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► heard separately – an out-take version – and we were all sure that we should do it."

The album also features some superb pedal steel playing from Paul Franklin, a Nashville session player.

"He is just *stunning*" says Brendan. "I've never met anybody like that – from the first note he started playing I just thought 'bloody hell!' Mark found out about him from Chet Atkins. Mark was saying how it'd be good to get a pedal steel player, and Chet just said 'right, Paul Franklin'. So me and Mark went over with the tapes, and the day he turned up both of us were just stunned. I just thought, 'oh well, I might as well go back to basket weaving!'"

Steve: "All of us have dabbled with lap steel. We did quite a lot of Hawaiian playing in the early days, on a National with a jacked up top-nut, and a dobro bar. And I've had a couple of electric lap steels…"

Brendan: "It's all good fun, but this is a different beast altogether, you just have to think so quickly. Paul Franklin usually does three sessions a day in Nashville, and he did our album in a day and a half. And he couldn't get out of this habit of thinking that if he'd just done something which he knew he could do better, someone would use it if he didn't destroy it. So if he played something he didn't like, it took ages to stop him dragging the bar across the strings to ruin it. We just said, 'but you can drop in!' 'Really?' 'Of course!' He never did it though – he could always remember what he'd played so he just did it again. It just seems to be their tradition. He's just astounding – and quite a gentleman too.

"He plays this thing called a Pedabrone on a couple of tracks which his father, who's a steel guitar builder, invented. Nobody had managed to do a Dobro version of one, but he did it, and it sounds fabulous. And he had one of those strange National amplifiers which you can't get in this country. Because if you play pedal steel *too* well, then it comes out as an absolutely dead straight frequency which rips normal amplifiers apart. But these things have got a little circuit which clips in to stop you wrecking the amplifier."

But courtesy of Knopfler's studio, these roots met Guy Fletcher and the state-of-the-art technology of a Synclavier.

Steve: "It's amazing, because the 'mandolin' on the album, and the double bass and the banjo are samples on the Synclavier. And the drums, for example on *Run Me Down* – all those little fills sound so realistic. Guy does take a lot of time tinkering around to make it sound like it has been played. It's all good stuff!"

Brendan: "For me, this is a good way of finding out how other people do things. You can shove bits of your ideas, and steal bits of their ideas back and it's a good thing to do."

I can see lots of people listening to this record and saying, 'yeah, those are really good songs'. What would you suggest they go and search out?

Steve: "Number one, Lonnie Johnson and Eddie Lang – Blue Guitars Volume I and Volume II. Best of the Delmore Brothers. Any late '40s Muddy Waters, Robert Johnson, Blind Boy Fuller – although I'm trying to think of a really outstanding LP. The Sun Years by Elvis…"

Brendan: "…Which Blind Blake ►

L-R: Mark's red Schecter (in open G with capo at second fret). 1966 Telecaster Custom with replacement Schecter bridge.

L-R: 1912 Gibson 'new style' Harp guitar. 1926 Gibson L3

Photography: *Adam Jones*