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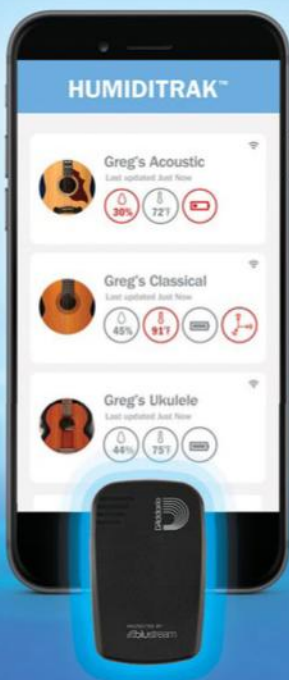
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NOIZE FROM THE EDITOR



HERE'S HOW BAD IT IS. I HAVE A SMALL STORAGE

space for guitars and amps, and I still have a whole bunch of guitars and amps residing in my garage. I have tons of plastic bins stacked up high, each marked in black Sharpie with identifications such as Fuzz Pedals, Distortions and Overdrives, Delays, Modulation FX, Boosts and Preamps, Tuners, Strings, Cables, Misc Accessories, and so on. I have separate pedalboards for small gigs, medium gigs, big gigs, and studio sessions. There are two guitars and a couple of practice amps in my home office. Picks, gaffer's tape, and loose string packs tend to hide in every nook and cranny of the house. I just

came back from Winter NAMM with even more small accessories, as well as electronic press kits and a mental checklist of the new products I'm kind of jonesing for.

Have I lost my mind? I've been in the music industry for more than 40 years. I've seen it all, done most of it, and collected far more different types of guitar gear than Noah would have ever let on his ark. Why do I continue to lust after new stuff?

Well, I probably do have some form of a really awful hoarder's complex—but one that leaves my house relatively clean and stark and devoid of stacked newspapers, old boxes, tunnels made of junk winding through the rooms, and all the stuff that scares the crap out of me when I happen to watch a few minutes of those reality shows on "real" hoarders. But, um, I'm still holding on to a lot of gear that I probably don't need to have hanging around. Or do I?

I think I actually know when this all started. I was early into my life-long love affair with the guitar, when some other newbie guitarist stated with all the arrogance he could muster, "Man, you're not a real player unless you have some effects going on." That hurt my feelings, of course—especially as I didn't know what he was talking about. So I checked out the little glass cabinet in my local guitar shop—which I had never noticed before—and I saw my first Cry Baby wah. It took a big bite out of my newspaper-route savings, but I was finally a "real" player with a cool effect. And—shazam!—the wah did change the way I approached songwriting, solos (such as they were back in my crummy fumble-y days), and rhythm guitar. It inspired me to try new things and seek out different sounds. These pedals were magic! But they were like a drug, too, and whenever I hit a creative drought on the guitar, I had to look for another fix.

Guitar Player helped me immensely back then, because it told me what the pros were using. I didn't have to depend on the arrogant snob box anymore. In fact, I could tell him about the cool tools Hendrix, Page, Beck, and other rock stars were using to make their deliciously wonderful and seductive albums. So I succumbed to a lust for various pedals by BOSS, MXR, Electro-Harmonix, Ibanez, and so many other makers.

I'm still that guy today. I love how scores of pedals, different guitars, crazy software tools, and hordes of tube, solid-state, and digital amps still inspire me to explore new sounds, new ideas, and new musical strategies. I am at peace with the fact that my brain alone is not wired to conceptualize uniqueness from just a plank of wood and six strings. But hand me some new gear that I haven't tried before, and every neuron in my skull will fire off like a Fourth of July celebration. The gear enhances my creativity and my growth as a musician. Curiosity is keeping this cat alive and inspired and happy.

So, yeah, I know what I'll be chasing down the next few months. Please check out the new-gear reports in this issue—or peruse *GP*'s NAMM news online—and send your wish list to me at mmolenda@nbmedia.com.

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James Hetfield and **Kirk Hammett** have come a very, very long way from playing crap clubs in San Francisco's East Bay. They are wealthy men, their band sells gazillions of records and fills stadiums, and they own tons of cool instruments that many of us would die to have in our collections. But none of that matters when they plug in their guitars and play. This is a story about how passion can transcend accomplishment, and still—after years and years of success and tours and recording studios—drive those who love the guitar to get chills every time they pick up their instruments. These guys mean it, man! Bonus: Hammett talks about his acquisition of **Peter Green**'s "magic" Les Paul. (Spoiler Alert: He means to play it—not hide it in a display case.)

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(from February 1973)

Guitar Player
50
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THE FIRST FIVE YEARS

As part of *Guitar Player's* 50th Anniversary, we are celebrating the advertisers who believed in founder Bud Eastman's mad idea, and supported the infant magazine through its first five years, 1967-1972. They are: Acoustic Amps, Alfred Publications, AKG, Altec-Lansing, Ampeg, Bigsby, Bill Russell Capo, Black Diamond Strings, Carlsboro Amps, Coral, Danelectro, Darco Strings, Dunlop, Eko, Electro-Harmonix, Electro-Voice, Epiphone, Ernie Ball, Fender, GHS Strings, Gibson, Gretsch, Guild, Hagstrom Guitars, Hallmark, Hammond Organ (Leslie), Harmony Guitars, Heathkit, Hohner, JBL, Kustom, La Bella Strings, Martin, Mel Bay Publications, Messenger Guitars, Mosrite, Ovation, Peavey, Randall, Rickenbacker, Robb Guitars, Rowe/DeArmond, Sigma, Standel, Sunn, TWA, Vox, Yamaha. Thank you all!

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GP COMMUNITY

PEER COMMENT

BY THOM PESTA



I'VE BEEN AROUND SINCE GP'S BEGINNING.

Here's a photo of my band, the World, in 1967, and another from 2016, where we did an "impromptu" performance at Woodstock on the spot where the original concert stage was located (I'm third from the left). Cross that off our bucket list, as we missed playing the original concert somehow. Throughout my career and all of its gear—I just bought my second PRS to go along with my Marshall half-stack, Fender Bluesmaster, Orange Micro Dark Terror, and Fuchs Overdrive—I could count on *Guitar Player* to keep me informed of what was new, what was hot, and what was not.

I depend on *GP* for reviews, instruction, and entertainment. You've never let me down. Congratulations on 50 great years.



OOPS!

So who was that "mystery" guitarist crowd surfing atop a sea of fans on our March 2017 cover? I guess we forgot to tell everyone (although we did post his identity on our website and Instagram page). He's **Cole Becker** from the Oakland, California, band **SWMRS**—which also includes Joey Armstrong (who is the son of Green Day's Billie Joe Armstrong), Max Becker, and Seb Mueller.

DANA'S GP50 GEAR GIVEAWAY!

THIS MONTH, I'VE PICKED OUT FOUR ROCKIN' PEDALS FOR our monthly gear giveaway celebrating *Guitar Player*'s 50th anniversary. From **Deep Trip**, we have the Hell Bender (one of Editor Boy's fave fuzzes) and Bog, and **Jam Pedals** offered up their Red Muck and Big Chill.

To win one of these pedals, simply send an email with the subject line "GP50 DeepTrip Jam" to mmolenda@nbmedia.com. The deadline for entries is April 20th, 2017. We'll select the winners at random (one winner per pedal), and announce their names in an upcoming issue. Keep in mind that all contest gear was actually reviewed by the *GP* staff, and will be "as is." In addition, please don't forget to thank *GP*'s manufacturing partners who have generously donated gear so that we may "gift" them to our fabulous readers.

—DANA PARKER

VENICE PARKER



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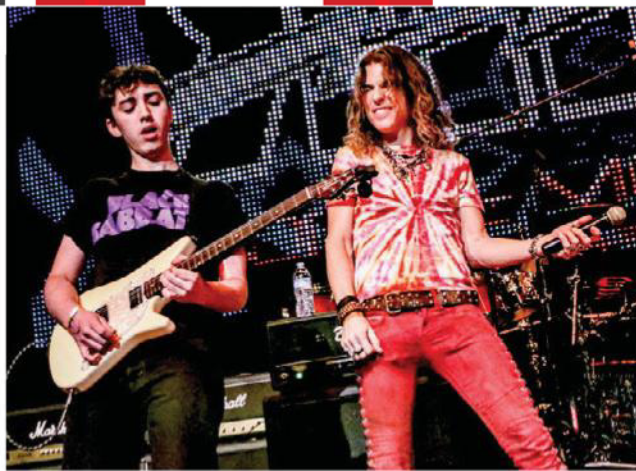
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R G 3 0 T H A N N I V E R S A R Y

RIFFS



Emanuel on the red carpet with Leighsa Montrose.



The Rock the Nation Award winner performing “Paper Money” with former Montrose vocalist Keith St. John.



Skye Emanuel Wins 2017 Ronnie Montrose Rock the Nation Award

BY MICHAEL MOLEND

AS PART OF *GUITAR PLAYER*'S ONGOING “Play It Forward” initiative, the magazine seeks to recognize talented teenaged guitarists. One of these endeavors is the Ronnie Montrose Rock the Nation Award, honoring young guitarists who aspire to greatness—which was founded by myself and Leighsa Montrose in 2014.

As the award also pays tribute to the late Ronnie Montrose’s desire to educate children about music—as well as celebrate his formidable legacy as a guitarist—we have been fortunate to announce the 2016 and 2017 Rock the Nation honorees at vocalist/event producer Keith St.

QUICK TIP

DYNAMIC EFFECTS

“I like effects and guitar sounds constantly changing right along with the dynamics of a song. For example, I want the choruses sounding completely different from the verses. I hate it when a guitar tone is the same throughout an entire set. I dance on my pedalboard so much during our shows that my muscle memory is locked into specific pedal positions. It’s instinctive. If I moved a pedal to a different spot, or if I changed out a pedal for something new, I fear that I’d be totally lost.”

—TOM EDWARDS, GUITARIST AND MUSICAL DIRECTOR FOR ADAM ANT, WHO DIED TRAGICALLY OF SUSPECTED HEART FAILURE AT 41 YEARS OLD ON JANUARY 25, 2017.



BY JIM CAMPILONGO

**THE PAUL BUTTERFIELD BLUES**

Band released the great *East West* in 1966. It was mostly composed of curated blues tracks played with reverence and expertise by Paul Butterfield on vocals and harmonica, Mike Bloomfield playing a Les Paul through a Twin Reverb, Elvin Bishop on guitar and vocals, Mark Naftalin on piano and organ, and the rhythm section of bassist Jerome Arnold and drummer Billy Davenport. There are great covers on *East West*. In the Butterfield band's hands, "Mary Mary"—penned by the Monkees' Michael Nesmith—sounds as if the Yardbirds were an American group, and "Never Say No" features a terrific performance by Elvin Bishop that feels so molasses slow, it almost threatens to stop dead in its tracks. But, to me, the real star of the show is the 13-minute instrumental track "East West."

"East West" is a musical journey with different sections constructed like the acts of a play. At 2:48, Bloomfield bursts out of the gate like a wild Arabian horse as he churns out a Middle Eastern solo that sounds sonically mystical. One of the amazing things is the energy level never ceases until the explosive finish at the seven-minute mark. During this solo, Bloomfield never channels sitar in a hippie-dippy, "Down in Monterey" style—it's muscular, explosive, fiery, and dead serious. At the time, this was my first exposure to droning modal guitar playing, and it inspired hours of playing along with the album. Although, I didn't know it at the time, Bloomfield was mostly—it's hard to narrow it down to one thing—super-imposing *D* harmonic minor over an *A*

The Paul Butterfield Blues Band

East West

pedal. It's fantastic playing that still holds up 50 years later.

I've applied Bloomfield's influence on my own albums—actually, it creeps out on almost everything—but the tracks "Manic Depression" on *Dream Dictionary*, and "Backburner" from *Orange*, all display *blatant* Bloomfield-isms. But what I learned from Michael Bloomfield doesn't stop at "East West."

I think it was around 1975, when my pal Dennis Garibaldi and I went to San Rafael to hear Bloomfield. We expected to hear a full band playing *Super Sessions*, or, in the best-case scenario, an "East West" modal jam that would last hours. Instead, we found ourselves in a pizza parlor with a dozen or so attendees, and a solitary Michael Bloomfield with an acoustic guitar and a movie projector. As I was a teenager with bigger than life expectations, I was immediately disappointed.

After playing one or two acoustic-blues pieces, Bloomfield showed a film on a 16mm projector. His intention was to expose the audience to the blues music he loved. It was a perfectly timed experience for me. As the projector clicked away, Bloomfield told us about the blues artists in the film. The very next day, I bought an armful of LPs that I still have today. Muddy Waters, Hound Dog Taylor, Lightning Hopkins, and the list went on. That evening made an indelible mark on my musicality, and, to this day, I've felt a debt of gratitude to Michael Bloomfield's passion, knowledge, and generosity. ■

John's Ronnie Montrose Remembered concerts during Winter NAMM. This year, the show was held January 21, at Santa Ana's Yost Theater, and featured rockers such as Howard Leese, Brad Gillis, David Ellefson, and Rudy Sarzo performing Montrose songs in the guitarist's honor.

St. John had actually recommended Los Angeles guitarist Skye Emanuel, 17, and in a wonderful example of "it was fated to happen," Emanuel was ultimately selected as *GP*'s 2017 Ronnie Montrose Rock the Nation Award winner. The young player also won a spot on the Ronnie Montrose Remembered stage (performing "Paper Money"), a groovy gold medal (gotta have those bragging rights—he earned it), and a soon-to-be announced prize package.

Emanuel's current rig includes an Ernie Ball Music Man Albert Lee model and a Fender Richie Kotzen Telecaster (both strung with Ernie Ball Regular Slinkys, gauged .010-.046), a Mesa/Boogie 50 Caliber Plus, a Dunlop Cry Baby Mini Wah, a TC Electronic Spark Booster, and assorted Dirty Boy pedals ("Hands down, the best pedals around").

"My biggest inspiration is Brian May," says Emanuel. "I love his style, tone, riffs, and everything about him. Other major influences of mine include Blues Saraceno, Eddie Van Halen, and Richie Kotzen. Watching people play the guitar when I was younger was enough to make me want to do it myself. The first time I plugged into an amp, I was hooked. The idea of being able to play and progress fascinated me, and I haven't been able to put the instrument down since. I like to say, 'Love what you do, love what you play, and make it all count.'"

Emanuel joins past Rock the Nation honorees Max Lazarus (2014) and Jess Araten and Geddy Franco (2016). ■

Resurrecting a Lost Classic

BY MICHAEL MOLEND



Mike Somavilla peers between Terry Dolan (left) and John Cipollina in 1988.

LAST YEAR, THE MUSIC MEDIA LAUDED the decades-delayed release of a lost classic—Terry Dolan's self-titled 1972 "debut" album that never debuted. The San Francisco guitarist/songwriter looked to have a sure thing at the time, with songs produced by Nicky Hopkins and Pete Sears, and a studio band that included the Pointer Sisters as background vocalists, drummer Prairie Prince, percussionist Spencer Dryden, bassist Lonnie Turner, and guitarists John Cipollina, Greg Douglass, and Neal Schon. Why the album was shelved remains a mystery, but the reason you can finally hear it is due to the unwavering efforts of Dolan's former fan-club team member and long-time manager, Mike Somavilla. Here, Somavilla recounts his story of saving a lost treasure.

So there's no idea what happened back in 1972?

Not really. Warner Brothers cancelled his recording contract in 1972, and the record was

shelved in '73. Terry had gone on a vacation to the East Coast to visit family, and he came back and was wondering, "What's going on with my record?" He called Warner Brothers, and they were like, "Oh, don't you know? We dropped you."

When did you first hear it?

I heard side one when I was still living in Virginia, because we did some fan club releases on cassette. I loved it. In fact, I loved Terry's music so much that I decided I needed to be in San Francisco permanently, so I moved out here in 1987—ten days before my 30th birthday. Terry called me, and said, "Hey Mike, I've got a birthday present for you. Come by and pick it up." And he gave me one of the test pressings of the album.

Did he know that you wanted to get the album released somehow?

In 1989, I told him I was contacting Warner Brothers to try to get his record back, and he said, "Well, good luck. Have fun. Have at it."

How did Warner Brothers react?

They ignored me. I tried again in 1991, and



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they said, "You misread the contract. It belongs to us in perpetuity." I thought, "Okay, let me regroup." In 2002, I tried again, and I almost had it out, but my backer lost money in the stock market and had to pull his support. Then, in 2011, I met George Wallace from High Moon Records, and I played him Terry's album. He said, "I've got to put this out." George was able to license the record from Warners, and they actually sent us the original master tape. They also gave me access to all of the original artwork and photos. When they shelved the record, they just put all the promo materials in a box and filed it away. It was quite a find.

Of course, the sad part of the story is that Terry passed away in January 2011, and he never saw his album released.

He was definitely aware that High Moon Records were going to put it out, but he didn't live to see it get released.

Man, I have to commend your dogged determination to get Terry's album out to the public. What drove you through all the years and all of the disappointments?

I'm a "never say die" guy. Terry was a good friend of mine, and he gave me my start in the business. I also felt that it was a great album, and it should have been out in 1973. I mean, it would have totally changed Terry's life if it had come out then. But for whatever reason, it didn't, and I couldn't just let such really great music—and the work of all of those great players—stay hidden. Also, it's nice to think that Terry is probably up in heaven dancing and smiling that his record finally saw the light of day. ■

Musical Mouthpieces

BY MICHAEL A. ACZON

“LET ME DO THE TALKING” ARE FIVE WORDS YOU LIKELY heard for the first time from an older sibling when you were about to get into trouble for some childhood misdeed. As you progress musically, the opportunities to have others represent you will similarly arise. Knowing who these representatives are, what their roles are, when you need them, and how to make best use of them is crucial to your success as an independent musician.

Booking Agent. The sole job of a booking agent is to get gigs for musicians. In order to keep a high standard of professional practices, some states require booking agents to be licensed in order to represent talent. An agent is different from a talent booker who works for a venue, or a concert promoter who are “buyers” that hire musicians for gigs.

Manager. Often referred to as the CEO of a musician’s business, a manager works closely with musicians with long-term goals in mind. Managers help musicians develop short- and long-term strategies, make industry contacts, build a business team, and coordinate the efforts to create and build an audience and a career for a musician.

Lawyer. Lawyers represent and advise musicians on legal matters on a case-by-case basis. While most known for the representation of musicians for entertainment law matters dealing with negotiating contracts and industry-related lawsuits, lawyers are

called on for a variety of issues ranging from criminal matters to advising musicians on writing their wills.

Deal-maker/Connector/Consultant. There are multiple titles for the go-between who “knows somebody” that can move a musician’s career forward. Ranging from casual acquaintances to established music industry executives, these connectors are of varying levels of experience, professionalism, and integrity.

Regardless of who you allow to represent you, here are some key questions to consider and clarify when letting someone else do the talking for you:

- What is the scope of the representative’s agreement with you? Is it to broker a deal, book you for the next three years, or assemble your band and find a record label? The clearer the job description you can articulate, the more professional the individual you attract to represent you will be.
- What are the limits of the representative’s authority? Are there geographical limits or time limits that they get in order to represent you? Can they speak on your behalf, obligate you to contracts, or receive money on your behalf?
- What do you know about their reputation? Remember—your reputation is carried along with the reputation of the person representing you. Are they transparent about their reputation? Do they encourage you to check out references?
- Is there an expectation of payment for the representative’s services? If so, are you both clear about how much the payment is to be, as well as where the money will come from to pay for those services?

The clearer your idea of what you want from your career, the better prepared your team of representatives will be to help get you there. ■

SESSION FILE

Peter Gabriel’s First Solo Album

BY STEVE HUNTER

OVER THE NEXT FEW COLUMNS, I’D LIKE TO talk about Peter Gabriel’s first solo album, which is sometimes called the “Car Album” because of the cover artwork. It was a fabulous experience working on that record, and I learned a great deal.

When producer Bob Ezrin called me about this record, I was excited about the work, but I didn’t know much about Peter Gabriel. I knew he had been the lead singer with Genesis, but I hadn’t really heard any of their music—even though I loved the title of *The Lamb Lies Down on Broadway*. I did know that if Bob was into doing it, it would be a great project.

I had been living in Toronto because we were doing a lot of work there, so all I had to do was take the tube to the studio. Bloody cold up there in the winter, though. Bob filled me in on how the record was going to be recorded, and I really liked the idea. There would be eight



musicians on the basic track, including Jozef Chirowski on keys, Larry Fast on synth, Allan Schwartzberg on drums, Jimmy Maelen on percussion, Tony Levin on bass, Robert Fripp on guitar, Peter on keys or piano, and me on various guitars. Needless to say, it was a pretty crowded studio, but it’s quite satisfying to play with that many musicians on a basic track—very much like recording a live album. Peter would almost always do a scratch vocal while we recorded, so we had a good strong

sense of the song. It was pretty damn cool.

Many of the songs were quite complex, and I sometimes felt a bit intimidated. But then I would remember working on Jack Bruce’s *Out of the Storm* album, and how I was able to figure something out. And, truth be told, I loved the challenge. I guess, at some point, you need to learn to just trust yourself.

Next month, I’ll start discussing some of the album’s songs, which, I hope, will give you a sense of the challenges, but also the fun I had, as well as what it was like playing with these incredible players. ■



Victoria 1972



SECOND BILLED TO JAMES TAYLOR IN HIS LAST GIG AT the Fillmore East, or co-billed with Tim Hardin at the Gaslight, or singing in the square at San Francisco's Cannery, or the final Thanksgiving supper with Bill Graham at the Fillmore West, or on one of her two albums on San Francisco Records (distributed by Atlantic), you might have seen or heard of Victoria, an emerging young folk singer/guitarist. Victoria differs from the dynamic trio—Mitchell/Baez/Collins—in her use of highly dissonant sounds and abstracted chording.

How did you go about learning the instrument?

I love the guitar as an instrument, and I love to compose on

it, but I never had formal instruction. When I learn something, it's because I have spent a week with a really good guitar player, with my hands glued to the fretboard and my eyes glued to the guitarist's hands. I like that my playing is fresh that way—it's not current by any kind of style, and I do weird things in songs occasionally just because I don't know what I'm doing.

What about your chord structures? Is it a conscious thought for you to try to make a chord sound as dissonant as possible?

When I first began writing, I would force myself to play into dissonance, because I was into free music, and I thought it was a cop out to go into formal or traditional chord structures for a song. And that hung me up for a long time, because I was forcing myself to do something. It was always an exercise in every tune, and the tune never grew out of itself, but out of some concept I was trying to write into it. So those songs weren't that great. They weren't that real somehow, the dissonant chords. But I still like a chord placed in a song sometimes that makes you feel an odd way.

What kinds of guitars do you use?

I have a Martin 000-28 and a Marcelo Barbero.

What is it like making an album?

The thing is that you are going to make an album—no matter what it costs in sneers and objections and everything—so don't put anything down until you feel at home. If you have to bring in Tiffany lamps and a bathtub full of marshmallows to get off in the studio, do it, because there is no use wasting everybody's money and time singing when you're uptight, because it sounds like it. Whatever it takes, you have to be comfortable and feel righteous before you make a note. That is something I really believe in, and I learned it at a great cost.

When you perform live, do you feel that the musical quality goes up as the intensity increases?

It does for me. I groove on danger and any kind of weird stimulus that might take me out of myself.

What about audience communication?

It's very important—essential. When I'm not making it, they know it and I know it, and it's dreadful. I opened for James Taylor at the Fillmore East, and the audience communication that night was incredible, because they were hostile. From the time I went out, they said, "We want James!" But after two songs they died down, and at the end, I got an encore. That was the most flexible audience I have ever worked with, because they did a complete turnaround. Usually, when you have a hostile audience they stay hostile. —EXCERPTED FROM MICHAEL PIERCE'S

PROFILE IN THE APRIL 1972 ISSUE.



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Music for Troubled Times

ALTER BRIDGE EXPLORES THE SOUNDS OF DISILLUSIONMENT

BY MICHAEL MOLENDRA

AS STRANGE AS IT MAY SEEM FOR A world-class band, Alter Bridge completed its fifth studio album, *The Last Hero* [Caroline/Napalm], almost as a vanity project. When they started tracking with producer Michael “Elvis” Baskette in 2015, they had no management, no record company, and no budget, so they sold guitars provided by PRS along with other memorabilia to finance the album. Happily, *The Last Hero* emerged in late 2016, because there are tons of heavy, strange, beautiful, and atmospheric guitar parts all over the record. Before heading out to tour behind the new album in 2017, guitarist Mark Tremonti and guitarist/vocalist Myles Kennedy discussed how they approached their collaborative guitar parts, developed their tones, and messed with convention.

I was really impressed with all the emotional shifts during the intro solo to “Show Me a Leader.”

Tremonti: The solo before the song really starts is Myles’. I take over for the later solo section.

Kennedy: Well, thank you. I’m glad you liked that. If I remember correctly, I was on tour with Slash, and I was basically being held prisoner in my hotel room with a nasty cold. I thought, “Well, I’m going to take this time to be productive,” and that was where the genesis of that idea came from. A lot of times, you have a guitar in your hands and you never really know where you’re going to end up. You just try and tap into something, and, fortunately, on that day, I landed on the concept for the intro solos.

You know, the solos are so seamless on this record that you guys almost sound like twin brothers. It’s hard to tell you apart at times.

Tremonti: I think we sound more similar on this record because it’s the first time Myles put all his solos together before he tracked them. Usually, he’ll improvise everything—and he’s a great improviser—but for *The Last Hero*, he spent the time to get them all composed, so we might have influenced each other as we went back and forth working out our parts.

