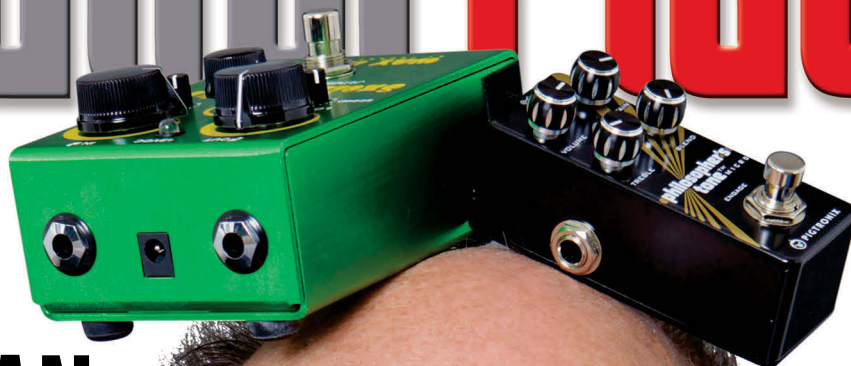


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{ From The Editor }

I RECEIVED A TEXT MESSAGE FROM GUITARIST JOHNNY A, JUST BEFORE I

was about to cover Joe Bonamassa's "Keeping the Blues Alive at Sea IV" cruise on February 26. I knew I was going to see him onboard, but I was surprised when he said his new solo show was based around a looping system. Johnny, of course, made a name for himself playing instrumental guitar music, and he also joined the Yardbirds a while back. This, however, appeared to be a bold transition into a different creative paradigm for him—at least as far as I knew.

But it didn't really matter what Johnny was planning to unveil aboard the Norwegian Jade liner. The cool thing for me was that he had changed his own game. I always root for people who do that, whatever artistic endeavor they're engaged in. Sometimes, such explorations can forge hybridizations and blissful errors and unexpected rethinks of architecture that transform how art is perceived and consumed—such as when Jean Cocteau, Erik Satie, Léonide Massine, and Pablo Picasso shocked Parisian theater patrons with the surrealist ballet *Parade* in 1917. Or, closer to home, when young British musicians took American blues and served it back to these shores as supercharged blues-rock, or even when some crazy kids mashed-up urban beats and guitars to invent rap rock.

Obviously, these creative "hiccups" have been vastly important to the evolution of music. And, at least during my lifetime, they have been made whole by a fusion of unbridled creativity and the technological gizmos of the moment. It might have been louder amps or fuzz pedals or modulation devices or samplers and drum machines or loopers, but the gear was always sitting there waiting for someone to dive in and try something nutty.

While every issue of *GP* hopefully inspires readers to consider going artistically rogue with articles on artists who found singular voices, and the gear that helped them get there, I always have a lot of fun, in particular, working on our annual Pedalmania feature. Mostly because it's all about those groovy—and typically affordable—little boxes that can mean so much to everyone who seeks their own pathway.

For me, the really cool elements in this issue include Adrian Belew—who has conjured far more than his share of magnificent sounds—grabbing a bunch of pedals from his own collection and literally burying his head in them for our cover image, Joe Gore sharing his recipes for boutique pedals, Sara Ardizzoni detailing her looping strategies, and even Michael Schenker stating why he *doesn't* use pedals very much. There's also great stuff from Tim Miller about visualizing the perfect guitar for his music, Mike Stern fighting back from what could have been a career-killing injury, and James Stevenson revealing how he manages to play in several bands almost at once.

The centerpiece of all of this content is, of course, our reviews of the latest pedals out there—many just released at the Winter NAMM show in January. While we restricted the evaluations to one pedal per manufacturer in the print magazine (mostly to be fair to every maker, but also because we wanted to ensure the issue was relatively balanced across the gear, artist, and lesson content), we simultaneously published *all* the reviews at guitarplayer.com, so that you wouldn't miss any of the goodies that came our way after NAMM.

One last thing: If you write a track and/or perform a clever riff with any of the pedals we reviewed—or, for that matter, *any* pedal released this year—please shoot a quick video, post it on YouTube or Instagram, and send me the link (mmolenda@nbmedia.com). If I dig it, I'll share it with the community. Don't keep it to yourself. One of the greatest things we can do as guitar players is inspire others.

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The Edge

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OPENING NOTES



Tom Wheeler (left) interviews Michael Bloomfield, 1978.

Tom Wheeler

December 15, 1947-February 10, 2018

BY DON MENN

PHOTOGRAPH BY JON SIEVERT

I HAD THE UNFATHOMABLE GOOD fortune to recruit, hire, and, later, pass my torch as Editor in Chief of *Guitar Player* to Tom Wheeler, and that torch flamed even higher, brighter. We met and clicked at a NAMM show, and right away, he started firing off query letters. I declined every one, because we already had the topics assigned, or they were fresh off the press. But those pitches of his were so clever, so funny, and so peppered with nuanced vocabulary and turns of phrases rarely heard in guitar circles, it occurred to me we'd better snag him before someone else did.

I invited him up from L.A. to talk. He was hesitant. He told me he was teaching guitar. When he added that one of his pupils was Barbi Benton at the Playboy Mansion, I detected both ambivalence and irony in his voice. So I persisted, and he soon signed on.

We became coworkers, friends, and co-commuters. We laughed every inch of the drive to and from work, arriving with aching stomachs from wicked punchlines and mutually

contrived jokes in progress. We marched in lock-step. I got him his first home. He later turned one of his over to me—the place where I still live. We raised families in tandem and babysat each other's offspring. We competed to see who could find the most errors in each other's editorial copy, and we took turns winning. Together, we interviewed John McLaughlin, Al Di Meola, and Paco De Lucia.

Tom said that I had raised the editorial standards to new heights. I counter he surely

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OPENING NOTES

{ TOM WHEELER }

pushed them up and over the top. His humility was extreme but praiseworthy. He swore me to silence about his having written a song about his hero, Chuck Berry, entitled "Sheik of Chicago," recorded by Joe Stampley. He got Steve Vai his movie role in *Crossroads*. Once, I picked up B.B. King at the airport and brought him to our warehouse, where Wheeler held his own with apparent calm in a jam with B.B.

Tom's long-time buddy was Steve Fishell, pedal-steel guitarist for Emmylou Harris and now producer on gazillions of sessions. He shared an email he got from Wheeler after B.B. died: "I wondered what was the etiquette—would I offend him if I slipped in a lick or two? But he lit up with a smile and gave me a look that said, 'Okay, let's go!' So we traded licks. I had seen him several times since then. You know, I wasn't even sure he would remember me (I don't want to overstate our friendship), but he always did. A few years later, Anne [Tom's wife] and I are sitting with him after the show in the rear of his luxury bus, listening to Pavarotti, and out of the

blue, totally unexpectedly, B.B. says, "Hey, Tom! Remember that time we jammed together?"

Fishell adds, "Of course B.B. King remembered jamming with Tom. Tom always left an impression—whether it was through his kindness, his wisdom, his intellect, or his talent with a guitar."

He modified his ear to hear what was comin' down the rail, and to switch tracks before some musical derailment. He never lost his grip on the divining rod he used to find that for which readers thirsted. He inherited a wildly talented editorial staff that included Dan Forte, Tom Mulhern, Jas Obrecht, and Jon Sievert. The fur flew far. Frequently. Things didn't get easier as he added his own staffers. After all, people that extraordinary were hired because of their different strengths—a recipe for feudal war *and* for brilliant advancements in editorial breadth and quality.

His days were wild and bright in a kaleidoscope of fanatical readers of his prolific oeuvre; snarky startup mavericks; genius engineers with brain synapses soldered to fire faster than pedalboard wires; long-toothed academics and

electronic, ivory-tower-ites; nitpicky historians; OCD archivists; sanctified, certified, Grade A, No. 1, free-range, musical icons; not to mention a line of journalism students extending over the horizon who waited long and fought hard to get into his classes at the University of Oregon.

One final story: When I finally got Tom up to the San Francisco Bay Area for his job interview, I hosted a dinner for him with a young couple that I was trying to convince to give up their place to him. They were post-hippie hippies, eager to move to a farm. The young woman said that she loved animals—especially cows—because they were so spiritual. Tom asked her to elaborate. She said, "Oh, didn't you realize that 'moo' spelled backwards is 'oom'?" Tom and I exchanged a sidelong glance before covering our mouths with our napkins to stifle face-reddening guffaws with fake coughs.

So here's a sidelong glance, looking at you, kid. The reverberating echo of our shared laughter will raise my spirits when I feel low because you're gone. Tom Wheeler has left the building. ■

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Peer Tributes to Terry Kath and Chicago

DAVE WAKEFIELD

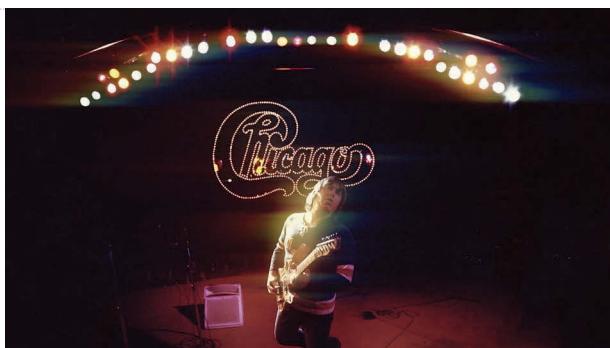
Thank you, Joe Bosso, for your article on Terry Kath (March 2018), who we lost much too soon. He is really the guitarist I'd like to see return to earth from Rock and Roll heaven. Jimi was great, of course, but he was at the apogee of his skill and innovation when he passed, while Terry was surpassing Jimi with more versatile styles, and explorations of sounds and technologies. Terry gave Chicago balls, and made them a rock-jazz band. When he died, Chicago became a pop band. Terry deserves far more heralding.

DON WIGGINS

My story is can't be easily corroborated, but I'm still compelled to share it. In the '80s, I studied guitar with Stu Pearce, who taught out of his home on Adams Street in the Chicago suburb of Bellwood. Without a doubt, Stu was deserving of a "C.G.P. Award," he just never met Chet Atkins to collect it. Another student of Stu's was Terry Kath. Stu was quite proud of Terry's accomplishments, but deeply saddened when Terry widely claimed to be self-taught. But the beautiful, full circle of music is that as Terry lives on through his music, Stu lives on through his many appreciative students, as well as in Terry's voice. Listen to "Free Form Guitar," and you'll hear Stu Pearce.

LOU LENTI

In 1974, I spent a summer in Colorado, and I stopped at a lake in the Blackhawk vicinity to try my luck fishing. I scrambled down a very steep slope to the lakeside, and I began hearing what sounded like horns playing. I thought I was having a bout of mountain sickness! Later, I told the manager at the Boulder KOA [campground] about the experience, and he informed me that Chicago had purchased a farm at the lake, and they were utilizing it as a recording studio. Needless to say, I was very happy to learn I was not suffering from delusions.



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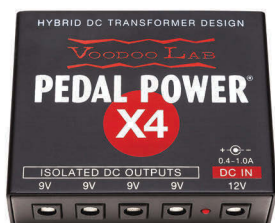
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New Gear

BY PATRICK WONG



Voodoo Labs Pedal Power X4 \$99 street

Housed in an aluminum chassis, the X4 can drive up to four battery-operated or high-current DSP effects. It mounts easily to pedalboards and the multi-pole filtering eliminates noise. Includes power cables, power adapter, and mounting hardware. voodoolab.com

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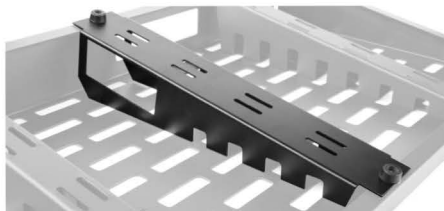
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CULTURE

CRUISE

Caribbean Blues

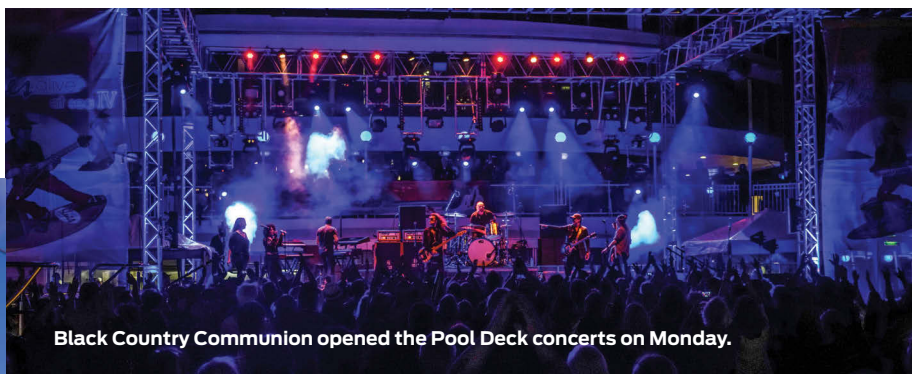
Joe Bonamassa Brings Artists & Fans Together on the High Seas

BY MICHAEL MOLEND

PHOTOS BY WILL BYINGTON

YA GOTTA LOVE THE SHARED BASH-fest that is the web. When I posted some Instagram videos from Joe Bonamassa's "Keeping the Blues Alive at Sea IV" cruise on February 26 through March 2, 2018, a snarky comment

Ana Popovic rocked the Pool Deck on Wednesday.



Black Country Communion opened the Pool Deck concerts on Monday.

stated, "I can't think of something that represents the blues more than a bunch of rich white people on a ship."

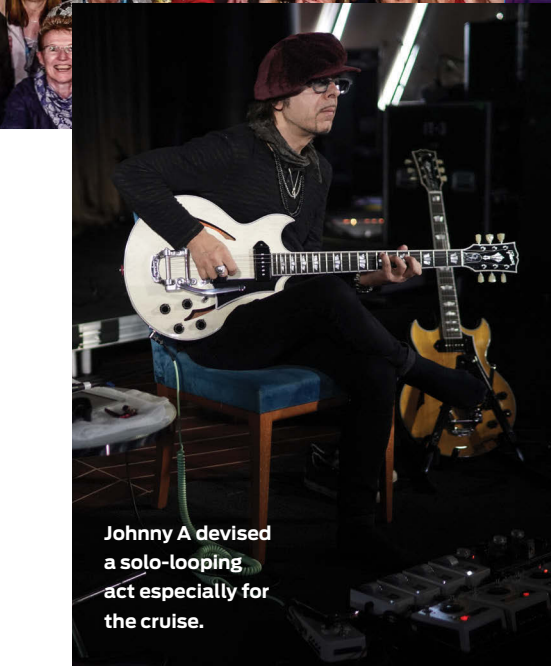
Well, I guess *someone* always has to throw mud at something wonderful. I was there, however, and for whatever it's worth, here's my take on what went down...

• The Sixthman crew—who produce the cruise in tandem with Bonamassa's J&R Adventures—are like having your own personal concierge. Everything is taken care of. I never had

to worry about what to do, or where to be. Like all of the cruisers, my only "job" was to relax and enjoy myself—well, that is, if I wasn't being the working press.

• Yes, the fans were predominantly white people of a certain age, but it's wrong to assume all attendees were affluent. I talked to people who saved two years to make the trek, and it's their only vacation.

• It was uplifting to see more than 2,000 people support live music, and they devoured



Johnny A devised a solo-looping act especially for the cruise.



Joe Bonamassa unleashed tons of ferocious guitar moments.



David Hidalgo was on fire when Los Lobos performed in the Stardust Theater.



GP cover artist (September 2017) Marcus King jammed with former Butch Trucks tour-band member Heather Gillis.



One-man band Juzzie Smith and the artist-signed Epiphone Joe Bonamassa 1958 Amos Flying-V that will be raffled off on the 2019 KTBA at Sea V cruise with Bonamassa, Kenny Wayne Shepherd, Samantha Fish, and others.



CULTURE

{ CRUISE }

it. Even the least-known acts in the smallest venues on the ship enjoyed enthusiastic audiences.

- The artists played their asses off, signed autographs, hung with guests, and often jammed with each other.

- Bonamassa works like a demon to ensure every passenger is enjoying themselves. Special little gifts are distributed in every cabin, he plays surprise concerts and joins jams, and shares stories about his vintage-gear obsession.

- The cruise supports Bonamassa's Keeping the Blues Alive charity, which raised \$70,000+ for music education on this outing.

- It's a boat full of people who love what we musicians do for them. It's hard to be snarky about that, right? 🎸



The Lovell sisters—a.k.a. Larkin Poe—jamming on the Pool Deck.



Chicago Blues guitarist Toronzo Cannon goes low down.



Folk artists Madisen Ward and the Mama Bear—the mother/son team of Ruth and Madisen Ward.



Sixthman Ninja Assistant Justin Keller (left) and Artist Relations Leader Trae Vedder



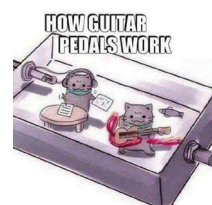
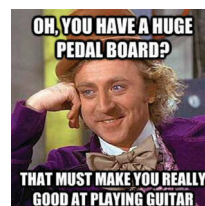
The Bros. Landreth holding court in the Atrium's Acoustic Mornings slot.

When Pedals Bite Back

The Wacky World of Stompbox Memes

BY MICHAEL MOLEND

KEITH HYDE IS ONE OF THE friends I made while covering Rock 'n' Roll Fantasy Camp a few years back, and the man is a tireless meme-dissemination artist. Without warning, Keith will blow up my cell with these daft guitar memes. I think he's just trying to toss a few giggles into my day, but I also dig the fact that sharing memes is like a gentle finger wag to keep musicians from taking themselves too seriously. So for this issue's theme, I've chosen six memes—discovered through Tumblr, Fortin Amps, memebase, memegenerator, and quickmeme—that take aim at “pedal pomposity.” If you have your own faves, please share them with me at mmolenda@nbmedia.com.



“

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The Effects Menu

A Newbie's Guide to Pedal Selection

BY MICHAEL MOLEND A



A Mono medium pedalboard with my “hybrid” setup of Velcro and zip ties. I was on a short tour, and I didn’t want the pedals to come loose in the van, so I added the ties to some pedals for ultra security. This band required a sparse rig of a wah, a boost pedal, a distortion, a Mellotron simulator, and a tuner



For more sonic diversity, I made a Mono Suitcab pedalboard with two fuzz pedals, an organ simulator, a reverse delay (notes sound backwards—trippy!), a boost, an echo box, a wah, and a tuner—all Velcro’d to the top panel.

EVEN IF YOU'RE JUST BEGINNING

your journey with the guitar, you probably already know that many guitarists are obsessed with little boxes of joy and noise called effects pedals. But you may not be aware of why more experienced players choose certain pedals, or which types of pedals may be most appropriate for the style of music you play. As you’ll see, technical strategy and plain old gut feelings can drive a player’s pedal choices. But, for now, let’s simply dial back any confusion factor you may have, and offer an easy and straightforward menu to pedal selection.

STARTERS

Whatever style of music you are playing, there are a couple of boring but critical essentials every pedalboard needs. First, get a chromatic tuner that’s small enough not to devour valuable space on your board, yet with a display big and bright enough to see on dark stages and in direct sunlight (if you play outdoors). Find one that mutes the output signal when you tune, so that the audience isn’t treated to a “tuning concerto” at performance volume.

Getting juice to your pedals—rather than depending on 9-volt batteries or

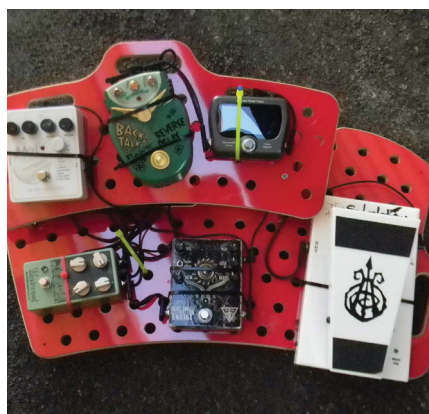
individual (and messy) power cables—requires a pedal-power supply with enough outputs for your chosen stompboxes. Of course, you’re going to need short ¼” cables to connect your pedals together, as well as some method (Velcro, plastic ties, etc.) of affixing the boxes to whatever size pedalboard you’ve either purchased, or made yourself from a piece of wood or other material. Finally, don’t forget to include at least a 20-foot extension cord, as you never know how far away a club will put its power outlets from your stage position.

FOLLOWING ORDERS (OR NOT)

- > You *will* meet people who insist there is a “correct” order to positioning your pedals from your guitar to your amp. They may even be right, as there are certain technical strategies to putting some pedals in front of, or behind other pedals. You can Google that stuff all day. Then again, some noted pedal-board builders will say a few of their pro clients have them construct rigs in very idiosyncratic ways—or, in other words, “wrong.” I’d defer to the late recording-studio madman Joe Meek here: “If it sounds good, it is good.”

That said, Steve Vai has counseled running your basic signal path this way: tuner, overdrive, distortion, modulation pedals, delay. In GP’s “Ultimate Guide to Pedalboards” issue in May 2008, we suggested this order: tuner, filters/wah, compressor, overdrive, distortion, modulation, volume pedal, delay, reverb. Do some research, pick a path, and if something bothers you, don’t be afraid to change it up.

WHAT ARE THESE SOUNDS?



The Chemistry Design Werks Holeyboard is all about zip ties, and it provides a top tier—a good alternate landing strip for when you're wearing Doc Martens onstage!

ENTREES

Once the essentials are nailed down, you can begin the real fun stuff—choosing the effects. It's extremely important to note, that while I've provided some very basic menu recommendations tailored to "appropriate" or "typical" pedals for specific musical styles, there are no right or wrong choices. Whichever pedals fire up your creativity are the right ones for you, and, in any case, fearlessly messing with so-called convention can be liberating and inspirational. Use a filthy fuzz for supper-club jazz, or experiment with The Edge-style delays for a bar blues band. You should also research which pedals your personal guitar heroes have in their rigs.

Rock: Wah, Distortion, Fuzz (with or without octave effect), Chorus, Flanger, Delay, Reverb.

Blues: Wah, Overdrive, Tremolo or Vibrato, Rotary Speaker/Uni-Vibe, Reverb.

Jazz: Compressor, Overdrive, Volume Pedal.

Metal: Wah, Pitch Shifter or Whammy,

CHORUS

Effects Group: Modulation

All You'll Care About: Makes things all shimmery and sexy.

Audio Example: "Come As You Are," Nirvana (verses).

COMPRESSOR

Effects Group: Dynamics

All You'll Care About: Keeps the volume level of all of your notes and chords consistent. Puts everything right in the listener's face.

Audio Example: "Saved By Zero," Fixx.

DELAY

Effects Group: Ambience

All You'll Care About: Your parts come right back at you like echoes across the Grand Canyon.

Audio Example: "I Will Follow," U2.

DISTORTION

Effects Group: Distortion/Overdrive

All You'll Care About: Ferocious, saturated grittiness with sustain.

Audio Example: "Mr. Scarey," Dokken.

FLANGER

Effects Group: Modulation

All You'll Care About: Swooping, sweeping ray-gun sounds.

Audio Example: "Barracuda," Heart (main riff).

FUZZ

Effects Group: Distortion/Overdrive

All You'll Care About: Buzzy, fuzzy majesty—usually a funkier noise than a typical distortion or overdrive pedal.

Audio Example: "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction," Rolling Stones (main riff).

OVERDRIVE

Effects Group: Distortion/Overdrive

All You'll Care About: A natural, organic grind—like an overdriven amp (hence the name).

Audio Example: Anything by AC/DC.

REVERB

Effects Group: Ambience

All You'll Care About: Super-sensual ambient soundwaves. As vibey as it gets.

Audio Example: "Pink Orange Red," Cocoteau Twins (intro).

WAH

Effects Group: Filter

All You'll Care About: Messes with tonal frequencies to produce soaring or staccato vocal and horn sounds.

Audio Example: "Voodoo Child (Slight Return)," Jimi Hendrix (solo).

Distortion, Flanger, Chorus, Delay, Reverb, Noise Gate.

Country: Compressor, Overdrive, Delay, Reverb.

Starship Warrior: Wah, Compressor, Pitch Shifter, Distortion, Fuzz, Flanger, Phaser, Chorus, Tremolo, Noise Gate, Volume Pedal, Delay, Reverb.

DESSERT

If all of this pedal selection and pedalboard order is daunting or bothersome, you can always chuck it and go for a multi-effects floor processor. There are tons of them at

all price points, and the whole effects-order thing is pretty much done for you, because the effects options (and their on/off switches) are laid out on an integrated slab of plastic or metal. These devices can also be small—some can even fit in a gig-bag pouch. If there's a downside, there may be a slight learning curve to getting comfortable with parameter menus and LCD screens, as you've upped the technology level somewhat from a few pedals with a couple of control knobs each. There are a lot of tonal options in an all-in-one multi-effects floorboard, and, best yet, you didn't have to build it yourself. ■



In the Box

Emulating Jeff Beck's Tone on "Pull It"

BY BRIAN TARQUIN

PHOTOGRAPH BY ROBERT ESSEL

I CAN'T THINK OF ANY OTHER GUITARIST I HAVE FOLLOWED so closely, or who has influenced me so deeply, as Jeff Beck. It's not just his Yardbirds or classic fusion days, either, as his new work is so strong. He just keeps getting better and better.

Beck's recent *Loud Hailer* delivers a multitude of brilliant guitar tones, but the instrumental "Pull It" really caught my attention, due to its melding of furious overdrive with dubstep-style bass and drums. This is precisely why Jeff is such an innovator—he takes contemporary music and bends it to his will. If you want to explore the "Pull It" tone in your DAW, here's how I approached it.

