

Dobro to PSG, Pt 1

I've been giving some thought about my 2002 transition to the pedal steel guitar and the challenges that other dobro players might face if they choose to make the leap. I figured it might be useful, interesting & amusing if I shared my personal experiences. This may end up being a series of occasional posts. I encourage and welcome comments, questions and feedback. I was encouraged, almost nagged, to take up psg by Mike Auldridge and unlike most I had the benefit of his mentoring. Mike was a kick butt player and you can hear a lot of his work on the Chesapeake CD's as well as some of the early Scene projects.

At the outset let me state that the psg cannot be treated like and "electric dobro". Many dobro techniques just do not apply to the instrument. As an example, hammer ons & pull offs are a dobro requirement. Those techniques rarely applies to the psg. In the classic psg fashion the bar is rarely lifted from the neck, a common practice on square neck dobro. That means that "blocking", arguably a option on dobro is a flat out requirement on psg. There is a physicality to playing the psg which is foreign to the dobro (and vice versa). The execution of note changes with feet and knees takes a considerable amount of seat time to get correctly. Using a pedal to execute what was accomplished with a dobro hammer-on can be head splitting.

When I took up the psg I was already a "journeyman" dobro player and also had G6 eight string under my belt. I describe "journeyman" as a player with adequate theoretical knowledge and could be musical in all situations where I applied myself. Looking back, I had just enough theory under my belt to approach the psg. As I took up the guitar I found that I had to rapidly build on that dobro theory in order to take advantage of the psg. I am still building on that theory. On dobro, I rarely thought of extended chords, full minors, sussed chords and substitutions. These are all commonly executed on steel, no matter which neck you happen to be playing. In my opinion the pedal steel would be a poor choice of instruments without some theoretical knowledge.

In my personal experience the challenge of learning psg as a first instrument would be daunting. So, here I am. Fourteen years into it. I have plenty of bad habits. If not careful I will still be more "dobroish" than I like. I'll "push" the guitar way too hard and lose that psg tone. I've been told that I often don't sound "classic". I agree with that assessment and continue to strive. I have way too much dobro in my right hand.

I'm going to stop here, for now. Before I sign off I'll pass along two fine resources for the interested: The Steel Guitar Forum - The ultimate resource. Browse for free. \$5 gets you full privileges for life. steelguitarforum.com/ Mickey Adams on YouTube - Terrific video lessons, beginner to advanced. FREE, FREE, FREE! No one has given more to the community then Mickey . He is also a terrific psg "mechanic". <https://www.youtube.com/user/Singlpilot> As said earlier, questions and comments welcome. I'll probably return to this topic talking about "how to purchase without getting ripped off" and other droll topics. Ta, ta for now!

Dobro to PSG, Pt 2

Continuing my saga. Let's call this "Procuring The Pedal Steel Guitar" I'll try to cover the highlights: + You can't walk into your local guitar shop and hope to see, buy, talk about pedal steel guitars. + New guitars are bought directly from the builder or from specialty dealers.

There are roughly a half dozen builders out there. All of them build very fine guitars. "Student" models

(single neck, E9) are in the \$1,000- 1,500 range, depending on configuration, bells and whistles. "Pro" models typically start at approx \$3,000 (single, E9) - \$4,500+ (double neck E9/C6) and may wander up to \$5,000plus depending on configuration. I would run away from older student guitars like the MSA Red Baron, Sidekick, Sho-Bud Maverick and others. No parts. Not configurable to contemporary standards. + Used "Professional" guitars are bought from individuals or specialty dealers (hopefully). The buying used challenge is that these are mechanical devices with springs, rods, clips, and a host of parts that wear over time. There are "well played" guitars that are just plumb wore out. and must be repaired or rebuilt in order to be made playable once again. Some of the companies that built these guitars are l-o-n-g gone and parts will have to be sourced. In addition someone with specialty knowledge will have to do repair/restoration work. That being said, there are well known, reliable, older used guitars where at least the parts are available and there are online resources to help the DIY mechanically inclined types. I'll mention the older MSA (Classic or SS), Carter, Zumsteel. There are others.

How to recognize a good used example from a worn out warhorse? Either have a knowledgeable person as a guide or buy from a reputable source. Personally, as a first guitar I would stay away from "vintage" for several reasons. These will be 40-50 year old guitars. Some cannot be configured to play contemporary changes. Many require complete restoration. Those desirable guitars that have been restored command stratospheric prices. You'll eventually encounter terms like "push/pull (p/p)", "all pull", "pull release" and cable guitars. 99% of contemporary builders use "all pull" changers. These guitars are highly configurable, reliable and relatively light.

I recommend that all first time buyers only buy an "all pull" guitar. + When buying either a student or professional model steel I recommend you buy (at least): Single E9 - 3 pedals/4 knees (3P/4K) Double E9/C6 - 8 pedals/ 4 knees (8P/4K) These pedal/knees will enable you to play 95% of what you associate with the pedal steel guitar. Although many guitars now ship with 5 knees, no worries, 4 is just fine. You may encounter terms like "2 raise/2 lower" , "3 raise/3 lower", etc.. This refers to the number of pitch raises and lowers allowed on each string. "2/R/2L" is OK. "3R/3L" is better imho. Some modern builds are "4R/4L" which means a lot is going on and the guitar is highly configurable. Well, I hope I've given you some meat to chew on. Please, if you have any comments/criticisms drop me a line here. I'm hoping a few other knowledgeable folks will drop in and lend a hand.

Dobro to PSG, Pt 3

This third (and probably last) installment on getting into the pedal steel guitar will outline the accessories you'll need to get started on your new musical addiction. I'll assume you have or will have a psg soon.

1. Something to sit on: Most steel players sit on a "packaseat". This is a combination seat and storage locker. Other players might use a drum throne or keyboard bench. An armless chair will do in a pinch. Just remember that you'll be sitting for extended periods so, get something comfortable.
2. Tone Bars, & picks (thumb and fingers): A "bullet" bar is the tool you'll need, something similar to a Dunlop 920. Roughly 3 1/4 inches long. If you're playing dobro now you can use the same picks to start learning.
3. Volume pedal: On pedal steel volume pedals are used as expressive devices and proper pedal

technique is a skill you'll get into eventually. I'd recommend that you acquire a pedal specifically designed for pedal steel guitar. It will have the correct/required range and all of the inputs & outputs will be on the right side of the pedal. Desired but not required is a bracket which allows for the attachment of the volume pedal to the guitar's pedal rack.

4. Amp and cables: There are amps specifically designed for pedal steel. You'll want something appropriate eventually. As a beginner in your music room you can play through just about any amp. I'd say something in the 15-20W range is suitable at first. I'd recommend an amp with built in reverb which you can use judiciously. Get decent quality guitar cables. Several short cables go from the guitar's output to the volume pedal and tuner. A longer cable to go from the volume pedal's output to an amplifier. 5. A tuner: There are tuners designed for pedal steel (Peterson) but a decent chromatic tuner will suffice when you start. You'll need some instruction on how to tune the guitar and all of the pedal + knee "changes". It'll be a bit slower with a generic tuner but you'll learn lots about your guitar. I think that is it in a nutshell! Drop me a line with any comments, questions or suggestions. Now, go out and find an instructor or instruction. Your journey has just begun.