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POLARIS GUITARIST AND METALCORE GUITAR HERO RYAN SIEW DIES, AGED 26

Ryan Siew, guitarist with Australian metalcore band Polaris, has died aged 26. The Sydney-based band announced the news with a moving post on social media, describing Siew as a man who "loved music, more diversely than you could ever imagine, and spoke its language in ways that only the rarest among us do."

"Our hearts are with his family first and foremost, but also with all those whose lives he touched," read part of the statement. "We ask that you please respect the wishes of Ryan's family for privacy at this time, and likewise that you give us, our team and family the space to grieve & attempt to heal from this immeasurable loss. We know that you will be grieving with us and that we, and our community, will hold each other through this."

Polaris had been preparing to release their third album *Fatalism* this September and Siew was much respected among metalcore fans and the wider guitar-playing community. The band's first album, 2017's *This Mortal Coil* and the follow-up 2020's *The Death Of Me* were both nominated for an ARIA award, while the latter was also tipped for Best Record by Australia's Rolling Stone. **Words by Matt Parker Photo credit: Instagram**

For more of the latest news and exclusive content, head to *guitarworld.com*

PAUL MCCARTNEY SAYS THE "FINAL BEATLES RECORD" IS NEARING RELEASE – AND IT'S BEEN CREATED USING AI

Paul McCartney has revealed that the last ever Beatles song is set to arrive this year, but will do so with a rather notable, artificially intelligent twist. Speaking to BBC Radio 4 in June, the legendary songwriter spoke of the "final", as-yet-unreleased Beatles track, which is rumoured to be John Lennon's unheard cut from 1978, titled Now and Then.

And, while doing so, McCartney also discussed how he called upon AI to help create the final version of Lennon's vocal tracks. But don't be alarmed – it's not as blasphemous as it first sounds. Artificial intelligence wasn't used to completely create Lennon's vocal track from scratch, but was instead used to help "extricate" Lennon's voice from an old cassette.

The cassette – which had been recorded by Lennon shortly before his death and labeled "For Paul" – contained this "final Beatles track", which in turn was altered with AI to strip Lennon's vocals from accompanying piano. Notably, the same process was used by Peter Jackson to clean up old audio for use on his mammoth Get Back Beatles documentary. As such, Jackson was recruited by McCartney for this project.

Words by Matt Owen / Photo credit: Kevin Winter / Getty

GODIN GOES ALL IN ON NYLON

Godin is going all in on the nylon string craze, with its newly announced line of modern Multiacs – dubbed the Multiac Mundials – poised to offer a "more modern and stylish variation" compared to earlier models. These are ultra-light affairs, with a Silver Leaf maple body bedecked by a cedar top and neck, with a 22-fret rosewood fingerboard at a 16 inch radius. The hollow body electrics are packed with Godin's Dual Source System, and in Godin's words, is "lighter, breathes, and resonates without feedback."

Meanwhile, Godin is also giving its G-Tour model – which is designed for primarily electric guitarists to get in on the benefits of nylon – a fresh Arctik Blue set of paint. Its chambered silver-leaf maple body has a cedar top and rosewood bridge, with a 25.5 inch scale length and rosewood fingerboard with a 12 inch radius. It also comes bearing an EPM Q-Discrete under-saddle pickup.

The Multiac Mundial Models will set you back $2,895, while the G-Tours range $2,995 through to $3,195. Check out future issues for a closer look. **Words by Shaun Prescott**

AUSTRALIAN guitar™

#154

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BLAKE WILLIAMS

So, where are you from?
I grew up in Penrith. I know this is not exclusive to one place, but nostalgia of making lifelong friends and playing music for the first time will always stay with me. Plus having a premiership-winning NRL team doesn't hurt.

What's your latest drop?
In February I released my single 'You Probably Won't Care'. If you feel irrelevant and want to just scream into your pillow and/or at a random stranger in the street, then I think you probably will care about this.

How would you sell your sound?
Imagine jumping on a trampoline, feeling like you can reach the sky and touch the stars. Meanwhile, you're bumping into everyone else on the trampoline, thriving off everyone's adrenaline and screaming in each other's faces.

What are your tour van playlist go-tos?
5 Seconds Of Summer for some hometown motivation, Twenty One Pilots for some cry-dance sessions, Bring Me The Horizon for a mobile mosh-pit, and Halsey to feel like a god.

In what setting does your music *truly* come to life?
With headphones on, in bed, as you're falling asleep. Whenever I listen to music like this, it really allows me to focus on the music and nothing else around me. There are always little layers or melodies I add to my tracks that I think no one will ever notice, but listening like this is the perfect way to get the full experience.

It's 2012 and this is Tumblr, what's on your mood board?
A necklace with brass knuckles, because I thought Good Charlotte were so hardcore for wearing them. A sky blue Kombi Van parked by the beach. Any sort of "straight-edge" symbols. Moody lyrics in handwritten font on a rainy backdrop. Anything wrestling.

What else should we know about you?
I'm just a girl from Western Sydney trying to make her dreams come true and share her music to anyone that will listen. I want to travel the world playing shows and work with like-minded people. I'll fulfil that dream or die trying.

Photo by **Blake Williams**

CHERISH

So, where are you from?
We're spread out across greater so-called Sydney, coming from stolen Gadigal, Darkinjung and Dharug land. The best things in all of those places are the nature, water and people.

What's your latest drop?
Our current release is called Your Suffering. It's six tracks of blistering straight-edge hardcore. You should check it out if you want to hear voices from the margins, raging against the system and scenes that keep us down and out. Keep an eye out for our next tape, *Project XOXO*, out in May.

How would you sell your sound?
Instructional poetry for the revolution. Songs to scream back at a world that scorns you. Anthems for agitation. Short. Fast. Loud.

What are your tour van playlist go-tos?
Kylie Minogue, G.L.O.S.S, Refused, A Tribe Called Quest, mewithoutYou, Have Heart and Fugazi.

In what setting does your music *truly* come to life?
I've had multiple people tell me it's good to work out to? I enjoy listening to aggressive music while I exercise, so it checks out.

It's 2012 and this is Tumblr, what's on your mood board?
A lot of classic black-and-white '80s hardcore and skateboarding photos; heaps of quotes about anarchism, decolonisation, feminism, anti-capitalism, etcetera; gay stuff, trans stuff, and gay trans stuff; *Pokémon*; Dr. Pepper; Guzman y Gomez.

What else should we know about you?
Cherish is an intentional art project, created to push back against the status quo. We want land back. We want to see all the freaks to the front. Women, people of colour, queers, trans people – take up that space. We see you, we love you, we are you.

Photo by **Adam Davis Powell**

DUSTY

So, where are you from?
Jord lives in Brisbane and reckons Bunnings is where it's at. Annie lives in Tweed, where the best thing is that it's not Brisbane. Tannum says the Brisbane river is so good for a dip, and Harls says it's all the bands and the local music scene!

What's your latest drop?
'Brat'! If someone with a moustache is grinding your gears, this is the track for you. If you have a moustache, this track is also for you!

How would you sell your sound?
It could be described as getting punched in the face, but in a good way. Lots of sass, catchy riffs and melodies!

What are your tour van playlist go-tos?
Momma, Paramore, Hole and The Beths.

In what setting does your music *truly* come to life?
4am, U'y boom, sat around a plastic table.

It's 2012 and this is Tumblr, what's on your mood board?
Everything '90s. Camcorder footage. Bedroom collage. Socks with thrills. Overalls.

What else should we know about you?
We're in it for the money, but music's kinda cool as well we guess.

Photo by **Ella Tubman**

HONEYBEAM

So, where are you from?
I'm from Tarndanya/Adelaide (currently Naarm/Melbourne-based) and it's really lovely. I love it, it's full of beautiful people and a fab tight-knit music and art scene. Best thing in my opinion is this one little spot by this creek in the hills, it's overgrown with bamboo that makes these little tunnels and I used to go there every day after school and crawl around. I grew a little herb garden in there. It might be my favourite place in the whole world!

What's your latest drop?
It's a single and B-side, 'Technically' and 'Everyone Knows' – two quick, honest songs. You should keep doing what you're doing – I'd hate to distract you – but if you feel a little rumble in your tummy while you read this, like some kind of fizz, you're hereby invited to come dive in.

How would you sell your sound?
I've always thought it sounded a little like the feeling you might get at the end of the world, but no one's entirely sad about it, or happy either. Some kind of melancholic or nostalgic world-ending crumble time that makes you say a really emotional 'huh'. You know when things kind of zoom out and everything feels really objective, and you understand things a little more or something? I hope it sounds like that.

What are your tour van playlist go-tos?
Weyes Blood, Ink Spots, Julia Jacklin, Andy Shauf, The Beatles and their solo things, Alice Phoebe-Lou, maybe some Ashnikko or Rei Ami for the freeway times, King Krule, maybe some Mac Miller here and there, and Brenda Lee.

In what setting does your music *truly* come to life?
Some kind of busy place where you've got your earphones in and you're in your own little world, on some journey but surrounded by people. We love a main character moment.

It's 2012 and this is Tumblr, what's on your mood board?
Probably some combination of skate-or-die things, Runescape references (actually a great soundtrack), some guitars going up in flames, a heavy dose of side-fringe, and maybe sour squirms or choccy-covered liquorice?

Photo by **Maya Adamson**

HUBRIS

So, where are you from?
We operate on Kaurna land (Adelaide) and I think the most notable thing about us right now, unfortunately, is the giant pigeon statue in Rundle Mall.

What's your latest drop?
We released a song in late 2021 called 'Chemical Remains' – we think it's honestly just a really fun punk-rock song. Things are gonna sound quite a lot different in the future, but we're really proud of this one for a first release and we think that you might love it too.

How would you sell your sound?
So, you know sometimes you hear a car drive past you and it sounds so horrifically messed up that it's actually kind of fun? Well that's the exact kind of energy we want to portray with our music – kind of gross, but kind of beautiful.

What are your tour van playlist go-tos?
Lots and lots of The 1975, Boygenius, My Chemical Romance, Knocked Loose, Charli XCX, Loathe, Limp Bizkit, and a random assortment of '70s and '80s power-pop.

In what setting does your music *truly* come to life?
You know that scene at the start of *The Matrix* where Trinity leads Neo to that wild nightclub? Well imagine that club, but just a whole lot gayer – that's where our music belongs.

It's 2012 and this is Tumblr, what's on your mood board?
Robert Smith is a pretty easy number one. There would definitely have to be one of those iconic Tumblr-style black-and-white photos of a sad girl in Doc Martens and a tennis skirt, smoking a cigarette. A fancy red wine spilled all over a wanky philosophy book. An ungodly amount of Garfield and Garfield related paraphernalia (this one is directly from Amy, our drummer, and I am being held at gunpoint to include this). And in the spirit of 2012 Tumblr, it wouldn't be complete without a little bit of artful nudity.

What else should we know about you?
We are very cool and very good (we promise) and you should come to a show sometime if we're playing near you. Also, trans rights!

Photo by **Isabel Armstrong**

NONNIE

So, where are you from?
We all reside in various spots around Adelaide. Liam (bass) and Gianni (drums) are much closer to the city than Lilly, (vocals/guitar) which can make getting to places in a timely manner a bit tricky. As for the best thing? I could make a joke here about how we have giant balls in our city centre, but genuinely I think the music scene here is one of the best things about Adelaide. So many cool, young bands around the place.

What's your latest drop?
We have a brand new song called 'Choice Words' and I think people should give it a listen because it's emo as hell! It's also the first single to feature the whole band after recording solo for so long. You should also listen to it right now 'cause the bass is *soooo* clean.

How would you sell your sound?
Just think to yourself, "What if Weezer played a lot of *Sonic The Hedgehog*, had a caffeine addiction and then went to a pride parade?" That's what Nonnie sounds like.

What are your tour van playlist go-tos?
On the bus to Melbourne back in April I listened to a lot of Blink-182, it's really good travel music and really energised me for the whole trip. I also find myself listening to a lot of local acts like Teenage Joans. Liam's picks are Korn, System Of A Down and the *Wario Land 4* soundtrack.

In what setting does your music *truly* come to life?
Definitely during a practice, but good luck with getting to hear that yourself. You'd get to hear us get real silly with it.

It's 2012 and this is Tumblr, what's on your mood board?
Probably that one picture of Rivers Cuomo from Weezer wearing a dress from the *Pinkerton* era, maybe some Homestuck, and raccoons eating fruit with their tiny hands. Also the PlayStation 2 memory card screen and Juggalo couples.

What else should we know about you?
We have no idea what we're doing at any time, to be completely honest.

Photo by **Erin Wicks**

Photo: Sam Aptelis

SAM TESKEY

HAILS FROM NAARM/MELBOURNE, VICTORIA
PLAYS IN THE TESKEY BROTHERS
SOUNDS LIKE WHISKEY-SOAKED SOUL PLUCKED STRAIGHT FROM THE '50S
LATEST DROP *THE WINDING WAY* (LP OUT NOW VIA IVY LEAGUE)

How did you first discover the guitar?
I went to a great primary school called the Co-Op in Hurstbridge – a parent-run school that allowed for a lot of exploring and self-learning. I didn't pay too much attention to the standard curriculum, but there were a couple of old, beat-up nylon-string guitars that I found myself very engaged with. I then borrowed my first steel-string off my dad, an entry-level Maton from the '60s. It wasn't long after that I managed to save up for my first guitar, my faithful 1987 Fender Stratocaster in TV white. I still play that guitar today.

What's your current go-to?
My 1987 Strat is my go-to because it's what I've always known and feels like home when I play it. I also play a lot with my volume pot to ride with the dynamic music we play, and I shift tones from clean to distorted with that same pot regularly. This guitar's volume pot is perfectly positioned so I can always have my pinkie riding it while I play. The tone on a Strat is so versatile because the output volume is so low. As long as you have some sort of pedal to boost the output gain, you can really find that sweet spot between clean and distorted. And because of the springs holding up the bridge, the guitar always sounds so open and resonant.

What inspires you as a guitarist?
I could talk about what guitarists inspire me for days, but it's a little less defined than that – music is a feeling, and I believe if you feel good in a space, the music feels good. I find inspiration through playing by rivers, in caves, and at dinner tables. But I think the main thing that can sum up my inspiration is darkness. I used to jam a lot and record whatever we were playing, and every time we turned the lights off, something magic happened. I think this is why I like analogue recording so much: no computer screens, no waveforms to look at... What you hear is what you get.

Are you much of a gear nerd?
I guess I've never really considered myself a gear nerd. I only use one pedal and that ends up being anything that can boost my output signal into the amp. I'm a bit of a purest when it comes to clogging up my signal chain with too many pedals that I never use when playing. I get my sound from the way I play and the heavy-gauge strings. In my eyes there are 1,000 variables in sound before you even consider putting a pedal in place. I find too many pedals overwhelming and I get lost.

What would your signature model look like?
I've been thinking of modifying my Strat to have hotter pickups so I don't need to use a pedal. If I could somehow get a love child of a Strat and a Les Paul, I would be very happy. But it's not an easy thing to achieve. There are so many different ways to go about this, but the most viable would be putting a battery in the guitar, which is something I'm not incredibly keen on. I think my signature guitar would be the Strat I've got, with 12-gauge strings and hand-wound pickups from Dave Paul at Orpheus.

What advice would you give your past self?
I'd say to spend more time singing what I want to play and play it. I think we forget too often what our jobs are as musicians, and that is connecting with people. That's the joy of it all. Every time you forget the technicality of the instrument and think about who you are playing to and what you are playing for, magic happens. Magic is how I define music – not speed, skill or formula. It's soul and feeling. It's hard to define or compare. It's how you feel and how it makes others feel. That's how you define and compare music. It's how it connects us!

If you could jam with any guitarist, dead or alive, who would it be?
Man, I don't know! I can't really go past my big bro. I consider myself very lucky that for the past 21 years I've been able to play around such a soulful singer and guitarist. There ain't no better vibe for me.

Photo: Jarrah Knowels

LILY MORRIS

HAILS FROM WALBUNJA/BRAIDWOOD, NEW SOUTH WALES
PLAYS SOLO
SOUNDS LIKE TWANGY, SLOW-BURNING INDIE SEEPED IN PERSONALITY
LATEST DROP *SLEEPING IN* (EP OUT NOW INDEPENDENTLY)

How did you first discover the guitar?
My dad had an old Sigma acoustic and this mysterious '70s Les Paul clone with built-in effects and the wrong neck, which he'd strum sometimes. My older brother was really into guitar, so as not to intrude on his passion I learned bass for the school band. I got bored of the Bb scale and Henri Mancini so I'd hide and teach myself stuff on guitar at lunch and after school. The first song I learnt was 'A New England' from dad's vintage Billy Bragg songbook. That book had a lot to do with my love for songwriting. My first guitar was a disassembled Squier Jagmaster that had been badly repainted metallic red – it was in a box at the local tip. Dad brought it home and made me build it myself.

What's your current go-to?
I just fixed a guitar I built, which I'm enjoying playing again. It's an earthy pink colour and has a Filter'tron in the neck, which sounds delightful. I also recently got a '70s Harmony thing for cheap, it's small and the neck feels great. I've been playing slide stuff on it. So fun!

What inspires you as a guitarist?
I love tension and dissonance and guitarists with a lot of expression. I go to heaps of shows and am always soaking stuff up (I saw Snowy Band last night and now he's my favourite guitarist). My list of influences would be huge, but right now I'm really digging Jeff Tweedy's solo stuff. I love the dynamics and the cutting solos over acoustic backdrops. I've also been going through a bit of a Hand Habits phase lately. Meg Duffy shreds but also writes the most lush chord progressions and layers parts perfectly. They're sound is distinctive but understated and there's always something new to find in the layers.

Are you much of a gear nerd?
During lockdown I started collecting pedals and built my first board. It's small but jam-packed and fits in an old laptop case. I've got some nice pedals on it but the one I use most, I bought for $30 on eBay. It's a Pure Sky overdrive by Caline. It's a cheap, generic clone of something and by no means 'cool' or quality, but it sounds great and it's a leave-on now. At my family home there's a 1969 Princeton that dad found in a pile at the tip. It doesn't get used much but I love when I go home and get to play it. I recorded my EP *Sleeping In* with it. Hopefully one day it'll be mine!

Do you have any 'white whales'?
Pretty much anything built in Japan in the '70s. Especially if it has a Bigsby on it. I'd also love a nice old acoustic.

What would your signature model look like?
My dream guitar changes all the time, but I guess that's the good thing about building them: I can just design and make them myself (with limits of course). To keep it simple though, off the top of my head, my signature guitar might be a red, thinline Tele with a Filter'tron in the neck, wide-range humbucker in the bridge, a maple fretboard, an off-white pickguard and a half-ashtray bridge.

What advice would you give your past self?
Do whatever you want and break all the rules. Technical ability doesn't always equate to interesting or fun. And to contrast that, learn more chords, embrace silence and dynamics, and pay attention in theory lessons because knowing what you're doing can also be cool. Just focus on what is exciting for you, because that's the point, right? You don't have to prove anything to anyone.

If you could jam with any guitarist, dead or alive, who would it be?
I want to jam with everyone and anyone, all the time. Do you wanna jam?

Photo: Kalindy Williams

JENNY MCKECHNIE

HAILS FROM NAARM/MELBOURNE, VICTORIA
PLAYS IN CABLE TIES
SOUNDS LIKE PUNCHY POST-PUNK DRIVEN BY RAW PASSION AND SPIRIT
LATEST DROP *ALL HER PLANS* (LP OUT NOW VIA POISON CITY)

How did you first discover the guitar?
I first discovered the guitar when I was about 12. My dad had a nylon-string that I picked up and messed around with for a while. The fretboard was huge and I couldn't get my hand around it properly, but I think my parents were impressed by my persistence and got me a lovely little three-quarter nylon-string of my very own. I couldn't tell ya what make it was, but I named her Maria after the main character from *The Sound Of Music*. I was a pretty cute and easygoing kid who was into stuff like *The Sound Of Music* and Steeleye Span. How times change.

What's your current go-to?
My current fave is my 1991 '52 reissue MIJ Telecaster. It's from the FujiGen era and is beautifully made. I deeply love this guitar. Haven't played one I like better. I've got a backup Tele for shows when I change tuning or break a string, but it's just not the same. Both have Texas Special pickups because I like things to be bitey like grandma's Cracker Barrel cheese.

What inspires you as a guitarist?
I like guitarists (and musicians of all kinds) who are emotionally expressive in the ways they play. Bonnie Mercer is an incredible local player I look up to, both for her experimental solo work and guitar in The Dacios (as well as many other projects); Blake Scott from The Peep Tempel; David Kilgour's playing on 'Point That Thing Somewhere Else' by The Clean is my favorite piece of guitar playing, particularly listening to it in live sessions where it's such a living, breathing and growing thing. I think they're all players who can communicate an incredible sense of longing through their playing... at least it's how it makes me feel. They can also build, hold and release tension in such a delicate way.

Are you much of a gear nerd?
I'm not a big gear nerd. I tend to have a sound in mind and then go ask people that I trust how to achieve it. That said, here are some of my faves. I have a 1965 40W Goldentone Reverbmaster Combo. It only comes out on special occasions because I was frying too many parts of it too quickly. Still sounds incredible, even though it's far from original. One pedal I love is my reverb/feedback pedal, When The Sun Explodes by Beautiful Noise Effects. Its perfect for creating wild, stuttering feedback and sending the odd solo off the cliff. My [Greer Amps] Pork N Beans boost pedal broke recently – really made me appreciate how much I love and rely on that pedal. As a vegetarian I only use the beans setting (top boost). With my amp already driving pretty hard, it just adds a touch of sparkle and sizzle to the solos. Subtle and beautiful thing.

Do you have any 'white whales'?
I'm a simple woman. I just wish I could clone my Tele. I love it. I don't really pine for anything else. Would also love to get one of those little Goldentone suitcase amps for playing at home or solo.

What would your signature model look like?
Is there a way I could make my fave Tele a bit lighter, but sound exactly the same? I have no idea. It's dark magic to me. Wouldn't mind if it was pastel purple to match my hair.

What advice would you give your past self?
Play how you wanna play. Don't try to sound like anyone else. Just see what comes out of you.

If you could jam with any guitarist, dead or alive, who would it be?
Viv Albertine. I'd be crapping my pants but I'd just love to experiment and jam together... And get to talk to her...

Photo: Lachlan Douglas

ANDREW

HAILS FROM NGAMBRI/CANBERRA, AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY
PLAYS IN GLITORIS
SOUNDS LIKE FIRED-UP FEMINIST PUNK WITH TONGUES FIRMLY IN-CHEEK
LATEST DROP *GLITORIS* (LP OUT NOW VIA BUTTERCUP/MGM)

How did you first discover the guitar?
I first discovered the guitar through all the records my dad was playing – everything from Muddy Waters to BB King, Chuck Berry and Taj Mahal. Then later on, classic rock guitarists like Jimi Hendrix and Brian May. I love Dave Navarro and Jerry Cantrell, and Crispin Grey, who played for Daisy Chainsaw. Queen Adreena is superb. And Jonny Greenwood, of course. My first guitar was a second-hand nylon-string acoustic that was given to me when I was about six. Then I bought my first electric guitar from Cash Converters on Kilburn High Road. It was £90. I played it to death and I still love it. It's the most basic guitar Fender ever made, but I wouldn't part with it and I think it's underrated in terms of its build quality and sound.

What's your current go-to?
My go-to guitars were both made by Rusty Vance at Vance Custom Guitars. I've been so fortunate: since 2017, very early on in the Glitoris days, Rusty made two guitars for me. I The first guitar is the Glitterbomb. That's the glittery green guitar I play. It's so light, has a really slim neck and fretboard, and the pickups are mean as – it's got a Bare Knuckle Painkiller on the bridge and a DiMarzio Hot Rails on the neck. It's such a powerful guitar for its size. It was custom made for my body.

Guitars are made for men in every way, from the weight to the size of the body and the spacing of the frets. The Glitterbomb was designed for women and small-frame players. Then there's the Glitterbomb MkII – it's slightly bigger and a bit more curvy, in very sparkly silver, and this time with two Bare Knuckle Painkillers on the neck and bridge. The fretboard is slightly larger, but it plays like a dream. I love both guitars and I couldn't be without them. They're unique and reflect everything about the band, its politics and the more abrasive aspects of our sound. I've been so unbelievably lucky to know Rusty – he's been extremely generous as both an incredible luthier and a mentor.

What inspires you as a guitarist?
Aside from guitarists – Daron Malakian, Tom Morello, Brian May are my favourite players – I'm heavily influenced by politics and social justice. Music is an effective way of channeling everything you're mad about, and there's a lot to be mad about.

Are you much of a gear nerd?
I'm very picky about gear. There's things I won't compromise on. Nowadays, I don't play any other guitars aside from Vance's. I play through a Marshall DSL JCM 2000 amplifier and have done since long before Glitoris. I rarely play through other amps, although on the recent Regurgitator tour, there was one show where I didn't have the DSL (nightmare) and I played through a Fender combo. I wasn't keen, but Chad and Greg, who were doing front-of-house, said it sounded better! They were trolling me with accusations of being "Fender curious" – no way, Marshall all the way!

Do you have any 'white whales'?
I've always wanted to own a Fender Mustang. My friend Susan lent me her original 1960s Mustang for our album recording and it played beautifully. They're such iconic guitars. But I'm not a gear hoarder. I don't like owning stuff I don't use – I'd only ever buy another guitar if there was a reason for doing so.

What advice would you give your past self?
I would love to have read that Miles Davis quote about music when I was about 16: "20 percent is the notes, 80 percent is the motherf***er playing the notes." I wouldn't have sweated so much over learning theory and I would have gone straight down the path I'm on now, forgetting about convention and doing my own thing.

If you could jam with any guitarist, dead or alive, who would it be?
Tom Morello. I'd just want to jam on the entire Rage Against The Machine and Audioslave catalogues, and come up with some new stuff!

ASSISTED STRETCHING

TAYLOR GOLDSMITH TALKS DAWES' LATEST GENRE-EXTENDING EFFORT AND THE BENEFITS OF BRINGING A HIRED GUITARSLINGER ON TOUR.

WORDS BY **ALAN PAUL**

The group Dawes debuted in 2009 with *North Hills*, a fresh slice of Americana distinguished by its vintage vibe. The album was the product of young guys who had musical depth beyond their years. Singer/guitarist Taylor Goldsmith was 24; his drum-playing brother, Griffin, was 19; and bassist Wylie Gelber was 21. North Hills marked a left turn from the indie rock the Los Angeles natives played in the band's previous incarnation, when it was known as Simon Dawes and featured lead guitar wunderkind Blake Mills.

Over the 14 years since their debut, Dawes have expanded their palette, reaching into a variety of styles, including minimalist pop rock and '80s synth sounds. Their eighth album, last year's *Misadventures of Doomscroller* (Rounder), extends the band's reach even further. Produced by Jonathan Wilson, who worked with them on their first two releases, it's a musically expansive effort on which Goldsmith takes extended solos and the compositions hint at prog rock and even fusion. The album features the band's core of the Goldsmith brothers, Gelber and keyboardist Lee Pardini, but onstage the group is augmented by Trevor Menear, who shines as lead guitarist.

Prior to Dawes' 2023 spring tour, Gelber announced that he would be leaving the band to focus on his custom instrument company, Gelber & Sons. At press time, the group had not announced a replacement. We spoke to Goldsmith from New York City, where he was living while his wife, actress Mandy Moore, filmed the Hulu show Dr. Death.

Dawes' first two albums had a very folky Americana vibe, but the group has moved away from that over the years. Why is that?

We grew up on Bowie, Elvis Costello, the Rolling Stones — pillars of rock and roll education. But right before we recorded North Hills, I began to appreciate the power of lyrics. Music like early Bob Dylan and the Band and Crosby, Stills & Nash, which I had heard my whole life, started to make sense to me, and that had a huge impact. Once I heard how far words can take a song, I really committed to being a lyricist. That really had an impact on the sound of that album.

You clearly enjoy playing lead guitar, and it seems to be an expression of you just as much as the singing or songwriting.

That's true, and if I'm having a rough night, I am always down to play guitar. And If I can lift myself with a solo or riff, it can re-ignite me and save the show. When we first started, all my solos were composed. I didn't know how to think like a soloist or improviser. I had to learn as the band went along. Being with Blake for so long, I didn't really play solos.

After your fourth album, Duane Betts, an old friend of yours, joined the road band, and you've had another guitarist ever since. What's the benefit?

We just wanted to open up and make the show bigger, and Duane is a powerhouse guitarist. He doesn't mind sinking into the notes instead of just trying to blaze. He can blow your mind with his melodies. He's so confident that he's willing to let it marinate in a way that takes a lot of maturity to be cool with. Having him, and now Trevor, onstage just gives us one more voice to pass the ball to, and while they're very different players, they both add a lot. Griffin and Lee play a ton of L.A. sessions, and they recommended Trevor. There's something very special about him; he has a very angular jazz approach. He'll get out and open up new lines.

So much of your early music was about breakups and romance. Is it harder to write now that you're married and have a family?

It's just different. I don't want to write those kinds of songs. I have a hard time enjoying them, and I don't mean just those written by me, unless they offer some aspect of who someone is or help me reprocess an emotion. Sometimes I hear my own older songs and think, Why am I singing about this? It felt so indiscreet. If I am going to get so personal, I want there to be a point. I'm proud that I wrote those songs, and all my favorite writers have those periods, but I thought it was essential to be able to take on a different perspective as well.

"IF I CAN LIFT MYSELF WITH A SOLO OR RIFF, IT CAN RE-IGNITE ME AND SAVE THE SHOW"

"When My Time Comes" [from *North Hills*] is anthemic, with a big sing-along chorus. Were you aware of that power when you wrote it?

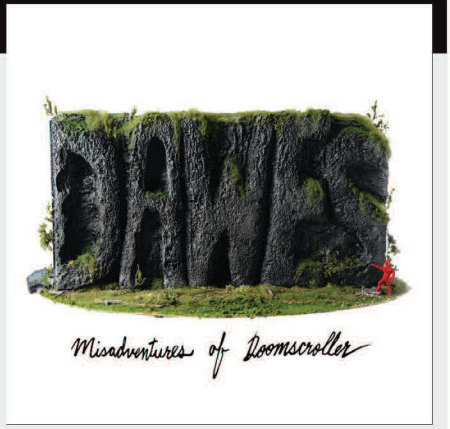
Definitely not. It wasn't even on North Hills originally. I just had this chorus and the guitar riff. A friend of mine heard it after we had finished recording and he said, "You have to finish this and put it on your record because it's going to be a big deal." I was doubtful, but I wrote the first verse, and kept insisting on forcing words into the "woah, woah woah" part. I finally gave up and let it be wordless, and I didn't even write the second verse until I was in the studio. That song had so many chances to not be on the record, and if it wasn't, I don't think we'd still be a band. It became such a big part of the show right away. People who had never heard it immediately started singing along by the last chorus.

When we cut *North Hills*, the idea of having a full-time music career was drifting away, and I was just happy to have a record to play for my friends at work. I figured we'd be a local band and play when we could. We all lived together, we toured with Incubus, and it felt like it was moving. Then that ended and I had a regular job at a home-warranty insurance place, and we played around L.A. We all quit our jobs when we got offered an opening slot on a Delta Spirit tour, and that song resonated in a short set and led us to a manager and agent. I really don't know if that would have happened without "When My Time Comes."

Griffin is such a good drummer. Is there a "brothers" thing going on there rhythmically, the way there is with harmonies? Is your right hand totally attuned to his playing?

I think he plays drums according to how I sing and play guitar, and I play and sing according to how he plays drums. We have different criteria for judging shows, so when he thinks it was too fast, I always think it was the best night, and when I think it was too slow, he thinks it was the best night. I'm looking people in the eyes and gauging how much they're dancing and singing, and he's listening to us execute. I think both of those radars are very important, and if I can let myself go, then I can pay attention to both at once — be mindful of the audience engagement and if we're hitting our marks and nailing it. They're not mutually exclusive.

RECOMMENDED LISTENING



MISADVENTURES OF DOOMSCROLLER
"SOMEONE ELSE'S CAFÉ/DOOMSCROLLER TRIES TO RELAX," "GHOST IN THE MACHINE," "EVERYTHING IS PERMANENT," "SOUND THAT NO ONE MADE/DOOMSCROLLER SUNRISE"

BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

ON DOUBLE EXPOSURE, **VINNIE MOORE** UNITES BOTH SPHERES OF HIS ROCK GUITAR INFLUENCES.

WORDS BY **JUDE GOLD**. PHOTOGRAPHY BY **GRETCHEN JOHNSON**

It's only natural that Vinnie Moore has been making instrumental albums ever since Mike Varney discovered him back in the mid '80s and immediately signed him to Shrapnel Records. After all, the first melody Moore remembers figuring out on his own as a budding teen guitarist was Jeff Beck's "Blue Wind." "At that point I couldn't even bend notes," Moore recalls. "I didn't know what a bend was. I played everything straight."

But like any rock guitar virtuoso who started playing in the mid to late '70s, Moore was also profoundly affected by guitar acts with vocals — everyone from the Beatles, Led Zeppelin and Robin Trower to Bad Company, Mountain and Michael Schenker–era UFO, the iconic German heavy rock band Moore has played lead guitar for since 2003.

And now, with the release of *Double Exposure* (Minds Eye Music), Moore has, for the first time, allowed both hemispheres of his musical influences to seep into a solo album. As you'd expect from a Vinnie Moore release, every song on the new record boils over with tasty guitar riffs, fills and solos that span every genre, from rock and metal to funk and Americana. Noteworthy, though, is that half of the songs on *Double Exposure* also — for the first time in Moore's solo career — feature singers, including such vocal powerhouses as Keith Slack, Ed Terry, Mike DiMeo and Brian Stephenson.

And yes, Moore sings on it too — sort of. Perhaps as a testament to how much he values groove in every song he tracks, Moore, at the end of "In Too Deep," can be faintly heard singing a classic phrase through his guitar pickups: "It don't mean a thing if it ain't got that swing."

After nine instrumental records, what inspired you to put vocals on your 10th?

I began this album during lockdown. I figured a quick and painless way to get six songs out would be to record an instrumental EP. But when I was listening back to one of the demo songs, I started hearing vocals in my head. I began singing along with it and went, Hey, this could be a good vocal song. Maybe I could have somebody sing on it.

I kept that in mind, and as I listened to the other songs, I had this lightbulb moment and thought, What if I did the six instrumentals, but then also recorded another version of each with a vocalist? Soon, my short little project grew into a more massive undertaking than originally anticipated, but I'm glad I did something different. Of course, I have done vocal stuff with UFO, but this is something I've always wanted to do with a solo record.

From clean to dirty, there is a wide range of juicy guitar sounds on the album.

A lot of parts were done through my old Marshall JMP head, which has a great crunch sound. For extra gain, I kick on my [Analog Man] King of Tone overdrive. That amp sings with a pedal in front of it. I also used a 1965 Fender Super Reverb in places, too.

Another way I get different sounds is by switching between pickups. When I play live, I'm constantly switching pickup combinations — bridge, neck or both — and riding the guitar's volume control, all of which can create a lot of different tones. I don't always play on 10; I also like to crank it down to, like, four or so, to get more of a half-overdriven sound, which works great with chords.

You're known to play Kramer guitars, but you're holding an Epiphone SG on the album cover. Frank Marino fan?

I love Frank Marino. It's funny — when I first showed people the album cover, a lot of them wondered if it sounded like Marino. And I'm like, "Sorry to let you down, but not really." If I could just pick up a guitar and sound like the guy who played it, well, I might go buy one of Eddie's Frankenstein guitars.

I bought a "Red Knob" Fender Twin once because Robben Ford used them as backline amps. But when I got it, I didn't instantly sound like Robben Ford.

Funny how that doesn't happen. But stuff like that can still lead you in a good direction and get you part of the way there. From that point, you need to get it going with your hands, your mind and the way you set the controls.

Tell us about your Kramer.

My main guitar is the Kramer Pacer I played on the last UFO tour, as well as on my solo tour of Europe. Kramer did some mods to it for me, including custom pickups and fat frets. The main mod, though, is how they carved out some wood and recessed the Floyd Rose bridge so it's low on the body. This meant the neck had to come down closer to the body, too.

I like the bridge to be as low as possible because it just feels more comfortable for my picking hand. If the strings are high off the body, like on a Les Paul, when I go to play the low strings, my hand kind of falls off. Back in the early days of my playing that didn't happen. I have no answer to why it happens now.

Speaking of the early days, there's a blazing shred cadenza you did with Vicious Rumors in the mid '80s called "Invader." How did that come together?

That was done back in the time when it was popular to put a guitar solo on a record because Eddie had done "Eruption." My memory of that record is going in one night and recording all the solos in, like, four hours, and being kind of frustrated that I didn't play "Invader" as good as I had on the demo. I was kind of disappointed by that because some of the picking stuff wasn't up to my ability. It was that thing where on a certain day you go in to record, but something's not working a hundred percent.

I remember Eddie Van Halen, in interviews, saying something similar about "Eruption" — that there was a mistake in there that always bugged him. In a video of him in Jason Becker's living room, he explains that it's during the tapping section at the end that the pattern gets slightly off for a second. I know the part he was talking about, but I have always liked that moment. It's like a race car almost going over the cliff but righting itself — it adds to the excitement.

That's the curse of being an artist. When you're laying stuff down, you're too hypersensitive and too aware of things, and they can bug you if you let them. But often when there are things that have bugged me, I come back even just a day later and it doesn't bug me at all.

Listeners don't analyze music under a microscope, which is the vibe you can get into when you're recording — and that's a dangerous place to be, because if you try to make things too perfect, you'll start killing the feel of what you've played. The more time you spend on something, the more you get drawn into that vortex of overanalyzing and looking too closely, and then you'll fix something that doesn't need to be fixed. You can get crazy with it! So when I'm recording, my main thing is to get in and get out quickly.

Have you gotten to know Michael Schenker much over the years?

I first met him around 1991, when Mike Varney introduced me. That was a real quick meeting, but in '99 we toured together and did 32 shows in America, sharing the same band each night. We all traveled on a tour bus, except Michael, who drove alone with his wife, so I didn't see him much on the whole tour, but he was always friendly. And I heard him play every night, which was awesome.

One time I ran into Michael at a hotel in Hanover, Germany, which is kind of where UFO is based. I had flown overnight, and we were about start a tour or a new record or something. I walk into the lobby, start checking in, and there's Michael, who was living in Hanover at the time. And for a second I thought, Man, if these guys made me fly all the way here to tell me Michael's back in the band and I'm gone, I'm gonna be pissed that they just didn't tell me over the phone. Turns out there was a heatwave in Germany and Michael was just staying at this same Marriott by chance. [laughs]

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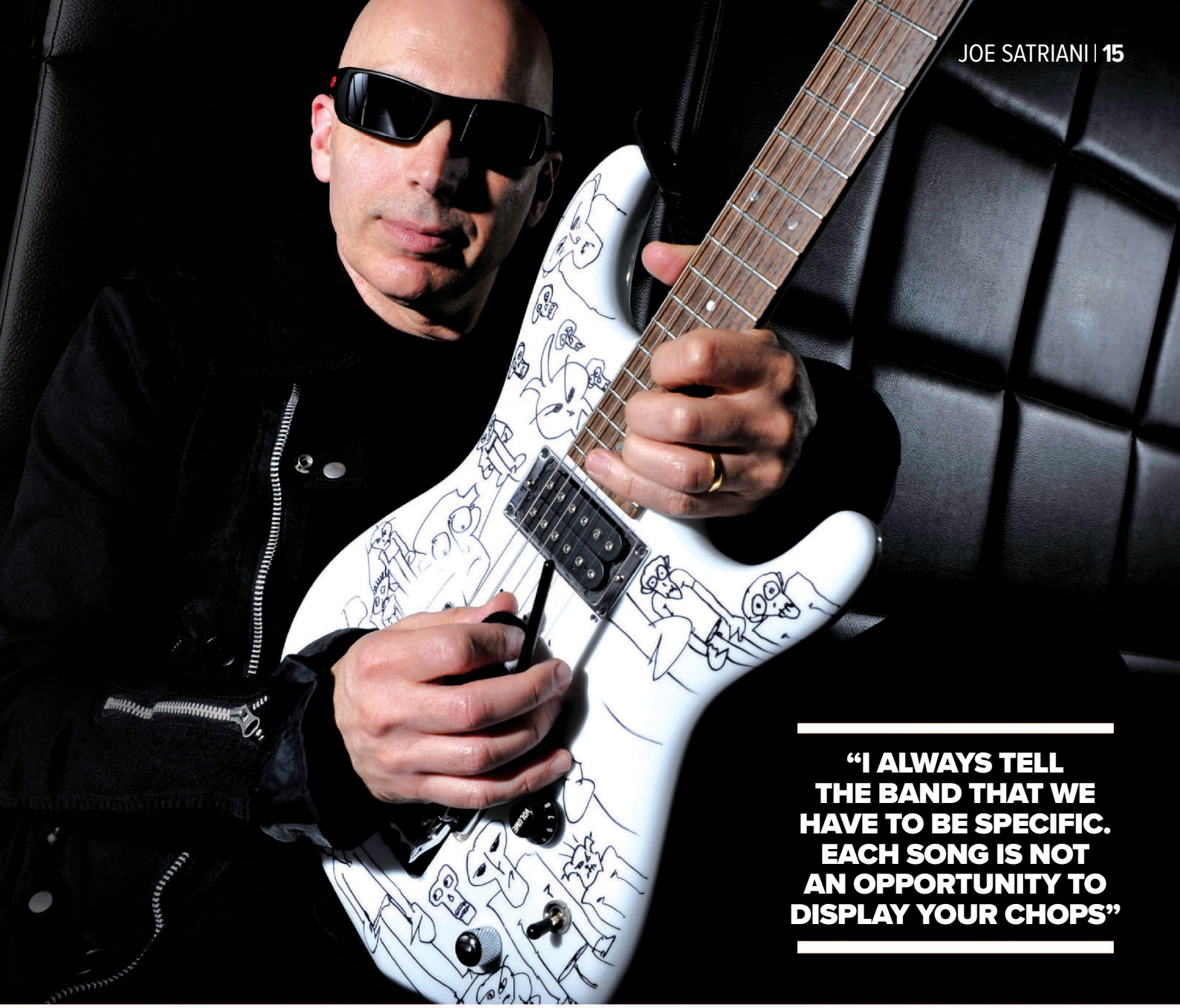


"I ALWAYS TELL THE BAND THAT WE HAVE TO BE SPECIFIC. EACH SONG IS NOT AN OPPORTUNITY TO DISPLAY YOUR CHOPS"

MY CAREER IN FIVE SONGS

HE'S RELEASED 18 STUDIO SOLO ALBUMS, BUT **JOE SATRIANI** REVEALS WHY THESE FIVE TRACKS HOLD A SPECIAL PLACE IN HIS CATALOG.

WORDS BY **MARK MCSTEA**

Of all the shredders that emerged in the '80s, Joe Satriani is perhaps the guitarist whose style is most rooted in the history of classic rock and blues, something that both Mick Jagger and Deep Purple clearly picked up on, as he had touring stints with both acts. His later rock supergroup, Chickenfoot, with Sammy Hagar on vocals, made it clear that Satriani was as comfortable in a band setting as he was fronting his own music.

"It's a very different discipline to be part of a band as opposed to fronting my own solo material," Satch explains. "It can be a bit of a relief when you've got a born front person like Sammy Hagar or Ian Gillan, and you realize, Oh, I can just hang out back here near the drummer. It's kind of nice for a person like me, who's shy. However, if you've had those moments where you've played your own instrumental music in front of 90,000 people and they've cheered, that feedback is so powerful. You don't get that direct audience connection with your own music when you're part of a band."