THE TONAL INGREDIENTS

- Stratocaster
- Overdrive
- Ring Modulation
- Phaser
- Wah Pedal

THE PLUG-IN

There are many excellent amp plug-ins out there, but I used Studio Devil Amp Modeler Pro (via an Avid Fast Track Duo interface). If you use another plug-in, you can probably approximate my choices, as many manufacturers provide a "usual suspects" menu of similar amp flavors—even if they go by different patch names. I choose Studio Devil's Hot Lead preset to achieve Beck's snarling tone.

THE CHASE

Within Hot Lead, I selected the British Crunch amp model. Then, I activated the Bright Amber button to boost the high frequencies. My speaker-cabinet choice was the 4x12 1960 model. To accentuate the midrange of the guitar, I activated the Graphic EQ, and boosted the mids and highs a bit to emulate the bite that Beck has going in the song. I also turned on the Wah-Wah Filter, setting the slider about a quarter of the way from left to right, to get a bit of that "cocked-wah yowl" tone. Finally, I opened the effects menu, and selected Phaser EFX, adjusting the Speed knob to 2 o'clock while keeping the Sweep and Depth controls at 12 o'clock. This setting seemed to credibly match whatever phaser Beck had chosen, or perhaps what his recording engineer may have added during the mix.

FINISHING TOUCHES

What I really enjoy about working in the box is the flexibility of the amp modeling. You get so many options for detailed adjustments. For example, I was able to adjust the size of the cabinet in the room, and also dial in more high end or sizzle from the virtual speakers. In addition, Studio Devil Amp Modeler Pro provides a kind of recording-studio rack—or an effects pedalboard—that lets you activate a noise gate, a compressor, an echo, and/or reverb for subtle refinements. Lastly, there's a control that allows you to choose the power-amp type: FET, AB, A, or Off. After experimenting, I found the best setting for the "Pull It" tone was AB. ■

Punch Up Your Parts! 3 Cool Applications of Compression

BY BRIAN TARQUIN

WHEN PLAYING GUITAR IN THE STUDIO, NOT ALL STRINGS are created equal—at least as far as their volume levels go. Compressing your guitar tracks can manage frequency transients and variations in your attack to keep your notes ringing clearly during solos and riffs, every note of your chords sounding articulately, and everything busting out of the mix without getting lost in the band instrumentation.

Many compressors—especially the vintage ones—add coloration to the

sound, so make sure the model you choose enhances the guitar part without destroying its natural tone (unless you *want* that). The examples below are from one plug-in and two hardware units, but the settings can usually be adapted to *any* compressor, whether software or hardware. You should also note that using compression can lower the overall level of the guitar, but most compressors have a “make-up gain” or Level control to turn the rage back up where it needs to be. As always, use your ears and experiment.



CLEAN ELECTRIC

For a part performed with a Fender Stratocaster and a Fender Super Reverb, I wanted a punchy clean tone with enough definition so that each note in the chord voicings cut through the mix. I choose the Steinberg RND (Rupert Neve) Portico 5043 plug-in for this task, and I set the controls as follows:

- Ratio at 2:1
- Attack at 8ms
- Release at 500ms
- Threshold set so the Gain Reduction meters read between -4dB and -6dB
- Activated Feed-Back for a sweeter, though less-accurate compression sound



ACOUSTIC GUITAR

I was seeking a woody, yet ringing tone with plenty of pick attack when strumming chords for a part mixed under some vocals. The guitar was my Guild acoustic with the L.R. Baggs Dual Source System, and I decided to use the Warm Audio WA76 Limiting Amplifier, which emulates the classic FET sound of the famous Urei 1176.

- Ratio at 4:1 (for more pick attack, use 8:1)
- Attack at 7
- Release at 13
- Input knob adjusted until Gain Reduction meters read between -3dB and -5dB



DISTORTED HEAVY METAL ELECTRIC

For this track, I needed a heavily compressed rhythm tone with plenty of scorch and bottom end that would make any metalhead proud. The rig was a Les Paul/plexi Marshall recorded in two passes for a stereo perspective (panned hard right and hard left). I went for the sound of a legendary SSL VCA model for this one, choosing the Audio-Scape Stereo Buss Compressor.

- Ratio at 4:1
- Attack at 3ms
- Release set to Auto
- Threshold set so the Gain Reduction meters read between -6dB and -8dB
- Tip: If you are compressing 7- or 8-string guitars with a lot of low end, you might want to activate the Sidechain switch to let the bass frequencies come through without being overly compressed



Circuit Bending

Joe Gore on his Boutique Pedal Designs

BY MICHAEL MOLENDRA

PHOTOGRAPH BY PAUL HAGGARD

I'VE WORKED WITH JOE GORE AT *Guitar Player*, spent some time in the studio with him, watched him play gigs here and there, and consider him a friend, but the dude still surprises me. Just when I thought I had him appropriately categorized in one of my mental file folders as a master guitarist, a fantastic writer, an ever-curious tone fiend, and an overall cool guy, he goes and transforms himself into a boutique pedal tinkerer, and then builds a bona fide *company* around his designs. I guess I need another folder.

While Gore Pedals still have the rough-hewn, mad-scientist look of something fashioned from his grandpa's workbench, both Gore's early DIY builds and the current

factory-produced models have received rave reviews from *GP* and other publications, and they are used by top players such as Richard Fortus, David Torn, and Mike Keneally. Here's a peek into his pedal process...

What triggered your interest in building stompboxes?

I went into it completely ass-backwards. I'd designed thousands of digital sounds for Apple, other clients, and my own use, often mimicking and mutating analog tones. Only later did I pick up a soldering iron.

I don't believe you have an engineering degree, so how did you achieve the circuit knowledge to start making this stuff?

I consulted old schematics, and I relied on the collective knowledge of the DIY stompbox

community—especially freestompboxes.org. After 100 or so clone builds, you've inevitably concocted your own mutants and hybrids. I don't sell clones, but I couldn't have created anything fresh without having studied them.

When you started out, were you looking to fill a specific niche?

Yes. It was a very specific niche—sh*t I wanted the ones that no one made. After using pedals since the Pleistocene, interviewing countless players for guitar mags, and reviewing decades' worth of stompboxes, there were still missing pieces for me. My jumping-off points are usually extant circuit topologies, but my designs

can jump pretty far from their origins.

For example, my Cult pedal grew out of a fascination with the Dallas Rangemaster, but Cult sounds nothing like a Rangemaster, or any other overdrive I know. I loved the crackling presence of that minimal, single-germanium-transistor circuit, but I didn't want a treble boost, per se, so I redid the input filtering. The original Gain control only sounds great cranked, so I reworked that, too, and I situated it at a different point in the circuit. Now every Gain-knob position sounds good. And while the original has phenomenal dynamic response, I tried to make it even more extreme. I got it to the point where rolling back your guitar's Volume knob yields a sound nearly identical to bypass. So it's a tonal expander. You have access to the normal range of the guitar Volume knob, while the knob's upper reaches transition to harmonically rich, ultra-present distortion. In the end, after 20-some iterations, not a single part value was the same as on the Rangemaster, and the topology had mutated. But I never would have gotten to the Cult were

it not for the Rangemaster.

That's pretty typical for me. I steal from the past, but I strive to take what I've stolen in fresh directions. I won't claim these are improvements or corrections, but they work better for me, and, I hope, a few other players.

As the designer, what elements do you feel make Gore Pedals unique?

It's dangerous to claim you're unique, because there are lots of pedals out there. But I never sell anything unless I believe it does something no other pedal does. I've aborted several projects when other builders beat me to them. One example was Carolina's Olympia—a brilliant Big Muff variant. Another was Catalinbread's Katzenkönig, which grafted an '80s tone stack onto a '60s fuzz. I wish those were my designs!

I definitely have particular obsessions, though. One is dynamic response. If I change my touch or guitar settings even slightly, I want to hear a dramatic change in the effect. Another is control range. On many pedals, you use only a small section of a knob's range. I often restrict and

fine-tune potentiometer ranges to yield usable sounds in all possible positions. I avoid energy-sucking passive tone controls, providing tonal variation via input filtering and biasing tricks. I fixate on relatively low-gain distortion, because, to my ear, many pedals are too gainy. Finally, because of my digital background, I emphasize effects where the digital equivalents remain relatively weak. This includes, for example, octave fuzz, vibrato, and almost anything involving germanium transistors.

How much experimentation and refinement goes into each build?

It's *always* a long process of experimentation. I lack the engineering smarts to predict exactly what will happen if I alter a circuit—just like many electrical engineers lack the playing and recording smarts to know when they're onto something cool. It can take me an embarrassingly long time to refine and troubleshoot. Fortunately, there are audiobooks. If I were a proper engineer, I'd probably never have made it through *Anna Karenina*. ■

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PERFORMANCE

Angel of Havoc

The Otherworldly Truth of Sara Ardizzoni's Looping Maelstroms

BY MICHAEL MOLENDRA

PHOTOGRAPH BY DARIO BONAZZA

"MY MACHINES ARE AN INTEGRAL part of how I perform as Dagger Moth," says Italy's loop-driven guitarist, composer, and solo artist Sara Ardizzoni. "Even my albums are conceived around a looper and effects pedals to bring my pieces to life. It's not an "I-wish-I-could-but-I-can't" compromise because I don't have a band. This is a creative choice."

Ardizzoni is an extremely striking and charismatic presence as a performer, and yet her music is so tenaciously cinematic that it almost makes her fade into the sonic milieu. Her pieces are like visitations to some astral cathedral of human triumphs and foibles—beauty, horror, love, and angst—and all ruled by the sounds of a single guitar. It's a spellbinding, beguiling, and sometimes terrifying journey, as Ardizzoni taps, slaps, picks, shreds, twists knobs in

realtime, and shifts between fuzz and crystal-line tones to not only animate her songs, but to also sidestep timbral and thematic redundancies that can make loop-composed music appear repetitive and wearisome.

What guitar and amp combination works best for your live-looping adventures?

I need a good, full, clean sound, because it's an important starting point for everything else I do. So for the last three years, I've been performing with a Fender Classic Player Jazzmaster and a Vox AC30CH head and matching cabinet.

I'm also curious about your signal-processing pathways.

When I started Dagger Moth six years ago, I was aware that performing alone meant having to deal with two main issues. On one hand, there were the infinite possibilities of freedom in the creative process. On the other

was the need to give myself technical and aesthetic boundaries within which I could wander. I needed a versatile looper, and I went for the Boss RC-50 Loop Station. I was also intrigued by the idea of experimenting with a Korg Mini Kaoss Pad as a multi-effect device for the guitar.

At the moment, I split my pedals into two chains. The first one goes from my guitar to the amp input, and it consists of a BOSS tuner, a BOSS TR-2 Tremolo, a DigiTech HardWire RV-7 Stereo Reverb, an Ibanez Delay, a BOSS MO-2 Multi Overtone, a Marshall Guv'nor, and a ProCo RAT. The second one goes in the amp's effects return, and that's where I run the Kaoss, my RC-50, and an Ernie Ball volume pedal.

I also use the RC-50 as a mixer to send electronic samples to an active monitor speaker and the guitar amp. In addition, I keep the RC-50 connected to a TC-Helicon VoiceLive Play for some effected vocal loops and a Korg Kaossilator for synth-noise loops. As you can imagine, when I'm onstage, I'm trapped into an interesting architecture of cables and wires—my electric cobweb.

Do certain pedals drive your inspiration for soundscapes?

For some songs, the idea was already there—carved out using digital plug-ins while recording on my laptop. But I'll use the pedals later on to find more colors. Other tracks are born from random experiments with my pedals. I might find an interesting sound by chance that becomes a building block for an entire piece. This was the case for "Ovaries," where the main riff came out after messing around with the RAT, the BOSS Multi Over-tone, and a tremolo effect from the Kaoss Pad.

What are some of the challenges in constructing pieces from loops?

In general, working with loops means you must

have good timing and be very precise. But there's also the risk of becoming too predictable. Therefore, I try to add some challenges to the game. I avoid the usual structure built on consecutive layers, where consecutively looping one phrase over another means every part gets heard at least once before ending up in the arrangement, because you obviously have to record it first. I try to mix up these live loops with prerecorded electronic samples that pop into the song, taking the ear unexpectedly somewhere else by suddenly fading in and out. In addition, I avoid what I call the "karaoke effect" of being too obvious by never playing along to backing tracks that are the same length as the song. I interact with very short samples—just a few seconds long—while playing and singing. Of course, this often turns into a manic tap dance instead of a concert!

Another challenge is that my effects are set differently for every song—as are all the volume controls for patches and phrases in the RC-50—and I move quite quickly from one song into another during my set. Maybe it's just that I like to

complicate my life. Or, perhaps it's better to say that I enjoy making complicated things look simple.

Do you meticulously work out your pieces beforehand, or do you improvise over a main theme?

Ninety percent of my music is precisely worked out, and the remaining ten percent is improvised. I don't leave much to chance, as that could be a risky approach. There are too many things going on, and considerable focus is required. Unfortunately, if something goes wrong, I can't blame another bandmate!

How does all of this technology inform and direct your creative process?

The effects and guitar techniques serve a simple purpose of channeling my emotions, and drawing the listener into my little sonic planet. I have a curiosity for different sounds and musical genres, a strong rejection of stereotypes, a natural inclination to sonic hybridization, and I enjoy building something that's not easy to pigeonhole. In the end, however, I want heart and guts to prevail over the technological aspects. ■

Jimmie Vaughan Remembers the Old Days of Hunting for Parts

BY MICHAEL MOLENDRA

JIMMIE VAUGHAN FELL IN LOVE WITH

his trademark white Stratocaster after seeing Gene Vincent play a "Mary Kaye" model in a long-forgotten film.

"But I couldn't have a Mary Kaye, because I couldn't find one," says Vaughan, "so I just went for a white one. I wanted to be like Buddy Guy when I was a kid, and my first Strat was a '58 sunburst. Back in the day, there were lots of '50s and '60s Strats available, and they didn't cost that much. I finally got a white one from a friend."

But Vaughan found that keeping those guitars in working order was difficult under the duress of constant gigging.



"You'd be on tour for three months—just bam bam bam—and, you know, something would break," he says. "The pickups would just quit on me. Now, you didn't have all the [replacement] parts available that you do now. So I'd have to go to guitar shops seeking beaten-up old guitars that I could 'part out,' or I'd beg around for things, or I'd trade players for whatever I needed. Luckily, Strats were like race cars—workhorses—and if you found

something cool, you could switch things out. I was always tinkering with my guitars—trying to figure out how to screw up all the other guys. It's like gunslingers—you're trying to outdraw the other guy, right?"

The Fender Custom Shop debuted a "Vaughan Brothers" Limited Edition series built by John Cruz at Winter NAMM that includes SRV's "first wife" Strat, as well as Jimmie's late '70s model. ■



Road Doggin'

James Stevenson on Negotiating Multiple Sideperson Gigs

BY MICHAEL MOLENDRA

A FAMOUS BRITISH MUSIC JOURNALIST once stated that guitarist James Stevenson “has now played in 72 percent of all known bands.” Although the statement was amusing, it’s also apt. After 40 years in the business, Stevenson has played countless sessions, launched a career as a solo artist, and has hit the road with Chelsea, Generation X, Gene Loves Jezebel, the Alarm, Kim Wilde, Glen Matlock, the International Swingers, Holy Holy, and many others.

“Few bands today are really all-the-time things,” explains Stevenson, who has “72 Percent” imprinted on his custom picks. “Artists understand that most people play in several different groups. The way the industry has gone, you’re not getting any income from selling CDs anymore, so you constantly have to go out on the road in order to make a living.”

So how do you manage being in all those bands?

I have six completely different sets in my head all the time, and it’s a juggling act with the live shows, as well. At the beginning of



a recent tour with the Alarm, for example, I had to tell [frontperson] Mike Peters that I couldn’t do a show because Holy Holy had a television taping in London that I couldn’t miss. Mike was cool about it, and I literally flew from New York to London, did the TV show, and got on a plane to Atlanta the next morning to rejoin the Alarm tour. So that was pretty brutal, but that’s the way it is at times. You just have to go with it.

Is there a strategy to being such an in-demand session and tour guitarist?

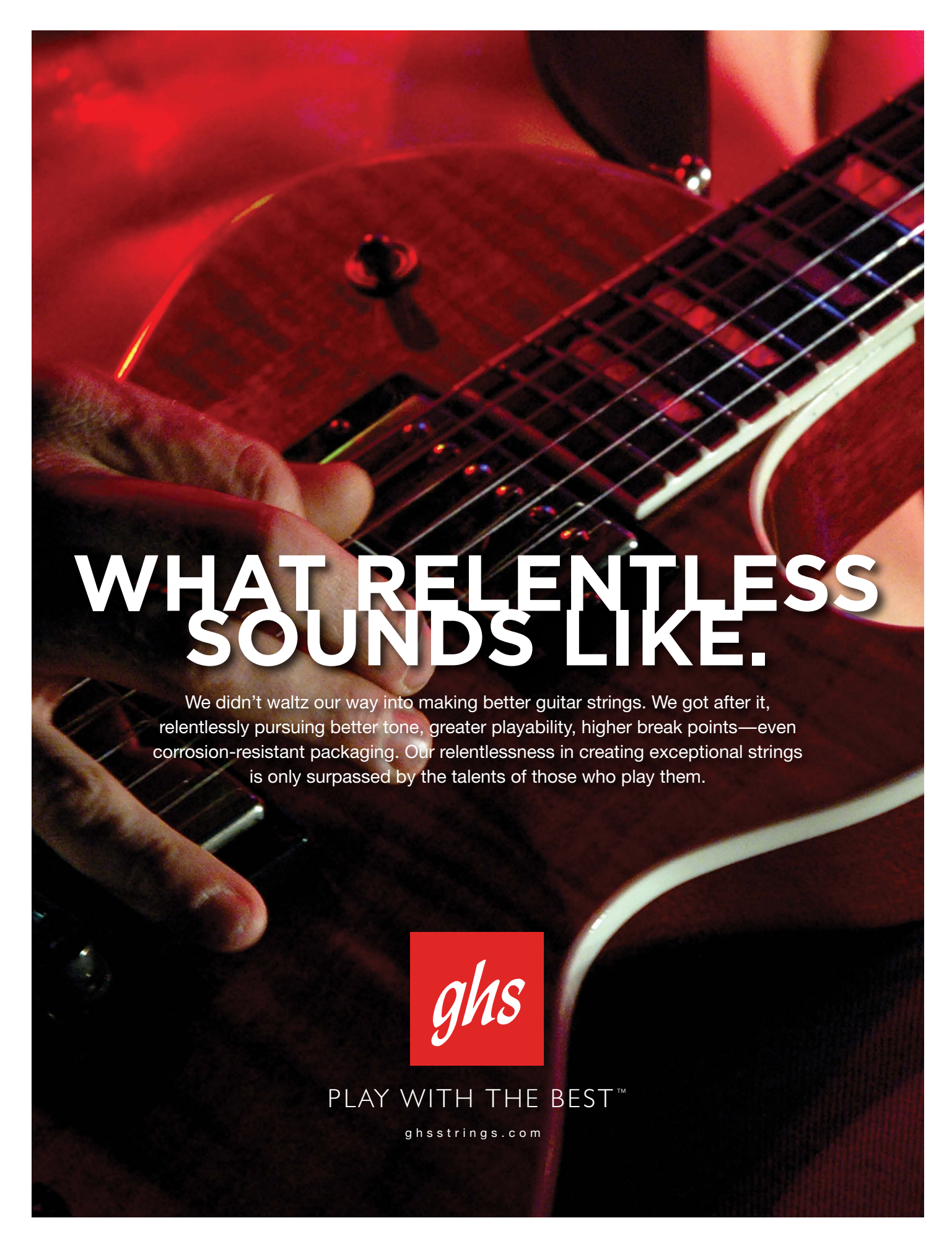
In a way, it’s like any business—it’s who you know. I’ve been playing professionally for

40 years now, and I’ve made a lot of connections. Through my first punk-rock group, Chelsea, I ended up meeting Gene Loves Jezebel. I’ve known Billy Duffy a long time, and that’s how I ended up in the Cult. With Holy Holy, the original promoter knew Mick Ronson’s sister Maggie—who I also knew—and she said, “You should talk to James about playing guitar.” You play in all these bands, you see, and people get to know what you can do.

What are the typical travel arrangements when you tour, and how do you manage the

STEVENSON’S FUZZY FRIENDS

- > “I like funky effects,” says Stevenson. “I have a lot of cool pedals that you could afford to buy in the 1980s, because no one knew what they were. Now, I see something on eBay that I paid 100 pounds for back then, and it’s going for 5,000 today. For example, I’ve got this desktop thing called the Psychedelic Machine, which was made by Shin Ei in the late ’60s. I have a ’70s CBS/Arbiter Doubler octave fuzz that was created by the original Tone Bender designer Gary Hurst. It’s one of my favorite pedals. I also have an original Uni-Sound fuzz pedal, some original Fuzz Faces, and a Foxx Tone Machine—one of the original furry ones with “octave” misspelled on the top. How I use these pedals is up to my gut. The thing with these old fuzz pedals is that they all sound a bit different. You can never really tell if they are going to sit in the track just right until you actually try them.”



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physical and mental pressures?

On the Alarm tour last year, we were living in a bus all the time. That's just how bands can afford to tour these days. But my favorite thing to do is to walk onstage and play my guitar, so if that entails sleeping on a bus for seven nights at a time, I'm more than happy to do that. Even when I go out with Chelsea, and we're playing smaller venues and sleeping three to a room in a hotel, it's fine with me. I used to be really fussy about that stuff 30 years ago, but now I don't really care. I just want to play. But if I have a couple of weeks off, I stay at home and chill out, because it often feels like I'm on the road 11 months of the year.

You'd think as we add more numbers to our ages, we'd get crankier about creature comforts.

Sure. But all the people I talk to—they don't care either. They're just glad to be out playing. Even someone like [drummer] Clem Burke. When he's out with Blondie, they get treated like royalty. He doesn't get treated that way when he's with one of the many other bands he plays with, but he's still happy, because he's out there playing his drum kit. We're

all a lot less spoiled than we used to be, because there's so much less money around. When I was touring with Gene Loves Jezebel in the '80s, you'd have a tour bus for the band, one for the crew, and a semi for the gear, and we'd stay in the best hotels every night in our own rooms. It cost a fortune! The money we threw away is just unbelievable.

In order to ensure your solos delight the artist and/or producer, and make the cut in recording sessions, how do you approach them?

Well, I can't stand it when you hear a song, and the solo has nothing to do with it—it's just some guy showing off. You have to learn that crafting memorable parts is so important. That's what was so great about Mick Ronson. If you listen to "Life on Mars" by David Bowie, the solo is easy to play, but to *invent* that solo is genius. It's so perfect for the song. In fact, I don't know why Bowie didn't share songwriting credit with him. Mick's riffs and arrangements are essential parts of some classic Bowie songs.

That brings up the thought that, if you come up with a signature part to a song, is it appropriate to ask the songwriter or artist, "Hey,

what's my percentage of royalties going to be for my contribution?"

Do that and you'd probably get fired straight-away [*laughs*]. It's very hard to argue with the hand that feeds you. Back in the day, I did a lot of sessions for [producer] Mickie Most when I was playing for Kim Wilde. Once, I billed him 600 pounds at union scale for an album project, and he told me, "I'm paying you 200 pounds." But I didn't disrespect him at all. The last thing I'd do is go to the Musicians Union and start a battle with him, because he'd never use me again. It's a lot of politics, and you have to feel your way around.

I can imagine that personality is a huge part of being sought out for band lineups and sessions.

Oh, yeah—that's the other thing. I try not to be an asshole, and I know about being on the road. It can be stressful. People are in a confined space, and you have to know how to chill out, and get on with people. You can be a great player, but if you're also a pain in the ass who drives everyone crazy, your employment is going to be brief. ■



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BY CRAIG ANDERTON



The Virtual Pedalboard

WITH DIGITAL RECORDING software, you can create cool virtual pedalboards with plug-ins—no patch cords or batteries! Here's how.

INSERT EFFECTS

All DAWs have effects bins (aka, “virtual racks”) for inserting plug-ins in series. The simplest option is to insert an amp sim—such as the Line 6 Helix, IK Multimedia AmpliTube, NI Guitar Rig, etc.—arrange its effects like a pedalboard, and you're done. But you can also supplement your sim, or replace its effects, from the huge variety of third-party plug-ins.

After creating your virtual pedalboard, save it. Many recording programs can save Track Presets—also called Track Templates. These save a track's settings (pan, volume, etc.), any effects included in the track, and the effect settings, so that calling up your virtual pedalboard is just a few clicks away.

PARALLEL EFFECTS

Track inserts generally don't allow parallel effects. No worries. Plug-ins such as Blue Cat's PatchWork and DDMF Metaplugin can host other plug-ins. For example, insert PatchWork (Fig. 1) as a plug-in in a track insert, and it can host up to eight parallel paths of series effects—just as if they were track-insert effects. What's more, some host plug-ins can “translate” normally incompatible plug-in formats—like hosting AU or VST plug-ins within Pro Tools (which accepts only AAX

format plug-ins). Slick.

If you don't want to spring for a plug-in host, create a parallel signal path with an effects or aux send to a bus, and add a second effects chain in the bus' effects bin or rack.

