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{ From The Editor }

I WAS INVITED BY BRAD SMITH—AN OLD FRIEND FROM MY *ELECTRONIC*

Musician days in the 1990s (and brother of Chad Smith of the Red Hot Chili Peppers)—to participate on a Guitar & Accessories Marketing Association panel during the NAMM show with Laura Whitmore (Mad Sun Marketing), Squiggy DiGiacomo (The Music Experience), Menzie Pittman (Contemporary Music Center), and moderator Richard Watson (*Music Trades Magazine*). Brad is president of GAMA—as well as vice president of MI Products at Hal Leonard—and the breakfast meeting was focused around the subject of “making more guitar players.” I was jazzed to be invited, as *GP* is actively involved in reporting on industry challenges—our March 2017 cover story was “Who Will Save the Guitar?”—and our recent redesign of the print magazine, and the retooling of the brand as a whole, was motivated by a desire to discover new ways to inspire the next generation of awesome guitarists.

Now, you might think, “Hey, making more players is a gear-manufacturing problem. Why should I care about companies trying to sell more stuff to players like me?”

I’d probably ask the same thing if my “musician brain” had drop-kicked my “editor of a guitar/gear brand” synapses right out of my skull. But the discussion actually surprised me by how much it resonated with the creative actions of being an artistically ambitious musician.

All it took was one word someone said at the breakfast: Risk.

While discussing outreach strategies for engaging all players—young, old, males, females, technocrats, vintage geeks, and so on—the GAMA members and the panel submitted that current culture may not reward companies that play it safe—who hold onto past truths with a desperate grip, who embrace conservative action, and who do the same things over and over. Shaking it up may be the killer app to waking up new players and new customers. Certainly, leaving safe ground is always a scary proposition, but if today’s communities of potential gear buyers want the industry to work a little harder to engage them—and, specifically, in the ways they prefer to be engaged—then the industry needs to break away from time-honored marketing habits. Get more creative. Get more inclusive. Engage disparate player cultures. Break tradition. Be Bold. Be *different*.

If you’re a regular reader of *GP*, these concepts aren’t strangers to you. The staff is always encouraging you to find your individual and unique tone (rather than clone the guitar sounds of the past), explore atypical approaches to composition, and seek different ways to market your music (whether you’re an aspiring professional, or just someone who digs getting more social interaction). But, even after writing so many articles cheering on *GP* readers to more inventive creative endeavors, I sat haunted and energized—and kind of buzzing in my chair—by that word. Risk. In fact, I’ve adopted it as a personal mantra since that GAMA breakfast.

“Risk” is a word that makes sense for the world of now, as well as one that can drive creativity in all disciplines—music, writing, marketing, manufacturing, and whatever you’re engaged in. It’s a word that challenges my youthful punk-rock ethic, because just saying it makes me assess whether I am being conceptually brave in my artistic and work choices. And, hey, taking risks can even be fun.

I never thought attending a NAMM event would result in a colossal inspirational moment for my creative life, my everyday existence, and my job as one of the engines of this fabulous *Guitar Player* brand. Evangelists often scare and/or bore me, but I feel like I need to act like one, however briefly, and just scream out that compelling word one more time: RISK!

BRYAN TURNER

GuitarPlayer

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OPENING NOTES

Raid Dana's Gear Stash!

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Oops! We mistakenly identified a non-Bigsby vibrato as a "Bigsby" in our APRIL 2018 review of the Tey Jazz Cat. In addition, we reported future production models of the Jazz Cat would not include a Bigsby. The more-accurate story is that Jazz Cats will ship with original, bona fide Bigsby Vibratos (as shown). Our apologies to the Bigsby brand for the error.



Peer Comments on the 2018 *Guitar Player* Redesign

RUSSELL KLAUSING

Wow. Totally agree with Paul Haggard's art direction of the February issue. Love, love, love the circles—as well as the departments, the total layout, and the focus. The lessons will be horribly dog-eared by the time I'm done. I just received the March Shred issue, as well, and while it's not my forte, I've already seen some tips I can utilize. Yes—you can teach an old dog new tricks. If you can keep this up, I'll be more than pleasantly rewarded for my subscription.

SHERRIE HOYER

I want to thank you for making sure female guitar players get covered. Thanks to your interview with Terra Lightfoot (March), I purchased two of her CDs, and she and I have been tweeting back and forth about gear. Because of the huge creative block caused by some "poisonous playmates," I took up different instruments, but now I'm back playing rock guitar, and your magazine is exposing me to new players. When I took up guitar at 11 years old, all I had were male guitar heroes—no complaint; that's just the way it was back then—but I'm so pleased that chick players can now look up to other women guitarists, as well.

RICHARD DILELLO

Hey, ho, way to go! As a long-time *GP* reader, a lover of all things guitar, and a lifelong magazine junky, I think the newly revamped *GP* is a home run. It's airy and accessible, and layout is everything. You've kept the very best of what you do so well, and improved what needed improving. The great Steve Lukather jumps out at you from the [February] cover and invites you in to the party. Thumbs up!

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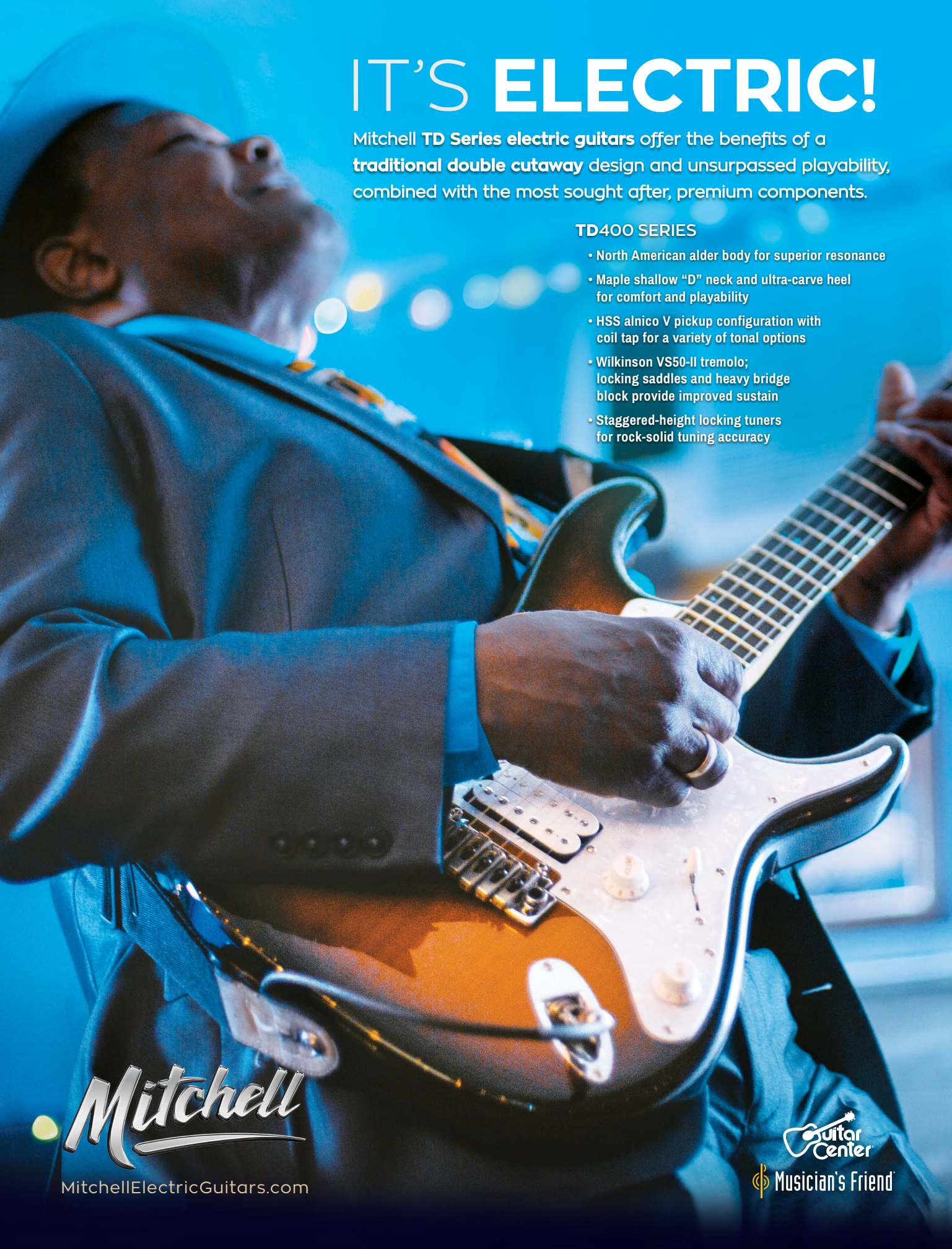
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OPENING
NOTES

New Gear

BY PATRICK WONG



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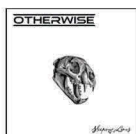
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A Demisemiquaver Rest

Asha Mevlana Builds a Teeny Musical Habitat

BY MICHAEL MOLEND A

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DON SHREVE

IT'S ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE THAT SUCH a huge personality could fit into such a small home, but, thanks to savvy design and a “scorched-earth policy” regarding her personal effects, Trans-Siberian Orchestra string director and soloist Asha Mevlana is living large in a house that takes up just 560 square feet.

“Being a musician and touring quite a bit, I wanted a place to come home to, but I didn’t need something huge,” says Mevlana. “I love the idea of living with just what is necessary. At one point, I had storage units in New York, Boston, Los Angeles, and it was getting hard to keep up with all of it. One day, I simply decided to get rid of all the things I didn’t need, which left my music equipment, instruments, books, and clothes. Everything else went to Goodwill or the trash.”

A true warrior by any definition, Mevlana was stricken by breast cancer in 1999. During her treatment, she ramped up her music projects, ultimately playing electric violin with Roger Daltrey, Enrique Iglesias, Alanis Morissette, the Jonas

Brothers, and others before landing the Trans-Siberian Orchestra gig in 2011. She also works with cancer-survivor and wellness communities, and, as a result, she was bestowed with the Gilda Radner Award in 2004. In 2016, Mevlana decided to put down some tiny roots in Fayetteville, Arkansas, and she worked with *Tiny House Nation* host Zack Giffin and the show’s architect Brian Crabb to manifest her dream home.

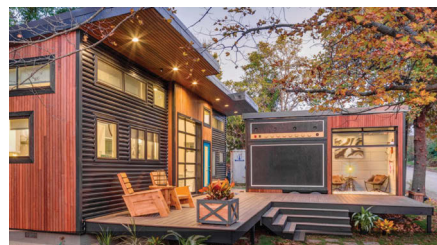


Mevlana and *Tiny House Nation* architect Brian Crabb.

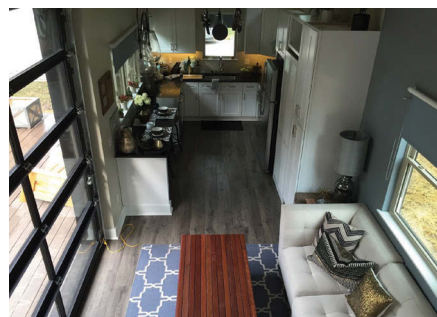
would make the house feel bigger. The main house is 400 square feet and rests on a foundation, while the 160 square-foot music studio is built on a trailer. The idea behind this was



The music studio, lounge, and guest room.



The deck/stage for tiny concerts. The amp speakers actually work.



The living and kitchen areas. The “coffee table” opens up into a desk for Mevlana’s DAW.

that I could take the trailer on the road, and give concerts around the country. I also knew I needed lots of windows and light coming in, so I didn’t feel too claustrophobic. The garage doors leading out to the porch help make the house feel larger than it is, as well as adding a design element.”

Not surprisingly, Mevlana’s “Amplified Tiny House” was profiled on *Tiny House Nation* on March 4, 2017, and, since then, scores of articles have been written about the musical mini abode. But while the experience upped her media profile on network television, her main focus appears to revolve around her local music community.

“I wanted a large deck where I could hold outdoor concerts and jam sessions,” says Mevlana. “A popular Arkansas band actually recorded their music video on my deck! I am also planning a Fayetteville Amplified Festival—as well as a Porchfest, or a Tiny Deck Concert Series—because there are a ton of talented musicians in the neighborhood.” ■

One Year After “The End”

Tony Iommi on Black Sabbath’s Last Hurrah

BY MICHAEL MOLENDRA

PHOTOGRAPH BY PAUL HAGGARD

AS WE WENT TO PRESS FOR THIS issue, we realized it had been a year since Black Sabbath played its final concert in Birmingham, England, on February 4, 2017. In September of that year, that last goodbye was premiered as a theatrical documentary, *The End of the End*. Sabbath guitarist Tony Iommi reflected on his “retirement” during a late 2017 promo run for the DVD release of the film, and now it seems like a good time to share his thoughts on the one-year anniversary of “The End.”

First, I’d like to thank you for all the knowledge you’ve shared with GP readers throughout the years.

Thanks. Hopefully, I’ll be here a lot longer.

What was it like doing such a massive tour in your late 60s?

Even though we had the best hotels, our own plane, and assistants to do everything for us, it was like we were *constantly* onstage. Meet-and-greets and audiences at sound-checks didn’t exist many years ago, and it

takes a toll on you. You do all this stuff before a show, and then you try to eat, and maybe get a hour to relax before you go onstage. It’s bloody tiring. After you’ve done a year of that, you feel it.

Gear-wise, did you do anything differently for that last tour?

I did speak with Laney before the tour, and I said I wanted to go back to the beginning with the amplifiers—get rid of the preamps and all that stuff. I just wanted a basic amp like I had in the early days. It was quite funny, really, because that request instigated a special department in the Laney factory, and half of the workers hadn’t been born when the amps first came out. They had to get an old amp, study it, and copy it, but with better components. I was really pleased with the outcome. For the tour, I also had my signature Gibson SG, some Jaydee guitars, a preamp booster, a wah pedal, and a chorus pedal. I think that was it. Basic.

Did you have any favorite songs to play

during the tour?

I enjoy playing all of them, really. But I do like the songs where I get a chance to play a bit free form, rather than stick to a set solo. It’s always good to be able to go off a bit.

Looking back, do you feel the film represented the band at that moment in time?

Yeah. There’s always something, though. We had to cut some songs for the film, because the set was too long. Also, we had to be sensible and play what Ozzy could sing comfortably. That’s why we went into a studio and played songs on a one-off basis for the film that we hadn’t done for years, like “Wicked World,” “Changes,” and “Sweet Leaf.” Those songs have some high melodies, and it would be bloody difficult—impossible, actually—for him to sing them constantly on tour.

What are your next steps?

I’m still playing, of course, and I still want to write and record. That’s what I do, and I love it. It’s nice to have the time now to consider things carefully and thoughtfully. ➤



Signature Sound/Signature Guitar

Nita Strauss on Tone and her new Ibanez JIVA

BY MICHAEL MOLEND A

PHOTOGRAPH BY NEIL ZLOZOWER / ATLASICONS

THROUGH HER EARLY DAYS WITH the Iron Maidens, her current tenure in the Alice Cooper band, and her solo projects, Nita Strauss has forged a personal style and sound that has not only thrilled fans and other guitar players, it also cemented her selection as one of *GP*'s 50 top female guitarists in our May 2017 cover story. The long-time Ibanez artist further refined her sonic weapon of choice when she debuted her JIVA signature model at the 2018 NAMM show.

Can you describe your favorite rhythm and lead tones?

The perfect rhythm sound has to cut through with enough crunch and definition to be a good building block for a song. The rhythm guitars are the bricks of the house, and the drums and bass are the foundation. The lead guitar on the other hand, has to soar, sing, and ring out with a bold, vocal quality.

When you're cutting tracks, do you craft one guitar sound, or do you layer different tones for a massive wall 'o' guitars?

Layering is key. I'm guilty of over-layering, but it's amazing to see what new dimensions different tones can bring to a song.

Are there any differences between the tones you need to perform decades of Alice Cooper material and the sounds you seek for your own projects?

When I first joined Alice's band, I obsessed about getting an "old school" tone. But I soon realized that they weren't looking for someone to recreate the exact tones used on *Welcome to my Nightmare* in 1975. The three-guitar lineup we have now—Ryan Roxie, Tommy Henriksen, and myself—cover all bases of the sonic spectrum, and my tone fits in perfectly on the

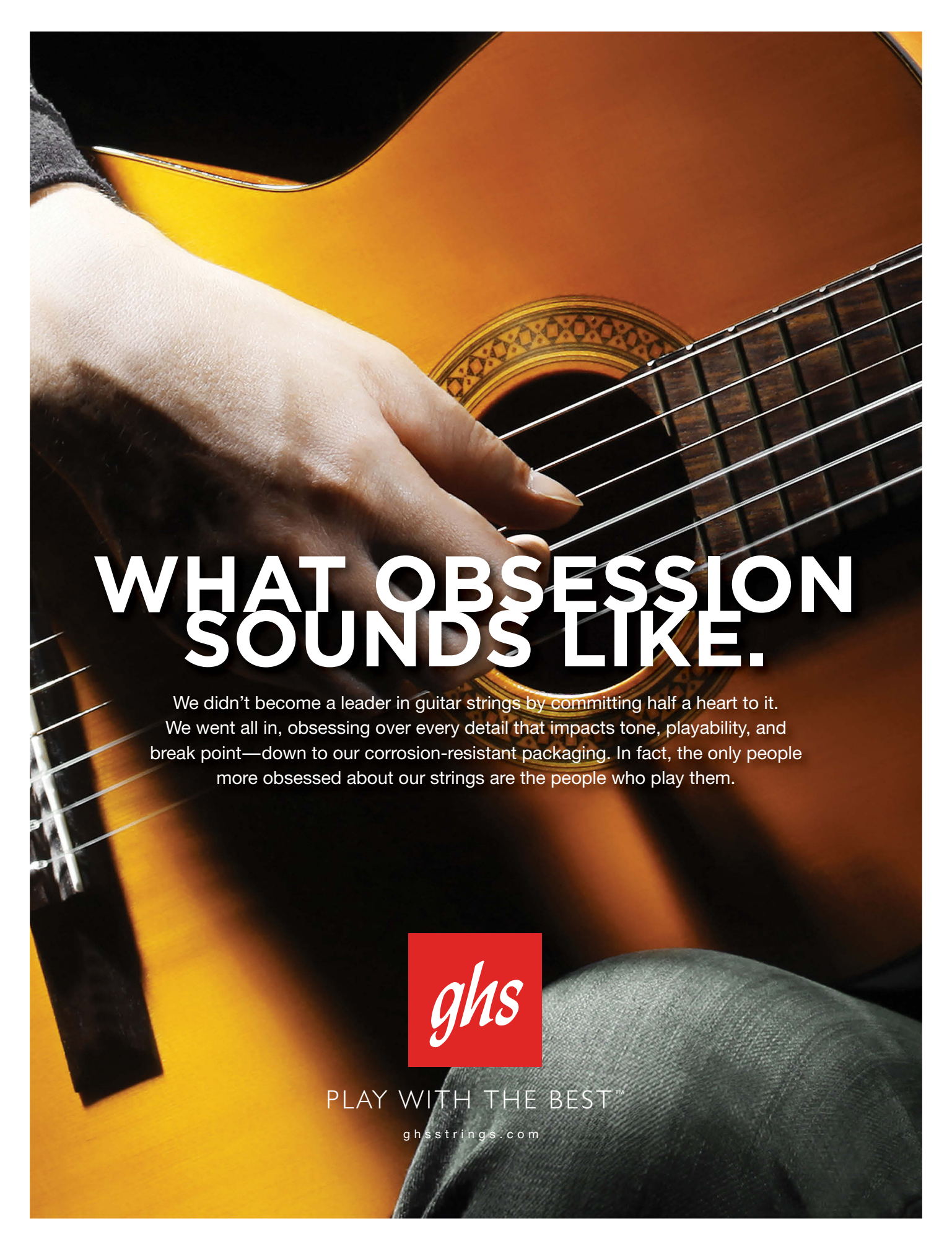
modern, brighter, and high-gain end of that spectrum. For my band, We Start Wars, I drop down to *D* or *C*, but I'll just make a few adjustments to the low end and the noise gate. My tone is almost exactly the same. I don't play like myself when I don't sound like myself, so when I find something good, I tend to hold onto it for dear life!

What's it like to co-design a signature guitar that nails your personal tonal colors?

It's a dream. I think every guitar player designs their signature guitar in their head from the beginning of their musical journey. I mean, how many times have you gotten a new guitar, and no matter how much you love it, you think, "If only it had this instead of that. I had my heart set on a neck-through Ibanez S series for a long time, but when I finally got one made in the Los Angeles Custom Shop, it wasn't as balanced as I would have liked. So I went with bolt-on construction for the JIVA, and now you can balance it on your palm at the neck joint, and it will lay flat in mid-air. I also asked for a mahogany body, a quilted-maple top, an ebony neck, and my signature DiMarzio pickups. Those are the main things that set my signature model apart, and it has amazing tone and sustain for a guitar that weighs just 7 lbs. Now, I have everything I've always wanted in one guitar.

Keep track of Strauss' projects at nitastrauss.com. ■





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that would not be possible otherwise. I could ask myself, "What would this song sound like with a Coral sitar, a P-90 sitting on the neck angled at a diagonal, and the whole thing tuned to *Am11*?" And I could literally do that at the speed that I just said it. That's *Harry Potter* stuff!

But you really go off into some crazy-ass realm of *Star Trek*/*Harry Potter* techno wizardry with your tonal explorations.

[Laughs.] The *Star Trek* stuff is probably the rapid and disparate tunings. I've also redefined the fretboard where I can finger a chord pretty easily that would take a six-fret stretch on a conventional guitar. Then, I like to set up strange tunings to approach improvisation with a fretboard that's totally alien to me. I believe the moment you remove what you know, you immediately become more creative—even if there's a short moment of fear of the unknown.

Obviously, you can deploy Variax technology until the tones don't sound anything like a conventional guitar. Should we care?

I don't think we should care. It's all about results. Ultimately, it's just different colors to paint with. But the future of where the technology *will* go is the exciting part, because there is no ceiling. I think of it like this: We're looking at 8K UHD resolution on video screens right now, and, someday, the resolution will be the same as reality. So what happens when you can turn on a video wall and have a beach? Will it make your brain feel like you're there? We'll also be able to replicate every guitar tone ever made with technology. At that point, all that's left is some sort of philosophical stance. For me, I'm all for the future and what it brings. This is not a threat to guitar. It's just a really nifty way to create stuff. ■

Technological Sorcery

Stevic MacKay Chases the Impossible Tone

BY MICHAEL MOLENDRA

PHOTOGRAPH BY PAUL MASHBURN

AUSTRALIA'S TWELVE FOOT Ninja regularly charts millions of views for its YouTube videos, but I doubt the band's rabid fans are aware that Steve "Stevic" MacKay's mercilessly bombastic guitar tone often shifts into several completely different tunings within a single song.

"I actually applied for a Guinness World Record for the most tuning changes in a commercially released song," says MacKay. "This is fair dinkum. I'm serious. I realized one of our songs changes tunings 18 times, and I thought, 'That has to be some sort of record!'"

Obviously, that many tuning changes doesn't happen without technology in the mix, and MacKay has used Line 6 Variax guitars for every electric-guitar sound you hear on every Twelve Foot Ninja release. He now has his signature model—the Shuriken—which he usually pairs with a Line 6 Helix. While the Variax has been around for nearly 15 years—we ran a cover story about the debut in our March 2003 issue—MacKay has to be one of the most fearlessly

creative sonic mad scientists to deploy the technology for tone construction.

What got you so immersed in this thing?

My story is no different than any other guitar player on the planet. I spent an inordinate amount of time challenging myself to do the things everyone does. When I moved into doing sessions, however, I found my inspiration would wane after I'd retune, restring, and go through my guitars to find the right tone. With the Shuriken, I can manipulate things in real-time

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Committing to the Song

Ali Handal Cuts Back the Blazing Solos to Focus on Composition

BY MICHAEL MOLEND A

PHOTOGRAPH BY RAY GUTIERREZ

FOR YEARS, ALI HANDAL'S REPUTA-tion has centered around her big riffs, burning yet melodic solos, and huge voice. But for her most recent album, *That's What She Said* [Red Parlor], the rocker decided to take a little "quiet time." Blame the Dobro.

"That gorgeous red/silver resonator influenced the character of the record, along with my Gibson SJ-200 acoustic," she says. "As we started producing tracks, the Dobro's rootsy, bluesy sound inspired us, and we kept using it on more songs."

As a result, the album took a left turn from Handal's rockier side, and charged down the singer/songwriter path. Electric solos were, for the most part, abandoned in favor of fastidiously crafted acoustic tunes—all of which brought forth the question, "How does a lead guitarist *not* solo?"

So "Rocker Ali" took a vacation for *That's What She Said*?

Well, my mind tends to go to extremes. I had done full-on electric rock records, and this one was completely acoustic, so maybe I went too far in the direction of not playing flashy solos [laughs].

I'm curious how a guitar player who can rip decides to forgo solos on her own record?

I didn't get where I wanted to be in my career. I didn't become Orianthi. That's what I wanted 20 years ago, and it never happened. People didn't give a sh*t. And it occurred to me that people are way more interested in you when you have songs they remember. So I've really been focusing on songwriting the past few years, and I think the biggest strength of this record is that it has memorable songs.

You can't have both—great songs and crazy solos?

