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{ From The Editor }

ONE OF THOSE WONDERFUL MOMENTS WHEN A DISCUSSION TRIGGERS

deeper thought occurred while I was interviewing June Millington for this month's issue. We were talking about the interaction of musicians in a band, and she said, "You know, there's a way of being gracious, even when you're turned up to 11."

Now, I know *GP* readers tend to hate it when I veer off into the social-political realms of current culture, but June's words had resonance beyond music making. So please bear with me for a bit, and I promise we'll get back to guitar stuff.

I don't think it's a secret that debates these days all seem to have the volume knobs cranked up to 11. In the worst examples of the "non-communicative" arts, everyone is shouting, screaming, calling each other names, completely disregarding different thought processes, going for the throat, getting personal, and acting out of some bizarre notion of fearfulness. Truth is suspect. What is the truth anyway, and who *can* we trust? It's confusing and frustrating and culturally depressing, and no matter where you stand, you're probably dealing with the same angst and horrors. The collapse of empathy and gracious debate affects everyone. We are all in the sh*t.

Of course, musicians live in the same world as everyone else. (Well, unless those, um, "experiences" you enjoyed in your youth have permanently transported your brain to some C.S. Lewis-inspired fantasyland.) We can ignore the tumult and create music outside of real life, or we can dive in and write songs that embrace everyday existence, with all of its elements of "glass half full" and "glass half empty." Or, heck, we can just write lovely little love songs all the time. No harm in joy.

But however you follow your creative muse, it can't really escape all the noise. We are human, after all, and unless you've discovered a way to transform yourself into a solely data-driven, unfeeling android, your emotions will be affected by the forces surrounding your life. So how *does* that stuff resonate in our hearts, brains, and hands?

It could turn you into a bit of a bully. The societal "okay-ness" of going on the attack if you don't agree with something could absolutely affect relations within your band—and it might start so subtly that you miss the clues. Perhaps, you outright dismiss a musical suggestion from your drummer, and cap it with a snotty comment. Maybe you become so sure of yourself that you can't see the forest for the trees, and you totally miss some production, arrangement, or musical elements that could have made your song so much better. Or you could even get envious of a colleague's awesome ideas, and simply refute them because you're afraid someone else's brainstorm diminishes your own contributions. I'm sure you can devise some other plot points here.

Now, admittedly, I'm a bit of a paranoid creator/leader/collaborator. I always worry that I might be opening the wrong door, following the wrong path, or driving the car into a ditch. So outside forces do affect me, because I worry about how they may inform my decision making and creative drive—whether those elements manifest themselves as anger, depression, hopelessness, or even aggressively productive goodness. You may be different. (I hope so—it can sometimes suck to be me.)

But let's just say that blasting the volume at 11 should only be done when you want to achieve some luscious, totally saturated overdrive tone through your favorite amp and guitar. For everything else, I humbly suggest that we back that knob down to 7, and absorb the signal headroom that will allow us to see all directions, consider all options, and act like gracious and supportive humanoids.

Michael Molenda

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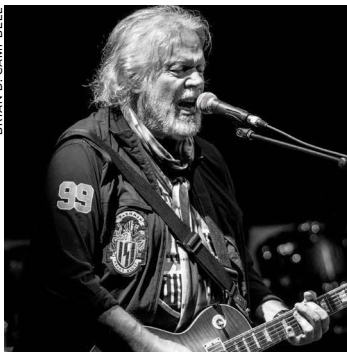
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Guitar Player (ISSN 0017-5463) is published monthly with an extra issue in December by Newbay Media, LLC, 28 East 28th Street, 12th floor, New York, NY 10016. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. Canada Post: Publications Mail Agreement #40612608. Canada Returns to be sent to Bleichip International, P.O. Box 25542, London, ON N6C 6B2. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Guitar Player, P.O. Box 2029, Langhorne, PA 19047-9957.

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OPENING NOTES

Raid Dana's Gear Stash!

The coolest part about my job as *Guitar Player's* fearless Gear Coordinator is ending up with tons of awesome products that our editors have reviewed throughout the year. Occasionally, some generous manufacturers allow me to give our loyal readers a chance to "Raid My Stash."

This month, **Walrus Audio** is presenting its groovy **Monument Harmonic Tap Tremolo**. For a chance to get this pedal in your clutches, send an email to nbmgearcoordinator@gmail.com with "Monument" in the subject line. One lucky winner will be chosen at random. The deadline for entries is June 20, 2018. Please keep in mind that all previously reviewed gear is "as is," and that your emails may be shared with Walrus Audio. Good luck! — DANA PARKER



Oops!

In his June 2018 column, Terry Carleton wrote about what he *thought* was a Whack Job made by Blich-Chri, but it was a counterfeit. (Since the report, all Blich-Chri online accounts have been closed.) The actual originator of the Clari(not) pedal is Doug Tuttle at Mid-Fi Electronics. Check out midfielectronics.com to see Tuttle's complete line of wonderfully weird guitar processors.

A Question of Beauty



I first saw *GP* in 1967, I've subscribed for decades, and I grew up to '50s and '60s rock. I've had a band since the '70s, dealt with lead-guitarist disease, quested for tone, committed to making songs sound true, and acquired a basement full of *GP* Editors' Picks-winning products. So I'd like to ask a question stimulated by Michael Molenda's April 2018 "Noize from the Editor" about risk.

Why does *Guitar Player* never address music's essence: Beauty?

Shouldn't that be the magazine's guiding theme? Beauty is wired in, it grabs us, and we know it when we see it (or not). Beauty is vital to an art form's birth, growth, and maturation, but it has limits. Guitar music flourished in the '60s and '70s, and matured in the '80s. Then came punk, rap, and grunge, which were rejections of musicality and craft, and guitar music's decline coincides with beauty's disappearance. While the concept of "risk" sounds bold and imaginative, if guitar music has exhausted beauty, what can risk offer? We need to find new beauty. —

CHARLIE CLANCY

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Strings of Change

10 “New Classic” Albums for Classic-Rock Fans

BY MICHAEL MOLEND A

I WAS BORN SMACK DAB IN THE EYE

of the classic-rock hurricane that changed rock guitar forever. The '60s and '70s icons who forged such a massive cultural disruption were heroes to me—giants whose music reached into my soul and psyche, changing who I was, as well as who I would become. I would never have braved a career in music without their paths to aspire to, nor would I have fallen so deeply in love with the guitar. In fact, the whole idea of my someday becoming Editor in Chief of *Guitar Player* would have been ludicrous without their inspiration to emulate their guitarcraft in my own fumbling manner.

But those musicians were “of a time,” and much as I adore that era, I don’t want to believe the style can’t evolve beyond its originators. Music should evolve and inspire new players, so rather than regurgitate the classic-rock albums we all know and love for a “Top 10 List,” we’ve instead selected a bevy of classic-rock-inspired releases by the “next generation.”



The World's Best American Band, White Reaper

Kentucky's White Reaper synthesizes Cheap Trick-like sing-along choruses and tons of big-ass guitar riffs into music that would fit right into *That '70s Show*.



Puppet Show Ally Venable Band

At just 19, Venable pulls off a stunner of gritty and/or sultry blues-rock tunes embellished with lots of tasty guitar solos. Gary Hoey guests on “Devil's Son.”



Tyler Bryant and the Shakedown Tyler Bryant and the Shakedown

Vibey, dreamy, or slow-cooking fuzzy verses often explode into anthem-esque choruses. Nice pay-offs, and guitar licks aplenty. Brad Whitford's son, Graham, is one of the guitarists.



Hollow Bones Rival Sons

Soaring from a blues-rock foundation, Rival Sons adds huge, Def Leppard-style background vocals and surging, blistering guitar riffs to performances that sound beautifully alive and exciting.



Hard to Kill Heaven and Earth

Admittedly, these vets could have seen duty in the '70s. However, this is a relatively new band, and their classic-rock roar is not only youthful, but their material has all the right moves.



West Wooden Shjips

This San Francisco band evokes the City's psychedelic roots with crazy hurricanes of overdriven guitar—punctuated with delightfully cheesy organ sounds. It's like going to Winterland in the '70s.



Ooga Booga Schizophonics

Led by completely unhinged guitarist Pat Beers (watch the videos), this San Diego band's MC5/Stooges-like assault could almost own a day on Steven Van Zandt's *Underground Garage*.



Everybody Wants The Struts

Yeah, it might be dumb and derivative, but it's also “crafty dumb” like the best sing-along, grooving, bombastic guitar-driven joyfests of Sweet, Slade, and Grand Funk.



From the Fires Greta Van Fleet

It may not be fair to include this release, as the upcoming album promises more diversity, but you can't argue it ignited a fan frenzy over youthful classic rockers.



Victorious Wolfmother

Australian guitarist Andrew Stockdale puts Black Sabbath, Led Zeppelin, and other '70s legends into a musical blender, and pours out an exhilarating repast of riff rock. ■

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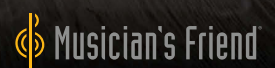


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The Enduring Legacy of Jimi Hendrix

A Guitarist's View of *Both Sides of the Sky*

BY MATT BLACKETT

FOR SERIOUS JIMI HENDRIX FANS, the words “new Hendrix album” can be a two-edged sword. On the one hand, any additional info on the Grand Poobah/Mack Daddy/Supreme Badass of the electric guitar is a welcome thing. Having said that, students of Jimi’s trip know that some “previously unreleased” tracks were unreleased for a reason. That’s why I was trepidatious about this latest addition to the Hendrix oeuvre.

Thankfully, those fears were largely unfounded, because there is a boatload of Hendrixian goodness on the 13 cuts of *Both Sides of the Sky* [Legacy Recordings/Experience Hendrix].

The opener, Jimi’s take on the Muddy Waters/Bo Diddley classic “Mannish Boy,” features a Uni-Vibe-soaked tone playing an “I Just Want to Make Love to You” riff. There are some cool vocal flourishes, and a must-steal lick at 3:05. The Band of Gypsys rhythm section provides a great bed for Jim to work his magic at 4:00.

“Lover Man” would seem like a great document of Jimi’s lead-guitar chops, and it is. But what’s really evident on this song is the fact

he is one of the all-time great rhythm guitarists. The guy is just impossibly funky and in the pocket. Once again, the Band of Gypsys guys create a consistently soft place for Jimi to land.

Jimi is reunited with his Experience compatriots for “Hear My Train a Comin’.” The groove is a little busier, but the downbeats are still huge. The solo is driven by a crying, screaming, out-of-control tone where Jimi plays the howling feedback as much as the notes. The way he works the volume-knob dynamics is inspiring. How do you get 1,000 sounds out of one tone? Like this.

Some of the interest in this release is about the collaborations with Stephen Stills. “\$20 Fine” gives Jimi the opportunity to play side-man to Stills’ organ and vocal, and he kills it. He turns in a powerful, thoughtful performance that makes a bold statement without taking over the song, and his parts once again serve as an awesome rhythm/lead tutorial.

Hendrix and Stills also team up on “Woodstock,” but Jimi’s only on bass for this cut. Locked in with Buddy Miles, Jimi delivers a beautiful bass performance with none of the showoff-y

stuff that guitarists occasionally [*cough*] apply to bass parts. Again, it’s about the pocket with this guy, and his pocket is unassailable.

For Band of Gypsys fans, the crown jewel on this recording is a tune they have likely had in their collection for decades. “Power of Soul” represents all that is good about Hendrix, and it provides some tantalizing clues to the age-old question, “What do you think Jimi would have done if he had lived?” This isn’t just a great riff, but it’s a riff that he morphs into a bunch of different keys and harmonizes in fourths in a ton of cool ways. To call it a pentatonic workout does it a tremendous disservice, but it’s one of the best pentatonic workouts ever.

There’s more. Jimi rocks with Johnny Winter on “Things I Used to Do.” He reacts to Lonnie Youngblood’s sax and vocal on “Georgia Blues.” He plays sitar (and unreal feedback) on “Cherokee Mist.” He plays like Jimi Hendrix on every song.

This is an important recording from a historical standpoint, but it’s a flat-out great guitar record on top of that. It’ll remind you why you love this guy so much. ■

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SONGWRITING

Purple Partnership

The Revolution's Wendy Melvoin Recalls the Co-Writing Process for *Purple Rain*

BY JAMIE BLAINE

PHOTOGRAPH BY JAMIE BLAINE

HISTORY TENDS TO PORTRAY PRINCE as a genius/control freak/one-man band, but it's important to note that *Purple Rain* is credited as "produced, arranged, composed and performed by Prince and The Revolution." This is not lip service. Like Robin to Prince's Batman, or Keef to his Mick, Wendy Melvoin's sass, spirited vocals, and avant-garde guitar structures played a crucial role in the creation of the Purple One's masterpiece. Melvoin offered to look back at some *Purple Rain* sessions as the reformed Revolution continued its 2018 tour.

Which *Purple Rain* songs were you involved in creating?

I had a hand in everything, except "Darling Nikki" and "The Beautiful Ones."

How did you develop the chordal structure to "Purple Rain"?

The band was in rehearsal, and Prince brought in this chorus. He said, "I've got these three chords. It's almost like a straight-up

country song. I need everybody to be who you are, and let's make it something else." I used my bag of tools to take this progression that sounded simple, and rework the chords to give it more subtext and elevate the song into something higher. I had a jazz-harmony background, so I re-harmonized the chords as triads. I also used my thumb on the neck similar to the way Richie Havens did. If my index finger was barring the 3rd fret, my thumb could barre the low-E and A strings on the 5th or 6th frets. That's how I played "Purple Rain."

For the record, what is the song's opening chord?

I was in standard tuning, and Bbadd9 would be the easiest way to tab it.

Would you also experiment with alternate tunings?

If I got bored with standard E or dropped D, I would tune to some beautiful chord I loved, and I'd create a piece of music based on that. I'd usually use the bass notes as the root, and then end up with some bizarre +13sus chord by the time I was done. If I'm trying to impose a different flavor into a pop or rock element,

I'll do open tunings with distortion and lots of reverb and delay.

How would you work out guitar parts with Prince?

Just hours of jamming. We'd sit on a groove for three or four hours. He'd call out a key change, and we'd find the next right place to lay the railroad track down to keep the train moving. Most of the time, we'd go with call and response. Prince starts the phrase, I finish it. You stay on the groove, and make tiny, subtle changes—such as slide one note between the minor and major to make it funkier. But that one tiny tweak can turn the groove on its head. Nuance was the most important thing.

How was "Computer Blue" written?

Lisa [Coleman, keyboardist] and I came up with that little lead lick, and we all started jamming on that. Prince was good at corralling us to stay in the moment, and tease out the song structure. He was the chef, and we were the line cooks making this beautiful paella. 🍲

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Adrian Conner (second from left)
Belles Bent for Leather (Judas Priest Tribute)
Gibson SG Standard, Fender Stratocaster, Marshall JCM 2000.

Classic-Rock Tone Talk

A Sound-Sculpting Roundtable with Cover & Tribute Band Musicians Who Emulate the Hits at Bars, Clubs, and Festivals.

BY MICHAEL MOLENDRA

IF YOU WANT A SEMINAR ON CLASSIC-rock guitar tone, it's probably as close as your local watering hole, where the nightly entertainment is presented by cover and tribute bands simulating the experience of classic-rock bands performing live. To truly provide audiences with the vibe, thrills, and sense memories of grooving to Alice Cooper, Led Zeppelin, Van Halen, Journey, and other such heavies, the guitarists paying tribute to these iconic bands must weave their spells with spot-on tones, riffs, licks, and solos. Or do they?

In order to determine exactly how cover artists approach their "emulative endeavors," I put out a Facebook call asking them to divulge tips, conceptual advice, and tone strategies. These men and women love stepping into the musical shoes of their heroes, and the depth of study they often undertake to do their jobs well and attract audience support is likely no less grueling than that of original artists striving to develop unique and commercial voices. Here's a compendium of their shared wisdom...

How precisely does the typical audience expect you to emulate the parts and tones on the hits you cover?



Bill Rupert

E53/Mis B'Havin/Tongue n' Groove
(cover bands)

Tom Anderson, Fender, Gretsch, Ibanez, and Sully guitars; Friedman Marsha, Matchless Chieftain, Trainwreck Express, Fender Deluxe Reverb, Epiphone Pace-maker.

Martina "Chaos" Fasano (Eyes of Alice):
For the most part, the audience wants to hear the songs they love played the way they

remember them on the original, recorded versions. They're not there to hear your heavy-metal djent version of "No More Mr. Nice Guy." But I've found that if you play the songs close enough to the originals, people are happy. Very few audience members are going to get caught up in deciding whether or not your Marshall sounds like Slash's, or if you are using the same phaser as Eddie Van Halen.

Richard Gee (Marinfidels): Playing all parts exactly isn't important to our audience. More important is the energy that we bring to the songs. Of course, we play the signature licks correctly, and we make sure the tones don't suck, but audiences want entertainment. Someone who plays parts perfectly, but with no emotion or attitude usually isn't received well.

Bill Rupert (E53, Mis B'Havin, Tongue n' Groove): As long as an audience knows what the song is, and it's performed well, they're typically very pleased. After all, there are so many variables *after* your amp's speakers—such as audience noise—that make it nearly impossible to nail the original tones.

Mark Banning (The Unauthorized Rolling Stones): Guitar players expect more precision than most normal people, and, for many



years, I tried to appease the critical guitarists in my audiences. Obviously, tone is very important to me, but, lately, I just try to get into the ballpark.

Adrian Conner (Belles Bent for Leather):

If something sounds like sh*t, any audience is going to be disappointed. If there are many mistakes, folks will walk out and say negative stuff about the band. But, that said, the audience wants you to do well. They are on your side, and they want to be amazed. You should also remember that rock audiences want to see action and passion as opposed to perfect technique. Still, I never stop listening and trying to get better. I research the parts and practice to a metronome—Jennifer Batten gave me an excellent finger exercise that keeps me training all year long—because I need to work up to around 220bpm for a Belles Bent for Leather gig. I also need some distortion to execute pick squeals, pitch harmonics, and dive bombs, but I'm careful not to squash the f**k out of my tone with gain.

Desmonde Mulcahy (Rebel Rebel): We pay tribute to the music of David Bowie, and we respect what he intended with a given song. But Bowie changed arrangements all the time when performing his work live, so we feel free to explore other interpretations within our performances.

Brandon Cook (Appetite for Deception):

My goal is to exactly replicate the feeling, tone, and performance of Slash, and I can't allow myself to aim for anything less. Audiences don't want *my* take—they're paying to hear Slash.

Matt Blackett (2112, Red Rocker Experience): When I was in a Rush tribute band, I nailed Alex Lifeson's rhythm stuff pretty well. For the solos, I got every iconic part, but on the fast, crazy stuff, I just had to do my own thing. I applied the "Point A to Point B" rule: If I started on the same note as him, and ended on the same note, I could take some liberties with the middle notes. What I learned from that gig was people love the tunes. They appreciate the other stuff, but it's the melodies and arrangements that make them feel good. Nail the intro, give respect to the breakdown, crush the outro, and you win.

Can you get away with a less-than-accurate tone if the musical parts are spot on?

Richie Castellano (Blue Oyster Cult, Band Geek): Will it sound right if the tone is spot on and the part is wrong? The answer is obviously,



Maury Brown

Shoot to Thrill (AC/DC tribute)

Gretsch G5420T, Gretsch G5448T Double Jet, Splawn Quickrod 100, Marshall JCM 900, Marshall JCM 1960 4x12 slant cab, Laney straight cab loaded with Celestion Vintage 30s.



Martina Fasano

Eyes of Alice (Alice Cooper tribute)

Ibanez S670QM, Ibanez RG350QMZ, BOSS GT-100, Seymour Duncan Power-Stage 170, Peavey 4x12 cab.



"no." Playing the part correctly while matching the feeling, nuance, and inflection of the original artist will go a very long way, even if the tone isn't exact. Having the exact tone is the cherry on top.

Martina "Chaos" Fasano (Eyes of Alice):

When we cover songs from the studio-layering-rich '70s and '80s, it's impossible to replicate all of the little fills, overdubs, and nuances in live performance. It's important to get as close as you can with the tone, and then make sure the most recognizable parts are spot on. Few people will notice that your overdriven tone has a bit more bite than the original, but *everyone* notices if you don't play an intro riff correctly.

Rick Rabor (The Aspersions): I'm in a drums and acoustic-guitar duo, and, after nine years of gigging, we've found that singing songs in the original keys, and playing the same arrangements that the listeners remember, are more important than guitar tone.

Adrian Conner (Belles Bent for Leather):

Judas Priest's studio productions make it hard to emulate a specific tone for an entire show. Their early stuff is dry and more blues based, and, as the band progressed, the playing became much flashier and classically oriented. So, for us, as long as we are playing the right parts, the tone is secondary.

Antonio Marquez (ZEBOP!): The melodies and the feel are critical to having a song come off well, but I also try to emulate Carlos Santana's tone as exactly as possible. That's important to me, because I know there are diehard Santana fans out there that know the

Matt Blackett

2112 (Rush tribute), Red Rocker Experience (Sammy Hagar tribute)

Robin Custom guitar, Rivera M-100, ART SGX-2000, Kemper Profiler, MXR EVH Overdrive.



Brandon Cook

Appetite for Deception (Guns N' Roses tribute)

Gibson VOS 1959 Les Paul, Marshall JCM Slash Signature, Full Tone OCD, MXR Ten-Band EQ, Boss DD-7, Dunlop Cry Baby.

tones. They want to hear the sustain, and, as Carlos used to say, "the cry."



