

## track info

## tracks 14-16

Get your picking chops up with this tasty workout courtesy of Lee Hodgson

14. Introduction

15. Full track

16. Backing track

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## rating info

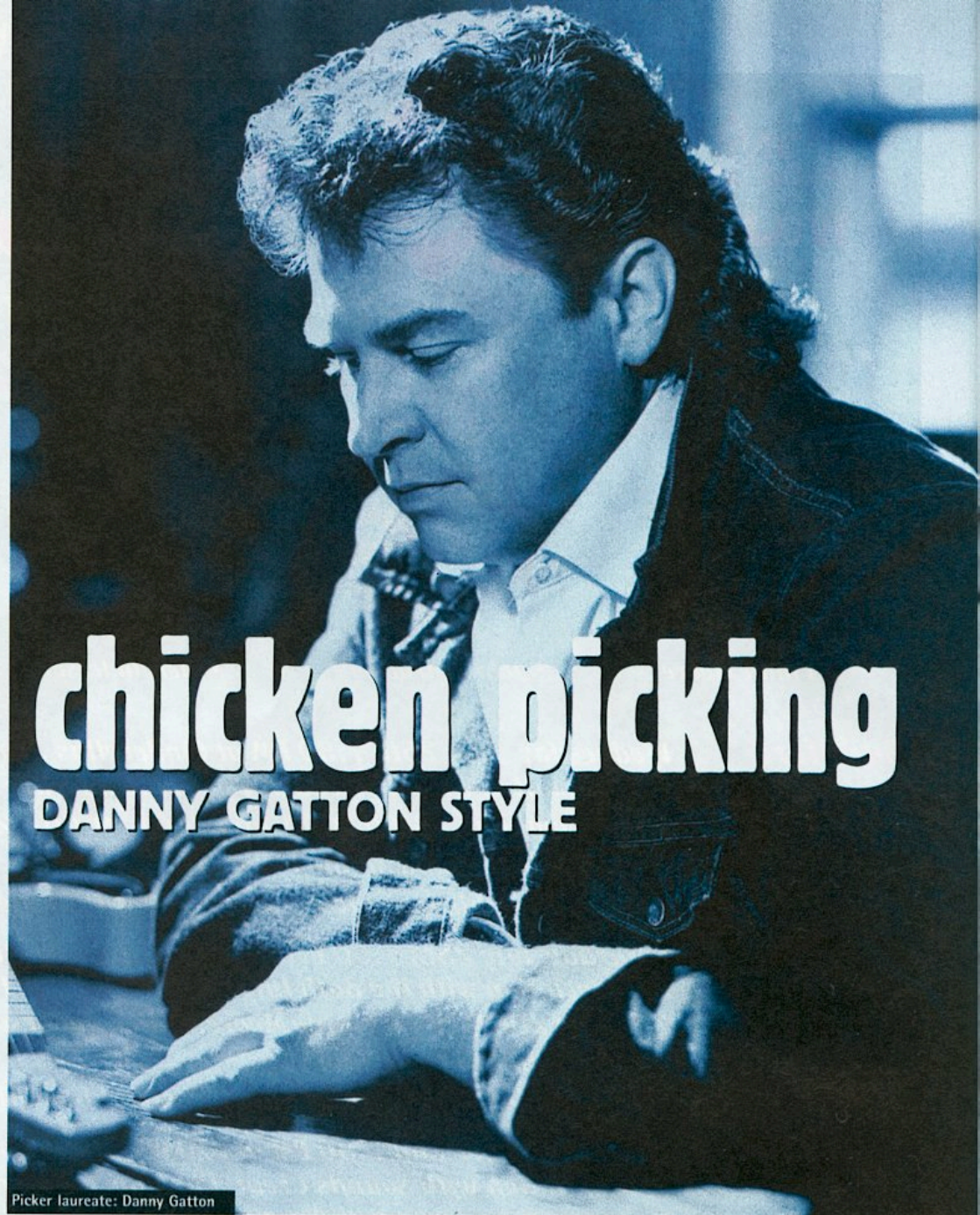
beginner easy moderate hard



rating: moderate to hard

Many of the moves are physically rather tricky so it'll take a bit of time to get this one spot on...

michael ochs archives/redferns



# chicken picking

## DANNY GATTON STYLE

Picker laureate: Danny Gatton

### meet your gt tutor: lee hodgson

Lee Hodgson is guitarist/lead vocalist with Memphis Roots. He's the country specialist at London's prestigious Guitar Institute and Module Leader/Instructor for Advanced Instrumental Techniques, too. Lee has written a guitar tutorial, *Hot Country*, plus several grade pieces for Rockschool Ltd. Lee has jammed with Albert Lee, Jerry Donahue and Stevie Wonder's Wonderlove. Mr H also transcribes and writes an occasional column for our sister magazine, *Guitarist*.

