



Steel Guitar 'Rag'

Sept. "Official Publication of the Southwestern Steel Guitar Association" 2016

Hello Everyone!

Welcome to the September edition of the SWSGA "Steel Guitar Rag". I hope you are all prepared for an enjoyable and safe Labor Day holiday weekend.

It seems like time is slipping by very quickly and we still have some things to do in preparation for our fall jam and then the 14th. annual Steel Guitar Show. The fall jam will be on November 12th. at the Mesa Hilton Hotel, 1011 W Holmes, Mesa, (North side of HWY 60 at Alma School Rd.). You can't miss it! So bring your guitar and join in on the fun. Frank Carter will be providing the tracks and Darrell Bircher, Darcie Bodemiller, Gerald McDaniels, and Dan Range will be playing for the live band portion. The jam is still a little over 2 months away, but I wanted to give you plenty of time to make arrangements.

We are still looking for volunteers to help at the show. Volunteers will be provided with staff badges for the entire show. If you would like to help, call any one of the board members and we can add you to the schedule.

If you are planning on staying at the Hilton Hotel, be sure to make your reservation as early as possible. The rooms are already starting to fill up and the final cut off time for the SWSGA discount will be December 20th. Information on how to book your room on line will be provided in this newsletter. If you have any problems, please contact any one of the board members and we can help.

I mentioned in a previous newsletter that we do a "Jam Session" at my music room about once a month. Usually these sessions are scheduled about one week in advance. If anyone is interested in attending, call or email me with your contact information and I will call you when we schedule a jam. We always have room for one or two more players.

Thank you all for your continued support of the steel guitar and the SWSGA. Have a great Labor Day week end.

Troy Porter SWSGA Chairman

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This newsletter is published monthly from P.O. Box 1129, Globe Az., 85502 and presents information for the newsletter of the SWSGA, A 501(c)(3), non-profit organization.

Editor: Bill Tauson

Future Events

2016 Fall Jam

Nov. 12th. At the
Mesa Hilton.

2017 SWSGA Show

Jan. 12th., 13th. & 14th.
Mesa Hilton.

Watch for further details
in the Steel Guitar Rag'
or the SWSGA's
Website!

<http://www.swsteelguitar.com/>



Find us on
Facebook

Treasurer's Message...

This summer is almost over.

The Fall jam is scheduled for November 12th., at the Mesa Hilton Hotel and we are getting closer to our 2017 Show. Please get your reservations at Mesa Hilton and the early entry badges. For 2017, paid members early badges will be \$60.00 and non-members \$65.00 for the 3 full days of music. Mail your checks to SWSGA, PO Box 1129, Globe AZ, 85502.

As a SWSGA member, you receive one of the best newsletters containing a full package of information. We are able to email the full pages of all the tablature and articles in color. We would like to have everyone with an email receive your newsletter in this manner. It is costly to print and mail, at times we are not able to send the complete newsletter due to the number of pages. Please let me know if you prefer to change to email.

Our new hotel looks like it will be a great place for our show this year. Lots of restaurants and shopping very close. I have received notice from a tour company that would like to arrange any tour that you may want to do. Maybe a group of you, especially the wives, would like to arrange a tour, even a shopping trip. Please contact me for the information. Also, Macy's is sending discount coupons for the shoppers. I sincerely believe there will be lots of enjoyment for everyone.

Peggy Porter, Treasurer



SWSGA

Welcome to the SWSGA reservation site!

A block of rooms have been reserved for January 11, 2017 - January 15, 2017. The special room rate will be available until December 20th or until the group block is sold-out, whichever comes first.

Booking a reservation from our site is simple. To begin the process, click on "Book a Room" below to receive your group's preferred rate.

See you at the Hilton Phoenix/Mesa in January! We hope you enjoy your stay and your group's event!

Quick and Easy Reservations for Attendees

Attending an event at our hotel? Special room rates have been arranged for this event. Click on the room type below to view room details.

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[1 KING BED](#)

rates from
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[2 QN BEDS EXECUTIVE FLOOR](#)

rates from
119.00 USD/Night

Check-in Date:

11 January 2017 - 15 January 2017

Book **by December 20th** to reserve your room!