Where do your solo ideas come from?

Tremonti: I’ll sit and play the track 100 times, and as I start getting better parts together, I’ll have my little place markers of licks that fit the section. I like to follow the chord changes when I can, but I also want the solo to be fun, exciting, and full of energy. I think the toughest thing for me is to come up with the very beginning of the solo. Once I get that, I kind of go on autopilot. I’ll just fall into whatever happens next. Sometimes it will be mediocre, and sometimes I’ll hit the mark, but I’ll keep on moving, going over lick after lick after lick until the solo takes shape. I like to make every solo tell a little story, and to be as unique as I can make it.

Kennedy: Initially, I try to come up with the basic concept, and not spend too much time on it. I’ll tuck it away, and when it’s time to start extracting ideas for a record, I can listen to everything with a fresh perspective—it’s like listening to it for the first time. Then, I weed out the ideas that don’t resonate.

Mark has said that you excel at coming up with ambient and sweetening parts on





Looking for a hero—(from left)
Alter Bridge's Brian Marshall, Myles
Kennedy, and Mark Tremonti.

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FEATURES >>> ALTER BRIDGE

top of what typically are very heavy tracks. How do you visualize those parts?

Kennedy: A lot of times, it's a feel thing—just something I'll hear in my head. For example, when Mark came up with the riff to "Crows on a Wire," it was such a signature Tremonti sound that I wanted to design something that would add harmonic movement and give it a whole new flavor. Most of the time, though, I try not to overthink it. I guess after all these years of writing songs and parts, I really just want to stay in the moment, and kind of let my brain do what it does without trying to hyper-analyze things and get too theoretical, because then it sounds contrived. It's really a matter of following your instincts and seeing what happens.

How did you craft the sounds for *The Last Hero*?

Tremonti: I've been working on a signature amplifier with Paul Reed Smith, and this is the album it made its debut on.

That amp is probably 80 percent of all the tones we used for the record. The funny thing is, I was trying to do an entry-level amp. I told Paul I wanted to keep it under \$700, and make it the best amp kids ever played. It's going to be a great little amp for the price. I want folks to unbox this thing and just be blown away.

Can you tell us a little more about it?

Tremonti: When PRS sent me the Archon years ago, I was blown away. So I got together with the guy who voiced it, and we must have gone back and forth about 15 times tweaking the sounds. You see, I'm an amp fanatic. I spend all the money I make on tour on amplifiers. It's my thing. So I went through all of my amps, and I swear this little amp had one of the best clean sounds of any of the amps I have. My favorite clean sound is a Fender Twin open-back 2x12 combo. I like a lot of headroom. I like the sound to be bright, not harsh, but real present, because I tend

to not use a pick as much when I'm using clean tones. This new amp has all of that, and in its own way.

What about the overdrive sounds?

Tremonti: I've always liked the mixture of a Mesa/Boogie Rectifier and a Bogner Uberschall. I like a good high gain thing for live. When I'm at home, I tend to play through boutique amps that bring out a different player in me, but for my signature amp, I had to hone in on what I do in Alter Bridge. So the amp's overdrive sound is like a Mesa/Boogie with its bright, sharp attack, and then the Bogner warms it up a bit. There's a real precise attack, but it's not harsh on your ears.

What was your go-to amp, Myles?

Kennedy: My Diezel Herbert was on 90 percent of the record. I know that amp works in conjunction with Mark's sound. He doesn't leave many sonic holes—his sound covers such a wide spectrum—and that amp fits in really nice with his sound.

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It took a long time to find the right combination, because the trick was not to sound so different to where it stuck out. I wanted something that blended nicely with his sound, but at the same time didn't walk all over it. The Diezel has a very interesting top end, which I think is the real hook for that amp—especially considering what Mark is doing.

What about guitars?

Tremonti: Paul Reed Smith was nice enough to give us about 14 guitars, and we tracked each song with a separate guitar. Then, we sold those guitars. We didn't have a record label or management when we started this project, so selling those guitars was how we paid for the album. My brother Dan came up

with the idea. We felt the fan-funding thing sometimes leaves a bad taste in people's mouths, but here we had something where both parties were happy. We got to pay for our record, and the fans got guitars that had real significance to the album.

Kennedy: I used my tried and true PRS guitars that I've played for the better part of a decade—the SC245 and McCarty. I used a new McCarty—the one where they changed the scale length—for "Show Me a Leader" and a few other leads. It had a great cut to it.

Did you try any new tunings or other ideas for the album?

Tremonti: Yes. I spoke to Myles before we got together to write, and I said I wanted to step it up and do something different. For example, 7-strings have never been my thing, but I had one collecting dust in my closet, so I took it out and tried to write a song on it. That turned out to be "Show Me a Leader." I used *DADGAD* for the first time on record for "Twilight." Then, on "This Side of Fate," I tuned to a *B* on the low-*E* string, and *F#*, *C#*, *F#*, *B*, and *D*. It's real unique. I love finding these tunings where you throw out everything you've ever learned and start over. I love the foundation being completely uprooted. I don't want to sound like everybody else. I want my parts to sound like capturing lightning in a bottle. I think when you're not playing it safe, and you dive into weird, left-hand shapes that would sound terrible in standard tuning, you sometimes fall on that magic. You might sit there for five hours before you find it, but, for me, that's the most exciting way to write.

Kennedy: I've always been a fan of open tunings, because they take you out of your comfort zone and force you to look at the neck in a completely different way. And, on top of that, it allows the strings to drone in a certain way. I think that's really the best part of using open tunings—the drone and how it affects the melodies. Actually, as we were developing guitar parts, I often didn't want to know which tuning Mark was using. I think not knowing which tunings we were in makes it even more interesting, because what happens is you have different strings droning from different players, and it really creates these crazy harmonic voicings. They can go wrong if you're not careful, but we've managed to make it work, and I think it helps us create and define our sound. ■

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An Explosion of Wonder

**ANDY TIMMONS
EXPLORES EMOTION &
MELODICISM ON *THEME
FROM A PERFECT WORLD***

BY MICHAEL MOLEND A

IT'S A BIT BRILLIANTLY STRANGE AND EXCITING

to release an instrumental opus influenced by music as seemingly disparate as Todd Rundgren, progressive rock, David Bowie and Mick Ronson, the Who, INXS, and the Raspberries. But Andy Timmons is nothing if not a seeker—a curious and constant student of tone, technique, beautiful melodies, and the emotionalism needed to make his compositions and playing unfold in meaningful ways. The recent *Theme from a Perfect World* [Timstone]—produced by Timmons and his bassist Mike Daane—is exquisitely crafted, pulsing with live energy, and cinematic in its scope. Here, Timmons details how he approached the recording of the album, and he also provides some insights on what it was like to perform with Uli Jon Roth and Jennifer Batten during last year's "The Ultimate Guitar Experience" tour.

What was the main concept for *Theme from a Perfect World*?

The title track I put together as a thinly veiled tribute to Todd Rundgren and Utopia, but, overall, I just wanted it to be a good collection of songs. There were plenty of tunes in the pipeline, as my last release of original material was 2006's *Resolution*. Initially, all the songs were written with no overdubs in mind. We were so burnt out on formulaic instrumental-guitar records

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FEATURES

>>> ANDY TIMMONS

where there are all these rhythm guitars and keyboards. And when we paired the instrumentation down to just a strict trio—that's when it got a bit more exciting. We recorded the rhythm tracks live in the studio, and stripping things down made us focus on the actual guitar tone. While I've always been concerned with tone, I wasn't all that concerned until the sound was completely exposed like that. You're under the microscope, so that led me down the path of tone questing.

But once we started very critically looking for tones, the strictness of the formula eased up. What if we had another guitar? What if we used a B3 organ? So we took the hand-cuffs off a little bit, and gave ourselves the toy chest back. In some ways, this helped me rethink how I was playing some of the songs. If there was a keyboard or additional guitars, I didn't necessarily have to support myself on my lead as a jazz-chord soloist—which is how I approached the last two records. So that was kind of fun! We gave ourselves the keys to the kingdom, but we still kept the tracks as organic and sparse as possible. We didn't want to overdo it.

When you and Mike are tone questing, what elements and nuances are you searching for?

It's really about trying to draw more personality out of the tone, and Mike is great at that. I would track live with the band, but, generally, we'd end up redoing the whole track once we had a chance to really sit down and focus on the tone. We were obviously trying to get the best performances, but we also wanted to find the best voice for the song.

For example, we knew we wanted a Stevie Ray Vaughan-style, vintage Strat neck-pickup tone for "On Your Way Sweet Soul," and we literally had 20 different Strats in the studio. At one point, Sam Swank, a buddy of mine who is a luthier, brought in an all-original 1960 hardtail Stratocaster. He said, "Man, you should hear this guitar." He didn't know we were doing a Strat quest. This guitar instantly blew everything else away. It had whatever extra level of mojo some of these old guitars have. I haven't given it back yet! I've been looking for that sound for so long, and I just was never fortunate enough to find the right guitar or find a way to hold on to it once I had it. We experimented with amps, too. I've been using my Mesa/Boogie Lone Stars as my live rig, but, in the studio, anything goes. We had those on hand, and

there were a couple Marshalls we used quite a bit—a '69 Marshall Super Lead and a '79 JMP—as well as some old Fender Deluxes.

I know that the goal of "drawing more personality out of the tone" is a very subjective evaluation, but can you provide a bit more illumination on how you make your sonic decisions?

I ask myself, "How am I going to convey this specific emotion through the instrument?" There's a song called "That Day Came"—an ode to one of my cats that passed away—and I needed a very pensive and sad tone. It turned out to be a '65 Strat that had a very delicate, plaintive kind of sound. It's obviously about how you play it, as well, but my main guitar just wouldn't have the detail in the top end to cut that track the way I wanted it.

As I alluded to earlier, there may be a benchmark tone in my head if I want to sound like Eric Johnson, SRV, or Hendrix. Of course, you never end up sounding like them, but at least it's a tonal direction for me to insert into a tune. I like to be in that realm of sonic integrity—whether I reach it or not. It's just good to have a goal to shape and inform the sound you're going after.

In general, when I think about tone questing, it's not about just lining up different guitars and amps. You've got to have a sound in your head. You have to know where you're going. Sometimes, you could be inspired by something you didn't expect. I didn't originally intend to play "Theme From a Perfect World" on an SG Special, but Mike said, "Check this guitar out!" He would hand me stuff randomly every now and then, and, sometimes, that would lead me down a slightly different path.

There's a funny story about that SG, by the way. When Mike gave it to me, it had .010s on it, and I just couldn't keep it in tune. How did Townshend do it? That *Who Live at Leeds* tone is one of the greatest tones of all time. When I did some research, it turned out he had .012s on his guitar. So I put on the .012s, and—oh, man—the tone grew in a huge way, and it stayed in tune much better. Of course, I had to deal with bending the .012s, and that wasn't easy [laughs].

Joe Satriani once said to me, "When your guitar is the singer in the band, you have to make sure the tone isn't going to annoy people." He basically meant that he doesn't hammer the audience with sear-

ing midrange tones. How do you keep your guitar sound pleasing, as well as appropriate to the melody you're trying to convey?

This is something we spend a lot of time on, because aggressive guitar tones are what annoy me about a lot of guitar recordings. The more distortion you introduce, the more you put out this fuzziness and top end that can be very harsh. There's a forgiving nature to saturation, of course, and it helps some guitarists play more fluidly. But I spend a lot of time balancing less gain and less treble with clarity and fluidity. It's not easy, because you still have to cut through the mix, and Mike battles me sometimes when I go for a tone that's a bit too dark. I definitely want a warmer sound these days, as I try to cultivate a way of really "singing" my melodies in a vocal fashion with a very pleasant tone.

How much time do you spend obsessively evaluating your phrasing?

A lot! That's how a player grows. That's how Jeff Beck is where he's at! He could have stopped at "Shapes of Things"—one of the greatest solos ever—but he kept going, and he's still going. He got where he is by consistently and persistently being hard on himself. Not settling for something *close* to where you want to be is key. You must seek your own perfection, and never give up.

One of the things I love about the record is your intros are always like, "Listen to me!" They're so impactful and seductive. How does that stuff happen?

I wish I had some magical answer for you, but the songs just kind of happen the way they happen. I do compose the intro first, so that might be it. I don't write the choruses and verses, and then come back to the intros as an afterthought. I try for an interesting idea that hits the listener immediately, and then I see if I can compose the rest of the song from there.

What was it like playing with Jennifer Batten and Uli Jon Roth on your trio tour last year?

Jennifer has so much creativity, and her sense of compositional development is wonderful. We didn't have a lot of interplay between us during the shows, but it was incredibly inspiring to stand next to her as she wove her musical spells. Uli and I decided there would be a moment each night where we would improvise. We'd take the changes to "Little Wing" and literally think of ourselves as Bach in a way, and weave lines in between each other. This was dangerous, of course, because one player could be brilliant, but if the other player isn't open or on point, the whole thing could be disastrous—or not nearly as exciting as it could be. It takes two to tango, right? Happily, each night we started realizing, "Oh, man, we've got something here." And we made that interplay a special moment in every show. 

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The Importance of Being Rhythmic

FORMER CONGRESSMAN JOHN HALL TALKS FUNKY HOOKS AND SUSTAINING SOLOS

BY MICHAEL ROSS

ORLEANS' "STILL THE ONE" AND "Dance with Me" have ruled pop radio for decades. But if they remain your only encounter with John Hall's guitar work, you owe it to yourself to check out the first, self-titled, Orleans record. There you will find him playing the catchiest, funkier rhythm riffs this side of Jimi Hendrix or Nile Rodgers, along with the nascent guitar harmonies that defined the band's sound.

Delving further back into Hall's sideman solos on Taj Mahal's live "Ain't Gwine Whistle Dixie (Any Mo')" and Bonnie Raitt's "Stayed Too Long at the Fair," a theme of privileging melody over riffage and/or flash emerges. Hall's virtuosity is so embedded in the DNA of each particular song that it's possible to think of his parts and solos as simple—until you try to emulate them. If you don't believe me, try the signature lick to "Half Moon"—a Hall composition that was a hit for Janis Joplin.

The guitarist's career spans composing Obie-winning theatrical music, solo records (one containing the No Nukes theme song, "Power"), writing tunes

covered by Chet Atkins, Ricky Skaggs, Bela Fleck, Bonnie Raitt, the Doobie Brothers, and James Taylor. (His credits are largely chronicled in the self-published memoir, *Still the One: A Rock 'n' Roll Journey to Congress and Back*.) And did I mention his two terms as Congressman from New York's 19th District?

What first attracted you to the guitar?

Looking cool in front of the mirror, and getting more attention from girls. Actually, I was listening to commercial folk artists like Peter, Paul and Mary. Later, it was the Ventures, the Beach Boys, and the Beatles, quickly followed by Hendrix, Clapton, and the British groups that came to the States. I had been studying piano since I was five, so by the time I picked up the guitar, I had some knowledge of harmony and melody.

What influenced your melodic style?

I played French horn in school, which got me thinking that the guitar could be melodic—like a horn. I thought a solo didn't have to be a bunch of flash. It could be a composition. I like both kinds

of solos. I just gravitate in a melodic direction.

Would it be fair to say your solos outline the chords as much as playing through them?

That is true. My background in classical, church, and folk music involved largely major or minor keys. It was seldom modal, or in the spaces in between. But, sometimes, I make an effort to play outside the chord when the tension makes sense. I really like it when Robben Ford plays a straight blues, and then I suddenly go, "What the hell was that?"

Which players influenced you when you were first starting?

Jimi Hendrix was probably the most influential. Every song started with a rhythm guitar lick, and the song is built around that skeleton. I try to do the same thing. You can really hear the Hendrix rhythm influence in "Half Moon."

The first Orleans record is a collection of great rhythm parts—some reminiscent of Betty Wright's "Clean Up Woman."

We used to play that song at sound-check. There were other influences, such

as Curtis Mayfield and the Isley Brothers. Playing with Taj Mahal eventually pulled it together for me. He understood the importance of behind-the-beat guitar parts and lagged dotted-eighth-notes, where it feels like the rhythm is falling over backwards. Taj taught me by getting up and dancing around. He made me realize the importance of the rhythm-guitar part. If I played too many lead licks, he would yell, "Get back on that rhythm!" Playing lead is fun, but writing a unique and propulsive rhythm-guitar part is an accomplishment. When I was in Washington, a protester approached me on the steps of the Capitol to give me a message. It turned out to be, "I really love your rhythm guitar part on 'Spring Fever.'" That was a high point of my four years in Congress. Maybe he was just protesting bad rhythm guitar.

For the most part, you don't play with the kind of distortion that Hendrix and Clapton used on their solos. How do you get such a fat, sustaining tone?

On the early records, it would be a Strat through an MXR Dyna Comp into the amp. The amp was either an old Fender Bassman, or in the case of "Still the One," an old Fender Princeton, which I still have.

How do you set the Dyna Comp to get sustain without squashing the attack.

I don't set it up full. I think both knobs are around one o'clock. Some of the sustain comes from sitting close to the amp, and some comes from maintaining a little vibrato on the note.

On your solo record, *Power*, the sound was more distorted than early Orleans. Were you just pushing the amp harder, or did you go to any pedals?

It was mostly pushing harder. I was reluctant to give in to pedalmania. I eventually went through various pedalboards with individual stompboxes, and I had to worry about power supplies or batteries. At this point, I have narrowed it down to a Boss ME-50 or ME-80 multieffects pedal.

On fly dates, it's great to be able to have one pedal that will fit in my suitcase and needs no internal cords or batteries. You just plug in the power with one cord in and one cord out. Sometimes, I just bring the Dyna Comp and two cords, because the amp will have reverb in it, and our house engineer has more effects than I can shake a stick at. He knows what I am going for, so I can get that fat, sustained sound on stage and let him fill in the rest.

Which pickup do you favor for solos?

It depends on the song, but mostly the middle—especially for the slide parts. I might flip to the bridge if I need an edgier sound for part of a solo, or go to the neck and middle, or the neck and bridge positions for a woody sound that is fat in a different way. It depends on what the band and the stage sound like, and what equipment I have. For a lot of gigs now, we are renting backlines. I show up and there's a '65 Fender Deluxe reissue there. They



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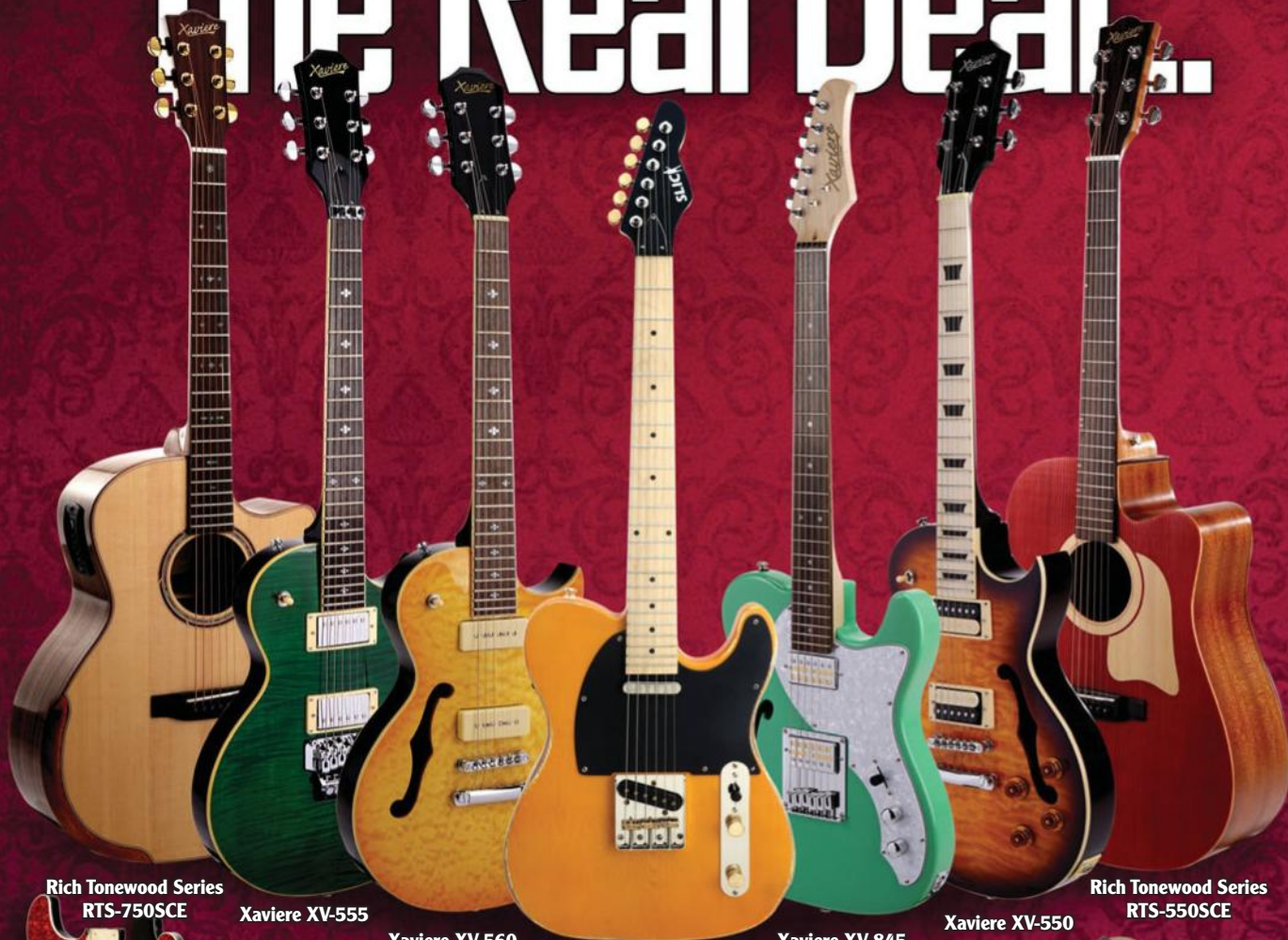
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sound pretty good.

How did you work out the guitar harmonies in Orleans?

Usually, I would play first, and Larry [Hoppen, Orleans co-founder/co-guitarist] would be in the control room with the talkback button, coaching me through my take. He'd say things like, "It's great for the first four bars and then let's punch in." Sometimes, he would say, "Try adding a little of this here or that there." I might do a one-take solo for a session with Bonnie Raitt or Jackson Browne, but with Orleans that was rare. We were building a masterpiece. When I finished the solo, we switched roles, and Larry would have the harder job—learning my part and then playing a harmony. He would play a fourth or fifth above, or sometimes below.

Tell me about the natural finish, maple-neck Stratocaster you have been playing almost exclusively for decades.

When Mountain Music in Woodstock was getting ready to go under, the owner sold me his personal guitar. It was already stripped and worn out—it looked like a piece of driftwood. It has a great neck and pretty good pickups. The only modifications are the Telecaster knobs and a five-position switch. That's still my number one guitar today.

Is it a hardtail?

Yeah, the strings come up through holes in the body. It stays in tune if you break a string.

What strings are you using?

I use Elixir strings, gauged .010-.052.

What picks do you use?

I really like the Herco gold picks. I use them until I run out, and then I'll use a Dunlop medium. But the Herco gold pick is a little bit more flexible—it's in between the Dunlop medium and the Dunlop light.

I understand you had some physical issues that affected your playing.

When I had surgery, they nicked a nerve in my left wrist, and my left hand stopped functioning. I did therapy and a lot of woodshedding on songs I already knew. Interestingly, playing harmony parts uses well-worn pathways, so there is no problem, but I had to build up my improvisational skills. My brain knew what it wanted my hand to do, but the signal wasn't getting to my fingers. The nerve actually has to regenerate, and that takes time. Elliott Randall and Robben Ford gave me exercises that enabled me to open up the neural pathways and bring the hand 98 percent of the way back.

What's in the future for John Hall?

Orleans is working on new material and we have a couple of things recorded. I have some solo shows that will combine talking about my experiences in politics and music with playing songs. There are so many stories. That's why I wrote a book. ■



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Solo on the Side

SUPER SESSION GUITARIST RAFAEL MOREIRA GOES HIS OWN WAY—TEMPORARILY—WITH MAGNETICO'S *DEATH RACE*

BY MICHAEL MOLENDRA

LIKE SOME KIND OF SUPERHERO, RAFAEL Moreira seems to be all over the place. He has played guitar on massively popular television shows such as *American Idol*, *The Voice*, *Rock Star: INXS*, *Rock Star: Supernova*, and the recent remake of *To Tell the Truth*. You also may have seen him on *Saturday Night Live*, *The Late Show with David Letterman*, *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno*, *Late Night with Conan O'Brien*, *Jimmy Kimmel Live!*, the *MTV Music Awards*, *Good Morning America*, and more. He has performed with superstars such as Christina Aguilera, Pink, Steven Tyler, Paul Stanley, Stevie Wonder, Sheryl Crow, and others. You've heard his music in video games, television shows, and movie trailers. In the Los Angeles music scene—and all that the entertainment capitol sends out to the world at large—he is nearly omnipresent, but much of his high-profile career is doing great work for other artists.

However, the Brazilian-born Moreira—who was taught to play guitar by his mother, and formed his first band at age eight with his two older brothers—has also managed to produce his own work. Considering his workload, it's almost miraculous that he has time to write and record for himself, but Moreira has persevered to release an instrumental solo album (2005's *Acid Guitar*) and two albums with his rock trio Magnetico—2008's *Songs About the World*, and last year's *Death Race*. How does he do it?

What was the recording process for *Death Race*?

