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THE
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ISSUE!**LEARN**

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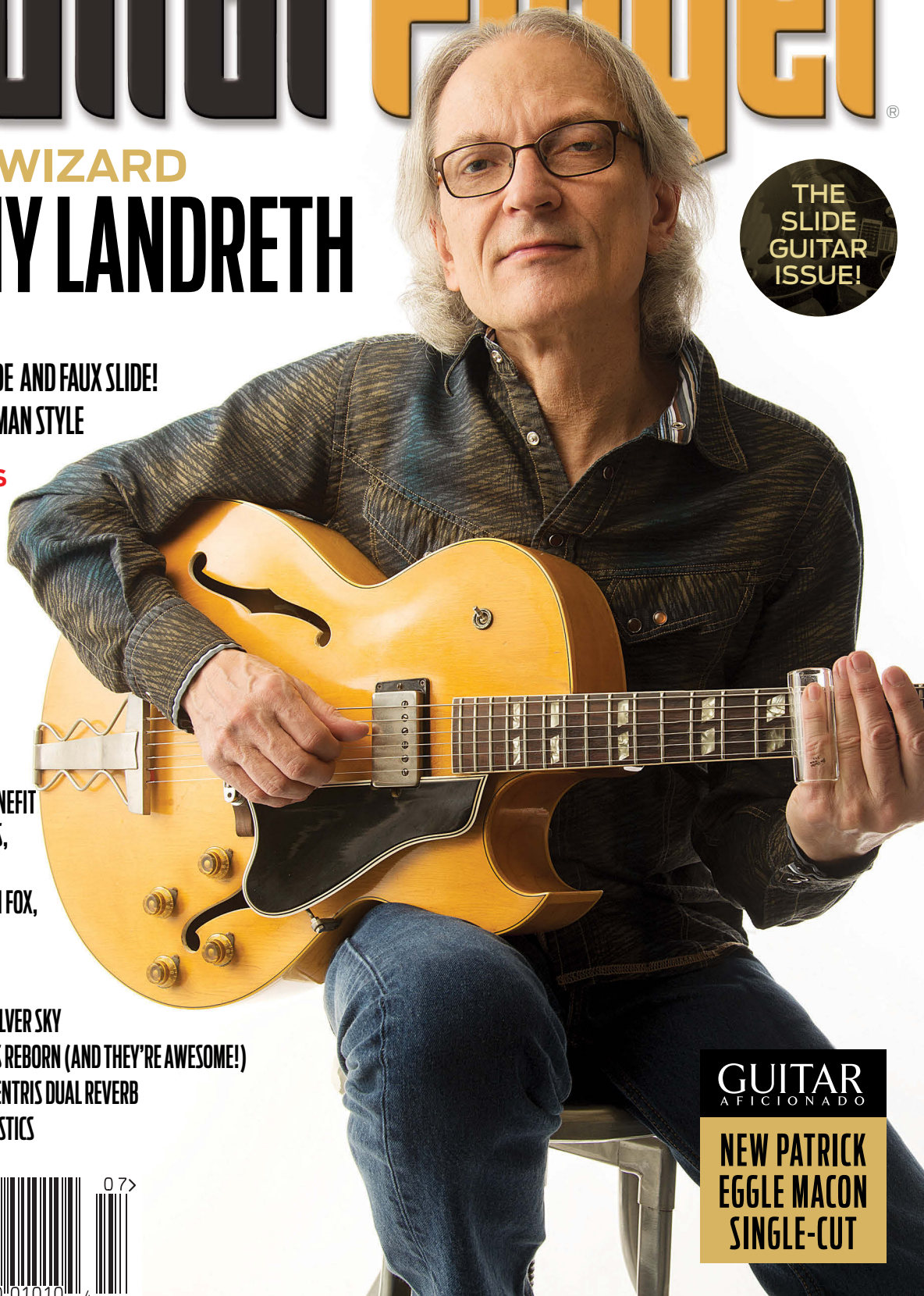
JOE GOLDMARK

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WITH ANDY SUMMERS,
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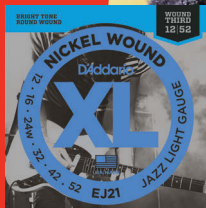


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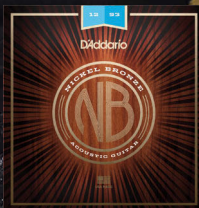
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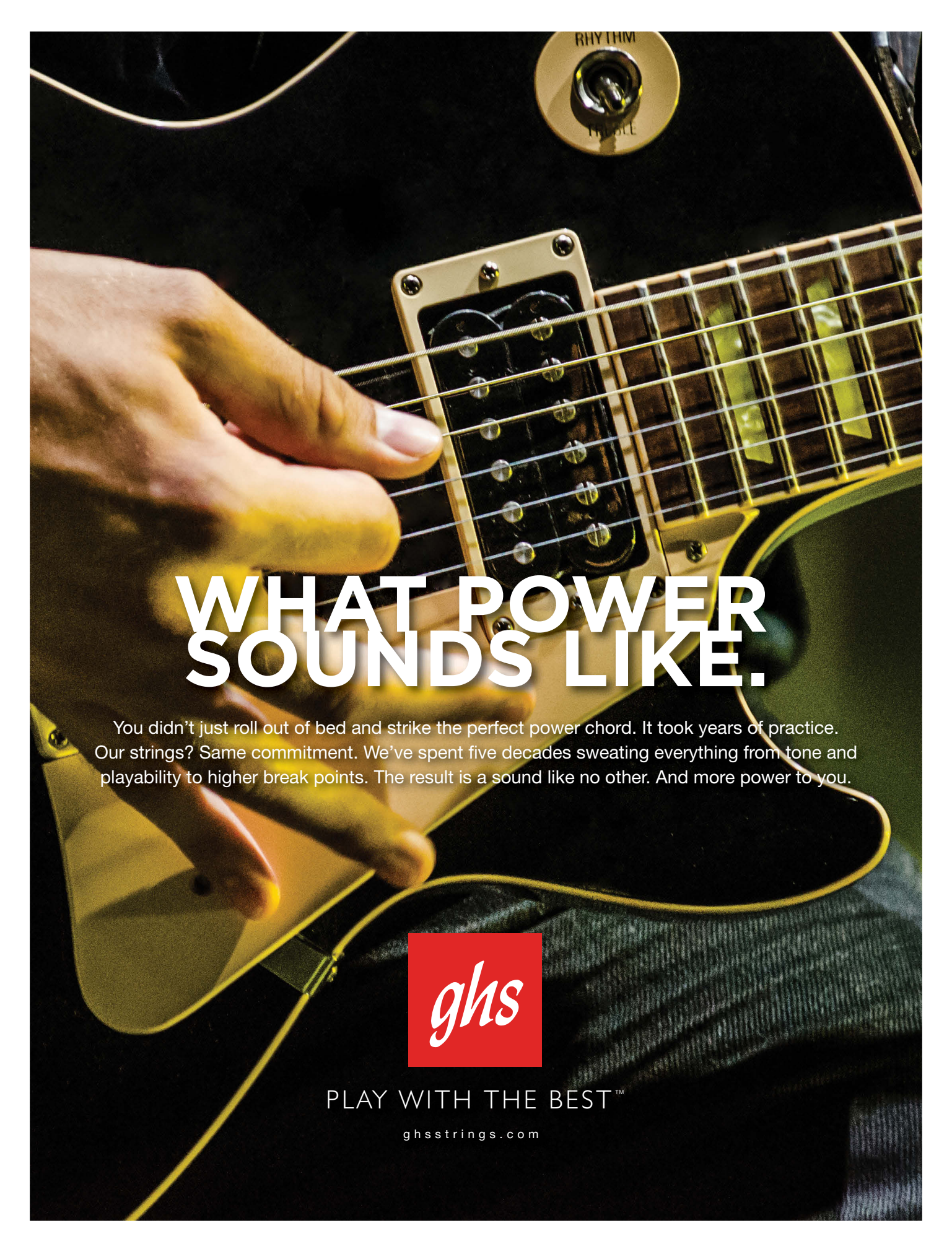
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{ From The Editor }

THIS IS THE LAST NOIZE I WILL BE WRITING AS EDITOR IN CHIEF OF *Guitar Player*. I have viewed these past 21 years as a tremendous joy and responsibility, and I have never taken it for granted that I work for *you*. My job as your humble servant and steward of a beloved 51-year-old brand has been to educate, entertain, challenge, evolve, evangelize, seek out talent and promote it, evaluate new products, and keep the *GP* staff happy and inspired to do its best for our readers. I have loved every minute of this job.

I have valued and respected all of your criticisms—the constructive ones, as well as the angry and abusive ones—because that just meant you cared deeply about the magazine. I have met every famous musician I could have ever imagined meeting, and I got to spend a lot of time hanging out with readers. I really enjoy face-to-face interactions with people as nuts about guitar as I am.

When I bought my first *Guitar Player* in the early '70s at a local music shop in San Francisco's Sunset District, I would never have dared hope that I would get the incredible opportunity to be its editor one day. I really got to live a "wow" kind of life for more than two decades, and for that gift I thank Ed Sengstack and Ross Garnick (the publishing team that originally brought me to *GP* in 1997), as well as Pat Cameron, Dominic Milano, Joe Gore, Jas Obrecht, James Rotondi, Lonni Gause, Andy Ellis, Rich Leeds, Cynthia Smith, and everyone on the then-Miller Freeman team who agreed to invite me into their magnificent playground.

But as the cliché says—and the cliché is spot-on in this case—"all good things must come to an end."

Future Publishing purchased NewBay on April 3, 2018, and after reviewing challenging financial prospects for the music group, several employees were made redundant. I was one of them. Future runs a lot of magazines, and they already have a ton of editorial resources in place, so it certainly made good business sense to tighten up. I won't try to pretend it wasn't a shock, but it wasn't personal at all, and I'd rather see the four brands I have directed for many years flourish in a leaner business model, than collapse under the weight of their operating expenses.

That said, there are no words to define the emotional and creative black hole I'm facing by no longer working with the brilliant staffers who produce these magazines: Art Thompson, Paul Haggard, Jimmy Leslie, Patrick Wong, Barbara Schultz, Chris Jisi, Jon D'Auria, Gino Robair, Matt Blackett, Jude Gold, Jesse Gress, Dave Hunter, Michael Ross, Jimmy Brown, and all of our columnists and writers.

I wish the Future team and every employee who is continuing onward nothing but goodwill and success. I'll watch *Guitar Player* and the other brands grow and prosper from the sidelines—no less emotionally involved, but more like a parent watching a child play soccer, than the dude who puts on the cleats and takes the field.

Of course, I'm not done yet. I love writing. I love the guitar. I love the music industry. I dig gear. I adore creative collaboration and planning content strategies. I'm still a big kid with big dreams, and, as a great friend was kind enough to tell me when I was feeling a bit down, "You're an industry icon with a huge following of musicians and manufacturers—keep doing stuff for them!"

So I will. I'll pop up somewhere, and continue my crusade to evangelize the guitar. If you want to keep in touch, please follow me on Facebook, or contact me through my personal email at gpeditor@gmail.com. I've decided to keep the "gpeditor" appellation like a retired colonel. I think I've earned it. Hahaha.

Guitar Player

Vol. 52 No. 7

JULY 2018

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CONTENT

EDITOR IN CHIEF Michael Molenda,
michael.molenda@futurenet.com

MANAGING EDITOR Patrick Wong,
patrick.wong@futurenet.com

SENIOR EDITOR Art Thompson,
arthur.thompson@futurenet.com

LOS ANGELES EDITOR Jude Gold, judegold@gmail.com
FRETS SECTION EDITOR Jimmy Leslie, jl@jimmyleslie.com

LESSONS EDITOR Jimmy Brown,
james.brown@futurenet.com

CONSULTING EDITORS Matt Blackett, Jim Campilongo,
Jesse Gress, Dave Hunter, Michael Ross

SENIOR DESIGN DIRECTOR Paul Haggard

MUSIC COPYIST Elizabeth Ledgerwood

PRODUCTION MANAGER Beatrice Weir

ADVERTISING SALES

US CHIEF REVENUE OFFICER Luke Edson
luke.edson@futurenet.com

ADVERTISING DIRECTOR Jonathan Brudner
jonathan.brudner@futurenet.com, (917) 281-4721

ADVERTISING DIRECTOR Mari Deetz marl.
deetz@futurenet.com, (650) 238-0344

ADVERTISING DIRECTOR Jeff Donnerwerth
jeff.donnerwerth@futurenet.com, (212) 378-0466

ADVERTISING DIRECTOR Jason Perl
jason.perl@futurenet.com, (646) 723-5419

ADVERTISING DIRECTOR Scott Sciacca scott.
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MANAGING DIRECTOR: Julian March

CHIEF OPERATIONS OFFICER: Aaron Asadi

GROUP CONTENT DIRECTOR: Paul Newman

COMMERCIAL FINANCE DIRECTOR: Dan Jotcham

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Chief executive: Zillah Byng-Thorne
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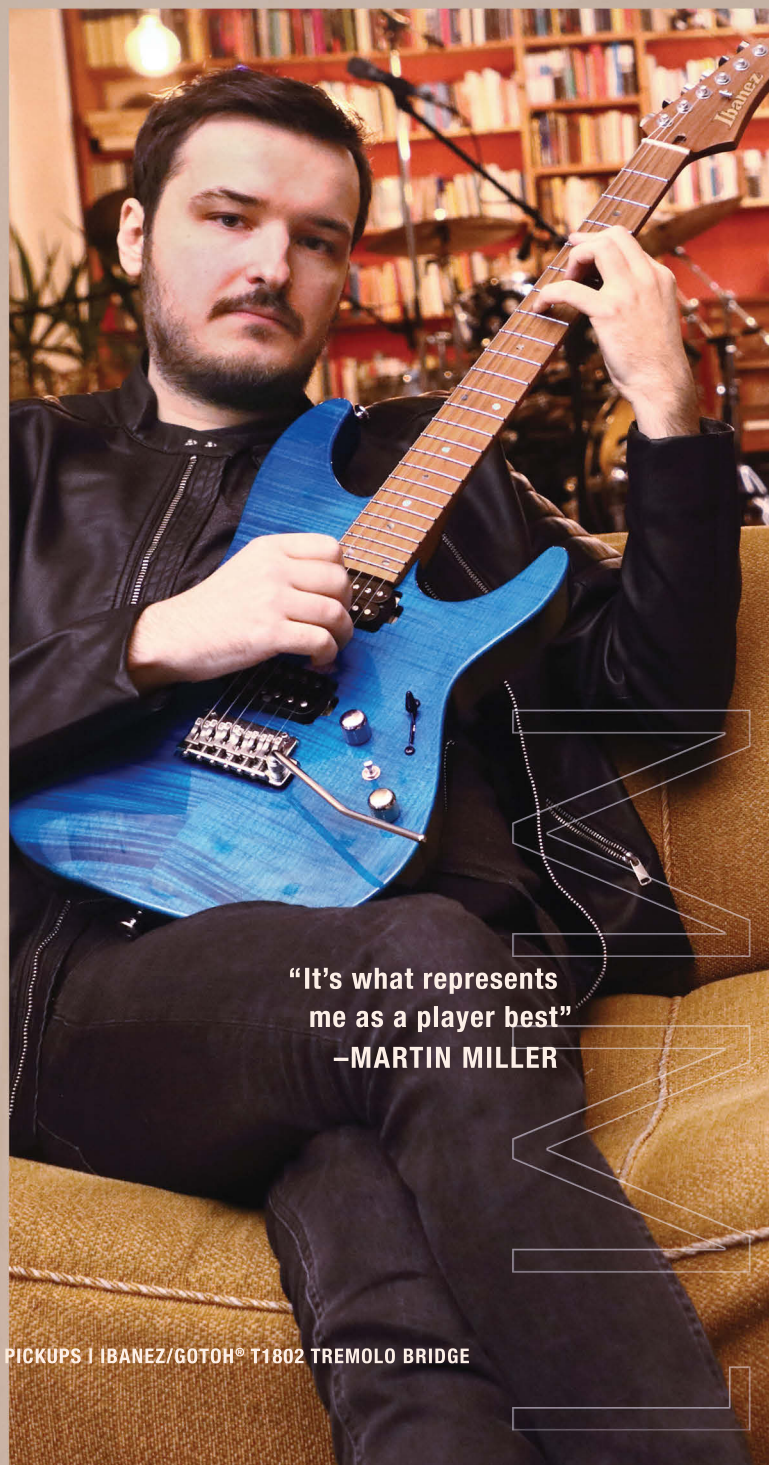
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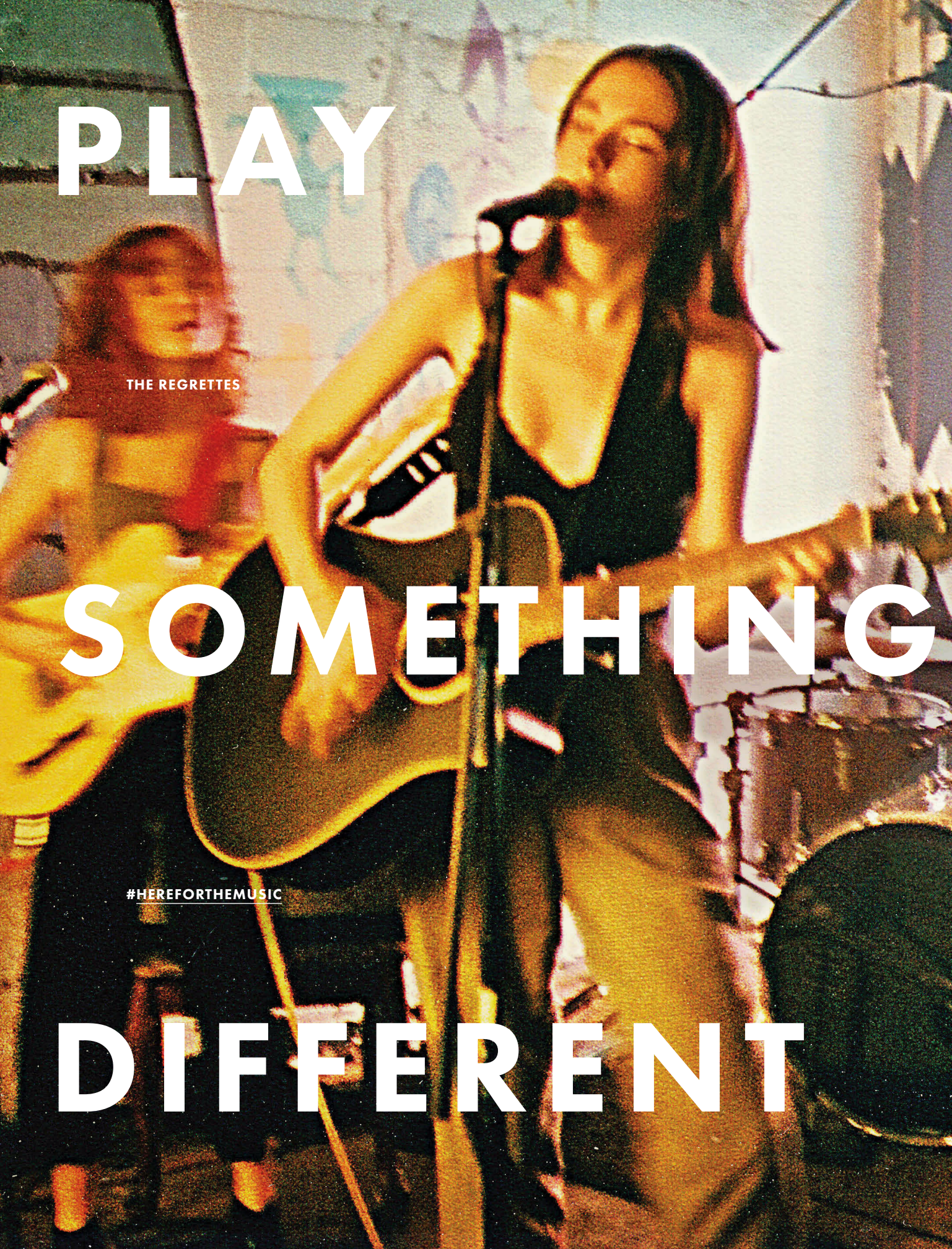


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JULY 2018
VOLUME 52
NUMBER 7

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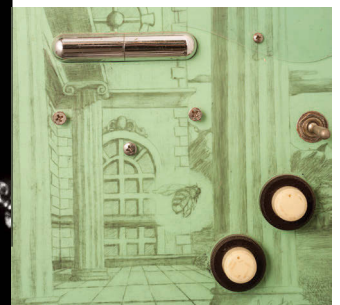
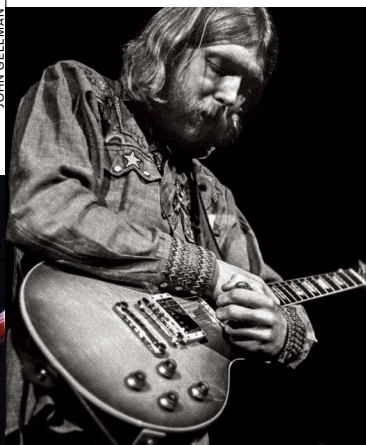
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Vinyl Treasures

DIANE ROSENFELD



JOHN GELLMAN



Cover Photo by **Greg Miles**

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HERO

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OPENING NOTES

Raid Dana's Gear Stash!

Thanks to **Radial Engineering** for generously contributing two of their rockin' pedals for this month's giveaway. The **JDX Direct Drive** acts as an amp/speaker simulator and a direct box—a great tool for fly gigs or touring players who don't want their tone compromised by a less-than-awesome backline. The **Texas Pro** is a versatile overdrive with a Boost function and a handy Range switch that lets you toggle between Vintage, Modern, or Maximum drive.

For a chance to put one of these pedals on *your* pedalboard, simply send an email to nbmgearcoordinator@gmail.com with "Radial" in the subject line. Two lucky winners will be chosen at random. The deadline for entries is July 20, 2018. Please keep in mind that all gear has been previously tested by *GP* editors, and is "as-is." This is simply a fun way for us to spoil our readers. Now, raid my stash! —DANA PARKER



Peer Comment



Time Traveling

I had to reach out to you and comment on the Andy Fuchs article "Time Traveler" in the April 2018 issue. Great, great story! Yes, it's personal, but isn't our relationship with the guitar very personal? We are not talking about washing machines here. The guitar brings us and others joy and tears. Andy's story brought out both in me. I really wish there could be some more articles like this in the magazine. Personal stories connect us in a way—sometimes, we've been there and done that. We know the feeling. Please extend my thanks to Andy for telling us his story about his Philip Interdonati archtop guitar.

By the way, I was your Tal Farlow connection in the '90s. I studied with him and wrote a couple of articles and a Tal lesson. I'm still out in the trenches playing jazz and bottleneck. —

PETE WAGULA

Missing Steel

I used to be a steel-guitar student, but I never managed to become a steel guitar professional, due to the cost of pedal steels. But I used to love reading the steel-guitar articles in *Guitar Player*. I haven't seen any such articles of late. Has *GP* bid them a fond adieu, and carried on writing about guitars—electric and steel string with a few classical guitar players thrown in as they come to the attention of the editorial team? —WESLEY PARISH



*Hi Wesley—Hopefully, you have this issue in your hands, as we have a great interview with pedal-steel player Joe Goldmark by Vinnie DiMasi. We try not to ignore any styles, instruments, or players, but, at times, it is difficult being completely comprehensive in our coverage. All readers should feel more than welcome to email me at michael.molenda@futurenet.com if *GP* "goes dark" on any guitar subjects you want to see in the magazine. We certainly don't mean to forget anyone or anything, and a helpful reminder from the community is always a great way to keep us on track.* —MICHAEL MOLEND

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MICHAEL MOLEND

Editor In Chief
michael.molenda@futurenet.com



ART THOMPSON

Senior Editor
arthur.thompson@futurenet.com



PATRICK WONG

Managing Editor
patrick.wong@futurenet.com



JUDE GOLD

Los Angeles Editor
judegold@gmail.com



JIMMY LESLIE

Frets Editor
jl@jimmysleslie.com



DAVE HUNTER

Gear Section & Video Contributor
dhunterwordsmusic@yahoo.com



PAUL HAGGARD

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OPENING
NOTES

New Gear

BY PATRICK WONG



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fralinpickups.com

Framus D-Series Electric Guitars \$899-\$1,199 street

The D-Series is based on Framus' Teambuilt German Pro Series and Custom Shop models. The six models come with pickups manufactured by Seymour Duncan and fretboards made of tiger-stripe ebony. Warwick Security Locks, Cleartone Strings, and a Deluxe RockBag are included with every model. (Diablo Pro pictured.) framus.de

SlideWinder Ring \$75 street

The ring allows players to duplicate slide-guitar sounds while keeping all fingers free to use. The device utilizes a rare-earth magnet to interact with the electric guitar strings, creating a "floating fret."
slidewinderring.com

Ernie Ball Braided Instrument Cables \$36-\$39 street

These cables are available in nine colors and are 25 feet in length. Multiple shielding materials preserve the signal with low-handling noise, and the braided exterior provides tangle-resistant performance. (Black/Green pictured.) ernieball.com

La Bella Bender Electric Guitar Strings \$5.99 street

La Bella re-introduces its vintage Benders, using the same string-construction methods from the '60s and '70s—including the exact formulation of nickel used in the original strings. Available in nine different gauges. labella.com

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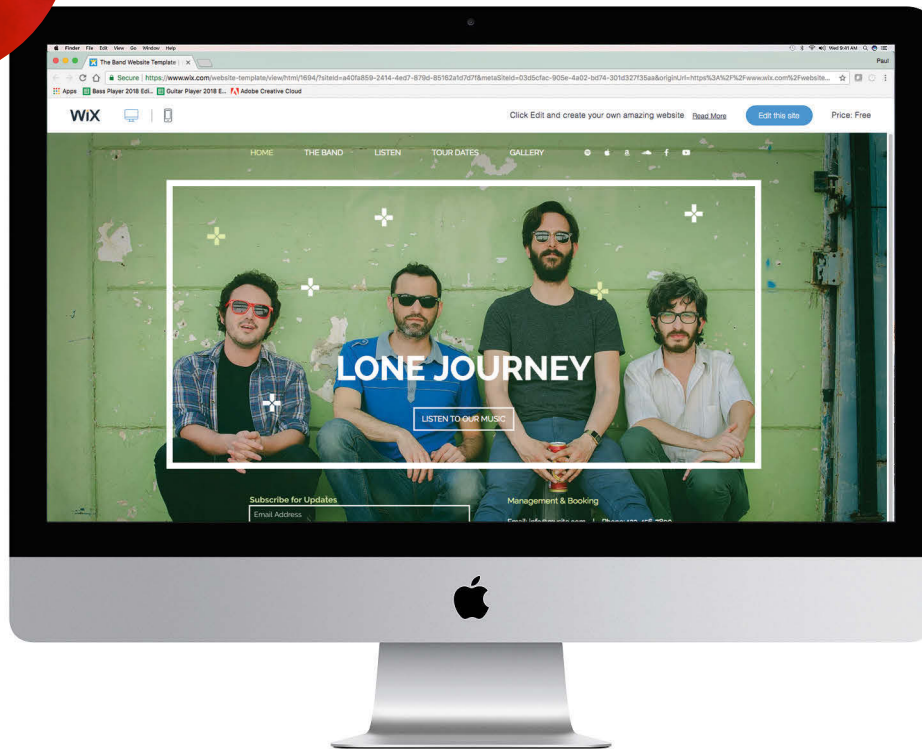


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Social Media Marketing

It All Starts with a Website

BY MATT GIBSON

IF YOU ARE A MUSICIAN, YOU ALREADY know that social media is a way to get your music in front of other people. That said, if you are like most musicians I know, you could probably use a little coaching to ensure you are meeting your music-marketing goals. Whether it's Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, or Instagram, it takes a serious time commitment to stay on top of what you *should* do on social media, and it seems like the rules and algorithms change daily! Here are some tips for your own "music and content distribution system."