REAL-TIME FOOT CONTROL

This can get complicated, because you'll need to link some kind of MIDI hardware to controls within the program. Footpedals are usually easiest, because parameters often have a “MIDI Learn” function where you simply move the pedal, and it's assigned. Or you may need to link a parameter to controls or macros that then respond to MIDI. Check the documentation.

For footswitches, not all effects have automated bypass. Sometimes, your best option is linking to an effect's mix control, and switching between processed and straight sound. But unless you're using the virtual pedalboard live, it's easier to enable/bypass effects for particular parts of a song, and punch in where you want any changes to occur.

FX CHAINS

These let you create your own multieffects by setting up effects chains, and assigning knobs and buttons to various parameters, or even combinations of parameters. For example, you could assign an FX chain's “Distortion” control to distortion drive, midrange EQ boost in a parametric EQ, and overall level to maintain a constant level as you change the distortion



Fig. 1—PatchWork is a plug-in that hosts plug-ins.

drive. The FX Chains in PreSonus Studio One (Fig. 2) provide series and parallel effects chains, and include eight knobs and eight buttons. Cakewalk Sonar's FX Chains (Fig. 3) provide six knobs and six buttons, as well as the option for custom graphics.

Get a new tip every Friday at craiganderton.com, and also check out his latest music. ▶

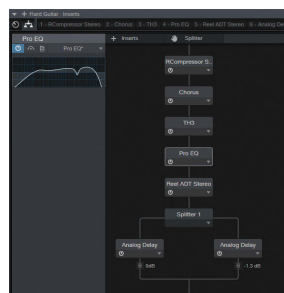


Fig. 2—Studio One's Effects Chains provide series and parallel effects paths.



Fig. 3—Cakewalk Sonar's FX Chains let you customize the graphics.

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{ MEET YOUR MAKER }

BY MICHAEL MOLENDAA



Stan Cotey Leads Fender's New Pedal Crusade

AS FENDER ITSELF WILL ADMIT, THE company has been a bit of a dilettante in the pedal space—not from a lack of innovation or manufacturing, but certainly from the standpoint of “we’re in the game to stay.”

“We’ll do a really cool pedal, and then 20 years later, we’ll do another one,” says Fender vice president of product innovation Stan Cotey. “There’s always a big gap in-between.”

But Fender is finally hitting the stompbox adventure with all burners set to hyperspace. Cotey is marshalling a series of six pedals this year, with a commitment to grow the line. (See Matt Blackett’s evaluation of the Mirror

Image Delay on p.91, and get reviews on the entire series at guitarplayer.com.) In addition, these are completely new designs, and not clones of the obvious choices. Cotey devised each pedal—with the exception of an overdrive that was developed by Alex Aguilar—from his personal “wish list” as a lifelong guitarist looking for sonic solutions. Unlike many of us, Cotey actually has the engineering chops to build his dreams.

“I love designing, so I would just work on projects for fun,” he says. “Sometimes, I’d drag them to the office, and they’d turn into products. So I had this labor of love doing a bunch of pedal designs, and the executives decided it was finally time to come up with enough pedals to build a line and really gain momentum. No one wanted to tread the same ground we covered before by going in and out of the market.”

Cotey’s “educated tinkerer” approach to design is apparent in the signal-processing schemes he sought to amend, re-engineer, or completely rethink for the pedal line.

“As a guitarist, I like the squishiness of stompbox compressors,” he says, “but the slow attack time of some models bugs me, because your attack can overshoot the processor, clip the amp, and produce a burst of noise at the front of the note. I want to play quietly, and then slam a chord, and have the compressor grab it quietly. So The Bends compressor has a precision peak protector with a really fast, complex circuit that’s much better behaved.

“The Level Set Buffer may not be everyone’s idea of a pedal to include in the initial release, but it was something I wanted to do because I change guitars a lot—from Teles to Strats to some things with lipstick pickups or humbuckers—and I was always adjusting the level of my amps, or the gain settings of the pedals downstream. In addition to being a good front-of-chain buffer, I added Level and

Hi-Frequency controls to the Level Set Buffer to allow for different guitar input levels and tones.

"For the Pugilist, my thinking started with that green overdrive that everybody loves, because it leaks a bit of the clean signal along with the diode-clipped distortion. That's neat, because it gives you some clarity. Of course, if you switch to a louder guitar, you can't control the proportions of the clean and clipped tones, and the overdrive sounds different to me. But I like the complexity of that circuit, and I've always liked blending multiple amps, so I thought about having two separate distortion engines inside the Pugilist. Then, you can set separate gains and tonal balances, and blend between the two sounds—say, bright and clean on one, and dark and grainy on the other. It's gets a bit more three-dimensional and complex—power, sustain, *and* clarity!

"I went for a mixed-bypass scheme for the Marine Layer Reverb and Mirror Image Delay to preserve the reverb and delay tails, as well as a Dry Kill switch for amps with parallel effects loops, in order to keep the dry signal entirely in the amp."

Although Aguilar is more known for bass products, he is actually a fantastic guitar player, and his current position at Fender opened the door for a "pedal partnership" with Cotey.

"I love what he did with the Santa Ana Overdrive," says Cotey. "He included a stabilized 20-volt internal power supply that allows the FETs to operate consistently, and with more dynamic range than a simple 9-volt supply. There's also an A/B voicing switch for working with amps that aren't traditionally pedal friendly, and a footswitchable boost that can be assigned pre or post."

Despite the big-company support, Cotey is often sitting at a garage workbench overcrowded with wires, sketches, transistors, and soldering guns—just like most emerging boutique builders.

"Yes, I work for Fender, and, yes, I need to deliver a successful pedal line," he says. "But everything I do is still driven by curiosity. It always starts with, 'What happens if I do *this*?'"



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{ WHACK JOB }



BY TERRY CARLETON



Blich-Chri Clari (Not)

MY INTEREST IN PEDALS

is very much like my interest in guitars—I love the weirdoes. Blich-Chri refers to this box as a “Custom Guitar Pedal Weird Tape Noise Thing”—which just scratches the surface of its mind-bending effects.

WEIRDO FACTOR

Let’s start with the graphics on the surface of the box. They look a bit like a ransom note cut out of unmatched newspaper fonts. (“wE haVe yOur dAugHter. SeNd \$1 miLLion to kEEp heR breAth-inG”). But the real weirdness happens when you plug in this circuit-bending marvel.

PLAYABILITY & SOUND

The Clari (Not) produces a great analog echo, as well as massive tube-style distortion. That might be enough value for what I paid for it, but you can also dial in an LFO (which is sort of like a wobbly octaver) to kick in during the echo trails, or you can process the original dry signal to take you into a scary sci-fi soundtrack mode. The controls are all interactive

and fun, and I was like a kid feeling around until I found something I liked. The audio output is super clean, and, on the back of the case, there’s a handwritten schematic of the trim-pot assignments on the circuit board—just in case you want to dial back the distortion, etc.

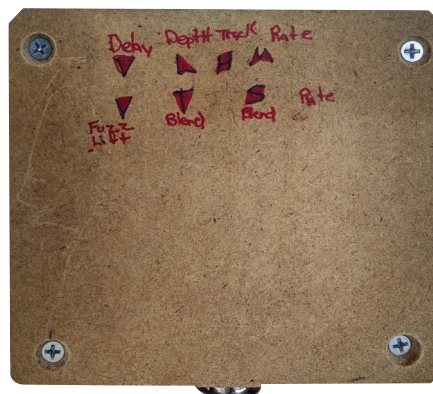
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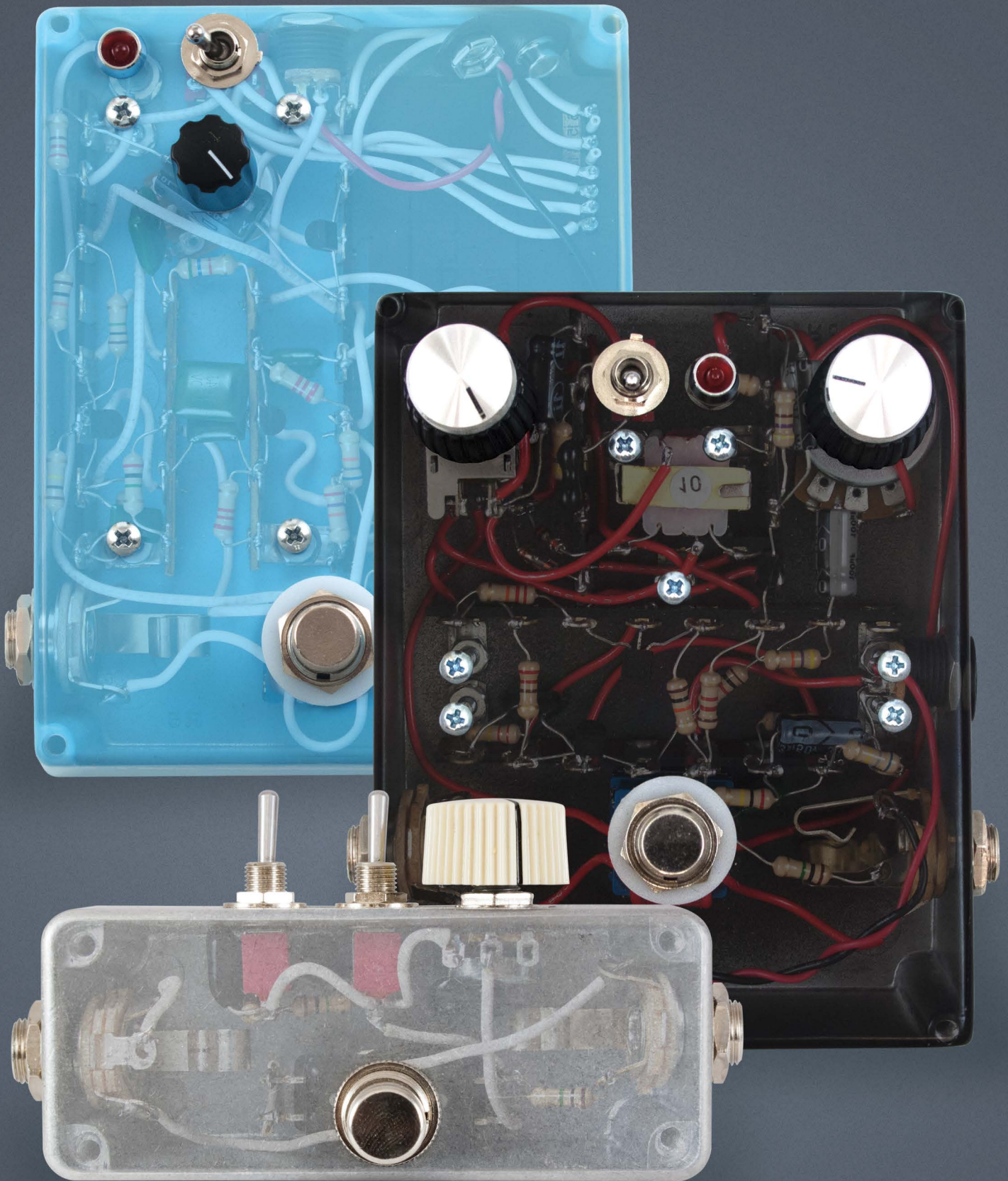
I paid about 90 bucks, including shipping, and if I use it on just one recording, it has more than paid for itself. The downside is availability. Blich-Chri appears to have taken a powder. My bet is that the company—likely a one-person operation—will resurface soon. For now, you’ll have to comb online sites to spot a used one.

WHY IT RULES

The Clari (Not) is like an old Minimoog. There are so many sonic possibilities that you almost wish it had presets. Of course, that would spoil the fun.

If you have photos and stories about your own whack jobs, please contact me with at rtcarleton@gmail.com. 📧





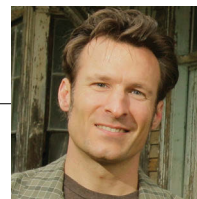
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{ CLASSIC GEAR }

BY DAVE HUNTER



The 1959 Gibson Flying V

THE GIBSON FLYING V IS

such a prominent symbol of rock warriordom today that it's hard to imagine a music scene without it. Yet there was a time when it did not exist, and that pre-V world was a very different place indeed. Born in 1958 and refined in '59, this iconic guitar arrived when the Cold War was raging, a gallon of gas cost 25 cents, and the first US passenger jet flights were just beginning. Amid all of this, and with rock 'n' roll still in its infancy, one of America's more traditional guitar manufacturers busts out with the most ferocious and thrusting electric design imaginable—a veritable hormone-fueled rocket of pure teen rebellion. Ahead of its time? The Flying V was totally out of its dimension.

Alongside the equally radical Explorer, the Flying V was part of Gibson's Modernist series of '58, a two-guitar lineup that exploded all previous notions of what an electric guitar could be. Not only was the Flying V's shape wildly original, it was also made from solid korina wood (also known as African white limba), a variety that hadn't been commonly seen in solidbody guitar making before this time, but had been used in Gibson's Consolette and Skylark Hawaiian steel guitars. A relative of mahogany, korina is a light, fine-grained wood with a slightly golden hue, and excellent resonance and sustain. When crafted into a good design it can make for a rich, singing solidbody guitar with a particularly lively



and detailed midrange response. Partnered with a pair of PAF humbuckers, the Flying V and Explorer constituted a force to be reckoned with in the tonal stakes.

Never mind that it's almost impossible to play a Flying V sitting down (despite the token gesture of a ribbed rubber pad attached to the body's bottom edge to provide a little traction in your lap). When you strap on one of these bad boys you really need to be standing, pant-legs flapping in the spotlight as a full-stack rages at your back. In order to make that wildly high neck/body joint stable, Gibson used

ESSENTIAL INGREDIENTS

- > V-shaped body made from solid korina (aka white limba)
- > Glued-in korina neck, unbound rosewood fretboard with dot inlays
- > ABR-1 "Tune-o-matic" bridge
- > "V" tailpiece with through-body stringing
- > Gold-plated hardware
- > "Patent Applied For" humbucking pickups

an unusually long neck tenon in a pocket that extends well beyond the neck-pickup route, while saving real estate at the body's back end by using a stylish "V" bridge plate and through-body stringing into ferules at the rear of the guitar. Combined, these constructional features worked toward a meaty, sustaining response. Filter that through the most revered humbucking pickups ever made, and most original Flying Vs are absolute tone monsters.

Early adopters of the Flying V included Albert King and Lonnie Mack, while Keith Richards of the Rolling Stones and Dave Davies of the Kinks picked up first-run examples some years after their extinction. Yet it's no surprise that this outlandish, space-aged guitar was just too much for most musicians of the late '50s and early '60s. The original release vanished from the Gibson catalog post-1960, after fewer than 100 had been made. It would be revived later in the decade—and remained a rock staple forever after—but the original korina Flying Vs are among the rarest of rare birds. Gibson's Custom Shop released a highly regarded 1959 Flying V reissue in the late '00s, and several other makers have paid homage to the design, but the originals changed the concept of what you could do with a solidbody electric guitar, and confirmed that it could be a sculpture, a statement of intent, and a powerful musical instrument all at the same time. ■

PHOTO COURTESY OF MAT KOEHLER AND GIBSON GUITARS



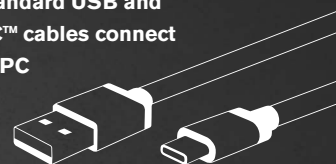
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{ THE FOLEY FILES }



ANITA BARBOUR

BY SUE FOLEY



Ellen McIlwaine

ELLEN MCILWAINE WAS

already well known on the blues scene when I was starting out. She was legendary for having played with Hendrix in the '60s, as well as forging her career at the cusp of the women's movement. Ellen was one of the first females to play a really strident, aggressive style of slide, with no holds barred and totally in your face. Even though she was categorized as a blues artist, Ellen shifted her style over the years, incorporating world music to create something completely of her own. She remains one of the world's greatest and most unique slide guitarists.

Do you realize how much of an influence you've had? I see you in the same light as Memphis

Minnie—a real trailblazer.

I didn't learn the way someone else does, so I didn't fit into a box. I was playing an acoustic guitar through an amp with a wah pedal, breaking all the rules, and not paying attention to "this is how you do it." My slide playing is not typical, but slide is a really individual thing. If you listen to every slide player, you'll see that we're all different.

What do you feel is most unique about your style?

I learned from a flamenco player—that's why I use finger picks and fling my whole right hand at the guitar.

One of the things I found interesting seeing you live was hearing your Middle Eastern influences.

I've always been fascinated

by minor keys, and those strange Middle Eastern scales. Because I grew up in Japan, I was exposed to all different cultures. We had 200 students in our school, and 28 nationalities. When I first came to the States, people would say, "What is that? That's really weird." But it's part of the whole thing called world music. I've always done it. Every kind of people in the world have wonderful contributions to make. I think people should share music, dance, food, and art, because we have so much to give each other.

Are there any women on the scene today, or in the past, that you've been influenced by?

There was nobody there but me. I was on the scene for maybe five years before Bonnie Raitt appeared, and Memphis Minnie

was not somebody that anybody talked about. Those women who played blues in the '40s kind of got buried and passed over. I didn't hear about them until much later in my career. I consider Joni Mitchell to be a great guitar player. I'm a big fan. She's just playing what comes out of her, and I think that's what we women have to do. If there's anything we can give each other, it's just. "Let's go for it!" Being a female guitar player doesn't need to have any restrictions, but other people who use that term might think it does. You have to play what comes out of you, and in order to do that, you can't put the brakes on.

For more information on Sue Foley, click to her website (suefoley.com), or check out her latest CD, The Ice Queen. ■



COLUMN

{ VINYL TREASURES }

BY JIM CAMPILONGO



Live Johnny Winter And

I FIRST HEARD THE 1971 RELEASE,

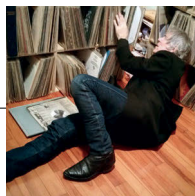
Live Johnny Winter And, when I was a curious 12-year-old kid who was just discovering blues rock. This great LP was recorded at the Fillmore East in 1970, and it showcased standout tracks such as “Mean Town Blues,” “Jumpin’ Jack Flash,” and “Johnny B. Goode.” But the song that still blows me away is “It’s My Own Fault”—a blues-rock tour-de-force that clocks in at 12 minutes and 14 seconds. Every second of it is vital, spirited, and interesting, and I’m still inspired by the chemistry of the group, which included guitarist Rick Derringer, bassist Randy Joe Hobbs, and drummer Bobby Caldwell.

Sure, the most obvious things on the album are the wonderful and fiery pentatonic onslaughts of Johnny Winter, but my vote for Most Valuable Player goes to Derringer and his rhythm playing. Derringer exposed me to tritone substitution (basically, playing the upcoming dominant chord

a 1/2 step above the destination chord); 9th, #9, & 13th chords; and brilliant turnarounds that could come from Blind Lemon Jefferson or Leadbelly, but that were played with the sound and spirit of Angus Young. Derringer’s virtuoso rhythm playing displayed an endless supply of ideas and themes, and he supported Winter in a selfless way, while still pushing the band.

I continue to apply some of Derringer’s licks and turnarounds in my trio, and they never feel passé. I specifically employ two turnarounds inspired by him on “Jim’s Blues” from my *Live at Rockwood Music Hall NYC* album, and I always think of Derringer when I play them—even after all these years of making them part of my musical vocabulary. I can only hope that some young guitarist might take something similar from me. It’s the gift that keeps on giving.

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



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"HE TRICKED ME!"



A BIT OF MISDIRECTION FOOLS **ADRIAN BELEW** INTO JOINING GIZMODROME

THERE SEEMS TO BE A “THING” going on lately, where artists get contracted for a single session, but then end up as marquee players in the act they were brought in to bolster. This happened for Jennifer Batten with the Scherer/Batten *BattleZone* album (read all about it in the February 2018 *GP*), and it also went down for Adrian Belew, when ferocious drummer—and member of the Police—Stewart Copeland asked him to put some “stunt guitar” on a recording project in Italy.

“I thought I was going to play for a couple of days on a couple of tracks, and I ended up staying ten days,” says Belew. “I thought, ‘It’s Stewart Copeland. It’s Italy. I get to hang out in the Italian sun and eat pasta. What could possibly go wrong?’”

In fact, everything went all kinds of right—so much so that Belew, Level 42 bassist Mark King, keyboardist Vittorio Cosma, and Copeland turned into a bona fide band, and released the self-titled album, *Gizmodrome* [earMUSIC] late last year.

“I had my family with me,” explains Belew, “so it seemed more like a vacation than anything else. But as the days went by, it was pretty clear this group of players was doing something really special, unique, and uplifting. I thought it



LORENZA DAVERIO

would be a shame *not* to be in a band with these guys, because the music is so good. And, in the bigger picture, I think people are gravitating back to music that is performed by accomplished players—they’re waking up to good music again. But I’ve been wrong about that before...”

So how exactly did you go from guesting on a Stewart Copeland project to joining a band?

BY MICHAEL MOLEND

PHOTOGRAPH BY MAX CARDELLI

When someone brings me in to do some hairy guitar stuff, I typically set up in the control room, and go wild on tracks that are already there. That’s what I thought I’d be doing in Milan with Gizmodrome. But, when I arrived, everything was set up in a big recording room, because we were going to play together as a band. Then, we proceeded to learn the songs, because they weren’t arranged, and nothing was set in stone. It was, “Here’s the verse, and here’s the chorus.” We’d work up an arrangement on the fly, and when we were ready, we’d do a couple of takes. We usually didn’t do more than two or three takes, and we almost always used the second one. This is when I got the clue that something different was happen-

ing here. Unbeknownst to me, Stewart was hoping Mark and I would invest ourselves in the music, and say, “Hey, why don’t we make this for real and become a band?” He tricked me!

Let’s talk about your wonderful Gizmodrome cohorts. What’s it like playing with Stewart?

For my money, Stewart Copeland is one of the top five drummers ever. I put him up there with Ringo Starr and Bill Bruford—players who changed the way people hear drums. He is a ball of energy that shatters the earth all on his own, and



{ ADRIAN BELEW }

you kind of pick your place and jump in. It's really fun to play with somebody who has that much technique, but is tasteful at the same time.

What about Mark?

Mark and I bonded quickly, because we both have a wacky sense of humor. In Europe, he's called "The man with the three-million dollar thumb"—or something ridiculous like that—because he's so well-known for being the slap-bass guy. And, on the first day of the sessions, that's exactly what he was doing. It was sounding good, but you had me going crazy on guitar, and Stewart absolutely off the wall with the drumming. So Mark comes in on the second day, and he says, "You know what? *Somebody* has to hold this thing down." Then, he picked up a Jazz Bass, and completely changed his style to fit the band. Everything just got better and better from there.

I guess to American audiences, Vittorio would be the least known of the group.

He was kind of quiet and serious-minded, but that might have been due to the language barrier. All the Italians told us that, in Italy, he's considered to be hilarious. He plays in the band Elio, which is very theatrical and comical. Also, Vittorio wasn't really going for his parts when we were recording the basic tracks. It wasn't until I started getting the rough mixes that I could hear all the things he was playing, and I was astounded. His chops are amazing. He can play grand piano, or organ, or whatever you want. But it was more about his taste, and all the little sounds he put into the music. He's a colorist—which is kind of how I view myself, as well.

Was the plan always that Stewart was going to be the lead vocalist?

From the beginning? I'm not sure. Stewart would just say, "Let me throw a vocal on here so everybody knows where we are." I was kind of taken aback—but only because he has never tried to be a singer. Oddly enough,

as the days went by, I got accustomed to his singing, and I realized that a big part of the charm for me was the personality he put into the songs. So we decided that Mark and I would sing the choruses perfectly in harmony and gorgeously double tracked, and Stewart would be the storyteller.

How did you approach the material?

When we worked up the basic tracks, I was just trying to learn the songs and be a rhythm-guitar player. When those were done, I moved my gear into the control room to do overdubs. Everybody was sitting behind me, and Stewart would say something like, "This is about an alien, so do you have anything that sounds like an alien spaceship?" I'd say, "Sure." Then, he'd say, "Okay, go wild at the end." And I'd say, "Yep. I can do that." It was all very quick. I didn't plan things. I didn't work out parts. I just went for it. I would do a couple of things in one pass, and then maybe throw something else on there, and they pretty much used everything.

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PLAYERS

{ ADRIAN BELEW }

Even after all of your experience, did you ever feel any trepidation about having to immediately translate what Stewart was asking for into actual guitar parts? I mean, it sounds about as in-the-moment as it can get.

No. I feel very confident about my abilities when being put on the spot. After all, I've done it with a lot of people, and many of them were very scary—like Frank Zappa. There's always a minute, though, when you think, "I hope what I'm doing here is turning people on." Of course, you never know that for sure until you finish, and the people around you are screaming and dancing around.

I think *GP* readers have always been amazed at how easily you seem to devise unique and surprising, yet appropriate parts. It's almost warlock stuff.

The process is magical to me, too. You have to understand, I really don't know what I'm doing that much. I'm not educated. I didn't

go to Berklee. I don't know a pentatonic scale from a fish scale. So it's really all coming from what my imagination is telling me.

What gear were you using to unleash all of this madness?

I was just off a European tour, so I had my guitar rig with me, which all fits in one case and weighs 79 pounds. It's three volume pedals, a Liquid Foot MIDI pedal, a DigiTech HarmonyMan, an Fractal Audio Axe-Fx, a Boss GP-10, and a computer. Then, I had two identical Parker Fly guitars. There was no amplifier involved at any time. Everything came out of the Axe-Fx and into direct boxes.

Your comment about people gravitating back to accomplished musicianship is interesting and, well, hopeful.

