

## FOREWORD

It is with pleasure that we present the following pages by one of the greatest banjo virtuosos of all time – Eddie Peabody.

Never before has Peabody's name appeared as a writer so it is a privilege for us, the publishers, to offer his first published work – "EDDIE PEABODY AND. HIS BANJO."

One of the first sponsors of this great artist was Sam Fox and a mutual feeling of friendship has always existed, therefore, it is most natural that Sam Fox should have been selected as the publisher of this interesting book.

Without pretense of formality, Eddie Peabody expresses his ideas in his own inimitable way and in words that he would use if he were talking with you personally. You will become better acquainted with Eddie as you progress through the pages of his book.

SAM FOX PUBLISHING CO., PUBLISHERS

## A PERSONAL MESSAGE

You will find the contents of this book rather unusual in that I am making public for the first time many tricks and secrets that have aided my success and have been introduced in my records and Movietone and Vitaphone short subjects (short motion pictures with sound).

In my first published book I am not desirous of conveying the impression that my method of playing the banjo or interpreting popular and classical music is the best, but simply passing on to you my ideas that I have found very effective and successful.

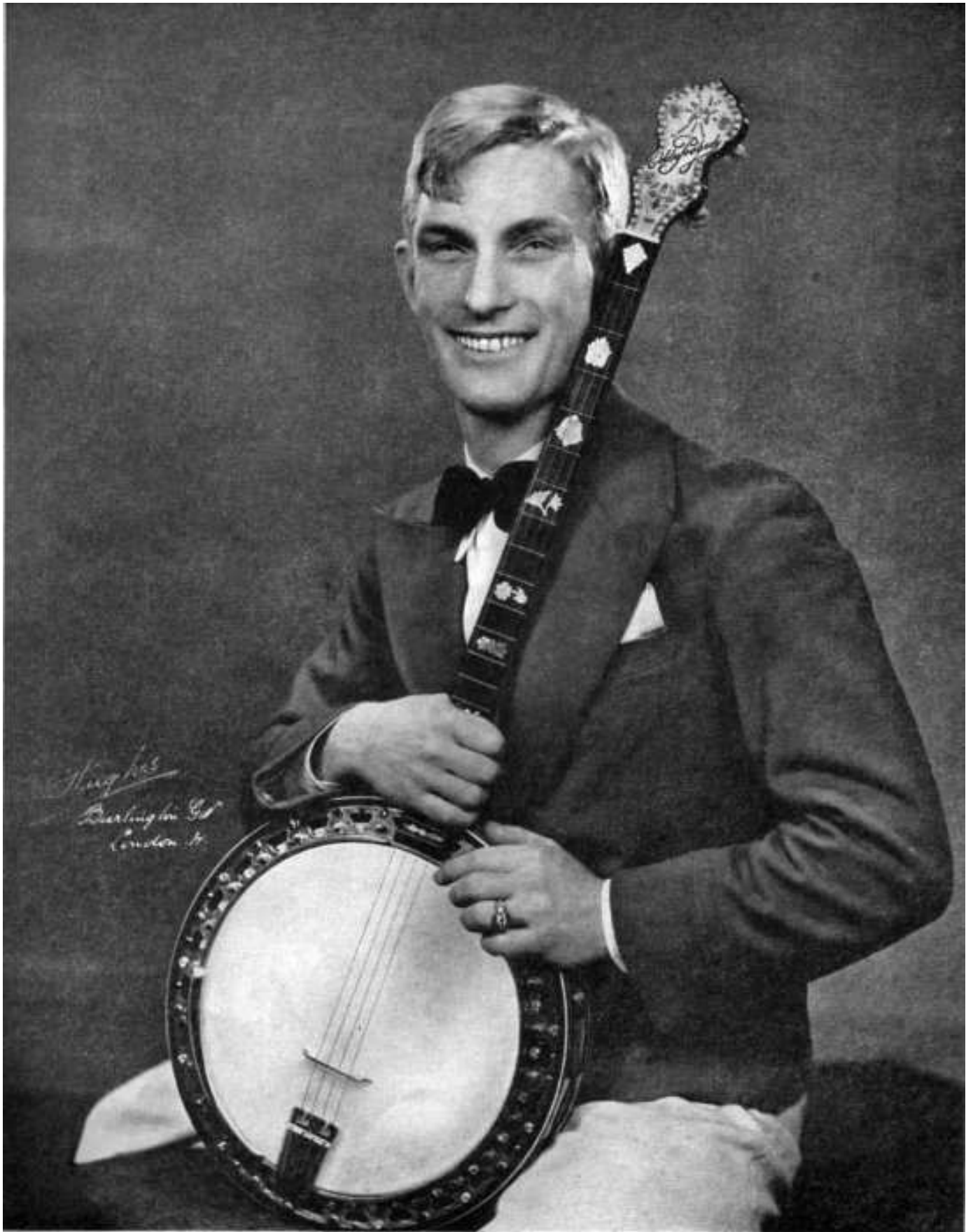
If, after reading my book, you are benefited in any way, I will feel I have accomplished much towards helping my fellow artists. It will please me very much to have every one of you write me a personal letter, telling me whether or not my writings have helped you. By your letters I will know if you would be interested in more material, including adaptations to the banjo of popular and classical selections

Thanking you sincerely for any suggestions or comments that may guide me in future publications, I remain

Musically,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Eddie Peabody". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the typed name "Eddie Peabody".