Rule #1 of social-media marketing: Get a website. Now. You need to build your media empire around a website that you own and control, because—very important—you must collect the contact information of your fans. Think about it: If the social network collapses—remember Myspace?—you'll still have a way to communicate with and sell product to your supporters.

Here are the elements and tasks that your website should provide a (hopefully) growing audience.

- > Collect emails and directly communicate with fans.
- > Tell Your story. Write blog posts that tell fans about you and your values.
- > Show people your accomplishments. Link to interviews and accolades.
- > Sell products and services: music, merch, and lessons.
- > Use social sharing tools to promote your content.
- > Give fans an easy way to get ahold of you directly with a contact and booking page.
- > Share your appearance schedule—tour and/or speaking dates.
- > Include an electronic press kit and a bio.
- > Present professional-looking photos and videos that amplify your story.

There are many ways to build a professional website containing all of the above elements.

> Hire a web designer and make a custom site. This will be expensive but it should look great.

> Build it yourself using one of the many website construction sites out there.

If you haven't constructed a professional website for your music endeavors before, this may seem a bit daunting at first. Happily, there are tons of educational resources you can find via a Google or Bing search that will teach you how to do pretty much everything. If you need advice, website tools, or tutorials, check out my Kingdom of Rock artist resource page at kingdomofrock.com/artistresources.

Matt Gibson is the host of the Kingdom of Rock podcast, and Director of Marketing and Public Relations at EVO Band Apps. 🎸

Shinola Canfield

On-Ear Headphones

TESTED BY MICHAEL MOLENDRA

IT MAY BE A MARKETING AND MANUFACTURING conglomerate, but I still love the whole Shinola Detroit concept—its revival of a vintage brand, its restoration of factory jobs to a once-powerful city of sweat and iron and American dreams, and its retro take on lifestyle products. It's no surprise the Canfield On-Ear Headphones (\$350 street) look lush, warmly techy with a dash of John Wayne cool (especially the silver/cognac model, as tested), and fashion forward. The brand made its bones producing stunning designs for hipsters, so if you want to strut some rock and roll attitude while actually *listening* to rock and roll, these are absolutely the headphones to glam you right up.

Yes, they are expensive, and, yes, if you want critical-listening headphones for mixing tracks, you should probably invest in a studio-quality reference model. The Canfield is not particularly accurate or transparent, but, to be fair, neither are the ultra-popular Beats headphones. What you do get is a very comfortable headphone and a pleasant listening experience. High frequencies are clear, though not airy or dimensional. Midrange frequencies lack punch, but they are articulate, and the low end is a tad flat. There's little butt shakin'



going on, but no woofiness or boomy bass, either.

But let's face it—you're going to look good while boppin' to your fave jams. And if you're the type to go for the flashy Corvette over the serviceable Ford Escort, then you're not going to worry

whether you've overspent for the

level of audio quality the Canfield provides. What's more rock and roll than that?

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Slide Characteristics

BY ART THOMPSON

SLIDES ARE TYPICALLY MADE FROM

glass, metal, or ceramic, and every slide has certain qualities that might be preferable for a particular application. "Application" is the key word here, as, for example, a heavier slide tends to work best on a guitar with fatter strings and tall action, while a lighter, thinner-walled slide is usually better for guitar with skinnier strings and low action. The style of music and type of guitar you play are obviously important factors in choosing the right slide, so try different types and see how they work for you. Whatever you pick, make sure it fits your finger snugly and doesn't fall off when your hand is pointing south, but not so tight that you can't slip it off easily—especially if you like to switch between slide and fingers in different sections of a song. Here are a few things to consider about how a slide's size, shape, and material affect tone:

THICKNESS

In general, thinner slides offer better control because they are lighter and they keep your finger closer to the strings. If you're a beginner, start thin and work your way up. Thick slides can be harder to control, making it easy to "overshoot" the targeted fret when sliding around the neck—although they tend to produce a fatter sound, and are the way to go if your guitar's setup has been optimized for slide with higher action and heavier-gauge strings.

SHAPE

Most slides are basically straight tubes, but some have a flared shape that can help your vibrato and make it easier to navigate different neck shapes and fretboard arcs. A flared profile can also minimize buzzing and allow for easier angling when playing in non-open tunings. Then there are domed slides, which have a rounded surface on one end and may



have certain benefits for players who like to finger notes behind the slide.

GLASS

If you've ever played slide with a Coricidin bottle (or the Dunlop model 272 equivalent), you can thank Duane Allman for bringing thin glass to masses—although he certainly wasn't the first to use a medicine bottle for slide playing. Glass is the material of choice if you want a smooth feel and warm tone with lots of harmonics. Glass slides are available in a wide variety of styles and thicknesses, and along with glass, Pyrex, and borosilicate, some are crafted from recycled wine, brandy, and olive oil bottles. Thicknesses can range down to 4mm, so be careful not to drop a thin-walled slide while walking to the stage. Good advice if you're going with glass is to pack a spare.

METAL

Brass or steel slides typically deliver a harder, brighter tone, which might be the ticket if you want more edge in your sound. However, metal slides that are highly polished and/or have chromed surfaces can be good choices if you want a little more heft than glass provides, and don't want to worry about breakage. There are also metal slides with multi-point interior gripping—like that of sockets used

for working on machinery—and these might be preferable in some cases over a smooth-walled slide.

CERAMIC

Glazed porcelain falls somewhere between glass and metal and can be a great alternative for some players. The scientific rap is that sound from the glazed surface travels into the underlying porcelain, producing a tone that is actually brighter than glass, but smoother than metal.

BOTTOM LINE

There are no rules when it comes to choosing a slide. Try as many as you can and see what works best. Slides are relatively inexpensive, so pick up a few and see what sticks after using them for a while. There is also a wealth of information about slides from the websites of manufacturers such as D'Andrea, Diamond Bottlenecks, Ernie Ball, Fender, Jim Dunlop, Latch Lake, Mudslide, Planet Waves, Rocky Mountain, Rock Slide, and Steve Clayton. And, if all else fails, get an empty bottle of Mateus Rosé or a piece of motorcycle handlebar and make your own custom slide! 🎸

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Easy Mods to Get Your Guitar Rev'd Up for Slide

BY ART THOMPSON

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARCO VAN ROOIJEN

PLAYING SLIDE ON A STANDARD guitar with low action and skinny strings isn't the optimal way to enjoy the slide experience, however, making a guitar more slide friendly is a pretty easy process for anyone with even minimal DIY skills. Here are some things to consider if you want to optimize a guitar for slide.

THE INSTRUMENT

An inexpensive acoustic or electric guitar is ideal for converting to slide, and you may find that you'll get more use out of it than you would by keeping it in standard configuration. Also, a cheap ax will often sound rawer and more lo-fi as a result of its construction and pickups, which can actually be a benefit when it comes to slide tone. Just think of what electric blues players had at their disposal back in the 1950s!

ACTION

Raising the action is the first order of business if you are making a dedicated slide guitar, but it doesn't necessarily take a lot of height increase to keep the slide from rattling against

the frets. On an electric guitar you can adjust the bridge and/or the saddle to get the strings high enough off the deck for a clear slide sound, while still keeping the action comfortable for playing with fingers. Raising the action on an acoustic or electric can also be done by using an inexpensive nut raiser, which slips over the stock nut to elevate the strings. Choices here include Grover's GP1103 Perfect Guitar Nut Height Extender (\$5.99 street) and the Golden Gate Resonator Guitar Extension Nut (\$7.95 street).

STRINGS

The general wisdom says that bigger strings equal bigger sound, but there are no rules regarding string gauge for slide guitar. Use what feels right, and if a lighter-gauge set suits your preference you're in good company. For example, slide master Derek Trucks strings both his Gibson SG and his resonator guitars with the same custom gauge DR nickel-wound set, which runs 011, .014, .017, .026, .036, and .046. 'Nuff said!

TUNING

Open tunings are where it's at when it comes to slide, and the most popular tunings for blues and rock are *E, D, G*, and *A*. Derek Trucks plays almost exclusively in open *E* (*E, B, E, G $\sharp$, B, E* low to high), while Sonny Landreth often bottlenecks in open *G* (*D, G, D, G, B, D* low to high). The legendary Delta blues guitarist Robert Johnson used open *G* tuning for many of his greatest songs, such as "Crossroad Blues," "Walkin' Blues," and "Come On in My Kitchen."

PICKUPS

There are no definites about pickups when it comes to slide either. Bonnie Raitt gets a beautiful tone via her stock Strat pickups, and so does George Thorogood with the P-90s in his Gibson ES-125. Johnny Winter famously used a Gibson Firebird with mini humbuckers, as well as an Erlewine Lazer guitar with a humbucker in the bridge position and a single-coil in the neck. With so many aftermarket pickups available from Seymour Duncan, DiMarzio, Jason Lollar, Lindy Fralin, TV Jones, and others, it certainly behooves one to try different types and see what sounds best through your rig. ■

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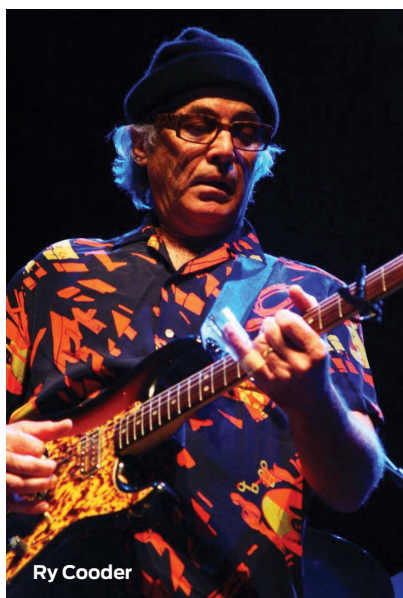
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Slide Strategies of the Masters

BY THE GP STAFF

IN MORE THAN FIVE DECADES OF publishing, *Guitar Player* has covered a lot of slide players, as well as dedicated a smattering of issues as slide-guitar specials. For our slide theme this year, we figured, “Why keep all of those great tips in the back-issue archives?” So here’s some knowledge from the



Ry Cooder



Bonnie Raitt

’90s—culled from the *GP* staff’s wonderful slide extravaganzas of November 1992, August 1994, and March 1999, and via interviews by Jas Obrecht, Chris Gill, Andy Ellis, and Dave Whitehill. We’ve also included a tidbit from Bonnie Raitt’s first *GP* cover story in May 1977 by Patricia Brody. Hopefully, these ten quick tips will inspire you whether you’re just considering learning to play slide, or have been sliding for years. Now, let’s meet the maestros...

LOSE THE PICKS

“Consider the beauty of the hands. What we’ve got here is an amazing tool. Flatpick—throw it away. Thumbpick—I’d say throw it away, because every time you hit the string, you are, in effect, *stopping* it, as well. Learn to feel the string with your skin. Gabby Pahinui played so caressingly you could hear his pores. I swear it. With Son House, it’s a dynamic thing. A matter of drama.” —RY COODER

GLASS VS. METAL

“Glass definitely has a real nice sound. For a while, I was using a test tube that was cut off, but it wasn’t quite thick enough to get a good sustain. Metal, of course, sounds more metallic, and, most of the time, I like that better. The glass sound is a little bit mellower, but I like that harsh metal sound. That’s why I like National guitars—the more metal, the better.” —JOHNNY WINTER

FEEL

“I play single strings mostly. I can’t make the guitar say as much as my voice, but I try to get it as close as I can. Me and my guitar—we have a conversation together. I’m no hell of a guitar player, but the feeling that I put into my guitar—a lot of players can’t get there. One note

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of mine will say something the other guy can't say. The tone I lay in there—the other guy can't get it out with 12 notes.” —MUDDY WATERS

A HIGHER LOVE

“With slide, you can really move the vibrato around according to your emotion—the same way you do with your voice. When I first heard the blues guys who played slide that I love—Muddy Waters, Son House, and Fred McDowell—they would get so emotional that they couldn't sing anymore. They would tilt their head back and take over on the slide. That's where I saw how slide guitar was able to extend what they were already feeling, and take it to an even higher level.” — BONNIE RAITT

ACOUSTIC VS. ELECTRIC

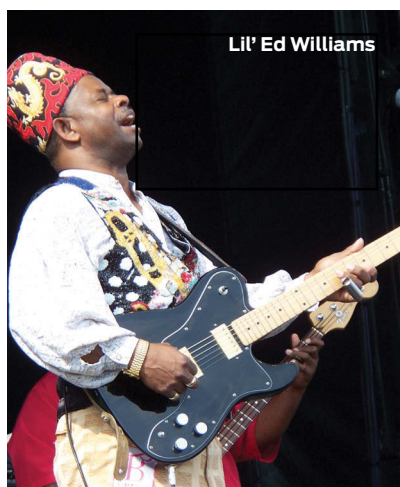
“The acoustic guitar will tell you a lot of information. The electric will give you less. The truth of the matter is only an acoustic will really reflect what you're up to. You can hear yourself at work. You can hear your mind in there. ‘Oh, I'm tense today. I'm tired. Too much coffee.’ And when you begin to hear all of that, try to imagine the guy in front of his shack in a bean field in Mississippi. Think how different his mind is from yours. That's why his sound is so interesting—funny, far away, and lonesome. Everybody is a conduit of sorts.” —RY COODER

THE HUTTO EFFECT

“My uncle, J.B. Hutto, gave me tips—like it's mostly in the left wrist and holding the slide steady. With shaking the slide, you have to vibrate the little finger, so you have to stiffen the wrist to keep it shaking, and then wiggle the arm a little bit. Whatever I seen him do, I do.” —LIL' ED WILLIAMS

MIX IT UP

“Experimenting with different techniques, tunings, and slides is creatively inspiring, and it will keep your mind and fingers from falling into predictable patterns. You know, hop on the merry-go-round, and then go play on the swings. For example, I used to have maybe



three slides, but now I have glass, stainless steel, brass, ceramic, and aluminum, and they all sound different. On really bright guitars, I use a silver slide coated with acrylic to tone down the highs. Ceramic seems to warm the slide sound more than any other material.”

—WILL RAY

DAMPING

John Hammond told me to use the finger to the left of your slide to damp, so that when you're coming up the neck, the note will ring clearer. But I had already learned to damp with just my palm, and I couldn't change it. I use the palm of my right hand to kind of muffle the sound when I pick with my thumb, and I use my thumb to get that thumpy kind of bass. I also use all three fingers when I pick. I sort of precariously balance my slide, so putting it

on my middle finger wasn't the best choice, because when you go to chord, you have to learn how to keep the bottleneck from falling off. —BONNIE RAITT

IT'S ALL IN THE ACTION

“It's a mistake to think you can play cool-sounding slide with a regular action. You tend to press down too hard with the slide—espe-



cially when you're playing live and the adrenalin gets pumping. You get all kinds of nasty squawks and rattles against the fretboard. You have to raise up the action as high as you can take it. I bring it down a little on the bass-string side for playing rhythm, but the rest of the strings are up really high. You should also use heavier-gauge strings.” —RICK VITO

INTONATION

“It's all about using your ears and remembering what you did when it sounded right.”

—WARREN HAYNES ■



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Three Flavors of Microphone Preamps

BY BRIAN TARQUIN

DURING THE ANALOG DAYS, RECORDING STUDIOS OFTEN had microphone preamps built into their mixing consoles, so there was no real call for outboard mic preamps. But today's "in the box" warriors who work with DAWs are finding that then the perfect *hardware* mic preamp is crucial to recording quality. If you're just getting into hardware mic pres, here are some models and settings you should check out. To keep my preamp crafting consistent, I used a Shure SM57 microphone for all of these examples.



BAE 1073

CRUNCH

I wanted to capture a classic-rock rhythm tone "live in the room" using my Gibson Les Paul Deluxe and an Orange AD15 1x12 tube combo. I choose a BAE 1073, because it utilizes a Class A transformer-coupled design, and a St. Ives (Carnhill) transformer that typically produces a fat, rich tone.

- Set the Output knob to 4 o'clock.
- Set the Microphone input level to 30 using the red rotary pot. If you need more level, adjust as desired.
- Additional level adjustments can be made with the Output knob.
- These simple tweaks to a great preamp should deliver really "live" and rockin' guitar tones.



Universal Audio 610

JANGLE

I was looking for a retro, Byrds-like clean tone for my Eastman 12-string electric, which was plugged into a Fender Twin. I chose the Universal

Audio 610 because of its tube warmth. I also find that its subtle, yet extremely musical EQ is very useful for shaping guitar tones to sit nicely in a track.

- Set Gain to zero.
- Slowly bring up the Level knob until you get the desired input level to your DAW.
- Set the High EQ switch to 7kHz, and the level knob to +3.
- Set the Low EQ switch to 70, and the level knob to -1.5.
- Thanks to the vintage sound of the UA preamp, my jangle was as Byrds-y as you can get.



JDK R20

METAL MANIA

This time, I envisioned a fierce metal tone for my Ibanez 8-string and Marshall JCM 800 combo. Perhaps going against the obvious approach, I used a JDK R20 for its smooth and transparent sound. I was not seeking something that would significantly color or "rough up" the tone, as I loved the sound of the guitar and amp raging in the room, and I wanted to document it as simply and as accurately as possible.

- Make sure you are on Mic (an important "duh").
- Adjust the Gain knob as desired.
- Watch out—there is a lot of gain in this preamp. If you find yourself overdriving the signal in a "bad" way, you can use the Pad switch to knock down the signal level.
- The natural sound of the JDK gave me pretty much the guitar tone I was hearing in the room on the tracks.

FIND YOUR BLISS

These are just three examples of preamps and tonal settings. To studio geeks, mic preamps are as subjective—and as hotly debated—as guitarists extolling a specific amplifier or stompbox. So get out there and explore other preamps, and look for something that enhances your workflow and makes your ears happy. 🎧

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Emulating Jack White's "Battle Cry" Tone

BY BRIAN TARQUIN

AS A MUSIC COMPOSER/GUITARIST for television and film, I have to cop many different guitar styles and tones. Recently, I was asked to come up with a CD of instrumental compositions for Telepictures Productions—which produces shows such as *Extra*, *TMZ*, and *Crime Watch Daily*—that incorporated guitar tones from Jack's 2017 single, "Battle Cry."

White displays a reckless approach for the song—and that's meant in a good way—that really brings it to life, gives it a "must listen" seductiveness when it hits your ears, and brings on an almost cinematic, "storytelling" vibe. I particularly like the main riff of "Battle Cry," because of its unbridled energy, and its ability to give the listener a feeling of an imminent sense of danger. I wanted to capture this attitude in my compositions for the CD, as well as evoke the same types of emotions. My first step was to identify the basic elements of the riff's tonal characteristics:

- Fuzz tone
- Low-end octave boost
- Long, single-note sustain
- Grungy attitude
- Forward presence of guitar

THE BATTLE BEGINS

There are many excellent amp plug-ins out there, but I used Logic Pro X (via an Avid Fast Track Duo interface). If you use another plug-in, you can probably approximate my choices, as many manufacturers provide a "usual suspects" menu of similar amp flavors, even if they go by different patch names. After establishing my sound goals, I choose a 1977 goldtop Gibson Les Paul Deluxe with mini-humbuckers to achieve the necessary sonic attitude, and I put the pickup-selector switch at the bridge position. Then, I got to work emulating White's sound:

- I auditioned the selections under the Crunch Guitar menu, and the closest patch to White's "Battle Cry" tone was Chord Burner (Fig. 1). I started there.

- I set the Gain knob at 11 o'clock, which produced the vibe I was looking for.



Fig. 1—My "virtual" Jack White amp.

- I still needed a bit "more," however, so I switched on Lead Boost Drive, and cranked the level to full blast (Fig. 2).

- For even more distortion, I clicked on Pedalboard, and selected Dr. Octave (Fig. 3). No need for subtlety—I cranked the knobs!

- To capture all of this roar, I chose a Stadium 4x12 speaker cabinet miked by a Dynamic 421



Fig. 2—Clicking the "more" switch for a lead boost.

pointing directly at the center of one speaker.

Tone crafting can be a subjective science, of course, but the sonic building blocks I chose got me pretty close to the Jack White sound I was after. I felt that I had dialed in the right tone and attitude from "Battle Cry," and Telepictures was very happy with the result, as well. When you're dealing with an artist who appears to use lots of vintage and strange gear, it's a really satisfying feeling when you can simulate their sound "in the box" with digital tools. Like anything else in the world of music production, it's often a matter of research, attention to detail, the appropriate studio tools, and your ears that will win the day. 🎸



Fig. 3—The pedalboard with octave pedal engaged.



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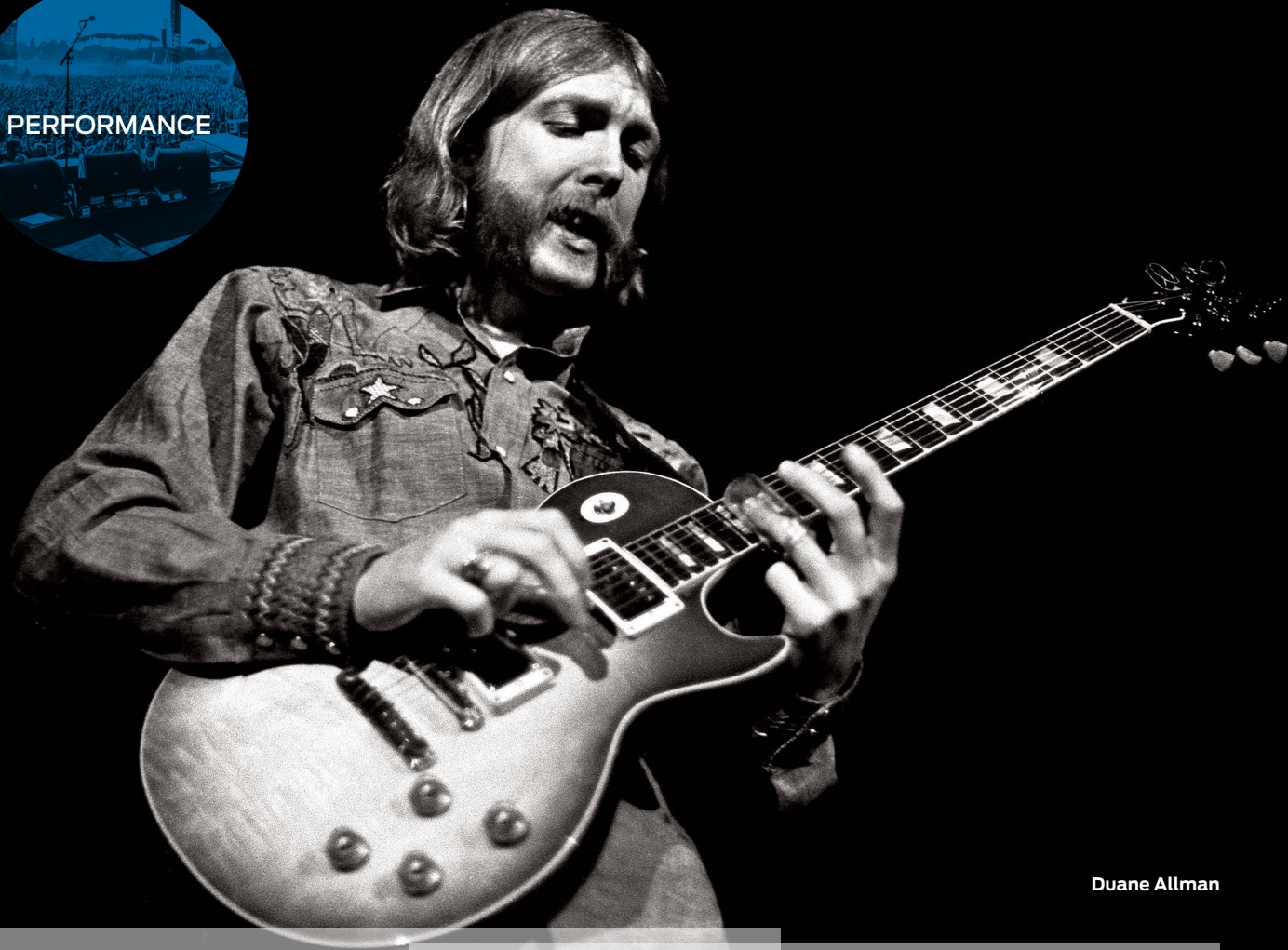
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PERFORMANCE



Duane Allman

Searching for Sky Dog

Jules Leyhe on the Duane Allman Slide Style

BY "GREASY" JULES LEYHE AS TOLD TO JIMMY LESLIE
PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN GELLMAN / CONCORDE MUSIC GROUP

JULES LEYHE IS A SAN FRANCISCO Bay Area musician, a graduate of Berklee College of Music in Boston, and a wicked slide player whose old-soul sensibilities, go-for-bust attitude, and deep understanding of the nuances of Duane Allman's style earned him the nickname "Greasy." Not surprisingly, Leyhe is also a member of my Allman Brothers tribute band, the Allmond Brothers. —JIMMY LESLIE

The first slide player I tried to emulate was Muddy Waters, and it makes sense to start there, because he often played a Telecaster in standard tuning over a 12-bar blues form. Muddy used a metal slide on his pinky, and he didn't do anything fancy, but he used fingerpicks to get a really gnarly sound. I went

down that road for a while until I heard *At Fillmore East*. I remember hearing the announcer say, "Okay, the Allman Brothers Band," and then Duane's opening passage on "Statesboro Blues" changed my life.

