



52

Weeks of Blues

FINGER PICKED ACOUSTIC

BLUES TABS

Week 34:

I'll Fly Away

Pink Anderson

00:00

The Man

00:00

Pink Anderson is a fairly unknown Piedmont guitarist from South Carolina who was the major influence on the Spartanburg blues scene. A veteran of the travelling medicine shows of the 1920's and 30's, Pink was recorded in the 20's and later found a little fame in the blues revival of the 1950's and 60's. His is most famous as the source of the "Pink" in "Pink Floyd" after Syd Barrett, Pink Floyd's original singer and guitarist, found his and Floyd Council's names in an anthology of Piedmont guitarists.

Pinkney Anderson was born on February 12, 1900, in Laurens, South Carolina, the home town of the legendary Rev. Gary Davis, born just 4 years before Pink. His family moved around the area – Greenville and Spartanburg (where Pink made his home) – working as itinerant farm hands. Around age 10 Pink was given a guitar and bashed away at it in open tunings.

At age 14 he joined Dr William Kerr's 'Indian Remedy Company' as a buck dancer – dancing while Kerr tried to sell snake oil to the crowds. Pink loved the travelling entertainer life style, and before long he was performing as a singer and dancer in various travelling medicine shows like Kerr's such as Leo "Chief Thundercloud" Kahdot's medicine show.

In Spartanburg in 1917 he met a blind guitarist named Simeon Dooley but better known as Blind Simmie. Blind Simmie was a very good guitarist and despite being 20 years older than the young Pink, he took him under his wing and taught Pink all he knew. The area had a thriving blues scene with Gary Davis, Willie Walker, Sam Brooks and Josh White all regularly jamming together. Pink and Simmie were frequently seen on Spartanburg's street corners performing as a duet when Pink wasn't travelling with a medicine show. Simmie was a very good guitarist, rated by Gary Davis as up there with Willie Walker as the best pre-war country blues guitarist, and Pink was taught in this tradition.

On April 14, 1928, in Atlanta Georgia, the two were recorded by Columbia. They recorded 4 sides which were quite successful, especially the duet "Every Day in the Week Blues" with both singing and Pink playing rhythm to Simmie's lead guitar. Columbia was encouraged with Pink's singing and playing, and invited him to record further the following year. Loyal to his friend, however, Pink refused to record without Simmie and it was a further two decades before he would be recorded again.

Pink returned to the travelling medicine circuit and met a young harmonica player named Arthur 'Sam' Jackson and taught him the ropes of the medicine shows. A year or so after that met, Sam lost a leg after being hit by a train while hobbing, and adopted the nickname "Peg Leg Sam". Pink and Peg Leg Sam frequently played together in the medicine shows.

Back in the Spartanburg and Greenville area, Pink was at the centre of the next generation of the blues scene. He was mentoring musicians like Peg Leg Sam and Baby Tate. In 1950, the musician and Folklorist Paul Clayton recorded Pink at the Virginia State Fair. These recordings were released as half of an Album also featuring Gary Davis titled "Rev. Gary Davis and Pink Anderson: American Street Songs" in 1961.

The blues revival was in full swing by the time the record was released, and the record produced a lot of interest in Pink's music. Sam Charters, the musical historian and producer whose recordings introduced Lightnin' Hopkins to the world, tracked Pink down to Spartanburg and recorded him on April 12, 1961. The recordings were released as "Pink Anderson: Vol. 1 Carolina Bluesman".

Sam Charters returned in August and recorded another album with Pink accompanied by Baby Tate – “Pink Anderson: Carolina Medicine Show Hokum & Blues with Baby Tate”. The following two years more recordings and albums followed: “Pink Anderson: Vol. 2 Medicine Show Man” and “The Blues Of Pink Anderson: Ballad & Folksinger, Vol. 3”.

The three volumes recorded by Charters show that Pink is probably best remembered as a ‘songster’ rather than a bluesman. The blues were only part of a diverse repertoire, although the blues that Blind Simmie taught him 40 years earlier is evident in every song he played.

Pink played a few gigs and folk festivals in the early sixties, but a stroke in the mid 60’s ended his public performing. Folklorist Peter B. Lowry attempted to record Pink in 1970, but the recordings were never finished. Guitarist Roy Book Binder, who idolised Pink, met him in 1970 and organised a ‘farewell’ tour, playing when Pink was unable. In 1973, Book Binder’s first album was named “Travelling Man” in honour of Pink.

Pink Anderson died of a heart attack on October 12, 1974 and is buried in Lincoln Memorial Gardens in Spartanburg. His son, Little Pink Anderson, continued in his father’s footsteps and is a bluesman based out of South Dakota.

The Song

The Lyrics

The Intro

The Progression

Pink uses similar riffs in the verse and chorus, and improvises around them in each repetition. Keep your bass lines clean to let the bass riffs really have an impact. In the first chorus he goes up to an E shape barre on the 10th fret and plays a quick riff – very nice! – but he plays the chord as a quick arpeggio, which I can’t really tab properly and keep the timing. Just listen to it and you’ll see how to play it. In the repetitions he riffs on the bass line, similar to bar 1 of the chorus below.

Verse

	2			2	2	2	
T		3		3	3	3	3 3 3 1 1
A				2		2	
B	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	0	0	0	0	3	0	0

T	3				3				3	3	2	2
A	0				0				0h2	3	2	3
B	0	0h2	0	3	0	0			0	0	2	0
					2			0	5	0	3	4
								0		0		0

T		2			3		2	1	1	3	2	2
A	0	0			2		2	2	2	3	2	3
B	0	0			0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	0	0			0	0		3		0		0
										0		0

T	3				3		3	2	1		0	3	3
A	0				2	2	2	1	0		0	2	2
B	0	0/2	0		0	0	3	2	1	0			
					3	0				0		0	0
												0	0

Chorus

T					3			1	1			
A	0				2	0h2p	0	3	3	3	3	1
B	0	0	0	0	0	0				2	2	0
	0	3	3	0	0	0		0				0
												0

T	3	3			3	3			3	3	3	2	2
A	0	0	0		0	0			2	0h2	2	2	3
B	0	0h2	0		3	0			0	0	0	0	0
						2		0	5	0	3	4	
								0		0			0

T		2	3	3		3		2	1	1	3	2	2
A	0					2		2	2	2	3	2	3
B	0	0	0			0	0	0	0			0	2
	0	0				0	0	3				0	0
													0

T	10			10	10	10							
A	10			10	10	10	13p	12	10	10/	3	3	3
B		12	11						11/	2	2	2	2
										0	0		
												3	2
												2	1
												3	2
												1	0
												0	0

T	0	0	0	0
A	0	0	0	0
B	/3	3	3	3
		2	2	

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