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NOIZE FROM THE EDITOR



THERE ARE A LOT OF AWESOME DELIGHTS ABOUT charging through the *Guitar Player* archives to find cool stuff to celebrate the magazine's 50th anniversary. But there are some sad moments, as well. Obviously, there are the articles on scores of guitarists who are no longer treading the planet along with us. A half-century is quite a time span, so the "guitarist graveyard" is, unfortunately, well populated. But I also found some less mortal, though no less tragic, bummers—all of the players we covered who were once on the brink of success, but are now forgotten, struggling, or simply out of the music industry.

You can well imagine that the past 50 years have seen us interview "next big things," respected players eking out livings in the club circuit, and artists with massive record sales and followings. I'm sure we believed every one of these acts were going somewhere, were doing something unique and educational, or had staying power. We wouldn't have taken the trouble to share them with our readers if we didn't feel that way—at least at the time. But a good number of those artists simply didn't follow through with our expectations. Bands imploded, players gave up, audiences moved on. They became "one-hit wonders," so to speak. Memories. Curiosities. Ghosts.

I also thought of all the work and luck and practice and business smarts and cultural acumen it took these failed artists to even *become* citizens of "once-upon-a-time land." It takes a colossal amount of grit to seduce a significant audience. There are support people involved, too. Managers, roadies, drivers, producers, engineers, publicity teams, label executives, and more. Sure, some of these people just move on to the next burgeoning act, but others disappear along with the fading public stature of the artists they were working for. There's always a knee-buckling level of danger in joining a business that flourishes or tanks based on the whims of an often-fickle public.

You can look through your own back issues of *Guitar Player* and find plenty of acts that fit the bill here. But as I collected these ghosts in my mind, I started to be less dismayed by their circumstances. Yes, they caught hold of a bolt of lightning—momentarily looking ahead at the possibility of a phat lifestyle—and ended up losing their grip and spiraling down into a future of *not* being rich and adored. Does this make them artifacts of failure?

I believe that everyone who honors the guitar—and who strives for any number of people to hear their particular brand of artistry—enriches guitar music, other guitarists, gear makers, and guitar fans. If you can be *heard*, then there's a good chance that you influenced, surprised, educated, or inspired someone else. Your music matters. And it matters whether you had a major record deal at one time, or never got far from the miniscule stages, beat-up sound systems, and crap pay of local bars.

And if, like me, you're one of those "career criminals" who will play guitar until you drop down dead—whether you're getting paid big bucks or no bucks, or whether millions love you or 50 people on Facebook think you're cool—then all that matters is *playing the guitar*. Doing music for a grand living is a wonderful dream. But would you toss it all away if the prospect of shaking some major revenue with your guitar eluded you? Didn't think so. The pure bliss of placing one's fingers on a fretboard is mysterious and powerful and transformative, and it transcends economics and ego. Whether we get that terrific moment in the spotlight or not, the joy doesn't ever fade away. Lucky us.

Michael Molenda

EDITOR IN CHIEF Michael Molenda
mmolenda@nbmedia.com

MANAGING EDITOR Kevin Owens
kowens@nbmedia.com

SENIOR EDITOR Art Thompson
athompson@nbmedia.com

LOS ANGELES EDITOR Jude Gold
judgold@gmail.com

FRETS SECTION EDITOR Jimmy Leslie
j@jimmysleslie.com

LESSONS EDITOR Jimmy Brown
jbrown@nbmedia.com

CONSULTING EDITORS Jim Campilongo, Jesse Gress,
Henry Kaiser, Michael Ross,
Leni Stern, David Torn

ART DIRECTOR Paul Haggard

ASSISTANT ART DIRECTOR Laura Nardozza

MUSIC COPYIST Elizabeth Ledgerwood

PRODUCTION MANAGER Beatrice Weir

NEWBAY MUSIC GROUP, BUSINESS
VICE PRESIDENT, GENERAL MANAGER:
Bill Amstutz, bamstutz@nbmedia.com
GROUP PUBLISHER: Bob Ziltz, bziltz@nbmedia.com
ADVERTISING DIRECTOR: Jonathan Brudner,
jbrudner@nbmedia.com
ADVERTISING DIRECTOR: Mari Deetz, mdeetz@nbmedia.com
ADVERTISING DIRECTOR: Jeff Donnenwerth,
jdonnenwerth@nbmedia.com
ADVERTISING DIRECTOR: Jason Perl, jperl@nbmedia.com
ADVERTISING DIRECTOR: Scott Sciacca,
ssciacca@nbmedia.com
ADVERTISING DIRECTOR - LABELS:
Chris Enriquez, cenriquez@nbmedia.com
ADVERTISING DIRECTOR - NON ENDEMIC:
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PRODUCTION DEPARTMENT MANAGER: Beatrice Weir
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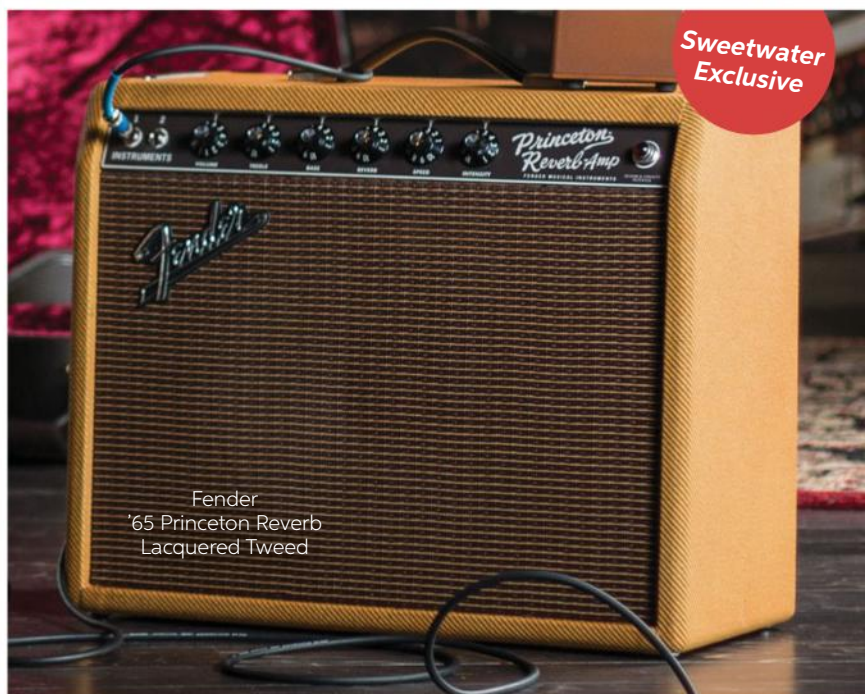
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CLASSES OF '68-'69

When *GP* took its first tentative steps into the publishing world 50 years ago, a few major manufacturers jumped right in to support the new venture. Last month, we celebrated the magazine's original 1967 advertisers. Now, we'd like to spotlight the companies who joined the party in 1968 and 1969: Acoustic Amps, Alfred Publications, Ampeg, Black Diamond Strings, Danelectro, Darco Strings, Electro-Harmonix, Ernie Ball, GHS Strings, Hagstrom Guitars, Hammond Organ (Leslie), Harmony Guitars, Kustom, La Bella Strings, Mel Bay Publications, Messenger Guitars, Ovation, Yamaha.

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Awesome Instrumentals Series

HERE ARE THE WINNING TRACKS FOR THE DEBUT OF **GUITAR PLAYER RECORDS'** GUITAR instrumental series, which is managed and distributed digitally by Mi5 Recordings/Universal. Players of all ages and styles were invited to submit works evoking emotional or meteorological turmoil via notices on GP's web-site and social-networking channels. The series format is to present two guitar stars, along with four female guitarists and four male guitarists, in a celebration of diversity and stunning guitar technique and/or composition.

So, congratulations to the eight players who are joining the legendary **Steve Hunter** (Alice Cooper, Lou Reed, Peter Gabriel) and the thrilling blues guitarist **Ana Popovic** on *Awesome Instrumentals, Volume One: Stormy Weather*. Stay tuned to guitarplayer.com for information on how to submit tracks for *Awesome Instrumentals, Volume Two: Film Noir*. — MICHAEL MOLEND



- "Ice Storm" Steve Hunter
- "Tribe" Ana Popovic
- "Calmaria" Leticia Filizzola
- "Aurora" Jude Gold
- "Flying Trumpets" Janet Robin and the String Revolution
- "Until We Meet Again" Daddo Oreskovich
- "Ambition" Aleks Sever
- "White Out" Jimmy Leslie
- "Tempest" Gretchen Menn
- "Burning of Ideals" LoNero

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MICHAEL MOLEND, Editor In Chief

mmolenda@musicplayer.com



ART THOMPSON, Senior Editor

athompson@musicplayer.com



KEVIN OWENS, Managing Editor

kowens@musicplayer.com



JIMMY LESLIE, Editor, Frets section

j@jimmysleslie.com



PAUL HAGGARD, Art Director

phaggard@musicplayer.com



DANA'S GP50 GEAR GIVEAWAY!

Hi, everyone. It's *Guitar Player's* gear coordinator, Dana, announcing this month's two "Birthday Gifts" in honor of *Guitar Player's* 50th anniversary. The **McCaffrey Reactor Boost Compressor** offers Level and Fusion (compression) controls, as well as a Critical Mass Switch that tailors bass response. Also from McCaffrey, the **Green Vodka** evokes the '90s-era Sovtek Big Muff fuzz and adds some crafty mods. For a chance to get the Reactor or the Green Vodka into your hot little hands, send an email with the subject line "GP50 McCaffrey" to GP Editor-in-Chief mmolenda@nbmedia.com. (One winner per pedal.)

Thanks to the generosity of our manufacturing partners, some lucky and fabulous GP readers will win free gear each month throughout 2017. All giveaway gear has been tested for actual GP reviews, and is "as is." Deadline for entries is February 20, 2017. The two winners will be selected at random. Happy 50th Birthday to everyone in the *Guitar Player* universe! —DANA PARKER



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EXPERT TESTIMONY

Jackie Venson on Emotive Tones

BY MICHAEL MOLENDRA

JACKIE VENSON MAY BE tagged as a “blues artist,” but the Austin-born guitarist/composer doesn’t allow media labels to fence in her stylistic diversity. On her recent self-released album, *Jackie Venson Live at Strange Brew*, she fearlessly presents

a number of styles, feels, and moods—all anchored by a rainbow of Stratocaster sounds.

How did you craft your live-performance sound for the album?

For the album, I used a Vox

AC15—though I have a Fender Blues Junior now that I love so much I want to marry it—a Boss DD-7 Digital Delay and a DS-1 Distortion, and D’Addario .010s, because those strings sound good and they’re inexpensive. I’m a baller on a budget

[laughs]. My favorite guitar is a new 2016 Fender American Elite Stratocaster with S-1 and Passing Lane switches. I can get 11 tones out of it, as opposed to just five.

Do you actually use all those sounds?

Oh, hell yeah! That's why I bought the guitar. I use all the tones all the time, because I don't stick to one style of music. On the live album, it starts off jazzy, then it goes into R&B, rock, Texas two-step blues, reggae, and beyond. I also change tones a lot during parts of songs to match the stories as they develop. It's the same with solos—as my mood, dynamics, and intensity change, so will my tone. So I need these tones to be able to add so much more language and emotion to everything I do.

Many players tend to stick with just a couple of sounds onstage. Why do you seek multiple tones?

The reason is that I get bored [laughs]. I played a gig with my dad [Austin blues icon Andrew Venson] after about two years of playing guitar, and I said, "Dad, I feel like I'm plateauing." And he's like, "You ain't plateauing, you're just not using enough tones. You need to work your Tone knob. Why don't you put it here? Why don't you put it there?" So I went home that same night, and I checked out what different Tone and Volume positions sounded like using all the different pickup choices. My dad is always right—he has blown my mind like 15 times.

But how can you devise a uniquely individual sound when you're always switching up tones?

B.B. King, Buddy Guy, and

George Benson have unmistakable tones, but it's also their note choices and phrasing that makes them so recognizable. You know, a singer can sing a lot of different songs, but an audience can still tell it's them whether they're singing a rock song, a ballad, or an R&B tune. So I'm actually humming to myself as I'm soloing in order to get to a point where people say, "That sounds like her." My singing voice is hopefully unique, so I'm trying to get my guitar to be just as recognizable as when I sing. I don't exactly know what people will latch on to so that they know it's me when I play the guitar, but once I find out what it is, I'm going to chase it.

How do you reconcile your talents as a songwriter and a guitarist? They can be totally different jobs.

I'm kind of a rebel, because I understand that non-players—which is most of the world—want to hear catchy melodies and maybe sing along with the songs. But I'm also a guitarist, and I want to *play* the guitar. I want the freedom to do things that interest and challenge me, and not have to worry about what people want to hear. So, my songs have hook-y choruses, but they might also have a three-minute guitar solo, and the audience is going to have to deal with it. My position is, "Look, I gave you your sing-along melodies, now let me play the guitar!" 🎸

VINYL TREASURES

BY JIM CAMPILONGO



Roy Buchanan

Roy Buchanan



I'VE AVOIDED WRITING about Roy Buchanan's debut album for Polydor, because I thought it might be too obvious, but how could I pass over this classic masterpiece in Vinyl Treasures? Released in 1972—after shelving a project that Roy described as a failed attempt at trendy commercialism—*Roy Buchanan* significantly furthered the potential of the Fender Telecaster. It also influenced guitarists all over the world—most notably, Jeff Beck (who dedicated "Cause We've Ended as Lovers" to Mr. Buchanan) and guitar virtuoso Danny Gatton.

I was first exposed to Roy by the 1971 PBS documentary, *Introducing Roy Buchanan*. Luckily, my father called me into the living room, "Hey Jim! You should hear this guy playing guitar!" At the time, I was 12 years old, and seeing Roy play guitar changed my life. I immediately bought *Roy Buchanan*, and I was knocked out by "Pete's Blues"—most significantly at the 1:50 mark, where Roy leaves the boundaries of the blues and enters a modal Middle Eastern world that builds to an explosive musical climax. Mike Bloomfield's "East-West" instrumental [1966] may have paved the way, but Roy's sheer modal emotionalism on "Pete's Blues" is unequalled to my ears.

Roy played his '53 Telecaster—"Nancy"—through a Fender Vibrolux (that, unless I'm mistaken, was *not* cranked to 10), and,

more than any other Buchanan release, *Roy Buchanan* displays Roy's multi-genre virtuosity. On "Hey Good Lookin'," he defines 6th and 9th chords à la steel-guitar. "The Messiah will Come Again" displays a groundbreaking use of Volume- and Tone-knob swells, and Roy's timeless rendition of "Sweet Dreams" throws in the kitchen sink of Telecaster techniques along with a brilliant melodic sense.

Where do I start? From this album, I learned hybrid picking, behind-the-nut bending, detuning the 6th string for ominous rumblings, Tone-knob swells, Volume-knob swells, steel-guitar bends, steel-guitar chord voicings, and, of course, a lifelong love for the Telecaster. I tried to recreate a visual homage to *Roy Buchanan* with my *Dream Dictionary* release, and I've included a Buchanan tribute on almost every single record I've made. I think my most successful was "Blues for Roy" from *Orange*, where I basically reinterpret "Pete's Blues," and try to employ all the techniques Roy taught me. Hopefully, I achieved the art of storytelling, as well—a talent Roy so poignantly exhibited. I've met many guitarists who have a bulging toolbox of scales and chords, but sidestep digging down deep to get to the "truth." Roy teaches us how to tell a captivating personal story, while combining emotionalism with technique that we *all* can learn from. 🎸



BARRY CLEVELAND

John McLean and Mike Allemana

on the Genius of Charlie Christian

Mike Allemana
(left) and John
McLean perform-
ing at the 2016
Chicago Jazz
Festival.

BY BARRY CLEVELAND

CHARLIE CHRISTIAN'S importance as an electric-guitar pioneer is widely acknowledged and particularly astonishing given the brevity of his professional career—which ended abruptly with his untimely death in 1942 at age 25. Chicago-based jazz guitarists John McLean and Mike Allemana led a tribute to the visionary jazzman at the 2016 Chicago Jazz Festival, after which they shared a few personal observations on Christian's singular contributions to the art form.

Allemana: Perhaps the most impressive thing about Charlie Christian is that when jazz guitarists came up from the late 1940s on, they had Charlie and maybe a couple of other guitarists

to model their approach on. But Charlie had no models. He was making everything up on the fly. The work he did during those two primary years of his career was really transformative. He changed everything. And, not least of all, he brought the guitar out of the rhythm section and into the spotlight as a soloing instrument.

McLean: If you listen seriously to the few recordings of Charlie that are available, you can hear that his main influence was tenor saxophonist Lester Young. So, the characteristics of Lester's playing—like his advanced rhythmic concepts and interesting intervallic relationships to the chord progression—is all there in Charlie's

playing. Also, a lot of people don't realize that Charlie was directly interacting with all of the legends of the bebop era. John Scofield once said that Miles Davis told him that Charlie Parker told *him* that Charlie Christian was as responsible as anybody for the inception of the basic harmonic and rhythmic concepts that we know today as bebop.

Allemana: Another thing people sometimes don't fully appreciate is the rhythmic sophistication and sense of space in his playing. Also, I believe it was Barney Kessel who said that Charlie played the best bridges. If you notice, his solos were constructed with a lot of conscious effort—paying close

attention to melodic phrasing and how he got around the harmony—but on the bridges, he would stretch out a lot more. I think a lot of cats miss the way he played on bridges.

McLean: They were making 78s, so you just played the riff, and then everybody got one chorus. Among the few recordings of Charlie are session outtakes where you get to hear them run down multiple takes. When you listen to a lot of consecutive versions of the same tune, even very fine musicians like Georgie Auld play the same thing every time. It's only Charlie and Benny Goodman that you can feel pushing things on every single take. They're like, "Come on. Bring it!" 

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There's More to Life Than Sustain!

BY CRAIG ANDERTON

GUITARS ARE NATURALLY PERCUSSIVE—pluck a string, and a quick transient decays rapidly. Although we often try to violate the laws of physics with compression, feedback, limiting, distortion, E-Bows, and other techniques that increase sustain, there's a parallel universe where the goal is making the guitar *more* percussive. Of course, muting strings is very percussive, but we can take this concept much further with signal processors.

Expanders. These are the opposite of compressors (which above a certain threshold, produce less output for an equivalent input increase). With expanders, signals *below* a threshold produce less output for a given input *decrease*. For example, if the input is below the threshold, and it drops 10dB, with 1:2 expansion, the output will drop 20dB. With 1:4 expansion, it will drop 40dB. This can make pick and note attacks super-prominent, while hastening decays. Expansion can help guitars avoid conflicts with drums that have a long ring, but with a fairly high threshold, they can provide a super-percussive effect. This also affects downstream processors, such as distortion (where the peaks distort much more than the rest of the signal) and delay, where you'll get a quick "hit," but not much else. A corollary technique is using expansion not on your main-guitar signal, but on a bus that your guitar feeds. With a reverb bus, for example,



Chopping a guitar's phrases in a DAW to lock in with a synth bass sound.

you'll hear a quick ambient spike, which then gets out of the way so that the reverb doesn't step on other instruments.

Noise Gates. These are like extreme expanders. Below a threshold, the guitar sound mutes completely (although noise gates usually allow for less drastic options). This can produce an extremely percussive sound, but you'll need to pick with predictable force, so that the signals you want to hear are above the threshold, and the signals you want to mute are below it. You can also sidechain a noise gate to the guitar's audio on and off using another instrument as a trigger. (I covered this option in a column a few years ago—search for "Hyper-Rhythm Guitar" at guitarplayer.com.)

Cutting. This involves cutting guitar parts recorded on hard disk, so it's not suitable for live performance. For example, suppose you

want the guitar to lock perfectly to a synth-bass part (something I often need for EDM). MIDI notes trigger the bass part, so you can line up the MIDI track with the guitar's audio track, and then chop the guitar part into slices that last exactly as long as the MIDI notes (see the example). You'll probably need short fades (around 3 to 7 milliseconds) on the chopped guitar clips to avoid clicks at the beginning and end, but most DAWs let you apply mass fades to groups of selected clips.

DAW Tremolo. Some of the tremolo effects in DAWs provide pulse and sawtooth waveforms, in addition to the traditional sine or triangle waves. These not only impart a percussive quality, but often can sync to the host program tempo for rhythmic effects. Chopping up a power chord with percussive tremolo can be very cool. 🇺🇸

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PRO'S REPLY



Grady Martin

August 1969

One of GP's fab content innovations was its "Pro's Reply" columns that brought readers into the worlds of professional sessions and live performances, and offered insights from guitar stars. We're celebrating that grand idea by republishing some of the most interesting bits from the "Pro's Reply" archive. —MM

PRO'S REPLY



Grady Martin

As the musician most in demand for recording in Nashville you are called upon to create original licks for many different artists. How do you go about developing an original idea and how do you tailor it to a particular artist?

A. In my case it's just sort of a free-play thing, kind of like a jam, with a certain amount of restriction. It depends on the artist and the material they're doing.

Q. Does the artist say "that's the way I want it" or is this left up to you?

A. It's mostly left up to me. My bad judgment maybe.

Q. How do you know when you have just the right fills for a particular artist?

A. Well, you don't really know, you just play free and if it feels good, you hope that it comes off.

Q. In the event that four or five "takes" are necessary would you be apt to use the same licks on each? In other words, would you try to repeat what you had come up with first if you thought that it was good material?

A. Not always. You just try different things. If you get something going that everyone likes you naturally try to hang onto the same idea. Whether you play it exactly note for note would be one thing. You just try to get close.

Q. How many sessions do you play each week?

A. Average is probably two a day. Five days a week.

Q. Do some sessions pay better than others?

A. No. The pay scale is the same on all of the sessions.

SESSION FILE

Jason Becker, Part One

BY STEVE HUNTER

I FEEL COMPELLED TO WRITE

A few words about one of my very best friends, Jason Becker. Most of you know who he is, and know his story [We put Becker on our cover for the July 2012 issue]. Bob Ezrin had been slated to produce David Lee Roth's 1991 album, *A Little Ain't Enough*. For whatever reason, that didn't work out, but before Ezrin left the project, he asked me if I'd be interested in teaching this new shredder guy some stuff about blues. The shredder was, of course, Jason, and he called a couple of days later to set up a time for his first lesson.

Before the lesson date, Jason sent over a couple of CDs of his band Cacophony with his friend Marty Friedman. I gave the CDs a listen, and I was not impressed. I was pretty fed up with shredding by that time, so I probably wasn't listening with an open mind. All I could think was, "What the hell is going to happen at the lesson?" I was pretty apprehensive. Most of the shredders I had met were pretty arrogant, and I didn't really have time for that.

When Jason arrived, I opened my door, and there stood a tall, skinny



PAUL HAGGARD

guy with a lot of hair and a guitar. I was living in a pretty small apartment in Hollywood then, so there was no place to hide—except maybe the bathroom. So I figured, "Let's get to it."

When he told me he was just 20 years old, I was a little impressed, as it was hard to believe he could play like that at 20. We started talking about the blues, and he said Stevie Ray Vaughan was his favorite player. That was music to my ears. We both began to relax, because we had found some common ground. I put on Albert King's 1969 release, *Years Gone By*—not his best tone, perhaps, but some really beautiful playing. I told Jason, "This is where Stevie Ray got a lot of his blues." Jason loved it, and from that

moment on, I knew we were going to get along just fine.

We had several lessons, and it was very clear that not only was Jason an incredible and remarkable talent, but also that we were becoming fast friends. Later on, as Jason entered my apartment, I noticed he was limping. I jokingly asked if he had stubbed his toe. He said, "No. I don't know why it's doing that." That sent a chill up my spine. He said he had an appointment with a doctor to find out what was up. After many doctors and many tests, Jason was diagnosed with ALS. ■



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RIFFS

FAIR PLAY



Elizabeth Cotten

“FREIGHT TRAIN”—ONE OF OUR BEST- loved folk songs—came from one of the least-credited folk artists of all time: Elizabeth Cotten. As a guitarist, she was handicapped, since, as a left-hander, she had to teach herself. Her chances of achieving early prominence as a performer were negated by her sex, color, and religion. Married and a mother at an early age—and admonished by church deacons for playing music that “served the devil”—Libba often worked the cleaning, cooking, washing, and scrubbing jobs to which black women turned for support. It took years of legal negotiations before Mrs. Cotten, now 82, finally gained control of the rights to the song she wrote as an adolescent while chopping wood with her brother a half mile from the Chapel Hill, North Carolina, railroad tracks.