YOUR PILOT'S GEAR

You need a thick glass slide to get that smooth tone, and even though Duane used his ring finger, I continued to use my pinky because my instructor at Berklee, David Tronzo (an incredible slide player himself), told me that if you can get comfortable with the pinky early on, then do it, because it makes playing chords and fretting behind the slide available further on down the road. Duane used Gibson guitars, and the sound of a thick glass slide on a Gibson with humbucking pickups is very

specific and hard to mimic. That said, you don't need to spend a bunch of money on a '59 goldtop. I actually play a Jay Turser semi-hollowbody that I got for \$100 at Flashback Guitars in Oakland, California.

You need thick strings and a high action to support the thick glass slide. I use .013-gauge D'Addario XLs. Most of Duane's slide stuff is tuned up to open-E [*E, B, E, G#, B, E*; low to high], which increases the tension, so be advised. I wouldn't go about doing that willy-nilly. I had a guy set it up for me, compensating for the tension, and raising the action. The strings need to be taught—not slack—which makes fretting difficult, but I don't do much

fretting on my slide box. I have other guitars that I use for fretted tunes from the Allman Brothers catalog, such as "In Memory of Elizabeth Reed."

Duane used a cranked Marshall, and rode his Volume knob, and that's the Holy Grail if you can play that loudly when you're wailing. But we mortals that play in smaller clubs need to take a practical approach. Use an amp that breaks up nicely at a reasonable volume, and maybe a couple of lower-level gain devices such as a booster and an overdrive. My bread and butter is a Reverend Hellhound 40/60 1x12 combo that breaks up smoothly when pushed. I use two different gain boosters—an Xotic EP that adds a bit of character in the presence of the gain, and a super transparent Vertex Boost that simply gives you more of what you already have. I also use Vertex's Steel String Clean Drive, which emulates a Dumble tone. The slide responds really well to that. It's important not to get too distorted, which can be tempting, but Duane's tone is never hugely distorted. It has a singing quality that's very warm and kind of beautiful.

OPEN-E

The Duane Allman slide style flows from open-E tuning. That was Elmore James' tuning, as well, so it had been done before. But it hadn't been heard in such a big, electrified way where you're not simply sliding a bunch of chords around, you're playing articulated single-note lines. As soon as you tune your guitar to open-E, and start fiddling with few Allman-style slide licks, you go, "Oh, okay. I really need this tuning to play these licks." For a deeper

understanding of open E, I recommend learning the acoustic track, "Little Martha." It's not a slide tune, but it's great for learning how notes and chords lay out on the fretboard.

"STATESBORO BLUES"

"Statesboro Blues" is the quintessential Duane Allman slide tune, and a lot of core stylistic elements happen right at the top. One of the hardest parts about playing slide is the extensive right-hand muting, and the "Statesboro" intro is a great example, because Duane is calling *and* responding. He plays the riff along with the band, and then he plays the response lick during the breaks. It all happens in quick succession, and it simply can't sound sloppy.

The song is in the key of D, so the 10th fret is home base. If you were tuned standard, you'd barre there with the first finger, and your first instinct might be playing "forward" between the 10th and 13th frets in a Chuck Berry style, but a slide mentality is almost a mirror image of that. Because your slide acts as the barre, the basic blues instinct leads the other direction down the fretboard from the 10th fret. In open E, there's literally a box shape with the pentatonic notes at the 10th and 8th frets on each string, except the third string, where the minor 3rd sits at the 9th fret—kind of like "X marks the spot" at the center. Most of the "Statesboro" licks fall in that zone. Duane pretty much sticks to position playing without incorporating open strings because they don't really work in D. Try "Stand Back" if you want to play a groovy Allman Brothers tune in the key



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of *E* that allows the open strings come into play.

You need to dig in with both hands attacking the strings at great velocity to get the wailing tone with the right bite that makes the harmonics pop. The slide hand is done *emphatically*. That's where all the phrasing comes from, and Duane's phrasing is not loosey-goosey at all. It's very specific, tight, and tenacious. That's the key to getting a blues-harp kind of tone—like Little Walter playing through a bullet mic. Little Walter also informs some of the actual vocabulary—the way some notes are slurred and the way phrases flow.

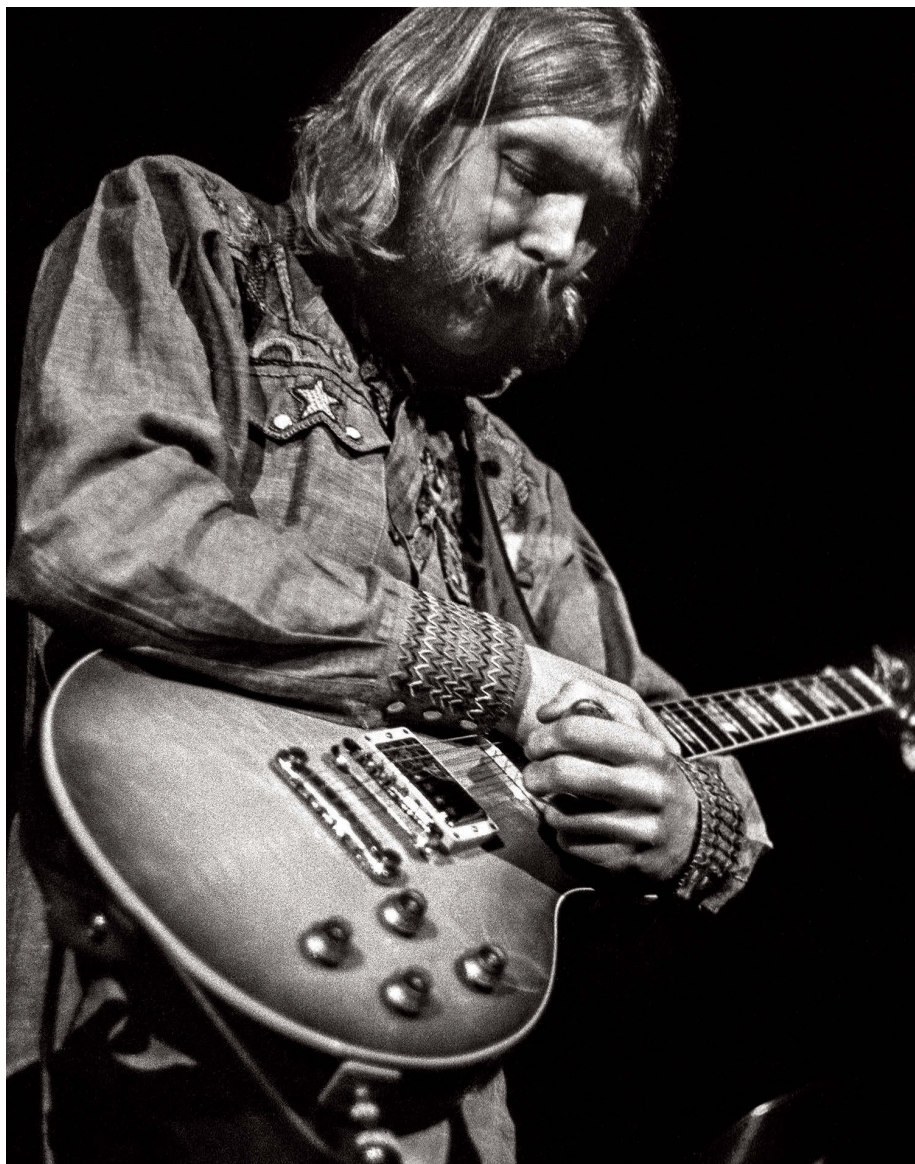
Each of the licks Duane plays during the “Statesboro Blues” intro has a little technique lesson in it. The first and third responses are very much like Little Walter harmonica licks. The second one ascends like the classic rock and roll Chuck Berry bending lick, but when you play that with a slide, it needs to be slowed down, and you have to be careful not to turn it into a harmony thing where you end up sounding the entire chord as you go up. Each digit on your right hand needs to mute the string immediately after the note is plucked, so that the next note sounds free and clear. That's honestly the whole bag. If you can do that, then you're set to play single-note lines. Remember, you're thinking like a singer, and not a singer with six voices like six guitar strings, but rather one continual singing line.

“DON'T KEEP ME WONDERIN'”

“Don't Keep Me Wonderin'” is good to work on, because it's in the key of *G*, so your home pentatonic slide box is rooted at the third fret, but the solo starts on the IV chord, which is *C*. We can slide up to the 8th fret to get a *C* chord, and a lot of cool stuff is available by simply alternating between major and minor blues. If you build the phrasing off the *E* and the *G*, it puts you in a gospel-influenced, B.B. King zone that Duane totally milks. Playing *G* licks out of the *C* position happen easily if you simply shift your right-hand thinking down a string set—by a fourth. Sliding up and down a single string to get from position to position is cool because it produces a very vocal sound along the way. The logical place to elevate the solo is the 15th fret for the *G* box an octave higher, where we end up!

CONTEXT IS KEY

It's super important to have some sort of reference for your intonation when practicing slide licks. Playing along with the record is good—and so is using a looper or playing with another player—but



JOHN GELMAN / CONCORDE MUSIC GROUP

Notice how Duane Allman is picking behind the slide on his Les Paul.

there's simply no substitute for working with a band if you're trying to nail the Duane Allman style, because he's playing a specific role in a specific group. It's kind of like the role of a sax player in a blues band. You're not there to play chords. You're filling gaps and playing solos.

But Duane's role was deeper than that.

Duane was essentially a second singer whose

voice was slide guitar. Playing that role means that when it's your time to play, be confident but show some restraint in the first chorus of the first solo. Entrances and exits are vital, and once you've exited—stay out. You'll get another turn. The artistry of playing like Duane happens when you really express yourself—building themes rather than playing licks. That is definitely the toughest thing, creating a continuing story, building and building to a climax that makes the crowd get up and go, “Oh, my God. That was insane!” 🎸

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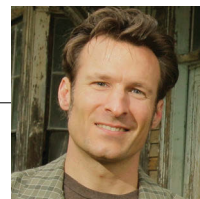
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{ CLASSIC GEAR }

BY DAVE HUNTER



The Martin 000-45

THE LEGENDARY C.F. MARTIN

& Co. might be best known for its big dreadnoughts like the D-28, but before that model was officially added to the stable in 1931 the 000 was the flagship—and if you wanted the top-of-the-line in its most elegant incarnation, the 000-45 was the way to go. The model was introduced in 1906, but any pre-war example, like the luscious 1930 000-45 featured this issue, is an extremely rare bird. Only 21 were built by the Pennsylvania manufacturer in that year, and only 341 of its type have ever been made, making it one of the most collectible vintage Martins.

In Martin nomenclature, the letters at the front of the model name denote the body shape and size, while the number that follows indicates the style level and materials. Rising from the 13 1/2" body width of the diminutive Model O (what we'd generally call a "parlor guitar" today) and beyond the 14 1/8" OO, the 000 was a full 15" across its lower bout. The Style 45 delivered it not only with a back, sides,

and fretboard of solid Brazilian rosewood (a tonewood achieved once you rose above the mahogany of the Style 18-level instruments), but with Martin's most elaborate inlays, marquetry, and purfling as well. The result was a guitar that sounded every ounce and inch as glorious as it looked. You could also argue that, while the D-45 is a more commonly seen rendition of the company's most opulent styling, the beautifully rounded 000 body shape couches all that bling in a more elegant setting.

For many years, C.F. Martin's showpiece-grade models peaked at the Style 42, which carried an ivory bridge for a time. But in 1904 the Style 45 added a bound headstock with abalone fountain inlay to the existing features on the 1, O, and OO models, and two years later the fancier appointments were offered on the larger 000. The delicate mother-of-pearl snowflake position-marker inlays on the fretboard are a Martin classic, and note how the abalone purfling that runs within the body binding follows

the entire fretboard extension, even cutting into the abalone soundhole rosette. Such luxury isn't limited to the guitar's top, either: Flip it over, and you see a multi-colored wood marquetry stripe down the middle that joins the two-piece back of Brazilian rosewood, in addition to more abalone purfling around its edges.

Whether strummed, fingerpicked, or flatpicked, the 000-45 delivers a sonic elegance to match its appearance,

ESSENTIAL INGREDIENTS

- > Smaller, rounded "000" body shape
- > Solid Adirondack spruce top with scalloped spruce braces
- > Solid Brazilian rosewood back and sides
- > Brazilian rosewood fretboard
- > Mother-of-pearl "snowflake" position markers
- > Abalone body and headstock inlays
- > Inlaid wood marquetry back center stripe

and many players declare the 12-fret model like this one to have a tone even richer and warmer than that of the 14-frets-to-the-body models, which only became available in 1934. Internals features included Martin's legendary X-brace top support, which allows optimal vibration from the solid Adirondack-spruce top, so it sings sweetly and with rich harmonic complexity. And while the big dreadnought designs might have been just on the horizon, this bounteous 000-sized body packs more than enough acoustic muscle to get you heard in grand style.

Martin hasn't offered an authentic reissue-spec 000-45 for some time, but the 000-42 Authentic 1939 in their current Authentic & Vintage Series gets pretty darn close—minus the bound headstock and fountain inlay—in a guitar loaded with abalone purfling and rosette, pearl snowflake inlays, and delivering rich, complex tones courtesy of Madagascar rosewood back and sides and an Adirondack spruce top. ■

GUITAR AND PHOTOS COURTESY OF PAUL HEUMILLER AND DREAM GUITARS



BY CRAIG ANDERTON

CGI Slide Guitar

IN THE MOVIES, CGI STANDS for “computer-generated imagery.” But, here, it stands for a “computer-generated instrument” that relates to slide guitar.

Yes, I can play slide. And I can play keyboards—sort of. (If my keyboard technique was a car, it would be a Yugo). But, for the studio, here’s a variant on slide guitar that combines guitar and minimal keyboard skills. Although traditional slide allows for *far* more nuanced playing, the keyboard-meets-slide approach produces unique sounds that recall steel and slide guitar.

To hear what this sounds like, go to <https://store.cdbaby.com/cd/craiganderton>, and click on the free preview of the song, “Play the Game, Spygirl.” (The solo at the end is a real guitar, by the way—keyboards can’t do *that*.)

CREATE YOUR INSTRUMENT

Open your recording software, and record a major and minor chord in all 12 keys. Let the chords ring out as long as possible, and leave a space between each chord. Split the chords into individual samples with a short fade-out (around 200ms) so that a chord fades out, rather than just stops dead. You might also want to record some individual notes, so you can have a few notes available that aren’t chords.

Next, map the samples to keyboard keys. How to do this varies for different programs. Sample One (**Fig. 1**) is fairly typical. You drag in the samples, specify each sample’s root note, and the note range over which it plays (which will be a single keyboard key for each chord).

THE CGI SLIDE TECHNIQUE

Create the slide by moving the pitch-bend wheel. For example, start with the wheel rolled back, hit a key to trigger a chord, and then slide up to the chord’s original pitch by returning the

pitch wheel to center. Or, hit the key and bend down or up before returning to pitch.

Samplers can specify a pitch-bend range. Narrow ranges (like ffl2 semitones) make it easier to hit pitches precisely, but a range like ffl12 semitones allows for long slides and pseudo-whammy bar effects. Of course, because you’re triggering the chords and bends with MIDI data, you can edit your playing after the fact if you have Yugo-level keyboard skills. You can also add an attack time so the sound fades in like using a volume pedal with steel guitar, and if you want to slide from one chord up

or down to another, you can use glide (portamento) instead of the pitch-bend wheel.

Most synthesizer patches use the modulation wheel to add vibrato, but—hey—you’re a guitar player! Wiggle the pitch-bend wheel instead, which will sound more human than a synthesizer vibrato. Put this all together, and you’ll end up with a cool sound that has a guitar’s organic timbre, but the precision of an electronic instrument.

Check out craiganderton.com every Friday for the latest Tip of the Week, and follow @craig_anderton on Twitter. 🎸



Fig. 1—Guitar chords hosted by PreSonus Studio One’s Sample One instrument. The attack time in the Amp section affects all samples to give more of a steel-guitar sound.



{ WHACK JOB }

BY TERRY CARLETON



2001 Danelectro Baritone

THE SILHOUETTE OF A

Danelectro is easy to recognize for most anyone interested in guitars. But, wait, this Baritone model ain't exactly what you can buy off the shelf at your local music store. This is a one-of-a-kind creation that you'll only see in *my* studio. It may not be worth as much as a pristine '58 sunburst Les Paul, but it's definitely rare, and it may never go on the auction block.

WEIRDO FACTOR

It's not so much the instrument that's the weirdo this time—it's that the column isn't really about Danelectros. It's about art! Specifically, the guitar as a canvas. When I was a kid, I remember almost gasping when Clapton, Harrison, and Hendrix painted their guitars back in the '60s. So when I acquired this Dano Baritone, I asked my friend—artist/musician Michelle Winter (michellewinterdesign.com)—to paint it for me. I said, "Just do whatever you want," and she created "The Bee." (Note the bee hovering just under where the *B* string would be.)

PLAYABILITY & SOUND

Pretty much everyone knows these vintage-styled planks made of plywood and Masonite—and with their lipstick pickups—have their own distinctive vibe. They sound bright and chimy, and tons of players have added Danelectros to their tonal arsenals since Evets Corporation



revitalized the brand in the late '90s. They're light and easy to play, but, in this case, I liked looking at the guitar more than playing it. I ended up removing the strings, bridge, and anything that obscured my appreciation of Michelle's wonderful pencil and eraser drawing. Now, it just hangs in my studio looking awesome.

VALUE

I paid \$150 for this used 'canvas' from Craigslist, but now I consider it priceless. I

love the art, and I love that it was painted by a dear friend.

WHY IT RULES

I'm not necessarily suggesting that you take a functioning guitar out of circulation just to paint it. But, if you do, you can hang it in your studio as an art piece, or use it as functional sculpture to perform live. Either way, it will become a singular expression of who you are.

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

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{ THE FOLEY FILES }

BY SUE FOLEY



Rory Block

RORY BLOCK HAS SO MUCH passion, soul, and depth, and she connects to an audience like only a handful of performers I've seen. Besides being an amazing country blues and slide guitarist, singer, and songwriter, Rory is also one of the most qualified interpreters of classic blues. There are few players with a biography as rich as Rory's, who started her career at 14, playing and hanging around with legends such as Mississippi Fred McDowell and Son House. Her latest album is *A Woman's Soul: A Tribute to Bessie Smith* [Stony Plain Records].

I'm going to quote your own writing from your website: "When I played 'Big Road Blues' by Tommy Johnson, someone in the audience jumped up and shouted 'She plays like a man.' I didn't understand what men played like, or what women played like. I didn't comprehend that I was black or white or 14 years old or 40. I was in love with the music."

I didn't see myself as a category. I just saw myself as a player. There may have been an initial kind of surprise when people saw me playing blues, but I chose not to register it. I didn't see what was so different and surprising. It's just what I was driven to do. I mean, Robert Johnson just fascinated me.

I want to talk about interpretation. There's something



SERGIO KURHALIK

in blues that when you pick up someone else's songs, you're jumping into their whole style. Was there a point when you found it easier to find yourself in the midst of that?

Yes, but I don't know when that happened. In the very beginning, you are emulating all you can, and it may be impossible to say when your style becomes your own. We have to make it real from our own lives. I think one of the greatest compliments I've gotten is when a guy came up to me after a show and said, "You're the only person I've seen do blues in the present day and make it new. I've never

liked blues before, but seeing you now, it feels totally different and meaningful." I am sure he has found others since then, but it was the greatest compliment simply because he said that I was making it real in the present.

But is it hard to step into Robert Johnson's shoes, and come out sounding like Rory Block?

I never thought about it, and I never worried about it. I feel so connected to the music that I don't even know what I am projecting. I fell in love with blues, and there's this out-of-control passionate, loving feeling about the music,

and if that comes through—great.

There are a lot of women guitar players out there now, but it's still rare to see female country-blues artists.

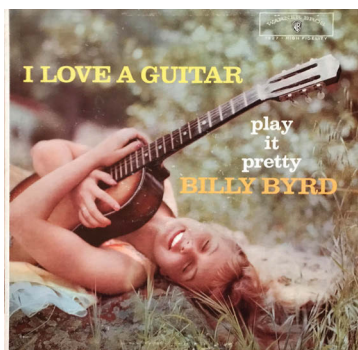
Perhaps it's an odd category. There is a lot of interest in acoustic blues, and female players are out there playing the style, but there aren't many. I meet a lot of women at festivals, and I always say, "Don't stop playing until everyone knows who you are." That's my blanket advice.

*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



I Love a Guitar—*Play It Pretty* Billy Byrd

BILLY BYRD IS MOST WELL-KNOWN for playing with Ernest Tubb, who was famous for calling out, “Play it pretty, Billy Byrd!” Whenever that happened, Billy would play his phrases effortlessly while looking ahead smiling, always connecting with the listener. Many of his phrases are like the pillars country guitar is built on, and, because of this, Billy’s Gibson Byrdland is on display at the Country Music Hall of Fame in Nashville.

I was lucky enough to discover this record via steel-guitar great Joe Goldmark in the late ‘80s. If I had heard it earlier in my guitar life, I might have discounted it as ‘60s elevator music. But the ‘80s were a golden time of discovery for me, and my mind and ears were grounded in a student’s humility to learn. As a result, *I Love a Guitar*—first released in 1959, and with the great Hank Garland on rhythm guitar—taught me how to play a melody. The album features 12 great tracks with Billy playing the melody, only the melody, and nothing but the melody. His

sound and technique are subtle and virtuosic. He employs slides, trills, pull-offs, Django-like semi-tone string bends, and a concise phrasing that elevates his playing to the heights of a captivating vocalist.

The first thing I learned was how deceptively difficult his playing was to imitate. It took me weeks to nail “I Love You So Much It Hurts,” but after my cramming, I had a full toolbox of Mr. Byrd’s techniques that I still employ today.

Today, whenever I play on a studio session—or if I’m asked to play a show—I always learn the artist’s melodies for the songs I’m supporting. Nine times out of ten, my solos will incorporate the melody—if not feature the melody completely. The artist is always delighted, and is probably happier than if I pulled off the hottest guitar solo since “Eruption.” Try it and see. And then thank Billy Byrd.

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



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PLAYERS

FORSAKEN

SONNY LANDRETH
SETS THE SLIDE ASIDE FOR
JOHN HIATT'S *SLOW TURNING* TOUR

COULD THIS REALLY HAPPEN? THE most masterful and game-changing slide guitarist the world has ever seen faces a challenge when famed singer-songwriter John Hiatt asks him to go on the road for

the celebration of the 30th anniversary of Hiatt's *Slow Turning*?

"When we started talking about this

BY ART THOMPSON

reunion, I should have immediately started practicing in standard tuning right away," says Landreth, who played electric, acoustic slide, 12-string, and steel on the 1988 album sessions. "Holding a



ROBLEY DUPREX

flatpick after not doing that for so many years was a rude slap of reality. I've played standard guitar parts on albums and such, but it's not the same as digging in full bore with a major artist. See, when we first got together with Hiatt in the summer of 1987, I was playing in both standard and open tunings. However, at some point down the road, I started shying away from standard. We got back together with John from '99 through 2003 and made two more albums—*The Tiki Bar Is Open* and *Beneath This Gruff Exterior*—and that pushed me to play standard again, and I started feeling really good about it. But then I got away from it once again. So I guess John is responsible for keeping this going, but all these

years later, the bottom line was I had to get my chops together!"

To rewind a bit, what made you decide to devote yourself to slide in the first place?

I started out playing standard guitar with a pick just like everybody and then I learned to fingerstyle from Chet Atkins. I came upon the slide a little later when I was a teenager. Until about 1995, I did both—especially with Hiatt. Half the songs were in standard tuning with light-gauge strings and a flatpick, and the others were with heavier-gauge strings for fingerstyle and slide. At some point, though, I just decided I had more going with slide. I kept discovering new techniques and coming up with ideas, and I thought it best to put my focus in that area. As a songwriter, the chordal-tuning slide-guitar approach enabled me to interpret different styles, and put it all together in a unified way that ultimately gave me my identity.

How did Hiatt approach you about touring with his Goners backup band again?

He called me out of the blue, and it was a total shock, because we hadn't spoken in almost 14 years. He said it was going to be the 30-year anniversary of recording *Slow Turning*, but his original thought was to go out last year and do the *Bring the Family* album. As you know, Ry Cooder, Jim Keltner, and Nick Lowe did that album, but the Goners were the touring band that went out and played all those songs. John's idea was that we would segue into *Slow Turning* this year to commemorate our making the album. But, ultimately, it took until the beginning of this year to get all the dates scheduled, and that was just as well, because it gave me more time to get my thing together. It has been interesting to come back and play these songs after all these years, and to honor what we did and inject some new ideas and vibes into it. That has been a big part of the fun of this whole episode.

What was involved in getting up to speed for this tour?

The first thing was just re-learning the songs. I hadn't played some of them in almost 30 years, and I had to revisit

the arrangements, the changes, and how I played them. Listening to the recordings was kind of a strange experience—like a distant dream from another life. The other part was getting my chops in shape to play the songs in standard tuning. Much of what I do on slide involves using sympathetic strings, so I'll leave things ringing in the tunings. But that doesn't necessarily work in standard, and that has been one of the harder things to overcome—along with just bending a string and nailing it right on pitch.

