

accuracy. If this was not true how could there be a Ricky Skaggs or a Chris Thile?

The brain is very flexible and can be coaxed into doing many things (good and bad) if you train it. One way to train the brain in the art of good timing is to play with other musicians who play with good timing. But, if you are doubtful whether you have "good timing" how are you going to decide if they do? Sure, if you can get Tony Rice to come over on Tuesday nights you can be sure your guitarist has good timing. But, can you judge the timing of the local crop of pickers? Have you ever tried? I think you will find it to be an interesting exercise. But, one hint: If you begin to analyze other players timing you better keep your trap shut. Announcing to someone that you think their timing is "a bit off" (unless you are the teacher and they are paying you to tell them) is a sure way to make an enemy, never be asked to play with them again, and possibly end up with some broken bones. It is wiser to spend your time analyzing your own timing problems. Same goes for marital problems, financial problems and hygiene problems.

A safer way to study timing in private is to use a metronome. The more you play with a metronome the easier it gets. And the easier it gets the better your timing will be.

## The Metro Gnome

The initial phases of working with a metronome are frustrating. But, you will get better at it. And eventually you can give the metronome to someone else who could use it. Eventually. Like after 50 years of dueling with it. I think of the metronome as a little house occupied by a dastardly little gnome. The gnome is an unfeeling, uncaring, unsensitive jerk which doesn't care if you even exist. (I have played with some musicians who were like that too!) So don't feel bad if you swear at the cursed thing. The gnome doesn't care. If he notices you at all he will be amused by your suffering.



Later, as you progress in your ability to stay with that danged clicking, you may even find that you and the gnome have become more friendly. If you beat the gnome at his game he will leave you alone. And when you think you have gotten all of the use that you can from the gnome, you can take a sledgehammer to the thing.