Did you always play left handed?

Yes. I never could play no other way. They’d tell me to turn my strings, and I turned the strings on my guitar around twice, but I couldn’t play it. My brother said, “Change your strings, or turn your guitar the other way to play it. I can’t show you nothing if you’re playing upside down.” But I just wanted to play so bad, so I began to pick it out one string at a time until I got it.

When did you get your own guitar?

I’ll tell you what I did. Without my brother knowing it, I asked people to let me work for them. One lady said, “A little girl like you looking for work? What could you do?”

I wanted the job so bad. I said, “Miss, I can sweep the kitchen, I can help you with your vegetables, I can bring in your wood, and I can help with your children.” Well, maybe she felt sorry for me, or maybe she thought I could amuse her children if I couldn’t do anything else. I worked for her for one dollar a month. Then, I asked my mother if I could buy a guitar. So my mother carried me down to a guitar shop on Main Street, and she told the man, “My little girl wants a guitar.” And he says to her, “Aunt Lou, I tell you what I’ll do. Come bring your little girl back tomorrow night, and I’ll have a guitar that’s just right for her.” I had to wait a whole day! My mother carried me there the next night, and there was the guitar on the counter. Oh, I was the happiest little soul! The man says, “Aunt Lou, if the little girl wants that guitar so bad, she may have it for \$3.75.” So she bought the guitar. And the name of the guitar was “Stella.”

What kind of guitar do you have now?

A used Martin [an 000-18, serial #114993].

Do you play in open tunings?

I play Vestapol [D, A, D, F#, A, D], and I play Spanish [D, G, D, G, B, D]. Those are about the only two.

Do you use fingerpicks?

No. It makes the music too loud. I use my fingers, because I think it’s softer. You get more melody with soft playing. You get in it what you’re putting in it.

—EXCERPTED FROM JON MONDAY’S PROFILE IN THE MARCH 1975 ISSUE. ▶





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FEATURES

Tone Poet

MIKE KENEALLY ELEVATES THE CONCEPT ALBUM

BY JUDE GOLD

MIKE KENEALLY WAS JUST 25 YEARS OLD WHEN HE PICKED UP THE PHONE and made what may ultimately stand as the boldest cold call in prog-rock history.

"In an act of insane optimism," says Keneally, "I called Frank Zappa's office and left a message saying, 'I don't know if Frank is looking for anyone, but I play guitar and keyboards and I sing. I have all of Frank's records, and I know all of his stuff.'"

To Keneally's surprise, Zappa returned his call the very next day.

"You can play all of my songs? I don't believe you. Get your ass up here and prove it."

That conversation was nearly 30 years ago, and, after a quick audition, Zappa hired Keneally on the spot. But while Keneally's tenure with Zappa was short lived—about a year—his solo career has flourished. Since his days as Zappa's "stunt guitarist," Keneally's mind-boggling versatility on fretboards and keyboards has also gotten him high-level sideman work with Steve Vai, Dethklok (featuring Brendon Small), and, most consistently, Joe Satriani.

Yet, it only takes one listen to Keneally's latest solo album—a genre-morphing double-disc prog opera of sorts called *Scambot 2/Inkling* [Exowax]—to recognize that he still carries a torch for Zappa's unpredictable chord changes, adventurous grooves, radical melodies, quirky lyrics, and extended guitar improvisations.

I caught up with Keneally at Swinghouse Studios in Los Angeles, where the guitarist was having a ball plugging his trusty old Fender Stratocaster—a green '88 Eric Clapton Signature model carrying serial #8, strung with Dean Markley strings, and fitted with EMG SA active single-coils—into some shiny new Pigtronix pedals.

What was it that first got you into music?

It was hearing The Beatles on the radio. It was the mid '60s, and I was five or six years old. My 16-year-old sister was engulfed in full-on Beatlemania, so she had all the records and all the posters. I got into The Beatles through her. But with the releases of *Revolver* and *Sgt. Pepper's*, they got too weird for her, and she got off the train. So I inherited all of her records, and I would listen to them in the basement.





I became obsessed. They really infected my brain and my soul. One Beatles guitar moment I've always loved is "And Your Bird Can Sing." It's like Bach or something—so logical, so ingenious, and so pretty. When you hear it with Beatle guitar tones, and the unbelievable sound of John Lennon's voice, it's crazy stuff. It has two guitar parts, but I like to combine them and play them as one. [To hear Keneally play this and other examples from this interview, stream Episode 36 of GP's No Guitar Is Safe podcast.]

When did your musical interests finally expand beyond The Beatles?

That happened when I moved to San Diego in 1970, and discovered FM radio—which was very experimental and freeform at the time. That introduced me to some crazy sh*t. Back then, deejays would put on entire album sides while they went outside to get high. So I'd be sitting there at age eight, listening to full sides of *Islands* by King Crimson, *Every Good Boy Deserves*

Favour by the Moody Blues, and *Tarkus* by Emerson, Lake & Palmer. I was already playing electric organ by that point, so the 5/4 "Tarkus" riff really amazed me. I didn't know you could do that on organ! That distorted Hammond tone made it sound almost like heavy metal. In fact, that riff sounds badass on guitar. I was obsessed with learning this stuff. For example, when I was 16—the age when you're supposed to go out and get in trouble on the streets—I spent the summer at home learning every Gentle Giant guitar part, figuring out how those parts fit into the architecture of that crazy music.

Back when I was nine, though, a boy across the street said, "You're a weird kid, and I think I have some music you can relate to." He played "Help, I'm a Rock" from *Freak Out!* by Frank Zappa. I became obsessed with Zappa at that point.

It's astonishing to me that guys like you, Dweezil Zappa, and Jamie Kime can

memorize a full set of Zappa melodies. That's an insane amount of notes.

It's all how you're wired. The thing that's interesting to me about a Zappa tune such as "The Black Page" is that while it is very strange, once you've got it in your fingers and programmed into muscle memory, you can't mistake it for anything else. Ironically, a simple blues song with a variation on the turnaround is sometimes harder for me to memorize than a Zappa tune. Every Zappa composition just feels like its own little flower. Once it's absorbed, it never goes away.

One amazing thing about your new record is that you create a different musical world for each song. For example, the very first tune is the ten-minute rock odyssey, "In the Trees."

Well, as you can tell from the included booklet—which is full of lyrics, elaborate artwork, and drawings of all the characters—the record has a pretty elaborate

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storyline, so I thought it worked really well to start with the densest, craziest, most action-packed song. But that song is the big bang that sets the album in motion. Things get more spacious from there, and the arrangements get less layered and dense. In fact, when I release *Scambot 3* in a couple of years, it will probably be even less dense. It will probably sound like a Brian Eno record [laughs].

Meanwhile, your album's other disc, *Inkling*, has a super-short piece, "Mystery Song."

That song is just four seconds long! *Inkling* is this additional 48 minutes of music that was in consideration for *Scambot 2*, but I thought it stood alone as a separate album.

What was your go-to gear setup for the sessions?

It was all over the map. The Rivera Quiana was my main guitar amp, but a few plug-ins were used, as well. For instance, one of my favorite tones on the album is

on the song "Roll," which is a Gibson SG run through both the Quiana and Tech 21's SansAmp plug-in.

How are you liking the Pigtronix pedals on your board?

Pigtronix hooked me up with some cool stuff like the Infinity Looper—which is insanely limitless in what it can accomplish. I'm also digging their Echolution 2 Ultra Pro. With just that pedal, you can get many interesting effects that go beyond the realm of mere delay. It's basically a synthesizer and eight pedals in one. I'm really a child when it comes to this stuff. My adventurousness tends to be with the music itself, so when it comes to gear, I tend to find things that work for me, and then I use them forever until they crumble in my hands. I still have an iPhone 5.

When did you first start gigging?

Back in high school, I wasn't into gigging as much I was into recording. My older brother Marty and I were just fascinated by

the possibilities of recording. We set up a 4-track reel-to-reel tape recorder in the living room, and we would try to replicate songs we loved by Jeff Beck, Santana, Neil Young, E.L.P., Yes, Genesis, Return to Forever, and Crosby, Stills & Nash. We learned to mix and bounce tracks, and we got so advanced at programming the Oberheim DMX drum machine that when a rep from Oberheim heard our drum programs, he said, "That's the most advanced drum programming I've ever heard." We were obsessed. Recording in the living room for years—that was our version of a garage band.

Where did you go from there?

I had a father who was unbelievably supportive. When I was nearing the end of high school, I had no clear idea of what I wanted to do, other than make music. So I said, "Dad, I guess I've got to figure things out. Am I going to school, or am I getting a job?" His immediate response was, "Your job is to write songs." 🇺🇸



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CELESTION



Funk-Jazz in the Fast Lane

ALEKS SEVER LAYS IT DOWN ON *EXTRAVAGANT*

BY ART THOMPSON

IT ONLY TAKES A FEW SECONDS OF LISTENING to Aleks Sever to recognize the fire and soul that she brings to her music. Sever's knack for catchy melodies coupled with her impressive guitar chops is a recipe for success in the instrumental arena, and the guitarist's fearless approach, inventiveness, and spirit of adventure make her latest album, *Extravagant*, a gem. "I always try to find something new that excites me or is some kind of breakthrough when I write," says Sever. "For inspiration I listened to a lot of jazz, funk, and hip-hop. Miles Davis' *Kind of Blue* and *Bitches Brew* got played almost every day for a long time."

Along with Miles, Sever cites John Coltrane, Maceo Parker, Prince, and James Brown as early influences. "I was really captivated by the grooves and the incredible harmonic depth and sense of freedom from their horn players. I started developing kind of a hybrid rhythm style, combining some of the chord shapes and more interesting melodic elements of the jazz approach with the raw groove of funk, which has always been my first love. More recently I started listening to a lot of rap and hip-hop, and the phrasing, use of space, and the total intensity is very inspiring. I have a lot of respect for rap artists, and the skill it takes to create a story with a groove."

Can you give us some insights into your songwriting process?

The rhythm part is the basic floor for me that determines the style, feel, and the overall direction and emotion of the song. The stronger and more defined the basic rhythm part is, the easier it is for me to build up melodies and solos later in the process. I usually start by playing a lot of different ideas, with no restrictions until something sparks an idea. It can be a single lick, or a little piece of a groove idea that gives me the concept for the whole song.

I can visualize the whole thing in my head. Then I start to organize it by recording a drum loop and creating a rough structure or tempo map, so I have an idea where the sections will be. I start by reacting to the loop as if it were a real drummer to get a "live" feel to the part by playing around the backbeat, upbeats, and exploring the spaces. I play in different tempos and keys, and make adjustments to the drum feel until I'm satisfied that it's as good as I can get it. After that, I add melodies and solos. I try to be aware of balance—when to obsess and when to let go and come back to it later.

What is essential to creating instrumental music that will catch the attention of the listeners you want to reach?

I first try to make music that excites me, and I have to trust that if it excites me, it will have the same effect on other people. The emotion is the most important part for me. There has to be a story or feeling behind each song. Songs with words are easier, because the intent is clear. Instrumental music is a little harder, because there are no words or vocals to catch people's attention, so I really try to focus on strong melodies. It can be aggressive, playful, melancholy, sexy, etc., but it has to be emotional. It can't be only clever or tricky or too complicated just to be impressive. The groove, of course, also has to be undeniable. I spend a lot of time on that part, working on the drum feel and finding the perfect tempo. I try to let the inspiration flow through me, and hopefully that inspiration will capture a listener's attention.

"Red Moon" caught my ear as having that sense of harmonic freedom you hear in some of Miles Davis' finest moments.

That song was absolutely inspired by *Bitches Brew*. That record was so far ahead of anything else during that period in music that it still stands as a monument to Miles' genius. Nobody was playing

those kinds of grooves in jazz, or playing with such ferocious intensity. You can hear it in the playing of the other musicians on the record. It seems as if it lifted them up way past their abilities and created a new genre of music that's still alive today. That's why I asked Randy Brecker to play on "Red Moon." I wanted to try to capture that wild spirit that Miles had on that album, and Randy has the same kind of all-in adventurous spirit in his playing.

I hear some Jeff Beck in your playing by how you infuse fast runs with sly bends, all the while staying beautifully in tune.

The *Guitar Shop* record blew me away. Jeff stretches the limits. He does things that nobody else does, and makes it all sound effortless. The way he incorporates subtle whammy bar effects into his runs is totally awesome. I don't use a lot of whammy bar, but I try to get the same kind of effects by using a lot of subtle bends and quick little vibrato flourishes in my solos and melodies.

I never really thought about his influence on my playing, but I'm sure it's there. Jeff is so strong a player that probably every guitarist born in the last 50 years has been influenced by him in some way.

Your playing is so in the pocket on funky songs like "Crazy," "Hi-Lites," and "V.I.P." I hear Prince there, but what other guitarists have shaped your approach to funk?

James Brown's guitarists were a huge influence. When I first heard that music, I knew that's how I wanted to play. Maceo Parker's guitarists were actually the people that created that style. Maceo's band the Kingsmen became James Brown's band, and I listened to them a lot. Prince was also a big influence. I remember the first time I heard "Kiss" it blew me away. Prince was an incredible rhythm guitarist and one of his live performances was actually the inspiration for my song "Hi-Lites." I remember watching a TV performance of his and the band was just fantastic. The song was

really fast, and the horn players were doing steps while playing these incredibly complicated parts, and all of it seemed effortless. It inspired me to write a song with that kind of energy.

There are a lot of heavy hitters on this recording. Did you consciously choose players who shared your vision for this album?

I feel very lucky to have these musicians on this record. John Blackwell [drums] lifted the music up to another level from the first note. Josh Dunham also brought a totally natural feel to the record. I'm really particular about bass parts because they have to complement the rhythm guitar, and Josh knew instinctively what to do right away. Keyboardist Bobby Sparks was awesome! He's so creative, and he really leaned into this project. He was on the road at that time, and he would send me these incredible suggestions for parts by email. He had so many ideas and it was great—it made everything exciting. If you have the right

"Man, i never thought a guitar pick would make me say WOW but i gotta say when i heard them, i had to get a hold of you and thank you for creating these picks. They really affect my tone in a positive way." Jonathan Fifty Sticks

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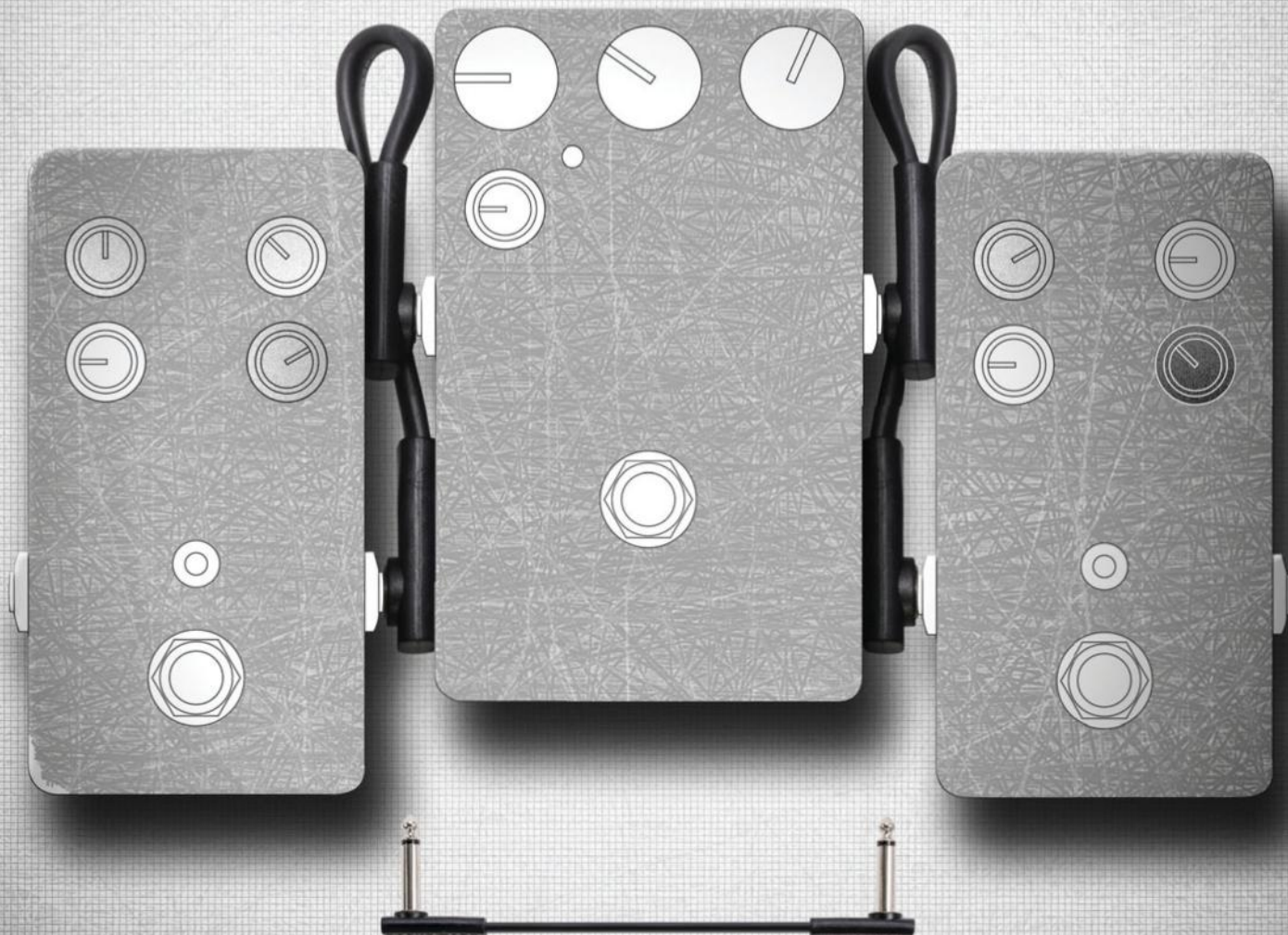
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musicians for your music there isn't much to talk about; you can just play and enjoy, and make sure not to edit too much later on. I wanted this record to sound a little wild but very intense, and these musicians just killed it.

Were the song arrangements pretty locked down before you went into the studio?

I have a pretty good idea of the songs before I go in the studio, and the arrangements are usually planned out in advance. I like to feel prepared. I find that it's good to be organized and have a clear vision; it saves a lot of time and everything goes more smoothly. But at the same time I do try to be open and let musicians be creative. Sometimes things happen in the moment that you didn't plan, and you don't want to block something that might turn out to be magical.

Were the tracks cut live in the studio, or did you start with basic rhythm tracks

and then overdub the other parts?

I don't really have a preference, as I think you can get a good result either way, but for *Extravagant*, all the musicians lived in different states so we had to overdub. Everybody seemed to connect with the music right away, and they brought so much to it that it didn't really feel like we were overdubbing. Most of them had played together before, so it was a natural process. Everything just came together without having to give a lot of direction. The project just started growing and developing on its own, because the players really seemed to enjoy it.

How do craft your solos? Do you work them out in advance or do you rely on inspiration of the moment?

It's actually a process that involves both modes. I start by reacting from instinct, with no roadmap or planning. I give myself permission in the first few passes to sound

really bad and to make a lot of mistakes, because there's usually a fragment or phrase, or even a mistake somewhere, that shows me how to approach the solo. Then I come back and fill in the blanks by creating a rough structure for the solo—like where to play sparse, where to get more active, where to create a climax, etc.

What guitars and amps did you bring for the sessions?

I like Fender Telecasters. They're comfortable to play, I love the way they sound and feel, and it's the perfect shape for me. The body design gives my forearm a lot of support, which allows my hand and shoulders to relax. Being relaxed and comfortable gives me more confidence. I use an American Standard Tele, a Deluxe Tele, two Blacktops, and I just recently got the Nashville model with the middle pickup. I use either a Fender Super Sonic or Deluxe amp. Both are great for clean sounds because they have

a lot of snap to the attack. The overdrive comes from a DigiTech RP-500 multi-effects pedal—I don't use the channel switching on the Super Sonic—but both amps react really well to the RP-500 overdrive, which always has a warm and musical sound.

What other effects did you use?

I used a TC Electronic Flashback delay and Hall of Fame reverb, and a Boss DD-7 digital delay and a PS-6 pitch shifter. I experimented a lot with pitch change and delay effects and I'm really happy with how it came out. On the song "Glamour Baby" I used a pedal called the Philosopher's Tone from Pigtronix, which is a compressor type effect. It's a pretty extreme type of compression. It boosts the output and sustains forever. It turned out to be a good alternative to an overdrive for melody sounds.

Can you talk about your preferences in picks and strings, and are there particular ways that you like your guitars to be set up?

I use Dunlop nylon 1 mil picks and .009 D'Addario strings, which in my opinion are the best strings on the planet. I've tried other brands, including some very expensive ones, but nothing feels as soft, or stays in tune like D'Addario. They also almost never break. I like my guitars set up with the action a little higher than a lot of players. It sounds better in my opinion, and I can get under the strings easier when bending. There are some tricks that my tech does when he adjusts the saddle height to give me a soft feel with high action.

What kinds of things do you work on when practicing?

I start with a warm-up series of scales and arpeggios. I have my basic routine, but I'm always adding or changing up scales and styles to try and stretch my limits. Laziness can sometimes be the biggest challenge. Learning to be a better player means making yourself uncomfortable on purpose. Intense practice is difficult and exhausting, and I don't always have the energy, but I try and avoid repeating myself. My goal is to try to improve some aspect of my playing every time I pick up the instrument.

I practice slowly to build hand strength. Slow legato practice is the key to playing fast for me. It builds muscle memory and I feel stronger and more in control. I also map out phrases and work on the fingering and dynamics until I feel comfortable. Rhythm practice

and transitions between chords use a different set of muscles, and it actually improves my single-line solo playing. It strengthens and trains the hands and forearm. I also try to think ahead and visualize the fretboard, and work on anticipating a particular chord pattern or single-line run.

What advice would you have for young

guitarists who want to become pro players?

Be committed and strive to be the best you can be. It seems that when you're really focused on the music and not distracted and impatient, opportunities show up without looking for them. Also, surround yourself with people who understand and support your path. It makes everything possible. 



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Old Soul

20-YEAR-OLD MARCUS KING DAZZLES WITH JAZZ-INFUSED SOUTHERN ROCK AND BLUES

BY JIMMY LESLIE

MARCUS KING'S FATHER, MARVIN KING, IS a blues guitarist, as was his father before him, and that helps explain how the phenomenal 20-year-old sounds as if he has been playing, singing, and writing for ages.

The Marcus King Band [Fantasy/Concord] features meaningful contributions from a host of veterans from the Allman Brothers family of bands, including Derek Trucks, bassist Todd Smallie, keyboardist Kofi Burbridge, and album producer Warren Haynes. King—who spent two years diligently studying jazz in his hometown at the Fine Arts Center of Greenville, South Carolina—thrives on the additional experience, as does his crack band of millennial-aged players.

King has his own thing, yet analogies to the Allman Brothers Band abound, with his vocals closest to Haynes, his guitar style like a jazzed up Dickey Betts, and a tone somewhere between Duane Allman and Derek Trucks. King is *that* good. He's a natural who has been nurtured, and if *The Marcus King Band* is any indication, we're all in for one hell of a fun ride.

Who was the player that shook your world as a youngster, and what gave you the drive to go so far so fast?

My father and grandfather were big influences when I started playing, and Duane Allman was the first guitar player that figuratively took me up and shook me. The intensity of the whole Allman Brothers Band inspired me to drive further as a musician. From a very young age, I tried to gain influence from any channel I could. I'd listen to Etta James' vocals, Jimmy Smith's organ playing, or John Coltrane's sax, and try to apply what I heard to guitar.

What's your story from a tonal point of view?

I've always thought simplicity is key. I mostly play through a Fender Super Reverb with an Ibanez TS9 Tube Screamer that I mainly use as a master volume. I have the Screamer's Drive knob at about 11 o'clock, Tone at noon, and the Volume knob is at about 7 o'clock. It's just barely enough to feed signal to the amplifier—which is cranked up for maximum natural overdrive. For bigger venues, I'll change over to a 100-watt plexi clone made in Nashville at the Amp Shop, which has a master volume on the back. The only effect I use much is a Dunlop CryBaby wah. My simple stance started at age seven or eight, when I started playing around with all sorts of pedals through my grandfather's Super. I'd ask, "What do you think about this tone, Papa?" He would reply, "If mine sounded like that, I'd take it to get it fixed [*laughs*]."