We recorded live at Steakhouse Studios in North Hollywood. We did two takes on each song. To be honest, I wish I was in the studio for a month, but we only had one day to record the basic tracks for the whole album. Then, I brought everything home and started doing vocals and guitar solos. I was never happy. I questioned everything, because I was home alone most of the time. Over time, I had to let it go. Also, I got two gigs right after I recorded the basics, and that took me away from my own project for a while.

What were some of the main guitars you used

on the sessions?

I used a few guitars by the Gibson Custom Shop: a True Historic '57 Les Paul Goldtop, a True Historic '57 Les Paul Black Beauty, a True Historic 1960 Les Paul Reissue Sunburst, a 1959 Les Paul Standard Reissue in tobacco burst, and an EDS-1275 double-neck. I also used a PRS 24 with a Floyd Rose, a Fender Custom Shop 1952 Thinline Tele Relic, and a Gibson Les Paul Baritone. All of the electrics were strung with Ernie Ball Slinky M-Steel strings, gauged .010-.046. If I tune down, I might mix up the gauge with a .011 on the high *E* and a .060 on the low *E*. For acoustic parts, I used all Gibsons—a 12-string Songwriter Deluxe, a Dove, and a J-45.

What about amps?

I used one head for the whole record—a Bogner Shiva. It's custom, it's old, and they don't make it anymore. The cabinet was a Bogner 4x12 loaded with Celestion Vintage 30s.

Did you use any pedals on the album tracks?

For solos, I used a hand-wired Ibanez Tube Screamer, and I have an Arion Chorus that works great for Leslie-type sounds. An Electro-Harmonix POG made an appearance here and there, as well.

Although you've designed Magnetico as a rock band, I think your Brazilian heritage shows up in how you phrase your solos.

Sure. I completely agree. I'm just a sum of all these voices I have, and they're going to come out somehow, even if I try to keep it just rock. But I think those things are unconscious. I don't ever say, "Hey, I'll throw this influence in here." Those voices of mine just come out, and I guess I like to see where they take the music. For example, a rock player will typically attack the downstrokes—the ones and threes—when playing solos. But, because of my jazz influences, I tend to attack the upstrokes and swing a bit more.

You're also a very melodic player...

That's a mentality I learned from Scott Henderson around the time I was taking classes at Hollywood's Musician's Institute. He encouraged me to speak

through my solos, as if we were having a conversation. He said the tools to create a conversation are motifs, so develop them. This concept became like a religion for me. Now, that approach comes out whether I'm sitting down and composing a solo, or improvising a solo in real time. Occasionally, I like to surprise listeners—you know, go somewhere completely different when they think they know where you're headed—but I always want the audience to completely understand what I'm saying.

Your television work requires you to play covers most of the time. How do you prepare for that, and is it difficult juggling the creative differences in being both a solo artist and a sideman?

When I started playing guitar as a little kid, it never crossed my mind to be a side guy. But then, my first gig after going to school in Los Angeles was with Christina Aguilera, and I had to fit into that world. You've got to be supportive, you've got to be

a team player, and you've got to play for the music. It's very different work than being a solo artist and playing your own tunes. It's conflicting, but I chose to embrace it all.

For the television shows, my job is to learn and play a lot of music by other people. How I approach that gig is to just do it and own it. And once the show is over, I'll never think about that song again. Whatever songs I've learned for *Rock Star*, *American Idol*, *The Voice*, or even for another artist—they are gone forever from my head once I'm done. Then, I go back to writing and playing my own material. I need to get rid of all the other stuff that was in my head for the purpose of my own work. It's like a hard drive. I just let the data go so that I can create the music I want.

That's interesting. So if I saw you play "Lola" by the Kinks on television, and, a week later, I asked you, "Hey, Rafa, let's jam on 'Lola,'" you'd look at me with a blank face?

[Laughs.] If you called me a week later to play a song I had played the week before, I would have to listen to the tune a couple of times to get it back.

Many guitarists who have enjoyed successful careers as side or session players never break out and establish themselves as solo artists with their own material. How do you think you managed to get out there under your own name?

I've lived that for close to 20 years. I've seen a lot of great players—great friends—going from one gig to the other real quick. Like, "Where's the next gig? Where's the next gig?" And years go by, and they haven't seriously produced their own music at all. For the most part, I've fought the drive to always get the next gig, because I have this voice in my head that wants to get out. I always have. It means no harm to anybody, it's just that I'm a human being, and I feel like I have something of my own to say. ■



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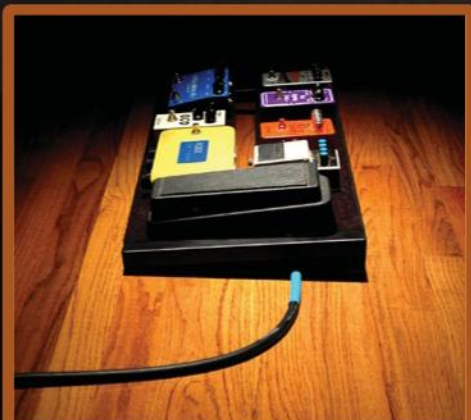
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The National Association of Music Merchants held its annual four-day convention in Chicago last June. More than nine thousand music store employees turned out to look over the products of hundreds of manufacturers.

Chicago Musical Instruments led the way with new guitar gear by introducing the gold Les Paul Signature guitar and bass, debuting a Howard Roberts series of guitars, premiering Bigsby's Palm Pedal which produces steel guitar effects by bending the 2nd and 3rd strings, and showing off Maestro's Universal Synthesizer Systems for guitars. In addition, CMI announced an entire new line of amps which they are calling SG Systems.

Ovation Guitars greeted buyers with a beautiful new white-top Balladeer, while Martin displayed its finely crafted Swedish steel-string models made by the Levin company.

Randall Instruments came up with a 200-peak watts piggyback version of its Alpha IV amps. The Rickenbacker company introduced a unique guitar dubbed the 490, which boasts three sets of interchangeable pickups and five interchangeable circuitry units.

The Elger Company arrived at the NAMM show with the Ibanez "Rocket Roll" guitar, claiming it to be identical to the old Flying V.

Among the most unusual products for guitarists was the new Pignose amp. Totally portable, the 6" x 8" x 6" unit attaches to the player's belt and operates off six penlight batteries to produce three watts of strong, clear sound.

These are just a few of the hundreds of new and exciting items premiered at NAMM '73, items that are now showing up at your local stores.

CMI's special treat: Bruce Bolen (L), Les Paul and Howard Roberts jamming.



The Rickenbacker 490.



Ovation's White Top.



The portable Pignose amp.



Maestro Universal Synthesizer.

Bigsby Palm Pedal.



18



Weird Scenes Inside the GP Archives

NAMM, THE MUSIC INDUSTRY, THE guitar media, and the guitar community have sure come a long way since September 1973, when this one-page NAMM report

with photos of just nine products made the scene. Compare it to the NAMM reports in this issue (and online). It's hard to imagine that, back in the day, gear really wasn't much

of a focus to the editors and the magazine's readers. In fact, for quite a while, *Guitar Player* didn't publish product reviews at all. How things have changed! —MICHAEL MOLEND



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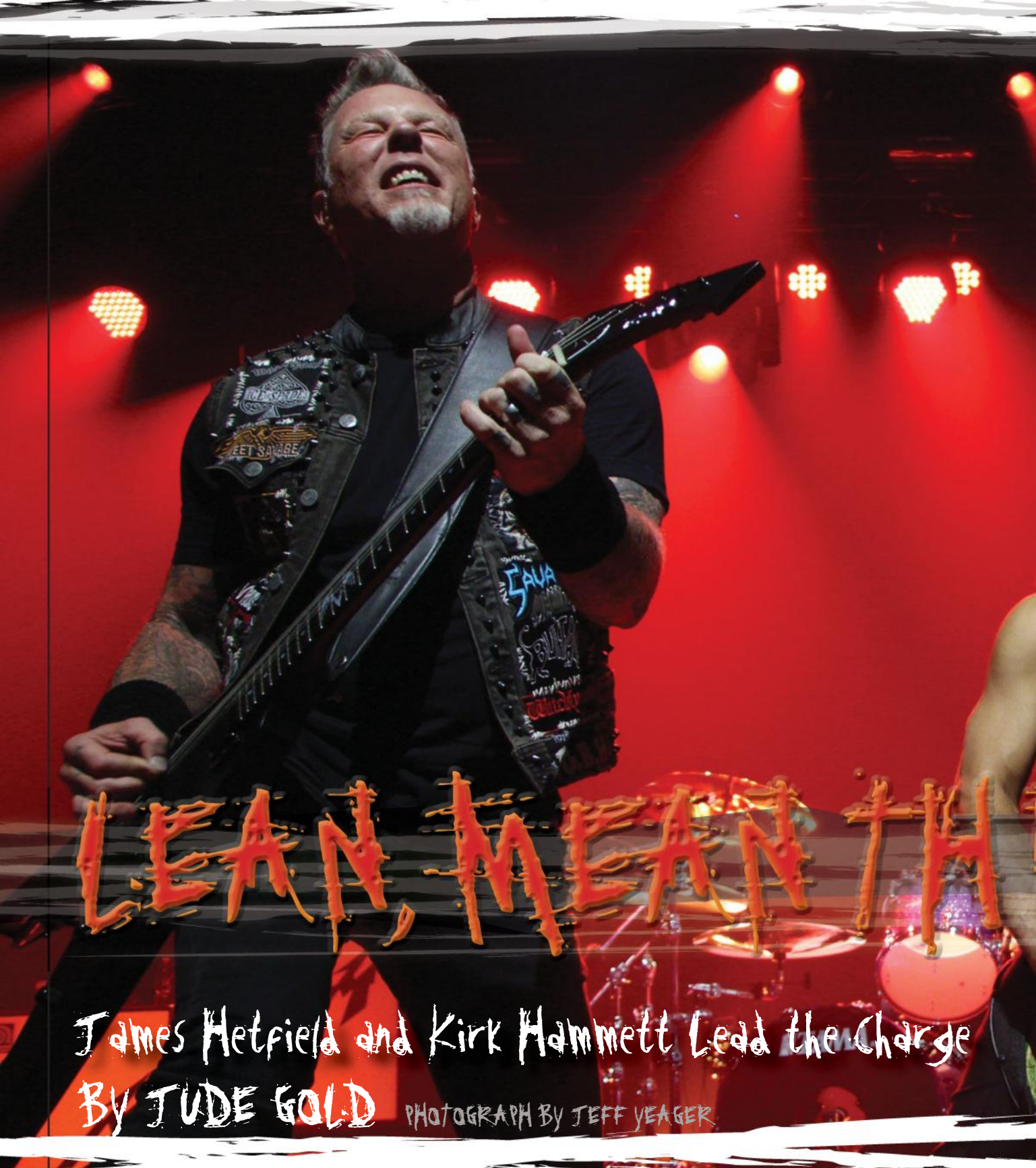
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CHATTANOOGA, TN



James Hetfield and Kirk Hammett Lead the Charge

BY JUDE GOLD PHOTOGRAPH BY JEFF YEAGER

IT'S NOT THAT METALLICA FRONTMAN JAMES HETFIELD isn't thrilled that his band's new album, *Hardwired ... to Self-Destruct* [Blackened], debuted at number one worldwide—the sixth Metallica release in a row to do so. It's just that there's another number that is more important to him—zero. That's how many

empty seats the singer/guitarist likes to see at Metallica concerts. It's also how much space the singer/guitarist would, in a perfect world, have between the audience and stage.

"I want to see faces," says Hetfield, who works with stage designers and venue managers to get the barricades at Metallica



From left: James Hetfield,
Robert Trujillo, and
Kirk Hammett.

shows as close to the stage as local ordinances will legally allow. "I need to see eyes. I need to see the reaction. I need to get the energy. And, yes, I am pretty surprised at the huge response to *Hardwired*. People buying the record and making it number one is a very nice thing. But I don't worry about whether we're number

one, two, or three, or whatever. For me, when people show up to watch us play, *that's* when it feels successful."

Similarly, aside from spending time with his family, Metallica lead guitarist Kirk Hammett can't think of anything he loves more than taking the stage with Hetfield and his other two band

COVER STORY

METALLICA

mates—bassist Robert Trujillo, and drummer Lars Ulrich.

“I rarely have a bad Metallica gig because I enjoy myself so much up there,” says Hammett. “I’m like all other guitar players—I like hearing my guitar really loud. I’m not even really talking about filling the arena or stadium full of guitar sound. That’s cool, too, but I just love standing in front of any amp cranked up to that sweet spot where it gets warm—whether it’s in my house, in a club, a small hall, or even back at [Metallica] HQ.”

Although both guitarists have, in recent years, relocated their families out of Northern California (the Hammetts to the Hawaiian Islands, the Hetfields to Colorado’s Rocky Mountains), HQ remains the tricked-out San Rafael, California, office/rehearsal facility/recording studio/clubhouse/pin-ball parlor where most things Metallica still go down. For this interview, though, the guitarists called in from the winter

leg of their 2017 World Wired Tour—Hetfield from Beijing, China, before the band’s show at the Sports Arena, and Hammett, a few days later, after their concert at Singapore’s Indoor Stadium. And these “EnormoDomes” are *small* venues for Metallica, who will likely be playing American stadiums later in 2017, when they embark on their first U.S. tour since 2009.

But whether Metallica is playing arenas or stadiums, the band’s worldwide success is all the more astonishing if you remember where they *used* to play

When I started at Berkeley High School in the mid ’80s, I often noticed flyers on nearby telephone polls advertising Metallica gigs at a local club called Ruthie’s Inn—sometimes with Exodus or Megadeth on the bill. What were those shows like?

Hetfield: Ruthie’s was a lot of fun. Back then, we had no worries, no agenda. And it was our local hang, too. Going there was

our weekend ritual. No matter who was playing, we’d be there.

Hammett: We didn’t require much—just a few amps, a drum kit, and some guitars, and we were good to go. We were always having sound problems, but it didn’t matter, because we were only concerned with getting up there and being as heavy, aggressive, confrontational, and visceral as possible. Nowadays, it’s the same basic ingredients, but the glaring difference is that we have better equipment, and a higher level of quality that we need to hit.

When I finally had a band and gigged at Ruthie’s a few years later, it was a rainy night, and there were buckets everywhere inside the club—even on the stage—to catch water coming through the ceiling.

Hetfield: Actually, at our show in Shanghai a couple of nights ago, there was a leak in the arena’s roof, and it was dripping right onto my dry T-shirts for stage! [Laughs.] Since those days, we have evolved



Quito, Ecuador

JEFF YEAGER



JEFF YEAGER

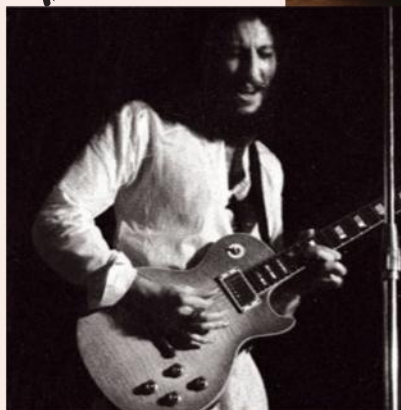
Kirk's Green Machine

SINCE THE SUMMER OF 2014, KIRK Hammett has been the owner of what may be the most hallowed Gibson Les Paul in history: "Greeny," the famous '59 Standard once wielded by revered British bluesman Peter Green. Yet Hammett doesn't *feel* like he's the guitar's owner.

"I just feel like I'm the guy taking care of it for this period of time," says Hammett, who purchased the instrument for "under seven figures"—a bargain, apparently. "Greeny has its own fan base. It has its own life separate from mine, and I love that. It's not tied to me like some other guitars are. And everyone who sees Greeny wants to take a picture with it. It's as if my wife were a famous movie star and I'm constantly having to step aside so people can take pictures with her."

The guitar is legendary for at least three reasons—Peter Green's use of it on iconic Fleetwood Mac recordings ("He wrote 'Green Manalishi,' 'Oh Well,' and 'Albatross' on that guitar," raves Hammett); its long tenure with Gary Moore, who purchased it from Green in 1969 ("Gary played it on *Black Rose*, one of my favorite Thin Lizzy albums"); and the spooky out-of-phase sound it gets with both humbuckers engaged.

Famed luthier Jol Dantzig had the opportunity to examine Greeny's pickups and controls in 1984. "Everything looked totally stock," he later told *GP*'s Andy Ellis. "The pickups were wired in phase, but I knew they didn't sound stock when played together. Then, I used a compass to measure the pickups' polarities. I discovered that one magnet was oriented



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north-to-south while the other was oriented south-to-north. The pickups were magnetically out of phase. *This* was the secret we'd all been searching for."

Hammett was impressed by the guitar from the moment he first plugged it in. "I was in London one fine summer day when a dealer friend invited me to check it out," says Hammett. "We ran it through a vintage Marshall Bluesbreaker 2x10 combo, and immediately the bridge pickup had a nice, full tone with lots of presence. I checked the neck pickup and thought, 'Wow, that's one of the fattest neck sounds I've ever heard.' But when I put it in the middle position, oh my god—it sounded like a Strat through a 100-watt Marshall fully cranked.' Seven hours later, after making a counter-offer, the owner called and told me we had a deal. I had never even thought about owning Greeny before that day. I was just on tour, and Greeny came to me."



RICHARD HENRY GUITARS

From left: Kirk with Greeny, Los Angeles 2017; Peter Green circa 1970; a close-up of the "most hallowed Les Paul in history".

To hear Hammett playing Greeny with Metallica, listen to his solo on "Hardwired," the first track on *Hardwired ... to Self-Destruct*. He played the part on Greeny while plugged into three amps—a modded Marshall head, a Mesa Dual Rectifier, and a Kirk Hammett signature-model Randall KH103 "Meathead" with a KHDK Ghoul Screamer pedal engaged for extra drive.

"That solo is all blues licks," says Hammett, who also played Greeny on several other tracks on the album. "The licks are just strung together in such a way that it sounds like a heavy metal solo. If you really listen to it, though, the opening lick is just a Robert Johnson lick that's turned up."

Despite being a near-priceless hunk of guitar history, Greeny has been touring with Hammett and Metallica.

"I play it on 'Whiskey in the Jar,' which is a song Greeny has probably played numerous times before I came along," says Hammett. "A lot of people have played that guitar, including Jimi Hendrix, Jeff Beck, Rory Gallagher, and George Harrison. And the guitar will continue to get played. I'm not going to put it in a f**king display case. That piece of wood is all the right things at all the right times, and it was created for all of us." —JG

COVER STORY

METALLICA



JEFF YEAGER

into a worldwide band that is still going after 35 years—which is still unbelievable to think about.

Obviously, with success, you were able to hire pro guitar techs and tour managers. But is there any staffer you have now that you never dreamed you'd have?

Hammett: Yes. Mike Gillies. He runs our Pro Tools rig and records every single live show, rehearsal, and TV appearance we do. He also maintains a huge reference library of all our music—which is helpful if, say, we're in doubt about a part on a song we haven't played in a long time, or we want to hear what tempo we were doing a song at on the last tour. He has a lot of album stems, too, so he can often isolate

the original part for you, slow it down, or even change the pitch to match whatever tuning you're in. His position is not one we ever asked to be filled. His job just sort of evolved over time.

I understand you guys have a tuning room set up at every venue. A whole room just for tuning?

Hetfield: It's a band room, actually, where we can run through songs and go over vocal harmonies and guitar parts, etc. And when we're performing in places like China, it can be interesting, because there are certain songs we're allowed to play, and others we're not. So, because of the censorship that still happens, there may be some songs we need to rehearse

that we haven't played in a while. Sometimes, a new riff comes up in there, so we record it on the spot, and maybe it ends up on the next record. Also, while we're in there, we'll figure out if there are particular sounds we need to work on with the crew. But we have an amazing road crew that is very well prepared, so we usually don't even need to soundcheck.

If I was on stage with you at a soundcheck, and you handed me your guitar and said, "Here, give it a swing," what do you think might surprise me about playing through your rig?

Hetfield: You'd probably be surprised that there isn't a giant backline, and that it's not as loud as you might expect it to

be. I have two cabinets and that's it. A lot of our sound is coming through in-ear monitors, and a lot of it is coming through the Meyer wedges we use on stage. We're very happy with our monitor sound. A huge wall of amps doesn't seem necessary to us anymore. We like to be a little more streamlined, so we can show up at a TV show, a radio thing, a stadium, or a club, and things will work the same in every setting.

Hammett: If you picked up any of my guitars, you might be surprised that they're not super easy to play, because I play with relatively high action. If a guitar's action is really low, I don't like it. I need to have some space between the string and the neck. There would probably be less wear and tear on my hands and my fingers if I lowered the action a little, but I like the guitar to fight back—especially because my right-hand attack is so aggressive. I don't want it to be too smooth and seductive, because my playing style is half caveman, half Lord Byron. My strings

aren't even particularly light. At home and in the studio, when we're in [A 440] concert pitch, I use Ernie Ball .011s. When I'm on the road, though, and playing for hours and hours each day, I'll go down to .010s.

What are your go-to stage guitars these days?

Hetfield: It's mostly ESP guitars for me—all of which have Ernie Ball strings and my EMG Het Set pickups. I'm really loving my ESP Vulture—which has a Flying V type of design that I came up with last year—and also my ESP Snakebyte. I've also got a few Gibsons in there—just for diversity. I love the V shape, the Explorer shape, and the traditional Les Paul shape. Those shapes fit my body best, and I love playing them. But that Vulture guitar! It's nice and light and it's really lively sounding.

Hammett: We actually have two entire sets of touring guitars and amps. We call one the Black System, and the other the Blue System, and they leapfrog when we're

touring. If, say, the Black system is at a show in London, the blue system might be on its way to Switzerland. On one system, I'll have my original 1988 ESP KH-2 "Skully" guitar—the very first ESP that I ever got—as the main guitar. The other system features my ESP "Mummy" guitar, which I've been playing since the '90s.

The problem used to be staying consistent with the amp sounds, because one system would usually have a better-sounding amp than the other, and James and I would always know which system sounded better. But we solved that problem when we switched to Fractal Axe-FX processors. Now we have the same guitar sound everywhere—even in rehearsal.

Hetfield: We're really pleased with Fractal. It's amazing. For my rig, we went into the studio and put some sounds into it—a combination of my Mesa/Boogie amps mixed in with a little bit of my Diezel sound. The clean sounds are from the Roland JC-120.

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f p t i

COVER STORY

METALLICA

On stage, Mesa 2:Ninety power amps drive my cabinets, but those cabs aren't miked at all. They're only there for my monitoring, for getting feedback, and for just *feeling* it. The Fractal is going direct to the board.

Hammett: For a while, we didn't have any cabinets onstage, but that was just too weird. I need to hear something. I need to feel the air being pushed by the speakers for it to sound natural to me. So I have one cabinet on stage for monitoring, and one cabinet in a flight case with a fixed mic on it.

Do you feel like the Fractals sound as punchy on stage as your tube heads do?

Hetfield: Well, they probably won't ever sound exactly the same as amps they're replacing, but we've worked really hard to get them extremely close. And I'll tell you, for convenience's sake for our crew, and for consistency out front for our soundman, Big Mick [Hughes], it's an amazing setup.

Metallica hasn't done a U.S. tour in eight years. Any hints as to what the new stage

is going to be like?

Hammett: At this point, we have a lot of plans, but we can't go into detail because it's still developing. One thing we are going for is a cleaner look—less gear onstage, and more focus on what the four of us are doing.

Do you guys still get the same emotional release from playing the guitar as you did when you started as teenagers?

Hetfield: Absolutely. I've probably said this before, but my wife will know when I'm in a crappy mood, and she'll say, "Hey, when's the last time you played guitar?" Guitar really does put me in a happy state—a content state. I love just sitting and playing. And I'll tell you, when you're out on tour and you play your rig through a giant P.A. system in a stadium, it's still cool. It's like a kid living the dream.

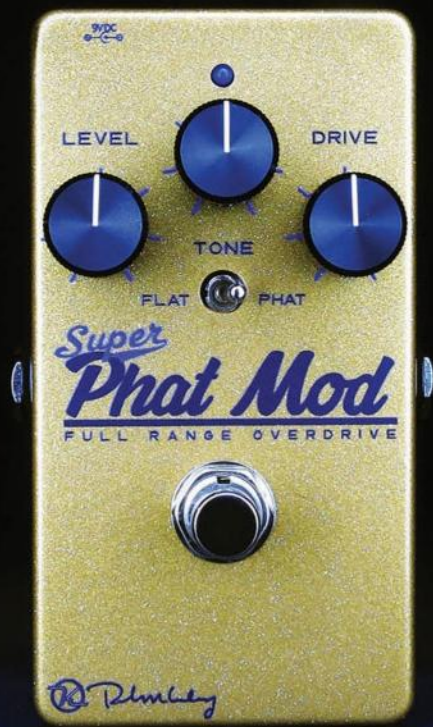
Kirk, what directions are you going as a lead player these days?

Hammett: Well, it's really strange. My ten-year-old son plays cello, and my eight-year-old

son plays violin. They're just starting, but there's a lot of classical music in the house. And in much the same way as when I used to put on Jimi Hendrix and get licks from "Red House," I've started doing that with classical pieces. I'll hear a little thing and go, "What is going on there?" Then, I'll grab my guitar and figure it out. I had never thought of doing that with classical music. I'm also loving tango music. I can't believe how emotional it is. I totally love Cuban music, too, and I am obsessed with Bossa Nova, as well. I love Jobim. I spend a totally inappropriate amount of time sitting with my acoustic guitar playing Bossa tunes over and over.