Of course you can, and this is what I like about people giving me input. My pet name for *That's What She Said* was #folkfail, because the idea was releasing something very acoustic. The solos I did play were done on Dobro or acoustic guitar. Then, I got this record deal with Red Parlor, and the owner of the label told me, "You built your fan base playing ripping guitar solos, and this record doesn't have any. Don't throw away everything you've done in your past, and all the things that people have liked about your previous records. Can't we include some electric solos on the album?" So I grabbed my Strat, Tele, and Fender Vibrolux amp, and I added solos to "Everybody's So Naked" and "You Get What You Settle For."

Do you have a typical approach to fitting a solo into a song?

I don't feel that solos have to fit into every song I write. I don't like to play long solos, and I'm not into things sounding complicated or fast. There's usually a main point I want to make, and then I get off it real fast. Maybe I just have a short attention span [laughs].

How do you hone your songwriting skills?

I've spent the last five years going to songwriting camps to get my songs critiqued by some amazing songwriters and teachers. Once, I played a song for Pat Pattison—who is a professor at Berklee College of Music—and he asked, "What's the thing people say to you after a show?" I said, "They say I have a great voice, and I'm a great guitar player." He's like,

"Right. They don't mention your songs, do they?" That hurt, but he was right, because all the energy I was putting into my performances was overshadowing the songwriting.

When a teacher critiques your work, what specific elements get talked about?

A lot of it has to do with making the lyrics flow. For example, "Last Lullaby" is about the death of a loved one, and I wanted it to be a very cathartic song. But when I played it for one of my teachers, she said, "Nice song. That's really pretty." I did not get the response I wanted. Clearly, the subject matter was not coming across to her, because she completely did not get it. So I worked with one of my other teachers, and I ended up changing a few words. That made the difference. The rewrite enabled people to get that somebody was dying—it was a song of loss and grief. I guess the original lyrics were too poetic or vague. I learned it's not about being clever. Nobody wants that. They want an emotional connection.

Are you one of those composers who crafts ideas 24/7?

I don't write every day or have a set schedule. I tend to write when I'm in the mood. In fact, while I was working on *That's What She Said*, I was actually more focused on marketing and increasing my fan base, because I wanted people I could sell the record to. Also, I don't necessarily write for a specific project. Generally, I'll write when I'm upset about something, because that's the best way for me to process things. There has to be a really strong emotion behind my songs. Otherwise, I don't really care enough to write something. One example of that is "Thank God For Birth Control," which came out of people making assumptions about me not wanting to have children. I had huge frustrations with society's expectations, and how people often speak to



women assuming they know something very personal about them. I wanted to get across that I love my life the way it is, but I wanted the song to be funny. It started out as a poem, and

it ended up co-written with Eric Schwartz—a friend, a brilliant composer, and one of my favorite comedy writers.

So what's the next step? Does Rocker Ali return, or does Singer/Songwriter Ali continue driving?

I still have dreams of touring with a full-on

rock band and shredding. My goal is to be successful enough so that I can bring a band on the road and play as loud as I want to [*laughs*]. ■



Gear as Inspiration

BY MICHAEL MOLEND A

WHILE I WAS STRUGGLING THROUGH

my early formative years as a guitarist and songwriter, battling writer's block seemed to be a constant pain in the brain. I'd hit one of those plateaus in my technique and/or musical knowledge, and I'd just sit on my bed, holding a guitar and strumming through little nothings that never evolved into the foundations of songs. Super frustrating. Confidence completely tanked.

What saved me back then was a little green box—the BOSS PH-1 Phaser.

I didn't have a lot of experience with effects around 1977-78, so plugging into this green machine unlocked all kinds of creative possibilities. New chord progressions and riffs suddenly started flowing from my imagination, and all because of the simple fact that the PH-1 made



my basic creative fumbling sound more mysterious, unique, and really f**king cool. Sometimes, all you need to defeat writer's block is a little push...

Waning inspiration can affect anyone from time to time—whatever your skill level—so if you're bedeviled by stalled creativity, pick up an unfamiliar guitar (or other instrument), mess around with effects parameters instead of slavishly accepting factory presets, and dive fearlessly into processing you'd never consider as artful (that "flanged ping-ponging reverse delayed reverb from Venus" might actually trigger a great riff).

Almost every time that I've sat staring at my frozen hands on a fretboard, a piece of gear has shown me a path forward. Give it a try... ■

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Charly Bliss on Being True to Your “School”

BY DAVE HUNTER

THREE YEARS SINCE BROOKLYN quartet Charly Bliss seduced power-pop fans with their EP, *Soft Serve*, the band's debut full-length album, *Guppy* [Barsuk], is finally with us. From the gnarly bubblegum-grunge guitars of “Percolator,” to the infectiously hooky chorus of “Glitter,” to the Weezer-like grind of “Ruby,” singer/guitarist Eva Hendricks and guitarist Spencer Fox apply their Fender offsets to one delectable riff after another. And whatever genre you call home, it's also a superbly sharp wedge to hammer in between the electronic pabulum and auto-tuned schlock that often dominates the charts today.

The scary thing is, Hendricks, Fox, bassist Dan Shure, and drummer Sam Hendricks (Eva's brother) almost didn't get the album made for fear of not being cool enough.

“For a long time, we got caught up in thinking, ‘What genre are we in? Is it cool? What are we doing in comparison to everybody else in Brooklyn?’ Do people feel our music is too rooted in ‘90s indie rock?” says Hendricks. “It's sad and maybe kind of pointless to get too deep into worrying about that, but it took us so long to figure that out. Ultimately, I think what's great about our music—or what I'm most proud of—is the *fun*. It feels good to play, and I think people can come to a show and jump around to it. To me, that can't be rooted in any decade, and I feel like we can't pay too much attention to what's ‘in’ right now, because all

that stuff cycles out so quickly.”

If it took a while to get there, the grinding, churning guitar glory of *Guppy* came together impressively quickly. Basics were recorded in a mere two days at Atomic Studios in Redhook, Brooklyn, and followed by a week of overdubs at Fancy Time Studio in Philadelphia.

“We kept much of our live tracking,” says Fox, “because the room sounded so amazing. I think about 95 percent of Eva's guitars from those first two days made it onto the record. A few of the more prominent overdubs were done by plugging a guitar straight into the board and using input-preamp distortion. I've always loved the way that sounds. It's so gnarly—like you're running your guitar through a laser. We also discovered, after spending hours trying to get huge guitar sounds for some tracks, that plugging my Fender Jaguar into a Marshall JCM800 and a Big Muff was all we needed. We were trying all this crazy sh*t, and we ended up doing exactly what we should have started with.” ■

CHARLY'S ANGELS

> **Eva Hendricks:** 1973 Fender “Competition” Mustang, Fender Hot Rod Deluxe, Henretta Engineering Chord Blaster Overdrive/Distortion.

Spencer Fox: Fender Johnny Marr Jaguar, Fender '65 Twin Reverb reissue, TIM The Pearl Dual Overdrive, Fulltone OCD, Way Huge Fat Sandwich, Strymon El Capistan.

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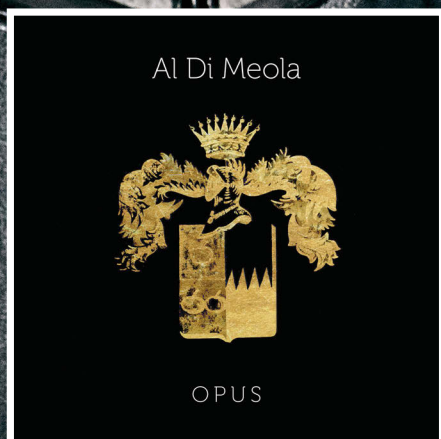
*"With **OPUS** I wanted to further my compositional skills as I think that the evolution of this part of my persona has labelled me more composer/guitarist than guitarist/composer."*

(Al Di Meola, November 2017)

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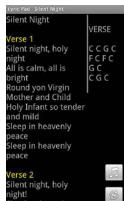
Lyric Apps

BY MICHAEL MOLENDRA

IT HAPPENS, BUT IT DOESN'T FEEL good when it does. I was onstage at a summer festival, and the first verse of a song completely exited my memory. I stood there like a frightened deer—frozen, embarrassed, and devoid of any escape plan that decades of gigging should have offered me. I just copped to it, let the bassist whisper the lyrics into my ear, and we started the song again. Not exactly the way to put on a professional show. Sigh.

While it's likely overkill, or too expensive, to cart around a high-tech teleprompter for club gigs, there are simpler ways to provide

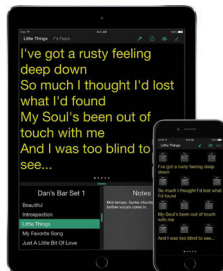
little memory jogs during live performances. Mobile apps designed for performing musicians can scroll lyrics, arrange set lists, serve up chord charts, and more.



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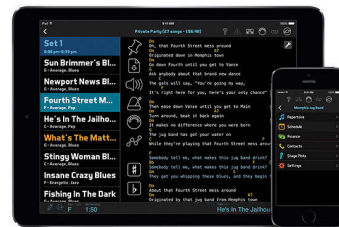
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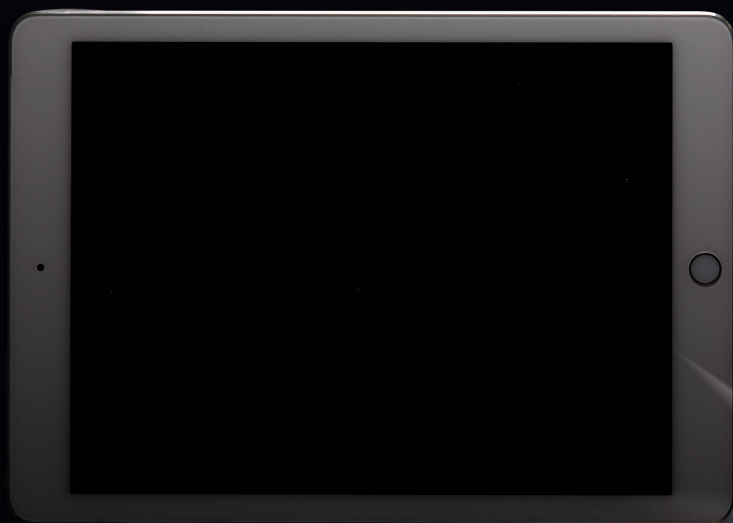
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IT'S 1942, AND AS THE United States is entering World War II, the Gibson guitar company just releases what would become its most popular acoustic model of all time. The J-45 from that year will later be considered a "pre-war guitar" by players and collectors, since it arrived before the Kalamazoo company halted guitar production to support the war effort. The four-year production hiatus that followed makes original first-year J-45s rare birds indeed, and to stumble on one in this condition is truly a hen's-teeth type of encounter.

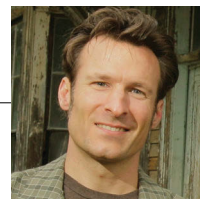
Dubbed "the workhorse" for the versatile way it took to country, bluegrass and blues, and later rock and roll, the J-45 was released alongside the Southerner

Jumbo (later shortened to Southern Jumbo) of the same year, and was the upgraded sibling of the previously released J-35. The two represented an expansion of Gibson's round-shouldered (aka slope-shouldered) dreadnought lineup, which had opened the bidding in 1934 with the release of the Jumbo, not to be confused with the rounder and altogether larger-bodied Super Jumbo, the SJ-200, of a few years later.

The name "J-45" was derived—as were many of Gibson's guitar model names of the time—from the guitar's introductory price of \$45. On today's collector's market, a good 1940s J-45 is likely to cost you at least \$5,000 and an early example like this one upwards of \$7,000 or more. Particularly

{ CLASSIC GEAR }

BY DAVE HUNTER



1942 Gibson J-45

sought after are the early "banner headstock" examples like this '42, which is adorned with the classic headstock banner decal proclaiming "Only a Gibson is Good Enough."

At a time when Martin was king of the flat-tops in the USA, Gibson was still expanding its lineup from the archtop guitars that the company had been founded upon. Other than the fancy Nick Lucas model, the earliest flat-tops of the mid 1920s were more entry-level models—for an established company such as Gibson, at least—and Kalamazoo really didn't show Martin much competition in its own arena until the latter part of the '30s. With its elegantly rounded upper bouts distinguishing it from Martin's square-shouldered dreadnoughts, the J-45 bolstered a line intended to compete with big guns like the D-18 and D-28, and would be Gibson's most successful flat-top over the following decades.

Most J-45s were made with tops of solid Adirondack spruce,

but this rare example features solid mahogany instead, the same tonewood used for its back and sides. Generally a little warmer, rounder, and more midrange-focused than spruce, a mahogany top can nevertheless achieve plenty of clarity and sparkle from a well-built and well-seasoned vintage guitar. And while Gibson's smaller flat-tops up to this point had usually been built with "ladder bracing"—parallel braces glued beneath the top to support it—the J-45 and other bigger, more upmarket models used Gibson's new advanced-X bracing pattern, which encouraged a livelier, more articulate response from these guitars. The J-45 also boasted a more contemporary rounded neck profile, which sometimes still had a slight "V" to it, but was less of a "boat neck" than those found on most earlier Gibsons.

The list of major players who have displayed their acoustic chops on a J-45 is impressive. The model was Buddy Holly's main squeeze, and it's heard on virtually any of his classic recordings that feature an acoustic guitar. Blues legends Lightnin' Hopkins, Blind Gary Davis, Skip James, and several others plied their trades on a J-45—and John Lennon first learned to fingerpick on a 1965 J-45 that he borrowed from English folk singer Donovan while on a pilgrimage to India in 1968. Bold and punchy, yet musical and articulate, there are fewer better "rhythm cannons" to drive the band than a J-45. ■

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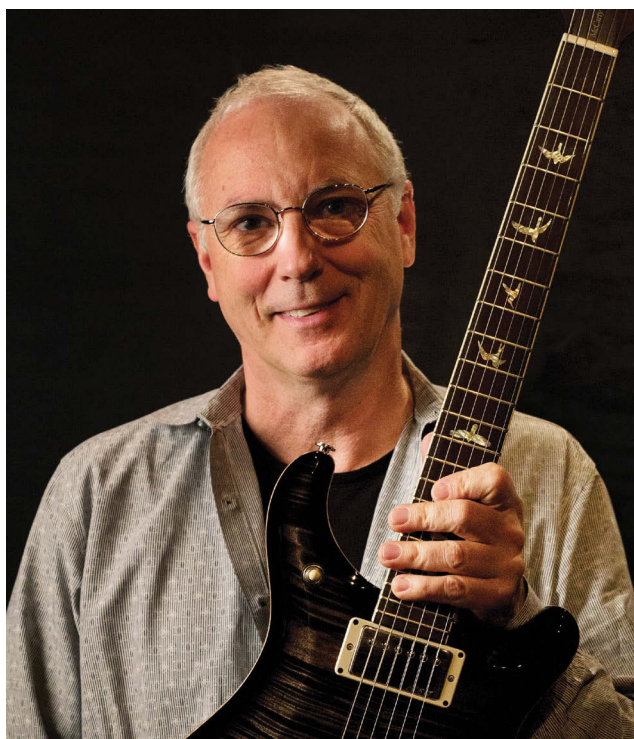


{ MEET YOUR MAKER }



BY MICHAEL MOLEND A

Paul Reed Smith on Fighting the Good Fight



IN AN INDUSTRY FILLED with entire platoons of very smart people, Paul Reed Smith's rapid-fire, ever-so-slightly defiant, and spot-on missives about tone, guitars, and music making are always thought provoking, educational, and inspirational. Here, he shares some astute intel on the state of guitar.

What is PRS doing to ensure its guitar business stays strong?

How many guitars have you bought in your life?

Me? Probably upwards of 50.

Okay. Do you pay for something that's not worth the money?

I do not.

Right. Now we're talking. My experience is that this is not a dead market. People are simply being unbelievably careful with their money. They'll argue over 50 bucks if that makes a difference. But when they think something is worth it, they'll hand over the money. When we have quality meetings with the PRS managers, my number-one question is, "Did the player get their money's worth?" When you do that, all hell breaks loose. I mean, how many Priuses have they sold? It's unbelievable. When car sales were bad, they were lining up at

Toyota dealerships to buy Priuses. People were getting their money's worth.

So I believe that the money and desire are just sitting there. For example, I went to a vintage-guitar show that was *packed*, but nobody was selling anything. Then, a '57 Strat came up for sale for 20 grand, and I never saw stacks of hundred-dollar bills come out so fast in my whole life! I learned something important right then—everybody is watching, and they're waiting for the right thing to wet their whistle.

Do you think the watchers are somewhat frozen by the sheer amount of data they have to absorb before they find that "right thing?"

Possibly. There's just so much stuff out there. There used to be 12 guitar brands. Now, there are something like 450. People don't know what's going on anymore. They can't swim through the mud. But I've found that while the way people get their information has changed, the love of guitars hasn't changed. When I go on the road now, I talk to people

who are hungry for information. They aren't disinterested at all. In fact, we have people who *live* on the PRS website as "pain-relief medicine." They want real communication. Sometimes, I go up there and look at the discussions just so I can feel better at the end of the day.

So, to recap, it kind of comes down to the old adage of "building a better mousetrap?"

Listen, when we release a product, we hold our breath like everyone else in the industry, because the market is going to say "yes" or "no." There was an explosion of pedals a while back, right? People bought a lot of pedals in the last nine years. Now, I truly believe that people are interested in owning guitars again, and all we can do is fight back. The 594 was a fight back, the Starla was a fight back, the S2 was a fight back, the Mira was a fight back, the change in the Custom was a fight back, and the new SEs are a fight back. We just need to put the right products out there, because a really, really, really good amp, pedal, or guitar is going to sell. ■



{ THE FOLEY FILES }

BY SUE FOLEY



Jennifer Batten

JENNIFER BATTEN FASCI-nated me when I saw her playing with Michael Jackson in the '80s and '90s. At that time, you could count on one hand the number of female guitarists who played at that level, and who had achieved that kind of notoriety. Jennifer broke things wide open, and she blazed the trail for so many of us to follow. Besides her stint with Jackson, she did some amazing work with Jeff Beck, and she remains curious and exploratory in her own music. (For information on Batten's most recent project, *BattleZone*, check out the February 2018 issue of *GP*.)

You started playing at eight years old when an older sister got a guitar, right?

Yeah. I was green with envy, and I took guitar lessons right

away. My dad was a jazz fiend, but I didn't get into jazz myself until I went to GIT (Guitar Institute of Technology). That was a butt kickin' year for me. The first time I went to GIT was for a guitar symposium where they had these clinics all weekend long. I auditioned to get in, and I flunked. After taking lessons from the age of eight, I found out I didn't have the basic tools, such as major and minor scales, arpeggios, and that kind of stuff.

When you finally got into GIT, were you the only woman in the class?

It was a bunch of guys and me. It was shocking in a way, because I hadn't realized how rare it was until I got there. I thought it might be 50/50—like a regular school.

Do you think male and female guitarists will ever reach

a 50/50 ratio?

Not in my lifetime. As far as rock and roll guitar and soloing goes, there's an aggression to it, and I imagine a lot of girls growing up are taught that showing your aggressive side is not cool. If I'm ever in a conversation and they see my guitar case, they always assume I am a classical musician or a singer/songwriter. I think it's going to take a very young and innovative Eddie Van Halen-type female with great chops that gets in a pop band with amazing songs. That would probably turn things around instantly.

When you started out, did you feel that you were under additional pressure to prove yourself as a player?

On my first record, I was definitely aware of having to prove myself. That's why I started with

"Flight of the Bumblebee." It was about showing my chops. Now, I go for sounds and moods, and, if anything, I'm going the other way, and specifically *not* catering to guitar players. I was so influenced by the Jeff Beck records I played on. Jeff never wants to repeat himself. He'll listen to East Indian radio when he's at home, and to all these different things to try and find inspiration. He has a short attention span, and, for my own solo records, I also found I was kind of bored with the average guitar-shredder record. But as I haven't had mainstream success, there's not really any pressure on me to repeat myself, so I can go wherever I want to go. I'm just trying to entertain myself.

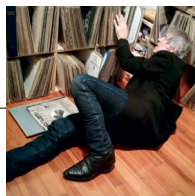
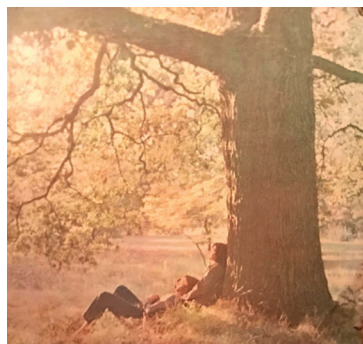
Sue Foley's new CD, The Ice Queen, is out now. Check it out. ■



COLUMN

{ VINYL TREASURES }

BY JIM CAMPILONGO



John Lennon/Plastic Ono Band

SO MANY RECORDS THAT INFLUENCED me when I was a pre-teen and teenager were second-generation interpretations. I heard Eric Clapton before I heard Freddie King, I heard John Fahey before I heard Skip James, and I heard the *John Lennon/Plastic Ono Band* before I heard Muddy Waters.

The *John Lennon/Plastic Ono Band* album is possibly one of the first punk records ever. Released in 1970, along with its almost visually identical sister record, *Yoko Ono/Plastic Ono Band*, Lennon's album was influenced by primal-scream therapy, and it became his chance to expose his eruptive underbelly without compromise. To me, it's also an underrated guitar record. It influenced me as a player, and it's uncompromising bravery influenced me as an artist.

"I Found Out" resembles a Muddy Waters dirge, and the chorus has a guitar part as crude as serving dinner guests raw meat dripping with blood. Lennon's guitar has more fuzz than notes, and his "solo" is a series of repetitive stabs that taught me less can be way more.

"Well Well Well" is another great guitar track. Lennon plays mangled double-stops

that support his vocals, and this kind of primal playing really rocked my 12-year-old world. It still sounds incredible to me today. *John Lennon/Plastic Ono Band* is not all raw meat, however. "Hold On" has a lovely, vibrato-laden pentatonic guitar that sounds like Curtis Mayfield through a blender, and "Look at Me" has a "Julia" [Beatles] vibe, but it's delightfully more direct.

I'm amazed that "Mr. Wall of Sound," Phil Spector, produced this stark-sounding album. Ringo said that Spector arrived on the second day of recording, after Lennon, bassist Klaus Voorman, and himself had already established the record's bare-bones sound. Kudos to Phil for not messing around with perfection!

Though *John Lennon/Plastic Ono Band* is known as the "primal scream record," I think it's much more than that. It's a study of raw guitar and honest, unedited emotion, and, thanks to Lennon's uncompromising and urgent artistry, it's an album that's still worth discussing almost 50 years after its release.

Jim Campilongo's new live album, Live at Rockwood Music Hall NYC, is available now. ▶

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ANGEL VIVALDI

DECODES THE BRAIN WITH SYNAPSE

IT'S ALWAYS A THRILL TO SEE OUR *Guitar Player's* Guitar Superstar finalists go on to enjoy successful careers as musicians. Not only does that success validate our gut feelings that these players were “guitarists to watch,” it’s also a tribute to the artists themselves, and the ongoing ambition, development, craft, and technique they’ve applied to win over so many fans.

Angel Vivaldi took the stage in our 2010 competition—performing in front of judges George Lynch, Elliot Easton, Reeves Gabrels, and Gary Hoey—and although he didn’t take the crown (acoustic guitarist Don Alder won the honor), he certainly

didn’t let that discourage him. Since then, Vivaldi’s YouTube videos have racked up hundreds of thousands—and, occasionally, multi-millions—of views. His latest album, *Synapse* [Angel Vivaldi], is a heady concept, where each song evokes a specific brain chemical or neurotransmitter. Guest guitarists include Nita Strauss and Gus G, and, for the videos, Vivaldi even repainted his studio for each song, in order to portray just the right color palette for the mood he was trying to create. Much like the neural networks he visualized with music for *Synapse*, Vivaldi is definitely a multi-faceted creator who stretches his artistry beyond mere riffing.

What was the main gear you used to record *Synapse*?

I’m definitely an advocate of “tone is in the fingers,” and I think the gear we use simply helps us perform better. Obviously, I gravitate more towards legato playing, so my gear is chosen to help me achieve that smooth, silky, and fluid sound when I’m doing leads—although I feel I’m a much better rhythm guitarist and songwriter than I am a lead guitarist. I used two guitars on the album—the first prototype of my Charvel signature model, and my old Ibanez RG CT7. Both were strung with Dunlop Super Brights, .009-.052. I love Mesa/Boogie amps, and



all of my solos were done with a JP-2C. A Bogner Ecstasy was the main amp for the rhythm guitars.

Why did you cast the amps specifically for lead and rhythm?

The JP-2C has a particular midrange quality that cuts through a mix without sounding nasally or snarly, whereas the Bogner has this fat, saturated sound, but with enough articulation for a sharp attack.

The guitar sounds are pretty organic...

The only effects I used are reverb and delay, but there was a lot of finagling to get the *right* reverbs and delays. For example, I didn't want the size of the reverb, or the length of the decay, to prevent someone from deciphering what's happening melodically. About 60 percent of the effects were added using a Fractal Audio Axe-Fx in post-production, and I'd say 40 percent were printed while I was playing, so that I could tailor the reverb

and/or delay to my parts. The effects were probably the overwhelming problem with the record. I wanted to make sure they wouldn't hinder clarity or articulation.

Given the different moods on the album, did you ever have to adapt your guitar tone to your technique, say, changing a setup depending on whether you were playing legato lines or rapid picked passages?