But one benefit of playing in standard is that I've started using the whammy bar, which I've never really done—except for a song called "Ol' Lady Luck" from my album, *The Road We're On*. So I've gotten hooked on it again, and I had my guitar tech float the bridge on one of my Strats. I'm particularly enjoying using the whammy to get vocal inflections and effects, and I've taken some of my right-hand techniques from slide playing and applied them using the bar to come up with something altogether different.

Now that you've had to go back to playing with a flatpick, what do you use?

I used to play with extra-heavy Fender picks, but I've found them to be too much for me right now. On some songs, I'll use something between medium and heavy. I did a gig with Carl Verheyen in Bakersfield around Christmas, and I was telling him how the flatpick just felt so weird. He said, "Why don't you just use a thumbpick?" So I'm doing that on "Is Anybody There," and also on "Feels Like Rain"—which is actually just my thumb and fingers. For fingerstyle and slide, I love these flat thumbpicks that Jim Dunlop has been making for years, and I also caved and got acrylic nails, which I've found work well for standard tuning on electric guitar. Now, I get a big, open sound, and I can do cross-picking and patterns. I'm using the nail on the index finger and holding it like a flatpick.

What gauges are you using on your standard-tuned guitars?

I'm going for the path of least resistance, so it's a .009-.042 set. A long time ago, I started using an .011 on the top two strings, because that worked better



BRAND C. MILLER/RICHARD

for slide playing in standard tuning. But I didn't do that on this latest go 'round. The skinnier strings make it easier for bending behind the slide, as well as for double-stops or when holding down two or more strings when playing chordal melodies—which some of John's songs require.

Watching you play a Firebird and Les

Paul with Hiatt recently was certainly something new.

Yeah. It was cool to be able to bring the Firebird and the Les Paul, because a lot of people have never seen me play either of them. I would have never foreseen two years ago the need to set up a guitar for standard tuning again, and I had to decide which ones

I was going to use. I knew I wanted the Les Paul, because on the last album we did with John, *Beneath This Gruff Exterior*, I used it for "Almost Fed Up with the Blues." I later converted it for slide, and that's the way I've been using it all these years—although mostly at home. Now, it's back in standard tuning

What year is your Les Paul?

It's a 1970, and it has T-top humbuckers—which I've always liked. They're very much like a PAF, but they have a little more output and brightness. The Firebird is a 1964, and I bought it from a great player named Paul Black when I was in a jam-blues band back around 1971. I also got a '71 Marshall head from him. That was the first Marshall I had, and I used it for a long time until it got stolen. The Firebird's neck is incredible. It just had all this range, and that's what I still love about it. It's a different beast, though, and not for everyone. Getting used to the balance is a trip, but once you do, it's a totally unique sound and feel—especially for slide.

You also rolled out a few different Strats on this tour.

Right. Two of them are from the late '80s. The red one with the floating trem has Fishman Fluence pickups. They sound great and they're dead quiet, which is a real plus in some situations—especially when using a compressor. I took my '65 Strat up to the Fishman factory, and they did their magic with it, and now my red Strat's pickups sound so close to the '65's that the difference is negligible. The grey one I use for "Georgia Rain" has a Fluence PAF-style humbucker, and I can get two sounds out of it—a stock PAF tone and a hotter sound. The rosewood-fretboard Strats I've been playing are the last of the prototypes for my signature Fender model, and they have a Tele bridge plate that's bolted onto the trem block, a really different neck profile, and some other cool things. I use them for *D* tuning with slide on "Trudy and Dave" and "Icy Blue Harp."

What is the benefit of having so many guitars on this tour?

Well, it's the way it ought to be. My band does fly dates mostly, and the advantage is that you can cover a lot of territory in a short amount of time, and you get to go home after four or five shows. The disadvantage is that you can't take all of your gear, and that makes a big difference when you start looking at production values. I've always felt I wasn't giving people the best of



what they should be hearing, and that has always concerned me. But now, I'm bringing out guitars I haven't played in years, along with my whole rig.

What amps are you using?

Right before I left, I blew out a bias pot on my Demeter TGA-3 head, and my Dumble needed tubes, so I just used my Demeter Mighty Minnie head for the first week, and it was great. Then, we had a day off in Los Angeles, so I went over to Alexander Dumble's house, and he got my amp rockin' with new tubes and all that. I was playing these different amps with all the various mods he has done, so I also got him to modify my Overdrive Special so that I could do more switching on the floor. Basically, he added more relays inside to turn some of the features on the amp's front panel on and off. Now, for example, I can go to the clean channel and use some of my pedals on one song, and then go back to the overdrive channel, and maybe use a delay or a compressor on another song. I have more options.

Are you using overdrive pedals with the Dumble?

If I'm on the clean channel, and I want to drive it, I'll use the Hermida Audio Mosferatu. On "Feels Like Rain," I'm using the clean channel along with a little bit of

compression. The Voodoo Lab Giggity also works great on both channels to make everything sound fatter. Like, if you want a clean sound for a lead tone, it gives it more depth. I put it last in the drive department—before effects like delay and chorus. The Giggity is more like a studio EQ that you would use for mastering. You can use it to drive the front end, but I like it mainly for fattening up single-coil pickups. I also have a bunch of delay pedals, but I'm back with the Strymon El Capistan. I always thought it sounded great, but the one I had started working intermittently, so for a while, I switched over to the Wampler Faux Tape Delay. It's simple and straightforward, and I was ready for that after some of these more complicated pedals. But I went back to the Strymon, because I was familiar with it, and I like the remote tap-tempo function.

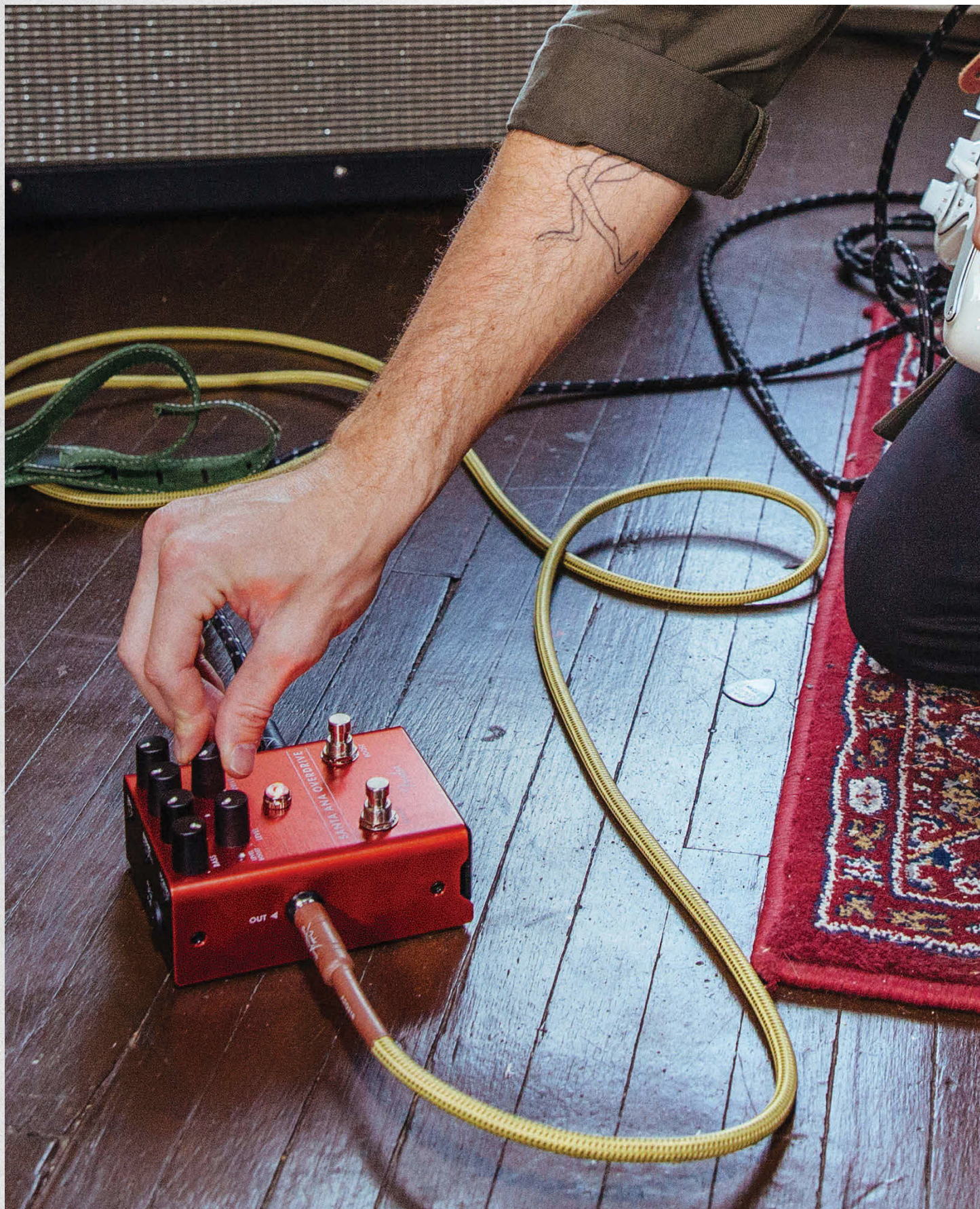
How does playing with Hiatt change how you use effects?

On John's gigs, I'm basically playing guitar and singing harmony on a few songs, so I have the luxury of being able to reach over and adjust the settings on my amp or effects. Normally, I'm talking and singing, and controlling my amp or effects is something I can only do with my foot. Some of my songs—the instrumentals in particular—are more demanding, because I'm changing effects

on different sections of the song.

What do you appreciate most about playing with John Hiatt?

John is the consummate songwriter, and he's at the top of the list along with Bob Dylan. John's songs have such meaning and depth, and they've stood the test of time. Here we are 30 years later, and I swear that playing them seems like yesterday, because they sound so fresh. He doesn't polish anything, either. It's all about the raw emotion of the lyrics, because there's not a set form. A good example is "Sometime Other than Now," which is all simple chords, but they change with the lyrics. A lot of pop songs sound like the words are written to fit a musical scheme, but with John's songs, the lyrics come first, and the music supports that. It's more spontaneous that way, and the challenge is more about remembering the arrangements. John makes the joke every night about trying to remember how we did these songs originally, but we didn't know what we were doing back then. That's the creative side of it I love. It's more of an adventure, and the songs are different every night because of it. I think people relate to that, because they know they're getting something raw, fresh, and in the moment. It's a great honor to be able to work with music on that level. ■





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RICHIE KOTZEN

BUILDS STUFF, DESIGNS GEAR, REMODELS HIS
TECHNIQUE, AND MAKES RECORDS ALL ALONE

ACROSS FROM A BRIGHT-RED GRAND

piano, Richie Kotzen is seated on a comfy couch in the living room of his house in the Santa Monica Mountains. One of his signature-model Fender Telecasters is in his hands, and a small tube combo is powered up by his side. In mere weeks, the guitarist/singer/composer and Winery Dogs founding member will take off on the latest leg of his worldwide tour supporting his 21st solo album, *Salting Earth* [Headroom-Inc.], and his fingers seem more than ready. Pouring out of his hands are pleasing volleys of notes—some phrases slow and meaty, others fast and aggressive—but all are soulful, and none are played with a pick. The little amp next to him is sounding great, too—its warm timbre given added dimension by the room's vaulted ceiling.

"I built that amp myself," says Kotzen. "Technically, it is a tweed-era Fender Deluxe. I soldered it together from scratch, using a kit that I found online. I've been building electronic things since I was a kid."

As it turns out, Kotzen also had a hand

in the design of his main touring and recording amp—the new Victory Richie Kotzen Signature RK50.

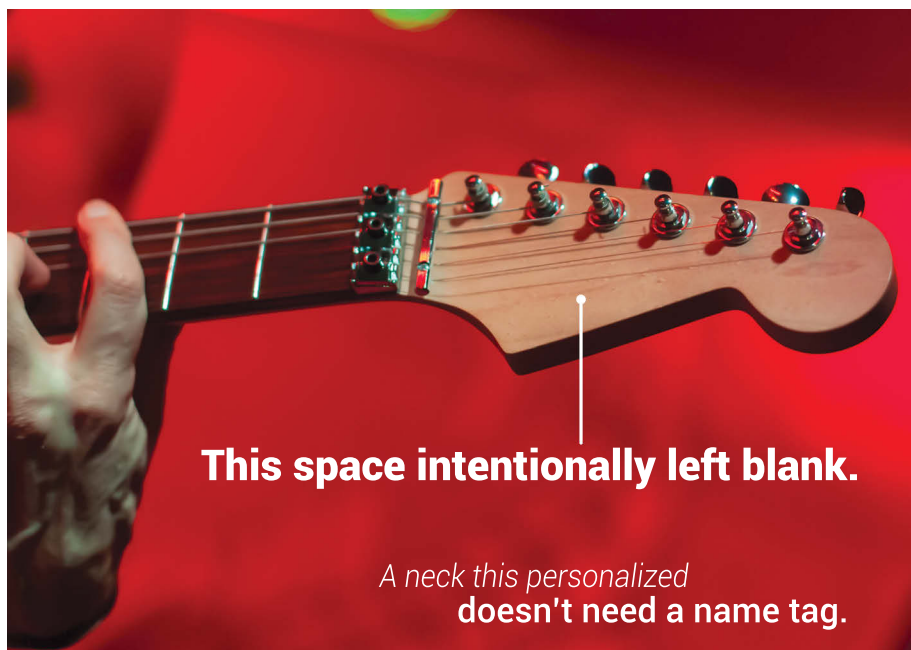
"The RK50 sounds great and it's incredibly simple to use," says Kotzen. "It basically gives you three things to play with—a master Volume, a Tone knob, and a Gain control. It does have reverb, tremolo, a boost switch, and an effects loop, but, to me, those are just bonus features. The magic lies in its great gain and sustain. When [Victory Amplification head designer] Martin Kidd sent me the first prototype, it was voiced almost exactly how I wanted it, but I still wanted to try a couple of subtle tweaks. So, instead of me sending the amp back to Martin, he sent me the schematics, and suggested modifications I could try. He trusted me to go in there with a soldering iron and wire clippers, so I did. Afterwards, I was worried I would turn the thing on and it would explode, but it didn't. It sounded perfect."

The more you hang out with Kotzen, the more you realize you're talking to one of the handier guitar heroes in action

BY JUDE GOLD



{ RICHIE KOTZEN }



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today. ("See the molding around all the doorways?" he asks. "I matched it perfectly to the antique wood around it, and I installed it myself. And that fire pit outside? I designed it, landscaped it, and poured all the cement.") One of Kotzen's concepts emerged as the Tech 21 Richie Kotzen RK5 Signature Fly Rig—which puts reverb, delay, boost, and two flavors of Tech 21's SansAmp analog-amp emulation circuitry at your feet in an aesthetically pleasing, ultra-portable hull.

"The whole thing was my idea—even the name," says Kotzen. "I had been doing so many fly dates that, one day, I decided that—from my guitar gear to my wardrobe—it was time to start traveling lighter. So I grabbed a few of my favorite pedals, pulled the guts out of them, and installed everything in a small electrical box that I got at Electronic City. I drilled holes in all the right places for each pedal's switches and controls to pop through, hardwired everything together, added an input and output, and—*bang!*—there was my rig. You can see me using it on the Winery Dogs' DVD, *Unleashed in Japan 2013*."

Later, when Kotzen showed his homemade multi-effector to Tech 21 founder Andrew Barta, the pair decided to build the Fly Rig professionally.

"Andrew transformed it," says Kotzen. "He found all the right components—including the wonderful little knobs that light up—and turned it into something fantastic."

Kotzen's DIY approach to life shows up in the studio, too, as he played all the instruments on *Salting Earth*.

"That ends up happening on some of my records—not because I'm a selfish bastard, but because of the way I write," he says. "I go in there, I start working, and I put down ideas, and the next thing you know, the song is finished. Sure, I listen back and think, 'I could have people come in and replay the drums and bass.' But the only real test is whether I love the track or not. If I really love it, it's done."

"Some songs come unbelievably fast. For *Salting Earth*, take 'Grammy.' I literally woke up at 3:30 in the morning with an idea, and I went into my studio. By 7:30 am, the song was done—fully tracked and mixed. But then you have a song like 'Make It Easy.' Its basic tracks have been on my hard drive since 2003. I loaded the session into my system again,

started listening, and the lyrics finally came to me. I put down the vocal, added the B-3 and Clavinet, and it all fit.”

Kotzen first gained renown at 19 years old in 1989, when producer Mike Varney received his demo tape, featured him in *GP*’s “Spotlight” column, and signed him to Shrapnel Records. While maintaining his prolific solo career, Kotzen also enjoyed stints with arena rockers such as Poison and Mr. Big. Fast forward to the present, and it’s striking how much Kotzen’s playing and songwriting have evolved. For example, the giant chorus to “Make It Easy” would be right at home on a gospel record.

“If there’s a lot of R&B in my music, it’s because the first bands I was into as a kid were the O’Jays, the Spinners, and Sly & the Family Stone, and my first concerts were Stevie Wonder and George Benson,” says Kotzen. “It was years later that I got into the Who, Led Zeppelin, and other guitar-driven bands. The first vocalist I ever became obsessed with singing like was an R&B guy, too—Terence Trent D’Arby. Back in 1990, I was so into him I learned to sing his debut album from top to bottom.”

As Kotzen’s musical evolutions often revolve around paring down elements of his craft (or wardrobe), he has also become possibly the only early Shrapnel alum who has almost completely parted ways with the plectrum.

“I still use picks when I’m on acoustic and want that strumming sound, but I rarely use them live on electric anymore,” he says. “Going pick-less started many years ago, when I was on tour in Brazil. I was sitting in my hotel room feeling unhappy with the way I had been sounding. I needed a change, but I knew I couldn’t suddenly become a massively better player in one night of practice. So, instead of trying to add something to my playing, I thought, ‘What can I eliminate?’ I decided to challenge myself by seeing if I could get through an entire show without a pick. The next night, I got onstage with just my fingers, and it was scary because it meant that several techniques I used regularly were instantly unavailable. In many ways, this slowed me down. But on the positive side, I suddenly was back to playing really lyrical lines. I was really *phrasing* again. And guess what? Over time, I’ve found ways to bring back many of the techniques I initially gave up—such as sweeping and alternate

picking—without using a pick.”

Now that Kotzen has completed several legs of his *Salting Earth* tour, he’s able to see how his show has evolved.

“We started with a big U.S. run, then we did Asia, Australia, and Europe,” he says. “We literally circled the planet. By the end of that circle, I noticed I was doing a third

of my show on electric guitar, a third of it on acoustic, and a third on piano. It was interesting to realize that, despite being best known for putting out guitar records over the years, it was no longer my guitar playing dictating my set list. My set is now built more around my voice and the strength of each song.” ■

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FEAR & FREEDOM

BILL FRISELL

ON THE PANIC AND PLEASURES OF PLAYING SOLO

THERE ARE ONLY A HANDFUL OF GUITARISTS who can be said to have significantly changed the way subsequent players have approached the instrument: Charlie Christian, Jimi Hendrix, and Eddie Van Halen are among them.

And so is Bill Frisell.

Just as a generation of metal guitarists tapping away can be credited to Eddie, the current generation contains more than a few who play jazz-influenced versions of pop and country tunes on Telecasters, thanks to Bill. In the must-see movie, *Bill Frisell: A Portrait*, Nels Cline says, “He has had one of the loudest impacts on creative guitar.”

Over four decades—and on more than 100 recordings—this unique artist has brought his unmistakable sound to a wide variety of music, including jazz, country, pop, rock, and noise—sometimes all in the same band (check out John Zorn’s *Naked City*). He has also managed to fit his personal approach and distinctive musical vision into the equally defined art of such diverse employers as Allen Toussaint, Bonnie Raitt, Lucinda Williams, Elvis Costello, Joe Jackson, Earl Klugh, Paul Simon, Salief Keita, Rickie Lee Jones, Loudon Wainwright III, Renee Fleming, Marianne Faithfull, David Sylvian, and David Sanborn.

What brings artists at the top of their games to enlist his aid? In the same documentary, producer Hal Wilner gives some insight: “He just makes everything better, and takes it to a whole other level.”

Throughout a career of working with exceptional musicians, Frisell has released very few records featuring him alone. The first record

under his own name, 1983’s *In Line*, started as a solo record, but eventually added bassist Arild Andersen to some of the tunes. In 1999, *Ghost Town* appeared, and a quickie, solo-free improv session for John Zorn’s Tzadik label, *Silent Comedy*, slipped in under the radar in 2013. Now, *Music Is* [OKeh/Sony] has arrived. It appears obvious that recording by himself is not a priority for this—okay, I’ll say it—guitar genius.

Why did you choose to do another fully realized solo record now—18 years after *Ghost Town*?

It has been this ongoing challenge. When I first tried to play solo it was—“traumatic” is too light a word. For me, the guitar and music has always been about playing with other people. But I’d hear piano players, like Bill Evans, Keith Jarrett, Paul Bley, or Art Tatum playing solo, and it felt like I had to figure out how to do it. The first solo gig I did was in Boston in the early ’80s, after I had been playing for many years. It was in this tiny place with probably only five people in the audience, and it was horrifying. I went through everything I knew, looked at my watch, and ten minutes had gone by. I still had another hour, and I didn’t have anything. I thought, “I’m never going to put myself through this again.” But, a year later, I did, and I gradually got more comfortable with it. It’s still different, but there was a point where it actually got cool. There’s a freedom in doing it that’s incredible. I can go anywhere I want to musically. By the *Ghost Town* record I was more comfortable. *Silent Comedy* was something else. I

BY MICHAEL ROSS





MONICA JANE FRISSELL



had wanted to do something with Zorn in the studio, and there was no preparation or thought—other than I was going to improvise for a little while.

You typically use looping systems when you play solo. Do you find they give you something to respond to, in the place of other musicians?

Yeah, but it's so dangerous. The looping thing is like a safety net. It's such a crutch for me. I'm trying to get braver about not going there. The most challenging thing for me is to not be afraid of space—to actually *embrace* it. There's something to be said about letting the energy be in the silence. The ultimate thing would be to make a whole album with just an acoustic guitar and nothing else. I still haven't gotten to that.

How did you approach *Music Is*?

The preparation was like *anti*-preparation. I had six nights to play at the Stone in New York, prior to going in the studio. Every night, I came to those gigs bringing

piles of music I had either never played before, or not in a really long time. I tried to keep myself off balance for the whole week. I used the Stone to get myself in the frame of mind where I didn't know what was going to happen. When I went in the studio, I kept that same thing going. We set up the studio so I could just grab any instrument and play whatever came to my mind. Everything about the sound and the structure of the individual pieces came from being in the moment.

Can we talk about some of the gear? What was the basic amp setup?

Live, I usually have one or maybe two amps, and everything is coming out of the same amp all the time. In the studio, however, we set up with two amps for the basic sound—a Gibson GA-18 T Explorer and a Carr Mercury for the loops. The loop amp was isolated, so when we mixed it, we could control the level.

What's that striking loop in "Rambler"?

There was this weird sample-and-hold-type loop from the Z.Vex Ringtone that was in the key of the song, so I played the song over the loop.

It sounds like there's a bass at the end. Was it a bass guitar or an octave pedal?

I played a little bit of bass. That was a luxury I was afforded, because I brought a bunch of gear. So many of my albums are recorded with just one guitar.

It certainly helps vary the textures. For example, the guitars on "Go Happy Lucky" and "Monica Jane" have an acoustic tone. Were you using a hollowbody for those?

Yes. That's an old ES-125 with one P-90 pickup. I love that guitar. They might have miked the body of the guitar as well as the amp.

It sounds like you used an actual acoustic for "Made to Shine" and "Pioneers."

That was an incredible, early-'40s Gibson J-45.

What about the music box-like sound



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at the beginning of “Monica Jane?”

That actually is a couple of different music boxes being captured through the pickups of the guitar, and then routed into the Line 6 DL4 I used for looping. I can’t seem to shake that pedal. It’s just so easy for me to use. I also used a modulated tremolo setting on the Strymon Flint.

“Think About It” has a unique distorted sound. Do you remember how you got that?

It’s just the amp turned way up, and going into the strings of this upright piano that was owned by Richard Manuel from The Band. The amp was right up against the strings, and we held down the piano’s sustain pedal so that the overtones were ringing from inside the upright’s soundboard.

There’s some ring modulation on that, as well.

I’m pretty sure that’s the Ringtone—although I also used a Minifooger Ring Modulator in a couple of places. I used a



Tube Screamer for overdrive and a Catalinbread Katzenkönig for more extreme distortion.

If you had to pick a desert-island amp and a guitar, what would they be?

I have a Gibson GA-18 T Explorer amp. It’s very low powered with one 10” speaker—like a Gibson version of a Fender Princeton. Whenever I’m home, *that’s* the amp. When I moved recently, I only had one guitar with me. It was this J.W. Black Telecaster. I realized it was all I really needed. Although, I might pick that J-45, or some big archtop.

Is there one pedal that is essential to your sound?

I love the Strymon Flint Tremolo & Reverb. I’ve done a couple of tours where I only brought that.

When you do get back to playing with other artists, is there anybody left with whom you really want to work?

I’ve been able to play with 90 percent of the people I would name. Maybe one song with Bob Dylan or Sonny Rollins, but so many of my dreams have come true beyond my wildest imagination. 🎸



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STEELIN' THE BLUES

JOE GOLDMARK

EXPLORES THE BLUESY SIDE OF COUNTRY
ON *BLUE STEEL*

DESPITE ITS DESIGNATION AS A GUITAR, the pedal steel is about as foreign to most 6-stringers as advanced quantum physics. And although the instrument's tangy twangs and gooey glissandos are mainly associated with traditional country and Hawaiian music, in the hands of a virtuoso like Joe Goldmark the pedal steel is capable of traversing multiple genres. "I love the sound of the traditional steel guitar, but really enjoy putting it in non-country contexts," Goldmark explains. "I think rock audiences who might shy away from conventional country would find a lot of things to connect with in my music."

