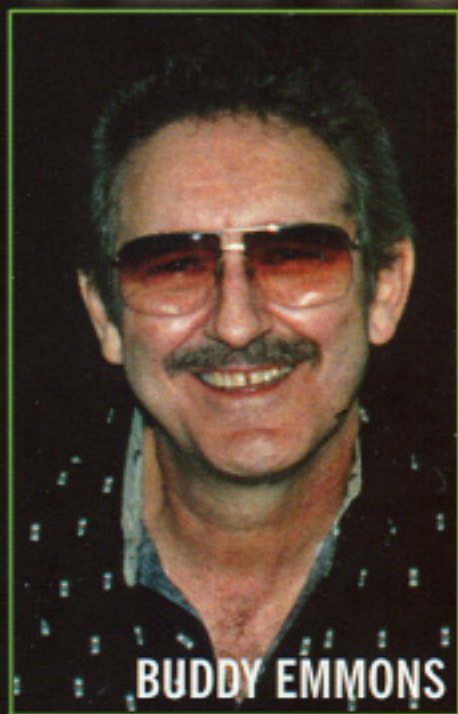


LLOYD GREEN

MASTERS

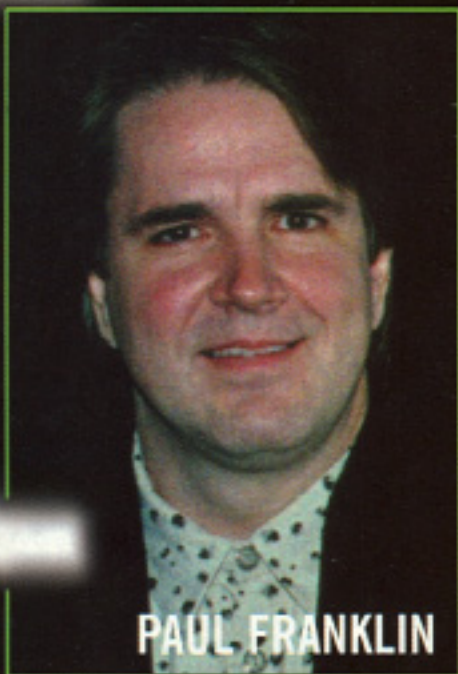
OF
THE



BUDDY EMMONS

PEDAL

STEEL



PAUL FRANKLIN

BY JIMMY PHILLIPS

IN THE YEARS AFTER WORLD WAR I,

troupes of Hawaiian musicians began touring the United States, introducing Polynesian rhythms and melodies to the masses, as well as two curious instruments: the ukulele and the steel guitar. Played with a steel bar, the Hawaiian steel guitar had an exotic, whining tone that titillated audiences and worked its way, through several incarnations, into American popular music. The sound was not altogether foreign to southerners, as blues guitarists produced a similar effect using bottle-necks, knife blades, pill bottles, and other hard objects.

In 1924, light-opera-tenor-turned-hillbilly-singer Vernon Dalhart included a Hawaiian guitar played by Frank Ferera on an Edison recording session. A Hawaiian of Portuguese ancestry, Ferera claimed to be the first to introduce the instrument to the American public. In January 1925, Frank Wilson played a Hawaiian steel guitar on a session in the New York studios of Okeh Records for a southern string band known as Al Hopkins and the Hill Billies. Three years later, Ellsworth T. Cozzens played a Hawaiian steel on Jimmie Rodgers's second Victor session. Rodgers's subsequent recordings helped popularize the steel guitar in country music, at the hands of Cliff Carlisle, John Westbrook, Joe Kaipo (a native Hawaiian), and others.

Oklahoman Bob Dunn is credited as the first to electrify the steel guitar. After hearing a group of Hawaiians perform in 1917, Dunn began taking lessons through the mail from Hawaiian master Walter Kolomoku. He joined the Panhandle Cowboys and Indians in 1927, and played with several vaudeville groups before joining Milton Brown and his Musical Brownies in late 1934. To compensate for dance-hall noise and compete with louder instruments in the band, Dunn raised the action of a Martin guitar, magnetized the strings, attached an electric pickup, and plugged into a Vol-U-Tone amplifier. In January 1935, he used this setup on a Chicago session, making him in all probability the first country musician to record an electrified guitar. Texas Playboy Leon McAuliffe electrified his instrument soon after Dunn. McAuliffe's "Steel Guitar Rag," recorded in 1936, became a country standard, prophesying the central role the instrument

would play in succeeding decades.