I usually don't compensate for technique—my guitar sound in the studio remains pretty consistent—but I did once. There's a muted-legato technique that had to be EQ'ed a particular way. It was sounding woofy, and it wasn't cutting through. Fortunately, the JP-2C has a lot of EQ options. The tone I ended up with was quite bizarre by itself, but it worked beautifully in the track.

BY MICHAEL MOLEND

How do you carve out an individual identity as an instrumental guitarist—especially in the shred camp, where there are so many players doing so much amazingly technical music?

Yeah. Even in niche markets, I see extreme overlap. I call it "YouTube metal." There are these very young, incredibly talented guitarists, but they all sound the same. That's fine—it's par for the course—but I'm more interested to hear the music they'll write when they're older, and have found their voice.

To that end, I think the most important thing—and what's going to give an artist longevity—is being yourself, because no one can do that better than you can. I think the more you imitate your influences or popular bands, the more you hurt your chances to make a name for yourself. Fads die, kids. What's popular today will not be popular in a few years.



{ ANGEL VIVALDI }

Once you have your sound, it's a matter of cultivating it, and knowing thyself. I feel that if you love life, and have different life experiences, they work their way into your art somehow.

Some players never get very far away from their influences, and they're almost like clones of, say, Yngwie Malmsteen.

How can a player develop beyond his or her influences to manifest their own approach to phrasing and composition?

It's a never-ending struggle. My guys growing up were Yngwie Malmsteen, Eric Johnson, and Alex Skolnick. I never sat down to learn their material, because it was way ahead of my ability, but I listened, and I absorbed the

blueprints of how they approach composition. That said, one of the last covers I learned for a video production was a Metallica song and a Kirk Hammett solo. It got to the point where I was bored replicating the licks, and I thought, "What if I change this part? I'll try this and I'll add that." Eventually, the licks evolved into something that weren't Kirk's, but something different, although they were absolutely inspired by him. So going forward from there, it was like, "Ah, this is *my* voice." You know, in my case, it's almost like Yngwie, Eric, Alex, and all those guys taught me a language. I heard all the words, but then I took those words and started writing my own sentences, so to speak.

That's where I think some guitar players fall down. They've got awesome technique, but they blur into everybody else, because their music is similar to everyone else. How do you derive your melodies, and how do edit them to ensure they are unique and true to yourself?

I'd say 20 percent of the melodies I write come from listening to a song in the car—just driving and hearing melodies in my head. The bulk of them come from improvisation, and just working things out until I can say, "That's the lick!" This is why it takes me years to finish writing a song. I am very much a perfectionist. I want a melody to get to a point where it's irrefutable. I don't settle. Every note has to have a purpose.

On that thought, how did you tailor your performances to the concept of Synapse, where you were musically representing different neural chemicals?

The big picture is the concept, and if I'm writing an album about neurotransmitters, I want to be effective and authentic with each one. "Adrenaline" was therefore pretty brisk, while "Adenosine"—which is a sleep molecule—was very open and very ambient, lullaby-like, with a lot of reverb and delay. I wanted "Dopamine" to kind of have that tonality of pleasure seeking, which, for me, is represented by tremendous amounts of melody, harmony, and layers of synth stuff. But, at the same time, there are always little sections in each song that go in and out of the main theme. You see, with neurotransmitters, they're responsible for more than just one thing. So "Serotonin" is definitely an upbeat, positive, dance-party kind of song, but there are some shred bits in there, as well. ■

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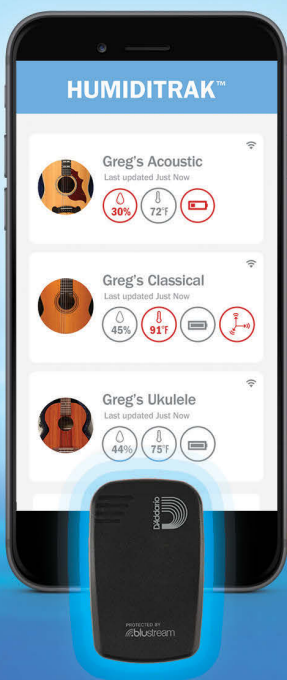
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TRAGIC BEAUTY

STEVE HOWE ON VIRGIL HOWE'S LEGACY, AND THE MAKING OF THEIR FATHER-SON PROJECT, *NEXUS*

IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN ONE OF THE happiest times in Steve Howe's life, but it turned into a nightmare. The guitarist was looking forward to the release of *Nexus* [Inside Out Music], a collaborative album he had recorded with his multi-instrumentalist son, Virgil. But on September 11, 2017, while on tour in the States with Yes, Howe got the news that Virgil had passed away in London. He was only 41 years old.

"It was a complete shock," says Howe. "The whole thing has been so terribly sad and frightening. You're never prepared to deal with something like this. Two hours before he died, he was at lunch with my wife, and then he just suddenly passed out. It was a heart attack, and it was fatal. It's still a horrible shock, but the family has had a lot of support, and we've been able to come together and share the load. That helps. Of course, we're not past it, but you just have to adopt an approach where you realize what was important to him, even though he's not here."

In his short life, Virgil Howe established a rich and varied musical history, drumming for the freakbeat band Little Barrie, hosting events as an in-demand

DJ, and playing sessions with artists as disparate as the Pet Shop Boys and Demis Roussos. Father and son worked together from time to time, but it was always centered around Steve's solo projects. But for *Nexus*, it was Virgil who called most of the shots.

The record moves grandly between stately and haunting ballads, electronica-

with the decision to release *Nexus*, but in the end, he felt the best way to celebrate his son's life and musical legacy was to let the music go.

"He was such a clever boy, and so brilliantly talented," he says. "He had so many concealed talents, and it was a delight to see them come out on *Nexus*. It's just so terrifyingly awful that he's not here to enjoy it."



Steve Howe with his son, Virgil.

laced groovers, and widescreen, spacey prog. Virgil's melodies form the foundation of each track, freeing Steve to embroider the music with elegant lead-guitar lines. Howe had initially wrestled

have been intimidated by the drums, because Dylan was getting so good, but Virgil developed very quickly on the keyboards. Along the way, Virgil sat down at the drums, and he turned into a very natural drummer, as well. He wasn't just a one-sided coin.

He didn't gravitate towards the guitar. Do you think you were an intimidating figure to him?

When Virgil was a child, when did it become clear he was going to be a musician?

Early on. My son Dylan was born first, and he was already hammering away on the tiles of his room. We called it "the drum room." Virgil was born in 1975, and, by the end of the '70s, he got interested in the Mini Moog. He might

BY JOE BOSSO

PHOTOGRAPH BY KEN SETTLE

[Laughs.] I might have been, but he did have a good time with the guitar. He didn't play a lot, but he had a certain vibe on it. Dylan does, as well.

Was there ever any kind of musical generation gap between you and your sons?

Not at all. Virgil and Dylan knew that I welcomed anything they were doing. They introduced me to certain things, and I don't think they ever felt like they couldn't join me in anything I was doing. They were never like, "Oh, Dad won't be into that."

The songs on *Nexus* don't feature actual guitar riffs. Is that how Virgil wrote them?

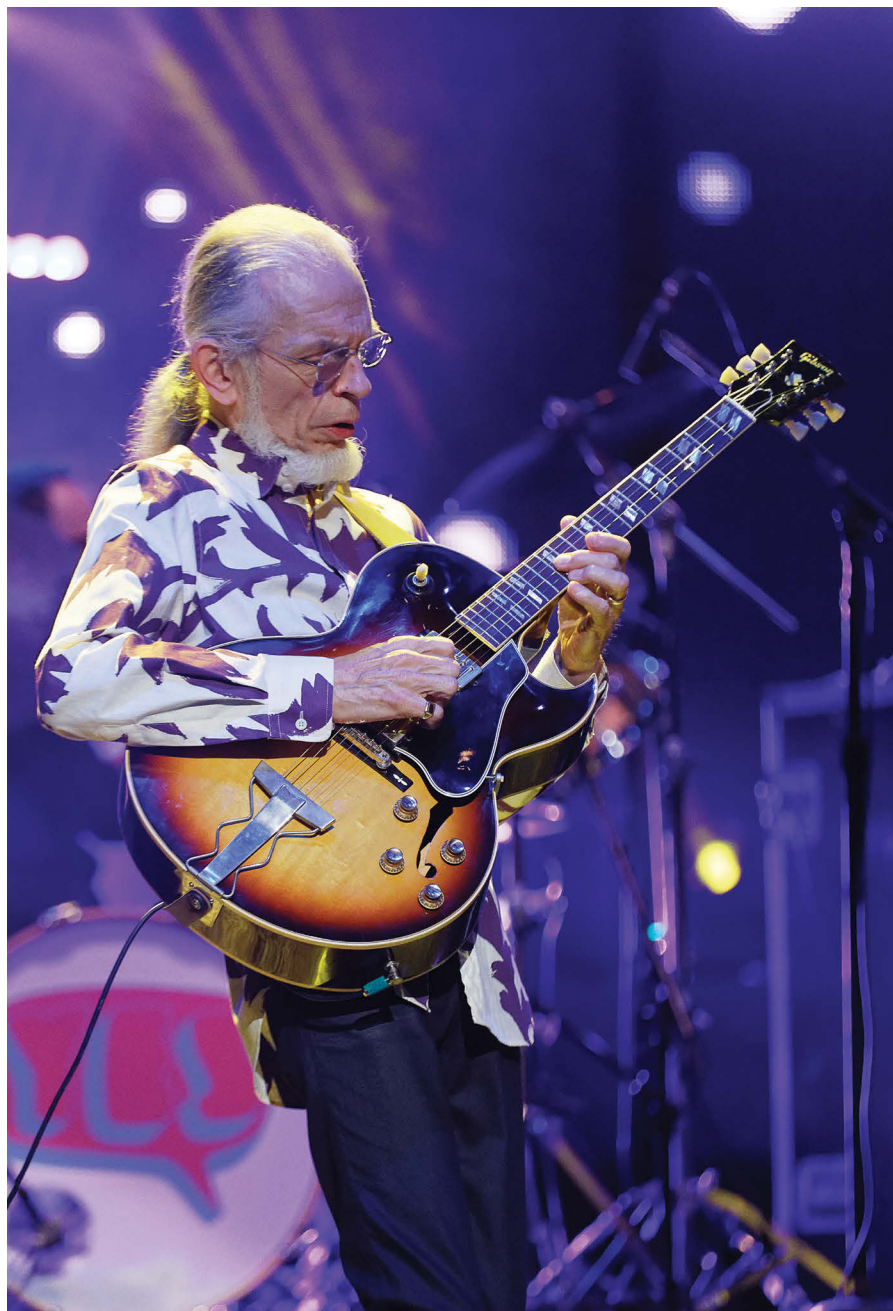
I don't know whether I agree with the "no riffs" thing. I think what I'm doing is affecting more of the top-line areas than the sub-structural shape of the songs. I respond to what other writers do. If I didn't, I guess I'd be out of a job.

Your guitar sounds on the record are less recognizable than your fans may be used to.

I do want to be recognized by my sound, but also I want to get new sounds, as well.

What gear did you bring to the sessions, then?

Let me think. There was nothing terribly weird. I used a Gibson banjo, and also a pedal steel—usually it's a Fender, because the double-pickup Fenders are very good. I had my '56 Les Paul Jr. with a big fat neck and a P90 pickup. Since *Tales from Topographic Oceans* [Yes, 1973].



I've adored that guitar. I used a Line 6 Variax for the sitar sounds on "Passing Titan." You can get some really wonderful sounds out of that. You can go crazy pulling out all of your guitars to get this sound or that, but with the Variax, I can get some really nice sounds quite easily.

How did you and Virgil approach doing something like *Nexus*?

Well, over the years, he would send me these lovely piano tunes, but he kind of kept them in his drawer. Finally, I said, "Let me see if I can do something with these." There were quite a few that seemed to lend themselves to different guitar textures and melody lines. He'd worked with me on my music, so it was

nice to see what I could do with his songs. I guess you could say it was an expansion on what we had already done, and it was a hint of an approach we could have looked at in the future.

Is it safe to call your role on the record as more of an accompanist?

Probably so. Virgil had the framework for these songs, and it was up to me to see what I could add, but I did it in a different way than a session player might. I developed melodic ideas and sounds. In that way, we shared the writing, but his writing and production were the predominant factors. He accomplished so much on the tunes. I just tried to finish them. We were on a roll—no doubt about it. ■





PATSY, LORETTA, AND PEDAL STEEL

SNARKY PUPPY'S BOB LANZETTI GOES COUNTRY FOR HIS SOLO ALBUM

AS PART OF THE POOL OF PLAYERS making records for bassist Michael League's GroundUP Music label, Bob Lanzetti works in League's funk/fusion band Snarky Puppy, plays African-inspired grooves with Bokanté, and performs unclassifiable "world music" with Banda Magda. Yet, despite being part of GroundUP's "house band," Lanzetti decided to self-release his country-inflected solo record, *Whose Feet are These That are Walking?* (note the sly Ernest Tubb reference). Although Lanzetti is a diverse and accomplished stylistic, it's still a bit of a surprise that a consummate funkmeister ended up embracing classic country covers for his own album.

So how did this country-flavored album come about?

Many of these tunes started about five years ago, when I was listening to early country stuff that has a lot of pedal-steel on it. I got a gig where I had to fill two hours, and I only had an hour of tunes, so I decided to add some instrumental country covers with pedal steel. After that, I began to hear that sound when writing music, and I tried to incorporate it into the tunes I had already written, as well. On some tunes, it was hard to hear pedal steel because of its unique sound, so I used players who were able to provide textural effects, and even funky parts, here and there.

Where did you get the idea of having wordless vocals on some tunes?

That came from listening to Patsy Cline and Loretta Lynn. I noticed the background vocals on their tunes, and I thought that approach would add a really interesting effect.

What led you to cover the Beach Boys' "Caroline, No"?

I've always loved that song, and it fit the vibe of the record. It's also an A-A-B-A form, which is common in jazz. The feeling was that it would be cool to do it instrumentally, and then solo over it. I wanted to do the [wordless] vocal thing on that song, as well.

Did you do your solos with the band, or record them later?

BYMICHAEL ROSS

PHOTOGRAPH BY STELLA K

Many of the solos were tracked live with the band, because I didn't want to have to improvise my solos during an overdub session.

What rig did you bring to the sessions?

I used different amps and guitars for different parts. All the single-coil guitar stuff is my '82 Tokai with Fralin Blues Special pickups and a Callaham bridge. The studio lent me a Les Paul for some things, and there was a Gibson ES-335 and a steel-string acoustic used for some parts—such as for the arpeggios in the intro of "Anonymous." I've been using a Fodera guitar live that they built to the same specs as my Tokai. About half the time it's the Fodera, and the rest of the time it's the Tokai. My strings are a .010 set of D'Addarios, and my picks are Dunlop 1.4mm.

At home, I have a Victoria amp that's easy to cart around New York, and I've been using Supros a lot, because I play most of my gigs at Rockwood Music Hall, and they have a Supro Rhythm Master and a Supro Saturn Reverb there. The Supro I usually use with Snarky Puppy is the Coronado, which has two 10" speakers, and puts out a good volume for what we are doing.

Does the pedalboard you use live for your own music differ from what you might use with Snarky Puppy?

It is basically identical. There's a small board I use when we're not doing a long bus tour with a Source Audio Nemesis Delay, Boss DD-6 Digital Delay, Goodrich



PLAYERS

{ BOB LANZETTI }

volume pedal, Electro-Harmonix POG 2, Z. Vex Fuzz Factory and Box of Rock, Maxon OD808, and a J. Rockett Archer. I also have a larger board, but the only extra things are a DigiTech Whammy and an Empress Tremolo.

How do you use the two delays?

Lately, I've been using the Nemesis as the main delay. I usually keep it on a medium delay-time setting with a little modulation. The DD-6 is more for weird things—such as really, really long delays to make loops. I'll also use them together to make rhythmic delay patterns.

Is the Nemesis on a specific delay setting?

Usually, it's the Analog one, but I also use the Noise Tape setting. Lately, I've been using an Option Knob on the Nemesis' Delay Time control, so that I can do crazy stuff with my foot to get super-weird abstract sounds. Often, I am doing something that I will feed into the DD-6 to craft live loops of the weird stuff from the Nemesis.

What are some of the effects on the spacey section at the end of "Ivory"?

I overdubbed a ton of different sounds. The chimey, melodic guitar part is false harmonics with a good amount of delay from the DD-6, and maybe an Electro-Harmonix Memory Man. There was a static chord that was created using an Electro-Harmonix Freeze, and I also manipulated the pitch of the Memory Man after the Freeze. The pedal steel part is all from the live take. He was playing pretty chords delayed with some tremolo, as well. I also overdubbed an EBow playing one note at a time to get a whole chord. When we had all those tracks, we started to build the form after the fact.

"Ivory" has an African feel. Was that a nod to King Sunny Ade's use of pedal steel?

Not intentionally. The very first line you hear on the acoustic guitars had an Ali Farka Touré type sound to me. I think of Afrobeat as blues and a little bit of American funk.

That was one of the songs where the pedal steel does mostly ambient, textural stuff with delay. Some things you might think are guitar are actually the pedal steel.

The solo on that tune sounds particularly fat.

That was the OD808 running into the Box of Rock. I do that a lot for those kinds of sounds. I usually keep the gain of the Box of Rock pretty low, and the OD808 settings change. For "Ivory," the Drive knob on the OD808 was set at around 12 o'clock, and the Drive control on the Box of Rock was at 10 o'clock or so.

How do you juggle all of your various projects for GroundUP?

I try to deal with one at a time. Snarky Puppy was busy for ten weeks, and the guitarists are always coming in and out, so I only did about four weeks of the tour. It's a little bit of first come/first serve, and a little bit of juggling whatever makes sense for everybody. 🎸



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SGT. PEPPER'S LONELY HEARTS JAZZ BAND

YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT WILL HAPPEN

when jazz musicians get their hands on an iconic—well, let's say “a culture changing and legendary”—rock album such as *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. (Do I even have to mention who made that record?) But there I was at Berkeley's beautiful Freight and Salvage club late last year, anticipating a performance by the San Francisco String Trio to celebrate the release of *May I Introduce to You* [Ridgeway Records]—the group's inspired take on the Beatles' transformative 1967 masterwork.

The players were certainly up to the challenge, as bassist/vocalist Jeff Denson, violinist Mads Tolling, and guitarist Mimi Fox are undeniably transcendent players, arrangers, and composers. The instrumental rethinks (along with three vocals by Denson) are gorgeous and artistically sensitive mash-ups of styles and moods—they're almost master classes on how deft creative minds can twist and turn a great melody without tasing the conceptual majesty of the songwriters.

What I didn't expect was a shred-fest from Fox.

I kind of sat astounded and open-mouthed like some hapless dork who had never seen a guitar performance before (thank goodness I was sitting in the back of the club), but I can only defend myself by saying the catalog of techniques that Fox unleashed was mind blowing. She tapped, banged, went outside, came back home, fired off fast passages like a teen-aged metalhead, played legato, leapt into savvy pull-offs and bends and hammer-ons, and did stuff I couldn't even explain

MIMI FOX AND THE SAN FRANCISCO STRING TRIO REIMAGINE A CLASSIC

(and I'm supposedly the editor of a guitar magazine). It was quite the experience. I was forever changed by it.

Okay, I don't think I can even catalog the techniques you deployed for the album and the live performance. I'm rather dumbfounded here...

I kind of just do what I need to do to get each job done [laughs]. To me, the guitar is such a beautiful and expressive instrument, so I try to use the different properties it has to tell a compelling story for each song. That's how I look at it.

Well, perhaps we should start at the beginning then.

The trio happened because we were all doing different things together, and then we all kind of connected the dots.

BY MICHAEL MOLENDAA

PHOTOGRAPH BY BELOVE HR

Unbeknownst to me, Mads and Jeff were thinking of putting together a traditional jazz string trio with bass, violin, and cello. At one point, Jeff said, “You know, we can have a string trio without a cello. Why don't we have guitar? Do you know Mimi?” Mads had just hired me for a bunch of his shows at the time, so we all got together, and we felt this really good chemistry, we respected each other's musicianship, and we started thinking about what we would want to do as a project.

And that first project was, “Hey, why don't we take on the Beatles?”

We all love the Beatles—the music remains timeless—and every jazz musician knows the great songs by Gershwin, Cole Porter, and all the classic songs that are a part of the Great American Songbook. To me, Lennon and McCartney tunes like “Blackbird,” “She's Leaving Home,” or “In My Life”—and I could go on and on—stand up to reharmonization, because the melodies are so beautiful. They are every bit as deep as Rodgers and Hart, or any of the Great American Songbook writers. So the moral of the story is, “If you have a great melody, take it to the bank.”

Is there a methodology to expanding upon an artist's work while still retaining enough of their musical DNA to have a kind of home base for the audience?

We knew we were really treading on hallowed ground here, but I hope the reverence and the love with which we hold this music is obvious. Beyond that, I can just say that the rearrangements were more of an organic process than a particular method. We're all composers, we're all arrangers, and we've all been educators, so



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PLAYERS

{ MIMI FOX }

we can analyze stuff from an academic standpoint. We could have come at it from more of a structured methodical thing, but that's not what we're all about. I think we are very passionate artists, and we try to funnel all of our knowledge through our hearts—if that makes sense. I don't think any of us really care about our academic chops, but we do care about emotional connections. "Does this move me? Will it move someone else?" Of course, that's always subjective, but for myself as a listener, when I go out to hear music, I don't care about the chops. I want someone to tell me a good story. And then, it doesn't matter if I'm listening to metal, or a string quartet. It's all about the connection of the musicians to the music, to each other, and then to me as a listener. That's how we approached this project. We wanted it to be compelling.

Are some people surprised when what they might perceive as a "studied" jazz musician is talking to them about organic processes and emotion?

The bottom line with music is that it is about emotion and connection. I tell my students that all the time. But, yes, there are some interesting assumptions about jazz artists. For example, people are always surprised about all the different things I listen to. They may come to my house, and I'll have Stevie Ray Vaughan playing, or the Kinks, and they're like, "But you're a jazz musician." Really? So sue me. This is great music. I'm still waiting for someone to play me a ballad that rocks my world more than "Waterloo Sunset" by Ray Davies. It's such a gorgeous ballad. So, back to the point, I think all of us are coming from a place of: "We have all this knowledge, but the knowledge is completely barren if it's not matched by at least as much heart."

That's wonderful, because it works across all styles of music, really. Whether you're an accomplished jazz musician or an unschooled punk rocker, if the music you make is not compelling, then you've failed.

Exactly. I can't tell you the amount of times I've heard some great, totally confident artists, and I've left the concert scratching my head. "Wow. That didn't move me at all." You can always hear great players, but if they're just mailing it in, it's not going to be something you'll want to experience. Listen, when Steve Vai signed me to his Favored Nations label, he didn't care about my technique. All he cared about was, "Is this something that's going to touch people?" That was a real honor. If I

can touch guys that are coming from a different place, as well as audience members that have never really dug jazz before, then that's it for me. That makes all the years when I was younger, playing "Smokey Eyes," and coming home fairly trashed from road tours worthwhile, because I know that I've touched somebody. If you can boost somebody's spirits by playing something that moves them, that's priceless. That's what it's all about.

When you attack your improvisations, are you just thinking about the melodic lines? I mean, the typical rock player might be approaching a jam by visualizing boxes, patterns, or scales?

I understand what you're saying—it's not like we're unaware of scale possibilities, or the harmonic and melodic possibilities. This comes back to the academic thing. For instance, on "Within You Without You," the basic vamp is in a kind of E Locrian. Now, we reference that scale, but we're going to put in passing tones and superimpose all kinds of other things on top of it, because we've studied that stuff, and we know what can work. But in a playing situation, that knowledge becomes a subconscious thing. It's always there. The modes, the scales, the arpeggios, and the musical concepts become so integrated into your playing that you don't think about them. This is what enables us to take a song we may have never heard before, and just jump on it from the get-go. Understanding what is happening with the harmony liberates us, and frees us to follow the music wherever it may go.

I'm sure that you used your Heritage signature-model guitar for the album sessions. What else did you bring?

Yes, I used my signature model. I also had my old Guild F-30 that I've owned since I was 14 years old. I've had that guitar so long—and it has been with me all over the world—that you can't see the "Guild" logo on the headstock any more. It is completely worn off. That's an earthy guitar with a lot of miles on it. I borrowed a nice Taylor 12-string from Tall Toad Music in Petaluma for "Within You Without You," because the action on my Takamine 12-string is pretty abysmal. I think I got it at a yard sale for like 50 bucks when I first moved here. The amp was my vintage 1969 Fender Deluxe Reverb. I love to play through that amp, so I always use it. You're going to laugh, because my Volume stays at 2, and the Reverb is at 2, and it never changes. And I don't use pedals. I'm essentially an acoustic musician [laughs]. ■



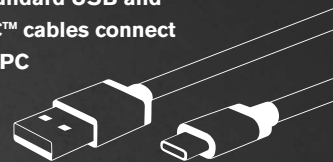
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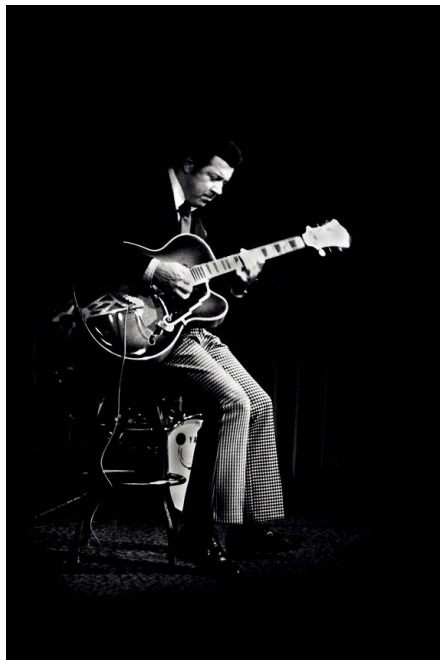
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{ STYLE }



Kenny Burrell's Blue Modal Magic

BY VINNIE DEMASI

WHETHER YOU'RE A NEWCOMER beginning your jazz exploration or an old pro seeking new inspiration, I highly recommend you treat your ears to the hard-swinging, blues-infused sounds of legendary jazz guitarist Kenny Burrell. Burrell caught the attention of the jazz world in the early '50s, first as a sideman for Oscar Peterson, Tony Bennett, and Benny Goodman, then later as a leader on dozens of dates for Blue Note records. Equally open to the influence of boppers such as Charlie Christian and bluesmen such as Muddy Waters, Burrell skillfully weaves harmonically complex lines and soul-satisfying blues with uncommon grace and fluidity. Throughout his prolific career Burrell regularly explored modal compositions as a means of infusing cool blues moves into jazzier terrain.

