chord Manager</u>, exiting using "OK" will add your diagram to those already included in the manager. Exiting using the "Close" button closes the window **without** adding the chord to the manager and any editing you may have done is permanently lost. Both options return you to the "Chord Diagrams" dialogue. If you exit the dialogue via "Insert", the diagram is inserted above the tablature at the cursor position. If you exit via "Close" the diagram is not inserted into the tablature but **IS** kept for future use.

If you've accessed the editor window from the <u>Chord Builder</u> dialogue, exiting via "Add" will include your diagram in the chord manager but will not insert it into the tablature, exiting via "Close" loses anything you've edited. The "Insert" button is a little special. It inserts the notes of the chord you've created into the lines of the tablature itself rather than the diagram being inserted above the tablature.

Ringing Notes

The **ringing note** effect allows the selected note to ring for twice it's written duration. This enables you to obtain a natural playback sustain without the clutter of tied notes in both the tablature and standard notation. In the example below, both measures will sound the same during playback. The solid dark line to the right of the note in the tablature indicates the extended duration.

The ringing note effect should be used sparingly. Some guidelines for its use:

- Use it primarily on a series of two or more notes with a duration of a 1/8th note or less.
- Seldom, if ever, should it be used on a quarter note
- NEVER use it on a half note or whole note.
- Do not use it where a tied note is more appropriate
- Do not use it to sustain a note into the next measure

The following example shows two samples of improper ringing note usage,

The correct notation for the above example.

Bends

A **simple bend** is created by first entering two notes on the same string. The first note is the initial pitch and the second note the pitch to be achieved by the bend. Highlight the first note and apply the bend effect. A small curved arrow appears to the right of the number on the tab line. The small number at the tip of the arrow indicates the number of whole tones of the bend. There is a two fret, one whole tone, limitation for a bend. Applying the effect with a note separation greater than two frets will result in playback of the original tone only. It is common practice to set the second note with a dynamic modifier of ppp to indicate that it is not picked. This will also exclude that note from the tab when printed

The selection of notes dictates the timing of the bend and amount of sustain. In the first bend below, the pitch change will occur over duration of the first eighth note and sustain through the tied quarter note. The pitch change in the second bend will be slower, over the duration of the quarter note, and the sustain will be shorter.

The release or **bend-release** effect is created in the same manner as the <u>simple bend</u> and is indicated in the tab as a double curved arrow. Again the small number represents the number of tones of the bend-release. During playback, the pitch will change to the second note and near the end of the sustain, return to the pitch of the first note. The limitation and timing considerations of the simple bend also apply to the bend-release

A **prebend release** is the same as a <u>simple bend</u> except the second note is at a lower pitch than the original note. The prebend release is indicated in the tab as an curved arrow with a negative number to indicate the number of tones in the release.

The **choke** effect applies a quick one quarter tone pitch change to a note and is indicated by curved arrow with a small 1/4 at the tip.

The **grace note bend/release** is the final bend effect. First enter a note at the desired final fret. Then from the <u>Grace note</u> dialogue, activate the Bend/Release effect, and set the "Position" number box to the desired starting fret, a lower fret number for a bend or a higher fret number for a release. The result will be a small number with a curved line to the left of the note in the tablature and a small grace note in the standard notation. The small number represents the starting fret of the bend and NOT the number of tones.

Palettes

Dynamic Modifiers palette
Menu: {Display} {Palettes} {Dynamic Modifiers}

Fingerings palette
Menu: {Display} {Palettes} {Fingerings}

Keyboard palette
Menu: {Display} {Palettes} {Keyboard}

Notes palette
Menu: {Display} {Palettes} {Notes}

Special Effects palette
Menu: {Display} {Palettes} {Special Effects}
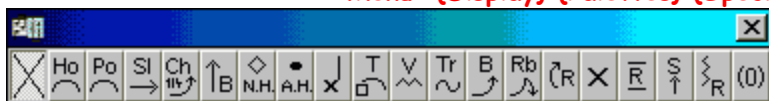
Tools palette
Menu: {Display} {Palettes} {Tools}