This seems a reasonable assumption considering Goldmark's past albums have included his take on Beatles tunes and other '60s pop gems, and his latest release *Blue Steel* [Lo-Ball Records] finds him putting the pedals to tunes by Rufus Thomas, Graham Parker, Bob Marley, and B.B. King—alongside his own blues and surf-inspired instrumentals. "I always keep my ears open for tunes that might work well with steel guitar and add them to a running list," says Goldmark. "When I make a new album, I'll go back over the list and see what'll work with the music I'm writing. I look for the kinds of tunes that are

under-represented in country rock and try to do unconventional things with them. This album features guest vocalists Glenn Walters and Dallis Craft and I often had them reverse genders by having Dallis sing a traditionally male song and vice versa. I have really eclectic tastes in music, and I don't like boundaries."

During the '90s, Goldmark recorded three acclaimed albums as a member of Jim

Campilongo's 10 Gallon Cats, and Campilongo makes a cameo on *Blue Steel*, writing and playing lead guitar on "I Want to Be with You Forever." In his co-collaborator Goldmark sees a kindred artistic spirit: "Jim combines some amazing qualities in his playing that nobody else really has. There are all

these time-honored country elements and a Roy Buchanan approach, but he's playing in rock and jazz contexts and taking it to whole new levels."

Originally a cellist, Goldmark gravitated to bass in high school and tracked some of the bass parts on *Blue Steel* himself. It was after seeing Jerry Garcia with New Riders of the Purple Sage that he bought his first pedal steel and dedicated himself to it exclusively. Goldmark's current instrument is a custom ZumSteel made by legendary builder Bruce



BY VINNIE DEMASI





{ JOE GOLDMARK }

Zumsteg, which he plugs straight into a late-'70s solid-state amp Webb amp.

For curious guitarists looking to explore the pedal-steel world, Goldmark offers a basic primer: "The main neck on a pedal steel is the one in E9 tuning (B, D, E, F#, G#, B, E, G#, D#, F# low to high). This gives you the signature I-IV switch you hear on most commercial country songs. Single-neck instruments in this tuning are a good place for beginners to start. The other neck is in C6 tuning (C, F, A, C, E, G, A, C, E, D low to high) and is capable of more bluesy swing sounds. It's what I'm using for my solos on 'Beautician Blues' and 'The Wobble.' The tunings are just half the story, though, because there are the pedals and knee levers that bend notes analogous to the way you bend strings on a guitar."

"Playing steel requires a different technique than playing guitar, and it's important not to shirk the effort of learning correctly. Because it involves the right-hand thumb,

index, and, middle fingers, some guitarists think they can pick with their fingers alone, but I really recommend using thumb- and fingerpicks to get the sharpest clearest tone. You'll also need to master a technique called pick blocking, where you use the back of your palm to dampen the strings after they're played. When done right, it creates these up and down movements with the whole hand."

"As for the left hand, most slides and bars are almost four inches long, almost an inch in diameter, and fairly heavy since more weight means more tone and less buzz. They're smooth and rounded and require some skill to learn how to hold effectively. Unlike slides for guitar, a pedal-steel slide moves top to bottom across the strings as well as up and down them. The left hand follows where the right hand picks and the tip of your bar-hand finger extends past the end of the bar slightly so the strings are muted beyond where the top of the bar is. Like in

the guitar kingdom, there are different ways to approach vibrato. You can rock the bar on its axis for subtle tonal variation or quickly move it back and forth, for a more dramatic pitch fluctuation."

Beyond just mastering the basic techniques Goldmark says becoming an effective pedal-steel player is also about learning to fit in with an ensemble. "It's wise to know the give and take standard for playing with other instruments in country music," he explains. "For example, whoever takes the intro usually lays out during the verse fills. Whoever didn't play in the verse usually takes the solo. It's delineated so that no two solo instruments are ever playing at the same time unless you've worked out a twin line in advance. It's okay to comp behind other soloists but you don't want to overshadow them. Spend time learning the traditions of the instrument, and once you've done that, you'll be in a good position to do your own thing." ■

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We paid homage to Andy Summers with a guitar-armada jam on “Message In a Bottle.” Left to right: Jennifer Batten, Eric Barnett, Andy Timmons, Patrick Stone, Kevin Aiello, Noelle Doughty, Uriah Duffy, Gretchen Menn, Tracii Guns, Michael Molenda.

BEAUTIFUL NOISES

A BAND OF ANGELS GIVE WINGS TO GP’S “PLAY IT FORWARD” BENEFIT FOR MUSICIANS AFFECTED BY THE NORCAL FIRES

AS THE OCTOBER 2017 NORTHERN CALIFORNIA fires raged in GP’s “hood,” the staff committed itself to a small, but mighty goal: Helping guitarists who had lost their instruments—or their creative mojo—to the devastation. It took us until the six-month anniversary of the tragedy, but, thanks to a fabulous commune of artists, manufacturers, and friends, we launched our “Play It Forward” benefit concert on April 20, 2018 at the Luther Burbank Center for the Arts in Santa Rosa—

itself still rebuilding from fire damage to the venue. Those who served brilliantly during this crazy endeavor include: Eric Barnett (our event co-producer, who also offered up his group Points North as the house band), Anita Wigglesworth and the entire staff of the Luther Burbank Center, Isabelle Garson of Second Octave (who rescued our social promotions), Tien Lawrence, Doug West, and Tim McKee (they donated the backline); Ellen Maremont Silver of Santa Rosa Junior College (who, along with Robyn Bramhall, got an enthusiastic array of students into the theater), David Silva of the Play It Forward Music Foundation (despite the name, his group isn’t affiliated with GP, and yet, they offered instrument donations and helped with promo), Jim Douglas of Prime Time Entertainment (who provided



STEVE JENNINGS

Rock and Roll Hall of Fame legend Andy Summers—shown with his brand-new, reclaimed-pine Telecaster from the Fender Custom Shop—captivated an enraptured audience during a solo-guitar performance of “Message In a Bottle,” an interview and Q&A, and a surprise reading from his as-yet-unreleased novel.

the Roland Jazz Chorus amp for Andy Summers and Mimi Fox), Carlos Santana and Joe Bonamassa (who signed guitars for the charity auction), Danelectro for the ’59XT all of the benefit artists signed, the local radio ticket giveaways (thanks KRCB, KSRO, and KVRV), and *Frets* editor Jimmy Leslie (who filled in all the blanks on the duty roster).

GP is continuing the signed-guitar auctions for charity (instruments from Steve Vai, Nita Strauss, and Steve Lukather are en route), as well as our free guitar giveaways to those whose instruments were destroyed in the carnage (Fender has already donated ten guitars, and Mitchell Guitars and Danelectro gave us two each). We’ll keep reaching out to our fab manufacturing partners until all 50 people who requested replacement guitars have them in their hands.

Of course, this dream would have *stayed* a dream if not for the tremendous contributions of all the artists who donated their performances. Not only did these gifted and diverse talents enthrall the audience, every one of them was an awesome hang, a supporter of the cause, and a gracious and lovely human being. The entire night was like being at the best party ever, and with the coolest people imaginable. GP’s enduring thanks goes out to every one of you.

BY MICHAEL MOLENDNA



The limited-edition poster, designed by GP/BP managing editor Patrick Wong. Only

50 were made for the artists to sign for VIP ticket holders and the Luther Burbank Center.



CHERYL ALTERMAN



STEVE JENNINGS

Jennifer Batten unleashed huge tones while performing to selected film clips from her multimedia show.

Not sure how often audiences are treated—or threatened—by something like this: Gretchen Menn and Tracii Guns with their dueling violin bows.



STEVE JENNINGS

Enlisted by *Bass Player* editor Chris Jisi, Michael Manring played some stunning solo-bass compositions.



PATRICK WONG

The artist hang and charity VIP event in the huge Luther Burbank Center green room.



MICHAEL MOLENDRA

Frets editor Jimmy Leslie “guarding” the guitars for the charity auction: a PRS SE Abraxas signed by Carlos Santana, a Danelectro '59XT signed by all the Play It Forward artists, and an Epiphone Les Paul Special signed by Joe Bonamassa.



SONNIEFELS



Mimi Fox played her signature Heritage guitar so fast and so smoothly that you could barely hear her pick hit the strings. Gorgeous.



CHERYL ALTERMAN

The Points North house band—with vocalists Patrick Stone and Noelle Doughty—back up Tracii Guns during his set.



CHERYL ALTERMANN

The Trouble With Monkeys' guest-star-driven "psychedelicized" version of "Pleasant Valley Sunday." Left to right: Jennifer Batten, Sam Haun, Andy Timmons, Dana Parker, Michael Molenda, Cheryl Doll, and Patrick Wong.



STEVE JENNINGS

The joke was that Andy Timmons was never off stage, as he played with almost all the artists. But his own performance was mesmerizing and full of guitar thrills.



CHERYL ALTERMANN



STEVE JENNINGS

Noelle Doughty and Gretchen Menn (second from right) evoked a Zepparella performance, doing some Led Zep tunes with Zeppelin Live drummer Jimmy Wells and Point North's Eric Barnett and Uriah Duffy.



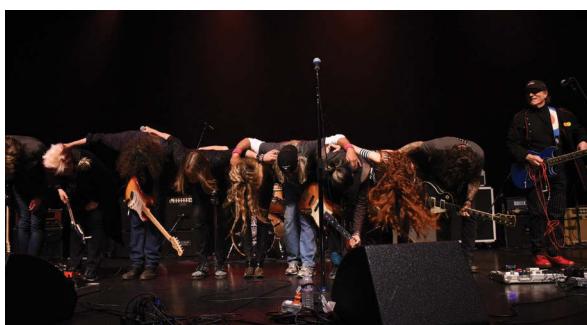
STEVE JENNINGS

A big rock moment in the Points North set with guitarist Eric Barnett, bassist Uriah Duffy, and drummer Kevin Aiello.

Oakland's Stimuli—guitarist Jimmy Tomahawk, drummer Cole Andrew, and bassist Tai Hake—brought some ferocious energy to the house.



STEVE JENNINGS



CHERYL ALTERMANN

Someone missed the cue for the big curtain-call bow.

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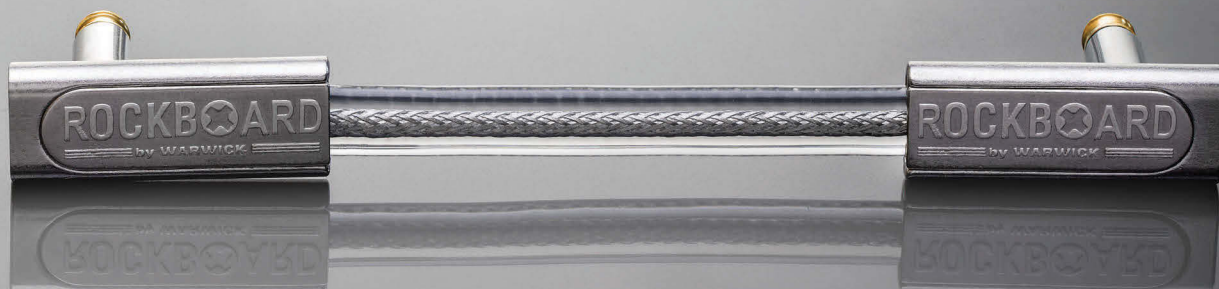
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A LONG TIME COMING...

AFTER DECADES SPENT THINKING OF OTHERS, BOB KULICK WALKS INTO A STUDIO TO DO HIS OWN THING

BOB KULICK HAS ALWAYS HAD A HEAD for big concepts and the guitar skills and production chops to pull them off. He also has a gift for putting just the right players into a musical framework to make a song blast out of a playback system to become a blissfully vicious earworm you won't soon forget—even if you're not a fan of the music itself. (Yeah, there has to be some kind of voodoo going on there, Bob.) But he has deployed all of his magic in the service of concept albums (*Immortal Randy Rhoads: The Ultimate Tribute*, *Butchering the Beatles: A Headbashing Tribute*, *We Wish You a Merry Christmas and a Headbanging New Year*) and productions for various bands.

So, okay then, if he is all that talented

and creative, why did it take him more than 50 years to finally make his very own solo album? Like many things that force other things to happen, it was a consequence of love.

His girlfriend, photographer Julie Bergonz, kicked off the whole process that would become *Skeletons in the Closet* [Vanity Music Group] by encouraging Kulick to not only consider it was time to do something for himself, but she also went out and found the studio—Vegas View Recording in Las Vegas—and introduced him to the album's co-producer, Bobby Ferrari.

At that point, it was time to pull

BY MICHAEL MOLENDAA

out his producer's call list to populate the album sessions with musicians that would bring his collection of new compositions, works from his vault, and a cover of "Goldfinger" to life. By the time *Skeletons in the Closet* was mixed, 23 players were credited, including Dee Snider, Eric Singer, Rudy Sarzo, and Robin McAuley.

Kulick—who Kiss Army members worship for his classic sessions with the band, as well as his jaw-dropping performances on Kiss Kruises with his brother Bruce (who was actually in Kiss from 1984-1996)—considers his very very long-in-coming first solo album a "retrospective," due to its mix of songs from the past and present. Another appropriate word to define it would be "finally."

How does a someone who picks up the guitar as a lifestyle and career more than 50 years ago, and, in the process becomes a Grammy-winning record producer with tons of songwriting credits and access to killer players, wait five decades to walk into a studio and do his own thing?

I never thought very much about a solo career. I've always been a team player. But my girlfriend, Julie, encouraged me, and I also realized that throughout my career as a producer, people have always said they'd like to do something with me. So it seemed like the right time to plug in the resources—my guest artists—and record something. It started out as an EP, but then we started adding some of my songs that had never seen the light of day, and we had an album. It was not something I could have predicted.

When you look at the retrospective material and the new songs that you've written, can you track your growth as a composer through the selections on *Skeletons in the Closet*?

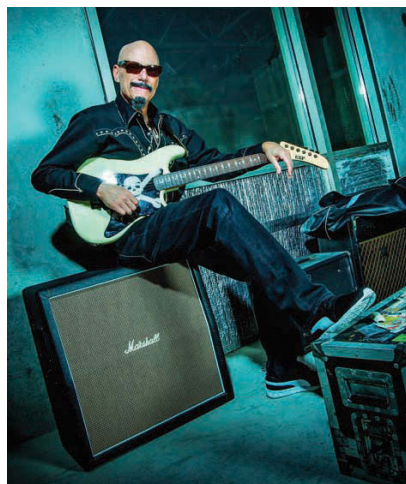
I do feel I've improved as a writer, and it's because of my better understanding of chords and tunings. As a result, I'm creating chords—I call them "piano chords"—that are different than I've ever had in my vocabulary before. I also moved away from writing everything in 4/4. So I was kind of proud when a guest artist would say, "This song sounds unique," because that's very hard to do these days. In addition, all of my experience as a producer helped me to not settle for some of the stuff that I might have settled for back in the day.

Did you change your approach to soloing for the album?

Usually, I like to catch the spontaneity

of the moment, but I did spend time working out some of the guitar solos. I wanted to hear something different from myself, so I thought "Okay, let's construct some stuff."

Given your massive experience producing other artists, were there any particular challenges in making your own record?



It's really challenging trying to create something special—and something that's different for me—while not trying to be something I'm not. That was the hardest part of this project.

How did you science-out that task, then?

Well, as a producer, I've had to critique other people's material and make changes, so I had those muscles exercised. But I was very lucky to have Bobby Ferrari as a co-producer. Bobby didn't stand in the way of me being me, but he also really helped me make sure this was a more modern-sounding me. Some of the intro ideas and guitar sounds he came up with were definitely not things I would have

thought of.

Specifically, what did Bobby do that helped you modernize yourself a bit?

First, I think artists who chase after something they're not usually fail, because if it's not heartfelt—and, to me, this is one of the beauties of music—the audience somehow knows it. They can usually tell the true artists from the imitators. And, you know, it's actually a tall order to try to chase something that's not you, or to recapture who you were 20 or 30 years ago, and make it work. So I simply went with ten songs I was comfortable with, and I trusted what I played on those ten songs. Where Bobby was invaluable is the fact that he is very aware of my history, and he knew how far he could push me towards modern-ness without losing myself. For example, having three or four different amps plugged in together to get some different sounds was as about far as we went. I didn't even try different guitars, because I really love my ESPs.

And it wasn't weird for you to have a co-producer, when you've done the job yourself for years?

I was okay with it, because he saw the vision, and he was able to add to it. Bobby is also so musical that he made it a lot easier for me to relax and be the artist—rather than continually wearing the producer's hat and beating myself up.

What is your main production doctrine?

It's always about the songs. People need to have those great songs, guitar hooks, solos, and all of that. There are so many choices out there today, and a person can be incredibly discerning about what he or she wants to listen to. You have to start out with a brilliant, heartfelt song that people are going to remember. ■



{ STYLE }

Faux Slide Guitar

HOW TO GENERATE AUTHENTIC BOTTLENECK SOUNDS WITHOUT THE BOTTLE

BY JESSE GRESS

IF YOU'RE LIKE ME, YOU ADORE THE sound of bottleneck/slide guitar, but could never quite get the hang of it. (Dammit!) But instead of feeling left out, I eventually took inspiration from Jeff Beck—who possesses mad slide guitar skills, plus an uncanny knack for simulating slide sounds using only his bare fingers and a whammy bar—and have since incorporated an ever increasing number of “faux slide” moves into my musical vocabulary. Here’s how you can, too.

SLEIGHT OF HAND

Essentially, you only have to master a few bar-bend and string-muting techniques to convincingly pull off all of the following musical examples. You have silently pre-bent and audibly released grace notes to use to “slide” or “dip” into notes, and downward melodic/rhythmic bends with both silent and audible releases, and that’s about it. Regarding the pick hand, I highly recommend the Beck technique—all notes plucked with the thumb and the

index finger positioned at-the-ready, on top of the whammy bar. (Tip: “Choking up” towards the middle of the bar facilitates more control over subtle half-step dips and bends, while depressing the bar from its tip requires less pressure to travel greater distances.) Thumb-picking works and sounds best, but if you must use a plectrum, you’ll have to shift all bar duties to a combination of middle and ring fingers in tandem. However you slice it, the whammy bar offers a vehicle to some scintillating, sultry slide textures.

BAR HOPPING BASICS

Okay, grab a whammy-equipped axe—a “floating” setup, for which the bar can be raised as well as lowered, works best, even though we won’t be doing any upward bending, except to create smooth vibratos—and play the beautifully resonant upper-register, second-inversion *A* triad diagrammed in **Ex. 1a**. Next, play it again, as shown in **Ex. 1b** and dig the result. We’re only pre-bending and releasing the bar by a half-step, measured

on the *B* string (some of the strings may travel slightly more or less than that, a side effect that is exaggerated on downward bends of greater distance), but along with the added vibrato it’s enough to create a convincing slide simulation. **Ex. 1c** adds an optional finger slide into the pre-bent grace notes and immediate release that further enhances the effect, while **Ex. 1d** features a more gradual release from the half-step pre-bend for another variation.

Now, drop **Ex. 1c** (though the other two variants work equally well) into the bluesy *A*-based 12/8 chordal figure notated in **Ex. 2a** and dig its vibe. Once you’re comfy with it, move on to **Ex. 2b**, where a four-note blues lick derived from the same chord shape is inserted into beats two and three of the previous figure. Hold the *A* triad and apply a downward whole-step bar bend from *C#* to *B* on the second string, then silently release it just before playing the following third-string *A* and half-step, pre-bent “dip” and audible release from *B#* (a.k.a. *C*) to *C#* before restating the pickup chords. The “silent” (versus

Ex. 1a

T	14
A	14
B	14

Ex. 1b

T	14
A	(13)-14
B	(13)-14

Ex. 1c

T	14
A	(13)-14
B	(13)-14

Ex. 1d

T	14
A	(13)-14
B	(13)-14

Ex. 2a

♩ = ca. 65 A D/A A A A D/A A

T 2-2-3 2 2-2-3 2 2-2-3 2
A 2-2-(2) 2 2-2-(2) 2 2-2-(2) 2
B 0-0-(0) 0 0-0-(0) 0

Ex. 2b

♩ = ca. 65 A A D/A A A

T 14-(12)-14 14-(12)-14 2-2-3 2 14-(12)-14
A 14-(12)-14 14-(12)-14 2-2-(2) 2 14-(12)-14
B 14-(12)-14 14-(12)-14 0-0-(0) 0 14-(12)-14

Ex. 2c

Ex. 2d

♩ = ca. 65 A

T 12-(11)-14 14
A 12-(11)-14 14
B 12-(11)-14 14

“audible”) release is an important factor throughout, and it is best accomplished by muting the string with the fret-hand thumb while the bar is still depressed and releasing it just before playing the following note.

Ex. 2c creates another drop-in option, by moving the same shape and phrasing to the

next lower set of adjacent strings to form an A-G-E-A lick. **Ex. 2d** presents a third drop-in that features slightly different phrasing. Here, we hold the opening E-to-D# half-step bend, so that it serves as a pre-bend preceding the audible grace-note release from B# to C#, which is allowed to ring over the final

vibrated A. Sweet!

LICK LIBRARY

Before we enter the library, let's examine four ways in which to re-phrase the same A-G-E-A lick. **Ex. 3a** employs a finger slide into A on the second string, followed by a downward melodic whole-step bar bend to G and its subsequent silent release that precedes E, which (optionally) is allowed to ring beneath the vibrated return to A. **Ex. 3b** replaces the finger slide with a pre-bent G grace-note dip into the opening A, followed by the same moves as Ex. 3a. **Ex. 3c** maintains the opening grace-note pre-bend/release and downward A-to-G melodic bar bend, but as seen in Ex. 2d, this bend is held until its audible grace-release from D to E, preceding the final A. Finally, **Ex. 3d** brings back the finger slide

Ex. 3a

♩ = 65-135 A7

T 10-(8)-9 10 (8)-10-(8)-9 10 (8)-10-(8)-9 10 10-(8)-(3)-5 5
A 10-(8)-9 10 (8)-10-(8)-9 10 (8)-10-(8)-9 10 10-(8)-(3)-5 5
B 10-(8)-9 10 (8)-10-(8)-9 10 (8)-10-(8)-9 10 10-(8)-(3)-5 5

Ex. 3b

Ex. 3c

Ex. 3d



and is otherwise identical to Ex. 3c, except the D-to-E grace-release has been re-phrased as a pair of 16th notes.

The next dozen A-blues-based faux-slide licks are played between the eighth and second positions, and use Ex. 3c's phrasing (minus its opening grace-note dip) as a template, though the three other options are always available. As written, they're designed to drop into Ex. 2a, but they can also be combined and/or rhythmically displaced to create longer lines in a wide range of tempos. Here's an intervallic play-by-play for each lick:

Ex. 4a - Root-to- $\flat 7$ (A-to-G) bend held until audibly released from 4 to 5 (D to E),

plus $\flat 7$ target (G).

Ex. 4b - $\flat 7$ -to-6 (G-to-F $\sharp$) bend held until audibly released from $\flat 5$ to 5 (D $\sharp$ to E), plus $\flat 7$ target (G).

Ex. 4c - Same as Ex. 4b, but with A root target.

Ex. 4d - Same as Examples 4b - 4c, but with 3 target (C $\sharp$).

By now, you should have noticed how sustaining the last two notes in each lick implies a partial chord—A5 in Examples 4a and 4c, A7 in Ex. 4b, and A in Ex. 4d. Check out how this let-ring option produces partial A triads in the next four examples.

Ex. 5a - 5-to- $\flat 5$ (E-to-D $\sharp$) bend held until audibly released from 2 to 3 (B to C $\sharp$), plus

5 target (E).

Ex. 5b - Same as Ex. 5a, but with high-A root target.

Ex. 5c - Same as Ex. 5b, but with A root target dropped one octave.

Ex. 5d - 3-to-2 (C $\sharp$ -to-B) bend held until audibly released from $\flat 7$ to root (G to A), plus 5 target (E).

Ex. 6a - Same as Ex. 3c played one octave lower, minus opening bar dip; Implies A5.

Ex. 6b - Same as Ex. 5d, but with A root target; Derived from A major pentatonic; Implies A6 or F $\sharp$ m.

Ex. 6c - Same as Ex. 6b, but with half-step bar bend and audible release (C to B, and E $\sharp$ to F $\sharp$).

Ex. 6d - Introduces a harmonic $\flat 7$ -over-5

Ex. 4a **Ex. 4b** **Ex. 4c** **Ex. 4d**

$\text{♩} = 65-135$ A7

Ex. 5a **Ex. 5b** **Ex. 5c** **Ex. 5d**

$\text{♩} = 65-135$ A7

Ex. 6a **Ex. 6b** **Ex. 6c** **Ex. 6d**

$\text{♩} = 65-135$ A7

minor-third interval (G-over-E) bent down a half step to F#-over-D and held until audible single-note $\flat 3$ -to-3 grace-release (B#-to-C#), plus choice of G-over-E or tonic A targets.

DOUBLE YOUR PLEASURE, DOUBLE YOUR FUN

The next five licks encompass a full measure of 12/8 meter. Keeping Ex. 6d in mind, check out how **Ex. 7a**, which restores the opening

bar dip, breaks the previous $\flat 7$ -over-5 interval into two beats of alternating single notes, repeats beat one on beat three, and finishes up with the 5- $\flat 5$ -3-root lick from Ex. 5c. Employing the let-ring option creates a glorious partial A7 chord. **Ex. 7b** takes a similar tact with the $\flat 7$ replaced by tonic A's for more of an Elmore James vibe. **Ex. 7c** follows suit with broken 5-over-3 intervals (E-over-C#) for three beats, plus a reprise of Ex. 6a

on beat four.

Ex. 8a is a slightly different animal that employs the previous harmonic G-over-E intervals as partial A7 chords for two beats, and then tacks on Ex. 6d as a closer. On the other hand, **Ex. 8b** recalls a snippet of Duane "Skydog" Allman's soaring slide work on "Statesboro Blues" while introducing a new technique. Begin with the opening triplet from Ex. 7b, then grab an eighth-fret B# on the first string and simultaneously apply both a half-step finger bend (the only one in this lesson) plus a pre-bent bar dip and grace-note release to sound the C# on beat two. This technique adds extra "swoop" to the note and can easily be applied elsewhere. Following a tonic A, the measure is filled out with the first three notes of Examples 7a and 7c, respectively.

I CAN'T BELIEVE IT'S NOT SLIDE!