[Terms & Conditions](#)

[Book a Room ▶](#)

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Amenities



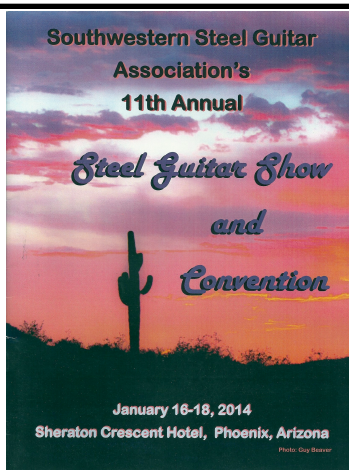
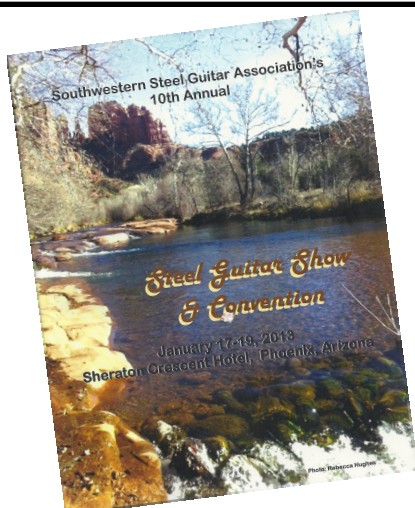
With modern Southwestern flair and resort-style amenities, the Hilton Phoenix/Mesa hotel is located in the suburb of Mesa, AZ, near corporate offices, including Boeing, Honeywell, Intel, as well as a variety of shops, restaurants and more. While you're here, rejuvenate in our tranquil outdoor pool, savor delicious American cuisine at Zuni Grill, and unwind in our comfortable, spacious guest rooms while enjoying complimentary WiFi.

Clicking the link below will direct you to the Mesa Hilton Hotel reservation site. Rates are listed on the site and you can make your on-line reservations for the 2017 SWSGA Show. For those without internet connections, the Hotel information is also listed above.

http://www.hilton.com/en/hi/groups/personalized/M/MESHPHF-SGA-20170111/index.jhtml?WT.mc_id=POG



As you can see, our jams are well attended and it's a great chance to visit with friends and enjoy the music. The jam is free and everyone is welcomed!! We look forward to seeing you there!!



We are proud to say that plans are under way for the 2017 SWSGA Steel Guitar Convention in Mesa, Az. on January 12th., 13th., & 14th. and we would love to have you join us! There is still a vendor room and tables available for the show and we are planning the show program. If you'd like to advertise in the program or join us as a vendor, we would love to hear from you.

Program advertising prices are as follows;

Full Page ad	\$100.00
Full Page Color ad	\$150.00
Half Page ad	\$ 50.00
Half Page Color ad	\$ 75.00
Quarter Page ad	\$ 25.00
Business Card	\$ 15.00

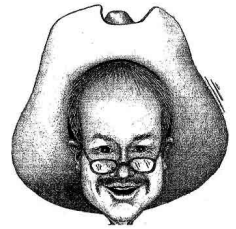
Please send your PDF, JPEG ad copy to;

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P.O. Box 1129
Globe, Az., 85502

or contact any of our board members listed on the next page who will be happy to assist you.

Ax Ron ????????

By Ron Pruter

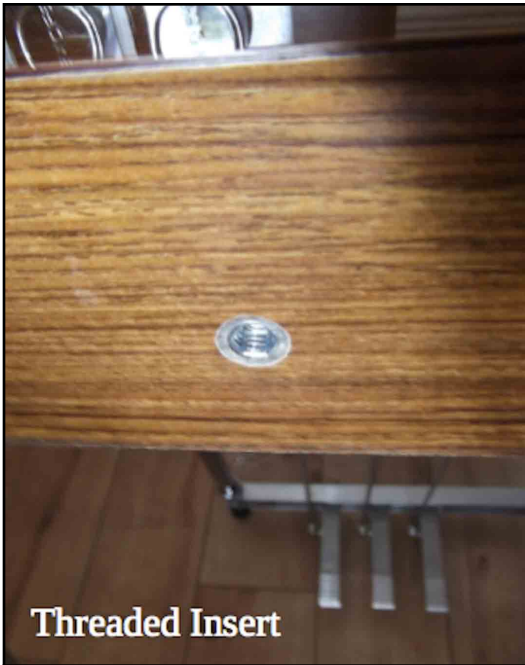
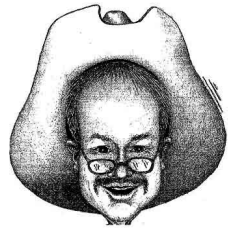


Welcome to my September edition of this fine publication. I want to do my part to promote this wonderful instrument. Please Email me at ronprutermusic@outlook.com and I'll try to answer your questions, as space allows.