Merle Travis

Merle Robert Travis (November 29, 1917 - October 20, 1983) was, and still is, without a doubt one of the most influential figures in modern fingerstyle guitar playing. Son of a Kentucky coal miner, Merle learned to play from local talents in and around Rosewood in Muhlenberg County, most notably Mose Rager and Ike Everly (whose sons, Don and Phil, later achieved a certain reputation as The Everly Brothers). He, in turn, was to influence many of the best known names in fingerpicking (although the currently accepted term for the style is "thumbpicking") including Chet Atkins and Jerry Reed, among others.

The style he learned from them was very distinctly a local product whose basic technique involved a syncopated accompaniment on the bass strings with the right-hand thumb (a thumbpick is almost a requirement) while picking lead on the treble strings using the index finger. The requirements of this style of playing also led to the use of a number of unorthodox chord positions which, although awkward for the beginner, are necessary if the player wishes to be "authentic" in his/her playing.

Merle's guitars

Although Merle's custom-built 1952 Gibson Super 400 is the instrument he's most often associated with, during the span of his career he used a number of different guitars, both amplified, f-hole jazz models and straight acoustics. He started his recording career using a Martin D-28. This is the instrument he used in his early "soundies" (the period equivalent to modern music videos). It was later altered to include a custom neck and pickguard by Paul Bigsby. This is the instrument Merle can be seen playing in the film "From Here to Eternity" (where he sing "Reenlistment Blues"). Although he had a distinct preference for Gibson guitars (in addition to the Custom Super 400, he played, at various times, an L-10, a J-185 and a standard Super 400) he also used a Guild archtop at one point and several solid-body guitars of his own design. The Custom Super 400 and the Bigsby/Martin were, however, his constant companions throughout the latter part of his life.

The right hand

Merle used a very unusual right hand position. Although it's almost the norm among fingerpickers to keep the little finger of their right hand on the top of the guitar for support and placement, Merle almost always kept THREE fingers solidly on the sounding board or pickguard of his guitar. This position produces a highly distinctive playing angle and, as a result of this angle, a very personal sound. Although this position is almost a pre-requisite for

achieving a perfectly "authentic" Travis sound, I wouldn't actually recommend that students attempt to adopt it. It would probably take quite a while to get used to and it forces the player to play lead with the index finger, only. It should also be noted that, after the installation of a Bigsby vibrato bar with an elongated handle on his guitar, Travis often moved his right hand up over the end of the neck, itself, to change the "sound". He then hooked his little finger through a loop on the end of the vibrato handle for additional effect.

The question of which right-hand fingers to use in playing Travis' music is somewhat unclear. Although Thom Bresh (Merle's son) states categorically that Travis never used anything but his index finger to play lead, film evidence shows that there are exceptions. It's evident that, when needed, Travis did, indeed, use his middle finger on occasion and I suspect that in the lightning fast opening lick of "Blue Smoke" he actually used the ring finger, as well. These are, however, exceptions to a fairly consistent rule.

Bresh also states that Travis always kept the bass strings muffled with the edge of his right palm. This is also a truth with certain modifications. The damping is lifted, completely or partially, when performing certain slides and bass runs. In general, the outer edge of right hand should be kept lightly on the bottom three strings, almost directly over the bridge saddle. A quarter of an inch too far forward or slightly too much pressure and the damping becomes too heavy, causing 90% of the bass drive to disappear. Slightly too far back or slightly too little pressure and you lose the damping effect and get either a normal tone or simply a slightly dulled string. There's very little room for error. Think about it this way: a classical guitarist is usually trying for two voices in his playing, bass and melody or chord and melody; a (classical) ragtime guitarist is trying for three voices, i.e. All of the above, bass, chords and melody; Travis actually achieves four and, at times, five voices by treating damped and undamped bass strings as two, separate voices and by the addition of secondary notes (either with the thumb in the basses or with index finger brushes in the treble, see below).