What's your guitar story?

I had been mostly playing a brown SG from the early '70s that I found at a Christian bookstore when I was 11 years old. It has Grover tuners and mini humbuckers. But for the past couple of years, I've been playing what was my grandfather's guitar. It's a '62 Gibson ES-345. Once I switched to that hollowbody, man, I couldn't turn back. I used the SG on a couple tunes for the record, but, for the most part, it was the 345.

How did you track *The Marcus King Band*?

We were all isolated, but playing together at the same time. That's what was hip about Carriage House Studios. My amps were the only ones in the live cutting room. I had a Fender Super, an old Supro 1x12 combo, and a Marshall plexi with a 4x12 cabinet. There were two mics close up on each cabinet. I ran through all three of them at the same time, and then we'd pick and choose what sounded best for each song section during mixing. If I played





IAN PAWN

my SG on a take that sounded a little thin during playback, we'd cut it again with the 345—which I call "Big Red."

Did you play a resonator on "The Man

You Didn't Know"?

Yes. I played a National Resonator for the rhythm, and then I did the solo using an early '60s Silvertone lap-steel through

Warren's old Gibson amp.

Do you ever play slide on your guitars?

I have been lately—in standard tuning.

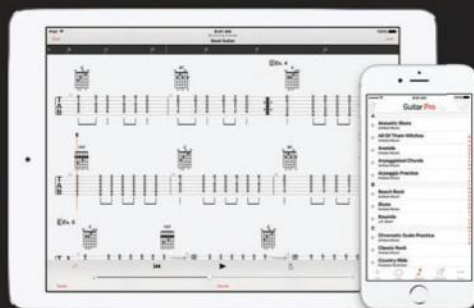


Warren Haynes on Marcus King

"Marcus King is the first young guitar player I've heard since Derek Trucks who plays with such soul and emotional maturity. He blends so many influences together, but it all comes out in his own voice, and that's the hardest thing to accomplish as a musician. He has the chops to play jazz-influenced stuff, but he also has that ability to portray a melodic picture, and sound like he's singing through his instrument. I love that he doesn't go for an overblown tone. He has studied a broad range of styles and eras, and his love of it all comes through in a very unpretentious way. He looks at music through the proper lens.

"We had a blast making the record. I love 'Self Hatred' when he's playing alongside Derek Trucks—which is a brave feat. But I think my favorite solo is the one he takes on 'Thespian Espionage.' Tracking solos live with the band like that takes a lot of balls for a newcomer. Most were keepers. I've never done all this with a young player before, but it seemed right in this case because he's the whole package. The sky is the limit for someone who can sing like that, play like that, and write great songs." —JL

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I'm enjoying the hell out of it, and I wonder why I haven't been doing it longer. I guess I wanted to identify myself differently because of the comparisons already being made about my music. But that's just a silly mentality. I want to play some f**king slide [laughs]!

Do you adjust the action?

I don't. My slide is a little green medicine bottle—a lot like a Coricidin bottle—that a friend of mine dug up when he was excavating some old real estate. I use it on the ring finger. It's pretty short—which is cool, because I always liked Derek's approach where he puts it high enough on his finger so that he can still bend it.

"Radio Soldier" features an intricately picked rhythm figure. Can you explain your picking technique?

I played the riff at the top with a pick. I use Dunlop Jazz III picks, because I can tuck them away in my index finger pretty easily, and then use all of my other digits

for fingerpicking—which I used a little bit on the verses.

Can you talk about some of the moves you used to spice up the solo on that song?

I drew on some Hendrix inspiration for the solo on "Radio Soldier," because he could take the instrument and turn it into the sound of a battlefield. I played my SG on that song, and I actually used a Dunlop Jimi Hendrix Fuzz Face when I overdubbed the solo, because it was sounding too safe. I wanted something angrier to suit the lyrics. Musically, I threw in some Dorian stuff to spice up those minor pentatonics, and I love to use passing tones on a song that doesn't seem to want them. I'll do anything I can to get around the tonic. The song is in the key of B, but I put some "uncouth" B's in there.

The jazziest number on the album is "Thespian Espionage."

I wrote that at the Fine Arts Center

when we were doing our class transcription project for the year. Ours was Jimmy Herring's "Twelve Keys" from *Subject to Change Without Notice*, but the cats on melody duty flaked out, so the teacher let me do an original tune for the recital. I rediscovered the chord sheet for "Thespian Espionage" a couple of years later, and now it's back in circulation with the band.

Warren Haynes lays down some nasty slide playing on "Virginia." Was that intimidating?

Yeah. And that's why I'm glad it was the last live-band track we cut. I sang while he played. By that point, we'd been hanging out for two years, and he'd broken through my bashful barrier. He's patient as a producer, and specific, as well. Some producers say things like, "Try one with a little more ass on it." What does that mean? Warren says things like, "Over that *Ebmaj7*—try this." His knowledge of each song made working with him easy. ■

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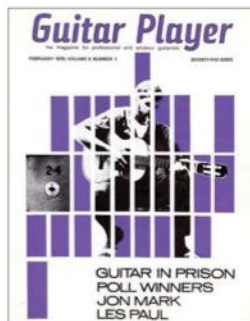
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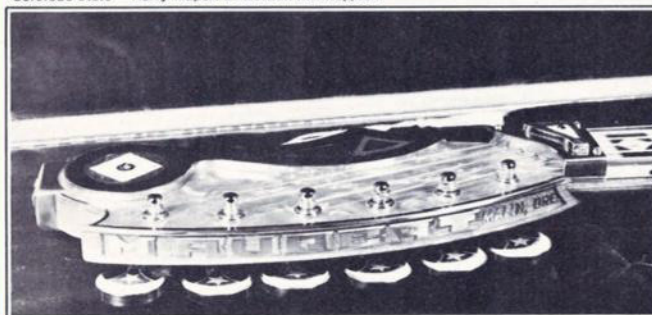
Weird Scenes Inside the *GP* Archives

I DOUBT THAT SO EARLY IN *GP*'S GROWTH WE HAD exhausted all of the guitar stars available to talk about, so I can only surmise this writer was inspired by Johnny

Cash's 1969 live album, *At San Quentin*, for this February 1970 article on the guitar programs at two prisons. I've excerpted the story here so that you can see



Colorado State — Harry Rupert at work in his shop/cell.



San Quentin — The Hard Traveler



the original opening layout — apologies for leaving out the section on San Quentin — and, for the most part, the uncredited author avoids romanticizing (or demonizing) the prisoners. He even ends the piece with a subtle warning for potential gangsters:

“Should the reader fancy that prison life for a musician is not too bad, be assured that it’s a mighty good feeling at the end of the day to walk through those steel gates with thoughts of home.”

—MICHAEL MOLENA

The guitar is doing time in almost every state and federal prison in the country. For an inside look at what’s going on musically behind the walls, Guitar Player visited the Colorado State Penitentiary at Canon City and the California State Prison at San Quentin. Both institutions have music programs and while their approach is different, the results are the same: Talented and dedicated inmates grateful for the chance to express themselves in a way they understand.

Colorado State Prison

Bill White heads up the music program and is himself a fine guitarist and electric bass player. His job at the prison is mainly to supervise and organize, so he gets his musical kicks playing weekend jobs in and around Canon City. While escorting us through the maze of electronically-operated steel gates, Bill explained one reason why the guitar is so popular here. “According to this prison’s regulations the only instrument allowed in the cells is an unamplified guitar.”

With the seemingly endless clanging of steel behind us, we stepped out into a beautifully landscaped yard so well cared for, the outsider is suddenly aware of the enormous available work force. Everywhere inmates were trimming, cultivating, cleaning, and painting. They go about their work quietly and effectively.

As we entered the auditorium the feeling of confinement and restriction melted into an atmosphere like any ordinary afternoon dance band rehearsal would create. The Elites were on stage doing a big band arrangement of “Masquerade.” Group leader Roy Canard plays electric bass and does most of the vocals as well as writing the arrangements. The group, consisting of trombone, sax, bass, guitar, piano and drums, rehearses at least four mornings each week. Roy’s arrangements have the big band sound and result from material he has heard and remembered over the years. His formal education was with the Berklee School of Music of which part was on campus and part through correspondence.

While the Elites rehearsed, we were able to talk with several inmates who are active in the music program.

Bob Mora plays rhythm guitar and is a vocalist with the big band as well as the jazz group and two small combos. There are 11 groups in the program with the big band, composed of 21 pieces, heading the list.

We asked Bob how an inmate qualifies for the music program. “They have to be able to read. They can’t fake their way; they have to know something since there is no one here to teach them.

“The music program has been a tremendous help to me. Music makes you use your mind and makes doing time a lot easier. A person doing a 14 to 23 has to have a goal to look forward to. When I leave here my main goal is to play in a studio band.”

When asked how much time he spends studying the guitar, Bob replied, “All my time up until lights are out at 10:00 p.m. As soon as I hit the cell I’m in my books and when I get up in the morning it’s the first thing I do after I wash up. I have quite a collection of music . . . standards and jazz. I run through them all and sing quite a bit.”

Bob played professionally on the outside but doesn’t feel his music had anything to do with his misfortune with the law.

“I’m here on a narcotic conviction . . . sales. I don’t use any hard narcotics, I smoke weed. As far as playing on hard narcotics, I can’t. I can’t feel with it, play behind it, or sing behind it. You whisper, more or less, when you’re singing. I don’t use liquor either.”

Unfortunately the narcotics traffic can’t be stopped even in prison. As Bob put it, “If you want it, it’s here.”

Harry Rupert, a guitar maker (luthier) of 35 years experience, is an ingenious master craftsman. His craftsmanship is seen in the unbelievably intricate and ornate hand work that goes into every guitar, banjo or case he makes. His ingenuity is evidenced by the fact he has managed to squeeze his tools (including a lathe) and materials into a 6’ x 8’ cell with space left for his bunk!

During the four years Rupert has been at Colorado State he has made and sold 24 guitars and banjos. They range in price from \$400 to \$2,000 and have been appraised for as much as \$6,500 by Milton G. Wolf of Chicago. The exquisitely-carved and engraved solid-body instrument so impressed Wolfe he traveled all the way to Canon City to meet Rupert.

Harry and his apprentice, Ronald Jorgenson, have recently shifted almost entirely to solid bodies because of the acute shortage of suitable woods for acoustics. They are working now with fibre glass and epoxy.

“We make all our own fittings here, everything except strings, and we would make them if we had the equipment. The fittings we send to Denver for chrome or gold plating. We also make hand-carved leather cases that sell for \$500. We’ve sold several of them. The last guy was going to pay me \$600 and thought it was a bargain.”

Harry hasn’t always had time to build guitars. As he put it: “When I was on the outside on the lam running from the law, I naturally never had time to set up and build my own guitar so I bought guitars with hot checks.”

Harry also built a pedal steel with a new electronic pedal system he developed with solenoids pulling the string levers instead of rods. Harry describes it as, “An extraordinary steel . . . a complete band in one unit. The amplification system and all the extra electronic gadgets were all incorporated in the one unit, covered and laced with hand-carved leather. An elaborate thing.”

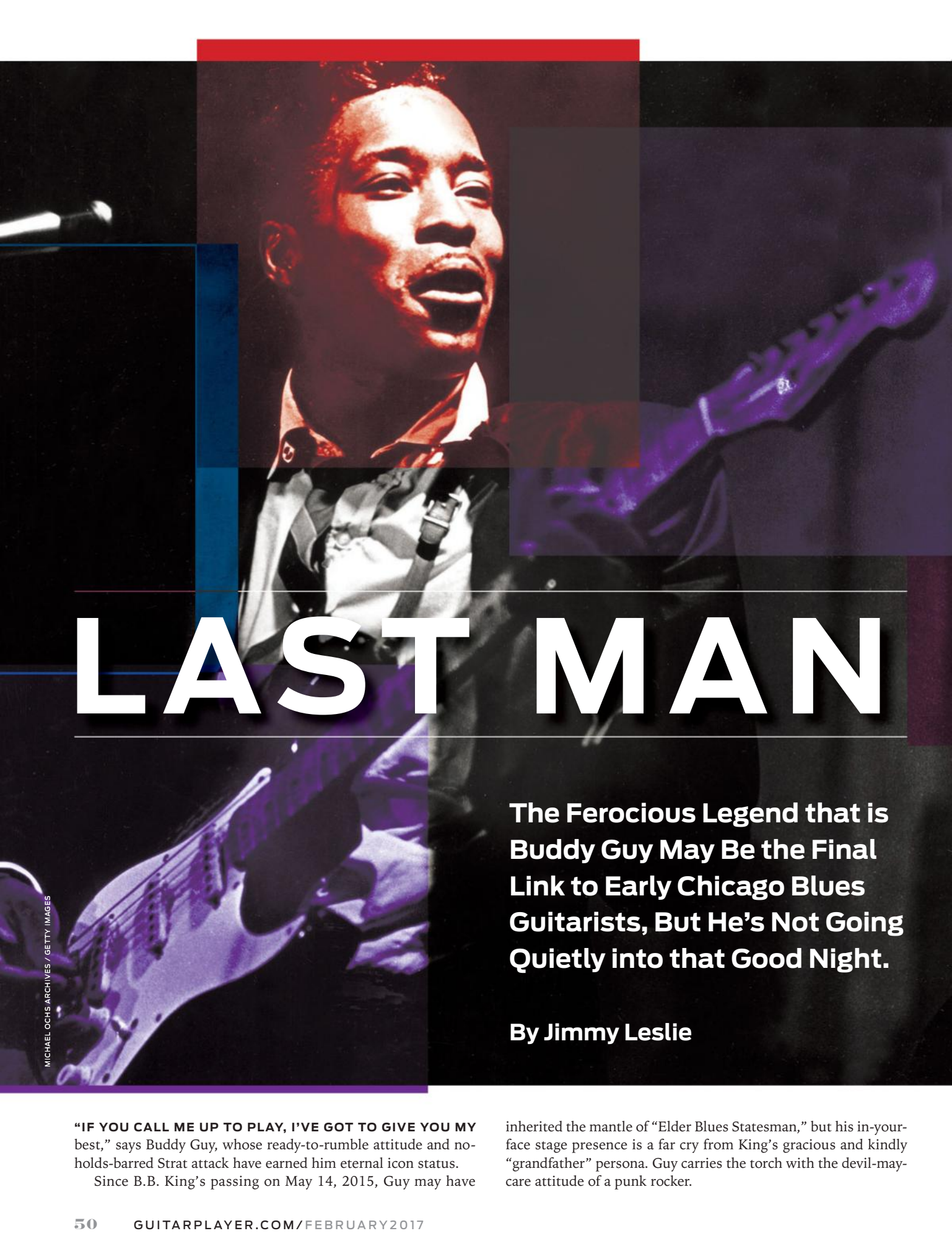
With an accumulated investment of \$10,000 in equipment and supplies, Harry is proving *It’s what you do with what you got, that pays off in the end.*

Patrick Agerton plays steel guitar with a group that specializes in country music and pop standards. With steel guitar, two Spanish guitars, accordion, and bass they produce a variety of music some people call “schmaltz.” The group decided to give acid rock a go after a group from Berkeley appeared at the prison. Pat put together a “feed-back amp” and for a week literally raised the roof. “Mr. White had to put a stop to it. We were makin’ so much noise they couldn’t even change shifts down there.”

Stick Williams plays piano with the big band and also writes the music column for the prison magazine. The Interpreter. Stick is justly proud of the fact The Interpreter was awarded the second best prison magazine in the nation.

While Stick does not play guitar, he recognizes it as the most important instrument in the prison. “Because it’s the only instrument they can have in their cells. It’s a beautiful outlet for the tension, and there’s a lot of tension and hostilities in prison. All through the cell houses at night you hear the soft muffled tones of guys practicing and gettin’ themselves together. It’s the one way they can escape.

“A lot of credit should be given to Warden Wayne Patterson. This guy has put the emphasis on rehabilitation and reformation, and not so much on punishment, by trying to initiate things that help the convict further his own goals and philosophy.”



LAST MAN

The Ferocious Legend that is Buddy Guy May Be the Final Link to Early Chicago Blues Guitarists, But He's Not Going Quietly into that Good Night.

By Jimmy Leslie

"IF YOU CALL ME UP TO PLAY, I'VE GOT TO GIVE YOU MY best," says Buddy Guy, whose ready-to-rumble attitude and no-holds-barred Strat attack have earned him eternal icon status.

Since B.B. King's passing on May 14, 2015, Guy may have

inherited the mantle of "Elder Blues Statesman," but his in-your-face stage presence is a far cry from King's gracious and kindly "grandfather" persona. Guy carries the torch with the devil-may-care attitude of a punk rocker.



KEN SEITZ

“Thanks to the rappers, I can say whatever the f**k I damn well please these days,” announced Guy from the stage of the San Francisco Masonic while supporting Jeff Beck in 2016.

A few folks probably don’t appreciate Guy’s litany of

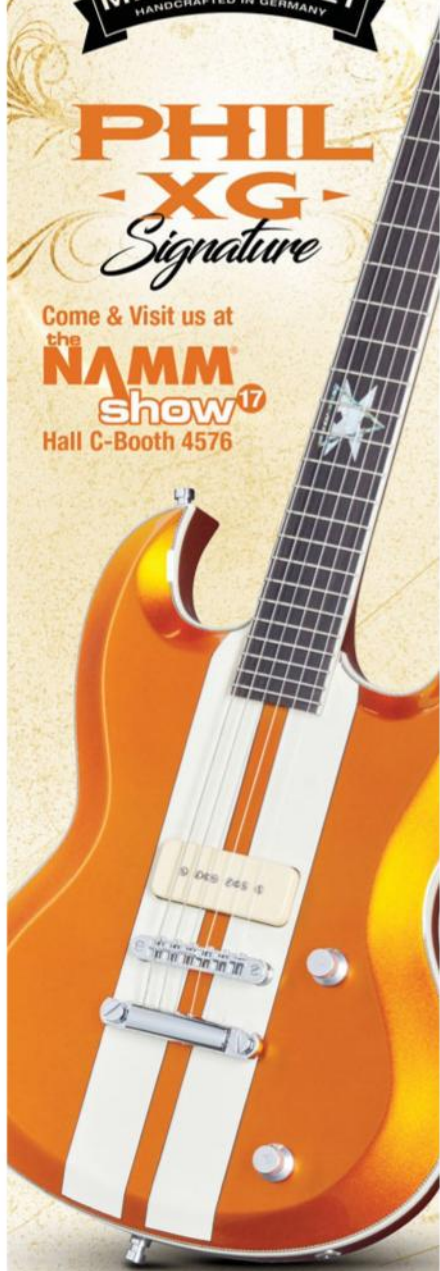
F-bombs—or his over-the-top guitar antics—but most people find Guy’s firebrand blues a welcome presence in a genre watered down with each passing cliché. On recent tours, the 80-year-old Guy has come across like a man possessed—as if he’s making up

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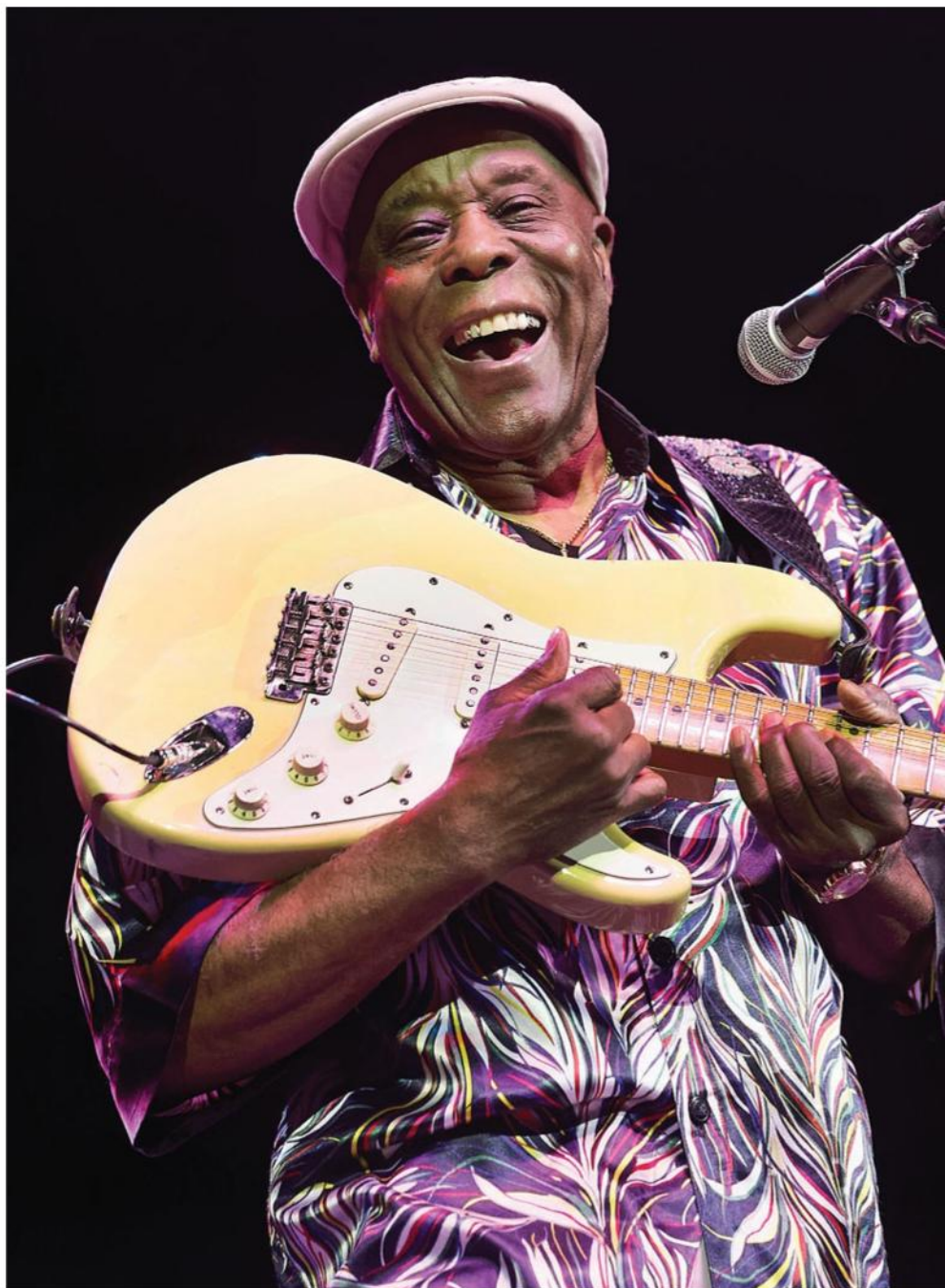
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COVER STORY

BUDDY GUY



for lost time in the spotlight. Throughout much of the '70s and '80s, Guy couldn't even land a record deal, much less fathom being honored as a living legend at the 2012 Kennedy Center Honors by an African-American president.

No one can deny that Guy—who was born George Guy in Lettsworth,

Louisiana—represents the ultimate long shot, and he continues to defy all odds. The atomic energy he channels through a Fender Stratocaster and a Fender Bassman would be thrilling and impressive at any age, but it's almost *supernatural* for an octogenarian to rock so hard. Last year, *Guitar Player* honored both Guy and Jeff Beck—the two



KEN SETTLE

wildest Strat cats of their generations—with Lifetime Achievement Awards.

What does it mean to you to be honored in the world's oldest guitar publication for playing a lifetime of ferocious licks dating back to before there

was even such a thing as a guitar magazine?

Thank you very much. Better late than never. Most blues musicians I learned my lessons from are no longer with us, and they didn't print a lot of stuff about those guys. Every night I go to

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- 26 Feb — Pittsburgh, PA — Byham Theatre
- 28 Feb — Burlington, VT — Flynn Theatre
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- 2 Mar — Englewood, NJ — Bergen Performing Arts Center
- 3 Mar — Newton, NJ — Newton Theatre
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- 5 Mar — Northampton, MA — Academy of Music
- 7-8 Mar — Alexandria, VA — The Birchmere
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COVER STORY

BUDDY GUY



the stage, I stop and imagine the history of some of the guys like Lightnin' Hopkins and T-Bone Walker. The media didn't get us until the British started playing blues. That's when major newspapers started interviewing Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, and people like that. Before then, we were playing to a 99.9-percent black audience. When the British started playing blues, the audience completely changed. My late friend, B.B. King and I were in Memphis once, and this lady ran up to him, and said, "Hey man, these white people are taking the blues from us." B.B. said, "No, ma'am. They didn't take it. You



just quit listening to it.”

