

Last Old Dollar

Based on Benny Williams & Buddy Spicher

Transcribed by Annie Staninec

Lead Fiddle

Twin Fiddle

1

B

Lead

Twin

4

2 2 3 2 3 1 3 1 2 1 3 2 3 2 3 1

F# B

Lead

Twin

7

2 3 1 3 3 2 1-1-1

G#m B F# B

Here is Benny Williams and Buddy Spicher's kick-off break on Last Old Dollar. Lloyd George and Rollin Sullivan wrote the song, and the track can be found on the Bill Monroe Bluegrass 1959-1969 4 album box set. This is an old folksong that predates bluegrass, and Monroe got it from his booking agent Ken Marvin, who polished and recorded the song when he was performing in the Lonzo and Oscar act on the Grand Ole Opry with Rollin Sullivan. The Black Mountain Bluegrass Boys, Mark Schatz, and High Country have also recorded it.

This is in the key of B, and the break is tasteful with beautifully matched phrasing. The lead stays on the melody until the flashier lick starting and the end of bar 7. I love the use of upward and downward slides here, especially the syncopated one that crosses a beat in bar 7. The slides between the sixteenth notes in bar 8 are written as half step intervals to clarify the rhythm, but the actual distance is closer to a quarter step (hence the low point of the lead note is between an F# and F natural). This is true for the corresponding slides in the twin.

The twin is a straight tenor part, one chord tone above the lead, and parallels the melody perfectly. It starts off in 1st position, and shifts into 3rd position on the B note slide at the beginning of bar 4. It returns to 1st position for the sixteenth note run starting at the end of bar 7.

Both parts can be played in closed position without the use of open strings, so this break is easily transposable to Bb if moved a half step down, or C if played in 2nd position. There is even room to move it to the left to E, and F (in 2nd position), all in the same fingering pattern!

Be sure to check out the original recording – the fiddles twin the fills through the majority of the song, and there is some excellent melodic backup on a single fiddle behind the second verse.