Rick Rabor

The Aspersions (cover band)

Ibanez AE20, 200-watt Peavey P.A. head, LR Baggs Venue DI.

How do you sneak your own personal style into the performances when your job is to emulate classic solos, riffs, and other parts?

Chris Masterjohn (5 South): That's a challenge, but if the song is well known, and 700,000 other cover bands play it, you need to add your own style to keep it fresh and give the audience something new.

Brev Sullivan (Skin City Angels): I never think, "I'm just playing someone else's song or



Richie Castellano

Band Geek (cover band)

Music Man Axis, Line 6 Variax, Line 6 Helix.

solo." I *live* it in real time with the audience, as if it's being heard for the first time.

Juliana Tarter (Killer Queens): When I learn Brian May's guitar solos, I try to decipher what sort of scale the notes belong to, and how they relate to the harmony. When I understand where he was coming from, I feel more comfortable branching

EDDIE CURRENT ON YOUTUBE COVERS

I MAKE NOTE-FOR-NOTE

recreations on YouTube, and I also play bass in a tribute band. No one has ever come up after a live show and complimented the similarity of my tone or my parts to the originals, but on YouTube, particularly with guitar parts, viewers are extremely picky. People watching videos want to see you play and sound *exactly* like the original, and they call you out if you miss something, or if the tone is a little off. On video, where people can focus on a single part and rewind, the stakes are higher. In order to get shares, thumbs-up, and glowing comments, the notes, the feel, and the sound all have to be there.

It may seem paradoxical, but it is possible to nail a tribute performance and still get your personal style and expression in there. One thing I try to do is *exaggerate* the original artist's intent—or, at least, my interpretation of the artist's intent. If the original sounds fiery and attacking, I try to make it even more so. If the part grooves strongly, I try to groove harder. So, it ends up being not a mechanical reproduction of the original performance, but instead a reproduction of how I hear it as a fan, emphasizing

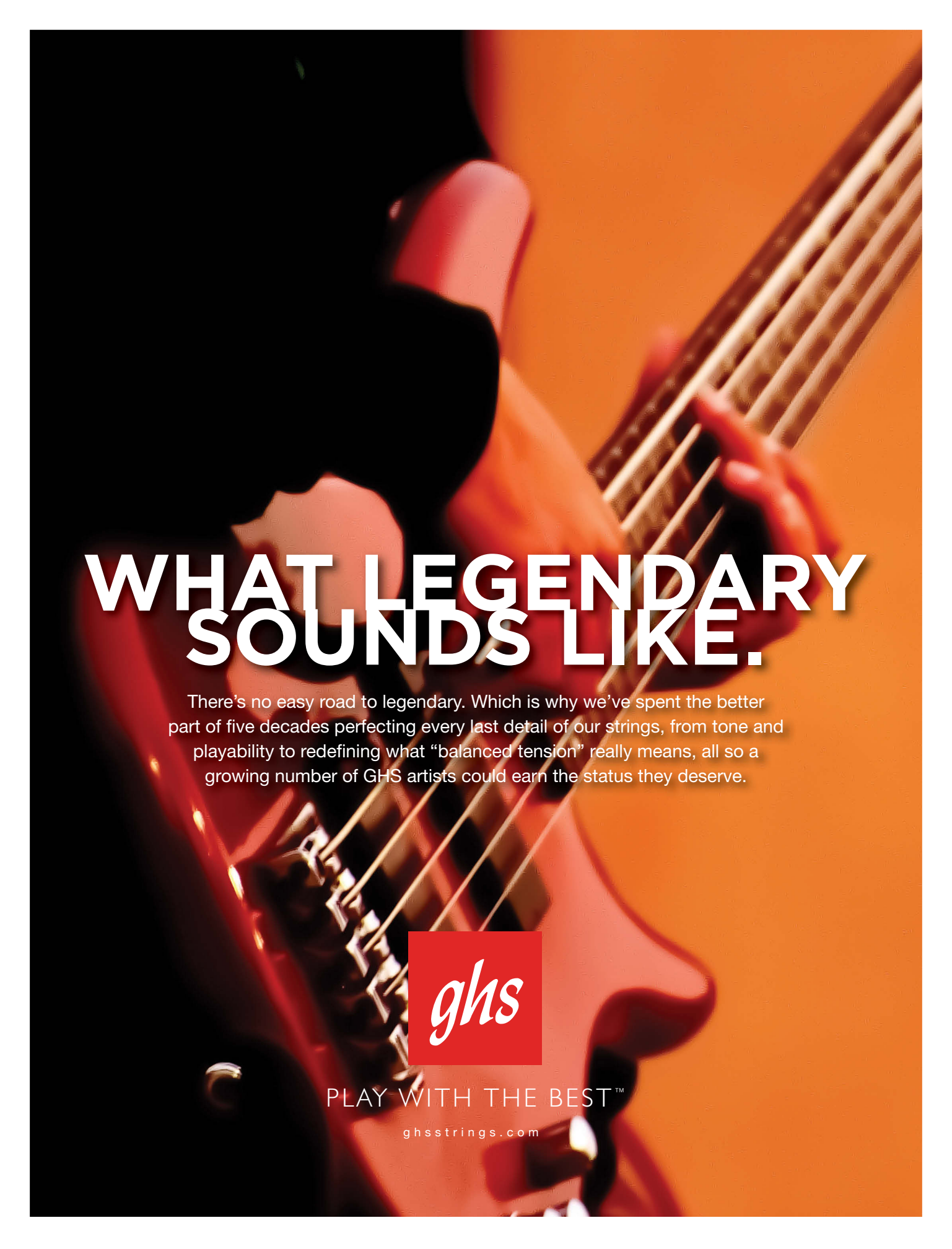
the aspects that appeal to me most.

If anything, I think people are more jazzed seeing someone sound like an artist *without* using the original gear—it's encouraging, and it lets them know that music is about a lot more than gear.

Eddie Current—who "moonlights"

as long-time Bass Player editor/proofreader Karl Coryat—has more than 3,200 subscribers to his EddieCurrentCovers YouTube channel, with total views at more than 230,000. His gear includes an '80s Ibanez Roadstar II, Line 6 POD, IK Multimedia Amplitude, and Pro Tools.





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Richard Gee
Marinfidels (cover band)
PRS 595, Fender Stratocaster, Gibson Les Paul, Ernie Ball Luke III, Fender EC Tremolux, Two Rock Matt Schofield Signature, Universal Audio OX, TC Electronic Hall of Fame Reverb, Keeley Monterey.

out a bit from the note-for-note parts by throwing in some extra trills or vibrato, or a few extra notes in a shreddy run.

Antonio Marquez (ZEBOP!): It comes out naturally, because no one can play exactly the same. Of course, I approach the essential parts like a classical musician performing a part written by a great composer. I am Itzhak Perlman and Carlos is Beethoven.

Maury Brown (Shoot to Thrill): I play the role of Malcolm Young in an AC/DC tribute, and I don't try to inject my personal style into the performances. It's more about channeling every nuance of the band and trying to personify that.

Martina "Chaos" Fasano (Eyes of Alice): My personal additions usually come in the form of vibrato, bends, and little nuances. You don't want the parts to sound robotic, so there's a fine line between emulating the original performance and being yourself.

Bill Rupert (E53, Mis B'Havin, Tongue n' Groove): I stick as close as possible to signature solos, but, for others, I may mix original parts with a bit of improv to put myself into the mix. Occasionally, I'll completely improvise a solo if I feel the original was weak or unmemorable. This is obviously very subjective, but I think I have a pretty



Fred Di Santo
21 Gun Salute (AC/DC tribute)
Godin 5th Avenue LTD, Godin Montreal Premiere, 1978 Marshall JMP MK II 2187, Marshall 1936 2x12 cab, Marshall 4x12 cab.

good feel for when and where I can get away with it. Interestingly, I typically get the most compliments for improvisation over nailing something note-for-note.

Dave Crimmen (Dave Crimmen Band): I never worry about me coming through the songs. No matter how close you get to the original recording, it's still going to sound like you, because you're the one playing it. I like to think that my spirit comes through their music.

Adrian Conner (Belles Bent for Leather): Nobody wants to hear my version of Judas Priest's "Living After Midnight"—they want to hear the badass solo that made the song such a classic. It can be very difficult for me to decide when to use my own voice. Generally, I'll do my own thing only if the part is super fast, or not iconic or melodic.

Mark Banning (The Unauthorized Rolling Stones): I've always studied the solos closely, but I usually improvise within the original performer's style. I think, "How would this person play it live?" Audiences expect me to pay homage to the original solos, but still make them my own.

Richie Castellano (Blue Oyster Cult, Band Geek): You don't want to be the guy who didn't do his homework and decided to do his own thing on songs like "Bohemian Rhapsody," "Hotel California," or "More Than a Feeling." Then again, there are songs where the original guitar player



Dave Crimmen (cover artist)
Fender Stratocaster, Gibson Les Paul Custom, Gibson J-200, Fender Deluxe Reverb, Fishman Loudbox, Bose S1.

is jamming, and probably never plays the solo the same way twice. For parts like this, I'll establish the key elements of the original solo, and then inject my own improv, while making sure that what I play stays within the context of the song. Here's a funny example of what I mean about players who don't stick to their original solos: I've been playing second guitar and keyboards in Blue Oyster Cult for the past 13 years, and, for my own gigs, I'll occasionally cover "Burnin' For You," making sure to play the solo exactly like the original version. Buck Dharma [founding BOC guitarist] heard a recording of me doing the song, and told me, "You play that solo just like the record. I don't even remember how that solo goes!"

Do audiences want to see you playing the exact same gear as the original artists?

Chris Masterjohn (5 South): We are there to entertain people, and most audiences could care less that you are playing a vintage-Strato-Marshall-Paul, or whatever. They just want to enjoy the music, and equipment is pretty much the last thing on their minds. I believe you can get about 90 percent of the tones you need with any guitar with humbuckers and a coil-tap, a two- or three-channel amp with a nice spread of clean and distorted modes, and wah, delay, and chorus pedals.

Juliana Tarter (Killer Queens): I play my Jackson SLX Soloist, but I think that by playing with different gear, it reminds the audience that we are

“

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Antonio Marquez
ZEBOP! (Santana tribute)
1995 PRS Santana I, Mesa/Boogie Mark
Five: 35, 1977 Mesa/Boogie Mark I, two
Mesa/Boogie 1x12 cabs, Vox wah.

musicians replicating a sound and style, yet we come from different backgrounds and have our own uniqueness.

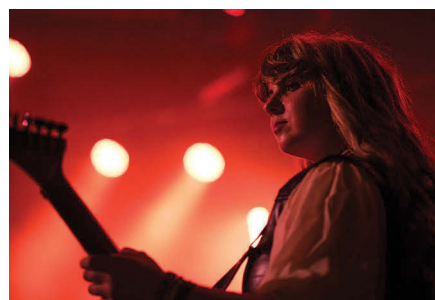
Martina “Chaos” Fasano (Eyes of Alice): Alice Cooper fans enjoy seeing our stage show mimic Alice’s—which means the guillotine, electric chair, gallows, the works—and, as people tend to listen with their eyes, it helps to use the gear the original musicians played. If you’re really paying tribute to the entire experience, then the gear matching is a part of that experience. I had switched to Ibanez and Jackson guitars because of wrist issues, but, lucky for me, as [current Cooper guitarist] Nita Strauss plays Ibanez, it worked out that I am paying homage to her.

Dave Crimmen (Dave Crimmen Band): When you’re working bars you don’t have time for 47 different amps and 5,000 different guitars. You have to make compromises. I make sure the songs are in the same keys, same tempos, same arrangements, and with the same backup vocals. I don’t worry about the gear.

Brev Sullivan (Skin City Angels): Yes. But, as an ’80s arena-rock tribute, all the state-of-the-art gear and tiger-striped guitars are nothing without an energetic and smooth performance with in-tune vocal harmonies.



Brev Sullivan
Skin City Angels (cover band)
Custom 24-fret guitars equipped with Floyd
Rose locking tremos, DV Mark Multiamp, 2x12
stereo guitar cab.



Juliana Tarter
Killer Queens (Queen tribute)
Jackson SLX Soloist, Orange TH30, Line 6
Spider II, Orange Bax Bangeetar, TC Elec-
tronic Corona.

Antonio Marquez (ZEBOP!): In my experience, the audience wants it sound like the band, but the gear doesn’t have to *look* like the band’s.

Fred Di Santo (21 Gun Salute): I work at Godin guitars, so I use Godins, rather than Gretsches, to emulate Malcolm Young’s tone in my AC/DC tribute band. I keep my rhythm chops accurate to what Malcolm recorded, I never overplay, and I dial in as big a tone as possible, and I haven’t heard any complaints. That said, my bandmate who plays Angus uses Gibson SGs.



Mark Banning
The Unauthorized Rolling Stones
Fender Esquire, Fender Telecaster, Fender
Stratocaster, Gibson Les Paul, Vox AC30,
Fender Bassman, Fender Tweed Pro, Ro-
land CUBE-80, BOSS Katana.

Bill Rupert (E53, Mis B’Havin, Tongue n’ Groove): For a cover band, absolutely not. For certain tribute acts on the other hand, I think the closer you recreate the entire experience, the better the reception will be. Audience scrutiny is much greater in that arena. For example, if I see a Queen tribute, I don’t want to see a guy in jeans and a t-shirt playing a Charvel.

Adrian Conner (Belles Bent for Leather): I don’t get the impression the audience cares what kind of guitar I’m playing.

Brandon Cook (Appetite for Deception): People didn’t actually say anything to me, but when I had an Epiphone, they looked at it more like a farce. Once I got a real VOS [Vintage Original Spec] Gibson Les Paul, people changed their view for sure, and the audience response become more ecstatic.

John Cruz (Black Rose): I’m in a Thin Lizzy tribute, and some people have given me a hard time for playing a Stratocaster for most of our set. But a Strat is who I am, and it works better for my ears and fingers. But people really don’t care as long as the show is good.

Maury Brown (Shoot to Thrill): Yes and no. Of course, an Angus Young couldn’t pull it off without an SG, but while I certainly couldn’t do my job as Malcolm with a Les Paul or a Strat, playing a Custom Shop Jet or a ’50s White Falcon isn’t required, either. There’s a balance between being having serviceable gear that meets the demands of the tones, yet provides the aesthetics and visual signature of the band you’re emulating.

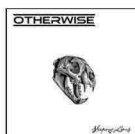
Richard Gee (Marinfidels): Only gearheads care about that stuff. 🎸

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PERFORMANCE

Good Vibrations

Scott Totten Details his Gig as Musical Director for the Beach Boys

BY MICHAEL MOLENDRA

PHOTOGRAPH BY JEFF McEVOY

SCOTT TOTTEN EARNED A BACH-elor of Music degree from Berklee, performed in numerous Broadway musicals, and did tons of session work, but perhaps his most demanding gig has been “conducting” Brian Wilson’s brilliant studio arrangements as musical director for the Beach Boys. In addition to ensuring the band performs the music of the Beach Boys with near-impeccable precision at every single show, he has to do this job for an act that seems to be constantly on tour, as well as under the watchful eye of original Beach Boy, Mike Love.

What are some of the challenges of musical directing a band that is etched into the fabric of American rock culture?

A lot of the Beach Boys music is very orchestrated and specific. So one of the things I take very seriously is adhering to the arrangements Brian Wilson came up with in the studio—this is the guitar part, this is the organ part, this is the drum beat, this is your vocal part, and so on. I try not to take it to the point of stifling the band, but when an audience hears “California Girls,” they want to hear what they know. I’m like a conductor, actually. I have to know the score, as well as each player’s part, so if I need to, I can say, “It should be phrased like this.”

Do you get together with the band to rehearse the arrangements before each tour?

Because we’re *always* on tour, having a

rehearsal day is a very rare thing. In the 17 years I’ve been in the band, we’ve had maybe four rehearsal days when Mike wanted to work up some new material from the catalog. But, generally, what happens when we add a song is I’ll write out lead sheets and chord charts, and send out mp3s with me singing the vocal parts for each musician. The players are asked to study the parts on their own time, and we’ll rehearse the song when we get together for a soundcheck.

Man, that’s not a lot of time to work things out.

Well, I have to be the guy to say to Mike, “I’m sorry. It’s not ready yet. We need another day.”

How do you approach the guitars in a band whose music goes all the way back to the ’60s, and carries on into the now?

I’ve heard some people describe the early Beach Boys as kind of a punk band, because they were kids in a garage doing their best Chuck Berry impersonation. So, for those songs, the guitar parts can be a little freer, because those were free-spirited records. Then, Brian started working with the Wrecking Crew, and everything becomes very orchestrated, so I feel the guitar parts should be more precise. Now, there are people in the band who feel I should play [Beach Boy guitarist] Carl Wilson’s solos note-for-note, and there are people outside the band who feel I should just do my own thing. I adhere closer to doing Carl’s solos, but I’m not the same player that Carl was, so I still have my sound—which is a bit smoother, as Carl’s approach was sharper and more angular.

On the early records, Carl used a Jaguar,



ALYSSIA TOTTEN

Surf guitars (left to right)—John Stamos, Totten, and Jeff Foskett ride the 6-string waves with vocalist Mike Love.



which has a very distinctive sound that a Strat doesn't really have. Then, in the mid '60s, you had Carl playing Stratocasters, Guilds, or Gibsons, and you had the studio guys playing Gibsons and Telecasters. So there's a lot of ground to cover tone wise. I put Lindy Fralin pickups in my Strat, and they have a blender pot that allows me to use the neck and bridge pickups at the same time. That's the sound I use for 95 percent of the show. It's not really a conventional Strat tone, but

it's a little closer to a Tele or a Jaguar. For the later records from the '80s and '90s, I can also approximate those super-Strat sounds.

How do you cast the parts between yourself and current Beach Boys co-guitarist Jeff Foskett?

On the early stuff, Jeff is more the strum, and I'm more the ga-ga-ga-ga-ga. On the later stuff, with all the interlocking guitars, we just decide between us who wants to do what.

Who is your own main influence on guitar?

For me, it all comes back to Jimi Hendrix.

Fortunately, Mike really loves Jimi Hendrix, too. That's one of the reasons I got to be in the band, because I sent him a demo tape that had some pretty wild stuff on it, and he liked it.

It must be a trip studying what was in Brian Wilson's head, and decoding those parts for an entire live show.

Not to give bootleggers any credit, but the big thing for me was poring over unreleased outtakes, because the studio techs had a journal reel running all the time. "California Girls" took 43 takes, so I can listen carefully, and go, "What happened on take six? How is it different from take 20?"

That's a really deep dive. Why not just study the released material that everyone knows?

The reason why is because on some takes, they had the saxophone section up super loud, and that allowed me to hear what all the sax parts were, and what kind of saxes they used. On the record, those parts are buried deep in the mix, but on earlier takes, you can hear them loud and clear. Also, when something required 43 takes, that tells me Brian was very particular about what he wanted to do. So I feel that I should study that stuff.

What was the most challenging song for you to arrange for the stage?

I would say "Good Vibrations." That's a tough one, because our keyboard player has to do the Theremin and all the cello parts. There's also a tack piano and flutes. Then, there are more vocal parts than we have singers on stage. It's tricky to sing it and perform it with accuracy and energy.

How do you advise all the sound crews you must encounter throughout a tour to ensure they project all of your hard work out to the audience?

I always tell the front-of-house mixer, "Don't think of it as one lead singer, some harmony vocals, and a band. Think of it as a bunch of lead singers, because everybody is singing a note in a chord, which is the harmonic support for the sound. Then, the instruments fill in the rest. The vocals are the star—not my guitar parts. Also, Mike is the Beach Boy—he's the star of the show, and Jeff sings the high parts—but you can't have those parts screaming loud and the other vocals buried. That's not the sound of the Beach Boys. Every note is very important. 🎧



3 Essential Miking Techniques for Amps

BY BRIAN TARQUIN

THERE ARE AS MANY GUITAR-MIKING TECHNIQUES AS there are guitarists, and yet, finding the right mic placement when recording guitar through an amp can be tricky. Many elements come into play, such as room acoustics, mic type, and, of course, the musical style of the player.

But whatever type of music you're recording, I've found the best starting point is to walk around the environment where the guitarist is playing. You'll want to take note of how the amp sounds at different

places around the room, and be ready to move the amp if you're not digging the tone. Evaluate the sound quality close to the speakers, a bit further back from the cabinet, and way out into the room. Once you've determined the sweet spots for capturing the best sound, you can try these techniques of mine as starting points. Again, don't be afraid to adapt and amend. The goal is great sound, and, sometimes, the strangest, most "wrong" techniques can produce the tones you love most.



Fig. 1—Ribbon mic dead on center.

IN YER FACE RHYTHM

Source Sound: Gibson Les Paul, Marshall plexi head, Marshall 4x12 cab.

The Recipe: Place one microphone directly in front the cone of one of the 12" speakers (**Fig. 1**). I used a SE Voodoo VR1 ribbon mic for an organic sound. Position a large-diaphragm condenser (I selected an AKG C414) six feet in front of the cabinet, and pointed dead center. Record each mic on its own track, and pan the close mic at 11 o'clock, and the far mic at 2 o'clock.

The Result: The close mic should capture the articulation and punch, while the far—or room—mic will bring in a natural ambience.

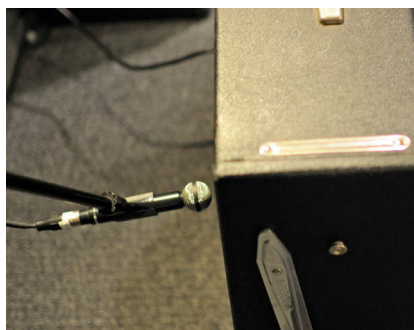


Fig. 2—Rear cabinet position.

