

Guitar **Player**

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW!

THE
BLUES
POWER
ISSUE!

GARY CLARK JR

Inside His Fuzz
Stomping
New Album

TOP 10 BLUES TIPS OF THE PROS

LEARN
BETTER BLUES
SCALE LICKS

**BREAK FREE OF
BLUES CLICHÉS**

7 TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL
SOLO ACOUSTIC GIG

BLUES EXPLOSION!

SAMANTHA FISH

KIM SIMMONDS

RICK SPRINGFIELD

BEN HARPER

GEAR
BEST OF
SUMMER
NAMM 2018

**SUPRO BLACK
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{ From The Editor }

OVER ITS (ROUGHLY) 120-year history, the blues has proved to be a supremely versatile and durable musical genre. Sanctimonious purists may decry modern musicians who mix their blues in a cocktail of divergent musical influences, but that sort of intermingling has played a vital role in the genre's history. From its origins in the Deep South, the blues spread throughout the U.S., taking root in various regions where it blossomed into such forms as Piedmont, swamp and hill country. It became electrified in Texas and the West Coast, and in urban markets like Detroit, Chicago, Memphis and Kansas City. By the 1960s, the blues had spread to England — where it eventually merged with rock and roll, courtesy of guitarists like Eric Clapton, Peter Green and Jimmy Page. Wherever it traveled, the music served as a pliable form that could be shaped to serve the expression of those who played it.

Thanks to its malleability, the blues is both diverse and pervasive, though, oddly, it tends to lurk just below the radar of popular culture. Lately, however, its signal has strengthened once again, thanks to a growing number of six-string practitioners. For this month's issue, we look at a few of those players who are helping to keep it vital. Not surprisingly, given the blues' history, many of them are merging the genre's traditional forms with other styles.

Take Gary Clark Jr., this issue's cover artist, for example. The Austin-based guitarist came to prominence around 2011 with a singular brand of blues inflected with rock, soul and hip-hop. Seven years later, he's shown no sign of retreat. Clark invited *Guitar Player* to hear a preview of his new album — the soon-to-be-released *This Land* — on which he takes his blues into a harder-rocking territory than previously. "Blues is my roots," Clark tells *GP*'s senior editor, Art Thompson. "But I don't wake up and go, 'I'm a blues guy.'" It's thanks to his innovation that Clark's music continues to push the genre in new directions, keeping it alive and meaningful.

Guitarist Samantha Fish, on the other hand, is a stylistic rolling stone who's woven a path from Delta blues to traditional blues-rock to hill country blues. She's also revealed her range by delving into classic soul and Americana, and even covered tunes by Screamin' Jay Hawkins and Black Sabbath. As contributor Jim Beaugez discovers when he interviewed Fish for this month's issue, her musical beginnings were, as she says, "all over the map"; it was only through the blues that it all came together for her.

The blues was most certainly a salve for Rick Springfield, another of our featured artists. Though you may know him best for his 1981 pop hit "Jessie's Girl," Springfield has been a prolific recording artist over the years. Yet he never explored the blues until his new album, *The Snake King*, where the genre provided an emotional bed for his concerns about the current state of the world. Springfield stands in stark contrast to blues-rock stalwart Kim Simmonds. As the leader of England's Savoy Brown for the past 53 years, Simmonds has kept the band's brand of hard-rocking blues vibrant and vital. In a spirited interview with Michael Molenda, Simmonds reveals how a faithful crew of influential musical companions have helped him stay true to his musical vision.

If there's one thing the artists in this issue demonstrate it's that the blues is alive and well. And, as long as we're in this crazy world, chances are excellent that the blues will be here too — in all its diversity — giving expression to our unique stories.