One of the most characteristic and impressive right hand techniques used by Travis were his trademark "rolls". These were played at various positions on the neck, usually based on a partial chord (often combined with the use an open string), played both backwards and forwards and often at an incredible tempo. The usual finger sequence was T, T, i. Although these can be played adequately using T, i and m, this sequence Doesn't quite come out the same way as the original, probably due to the "weight" of the different fingers and the lack of assistance from the thumbpick on the second note.

Last, but certainly not least, there is the question of Travis' use of brush techniques. As previously mentioned, Travis invariably used a thumbpick. This allowed him to "strike through" a bass note in such a way that the adjacent string also sounded consistently. The volume of this secondary bass note is, in most cases, somewhat lower than the primary, something which should be reflected in the dynamic levels selected for a true "performance" transcription. It's also clear that many of the lead notes are actually brushed to include the next lower string giving rise to harmony notes which are heard but not consciously played. According to Bresh, Travis simply grabbed chord positions and kept the 'drive' going without actually paying attention to these secondary notes, the theory being that as long as he kept the rhythm going

and Didn't hit anything that was actually "wrong" everything would end up right. There are, in fact, many instances where he does strike a note which would be considered "wrong" in music theory but which, somehow, end up sounding right.

The left hand

Travis is reputed to have had very large hands, something which is difficult to judge from the existing films. One of the reasons for this claim is, undoubtedly, his use of the Lefthand thumb in forming chords. Travis' chord shapes were, to say the least, often Excentric. They were, however, extremely effective and, in some cases, essential to his style. I've created a short catalogue of these "exotic" chord shapes which is included in the ZIP file containing this tutorial. It's entitled travcrds.tef and can be accessed from the TablEdit _Chord Manager_ by opening the latter and clicking on the square button marked "Catalogue". The full catalogue file can be opened as a standard .tef file for editing and printout.

Examination of his filmed performances show that his left-hand thumb almost always remained well over the edge of the guitar neck, even when it wasn't being used to fret the strings. On this evidence alone, I would, at the very least, tend to agree with Bresh's statement that Travis "very rarely" used a full barre chord. He regularly used his thumb to fret both the 5th and 6th strings and there is evidence that he, on occasion, even used it to fret the 4th string. In addition, he would stretch his thumb up to two, possibly three, frets below his primary chord (without either releasing or moving the latter) in order to play bass runs. I can't over-stress the importance of notating this left-hand thumb correctly when writing performance tablatures. It's often a key factor in figuring out the chord positions he used. It should also be remembered that Travis made frequent use of the open 1st string, especially when anticipating chord changes.

Tablature tips

All of the characteristics described above need to be kept in mind when attempting to create "performance transcriptions" of Travis' work.

Tunings, Keys, Capos, Time signatures and Syncopation

Travis almost invariably played in standard tuning. There are, however, exceptions and he didn't mind playing a little joke on the audience. One notable exception is his recorded version of "Black Diamond Blues". To all appearances a fairly straightforward 12-bar blues, you quickly discover problems when trying to transcribe it (nine fret stretches, anyone?). There's a prominent harmony voice throughout the piece that defies logical fingerings! Many years after the fact, Travis revealed the secret of the number. He'd used an exotic tuning which involved removing the standard 3rd string, replacing it with a 1st string which he then tuned up to match the G note of the 3rd fret, 1st string, putting the high voice on the 3rd string! Nor was he averse to using studio tricks to get certain sounds.

Travis wrote in most of the common keys but had a preference for C, E, G and A. He did,

however use a capo and a number of his pieces were recorded both with and without. Using the capo shortens the necessary stretches. What is important to remember is the key whose shapes he used rather than the actual key. Nevertheless, when you insert a virtual capo you should make sure to use the corrected key when indicating the key signature, i.e. A C position piece with a capo at the second fret should be marked D major instead of C major.