Most steelers recognize Jerry Byrd as the godfather of modern electric steel guitar. Growing up in Lima, Ohio in the 1920s and '30s, Byrd was a devoted student of Hawaiian music. In the late thirties, as the steel guitar's role in country music began to expand, he gravitated in that direction, appearing on Cincinnati radio station WLW in 1939 and joining the Renfro Valley Barn Dance in the early forties. Byrd moved to Nashville in the mid-forties, where he joined Red Foley's band and became one of Music City's first studio musicians. Above all others, Jerry Byrd is responsible for making the instrument a dynamic and definitive force in commercial country music.

Pioneered by west-coast players, the pedal steel guitar arrived on the scene in the early fifties, when Bud Isaacs popularized the instrument on Webb Pierce records. The pedal steel gained momentum in the mid-fifties, and eventually the less exotic, whining sound emitted by the more sophisticated Hawaiian-derived instrument became one of the defining voices of country music. In the intervening years, the instrument has found acceptance in jazz, folk, pop, rock, folk-rock, country-rock, and other forms of popular music.

Pedal-steel masters Buddy Emmons and Lloyd Green launched their careers nine years apart, Emmons in 1955 and Green in 1964. Both were dominant and influential figures on the Nashville studio scene until the DX7 invasion of the early eighties temporarily bumped the pedal steel out of vogue. Each is rich in historical recollection and sociological observation. Our evolutionary journey continues through their eyes.

Since the late eighties, Paul Franklin has ruled the roost.

One would be hard-pressed to find a reputable Music City steel guitarist who does not play through a Peavey Nashville™ 400 or Session® 400 amplifier. Simply stated, these are the industry standards. Also enjoying high visibility in the steel-guitar world are the Peavey Profex® II digital stereo multieffects preamp/processor, and most recently, the Tube Fex™ tube guitar preamp/24-bit stereo digital effects processor.

How has the Nashville studio scene changed during your tenure?

Emmons: My first Nashville session was in 1955. The few studios that were there were either mono or two-track. In fact, I believe my first instrumental recordings for the Columbia label in '55 or '56 were mono. Mixing was done on the fly, and if the artists were happy with the playback, all mistakes made by musicians became a part of country-music history. There were no charts to follow, so all arrangements were committed to memory. After a couple of rehearsals, they rolled the tape. In an era of 2/4 rhythm and four- and five-chord songs, though, it wasn't nearly as difficult as it would be today.

Amps were in the open and recorded at low levels. Headphones were rarely used. The Fender electric bass had just surfaced, but very few players used them in the studio. Because the rhythm section was acoustic, there was plenty of sound in the room. It was kind of like sitting around the house and playing. In the fifties and sixties, every singer had a signature sound. You knew who the artist was just by the intro of the song. As the years rolled by, all that fell by the wayside. The impressive thing about the handful of studio players of that era is how they kept up with and maintained the individual styles of each artist. Today, Nashville studio musicians number in the hundreds, and most of them sound alike.


Green: I arrived in Nashville in December 1956. At that time, the town was not only geographically much smaller than today, but the recording industry, though thriving, was more loosely structured. Owen Bradley, Chet Atkins, and Paul Cohen were the principal record producers. The steel guitar had seen a meteoric rise in stature since Bud Isaacs had first played a country pedal steel on Web Pierce's Decca recording of "Slowly" in late 1953. But there was trouble on the horizon.

