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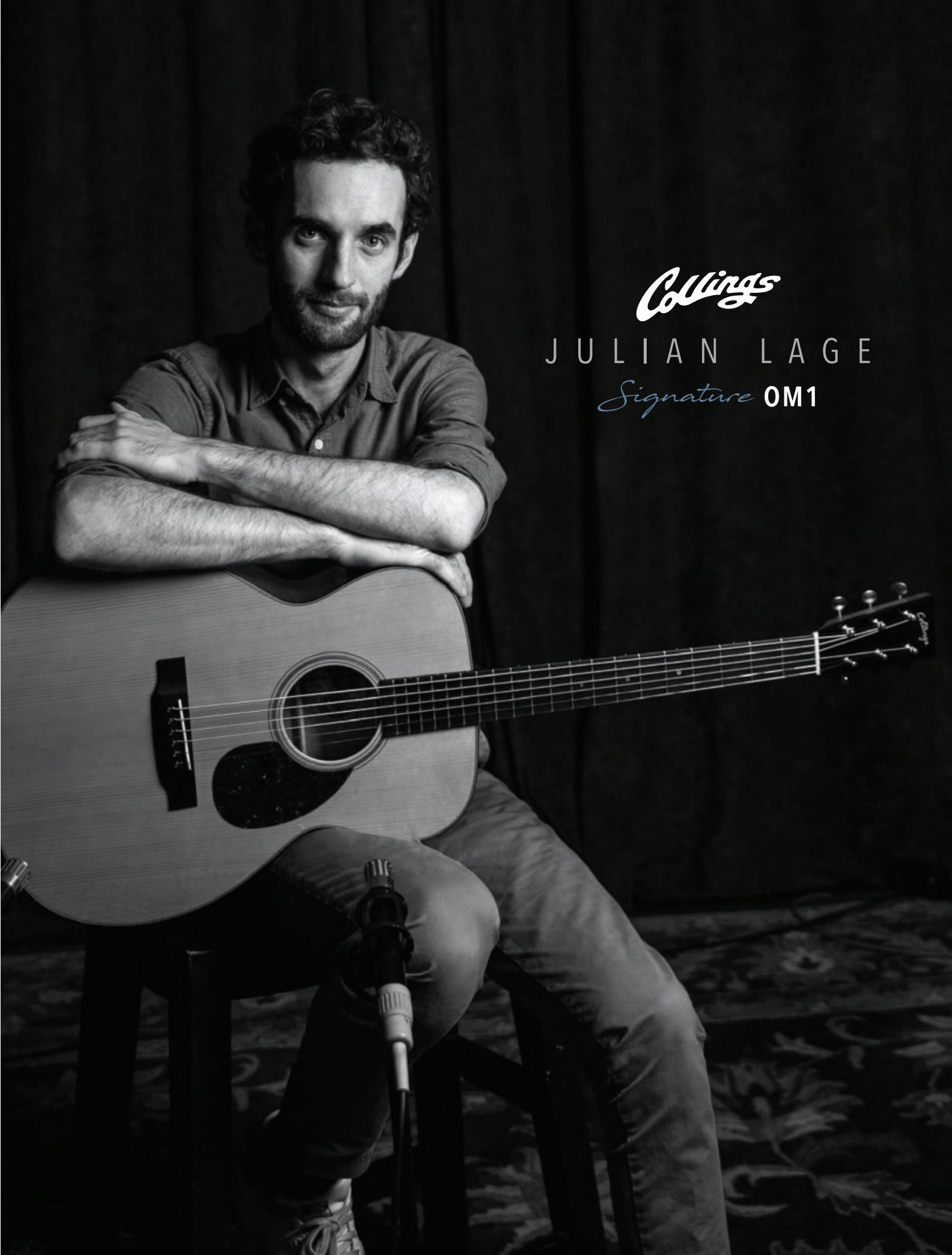
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PEDAL TONES

Nick Millevoi test drives the Acoustic Preverb and Smolder Acoustic OD, two new Fender stompboxes designed especially for acoustic players. (p. 74)



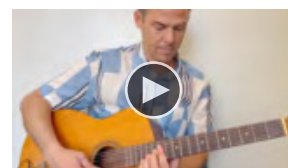
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THE FRONT PORCH

Thelonious Monk



WILLIAM P. GOTTLIEB

Years ago, as a teenager, I remember the thrill of discovery when I would read an interview in a guitar magazine, come across an unfamiliar name like John Coltrane, and feel compelled to seek out a cassette like Coltrane's *A Love Supreme*. (As these were the days before music was instantly available on any internet-equipped device, this was not always an easy task!) In the process I would be exposed to a whole new world of music—and with it, so many ideas to try on the guitar.

I was reminded of this when editing E.E. Bradman's cover story on the fingerstyle legend Leo Kottke. In the feature, Kottke talks about his latest album, *Noon*, part of a series of duets with Phish bassist Mike Gordon, as well as his long and colorful history as a guitarist and touring musician. There are references to jazz pianist-composers Carla Bley, Bill Evans, and Thelonious Monk—names you don't often see in acoustic guitar magazines. I would recommend checking out their music (if you haven't already) and seeing what you can take away for approaching the acoustic guitar.

Speaking of jazz, this issue's special focus is on a group of musicians who in the 1930s and '40s played time-keeping duties in some of the leading swing ensembles: Freddie Green, as well as his undersung contemporaries John Trueheart, Bernard Addison, Morris White, and Al Casey. Jazz guitarist and writer Nick Rossi dives deeply into these players and their contributions to jazz guitar, with transcriptions that show the differences

in their signature approaches, including a rare chordal solo by Green.

There is also a pair of pieces inspired by the Gypsy-jazz great Django Reinhardt. In his Basics lesson, part of an ongoing series on chord-melody fundamentals, Greg Ruby teaches how to harmonize Reinhardt's single-note lines on the standard "I'll See You in My Dreams" using common block chords. And for this issue's World Premiere, French jazz guitarist Stéphane Wrembel presents his transcription and interpretation of Reinhardt's 1937 solo reading of "Tea for Two," part of Wrembel's album and book *Django L'Impressionniste*.

Another motif in this issue is the versatility of DADGAD tuning. Editor at Large Jeffrey Pepper Rodgers breaks down his DADGAD arrangement of Pink Floyd's "Wish You Were Here," with a bonus transcription of David Gilmour's iconic acoustic solo in standard tuning. In a different direction, roots and fingerstyle great Al Petteway offers a Weekly Workout on playing the blues in DADGAD. While blues guitar is most commonly played in standard or in an open tuning like G or D, Petteway demonstrates how DADGAD, in which the open strings have an ambiguous tonality, works just as well for playing shuffle patterns in D.

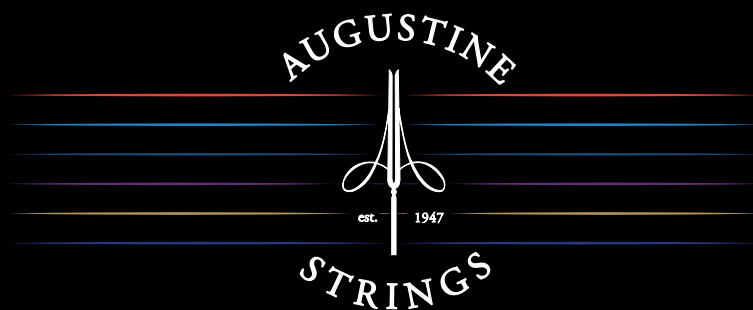
While you're in DADGAD, be sure to explore the tuning on your own outside of these lessons. There's a good chance that will be just the ticket for fresh inspiration.

—Adam Perlmutter

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TONY RICE

The cover photo on the latest issue of AG is beautiful. Like for many people, Tony Rice was one of my favorite guitarists. I last saw Tony and the Unit in 2011 at Jorma Kaukonen's Fur Peace Ranch. It's hard to believe that it will be ten years this September. However, I can't complain because I got to see him around 20 times. But I always hoped for more. The article on Tony is great; hats off to Molly Tuttle and everyone she interviewed. Ever since he died, I've been telling people that Tony is up on a small pedestal of my favorite guitarists, along with Jimi Hendrix, Doc Watson, and Richard Thompson. Now, that list may throw some folks, but here's what they all have in common: Each could play any style that he wanted and play it masterfully. Thanks again for the great cover and article. Molly is carrying on the tradition of these four, I believe, and I hope she has many decades of work ahead to prove me right.

—Paul Graham, Worthington, Ohio

Thank you for featuring Tony Rice in the May/June issue. In the mid-1980s, I played

mandolin and guitar with the Bass Mountain Boys from Graham, North Carolina. Tony was a good friend of Steve Dilling, our banjo player. At a festival where we were sharing the bill with Tony and the Bluegrass Album Band, Steve and I were on our bus when Tony climbed onboard to speak with Steve. I was noodling on my 1963 D-18 and Tony, who I had never met before, asked to play it. In his hands, that guitar took on a new life. His tone, strength, and touch rang true, teaching me the value of his technique and incredible artistry. In other words, it sounded just like Tony Rice! I'll never forget that day or the valuable lesson he taught me.

—Greg Trafidlo, Salem, Virginia

A CAUTIONARY TALE

One of my teachers had amassed a nice collection of vintage guitars over the years; some electric, a few acoustic, but together they were every player's dream. Being the trusting guy he was, he let a friend who was down on his luck stay at his place for a few days, only to return home one day to no guitars and no

friend. He called the police, who did what they could, but when they asked him if he had photos or serial numbers for the guitars, he said no, and they left. To this day, he does not know what happened to his guitars, or his "friend." Moral of the story: Take photos of all of your guitars and record the serial numbers. Then, keep the documentation in a safe place. You may not get your instruments back, but it does increase your chances.

—Jerry Brittain, Statesville, North Carolina

BLUES WOMEN

The article "Women of the Blues" in the March/April issue reminded me of seeing Etta Baker on the program *Folkways* from UNC-TV back in 1998. The episode, which is still online at pbsnc.org, shows Baker playing using only her thumb and index finger and features a great interview by David Holt, a person who would fit in this magazine nicely.

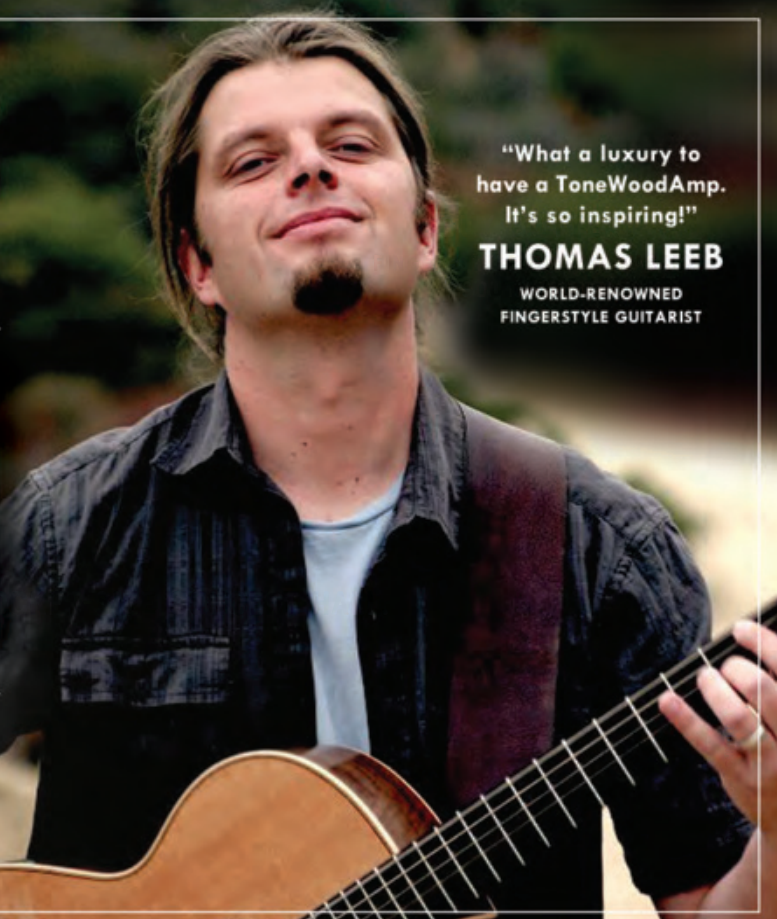
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Innovation and Exploration

Kaki King is still pushing boundaries on her latest album

BY KATE KOENIG

After you've spent your whole career pushing the guitar to its limits, where do you go next? Kaki King has been working on answering that question since her 2014 show *The Neck Is a Bridge to the Body*, a multimedia production hatched at Brooklyn's BRIC in which visuals were displayed on her signature Ovation guitar using projection mapping. She had big plans for 2021 with a new multimedia show entitled *Data Not Found*—with themes around modern technology and its effects on our world. Unfortunately, the show's production came to a halt in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 lockdown.

But out of something lost rose something new—the soundtrack to the unborn show, released as an album, *Modern Yesterdays*. As King says, the recording “would have been this companion soundtrack that was a snapshot in

time.” Collaborating with sound designer Chloe Alexandra Thompson, King returns with her trademark exploratory, percussive textures and seas of slowly unraveling moods, this time couched in Thompson's undulating sonic scenes. Compositions like “Rhythmic Tiny Sand Ball Patterns,” “Lorli,” and “Default Shell,” in particular, illustrate their inventive collaboration.

Speaking of inventiveness, *Modern Yesterdays* happens to incorporate a new invention, designed by King in collaboration with Providence-based luthier Rachel Rosenkrantz (profiled in the March/April 2020 issue), called the passerelle bridge. The passerelle is a metal object that acts as a second bridge, fitting under the guitar's strings and dividing them into two playable sections in a setup that resembles that of the Japanese koto or

Chinese guzheng. You can hear King using the bridge on the meditative “Teek.”

King's personalized guitar is another example of her connection with the mechanics of her music. Her Ovation 2078KK-5S Kaki King Signature has an AA solid Sitka spruce soundboard, Lyrachord rounded back, five-piece mahogany/maple neck, ebony fretboard, and is equipped with an OCP-1K undersaddle piezo pickup and Ovation OP Pro Studio preamp. On the electronics, King comments that they make the guitar sound “fabulous. Plugging into an acoustic and playing it live is usually like the grossest sound in history, but usually what I get back from sound engineers is, ‘Wow, that guitar sounded really good.’”

In our conversation below, King elaborates more on what she loves about her guitar, the

making of *Modern Yesterdays*, and why she prefers affordable models to expensive ones.

What was your creative process for the new album? How did these songs develop?

It's interesting: A lot of pieces were in place as placeholders. So, for instance, I had old songs—songs from my first album—that were in the show *Data Not Found*. I was looking forward to going on the road and really figuring out what else would fit inside of this show. But in the meantime, it felt like things were going to start happening and touring was going to get really busy, so I thought I might as well record what I had at the time. It's almost like I just needed to use that empty space that I thought I had in my schedule. And also, the producer I was working with, Chloe Thompson—we were like, "Let's just record everything and work from there." So I don't know that *Modern Yesterdays* ever had a really big release behind it. I don't know that that would have been the case had we just gone about our business and done *Data Not Found*. It may have just existed as a collection of recordings; I don't even know. But it did eventually have to stand on its own and become its own album [laughs].

'If I can whisper at a string and it gives me something back, then I'm very happy!'

—KAKI KING

I've seen in interviews that you describe your writing style as revisionist.

Yeah, definitely, that's exactly what I'm talking about. The luxury of being a person that mainly is known for live music. It just gives me the ability to try and change and try and change. And eventually things settle. They settle into a place that the songs are pretty happy—but I never really worry about going into the studio and having things be final. That's something I've learned over time to just not worry about. Because it's all going to change. So you might as well record what you have and let that be its own thing and see where it goes.

How would you describe the sound that you created on this album?

The guitar is so well explored by so many brilliant people—so many talented, talented people for hundreds of years now. I think that I'm always trying to see what else can be done. So this is still very much a solo guitar record.

But it wasn't like I was using the acoustic guitar with pedals. [Chloe and I] were transforming it in very different ways using a much more sophisticated process. So I think that that while it's very far from any kind of *electronic* album, I think that those are the tones that are implied by what we're doing.

Regarding the passerelle bridge, I thought it was interesting that you'd prefer to convert a guitar into a koto-like instrument rather than just play the koto.

Well, the guitar is something that I know and

I'm familiar with and makes sense to me and that I have several of. It would feel really strange to go out and purchase an instrument that I have no skillset with, no cultural history on. But fundamentally [the passerelle bridge] is a noisemaker. It's a way to take your guitar and create something that's in the realm of a six-string guitar, except you're now playing a 12-note instrument. I have not defined the bridge or how it is to be played or what can be done with it. I think that obviously there are tones of guzheng and the koto, but it's for other people to determine what can be done with it.

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The passerelle bridge is capable of creating tones similar to the guzheng and koto.

What made you fall in love with the guitar?

I've been playing since I was very young, so in so many ways I grew up with it; it's always been familiar. The guitar is so intimate and interesting, but very limited in its scope. Yet what people have done with it, from a musical place and a cultural place—the amount that the guitar has spread across the globe in the last century—it's alluring and fascinating. And there's a lot of mystery around it, clearly. Without that there wouldn't have been all these people that have gotten so deeply attached to it, built careers around it, pushed it to its limits, pushed themselves; it has a magic quality. So I'm just caught up in that like everyone else.

You have your own signature Ovation guitar.

What is it that distinguishes that guitar from other guitars for you?

Two main things: One is that I like to tune really low and that guitar can always handle really low tunings without becoming muddy. There's still a lot of clarity. I think that is really, really important. The other thing is that it's well-balanced, so, to me, every note is the same volume. Maybe that's a trick of the mind, because I've just gotten so used to playing it. But it feels like it almost has a natural compression because I feel like whatever I'm doing, whatever I'm playing, everything is mixed very well. And I mean *everything*: The note I'm playing, the overtone that's happening, the decay from the string that I just played the chord before; it all is very evenly balanced, which I think I don't find often. I found it more often in nylon-string guitars but not nearly as often in steel-string acoustic flat-tops that are wood. But I think that the [Ovation's] carbon-fiber top has something to do with that. And obviously the rounded back.

Are there any particular specs you look for in a guitar?

What I *don't* like in a guitar is any kind of struggle at all. These days, the affordable entry-level guitar is so much better than it ever has been. It used to be that you were spending \$400 on what amounted to a piece of furniture. And now you can get a guitar that's responsive and plays well for a pretty cheap price. A lot of people say, "What kind of guitar should I get?" I used to be really specific, but now I say just go and see what speaks to you. I think it's responsiveness. Some people get a lot of mileage out of guitars that you need to really dig into, but for me, the lighter touch the better. If I can whisper at a string and it gives me something back, then I'm very happy. I'm not really a sucker for anything old and vintage and all of that because I find a lot of those instruments are more sort of art pieces than anything. I like



COURTESY OF RACHEL ROSENKRANTZ

new things, new luthiers, new technology, and I like really responsive, playable instruments.

Are there any luthiers whose guitars you really like?

My friend Julian Gaffney—I've put down a deposit for one of his guitars. I work with Joe Veillette, and he's done the Gryphon, which is a high-strung 12-string guitar. He also has several versions of high-strung tiny guitars that are really magical.

It's really easy to spend \$10,000 on an incredibly well-crafted, beautiful instrument. It is totally something that I would want to do if I wasn't a professional musician, because my gear cannot cost that much money. I am not going to take a one-of-a-kind precious thing that I waited for three years to have made and put it on a plane and fly to California and play. I need instruments that are workhorses that last, so my focus is on having guitars that do just that. I wish I was more of a refined collector, but it does not make any practical sense for me.

You seem to have a conceptual approach to writing. Has that shifted over the years?

