



CHITARRE 313

The Style of Jerry Reed

Howdy everybody and welcome to this third episode dedicated to country music. The first month (Chitarre 312) we talked about Vince Gill and the country approach to bending. Last month we discussed banjo rolls and open strings lines. This month we'll focus on double stops which is the way country guitarist emulate pianists.

Firstly: what are those damn double stops? Double stops are normally two notes played simultaneously, so a double stop can also be called interval or bichord. Double stops are not exclusive to country music, just think Jimi Hendrix or the famous Motown fills. The difference is that in country guitar double stops are played quite differently from any other style and this makes them an important topic to study.

To deal with double stops we'll discuss the style of someone who many consider the King of this technique: Jerry Reed!

Jerry Reed Hubbard was an American guitarist, singer, composer and actor who wrote some of the most amazing pieces in the history of country guitar. His trademark was an unbelievable creativity that often was a side effect of his humor. Jerry loved to think of himself as a guitar 'thinker' instead of as a 'guitar hero' and this shows in any of his pieces. In fact, the majority of things that Jerry did were actual creations, in the sense that nobody before him did anything remotely like them. Often, when listening to a guitarist, we notice their influences, that is, the guitarists they've absorbed ideas from. Well, with Jerry this is very difficult to do because he was, in a way, the origin of a lot of ideas.

Jerry was famous amongst the guitar community for:

- The use of a Spanish guitar (nylon string): this was a very unusual choice considering that everybody else was using a Telecaster! Anyway, he actually did many things on electric guitar as well but maybe he was the only (first) one to introduce the Spanish guitar in country music.
- Double stops: Jerry was the man who brought this way of playing to another level. His approach has been a massive influence on country guitarists, like Brent Mason.
- Funky-country: Jerry was the first one to give a funky flavor to country music. Just listen to the intro of Amos Moses and you'll know what I mean!
- He was one of the first country artists (singers) to incorporate an instrumental piece on an album. Some of those pieces are now part of the country guitar repertoire and are studied everywhere in the world.



To study double stops I composed a short tune in the style of Jerry Reed. I played on an electric guitar to make it a bit more interesting and hip but it can be played perfectly on a spanish guitar (just not with classical technique!). The piece is in D and features a Drop D tuning (the 6th string a whole tone down).

The piece can be played finger style, with a thumb-pick (like Jerry) or with hybrid picking. Each one of these approaches will bring something slightly different to the piece. Anyway, there are a few important things to keep in mind when playing double stops:

- Double stops are never played combining pick and the fingers. Even when using hybrid picking, double stops are played always with the fingers (index and middle or middle and ring - no pick and middle for instance).
- The fingers' movement should be quick but not powerful. The strings should not be pulled away from the guitar (unless that's the effect we're looking for).
- The fingers which play the double stops should move like one, not like separate fingers. This will produce one big sound instead of two separate close sounds.

When using double stops it's important to keep both hands very relaxed and to focus on the rhythm of each phrase. The thing that makes double stops sound good is not the speed of execution or the amount of double stops one can fit in a bar. It's the rhythmic precision. This is what makes a phrase sound funkier.

Enjoy it and I'll see you next time!

TONE

This piece can be played with either a spanish guitar (nylon string) or an electric one. While I was recording I tried different options and ended up using a Strat set on the middle pickup. It's such a great sounding combination but for some reason doesn't get used much. I added a compressor (MXR Dynacomp) and a short digital delay (100ms).

RECOMMENDED LISTENING

Jerry Reed - RCA Country Legends

This is some kind of Best Of with some of Jerry's most well known pieces like the The Claw, Amos Moses, East Bound & Down, etc. If you're not a big fan of anthologies then check out what Jerry did between 1968 and 1978. There's a lot of great stuff on those recordings!

Dario Cortese



♩ = 80 (don't let ring!)