CLEAN SHEEN WITH ATTITUDE

Source Sound: Gibson ES-335, Fender Super Reverb.

The Recipe: Position a dynamic mic (my choice was a Sennheiser e609) right against the grille cloth, and in front of one of the speakers. Now, put a ribbon mic (mine was a Beyerdynamic M160) at the rear of the open-back cabinet at a distance of eight inches, and angled off center to one of the speakers (**Fig. 2**). At the mixer, flip the phase of the dynamic mic at the front of the amp. Record the mics to separate tracks, and you will be able to mix the dynamic mic's defined and brilliant tone with the ribbon's darker timbre.

The Result: You get a choice of two different clean tones to adjust. Go darker in the verses, and brighter in the choruses, or flip them around, or simply dial in an awesome sound for the entire song. Options are good!

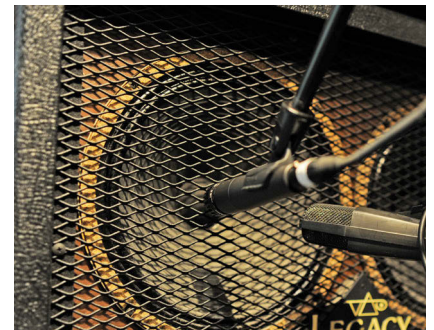


Fig. 3—Two mics, one off-axis.

SINGING LEAD

Source Sound: Gibson Les Paul Custom, Mesa/Boogie Mark IIB, Carvin Legacy 4x12 cabinet.

The Recipe: Point a dynamic mic directly at the center of the speaker cone (I used a Shure SM57). Place a second dynamic mic (mine was a Sennheiser MD 421) at a 45-degree angle to the SM57, but also pointing at the speaker cone (**Fig. 3**). On the mixer channel for the "straight-on" dynamic, flip the phase switch. Record each mic on its own track.

The Result: For this technique to work, you do need a brighter mic for the straight position, and a mic with a chunkier midrange for the angled position—which is why I choose the mics I did. Get it right, and you'll have the opportunity to blend a nice treble sound with a stout midrange timbre to achieve a warm and beautiful singing tone. ■

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{ CLASSIC GEAR }

BY DAVE HUNTER



1961 Fender Reverb Unit



FLOAT THE PHRASE “tube reverb” and most players are likely to conjure up an image of one of Fender’s creations, whether it’s a blackface amp like the Deluxe Reverb or Twin Reverb, or this stand-alone 1961 Reverb Unit. This unassuming brown box was in fact where reverb was born, as far as the Fullerton company was concerned, and it remains, for many players, the zenith of that wet, atmospheric sound.

Although Fender was late to the game—Ampeg, Gibson, Danelectro, and others had already introduced the effect—the Fullerton, California, company would set the standard for tube-driven spring reverb in ’61, when it debuted the humbly named Reverb Unit, which introduced a sound that would be

difficult to accurately replicate in the post-preamp reverb stages subsequently included in most guitar amplifiers.

The Fender Reverb Unit also offers more controls than most amp-based reverb circuits, with knobs for Dwell (depth), Mixer (reverb/dry blend), and Tone (brightness of the effected signal). It also has a deep, lush, watery sound thanks to an uncompromising tube-driven circuit. Circuit-wise, the Reverb Unit, which is designated Model 6G15, is essentially a small amplifier in and of itself. Instead of driving a speaker, however, it drives one end of a set of springs in the “tank,” with a transducer at the other end of the springs to pick up the delayed signal, which

is then amplified and blended into the dry signal. As such, the Reverb Unit contains 12AT7 and 7025 preamp tubes, and a 6K6GT output tube (a slightly weaker variant of the 6V6GT, which is often used in reissue units). It also has both power and output transformers. All in all, enough circuitry and components to build a small, single-ended amp, not unlike a Champ.

ESSENTIAL INGREDIENTS

- > Fully tube-driven
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- > Controls for Dwell, Mixer, and Tone
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- > Tubes: 12AT7, 7025, 6K6GT

As a result, this became the sound of surf guitar and a must-have effect for guitarists—and indeed vocalists—in several other genres. When used with guitar, it’s designed to be placed in front of the amplifier, which is to say, to be connected between your guitar and your amp’s input as you would most traditional effects pedals. As such, Reverb Units function best when plugged into vintage-style, low-gain amplifiers. Although they can be used in the effects loops of some amps, they don’t tend to perform their best in such setups.

A few minutes spent playing with a great vintage unit quickly reveals what a wonder this effect must have been in its day. When set just right, the Reverb Unit adds an ethereal dimension to your guitar tone, and takes you on a sonic trip rarely bettered by more dramatic delay or modulation effects. It’s still a major classic—and little wonder. Surf supremo Dick Dale was one of the first major proponents of Fender’s Reverb Unit, and soon after its release every other surfer worth their salt had to have one—as did every other pop, jazz, and rock ‘n’ roll guitarist on the block. Over the years, the Reverb Unit’s liquidy *sproing* has also graced the playing of Neil Young, J. Mascis of Dinosaur Jr., and Stone Gossard of Pearl Jam, among many others. ■



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{ MEET YOUR MAKER }

BY MICHAEL MOLEND



Sterling Ball Joins the Club



Ball (left) at the “day job,” devising cool tools for Ernie Ball/Music Man. In Big Poppa Smokers hoodie jamming with John Petrucci (below), who contributed a Disney medley to *The Mutual Admiration Society*.

STERLING BALL HAS EVOLVED

and grown the family business his dad started—as well as bringing his own brood into the enterprise—but designing guitars and basses for Ernie Ball is just one element of this modern Renaissance man’s current lifestyle. He has also become a bona fide star in the BBQ world with his Big Poppa Smokers company and competitive-grilling career. (Ball is the brand ambassador for Smithfield Pork, and the “face” of summer grilling for Walmart and Tabasco.) And, as if he didn’t have enough to fill his time, he recently released his second solo album, *The Mutual Admiration Society* [Mascot], that features guests such as Steve Vai, John Petrucci, Steve Lukather, Albert Lee, and Steve Morse.

How did you and your team—John Ferraro and Jim Cox—approach the sessions?

Basically, we went into this thing really pure with no expectations. I think when you do that, you don’t try to overthink or oversteer, and some really good things can happen. The two of us would just sit down and play, because there’s a certain feel that we have together, and that feel would always lead us to certain musical directions. The only thing I might have told John was not to be a session guy and play things too safe. He is very capable of going for it, and that’s what I wanted to hear.

Excepting the melody line, what do you feel elevates an instrumental into something special?



The textures—the parts and the layering—is critical. It’s like creating a recipe. You add a little bit of this, and a little bit of that, you listen to how it all fits together, and then you pick the good stuff. It’s actually not that easy to make a simple song sound good. You need to build those tracks with some sweet bits to attract the listener.

How did you lay down your guitar solos?

I’m like the race-car driver who is going into a turn too fast, and you don’t think he’s going to make it, but, all of a sudden, he does. I just play, and I try different things each time. If I focus too much, I’ll play too stiffly.

Was it all intimidating to

incorporate the solo tracks from those world-class players into the album?

Well, when Steve Morse, Steve Lukather, Steve Vai, Albert Lee, John Petrucci, and Jay Graydon want to make music with you, you make music with them. And I actually got a very strong lecture from Steve [Vai], who said, “Stop this self-deprecating bullsh*t. You’re in the club. You have a unique voice. So shut up.” That helped me go in the studio and create. I’ll tell you another thing: I spent my life serving artists. My job wasn’t to be their peer—it was to create tools to help them. But, at this time of my life, and thanks to my dear friends, I finally felt it was okay for me to join the club. ▶

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COLUMN

{ THE FOLEY FILES }



NEIL ZLOZOWER / ATLAS ICONS

BY SUE FOLEY



Nancy Wilson

GRACE IN MOTION—THAT'S

how I've always seen Nancy Wilson. I remember being a kid, staring at Heart album covers, and being so intrigued with this mysterious and quiet blonde who played guitar beside her vocalist sister, Anne. Nancy showed how to be both strong and feminine in the visceral world of rock, asserting herself onstage with a sense of playfulness, musicality, sensuality, and, like I said, *grace*. Of all the women I've interviewed, Nancy's name comes up the most as an early influence.

How were you drawn to become a guitarist?

Coming from our family that's very musical, I think I was born to play guitar. My uncle taught me the ukulele when I was about six years old. Then, we saw the Beatles on *The Ed Sullivan Show*, and it was like, "Oh, my god! We have to have a band. We have to get guitars now."

Who were your favorite players when you were coming up?

I was always such a Jimmy Page fanatic, and Paul Simon, too. There's also little bit of Joni Mitchell in there, and a lot of Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young.

Did you start playing electric right away?

I had an electric guitar, but I was mainly an acoustic player at first. Then, I got a chance to step up and do a few leads here and there. The guys in the band

taught me how to play a little more lead, and how to be a good support player. A lot of it is what not to play. It's when to shut up.

Do you think there's a difference between the way women approach the instrument?

There are a lot of flashy guys, and a lot of girls can do that, too. Technique-wise, they can play anything a guy can play. But there's a different kind of soul, and I think a lot of it is just the basic instinct of women. It's more of a poetic thing that happens with women players.

So many people I talk to point directly to you, and I was thinking, "I wonder if she realizes how influential she has been?" And I thought that, chances are, you're looking forward, not backwards.

Thank you very much. It's really good to know that after all this time—having done something and worked hard doing it—that it means something to people. Being an influence means that the best part of you moves forward into the next chapter of women in music, and music in general. I always hoped that I could imprint something that was in some way elevating and inspiring to people that heard Heart's music, and my music. I know it sounds corny, but that's the sh*t, man.

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



{ VINYL TREASURES }

BY JIM CAMPILONGO



Santo & Johnny

ALTHOUGH I OWN MORE THAN 12 Santo & Johnny LPs, the Farina brothers' 1959 debut album made its biggest impact on me. Santo was 21, and Johnny 19, when these Brooklyn boys conceived a perfect instrumental, "Sleepwalk"—a timeless composition that successfully conveys innocent romanticism like no other, and that now seems part of our musical DNA.

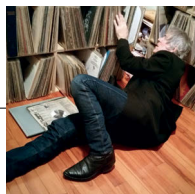
Prompted by their father, who found a steel-guitar teacher for both boys, Johnny ended up playing standard guitar with Santo playing steel. "Sleepwalk" was written during a late-night jam, when the brothers couldn't sleep after a gig. Around 1985, I started studying the song as if I were writing a master's thesis on it, spending more than a month of eight-hour practice sessions focusing on variations on the "Sleepwalk" themes. I applied 6/9 chords, doublestops, harmonics, volume and tone swells, steel-guitar bends, behind the nut bends, and chord melody. I also viewed the amazing IV minor chord as a ii chord—Dm7♭5—which

opened up another avenue of approaches. Finally, I discovered the potential of the Fender Telecaster, and the endless techniques and sounds it offered.

I've written more than 100 instrumentals, and it has been a major effort—possibly futile—to try to write something as perfect as "Sleepwalk." This album has more than one gem, though. "Caravan," "Summertime," "All Night Diner," "School Day," and the others all have simple, vibey approaches that simultaneously convey naiveté and profound wisdom. *Santo & Johnny* is a little masterpiece of an LP, and "Sleepwalk" is its crowning jewel.

The Farina brothers went on to record music for decades, and rumor has it that they eventually didn't get along. Too bad. When I look at the LP cover on this Canadian/American release, I wish I could freeze that moment in time, because it beautifully displays innocence and youth.

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



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IT'S ENOUGH TO MAKE "MATURE" rockers proud. At a time when the sad cliché is "no one sells records anymore," Greta Van Fleet is generating sustained flurries of wild anticipation for its upcoming full-length album. Furthermore, when some 6-string disciples seem to have perpetually furrowed brows over the future of their favorite instrument, it's a GUITAR album.

Yeah, that's "guitar" in all capital letters, because 22-year-old guitarist Jake Kiszka is not only a lover of big riffs, guitar solos, and a battered '61 Gibson Les Paul, he is also generating massive excitement amongst pre-teens, teens, Millennials, adults, and even senior citizens about guitar music.

The media and fan frenzies have continued unabated since the band's 2017 debut EP, *Black Smoke Rising* [Republic], unleashed the song heard 'round the planet, "Highway Song." A double EP, *From the Fires*, hit just seven months later, combining new recordings with the songs on the debut, and produced another hit, "Safari Song." Both tunes topped the Billboard charts, and, in fact, "Highway Song" became the fastest debut single from a band to reach number-one on the Mainstream Rock chart in almost 16 years.

But even with all the critical acclaim and sold-out headliner tours, the Frankenth, Michigan band of brothers—in addition to Jake, there's vocalist Josh Kiszka and bassist/keyboardist Sam Kiszka, along

with drummer Danny Wagner—also has a bit of a musical albatross around its neck. Detractors—and even some fans—point to the very obvious Led Zeppelin influences. Zep vocalist Robert Plant himself told *Loudwire*, "There's a band in Detroit called Greta Van Fleet. They are *Led Zeppelin I*. Beautiful little singer. I hate him. He borrowed his voice from somebody I know very well." It was a bit of a joke, but, nonetheless, the band's handlers reportedly have been concerned about the press regurgitating the Led Zeppelin comparisons—especially as the upcoming album is supposed to show growth and diversity.

Time will tell—we hadn't heard the new release at press time—but whatever it ends up sounding like, Greta Van Fleet



A CHANGE IS GONNA COME

JAKE KISZKA
AND GRETA VAN FLEET GIVE RIFF ROCK
A KICK IN THE BUTT

is certainly doing a mammoth and much-appreciated job of putting guitar back in the mainstream media. As for Jake, his enthusiastic assimilation of everything from the blues to the Beatles to Simon & Garfunkel and the young bands of now makes for a winning potpourri of modern guitar culture. He's no one-trick stylist, he really loves to play, he's totally committed and passionate, and, hey, the guy can rock.

What really makes you guys tick?

When we were growing up, we all listened to the foundation of the blues. Later on, we heard the British evolutions of the blues in rock, and that's what partially inspired us to reinterpret the blues or folk or anything, and try to do something

different with them. We feel the older blues artists kind of established a lot of song arrangements that bands are still doing today, and it's our job to stretch out those formats and take a different direction. We're aware that listening to Simon & Garfunkel, and things like that, can help us incorporate more distinctive elements into our own music. I'm a guitarist, and a huge fan of riff writing, so I listen for unique approaches that I can use. I want to push the boundaries of what someone would typically do with a riff or a solo.

It's interesting that you gravitated to blues music. For example, you could

have rejected the music your parents might have been playing at home, and gone bonkers for EDM.

Well, those old blues guys are way cooler than anyone else. When I listen to a lot of contemporary artists, there just isn't the same amount of emotion, so it doesn't affect me the same way. You could hear a lot of truth in what was being written back then. It came through, and it touched you, and it didn't sound so manufactured. It made us *feel*.

Do you feel that, sometimes, the public has a hard time differentiating true emotion from manufactured, well-written pop music?

I think people basically like what they're given. If what they're given is

BY MICHAEL MOLENDAA

PHOTOGRPH BY JEFF FASANO



stenciled and familiar, and it's played over and over, eventually they're going to like it. But when you hear something real, you feel it, because you can't manufacture emotion. You can't take short cuts. I also don't think it's a negative thing that there's bad music out there in the world, because when you listen to something that's bad, it teaches you what *not* to do.

Has any music particularly informed the sessions for the new album?

I was listening to a lot of Allman Brothers on tour, and Duane inspired some of my arrangements of solos. That was something premeditated. I've also been listening to way more Beatles than I ever have before, as well as some of the stuff on *Sticky Fingers* by the Stones, and a lot of folk music. I've been getting into more Mumford & Sons, as well as the Black Keys, Kaleo, Fleet Foxes, and a duo from Sweden called First Aid Kit. They're pretty phenomenal. All of this music helped me bring more elements of light and shade

to the album—acoustic material, heavy rock and roll, and even some experimental stuff.

You mentioned a premeditated approach to Duane Allman's influence. Do many of your other influences dig into your brain more or less precisely?

When we're onstage and it's time for me to take off in one direction or another, it's pretty off the cuff and natural. I listen to all this stuff, and it just flows through me, and whatever comes out, comes out. It's interesting. A lot of weird things go on that way, so I think it's best when I just do it, and it's *not* so premeditated. A lot of stuff catches me off guard when it's not so thought out. It's more of an emotional thing.

So did you find yourself improvising solos more in the studio, or writing out structured lines?

There are certain licks I incorporate often, because I like them. But, for the most part, I like to screw around and jam, and let my emotions guide me. Once I have the initial

approach down, I'll start honing in on the notes I like. I try not to let the process take too long, though, because that just crushes the emotion. It also really helps me to throw away all the rules, and take an approach that's entirely open minded—even if what I initially play doesn't make sense. Usually, out of that forced confusion comes something that's unique.

Does the band tend to record basic tracks live in the studio?

Usually, all four of us play together to get a basic track down, because we want that shared energy and emotion.

Your vibrato is sounding really awesome on some of the more recent live videos on YouTube. It's kind of interesting and strange how you bend strings. Where did that come from?

Very early on, vibrato was a huge focus of mine. I was trying to emulate Clapton's vibrato, but I never learned the proper way to do it. You're supposed to bend the strings



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PLAYERS

{ JAKE KISZKA }

upward, but unless I'm bending the high-E string, I pull the strings *down*, and my vibrato tends to get a bit faster as I bend closer to the other strings.

Can you detail some of the gear you've been using lately—stuff we might hear on the new album, as well?

I have a 1961 Gibson Les Paul with two PAF humbuckers and a Gibson Custom Shop SG. Then, there's a Coodercaster, which our producer Al Sutton helped build. It's basically a Strat with lap-steel pickups, and it has a dirty, rough tone, so I use it when I need something really aggressive. What constitutes a good electric guitar for me are pickups that are very receptive, so I can knock anywhere on the guitar, and I can hear that sound coming through the amplifier. I don't just use the strings, I like to grab the guitar neck and bend it, and maybe knock against the body with my knee. I want the whole instrument to be amplified. For acoustics, I have a Gibson Hummingbird and a J-45, which

sounds incredible. I like using D'Addario strings—a .010 set.

My amplifiers are a Marshall Astoria CME and a Vox AC30. I kind of go back and forth between the two. There's also a boutique company out of the east side of Detroit that has a very impressive-sounding amplifier that I used. I'm not really a fan of pedals, because I don't want to lean on anything and sort of manufacture a tonality that's not naturally there. But I do have an Electro-Harmonix Holy Grail Reverb, and a Jext Telez Range Loard that has come in handy quite a bit for the album—especially for solos. It's a very interesting tone. There's some wah-wah on the album, as well.

How do you personally view the health of the guitar and guitar music these days?

There might not be as many players now as in the past, but there are still a lot of young guitarists out there. The guitar is historically significant for changing a lot of things musically, and I don't think it's done growing. But I do think it's going to take a

bunch of people—young and old—to take the guitar and elevate it. We have to try to vary our approaches and create something new to keep the guitar evolving.

Did you think we guitarists can band together in some way and achieve that goal?

I think what separates a guitarist from a great guitarist is his or her ability to apply emotion to what they are doing. It has to come right from your heart through your hands to the guitar. There can't be a wall of moderation. I suppose the best way to say it is to surrender yourself to what you're playing.

For us, the mission we set out on was to play the truth. Some people might be caught off guard by it, *because* it's truthful, and they're not used to the sort of music that speaks from your soul, and emits truth, meaning, and purpose—rather than manufactured emotion. But I think if guitarists are uninhibited, and delve into the song and express emotion, then guitar music will continue to affect people. ■

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STORM CROSSED

JUNE MILLINGTON

RECLAIMS & REVITALIZES HER MUSICAL LEGACY

JUNE MILLINGTON IS AN ARIES WARRIOR—one who survived the tumult of an indifferent, or outright antagonistic, music industry in the '70s with her groundbreaking, all-female band, Fanny.

"Rock and roll isn't for wimps," she says.

But far from being knocked down by an episodic career of good and not-so-good plot elements, she continues to rock like a demon today. In fact, Millington—whose commitment to empowering and educating female musicians prompted her to establish (with Anne Hackler) the Institute for Musical Arts in Ashfield, Massachusetts, in 1986—recently rejuvenated Fanny's legacy.

Last year, she recorded *Fanny Walked the Earth* [Blue Élan] with her Fanny cohorts, sister Jean Millington (bass) and Brie Darling (drums) at the IMA studio complex. The record is not only a tribute to three inspiring classic-rock veterans—it's also a brilliant document of how the life experiences of great musicians, when funneled through a youthful mindset and unwavering passion, can deliver music for the ages.

What was it like recording a Fanny record after 40 years with your sister and Brie?

It was like going down a slide. "Wheee!" It was transformative all over again, and we just couldn't let go of it. We had the chops, the attitude, and the creative energy, but you've got to go back to our high-school band, the Svelts, or you don't have *Fanny Walked the Earth*. Our internal feel—especially the groove thing and vocals—had

been dialed in when we were 16 years old. It was like just walking into the same skeleton and muscles with a slightly different wisdom-filled self.