At 86, Burrell is still going strong, mentoring a new generation of cats as a both a professor and Director of Jazz Studies at UCLA's Herb Alpert School of Music. Let's see if we too can cop a few cool tricks from the master.

Ex. 1 is loosely based on Burrell's interpretation of the Duke Pearson tune "Jean-nine" but stands on its own as a G Dorian (G, A, B $\flat$, C, D, E, F) modal vamp. It highlights three signatures of Burrell's style; the juxtaposition of short, two- and three-note chord stabs against single-note lines, the use of call-and-response phrasing, and the incorporation of blue notes such as the $\flat 5$, D $\flat$, in bar 2. Some of the chord grips shown are rootless voicings, the root note being either implied by context or ostensibly provided by the bass.

Ex. 2 is another line that elegantly intermingles the G Dorian mode with the G blues scale (G, B $\flat$, C, D $\flat$, D, F). Dig the syncopated modal climb in bars 1 and 2 that resolves with a bluesy phrase that's then transposed down an octave across bars 3 and 4.

Our next two examples recall Burrell's version of the Miles Davis classic "All Blues," a tune that's based on a traditional blues form and incorporates Mixolydian scales, set to 3/4 jazz-waltz feel. **Ex. 3** is a tasty G Mixolydian phrase that sits nicely over the I7 chord. Dig how Burrell uses thematic development of the triplet phrases then alternates them with responses from double-stops throughout. For the line's resolution, the guitarist borrows from the G blues scale, slyly incorporating the diminished, or "flatted," fifth (D $\flat$) and minor

WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Ex. 1

♩ = 164-172 ♩ = $\overset{\sim}{3}\sim$

Am7 Gm7 Am7 B♭ Am7 Gm7

5

Ex. 2

♩ = 164-172 ♩ = $\overset{\sim}{3}\sim$

Gm7

Ex. 3

♩ = 122-130 ♩ = $\overset{\sim}{3}\sim$

G7

4

The *Bbmaj7/C* chord grip that starts off **Ex. 4** effectively acts as the tune's IV chord and sets our ears up for the lilting *C Mixolydian* (*C, D, E, F, G, A, Bb*) line that resolves to the rootless *G9* voicing in bar 4. On the fretboard, *C Mixolydian* may also be looked at

the same parent major scale, *F* major (*F*, *G*, *A*, *B**b*, *C*, *D*, *E*), and we're playing primarily in third position. The re-introduction in bars 5-8 of notes from the *G* blues scale again leads effortlessly to a tasteful resolution to some honky-tonk piano-style double-stops

Although he works mostly in the jazz idiom, Burrell's brilliant mixture of blues and modal melodicism was influential on the music of jam bands such as the Allman Brothers and the Grateful Dead, and is an inspiration to musicians of all styles. ■

EX. 4

$\text{♩} = 122-130$ $\text{♪} = \overset{\sim}{\text{♪}} \overset{\sim}{\text{♪}}$

B $\flat$ maj7/C

EX. 4

♩ = 122-130 ♪ = ♩³

B♭maj7/C

G9

let ring

5

G C G7

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My live interpretation of Joe Satriani's high-flying, tasteful guitar work on the song "This Is Not a Drill," from the the legendary Todd Rundgren's latest release, *White Knight*.

BY JESSE GRESS

FOLLOWING A LONG STRING OF SOLO albums, on which he played nearly every instrument, Todd Rundgren's 2017 release, *White Knight*, marked the musical wizard's first truly collaborative efforts since his Utopia days, and features a diverse roster of co-writers and musical partners in a kaleidoscopic array of styles, including spooky industrial electronica with Trent Reznor, biting Steely Dan-tinged political satire with Donald Fagen, Philly soul with Daryl Hall, Utopian power pop with Moe Berg, Beatle-esque psychedelia with Joe Walsh,

and Joe Satriani's Metallica-style shred fest. Satch's contribution, "This Is Not a Drill," is the album's closer and was delivered as a fully realized instrumental track, featuring multiple rhythm guitar overdubs and two ripping solos, to which T.R. added synth orchestrations, guitar manipulations, and vocals, plus live bass and drums, courtesy of longtime bandmates Kasim Sulton and Prairie Prince. This rhythm section, plus keyboardist Greg Hawkes and yours truly, was tasked with recreating the song behind T.R. for nearly six months during

2017's *White Knight* tour, and, for me, that required a few adjustments and alterations. This is the story of how I played it, and I'm sticking to it.

COUNTDOWN

Ex. 1's symphonic synth figure (Rhy. Fig. 1) is the first riff to appear, setting the stage for things to come with a steady stream of 16th notes—all C's except for the B $\flat$'s on beats one and three—which relate to C Mixolydian, C Aeolian, C Dorian, or C blues, lending an air of uncertainty as to the exact tonality being established. Nine rounds later, Rhy. Fig. 1 is joined for four additional bars by a guitar playing the hammered B $\flat$ 5/C-to-C5 power chord riff (Rhy. Fig. 2) shown in **Ex. 2**.

BLAST OFF

The last 11 of the previously described 13 bars (Rhy. Figs. 1 & 2 combined) serve as the framework for Satriani's 11-bar intro solo. On the album, Todd actually flew in Joe's solo backwards and at the halfway point reversed the backwards solo back to its original forward form, creating a musical palindrome that plays identically in either direction. (Yipes!) This was a little too crazy to pull off live, so the transcription in **Ex. 3** details my multi-modal live version, which begins like Joe's in bar 1 with a high-register, pick-tapped trill between G and D (the 5 and 2 of the previously mentioned C modes), then transitions to a descending C Mixolydian scale in bar 2, further blurring the tonality and exemplifying Satch's pitch axis concept, where different scales or chords hover around a consistent

Ex. 1

♩ = ca. 120 Rhy. Fig. 1
Play nine times

T
A
B

Ex. 2

Rhy. Fig. 2
Play four times

B $\flat$ 5/C C5 B $\flat$ 5/C C5

T
A
B

w/Rhy. Fig. 1

**Tap trills w/edge of pick throughout.

w/Rhy. Fig. 2

6

2 4 1 2 4 1 2 4 1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2

8-10 7-8-10 7-8-10 7-9-10 8-10-11 8-10

pick slide

15-10-15

w/Rhy. Fig. 2

8va

2 3

23-20-23

Rhy. Fig. 3

Play eight times

[illegible]

segues to bars 6 and 7, where a reversed repeat of bars 1 and 2 culminates in a high *E_b*-to-*C* pick-tapped trill, with the *E_b* played just above the end of the fretboard. (Tip: Up there, the edge of your pick becomes a moveable fret.)

Next up is an abrupt eight-bar breakdown that features synths alone playing the first four bars of **Ex. 4** (Rhy. Fig. 3), with guitars joining in for bars 5-8. This single-note, root-to- $\flat 3$ riff (*C-E $\flat$*) solidifies a C

LANDING & RELAUNCH

The song's chorus features Rhy. Fig. 5's (Ex. 6) C5-A $\flat$ 5-B $\flat$ 5-A $\flat$ 5 and C5-A $\flat$ 5-B $\flat$ 5-F/A

power chord “golf balls,” in tandem with a second guitar playing eight bars of Rhy. Fig. 3. Note how the *F/A* dyad in the second ending implies another momentary pitch-axis modal shift, this time to C Dorian. A second verse and chorus follow before Satch’s main solo erupts.

INTO THE STRATOSPHERE

Satriani's jaw-dropping solo—following the song's second chorus and prefaced by four bars of Rhy. Fig. 2—comes off like a drum roll with notes! His 10-bar excursion is framed by the ominously ascending G Dorian-based octaves portrayed in **Ex. 7** (Rhy. Fig. 6). To pull off the solo (pun intended), I again resorted to a combination of close-to-direct quotes and my own intervallic designs. **Ex. 8** details my interpretation, beginning with four scary-ass looking bars filled with edge-of-the-pick taps and pull-offs, all performed on the high *E* string, but fear not. Once you suss the pattern, it's not as hard to play as it looks. What we've got here is a 3/8 hemiola, comprising six 32nd notes, that repeats five

times per measure. Study the first six notes in bar 1 slowly and you'll find a tapped high G pulled off to *D*, followed by another tapped high G pulled off to *D*, *C*, and *B* $\flat$. This rhythmic motif repeats every three eighth notes—that's five times over the course of bar 1. The tapped notes alternate between pairs of G's and A's, while the fret hand notes remain consistent. The trick here (and for the next three bars) is to plant your fret hand in sixth position and leave it there—first finger on *B* $\flat$ (sixth fret), second finger on *C* (eighth fret), and pinky on *D* (10th fret)—while the pick taps jump between high Gs and As, at the 15th and 17th frets. Once you've got bar 1 wired, the next two measures are smooth sailing—the only things that change are the pick-tapped notes, which alternate between *F* and *G* in bar 2, and *E* and *F* in bar 3.

Up until now every note in the solo has been derived from G Dorian, but all that changes as we enter bar 4. Here, the rhythmic motif remains the same, and the pick-tapped notes stay on F, but the fret hand

shifts up to ninth position—first finger on C# (ninth fret), second finger on D (10th fret), and pinky on E (12th fret)—and the resulting repetitive b7-6-b7-6-5-#4 hemiola gives off a distinctive and exotic Lydian b7 aroma.

Joe lost me for the next two measures, so I inserted another favorite Don Mock lick into bars 5 and 6. It's a slippery, two-bar ride down a 15th-position G Dorian scale pattern, peppered with string skips, octaves and chromatic passing tones, and once again it involves a repetitive 3/8 hemiola rhythm, so nailing the first six-note phrase (this time starting on the "and" of beat one) will get you through both measures. From here on, it's an easy ride. Returning to form, bar 7 is a virtual repeat of the ascending C Mixolydian run from bar 6 of Ex. 3, now functioning as its relative G Dorian mode (both derived from their parent F major scale), and bars 8-10 echo the two measures that follow. All in all, it's a rollicking ride that's guaranteed to sharpen your chops! 

Ex. 5

Rhy. Fig. 4

Play seven times

[illegible]

Ex. 6

Rhy. Fig. 5

Ex. 6 Rhy. Fig. 5

C5 A $\flat$ 5 B $\flat$ 5 A $\flat$ 5 F/A

T
A
B

Ex.7

Rhy. Fig. 6

Ex. 7 Rhy. Fig. 6

TAB
5 — 3 — 5 — 7 — 6 — 5 — 6 — 8 — 10 — 11 — 10 — 11 — 13 — 15 — 17 — 15 — 17 — 18 — 20
3 — 1 — 3 — 5 — 2 — 3 — 5 — 7 — 8 — 7 — 8 — 10 — 12 — 14 — 12 — 14 — 15 — 17

Ex. 8

Guitar Solo w/Rhy. Fig. 6

1

The musical score is written for guitar in 4/4 time. The melodic line is on a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). It begins with a tempo marking of 8va and a series of eighth and quarter notes, some with accents. The bass line is written below the staff as a series of fret numbers: 15-10-15-10-8-6-17-10-17-10-8-6-15-10-15-10-8-6-17-10-17-10-8-6-15-10-15-10-8-6. Above the fret numbers are 'T' marks indicating fretted notes, and some are grouped with slurs.

8va

4/4

T

15-10-15-10-8-6-17-10-17-10-8-6-15-10-15-10-8-6-17-10-17-10-8-6-15-10-15-10-8-6

T

A

B

*Tap w/edge of pick throughout.

8va

TAB

3 *8va*

TAB

4 *8va-*

The musical score is written on a treble clef staff. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The tempo/mood is marked 'Allegretto'. The score consists of a single melodic line. The notes are: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), Bb4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), Bb4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), F4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), D4 (quarter), C4 (half). The fretboard diagram below the staff shows the fret numbers for each note: 13, 12, 13, 12, 10, 9, 13, 12, 13, 12, 10, 9, 13, 12, 13, 12, 10, 9, 13, 12, 13, 12, 10, 9, 13, 12, 13, 12, 10, 9. The diagram is a single line with fret numbers and vertical tick marks indicating the fret position for each note.

5 *8va-*

T
A
B

15 18 15 14 18 17 16 15 15 14 18 17 16 15 15 14 13 13

7 loco	**	8va 15-14-15	
T A B 8-10 7-8-10 7-8-10 7-9-10 8-10-11 8-10	15-10-15	23-20-23	

**Trill w/edge of pick.



Riff Scramble

A Fun Game of Reinventing and Deciphering Classic Rock-Guitar Themes

BY JESSE GRESS

LAST YEAR I HAD BIG FUN DECONSTRUCTING A HANDFUL of classic rock riffs, by turning them inside out, upside down, and every which way, in order to illustrate the mechanics of power chords. It was a great way to show how great riffs stand on their own, no matter how you slice them up, and it also facilitated a way to hint at music we usually don't have access to, but the process also became very gamey. So, in the spirit of April Fools' Day, here we go again.

The following well-known two-bar riffs have been sliced and diced beyond recognition, and the results are analogous to "word scrambles" and anagrams. Your mission, should you decide to accept it, is to decode and unscramble each notated riff along with its artist and title, both of which are presented as anagrams.

GROUND RULES

1. All pitches and rhythms, including rests, from the original riff must remain intact, regardless of where they are repositioned in a measure.
2. All pitches must remain in the same octave as the original riff. (No octave displacement.)
3. All articulations and note ornaments from the original riff, such as hammer-ons, pull-offs, slides, and vibratos—must remain intact, although a hammer-on can reverse to a pull-off and vice versa.
4. All rhythms must add up to equal the same number of beats as those in the original riff.

HOW TO PLAY THE GAME

We'll illustrate the concept with two bars of "Mary Had a Little Lamb," attributed to the Rolling Stones (!), first notated in **Ex. 1a** in its original form. (This would be the solution to the riff scramble.)

Ex. 1a $\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 190$ N.C.

Ex. 1b establishes a template for all of the scrambles that follow. Each begins with a pair of anagrams, which, when solved, reveal the song title and the name of the artist. The adjacent blank spaces

denote the number of words and how many letters each contains. The scrambled riff transcription follows, captioned with a few valuable clues designed to help you solve the puzzle. You can start with the anagrams, but the most musical approach would be to play the example first and try unscrambling it before revealing the artist and title.

Ex. 1b

A HARDBALL MAY MELT IT - _____
LONELIEST THROGS - _____

Ex. 1b

Clues: Kids love it; Covered by Brit quintet named after a Muddy Waters song; Band gathers no moss; Play it behind your head.

Ex. 1c

Ex. 1d

Figures 1c and 1d show two more scrambles of the same melody. Note how a displaced dotted quarter note can appear as an eighth note tied to a quarter note (its notational equivalent). Any note

and its original rhythm is eligible for displacement. Get the idea? Well, okay then. Game on!

Ex. 2

ROMANCING NIL - - - - - ONLINE GUY - - - - -

Fig. 2

♩ = ca. 100

Drop D tuning (E) = D

D5 G/B C5 G5 F5 C5 D5

Clues: Renowned for one-note solo; Gretsch semi-hollowbody electric through a cranked Fender Deluxe played by a loner; Break out the fringe jacket!

Ex. 3

YOU FEVERISH SOLO NUN - - - - - MR. ACE - - - - -

Fig. 3

♩ = ca. 114 N.C.

N.C.

Clues: Worldwide blues-rock hit that defined the power trio genre—state-of-the-art in '68. A neck-position humbucker with a rolled back tone control through a cranked Marshall gets the job done properly.

Ex. 4

A FLATLAND HATH YODELLING - - - - -

KENS KITH - - - - -

Fig. 4

♩ = ca. 138

B♭5 G5 F5 B♭5 F5 G5

Clues: Title is equally diurnal and nocturnal; Page-toned bridge humbucker and honking Vox overdrive; Power pop antecedents to the Who sported sparring siblings (not Oasis).

Ex. 5

TARDY PIPER - - - - - BE ATHLETES - - - - -

Fig. 5

♩ = ca. 138

(E7)

N.C.

(E7) N.C.

Clues: Rite-of-passage for throngs of budding guitarists by four Anglophiles, a.k.a. the OAR BUFF (___ ___). A Gretsch or Rick-enbacker solidbody feeding a Vox amp will do just fine. Bar 1 looks good in a mirror.

Ex. 6

SAGGY ZIT TURDS - - - - - DEW DIVA BIO - - - - -

___ (with CONK MINORS - - - - -)

Fig. 6

♩ = ca. 79

G/B Cadd9 G5 D Dsus4 D Dsus2/A

Clues: Epic tale by Rock's first sci-fi character; Signature power chording courtesy of a Rat from Hell whose nickname rhymes with Bono; Distinctive midrange boost emanated from a Les Paul, cocked wah, and Marshall Major 200 watter.

Ex. 6

FLY YO AXED - - - - - MIRED HIJINX - - - - -

Fig. 7

♩ = ca. 95

N.C.

F#7#9

N.C.

F#7#9

N.C.

N.C. F#7#9 N.C. F#7#9 N.C.

Clues: Title is often misspelled; West Coast expatriate who struck terror in the hearts of his Brit contemporaries; Nothing but a Strat, Marshall, and Fuzz Face will do.

TWO TOW WORM MUTILATION - _____ - MIRED HIJINX - _____

♩ = ca. 114

Clues: Same artist and gear specs as Ex. 8, but with fuzz off and a clean neck-pickup tone to die for; Grace-hammered triads appeared in many subsequent guitarist's bag of vocabularies (Think "Long Train Running" and "Free Ride."); Useful for seeing if bassists and drummers are on their toes. ("Ba-bump!")

FELINE SATAN ELF HIT - _____ STAGE HEEL - _____

$J = \text{ca. } 110 \quad \text{N.C.}$

Clues: '70s So-Cal favorite, featuring three guitarists, one a former Measle who once ran for President; Original relied heavily on rhythmic displacement; Dry and gritty rectified bridge humbucker tone highly recommended; Double it!

THE MALE TITS - _____ - SNEERING SLOTH LOT - _____

♩ = ca. 175

Clues: Early 60's effort from the English fearsome five-some mentioned earlier; The riff everybody plays wrong; Appropriated by The Verve; Sounds best on a white teardrop Vox Phantom.

NOTE ACHE - _____ - DEEP ZEN PILL - _____

♮ = ca. 174 N.C.



GAME OVER!

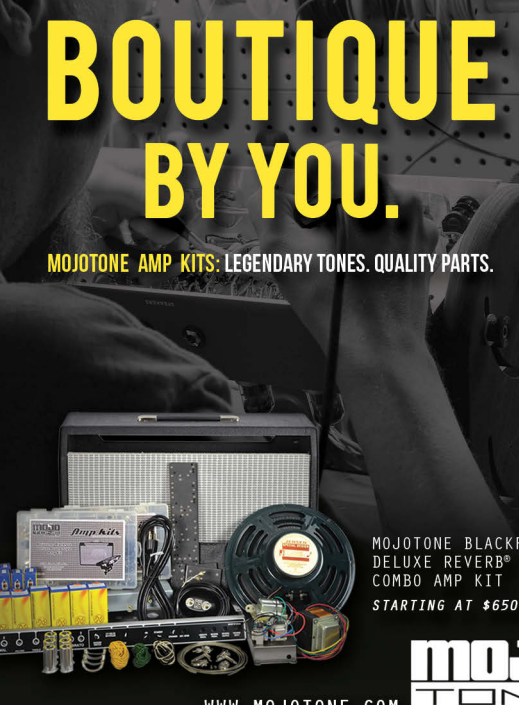
The solutions are up to you, but I'm sure you'll find enough clues to eventually crack the codes. Let us know if you'd like to see a monthly Riff Scramble.

How ya doin'?



When Joe Walsh approached Dr. Z for a new amp, he harkened back to the legendary recordings with the James Gang, where Joe was using small, single ended Tweed combos. Never one to be satisfied with rehashing old designs, Dr. Z and Joe Walsh upped the ante by looking to hi-fi audio amplifiers; from this the Z-PLUS was born.

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“Better Call Saul”

BY JESSE GRESS

BESIDES BOASTING SOME THE BEST writing, acting, and cinematography on television (or anywhere), AMC's hit dramatic series *Better Call Saul* also sports an infectious opening theme featuring a short, almost happy-go-lucky "surf guitar" figure that leaves you with a sense that something menacing is brewing, just like the show. But did you know that the 15-second snippet that underscores the opening credits is an edited excerpt from a full song by England's Little Barrie?

Ex. 1 details what is now ingrained in every *Breaking Bad* and *Saul* fan's psyche for time immemorial. Prerequisites include a humbucker, single-coil, or Filter Tron-equipped axe set to a middle-position combination of neck and bridge pickups, a clean Fender amp with reverb, and whatever whammy bar you have on hand. We begin with a raked, first-inversion A chord—the top three strings of a fifth-position A barre chord—supplemented with octave A's on the fourth and fifth strings, and embellished with a subtle

half-step bar dip and release between beats one and two. This is followed on the “and” of beat three by a slide up the third string to a reverse arpeggiated, first-inversion C#m voicing, played as a partial barre across the top three strings at the ninth fret. This leads to a raked, first-inversion C chord on the downbeat of bar 2—same as the opening *A* played three frets higher—which is sustained for two-and-a-half beats and embellished with a bit of whammy wiggle.

A raked 12th-fret *Dadd9* chord followed by a 4-to-3 (*D*-to-*C*) blues lick completes bar 1 and leads back to an exact repeat and recapitulation of the first half of bar 1, minus the octave *A*'s (play the top three strings only). The previous slide into *C#m* is replaced with a scrambled *A7* arpeggio (the "Red House" voicing) encompassing the "and" of beat three and all of beat four.

A bar of 6/4 brings the theme to a close, beginning with a dramatic drop to three open low *E*'s during beats one and two, followed by a sharply accented *D9* chord (a commonly overlooked detail) and fragment of a descending *A* blues scale (5-*b5*-4-*b3*) capped with a *D#*-to-*E* hammer-on, string skip to *C* and *D*, and drop to an open-*A*-to-*C* move before coming to an abrupt halt (i.e., edit) on open *A*. This measure can also be counted as a bar of 2/4 tacked onto a bar of 4/4. S'all good, man! ■

Ex. 1

Ex. 1

$\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 86$

A C#m C N.C. A A7

grad. B w/bar -1/2 R let ring ----- I w/bar grad. B 1/4 grad. B w/bar R -1/2 grad. B 1/4

T
A
B

(E) N.C. D9 N.C. (A)

grad. B 1/4

T
A
B

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A Full-Bodied Tonal Bouquet

Paoletti Guitars Uses Century-Old Wood from Wine Barrels

BY RICHARD BIENSTOCK

FABRIZIO PAOLETTI BEGAN BUILDING guitars in the Tuscany region of Italy in 2005. He constructed his first instrument—a triple-single-coil solidbody with an alder body and a sunburst finish—at the request of a friend. The finished product, he recalls, was “not so bad.”

Today, he continues to build instruments under the name Paoletti Guitars, with results that are not only quite stunning, but also wholly unique. In an innovative twist, his guitars and basses feature bodies constructed from the wood of century-old chestnut wine barrels—a nod to his family history, as the Paolettis have been producing Chianti in the region since the 19th century (Fabrizio’s father still operates a small local vineyard).

“My guitars pay reverence to both my passion for the land and my love of all things musical,” says Paoletti. “The first time I came across this idea about repurposing wine barrels, I was with Maurizio Solieri, one of the most famous musicians in Italy. He suggested we test the sound of chestnut on his own Paoletti custom guitar. The result was amazing, so I started to recover all the barrels my grandfather had left to my family. I’m talking about 130- to 150-year-old chestnut wood from abandoned wine barrels in Tuscany—what we call ‘Leonardo da Vinci land.’”

Paoletti employs this ancient wood in all his builds, most notably for his flagship Stratospheric Wine Series.

“Chestnut is alive—it breathes,” he says. “It’s a wood that brings a high number of harmonics,

which I think is something that is very important, and it is also the king of sustain. There is a focus on middle-bass frequencies, but the tone is also malleable, depending on the other woods used in the guitar.”

In the case of the HSS model shown here, these other woods include a Honduras mahogany neck and a Macassar ebony fretboard, each of which Paoletti says is matched to the specific piece of chestnut used for the guitar’s body. Other features include Gotoh tuners, an original Floyd Rose tremolo, two custom-wound Paoletti Strato 60s single-coils, and a Rock II humbucker.