Listen, if I tried to fit in and create a pop hit, I'd fail every time, because that's not how I think. I like to say that I'm in the business, but I'm not in the business a lot of other people are in. I realized after having enough tries at being a mainstream artist that I wasn't

going to have that. What I have instead is my own voice—which is what everyone should have—and it's all down to how many fans know about it, how many fans will buy the music, and how many fans will come out to the show. I'm not a rich rock star. I'm just a working musician—a "creative force" is what I like to call myself [laughs].

You certainly appear to be working a lot and having a blast.

My wife once said, "At the point you're at now, it's all about love. You do it for the love." It *should* be fun, or don't do it. I've been in the race long enough, and I know I can't really do anything else, so it really comes down to saying, "What do I really want to do the most, and can I get there?" And that's what you're working on all the time. So when Gizmodrome appeared out of nowhere, it was a huge blessing for me because I felt like, "Oh, I can go in a new direction with new musicians who are on my level, and create music that's fun and groovy." ■



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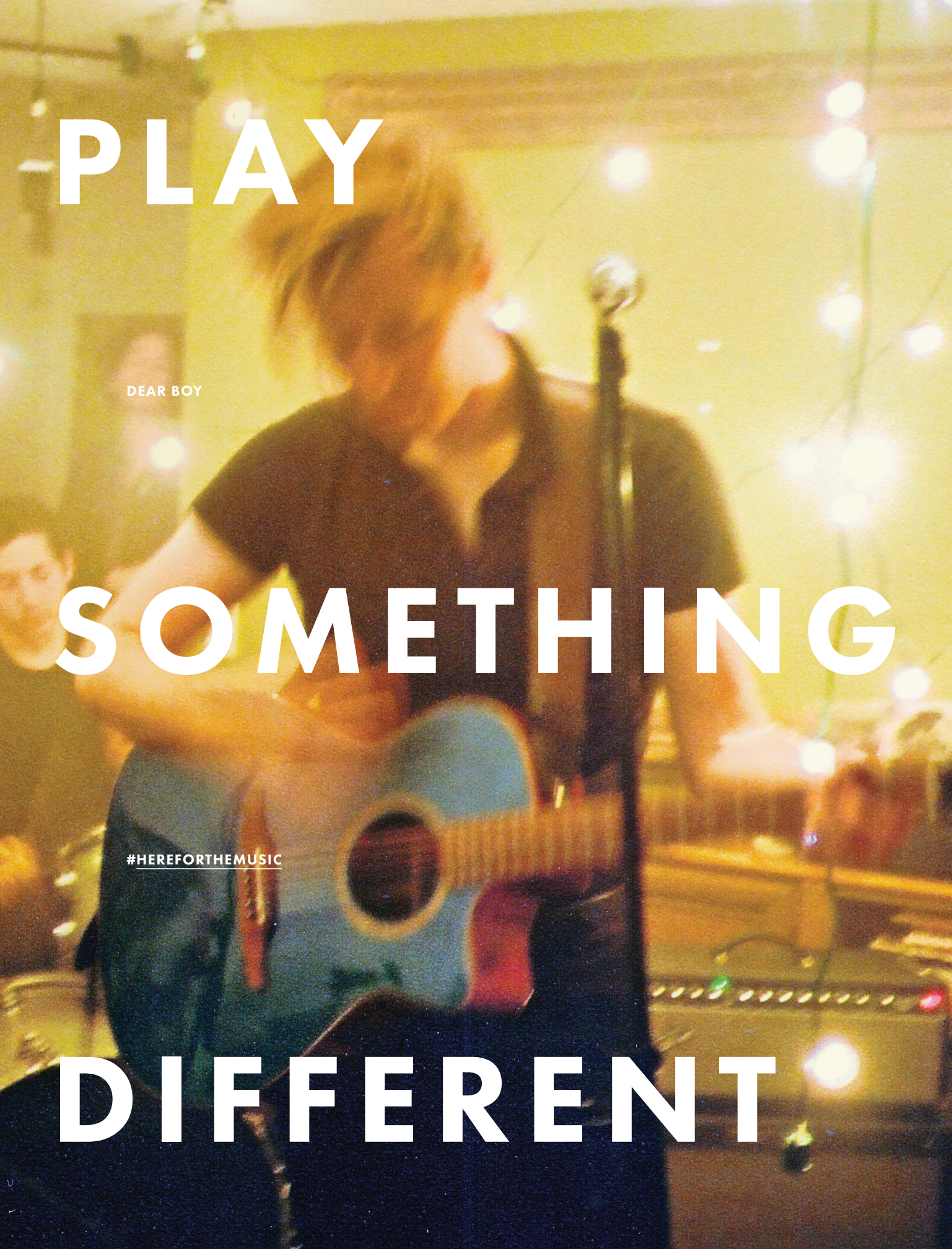
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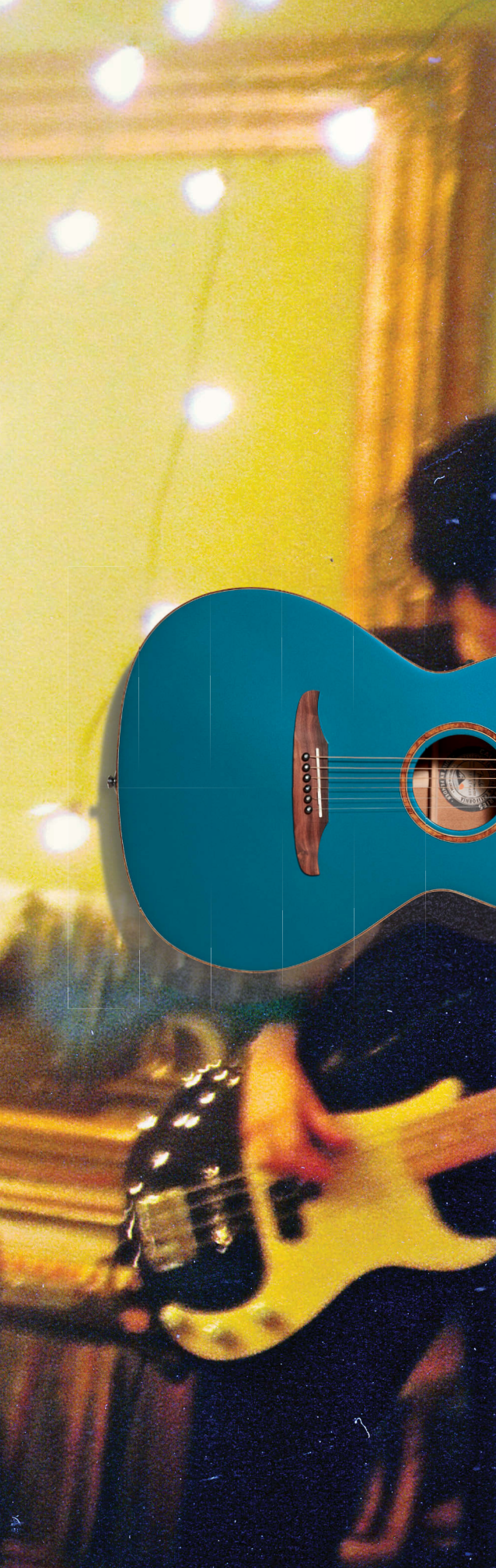
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SAMPLES? PICK CHANGES? MIDI?

TIM MILLER SCIENCES-OUT HIS GORGEOUS ACOUSTIC/ELECTRIC SOUNDS.

IT MAY SEEM A GIVEN THAT AN OUT-standing guitarist would try to achieve fame and fortune. But despite prodigious chops, a gorgeous sound, and excellent compositional skills, Tim Miller has eschewed such a path for a life largely dedicated to teaching and family. A professor of guitar at Berklee College of Music and the creator of internetguitarlessons.tv, Miller has also authored a book with performer/educator Mick Goodrick, *Creative Chordal Harmony for Guitar* [Berklee Press/Hal Leonard].

Even with his full teaching schedule, however, Miller has found time to perform and/or record with Dweezil Zappa, Paul Motian, Randy Brecker, Mike Stern, Ben Monder, Gary Burton, George Duke, Gary Husband, and others. Though he remains under the guitar-hero radar, his latest recording, the self-released *Trio Vol 3*, may help change that. It is replete with the kind of lush chords, breathy, fat-toned legato soloing, and lightning runs that might sound familiar to Allan Holdsworth fans. This is not surprising, as Holdsworth and Miller's relationship was as much friends as musical peers and creative foils.

What do you see as some of the similarities and differences between your style and Holdsworth's?

I admire his playing so much. He was a huge influence on my style, and I'm happy to embrace that. We became friends, and we'd talk a lot on the phone and trade gear. But what separates me from his style is the diversity of my influences, which include Pat Metheny, John Scofield, Mick

Goodrick, Eric Johnson, Van Halen, Joe Satriani, Steve Vai, Frank Gambale, Mike Stern, and many more. I put it all together with my own ideas, which took me to a different place.

You've been playing guitars made by Rick Canton that are based on Klein designs.

I'm a very tall person, and the slightly angled Klein neck helped me sit up straighter when I'm playing, and it also straightens my wrist so I can get in more hours of playing. When I wanted to blend electric and acoustic sounds as part of my tone, I asked Rick to hollow out one of his instruments and put a microphone in the soundhole. I also wanted a MIDI guitar system onboard, and I use the Fishman TriplePlay wireless MIDI controller. Recently, I have been using a Kiesel Zeus as my main guitar.

How did you get such a big electric sound on *Trio, Vol. 3* with little or no distortion?

It's a blend of a bridge-humbucker sound processed in stereo, and a Neumann U87 or sE Electronics microphone positioned next to the guitar body. Because a loud amp will bleed into the mic, I process the electric-guitar sound with amp models from a Fractal Audio Axe-Fx II or AX8, along with speaker impulse-response plug-ins. For the miked signal, I use the Fractal or plug-ins for processing. So the two signals are treated separately, but then I mix them together. This achieves a full-range

sound, giving me overtones and upper harmonics that a straight electric-guitar tone can't achieve.

You also go to great lengths to craft the acoustic element of your sound when performing live.

Yes. I've tried piezo pickups and all kinds of IRs, but I still couldn't get my acoustic tone to sound like it does in the studio. So I did a multi-sample recording of my guitar, and I trigger the acoustic samples via MIDI. I blend the samples with the electric sound, but only for a small part of the high-frequencies. All of the dynamics still come from the electric. This approach doesn't have the attack of an acoustic piezo pickup, and, in fact, it's not the best acoustic sound, but it does add air to the overall tone.

It's interesting that you consider your pick as an essential component of your tone.

The pick is important, because it's the start of the sound. The angle and the attack controls the EQ. I've worked on a technique where the more I angle the pick, the more bass I can get out of the note, so I can control the low-end frequencies in my tone with my touch. Also, when I play a low-volume gig or session, I'll use a Fender Heavy for more bass and more volume. But the louder I get, the lighter I go with picks, because a lighter pick attenuates the low end.

Why did you adopt hybrid picking?

It began as a departure from other people's styles. I found I couldn't do what they were doing, so I found a way of picking that would work for me. I was also

BY MICHAEL ROSS

PHOTOGRAPH BY KERRI MILLER



hearing things in my head that I couldn't do with alternate picking, sweep picking, or any of those techniques, so I started using my fingers, and I came up with this system of arpeggios.

Do you have any tips about how to keep scales and arpeggios used in solos from sounding like exercises?

Deliver the phrase as if you were singing it vocally. I always try to make music—even if I'm practicing something technical.

What amps do you use live?

I have two rigs, depending on my

mood. If I use the Fractal AX8 for its amp sounds, I'll send some outputs to the front of the house, and the other outputs to full-range QSC K10 powered speakers. Blending the acoustic and electric sounds doesn't work with a conventional guitar amp. My other rig is either a Paul Reed Smith Sweet 16 or a Quilter Overdrive 200, and I use the Fractal solely as an effects pedalboard, along with a Maxon SD-9 for overdrive.

How has your music changed between your last record and this one?

I started a family and had three kids—which changed my life completely. I'm more focused when I practice, because I have less time. As a result, my music has become clearer, and my technique has gotten a little better.

You're on par with any player who is making a career as a guitarist, yet you decided to concentrate on teaching.

I love to teach, but I can also see myself doing a lot more playing and touring soon. I don't think about it too much, though. I just think about the music. ■

RARE BREED

MICHAEL SCHENKER
FOLLOWS NO ONE

SCORES OF GUITARISTS HAVE WORN out copies of the Scorpions' *Lonesome Crow* or UFO's *Phenomenon* attempting to glean the secrets of Michael Schenker's phrasing and elegant yet forceful vibrato. Schenker is well aware of such fan devotion, but he lets out an astonished gasp at the notion he would ever engage in such diligent study of another player himself.

"Why would I do that?" he laughs. "I'm a trend maker—not a trend follower. I don't listen to anyone else, and I don't listen to music at home. Period. I never

even practice. That's dull. For me, the guitar is what I use to go on an adventure. It's self-expression. The art of playing lead guitar should always be based on instinct and emotion."

A couple of years ago, Schenker put together the Michael Schenker Fest, a touring outfit that featured the three most famous vocalists (Gary Barden, Graham Bonnet, and Robin McAuley) from his past MSG/McAuley Schenker Groups.

BY JOE BOSSO

Buoyed by the reception he received from fans, Schenker gathered the whole gang—along with singer Doogie White from his Temple of Rock combo—to record *Resurrection* [Nuclear Blast]. Brimming with catchy hard-rock anthems, the album captures Schenker, at age 63, at peak form, deftly deploying widescreen riffs and potent solos.

Let's go back in history. What's the story behind your auditioning for the Stones to replace Mick Taylor back in the '70s?

That never happened. I was in England with UFO, and my landlady said I had gotten a call from the Rolling Stones. I called back, and somebody said, "Do you want to audition for the Stones?" I went, "Whoops! Wait a minute. I'll call you back." I told my brother Rudolph that I didn't know what to do. He said, 'Well, it's your life. You have to do what feels right.' I decided to forget about it. UFO was already a big step for me. The whole thing made me nervous. I guess I just talked my way out of it.

You also turned down the chance to play with Ozzy Osbourne. A lot of guitarists would have jumped at that chance.

But I'm not like most guitarists [laughs]! Ozzy was in shock because Randy Rhoads had just died. He needed to carry on with the tour, and he called to ask if I could help out. I was tempted, but I had left UFO to put my own thing together, and that felt like the right thing to do. So, no, I didn't play with Ozzy. Some people desperately look for fame. I don't. I look for, "What's the next best step for me?"

Your lead on UFO's "Rock Bottom" is commonly cited as one of the best solos of all time. What do you make of that?

I don't know. I've heard people say, "He knew the rules, and that's how he broke them." But I wasn't breaking rules. I didn't know them! It's all by ear and feel—the inner world. I play a note that inspires me, and that takes me to the next note, and so on.

Your guitar sound in that song was also selected as one of the "50 Best Tones of All Time" by this magazine. You used a partially engaged wah. Was that something you commonly did?

It was. I liked the element of a little bit of "wah EQ" in there. But from that point on, I pretty much stopped using the wah. Many of the new pedals sounded thin and horrible, and they made these stupid noises. So the wah became less important to me.

The new album has four different vocalists on it. Did you change your guitar style or tone to suit a particular singer?

No. You put two elements together, and there's a chemical reaction. It's almost like a horoscope. You can try to predict what you'll do, but you never really know.

Metallica's Kirk Hammett guests on "Heart and Soul," and his vibrato sounds vaguely similar to yours.

It's funny you say that, because I was just thinking that the other day. Only I think his vibrato is more like what I did years ago. I think he was a fan of my early work, so he must have checked it out when he was quite young. He has a fast vibrato, but I don't do that anymore. I try to relax. I want to sing with the children.

Did you two work out what you were going to play together?

Nothing is planned. If you work something out and practice it, it has no life. A solo has to be a continuous development. It's part of a thought process. It's not even a thing for words. I can't describe what I do all the time. I like to play music—*not* talk about it.

The instrumental, "Salvation," is very sweet and poignant. You've made a number of all-instrumental albums. Do you ever think about doing another one?

Once I do something, it's done. There's no reason to repeat it. There's nothing left that I need to do on that level.

Do you ever pick up a non-V-shaped guitar?

Oh, no—never! [Laughs.] In my beginning period, I played other guitars, and I played a Les Paul on *Lonesome Crow*, but I prefer Vs. When I went with Dean, they sent me a bunch of guitars, and they're lovely. That's all I play.

Are you still using Marshall JCM 800 2205 amps?

Oh, yes—the same amp I apparently designed. There's no reason for me to play anything else.

Do you use any effects?

I have a couple of Boss delays and choruses, as well as a Dunlop DB0 Dimebag Cry Baby From Hell wah that's really nice. I don't go crazy with effects, because I always want to sound like me. Too many effects make you sound like somebody else. ■



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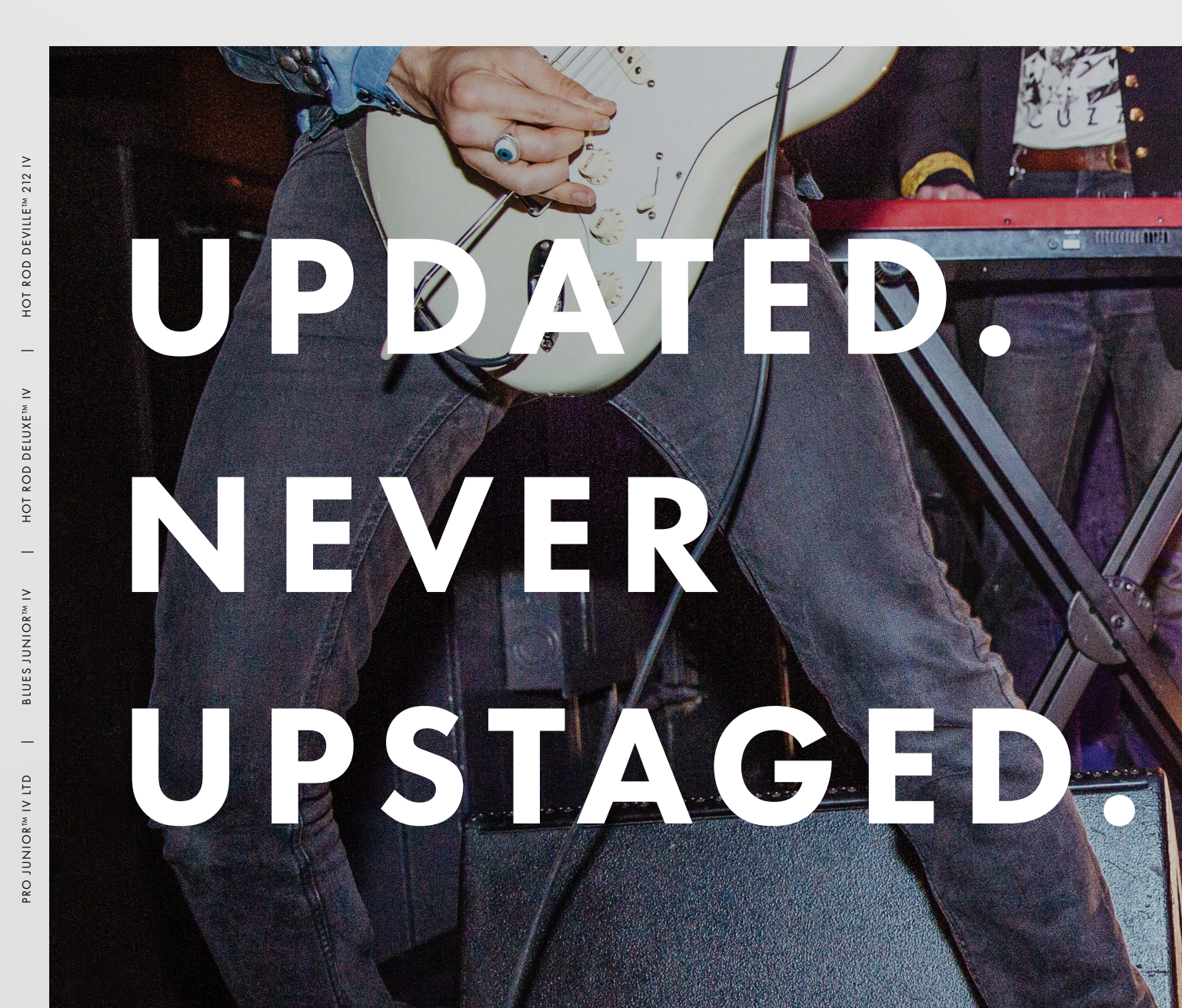
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FALLING STAR

ON JULY 3, 2016, MIKE STERN WAS crossing a street in Manhattan when he tripped over some of the construction debris that dots New York City. Putting out his hands to break his fall, Stern suffered fractures to both arms, and his right hand—his picking hand—suffered nerve damage. An injury like this would be shattering for any guitarist, but for Stern, who, since his days with Miles Davis, has had a reputation as one of the most technically proficient players on the jazz scene, it was especially tragic.

But Stern didn't become one of jazz's leading guitar lights by giving up when the going got tough. Within an amazing three months, he was back on stage, wielding his Yamaha signature guitar, and trotting out the endlessly inventive (if microscopically less fluid) bebop lines on which he has built his reputation.

His new record, *Trip* [Heads Up]—get it?—contains all the elements Stern fans have come to know and love. The groove-based title track and “Watchacallit” feature his trademark angular heads. “Half Crazy” finds him burning through rhythm changes at a wholly insane pace. “Screws” recalls the guitarist's Davis days by melding Jimi and Miles into a bitchin' brew, and “Amelia” revisits the wordless vocals and African attitude of Stern's *Voices*. He is ably abetted throughout by an all-star lineup of fusion stalwarts, including drummers Dennis Chambers,

Dave Weckl, and Lenny White; bassists Victor Wooten and Tom Kennedy; saxophone star Bill Evans; and trumpeter Randy Brecker. Like his 2012 record, *All Over the Place*, *Trip* takes you on a, well, trip through multiple genres and tones.

How are you doing physically after the accident?

Obviously it's a challenge, but generally, things are a lot better. I had nerve damage in my right hand. A doctor Wayne Krantz recommended patched me up. It happened in July, and by the second week of October, I was playing. But it was hard. The pick wouldn't stay put because there was not enough strength there. A drummer named Ray Levier, who has difficulty holding his sticks due to being burned in a fire, told me to try wig glue, and that really helped me grip the pick.

Other than having to glue the pick to your hand, did the injury change anything about your technical approach to the guitar?

Not really. I have always played with a light pick attack—like Jim Hall. In his playing, you don't really hear the pick. It's a vocal sound he heard in his head that he went for. Sometimes, when I'm digging in for rock, I want to hear the percussive part of the sound. But, most

times, I try to get a more vocal sound. I'm also after a horn-like approach, and I try to get the quality of that phrasing on the guitar. I transcribe a lot of horn music. I forget most of it, but some seeps into my playing.

Which picks are you gluing to your thumb?

D'Addario heavys. I was using medium picks until about three years ago.

What strings are you using these days?

I played Fenders for years. When I was first playing in the '60s, the gauges for a set of Fender .010s were .010, .013, .015, .026, .032, and .038. Now, D'Addario is making me a custom set of those gauges, except that I now substitute an .011 to get a little fatter sound on the high E string.

How about your amps?

For the new record, I used Roland Blues Cubes with two 12" speakers. Some of my amps are falling apart after using them for so many years, and I thought the Cubes sounded really good.

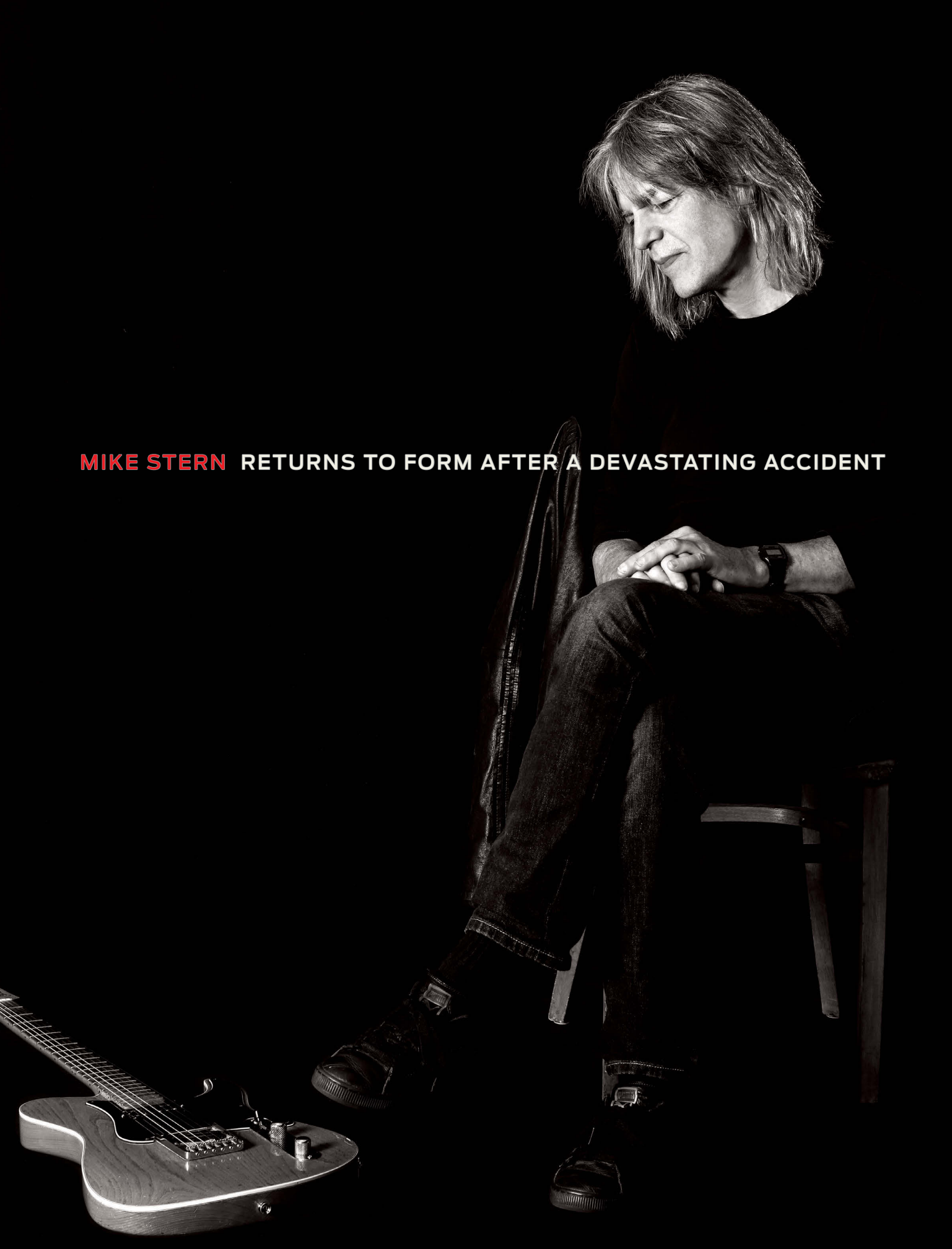
Will you take them out on the road?