What player would you like to acknowledge above all from a guitar perspective?

I could mention a thousand players. When I was coming up, it was Lightnin’ and T-Bone, and then up stepped B.B. King, Gate-mouth Brown, and, of course, Guitar Slim. There weren’t many guitar players way back when, because it was unheard of. You literally couldn’t *hear* an acoustic guitar onstage. The guitar

was getting obsolete until Leo Fender and Les Paul electrified it.

How unimaginably wild was the Stratocaster when you first witnessed one?

When Leo came up with that Strat, man, I didn’t know what the hell it was! Guitar Slim was the first I saw play one, and I thought it was a joke. But you had to keep the acoustic guitar out of the weather, and this solid piece of wood Leo came up with took more wear and tear. Guitar

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COVER STORY

BUDDY GUY

Slim's Strat had scratches all over it. Well, you can't do an acoustic like that. I'm not sure if Leo made the first solidbody, but his was the one that exploded. The Stratocaster got the guitar heard.

How did you develop your own sound?

I don't know. Some people tell me I have a tone. I barely pay attention to that. Back

when the British guys started mentioning my name, players like Jimmy Page would come up to me, and say, "Man, I didn't know anyone could play blues like that on a Strat. What are you doing?" The Chess brothers used to say, "If you want it played right—go get Buddy." But even I didn't know what the hell I was doing. I got my tone from a '57

Strat and an old Fender Bassman. You can't get that tone anymore. The Fender people do a good job at trying to replicate that '57 tone, but there's something different about the wood, or something else that Leo took with him. I'll tell you what else Leo took with him: Whatever he had in that [original] Bassman transformer.

You've talked for years about the glory of the vintage Bassman tone. Ironically, you turn all the knobs up except Bass.

I turned the bass all the way off from day one. There was no reason to do anything else, because that was exactly the sound I wanted. I never had to worry about changing the tone. All I would do was wrap up the guitar cord and come home. Nowadays, you get different tones at different clubs, but that thing had the same tone wherever I played—except some of the smaller clubs where grounding issues would produce a scratchy sound that you hardly hear anymore.

Do you still have your original Bassman?

Yes. I've still got that old Bassman. I almost lost it when I went to Africa around 1969. I was sitting by the window watching my bags being loaded, and my amp was just sitting there. As the plane was going to take off, I jumped up. The stewardess said, "Mister, sit down. You've got your ticket for your bag." I said, "My amp is out there past the wing of the plane!" They kept that amp for five years. When it finally came back to me, it was all rusted out.

You use two amps onstage each night—a '59 Bassman reissue, and a new Fender Bassbreaker.

Right. They come pretty close, but they don't have the tone that the one had when I came here 60 years ago.

Was Jimi Hendrix the first player you heard use a wah?

I heard the late Earl Hooker play the wah-wah before I even knew who Jimi Hendrix was. I made a few cuts with it, because I liked Hendrix a lot. I'm doing the Experience Hendrix tour again in 2017. They go get a bunch of youngsters that can really play. Everybody knows "Voodoo Child." But if you listen to Hendrix, "Voodoo Child" was similar to the Muddy Waters tune, "Mojo Working." So I'm trying to do a version of that.

Did you get to know Hendrix very well?

Yeah. There's a video clip of the night we met. When I first went to New York in 1967, I was into a solo with the guitar behind my

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COVER STORY

BUDDY GUY



Buddy Guy's Chicago Blues Band circa 1969—(from left) Bobby Fields, A.C. Reed, Guy, Jack Meyers, and Glen Martin.

head when somebody started hollering at me, "There's Jimi Hendrix!" I was like, "Who in the hell is Jimi Hendrix?" And he came up and said, "Can I tape your show?" He had a reel-to-reel tape recorder.

You weren't aware of him at all?

No, no. I was into Arthur Crudup, T-Bone Walker, B.B. King, and all the old blues guys. I wasn't into all the special effects. If I had been, I probably would have got hooked myself. I liked what Hendrix was doing when I heard it. But I decided to let him have that. I figured my time would come.

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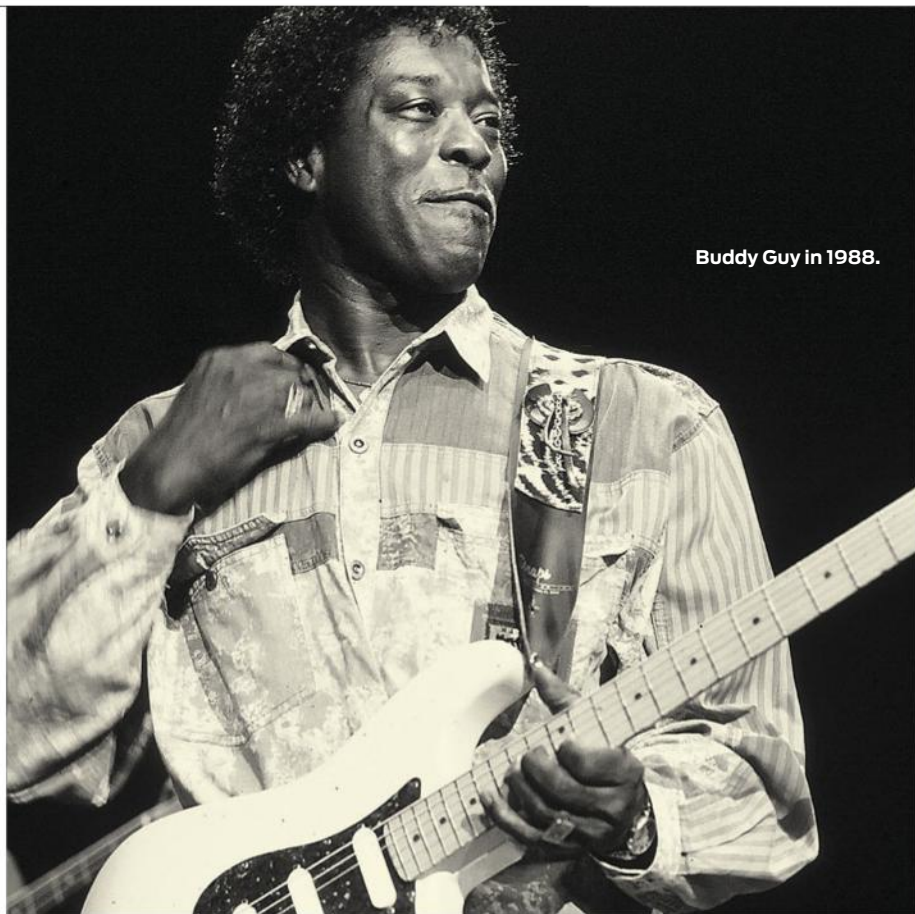
FOH: Radiohead, Arcade Fire, Nine Inch Nails, Peter Gabriel

How so?

I couldn't be B.B. or T-Bone, but they kept telling me, "Man, you got something there. You got a Buddy Guy tone." I was so dumb. I didn't even know that. Even the Chess brothers told me. When I first went in there, they didn't want to hear my noise. But when Jeff Beck, Jimmy Page, and Eric Clapton all said, "I've been listening to Buddy," the Chess brothers said, "Wait a minute. Let him come in and do what he wants." I was surprised. I said, "Man, what are you talking about?" They said, "These British guitar players are selling millions, and they're eating up the sh*t you've been playing!"

Why didn't you play together more on-stage with Jeff Beck during your recent tour together?

We didn't play together every night, but we played together several nights. He insisted on me coming out and playing "Let Me Love You," which Willie Dixon and I wrote. I told him I didn't want to wear out my welcome,



Buddy Guy in 1988.

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COVER STORY

BUDDY GUY

because if you go to a ballgame expecting to see your favorite pitcher, you look for him to pitch. If they change, you'll watch the game, but you're not happy. He's a hell of a guitar player. People want to see Jeff Beck, and I didn't want to get in the way. You see, I played the Crossroads Guitar Festival in Dallas with Eric once, and Eric *asked* me to

solo. I soloed, and the writer from the *Chicago Sun-Times* wrote, "Buddy Guy was trying to step on Eric Clapton's feet." It kind of pissed me off, because if you don't ask me to solo, I won't—especially if I'm playing behind someone else. I didn't learn how to play by the book. I learned how to play by listening. So with somebody as good as

"B.B. King and I were in Memphis once, and this lady ran up to him, and said, 'Hey man, these white people are taking the blues from us.' B.B. said, 'No, ma'am. They didn't take it. You just quit listening to it.'" —Buddy Guy

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Eric Clapton or Jeff Beck, I like to say, "Can I learn something from you?"

I heard that you celebrated at your 80th birthday show by shredding Beck to the point that he simply threw his guitar up in the air, smiled at you, and walked off the stage!

Well, I'm like this—if you don't want me to play, don't call me up there. From the time I was eight years old, my dad and mama would always tell me, "Son, don't be the best in town—just be the best 'til the best come around."

Why is it that you hardly ever use the whammy bar?

I used a whammy bar. Eric Clapton and
Continues on page 126



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A collection of Fulltone guitar pedals and amplifiers. The pedals include the SS Tape Echo, Supa-Trem2, True Path, Deja Vibe, and Wak Full. The amplifiers include the True Path and Deja Vibe. The Fulltone logo and website "www.fulltone.com" are visible in the top left corner. The text "The very definition of Analog." is prominently displayed at the bottom.

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LESSONS

Hail, Yeah! Highlights From Jeff Beck's Recent Masterpiece, *Loud Hailer*

BY JESSE GRESS

AS IS THE CASE WITH GP'S OWN 50TH anniversary, it's hard to fathom that a half century has passed since the release of "Hi-Ho Silver Lining" b/w "Beck's Bolero," Jeff Beck's premiere recordings as a solo artist. Fifty years later, on the heels of last year's epic, *Loud Hailer*—Beck's first studio album in six years—we're still trying to decipher how those magic fingers can jump from sheer savagery to heart-wrenching beauty in the blink of an eye.

The brainchild of Beck, co-producer Filippo Cimatti, and touring bandmates Rosie Bones (vocals) and Carmen Vandenberg (rhythm guitar), *Loud Hailer*, which also features Giovanni Pallotti on bass and Davide Sollazzi on drums, is a gut-wrenching, high-tech, guitar-centric masterwork filled with layers of overdubs that recall the controlled chaos of 1969's *Beck-Ola* and provide the perfect framework for Bones' lyrical socio-commentaries. And dig this: The album was mostly written around Beck's medieval fireplace! Geez, does it get any cooler than that?! Let's get down to business and check out some highlights.

"LIVE IN THE DARK"

Wing-woman Vandenberg kicks off this modern-day, techno-blues holler with the last two rounds of the sequencer-like, partially muted 16th-note rhythm figure depicted in **Ex. 1a**. Note the consecutive downstrokes, the strategic 16th-note rests on beats two and four, and how beat four is left open on the repeat. When played five times, as written, this becomes the

rhythm figure beneath the song's pending tandem Beck-and-Bones melody.

In preparation for things to come, let me reiterate that Beck's right-hand embouchure typically involves playing melodic lines with his thumb while resting his index finger on top of the whammy bar (for downward bends), curling his middle finger under the bar (for upward bends), and leaving his ring finger and pinky free for on-the-fly, nearly constant manipulation of his Strat's Volume and Tone controls. Beck's palm is generally positioned near his floating bridge, at the ready for some impromptu palm muting or signature manual bridge vibrato, a fluttering pitch effect he achieves by rapidly pounding the heel of his right hand on the raised part of the floating bridge plate, using a karate-chop-like motion.

Ex. 1b, which details the first round of Beck and Bones' five-bar, *F#*-blues-based unison guitar/vocal melody, drips with Beck's mercurial finger grease. The pickup and bar 1 utilize staccato notes, a gradual quarter-step "smeared" bend from the *b*3 (*A*), a hand-vibrated grace-note hammer-on from the *b*7 to the root (*E*-to-*F#*), and subsequent syncopated 16th-note pull-off (*F#*-to-*E*). Bar 2 rhythmically paraphrases the opening phrase in second position with whammy vibrato on the *E* downbeat, and a signature faux-slide 5-to-4 (*C#*-to-*B*) downward bar bend on beat two, followed by another syncopated pull-off, this time from the 4 to the *b*3. A staccato 4-to-5 bend provides the pickup to bar 3, where the same bend is given full quarter-note value on the downbeat. Beats two and

three once again echo the rhythmic motifs from the first two bars, but this time with 4-to-*b*3 and 4-to-3 (*B*-to-*A#*) pull-offs. The double *F#* pickup is repeated on the downbeat of bar 4 (observe those staccato dots!) and is followed up with a short lick that begins with two *A*'s and ends with a rhythmic *B*-to-*C#* bend on beat three. The pickup into bar 5 prefaces a grace-note hammer-on and another faux-slide descending bar bend on beat one, leading to a short root-*b*7-root lick that completes round one of the melody. Rinse and repeat, but remember—Beck never plays it the same way twice!

Ex. 2 shows what happens next as Vandenberg's four-note pickup fills the empty fourth beat in bar 5 of her previous rhythm figure (Rhy. Fig. 1), prefacing Beck's four-bar instrumental break, where, in true call-and-response tradition, he begins three one-bar phrases with a full beat of his previously mentioned "karate chop" vibrato technique applied to the *b*3 (think four 16th notes), before providing slightly different "answers" for each one. (The cool random finger-on-string noise in bar 1 was likely a happy accident.) Notice how the triplet-based runs in bars 1 and 3 target a *b*3, ornamented with similar vibrato, whereas the lick in bar 2 features 32nd notes and a staccato root target. The interlude concludes in Hendrix territory with bar 3's four-note pickup into a pair of elegant pre-bends and releases. Dig how applying finger vibrato to a pre-bent note creates a pseudo-whammy-bar effect that's very different from vibrating a grace-note bend.

LESSONS >>> JEFF BECK'S LOUD HAILER

Later in the song, Beck recasts the melody from Ex. 1b in octaves while Vandenberg provides support with a new four-bar rhythm figure (played twice). **Ex. 3** illustrates both parts as Beck swoops in and out of octaves paired on two low-string groups using finger slides (bar 1) and downward and upward bar bends (bars 1-3). It's all in the thumb. (Tip: This type of aggressive thumb-strumming should originate from the wrist, not the ball of the thumb.)

"PULL IT"

Want to scare the crap out your friends? Next time you've got a captive audience in your car, cue up the album's third track and crank it up as loud as you can. OMG! This has to be hands down the most terrifying two-minute onslaught of guitar savagery ever waxed. The piece was presumably born from an impromptu lick Beck has been randomly dropping into select solos for several years. It involves snapping the low open-E string against the

fretboard with the right-hand thumb while using the left hand to reach over the guitar's lower bout and depress the whammy bar in discrete pitch increments while playing quarter-note or eighth-note triplets (depending on the tempo of the moment) that recreate the stuttering sound of a hot rod screeching to a halt. **Ex. 4** attempts to approximate how Beck turned this impromptu lick into the basis for a killer instrumental excursion that must be heard to be believed. We begin with

Ex. 3

♩ = ca. 90

Grtr. 1 (J.B.) N.C. (F#5)

strum strings w/thumb w/bar w/bar -1 B w/bar -1 B

Grtr. 2 (C.V.) F#5 A5

sim.

3 w/bar w/bar grad. B +1 grad. B 1/4 grad. B 1/4 w/bar

tacet 2nd time - -

F#5 A5 B5

Ex. 4

$\bullet = \text{ca.}72$ N.C. (E5)

musical score for "The Wind" by Peter Dinklage. The score is in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It features a single melodic line on a grand staff. The piece begins with a "snap string w/thumb" instruction. The melody consists of eighth-note triplets and quarter notes. A "grad. dive" (graduated dive) is indicated at the end of the first phrase. The second phrase includes a "w/bar" (with bar) instruction and a "grad. dive". The score ends with a double bar line. Below the staff, there are fret numbers for the first and second phrases: 0-0-0-0-0-0-0-(-1)-(-2)-(-2)-(-3)-(-3) and 0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-(-1)-(-2)-(-3)-(-5). A note indicates that the lower bar is in pre-bent quarter-tone increments.

*Lower bar in pre-bent quarter-tone increments.

Ex. 5a

 = ca. 76 N.C. (E5)

w/wah
 w/thumb
 grad. dive w/bar
 w/bar
 grad. B 1/4 pre-B R
 w/bar
 B R B R

0 0 0 0
 0 (-2) 0 0 3 (3) 5 (6) 5 3 0 (-2) 0 (-2) 0

Ex. 5b

 = ca. 76  = 

N.C. (E5)

“RIGHT NOW”

Channeling more Jimi-style riffing, Beck begins this song alone with four bars of low-register, *E*-blues-based, wah-inflected licks, similar to the one transcribed in **Ex. 5a**. Establish a swing-16ths feel and dig into its dive-bombed open-string pickup, the low-*E*-to-*D*-to-*E* bar bends that bookend the phrase, the muted-string backbeat played with the wah pedal in full treble position, and the growly lick that incorporates a gradual quarter-step bend,

half-step pre-bend and release, and pull-off to open *E*, followed by an unpicked whammy dip that triggers a repeat of beat one, all in the space of six beats!

Ex. 5b shows the song's behemoth of a main riff, a two-bar monster that commences with a 3/8 *E-D-E-D-low-E* motif (think of a reversed "Manic Depression" played in half-time) embellished with pull-offs during beat one and pre-bent bar dips on beats one and two. The riff starts over on the "and" of beat

> > >

two, but deviates on the “and” of beat three to a scooped and gradually hand-bent ♭3-to-3 (G-to-G#) and E root. Bar 2 repeats the previous first two beats verbatim before Beck seals the riff on beats three and four with stuttering E-to-C# and E-to-G single notes, redolent of his classic “Rice Pudding.”

“SCARED FOR THE CHILDREN”

Beck has always had an uncanny flair for turning common chord voicings and progressions into something magical and angelic, and his work on "Scared for the Children," which features an exquisite Rosie Bones vocal, is no exception. The song's intro appears to be simple—just play half notes at a tempo of approximately 65 beats per minute while using your Volume control to swell into the

first six chords diagrammed in **Ex. 6a**, then hold the final G for four beats—but getting that tone out of your bare fingers is another story. (Tip: Think of the first four chords as G, *Gmaj*7 [7 in the bass], G7 [♭7 in the bass], and *Em*7.)

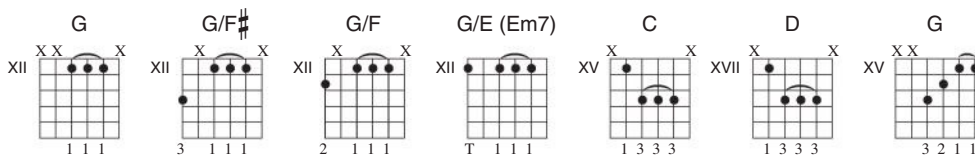
The real magic begins four bars in, when Beck starts having his way with the progression. **Ex. 6b** illustrates how he uses only his thumb to arpeggiate the chords while extending and embellishing the basic voicings with suspensions, pull-offs, and hammer-ons. Note that, with the exception of the first G chord and the thumbled strums in bar 4, the bass note always precedes the arpeggio, and how Beck switches to different C, D, and G voicings (the first two played with the thumb on the sixth string)

for the beautiful *sus*#4 and *sus*4 suspensions and resolution in bar 4.

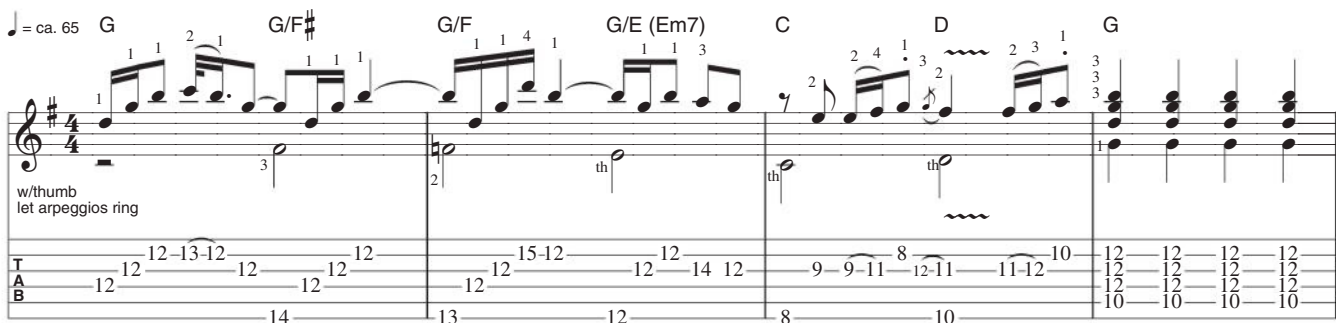
Proof that “he changes every minute” (my favorite quote from some old Japanese liner notes), **Ex. 6b** presents the same four-bar passage culled from a 2016 live performance. Here, Beck inserts an *A*♯ into bar 1’s *G/F*♯ (shades of Miles Davis) to create a bittersweet dissonance, adds a stretchy *E* and subsequent pull-off to the *G/F* chord, decorates *G/E* with an *A*-to-*G* pull-off, and then resorts to the *C*, *D*, and *G* voicings from **Ex. 6a** before concluding with a pair of dreamy, half-step bar dips. (Think Santo and Johnny.)

Once again, we've barely scratched the surface. *Loud Hailer* represents a true master at the top of his game, hopefully with many more opuses still to come. Rock on, Sir Jeff! 

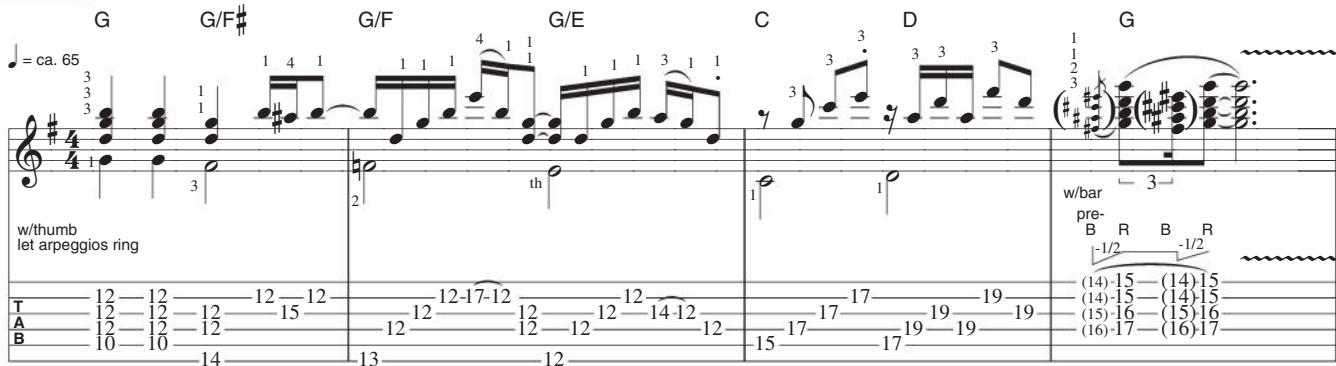
Ex. 6a



Ex. 6b



Ex. 6c



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>>> STYLE LESSON

A Guide to Blues Rhythm Guitar

BY KEITH WYATT

THE DRIVING FORCE BEHIND MUSIC is rhythm, and the foundation of traditional blues rhythm is the shuffle. Here's a quick-start guide to the art and craft of playing classic blues shuffle rhythm guitar.

HARMONIZING THE DRUMS

The fundamental role of rhythm guitar is to harmonize the drums, in other words, to express the feel of the drum set with chords, so the first step in capturing the elusive blues shuffle groove is to listen to how a drummer plays it. **Ex. 1** shows a typical medium shuffle pattern: bass drum on beats one and three, snare drum on

beats two and four (the *backbeat*), and the *shuffle* rhythm (eighth-note triplets with the middle note left out) on the hi-hat.