Chris Scapelliti

Guitar Player

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1998 Italia Monza

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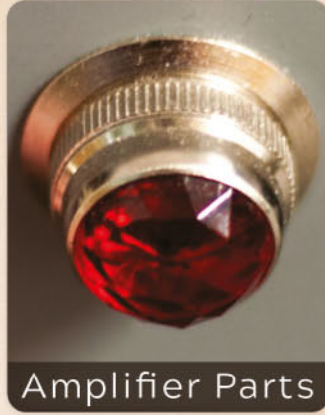
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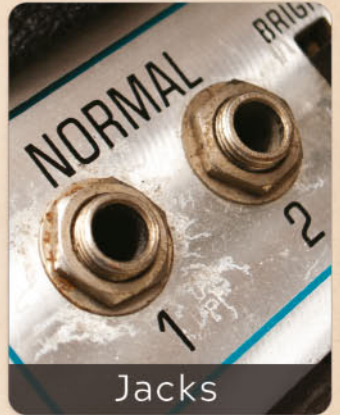
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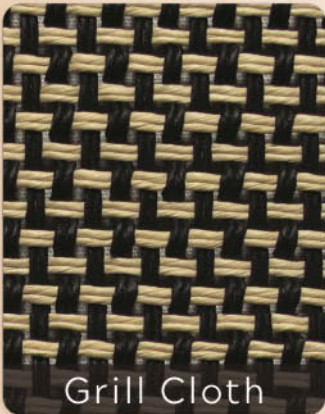
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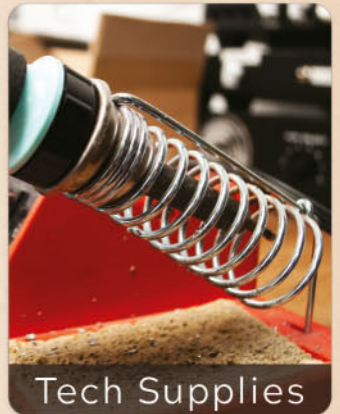
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Raid Dana's Gear Stash for a SviSound Optical Phaser Techno-FA, and get the scoop on the best new gear from Summer NAMM 2018.

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Susan Tedeschi



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Peer Comment

HIGH ON THE PROG

Thanks for your Prog issue and interview with Tosin Abasi [Sept 2018]. I grew up with classic prog rock thanks to my Dad. Because of that, for years I was pretty stubborn about who I'd listen to — mostly music written before I was even born. All that changed when I heard players like Tosin and Misha Mansoor. They woke me up to the fact that prog is still alive, well and evolving, thanks to the monster chops they're bringing to the game. I encourage everyone who loves classic-era prog to listen to what the new generation is doing and how they're keeping the music alive and vital today. — DYLAN WESTERMANN



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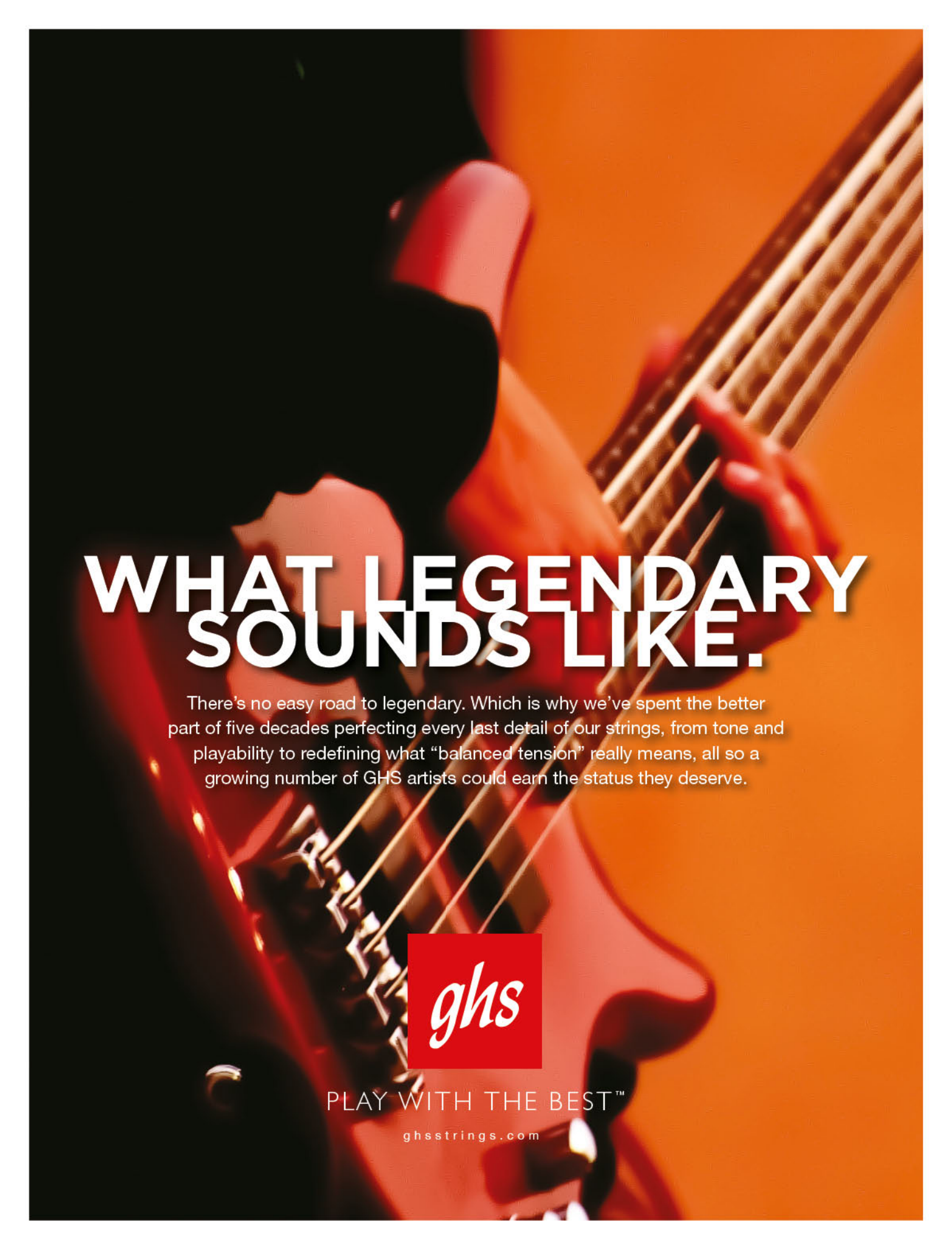
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New Gear