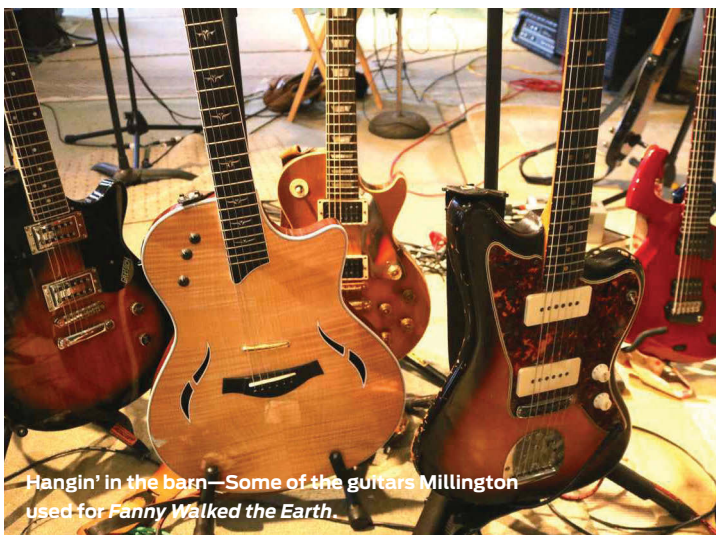
How does the Svelts era manage to inform your musicality to this day?

When you're 16, and you play "Walking the Dog," and everybody rushes to the dance floor, you know you're doing the right thing. It just translated, and it carried over into 2017, and the recording of *Fanny Walked the Earth*.

What gear did you bring to the IMA sessions for *Fanny Walked the Earth*?

Well, there was my '57 Les Paul Standard that I got from [Steppenwolf guitarist] Kent Henry in 1971. Skunk Baxter did the mods, back when he was a guitar tech. I also used a 1958 Les Paul Special, a Fender Jazzmaster, a Parker Fly, a Gretsch Electromatic, and a Taylor T5. The main amps were a Fender Blues DeVille 4x10, a '62 brown-face Fender Deluxe, and a Yamaha G5 practice amp.

I only used a couple of pedals that Dave [Darling, album producer] brought—like



Hangin' in the barn—Some of the guitars Millington used for *Fanny Walked the Earth*.

BY MICHAEL MOLENDAA

PHOTOGRAPHS BY IMA



a Seymour Duncan boost, a Mu-Tron III, and a Line 6 M5—because I’ve really given up on them. I feel like if it doesn’t come out of my fingers, I just can’t be bothered.

I love the intro to “Storm-Crossed,” where this vibey feedback sets up a gritty, but funky lick.

You know, I probably jammed, or shared a stage, with everyone who is considered classic rock now. So controlling feedback is second nature to me, because all of us were experimenting with taking it all to the edge and beyond. That was the place you wanted to go. It was the holy grail.

I also dug the stinging, yet simultaneously fat and slinky lead tone on “When We Need Her.”

That was the Yamaha amp cranked up until it was practically barfing, but I was

playing these controlled licks—like Jesse Ed Davis. By the way, I thought my original solo on that track was one of the best things I had ever done, but no one will hear it. Dave and Brie decided it was too soft rock, which actually upset me quite a bit. As far as I was concerned, it was a gritty solo as conceptualized by a woman, and that’s the statement I wanted to make.

Speaking of statements, how do you conceptualize your licks?

Somebody told me once that Laura Nyro said to her producer, “I want it to sound like mist rising over a lake in the morning.” I’ll never forget that, because that’s exactly how I feel music. I visualize things and go off to the galaxy’s limit. I just let myself be led. I don’t ask questions. I just go. But my licks often come

out of the lineage of hearing Jimi at the Fillmore West. I was standing right in front of him. In fact, this kid and I were fighting for position, because the only way you could learn back then was to stand in front of the guitar player and absorb everything they did. I later found out that kid was Carlos Santana [laughs].

You see, the live stuff really informed me. I didn’t learn the sh*t off the records. I learned it from watching guitar players, or going to a club where somebody great was playing so I could ask them questions, or seeing if people would jam with me. All of that is like a hologram now, and the sounds are swirling in front of me. I can hear it, I can feel it, and I can see these guys. They were all guys, because very few women I knew at the



{ JUNE MILLINGTON }

time could play well—although I thought the lead guitar player in Birta [Shele Pinizzotto] was unbelievable. So I can just go fishing, draw a lick in, and make it mine. It's like going shopping.

From your perspective on playing back in the classic-rock era, do you feel today's guitarists are missing the plot on anything?

I don't think people are experimenting so much with sound now. I feel like guitarists aren't taking the time to really get into the circuitry of each guitar and each amp they're playing. I've always liked that fearless attitude of finding out what a guitar and an amp can do together, and a lot of my time is still spent doing exactly that. You'll never find out about all the tonal characteristics available to you unless you experiment with *everything*. You're the one who pulls it together, and creates that magical thing that happens—which is sound, melody, and the unexpected. You've got the technology, but you have to be the maestro.

Fanny is revered as one of the touchstones for female rockers, but, commercially, it seemed the band struggled for Top 40 acceptance. What's your take on that?

We were held to a different standard, because we were young women. The number one job I had was to prove we could play like guys. I had to stay on top of the wave all the time, because it was assumed the girls couldn't play. Unfortunately, once we did that, I got bored with it. I wanted to be asked about my sound. My influences. My technique. But, no, it was always, "What does it feel like to be a girl guitar player?" Are you kidding me? I realized it was going to be one-dimensional forever, and I'm too creative and too smart to be locked into that position. It was like being in prison, and we knew it. All four of us were really interested in finding the strength in ourselves, and expressing ourselves lyrically in eloquent and intelligent ways—not that our songs

didn't have the sex component in them. Listen to "Soul Child." But they also had a sort of fierceness before I even got turned on to feminism.

On top of that, the better the band got, the more we expected we would have success. I mean, our version of "Hey Bulldog" should have been at the top of the charts. It wasn't. We just couldn't get over that hump, because society wasn't going to give it to us. We put it together from every standpoint, and we couldn't get it. The band was getting tired. It was like, "What do we have to do for these people?"

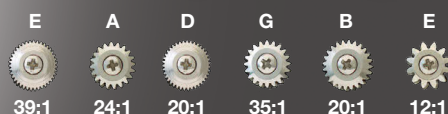
But that experience didn't appear to tank your creativity, or your love for music.

I'm a wild Aries, and we create out of chaos [laughs]. But I see music in everything I do. It's a highway to communication, and the highest love—everything you can think of that's the best part of being in this dimension on this planet. That's what I serve. ■



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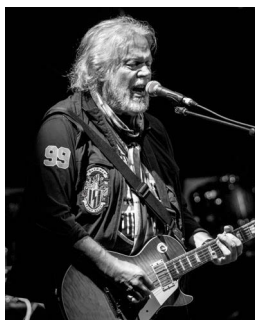


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UNDONE



RANDY BACHMAN

FEARLESSLY SCRAMBLES THE MUSIC OF GEORGE HARRISON

RANDY BACHMAN IS NO SLOUCH when it comes to writing hit songs. Between his tenures in the Guess Who and Bachman-Turner Overdrive alone, the Canadian treasure has likely pegged more than 50 million in album sales. But he may have brought his formidable songwriting, arranging, producing, and guitar chops under fire when he endeavored to radically recast the music of “serious Beatle” George Harrison for *By George* [Universal].

Populated with 11 Harrison classics and one original song about Harrison (“Between Two Mountains”), the album veers more to Bachman’s jazz sensibilities in that it holds the sacred rather, well, unsacred. Melodies and chords are dispensed with and replaced, grooves are re-engineered, and everything is approached as material ripe for almost catastrophic revision. While a couple of songs get a light or jazzy treatment, most of the set is like a stomping, frenzied arena-rock explosion of huge, over-driven guitars and heaps of badass solos. It’s all a brave, interesting, and, yes, even

respectful celebration of a musician whose shadow looms eternal over rock culture and society in general. But... would you have taken such a risk?

Well, man, you really punk-rocked George’s sh*t. I didn’t expect to hear those classic songs so severely rearranged.

[Laughs.] You can’t outdo lightning in a bottle. Any time those four crazy lunatics got in a studio with [producer] George Martin this lightning bolt came out. That’s pretty hard to replicate. So I thought, “I’m going to retake this body of work, and put some new clothes on George.” It’s 50 years on, it’s his 75th birthday—and it’s my 75th this year, as well—so let’s f**king celebrate! Let me sing his songs the way I want to sing them. Let me put them through a ringer. I just hope his fans will appreciate that we weren’t looking to do anything sacrilegious. In fact, it was something closer to hero worship, because the songs remain

BY MICHAEL MOLENDAA

in everyone’s heart and soul, and they still stand up after 50 years.

How did you even start this process of unhinging the original arrangements?

I took 30 of George’s songs, printed up the lyrics, and listened to drum loops on Apple GarageBand, while asking myself, “Can I fit these lyrics into this tempo, and in between these beats?” I would just play around until—cha-ching—one would hit. Then, I’d go to work. George had like 15 chords in “Give Me Love (Give Me Peace On Earth).” I took it down to three chords. “Something” has a zillion jazz chords, so I made it into two chords—like a Robin Trower song. I put “Here Comes the Sun” in a minor key, and I added some of my jazz voicings. When we got to “While My Guitar Gently Weeps,” it was time to go berserk, “Neil Young crazy.” I was lucky enough to get Walter Trout for the outro solo, which sounded like Hendrix had landed in the studio. It was a lot of fun.

Ultimately, you choose 12 songs to put on the album. Once you made the

THIS PAGE: BRIAN D. CAMPBELL; OPPOSITE: CHRISTIE GOODWIN



final selections, did you have the arrangements locked and loaded?

Not always. For some songs, I had five or six versions with different chords and different tempos. When you get different chords, you change the odd little melody line to fit a blue note here or there, and I would play around with those things until something blew me away. I have to admit that a lot of things were pure happenstance. I felt the angels were shooting arrows at me, and rather than duck them, I opened my arms and let them hit me in the heart.

It's also cool that, like a video game

or a Marvel movie, you tossed around some "guitar Easter eggs"—little nods to other songs, solos, or riffs in some of the tracks.

Yeah! During the intro to "Think For Yourself," we put in his riff from "My Sweet Lord." In "Between Two Mountains," my middle solo cops the beginning of "And I Love Her." I sprinkled George's licks throughout different songs on the album. It's almost like a contest for guitar players. "Oh, wow, that's from 'Taxman,' or 'Give Me Love' or *Wonderwall*." If you're a real George/Beatles fan, you'll listen to this and find sprinklings on the cake, so to

speak, of different George Harrison riffs.

What was your main guitar for the *By George* sessions?

We did the final recording and mixing in Calgary at the National Music Centre Studio Bell, which is also Canada's rock and roll museum. My 1959 Les Paul "American Woman" guitar is in the museum, so I asked if someone could go get it. They said, "There are guards there." I said, "Well, it's my guitar, so could you call the head guy?" Finally, they took it out of its case and brought it into the studio, and I used it. There aren't really a lot of guitars on the album—most of it is that '59 Les



Paul. It's really heavy—almost like it's made of petrified wood—but that's the sound of "American Woman." It's a great guitar, but it was just too heavy to play onstage. I ended up playing it sitting down in the studio, and then I'd put it right back in its case. The funny thing is that Gibson made me a chambered '59 reissue Les Paul that weighs just eight pounds. I've been using it for live performances for about eight years now, and it's all weather beaten and road worn. It's now in worse shape than the original '59 "American Woman" guitar!

For the sitar riff in "Between Two Mountains," I didn't have a sitar. But I did have a 4-string Gretsch tenor Dobro, so I tuned all the strings to the same note, and I lowered them down so they would buzz against the metal resonator. I'd play "bow-bow-ba-bow" on one string by shaking my second finger while the other strings were droning. All I needed was one good take, and then I cut and pasted the line where I needed it. I

got very lucky with that Gretsch.

Did you ever run into George during your career?

I wish I would have met him, but I never did. But I felt like he visited me about six months ago when I wrote "Between Two Mountains." I had already written some lyrics, but I was struggling. They were really dumb, like "How can I stand tall between a mountain like John and Paul?" I mean, they were like bubble-gum lyrics by a 14 year old.

Then, one night, I woke up at 3 am, feeling as if there was somebody in the room. But the thing in the room took me out of the room—like a dog wandering in and out and in and out until you get up and follow it. I followed this aura or essence to another bedroom where I had my laptop and guitars, and I started to write these lyrics: "There's peace within. Just close your eyes. Angels in flight through space and time. I learned to wait. My time would come." I was like, "Where are these coming from?" And they

perfectly encapsulated what I was trying to say about George. Rather than being pissed off that he's caught between these two creative mountains, he celebrates that he's in-between them: "My light will shine between two mountains."

Now, I've been given a couple of gifts in my life—such as "American Woman" and "Taking Care of Business"—but this was the greatest gift of them all. I felt I was guided by a George apparition. It was amazing.

Any worries about the "Beatles Mafia" putting out a hit on you for messing with these songs?

I hope not. I mean, take any band of musicians over 30, and say, "Go and record a bunch of Beatles songs, but change them so we don't know what they are until you start singing." Wouldn't that be a joy and thrill? It was for me. I did this album out of pure love for this guy, and to celebrate how intelligently and eloquently he composed his solos and his songs. ■



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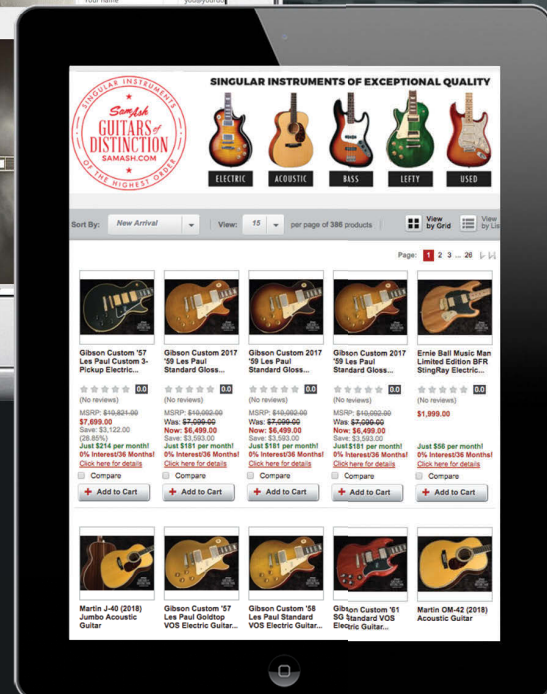
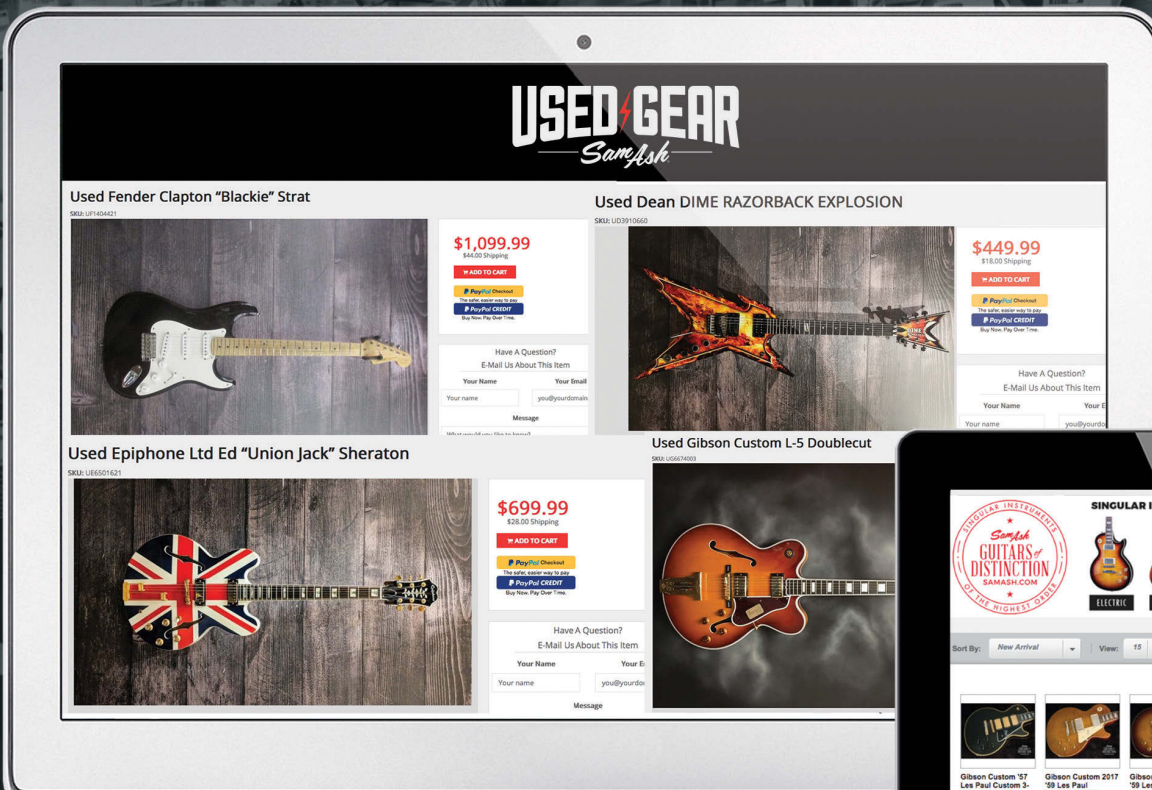
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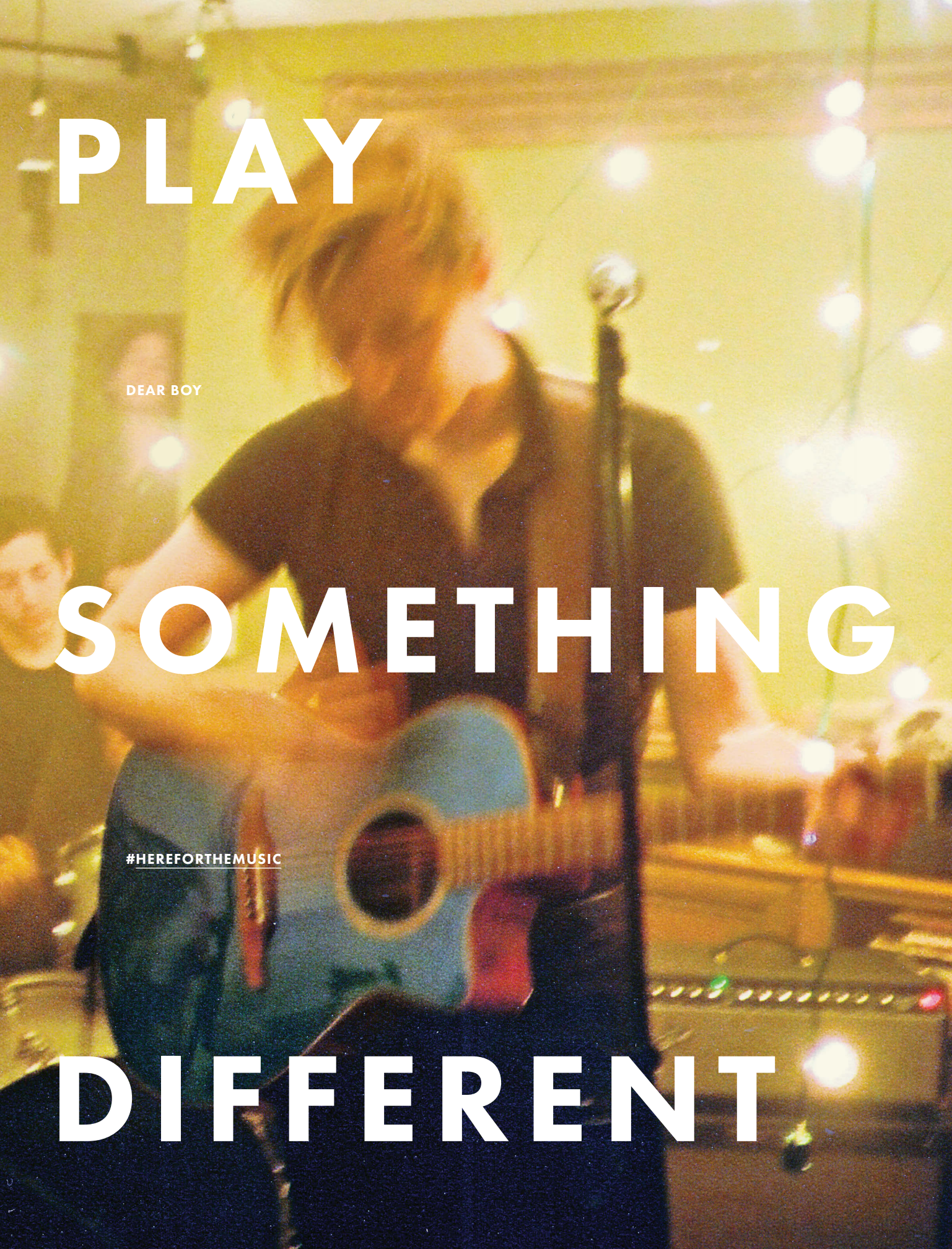
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LESSONS

{ STYLE }

Unsung Heroes of West-Coast Classic Rock

BY JESSE GRESS

THE TERM “CLASSIC ROCK” GENERALLY encompasses the psychedelic, blues-rock, and progressive rock genres that emerged during the musically fertile era between 1965 and 1980—with a couple of years off during the disco craze. What’s interesting about American classic rock is that it is

inherently regional, even within the same state. For instance, in California, the Grateful Dead, Jefferson Airplane, Big Brother & the Holding Company, Quicksilver Messenger Service, and the Steve Miller Band reigned supreme in the Bay Area, while groups like the Byrds, Buffalo Springfield,

the Doors, and *the* Mothers of Invention ruled Los Angeles. But there also coexisted in both regions many equally talented bands (some even more so), who, except for the occasional hit song, were largely overshadowed. So, to give credit where credit is due, we salute four hard-working Cali-based

Ex. 1a

♩ = ca. 110

Molto dist.