While you're listening, tap your foot on each downbeat, mute the strings with your fretting hand, and scratch out the hi-hat pattern on the strings, muted with the fret hand, using alternate strokes—downstroke on the downbeat, upstroke on the upbeat (**Ex. 2**). Pick from your wrist and keep it and your forearm loose and relaxed. Match the tempo precisely, accenting each downbeat and adding a little extra snap on the backbeats (two and four) to mirror the relaxed yet authoritative groove.

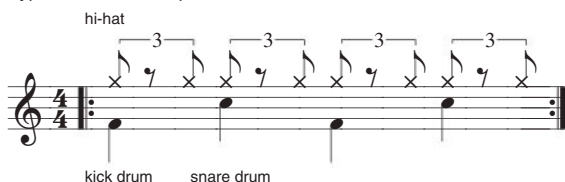
Next, fret an A5 power chord on the sixth and fifth strings and mute the remaining strings with the side of your first finger. Continue the same picking pattern, releasing the pressure on the strings immediately after the downbeats and sustaining the upbeats (**Ex. 3**). Classic shuffle phrasing requires careful coordination between the hands to balance the laid-back triplet feel, the slight break in the middle of each beat, and the accented downbeats.

BOOGIE SHUFFLE AND THE 12-BAR BLUES

Now we have laid the proper foundation for

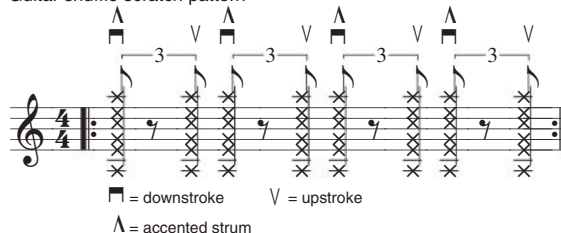
Ex. 1

Typical drum shuffle pattern



Ex. 2

Guitar shuffle scratch pattern



Ex. 3

Power chord shuffle



Ex. 4

Boogie shuffle



the number-one blues guitar rhythm pattern—the boogie shuffle (**Ex. 4**). Credit goes to Delta blues icon Robert Johnson for adapting this boogie-woogie piano figure to the guitar (check out his “Sweet Home Chicago”), and disciples like Elmore James (“Dust My Broom”) carried it forward into the electric era. Maintain the drum-based picking pattern while you add the extra note on every other beat with your fourth finger (interpret the eighth notes with a shuffle feel).

The most common vehicle for the blues shuffle is the 12-bar blues, a song arrangement

consisting of three chords: the tonic, or “one,” chord, plus the “four” and “five” chords, based on the fourth and fifth steps of the major scale, respectively (key of A: A, D and E). Apply the boogie shuffle pattern to the 12-bar blues in A shown in **Ex. 5**, continuing the same picking and fretting pattern as you switch between chords.

To transpose this rhythm figure to other keys, first locate the root of the one chord on the sixth string. The root of the four chord is at the same fret on the fifth string, and the five chord is up two frets from that.

TURNAROUND AND ENDING

At the end of each repeating 12-bar progression—what’s often referred to as a chorus—you have the choice either to go back to the top or end the song, and there’s a specific chord pattern for each. To keep going, insert a turnaround, or rhythmic accent going to the five chord in the 12th bar (turnaround chords are typically dominant ninth chords). Play the turnaround accent without altering the steady down-up picking pattern, as demonstrated in **Ex. 6**.

Ex. 5

12-bar boogie shuffle

1 *A (repeat previous bar) D

*Chord names represent basic, overall harmony.

7 A E D A

Ex. 6

Turnaround

A A (return to beginning of progression)

To end the song, conclude the accent on the one chord instead of the five (the final chords are also usually ninths), as demonstrated in **Ex. 7**.

UPBEATS

The boogie shuffle is the most popular guitar rhythm choice, but it's not the only game in town. A classic counterpart

is a steady pattern of upbeats, referring to the last eighth note of each triplet (also borrowed from piano players). Using the same shuffle groove in your picking hand,

Ex. 7

Ending

Ex. 8

12-bar shuffle in A, with upbeats

fret the chords on upbeats and relax the finger pressure on the downbeats to mute the strings without letting go of them. Use ninth chords all the way, and continue the alternate picking pattern right through the turnaround (**Ex. 8**).

Jimmy Reed and Eddie Taylor featured a layered boogie-shuffle-plus-upbeats guitar arrangement on some of the best-known shuffles in the blues repertoire, such as “Baby What You Want Me to Do,” “Bright Lights, Big City,” and many others, recordings that inspired Stevie Ray Vaughan’s all-in-one-guitar shuffle masterpiece, “Pride and Joy.”

HORN RIFFS

A third layer of shuffle rhythm is inspired by the horn-section arrangements on classic blues records by B.B. King and others. Adapted to the guitar, these syncopated two-bar horn riffs include sixth chords alongside ninths, with chromatic half-step moves providing extra color. Maintain the alternating shuffle picking pattern, strumming the chords that land on the downbeats with downstrokes and those on the upbeats with upstrokes. **Ex. 9** demonstrates the standard ending).

These three workhorse shuffle rhythms can be played separately or together in

any combination and are highly adaptable to different chord progressions, tempos, and styles of blues, from “down-home” to “uptown.” There are many other textures and techniques in the blues rhythm repertoire, but the key to unlocking any rhythm style is to play like a drummer. Just substitute picks for sticks.

Keith Wyatt created the *School of Electric Blues Guitar* at www.artistworks.com. He taught blues guitar for over 30 years at L.A.’s Musicians Institute and is the author of *Blues Rhythm Guitar and Blues Guitar Soloing* (MI Press/Hal Leonard). ■

Ex. 9

12-bar horn riff arrangement in A

The musical score for "Ex. 9" is a 12-bar horn riff arrangement in A major. It is presented in three systems, each with a treble clef staff and a guitar tablature staff. The first system (measures 1-4) features A6 and A6b6 chords. The second system (measures 5-8) features D9 and D9b9 chords. The third system (measures 9-12) features E9, D9, and A6 chords, ending with a B9 A9 chord. Fingerings and picking directions (V for upstroke, V for downstroke) are indicated throughout.

System 1 (Measures 1-4):

- Measure 1: A6 (fingering: 3 2 4 1)
- Measure 2: A6b6 (fingering: 3 2 4 1)
- Measure 3: A6 (fingering: 5 4 5)
- Measure 4: A6b6 (fingering: 5 4 5)

System 2 (Measures 5-8):

- Measure 5: D9 (fingering: 5 4 5)
- Measure 6: D9b9 (fingering: 5 4 5)
- Measure 7: D9 (fingering: 5 4 5)
- Measure 8: D9b9 (fingering: 5 4 5)

System 3 (Measures 9-12):

- Measure 9: E9 (fingering: 7 6 7)
- Measure 10: D9 (fingering: 5 4 5)
- Measure 11: A6 (fingering: 5 4 5)
- Measure 12: A6b6 (fingering: 5 4 5)

>>> CLASSIC RIFF

Blue Öyster Cult's "Cities On Flame with Rock and Roll"

BY JESSE GRESS

HAVING AN OPPORTUNITY TO PRE-ent a transcription with commentary by the guitarist responsible for one of classic rock's most badass riffs is a rare occurrence and treat. This month, my buddy Kasim Sulton, who has been Blue Öyster Cult's bassist for the past several years, helped make such a scenario happen, via an introduction to none other than guitarist Buck Dharma and a quick reminiscence

about the band's early hit, "Cities On Flame with Rock and Roll."

“‘Cities’ was recorded with the rest of our first Columbia LP at the Warehouse, a prominent New York jingle studio in Manhattan in the ‘60s, ‘70s, and ‘80s. Albert Bouchard came up with the primary musical idea for the song, which was inspired by Black Sabbath’s ‘The Wizard.’ We couldn’t, of course,

just copy Sabbath's lick, so I was tasked with coming up with an original riff that not only sounded different, but was also more complex and tricky to play. Similarly, when I met Sting back in the Police days, he told me he'd taken the lick from 'Don't Fear the Reaper' and expanded it to form the basis of 'Message in a Bottle.'

"I was playing a Gibson SG Standard on that first record, and recorded with a

Ex.1

= ca. 88 (F#m)
 N.C.

T
A
B

2 5 2

2 5 3 4 3 4 2 3 4 3 2 0 2 0

B R B R etc.

T
A
B

2 5 2

2 5 3 4 3 4 2 3 4 3 2 0 2 0

Cities On Flame With Rock 'N' Roll

Words and Music by Samuel Pearlman, Donald Roeser and Albert Bouchard

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Marshall 800 or Super Lead—whatever Marshall was selling as a 100-watt stack in 1970. We used Marshalls because Hendrix and Clapton were using them, after first buying a bunch of Acoustic amps because the Doors had used them. The half-stack was cranked up really loud, to get that sawing Marshall sound, and loaded into the studio room, which contributed to the tone of the lick. It was likely mic'd with a Shure SM57 or Sennheiser 421 dynamic microphone. I used a patch cord to connect the bass and treble channels of the Marshall together. You need both to get a full-range sound out of those early Marshall amps."

Dharma employed contrasting rhythmic phrasing—sparse in bar 1 and busy in bar 2—and a nearly fourth-less $F\sharp$ blues scale to forge the song's killer two-bar signature riff, notated in all its glory in **Ex. 1**. The riff appears four times throughout

the song's intro—two times with nearly two beats of rests in bar 1, and twice embellished with snarly, blues-based fills replacing the rests, as illustrated in bar 3. The C 's have been enharmonically notated as $B\sharp$'s, to avoid excessive accidentals, and I've included three barely audible "ghosted" double-stops that occur randomly.

Buck's website (buckdharma.com) offers a descriptive play-by-play that originally appeared in his 1984 *Guitar Secrets* column in *GP*: "The first finger kicks it off on the 2nd-fret low- E string, followed by the pinky on the 5th fret of the same string. The last note in this phrase (as well as the first note in the second phrase) is the same as the first— $F\sharp$. Then it's C (notated as $B\sharp$) to $C\sharp$ on the 3rd and 4th frets of the A string, using your middle and ring fingers. Go up to the $F\sharp$ on the D -string's 4th-fret with your ring finger

and follow the same C -to- $C\sharp$ combo, ending on the 2nd-fret, D -string E note. Repeat those last three notes— C , $C\sharp$, and E —and move down to the A -string's 3rd-fret (C) for a double pull-off, which goes from C to B on the 2nd fret to an open A string. The last two notes are the $F\sharp$ on the 2nd fret of the low E string, and the open E . Then start all over again."

"The live performance of 'Cities' is quite different than the original studio version. For one thing, Eric Bloom took over the vocal duties after Albert had sung it on the record and, early on, live. We also extended the arrangement with more jamming and made it more of a showpiece. We still do that today. 'Cities' remains one of the featured tunes in BÖC's set list and is usually performed as an encore."

Special thanks to Buck Dharma and Kasim Sulton! ■

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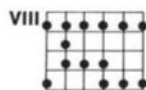


LENNY BREAU FINGERSTYLE JAZZ Blues Soloing: Keep It Simple

OVER THE LAST THREE MONTHS, I've discussed blues comping in a jazz vein, covering Freddie Green-style swing rhythm and bebop comping. Let's now turn our attention to single-note soloing.

The 12-bar blues form is an excellent place to begin studying jazz soloing because you can approach it simply at first and apply more complex concepts later on. While most players want to start learning long bebop lines from the start, I recommend that you begin by getting some bluesier licks under your hands. The simpler the melodic material is, the sooner you'll begin to develop a sense of phrasing; this will give you greater soloing freedom because you'll have a larger rhythmic vocabulary at your disposal. Some of the best bebop players also have a good command of the blues. To supplement your practicing, I suggest you listen to records by the following jazz guitarists, whose playing has a decided blues flavor: Herb Ellis, George Barnes, Kenny Burrell, George Benson, Charlie Christian, and Wes Montgomery (who played some classic bluesy solos with octaves). Also check out straight-ahead bluesmen B.B. King, Albert King, Freddie King, and newcomers such as Stevie Ray Vaughan.

While the blues scale isn't used as much in jazz as it is in urban blues styles and rock, it's still an important part of the improviser's language. In addition, it's utilized for the melody of many 12-bar tunes, including Milt Jackson's "Bag's Groove," Barney Kessel's "Bluesology," and Wes Montgomery's "Missile Blues." "Simple Blues," at the bottom of the page, uses the C blues scale exclusively, and can be played from the following fingering:



"Simple Blues" makes a good head (melody), and like most bebop tunes, it should be played twice before you begin your improvisation. However, besides providing a melody, it can also be employed as a solo. The tune is made up of a four-bar phrase that repeats three times, with a slight variation in bar 11. Once you're familiar with the preceding scale, practice inventing four-bar phrases until you can toss them off at will. Not only can you use these types of figures while improvising, but they also make great fills for backing up a vocalist or a soloist. Another common phrase is the two-bar figure, which forms the basis of standards such as Duke Ellington's "Things Ain't What They Used To Be." Here's a sample two-bar figure; practice inventing some more on your own:



One nice thing about the blues scale is that it fits most variations of 12-bar jazz changes. However, remember that there are many other melodic devices that you should know in order to improvise effectively.

Just after we had prepared this month's column for the printer, we received news of Lenny's death (see obituary, page 12). Next month, we'll feature a special final tribute, which will include his beautiful chord-melody arrangement of "Londonderry Aire."

"Simple Blues"

By Lenny Breau

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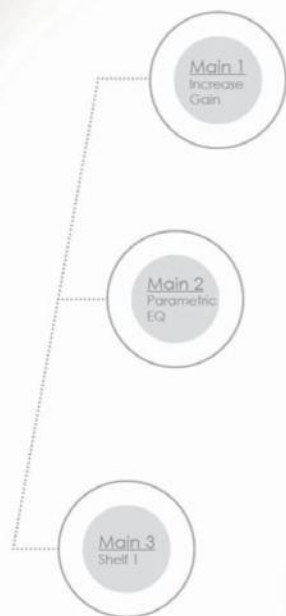
See Notational Symbols, page 98

OCTOBER 1984/GUITAR PLAYER 109



FOR GUITAR PLAYER'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY, WE ARE COMBING THE ARCHIVES FOR INTERESTING, EDUCATIONAL, and maybe even whimsical lessons from the magazine's past. To keep with this issue's blues vibe, here's an October 1984 Lenny Breau column on soloing. Sadly, it was also Breau's final column. The guitarist was murdered in Los Angeles on August 12, 1984, and the case remains unsolved. —MICHAEL MOLENDRA

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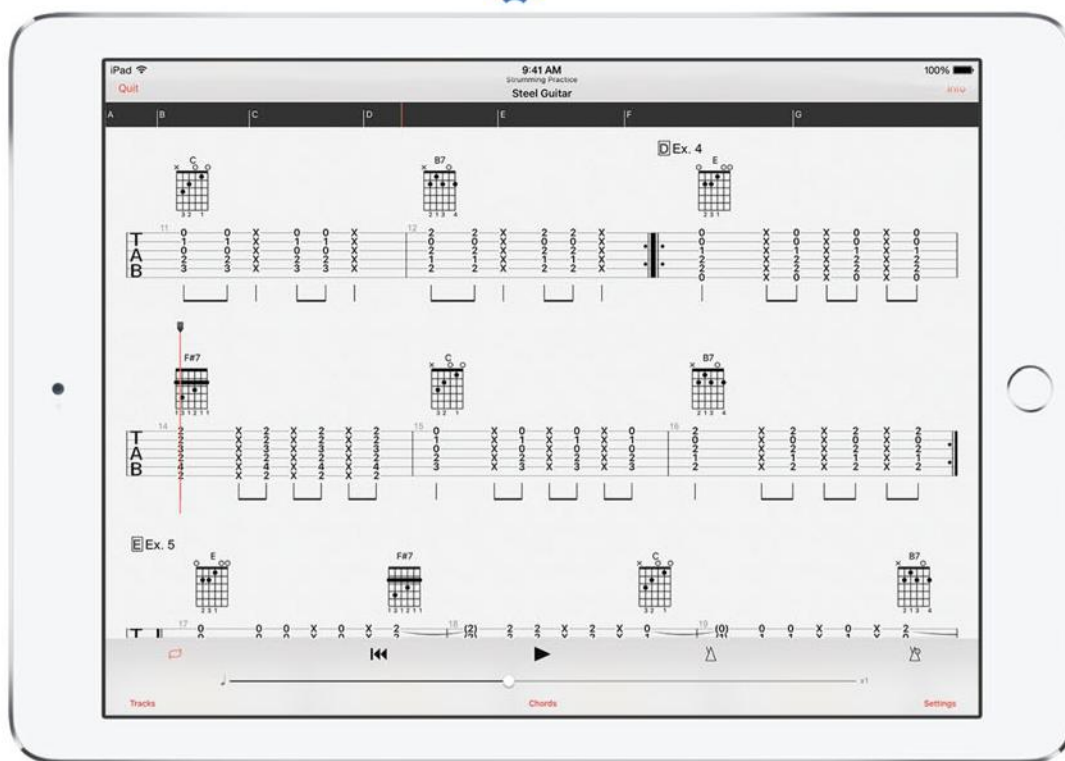
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Boasting 6 minutes of looping time, the super-affordable 360 lets you record, store and recall 11 loops. Single footswitch control of record, erase, undo-redo and unlimited overdubbing, plus a compact size and easy-to-use functionality, complete the picture.

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ROUNDUP



New 50-Watt Tube Heads from Friedman, Fuchs, Hi-Tone, and Victoria

TESTED BY DAVE HUNTER

THE 50-WATT HEAD REMAINS A popular workhorse for guitarists who require the kind of power necessary to take it to a larger stage, while also valuing the headroom and full-throated voice that only large output tubes and big iron deliver. These four

new options from respected boutique makers large and small all spring from classic archetypes to offer new twists and tones on some familiar templates. All were tested with a '57 Fender Telecaster, a Gibson 1959 Les Paul Reissue, and a Novo Serus J with Amalfitano P-90s

into a TopHat 2x12 with one early '80s Celestion G12-65 and one Alnico Cream, a Fryette 2x12 with Fane F70s, a StoneAge 1x12 with an EVM12L Classic, and a Two Notes Torpedo Live load box and speaker emulator with a variety of appropriate IRs.



FRIEDMAN RUNT 50

HAVING ESTABLISHED HIMSELF AS A one-stop shop for modified-Marshall tone in all its glorious shades, Dave Friedman has just released his new, more affordable Runt series of amps designed for working musicians. The 50-watt Runt 50 head, like the Runt 20 head and combo, uses PCB construction to rein in the pricing, while employing the same circuits that Friedman has used in many of his hand-wired designs to achieve some of today's most popular rock lead tones. Friedman tells us he took the lead channel from his mighty BE-100—essentially a high-gain-modified plexi with expanded flexibility (and a past *GP* Editors' Pick Award winner), while the clean channel is "going for an American blackface front end." Looks-wise, the Runt 50 cops an offset-chassis M-style aesthetic in a usefully compact cabinet that's more the size of an 18-watter than a plexi, although it retains the big-transformer heft of the 50-watter that it is.

Given their origins, the control layout of each channel offers no surprises. It's worth noting that the lead channel has a Boost switch to increase gain, while the clean channel has a 2-way Bright switch, and only the lead channel has a Master. Simple it may be, but the Runt 50 still provides some handy bonus features (see spec box), the most impressive of which is a balanced, speaker-emulated DI via XLR output providing direct recording or a mic-free link to the P.A., with switches for Level, Ground Lift, and Axis (i.e., Center or Edge mic position). The engine runs on two EL34 output tubes with

four 12AX7s in the preamp, and solid-state rectification. As per the Runt ethos, the internals boast a sturdy main PCB populated with signal caps from Mallory and Sprague, and although the tube-socket connections are made directly to the board, the sockets themselves are also chassis-mounted for durability.

In the estimation of many players, plugging into one of Friedman's creations has yielded a faster track to the classic hot-rodded Marshall-style tone than firing up an actual Marshall. The Runt 50—despite its cost-saving ethos—proves to be no exception. Little needs to be said other than if you're seeking easy access to the kind of archetypal rock grind and sizzle that's launched a thousand hits, it's right here and waiting. Assessed critically, the Runt 50 might fall a hair short of nuanced vintage- or boutique-grade tonal depths at those cross-over settings where the lead channel's crunch segues into more saturated lead tones, and the voicing here is characteristically bright and crispy throughout the amp's range, but it's a fun and inspiring ride all across the dial for anything in the broad basket of '70s- and '80s-inspired EL34-driven tones—and there are some smoking high-gain tones available with that Boost engaged, too. The clean channel also offers a better platform for sparkle and chime than the under-served rhythm voices on many more expensive channel switchers. In short, the Runt 50 is a good'un, and likely to make a host of classic rockers extremely happy.

SPECIFICATIONS

RUNT 50

CONTACT	friedmanamplification.com
PRICE	\$1,799 street
CHANNELS	2
CONTROLS	Clean: Volume, Treble, Bass, Bright switch. Lead: Gain, Bass, Middle, Treble, Master, Presence, Boost switch;
POWER	50 watts
TUBES	Four 12AX7s, two EL34s
EXTRAS	Single-button footswitch for channel select. Dual speaker outs with 4/8/16Ω switch. Buffered series FX loop. Speaker-emulated XLR DI with Ground Lift, Axis, and Level switches.
WEIGHT	33.4 lbs
BUILT	USA
KUDOS	A compact and relatively affordable fast track to classic Marshall-style lead tones with a surprisingly good clean channel to boot.
CONCERNS	None.



FUCHS ODS-II



I CAN'T ATTEST TO WHETHER "THE Dumble sound," et al, was Andy Fuchs's prime inspiration for getting into the amp game, but it sure has given him a great peg on which to hang his hat. His Fuchs Audio Technology of New Jersey has become one of the larger and more successful proponents of that popular genre, and the ODS-II is the culmination of that passion. If the maker's popular ODS—now refined into the new ODS Classic after 15 years—represents the classic take on D-tone, the ODS-II is here to fill an objective that might be defined as "let's take an ODS and give it everything we can possibly think of to take its versatility and functionality off the charts." There isn't nearly room enough here (or virtually anywhere) to discuss all that the ODS-II can do; in brief, think of it as an ODS that gives you two full Dumble-inspired channels, one with Lead mode, masters on both plus a global master, mid boost and tone-stack bypass boost on both, 16-bit digital reverb (designed by Keith Barr of Alesis), two buffered effects loops (tapping different stages within the circuit), and a crazy ton of flexibility via the six-button footswitch that's included.

Functionality extends to a built-in bias meter with check and adjustment points on the amp's rear panel, so you can get the most out of any pair of 6L6GCs you pop into it, and there's also a fan (with Hi/Lo/Off switch) to keep them cool. Fuchs's construction employs a thick, double-sided PCB for the main board, loaded with quality components and completed with hand-wired connections, plus several smaller boards for various circuit stages. All tube sockets other than that for the internal 12AT7 output-tube driver are

chassis-mounted and connected with flying leads, and transformers are all U.S.-made. A lot of thought has clearly gone into the layout, which, along with details such as DC filament supplies, helps to keep the signal crisp and the noise low. Outside, the ODS-II boasts what we might call "Double-D" cosmetics, in a squat, tank-like head with the optional luxury of a finely crafted hardwood cabinet.

You could write a book on the sonic variations available from this beast, so I'll primarily address the amp's core sound here: suffice it to say the ODS-II provides a great and accessible rendition of that popular D-sound for guitarists who seek it in more than just a "two- or three-trick pony." Having two entirely different renditions of that delectable clean-plus-lead-plus-boost tone yields utterly unbridled versatility, and I can't imagine there are many contemporary rock, jazz, or fusion players who couldn't find something to like here. That sweet, rich, harmonically plump lead tone is available in abundance, sure, but I also enjoyed tapping two variations of clean tones at will, boosting to taste, and so forth. The digital reverb offers a good simulacrum of the studio effect, and to my ears, rather conversely, sounded better on lead tones than on clean (I still find it hard to beat a dab of analog spring reverb when you want to splash up a clean electric guitar), but it's a sound many Dumble fans are likely to appreciate overall. If you don't need this amp's hyper functionality you might prefer Fuchs's ODS Classic, but for a player looking to do it all in one compact and ridiculously flexible package, the ODS-II's achievement makes it worthy of an Editors' Pick Award.