When a guitar player walks into HQ for the first time, is there anything about the place that might blow his or her mind?

Hammett: Well, it's like Guitar Center, but personalized. [Laughs.] James and I really like Les Pauls, so you'll see a lot of those. You'll also see a lot of ESP guitars—my models, and James' models. You'll see amps



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Arcade Fire
Averged Sevenfold
Babyface
Barbara Streisand
Barenaked Ladies
Blue Man Group
Beck
Beyoncé
Billy Idol
Billy Joel
Blue Rodeo
Billy Sheehan
Biffy Clyro
Blake Shelton
Bon Dylán
Bon Jovi
Bonnie Raitt
Brent Mason
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METALLICA

stacked high—new amps, vintage amps, and boutique amps. There's also whole bevy of guitar effects—stompboxes and rack stuff—and a piano that everyone poses with, but never plays. Honestly, we're so stocked up on gear, that I'm shocked when we discover we *don't* have something and need to buy it.

I have a lot more guitars than I actually need, so I've started going through them to figure out which ones really sound good and which ones mean something to me. The rest I've started selling anonymously on eBay. I won't tell anyone that I'm the owner, because if I do, the transaction gets complicated.

Your rigs are slimming down, your stage is more streamlined, and your guitar collections might be shrinking. Listening to the new record, it seems as if you're also streamlining musically a bit—back to raw thrash metal, but with a modern sound.

Hetfield: I think we get a little older in life and want to simplify things and stick to the stuff that works. As far as the album itself being streamlined, though, I don't know. We had so many riffs, the album had to be on two CDs!

I love the way the album sounds. I think [producer] Greg Fidelman did an amazing job at helping us get the sounds we wanted. It sounds really powerful, but also smooth, so that you can really turn it up without it punishing your ears. You don't get ear fatigue listening to it. It's warm, but fat. That's really what we were after.

In an age of dropped-tunings and 7- and 8-string guitars, I'm amazed at how heavy you guys made the songs in *E* sound. It's like you somehow made *E* sound heavier and deeper than it should.

Hetfield: I think that's part of the lively feel to *Hardwired*—staying in *E* on many songs, instead of recording dropped, like we do live. We've experimented with that quite a bit. Having one song that's tuned down—"Dream No More"—creates some good diversity, but when you have *everything* tuned down, eventually it all just sounds the same.

The "Moth Into Flame" chorus lick is so catchy. How did that materialize?

Hetfield: We probably played it on the road somewhere, and it got recorded and put in our library. It doesn't really matter who put the riff in there, because all four band members have tons of ideas stored up—especially now, since it's been eight years between albums. When it's time to plan a

record, Lars and I sit down, as we've done with all our albums, and we go through all the riffs to find the A+ riffs. "Moth" was definitely one of the A+ riffs.

What are some of the craziest, wildest, most *Spinal Tap* moments that have occurred on your big stages?

Hetfield: Lots of things have happened to us on the road, from electricians being electrocuted to big pieces of pig parts flying up on the stage at festivals, to bolts and darts being thrown at us. I haven't really done the falling off the stage thing yet, but our career's not over [laughs]. Our stages have been extremely dangerous over the years. There has been fire hidden underneath the stage, things that fall over and explode, road-crew members seemingly falling out of lighting rigs. We've done lots of crazy things that scared people, which is always pretty fun. In the movie *Through the Never*, there's that new, improved *And Justice for All* statue crumbling down and bouncing into the crowd. We've even had big Tesla coils onstage. I don't think anyone else has done that.

Hammett: During the *Ride the Lightning* tour, I think I fell off the stage two or three times. Part of the reason for that was we used to drink before we went on, and sometimes my footing wasn't as good as it could have been. Next thing you know, I'm on my back. One funny thing that comes to mind is the night we changed the key of "Jump in the Fire" from *G* to *F#*, because we had figured out that if it was down a half-step, we could utilize open strings—which always makes things sound bigger. So, later, when we're deep into our set, the song finally comes up, and someone forgets that it's now down a half-step. Everything's off by a minor-second. We're a full two minutes into the song, and it's still completely atonal. I mean, to be fair, when you have in-ear monitors, and all you can hear is yourself, it's hard to figure out that you're in totally a different zip code than everyone else. But that was hilarious. It was microtonal f**king chaos.

I wanted to congratulate you on co-founding KHDK Electronics, Kirk. What's it like being in the guitar-pedal business?

Hammett: It's a lot more fun and creatively satisfying than I expected it to be. I love the fact that I'm manufacturing pedals that I want to use. It's such a great feeling to be able to think something up, have it built, and then have it sitting in front of you. My

partner, Dave Karon, and I have been trying to get these pedals into everyone's hands—musicians in rock bands, funk and soul bands, blues bands, jazz bands, and country bands—because we are not just a heavy-metal pedal company. We're also in the process of building pedals for a few other guitar players right now, and I'm really excited about that, because I want them to get the same feeling I got when I had that first KHDK Ghoul Screamer sitting in front of me. There I was, thinking, "Finally! A Tube Screamer with more knobs and compression." I want to be able to offer that kind of situation to players who have an idea for a pedal that they've always wanted to have, but that no one has built.

What do guys think of djent? Do you check out bands like Meshuggah, who are still very much metal, but are taking the rhythmic complexity factor to the next level?

Hetfield: Of course. Yeah. We've done quite a few shows with Meshuggah. They're one of a number of bands out there that are really pushing the limits as far as sonics go, as well as playing some extremely intense and challenging stuff. It blows my mind that I have no idea how they can remember those songs. Then again, people ask us the same question—"How do you remember that song?" Well, you *write* it. That's how you remember a complex song. When you write the song, it's a lot easier to remember than if you're trying to learn someone else's thing.

Kirk, you've been public about the fact that in recent years you've become alcohol-free. Has quitting drinking helped your playing?

Hammett: Yes, it has. Alcohol just stopped working for me. So, about two-and-a-half years ago, I quit drinking. I had been in this routine for years and years where we'd play a show, and, afterwards, I'd go out and get drunk, come back to my hotel room, grab my guitar and start playing, and two or three hours later, pass out and go to sleep. I still play guitar in my hotel room after shows, but now I do it without being drunk. And this means that the next morning, I remember what I played the previous night. It stays with me. Because of that, I've reconnected with my guitar in a way I never expected. It's the weirdest thing to have been playing guitar since I was 15 years old, and, then—36 years later—connect with it in a completely different way. It blows my mind. ■

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Name That Tune!

A Primer on Melodic Ear Training

BY JESSE GRESS

A BLESSING, OR A CURSE? WHATEVER

your attitude on the subject, there's something truly remarkable about the ability to hear music in your head at any time and in any situation, from dead silence to noisy cacophony. Equally amazing is the ability to slip into a realm of consciousness wherein the brain translates natural or man-made sounds into rhythmic, melodic, and/or harmonic musical events—bumps in the road, bird songs, washing machines, traffic jams, dueling chainsaws (one of my favorites!), or a text ping perfectly in time and tune with

a song or soundscape of the moment. It's a beautiful thing, and I'm sure I'm not alone, but if you haven't ever been experienced, it takes time and hard work to develop big ears. Here's how to get started.

BASIC DIVISION

Melodic ear training begins with interval recognition. To measure physical distance, a foot is divided into 12 inches. Similarly, a musical octave is divided into 12 half-step increments. The half step is the unit

of measurement used to define a musical interval, which is the distance between any two notes. Intervals are the building blocks of melody and harmony. A melodic interval measures the distance between two separate notes, while a harmonic interval measures the distance between two notes played simultaneously. Chords contain three or more notes, so there are compound intervals within chords. When one chord moves to another, the root motion is measured in intervals. Because intervals provide a way to measure and communicate relative aural

Ex. 1

Chromatic scale steps

Root $\flat 2$ 2 $\flat 3$ 3 4 $\sharp 4/\flat 5$ 5 $\sharp 5/\flat 6$ 6 $\flat 7$ 7 Root (octave)

T
A
B 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15

Ex. 2a

C Major scale/Ionian mode

sing: Root 2 3 4 5 6 7 Root

play:

T
A
B 3 5 7 8 10 12 14 15

step formula: 1 1 $1/2$ 1 1 1 $1/2$

alt. fingering:

T
A
B 3 5 2 3 5 2 4 5

Ex. 2b

D Dorian mode

sing: Root 2 $\flat 3$ 4 5 6 $\flat 7$ Root

play:

T
A
B 5 7 8 10 12 14 15 17

step formula: 1 $1/2$ 1 1 1 $1/2$ 1

alt. fingering:

T
A
B 5 7 8 5 7 4 5 7

Ex. 2c

E Phrygian mode

Ex. 2d

F Lydian mode

Ex. 2e

G Mixolydian mode

Ex. 2f

A Aeolian mode (natural minor)

Ex. 2g

B Locrian mode

distances within music, any melodic or harmonic structure can be verbally described in terms of its intervallic design.

The object of ear training is to gain the ability to recognize and identify all 12 intervals in your mind's ear, and to equate them with their physical shapes on the fretboard. The good news is you already know how they sound via familiar melodies—you just have to learn how to identify them by name.

THE BIG PICTURE

Ex. 1 illustrates and names all 12 intervals measured from a C root on the fifth string to form a chromatic scale. Spend some time playing each interval and singing along to

the best of your abilities until you hit the octave—"root-b2, root-2, root-b3, root-3, root-4", etc.—and see if you can recognize the opening notes of any familiar melodies along the way. If not, don't worry—we'll get there.

SING IT, BABY!

The major scale and its relative modes are formed by extracting different intervallic formulas from the chromatic scale. **Ex. 2a** details a C major scale (a.k.a. the C Ionian mode), its intervallic structure (root-2-3-4-5-6-7-root), and its scale-step formula (whole step, whole step, half step, whole step, whole step, whole step, half step),

along with two suggested fingerings: one on a single string, and one across adjacent strings. **Examples 2b** through **2g** follow suit with the six remaining relative modes derived from the same C major scale with each successive mode beginning on the next scale step. This process shifts the root and alters the scale-step formula to produce six different scales, or modes.

Begin by internalizing the major scale and its seven major and perfect intervals. Play through both fingerings a few times, then give yourself the starting note (C) and see how far you can get by singing each scale step rather than playing it. Once you can sing the C major scale without playing along, re-designate its second

LESSONS >>> NAME THAT TUNE!

scale step (D) as the root and play the D Dorian mode in Ex. 2b until you can sing it without accompaniment. Repeat this process for each successive mode—Phrygian starting on E, Lydian starting on F, Mixolydian starting on G, Aeolian starting on A, and Locrian starting on B—until you come full circle back to C. (Tip: Think of the whole process as a seven-note sequence starting on each note of the major scale.) Why do this? The major scale comprises only major and perfect intervals, while its modes contain various amounts of

the five missing minor and altered intervals found in the chromatic scale—the $\flat 2$, the $\flat 3$, the $\sharp 4/\flat 5$, the $\sharp 5/\flat 6$, and the $\flat 7$. Learning to sing the modes in sequence will attune your ears to all of these intervals in various settings.

FINE TUNING

If you're having trouble singing the modes, don't feel like the Lone Ranger. There is a way to indelibly drill every interval into your head, starting with the major and perfect intervals. Just diligently follow these

four easy steps every day for a few weeks and you'll be amazed at the results: 1) Play the major scale from its root up to a designated interval; 2) Play the same thing while simultaneously singing the scale steps; 3) Eliminate the in-between notes and sing the root to the chosen interval without accompaniment; 4) Double-check your last step by singing and playing the root to the chosen interval. That's it. The long-term goal is to eventually eliminate the accompaniment and be able to find each interval by hearing it in your mind's ear.

Ex. 3

Major Thirds

play:	sing and play:	sing:	sing and play:
T A B 3 5 2	3 5 2	(3) (2)	3 2

Ex. 4

Perfect Fourths

play:	sing and play:	sing:	sing and play:
T A B 3 5 2 3	3 5 2 3	(3) (3)	3 3

Ex. 5

Perfect Fifths

play:	sing and play:	sing:	sing and play:
T A B 3 5 2 3 5	3 5 2 3 5	(3) (5)	3 5

MORE ONLINE!



For audio of this lesson, go to guitarplayer.com/lessons/april2017

We're skipping major seconds, which simply span one whole step (equal to two half steps, or two frets; think of the first two notes of "Silent Night" or "Norwegian Wood"), so follow the four-step drill to work your way through each remaining interval. **Ex. 3's** major thirds span two whole steps, or four frets (think "When the Saints Go Marching In" or "Can't Buy Me Love"), **Ex. 4's** perfect fourths cover two and one half steps, or five frets ("Here Comes the Bride" or "Amazing Grace"), **Ex. 5's** perfect fifths encompass three and

one half steps, or seven frets ("My Favorite Things" or the theme from "Star Wars"), **Ex. 6's** major sixths equal four and one half steps, or nine frets ("It Came Upon a Midnight Clear" or the NBC Network chimes), **Ex. 7's** major sevenths span five and one half steps, or 11 frets (the first and third notes of "Over the Rainbow," "Bali Hai," or "Immigrant Song"), and **Ex. 8's** octaves cover six whole steps, or 12 frets (the first two notes of "Over the Rainbow," "Bali Hai," or "Immigrant Song"). Visualizing intervals on the fingerboard while singing

them, and filling in your own musical examples whenever possible, will greatly increase your retention and mental recall of each interval.

MINOR ADJUSTMENTS

The same four-step method can be applied to each of the remaining modes and used to cement your recognition of the five intervals not present in the major scale—minor seconds (one half step, or one fret), minor thirds (one and one half steps, or three frets), sharp fourths/flatted fifths

Ex. 6

Major sixths

play:	sing and play:	sing:	sing and play:
T A B 3—5—2—3—5—2	"Root 2 3 4 5 6" 3—5—2—3—5—2	"Root 6" (2)—2	"Root 6" (3)—3

Ex. 7

Major sevenths

play:	sing and play:	sing:	sing and play:
T A B 3—5—2—3—5—2—4	"Root 2 3 4 5 6 7" 3—5—2—3—5—2—4	"Root 7" (4)—4	"Root 7" (3)—3

Ex. 8

Octaves

play:	sing and play:	sing:	sing and play:
T A B 3—5—2—3—5—2—4—5	"Root 2 3 4 5 6 7 root" 3—5—2—3—5—2—4—5	"Root root" (5)—5	"Root root" (3)—3

LESSONS >>> NAME THAT TUNE!

(three whole steps, or six frets), minor sixths (four whole steps, or eight frets), and minor sevenths (five whole steps, or 10 frets). Play each of the following examples as written, and then apply the previous drill to continue through the octave.

Examples 9 and 10 utilize the *D* Dorian mode to respectively illustrate $\flat 3$ s (Think “Hello Dolly” and “A Day in the Life”) and $\flat 7$ s (“Star Trek” original TV theme and “She Came in Through the Bathroom

Window”), while **Ex. 11** gives us a taste of the $\flat 2$ (“White Christmas” and the shark theme from “Jaws”) and $\flat 3$ inherent to the *E* Phrygian mode. **Ex. 12** demonstrates the *F* Lydian mode’s unique $\sharp 4$ (“Maria” from *West Side Story* and the first and third notes of “Blue Jay Way”). You can experience *G* Mixolydian’s $\flat 7$ on your own, simply by replacing either a *G* major scale’s 7 ($F\sharp$) with a $\flat 7$ (F), or the *G* Dorian mode’s $\flat 3$ ($B\flat$) with a 3 (B).

Ex. 13’s *A* Aeolian-mode/natural-minor-scale formula includes both a $\flat 3$ and a $\flat 6$ (“Because” and “She’s a Woman”). We conclude with **Ex. 14’s** *B*-Locrian-based $\flat 5$, which neighbors its $\flat 2$, $\flat 3$, 4, $\flat 6$, and $\flat 7$.

Be sure to transpose all of the previous examples to all keys. You can also apply the same drill to the five-note pentatonic major and minor scales (root-2-3-5-6, and root-2- $\flat 3$ -4-5- $\flat 7$), as well as the six-note blues scale (root-2- $\flat 3$ -4- $\flat 5$ -5- $\flat 7$).

Ex. 9

Minor Thirds

D Dorian mode

play: sing and play: sing: sing and play:

Ex. 10

Minor Sevenths

D Dorian mode

play: sing and play: sing: sing and play:

Ex. 11

Minor Seconds and Thirds

E Phrygian mode

play: sing and play: sing: sing and play:

WHAT GOES UP MUST COME DOWN

Every ascending interval has a corresponding descending version. To hear, practice, and internalize descending intervals, play and sing all of the previous examples in reverse from high to low. Here are some descending reference melodies to get you started: $\flat 2$ = "I Am the Walrus"; 2 = "Yesterday"; $\flat 3$ = "Hey Jude"; 3 = "Summertime"; 4 = "I've Been Working on the Railroad"; $\sharp 4/\flat 5$ = British police siren

(a la Jimi); 5 = "Feelings"; $\flat 6$ = Theme from *Love Story*; 6 = "Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen"; $\flat 7$ = "Willow Weep for Me (first and third notes)"; 7 = "I Love You" (Cole Porter); and octave = "You've Got to Hide Your Love Away" (chorus).

BIG EARS RULE

Melodic ear training is only one aspect of developing your mind's ear. There's also rhythmic ear training and harmonic ear

training to be considered, not to mention using your imagination to translate natural and industrial sounds into the language of music. We've only scratched the surface here, but it's a good place to start. Do the work and you'll not only become a better guitarist, you'll be a better musician. ■

Ex. 12

Sharp Fourths

F Lydian mode

play:	sing and play:	sing:	sing and play:
			
	"Root 2 3 $\sharp 4$ "	"Root $\sharp 4$ "	"Root $\sharp 4$ "
T A B 8 10 7 9	8 10 7 9	(8) (9)	8 9

Ex. 13

Minor Sixths

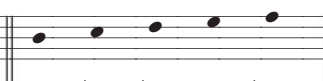
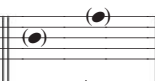
A Aeolian mode

play:	sing and play:	sing:	sing and play:
			
	"Root 2 $\flat 3$ 4 5 $\flat 6$ "	"Root $\flat 6$ "	"Root $\flat 6$ "
T A B 7 4 5 7 5 6	7 4 5 7 5 6	(6) (7)	6 7

Ex. 14

Flatted Fifths

B Locrian mode

play:	sing and play:	sing:	sing and play:
			
	"Root $\flat 2$ $\flat 3$ 4 $\flat 5$ "	"Root $\flat 5$ "	"Root $\flat 5$ "
T A B 4 5 7 5 6	4 5 7 5 6	(4) (6)	4 6

>>> TECHNIQUE LESSON

Finger Lickin' Good

Utilizing Hybrid Picking for Lead Playing

BY DAVID BREWSTER

HYBRID PICKING—USING A PICK IN conjunction with your available pick-hand fingers to pluck the strings—is an interesting and often highly useful alternative to traditional plectrum-based guitar playing, one that can facilitate the performance of licks and phrases that would be more difficult, if not impossible, to play using the pick alone. This lesson explores a specific application of hybrid picking, for lead work, with a survey of techniques and stylistically diverse approaches that can be found in the playing of countless guitar legends—everyone from Chet Atkins, Billy Gibbons, and Warren Haynes, to Eric Johnson and Buckethead.

As you begin to notice various applications of hybrid picking in the music of these and other artists and the sounds, melodies, and textures it can be used to

create, you'll discover that different players will typically adopt their own personalized approach to the technique. For those who are new to hybrid picking, it involves clasp[ing] your pick between your thumb and index finger, as you would ordinarily do for picking single notes or strumming, and picking downstrokes while alternately or simultaneously plucking higher strings with your available bare fingers, most often the middle finger, with the ring finger sometimes brought into play for double-stops, and the pinky occasionally employed to pluck chords.

Many blues, rock, and metal guitarists who employ hybrid picking commonly use only one finger, typically the middle, but you'll find plenty of country and bluegrass players blazing hybrid-picked licks using various combinations of pick-hand

fingers. The unique combination of plectrum-picked lower strings and fingerpicked higher strings creates an interesting tonal contrast between your pick and fingers, and these varying articulations can create plenty of variations in the volume and dynamic attack of what you're playing, which can sound exciting, lively and very musical. You can also produce strong note accents by pulling a string away from the fretboard as you pluck it with a bare finger and allowing it to snap back as you let go of it. In contrast, you could also brush the strings gently with your fingers, helping to create a wide, pronounced variance in your volume range.

To get started hybrid picking, play through **Examples 1a** and **1b**, with Ex. 1a presenting a basic single-note *E* minor pentatonic-based phrase played in 12th position using

Ex. 1a

Em

* $\blacksquare$ = downstroke w/pick; ∇ = upstroke w/pick;
m = pluck string w/middle finger; a = pluck string w/ring finger

Ex. 1b

Em

Ex. 2a

E7

Ex. 2b

E7 blues turnaround

E7

Ex. 3a

E7 blues turnaround (lower octave)

Ex. 3b

E7 blues turnaround (higher octave)

hybrid picking, and Ex. 1b fusing the same lick with a pair of double-stops, plucked with the middle and ring fingers together.

Our next two examples reveal a common hybrid-picked E7 lick idea, with a basic primer exercise shown in **Ex. 2a**, and its development into a standard blues turnaround phrase depicted in **Ex. 2b**. Notice how the use of hybrid picking here makes all the string skipping so much easier to do than if you were to try and flatpick all the notes!

Examples 3a and **3b** demonstrate how to perform another common blues turnaround,

this time covering two different fretboard positions and quickly shifting to another location on the neck. Ex.3a features a very common E7 turnaround in open position, while Ex.3b relocates this idea an octave higher, creating a slinky turnaround phrase that would sound at home in blues music, but could also be used in rock, country, jazz, and a variety of other styles. Notice the exceptionally wide intervals created by pulling off to the open high E string from so high up on the neck. There are plenty of guitarists that have incorporated

this technique into their playing style and vocabulary, and you can find licks like these in the music of such greats as Albert Lee, Robben Ford, Stevie Ray Vaughan, and country legend Willie Nelson.

Ex.4 presents a stock hybrid-picked lead phrase that brings to mind an abundance of licks that you'll hear coming from blues-rock masters like Billy Gibbons, Joe Bonamassa, Slash, Warren Haynes, and countless others. Experiment with "snapping" the hybrid picked notes as this lick unfolds, giving the phrase an aggressive,

Ex. 4

Hybrid-picked blues-rock lick

Em

LESSONS >>> FINGER LICKIN' GOOD

heavily accented sound.

You can apply hybrid picking to just about any style of music, and the abundance of licks, phrases, and ideas that you'll discover and invent while researching and experimenting with this technique is a worthwhile study that should be eagerly explored!

To move things into more of a rock/shred direction, **Ex.5** features an interesting way of performing an *E* minor arpeggio, utilizing hybrid picking to facilitate an intervallic arpeggio idea that incorporates frequent string crosses and changes in melodic direction, with only one or two

notes played on each string before switching to another one. This example is demonstrative of licks and phrases coming from hard-rocking shred virtuosos Greg Howe, Guthrie Govan, Zakk Wylde, and the masked guitar wizard, Buckethead. As you play through the example, be sure to alternate between your pick and middle finger as each two-note string-group moves along the strings.

Examples 6a and **6b** offer insight into the origin and execution of a famous and very cool hybrid-picked lick, one performed by Eric Johnson during the intro to his classic instrumental, "Cliffs of Dover," which

is based on a classical-style pedal-point phrase borrowed from the great composer Johann Sebastian Bach. **Ex. 6a** reveals how to perform an ascending *E* major scale-based run using hybrid picking to greatly facilitate the alternation between climbing notes on the fourth, third and second strings and a recurring high *E* root note on the first string. **Ex. 6b** reveals a descending variation on this pedal-point idea, similar to Johnson's lick. These two runs are challenging to execute cleanly, so be sure to take your time moving through the notes of each phrase until the string skipping

Ex. 5

E minor intervallic arpeggio sequence

*E*m

Ex. 6a

Ascending *E* major scale with hybrid-picked pedal tone

E

Ex. 6b

Eric Johnson-style hybrid picking lick

E

MORE ONLINE!



For audio of this lesson, go to guitarplayer.com/lessons/april2017

Our final offering, **Ex. 7**, presents an advanced hybrid-picked string skipping run that's inspired by the playing of shred masters Steve Morse and John Petrucci, as well as country-shred monsters Brent Mason and Johnny Hiland. Take your time learning and playing through this wicked run, and

In your quest to expand your musical and guitar playing horizons, try to incorporate some of the ideas and sounds presented in this lesson into your own playing, and be

sure to spend plenty of time experimenting with hybrid picking and its numerous uses. The dynamic and tonal variations that can be achieved between the pick and fingers can be harnessed to craft very expressive, interesting licks and phrases, so spend plenty of time practicing the techniques and its various applications in the creation of your own licks. 

Rock/shred hybrid-picked string-skipping lick

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>>> CLASSIC RIFF

Donovan with the Jeff Beck Group “Goo Goo Barabajagal (Love Is Hot)”

BY JESSE GRESS

ONE OF THE MOST PLEASANT AND unexpected surprises during the summer of '69 was Irish folk/pop star Donovan's team-up with none other than the Jeff Beck Group for the nonsensically titled “Goo Goo Barabajagal (Love Is Hot)” —reportedly a word play on John Lennon's “Goo goo ga joob” lyric (from “I Am the Walrus”) — which charted modestly in both the U.S. and U.K. Working under the tutelage of producer Mickie Most, Jeff and the lads (Rod Stewart, Ron Wood, Nicky Hopkins, and Mick Waller) groove through the entire track, but Beck's most prominent contribution is the song's intro—a funky-up riff incorporating hybrid-picked, low-register single-notes contrasted with mid-register double-stops.