“The pickups are completely handmade here in the factory, using components that work perfectly with chestnut wood,” says Paoletti. “We also use Alnico V magnets, as well as a double-waxing process to prevent ‘bad’ noises.”

The pickups are controlled by a 5-way selector switch, as well as a trio of knobs (one Volume, two Tone) that have been fashioned from shotgun shells from the Italian ammunition company, Fiocchi.

The shotgun shells are hardly the only pieces of eye candy on the HSS. Paoletti tops the instrument with a richly-hued brass pickguard.

“We treat the brass with different acids and water temperatures to obtain different reflections and finishes,” he says. “Brass gives a great look on the guitars, and it also protects the pickup assembly underneath, and helps in controlling noise.”

Then, there are the roughly 30 brass nails that outline the top and front of the guitar’s body.

“They’re reminiscent of the nails used on wine barrels to hold the wood pieces together,” explains Paoletti.

Paoletti hand builds all his instruments, working alongside a team of three in a small shop in Montemurlo, just north of Florence. Despite the small operation and modest output, his guitars have found their way into the hands of numerous high-profile artists, such as Keith Richards, Bruce Springsteen, Richie Sambora, Europe’s John Norum (an official endorser), and Brian May.

“Brian noticed the astonishing tone of chestnut after 30 seconds of playing, even though we didn’t explain the properties of the wood to him,” says Paoletti. “I am honored by all the feedback from these guitarists, which is so very important to me. Their appreciation is confirmation of the quality and passion we put into our work.”

While Paoletti continues to develop new products and designs—he offers instruments featuring bodies wrapped in various leathers, for one—the common denominator, he says, is always chestnut.

“The Wine series of guitars has been, and still is, an innovation,” he says. “It features a wood that nobody in the world has ever used in making musical instruments. The basic idea is to let the wood, with all its unique veins and characteristics, express itself. The signs of time are well-marked on each instrument, and every Paoletti guitar has its own story to tell.” ■





Time Traveler

My Interdonati Archtop

BY ANDY FUCHS

I GREW UP IN A MIDDLE-CLASS WORK-ing family. My parents met through music and opened a music store shortly before I was born in Queens, New York. They were working musicians who played club dates on weekends in the '50s and '60s, and I was raised on Long Island at my family's summer home by my great aunt and uncle and my grandparents. The family was first-generation Italian, and had a small piece of land in Rocky Point. On the block were many Italian immigrant families. It seemed everyone was your "aunt" or "uncle," whether related or not, and the smell of Italian cooking and the sound of Italian music was in the air. We were a block from the north shore, so when I wasn't at the beach, I was trying to learn "Pipeline" from my slightly older cousin Kenneth, or playing Italian folk songs with my uncle Pat, who lived next door.

Pat was loosely connected to my family by some thread I never fully understood. He was a lifelong bachelor who owned fine clothes, dated lovely women, and drove a cool car—I loved his 1960 T-bird. He also played guitar and mandolin. While my mom was a well-schooled guitarist

Andy Fuch's Interdonati archtop
that he learned to play on.



Philip Interdonati at work on a keyboard.

(she studied with John Vicari, who taught John Tropea and played in the movie *The Godfather*), mom was often busy gigging and teaching others. She did teach me to count "Black Dog" by Led Zeppelin, but I mainly learned what I could about playing guitar from Alfred or Standard guitar method books at Dad's store and from uncle Pat, who owned some nice toys: an Ampeg Reverberocket, a Stadel bass amp, a Hagstrom bass, as well as a very unique archtop guitar that I learned to accompany him on.

The guitar was custom made in New York City in 1938 by an Italian immigrant builder named Philip Interdonati. When my uncle passed away in the 1980s, my cousin Kenneth quickly cleaned out all his musical equipment and the guitar vanished somewhere in Florida. A few years ago, the guitar came to mind after finding some home-cut 78s that uncle Pat and my mom recorded many years ago. I had them transferred to CD, and while listening to them, I started searching on Google and found an article that a West-Coast guitarist named Tony Marcus had written about this exact guitar. I contacted him and explained how I knew the instrument, and that my uncle's

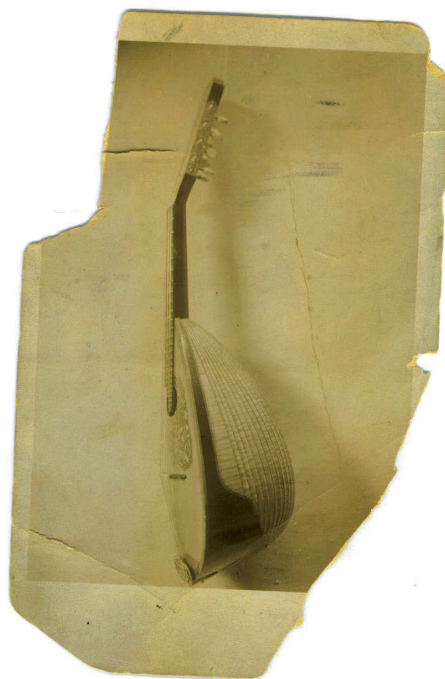


(Left) A beautiful engraved brass headstock plate adorns the 1938 archtop. To the right is an Interdonati mandolin and an interior label signed by the builder.

name would be on the paper sticker inside, and sure enough it was!

Tony was willing to sell it to me, since it was a family heirloom. A guitar on which I became a guitar player had come home. After not seeing it for almost 40 years, I had tears in my eyes when I opened the case to behold its unique beauty. There is little online about the builder Philip Interdonati. He was a tool-and-die maker by trade, and also made furniture as well as musical instruments. He made less than 50 stringed-instruments, including a few unique scalloped-fingerboard guitars, some archtops, as well as many ornate mandolins and violins. He also sold tools and fixtures to John D'Angelico. Through the wonder of the Internet, I came to know some of his relatives, and learned that after Philip passed away, D'Angelico purchased his shop fixtures and wood stockpile.

The instrument has maple back and sides, a paper-thin spruce top, an ebony fingerboard with mother-of-pearl inlays, a fixed steel-reinforcement rod and a mahogany neck. The builder's name is on a beautifully engraved brass plate on the headstock. The tuners and tailpiece are



Interdonati mandolin

the same as D'Angelico used from the period. Guitar builder Ric McCurdy set it up when I first

got it. He told me the guitar features scalloped bracing, which was common to Martin guitars from that period. The guitar is very lightweight, and it has a loud and clear voice. It is unique for the time in that it's an archtop with a round soundhole instead of conventional f-holes, although I have seen pictures of this model with f-holes as well.

I showed the guitar to Rudy Pensa from Rudy's Music in NYC who was impressed with the tone and workmanship, and said he was surprised he had never heard of this fine builder before. At one time the guitar had a DeArmond pickup and a black Bakelite pickguard, which have been lost to time. I hope to make a replacement pickguard at some point.

The guitar holds a place in my heart and my music room. I often play it late at night, and I always enjoy its beautiful tones and how it reminds me of my uncle Pat and my youth on Long Island.

Andy Fuchs is the founder of Fuchs Audio Technology, a maker of high-end guitar amplifiers, speaker cabinets, and the Plush line of effects pedals. ■



SPECIFICATIONS

CONTACT drzamps.com

MODEL Z-Plus LT Combo

PRICE \$2,195 street (as tested, with optional Celestion Alnico Blue speaker)

CHANNELS 1 (w/footswitchable EQ bypass)

CONTROLS Volume, Treble, Middle, Bass, Reverb, Cut, Master

POWER 15 watts, switchable to 7 watts

TUBES Four 12AX7s, one 12AT7, two 6V6s, 5AR4 rectifier

EXTRAS Outputs for 4 Ω , 8 Ω and 16 Ω cabinets. Effects loop. Half-Power switch. EQ bypass jack (footswitch included)

SPEAKER 12" Z 12 (made by Eminence). Celestion Alnico Blue upgrade (\$200)

WEIGHT 42.26 lbs

BUILT USA

KUDOS Awesome sonic complexity. Excellent reverb. Variable EQ bypass footswitch.

CONCERNS None.

Dr. Z

Z-Plus LT Combo



TESTED BY ART THOMPSON

A UNIQUE OFFERING IN DR. Z'S EVER expanding line of hand-wired tube amps, the Z-Plus resulted from a request by Joe Walsh for a new amp to use on the Eagles' 2018 tour. Walsh famously used small Fender tweed combos on many of his legendary recordings, so the starting point for Dr. Z's Mike Zaite was classic

single-ended class-A architecture, but with his own twists on a design that would also reflect Walsh's appreciation for vintage hi-fi audio amps.

The result was the Z-Plus, a parallel single-ended amplifier that uses two 6V6 power tubes in true class-A configuration. Imagine two single-tube tweed amps in one package and you've

JOE WALSH ON THE Z-PLUS

- > "I recorded 'Funk 49' with a Telecaster straight into a blackface Champ with an 8" speaker and one output tube, and that's why it sounds like it does," says Joe Walsh about what he was seeking when he asked Dr. Z founder Mike Zaite to design a new amp for him. "That sound mystifies most guitarists. Single-ended amps can be magic in the studio, but they don't work at all for live performance. I call up Z sometimes and we talk amps, so I said to him, 'How do we get a Champ sound at stage volume?' As usual, Z goes, 'I don't think you can do that, but let me think about it.' Then, he calls me in the middle of the night and says, 'I'm in the shop, and I've got a couple of ideas. I'll get back to you.' The result was two output tubes wired in series, which keeps the amp single-ended, but it's way over twice as loud. No push-pull, no phase-splitter, no biasing issues—none of that. It's a high-powered Champ offering a world of new sounds with *any* pickup. You should hear 'Funk 49' through it. Thanks, Z. U da man!" —AT

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got the idea. Of course, bringing the concept into something befitting Dr. Z required that the amp be its own thing, so along with a half-power switch, tube-driven reverb, and an effects loop, the circuit housed within the custom aluminum chassis also reflects the builder's typically high level of quality and attention to detail. The hand-soldered connections on the terminal board are neat, and the list of top-grade components includes German-made F&T electrolytic caps, a PEC pot for volume control (the other pots are Alphas) and an output transformer made especially for this amp that uses highest-grade M-6 stacked laminates. (Stacking factor is the ratio of the actual volume of steel in a transformer stack—not including air or insulating materials—compared to the *measured* dimension of the stack. The M-6 designation means that the laminations are smoothly finished everything else in the assembly process has been optimized to produce a very high-grade unit.)

The Z-Plus LT Combo on review here has a slightly larger cabinet (22.5" wide x 19.5 high x 10.5" deep) than the Studio Combo version, and

is available with the standard, Eminence-made Z 12 speaker or a Celestion Alnico Blue, which adds \$200 to the price. Since Walsh specified the Celestion for his personal amp, we opted for it too.

Tested with a Gibson Historic '59 Les Paul, a G&L ASAT Classic (with Seymour Duncan pickups), and a Fender Strat, the Z-Plus offered up excellent tones with no fuss. Being a true class-A design—as opposed to an amp that is biased “toward” class A—it has that inherent quality of adding a layer of second-order harmonics to the sound, and you can hear it in the complexity and dimension this amp delivers. The Z-Plus has good clean capability too, and, in 15-watt mode, there's headroom aplenty for jazz and other styles with the Volume knob kept around 9 o'clock with the Master turned up. Advancing the Volume into the breakup range brings juicy texture into the brew, and pushed further into saturation, the Z-Plus's grind gets more intense and the feel more compressed, yet you can pull right back to a cleaner tone by rolling down the guitar volume.

This is a fairly loud amp when cranked, and the

half-power setting is handy in situations where you want to keep a lid on the volume without cutting back on power-tube distortion. The passive tone controls are augmented by a Cut control that attenuates high frequencies in the output stage. Because it operates independently of the tone stack, you can still use Cut even when the EQ section is bypassed via the included footswitch. Bypassing the tone stack elicits more gain from the circuit, and having it on a footswitch lets you click between cleaner rhythm tones and more heavily saturated sounds for solos, slide work, etc.—effectively turning the Z-Plus into a two-channel affair. There's even a knob on the side of the footswitch to adjust the amount of EQ bypass. Another great feature is the tube-driven spring reverb, which sounds excellent whether used for a whiff of airy reflection or for super pinging surf effects. The Celestion Alnico Blue speaker is an excellent match here with its bright, ballsy response, and the total package adds up to be one of the most thoroughly enjoyable amps I've played, and an easy Editors' Pick Award winner. **■**



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Sting
Styx
System of a Down
Taylor Swift
The Band Perry
The Beach Boys
The Black Crowes
The Black Eyed Peas
The Black Keys
The Corrs
The Decembrists
The Doobie Brothers
The Eagles
The Flecktones
The Killers
The Lumineers
The National
The Rolling Stones
The Tenors
The Tragically Hip
The Prodigy
The White Stripes
The Who
Timbaland
Tom Waits
Tommy Emmanuel
Tony Bennett
Tony Levin
Toots & the Maytals
U2
Usher
Van Halen
Victor Wooten
Vince Gill
Vintage Trouble
Volbeat
Weezer
Will.I.Am
Whitesnake
X Ambassadors
You Me At Six
Zac Brown Band
Zakk Wylde
Zella Day

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The Battle of Evermore (Gear)

We Fought the Hordes to Pick Our 25 Favorite Products from NAMM

BY ART THOMPSON AND MICHAEL MOLENDRA

WE'VE ATTENDED A LOT OF NAMM SHOWS, BUT, THIS YEAR—*frightening*. Booth numbers in the five-digit range, a completely new hall, the incorporation of AES (pro-recording products) into the mix, and heightened security (bag checks and metal detectors) made for a harrowing—and time-consuming—journey.

But amidst the surging masses of humanity and the noise and bother, there was, as always, the GEAR. Multitudes of awesome products debuted at NAMM 2018, and we've previewed many of them on guitarplayer.com, our social-media pages, and on our YouTube channel, and we'll publish comprehensive reviews on as much of the new gear as we can in future

print issues and online.

Being blissfully overwhelmed by so much gear is daunting, both for the editors and our readers. So we decided to do a "first cut" for you, and select 25 products that caught our eye, or intrigued us, or simply ignited our own personal gear lust. We aren't proposing that this list encompasses the "best" gear released at NAMM, or even the most important or anticipated. It's just the subjective mission brief of two *GP* editors, who walked the miles of aisles at the Anaheim Convention Center during the 2018 NAMM extravaganza, and came across 25 products they dug and wanted to share with other players.



DUNLOP FLOW



FISHMAN OPEN CORE



MAD HATTER EARTH BOARD



PROCO RAT TAIL

ACCESSORIES

DUNLOP FLOW JUMBO PICKS

Featuring beveled edges for fast string release and a wide profile to make them easy to grip, these picks feel great and deliver a clear, meaty sound. (\$3.99 street for a 3-pack). jimdunlop.com

FISHMAN OPEN CORE HUMBUCKERS

These new models in the Fluence series (\$TBA) have exposed coils for a classic "zebra" look and sound. In Voice 1 the neck and bridge pickups are set to a vintage PAF-style tone. Voice 2 makes the bridge hotter and the neck less so for a cleaner sound, and Voice 3 provides

a split-coil sound. Now you can enjoy all the advanced technology that Fluence offers while keeping your guitar looking dead-nuts vintage. fishman.com

MAD HATTER EARTH BOARD

This pedalboard (\$399 mini, \$499 standard) features a lightweight aluminum frame supporting isolated steel rails and "Pedal Plates" that attach to your stompboxes. Each Pedal Plate has magnets to hold to the steel rails of the Earth Board, making for easier positioning of pedals, and the steel rails of the Earth Board also provide voltage to each Pedal Plate through the magnets to power the pedals. The Earth Board can be powered by a standard 9VDC power supply, or with a lithium rechargeable battery for clean isolated

power. Available in 20" x 12" standard and 20" x 6" mini sizes, and with the option of LED lighting in a variety of colors. madhatterguitar-products.com

PROCO RAT TAIL DISTORTION CABLE

I'm not sure if this is crazy genius, a new paradigm, or just dumb fun, but the Rat Tail (\$57-\$62 street) serves up blistering distortion right from your guitar cable. A knob on the guitar-input jack lets you select two Rat-pedal-approved distortion settings (one at unity gain; the other with a 3dB boost) or a true bypass (unaffected) mode. Those with fast hands and clumsy feet can now bid their grind pedals adieu. Available in 10', 18', and 25' lengths. ratdistortion.com



PEAVEY INVEKTIVE .120



BOSS KATANA-AIR



HEADRUSH FRFR-112



MARSHALL ORIGIN SERIES

AMPS

BOSS KATANA-AIR

BOSS will proudly tell you the Katana-Air (\$399 street) is the first completely wireless professional guitar amp in the galaxy. And that's cool. I guess. Beyond ultimate portability, you also get the wireless transmitter for your guitar, five amp models, 58 effects, Bluetooth music playback, 20 watts (battery) or 30 watts (AC) of power, and some other groovy features. But here's what's really cool for both futurists and lazy sods: the transmitter and amp automatically go into standby mode when you're not playing, and a motion sensor in the transmitter turns everything back on when you pick up your guitar. Did you hear that? All you have to do is pick up your guitar! I did that all afternoon at NAMM, and I giggled with joy every time. Boom. boss.info

HEADRUSH FRFR-112

As a full-range/flat-response, powered-speaker cabinet (2,000 watts peak) for its own HeadRush Pedalboard or any digital-modeling device, the FRFR-112 (\$299 street) is really well-configured for real-world live-performance use. The killer app is that it's monitor shaped, which means it can be angled behind a player for optimum sound dispersion on stage, or placed in front of the performer (like a conventional monitor speaker) if the house system is getting the main signal feed from your device. headrushfx.com

MARSHALL ORIGIN SERIES

These great-sounding new combos and heads available in 5-, 20-, and 50-watt versions (\$449 to \$799 street), are straightforward, all-tube designs that harken to classic Marshalls of yore. However, they have modern features like Powerstem power reduction (which maintains tonal

consistency by lowering the voltage in the output stage instead of switching the power tubes to triode configuration), adjustable gain boost, and a Tilt control that lets you vary the sound between normal and high treble. marshall.com

PEAVEY INVEKTIVE .120 HEAD

Periphery guitarist Misha Mansoor designed this metal machine (\$1,899 street) with Peavey from a blank slate. It's not specifically based on old school or new school amps, yet it sounds simultaneously familiar and boldly unique—a good thing for sonic explorers who want to chart their own tonal expeditions. Lots of clean headroom and textural, complex high-gain spoken here. peavey.com



{ NAMM }



SUPRO DAVID BOWIE
LIMITED EDITION



PRS S2 STUDIO



REVEREND AIRSONIC HC



FENDER ERIC JOHNSON
THINLINE



HARMONY SILHOUETTE

ELECTRIC GUITARS

FENDER ERIC JOHNSON THINLINE STRATOCASTER

This mind-blowing innovation—the first-ever semi-hollow Stratocaster (\$1,999 street)—took two years to develop. I attended a Fender breakfast with Eric Johnson to introduce the new model, and he said he played with body woods, pickup voicings, positions of the internal chambers, and even the size and position of the f hole before settling on the production specs. When he played that morning, the sound was resonant and airy—just like the combo plate of a Strat and his favorite semi-hollowbodies that he was looking for. Seeking more “off-kilter” Fenders? Check out the Parallel Universe Collection. fender.com

HARMONY SILHOUETTE

I've been intrigued about the Silhouette since *GP*'s Whack Job columnist, Terry Carleton, profiled a

'65 model in 2015. But I wasn't up for wrestling with a vintage pawnshop prize. Then, here comes NAMM, and—shazzam!—Harmony is back, and so is the Silhouette (along with the Rebel and Jupiter; all \$TBD). Edwin Wilson—formerly of the Gibson Custom Shop—is leading Harmony's resurrection, and the models I played at NAMM were solid, sounded good, and felt comfortable to play. They had to wrest the Silhouette out of my hands. harmony.com

PRS S2 STUDIO

I've always dug the S2 Standard 22, and the new Studio model (\$1,399 street) gets a boost in sonic range and flexibility factor courtesy of an HSS pickup configuration with a Starla humbucker in the bridge (which has a coil-split function) and Vela Type-D single-coils in the middle and neck positions. prsguitars.com

REVEREND AIRSONIC HC

This new model (\$1,099 street) designed by

Reverend founder Joe Naylor brings elements of hollowbody and solidbody together in a unique way, with the thru-body f-holes providing more resonance, and the thick center ridge enhancing attack and sustain. The Airsonic's Railhammer Humcutters deliver the clarity and dynamics of P90s without the hum, and the tremolo bridge is a Wilkinson WVS50 IIK. Stay tuned for an upcoming review of this intriguing guitar. reverendguitars.com

SUPRO DAVID BOWIE LIMITED EDITION DUAL TONE

This hits too many of my obsession/nostalgia buttons. I'm a fanatical Bowie fan, but the fact that Bowie's desire for this guitar was driven by his love for Link Wray and his Dual Tone—well, that's two of my musical heroes wrapped up in one guitar! The Bowie Limited Edition (\$1,199 street) is not only a fine example of a vintage Supro, it's also a revved-up, customized version of the last guitar Bowie played on tour. suprousa.com



ELECTRO-HARMONIX 95000



ERNIE BALL EXPRESSION TREMOLO



LINE 6 HX

JOE GORE CULT
GERMANIUM CHANNELMXR DOUBLE-
DOUBLE
OVERDRIVESEYMOUR
DUNCAN LA
SUPER RICASOURCE AUDIO
VENTRIS DUAL REVERBWAY HUGE MINI AQUA-PUSS
AND MINI BLUE HIPPO

PEDALS

ELECTRO-HARMONIX 95000 PERFORMANCE LOOP LABORATORY

This cool looping device (\$550 street) has six mono tracks and one stereo mixdown track per loop, and can record up to 375 minutes and 100 loops with a 16GB micro SD card. It's easy to navigate, I like how you can fade out tracks, and the intuitive interface and rugged aluminum chassis makes it well suited for live performance. ehx.com

ERNIE BALL EXPRESSION TREMOLO

In a stunning purple finish and matching knobs and jacks, the Expression Tremolo (\$249 street) is almost a must-buy for its cosmetic flash alone. But add the fact you can control tremolo depth, rate, or depth and rate with your foot, and this pedal becomes essential for tremolo lovers—and that's before the five waveforms (slow rise, slow fall, sine, square, harmonic) and an onboard spring reverb are piled on top of the goodies already in evidence. This thing is a monster. ernieball.com

JOE GORE CULT GERMANIUM CHANNEL

Though based on the single-knob Cult Germanium

Overdrive, the Germanium Channel (\$75 street) has Pre, Drive, Lows, Highs, and Cut controls for more precise tone shaping before and after the drive stage. It's great for Brit-pop jangle through a cathode-biased amp, it will take a Marshall straight to the Sabbath zone. His new Purr Vibrato is also sublimely sensual. gorepedals.com

LINE 6 HX

Boasting 100 high-quality effects models—many lifted from Line 6's well-known stompers—the HX (\$599 street) can function as a stand-alone effect system, or be used in conjunction with your existing pedalboard. Armed with ridiculous processing power, the HX can run up to nine effects simultaneously, and it has dual effects loops, as well as MIDI connectivity to facilitate integration into most any setup. Considering what individual effects pedals cost, the HX offers serious bang for the buck. line6.com

MXR DOUBLE-DOUBLE OVERDRIVE

Combining two classic overdrive textures with a powerful 2-band EQ and a Lo/Hi Gain switch, the DDO (\$116 street) can go from big and clean to huge and creamy. jimdunlop.com

SEYMOUR DUNCAN LA SUPER RICA FUZZ

There is really just one thing to say here: This is a

fuzz pedal (\$179 street) with sweepable, semi-parametric midrange control. Well, let me add that you also get a Fat/Flat switch. Now, think of the tonal bliss and mass carnage you can devise with that degree of fuzz-o-licious frequency command. Planets could shatter like Krypton. seymourduncan.com

SOURCE AUDIO VENTRIS DUAL REVERB

Featuring two completely independent 56-bit reverb processors and 12 reverb engines, the Ventris' (\$399 street) otherworldly dual-reverb effects blew me away when I heard it at NAMM. True-spillover capability, and an ever-expanding collection of reverb effects available via the Neuro Mobile App or Neuro Desktop Editor, make it perhaps the most powerful reverb pedal ever. sourceaudio.net

WAY HUGE MINI AQUA-PUSS DELAY AND MINI BLUE HIPPO CHORUS

I have both of these supremely cool pedals from years ago, so I was immediately down with these new smaller versions, which are perfect if you want to downsize a pedalboard without compromising tone or features. And what a sweet price for these legendary analog stompboxes (\$149 street, each). jimdunlop.com

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GEAR

{ NAMM }

RECORDING/ LIVE GEAR

BOSE S1 PRO MULTI-POSITION P.A. SYSTEM

Guitar World's Paul Riario and I got a preview of the fabulous S1 (\$599 street) at Bose Headquarters in Boston last year, and, as always, the Bose tech is impressive. This very portable, monitor-sized sound system features three channels, onboard reverb and EQ, and Bluetooth. What really blew my mind is that speaker dispersion automatically reorients itself depending on whether the S1 is tilted back vertically, elevated, placed on a speaker stand, or used in a horizontal position as a floor monitor. bose.com



BOSE S1 PRO

CENTRANCE MIXERFACE R4

This pro-level mobile audio interface (\$TBA) for recording on a phone or tablet features dual mic preamps with 48-volt phantom power, playback and recording buttons, gain controls, stereo balanced and unbalanced outputs, a headphone output, a rechargeable battery rated for eight hours of operation, rugged construction, and the list goes on. centrance.com



CENTRANCE MIXERFACE R4

UNIVERSAL AUDIO

OX AMP TOP BOX

OX (\$1,299 street) is unlike anything you've ever plugged into. You can run your tube amp into it (up to 100 watts) at any volume, and the reactive-load circuitry makes it sound and feel like you're playing through a real cabinet—right down to the “cone cry” harmonics—at house-friendly volume. But that's only part of it, as the emulation side of OX gives you dozens of microphones and guitar cabinets to choose from, and you can adjust mic positioning and even the ambience of the room itself. I got a tour of OX at UA's headquarters prior to its release at NAMM, and the sound quality is unreal. It's literally like being able to play your favorite amps in a world-class studio. uaaudio.com



UNIVERSAL AUDIO OX

WAVES PRS SUPERMODELS AMP SIM PLUG-IN

Paul Reed Smith partnered with Waves to devise accurate and realistic sims of his Archon, Blue Sierra (a prototype that was never released), and Dallas amplifiers (\$TBA). I played through the software on the NAMM floor, and it felt good and sounded great—especially given all the cabinet and microphone options. waves.com



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GEAR



Mesa/Boogie

Mark Five: 35



TESTED BY DAVE HUNTER

HAVING COMPACTED DOWN MUCH of the full-bore Mark Five's hyper-functionality to the diminutive Mark Five: 25 three years ago—an amp that brought Mesa/Boogie's flagship voicings to the lunchbox-sized market—the California maker has now nudged the punching power upwards to the Mark Five: 35. This more muscular performer also adds a few useful bonus features, and although a cursory glance at the Mesa/Boogie lineup might indicate some redundancy between the big boy and its little brother, early raves indicate the 35-watter definitely has its place.