**GUITAR INSTITUTE**  
GUITAR SCHOOL



It's chicken pickin' time again – with something akin to the bluesier side of Danny Gatton...

This month we're looking at chicken picking in combination with a few pinched harmonics. Chicken picking, so called because it does indeed produce sounds rather like our clucking farmyard friends, was, as far as I know, a style originated by players such as Don Rich (guitarist/harmony vocalist in Buck Owens' Buckaroos) and Phil Baugh, back in the 60s. I first discovered it on hearing one of Arlen Roth's early solo albums, called *Guitarist*. The style has since become synonymous with players as diverse as James Burton, Jerry Donahue, Adrian Legg, Michael Lee Firkins and, of course, the great Danny Gatton. You might even say Jeff Beck and Mark Knopfler both play quite 'clucky' at times, too. The pinched harmonic aspect (see ahead for technical description) is perhaps best associated with Billy Gibbons and Roy Buchanan.

Incidentally, it's the Fender Telecaster that's synonymous with the style/players under discussion – those 'whistlers', as Danny Gatton used to call them, can sound so sweet and ethereal on that basic yet possibly most versatile of instruments.

### performance notes

The solo begins with a Jerry Donahue-style prebend (have the second and third strings already bent, by a semitone's worth in this instance, before you make a sound). Incidentally, this technique is also a passable bluff for performing pseudo-slide licks in the style of Ry Cooder. By the way, it's important to examine the suggested fretting fingerings (small numbers by the note-heads in the music) because there are things here that appear awkward until you discover the knack of which fingering gets the job done efficiently. However, there are no universally

correct fretting finger choices – you should always experiment to find out what's natural for you (as long as it works up to speed) and the lick in bar 2 is a case in point...

The Jerry Donahue approach is maintained throughout bar 3, although you might say it's reminiscent of Nashville's Brent Mason. Look ahead to bar 8 to see a similar but extended idea...

The start of bar 4 was something I played off the cuff. Incidentally, such gliding or sweeping is not normally part of the chicken picking style, but I was consciously setting up a blues lick so I suppose I felt that way inclined as I prepared for it. As regards the idiosyncratic 'dug-e-de-ba' rhythm (at beat 2 of bar 4) that's so often heard when playing this style, what you should realise is that country pickers typically 'pop' (pull away) the higher-sounding string with their flesh (Brent Mason uses his index finger). Many guitarists, including myself, actually use the middle finger to pluck the upper note, although James Burton is unique, I believe, in wearing a metal fingerpick on that digit.

Pinched harmonics feature only occasionally in this particular performance but less is more, as they say... Although they may be consciously brought to bear, pinched harmonics are often happy accidents. Here's how to create them: dig in with the very tip of the plectrum while letting the side of your thumb catch the string just before the string is activated, creating a **node**. If you want to add a chunky, funky feel then you may also wish to incorporate a thuddy, clucky sound – which is somewhat synonymous with the style in general – by emphasising the percussive element. This is achieved by using palm muting (lean the edge of your palm gently on the strings near or even on the string saddles). Okay, let's get back to the specific parts on offer.

In bar 5 there's a natural harmonic that was a complete fluke! The chord fragment I was holding down just happened to assist in creating that particular harmonic. Next, observe how I have targeted a 'good' note early: the E<sub>b</sub> note – which conveniently sounds like it's from the C blues scale (in my mind, I realised this would become the ♭7 of the next chord, F). Thinking ahead is a powerful creative tool for an improvising musician; it's a means to achieve heightened creativity.

Bar 6 features sixths, which are never far away in many country pickers minds and fingers and they are especially suitable for chicken picking. Note the staccato (short and detached) sound hereabouts – which appears to widen the dynamics.

Bar 9 introduces a particular rhythm: a pair of 'straight' sixteenths plus an eighth that may be vocalised. Think 'book-a-da (-uh)' and so on. Remember, though, to experiment with all manner of rhythms and rhythmic displacement (possibly putting the upper note variously on or off the beat) to see what tickles your fancy! A novel approach is to say a word or phrase and mimic it, rhythmically, on your guitar (Steve Vai is the supreme master of this).

## sound advice

### lee's gtCD gear

I used the bridge pick-up (a Van Zandt Vintage Plus) on my Squier Silver Strat (11-58 Picato strings) via a Ripcord into my Mesa/Boogie MKIII Simulclass amp (class A mode – PM EL34s), which was set as follows (p=knob pulled out):

Vol	Bass	Mid	Treb	Pres	Mst
7.5p	3p	5	7p	5	2p

The graphic EQ was set V-shaped but with the top end only just above 'flat'; the amp was DI'd via a Palmer ADIG-LB into the desk. At mix-down, reverb (Big Studio) was added from a Lexicon MPX1 while compression from a Presonus DCP8 smoothed things out a bit.