The top two recording steel players from 1954 through 1960 were Jimmy Day and Buddy Emmons. But the steel assumed a greatly

diminished role after 1957. With the recording at RCA Studio B in 1955 of a young Elvis Presley and a song entitled "Heartbreak Hotel," the death knell had sounded for the steel guitar. From that moment, many singers in Nashville, including Faron Young, Jim Reeves, Ferlin Huskey, and others, tried to switch from country to pop-country. Of course, there were a few traditionalists like George Jones and Ernest Tubb who resisted the transition. But the steel guitar was suddenly and effectively removed from many Nashville recordings.

This jarring discombobulation upset and delayed my plans to become a session musician. Then in 1960, a young steel player from Atlanta landed in Nashville and magically revived the steel from its comatose state by playing on three number-one country hits in a row: "Don't Let Me Cross Over," by Carl and Pearl Butler on Columbia Records, "Anymore," by Roy Drusky on Mercury, and a tune by George Hamilton IV on RCA. His name was Pete Drake, and the pedal steel had returned in a big way to country records, thus setting the stage for the major Nashville studio players of the 1960s–1980s: Weldon Myrick, Hal Rugg, Pete, me, and much later, Sonny Garrish. Paul Franklin became the dominating studio player in the late eighties, and continues to be.

Pete was the focus of much controversy and misunderstanding among steel players. He was technically not a great player, but oh were his ideas commercial and unique and the reason for innumerable records becoming hits. But perhaps as important, Pete had the perfect studio personality. In that era and the succeeding three decades, all the studio players had to feel comfortable with each other. There was little tolerance for prima donnas or inflated self-images when all were working in close proximity trying to cut hit records. If you expected to be a major studio player, you'd be best served by checking your ego at the door. Being a member of the A-team meant much more than simply being a good musician. Otherwise, as more than one pretty good player discovered, you'd soon be scratching your head, wondering why the producers and musicians had stopped calling. You were an



When I recorded with Mark Knopfler, depending on the song's needs, I approached the instrument as a keyboard, a saxophone, a string section, a guitar, and yes, sometimes as a steel guitar. If the steel guitarist draws from a diversified musical background and applies those influences to a contemporary musical direction, it will have to fit. Music is music, no matter what you play it on.

—Paul Franklin



I would advise young players not to get too caught up in hero worship, but rather to exercise their own gray cells and develop their individual musical style. The formula for playing the steel has long been worked out. Jerry Byrd had it all analyzed correctly by the late 1940s. He played with beautiful tone, sensitivity, emotion, in tune, and melody, melody, melody. It's now 1996. Nobody's ever found a better philosophy for playing the steel guitar.

—Lloyd Green

equal among equals—nothing more, nothing less. I learned this studio etiquette and protocol by visiting some of the sessions on which Pete was playing, and paying close attention to not only the music being created, but also the social, perhaps subliminal, interactive transactions taking place. When my big chance in the recording arena occurred in 1964, I was prepared, hungry, and full of new ideas.

In the sixties and seventies, I and other instrumentalists were expected to create new styles and sounds for different artists. For instance, my early recordings and styles differed substantially on Johnny Paycheck's "Little Darlin'" tracks from my work with Charley Pride, Lynn Anderson, and Warner Mack; from Mel Street to Gene Watson to Ronnie Milsap. My Don Williams style was different than my Hank Jr. sound. In the rare instance when I wasn't sure of which direction to take on a song and asked the producer's opinion, the usual response I received was, "Hey, that's why we hire you, for your ideas." How dramatically that fertile environment was to change by the eighties.

In what I consider to have been the "renaissance" of country recording, 1960–1980, the records were cut "live," that is, the singer and musicians recorded the song together and usually without headphones. The nucleus of a typical session was bass, drums, piano, steel, rhythm guitar, electric guitar, and six-string electric bass guitar (euphemistically called "tic-tack"), and perhaps fiddle, harmonica, and background vocals. When I began recording in 1964, we had only one-inch tape and four-track machines, so all of this music had to be put on tape with much consolidation of instruments: one for the singer, the remainder for the musicians. There was no overdubbing because of the lack of additional tracks and the resultant leakage of instruments into the other musicians' microphones, and no direct recording. We either did it together or we re-cut the track.