My latest project was to make a good sturdy arm rest for my friend, Chet Arthur's new Stage One steel. You can buy one from Doug at Stage One, and for the money they are fine. The things I didn't like about them were Number one- kind of flimsy in construction, Number two- kind of a flimsy mounting system and Number three- they were not full length. The smaller length works fine but in my opinion, just doesn't look as good as a full length one. The good thing about the sparse build of these was they were small and could actually be tucked away in the steel case for transport. Not true of mine. I also took the effort to try and match the color of the pad to the color of Chet's steel seat. The following are some thoughts on how I built my "Loafer Pad.

- I made the frame of the pad from a cedar fence picket. It was cheap, easy to work, light and even smelled good.
- After upholstering it, I wanted to trim it out with a nice metal band. I went back to Home Depot and got a ½" by ½" strip of aluminum angle iron. To bend the nice round corners, you cut away the bottom strap of the angle iron around the whole corner and just leave the sides. That's all you will see, unless you're under your guitar. I think that metal strap is what really sets off the pad.
- At first, I wasn't sure how I was going to attach the pad. I first considered an integral clamping system that was too complicated and heavy. I talked to Chet, the owner, and he didn't mind me installing the threaded inserts. I bought these from Home Depot, Part #608 582. I need to mention they are not hammered in but rather threaded in to the wood. Note: Be careful when drilling and installing the inserts. The mica chips very easily. I increased the diameter of the hole in the mica at the entrance of the drilled hole, with a burnisher so it would not be torn through by the outside threads of the inserts. These inserts work great! They thread in easily with a large allen wrench and have a nice ¼" 20 thread on the inside.
- I wanted to use nice black plastic, shouldered knob bolts to affix the pad to the guitar, but couldn't readily find any.
- I installed a layer of rubber with spray adhesive to the back of the pad. (Actually I got the rubber from an old inner-tube

Here's some pictures



Threaded Insert



End View



Back View



*Hey You!!! Keep on
Steelin'*

Later, Ax



Professor Twang's E9 Grab Bag!

Hi fellow steelers, John McClung here (aka Mr. Twang / Professor Twang) coming to you from Olympia, WA. For questions about this lesson, or inquiries about private Skype lessons, write to me at: steelguitarlessons@earthlink.net, or phone me at 310-480-0717. I welcome suggestions for topics for this column!

<http://steelguitarlessons.com>

It's OK to be a Big Fish in a Little Pond!

This month's topic was inspired by a chapter from the book "David and Goliath: Underdogs, Misfits, and the Art of Battling Giants," by Malcolm Gladwell.

Chapter 3 tells the story of a young woman who loved science all through high school and for college chose to attend an Ivy League school, Brown University, with a great reputation that attracted the best students of the best, making it a very competitive, high pressure environment.

When she got a low B grade in her first science course, Organic Chemistry, and just couldn't seem to grasp, much less master, the difficult concepts in that course, ESPECIALLY WHEN COMPARING HERSELF TO FELLOW STUDENTS, she became so discouraged that she dropped out of the Sciences and pursued a different major.

There's a name for that: the Little Fish–Big Pond Effect. Putting herself up against some of the smartest students in the nation is a huge handicap right from the start. She would have done better and been much happier by attending a school where she'd be a Big Fish (talented and motivated science major) in a Little Pond (school of lesser renown and less competition), and be far more likely to succeed and thrive.

Which made me ponder: how do we steel players view and evaluate ourselves?

I suspect many of you, like myself, are rather unconsciously always comparing your playing skills and knowledge to that of other

players. And that right there is the crux of what may be a problem: in today's internet-connected world, all of us have available 24/7 exposure to the best playing from the "best" players, thanks to online videos. While that is in many ways a great source of inspiration and ideas on how you can improve...by constantly holding yourself up to the lofty standards of Buddy Emmons, Lloyd Green, Tommy White, Mike Johnson and many other fine and accomplished professional players, don't you sometimes despair of ever achieving their high level of knowledge, technique and execution?

If you do, you're in essence the Little Fish in the Big Pond, comparing yourself to the best talent in the world.

In contrast, I think back to how the world was when I was a beginning player in the mid-1970s. There was no internet, of course, no Steel Guitar Forum, no YouTube. About the only live playing I saw was a handful of local players near my then-home of Hayward, CA. The only way to see the top pro's perform was by attending Scotty's annual International Steel Guitar Convention in St. Louis, or perhaps making a pilgrimage to Nashville and hoping to catch a few of the top session players moonlighting at clubs in Printer's Alley.