It's funny, because people say that but I don't

ever see that. I feel like I write tunes that sound good. I'm not really into any kind of concept. I prefer to feel things and have them come out. All I know at this point is that if I play guitar, if I try to play every day, eventually something will happen and a song will get written or an idea will be had. And sometimes I play guitar to just work out other things in my life. I think I always have. So my approach hasn't really changed. I think definitely when I was younger, there was this feeling of "I need to prove something," especially live. I needed to get up there and rip and show off. I've certainly let go of a lot of that. Now, I really just need to write songs that move me and move other people, and however I get there is not important.

If you listen to my albums and songs that really got popular, they were never songs that I played on television. They were songs that were slow and pretty and people loved. Some people know me like, "Kaki King, she uses crazy technique," and that's kind of the end of the story. But the people who stuck around for a long time are like, "Wow, she's a really good writer on the guitar," and that's all I've ever aspired to be.

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**Leo Kottke and
his long and
uncategorizable
musical journey**

BY E.E. BRADMAN



“In the last 50 years, I haven’t been off the road for more than two months,” says Leo Kottke. “Sometimes I think I’d love to never see another airport. But you know what? It never stops being a surprise that somebody wants to pay me to play.”

Surprising words, indeed, from a man whose adventures on acoustic guitar have inspired at least three generations of musicians. A road trip through the places Kottke has visited since *6- and 12-String Guitar* put him on the map in 1969 is dizzying: There are solo gems (1973’s *My Feet Are Smiling*, 1981’s *Guitar Music*, 1999’s *One Guitar, No Vocals*, 2004’s *Try and Stop Me*); full-band jams (including 1974’s *Ice Water and Dreams and All That Stuff*, as well as 1975’s *Chewing Pine*); effulgent ’80s grooves (*Time Step*, *My Father’s Face*), and big ’90s pop (*That’s What*, *Great Big Boy*, *Peculiaroso*). There’s also a handful of live discs from the ’60s through the ’90s, a couple of orchestral moments (on 1976’s *Leo Kottke* and with composer Stephen Paulus on 1990’s *Ice Fields*), and thanks to YouTube, evidence of onstage magic with luminaries like Chet Atkins, Michael Johnson, Jerry Douglas, and Michael Hedges. Kottke’s most recent release, *Noon*, is the third in a series of meditative, energetic, and sometimes humorous duets with Phish bassist Mike Gordon.

Throughout Kottke’s journey, the one constant has been his love for acoustic guitar. The 75-year-old’s discography is an inspiring showcase of dazzling technique in the service of multilayered compositions that are frequently syncopated and harmonically compact, and always self-sufficient. His ability to conjure so many flavors and attract so many labels—country, blues, new age, folk, jazz, pop, Americana—yet not be confined by any of them, speaks to his knowledge of (and ceaseless curiosity about) music beyond genre. Onstage, his gravelly voice and deadpan delivery are such a part of the Leo Kottke live experience that it’s hard to believe critics once struggled to accept that this clearly gifted virtuoso wanted to open his mouth, too.

In conversation, Kottke comes across as a combination of self-effacing guitar hero, hilarious OG with Minnesota-tinged Zen wisdom, and eternal road dog with an endless supply of you’re-kidding-me stories about some of the greatest musicians of the 20th century. Hearing him reminisce about opening for Mahavishnu Orchestra, being an audience of one for Mississippi Fred McDowell, watching Joe Pass meet Pepe Romero for the first time, his deep love for the music of Carla Bley and Bill Evans, and experiencing Buell Neidlinger play Henry Eccles’ *Sonata in G Minor*, makes one wish



JARED SLOWOFF

Kottke would finally finish the memoir he's been working on forever.

Five decades after he first gained attention for reimagining his instrument's possibilities, Kottke can look back with humor at the 22-year-old who sent *6- and 12-String Guitars* to John Fahey's Takoma label in early 1968. "I see really good luck and privilege, but I hear a different guy in that stuff," Kottke says. "The music isn't different, but the guy is, and that kind of enthusiasm has been replaced by the current enthusiasm. In that sense, nothing has changed, but everything's changed; the imagination is very plastic. It has all the room in the world to go anywhere, and it gave me a life. It still does."

How did you first begin gigging on guitar?

My first job, I think, was at Bassin's Top O' the Walk, in 1961 or '62. At Bassin's, you played for free beer, and the first time I played there, they charged me for my beer. So I got a good lesson right away.

How long had you been playing by then?

I've been playing since I was about 11. I'd been sick, I couldn't get out of bed, and my mother brought me a guitar. I made up an E chord, and that E chord got me out of bed. I couldn't get enough of it, and I still can't. Curiosity—the desire to play around and see something happen—is all you need.

Your curiosity is very focused on acoustic guitar: It seems like you've never been excited about playing electric, for example, or with effects or large ensembles.

I did try playing in a band. I played with the Blackwells at the Domino Bar in a little town in Minnesota, but they fired me the next day.

When was this?

In 1964, probably. I asked them why they were firing me, and they said I didn't dress right. Musicians can be very kind [laughs]. I was playing a Rickenbacker 12, and I was completely flummoxed by its narrow neck, but also, I was already used to playing by myself, so I was stepping all over everyone and getting in the way. I still don't know how to do it right, but I'm starting to learn, and fortunately, it's a challenge that Mike [Gordon] is willing to take on.

Over the years, you've played with some killer bass players—including Mike Leech, John Leftwich, Roy Estrada, Billy Peterson, and David Miner—who've done a great job of supporting you while staying out of your way. Way back when I first got to L.A., I was working with my manager/producer Denny Bruce, and

he said, "You know, you're not going to be able to work with these 'ringers.'" I didn't understand at the time, but if someone plays the 2 and the 4 on the roots, it subdivides me and I start sounding kind of dumb. So, he put me with two guys who play jazz: [bassist] Putter Smith, who I saw playing with Thelonious Monk at Shelly's Manne-Hole, and a drummer named Paul Lagos. They were willing to accept that I'm kind of baroque instead of a horn, and because they're jazz guys, they could just float around. Billy [Peterson] would sometimes leave long stretches alone and then play exactly the right note. He never played with the guitar; he played to the piece.

Did you enjoy working with studio bassists like Leech?

Yeah! They'll do their job, and then maybe twice in any given tune they'll throw in a little figure somewhere. You only need one of those figures,

'Larry Coryell once told me, "Man, you'd really be something if you learned a little music!"'

—LEO KOTKE

and the whole track lifts, and everything you've heard before that little figure is lifted. They're playing with time and space. Leech and Leftwich are geniuses at that.

Is it fair to say that Mike Gordon's approach is very different than any of the bass players who preceded him?

Mike is playing where other bass players don't. Early on, I told him that I've always liked Bill Evans' idea of having three front guys going at the same time. Mike liked that idea, and we went from there. That's why we both can get busy.

You encouraged him to be less supportive and more interactive and upfront.

Yeah. When we sit face to face in a room and play, I can't get enough of it. He's such a quick reader, and he just knows where everything is. We have some ideas about what we want to do in the future, and I've been jamming in the studio with [Bad Plus drummer] Dave King, primarily to loosen that up and do a lot more improvisation.

Watching you onstage and hearing you segue easily between eras, songs, tunings, and instruments, I think of you as quite an adept improviser.

Not all the time, but more often than I used to be. Sometimes I take off and I crash, and I don't mind that anymore. I'm willing to crash, and the crowd will go with you if you don't complain. And it's worth it. You never play off the stage like you do onstage!

Did you try other instruments before settling on guitar?

I spent two years as a very young kid with the violin. I tried the flute, but my mouth was too big, so I played trombone. I did that for a long time; I took lessons with three different teachers, and I played in marching band, which was a great thing to do, especially in junior high. But I was only able to play one note at a time, and what I heard in that E chord was a lot of notes. I tried to play piano, but it didn't have that thing, you know, that guitar does.

What was it about the guitar that satisfied you?

I heard parts and layers coming in and out, and the guitar could do all that.

Which albums inspired you early on?

You know, it was hard to find records. I found a Heitor Villa-Lobos recording by Laurindo Almeida and I liked it, but it wasn't what I wanted. I heard Sabicas, which was just incomprehensibly great, but that wasn't what I thought I might be able to do, so I just kept fussing with stuff. I learned early on that that was the really critical thing.

Was there a turning point, a light-bulb moment?

One day when I was in seventh or eighth grade, my mom dropped me off at a house and told me to go in. I had no idea why she brought me there, but I walked in and heard someone playing a different kind of fingerstyle, different than classical and flamenco, something I hadn't heard with Sabicas or Almeida. When I finally saw the guitarist—a young guy, probably in college, with a small Martin—I asked what he was playing, and he showed me a pattern.

Now, patterns are the death of a lot of people playing with their fingers; you betray yourself. But this pattern was long and open-ended. It didn't finish, and that's what that guy gave me. When you find a pattern developing, make sure it doesn't end, so you have room for some music. I never did find out who that guy was, but that was a big help.

What a moment! What other players planted seeds?

I had some ideas about rhythm, but the punch and rhythm on John Hammond's first record was a revelation. It really kicked in when I saw Mississippi Fred McDowell. He made you sit down in yourself, rooted in the pocket, and it was profoundly cool.

How can a guitarist work on developing rhythm?

Lean in! Your body will find the groove, and your hand will follow. If it doesn't, well, you're screwed! *[laughs]*

I've seen you mention a Stan Getz quote about playing everything with irreverence. What does that mean to you?

It's the opposite of taking it too seriously. It's not that you lose any of your reverence for music; it's that your performance is going to do a lot better if you don't impose anything on it. I remember one particular night in 1970 when I was playing at the Kennedy Center. Things weren't going the way I wanted them to. Nobody was unhappy; it was OK, but I wasn't feeling that great. I had taped myself that night—which I rarely do—and when I listened back to it, I realized that I was trying too hard. I had to sit back and just play.

What would you say to a guitarist worried about making mistakes onstage?

Relax. You're going to mess up. You're not going to be happy or get it right every time. Just bring what you have, let go of all that, and don't treat it like it's a big deal. You wouldn't be devoting your life to music if it wasn't a big deal to you, but don't treat it that way. Give it a little dignity.

That's a great realization to have so early in your career.

It really helped me a lot. Everything got better after that.

How has your relationship to technique changed over the years? Do you spend time working on exercises before going on the road?

No, I don't. I have learned that I ought to play for a while before I go out because it's better for you *[laughs]*, but no, I never thought of technique except to get it wrong. I saw a picture of Lester Flatt and he had a thumbpick on, so I put a thumbpick on. Somewhere along the line, I started using fingerpicks, and that gave me tendonitis, which turned my hand into a claw that wouldn't move. It took three years to get rid of that, and it was the most awkward,



humiliating, terrible three years I'll ever have. It was worse than being a beginner, because I lost everything I thought I could do.

How did you recover from tendonitis?

I stopped using picks, and I told my hand it had to do something else or I couldn't use it anymore. I knew not to rest my hand, my pinky, or heel; that just made sense to me. I remembered again that the guys who really knew how to do it, like Fred [McDowell] and Son House and John Jackson, most of them just had their fingers and they didn't pay any attention to them. They just did it. So, I loosened up, and that's how I have developed what I have now.

But you were playing during your recovery, right?

The only way I could do it was onstage. I remember the first night without thumbpicks or picks was in Melbourne. It was one of these big, beautiful halls they have in Australia, and the place was sold out. I walked on and started playing, and it was like a mouse in the sink: "Tinky tink tink"—there was just nothing. Oh, god! It was rough.

How do you feel about open tunings these days?

I've kind of abandoned them. I still use them to play some of the hits, but I'm more inclined to use concert tuning and tune one or two strings differently. There's a quality to playing in an open tuning that shows itself, and you don't hear that in concert tuning; you hear the player show himself or herself. I like that better. I get a little tired of open tunings, but sometimes, somebody will come along and do something that makes me wonder why I ever dropped them. I like Andy McKee, who plays in concert tuning and in open tunings. He breaks it up.

Do you listen to current players?

I am terribly behind. Somebody else has to force me [to check out other players] because I usually have my head in the guitar. What I find out tends to be from other players that I know or bump into. I used to be a record freak who'd just grab all kinds of stuff. Not so much anymore. But I really like Julian Lage.

Do you hear your influence in other players?

I have, and it's really nice to hear. I don't care

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if they do it right, and I don't care what level they are or anything. I like that the tune appeals to somebody.

Did you ever have formal training in harmony or theory?

People I greatly admire and often envy have taken the time to study harmony and theory, which has always seemed like the wrong word to me. Larry Coryell once told me, "Man, you'd really be something if you learned a little music." I didn't think of that as an insult; I thought it was great. And I do know a little more music than I used to.

You seem to have a good relationship with Kevin Muiderman and his guitars.

I met Kevin 14 years ago. If I want to try something, Kevin will build a guitar along those lines; he allows me to make suggestions. I love a zero fret because it just seems to make sense, and not many people are willing to try it, but Muiderman's happy to punch one up. I've always wanted to try using an ebony saddle to tame the jangle on a 12-string, and now I've got a Muiderman 12-string with an ebony saddle. It worked great. He's building regular spruce tops with composite bracing, and I'm thinking about maybe thickening the tops a little bit more.

Are you still playing your signature Taylors?

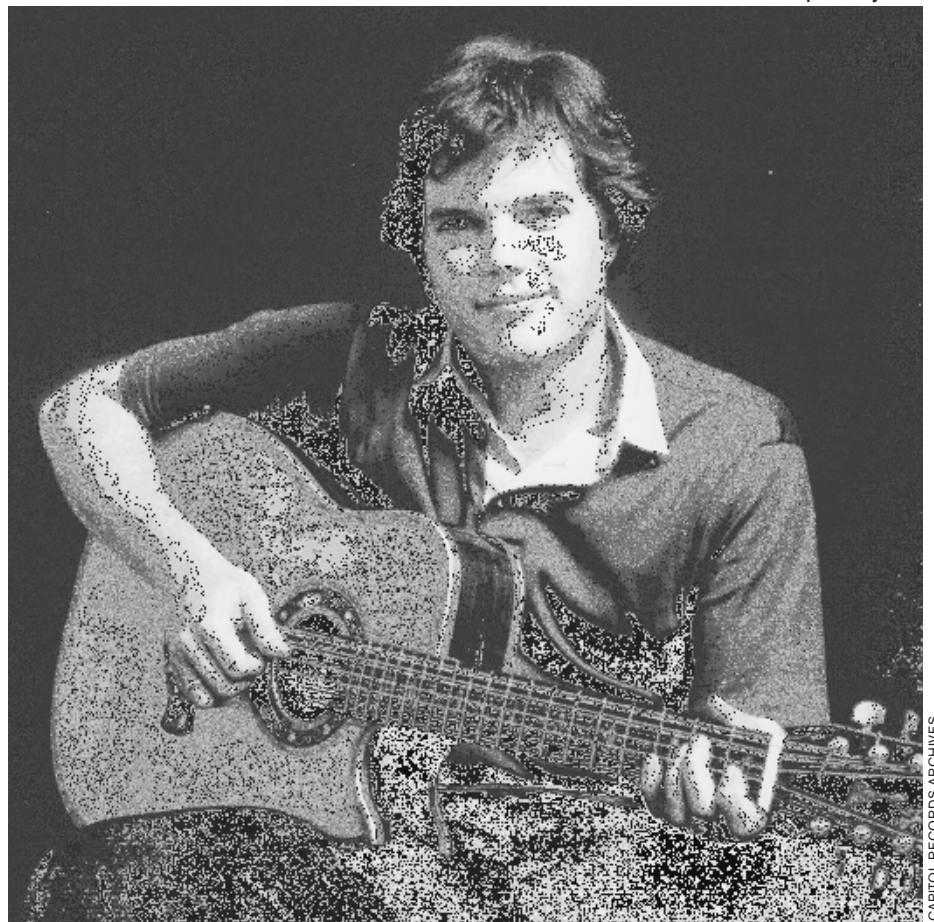
Yeah, I still have the six and the 12.

How would you say your ears have changed over the years?

What I want to hear in a guitar is different than it was way back then. Now I want clarity most of all, and next to that, I need texture. Texture is like personality—it varies a lot, even within a brand, from guitar to guitar. For me, the texture I want is something like what rosin does for a bow. I don't mean the tap tone, exactly, but if you can hear your finger pads kind of crisp on the top, that's the texture that I really love. That's something I was unaware of in the beginning.

When I think of your signature texture, I think of the 12-string. How often do you play 12s these days?

Not as much, because of that clarity thing, but I still need it. I was nothing but a 12-string guy for a long time, so it's very odd to find myself playing more six-string. There's something about tuning a 12-string, and there's also something about how much I can ask my hands to do. One of the reasons I'm trying out the Muiderman 12 is the lower bout. I'm thinking maybe I ought to lower my shoulder. I don't have any problems with it yet, but it's a weird



'I feel more at home sitting in a hall and playing than practically anywhere!'

—LEO KOTTKE

way to sit for an hour and a half while you're really getting into it. So that's one reason I'm backing off on the 12 at the moment.

How has your approach been influenced by playing with your fingers and duetting with Mike?

I want to hear the note and I want to hear some bottom, but it has to be clear so I don't screw up Mike or another bass player by being in their range; you've got to watch it if you're playing with all your fingers. If I play like I'm playing a horn, I can respect the bass player.

How do your strings help you get the sound you want?

My John Pearse strings really shine; they have a little more of that rosin-y thing. I'm using Pearse

lights on the six, and on the 12 I use the same six-string set and then build my own octaves depending on time, place, what I'm hearing, or what I'm having trouble with.

And you've used a Sunrise pickup forever.

I have, but in the last couple years, K&Ks are sounding good to me. They give me a chance to clear up the low mids, giving me a more vivid bass note, which is exactly what I didn't think they could do.

As we gradually recover from the pandemic shutdown, what projects are you most looking forward to?

Getting onstage and playing. With Dave King, I'm exploring rhythm and improvisation. I'm used to playing tunes, so jamming is a brand-new thing for me. There might be an album one day, but we have no idea.

How do you feel about leaving home and getting back on the road?

I feel more at home sitting in a hall and playing than practically anywhere. It's really an ancient thing: Somebody walks on stage, and people listen. It still gives me chills.

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COMPOSERS TRANSFORM

(Left to right) William Kanengiser (LAGQ), Pat Metheny, Matthew Greif (LAGQ), John Dearman (LAGQ), Jason Vieaux, Scott Tennant (LAGQ)



SPECIAL INFORMATION

Jazz guitarist Pat Metheny enlists classical masters Jason Vieaux and the Los Angeles Guitar Quartet to play bold new works

BY MARK SMALL

The album *Road to the Sun* from Pat Metheny is notable on many counts. It's striking that of its 57 minutes of music, Metheny is featured on only one eight-minute track. For the rest, he relinquishes the spotlight to classical guitarists Jason Vieaux and the Los Angeles Guitar Quartet (LAGQ), who perform epic solo and quartet compositions he wrote for them. The work dedicated to LAGQ shares the album's title, and the opus for Vieaux is called "Four Paths of Light." Completing the program is Metheny's 42-string guitar rendition of "Für Alina," a piano composition by Estonian composer Arvo Pärt.

Jazz guitar virtuoso, bandleader, and composer Metheny probably needs little introduction. In a prolific 47-year career, he has earned three gold records and 20 Grammy Awards in 12 different categories. With *Road to the Sun*, Metheny ventures into new territory as a classical composer.

WINDING ROAD

The genesis of the project traces back to about 2005, when Vieaux and Metheny met after Metheny's trio played a concert in Richmond, Virginia. "I gave him my Naxos album [*Guitar Recital: Jason Vieaux*], and my Albéniz album [*Sevilla*]," Vieaux says. "I didn't think he'd listen to them. Then two weeks later he sent me an email saying that he really enjoyed them." That same year, Vieaux put out an exquisite album called *Images of Metheny*, which included solo guitar versions of such well-known Metheny compositions as "Letter from Home," "The Road to You," "Always and Forever," and "Every Day (I Thank You)"; it had been completed but not released at the time of their meeting.

