

Chadwick Rantanen

Melisma

April 8 - May 4, 2025

12 pedals, 2025

steel, aluminum, plastic, rubber
dimensions variable

2 pedals, 2025

steel, aluminum
dimensions variable

There are only anecdotes about the early pedal steel. Prototypes in bricolage. Not for mass consumption nor long for this world. All custom because not enough people care about this sort of thing. Straightened out coat hangers screen door turnbuckles for tuning gas powered washing machine pedals. Vice grips hose clips curtain rods. Not sure what some of it is.

These are splayed against the walls. A vine finding the room. Have to bolt and screw them in and they scuff the walls a bit. Pinned like a butterfly and pulling at the walls. A few small levers and springs and it tightens and relaxes. Up and down become left and right. A push becomes a pull. Not much control the further it goes but at a certain point control isn't worth much.

They're a bit like the action on a church organ. An organ amplifies you but a pedal steel distills. Orchestrating your limbs but erasing the evidence like a cypher. Compressing into a single tone. Washing, sliding, bending, crying. A reduction or compression or whatever you want to call it.

Everyone does it differently so there's lots of room to roam. It's not Catholic. Inscrutable, yeah but if uncharted territory looked enticing it would be charted. Some machines don't accommodate the average user. They don't really have any.