Ex. 1 illustrates how Beck used a

pick-and-fingers approach to articulate bar 1's blend of picked open *E* and *A* strings, and major- and minor-third intervals, suggesting *E7/5*—*A* played on the second and third strings, picked with the middle and ring fingers. (You can alternatively use your thumb instead of a pick.) Notice how beats one and two feature straight eighth- and quarter-notes before beats three and four get syncopated. The syncopations really kick in in bar 2, wherein Beck employs a 3/16 hemiola, or “three-against-four” rhythmic pattern, by alternating between four picked 16th-notes (*E-G-E-E*) and four middle-finger-plucked eighth-notes (*E-G-E-D*), followed by *B $\flat$* to *B*, starting on the second 16th-note of beat four. Notice also how Beck's strategically placed staccato phrasing significantly ups the funk factor here.

Bar 3 is essentially identical to bar 1 (with the addition of an alternate fingering for the first two double-stops), before bar 4 provides the riff's closing response lick. Here, Beck reiterates beat one from bar 2, and though he keeps the 3/16 hemiola rhythm intact, the following picked 16th-notes remain on *E*, while the middle-finger-plucked eighth-notes outline a descending *E* pentatonic minor scale—*E*, *D*, *B*, and *A*, capped on beat four with a lazy, moaning *F $\sharp$* -to-*G* bend that sets up the song's *E-A* verse groove. It all adds up to one of my favorite soundcheck riffs for testing a fab in-between-clean-and-high-gain crunch tone, and it rarely fails to elicit a “What's that?” response from bandmates, followed by some raised eyebrows! 🤨

Ex. 1

♩ = ca. 102 (E7/5) (A) (E) (E7/5) (A) (E)
N.C.

Barabajagal

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HARMONY THEORY

by Page Milliken

Harmonics

Whether you listen to Buffalo Springfield, Charlie Byrd, or Andres Segovia, you have probably heard harmonics used in music. And if you've listened to a professional guitarist tuning up, you may have heard harmonics there too.

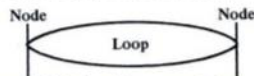
HOW HARMONICS ARE MADE

If you lightly touch (not depress) any of your strings exactly over the 12th fret bar (not the space behind the fret), then pluck the string and quickly remove your finger, you will get a harmonic. The harmonic sounded will be one octave *higher* than the open string, and the *same* pitch as that string stopped at the 12th fret. Compare the harmonic with the note normally sounded at the 12th fret. If they are not the same, your strings may need changing, or your bridge adjusting.

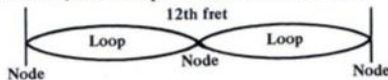
If the harmonic procedure is used on the 5th fret you will get a note two octaves higher than the open string, and on the 7th fret you will get a note an octave and a fifth higher than the open string.

WHAT HARMONICS ARE

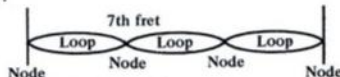
If you pluck a string you get a vibration. The end of the string is called the node (the point of rest) and the middle of the string is called the loop (point of motion).



The 12th fret is half the distance of the guitar string (no matter how many frets your guitar has). When you play a harmonic there, a new loop and node are introduced.



Each half of the string is now vibrating at twice the original frequency. At the 7th fret, the string can be divided into thirds, each of which vibrates at three times the original frequency.



TUNING WITH HARMONICS

A very accurate way of tuning is with an A-440 tuning fork. When struck, the fork will produce the same pitch as the harmonic played on the 5th string at the 5th fret. The advantage to harmonic tuning is that it leaves your left hand free to move the pegs after you have struck the initial harmonic. The note will keep ringing after your finger is removed. Another advantage is that the sound produced by the harmonic is two octaves higher and makes slight differences much easier to hear.

Once you have the 5th string in tune to the fork, you will want to tune the 6th string to the 5th. To do this, play the 6th string at the 5th fret harmonic and the 5th string at the 7th

fret harmonic. Tune the 6th string until the two notes are identical. Then compare the 5th string at the 5th fret harmonic to the 4th string at the 7th fret. Tune the 4th string until it matches, and so on.

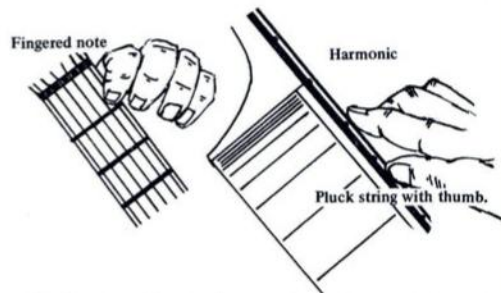
Tune 2nd string to this fingered note.



This will work for every string except the 2nd, which must be tuned by fingering the 4th fret of the 3rd string and tuning the 2nd string to it in the traditional manner. When the 2nd string is tuned, go back to the harmonic method and tune the 1st string at the 7th fret harmonic to the 2nd string at the 5th fret harmonic.

FINGERED HARMONICS

The open string harmonic notes are limited in number. Suppose, for example, that you want the tone quality of a harmonic on the note F. Finger the 1st string at the 1st fret (F) with your left hand, then place the 1st finger of your right hand over the 13th fret bar (also F) and pluck the string with your right thumb. The resulting note is called an artificial harmonic.



By fingering the 1st fret you have shortened the string length (your finger is the new node), and the 13th fret is now halfway up the shortened string, making a harmonic. If you finger the 2nd fret on the 1st string (F#), a harmonic may be generated at the 14th fret, and so on. This will work on all six strings.

The use of harmonics makes possible more accurate tuning, and also provides an alternative tone color, mellower and more subdued, to the performer. Combined with other techniques (for example, an artificial harmonic may be bent upward while it's still ringing, or with an amplified guitar a note may be played normally and then the harmonic node touched, so that the pitch leaps upward an octave), the harmonics can be put to many expressive uses.



IT'S INTERESTING THAT PAGE MILLIKEN'S FEBRUARY 1973 LESSON ON HARMONICS NAME-CHECKS THE wacky harmonic-spewing artists Andres Segovia, Charlie Byrd, and Buffalo Springfield. Funny how the coming of shred, new wave, and experimental guitar—as well as the continuing evolution of hard rock—pretty much stole the “harmonics mantle” from those classical, jazz, and pop-rock types. —MICHAEL MOLENDA



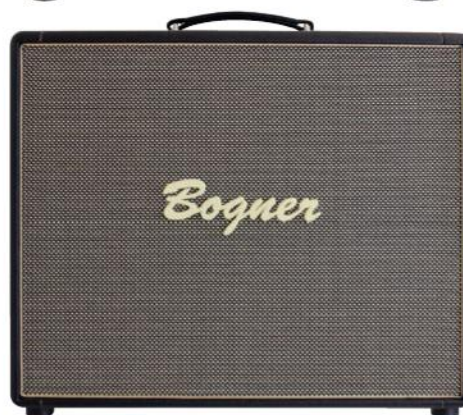
Gear

ROUNDUP

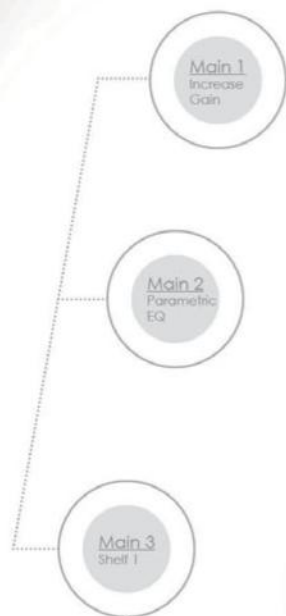
Four American-Made 1x12 Tube Combos

TESTED BY DAVE HUNTER

FOR ALL THE HEAD 'N' CAB OPTIONS OUT THERE, there's still something solid and comforting about a good combo. Grab the amp in one hand, your guitar in the other, and go. This issue we round up four new American-made 1x12 tube combos—the Bogner Helios, Dr. Z The Cure, Friedman Runt 20, and the Morgan MVP23—that spring from a broad range of inspirations to address myriad gigging needs. All of these amps were tested with a Fender Telecaster and a Gibson Les Paul.



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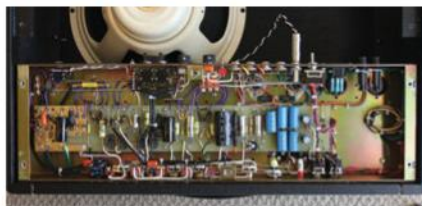
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BOGNER HELIOS 50 COMBO

FOR THOSE COMBO FANS WHO STILL need to rock the foundations of a sizeable stage may we present the Helios 50. The hand-wired *head* rendition of Reinhold Bogner's ultimate modded-plexi has been tearing roofs off the sucker for a couple of years now, but some players—particularly those with strong right arms and sturdy backs—still like to haul their tone monsters in a single bound, so here we have it. Without too much of a deep dive into the logistics here (check the spec box for full control complement), the Helios conjures classic Marshall-inspired tones from the plexi-to-high-gain range with footswitchable channels, multiple voicings to capture '70s and '80s tones (the former bolder, the latter higher-gain), a footswitchable tube-buffered FX loop that doubles as a volume boost, and facilities to tweak other gain and EQ parameters. In other words, there's a lot of Marshall-esque rock in one package.

In classic style, the Helios 50 Combo is powered by a pair of EL34 output tubes, which drive into a 12" single Celestion Alnico Cream with a 90-watt power rating. It's all wrapped into a classic Brit-styled combo with the controls top-mounted, and although a pretty heavy lift at around 55 lbs, it still offers an impressive watts-per-pound ratio up against other big combos of yore. Open up the Helios's chassis, and it's easy to ascertain why Bogner needs to charge nearly \$3k for the combo. The board does include some printed traces for switching and other functional elements, but it carries a lot of complex hand wiring otherwise, in a layout that's as tidy as it is busy, with SoZo coupling caps taking most signal-related duties and a plethora of other

quality parts throughout. In short, Bogner has thrown every trick in the book at this thing (a book he's compiled after decades of working on the plexi Marshalls of many of the world's best guitarists), and the results are impressive.

There isn't room here to go into all the variables on the theme that this amp enables, but suffice it to say it's one mammoth rock beast, and superbly versatile to boot. That being said, of the Helios's two inputs—Plexi and Hot—I think the former, which yields an anemic response from both channels until their volumes are pushed hard, is largely dispensable. Hot is where it's happening, and with Channel II engaged in particular, it's a corpulent bundle of room-rumbling fun. (Bogner's Jorg Dorschner responds, "The anemic response probably comes more from the single 1x12 combo situation. If you plug the amp into a 2x12 cab or 4x12 cab it loses that.")

Consider that the Helios might not exude quite any straight-up Marshall sound from the golden years, but of course that's the intention; what it delivers, instead, are the hot-rodded plexi and 2204 tones that many of us actually think of when the M-word is mentioned in relation to classic '70s and '80s rock. As such, you get a sizzling, raw, and raucous boatload of screaming tone just about anywhere you set it. I particularly enjoyed '70s mode on Channel II with the Variac switched in, Bright on I, and the Les Paul wailing for all its worth; a searing yet extremely tactile playing experience. In short, if you're a combo fan looking for a semi-portable straight shot to that sound, you could do far worse than hauling a Helios around.

SPECIFICATIONS

HELIOS 50 COMBO

CONTACT	bogneramplification.com
PRICE	\$2,999 street
CHANNELS	2
CONTROLS	Vol I, Gain II, Vol II, Treble, Mid, Bass, Presence. Bright switches for both channels, '70s/'80s voicing switch for Ch II, EQ bypass/Boost switch for Ch II. Bottom control and Variac Mode switch on bottom panel
POWER	50 watts
TUBES	Five 12AX7s, two EL34s
EXTRAS	Buffered FX loop with bypass switch and Return level (serves as footswitchable boost when no effects are inserted). 4/8/16Ω speaker outs
SPEAKER	One 12" Celestion G12 Alnico Cream
WEIGHT	55 lbs
BUILT	USA
KUDOS	A fierce, versatile bundle of hot-rodded-plexi-inspired goodness in one surprisingly compact package. Great build quality. Clever features.
CONCERNS	The Plexi input seems rather pointless, and not entirely "plexi sounding."



DR. Z THE CURE

FOLLOWING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF

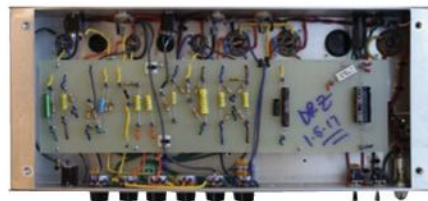
the Z-Lux, released a little less than two years ago, Dr. Z has stripped down the format to produce another broadly American-voiced combo called The Cure. Immediately impressive is the low price at which the long-established “boutique” maker brings in this hand-wired amp, and it’s worth noting up front that I can see no compromises made in doing so. The Cure eschews the Z-Lux’s onboard reverb and tremolo and halves the power to bring you 20 watts from a pair of cathode-biased 6V6s fronted by a single-channel preamp that merges tweed Fender and basic Marshall topologies, while also enabling some blackface-like shimmer and bark.

The amp does include, however, a footswitchable tone-stack bypass boost, with a Boost-level control right on the footswitch (which determines how much of the tone stack’s signal is dumped to ground, and thereby how hot your boost), as well as a lot of governance over gain staging and output levels. In addition to the Volume control, there’s both a pre-phase-inverter Master that follows the three-knob, cathode-follower tone stack (essentially Z’s Maz preamp), and a post-phase-inverter Level control. Around back is a simple series effects loop along with both Internal and External speaker outs. The first of these is routed to the combo’s single 12" Z-12, which is manufactured by Eminence and designed by Dr. Z to capture the rich, round sound of the mid-’60s Oxford speakers that came in many Fender amps of the day. Inside the chassis we find the usual neat Dr. Z construction, featuring a turret board loaded with Mallory signal caps and carbon-film resistors, plus a nifty surprise on the other side of the aircraft-grade aluminum box: a Triad output

transformer, made by the same company that supplied transformers for the most desirable Fender tweed amps of the ’50s, and is now back in the game. The whole thing is housed in Dr. Z’s light, compact Studio cab, done in black with tasty Z-Wreck grille cloth, bringing the package in at a light 33 lbs.

Right out of the gate, The Cure proved itself an extremely versatile and great-sounding platform for whatever I had to throw at it. Just as it sits, it’s a dynamic and extremely playable little club-gig combo, with a richly textured sonic signature and a good range of punchy cleans to chewy tweed-inflected overdrive. It twangs and shimmers beautifully with the Telecaster injected, going appropriately gnarly with the amp’s Boost engaged, taking me easily from classic country to snarling garage-roots tones. Show it the Les Paul and adjust the gain stages accordingly, and it’s suddenly a surprisingly raucous blues- and classic-rock combo. The Level control works great, allowing you to dial in your degree of overdrive with the Volume and Master, and then set your desired output without radically changing the amp’s voicing or touch sensitivity—or just leave the Level full up for a surprisingly loud little belter!

The series loop worked great with a Mad Professor Silver Spring patched in for reverb, and the amp interacted beautifully with overdrive pedals I showed it, including an Xotic BB Preamp, BMF El Jefe, and JHS Angry Charlie. I really dig the sound of this newer Z-12 speaker, too, which is full, responsive, devoid of peaky highs, and suits the amp extremely well. In short, like so many Dr. Z designs, The Cure is one nifty handful of tone, and earns itself an Editors’ Pick Award.



SPECIFICATIONS

THE CURE COMBO

CONTACT	drzamps.com
PRICE	\$1,299 street
CHANNELS	1
CONTROLS	Volume, Treble, Middle, Bass, Master, Level
POWER	15 watts
TUBES	Two 12AX7s, one 12AT7, two 6V6s, 5AR4 rectifier
EXTRAS	Single-button footswitch with level control for Boost function. Internal and External speaker outs. Passive series FX loop
SPEAKER	One 12" Eminence-made Z-12
WEIGHT	33 lbs
BUILT	USA
KUDOS	A sweet sounding and surprisingly versatile “club combo.” very well built and delivered at a great price.
CONCERNS	None.



FRIEDMAN RUNT 20

IN AN EFFORT TO MAKE HIS POPULAR designs more accessible to the everyman or woman, Dave Friedman's new Runt series scores big savings by using printed circuit boards (PCBs), while still employing quality components and a lot of hand-wrought assembly work. Friedman himself supervises every step of the manufacturing process, plays every amp, and even signs every chassis before shipping. We tested the Runt 50 head in a Roundup a couple issues ago, but this Runt 20 combo should appeal to a different enough crowd that it warrants a close look itself. In one compact package, the Runt 20 provides two footswitchable channels—the full Friedman BE-100-derived lead channel, plus a “simple clean” channel with just a Volume control and a 3-way bright switch—and delivers 20 watts from a pair of cathode-biased EL84 output tubes. Bonus features include a cabinet-simulated XLR D.I. output with voicing switches and silent recording capabilities (i.e. no speaker need be connected to supply a load), and a buffered series effects loop.

It all comes in a stout, cube-like cab that's impressively compact on the two-dimensional plane, but boasts a little extra depth than the norm to coax a little more low-end from its Celestion G12M Creamback speaker. The look is entirely apropos of the Friedman sound's British origins, from the black-and-gold grille-cloth, to the offset Plexiglas control panel—a nod to the very first JTM45 prototypes. The top-rear-mounted chassis in the combo version of

the Runt 20, which is also available as a head, makes it a little tricky to access the D.I. functions or to plug in the included footswitch, and you'd likely need to remove the entire chassis to swap tubes, but that's all worked around easily enough. Inside, a clearly laid-out PCB is populated with Mallory, Xicon and SBE (“orange drop”) signal caps and carbon-film resistors, and although the tube sockets make their connections straight to the board, the board itself is mounted sturdily to the chassis.

For those already familiar with Friedman's amps, there will be no surprises in the juicy, snarling lead channel, other than perhaps that it translates so well to this 20-watt format and the diminutive cab it's loaded into. And many players will be plenty surprised by how virtuous the one-knob Clean channel is. Clear, articulate, well-balanced (in large thanks to a very well-conceived 3-way bright switch), yet buoyantly toothsome, it's a delight to play. And while it might not be the perfect clean voice for all occasions, it's hard to imagine a much better one achieved this simply. But dirty is where the Friedman deed is best done, and in that department the Runt 20 is another pure delight. From wirey, bitey, Jimmy Page-style riffage on the Tele to chunky power chords and more singing, searing leads on the Les Paul, this thing simply works, and works well. Let's call the Runt 20 Combo one smokin' little compact box of rawk, and an Editors' Pick Award winner as well.

SPECIFICATIONS

RUNT 20 COMBO

CONTACT	friedmanamplification.com
PRICE	\$1,499 street
CHANNELS	2
CONTROLS	Clean Vol, Gain, Bass, Middle, Treble, Master, Presence; Clean Channel Bright switch; Channel switch; Lead Boost switch
POWER	20 watts
TUBES	Three 12AX7s, two EL84s
EXTRAS	Single-button footswitch for channel select; dual speaker outs with 8/16Ω switch; buffered series FX loop; speaker-emulated XLR DI with Ground Lift, Axis and Level switches
SPEAKER	One 12" Celestion G12M Creamback
WEIGHT	41 lbs
BUILT	USA
KUDOS	An enticingly compact Marshall-style combo that sounds surprisingly big and fierce. Classic hot-rodded British lead tones, and a good clean channel
CONCERNS	None.

MORGAN MVP23



CALIFORNIA AMP MAKER JOE MORGAN

has been gaining a reputation over the course of the past decade or so for his straightforward yet effective takes on classic British and American circuits, to which he generally adds a few extremely useful performance features. Morgan's more affordable models—this MVP23 combo included—are now manufactured under Boutique Amps Distribution. In addition to making these hand-wired amps more accessible to players, it's worth noting that the shift is also intended to rectify a few small-shop customer-service glitches that had plagued Morgan recently, including some notably long wait times. As Steven Elowe of B.A.D. puts it, "Anyone who has ever played through a 'boutique' amplifier knows immediately the difference between mass produced amps and the custom hand-wired masterpieces, but building amps by hand comes with inherent problems. If it's successful and demand grows, there are usually only one to three people working on them, and the workload becomes impossible." By partnering with B.A.D., Morgan now has, in addition to other resources, a full customer service and support crew. In short: the designers handle the circuits, but an experienced business team handles the business.

The single-channel MVP23 would appear to address the enduringly popular "18-watter" template, although its design isn't so much straight-up British as it is a clever trans-Atlantic hybrid. Gain and Volume controls determine the clean-to-mean ratio from two gain stages via a full tone stack with Treble, Middle, and Bass. A final Power control governs a power-scaling network that takes the amp from a quarter of

a watt to full power (stated as 23 watts) from its cathode-biased, dual-EL84 output stage. Inside the rugged little aluminum chassis the circuit board is loaded with quality hand-soldered components, including Synergy coupling caps and carbon-film resistors; and all pots, switches and tube sockets are mounted directly to the chassis itself. Covered in "Twilight" salt 'n' pepper fabric that's made in the USA and exclusive to Morgan, the Baltic-birch cabinet has a classy retro-chic look and is loaded with a 12" Celestion G12M Creamback speaker.

With either a Tele or Les Paul plugged in, playing tests confirm that the MVP23 strays creatively from the Brit-inspired roots of so many dual-EL84 creations. It delivers a kind of Vox-meets-Fender-blackface in its voicing, with a certain spanky crispness in the highs and upper mids, yet a richer midrange laced with dark, plummy notes. It's a gutsy foundation with a warm, trenchant voice when kept clean, but it does go toward mild breakup pretty quickly and then into thick, meaty overdrive when pushed harder. As such, this combo rocks plenty hard all on its own, but it interacted extremely well with a range of overdrive pedals, too, which opened up its versatility exponentially. The MVP23 is a loud little beast, but the Power knob does rein in the bluster very well when needed. The MVP23 gets a little "brown" when you reduce the Power setting to below one o'clock or so, thus softening up the attack and squashing out a bit, so it behooves you to adjust Gain and Volume slightly to retain as close to the same tonality as possible. All said, and with its cool styling and cool sounds, the MVP23 is a fun variation on a well-tested theme. ■



SPECIFICATIONS

MVP23 COMBO

CONTACT	morganamps.com
PRICE	\$1,699 street
CHANNELS	1
CONTROLS	Gain, Vol, Treble, Middle, Bass, Power
POWER	23 watts
TUBES	Two 12AX7 preamp tubes, two EL34 output tubes, solid-state rectification
EXTRAS	Power scaling function. Dual 8Ω and single 16Ω speaker outs
SPEAKER	One 12" Celestion G12M Creamback
WEIGHT	40 lbs
BUILT	USA
KUDOS	A solid and stylish combo offering a good sonic platform from warm cleans to classic-rock crunch.
CONCERNS	Power scaling induces a "brownier" sound when used in excess, but works well otherwise.

30 Superstars for 2017

THOUSANDS OF PRODUCTS DEBUT AT NAMM EACH YEAR. WE PICKED OUR FAVES. WHAT ARE YOURS?

BY THE GP STAFF

IT'S CONFUSING, ISN'T IT? HOW DO you peruse all the magazines and websites and YouTube videos and social posts to get a handle on the new products you might wish to explore further? Sadly, we can't really help you with that. You *should* study all of that stuff, because there are a lot of cool products released at NAMM, and why would you want to risk missing something really cool?

What we can do, however, is highlight the gear that caught the editors' eyes, and perhaps start you on your quest with just a few products to check out first—you know, before the Onslaught of Plenty.

For this report, Editor in Chief Michael Molenda, Senior Editor Art Thompson, Los Angeles Editor Jude Gold, and Nashville Editor Michael Ross all picked the new products they dug the

most. Obviously, these choices are subjective—not comprehensive—but as you know most of us from reading our gear reviews, you'll hopefully find some highlights that you'll dig, as well. If not, you can always tell us where we went wrong. Please send your own lists of the top products of 2017 to mmolenda@nbmedia.com, with the subject line "NAMM 2017," and we'll publish those lists at guitarplayer.com.



ACLAM SMART TRACK S2 PEDALBOARD

Why: I loved Aclam's post-modern pedalboards and their innovative pedal fasteners when I first saw prototypes a couple of years ago. The Barcelona, Spain-based company had some challenges with distribution, but now KMC Music is distributing them in the USA, and these potentially game-changing pedalboards may finally get into player's hands. I know that I want one. The S2 holds eight to ten pedals, and those fasteners look to be pretty darn cool, versatile, and, hopefully, snug.

Price: \$249 street (other sizes available)

More Info: aclamguitars.cat



BANDLAB TECHNOLOGIES AUDIOSTRETCH

Why: A truly super tool for learning solos, licks, melodies, chord patterns from any audio or video source. AudioStretch lets you slow down tracks without pitch changes, shift pitch up or down 36 semitones, and scrub audio for precise, note-by-note listening. I can't wait to input video of my fave artists performing onstage and slow down the musical onslaughts to something my ear can grab hold of. Fabulous!

Price: \$9.99 (LITE version is free)

More Info: audiostretch.com



BC AUDIO GRAND PRIX 100

Why: This superbly built, point-to-point-wired amp features a unique footswitch-activated Dual Power function that lets you footswitch between two or four EL34 power tubes, doubling power output and creating a volume boost that's handy when you need to stand out over the band. The Grand Prix has a Clean/Crunch mode on Channel 1 and Vintage/Modern on Channel 2, 3-band EQ, Presence and Depth controls, and an effects loop.

