



**Beginning Hawaiian Steel Guitar Workshop**  
**Augusta Heritage Festival**  
**July 15-20, 2007**  
**Gerald Ross – Instructor (gbross@umich.edu)**

This workshop introduces the beginning student to the Hawaiian steel guitar utilizing the C6 tuning (CEGACE low to high strings). The C6 tuning is a versatile tuning that adapts well to Hawaiian, Western Swing, 1930's / 40's popular music, Ukulele music and early Country music. The sound of this tuning is very evident in many of post 1945 Hawaiian recordings. Ukulele players in the workshop are encouraged to join in and accompany on demonstration songs.

This is not a beginning guitar class. It is assumed that the student has some standard guitar experience. Listeners and observers are welcome to attend. Tape recording the workshop is allowed and encouraged.

**Topics covered:**

Tuning the guitar  
Holding the bar  
Sliding the bar. Not sliding the bar.  
Picking single notes/Picking chords  
Chord progressions.  
Finding four chords at one fret location.  
Ukulele accompaniment.

**A Suggested List Of Steel Guitar Gear**

**Strings:**

In order to tune your steel guitar to C6 you must use the following gauge strings (standard gauged acoustic guitar strings will not work!). The strings MUST be metal, nylon strings will not work.

Low to High (.36 .30 .26 .24 .18(p) .15(p)) all the strings are wound except for the .18 and .15, which are plain steel. If you can't find these exact gauges, a couple of degrees off is OK. In other words if you can't find a .36, a .37 or .35 will do fine. This holds true for all the strings. For electric steel the strings must be nickel or steel based (not bronze). For acoustic any metal string will work.

**Nut Extender:**

If you are converting an acoustic steel string guitar to a steel guitar the strings of the guitar must be raised off the fingerboard. This prevents you from hitting the frets or the fingerboard with your steel bar while playing. A nut extender does the job just fine.

[www.elderly.com/accessories/items/EN02.htm](http://www.elderly.com/accessories/items/EN02.htm)

*Note: most people use a "junker" or "garage sale" guitar with these nut extenders when they are starting off because long term use of a nut extender can affect the neck of a good instrument in detrimental ways.*

**Steel Bar:**

A round-nosed bullet bar is the default bar used in Hawaiian Steel. Typically the bar should be no longer than 3" and the diameter should be 3/4". Long bars are very hard for a beginner to manipulate and slant. The Stevens style bar (with the built-in finger grips) is not typically used because the finger grips hinder slanting the bar and the sharp flat nose of the bar can easily get caught up when moving the bar between the strings. Here are two suggested bars:

The default Hawaiian Steel Bar is the **Jerry Byrd Dunlop 919** bar. 2 3/4" in length, 3/4" in diameter.

[www.elderly.com/accessories/items/S919.htm](http://www.elderly.com/accessories/items/S919.htm)

If you must use a Stevens Style (yes they are easier to start with) try the following. It's a **Pete Grant bar by the Shubb company**. Notice the nose of the bar is rounded to not get caught in the strings.

[www.elderly.com/accessories/items/S62.htm](http://www.elderly.com/accessories/items/S62.htm)

### **Fingerpicks.**

A plastic thumbpick and two metal fingerpicks are the default mode. The picks should fit firmly and comfortably. They should be tight enough to stay in place while picking.

I like the Dunlop Zookie thumbpicks (20 degree angle) because they have a slight angle to the blade. The angle helps in striking the string on a more flat even plane.

[www.elderly.com/accessories/items/PKL-30-LG.htm](http://www.elderly.com/accessories/items/PKL-30-LG.htm)

Any metal fingerpick will do. Fingerpicks come in different thicknesses. Do not get too light a gauge. Here's a nice middle ground.  
[www.elderly.com/accessories/items/PK8-18.htm](http://www.elderly.com/accessories/items/PK8-18.htm)