The two became friends and began attending each other's concerts. "The first Jason Vieaux concert I went to was around the time he was coming on the scene," Metheny recalls. "His Bach playing is absolutely spectacular, and I think at that moment the seed was planted that I wanted to write something for him someday."

Fast forward to 2013, when Metheny met the members of LAGQ at the Crown of the Continent summer guitar camp in Big Fork, Montana, where all were resident artists. Impressed by LAGQ's concert, Metheny told them he wanted to write a piece for them. LAGQ formally commissioned a piece from Metheny, but two years would pass before it began to take shape. "Pat emailed us and said he had the whole map and harmonic foundation of the piece completed," says LAGQ leader William Kanengiser, "but assigning the parts was going to take him some time."

Back to Vieaux. "Pat told me about ten years ago that he wanted to write a piece for me,"



Vieaux recalls. "Then LAGQ commissioned him to write something and Pat asked me to give him input during the process. So I was on the edge of those conversations." Knowing that Metheny had to carve out time in his busy schedule for the LAGQ composition, Vieaux figured his own piece went to the back burner.

Metheny initially planned to compose a short piece for LAGQ, but as he wrote, it kept growing until it was a half-hour long with six movements (titled "Part 1," "Part 2," etc.). After sending LAGQ the music, Metheny flew to Los Angeles following a concert somewhere in the Northwest to coach the quartet for a full day. "It was humbling to see him come on a day off, probably with little sleep," says LAGQ's Scott Tennant. "It showed his level of commitment to the piece." LAGQ premiered "Road to the Sun" in Denver in 2016 and began playing it on tour. In January of 2017, with Metheny producing, they recorded the work in L.A.

BREAKING IT DOWN

Kanengiser characterizes the writing as "very democratic," giving quartet members moments to shine together, in subgroupings, and individually. "He studied a lot of our pieces and

arrangements and noted how we pass things around the quartet," Kanengiser says. "We really use the antiphonal and spatial possibilities of the group. In this piece, we ended up with our typically assigned roles. I got some juicy melodies, Scott [Tennant] had the pyrotechnical things, John [Dearman] was the bass player [wielding a seven-string guitar], and Matt [Greif] laid down the grooves."

"In a way, these guys were the 'Pat Metheny Group' for this project," Metheny says. "The goal was to take advantage of what they all do best and try to reconcile those potentials with my own sensibility of music and what I hope to express with it. These guys are all such astonishing players. There really was no limit on what kinds of things might be possible."

Part 1 opens with soft, murmuring arpeggios and string brushing before Kanengiser enters with a solo exposition of the contemplative theme and then the others join him. It is quintessential Metheny, with evolving melodies and harmonies and dramatic sweep. Without pause, Part 2 begins with alternating sections of restraint and unbridled energy. Like Pat Metheny Group pieces, there are buoyant tunes, with dashes of chordal harmonics, dynamic

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contrasts, plus a button ending. In the build to the climax, Metheny added a track of what the liner notes term “guest strumming.”

Part 3 opens with a falling melodic gesture and brooding harmonies that give way to a slow-paced lyrical melody and concise ensemble interactions. The mood shifts for Part 4, where Greif grooves a medium-tempo ostinato in 5/4 over which melodies rise and fall and the players dialog in chordal passages before it all disintegrates into noise and percussive effects. “The most striking part of the whole piece is this transition from Part 4 into Part 5,” Kanengiser observes. “Pat dispenses with notes and has us scrape down the strings with a pick and produce high pitches by plucking behind the nut or behind a bar. It’s an otherworldly sound. When we’ve done it live, people don’t know where the sound is coming from. It sounds a little like a plane taking off.”

The episode flows into Part 5 as a rhythmic bass pedal tone in octaves emerges, leading to a rollicking melody played antiphonally across the ensemble. Halfway through, Kanengiser, Tennant, Dearman, and Greif play jazzy solos Metheny wrote for them over a samba groove. Vigorous strumming (augmented again by Metheny) begins a steady ascent through dynamic peaks and valleys in the buildup to a rhythmic finish. If the work had concluded there, audiences would leap to their feet applauding, but Metheny opts for a reflective epilogue in the final movement.

After a short intro to Part 6, the theme from Part 1 is recapped, this time accompanied by dolorous and dense harmonies. “The textures are really great,” says Kanengiser. “All four of us play the theme from Part 1; it’s almost like a string quartet version. Later, I get to play it by myself once more as in the beginning of the piece.” The work comes to rest on an E♭ triad with an added twist: A three-note motif incorporating two non-chord tones sounds three times, seemingly posing a question before peacefully ending on the E♭ triad.

This music took LAGQ to new places. “The way he voiced the harmonies on the four guitars is so rich,” says Tennant, “and is something we haven’t experienced before. We’ve played Beethoven and Debussy with amazing harmony, but this is something above that.”

Kanengiser noted the arch form of the piece. “It’s like a musical palindrome that begins and ends with the same material, tying things together really well,” he says. “It’s as if you’ve gone on a long journey and then look back with new eyes and new memories. You hear the opening melody again, but it means so much more than the first time you heard it.”

TO THE WORLD

How should Metheny get this music out to his large fanbase? According to Vieaux, after some pondering, Metheny had an idea. “Pat called to say, ‘I’ve got it—this is going to be a record. I’m going to write you a piece and then I’ll figure out something that I will play.’”

The resultant four-part work for Vieaux, “Four Paths of Light,” is the album’s opener. Vieaux had heard the LAGQ piece and wanted something contrasting. “I was keen to give Pat advice on the solo piece,” he says. “My knowledge of his music is very extensive. I didn’t tell him what to write, but I referred him to my favorite things from his previous albums.” Vieaux also pointed him toward classical guitar works by Leo Brouwer, Sérgio Assad, Benjamin Britten, and Alberto Ginastera.

“I wanted something edgy,” Vieaux says, “and Part 1 is really aggressive, exactly what I was hoping for.” He compares Part 2 to the type of tune Metheny would write for his group or combo projects. The abstract nature of Part 1

‘These guys are all such astonishing players. There really was no limit on what kinds of things might be possible!’

—PAT METHENY

gives way to a pleasing tonality in this segment. “You get glimpses in reverse of some of the melodic content and chordal stuff from Part 1,” Vieaux shares. “This movement is the heart of the piece and ends with material derived directly from measure five of Part 1.”

For Vieaux, Part 3 is the apex of the entire work. “It accomplishes the climactic moment with a triumphant feeling of release,” he says. “The climb in the latter half of the piece is seemingly endless and is the hardest thing I’ve ever played on guitar. Really difficult!”

Part 4 features a slow tremolo in continuous 16th notes. “I told Pat what a huge fan I am of his album *The Way Up*—a 65-minute, one-movement piece with a great epilogue,” Vieaux says. “Part 4 is built around the melody from the second movement, but it’s a little more desolate.”

The studio sessions with Metheny producing were unusual and a challenge for both LAGQ and Vieaux. “Pat and his engineer David Oaks use the studio as a composition tool,” Vieaux says. “Pat was still figuring out how he wanted the piece to sound. He had me play two- or four-measure

phrases, and then would ask me to shape them dynamically three different ways, and we’d get two or three different takes of each. I’ve never worked like that on my records.” Upon hearing the final recording, Vieaux noticed where Metheny and Oaks took notes from various bars, edited them into different places, and extended passages.

Ultimately, the 19-minute work took 28 hours of studio time to record over three days. “My hands were completely gassed by the end of the three-day session; it was a lot of playing,” Vieaux says. “I had to take two or three days off before my next gig.”

Similarly, during the LAGQ studio sessions, Metheny wanted many takes, experimented, and even conducted the group through a rubato section. “The recording was fun, intense, and unusual in some ways,” says Greif. “We did lots of complete takes. This is more common in jazz recording than in classical, partly because parts generated on the fly wouldn’t match take to take. But recording that way you get a unique, committed energy between the players. Overall, I think the recording has that spontaneous, natural vibe similar to a jazz approach.”

LACHRYMOSE CLOSER

Metheny closes the album with Arvo Pärt’s meditative “Für Alina” played on his Linda Manzer Pikasso Guitar. “It’s a well-known piano piece,” he says. “When I first heard it some years back, I imagined it on the 42-string guitar. I found the sheet music and figured out a way to use that strange guitar to address [Pärt’s] score.”

A somewhat ominous, low B bass note opens the work. The original 15-bar score consists of a plaintive melody in B minor over a recurring B pedal tone. It’s a perfect vehicle for Metheny’s improvisational explorations of his instrument’s colorful sets of jangling strings. It’s haunting and modal, a vivid contrast to the complex harmonies of the album’s other works.

LAGQ and Vieaux view Metheny’s maiden voyage into classical guitar as hugely successful. Vieaux says, “Pat knocked it out of the park; I think he wrote a killer piece for solo guitar.” “Pat sees ‘Road to the Sun’ as a legacy piece, something that will be around for the future,” says Tennant. Both works, meticulously engraved, will be published in December.

“In the end, maybe what’s most exciting to me about these pieces,” says Metheny, “is that folks 100 years from now will find the same notes on the page that will indicate with full detail how to get to their own version of what is at the heart of this music.”

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Freddie Green and his Stromberg Master 300 with Helen Humes, circa 1940

STRING KINGS OF HARLEM SWING

The captivating rhythms of Freddie Green, John Trueheart, Bernard Addison, Morris White, and Al Casey

BY NICK ROSSI

Freddie Green is synonymous with swing guitar. Born in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1911, Green enjoyed a 50-year career holding down the rhythm chair of Count Basie's famed big band. Through that association—and due largely to his dedication to using an acoustic archtop as the primary timekeeper in a large jazz ensemble—his name not only is forever tied to an essential element of jazz, but has also become a shorthand term many guitarists know well. It has long been common for a player to be asked to “do a Freddie Green” and be expected to know what that implies: strictly rhythm, all chords, and nothing but steady, swinging quarter notes. But when one surveys the scene in early 1937, when in New York City, Green joined Basie's orchestra of musicians from Kansas City and the Southwest, it quickly becomes apparent that Green was part of a larger tradition near its peak of practice.

Although Green had lived in New York for several years in the 1920s before returning to Charleston, it was in 1930 that he made a more permanent move to the jazz center of the world. By that time, he had progressed from the ukulele to tenor banjo and found work in Harlem cafes and at house parties accompanying stride piano players. The beat of the music had already started moving towards the 4/4 pulse that

came to define the era. In 1933, Green swapped his banjo for a guitar, partly as a result of seeing firsthand what Lonnie Johnson could do with the instrument. But, like Duke Ellington's rhythm man Fred Guy, whom Green admired and eventually befriended, he was a relative latecomer to the change. Many of the dance and jazz band rhythm sections, both Black and white, featured guitar by the early 1930s due in no small part to the widespread influence and popularity of Eddie Lang. But the period through the first half of the decade was a diverse one, rife with subtly different parallel paths to the same destination: swing.

A RHYTHM INNOVATOR

The first major influence on Green's guitar playing and someone he would point to throughout his life was John Trueheart (1903–1943). Trueheart was born in Virginia and raised in Baltimore, Maryland, where he met a teenage drummer named Chick Webb. Around 1924, after paying dues working excursion boats on Chesapeake Bay with the Jazzeola Orchestra, Trueheart, with Webb in tow, left for Harlem, where they scraped by for years. They fell under the wing of Ellington, himself still on his way up, eventually appearing at the legendary Savoy Ballroom for the first time in February 1927. In the spring of that year, Trueheart, who was jobbing around town as a tenor banjo

player, appeared on a recording session with the clarinetist Wilton Crawley that also featured Lang on guitar.

Webb, at Ellington's urging, had become a bandleader by this time, and Trueheart finally had an opportunity to record with the diminutive drum powerhouse in June 1929. By the date of his second session with Webb that same month—"Jungle Mama," released as the Jungle Band on Brunswick—Trueheart had begun playing guitar. Although it was his debut recording on the instrument, the sound and feel that captivated Green years later is already present. The quarter-note pulse is steady but persistent, keeping the band moving forward in a light but propulsive manner. As with many early Black swing guitar players, one can hear how important banjo technique was to the approach: the wrist is loose and there is a snap in the strum.

Trueheart had already jettisoned much of the extraneous syncopations that often characterized Jazz Age banjo playing, focusing mostly on even downstrokes and chords voiced to cut through a moderately sized ensemble. With Webb, but playing a banjo, Trueheart can be seen in the 1929 short film *After Seben*, which, in spite of the overt racism of the time, features a live band performance accompanying the first Lindy Hop dancing captured on celluloid.

Chick Webb entered into a management agreement with Savoy co-owner Moe Gale in

John Trueheart (on banjo) with Chick Webb's band



1931, and in between stints backing Louis Armstrong and Ethel Waters rose to prominence leading the dance band of choice at New York's first truly integrated ballroom. While Webb influenced nearly every drummer who followed in his wake, Trueheart was right by his side, tucked in between the trap kit and piano on the bandstand, laying down the rhythm framework for the sound of swing bands yet to come. Occasionally, the arrangement would call for a rhythmic

flourish such as the two-bar break in "It's Over Because We're Through" (Decca, 1934) or at the start of "Lonesome Moments" (Okeh, 1934).

On the latter, Trueheart demonstrates a 1930s swing guitar device: the four-bar intro, as shown in **Example 1**. Working primarily with tonic and dominant fifth chord forms, the guitar has the ability to both set the tempo and establish the harmonic framework of the song. As was commonplace early on, Trueheart

Example 1 (à la John Trueheart)

Example 1 is a musical score for guitar in 4/4 time, featuring a four-bar intro. The key signature is one flat (B-flat). The chords are Gm7, C6, C7 D♭7, C7 D♭7, C7, F, and F6. The notation includes a treble clef staff with a key signature of one flat, and a bass clef staff with a key signature of one flat. The bass staff includes fingerings for the left hand (10, 11, 12) and the right hand (1, 2, 3, 4, 5). The score is marked with 'V' for the first four bars.

Example 2 (à la Bernard Addison)

Example 2 is a musical score for guitar in 4/4 time, featuring a four-bar intro. The key signature is one flat (B-flat). The chords are Cm, Bm, Cm, A♭7, A♭9, A♭6, A♭, C13, C9, and C7. The notation includes a treble clef staff with a key signature of one flat, and a bass clef staff with a key signature of one flat. The bass staff includes fingerings for the left hand (3, 4, 5) and the right hand (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10). The score is marked with 'V' for the first four bars.



(Left to right) Bernard Addison, Zutty Singleton, Sidney De Paris, and Gene Sedric, 1937

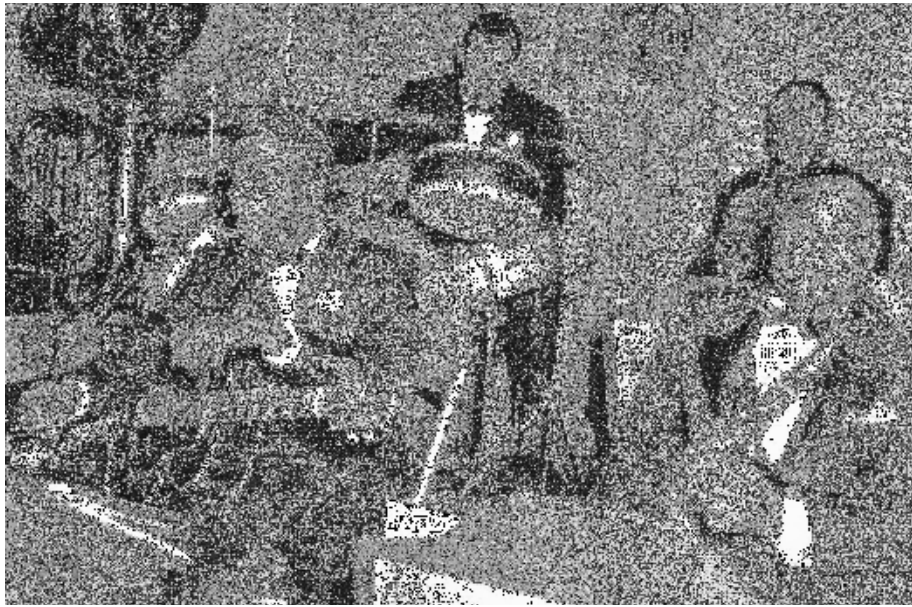


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embellishes these relatively simple chord forms with some slides and chromatics for effect. Of equal importance on a recording such as this is Trueheart's strong sense of the rhythm pulse of his beat: a steady 4/4 but with some slight syncopated emphasis on offbeats here and there.

The earliest photo of Trueheart holding a guitar shows him with a 16-inch Gibson L-5, as popularized by Lang. But it's quite likely that by the time he appeared on recordings with

such jazz legends as Billie Holiday, Teddy Wilson, and Ella Fitzgerald circa 1935–1936, the guitarist had switched to a similarly sized Epiphone, then New York-based and the main competitor of Gibson.

Unfortunately, Trueheart was sidelined for two years due to tuberculosis starting in early 1937. Reflecting their deep friendship, Webb kept the guitarist on the band's payroll and funded his convalescence near Saranac Lake in

the Adirondacks. Tragically, within months of Trueheart's return to the band, Webb himself died from the very same disease after having silently suffered through much of his brief life. The guitarist continued with the orchestra under vocalist Fitzgerald's leadership, but left in the middle of 1940. The rhythm innovator continued to be plagued by his condition and he died in Seaview Hospital, on Staten Island, a year after the same ailment claimed the life of electric jazz pioneer Charlie Christian in the same sanatorium.

AN IN-DEMAND PLECTRIST

Trueheart's contemporary Bernard "Bunky" Addison (1903–1990) was born and raised in Annapolis, Maryland, but came up playing in and around the Washington, D.C., area with future Ellington cornet star Rex Stewart, as well as Ellington's early rival Claude Hopkins. Addison was initially a mandolin player like his father, but as a teenager he took up the then-popular tenor banjo as his work with dance bands increased. Like Trueheart and Webb, he eventually made his way to Harlem and found work at such night spots as Smalls Paradise. By 1924, he was also appearing on record dates.

Addison shifted his focus to guitar in the late 1920s, inspired in part by the commercial success of Nick Lucas and spurred on by informal lessons given to him by his friend Eddie Lang. In March 1929, as a member of the

Examples 3a–b (à la Morris White)

G6

G6

Wabash Trio, he made his recording debut for Grey Gull Records on the instrument, sounding not unlike Lang but already with traces of the loose but driving approach he would take with the guitar throughout the 1930s. Addison's characteristic mix of single-string runs and chord accents are also present. Additionally, Addison holds the distinction of being one of the first Black Swing-Era guitarists captured on film: He was seen briefly playing a Master Model L-5 in Dudley Murphy's *St. Louis Blues* (1929), starring Bessie Smith.

Through his early associations with innovators and legends such as James P. Johnson, Jelly Roll Morton, Bubber Miley, and Louis Armstrong, Addison was very much in demand during the dawn of the era. In 1933, he joined one of the most important big bands of the period: Fletcher Henderson's orchestra. For 18 months, he was part of a groundbreaking swing rhythm section that included pianist Henderson, bassist John Kirby, and drummer Walter Johnson. Recordings such as "Happy Feet" (English Parlophone, 1933) reveal Addison's very personal and slightly idiosyncratic rhythm feel. Using a mix of both down- and upstrokes, at times rife with banjo-like syncopation, Addison pushed the beat with a subtle emphasis on the offbeats. Does it still swing? Of course it does! But, as depicted in **Example 2**, the effect is perhaps closer to what contemporary guitarists associate with *la pompe*.

Cab Calloway and His Orchestra featuring guitarist Morris "Fruit" White (at right) in 1932



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manouche of Gypsy jazz (see a lesson on this style in the June 2017 issue).