No. I'm one of those guys who gets used to something that works. I'd rather focus on the music, and not stress out too much about new equipment. I'll still use the blackface Fender Twins I've been renting on the road.

The distortion sounds on the new record are great, and it seems you were using more dirt on the record

BY MICHAEL ROSS

PHOTOGRAPH BY SANDRINE LEE

A black and white photograph of Mike Stern, a musician, sitting on a wooden stool. He is looking down with a somber expression, his hands clasped in his lap. He has shoulder-length hair and is wearing a dark t-shirt, jeans, and sneakers. A watch is visible on his left wrist. In the bottom left corner, an electric guitar lies on the floor. The background is dark, and the lighting is dramatic, highlighting the subject.

MIKE STERN RETURNS TO FORM AFTER A DEVASTATING ACCIDENT



{ MIKE STERN }

than usual. Did the distortion help you play after the accident?

That's exactly right. My thumb was still not fully flexible, and the compression that happens naturally when you use an overdrive helped. I used a Boss DS-1 Distortion and a Boss BD-2 Blues Driver. The Blues Driver has this thing where it sounds like the amp

is breaking up a little in a cool way. Also, other things about the situation might dictate what sound you use. For example, the drums were right next to me in a small room, so I used the Blues Driver more because it focuses the sound and makes it pop out. I was also into changing up a little, and using a dirtier sound.

Do you use the Blues Driver and the DS-1 separately or together?

Usually separately—when I use them at all. Sometimes, I'm just playing through the harmonizer effect in a Yamaha SPX90, which makes the sound fatter and a little more legato. Like I said, once I find something that works, I stay with it. The patch I use on the SPX90 is like a chorus, but it has a sound quality that I like better. The SPX90 is a pretty cool multi-effect, but I drag it around just for that one effect. It's part of my sound.

Your compositions are really groove oriented. Do you compose with a drum loop or a program?

I just get a groove in my brain, or I'll hear somebody play something. I always carry a little notebook around in my guitar case. If I'm playing with Dennis Chambers, and he's doing cool stuff at soundcheck, it might inspire me to write it down. Inspiration hits you, and then it's gone. Sometimes, people think they will remember it later, but that hasn't worked well for me. I have to write it down whenever I get an idea. Time has always been an important part of music for me—even in ballads that don't have a strong groove. It's always in the tune somehow. No one has perfect time, but you can work on it. A person's musical voice is defined as much by what they can't do as by what they can do. For example, some people who don't have strong time figure out a way to float over a groove in a beautiful way.

Who would be an example of that?

Allan Holdsworth was a really good example. He had a good sense of time, but it wasn't about swinging in a pocket. He would phrase over the time in a way that came out as interesting rhythms, but that wasn't "hitting up against the time," as Jaco used to say.

Was the new record recorded before or after the accident?

I'd written most of the stuff before, but it was recorded after the accident. It was no coincidence that I called it *Trip* [laughs]. I figured, I can't really ignore this accident, so I may as well embrace it, and get something positive out of it. It's like Django Reinhardt after the fire, or Les Paul after his car accident—if you really want to keep going, you can do it. There's no way I was going to give up—that's for damn sure. I love to play too much. 🎸

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{ STYLE }

Smooth Struttin'

How to Play Walking Bass Lines and Chords in a Blues Progression

BY JESSE GRESS

Ex. 1a

♩ = 106-120 D9 C9

Ex. 1b

♩ = 106-120 D9 C9

Ex. 1c

♩ = 106-120 D9 C9

DO YOU ADMIRE HOW GREAT BASSISTS CAN EFFORTLESSLY “walk” their way through any blues progression, but don’t have a clue how they do it? Well, here’s your chance to become enlightened. In addition to developing a greater understanding of the bass’ function within the harmonic structure of a given chord progression, learning how to “walk the blues” will also give you the ability to sound like two players at once. This primer is designed to get you started with a few simple exercises, and then progress to walking through two different 12-bar progressions, adding chordal punctuations, and, ultimately, formulating a complete 12-bar harmonized bass line.

Predominant in jazz, but also essential to blues, a walking bass line basically serves two functions: 1) To anchor the bottom end, while defining root motion and other harmonic information pertinent to a chord progression, and 2) To provide rhythmic propulsion. The preliminary rules are pretty simple: Play uninterrupted quarter notes, and aim for chord tones on the strong downbeats (beats one and three) mixed with non-chord passing tones on the weaker upbeats (beats two and four).

BABY STEPS

Before attempting to tackle an entire 12-bar blues progression, let’s begin with something shorter and simpler. **Ex. 1a** paraphrases the repeating two-bar, D9-C9 bass vamp from Quincy Jones’ classic jazz standard “Killer Joe.” Check out how the notes outline each chord with its root, 5, and root (D-A-D and C-G-C), followed by a common chromatic passing tone (D♭/C♯) into the next chord. Any bassist would undoubtedly finger this “3-3-3-2-1-1-2,” but here we’re using the second finger exclusively to play every note in preparation for accommodating the pending D9 and C9 chordal “stabs”—picked with the middle finger, unless you opt for fingerstyle—that appear on the upbeats of beat one in **Examples 1b** and **1c**. These have been respectively written using both traditional swing notation—a dotted eighth note or rest, followed by a 16th—and blues-shuffle swing eighths. The difference in feel is subtle but crucial to each genre. (Tip: Try moving the chord hits to the upbeats of beats two and three.)

WALK, DON’T RUN

Ex. 2 fleshes out a basic 12-bar blues progression in the key of G, common to Chicago, Delta, and Texas blues, with an atypical walking bass line, versus a repeating I-chord riff (transposed to cover the IV and V chords) more common to those styles. Here’s the bar-by-bar, play-by-play:

Bar 1: Root-3-5 (G-B-D) of the I chord (G7), plus the b5 (D♭) descending chromatic approach to the IV chord (C7) in bar 2.

Bar 2: Quick-change progression to the IV chord (C7)

Ex. 2

♩ = 106-120

1 G7(I) C7(IV) G7 C7

7 G7 D7(V) C7 G7 D7 G7

Ex. 3

♩ = 106-120

1 G7 C7 C#dim7 G7/D Dm7 G7 C7 C#dim7

7 G7 Am7 Bm7 E7 Am7 D7 G7 E7 A7 D7 G7

with a C root, followed by a drop to open E (the 3 of C), and ascending double-chromatic approach (F-F#) back to G in bar 3.

Bars 3 and 4: G target, followed by B (the 3 of G) and a 4-#4 (C-C#) chromatic climb to target D (the 5 of the tonic, G7) in bar 4, plus the octave G root, b7 (F) and 5 (D).

Bars 5 and 6: IV-chord root (C) target, plus E (the 3 of C7) and 4-#4 (F-F#) double-chromatic approach to G (the 5 of C) in bar 6, followed by the same drop to the low E and another ascending double-chromatic approach back to G from bar 2.

Bars 7 and 8: G6 arpeggio (G-B-D-E) in bar 7, followed in bar 8 by the same notes as bar 3, with an octave G.

Bars 9 and 10: V-chord (D7) figure in bar

9 is the same as Ex. 1a, bar 1; IV-chord figure (bar 10) is identical to bar 2.

Bars 11 and 12: A return to the I chord reprises the G6 arpeggio from bar 7; Bar 12 reverses the notes and adds a low F#.

Ex. 3 enhances the previous progression with jazzier chord substitutions:

Bar 1: Same as bar 1 of Ex.2.

Bar 2: Reflects the quick-change IV-#IVdim7 chords (C7-C#dim7) with a C-E-C#-E line.

Bar 3: D target (the 5 of G7), followed by root-b7 (G-F), similar to bar 4 of Ex. 2, with a C# chromatic approach to bar 4.

Bar 4: Substitutes Dm7-G7 chord tones for I chord, a common jazz technique used as a “II-V” approach the IV chord (C7).

Bars 5 and 6: Bar 5 reproduces bars 2

and 10 from Ex. 2, and bar 6 features an ascending C#diminished arpeggio (G-Bb-C#-E) that corresponds to the #IVdim7 chord of the moment.

Bars 7 and 8: I7-IIIm7-IIIIm7-VI7 progression (G7-Am7-Bm7-E7) that begins with another D target, leading to a subsequent chromatic descent to C, then A—both Am7 (IIIm7) chord tones—followed by the root of Bm7 (IIIIm7) and an upper chromatic neighbor (F) approaching the root of E7 (VI7), before dropping a b5 to Bb as a chromatic approach to the pending Am7 chord in bar 9.

Bars 9 and 10: Climbing and descending walks up and down Am7 and D7 (IIIm7 and V7) chord tones with chromatic passing tones replace Ex. 2’s V and IV chords.



Bars 11 and 12: Standard jazz-blues turn-around with root- $\flat 7$ -6- $\flat 3$ -2- $\flat 6$ -5- $\flat 2$ root motion (G-FE-B $\flat$ -A-E $\flat$ -D-A $\flat$ -G) corresponding to the I7-VI7-II7-V7-I7 progression (G7-E7-A7-D7-G7).

WALK THIS WAY

After you get these lines under your fingers, it's time to add some chordal punctuations, à la Examples 1b and 1c. **Ex. 4** will get you started with chord stabs applied to the first four bars of Ex. 2, but the rest is up to you. Continue applying chords to the upbeats of beat one, two or three throughout the remainder of Ex. 2, and then go back and do the same with Ex. 3. (Tip: You can borrow chord voicings from Ex. 6.)

GIANT STEPS

Ex. 5 takes a different approach to a G

blues, by placing almost every note on the sixth string, which facilitates a better understanding of the progression's intervallic formula, as the basic harmonic structure is liberated even further. Familiarize yourself with it and analyze its structure, as we did in Examples 2 and 3 in preparation for things to come.

BLUES CHORDS ON PARADE

All of this leads to the inspiration behind this lesson. Way back in the mid-'70s, then GP columnist Jerry Hahn presented a 12-bar blues bass line similar to the previous one harmonized in three-note chords played almost entirely on the sixth, fourth, and third strings. I remember spending considerable time memorizing it, and found

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it extremely useful in the years that followed, but those memories have since morphed into the version notated in **Ex. 6**. One of the most beautiful things about this elegant sequence of 48 chords (!) is how, except for beat one in bar 7, your third finger never has to break contact with the third string, which makes for smooth sailing, once you memorize the chord shapes. Here's a bar-by-bar harmonic analysis of each chord's relationship to the key center.

Bar 1: G7-Am7-A $\sharp$ dim7-G/B (I7-IIIm7- $\flat$ IIIdim7-I/III)

Bar 2: C7-B7-C7-C $\sharp$ dim7 (IV7-IIIm7-IV7- $\sharp$ IVdim7)

Bar 3: G7/D-Am7/E-F7-F $\sharp$ 7 (I7/V-IIIm7/

Ex. 4

$\text{♩} = 106-120$

Ex. 5

$\text{♩} = 106-120$

Ex. 6

♩ = 106-120

III G7 IV Am7 V A[#]dim7 VI G/B VII C7 VIII B7 IX C7 X C[#]dim7 XI G7/D XII Am7/E XIII F7 XIV F[#]7

1

XV G7 XVI F7 XVII E^b7 XVIII D^b7 XIX C7 XX B7 XXI C7 XXII C[#]dim7 XXIII Dm7 XXIV D[#]dim7 XXV C/E XXVI Cm/E^b

4

IX G/D X D^b7 XI C7 XII B^bdim7 XIII Bm7 XIV F7 XV E7 XVI B^b7 XVII Am7 XVIII Bm7 XIX C7 XX C[#]7

7

X D7 XI C7 XII B^b7 XIII A^b7 XIV G7 XV F7 XVI E7 XVII B^b7 XVIII A7 XIX E^b7 XX D7 XXI A^b7 XXII G7

10

Measures 1-12: Chord progression and bass line notation.

VI-^bVII7-VII7)

Bar 4: G7-F7-E^b7-D^b7 (I7-^bVII7-^bVI7-^bV7)

Bar 5: C7-B7-C7-C[#]dim7 (Same as bar 2.)

Bar 6: Dm7-D[#]dim7-C/E-Cm/E^b (Vm7-[#]Vdim7-IV-IVm)

Bar 7: G/D-D^b7-C7-B^bdim7 (I/V-^bV7-IV7-^bIIIIdim7)

Bar 8: Bm7-F7-E7-B^b7 (IIIIm7-^bVI7-VI7-^bIII7)

Bar 9: Am7-Bm7-C7-C[#]dim7 (IIIm7-IIIIm7-IV7-[#]IVdim7)

Bar 10: D7-C7-B^b7-A^b7 (V7-IV7-^bIII7-^bII7)

Bars 11 & 12 (turnaround): G7-F7-E7-B^b7-A7-E^b7-D7-A^b7-G7 (I7-^bVII7-VI7-^bIII7-II7-^bVI7-V7-^bII7-I7)

Variations of this progression can be created by excluding select chords or by applying the upbeat rhythmic punctuations suggested in Examples, 1b, 1c, and 4 while maintaining Ex. 5's bass line. Overly analytical? Perhaps, but now you know how and why it all works. Bassists beware! ■



Licks, Tricks and Riffs for a Variety of Effects

BY TOM KOLB

THERE WAS A TIME WHEN ALL A SUCCESSFUL player required was a good guitar and an amplifier loud enough to be heard over the drummer. But then a little device called the fuzz pedal appeared in the mid '60s, and soon the direct connection between guitar and amp went the way of the dial phone. Nowadays it's rare indeed to see a performing guitarist without at least several effects pedals at his or her feet. While the amount of effects pedals doesn't necessarily dictate the proficiency of the player, there are a handful of "stompboxes" that, over the years, have become required tools of the trade. These little lifesaving tone enhancers/modifiers, and how they can be used creatively, will be the focus of this lesson. So whether you've just started to use pedals, or you're the proud owner of a closet full of gadgets, come on in. All are welcome!

WAH-WAH

Often first in the chain (running order of pedals between guitar and amplifier), and within convenient stomping distance, is the wah-wah pedal. One of the most expressive effects pedals ever invented, it also tops the list as being the most physically demanding. Effectively, it needs to be "played" like a second instrument while simultaneously playing the guitar. In simple terms, it's a bandpass filter that creates a peak in the frequency spectrum, which can be shifted up and down via a foot-controlled potentiometer. The wah pedal can be used to imitate the human voice, or growl like a lion, cry like a baby, and even chatter like a tree full of monkeys! But perhaps its most practical use is as a percussive tool, to enhance funky rhythms, as depicted in **Ex. 1**. Be sure to keep a smooth, down/up motion with

the pedal. Stay in time with the quarter-note pulse, targeting the treble tone (toe down) on the downbeats, and the bass tone (toe up) on the upbeats. The only variation is in the final bar, wherein the wah is used as a gradual tonal sweep, to anticipate the closing chord attack.

Keep in mind that while the abovementioned quarter-note rocking motion is ground zero for achieving the classic "chick-a-wah" sound, the wah-wah is ready and able to be manipulated back and forth at virtually any tempo humanly possible. **Ex. 2** exploits a series of glissando-slides up and down the G-string for a "talking" effect. (Think Jimi Hendrix, Steve Vai, and a dose of Charlie Brown's school teacher!) The crucial factor is to start in the "up" position at the launch of each pick attack, quickly stepping down as you slide along the string. And incidentally,

Ex. 1 (neck single-coil pickup, clean w/ wah-wah)

♩ = 100

E⁹ N.C. E⁹ N.C.

* smoothly rock wah-wah down and up in steady 8th-note rhythms

E⁹ N.C. E⁹/D

** gradually rock wah-wah down across beats one and two

Ex. 2 (bridge humbucker, w/dist. and wah-wah)

freely N.C.

* rapid down/up motion with wah-wah on each pick attack

Ex. 3 (bridge single-coil pickup; clean tone with compressor)

♩ = 240 A⁷

fret-hand fingering: 4 4 3 3 2 2 1 1 1 3 2 1 2 3 1 2 1 1

Ex. 4 (bridge pickup with fuzz)

♩ = 124 (♩ = ♩³) A⁵ D⁵ C⁵ A⁵

fingerstyle:
(m = middle
p = thumb)

if you're interested in that "monkeys" trick, try scratching out a flurry of muted 16th-note string attacks while slowly rocking the wah forward and back. And if you have the stamina, you can produce a warbling effect by sustaining a chord while rapidly rocking the wah as fast as you can!

COMPRESSOR

Another pedal that players like to place first in line is the compressor. While maybe not as sexy as the wah-wah, the compressor can be used to considerably up the ante in the dynamics department. For example, many country guitarists rely heavily on compression to enhance their "chicken pickin'" licks (Ex. 3). Set at a moderate level (Level and

Attack knobs at roughly 12 o'clock, depending on the pedal), the compressor evens out the volume of the pick attacks. This in turn enhances the muted notes, thus emphasizing the "clucking" sound in the licks. The same moderate settings can be quite useful for providing percussive excitement to funk rhythms (think Nile Rodgers and Prince). With the Attack knob maxed out, it can be possible to sustain a note or a chord until your speaker can't handle it anymore. By the same principal, max settings can help coax elusive feedback from your amplifier. In the recording studio, the compressor pedal can be used to produce that feeling of being right next to your amp, even though it may be isolated in a room far away.

FUZZ

This is the pedal that singlehandedly started the stompbox revolution way back in the '60s. Hands down the most dramatic pedal in the distortion family (boost, overdrive and distortion pedals), the fuzz is capable of producing the biggest single-note sound known to man. Generally speaking, there are two basic types of fuzz tones: the bright, clipping sound of the early fuzz pedals of the '60s (think Keith Richards' "Satisfaction" riff), and the fat, warm sounds introduced in the '70s (the Big Muff reigns supreme). Ex. 4 uses a Vox Tone Bender fuzz pedal (controls maxed out) to produce the "transistor" sound so prevalent in the psychedelic '60s. If you really want to capture that vibe, dial

Ex. 5 unleashes an Electro-Harmonix Big Muff for a creamy, legato nod to Clapton, Beck, and Bachman.

If the fuzz pedal is an instant transport back to the swinging '60s, then the chorus pedal is a time machine to the "MTV" decade of the 1980s. This was the era of the "jangly riff" (see Ex. 6) and a pedal like the Boss CE-2 was a must-have for any working Top-40 guitarist. The luscious, "swirly" sound of the chorus pedal is similar to the

sparkly, doubling aspect of the 12-string guitar, but with an added, space-filling warmth. Equally prevalent in the hard-rock and metal ballads of the mid- and late '80s, the chorus pedal fueled arpeggio figures such as the one in **Ex. 7**. In both of these examples, the Rate and Depth controls are set at 12 o'clock. Boost the Rate knob and you can emulate the fast setting of a rotary speaker (Fender Vibratone or Leslie cabinet). Think "Cold Shot" by Stevie Ray Vaughan. And for a luscious, rock solo tone, use a moderate setting on the chorus, push it with an overdrive (such as a Full-tone OCD) or distortion pedal (Pro Co Rat or Boss DS-1), and select your bridge

pickup with the tone knob dialed down to take the edge off.

The chorus pedal can be a powerfully seductive modulation device, but in certain situations it can just sound too pretty. In such cases, a phaser (Eddie Van Halen's "Eruption" solo) or flanger ("Barracuda" by Heart—see this month's Classic Riff) may be just the alternative you're looking for. Similar by nature, both pedals produce a swirling tonal shift across specific frequency spectrums, but they are subtly different. The phaser has a "throaty" quality (rather similar to a wah wah) and the pitch doesn't waver, whereas

♩ = 88

E7

9 9 11 9 7 7 9 11 9 15 14 12 13 16 16 14 15

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

♩ = 144

Dadd9

Aadd4

A¹¹

Em⁷

let ring throughout

T

A

B

♩ = 94 Bm¹¹add^b6

E⁵add⁹ C⁵([#]4)

let ring throughout

TAB

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

1 3 2 3 1 0 1 3 2 3 2

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the flanger can be adjusted to extreme levels in pitch variation. If money is a factor, the flanger is probably your best bet, as it's capable of emulating the sounds of a phaser and a chorus pedal. (Andy Summers of the Police often used a flanger for his "chorusing" effects.) **Ex. 8** combines both a phaser pedal and a flanger to fortify an aggressive, hard-rock riff. The flanger is a T.C. Electronic Vortex, with Speed, Depth, and Feedback set to 12 o'clock. This feeds an MXR Phase 90, with the Speed knob at around 9 o'clock. [Marshall amp simulation is courtesy of Fractal AX8.] For an "out of this world" sound effect, boost all the settings on the flanger to the maximum and strike random

notes anywhere on the fretboard. Closest description is the sound of a ray gun battle in a 1950s science-fiction movie.

DELAY

Often second-to-last (right before reverb) in the pedalboard chain is the delay pedal. Its primary job is to provide repeated signals (echoes) of the notes produced on the guitar. These echoes can be adjusted to occur anywhere from once to an infinite amount of times. The time span between the picked note and the echo can also be adjusted. Popular delay times run from very short (approximately 30 to 50 milliseconds for a doubling effect; and 90 to 120 for a rockabilly-style

"slapback" delay), to medium (in the 300 to 350ms realm for rock solos), to long delays for lush soundscapes. Another popular setting is the dotted-eighth delay. This is where the delay is set to repeat a dotted-eighth note (or three 16ths) after the picked note. A useful setting for rhythm work (think U2's "Pride (In the Name of Love)"), it can also be used to make it sound like you're playing twice as fast as you actually are! **Ex. 9** provides just such an example with a revved-up blues riff. In actuality, it's an eighth-note figure that, with the help of the delay setting, it sounds like cascading 16th notes. Here's a hands-on method you can use to dial in the proper setting. Set the Effect level

Ex. 8 (bridge humbucker; overdrive; phaser; flanger)

♩ = 132

E⁵ F^{#5} G⁵ E⁵ D⁵ | 1. | 2. D Dadd4

P.M. ----- | Harm. ----- |

2 0 2 0 5 0 | 3 3 3 2 1 3

Ex. 9 (bridge humbucker with delay set to dotted 8th note)

♩ = 132

E⁷ A⁷

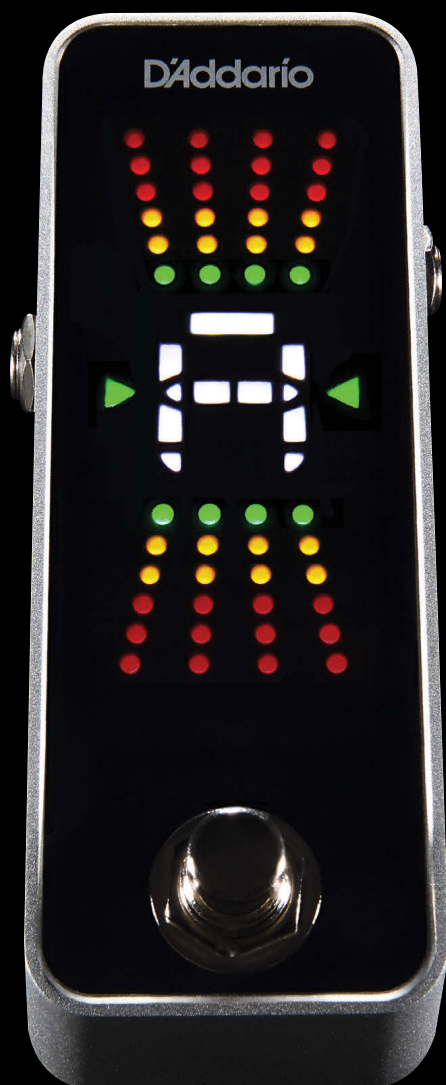
P.M. throughout

0 4 2 4 2 4 4 | 5 4 7 4 7 7 4 4

* notes in parentheses represent the echo/delay repeats

B⁷ E⁷

7 6 9 6 9 9 6 6 | 7 6 9 6 9



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**Ex. 10** (bridge humbucker; heavy overdrive; flanger; phaser; tremolo)

♩ = 144 A/E G^{SUS2} D/F# Dm/F

T 17 15 15 15
A 14 14 14 14
B 14 17 16 15

* notes in parentheses are generated by tremolo pedal

A G D A

T 14 12 7 14
A 14 12 7 14
B 14 12 7 14
12 10 5 12

Ex. 11 (bridge/middle pickups; clean tone with chorus, long-trailing reverb, and delay)

Rubato (Freely)

E A/C# E/G# F#m

fingerstyle throughout

T 16 12 (12) 7 5 (5)
A 16 14 (14) 9 6 (6)
B 14 11 (11) 6 4 (4)

≡ = volume swell up
≡ = volume swell down

E C#m E/G# A E

T 9 5 5 2 (2) 1
A 9 6 6 2 2 (2) 2
B 7 4 4 4 5 (5) 0

to 50% (delayed note is same volume as the initial note) and the Feedback to at least six repeats. Set a metronome to the desired tempo (in this case, 132 beats per minute) and play steady quarter notes on an open string while adjusting the Delay knob with your free hand until you reach the spot where you're hearing quarter-note triplet repeats. Once you arrive at the proper time setting, adjust the Feedback to produce only one repetition. Now you're ready to roll. (If your delay pedal has a tap tempo feature, simply tap in quarter-note triplet rhythms.)