The vast majority of Travis' instrumental work should be written in 4/4 time (plays hell with waltzes, though). Because of his thumb technique, many of the pieces are actually played in a syncopated 8/8 time, but this isn't a time signature you really want to write a tablature in, any more than you really want to write the blues in the triplet driven 12/8 time that's technically correct. In both these case, the solution in TablEdit is the same. Use the "Syncopation" function set to 1 or 2, depending on the amount of delay you want to feed to each double 1/8th note combination. I also find that many of these pieces benefit from a light touch (15-20) of reverb.

Chords

The next decision that has to be made is whether you are going to stick strictly to the way Travis played it or if you are going to allow yourself slight departures from his technique. This decision most often concerns Travis' chord shapes. My own recommendation, with (at least) one exception, is to stick with his original chord shapes. They're very often the only way to reproduce certain runs, especially those chords which use the left-hand thumb to fret more than one string. Despite the criticism of some classical guitarists (whom, in general, have a tendency to say "you can't do it that way" about anything that strays from "classical" technique), there are some chord/lead combinations that simply can't be played from a grand barré position and Travis used all of them! The ability to use the left-hand thumb to form these positions is more a question of training than of hand size. Long practice (hey! The guy who tells you you can become a guitar player in five easy lessons is lying through his teeth and you know it) and effort will stretch the tendon linking the thumb and index finger so that it becomes second nature.

The one exception I would, in general (there are a couple of exceptions to this exception), make to the above rule regards the use of the common 9th shape illustrated below:
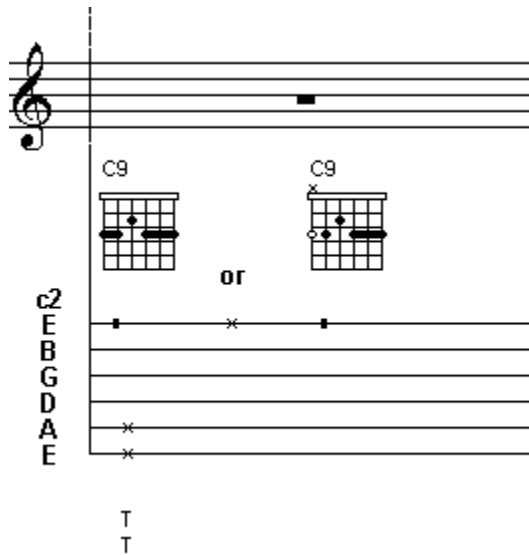
Travis would play this shape using his thumb to fret the 5th and 6th strings. This shape can be very useful in connection with certain chord runs but it can also be a royal pain in others. In most cases, this fingering can be replaced by the more common one where the middle finger is used to fret these strings with a mini barré (or alternate between them as in the second example) without losing anything but "authenticity". The choice is yours.

Thumb Technique,

Merle's right hand thumb was used to play both a mixture of fairly common alternating and monotonic bass accompaniments and various combinations of fast rolls and single string runs.

Palm Muting and "Ghost Notes"

As was stated earlier, when performing bass pattern accompaniments. Merle usually kept the bottom two or three strings damped with the edge of the right-hand palm. You should mark such notes, usually 1/4 notes, as "muted". Except in the case of certain bass fills, they should also be reduced by one or two dynamic levels relative to the surrounding notes, thus reducing their volume. Please note that he sometimes played such bass fills without damping the notes at all.