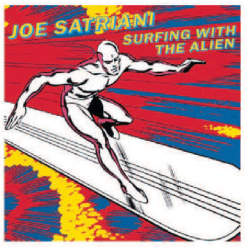
As a solo artist, Satriani has amassed a body of work that has pushed the boundaries of instrumental rock music, while never relying on technical expertise at the expense of emotional content. "It's so easy to write complicated songs," he says. "You take a piece of sheet music and you fill in the dots. Then you find some crazy musicians who are willing and able to play it, and you go, 'Look this is so complicated, isn't it great?'" He laughs. "When you try to play it live, what do you do? Basically you're busy all the time, just playing the parts. It's very different going to see a band like Free: There's a singer, bass, drums and guitar. They can move with the audience; they're not bogged down with ridiculous parts."

Four of Satriani's song selections are long-established favorites fans expect to hear at every show. And they haven't lost their freshness for Satch, even after almost 30 years of playing them. "I'm still trying to get them right," he says, with a laugh. "I'm so grateful that I've got an audience that allows me to play those songs and refine them each time I play them. Many times, recordings are the first attempts at a song, and there are things that evolve the longer you play them live. We always respect the song as much as we can. I always tell the band that we have to be specific. Each song is not an opportunity to display your chops. We're not in a fusion band playing in a club; we're a rock band playing on a big stage. Our audience knows these songs, so let's respect that. The songs actually allow for interpretation because of the delicacy in the way that they're arranged."

Satch performs with Chickenfoot at the O2 Shepherds Bush Empire, June 25, 2009.

"SURFING WITH THE ALIEN"

SURFING WITH THE ALIEN (1987)



"This was definitely the song that introduced me to a worldwide audience, and I think, in retrospect, it was probably the best song to make that introduction. When we started recording, we didn't know that this would be the title of the album or that it would be the first track. We were just having fun, everybody was coming up with great ideas, and it became the obvious choice to open up the record. When I finished it, I thought that it was a representation of everything that I like about guitar playing. It had some Hendrix and Chuck Berry — a bit of everything; it was a natural. It wasn't dark and brooding, and it didn't sound like I was jumping on any particular bandwagon.

"I think Relativity, the record company, were scratching their heads over me, because I didn't look right. [laughs] They had Steve [Vai] at the time, and he looked perfect — he always does — for the role of guitar god. It was both fun and heartbreaking to make the album; we had some terrible obstacles to get through. We didn't have enough money to finish it off at one point. We had to master it twice, because there was a discrepancy in the left-to-right balance that I wasn't prepared to accept. The day we were finishing the track itself, I was really just winging it to come up with something for the end. We'd been using an Eventide Harmonizer, which kept breaking down, and we couldn't control the stereo pitch alteration. The malfunctions caused us to run late, so the guys who'd booked the next session were literally standing there glowering at me, waiting for me to finish. I performed the end solo with the whammy bar in front of a hostile audience. [laughs] I would have changed a lot of things about the album if we'd had a much bigger budget, but as for whether I'd have gotten a better result, nobody can ever know that.

"FLYING IN A BLUE DREAM"

FLYING IN A BLUE DREAM (1989)

"I feel that the structure of this song, musically, is extremely unique. Whenever I write a song, I always go into it thinking I can make some kind of innovation that no one has thought of — maybe some chords or some juxtaposition of ideas that hadn't been used before. This song embodied that spirit of experimentation on so many levels. I used an open F tuning for the rhythm guitars, and I tuned my '64 P-Bass down to a low C. I don't know why I didn't just get a five-string to solve that problem. [laughs] [Producer] John Cuniberti, who programmed the drum machine, wanted to try what was a really modern approach back then: to use no fills and follow the bass and acoustic guitars, which were constantly repeating in a minimalistic way. We didn't call it 'techno' back then, but the approach was in that vein.

"I thought, for the melody, I wanted to re-create the feel of a great tune from the jazz-pop era. When Sinatra or Tony Bennett would sing a song, they'd start in a conversational low tone, then the notes would rise through the register. And eventually, when they got to the last few lines of the story, that would be the chorus, and the highest notes of the melody. I thought it was a very elegant way to tell a story, rather than starting on 10. That required me to really focus on how I can get my fingers to communicate a beautiful melody to an audience, to really inspire them.

"THE HARDEST THING FOR ANY MUSICIAN IS TO REALLY NAIL THE EMOTIONAL CONTENT OF WHAT YOU'RE TRYING TO EXPRESS"

"The beginning of the song came about by accident; we could not get rid of RF noise and interference — TV, radio or whatever. One day we were laughing at how many TV stations I could dial in with my volume control, and we started to hear this kid talking. John pushed 'record,' and it just happened to be right at the start of the tape reel. Then the guitar chords came in over it. It was a great coincidence. The solo was just a burst of craziness I played after a few glasses of wine. I often think I could do it so much better now, but it's definitely got the vibe."

"SUMMER SONG"
THE EXTREMIST (1992)

"It was tough to pick the third song for this — whether to go for what meant the most to me or which reached the most people, because that is what really defines your career: what people hear. I was on a promotional tour for Surfing With the Alien with a radio promo guy from Relativity Records, and I asked him what he thought would be the next step, career-wise, to reach more people. He said, 'Just keep doing what you're doing. All we need is that one 'summer' song. If you can come up with one track that encapsulates the vibe of summer, I would have a much easier time walking an instrumental track into a rock and roll radio station.'

"I was working on that idea, and I just started focusing on the rhythm and the two chords, and letting the movie in my head run — driving around having fun, getting out of school... girls — you know? [laughs] It was difficult to record. The first time we tried, it failed; it just sounded kind of shuffly. We reconvened at another studio, and it was too much like 'Surfing.' We had a drum machine and it just wasn't working. We got the Bissonette brothers in — Matt on bass and Gregg on drums — but we still couldn't nail the vibe live. So we decided to use the track we already had with the drum machine and got Gregg to play to it. He really got it. Andy Johns was producing, and he worked with Gregg on nailing down the exact feel. The song hadn't happened until that point. When we played it for the record company, they didn't get it. We made a video that MTV wouldn't play, but Sony came in and offered me a commercial. During the MTV awards, they booked two spots during every ad break and the song got played about 10 times that evening, and that made it my biggest international radio hit."

Joe Satriani poses for a publicity photo in New York City, January 1988.

"CROWD CHANT"
SUPER COLOSSAL (2006)

"After years of touring, we used to scratch our heads on the bus after shows about how, any time I tried to do a call-and-response, I would just get moans and groans from the audience. They sounded like zombies or something. [laughs] We were thinking that, obviously, I must be playing the wrong notes and they can't follow what I'm doing. Finally, we decided that they don't know what to sing because they're not prepared for it. I was working on the 'Pavane' by Fauré, and figuring out a way to use that in a song, when I suddenly realized that I could put it together with my crowd participation idea, as it was such a beautiful melody that they'd want to sing it. I made a long demo, playing what I thought was cool, then every day I'd go back to it, making it simpler and simpler. I realized that the simple things were more fun, like pentatonics, for example. Of course the 'Pavane' was in a minor key, so I was combining the happy and the sad.

"We wondered if we could make the crowd sound work. We had about 10 musicians who could sing, and a bunch of other people, kids or whatever, to follow along. We did one take which sounded really good. When we added the second take it sounded like a hundred people, and the third overdub sounded like a thousand. After about seven passes it sounded immense. [laughs] It was originally called 'Party on the Enterprise', with some loops from the old Star Trek TV series, but Sony was afraid of being sued so we couldn't use it. It's become a great encore song."

"SAHARA"
THE ELEPHANTS OF MARS (2022)

"This one was originally intended to be a vocal song. I was imagining the singer having a crisis: He's frantically walking down the streets in the middle of the night, when he gets confronted by a female deity, who tells him love is the answer. I explained the whole concept when we were doing the album, but I think it overwhelmed everybody, and we couldn't get it to work as a vocal track. The producer said it's too bad we can't do it as an instrumental, but I thought it would be very tough to make it work, as the structure of the song had so much repetition. I worked on it, and it was actually challenging to play an instrumental melody on top of a rhythm guitar part where there's a really awkward bend. It made it sound like things were out of tune. I was bending the D string on the fourth fret of a 12-string guitar. I created a minefield for myself when it came to putting the melody on top.

"I picked this song for this list because it was such a discovery of guitar playing as I went along building the track. When it was over, I'd become a better guitar player. It wasn't difficult from a technical point of view, but the hardest thing for any musician is to nail the emotional content of what you're trying to express. I always want to transcend the technical aspects of the guitar to move people."

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ANGELA PETRILLI EMERGES FROM GRIEF WITH A NEW BAND, A NEW EP AND AN INSPIRED OUTLOOK ON GUITAR.

WORDS BY **JOE BOSSO.** PHOTOGRAPHY BY **MAX CRACE**.

On her just-released EP, *The Voices* (DistroKid), Los Angeles–based guitarist and singer Angela Petrilli comes on like a true original, delivering smart, tough and soulful blues rock that brims with blood-pounding guitar playing on a set of songs that artfully examines the highs and lows of the human spirit without being obvious or overdrawn.

The record is a triumph all right, but it's one Petrilli hadn't planned on making. Until 2019, the guitarist was one half of the Americana duo Roses and Cigarettes. On the heels of the release of the group's second album, *Echoes & Silence*, Petrilli's longtime bandmate Jenny Pagliaro passed away from stage 4 breast cancer. While grieving her friend and musical partner, Petrilli didn't pick up the guitar for months. The very sight of the instrument reminded her too much of what she'd lost.

"My time in Roses and Cigarettes was so beautiful, and I had to honor it properly," she explains. "I decided I had to live my life. I traveled to places where I have an accent. When I got back home, I still didn't know what I would do, but my friend Eric Tessmer invited me to play a show in Austin. Getting back onstage, I thought, Oh...this does bring me joy! I remember this, and I missed it."

Petrilli got back to it with a vengeance. She assembled a group she dubbed the Players — bassist Brett Grossman, drummer Stephen Haaker, keyboardist Bobby Victor, percussionist Vic Vanacore III and harmonica player Matt Lomeo — and tested out her new material at shows in and around L.A. ahead of recording sessions at the famed Sunset Sound Studios. "It was one of the best and easiest times I've ever had making a record," Petrilli says. "I never thought I'd be a band leader, but it turns out that I actually like it.

"This EP celebrates the joy and fragility of life," she adds. "It was important to me to illustrate that in my playing. Coming from where I was, I'm just so thankful to be able to do what I do. I have a heart that beats and a body that's healthy. I get to make music with a piece of wood and strings. I'm just so happy to be here."

Let's start with how you began playing. Was there a moment when you realized that you wanted to pick up the guitar?

Well, I was always surrounded by music. My mother played guitar a bit. She and my dad loved music and saw all the big bands — Zeppelin, Skynyrd... Everybody you can imagine. My dad was way into the blues. That music was playing around me from the start. My mom had a big Guild acoustic. I was four years old and I saw her playing these chords. I remember saying, "I can do that."

Did playing come easily to you?

Somewhat. I was 10 years old and heard "Put Your Lights On" by Santana and Everlast on *Supernatural*. I told my mom, "I want to learn how to play that." She figured out the chords and showed them to me. I practiced all day, and the next morning I woke up my parents and played it for them. They were like, "Okay, this kid needs lessons!" [laughs] After that, I was off and running. I played an acoustic for three years before I got a Strat.

Blues is all over your style. Who were your big influences?

Stevie Ray Vaughan, for sure. David Gilmour is another big favorite. The texture of his playing and how he sounds so human — he just has that touch, you know? Then there's Jimi Hendrix, Jimmy Page, Howlin' Wolf, Bonnie Raitt, Susan Tedeschi... There's so many. I try my best to take bits from them.

And how do you use all of those bits?

I try to be conversational. I'm mindful that my guitar should tell a story. I'm a big believer in "less is more." I like space. I let things be big when they need to be, but then I bring things down and get quiet. I like dynamics.

Were you in other bands before Roses and Cigarettes?

I was a guitar-for-hire before Roses and Cigarettes. I played with other bands for many years. I went to open-mic nights and jams, and met everybody I could. I loved talking to other musicians and playing with them. I just felt so grateful that I could do something that brought me so much joy.

One day I won't have to ask this, but did you ever encounter sexism? Were there ever issues with you being a female guitarist?

Very rarely was it an issue. There was one audition when they said, "You're great, and you're an awesome player, but we really need to hire a guy." It was just the one time.

Overall, your guitar sound is very pure and unaffected. You don't seem to go for a lot of effects.

No, I don't. I think tone is in the hands: from the hand to the heart. I try to keep it as clean and direct as possible. Sometimes I like fuzz and wah, but other than that, I think it's gotta come from your hands.

You're a terrific slide player. On "Red River," your guitar lines are big and bold, yet poetic.

Oh, thanks! For me, it's been a lot of Allman Brothers. Lots of Duane Allman. Warren Haynes is one of my favorites. Any time Gov't Mule is playing, I drop everything and go see Warren play. He's so soulful and tasteful.

Your solo on "High Roller" is beautifully structured. Do you write solos out before you record them?

That solo I had written out before we recorded. I sat down and worked it out, and I rewound the track over and over unti I got it. I wanted it to be melodic and to serve the song. Other tracks I would do live and come up with stuff in the moment. Sometimes you've got to breathe the air and let the music happen.

Talk to me about recording at Sunset Sound. What does that place offer a guitarist?

Oh, man! It's in the rooms. You walk in and you feel the energy from everybody who ever recorded there. I wanted to honor what they left there and put my little time stamp on the place. The studio walls are musical; they give you back what you put into it, but they give you back a little more. Some studios are sterile, but Sunset Sound has soul. I don't know... it's just an inspiring place to record in. It was like the sixth player in the band.

What were your main guitars on the EP?

I used my Les Paul R9, which was rockin'! It's a Custom Shop R9 in Lemon Burst, and I just love that thing. I also used a '58 Les Paul Jr. Custom Shop reissue. Those P90s — forget about it. It's just perfection. And then I used a '98 Fender Strat Deluxe with Fishman Fluence Strat-style pickups. Those were the big three.

Aside from leading this group, do you have other plans in mind? Would you consider being the guitarist in somebody else's band?

That's hard to say. I follow my gut, and I'm grateful for the opportunities that come my way. This band has been such a gift in my life, and I want to explore this new phase musically. I can't say for sure what I would do if I got a call to be in somebody else's band. I don't have a master plan. I'm just trying to take things one day at a time and be in the moment.

RECOMMENDED LISTENING

THE VOICES
"THE VOICES," "RED RIVER," "HIGH ROLLER," "SLAPJACK," "GHOST INSIDE A FLAME"

"IT'S REALLY EASY TO TRANSLATE CLASSICAL CHORD SHAPES TO POP MUSIC"

Words Stan Bull

"THE STRAT SOUND IS THE MOST INSPIRING"

The Lemon Twigs' power-pop has a new sense of refinement – plus some classic guitar heroics

They could be considered the vanguard of a 70s glam rock revival, but New York brother-band The Lemon Twigs are exploring a more contemplative and stripped-back sound on their fourth full-length, *Everything Harmony*. Full of rich vocal harmonies and subtle fingerpicked guitar lines, the band's bold change of pace has resulted in some of their finest work to date.

"The sound came during the demoing process," says Brian D'Addario, who shares vocal, guitar, bass, drum and production duties with his brother Michael. "The songs that stood out were the songs that were more vulnerable. That was a mood that we got into that continued until the whole album was written. We wrote a lot of frivolous pop at the time as well, which we love, but it just felt wrong to put them alongside the other songs."

The brothers' quest to refine their sound found them taking in a wider range of influences than ever before, including the late cellist and composer Arthur Russell, and his 2019 compilation album *Iowa Dream*. "We played that to death," says Brian. "A lot of those recordings were made in a demo form, and you just get a sense of his completely unique identity as a songwriter and a melodist, and that's what we wanted to capture on our record – what our identities are as writers, not just an audition reel of all these different styles we're interested in."

Speaking from his apartment in Brooklyn, Brian discusses his appreciation for classical guitar, his newfound love of Rickenbacker 12-strings and his formative years as a surprise My Chemical Romance super-fan…

You're from a musical family. What age did you start playing the guitar?
I was around seven, and I remember The Beatles' *Love Me Do* was the first thing my dad taught me – which uses these one-finger chords – probably on a very small nylon-string guitar. I think I started writing songs around that time, with one-finger chords.

Did seeing instruments around the house make you want to learn how to play them?
Yeah. I'd get real frustrated not knowing how to play instruments, so my dad would just show me a few things here and there. It was something that Michael and I took to intensely.

Do you remember the first guitar you owned?

I got this Johnson tiny-scale – I'm not even sure what you'd call it, but it was meant for kids – higher-tuned Strat copy. That was the first guitar that was my own; it was perfect for my size.

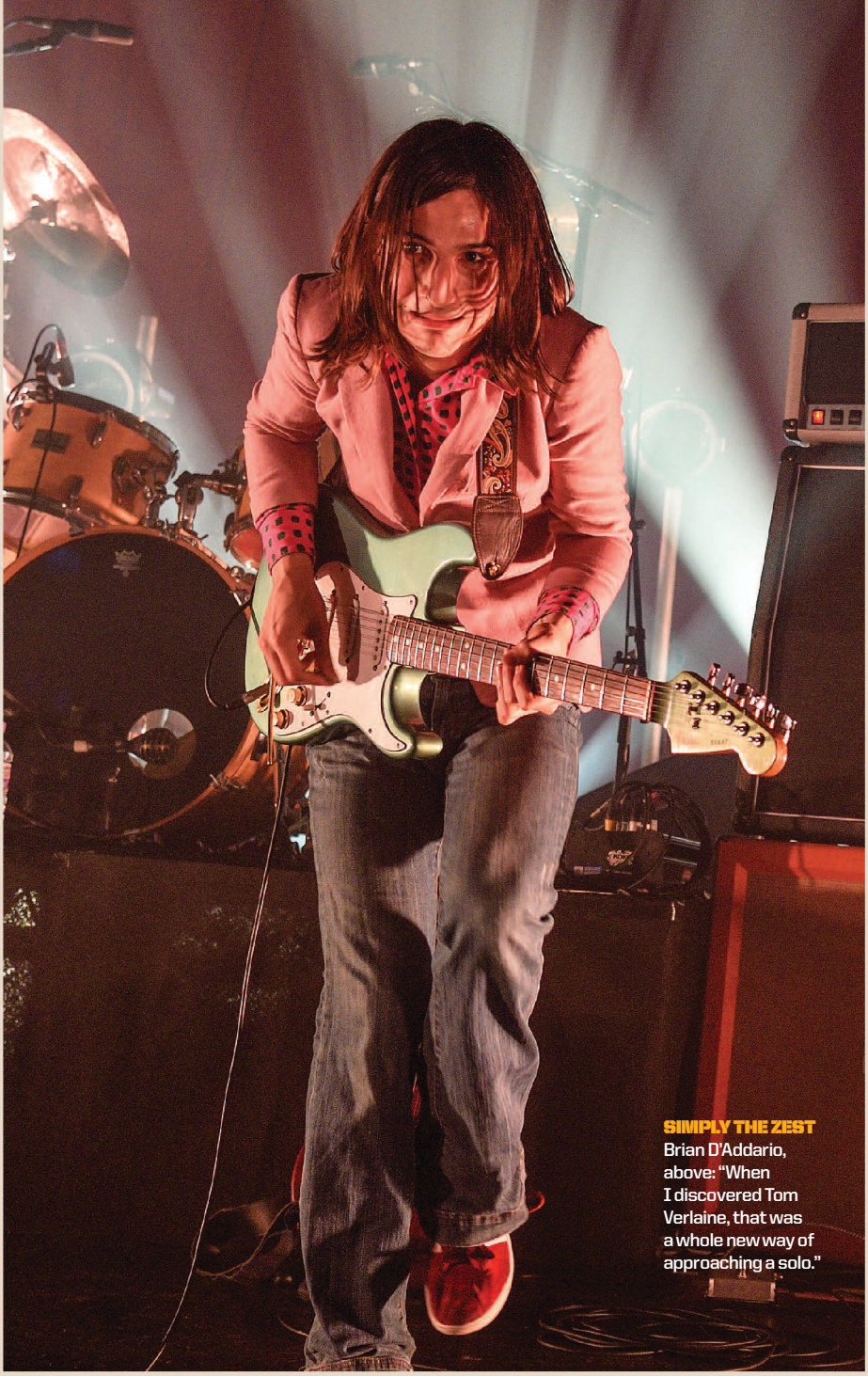
Did Michael and yourself begin performing together right from the start?
We started with me playing guitar and Michael playing drums – we were always playing together. We always knew that it was going to be us in a band together. Over the years, I think we both flirted with doing stuff on our own, but it's never been something that we thought would be as good or as enjoyable to do.

Did you ever use to fight over who was in the spotlight?
I think as soon as Michael started playing guitar and writing his own songs I was happy to give up some of the spotlight to him. But it was always the kind of thing where people would watch him from the drums and he would sing songs from the drums. So as soon as I got a chance to play drums on stage, I really took to that because that was something I wasn't allowed to do when I was a kid. My mum would say, 'Well, Michael's the drummer.' So I was happy to start sharing different roles.

You posted a video of your teenage band covering My Chemical Romance back in 2010. What's the story there?
That was shot in our parents' backyard. There was a cover contest that MCR did on their website, and we entered about three or four different covers. When we played with them last year it was really cool to see them, and the songs were still very strong. When we first got into other music we kind of turned our backs on that whole genre, but you get a real sense of the songs and how good they are when you see them live.

Who were your guitar heroes growing up?
Well, Ray Toro [of MCR] was a big hero when I was learning to play stuff, and he did things technically that I learned note-for-note that really helped me play fast. But my initial guitar heroes were Pete Townshend, Jimi Hendrix, George Harrison; people like that. And when I discovered Tom Verlaine, that was a whole new way of approaching a solo. Robbie Robertson was also a big one, and Richard Thompson had incredible style.

Many of the tracks on *Everything Harmony* feature acoustic fingerpicking. Was this something you had to brush up on or was it already in your wheelhouse?
It's how I write on guitar, generally – I play the melody first before I start singing. There weren't a lot of fingerpicking parts that were written after the fact. I played classical guitar for a while, and so when I play classical it helps me brush up on all the other stuff that I play. I would definitely advise people to try classical because you get introduced to all these different chord shapes, even in the simplest pieces that you'll learn. So it's really easy to translate classical chord shapes to pop music.



SIMPLY THE ZEST
Brian D'Addario, above: "When I discovered Tom Verlaine, that was a whole new way of approaching a solo."

***Every Day Is The Worst Day Of My Life* is probably the most stripped-back you've sounded.**
That was Michael's tune. As soon as he made the demo he was like, 'This is the version', and I was pushing us to re-record it with drums and stuff. But when we were tracking it again it didn't feel right, especially doing the vocals again. It's always really hard to recapture that feeling you get when you record a song for the first time and you're super excited about it. So we just left it, and I'm really happy with it.

What guitars were you using for the acoustic parts?
There's this classical guitar that I got in LA at a shop and it was made by the store owner's grandfather, and there was a Gurian, which was my brother's. We saw Paul Simon play one; they're made by New York-based luthier Michael Gurian.

What about for the electric guitars?
There was a Rickenbacker 12-string that we used, a '77 black Strat and a knock-off Hofner bass that belonged to the engineer, and we mainly used natural distortion from a Fender Twin Reverb.

You're known to play Fenders and Gibsons. What is it about these brands that you love so much? The sound, the aesthetic?

Photos Getty

Oh, both. We're getting more into playing 12-string now. There's a Gretsch 12-string that we like a lot, and the Rickenbacker 12-string. But the Strat sound mainly has been the most inspiring sound to work with for us. I guess it's sort of power-pop lineage, [The Beatles' 1965 classic] *Nowhere Man* being the first guitar sound that I really locked into. It's always inspiring to come up with a part on a Strat.

The track *What You Were Doing* features a great solo towards the end.
That was an improvised solo, done thinking that we were gonna fade the song out way earlier. It was really spontaneous, I was just fooling around and that's probably why it came out sounding free. It's pretty Television-inspired. The first half is the first take and the second half is the last take.

Another highlight is *Ghost Run Free*. What are we hearing in the outro?
Everything was recorded with this TC Electronic chorus pedal that we loved, and then after we did some real flanging by taking the whole track and putting it into our Roland Space Echo and messing with the speed. We did that a few times and we used our Eventide H3000 that has some digital phasing and flanging effects, and we put the whole track through that a couple times and tried to find some nice, sweeping sounds that we could do some stereo effects with. That was pretty inspired by a particular Roxy Music song, *In Every Dream Home A Heartache* [from 1973's *For Your Pleasure*], where the whole end of the song is this really epic, totally phased-out thing.

"WE'RE GETTING MORE INTO PLAYING 12-STRING NOW"

As multi-instrumentalists, do you ever think, 'this song just flat-out doesn't need a guitar'?
Definitely. The most important thing is how you initially track the song. We'll always track with Michael on drums and me on guitar, or vice versa, and we'll try to get something that we keep. We don't record a guide track. Whatever is supposed to be most prominent in the song is what we'll record first, so I'll try to get a good guitar arrangement that I want people to pay attention to when we're initially tracking. That way, everything else that's paired with it is working around that instrument.

Finally, are there any holy grail items of gear you're still after?
Just Rickenbackers, I think. Different kinds of Ricks. Michael, I know, especially wants the Roger McGuinn blonde Rick, but a six-string version. And I would say the same!

Everything Harmony is out now.

EXTREME IX

EXTREME

THE RISING SON

BACK IN MARCH, **EXTREME** RELEASED A NEW SONG AND MUSIC VIDEO CALLED "RISE" (COMPLETE WITH A FREAKIN' PHENOMENAL NUNO BETTENCOURT GUITAR SOLO). THE GUITAR-PLAYING COMMUNITY HASN'T QUITE BEEN THE SAME SINCE.

WORDS BY RICHARD BIENSTOCK PHOTOS BY DUSTIN JACK

ONCE UPON A TIME

When Nuno Bettencourt appeared on the cover of our sibling mag *Guitar World*, in December 1992, they declared the then 26-year-old phenom the "new boss." At the time, Bettencourt had turned the six-string universe on its ear with the excessively funky and fiery guitar acrobatics he packed into every groove (or, given the smash acoustic hit "More Than Words," almost every groove) of Extreme's smash sophomore album, *Pornograffitti*.

Here we are more than three decades later, and while Bettencourt has continued to push the creative and technical limits of rock guitar — on successive albums with Extreme; in his own solo work and projects like Mourning Widows; with superstar bands like Satellite Party; alongside pop superstar Rihanna; and with Yngwie Malmsteen, Zakk Wylde and Tosin Abasi on the Steve Vai-led Generation Axe extravaganza tours, for starters — he has, at 56 years old, quite possibly just set a new bar.

In March, Extreme announced their first album in nearly 15 years, *Six*, and also released its first single, "Rise." And while all the hallmarks of what makes a great Extreme song — high-energy, rock-solid riffs and rhythms; sticky hooks and choruses; a forceful and expressive Gary Cherone vocal — are present and intact, it was Nuno's guitar solo that stopped fans, peers, industry pros and even guitar legends in their tracks.

We can assume that anyone reading this magazine has by now heard it, and maybe even injured a finger or two trying to play it. But if you haven't, rest assured it's a thing of wonder, infused with intensity and emotion and capped with one of the most mind-boggling fretboard-spanning triplet passages in this or any era. Guitar websites *ooh'd*. Online commenters *ahh'd*. Howard Stern namechecked him on his SiriusXM show. Popular YouTuber Rick Beato released a fawning instructional video titled "The Nuno Bettencourt Solo Everyone Is Talking About" that racked up more than a million views in its first week. And guitar icons from Steve Vai and Tom Morello to Brian May and Steve Lukather reached out to Bettencourt to express their awe at and appreciation for not just Nuno's playing, but also the fact that, through it, he managed to jumpstart a conversation and excitement about the guitar that, at least in a mainstream context, seems to have withered in the 21st century.

It's an incredible response to a mere 60 seconds of music. And perhaps no one is more

aware of that than Bettencourt himself. "My head is spinning," he admits. "I don't take compliments very well anyway, but when I see all this stuff online, and then all of a sudden your phone's blowing up and it's different musicians and people you haven't seen or talked to in years calling to tell you they heard this thing and they can't believe it... it's like, 'What the fuck is happening?' "

What's happening is that Bettencourt has struck a nerve like few guitarists of late. As for why? In his humble estimation, Bettencourt believes that people have connected to not just the playing on "Rise," but also the passion that is evident in the performance itself. "I think it's the physical aspect, the emotional aspect of the thing," he says. "I know for a fact that I'd be getting 50 percent of the reaction, even less, if the solo wasn't connected to the song or the video. For instance, on Instagram there's guys that I follow that, every day, I'm like, 'Are you kidding me? I can't play like *that*.' These guys, it's perfection. But they're doing it while sitting in a chair at home. I think it's something different when you show how passionate you are about playing. And I don't just mean by jumping around in a video — I mean by communicating the *joy*. It touches a nerve differently. It inspires differently."

One person who concurs with this line of reasoning is Bettencourt's Generation Axe compatriot, Steve Vai, who praised Nuno's playing in "Rise" as "right in your face — it jumps out at you. You cannot escape every note. It's palpable."

But here's the thing about Nuno — during a playthrough of the album, Vai quickly came to another realization: "Rise" is only track number 1. "When I heard the full record, I realized that solo wasn't an isolated incident," Vai says. "There's some real creative, death-defying stuff happening throughout the whole thing."

For sure, *Six* is chock-full of ripping, high-octane riff-rock, from the chunky stomp of "#Rebel" to the sleek-and-sexy, four-on-the-floor thump of "Banshee" to the electro-funky grooves of "Thicker Than Blood." (Suffice it to say, all three tracks also feature head-spinning, *what-did-he-just-do-there?* solos, in particular "Thicker Than Blood," which Bettencourt spikes with some seriously slippery, whimsical phrases.)

But keep in mind, this is an Extreme album, so straightforward hard rock constitutes only a portion of the full picture. We also get acoustic-guitar-based, vocal-harmony-laden tracks like the sun-kissed "Other Side of the Rainbow" and the intricately fingerpicked "Hurricane," the *faux*-reggae "Beautiful Girls," the cyber-metal epic "X Out" and the anthemic, Queen-like closer "Here's to the Losers." Throughout, Bettencourt lays down a masterclass in melodic rock songwriting and advanced guitar technique but never loses sight of a core musical tenant: "I always try to have my playing match the gears of the song," he says. "So 'Rise' is a fast, fun, crazy, energizing thing, and I'm hoping that's what the solo is. But then in 'Hurricane,' for instance, I play one phrase at the front of the solo, and then I don't play anything for a good three or four beats. That's because for me, emotionally, I couldn't find anything to put there other than the space. But I remember Freddie Mercury once saying, 'The space is where things get said sometimes.' So I just thought, you have to have the balls to leave it alone."

Nuno Bettencourt photographed in Los Angeles (with his Washburn N4) in April

[*top*] The December 1992 issue of *Guitar World*

So if he were asked to name the thing he's most proud of when it comes to his guitar playing? "I would answer that, no matter what, I play for the song," Bettencourt says. "That's the most important thing, always. And you should never be afraid to do that."

Broadly speaking, what was your approach on Six from a guitar perspective?

As I was doing the album I was re-inspired to kind of go for blood again. I basically said, "I want to bring guitar playing back." But I didn't mean it in an innovative, I'm-gonna-change-the-game sort of way. I just wanted to make it fun again — what's fun for me. For instance, when I was starting out, one thing we all learned from Edward [*Van Halen*], and also guys like Jimmy Page, but really, Edward did this a lot, was the concept of incorporating fills into your rhythm playing. Whereas other people were usually overdubbing things. I thought that was so cool — it was like he was having fun with the rhythm track, you know? That changed the way I looked at my playing. So that was one thing I wanted to do on this record, because I don't hear it as much anymore. I thought, Wouldn't it be fun to just bring the joy that Eddie brought into it, and the playfulness and sometimes the fucking *nastiness* of it, where you're just letting go and throwing in a lick or a dive bomb or whatever? I wanted to tap into that in-the-moment excitement.

Speaking of Eddie, people have latched onto a statement you made in the press release accompanying "Rise," in which you said, "When Eddie Van Halen passed, it really hit me. I'm not going to be the one who will take the throne, but I felt some responsibility to keep guitar playing alive."

One thing I want to make clear is that there was only one Edward and there will only ever be one Edward. I was in no way saying I think I can take his place or anything like that. I've always felt like I'm my own player, albeit one that is clearly influenced by Edward. But there is no heir to the throne of Van Halen. There just isn't. He was in his own lane. He was the innovator and he changed so much.

Another thing that has been getting a little misconstrued, and I'd love to correct it, is this idea of, "Nuno does an album to pay tribute to Eddie..." This is not a tribute album, because that demeans me, and also him, in a way. I didn't play these solos because Edward died. That would be awful. In fact, he came by when I was recording the album. It was the day I was doing the "Rise" solo, actually.

Eddie came by the studio?

Yeah. The album was done a little while ago, in 2019, parts of 2020. And so one day I was recording at my house and Gary [*Cherone*] calls up — he literally called my phone three times — and he says, "Come downstairs. You gotta come downstairs." And I'm like, "Stop fucking bothering me! I'm recording a solo and I'm in a zone!" Because the thing with me is, I record all my guitars at home, and I do it alone. I don't have an assistant, I don't have anybody cleaning my tracks, I don't have anybody in my room with me. The gear is in there and I sit by myself. I like to get lost and blackout and do whatever I'm doing. I don't want to be interrupted by *anything*. But Gary's like, "Come down here, now." I'm thinking, my god, what is happening? Did somebody bash my car in? What's going on? So I go downstairs... and there's Edward. And he gives me the biggest hug. And so we're talking, whatever, and he goes, "I hear the record's good..." I say, "Yeah, I'm actually recording guitars right now." And what I was recording was that "Rise" solo.

Did he hear it?

He wanted to come up and listen. But I was like, "No, no, no, come back when it's done." Because I didn't want him to hear something that was only half-finished. And I regret it a little bit now, because he passed away before he could come back to hear the album.

It'd be an understatement to say people have been talking about that "Rise" solo. Especially the runs in the second half.

The thing that's funny is that I really just did that on instinct. And you know, I watched that Rick Beato video where he breaks it down, and when I saw him play that lick slowly I was really worried. Because it sounded like nothing to me. I didn't even know, like, "Wow, there's two notes that repeat? How bullshit is that?" [*Laughs*] Because when it's fast, I don't hear those things. And I've never played it slow once. I never broke it down. It's just something I latched onto when I was playing it. I was following the structure of the chords. I wasn't going, you know, "This is an A that hits the octave," or whatever. But when I watch something like that I'm like, "Oh no, it's theory!" [*Laughs*]

You're just going for it.

Exactly. As you're doing it you're being creative in the moment and jamming with the section of music. When I record, I do passes, and a lot of people go, "Oh, it's kind of worked out." It is and it isn't, because I'm doing everything instinctually. I used to write more melodic stuff, like the solo to "Rest in Peace"

[*from 1992's* III Sides to Every Story], in a very Brian May sort of way. But over the last 10 or 15 years, I'm like, "Fuck that. I wanna really go on instinct and see what I would do if I didn't have anything worked out." I'll do a few passes, and then I listen back and I go, "That's cool. And that's cool." And I might comp the solo, but at least I know it was played live in the sense of, I was feeling whatever the band was giving me and whatever I was doing. It's way more exciting for me that way.

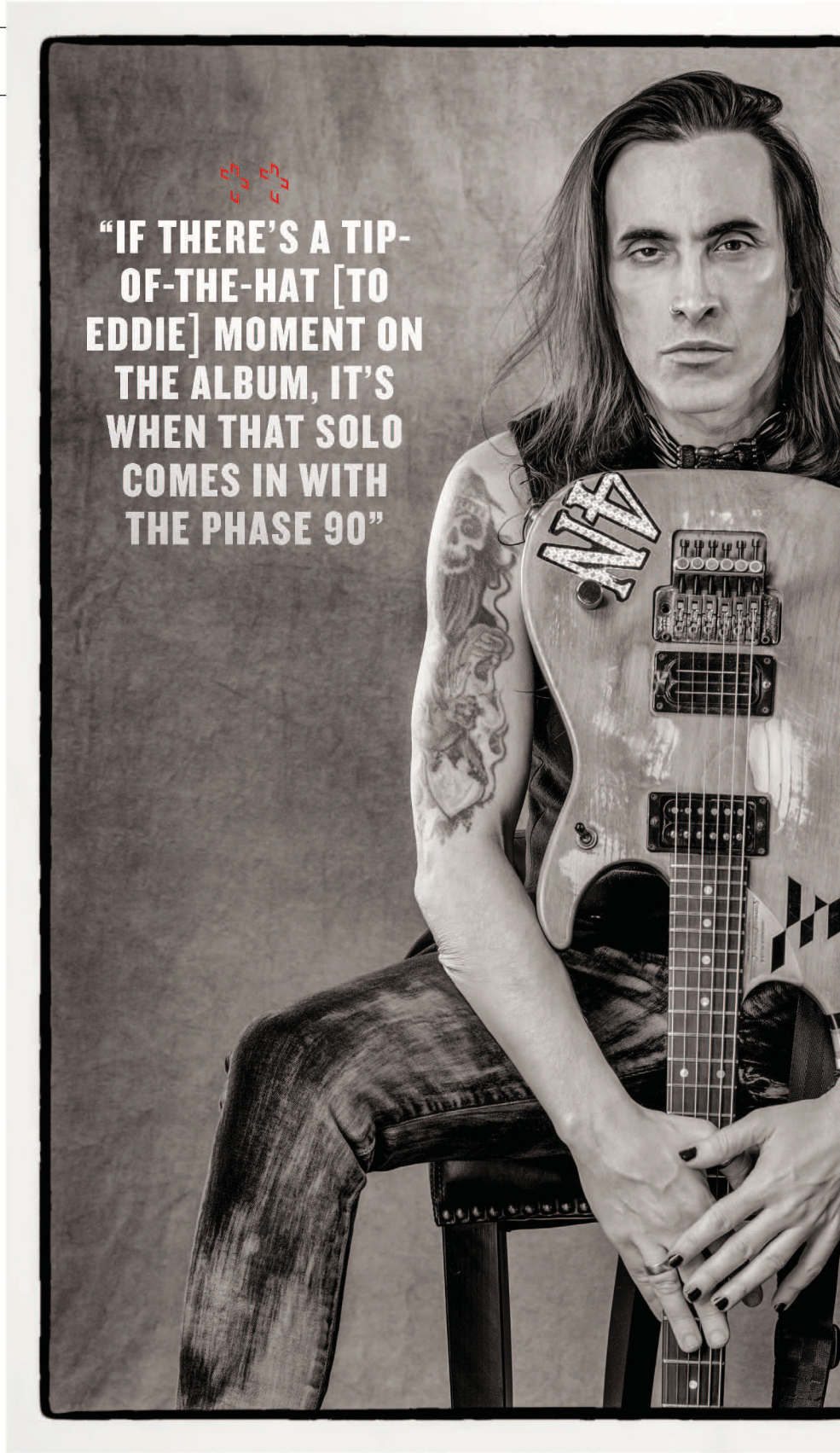
Understandably, people tend to focus on your lead playing. But the rhythm work on this album should be addressed as well. There's so much fire and attack, and also dynamics and nuance in what you're doing. To me, again, it's an approach that can be traced back to Van Halen, where the riffs and rhythms feel so alive.
You're absolutely right — that's Edward all day. When everybody was talking about all the pizzazz he had in his solos, my feeling was, "Is anybody hearing what's going on in the other three minutes of the song? There's a whole meal happening here — the solo's just dessert." That influenced the fuck out of me. Because that's where a lot of the fun was. That's where a lot of the nuance and the creativity was. And his tone and attack and phrasing, and the way he was adding notes within a chord, it was an art form in itself. Something like "I'm the One" is a perfect example. Like, what the fuck is going on there? [*Laughs*] There's such a love for rhythm.

There's also some great acoustic work on Six. In particular on "Hurricane." Who inspired you in that realm?
On the electric side the big ones for me have always been Brian May, Jimmy Page, Edward and maybe an Al Di Meola or a Neal Schon. But would it be weird to say I really have no guitar players that influenced me acoustically? [*Laughs*] I guess what I'm trying to say is that, to me, acoustic guitar was always something that was in your living room.

You weren't locked away in your bedroom, woodshedding your Travis picking technique.
Never. I never even picked up an acoustic and said, "I'm gonna learn that thing that Page did, or that thing that [*Paul*] McCartney did." It was just something you kind of figured out because you were listening to songs and different things. So if you go to "Hurricane," is it from playing [*the Beatles'*] "Blackbird" as a kid around the house? Maybe. But who's my big acoustic-guitar influence? No one's ever asked me that. I think you're the first!

Let's talk about your tone on Six. It's so full, with tons of bite and definition. To borrow a word from Steve Vai, it's "palpable." What was your setup in the studio?
For one thing, there was no separate rhythm amp and solo amp. It was all the same — my Marshall DSL 100. And there's basically no EQ. The treble is on one-and-a-half, the mids are on, like, one-and-a-half or two, and the bass is up to four. And then I just turn it up. It sounds thumpy to me that way, and it gives it that punch. Like Steve said to me, he goes, "You're right in my fucking face in the speaker!" And then when I take a solo and go into the higher stuff, it still sings.

What do you like about the DSL?
I think you use an amp for wherever you are in your guitar playing, and the DSL has been my go-to for probably the last 10 years because it just seems to work for me. I had a JCM[*800*] and a Laney on the first album [*1989's* Extreme]. Then I was using the ADA stuff on *Pornograffitti*. And I had a [*Hughes &*] Kettner at one point. But right now the DSL seems to be the one. For me, an amp is an extension that doesn't get in the way of what you do. Actually, it elevates what you do, or at least interprets what you do. And wherever and whatever I'm playing, the DSL allows me to say what I need to say without getting in the way. So it's the amp of the moment.



"I didn't play these solos because Edward died," Nuno says. "That would be awful. In fact, he came by when I was recording the album. It was the day I was doing the 'Rise' solo, actually"

How about effects?
It's the same as it's been for a long time. I use the Boss GT-8 [*guitar effects processor*], which has four pedals, and that's it. And the way I have it set is, there's nothing on "One." "Two" is a chorus, and it's their chorus that I love. "Three" is the solo bank, and basically it brings up the level and there's a delay in it. It's not really heard, but you know when it's gone. And then "Four" is the flanger that I use as a transitional kind of a thing, which is something I took from Pat Travers.

And then, for the first time ever in my life, and for obvious reasons, I pulled out an MXR Phase 90 on this album. I've never, ever recorded with a Phase 90 in my entire life, for the exact reason

Rihanna and her band — including Nuno [*far left*] — do their thing at this year's Super Bowl halftime show

EXTREME SPORTS

HOW A THREE-MONTH STINT WITH RIHANNA TURNED INTO 14 YEARS, MULTIPLE TOURS AND A SUPER BOWL

BY RICHARD BIENSTOCK

ROCK FANS WATCHING this year's Super Bowl likely experienced a jolt of unexpected delight when they caught a glimpse of one of their own — Nuno Bettencourt, ever-present Washburn N4 in hand — performing alongside Rihanna during her halftime-show extravaganza. But while his screen time was exceedingly brief — "about 1.5 milliseconds," he jokes — Bettencourt's partnership with the international pop superstar, as many now know, stretches back more than a decade.