Throughout the remainder of the era, Addison hopped from job to job, working with more of the biggest names in the history of jazz, including Benny Carter, Billie Holiday, Stuff Smith, and Sidney Bechet. An extended engagement backing the Mills Brothers sent him across the Atlantic in mid-1936 and also resulted in a film performance with the vocal group in the

English production *Sing as You Swing* (1937). Work for Addison continued until the start of World War II; he enlisted in September 1942, and although on occasion he returned to performing and recording after the war, he effectively left the business.

SWINGING ON A STRING

Cab Calloway led one of the most popular Black orchestras of the 1930s, second to only

Example 4 (à la Al Casey)

The image displays two systems of guitar fretboard diagrams for the song "The Sound of Silence" by Simon and Garfunkel. Each system consists of a musical staff with chords and a corresponding fretboard diagram with fingerings.

System 1 (Measures 1-4):

- Measures 1-2:** Chords B and C. Fretboard diagram shows fingerings for the first four frets.
- Measure 3:** Chords B C B C. Fretboard diagram shows fingerings for the first four frets.
- Measure 4:** Chords C₆ B₇ B₆ C₆ B₆ C₉. Fretboard diagram shows fingerings for the first four frets.

System 2 (Measures 5-8):

- Measure 5:** Chords D₆ D_{b6} D₉. Fretboard diagram shows fingerings for the first four frets.
- Measure 6:** Chords G_{7b9} C₆. Fretboard diagram shows fingerings for the first four frets.
- Measure 7:** Chords C₆. Fretboard diagram shows fingerings for the first four frets.
- Measure 8:** Chords C₆. Fretboard diagram shows fingerings for the first four frets.



OFFICIAL FILMS



White (nicknamed for his eating habits) set out on the road as a tenor banjoist with traveling revues, first landing in Chicago and eventually working his way east to Harlem. As a member of a band called the Missourians, White first played the Savoy Ballroom in 1929, around the time the group made its recording debut. But it was a year later that Charlie Buchanan who, with Moe Gale, ran the dance emporium, pivotally paired the

For White, the transition from banjo to guitar was less abrupt than the band's rapid rise. He played both instruments on Calloway records well into 1931. Early photographs even show him playing a flattop before acquiring an L-5 around 1932. Much like Bernard Addison, White's rhythm style also retained stronger banjo elements than many of his contemporaries, notably added syncopation and less of a reliance on pure downstrokes. Similar also to Addison was his mix of both chordal figures and single-string lines during his solo breaks. Breaking with contemporary trends, White was also not afraid to depart from the 4/4 pulse and throw in an accent chord for effect.

All of these characteristic elements, along with a great sense of where White felt the beat of the music, can be heard on Calloway's 1934 Brunswick recording of the early jazz workhorse "Avalon." In general, his quarter-note pulse is not very different from Addison's—perhaps a bit more relaxed with a gentle drive more akin to John Trueheart's approach. But his loose-wristed banjo-derived approach really reveals its merits in his alternating stroke responses to Walter "Foots" Thomas' flute. Even his single-string

[illegible]

runs, all played on the high E string, are played in a rhythmic manner, like in **Example 3a**.

Of course, heavy strings and higher action both go a long ways towards swinging on one string, but in White's case, it's extremely effective. The banjo experience comes to the fore with the second break (**Example 3b**), in which White deploys the type of tremolo often associated with the brash metal-bodied instrument. It's a technique that is best practiced slowly with a lighter-gauge pick at first, switching to a heavier plectrum once speed and even strokes have been developed.

In a number of film appearances with Calloway made during this period, White can be seen exhibiting how similar his right-hand technique is to classic jazz banjo playing of the 1920s. From 1936 onwards, the guitarist was photographed with Gibson's flagship 18-inch Super 400 guitar, perhaps speaking to the degree of visibility Calloway's band enjoyed over the course of the decade. His tenure with the group lasted through the era's high-water-mark years of 1935 to 1937, before he was replaced by another serious rhythm purveyor: New Orleans' own Danny Barker. White discovered work after Calloway to be surprisingly scarce, and after serving during the Second World War he moved to St. Louis, where he briefly ran a nightclub and eventually started a successful novelty entertainment business.

FLEET-FINGERED CHORD WORK

Although several years younger than Freddie Green, Al Casey (1915–2005) managed to make his recording debut almost three full years before him. Originally from Louisville, Kentucky, Casey took violin lessons at an early age but never quite took to the instrument. By 1930, his family had moved to New York, where he began exploring the guitar with a like-minded cousin. He showed enough promise and enthusiasm that he was sent to the Martin-Smith Music School in Harlem. Through a family friend, he caught the ear of piano legend Fats Waller, with whom Casey would go on to record and perform upon his graduation from high school. This long association, with one notable break, would last nearly until Waller's death in 1943.

Over the course of dozens of Victor 78s credited to Fats Waller and his Rhythm, Casey largely defined the role of the guitar in a small group swing band for half a decade. Waller's tremendous popularity and widespread influence (he was an early mentor of Count Basie among others) ensured that Casey's buoyant pulse and fleet-fingered chord work was heard by many during the era. His relaxed but steady beat edged closer to where John Trueheart laid

(Left to right) Lonnie Simmons, Fat Atkins, Freddie Green, unknown bass player, Bobby Moore, circa 1936



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE FREDDIE GREEN COLLECTION

down his quarter notes, but he was not shy about using offbeat accents or single-string runs to tie together his ideas either as an accompanist or as a soloist.

Casey's early 16-inch D'Angelico underpins some of Waller's best-known and most-loved recordings: "Honeysuckle Rose," "Rosetta," "Lulu's Back in Town," and many more. With D'Angelico in hand, Casey is shown backing Waller in a widely circulated 1941 "soundie" (an early film performance that was played back on coin-operated jukebox-like machines) of "Honeysuckle Rose."

In June of 1937, Waller featured Casey for a full chorus, virtually unheard of at the time, on his Victor recording of "Blue, Turning Grey Over You." Casey's final eight bars in particular, similar to **Example 4**, show some of his favorite harmonic and rhythmic devices. The sixth and ninth chords that he often employed are present, as are his synopated offbeat accents. Also of note is Casey's heavier reliance on downstrokes, perhaps due to his focus on the guitar at an early age rather than tenor banjo. Casey also exhibits more internal harmonic movement than many of his Harlem-based contemporaries, something more prevalent in the playing of leading white jazz and dance band players from the same time such as George Van Eps, Carl Kress, or Dick McDonough.

By his own later admission, the earth-shattering arrival of electric guitarist Charlie Christian on the scene in 1939 had a massive impact on Casey's approach to the instrument. While he waited until after Waller's death to plug in and go electric, when he finally did, he abandoned his early approach and broke with the Harlem rhythm guitar tradition. He managed to begin a second act as a mainstay

on 52nd Street through the mid-1940s as modern jazz began to come to the fore.

INSTANTLY CAPTIVATING RHYTHMS

Freddie Green emerged during the second half of the 1930s, in a competitive field filled with players such as Al Norris, Lawrence Lucie, Arnold Adams, and many others. But similar to Al Casey, Green spent time paying his rhythm dues accompanying a master of Harlem stride piano. In Freddie's case, this was Willie Gant. By 1936 Green was working in a small combo at a Greenwich Village nightclub called the Black Cat and it was here that legendary producer and impresario John Hammond first encountered him, instantly captivated by his rhythm feel.

Hammond later said Green was closer to Eddie Lang than any other guitar player he had heard—very high praise indeed—and began machinations to work Green into the Basie rhythm section, first by singing the guitarist's praises, and eventually by helping stage a jam session. With pianist Teddy Wilson and a band consisting largely of Basie-ites (including Lester Young), Green made his recording debut for Brunswick in January 1937 backing Billie Holiday. The first song recorded was "He Ain't Got Rhythm"—although clearly this was something Green had plenty of!

Listening closely to the recording session, you can hear elements of many of the early masters of the style: Trueheart's relaxed drive, as well as some of the additional syncopations favored by players such as Addison. *Not* heard, however, are the one- and two-note chords that would later be so closely associated with Green; that would come later in his development. The session also brought him in contact

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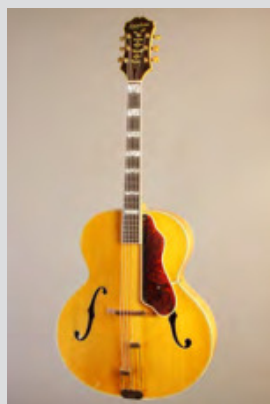
1924 Gibson L-5



1946 Epiphone De Luxe



1936 Gibson Super 400



1943 Epiphone Emperor



1941 D'Angelico New Yorker



1947 Stromberg Master 400

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NOTHIN' BUT RHYTHM: TOOLS OF THE TRADE

As swing emerged from the Jazz Age, the acoustic archtop supplanted the tenor banjo as the instrument of choice for rhythm players. That choice for many was the 16-inch Gibson L-5, which had been introduced in 1924 and soon after became the benchmark. Gibson's 1920s Master Model line, which also included mandolin-family offerings, was one of the most important series in American instrument manufacturing and helped establish the Kalamazoo, Michigan-based maker as a key player.

While New York's Epiphone Banjo Corporation introduced a line of roundhole archtops in the late 1920s, Gibson didn't have much competition until Epiphone unveiled its f-hole models in 1931. Epiphone's premiere model, the De Luxe, was a 16-inch instrument featuring attractive appointments and excellent projection, thanks to its build and longer 25.5-inch scale. Epiphone gained notoriety for its consistent quality across the entire line and found particular favor among guitarists in New York.

In 1935, the competition between these two makers, as well as the volume demands of growing dance and jazz orchestras, kicked off a war of width. Gibson struck first with the introduction of the Super 400, which boasted an 18-inch lower bout. By August of that year, the L-5 was enlarged to a 17-inch instrument. Epiphone answered the challenge by increasing the lower bouts of its professional-level instruments to 17-3/8 inches, eventually introducing the premiere 18-1/2-inch Emperor in late 1935.

Into this fray came independent luthiers such as Charles Stromberg and Son out of Boston and John D'Angelico, based in New York's Little Italy neighborhood. Both initially offered popular 16.5-inch models inspired by the Gibsons of the time, and these small shops mirrored the majors by further increasing their widths. While D'Angelico's New Yorker topped off at 18 inches at the peak of the era, Stromberg's Master 300 and 400 took top honors with 19-inch lower bouts. —NR

with half of what would later be called the All American Rhythm Section: drummer Jo Jones and bassist Walter Page.

Walter Page is largely credited as the driving force of the early Basie rhythm sound, both in terms of concept and execution. After Green joined the band, rhythm section rehearsals (often minus bandleader Basie) became commonplace. Compounded with a relentless schedule of dance dates over the subsequent 18 months, the result was a beat that rivaled the best in the band business, and the musicians quickly rose to the top of the polls. Even by the summer of 1937, the Basie rhythm sound was coming into focus, with "John's Idea" (recorded for Decca) being one example. During most of this time, Green was a committed Epiphone player, starting with a 16-inch Triumph before moving on to a massive 18-inch Emperor, which he briefly endorsed.

One of Green's early activities away from the Basie fold was a summer 1938 recording session for the Hot Record Society with clarinetist Pee Wee Russell alongside stride master James P. Johnson, Ellington's early bass bedrock Wellman Braud, and drum innovator Zutty Singleton. While a slight aberration from the standard swing band of the day, the integrated group's performance of "Dinah" not only offers insight into how Green felt the beat, but includes a rare 16-bar chord-based solo. Using chromatics in a manner similar to Al Casey, Green plays relatively simple chord forms utilizing basic harmonic ideas, as shown in **Example 5**. But his mastery of time is already apparent, as he mixes in subtle syncopations and emphasizing offbeats, most effectively in his second eight bars. Similar rhythmic ideas appear in early Basie broadcast recordings as well. Additionally, his accompaniment during Johnson's solo offers some early insight to his voice-leading ideas.

Of course, this was all just the beginning. By the early 1940s, Count Basie and His Orchestra was one of the most popular bands in the country, with a remarkably diverse fan base and admirers throughout the music industry. Except for a brief hiatus at the end of the decade, Basie's big band continued long after the Swing Era concluded. For his part, Green continued to refine his approach to rhythm guitar throughout his career, which later included elements learned from Benny Goodman's guitarist Allan Reuss, but most importantly was based on years of dedication to his craft as well as devotion to the tradition of swing rhythm guitar.

Special thanks to Mark Cantor, Stephanie Crease, Al Green, George Gruhn, Jean Labaye, Jean-François Pitet, Loren Schoenberg, and Dave Stuckey.

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THE BASICS

Adapting to Changes

How to transform a melody or single-note solo into a chord-melody arrangement

BY GREG RUBY

THE PROBLEM:

You want to create a chord-melody arrangement based on your favorite rendition of a song but don't know where to begin.

THE SOLUTION:

Adapt a transcription by using chord-melody voicings for the longer melody notes and thirds or single notes on the quicker passages. Try this approach to make a chord-melody version of Django Reinhardt's iconic interpretation of "I'll See You in My Dreams."

1 WORK FROM THE RECORD

The first step is to find an accurate transcription of the piece you want to adapt and learn. While making the transcription yourself is highly recommended, there are typically many available online and in print. The next step is to spend time learning to play along with the original recording. By doing so, you internalize the rhythms, phrasing, dynamics, chord progression, and note choice. I recommend slowing the recording down to an attainable speed. There

are plenty of apps and computer programs available that can decrease the tempo of a recording without changing its pitch (even YouTube—just click on the gear icon on any video to find variable playback speed). Once you can play side by side with your favorite musician, you are ready for the next step.

2 FIND THE RANGE

Observe the highest and lowest notes of the transcription. It is a good idea to keep the range between the third-fret D on string 2 and

5 PLAY "I'LL SEE YOU IN MY DREAMS"

On June 30, 1939, Django Reinhardt, along with Pierre "Baro" Ferret on rhythm guitar and Emmanuel Soudieux on bass, recorded a sublime rendition of "I'll See You in My Dreams," the 1924 popular song by Isham Jones and Gus Kahn. From the first notes of the opening statement through the ending, it is pure brilliance.

Reinhardt's first chorus is a very relaxed and soulful interpretation of the melody, complete with fills, syncopated rhythms, and a few of his classic licks. **Example 6** arranges this opening chorus as a chord-melody solo. Following the chromatic triplet pickup bar, measures 1–2 voice the notes D, F, G, and A as the top notes of a B♭ major triad. This changes their names in measure two to B♭6 and B♭maj7. In measure three, use an upstroke with the plectrum on beat two while holding the B♭m6(9) and then play the B♭m6 on beat three with your second finger pressing both the third and fourth strings. Aim for the space between the two strings. If this is unattainable for any reason, alternatively,

you could remove the note F on the fourth-string and fret the third-string B♭ with your second finger.

In measure 5, the chords Fmaj7 and F6/9 are used to voice the notes A and C. Use your first and third fingers for both chords, as this

While making the transcription yourself is highly recommended, there are typically many available online and in print.

will help with a smooth transition. Measure 8 offers a very hip Reinhardt "enclosure" lick. This cluster of notes moves too quickly to harmonize with a chord, so just play them on their own. In measures 9 and 10, the melody is harmonized with a third below. The note B

is natural due to the diatonic resolution of a D7 chord being G major.

In measure 18, hold the B♭ triad while adding the other melody notes. Reinhardt's original melody in measures 21 through 23 was a flourish of notes outside of the guitar's range in this octave, so I replaced them with the melody. In measure 25, finger the diminished chord by barring your first finger across the tenth fret, allowing you to lift your third finger to play the note D while still sustaining the chord.

Once you work out the fingerings, try practicing along with Reinhardt's recording at half speed before bringing it gradually up to tempo. Then you will be sure to turn heads at your next swing jam, which is hopefully right around the corner.

Greg Ruby is a guitarist, composer, historian, and teacher specializing in jazz from the first half of the 20th century. His latest book is *The Oscar Alemán Play-Along Songbook, Vol. 1*. Ruby teaches Zoom lessons and classes. For more information, visit gregrubymusic.com.

Example 6

"I'll See You in My Dreams"

Chord diagrams and fingerings for Example 6:

- B♭**: xx111x
- B♭6**: xx321x 6 fr.
- B♭maj7**: xxx111
- B♭m6(9)**: xxx321 5 fr.
- B♭m6**: xx1224 5 fr.
- Fmaj7**: xx1333 3 fr.
- F⁶₉**: xx1133 7 fr.
- E7**: xx1112 9 fr.
- F6**: xx1211 12 fr.
- F6**: xx1111 10 fr.

Measure 1: 3 (guitar), 6 5 4 3 (bass)

Measure 2: 6 7 8 (guitar), 3 6 7 8 (bass)

Measure 3: 3 5 6 7 (guitar), 3 5 6 7 (bass)

Measure 4: 8 6 3 (guitar), 6 6 2 3 (bass)

Measure 5: 3 3 4 (guitar), 3 3 4 (bass)

Measure 6: 5 8 10 12 15 12 10 (guitar), 5 8 10 12 15 12 10 (bass)

Measure 7: 10 10 10 10 (guitar), 10 10 10 10 (bass)

Measure 8: 11 9 10 11 9 (guitar), 11 9 10 11 9 (bass)



D7 xx1211 10 fr.

G7 xx121x

G13 xx123x

G7 xx213x 4 fr.

9

10 10 11 10 3 4 5 7 7 12 10 13 10 3 4 3 5 4 6 4 5

1/2

3

C13 xx123x 8 fr.

C7 xx121x 8 fr.

Bb xx111x

Bbm6(maj7) xx1342 5 fr.

Bbm6 xx2314

15

10 9 8 8 10 8 3 3 6 3 5 6 5 6 3 3 4

3

Fmaj7 xx1333 3 fr.

F⁶ xx1133 7 fr.

E7 xx1112 9 fr.

F6 xx1211 12 fr.

F6 xxx111 10 fr.

Ebdim7 xx1213 10 fr.

Cdim7 xx1213 7 fr.

21

5 5 3 8 7 9 10 12 12 10 10 10 10 11 10 9 10 11 10 10 8 7 8 7

3

10 11 10 9 10

A7 xx1211 5 fr.

Dm xxx32x 6 fr.

Bb xx111x

Bdim7 xx132x 6 fr.

C7 xx132x 8 fr.

Bbm xx311x 6 fr.

F xxx12x 5 fr.

27

5 5 5 8 5 6 7 7 5 4 3 6 8 6 6 6 5 7

3

Klezmer musicians at a wedding, 1925



YIVO ENCICLOPEDIA

Yiddishe Hora

Get into klezmer with an arrangement for solo fingerstyle guitar

BY NICK MILLEVOI

In the late 19th century, Yiddish-speaking immigrants from Eastern Europe entered the United States, bringing with them rich cultural customs including a traditional form of music that came to be called klezmer. According to Joel E. Rubin's *New York Klezmer in the Early Twentieth Century*, by 1915, New York City "hosted the largest single concentration of Jews in history," which made it "the major center of Yiddish culture, including klezmer music." And while you could hear *klezmerim*—klezmer musicians—playing at weddings and religious occasions all over the city, nary an acoustic guitar would be found, as the instrument would stand no chance of rising above the tremendous volume of clarinets, brass instruments, strings, and percussion.

In the 1970s, klezmer was set for the revival that found most groups using the instrumen-

tation of their musical ancestors. As time went on, though, more musicians began experimenting with the form and bringing in outside influences that created some space for guitarists to work their way into the klezmer scene. By the '90s and 2000s, Marc Ribot, Tim Sparks, and Bill Frisell established new ways to approach Jewish music on the guitar with the release of *Masada Guitars*, an album that featured each player performing solo arrangements of works from composer John Zorn's *Masada* songbook. (See Sparks' arrangement of Zorn's "Sippur" in the January 2017 issue.)

While the guitar still hasn't risen to any particular prominence in klezmer, players such as Jeff Warschauer and Yoshie Fruchter have made a strong case for the role of the instrument in more traditional settings while also experimenting with its place in klezmer ensembles.