Like the smaller 25, Mark Five: 35 has two entirely independent channels. The first is ostensibly for rhythm, the second for lead, and each has three modes: Clean, Fat, and Crunch on Ch1; MkIIIC+, MkIV, and Xtreme on Ch2. The

flexibility is extended by a 5-band graphic EQ that can be individually selectable per-channel to be on, off, or footswitch-enabled; plus independent, footswitchable Solo output-level controls for each channel (essentially second masters). Each also has its own rear-panel Reverb level control, and the 35, 25, or 10-watt Multi-Watt power level is also independently assignable per channel, meaning you can push your lead tone into heavy output saturation in 10-watt mode while maintaining maximum clean headroom in 35-watt mode on Ch1, for example.

The output stage comprises four EL84 tubes, which are run together in fixed-bias for 35 watts, halved to two for 25 watts, or run in triode mode for 10 watts. In addition to the volume reduction, expect a slightly squishier

feel with each notch down, as well as an earlier onset of distortion. As with most classic Boogie Mark designs, however, the majority of the user-adjustable gain and tone shaping occurs in the preamp, which is driven by four 12AX7s, plus another two for reverb and phase-inverter duties. Inside the chassis we find the usual Mesa/Boogie assembly and component quality, with circuitry packed onto a sturdy printed board. The accompanying speaker cabinet is Mesa's WideBody Compact 1x12, an open-back cab measuring 22.5" x 16.5" x 11.25" and loaded with a single proprietary Celestion MC-90 speaker.

While you can certainly partner the head with other cabs, Mesa's Doug West tells us that the formulation of the still English-made MC-90 duplicates the production methods

SPECIFICATIONS

CONTACT mesaboogie.com

MODEL Mark Five: 35

PRICE Head \$1,749, 1x12 Widebody cab \$429 street

CHANNELS 2 (three modes each)

CONTROLS Gain, Treble, Mid, Bass, Presence and Master for each channel; switches for Clean/Fat/Crunch on Ch1 and MkIIIC+/MkIV/Xtreme on Ch2; shared assignable 5-band EQ; individual Solo output controls; individual Reverb controls (back panel)

POWER 35 watts, independently switchable to 15 watts and 10 watts for each channel

TUBES Six 12AX7 preamp tubes, four EL84 output tubes

EXTRAS Four-button footswitch for Channel, EQ, Solo 1, Solo 2; CabClone DI output and switching; outputs for 4Ω and 8Ω speakers

SPEAKER 12" Celestion MC-90

WEIGHT Head 27 lbs, cabinet 33 lbs

BUILT USA

KUDOS Mindboggling versatility from one great-sounding voice to the next, in a well-thought out and robustly constructed package

CONCERNS Not a big detractor, but some players would find it handy to footswitch between Clean and Crunch on Ch1 (for example)

DAVE HUNTER



Hoof™ Hybrid Fuzz

What to say about the Hoof that hasn't already been said? Our flagship fuzz pedal can be found on thousands of pedalboards around the world and has rocked countless stages, from stinky suburban basements to Madison Square Garden. Twice. The Hoof is loosely based on a classic green Russian fuzz circuit and features a hybrid Germanium / Silicon design, pairing maximum tone with maximum temperature stability not found in finicky and expensive vintage units. We hand-match our NOS Germanium transistors to exact specifications for pedal-to-pedal consistency, taking the guesswork out of your fuzz purchase and guaranteeing that your Hoof delivers the same smooth, natural and harmonically-rich sustain as all your friends' Hoofs. All your friends have Hoof fuzzes, right?

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www.earthquakerdevices.com



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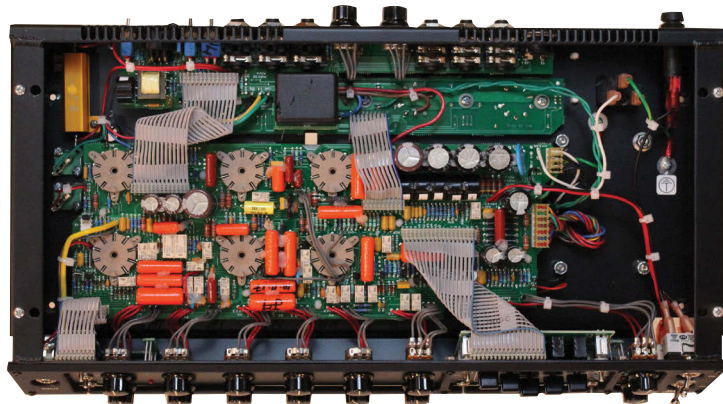


GEAR

{ MESA/BOOGIE }

of the great-sounding Celestions Mesa used in the '80s, which have a perfect scoop for clean sounds, and sweet, balanced response for high-gain settings and their saturated overtones, while still handling higher power and minimizing cone cry and other undesirable artifacts in the process.

Tested with a Gibson Les Paul and a Fender Stratocaster, the Mark Five: 35 provided a fast rewind to my days spent gigging with a Boogie Mark IIB many years ago. It's a more versatile tone machine, certainly, and more refined too, but that familiar Boogie sonic signature is front and center in creamy yet sizzling high-gain settings, with lots of beating overtones amid string bends, and delightfully malleable sustain and controlled feedback. Mesa/Boogie has earned pride of place in the metal camp, and the Mark Five: 35 does such tricks as well as you could hope any lower-wattage, small-bottle amp can manage—in more vintage '80s style from Ch2's sweetly eviscerating MkIIC+ setting, or with contemporary tightness and thump set to Xtreme,



both easily chunked up via the graphic EQ. But the Mark Series amps have always been more than just shred machines, and judicious Gain settings easily straddle classic rock, punk, garage, grunge, or whatever breed of more restrained dirt your heart desires.

And all this before savoring Ch1's capabilities, which run from pristine cleans to juicy, thick rock crunch, and blues drive, a cornucopia that

will no doubt have some players wishing they could footswitch between this channel's voices alone. Add in the convenience of the CabClone, a good sounding tube-driven spring reverb, and the superb versatility of the independent power levels and Solo settings—clearly too much to cover in detail in the space allowed here—and this mighty 35-watter is a clear Editors' Pick Award winner. ■

DAVE HUNTER

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Stonewall

Signature Strat Set and House of Tone Special S 1960 Heavy Formvar Set

TESTED BY DAVE HUNTER

THE REPLACEMENT-PICKUP MARKET continues to provide fertile ground for small-shop winders still seeking to provide that missing link between players' dream tones and the pickups that will get them there. This month we investigate one homegrown set that blends different traditional voices for maximum versatility, and another from across the Atlantic that drills down to nuanced vintage specifications. All were tested in an ash-bodied Fender Stratocaster with a maple neck, through a tweed Deluxe and a Friedman Small Box head and 2x12 cab.

STONEWALL PICKUPS SIGNATURE STRAT SET

Scott Miller of New Hampshire-based Stonewall Pickups is rapidly earning a reputation for creative designs that are rooted in tradition, while delivering versatile and playable twists.

His Signature Strat Set (\$305 direct, full set; \$450 in loaded pickguard, as shown) mixes complementary vintage-S flavors via an Alnico III neck pickup that measures 4.9k Ω and an Alnico V middle pickup wound to a beefier 6.1k Ω , with a stealth maneuver in the bridge position: Stonewall's S90, an S-sized P-90 with threaded steel poles and bar magnets beneath, spec'd to around 7.5k Ω .

Amped up, it's impressive how well this seemingly diverse trio hangs together, given that most players flip their 5-way seeking some sonic variation in the first place. The neck position is thick and rich, yet crystal clear, with a tight, punchy low end, delivering a quick road to fat SRV tones with some mild crunch dialed in on the Friedman. The middle position gets respectively Hendrix with dirt, but also does great Mark Knopfler tones when cleaned up, while the S90 provides an outstanding cure

for the perpetually thin, wimpy Strat bridge position, in a ballsy, somewhat gritty rock 'n' roller that you could easily mistake for a Les Paul Junior with eyes closed. Great stuff, and a whole lot of useful shades from one clever set. Given the mash-up, the in-between positions aren't entirely traditional, but they are surprisingly useable and good-sounding too.

Kudos A versatile Strat set that sounds great in each position, with a fat, gnarly bridge pickup that will win over many rockers.

Concerns None.

Contact stonewallpickups.com

HOUSE OF TONE SPECIAL S 1960 HEAVY FORMVAR

House of Tone's proprietor Matt Bascetta is a transplanted American working in the city of Chester in the northwest of England, just south of Liverpool. A former maker of acoustic guitars and violins, Bascetta applies a keen ear to these vintage-style pickups, which are wound with the heavy Formvar insulated wire as was used in the late '50s and early '60s. Pickups in the House of Tone Special S 1960 Heavy Formvar Set (\$209 direct for the full set, plus shipping and any duties) are all wound to approximately the same target resistance of 6.3k Ω , as were pickups back in the day, so you balance their outputs the good-old-fashioned way—by adjusting their relative mounting heights in the guitar. Each uses slightly degaussed Alnico V magnets to replicate the strength of original Strat pickups that Bascetta has examined, and this set is lightly potted to retain a lively response, while combatting more

Q\STRIP

The '60s and '70s are widely recognized as the heyday for professional recording console design. The EQ and preamp sections of these near-mythical vintage consoles are highly sought after, even to this day. Some of the most iconic guitar and bass tones in the history of recorded audio were tracked "direct" straight into these consoles' channel strips.

The Q\Strip was designed with sophisticated features that enable you to take these highly-coveted tone shaping circuits with you, whether you're heading to a live gig or tracking in the studio or into your DAW. It's compact, extremely cost-effective and in an ultra-convenient DI format.

The 100% analog MOSFET circuitry in the heart of the Q\Strip provides the warmth, girth and larger-than-life tones for which vintage consoles are revered. Add in four bands of pro-audio-quality equalization, two parametric mid bands, as well as high and low shelving filters, and you have incredible control over how your instrument cuts through on stage or in a mix.

The HPF and LPF give added control over the frequency spectrum whether you're going direct with your bass, guitar, fiddle...or even a vocal.

The Q\Strip is limited only by how far you are willing to push your creativity and how much of that juicy vintage tone you crave.



TECH 21

DESIGNED AND MANUFACTURED BY TECH 21 USA, INC.
For details and video, head to tech21nyc.com



severe microphony (different levels of potting are available). All this and—ta-da!—they come in a nifty wooden presentation box.

Rammed through the test rig, the House of Tone Special S1960 Heavy Formvar set quickly proved one of the more accurate—and enjoyable—vintage-spec Stratocaster sets I've had the pleasure of playing in some time. Lows were firm, bouncy, and lively, with a big, bell-like boing; midrange was meatier and gutsier than that of so many low-wind modern S sets; and highs were crisp and silky, without ever being spikey. Atop of all this, each pickup delivered a trenchant, silvery texture that was positively delectable, really ramming that "vintage" character home, and making everything I threw at them an utter delight. Sweet stuff, and at a very respectable price up against so many other acclaimed boutique Strat sets.

Kudos A luscious-sounding early '60s style Strat set with bags of vintage character.

Concerns None.

Contact houseoftonepickups.com



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Reverend Guitars

Reeves Gabrels Dirtbike



TESTED BY MICHAEL MOLENDAA

A TESTAMENT TO BOTH REEVES

Gabrels' and Reverend's ongoing quest for refinement is the fact the team has partnered up for three signature guitars—the Reeves Gabrels Signature, the Spacehawk, and, now, the Dirtbike. In fact, only Pete Anderson—who has outdone all comers with six Reverend signature models—is currently honored with more machines than Gabrels. Okay, it's not a competition, but there must be something in the Gabrels mojo that continues to drive viable instruments.

Perhaps a little background is in order, here. Michael Ross reviewed the Signature in the February 2011 issue, and he liked its resonant tone, excellent playability, and versatility within rock styles. I took on the Spacehawk in December 2014, and I gave it an Editors' Pick Award for its killer Bigsby (with specially selected springs), tonal power, craftsmanship, and comfy playability.

The Dirtbike is Gabrels' first single-pickup signature model—which corresponds with his desire for "freedom in the form of speed and

power stripped down to its essentials"—and it also has a cool backstory of being inspired by his 1966 Schwinn Stingray and '71 Honda dirt bike. I should note that when Reverend debuted the Dirtbike at Summer NAMM 2017, Gabrels somewhat exasperated the convention-center staff by riding a bona fide blue Stingray through the halls. That's what you call "hybrid marketing."

As a tonal engine, the Dirtbike doesn't give up much to its dual-pickup stablemates, and I didn't miss having a neck pickup at all. The Joe Naylor-designed Railhammer Gabrels signature



SPECIFICATIONS

CONTACT reverendguitars.com**MODEL** Reeves Gabrels Dirtbike**PRICE** \$1,199 street**NUT WIDTH** 43mm, Boneite**NECK** Korina (three-piece), set**FRETBOARD** Blackwood Tek, 12" radius, 24.75" scale length**FRETS** 22 jumbo**TUNERS** Reverend Pin-Lock**BODY** Korina**BRIDGE** Wilkinson WVS50 IIK tremolo**PICKUP** Railhammer Reeves Gabrels Signature Bridge**CONTROLS** Master Volume, Master Tone, Bass Contour**FACTORY STRINGS** D'Addario XL Custom .009-.046**WEIGHT** 7 lbs**BUILT** Korea**KUDOS** Feels good. Plays great. Sounds super tough.**CONCERNS** None.

pickup is aggressively articulate with a pleasing midrange attack that's not shrill or too thin. The Master Tone is voiced to produce warm vocal-esque timbres when you tamp it down—though it's certainly not as sensual as the low-end frequencies you'd get from a dedicated neck pickup—and the fabulously magical Bass Contour can dial in some very shimmery colors that are especially evocative for clean tones. Whether I went straight into my Vox AC30 for organic grit, or added a caterwauling fuzz pedal to the mix, the Dirtbike's tone was always clear, taut, and rock solid. I don't have

tons of experience with Wilkinson tremolos, but, man, that thing is a blast to yank around, and it never seriously messed with my tuning. I should probably put a sticker on the guitar that says "Only Use When Appropriate," because I may be having too much fun with it.

Like Gabrels' other models, the Dirtbike is extremely comfortable to play. It's light and well contoured to your body, and the neck feels smooth and fast. The Volume knob is within easy reach for doing volume swells, but it took a bit of a reach to do "faux wah" tricks with the Tone control.

The Bass Contour is in another continent, so to speak, but I never had reason to adjust it on the fly. It wasn't a surprise that the workmanship is excellent, as all Reverends I've played have been as well-crafted as a Bentley.

The Dirtbike may be inspired by Gabrels' youthful tough-kid capers—my parents never let me near a Stingray or a motorcycle—but it's a truly thrilling guitar to play, and there's enough punk aesthetic with that single pickup to "cool up" even a former Boy Scout such as myself. Thank goodness for rock and roll, eh? ■



GEAR



SPECIFICATIONS

CONTACT blackstaramps.com

MODEL HT Club 40 MkII Combo

PRICE \$699 street

CHANNELS 2 (with two gain levels in Lead)

CONTROLS Clean channel: Volume, Bass, Treble, Mode switch; Overdrive channel: Gain, Volume, Mode switch, Bass, Middle, Treble, ISF; Reverb, Master, 40/4-watt power switch

POWER 40 watts, switchable to 4 watts

TUBES Two ECC83 (12AX7) preamp tubes, two EL34 output tubes

EXTRAS Two-button footswitch (included, 5-button available), outputs for 8 Ω and 16 Ω cabinets, speaker emulated DI out via both TRS and XLR, effects loop Send and Return with Level switch, digital reverb with Dark/Light switch

SPEAKER 12" Celestion Seventy/80

WEIGHT 52 lbs

BUILT China

KUDOS A versatile and good-sounding tube combo that offers a big performance at an impressively low price.

CONCERNS Some volume jump is experienced when switching between voices on OD channel.

Blackstar

HT Club 40 MkII Combo



TESTED BY DAVE HUNTER

A DECADE INTO ITS EXISTENCE, THE British amplifier company Blackstar has already garnered major praise for its ability to blend compelling and usable tube-generated tones with impressive versatility and affordable price points. Given that premise, the new HT Venue Series MkII aims to play to the company's strengths, and the example on review this issue, the HT Club 40 MkII 1x12 Combo, looks to be the sharpshooter of the bunch for its eminently utilitarian size/features ratio.

Like all amps in the range, the HT Club 40 MkII uses EL34 output tubes—a pair, in this case, generating 40 watts, with a switchable 4-watt power-reduction mode for home and studio use. There are two ECC83 preamp tubes (Brit-speak for 12AX7), which are reconfigurable for two gain stages in the Clean channel (gain,

EQ), and two cascading gain stages in the Overdrive channel. In addition to the OD channel's secret weapon—Blackstar's patented ISF control (Infinite Shape Feature), which dials the lead voicing progressively between American and British—each channel also has two core voices: High Damping and Low Damping on the Clean (think “glassy and tight” vs. “warm and resonant”); Medium Damping and Low Damping on the Overdrive (“classic OD” vs. “modern lead”). The two-button footswitch included allows easy on-the-fly selection of all four, while the optional five-button unit also provides a Boost mode for each channel, and reverb on/off. The latter effect comes courtesy of a digital unit, with a traditional control for reverb depth, plus a Dark/Light voicing switch.

In addition to the effects loop with Level

switch and speaker outs for 8 Ω and 16 Ω , the amp includes a speaker-emulated DI out via either XLR or TRS, with a switch to select between 1x12 and 4x12 cab voicings. To top that, the MkII Series also now includes USB audio out, for tracking up to four channels of various configured signals straight into your computer. The semi-open-back cabinet houses a 12" Celestion Seventy/80 speaker. A look inside the chassis reveals a circuit built on a sturdy, double-sided PCB with through-plated holes, and the preamp-tube filaments are DC powered for low noise.

Tested with a Les Paul and a Stratocaster, my immediate impression of the HT Club 40 MkII was how easy it would be to take this amp to most any gig and get the job done, no fuss no muss. Blackstar tells us they have

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GEAR

{ BLACKSTAR }



completely redesigned the Clean channel for the MkII, and I don't doubt it. Each voice is extremely usable, and the gain runs from glassy twang to meaty pre-crunch. The OD was the most fun, though, and while the ISF is extremely useful, I preferred it rolled toward British most of the time—maybe that's just me, but the EL34s seem to breathe best in that voicing. That being said, with OD on its higher-gain voice and ISF toward American, there are some extreme Boogie-like tones here, for sure. Either way, from delectable leads and power-chord crunch set to Classic, or scorching thrash-and-burn set to Modern, it's a doozy of a channel, and tons of fun. The reverb sounded great at all settings, and the 4-watt mode yielded great results. One note: switching between Overdrive voices brings a big volume jump when Modern is engaged, which makes it a little less usable live in some cases. Even so, for all it offers, and the excellent core sounds at all turns, at this very reasonable price, the HT Club 40 MkII Combo earns an Editors' Pick Award. **A**



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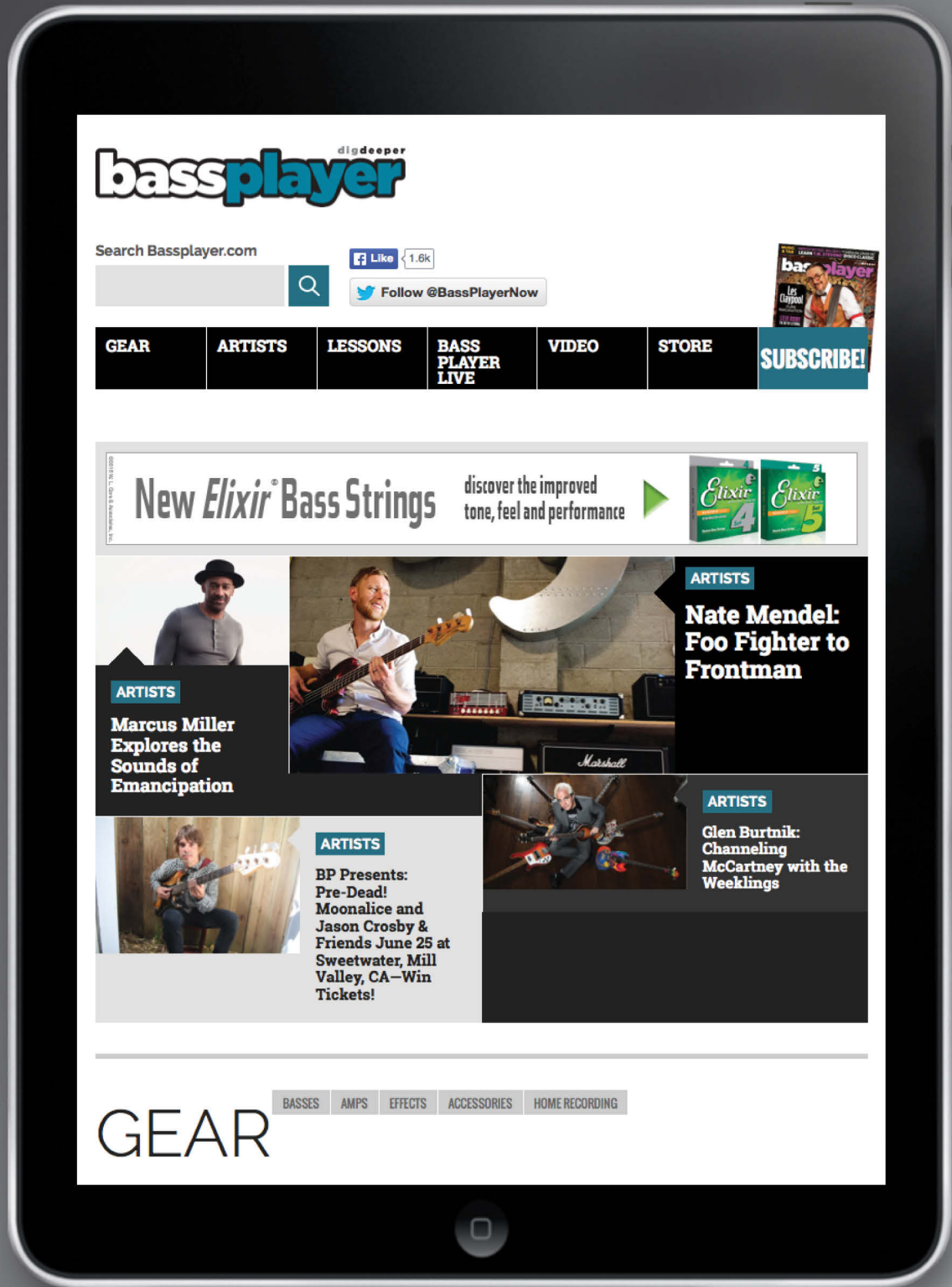
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GEAR

Amptweaker

O12J65 12" Speaker

TESTED BY DAVE HUNTER

ALTHOUGH THE AMPTWEAKER NAME is probably best known for its pedals, founder and head designer James Brown designed amplifiers for Peavey, Kustom, and Schecter before striking out on his own a few years back, and his company's new two-channel 50-watter made its debut at NAMM this winter. Given all the hours spent tweaking circuits with soldering iron in hand, Brown has had a lot of time to consider speaker tone, and has even spec'd and designed several models for other makers.

Amptweaker's first speaker, the O12J65 (\$120 direct, in either 8Ω or 16Ω) is a US-made, 12" driver that seeks to bridge American-clean and

British-over-drive voicings, while delivering a balanced and musical performance out of anything you throw at it. The O12J65 uses a 37-ounce ceramic magnet, and has a ribbed cone and a 1.75" voice coil. It is mounted in a four-spoke gray steel frame reminiscent of those used by Celestion, with eight mounting holes to make an easy fit in most cabs. It has an efficiency (or sensitivity) rating of 99 dB 1W/1M, and can handle 65 watts RMS.