No studio in Nashville had sixteen-track machines until 1969. In fact, when in 1968 the Byrds hired me to play on their seminal coun-

try-rock album *Sweetheart Of The Rodeo*, they were astounded to find only eight-track machines at Columbia Studio A. They had been recording for at least a year in Los Angeles on sixteen-track equipment, so they had all the Nashville CBS engineers scurrying around the studio, trying to tie two eight-track machines together in order to record with sixteen tracks. Tape was literally all over the floor of the control room, and it was a spectacular failure—everything was out of sync. They finally settled for one eight-track machine, took the tape back to L.A., and converted it to sixteen-track there in order to gain the overdub tracks. I then flew to L.A. and recorded an additional two songs with them. They also used J.D. Maness, a fine west-coast steel player, on some of the album tracks.

There were four major studios in my first year, 1964: RCA Victor B, Fred Foster's Sound, and two Owen Bradley studios on 16th Ave. South (Columbia A & B). In late 1964 or early 1965, Bradley's Barn was built. (Today there are more than 200 studios in Nashville.) Each studio had a variety of Fender amps furnished, so that was the amp of choice. In those days, we were expected to cut four songs during a three-hour session. This we did, three to four sessions a day, five days a week (often seven days), year after year. It's also important to note that we had never heard the majority of those songs before. The singer would either sing the song with a guitar or piano, or a demo tape would be played while we quickly wrote our musical chart, using the famed Nashville number system created by Neal Matthews of the Jordanaires in the mid-fifties.

That is in essence what the "Nashville sound" was, a group of consummate musicians encouraged by the producer to come up with the ideas, creating a recording in about forty-five minutes or less. All of this might sound medieval and preposterous to the studio crews of today, who cut about one song every three to four hours in the studio.

By the late seventies, our incredible work load had inevitably led to a musical burnout of the Nashville sound, and suddenly several major

I've heard the sky has been falling for years, but the only serious dips in the popularity of the steel in the studio were during the Presley era and a few years ago when the DX7 was hot. For a while, every track was swarming with chorus and fuzzy string sounds. The fans quit buying, a few producers got their asses canned, and it was back to business as usual. As for the steel's future, the nineties look good.

—Buddy Emmons



changes occurred simultaneously. A new musical trend was in the wind. Now came the pop-country popcorn sound of the era, and the producers began suggesting I make my steel sound like anything but a steel. Another phenomenon happened concomitantly. During the sixties and seventies, there was a three-tiered arrangement in Nashville recording: the band, the featured instrumentalist, and the singer. Now, in the late seventies, the soloist was pushed back into the rhythm section, thus becoming transparent. Now there were only the singer and the band. Interestingly, too, it was about this period of time that instrumental recordings disappeared from the country airwaves. It still holds true today, almost two decades later—no country instrumental airplay. What emerged from this configuration was electric keyboards replacing steels and fiddles, doing the intros and turnarounds with a bland, nondescript pop flavor. After a few years, this was augmented with electric guitar fills, and finally today, records are again occasionally featuring pure steel on solos.

However, today's recordings are largely a more sterile and generic enterprise than in the past. Almost everyone records direct without a mic, and the instrumental or fill instruments are most often overdubbed at a different time. Originality has substantially been replaced by sound-alike licks and clone singers in cowboy hats, or pure rock & roll records masquerading as country. Yet country music is much larger today than in the past decades, playing to a much younger and more diversified audience, and most would probably laugh at the country of the 1950s–1980s.

Franklin: I started recording in the late seventies. The biggest difference I see has come with the new rise in popularity of country music. Nashville has become the musical focus for various artists and producers outside of the country field. Pop artists and producers are learning that the musicians here are capable of playing everything from Mozart to Hendrix. We're not limited to just recording country music anymore. With state-of-the-art studios, great engineers, produc-

ers, songwriters, and incredible musicians, we have all our ducks in a row this time around.

Another change has come with the technological advancements and the larger budgets for recording CDs. We spend more time getting sounds on each instrument. Once the sounds are there, we record until you get a great-feeling track, which is the bottom line in making great music, in my opinion. We then take all the necessary time to perfect each musician's performance on that track. They spend as much time as it takes, when they believe it's a hit song. This is a luxury that was unheard of back in the sixties and seventies.