Price: \$3,600 retail

More Info: bcaudio.com

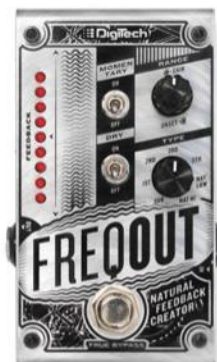


EARTHQUAKER DEVICES SPACE SPIRAL

Why: This crazy modulated digital delay with 30ms to 600ms of delay time and a variable wave-shape LFO (that affects the delay repeats only) is all you need to create dark, gothic dreamscapes—or nightmares—of sonic hysteria. Not that brave? Well, you can still play around with tape-like delays and undulating modulations.

Price: \$195 street

More Info:
earthquakerdevices.com



DIGITECH FREQOUT

Why: I admit it. I completely freaked out over the FreqOut. Why? Because I *adore* feedback, and this pedal lets me spew sonic carnage in many ways. I can select the harmonic of the feedback, set the speed at which it starts wailing, and delete the dry signal for spooky, EBow-like sustain, and more. This savage beauty is due in March. Can I wait that long?

Price: \$179 street

More Info: digitech.com



D'ANGELICO PREMIERE BOB WEIR SS

Why: Co-designed with the legendary Grateful Dead guitarist, the Bob Weir SS is an impressive hollowbody electric that offers a maple-on-maple body and a 3-piece (maple/walnut/maple) set neck topped with a 22-fret, 25"-scale rosewood fingerboard. Available only in right-handed and with the new "Stone" finish, the SS also has Weir's signature engraved on the classic "skyscraper" trussrod cover.

Price: \$6,990 street

More Info: dangelicoguitars.com



ELECTRO-HARMONIX BLUEST

Why: This radical modulating filter may only be for the brave, the adventurous, or the sonic anarchists. It's also a ton of fun. Electro-Harmonix has unleashed some cool synthesizer tricks in a package that guitarists can both understand and enjoy. Go hither and make noise!

Price: \$137 street

More Info: ehx.com

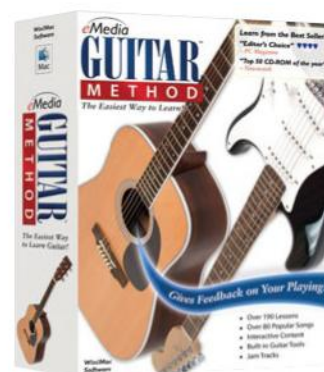


ELIXIR OPTIWEB STRINGS

Why: Coated strings have received a bad rap in some quarters for feeling a bit, well, *weird*. But I tried out a pre-release set of OPTIWEB strings before NAMM, and, to me, they felt no different than the uncoated strings on my other guitars. In addition, the OPTIWEBs sounded balanced, articulate, and accurate. The feeling is good!

Price: \$12.99

More Info: elixirstrings.com



EMEDIA GUITAR METHOD 6

Why: This interactive teaching tool just hit version six at NAMM, and its "automated fretboard" continues to be an awesome and simple way to absorb guitar concepts. A new chord-recognition engine keeps you playing the right stuff, and jam tracks, songs, the ability to loop tough sections, and instructor assistance is all just a click away.

Price: \$59 retail

More Info: emediamusic.com



ERNIE BALL PARADIGM STRINGS

Why: Those crazies at Ernie Ball just slammed down a *guarantee* on their electric and acoustic Paradigm strings. If they break or rust within 90 days of purchase, you get a replacement free of charge. They even dared Kenny Wayne Shepherd and John Petrucci to destroy their Paradigms. Saying something is break resistant is one thing, popping a warranty on that claim is something else.

Price: \$14.99 retail

More Info: ernieball.com



FISHMAN FLUENCE SIGNATURE PICKUPS

Why: Fishman expanded its line of Fluence pickups with some very savvy evangelists. Will Alder (his pickup is shown), Tobin Abasi, and Killswitch Engage have all joined the Fluence fold with wildly different sonic preferences. It's going to be very exciting indeed to check out the varied tones of these new pickups.

Price: \$TBD

More Info: fishman.com



EPIPHONE JOE BONAMASSA "TREASURE" FIREBIRD

Why: This one really caught my eye as it is closely modeled after Bonamassa's original 1963 Gibson Firebird—a rare single-pickup version made only in the first year of production. The Epiphone "Treasure" features a 9-piece thru-neck made of mahogany and walnut, mahogany body wings, a ProBucker FB720 pickup (a recreation of the early '60s Gibson unit), and correct-style Kluson banjo tuners on an in-line headstock. Available finishes for this sweet-looking solid are Polymist Gold and Tobacco Sunburst.

Price: \$799 street

More Info: epiphone.com



ERNIE BALL ST. VINCENT

Why: The St. Vincent didn't actually debut this year, but the new Tobacco Burst finish on an African mahogany body puts a classic spin on what has to be one of the coolest retro-esque body shapes around. Equipped with three DiMarzio mini humbuckers and an Ernie Ball/Music Man vibrato bridge, the St. Vincent is a sleek-playing reminder of some models that a certain Kalamazoo-based company came up with back when tailfins were hot items on '50s-era autos.

Price: \$1,999 street

More Info: ernieball.com



GRETSCH G6218T-CLFG SIGNATURE DUO JET

Why: This exacting replica of the 1954 Gretsch Duo Jet played by Cliff Gallup when he was a member of Gene Vincent and His Blue Caps in the late '50s, features a semi hollow mahogany body, period-correct DynaSonic pickups, "Big Block" pearlloid inlays, a compensated aluminum bridge with a pinned aluminum base, and a Bigsby vibrato tailpiece. Go, cat, go!

Price: \$2,799 street

More Info: gretsch.com



HEADRUSH PEDALBOARD

Why: Another thrilling entry in the digital-processor field for guitarists, the HeadRush offers intuitive touch-screen programming, gapless preset switching, 20 minutes of looping time, and tons of amp, cabinet, effects, and microphone models—all ready for stage and studio in a robust footpedal.

Price: \$999 street

More Info: headrushelectronics.com



L.R. BAGGS SYNAPSE

Why: This gorgeous and funky personal P.A. system looks like a cross between a tiki god and a fine piece of furniture. But the Synapse is not just a looker. Waveform dispersion is claimed at 180-degrees horizontal at all frequencies, it puts out 500 watts of Class-D power, and it provides two channels, each with separate controls for EQ, reverb, gain, a 20dB pad, a mute, 48-volt phantom power, and more.

Price: \$TBD

More Info: lrbaggs.com



KOMET 29

Why: Designed to deliver more volume, clean headroom, and bottom than the previous Komet 19, this new head (also available as a 1x12, 2x10, or 2x12 combo) packs four EL84 power tubes and larger transformers, while remaining the same compact size as the 19. Volume, Thrust, and Tone controls, a 3-way Bright switch, point-to-point wiring, and top-shelf components define the Komet 29 as an amp to be reckoned with in the mid-wattage boutique category.

Price: \$2,999 street

More Info: kometamps.com



MONO PEDALBOARDS

Why: These are sleek, light, and modern-looking boards with modular options that can handle everything from a collection of mini pedals to a monster rig rivaling that of The Edge. Each of the five available pedalboard sizes is fashioned from laser-cut aluminum, anodized with a black or clear finish, and includes rubber feet.

Price: \$109-\$219 direct

More Info: monocreators.com



LOKNOB FUGGEDABOUTIT TOUR CAPS

Why: Another wild and wacky idea from some not-so-crazy minds. You adjust your guitar and/or pedal settings, put Tour Caps over your potentiometers, and "fuggedaboutit." You'll never have to worry about your pedal or guitar controls shifting.

Price: \$9.99 direct

More Info: lokknob.com



PRS SONZERA 20-WATT COMBO

Why: Offering everything from pristine, dimensional clean tones to super saturated overdriven sounds, the Sonzera 20 gets its game on with a pair of 6L6 power tubes—a bit unusual for a 20 watter—and the results speak for themselves. Features include two footswitchable channels, reverb, FX loop, and a Celestion V-Type 12" speaker. This is a cool and versatile amp with a high pedigree for a sweet price.

Price: \$799 street

More Info: prsguitars.com



RADIAL TONEBONE NORTH-STAR

Why: This is a pretty groovy Solo Machine for those who dig smacking up their amps for natural, soaring sustain, but who also want a good drive option for a bit more edge and yowl. The North-Star provides both options with a 24dB clean boost that can also activate an effects loop for truly mesmerizing solos, as well as a dedicated overdrive. In addition, you get a low/flat/high switch for tuning the tone to match your amp or the room.

Price: \$169 street

More Info: tonebone.com



ROLAND GO:MIXER

Why: It's shocking and near magical that you could have the power of Abbey Road Studios on your smartphone. Well, that's not quite true, but the GO:MIXER is an ingenious solution for mixing vocals, guitars, keyboards, and other sounds into your phone as you track tunes and soundtracks for social-networking videos. Think about it—audio quality for hand-held devices just received a mammoth upgrade.

Price: \$99 street

More Info: roland.com



REVEREND SHADE BALDEROSE SIGNATURE

Why: Balderose is the guitarist for the hardcore punk outfit Code Orange, so it's no surprise his signature model is a stripped-down, aggro rock monster. Features are a korina body and set korina neck, a rosewood fretboard, Railhammer Chisel (bridge) and Hyper Vintage (neck) pickups, and a cool kill switch when you pull up the Volume knob.

Price: \$TBD

More Info: reverendguitars.com



ROCKBOARD BY WARWICK FLAT PATCH CABLES

Why: As a pedal geek, one of the big surprises at NAMM—and one that really knocked me out—were these flat patch cables. What a simple, elegant, and “duh” way to get even more pedals on your pedalboard. I also dug the option for cleaner cabling—no more big ol’ jacks sticking every which way. The cables come in four lengths: 10cm (4”), 20cm (8”), 30cm (12”), and 60cm (2”).

Price: \$TBD

More Info: warwick.de



SEYMOUR DUNCAN POWERSTAGE 170

Why: How cool is a stompbox-sized power amp with 170 watts of power? I'd say pretty kick-ass cool—especially if you rock digital rigs, such as Kemper, Axe-FX, Line 6, Boss, or the new HeadRush. The 170 also means that your guitar, pedalboard, and “amp” will likely fit in an airline overhead compartment. Of course, if you want even *more* power, the 700 delivers 700 watts in a rack-like configuration.

Price: \$399 street (PowerStage 700; \$699 street)

More Info: seymourduncan.com



SOURCE AUDIO VENTRIS

Why: Coming on the heels of the Nemesis Delay, the dual-processor-equipped Ventriss is an inspiring stereo reverb pedal that offers 24 effects ranging from classic 'verb sounds (spring, plate, room) to wilder effects such as modulation, pitch shifting, shimmer, and swell reverbs. Details of this super sounding pedal include eight onboard presets, true spill-over, stereo inputs/outputs, soft bypass (preserves reverb trails), a unique hold function, full MIDI, and deep editing capability with the free Neuro Mobile App.

Price: TBA

More Info: sourceaudio.net



TECH 21 QSTRIP

Why: I've been a studio geek almost as long as I could wrap up a mic cable, which is why I'm so tickled with the QStrip. For one thing, the gray chassis and red knobs look as if they were inspired by a channel strip from a '70s Trident console. Love that. But the serious stuff is the massive, big-studio-like frequency control. This is a preamp to die for. Sigh.

Price: \$249 street

More Info: tech21nyc.com



SUPRO AMERICANA SERIES

Why: These replicas of the classic Supro "reso-glass" guitars are constructed with a chambered mahogany body and resonant molded top. This semi-hollow recipe retains the unique sonic characteristics of the vintage Supros while being lightweight and easy to play, and the Vistatone pickups are modeled on the single-coil design developed by Valco in the early 1950s. These historic reissues (including the Martinique shown here) are available in two body styles with a range of hardware options.

Price: \$699 to \$1299 street

More Info: suprousa.com



SOUND CITY SC30

Why: Based on the original Dave Reeves-designed Sound City One Hundred—from which the new Sound City Master One Hundred and Master Lead 50 amplifiers were created—the SC30 delivers dead-amazing clarity, punch, and sweetness for its size and power. Designer Steven Fryette says that linking the expressive Gold Lion KT66 "Kinkless Tetrode" power tubes to a classic Reeves-inspired, phase-inverter design in a cathode-biased configuration yields remarkably rich harmonic balance and tonal detail from single-coils and humbuckers. Evidence of this concept was obvious when I got to try the SC30 in the sound booth with a Stratocaster. It had a righteous blend of fatness and chime, subtle-but-tactile compression, plenty of juicy grind when laying into it—and, man, could it get it loud. Other details of this inspiring amplifier include a 5AR4 tube-rectified power supply, a Partridge-inspired, paper-insulated output transformer, and a carefully evolved rendition of the original 12" Sound City Power Speaker—right down to the original label design.

Price: \$1,699 street

More Info: soundcityamp.com



WAY HUGE RUSSIAN PICKLE

Why: Well, here's a Russian initiative that won't start a political battle—unless it's a groovy fusillade of '90s, grunge-influenced fuzz. The Pickle combines a clear midrange with and a stout low end to deliver saturated buzz that gets pretty rude, but doesn't degrade to mud.

Price: \$159 street

More Info: jimdunlop.com

Mission Engineering Gemini 2 Studio

TESTED BY BARRY CLEVELAND

LIKE THE STANDARD GEMINI 2, THE Studio (a.k.a. GM-2-ST) is a stereo amplified guitar speaker cabinet designed especially for use with digital modelers and other software-based guitar systems. It faithfully reproduces modeled amps and cabs with minimal coloration, due to its super-clean and flat 220-watt class D amplifier and proprietary speakers. Two 1" high-frequency compression drivers with titanium diaphragms are coaxially mounted at the centers of a pair of 12" low frequency speakers, much like "time-aligned" professional studio monitors, resulting in broader dispersion of sound than conventional guitar speakers.

An additional advantage to the coaxial configuration is that because the highs and lows originate from a common point in space, "directly on-cone," "off-axis," and other traditional speaker-miking techniques may still be employed effectively. The cabinet itself is constructed of 3/4" void-free Baltic birch and covered in black Tolex and fitted with black hardware. A classic basket weave grille and white piping complete the elegant package.

On the rear panel are three inputs and one output. Input 1 is a combo connector that accepts mono signals via XLR or 1/4" TS, and stereo signals via 1/4" TRS (you'll need a TRS-to-right/left TS insert cable to connect it to devices with individual right and left outputs). A Stereo R Out jack facilitates connecting two Gemini 2 Studio cabs in a single stereo or mono setup.

The Gemini 2 Studio also features a built-in USB digital audio interface with sampling rates up to 192kHz and 24 bits (USB cable included). You plug your instrument into the USB Guitar



input for this purpose. And there's even Bluetooth connectivity, which enables you to stream audio from your computer or handheld device for playback.

Additional controls include an AC/Panel Ground Type toggle switch, a Bluetooth activation button, and variable controls for output Level and Empower frequency response. The latter allows you to choose between flat response and more traditional guitar speaker and cab response.

As I expected, the Gemini 2 Studio sounded every bit as good with my PRS Custom 22 as the *non-studio* Gemini 2 that I'd previously borrowed for a gig at a small theater in San Francisco. After the show the FOH engineer commented that my guitar sound was possibly the best he had ever heard on his stage. A lot of that had to do with the many hours I spent programming sounds into my Fractal Audio Axe-FX II XL in the studio—but the Gemini 2 translated those sounds to the stage with stunning richness, depth, and clarity.

The Gemini 2 also sounded great in my studio except that its robust cooling fan was clearly audible in the ultra-quiet environment, making close miking problematic. Mission's President Paul Shedden told me at the time that a "studio" version with more sophisticated grounding and a silent cooling system was coming, and that's the Gemini 2 Studio reviewed here. It definitely solves the fan-noise problem, and is *super* quiet except for the popping sound it makes when you switch it on and off. At \$1,899 it won't be for everyone, but if you already own a high-end Fractal Audio, Line 6, Kemper, or other professional modeler, the Gemini 2 Studio makes the perfect companion. ■



SPECIFICATIONS

GEMINI 2 STUDIO

CONTACT	missionengineering.com
PRICE	\$1,899 direct
CONTROLS	Level, Empower, Mono/Stereo switch, Ground Type switch.
POWER	220 watts (into 8Ω)
EXTRAS	USB and Bluetooth audio interface.
SPEAKER	Two proprietary 1" high-frequency drivers and two 12" low-frequency drivers
WEIGHT	63 lbs
BUILT	USA
KUDOS	Fabulous sound. Robust construction. Classy looks. Flexible signal routing and audio interface.
CONCERNS	Makes a loud popping noise when turned on and off.

Fire-Eye Bright-Eye Clean Boost/Buffer

TESTED BY MICHAEL MOLENDAA

GUITARIST EARL SLICK ONCE schooled me that all I needed to get a clear, soaring lead tone out of a Vox AC30 was my fingers. “Just set up the amp’s volume, and then turn your guitar Volume up or down to get what you need,” he said.

I felt so stupid. Like “Duh” stupid. But, for me, it has never been that easy to crank up my guitar Volume knob for solos and back it down for rhythm parts. I’m extremely excitable onstage—and clumsy with my guitar’s controls—so pedals have always come to my rescue. But Earl had a massive point about a good tube amp—why color the sound



with an overdrive or distortion pedal (unless you *want* to), when the amp itself will deliver a pretty stunning and organic lead tone?

Well, all I can say is, “Thank goodness for clean-boost pedals,” and my current favorite for walloping the front end of my AC30 is the USA-made Bright-Eye Clean Boost/Buffer (\$155 street). This mini pedal takes up precious little real estate on my pedalboard, it delivers up to 20dB of boost with its adjustable Boost Volume knob, a Shaped Mode decreases highs if my boosted tone gets too sizzle-y (there’s also a Flat Mode), and the photocell-controlled footswitch is dead quiet.

The Bright-Eye’s boost is thick yet transparent, and articulate enough to clarify every note of fast runs or open chords. I like the Shaped Mode best, because I tend to run my guitar a tad bright, and having a stout and less steely tone for solos actually helps the parts break out of a band mix, as well as making the roar easier on the audience’s ears. If you’re not an Earl Slick, the Bright-Eye is a marvelous option for getting heard with but one stomp of your foot.

KUDOS Ballsy or transparent boost. Small footprint. Rugged.

CONCERNS None.

CONTACT fire-eye.com





Rivolta Combinata Standard

TESTED BY MICHAEL MOLENDAA

TWO INNOVATORS OF GORGEOUSLY wacky guitar design—Dennis Fano and Mike Robinson of Eastwood Guitars—have partnered to launch the new Rivolta line. Fans of Fano's work will immediately recognize the whimsically off-kilter (those bouts!) look of the Combinata Standard, which still manages to offer wonderful ergonomics for real-world performance needs. And, if you know anything about Eastwood's revival of unique and distinctive '60s, '70s, and '80s guitars, then the Combinata's blended echoes of Rickenbacker (especially in the Autunno Burst finish) and Gretsch Duo-Jet silhouettes—as well as its inspiration from a 1954 Combo Model—fits right into Robinson's wheelhouse.

But this partnership isn't just about Fano's designs being run through Eastwood's production facilities and distribution network. It's also an opportunity for players who have ever lusted after a Fano guitar or his new Novo line to actually afford one of his models. For example, a Fano Alt De Facto ML6 can run from \$2,995 on up, and a Novo Serus J starts at \$2,799. The Combinata Standard, however, goes for \$1,199 with a hardshell case. (The Combinata Deluxe with Dusenbergs Les Trem II is \$1,349.) Ya gotta love joint ventures that bring joy to the guitar community!

Of course, a \$1,000+ guitar isn't an inexpensive proposition for most players, and, for that price,

you should expect well-dressed frets, an impeccable finish, good intonation, and sturdy hardware. The Rivolta gives you all of those features. Even the chunky, full-width block inlays—inspired by '60s guitars made by luthier Roger Rossmeisl—are beautifully rendered, with no filler, cracks, or jagged edges to spoil the lovely aesthetic touch.

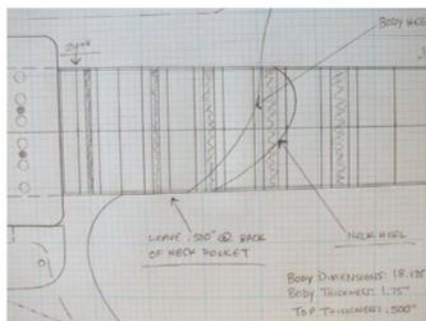
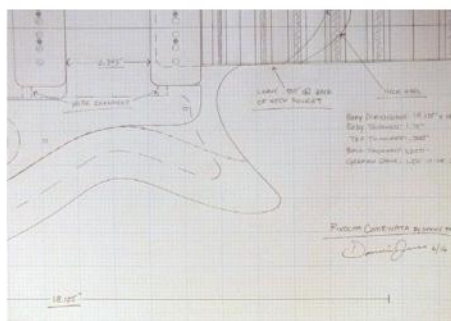
We did have a little shipping calamity, where the 3-way selector was somehow punched through the extended pickguard and into the control chamber. This obviously isn't a fault of the Rivolta, but if you're an aggressive basher that likes to rudely smack the pickup selector, just be warned that there's air under that switch, and treat it accordingly.



Ergonomically, the Rivolta is a player's dream with a wide yet comfy neck, and easy access to all 24 frets. The body shape feels good, and weight is not a problem. I played a four-hour rehearsal with it, and I didn't feel any fatigue at all. The generous string spacing might put off shredders, but I found it very appealing, as fingering chords and riffs in all positions was near effortless. The Master Volume is well-placed for pinky swells, but then there's no way I could reach the Master Tone for manual wah effects. Although it's also a bit of a reach to grab the 3-way selector—and it's positioned between the Volume and Tone knobs—I had no difficulties switching pickups on the fly.

Acoustically, the Rivolta sounds pretty loud and balanced—thanks to the chambers, I'm sure—and, in a pinch, it could be miked up and used for acoustic parts if you forgot to bring your favorite steel-string to the studio.

I tested the Rivolta's electrified tones with a Vox AC30 and an Orange Tiny Terror with a 1x12 Mesa/Boogie cabinet. The Rivolta Novanta P90's are very articulate pickups, and with great dynamics. Wherever you set the pickup selector, you can derive myriad tones simply by adjusting your pick attack, or switching from pick to fingers to thumb, or knocking down the Master Volume knob. I loved the Rivolta's shimmer when using clean amp sounds, and the snap and pop of each note while playing single-note lines—even when rocking punk-style overdrive tones. The guitar's wide neck and super-clear sound makes it easy to play open-chord arpeggios in the first position without (much) fear of tanking the parts while jumping around stages. In every way most players rate a mid-price guitar—comfort, tone, playability, versatility, and looks—the Rivolta scores gold medals. 🏆



Dennis Fano's original design sketches for the Rivolta.

SPECIFICATIONS

COMBINATA STANDARD

CONTACT	rivoltaguitars.com
PRICE	\$1,199 street
NUT WIDTH	1.687"
NECK	Maple, set, C+ profile
FRETBOARD	Rosewood, 25" scale, 12" radius
FRETS	24
TUNERS	Kluson-style
BODY	Chambered mahogany with German-carved maple top
BRIDGE	Compensated vintage wrap-over
PICKUPS	Two Rivolta Novanta P90
CONTROLS	Master Volume, Master Tone, 3-way selector
FACTORY STRINGS	D'Addario, .010-.046
WEIGHT	7.2 lbs
BUILT	Korea
KUDOS	Comfy. Articulate tones. Looks rad.
CONCERNS	None.



Three Pedals from Black Cat, Mu-FX, and Supro

TESTED BY BUDDY SALEMAN

WE'RE FINALLY GETTING TO THE BOTTOM of the pile of pedals released in 2016. Yeah, it's the April 2017 issue now, but that's an indication of just how many cool new pedals are released each year. Happily, this trio of stompboxes is still relevant and desirable, and they all sound fantastic. Hey, a year-old Ferrari is still a mean machine, and so are these kick-ass tonal processors.

STEREO BLACK CAT VIBE

The Stereo Black Cat Vibe (\$325 direct) retains

the same circuitry as the original Vibe favored by players such as Steve Lukather, Michael Landau, and Trey Anastasio, but adds another output jack for true-stereo operation. It can also run on either 12-volt DC or 12-volt AC (as the original Black Cat Vibe) power, which means the stereo Vibe is compatible with most brick-style DC-power supplies, and that means it's now an easy fit for your pedalboard.

Despite its made-in-the-USA boutique design, the Stereo Black Cat Vibe isn't just an

expensive pedal to coddle in your home studio. This is a real gigging stompbox. You get a tough metallic-silver chassis, three big knobs (Volume, Intensity, Speed), a Chorus/Vibrato switch, and an input for an optional expression pedal for real-time Speed changes. Oh, and the on/off LED pulses in time to your Speed setting when the pedal is active.

I should admit that I seldom use chorus-vibrato effects live, as I find they can muddy up the sweet tones of my favorite Mesa/Boogie amp.

However, the sound of the Stereo Black Cat Vibe is very articulate, very rich, and it doesn't "blur" the natural tone of my amp or guitar—unless I choose to crank the knobs to their maximum settings and go wildly psychedelic and out of control. Fun! The pedal also responds very well to performance dynamics, giving you another way to add aggression or subtlety, simply by changing your attack on your strings.