If some fans believe it to be a strange place for one of hard rock's most lauded six-string shredders to end up, well, there's precedent (Eddie Van Halen's star turn with Michael Jackson on "Beat It," for one; Bettencourt's guest appearance on Janet Jackson's radio edit of "Black Cat," for another). Even so, Bettencourt understands the concerns. "A lot of people were probably thinking, 'Why is Nuno doing a pop thing?' " he says. "The truth is, and I'm not bragging here, I feel I was kind of made for the gig."

Indeed, as much as Bettencourt is known for his amped-up and advanced rock chops, he is also recognized as one of the genre's most versatile, not to mention funkiest, players. All of which no doubt contributed to his being tapped for the Rihanna position in the first place.

CHRISTOPHER POLK/VARIETY VIA GETTY IMAGES

"I WAS LIKE, 'I GOTTA GET BACK TO MY ROCK,' YOU KNOW? 'I GOTTA ROCK!' "

As he recounts, "I got the call from a great guitar player in New York named Tony Bruno. He was MD-ing [*musical directing*] for Rihanna, and they were looking for a guitarist to do a run with her. He got in touch and he goes, 'Dude, I know you're gonna say no because you don't do this stuff, but we need somebody. We're on the 31st guy now, and this is getting tough."

Bettencourt continues, "I remember thinking, 'Why is this so difficult?' But when he sent me the tunes I understood. Because it was like, I have to be able to play reggae. There's trap. There's straight-up hip-hop with 808s. There's pop. There's club tracks. And playing in that pocket, you know, everybody thinks it's simple, but it's not. It's a feel thing, and it's not easy."

Despite the various styles on tap, the good news was that Bettencourt was also told, " 'You can be you and you can do you,' " he says. "Which was a nice thing to hear. Because I was like, 'Why do you need me? There's no guitar.' And Tony goes, 'Exactly. She wants to rock out the show.' "

And rock out Bettencourt did, serving as guitarist and at times band leader for Rihanna on multiple outings, including 2010's *Last Girl on Earth* tour, 2011's *Loud* tour and 2013's *Diamonds* tour. "All the funk shit and everything we were doing, it was crazy," Bettencourt says. "And then I'm playing with some of the greatest musicians I've ever played with. These were player's players — our drummer did a Stevie Wonder tour, for fuck's sake. It was like having the R&B version of Neil Peart next to me. The fusion and the jazz and all the jams that were going on, it was beyond belief."

Bettencourt points to one Rihanna song, "Where Have You Been," as a standout. "That's a synth riff on the album version," he says. "But onstage we were replacing it with a live band and crazy playing. It was all fast funk, really clean. You had to wear five hats to be able to do that. So it felt like I had been training my whole life for that gig — growing up with the Beatles, then Al Di Meola, then loving Bob Marley, then digging Parliament, then doing all the funk stuff in Extreme, it was insane. It kept me busy for sure."

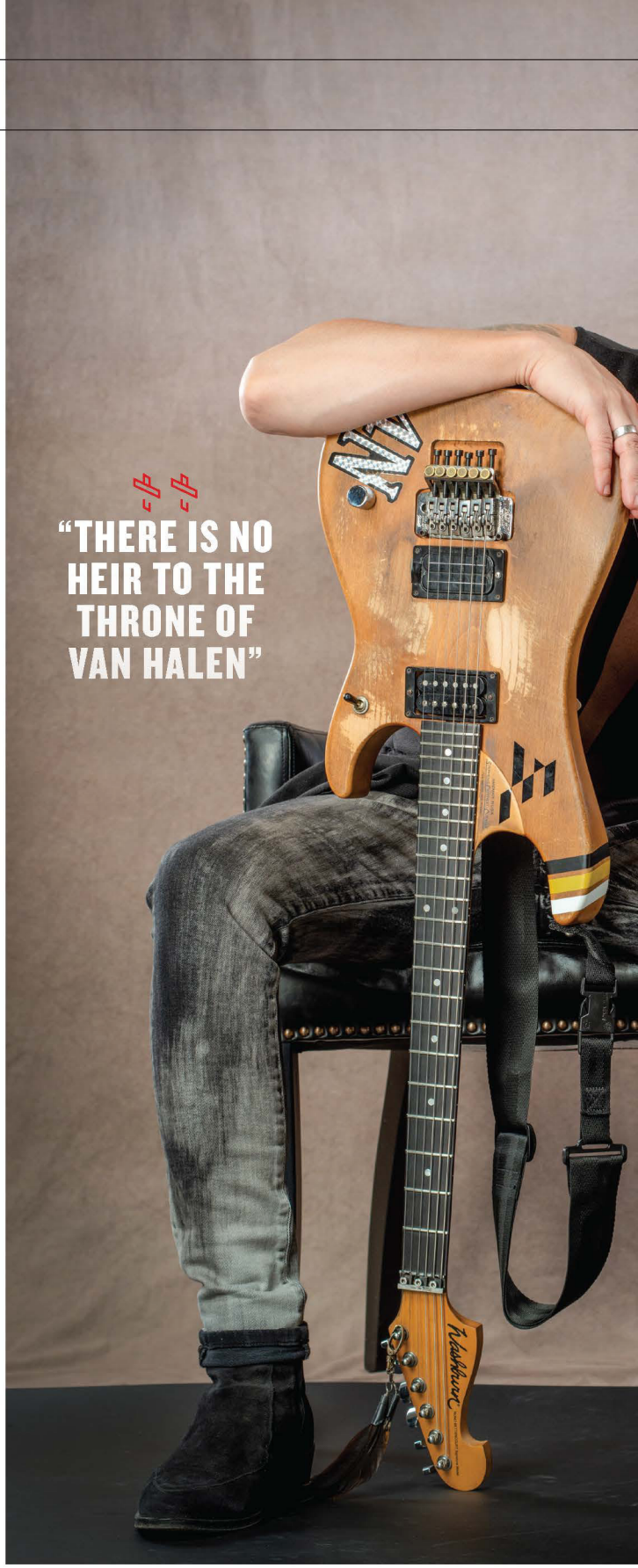
And while it's clear that Nuno has a true appreciation for Rihanna's music, the question remains: Is Rihanna an Extreme fan?

"You know," Bettencourt says, "I think she was blown away by stuff like 'Get the Funk Out,' just because of the funk element and the horns and all that. That might've been one of the songs that got her to go, 'Okay, let's hit the dude up.' And she obviously knew 'More Than Words.' "

In fact, Bettencourt continues about the hit acoustic ballad, "There was one point where we were almost doing it live. Because we did 'Redemption Song' by Bob Marley, and I would sit onstage with her and play it on acoustic. And she would threaten, 'Come on, let's kick into that!' It would've been amazing to do 'More Than Words' with her, sitting side by side. But it never happened."

If that duet were to come about, it likely wouldn't be any time soon. What Bettencourt initially thought would be a three-month stint with Rihanna wound up being three tours over the course of several years. But as much as he loved playing with the pop singer, he eventually had to bow out. "It was fun and I learned a lot," he says. "Then they had the *Anti* tour coming up [*in 2016*] and they asked me to do it, but I felt it was time to go."

Bettencourt laughs. "I was like, 'I gotta get back to my rock,' you know? 'I gotta rock!' "



"THERE IS NO HEIR TO THE THRONE OF VAN HALEN"

of, "All right, dude, you're influenced by Edward, but you put that fucking thing on there, it's a wrap. It's over!" [*Laughs*] So I really avoided it. But after he passed, I pulled one out and used it on probably three or four solos on the record.

Which ones in particular?

It's definitely on "Rise." Like I said, I was cutting that one on the day that Edward came over. But later on, I extended the front of it. And with that beginning part, where the band stops and I do the fast picking up the neck, I was like, "You know what? Fuck it. This is as 'Eruption' as you can get, I'm doing it." So if there's

a tip-of-the-hat moment on the album, it's when that solo comes in with the Phase 90. It does almost nothing to the notes, but you hear what it does to the pick. It just adds this crazy attack. The rest of the solo is me just doing me, but that beginning part, that's me saying, "Thank you. I hope you're watching from up there and listening."

Otherwise, I might have kicked on the Phase 90 for the end of "#Rebel," and it's definitely on the solo in "Other Side of the Rainbow." It's so heavy on there that a lot of people have asked me, "Are you using a wah pedal?" And I'm like, "No, it's the Phase 90."

And I assume the primary electric on the record is your signature Washburn N4.
It's the N4 that I'm playing now, which is the one known as the 4N, because I flipped the name on the body. A while back I retired my original N4 because it became such a valuable guitar emotionally to me. And it was almost stolen three times. So I was like, "Okay, I'm walking around with this guitar, I'm checking it on a plane... I'm putting it out there." I played it on every tour. And it wasn't the financial thing, but I started seeing that it meant something to other people because it was number 0001. I started getting offers on it from collectors for a lot of money. So I said, "Let me put this in a vault somewhere for now..." I only wanted to do that if I could find another one of the early ones built around the same time, where I could pick it up and close my eyes and go, "Okay, that's it." And I did that.

How did you manage that?
While we were on tour and doing meet-and-greets, kids would come in with an N4 and they'd go, "Sign my guitar." And you could see it was dusty, that they didn't play it anymore. So I'd be like, "What year is this?" And some of 'em already had my signature on it, and when I'd sign a guitar I'd always put the year, so it'd say, like, "Nuno '91," "Nuno '92," "Nuno '93," whatever. So I'd go, "Hey, would you be interested in swapping a guitar with me?" Or I'd buy it from them. And I wound up with three that were super-close to the original. I bought one in Scotland, I bought one in China, and the one I'm playing now is from the Netherlands. I got it from a friend and it was like, "Whoa." It was just the closest thing. So it's been the workhorse for a good many years now. I used it through the whole album, except for one song, "X Out," where I played the N7, the seven-string version, for the first time in my life. I believe that guitar is also on "Save Me," which is very Alice in Chains, by the way. And then on one song, "Other Side of the Rainbow," I used my Nele, which is the Tele version of the N4.

What did you use for the acoustic tracks?
I got this great guitar from Washburn, a WD10S, as a throw-around. It's one of their cheaper models, probably $300, but it's one of my favorites. It plays like butter and it sounds amazing. I wrote and recorded "Hurricane" on that. Then I have a jumbo Washburn [*WJ45SCE*] that I had fitted with True Temperament frets, and that's what I used on all the other acoustic stuff. It sounds so great. It used to drive me crazy how, when you're playing acoustic and you play a D chord and then all these different chords, the intonation would be off. But I use the guitar on "Small Town Beautiful" and "Here's to the Losers," and you can hear just how perfectly intonated it is.

Another guitar we have to talk about is the one that made an appearance at Super Bowl LVII earlier this year — the red N4 you played onstage with Rihanna during the halftime show.
That guitar was actually wrapped! It was a brand-new N4 that Washburn had sent me, and it was still in the case. I was in Phoenix [*for the Super Bowl*], and I was told, "You didn't get the email? All the instruments have to be red." So they had to have a courier Uber the guitar to a place that wrapped all the instruments. And the way they did it, it was so pristine. They did that shit like they do on a car. They even put the N4 on it in black. It's still in the Rihanna locker somewhere. I gotta go get it.

So there's probably not going to be a red N4?
I don't know, man. It *was* pretty fucking cool. [*Laughs*] I'm trying to decide whether or not to keep it as it is. I mean, it's the guitar used at the Super Bowl!

So you've performed at the Super Bowl, released a new Extreme album, turned the guitar universe upside down... not a bad 2023 so far. What's next?
I would love to not wait so long to do another Extreme album. Because I knew this album specifically was going to maybe excite fans and guitarists with what it is, but I also thought, "Wow, I didn't do any funk on this album..."

"Thicker Than Blood" has maybe a little bit of that vibe.
Exactly. That's maybe the closest to an older one of our songs. But it's still more electronic and more like Nine Inch Nails than like classic Extreme. But I have this crazy idea, and I told Gary, I said, "Man, the next album, I want it to be funky. Like, *so* funky. Every song has to be funky." I'm talking horns, and not like *Pornograffitti*, where we did two or three songs with horns. Just full-blown, if-Lenny-Kravitz-was-gonna-do-an Extreme-album type of thing. And it wasn't on purpose that we didn't go there this time. It was just that, for whatever reason, the things that we're digging right now weren't that.

Well, you have a studio at home. What are you waiting for?
[*takes out phone and begins scrolling through voice memos*] Oh, the ideas are there...

Point taken. So it won't be another 15 years before we hear from Extreme again, is what you're saying.
No. Definitely not. Hopefully it'll be more like 15 months!

[*from left*] Paul McCartney (1963 Hofner 500/1), John Lennon (1958 Rickenbacker Capri 325) and George Harrison (1963 Gretsch Country Gentleman) huddle around a Vox AC30 in late 1963

POPPERFOTO VIA GETTY IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES

THE SOUNDS THAT SHOOK THE WORLD

ULTIMATE BEATLES TONE GUIDE

HOW THE BEATLES CRAFTED THE GUITAR AND BASS TONES THAT FOREVER CHANGED AND SHAPED THE SOUND OF ROCK MUSIC BY CHRIS GILL

NO BAND HAS had more pages written about them than the Beatles.

There are books that examine every day of the band's history, large volumes about their recordings and books devoted entirely to their gear. Yet for all that has been written about them, there is still much mystery about the finer details, such as what exact guitars and amps they used to record specific songs.

We set out to answer that last question by closely examining a select group of songs spanning the Beatles' entire recording history. A big part of the challenge is that a great amount of conflicting info exists, even among the experts. Even the members of the Beatles, producer George Martin and engineers like Geoff Emerick have provided conflicting accounts, and sometimes those people have contradicted themselves. Photos taken during the recording sessions provide helpful hints, but all too often crucial details are missing, and the best anyone can do is speculate. Internet forums are frankly a hell-hole of highly opinionated alpha characters who insist they have golden ears but are usually pulling utter BS out of their golden rears.

What follows is our best attempt to determine the guitars, basses, amps and effects that the Beatles actually used. This information is not perfect and in many cases is highly speculative (such as the amp that Lennon used to record his solo on "The End"). However, we hope it will provide a good guideline for guitarists who want to decode the magical mystery of the iconic sounds that the Beatles' crafted over an incredibly prolific seven-year period.

PLEASE PLEASE ME

Please Please Me (UK), 1963

GEORGE HARRISON

Guitar: 1957 Gretsch 6128 Duo Jet

Amp: 1962 Vox AC30 combo with two Celestion T530 12-inch speakers

JOHN LENNON

Guitar: 1958 Rickenbacker 325 Capri

Amp: 1962 Vox AC15 combo with two Goodmans 12-inch speakers

PAUL McCARTNEY

Bass: 1961 Hofner 500/1

Amp: Leak Point One preamp, Leak TL-12 Plus power amp, 1x15 cabinet with Tannoy Dual-Concert speaker

THE BEATLES' DEBUT single "Love Me Do" enjoyed only moderate success, but their follow-up, "Please Please Me" was the band's first bonafide hit. Like most of the other material the Beatles recorded in the early Sixties using two-track recorders, the recording primarily captures the band performing live, with George Harrison's Gretsch Duo Jet dominating the instrumental accompaniment. The melodic hook features Harrison's Gretsch and John Lennon's overdubbed harmonica playing in unison. This technique of combining and layering instruments together was something the Beatles employed often throughout their career.

The guitar tones are very clean, with Harrison taking advantage of his Duo Jet's low-end twang (picking near the bridge) while Lennon's rhythm part is subdued and low in the mix. The Quad QCII bass amp Paul McCartney usually used for live performances at the time was not considered up to snuff for the recording, so he plugged into the studio's Leak preamp and power amp instead. Harrison and Lennon owned 1962 Vox 2x12 combo amps with fawn-colored covering, with Lennon playing though an AC15 and Harrison using an AC30 with an add-on treble boost circuit that became known as Top Boost on later Vox AC30 models, which Harrison used to brighten his guitar's treble frequencies.

A HARD DAY'S NIGHT

A Hard Day's Night, 1964

HARRISON

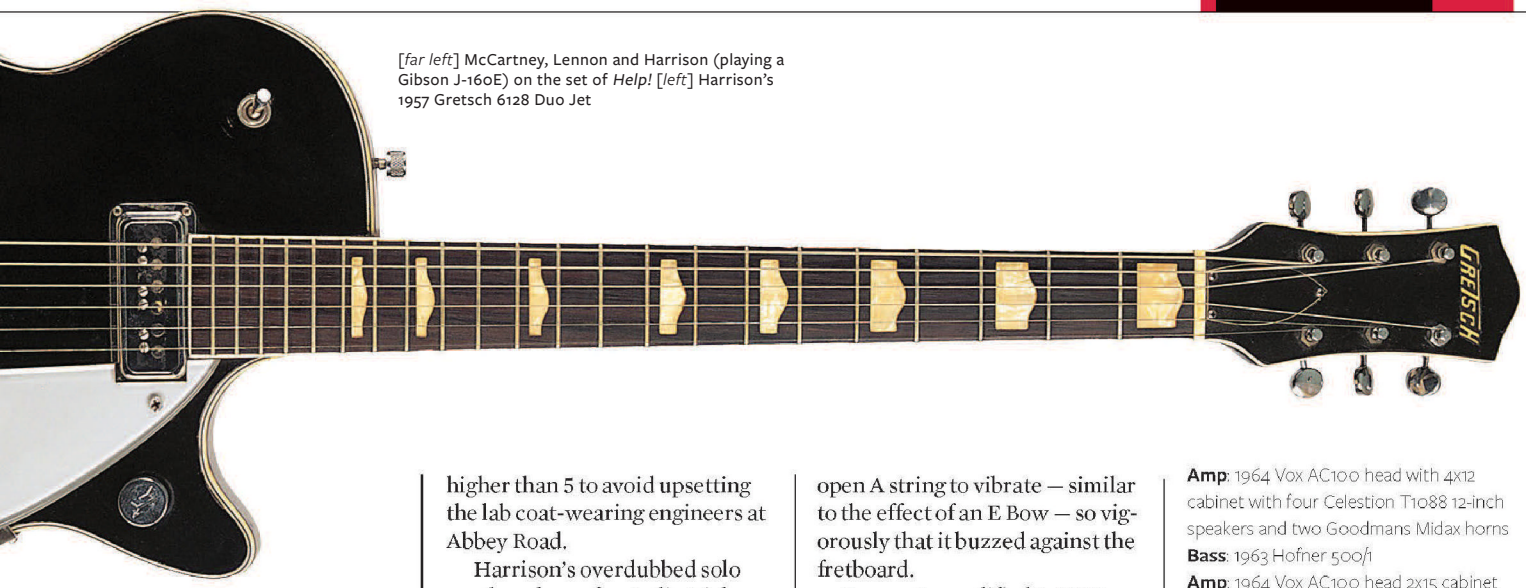
Guitar: 1963 Rickenbacker 360/12 electric 12-string

Amp: 1963 Vox AC50 Mk I head and 2x12 cabinet with two Celestion T530 12-inch speakers and Goodmans Midax horn

LENNON

Guitars: 1963 Rickenbacker 325, 1962 Gibson J-160E acoustic-electric

Amp: 1963 Vox AC50 Mk I head and 2x12 cabinet with two Celestion T530 12-inch speakers and Goodmans Midax horn



[*far left*] McCartney, Lennon and Harrison (playing a Gibson J-160E) on the set of *Help!* [*left*] Harrison's 1957 Gretsch 6128 Duo Jet

BEATLES: ROLLS PRESS/POPPERFOTO VIA GETTY IMAGES GRETSCH: NIGEL OSBOURNE/REDFERNS

McCARTNEY

Bass: 1963 Hofner 500/1
Amp: 1963 Vox AC100 head and 2x15 cabinet with Celestion T900 15-inch speakers

THE BEATLES PROGRESSED to using four-track recorders in the studio early in 1964, which gave the band more freedom to experiment with overdubs and more advanced arrangements. By mid April of 1964 when they recorded "A Hard Day's Night," Harrison and Lennon had expanded their guitar collections, which now included various Gretsch and Rickenbacker models — most importantly George's newly acquired Rickenbacker 360/12 electric 12-string that played a crucial role in this song's signature sound.

Musicologists can explain the intricacies of the song's opening chord in better detail, but it was created by a blend of Harrison's Rickenbacker 12-string, a D from McCartney's bass and overdubs of Lennon's Gibson J-160E acoustic-electric and a piano chord played by producer George Martin. The main rhythm guitar parts were recorded as a simultaneous performance, with Harrison on the Rickenbacker 360/12 and Lennon on his new 1963 Rickenbacker 325, both playing through new Vox AC50 Mk I heads with 2x12 cabinets that delivered ample clean headroom for the strings to sing with clarity and twang. The amps were probably set with the Treble controls near full, the Bass rolled down around 2 or 3 and the Volume no higher than 5 to avoid upsetting the lab coat-wearing engineers at Abbey Road.

Harrison's overdubbed solo employed a crafty studio trick devised by Martin. The solo was recorded at half speed, which made it easier for Harrison to play the notes on his 360/12, and Martin played a piano in unison at the same time. Played back at normal speed, the pitch is transposed up an octave, giving the guitar a distinctive timbre. Guitarists hoping to duplicate this sound live can use a pitch shifter set to an octave up effect, like an Eventide Pitch Factor, Boss PS-5 Super Shifter or DigiTech Whammy (avoid Octavia or octave fuzz pedals, which sound too distorted).

I FEEL FINE

Beatles '65 (USA), 1964

HARRISON

Guitar: 1963 Gretsch 6119 Tennessean
Amp: 1964 Vox AC100 head with 4x12 cabinet with four Celestion T1088 12-inch speakers and two Goodmans Midax horns

LENNON

Guitar: 1964 Gibson J-160E
Amp: 1964 Vox AC100 head with 4x12 cabinet with four Celestion T1088 12-inch speakers and two Goodmans Midax horns

McCARTNEY

Bass: 1963 Hofner 500/1
Amp: 1964 Vox AC100 head with 2x15 cabinet with Celestion T1074 15-inch speakers

THIS RECORDING IS notable for featuring possibly the very first instance of intentional feedback, which was the effect of Lennon's amplified Gibson J-160E becoming driven by the resonance of a low A note played on the bass by McCartney during the intro. Instead of the usual high-pitched howl, the J-160E's resonant chamber caused its sympathetic open A string to vibrate — similar to the effect of an E Bow — so vigorously that it buzzed against the fretboard.

Lennon's amplified J-160E provided that backbone for the guitar riff heard throughout the song, which has an unusual organ-like timbre. Unlike a modern acoustic-electric, the J-160E was designed with a heavier top and stiff ladder bracing to suppress vibration. Ironically, this was Gibson's attempt to avoid feedback, but the model's most famous use is to generate feedback. A P90 single-coil identical to those found on early Les Paul models was mounted under the top at the edge of the fretboard, with the polepieces extending through the top and covered with a small plastic housing. The P90 works better with standard nickel electric strings. Lennon probably used flatwound Pyramid Gold strings (most likely .012-.052), which also contributed to the smoother-sounding timbre.

Harrison's part mostly consisted of him doubling Lennon's riff on his Gretsch Tennessean, most likely set to the bridge pickup as heard in his brief twangy solo.

TICKET TO RIDE

Help!, 1965

HARRISON

Guitars: 1963 Rickenbacker360/12 (rhythm), 1961 Fender Stratocaster (overdub fills)
Amp: 1964 Vox AC100 head with 4x12 cabinet with four Celestion T1088 12-inch speakers and two Goodmans Midax horns

LENNON

Guitar: 1961 Fender Stratocaster
Amp: 1964 Vox AC100 head with 4x12 cabinet with four Celestion T1088 12-inch speakers and two Goodmans Midax horns

McCARTNEY

Guitar: 1962 Epiphone Casino E-230TD (lead)
Amp: 1964 Vox AC100 head with 4x12 cabinet with four Celestion T1088 12-inch speakers and two Goodmans Midax horns
Bass: 1963 Hofner 500/1
Amp: 1964 Vox AC100 head 2x15 cabinet with Celestion T1074 15-inch speakers

THE TOPIC OF WHO actually played what parts and what exact guitars on the Beatles recordings is subject to much speculation, but "Ticket to Ride" is one exception where this info can be confirmed, thanks to George Martin's detailed track notes about the instruments and players. Martin's handwritten notes specify that Harrison played his Ric 360/12 accompanied by Lennon on a 1961 Fender Stratocaster on the rhythm part and McCartney laid down the fills and outro on his 1962 Epiphone Casino. On track four, Harrison also overdubbed a few accents, like the descending pattern on the second "ride" of the chorus, using a '61 Strat while McCartney recorded his lead fills on the same track. The *Help!* sessions were notable for featuring McCartney's first contributions beyond bass as a guitarist, a role which he would expand even more on later recordings.

As in previous instances, the Vox AC100 amps are dialed to crystalline clean tones with the Treble above five and the Bass barely up. McCartney probably plugged his Epiphone Casino into Lennon's amp and used either the middle or neck pickup setting with the guitar's tone knobs backed down a bit. Although Harrison's Ric 12-string had defined much of the early Beatles' signature sound up until this point, "Ticket to Ride" was one of the last instances where he used it in the studio. "All it ever seemed was that there was one sound I could get (from the Rickenbacker) where it was bright," Harrison told the BBC in 1987. "(That's) the sound you hear on 'Ticket to Ride.'" Soon, his

Gretsch and Rickenbacker guitars became distant memories as his taste in guitar tones progressed.

MICHELLE

Rubber Soul, 1965

HARRISON

Guitar: c. 1963-65 Gibson ES-345 (solo), Framus Hootenanny 12-string (Rhythm)
Amp: 1963 Vox AC30 Top Boost combo with two Celestion T530 12-inch speakers

LENNON

Guitar: Ramirez 1A classical

McCARTNEY

Guitar: 1964 Epiphone Texan FT-79
Bass: 1964 Rickenbacker 4001S
Amp: 1964 Fender Bassman (blonde) 6G6-B head, 2x12 cabinet with Jensen C12N, Oxford 12M6 or possibly Utah speakers

A PHOTO SHOT at Abbey Road Studios during a pre-recording rehearsal of this song gives a very good idea of the exact guitars used by Harrison, Lennon and McCartney for the recording of the main acoustic rhythm track: a Framus Hootenanny 12-string (Harrison), Ramirez 1A nylon string classical (Lennon) and Epiphone Texan FT-79 (McCartney). One particularly revealing detail is that all three guitarists used capos on the fifth frets of their guitars. Also of interest is a later photo showing McCartney playing his Rickenbacker 4001S bass also with a capo on the fifth fret. Harrison's 12-string is very low in the mix, heard most prominently on the descending line in unison with McCartney and Lennon's louder six-strings.

The big unsolved mystery is which guitar Harrison used for the sultry, horn-like solo heard in the middle and ending of the song. "The guitar solo in 'Michelle' is my composition, actually," producer George Martin revealed in a 1993 interview. "I wrote down the notes and said, 'I'll play this. George, you can do these notes with me on guitar. We'll play in unison.'" Apparently, Martin's unison part was discarded. Harrison's guitar tone is very warm, muted and unusual compared to other Beatles recording, which suggests he may have used a Gibson ES-345 semi-hollow, which briefly showed up in his possession around the date of these sessions. Other speculated candidates include his Gibson J-160E, Epiphone Casino and even the 1961 Strat using the neck pickup and tone control rolled off. The jazz hollowbody-like warmth and humbucker-like fatness, however, strongly suggest he used the 345's neck pickup, rolled down the tone control and played with his fingers. The amp he used is also unknown, although session photos show that Harrison and Lennon had dusted off their trusty black 1963 Vox AC30s.

TAXMAN

Revolver, 1966

HARRISON

Guitar: 1964 Gibson SG Standard
Amp: 1966 Vox 7120, 4x12 cabinet with Celestion T1225 12-inch speakers

McCARTNEY

Guitar: 1962 Epiphone Casino E-230TD
Amp: 1964 Fender Bassman (blonde) 6G6-B head, 2x12 cabinet with Jensen C12N, Oxford 12M6 or possibly Utah) speakers
Effect: 1966 Sola Sound Tone Bender (Mk 1.5)
Bass: 1964 Rickenbacker 4001S
Bass amp: 1964 Fender Bassman (blonde) 6G6-B head, 2x12 cabinet with Jensen C12N, Oxford 12M6 or possibly Utah) speakers

MANY GUITARISTS CONSIDER this one of their top 10 favorite Beatles tunes, thanks to the biting guitar tones, Harrison's cutting 7th chords and McCartney's gritty raga-style solo and punchy bass riff. For some unknown reason, Lennon sat this one out when it came to playing a guitar track and his only contribution is backing vocals. To fill the sonic space, Harrison double-tracked his rhythm guitar part by playing two identical takes.

The solo is one of the main sources of guitarists' fascination with this song. McCartney confirmed that he played his 1962 Epiphone Casino (probably set to the bridge pickup), and photos taken in the studio around this time strongly suggest he plugged into his trusty Fender Bassman head and 2x12 cabinet. A Sola Sound Tone Bender Mk 1.5 (set with Level just above 5 and Attack at 6 to 7) also seen in photos likely provides the distortion heard on the solo, riff unisons and fills.

Details about Harrison's rig are more sketchy. To me it sounds like he's playing his Gibson SG Standard (bridge pickup) through one of the new hybrid (solid-state preamp/tube power amp) Vox 7120 amps the band acquired thanks to the fast, percussive attack, scratchy treble and nasal midrange. Other options include his 1961 Strat and a new 1966 Fender Showman stack that appeared around this time, but blackface tube Fender amps generally sound more polished and sparkling than what is heard here.

McCartney's bass tone is impressively punchy and robust. He probably plugged his Ric 4001S into the same Bassman rig that he used to record his guitar part to give the tone more presence.

SGT. PEPPER'S LONELY HEARTS CLUB BAND

Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band, 1967

HARRISON

Guitar: 1964 Gibson SG Standard
Amp: 1967 Vox UL730 head, 2x12 cabinet with two Celestion T1088 12-inch speakers

McCARTNEY

Guitar: 1962 Epiphone Casino E-230TD
Amp: 1967 Vox UL730 head, 2x12 cabinet with two Celestion T1088 12-inch speakers
Bass: Rickenbacker 4001S
Amp: DI (direct)

THANKS TO THE agreement that manager Brian Epstein arranged and maintained with Vox, the Beatles enjoyed a constant influx of the newest Vox amp models in the studio up through Epstein's death in August of 1967. In February 1967 when the Beatles started work on the *Sgt. Pepper's* album, the band took delivery of several Vox UL730 hybrid solid state/tube amps, which they immediately put to use. For the album's title song, Harrison and McCartney first recorded their rhythm guitar parts together, each using separate UL730 amps dialed in to tones with just a hint of overdrive. Later in early March, McCartney recorded an additional lead track using the UL730's built-in fuzz effect, which was accessed via an on/off footswitch (with no controls for gain or intensity, just fuzz on or off). The early rhythm guitar track was panned to the center (it can be isolated by adjusting balance to the left) while McCartney's fuzz lead guitar overdub is panned to the right along with his lead vocals.

McCartney (Epiphone Texan), Harrison (Gretsch Tennessean) and Ringo Starr on the set of *The Ed Sullivan Show*, August 14, 1965.
[*right*] Harrison's 1963 Rickenbacker 360/12, the star of "Ticket to Ride"

BEATLES: CBS VIA GETTY IMAGES RICKENBACKER: NIGEL OSBOURNE/REDFERNS

McCartney is seen in a photo taken on March 3, 1967, during the overdub session playing a Fender Esquire plugged into a Selmer Thunderbird 50 Mk II combo, with his Epiphone Casino resting at an angle on the amp. It's widely assumed that Paul used this rig to record "Sgt. Pepper's," but a more likely scenario is that he used it for the bright, jangly rhythm guitar part heard on "With a Little Help from My Friends" also recorded that day as no fuzz pedal (which is essential for his lead track) is in sight.

Although bass amps are still seen in Beatles studio photos from this point onwards, McCartney was recording most of his

bass tracks using a DI box instead of miking an amp. The bass amp was just there so his bandmates could hear his bass parts while they were recording.

REVOLUTION

B-side of "Hey Jude" single, 1968

HARRISON

Guitar: 1964 Gibson SG
Amp: Redd.47 line amplifier

LENNON

Guitar: 1965 Epiphone Casino E-230TD
Amp: Redd.47 line amplifier

McCARTNEY

Bass: 1964 Rickenbacker4001S
Amp: DI

ABOUT A YEAR and a half after Paul McCartney started recording his bass direct in the studio, Lennon and Harrison first adopted this approach as well when recording "Revolution." The motivation for this was driven by Lennon's demand for the most violent and extreme distortion tones on guitars as possible. After attempts with traditional amps and fuzz boxes failed to satisfy Lennon, engineer Geoff Emerick conceived the idea of recording the guitars direct and overdriving the tube-powered REDD.47 line amplifier/mic preamp modules in the studio's console. He finally accomplished the sound Lennon had in mind by cascading two REDD.47 units together, both with the gain set to excess levels.

Although a later promo video shows Lennon playing his Epiphone Casino (with the finish stripped off), Harrison on his 1957 "Lucy" Gibson Les Paul Standard and McCartney with his iconic Hofner 500/1 bass, Lennon's Casino is likely the only guitar actually used on the studio recording. Instead, Harrison probably played his Gibson SG and McCartney used the Rickenbacker 4001S bass that had become his mainstay.

WHILE MY GUITAR GENTLY WEEPS

The Beatles ("The White Album"), 1968

HARRISON

Guitar: Gibson J-200 acoustic

LENNON

Guitar: 1968 Fender Bass VI
Amp: 1966 Fender Deluxe Reverb with Oxford 12K5-6 12-inch speaker

McCARTNEY

Guitar: 1964 Esquire
Amp: 1964 Fender Bassman (blonde) 6G6-B head, 2x12 cabinet with Jensen C12N, Oxford 12M6 or possibly Utah) speakers
Bass: 1966 Fender Jazz Bass
Amp: DI

ERIC CLAPTON

Guitar: 1957 Gibson Les Paul Standard
Amp: 1966 Fender Deluxe Reverb with Oxford 12K5-6 12-inch speaker

ALTHOUGH GEORGE HARRISON was the Beatles' lead guitarist and had penned a song with "guitar" in its title, his guitar playing mostly took a backseat on the recording of "While My Guitar Gently Weeps" as he contentedly strummed acoustic rhythm on a Gibson J-200. Granted, Harrison may have actually planned to play electric lead until he decided to invite Eric Clapton to play the song's legendary solo, but since Harrison was Clap-

[*from left*] Harrison (1964 Gibson SG), McCartney and Lennon (1965 Epiphone Casino) on stage in the U.K., May 1, 1966

The Beatles On Thank Your Lucky Stars
From left, Paul McCartney (with a Hofner 500/1 violin bass guitar), Ringo Starr (at his Ludwig drum kit), George Harrison (with a Gretsch 6119 Tennessean guitar with Bigsby vibrato) and John Lennon (with a Rickenbacker 325 guitar) of English rock and pop group The Beatles relax together on stage during rehearsals for the ABC Television music television show 'Thank Your Lucky Stars' at Alpha Television Studios in Aston, Birmingham on 28th March 1965. The band would go on to play three songs on the show, Eight Days A Week, Yes It Is and Ticket To Ride. (Photo by David Redfern/Redferns)

ton's good friend and he highly respected his playing it's easy to understand his understated role.

The presence of Clapton in the studio motivated Lennon and McCartney to step up their game. McCartney contributed a solid electric rhythm guitar track that he played using his trusty Fender Esquire guitar/Fender Bassman amp rig, and Lennon doubled many of McCartney's lines on a Fender Bass VI six-string bass (or possibly a Stratocaster or other electric) plugged into a Fender Deluxe Reverb.

Clapton's solo is rightfully the song's main focus thanks to his soulful lines played on Harrison's 1957 Gibson Les Paul Standard (nicknamed "Lucy") through a Deluxe Reverb cranked almost all of the way up. To make Clapton's part sound more "Beatley," his track was processed with ADT (artificial double tracking) during mixing. Producer Chris Thomas handled the task of manually adjusting varispeed during the ADT process, which gave the guitar its distinctive warbling texture.

LET IT BE

Let It Be, 1970

HARRISON

Guitar: 1957 Gibson Les Paul Standard (album)/1968 Fender Rosewood Telecaster (single)
Amp: 1966 Fender Deluxe Reverb with Oxford 12K5-6 12-inch speaker (album)/ Leslie 147RV (single)

McCARTNEY

Bass: 1963 Hofner 500/1
Amp: DI

WHEN IT COMES to discussion of the guitar tone on "Let It Be," the first question is whether it involves the single or album version, which are quite different from one another though each is equally impressive in its own right. The single was released first in March 1970, while a different version appeared on the *Let It Be* album released May 1970. The single version's solo was recorded in late January 1969. Although Harrison felt that the solo he played on a previous take was better, the consensus was that a later take featured a better overall performance even though Harrison's guitar solo wasn't quite as good. A few months later in late April, Harrison recorded a new solo, and a new mix of the song was done for the album.

For the single version, Harrison played the 1968 Fender Rosewood Telecaster that had become his favorite ax for the *Let It Be* sessions. He plugged it into a Leslie 147RV rotating speaker cabinet, which provided the warbling, thick, chewy textures. His approach to the solo he recorded in April 1969 for the album version was more straightforward, employing his 1957 Gibson Les Paul Standard "Lucy" through an unknown amp cranked up to a good amount of overdrive. The midrange punch suggests he used a smaller amp, most likely a Fender Deluxe Reverb with a 12-inch speaker. There's also the possibility Harrison played his Epiphone Casino E-230TDV instead of the Les Paul.

THE END

Abbey Road, 1969

HARRISON

Guitar: 1968 Fender Rosewood Telecaster
Amp: 1966 Fender Deluxe Reverb with Oxford 12K5-6 12-inch speaker
Effect: Dallas-Arbiter Fuzz Face

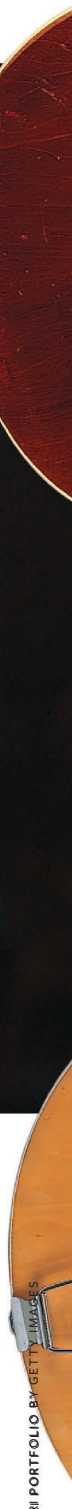
LENNON

Guitar: 1965 Epiphone Casino E-230TD
Amp: 1967 Vox Conqueror with two Celestion T1088 12-inch speakers

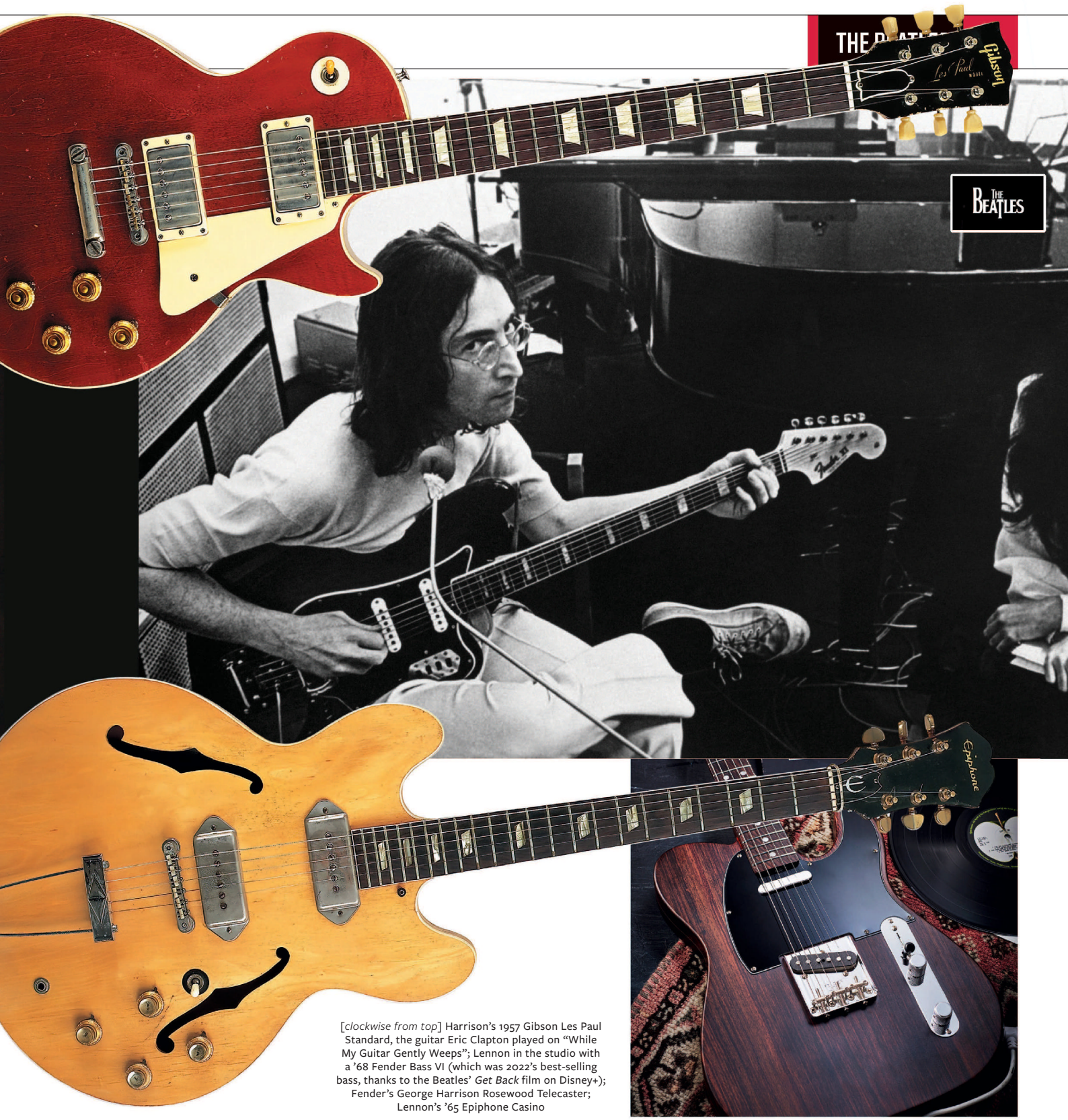
McCARTNEY

Guitar: 1962 Epiphone Casino E-230TD
Amp: 1968 Fender Twin Reverb with two Oxford T126 12-inch speakers
Bass: Rickenbacker 4001S
Amp: DI

THIS SONG'S SECTION where McCartney, Harrison and Lennon traded solos was one of the last truly happy moments that the three shared while they were still the Beatles. "I think in their minds they went back to their youth and all those great memories of working together as a band," engineer Geoff Emerick later recalled. "Suddenly there was just this



LIVE 1966: JEFF HOCHBERG/GETTY IMAGES LENNON 1969: MONDADORI PORTFOLIO BY GETTY IMAGES
GIBSON/EPIPHONE: NIGEL OSBOURNE/REDFERNS



[*clockwise from top*] Harrison's 1957 Gibson Les Paul Standard, the guitar Eric Clapton played on "While My Guitar Gently Weeps"; Lennon in the studio with a '68 Fender Bass VI (which was 2022's best-selling bass, thanks to the Beatles' *Get Back* film on Disney+); Fender's George Harrison Rosewood Telecaster; Lennon's '65 Epiphone Casino

great vibe in the studio."