Who are your primary musical influences?

Emmons: My primary influences were Roy Wiggins and Jerry Byrd. Roy was with Eddy Arnold, and Jerry was doing sessions and recording instrumentals for the Mercury label. As I progressed from six to eight strings, I became interested in the sounds of swing players like Speedy West, Joaquin Murphy, and Noel Boggs. Later, I turned to jazz, which was the source of most of the swing players I was drawing from. Flip Phillips, Ben Webster, Charlie Parker, and Oscar Peterson were among my favorites. As for guitar players, I listened to Barney Kessel, Tal Farlow, and Johnny Smith.

Green: Let me give you a somewhat different view on so-called musical influences of steel players. It's my belief that listening to other steel players is only beneficial when one is learning to play the steel. In order to develop your own identity as a musician, you must at some point cut that cord of dependency and rely on your own talents and thinking processes. By the time I arrived in Nashville at age 19, I was already a pretty good player and not interested in playing or sounding like someone else. And I can assure you, had I not developed my own musical identity, my studio career would have been very short-lived. They weren't looking for clones then. In fact, I purposely avoided seri-

ous listening to other steel players for many years, because I felt it would interfere with the commercial ideas I was exploring and somehow upset that delicate equilibrium. Occasionally, however, I would hear a new thought played which was so overwhelming I could only pause and marvel at such originality. This happened when Tom Brumley played "Together Again" with Buck Owens on Capitol Records. That was so unique, so brilliant, I was humbled.

I would advise young players of any instrument not to get too caught up in hero worship, but rather to exercise their own gray cells and develop their individual musical style. Look, the formula for playing the steel has long been worked out anyhow. Jerry Byrd had it all analyzed correctly by the late 1940s. He played with beautiful tone, sensitivity, emotion, in tune, and melody, melody, melody. It's now 1996. Nobody's ever found a better philosophy for playing the steel guitar.

Franklin: This is an impossible question for me to answer. There are so many great musicians! I'm influenced by everyone, really—from Buck Owens to Stevie Wonder, Coltrane to Steely Dan, Hendrix to Grady Martin, Bach to Jeff Beck. My influences change from song to song. Whatever mood I'm in determines the influence I draw from. I try to listen to everything.

A *At what point did the steel guitar become an integral part of the Nashville sound? Has it lost ground in the nineties?*

Emmons: By the time the term "Nashville sound" caught on, the steel was already an integral part of it. The "sound" is based on the attitude and input of musicians and producers who know how to work together spontaneously and feed off of each other's talent. The musicians and producers come and go, but the attitude—or sound, as they put it—stays.

I've heard the sky has been falling for years, but the only serious dips in the popularity of the steel in the studio were during the Presley era and a few years ago when the DX7 was hot. For a while, every track was swarming with chorus and fuzzy string sounds. The fans quit buying, a few producers got their asses canned, and it was back to business as usual. As for the steel's future, the nineties look good.

Green: The term "Nashville sound" wasn't coined until the mid-to-late 1950s. Once "Slowly," the first modern record with pedals, was recorded in 1953, the steel was an integral part, until the Elvis period almost caused its extinction from records. As I stated earlier, it is my belief the Nashville sound reached its fullest flowering in the sixties and seventies, steel guitar being arguably the most dynamic instrument of that era. It has possibly stepped back a pace or two in the nineties, if you contrast the usual generic playing found on much of the recordings with the more creative and melodically constructed ones of the earlier decades. Paul Franklin is now in the driver's seat. He has both the power and exceptional musical ability to influence the direction in which the steel travels and probably will traverse for the first decade of the twenty-first century. It's perhaps an onerous burden, and I'll not second-guess his decisions, with which I have great empathy.