Ex. 1b

♩ = ca. 137

Molto dist. B5 C5

B5 C5

Ex. 1c

Molto dist. N.C.

Ex. 1d

Molto dist. ♯

bands whose five guitarists rarely receive the accolades they so justly deserve.

BLUE CHEER

Subtle they weren't. When Blue Cheer first appeared on the San Francisco scene, the earth-shaking power trio was considered, for better or worse, the loudest band on the planet. By the time they released their

the same three notes, except the first *D* is sustained and vibrated, rather than cut short before Weis adds an ascending *G* minor pentatonic run (*D-F-G-B♭*), a *C*-to-*D* bend, and another *♭3* (*B♭*). The backing chords shift to *Gm* and *F* in bar 3, where the riff from bar 1

is transposed up a fourth and embellished with slight melodic and rhythmic variations during beats three and four. All this leads up to bar 4's hammer-on and pull-off fueled ride down the first string from 10th to open position. The note choices reflect G Dorian,

as the rhythm morphs mid-measure from sixteenth-note triplets to 16th and 32nd notes. Raga Rock rules!

Ex. 4, inspired by “Iron Butterfly Theme” (suspiciously similar to the theme from *Our Man Flint*), proves the band to be one of the first to incorporate the “Devil’s Interval” (the $\flat 5$) into an instrumental melody, pre-dating both “Black Sabbath” and “Immigrant Song” by two years. We’re in the key of C minor, as the ominous root-5- $\flat 5$ -4- $\flat 3$ melody takes shape over an eerie Cm-Cm/G-D/F $\sharp$ -D $\flat$ /F-Cm/ $E\flat$ progression. The way he takes a simple melody consisting of C and G half-notes, and G $\flat$, F, and $E\flat$ whole notes, and embellishes it with elaborate bend ornamentations and inventive rhythms is a true testimonial to Weis’s creativity.

CANNED HEAT

Though primarily known for a few major

Ex. 5

Ex. 5

$\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 132$ $\text{♪} = \text{ca. } 132$

Open A tuning (low-to-high: E, A, E, A, C $\sharp$, E)

A5

Rhy. Fig. 1

(C) (D)

end Rhy. Fig. 1

semi-dist.

m p m *

TAB

0 0 X X X 0 0 X 0 3 5

*Thump string w/thumb.

Ex. 6a

Open A Tuning **A7-5**

Dm/A5

A7-5

Am

A7b9

Am

The musical score is for a piece titled "F.C.A.E.A." in 4/4 time. It features three staves: a guitar staff (Gtr.) with a treble clef and key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#), a bass staff (Bass) with a bass clef, and a semi-distortion pedal (Semi-dist.) staff. The guitar part includes a solo section marked "Gtr." and a section marked "Bass cont. sim." (Bass continues, simulate). The bass part includes a section marked "Bass cont. sim." (Bass continues, simulate). The semi-distortion pedal part includes a section marked "Bass cont. sim." (Bass continues, simulate). The score is divided into measures by vertical bar lines, with some measures containing multiple notes or rests. The guitar part includes a solo section marked "Gtr." and a section marked "Bass cont. sim." (Bass continues, simulate). The bass part includes a section marked "Bass cont. sim." (Bass continues, simulate). The semi-distortion pedal part includes a section marked "Bass cont. sim." (Bass continues, simulate).

Ex. 6b

Open A Tuning

A7-5

$$Dm/E$$

let ring throughout

p i m sim.

p i m

Ex. 6c

Open A Tuning A6

A9

Am

Bm/A

Am

[illegible]

For his solo, Wilson throws listeners a curve by laying down a figure similar to the one shown in **Ex. 6a** instead of taking a more conventional route. Open-A tuning facilitates many consonant and dissonant one-fingered chords, and Wilson takes full advantage of both over an A pedal in this off-the-wall figure that is strummed with the thumb and sounds remarkably sitar-like, possibly the result of a slightly loose capo. Also notable is the use of straight versus shuffled eighth-notes. **Ex. 6b** arpeggiates three strings selected from the first two chords in **Ex. 6a** using eighth-note triplets, and **Ex. 6c** continues similarly with arpeggiated one-finger partial barres at the 5th, 7th, 8th, and 10th frets before climaxing on a thumb-pounded straight-eighth Am chord in bars 5 and 6. Sweet!

Henry Vestine, on the other hand, was a fuzz fiend from the get go. Like Wilson, he blends the boogie's inherent triplet shuffle feel with straight eighth and 16th notes, but does so in a single-note context, and in standard tuning. **Ex. 7a** assimilates part of his solo, during which he blurs the lines between A minor pentatonic, A Mixolydian, A Dorian, and even the A major scale, all within six bars. Highlights include the opening lazy bend, ensuing A Mixo-major antics, and slippery legato phrasing, all of which obscure the distinctions between major and minor tonalities. The real fun, though, happens courtesy of a "happy accident" partially captured in **Ex. 7b**. It's an off-the-cuff moment that finds Vestine caught totally off guard by a deafening burst of microphonic feedback, an event that would normally bring any take to a halt. Instead, Vestine seizes the moment and turns the screech—which happens to be E $\flat$, the $\flat$ 5 of A (!)—into a rhythmic call-and-response lick, by answering it with some conventionally fretted notes, and then does it again... and again, and again, and so forth. Unreal and absolutely fearless!

CAPTAIN BEYOND

One of the most criminally overlooked albums of the era is Captain Beyond's self-titled 1971 debut. Comprising former members of Iron Butterfly (guitarist Larry "Rhino" Reinhardt, who along with Mike Pinera replaced Erik Brann, and bassist Lee Dorman), Deep Purple (vocalist Rod Evans), and Johnny Winter And (drummer Bobby Caldwell), the band was poised for superstardom, but

Ex. 9 G5 A5 G5 A5 C5 A5

$\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 167$

Ex. 10a w/Rhy. Fig. 2 (see Ex. 8c)

Ex. 10b w/Rhy. Fig. 2

it never happened. Nonetheless, their stellar musicianship yielded a wide range of influences, from Latin to jazz-rock, tons of odd time signatures, and a non-stop three-suite approach. It sounded like nothing before (or after) it. And that groovy 3-D cover didn't hurt either!

To simulate the opening cut, "Dancing Madly Backwards," play the ingenious two-bar figure from **Ex. 8a** until you get your 5/4 groove going—B $\flat$ 5-B5-C5 on the upbeats of beats two, three, and four in bar 1, and C5-B $\flat$ 5-G5 on the same upbeats in bar 2—and then segue directly to **Ex. 8b**'s take on Reinhardt's main 5/4 verse riff. Grooving to the previous rhythm, begin in bar 1 with a reverse G5 arpeggio, followed by a chromatic climb from B $\flat$ to C that coincides with the same accented upbeats as **Ex. 8a**'s B $\flat$ 5-B5-C5 chords. Similarly, bar 2 repeats the first three notes from bar 1, and the upbeats that follow reflect the roots of **Ex. 8a**'s C5, B $\flat$ 5, and G5 chords. The verse accompaniment is

essentially a 20-bar blues form that transposes the riff to the IV and V chords (C and D, respectively). Play each two-bar riff as follows: G (I) in third position, as written in **Ex. 8b** (4x); C (IV) transposed to eighth position (2x); G (2x); D (V) transposed to 10th position for bar 1 and C (IV) in eighth position for bar 2; and G (2x). After two verse cycles, skip the very last beat of the G figure and transition to the 4/4 riff shown in **Ex. 8c**, where gnarly, middle-pickup Strat-toned low E's are interspersed with F $\sharp$ 5 and G5 dyads. (Proto Metal, anyone?) The trilled sixteenth-note run in **Ex. 9** portrays Reinhardt's moves over a new IV-chord figure. Follow it up with a return to **Ex. 8c**, and then layer it with the cool, semi-chromatic single-note theme in **Ex. 10a**. Finally, two more bars of "Rhino"-style soloing, courtesy of the E Dorian-based moves in **Ex. 10b**, bring this tribute to a close. Check out how the same three-beat rhythmic motif repeats across the bar line. Tremendous! ■



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BY TOM KOLB

can rapidly devolve into a big yawn fest, especially when presented using only boring, textbook-ish exercises with no commonplace applications. This is a sad situation, as many students of the guitar and music theory never fully grasp the powerful potential of these three-note wonders. Well, cheer up, class! The revered classic-rock catalog is a virtual treasure trove of highly musical triadic applications. So grab your Les Paul, Strat, Tele, or SG, and let's get going!

We'll start with triad voicings on the top three strings. **Ex. 1** shows the four basic triad types—major, augmented, minor, and diminished, all built from a *D* root note: *D* major (*D-F#A*; root-3-5); *D* augmented (*D-F#A#*; root-3-#5); *D* minor (*D-F-A*; root-♭3-5); and *D* diminished (*D-F-A♭*; root-♭3-♭5). The first triad in each group is in root position (root-3-5), followed by first inversion (3-5-root), and second inversion (5-root-3). (Note: the scope of this lesson

Our first music example (**Ex. 2**) is in the style of the Who's Pete Townshend. Widely respected as one of rock's most influential rhythm guitarists and songwriters, Pete has gotten quite creative with triads, especially when casting them against John Entwistle's pedaled bass lines, in such Who classics as "I Can See for Miles," "Won't Get Fooled Again," "Sparks" and "Substitute." The riff

D diminished triad voicings

♩ = 132

D A/D G/D 1. D 2. C#o/D D

TAB

[illegible]

♩ = 80

Em D C/D D

7 8 9 0 5 7 7 3 5 5 5 7 7

♩ = 130

D A E A

let ring ---| let ring ---| let ring ---| let ring ----|

TAB

0 9 11 10 11 10 4/6 5 5 6 5 11/13 12 12 13 12 4/6 5

♩ = 74 * Bm A#° A G#°

TAB

fret-hand
fingering:

[illegible]

Ex. 6 is a tribute to Don Felder and Joe Walsh's sweet harmony leads featured during the outro section of the Eagles' "Hotel California" and is based on the top harmony line. As in Ex. 2, the diminished triads here may be thought of as the top three notes of related dominant seven chords. [*A#dim* (*A#C#E*) and *G#dim* (*G#B-D*) share common tones with *F#7* (*F#A#C#E*) and *E7* (*E-G#B-D*), respectively.]



Let us not forget the augmented triad! More often than not finding its place in an altered V7 dominant chord in a blues-based song, such as “Oh! Darling” by the Beatles, it occasionally sneaks its way into featured riffs, such as the main hook of classic rock crooner Eddie Money’s breakout hit, “Baby Hold On,” which informs **Ex. 7**. An amalgamation of that song’s rhythm guitar and synthesizer parts, the example juggles *D* major and *D* augmented triad voicings with selected string attacks. The rather unorthodox *D*-chord fingering is employed here to free up the ring finger for the *Daug* chord without having to move the other digits.

STRINGS 2-4

Let’s now move over to the next trio of adjacent strings, the *D*, *G*, and *B*. **Ex. 8** shows the voicings in the same order as **Ex. 1**, except now with *A* as our root note.

Our next two examples exhibit the eternal power of the mighty I-IV-V progression. Both are in the key of *A* major and exploit a palm-muted open *A* string to fortify the triads. **Ex. 9** is a tip-of-the-hat to classic rock hitman Steve Miller (“Swingtown”), while **Ex. 10** is a nod to the late, great Randy Rhoads.

Although he is best known as the chief songwriter and lead vocalist of the pioneering “progressive pop” band the Moody Blues,

guitarist Justin Hayward’s six-string prowess is too often overlooked. **Ex. 11** is inspired by his rollicking riff action in “Story in Your Eyes” and features triads harmonized from the *A* Dorian mode (*A-B-C-D-E-F#-G*) and played between the gaps of a driving bass line.

Ex. 12 is a virtual mini lesson in the signature rhythm guitar style of the great Keith Richards. Kind of a mashup of the Rolling Stones classics “Brown Sugar” and “Start Me Up,” our example offers a way to emulate Richards’ unique 5-string open *G* tuning (*G-D-G-B-D* low to high) in standard tuning. Most of the activity occurs on the *D*, *G*, and *B* strings, which are the same pitches in

Ex. 7 (bridge & middle single-coil pickups)

♩ = 120

D **D⁺** **D**

let ring throughout

Ex. 8 (Triad voicings on the *D*, *G* and *B* string)

A major triad voicings **A augmented triad voicings** **A minor triad voicings** **A diminished triad voicings**

Ex. 9 (bridge humbucker and middle single-coil, w/ doubling effect)

♩ = 132

A **D/A** **E/A** **A** **D/A** **E/A**

P.M. the *A* string throughout

Ex. 10 (bridge humbucker w/dist.)

♩ = 138

N.C. A E/A D/A A

P.M. the A string throughout

T
A
B

0 0 0 5 6 7 0 0 0 0 5 4 6 0 0 0 0 3 2 4 2 2

Ex. 11 (bridge humbucker; medium overdrive)

♩ = 174

N.C. Am Bm/A C/A D/A N.C. Am Bm/A C/A Bm/A

TAB

0 3 0 0 1 2 3 4 5 5 7 7 0 3 0 0 1 2 3 4 5 5 7 7 0 3 0 0 1 2 3 4 5 5 7 7

Ex. 12 (neck & bridge single-coil pickups)

♩ = 128

C/G G C F/C C F/C B $\flat$ E $\flat$ /B $\flat$ B $\flat$ E $\flat$

TAB

13 12 5 6 6 5 5 6 6 3 4 4 4 3 8
12 12 5 5 5 5 5 7 7 3 3 3 3 3 8
14 12 5 7 7 5 5 7 7 3 3 5 5 5 8
15 X 15 X 8 X 8 X 6 cont. simile X 6 X 6 X 11
2 1 2 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1
1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1
3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3
4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4

A $\flat$ /E $\flat$ E $\flat$ C F/C

TAB

8 9 9 8 5 6 6
8 8 8 8 5 5 5
8 X 10 X 5 7 7
11 X 11 X 8 X 8
11 11 11 11 8 8 8



both tunings. Here, second-inversion triads, played with a partial index-finger barre, alternate with first-inversion triads (maintain the barre and add the second and third fingers on the B and D strings). The challenge here is fretting the bass notes on the low E string with your pinky, which requires a three-fret

reach. The only missing ingredient from these Keith-style voicings is the notes on the first string, which you wouldn't be able to finger without tuning your high E string down to D (so that you could include it in the barre), so just avoid strumming that string.

Long before he became a full-fledged

Eagle, Joe Walsh was churning out triad-fueled riffs in the James Gang ("Funk #49" and "Midnight Man"), Barnstorm ("Turn to Stone"), and on his solo albums ("Rocky Mountain Way," "Meadows," and "Life's Been Good"). **Ex. 13** is inspired by the guitarist's modal excursions in "Welcome to the Club,"

Ex. 13 (neck & bridge humbuckers; mild overdrive; light flange)

♩ = 120 (♩ = ♩♩)

G/A F#m/A Em/A G/A D/A C#°/A

G/A D/A C#°/A D/A Em/A G/A A

T A B

0 3 4 5 3 4 5 2 2 4 4 0 0 0 0 3 4 5 3 4 5 7 7 7 8 9 11 0 0 0 0

12 10 8 8 7 5 5 3 3 3 3 5 12 11 9 9 7 5 5 4 4 4 3 4 5 3 4 5 6 7 0

Ex. 14 (bridge humbucker; mild overdrive; rotary speaker effect)

♩ = 60

Am C+/G# C/G D/F# Dm/F Am/E

let ring throughout

F° G#° B° D° Am

rit. -----

T A B

7 5 5 5 7 6 5 5 5 6 5 5 5 5 4 2 3 2 4 3 2 3 2 3 2 2 1 2 2

3 1 0 1 3 6 4 3 4 6 9 7 6 7 9 12 10 9 10 9 10 9 10 0

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**Ex. 15** (neck single-coil pickup)

♩ = 116

Ex. 16 (Triad voicings on the A-D-G and E-A-D string sets)

E major triads on A-D-G strings E major triads on E-A-D strings E minor triads on A-D-G strings E minor triads on E-A-D strings

form 1974's *So What*. Harmonized from the A Mixolydian mode (A-B-C#-D-E-F#-G), the passage snaps various triads into place along the fretboard, all the while keeping a rolling, shuffle rhythm going on the open A string.

Ex. 14 is modeled after the arpeggiated figures George Harrison played in the John Lennon-penned Beatles classic, "I Want You (She's So Heavy)," from *Abbey Road*. The first half of the progression is more akin to George's own compositions "While My Guitar Gently Weeps" and "Something," but the picking

pattern corresponds to what he played on John's song. Although not always triad-based, the Beatles catalog includes an abundance of arpeggiated figures. "Ticket to Ride," "Help," "Till There Was You," "Hard Day's Night," "Sun King," "Here Comes the Sun," "Octopus's Garden," "Oh! Darling," and "I've Got a Feeling" are but a few of the many examples.

Before we move on, here's a funky little Jimi Hendrix/Doobie Brothers/Edgar Winter mashup of triad riffage (**Ex. 15**). Notice that all three sections employ the same kind of

Keith Richards-style triad-connecting moves we looked at in Ex. 12.

STRINGS 3-5 AND 4-6

We'll stick to the more common major and minor triads for the lower string trios. Check out **Ex. 16** for the voicings, this time with E as our root note.

Ex. 17 switches to acoustic for a Jimmy-Page style display of major and minor triads spread out along the A-D-G string group. The key element here is the droning effect

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Ex. 17 (acoustic)

♩ = 96

[illegible]

Ex. 18 (neck humbucker; long delay; spring reverb)

♩ = 69 (♩♩ = $\overset{\cdot}{\text{♩}} \overset{\cdot}{\text{♩}}$)

[illegible]

* chord symbols represent the triad inversions

G#m/B F#m/A A G#m A G#m
 T 13 11 9 8 11 12 11 12 11 0
 A 13 11 9 8 11 12 11 12 11 0
 B 14 12 12 11 11 12 11 12 11 0

Ex. 19 (bridge humbucker; distortion; doubling effect)

♩ = 105

♩ = 105

D#m/A# Em/B D#m Em D#m/A# Em/B D#m Em

TAB

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

6 6 7 7 6 7 6 7 6 7 6 7

G F# F Em

TAB

7 6 6 5 5 4 4 0 0 4 5

9 8 9 8 8 7 7 0 0 6 7

10 9 9 8 9 8 7 0 0 6 7

Ex. 20 (bridge & middle single-coil pickups; chorus effect, long delay)

♩ = 124

D/F# G E/G# A F#/A# Bm C D(add4) C

let ring throughout

produced by the surrounding open strings. Listen to Led Zeppelin's "Ramble On" for a prime example of this technique. Heart's Nancy Wilson also displays a penchant for this kind of chord work. Check out her acoustic buildup during the interlude section of "Crazy on You," just before the song's outro.

Ex. 18 is inspired by Peter Green's haunting main theme in Fleetwood Mac's "Albatross." The liberal distribution of $G\sharp m$ triads, played in conjunction with the pedaled *E*

note in the bass, implies a sort of jazzy *Emaj7* sound. Peter voiced his chords further down the fretboard on higher string sets, but this register provides a rich timbre suited for self-accompanied solo guitar work.

Next up is an edgy prog-rock example inspired by the rather unorthodox approach to triads characteristic of the playing and songwriting style of King Crimson's Robert Fripp. This heavy passage (**Ex. 19**) is based on the chromatic themes brought forth in

songs such as "Vroom" (also featuring guitarist Adrian Belew). At first glance, the triads may appear like random insertions, but upon closer inspection the chord sequences target a firm, *E* minor home-base tonality.

The low-string arpeggiated lines in **Ex. 20** bring to mind some of the catchy passages that sprinkled '80s pop-metal hits by acts such as Def Leppard, Whitesnake, and Bon Jovi. Use a chorus pedal for this example, and let all those open *D* and *G* notes ring clearly. ■

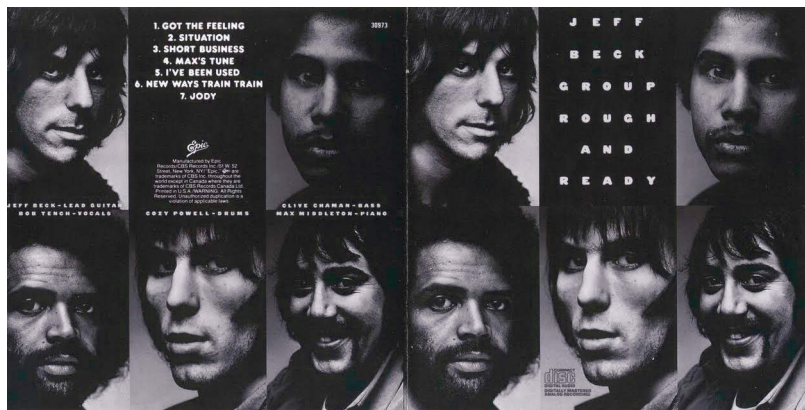


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“Situation”

By The Jeff Beck Group

BY JESSE GRESS

UNQUESTIONABLY WORTHY OF A featured spot in Jim Campilongo’s monthly Vinyl Treasures column, the Jeff Beck Group’s *Rough and Ready*—the maestro’s 1971 return to action, following a near-fatal automobile accident and lengthy recovery—rekindles many warm memories of hearing the album on a killer stereo system for the very first time, and then spending years tearing each song apart, note-by-note. The rest aside, “Situation,” with its odd-metered intro and tone to die for, is a

particular standout.