P.S. Kindly address me in care of the publishers.



EDDIE PEABODY

# How To Hold The Banjo

## Incorrect Positions



The picture in the upper left hand corner of this page I consider an illustration of a very bad and incorrect position for playing. You will notice that by crossing the legs the head of the banjo is brought up too high and forces me to bend over to see the fingerboard. This throws me off balance, making it almost impossible to play difficult passages and also makes a very unprofessional appearance.

The illustration at the upper right shows another incorrect position. Here I am also thrown off balance which makes it very difficult to play passages covering a wide range. In this position I would have to depend upon my right forearm to keep the banjo from sliding or slipping and, with my forearm in an awkward position, my hand is cramped and forces me to slow down my usual speed fifty per cent.

On the next page you will find illustrated the position I consider correct. But, may I again remind you that I do not want you to think my ideas the best, unless you find them as practical as I do for obtaining maximum results.

# How To Hold The Banjo

## Correct Positions



Correct Playing Position



Illustrating ease in handling  
difficult fingering in correct  
Playing Position

The above pictures are almost self explanatory, as they show my exact playing position for both first fingering position and my most difficult fingering position. I am sure everyone will agree that this correct playing position permits me to execute any selections regardless of difficulty and also makes for a good appearance.

Let me explain that in this correct playing position I hold the banjo between my legs in a semi-curved position with the banjo neck upright and pointing toward my left shoulder. This immediately relieves me of the weight and necessity of steadying the banjo, leaving both hands free for execution.

With both hands thus relieved, it is possible for me to get the maximum out of my wrist muscles which is responsible for the excellent results I get in my playing and always with a good professional appearance. I strive to avoid any strain at all times.

Give this a try and see if you do not get better playing results and with more comfort, too.

## The Pick and Strings



Incorrect Way To Hold Pick



Correct Way To Hold Pick



Correct Way To Hold Pick



### THE PICK

As the pick is a part of every banjoist's equipment, I feel that you would be interested in knowing the kind of pick I use. I get the best results from an ordinary pointed celluloid pick with a cork grip on one side only. After using the pick awhile, it rounds off and becomes a real fine pick.

In the upper left picture, please notice the pick in relation to the strings and also my last three fingers. There does not seem to be any apparent use for these three fingers which, in my estimation, causes lack of control and uneven and incorrect shading.

The center picture shows my idea of the correct way to hold the pick. Note carefully the position of my last three fingers. I get absolute control by letting the three fingers slide along the head of the banjo while using the pick on the strings. Well, so much for the pick matter.

### THE STRINGS

There is no secret about the strings I use; they are just common plectrum banjo strings with loop ends. Many third strings for the plectrum banjo are wound, but I do not use a wound third string, as I find I can get a clearer tone quality from an unwound third. My fourth string is wound on silver plated steel.

## Personal Note

I have received many inquiries regarding the clothes I choose to wear on the stage and other functions where I am called upon to entertain. I might say first that I have always observed the other fellow carefully and in presenting and knowing thousands of the best entertainers personally it has given me some very definite ideas about stage dress.

Most all of the nationally and internationally known entertainers have created for themselves an individual personality and are generally identified by certain mannerisms and dress. The public expects them to appear accordingly and would be greatly disappointed if they failed to do so.

All of which leads up to myself, for, ever since I have been a featured entertainer before the public I have tried to create a distinctive personality that anybody would immediately recognize as Eddie Peabody. That is why you can always count on seeing little Eddie with his red jacket and big baggy white trousers, and of course the banjo and other fretted instruments. By always appearing properly uniformed as an entertainer, I feel I am preserving the individuality I have gained.

I enjoy my work thoroughly, especially when I see the audience is pleased with what I am endeavoring to present to them, and, personally, it is not always a question of money but rather the amount of genuine enjoyment I am able to give my listeners. I believe in the saying, "You get out of life just what you put into it." If I deliver a good clean brand of entertainment, I should be properly rewarded either by money or satisfaction, according to the well defined laws of compensation.

## **Regarding the Plectrum Banjo I Use**

I am repeatedly asked the kind of instrument I use and to recommend the make of banjo I think best. My only reason for bringing this matter into my book is because the publishers requested me to tell in my own way how I handle the banjo, some of my tricks and anything else pertaining to the banjo that would interest the readers.