The other important function in this context is the so-called "ghost" note (TablEdit version 2.10 or greater). When Travis played his bass accompaniments, he usually "struck through" the second and third beat bass notes so that the next higher string also sounded. Something of an "alternating brush" technique. It's a bit impractical to write all of these as brushes and the common practice is to ignore them altogether in tablature. In the context of TablEdit, however, you want to be able create a tablature that also sounds good, both from within the program and as an exported MIDI file. Their bare inclusion in the tablature can, however, lead to a lack of clarity unless they're specifically marked as secondary notes, not to be actively picked. This is where "ghost" notes come in. Marking a note as a "ghost" note encloses it within parentheses (not square brackets like tied notes) and reduces their volume

to 66% of that indicated by the dynamic level applied to it. "Ghost" notes should be added to practically all second and third beat basses and should be assigned the same dynamic value as that assigned to the undamped treble notes. They can also be added to the lower bass notes in some, but not all, cases. Remember that "ghost" notes added to the lower bass line cannot be combined with the "mute" effect. "Ghost" notes in the upper basses should be of the same duration as the principal bass note, except, of course, in places where the string they're located on is picked after a shorter interval.

I hope that this little essay has caught your interest will help you in your attempts to write this style of tablature. And I, of course, hope that it will help you get even greater enjoyment out of your use of TablEdit.

Tom Thomason
thomason@algonet.se or tom@tabledit.com

Gothenburg, Sweden
March, 1999

Standard Notation Guidelines

As the weekly submissions to the TUS are reviewed, two common faults that detract from the quality of the tabs are prevalent: improper placement of notes (quarter notes on the off beat, half notes on beat four, etc.) and cutting notes short or minimal use of sustain. Although this tutorial is not designed to provide an in-depth explanation of proper standard notation, the following general guidelines should be helpful when creating your tablatures. They assume that the song is entered in 4/4 time:

· Enter whole notes on beat **one** only.

· Enter half notes on beats **one** and **three** only

· Enter quarter notes on beats **one**, **two**, **three** and **four** only

· You should **never** enter a note duration that extends beyond the end of the measure

· Use tied or <u>ringing notes</u> to obtain note sustain

If you are new to creating tablatures, it is recommended that you start by entering tunes that use an alternating bass. These are by far the easiest to enter with proper timing. A good approach is to enter the bass notes for a three or four measure section and then add the melody notes. The advantages of this are that the bass notes provide a reference as to whether the melody notes are on or off the beat and also where on the fretboard the melody notes are played. Two important considerations regarding timing in alternating bass songs:

· Syncopation in the melody consists primarily of notes played either on the beat or off the beat. Although, you will run into quarter note triplets, eighth note triplets, etc., these are not the norm.

· Most songs are played with a swing feel , commonly called swing eighths, where the first eighth note of a beat has a duration of a quarter note triplet and the last eighth note a duration of an eighth note triplet. The most notable exception to the swing feel is Rock & Roll songs. They're generally played with straight eighths where both eighth notes are of equal duration.

To establish the proper playback picking syncopation, set the "Picking syncopation" in the <u>MIDI Options</u> dialogue to one of the following values:

"0" - Straight eighth notes

"1" - Moderate swing eighths

"2" - True swing eighths with triplet feel

The other element affecting playback is proper placement of note values in your tablature. It's very common to see quarter and half notes entered on the off beat. There are two very important reasons for NOT doing this. First, It makes the standard notation and tablature very difficult to read. The note symbols in musical notation are designed to give you a visual reference as to whether notes are on or off beat. When you see a quarter note, you expect it to be played on the beat. When they are used everywhere in a measure the visual reference is totally lost. More importantly, the swing eight playback will be incorrect if you use quarter notes on the off beat. When the picking syncopation is "1" or "2", you MUST enter off beat notes as eighth notes to obtain the correct playback. Quarter or half notes used on the off beat will play back with straight eight feel.

TablEdit includes a ruler to assist you in entering notes. The note symbol at the far left end of the ruler indicates the note value for each ruler line. The initial default is sixteenth notes but this can be changed by selecting "Save/Load Configuration with files" in the Preferences - Advanced Settings sub-dialogue. Each line represents a sixteenth note. The longer lines represent the on beats of the measure. Using this setting, quarter notes should be entered only on the long lines and eighth notes on the long or middle short lines. The setting can be changed from 8 lines per measure to 64 lines per measure by clicking on the small note on the left-hand end of the ruler. Also note that the cursor extends to the ruler to assist you in note positioning. The two numbers at the beginning of each measure indicate the current measure and the total number of measures in the song, respectively. The ruler is included   in all examples below for note reference.