## **Suggested Listening**

### **1920's - 30's**

<b><u>Artist</u></b>	<b><u>CD Title</u></b>	<b><u>Where to buy</u></b>
Sol Hoop`ii	Radio Sol	<a href="http://www.cumquatrecords.com.au/2754.htm">www.cumquatrecords.com.au/2754.htm</a>
Various Artists	A Treasury of Hawaiian Guitar Music	<a href="http://www.cumquatrecords.com.au/2773.htm">www.cumquatrecords.com.au/2773.htm</a>
Andy Iona And His Islanders	South Sea Lullabies	<a href="http://www.cumquatrecords.com.au/2735.htm">www.cumquatrecords.com.au/2735.htm</a>
Dick McIntire	Honey Let's Go For Broke	<a href="http://www.cumquatrecords.com.au/2741.htm">www.cumquatrecords.com.au/2741.htm</a>
Andy Iona	Steelology (All Instrumental)	<a href="http://www.cumquatrecords.com.au/2769.htm">www.cumquatrecords.com.au/2769.htm</a>
King Bennie Nawahi	Hawaiian String Virtuosos	<a href="http://www.elderly.com/search/elderly?terms=nawahi">www.elderly.com/search/elderly?terms=nawahi</a>

### **Contemporary**

Jules Ah See	Hawaii Instrumentally Yours	<a href="http://mele.com/v3/info/1039.htm">mele.com/v3/info/1039.htm</a>
David "Feet" Rogers	Slack Key & Steel Guitar	<a href="http://mele.com/v3/info/1039.htm">mele.com/v3/info/1039.htm</a>
Barney Isaacs, Billy Hew Len	Steel Guitar Magic	<a href="http://mele.com/v3/info/258.htm">mele.com/v3/info/258.htm</a>
Barney Isaacs	Hawaiian Touch	<a href="http://mele.com/v3/info/88.htm">mele.com/v3/info/88.htm</a>
Bob Brozman	Kika Kila Meets Ki Ho`alu	<a href="http://mele.com/v3/info/889.htm">mele.com/v3/info/889.htm</a>
Jerry Byrd	Steel Guitar Hawaiian Style	<a href="http://mele.com/v3/info/28.htm">mele.com/v3/info/28.htm</a>
Various Artists	Hawaiian Steel	<a href="http://mele.com/v3/info/554.htm">mele.com/v3/info/554.htm</a>
Various Artists	Hawaiian Steel Vol 2	<a href="http://mele.com/v3/info/2156.htm">mele.com/v3/info/2156.htm</a>
Various Artists	Hawaiian Steel Vol 3 – Byrd's Nest	<a href="http://mele.com/v3/info/3025.htm">mele.com/v3/info/3025.htm</a>

### **Instructional**

Play Along With The Hawaiian Hotshots	<a href="http://www.cumquatrecords.com.au/2769.htm">www.cumquatrecords.com.au/2769.htm</a>
24 Hawaiian Guitar Backup Tracks	<a href="http://www.umich.edu/~gbross">www.umich.edu/~gbross</a>
Jerry Byrd Instructional Course	<a href="http://www.scottysmusic.com/byrdbook.htm">www.scottysmusic.com/byrdbook.htm</a>

## **Internet Resources**

The Hawaiian Steel Guitar Association (HSGA)	<a href="http://www.hsga.org">www.hsga.org</a>
The Steel Guitar Forum	<a href="http://steelguitarforum.com/cgi-bin/Ultimate.cgi">steelguitarforum.com/cgi-bin/Ultimate.cgi</a>
Brad's Page of Steel	<a href="http://www.well.com/user/wellvis/steel.html">http://www.well.com/user/wellvis/steel.html</a>

## **Backup Tracks For Practicing**

Blue Eyes Crying In the Rain (key of D)	<a href="http://www.umich.edu/~gbross/SteelLessons/BlueEyesCryingInTheRain.mp3">www.umich.edu/~gbross/SteelLessons/BlueEyesCryingInTheRain.mp3</a>
Harbor Lights (key of D)	<a href="http://www.umich.edu/~gbross/SteelLessons/HarborLights.mp3">www.umich.edu/~gbross/SteelLessons/HarborLights.mp3</a>
Steel Guitar Rag Slow (key of E)	<a href="http://www.umich.edu/~gbross/SteelLessons/SteelGuitarRagSlow.mp3">www.umich.edu/~gbross/SteelLessons/SteelGuitarRagSlow.mp3</a>
Steel Guitar Rag Fast (key of E)	<a href="http://www.umich.edu/~gbross/SteelLessons/SteelGuitarRagFast.mp3">www.umich.edu/~gbross/SteelLessons/SteelGuitarRagFast.mp3</a>