I touched upon it a moment or so ago I'd just like to remind you that while chicken picking it's good to occasionally introduce dead or heavily muted/damped notes, without which it would all sound rather tame. So, all those percussive clicks shown as Xs on the TAB are not mistakes – they're correct and quite crucial!

The succession of licks seen and heard around bars 10 and 11 are very much in the style of James Burton. Maximum twang while using your bridge pick-up is the order of the day. Avoid ear-splitting treble though – legend has it that in small clubs, Roy Buchannan used to face his fire-spitting amp's speakers towards the wall! Anyway, that percussive element I keep on about is quite prevalent in the form of the guttural, stuttering sounds which abound hereabouts.

Bar 12's G11 chord could be seen as being a slash chord (F/G), but in this case I'd ask you to consider it as sounding rather 'C-ish' so to speak (play G11-C back and forth in order to appreciate what I'm getting at). Once viewed/heard this way, then it seems acceptable to have a C blues lick thereabouts. Also, observe how I instinctively changed string thrice in succession (on beats 2, 3 and 4) in order to reproduce what is essentially the same lick over and over again. If you enjoy creating different timbres on the guitar, choosing particular strings and/or locations on the fretboard is the way to go.

The undoubtedly country lick in bar 16 is presented in a rather sophisticated context (F#m7<sub>b</sub>5), which is a chord synonym of D9/F# – and D9 is not un-country is it? Whatever, the move requires nifty shifting of your fretting hand/fingers; it's a flowing thing, which is exemplified in Albert Lee's playing.

Bar 18 is a real challenge in Jerry Reed style (Jerry was a big influence on Brent Mason, incidentally). Still, here I was actually thinking of the inimitable Danny Gatton as I tried to, er, imitate...

Bar 19's flurry is just the sort of thing Danny used to do when he wanted to imitate a speedy organ style-lick, and you'll need good hybrid picking technique if you want to stand a chance of nailing it! Warning: it's extremely difficult to do this 'cold', as they say, so practise this demanding technique only after warming up! Finally, there's some crazy stuff towards the end, which is yet another example of me just going for it and to hell with the problems of transcribing it! **st**

## jargon buster



### node

A node is a predetermined (forced) point of rest – no string motion – about which both sides of the string may possibly vibrate once plucked; the end result is what is known simply as a harmonic (in all its various forms such as natural, artificial or touched, pinched, tapped and slapped!).



**REMEMBER** terms and signs are fully explained on page 86

## st info

### the sessioneers

Keyboard: Pete Jacobsen  
D-drums: Wol Webster  
Bass: Lee Hodgson



## chicken picking danny gatton style

### chicken picking danny gatton style

♩ = 84

*Biting tone*  
*See text*  
*hint of vib*  
*vib*

GT TAB

0 1 C B $\flat$ 9 C B $\flat$ 9

Let ring  
PB LD CO  
PB LD CO  
PB LD CO

3 C B $\flat$ 9 Gsus4

*gliss*  
*gliss*  
*Nat harm*  
*Loco*  
*vib*  
*gliss*  
*gliss*  
*gliss*  
*gliss*

5 C(7) F9

Let ring  
CO H CO CO  
BU LD CO PB LD H MU H

7 C Am G C7

*gliss*  
*gliss*  
*gliss*  
*gliss*  
*gliss*  
*gliss*  
*gliss*  
*gliss*

9 F(7) D7/F $\sharp$

chicken picking danny gatton style... continued

11 G11 G11

13 C E7#9

15 Am F#m7b5 (D9/F#)

17 C/G G11

19 C/G G11



## chicken picking danny gatton style

tracks 14-16



chicken picking danny gatton style... continued

21

*gliss gliss gliss gliss*  
*vib*  
*3 gliss*  
*3 5*  
*rake*  
*rake*  
*vib*

H POCO S S S S BU CO BU LD S CO PB LD PO CO BSF LD CO

E 8 10 8 5 8 (8) 6 (6) 8 (10) 8 5 (7) (8) 7 5 3 5 3

B 8 10 8 5 (8) 8 (10) 8 (10) 8 5 X X

G 6 8 6

D

A

E

F7 N.C.

23

*6*  
*3*  
*TA vib*  
*gliss gliss*

(Ph) PO PO Let ring S S

E 3 1 3 2 1 0 3 1 2 3 1 3 2 1 0 18

B 3 1 2 3 1 3 2 1 0

G

D

A

E

C(7)