I tested the O12J65 in a StoneAge 1x12 cab with convertible open/closed back panels, powered



by both a Friedman Small Box head and a tweed Deluxe, using a Les Paul and a Stratocaster. Clean settings through any combination of test gear sounded bold, round, and well balanced, with an appealing high-end crispness, but no spikiness. There were hints of Jensen, certainly, but a plummy midrange took it all toward the British side of the pond, as per Brown's intentions. Hit harder with either the Friedman's lead channel or an Xotic B.B. Preamp through the Deluxe, the O12J65 churned out textured crunch and lead tones, with an appealingly playable hint of compression and an admirable lack of harshness or bark—all of which really sang with the Les Paul in particular. A job well done on a versatile rock speaker!

Kudos Well-balanced through both clean and overdrive tones alike. Articulate, yet with no harshness.

Concerns None.

Contact amptweaker.com

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EarthQuaker Devices

Westwood Translucent Drive Manipulator

TESTED BY MICHAEL MOLENDRA

I'VE PROBABLY SAID IT BEFORE, BUT I love how the crazies at EarthQuaker name their pedals. I mean, initiating a "Translucent Drive Manipulator" is just mega cooler than merely stomping on an overdrive pedal—even if that's essentially what you are doing. It's all about perception and pleasure, right?

But, beyond having fun with tone toys, the Westwood (\$179 street) actually *is* a bit different than your typical overdrive. This is something on the order of a "colored boost," reminiscent of the excellent Chandler Little Devil I tested back in 2012, albeit with a few less features and a less lofty price tag. With subtle tweaks, the

Westwood does that excellent ballet of retaining the inherent tone of your guitar and amp, while simultaneously adding more level and restrained grit. Yet, even with a cranked Drive knob, note articulation is clear and precise—it's just a tad more aggro and vibey.

If you want more fun "coloring" your sound, the Tone controls are voiced very nicely and offer a bountiful boost/cut of 20dB. The center frequency of the Treble knob is near a midrange sweet spot of 2kHz, which means you can deploy



the Westwood as a cool treble booster, or tame the attack for scooped-like shimmer. You can lower the boom without adding mud by diming the Bass knob (with its 80Hz center frequency), or clean up rampaging low end with a counterclockwise twist.

For any guitarist who loves the tone of their rig, but wants more "more" without veering into distortion, the organic and natural push of the Westwood should be just the trick. It's tran-

scendently translucent.

Kudos Fabulous and subtle drive. Great EQ. Excellent sound.

Concerns None.

Contact earthquakerdevices.com ■



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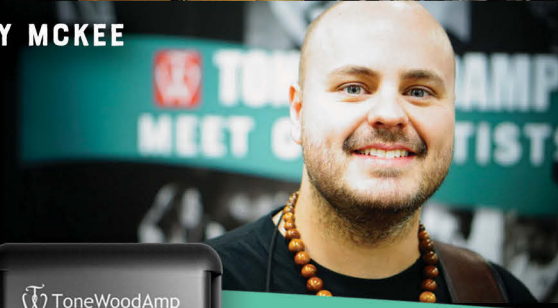
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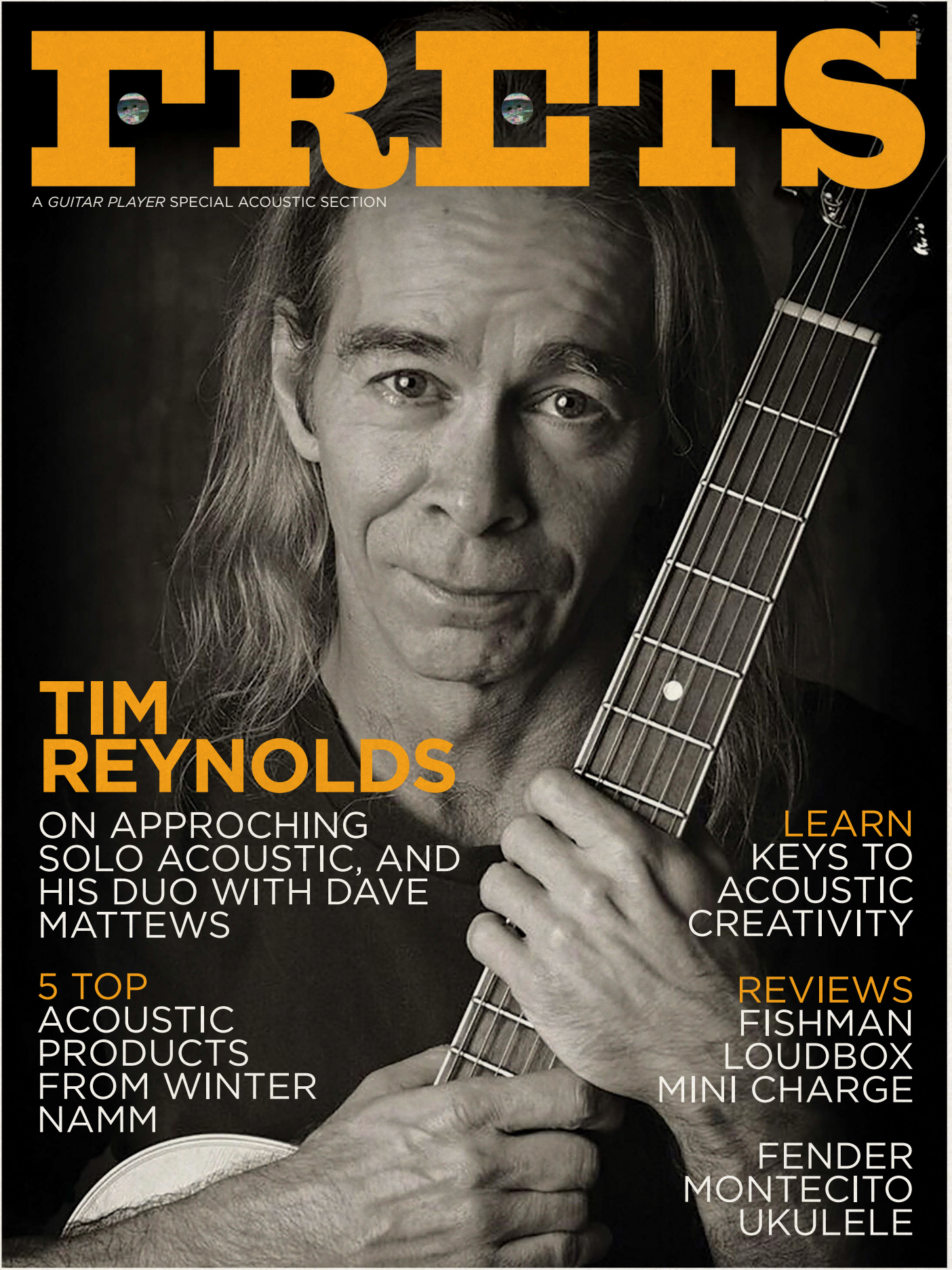
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TIM REYNOLDS

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SOLO ACOUSTIC, AND
HIS DUO WITH DAVE
MATTEWS

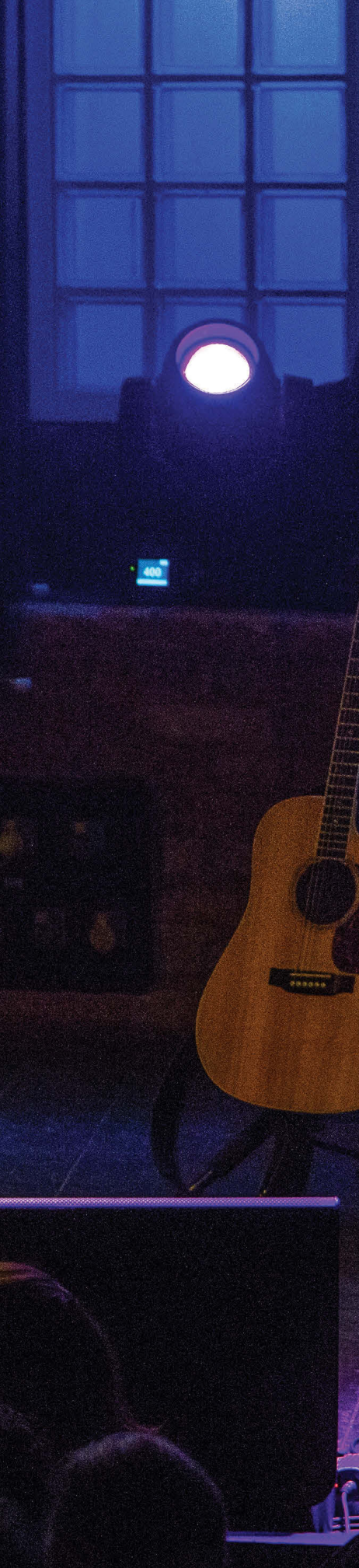
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TIM REYNOLDS

ON THE JOY OF SOLO ACOUSTIC AND HIS DUO WITH DAVE MATTHEWS

BY JIMMY LESLIE

PHOTOGRAPH BY RODRIGO SIMAS

TIM REYNOLDS IS A MULTI-FACETED MAESTRO WITH AN EXTRAORDINARY understanding of what to play when in a given situation. He spends his electric string time ripping in his progressive power trio TR3, and playing lead for the Dave Matthews Band. Reynolds finds balance doing acoustic-duo gigs under the simple moniker Dave Matthews and Tim Reynolds, and, as an accomplished solo artist with an extensive recording catalogue, including 2017's stylistically adventurous *That Way* [Beam On].

GP caught Reynolds doing the duo with Matthews twice in 2017. Once last spring on the main stage at the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival, and again near the end of the year participating in the Band Together Bay Area benefit for Northern California fire victims at San Francisco's AT&T Park, along with Dead & Company, Metallica, and more.

When he plays with Matthews, Reynolds is the ultimate color man, tackling tricky lead turns, providing sure support, and occasionally adding atmospheric effects. In solo mode, unlike a lot of modern players that try to cover a slew of parts all at once, Reynolds deftly picks and chooses what he does or *doesn't* play. He's confident enough to play melodies and lead breaks stark naked without harmonic or rhythmic support.

How do you approach playing an acoustic gig in a stadium on a bill loaded with electric acts?

For a long time, I'd push it and play louder in big venues. But that's self-defeating, because, at some point, you can't play any louder, and you realize, "I'm getting worn out here." You eventually learn to play soft as a general rule, and let the dynamic intensity come wherever it will during the journey of a song, or the development of a jam. It's definitely weird to play in-between five acts of sonic boom, but it's also cool to be the contrast.

How do you achieve the pulsating sound for one of Matthews' most enduring songs, "Satellite"?

I do it with a volume swell, so you don't hear the initial attack, and a little bit of delay. I learned that years ago by mimicking the way Jeff Beck uses his Strat's volume knob, but I use an Ernie Ball volume pedal when I play acoustic. The trick is learning how to hit the note at the right time when you swell so there's an even flow and the rhythmic bounce of the echo is consistent. That's hard to define, but you eventually learn how to feel the note beginning as you depress the volume pedal, and how get the echo time right. I use a BOSS DD-5, and I've learned how to eyeball the dials like a clock to find tempos that work with certain songs. Luckily, one of the default timing modes produces the perfect medium-tempo delay for "Satellite" when I turn Delay Time all the way to the right.

During a show, I'll occasionally hear this trippy, wildly effected spectral sound. What is that?

FRETS

{ TIM REYNOLDS }

That's the DD-5. In fact, the main reason I dig that pedal so much is that it's the only delay in the DD series with reverse pitch shifting. You can pitch-shift down or up an octave on a DD-5, and it's the coolest effect, because once you're in reverse and pitch-shifted, it's not a guitar sound anymore. The most fun thing to do is start high, and then pitch-shift down to a super-low drone. I only use reverse when I go for big, droning bass notes, but you can also start playing weird notes down low, and then pitch-shift up to produce a wild, crazy sound.

What else is in your acoustic rig?

On recent solo gigs, I've been incorporating a Strymon Big Sky. It's an awesome-sounding reverb with simple controls. I'm much better twisting knobs than I am at programming. I always use a Fishman Aura at the end of my signal chain to get a miked-acoustic sound directly from the onboard pickup of my Martin.

Do you always play the same Martin?

I actually have two D-35s. I got the first one in 1995, and I cracked it trying to do all that fancy drumming on it. I'm a closet drummer—I'm nuts about Bill Bruford—but when I damaged the guitar, I realized I should stop doing that percussive thing. Playing guitar the regular way is enough of a challenge. While that guitar was getting repaired at Martin in 1996, I bought another D-35 that has a slightly different body. Ever since the fix, the '95 stays in the truck with Dave's gear so that I don't have to fly with it, and the '96 stays with me. I've played the '96 so much that the top is all slashed—it looks like the surface of the moon—because I would try to get drones going by hitting the bass string really hard. I remember thinking, "Who keeps scraping my guitar?" Then, I realized, "It's you idiot!" So I stopped doing that, too [laughs].

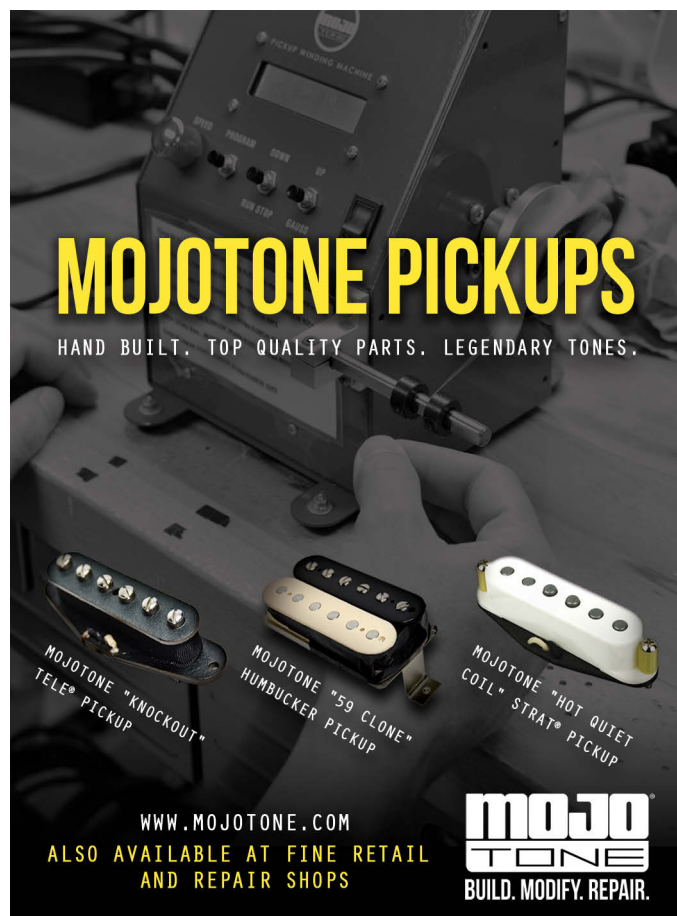
It's surprising that you don't use a cutaway model considering how much time you spend working the upper fretboard.

A couple of years ago, I found a video of a guy playing Paganini on a dreadnought, and I was inspired by his upper-fretboard extension. There's not the same kind of freedom you have with a cutaway, but I like the challenge of forcing my hand to do stuff up there. I've been practicing it steadily for the past couple of years. I have to really stretch and use my fingertips almost like an upright bassist playing the upper reaches of a fretless fingerboard.

How did you track *That Way*?

I went over to a friend's home studio, he threw up a mic, and I took a few passes at each song. We'd choose the best take, and maybe make a few edits, but that was it. I keep it simple. I don't want to listen back a hundred times and dissect a performance, or add a bunch of stuff.

What's the key to pulling off lead breaks that go way high up the neck without any other harmonic support—such as on "Give Up the Goat" from *That Way*?



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It's the sheer desire to make it happen. After a while, you learn to make the guitar do what you want it to do. The way Joe Pass thought about playing solo guitar was that you don't have to come up with crazy techniques to play all the parts of a song simultaneously. He felt you could be musical over the course of three or four bars—playing some bass, some chords, and some melody—as the song moves along. It's also fun to completely let go and play a lead break in the upper register without worrying about anything else at all.

You cut several 12-string tracks on *That Way*. What's your preference in a 12-string guitar?

I play a 12-string Martin D-28. I like to use the 12-string for a deeper voice on solo gigs. I'll tune the whole guitar a step down from standard tuning, and then I like to drop down the bottom string another step for an even lower register. I love that among the top three strings, only the

third string is coupled with an octave up. The top two strings provide a natural chorus, while the next four provide a natural octave effect, and weird things can sometimes happen out of the blue. I was messing around recently, and when I went for a false harmonic, I accidentally hit one on that octave G string. It was totally out of key, but it worked in a super-cool way. I love little surprises like that.

You seem attracted to dreadnoughts.

I find the dreadnought works for pretty much any style. A good dreadnought is super responsive over a tremendous dynamic range. It sounds great when you play soft, and when you bang a chord super hard, the dreadnought's tone doesn't fall apart—it hits right back. I like the dreadnoughts versatility, as well, as I play a lot of musical styles that are not commonly associated with the steel-string dreadnought, including jazz, flamenco, and classical. But perhaps it's comfortable for me

because the first acoustic guitars I saw were the dreadnoughts played by Crosby, Stills & Nash. And Neil Young has such a touch that he can play a simple *D* chord on a dreadnought and somehow make it sound like a full band.

Do you ever play nylon-string guitars?

I play a little nylon Yamaha that I've had for years, but it messes with my steel-string technique if I play it too much. My fingers go soft.

What's the coolest aspect about performing solo-acoustic music?

The thing I dig most about playing solo is simply using one guitar all by itself. In my mind, I'm an entire rock band, laying down a bit of bass, some rhythm guitar, delivering the melody, and playing lead. I already get to rock out with TR3 and the Dave Matthews Band—as well as do the duo with Dave—but playing solo is part of my soul. It's the landscape of my spirit, and it makes me feel whole. ■



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Keys to Acoustic Creativity

BY JIMMY LESLIE

THE GLORY OF THE ACOUSTIC IS THAT IT'S ALWAYS ready at the moment of inspiration. You don't need any pedals or a noisy amp to get your tone together. The acoustic is your anytime/all-the-time guitar. Keep it close by. When you wake up in the morning, walk over to it and simply start playing. All those weird dreams are still lingering, waiting to come through your fingertips and become music. Don't think. Just play. It's the only time of day not obscured by all the thoughts that start accumulating the moment you become conscious. Always record right into your phone. Don't waste time hooking stuff up. Get right to playing, and keep the creative flow going for as long as it lasts. Once your conscious mind starts taking over, then give it a chance to make sense of the raw creativity. Can you repeat what you just did? Is there an A and a B section? If you're lucky enough to feel a song manifesting, pursue it doggedly, following the path like a hound tracking a rabbit until you've either snagged that sucker, or the trail goes cold. Once you start playing familiar licks—stop. Give a listen back. Got it? Good. Move on with your morning.

ANOTHER THING...

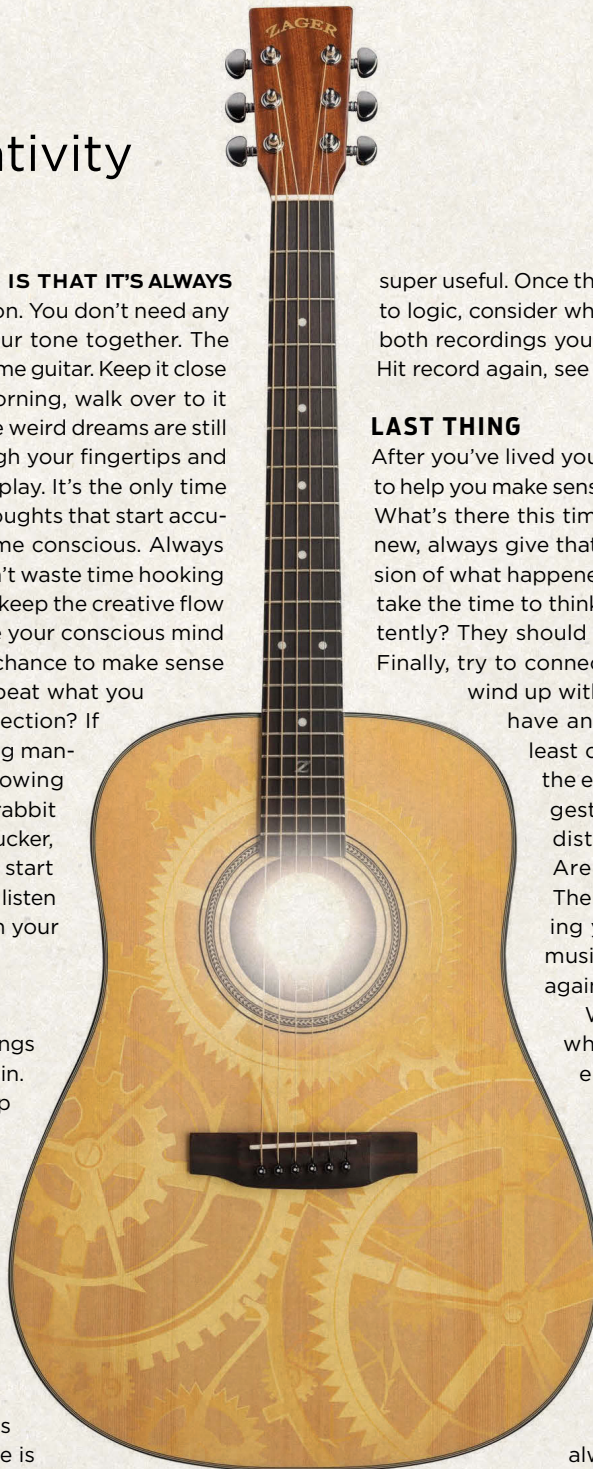
After you've been doing other things for a while, grab your acoustic again. What happens when you pick it up and start playing this time? Is it that thing from earlier, or something altogether different? Follow through. All the emotions and thoughts that the day has brought are waiting to be translated. If it's the earlier thing again, is it happening exactly the same way? Great! You've got something solid. If not, that's cool too. Maybe it's better, more developed. Maybe both ideas are valuable. Variation on a theme is

super useful. Once that moment of inspiration gives way to logic, consider what you've got. Take a listen back to both recordings you've made today. Do they connect? Hit record again, see what flows, and move on.

LAST THING

After you've lived your day, give your acoustic a chance to help you make sense of everything that has happened. What's there this time you pick it up? If it's something new, always give that a chance to flow. If it's some version of what happened earlier, let that happen too. Now take the time to think. Can you play these ideas consistently? They should start to take more definite shape. Finally, try to connect them. In the end, you may only wind up with one full theme, but you also may have an entire tune. Try to determine at least one definitive thing. Listen back to the earlier recordings. What's the strongest idea? Can you hum it? Is there a distinct rhythm? Play around with it. Are you in the best key? Try a capo. There's no better sleep-aid then knowing you've created a living, breathing musical idea—something you can play again and again.

When you wake up the next day, what you worked on yesterday will either be there again, begging for development, or perhaps there's a completely different idea waiting to celebrate a new circle around the sun. Of course, it may strike in the middle of the night, and you *must* get up and get it down before it slips away. That's why it's imperative to *always* keep an acoustic handy—out of the case, on a stand and seductive. Remember, the greatest thing about the acoustic guitar is that it's always in the mood to get creative. ■





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FISHMAN LOUDBOX MINI CHARGE

TESTED BY JIMMY LESLIE

FISHMAN'S LOUDBOX RANGE IS ONE of the most successful in the acoustic amp arena, and the Mini Charge is an exciting prospect because battery power and Bluetooth connectivity promise a troubadour's dream—cutting the cord without tonal sacrifice. Such satisfaction must truly be hard to deliver, as there aren't many battery-powered options on the market, and some of those simply use off-the-shelf batteries. Fishman claims that the Mini Charge delivers 60 watts for about 12 hours at “average volume” via its built-in rechargeable battery and special power management circuitry. I jumped at the chance to test a Mini Charge slightly in advance of its debut at the Winter NAMM Show.

At first glance, the Mini Charge appears similar to the standard Loudbox Mini with

a different cosmetic makeup. Instead of a dark brown grille, a light tan face, and smooth brown tolex sides, the Mini Charge has a tweed grille, a dark tan face, and textured brown tolex sides. The basic layout remains the same. The guitar channel has controls for Gain, Low, Mid, High, Reverb, and Chorus, plus a phase button. The mic channel offers an XLR input, and the same controls sans Mid and Chorus.

Upon unboxing, I did *not* connect the power cord. I flipped the power switch, and much to my delight a pair of green lights appeared—one next to the Master volume indicating power on, and another above it indicating the Mini Charge was indeed running on its battery. A red light appears when the charge becomes low, and a yellow one when the amp is plugged in and saving juice.