In the examples, you'll notice that the bass notes are entered with a small "x" and the end of the note stem. This indicates that the notes are muffled or muted. If you have the muted note effect turned on in the Special Effects palette, all notes on the lower three bass strings will be automatically entered as muted, a great time saver.

This example indicates improper notation. Notice the use of quarter notes throughout measure 1 and also the use of a half note that sustains into the next measure. If the picking syncopation is set to "2" the playback will be incorrect.

Example 1 - Incorrect notation

```
E  -9---------9-------------------------------7----9----
B  ----9-----------12----10-------------------------
G  ----------11-----------9----------------7--------7-
D  
A  -9---------9------------------0------------0------
E  
```

Same measures with correct notation using tied notes. To notes tie notes, highlight the second note and click ![tie icon] from the <u>Notes</u> palette or press [**L**]. The tied notes in the tablature (numbers enclosed within brackets), will not be appear when printed unless you select "Slurs in Notation" in the <u>Print Setup</u> dialogue.

Example 2 - Correct notation

```
E  -9---------9---[9]------------------------------7----9----
B  ----9---[9]--------12--[12]--10---[10]------------------
G  ----------11------------9-----------------7--------7-
D  
A  -9---------9--------------0-----------------0------
E  
```

Once you begin to use eighth notes properly, a common mistake is to not sustain notes by using ties. This results in a very choppy sounding playback where the notes are cut short. If you think about what happens when a string is picked, you'll quickly realize that this isn't usually correct. A string will continue to ring until one of the following occurs:

1. It stops ringing naturally (very rare).

2. It is picked again to play another note on the same string.

3. It is stopped by releasing the fretting finger pressure or touching it with some part of the picking hand.

With this in mind, look at the following measures. There are eighth notes entered on the second half of each beat. For this to happen, the ringing of each note would have to be stopped in some manner as explained above. This is highly unlikely, so the notes must be sustained to the first half of the following beat or followed by the appropriate rest.

Example 3 - Notes cut short

To do this, tied notes are entered on the first half of the each following beat. Eighth notes are used on beats 2, 3, and 4 of measure one as eighth notes currently exist on the second half of each beat. The first beat of measure two presents several options. Notice that there is a position change from the 9th fret at the end of the first measure to the 7th fret in the beginning of the second. If the finger is lifted from the the 10th fret then the ringing will stop, In this case a half note rest should be entered to cover the absence of melody notes for the first two beats. To do this, place the cursor on an empty tablature line, select the half note in the Notes palette and press [.] (period).

If the finger is not lifted, then a tied note must be entered, either a quarter note on beat one with a quarter note rest on beat two or a half note on beat one. The tied half note is illustrated (see Example 2 - "Correct notation" above).

This discussion on standard notation and sustain may seem confusing at first but, with practice, it will become second nature and you'll do it automatically. It is   suggested that you look at some published music books, and observe how tied notes and note durations of different lengths are used to create sustain.

Finally, there's the question of stem direction. The automatic display created by the program is not always correct. Stem direction can be forced manually by placing the cursor on the note(s) in question and pressing [a] or [z] to force the stem upwards or downwards, respectively.   Pressing the [e] key will return the stem direction to the TablEdit default. If you have the "Duration errrors" function turned on in the <u>Display Options</u> dialogue, the heads of stems which have been forced upwards will be displayed in red while those which have been forced downwards will be displayed in blue. It's not always necessary to change all notes with an incorrect stem direction. It's often enough to change a single note for the automatic function to change the remaining ones.

Glossary

A B C D E F G H I J K L M
N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

D

Display Options dialogue

Display Options dialogue