A HORA IN NAME ONLY

"Yiddishe Hora" is a piece written in the early 20th century by composer, violinist, and bandleader Alexander Olshanetsky. Despite what the title suggests, this tune is not in fact a hora. A hora is a style of klezmer song that features a slow 3/8 tempo, commonly leading into a *freylekh* or *bulgar*, which is a much faster piece you might know from seeing people do a circle dance (also called a hora, which confused me for the longest time) if you've ever been to a Jewish wedding or seen one on TV. "Yiddishe Hora" is actually a *terkisher*, a type of midtempo 4/4 tune that comes from Greek music and features a 3+3+2 rhythm.

My close friend and longtime musical collaborator Dan Blacksberg is a klezmer trombonist, composer, teacher, and the host of the *Radiant Others* podcast. When recording Dan's album of



the same name, I learned his arrangement of “Yiddishe Hora,” in which I was given a solo electric guitar intro. Inspired by what I learned, I consulted Olshanetsky’s original, as well as a recording by the Bay Area trio Veretski Pass, to create the solo acoustic version here.

For this arrangement, I tune the fifth string down a whole step, from A to G, in order to easily sound a root note on the A section’s G chord, while I play the melody in seventh position. As an introduction, I play the material from the A section one time through with a rubato feel (as seen in the accompanying video but not shown in notation), using bass notes mostly on the downbeat of each measure, while I play the melody with improvised embellishments using trills, slides, and harmonics.

MEANT FOR DANCING

In the first measure, bass notes on beat one, the *and* of two, and four establish the rhythmic backbone of “Yiddishe Hora.” The music is meant for dancing, so the rhythmic feel is important to the performance of any klezmer

piece. I alternate between slightly swung and straight eighth notes in order to convey each phrase. While playing this, I think it’s worth

“Yiddishe Hora” is actually a *terkisher*, a type of midtempo 4/4 tune that comes from Greek music and features a 3+3+2 rhythm.

experimenting with rhythmic ideas that are both subtle and, like the best dance music, a little un-transcribable.

The B section works its way well above the 12th fret. It gets a little trickier to play this as

written on a 12-fret guitar, but it’s possible and worth the effort. If it does feel forbidding, though, just move the double-stops for strings 2–3 to 1–2 and everything will still sound good. Note, too, that for a change of texture, I strum the 16th-note triplets in bars 17–18 and 21–22 with my middle finger.

My favorite part of this whole piece is when the tonality changes in measures 25–31 to E *freygish*, which is the name commonly used in klezmer for the fifth mode of the harmonic minor scale, a.k.a. Phrygian dominant or *hijaz*. You can also think of this note collection as the Phrygian mode, but with a raised third—if the root note is E, it’s spelled E F G# A B C D.

As you work your way through this arrangement, you may find it easier in the beginning to avoid some of the embellishments. This is a good approach, and I’d encourage you to not only add in what I’ve arranged here when you’re ready but, once you feel comfortable, consider adding some of your own embellishments to make it feel more personal. **AG**

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Tuning: E G D G B E

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B

Em

17-17-17-17-17
16-16-16-16-16

12-12-12-12-12
12-12-12-12-12

17-17-17-17-17
16-16-16-16-16

15-15-15-15-15
17-17-17-17-17
16-16-16-16-16

E

A_m

E

D_m

E

D_m

1.
E

2.
E

D.S. al Coda

Coda

G

D_m

Em

rit.

Blues in DADGAD

Exploring shuffle licks and their many cool variations

BY AL PETTEWAY

DADGAD—perhaps most commonly associated with Celtic music—is one of my favorite tunings. While I often use DADGAD in that context, I particularly enjoy playing blues in the key of D in the tuning. The blues can have an ambiguous tonality, and so DADGAD, in which the open strings form a Dsus2 chord—neither major nor minor—works perfectly for this purpose. Plus, because the top two strings are tuned down a whole step, it is easier to do bends than in standard tuning.

In this lesson, I'll show you some fingerpicking exercises based on some of my blues in DADGAD ideas. You'll start by breaking down a simple lick and working through progressively difficult variations. Then you'll expand on the lick in two different 12-bar blues examples, using approaches that are equally suited to accompaniment and solo work. As you work through these examples, I think you'll get a good sense of the abundance of bluesy possibilities inherent in DADGAD.

WEEK ONE

The first lick you want to learn is fairly simple and works on the I chord (D7) in the key of D. As shown in **Example 1**, start with double-stops on strings 2 and 3, sliding into them from one fret below. I typically use my first and third fretting fingers, as I like to leave my second and fourth fingers available to grab other notes, but you can instead use your first and second or second and third fingers—whatever is most comfortable.

As for your picking hand, you can play all of these examples straight fingerstyle, with your first, second, and third fingers on the upper strings and your thumb on the lower strings. I like to use a thumbpick for a bit of extra thump. In any case, to complete the lick from Ex. 1,



COURTESY OF AL PETTEWAY

pull off from the first-fret A♭ to the open G string while simultaneously picking the open high D, then do another pull-off, from the third-fret F to the open D string (**Example 2**).

Now let's stitch the lick together, first the double-stops and then the pull-offs, as depicted in **Example 3**. Note that I am fleshing things out with the addition of the low open D. If you're a solo fingerstyle player, then you'll want to keep that bass note moving. As demonstrated in **Example 4**, you could start by playing straight on the beat, and you can include the open A string for a denser bass texture. Try palm-muting these bass notes so that they don't ring too much. Next, add the bass notes to the lick (**Example 5**). Note that on the accompanying video I play this pattern with straight, as opposed to swung, eighth notes. There are tons of variations you can do, both rhythmic and melodic; experiment with some of your own.

brings in a blue note—F, the flattened third—in the bass on beat four of the first bar.

Example 8 shows the most complex variation yet. This figure brings 16th-note melodic patterns into the fold, while also including some of the previous ideas, like the pull-offs to the open G string and the steady moving bass notes. Try using different rhythmic feels on this one—play it straight as written, or with swung 16th notes, more like how I play it in the video. Then, spend the rest of the week making sure that all of these variations are under your fingers and in your ears.

WEEK THREE

Now it's time to start thinking about the licks in the context of a 12-bar blues. Whether you're using them to accompany singing or for solo guitar, a handy way of creating a great shuffle feel is to alternate between playing bass notes

Beginners' Tip #1

To get into DADGAD from standard, all you have to do is tune your first, second, and sixth strings down a whole step. Any electronic tuner should make this easy.

WEEK TWO

This week, continue to work on the I chord lick, making sure that you can play everything cleanly and with both a straight and swing feel, and learn some additional variations. **Example 6** introduces some triplets based on the root (D), seventh (C), and fifth (A) of a D7 chord. Also including these triplets, **Example 7**

Beginners' Tip #2

In a straight rhythmic feel, eighth notes are played evenly. With a swing or shuffle feel, eighths are played long-short, at a ratio of about 2:1. Try these examples both straight and swung.



WEEK 1 DADGAD tuning (all examples)

Example 1

D7

Example 2

D7

Example 3

D7

Example 4

Example 5

D7

WEEK 2

Example 6

D7

Example 7

D7

WEEK 3

Example 8

Example 9

D5

on the beat and the higher strings on the “ands,” as notated in **Example 9**.

A full 12-bar blues, **Example 10** is based on that same rhythmic feel. While the previous figures have all used just the I chord, this one also includes the IV (G) and the V (A). Note that on the IV, instead of using the typical seventh chord voicing, I am playing the top three strings open, making the chord not only easier to play but lending harmonic color, thanks to the suspended second (open A string). I also use the

three open strings for the V, forming an equally cool-sounding A7sus4 chord.

WEEK FOUR

This week you'll work with another 12-bar figure (**Example 11**), bringing back some of the arpeggios while changing things up in the bass—all while remaining in first position. In each IV chord bar, instead of playing the root note (G), try playing the third (B). This sounds especially good when the third is approached chromatically, i.e., the A–A#–B move starting at the end of bars 2 and 7. Note that I sometimes remove my palm mute from that B, like in bars 3 and 4, which provides a nice change of texture.

There are some other new ideas introduced in this example. As shown in the second measure, playing the bass notes in eighths instead of quarters adds a sense of rhythmic drive. In bar 10, a

slight bend on the F emphasizes the note's bluesy character, and in the last measure, the fifth-fret natural harmonics reveal the characteristic suspended sound of DADGAD tuning.

I often get lost jamming on these many variations when playing the blues in DADGAD. That's the most fun part about it for me. I hope you've enjoyed this lesson and will continue to explore these concepts that work so well in this tuning. **AC**

Beginners' Tip #3

You can make the most of any bluesy lick by plugging it into the 12-bar form used in Examples 9 and 10.

Beginners' Tip #4

The real magic happens when you have integrated these blues licks into your playing and can seamlessly string them together.

Example 10

D7

Gsus2 **D7**

A7sus4 **Gsus2** **D7**



WEEK 4

Example 11

D7 **Gsus2/B**

D7 **A7sus4** **Gsus2/B**

D7 **8va** **harm.**

TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL

Octaves in DADGAD tuning are really fun, because you can make them sound smooth by playing them at parallel frets. Try this bluesy pattern incorporating octaves on string pairs 1 and 4, 2 and 5, and 4 and 6. If you play it like I do on the video, you should get a cool 12-string effect.

D7



David Gilmour with his signature Martin



ACOUSTIC CLASSIC

POLLY SAMSON

Wish You Were Here

A DADGAD take on the Pink Floyd classic

BY JEFFREY PEPPER RODGERS

“Wish You Were Here,” the title track of Pink Floyd’s masterwork from 1975, grew out of a guitar riff that David Gilmour found while picking a newly acquired 12-string in a control room at London’s Abbey Road studios.

With haunting lyrics by Roger Waters, “Wish You Were Here” became one of Pink Floyd’s most enduring songs and, for acoustic guitarists, one of the most accessible—easily playable with open-position shapes in the key of G. That’s how I learned it years ago, but I recently found a new way to bring this song to life in DADGAD tuning that I’m sharing here.

Gilmour’s original riff is built around G, Em7, and A7sus4 chords voiced with the same notes on top: D (string 2, fret 3) and G (string 1, fret 3). Tuned to DADGAD with a capo at the fifth fret, you get these same notes on top but on open strings, and my arrangement takes full advantage of the freedom that setup provides. (Note that in the video at AcousticGuitar.com, I capo at the second fret

to play in E, just because that key better suits my voice.)

One of the pleasures of DADGAD and other open tunings is letting open strings add lush extensions to chords. That’s what I do in this arrangement, as open strings turn the IV chord (with the capo, a G) into a Gsus2, the V into Aadd4, and the vi into Em11.

The notation shows the intro (also used as an interlude), the verse rhythm pattern, and an outro that moves the intro riff up an octave. In the verse you’ll find a few alternate chord shapes not shown in the chord library, like the voicings of Em11 and D5 at the end of this section. In the sequence from Gsus2 to G/F#, Em11, and D5 in the verse’s last three measures, keep your fourth finger planted on fret 5, string 5. In the outro, the Bm7 and E7sus4 also use alternate shapes; for the E7sus4, use a first-finger barre across strings 3–5, and on the final chord, fret the sixth string with your second finger. In the video, I use alternate voicings up the neck for G, A, Em, and D to boost the last verse.

Though this arrangement is shown in DADGAD, the idea actually first came to me while I was using a partial capo covering strings 3–5 at the second fret. In that three-string partial capo setup, sometimes called an Esus or DADGAD capo, the intervals between open strings are actually the same as in DADGAD up a whole step. So I often translate arrangements from Esus partial capo to DADGAD (with a regular capo at the second fret to sound in E) and vice versa, and they sound nearly the same. To perform this arrangement live, I’d likely use the partial capo just to spare myself and the audience the retuning.

As a bonus, I’ve also transcribed Gilmour’s intro guitar solo—played in standard tuning with no capo (so shown in G). Gilmour used a lot of electric-style bending that’s quite a bit easier with slinky strings; you can always substitute slides for bends as needed. If you want to try the song as a duet, blending a standard-tuned guitar in G with the DADGAD part (capo 5) is a good option.

AC

WISH YOU WERE HERE

WORDS AND MUSIC BY ROGER WATERS AND DAVID GILMOUR

DADGAD tuning, Capo V

Chords

Bm7
x10200

D5
000200

E7sus4
120300

Gsus2
340000

Aadd4
x03200

Em11
111000

G/F#
3400xx

Intro/Interlude

Bm7 **D5** **Bm7**

D5 **Bm7** **E7sus4** **Bm7**

Verse Rhythm Pattern

E7sus4 **D5** **Gsus2** **Aadd4**

Em11 **D5** **Aadd4** **Gsus2** **G/F#**

Outro

Em11 **D5** **D5** **Bm7**

WISH YOU WERE HERE

D5 **Bm7** **D5** **Bm7**

E7sus4 **Bm7** **E7sus4**

Bonus: Intro Guitar Solo

Em7 **G** **Em7**

*standard tuning

G **Em7** **A7sus4**

Em7 **A7sus4**



Intro (with guitar solo on second pass)

Bm7 D5 Bm7 D5

Bm7 E7sus4 Bm7 E7sus4 D5

Gsus2 Aadd4

1. So, so you think you can tell

Em11 D5

Heaven from hell? Blue skies from pain?

Aadd4 Gsus2

Can you tell a green field from a cold steel rail?

G/F# Em11 D5

A smile from a veil? Do you think you can tell?

Gsus2 Aadd4

2. Did they get you to trade your heroes for ghosts?

Em11 D5

Hot ashes for trees? Hot air for a cool breeze?

Aadd4 Gsus2

Cold comfort for change? And did you exchange

G/F# Em11 D5

A walk-on part in the war for a lead role in a cage?

Interlude

Gsus2

Aadd4

3. How I wish, how I wish you were here

Em11

We're just two lost souls swimming in a fish bowl

D5

Year after year

Aadd4

Running over the same old ground

Gsus2 G/F# Em11

What have we found, the same old fears

D5 Gsus2

Wish you were here

D5

Wish you were here

Outro

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Stéphane Wrembel



JASON GOODMAN

Tea for Two

A new transcription of Django Reinhardt's masterful 1937 solo rendition

BY STÉPHANE WREMBEL

My album *Django L'Impressionniste* is a journey to the most secret places of the guitar and the soul. It is a mirror reflecting on the most exquisite parts of the human spirit. The excursion started for me in August 2016, when I decided to open my upcoming Carnegie Hall concert with “Improvisation 1,” the first prelude for solo guitar recorded by Django Reinhardt in 1937. This extraordinary interpretation encompasses the entire spectrum of Reinhardt’s universe. It is as beautiful as it is hard to execute, original and unique in its form and use of the harmonic and technical elements. After experiencing the transformative effects that memorizing and integrating this masterpiece had on my musicianship in general, I embarked on what became a four-year pilgrimage.

I discovered that there were 17 of these solo Reinhardt pieces. At first I learned the tunes by ear, jotting down notes about how to play them. The next step was the memorization and analysis of each one of them, in order to record and perform the entire repertoire: a real and complete

solo classical recital. When I recorded the pieces in February 2019, it was a very demanding process. I needed to really capture the atmosphere and the life of the 17 pieces, like a classical recording. Working for several days with engineer Eric Ritter at the Windmill Agency, in Pennsylvania, I played the pieces again and again until I got the right interpretation for each one. I wasn’t aiming for a modern sound, which at times I find very cold and impersonal. One can hear, especially on the vinyl edition, the warmth of the guitar and its many shades.

I first performed the set of pieces at the Lyon Opera House, in France, on October 19, 2019. The last step was to write down accurate transcriptions and make them available to everyone. I spent the first half of 2020 laying it all down on paper, very old-school, with a pencil and an eraser, before having the music engraved and published in a new book, *Django L'Impressionniste*.

“Tea for Two,” the old jazz standard, is the only piece in the book that Reinhardt did not compose. But the arrangement he created and

recorded in December 1937 is done in the same spirit as the rest of his original solo works. I chose to interpret the piece a bit slower than Reinhardt; I really played it the way I felt it, without trying to copy his interpretation. It is my belief that everyone should go with their instincts when it comes to playing classical, composed repertoire like this.

The first detail to note in “Tea for Two” is the fingerpicking technique. As the song has a swing groove, Reinhardt picks in a very funky way, all *tirando* (free stroke), with a great equality of tone and volume between the voices. It has a bit of a staccato quality to keep the beat and the groove up. One should focus on Reinhardt’s total control of harmony, the sophisticated ways in which he moves the chords’ inner and outer voices. Reinhardt managed to turn this jazz piece into a classical/impressionist piece, without losing its original and fundamental spirit. His strength was to always apply his complete mastery of classical music, and of rhythm and of harmony, to any kind of music.

AC

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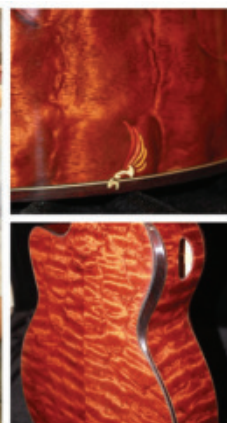
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TEA FOR TWO

MUSIC BY VINCENT YOUNANS

Chord progression: G/B B $\flat$ dim Am7 D13 $\flat$ 9 Am9 C $\sharp$ 7 A6 G13 $\flat$ 9 D9

4 D9 $\flat$ 5

8 Am7 D7 Am7 B $\flat$ dim Gmaj7/B B $\flat$ dim

12 Am7 D7 Am7 D7 G Am7 $\flat$ 5 G



16

C#m7 F#7 E13,9 C#m7 F#7 F13 Bb9 Em

20

Em7 F#7 F#7sus4 F#7 B/F# C6 D/C G/B Bbdim Am7

24

D7 Am7 D13,9 Gadd9/D Bbdim G/B Bbdim

28

Am7 D7 Am7 D7 G9 F9 D9 E9 F9 D9 E9 E7

32

Bdim7 Adim7 G#dim7 Bdim7 Am Cm(maj7) Cm6

Cont. from p. 61

36

G/B B $\flat$ dim Am7 D7 D $_{13\flat 9}$ G B $\flat$ m6 G $\sharp 6$ Am6 G6 F6 D/F $\sharp$ G

40

Am7 D7 Am7 D7 D7alt G/D D $_{13\flat 9}$ G B $\flat$ m6

44

Am7 D $_{13\flat 9}$ Am7 G $_{13\flat 9}$ D9 F $\sharp 7$ G6 G/B Am7 $\flat 5$ G Am6 C $\flat 6$ G/B Am6 G

48

C $\sharp 7$ F $\sharp 7$ F $\flat 6$ F $\sharp 9$ Ddim7 C $\sharp$ dim7 Edim7 B G9 C $\sharp 7$

52

F $\sharp 7$ C $\sharp 7$ C $\sharp$ dim7 B B $\flat$ B C B D7 Bdim7 C9 F $_{13\flat 9}$ C9 Bdim7



56

D7 Am7 D7 Am7 Gmaj7/B Bbdim7

60

Am D7 Am7 D7 Bm7,5 Bdim7 Am

64

Bdim7 Adim7 F#dim7 G#dim7 Adim7 G#dim7 Cdim7 Bdim7 Am Am7b5

67

G/B Bbdim Am7 D7

70

G/B Eb/Db Ab/c Cdim7 G/B G6/B



Alan Barnosky



RACHAEL FIORENTINO

Leather Britches

A classic fiddle tune, arranged for flatpicking guitarists

BY ALAN BARNOSKY

“Leather Britches” is about as classic as a fiddle tune can get. It’s a popular piece in the U.S. among old-time fiddlers and contest players but has actually been around for hundreds of years, dating as far back as 18th-century Scotland under the name “Lord MacDonald’s Reel.” The tune has a rich recorded history. My favorite fiddle version is Paul Warren’s on *Flatt and Scruggs at Carnegie Hall!*, and the most popular is likely John Hartford’s on *Aereo-Plain*. There are also some stellar guitar recordings as well, including those by Charles Sawtelle with Hot Rize, Norman Blake with Sam Bush, a solo rendition by Wayne Henderson, and a ripping dobro version by Andy Hall.