The stereo operation of the pedal provides a very animated left/right spectrum when you use two amps (or two separate tracks on your DAW), and, additionally, it leads the way to getting *three* cool sounds. You see, in order to get different tonal "vibes" from Output 1 (the jack you use for a mono signal) and Output 2, the sound of Output 2 is slightly thinner, brighter, and more phase-y. So if I wanted a slightly weirder and more haunting tone than the Vibe's excellent Chorus and Vibrato settings, I simply used Output 2 exclusively. Tricky. That said, fans of old-school Uni-Vibe sounds should be thrilled by the Stereo Vibe's accurate and spacey reproductions of vintage Hendrix, Gilmour, and Trower tones.

KUDOS Great tone. Now works on 12-volt DC power.

CONCERNS None.

CONTACT blackcatpedals.com

MU-FX BOOSTRON 3

Though not much of a secret to pedal zealots in-the-know, Mu-FX is the new company of Mike Beigel, who, after co-founding Musitronics with Aaron Newman in 1972, went on to invent effects pedals such as the Mu-Tron III, Mu-Tron Bi-Phase, and other weird and wonderful devices. Starting in 1976, Musitronics also produced the Dan Armstrong effects line—the Green Ringer, Yellow Humper, Purple Peaker, and Orange Squeezer. But it swallowed a demon beast when it began manufacturing the original Lol Creme/Kevin Godley Gizmotron, a move that may have ultimately caused Musitronics' demise.

Since starting Mu-FX in 2014, Beigel has continued to explore his often-whimsical creativity by blending pieces of his past with a firm commitment to the needs of today's tone explorers. The Boostron 3 (\$249 direct) is—wait for it—three effects in a rugged, multi-colored

chassis that evokes the look of vintage Mu-Tron pedals (or, a '70s idea of what a '60s Russian Sputnik control panel might have looked like). The three effects are based on vintage processors: Blaster on the Alembic Stratoblaster clean boost, Squeezer on the Dan Armstrong Orange Squeezer compressor, and Slacker on a Pro Co RAT distortion. However, the parameter controls for each effect are relatively bountiful, and, as a whole, the Boostron 3 is more like a studio preamp than a stompbox. This can be a double-edged sword, of course, as your tonal options are varied, but it might take some dialing in to achieve your favorite settings.

The Blaster is activated by a toggle switch, so it's either always on, or always off. There's no footswitch for kicking the boost in or out while performing live. It's perhaps a strange omission, but Mu-FX likely views this as a "secret weapon" that constantly drives your amp's front end to a creamy-good sound, rather than something to use for a few extra dB during solos. You can also crank the Bright control to evoke a classic treble booster, à la Brian May.

The Squeezer is certainly not a transparent studio compressor, but I dug its warm, dark "squeeze" that was reminiscent of classic '70s compression pedals. As with those beauties, you can get a slight "attack pop" if you go overboard on the Squeezer's Juice knob, but that's kind of an effect in itself. Sustain here is nice and organic, and the Output control adds a second tier of boost if you already have the Blaster active.

If you're into distortion pedals with two or three knobs, the Slacker section might be confusing at first, but there are some awesome overdrive, distortion, and fuzz tones to be had if you stick it out. Much of the character is in the Mode switch, which offers Comp (a "limiting" overdrive—rather like the pushed-into-the-red guitars on the Stones' "Street Fighting Man"), Ext (a dynamic distortion with good headroom), and Dist (a savage yowl). If you get a tad confused in the heat of a performance, the Slacker's LED keeps you alert with a red light for off, dark blue for Comp, light blue for Exp, and green for Dist. There are also three choices for a pre-set

bass frequency: flat, cut, and boost. Everything interacts with the Gain and Level controls, so patient exploration can deliver everything from subtle natural-tube overdrive to full-on, buzzy RAT-like cacophony. There's certainly enough tonal power in the Boostron 3 for it to upgrade its moniker to "Boostron Near Infinity."

KUDOS Rugged. Great sounds. Versatile.

CONCERNS Can take a slight learning curve to unlock the pedal's full tonal power. Somewhat beefy footprint on pedalboards.

CONTACT mu-fx.com

SUPRO ANALOG HARMONIC TREMOLO

The revived and energized Supro brand has been making a lot of noise lately with its amps and guitars, and the company's vintage vibe is maintained in its Tremolo pedal (\$229 street), which can emulate the groovy pulse of the tremolo effect in the original Supro amps (Amplitude Mode), or evoke Leo Fender's seminal tremolo in his early '60s blonde and brown-face amps (Harmonic Mode). Even hipper, the Tremolo's Gain knob lets you control the "preamp level" of the effect, which can be dialed in for some slight edge or outright saturation. The Gain circuit also has a handy "auto-compression" feature that keeps output levels consistent whether you go light or heavy on the preamp gain. You can set tremolo rate by the top-panel Speed knob or an optional expression pedal, and the rate is displayed on the Tremolo's LED indicator.

I've found that many tremolo pedals are a bit flat sounding for my taste, but the Supro Analog Harmonic Tremolo has edge, character, and a vintage-sounding, tube-like quality. As a result, it seems to leap out of bandstand clutter and studio tracks to really own its spot in a live or studio blend—a real plus. In addition, whether I run my amp clean, overdriven, or saturated, I can dial in the Tremolo's own dedicated gain stage to add more sonic interest and flavor to riffs, chords, and melody lines. Bottom line—this is a real *exciting* tremolo!

KUDOS Vintage sound. Excellent tube-amp emulation. True bypass.

CONCERNS None.

CONTACT suprousa.com

Radial JDX Direct-Drive

TESTED BY MICHAEL MOLENDRA

I KNOW TONS OF GUITARISTS THESE days that often do shows requiring a plane flight, and their rigs must fit in their checked and/or carry-on luggage. And, whether you travel a few miles or across the country, there's always the hassle of back-lined gigs where the provided amp is simply crap. How do you keep your head from exploding and your tone from sucking?

A bevy of excellent "fly rigs" now exist from many manufacturers, but one of the most clandestine and absolutely bulletproof is the JDX Direct-Drive (\$199 street). Just the size of a conventional stompbox, the Direct-Drive can fit in a gig bag—or even a coat pocket—and it offers three amp/speaker emulations (a Fender Twin, a Marshall JCM half-stack, and a 4x12 cabinet

miked with a Shure SM57), a Presence switch, Polarity and Ground switches for the XLR balanced output, a tuner jack, an unbalanced 1/4" output, and an unbalanced 1/4" Thru output that bypasses the amp emulations. If you have more room in your flight bag, you can even plug pedals right into the Direct-Drive as if it were your favorite amp.

The JDX 4x12 and Stack emulations are spot-on. A little ambience from your soundperson (or recording engineer if you're using the Direct-Drive with a DAW), and it'll sound like tube-amp wonderland. The Combo setting sounded less



like a Fender Twin, and more like a transparent direct-guitar sound through a good studio preamp, but it gets the job done. The Direct-Drive is a fantastic tool for fly dates, studio sessions, and impromptu gigs where you can't grab your

rig. It's also a Savior Machine, because if my amp ever goes down for whatever reason, I'm going to be thankful the Direct-Drive can be plugged right in to save the show.

KUDOS Super portable. Great stack sounds. Rugged and road ready. Good output options.

CONCERNS Combo sound a bit too clean.

CONTACT radialeng.com

>>> FIELD TEST

Jensen Jet Tornado Stealth 100

TESTED BY DAVE HUNTER

JENSEN IS BEST KNOWN FOR ITS reproductions of classic American speakers of the 1950s and early '60s, but the Italian manufacturer behind the revised brand was also one of the first makers to dive headlong into neodymium-magnet guitar speakers, with good success. The new Jet Tornado Stealth 100 (\$159 street) is an update of the Tornado Classic 100, which captures a lot of the popular 12" neo speaker's characteristics in a cleaner, more classic-looking new format. Hence the "Stealth" in the name—without knowing, you might expect to find an alnico or ceramic magnet under that elegant cover, which nicely matches the frame's textured matte-black finish. Pick it up, though, and you'll surely feel the difference that a neodymium magnet makes. At a mere 4.41 lbs, it sheds as much as 5 lbs from the weight of a traditional speaker. Its 100-watt power handling means it works well with many amps on its own, and a 98.5dB sensitivity rating (measured at 1W/1M)

implies it might not be as hard and spikey as some overly sensitive neo speakers of yore.

Tested in a StoneAge 1x12 cab with back both open and closed, using a tweed Deluxe and a custom modified JTM45-style amp—with a Telecaster and a Les Paul—the Jet Tornado Stealth 100 exuded a rich tone with a predominantly warm characteristic, yet with good detail and articulation. The lows aren't bountiful, but they are sufficient for most playing styles, and appealingly round at that, if a little soft for metal or some other contemporary genres. The speaker displayed excellent detail and good responsiveness, and a voice that was not necessarily "American," as we've come to expect from Jensen, but which ably stood in where you might expect a Celestion to excel; for example, sounding right at home with the tweed 15-watter.



The Jet Tornado Stealth 100 is a great speaker for subtly darkening an overly bright amp without losing the clarity and responsiveness that the shift might imply. A worthy new offering in general, and also available in 65- and 80-watt versions, it's definitely one to try if you'd also like to drop a few pounds from your rig.

KUDOS A round- and warm-sounding speaker with enjoyable richness.

CONCERNS Low-end might be a little loose for some contemporary rock applications.

CONTACT jensentone.com

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>>> WHACK JOB

1969 Yamaha TA-30 Guitar Amplifier

BY TERRY CARLETON

STONED HIPPY CUSTOMER ASKS A music-store clerk, “Uh, yeah, Daddy-O, I’m looking for a guitar amp that looks like a cross between a sandwich board and the monolith from the movie *2001*. And, of course, it has to sound, like, totally cool, okay?”

I often write about weird-looking guitars from the ’60s and ’70s, but the designers at Yamaha back then weren’t just challenging what a guitar could look like, but what a guitar *amp* might look like, as well. The Yamaha TA-30 is a fine example of what happens when artistic design meets functionality.

WEIRDO FACTOR

We all know that guitar amps need to be squares or rectangles, and—duh—speakers have to be round. But not in this Twilight Zone! This trapezoidal guitar amp doesn’t just look unusual, the speaker looks like it’s made from recycled Styrofoam take-out containers. But, man, this trippy amp and speaker design really come together to make one very musical statement.

PLAYABILITY & SOUND

The 1969 Yamaha catalog says the TA-30 has 50 *undistorted* watts of music power. This amp

does get pretty loud—although it’s nothing like my 50-watt Marshall. But, whatever the actual wattage, this little weirdo sounds sweet. Naturally, I tested it first with my Yamaha SGV, and what I got was a very full sound with lots of lows and highs. The SGV is not known to be a full-sounding guitar, but through this amp, it almost sounded like a Gibson hollowbody. I also plugged in Fenders and Gibsons with my pedalboard in-line, and the TA-30 could easily keep up with a medium-loud band.

The amp offers two channels, each with high and low inputs. Channel One provides three EQ knobs, Reverb Depth, and Tremolo Depth (with frequency-speed control). Channel Two offers three knobs for EQ and a Volume knob. The reverb tank is tiny, but it rivals any surf-y ’verb out there. The tremolo effect can be dialed from subtle all the way up to “I’m gonna get sick.” (For you early rock-instrumental fans, that’s from “Apache” to “Rumble.”) There are separate jacks for effects on/off footswitches, and if you need a place to plug in your lava lamp, there is even a two-prong electrical outlet.

Speaking of power cables, the TA-30’s had no ground pin, and I got a lot of 60-cycle hum. But wait! The amp’s Power switch has a ground

flip. Voila! The noise went away. The non-directional speaker—which Yamaha called a “Natural Sound Speaker”—is shaped like Mr. Spock’s ear, but it really sounds good.

VALUE

I lucked out on this one. I snagged it as you see it—complete with the original black leatherette cover—for \$150. Probably because they sound so good, they are rarely seen for sale, and from what I could tell online, they typically sell for between \$600 and \$1,000. I would hate to have to replace the speaker, but, from what I understand, they are quite durable. Mine is almost 50 years old, and not only is there no sign of decay, it sounds very solid.

WHY IT RULES

The TA-30 is almost twice the height of a 45-lb Fender Deluxe, but as it utilizes solid-state circuitry (29 transistors and ten diodes) it’s only 35 lbs. It also rules because it looks weird and delivers a very usable sound.

Thanks to Ronni Dinette for spotting the TA-30 on Craigslist and helping me get it, and to Starving Dave Stein for scoring the 1969 Yamaha catalog. Feel free to contact me at rtcarleton@gmail.com with photos of your rare weirdos. 📷

Godin



Summit Classic Limited CherryBurst Flame Lollar

Montreal Premiere Limited Desert Blue TV Jones

Summit Classic Supreme Limited Cognacburst Lollar

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>>> CLASSIC GEAR



The 1979 Marshall JMP50 2204 Master Model

BY DAVE HUNTER

MARSHALL'S PLEXI MODELS OF 1967-'69 are the stuff of many guitarist's dreams, but cast your "mind's ear" to the classic sound of rock guitar throughout the late '70s, '80s, and '90s, and in many cases the amp you're conjuring up will be a JMP50 2204 Master Model, much like this one. After Randall Smith's Mesa/Boogie amps with their scorching cascading-gain preamps began delivering super-sustaining lead tones at manageable volumes to just about every notable artist in the early to mid '70s, the major names knew they needed to catch up to the high-gain game. Marshall's response was to adopt a few of the Boogie's tricks, but to keep the resultant sound entirely British. The amps they delivered became instant "latter-day classics," and still remain a more accessible vintage option for players who can't stretch to the hallowed JTM45s and plexis of the '60s. And in truth, for many of us, these might be a faster track to the ripping Marshall tone we've been chasing all along.

In 1975 Marshall introduced its Master Models, which had factory-installed Master Volume controls to enable preamp overdrive without having to run the output stage at full whack, and producing the blistering volume levels that some playing situations just couldn't hack any more. As such, the Model 2203 100-watter and Model 2204 50-watter had a second volume control placed between the end of the cathode-follower tone stack and the input to the phase inverter, but each was initially a little different in another essential way. Both amps had two inputs instead

of the previous four on traditional non-master Marshall lead amps: On the first rendition of the 50-watt 2204 JMP Master Model of around 1975-'76, the High and Low inputs each used half of the first ECC83 preamp tube, with a different voicing for each via different cathode bias networks and different coupling caps on the way to the shared Volume control. In that sense, they weren't all that much different from the four-holders that had come before, and which Marshall still made, other than in their inclusion of the Master Volume control itself.

The 100-watt 2203 JMP Master Model, on the other hand, had High and Low inputs that yielded entirely different results. Plug into the Low, and you would essentially tap the classic circuit, which ran as follows: first gain stage into tone stage into phase inverter. The High input, however, routed the signal through an extra gain stage before joining the rest of the Low input's path, resulting in a hot signal that would have been virtually unmanageable without that Master

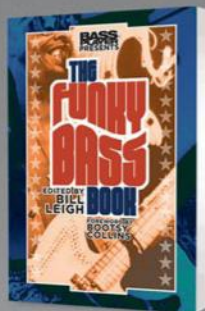
Volume control. At this point, Marshall really was taking a page out of Mesa/Boogie's book, and the cascading gain gave the amp much greater lead capabilities than, say, the Twin Reverb of the day, to which Fender had added a Master Volume in 1972, but *not* a cascading-gain stage.

Part way through 1977, the 50-watt Master Model amps were also given this hotter cascading preamp circuit. That further evolution means that amps like the pristine 1979 version featured in this issue are considered by many to be the best-sounding 50-watt Master Models of the era, and are generally preferred to the earlier renditions. Although the Master Models were notable as a new development, Marshall continued to produce non-master-volume amps at this time, too. The 50-watt Model 1987 Lead and 100-watt Model 1959 Super Lead largely retained the circuits of their legendary predecessors. Those, however, still had to be cranked up to foundation-rumbling levels to achieve singing lead tones just like in the old days, so most players who sought that sound gravitated toward the Master Models. Note that for ease of servicing, the US-import amps of the era were equipped with 6550 output tubes rather than the classic EL34s that were retained by amps staying in Britain and headed to Canada and much of Europe. Many American players modify their export Master Models to use EL34s (as has been done with this one), but plenty will also tell you that these amps sound perfectly ferocious—and still 100-percent Marshall—with the 6550s in there. 🎸

ESSENTIAL INGREDIENTS

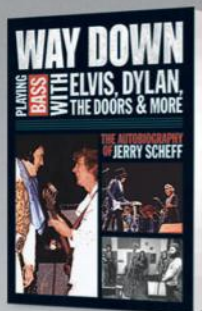
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Bryan Sutton with his band and his “new” 1936 Martin D-28 at the Freight & Salvage Coffeehouse in Berkeley, CA. From left to right—Mike Barnett, Sutton, Sam Grisman, and Casey Campbell.





JIMMY LESLIE

PATHFINDER

BRYAN SUTTON ON VINTAGE ACOUSTICS, IMPROVISATION, AND BLAZING BLUEGRASS

BY JIMMY LESLIE

"I TRY TO KEEP MY PLAYING ROOTED in melody and tradition," says champion flatpicker Bryan Sutton, "but I also seek a healthy balance when I improvise, keeping things as reactive and in-the-moment as possible."

At a recent show at the legendary Freight & Salvage folk house in Berkeley, California, the core players that recorded Sutton's most recent album, *The More I Learn* [Sugar Hill], gathered around a single microphone in the Freight's acoustically impeccable showcase room. Sutton—along with bassist Sam Grisman (son of legendary mandolin man, David Grisman), Mike Barnett on fiddle, and Casey Campbell on mandolin—pushed each other into virtuosic flights that always honored the tunes at hand.

"A real challenge for folks to embrace regarding improvisation within the flatpicking tradition is the real-time variation-on-a-theme approach," he says. "I'm not going to just blow over the changes, nor will I simply play a melody three times through and stop. I engage fully with an improvisational spirit, but remain aware of where I am in a given melody or chord structure, and I try to react with a sense of what feels melodically inspired."

You announced onstage that this was the first time you'd taken your 1936 Martin D-28 on the road. What's the story behind that guitar?

Guitars with 11 $\frac{1}{16}$ " spacing started feeling a little cramped, so I've been making a switch to the 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ " spacing over the past year or so. A guitar my pal Caleb Smith made was the only one I had with the wider neck. I settled

in, enjoyed it, and started a search for and older one. I found a 1935 D-18 last spring, and I got into the deep end quickly, encouraging a search for a D-28. I happened to walk into Gruhn's last fall, and they had just hung one on the rack. I knew it was *the one* from the first strum.

What are its key qualities?

That guitar is not a boomer, but it feels very present in a band. All of us bluegrassers hold Tony Rice's sound as the gold standard as far as tone and mix balance. I'll never sound like Tony Rice, but this guitar maintains some of the midrange and fullness of Tony's sound.

Can you share some thoughts about your approach to rhythm?

When I teach bluegrass rhythm, my big point is to pay attention to context, and take note about what's going on with the bass. For example, Sam Grisman is a more active player than a more traditionally minded bassist. I love our interaction within the pocket we create. When I play rhythm, I listen to him and react, versus trying to drive things so hard as to force clutter. I try to maintain a balance of groove, dynamics, and reactive little improvisational nuggets. I don't want to compromise the pocket, but I don't want to be too predictable, either. I'll respond to things Sam does with more chord voicings, and playing in the higher register—like the right hand of a piano.

Watching you and your group work around the mic was interesting. What model was it, and what makes it work in a bluegrass setting?

That was the Edwina by Ear Trum-pet Labs. I've found that when we use

FRETS

BRYAN SUTTON

a single mic and no monitors, we listen to each other's note choices acoustically, and react based on the organic thing happening onstage. It's also just more fun. I'm not so interested in big volume. We can add pickups when needed, but everything usually works out fine. Everyone's ears all kind of calibrate to the sound in the room. It's a production technique that gets overlooked—playing music for and with people instead of *at* people. The Edwina is a very useable tool for this approach. It's a full-range, large-diaphragm condenser, but it's not quite as sensitive as, say, a Neumann U-47.

Can you describe what you listen for as you move the guitar around the mic?

After years of miking acoustics, you learn to locate sweet spots and hot spots. I'm sort of half aware as I move around. I mainly keep an ear out for things that feel too woofy. I'll make slight adjustments to keep things feeling full, but not overwhelming.

There are lots of distinctly different guitar tones on *The More I Learn*. Did you use a variety of guitars?

I used several guitars on the new record, including a 1935 O-18, a 1942 D-28, a 1927 000-45, a 1949 Gibson SJ, a 1942 O-17, and a 1948 D-28.

When we spoke for the January 2015 issue, you were playing a 1948 D-28. Can you draw a general comparison about Martins from the '30s versus the '40s?

The '30s guitars are different animals with forward X-bracing and wider spacing. The '48 is one of the best recording acoustics I own—especially in a non-bluegrass situation—but the '36 I'm touring with simply sounds bigger. It seems that guitars from the 1930s—and not just Martins—have an open, very impactful, and full midrange sound.

Most of *The More I Learn* features your vocals, but there are also a few strong instrumentals. Can you share a few insights on

how you treat "Arkansas Traveler" for solo guitar in the key of D?

I put a McKinney-Elliott capo at the 2nd fret, and I work out of the C position using classic flatpicking inspired by Doc Watson and Norman Blake. I've played that tune since I was a kid, and I try to create a performance arc by playing with dynamics in various registers. I like to syncopate the B section with crosspicking—easier said than done!

What are your current pick and string preferences?

I've settled on Blue Chip picks lately. They make a TP-50 [1.25mm] that I have thinned to make it a TP-48—so far, so good. I'm still finding D'Addario EJ17 strings to be really consistent.

"Chase the Moon" is a prototypical bluegrass workout in G. Can you share tips on how to execute good rhythm guitar on such a blazer?

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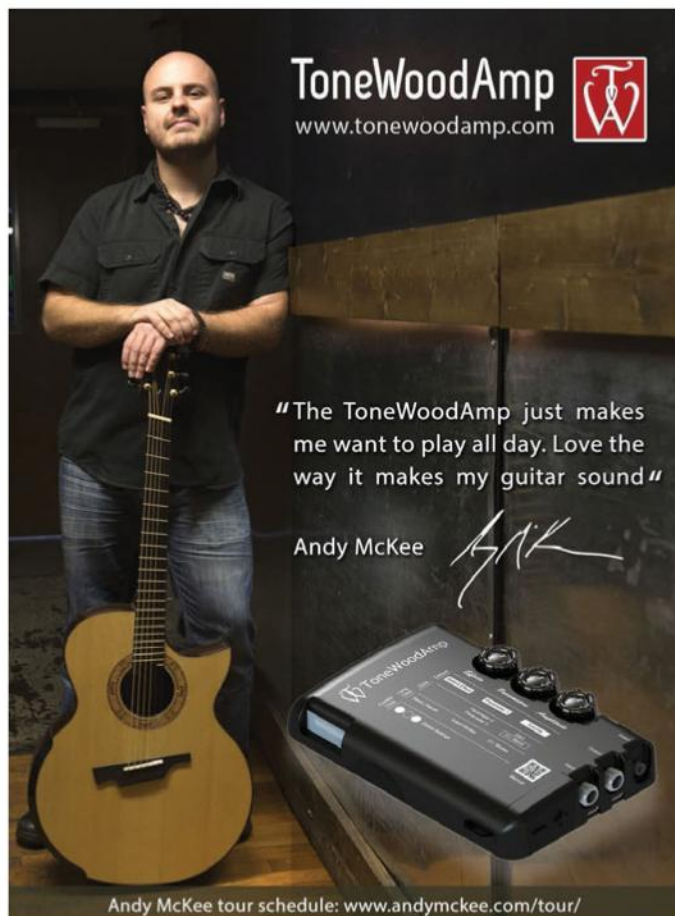
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to start here, taking advantage of phrase endings for dynamics and profile rising. I'm guided by Jimmy Martin and Del McCoury on this front. It's important to keep tension management in mind when working so hard at such levels. Singing and playing this type of song has helped me create a better and more efficient balance. I also appreciate more and more how being aware of long flow streams can have a certain sense of rhythmic purpose. Like a clothesline hung between two buildings, the middle of the phrase can settle a bit. I focus on the first and last note of the phrase or stream, and I try to allow all the potential notes in between to find their spots based on this image. The result is a very tied together and settled phrase that could otherwise feel very tight and chopped.

What's your pre-gig ritual to get ready to rip tunes such as "Chase the Moon?"

I don't really have one. The bluegrass trail sometimes leaves you with lots of time

before a set, and others when you only have enough time to walk up and go. I try not to get bogged down with ritual. If I got dependent on that, I might freak out if I couldn't go through the whole thing. I try to stay adaptable, and take things as they come—the Zen of bluegrass touring!

"Virginia Creeper" is an original with a slow introduction that kicks into a brisk, Appalachian-flavored instrumental. Can you talk about its origin, arrangement, and execution?

The intro is based on a little theme that had been in my head for years. I like that tune because it's in C, but incorporates the modal approach of some old-time tunes traditionally played in A—such as "Red Haired Boy" or "Cattle in the Cane." I'm actually thinking in F major a lot when I'm improvising. I love how the guys in my band help keep things joyful, and the feeling of confidence I have knowing they'll react to audibles at the line of scrimmage with

grace and professionalism. We're living in an amazing time as far as mature young talent in the acoustic scene goes.

What bluegrass guitar players are turning you on currently?

I'm excited about what we'll continue to hear from folks such as Billy Strings, Molly Tuttle, Jake Stargel, Jake Workman, Courtney Hartman, and Jordan Tice. These are immensely talented folks who are finding their musical ways, and their prospects look good.

What are your prospects for the foreseeable future?