Check out these 10 hot picks from Summer NAMM 2018



Fender
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vibramate.com



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boss.info



Martin
D28 Bigsby
\$3,999

The D28 Bigsby pays tribute to the guitar Merle Travis made famous in the late '40s. Built on the foundation of a reimagined D28 (2017), it features East Indian rosewood and a maple high-performance taper neck with Bigsby headstock. The interior label is numbered and signed by Chris Martin IV and Fred Gretsch.

martinguitar.com



NUX
Mighty Lite BT
\$99

This three-watt portable guitar amp has three channels (clean, overdrive and distortion), digital reverb and delay, auxiliary line in and Bluetooth connection — as well as built-in drums and metronome. A mobile app (Android/iOS) provides additional effects and features. The amp can be powered by battery or USB and includes a headphone jack.

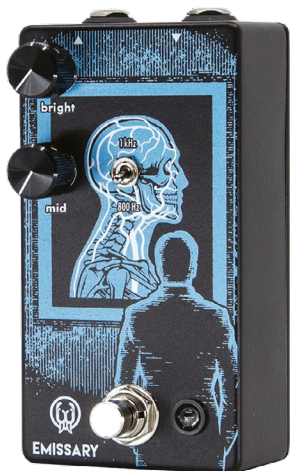
nuxefx.com



Epiphone
Joe Pass
Emperor-II Pro
\$499.99 street

The Joe Pass Emperor-II Pro has hand-scaled bracing, Epiphone's ProBucker humbuckers with coil splitting, Graph-tek NuBone XL nut and Grover Rotomatic tuners. It has a 24.75-inch scale length, 20 medium-jumbo frets, gold hardware and a fingerboard radius of 12 inches and comes in Vintage Natural, Vintage Sunburst and Wine Red finishes.

epiphone.com



Vox
AC30S1
\$990

The AC30S1 is based on the Top Boost channel of the original AC30 but does away with the multiple inputs, tone cut and tremolo circuit of the original. The 1x12 all-tube combo features a single input, effect loop, and controls for gain, volume, treble and bass.

voxamps.com

Walrus Audio
Emissary Parallel
Boost
\$169

This two-in-one boost features “bright” and “mid” circuits with individual volume controls. The “bright” boost delivers a clean, high-headroom JFET boost, with a slight emphasis on higher frequencies — while the “mid” circuit targets either 1kHz or 800Hz, selectable by the toggle switch. The bypass switch also has a momentary function.

walrusaudio.com



Taylor Guitars
Builder's
Edition 614ce
\$3,999

The Builder's Edition 614ce Grand Auditorium has a maple/torrefied spruce body, back and sides of figured big-leaf maple and Taylor's much-lauded V-Class bracing system. Other features include a double-carved cutaway, Silent Satin finish and Taylor ES2 electronics. Plus, the guitar ships in a deluxe hard-shell case.

taylorguitars.com



Yamaha
CSF1 & CSF3 Parlor
Acoustic Guitars
Prices Vary

After 15 years, Yamaha has revived and upgraded its CSF models. The CSF1 (\$645) has a solid Sitka spruce top, laminated mahogany back and sides, nato neck, black-wood fingerboard and bridge — plus Yamaha's SRT Zero Impact passive pickup system. The CSF3 (\$880) adds solid mahogany back and sides and mahogany body binding.

yamahaguitars.com



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xotic.us



Indiana Jonesing

Guitarists hit Fort Wayne to satisfy their craving for the latest gear and the greatest ax legends at Sweetwater's GearFest 2018.