PEDAL COMBINATIONS

In closing, let's take a look at a couple of examples that combine several effects pedals. First up (Ex. 10) is one that produces an effect similar to a synthesizer. Using your guitar's bridge pickup (preferably a humbucker), dial in a liberal setting

on an overdrive pedal, feed that into a flanger with a moderate setting (controls at 12 o'clock), and plug that into a phaser set at a slow speed. The last ingredient is a tremolo pedal (such as a Fulltone Supa-Trem) with the Mix level at maximum and the Rate adjusted to eighth-note rhythms at 144bpm. All you have to do is play the chords in whole-note rhythms and let the effects do the pulsating.

Let us not forget the reverb pedal! Often the last pedal in the chain, this stompbox provides the vital ambience that enhances everything that comes before it. In this example (Ex. 11), it provides the final touch to a passage inspired by Eric Johnson's orchestrated chord melodies. The starting point is a Strat-style guitar with the bridge-and-middle

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pickup combination. Plug that into a volume pedal (such as an Ernie Ball MVP), and then into a chorus with a moderate setting. Next in line is a delay pedal set to around 500ms, a reverb pedal with a large hall setting with a long decay, and into a clean combo amp (Fender Deluxe or Twin Reverb). The crucial element in this example is the volume pedal manipulation.

Make sure it's all the way off (toe up) when you strike each chord. Quickly press it to maximum (toe down) and then back to the off position before the next chord attack. It takes some practice to master this volume swell technique, but the end result is well worth the effort. ■



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“Barracuda” By Heart

BY JESSE GRESS

WHAT DO BUFFALO SPRINGFIELD'S "For What It's Worth," Led Zeppelin's "Dazed and Confused," Yes' "Roundabout," and Heart's "Barracuda" all have in common? They're all classic rock songs that feature killer instrumental intros utilizing natural harmonics. (You really can count 'em on one hand.) In Heart's case, "Barracuda" (from 1977's *Little Queen*) was written by Ann and Nancy Wilson, guitarist Roger Fisher, and drummer Michael Derosier, as an angry retort to the predatory business tactics employed by the band's first record label during a long, drawn-out legal dispute.

Ex. 1 depicts Fisher's acapella guitar intro, which commences with a partially muted *E5* dyad set to a galloping eighth-plus-two-sixteenths-per-beat rhythm that presaged Metallica-style metal by a decade. (Fisher's live rig at the time was a sunburst Strato-caster through three rack-mounted 100-watt Marshall heads, although legend has



Nancy Wilson and Roger Fisher in 1978

it that the part was recorded on a Bigsby-equipped Telecaster, played through a Fender Bassman 4x10.) Note the subtle but distinct use of an analog flanger effect, with a shallow Depth setting and the Rate set to a slow sweep. Don't over-mute or -choke the notes—the palm muting should be light enough to allow each chord its full rhythmic value.

Fisher's two-note *E5* voicing remains consistent throughout bar 1, but slightly opens up with an added octave *E* on the second and third downbeats of bar 2, in anticipation of the pending *F#5* and *G5* eighth-note hits on beat four. Though barely noticeable, it's a nice touch that provides a subtle lift into the first ending, where some audible string squeak (cool!) leads into beat three's 12th-fret harmonics

played on the top three strings—an *Em* triad that implies *G6*—followed by their octaves at the fifth fret on the downbeat of bar 4, which Fisher embellishes with a pair of rhythmic whammy-bar dips, followed by an accented descending slide back to open position, via an inverted *G5* dyad on beat four.

The four-bar repeat is nearly identical, except Fisher replaces the 12th-fret harmonics with raked open strings ringing over his held G5 chord. The finishing touch is a downward glissando (slide) that originates from a 7th-fret, second-inversion D triad and sounds like a slide guitar overdub. (Possibly played by co-guitarist Howard Leese?) All in all, this is an eternally cool riff that sounds best served up with a healthy dose of angst! **E**

Ex.1

♩ = ca. 132

E5

w/dist. and slow, subtle flanger effect

F#5 G5 $\overline{1.}$

1.

1

w/dist. and slow, subtle flanger effect

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

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11

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BARRACUDA

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The Wild One

Lucero's Ben Nichols Is Inspired by Motorcycles and Memphis

BY JIM BEAUGEZ

IT WAS 2016, AND BEN NICHOLS, THE rough-hewn frontman of Americana rockers Lucero, weaved his 2007 BMW R1200GS through late-season snow and sleet over high Rocky Mountain passes on the western leg of his Bikeriders solo tour. Well above the tree line, the sheer cliffs fell away as he climbed through the icy mess. He thought that would be the worst of it. But the temperature soon dropped 20 degrees, and winds barreled around Nichols and the half-dozen other riders on the trek at 70 mph.

"The wind was so fast that it was like trying to ride underwater," he says. "When those gusts catch you, you want to slow down, but the slower you go, the easier you tip over. I thought I was going to die."

As the singer, songwriter, and rhythm guitar player for a hard-living, continent-crossing rock band, Nichols has found what doesn't kill him gives him plenty to write about. Reclined on a vintage couch in his 1920s Craftsman bungalow in Memphis, Nichols picks out the repeating figures from Lucero's "On My Way Downtown" on an Epiphone Sheraton. The battered Takamine acoustic he carried in a waterproof bag on those early Bikeriders tours rests in a corner opposite his first guitar—a parlor-sized Harmony Stella. Nichols has always had a penchant for living on the edge of the moment. Like his grandfather, whose trials in World War II inspired the Lucero live staple, "The War," he didn't follow the rest of the family into conventional lives. Instead, his rebellious streak emerged early in Conway, Arkansas, with a taste for motorcycles and music that began with idolizing Fonzie on *Happy Days*, and spinning classics like "Rock Around the Clock" from his dad's 45 collection.

"From the earliest time I can remember, I've loved rock 'n' roll," he says. "I'd play those records on my record player when I was just three years



JEFF FASANO

old. Then, I'd get on my rocking horse and I'd 'ride, ride, ride.'"

Nichols bought the Stella from a kid on his school bus for five bucks, and then picked out the rudimentary notes of "Louie, Louie." After discovering punk rock in high school, the DIY attitude he found at punk shows fit his sense of adventure.

"Downtown Little Rock was abandoned at the time," he says. "There was a riverfront park, and the power was always on at the gazebo. Bands just started taking a P.A. down there, plugging it in, and playing shows. The cops never showed up. Nobody cared."

Nichols followed a girl he knew from the scene to Memphis, where he met his future Lucero bandmates. At the time, he was trying to write simple, direct tunes like his heroes Johnny

Cash and Hank Williams. He also found inspiration in the Pogues, and songs like "Blind Love" by Tom Waits and "The Living Bubba" by the Drive-By Truckers. When he discovered *The Bikeriders*—a Danny Lyon photo book of a pre-*Easy Rider* motorcycle club—he wrote a song about it for Lucero's 2005 album *Nobody's Darlings*.

"It was the golden era before motorcycle gangs were all shootouts and drug deals," he says. "The members had seen *The Wild One* with Marlon Brando—they all loved that movie—but they were in the clubs to work on bikes and ride together. They looked like people I knew from the punk-rock scene in Arkansas in the old days."

Soon Lucero was logging more than 200 shows a year, and signed record deals with Universal and ATO. As the band evolved, horn flourishes boosted their roots-country sound with a confident Memphis R&B swagger, and Nichols' gravelly bark smoothed into a soulful, ragged croon. And he finally bought his first motorcycle, a 1977 BMW R100/7 he still owns. Between tours, he began branching out more on his bike, taking trips across the Mississippi River into the Ozarks and Ouachita Mountains of rural Arkansas. As he yearned to ride farther and longer, he bought the R1200GS, and he began booking low-key solo gigs in towns where friends and family lived to break up the trips.

"Whenever Lucero has a break, I strap the guitar to the back of the bike, and I go off by myself and play acoustic shows," he says. "If I want to go see somebody, I book shows in that direction. If I want to see the mountains, I book the tour that way. It's the most liberating thing."

Lucero's newly acquired headquarters are in Memphis' Edge district, a neighborhood of aging brick warehouses and auto shops near downtown. The one-time AC Repair Shop sits near Sun Studios, where impresario Sam Phillips



recorded the pioneering single “Rocket 88” in 1951, and piloted early rock-and-roll’s Mount Rushmore—Johnny Cash, Jerry Lee Lewis, Carl Perkins, and Elvis Presley—to stardom.

“For a few records, I let Memphis influence the Lucero songwriting a little bit more, and it was really fun,” he says. “I didn’t think I would write songs with that kind of swing or groove.”

A few blocks away is Sam Phillips Recording, the studio Phillips established when he outgrew Sun back in 1960. Between tours, Lucero is recording its next album there with Matt Ross-Spang, who earned a Grammy for engineering Jason Isbell’s *Something More Than Free*.

The stakes feel different these days. After all,

snow and ice couldn’t bring Nichols down, and though the winds may have given him a scare, they’re blowing mostly in his favor these days. Nichols was recently long-listed in Grammy voting for his song “Loving” from the 2016 film of the same name. His songs have also appeared in the film *Mud*, and the title track to his solo release, *The Last Pale Light in the West*, narrated the ruin and reckoning of The Governor, the villain in season four of *The Walking Dead* television series.

Music has always given reason to his roaming, and Nichols continues to just ride, ride, ride.

“There’s that freedom,” he says, “and you take the ride wherever it goes.” ■



Workbench wackos Luis Etscheid (left) and Caleb Henning.

Purveyors of Weird

Mantic Conceptual's Luis Etscheid and Caleb Henning Want You to Blow Things Up

BY RICHARD BIENSTOCK

WHEN LUIS ETSCHIED AND CALEB

Henning began building effects pedals five years ago, they were working primarily off intuition, rather than experience. The pair, then in their early 20s, were (and still are) bandmates in the Denver-based experimental rock outfit Holophrase, and they spent much of their free time breaking open old toy keyboards and other electronics.

"We were circuit bending in order to make weird, wacky sounds for fun," says Etscheid.

Today, working out of a cluttered two-car garage on a corner lot in Henderson, Colorado, Etscheid and Henning continue to make weird, wacky sounds under the name Mantic Conceptual, and the duo's radical pedals have been embraced by some of rock's more adventurous artists.

Adrian Belew and Jack White have versions of their Flex phase-locked-loop processor, Mars Volta and Racer X bassist Juan Alderete uses their Vitriol high-gain distortion, and Deerhoof's Ed Rodriguez brought their Proverb spring-style reverb on tour. Additionally, post-hardcore heroes At the Drive-In offered a specially-made Mantic Axiom—an upgraded Proverb that added an oscillation



circuit—with their recent reunion album, 2017's *in-ter-a-li-a*. Red Hot Chili Peppers guitarist Josh Klinghoffer purchased, according to the pair, "two of everything" they produce. Jack White's Third Man Records snatched up the entire 250-unit run of their Isaiah digital/analog hybrid delay, initially built for late Mars Volta drummer—and Holophrase producer—Ikey Owens.

"We had to temporarily discontinue that one," says Etscheid.

That Mantic attracts such bold, exploratory artists is hardly a surprise—their boxes are not for the faint of heart. Their first, and best-selling creation, was a sub-harmonizer and low-frequency booster they named the Density Hulk—a slightly modified clone of the mid-'90s DOD Meatbox.

"We blew out all the speakers of a 4x12 cabinet during testing," says Etscheid, "as well as a set of monitors."

"One of our users said he stepped on his Density Hulk onstage at a small venue, and it blew the club's doors wide open," adds Henning.

Though plenty powerful on its own, the Density Hulk also makes an appearance in one of

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Mantic's top-of-the-line creations, the limited-edition Grinch. The Grinch pairs a turbo-charged Hulk ("It's a lot louder," Henning reports, "maybe too loud") with a Vitriol, and the two effects are wired in series so that they can be used on their own, or in conjunction with each other.

"I just wanted to be able to turn on my Hulk and my Vitriol at the same time," says Etscheid, "and I started to hear other people saying the same thing. So it seemed kind of obvious to combine the two circuits."

The Grinch was produced in a very limited run of just ten units this past Christmas. It sold out immediately, and a larger run of 30 to 50 units is being considered for later this year.

But if the Grinch is an unusual box, it has nothing on Mantic's other high-end offering, the Flex Pro.

"It sounds like a robot duck—that's malfunctioning," says Etscheid, seemingly at a loss for words to describe the wildly diverse and often-extreme tones conjured by the pedal.

At its core, the Flex is a phase-locked-loop

pedal, though Etscheid is quick to point out that it's not a Schumann PLL derivative—it's an original design with numerous modifications and tweaks.

"Adrian Belew received a very early version—at the time called the Master Flex—where we broke out the whole circuit to offer all the options you could imagine," says Etscheid. "We warned him that the circuit at the time was really unstable, so it could get super jittery and glitchy and fluttery, but in a good way. And he was pumped. Back then, he was about to join Nine Inch Nails, and he said it would be the perfect pedal for the project. Now, he probably has five or six different versions, from that first inception to its current form."

Of the six knobs on the Flex, "Filter, Rate, Mix, and Level are pretty straightforward," says Henning, "but Focus and Pump are unique. I think that's why they're named so obscurely."

Regardless of what, exactly, the knobs do on their own, or in combination with one another, a few twists and turns will quickly coax otherworldly

squawks, squiggles, and squeals from the user's guitar and amp.

"It's definitely the pedal that has gotten the most attention, because it's so out there," Etscheid says. "There wasn't really much like it to speak of when we first released it."

At \$349 and \$400, respectively, the Flex and the Grinch don't come cheap, and, at press time, the Grinch was completely sold out. But given that Mantic is still a two-man, all hand-wired and hand-assembled operation, those prices reflect the overhead and time that go into crafting each unit. Furthermore, Etscheid and Henning report that they're so inundated with orders that "they can barely keep up."

They still, however, manage to find time to work on new designs. Some, like an updated Density Hulk, they're happy to talk about, but they prefer to keep the pedals in the development phase off the record.

"If it's weird, striking, or different—or whether it's even musical or not—that's probably where we're headed," says Etscheid. ■



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Anyone who has experience with high-end studio compressors can be forgiven for avoiding some stompbox models. Although the great thing about many pedal compressors is their unique coloration of the input signal and that often-cool little “pop” your notes get as the compression circuit grabs your attack, it’s also those very elements that frustrate players looking for less-effected options. The Lyndhurst is a marvel because it not only includes a transformer designed by studio legend Rupert Neve, but it’s as simple to use as opening a box of cornflakes. You can go for an automatic Attack setting or dial it in yourself; go for Flat, Chime, or Sparkle tones, and just twist knobs to find your bliss. Not surprisingly, the Lyndhurst produces transparent timbres that retain your guitar’s sound—even at crushing compression settings. It’s like having an expensive studio processor on your pedalboard!

bogneramplification.com —MM

Pedalmania 2018!

We Review 25 Engines of Cool FX
for our Annual Stompbox Rally

TESTED BY MATT BLACKETT, DAVE HUNTER,
MICHAEL MOLEND, AND ART THOMPSON

THE STOMPBOX SCENE HAS BLOWN UP TO THERMONUCLEAR PROPORTIONS, and keeping tabs on new pedal introductions—let alone all the new outfits that are jumping into the FX game—is essential for guitarists searching for new sounds, as well as producers and studio engineers who want to keep their artists visible amidst the fast-moving avalanche of music coming from every media outlet. For those of us who write about guitar gear, we get intel on the hippest new devices via our own playing needs, by staying tuned to what is trending in the blogosphere, and by what the pros we interview are saying about effects they’re using for studio work and live performances.

The *GP* staff also got a lot of early peeks at new pedals at the winter NAMM show last January, and, as review samples started rolling in some weeks later, the stage was set for another installment of our annual Pedalmania stomp-a-thon. The FX pedals reviewed here—which cover the spectrum from distortion and fuzz boxes to reverbs and delays to some very adventurous sound modifiers—were all tested on gigs, rehearsals, and at home studios, using an assortment of guitars from Fender, Gibson, PRS, Ibanez, Gretsch (among others); vintage and modern tube heads and combos; and state-of-the-art modeling systems from Fractal, Kemper, and Line 6. —AT



CARVIN AUDIO X1 TUBE PREAMP

\$449 street

Carvin fans were likely crushed when the manufacturer shut down its California factory last year, but the brand is far from pushing daisies. In fact, the company is celebrating its heritage with the release of the new X1, which puts the sound of its seminal X-100B amps into a box that can work for home recording (via a cabinet-voiced output and a 2x12/4x12 switch), practicing, and as an onstage tube preamp or the perfect fly rig. The controls of this two-channel (rhythm/lead) processor are powerful and easy to rock—though the small labels for the four footswitches can be tough to see during live performances. The X1 sounds organic, dimensional, and awesome for practically every tone you desire—clean, slightly gritty, overdriven, or saturated—and it saved my butt on a few sessions where I wasn't digging the available amps. Carvin to the rescue! carvinaudio.com —MM



DANELECTRO BIG SPENDER SPINNING SPEAKER

\$79 street

The name says it all, and Big Spender delivers a good replication of classic Leslie-speaker effects courtesy of its Speed, Volume, and Treble controls, as well as a clever Ramp footswitch (adjacent to the true-bypass switch) that toggles between ramp up/down to simulate the speed-change time envelope of a motor-driven rotary speaker. It all works quite well, and the Spender provides a satisfying array of swirly, doppler-esque sounds that aptly fill a niche between what you get from most chorus and vibrato pedals. The curvy metal enclosure (which doesn't allow for battery use) and glossy paint job (common to all of Dano's Billionaire series pedals) give the Big Spender a look befitting its name, even though it lands at a middle-class price. danelectro.com —AT



DEATH BY AUDIO DEEP ANIMATION

\$270 retail

Death by Audio's Deep Animation adds selectable up sweeping and a gnarly, textured voice to the "auto-wah" sounds of traditional envelope filters. Housed in a chunky box reminiscent of '70s classics, its knobs offer control over Sensitivity, Intensity, and Volume, while a rotary Frequency Selector enables six accent bands from bass to treble. Two footswitches select Bypass and Up/Down, and a Trigger input enables you to trigger the filter's pulse from an external signal (a drum machine, for example). How does it sound? Let's just say the Deep Animation is more a way of life than a sound ... which is to say, cue the Mother Ship, Bootsy, 'cos I never knew I was half this funky. From chewy and marble-mouthed to edgy and squawky and all points between, with delectably playable dynamics, this is a marvelously creative groove tool, which will rapidly burn up hours of noodling time, likely with great results. Love it! deathbyaudio.com —DH



DOD CARCOSA FUZZ

\$99 street

I've said many times that I'm an unrepentant fuzz freak. I have so many boxes of boutique, major manufacturer, vintage, and just plain weird fuzz pedals in my studio that it's often a chore to track down my *other* stompboxes. But what a joy to have that problem. The Carcosa is one of my new pedal-board faves, because it produces two fuzz tones that I use a lot—ugly and blistering and organic yet slightly fizzy—and it's also quite the deal at just \$99. Whatever chaos or clarity you're going for, the EQ options are enough to get it done—Dehme (low-mid boost), Hali (bass cut), and Hi-Cut—and the After (or bias) control conjures everything from Hendrix to the sound of drunken and belligerent Vikings engaging in aggro anarchy. How can I not love this? digitech.com —MM



DUNLOP MINI 535Q CRYBABY

\$149 street

At half the size of a standard Crybaby, the Mini 535Q is perfect for small boards, yet it doesn't compromise on features. It has a four-position range selector that moves the voicing from bassier to brighter, a Q knob that lets you set it for a narrow bandpass (more high-end emphasis) or a wider bandpass for enhanced low-end response. There's also a Boost switch and corresponding Volume knob that provide up to 16dB of level increase. Incorporating a Fasel inductor for authentic late-'60s sound, the Mini 535Q's vocal-like color and stout range of tones makes it a great choice if you want to put one pedal in your kit that can cover the bases for pretty much any wah sound you need. jimdunlop.com —AT



ELECTRO-HARMONIX SLAMMI PLUS

\$168 street

This new pedal is essentially an EHX Pitchfork and expression pedal in one, and it lets you transpose or shift single notes or chords (over a +/- three-octave range) with glitch-free tracking. The polyphonic pedal has selectable Up and Down modes, as well as a Dual Shift setting that generates two separate pitch-shift intervals simultaneously. Side-mounted controls include wet/dry Blend, Pitch Mix, and an 11-position Shift knob with settings for Detune, Minor 2 and Minor 3, Major 2, 3, and 6, Perfect 4 and 5, and Octave 1, 2, and 3. There's also an interesting X-Fade function that fixes the pitch-shift interval so that you can use the rocker pedal to morph between dry and pitch-shifted sounds, or from one pitch-shifted interval to another without taking your hands off the guitar. From Whammy sounds to doubling and chorus effects to instant key changes, the Slammi Plus is the sonic equivalent of a Swiss Army Knife. Other details include battery or external power, and a rugged, rack-and-pinion drive for the rocker. exh.com —AT



EMMA ELECTRONIC OKTO NØJS

\$229 street

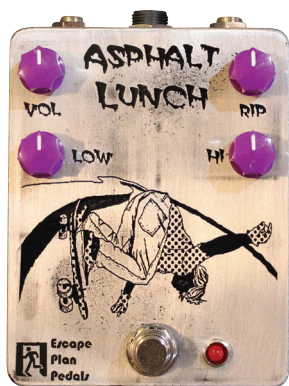
What a fun, trippy, and musical box this is. The Okto-Nøjs gives you a fast-tracking sub-octave (Okto) and a fuzz octave (Nøjs) that you can use individually or combined. The Okto side is a beautiful-sounding octaver that can add just a hint of bottom end with the Dry control cranked, or full-on subterranean lows with Dry backed off. The Nøjs features a sweet fuzz circuit that takes you into ultra-cool synth bass territory, with tones that go from edgy and biting to gorgeously sludgy. It tracks very well, but I love how I can get it to freak out with certain chords and intervals, giving rise to ring-mod sounds, monster gurgles, and sequencer-like pulses. Engage both sides for a whole new range of tones. Inspiring and creativity boosting. godlyke.com —MB



ERNIE BALL EXPRESSION TREMOLO

\$249 street

This unique pedal combines tremolo and reverb, and has controls for Depth, Rate, Reverb, and Waveshape (Ramp Up, Ramp down, Sine, Square, Harmonic). The heavy-duty aluminum housing features a slip-proof rocker that varies the intensity and speed of the tremolo—along with reverb level—in relation to how the controls are set. The Depth and Rate controls also have a push on/off function, and when switched to "off," the rocker automatically sweeps from zero in the heel-down position to maximum depth and speed in the toe-down setting. The unit operates with 9VDC external power only (adapter not included), and features tight, roadworthy construction inside and out. The Expression Tremolo is a blast to play though, and the Waveshape switch provides plenty of cool-sounding trem textures, ranging from smooth amp-like pulse to stuttering chop to rotary-like effects to a syrupy chorus-trem. The spring-sounding reverb adds airy dimension to everything, helping to make the Expression Tremolo one of the hippest new rocker-style pedals around. ernieball.com —AT



ESCAPE PLAN ASPHALT LUNCH

\$169 street

The skater-graphic'd Asphalt Lunch—as in “face plant,” or “eat pavement”—is a distortion with active 2-band EQ, plus controls for gain (Rip) and Volume, all governing cascading amplifier stages derived of two op-amps (rather than clipping diodes or transistors). The results are maximum grinding saturation in a big-sounding pedal with crushing lows when you want them, and smooth, liquid highs. Fat, fuzzy, raw, and not the least bit polite, it has a watery touch sensitivity that screams of slammed cascading-gain stages, and gets über hairy and close to meltdown before you even roll the Rip control past noon. Not one for creamy, singing lead tones or lush harmonic sparkle, it's more about aggressive garage-rock and noise-police-alerting mayhem, reminiscent of early '70s distortions with a distinct hint of op-amp style fuzz in the brew, and a lot of fun in the process. **escapeplanpedals.com** —DH



FENDER MIRROR IMAGE DELAY

\$149 street

If you're old enough to remember the Fender Multi-Echo from 1969, you'll definitely see how far they've come in the delay world when you try the new Mirror Image Delay. Rather than throw in the kitchen sink, Fender has provided an easy and intuitive feature set that still provides a ton of flexibility. You get three delay modes (Digital, Analog, and Tape), each with two variations, and you can add modulation to any of them. There's a Dotted 1/8 switch that adds a repeat at 75 percent of the selected time, for an interesting take on The Edge-style repeats, although there's no tap tempo, so you'll need to set the rate by hand. What this box does really well, however, is sound great. The Doubler algorithm is super cool, adding random timing and pitch variations to simulate double tracking. The Mirror Image is an atmospheric and vibey take on a must-have effect. **fender.com** —MB