So my evolving standard of excellence was what I heard on records (and at that point I didn't have the ability to transcribe much of what I was hearing on vinyl or cassette), and what I

continued ►

Professor Twang's E9 Grab Bag!

heard from my local heroes (in my locale, that was primarily Joe Goldmark, Greg Lasser, Dwayne "Pudgy" Wong, Pete Grant, Dan Tyack, Bobby Black, Joe Shelby, Fred Jones, and a few others I know I'm forgetting; living in the San Francisco Bay Area I still had formidable talent to emulate!).

Thus I was judging my own competence as compared to other local players with more experience onstage and practice time at home. While that certainly was many notches above my own playing ability at the time, it was still a manageable goal to shoot for. I can recall feeling discouraged now and then, but almost never hopeless about my pursuit of playing excellence.

I can imagine how easy it would have been to become hopeless and disheartened if I'd been constantly comparing myself to the steel guitar greats of the day! I might have simply quit!

That's my main point here: try not to make your personal standard of excellence and achievement the level of today's top players.

Remember that you're playing one of the most complicated instruments ever invented, so just the fact that you can hold your own in a local country band is quite an achievement in itself.

How many good steel players live and perform in your local town or region? The number is likely quite small, and it's possible you're the *ONLY* steel player around. So that makes you a Big Fish, or even *THE* Big Fish, in a Little Pond; you're the one of the few cats who can provide pedal steel sounds to the local music scene, so no matter how basic you may feel your playing is, you're still able to contribute something unique to local bands and audiences. There's big value in that, my friends.

Keep that in mind, and value what you have to offer. Avoid being the Little Fish in the Big Pond (you'd be that for sure if you quit your

job, moved to Nashville, and tried to break into the recording scene there— not impossible, but then you'd literally be compared to every top session steeler by every producer, artist and fellow musician in Music City).

Now, I'm not advocating that you don't challenge yourself with more difficult material just because you have the local market cornered; do stretch and strive to always improve and learn new things. Without doing that, you'll get stale, and bored, and your playing may suffer.

If that happens, try to transcribe some cool lick or chord changes you hear on a record that you find exciting, interesting or mysterious. Or do take advantage of the near-infinite resources on YouTube and elsewhere online, most of which are even free. Better yet, find a good player, local or accessible via Skype, who is also a good instructor, and get personalized help with your technique, knowledge and execution. That, by the way, is my specialty (hint, hint).

I do discourage ordering up a book full of pedal steel tablature, and slogging your way through that. If you put in the effort to figure things out yourself, you'll learn a ton more, and the knowledge will stick with you better and have more value to you, because *YOU* did all that work your very own self!

I hope this pep talk has helped you rethink and reframe how you view yourself and how you evaluate your own playing. Don't run yourself down just because you don't know all the licks and moves of an Emmons or Franklin. Be proud of what you *CAN* do!

Till next time...play purty!

Professor Twang

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CHORD CONSTRUCTION

For The

PEDAL STEEL GUITARIST

By Tom Bradshaw

"A Bit of History"

It is interesting to learn how the pedal steel guitar became a chord-producing instrument. Let me review how that came about. ...Tom

Birth of the Instrument: On one of the Hawaiian Islands around 1875, a James Hoa showed some other musicians how raising the strings on a Spanish guitar and then fretting it with a "glass perfume bottle or a knife" would create a different sound. What he did with that idea is not documented, but his claim of being the inventor of the instrument has lived on. However, around 1889, Joseph Kekuku, a Hawaiian teenager, discovered that if metal came into contact with the strings of *his* Spanish guitar, the pitch of those strings also changed. Joseph did do something with the idea. He immediately enlisted his school's shop teacher. They raised his guitar's strings and fashioned a flat piece of steel to fret it. Joseph placed it on his lap and learned to play it in that manner. He became an accomplished player by the standards of his time, and later did some touring with it in the U.S., while always claiming that he invented the instrument. The truth remains controversial even to this day. Regardless, the **guitar** was born and that **steel** bar gave the instrument its true name. Kekuku also said he invented the flat bar he used to fret the instrument. That claim may be true, since that flat bar of steel has lived on, even to this day by resonator guitarists, while most steelers use a round one.