BY DAVID BREWSTER

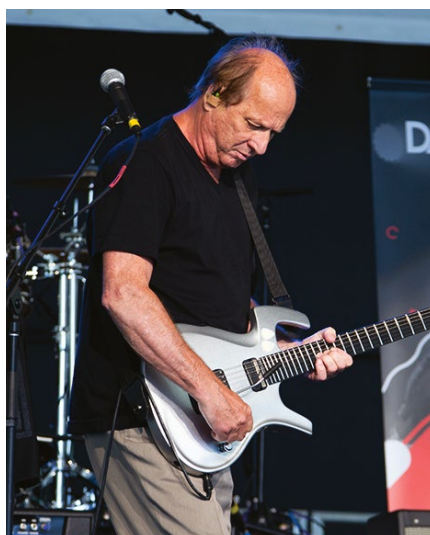
WHERE CAN YOU catch Larry Carlton, Adrian Belew, Yngwie Malmsteen, Paul Reed Smith, Nita Strauss and many other industry legends, all in one go? They were among the participants at Sweetwater's GearFest 2018, held this past June 22 and 23 on the music retail giant's campus in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Now in its 17th year, GearFest has grown into a truly educational and entertaining experience. The annual two-day music trade

event combines the latest and greatest musical equipment and products from countless manufacturers with workshops, presentations and clinics—all hosted by an impressive roster of talent, including modern musicians and industry legends. As always, this year's activities included workshops and performances inside Sweetwater's massive indoor campus, but much of the action took place outdoors. Guests enjoyed booths and exhibits housed

under spacious and waterproof tents, as well as a flea market of used gear and "open-box" equipment at radically reduced prices. A generous number of food trucks were on hand, along with free bottled water, to keep attendees fed and happy throughout the activities.

Perhaps the biggest thrills were reserved for Sweetwater's massive 24,000-square-foot Pavilion performance stage and seating area, where a number of live performances



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Mike Stanley, Nick Bowcott, Nita Strauss, Josh Villalta and Mike Orrigo take a bow; Strauss jams; Greg Koch performs; Adrian Belew plays at his “Power Trio Clinic”

and workshops were held during both days of the show. The venue hosts high-profile acts and national touring artists throughout the year and can hold up to 3,500 people.

GEARED UP

The gear tents numbered more than 20 and were arranged by instrument — which was good news for guitarists, who didn’t have to compete for volume with drummers, vocalists, keyboardists or other musicians and instruments. Indoors, Sweetwater offered plenty of additional presentations, ranging from workshops and clinics in traditional classrooms to events held in the company’s state-of-the-art recording studio as well as in performance halls and conference areas. Every session revealed an array of inspiring and notable talents who shared knowledge on a variety of subjects covering a range

of musical styles and instruments.

The first day’s events included Greg Koch’s “Guitar Pickups and Amplification” seminar, Mark Halcomb’s “Achieving Great Tone on the Road” workshop and Adrian Belew’s “Power Trio Clinic.” Each of these one-hour sessions allowed time for plenty of interaction between presenters and participants. The day closed with a double-billed live performance featuring Chicago’s Little Kids Rock All-City Modern Band and the Sweetwater All-Stars, a nine-piece group made up of the retailer’s talented employees. The concert was sprinkled with a number of special guest artists, including Paul Reed Smith, who performed a number of songs during the set.

TOP PICKS

The majority of workshops and product

demonstrations combined live performance and general instruction with informative Q&As, where attendees could dig deeper into the minds of their favorite musicians, such as studio guitar legend Larry Carlton. Hosted by Sweetwater’s Mitch Gallagher and held in the company’s luxurious indoor Performance Theater, Carlton’s revealing session saw him answer a range of questions — compiled by Sweetwater via the internet — about his lengthy and extensive music career. The guitarist also found time to take additional queries from the audience during the presentation. Carlton gave the crowd cogent and lucid advice, including the gem: “You won’t run out of ideas if you play less” — one of the many examples of useful information and instruction passed around Sweetwater’s property on both days of the festival. Needless to say, there were plenty of performers to watch,



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Larry Carlton's Q&A; Yngwie Malmsteen shreds; Nick Bowcott and Nita Strauss perform Pantera's "Walk"; inside the Sweetwater Pavilion; Strauss performs at her clinic

a ton of gear to demo and much to please the senses — but there were also plenty of opportunities for attendees to learn more about their artistry and craft.