Let's remember, the steel guitar in its modern incarnation (i.e., with pedals) is still a relatively young forty-three years of age and probably hasn't yet found its ultimate destiny. If it survives, it will hopefully find its path leading to other genres of music: jazz, classical, and rock. There have been a few tentative steps taken in all of these arenas, with as yet mixed results. I've played with symphonies, Emmons has ven-

ured into jazz, as has Paul Franklin, who also toured the world with Dire Straits. I've recorded with McCartney and Ringo Starr and in fact, to my lasting regret, turned down Paul McCartney's offer to play the "Wings Over America Tour" in the mid-seventies. He wanted to do a fifteen-minute segment in each show featuring country music, with the spotlight on me. What a grand opportunity lost. But I considered my studio work more important. It's only in retrospect that I realize the magnitude of that decision, which is exactly why I encouraged Paul to play the Dire Straits tour and was delighted that he did.

Still... it's now 1996, and I don't see that any tangible breakthroughs have occurred for the steel guitar. It still appears to be considered fundamentally a country instrument. Of course, it's entirely possible that my vision is merely myopic, having been out of recording and the mainstream of the steel guitar for the past eight years.

Franklin: I'll let Buddy and Lloyd answer the first part of this question. As for the nineties, I don't feel that we've lost any ground with the steel. Actually, I believe we have gained acceptance with our instrument as never before. I'm sure some traditionalists will disagree with me. We've gotten exposure like never before because of the countless millions of records sold since the late eighties. You would be hard-pressed to find a country record without steel on it somewhere. Whether you like this modern country music or not, the artists and producers haven't abandoned the steel as they've crossed over into the pop charts. In the past, country artists who crossed over into the pop scene, such as Kenny Rogers, Eddy Arnold, Patsy Cline, and Ray Price, immediately dropped the steel and fiddle from their records to keep from being labeled too country. New country artists would rather have the musical freedom to record more pop-sounding tracks, yet put the many faces of the steel guitar on it to identify it as country-flavored.

This gives steel guitarists the opportunity we've been waiting for: to rock out and experiment with different sounds and styles other than the traditional, stereotyped, crying-steel-guitar thing. Don't misunderstand me—I love to play, perhaps more than ever before, the many traditional styles of the past. The traditional steel styles are still alive and well-represented by artists such as Alan Jackson, Vince Gill, George Strait, and Tracy Byrd. I'm just stating that we are no longer limited to just playing within those styles. In the nineties, the steel is being accepted as a valid instrument, maybe for the first time, and is being allowed to fit into many different musical styles and into any form of music.

H *ow do you perceive the role of the steel guitar in contemporary music? What does the instrument signify to you?*

Emmons: I view the steel as I would any other instrument. It's just another vehicle for expression, and the role it plays in any style of music is up to the person playing it. It has checked in and out of various styles of music for years. Alvino Rey played pedal steel and fronted a very successful orchestra in the forties. Speedy West recorded with a long list of pop artists in the fifties, including Rosemary Clooney, Kay Starr, and Bing Crosby. In the late sixties, while living in Los Angeles, I did many sessions with contemporary artists. Other L.A.-based steel players like Red Rhodes, Sneaky Pete Kleinow, and J.D. Maness were also very active in the studio at the time.

I've enjoyed playing the steel, but I've also had a certain amount of contempt for it because of its physical drawbacks. I've never been able to completely express myself musically because of the limitations of

fixed-pedal configurations.

Green: Perhaps because of its relative youth, I believe the pedal steel guitar has yet to find its niche in musical areas other than country music, despite its tentative steps forward. Hopefully, in the twenty-first century there will be more adventures by players into jazz, rock, and classical. Or the trend may continue, which is to blur the lines which separate and compartmentalize the various musical genres. This scenario would probably make it easier for the steel to be assimilated as it further matures.

Although I'm biased, having played this instrument since age seven, starting with a six-string acoustic Hawaiian guitar, I still find the steel guitar to be the most beautiful (when played properly), and yet the most difficult to master and ultimately the most fulfilling to have played. If I were magically given the chance to start again and choose, my choice would still be the pedal steel guitar.