Despite its popularity among fiddlers, “Leather Britches” is less known with flatpickers—surprisingly so, as it is fun to play and lands especially well on the guitar. The tune is in the bright key of G major, and the rendition here is my preferred way to play it. It uses a combination of open strings,

cross-picking passages, and position shifts to allow for a droning rhythmic bounce that mimics a fiddler’s rocking bow. Even at slower speeds this arrangement can create some nice energy if there is a focus on keeping steady time and accenting notes that land on offbeats.

A technique that really makes this arrangement shine is letting notes—especially open strings—ring out as much as possible. Consider how certain instruments have features that allow notes to blend into one another: a banjo’s droning high G string, a piano’s sustain pedal, or an electric guitar’s time-based effects. Sustained notes give a feeling of spaciousness, openness, and ease to the music.

As acoustic guitarists, we can achieve this sense of fluidity by letting picked strings ring out. In the A section, relax your left hand so your fretted fingers don’t mute the ringing open strings. For the position shifts in the B section, allow the open high E string to ring

out while moving along the neck to avoid an audible gap when your hand makes the jump.

Certain fretted notes can be sustained as well, like the up-the-neck passage in bars 10 and 14–15 where the fourth finger on the B string can ring while the other fingers play notes on the top string (see the fingerings for this passage in the notation). Alternatively, some fretted notes can be intentionally cut short: I like to play the D7 arpeggio in bar 8 shorter to give that lick a more linear feel, so that the fourth-fret F $\sharp$ doesn’t clash when it resolves to the open G.

If you enjoy playing “Leather Britches,” don’t let the transcription here be your last stop. Check out the guitar versions noted above for more ideas on how to approach the tune, and listen to some fiddle recordings to hear it in its natural context. The beauty of these classic fiddle tunes is how enduring and adaptive they are. No two people play them the exact same way, resulting in a rich and varied history that spans centuries and continents.

AC

$$\phi = 110$$

A

G

The image shows a musical score for the song "The Rose Tree". It consists of two staves. The top staff is a treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). The melody is written in a simple, folk-like style. The bottom staff is a bass clef with a common time signature (C). It contains a bass line with various notes and rests, including some triplets. The music is presented in a clean, black-and-white format.

D

G

5

5

Sheet music for the song "The Rose Tree". The score is written for a single melodic line on a treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody is in 4/4 time and consists of 12 measures. The first measure is a whole note, and the subsequent measures are mostly quarter notes, with some eighth notes and a final double bar line. The lyrics "The Rose Tree" are written below the staff, aligned with the melody. The first line of the lyrics is "The Rose Tree", and the second line is "The Rose Tree".

B

9

D

G

1

The second system of the musical score for 'The Rose Tree' consists of two staves. The top staff is a treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It contains a melody with various ornaments and fingerings indicated by numbers 1-4 above the notes. The bottom staff is a bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It contains a bass line with various ornaments and fingerings indicated by numbers 0-7 below the notes. The system concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.



It Had to Be You

A guitar-friendly arrangement of a favorite from the Great American Songbook

BY KATE KOENIG



Maurice Tani

For most listeners, the title of the song "It Had to Be You" instantly calls its famous melody to mind. Written by Isham Jones with lyrics by Gus Kahn, it was first published in 1924 and has been covered countless times since. As a jazz standard, some famous recordings of the song include ones by Frank Sinatra, Barbra Streisand and Michael Bublé, Harry Nilsson, Bing Crosby, Ray Charles, and Harry Connick, Jr. It was performed by Doris Day in the film *I'll See You in My Dreams*, by Diane Keaton in *Annie Hall*, Dooley Wilson in *Casablanca*, Megan Cavanagh in *A League of*

Their Own, and was featured on the soundtrack of *When Harry Met Sally*.

Not exactly a cowboy-chord song, "It Had to Be You" makes use of nine different jazzy voicings—in order of appearance, Cmaj7, A7, D7, Am7, G7, E7, Fmaj7, Fm7, and Dm7. Given that this arrangement is in the key of C, almost all of these chords can be played as open, with the exception of Fm7, which requires a barre at the first fret.

This arrangement is played with what Maurice Tani describes in the accompanying video as a "loping, shuffle pattern"—it resembles the

standard boom-chuck, where the bass line alternates between two strings on beats one and three, and strumming happens on beats two and four. The changes are fairly evenly spaced out, except when you get to lines like "I wandered around and finally found," or "and even be glad just to be sad," where they happen a little more quickly.

If you have trouble with transitions between chords, try playing them very slowly, paying close attention to how your hand looks when it forms each chord shape. With enough practice, you'll soon have a version of "It Had to Be You" to call your own. **AC**

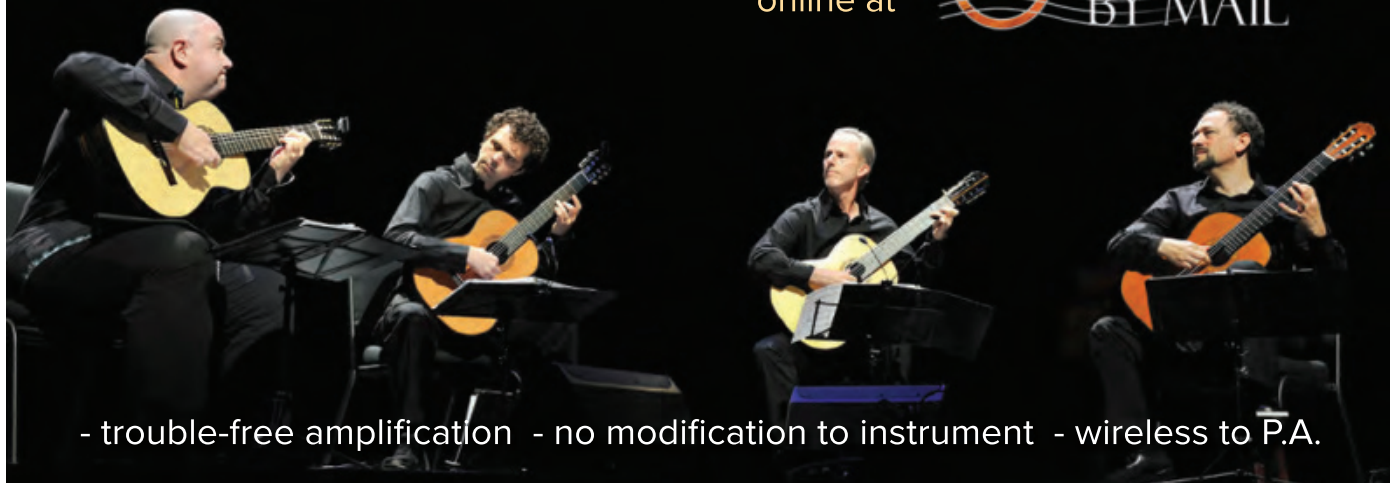
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Strumming Patterns

Chord diagrams and strumming patterns for the first system:

- Cmaj7** (x32000)
- A7** (x02030)
- D7** (xx0213)
- Fmaj7** (103420)

Chord diagrams and strumming patterns for the second system:

- Cmaj7** (x32000)
- A7** (x02030)

Lyrics: It had to be you, _____ it had _____ to be you. _____ I wan-dered a-round

Chord diagrams and strumming patterns for the third system:

- D7** (xx0213)
- Am7** (x02010)
- D7** (xx0213)
- Am7** (x02010)
- D7** (xx0213)

Lyrics: _____ and fi-nal-ly found _____ some-bo-dy who _____ could make me be

Chord diagrams and strumming patterns for the fourth system:

- G7** (320001)
- E7** (020100)
- Am7** (x02010)

Lyrics: true, _____ could make me _____ feel _____ blue. _____ And e-ven be glad _____



13

D7 xx0213 **Am7** x02010 **D7** xx0213 **G7** 320001

— just to be sad — think - ing of you — Some oth - ers I've seen —

3 2 3 0 2 0 2 0 3 0 2

17

Cmaj7 x32000 **A7** x02030

— might ne - ver be mean, — might ne - ver be cross —

2 3 2 3 4 4 0 3 0 2

21

D7 xx0213 **Am7** x02010 **D7** xx0213 **Am7** x02010 **D7** xx0213

— or try to be boss, — but they would - n't do. — When no - bod - y else

0 0 3 0 2 0 0 3 0 2 0 2 3 0 2

25

Fmaj7 103420 **Fm7** 131111 **Cmaj7** x32000 **E7** 020100 **Am7** x02010

— gave me a thrill, — with all your faults, I — love you still. — It had to be you,

0 2 3 0 3 2 3 0 0 2 0 3 0 3 0 2

29

G7 320001 **Dm7** xx0211 **G7** 320001 **Cmaj7** x32000

1. 2.

— won - der - ful you, — it had to be you. — It had to be you, —

0 3 0 2 2 0 2 2 3 3 0 3 0 2

Advanced Placement

How bridge saddles are optimally positioned on acoustic guitars

BY MARTIN KEITH

Q: What is the correct formula for placing a bridge/saddle on an acoustic guitar?

—Marc Lucas, via email

A: This is a good and very timely question—I was just involved in a discussion with a few other builder/repair people about a brand-new guitar whose saddle was placed in a puzzling spot. In order for the guitar to play in tune, the luthier had to fill the saddle slot and reroute it in a different placement—pretty unexpected work for a brand-new instrument that sells for almost \$2,000.

All of this serves to illustrate that saddle position is not always approached as a strict formula in the industry. A survey of several very popular makes (Martin, Gibson, Taylor, Takamine) shows differing saddle angles, split saddles, and compensated or ramped saddle tops on some guitars and straight saddle tops on others. If tuning is something that can be so easily measured, and if there's a clear right and wrong, then how can there be so many differences in saddle position and treatment?

I've been asked this question before by clients and can't always give them an easy answer. In my repair work, I prefer to consider each guitar on an individual basis—I measure the tuning accuracy with a strobe tuner, and determine string-per-string what adjustments are needed. This practical approach also gives me a convenient end-run around answering the larger question, but the question lingers nonetheless.

The simple math of fret scales suggests that the saddle should be placed exactly twice

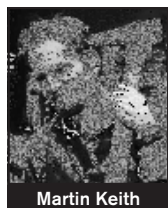


BILL EVANS

as far from the nut as the 12th fret. However, because strings are not perfectly flexible, and because that imperfection varies from string to string, the saddle needs to be moved away from that theoretical point. The strings' stiffness causes the notes to play sharper than they should, so the saddle is moved to lengthen the scale, causing the frets to play a tiny bit flatter. When this is done precisely, the two effects cancel each other out perfectly, resulting in well-tuned notes up and down the fretboard.

The nut is also implicated here, and this is a great time to bring up the many ways this can impact intonation. A high nut (i.e., one whose slots are not cut deep enough) will force the player to bend the strings sharp just to get them in contact with the frets. This

effect will be most prominent in the lower positions and is very common on new factory instruments. However, the effects of string rigidity do increase as you approach the nut, and modern luthiers have developed various systems to address those effects. Stepped or compensated nuts, first seen in the work of custom makers, are now starting to appear on mass-production instruments. Session guitarist Buzz Feiten developed a tuning system meant to sweeten the intonation of guitars, which includes a calculated change to the nut position. There are even aftermarket compensated nuts from companies such as Earvana, which allow the player to experiment with this idea in a non-destructive way on their favorite guitar. Finally, the most adventurous builders and players have jumped into the



Martin Keith

GOT A QUESTION?

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If AG selects your question for publication, you'll receive a complimentary copy of AG's *Acoustic Guitar Owner's Manual*.

deep end by building instruments where the frets themselves are not straight, but instead zigzag across the fretboard in a slightly unsettling way.

Unfortunately, this brings us back to the same big question: Shouldn't it be possible to measure each of these systems with an honest tuner and determine which (if any) gives a meaningful advantage over the traditional straight nut and fret? For readers who wish to engage in a well-documented technical analysis of the compensated nut, I would suggest the work of Trevor Gore and Gerard Gilet, two Australian luthiers who have done considerable research on the topic, including some fairly advanced math and physics calculations.

In my own instruments, I build-in a zero fret. This is an additional fret, located where the nut would normally be. The strings contact this fret when played open, so the guitar behaves as if it were capoed against a fret at all times. For this reason, I have not seen the advantage to pursuing any nut-end compensation, and I'll be honest that I have yet to get a straight answer about how nut compensation

can be meaningful in any way once a capo is installed on the guitar.

So, in light of all this, how does one go about finding a simple rule of thumb? I, like many builders, do not work to a formula; rather, I have devised a simple setup which allows me to string the guitar without a saddle slot, and use movable dummy saddles and a tuner to find precise intonation points. Those points are then used as guidelines to route the actual slot. This way, any tiny inconsistencies in the construction will not result in an out-of-tune guitar. This approach has never failed to give me an accurate result.

However, for those that really wish to have a simple rule: Among the repair people I respect most, the consensus is that for a standard 25.5-inch scale, you should add 1/16-inch to the scale length for the first string, and 3/16-inch to the length for the sixth string. This slope of 1/8-inch difference from strings 1 to 6 is likely to yield good results for the average setup, strings, and playing style. It will certainly get you close enough that any further adjustments can be made by carefully shaping the saddle top.

It can feel counterintuitive, even frustrating, to think that something as simply measurable as tuning can cause such differences of opinion among professionals. No guitar will ever be perfectly in tune. And in fact, no fretted instrument can be: The whole idea of 12-tone equal temperament is that every note shares the same small amount of error, which hopefully makes it too small to notice. Professional piano tuners often play with this by stretching the tuning to adjust the timbre and character of the piano, giving it additional warmth or brightness in specific ranges as needed.

I know of a session bassist (one of the industry's best and most renowned) who intentionally sets up his low E to trend a bit sharp, to help it cut through in big mixes. And, most importantly, small dips and rises in pitch from playing technique are an essential component of what gives each guitarist their own sonic personality. It is with all this in mind that I usually tell my clients to trust their ears above their calculators. Do your best to get the guitar as close as possible, check your work with a tuner, and then get back to playing. **AC**

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Martin GPC-13E

**Rugged and fine-sounding
acoustic-electric that's ready
for the road**

BY GREG OLWELL

With its Road Series, C.F. Martin & Co. offers a line of accessibly priced guitars that deliver pro-level performance and sound. These instruments are clearly intended as solid partners for gigging musicians and boast modern features, playability, and construction. Recently, Martin added two new models to the line, the GPC-13E Grand Performance cutaway and the D-13E dreadnought. (See a review of the all-mahogany GPC-15ME in January 2017 issue.) The GPC-13E features a solid Sitka spruce top with a choice of mutenye or ziricote for the back and sides. Martin sent the latter in for review. Over the few weeks I checked it out, I appreciated the GPC-13E's easy-playing features, great setup, good sounds, and contemporary looks.

MODERN AESTHETICS

The Grand Performance has become one of Martin's most popular body shapes since it was introduced a little over ten years ago. With a few differences in the body dimensions, the GP is similar to Taylor's Grand Auditorium. It's easy to see why players are into this body size: The upper and lower bouts are close to the width of a dreadnought, so a GP can supply plenty of lows and highs, yet its relatively narrow waist gives it the feel of a smaller, more manageable guitar.

Though Martin's model numbers have historically identified wood and decoration levels that increased with each higher number, this guitar's 13-level designation has style beyond what you might expect. Rather than approaching the guitar with vintage-inspired aesthetics, Martin chose crisp lines and bright-white binding that says "new guitar." The GPC-13E's radiant white binding and heel cap gleam, giving a bold contrast to the dark ziricote, while the 28-style mother-of-pearl pattern fingerboard dots and wide rosette add a little glitz.

The GPC-13E is the only guitar in Martin's regular lineup that features ziricote back and sides. This Central American tonewood is commonly dark brown with hints of green or purple and dramatic grain figuring. My test guitar had a light streak of sapwood up the middle of the back, like a built-in center stripe, giving it a unique touch. Because ziricote is pricey, the back and





sides are laminated. However, instead of the typical recipe with poplar or maple as the core layer, Martin uses khaya, or African mahogany, sandwiched between outer layers of zircote.

A VERSATILE PLAYER

As someone who grew up playing dreadnoughts, I really like the GPC's present but not overpowering bass output—it makes the guitar's tone feel grounded and solid, not bass-y or boomy. Pushed vigorously or coaxed gently, its modest midrange scoop and full bass and sparkling trebles combine some of the better traits of a bottom-heavy dreadnought with smaller-body guitar fullness.

Time and again when I played the GPC-13E, I kept gravitating toward strumming. Chords just want to jump out of this guitar, and it feels like you could play set after set with minimal fatigue and lots of satisfying sounds. It's also a good fingerstyle guitar, with its proportions giving rotund and controlled low-end and crystalline highs to both thumb-picked bass notes and fingerpicked treble melodies.

The GPC-13E plays as nicely as it sounds. Its neck has Martin's Performing Artist carve and high-performance taper, which lend a slender, modern feel that will appeal to players more experienced with electric guitars and comfort-minded acoustic guitarists alike. The neck's lightly applied, hand-rubbed finish was a delight for my

fretting hand and gave me an immediate sense of connection to the guitar.

The Richlite fingerboard and bridge were as dark as night, and both looked and felt like ebony. Because it's a phenolic resin/cellulose composite, Richlite is more stable than wood and less likely to be affected by dry conditions. The GPC's fretwork was smooth and sleek, and the setup made it easy to play for extended periods without getting tired. I could say the same thing for the entire guitar—it feels built for performance.

In Northern California where I live, relative humidity and temperatures varied widely during my test time with the GPC. Not once did the guitar feel challenged by near-single-digit humidity and high temperatures one day, followed by cold and damp conditions the next. The GPC-13E just seemed remarkably stable. Its performance held steady during an outdoor gig where temperatures dropped into the low 50s as the sun set, with action, fretwork, and sounds staying consistent. I suspect this is due, at least in part, to the guitar's road-ready features, like its strong, laminated back and sides, solid mortise-and-tenon neck joint, and Richlite fingerboard and bridge.

A TRUE ROAD WARRIOR

The GPC-13E's Fishman electronics package includes an onboard tuner located inside the

soundhole's treble side that mutes the pickup for tuning. The tuner's small LCD screen is easy to see while the guitar is held in playing position but is invisible to the crowd. Likewise, volume and tone controls are hidden inside the soundhole's bass side, for a discreet look as well as easy adjustability. The MX-T's tone control goes from a flat setting to simultaneous bass and treble boost, with a bit of gain added in as you turn the knob up. I tested the guitar through a Boss Acoustic Singer Pro. With the amp's EQ set flat and at a stage-ready volume, the GPC's fullness came through, and it made me want to strum through every rock tune I could remember.

While no guitar can satisfy every player's need, the GPC-13E does many things well. It does so many things right that it might be as close to an all-purpose guitar as anything I can recall. While its Swiss Army knife approach won't be for everyone, the GPC-13E is an easy choice for players needing a reliable, handsome guitar that sounds good acoustically and plugged in. It would also be great for players who like the sound of a dreadnought's accentuated bass and treble but want a guitar with more playing comfort. The GPC-13E is the kind of road warrior guitar that you could rely on for just about any gig that could come your way. **AG**



SPECS

BODY Grand Performance 14-fret cutaway body; solid Sitka spruce top with scalloped Sitka X-bracing; laminated zircote back and sides; Richlite modern belly bridge with compensated drop-in Tusq saddle and 2-5/32" spacing; tortoise pattern pickguard; gloss polyurethane finish

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New effects pedals bring practicality and loads of fun to acoustic players

BY NICK MILLEVOI

Since releasing its first volume pedal in 1954, Fender has produced quite a few effects, from reverb units and tape delays to fuzz pedals and phasers. The company recently joined in on the current golden age of guitar pedals by developing an extensive line of effects. That line just got a little larger with the introduction of two acoustic stompboxes—the Acoustic Preverb and Smolder Acoustic OD.