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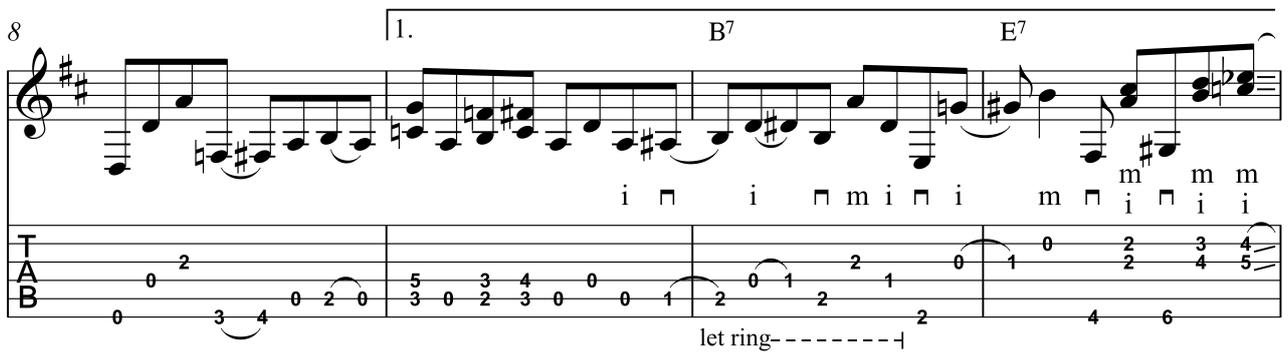
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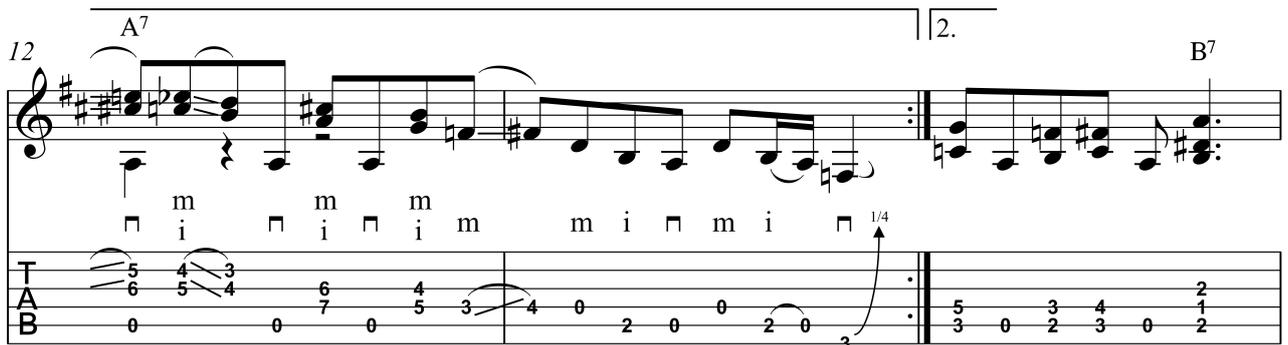


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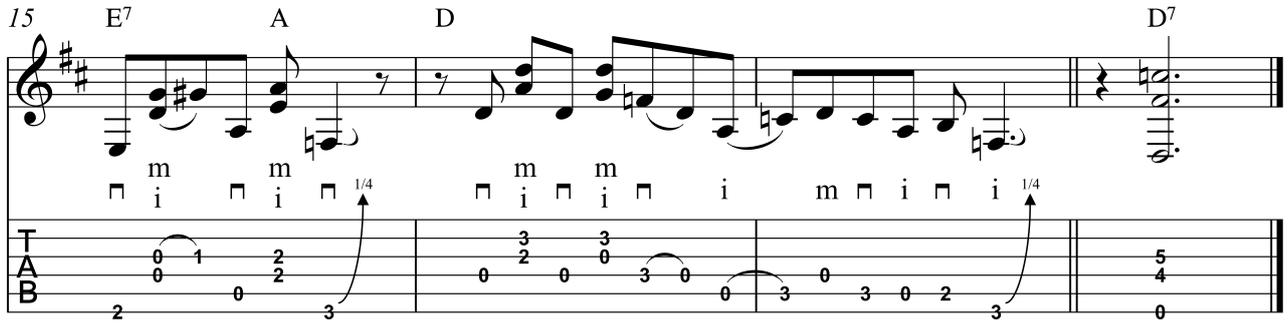
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Dario Cortese

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