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Law

[11] **3,797,355**

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[54] **BANJO MUTE**

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[51] **Int. Cl.** **G10c 1/10**

[58] **Field of Search** 84/267, 273, 294, 308, 84/310, 311

[56] **References Cited**

UNITED STATES PATENTS

1,826,969	10/1931	Truett et al.	84/273
821,494	5/1906	Howard	84/310 UX
706,381	8/1902	Bronson	84/273
2,483,268	9/1949	Fawick	84/310
1,761,294	6/1930	Forsythe	84/273
1,810,259	6/1931	Stallone	84/273

FOREIGN PATENTS OR APPLICATIONS

239,493	12/1925	Great Britain	84/310

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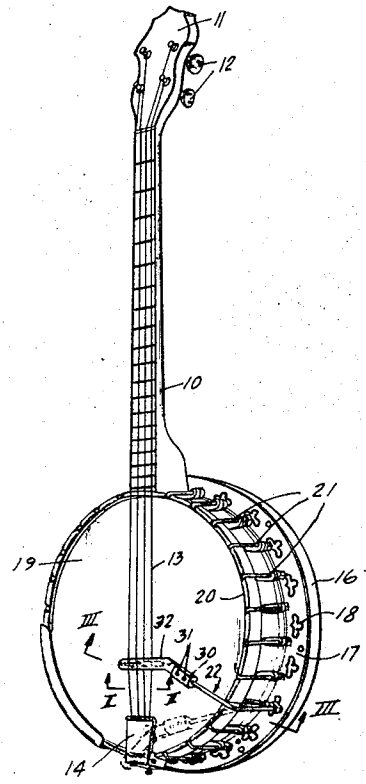
[57] **ABSTRACT**

A mute for a banjo or other stringed instrument which includes a frame, a bridge and strings supported on the bridge, the mute comprising an arm which is pivotally mounted with respect to the frame and a resilient pad carried by the arm and arranged to be positioned over the bridge to dampen the vibration of the strings.

2 Claims, 3 Drawing Figures



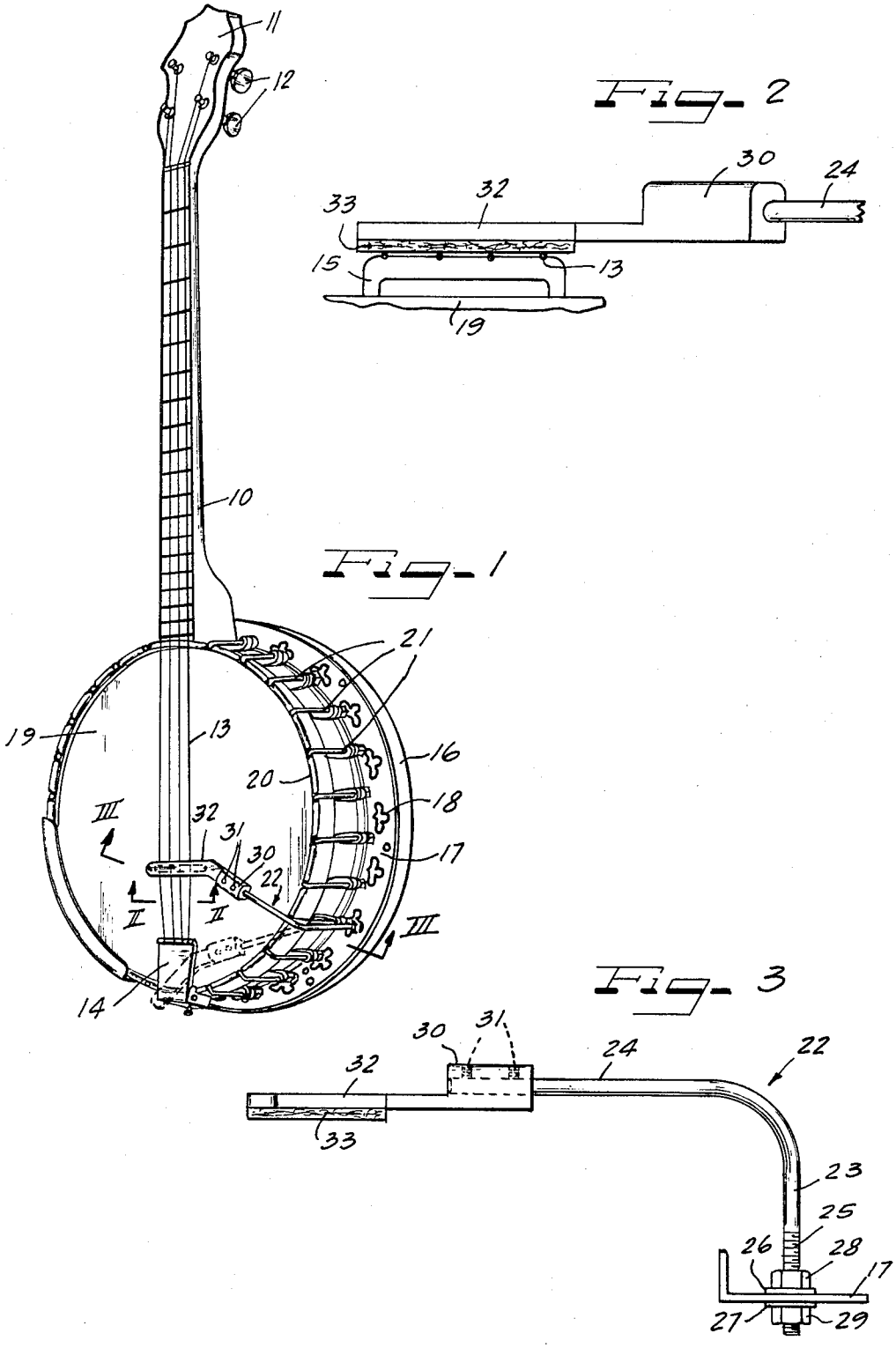

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Fig. 1
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Fig. 3
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BANJO MUTE

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

This invention is in the field of muting structures for stringed instruments such as banjos and employs a pivotally mounted arm which can be swung into and out of muting relationship with the strings as they are supported by the bridge.