Many guitar historians assume that each member of the guitar trio plugged into separate Fender Twin Reverb amps, similar to the setup seen in filmed *Get Back/Let It Be* footage. However, Emerick says that this was not the case: "I took great care to craft a different, distinctive sound for each Beatle, so it would be apparent to the listener that it was three individuals playing and not just one person taking an extended solo. They were each playing a different model guitar through a different type of amplifier, so it wasn't all that difficult to achieve."

Unfortunately, Emerick did not specify or recall exactly which guitars and amps they used. Most historians are pretty certain that Harrison played his Rosewood Tele and Lennon and McCartney played their Epiphone Casinos (maybe Emerick was confused by the contrast of the stripped finish on Lennon's Casino and the original sunburst on McCartney's Casino). Going out on a limb to guess the amps, McCartney starts with a slightly overdriven tone that sounds like a Casino through a Fender Twin. Harrison's tone has a sweet singing overdrive/distortion that sounds like a smaller amp (perhaps a Fender Deluxe Reverb) driven by a fuzz pedal, most likely one of the Dallas-Arbiter Fuzz Faces seen in the *Get Back* footage. Lennon's tone is characterized by distorted grit and an unusual honking midrange that's unlike any of the Fender amps the Beatles used during that period. It's possible that Lennon dusted off the Vox Conqueror last seen during the White Album sessions and used its Boost and MRB (Midrange Boost) functions.

TELE: OLLY CURTIS/FUTURE

TOP GEAR

HOW TO REPLICATE THE BEATLES' CLASSIC TONES USING TODAY'S AFFORDABLE INSTRUMENTS AND EFFECTS BY CHRIS GILL

IF YOU WANT to imitate the sound of the Beatles by acquiring the exact same models and vintages of gear that they used, good luck. The guitar and amp models the Beatles played are some of the most collectible and expensive items on the vintage market today, especially items that match the same exact years, like their 1962 and '64 Gibson J-160E acoustic-electrics, 1957 Gretsch Duo Jet, or a 1963 Rickenbacker 325. Similarly, vintage Vox tube amps from the Sixties fetch a pretty penny, and the hybrid solid-state/tube Vox models like the 7120 and UL730 are exceedingly rare, although fortunately the silverface Fender amps they used in the latter years are still somewhat reasonably priced.

Manufacturers often produce limited reproductions of the guitars the Beatles played, but usually these are expensive collector's items aimed at boomers with large bank accounts. Occasionally an affordable run of instruments will emerge, particularly around notable anniversaries, but these items also get snatched up quickly.

With the exception of the rare Vox hybrid amps and most Rickenbacker guitars and basses (which have highly protected copyrights), the sound of many of the Beatles rigs can be replicated with affordable, readily available gear. We've put together a list of our favorite choices that won't break the bank. While not everything will meet the needs of players in Beatles tribute bands who need to accurately look the part, these instruments certainly sound the part.

ELECTRIC GUITARS

Original: Rickenbacker 325 Capri
Alternative: Squier Mini Stratocaster

JOHN LENNON'S 1958, 1963 and 1964 Rickenbacker 325 Capri electrics (the latter actually being a Rose-Morris 1996 variant) are iconic instruments of the early days of Beatlemania. Because Rickenbacker vigorously guards copyrights and its instruments are so unique and distinctive, the best option for purists is to dig deep into their pocketbooks and buy an actual Ric. With its short 22-inch scale (two inches longer than the 325's scale) and three single-coil pickups, the Squier Mini Stratocaster is about as close as one can come on a budget. Use heavy-gauge flatwound strings.

Original: 1957 Gretsch 6128 Duo Jet
Alternative: Gretsch G5230T Electromatic Jet

HARRISON'S DUO JET had a pair of DeArmond Dynasonic single coils, so to replicate his twang you'll want to replace the Electromatic's humbuckers with Dynasonic-inspired pickups like the TV Jones T-Armond.

Original: 1963 Gretsch 6122 Country Gentleman / c. 1962-63 Gretsch 6119 Tennessean
Alternative: Gretsch G5420T Electromatic Classic Hollowbody

ALTHOUGH MANY BEATLES enthusiasts consider the Gretsch Country Gentleman an essential Beatlemania guitar because it appeared in many live shows, television broadcasts and the film *A Hard Day's Night*, George Harrison actually used his Gretsch Tennessean hollowbody more

1. Reverend Airwave 12-string
2. Gretsch G5230T Electromatic Jet
3. Epiphone SG Standard 60s Maestro Vibrola
4. Epiphone Les Paul Standard 50s
5. Squier Mini Stratocaster
6. Epiphone J-200

IF YOU WANT TO IMITATE THE SOUND OF THE BEATLES BY ACQUIRING THE EXACT SAME MODELS AND VINTAGES OF GEAR THAT THEY USED, GOOD LUCK!

often in the studio. The Gretsch G5420T Electromatic Classic Hollowbody is a great alternative (particularly the walnut stain finish version), but like the Electromatic Jet, it has humbuckers. TV Jones TV-HT replacement pickups sound very close to the Tennessean's original HiLo'Tron single coils.

Original: 1961 Fender Stratocaster
Alternative: Fender Vintera '60s Strat
➔**THE VINTERA 60S** Strat has the closest vibe to a vintage Sixties Strat that you can buy for just over a grand.

Original: Epiphone E230TD/TDV Casino
Alternative: Epiphone Casino
➔**PLAYED BY HARRISON**, Lennon and McCartney on dozens of songs, an Epiphone Casino is a must-have for any guitarist who wants to duplicate Beatles guitar tones. Fortunately, Epiphone offers an affordable import Casino model that perfectly captures authentic Beatles tones and vibe.

Original: 1963/65 Rickenbacker 360/12
Alternative: Reverend Airwave 12-string
➔**LIKE THE RICKENBACKER** 325, there really is no substitute for a Rickenbacker 360/12. However, the Reverend Airwave 12-string electric ticks a lot of the right boxes, including its semi-hollow construction, single-coil pickups and 24.75-inch scale.

Original: 1964 Fender Esquire/1968 Fender Rosewood Telecaster
Alternative: Fender JV Modified '60s Custom Telecaster/Eastwood Mad Cat RT
➔**FENDER CURRENTLY DOESN'T** offer any Esquire or Rosewood Telecaster models (although that could change at a moment's notice), but a good Sixties-style Telecaster will get you at least 90 percent of the way there for authentic Beatles tones. We particularly like the JV Modified '60s Custom Telecaster for its overall versatility. If you prefer the look of Harrison's rosewood Tele, the Eastwood Mad Cat RT is a super cool choice

Original: 1964 Gibson SG Standard
Alternative: Epiphone SG Standard 60s Maestro Vibrola
➔**WITH ITS MAESTRO** Vibrola tailpiece and ProBucker pickups, this Epiphone model not only looks the part but it sounds like it too.

Original: 1957 Gibson Les Paul Standard
Alternative: Epiphone Les Paul Standard 50s
➔**LIKE THE EPIPHONE** SG Standard, the Epiphone Les Paul Standard 50s is about as good as it gets for under a grand. This model may not come with Lucy's red finish, but the Metallic Gold option hints at Lucy's origins.

ACOUSTIC GUITARS

Original: 1962/64 Gibson J-160E
Alternative: Epiphone Casino
➔**NEITHER GIBSON NOR** Epiphone offers a J-160E-style model anymore. Because the original Fifties and Sixties models had heavy tops with ladder bracing, a mod-

THE BEATLES

THE VOX AC15C2 DOES A GREAT JOB COVERING THE GAMUT OF CLASSIC BEATLES TONES FROM THEIR MOP-TOP BEGINNINGS TO THEIR EARLY PSYCHEDELIC EXPLORATIONS

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7. Fender Player Jazz Bass

8. Vox AC15C2 2x12

9. Fender 68 Custom Princeton Reverb

10. Electro-Harmonix Lester K

11. Dunlop JDF2 Classic Fuzz Face

12. Keeley 30MS Automatic Double Tracker

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ern acoustic-electric won't really cut it either. However, the fully hollow Epiphone Casino actually delivers unplugged acoustic tones that come close, and the neck P90 pickup can closely duplicate the tones of the J-160E's P90 when plugged in.

Original: 1964 Epiphone Texan FT-79
Alternative: Epiphone Masterbilt Texan

EPIPHONE STILL OFFERS a Texan model, and it's a highly affordable Masterbilt model — enough said.

Original: 1968 Gibson J-200
Alternative: Epiphone J-200

HARRISON'S SIXTIES J-200 had a Tuneomatic bridge that gave it a distinctive jangly tone, but many acoustic purists consider the bone saddle in the Epiphone versions bridge a more traditional and better sounding option. The jumbo body dimensions also deliver the requisite volume projection and bass.

BASS GUITARS

Original: 1961/63 Hofner 500/1
Alternative: Hofner Violin Ignition SE or Ignition SE Cavern

FEATURING HOLLOWBODY CONSTRUCTION and a short 30-inch scale length, Hofner's Ignition Series basses deliver sound and looks to please discriminating fans of original Beatle bass tones that come direct from the source.

Original: 1964 Rickenbacker 4001S
Alternative: Rickenbacker 4003S

SIMILAR TO THE Rickenbacker guitars above, there really aren't any affordable brand-new alternatives to the Ric 4001S on today's market. If you absolutely have to have a Ric bass, the 4003S is available for just over two grand.

Original: 1966 Fender Jazz Bass
Alternative: Fender Player Jazz Bass

THE FENDER PLAYER Jazz Bass delivers the classic punchy, rumbling tones of McCartney's latter-day Beatles bass tracks.

Original: 1968 Fender Bass VI
Alternative: Squier Classic Vibe Bass VI

INSTEAD OF SHELLING out thousands for an original vintage Fender Bass VI or a baritone that's more suitable for metal, you can pick up a Squier Classic Vibe Bass VI for much, much less. It even has the same bound fingerboard and large CBS-era-style headstock as the model played by John and George.

AMPS

BECAUSE THE BEATLES used so many different amp models in the studio over the course of 1963 through 1970, it can be frustrating attempting to duplicate their amp rigs. The hybrid tube/solid-state Vox models, which are quite rare, can be particularly difficult to replicate accurately, but fortunately the Fender amps they used in the latter days are the opposite. Instead of chasing individual tones, I recommend casting a net wider and focusing on good general-purpose tones that can be divided into two distinctive camps: Vox and Fender.

Vox AC15C2 2x12

THE VOX AC15C2 does a great job covering the gamut of classic Beatles tones from their mop-top beginnings to their early psychedelic explorations. Its clean tones are particularly stellar, and the Top Boost channel can dial in period-correct tonal character. If you need more volume output for

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performing on stage, the AC30C2 delivers the goods for a few hundred more bucks.

Fender '68 Custom Princeton Reverb

WITH THE EXCEPTION of McCartney's Blonde Bassman and Harrison's blackface Showman and Deluxe, most of the Beatles' Fender amp tones in the studio came courtesy of late Sixties silverface models. The Fender '68 Custom Princeton Reverb provides very sweet silverface clean and overdrive tones at studio volume levels. For higher stage output levels, the Fender '68 Custom Pro Reverb occupies a nice sweet spot between the Deluxe Reverb and Twin Reverb amps.

EFFECTS

THE BEATLES DID not employ too many pedal effects in the studio other than various fuzz boxes and an occasional wah or volume pedal. Many of their more dramatic effects were created using studio techniques like tape flanging or ADT (artificial double tracking). However, a handful of fuzz boxes and pedals that duplicate studio effects are very helpful for nailing authentic Beatles tones.

Boss TB-2W Tone Bender

A SOLA SOUND Tone Bender first showed up at Beatles sessions while they were recording *Rubber Soul* in 1965, and various Sola Sound Tone Benders played important roles on *Revolver* and beyond. The Boss TB-2W accurately replicates the tones of an original Sola Sound Tone Bender Mk II, while its adjustable voltage settings expands the range of available tones. Medium Attack settings are ideal for mid-Sixties lead tones, while dialing the Attack up full takes the sound into *Sgt. Pepper* territory.

JHS Colour Box 2

A MODERN REPRODUCTION of the REDD.47 line amplifier that was used to generate the gritty distortion on "Revolution" will set you back more than two grand, but the JHS Colour Box 2, based upon a Neve 1073 mic preamp, will get you very close to that distinctive sound for less than a fourth of that price. It's also in a pedal format so you can use it on stage, and it's a highly versatile preamp/EQ that sounds great with any instrument or vocals (not just for over-the-top distortion).

Dunlop JDF2 Classic Fuzz Face

A FUZZ FACE is essential if you want to replicate most of the distorted lead guitar tones heard on *Abbey Road* and *Let It Be*.

Keeley 30MS Automatic Double Tracker

THIS PEDAL'S "ABBEY" mode should give you a good idea what it does. Yes, this is an electronic version of the tape machine-based ADT effect that the Beatles often employed. Your guitar will gently weep when you plug it into this.

Electro-Harmonix Lester K

IF YOU DON'T have the space or upper body strength to deal with a huge Leslie 147RV cabinet, the Electro-Harmonix Lester K provides dazzling rotating speaker effects that sound every bit as good as the real thing, and fits into your guitar case.

(AND IN THE END, THE SOUNDS YOU MAKE ARE EQUAL TO THE LICKS YOU TAKE).

STRUNG UP

THE BEATLES FLATWOUND VS. ROUNDWOUND DEBATE

MANY guitar nerds note that perhaps the most important detail of replicating the Beatles' tones after their guitars and amps is the type of strings that they used. It is generally believed that Harrison and Lennon used flatwound strings in the early years up until late 1965, just after the release of *Rubber Soul*. After that, from *Revolver* and beyond, they apparently switched to roundwound strings.

This argument seems to make sense from both sonic and historical perspectives. The more balanced and less brilliant tone of flatwounds certainly explains why some critical listeners today are under the mistaken impression that George didn't play an electric 12-string on "Ticket to Ride" (George Martin's handwritten notes indicate that Harrison did indeed use his Rickenbacker 360/12) since most guitarists today are used to the sound of electric 12-strings with roundwounds. A 12-string electric with flatwounds sounds more blended and even. Heavy-gauge flatwound strings (like Pyramid .012-.052) are also a critical element of Lennon's Rickenbacker 325 Capri setup. Because the 325 has a short 20-inch scale length, modern lighter gauge slinky strings are too floppy and loose.

The Beatles' shift to roundwound strings likely had more to do with the new instruments the band acquired than any personal preferences. Most electric guitars shipped with flatwound strings until the mid Sixties, so when John and George bought their new Epiphone Casinos, George bought his 1964 Gibson SG and McCartney acquired his 1964 Fender Esquire, these guitars probably came from the factory with roundwounds installed.

Back in those wild and wooly days before guitar magazines existed, no one knew what brand of strings the Beatles preferred, and once when asked, McCartney coyly responded that he liked "long shiny ones." After the fact, it's been determined that the Beatles probably used Pyramid flatwounds in the early years and Gibson Sonomatic and Rotosounds during the latter part of the band's career. Generally, they used heavy-gauge sets with .012 or .011 high E strings, although they may have used lighter gauges starting in 1968 or '69. — *Chris Gill*

PYRAMID: DAMIAN FANELLI/FUTURE

POPPERFOTO VIA GETTY IMAGES

Lennon with his (or Harrison's) 1962 Gibson J-160E in May 1963 — with a Vox AC30 in the foreground

ULTIMATE BEATLES TONE GUIDE

BEATLES UNPLUGGED

A GUIDE TO THE FAB FOUR'S ACOUSTIC ARSENAL

MOST BEATLES fans who play guitar obsess over the electric guitars and amps that the band members played through various stages of their career. However, with the exception of the Gibson J-160E acoustic-electrics that were seen throughout the entirety of the band's existence, the acoustic guitars that they played don't get as much attention, even though they played equally important roles in the acoustic songs they recorded, as well as those where acoustic and electric instruments were blended together.

Harrison and Lennon purchased a pair of brand-new J-160E guitars in 1962, and Lennon replaced his with a new 1964 model after his was stolen. Although a J-160E doesn't have the most stellar acoustic tone (the Beatles used theirs amplified as often as they recorded it acoustically), it managed to provide a good driving rhythm texture behind the band's electric tones. By 1964, the band had greatly expanded its acoustic guitar arsenal, with Lennon having a Ramirez 1A nylon-string classical and Framus Hootenanny 12-string, Harrison also owning a Ramirez classical and McCartney acquiring an Epiphone Texan FT79. These guitars were immediately put to good use on songs like "And I Love Her," "Norwegian Wood" and "Yesterday."

In 1968, the Beatles expanded their acoustic collection further, with Lennon and McCartney each obtaining Martin D-28 dreadnoughts (Lennon soon stripped the finish off of his) and Harrison buying a brand-new Gibson J-200. These guitars appear on the White Album, with McCartney's D-28 playing a prominent role on "Blackbird" and "Mother Nature's Son," while Harrison's J-200 provided the driving rhythmic backbone to "While My Guitar Gently Weeps." Harrison played his J-200 often until the band's final days, using it to record "Here Comes the Sun." — *Chris Gill*

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METALLICA

Words Jenna Scaramanga **Photos** Tim Saccenti

"THE GROOVE IS EVERYTHING!"

The biggest guitar album of the year has arrived: Metallica's ***72 Seasons***. Lead guitarist **Kirk Hammett** and bassist **Robert Trujillo** tell us how this legendary band finds new inspiration in the pursuit of heaviness...

Kirk Hammett has a confession to make. Metallica's lead guitarist is talking about the band's new album *72 Seasons*, and how the energy within it comes from a spontaneous approach to writing and recording...

"First and foremost I'm an improvisational musician," he says. "I've realised that everything you do is pretty much improvisation. Any songwriting is improv. Writing melodies is improv. Improvisation is playing guitar."

And as he muses on this subject, he admits to a longstanding 'fixation' with one of hard rock's greatest lead players, AC/DC's Angus Young. "One of the things I love about Angus is how he never plays the same solo twice," Kirk says, before adding in a conspiratorial tone: "I have to confess that this is the album that got my Angus fixation out of my system finally.

"I've been obsessed with AC/DC most of my life – Angus and Malcolm's guitar tones, just their whole approach. I don't speak too much about it because it's a real common thing. Everyone's blown away by AC/DC.

"But I've always marvelled at Angus's guitar style because it's the perfect combination of blues, hard rock and boogie. He has a lot of humour in his playing, and yet it's just so intense. You can't f*cking beat it! Coming from Angus it's just so organic. You know he's not thinking about what all the guitar magazines are gonna say. He just goes up and f*cking does it. And I love that."

A similar ethos is at the heart of *72 Seasons*, which finds Metallica doing exactly what they did in the 80s. Not always *sounding* like they did in the 80s, but determinedly being themselves without giving a single sh*t what other people think.

The weight of history can be a heavy burden. Metallica's key albums – such as *Master Of Puppets* from 1986, and their self-titled multi-million-seller from 1991, forever known as 'The Black Album' – are landmarks in metal, which now come with more than 30 years of attached memories and myths. Other legendary bands have been intimidated into mediocrity by that kind of pressure, but *72 Seasons* has Metallica operating at full power, drawing on everything from their thrash metal roots to the heavy grooves of their classic early 90s songs *Enter Sandman* and *Sad But True*. Some of *72 Seasons* will remind you of old Metallica because this *is* Metallica. But all of it sounds reinvigorated.

Aside from 2011's *Lulu*, the band's one-off collaboration with Lou Reed, *72 Seasons* is Metallica's third studio album since bassist Robert Trujillo joined the ranks alongside Kirk and the two founding members, guitarist/vocalist James Hetfield and drummer Lars Ulrich. And with Hetfield currently unavailable for interviews, it's Kirk and Robert who speak to TG about how this album came together.

For Kirk, the years between this album and its predecessor, 2016's *Hardwired... To Self-Destruct*, saw him rediscovering his earliest influences. "I started a deep dive into all the guitar players that really influenced me when I was a kid," he says. "Hardwired was me listening to a lot of Michael Schenker and that generation of guitarists. On this [album], I went back even further. I realised that there's a generation of British guitar players that I love. I even like the obscure ones, like Kim Simmonds of Savoy Brown. So I started relearning all this stuff, and that British guitar player influence really rubbed off on me when we started doing this album."

Incredibly, 'new' bassist Robert Trujillo has now been in Metallica longer than Cliff Burton and Jason Newsted combined. While Kirk revisited British blues-rock, Trujillo took cues from his predecessors in the band. "Cliff and Jason were so different in the way they play, and in their approach to the instrument," he explains. "It's very exciting for me because I understand what they did best. I have what I can offer to the song, but I can also pull from that existing bag of possibilities from Cliff or Jason. I love Cliff's melodic approach. If you take a song like *For Whom The Bell Tolls*, it's melodic yet edgy, and has that anthemic quality. He was so great at that, and also changing the sound of the instrument and bringing it into an arrangement. That idea wasn't really prevalent in metal. Jason was just really solid. The Black Album has very well-produced bass parts.

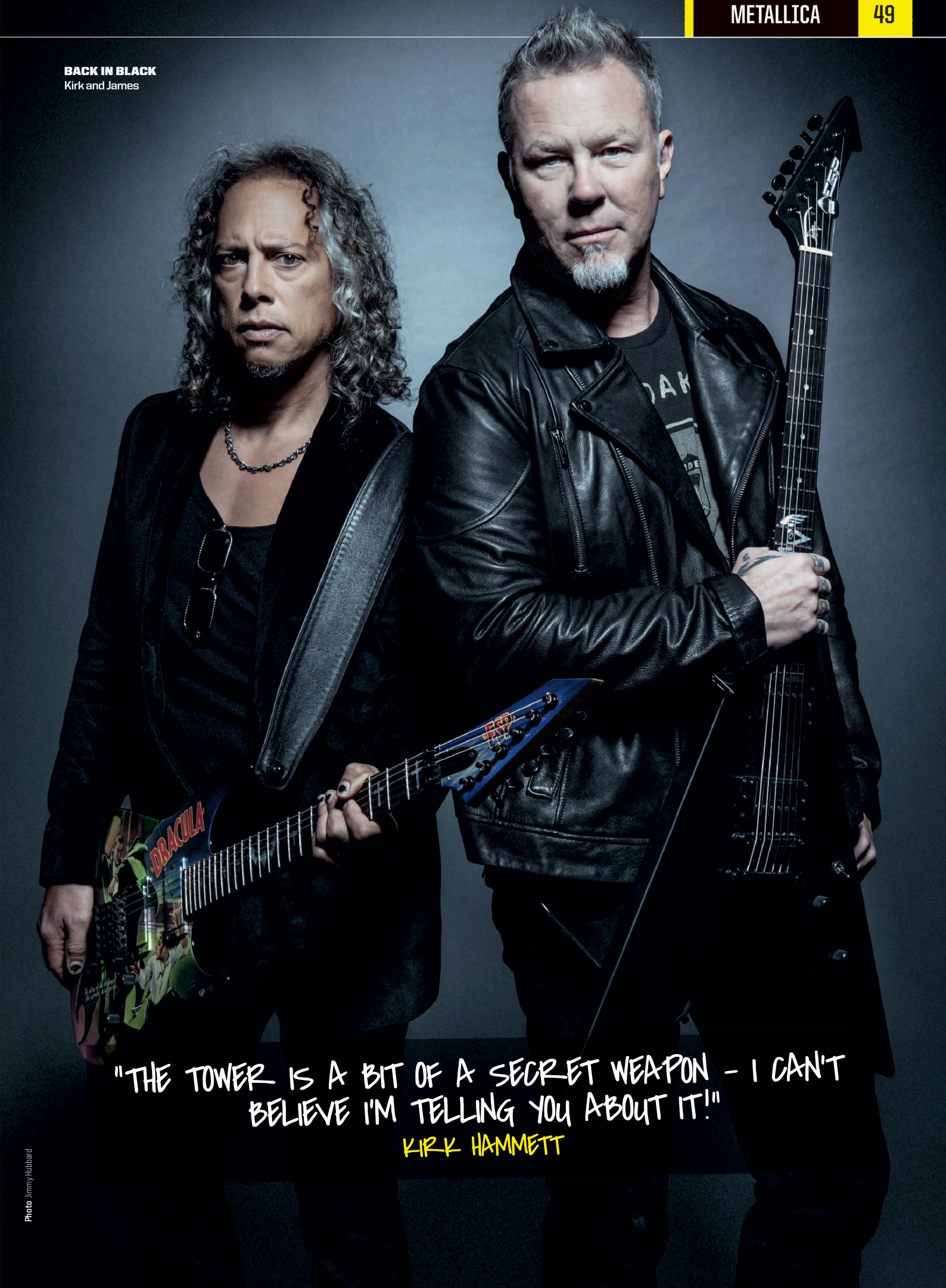
Tonally, both Kirk and Robert's choice of sound is influenced by James Hetfield's gargantuan rhythm tone. "One of the important things about being a bass player in Metallica is to find the sound that sits well between James's and Kirk's guitars," Robert says. "Fortunately, our producer Greg Fidelman is really aware of that. On the record you can hear every note of the bass. The way the parts are slotted together, everything works so it becomes a team effort. There's a lot of energy in the songs, so the sound is important, the attack of each note."

Kirk's British blues-rock kick also influenced his choice of gear. His main axe is Greeny, the 1959 Les Paul formerly owned by Fleetwood Mac's Peter Green and then by Gary Moore, which Kirk acquired in 2014 for an undisclosed price reportedly "less than $2 million". His amp choices also reflect the tones of that era. When TG suggests it sounds like Metallica have been using Marshalls, Kirk replies "We always use Marshalls." But while Marshall amps are almost always part of Metallica's tonal equation, they have rarely been this prominent.

"I was so much more into Greeny's sound, and that classic British thing of plugging a Gibson Les Paul into a 50-watt Marshall," Kirk says. "I really fell back in love with that whole sound. I have a special Marshall that I use in the studio, a hot rodded 80s Marshall. It never really leaves the studio, and whenever we record it always works its way into my setup."

The secret sauce on his tone is the Solodallas Schaffer Replica EX Tower, a replica of the tone circuitry from the Schaffer Vega Diversity wireless system most famously used by AC/DC. "It's a type of preamp compression unit," he explains. "People like Angus Young, David Gilmour and Eddie Van Halen were able to boost the output on that transmitter, hence Angus's amazing guitar sound. So the Tower is a bit of a secret weapon – I can't believe I'm telling you about it! It's a large part of how I got that super dynamic lead sound. It's really full sounding, there's a lot of mid, but it doesn't sound harsh or too bold or solid. The harmonic distortion is amazing. I hit a note on Greeny and it literally will never quit."

He continues: "The tone on *72 Seasons* is based on my live sound, which is a Fractal Axe-FX modelled on a blend of my Fortin Meathead amp and my Dual Rectifier. We took that lead sound and tweaked a little EQ, added the Tower and we're good to go. Maybe there's a Tube Screamer in there also, because I just love that sound."



BACK IN BLACK
Kirk and James

"THE TOWER IS A BIT OF A SECRET WEAPON – I CAN'T BELIEVE I'M TELLING YOU ABOUT IT!"
KIRK HAMMETT

Photo Jimmy Hubbard

18+

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THE FIRM
Metallica (from left): Robert Trujillo, Lars Ulrich, James Hetfield, Kirk Hammett.

"WHEN YOU HAVE A GREAT RIFF, YOU CAN PLAY WITH IT SO MANY DIFFERENT WAYS"

ROBERT TRUJILLO

For parts requiring a Floyd Rose, Kirk used an old favourite. "Guitar-wise, I just went back and forth from Greeny to my Mummy guitar. Why bother with anything else? The Mummy is my best-sounding ESP, and Greeny... everyone knows how that sounds! There was no need for a really crystalline clean tone. There's not even a ballad on this album."

That lack of ballads reflects the incredible energy Metallica felt when they first reunited after Covid lockdowns. Instead of mellow tracks, Trujillo says there was one key ingredient: big riffs. "You always go to that, go back to your anchor. A great riff makes songwriting a lot easier. When you have that you can play with it so many different ways. That's where we incorporate accented rakes, muting, and all that kind of stuff."

One great riff is on *Screaming Suicide*, which found Kirk paying homage to another early hero. "That is a complete tribute to Ritchie Blackmore. The melody is very reminiscent of what he plays in [classic Deep Purple song] *Black Night*. A large part of my guitar style and attitude comes from him. He had such a vision and he wrote great songs. I just feel indebted to him for his music and his spirit."

In the first track released from the album, *Lux Æterna*, Kirk's frenzied whammy solo drew a lot of criticism, of which he is well aware. "That solo seemed to get people talking on the Internet to the point where people were doing their own version," he says. "I was just laughing the whole time. Yeah, anyone could do a technically better solo than anyone else on any song, but what's the point? My f*cking friends down the street could probably play a better solo than *Lux Æterna*, but the solo that's on there is part of the experience. For me, what's appropriate is playing for the song and playing in the moment."

He speaks again about the value of spontaneity. "I'm constantly working on my improvisation," he says. "Constantly finding more ways to get within the groove. The groove is everything. If you're in the groove it really doesn't matter what you're playing. You can even play outside notes, but if the groove is there you're golden. You get a bad note? Play the next note and it's good. After playing guitar for 40 years, I've come to this conclusion. I wish I knew back in the 70s and 80s, but that's just not how it was meant to be for me."

This renewed enthusiasm for improvisation comes from another of Kirk's recent discoveries. "I'm really into prog and jazz fusion these days. A lot of those bands embrace everything that I was just saying. I missed out on prog while it was happening because I was into Tygers Of Pan Tang and Angel Witch. But I've discovered a whole world of music I love."

He says that this desire for spontaneity extends to the entire songwriting process. "If we get to the point where we're agonising over something, that means we need to move on to something else fresh. The last thing I want to be is stuck on any music, like I don't have any more ideas and I'm too locked into this feeling. We never agonise over anything, and if anything's too complicated to play, that means it probably shouldn't be on the album."

Spontaneous or not, the songs on *72 Seasons* are all meticulously arranged, and the intros are a particular highlight, as Robert points out: "Pretty much every song builds into something. It doesn't start out as the thing it's ultimately gonna be," he says. Similar care was placed in selecting the tracks for the album. "It's like you're looking at works of art in an exhibition and each song has its place in there," he continues. "You take songs like *You Must Burn* or *Chasing Light*, and then you take a song like *Room Of Mirrors* and it helps complete the overall picture."

Kirk's contributions, meanwhile, are focused on melody and hooks. In many songs he memorably doubles Hetfield's riffs in a higher octave. "Sometimes not playing a harmony but playing an octave is just as effective," he reflects. "We tried harmonising a lot of the stuff, and sometimes harmonies just make something sound a bit more pretty than the intention. If you play an octave, it kind of underlines the statement. If I could sum up my playing on this album, my solos are mostly rhythmic. That's just how I feel like playing these days. I really wanted to sit in the rhythm, lock in with the groove and play for the song."

For Kirk, playing for the song means more melody and less shred. "I don't try to reach outside the boundaries of the song," he says. "I don't think that's appropriate. I could string together six or seven three-octave arpeggios, sit there every day and practise it and go, 'Hey, look what I can do!' But where am I gonna put it? Arpeggios mapped out like a lot of people do, four or five chords with a different arpeggio over each one? Come on, it sounds like an exercise. I don't want to listen to exercises and warm-ups. The only guys who I think play arpeggios as a means of expression are Joe Satriani, Yngwie Malmsteen and Paul Gilbert."

Warming to his theme, Kirk argues that melodic playing is both more meaningful and, counterintuitively, more difficult than shredding. "I could fill up these songs with a bunch of really fast modal playing," he says. "I know my modes, Hungarian scales, symmetrical scales, whole tone scales, I know all that sh*t. Is it appropriate? Diminished runs – is that appropriate? Maybe earlier in our time, but not now. What's more appropriate is coming up with melodies that are more like vocal melodies. And guess what? The best scale for mimicking vocal melodies is the pentatonic. There's a reason why the blues is so expressive, and it's because of pentatonics. I prefer pentatonics because they're more expressive. It's actually harder to say stuff with pentatonics because you don't have that many notes. It's easier to play modal, because you've got so many notes. Okay, some of them are repeated in different octaves, but I will challenge anyone on that. One, two, three, five notes – what's more difficult? You tell me."

What Kirk says in conclusion is that this passion for improvisation will be carried forward into Metallica's live show, which UK fans will witness over two nights at the Download festival in June. "I have every intention on playing every solo from this album differently when we play live," he says. "If you watch old videos of Ritchie Blackmore, Jeff Beck, or even Michael Schenker, they're not playing the solos on the album – they're playing whatever the f*ck they wanna play. I love that because it's a moment of real honesty.

"With this album I went in intentionally to improvise 20, 30 solos, give them all to Lars and Greg, and go 'You guys edit them!' I know I'm gonna play something completely different live, so I can offer something different every time you see Metallica. When you buy a ticket to a Metallica show, you're not gonna hear carbon copy versions of the album.

"At a time when it's just so accessible to see videos of your favourite band, there needs to be some sort of impetus for people to go out and see live shows that are actually somewhat spontaneous." He laughs. "That's my thing these days – and if people don't like it, that's just tough!"

72 Seasons is out now.

METALLICA

Words Jenna Scaramanga **Photo** Tim Saccenti

"IT JUST PUNCHES YOU IN THE FACE!"

A deep dive into Metallica's *72 Seasons* with **Kirk Hammett** and **Robert Trujillo**. Fast stuff, bouncy stuff, thrashing riffs, evil tones, power grooves and 'total noise' solos included!

01 72 SEASONS

Blasting out of the gate, the album's title track is a statement of intent, proving that Metallica are still capable of impressive ferocity. The double-time blasts feel like 320bpm, and Kirk cleverly highlights accents from the main riff with a lead line packed with doublestops. The wah-drenched solo is packed with Hammett trademarks and comes out into a melodic lead guitar hook.

Kirk Hammett: It has all the elements – fast stuff, bouncy stuff, [a] super strong melody. It's designed to just suck you into the album. We all agree that the middle part of *72 Seasons* is one of the most difficult Metallica riffs we have ever played. It's not the choice of notes or how the notes are played; it's all in the timing and the phrasing. You have to use your head; you can't just punt it. It shifts and it has weird counts.

Robert Trujillo: *72 Seasons* has all the perfect ingredients of an opening track on a Metallica album. I love when it gets chuggy and falls into half-time. It strips down to just the guitar and the hi-hat, but the energy is still pulsing through with the guitar double-picking. Then we all come back in and it blasts into the lead section, like 'Hey Kirk, come on in – let's party!'

02 SHADOWS FOLLOW

There's a distinctly old-school Metallica vibe in *Shadows Follow*, with a riff that emphasises that most metal of intervals, the diminished 5th. Kirk's doublestop licks in the solo speak of the Angus Young influence he tells us about, and he also performs some classic pull-offs onto open strings, another early AC/DC favourite. There is also an echo of *Battery*, the opening song from Metallica's classic 1986 album *Master Of Puppets*.

Kirk: *Shadows Follow* falls in line with the second Metallica song on every album: usually mid-paced, super rhythmic and has a real driving quality to it. Someone said, 'Hey, why don't we come up with a *Battery* type of rhythm solo?' So that's what you hear right before the solo...

Robert: This does speak evil! This song has a lot of everything, but it definitely registers on the 'evil tone', the ♭5th. It just has a lot of personality in that evil range. The accents play a role in that, and there are a lot of variations, too. I like how there's a descending sequence.

03 SCREAMING SUICIDE

Metallica slow things down in the intro of this 200bpm, half-time shot of adrenalin. The riff is in parallel 4ths, which makes it come on like a turbocharged Deep Purple. This is the first of many tracks to feature a memorable octave unison line between the guitars towards the end.

Kirk: I just love this song, because right off the top I can just vomit out wacky wah pedal melodies. That wah pedal jumps and grabs you by the throat! The song really is a tribute to the New Wave Of British Heavy Metal that we still bow to even to this day. We use the parallel 4ths a lot because it's a dark sound without being too minor.

Robert: This track has an evil slide in it. I love those rakes and accents. It's that classic Hetfield thrashing of the strings, and it's something that you feel. James and I will double up on those so we're both hitting the strings as hard as we can but muting it so it becomes a percussive effect. It's just energy.

04 SLEEPWALK MY LIFE AWAY

This is the first of a few songs that remind us of the band's self-titled album from 1991 – known to all as 'The Black Album'. The four-on-the-floor intro and Trujillo's bass riff, together with some excellent pickslides, build excitement for another riff that leans hard on the ♭5th. The wah-fuelled solo sees Kirk creating hooks with repeated rhythmic ideas, and the band sounds thunderous as they exit the solo into a half-time section.

Robert: I could see the comparison with *Enter Sandman*. It's got that swagger and it's not too fast. There's a feeling of simplicity but the pulse takes you in a certain direction. It's a power groove. Before you even get to the riff you've got that scratch on the bass that sends this thing off. It's kinda simple but I'm proud of it.

Kirk: There's a lumbering feel to it. Rob and I love this riff. It sounds like Cheech and Chong in the lowrider cruising down Hollywood Boulevard, smoking joints!

Robert: In the descending part of the intro, James is covering that and I'm just on root notes and stabs on the descend. Then all of a sudden it just punches you in the face with that riff.

"THE MIDDLE PART OF
72 SEASONS IS ONE OF THE
MOST DIFFICULT METALLICA
RIFFS WE'VE EVER PLAYED"
KIRK HAMMETT

"SCREAMING SUICIDE HAS THAT CLASSIC HETFIELD THRASHING OF THE STRINGS"
ROBERT TRUJILLO

05 YOU MUST BURN

This is a standout track. A slow, stomping beast that reminds us of *Sad But True* and the heavy parts of *The Unforgiven*. Heavy, heavy stuff.

Kirk: My favourite song on the whole album – and I didn't write any of it! That Sabbath-y middle riff that James wrote is epic. And I love the guitar solo. I can't remember playing any of these guitar solos to be honest, so it's amusing to hear them again! I get to get pick and choose what parts I want to play live and what parts I want to change, and that's beautiful.

Robert: I have so much love for this song. It resonates with me almost like an old horror movie, like *Nosferatu*. It's really got swagger, like Clint Eastwood or something. The mid section, James and I came up with this on the road and there was originally a bass break. I was straight out pulling from some of the classic Ozzy songs like *Believer* [from Osbourne's 1981 album *Diary Of A Madman*]. And there are backing vocals by Trujillo on this one!

06 LUX ÆTERNA

You've heard this already, but it sounds even more frenetic coming after the plodding *You Must Burn*. Kirk's whammy bar abuse riled his haters, but we're with him – the noise solo works!

Robert: I love the intro. I love that the snare is in sync with our descending guitars. It's like a beatdown. You're getting pulverised, and there's no time for a buildup – it's just in! For me this one's an arm burner. Although I'm just pulsing on the A note, it's a challenge, man. You start to run out of gas. When we first rehearsed it, I didn't get a chance to warm up, so I tried to sneak a pick in there, thinking that our producer Greg Fidelman wouldn't notice. He immediately gets on the mic, 'Robert! Are you playing this song with a pick?!'

Kirk: When I step up to solo, I'll listen to the song and say, 'This one needs a total noise solo', or 'This needs a really melodic solo'. *Lux Æterna* was f*cking pedal to the metal, total adrenaline! Trying to play a tricky melody when the band's going all out – is that really appropriate? If I play a total noise solo, that's gonna fit beautifully over what's happening because what's happening is already chaotic. So I just went in there and did my Judas Priest and KK Downing imitation. I love the chromatic thing that goes completely down because no one does that!

07 CROWN OF BARBED WIRE

The opening powerchords have the 5th in the bass, what Trujillo calls the "tension chords", for an extra sinister crunch. A groovy, single-note riff is, as Kirk says, unusual for Metallica, but sounds closer to their 90s output than anything before or since. Kirk's solo incorporates a Chuck Berry/Angus Young rock 'n' roll repeating lick, and after the solo he doubles the main riff in a higher octave.

Kirk: We haven't really ever had a riff or part that has ever sounded like this. It was on a tape that I made and like Lars just loved it. I was like, 'Really?' James said, 'I would have never thought of using that.' But Lars just went with it and said, 'This riff has something you guys aren't hearing.' Then we came up with this song and, you know, he was right. I think that song will become a deep cut that eventually people will start asking us to play live.

Robert: The tension chords that James plays are kind of the setup to this. I'm playing a

Photo Getty

repetitive hammer-on riff, and the tension chords are the strength in that issue. Then all of a sudden it's just a pulse. The bass is carrying it through with a nice power groove.

08 CHASING LIGHT

One of many songs to switch intelligently between half-time and double-time, this opens at 90bpm but soon shifts to feeling like 180. Kirk plays a lick in the solo that is not unlike Jimmy Page's repeating lick midway through his solo in *Stairway To Heaven*. The rhythm is not the same as Page's, but it displaces on each repeat. A similar idea shows up in *Too Far Gone*.

Kirk: That main riff is super cool. It's a different kind of riff for us in terms of hand-positioning. James and I were looking at it one day and he said, 'It's weird, it's like one riff fits inside the other riff.' It's like a two-tier riff. Tons of energy. It has these rhythmic shifts that I just love doing, lots of stop-starts and rhythms that make us who we are, basically. That song is just filled with them.

Robert: The thing with this song to me is the groove. It's pretty much a song centred around the feel. James's vocal approach is really cool. There's a soulfulness to it, almost.

09 IF DARKNESS HAD A SON

This has an insistent and menacing reverse-gallop groove. Kirk's solo draws on his Ritchie Blackmore influence. There's a string bend that he repicks while gradually releasing the bend, and some pull-offs to the open string in a slightly neo-classical style.

Kirk: I gotta say, man, that riff is so weird to me. It's a riff that sounds like a guitar solo lick, but when you play it lower, all of a sudden it goes from a guitar lick to a really cool riff. This song also has a technique that we've been doing for the last few albums, which is taking melodies and turning them into chord progressions. When James sings the title, the riff is really a melody, with those slides, but we're playing it on chords. We started doing it on [2008 album] *Death Magnetic* and it's really cool. James likes it because he can do counter-melodies and they just make the song melodically hookier.

Robert: You can sing the riff in that Cheech and Chong style! It has a certain nastiness to it. I really believe that if we play it live, you're gonna get the crowd singing the riff – that happens sometimes, especially in South America.

10 TOO FAR GONE

With a classic metal chord progression moving from E5 to C5 and a melodic chorus, this reminded us of early-80s metal. The rhythm guitar parts make heavy use of triplets, which at this high tempo is a different feel from any of the other tracks.

Robert: This riff has been around for a while and I'm so happy to see it made its way onto this record. It has a New Wave Of British Heavy Metal personality. It's just a driving tune: old-school feel, banging guitar solo, banging riff. I like when a song takes you on a ride. It's got that forward momentum.

Kirk: We all love playing this song. It has all the elements that make a really pleasurable song: the guitar parts are really fun, the arrangement's really great, and it's really straightforward. This is another song where we turned melodies into chord progressions. There's a harmony solo that James and I do.

11 ROOM OF MIRRORS

Some of the outro harmony guitars remind us of the approach Metallica took on their cover of *Whiskey In The Jar*, the traditional Irish folk song popularised by Thin Lizzy. As the melody repeats, the interval of the harmony changes for some nice development.

Robert: There's a bit of that punk feel. There's a couple things here that are challenging, at least for bass, because you're going from straight pump-pump style and all of a sudden you're doubling it. It's a challenge for a finger player. It's definitely a song that moves, but some of the melodic and the guitar layers have that classic Metallica statement. Hopefully we'll play this one live.

Kirk: Again, that song is New Wave of British Heavy Metal to the max. For the repeating lick in the solo, I showed up at the studio one day, and Greg said, 'You played this lick the other day. Let's build a solo off that.' So that's what happened! It was a kind of Ritchie Blackmore approach, where he takes a melody and just expands on it.