SPECIFICATIONS

FUCHS ODS-II

CONTACT	fuchsaudiotechnology.com
PRICE	\$3,995 street, plus \$500 upgrade for hardwood cab, as reviewed
CHANNELS	2
CONTROLS	Channel A & B: Gain (pull Boost), Bright, Deep, and EQ switches; High (pull Mid Boost), Mid (pull for frequency shift of Mid Boost), Low. Channel A: Master. Channel B: Drive, Overdrive Master, Tone, Reverb, Dwell, Level. Shared Presence and Master
POWER	50 watts
TUBES	Four 12AX7s, one 12AT7, two 6L6GCs (will take EL34s with rebias)
EXTRAS	Six-button footswitch for Channel, Overdrive, Mid Boost, Reverb. Speaker outs for 4 Ω , 8 Ω , and 16 Ω loads. Preamp FX loop with Send and Return levels, series/parallel switching. Post-preamp FX loop. Built-in digital bias meter with check points and adjustment controls. Cooling fan with Hi/Lo/Off switch
WEIGHT	30.4 lbs
BUILT	USA
KUDOS	A cleverly designed and ridiculously versatile "double-D" in a relatively compact package.
CONCERNS	Digital reverb might not be to everyone's taste.



HI-TONE HT50 JP

ONE GLANCE AT THE HI-TONE HT50 JP

and fans of the bolder, punchier verges of British tone will know exactly what they are looking at; or nearly, anyway, since this hand-wired, American-made amp revitalizes a rare variant of the fabled Hiwatt DR504 circuit. Hi-Tone is the progeny of Hiwatt fanatics Clayton Callaway and Mark Huss, with assistance in "U.K.-based component sourcing and circuit accuracy" from Glynn Reeves, the son of late Hiwatt founder Dave Reeves. If you think all this implies that Hi-Tone goes out of its way to render its amps as accurately as possible to the original Hiwatt designs and build techniques, you'd be right: components are hefty and of high quality, the wiring work is impressively tidy, and Reeves-certified build techniques are adhered to throughout the HT50 JP chassis.

The JP differs, however, in an entirely sensible refinement of one of Reeves Sr.'s rare custom modifications of the circuit, bringing to it what can only be described as an improvement. (The "JP", by the way, stands for Jimmy Page, and represents the variation of the classic DR circuit as built for the Zep guitarist back in the day.) Using another 12AX7 tube as a cathode-follower to drive a line-level signal, the preamp follows the first Gain control with a Balance control, which can be adjusted to provide a second, footswitchable volume control (with no tone suckage thanks to Hi-Tone's use of Vactrol switching, rather than sending the signal all the way out the footswitch cable and back, as Reeves's original design did). The result is not so much a high-gain lead option, as two selectable levels of volume from what is otherwise a standard single-channel Hiwatt-style circuit. "However," Huss from Hi-Tone adds, "most of our users don't seem to bother with the footswitch, and

just use the Balance control as a mild gain control." While these amps' cosmetics and control layout always made them look much like high-end Marshall wannabes, a poke around the Hi-Tone reminds us that they were anything but, as the amp employs an entirely original circuit, tweaked at every turn to maximize punch, clarity, and headroom, with an EQ stage that is very different from—and arguably more flexible and effective than—the JTM45's or plexi's traditional tweed-Fender-derived cathode-follower tone stack (the cathode-follower before the Balance control is used very differently).

Fane has earned a reputation as the speaker brand of choice with this style of amp for reasons that were immediately apparent once I plugged the HT50 JP into the Fryette cab. The combination is bold, clear, and thumping, and a fast track to that pummeling Pete Townshend rhythm tone circa *Live At Leeds* (albeit in 50-watt, smaller-venue form), or, with an Xotic BB-Preamp and EP Booster stacked in front, a throaty, singing David Gilmour-ish lead tone. Whether footswitch-selected or just set and forgotten, the JP's Balance control does indeed offer a useful, if subtle, extra. The classic DR504 circuit is still there in all its glory, but the added stage helps to tease out further nuances of gain staging, while adding an extra dab of flexibility. Cranked through the TopHat cab, the HT50 JP also copped other flavors of classic Brit-rock tone, and it's one loud 50-watter by the time you hit the breakup zone. The Master helps some, but the amp really sounds its best with that knob rolled toward its higher numbers. All in all, this is a powerful and well-built amp at a very good price, and a great option for serious fans of Dave Reeves' Hiwatt legacy.

SPECIFICATIONS

HT50 JP

CONTACT	hi-tone-amps.com
PRICE	\$2,049 direct
CHANNELS	1
CONTROLS	Input Volume, Balance, Bass, Treble, Middle, Presence, Master
POWER	50 watts
TUBES	Three 12AX7s, one 12AT7, two EL34s
EXTRAS	One-button footswitch for remote Balance (dual input volume) level. Dual speaker outs with 4/8/16Ω switch (buffered FX loop available for a \$250 upcharge)
WEIGHT	42 lbs
BUILT	USA
KUDOS	A boldly authentic take on the classic Hiwatt DR504 circuit with a useful modification. Excellent build quality
CONCERNS	Some unused holes in the chassis top should probably be closed off for safety considerations.



VICTORIA SOVEREIGN

LONG ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST

popular makers of high-end tweed reproductions, Victoria has also launched several more original designs over the years, of which the Sovereign was one of the earliest, and most fabled. The Sovereign was originally designed in 1998 as a model called the Rockin' Reverb, and was only ever built in small numbers due to the troublesome nature of the 6BM8 tube that powered its reverb circuit, and the microphonic EF86 in the preamp. Part of what has inspired proprietor Mark Baier to revive the circuit, however, is the recent improvement in newly made versions of a different tube. As he tells us, "When the new Tung-Sol EF806S was introduced, the world finally had a stable enough EF86 to get serious." To keep hassles to a minimum, the new Sovereign drops the reverb option altogether, but includes a tube-buffered FX loop so you can inject your own, with both a Blend control for dialing in depth of effect, and a Level control, which doubles as a master volume or output booster when nothing is inserted into the loop. To further enable your gain structuring, the dual inputs present considerably different sensitivities to the preamp, 1 being noticeably hotter than 2.

Put simply, think of this unusual Victoria creation as a Marshall JTM45-meets-plexi-type amp powered by a pair of EL34 output tubes (6L6s or KT66s can also be used with rebiasing), but with a juicy EF86 pentode preamp tube in front of the standard 12AX7 in the first gain stage, which can be dialed in via the Gain control to ramp up varying flavors of thick, creamy crunch and lead tones. Other

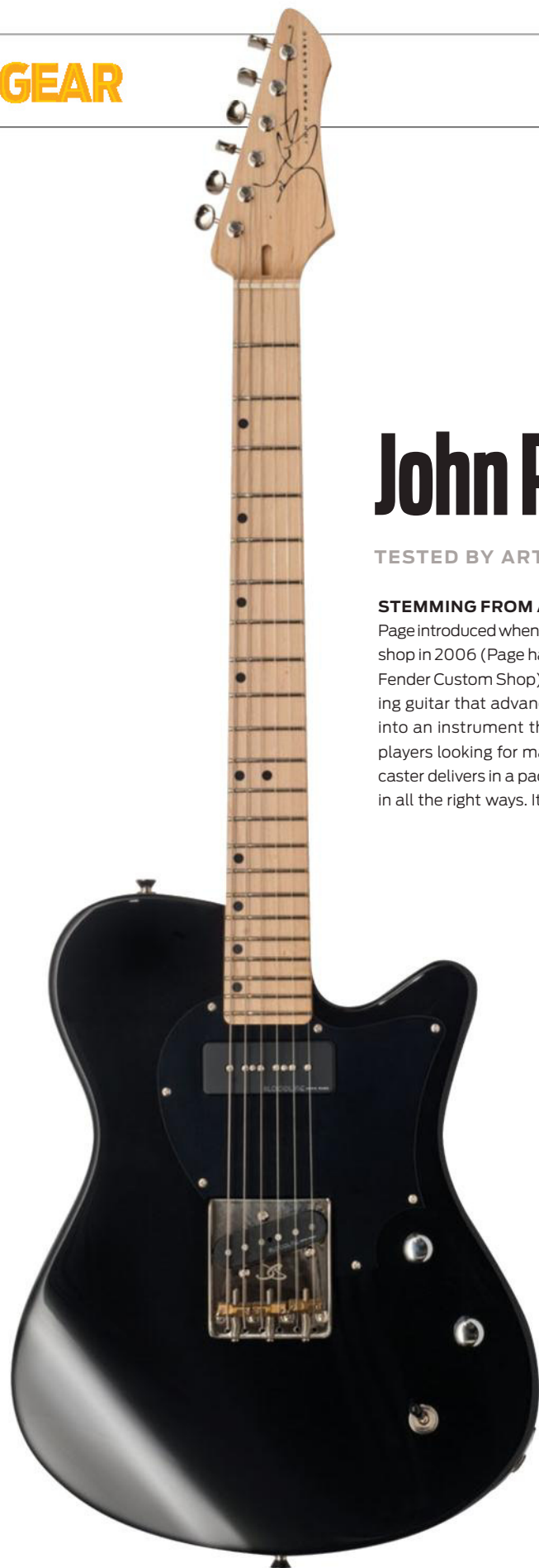
bonus features include a Resonance control, which fine-tunes the low-end response, and a half-power mode accessible via the 3-way Standby switch. The Sovereign looks great outside, with a vintage-M-style dress that includes a lusciously tactile cloth in the sandwich-front design. Inside, the amp reveals the robust and high-quality standards we've come to expect from Victoria, following the company's Fender-inspired eyelet-board construction long seen in its other products.

With the Gain knob at "0" and only 12AX7-induced gain via the Volume control, the Sovereign already puts out an extremely tasty rendition of mid-'60s, transition-era Marshall tone, with a chewy, tactile playing feel and a voice that's classic rock 'n' roll. Gradually add in the EF86, and things really get interesting. There is serious sizzle available here, but it's old-school gain—fat, buoyant, raw, and slightly hairy without being too fizzy. The Sovereign's character shines through as a *feel* thing as much as it does a quality of sound. Meaty, rich, and broadly appealing, it's a player's amp through and through. And although there's plenty of flexibility to be found in its two-knob gain structure, versatile EQ, and highly functional FX loop, it's utterly great as a set-and-forget platform—a delectable vintage-voiced tone cushion that offers a cozy ride for anything you want to lay out onto it. The half-power mode does its thing well, although it induces a softer, rounder, looser sound along with it. All in all, though, the Sovereign is very groovy stuff that delivers hip original sounds in a fun, "coulda' been vintage" package. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

SOVEREIGN

CONTACT	victoriaamp.com
PRICE	\$3,199 street
CHANNELS	1
CONTROLS	Gain, Volume, Treble, Bass, Middle, Presence, Resonance
POWER	50 watts
TUBES	One EF86, two 12AX7s, one 12AT7, two EL34s (can use 6L6GCs or KT66s with rebiasing)
EXTRAS	Full/Half-power switching. Dual speaker outs with 4/8/16Ω switch. Buffered FX loop with Balance and Level controls
WEIGHT	35.2 lbs
BUILT	USA
KUDOS	Great build quality. Stylish looks. Compelling and superbly playable sounds that offer an original twist on mid-'60s Marshall goodness.
CONCERNS	None.



John Page Classic AJ



TESTED BY ART THOMPSON

STEMMING FROM A DESIGN THAT JOHN

Page introduced when he began his own custom shop in 2006 (Page had previously headed the Fender Custom Shop), the new AJ is an intriguing guitar that advances an age-old platform into an instrument that's designed to reel in players looking for many of the things a Telecaster delivers in a package that is modernized in all the right ways. It begins with a body that

is contoured on the back and front and gets a reshaped lower horn and a streamlined neck heel to facilitate access to the high frets. A P-90 of Page's own design mates with his version of a Tele pickup, which sits in a reverse-angled mounting plate in order to lend more warmth to the high strings. A Bakelite pickguard brings some old-school charm to the brew, and Page also retained the classic-style bridge with three

SPECIFICATIONS

AJ

CONTACT	johnpageclassic.com
PRICE	\$1,499 street
NUT WIDTH	1.68" antique bone
NECK	Maple, bolt-on
FRETBOARD	Rosewood, 25.5" scale, 12" radius (maple also available)
FRETS	22 nickel silver (.095" wide x .045" high)
TUNERS	Gotoh staggered vintage-style
BODY	Alder
BRIDGE	JP vintage T-style with reverse pickup angle and three brass compensated saddles
PICKUPS	Bloodline by John Page JP-3P P90 (neck), Bloodline by John Page JP-3T Tele (bridge)
CONTROLS	Volume, Tone, 3-wayswitch (noise cancelling with both pickups on)
FACTORY STRINGS	D'Addario EXL110, .010-.046
WEIGHT	7.1 lbs
BUILT	Japan
KUDOS	A modern take on a T-style with expressive tones and great playing feel.
CONCERNS	None.

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brass saddles, which are step-compensated to improve intonation.

Wearing a Black Metallic paint job (2-Tone Sunburst, Seafoam Green, and Desert Sand are also available), the AJ plays beautifully thanks to its satin-finished medium C profile neck, finely worked frets, and a setup that lays the strings nice and low to the 12" radius fretboard. Here's where a modern approach to neck design pays off (including being attached with machine screws into threaded inserts), as the guitar is so accommodating to any style you throw at it, and sounds solidly in-tune wherever you grip—just an all-around easy player that throws down for everything from jazz and blues to country and rock.

Played through a Carr Sportsman, Marshall CODE 50 and CODE 20 combos, and a Mesa/Boogie JP-2C running through a Mesa 4x12 Recto cab, the AJ sounded right at home delivering sparkling cleans, dynamic grind, and full bore soaring sustain, all with a stringiness and note definition that allow complex chords to



ring clearly, while providing the essential juiciness and girth that give sweet texture to highly overdriven sounds. The lower-wind P-90 in this guitar grooves well with the Tele pickup for greasy funk playing, and the Tone control's voicing takes things from slinky rhythm sounds to buttery leads and never gets too muddy or

indistinct when turning it down for jazzier vibes. The Tele has always been famous for the range of sounds and styles it can cover, and the AJ simply enhances that quality in a soulful, fun-to-play guitar that looks killer, does pretty much anything you need it to, and comes in at a great price for this level of quality. ■

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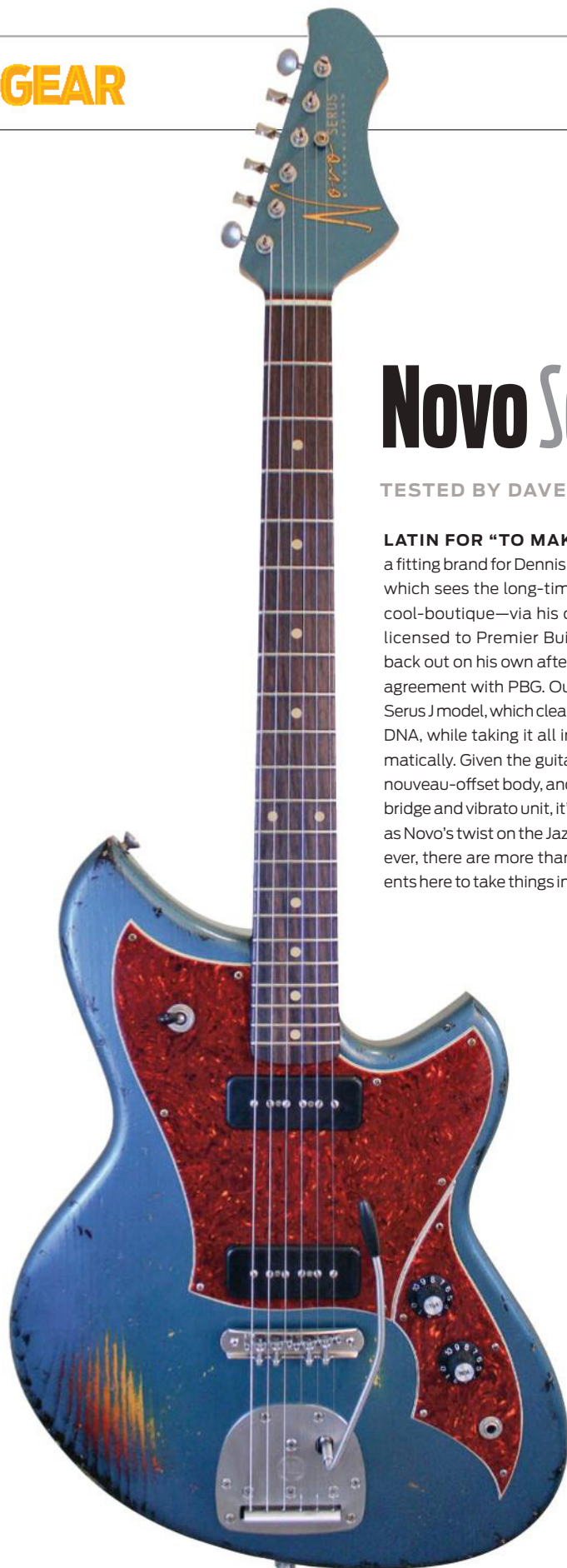
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Novo Serus J

TESTED BY DAVE HUNTER

LATIN FOR "TO MAKE NEW," NOVO IS a fitting brand for Dennis Fano's new operation, which sees the long-time progenitor of retro-cool-boutique—via his own builds and those licensed to Premier Builder's Guild—striking back out on his own after the dissolution of his agreement with PBG. Our review sample is his Serus J model, which clearly bears plenty of Fano DNA, while taking it all in a new direction thematically. Given the guitar's 25.5" scale length, nouveau-offset body, and high-quality Mastery bridge and vibrato unit, it's no stretch to see this as Novo's twist on the Jazzmaster format. However, there are more than enough new ingredients here to take things in alternative directions.



Fano is using tempered woods in many of his Novo guitars, and this Serus J incorporates such specially cured timbers in its solid pine body and maple neck. While some instrument makers rave about deluxe wood-seasoning techniques, and others call them snake oil, Fano says he's found the proof in the pudding: "I'm loving the tempered woods. They are very resonant and lively, sustain is off the charts, and those things have been consistent in all of our builds that incorporate tempered material."

To whatever extent their properties might influence the guitar's sonic characteristics, these woods look fantastic. The grain of the pine body exudes tactile waves through the hand-aged

SPECIFICATIONS

SERUS J

CONTACT	novoguitars.com
PRICE	Starting at \$2,999 (\$3,149 as reviewed)
NUT WIDTH	1.65"
NECK	Tempered maple, medium-C profile
FRETBOARD	Rosewood, 25.5" scale, 9.5" radius
FRETS	21 Jescar 6125 (medium)
TUNERS	Kluson single-line
BODY	Solid tempered pine
BRIDGE	Mastery bridge and Mastery Jazzmaster-style vibrato
PICKUPS	Two Amalfitano Novo P-90s
CONTROLS	Volume, Tone, 3-way switch
FACTORY STRINGS	D'Addario NYXL, .010-.046
WEIGHT	7.2 lbs
BUILT	USA
KUDOS	A creatively original take on a classic '60s design. Great playing feel. Surprisingly versatile tones.
CONCERNS	None.

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Ocean Turquoise over a '60s sunburst finish in thin nitrocellulose lacquer (a \$150 upcharge for the finish-on-finish paint job), while the maple neck is richly ambered and has a hard, smooth feel. The result is a light instrument for a large-bodied offset design, and one that's surprisingly comfortable to play. Complementary details include a two-piece tortoise pickguard, clay-dot fingerboard inlays, and a color-matched headstock (I dig the swooped "N" of the Novo logo). The P-90 pickups by Amalfitano read 8.36kΩ in the bridge position and 7.21kΩ in the neck, and their signals route through Emerson Pro CTS Volume and Tone pots and an Emerson paper-in-oil signal capacitor.

The Serus J was a blast to play through a Benson Chimera and a Friedman Runt 50 through a variety of speaker cabs. While I appreciate the Jazzmaster ethos, I have never been a huge fan of this Fender model, and often find the bridge/trem setup results in a light-toned and fragile-feeling instrument. Not so here, thanks in part to the Mastery hardware. The Serus J



has loads of ring and sustain, with a richly resonant and loud acoustic tone, and the playing feel is superb at both the left and right hands. Plugged in, it's Jazzmaster-ish, sure, but these P-90s lend extra bite and snarl to the format, turning it more easily to classic rock or cooking blues than you might normally expect from

an offset, while still delivering a clear, snappy chime when you dial down the volume. All that, and—no surprise—it's an endlessly cool indie- and alt-rock machine, with a swaggering sonic character and appealingly textural depths. Put it all together, and the Serus J earns an Editors' Pick Award. ■

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Marshall CODE 50 and CODE 25

TESTED BY ART THOMPSON

THE LONG HISTORY OF MARSHALL HAS resulted in scores of amplifiers and speaker cabinets that have given guitarists a lot of latitude when it comes to selecting rigs that best suit their needs. Marshall may be new to the modeling game, but its recently introduced CODE Series amps—which include 25-, 50-, and 100-watt combos and heads—aim to capture a lot of these great sounds (as well as those of other classic American and British amps) in a convenient and user-friendly package. CODE not only provides a selection of over 100 presets that you can use to get up and running right away, but it also lets you mix and match preamp, power amp, and speaker cabinet emulations to create custom “amplifiers” that never existed in the real world but can bring very interesting tones to your bag of tricks. These high-quality digital models were created by audio software company Softube, hence they are referred to as Marshall-Softube or MST.

Aside from wattage and speaker, the CODE

50 and CODE 25 combos on deck here have essentially the same features: Top-mounted controls for Gain, Bass, Middle, Treble, Volume, and Master; Preset and Edit knobs (one knob performs both functions on the CODE 25), and buttons for Pre FX, Amp, Mod, Delay, Reverb, Cab, and Exit/Store (the latter also incorporates an LED to indicate Bluetooth and store modes). All I/O connections are on the top panel and there is no effects loop or extension speaker jack.

A backlit display screen shows the presets and edit functions, but using a smartphone to select amp, cab, and FX models, and tweak parameters is really the way to go. Courtesy of the amps’ Bluetooth connectivity, you use your iOS or Android device to program up to 100 personal custom presets via Marshall’s Gateway app, which is a free download on iTunes and Google Play. Besides controlling CODE functions, the app also allows you to store presets in the Gateway library and/or share them with friends. Gateway offers an intuitive and easy way

of putting the amp/cab elements together so you can hear right away what, say, a 1962 Bluesbreaker preamp paired with a British Class A power stage (read Vox AC30) and a Marshall 1960V cabinet sounds like. Add effects like tremolo and spring reverb (five effects can be used simultaneously), and now you’ve got a rig that sounds like nothing else exactly. Load a track into Gateway (or simply play songs from your phone) and you can jam along in realtime using your new “maverick” amp. Very cool for practicing, working out solos, etc.

That’s just one example too, as CODE’s MST menu consists of 14 preamps, including Marshall JTM45 2245, 1962 Bluesbreaker, 1959SLP plexi, JCM800 2203, JCM2555 Silver Jubilee, JCM2000 DSL100, and JVM410H. There are also four MST power amps (EL34, 5881, EL84, 6L6), eight Marshall speaker cabinets (1960, 1960V, 1960AX, 1960HW, 1936, 1936V, 1912, and 1974X), and 24 nice sounding effects, including compressor, classic stompbox distortions, auto wah, pitch shifter,



CODE 25



CODE 50 (above) and CODE 25 control panels.

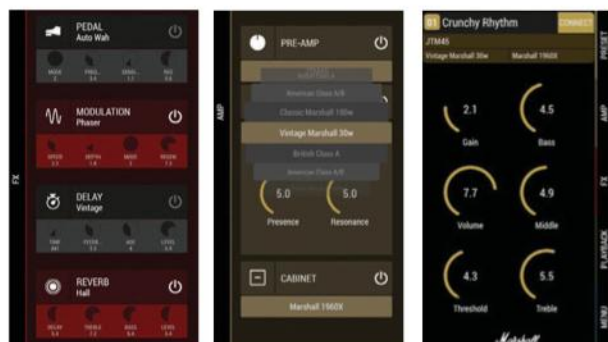


chorus, phaser, flanger, tremolo, delays (with tap tempo), and a variety of reverbs.