2. Description of the Prior Art

The banjo has a characteristic metallic or brassy tone which is primarily due to the presence of high frequency components as overtones in the vibration of the strings. While normally this type of tone is desirable, there are times when it would be desirable to soften the tone for particular renditions or effects.

There are apparently a substantial number of patents going back a large number of years which deal with the provision of mutes for banjos and the like. By and large, however, these devices operate by muting the vibration of the head in the area of the bridge or in the area of the tailpiece. Typical examples of mute structures from the prior art are those found in the following U.S. Pat. Nos.: 299,846, 312,638; 314,295; 421,173;441,930; 520,439; 526,899; 611,183; 706,361; 1,659,629; 1,672,386; 1,708,169; 1,761,294; 1,780,361; 1,800,588; 1,810,259; 1,817,461; 1,819,339; and 3,015,247. A muting device which has been employed for a substantial period of time commercially is shown in the Bacon et al. U.S. Pat. No. 1,800,588.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

This invention deals with a mute for a stringed instrument, particularly a banjo which can be positioned directly on the plane of the bridge over which the strings are received, the muting device being a resilient pad which is carried by an arm and is capable of pivoting movement into and out of muting relation with the strings.

In a preferred form of the invention, the mute includes an arm having a vertically extending portion and a horizontally extending portion, the vertically extending portion being arranged to be secured in pivotally supported relation with respect to a peripherally extending flange portion of the banjo. An elongated carrier extends in angular relationship from the end of the horizontally extending portion of the arm, with the centerline of the long dimension of the carrier being movable into a position where it coincides with the plane of the banjo bridge. A resilient pad is carried by the carrier and is engagable with the bridge in directly overlying relation to dampen the vibration of the strings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Other objects, features and advantages of the invention will be readily apparent from the following description of a preferred embodiment thereof, taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawing, although variations and modifications may be effected without departing from the spirit and scope of the novel concepts of the disclosure, and in which:

FIG. 1 is a view in perspective of a banjo equipped with the muting device of the present invention;

FIG. 2 is a fragmentary view in elevation on an enlarged scale of the muting device in position over the bridge; and

FIG. 3 is a view of the muting device itself, particularly illustrating the manner of attaching the device to the banjo.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

The mute of the present invention is capable of attachment to any standard banjo. A typical style of banjo is illustrated in FIG. 1 as including a neck 10 having a head portion 11 through which keys 12 extend for tuning purposes. Strings 13 extending between the keys 12 and a tailpiece 14 are tensioned by passage over a conventional bridge 15.

The banjo head structure 16 includes a peripheral flange portion 17 on which there are located spaced holes 18 which provide ports for venting the sound emanating from a resonator (not shown) located within the banjo head structure 16.

The banjo assembly also includes the usual head 19 which is tensioned by means of a tensioning ring 20 and adjustable tensioning clamps 21.

The improved mute of the present invention has been identified generally at reference numeral 22 in FIG. 1. As seen in FIGS. 2 and 3, the muting device 22 has a vertically extending arm portion 23 and a horizontally extending arm portion 24. The lower end of the vertically extending arm portion 23 is provided with threads 25. A pair of washers 26 and 27 and a pair of nuts 28 and 29 serve to pivotally mount the vertical end portion to the peripheral flange 17 through one of the holes 18.

The inner end of the horizontally extending arm portion 24 is connected to an enlongated carrier 30 by means of set screws 31. The extreme end of the horizontally extending arm portion 24 may be provided with a flattened portion so that the carrier 30 may be positioned adjustably along the end of the arm portion 24 to accommodate banjos of different size.

As best seen in FIG. 1, the carrier 30 includes an angularly inclined arm 32 which carries a resilient pad 33. The pad 33 may be composed of felt, rubber, flexible polyurethane foam, or other flexible damping material. The angular relationship of the arm 32 with respect to the remainder of the carrier is such that the arm 32 can be positioned with its centerline coinciding with the plane of the bridge 15 and consequently the resilient pad 33 will contact all four of the strings 13 with substantially equal pressure. The result is a muting of the high frequency overtones produced by the vibration of the strings which leave a very pleasant tonal effect.

As shown in the dotted lines of FIG. 1, the mute 22 can be readily pivoted into an out-of-the-way position when the muting effect is not desired.

The mute of the present invention can be inexpensively produced from readily available materials and can be attached to any banjo of standard design.

It should be evident that various modifications can be made to the described embodiments without departing from the scope of the present invention.

I claim as my invention:

1. A mute for a banjo having a raised head portion, a peripheral flange portion about said head portion, a bridge on said head portion and strings extending in spaced relation across said bridge, said mute comprising an arm having a vertically extending portion and a horizontally extending portion, means for securing said vertically extending portion in pivotally supported rela-

tion with respect to said peripheral flange portion with said horizontally extending portion being pivotable into substantially parallel spaced relationship to said head portion, an elongated carrier extending in angular relationship from the end of said horizontally extending portion, the centerline of the long dimension of said carrier being movable into a position wherein it coincides with the plane of said bridge, and a resilient pad carried by said carrier and being engagable with said bridge to dampen the vibration of said strings.

2. The mute of claim 1 which includes means for adjustably positioning said carrier on said horizontally extending portion of said arm.

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