Gaining Momentum: At the time of the steel's birth and for the next quarter century, our instrument was used almost exclusively for enhancing Hawaiian folk music. Surprisingly, and in spite of its use by several others who toured the U.S. the instrument failed to achieve much attention. That all changed at San Francisco's 1915 Panama Pacific Exposition. At that event, Hawaiian dancers were brought stateside for this International event. The presence of these grass-skirted girls and the strains of this "new" guitar apparently captured the prurient interests of many of the thousands of attendees. Male onlookers "salivated" and would long recall the echo of the steel's plaintive melodies that guided the swaying hips of the hula girls from our country's "Island Paradise." Statesiders quickly associated "romance" with what they dubbed the "Hawaiian" guitar, and embraced its sound, particularly when beautiful young "natives" from our distant Territory accompanied it. Many Hawaiian musical groups began touring the country. When young men saw those hula girls perform, as well as heard the steel guitar, they (Jerry Byrd for one) had to have one (the guitar that is, but would have likely settled for one of those native dancers)!

Proliferation: That sound led to the emergence of the Oahu Music Company and the explosion of their classes for steel-player wanna-be's throughout the country. That explosion lasted into the early '50s. So what began in San Francisco in 1915, soon found its way into what was first "imported" Hawaiian music. It would then find its way into Hillbilly music, then Country-folk music, then Western Swing music and finally into the big swing bands of the 1940s and '40s that originally played what was then called, "Popular Music."

Quest for Volume: When first used in 1920's musical groups, this fix-tuned 6-string instrument received life by projecting its sound to audiences mostly by using microphones to funnel its sound through PA systems. Other efforts to make this Spanish-style wooden-bodied steel guitar louder led the Dopyera Brothers to create their Dobro instrument in 1929. Played identically like the steel, its metalized sound box succeeded in projecting the guitar's sound at greater volume. Unfortunately, it sounded like a Dobro, not a steel guitar. Finally, in 1929 the first pickup was invented. Not surprisingly, since the steel needed the most increase in volume, the first instrument it appeared on was the "Fry Pan" steel guitar manufactured by the Adolph Rickenbacher Company.

Need for Chord Versatility: But let's return to 1889 with little "Joey" Kekuku and move forward. It would be over 40 years before someone got the idea to make the steel guitar more chord-versatile by creating a mechanism that would alter the pitch of the strings and permit more than mainly 3-string chord grips during all those previous years. That was in about 1932 when the Harlin brothers of Cincinnati, Ohio invented and patented the "chord changer." Before that time steel guitarists were limited to playing chords by selecting different string grips or using a variety of tunings suitable to the music they played. During those early years of the instrument, players most often relied on their backup accompaniment to complete their chords. Although that changed with the Harlin boys' invention, the full potential of the concept of a "pedal" steel guitar didn't catch on for nearly two more decades.

The Early Players: From those early 1930s until the late '40s the newly invented "pedal" steel guitar was primarily used for producing strum-chords. Non-pedalists such as jazz great Bob Dunn (with Milton Brown's famous swing band, "His Musical Brownies") and Leon McAuliffe of Bob Wills' "Texas Playboy's" brought recognition to the instrument with their single-string, 2-string and 3-string improvising, besides their strum-chords.

The major "chord producer" during the '30s & '40s ("the "Big Band" era) was Alvino Rey. Often he would voice big chord strums, even using those strums as melody lead-work in his huge orchestra. The two major brands of pedal steels for the '30s and '40s decades were first the Harlin Brothers' MultiKord and Gibson's Electraharp which Rey contributed in developing in about 1938. Gibson soon found itself with the Harlin brothers for infringing on their patent. Gibson either lost that lawsuit or bought their way out of it. Regardless, it was settled. They then altered their chord changer a bit and continued building the guitar. But neither guitar was popular with mainstream steel players, and little if any music was written for it. The pedals for both instruments were clustered at one end of both guitars. But steelers plodded on, mainly playing multi-neck rigs with different tunings on each of the necks. Like scores of others, I was one of them, with a triple-neck Fender Stringmaster. We multi-neckers would jump from neck to neck in order to voice the chords we wanted. Noel Boggs, though, was the master of this technique.