We've concentrated on blues licks, but slide guitar can be applicable to any genre. Here's a look at how to simulate four non-blues-based, real-world slide riffs in straight 4/4 meter. Get 'em right, and you shouldn't hear much difference from the originals. First up, **Ex. 9** recalls George Harrison's post-fab early solo work with an A-major-pentatonic-based melody played in 14th position around our original A chord. Rest for beat one, play a pre-bent grace dip and release from B to A on the first half of beat two, and rest on the second half. Next, grab the third-string B at the 16th fret with your third finger on beat two, add a downward whole-step to A (plus silent release), and then on beat four add F# and a pre-bent whole-step dip and grace release from A to B. (Recognize the phrasing? It's the same as Ex. 2c, but with different notes.) Bar 2 begins with an eighth rest, followed by an A eighth note and an F# quarter note before moving on to a four-note

Ex. 7a

$\text{♩} = 65-135$ A7, D7, or E7

Ex. 7b

$\text{♩} = 65-135$ A7, D7, or E7

Ex. 7c

$\text{♩} = 65-135$ A7

Ex. 8a

$\text{♩} = 65-135$ A7

Ex. 8b

*Distance of bend measured on 1st string.

**Finger bend B# 1/2 step to C# while releasing pre-bend.



Ex. 9 A F#m

♩ = ca. 124

Ex. 10 A G

♩ = ca. 65

Ex. 11 Cmaj7 Dm7 F/G

♩ = ca. 120

Ex. 12 D5 F5 E5 D5 A♭5 A5

♩ = ca. 86 Drop-D tuning (6)=D

6-root-6-5 lick (F#-A-F#-E) played with a half-step pre-bend and grace-release into the first note and a melodic whole-step F#-to-E bend on beat four.

The regal riff in **Ex. 10** attempts to replicate the B-section of “Beck’s Bolero” (sans slide-generated bullfight crowd noises). Once again, it’s based on our original A triad, plus the same shape moved down a whole step to G. Finger-slide into the opening dotted half note (add a grace-dip-and-release, if you like), and then for the four 16th notes on beat four, play the 4 (D), drop the bar a half step to sound the 3 (C#), and follow up with a silent release to the root and 5 (A and E) to create a beautiful *Asus4-A* suspension and resolution. Bar 2 begins with the same four-note motif and phrasing as beat four of bar 1, albeit moved down a whole step to its diatonic neighbor, G, which accounts for its #4-to-3 (C#-to-B) suspension and resolution and ensuing G and D chord tones. Ole!

And now for something completely different: **Ex. 11** depicts the way I perform the outro choruses of Todd Rundgren’s “I Saw the Light” in concert. I simulate the slide part with a pair of bar-bent natural harmonics—G on the third-string’s fifth fret, and B on the second string’s 12th fret, both prefaced with pre-bent bar dips and grace-releases—while surrounding them with the song’s Cmaj7-Dm7-F/G chord changes. Note how the first two bends are lowered one-and-a-half steps, which turns into a whole-step pre-bend on the second string. (Now sing while playing it. I dare ya!)

Finally, no slide guitar primer, faux or real, would be complete without an adaptation of the nefarious opening theme from AMC’s *Breaking Bad*. Dropping your low-E string a whole step to D, and having at **Ex. 12**’s fat, parallel root-plus-5 chords, all barred with the third finger, will get you dangerously close to Heisenberg territory. (The original riff was recorded on acoustic, but go ahead and pile on as much gain as you like—the more the merrier!) Fine points following the open D5 half note include a combo finger-slide/bar-dip into F5 connected to a half-step downward bend to E5 and its silent release and pull-off to D5, plus similar phrasing applied to A♭5 and A5 in bar 2. Tread lightly.

I hope this lesson encourages your own excursions into the world of faux slide. All of the previous techniques can be applied to a multitude of musical styles and situations. Experiment with rhythmic and melodic variations in different keys, and try dropping bar dips and downward melodic bends into your favorite well-worn licks. After all, every faux-slide bar bend is one less note you have to pick! 🎸

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Smooth Sailing

How to Play Slide Guitar

BY KEITH WYATT

FEW INSTRUMENTS CAN EVOKE THE qualities of a human voice as well as a slide guitar. An expert player can express a wide range of emotions, but the basic techniques of slide are accessible even to beginners... it starts with just one finger.

BACKGROUND

Before blues or country even existed, 19th-century Hawaiian guitarists developed a style called *slack key* by tuning the open strings to a chord and playing changes by sliding up and down the neck with steel bars. Meanwhile, African Americans in the south had the *did-dley bow*, a homemade, one-string instrument played with a bottle, knife, or even a piece of bone. In the early 20th century, these parallel traditions blended together to become the foundation of the blues, country, and rock slide guitar sounds we know today.

CHOOSING A SLIDE

Commercial slides are available in a variety of shapes and sizes; here are a few things to consider when making a choice:

- **Material:** Glass, steel, brass, copper and ceramic are the most common; the qualities are subtly different and the choice is a matter of taste.
- **Weight:** Medium weight and thickness—neither especially thin nor heavy—is easiest to manage.
- **Length:** about as long as the guitar neck is wide
- **Diameter:** just wide enough to slip over your finger up to the second knuckle (too loose and it can fly off).
- **Finger:** the explanations in this lesson are based on using the little finger, but every finger has its advantages, and many players prefer to wear the slide on their

ring finger. Experiment before you decide.

GUITAR SETUP

A smooth slide sound depends on avoiding contact between the slide and the frets, so serious slide players favor heavy strings (some use flat-wounds to reduce string noise) and high action. However, if you switch between normal playing and slide within the same song, or if it's simply not practical to dedicate a guitar to slide, you can make your everyday instrument work by developing a lighter touch and maybe using a clean boost pedal to fill out the sound.

HOLDING THE SLIDE

Holding your guitar normally, lay the slide flat across the strings, parallel to the frets. Rest the index (first) finger of your slide hand lightly on the strings, parallel to the

Ex. 1

E

Ex. 2

E

Ex. 3

Ex. 4

E7

slide about two frets below. Keep the second and third fingers slightly above the strings and position your thumb behind the neck opposite your first finger. Run the slide lightly along the strings and listen for a smooth, unbroken sound, with no bumps or scrapes from contacting the frets.

INTONATION

Slide guitar is essentially a fretless instrument, and playing in tune (*intonation*) depends entirely on your ability to hear and control minute differences in pitch. The first thing to notice is that when you fret a string it's the fret itself, not your finger, that determines the pitch, so to match the same pitch with the slide you must position the slide directly over the fret. Practice intonation by fretting random notes and precisely matching each one with the slide.

ONE-STRING MELODIES

A more musical way to practice intonation is to play melodies on one string. This is a common technique in down-home blues and gospel, where the slide is often played in unison with the voice. Classic examples include Blind Willie Johnson's "Dark Was the Night, Cold Was the Ground" and Mississippi Fred McDowell's "You Got to Move" (later covered by the Rolling Stones).

Ex. 1 is an unadorned melody on the high E string. Concentrate first and foremost on nailing each pitch as accurately as if you were fretting. Rest the slide lightly on the string and avoid contact with the frets. Pluck with

either a bare finger or pick and mute the lower strings with the heel of your picking hand.

Ex. 2 "vocalizes" the same melody by sliding into notes and adding vibrato. For vibrato, rock the slide along the string on either side of the pitch, with your thumb behind the neck acting as a pivot. The width and speed of your vibrato are a matter of taste; contrast Tampa Red's wide, sensuous vibrato ("Denver Blues") with Muddy Waters' fast, "buzzing" style ("Honey Bee").

DAMPING

To phrase effectively while moving across the neck, you need to learn how to *damp*, i.e. control unused strings in order to prevent them from interfering with the melody. Some slide players prefer to pluck the strings with their bare fingers and others use a flatpick or thumbpick, often in conjunction with the fingers (hybrid picking), but whichever approach you choose, the goal is to connect the end of one note to the beginning of the next (*legato phrasing*) without overlapping. It takes persistence to develop consistent damping skills, but it's an essential technique.

DAMPING (CONT.)

With the fingers: Place the slide over the ninth fret. Rest the heel of your picking hand on the lower strings near the bridge, with your thumb laying across the bottom three strings and your first, second and third fingers resting on the third, second, and first strings, respectively. Pluck the fourth string with your thumb, the third string with your

first finger, second string with your second finger and first string with your third finger. As you pluck each string, move your thumb across the lower strings to act as a damper; when you descend, bring each bare finger back into position to damp the upper strings.

With a Pick: Mute the lower strings with the heel of your hand and the upper strings with your bare fingers. As you move across the strings from low to high, use the side of your thumb (which is holding the pick) to damp the lower strings; when you descend, drop the fingers back into position to damp the upper strings.

With either technique, practice moving back and forth from string to string to coordinate picking and damping, focusing on legato and avoiding overlap between notes.

STANDARD TUNING

If you use a slide only occasionally, playing in standard tuning is the most practical way to go. As slide icons Robert Nighthawk ("Sweet Black Angel") and Earl Hooker ("Blue Guitar") proved, it also has few limitations.

Classic slide melodies are organized around chord tones rather than scale or pentatonic box patterns, and in standard tuning the major barre chord with the root on the fifth string provides a good foundation. **Ex. 3a** shows the E7 chord tones between the ninth and 12th frets, and **Ex. 4** presents some typical blues phrases within the same pattern (the rhythm track in the audio recording for this example includes an extra bar after each phrase, so that you can repeat it in tempo).



Ex. 5 E7 A7 B7 E7

Ex. 6 Open G tuning (low to high, D G D G B D)

MORE ONLINE!

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

To play slide melodies over chord changes, a classic approach is to move the same note-pattern up or down the neck to match each chord; for example, build phrases around the ninth fret over the *E* chord, the 14th fret over *A*, and the 16th fret over *B*, as demonstrated in **Ex. 5**.

OPEN TUNINGS

Tuning the strings to an open chord allows for one-finger changes and also makes accurate intonation a little easier by gathering frequently-used melody notes closer together. The most common slide open tunings are *open G* (known in Hawaii as *taro patch* and on the mainland as *Spanish*) and *open D* (a.k.a. *Sebastopol* or *Vestapol*).

OPEN G TUNING

Open *G* tuning was a favorite of traditional country blues artists, such as Charley Patton, Robert Johnson, and Muddy Waters. From standard tuning, tune the sixth, fifth, and first strings down a whole-step to form a *G* major chord (*D-G-D-G-B-D*, low to high).

Open *A* tuning, a common variation, has the same layout, but up a whole step: *E-A-E-A-C#-E*.

Ex. 6 illustrates the layout of *G7* chord tones in open *G* tuning, and **Ex. 7** is a 12-bar blues solo in *G* that includes *double-stops* (two notes at a time) and some “down-home” open-string phrases. Compare to versions of “Walking Blues” by Robert Johnson (on acoustic) and Muddy Waters (on electric).

OPEN D TUNING

The sound of open *D* tuning was epitomized by Elmore James; his performances on such classics as “Dust My Broom” and “It Hurts Me Too” inspired generations of blues and rock slide players with raw power and emotional expression.

Open *D* places the root of the chord on the top string, so phrases tend to resemble those of standard tuning more than they do in open *G*. From standard tuning, tune the first, second, and sixth strings down a whole step and the third string down a half-step (*D-A-D-F#-A-D*, low to high). Open *E*

tuning, which has the same layout a step higher (*E-B-E-G#-B-E*), was favored by Duane Allman and carried on by his virtuoso disciple, Derek Trucks.

Ex. 8 shows the layout of *D7* chord tones in open *D* tuning, and **Ex. 9** is an eight-bar solo in the style of “It Hurts Me Too” and built around the same pattern with a focus on vocal expression. An extra benefit of learning slide is that you return to your normal style with a deeper awareness of the importance of each note.

In the words of Derek Trucks, “[Slide guitar] can sound like the most beautiful woman in the world or like somebody skinning a cat.” Virtuoso slide players like Trucks have developed techniques that go far beyond the scope of this introductory lesson, but slide rests first and foremost on the foundation of precise pitch and an ear for melody. It only takes one finger, but when you land that finger just right, it’s magic.

MORE ONLINE! For audio of this lesson, go to guitarplayer.com/technique.

Shuffle

Open G tuning

Shuffle

C

G

D

C

G

D

w/o slide - - - - -

... ..

chord tones: 5 b7 1 3 5 b7 1

Slow blues

Slow blues

D

G

D

A

D

A

T

Riff Scramble

BY JESSE GRESS

THE FOLLOWING WELL-KNOWN TWO-BAR RIFF HAS BEEN sliced and diced beyond recognition, and the result is analogous to a word scramble or anagram. Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to decode and unscramble the riff along with its artist and title, both of which are presented as anagrams.

RULES OF THE GAME

1. All pitches and rhythms (including rests) from the original riff must remain intact, regardless of where they are placed in a measure.
2. All pitches must remain in the same octave as the original riff. (No octave displacement.)
3. All phrasing techniques from the original riff —hammer-ons, pull-offs, slides, vibrato, etc.—must remain intact. (Hammer-ons can reverse to pull-offs and vice versa.)
4. All rhythms must add up to equal the original riff.

Ex. 1

♩ = ca. 112 N.C.

“DAVID A DAD AGAIN” -- “_____”
by BUTLER FOR TINY -- _____

CLUES: Ties in with last month's Classic Rock issue; performed with a Mosrite Mark IV and Mosrite Fuzzrite; song title is tongue-in-cheek Biblical reference; lone double-stop is often overlooked; guitarist's surname has three spellings; framework for world's worst drum solo. 🎸

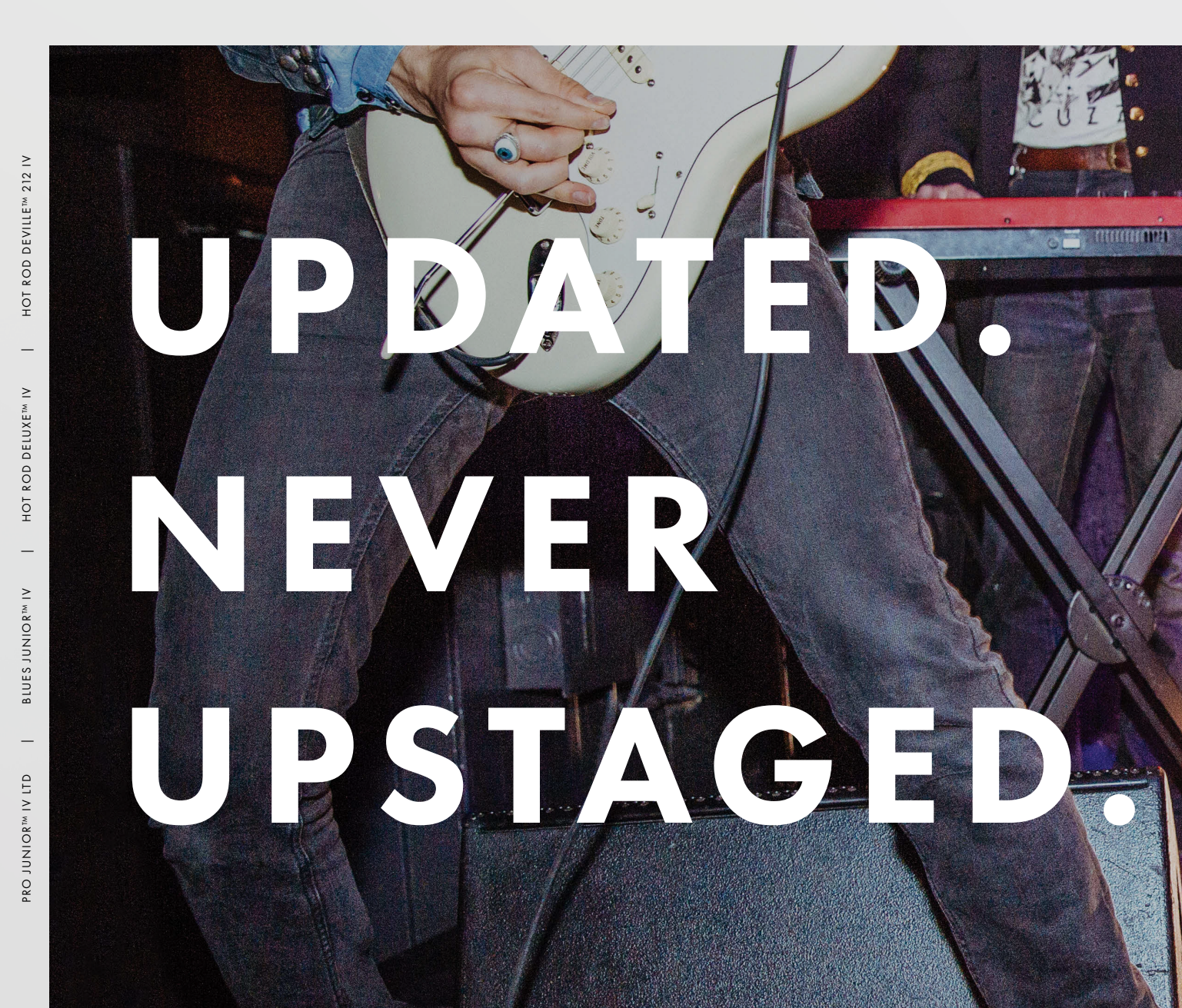


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Patrick James Eggle

MACON SINGLE CUT

BY RICHARD BIENSTOCK

BACK IN THE EARLY 1990S, BRITISH luthier Patrick Eggle made a name for himself as one of the premier guitar builders on the boutique scene. His instruments, in particular a top-of-the-line design dubbed the Berlin, were seen in the hands of legendary players like Brian May, and he crafted artist models and one-off builds for guitarists ranging from Tony Iommi (the TI Legend) to British session great Big Jim Sullivan (the JS Berlin) to Rory Gallagher, whose instrument, a customized JS Berlin Legend, was later sold at auction for 25,000 pounds.

However, by the middle of the decade, Eggle's operation had grown so large that he walked away from it entirely. "My role morphed into one of largely sitting at a bench writing production reports and explaining things to shareholders," he recalls. "And I thought to myself, 'This isn't what I got into this for. I just want to build great guitars.'" He subsequently spent several years crafting guitars on his own, and by the early 2000s had relocated to the U.S., where

he primarily built acoustics. "I wanted to go back to the types of instruments I was making when I first started out at 15," he says. In 2005 he returned to the U.K., overseeing operations for Faith Guitars, and eventually formed Patrick James Eggle Guitars, using his middle name to distinguish his new line from his still-in-operation former company.

To further separate PJE from his earlier brand, Eggle also continued to build solely acoustic instruments. That is, until now. Roughly two years ago he unveiled his first new electric model in many years, a double cut design with a slightly oversized Les Paul Junior-style shape that he christened the Macon. He quickly followed this up with a Strat-style model called The 96. Recalling what led him back to electrics, Eggle says, "I think it was just kind of a nagging thing. I was looking at what was out there, and a lot of the time I was thinking, 'Hey, we could do better than this.' I had a few ideas and I felt I had something to give."

Now, Eggle has unveiled his third electric design, the Macon Single Cut. As for why he opted to do a variation on his first model? "Everyone kept asking for it," he says.

Eggle's instruments, both acoustic and

electric, have long been distinguished by top-notch craftsmanship and high-end appointments, and the Single Cut shown here is among his most exquisite offerings. The semi-chambered body features mahogany back and sides, and is topped with a hand-carved—and quite stunning—6A quilted maple cap boasting a luxurious "Denim" finish. That finish, Eggle says, is "double-stained, with a light burst that is sprayed straight onto the wood." It is accented by "fake binding," wherein, Eggle explains, "we color the top and leave the edge of the cap natural, and then kind of scrape the top corner to get that 'bound' look."

Other features on this Macon include a mahogany neck that is set into the body via a "slipper" heel joint, which is then carved away to make things more ergonomic and provide easy access to the top frets. The Fat-C shaped neck is topped with an ebony fretboard adorned with crown frame inlays, each of which is crafted from four separate CNC-cut pieces of mother-of-pearl. There's also an ABM aluminum bridge, aged nickel plating, Gotoh SD90 vintage tuners and a bone nut and saddle.

For pickups, the Macon sports a Mojo P90-style soapbar at the neck and a Mojo humbucker at the bridge. "They're made in England by a chap named Marc Ransley, who hand-winds all his pickups," Eggle says. "And they're scatterwound. The bridge humbucker is about 14k Ω , so it's quite hot, and I actually had him underwind the neck pickup by about 15 percent from what the standard P90 would be. I find the underwound P90 works really well with the humbucker." The Macon's pickups are controlled via a 3-way switch and distinct Volume and Tone knobs, with a coil tap option on the humbucker. "The switching is kept quite simple and traditional, so you haven't got a huge range of sounds," Eggle says. "But the sounds you do have are all ones you want and that you'll use—the soapbar on its own; the soapbar with the split humbucker, which is killer; the humbucker on its own; and the humbucker split, which is really nice as well."

Eggle and his small, four-person team work out of their own shop within the Faith Guitars facility in Oswestry, about 200 miles outside of London. The small-batch production schedule results in roughly a dozen new instruments each month, though he takes custom orders as well. "Anything's possible," he says as far as building customized instruments. "It's just down to time and money." Up until recently, Eggle's guitars were only available for sale in the U.K., though he recently began offering instruments in the U.S. through Rebel Guitars and Music Zoo. And, as exemplified by the \$6,600 price tag of the Macon Single Cut shown here, a Patrick James Eggle creation doesn't come cheap. But he finds particular satisfaction in designing and producing a top-quality, high-end instrument.

"Everybody has their price-point where they feel comfortable, and this is where I've always sort of been," Eggle says. "I just think it's more rewarding, at least for me, to build a guitar that feels special. And I think we produce a very good guitar for the money."

He laughs. "I suppose we could make them cheaper. But we'd have to leave something off!" ■



GEAR

GuitarPlayer
EDITORS'
PICK



Sound City

MASTER LEAD 50 HEAD AND SC30 COMBO

TESTED BY ART THOMPSON

THE SOUND CITY MUSIC STORE IN

London during the mid '60s was at the epicenter of British rock—as, of course, was Jim Marshall's retail shop. However, Marshall was way ahead of Sound City owner Ivor Arbiter, as his amps were already making a name for themselves on stages in the U.K. and abroad. As the story goes, Mr. Arbiter wanted to get in on the action, and he needed someone to design amps for him that could take on Marshall. He picked well in choosing Dave Reeves for the task, although it's not at all clear as to how Reeves—who later went on to start Hiwatt—became involved with Sound City. A good guess is that Arbiter made him an offer to build a run of amps under the store name, and that's what he did—for a while anyway.

Sound City didn't start small, either, as Reeves developed a 100-watter straight away that was marketed as a lower-priced competitor to Marshall. After Reeves' departure, Sound City amps went through some changes—seemingly for the worse—and were gone from the scene

by the mid '70s. Following the ultimate demise of Sound City, the name—along with all Arbiter rights—were acquired in 2016 by partners Steve Fryette and Neal Ostberg.

Fryette is a longtime Hiwatt fan, and he is very familiar with the designs created by Dave Reeves, so one might chalk it up to destiny that an opportunity came along that enabled him to design a new series of Sound City amps, which were introduced at the 2017 Winter NAMM show. What we have on review here are the Master Lead 50 head and SC30 combo that represent the first wave of Sound City models to roll out of their Southern California factory.

MASTER LEAD 50

In classic British form, the ML 50 has two channels—Normal and Brilliant—and a quartet of inputs to feed them. The amp actually comes with a short jumper cable connecting two of the inputs, which is the old-school way of combining channels for a boost in gain. The balance of the silver Plexiglas-covered front panel has

controls for Normal Volume, Brilliant Volume, Master, Treble, Middle, Bass, and Presence, along with Mains and Standby switches. The rear panel, which is silver-painted steel, holds the fuse holders and a trio of speaker jacks: one 16Ω and two labeled 4Ω/8Ω with a selector to choose the desired impedance for your setup.

The build quality is of high order throughout. The birch-ply cabinet is neatly clad in black Tolex with white piping accents, and the chassis reflects the best of modern PCB design with a heavy-duty board that is reinforced in all the critical areas for pots, tube sockets, etc. Worth noting is the Partridge inspired, paper-insulated output transformer used here (as well as on the SC30), which is one of the essential elements in how this amp is designed to sound.

The Master Lead 50 epitomizes the plug-in-and-turn-it-up amplifier experience. This is the way it used to be, and the new Sound City amps greatly benefit from Fryette's engineering and tonal smarts. He has preserved the essence of what Dave Reeves innovated back in the late

'60s, while making thoughtful tweaks as necessary to create an amp that's totally suitable for today's players.

As a modern rendition of Reeves' 1967 100-watt model, the Master Lead 50 retains his concept of power-stage saturation, and this is definitely what makes the ML 50 so special. Getting the tonal goodies from it is Cro-Magnon simple, but a quick glance at the tag on the amp's handle recommends that you connect the jumper differently for the type of guitar being used: For humbuckers, plug into the #2 bore on the Normal side and jumper between #1 Normal and #4 Brilliant. For single-coils, do sort of the opposite by plugging into the #4 bore on the Brilliant side and jumper from #2 Normal to #3 Brilliant. This is the combination I used with a Strat and Tele, and it definitely optimized the circuit for these brighter pickups, although plugging in a Les Paul the same way did not darken it excessively either. I turned the Normal channel up about halfway, put the Brilliant Volume and Master all the way up, set the tone controls initially around their mid points and had at it.

Along with insane volume blowing out of the Sound City 212 cabinet, I was instantly rewarded with a crushing overdrive tone of the sort that can make you wonder why OD pedals are even necessary when you have an amp like this. Yes, there's that much muscular, complex, and beautifully saturated distortion on tap, and it's dynamically responsive, too. Just use your guitar's Volume knob to go between wailing leads and dirty rhythm, and that's all there is to it. An attenuator certainly makes it easier to live with the ML 50's massive volume potential, and I used both the Fryette Power Station (\$699 street) and Universal Audio OX (\$1,299 street) when playing the ML 50 around the house, and they both allowed the sound of those pushed Mullard EL34s to come through in a very appealing way. Yes, the ML 50 has an effective Master, but the true glory of this amp is best experienced

when its output stage is running at full tilt.

Kudos to Steve Fryette for not loading up this new model with channel switching, gain boosts, effects loops, etc. What the Master Lead 50 delivers is tone in its purest form, and it's simply up to you to discover how best to deploy this amazing rendition of one of Britain's long-lost secret weapons.