Franklin: The steel has its own voice to add to pop music. When I recorded with Mark Knopfler, depending on the song's needs, I approached the instrument as a keyboard, a saxophone, a string section, a guitar, and yes, sometimes as a steel guitar. I feel if the individual steel guitarist draws from a diversified musical background and applies those influences to a contemporary musical direction, it will have to fit. Music is music, no matter what you play it on. The steel is an instrument with many versatile sounds. You have to use them tastefully. You wouldn't want to play twangy country licks on a Tony Bennett session. However, if you played the steel with a mellow, dry tone and voiced it the way Bill Evans plays the piano, it could work!

How have you contributed to the evolution of steel playing?

Emmons: Shot Jackson and I designed and built the first Sho-Bud guitars in his garage in 1957. As time went by and Shot kept turning down changes I would suggest, I eventually had enough ideas on paper to design a new guitar. By 1961, I had found someone willing to build it for me. By 1962 or '63, the Emmons guitar was on the market. It has since become the benchmark for most contemporary designs. If Shot had loosened up a little, every Emmons guitar you see today would have a Sho-Bud sticker on it.

In 1962, I added F# and D# notes to the first and second strings of the E9th tuning. This allowed you to play melodies, scale notes, and harmonies within the triads. It's now the standard tuning for the pedal steel guitar. In 1969, I put a D-note on top of the C6th tuning, which expanded both its single-note and chord capabilities. A lightweight volume pedal that attached to the guitar was part of my original design, along with a formica finish that is now the standard for most steels.

Green: I have tried during my career to prove what Jerry Byrd had earlier shown with the non-pedal steel, namely that the pedal steel can be played in tune, with a rich, warm tone that even those unfamiliar with the instrument won't find offensive, and with personality and melodic content. In essence, I wasn't playing for steel players, but for the singers, producers, and listeners of the records. Most of my fifteen instrumental albums were on legitimate record labels and were designed for radio airplay, of which I received much during the sixties and seventies. The more than 10,000 records I played on were equally commercial ventures, and thus not designed to get the steel players' attention unless they really wanted to listen to the originality and sub-

tlety of what I was doing.

I truly loved my twenty-five years in the recording studio. It was my forum, provided a great income, and was my conduit to being heard around the world, so I took it quite seriously. It was most important to me to play the ideas I conceived, and play them seamlessly into the overall song format so as to not step on the singer's lyrics nor the other musicians' toes. It mattered to me because I knew that if I had any legacy to leave, it would be on those recordings, which would exist long after I'm gone.

Franklin: Buddy and Lloyd have contributed to the evolution of our instrument—I don't think I have. The steel guitar was already pretty much standardized by the time I moved to Nashville. All I had to do was learn how to play it. Hopefully, I've contributed to my own musical evolution. But that's for someone else to evaluate, not me.

What constitutes your basic guitar/amp/effects rig? How do you get your signature tone?

Emmons: In the three to four months out of the year I play with the Everly Brothers, I use a Peavey Session 400 and Peavey Profex. For studio work, I use a Peavey Tube Fex for EQ and compression, and a Lexicon PCM-80 for echo and reverb effects. From there, I go directly into the console. So I've got over \$3000 worth of stereo effects that land me a spot on the right- or left-hand side of the music. I've seen dumber things out of Nashville than 1996 technology on a 1960 mix, but it's been a while.

In live situations, I use the same settings as hundreds of other steel players do, which basically doesn't have much to do with the signature tone I get. On the last three George Strait albums, I recorded without an amp, using three different brands of steels and various tone settings for each. Most of the cuts sounded pretty much the same.

Signature tone is basically the sound you create with your hands. That's why no matter how I set my amp for myself, whoever sits down at my steel will never sound like anyone other than himself. As in the case of most stringed instruments, how hard or soft you pick and whether you pick close to the bridge or away from the pickup determines your signature sound. After that, you go on the never-ending search for an amp and instrument you feel will best complement your sound.

Green: I currently play a Sho-Bud LDG model which I designed and a JCH designed by Jimmy Crawford and John Hughey. I use two Peavey Session 400 amps. My only effects unit is a Lexicon PCM-41 digital-delay processor. I firmly believe the only two things that enhance the natural sound of a steel are a bit of reverb and a little delay to expand the sound by using two amps. Any other "effects" in my judgment serially subtract from the beauty of the instrument.