Regarding the proper kind of instrument to use, I would no more endeavor to tell you the kind of instrument to buy than I would try to tell you the kind of shoes to buy, when we all know that these things are purely a matter of personal likes and dislikes. There are several wonderful makes of instruments to my way of thinking and I would like to have you know that I am friendly toward all of the instrument manufactures and wish them all success. They have been very kind to me during my professional career and I most sincerely appreciate all they have done for me.

I personally use Vega-vox banjos and like them very much, but I have also enjoyed playing other makes as well. When someone calls to show me the instrument they are using and asks me what I think of it, I consider the price they have paid, the number of lessons taken, how well they play, etc., and then, if I honestly feel that they can get better results by using some other standard make of instrument, I tell them so.

I am always on the lookout for new improvements on instruments and offer suggestions whenever and wherever I feel they will be most appreciated, and so far everybody has been very considerate of my ideas. However, results are what we are all striving for, and when I say I get certain effects by my own methods, I do not want to give the impression that other methods are not as good. I am simply giving my version of things hoping that it may encourage the beginner and help other players in some way.



# Phonograph Records

## How They Are Made – Old and New Style

I think it might be interesting to the reader if I tell how I made my phonograph records and the tricks used in some of them.

When I began making records in 1926 the method of recording was done through a horn instead of the present day microphone, which is much more efficient. In the old days recording meant a great deal of work and, for various reasons, it was usually necessary to remake many times before a satisfactory master record was finally turned out.

The room in which the artist records is strictly soundproof, padded and draped with curtains, so that every outside noise is carefully avoided. On one side of the room are a number of horns coming out of a curtain and the artist plays into one of those horns. In the case of an orchestra they would use more horns, arranging them where they would pick up the sound of each instrument properly. Behind the curtain where the horns are placed is the recorder and the machinery that makes the record. In those days it was considered very secret, as each recording company used its own methods, but the advent of electrical recording devices has changed things considerably. The old style recording often required artists to make as high as fifty masters before the desired results were obtained and that represented a tremendous amount of work and expense.

Personally, when I recorded through the old system I could never sing my own choruses because I could not keep my instrument soft enough for my singing, and when I would hear the playback (as it is called), I would hear plenty of banjo and very little voice. It was, therefore, necessary to furnish me with a vocalist for the choruses of popular selections and, of course, that was not a one hundred per cent Eddie Peabody record. The present day recording does not make that necessary and I am happy to sing my own choruses. Speaking of the new style of recording, it has so simplified matters that when the microphone is set at the proper angle and distance nothing more is required except for the engineer to watch for good tone and clarity and amplify wherever advisable. This works on practically the same principle as radio broadcasting.

I could go on and write about radio and phonograph recording until the cows come home and still there would be things I would forget to tell you, but I enjoy this work and believe I was the first banjo player in the world who ever made consistent recordings on the banjo absolutely alone. I believe the public enjoyed them because of the tricks and novelties I introduced in all my records.

I should have explained more thoroughly how the recording engineers handle the wax records. In the recording laboratory there are two kinds of wax cylinders a little larger than the ordinary record and about an inch thick. These are generally kept in a heated chamber at an even temperature at all times while the recording is going on. One of these is the test wax and the other is called the master wax. After the artist has made his tests to the satisfaction of himself and

recording manager, he makes two, three, or four master waxes which he never hears until the records are pressed from them. Test waxes are very often played back in the recording room to the artist so he can hear any mistakes and make the necessary corrections, either musically or with the microphone. The master waxes are generally sent to the factory immediately where they are processed with copper and, later made into dies which are used in pressing the finished records.

Many people ask me about the arrangements I use in making records. There really is very little to say about this as the ideas I use are original. To be sure I have to keep pretty close to the original harmony of a number, but the breaks and hot licks are my own ideas and I probably would not play the number in the same way twice. That is why I often make three master waxes entirely different from one another and we pick the one we think the best.

It might also be interesting to mention that during the past four years I have used a certain pianist whenever I found it advisable to have an accompanist in my recordings. I feel that the folks who read this book should know what a great artist he is and that I consider it an honor and a pleasure to work with him in the making of many records. Frank Banta is his name. He is really an artist and has made some wonderful solo phonograph records for many companies. In all the years we have been making records together we have never used an arrangement in making our records. We simply rely upon each other's ability to improvise around the melodies and work for and with each other. Frankie is such a regular fellow and also a wonderful artist that I thought perhaps you would enjoy knowing him as I know him.