These gig-ready pedals are built into heavy-duty anodized aluminum enclosures that'll travel well, whether they're stationed on a pedalboard or squeezed into a gig bag's pocket. The controls on each are laid out nicely and feature knobs with handy built-in switchable LEDs, so you'll never be confused about your settings on a dark stage. My only complaint, admittedly minor, about the appearance of these pedals isn't about usability but about their color. Among a line of bright, candy-colored pedals, the two acoustic-focused stompboxes come in the same shade of rusty brown, to which I say, "Come on, let acoustic players have some fun, too!"

The Acoustic Preverb is a practical preamp/reverb combination pedal that could be a wise investment for anyone plugging in their

acoustic guitar. It features three types of reverb—large hall, room, and plate—that Fender says are specially voiced for acoustic instruments. With all the amazing reverb pedals on the market, I found it hard to get too excited about any of these, the three settings being a little hard to differentiate. They are, however, very functional, and knobs for reverb level, reverb time, and damping—which sets the high end of the effected signal—make it easy to find a solid tone.

If you're recording, you probably won't find yourself choosing any of these reverb sounds over what your DAW has to offer, but that's not the point of the Acoustic Preverb. This is a pedal meant for gigging, and that's where it really shines. The preamp controls on the Acoustic Preverb include a gain knob, a polarity switch, a controllable notch switch to rein in feedback, a tilt knob for EQ control, and a mute switch. While I can imagine more EQ options, at \$169.99 street, it's hard to argue with everything the Acoustic Preverb fits into one affordable package.

When I first unboxed the Smolder Acoustic OD, I was thinking of Kurt Cobain playing "The Man Who Sold the World"—which rules!—

but wasn't considering many uses for acoustic overdrive beyond that vibe. As soon as I plugged in, I began to realize this pedal is both more fun and more practical than I would have ever guessed.

Knobs for tone, bass, and treble make it easy to find your sound, while the pickup comp (compensation) knob does a good job assisting with inevitable feedback issues. The distortion is controlled via a knob for drive and a blend control, which is what makes this pedal such a useful tool. I found that I was able to dial in just enough drive to warm up the piezo pickup on my Taylor 510ce and make it sound more natural without sounding particularly overdriven. For guitarists like me who only want to use piezo pickups when necessary, this pedal is a great choice.

The real fun happens when the blend and drive knobs are cranked. This overdrive circuit is much more finely tuned to the sound of an acoustic guitar than a typical fuzzbox, and I had a blast exploring all the possibilities for both lead and rhythm playing. At \$149.99, the Smolder Acoustic OD is both useful and super fun. Now if only they'd make it in red! fender.com **AC**



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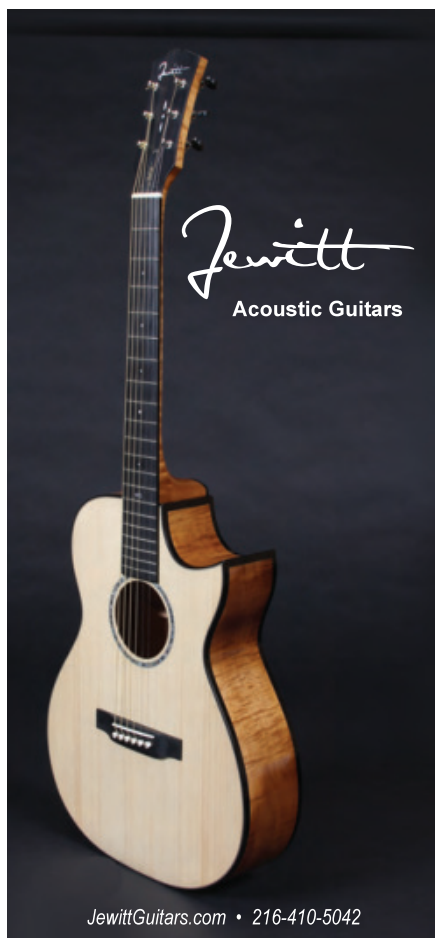
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L.R. Baggs Voiceprint DI

Breakthrough in acoustic amplification captures your guitar's unique sound

BY DOUG YOUNG

While acoustic guitarists may love the tone of their favorite guitars, most are far less enthusiastic about how they sound when plugged in. Even the best pickups often fail to do justice to acoustic tone. That has been changing, however, due to a digital signal processing technique based on impulse response (IR), which makes it possible to capture the sonic signature of one sound and apply it to another. Using IR technology, it is possible to capture the natural acoustic sound of a guitar and then process the pickup to make it sound more like the instrument's unamplified sound.

IR-based systems have been around for some time, but best results are usually achieved by capturing the IR of your specific guitar. Products that make the IR creation process accessible to guitarists have only begun to appear over the past few years. L.R. Baggs has recently thrown its hat into the ring with an impressive debut, the Voiceprint DI, a \$399 preamp/DI that lets guitarists create and use their own IRs. The company is taking a bold approach with its first app-controlled product by leveraging mobile phones for creating the IR—known as a voiceprint—as well as for accessing advanced features of the hardware.

Impulse response features aside, the Voiceprint DI functions as a simple preamp/DI with 1/4-inch input and output jacks, XLR output, volume, effects insert, mute switch, and ground lift. The remaining controls affect the voiceprint: a knob as well as a footswitch for selecting among 99 possible presets, a knob that controls the blend between the direct guitar sound and voiceprint, and an anti-feedback control. Offering 24-bit, 96KHz A/D conversion and 32-bit internal processing, the 4.75 x 5 x 2.5-inch device has an input impedance of 2.2 megaohms.

CREATING YOUR OWN VOICEPRINT

The Voiceprint DI can operate without the phone, but first you need to create one or more voiceprints and load them into the pedal. Creating a voiceprint requires the free



COURTESY OF L.R. BAGGS

AcousticLive app and a Bluetooth-connected iPhone 6 or later. An Android version is expected in the future. The process is simple: Place your phone in front of the guitar, plug your guitar into the Voiceprint DI, and select Create Voiceprint in the app. The app prompts you to tap on the body of the guitar, play a few chords, individual notes, and scales, and finally, audition the result before saving it as a preset. If necessary, you can reposition the phone and try again—as with recording, different mic placements may produce slightly different sounds. The training process is fast and easy and requires no special gear other than the phone.

ADVANCED SOUND TWEAKING

While the above process performs the magic of transforming your pickup to closely match the acoustic sound of your guitar, the unit's ability to shape and refine that sound goes further. The AcousticLive app allows you to adjust the volume of the processed guitar, control the blend between the voiceprint and raw pickup, adjust an anti-feedback control and a five-band fully parametric graphical EQ, and store everything as part of a preset. Amazingly, you can also access the Voiceprint DI through an Apple Watch, changing presets, muting or bypassing the pedal, and tweaking

all the parameters of a preset, including the parametric EQ.

Rather than providing a standard notch filter, the AcousticLive app analyzes your guitar during training to identify resonant frequencies most likely to cause feedback. Turning up the anti-feedback control progressively cuts those potentially problematic frequencies. I found this control effective as a way to tighten up the sound even when not trying to control feedback.

The EQ (plus variable-frequency high and low-pass filters) is an incredibly powerful feature in its own right. The AcousticLive app provides a number of handy preset EQ curves that may be useful starting points, but you can also take total control to make significant changes to your tone by up to +/-15dB at each frequency. The voiceprint and EQ complement each other well. The voiceprint transforms the pickup in a way that would be impossible with EQ alone, eliminating quack and other unnatural characteristics we associate with pickups, while the EQ lets you refine the result, adjusting for personal taste.

Because both the Voiceprint DI's firmware and the AcousticLive app can be updated, it is likely that we'll see continuing improvements and features, and perhaps even new directions based on the device's digital signal processing capabilities. lrbaggs.com

AC



Bose L1 Pro16

A refined and affordable personal amplification system

BY DOUG YOUNG

Bose triggered a revolution in amplification in 2003 with the introduction of the L1 Personal Amplification System (PAS). Line arrays—speaker arrangements that provide more uniform coverage and wide, even dispersion—have been used in large concert settings for decades. The L1 brought the concept to small groups and individual performers, in a portable, cost-effective package.

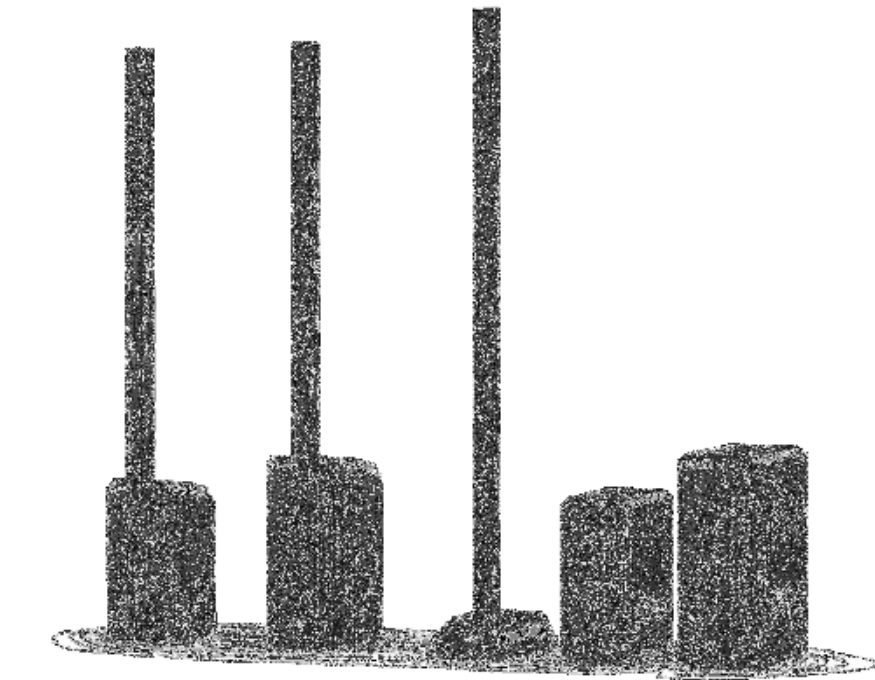
A traditional sound system consists of (usually large) PA speakers in front of the performers to project the sound to the audience, monitors aimed back at the performers, and one or more mixers to control everything. Band members may also have stage amplifiers. In contrast, with Bose's approach, each performer simply has an L1 positioned behind them. The promise is that the band hears the same thing as the audience. Sound is dispersed evenly throughout the room as well as the stage, allowing musicians to hear and mix themselves. Stage volume is lower, and sound reaches the back of the room without blasting those in the front row.

Acoustic performers especially embraced the original L1 due to its ability to fill a room while offering portability and simplicity. Bose has continued to refine the line, and in this review, we'll look at the latest incarnation, the L1 Pro.

180 DEGREES OF COVERAGE

The L1 Pro is available in three models: the L1 Pro8 (\$1,199), Pro16 (\$1,799), and Pro32 (\$2,698-\$3,098). Each version has slightly different dispersion characteristics and frequency response, mostly based on the size of the subwoofer, but all three promise 180 degrees of coverage. I checked out the Pro16, which combines a 250-watt, 16-speaker column with a 1000-watt 10 x 18-inch sub.

The L1 Pro16 consists of two functional pieces, plus an optional extension. The subwoofer weighs 40 pounds—quite light as subs go—and its tall, narrow shape (13 x 16 x 24 inches) and well-designed handle make it fairly easy to carry with one hand. A solo guitarist could quite literally walk into a gig with the complete system and a guitar in one trip. The 4 x 3-inch, 3-1/2-foot line array comes with a carrying bag that also holds the extension, with additional room for cables. Setup consists



COURTESY OF BOSE CORPORATION

of inserting the line array element into a connector on the top of the subwoofer and plugging in the power cord—remarkably fast and easy. Bose recommends using the 13-inch extension to raise the sound over the audience's heads when playing on the floor. The extension is not needed with a raised stage.

The subwoofer houses a three-channel mixer with volume, bass, treble, and reverb controls on the back of the subwoofer. The first two channels offer 1/4-inch/XLR combination inputs and provide phantom power for condenser mics; the third channel offers a line input, and can also connect to a sound source via Bluetooth. The back of the sub also has a power switch, line out, and a connector for Bose's ToneMatch line of mixers. For iOS or Android mobile devices, there's also a free L1 Mix app that provides full remote control via Bluetooth.

TEST DRIVE

With Covid restrictions, I was unable to use the L1 Pro16 on a gig, but I was able to check it out at home. The system produces a big sound—with more than enough bass and volume to fill a medium-size club—and sparkling highs. The even dispersion of sound was obvious even at home; the system seemed to fill the room equally whether I was directly in front of the speaker or entirely off to the side.

Music streamed through the L1 Pro16 sounded a bit hyped in the highs and lows, but that may be exactly what is needed in a busy venue. Connecting a guitar via my pedalboard,

the Bose sounded excellent: clean, clear, and natural, with a warm bass and shimmering highs, but none of the harshness you sometimes get from traditional PA systems with horn tweeters. Playing guitar through the system was enjoyable, an important aspect that sometimes gets lost in the effort to be heard.

The self-contained controls facilitate the easy setup, but the location on the back of the subwoofer is not particularly convenient for the performer, and controlling the system via the L1 Mix app on a mobile device is a more attractive option. While the L1 offers only basic treble, bass, and reverb controls, the app adds a full selection of Bose's ToneMatch presets that tailor the EQ for a variety of common guitars, pickups, and microphones. Four presets labeled voice, music, live, and flat also change the overall sound of the system. For those who want more control over EQ or more channels, Bose's ToneMatch T4S (\$599) or T8S (\$899) mixers can be attached via the ToneMatch connector, or you could use any external mixer with the L1's line inputs.

The L1 Pro16 is an impressive amplification solution that combines clear sound, plenty of power, and uniform dispersion and coverage characteristics, while being remarkably portable and simple to set up. The system should be especially attractive to solo performers, as well as acoustic duos or trios. With three choices of size and power, most performers should be able to find a model that suits their needs. [bose.com](https://www.bose.com) **AC**

Mark O'Connor



A Return to (Blazing) Form

Mark O'Connor mixes flash and feeling on his first guitar album in four decades

BY DERK RICHARDSON

There may be legions of bluegrass and acoustic music aficionados that never knew Mark O'Connor played guitar. They might have missed his 1978 album *Markology*, on which he played his 1945 Martin D-28 in the company of Tony Rice, David Grisman, and Sam Bush. And for the past four-plus decades, those who know O'Connor's music rightly think of him as a violinist-composer renowned for diverse collaborations (Steve Morse and the Dregs, Yo-Yo Ma and Edgar Meyer, Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg, the New Nashville Cats, Charlie Daniels, the Hot Swing Trio, the family-based O'Connor Band) and such major orchestral works as *Fiddle Concerto*, *Fanfare for the Volunteer*, *American Seasons*, *Americana Symphony*, and *The Improvised Violin Concerto*.

It's not just the 43-year-gap between guitar albums that makes *Markology II* such a revelation. O'Connor hadn't even played guitar for 20 years before setting out to record this album; bursitis inhibited the motion of this player who had twice won national flatpicking championships (as a teen) and occupied the guitar role vacated by Tony Rice in the David Grisman Quintet in 1979. These ten performances of original and traditional tunes bear not a single sign of the long

layoff; indeed, they come at you with a bit of I've-got-something-to-prove flash. Someone with O'Connor's technical ability probably just can't help himself. A direct heir of Rice (who died last December at 69, and to whom the album is dedicated), it's in O'Connor's nature to play with breathtaking speed, cleanliness, and precision.

But while the playing does draw attention to itself, it rewards that attention with myriad layers of sound and feeling that eventually reveal themselves—especially upon repeated listening. The first impression might simply be one of awe: Strummed chords, acrobatic single-note runs and clusters, and diamond-point harmonics come at you with a velocity that leaves you stunned, or giggling at the audacity of it all. O'Connor takes no prisoners on the oft-performed classics "Beaumont Rag," "Salt Creek," and "Alabama Jubilee," associated with Doc Watson, Bill Monroe, and Roy Clark, respectively. "Flailing" is an astounding whirlwind of alternating strummed and picked passages, and "Kamala Boogie," which opens with O'Connor tuning his low E string down to C, wouldn't have sounded out of place on *Led Zeppelin II*. All of these tracks are likely to cast you into a state that mandolinist/guitarist Tim Ware long ago called "idiot glee."

The six-and-a-half-minute opening-track exploration of hoary old "Greensleeves" sends the message that you are going to spend the next 38 minutes swimming with O'Connor in deep musical waters, carried by swift and smooth currents, towed through furious rapids, sucked down into kaleidoscopic whirlpools, and occasionally released into calm, open pools, their surfaces gently rippled by quieter strums and picking.

For most of the album, O'Connor plays a dreadnought built in 2017 by Colorado Guitar Company master luthier John Baxendale. Heavy-gauge strings add to O'Connor's big, lustrous tone. For "On Top of the World," which gives you a chance to catch your breath five tracks in, and "Ease with the Breeze," which closes the album with a virtual sigh, he plays the same D-28 he used on *Markology*. And his gorgeously melancholic reading of "Shenandoah" is on a 1924 Gibson K-4 mandocello. Given O'Connor's many forays into the classical-crossover realm, it's not surprising that much of the playing has an orchestral richness that is enhanced by the recording, engineering, and mixing that he did himself. He may have been out of touch with his guitars for decades, but his unexpected comeback shows that nothing is out of his reach.

AC



Gwenifer Raymond

Strange Lights Over Garth Mountain

(Tompkins Square)

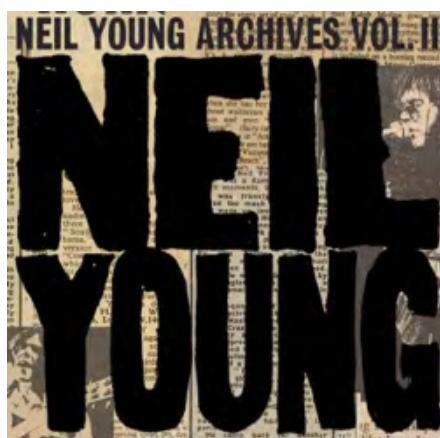
Solo instrumentals possess a “dark, disorienting power”

Gwenifer Raymond wants to make it clear: These eight solo tunes, recorded in her basement flat in Brighton, England, are *not* about the pandemic. “Coronavirus may have dictated the circumstances under which the album was recorded,” she writes in a press release, “but it did not otherwise inform any of the compositions. Neither I, nor any of the songs, saw said outbreak coming.”

Who could? But whatever their origins, there’s an essential loneliness, a portentousness that is evident, and pandemic or not, it’s infused throughout *Strange Lights Over Garth Mountain*. Raymond also wants us to know these aren’t improvisations. Unlike the pieces on *You Never Were Much of a Dancer* (2018), they’re composed, reflecting a lifetime of listening that started at eight years old with Nirvana, graduated to American Primitives in her teens, and now turns to experimentalists like Erik Satie, the inspiration behind her insistently unsentimental “Eulogy for Dead French Composer.”

There’s a dark, disorienting power in all of these pieces, shifting in rhythm and intensity from one moment to the next, taking old ideas from guitarists like Skip James and “Reverend” Robert Wilkins and filtering them through her childhood memories of Cardiff, Wales. The sonic images here—breath misting in cold air, coal trains rattling glassware in the kitchen, lights dancing in sky above Garth Mountain—are spooked, haunted by everyday death, madness, and what Raymond calls “Welsh folk horror.” That makes this album a stunning leap beyond her debut, creating her own version of Welsh Primitive marked by terror, aggression, and terrible beauty.