I used three instruments to check the guitar tones: a Fender Paramount Travel with an onboard Fishman PM system, a Taylor 514ce equipped with a Fishman Prefix system, and a Breedlove Legacy Concertina with L.R. Baggs Anthem electronics. Vocal tests came courtesy of Sennheiser e835 and Carvin M50 dynamic microphones. With all the main control knobs set at noon for a taste of the Mini Charge's basic guitar flavor, the most striking aspect was its plentiful low end packing a focused, distinctly closed-back style tonal punch—regardless of which guitar. One simply doesn't expect such beefy bass from an amp with a 6.5" woofer. And girth doesn't come at the expense of clarity. The tone sounds wonderfully pure and naturally present across a broad sonic spectrum. There's plenty

of power to fill a small space while maintaining good headroom and a very low noise floor. Fishman was smart to make the Master Volume usable all the way up. The best tones come when it's positioned past noon, and Gain is added as needed. That's good until about noon on the dial before distortion starts to ensue. As overall volume goes up, it's best to back down the mids and lows for clarity, especially when singing through the other channel. When I tried the Taylor using a Fishman Blackstack passive soundhole pickup that was a bit softer than the onboard Prefix pickup, I obtained the extra low-end punch and top-end sparkle I was listening for via the Mini Charge's Low and High controls. All the EQ knobs are very responsive. I couldn't try an onboard/soundhole pickup blend within the amp, as the second channel input is strictly XLR, not a combination input.

I was very curious about any tonal variation or headroom difference when using battery power compared to AC. So I got up close and plucked the Taylor's open strings consistently tuned to open *E* while using my free fretting hand to alternately plug in and unplug the power cord from around back. At first I thought I could discern a small variation in low-end "oomph" and top-end shimmer, but after closing my eyes and repeating the experiment a few times, I'd say there's either no difference, or one so slight that it's not noteworthy. I also repeated this test after the amp had been running on battery power for several hours, and reached the same conclusion: What's truly noteworthy, however, is how great the Mini Charge sounds unplugged!

Speaking of unplugged, the Bluetooth connectivity was a cinch to employ, and it worked like a charm. Simply engage pairing on your mobile device, hit the Pairing button on the front of the Mini Charge, and your favorite tunes or backing tracks burst forth from the Mini Charge. There's an auxiliary mini input jack on the back to do it the old fashioned way. It accepts stereo signals, and then automatically mixes them down to mono within the amp for playback.

The Mini Charge's digital effects are high quality and easy to control. The

reverb is nice and lush, and it sounds great on guitar or vocals. I appreciated having independent controls for each channel. The guitar channel's single Chorus knob acts as a dual depth control—one side for mild chorus, and the other for heavy. I'm not a fan of acoustic tones slathered in chorus, and I appreciated the judicious nature of the effect on this amp. Even the heavy chorus effect turned all the way up sounded musical. To test the Mini Charge's expandability, I ran an XLR from its balanced direct out into a QSC K10 active loudspeaker. Guitar and vocals sounded quiet, and then I realized the Mini Charge manual indicates the direct

out doesn't run at line level—it's at mic level. I flipped the K10's input switch from Line to Mic and—boom—the tone came bristling through complete with the amp's brilliant EQ, reverb, and chorus.

Fishman's Loudbox Mini Charge brings a ton of mobile tone. It's simply a great-sounding little amp that delivers a ton of mobile tone for the buck. I can't wait for warmer weather to put it through more paces in some wilderness spaces. The cushy optional deluxe carry bag (\$99 street) makes it a breeze to tote the lightweight Mini Charge wherever you roam. The sound of the woods just got a whole lot *louder*! 🎸



CONTACT fishman.com

Loudbox Mini Charge

PRICE \$499 street; \$598 with optional deluxe carry bag

CHANNELS 2

CONTROLS (Channel 1) ¼" Instrument input, Phase button, Gain, Low, Mid, High, Reverb, Chorus. (Channel 2) XLR mic input, Gain, Low, High, Reverb. Master (global volume).

EXTRAS ¼" Aux line-level stereo input (mixes to mono within the amp), XLR Mix D.I. post-EQ output, Bluetooth indicator and Pairing button.

POWER 60 watts

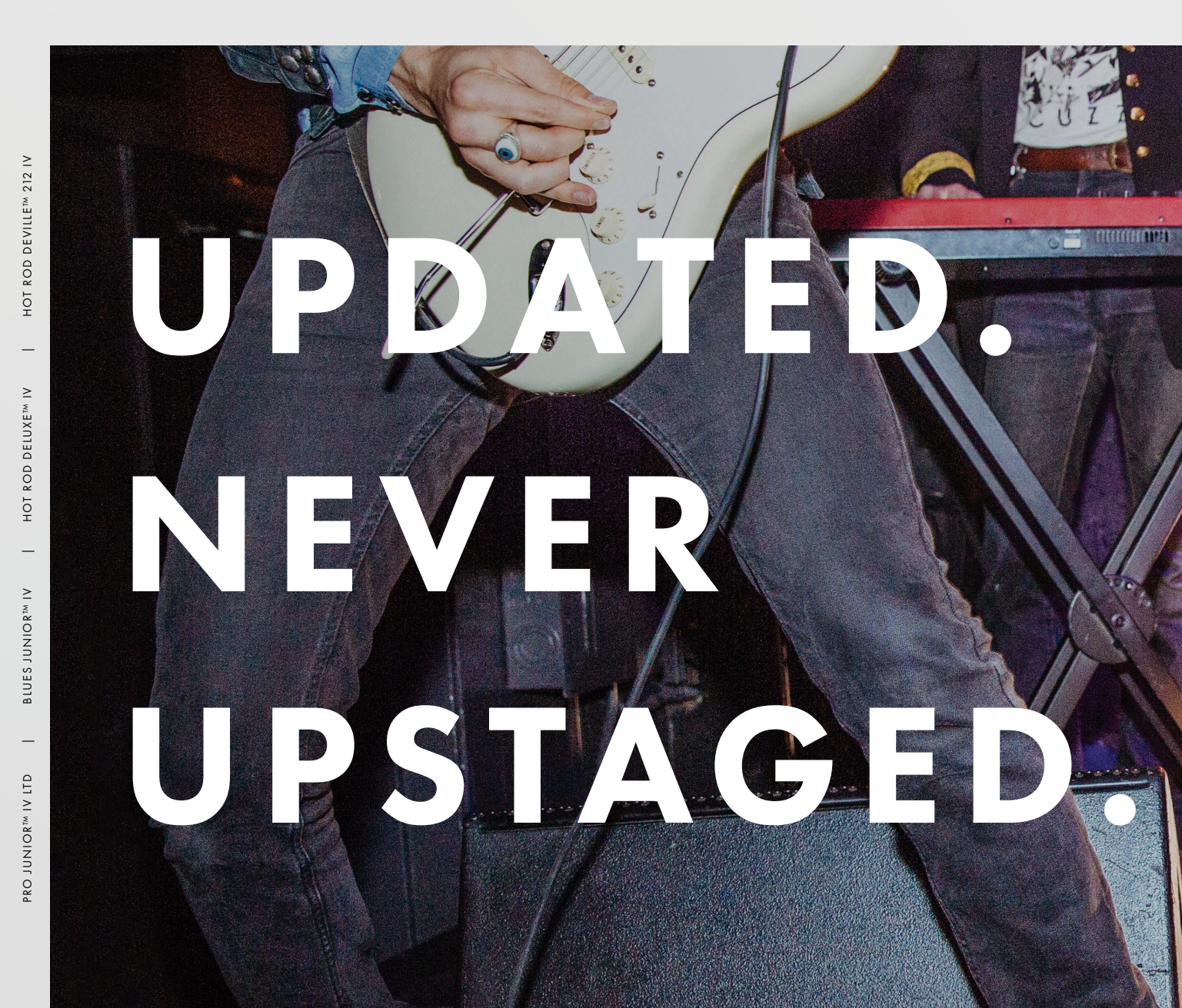
SPEAKER 6.5" woofer, 1" dome tweeter

WEIGHT 21.2 lbs

BUILT China

KUDOS Ultimate busk-ability with battery power and Bluetooth connectivity. Fine tone with bountiful low end surprising for amp this size.

CONCERNS None.



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5 Products You Need to Check Out in 2018 (and Some Industry Intel)

BY ART THOMPSON AND MICHAEL MOLENDRA

THE DAY BEFORE NAMM OFFICIALLY opened, Chris Martin IV really kicked things off by unveiling Martin Guitar's reimagined Standard Series—the biggest update to the company's flagship line in its 185-year history, and one that triggered some extremely “animated” discussions amongst the team. But Martin understands it

needs to evolve—even after close to two centuries (that's a joke, there)—and it also plans to spend 2018 letting players know the company makes more than just dreadnoughts and unamplified acoustics by promoting other styles and their acoustic/electric lines. (Don't miss the affordable X-Series.) The Taylor Builder's Edition

K14ce and the Fishman Loudbox Mini Charge were also big acoustic stories at NAMM, but we covered the K14ce in the March issue, and the Loudbox gets a full review this month on p. 104. For more info on the many great new acoustic products debuted at NAMM, go to guitarplayer.com and search for “NAMM 2018.”



KYSER

Capo App

Kyser may have developed a nearly perfect device for relieving the frustration of backing up singer/songwriters who never know what chords they are playing as they move their capos up and down the necks of their guitars. The free Kyser app for iOS and Android smartphones reveals all, and quite simply, by identifying chord sounds for many fingering and capo positions. An tuner and metronome is also included, and Kyser even makes an optional phone holder that attaches to their capos. Gotta love “easy.” kysermusical.com



PIGTRONIX

Bob Weir's Real Deal Acoustic Preamp

Bob Weir is no slouch when it comes to audio innovation, and when he wanted a natural acoustic-guitar sound at high volume levels onstage, he worked with Grateful Dead tech Mike McGinn to solve the problem. Then, he defied Pigtronix to translate the variable low- and high-frequency filters and other sonic mojo into a pedal (\$279 street). Weir patiently explained the processing to me when I talked to him at NAMM, but then smiled, and said, “I just like to play acoustic guitar really loud.” What more can you say? pigtronix.com



L.R. BAGGS

Align Acoustic Series Pedals

These dedicated acoustic pedals (\$179 street each; Active DI \$159 street) are designed to function together as a system for live performance and recording. The Align Equalizer works as a preamp/EQ and for notching out feedback frequencies, the Align Session is a compressor/saturation pedal for adding girth and richness to your sound, and the Align Reverb brings sweet, airy dimension to it all. Lastly, the Align Active DI with its XLR and 1/4" outs, 48-volt phantom power, and other hip features facilitates connecting to your amp rig or the house system. lrbaggs.com



YAMAHA

TransAcoustic Series

The trend of onboard effects for acoustic guitars shows no sign of abating, and now the technology appears to be trickling down to more affordable models. For its part, Yamaha is including its TransAcoustic system—with integrated reverb and chorus effects—on the affordable FG and FS series guitars this year. As an FG-TA or a FS-TA costs just \$599 (street), players can get those cool ambient/modulation effects along with a solid, Sitka spruce top, mahogany back and sides, and a rosewood fretboard and bridge. usa.yamaha.com

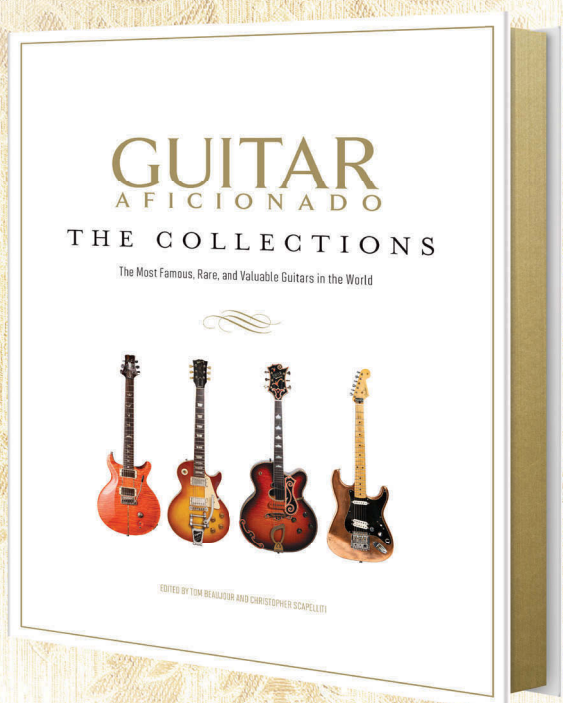
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FRETS

{ GEAR GUIDE }



PRS

SE A40E

One of three new Angelus SE models introduced at NAMM, the SE A40E (\$749 street) is a fine-playing and lush-sounding guitar that features ovankol back and sides and a solid-spruce top that's matched with PRS' hybrid X/Classical bracing to allow it to vibrate more freely. The Fishman GT1 pickup system delivers a very natural amplified sound, and the guitar has lots of high-end touches such as an ebony fretboard and bridge, bone nut and saddle, and PRS bird inlays. prsguitars.com

FENDER

MONTECITO UKULELE

TESTED BY JIMMY LESLIE

THE FENDER MONTECITO UKULELE was introduced last fall, during a refresh of its California Coast series.

The all-koa Montecito's gorgeous beach-blonde and tan wood grains glisten through its high-gloss finish, while the snazzy blue-green abalone used for the top purfling and soundhole rosette conjure images of a sea surf lapping away at the playa. Cream-colored edge binding along the top, bottom, and fretboard adds an air of elegance. The four-in-line Tele headstock with vintage-style closed-back tuning machines invokes the unmistakable image of a classic Fender dream machine. Even the inside label bears an image of a sailboat on the ocean passing near a palm tree. Ukulele purists may scoff at a Tele-style headstock on a uke, but Fender is honoring its California roots. The tuners actually work well, too, which ain't always the case on affordable ukes.

The Montecito is a tenor ukulele, meaning it's the third biggest of the four main body styles: soprano, concert, tenor, and baritone. Therefore, the Montecito sounds a bit fuller than the traditional Hawaiian tones of a soprano or concert, yet it retains plenty of brilliance. The Montecito's solid koa top produces a lovely if rather soft tone with a warm resonance many ukes lack. In fact, Fender already has a koa tenor called the Nohea on the market that's quite similar to the Montecito, but the Montecito's solid top is a clear distinction from the Nohea's laminated koa top. Somehow, they're priced exactly the same, so the Montecito is a clearly a better value.

With 19 total nickel frets—14 to the body—notes are plentiful. Excellent action via a generous 17" scale length makes them easy to come by. The frets feel fantastic under the fingers, and the fretboard binding ensures smooth edges. The Montecito comes loaded with three unwound strings, and a wound fourth. Clearly, Fender decided that this rather guitar-like tenor should have a low G, rather than a high

G as used in traditional re-entrant tuning, or "high G on top," which would have a wound third string. Either way, the string tunings go G, C, E, A (4, 3, 2, 1). It's simply a matter of how you prefer the sequence from low to high. Re-entrant uke players can easily swap out a couple of strings via the Montecito's no-tie bridge. Being primarily a guitar player, I liked the lowest string having the lowest pitch, and the ensuing fretboard familiarity. Essentially, the Montecito plays exactly like the top four strings of a guitar, but the sound is up a fourth. Play an open D shape and the Montecito sounds a G chord. Still, the four-string layout will challenge you to consider what you already know in a new light. What's the fingering for a C shape on just the top four strings? Hmm, that puts the third in the bass. You wind up learning and re-learning a lot, and playing in new ways no matter what.

Fender's Montecito ukulele is gorgeous, pleasant-sounding, and a joy to play. It's an inspiring songwriting tool and a perfect travel companion, even if its gig bag lacks any padding whatsoever. The Fender Montecito is truly a guitar player's ukulele, and that's a good thing. ■



CONTACT fender.com

MODEL California Coast Montecito

PRICE	\$249 street
NUT WIDTH	1.375," bone
NECK	Nato
FRETBOARD	Laminated hardwood, 17" Scale
FRETS	19 vintage style
TUNERS	Sealed nickel
BODY	Laminated koa back and sides, solid koa top
BRIDGE	Laminated hardwood with bone saddle
FACTORY STRINGS	Fender Aquila Tenor set (1-4) .02425, .0305, .0365, .02675
BUILT	Indonesia
KUDOS	Stellar look, easy to play and learn on.
CONCERNS	A little on the quiet side. Gig bag not padded.

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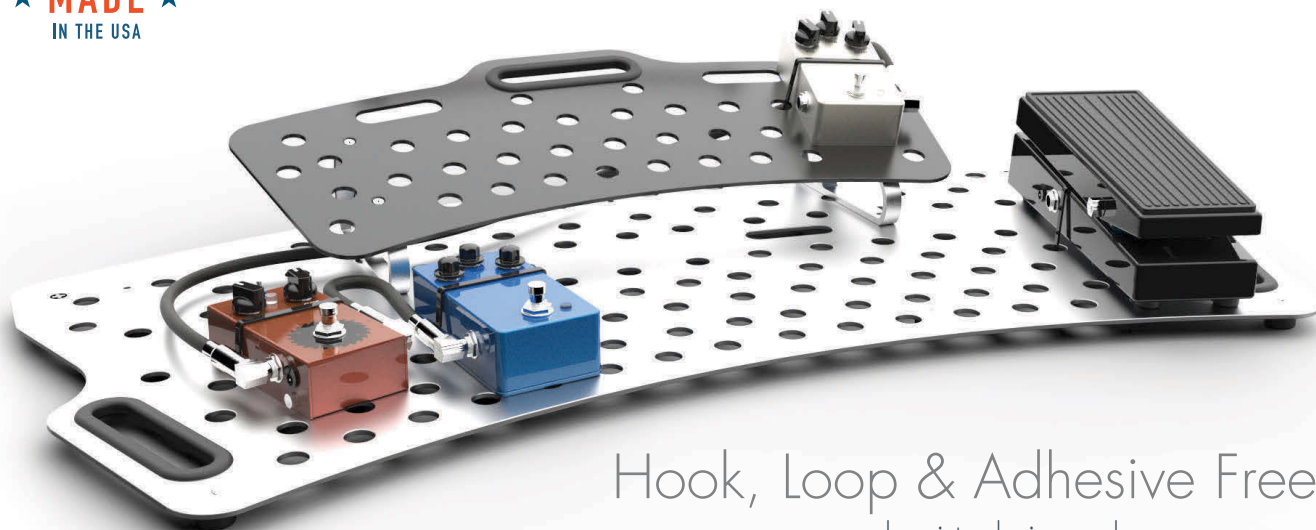


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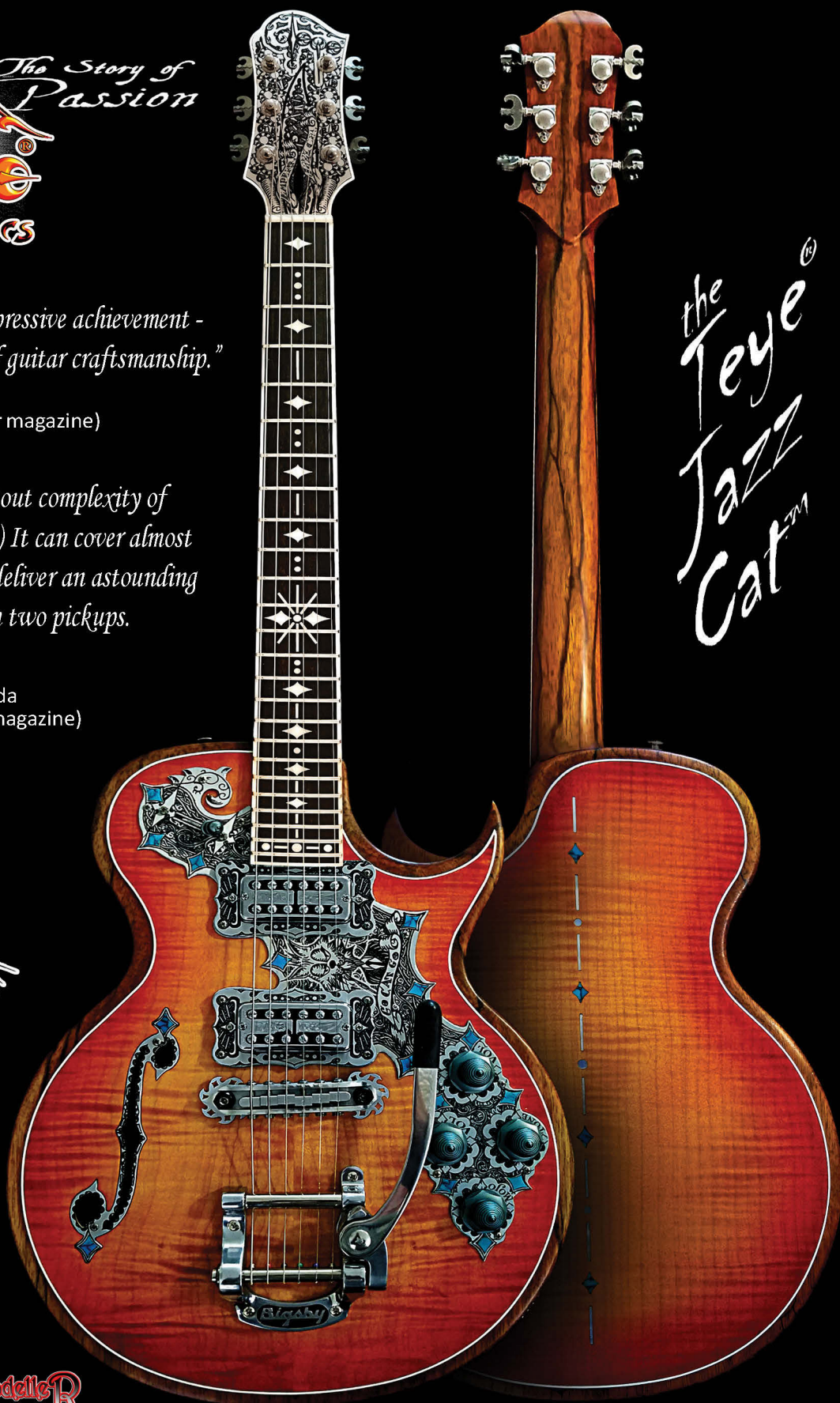
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Impressive!"*

Michael Molenda
(Guitar Player magazine)



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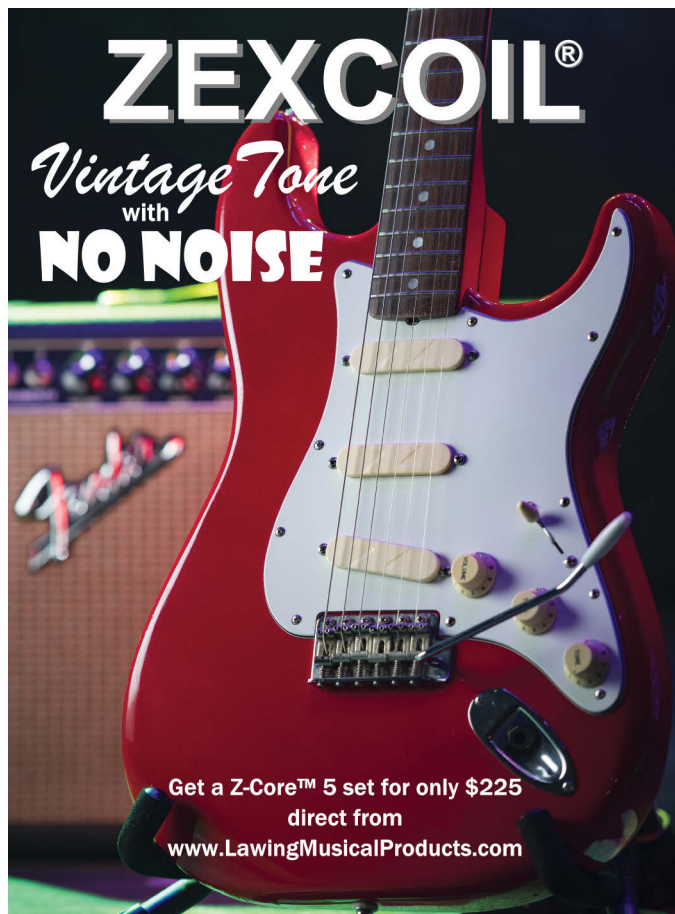
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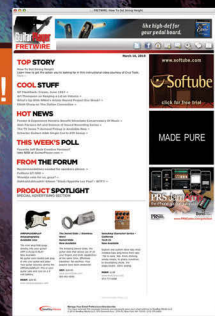
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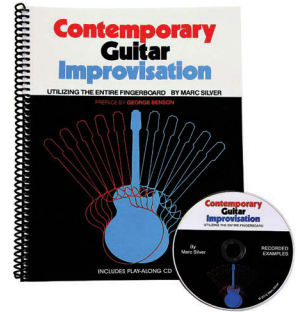
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Ford with husband Les Paul.

Mary Ford

1924-1977

Five Acts of Legend

- > While she was driving through Oklahoma with Les Paul, their car slid off the road into a creek bed, shattering Paul's elbow—an injury that almost ended his career. It was 18 months before he could pick up a guitar again.
- > Her ability to overdub multiple vocal layers at a time when such studio techniques were unheard of—mostly because Les Paul had to invent them—helped bring massive chart success to the Les Paul and Mary Ford duo, and established the recording studio as a true art form.
- > She was probably the most visible female electric guitarist of her time, wielding early Gibson goldtop Les Pauls, a white Les Paul SG, and other models.
- > She “won” a guitar duel with Paul on *The Colgate Comedy Hour* in 1954 that was pretty much hokum, but she showed a few tricks and kept up with Paul on harmony lines.
- > She got to play rhythm guitar in live performances alongside Mr. Les Paul. A lot of guitarists would have killed for that opportunity.

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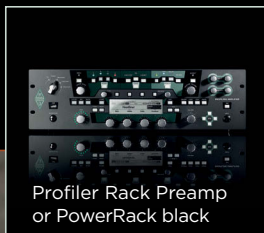
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