Essentially a long 15/4 phrase, **Ex. 1** breaks the opening C#-minor-based riff into a bar of 7/4, followed by two bars of 4/4. The notes are all derived from the C# blues scale (C#, E, F#, G, G#, B), but, as usual, Beck transforms it into something sinister. The first pass is played semi-softly, with a fat, clean tone, some palm muting, and lots of pull-offs, while the second round features the most beautiful fuzzed-out Strat-and-Marshall tone

you’ve ever heard. (It’s like a warm bath!) The pull-offs remain, but the palm-muting is gone. Pianist Max Middleton doubles Beck’s second pass, and in the second and fourth endings adds the accented quartally-voiced (i.e., stacked fourths) F6/9-G6/9-A6/9 chords on the upbeats, in sync with drummer Cozy Powell’s “salt shaker” open-and-closed hi-hat hits.

Rough and Ready is all killer, no filler, and a classic example of early jazz-rock fusion at its finest. Do yourself a favor and listen! ■

Ex. 1

♩ = ca. 180 N.C.

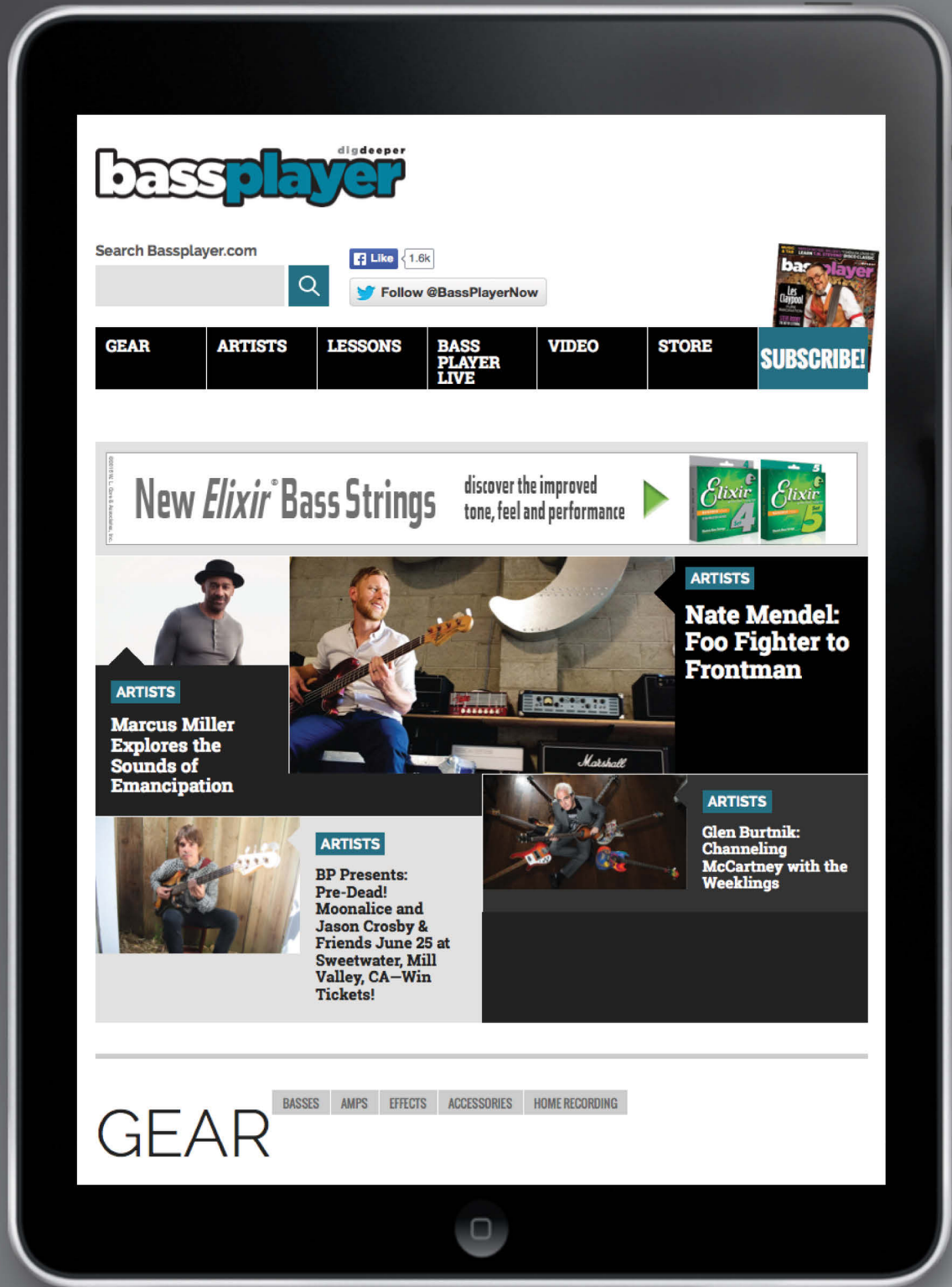
1.,3. 2.,4.

F6/9 G6/9 A6/9

piano: (to C#m7)

*1st time: *mp* clean tone w/palm muting.
** 2nd time: *ff* w/dist.

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Power of Love

NFL Tackle Joe Barksdale Discovers Music, Hendrix, and an Intense Devotion to Guitar

BY RICHARD BIENSTOCK

THIS PAST SEASON, THE NFL DEVOTED

one week of its 2017 schedule to a campaign called "My Cause, My Cleats." Among other events, the endeavor involved having hundreds of players take the field for their games in specially designed, custom-made shoes that reflected a cause and organization close to their hearts. Which is how Los Angeles Chargers offensive tackle Joe Barksdale wound up walking onto the team's home field at StubHub Center in Carson, California, in a pair of blue Nikes emblazoned with the visage of Jimi Hendrix, and covered with the sort of curlicue squiggles and hearts that adorned the hand-painted Stratocaster he famously played—and then lit on fire and smashed to bits—at the 1967 Monterey Pop Festival.

"I love Fender guitars, so I chose the Fender Music Foundation as my charity," says the 6'5",



326-pound tackle. "And I decorated my cleats with the most famous Fender artist ever."

The moment was an opportunity for Barksdale to reveal to football fans what are two of his great passions off the field. The 29-year-old Detroit native is an avowed guitar fanatic, and he spends much of his time away from football

honing his craft at home, in hotel rooms, and at bars and clubs around the country. (He even performed "Foxy Lady" to his wife, Brionna, at their wedding reception.)

Now, Barksdale has released an album, *Butterflies, Rainbows & Moonbeams* (the title is yet another reference to his favorite artist), that highlights his accomplished rhythm and lead playing, as well as his singing, on a handful of original tunes and covers of songs by Freddie King ("The Stumble"), Elmore James ("Dust My Broom"), MGMT ("Electric Feel"), and, of course, Jimi Hendrix ("The Wind Cries Mary"). Barksdale's own compositions run the gamut from blues, funk, and rock to R&B, gospel and even a bit of country.

"I look at my music like a gumbo," he says. "It's a huge collection of different sounds, and you just throw them in a pot, spice it, mix it,

and serve it up."

Amazingly, Barksdale has only been playing guitar for roughly five years, but his devotion to the instrument borders on obsessive—especially for someone whose day job is, to say the least, incredibly physically and mentally demanding. But he approaches playing guitar with the same confidence and passion he brings to football.

"I told my publicist straight up, 'Look, dude, one day I'm going to win Grammys and be really famous, and I'm going to be known as the greatest guitar player of my generation,'" he says. "'So you can either get on this train now, or you can be sitting there watching the documentary and wondering why you let it pass.'"



For a long time, however, guitar wasn't a part of Barksdale's life at all. His love of music led him to play an instrument, but, like most public-school kids, that first instrument was a plastic recorder. From there, he moved on to the violin, and, after discovering jazz men like Dizzy Gillespie, John Coltrane, and Miles Davis, the saxophone. By then, he had little time to devote to an instrument, anyhow. As a star defensive tackle, Barksdale earned a spot on *USA Today's* 2006 All-USA High School Football Team, and he threw himself fully into sports after enrolling at LSU.



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"When you get to college, football is a job," he says. "People work 40-hour-a-week jobs, but I worked at football probably 50 or 60. And any free time I had wasn't going to be spent going over music theory."

In 2011, Barksdale was drafted by the Oakland Raiders. He was released the following year, and then signed with the St. Louis Rams. It was during his time that music reentered Barksdale's life, after he experienced the death of someone "who was like a dad to me." Rams head coach Jeff Fisher could tell he was struggling with the loss, so he suggested picking up the guitar.

"His son loved to play, so he thought maybe I should try it, as well," says Barksdale. "And I thought, 'What's the worst that could happen?' So I bought a Fender acoustic, and I got my first-ever guitar lesson from one of our equipment guys."

A few weeks into his guitar studies, Barksdale experienced another life-changing moment.

"I was trying to motivate myself by looking at other great musicians," he recalls, "and



I remember searching for Jimi Hendrix on YouTube. I had no idea who he was, and the first video that popped up was Jimi playing 'Hey Joe' at the Monterey Pop Festival. It changed my life. It was the hippest thing ever. The way I felt seeing Jimi for the first time was how I wanted people to feel when they heard me play."

When he returned to St. Louis for the start of the new season, he immersed himself in guitar, taking lessons, and performing at open jam sessions at the city's downtown bars and clubs ("That's really where I learned how to play

the blues"). In 2015, Barksdale signed with the Chargers, and he soon commenced a 16-week residency at Humphreys, a club in San Diego. He modeled those shows after the jam sessions he had loved in St. Louis, and he also teamed up with the Fender Music Foundation, auctioning Fender products to raise money for the organization's various endeavors.

Given Barksdale's close association with Fender—and also his love for Hendrix—it's hardly surprising that his favorite guitar is the Stratocaster.

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"It's so versatile," he says. "You can play an entire show—all different types of music—with one guitar. Everything works with a Strat."

His "pride and joys" are a pair of '69-reissue Stratocasters custom-made by Fender master builder John Cruz. He also has a '65 reissue, as well as a blue Custom Shop Jazzmaster with "the sweetest paint job I've ever seen"—a takeoff on Jimi's custom-finished white Monterey Strat. (The Jazzmaster also served as the template for Barksdale's custom cleats.) His collection is rounded out by a Martin HD-28, a pair of Suhr electrics, and a tattoo of a Stratocaster that runs across the inner side of his upper right arm.

"I mean, it *is* my favorite guitar," he says. "When I'm home, I always have my guitar, and if I'm having a bad day, I pick it up. If I hear a cool song on the radio, I pick up my guitar. If I'm watching TV, I pick up my guitar. This translates into about three or four hours of playing a day. During the season, I either bring a guitar on the road with me, or I have a specific set of albums



that I'm going to listen to in order to hear some licks and melodies that will get me inspired. I'm constantly working on music in some way, shape, or form. Right now, I've gotten really deep into jazz and jazz theory, and I'm trying to write a song every couple of days."

He says he's currently putting plans together for a follow-up to *Butterflies, Rainbows & Moonbeams*.

"The guitar is like the voice of my heart," he says. "I just love playing. And that's why I dropped an album. It wasn't to prove anything to anybody. It was to show people that I can be a professional athlete *and* a professional musician."

And while Barksdale finds playing guitar to be a challenge, he also says it's not nearly as hard as his day job.

"In football, if you have a bad play, people want to murder you—literally *murder* you," he laughs. "But if you get up onstage and hit a bad note, you've just got to go and hit a good one. Just make sure to always resolve on a good note, and, at the end of the day, you'll be fine." ■



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BY DAVE HUNTER

MARSHALL AMPS AND THEIR EPONY-mous crunch and grind have been central to the sound of rock since the mid '60s, yet one man often gets far too little credit for his part in the story. Ken Bran was the amplifier repairman in Jim Marshall's London music shop in the early '60s, and an important member of the team that launched the legend.

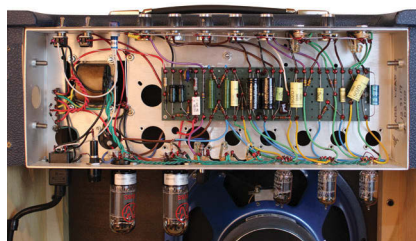
According to Bran himself in *The History of Marshall* by Michael Doyle, the Sound City store in London asked Marshall to supply "an amp the same as a Marshall but with a different name" (much as Marshall's production of Park amps, beginning several years earlier, was done to skirt around exclusive distribution deals in the north of England) in 1974, and these new non-Marshall amps for London were branded with the surname of Jim's right-hand man, but in reverse. Reports indicate that only a few dozen Narb amps were ever made—until now. Gabriel Curry of Echopark Guitars and Amplifiers has acquired the Narb brand name, and, along with engineer Eric Berns, is reconfiguring the spirit into several homages to the originals, offered exclusively by Guitar Riot in Cleveland.

The Narb Lead 20 Combo is a nifty creation styled like the Marshall-built amps of the era, in royal-blue Tolex with black 'n' silver checker-board cloth and a silver Plexiglas control panel. Although this model derives 20 watts from a pair of 6V6GT output tubes in adjustable fixed

bias, it's very much a scaling-down of the classic late-'60s "plexi" circuit, with a few adjustments to voicing and some JTM45 DNA for good measure.

As with many Park amps of the era, the Lead 20 splits its two channels' inputs (voiced for normal—i.e. bassy—and bright respectively) in between the Volume 2 and Volume 1 knobs, with the shared, cathode-follower Treble/Middle/Bass tone stack following, along with a Presence control. As per vintage specs, there's no master volume. There is, however, internal parallel linking of the two channels' Volume controls. So rather than using the old "jumper cable" technique to link the channels, whichever input you choose accesses both—just adjust each Volume knob to attain your desired balance of thick or bright.

A look inside reveals the care and quality that Curry and Berns have put into the build. A rugged turret-board is hand-wired with SoZo signal caps, carbon-comp resistors, and F&T and Philips electrolytic capacitors, while



SPECIFICATIONS

CONTACT narbamps.com

PRICE \$2,300 street

CHANNELS 1

CONTROLS Volume 2, Volume 1, Treble, Middle, Bass, Presence

POWER 20 watts

TUBES Three 12AX7 preamp tubes, two 6V6GT output tubes

EXTRAS Main and extension speaker outs

SPEAKER 12" WGS British-voiced 65-watt ceramic driver

WEIGHT 38 lbs

BUILT USA

KUDOS Thick, characterful clean tones. Gnarly, reedy lead tones. Well built.

CONCERNS Grille cloth is saggy in places on this prototype.



American-made Heyboer transformers drive it all. The cabinet is constructed of solid pine, with a plywood baffle carrying a custom British-voiced 65-watt 12" WGS ceramic-magnet speaker. All in all, it's a well-put-together package, with an appealingly retro vibe. I should note that the grille cloth was a little saggy around the edges on this one, but it's essentially their prototype, and that's the kind of thing that is likely to be addressed as production ramps up.

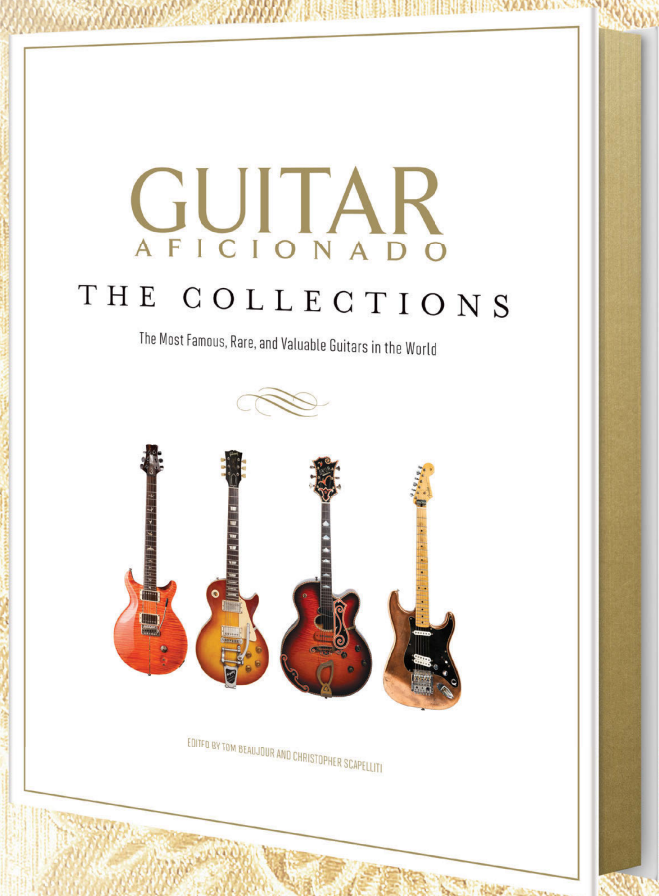
Tested with a Les Paul, a Telecaster, and a selection of drive pedals, the Narb Lead 20 combo paid out in full on its vintage-spec Marshall-esque promise. Keeping Vol 1 (bright channel) at 10 o'clock or below yielded thick yet articulate cleans, easily thickened further with a nudge of Vol 2. The latter brings on faster breakup, though, and, by the time you get both to around 11 o'clock, things are already pretty smoky and raw—in a very cool way. Roll the volume beyond this point and, with the Les Paul in particular, the Lead 20 gets mean and gnarly fast. Think of that woody, singing, reedy tone that Clapton immortalized on the "Beano" album and you're in the ballpark, but it's a sound that also excels at classic rock, punk, or more garage-leaning alternative adventures. By no means polite, refined, or "contemporary," the Narb Lead 20 combo is an excellent rendition of a known classic circuit in a hip package that I'm sure a lot of players will really dig. ■

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GUITAR
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Uncommon Tones

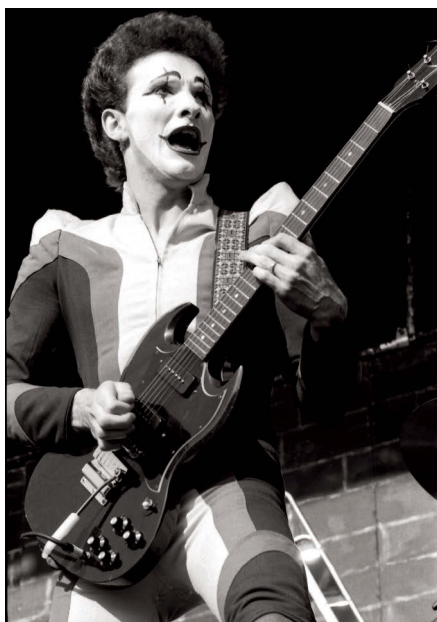
5 Classic-Rock Rigs from the Fringes

BY MICHAEL MOLENDRA

OKAY. PRETTY MUCH EVERYONE knows about the rigs of Jimi Hendrix, Eric Clapton, Jimmy Page, David Gilmour, Jeff Beck, and the rest of the much-documented greats of rock guitar's glorious early days. But those icons weren't the only players adding to the vocabulary of classic-rock guitar. There were lots of one-hit wonders, awesome bands hovering under the media radar, and interesting acts that never reached headliner status. So we thought it would be fun and informative to look into rigs of the "kinda unknowns" who served with passion, grit, and musical integrity.

Obviously, some of the tools detailed here were used by scores of guitarists back in the day, but the trick is to research the music of these players, and see *how* they used that gear to craft their individual licks, riffs, solos, and songs. And, hey, it never hurts to expand your personal guitar-pedia of influences to draw upon.

Here are five rigs used by players you likely don't think about every day—or perhaps have never heard of at all. If you're intrigued by what you see/hear on YouTube, and want to take the tone quest further, we've included suggestions for comparable modern gear to check out. Rock on.



NEIL ZLOTOWER / ATLAS ICONS



ZAL CLEMINSON

Sensational Alex Harvey Band, 1972-1978

Cleminson was one of the most striking figures—a twisted pierrot wearing white makeup—in a motley band of brilliant weirdos, but he was much more than a glam cartoon figure. His edgy, melodic solos in SAHB were like little symphonies of guitar thrills, and, believe it or not, he was a major influence on Guthrie Govan.

Essential Gear: '60s Gibson SG, Marshall 100-watt head, Vox Super Beatles cabinet, Cry Baby wah.