Marshall's Director of Marketing & Artist Relations, Nick Bowcott, offered to program some custom sounds into these two CODE amps before sending them to *GP*, so I suggested songs with very identifiable guitar tones by Billy Gibbons, Eric Johnson, Keith Richards, Robben Ford, George Benson, SRV, and Dimebag. This turned out to be a cool thing because these handcrafted tones showed the capability of CODE to create everything from dead clean to demonically overdriven tones, all without wading through the factory presets and rolling down effects to get to the, well, *core* sounds. Exploring these and other tones created using the presets as starting points revealed how well the MST pre- and power-amp models are able to cop the compression and harmonic texture associated with tubes, and create a similarly tactile response to picking dynamics. It would have been nice to listen to them through different speaker cabinets, but only the CODE heads give you that option.

The ability to concoct just about any "rig" you can think of is an interesting thing in itself, and the stout selection of quality effects makes it possible to cover a big spectrum of tones that can be recalled instantly using Marshall's optional PEDL-91009 4-button foot-switch (\$69 street).

While the CODE 50 and 25 are functionally identical, the larger model has some clear advantages for live performance, while still being very portable for a 1x12 combo. It's attractively priced for everything it does, and it's a little easier to get around on thanks to the larger display screen. If size matters, the CODE 25 is a stout little powerhouse that's loud enough for playing in smaller places and only takes up about as much floor space as a 5-watt tube amp. At any rate, these CODE models represent some new thinking from a company whose reputation is so rooted in vacuum tube technology, and, based on their performance, it's clear that Marshall has gone to great lengths to ensure you'll be impressed by what CODE has to offer. 🎸



Marshall's Gateway app lets you use iOS and Android devices to program up to 100 personal custom presets via Bluetooth.

SPECIFICATIONS

CODE 50 AND CODE 25

CONTACT	marshallamps.com
PRICE	\$249.99 street; \$199.99 street for the CODE 25
CHANNELS	1
CONTROLS	Gain, Bass, Middle, Treble, Volume, Master, Preset and Edit knobs.
POWER	50 watts; 25 watts for CODE 25
TUBES	None
EXTRAS	14 preamps, 8 speaker cabinets, 4 power amps, 24 digital effects (five simultaneously). Controllable via Bluetooth or USB. Tuner. Aux input. Headphone/recording output. Footswitch jack for optional PEDL-91009 4-way switcher.
SPEAKER	12" custom design; 10" speaker for CODE 25
WEIGHT	28.6 lbs; CODE 25 13.4 lbs
BUILT	China
KUDOS	Versatile array of amp, cab, and effects models. Easy programming on iOS and Android devices via Marshall Gateway app. Streams music from your phone or tablet over Bluetooth for practice or solo gigs.
CONCERNS	Desktop editor not available. No extension speaker jack.



Rocktron Mainline

TESTED BY BARRY CLEVELAND

THE MAINLINE IS A 300-WATT SOLID-state stereo power amplifier designed to emulate the sound and feel of a tube guitar amp. Rather than providing the relatively flat frequency response typical of most other solid-state power amps, it employs proprietary circuitry designed by LA Custom that enhances specific frequencies for a warmer sound, as well as providing a more tube-like response to playing dynamics.

The single-rack-space unit outputs 150, 75, or 37.5 watts per channel into a 4 Ω , 8 Ω , or 16 Ω load respectively. Bridging the outputs yields 300 watts into an 8 Ω load or 170 watts into a 16 Ω load. The Mainline may be configured

to power any setup from a single mono cab to four cabs in stereo with two cabs per side.

The amp's front-panel controls are very straightforward. Each of the two channels has controls for Resonance, Presence, and Level. The Resonance control fattens up the low end, the Presence control emphasizes the highs, and the Level control adjusts the output volume.

On the rear panel are two 1/4" inputs and two pairs of 1/4" outputs for Channels 1 and 2. The inputs may be switched from line level to instrument level, enabling you to plug a guitar or bass directly into the amp without a preamp. The instrument-level inputs will also accept the output of a pedalboard, making the

Mainline ideal for amplifying the effects in a wet/dry or wet/dry/wet amp configuration.

Also on the rear panel are a voltage switch for selecting 115- or 230-volt operation and a Stereo/Bridge switch for selecting stereo or mono operation. Inside, a very handy Automatic Short Detection circuit powers down the amp should the outputs be shorted for any reason.

I tested the Mainline in stereo mode using a Fractal Audio Axe-Fx II XL preamp and a Yamaha THRC212 2x12 speaker cabinet loaded with Eminence Legend 1218 and Tonker 8 Ω speakers. To begin with, I created some preamp-only presets to better hear the sound of the power amp and cab. I liked what I heard, though one



preset sounded a little thin, so I compensated by turning up the Resonance controls, which did the trick. Both Resonance and Presence sweep wide ranges, making it possible to easily dial in the optimum frequency balance. Bridging the amp to mono yielded equally good results. Next, I set the Mainline's inputs to instrument level and plugged the stereo output from my pedal-board directly into them. This, too, sounded really good, and after some experimentation I found that simply keeping the Resonance and Presence controls straight up worked fine.

In both applications the Mainline did indeed sound and respond much like a tube guitar amp, without the stiffness or harshness found in some

solid-state amps. At the same time, the sound was fairly neutral, with little of the glassiness, sag, or other idiosyncrasies that add personality to classic tube amps; and that's actually preferable if you plan to use it with amp-modeling devices, as the models themselves already possess those characteristics.

The Mainline weighs just over 17 lbs, though some of that heft is attributable to its ultra-roadworthy build quality. It's also worth noting that for such a powerful amp, it is very quiet and operates at a relatively low temperature. All told, the Mainline is a well-built, flexible, great-sounding amp that's priced squarely in reach of working players. ▶

SPECIFICATIONS

MAINLINE

CONTACT	rocktron.com
PRICE	\$459 street
CHANNELS	2
INPUTS	Two 1/4"
OUTPUTS	Two 1/4" (Channel 1), two 1/4" (Channel 2)
CONTROLS	Level, Resonance, Presence (x two channels), Power switch, Instrument/Line level input switch, 115-/230-volt switch, Stereo/Bridge switch
POWER	300 watts
EXTRAS	Automatic Short Detection circuit
WEIGHT	17.4 lbs
BUILT	China
KUDOS	Sturdy. Versatile. Tube-like sound and response.
CONCERNS	Weighty.

>>> WHACK JOB

1968 Zenon

BY TERRY CARLETON

IF THERE EVER WAS A GOLDEN AGE for electric guitars, the mid 1950s to the late '60s was surely it. So many styles, variations, and innovations were popping up faster than The Beatles could put out 45s. Interestingly, a lot of the guitars some players considered junk because they weren't a Fenny or a Gibby have grown quite a reputation. The intrepid explorers who sought out their own sound and look boldly took these non-Fender/non-Gibson "whack jobs" into studios and onto stages. But here's a model that *no one* chose! This guitar is so obscure that I'm not sure it was ever assigned a model number or a nameplate. It's likely a mid-'60s Zenon, Zimgar, Tele-Star, or St. George made by Teisco or Kawai in Japan. As far as I can tell, the groovy, orange-spotted aluminum foil overlay is stock. Not so with the "Capri" logo. That was added after I took it off my sister's orange, 1968 Ford Capri.

WEIRDO FACTOR

The shape of the guitar screams "psychedelically melted" Jazzmaster, with a headstock that looks like the band-saw operator was also "chemically enhanced" during production. Even weirder is the shiny foil finish under all of its chrome pieces.

PLAYABILITY & SOUND

This 8.5-lb mahogany beast with 20 frets and a rosewood fretboard has a wide, unwieldy

neck that's reminiscent of a classical guitar. The Zenon might work best as a dedicated slide guitar, because you ain't gonna be shredding on this baseball bat with strings! The three single-coils are surprisingly mellow and very musical-sounding. The three corresponding Volume knobs are pretty much the only options for dialing in your tones, as there are no pickup buttons or switches, and the fourth knob is a confusingly reverse-wired master Tone pot that's virtually useless. That said, it was kind of neat turning down the volume on two of the pickups, and then slowly dialing one of them back in to find a phase-y sweet spot. During a live performance, however, this move is a little like trying to dial in a Minimoog with a fog machine on. The whammy is smooth, but not terribly accurate.

VALUE

The vintage-'60's weirdo market is just plain silly right now. There appear to be more collectors than guitars, and prices are going up, up, up. I bought this guitar for 150 bucks about ten years ago, and, today, it could go for ten times that price!

WHY IT RULES

Like any off-the-beaten-track, 50-year-old guitar, the Zenon rules because it's unique looking and it sounds different. If you're seeking a very distinctive guitar tone, something like this might be just the right instrument for you.

Feel free to contact me at rtcarleton@gmail.com with photos of your rare weirdos. 📷



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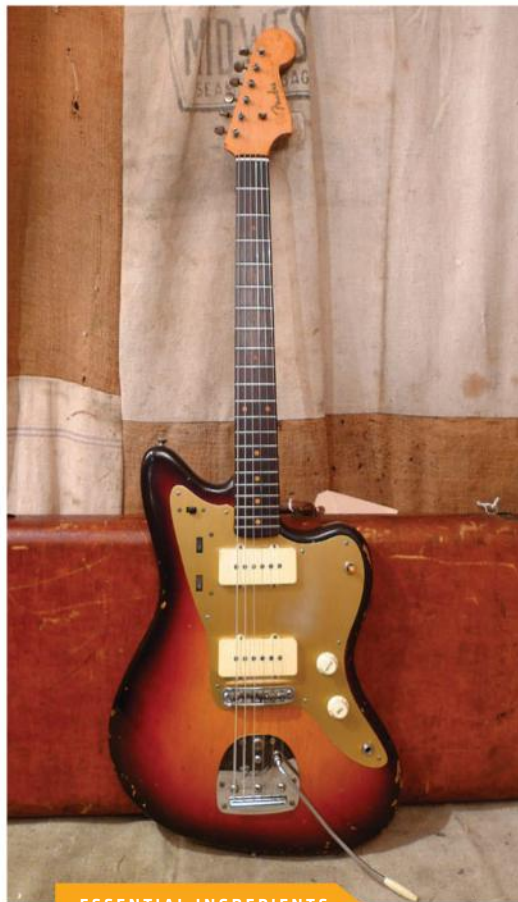
The 1959 Fender Jazzmaster

BY DAVE HUNTER

THE BELOVED GRANDDADDY OF Fender's "offset" series became a major road warrior for alternative players almost from its inception; the weapon of choice for surf guitarists, then punk, then alt-rock and beyond. It was conceived with very different ends in mind—or mis-conceived, you might argue—although its unexpected applications have rendered it yet another undeniable pre-CBS Fender classic.

Developed in 1957 and released for sale in 1958, the Jazzmaster was, as the name implies, Fender's first conscious effort to appeal to jazz guitarists. It's often said that Leo Fender moved to the separate rosewood fingerboards from the original one-piece maple neck/fingerboard, because he didn't like the worn and tarnished look of the maple after use. But this new 'board was first used on the Jazzmaster, and was also considered something that might appeal to the more sedate tastes of jazz players. Also pitched to the jazzers was a new pickup design, with wide, flat coils surrounding six individual alnico rod-magnet polepieces that were shorter than the magnets in Telecaster and Stratocaster pickups. The result was a somewhat warmer, thicker tone, but the Jazzmaster still twanged, albeit with a rounder, meatier voice—or did so via its "lead circuit," at least. In addition to that traditional control section, however, Fender included a separate "rhythm-circuit" control section that elicited a muted, bassy, and by many assessments, nearly useless, tone from the neck pickup alone.

These jazz-intended features didn't appeal to many true jazz artists, but they sure lit a fire under the surf scene of the late '50s and early '60s. The Ventures were the best-known early proponent of the model, but it was also hoisted by several others, the Fireballs and the Surfari among them, while the rhythm guitarists behind two of the biggest instrumental stars of the day—Bruce Welch with Hank Marvin in the Shadows, and Nick O'Malley behind Dick Dale



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- > New "Pat Pending" vibrato unit with locking mechanism
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in the Del-Tones—each preferred a Jazzmaster to their frontman's Strat.

Although the Jazzmaster was launched as Fender's top-tier model, it was never fully perceived as such by the broader guitar world. As a result, once the surf scene ebbed, Jazzmasters were generally more affordable on the used market than were Strats and Teles. This, in addition to the guitar's appealingly original looks and sounds, is likely a big reason behind its uptake in the punk, garage, and alternative scenes from the mid '70s onward. Tom Verlaine ripped it up on a Jazzmaster in the USA with the band Television, while Elvis Costello used one in the UK to establish his own pop-punk stylings. In the coming years, Robert Smith of the Cure, both Thurston Moore and Lee Ranaldo of Sonic Youth, J Mascis of Dinosaur Jr., Kevin Shields of My Bloody Valentine, and a steady stream of others continued to renew this "jazz model's" lease on life.

What can a Jazzmaster do for you? Plenty, if you like the general cut of that classic bright, snappy, jangly Fender sound, but want a slightly throatier bite and a smoother, subtler vibrato action along with it. While Jazzmaster pickups aren't particularly "hotter" than their Strat and Tele counterparts, their design lends a little more thickness to the guitar's sound, which suits many alternative styles extremely well. The Jazzmaster vibrato unit was designed to be Fender's finest of the breed. It's apparently what Leo and Freddie Tavares were originally aiming at with the Strat vibrato, but couldn't quite nail down in time for release. The vibrato itself is fairly smooth and efficient, although tuning instability is sometimes induced by the "rocker" bridge that's partnered with it. A good tech can usually get one of these working its best for you, and many players today have found a great alternative in Mastery's retro-fit replacement bridge, which lets the strings slide in well-rounded saddle grooves, rather than rocking in its entirety. 

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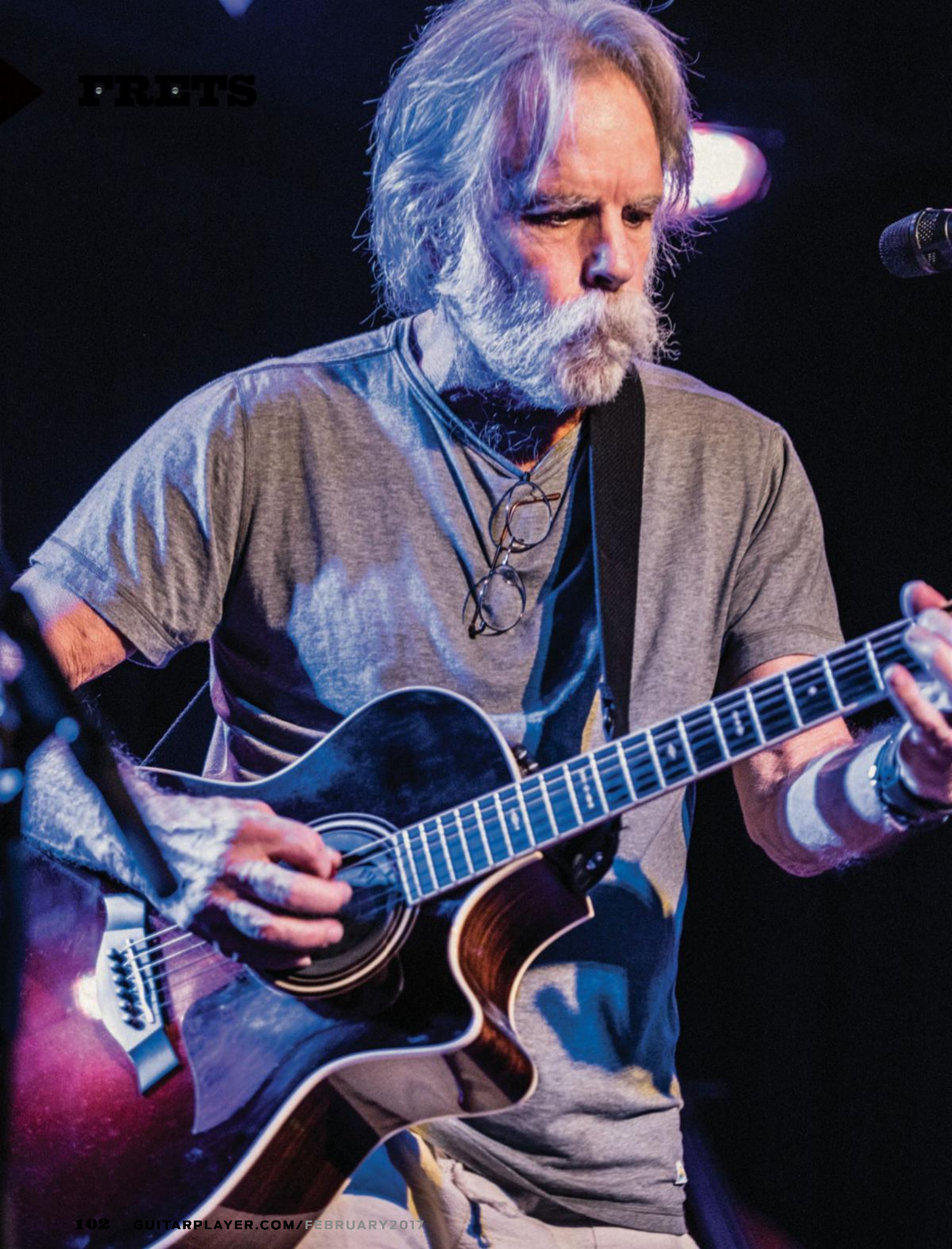
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FRETS





BIG SKY, COWBOY CHORDS, AND TELLING STORIES

BOB WEIR DRAWS ON HIS TEENAGED CAMPFIRE PERFORMANCES FOR *BLUE MOUNTAIN*

BY JIMMY LESLIE

IN THE NOVEMBER 2016 *GUITAR PLAYER* HALL of Fame Awards, Bob Weir was inducted into the Gallery of the Greats along with his former left-hand man, Jerry Garcia. They're infamous for electrifying San Francisco's iconic psychedelic '60s scene, but prior to that, they were a couple of acoustic aficionados playing in Mother McCree's Uptown Jug Champions.

"Jerry was on guitar and banjo," recalls Weir. "I was mostly on washtub bass. I played some jug, and some guitar."

Just before his jug and washtub glory days, Weir spent time as a teenager working on a Wyoming ranch, hanging around campfires and playing cowboy chords accompanying elder storytellers singing traditional western songs. He harkens back to those times on his first solo album of all original music in three decades, *Blue Mountain* [Columbia/Legacy/Roar].

Weir anchors the entire affair on acoustic guitar, with tunes such as "Ki-Yi Bossie" and the title track consisting solely of Weir's plaintive plucking-and-strumming, and earnest vocals. However, much of *Blue Mountain* is layered with electric-guitar

textures by the National's Aaron Dessner and Bryce Dessner, and Steve Kimock lent lovely lap-steel to "Whatever Happened to Rose." Weir partnered with Josh Kaufman on the production, which sounds like a cross between T-Bone Burnett's modern/roots affairs and Beck's *Sea Change*. It's beautiful and melancholy.

Josh Ritter served as Weir's primary lyricist—a role traditionally held by John Perry Barlow, who has had a serious string of health problems. Weir recently threw a benefit for Barlow's mounting health-care expenses at the Sweetwater Music Hall in Mill Valley, California—a classic club near Weir's home that he helped resurrect.

Congrats on being inducted into *GP*'s Gallery of the Greats. Not many rhythm specialists have made it. Can you offer some insights on how to be a rhythm ace?

Thanks. I approach rhythm guitar with the same passion your average lead player approaches his or her instrument. When I'm singing, my guitar playing is the springboard for my vocal, and it's all part of telling the story. If somebody else is telling the

FRETS

BOB WEIR

story, then I listen carefully to what they're saying—whether they're taking a lead or singing. I try to contextualize it with what I'm doing on my guitar, and, at the same time, provide colors they can pick up on to fill out their storytelling. As far as I'm concerned, it's a duet.

How did your campfire jam summers prepare you for life in the Dead?

Most of the old cowboy songs only use two or three chords, so it was pretty easy to intuit what changes were coming up, and when. All I had to do was listen to the story and the melody. That was a huge lesson in ear training and serving where the song wanted to go, rather than what I was actually playing on guitar.

When I wasn't out on the ranch, I was listening to Joan Baez and folk of her ilk—maybe even a little Bob Dylan. They were playing way more developed stuff on the guitar, but none of that was appropriate for what I was doing in the bunkhouse. The old cowpokes would have thought I'd taken leave of my senses—gilding the lily—if I tried to get fancy with any of that stuff, and I would have undergone some abuse [laughs].

Have you ever experimented with open tunings?

The acoustic guitar carries "Cassidy" on my first solo album [Ace, 1972], and I wrote the song in a semi-open tuning. I can't remember the original way I played it, but it was in a tuning something like *DADGAD* that David Crosby showed me. I'm sure he doesn't remember it, because he was all about strange tunings at the time. I went through that phase real quickly, but then bailed on it because it was confounding. I couldn't have a whole stage full of guitars in different tunings—moving back and forth between them, capoing up when we were drifting from key to key, or trying to do a seamless fifth. So I went back to standard tuning, and that's where I've pretty much stayed for the rest of time.

How would you describe your acoustic playing on *Blue Mountain* compared to all the electric ensemble stuff that has been your bread and butter over the years?

I approached most of my acoustic playing on *Blue Mountain* as if I were playing in

an electric ensemble. I'm selecting notes, rather than playing full chords, and I'm arpeggiating most of the time. Each note is important—a little stop in the story. Also, I mostly played and sang at the same time. The whole idea was for it to feel natural.

What's the backstory on the primary guitar you played—the vintage Martin?

According to what's stamped inside, and what I've found online about the serial number—68257—it's a 1937 Martin 00-17. It's made of all mahogany. I don't think they'd come out with the mahogany-and-koa wood combination yet, and I prefer full mahogany anyway, because it's crisp and clean in the high end. Koa wood rings a little more in the upper midrange. I found it in the classified ads, and picked it up in the East Bay 12 to 15 years ago for \$1,100. At that price, I figured it was beat up in some way. Sure enough, the neck had been pulled way forward, and it was unplayable. But just by thumping on the box, I could tell it had the sound I was looking for.

You were specifically after a small-bodied sound?

Right. I wanted a tight-sounding guitar. For instance, dreadnoughts and all the famous big-bodied guitars were developed to sound full as an accompaniment instrument without a bass. As soon as you add a bass to the equation, you're in a pissing match with it. I figured that out real quick when I was doing a duet deal with Rob Wasserman. So I became fond of smaller-bodied guitars for that situation—not lacking in low end, but a tighter low end. The double- and triple-Os have that. So I zeroed in on that kind of body style, as I didn't have a small-bodied acoustic of any sort. I'd been nosing around for a while when that Martin came up. I sent it back to the factory, and they did a really nice job of resetting the neck.

How much of the *Blue Mountain* music did you sketch out on acoustic guitar before entering the collaborative process?

Most of it was back and forth, but "Lay My Lily Down" sprang out of that guitar all by itself. We created the song around that particular lick.

Have you been using the vintage Martin on tour?

No. I haven't done that yet. I'm reluctant to subject it to the road, and I've got the prototype for a new pickup system currently mounted in a Huss & Dalton mini jumbo. They make a hell of an instrument, and it has been my go-to acoustic onstage, but it's much bigger than the Martin.

What's going on with the pickup system?

I'm working with David Koltai (Pigtronix/Zinky/Supro), my longtime engineer Mike McGinn, and the folks at D'Angelico on a system. We're basically combining an internally mounted, omnidirectional microphone with a bridge pickup. We cut the entire low end out of the microphone signal, and all of the high end out of the pickup, to get a three-dimensional tone that sounds like a miked guitar, but it can get considerably louder onstage.

What's the latest on your signature-guitar deal with D'Angelico?

We're doing the electrics first. They will combine various traits from a bunch of my favorite semi-hollowbody instruments, including a tremolo system. The first one is my signature SS. It's coming out at the Winter NAMM show, and I think I'm going to be there. I've been touring with one. The acoustic will wait until after we get the electric out.

Can you preview the acoustic?

D'Angelico has a concert body style, which is close to the triple-O body size I like. We haven't really gotten busy yet, but we're planning to look into the possibility of doing a graphite-reinforced neck, so that we can use tonewoods for the neck. We'll do that on the electrics, as well. The electric model will be constantly refined. We're also going to try an arched back on the acoustic, because I've had good luck designing guitars in the past with that feature.

What sonic properties does an arched back have?

It makes the tone a little more cello-like, and it makes the sound project a little better.

Are you planning to continue balancing dates with your *Blue Mountain* band and Dead & Company?