12 INAMORATA

Metallica's longest-ever song is likened by Kirk to *Orion* from *Master Of Puppets* and *To Live Is To Die* from 1988 album *...And Justice For All*. There is an undeniable Black Sabbath feel to *Inamorata*, although the harmonised guitars are a nod to Iron Maiden and Thin Lizzy. Hetfield's epic melody is rhythmically intricate and makes for a strong finish. Best Metallica album this century? We think so.

Robert: The ultimate closing statement to an album. I call it the shortest 11-minute song! It feels like it's at least half that time because it takes you on a journey. It's sludgy, but I feel like I'm in a convertible car driving up the coast. It strips down to this minimal moment where it's just the bass, and I'm pulling from Geezer Butler. James had a vision for really stripping it down to rawness. Every note I played on this, especially in the breakdown, I was closing my eyes and just feeling it. I almost felt like I was floating in the bending of the notes, and then all of a sudden it just releases itself into these beautiful layers of guitar for this melodic statement that takes you on the journey out. You can feel the interplay when we start coming out of the bass break. There's this moment where we're almost dancing together between the instruments.

Kirk: One day James said, 'You know, this song needs an extended harmony solo', and he literally sat down and came up with the entire solo one afternoon. I went in and learned the harmony to it and that was it. It is a little bit of a tribute to songs like *Orion* and *To Live Is To Die*. When we were coming up with this song I thought, 'Is this one even gonna make it on the album?' But it became a f*cking mammoth!

"TRYING TO PLAY A TRICKY MELODY WHEN THE BAND'S GOING ALL OUT–IS THAT REALLY APPROPRIATE?"
KIRK HAMMETT

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Opeth's Mikael Åkerfeldt [left] and former Opeth guitarist Peter Lindgren, conveniently photographed in 2003

21st Century Schizoid Men

How did a Swedish death metal band end up releasing one of the greatest progressive rock masterpieces of the modern age? Opeth's MIKAEL ÅKERFELDT looks back on 20 years of *Damnation*

BY AMIT SHARMA PHOTOS BY MICK HUTSON/REDFERNS

SINCE THEIR formation in 1990, Swedish metallers Opeth have been no strangers to wild experimentation and unexpected detours into the creative leftfield. Even their 1995 Orchid debut showcased a bunch of musicians who simply refused to exist within the usual confines of death metal — borrowing elements from long-distant worlds such as jazz and classical and then fusing it all together into something greater than the sum of its parts.

But even the band themselves would admit that 2003's Damnation album — a 43-minute love letter to their vintage progressive rock influences — was something they never quite saw in their own destiny. After breaking out of the underground and making their mark internationally with the Steven Wilson-produced Blackwater Park in 2001, the Stockholm-based quartet now had the world's attention. For singer/guitarist and mastermind Mikael Åkerfeldt, who had undertaken the role of writing virtually all of the music early on, it was now time for his band to really spread their creative wings in the form of two records — the extreme brutality of Deliverance and its calmer companion, Damnation, released six months later. So when exactly did he realize his metal band was going to start working on music that would had little to do with the guttural roars and blastbeat fury they were typically associated with, and did he ever consider releasing Damnation as another project entirely?

"I definitely wanted it to be an Opeth record," says Åkerfeldt, talking via video conference from his living room on a chilly day in Stockholm. "Before Blackwater Park it didn't feel like that much was happening around the band. We were active but we didn't tour or have much going for us. Suddenly that all changed. We became aware of the fact that people knew who we were. I had this idea of doing two records, one heavy and the other more ballady and calm...

"I'd always wanted to make a more chilled-out album, but at the same time had never envisioned it actually happening. So I pitched the idea for releasing both together, and the answer from our label at the time was no. I asked for some adjustments to our contract — an additional sheet of paper that said we'd make both for the price of one, counting as a single album. That's how much I wanted to do it! And, of course, then they said yes. It's a terrible idea for a band to do that, playing into the hands of the label, giving them an extra release for nothing — and they insisted on separate release dates — but that's how we got the green light."

For Blackwater Park you mainly used a black PRS CE24 that you'd bought from Katatonia guitarist Anders Nyström, as well as a Seagull acoustic. What do you remember about the gear in the studio for Damnation?

Not much! [Laughs] I'd recently gotten a Martin acoustic. It was a 000-16GT, the GT standing for Gloss Top. It was actually a guitar player from Nevermore, Curran Murphy, who sold it to me. I think he worked in a guitar shop. When we toured together on the Blackwater Park cycle, he told me he could hook me up with a nice Martin on a good deal. So I got it through him, and it ended up being one of the main instruments for the record. I had my first two PRS guitars, which I was very happy with. And even though I wanted an old-school kinda sound, I didn't really feel the need to get vintage gear. Most of the electric guitars were recorded with my blue Custom 24 from the late Eighties.

That would have been your second PRS guitar — the first being the black CE24, correct?

Yeah, it was the second PRS I ever owned and one I've used a lot in Opeth. It's a really good

Lindgren [left] and Åkerfeldt in 2003. "Usually I borrow extra guitars, but since we had a couple of PRS guitars and Peter's Les Paul, that was all we needed for those records," Åkerfeldt says today

guitar that had been modified. There was originally a turn knob with the five pickup settings, which allowed you to split the humbuckers. It was a really good idea, except that you couldn't really get hold of it properly when you were on stage. I had the same problem with my first PRS and needed to put black skateboard tape to get traction around the switch. The blue one had been modified to a regular three-way toggle switch, and that was my main guitar for both Deliverance and Damnation. [Former Opeth guitarist] Peter Lindgren had his 1973 Gibson Les Paul Custom, from the year he was born. It was a really good guitar, though the frets were worn and the neck had been broken at some point. I can't remember if there was anything else. Usually I borrow some extra guitars from my friends, but since we had a couple of PRS guitars and Peter's Les Paul, that was all we needed for those records. I brought the black CE24 to the studio, but I can't remember using it much.

What can you tell us about the amps heard on the recordings?

Fredrik Nordström, who owned Studio Fredman, had a Fender Twin that we used for most of the clean tones. We even brought that along to the second studio, as we had to record a lot of things elsewhere. He had also had an Engl amp and a 5150, which is what most bands would have used when recording there, but for Damnation it was mainly the Twin. I think we might have used some of Steven Wilson's plug-ins too.

The opening track "Windowpane" is the one you've played live the most. There's a certain dreaminess to the ninth chord from the intro riff.

I actually learned about ninth chords from Stevie Wonder, particularly the song "Visions" from the 1973 album Innervisions. That song starts with those kinds of chords. I remember when I first heard it, I thought, "That's a beautiful chord; it sounds special — so I'll nick that at some point!"

The first solo, in the key of F# Dorian, feels like a nod to Andy Latimer from Seventies progressive rock group Camel.

I don't improvise much so I definitely sat down to write the solo. For both records, when it came to leads, I didn't have much of an idea before going into the studio. There was no demo-ing. I guess I just sat down and played. We usually set aside a day or two for solos, because they are usually written right there. Whatever I played on the record is what I thought sounded nice. And you're right — Andy Latimer was one of my idols at the time, and still is. It's a sound I almost tried to copy. I wanted to sound as close to him as I could. I think the end result was quite interesting. One thing I noticed while practicing that song for our last tour was that the guitar tone is very dry, much drier than I remember it. When I think of that solo, I imagine a nice spring reverb or delay or something — but it's dry and not as warm-sounding as I remember. Steven Wilson was there for a lot of the lead guitars. He always seemed to like my guitar playing and say things like, "That's beautiful, that's awesome, let's keep that!" And I'd be thinking, "Really?!" I think he gave me the confidence I needed. I've always loved coming up with things in the studio. I don't have a problem leaving it to the last minute.

There's another riff halfway into the song that, like a lot of these tracks, utilizes open-strings ringing against a motif that jumps around on one string.

I've always felt riffs like that can be a bit hideous. I've been thinking about this stuff a lot lately, especially when relearning some of these old songs. For some reason, I used to like sticking to one string for leads and riffs. I'd often choose to play things around the neck instead of right under me. I soon learned I wasn't being very economical with how I played these parts, especially when I'm playing live and singing. I had to relearn some of these parts and play them in the same position. But it did help with writing some of these parts, like this riff, where I'd stick on one string and leave other strings ringing out to make it sound more colorful and interesting.

"In My Time of Need" has a very interesting Amin9 voicing, which adds to the ambience.

It's definitely an unusual-sounding chord. I play it with a barre across the fifth fret, the seventh fret on the A string, the ninth fret on the D, the G and B barred at the fifth before adding in the eighth fret on the B. That song's working title was "Old Man's Rock." I wanted a big chorus, and I probably nicked it from somewhere, as I did with "Windowpane," actually... that song's vocal melody line was taken from Grand Theft Auto III, believe it or not! There was a song you could play on the radio within the game and it had a nice vocal line, so I took inspiration from there. With "In My Time of Need," I just wanted a singalong type of ballad. I like those simplified songs every now and then, especially as we like to go off on a tangent and do things that are weird with confusing time signatures. My favorite type of music is usually the simple stuff, straightforward songs. My favorite tracks that I've written are usually the simpler ones, though I wouldn't say this is one of my best, funnily enough.

"Closure" is one of the album's more experimental offerings, with its haunting Middle Eastern melodies and frenetic outro.

I always liked "Friends" by Led Zeppelin and wanted to do something like that, with the higher D chord against a lower dropped-D drone. So that's where I got the intro from... Thanks, Jimmy! And he nicked a lot of stuff himself, so I'm allowed to steal from him, right? Usually if I come up with something that sounds like an opening riff, it will set the tone for the rest of the song. Especially if it's something weird like "Closure." It's not a typical rock 'n' roll song. I didn't want to leave that kind of Middle Eastern sound and go into something more regular. The rest of the song had to feel moody and ethereal.

"Hope Leaves" — along with "Windowpane" and 2016's "Will O the Wisp" — is one of the very few songs you've used a capo on. Was that to make the wide stretches a little easier?

It was just luck! The use of a capo wasn't really something I thought about too much. I just stuck it on there for the fun of it. I was lucky in a way, because playing it higher in B instead of A added a fragility to my voice that I wouldn't have gotten otherwise. As you say, I've only used a capo on a few Opeth tracks, like "Windowpane," "Hope Leaves" and "Will O the Wisp" — the first two on the second fret and the latter on the fifth. I guess it did make more sense for "Hope Leaves" because it's a wide stretch. When we play it live these days we don't bother with the capo, though we still have one for "Windowpane." I don't know why — maybe just to make the singing a little easier for me!

The opening riff from "To Rid the Disease" is a great example of how you can take an idea and simply move one note one fret at a time to create a lot of tension and dissonance.

That intro probably came from listening to loads of Queensrÿche when I was younger. It's a good song, I think. The chorus came from an old song I'd written called "Mordet I Grottan" with a project called Sörskogen. I thought it was such a good chorus, I had to reuse it. The chord progression itself is pretty standard... but we'd never done anything like this before. We hadn't done much "standard shit" before Damnation, and I guess I wanted some of that stuff in there. I really like the folky pastoral parts from this song, with all the strummy chords. There's a moodiness to it all that I really like, which is why it's one we've played live a lot — along with "Hope Leaves," "Windowpane" and "In My Time of Need."

You must be very proud of this album. Some would even say it's your finest work.

A lot of people seem to love it. I remember we were actually mixing Deliverance with Andy Sneap when I got the final Damnation mix from Steven Wilson. Me and Peter were in a hotel room in England. We only had one set of headphones and a portable CD player, so we couldn't listen to it together — it had to be one at a time. I asked if I could go first and he said, "Sure, go for it!" I remember closing my eyes and thinking "Oh, my god!" It suddenly made me feel so mature. I remember getting the shivers! It was not... death metal. At the time I really loved death metal, and I guess I still do, to some extent. But I was amazed we could do something like that. And though we've always been experimental, it made me realize we could progress into genres unknown to us or our fans. Steven's mix was amazing; I mean, the songs are good, some of them I would consider great, but the mix is perfect. It's not dated or too retro, it's just really atmospheric. There was a lot of Mellotron, which I was happy about. I wanted more keyboards and vintage sounds, and the mix brought it all out. I don't know who else could've done justice to those songs. Looking back, I'm very proud of what we achieved.

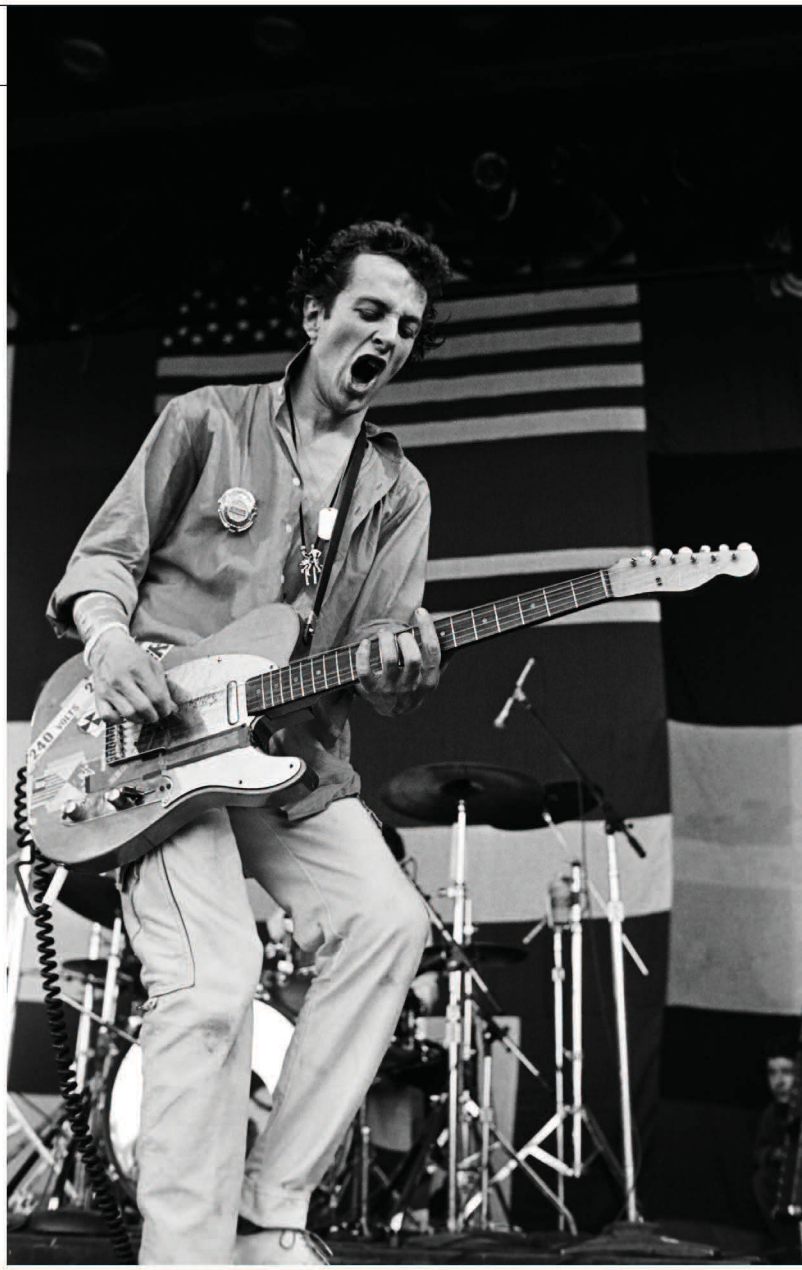
"It suddenly made me feel so mature. I remember getting the shivers! It was not... death metal"

—MIKAEL ÅKERFELDT

OPEN-MIC SONGBOOK

THE CLASH
LONDON CALLING

AG takes on an all-time classic and discovers there's more to punk than three chords and an attitude

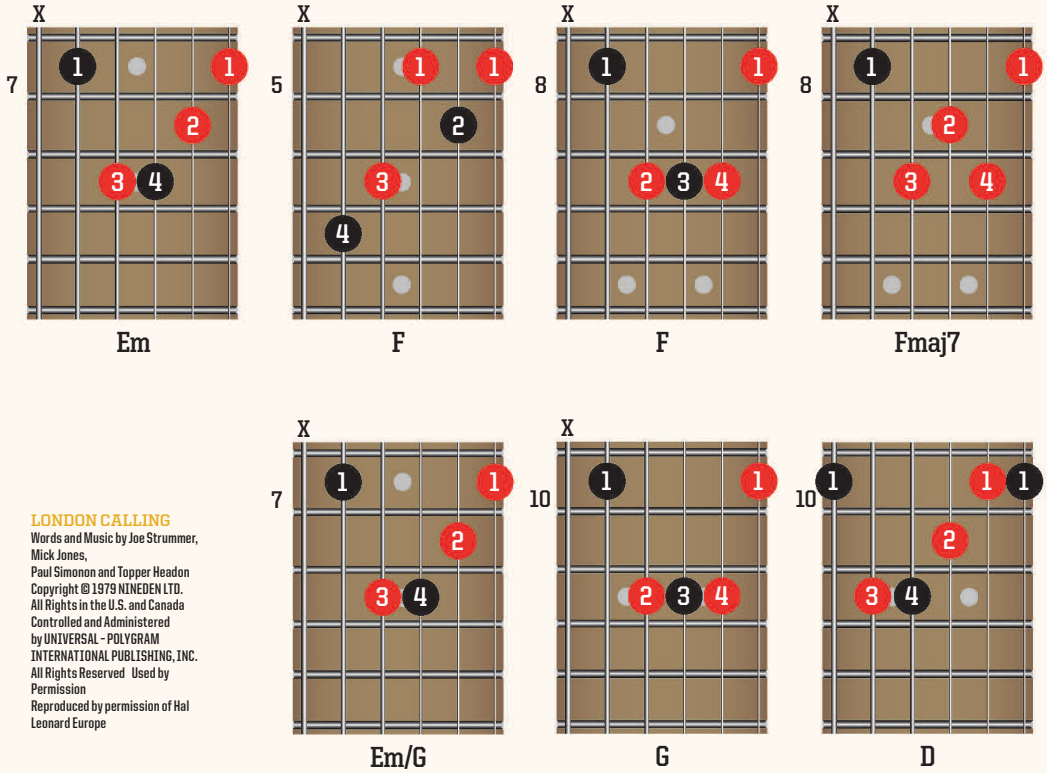


Though the Sex Pistols blazed the trail for late-70s British punk-rock, The Clash came to represent a more musically and lyrically adventurous style. 1979's *London Calling* album marked a change in musical direction for the band, featuring a broader palette of styles, including reggae, ska, jazz and hard rock – more post-punk than punk, then. And, in keeping with the more experimental vibe, the title track that we're looking at here features a lot more than mere thrashed out powerchords – in particular, its unconventional Phrygian modal tonality.

This is demonstrated during the intro, where Em and F chords (which are a semitone apart, remember) are played at the same time, creating a tense, 'outside' feel, yet somehow without seeming to, er, clash! It's masterful arranging – and tough to recreate without sounding like a garbled mess. If you're playing solo, try an Fmaj7 instead of the F. This brings the E root note into your F chord and gives a taste of the two-chord approach without the hassle.

CHORDS

The five main chords in *London Calling* are Em, F, Em/G, G and D. There are two voicings of F, with one shape occurring in the intro and the other during the rest of the track. We've shown 'full' shapes complete with root notes for guidance but the chords on the original recording are mostly confined to three or four treble strings. Note that a low G isn't played in the Em/G but, seeing as it's played over the bass guitar's G note each time, we've labelled it as a slash chord – just play Em again where you see Em/G. Finally, we've shown an Fmaj7 which you can try out instead of the F chords in the verses.



LONDON CALLING
Words and Music by Joe Strummer, Mick Jones, Paul Simonon and Topper Headon
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Guitars and backing Steve Allsworth

SONGSHEET

LONDON CALLING

Intro
Em / / / F / / / x6

Verse 1
Em F
London calling to the faraway towns
Em/G
Now war is declared
G
And battle come down
Em F
London calling to the underworld
Em/G
Come out of the cupboard
G
You boys and girls
Em F
London calling, now don't look to us
Em/G G
Phoney Beatlemania has bitten the dust
Em F
London calling, see we ain't got no swing
Em/G
Except for the ring
G
Of the truncheon thing

Chorus 1
Em
The ice age is coming
G
The sun's zooming in
Em
Meltdown expected
G
The wheat is growing thin
Em G
Engines stop running, but I have no fear
Em
'Cause London is drowning
D
I... live by the river

Verse 2
Em F
London calling to the imitation zone
Em/G G
Forget it, brother, you can go it alone
Em F
London calling to the zombies of death
Em/G G
Quit holding out and draw another breath
Em F
London calling and I don't want to shout
Em/G
But while we were talking
G
I saw you nodding out
Em F
London calling, see we ain't got no high
Em/G G
Except for that one with the yellowy eye

Chorus 2
Em
The ice age is coming
G
The sun's zooming in
Em
Engines stop running
G
The wheat is growing thin
Em G
A nuclear era, but I have no fear
Em
'Cause London is drowning
D
I... I live by the river

Break
Em / / / F / / / Em/G / / / G / / / x2

Solo
Em / / / F / / / Em/G / / / G / / / x2

Repeat chorus 2

Break 2
Em / / / F / / / x4

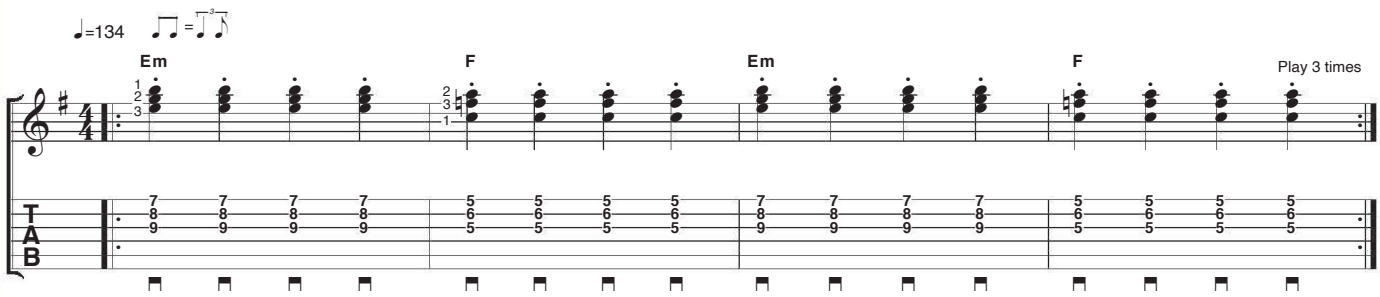
Verse 3
Em F
London calling, yes, I was there, too
Em
And you know what they said?
F
Well, some of it was true
Em F
London calling at the top of the dial
Em
And after all this
F
Won't you give me a smile?
Em F
London calling

Outro
Em / / / F / / /

Em
I never felt so much alike, alike,

alike, alike

THE CLASH LONDON CALLIING Intro

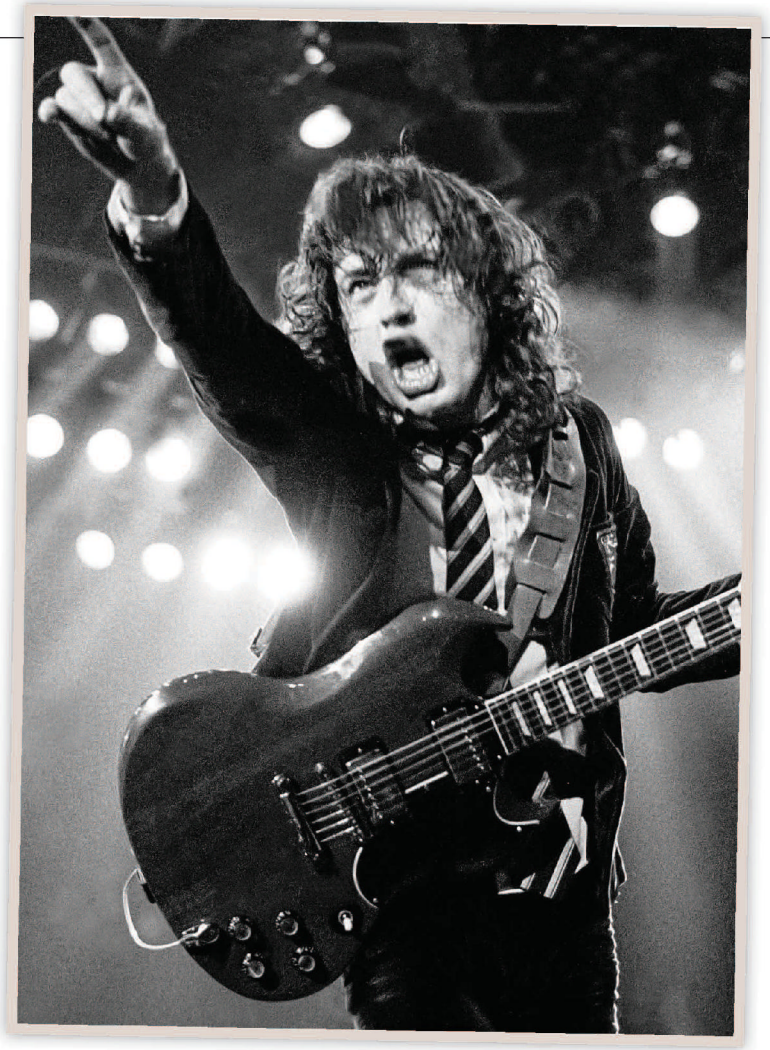


This famous intro actually contains two guitars; one playing only Em, and the other alternating between Em and F in each respective bar. We've tabbed the latter as it's the best way to play the part solo. Alternatively, experiment with an Fmaj7 instead of F if you're playing alone. Create the staccato effect with quick 'on/off' fretting pressure.

By Jon Bishop

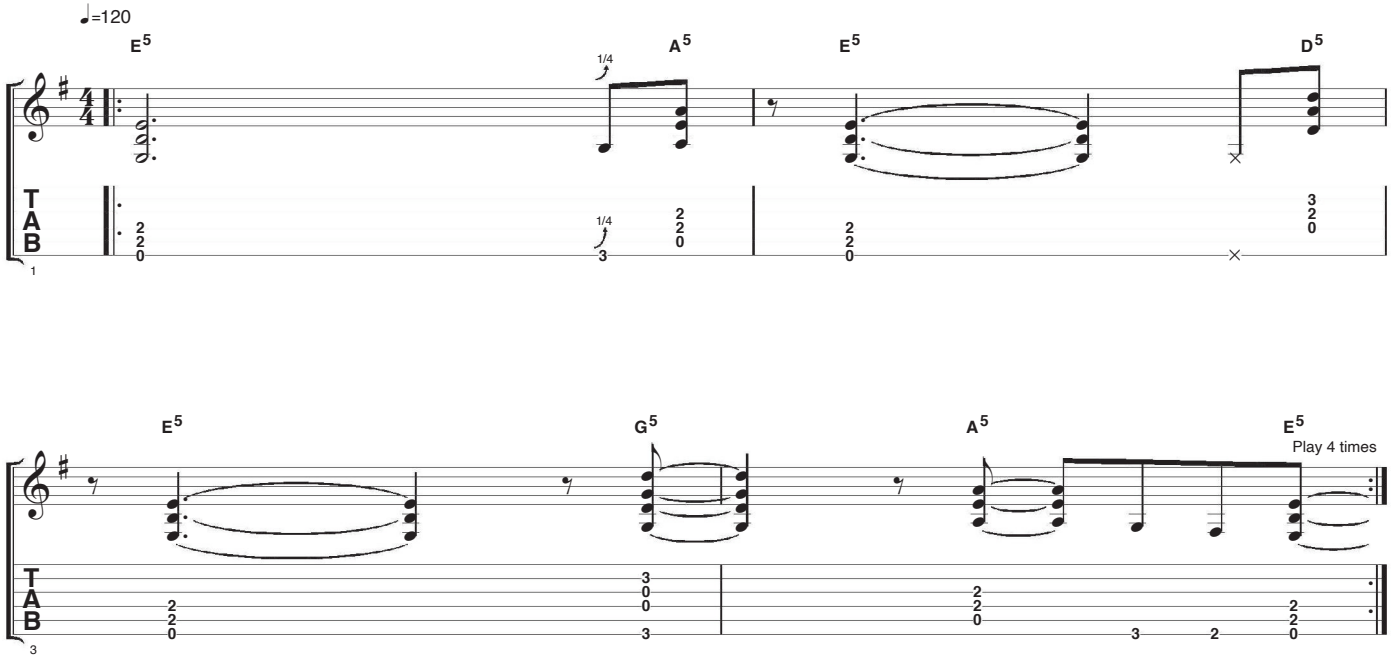
POWER UP!

Phrasing, vibrato and rock solid timing. Inside the essential elements of the **AC/DC** guitarists' styles



The sound and playing style of AC/DC's Angus and Malcolm Young is legendary and constantly emulated. The core elements, though rarely complex, are harder to master than you might imagine, however. Malcolm's open shapes and powerchords are delivered with unrelenting, rock solid groove. And Angus's leads? Well, his phrasing and vibrato are instantly recognisable – which, while making him the icon he is, does mean you'll be aping quite an individualistic style. Tonally, the AC/DC sound epitomises the idea that less is more. A Marshall amp is a core ingredient, as is the combination of Gretsch G6131 Jet and Gibson SG guitars with bridge pickups selected. Assuming you're not in a position to crank your amp to stadium-ready volume levels, Young brothers style, we recommend keeping the gain low for the rhythm parts and using a Tube Screamer-style overdrive pedal for a mid boost on lead parts. Now, let there be rock!

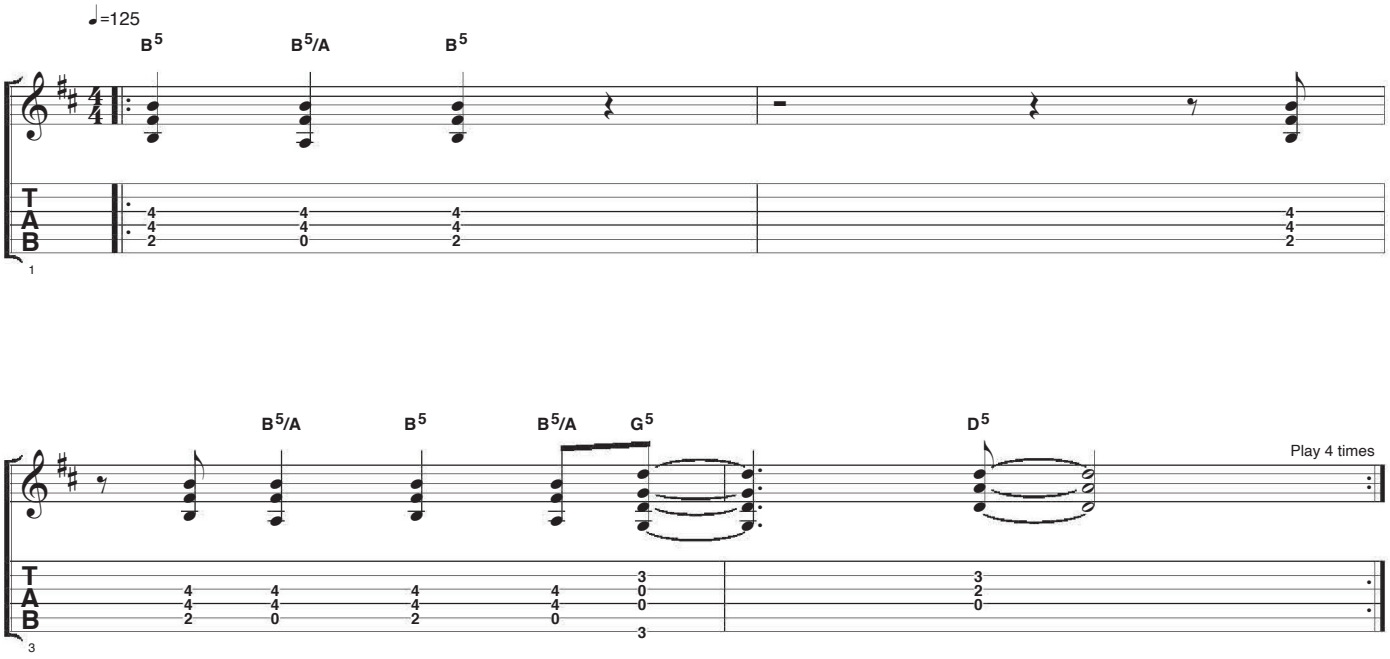
1 MALCOLM-STYLE OPEN POWERCHORDS



The driving force of the AC/DC rhythm section, Malcolm Young predominantly favoured open chords and powerchords, where open strings would maximise resonance and sustain. Coupled with the lightest of drive tones this gives loads of dynamic range and bucketloads more power than you'd expect. Here in our *Dirty Deeds*-style riff, the minor 3rd G note can be bent slightly sharp for a bluesy flavour.

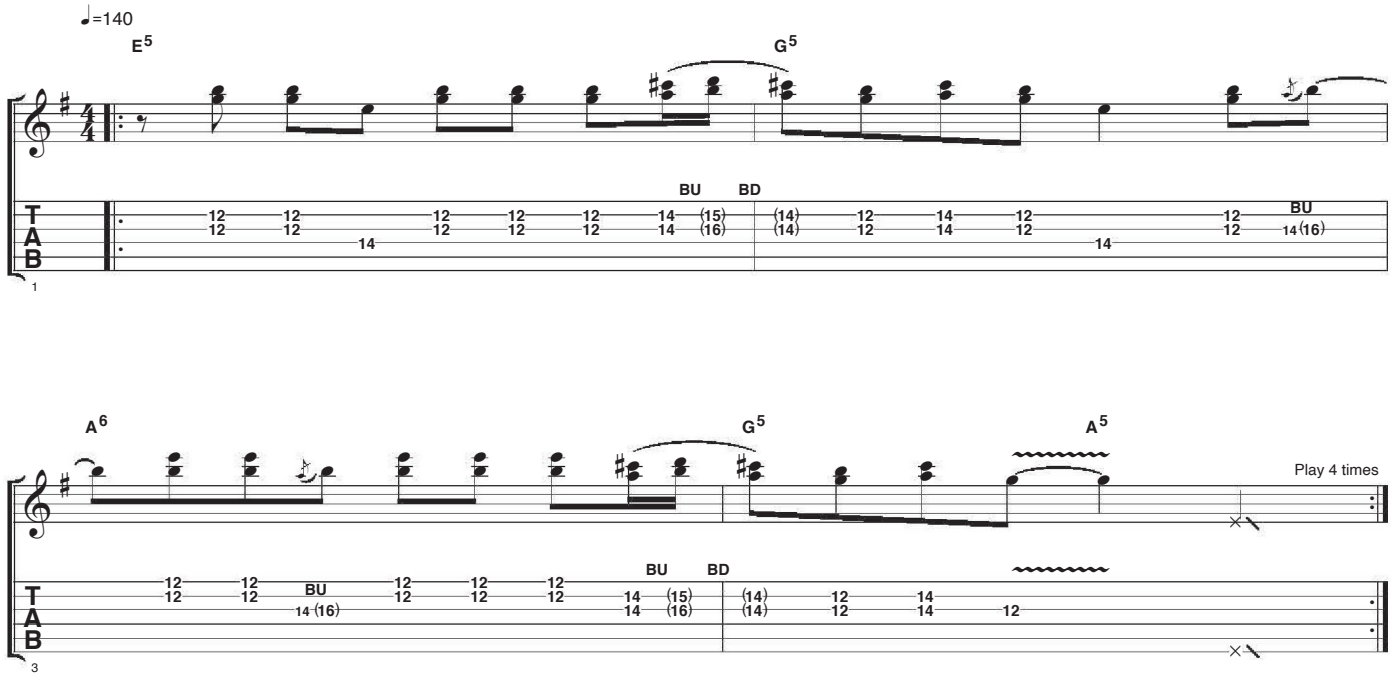
Photo Will Ireland

2 MALCOLM-STYLE SPARSE RIFFS



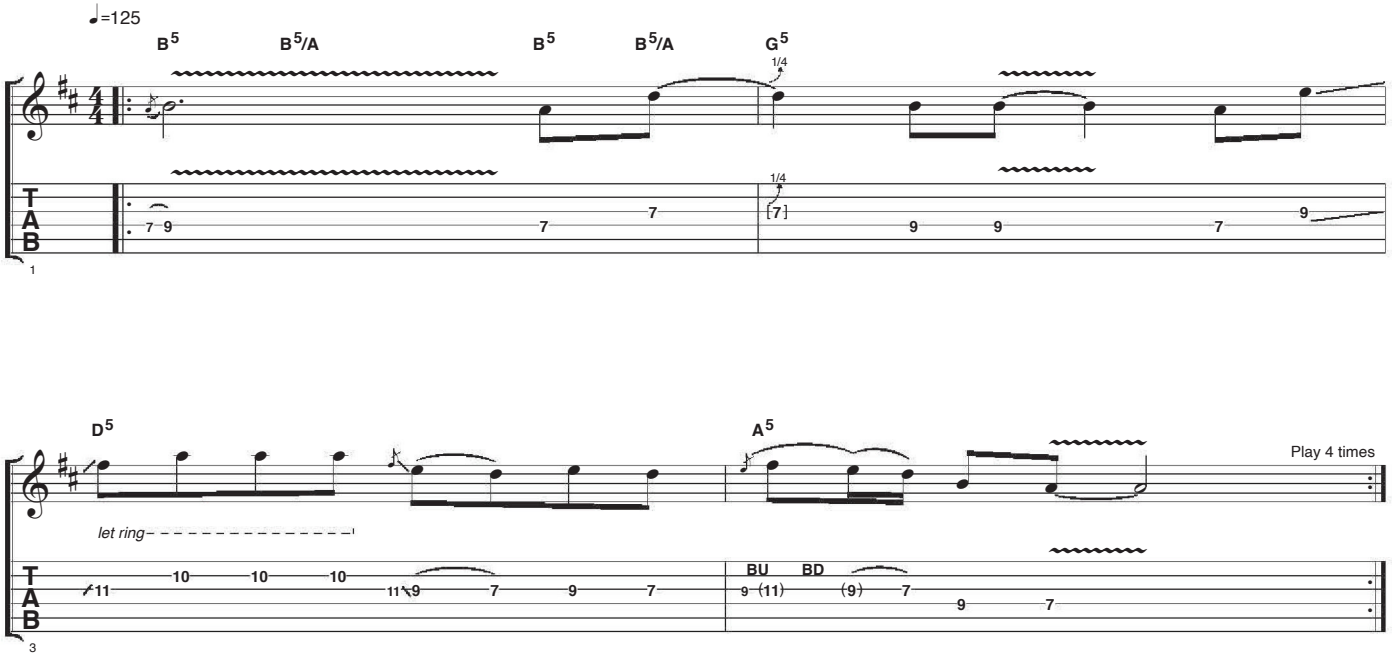
Space and raw simplicity are key to Malcolm's vibe – he'd *never* overplay! His parts let the drums and bass breath and never get in the way of Angus' lead parts. Inspired by tracks like *Rock 'N' Roll Train* and *Highway To Hell*, our example here is best delivered with downpicking for a consistent attack.

3 ANGUS-STYLE DOUBLESTOP LICK



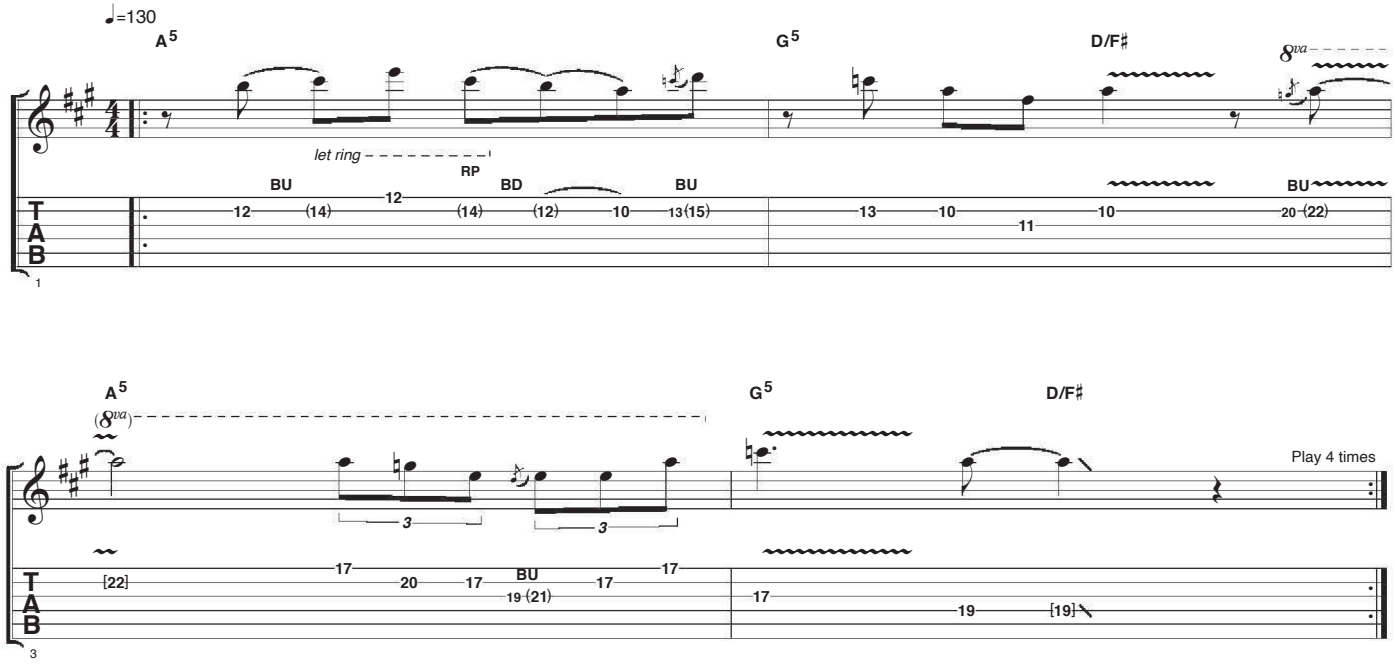
Angus' lead style is a blend of rock 'n' roll and blues, and this doublestop (two notes together) idea demonstrates his Chuck Berry influences. We've taken our inspiration from *Hells Bells* here with a lick that's based in the minor pentatonic scale – but take note of the 14th-fret note on the second string, which comes from the Dorian mode.

4 ANGUS-STYLE BENDS & VIBRATO



Many would say Angus' frenetic vibrato is instantly recognisable. Break the vibrato in our example riff into two elements by copying first the speed and timing, then analysing how much pitch bend to apply.

5 ANGUS-STYLE PENTATONICS



One trick that Angus uses is to mix up the major and minor pentatonic scales. Our example is inspired by *You Shook Me All Night Long* and starts out with the bright-sounding A major pentatonic scale (A B C♯ E F♯) before moving to the darker A minor pentatonic scale (A C D E G). Try to exploit this mood change in your own licks.