I'll probably make another record of some kind in the next year or so. I enjoy the energy of being a solo artist, but I'm not in a position to throw all my time into it. I'm searching for a balance between that, teaching via ArtistWorks, and recording and touring with other bands including Hot Rize. In the hectic nature of it all, I simply want to feel satisfied as a musician. ■

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ACOUSTIC GOODIES AT NAMM 2017

BY THE GP STAFF



ART & LUTHERIE LEGACY CW TENNESSEE RED

Why: Godin Guitars revamped the A&L line this year with solid spruce tops, wild cherry back and sides, Godin or Fishman electronics, and lovely semi-gloss “patina” finishes. The line offers three body sizes: dreadnought (Americana Series), concert (Legacy Series), and parlor (Roadhouse Series). I was most captivated by the cutaway Legacy in its lush Tennessee Red finish. What a beauty!

Price: \$499 street

More Info: artandlutherieguitars.com



BEDELL REVOLUTION SERIES

Why: Offered in Concert, Dreadnought, and Orchestra sizes, these beautiful guitars feature Adirondack spruce tops and stunningly figured, hand-tuned cocobolo backs and sides. With cosmetic appointments that include pearl rope purfling and rosette, along with turquoise accents on the ebony fingerboards, these impressive new American-made Bedells are attractively priced performers for all they bring.

Price: \$3,990 retail

More Info: bedellguitars.com

BOSS ACOUSTIC SINGER AMPLIFIER SERIES

Why: The Acoustic Singer Pro (120 watts) and Acoustic Singer Live (60 watts) appeared to be great-sounding acoustic amps, but that’s not the killer app here. It’s all the extras—independent

FRETS EDITOR JIMMY LESLIE WAS COVERING Rich Robinson and his Magpie Salute group’s sold-out concerts in New York City during NAMM, so the rest of the editors pitched in to find some cool acoustic gear. This year, there was a nice balance of simple “problem solvers,” innovative ideas, technology tools, and good, old-fashioned craftsmanship.



channels for guitar and vocal, anti-feedback control, and onboard effects. There’s also a built-in vocal-harmony feature *and* an onboard looper. The sonic and processing power in these amps is just crazy!

Price: \$699 street (Pro); \$499 street (Live)

More Info: bossus.com



D’ADDARIO CINCHFIT

Why: It’s a simple idea touched by genius. The CinchFit makes all those hassles of getting your guitar strap to fit securely over your acoustic’s endpin-output jack go away. Simply attach the CinchFit loop through your strap, open the clasp, and

let the magnetic ends clamp down on your jack. The weight of your guitar helps the CinchFit remain locked in place. Brilliant!

Price: \$19 retail

More Info: daddario.com



FENDER ACOUSTASONIC 40

Why: I seem to be all about “mini rigs” these days—light, no hassle, portable performance solutions—so I’m really digging

this 40-watt, 16.5 lb two-channel acoustic-guitar-and-vocal amp that looks so vintage cool. The Acoustasonic 40 also comes with 3-band EQ, an aux input, and onboard digital reverb. I could definitely do vocal rehearsals, arrangement sessions, and café gigs with this little cutie, and never break a sweat carting it around town.

Price: \$199 street

More Info: fender.com



GRETSCH G5021WPE RANCHER PENGUIN PARLOR ACOUSTIC/ELECTRIC

Why: Okay, I simply loved how the Penguin looked, it's affordable, it's portable (it's a "parlor guitar"), and it will class up whatever room I put it in. It has a solid spruce top with maple back and sides, a maple neck and rosewood fretboard, and a Fishman Isys III preamp—all of which is awesome, but it's the Penguin's sophisticated super-model looks that got my heart racing from across the showroom floor.

Price: \$549 street

More Info: gretschguitars.com



IBANEZ AEWC32FM

Why: Ibanez alludes to this model as "shredder's acoustic," and they're likely right, but its slender body, slim profile mahogany neck (with satin finish), "soft" Florentine cutaway, and no-hassle string changes (no bridge pins!) make it a good choice for *any* electric guitarist (or beginner) seeking to play a very comfortable acoustic guitar. It's also a stunner. That flame-maple top in a Glacier Violet Low Gloss is as sexy as it gets.

Price: \$399

More Info: ibanez.com



IK MULTIMEDIA IRIG ACOUSTIC STAGE

Why: It's a simple and elegant way to get a beautiful, studio-quality sound from a live-performance situation. Just clip the MEMS microphone to

your soundhole, attach it to the playing-card-sized preamp/DSP unit, and plug into the house P.A. Voila! I heard the great Jonathan Butler use the system during a NAMM demo, and every nuance of his jazzy funky style was reproduced without annoying squeaks, mud, sizzle, quack, or feedback.

Price: \$99 retail

More Info: ikmultimedia.com



TAYLOR ACADEMY SERIES

Why: Designed especially for beginning guitarists, the Academy Series flat-tops are easy to play and deliver very satisfying sounds at affordable prices. The Dreadnought Academy 10e, Grand Concert Academy 12e, and nylon-string Grand Concert Academy 12e-N feature narrower necks (1 11/16" at the nut), slightly shorter scale lengths (24-7/8"), and light-gauge strings to provide a super-comfy playing feel. Even the bodies incorporate armrests to enhance player comfort.

Price: \$499-\$699 street

More Info: taylorguitars.com



YAMAHA A5

Why: This beautiful playing acoustic-electric is the flagship for Yamaha's A Series range. Crafted in Japan, the A5 is available with either rosewood or mahogany back and sides, paired with a Sitka spruce top that has been treated with the company's patented Acoustic Resonance Enhancement process for increased sustain and resonance, along with greater midrange and high-frequency responsiveness. The A5's new preamp also features Studio Response Technology (SRT), which models the characteristics of vintage large- and small-diaphragm condenser microphones—as well as the ambience of a professional studio environment—for a more complex and organic acoustic tone.

Price: \$1,365 retail

More Info: usa.yamaha.com



AER COMPACT 60/3 TOMMY EMMANUEL SIGNATURE

TESTED BY JIMMY LESLIE

FINGERSTYLE WIZARD TOMMY Emmanuel worked closely with Germany's AER when they created the original Compact 60, and now Emmanuel has a signature version with a couple of key modifications and some groovy personalized appointments.

"My signature AER has Lexicon-based reverbs and a replica of the Alesis Midiverb II delay/reverb that I used for my Aboriginal tribute, 'Initiation,'" says Emmanuel. "The line-out signal has all the EQ and effects available, so you can dial in what you need from the amp itself, and the tone circuit is also smoother and warmer sounding."

To symbolize his Australian homeland, Emmanuel had Aboriginal art etched into one side of the cabinet. His initials are carved into the other side, along with the letters "C.G.P." in tribute to the "Certified Guitar Player" designation that Emmanuel was given by his mentor, Chet Atkins.

The gig-bag strap also features signature embroidery.

I took the Compact 60/3 TE out on two gigs, and despite having only a single 8" twin-cone speaker, it delivered a remarkably broad sound with several different instruments plugged into channel 1: an Epiphone Masterbilt Century Olympic acoustic archtop, a Taylor 512ce, and a Kevin Michael Sable carbon fiber acoustic. The acoustic tones were natural sounding and dynamically responsive, and each instrument sounded like itself, with little coloration coming from the amp unless I pushed the "Colour" button, which added significant top-end sparkle and a slight mid scoop. Emmanuel reports that he never uses the Colour function—he simply sets the three tone controls to 5.

Channel 2 is similarly voiced for guitar, although it's a bit hotter and does not offer the Colour option or a Middle control. I found it handy for running a Fishman

Blackstack passive magnetic pickup on the Taylor for a tone that complemented the guitar's onboard Fishman Prefix system. The balanced input also sounded fantastic for vocals.

The Compact 60/3 TE provides four effects presets with a Pan control to favor either channel, along with a global Level control. The first effect preset is a longish reverb that compared well to an Accutronics spring 'verb in a Rivera Sedona Lite acoustic amp that I recently tested. The second reverb is similar sounding, but with some pre delay added, so you play a note and a split-second later you hear the effect. The third setting is a single, mid-length echo based on Emmanuel's favorite Alesis MidiVerb II patch. It sounded great for fingerpicking, and you can get as many repeats as you want via the Level control. The Last setting is a room verb, which was perfect for adding slight ambience to strummed chords.

I appreciated having only a few practical effects with simple controls, and the way they are incorporated into the balanced output's signal ensures you get a fully realized tone straight into the P.A. In fact, you could essentially look at the Compact 60/3 TE as a fantastic direct box and small stage monitor with effects. "When I'm doing in-store appearances, live radio shows, or workshops, I simply turn up my amp, take a direct line out, and the sound is just right with the EQ set flat," says Emmanuel. "And in concert, this amp coupled with AER's Pocket Tools preamp is a powerful combination when you send *both* signals into the P.A."

Bottom line: AER's Compact 60/3 Tommy Emmanuel Signature amp is a worthy performance rig that delivers everything discerning acoustic players need in a lightweight and ergonomically designed package. ■

Compact 60/3 Tommy Emmanuel Signature

CONTACT	aer-amps.com
PRICE	\$1,299 street
CHANNELS	2
CONTROLS	(Channel 1) 1/4" Input, High/Low button, Gain, Colour button, Bass, Middle, Treble; (Channel 2) 1/4"/XLR Input, Line/Mic button, Gain, Bass, Treble. (Global EFX) Pan, Select 1-4, Level, Master Volume
POWER	60 watts
EXTRAS	Reverb (3 types); Delay (replica of Alesis Midi-verb II Delay/Reverb); Line, headphone, and tuner outs; FX loop; Send and Return; XLR D.I. out
SPEAKER	8" twin cone
WEIGHT	14.3 lbs
BUILT	Germany
KUDOS	Clear, responsive acoustic tone. Lightweight yet powerful. High-quality onboard effects with intuitive interface. Very quiet.
CONCERNS	None.

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Capos



According to Sabicas, the capo was first invented by a traditional flamenco guitarist who tied a pencil across his instrument's neck to raise the strings' pitch to the range of a particular singer's voice. "The cheat bar," as Tom Smothers called it, is a means of matching your guitar's voice with your own. Another application of the capo is to avoid fingering those sometimes arduous chords like Eb on the third fret. Whether you use the capo to avoid playing certain difficult chords, match your guitar's range to a vocal range, or play along with a second, uncapoed guitar, the capo can be a handy tool, but it is a crutch and one should attempt to achieve sufficient dexterity without it.

First of all, every note and chord you play on the fingerboard of the guitar has a corresponding letter. These letters, when put together, become the musical alphabet. There are seventeen different letters in this alphabet: A, A#(Bb), B, C, C#(Db), D, D#(Eb), E, F, F#(Gb), G, and G#(Ab). But while there are seventeen letters, there are really only 12 different tones, because some tones have two designations — the sharped name and the flatted name. The following groups of two different letters represent the same tone and are played with the same fingering: A# and (Bb), C# and (Db), D# and (Eb), F# and (Gb) and G# and (Ab).

Sharps (#) make the note they are placed next to raise one-half step, or, in the case of the fingerboard, one fret. Flats (b) make the note they are placed next to lower one-half step, or one fret. Looking at the above alphabet

you will notice that there are only two occasions where flats and sharps are omitted when running through the spellings, the change from E to F and from B to C. This should help in your memorization of the musical alphabet.

Now, the reason for learning the foregoing is in its application toward capo theory, for each time you move the capo up one fret, you must move up one level on the musical alphabet to define the chord you are playing. There are really only twelve levels in this alphabet as we learned above, since the sharps each have a corresponding flat which are played identically. So, if you want to play with the capo on the first fret, every chord fingering remains the same, but the chord name changes up one level on the musical alphabet.

This means that a C chord fingering in the open position becomes a C#(Db) chord when the capo is placed on the first fret, yet it is fingered the same as a C without the capo. An open G chord fingering played with the capo on the first fret becomes a G#(Ab) chord. For all intents and purposes, the capo can be considered a movable nut, and should be used thusly.

Here is a chart of the chord names you are playing at the various capoed frets, using the open chord positions. Notice how each consecutive fretted chord just moves one level up the musical alphabet. For simplicity, we have shown only the first six frets, but using the musical alphabet you may extend this chart up the fingerboard as far as you like.

OPEN	1st Fret	2nd Fret	3rd Fret	4th Fret	5th Fret	6th Fret
G	Ab	A	Bb	B	C	C#
F	F#	G	Ab	A	Bb	B
E	F	F#	G	Ab	A	Bb
D	Eb	E	F	F#	G	Ab
C	C#	D	Eb	E	F	F#
B	C	C#	D	Eb	E	F
A	Bb	B	C	C#	D	Eb

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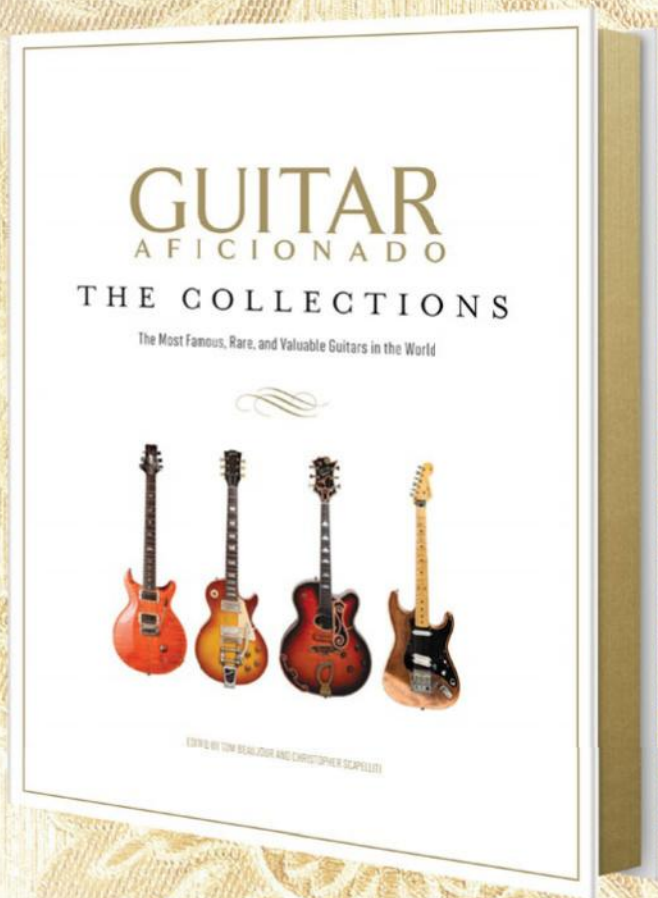
DURING THE EARLY DAYS OF GUITAR PLAYER, THE STAFFS MUST HAVE KNOWN THE YOUNG MAGAZINE was not just speaking to established pros and accomplished guitarists performing in bands—it was also inspiring players who were just starting out. As a result, the "beginner" content was informative without speaking down to newbies, and helpful charts and other visual data—as shown in this October 1971 treatise on capos—were often deployed to make performance concepts perfectly clear. — MICHAEL MOLENDIA

THE WORLD'S MOST EPIC GUITARS

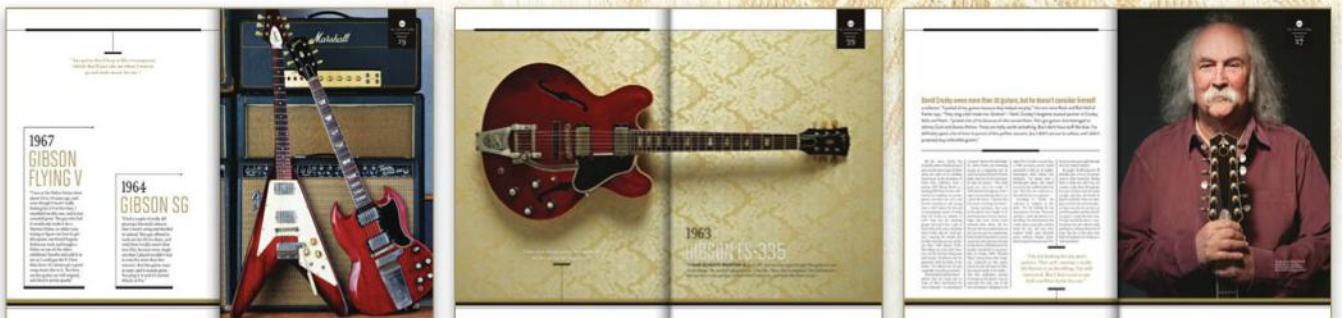
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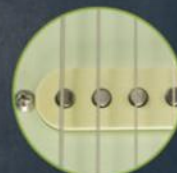
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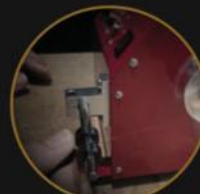
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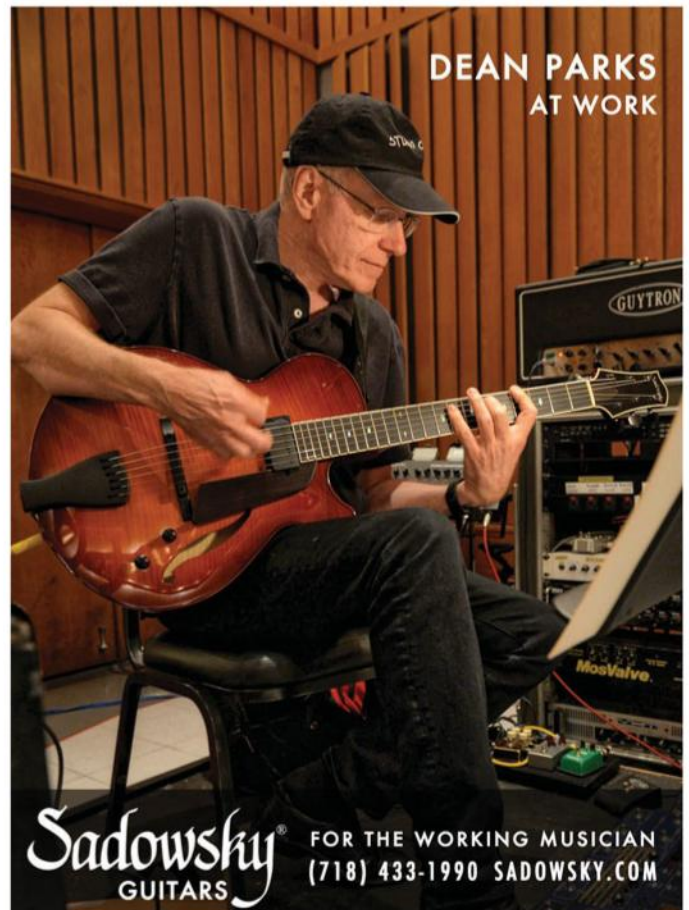


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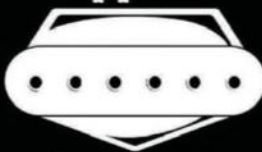
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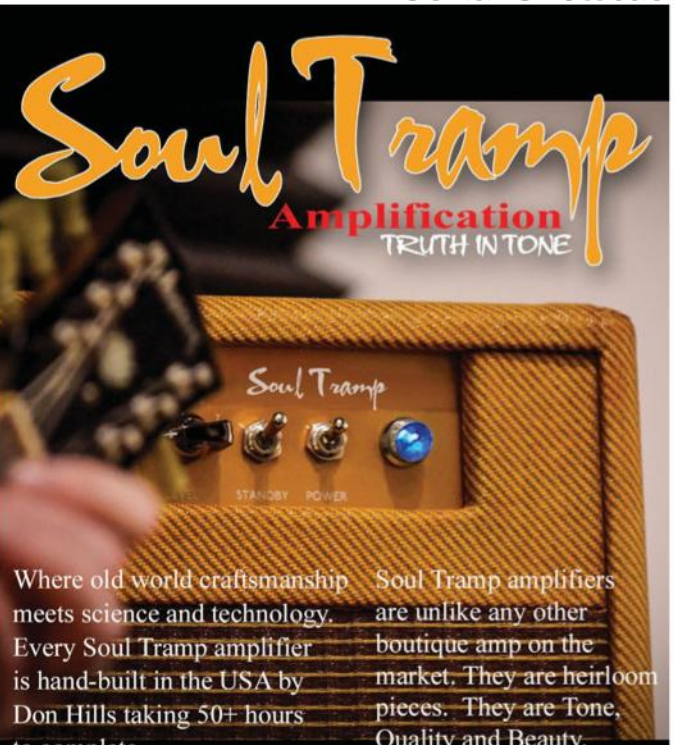
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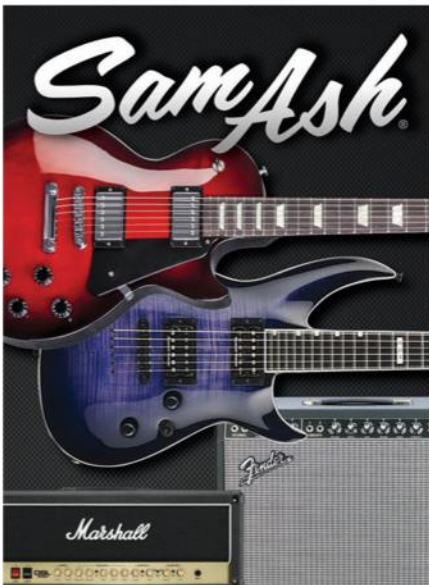
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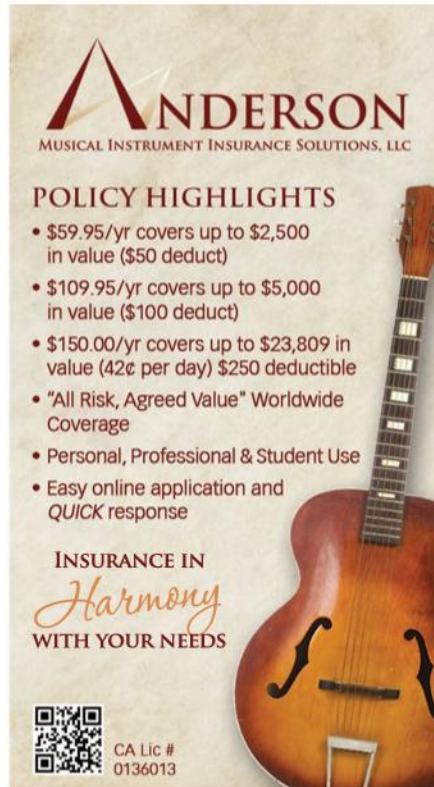
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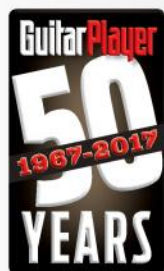
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THE THINKING GUITARIST

Improvisation: To Do Or Not To Do

By Mick Goodrick

THE FOLLOWING SUGGESTIONS for improvisation are based on what I call the "what you do/what you don't do principle," which dictates that what you do is as important as what you don't do. Observe that most of these ideas involve limiting or restricting a solo:

- Stay within one octave.
- Stay within one position.
- All eighth-note phrases must begin off the beat.
- End eighth-note phrases on a predetermined rhythmic "target point" (e.g., the and of beat four; check out Bob Moses' fine book *Drum Wisdom*).
- Use only two adjacent strings.
- Use only two non-adjacent strings.
- Choose a beat to avoid (e.g., never play on one).
- Choose a melodic function to avoid (e.g., never play the root).
- Feature a melodic interval (e.g., a major seventh).
- Play melodies that mostly ascend and then descend.
- Feature abrupt dynamic contrasts.
- Play only chord tones (1, 3, 5, 7).
- Play only extensions (9, 11, 13).
- Avoid melodic leaps larger than a predetermined interval (e.g., a major third).
- Avoid melodic leaps smaller than a predetermined interval (e.g., a perfect fourth).

- Feature repeated notes.

Each restriction requires a certain amount of discipline. It should be apparent that what you do is as important as what you don't do; however, there's a crucial element that may not be so obvious—attitude.

Let's assume you've picked one of these restrictions to work with. Further-

If your attitude is not okay, you'll end up criticizing yourself and feeling incompetent.

more, let's assume you're applying it to a standard tune at a particular tempo. Let's even say you're ready to tape this experiment. The only thing that remains is to be sure your attitude is "in tune." By that I mean realize what you're about to attempt is only an experiment, so enter into it in the proper spirit. Approach it as a game. Assume you'll make mistakes, it will be difficult, and you'll fail. Don't take the game too seriously.

Once you've accepted these points, your attitude will be "in tune." If you

don't adjust your attitude, you'll expect good musical results the very first time, and that almost never happens. Students often have terrible results when playing within the confines of these restrictions because they're reminded of what they don't know and what they can't do. (Playing the guitar is hard enough without restrictions!) For example, if you were learning to golf, you could be very self-critical for every stroke above par. But if you view the experience as banging a little white ball around a beautiful course while having a nice walk, you'll certainly have more fun. And you'll probably end up learning more because you haven't self-imposed a lot of pressure.

So if your attitude is okay, there should be no problem and you can learn a great deal. If your attitude is not okay, you'll end up criticizing yourself and feeling incompetent. The choice is yours. Remember: You can lead a horse to water, but a pencil must be lead. Fore!!!

Mick Goodrick teaches at the New England Conservatory and is the author of *The Advancing Guitarist* (Hal Leonard). His new album, *Biorhythms*, is on CMP (Box 1129, 5166 Kreuzau, Germany).



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How many times do we actually listen? Well, in his December 1991 "The Thinking Guitarist" column, Mick Goodrick tried to teach us the value of "limitations." I couldn't find any verified statistical data as to whether Goodrick was ultimately successful or not.

—MICHAEL MOLENDRA



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