The second day delivered another full schedule of workshops and live performances that showcased an entirely different selection of musicians and sessions. This included Act of Defiance guitarist Chris Broderick's "Mindful Practice" clinic, John Scofield and Peter Dinklage's "Inside the Groove" session and Alice Cooper guitarist Nita Strauss's "Tips and Insights" workshop. But without a doubt, the highlight of the day was the event-closing live performance and Q&A session with shred-guitar legend Yngwie Malmsteen. Hosted by Sweetwater's Nick Bowcott (of Grim Reaper

fame) and presented by Fender, Malmsteen's finale gave attendees a taste of his neoclassical shred mastery and provided additional insights into the guitarist's music career, practice habits, influences and more.

SWEETWATER SALUTE

Sadly, the festivities coincided with the death of legendary Pantera drummer Vinnie Paul Abbott, who passed away at his home in Las Vegas on June 22. News of his demise filtered through the crowd on the first night of GearFest. The next day, during an emotional dedication and live performance, Bowcott joined forces with Strauss at the end of her clinic for a brutal rendition of Pantera's "Walk," which was dedicated to Vinnie and his brother — and onetime

bandmate — the late Dimebag Darrell. The crowd roared its approval at this beyond-fitting tribute to the fallen metal legends. The performance reportedly took place without rehearsal, and it proved to be one of the festival's highlights.

By anyone's estimation, GearFest 2018 was a hugely successful celebration of music, musicians and gear. More than 15,000 people attended, including visitors from all 50 states and beyond — even as far as Japan. Sweetwater's GearFest has established itself as one of the summer's premier music events. Preparations are already underway for GearFest 2019, which will take place next June 21 and 22. Visit sweetwater.com/gearfest to stay up to date on the latest developments. **■**



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Collaborative Sonics

Joey Landreth tailors his guitar tone to his songs

BY MICHAEL MOLEND A

CANADA'S BROS. LANDRETH were a highlight of Joe Bonamassa's Blues Cruise IV this past March, playing an amalgam of roots, folk country and blues. The Juno Award-winners stopped cruisers dead in their tracks with soulful vocals, impassioned songs and some absolutely fearsome slides, courtesy of Joey Landreth, who cofounded the band with his bassist brother David in 2013. Joey sat down with *GP* to share the secrets behind his seductive slide tone and its role in his songwriting.

Your slide tone is really fiery and compelling. What kinds of things inspired your approach?

We listened to a lot of Sonny Landreth at home, and I avoided slide for a long time because of him. He's a phenomenal player, and he has the same last name, so why would I ever try? [The Bros. Landreth are indirectly related to Sonny, who played on their father Wally's recordings in the early '90s.] Then I heard Derek Trucks, and I was like, "Wow! I want to try that so bad." The other slide players who are my go-to faves are Ry Cooder and Bonnie Raitt. At the best of times, I'm doing a crappy impression of the

four of them massed together in some kind of soup.

Then I met Champagne James Robertson at a Canadian festival. He's a great slide player who plays in open C. We stayed up late one night jamming, and when he passed me his guitar, I noticed it had super-fat strings. He puts baritone strings on a standard-scale guitar. I was so impressed that I had a friend build me a ramshackle, Cooder-caster-style guitar with gold-foil pickups. I called James and asked, "Hey, would it piss you off if I put bari strings on my guitar and tried that open C tuning?" He said, "Go for it. I'm not the first guy to do it." It became something I really connected with. I love that stout, fat sound, and open C is also pretty nice to sing in.

So that's your sonic foundation at the moment?

Oh, yeah. Every guitar that walks into my life gets the treatment with baritone strings and open C tuning. Some guitars don't like it. I have a Suhr Classic Antique that actually likes to be in open D, but my main guitars live in that C tuning. I also have a Collings I-35.

How would you say that your guitar sound informs your songwriting?

I'll give you an example. I have a tune that explores the idea of forgiveness in an adult way — what it means to let go — and the sound has to match the content. It doesn't make sense to have bright chord changes on a dark song. But even acknowledging that I want to tailor the sound of a song to its mood, I'd still typically plug into my amp and pedal board and go for my usual tone.