FULLTONE FULL-DRIVE 1

\$119 street

This smaller and simplified version of the Fulltone's classic Full-Drive II dispenses with the II's Boost function (and fourth knob), but features everything else, including the 3-way Tone switch that, in the CC (comp cut) position, boosts mids and also volume (particularly at high Overdrive settings), while providing smoother and subtly different tones in the V (vintage) and FM (flat mids) settings. The FDI is a girthy-sounding distortion box that's very responsive to changes in guitar volume—and, with lots of output on tap, is great for players who want to either slam their amp with a hot signal using lower Overdrive/higher Volume settings, or generate loads of sustain up-front by turning the knobs in the opposite directions. The Tone control plays well with single-coils or humbuckers, and other noteworthy points include 9-18V operation, easy battery access, and true-bypass switching. **fulltone.com** —AT



JAM LUCY DREAMER SUPREME

\$249 street

The LucyDreamer Supreme delivers two of my essential live-performance needs—boost and overdrive—and saves pedalboard real estate, as well. Of course, as much as I love order and cleanliness, I wouldn't dig the LucyDreamer if it simply made my board more tidy. The Boost level is adjustable (via trimpot or optional expression pedal), and it's just right for when I want the sound of my amp pushed into organic overdrive. The Overdrive is very dynamic, and it gets me easily from classic-rock tones to near full-on shred. Even hipper, the Exp Mix feature lets me blend my clean and rev'd-up sounds to taste (again, with an optional expression pedal)—which is very much like layering guitars in the studio. There's a ton of versatility here, and every sound is killer. **jampedals.com** —MM



JHS BONSAI 9-WAY OVERDRIVE

\$229 street

"Not another Tube Screamer clone!" you howl, yet JHS's Bonsai is not just another Screamer, but every Screamer in one box—or all of the most desirable renditions, at least. In addition to its traditional Drive, Tone, and Volume controls, the Bonsai has a 9-position rotary switch to select between significant TS circuit variations, including obvious classics like the TS-808, TS-9, and TS-10, plus several mods and sleepers. Plugged in and twiddled judiciously, the Bonsai revealed subtle variations between some modes, but quite significant shifts between others. I was most enamored with the reworked renditions found in the hot and gainy TS-7+ setting, the juicy and compressed Keeley Mod setting, and the crisp and articulate JHS Mod setting—which, I suppose, is why the TS is modded so often in the first place. Tons of fun, and even if you only need one Screamer, a few of these selections might be among the best TS ODs I've ever heard. jhs pedals.com —DH



J. ROCKETT I.Q. COMPRESSOR

\$229 street

More than just a graphic EQ and compressor combined, the I.Q. chains its 6-band graphic equalizer in front of the compressor so you can determine which frequency bands hit the comp stage harder, and are therefore treated more severely. The Mix knob blends clean and compressed signal, and Vol governs overall output, all in a rugged, brick-like steel enclosure. Although my first few moments with the I.Q. were slightly puzzling, it really clicked into place once I raised all sliders together as pre-gain to push the compressor to the desired level, then nudged individual bands up or down slightly to carve out an idealized guitar sound. It's a great, smooth-sounding compressor in its own right, which doesn't overly squash or impact your tone, but adds the nuance of hitting individual frequency bands harder—whether subtly or considerably so—making the I.Q. a highly intelligent design with some powerful potential. rockettpedals.com —DH



LUNASTONE RED FUZZ 1

\$199 retail

With a generous gain range provided by the Fuzz control and a very effective Low-Cut knob, the Red Fuzz 1 gives you plenty of options for crafting everything from bottom-heavy fuzz with tons of sustain to skinnier tones that sound smooth and balanced at lower gain settings, and with excellent dynamic response to the guitar's volume. If you're looking for sicko, transistor-on-life-support tones, this pedal doesn't go there, but with its excellent touch sensitivity, high output, and ability to deliver massive fuzz sounds, this pedal is something to try.

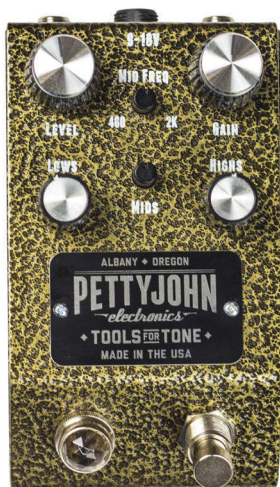
lunastonepedals.com —AT



MXR DOUBLE-DOUBLE OVERDRIVE

\$99 street

With a name and cosmetics that are a nod to In-N-Out Burger, MXR is serving up two hot and greasy takes on classic overdrive sounds. The Double-Double lets you choose between a TS-808-inspired flavor on the Gain switch's Lo setting and a take-off on the more boutique-y OCD on the Hi setting. You can't foot-switch between the two modes, nor can they be cascaded, but they both sure do sound great. The Lo realm is amazingly transparent and does the SRV "Drive set low with Level cranked" thing beautifully. Switch over to Hi and all kinds of ballsy rock tones are there, from barky to singy. The potent 2-band EQ provides tons of thump, sizzle, or both, and you can find great sounds even with the Bass or Treble controls rolled all the way off. Flexible, powerful, and a super bargain, I'll take mine to go! jim dunlop.com —MB



PETTYJOHN ELECTRONICS GOLD

\$249 retail

One of the latest in this Oregon company's single-effect Foundry series, Gold is an "amp-in-a-box" style British-voiced overdrive with extended tonal range. The controls are Gain, Level, Low, High, and Mids, plus both Mids and Mid Freq, the latter of which allows you to sweep the mid boost from 400Hz to 2kHz. Inside the gold hammer-finished steel box lurk the high-end components that Pettyjohn is known for using—through-hole components on a sturdy board, with esoteric tidbits like AuriCap and Orange Drop tone caps—plus mini-toggles to shift the bright cap or select between higher headroom or increased saturation. In use, the Gold reveals a juicy, vintage-leaning breed of cranked-Marshall-style tone, with opulently textured midrange, silky highs, and soft yet buoyant lows. I found its slight but easy sag and great touch sensitivity added to the fun, and the EQ and internal switching provided great versatility. A cool fast-track to classic-rock leads and power-crunch alike.

pettyjohnelectronics.com —DH



RAINGER FX REVERB X

\$193 street

This is one of the reasons I still love NAMM. I bumped into London-based designer David Rainger and his table of odd-looking pedals while rushing to another booth, and I'm glad I did. The Reverb X is one whacky box that's not for the conventional or faint of heart, but anyone looking for cinematic soundscapes is going to love this thing. You can gate the reverb, "stutter" it using the included Igor momentary pad, and add distortion. The "normal" reverb is vibey enough, but when I added some distortion and stomped on Igor, the fun-house of ambient mania is both a barrel of laughs and exquisitely inspiring. I started writing songs and licks based on my explorations, and I had to force myself to stop, or I'd neglect myself, my wife, and my dogs. Beware! **raingerfx.com** —MM



STRYMON SUNSET DUAL OVERDRIVE

\$299 street

Wow! Talk about an overdrive that can do it all. The Sunset gives you six different flavors of grind and boost, based on their interpretations of some classic circuits. There are three on the A side and three on the B side. You can run them individually, in parallel, or cascade A into B or B into A. That makes for a head-spinning number of possibilities. (Strymon's video demo of the Sunset is nine minutes long!) Each mode sounds sweet on its own, and I really loved the Channel A Treble boost in parallel with Channel B's Hard setting (for a super complex clean/dirty sound) as well as the Germanium and 2stage in series for a beautifully vicious slide tone. The Sunset does a lot more, with all the flexibility available to pair it with any kind of pickup and any kind of amp. Seriously. Strymon does it again. Dang! **strymon.net** —MB



TRUETONE 1 SPOT PRO CS6

\$129 street

True enough (sorry—had to make that quip), the brand-new Truetone 1 Spot Pro CS6 isn't an effects pedal, but isolated power is unquestionably a crucial tool for any pedalboard. In addition, as with some of the pedals I've reviewed for our Pedalmania feature, it solved a problem for me. I've been using a Line 6 M5 on my pedalboard as a "multi-purpose player" to provide effects that I don't use all the time—such as flanging—but might need for a specific session. Unfortunately, I have to run two power lines to my board, because my current power brick can't handle the M5's 500mA requirement. Well, guess what made *that* a non-issue? The Pro CS6 has the juice to power almost anything (yay!), and it's 6-output frame is slender enough to easily sit on most pedalboards. I'm back to one power cord, and as happy as a puppy. **truetone.com** —MM



GEAR

{ PEDALMANIA }



TWA DM-02 DYNAMORPH

\$299 street

You wanna get crazy? This thing will let you instantly tap into your wild side, with super-musical effects that don't sound like anything else. The Dynamorph is a magic box of fuzz/filter/synth/envelope tones that the incredibly well-written manual describes as a "primordial harmonic soup." You'll need that manual, too, because this pedal is deep and the controls have names

like Holometaboly and Gestation. But once you get a grip, you'll be greeted with excellent synth fuzz freakouts, singing sustain, talky alien voices, and a "torrent of waveforms battling for evolutionary supremacy." The Morph function allows you to control the amount of Ecdysis (Drive) with your picking dynamics, for a whole new level of fun. The DM-02 also responds to your guitar's Volume and Tone knob adjustments as well as any effect I've ever tried. I dare you not to write an awesome riff within five minutes of plugging into the Dynamorph. Heck, you could base an entire project on the sounds it cranks out. **godlyke.com** —MB



WALRUS AUDIO FATHOM MULTI-FUNCTION REVERB

\$199 street

This powerful pedal offers four reverb types (Hall, Plate, Lo-Fi, and Sonar), and features a complement of controls that includes Program, Decay, Dampen, Mix, X, and a 3-way Mod switch. I love the rich, expansive effects available in the Hall and Plate settings, both of which have full-time modulation that is variable with the Mod switch, and adjustable pre-

delay via the multi-function X control. The X knob also varies the filter bandwidth on the Lo-Fi setting (cool for funky 'verb effects), and it greatly impacts Sonar, where reverb is fed by low and high octaves. In this mode with X at noon, the low/high octave blend is equal. Turning it to the left or right shifts the octave balance, producing eerie, haunting effects that sound like they're rising out of the depths of the Mariana Trench—and pressing and holding the Sustain switch keeps the reverb decays trailing on, which adds to the otherworldly fun. You could do a soundtrack using the Sonar function alone, and while we've only scratched the surface of what this pedal is capable of, suffice to say Fathom is a great vehicle for expanding your sonic horizons. **walrusaudio.com** —AT

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GEAR

{ PEDALMANIA }

**WAMPLER
PAISLEY DRIVE
DELUXE****\$259 street**

Add together the Paisley Drive designed for the popular Wampler-endorsing Telemeister and Brad's beloved, yet obscure, Nobels ODR-S overdrive (once reconceived as the now-discontinued Wampler Underdog)

and you've got the Paisley Drive Deluxe, a dual-overdrive pedal with some clever possibilities for chain reconfiguration. Independent inputs and outputs and a 3-way switch let you run these as individual pedals, or select 1 into 2, or vice-versa, when internally chained. The pedal takes from 9v to 18v DC input for increased headroom and clarity at the upper range, and Ch1 has a Fat switch on the side, while Ch2 has a Voice switch to go from slightly scooped to more mid-humped. No surprise this thing excels with a Telecaster injected, immediately enabling that thick, rich, driven-tweed-like tone in Ch2 (Paisley Drive)—but I was surprised how much it liked a Les Paul's humbuckers, too. Add Ch1's throaty, compressed, slightly soft-edged overdrive to the brew, and gain-stage them as you please, and there's a lot of tone crafting to be had here. wamplerpedals.com —DH

**WAY HUGE
SMALLS SERIES BLUE
HIPPO CHORUS****\$149 street**

This mini version of the Way Huge classic has Depth and Speed controls, a switch on its blue anodized aluminum case to toggle between chorus and vibe, and the option of running on battery or external power. The analog-generated tones are warm and dimensional, and the range of the controls allows for everything from syrupy washes of chorus to faux-rotary speaker effects to more extreme shades of pitch-bending in vibrato mode—and at speeds ranging from sloth-like crawl to fast warbly spin. This is a great pedal, and how cool to see it sized for smaller boards. jimdunlop.com —AT

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Fender

Eric Johnson Stratocaster Thinline



TESTED BY ART THOMPSON

FOR AN ARTIST WHO IS AS PICKY ABOUT his sound as Eric Johnson, the development of a new Strat with his name on it must have been quite a process. On the face of it, taking the standard EJ model and giving it a semi-hollow body with an f hole seems relatively straightforward, but the new Thinline took some time to develop due to Johnson's penchant for getting it right—and he and Fender experimented with such things as the size of the chamber and the position of the f hole on the prototype guitars until EJ was satisfied with the end result.

Anyone familiar with the standard signature model will feel right at home here, as the neck carries the same moderately thick, soft V shape, the single-coil pickups are identical (with Tone controls for the bridge and neck units), and the trem is seated on the body with the five springs tensioned so that no downward motion is possible. Johnson apparently favors a locked-down trem so that he can do pedal-steel-like bends without pitch warbles (he does have a floating-trem setup on at least one Strat that he uses for Hendrix stuff), so you'll either be fine with this aspect of the

factory setup (along with having no screw holes on the back to attach a cover over the spring bay), or you'll need to adjust the trem to suit your own preferences. The attention to detail on this guitar is excellent. The frets are expertly finished, the paintwork flawless, and the "vintage" tint on the neck looks righteous.

The Thinline is lighter than a solidbody Strat, and when played acoustically, you can hear how the chambered construction enhances low-mid-range girth, and makes everything sound and feel more lively and expressive. These qualities translated into the electric realm when playing



the Thinline though all sorts of stompboxes during the testing for the "Pedalmania" roundup in this issue. This fat-sounding guitar roared supremely on the bridge pickup, kicking down sweet, buttery tones when driving various fuzz and distortion pedals (all fed into an Alessandro-handwired Fender Deluxe Reverb reissue or a Dr. Z Z-Plus combo), and the dedicated Tone control made it easy to get just the right balance of bite. Switching to the neck pickup produced deep, glassy sounds that sounded awesome when running into lower-gain/high-output pedals of the Tube Screamer ilk, and between those settings are juicy rhythm/lead flavors via the middle pickup and beautifully chiming sounds in positions 2 and 4.

The Eric Johnson Signature Thinline impresses on a lot of levels, and with its chambered body, superb playability, and excellent build quality, it is certainly a welcome new model in Fender's Stratocaster line. Its enhanced resonant qualities definitely give it an edge in the girth department compared to solidbody Strats, and for that reason alone it deserves an Editors' Pick Award. Kudos to Eric Johnson and Fender for all that was involved in coming up with the first semi-hollow Stratocaster since it debuted in 1954. 🎸

SPECIFICATIONS

CONTACT fender.com

MODEL Eric Johnson Signature Stratocaster Thinline

PRICE \$1,999 street, with hardshell case

NUT WIDTH 1.650" bone

NECK Maple, '57 soft V shape

FRETBOARD Maple, 25.5" scale, 12" radius

FRETS 21 medium-jumbo

TUNERS Fender vintage-style staggered

BODY Alder semi-hollow

BRIDGE Vintage-style Synchronized Tremolo

PICKUPS Specially voiced Eric Johnson single-coils

CONTROLS Volume, Tone (neck), Tone (bridge), 5-way switch

FACTORY STRINGS Fender .010-.046

WEIGHT 6.68 lbs

BUILT USA

KUDOS Semi-hollow body enhances girth and resonance. Ballsy bridge-pickup tones. Excellent playability.

CONCERNS Firmly seated bridge will need to be re-adjusted if you plan on using the trem.



XiTone

12" Active Wedge

TESTED BY DAVE HUNTER

THERE'S A NEW BREED OF WEDGE IN town. Not merely there to prop your foot on during the big solo, these are designed specifically for onstage amplification of popular latest-generation modelers—think Fractal's Axe-Fx II and AX8, Line 6's Helix, Atomic's Amplifire line, Kemper, and others—and seek to present a more traditional guitar-cab-like sound and feel in the process than the usual PA monitor-style wedge. XiTone's 12" Active Wedge is just such a product. It incorporates full-range, flat-response (FRFR) design elements, but modifies these for a performance that should feel more familiar to guitarists

used to old-school guitar amps.

The 19.5" x 16.5" x 16.5" unit weighs just 37 lbs and has feet both on the bottom and on one side, enabling use as a floor wedge or an upright cab with a more traditional rectangular appearance. It houses a 12" Eminence 12CX coaxial woofer plus an Eminence ASD:1001 tweeter, along with an 800-watt Dayton Audio two-way plate amplifier with DSP and active crossover (splitting 200 watts to the tweeter and 600 watts to the woofer). It's covered in a rugged, black polyurea coating with a black metal grille protecting the speaker. Somewhat unusually, the tweeter is mounted at the back

SPECIFICATIONS

CONTACT xitonecabs.com

PRICE \$899

CHANNELS 2

CONTROLS Independent Volume control and Mic Pad switch for each channel, 5-setting Mode switch

POWER 800 watts at 4 Ω (600 watts for woofer, 200 watts for tweeter)

EXTRAS Dual XLR and 1/4" inputs for each channel, XLR out for link, Bluetooth functionality

SPEAKERS Woofer: Eminence 12CX coaxial driver; tweeter: Eminence ASD:1001

WEIGHT 37 lbs

BUILT USA

KUDOS A powerful and good-sounding active wedge that's cleverly designed to address the need for a more familiar FRFR solution for modeling amplification.

CONCERNS As is the case with many modeler amplifiers, users might still need to tweak their preset EQs to achieve an accurate sound on stage.

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of the woofer, in a configuration that seeks to include its contribution, while minimizing the artificiality that some guitarists experience from tweeter-loaded FRFR cabs. In addition to this, XiTone's Mick Farlow tells us, "The active cross-over is designed to allow for a more guitar-cab feel, and taking the tweeter out of the picture as much as possible helps to accomplish that."

The amplifier has individual Neutrick XLR and 1/4" inputs for each of two channels, and a female XLR out for linking to other units or front-of-house PA support. Each channel has its own Volume control, with a switch for Line level or -24dB mic pad. A 5-position DSP Mode switch offers, Mode 1: FRFR; Mode 2: FRFR with 2dB bump at 500kHz for slight mid boost; Mode 3: FRFR with tweeter -2.5dB at 5kHz; Mode 4: LRFR (limited-range, flat-response) with only the 12" speaker engaged; Mode 5: 12" speaker raw (more like a traditional guitar cab). There's also a switch to enable Bluetooth for streaming audio into the amp. Tested with a variety of electric guitars into both a Fractal AX8 and an



Atomic Ampli-Firebox, the XiTone quickly proved itself something very different to the mid-priced PA wedge that might otherwise stand in for

modeling amplification on stage. Although it's billed as an FRFR solution in the broad sense, it delivers some extra lower-midrange thump and a certain guitar-cab-like punchiness (due to its sealed cabinet design) even when set to Mode 1—which is to say, it's not strictly FRFR, but that should be taken as a good thing by any guitarist seeking a traditional onstage response from their modeling rig. The Active Wedge sounds good at low volumes, but really comes into its own when pushed up to at least midway, at which point there's lots of gutsy punch, plenty of stage volume, and a realistic presentation of both tone and playing feel. For my playing style, I think I most enjoyed Mode 4, with the tweeter disengaged, but Modes 1 to 3 arguably shone a little brighter, with a plethora of more atmospheric effects like delay, reverb, and some modulations. All in all, this is a cool product that should help plenty of guitarists feel more at home bridging the tube-amp-to-modeling gap, and at a price point that's comparable to that of a mid-priced, traditional powered PA wedge. ■

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CHRISTIE LENÉE

ON BECOMING A FINGERSTYLE CHAMPION



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STRING STRATEGIES

CHRISTIE LENÉE REVEALS HOW SHE BECAME A FINGERSTYLE GUITAR CHAMPION

BY JIMMY LESLIE

CHRISTIE LENÉE WON THE PRESTIGIOUS INTERNATIONAL FINGERSTYLE GUITAR Championship at the Walnut Valley Festival in Kansas last fall, and she got high praise from our April cover artist Tim Reynolds. So when we saw Lenée had a gig scheduled at a new acoustic venue near *GP*'s California headquarters, a trip to see the troubadour was in order.

The Acoustic Den Café in Roseville, California, is a haven for acoustic-guitar players, where instruments and classic Americana album covers adorn the wood-paneled walls. Armed with a Maton EGB808 6-string, a Martin D12-35 50th Anniversary 12-string, a few effects pedals, and foot percussion, Lenée proceeded to wow an appreciative audience in the well-tuned room with an array of virtuosic overhand tapping, harmonic slapping, and classically inspired fingerstyle techniques. Lenée demonstrated impressive vocals, as well—particularly on a stellar cover of Joni Mitchell's "Big Yellow Taxi."

The guitar highlight was clearly her blow-by-blow account of how she went about winning the International Fingerstyle Championship. The audience reacted as if the competition was happening again right then and there. Lenée had everybody pulling for her, and by the time she got through performing, they might as well have wheeled out a podium and draped a medal around her neck.

What made you decide to enter the 2017 International Fingerstyle Guitar Championship?

My manager called me up one day, and said, "I've entered you in the competition, and you're going to win." Just like that. I agreed, and I made a deal with myself that I could live with any result, as long as I gave it my very best shot.

How did you go about getting ready?

Choosing material is a big deal, because judgment is completely based on execution of the composition. I considered familiar covers, but I wound up going all-original, and I think that helped. Coming from a background of classical, jazz, and folk rock, I fuse a lot of different styles into the new-age guitar thing. I wanted to make sure there was a balance of melodic fingerstyle, rhythmic tapping, and a bit of flashy playing, but nothing too over the top. Foot percussion wasn't allowed, so my challenge was to incorporate percussive

hits on the guitar with my hands. Two weeks out, I made sure I rehearsed that material specifically for at least 100 hours before the competition.

How did you feel once you got to Kansas?

I was feeling pretty good about my chances until I got there. There were 50 amazing guitar players sitting around warming up. It was intimidating, and then there was the unique way the competition works. It's a strictly acoustic situation, so even though I love using effects, I played a Martin D-18 Golden Era sitting down in front of a microphone. They don't want anything interfering with objectivity, so the judges aren't even in the same room watching. They listen remotely via headphones, and they don't even know your name. They just know the number you were given. You have five minutes to play two songs. If you make the cut to the final five, then you can play two more. I chose to play "Ivory Coast,"

FRETS

{ CHRISTIE LENÉE }

which is a tapping tune from my 2013 instrumental album *Chasing Infinity*, as well as the title track, which is completely fingerstyle. They're in the same tuning—low to high it's C, G, D, G, A, D. I put a capo on the first fret.

What's the backstory on the first song you played?

"Ivory Coast" came from hearing a melody in my head. I figured out how to play it by tapping the lower strings on the fretboard with my right hand. I outline a 9th chord, and the melodic variations are based on that. I keep the groove flowing with my left hand playing continuous sixteenth notes, using hammer-ons and pull-offs on the first and third strings to vary the high-end harmony.

Can you detail your overhand tapping technique?

I mostly use my right-hand index, middle, and pinky fingers. "Ivory Coast" has a couple of trills where I tap on the fretboard with my first finger, hammer-on with the pinky, pull off from that to my middle finger as it's being tapped-on, and then slide my middle finger down a whole step. It's the most difficult move that I've ever had to do. I try to keep my wrist as straight as possible so that I don't damage my hand.

Got any tips on overhand tapping?

I was trained to play classical guitar, so I have acrylic nails on my right hand. I didn't think that it was possible to tap with long nails, but I figured out a way. I kind of balance my right elbow on the top of the guitar, and angle my hand in such a way that I only use the very small muscle controlling the very top fingertip joint to tap. I try to use the minimal amount of motion. Sometimes, I rest my thumb on the top of the neck, and my fingernail kind of bypasses the string a little bit, so that I can tap using the fleshy pad of my fingertip.

Can you explain your fingerpicking when "Ivory Coast" breaks down to cascading descending melodies?

That section is interesting, because it's a combination of the right hand playing a classical-fingerstyle tremolo-picking sequence and the left hand doing pull-offs. It sounds very difficult, and it took some practice, but it's not as difficult as it seems. It starts with the thumb hitting the full chord harmonic at the 13th fret.



KERRI LESLIE

While those overtones ring, I hit the low D $\flat$, again with my thumb, and then pluck with my ring, middle, and index fingers, while simultaneously playing five notes with my left hand. The first three notes are the same, and I play them with my pinky. Then, I pull off from my pinky to my middle finger, and then from middle to index. So it's a total of five notes sounded via three plucks and two pull-offs. That's my way of playing five notes on one beat.

Can you detail the fingerpicking on "Chasing Infinity"?

The tremolo plucking on that is ring, middle, and index fingers playing the first, second, and third strings. The rhythm has a 12/8 feel, with a four-on-the-floor beat

happening underneath. There are a couple of really fun runs that I attribute to learning a piece by Andrew York called "Sunburst." Wanting to play that song inspired me to learn classical guitar. I learned a lot of techniques by studying that piece, such as what I think of as "backwards pull-offs"—hammering-on a string with the third finger, and then pulling off to the first finger, and then again to the open string. "Chasing Infinity" is fun because it's a fingerstyle piece that incorporates the entire guitar neck. There are runs in the low end, and high- and middle-register melodies that happen in a call-and-response fashion. Then, there's some exciting rhythmic strumming in the high register. It's a very



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FRETS

{ CHRISTIE LENÉE }

different feel from “Ivory Coast,” and, as the second song I played in the competition, it displayed my fingerstyle chops. I was very aware that no full-on tapper has ever won that competition.