I have found that the key to a warm, mellow tone with the Peavey amps is in the midrange control. I barely turn it on, perhaps to about 1 1/2 on my old amps, bass about 8, treble about 6. Fundamentally, the concept of tone lies in the brain. One should remember that the guitar, amps, and accessories are merely tools. They don't really get the tone, nor play for you. That action originates in the intellectual and subconscious parts of the cerebellum. My hands, and how I strike the strings, where I hold the picking hand, largely determine how I get my tone.

Franklin: I use a Franklin D-10 with nine floor pedals and eight knee levers. I use the following amps and effects: Peavey Tube Fex, Peavey

YDR * 20:20 digital processor, Lexicon PCM-42, L.C. Electronics 2290, two Nashville 900s, Mesa/Boogie Studio Preamp, and two Peavey single twelve-inch Black Widow[®] speaker cabinets. I use any combination of these pieces of gear at any given time. They all work well for me! I tend to sound the same no matter which combination I use.

Give me a pearl of wisdom regarding your craft.

Enzo: Whether you write your name on a scrap of paper or a blackboard, your signature remains the same.

Green: Learning to play the steel guitar and playing music on the steel are different entities. Only when one has grasped the fundamentals of playing such a remarkably complex instrument can the advent of genuinely playing music begin. Just learning to play the steel as a mechanical or technical function isn't enough, unless one is content to only copy others and play generic licks. Spending a career simply pushing pedals and striking strings, then describing that as playing steel guitar, strikes me as emotionally unrewarding and rare.

I would suggest that a steel player decide on which pedal setup and timing he/she is most comfortable with and stick with it. There's an entire lifetime of knowledge and ideas waiting to be played. Keep in mind that mathematically there are hundreds of thousands of combinations using the pedals, strings, bar positions, and phrasings. It is in fact an entire musical language. Most can't grasp or learn more than a fraction of this language if they're constantly changing pedal setups or tunings. Once I discovered the E to F (4th and 8th strings raised 1/2 tone) change on the E9/E8 tuning in 1966, I realized my setup was complete. That was the beginning of a wonderful journey of musical exploration that continues to this day. My pedal setup and tuning are still exactly what they were in 1966.

One final thought: Learn melody lines. Learn to play the melody to songs on your steel rather than just licks. Melody is a heaven, the map by which we keep our musical direction, and most important, it is the common language which all listeners understand.

Frankie: The more I learn about playing music, the less I feel I know! **A**

LOGGERHEAD HAND CLES

.....
southern California, 1965
the
Rolling Stones, "(I Can't
Get No) Satisfaction"

When "Satisfaction" hit the airwaves in the mid-sixties, all the cats were trying to figure out how Keith Richards got that bizarre guitar sound. One Friday night, I went down to the Buena Park Teen Club to check out this new band called the Symptoms. The dudes were pretty happening. I was digging the vibe, when all of a sudden the guitar player went into that ingeniously simple riff: *dunh... dunh... dunh-dunh-dunh...*

Look out, now—the sound!

During the break, I cased out his gear and found the culprit: a Gibson Fuzz Tone. It looked like a wedge of brown cheese, with a footswitch and a couple of knobs. The Fuzz Tone was one of the earliest stomp-box distortion units on the market, and thanks to ole Keith, everyone got into the action.

Dig: Someone hipped me that Hendrix had a Fuzz Face, so I laid a guilt trip on my grandmother and

copped a unit. But when I showed up at Vinnie Ferragamo's house for band practice, my fellow Spasms scoffed at my Fuzz Face, saying it was the goofiest thing they had ever seen. "Blasphemy!" I retorted, and quickly whipped out a *Hill Parader* with a photograph of the little bugger at Jimi's feet.

The geeks had to eat crow.

My favorite fuzz box was the Big Muff. It had hefty tone and respectable distortion. Then around '68 or '69, some dude flashed on the idea that if you had separate gain controls for the preamp and the power amp, you could get a perfectly gonadic distortion sound that was easier to control. After that little revelation, fuzz units went the way of the Edsel.

—Professor Loggerhead