

## STEAL FROM THE PEDAL STEEL (from "5 Ways to Gatton-ize your playing")

The pedal steel guitar has long been a source of inspiration for many guitarists (especially in the country music field) who developed different ways and tricks to emulate, with a regular guitar, the unique sound of this instrument.

From James Burton to Clarence White (who, with the help of fellow drummer Gene Parsons, designed a string pull mechanism - commonly known as the B-Bender - to closely emulate the pedal steel sound), from Bob Warford to Bernie Leadon, many guitarists have developed ways to adapt pedal steel licks to the electric guitar and emulate the sweet, sinuous sound of this particular instrument using conventional playing techniques (such as finger slides and, of course, string bending). While Danny Gatton was certainly not the first who drew from the pedal steel he did come up with some very interesting ways to emulate the string-bending sound of this instrument: let's have a look.

**Ex. a** Let's begin with a chordal introduction to a country song: in this instance we will mimic the pedal steel string-bending mechanism by using conventional hammer-ons and left hand vibrato. Pick the chord voicings with a combination of your pick, middle and ring fingers and be accurate with your left hand when performing the hammer-on chord embellishments. In measure 2, to emulate the pedal steel slide bar vibrato, you will have to pull the entire chord up and down, as opposed to the typical bluesy, single string vibrato most guitarists are familiar with.

♩ = 70

A D A E A

*freely*

T	2	2-3	2	5	5
A	2	2	2	4	5
B	2	2-4	2	6	6

Ex. b makes large use of double stops, finger slides and hammer-ons: start slowly, take your time and try to visualize and be aware of the underlying chord shapes behind the double and triple stop. It might not be apparent at first, but there are actual chord shapes hidden among the various licks (i.e. the triplets in bar 1 take you from an *A shape* E chord - on the 9<sup>th</sup> fret - to the *E shape* E chord in 12<sup>th</sup> position). Also, notice how each chord voice moves in a very melodic way between changes in order to keep movement to a minimum and prioritize voice leading.

With some practice and a good hybrid picking technique you'll be able to fly through this lick!

Examples B-C-D ♪ = ♪<sup>3</sup> ♪

♩ = 128 E E<sup>9</sup>

T 8 9 9 10 10 10/11 0 10 12 14 12 10 9 8 7 (7) 2  
 A 8 9 9 11 11 11/12 x 11 13 14 13 11 9 8 7 (7)  
 B 9 9 9 x

T 5 5 4 (4) 2 4 2 7 5 (5) 7 5 7 (7) (5) 5 0 (0) 2 5  
 A 5 5 4 (4) 2 4 2 7 6 (6) 7 6 7 (7) 6 2 4 1 2 (2) 2 5  
 B full 1/2 5 6 7 6 7 6 2 4 1 2 (2) 2 6

Ex. c starts to delve deeper into pedal-steel territory. Unlike the finger slide approach of the former examples, this one mainly employs string-bending technique, or, more specifically, *oblique-bend double stops*. This approach therefore combines two very common techniques of country guitar: double stop (two notes played simultaneously) and oblique bends (where you hold a stationary note on a high string and bend another note on a lower string - in our example, not adjacent). The A7 lick starts with a series of oblique

bends that emphasize the chord's 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> (G and B); in measure 3 make sure to pull the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> string just a half step, otherwise your double stop will clash with the D harmony. The example ends with some rapid, staccato bends that outline a D-E progression. Perform the double stops via hybrid picking (pick the lower string and pluck the higher, stationary note using your ring finger). Again, accuracy and precision are needed here. Focus on bending the strings precisely to reach the exact target pitch and let the top, fretted note ring freely throughout.

The image contains two systems of musical notation for guitar. The first system is labeled 'C' and features two chords: A7 and D. The A7 chord is shown with a double stop on the 14th fret (T and A strings) and a bend to the 15th fret. The D chord is shown with a double stop on the 12th fret (T and A strings) and a bend to the 10th fret. The second system is labeled 'E' and features a triplet of notes on the 9th fret (T, A, B strings) and an E chord with a double stop on the 11th fret (T and A strings) and a bend to the 12th fret. The notation includes fret numbers, bend directions (up and down), and labels like 'full' and '1/2'.

Ex. d I always liked how Danny Gatton could mix different technical approaches within the frame of even a single chorus. The lick starts with some quick descending 6<sup>th</sup> chord rakes, then employs pre-bends, arpeggios, hammer-ons, a pedal point to outline a D-A progression (more on this subject in the upcoming Play like a guitarist, think like a keyboard player section of the article) and some oblique-bend double stops at the end... do we need more?

**D**

A $\frac{9}{8}$  D

rake---| rake--| rake---| full

T 12 14 9 10 5 7 9 2 4 2 4 2 0 3 3 2 3 2 5

A 16 11 7 2 4 4 2 4 2 0 4 4 5 5

B

E

T 2 3 2 3 4 5 9 11 9 9 10 12 9

A 2 4 1 3 2 4 3 4 4 6 6 6/9 9 11 9 9 9 9 9

B

A

T 10 12 14 12 12 14 12 14 15 15 14 17 16 (16) 14

A 9 9/12 (12) 14 14 14 12 12 12 12 14 16 14 16 16 (16) 14

B