So you made the cut to five, and for the finalist round, you played “Song for Michael Pukac.” Can you share a story about its composition?

“Song for Michael Pukac” was the first instrumental song I ever wrote. Michael is my favorite living artist. He did all the artwork for my first album. He had a new painting, and he asked me if I’d write a composition to help tell its story about love and motherhood. I gave it a shot, but I didn’t think it was very good. A few days before I was to turn it in, I saw an incredible underground guitarist named Sean Frenette at an open mic in Tampa, Florida. He played Bach etudes on a 3-string guitar using all tapping. It inspired me try different tunings to produce harmonics

while tapping, and I ended up rewriting the composition completely.

What tuning did you wind up using?

It’s an open *F* tuning. Low to high it’s *F*, *A*, *C*, *F*, *C*, *F*. I chose the key of *F*, because according to the sound healing and music therapy I’ve studied, *F* is associated with the heart energy center, or chakra. Playing an *F* frequency activates feelings of love and connection. I begin the song playing melodic ideas over a *C* bass note to create anticipation, as well as a mysterious, uncertain feeling. When it resolves to the *F* for the start of the main melody, there’s a feeling of relief.

How did you musically convey the idea of love and motherhood?

To symbolize the moment of conception, I hit a harmonic chord on beat 1. The accompaniment comes in on the “and” of 1, and it goes through variations on that theme. For the big boom symbolizing the birth of a child, I start playing an up-tempo

rhythmic section that’s almost bluegrass, and that leads to a flurry of tapping symbolizing a celebration of life. The piece is almost like a Bach cello suite in that the main melody is established, and then there are lots of variations.

Did you learn any valuable lessons about how to advance in a guitar competition?

While I was there, I heard a story about a player from the previous year who thought he’d played horribly in the first round. So he packed his guitar away in its case and put it in his car. Eventually, they called his number to play in the finalist round, and he was flipping out trying to get ready to play again.

It felt like an eternity hoping for my number to be called, but I spent the whole time practicing “Song for Michael Pukac,” so I was ready when they finally did call my number. I guess the lesson is a simple one—always be ready to play! ■



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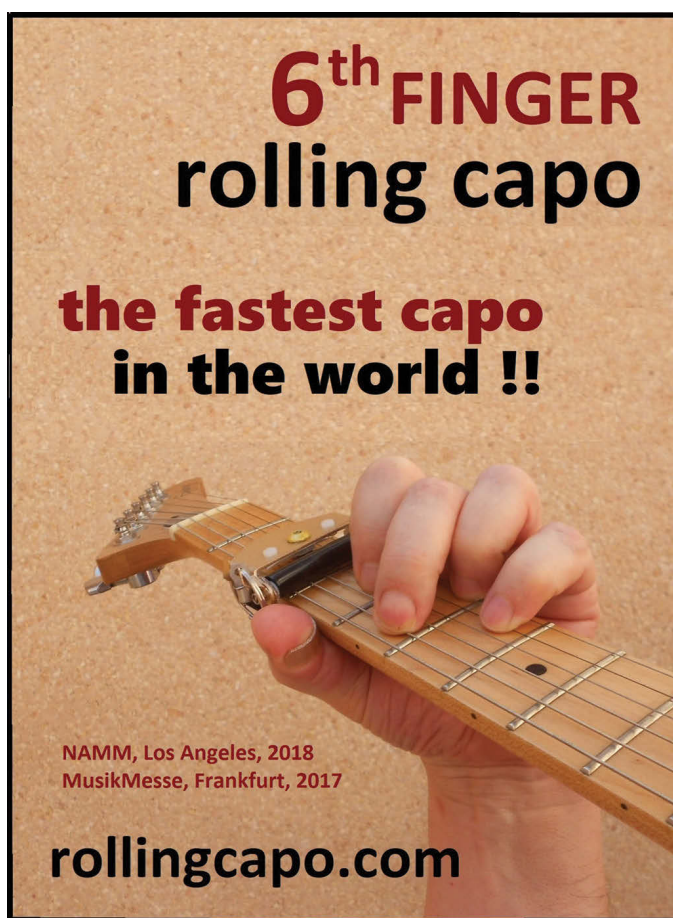
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What's On My Pedalboard?

Here's a list of some of Lenée's go-to pedals.

Radial Engineering Tonebone PZ-Pre

I mostly use this to dip 80Hz, which has always created feedback issues for me—especially when I perform with a band. My Martin J-40 is particularly hot at that frequency. I also use the boost when I need one for a lead.

MXR Ten Band EQ

I cut the Maton's signal in the low-middle range—particularly at 125Hz—to reduce mud-diness, and then I boost pretty significantly at the subsonic low-end at 60Hz.

BOSS DD-20 Giga Delay

I love the Analog Delay setting on this pedal, and the tap tempo works well. I'm obsessed with getting the delay in time with the song, and I like to have one part trail off while I start another. Sometimes people think I'm looping, but I'm not.

Kopf Percussion ToeKicker

This has a great kick sound, and it's nice and durable.

TC-Helicon Harmony Singer

Because my guitar signal runs through it, I can modify guitar parts to trick the pedal into creating non-standard vocal harmonies.



Electro-Harmonix Holy Grail Nano Reverb

I use the Spring setting to add a bit of ambiance in conjunction with the house system's reverb.

Eventide H9

I recently got the H9 because I'm interested in its harmonizing capability, but I haven't programmed it yet.



KERRI LESLIE

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L.R. BAGGS ALIGN SERIES ACOUSTIC PEDAL SUITE: SESSION, EQUALIZER, REVERB, AND ACTIVE DI

TESTED BY JIMMY LESLIE

VENERABLE ACOUSTIC-INSTRUMENT electronics manufacturer L.R. Baggs had the Winter NAMM Show abuzz over its new Align Series pedal suite aimed specifically at acoustic-electric guitarists. We're thrilled that they promptly sent review units ready for testing—and all together too, as a performance/recording system. The four distinctly acoustic-looking pedals featuring stained-wood graphics fit perfectly and snugly affixed to a MONO Pedalboard Lite Plus (\$129 street), all powered by a Truetone 1 Spot

AC adaptor and Multi Plug 5 Cable (\$29.90 street for both). To simulate a gig situation, Baggs also sent along its new Synapse Personal P.A. (\$1,999 street; review coming soon).

ALIGN SERIES SESSION

Essentially a compressor and gain pedal rolled into one, the Session (\$179 street) is designed to add oomph and richness for a studio-quality tone. Volume and Gain controls accommodate active or passive pickups. The magic here is in

the combination of analog saturation that brings a welcome balminess to cold piezo pickup signals, and multiband compression that evens out any rough sonic edges. The saturation effect isn't like typical overdrive or distortion—it's refined, and adds girth to an acoustic tone without being overbearing. And the compression isn't squashy, or even overt. It's a dynamically sensitive 3-band compressor that conducts subtle searches for problematic frequencies to smooth out. I got hooked on the fullness it provided, and

after playing with the Session a while, playing *without* it was a real letdown. If you simply want a bigger, better acoustic sound onstage or in the studio, audition the Session. It passed mine with flying colors, and receives an Editors' Pick Award.

Kudos Makes everything sound better in a beautifully subtle way.

Concerns None.

ALIGN SERIES EQUALIZER

Combining an FET gain stage with oodles of highly specified EQ tools in order to bolster and balance acoustic signals, the Equalizer (\$179 street) proved particularly handy for acoustics featuring electronics with minimal onboard controls, such as the test models used here: a Breedlove Legacy Concertina with an L.R. Baggs Anthem system, and a Taylor 814ce DLX with Expression System 2 electronics. The Align's variable High Pass Filter (40Hz, 80Hz, 120Hz) is automatically on if the pedal is engaged. I set it at 40Hz to attenuate only the lowest frequencies, and that alone turned out to be a huge help. I was truly surprised how much unnecessary low-end was muddying the waters without it, and that was especially true with significant amounts of reverb added. Other than the requisite Volume control, the Align EQ's main knob is an anti-feedback Garret Null Notch filter sweepable from 40 to 300Hz, and it's the way to start dialing-in a particular guitar's fullest tonal potential. The Breedlove sounded best using the Notch at 9 o'clock, while the Taylor sounded best with the Notch at noon. There are six fine-tuning dials, and Baggs chose frequency centers wisely. The beefy Breedlove came across more clearly with slight cuts at 85Hz, 350Hz, and a bit of an "air" boost at 10kHz. The Taylor benefitted from cuts at 10kHz,

4.8kHz, and 1.6kHz, and a slight kick at 85Hz. I had some difficulty making miniscule adjustments on the little black dials using my right hand due to my long fingernails for fingerstyle playing, so I went lefty. The white numbers below the dials were on the small side for my aging eyes—especially at a gig on a dark stage—so I dialed them by ear. While I was performing, I wound up wishing I could manipulate the little +/-6 dB Gain switch with my foot to raise the level for leads, or accommodate switching to a passive magnetic soundhole pickup. The Align Equalizer is a well-thought-out tone sculptor, but its über tweakability is a close-range deal. The obvious stage solution would be multiple units custom-dialed for each main acoustic.

Kudos Strong tone, smart flexibility.

Concerns Fine tuning not super stage friendly.

ALIGN SERIES REVERB

Baggs built this pedal to be specifically tailored for acoustic instruments, and, wow, did they deliver! It's easily one of the finest reverbs I've ever heard for enhancing acoustic guitar, and distinctly different from common reverb pedals aiming to emulate a spring 'verb sound. Align Reverb (\$179 street) possesses an intoxicating regenerative quality as it blossoms, and its dispersion is seductively slow and even. The Reverb knob blends the succulent effect in with your original tone. Decay adjusts the amount of tail, and when pegged it goes to comet-like lengths—essentially endless. Ambient applications abound. The Volume knob is a global instrument level control, but the Tone knob is specific to the reverb effect. Turned way down, you get a dark undercurrent that's practically tidal. With the Tone control way up, the reverb ascends to the heavens, shimmering atop your

natural acoustic sound. I was blissed-out going headlong either direction, or with the dial set straight up at noon, which felt like the exact tonal sweet-spot for acoustic guitar enhancement. Even with copious amounts of effect, I never felt like the organic instrument tone was ever overly obscured. The Align Series Reverb is an acoustic guitar godsend, and an enthusiastic Editors' Pick!

Kudos Luscious, unique tonal quality is ideal for acoustic guitar. Capable of otherworldly ambiance and infinite decay trails.

Concerns None.

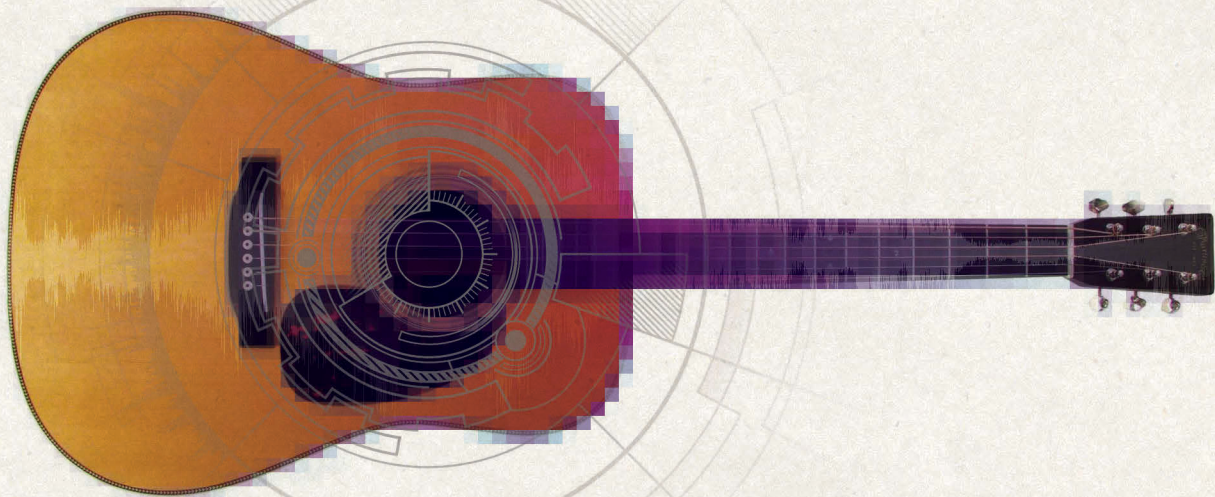
ALIGN SERIES ACTIVE DI

Baggs put its extensive DI experience in into the all-discrete Active DI (\$159 street), and loaded it with guitar-friendly functionality. Guitar players will be happy to hear it has XLR and 1/4" outputs (which can be used simultaneously), a volume pad for matching the XLR signal to the P.A., a Ground/Lift switch to eliminate ground-loop noise, phase inversion for fighting feedback, and a silent Mute foot-switch smack dab in the middle that's super handy for switching between acoustic guitars in different tunings. All said, the main takeaway is signal quality. The Align Active DI provides astonishing signal-to-noise ratio and gobs of headroom. The variance between plugging straight into the Synapse P.A. versus placing the Align Active DI in-between was transformative, and the comparison to a house DI at a place where I often play was dramatic. Not only did the house DI offer none of Baggs' guitar-friendly features, the Align Active DI's sonic superiority was easily evident.

Kudos Impeccable tone and massive headroom.

Concerns None.

Contact lrbaggs.com



What's Your Processing Profile?

BY JIMMY LESLIE

TO PROCESS OR NOT TO PROCESS? IT'S UP TO YOU, BUT when it comes to effects on the acoustic side of the guitar equation, there are essentially three schools of thought.

THE PURIST

Purists feel that effects have no place in the acoustic realm. Period. It is true the majority of acoustic giants have eschewed effects. Can you imagine Segovia using a chorus, or Paco De Lucia with a giant echo, or Maybelle Carter's impeccable archtop tone slathered in reverb? If you choose traditional acoustic tone, you're in good company.

THE DABBLER

The attitude here is that acoustic effects should be a slight enhancement—subtle and tasteful bits of reverb, modulation, compression, overdrive, and so on. The key to being an adept dabbler lies in the ratio of dry-to-wet signal in the mix. The processing should stand out to the listener, yet it should be palpable. Lots of modern pedals offer a Mix control, but that's not essential if you employ good judgment at each step in your signal chain. Think like a vocalist wanting effects to make his or her voice sound a bit more vibey, but not to alter or overwhelm their natural sound.

THE PROCESSOR

This lot wonders, "Why should electric-guitar players have all the fun?" Consider what the late Michael Hedges accomplished via heavenly reverb. The late New Age icon is enjoying a huge wave of renewed interest among percussive fingerstylists, and

pedals such as the L.R. Baggs Align Series Reverb (reviewed on p. XX) are helping players pay worthy, cathedral-esque tribute. A tap-tempo delay is an essential ingredient for any Processor. In his MAY 2018 *Frets* feature, Tim Reynolds detailed how he relies on the reverse and pitch-shifting capabilities of the BOSS-DD5 Digital Delay to create trippy sounds when he does acoustic duo gigs with Dave Matthews.

Overdriven sounds are becoming more prominent, as well. Mike Dawes (Holiday 2017) informed us he used a Joyo JF-14 amp-simulation pedal for high-gain tones on his latest record, *ERA*. Dawes and Petteri Sariola (February 2018) utilize magnetic soundhole pickups for overdrive effects, but piezo pickups can work too. Amazingly, ukulele maestro Jake Shimabukuro has evolved from Dabbler to Processor. Shimabukuro (*GP* December 2016) told us that acoustic artists have to be very picky about adding overdrive to piezo signals, which is why he used a Tech 21 Richie Kotzen Signature RK5 Fly Rig for his basic overdrive sound on 2016's *Nashville Sessions*. Shimabukuro even uses an Electro-Harmonix Micro POG to simulate the sound of baritone, tenor, and soprano ukuleles playing simultaneously.

The final decision for the Processor is to loop or not to loop. While singer/songwriters often make no bones about using loops to augment a performance, percussive fingerstylists don't want to appear to be "cheating." Sariola leaves his loop pedal at home in order to avoid any confusion, while Dawes issued a kind of acoustic public service announcement: "Don't be afraid of a bit of live looping, kids! It's a fun tool, much like any guitar effect. Be musical." ■

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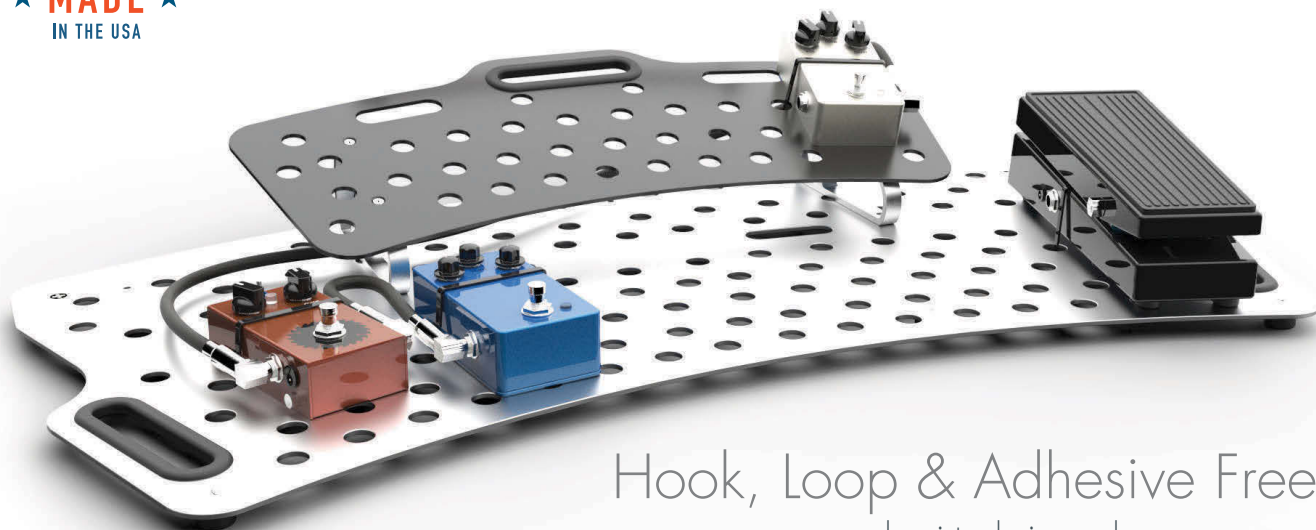


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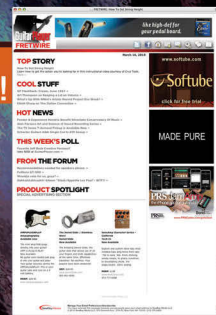
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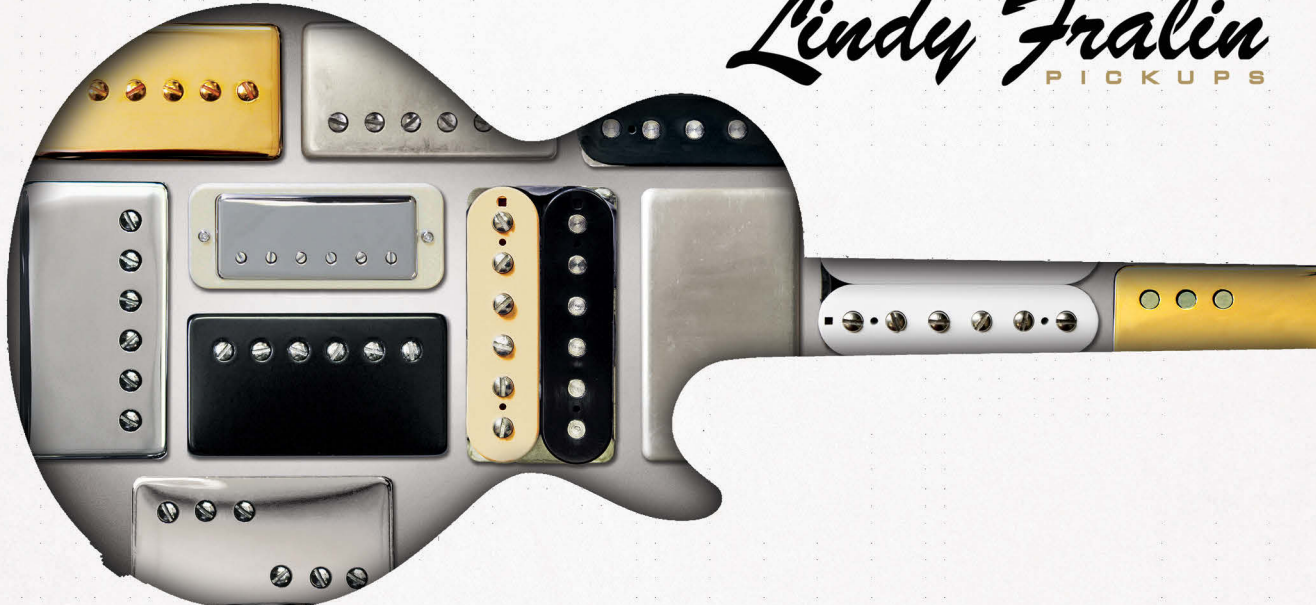
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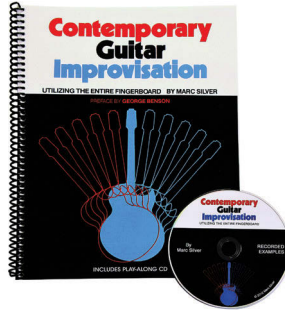
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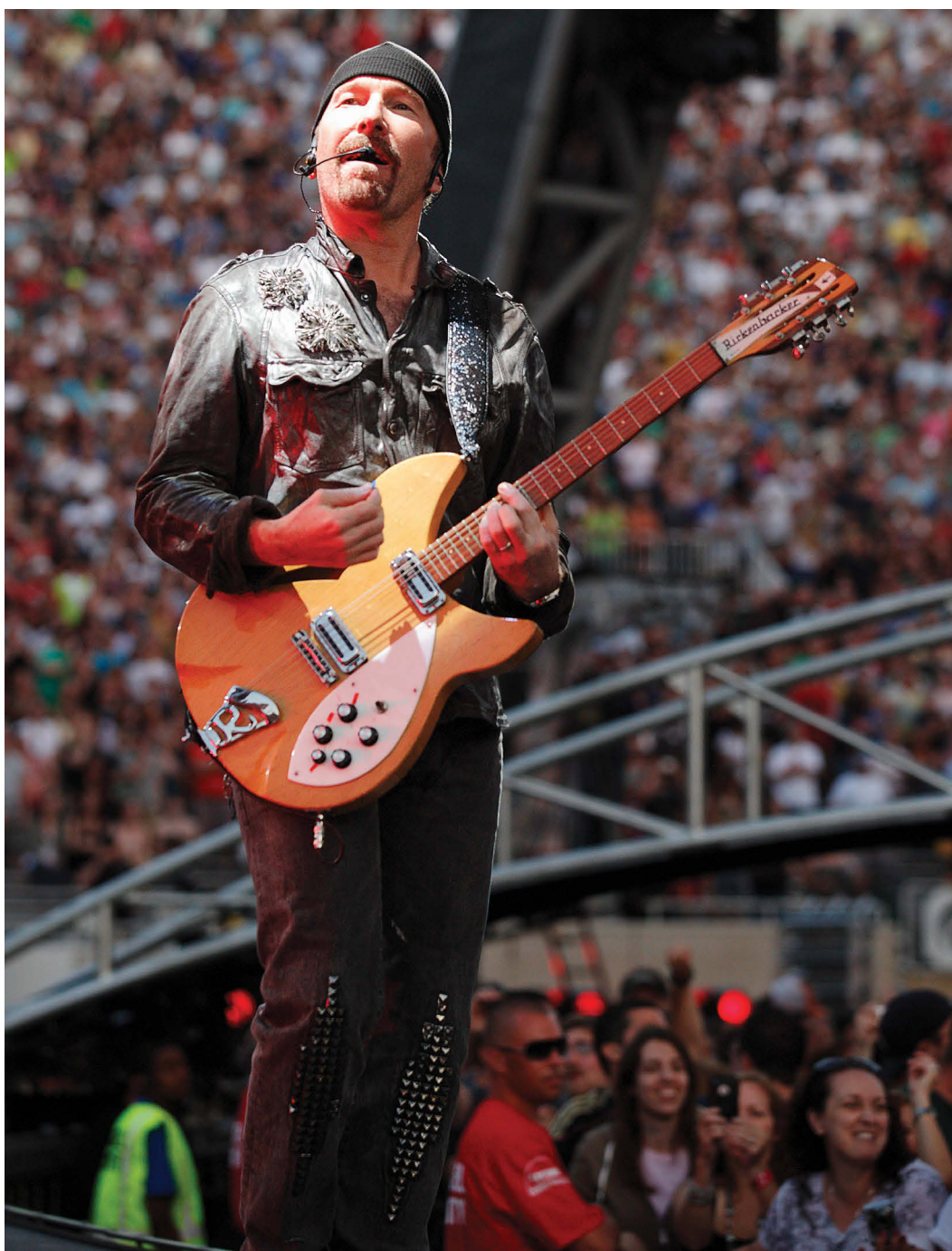
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