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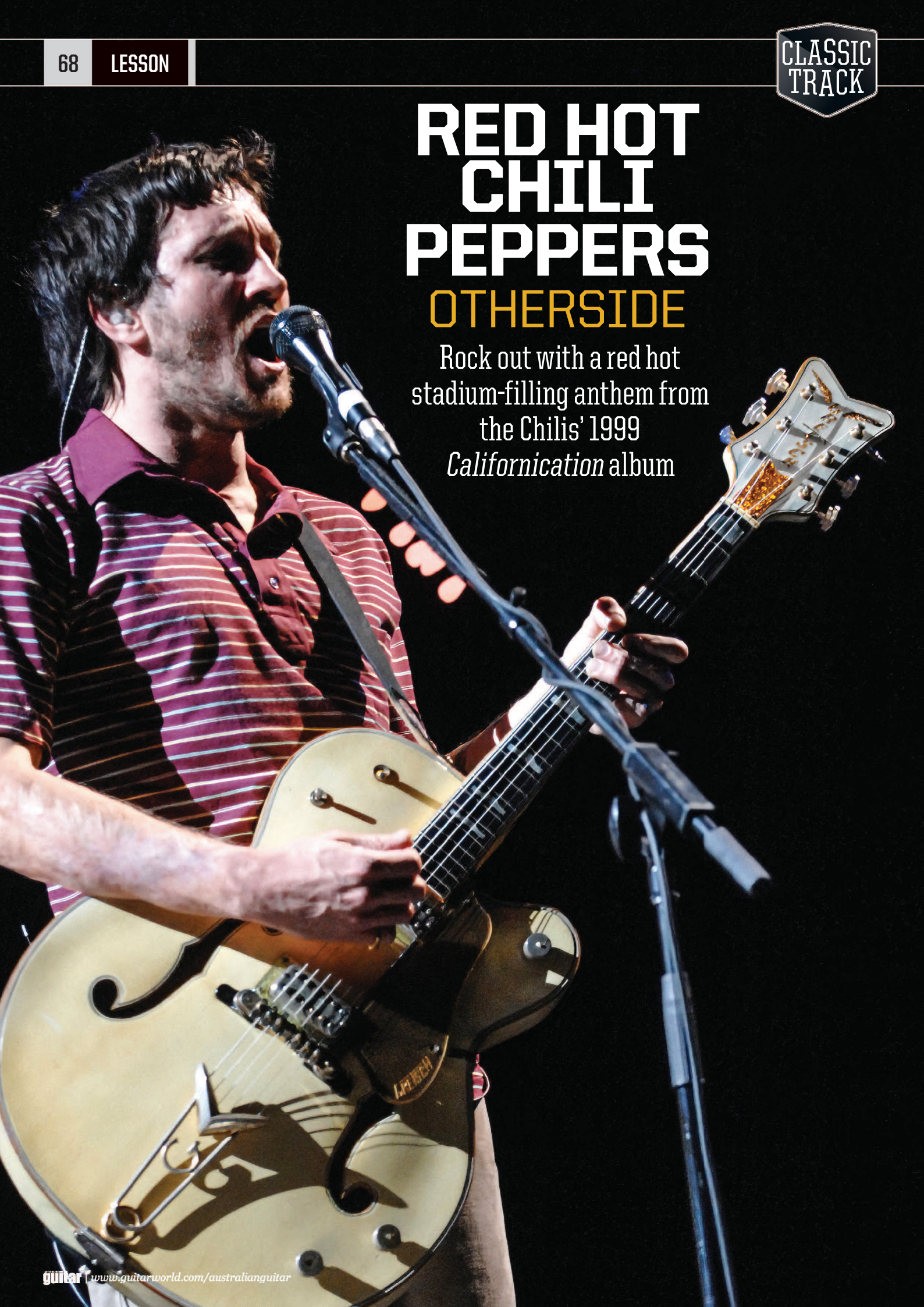
CLASSIC TRACK

RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS

OTHERSIDE

Rock out with a red hot stadium-filling anthem from the Chilis' 1999 *Californication* album

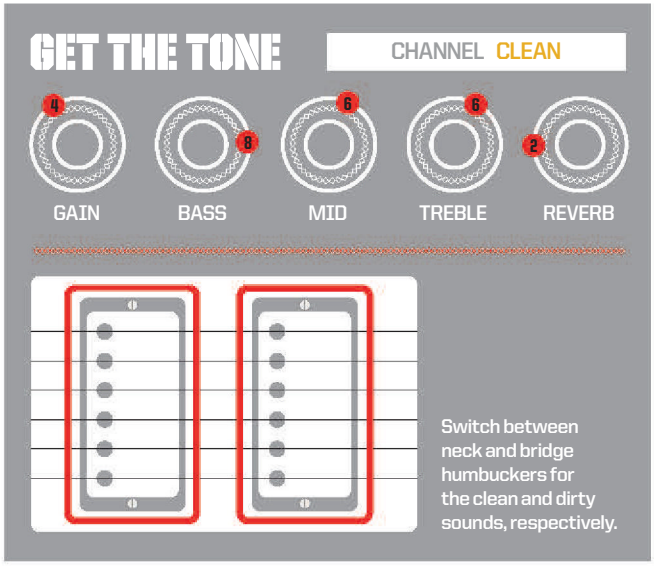


SOUND ADVICE

Everything you need to know before playing 'Otherside'

This month we're looking at the RHCP anthem *Otherside*, one of the band's most successful singles. The track was recorded live in the studio with no click track so the original tempo ranges from 123 to 127bpm.

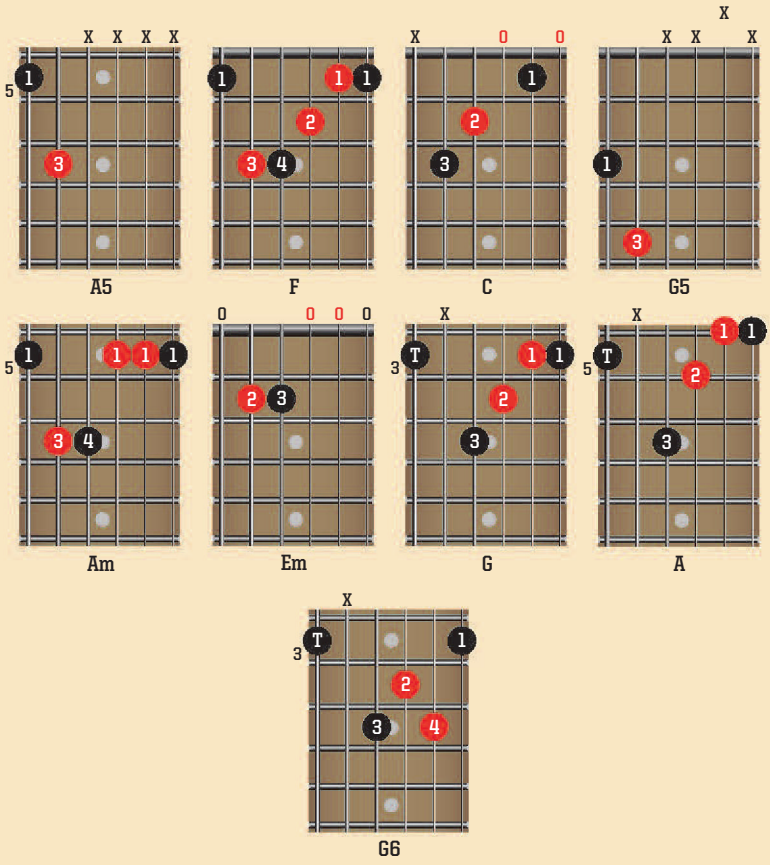
In terms of harmony, *Otherside* is in the key of A minor, with the main guitar riffs being built out of the notes of this scale. Only two actual chords are played – G and A – with the latter marking a brief foray into A major and brightening up the end of the verses. Still, Frusciante's guitar lines harmonise with Flea's bassline, implying chords as the song progresses. We've shown chord names over the tab to help you navigate our full transcription.



To play *Otherside* you'll need two sounds ready to go. The first is a punchy clean tone with a neck humbucker selected. John often turns to his hollowbody Gretsch White Falcon in live performances, employing minimal effects and using the old school approach of plugging straight into a cranked amp. If you're playing at neighbour-friendly levels, a little compression can help spiky clean tones sustain. The second tone you'll need is a higher gain sound for the lead parts – and this will sound most authentic with a bridge pickup selected and some fuzz distortion added.

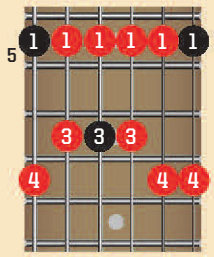
CHORDS

All of the chords in *Otherside* are from the key of A minor. In the guitar part, the only *actual* chords played are the G and A chords at the end of the verses. However, the rest of the chords are implied by the way the guitar riff harmonises with the bassline. We've provided some tried and tested chord boxes here should you

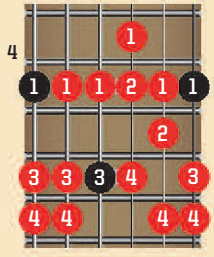


SCALES

You can solo over any section of the song fairly safely using the A minor pentatonic scale should you wish. The main vocal melody uses notes from the A natural minor scale (A B C D E F G), so for an extra challenge you could try playing a version of the vocal melody on the guitar by ear using this scale. The end lead guitar sections use ringing first and second strings (E and B) and this provides a bit of extra body to the sound.



A minor pentatonic scale



A natural minor scale

Photo Getty **Guitars and backing** Jon Bishop

RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS
OTHERSIDE

FULL TAB

OTHERSIDE
Words and Music by Anthony Kiedis, Flea, John Frusciante and Chad Smith
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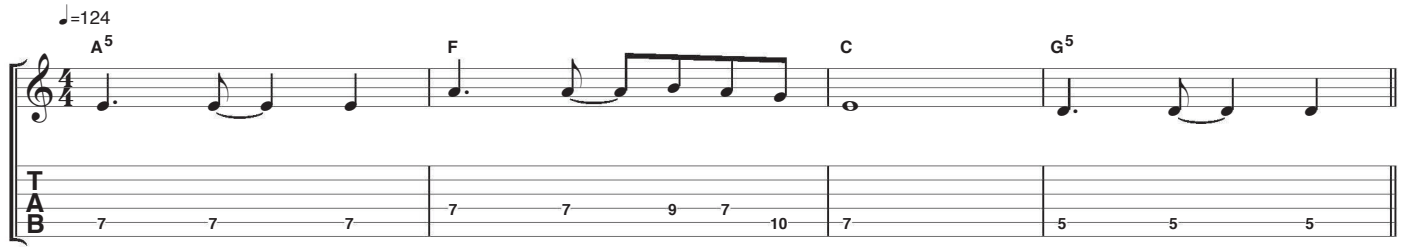
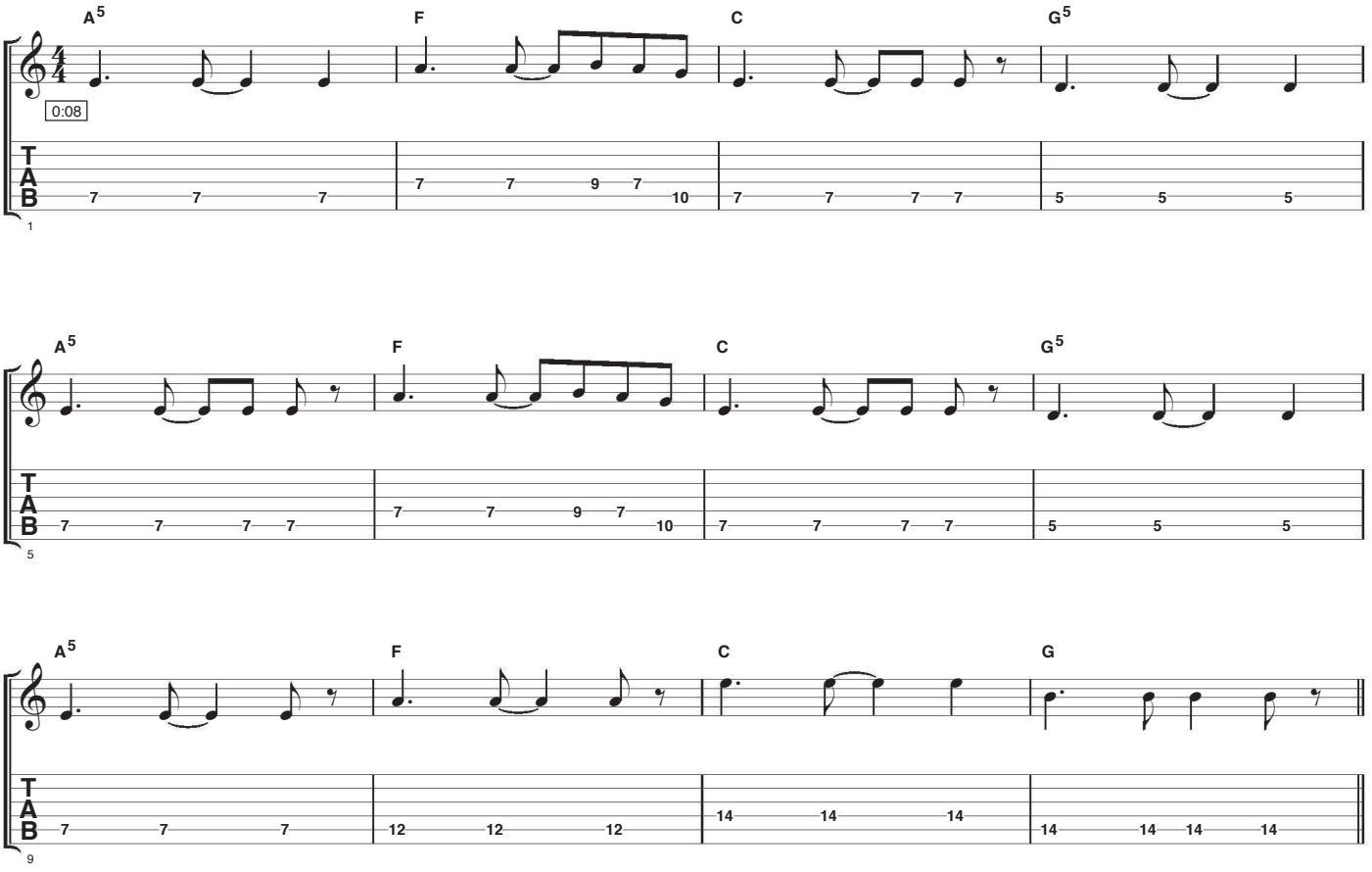
RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS OTHERSIDE Intro



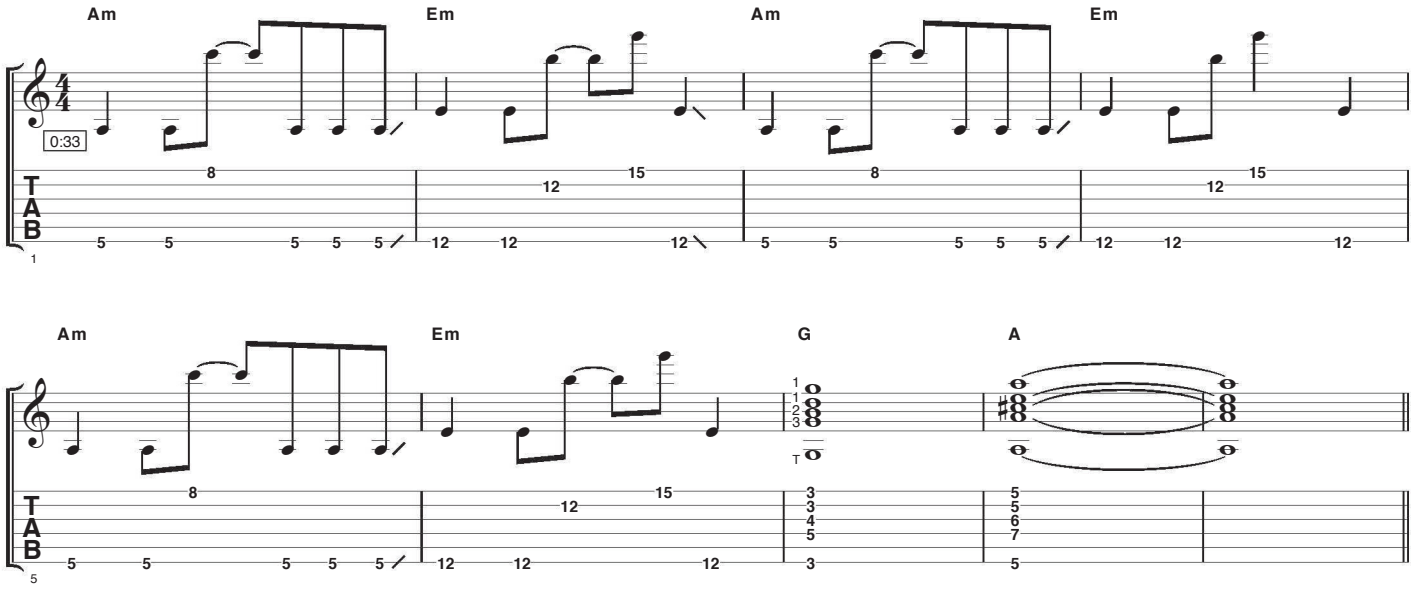
The intro features Frusciante's single-note riff. It's deceptively tricky to play with a consistent feel, so it's well worth practising slowly to get all the transitions dialed in. To help you lock in with the bass guitar at the start we've included a hi-hat rhythm.

RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS OTHERSIDE Chorus 1



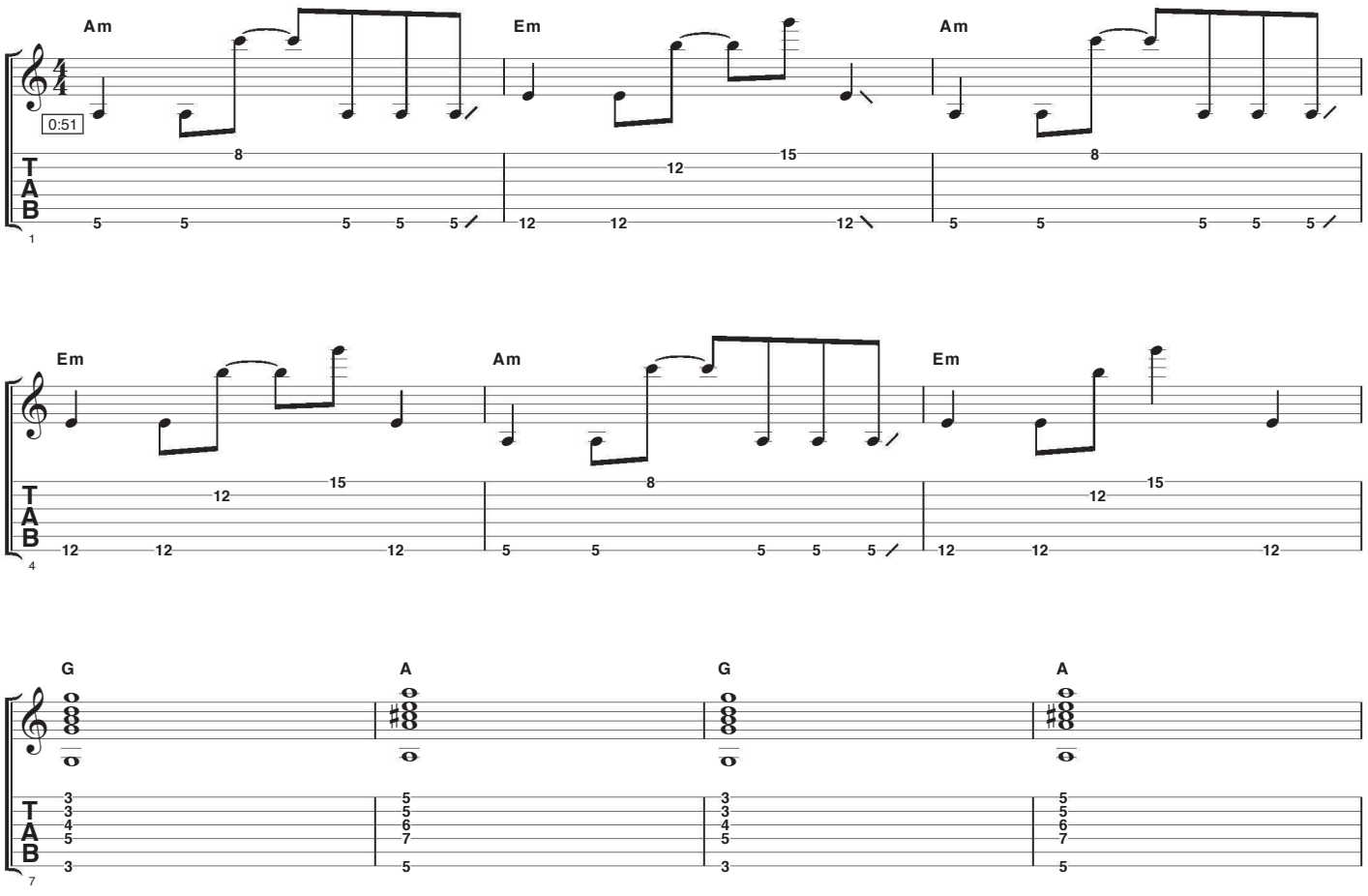
Chorus 1 follows the same riff as the intro, but watch out in bar 10 where you'll encounter a shift up to 12th position. If you can land on the 12th fret with your first finger you'll be in prime position to play the 14th-fret notes with your third finger.

RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS OTHERSIDE Verse 1

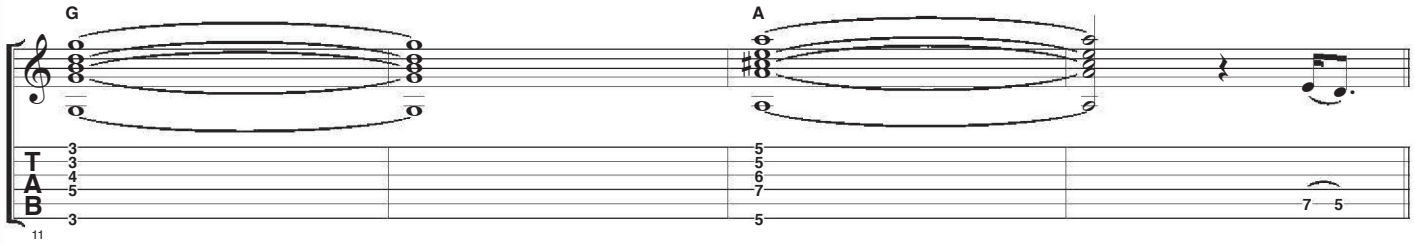


This section is tricky to play consistently due to the skips between the first and sixth strings. You'll need to pick accurately, of course, but make sure also to aim or clean fretting so that the right notes ring out over each other.

RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS OTHERSIDE Verse 2

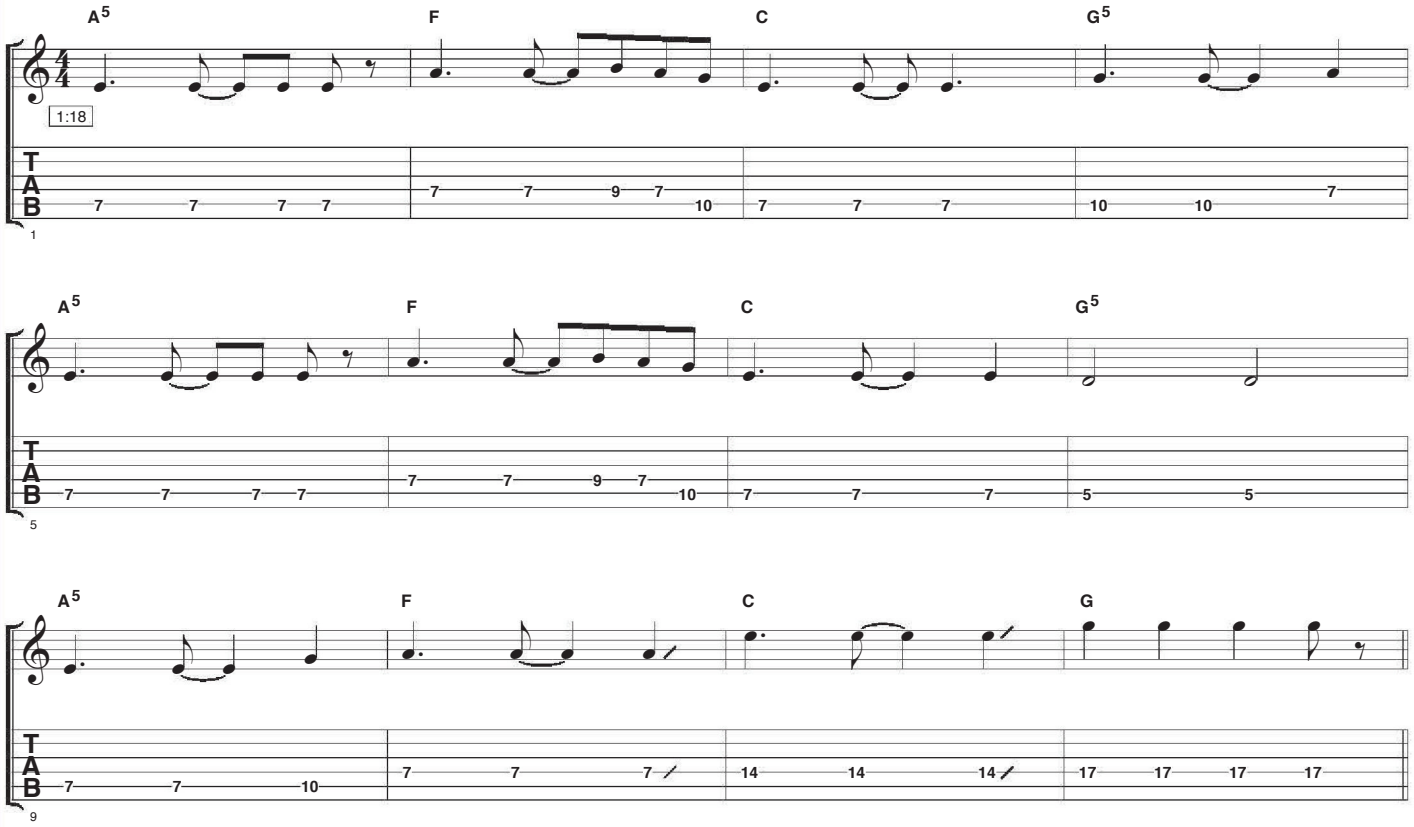


RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS OTHERSIDE Verse 2 (cont'd)



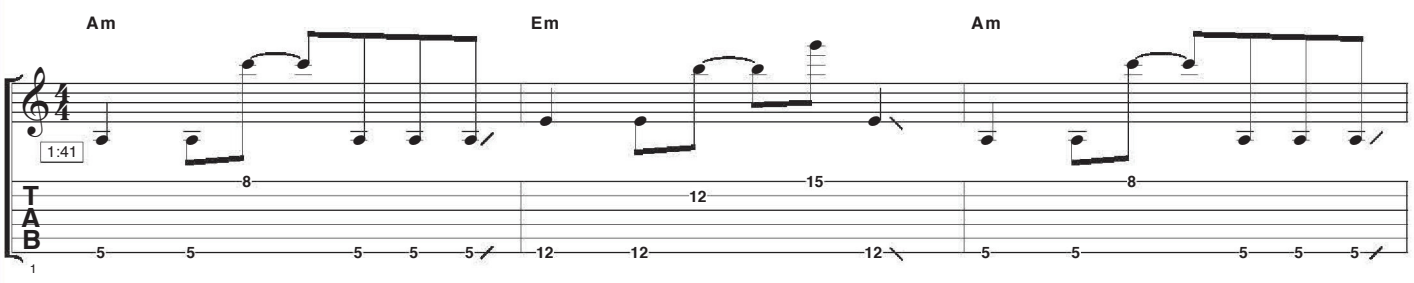
You'll be starting out the same way as you did in verse 1, but note the extended ending on the G and A barre chords here. Frusciante favours the Jimi Hendrix fingering, with the fretting hand thumb curled over the top of the neck to fret the sixth string.

RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS OTHERSIDE Chorus 2

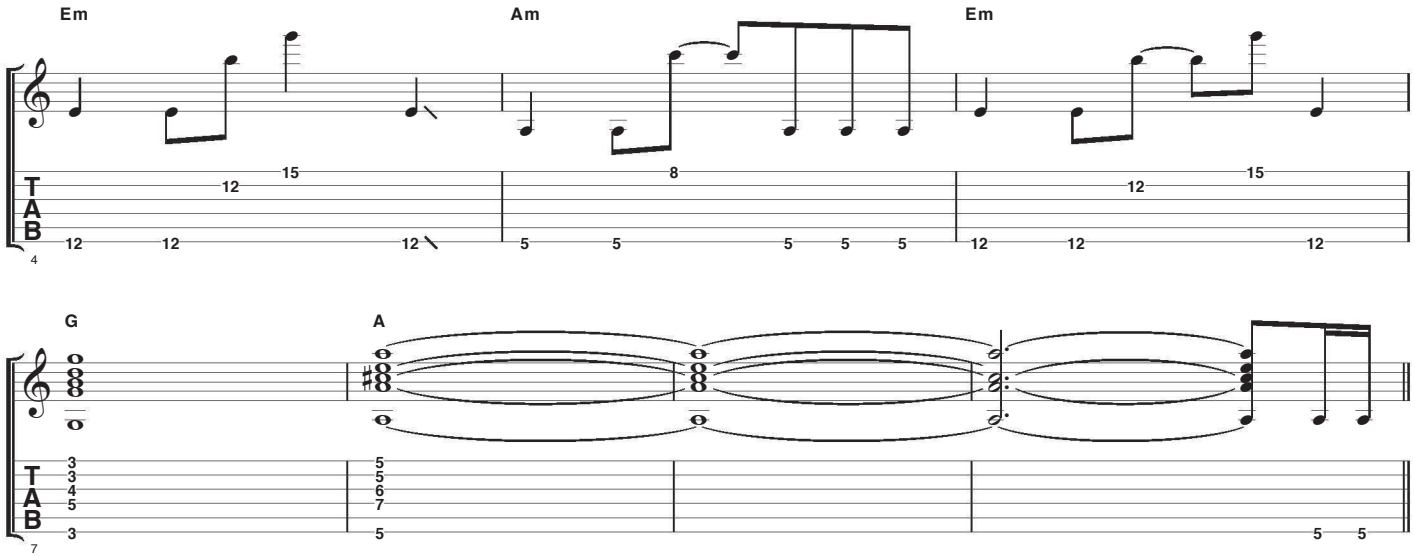


Though the main pattern of the riffs from chorus 1 is repeated, Frusciante adds in some variations here. The main melody is embellished and the last two bars feature an ascending part that helps transition nicely into verse 3.

RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS OTHERSIDE Verse 3

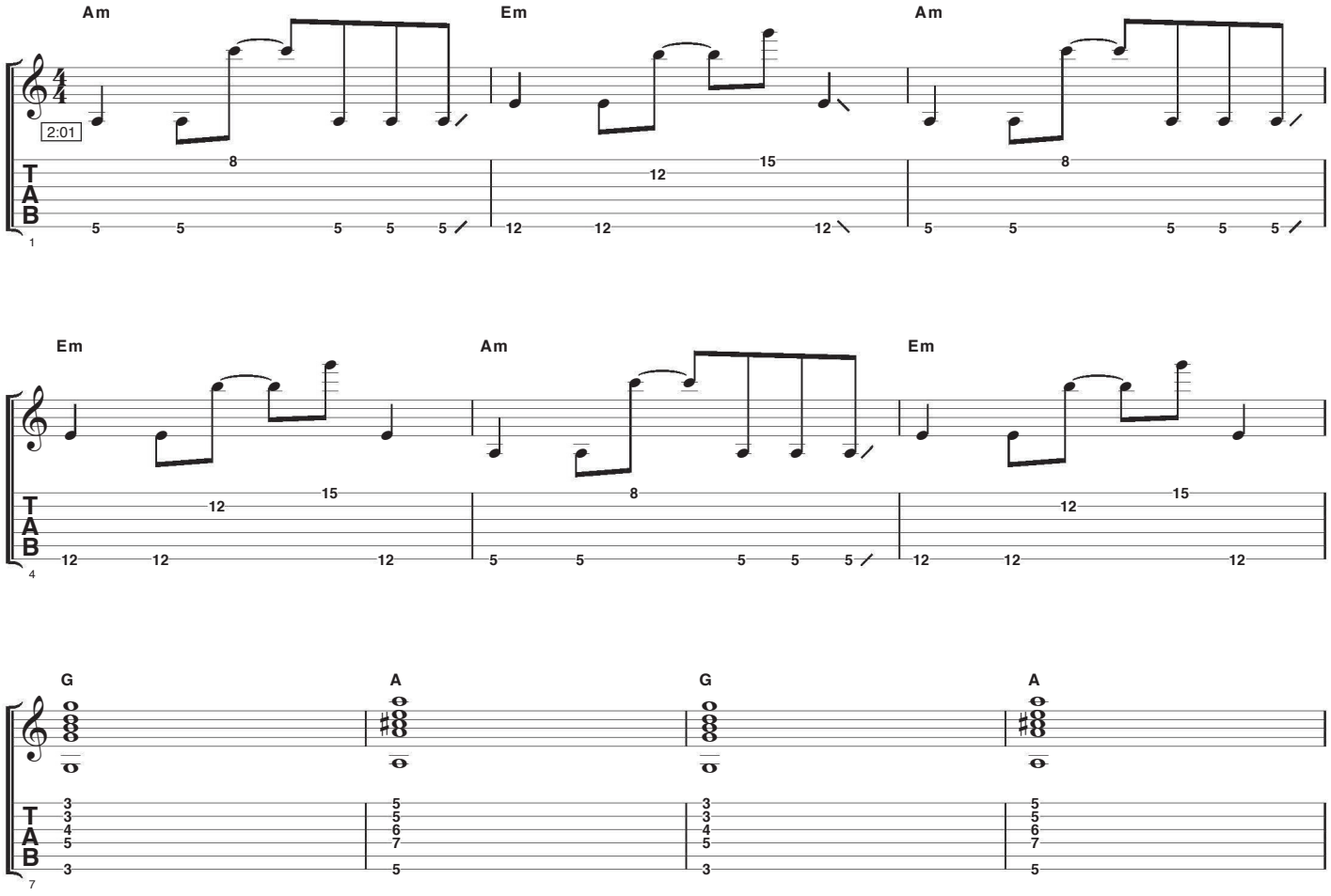


RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS OTHERSIDE Verse 3 (cont'd)

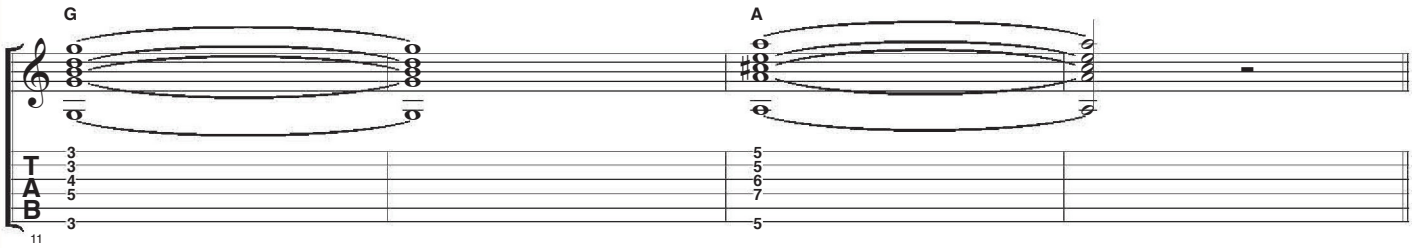


Verse 3 is much the same as previous verses. However, there is an extra bar of drums added to the end, plus a couple of 16th notes that act as a flourish into verse 4.

RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS OTHERSIDE Verse 4

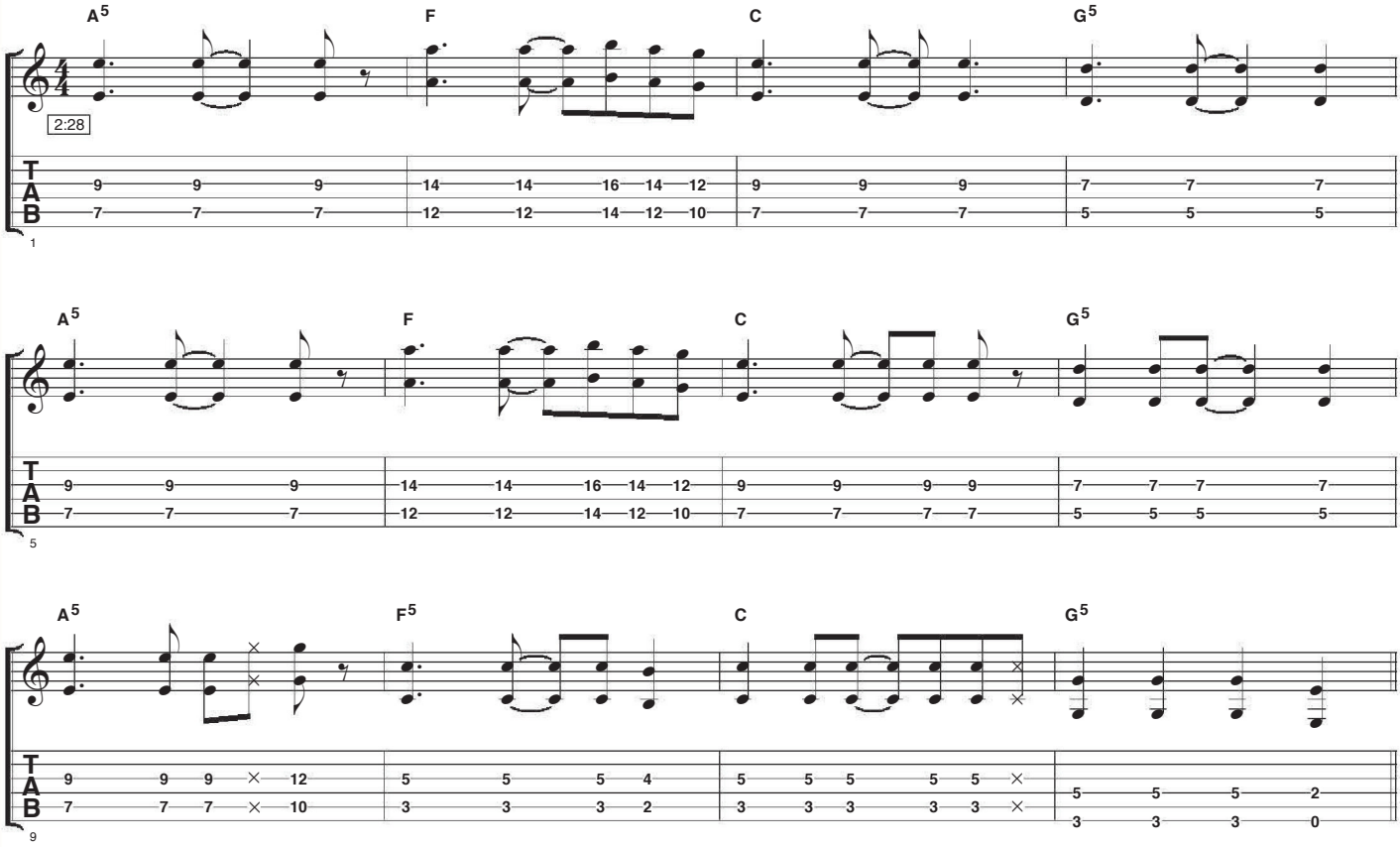


RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS OTHERSIDE Verse 4 (cont'd)



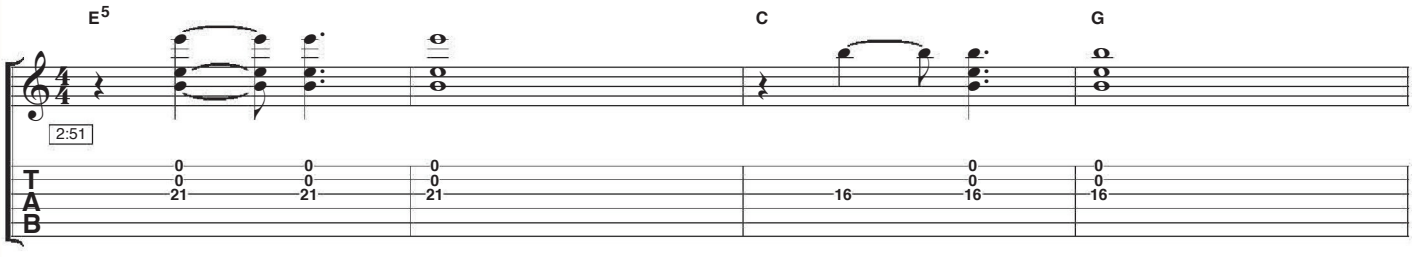
If you've mastered verses 1 to 3, this section should be easy as there are no surprises. Ready yourself for the change that follows in chorus 3.

RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS OTHERSIDE Chorus 3

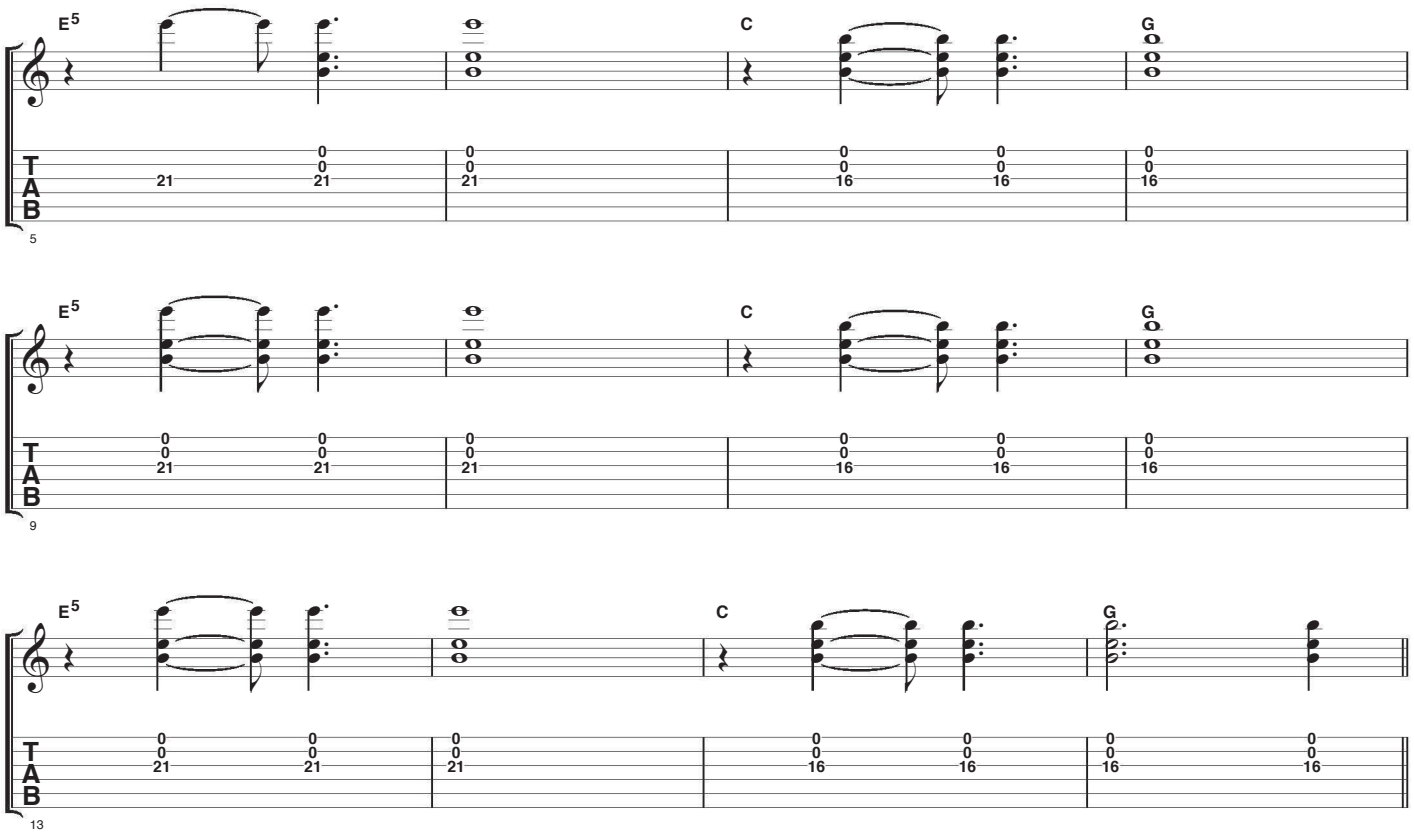


Here, the melody from chorus 2 is played in octaves, beefing up the sound as the song progresses. To keep the delivery clean, make sure your fret-hand muting is sound. This can be achieved by lightly resting your fingers on the strings behind where the fretting is occurring.

RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS OTHERSIDE Bridge

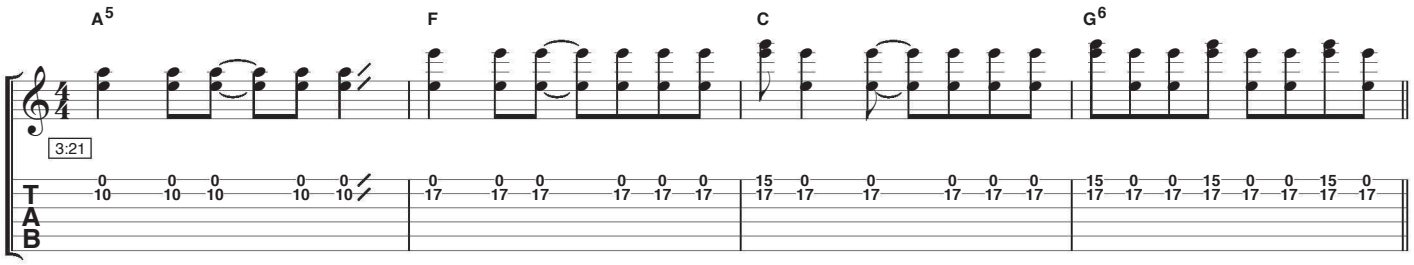


RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS OTHERSIDE Bridge (cont'd)



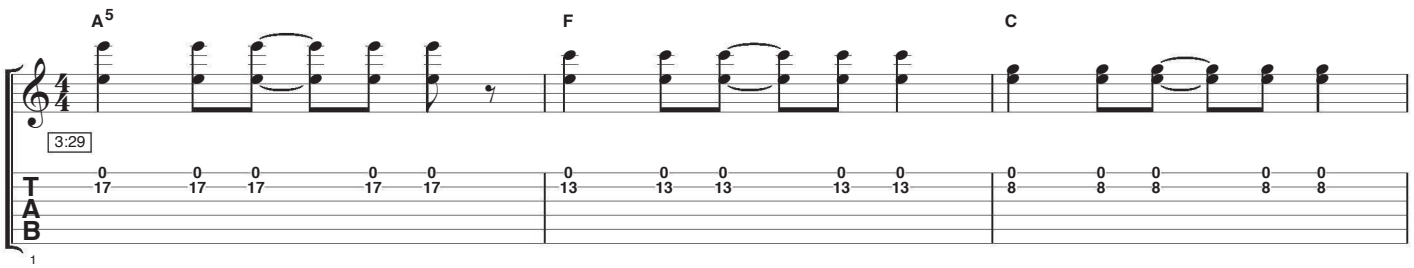
For the funky breakdown section, switch over to a bridge pickup and kick in some overdrive. The part here is relatively easy to play, but the ringing open strings are crucial. Simple downstrokes will provide the most consistency.

RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS OTHERSIDE Solo

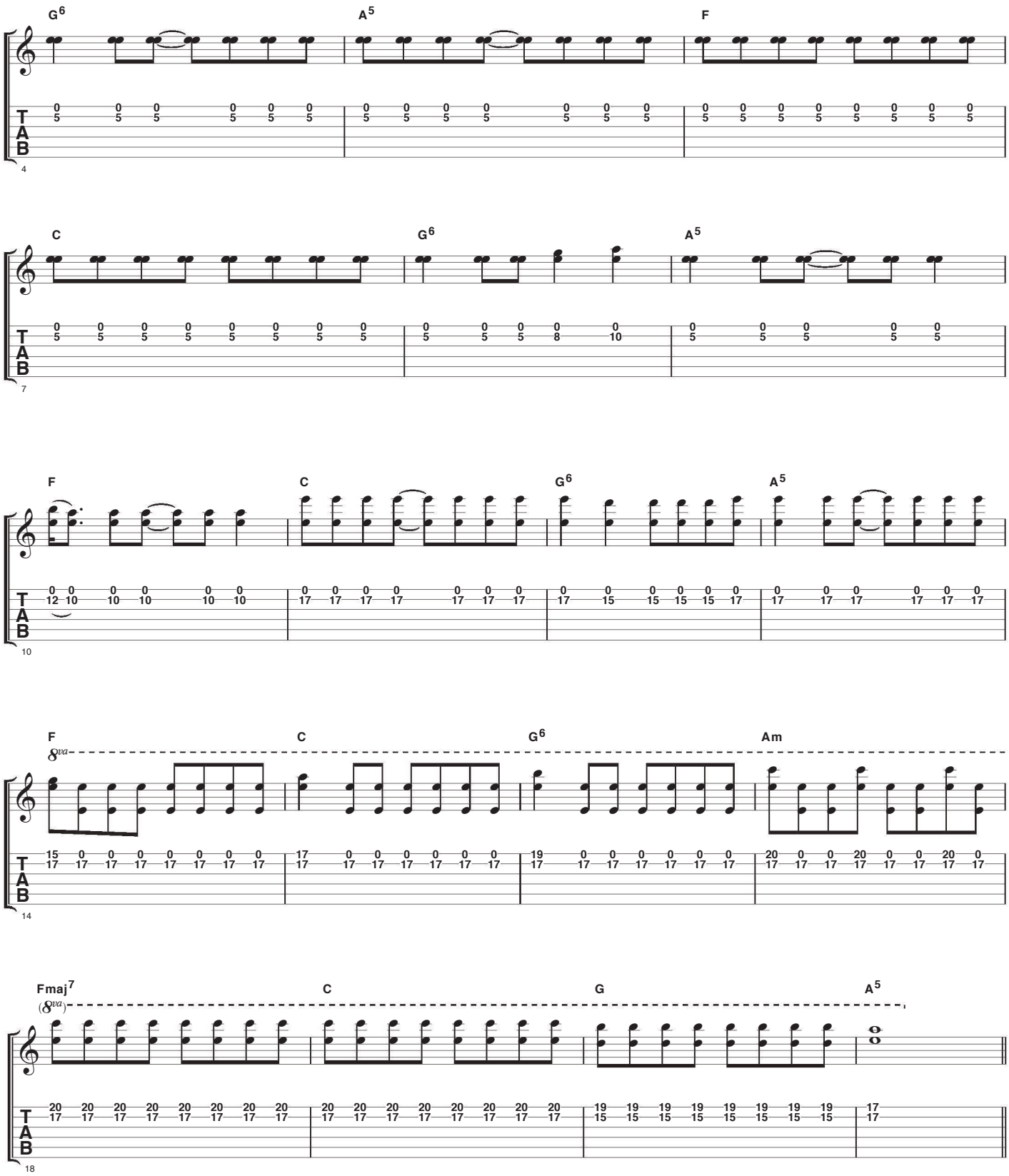


Here the first string is left to ring out while various notes from the A natural minor scale (A B C D E F G) are played on the second string. This is a top trick for filling out the sound when there is only and drums and bass guitar backing.

RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS OTHERSIDE Chorus 4



RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS OTHERSIDE Chorus 4 (cont'd)



The theme of the solo continues here with an open first string ringing out against the fretted second string. There's room for improvisation here as the song builds to its conclusion. Just be ready for a slight slow down in the last two bars.

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This is not your run of the mill chorus pedal. This compact, beautifully cased wonder is a three-voice chorus with six programmable presets and expression control. Choose from Vibrato Mode, Chorus Mode, and Rotary Mode and manipulate their Width, Rate, and Balance to achieve your ideal sound. Shift seamlessly from one mode to another to cop a blend that is all your own. One simple tap of the Preset ("Save/Recall") switch and you can summon up to six settings of your choosing at will.

CORT G300 GLAM

RRP: $1,649 • dynamicmusic.com.au

As a follow-up variant of the widely successful, multi-awarded G300 Pro, the new G300 Glam was designed for guitarists seeking a studio-grade versatile guitar with top-tier build quality and components in a glamorous eye-catching sparkling finish. The main feature that differentiates G300 Glam from G300 Pro is the 6mm maple top on a chambered African mahogany body that provides a perfect combination of deep, warm lows and bright punchy mid-highs with superb sustain while keeping the weight light. The ebony fretboard on the African mahogany neck provides sparkling highs and smooth slick playability. Available in the newly designed Polar Ice Metallic Burst finish.

GODIN MULTIAC MUNDIAL

RRP: starting from $4,399 • dynamicmusic.com.au

Available in a variety of colours, the Multiac Mundial is manufactured in Godin's Canadian factories with the same high standards as their other instruments. A more modern and stylish variation of other Multiacs, this nylon string guitar is the result of years of research and development. The Multiac Mundial is distinguished by the wood used (Silver Leaf Maple body, Cedar top, and Spanish Cedar neck), making it an ultra-light instrument, ideal for stage musicians or travelers. The Godin Double Source Custom preamp, the same as on the Encore models, allows you to mix the undersaddle pickup with the sensors in the guitar for maximum versatility. To achieve the most natural acoustic sound possible, Godin has returned to its hollow-body design, so the guitar is lighter, breathes, and resonates without feedback.

ERNIE BALL PEGWINDER SELECT

RRP: $29.95 • cmcmusic.com.au

The Ernie Ball Pegwinder Select is a high-quality string winder that is precision-moulded for quick and effortless string changes. Thanks to its universal design and integrated bridge pin puller, the Pegwinder Select is suitable for most electric and acoustic guitars and basses. Features include a compact, comfortable grip, and with the Pegwinder's non-abrasive socket head, you'll never worry about damaging your instrument's tuning keys. This compact pegwinder fits easily in most gig bags and makes a great addition to any musician's tool kit.

STERLING BY MUSIC MAN SABRE

RRP: $4,795 • cmcmusic.com.au

The Sabre features an eye-catching nyatoh body and flame maple top crafted in a comfortable, modern shape. Loaded with locking tuners, stainless steel frets, and a modern C-shaped roasted maple neck, this guitar makes shredding feel easier than ever. Plus, with the hum-free Fishman Fluence Modern Humbucker pickups, its tone is unmatched, achieving clarity even while handling all of the gain you can throw at it. Available in Cobra Burst and Deep Blue Burst.

FENDER STEVE LACY PEOPLE PLEASER STRATOCASTER

RRP: $2,549 • fender.com

A Grammy-winning R&B innovator and Gen-Z guitar hero, Steve's instantly identifiable guitar work, exceptional songwriting and innovative production have made him an undeniably compelling artist and highly sought-after collaborator. Steve Lacy's infectious hooks, inventive approach, and intelligent harmony are showcased in his formative work with The Internet and genre-bending solo releases as well as his collaborations with J. Cole, Kendrick Lamar, Solange, Vampire Weekend, and Tyler, The Creator. Lacy sculpts sonic masterpieces with broad musical timbres, layered vocals, lo-fi sonics and psychedelic arrangements...more amazing still, he does it all with little more than a smartphone and his Fender Stratocaster

EARTHQUAKER DEVICES DISASTER TRANSPORT LEGACY REISSUE

RRP: $399.99 • au.yamaha.com

Limited to just 3,500 units worldwide, this is the newest incarnation of one of EarthQuaker Devices' most beloved pedals ever, the Disaster Transport. For those well versed in the delay and modulation machine's celebrated history, you might notice some differences on this beautifully sparkly box. A new Mod Mode switch allows you to bend or stretch the modulation wave. The new Mod Speed switch offers three rates of modulation, from bizarrely animated gradual climbs and steep drop offs to rapid chorus and intense vibrato. The delay line has been redesigned to reduce the noise floor and improve the quality of the delay. Plus, it's now filtered to sound more like an analog delay than any of the previous versions.

FENDER LIMITED EDITION MADE IN JAPAN '70S STRATOCASTER

RRP: $2,149 • fender.com

The Made in Japan Traditional Series combines the aesthetics of Fender's traditional musical instrument production with the sophisticated craftsmanship of Japan. This Limited Edition release from the series is a Made in Japan, Traditional 70s Stratocaster in 3-Color Sunburst with Gold hardware and a Gold Anodised pickguard. Featuring a gloss finish Alder body, a 9.5-inch radius "U" shaped maple neck with 21 vintage-style frets and a 6-saddle vintage style Synchronized Tremolo bridge, this guitar provides all the classic feel you look for in a 70s Strat. The original MIJ Traditional Series Strat Pickups produce musical, vintage tones, and the addition of the Reverse 70's Stratocaster Headstock makes it a head turner. This guitar showcases what solid Japanese guitar craftsmanship can do.

PHIL JONES BASS BG-450 COMPACT PLUS COMBO AMP

RRP: $2,499 • egm.com.au

The Compact Plus BG-450 is the pinnacle of PJB's line of small and light weight powerful compact bass combos. It is the same size as the C-4 speaker enclosure with a power amplifier that will reach up to 450 Watts with four internal 5" drivers. The BG-450 contains the latest proprietary PJB chrome dome drivers which are the most efficient five-inch speakers ever engineered by PJB. The result is a perfect pairing of power and driver efficiency that makes it the best sounding 4x5 combo ever made by PJB and remarkably with less weight. It has an incredible punchy sound that cuts through air as "a knife through butter" with a solid and powerful low-end response normally associated with a much larger combo.

LEHLE P-SPLIT STEREO

RRP: $599 • egm.net.au

The Lehle P-Split Stereo combines passive intelligent splitting with the highest possible signal fidelity in a double pack. The classic solution for splitting, eliminating hum, balancing and re-amplification in recording applications, now appears in a doubled version and this time adds the passive summing of signals. The possibilities are far-reaching. Two Lehle Transformer Hz are working at the heart of the Lehle P-Split Stereo, galvanically isolating the particular ISO outputs from each other, and eliminating any possibility of ground loops and hum.

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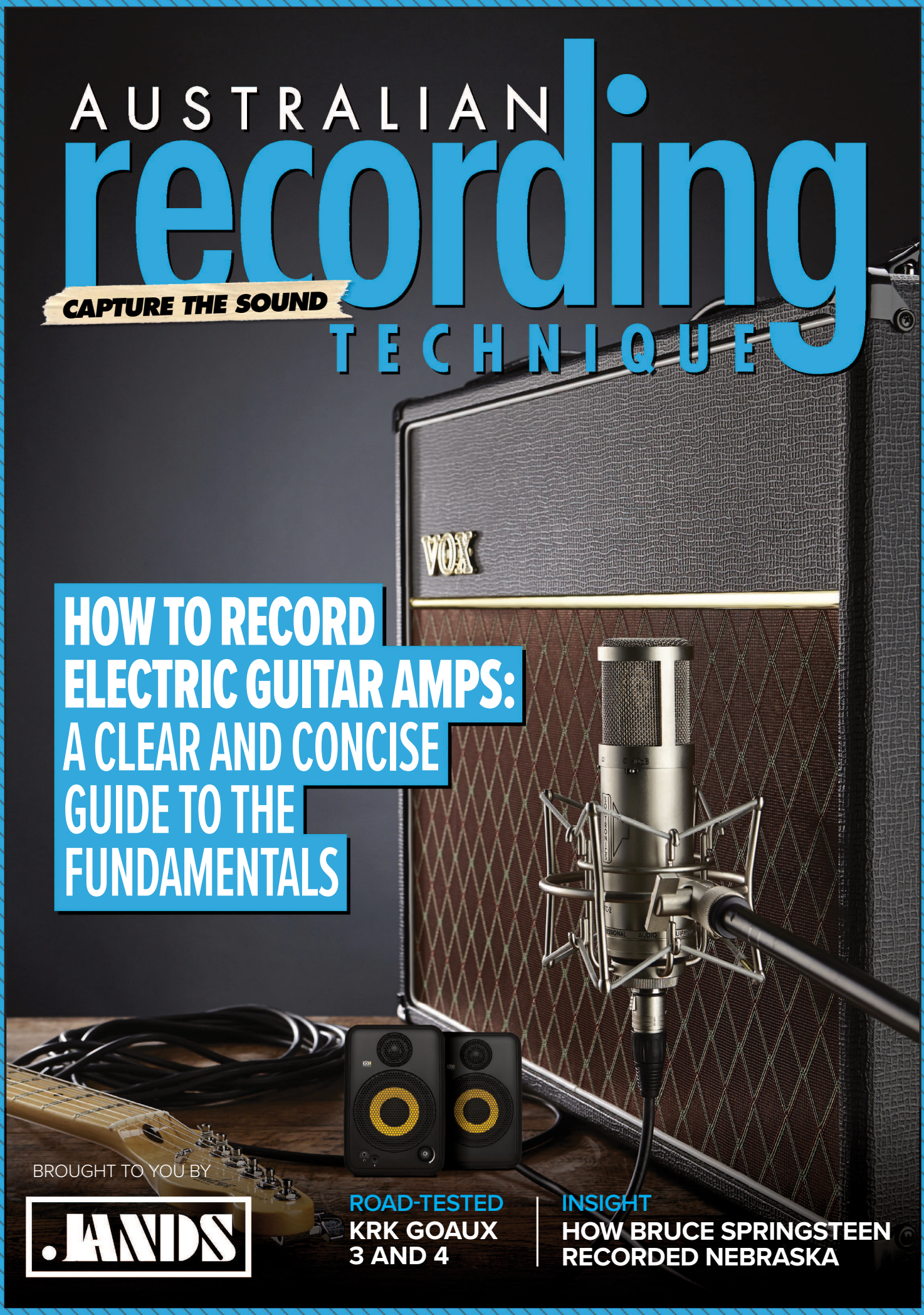

HOW TO RECORD ELECTRIC GUITAR AMPS: A CLEAR AND CONCISE GUIDE TO THE FUNDAMENTALS

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UP TO
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OF RUN TIME[1]

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In combination with the rugged polypropylene enclosure, use of the included weatherized input cover allows EVERSE 8 to meet the IP43 rating (water resistant for splashes and light rain) when running on battery power and while Bluetooth® streaming. Built-in feet with no-skid rubber pads ensure the system stays put. Bring EVERSE 8 outside for busking, marching band practice, or the backyard BBQ – wherever you need a PA, whatever the forecast.

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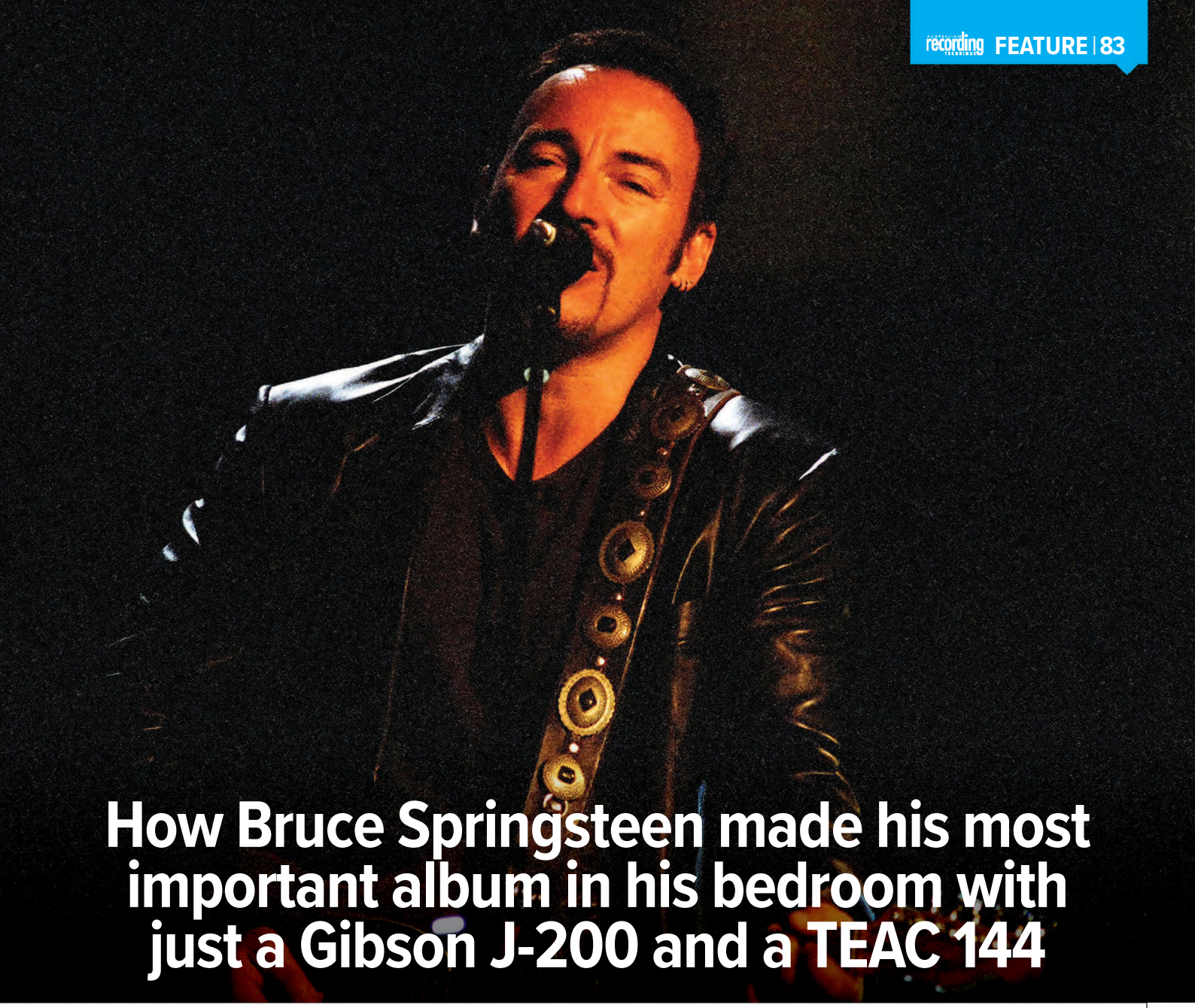


How Bruce Springsteen made his most important album in his bedroom with just a Gibson J-200 and a TEAC 144

Back in 1981, Bruce Springsteen started recording two albums: one was a state-of-the-art gamechanger that influenced the production sounds of the 80s and made him an international superstar. The other was better than that....

WORDS BY SCOTT ROWLEY

In 1981, Bruce Springsteen stood at a crossroads in his career and personal life. From the outside, he had the world at his feet. His last album The River had gone to no.1 on the Billboard charts and lead single Hungry Heart had gone to no.5. Coming off of the back of Born To Run's success and a run of hit cover versions (Patti Smith's Because The Night, Blinded By The Light by Manfred Mann's Earth Band), Springsteen was a bona fide star.

But something about it didn't sit right with Springsteen himself. Having struggled to break through, the victory seemed hollow. A romantic relationship ended and he found himself alone in a rented house wondering if it had all been worth it. "I just hit a wall that I didn't even know was there," he said recently. "It was my first real major depression."

In that rented house in Colts Neck, New Jersey, he started writing some new songs. The material that came was dark, inspired by a late night viewing of

Terence Malick's Badlands, by Charles Laughton's macabre classic The Night Of The Hunter, by the stories of Flannery O'Connor and Jim Thompson and by what he saw around him in Reagan's America. They were stories of desperate people, living on the margins of American life.

His roadie bought him a new piece of hardware to capture those songs. The TEAC 144 4-track recorder was the first real portastudio. Home-recording hardware that recorded direct to cassette, it meant that for the first time musicians could record cheaply at home. Paired with some industry-standard Shure SMS7 microphones, Springsteen set himself up in the bedroom and began recording these new songs, mostly just voice, a Gibson J-200 acoustic and harmonica, but occasionally a little mandolin and glockenspiel, and "the Born to Run guitar, a mongrel, with parts from a Fender Telecaster and Fender Esquire, both of a 1950s vintage".

He didn't realise at the time, but what he captured on the TEAC 144, and carried around on cassette in his pocket for months, would later be released as his new album, Nebraska. The story of Nebraska is captured in a brilliant new book, Deliver Me

photo credit: / Getty Images

From Nowhere by Warren Zanes, which details the relatively simple creation of Nebraska and its crazily complicated and tortuous route to physical release.

In theory, Springsteen was just creating demos on that TEAC 144 for his next album with the E-Street Band, and that's how it proceeded. He brought the cassette of songs he'd worked on into New York studio The Power Station and the band set out reshaping them. To begin with, it came easily. An angry little acoustic song called Born In The USA was transformed: Keyboard player Roy Bittan played an insistent riff on his Yamaha CS-80 while drummer Max Weinberg's snare drum boomed with gated reverb – a pioneering drum sound that would echo throughout the 80s.

"Everybody wanted that sound for a while," Springsteen's manager Jon Landau tells Zanes. "Even to this day you rarely hear drums with just the sonic power they had. It was so electrifying when we recorded it. It's an experience that was unforgettable. I forget a lot of the details of the past, but not that. When that happened, every person in the room, whoever was there, the assistant engineer or anyone in the band, everybody in the room felt like, 'This is as good as it gets.' It was a milestone. We'd done something in this studio that hadn't been done before."

With Born In The USA, Cover Me (an earlier song that Springsteen had written for Donna Summer but was persuaded to hold on to) and a couple of other songs that pre-dated his Colts Neck bedroom sessions (Glory Days and I'm On Fire) all quickly recorded, it was clear to them all – the band, their producers, the record company – that this new album was going to be huge.

But it didn't feel right to Springsteen. Maybe the stadium bombast of what would become the Born In The USA album was contrary to what he was feeling at the time. What he'd captured on his portastudio – that intimacy and darkness – was what interested him, and that was proving harder to reproduce in the Power Station. No matter how they cut those tracks, they didn't work. Finally, he pulled the cassette tape from his pocket: "What's the chance of mastering directly from this?" he asked

Producer Chuck Plotkin was not pleased with this challenge: "One of the things about Nebraska is it's cut on a crap piece of equipment. It wasn't a proper recording setup. It was also recorded by somebody who'd never recorded anything before. But they were making demos, so that wasn't an issue."

Making that tape useable is a tale in itself. Home recording hardware was different from studio. As Zanes comments: "In the first few years that followed the TEAC 144's introduction, it was common enough to hear people, particularly the aspirational types who had just picked up their new 144s, say, 'The Beatles made Sgt. Peppers on a four-track'. While true, The Beatles sure as hell weren't using a TEAC 144.

"The four-track machines at Abbey Road, which to this day remain coveted by artists and producers, were studio grade, using one-inch tape and operating at significantly higher tape speeds than the 144. The microphones used were of equal quality, no comparison with the Shure 57s Springsteen was using. And by Sgt. Pepper's The Beatles were syncing two machines together in order to have more tracks...

"What the 144 user's manual didn't say, because the makers of the machine didn't know this nor did anyone else at the time, was that the TEAC 144 would mark the beginning of a home-recording revolution that would, eventually, prove a significant threat to commercial studios."

As Springsteen recalled it in his autobiography, Born To Run, he mixed the 4-tracks "through a guitar Echoplex unit onto a beat box like the kind you'd take to the beach, total cost for the project: about a grand."

Released 30 September 1982, Nebraska went top 5 in the UK and the US. It was unlike anything before or since: a serious, authentic expression recorded directly from a major artist – without a producer, without a band, without even a drum beat. It showed that Springsteen had a depth that served as a useful counterpoint to the commercial juggernaut around the corner: Born In The USA.

"All popular artists get caught between making records and making music," Springsteen wrote in his autobiography, Born To Run. "If you're lucky, sometimes it's the same thing. When you learn to craft your music into recordings, there's always something gained and something lost... On certain records, that trade-off may destroy the essential nature of what you've done."

"If I had to pick out one album, that was going to represent me 50 years from now," he says today, "I'd pick Nebraska."

recording TUTORIAL

How to record an electric guitar amp

Last issue we published some advanced tips and tricks for mic-ing electric guitar amps. Some readers asked: but what about the fundamentals? So here are our top tips on mic placement and technique.

START WITH YOUR GUITAR

A great guitar sound starts at the business end of your signal path. With your guitar set up with fresh strings that are played in, you've got the first link in the chain sorted.

GET YOUR SOUND

Before you get started with microphones, fine-tune your pedal and amp settings to get them the best they can be to your ears in the room.

Try moving your amp to different positions in the room – or even a different room if possible – and see where it sounds best. Set your drive, EQ and overall level to a place where you feel comfortable, then move on to the mic.

SPEAKER EASY

As we just mentioned, if you're getting a great sound in the room, the only job the mic has to do is capture it. But the position of your mic in relation to your speaker can radically change the sound.

Put simply, depending on where you position the mic, you can change the sound it's capturing from bright to dark. The brightest tone is found dead-centre of the speaker – right on the dust cap. As you move the microphone to the edge of the speaker, you'll find the sound gets progressively darker.

Distance will also play a key role in your resulting tone – placing the mic very close to the speaker will capture the amp's sound in detail, with a lot of attack and definition. With this type of setup you're recording the sound of the speaker, with hardly any room sound.

The further you move the microphone away from the speaker, the more you'll capture the room reflections, adding ambience and depth to your sound.

CLOSE MIC-ING

Positioning your mic close to the speaker is the easiest, cleanest and most convenient way of recording your guitar.

A dynamic mic will handle the high SPL of your cab, so you can place it as close as you can physically get it. Start in the centre of the speaker cone, and move it towards the edge of the speaker.

It's worth enlisting the help of a bandmate at this point to monitor the sound the mic is picking up through headphones against the sound in the room. If you're recording alone, do this yourself – it'll just take a bit longer.

Once you've found the right position for tonality, try moving the mic back/towards the speaker and listen to how it changes the timbre of the sound. When you're ready, hit record!

AMBIENT MIC-ING

For some styles of music – or just personal taste – you may prefer to capture the sound of your amp in a more natural, ambient way. Ambient mic'ing will capture more of the sound reflections in the room, as well as the amp, and can really help your guitar to sit in the mix well later.

Because you'll be placing the mic further from the source, we'd recommend using a condenser mic; the extra sensitivity and frequency response will keep your sound full, even at a longer distance.

Start with your microphone about a foot (30cm) away from the grille. As with close mic'ing, the tonality of your captured sound will change, depending on which part of the speaker you aim the mic at – however bear in mind that this effect will be lessened the further you get from the speaker.

The rule here is simple: move it further from the amp to record a more distant, roomier sound, and closer to the amp to capture less ambience.

CLOSE / AMBIENT BLEND

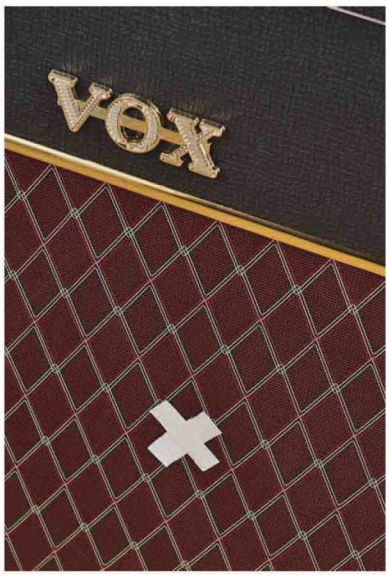
This is a mix of the two previous methods. Using a blend of close and ambient mic positions gives you two things: the best of both worlds in terms of maximum attack, and spacial effect from each position, plus the ability to balance these sounds in your final mix.

Get started by replicating both setups we've already looked at. At this point, we should mention phase. Much like your phaser pedal, phase between two mics will carve out a hole in your sound. With two mics in fixed positions, the phase will be at a set frequency. It can be used to make your sound fuller or thinner, depending on which frequencies are affected.

Phase is pretty much unavoidable, but it can be minimised using the 3:1 rule. The idea is that your second mic should be positioned three times the distance from the source (your amp) as the first (close) mic.

Ultimately, though, you shouldn't let this worry you too much. You're not going to break anything. Use your ears, listen to the two mics together, and if it sounds good, it is good!

TRACK TRICKS



MARK YOUR SPOT

Once you've found your ideal mic placement, mark the amp with tape or chalk so you can find it again if the mic gets knocked or moved.

CONE HOME

Not sure where the speaker starts or finishes? Take a look around the back if your cabinet is open-back or shine a torch through the grille to see its outline.

USE SMALL AMPS

Getting a great amp sound from a valve amp means cranking it up. Do this with a 100-watt stack and you'll end up with sirens on your recording! Instead, try a low-wattage amp to minimise the volume, and give a more usable result.

GAIN KILLER

Careful with that gain knob. When you're recording, it's easy to go overboard with the drive, but when you stack up layers of distorted guitars, it gets messy. Get the gain to your usual level, then back it off a notch.

DOUBLE UP!

A classic guitar recording trick is to double your track with an identical part. Play as tightly as you can, pan them left and right, and bang... instant huge tone. For an added twist, try changing your gain, EQ, pickup settings or even guitar on one of the parts.

THE VOICING

One of the best ways of adding thickness to double-tracked guitar parts is to use different voicings of the same chord. Try playing one part as open chords, and then switch to barres for the next track. It will instantly sound richer!

DARE TO DI

Recording a DI'd clean version of your part straight from your guitar is the ultimate safety net. You'll be able to re-amp your part later either live or with a modeller, or simply have a backup if anything goes wrong with your amp track.

RRP: $669 / $779

KRK GoAux 3 and 4

Need to take your monitors with you? Check out this new solution from KRK. Review by **Jon Musgrave**

GoAux 3 and GoAux 4 are the new on-the-go speakers from KRK and each kit comprises a pair of monitors in a padded travel case with space for all the extras. They use a 1" fabric dome tweeter coupled with 3" and 4" glass aramid woofers respectively, and the classic KRK yellow colour scheme is in full effect. Each speaker has an adjustable stand, is Bluetooth capable, has built-in EQ (HF and LF), onboard headphone output and front-mounted standby switch/level control.

Like a number of compact monitors, each GoAux pair uses common amplification (Class D). One loudspeaker (the left) essentially has all the input connectivity, power, settings, amplifier, volume control and headphone output, and the other is a remote unit linked via a lead, which in this case is a pretty robust and surprisingly long (4.5 metre) proprietary 4 core cable.

For physical inputs, both designs include RCA and 1/8" minijack, and GoAux 4 also has 1/4" TRS jacks and USB (B type). So, armed with a regular A-type to B-type USB cable you can connect the GoAux 4 directly to a computer, selecting the KRK Realtek driver as your output device. The GoAux 4 also includes ARC – automatic room correction – which we'll discuss below.

Both GoAux sizes include bespoke tabletop stands, which you bolt to the underside of the monitor. These incorporate simple adjustment that facilitates the correct upward angle, and we found these easy to use. Regarding EQ, both bands have three positions (boost, cut and flat) with respective soft switches. The buttons cycle around the settings, and LED indicators show the setting, which is handy in the dark.

Much like other quality compact monitors we've tried, both GoAux models deliver a very workable sound. The high frequencies, even when boosted using the EQ, are not unpleasant, and the mid and upper mid-range is reasonably forward. The rear-ported configuration enhances the low end enough so you don't feel they lack punch, but the low mid region doesn't have the same presence as a larger monitor. It's not a deal breaker as the overall delivery is very good, it's just something you need to adapt to when moving from more traditional near-field-sized monitors.

As mentioned, GoAux 4 includes automatic room correction (ARC). To get started, plug the included lavalier-style mic into the front of the left speaker, clipping it to you while you sit in your monitoring sweet spot. Selecting the rear-mounted ARC button activates the low-frequency test tone cycle and once completed ARC applies a corrective curve. You can then use the same button to switch the correction on and off. In our space, the difference was noticeable but not dramatic, but the outcome made sense, particularly having heard the peaks and troughs in the low-frequency tone cycle.

VERDICT

Overall KRK has done a good job with GoAux, delivering compact and portable monitors with a very workable sound.

PROS

- Padded travel case.
- Simple and adjustable stands.
- Great sonics for size.

CONS

- Sound lacks the fullness of larger nearfields

CONTACT

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Airpulse SM200 Active Speaker System

Listen up, pros: these are true monitor-quality loudspeakers with very low levels of distortion and a true-to-life sound quality.

Review by **Greg Borrowman**

Unlike most professional studio monitor loudspeakers, which are designed by engineers who make their living designing loudspeakers for home hi-fi use, the Airpulse SM200 Active Speaker System was designed and built by a man who started out as a musician, transitioned to being a recording engineer with his own studio, switched to designing loudspeakers for professional and domestic applications and is now not only a 'for hire' freelance loudspeaker designer, but also the owner of Phil Jones Bass, a company that builds bass combo amps, bass amp heads, bass speaker cabinets and guitar FX boxes along with other guitar-related products.

For the record, Phil Jones (because he named the company after himself) is also still an active professional musician. This introduction should make you realise that the Airpulse SM200, although it may be an unfamiliar brand to you, is one that deserves your full attention. It certainly had mine!

One thing I need to make very clear at the outset is that you should not confuse the Airpulse SM200 Active speakers reviewed here with the completely different Airpulse A200 Active speakers. The SM200 is for professional use; the A200 is a lower-specced 'consumer' variant.

Although the two different designs appear similar from the front, you need only look at the rear to immediately see the many obvious differences. However, the major difference that is not obvious is that the Airpulse A200 is a Bluetooth-equipped two-speaker system where only one of the two speakers is active—the other speaker is passive. The Airpulse SM200 design is completely self-contained, with an amplifier built into each cabinet and (thankfully!) no Bluetooth connectivity. Edifier, which owns the Chinese company that manufactures Airpulse, should really have made the model numbers more dissimilar to avoid confusion.

The high-frequency driver in the Airpulse SM200 is a horn-loaded ribbon tweeter using an alloy ribbon that has a stiff black metal mesh in front of it to protect it from physical damage. The ribbon's output is horn-loaded to increase efficiency, and the horn that does this is optimized for horizontal dispersion so a pair of SM200s can be used as very near-field monitors. The amplifier inside the SM200 that drives this tweeter is a Class-D design rated with an output of 15-watts.

The low-frequency driver in the SM200 is specified with a diameter of 134mm, but this turned out to be Airpulse using the standard industry method of describing the diameter by identifying the distance between the mounting holes in the frame. The overall diameter of the basket is 148mm and the cone diameter is 100mm. However the important dimension (the Thiele/Small diameter, which gives the effective radiating area) is 110mm, which puts that area (called the 'Sd' when it's plugged into the equation that identifies the ideal volume for the cabinet in which it is installed) at 95cm^2. It crosses over to the tweeter at 2.5kHz.

The cone is made from hard-anodised aluminium, which is hardly surprising given Jones' current obsession with using them in bass cabinets, and that he has a 40-year history with alloy cones stretching all the way back to Ted Jordan and Leslie Watts. The cone is driven by an under-hung 35mm diameter voice coil and a neodymium magnet. The driver uses an exceptionally large heavy-duty cast frame, built to an exceptionally high standard and was designed using state-of-the art German Klippel measuring and modelling equipment. The amplifier inside the SM200 that drives the LF driver is a Class-D design rated with an output of 55-watts.

The Airpulse SM200's cabinet is constructed of 19mm MDF and available in a variety of high-quality piano-grade finishes, including gloss red and gloss

black. It's a bass reflex design, with an elliptically-shaped port located at the top rear of the cabinet. The cabinet itself is 185mm high, 319mm wide and 318mm deep, making it an ideal size to sit on a mixing desk or for use in a small home studio. Airpulse specifies the maximum SPL for a pair of SM200s at a distance of one metre as 104dBSPL, which is 'way more than you'll ever need for near-field monitoring. The frequency response is rated as 45Hz to 40kHz ±3dB.

The rear terminal plates of the SM200s are comprehensively outfitted, with three modes of audio signal input: balanced XLR, balanced TRS (6.35mm phone jack) and unbalanced RCA. Because the two internal amplifiers are DSP-controlled, Jones has incorporated into the design both a very sophisticated high-pass filter, as well as low-frequency and high-frequency shelving filters (note that these are not the same as the tone controls on the A200).

The high-pass filter is continuously variable, so that you are able to set the –3dB down-point anywhere from 100Hz right down to 20Hz. You can also choose between one of four different filter slopes — 6dB, 12dB, 18dB and 24dB — depending on how steeply you'd like the filter to attenuate the frequencies below the 3dB down-point.

The high- and low-frequency shelving filters are not continuously variable but instead allow you to adjust level to +3dB in three single 1dB steps, or to –3dB in three single 1dB steps. Unlike conventional bass and treble tone controls which, when adjusted, affect midrange frequencies as well as bass and treble frequencies, the shelving filters on the SM200 have no affect on midrange frequencies. The LF control affects only frequencies below 250Hz, and the HF control only frequencies above 4.5kHz.

The volume control is continuously variable, with the actual level selected shown in the small blue-lettered LCD display to the left of the level control. Levels are selectable in single dB increments from –70dB to +6dB, though this is arbitrary since the actual volume level will also depend on voltage you're delivering to whichever of the three input you're using — XLR, TRS, or RCA. The input you are using is also shown in the display, above the dB reading. When the SM200 is switched on it will always default to the last-used input and the last-set dB level.

The difference between professional monitor loudspeakers and home hi-fi speakers is that a monitor speaker is supposed to deliver the flattest, most linear frequency response possible across the midrange, to make it possible to evaluate exactly what is being captured during a recording session, and the exact sound that will be replayed after recording. Home hi-fi loudspeakers, on the other hand, are often designed to make music played through them sound 'better', with the definition of what constitutes 'better' being mostly the personal opinion of the company's design engineer (or the company's marketing department).

But of course professional monitor speakers aren't only for recording. If you're using an electronic instrument (keyboard being the most obvious example) you need that speaker's frequency response to be completely linear, so that if you play two notes at the same time with the same finger pressure, those two notes will be reproduced by the speakers at exactly the same sound pressure level.

The midrange of the Airpulse SM200 is nothing if not audibly flat and linear. It is truly a professional monitor loudspeaker. But more than this, the flatness and linearity is extended 'way up into the high frequencies, to beyond the limits of human hearing. You may need to 'tweak' the HF control a dB or so either way to achieve this linearity, depending on where you've positioned the SM200s, but this is exactly what that HF control is for — to compensate for speaker location.

As for linearity in the low frequencies, this will also be affected by where you've positioned the SM200s, and can also be compensated for by using the LF shelving control, but of course absolute bass response is also dictated by the size of the SM200's driver and cabinet volume. You're going to be hard-pressed to get too far below 80Hz, but this would be the case for any small monitor speaker.

The good news here is that you can use the SM200's high-pass filter to remove signals you don't want from its ambit, so that you can get the cleanest signal possible from any bass cab you're using to deliver those low frequencies. Do this and you'll also be relieving the SM200's low-frequency driver of the burden of delivering those frequencies, which will improve the maximum SPL capability while at the same time reducing distortion — most particularly Doppler distortion — even further than the already-low levels evidenced.

Using my keyboard as a music source, the response of the SM200s was excellent, with my arpeggios crisply delineated and my chords delivered with a rich, full sound combined with exceptional tonal accuracy. A slow and carefully weighted chromatic excursion encompassing all 88 keys showed the linearity of the SM200s' frequency response was exceptional, with absolutely perfectly controlled volume levels that tailed off only very slightly in the lowest octave.