Yes. The plan is to do a bit of both, and maybe some other stuff, as well. I'm hoping to have the new acoustic ready for the summer. ■

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FRETS

REVIEW



BREEDLOVE OREGON CONCERTO E



TESTED BY ART THOMPSON

AS PART OF BREEDLOVE'S "BIG SOUND" debut for 2017, the Oregon Series guitars—available in Concert, Dreadnought, and Concerto body styles—feature solid myrtlewood for the sides and back, and are paired with either a solid Sitka spruce or myrtlewood top. If you're unfamiliar with myrtlewood, it's a tonewood with a visually striking grain that grows primarily in a 90-square-mile area along the Pacific coast. These trees take around 100 years to mature, and the varying climatic conditions, as well as the mineral composition

of the soil, play large roles in what gives the wood such a distinctive appearance and quality of sound.

The Concerto on review here is a finely crafted guitar that features a gloss-finished body and a satin-finished maple neck that is topped with an ebony fingerboard carrying 20 nicely worked frets. The graining of the wood looks stunning, and the décor is tastefully rendered via a sweet looking herringbone rosette, an ebony headstock facing, and black binding with herringbone trim on the top. The guitar

tuned up easily courtesy of the sealed, nickel-plated machines, and the compensated bridge, in concert with a Tusq nut, provides excellent intonation. Capping things off, a spot-on factory setup gives the Concerto a super-nice playing feel along with tuneful intonation in all regions of the fretboard.

Our review Concerto has a Sitka spruce top that has been Sound Profiled to work efficiently with the myrtlewood back (see sidebar for a closer look at Sound Profiling), and the result is a big, gratifying



Operations Manager Miles Benefield taps a set of top wood to capture frequency readings via computer software.



Breedlove's Sound Profiling

Ever wonder why acoustic guitars—often the same model made by the *same* company—all sound a little different, with some being more “magical” than others? You’re not alone. Many builders and researchers have pondered the same question, and most agree that part of the answer lies in the fact that woods vary in consistency from tree to tree, and even differ in what part of the tree they come from—for example, the lower areas are typically denser and harder

than wood from the higher sections. This poses a potential problem when trying to determine the ideal thickness for such critical parts as the top and back, as obviously holding to one specification isn’t going to work optimally all the time.

Breedlove’s answer to this is a process called “Sound Profiling,” and all of the company’s “Big Sound” guitars made at its Bend, Oregon, factory undergo this procedure to allow the tops and backs to work as harmoniously as possible. So what is Sound Profiling? Basically it involves tapping the top sets by hand to activate their frequency readings, which are then captured in a computer program. By analyzing the data and doing some calculations based on the density of the specific set, Breedlove knows precisely

how thick each soundboard needs to be in order to achieve a desired resonant frequency. A similar process is applied to the back set, and the end result is essentially a “marrying” of the top and back to maximize the instrument’s efficiency, which not only results in more volume and projection, but also a more complex and nuanced tone. The process adds time to construction, but Sound Profiling ultimately allows for improved tone and greater consistency between all of Breedlove’s Big Sound series guitars. —AT

FRETS

BREEDLOVE

tone that's balanced, complex, and endlessly musical. It sustains well and delivers a surprising amount of volume given its relatively compact size (15" wide at the lower bout, 9" at the waist, and 3.75" deep). The Concerto's quick response and firm, stringy presentation makes it well suited for fingerstylists and flatpickers, and a highly capable performance tool whether you're into solo playing or working in an acoustic ensemble. I should mention that the L.R. Baggs Element Active System is a great choice for this guitar, as it uses an ultra-thin film transducer that responds to the top's motion instead of depending on downward string pressure from the bridge, so there's minimal "quackiness," even when striking the strings hard. In tandem with Baggs' Class-A discrete endpin preamp, which has soundhole-mounted Volume and Tone controls, it's snap to get a natural tone though standard and dedicated acoustic amps, or when running direct into a P.A.

An impressive instrument on many levels, the Oregon Concerto moves the value needle northward for its excellent sound,

playability, and craftsmanship. Attractively priced, too, for an American-made guitar, it's an easy choice for an Editors' Pick Award. ■

Oregon Concerto E Sitka Spruce-Myrtlewood

CONTACT	breedlovemusic.com
PRICE	\$1,999 street
NUT WIDTH	1.75" Tusq
NECK	Hard rock maple, bolt-on
FRETBOARD	Ebony, 25.5" scale
FRETS	20
TUNERS	Breedlove nickel-plated with ebony buttons
BODY	Solid myrtlewood back and sides, Sitka spruce top
BRIDGE	Breedlove Delta, African ebony
PICKUPS	L.R. Baggs EAS-VTC
CONTROLS	Volume, Tone
FACTORY STRINGS	D'Addario EXP-16
WEIGHT	4.7 lbs
BUILT	USA
KUDOS	Superb sound and playability. Excellent construction.
CONCERNS	None.

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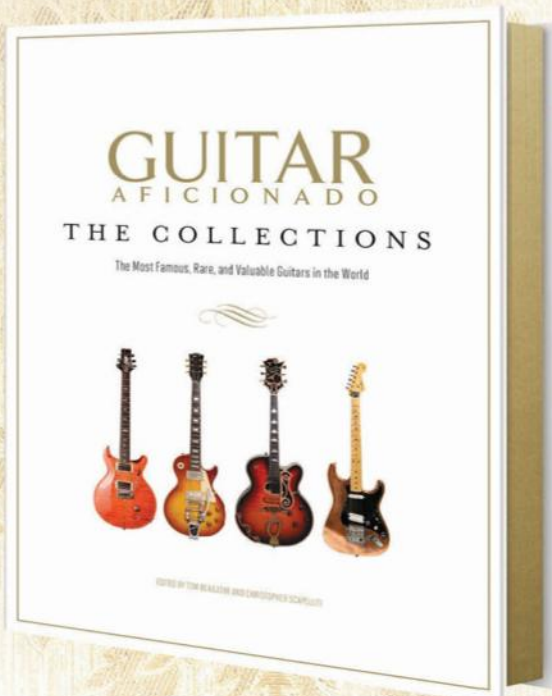
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TOM SMOTHERS

February 1969

This is the slippery, sliding, satiristic, smothered Tom Smothers of *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour*, whose one-time ambition—to play guitar with his own orchestra—was cut short by a thing called success. But success usually has simple beginnings.

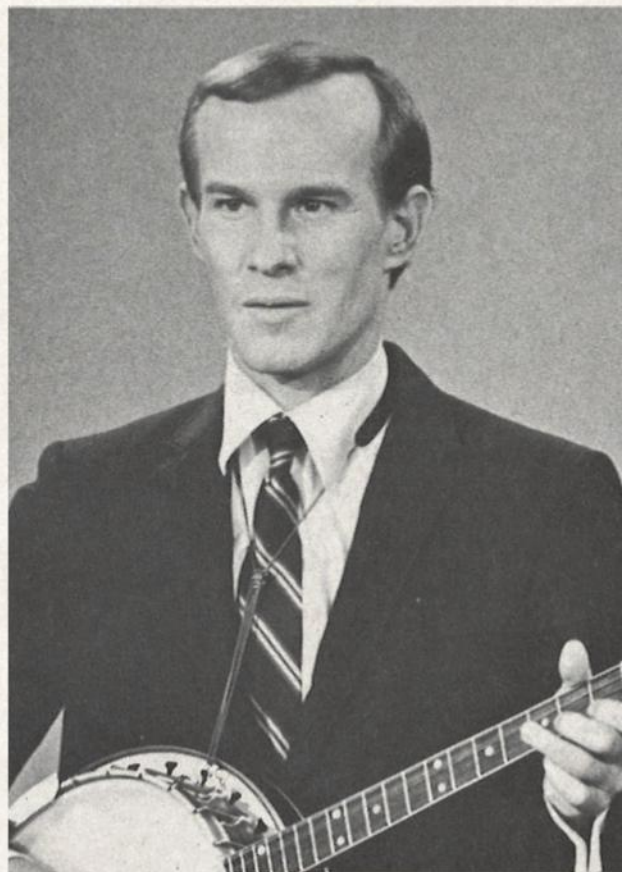
"I got my first guitar when I was in the sixth grade, and I also bought a guitar chord book and learned from there."

Most of Tom's guitar education just happened when he was doing a song and needed a chord to complete the music. Gradually, he accumulated a mass of chords, and got plenty of experience playing at dances and club functions. Around the mid-1950s, Tom was playing his "big gold Gibson with double pickups. I played some lead and stuff like that. I played that Gibson even when we started our trio at San Jose State."

The trio had their first important performance on a weekend at the Kerosene Club on Race Street in San Jose, California. This club was situated in a very rustic cannery-row setting. At the time, Tom was attending San Jose State College, where he was majoring in business administration and advertising. The trio then moved on to San Francisco, where they auditioned at the Purple Onion and got a job.

"We decided to drop out of school and give it a whirl," Tom says. "I was playing that gold Gibson in the trio at first, because it was the only instrument I had. I kept it until I had to hock it to get some money to stay in school. At that time, I purchased an \$18 Japanese guitar that had frets so far up from the fingerboard that I had grooves in the tips of my fingers. I played this guitar even when we went down to San Jose, and I bought a Martin for \$13 a month. Dicky bought his bass at the same place, and it took him two years to pay it off."

"I used to be a pretty good guitar player, I guess, but the comedy in the act took over. The guitar became secondary. I usually play a hard pick—a Nick Lucas—because when we are at a concert, the guitar sometimes has to play through the vocal mic, and I have to really boom it out to reach the



crowd. I chose a Guild acoustic, and strung it with the heaviest-gauge strings I could find, because it cuts through really well.

"I really don't have any advice for guitarists, but, to performers, I have a suggestion. There are too many people who prepare, prepare, and prepare, and before they do it on stage, it has already lost communication. If you have something to say, go out and do it when you are *not* ready. When we were at the Purple Onion, we only had five songs, and we went on and came off well. One time, we went on television completely unprepared. We didn't know what we were going to do, we just went on and did our thing, and we found that, pretty soon, you get very professional very quick." —MICHAEL BROOKS



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Tom Smothers' acoustic guitar was just a prop. Not true. As profiled by Michael Brooks in this excerpt from our February 1969 issue, concealed within the comedian's goofy stage persona was a very serious guitarist. —MICHAEL MOLENDEN

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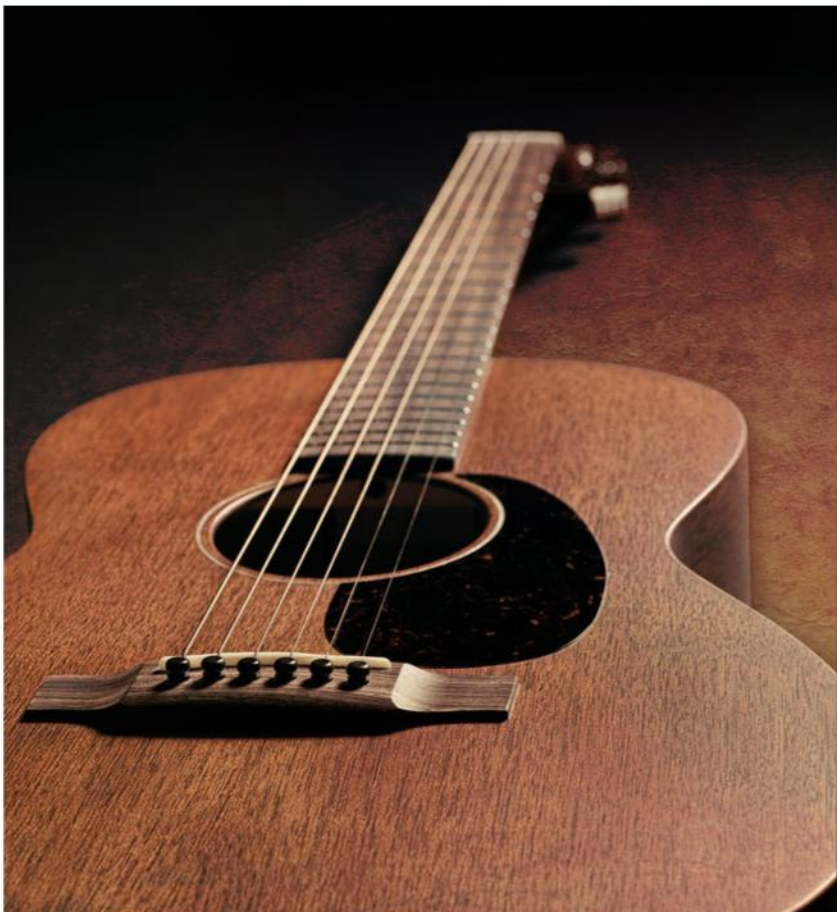
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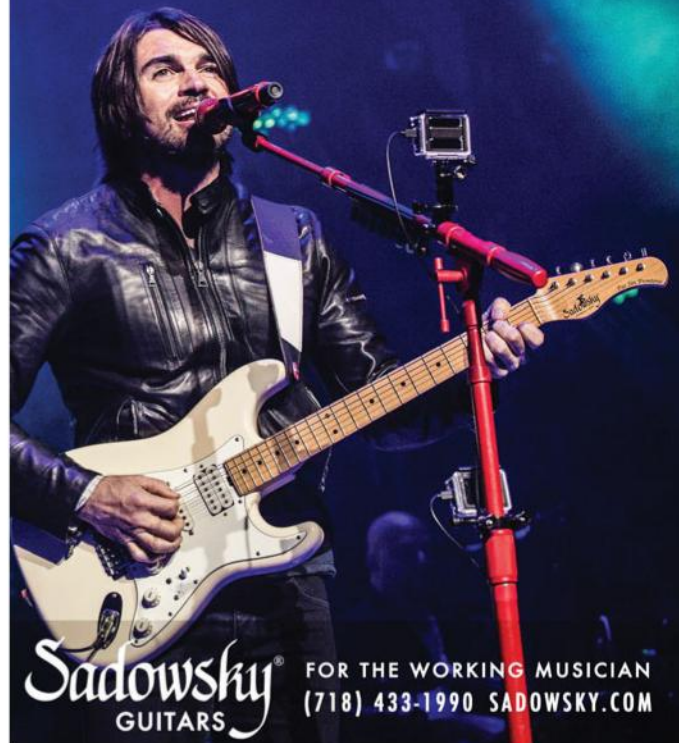


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COVER STORY

BUDDY GUY

Continued from page 60

Jimi Hendrix would tell you that if you check your history. I cut a side at Chess using a whammy bar, but they weren't ready for it. They were like, "Nobody wants to hear that." These days, though, I don't put a whammy bar on my guitars. Honestly, I stopped back when I was using very light strings because it made them break easier, and I couldn't afford to keep buying new ones. Beck puts that whammy in the palm of his hand, and Stevie Ray Vaughan was good with that, too. Stevie, Beck, and Jimi are the best I've ever seen with that. A lot of guitar players couldn't figure out how to work with it, but if you do it right—like Hendrix—it works.

In Carlos Santana's autobiography, *Universal Tone*, he claims that Stevie Ray Vaughan told him that Albert King demanded \$50,000 from Stevie for copping his style—and that Stevie paid it!

That story is new to me, but Albert would sit down and trade licks with Stevie, and he

was the only one. I didn't play a lot with Albert, but we were often on the same show. I'll never forget one time in Montreal when Albert was doing his soundcheck. I was sitting in the audience, and he turned his back to me after he saw me out there. He said, "I ain't going to let you see a damn thing." I had to tell him, "Man, you're left-handed. I can't take sh*t from you no way, because I'm right-handed."

Muddy Waters' influence on your playing is apparent, but it makes me wonder why you've never picked up a slide.

It's because I was always wanted to be like Guitar Slim, and you can't be wild and play a slide. You've got to be precise. You've got to sit there, and make that tone—like Derek Trucks. When I came out, I didn't ever think I was a good guitar player, so I was trying to make people pay attention. I got that from Guitar Slim. I remember when I first saw his show. At the start, all I heard was a guitar. And then he came in the front door playing. I turned to see he had a 150-foot-long cable.

I said, "That's what I want to do. I want to be wild like Guitar Slim, and I want to be able to shake my wrist like B.B. King." But who can?

It seems you may be the very last of the original blues guitarists who moved from the delta to the cities.

It's a little lonesome now. B.B. and I talked about it before he passed away. As a matter of fact, we used to talk about it before Muddy and all of them passed away. They would tell me, "Man, if you outlive me, don't let the blues die." That's exactly what I'm trying to do, and, this year, I did more dates than I've done in a long time.

If there were ever an "Experience Buddy Guy" tour, whom would you like to see on it?

I would invite every guitar player I know. That's why I don't think I would ever have one. There would be no end to the show!

Special thanks to Guy's guitar tech Chris Bynum, as well as his soundperson/tour manager Max Maxson for their insights.



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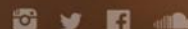
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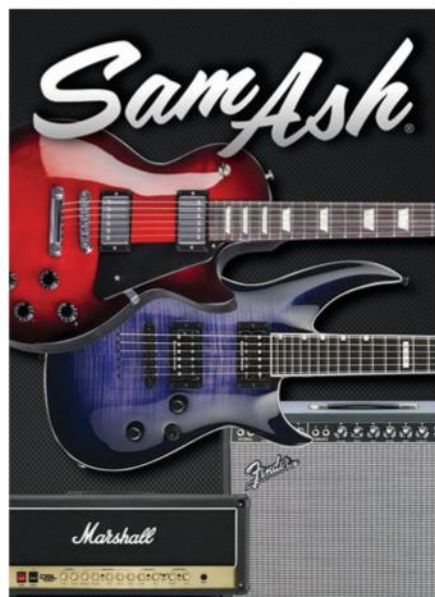
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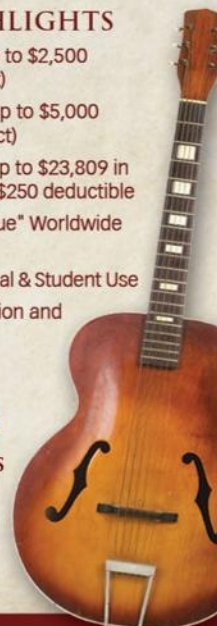
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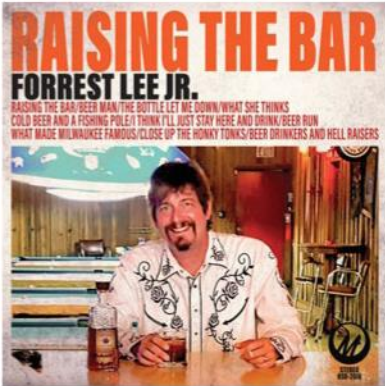
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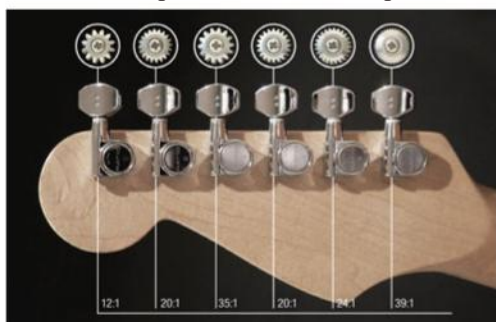
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The guitar moves to the body.

There are two main sources of trouble in honoring this principle: First, the guitar, and second, the guitarist.

Guitars are made for guitar makers, not for guitarists. Plectrum guitar design takes little account of the orthodox player. The main reason for this is the rarity of orthodox players. Generally, players accommodate their playing to suit their guitars. This is reasonable, as their instruments can hardly be denied, but is a poor basis for establishing a practice. It may take years to rectify defects in technique developed on an instrument of poor design or construction. The guitar maker has little information to serve the needs of a proper player without a sound, balanced, personal technique, or access to a player who has it. There is some consensus on left-hand technique, stemming from the classical instrument, although for rock and jazz players this is honored mainly in the breach. There is no consensus on plectrum technique, nor is there a widely accepted contemporary school of playing to establish a standard for the maker. The exception is the celebrity model, designed to meet the idiosyncracies of famous performers. But few famous performers have standard or orthodox techniques, and most pick players are idiosyncratic and pragmatic.

Design is based largely on sound, whether electric or acoustic. The electric guitar has two classic models which widely influence design: the Gibson Les Paul and the Fender Stratocaster. Orthodox considerations of playability dictate that the right arm is supported at the elbow by the guitar. This allows optimum movement of both forearm and wrist. The Les Paul is too small for this, and the compromise is to rest the forearm on the guitar. The Stratocaster, with its larger body and shaped edge, provides more support for the right arm. The weight of the guitar can be easily unbalanced by attachments to the guitar body, such as a vibrato unit. This can alter the position of the guitar on the body and unsettle the equilibrium between the two arms. Classic wide-body acoustic designs, such as Martin's and Gibson's, require compromise in orthodox technique; the wide-body is uncomfortable to play over long periods, and leads to arching in the right wrist. Some accommodations are generally inevitable, mainly in the right arm. The only acoustic guitar I have found which supports my orthodox technique is the Ovation super-shallow

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rounded body.

So, guitar design provides major problems for guitarists keen to establish an efficient practice. In these cases, the principle is:

We honor the principles as best we may.

The second source of trouble is guitarists. We put the guitar in the wrong place and then move to meet it. This puts the instrument before the player, which is a mistake. In Right Practice, we establish our personal equilibrium and then bring the guitar to the guitarist. The height of the guitar is governed by the Position of Readiness: The left hand rises naturally from the elbow to the seventh position, with the thumb in the middle of the back of the neck under the 1st fingertip, and the fingers hovering just above a point between the third and fourth strings.

The height of the guitar body is governed by the support for the right arm at the elbow, with the pick just above a point between the third and fourth strings. The center of gravity is the spine, which is erect—that is, central. From this middle position, both hands are available to move

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to wherever they are called to move. In this ideal position the fingerboard pickup of an electric guitar, or the soundhole of an acoustic, is above the area of the lower breast.

A common fault in placing the guitar on the body is to wear it too low, whether seated or standing. There are two main reasons for this. First, for three decades

groovy photos of rockin' dudes have influenced our sense of placement. We have two simple choices: our playing, or looking like a groovy dude from rock history. Second, if we have no sense of our bodily equilibrium, we won't be aware of our dis-equilibrium. The following are common problems resulting from the guitar being too low.

The angle of the left-hand wrist is extreme, depriving its full flexibility. If the thumb is held in the middle of the neck to allow the fingers to fall vertically onto the strings, the angle of the wrist will be pulled back severely. This pressure on the wrist is restricting and uncomfortable. The left thumb moves up the side of the guitar neck and over the fingerboard's edge. The hand then squeezes to apply pressure to the fingers stopping the notes, and movement of the fingers is greatly impeded.

The guitar supports the right forearm, rather than the elbow. This pinches the flesh and restricts the flow of blood. The picking arc of the elbow is reduced and the wrist strains to compensate, reducing its effectiveness.

The guitar is supported either by a strap or the legs, with or without a footstool. Each has advantages and disadvantages. The first advantage of a strap is that it holds the guitar central to the body. This position is in accord with the spine, arms, and hands. The second advantage is mobility. The disadvantage is the weight on the neck and shoulder muscles, particularly if we play an electric with attachments. The advantage of using the legs is the support they give to the right elbow and to the weight of the guitar. The disadvantages are a lack of mobility and the loss of the middle position.

The disadvantage in resting an electric or acoustic guitar on one leg or the other is that the balance between the arms is upset. The classical approach (on the left leg) is the standard, but this puts the left arm at a disadvantage. The reverse holds for the steel-string acoustic. On the right leg, the right arm is at the disadvantage. For height, we either use a footstool or cross one leg. A footstool is preferable, although it limits our mobility, and a crossed leg is uncomfortable to hold for very long.

Guitar Craft courses are held regularly both in America and Europe. Inquiries may be addressed to: Guitar Craft Services, Rte. 1, Box 278-M, Charles Town, WV 25414.

Former King Crimson guitarist Robert Fripp is currently directing Guitar Craft courses worldwide and playing in the rock group Sunday All Over The World.

ROBERT FRIPP



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THE INTELLIGENT, ERUDITE, AND DELIGHTFULLY OPINIONATED ROBERT FRIPP JOINED THE RANKS OF *Guitar Player* columnists starting with the September 1989 issue. Many of Fripp's columns openly promoted the Guitar Craft courses he was giving worldwide at the time, so, in effect, *GP* readers were provided his thoughtful, strategic, and invaluable guitar treatises for the price of a magazine. —MICHAEL MOLENDRA

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