When we are ready to make a series of records, we never practice things over nor do I play the number myself. We simply get together on the morning we record, we each take a piano copy of the tune we are going to make, we start incorporating our crazy ideas, and as soon as we have something that sounds pretty good we call to the recorder to let us make a test quick before we forget what we were going to do. Our minds start to percolate with ideas and before you know it we have made a fine recording of some popular tune.

Right now I want to give Mr. Adrian Schubert credit for being the most marvelous recording manager I have ever seen in my life. He has been my inspiration in the laboratory at all times and has helped me very much in the success I have attained in the phonograph field. I could wish for nothing finer than to always have Mr. Schubert as my recording manager for the rest of my professional career and I am sure thousands of other artists feel the same way about him.

In my late recording you may have noticed that I used a stringed instrument of a special variety. It is called a banjoline and I designed and named it myself. It is made like a mandola, as far as the body of the instrument is concerned, and the neck is made up with the same number of frets as any banjo but I made some changes in the tuning pegs and strings. There are six tuning pegs at the top of the neck, which by the way looks like any banjo neck. Next to my C string is a smaller gauge string tuned one octave higher; my G string also has a smaller gauge string next to it tuned one octave higher; the B and D strings are the same as the banjo. Over the radio and on the records it gives the effect of several string instruments, providing one plays full enough.

## About My Vitaphone and Movietone Recordings

It was around 1926 or 1927 that I made my first Vitaphone subject, which was about the time Vitaphone was perfected and the public was being startled with the results. The man who gave me my first chance on the Vitaphone was none other than Sam Warner, of Warner Brothers, and it was at the time Al Jolson's "Jazz Singer" was released, so you can see it was at the very start of the new era in motion pictures when talking pictures were introduced.

As this was my first attempt, I spent considerable time with Mr. Warner and we finally agreed on an idea which was a straight so-called musical short subject. I announced the numbers I played and used an accompanist only to assist me. We worked from eleven P.M. through the early morning hours before we completed what we thought a fine presentation. As the idea was so new, we experimented a great deal with sound effects, however, the recording idea is similar in principle to making phonograph records— making several tests first and then the masters. About a month later I saw the first showing of this work, which will always be a pleasant memory to me. Later I made two more shorts in which they employed trick photography in many spots.

My first Movietone was made for the Paramount people at their Long Island, N.Y., studio. In this picture I used the famous Hal Kemp & His Carolina College Boys. We worked out a college frat room idea with me in a big fur coat and a football, etc., and we had a lot of fun doing it. We completed this picture in one morning, and I want to say that I have never had the pleasure of associating with a finer bunch of boys— all regular fellows and fine musicians.

When making motion pictures in a studio room the lights are very bright and the heat is so intense that it is necessary for the players to wear a certain motion picture make-up which is very annoying to me because it gets all over my clothes and it doesn't make one feel any too good. I think it wonderful that these pictures turned out as fine as they did because we had to play while the heat was pouring down upon us.

As I subscribe to a foreign newspaper clipping bureau, I have received newspaper comments on my pictures from countries throughout the world and it is a pleasure for me to be able to say that the public's reaction has been very favorable.

## About My European Trip

Since starting to write this book, I have had the pleasure of filling engagements in Europe, and I feel sincerely obligated to devote a page to the wonderful treatment I was accorded while across the water, especially in Great Britain.

First of all I want to mention how very enthusiastic the folks in Great Britain seem to be about fretted instruments and, of course, this takes in the banjo which happens to be one of my chief instruments. They have guilds, clubs and organizations of all kinds which enable the players to get together and help each other, and these also play for special engagements, phonograph records and the radio.

It was especially interesting to me to find so keen an interest in the banjo, and I hope that during the twelve months spent in Great Britain I was able to assist in some small degree the development of the banjo and perhaps helped some of the many wonderful players that I was privileged to meet and know.

While in London it was my good fortune to sign a Columbia Graphophone Company contract and recorded some of my transcriptions of popular and classical selections. I am very grateful for the fine co-operation given me by the officials of Columbia and for the assistance of their excellent recording men. Many of these records turned out above my average American recordings, which of course pleased me greatly.

There are several names I would like to mention because of their many kindnesses to me and they come to me as follows: Mr. Sydney Cooper, for his sincere co-operation in putting on stunts at the various theatres where I played and also for his personal interest in my work; Mr. Sydney Vernon, of Bradford, England, a very fine player and teacher who organized a banjo band bearing my name, –incidentally, we made a phonograph record together and played together at the Paramount Theatre, Manchester, England; Mr. Dave Paget, famous musical director, who organized my first band at the Plaza for me; Mr. Godowsky, musical director of the Astoria Theatres, London; Mr. Earl St. John and Mr. Charles Penley, who gave me my productions for the London engagements, and I shall always be grateful to them for their efforts.

I have taken the liberty of asking the publishers' permission' to devote this page of gratitude to the peoples of England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales, as well as the Continent, for their extreme kindness to me.