Using pre-recorded music, the Airpulse SM200s proved to be true monitor-quality loudspeakers, with very low levels of distortion and a true-to-life sound quality that was very revealing of any flaws in a recording, such as accidentally captured extraneous sounds. Stereo imaging and channel separation (I was using a pair of SM200s, but you can buy just a single one if you want) were superb.

VERDICT

If you've been looking for a pair of high-quality, well-outfitted, great-sound near-field active studio monitors, you need look no further.

PROS

- Great sound, particularly across the mids.
- Superb build and quality control.
- Filters for frequency response customisation.

CONS

- No auto standby circuitry.

CONTACT

AUDACITY AUSTRALIA
Web: audacityaustralia.com.au

RRP: $4,499 / $4,299

Fender American Vintage II 1972 Telecaster Thinline and 1975 Telecaster Deluxe

Time has mellowed the wrath of the detractors and reinforced the joy of the believers in a range that divided opinion when first released in the early 70s. Review by **Neville Marten**

By the early 1970s, the Telecaster had already been around for more than 20 years. Five decades on and this seems like nothing at all. But back then it made Fender, still under relatively new management, feel that a change of direction was needed in order to refresh the range and perhaps chime better with the tougher music scene that was emerging. The company was experiencing a dip in popularity, since everyone from The Stones' Keith Richards to Wishbone Ash, Aerosmith, Mick Ronson with Bowie, Phil Manzanera with Roxy Music, Adrian Fisher with Sparks, Lynyrd Skynyrd, Martin Barre with Jethro Tull and, of course, a still massive Led Zeppelin were all mainly toting Gibsons. So perhaps those once all-conquering single coils had become the problem?

Enter the Thinline (the second version), Custom and Deluxe Telecasters, all fitted with at least one brand-new Fender humbucking pickup. Fender co-opted Seth Lover, designer of Gibson's own humbucker, to develop something that would not only suit the Fender style but produce the thicker tones that 70s rock demanded. Using a material called CuNiFe (pronounced "cu-ni-fay"), Lover came up with what Fender called the 'Wide Range' pickup. Here's a brief history from Tim Shaw, chief engineer at Fender.

"CuNiFe has been around for about 80 years," he explains. "It's an alloy of copper, nickel and iron, has been used in many different applications and, if you messed with it long enough, you could make a magnet out of it. At the time, it was the only magnet material that could be made into a screw. Since the patent for Seth's original humbucking pickup was still in force, he couldn't infringe himself, so – knowing about CuNiFe – he decided to try to make a pickup out of it. Seth learned pretty quickly that it wasn't like Alnico or other magnets, and had to allow for the fact that it didn't have much iron in it, so a pickup he wound with CuNiFe didn't have a lot of low-end. That forced him to make it bigger than the one he'd designed previously. And that's what became the Wide Range humbucking pickup."

A by-product of this larger footprint was that the pickup acted on a longer length of string, helping it to produce that thicker sound – and one that was quite distinct from Seth's original Gibson design. But more on those tones later.

The instruments we have here, from the American Vintage II series, are the 1972 Telecaster Thinline and 1975 Deluxe, which both feature dual Wide Range humbuckers. Their sibling, the Custom, a favourite of Keith Richards, of course, featured a neck humbucker but a regular Tele bridge pickup and is also available in the new range as the 1977 Telecaster Custom. Things to note are the Deluxe's large Stratocaster-style headstock and, due to the chunky bridge pickup on both guitars, hardtail bridges with through-body stringing. Interestingly, while the Deluxe comes with solid stainless saddles, the Thinline retains the vintage-style bent steel variety.

Timber-wise, the Deluxe is a two-piece spread of not overly heavyweight alder, while the Thinline is hewn from nicely grained ash. Back in the day we vintage aficionados felt the natural look we see here seemed somewhat anaemic, but a few decades on – and in this lightly tinted form and with such attractive grain – it looks delightful. Three-tone sunburst, of course, remains timeless, and the Deluxe's black 'guard sets it off perfectly.

One of the changes of which vintage die-hards disapproved was the three-bolt neck attachment with 'Micro-Tilt' adjustment. While it was designed to eradicate the need for shims should your neck require a steeper angle during setups, detractors deemed the mechanism a 'tone sucker'. Add to this opinion the often-sloppy neck joints of the time (which, thankfully, are no longer a problem) and you could perhaps see their point.

Tuners on both instruments are Schaller-style enclosed units, and while the Deluxe carries double string trees (first and second, and third and fourth strings), the Thinline has the usual lone retainer.

A major contrast comes by way of the two guitars' control setups. Whereas the Thinline has the conventional Tele single volume and tone controls plus pickup selector, the Deluxe goes for Gibson's jugular with volume and tone rotaries for each humbucker plus a Les Paul-style shoulder-mounted three-way toggle (as did the Custom). This necessitated the already large 'guard of the Thinline to be extended to accommodate it. Another difference is the fact that the Thinline retains Fender's original 184mm radius neck with vintage tall frets, whereas the Deluxe features the more modern 241mm and medium-jumbo formula.

Now, 50 years on, it has to be said that Fender got the looks of these guitars spot on. The big pickguards (especially the Thinline's white pearloid) make a strong visual statement, as do those big and bold humbuckers with their three-a-side polepieces. And a Tele with a Strat headstock? Absolutely!

During the 70s Fender necks were often slimmer than they had previously been. And our faithfully reproduced Thinline and Deluxe Teles conform to this trend, especially down at the nut end, where the general C-section slims down to 20mm depth at the 1st fret (compared with the 21mm of our own '52 Tele Reissue, which is also more U-shaped). If you're not used to such slinkiness, it might take you by surprise, but these guitars remain supremely comfortable, aided by their perfectly set actions. The difference in feel between the two, the Deluxe with its 241mm radius fingerboard and 21 medium-jumbo frets, and the Thinline's 184mm, is not as great as you might expect. Barre chords are perhaps easier on the smaller radius, while heftier bends and vibrato seem more natural on the larger of the two. But, really, the difference is marginal. The guitars clock in at a virtually identical 3.5 kg, but the Deluxe's belly cut means it's the more stand-up friendly of the two.

Anyone who's put a Gibson humbucker in a Strat knows it doesn't instantly transform it into a Les Paul, tonally. So many things are different: the woods, the construction, even the bridge/tailpiece style will impact on the sound. So, while of course a 'bucker on a Strat is going to sound thicker, it's thicker in a slightly different way. With this in mind, and knowing that CuNiFe sounds unlike Alnico, ceramic or other magnets, we plugged into our ever-faithful Laney Lionheart L20T.

Thinline first, and we notice a spanky clean tone that's definitely within the Fender family of sounds – a little bit Jazzmaster, perhaps? There's brightness across all pickup selections, but it's never harsh or shrill. And yet neither is it 'fat' in the Gibson sense; there's clarity even when pushed hard, across neck and bridge pickups, and with both on. Dirtying things up it refuses to get mushy, even with the Lionheart's gain whacked up high. Sure, the semi-hollow nature of the Thinline's body will be adding something to the magic here, but it's the sum of the parts and not any single facet that makes the guitar so engaging.

Our Deluxe model is definitely a more strident beast. Still not particularly Gibson-like, nonetheless it has a harder, darker edge. Clean, the two guitars are very closely matched, but cranking up the sunburst it becomes something of a monster. It wants to feed back but in a nice, controllable way, and will happily sustain should that be your thing.

Of course, with its more comprehensive control setup there's a bigger range on the Deluxe than on the Thinline, mainly when you're balancing tones and volumes between the pickups. But both are superb-sounding instruments, with tones that are distinctly their own.

Confession: this reviewer was among those who never quite got Fender's 70s reimagining of its Telecaster range. "What was wrong with it in the first place?" we reasoned. Well, actually, Fender was right all along, as has been proved with so many 'lemons' down the decades. These guitars do exactly what Fender intended, lending a new and more chunky voice to their long-established workhorse.

Just as with Gibson's ES-335 and Les Paul, the Thinline is the more subtle and perhaps refined of these two guitars; its ever-so-slightly lighter tones would make it the perfect partner for a nice set of pedals into a clean but throbbing amp. The Deluxe retains that clean 'clank' but with a bit more in the tank should you want it.

VERDICT

Which of this delightful duo would we most like to take home? It's a close-run thing, but ask us today and, for its slightly more open sound and subtle edge, it's probably the Thinline. Pose the same question tomorrow, and who knows?

PROS

- Very smart vintage builds.
- A pro guitar for a decent pirce.
- Great attention to detail.

CONS

- Some might find the 1972's neck too thin.

CONTACT

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Jackson X Series Dinky DK3XR HSS

A high-speed thrill ride for heavy metal neon nights.

Review by **Jonathan Horsley**

The Jackson brand is not known for its reserve but even for the now-classic hotrodded S-style Dinky this Neon Pink model is pushing it. Perhaps the hi-viz aesthetic is a note of caution, health and safety gone mad because, golly, that reverse headstock, six-in-line like a dagger, could have your eye out. This is one electric guitar you could see from space, as though the Jackson development team consulted with rave culture archivists to find the most lurid Day-Glo colour and apply it to one of the most fast-playing guitars you can find at this money.

Now, we'll get to the performance – and spoilers for what's to come, but it's like the Dinky plays you sometimes – but first the spec. What does a tad over a grand buy you in today's market? Well, down the supermarket that's a tub of margerine and six eggs, but in guitar land your cash gets you further. This is an impressibly put-together instrument. The finish is tip-top, the factory setup is on-point. This Dinky has a Nyatoh body. As with all Dinkys it has a bolt-on neck, putting some daylight between it and its neck-through sibling, the Soloist. The neck is rake-thin and has a satin finish, graphite reinforcement for strength and stability in changing temperatures, with that angled reverse headstock affixed to the neck via a scarf joint.

The fingerboard is laurel, a popular rosewood alternative that in this instance really does look a convincing deep brown. It's carved into a house standard 12"-16" compound radius and topped with 24 jumbo frets. You will find this fingerboard radius across Jackson, Charvel and EVH Gear brands right now, and that says everything about the sort of feel it lends the guitar, making chord work in the lower registers comfortable and then flattening out – and dramatically so – with the promise that once you get up into nosebleed territory the flatter radius facilitates turbo lead guitar. Those pearloid reverse shark fin inlays encourage such behaviour.

There is a Jackson-branded Floyd Rose double-locking vibrato, Jackson-branded sealed tuners, finished in black. The pickups are Jackson's own, with a high-output humbucker at the bridge and two single-coils in the middle and neck positions. A five-way blade selector switch promises plenty of different combinations of the three.

Choose the humbucker alone for full shred, position two for the humbucker's outer coil and the middle single-coil, position three for the middle pickup, four for a mix of both single-coils, and five for the neck pickup. There was a good reason why Jackson launched its American series with an HSS Soloist; the humbucker and dual single-coil configuration (HSS for short), is as versatile as it gets, and when you plug in here you've got options of where you want to take your sound.

Excursions to Planet Shred take off from the bridge humbucker, so let's start there. Jackson says it was voiced for "full, rich tone with maximum overdrive and sustain" and if you've dialled in a suitable level of crunch on your amp and thrown caution to the wind with a distortion pedal for good measure, you'll find Jackson as good as its word. You'll have no trouble teasing pinch harmonics out of it, and dropping the tuning down to D will reward you with a power chords that'll bloody the nose. Select both single-coils and that saturated gain makes a great tone for sweep-picking, a little of the unruly treble rolled off.

Aesthetically, this is a niche instrument, but it is no-one trick pony when it comes to sounds. Every good metal guitar needs a good clean tone and those single-coils with a clean amp, a little chorus and delay will get you on those Sus2 chords, fishing around in minor keys for Metallica vibes. Or take it out of the metal zone altogether, and use the spanky single-coils for funk. And besides, this OTT presentation could work in other contexts outside metal.

The playability is off the charts. The challenge here lies in having the self-discipline not to overplay, with the satin neck profile offering near frictionless movement. While the Floyd Rose might not have the same super-smooth action of higher-priced units, it is more than stable enough for all your dive-bombing needs, and it cements the impression that when it comes to finding a mid-priced speed machine, they don't come much better than this. Nor as neon. This is a fun electric that could get real serious with a pickup upgrade. If this isn't a statement guitar, what the heck is?

▶ VERDICT

A visual rambunctious hard rocker's axe that plays you almost as much as you play it.

▶ PROS

- Looks, if you dig it.
- Extremely playable.
- Great price.

▶ CONS

- Looks, if you don't.

▶ CONTACT

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Cole Clark True Hybrid TL2EC-BLBL-HSS

RRP: $3,679

Holy hybrid! Melbourne's Cole Clark offers up an intriguing acoustic / electric premise that promises the best of both worlds. Review by **Jimmy Leslie**

Cole Clark has been in business since the millennium flip and is probably most associated with Hawaiian superstar Jack Johnson's acoustics. They ceased making electrics in 2012, and have recently focused on manifesting the perfect fusion by blending advanced electronics with easy playability. Noticing the trend of players adding magnetic pickups to their acoustics, Cole Clark launched a range of dual-output thinlines with built-in humbuckers in 2019. Their popularity led the company to dig deeper into the hybrid concept, ultimately releasing three models that truly straddle the acoustic/electric fence. The True Hybrid range features Cole Clark's three-way PG3 acoustic system augmented by their three-way electric system consisting of either three single-coils, a pair of humbuckers or the HSS configuration on this review model, the True Hybrid TL2EC-BLBL-HSS.

This True Hybrid's aesthetic embodies its crossover concept. Sustainably sourced Australian Blackwood with a natural nitro satin finish provides an earthy backdrop for white single-coil pickups with white control knobs and a bowling ball-style pickguard that look like they could have been plucked from a vintage surf guitar. The teardrop-shaped sound hole on the top upper bout adds a cool splash, as does the golden humbucker that matches the golden control knobs and the tuners on Cole Clark's classic headstock crest. Teal abalone dot inlays adorn a she-oak fretboard. Somehow it all comes together harmoniously. The only element my eye finds slightly askew is the hard corner of a rectangular bridge bumping up against the curvaceous pickguard. A bit of rounding off would make it flow together better, but for being a bit of a unicorn, the True Hybrid looks pretty swift.

The unamplified tone from this thinline with thin strings and essentially a single f-hole isn't going to win any campfire competitions compared to a pure acoustic, but it has a solid, well-balanced sound that's far fuller than any hollow, semi-hollow or chambered body coming from an electric base. Sustain is particularly noteworthy. One of Cole Clark's hallmarks is a Spanish heel, an integral neck-through design where one piece of wood goes all the way to the sound hole, as on a classical guitar. The neck is glued to a carved top and back, along with the sides, joined internally with a ridged system rather than a notched lining (i.e. kerfling). It's all designed for maximum vibrational conductivity, which relates to the pickups.

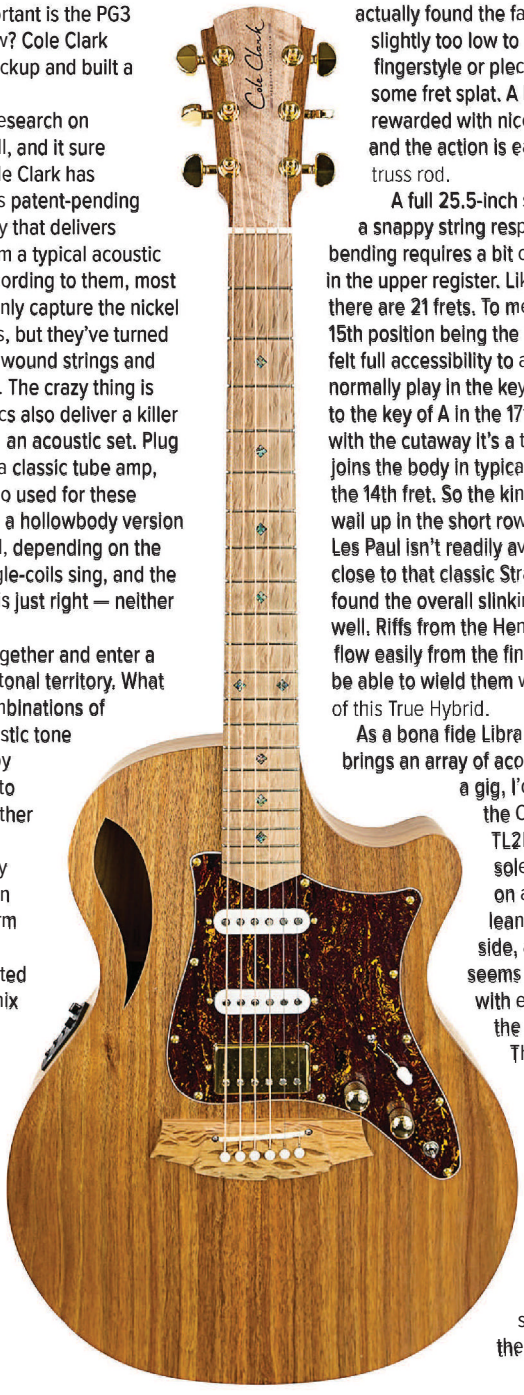
Speaking of which, the patented PG3 acoustic system, introduced in 2022, is a combination of six individual undersaddle bridge piezos plus a top (face) sensor and a mic. The idea is that the bridge pickups gather most of the low end, the top sensor grabs the middle body information and the microphone captures the high end. The result is flexible, powerful and realistic. The controls facilitate blending any balance you'd like, and Cole Clark has the crossover points dialed in wonderfully. The body sensor is incredible at capturing percussives. The most surprising aspect is how much body and mic ambience one can achieve without getting feedback. The PG3 system gave this thinline a grand sound through a little AER Tommy Emmanuel signature amp. How important is the PG3 in the manufacturer's view? Cole Clark states, "We designed a pickup and built a guitar around it."

They've done tons of research on the electric system as well, and it sure sounds like it paid off. Cole Clark has found a way to balance its patent-pending magnetic pickups in a way that delivers a full steel-string tone from a typical acoustic phosphor-bronze set. According to them, most electric-style magnetics only capture the nickel core on the wound strings, but they've turned up the magnetism on the wound strings and down on the plain strings. The crazy thing is how much these magnetics also deliver a killer electric guitar sound from an acoustic set. Plug the magnetic output into a classic tube amp, such as the '66 Fender Pro used for these tests, and they sound like a hollowbody version of a Strat, Tele or Les Paul, depending on the pickup selection. The single-coils sing, and the humbucker in the bridge is just right — neither too dull nor too bright.

Put the two systems together and enter a vast wealth of uncharted tonal territory. What bliss to enjoy endless combinations of a percussive, robust acoustic tone along with a slinky, snappy electric tone. Use pedals to add gain and effects to either or both outputs, and the possibilities are practically boundless. I blissed out on everything from jazzy warm and clean tones to raging blues-rock sounds facilitated by a devilishly delicious mix of thick overdrive from a Wampler Pexi Drive Deluxe coupled with harmonically rich grand-auditorium tones soaked in lush reverb. I had a ton of fun using the new Fishman AFX Broken Record to loop an acoustic bed on the AER while ripping away over the top through the Fender.

The neck has the voluptuous feel and flatter radius of an acoustic, and since it's designed to accommodate phosphor-bronze strings including a wound third, it certainly has an acoustic feel under the fingers. But the strings are extra light (gauges .011–.052), and the action is so easy that the True Hybrid practically plays like an electric. I actually found the factory action to be a slightly too low to deal with aggressive fingerstyle or plectrum playing without some fret splat. A lighter touch was rewarded with nicely nuanced dynamics, and the action is easily adjustable via the truss rod.

A full 25.5-inch scale length yields a snappy string response, and in turn, bending requires a bit of gumption, especially in the upper register. Like a classic Strat, there are 21 frets. To me, that translated to 15th position being the uppermost where I felt full accessibility to all the licks I would normally play in the key of G. You can get to the key of A in the 17th position, but even with the cutaway it's a tight fit as the neck joins the body in typical acoustic fashion at the 14th fret. So the kind of leads one might wail up in the short rows on, say, an SG or a Les Paul isn't readily available, but it's darn close to that classic Strat situation, and I found the overall slinkiness very Strat-like as well. Riffs from the Hendrix/Vaughan canon flow easily from the fingers, and it's wild to be able to wield them with the tonal flexibility of this True Hybrid.



As a bona fide Libra performer who often brings an array of acoustics and electrics to a gig, I'd be thrilled to have the Cole Clark True Hybrid TL2EC-BLBL-HSS as my sole traveling companion on a flyaway. I tend to lean towards the acoustic side, and this instrument seems more of an acoustic with electric features than the other way around. That's fine. Solidbodies or semis with piezos in the bridge tend to sound like an electric with a little lagniappe, even through dual rigs. Acoustics with magnetic pickups tend to yield something similar from the opposite angle.

▶ VERDICT

The True Hybrid delivers a blissful balance of acoustic and electric mojo. Kudos to Cole Clark for manifesting its double vision with clarity on both sides of the paradigm, with respect to tone and playability. It's a singular experience via dual outputs into dual amps, and the flexibility is awesome.

▶ PROS

- Ingenious hybrid design.
- Fine playability.
- Eco-conscious woods.

▶ CONS

- Skeptics may write it off as odd or obscure.

▶ CONTACT

COLE CLARK GUITARS
Ph: 0281981300
Web: coleclarkguitars.com

RRP: $3,195

Faith PJE Legacy Dark Roast Earth

A modern acoustic-cum-electric with an old spirit.

Review by **Steve Henderson**

Whenever a new guitar arrives for review, the tone is often crisp (sometimes overly so) and bright, with none of the "lived in" depth that will eventually provide the character that we love about old instruments. This is not necessarily a fault or a negative – it's just part of the instrument's journey. This is why players talk about their guitars "opening up" or "breaking in" after some time. Rarely does a brand new model present itself with what seems to be a genuine vintage voice.

But the Faith PJE Legacy Earth does exactly that. It sounds like it's been played for years and the tone has a sweet vintage vibe. Make no mistake, there are plenty of modern appointments: jumbo frets, bolt-on neck, built-in electronics, torrefied soundboard, Maccaferri-style Venetian cutaway. But this Faith Earth has an old soul and a warm richness that speaks of its heritage. In terms of style and comfort the Legacy Earth is an Orchestra Model, but the body shape has a subtle variation on the OM silhouette, where the shoulders don't square off near the neck, creating a more elegant version of Martin's OM shape.

Some specs: It is built almost entirely of African mahogany. Its long-scale neck has a super-comfy vintage profile that's a touch deeper than most modern guitars. It has a Macassa ebony fretboard (16" radius): bone nut and saddle, and Kluson-style Grover tuners. For a company that prides itself on affectation-free guitars, almost to the point of austerity, the abalone rosette is a lesson in less-is-more.

The Faith Guitars philosophy, driven by famed British luthier Patrick James Eggle, has always been to build a great guitar and not distract with affectation. In 2021, Eggle told me:

"Our thing with Faith has always been to build a guitar that's as good as it can be as a playing instrument, not worrying too much about the looks, and not worrying too much about gold hardware and fancy inlays, and all that. [The idea is to] just build an all-solid wood guitar that's properly built and as good as it can be for the money. So, let's build it properly, let's use the right tone woods....let's actually build it absolutely right, and put the money and the time into building a really good acoustic guitar. Obviously we need to build nice looking instruments. I like to think they've always been a little bit understated, and that's kind of always been our ethos with it, you know?"

While new mahogany tops often sound reserved but with the promise of a richer tone as they age, the Legacy Earth sounds like an old instrument that's already delivering the goods. The soundboard has been torrefied, which is a process of baking and re-hydrating the timber to specific levels, in order to age the timber's molecular structure, thereby replicating the passage of time. This creates a guitar whose voice is older and more "worn in'' but without the wait, or the wear and tear.

Acoustically, the Legacy Earth wins you over with a rich, even response. It has an extra 8mm in the depth of the body that gives the bass and lower mids time to interact, then bloom a little more than expected. The tone is warm from treble to bass. While it has more bass than a traditional OM, don't expect the low end thud of a dreadnought. What it does have is a beautiful fingerstyle tone with superb definition. The Legacy Earth is designed to be played in an acoustic setting, whether amplified or unplugged. It strums quite nicely but players who fingerpick will likely find their voice with this guitar.

Plugged in, the Fishman Flex T-Blend system produces a very accurate rendering of the acoustic sound. The Fishman system allows for a blend of a piezo transducer (an under-plate pickup) and a cleverly placed (right on the X of the X bracing) condenser mike, which are then controlled by volume, tone, and piezo/mike balance controls. The tone control is not the usual treble cut, but rather a dynamic flavouring of the basic sound: off is flat, midway is a mid cut, while full is a subtle bass and treble boost. Push on the tone knob and it will reverse the phase; push on the volume knob and it mutes the signal and engages a chromatic tuner.

Played through, variously, a Fishman SA330 system, a Loudbox Mini and a JBL-powered cab, the Legacy Earth delivers a beautifully rich voice. It handles delicate fingerstyle and a rougher percussive approach with ease. And there's a surprisingly snappy attack, with the microphone adding some woody presence. There's hardly any handling noise, even at higher volumes, and the general tone has an organic attack followed by the bloom of the low fundamentals and harmonics. This guitar is a pleasure to play.

The Legacy Earth has features that, at first, go quietly unnoticed: ebony scratchplate and truss rod cover, hand-voiced spruce bracing, and outstanding ebony body binding. It's great to see this calibre of instrument, a vintage-style guitar that's built to last, at an affordable price.

▶ VERDICT

For studio, stage, or home, this guitar delivers over and over. For the fingerstylist, the Legacy Earth may be The One.

▶ PROS

- Quality vintage tones.
- Great neck shape.
- Exceptional build values.
- Beautifully presented.

▶ CONS

- None

▶ CONTACT

CMC MUSIC

Ph: (02) 9905 2511

Web: cmcmusic.com.au

RRP: $279

Electro-Harmonix Lizard Queen Octave/Distortion

A compact take on a "big box" classic, the Lizard Queen is a stylish and versatile treat. Review by **Art Thompson**

The result of an unusual coalition between Electro-Harmonix, JHS pedals founder Josh Scott and graphic artist Daniel Danger, the Lizard Queen Octave/Distortion is a compact version of JHS's "big box" pedal of the same name. Created in the spirit of a "love letter" to Mike Matthews (who founded EHX in 1968), and made to echo the style of pedals that EHX produced in the mid 1970s, the limited-edition run features period-correct sheet-metal housings with silk-screened graphics, N.O.S. transistors and old-school circuit-board construction, complete with hand-drawn traces rendered artistically by Danger himself.

The nano Lizard Queen has the same graphics and complement of volume, octave and balance controls, but adds modern conveniences like a jack for external power and an on/off LED, as found on the JHS version. Removing the bottom plate from the die-cast enclosure provides access to the already installed "super-heavy-duty" carbon battery sporting Mike Matthews' image, and allows you to see all of the circuit components instead of just the back side of the PCB, as is often the case.

Scott maintains that the Lizard Queen is not a clone of a Roger Mayer Octavia, Foxx Tone Machine or, for that matter, any other vintage or modern octave-fuzz. The pedal is particularly interesting because it's a fixed-gain fuzz that dispenses with a standard gain knob in favor of a balance control that operates with a sort of dual personality. As Scott says, it's "not a tone control, but it affects the tone; and not a gain control, but it affects the gain."

The distortion sounds thickest and heaviest with the balance control turned counter-clockwise to the Shadow position. It's more biting and gated sounding when turned clockwise to the Sun position, particularly when the highly interactive octave control is also halfway up or so. Having a dedicated octave control is also somewhat unusual (although EHX's Octavix also has one), and it's a cool feature because you can turn the octave almost completely off or progressively add it to get the desired amount of shrill, ring-modulation-infused sound. The pedal has a lot of output too,

so plenty of boost is available, if needed.

Played through a Fender Deluxe Reverb with a variety of single-coil and humbucker guitars from Fender, Gibson and PRS, the Lizard Queen was easy to dial in for tones that can be very reminiscent of the previously mentioned classic octave-fuzzes — or for that matter non-octave pedals like the Big Muff or Fuzz Face — while also having plenty of latitude to conjure sounds that are just fun and pleasing to hear. For instance, turning the octave knob all the way up with the balance control set to Shadow elicits gated, modulating swells that sound like a backward effect. Turn the knobs the other direction and the tones become smooth and vocally in a "woman tone" sort of way with the guitar turned up (especially when using a neck-position humbucker), before descending into spittiness with a halo of octave chime as you turn down. Neat stuff.

The Lizard Queen is such a blast to play, and for the admission price of $279 you're essentially getting a boutique pedal for a pittance when compared to the original JHS offering, which is a piece of sonic art in its own right.

▶ VERDICT

If you're looking to summon your inner Jimi Hendrix or just want the most flexible octave-fuzz available to add fresh color to your distortion tones, the Lizard Queen is the bomb.

▶ PROS

- Delivers a wide range of octave-fuzz tones.
- Octave level knob and unique balance control.
- Battery power or optional 9VDC supply.

▶ CONS

- None

▶ CONTACT

VIBE MUSIC

Web: vibemusic.com.au

Vox amPlug Set Brian May limited edition

Vox's mini headphone guitar amp gets a royal ascent. Review by **Stuart Williams**

From the homemade guitar to the treble-boosted AC30s to the old six-pence-piece he uses as a pick, Brian May's tone is quite literally the stuff books are written about. So, imagine if you could distil all of that into a tiny headphone amp and mini-cab. That's exactly what Vox did when it set about creating the latest in its long-running line of amPlugs.

You've probably seen these before – the amPlug plugs directly into your guitar with a swivelling jack, loaded with controls and a headphone socket for the most portable practice possible. Now, Vox's amPlug has been issued as a signature Brian May edition and it comes in two guises. First is the lone amPlug Brian May, but perhaps of more interest to Queen fans will be the amPlug Set Brian May Limited Edition, which is what we have here. The set bags you the same amPlug plus a matching red mini-cab boasting a 3-inch speaker and pumping out 2 watts of power.

The amPlug itself is surprisingly packed with features: it's got two channels (one 'standard' AC30 channel and one 'treble-boosted'); a trio of effects (delay, phaser and chorus) and an on-board drum machine. The latter hosts a number of – let's be honest – fairly dated-sounding, albeit useful drum patterns, but there's a needle in the haystack courtesy of the stomps and claps from *We Will Rock You*.

If you've ever tried a battery-powered mini-amp before, you'll know the results can vary. With our amPlug hooked up to the cabinet (it mounts in the top and there's a mini-jack cable included), we'd say this sits on the clearer end of the tones this type of amp produces. Channel one goes from a plucky clean, up to a smooth crunch sound, while holding down the power button switches to the higher-gain treble-boosted mode. At the top end of its gain and volume spectrum things become waspy, but roll it back a bit and we're back to classic overdrive territory. The effects are fun, with only the intensity and delay tempo tweakable, but they definitely give a moreish flavour of Brian's tones.

So will you be ousting your 'big amps' in favour of this? It's doubtful. But as a good-sounding practice amp with heaps of collectable appeal, this is a lot of fun. We can't help noticing the price jump between a regular amPlug and cab and this set, but we assume that royalty comes with some royalties. Just don't take it on the roof.

VERDICT

A boost, distortion and octave fuzz team up to send your amp into ecstasies and usher in a new era for your more extreme guitar tones. Doom, chaos, and Sunn Model T-esque tones all in a box.

PROS

- A wealth of features at this price point.
- A beautiful keepsake.

CONS

- Inherent limitations of mini-amps.

CONTACT

YAMAHA MUSIC AUSTRALIA
Ph: (03) 9693 5111
Web: au.yamaha.com

RRP: $479

Zoom G2X Four

Loads of sounds and features at the stomp of a button. Review by **Steve Henderson**

In 1990, Zoom hit the ground running with their 9001 belt-pack multi-effector, amazing everyone with how much "stuff" they could cram into something that small. While there was a load of processing power, the actual tones were a compromise. To be fair, digital processing was in its infancy. Zoom were breaking new ground, and the market was maybe not as critical back then as it is today, after 30-something years of debating the whole analogue-digital thing.

The Zoom G2X Four is a compact, lightweight floor unit packed with useful sounds and clever features: 22 amp/cab models, 79 effects, up to six stomp box effects and one treadle effect at a time, 300 patches (50 of those user patches), an 80 second looper, a drum machine (synced to the looper) with 68 patterns, and 3-bands of global EQ with a master volume. Phew! And just in case you need more, there's a dedicated app that lets you expand the tonal palette or edit what's already there via your smartphone. Ports: mono in and stereo out.

The LCD display shows three effects at a time, displayed and tagged in a way reminiscent of the original effect ("TS DRIVE" is that little green pedal). There are four parameters for each effector, even though the originals may have had just three knobs, giving them a touch more programmability without making the process convoluted. Dial up a Phase 90, for example, and you now have options. Some of the modulation effects (chorus, harmonizer, vibe) are fabulous, and even more so in stereo. The delays and reverbs sound great and benefit from the four knob controls, and there are some really useful gain-based effects, like a DS-1, a ProCo Rat, a Distortion +, and a Zendrive. There's even an Echoplex preamp – a 1960s secret weapon. The amp models replicate various classic British and American amps, as well as boutique amps such as Diezel and Matchless, plus the godfather of hi gain: Mesa Boogie (Mk1, Mk3, and Dual Recto). And don't forget to tell the G2X Four whether you're running through a guitar amp or straight into the desk – it will adjust the output and tonal response accordingly.

Even with all this going on, the G2X Four is easy to operate. The treadle is assignable to wah, pitch shift, vibe speed or volume, and memory locations, or patches, are accessed via the three footswitches at the front, which also operate the tuner and the looper. Each patch shows three effects on the screen, but the left and right arrows scroll through all the effects in that patch. OK, so it sounds complicated, but when you plug in and start calling up sounds, it's amazingly intuitive. The Zoom's ease of programming makes it a no brainer for on-the-fly adjustments.

For a mix of simple and complex, new and old, I plugged into a few amplification choices: a Roland Cube 40XL, a Mesa TA-15 and 112, an old silver faced Fender Deluxe, and a portable Behringer PA with two 110+horn cabs. The Zoom worked fine in all of them but there were some stand outs. The Cube worked super-well with all the patches I tried: Roland tends towards the hifi end of the clean spectrum, so hearing it through the clean channel highlighted how accurate and complex some of the Zoom tones really are.

The Mesa amp makes everything sound better, and its tube circuit accentuated some of the Zoom's drive effects and their signal/noise ratio. This probably isn't entirely fair since Boogie players tend not to use multi-effects for this reason. The old Deluxe worked OK but its own character coloured the Zoom's sounds: the delays and reverbs sound a little darker compared to the Cube's pristine reproduction, but the amp models sound a little warmer.

The real surprise was the Behringer PA. I had to set the Zoom's output to PA rather than guitar amp but that's super easy to find: turn in on and it asks the question! Through the PA, the Zoom effects sounded nicely contained, as if there was a combo amp in between. There's a hint of sag but the compression isn't overly applied. If it's still a little bright and chirpy, turn down the global treble and add a touch more compressor for each patch. If this sounds like a lot of work, copy a set of patches to another location and trim them for when you need to DI.

As a product, the G2X Four represents great value. As a creative tool, it offers loads of good sounds and facilities. As a gigging tool, it's easy to use. For home practice and for working up song ideas, it's fabulous. Zoom multi-effects have always represented great value compared to individual pedals. If you chose just three or four popular effects (a TS-9 sells for around $180), you're way ahead with the G2X Four. Professionals might reach its limitations pretty quickly (although I'll bet they'd use it at home) but, for the new or intermediate player, the Zoom G2X Four is an ideal and great value device.

▶ VERDICT

Professionals might reach its limitations pretty quickly (although I'll bet they'd use it at home) but, for the new or intermediate player, the Zoom G2X FOUR is an ideal and great value device.

▶ PROS

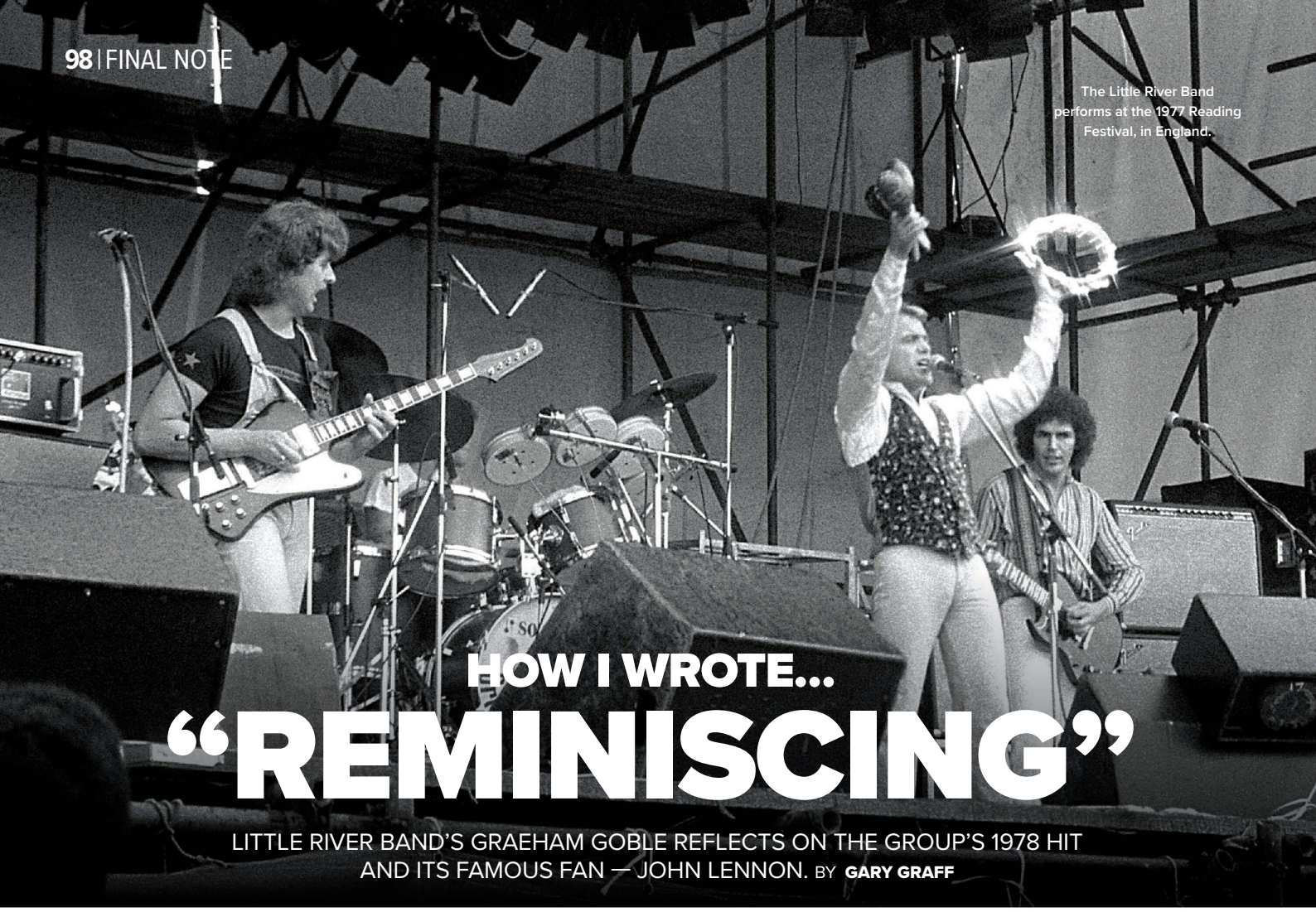
- Simple to use.
- Good sounds.
- Small and light weight.
- Quiet operation.

▶ CONS

- The sounds might not be complex enough for pros.

▶ CONTACT

DYNAMIC MUSIC
Ph: 0299391299
Web: dynamicmusic.com.au



The Little River Band performs at the 1977 Reading Festival, in England.

HOW I WROTE... "REMINISCING"

LITTLE RIVER BAND'S GRAEHAM GOBLE REFLECTS ON THE GROUP'S 1978 HIT AND ITS FAMOUS FAN — JOHN LENNON. BY **GARY GRAFF**

It's not hard to get Little River Band guitarist Graeham Goble to reminisce about "Reminiscing." The 1978 single was the Australian group's most successful in the U.S., peaking at number three on both the Billboard 200 and Cash Box charts. It was named Australian Record of the Year at the 1978 King of Pop Awards and was honored by Broadcast Music International (BMI) for five million plays on American radio, the most for any Australian pop song up to that point.

It was also, somewhat surprisingly, a favorite of the late John Lennon during his mid-'70s affair with former assistant May Pang. "She wrote in her book, Loving John, that they would lay in bed listening to 'Reminiscing,'" Goble says, "and he was asking her to play it again and again and again. That was pretty amazing."

Originally released as the second single from LRB's fourth album, Sleeper Catcher, "Reminiscing" can be found on the new LRB compilation, Ultimate Hits. Still in Melbourne where the band was formed, Goble has nothing but fond memories of "Reminiscing" and all that came in its wake.

MUSICAL CHEERS

"It was inspired by my love of the '30s, '40s and '50s musicals, 'cause I was 12 years of age when we got a black-and-white television in Adelaide," Goble explains. "The programs I immediately loved were all the Fred Astaire–Ginger Rogers, Rogers and Hammerstein musicals — all of that American romantic era. A lot of my songwriting, but particularly 'Reminiscing,' was about the life I wished I had, putting myself into those situations I saw in the movies.

The song arrived in April 1977, when the group was in Melbourne for a TV appearance. "We were in the green room, just playing our guitars," Goble says. "The lead guitarist, David Briggs, was showing me some jazz chords, one of which was a C9 chord, a shape I never knew about. When I came home after the television show, I picked up my Martin 000-18 and played that chord. Immediately, I had this melody and lyric, all at the same time, almost like it was a spiritual download that just flowed through me. In about a half an hour, the whole thing was finished, and I had this very different song with key changes and quite a lot of jazz chords — quite a sophisticated piece!"

THIRD TIME'S A CHARM

As Goble recalls, the Little River Band made two attempts at recording the song before they struck gold. "The keyboard player I wanted for it was Peter Jones, and he was not available," he says. "So I was forced to pick another player, and it didn't work. And then we did it with a second player and that didn't work out, either.

"Then I heard Peter Jones had come back into town. So under protest from some of the guys, mainly from [vocalist] Glenn Shorrock, they reluctantly agreed to give it a third go. As soon as we sat down with Peter, the whole thing came together. Our guitarist Beeb [Birtles] played a syncopated riff from the third verse to the very end of the song, which I really loved. It was a lovely lift to the latter part of the record."

CAPITOL ASSETS

In addition to "Reminiscing," Sleeper Catcher included "Lady," another song with which the LRB would make their name in America. Although Goble and the band were convinced they'd recorded something special, their label, Capitol, had trouble hearing it. "We waited five weeks with no response," Goble says. "They eventually Telexed us and said, 'We think the album is great but we can't hear any singles' — and they had 'Reminiscing' and 'Lady,' our two biggest singles of all time!"

Eventually the label decided to take a chance on "Reminiscing." "They said, 'But we really don't know if it will connect at all.' Within a couple weeks it went ballistic, right to number one in New York and number three on Billboard."

Goble calls it "our pinnacle song. It's double any other song we've ever had in terms of listens. It's been in a lot of movies, and a lot of soundtracks. Sinatra said he thought it was the best '70s song in the world, though he never recorded it. But when John Lennon calls your song one of his favorites, does that really matter?"

Paul Natkin/Getty Images

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