SC30

This 1x12 combo also derives its DNA from the same original 100-watt Reeves design that the Master Lead 50 and the soon-to-be-released Master 100 are based on. The SC30 is a different kind of amp, however, in that it uses a pair of Gold Lion KT66 power tubes running cathode bias to make 30 watts. This scheme also allows you to swap in 6L6 or 5881 tubes (or other variants) without rebiasing the amp, which is a nice aspect. The SC30 also uses a 5AR4 rectifier tube, and besides what this contributes to the dynamic feel, its slow warmup negates the need for a standby switch (though I'd still favor having one). There's one input jack, and the Normal and Brilliant channel Volumes are internally "jumpered" to yield the most gain and provide the ability to mix the channels to suit. There's no Master Volume, and the EQ consists of Bass, Middle, and Treble. Last in line on the silver plexi top-panel is the Reverb control, which adjusts the return level from the tube-driven Accutronics 3-spring pan situated at the bottom of the birch-ply cabinet.

Auditioned with the same Strat, Tele, and Les Paul, the SC30 proved just as easy to dial in as the ML 50. With the Normal control at about halfway and the Brilliant Volume full up, the distortion sounded righteously chewy and so dynamic and inspiring that it was hard to stop playing. The fat, splintery overdriven tones are couched in a perfectly balanced realm, where the sustain feels like it's blooming under your fingers and the touch-responsive grind is so abundant that it isn't necessary to switch on an OD or boost pedal when

SPECIFICATIONS

CONTACT soundcityamp.com

Master Lead 50

PRICE \$1,995 street

CHANNELS 2

CONTROLS Normal Volume, Brilliant Volume, Master, Treble, Middle, Bass, Presence

POWER 50 watts

TUBES Three 12AX7 and one 12AT7 preamps tubes, two EL34 power tubes

EXTRAS Three speaker outs: 1x16Ω, 2x8Ω/4Ω with selector

SPEAKER Tested with Sound City SC212 (\$995 street)

WEIGHT 41 lbs

BUILT USA

KUDOS An awesome-sounding rendition of a long-lost British classic.

CONCERNS None—unless you need an FX loop.

SC30

PRICE \$2,395 street

CHANNELS 2

CONTROLS Normal Volume, Brilliant Volume, Treble, Middle, Bass, Reverb

POWER 30 watts

TUBES Three 12AX7 and two 12AT7 preamp tubes, two KT66 power tubes, 5AR4 rectifier

EXTRAS Tube driven Accutronics 3-spring reverb pan. Three speaker outs (4Ω, 8Ω, 16Ω)

SPEAKER Special design 12" 75W 8Ω Sound City Power Speaker by Fane

WEIGHT 48 lbs

BUILT USA

KUDOS Quite possibly the most British-rock attitude I've ever heard from a 1x12 combo.

CONCERNS None.





going from dirty rhythm to solos. Here again, it's the output stage being pushed into saturation that makes the magic happen, and despite the obvious difference between KT66s and EL34s—as well as how the SC30's tube rectification softens up the attack—the overall experience was akin to playing a slightly less-aggressive version of the ML 50. The SC30 is plenty loud when cranked up, but running it through the 8Ω Sound City 212 increases its sonic output, and is the way to go if more stage volume is needed. This amp cleans up well at lower volume settings, and it's great with pedals in this mode thanks to the abundant headroom provided by the KT66 output stage when it's not being driven so hard. The reverb sounds great, too, covering the gamut from light reflections to more than enough spongy wash for a surf gig.

All in all, the SC30 is an amp that would be great for rock, blues, R&B, or what have you—and it's great to know there's a tiger lurking inside and poised to take your head off when you unleash its fury! 🐅



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keyboard



PRS

Silver Sky

John Mayer Signature

TESTED BY MATT BLACKETT

I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE THINKING: THIS

PRS reminds you of something, but you can't quite put your finger on it. When Paul Smith released this collaboration with John Mayer, the online reaction was swift and brutal, with plenty of brutally hilarious memes along the way.

Yes, the Silver Sky was inspired by a guitar that we all know and love. That's the superficial analysis—the easy part. The more interesting thing is to delve into the why and the how of this instrument.

When Smith sat down to talk to avowed Strat Cat Mayer, they discussed what, in their minds, was a conundrum: You can play 100 Strats and only two are magical. So Smith set about looking at every last detail that goes into a transcendent guitar, and he made sure he got those details right.

Despite the online outcry, there are several areas where the Silver Sky deviates from Strattiness. The most obvious is the headstock, which also differs from the normal PRS design in that it's a mirror image. This was, interestingly enough, to afford greater first-position comfort. Other changes are subtle, like the beveled lower horn, which features a different color paint (pearlescent on this Frost model), the output jack, which is angled to facilitate plugging and unplugging, and a Tone

control for the pickup in the position that needs it most—the bridge.

Like every PRS, the Silver Sky feels great all over. The neck carve splits the difference between a '63 and a '64 Strat, and it's beautiful—substantial but not bulky, with perfectly smooth fret ends. Despite the round, 7.25" radius, the Silver Sky is very bend-friendly. I could get it to buzz acoustically on bends of more than a minor third above the 12th fret, but it wasn't particularly noticeable through an amp, and is certainly less than any vintage neck I've ever played. Open strings ring amazingly loud and strong, and you can feel that all through the body.

When I first plugged this guitar in, I assumed that PRS had tweaked each pickup for optimal tone and output, because they all sounded so balanced and the in-between positions didn't have that overly hyped cluck that many three-single-coil guitars exhibit. Come to find out that all three of these pickups are identical—same number of winds, same everything. Smith clearly found the sweet spot to make this work as well

as it does. Because I favor a slightly bright neck pickup, I wouldn't have minded a hotter, darker bridge model, but that's a personal preference. The pickups all sound detailed, sweet, and musical and it was easy to get awesome Gary Moore-style bridge position sounds, Robin Trower middle tones, and Hendrix-approved neck flavors. The in-between settings are hum cancelling, and while the individual single-coils do hum, the signal-to-noise ratio is very impressive.

Bottom line: The Silver Sky absolutely delivers on the promise of being a damn-near-perfect version of this type of guitar. Plenty of folks are quick to pillory Paul Smith for what they see as heresy, while giving a pass to dozens of builders who have essentially done—or tried to do—the exact same thing. But any honest assessment of the Silver Sky has to conclude that this is a glorious guitar that sounds and plays amazing. Paul Reed Smith doesn't mess around, and you've got to assume that he never would have made this guitar if he didn't think he could bring something inspiring to the party. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

CONTACT prsguitars.com

MODEL Silver Sky John Mayer Signature

PRICE \$2,299 street

NUT WIDTH 1 21/32" bone

NECK Maple

FRETBOARD Rosewood, 25.5" scale, 7.25" radius

FRETS 22 medium-jumbo

TUNERS Vintage style, locking

BODY Alder

BRIDGE Steel Tremolo

PICKUPS Three 635JM single-coils

CONTROLS Master Volume, two Tone, 5-way blade selector

FACTORY STRINGS PRS .010-.046

WEIGHT 7 lbs.

BUILT USA

KUDOS Rock solid construction. Classic sound quality. Beautiful playability.

CONCERNS Haters gonna hate.

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{ FIELD TEST }

Music Man

CUTLASS RS HSS AND STINGRAY RS

TESTED BY ART THOMPSON

TRYING TO IMPROVE A PROVEN

product can always be fraught with risk, but Ernie Ball's Music Man division did just that with the recent release of the 2018 Cutlass and StingRay RS models. The RS stands for "roasted," which has become an increasingly popular manufacturing process for very understandable reasons: Heating the neck woods to a high temperature over an extended period of time drives out the moisture, and makes the material harder and more responsive to string vibration, while also imparting a deep, dark coloration to the wood that reveals the grain in often stunning fashion.

Such is the case with both models on review here, and particularly the Cutlass, with its amazingly figured maple fretboard. Both models are available with maple 'boards when ordered in Vintage Turquoise, Firemist Silver, or Vintage Sunburst. Rosewood fretboards are standard with Ivory White, Coral Red, or Charcoal Frost finishes, and the Stealth Black option gives you an ebony fretboard.



Cutlass RS HSS

Stingray RS

CUTLASS RS HSS

As with the original Cutlass, the new RS HSS features an alder body that couples via a bolt-on joint to a gorgeously figured maple neck. The flawless Vintage Turquoise finish dictates a maple fretboard, and the 25.5" scale, 10" radius surface also shows off the deep tiger striping of the wood. Sporting a medium-slim carve and 22 highly polished stainless-steel frets, the Cutlass's neck has an awesome playing feel. The guitar intonates well in all positions thanks, in part, to a compensated nut—and the factory setup provides for low action that allowed only minimal string buzz when bending above the 12th fret. The Music Man Modern Tremolo is butter smooth and returns to pitch very reliably once the strings are stretched out, and the Schaller M6 locking tuners and their 4 +2 arrangement—which provides straight string path over the nut—also helps maintain tuning stability. The resonant qualities are immediately apparent when strumming the Cutlass acoustically, and you can literally feel how the roasted neck is contributing to the uncanny sense of “aliveness” that this guitar provides. I'm sure the bent-steel bridge saddles are adding something as well over the previous Cutlass, but the single biggest enhancement for 2018 was bringing roasted maple to the recipe.

Pickups on this guitar include a Music Man HSS-1 Custom Humbucker in the bridge position and two Music Man Custom Wound single-coils, and the controls are Volume, Tone, and a 5-way selector. Note that this guitar is available with three single-coil pickups as the Cutlass RS for \$1,999 street. Both models have Music Man's wide spectrum Silent Circuit, which provides a buffered output to minimize noise and interference, while also preserving the high-end response at all guitar volume settings. It's powered by a 9V battery that resides in a cavity on the back with a flip-open cover that makes changing it a snap. In use, the Cutlass HSS proved to be exceptionally quiet when playing in noise-prone environments, yet it retains all the sweet, ringing character of passive single-coils, which is super cool.

The range of sounds from this guitar is impressive. The fat-sounding humbucker sounded killer though a new Sound City Master Lead 50 head as well as a '72 Marshall 50 (both driving into a Sound City 2x12 cab), and the bluesy wail from the neck pickup was a blast when pushing through various OD pedals into a cranked-up Fender Deluxe Reverb. The middle pickup and middle-plus-bridge, middle-plus-neck settings offer a wealth of chimier tones that work perfectly for rhythm

or cleaner lead playing, and what a great variety of funk tones these positions provide.

The Cutlass RS HSS underscores the utility of the hum/sing/sing pickup configuration, and everything about this guitar is so well dialed that it could easily qualify as a “desert island” solid-body for the working musician—and one that is quite fairly priced for an American-made instrument of this quality.

STINGRAY RS

Also featuring the same spec, roasted-maple neck with incredible figuring and hand-rubbed oil and wax finish, the StingRay RS differs significantly in several ways: most notably by having an offset body made from lightweight African mahogany and a pair of Music Man HH-1 custom-wound humbuckers with alnico V magnets. Our review model, with its luscious Coral Red finish, also sports a rosewood fretboard with a 25.5" scale and 22 stainless-steel frets. As with the Cutlass RS HSS, the combination of neck shape and spot-on factory setup make for a guitar that plays awesomely and sounds in tune in all regions of the fretboard. The roasted neck brings a similar liveliness to the package, however the StingRay's mahogany body and rosewood 'board steer things in a warmer direction, and, in tandem with humbuckers, this guitar has a lot of appeal if you're aiming for fat distortion tones.

Played though the same Marshall, Fender, and Sound City amps, the StingRay RS proved to be a righteous rock guitar that throws down tight, badass grind from the bridge 'bucker and sustains beautifully when driving a high-gain amp or pedal. It sounds ballsy and bright in all the right ways, and just slight tweaks of the Tone control were needed to bring everything into focus with our test rigs. The neatly wired and shielded circuit doesn't shave off highs when you turn down either, which is a good thing with humbuckers. The definition was excellent in even the most viciously overdriven settings, and the StingRay had no trouble cleaning up for crisp rhythm sounds with the Volume backed off. The neck pickup is wound perfectly for the position—it has plenty of output for singing leads, and a warm, clear voice that's great for rhythm comping—and with both pickups active, their richly textured sound fills out the spectrum for funkier grooves and smooth melodic lines.

All in all the StingRay RS is a fab rock guitar that can cop a wide range of tones, has a great vibrato, and is well suited for all sorts of things you may not think a twin humbucker guitar would do so well. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

CONTACT music-man.com

Cutlass HSS RS

PRICE \$2,049 street, hardshell case included (RS model with three single-coils, \$1,999 street)

NUT WIDTH 1 5/8"

NECK Roasted figured maple, bolt-on

FRETBOARD Roasted figured maple, 25.5" scale, 10" radius (rosewood available on certain colors)

FRETS 22 high profile, medium width, stainless steel

TUNERS Schaller M6 locking

BODY Alder

BRIDGE Music Man Modern Tremolo with Vintage Bent-Steel saddles

PICKUPS Music Man HSS-1 Custom Humbucker (bridge) two Music Man Custom Wound single-coils with Music Man wide spectrum Silent Circuit.

CONTROLS Volume, Tone, 5-way switch. Buffered output

FACTORY STRINGS M-Steel Hybrid Slinky .009-.046

WEIGHT 6.5 lbs.

BUILT USA

KUDOS Roasted maple neck. Excellent playability. Great trem. Impressive tonal range.

CONCERNS None.

StingRay RS

PRICE \$1,999 street, hardshell case included

NUT WIDTH 1 5/8"

NECK Roasted figured maple, bolt-on

FRETBOARD Rosewood, 25.5" scale, 10" radius (roasted maple available on certain colors)

FRETS 22 high profile, medium width, stainless steel

TUNERS Schaller M6 locking

BODY African mahogany

BRIDGE Music Man Modern Tremolo with Vintage Bent-Steel saddles

PICKUPS Music Man HH-1 custom wound humbuckers

CONTROLS Volume, Tone, 3-way switch.

FACTORY STRINGS RPS-10 Slinky .010-.046

WEIGHT 6.5 lbs.

BUILT USA

KUDOS Roasted maple neck. Excellent playability and sound. Great trem.

CONCERNS None.



GEAR

{ FIELD TEST }



Source Audio

VENTRIS DUAL REVERB



TESTED BY MATT BLACKETT

SOURCE AUDIO FIRMLY ESTABLISHED themselves in the stompbox big time with the release of the Nemesis delay a couple of years ago. Now they are poised to really turn some heads with the new Ventris Dual Reverb (\$399 street). With tons of processing power courtesy of two 56-bit chips, this beautiful box has the muscle to deliver classic reverb sounds as well as all new textures.

The Ventris is dressed up in a pretty, green, brushed-aluminum housing, with a very reasonable footprint given its two footswitches and seven knobs. It has 12 onboard reverb engines, with more to choose from via the Neuro mobile or desktop apps. In true Source Audio fashion, the Ventris is simple to use right out of the box, but it can go as crazy deep as you want with full MIDI implementation (for 128 presets), expression control, additional parameter editing, USB connectivity, and then some. You don't have to use any of these functions, but they're there if you want 'em.

What the Ventris *really* does, however, is sound awesome. Like, "up there with the best reverbs you've ever heard" kind of awesome. I

won't go through all the engines, but here are some standouts. The True Spring sound is astoundingly good and realistic. It has the drip and sproing of the real deal with none of the cartoonish artifacts that can taint some simulations. The Room and Hall algorithms are luscious and E-Dome (Tap fans take note) is freaking enormous. Some of the most inspiring sounds can be found with the Shimmer, Swell, and Offspring engines. The octave-up notes that accompany Shimmer are fabulously in tune and lend themselves to beautiful pads. Swell is super vibey and dynamic. Offspring is my personal favorite and one of the most creativity-boosting sounds I've come across in a long time. According to the manual, Offspring "uses all-pass filters to extract cascading frequency bands, creating an effect similar to an arpeggiator." That's true, and it's a real mind-blower. You can use tap tempo to sync the repeats to your groove, and then play just about anything and it'll come out amazing. Short, staccato chords take on a life of their own, pick drags go all horror-movie soundtrack, and single-note lines morph and

tweak in freaky-but-musical ways. This pedal would pretty much be worth the money if Offspring was all it did. But...

The very name of the Ventris Dual Reverb tells you that it does a lot more. At first I didn't get the genius of two reverbs at once, until I heard it. Rather than being washy or overly diffuse, these dual sounds are lush, detailed, and gorgeously complex. You can run any two engines (or the same engine twice) in series, parallel, left/right signal paths, "spill" one into another for seamless preset changes, or hold one and play another on top.

This is truly awesome and needs to be heard to be appreciated. Spring into Room, Reverse into Lo-Fi, and anything into Offspring are all incredible, but that's barely scratching the surface. It's hard to say enough good things about this great reverb machine. If the Nemesis delay was a home run, the Ventris is a grand slam.

Kudos Awesome sound. 12 reverb engines. Ability to run any two engines in series. Deep editing via Neuro app. MIDI.

Concerns None.

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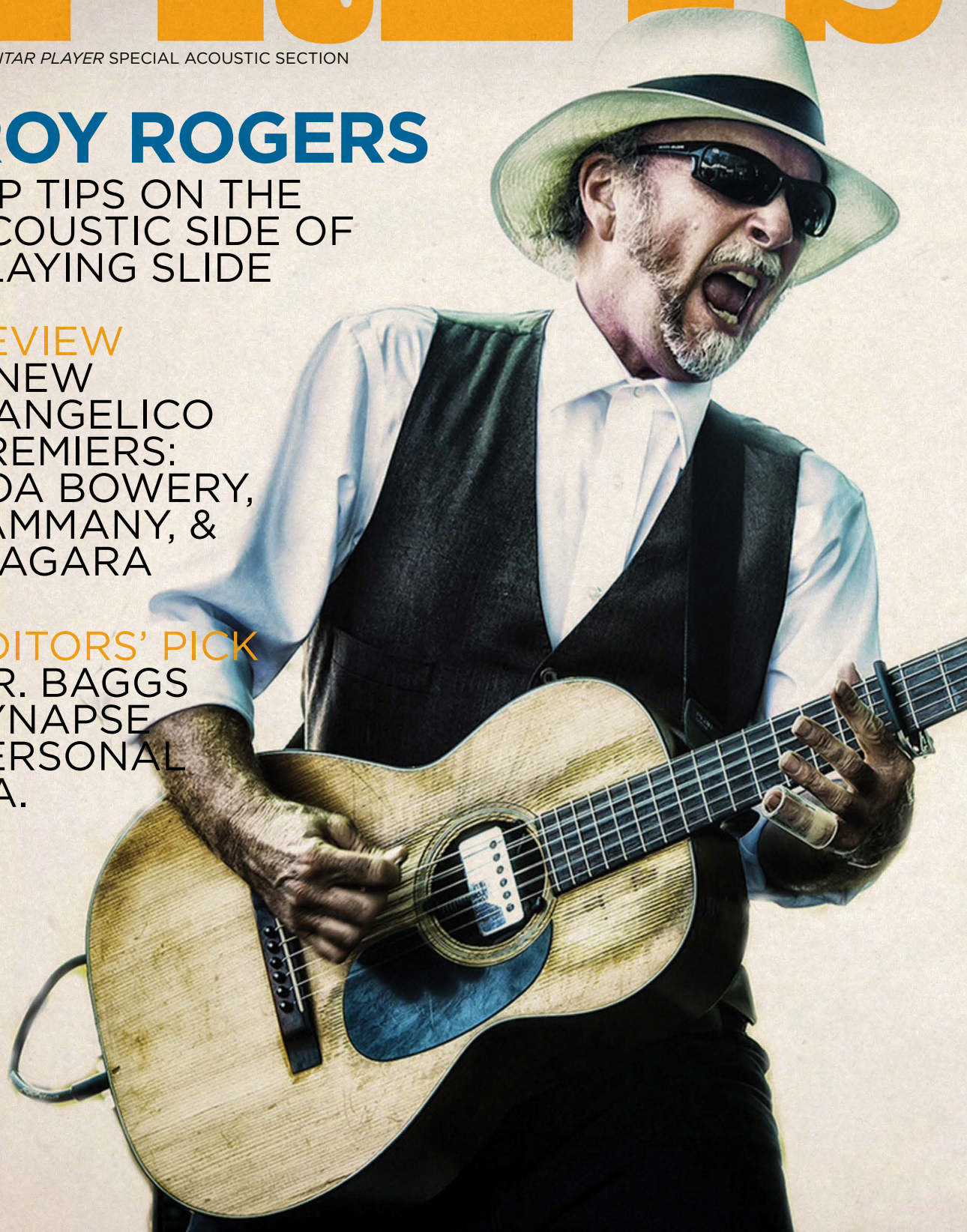
HIP TIPS ON THE
ACOUSTIC SIDE OF
PLAYING SLIDE

REVIEW

3 NEW
D'ANGELICO
PREMIERS:
KOA BOWERY,
TAMMANY, &
NIAGARA

EDITORS' PICK

L.R. BAGGS
SYNAPSE
PERSONAL
P.A.





MY GUIDE TO ACOUSTIC SLIDE

ROY ROGERS SHARES SOME ESSENTIAL TIPS

AS TOLD TO JIMMY LESLIE

PHOTOGRAPH BY JAY BLAKESBERG

ROY ROGERS IS A BONA FIDE SLIDE maestro who has been a big cat on the blues and roots scene since the early '80s, when he started working with John Lee Hooker. He has since garnered eight Grammy nominations, and produced Grammy-winning tracks with Hooker and Bonnie Raitt. Other collaborative credits

include Béla Fleck, Sammy Hagar, Carlos Santana, and Ray Manzarek of the Doors. Rogers' signature Delta slide sound can be heard on the original soundtrack for *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, as well as on the soundtrack for *The Hot Spot* with Hooker, Miles Davis, and Taj Mahal. Rogers continues to tour the world leading his

longstanding *Delta Rhythm Kings*, and he's also working on a new project called *"StringShot—Blues & Latin"* with Badi Assad on guitar and vocals, and Carlos Reyes on violin and stringed harp. Their album is due in the fall.

While some slide aces are primarily electric slingers—think Duane Allman—and



others such as Leo Kottke are strictly acoustic cats, Rogers is equally at home on either side of the equation. As we've usually focused more on his electric playing in GP, we figured this slide-themed issue was a good time to let Rogers hold court about his acoustic side. Take it away, Roy! —JL

IT'S ALL ABOUT RHYTHM

It's especially important for acoustic playing that your overall approach include playing rhythm with the slide. A lot of players tend to use the slide just for leads and melody, but it can also be an integral aspect of defining the groove.

THE SLIDE

What slide you choose is really about comfort. Use what you like best. Metal slides have more tonal bite to my ears. When I first started playing slide after seeing Muddy Waters perform, I used a short metal one like him. Now, I prefer a shorter glass slide—a Dunlop 212—because a lighter slide works well for my particular style. I often play horn-like riffs at a fast tempo, and a larger slide would be cumbersome for performing those parts. I suggest that players try a few different slides, and then decide. The same applies to which finger to use. I prefer the little finger so I can fret chords more easily than using, say, the third finger. But, remember, there is no right way or wrong way. Players have to figure it out for themselves.

THE GUITAR

Play what is comfortable to hold, stand, and sit with, and, most of all, what sounds good to you. Listen to how different woods sound, and how the intonation of each instrument makes you feel. I have always liked small-bodied acoustics, as a dreadnought was always too big and uncomfortable for me to play. Get to know as many guitars in various shapes and sizes as possible before you make a decision about buying one. For many years, my main acoustic has been a Martin O-16NY acoustic. It's a parlor guitar with great tone and a rather wide neck—which I like for playing slide.

RESONATORS

Playing slide on a resonator guitar is something all players should try, because it is a truly unique sound. I am the proud owner

of a 1931 National Duolian, and it scares me every time I play it! That instrument takes me to another time and place, and I find myself trying new things just from hearing *that* sound. My style is based on Delta blues, so I have never played lap-style at all—although I did see Bukka White play lap-style on a National steel guitar many years ago.

ACOUSTIC PICKUPS

How much coloration do you want? Go for piezo pickups if you want less of a tonal change from what you hear acoustically. In the studio, I like a combination of acoustic and electric tones so that I can dial in subtleties as needed. Live performance is a different story. The rather unique setup I use on my Martin O-16NY is a vintage DeArmond humbucking pickup from the '60s in the soundhole—which *definitely* adds tonal coloration. It allows me to play at significant volume with a small acoustic guitar. It delivers a great tone from the acoustic, but it also packs the kind of punch I want without feeding back. A guitar with a larger body would not work. I have had a great many guitar players ask me, "How can a little acoustic guitar sound like *that*?"

STRINGS

A player should use heavier strings for playing slide, because heavier strings deliver stronger tone, and tone is king. Of course, the strings have to feel comfortable to the player, as well. I use D'Addario strings, and I make sure to change them often. On my Martin O-16NY, I use D'Addario's Silk and Steel set, except that I substitute heavier strings—a .013 and a .016—for the first and second strings. I use a medium set of bronze strings on my 12-string Dobro, and I use heavy strings on my National. The gauges are .016 to .056.

PICKS

I prefer thick picks—again for tone—and because I pick hard. I generally play with

FRETS

{ ROY ROGERS }



a Clayton .80mm or a Gibson medium, and I've just started to use a Herco thumbpick—which is very cool. I sometimes play using a combination of fingers and picks.

CAPOS

I constantly use a capo onstage to change keys in open tunings. I use Shubb capos, because I find them to be simply the best and most reliable.

AMPLIFICATION

Many acoustic players simply go through a direct box to the mixing board, and hear themselves through the stage monitors. I have always preferred some kind of amp behind me when playing acoustically, because it's something I can control. My main amp is a late '70s Boogie Mark II 100-watt 1x12 combo, with a Motion Sound rotary speaker for a Leslie effect. My slide can cut through just about any mix with that amp setup.

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PEDALS

I prefer to get a natural sound from the amp. However, I have used an Arion stereo chorus for years. In addition to a great chorus sound, it gives me a slight gain boost that I find very effective.

SLIDE-HAND TECHNIQUE

The player's fretting hand should always be somewhat loose—not rigid. Vibrato is essential to good slide guitar, which means using a more fluid motion to get the feel of that foreign object on your finger. Have a solid intention of exactly how you want to play each note—whether you're going to slide up or down to the note, hammer-on to it, or hit the note straight-on. It's very important to slide directly over the fret for good intonation.