Modern Options: Gibson SG Standard (\$1,539 street), Marshall Plexi 1959SLP (\$2,699 street), Vox V212C Custom 2X12 (\$449 street), Dunlop Cry Baby wah (\$79 street)



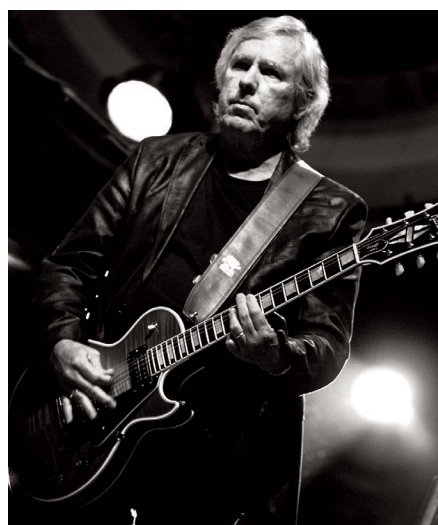
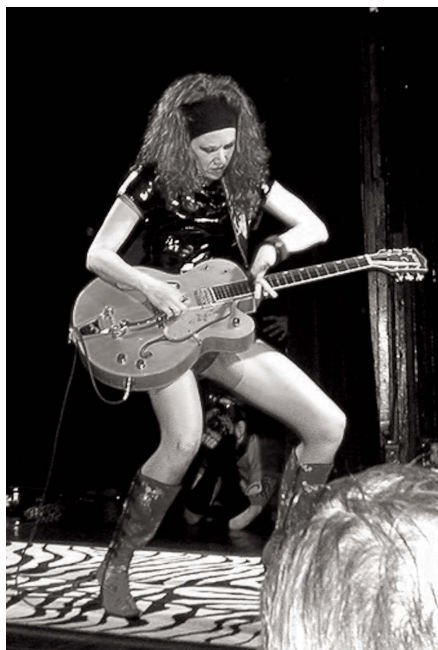
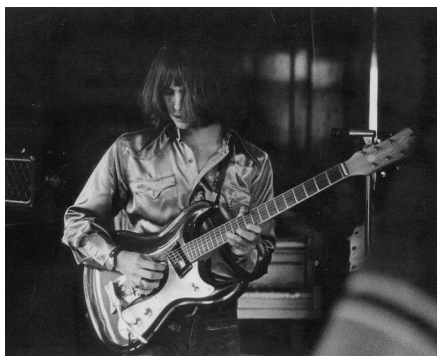
JAN AKKERMAN

Focus, 1969-1976

His band's signature tune, "Hocus Pocus," is one of the era's sublime guitar workouts—as well as a bizarre example of yodeling in a rock-instrumental piece—and Akkerman's frenetic solo lines are like watching a champion downhill skier shred the run. The Dutch musician—also an accomplished classical guitarist—graced *GP*'s May 1975 cover.

Essential Gear: Heavily modded Gibson Les Paul Personal, Fender solid-state amps, Coloursound treble booster, Leslie rotary speaker.

Modern Options: Gibson Les Paul Studio (\$1,649 street), Fender Champion 100 (\$349 street), Electro-Harmonix Screaming Bird Treble Booster (\$40 street), Strymon Lex Rotary Speaker Simulator (\$299 street)



ERIC BRAUNN

Iron Butterfly, 1967-1969

Braunn was a violin prodigy who became seduced by rock and roll, and he joined Iron Butterfly at just 17 years old. His fuzzy, psychedelic romp on the 17-minute smash hit "In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida" was a long way from Bach and Mozart, but what a crazy and mind-bending jam.

Essential Gear: Mosrite Mark IV, Marshall stack, Echoplex, Mosrite Fuzzrite, Vox wah.

Modern Options: Eastwood Mark IV KC (\$599 street), Marshall DSL100HR (\$899 street), Marshall 1960 cabinet (\$949 street), Dunlop EP103 Echoplex Delay (\$199 street), Catalinbread Fuzzrite (\$149 street), Vox V847-A wah (\$99 street)

POISON IVY

The Cramps, 1976-2009

We're veering slightly into classic "punk" rock here, but Ivy's supercharged yet respectful rockabilly-surf-Link Wray gumbo is as rootsy as it gets. Ivy's sultry looks were a big part of the Cramps' psychobilly stage act, so were her careening and staccato solo licks, clean-toned melodic runs, and outbursts of overdrive and feedback.

Essential Gear: '58 Gretsch 6120, Fender Pro Reverb, Univox Super Fuzz.

Modern Options: Gretsch G6120TFM (\$2,799 street), Fender '57 Custom Twin-Amp (\$2,999 street), EarthQuaker Devices Fuzz Master General (\$175 street)

JAMES WILLIAMSON

The Stooges, 1970-1974

Strutting, screaming, and roaring into the Stooge's unhinged caterwaul that was *Raw Power* (1973), Williamson's fully committed and impassioned performance mirrored the album's title. *Raw Power* struggled through a few controversial mixes and remixes—the most renowned by David Bowie—but no fader moves could diminish Williamson's explosive onslaught.

Essential Gear: '69 Les Paul Custom, Martin D-28, Vox AC30.

Modern Options: Gibson Les Paul Custom Heritage Cherry Sunburst (\$4,599 street), Martin D-28 (\$2,699 street), Vox AC30C2 (\$1,199 street) ■



GEAR



Rocktron

ValveSonic Plexi



TESTED BY ART THOMPSON

RESULTING FROM A PART-nership between Rocktron and Frank Lamara of LA Custom, the ValveSonic Plexi is an all-tube preamp designed to replicate the tones of British amps from the '60s through the '90s. To cover such a wide range of sounds, the 1U rackmount unit relies on a combination of switches to steer the tones toward particular eras of amplifiers. For example, the Tight 1-2 switch affects the input of the first tube stage, providing a modern-type response in the "1" setting, and warmer, vintage-style response in the "2" position. An accompanying switch labeled "Tight" firms up the sound when set to the up position. Following these is a 6-way rotary Bright switch that adjusts the overall sound from darker to brighter. The Gain control's range is dramatically affected by the Boost and Boost + switches: The manual states that with Boost off the overall gain is lower, as per earlier amps, while activating it brings the Gain control's range in line with models from the '80s. The Boost + switch takes things into much higher amounts of distortion, which amps from the '90s and later were designed to deliver. And if even more overdrive is needed,

the Afterburner switch activates another gain stage post EQ, which is controlled by the Drive knob.

Tone shaping is accomplished by Bass, Middle, and Treble controls; a High Cut knob, and an EQ 1-2 switch that gives a choice of modern- or vintage-style response curves. Lastly, a Master Volume adjusts the final output of the preamp.

Hooked up to a Mesa/Boogie power amp driving Marshall 4x12 and 4x10 speaker cabinets, the ValveSonic Plexi was easy to dial in for everything from moderate crunch to mammoth sustain. In general, by keeping the Tight switch off and Tight 1-2 in the "2" position, leaving all the Boost and Afterburner functions off, and putting the EQ switch in its "2" setting made it possible to get tones that were in the camp of a mid-'60s tube-rectified Marshall JTM-50. Using the alternate setting on the Tight and EQ switches took things closer to an early '70s JMP 50-watter, which sounded brighter and tighter in comparison. With all of the Plexi's potential, I didn't find it necessary to use anything more than the first Boost position, and with the Gain rolled down to around 10 o'clock, the grind was similar to what you

SPECIFICATIONS

Contact rocktron.com

Product ValveSonic Plexi

Price \$799 street

Channels 1

Controls Tight and Tight 1-2 switches, 6-position Bright switch, Gain, Boost and Boost + switches, Bass Middle, Treble, Afterburner switch, Drive control, EQ 1-2 switch, High Cut, Master, on-off switch. [Rear panel] Line and instrument outputs (unbalanced), secondary Input jack.

Tubes Four 12AX7

Weight 5.5 lbs

Built Korea

Kudos Extremely wide range of British-voiced overdrive tones

Concerns No effects loop.

get using a booster pedal on an old Marshall, or what a JCM 800 gives at full tilt. North of that setting, the distortion and sustain increase tremendously, and let's just say that if you're into extreme levels of grind, switching to Boost + will deliver the goods.

Going at it a completely different way, the Afterburner function can be dialed for sounds that are reminiscent of overdriving the *output* section of a tube amp, and by using a lower Gain setting before the EQ and a higher Drive setting at this post-EQ stage, the grind was delivered with a splintering attack and the kind of touch responsiveness that comes when the amp's power tubes are really sweating and contributing their own harmonics—as opposed to the more compressed thing that happens when they're being fed tons of distortion from the front end. I think this addition to the Plexi's many functions was a smart one.

The ValveSonic Plexi is very capable at delivering Brit-voiced amp tones over an exceeding wide range of gain and suffice to say that if you're into a rack setup, and want the ability to use any power amp that fits the need, the Plexi is definitely worth investigating. ■

What Clients are saying about the
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"This thing ROCKS."
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blown away."
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As a kid, I stood hypnotized in front of the guitar shop window. I stared at the Gibsons, Fenders, Rickenbackers and Les Pauls, lined up like lacquered mahogany and maple trophies. With their smooth curves, each one could produce hot licks, reverb and a wailing solo. The six string guitar is the heart of rock and roll. I'm proud to say that today I feel the same way about the new Stauer **Guitar Watch**.

We wanted to give our favorite vintage electric guitars their due with an impressive timepiece that captures the excitement of the golden years of rock and roll. The Stauer **Guitar Watch** is a legendary timepiece with bold, head-turning design and attitude to spare. It's rebellious enough to feel like you're getting away with something.

Meet your new favorite rock star. My only advice to the designers was to make a watch that looks exactly like rock and roll sounds. Big, bold and loud enough to wake the neighbors. It should evoke images of Bill Haley, Buddy Holly, The King and The Boss

strumming crowds into a frenzy. But it should also reverberate with the spirit of the world's greatest rock guitar gods like Jimi, Eric and Keith (who was featured on the cover of *Rolling Stone* magazine wearing a Stauer watch). As you can see, the final product is worthy of a standing ovation.

It's only rock and roll, but we like it. One look at the Stauer **Guitar Watch's** voluptuous stainless steel body will bring you right back to the glory days of 45 and 33 rpm records. The eye-catching shape of the case recalls the round-bottomed bodies of the greatest vintage electric guitars.

The unique, ivory-colored face features blue Roman numerals on the left of the dial and bold Arabic numbers on the right. Blued, Breguet-style hands keep time while additional complications mark the day, date and month. A date window sits at the 3 o'clock position. Inside, the 27-ruby-jewel movement utilizes an automatic self-winding mechanism that never needs batteries. The watch secures

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GEAR



Universal Audio

OX Amp Top Box

GuitarPlayer
EDITORS'
PICK

TESTED BY ART THOMPSON

AMPLIFIER ATTENUATORS HAVE BEEN around for decades, and modern, reactive-load devices have become standard items for players who like the sound of their amp running at full bore but need to reduce the wattage that hits the speakers to keep the volume in check.

True to form, Universal Audio's OX Amp Top Box (\$1,299 street) is designed to let you run your tube amp (up to 150 watts) at its optimal volume setting, while letting you control the output to the speakers with a 6-position Volume switch. However, good as it is at preserving the tone and feel of an amp while significantly lowering the volume, OX is far more than a mere reactive load box. It also routes some of the attenuated signal into a digital section that—when the software app for Mac or iPad is enabled—provides 100 “Rigs” (i.e. preset combinations of various speakers, mics, and effects), that can be modified to create your own custom rigs by selecting from a menu that includes 17 speaker cabinets, eight close mics and six room mics, as well as studio-grade compression, delay, EQ, and plate reverb.

Note that the “modeled” sounds are only available from OX's dual ¼" balanced line-outs, S/PDIF digital outs (RCA and optical TOSLINK), and headphone out. In other words, they do not affect the attenuated signal that's feeding a standard speaker cabinet.

OX's front-panel controls also include separate Volumes for the line and headphone outs, a six-position Rig selector (which is user configurable via the software app), and a Room knob that varies the amount of “studio room

ambience”—turn it up for an airier sound, down for a drier response. Room only affects the line, digital, or phone outs, and its settings can also be edited and stored via the app.

You can use OX *without* a computer, of course, but the app is necessary if you want to deep dive into all of the pre-configured Rigs and/

or edit those presets to create and save your own custom Rigs. And since the app is such a big part of the user interface, UA thoughtfully equipped OX with its own built-in Wi-Fi network, which—once the app is downloaded onto your Mac or iPad and a password established—provides reliable communication between OX and your chosen device, regardless of Internet availability. The only problem I had was that OX stopped passing signal twice during these tests and had to be switched off and on again to restore operation. The app was not running at either time, so the cause didn't seem to be Wi-Fi related.

The hardware side of OX is brilliantly executed. The unit features a heavy-gauge aluminum housing with plenty of vent openings, and the front panel looks retro with its two-tone color scheme, large knobs, wood trim, and jeweled indicator lamp. The in-line 12VDC power supply connects to main unit via locking XLR jack, and extra-tall rubber feet provide plenty of clearance for the amp's handle when placing OX on top of a head or combo. Nice! There's a foot-switch jack on the rear panel that the manual describes as “not functional.” However, by plugging in a momentary footswitch (not included) OX turns into a looper of sorts: It records, plays, and stops, but won't store anything. Heck, I wouldn't mind if it just let you toggle the Rig selector via footswitch.

Even before I started controlling OX with the app, it was fun to hear my amps through the six “factory” selections of miked 4x12, 2x12, 1x12, and 4x10 cabinets available on the Rig dial. The really cool thing is that my vintage Marshalls ('66



"The OX app for Mac and iPad displays your selected speaker cabinet and allows you to choose from a large selection of microphones, adjust their positions, alter the damping of the room, and add studio-quality compression, delay, EQ, and reverb to create your own custom Rigs."



JTM 50, '69 PA 20, and '72 JMP 50), as well as a Fender Deluxe Reverb, Mesa Mark 5:25, Sound City SC30, and Vox AC10 all maintained their distinct sonic and dynamic signatures when driving into OX at all sorts of different volume and gain settings. It's literally like taking your amplifier collection into a great-sounding room (which can sound two different ways by using the DAMP function), with awesome mics and

hearing them as perhaps you never have. Of course, the app lets you switch speaker cabinets, use different mics and adjust their positions, layer on superb sounding effects, and save these custom sounds in the app and/or to the Rig selector for live or recording situations where you don't want to be toting a computer or tablet. Pack your fave amps and OX Top Box, and now you've got studio-quality

tones at your fingertips with zero hassle. And since all of the outputs are available simultaneously, OX can readily be implemented into a live sound setup, where you'd run your amp though standard cabinets onstage, send a direct feed from the line-outs to a monitor system or the FOH mixer, and maybe use the digital outs to feed a DAW or other device. If you've ever lusted for a 3D soundstage when playing larger rooms, OX can certainly help get you there. OX is a brilliantly engineered device with so many application possibilities, but even if you simply use it to enjoy your tube amps in astonishingly realistic studio environments, there's a mighty good case for owing one. 'Nuff said, I love it!

Kudos Amazing speaker cabinet, microphone, and studio room simulations. Really good load box.

Concerns Required reboots on a couple of occasions.

Contact uaudio.com



Airsonic



Terz



Reverend

Billy Corgan Terz and Airsonic HC

TESTED BY MATT BLACKETT

THERE ARE SO MANY GUITARS introduced at the annual NAMM shows that an editor can be forgiven for “blurring over” a bit when confronted with aisles and aisles of solidbodies, hollowbodies, and acoustics. But Reverend certainly made sure we didn’t space out when we came across two very different models for 2018.

BILLY CORGAN TERZ

Let’s briefly talk about what this guitar is, and then I’d like to get to what I see as the more

important subject: What it *does*. What it is, is a sleek, sexy, short-scale Reverend model made for Billy Corgan, intended to be tuned a minor 3rd above standard (G, C, F, A#, D, G, low to high), to accommodate the many tunes where Corgan capos his guitar at the 3rd fret. It has a single Railhammer humbucker in the bridge and Reverend’s great Bass Contour control to give you way more tonal flexibility than most one-pickup guitars can offer. It sounds great and plays great.

Now for the fun and interesting stuff. I don’t know if you’ve ever tuned a guitar up to F, but I

have, and it was eye-opening to say the least. I’m a huge capo guy, so I’m no stranger to how cool it is to play your same old licks in a higher register. But a guitar tuned higher than standard and a guitar with a capo are *not* the same thing. The open strings don’t ring the same and the dots just aren’t in the right places (yes, I look at them). We all love what happens to guitars when you tune them down (thanks Jimi), but almost no one ever pitches them up, and that’s just not fair. Here’s my take: When tuned higher, guitars become brighter and janglier, your ideas

become more orchestral, and you naturally gravitate towards voicings that are very different from the power-chord ghetto that a lot of us reside in. You let go of the need for low end, and instead, embrace the upper register that is so prevalent with a higher-tuned instrument.

String sections and orchestras do this kind of thing all the time. Why don't guitarists? To a conductor, the idea of an instrument that is pitched a minor third higher makes perfect sense. Heck, they don't even care if you have to write the charts in a different clef. (Sorry, viola players!)

So who is going to want this? I'm guessing that the player in a cover band probably doesn't want to have to transpose "Chain of Fools" to play it on the Terz. But a songwriter/bandleader who is playing original music? Oh yeah. A studio rat who is already a capo junkie and is constantly searching for ways to come up with clever overdubs? Absolutely.

I don't expect we're going to start seeing "guitorchestras" with guitar equivalents of violins, violas, cellos, and basses (not to mention the clarinet and sax families), but that doesn't mean we shouldn't. This is a great idea, beautifully implemented in a fine guitar, and someone is going to embrace it and do crazy stuff with it. Why not you?

Thank you, Reverend, for this bold move. Here's hoping that players take this and run with it.

REVEREND AIRSONIC HC

The first thing you probably noticed about the Airsonic is the presence of thru-body f-holes, and those are a guaranteed conversation piece. Adding to the visual allure are the thinned-out body wings and the sparkly Superior Blue paint. So straight away I'm digging the Airsonic's look

and was eager to check out the tones.

I plugged it into a plexi Marshall profile on a Kemper Profiler and hit a chord. The Railhammer Humcutter bridge pickup, which is a P-90 voiced humbucker, delivered a throaty bark with a detailed snarl. What struck me, though, was the resonance and sustain that the Airsonic's body facilitates. Reverend's website talks about Joe Naylor's dream of marrying the open voice of a semi-hollow with the sustain and immediacy of a solidbody, and you can definitely smell what he's cooking when you dig in with the Airsonic.

My favorite feature on Reverend guitars is the super-musical Bass Contour control, which does a great job of turning a humbucker into a single-coil, with a ton of cool sounds in between. That knob, perched Gretsch-tastically on the upper horn, gives this guitar a huge range of sounds. You get even more bang for the buck when you factor in the treble-bleed circuit on the Volume control, which keeps the tone lively and present as you roll it down. Yes!

The Airsonic rocks a roasted-maple neck, and I don't know what it is about this whole roasted-maple thing, but every guitar I play with a neck like this seems punchier and vibier than other guitars, and this one is no exception. The neck shape is substantial and comfy, and I could reach even the uppermost frets with no prob. There were a couple of tuning anomalies that I had to struggle with—most likely due to the floating whammy—but the Airsonic is a joy to play.

Reverend does its own thing, with no regard to trends, and that's beautiful. Bottom line: If you're looking for a guitar that shows respect for tradition while unabashedly putting a hip new spin on it, plug this thing in. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

CONTACT reverendguitars.com

MODEL Billy Corgan Terz

PRICE \$1,199 street, hard-shell case not included

NUT WIDTH 43mm Boneite

NECK Roasted maple w/medium oval profile

FRETBOARD Roasted maple, 21.5" scale, 12" radius

FRETS 22 medium-jumbo

TUNERS Reverend Pin-Lock

BODY Korina

BRIDGE Hardtail

PICKUPS Railhammer Billy Corgan Bridge

CONTROLS Volume, Tone, Bass Contour, 3-way switch

FACTORY STRINGS D'Addario XL .010-.046

WEIGHT 6.5 lbs.

BUILT Korea

KUDOS Brilliant concept. Super inspiring. Overdubbing secret weapon.

CONCERNS Might be tough to apply in some musical situations.

MODEL Airsonic HC

PRICE \$1,199 street, hard-shell case not included

NUT WIDTH 43mm Boneite

NECK Roasted maple w/medium oval profile

FRETBOARD Roasted maple, 25.5" scale, 12" radius

FRETS 22 medium-jumbo

TUNERS Reverend Pin-Lock

BODY Korina w/thru-body f-holes

BRIDGE Wilkinson WV550 IIK tremolo

PICKUPS Railhammer Humcutters

CONTROLS Volume, Tone, Bass Contour, 3-way switch

FACTORY STRINGS D'Addario XL .010-.046

WEIGHT 7.6 lbs.

BUILT Korea

KUDOS Cool look. Impressive sustain. Broad range of tones.

CONCERNS Minor intonation issues.



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Left to right: Liam "Skin" Tyson, Robert Plant, Billy Fuller, Seth Lakeman, and Justin Adams at Oakland's Fox Theater on February 28, 2018.

TRANSFORMERS

LIAM "SKIN" TYSON AND JUSTIN ADAMS ON THE ACOUSTIC SIDE OF ROBERT PLANT & THE SENSATIONAL SPACE SHIFTERS

BY JIMMY LESLIE

PHOTOGRAPHS BY KERRI LESLIE

"WE CREATE THE SONGS ON OUR ALBUMS INSTRUMENTALLY at first, so you're playing to the unknown," says multifaceted guitarist and acoustic ace Liam "Skin" Tyson, who has been writing and recording with Robert Plant on and off since 2005's *Mighty Rearranger*.

"I didn't get the gig with Plant because of my guitar skills, which are rooted in English punk rock," adds Justin Adams. "I got it for my overall outlook on music. Electric guitar is the

main way I get my ideas across, but I might play a bit of anything from djembe to mandolin in the studio."

Playing with Plant is a dream gig for many reasons, including the beautiful balance of electric and acoustic instruments. Never one to gather moss, Plant's contemporary music—such as that on his latest album, *Carry Fire* [Nonesuch]—is a spell-binding meld of ancient roots influences that span the globe, modern influences that embrace trip hop and rave music, and



pretty much anything else that catches the interest of his band, the Sensational Space Shifters.

Can you detail your acoustic roles in the Sensational Space Shifters?

Adams: In the current show I'm playing the n'goni—which is an African lute—mandolin, a Godin Glissentar, a Gibson J-200 for flatpicking, and a Collings for fingerpicking. I may not be Bukka White or Mississippi John Hurt, but I can play things influenced by the syncopation associated with the Mississippi style. I'm into pumping rhythmic styles, and the links between Mississippi, New Orleans, West Africa, and the Middle East. Skin is a very serious acoustic guitar player. He comes more from the Bert Jansch style with that sense of Celtic lyricism and use of open tunings.

