

## 07. Selecting a Bridge

Selecting a bridge is the last step in setting up a banjo for playing. The banjo head and neck must be correctly mounted and adjusted before selecting a bridge.

Bridges are available in various shapes, heights and materials. Once the neck is properly mounted select a bridge that raises the strings approximately 1/4" above the fret closest to the head.

Some bridges are made of all maple or maple with an ebony top. One commonly used model is made by Grover and has an ebony top. There two basic models are available having either two legs or two legs with an additional center leg. The bridge characteristic that has the most influence on tone is the mass of the bridge. A thin bridge will produce a brighter sound than a heavy thick bridge but it may very hard to distinguish the difference. Bridge height may also have an affect the tone but the proper bridge is predetermined by the string height and there isn't much of a choice without making major neck adjustments. In my experience of using many various bridge styles from inexpensive to very expensive bridges I finally settled on a bridge that has the proper height, has a center leg and is perfectly flat when mounted and under pressure from the strings. I disregarded the bridge design or the materials – it's all in the sound.

Because banjo bridges are not fixed in place as they are on guitars and ukuleles they must be precisely located on the head. See "*Page 04 Tuning The Banjo - paragraph #3*" for bridge placement instructions.

With the bridge in place and the strings tensioned by tuning the bridge should be flat on top and the banjo head should have just a slight indent from the string pressure on the brige. Once the bridge is in place I suggest making small dot marks on the head at both ends of the bridge so you will know where it goes should it be moved. Some bridges with 3 legs have a longer center leg to keep the top flat.