Modernization: It wasn't until the late '40s in Los Angeles, that Paul Bigsby built a pedal steel for that area's Country-Jazz player, Joaquin Murphey. Murphey began showing Country Music's steel players what could be accomplished if chords were mixed with his jazzy hot single-string improvising he was heralded for. In addition to offering a simpler chord changer, Bigsby chose to place the guitar's pedals in a row between the front legs of the steel he built for Murphey. A few other major players soon began acquiring Paul's creation (Noel Boggs and Speedy West in particular). But, they still utilized it as a chord-producing instrument, mainly in Western Swing with the continued likes of Bob Wills' Texas Playboys and other notable swing bands such as Spade Cooley's, Ole Rasmussen's and Cliffie Stone's. That all changed in 1954 when Bud Isaacs introduced the pedal gliss on the tune "Slowly" by Webb Pierce. With that tune, the *pedal* steel guitar got its start as a major contributor to Country Music's sound. The demand for this "new" instrument was so great that "garage-builders" sprung up across the nation. It seemed that the talent of players had just been waiting for the challenge of a "new" guitar, and the pedal steel's ascendancy as a dominating lead and accompaniment instrument had been stoked. Two major tunings (E9th and C6th) arose and are now nearly standardized. Today, full chord accompaniment and full chord lead-work is within pedal steel players' *grasp* (pun intended).

The Sound: Isaacs' "pedal gliss" effect now identifies the pedal steel guitar in Country Music. That effect is the voicing of one or more strings that change in pitch (by pedal action), while other voicing strings remain unchanged. The instrument's capacity to deliver chords, as well as its fluidity into and out of chords, without a break in the music's flow, is also a hallmark of its sound. The result of the mechanical advancements and the musical innovations by its players has vastly broadened its demand by a listening public. Now, let's get into the purpose of this paper: educating you on the construction of chords.

Notice: *For the complete article, contact Tom Bradshaw at tommybradshaw@gmail.com and request to be notified of the source for this free publication (for reading and/or downloading). The article is too long (50+ pages) for inclusion in this Newsletter, particularly when it will be available (free of charge) to anyone who requests it from Tom. ...Editor*



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# Steel Guitar Instructors

**Troy Porter** In Globe, Az., is available for E-9 instruction at any level. Call Troy at (928) 425-5520.

**Daun Suarez** is available for beginning and intermediate instruction in the north Tucson/Marana area. Call Daun at (520) 682-6609.

**Rich Brennion** is available at all levels for E-9 instruction in the Tucson area. Call Rich at (520) 661-5682.

**Blackie Taylor** at "Blackie Taylor Music", in Riverside, Ca. is available to teach all tunings, pedal and non-pedal guitar, dobro, reading music, etc. Blackie is located at 5950 Mission Blvd., Riverside, Ca. from noon to 6:30 P.M. (951) 686-4010.

**John McClung** teaches E-9 lessons in his Olympia, Wa. home studio, or online via "Skype". Call John at (310) 480-0717 or email him at [steelguitarlessons@earthlink.net](mailto:steelguitarlessons@earthlink.net). John also contributes monthly instructional articles in this newsletter. Be sure and check them out!

**Margie Mays** is available for teaching non-pedal, all tunings, E-9 pedal steel and learning to read sheet music. Call Margie in Mesa, Az., at (480) 807-5443, or email her at, [margiedon@aol.com](mailto:margiedon@aol.com).

**Rick Schmidt** is available to teach bass, non-pedal steel, pedal steel guitar, both E-9 and C6 tunings in the North San Diego County area, Prescott Arizona, or online via, "Skype", specializing in improvisation and harmony. Call Rick at (951) 442-9621, or email him at, [questforgigs@gmail.com](mailto:questforgigs@gmail.com).

**Fred Justice** teaches steel guitar in the Phoenix/Mesa, Az. area. Call Fred at (480) 986-2599 or (480) 235-8797. or email him at. [fredjustice@justicesteelguitars.com](mailto:fredjustice@justicesteelguitars.com).

**Chuck Lettes** teaches pedal steel guitar, E-9 and C6, and lap steel lessons in the Denver, Co. area. Contact Chuck at (720) 545-4803, email him at, [clettes@comcast.net](mailto:clettes@comcast.net) or visit his website at, [chucklettes.com](http://chucklettes.com).



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- Proudly made in the U.S.A. by musicians and engineers.

The TCA-500B Combo Amp and Head Unit both offer a 1U rack space for an effects unit. At the time of order, either a black blank 1U panel, or a fully programmed effects unit can be installed. Lexicon MX-200 and TC Electronics G Major-2 EFX units are currently available.

In order to use external speakers with the TCA-500B Mini-12 Combo, the external speaker option must be installed at the time of manufacture.

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Traders Corner is available to SWSGA members at no cost, who wish to sell their Steel Guitar or Lap Steel items Please contact the SWSGA Editor with your items.

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