



CHITARRE 315

The Style of Brad Paisley

Hi and welcome to this fourth instalment about country guitar. In the past months we've talked about the way country guitarists use the bending technique, and also the way they use open strings, hybrid picking and double stops. This month we'll pretty much review all these different techniques analyzing one of the biggest innovators of country guitar in the past 10 years: Brad Paisley.

Brad Paisley is an American guitarist, singer, and songwriter (another one of those who do everything really well!) who in just a few years, had developed a huge following all over the world. Brad's first appearance was back in 1999 with the album "Who Needs Pictures" and in the following 13 years he, produced 10 successful albums, winning every possible award a country artist can hope to win during a career. But what is it that makes Brad Paisley so special from a guitarist standpoint?

To understand the impact Brad Paisley has had on country guitar we need to understand the music scene of those years. Country music in the 90s was dominated (from a guitarist point of view) by Brent Mason and Dann Huff. Those two guitarists were doing an average of 200 albums a year!! (Yes, more or less one a day and if I hadn't have witnessed it with my eyes I would have never believed it). It was impossible for a guitarist not be influenced by these two guys. Producers were asking for solos or parts in Brent's or Dann's style. The artists wanted on their records 'that' guitar tone on their records. Basically, if you wanted to survive in this style you had to deal with these two superheroes. Just when it seemed like everything had been written in that style Brad Paisley came out with his first record.

Brad came from out of 'nowhere' with a bunch of things that made him absolutely original, unique and inimitable.

- Humor: this is probably Brad's most important trademark. Both in the lyrics and in the playing he doesn't take himself too seriously and this gives him a great musical and artistic freedom.
- Tone: Brad was probably the first one to break the domination of Fender and Peavey in favor of Vox (or Vox copies created by Dr. Z).
- Guitar: Brad has always used a G-Bender instead of the most common B-Bender.
- Notes: the only way I have to describe Brad is "the guy who plays all the wrong notes at the right time".

To demonstrate his style I composed a solo over a typical country shuffle in C. It's a solo which combines every technique we've seen so far and also something new.



- Bendings: from the beginning of the solo the bending technique gets used more or less in the opposite way to what most people expect. Instead of bending the 'thin' strings, Brad bends the 'thick' strings. This is one of Brad's trademarks. Another unusual element related to bending appears in bars 5 and 10 where we are 'forced' to bending the strings with the index finger (one of those techniques that are very common in country music but not so common in other styles).
- Hybrid picking: hybrid picking is one of those techniques that get used everywhere in country music but it's quite a difficult topic to teach. The most common question is this: "Which notes are played with the pick and which one with the fingers?". The truth is that, other than, for few exceptions, there are no strict rules. Hybrid picking gets used as a tone, as a 'color' or 'effect', to pop the string. Other times it gets used to fix a technical problem or to make a phrase more fluid (e.g. banjo rolls). In the transcription I wrote down the notes that should be played in a specific way, whereas everything else is more open to interpretation and there isn't a right or wrong way (assuming it sounds right).
- Double-stops: every double-stops is played with middle and ring fingers.
- Acceleration and crazy phrases: in bars 6 and 7 you'll find quite a crazy lick, which Brad often does. We move from triplets (very appropriate on a shuffle) to 16th notes (very inappropriate on a shuffle!). Everything is done with a very brave note choice. especially if you consider that the country music target audience is American families and not guitarists! I wrote some indications for the picking hand but they are not set in stones.

Enjoy it and I'll see you next month for the last instalment dedicated to country guitar.

TONE

Brad is normally associated with a Vox type of sound but most valve amp would work really well. Set the amp just on the breaking up point (when it starts becoming crunch). Brad always uses a compressor (Keeley) and a slap back echo to thicken the sound. For this solo set up the Delay around 120-160 ms.

RECOMMENDED LISTENING

Brad Paisley - Mud On The Tires

This is my favourite Brad Paisley album. Recorded in 2003, Mud on the Tires includes some of Brad's biggest hits. If this is not enough than let me add that this album was recorded at The Castle - a very famous recording studio south of Nashville (Franklin, TN) - which used to be one of Al Capone's rest stop and hideout places!



Swing ♩ = 114

C F

3

full

full

full

10 10

3 5 3 5 3 3

5 3 5 (5) 3 5 7 6 7

m □ m □ m ∨ r m

4

G C C⁷ F

3

1/2

full

full

1/2

4 5 3 4 3 5 7 5

7 8 X 5 3 (3) X 10 10 10 8 10 8 10 12 10 11

m m □ m r m r m r □ m □ r □

7

G C G

3

10 8 7 0 1 2 0 1 2 0 3 0 1 0 3 0 4 3 5 7 5 7 5

m □ ∨ □ r □ m □ r m □ m

10 C

1/2

4

m = middle finger
 r = ring finger
 □ = downstroke
 ∨ = upstroke