But the guy I'm collaborating with is not a guitar player. He's a songwriter who plays drums and piano, and he doesn't have any of those hang-ups that guitarists have. I'll say something like, "Oh, I always go through my 1960 Fender brownface Super that I just adore, or maybe my Two-Rock TS1 for this sound." He'll counter with, "Um, I really need a bad guitar sound for this song, so don't use one of your good amps." It's fun and interesting to explore sounds like that and to work with someone who isn't wrapped up in all that guitar player sh!t about what makes a good tone. It should be about the most appropriate tone that brings alive the things your song is communicating. ■

Get Your Mojo Workin'

10 Blues Guitar Giants Share the Magic Behind Their Six-String Technique

BY CHRISTOPHER SCAPELLITI

PLAYING BLUES GUITAR is as much about attitude as it is technique. If you're suffering in either department, put some power back into your playing with this advice from blues guitar heroes of the past and present.



STEVIE RAY VAUGHAN

"Your sound is in your hands as much as anything. It's the way you pick and the way you hold the guitar, more than it is the amp or the guitar you use."



ROY BUCHANAN

"Use circle picking to play faster. Start by playing with your pick at an angle. Hit the string with one edge of the pick and you'll find that you're in position to come back on the upstroke with the opposite edge. Then, alternate pick with a rotating motion in either a clockwise or counter-clockwise circle. The pick, while not changing its angle in relation to the string, is circling that area of the string. It's not done with the

wrist, but with the fingers holding the pick."



SUSAN WEIAND

BONNIE RAITT

"Incorporate the feel of what someone plays into your style, rather than the actual notes. You just want to nail the emotion of how an artist's singing and playing is making you feel, and how those feelings transform your own playing."



JO MCCAUGHEY

JACK WHITE

"If you want to keep things raw, try limiting yourself to only two guitars on a track."

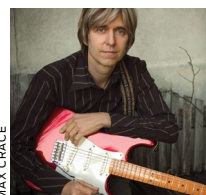


JON SIEVERT

RORY GALLAGHER

"You must perform for an audience, because the real crunch happens when you get in front of people. You may discover

that some things you played in rehearsal don't make any sense because you fooled around too much with the frilly stuff and forgot the basic drive of the song. Playing live also teaches you to deal with situations like dropping your pick or breaking a string — as well as forcing you to project."



MAX CRACE

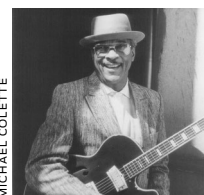
ERIC JOHNSON

"Remind yourself that you're free to feel great instead of reserved or insecure. When you're feeling good, you're more apt to take chances onstage, and if you make a bunch of mistakes, it won't matter. It's almost like you're the instrument, and the music is flowing through you like electricity."



RY COODER

"Play a new thing every day. Learning one new passing chord, or a note combination, will get you moving towards something that will serve you later on. Someday, a song will come along that all of those things will relate to."



MICHAEL COLETTE

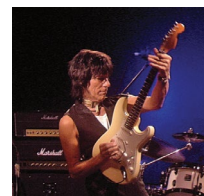
HUBERT SUMLIN

"Take a note from me, put it with your own notes, and make it you."



JOHN LEE HOOKER

"Forget about the fancy chords and just concentrate on a funky beat."



JEFF BECK

"Overindulgence in anything is wrong — whether it's practicing 50 hours a day or eating too much food. I've tried to keep it so that I'm able to execute the ideas that come out, but practicing too much depresses me. I get good speed, but then I start playing nonsense because I'm not thinking. A good layoff makes me think a lot. It helps me get both things together — the creativity and the speed." 🎸



Sister Sparrow's Brood

BY MICHAEL MOLEND A

PHOTOGRAPH BY SHERVIN LAINEZ

ANYONE WHO'S WRITTEN a song knows the process doesn't always end with lyrics, melody and harmony. Arranging a composition — refining and developing its musical parts, grooves and vibes — to maximize the tune's seductiveness is essential. Doing this in collaboration with others can lead to creative boondoggles and bruised egos.

So, imagine doing it with six musical co-conspirators, as Sister Sparrow — a.k.a. Arleigh Kincheloe — does when she brings her songs to the Dirty Birds, the artist's brass-fueled backing group that includes her brother Jackson on harmonica, guitarist Mark Marshall, bassist Josh Meyers, drummer Dan Boyden, trumpet player Phil Rodriguez and saxophonist Brian Graham. It seems a miracle that anything gets done.