—Kenny Berkowitz



Neil Young

Archives, Vol. II: 1972-1976

(Reprise/Warner Bros./NYA)

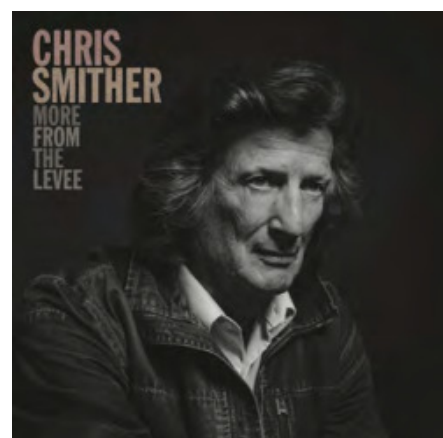
Acoustic treasures abound on early '70s box

At 75, Neil Young is steadily emptying his bounteous treasure chest of unreleased material. This ten-CD box set—available in basic retail and deluxe editions (with 252-page hardbound book), as well as streaming on Young’s subscription website—chronicles a prolific four-year period that began with the star-making album *Harvest* and spawned *Time Fades Away*, *On the Beach*, *Zuma*, and *Long May You Run*. There are several tracks from the recent rarities albums *Tuscaloosa* and *Homegrown* and a dozen previously unreleased songs and 49 never-before-heard versions.

But this monumental 131-song collection also includes a goldmine of rare acoustic nuggets, many spotlighting the Canadian folk-rocker alone with acoustic guitar and harmonica. The set kicks off with the plaintive “Letter from ‘Nam,” a previously unreleased and strikingly reflective solo-acoustic meditation on America and a soldier’s homecoming. An outtake from the *Tonight’s the Night* session finds Joni Mitchell singing a stripped-down version of her own “Raised on Robbery,” a perfect pairing for Young’s previously unreleased acoustic ballad “Sweet Joni.” Other unplugged gems include the Jimmy Buffett-worthy “Hawaiian Sunrise”; the unreleased original of “Traces,” from the *Walk On* sessions; a previously unreleased version of “Vacancy,” from *The Old Homestead* sessions; and an earnest solo performance of the British-folk chestnut “Greensleeves.”

But the real prize is an aching solo-acoustic demo of “Through My Sails,” from the *Zuma* sessions, featuring Young sans guitar slaps and without the sweet vocal harmonies by occasional bandmates David Crosby and Graham Nash—classic Neil Young unplugged.

—Greg Cahill



Chris Smither

More from the Levee

(Signature Sounds)

New Orleans sessions reveal more unfiltered bayou blues

With jaunty, spiraling picking, veteran singer-songwriter Chris Smither kicks off *More from the Levee* with “Lonely Time,” a song he first recorded on his 1972 debut album *I’m a Stranger Too*. Aside from a sashaying original, “What I Do,” the bulk of the tunes on Smither’s 18th album also draw from the past—they are previously unreleased gems from the 2013 New Orleans sessions that resulted in Smither’s stunning career retrospective *Still on the Levee*.

A listen to the existential front porch saunter “Caveman,” or the cyclical and wistful “Father’s Day,” will assure fans that these tunes are not mere leftovers from the lauded sessions that included the late Allen Toussaint, the Motivators, and members of Morphine. The present collection features unfiltered Smither—philosophical fatalism delivered in a bourbon-smooth rasp over picking that moves like a like a river’s current. In the intoxicating roadside gothic “Drive You Home Again,” Smither’s effortless, bouncing guitar floats over rolling and crashing drums as his guttural vocal promises a seductive and terrible journey. Toussaint’s piano crests like breakers as Smither’s slivery, razor-sharp guitar unfurls the loping melody of “Let It Go.”

On the swaggering “Old Man Down,” Smither’s bent-note blues picking is countered by distant dissonant piano, just as Anita Suhanin’s spectral whisper shadows Smither’s sepulchral growl. And the insouciant and airy “Hey Hey Hey” may be Smither’s most cogent combination of picking and philosophizing to date. As whirlwind guitar weaves through rambling drums, Smither grapples with the absurdist cosmos and decides to make it his friend.

—Pat Moran



John Smith

The Fray

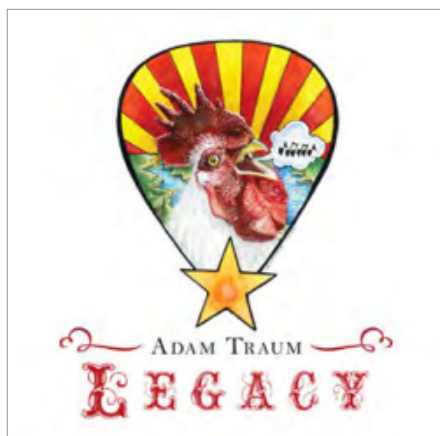
(Commoner/Thirty Tigers)

Melodic, introspective album about living through loss

It's been a hard year for Britain's John Smith, who lost his livelihood to the pandemic and a baby to a miscarriage at the same time his mother received a cancer diagnosis. Somehow, without the distractions of touring and performing, he's located the pandemic's silver lining, distilling his struggles into writing the songs on *The Fray*, an uncompromisingly melodic, introspective album about living through loss.

It starts with "My Friend," a love song to an ex, played with a lightly percussive touch on guitar, sung with a promise that "when the weight of the world gets heavy/ you don't have to bear it alone," and beautifully punctuated with a tenor horn solo by Marcus Hamblett. It ends with "One Day at a Time," a meditation about moving forward after the miscarriage, even without "a reason/ some way of making sense," that finds Smith reaching for a slow, stuttering solo on six-string and an aching falsetto, buoyed by Jason Rebello's reassuring chords on piano.

In between, there are ten songs, all pitched toward hopefulness, mostly played in the warm folk-trad weightiness of DADGAD and sung with a rich, honeyed rasp. Smith's performances on acoustic, electric, and lap steel are startlingly good throughout, with a lightness that keeps these songs afloat, and a set of guest spots—from Bill Frisell and Milk Carton Kid Kenneth Pattengale on guitar, along with duet vocals from Courtney Hartman, Sarah Jarosz, and Jessica Staveley-Taylor—make each song feel uniquely its own in a complex, emotionally satisfying blend of struggle and uplift. —KB



Adam Traum

Legacy

(Adamtraum.com)

Personable and well-crafted songs from folk scion

This Northern California singer, songwriter, and guitarist can lay claim to a picking lineage: His father, Happy Traum, and late uncle, Artie Traum, were fixtures on the 1960s Greenwich Village folk scene and contributed to recordings by Bob Dylan, The Band, and Richie Havens, to name a few. This self-produced album is a baker's dozen that includes ten originals; Happy Traum appears on two tracks and the album is dedicated to Artie. It features songs that resonate with memories of Adam's own life.

Powered by a Santa Cruz dreadnought and a tenor ukulele (on "Cuckoo"), Traum finger-picks his way through a selection of folk and blues ballads and country reveries. He is joined on occasion by Josh Yenne (electric guitar), Jack Hines (bass), and David Thom (mandolin). "One Light Blues" recounts his teen glory days and shows that Traum is as proficient a songwriter as he is a picker. The autobiographical "I Used to Care" is a wry ode to his awkward passage into adulthood. "Ash on the Windshield" and "Rain" pay tribute to the resilience of the wine-country community he calls home, and which survived recent historic wildfires. "Little Gifts" is a sweet homage to the beauty of the outdoors, replete with nature sounds. "Shoulda Coulda Woulda," a showcase for his fingerpicking talents, recalls the regret of a lost love. "Holes in My Shoes," the album's only message song, laments the plight of the working poor. Overall, these well-crafted songs are personable and relatable and always blessed with that pedigree picking. —GC



Robin Bullock

An American Guitar Album

(Dancing Wolf Records)

Imaginative interpretations of nuggets from the folk canon

After immersing himself in Celtic music for decades, Robin Bullock was touring with Tom Paxton when the folk patriarch asked Bullock why he didn't undertake an exploration of classic American folk songs. The efficiently titled *An American Guitar Album* is Bullock's answer to Paxton's query. Aside from a re-recording of his original "Lost Hollow Lament," Bullock focuses on instrumental interpretations of chestnuts associated with the likes of Maybelle Carter, Stephen Foster, and the ubiquitous Traditional. Playing primarily solo on his MacCubbin Wolf Boy six-string, Bullock reconfigures and rejuvenates these old-time tunes.

With crosscurrents of flatpicking, Bullock turns Foster's jaunty "Oh Susanna" into a pensive, melancholy lament. A slowed-down rendition of "Shenandoah" leaves the melody line spread out among bell-toned notes that reverberate in stillness. Open-G tuning gives a slack-key sound to "Corrina Corrina."

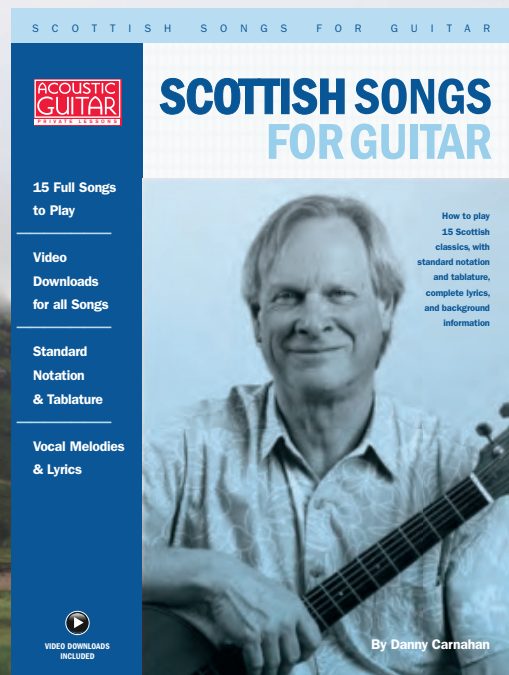
"The Streets of Laredo" is one of three tunes where Bullock augments his solo guitar with others; to his rippling lead part, he layers six-string rhythm and a jangling 12-string. Turning to his quiver of Celtic techniques—or perhaps his musical muscle memory—Bullock imbues the archetypal cowboy song with shimmering madrigal-like delicacy.

Only on John Fahey's "Joe Kirby Blues" does Bullock follow the composer's arrangement. With a knotty melody line, interspersed with bent-note punctuation, Bullock reveals that while he may have crossed the ocean to the British Isles, in his heart he's never strayed far from home. —PM

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2021 Santa Cruz OM Custom

An Old West train robbery meets old-growth redwood and “the Tree”

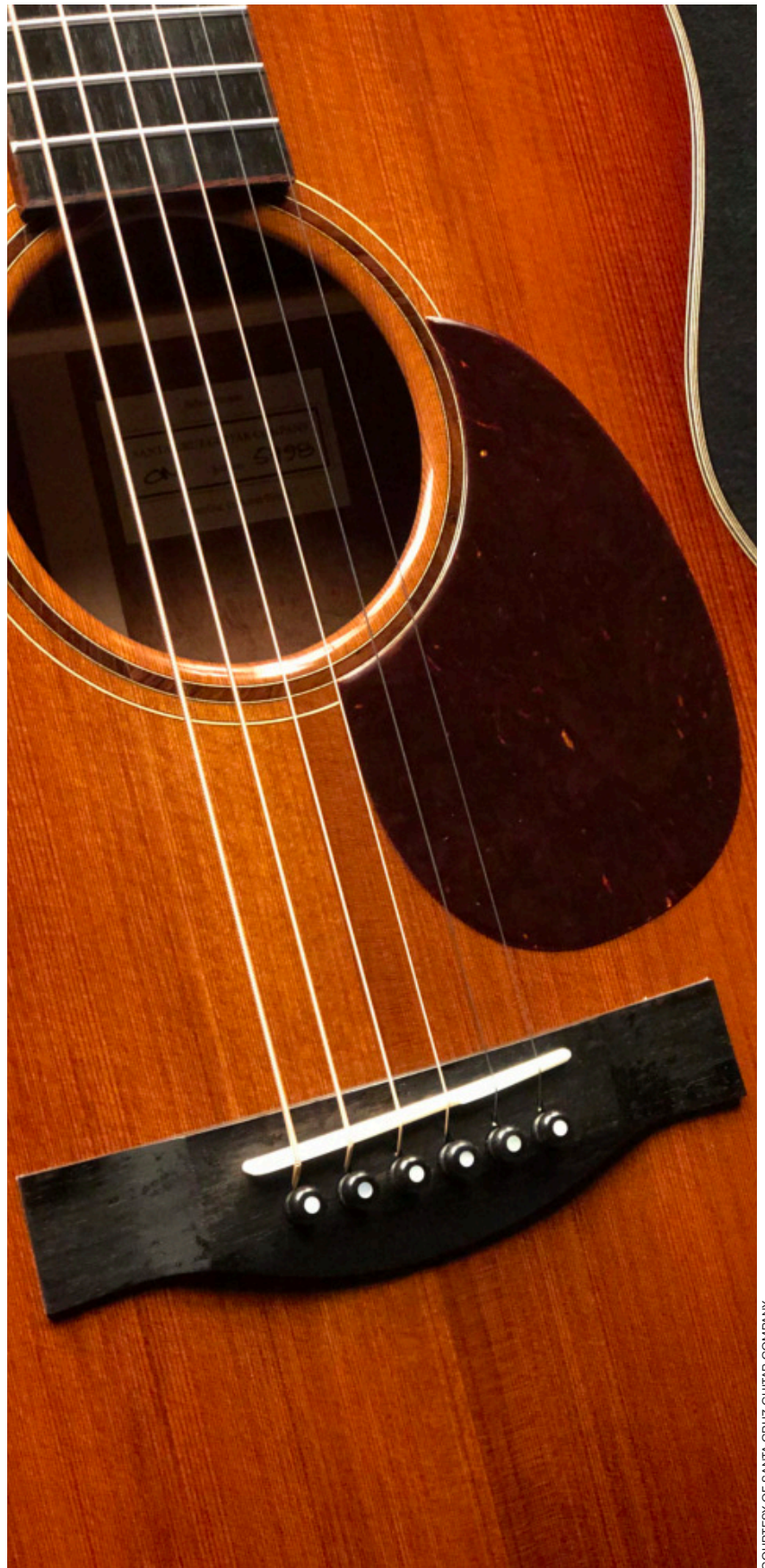
BY GREG OLWELL

Though this custom Santa Cruz OM was completed earlier this year, its story really begins with what would be the last Old West train robbery. On October 11, 1923, three criminally inclined brothers, Hugh, Ray, and Roy DeAutremont, made a disastrous and deadly attempt to rob Southern Pacific Train No. 13 as it made its way through a tunnel in Southern Oregon’s Siskiyou Mountains. The debacle resulted in the murder of four rail employees, and the tunnel was heavily damaged from the explosives used to break into the mail car. All three brothers were captured and imprisoned for their crimes after a four-year manhunt.

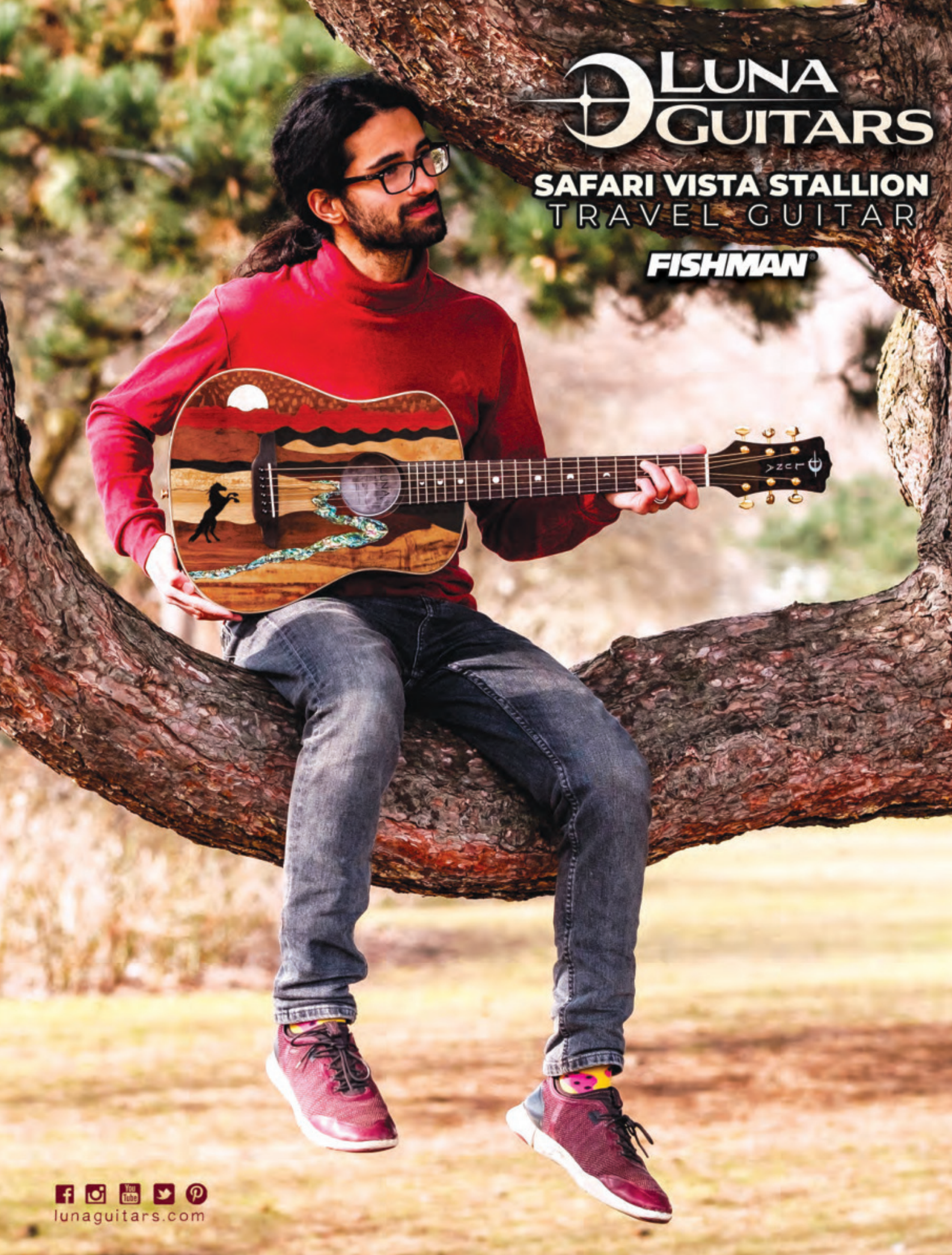
The tunnel’s large support beams were removed and tossed down an embankment. Realizing that they were made from old-growth redwood and had a remarkable story behind them, an enterprising luthier named Rob LaCoste salvaged the beams. The wood from these 2,000-year-old virgin-growth trees is exceptionally tight, with a dense and uniform grain, and after seasoning in a dark, temperate tunnel for over a century, the wood resins have polymerized, qualities that stood out to Santa Cruz Guitar Company founder Richard Hoover, who selected the redwood for the top of the guitar featured here. “The Tunnel 13 stuff we used was stiffer and denser and had a better velocity of sound than most of the redwood you could buy,” says Hoover. “You pluck a string, and you get the response *quickly*.”

This Santa Cruz OM was actually made with several varieties of storied woods, including Tunnel 13 redwood for the top; Brazilian rosewood for the binding, back strip, and rosette; and uniquely figured mahogany sourced from “the Tree”—a legendary, centuries-old source of mahogany discovered in Belize—for the back and sides. (See a feature on “the Tree” in the March 2016 issue.) Hoover says, “These rare woods are not only cool stories, but they’ve become part of SCGC’s story for the last 45 years, using responsibly harvested and salvaged woods. It’s not only the right thing to do, but they sound better and make for a superior guitar.”

AG



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