Tyson: I've got quite a lot of acoustic guitars in various tunings on the current tour, including a late '80s Gibson J-45 called "Snappy," because the neck has been snapped off a few times. I have a Gibson Southern Jumbo called "Son of Pacho," tuned *G, G, D, G, B, D* [low to high] for "That's the Way," and a Gibson Songwriter Deluxe Studio tuned to DADGAD for "Rainbow." I've

got two 12-string Martins—a new one and an old one—that I use for "Bluebirds Over the Mountains," "Dancing in Heaven," and sometimes for "That's the Way." The only acoustic I have tuned standard is a Gibson J-35 for "Babe, I'm Gonna Leave You."

Your fingerpicking on "Babe, I'm Gonna Leave You" appears rather vertically-oriented, like a classical player.

Tyson: Well, it depends on the song. If it were a country song, I'd be playing more of that claw style. But to play those rolling trills on the main figure of "Babe" with four or five fingers, you have to have them pointed more downwards. At least I do.

Still, your fingerstyle chops are advanced. Do you have any classical training?

Tyson: No. In the early '90s, I knew a guy that used to spend each summer learning all the chops with Paco de Lucía's son in Spain. They'd go from 9 o'clock in the morning to 9 o'clock at night every day, playing along with the dancers. He showed me how to do some of the trills and tricks, but I've never been classically trained.

You've got some serious fingernails. Are they acrylics?

Tyson: No. They're real. When they split, I just put Super Glue

on them. I tried getting acrylics done, but I couldn't play. It was like having alien fingers.

On the B section of “Babe” when you move the A minor triad up from the first position to the eighth and then sixth positions, how do you execute those flick-style strums?

Tyson: That's a standard flamenco approach. You can start flicking forward with your first finger and follow sequentially with the other fingers. Or, you can start by pulling your pinky back towards your palm, and then follow that with your fingers in reverse order. There's a way to keep the whole flourish rolling continuously by following the first technique with the second, but I haven't gotten it down yet. You can dig in a bit more on nylon strings, but I have to be careful, because I play phosphor-bronze strings, and I could break a nail.

How exactly did you go about learning to play the song, and how did you develop your extended live version?

Tyson: I've always figured songs out by ear. In our live version, we leave the root key of A minor, and go into the key of E minor for a while. It's nothing too spectacular, but once it's amplified with effects, it changes things, and that's how you affect people. One night, I left the effects on by accident, and I started playing these sixteenth-note triplets arpeggiating *Em*, and it has now become a bit we go to in the middle of the song. Otherwise, our arrangement is similar to the Zeppelin version, but we've condensed it down so that there aren't so many verses.

How does your version of “Going to California” compare?

Tyson: My version doesn't include as much alternating thumb in the bass line, and I do it in DADGAD. I never learned the song in Jimmy Page's style, or even studied it much. Robert is not hung up on playing it a particular way. One day he asked if I knew it. I started playing it the way I do, and we were off and running.

Can you give an example of how the songwriting process works in the Sensational



Justin Adams

Space Shifters?

Adams: Well, “Carry Fire” came about when we were experimenting with a North African version of the Bo Diddley beat. Our keyboardist, John Baggott, made a loop, and I was responding on a Godin Glissentar with a mic on the neck to pick up the finger noise while a direct line got the full body sound. Robert was in the control room with a microphone. We improvised for a while, and then we chopped up the improvisation to create the studio arrangement.

What's unique about the Glissentar?

Adams: It's kind of like a cross between a 12-string acoustic guitar and an oud, in that it's a short-scale acoustic/electric instrument strung with 11 nylon strings tuned standard. Unlike a 12-string guitar with octave string couples, the Glissentar uses unison pairs on all but the lowest string. Like an oud, it's fretless, which makes it easy to slide up and down the neck, and it

Guitar Tech Matt Straw on Adams' Acoustic Tones

“From whichever instrument Justin chooses,” says Straw, “the signal hits a Boss TU-3 Chromatic Tuner, and then splits into two outputs. The first signal goes through the electric-guitar pedals to the Victoria Golden Melody 2x12 combo, while the other goes through an L.R. Baggs Venue DI to the house. Justin can use the mute on the Baggs when he's playing electric, and unmute when he plays an acoustic instrument. He doesn't add effects to the acoustics—other than a bit of TC Electronic Alter Ego X4 Vintage Echo—but he does like to have the amp sound available to bolster his acoustic tone.”

Guitar Tech Ian Shepherd on Tyson's Signal Path

"We've got a DPA microphone taped on the inside of the feed-back buster in the soundhole that goes straight to the wireless pack for a completely un-effected acoustic sound," says Shepherd. "Then, the piezo output of each acoustic feeds into the effects rack, where we add delays and reverbs from a Lexicon MX300 and an Alesis Quadraverb. We might use a bit of compression from a Diamond CPR1, or an EarthQuaker Devices The Warden. Upon exiting the rack, a mono signal goes through a direct box to the front of house mixer. Another pair of dual mono lines feed a pair of Stone Deaf STC50 2x12 tube combo amps that he uses, with different gain structures, for all of his electric and acoustic instruments."

facilitates playing the quarter-tones found in Arabic scales.

What scales do you use to create that Eastern vibe?

Adams: The Arabic mode is called "Hijaz," which is comparable to the Phrygian mode. Sometimes, I modulate to another Arabic mode, which is called "Bayati" and includes a quarter-tone. So if you're playing in the key of *E*, as we do on "Carry Fire," there's a note between *F* and *F#*.

How do you hone in on quarter-tones using a fretless instrument?

Adams: It's tricky, and Arabic classical music is very severe, but I play it with a punk rock attitude—in other words, *not* so precise. I recently bought a guitar with some extra frets, and once I'd seen where those in-between notes lie on a fretted neck, it became easier to play them on a fretless. The other aspect is simply ear training. You learn to hear the quarter-tones.

Did you use any interesting recording techniques to capture the acoustic-guitar tones on *Carry Fire*?

Tyson: Tim Holmes engineered both of

our last two albums. This year, he used an interesting technique with two big Neumann tube mics set up on top of each other, with one pointed up, and the other pointed down. The sound he got was giant.

"The May Queen" is another acoustic highlight from the new album. How did that one come together?

Adams: I'd bought a beautiful small-bodied Collins that really sings—I think it's an OM1 T—and I took it down to an open *C* tuning *C, G, C, E, G, C* [low to high]. We were in the studio trying to write a new piece, and I couldn't see into the control room. While I was waiting in between takes, I spent about five minutes fingerpicking the new guitar in the style of Mississippi John Hurt. Suddenly, the talk-back mic came through the headphones, and I could hear everybody clapping and cheering. Robert said, "Right—that's a new song!"

Can you talk a bit about the instruments you play on "Little Maggie" from 2014's *lullaby and... The Ceaseless Roar*?

Adams: I played n'goni, which is a three-stringed African instrument that's basically a broom handle with a box, strings, and a bridge. I put a little pickup on it for amplification. I like to add a touch of delay, and run it through my amp to rock it up a bit. I dial out all the low-end frequencies to get this very percussive sound that I like.

Tyson: I used Justin's old 6-string banjo on that recording. On stage, I use a Gold Tone Banjitar that I play fingerstyle like an acoustic guitar.

Is there anything else you'd like to add about the current acoustic state of the Sensational Space Shifters?

Adams: My new acoustic-guitar element for the live show is using a Gibson J-200 to play rhythm along with the drums. It's very simple, but I love it. It goes all the way back to the British skiffle craze in the '50s. When you've got a J-200, you can just pump cowboy chords, but Robert loves that, because he's so comfortable with the music of Elvis and the Everly Brothers. He just loves that driving acoustic-guitar sound. ■



Liam Tyson

BREEDLOVE LEGACY CONCERTINA E

TESTED BY JIMMY LESLIE



**GuitarPlayer
EDITORS'
PICK**

NEW FOR 2018, BREEDLOVE'S concertina body shape is designed to produce maximum tone and comfort from a parlor-sized instrument. It comes on the heels of last year's bigger-bodied Concerto style, and both new additions fall on either side of Breedlove's original body shape, the mid-sized Concert. The Legacy Series represents the top of Breedlove's standard production instruments featuring all-solid tonewoods and nifty appointments, and the Legacy Concertina E on review features a Sitka spruce top coupled with cocobolo back and sides.

I received the Legacy Concertina on a sunny day, and I was taken aback by how the sunshine illuminated the cocobolo's reddish-brown hues and luxurious,

swirling grains. Other eye-catchers include a brilliant Legacy Knot soundhole rosette and a similar inlay at the 12th fret. A slotted headstock with open-gear, nickel-plated Gotoh tuners adds an old-world touch to the Legacy Concertina's classically inspired aesthetic.

The body is as comfortable as it is attractive. I'm a small-bodied dude, and the Concertina felt tailor-made for me. The guitar is actually on the heavy side for its size, but its balance felt right no matter how I changed my stance. When seated, I was easily able to wrap my arms around its whole body, which seemed slightly narrower at the hips and shoulders and shallower than other 12-fretters I've tried.

Whopping tone from a petite body is truly the story of the Legacy Concertina. This pequeño señorita delivers big bottom end that's articulate, not boomy. The mids are strong without being woofy, and the top end is smooth and never brittle. According to Breedlove, cocobolo is the densest tonewood they use, and due to their "sound optimization" process, they are able to cut it thin enough to use for the back and sides. Whatever they're doing, it clearly works.

With 12 thinnish frets to the body, medium-high action over them, and ample string spacing, the Legacy Concertina excels to the utmost when finger-picked in styles ranging from classical to folk to Delta blues, but it's so resonant that you'll want to strum plenty as well. You can really wail away at the Concertina with a plectrum, and the guitar thrives sonically.

The little Legacy Concertina E delivers big-time on Breedlove's promise of exceptional depth and power from a parlor-sized instrument, and its amplified sound is equally surprising. Discretely tucked away in the soundhole, the L.R. Baggs Anthem Tru-Mic pickup and preamp system sounded

huge and articulate through a Baggs Synapse Personal P.A.

Acoustic or electrified, the Breedlove Legacy Concertina is a bold little beauty, worthy of discerning players, yet financially reasonable considering its innovative design and clean, quality craftsmanship. **A**

CONTACT breedlovemusic.com

Legacy Concertina Natural Shadow E Sitka Spruce-Cocobolo

PRICE	\$3,099 street
NUT WIDTH	1.75" Bone
NECK	Honduran mahogany
FRETBOARD	Ebony, 25" Scale
FRETS	18
TUNERS	Gotoh 700, nickel-plated
BODY	Cocobolo back and sides, Sitka spruce top
BRIDGE	African ebony
ELECTRONICS	L.R. Baggs Anthem Tru-Mic System
CONTROLS	Volume, Tone
FACTORY STRINGS	D'Addario EXP16 Coated Phosphor Bronze Light
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CONCERNS	None.



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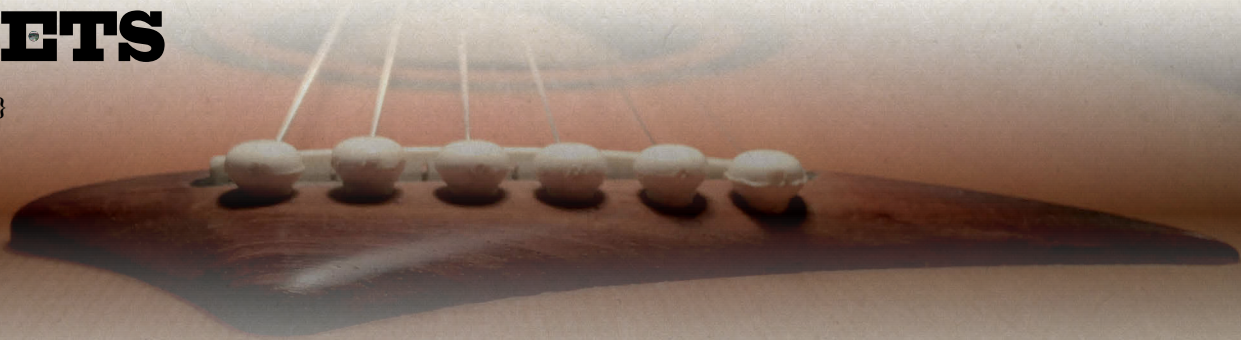
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Acoustic Components Then and Now

BY JIMMY LESLIE

IN THIS CLASSIC-ROCK THEMED ISSUE, WE THOUGHT it would be interesting to take a look at acoustic guitar components common to that era, and compare them to modern components. In some instances, the song remains similar or the same, in other cases, massive ch-ch-ch-changes!

TUNERS

Located on the headstock, tuning machines or “machine heads” are geared mechanisms designed to raise and lower string tension. Tuning machines were traditionally made out of die-cast metal with tuning keys or “buttons” made of either molded plastic or metal, and that’s still standard—although lighter options made of aluminum or titanium are now available. Some modern tuners include graphite designed to reduce friction. Open-gear tuners expose the gears inside. They were popular before classic rock, and have enjoyed recent resurgence. Locking machine heads include a device to fasten the gears in place, and are more common on electric guitars with tremolo systems.

Gear ratio is a huge factor. Old tuners often had lower ratios, while high-end modern tuners may run ratios as high as 21:1—meaning it takes 21 turns of the key for the post or “capstan” to complete a single revolution. The reward for that is a fine-tuning experience, and, once in tune, very little slippage or “backlash.” The cutting edge of tuner ratio technology lies in sets that vary greatly from string to string, rather than sticking to a single ratio for the whole set. The concept is to optimize the ratio at each string position, thereby creating a more consistent response from string to string.

NUT

The nut is a grooved sliver between the neck and the headstock that the strings pass through, and it is essentially the top end point for string vibration. Dense materials work well, and a quality acoustic from before rock’s classic period likely had a bone nut, while a cheaper model might have had a nut made of plastic—which isn’t great because of its softness. Manufacturers such as Martin started using synthetic bone substitutes such as micarta during the ’60s. Bone nuts are still popular, and a modern Martin D-28, for example, is still equipped with a bone nut, but huge advancements in “self lubricating” synthetics such as Tusq have led leading manufacturers to include them on many of their high-end acoustics. NuBone is a similar but more affordable synthetic. Arguments

can be made about the organic sound of bone versus the high-def, consistent tone of synthetics, but there’s no doubt about synthetics being generally more affordable.

BRIDGE

The wooden plate anchoring the strings to the body is super important to an acoustic’s tone because it transmits string vibrations to the guitar. Quality classic acoustic bridges were made out of tonewoods such as ebony and rosewood. That’s still true today.

SADDLE

The saddle transmits vibrations to the bridge, which, in turn, transmits them to the top and body. The saddle is a strip of hard material set into the bridge, and the chronology of saddle materials is similar to the nut, as is the tonal conversation. Regardless of material, the saddle’s job is to support the strings at their appropriate height and angle. “Compensating” the saddle fine-tunes it according to the optimal length for each string’s intonation. Compensations consist of carving away at either side of the saddle in order to adjust the point at which the string breaks over it. Carving the saddle on the side nearest the soundhole microtonally lengthens the string, lowering its pitch, while doing so on the other side has the opposite effect. Most acoustics from the classic-rock era did not have compensated saddles, but it’s standard equipment on most modern acoustics.

BRIDGE PINS

Bridge pins secure the strings behind the saddle, and they are integral to smooth sonic flow. Classic-era bridge pins were generally made of bone, wood, or plastic, and while those materials are still popular, materials on offer these days include synthetics, as well as metals such as brass, aluminum, and titanium designed to deliver modern aesthetics, as well as bell-like tone enhancement and greater sustain.

ENDPIN

The post where the back end of the guitar strap connects has become increasingly significant over time as more acoustics come with onboard electronics, and the endpin often doubles as the output jack for a guitar cable. That can mean a different shaped endpin, so it’s worth checking to make sure that the strap you’re considering has a hole that fits. ■

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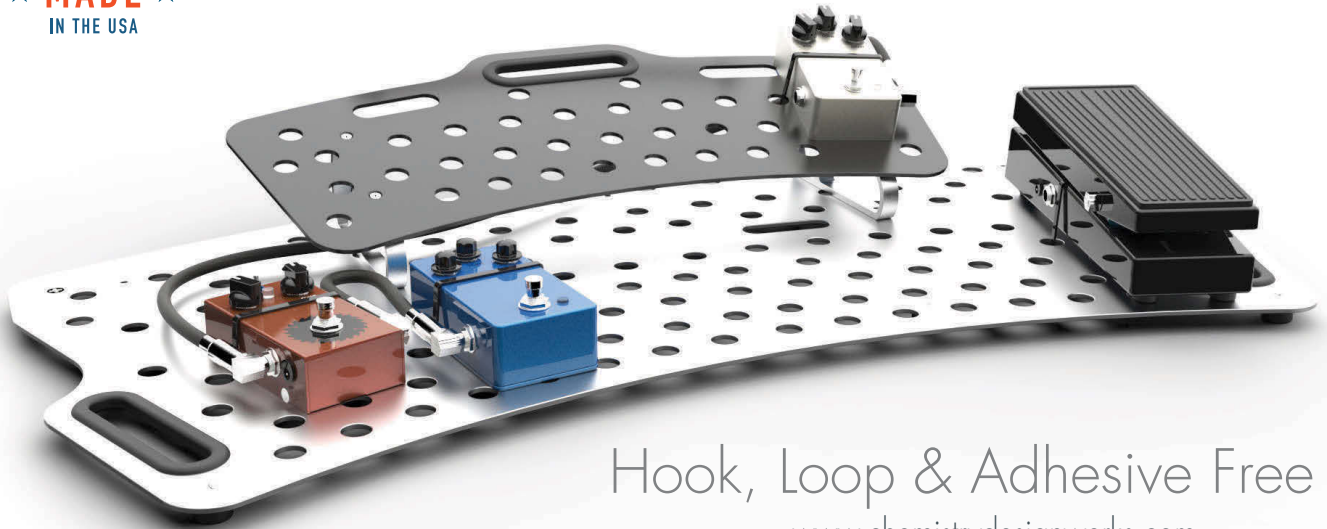


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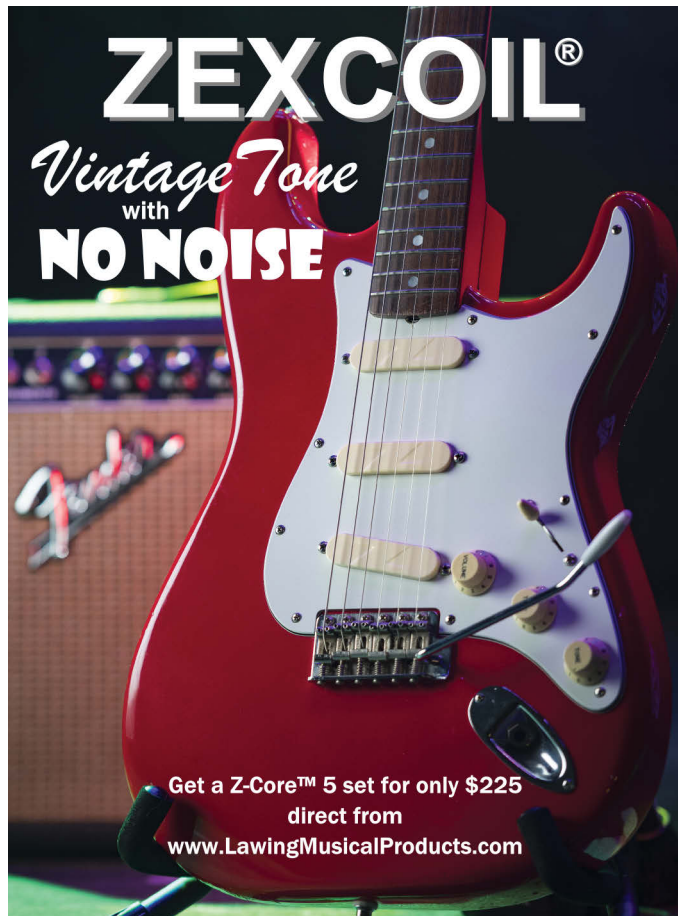
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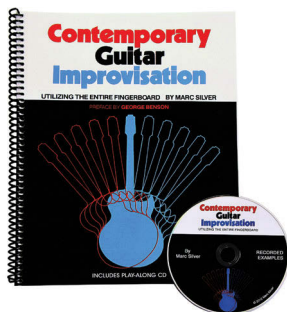
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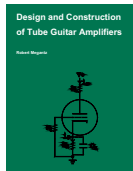


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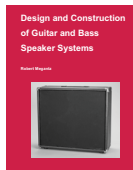
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Joan Jett

Five Acts of Legend

> She was a founding member of the Runaways in 1975. Sven-gali Kim Fowley marketed them as jailbait puppets, but the aggro girl power—and creativity—couldn't be constrained.

> Sex Pistols Paul Cook and Steve Jones joined her in 1979 to record a version of the Arrows' "I Love Rock and Roll." In 1982, Jett's reworking with the Blackhearts sat atop the Billboard Hot 100 for seven weeks.

> Not content with just being a rock star, she is a champion for animal rights and vegan living.

> She became Gibson's first female artist honored with a signature guitar—the Joan Jett Melody Maker—in 2008.

> The scrappy and gritty guitarist made the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2015.



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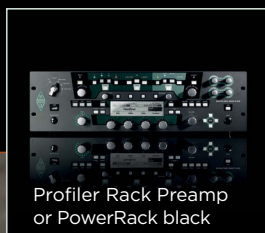
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