Yet, somehow the group manages to fit all the elements into a cohesive and

exciting mix without clashing or obscuring one another. *GP* caught up with the Sister Sparrow and the Dirty Birds to discover how the flock achieve synchronization.

Seven creative people is a lot to wrangle. How do you do it?

Sister Sparrow: I don't think there are any rules to it. I typically write the songs and bring them to the band and we arrange the songs together. Everybody chimes in with what they like and what they don't like, so it's kind of trial and error until we reach common ground. We're all passionate about this music, so we'll fight for our ideas, and the debates help us see what is really best for the song.

Phil: We're pretty democratic, to the point where it can sometimes take a year before we realize an arrangement is not quite working with a song.

What identifies an arrangement as "not working?"

Sister Sparrow: It's usually that something will irk me during a performance. Then I'm like, "We have to go back and workshop this song again."

Bill: The refinements to our songs come from playing 200 to 250 shows a year. For example, we might change one horn line per show to refresh things, and after a few months of doing that the song will morph into something different. Hopefully, something better. *[laughs]*

Jackson: It seems like we're always onstage, so we have plenty of time to assess audience reactions to a song or whether the band is digging something or not.

Sister Sparrow: If I start not liking something, I won't put that song on the set list for a while. That's the clue to the rest of the band that I'm not feeling that one anymore.

How do you arrange parts in such a dense band?

Jackson: *[laughs]* That didn't come easily. When we first started playing, all of the sonic space was taken up all of the time. It was Josh who helped us figure out that all don't all need to be playing at the same time.

Mark: It's an interesting guitar situation, because there are moments when the guitar has to be really big and wide, and other moments where it has to be refined and small — like two- or three-note chord voicings — to fit in with the horns and leave space for the vocals.

What's the main challenge to getting new music out there?

Sister Sparrow: I try not to get too bent out of shape about music being free, what with streaming and all that stuff. That's just how it works now. I can only hope that people will hear our songs, come out to the shows and maybe buy a CD at the gig.

Jackson: It's too hard to think about not being fairly compensated for your songs. I just focus on the fact that I get to play harmonica every day and get paid for it — which is amazing. Every day is a great day.

Sister Sparrow drops her new album, Gold, on October 12 📀



Sister Sparrow, a.k.a. Arleigh Kincheloe

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Blues by the Numbers

For Marcus King, the performance begins with the set list

BY MICHAEL MOLEND A

PHOTOGRAPH BY EMILY BUTLER

WE IDENTIFIED MARCUS King as a “person of extreme interest” long before he cracked his 20s. We even put him on the cover of our September 2017 issue.

Now just 22 years old, King is already a veteran of the road and a leading flag bearer for modern blues and blues rock. He sings like an old soul with demons on his tail and gets colossal tones from his grandfather’s ‘62 Gibson ES-345. No less than Warren Haynes — who produced King’s most recent album, *The Marcus King Band* (Fantasy Records) — calls him “the first young player I’ve heard since Derek Trucks who plays with such soul and emotional maturity.” We caught up with the blues guitar phenom to find out how he works his magic onstage.

What’s your most surprising method for achieving stunning live performances?

I never write the set list the night before. I just can’t do it, especially if I haven’t seen the venue or know what kind of fan base to expect. We like to walk around and feel the town out — see what kind of vibe the audience is going to bring to us. For festival sets, I like to know how the band performs right before us. If they just ripped everybody’s faces off, then we’re going to start with something a little more laid back and not try to immediately match that energy level. I’m always writing the set list in the dressing room just before we hit the stage.

How much do you amend your studio arrangements for the stage?

We definitely have to road test a song for about a month before it actually feels done. We’re just like, “This one part is shit. We need to get that out of there.” Also, some of the tunes we do in the studio are kind of smooth in an almost R&B sense, and when we play them live, we realize they’re dragging a bit. So we’ll push the tempo or rough it up.



Is it difficult to keep the band growing and evolving when you’re on the road so much?

It can be a chore, but wherever we’re touring in our van, we keep the music we listen to pretty open so that we can be inspired by different things. We all really love Wu-Tang Clan as well as new artists such as [U.S. folk singer-songwriter] Margaret Glaspy and [neo-soul guitarist] Nick Hakim. Then I always go back to [funk acts] Soulive, Lettuce and bands like that. You never know when those road-listening sessions will creep into soundchecks or rehearsals as new ideas.