PICKING-HAND TECHNIQUE

Whether I'm using a plectrum, fingerpicking, or both, I most often use the palm

of my right hand to dampen the other strings for a cleaner tone on the slide note. I'm constantly motioning on and off the strings with my palm while playing. It has become automatic.

TEXTURE

On most of my recordings, I use a combination of acoustic and electric guitars to create a "combo plate" sound. A variety of amped-up electric tone from clean sustain to searing distortion can be combined very well with acoustic tones. The headroom of the acoustics is so important, and voicings in open tunings cover a lot of musical space. In conjunction with using a slide, you can create a huge sound. Another great thing about open tunings is that you can play a similar part with a standard-tuned guitar, and there generally will be no conflict because of the different chordal characters.

ABSORB

Listen to all kinds of music from around the world—not just from the U.S., and not just from guitar players. Whatever your likes and dislikes, there is so much music to be heard, and there is always something new to be learned that will all go into *your* mix, and become what *you* play at some point.

REQUIRED LISTENING

There are three songs I'd recommend as essential listening for gaining invaluable insights on playing acoustic slide: "Dark Was the Night, Cold Was the Ground" by Blind Willie Johnson; "Death Letter" by Son House; and "Preachin' Blues" by Robert Johnson—who comes to mind above all others regarding slide guitar. So much has been written and talked about regarding all aspects of Johnson's guitar playing, but listening to his slide playing is especially amazing. There's a reason he influenced so many of us! ■



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Premier Tammany

Premier Koa Bowery

Premier Niagra

D'ANGELICO PREMIER KOA BOWERY, PREMIER TAMMANY, AND PREMIER NIAGRA

TESTED BY DAVE HUNTER

THE REVIVED D'ANGELICO BRAND

has come back like gangbusters since the introduction of its Asian-made archtop lineup in the early 2010s. Now the rapidly expanding range has been augmented by an impressive new selection of acoustics, three of which we dig into this issue. All in all, this trio of new offerings reveals a company that knows what it's after, and is delivering great value and competitive performance at every price point.

PREMIER KOA BOWERY

Decked out in D'Angelico's flagship Bowery single-cutaway dreadnought shape, the Premier Koa Bowery adds the beauty and complexity of a solid-koa top to the market's most popular flat-top body style. The rippling grain of the koa in this one packs a lot of visual appeal, as does its nicely figured laminated-koa back and sides—all of which glow beneath a thin high-gloss finish. An abalone soundhole rosette and multiply binding add to the elegance quotient, as do pearloid blocks in the ovangkol fretboard and the traditional D'Angelico headstock bling, including a mirrored stairstep trussrod cover, pearl inlays, and house-brand Imperial-style tuners. One feature you don't see, but which is just as important, is D'Angelico's newly redesigned X-bracing, a proprietary top-bracing technique aimed toward a lively and powerful response.

The neck is a three-piece mahogany construction, with a scarfed headstock joint that runs behind the first to third frets, a built-up heel block, and a gentle volute behind the nut. With a comfortable slim-C profile, and built to a 25" scale length with a 14" fingerboard radius and a 1 11/16" width at the nut, it's extremely comfortable in the hand without cramping finger space for flatpicking or finger-style alike. The action on this example rises just a hair higher toward the upper frets than I'd like to see, but a minor correction at the bridge saddle (a standard part of most dealers' setup process) would easily cure that. D'Angelico equips this one with their preamp to partner the under-saddle piezo pickup, with 3-band EQ, volume, and a built-in tuner. And rather than the standard end-pin jack, the guitar has a jack block located near the bottom edge of the

CONTACT	dangelicoguitars.com
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Premier Koa Bowery

PRICE	\$699 street
NUT WIDTH	1 11/16", bone
NECK	Three-piece mahogany
FRETBOARD	Ovangkol, 25" scale, 14" radius
FRETS	20 (14 clear of the body)
TUNERS	OEM Imperial style
BODY	Solid koa top with laminated koa back and sides
BRIDGE	Ovangkol with bone saddle
ELECTRONICS	Under-saddle piezo pickup with D'Angelico onboard preamp/tuner
CONTROLS	Volume, 3-band EQ, tuner on/off
FACTORY STRINGS	D'Addario EXP-16 .012-.053
BUILT	China
KUDOS	Excellent build quality. Impressively balanced and articulate tone for its price range.
CONCERNS	Bridge saddle could use slight adjustment to bring down action at the upper frets.

MODEL Premier Tammany

PRICE	\$449 street
NUT WIDTH	1 11/16", bone
NECK	Three-piece mahogany
FRETBOARD	Ovangkol, 25" scale, 14" radius
FRETS	20 (14 clear of the body)
TUNERS	OEM Imperial style
BODY	Solid mahogany top with laminated mahogany back and sides
BRIDGE	Ovangkol with bone saddle
FACTORY STRINGS	D'Addario EXP-16 .012-.053
BUILT	China
KUDOS	A comfortable playing size. Good build quality, and appealingly raw and characterful tones.
CONCERNS	The faux-aged finish might not suit all tastes.

MODEL Premier Niagara

PRICE	\$399 street
NUT WIDTH	1 11/16", bone
NECK	Three-piece mahogany
FRETBOARD	Ovangkol, 24 1/4" scale, 14" radius
FRETS	20 (14 clear of the body)
TUNERS	OEM Imperial style
BODY	Solid spruce top with laminated mahogany back and sides
BRIDGE	Ovangkol with bone saddle
ELECTRONICS	Under-saddle piezo pickup with D'Angelico onboard preamp/tuner
CONTROLS	Volume, 3-band EQ, tuner on/off
FACTORY STRINGS	D'Addario EXP-16 .012-.053
BUILT	China
KUDOS	Great performance from an appealing "travel guitar" that boasts a playing feel closer to a full-sized flat-top.
CONCERNS	Some slightly sharp fret ends.

FRETS

{ D'ANGELICO }

lower bout, where you'd normally find it on an electric guitar, which includes convenient access to the 9V battery.

While construction is excellent for an acoustic in this price range, I'm possibly even more impressed by the tone of this Premier Koa Bowery. It has the big, bovine girth and projection of a good dreadnought, but the crisp detail and the koa's sonic complexity and harmonic sparkle take it above and beyond what you'd typically expect from a flat-top in this price range. It all translates well through a preamp that's very serviceable for a guitar of this caliber, too, making it a handy plug-and-play package for any acoustic artist needing a stage-ready instrument with a powerful voice whether amplified or *au naturel*.

PREMIER TAMMANY

D'Angelico calls this new orchestra-bodied Premier Tammany their "portal to the past," a nod to a look that recalls a road-worn and well-loved blues beater. This model's relatively compact OM shape is given a slightly shallower body depth for a guitar that's very huggable, all rendered with a solid mahogany top and laminated mahogany back and sides. It wears an open-pore satin finish that D'Angelico calls "Aged Mahogany," but which might equally have been dubbed "fire-sale sunburst." Either way, it's a look that screams "play me hard!"

Scale and neck proportions are the same as on the Bowery, as are the neck's three-piece construction and the pearloid block inlays—albeit in a lighter-colored ovankol fretboard this time. The headstock retains the fancy inlays too, although the more austere dress elsewhere makes sense given the worn aesthetic, with the unbound body, simple black-and-white soundhole purfling, and bronze-finished tuners and trussrod cover all reinforcing the concept.

The somewhat smaller, shallower body and mahogany top add up to a more midrange-focused sound from the Tammany, but it still has decent power for an OM-sized guitar. The combination keeps the tone rich and warm, and altogether it sketches a quick reminder of why so many acoustic-blues players have enjoyed

this combination. It's a meaty voice with more plunk, snap, and compression than that of the big Bowery dreadnought, and plenty of burnished character besides, all from a guitar that makes a great blues box. There's no pickup system on this one, so you take it as it comes or modify it to suit your needs.

PREMIER NIAGARA

The travel-sized Premier Niagara is a downsized-dreadnought style guitar that nevertheless boasts a full-sized neck and 14-fret neck joint at a scale length that's reduced just a hair to 24 $\frac{1}{4}$ ". So you don't have to downsize your playing technique too much when you're out on the open road, kicking back on the beach, crooning round the campfire, or enjoying this portable instrument wherever it might come in handy. The solid spruce top on this one has a fine, tightly spaced grain, and the bound body (laminated mahogany back and sides), fretboard, and headstock—along with the

traditional D'Angelico headstock appointments—add a touch of class to the travel genre. The mahogany neck has the same three-piece construction as the others, with the same slim-C profile too, and its ovankol fretboard carries simple dot inlays. D'Angelico's proprietary preamp (with 3-band EQ, volume, and tuner) also graces this model.

The Niagara might not have quite the sonic depth or richness of a full-bodied flat-top, but the volume and projection are impressive for its size, and it boasts a lively and well-balanced tone overall. There's a hair of that archetypal travel-guitar "plinkiness" when you strum it hard, and the vibrational energy overwhelms the structure ever so slightly—but less than I've found in many other compact and/or shorter-scale models, and it has an appealingly round, full low-end response that belies its size. Overall it's a cool and likeable little road buddy that acquits itself well even up against many full-sized acoustics in its price range. ■

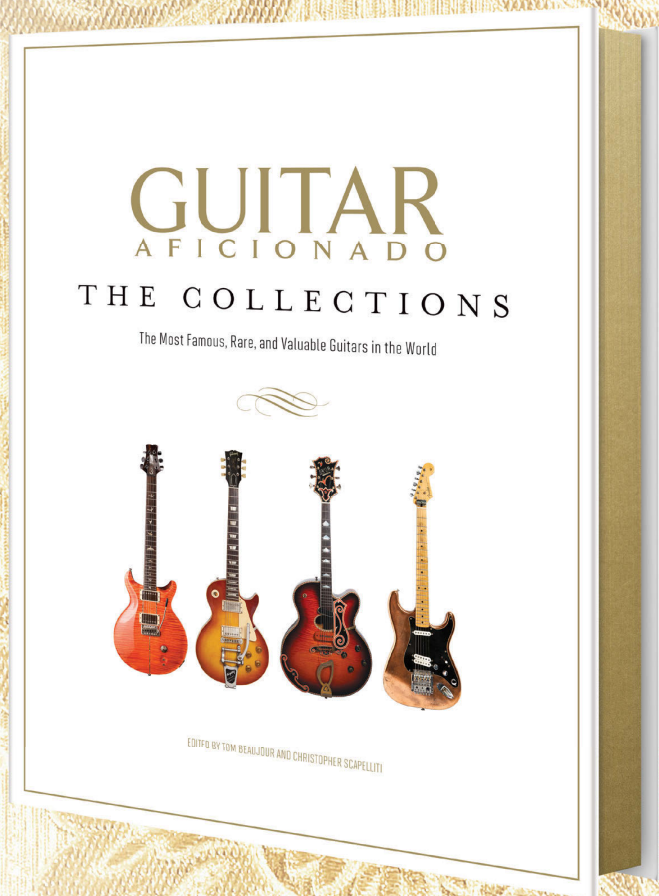


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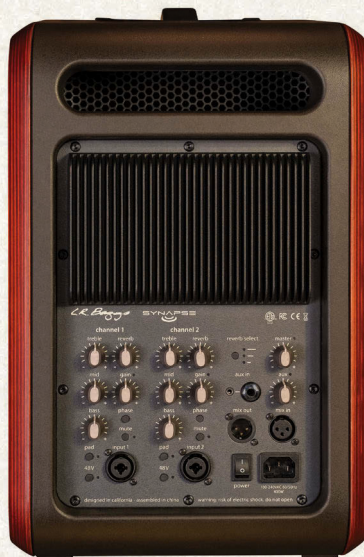


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L.R. BAGGS SYNAPSE PERSONAL P.A.

TESTED BY JIMMY LESLIE

AMPLIFIED ACOUSTIC TONE AFICIO-nados are well aware of L.R. Baggs' high-quality pickups, preamps, and direct boxes, and this year there's more to know as the manufacturer progresses down the signal chain. Frets praised the introduction of four Align Series acoustic pedals in the May issue with the Session and Reverb pedals earning Editors' Pick Awards. Now we're ready to take a look at Baggs' innovative foray at the signal path's culmination—the dual-channel Synapse Personal P.A.

One look says, "This is something completely different." Rather than following the trend towards skinny speaker sticks with sub counterparts, Baggs chose to blaze a unique all-in-one path veering off from the powered loudspeaker trail. The Synapse is deeper (21.75") than a typical powered speaker, and it's a tale of two halves. The back half is a walnut veneer plywood cabinet housing the Synapse's all-discrete preamplifiers and a 500-watt Class-D power amplifier. The front is made from high-density structural foam designed to minimize resonance from the speakers inside. Its half-cylinder shaped grille has two slotted openings—a larger, lower one, and a smaller, higher one—that make it appear like a cross between the air conditioning ducts on the interior of a Cadillac, and the head from one of those iconic Easter Island moai statues—without the creepy eyeballs!

The classy aesthetic becomes even more interesting when you understand why the Synapse looks the way it does. Those slotted grooves running from "ear to ear" on the grille face are designed to allow dual speaker horns to deliver sounds from an 8" compression woofer plus a high-frequency compression tweeter as an integrated, full-spectrum horizontal soundwave in a hemispherical pattern. The functionality that flows from the

form is a whopping 180 degrees of dispersal, rather than the 80 or 90 degrees of a typical speaker enclosure.

The Synapse is aimed squarely at the singer-songwriter or solo acoustic performer searching for a single-unit gig solution, and the back control-panel is wisely set up for exactly that purpose. I tested the Synapse using a Sennheiser e835 microphone for vocals, and a variety of acoustic guitars, including a Breedlove

CONTACT lrbaggs.com

Synapse Personal P.A.

PRICE \$1,999 street

CHANNELS 2

CONTROLS [Identical on Channels 1 and 2] Combination ¼"/XLR input, dial controls for Treble, Mid, Bass, Reverb, and Gain; buttons for Phase, Mute, Pad (line or mic level), 48V phantom power, and Reverb Select (toggles between short, medium, and long decay lengths). Global Master volume.

EXTRAS Aux Volume for Aux In (¼" mini-jack or ¼" TRS summed stereo), XLR Mix Out and Mix In jacks.

POWER 500 watts

SPEAKERS 8" compression woofer, compression tweeter

WEIGHT 38 lbs

BUILT China

KUDOS Innovative dual-horn design. Clear, multi-dimensional tone with broad dispersion.

CONCERNS None.

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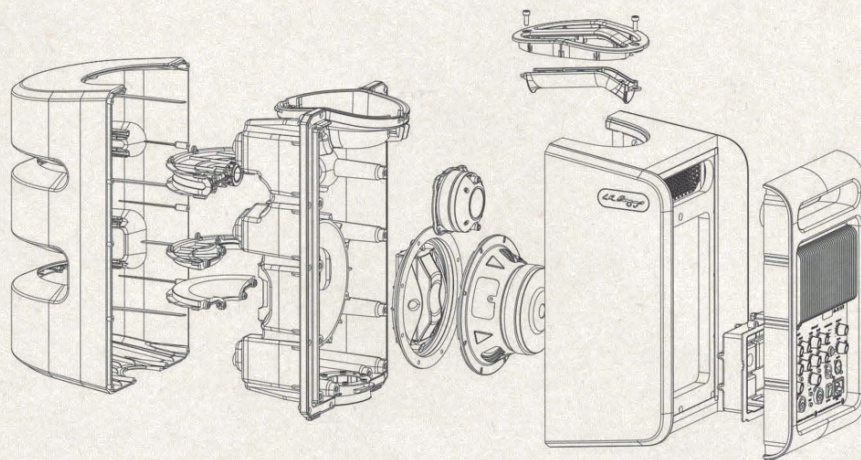
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Legacy Concertina equipped with a Baggs Anthem system, as well as a Martin OM-21 equipped with Fishman's new Matrix Infinity Mic Blend system.

The main points to make regarding the sound of the Synapse can be summed up in three words: clarity, quality, and dispersion. The Synapse has a bell-like sound that clearly comes from its dual-horned design. One can readily understand lyrics and differentiate between guitar notes. And that clarity isn't simply about presence in the high end—it's a holistic, full-spectrum sonic quality that literally radiates from the Synapse. The designers are obviously guitar players because its highly dimensional sound is more like that of a fine guitar amp, and very different from the flatter sound typical of powered P.A. speakers. The studio-quality reverb is way more guitar-friendly as well, with the three different decay lengths set quite practically for adding awesome acoustic-appropriate ambiance.

The Synapse's wide dispersion is totally unique. Standing on the side of a typical loudspeaker, you hear a muffled sound that's nothing like what's happening out front. The Synapse, on the other hand, delivers a similar sound all around. So while the Synapse costs more than many



comparably sized powered speakers, all you need is one. Also, due to its broad dispersal, you can place it anywhere without worrying about feedback. I cranked the Synapse way up and not only was its usable volume louder than the 1,000-watt powered 10" loudspeaker used for comparison, the Synapse delivered pure, practical power with essentially no feedback issues from the mic or guitar until I faced the soundhole directly at the speaker! The Synapse eliminates the solo performer's need for a separate stage monitor, mixer,

or an amp, and allows everyone in the room to enjoy the same dazzling acoustic guitar and vocal tones.

With its cleverly designed top handle, the relatively lightweight Synapse Personal P.A. is easily portable in its handy slipcover. I took the Synapse on a gig trip to a Lake Tahoe ski lodge, and it worked very well in the Tetris-like packing game I have to deal with driving a diminutive Toyota Matrix. Everyone who saw and heard the Synapse was unanimously impressed, and the system earns an Editors' Pick Award. ■

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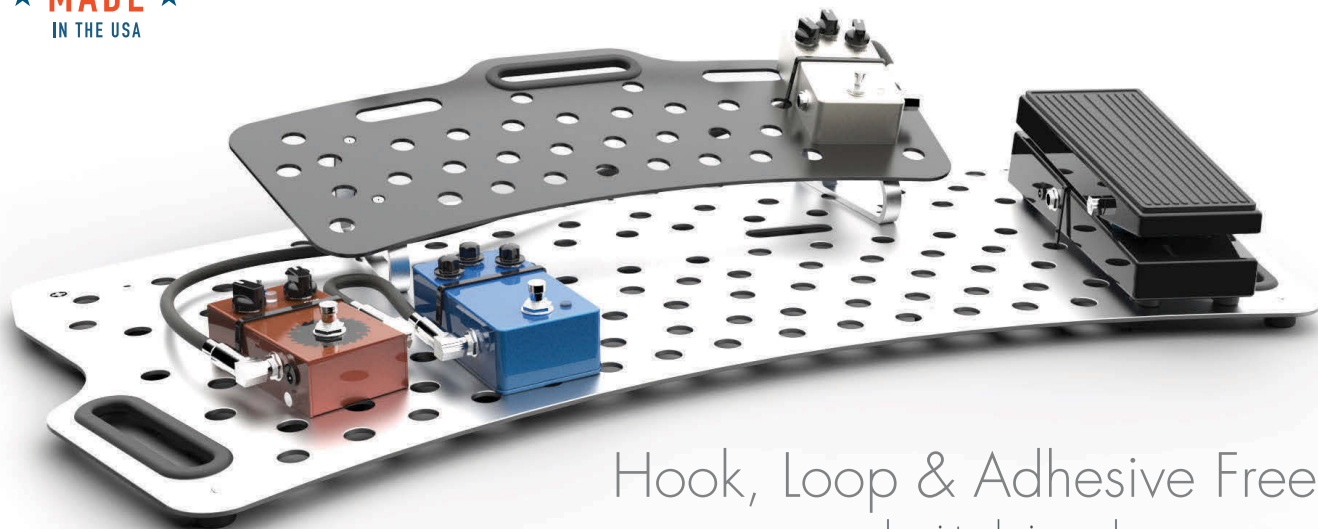


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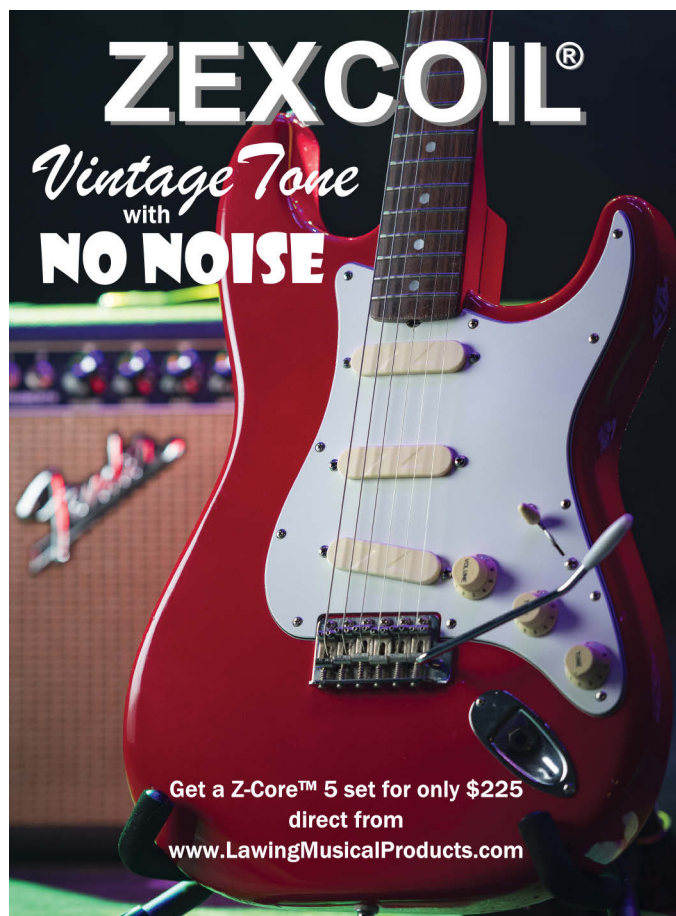
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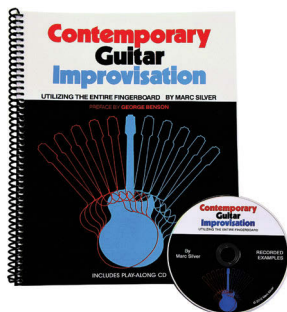
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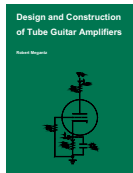


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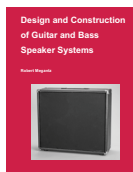
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> According to Keith Richards, when he first met Brian Jones, the charismatic Jones wanted to be Elmore James.

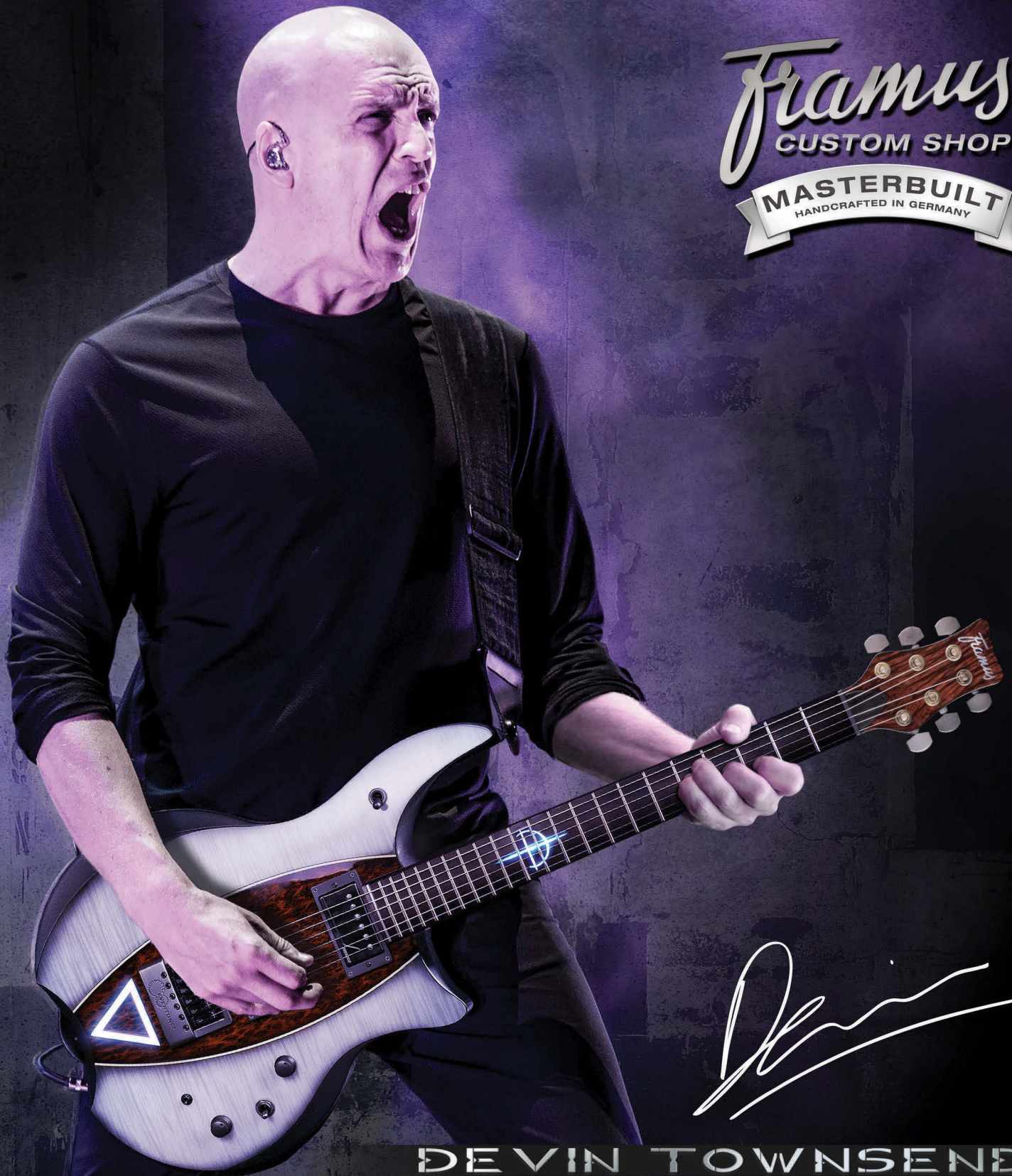
> Jimi Hendrix's brief incarnation as "Jimmy James" was a tribute to Elmore.

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