How can a guitarist seek to develop a unique and individual live sound?

When I was a lot younger, I stopped listening to

guitar players pretty consciously for a couple of years. I made the decision that I didn’t want to sound like Stevie Ray Vaughan or any of my heroes. Instead, I checked out Coltrane, Miles Davis, a lot of organ players and lots of vocalists. I always wanted to emulate Janis Joplin’s screech through an amplifier, so that started my search for a unique guitar tone. I also messed with phrasing from the styles of Etta James, Billie Holiday, Otis Redding and James Brown.

I don’t think there are necessarily any wrong answers here, other than not discovering your own voice. I think as long as you’re coming at it from the right mental place — which is to get something out that represents yourself purely — then every choice you make is probably a good choice. ■

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Perfect Positions

Learn three classic setups for acoustic guitar mic'ing

BY BRIAN TARQUIN

WHEN PROPERLY MIC'D, acoustic guitars can sound beautiful and lush. Just think of those wonderful albums recorded by the Eagles, with their rich acoustics melodies. Yes, plug-ins can improve your results, but there's nothing more gratifying than capturing that perfect acoustic guitar tone with a microphone. The key is to record not only the guitar sound but also the ambience of the room.

Before setting up your mic and hitting "record," take a few things into consideration:

- Your acoustic guitar's size (jumbo, concert, etc.) and body style (single-cutaway, thin body, etc.). Both of which affect its tone and volume.
- Room size and treatment: Is your space large or small? Carpeted or bare?
- Player style: Are you a heavy strummer or a light picker?
- Microphone type (condenser, ribbon, etc.) and polar pattern (cardioid, figure-eight, etc.), both of which affect its performance.

Here are three sample microphone setups that recreate the classic acoustic guitar sounds of the Eagles, Leo Kottke and Keb' Mo'.

1. THE EAGLES (FIGURE 1)

To make strummed chords sit nicely in the mix à la the Eagles, try the following mic and settings:

AKG 414

The 414 is the mothership of condenser microphones. For more than 60 years, engineers and producers have used it for almost every

imaginable application. It has a one-inch dual diaphragm; a selectable pattern (cardioid, hypercardioid, omnidirectional and figure-eight); a two-stage pre-attenuation pad and bass-cut filter; and a high sound-pressure-level capability of up to 160 dB SPL.

Steps for the Eagles' tone:

- Place the mic center between 12th fret and the sound hole.
- Set it six inches away from the guitar.
- Point the mic capsule downward, toward the bridge.

2. LEO KOTTKE (FIGURE 2)

To achieve a Leo Kottke detailed fingerpicking style, where the notes have great definition in the mix, try this setup:

LR Baggs Mixing System

Kottke used the first LR Baggs product, the LB6 undersaddle pickup. To mimic his tone and capture more of your acoustic's natural sound, you can add an internal mic to an undersaddle setup using a Baggs mixing system. These include the Dual Source, which combines a ribbon transducer with condenser mic, and the iMix, which pairs Baggs' iBeam active bridgeplate pickup with the Element undersaddle pickup. Either way, you'll get an incredible system that cancels feedback and preserves your acoustic tone's integrity.

Steps for a Leo Kottke tone:

- Roll the sound hole mounted mic control wheel up three-fourths



Figure 1: The Eagles setup

of the way.

- Turn the other sound hole mounted wheel (which is the volume) up halfway.
- To reduce any undesirable mid-range from the piezo, run the undersaddle pickup's output to a separate channel and adjust it to taste. If you are using the iMix, reduce mid frequencies using its Element mid-cut control.
- On the undersaddle piezo, set the EQ to roll off the quaking mid-range by moving the mids slider down to 2.
- You can combine this system with any of the mics discussed in this article, such as the AKG 414 or the AKG C 1000, to get an extremely full sound.
- If you're using this system with an additional mic, pan the LR Baggs to the right (3 o'clock) and the extra mic to the left (9 o'clock) for a stereo presence.

3. KEB' MO (FIGURE 3)

To achieve a Keb' Mo' blues-style slide guitar with a nice gritty tone, I use the following:

AKG C1000 S

The AKG C 1000 S is powered by a standard nine-volt battery or



Figure 2: Leo Kottke setup



Figure 3: Keb' Mo' setup

phantom power. The mic features polar pattern, which can quickly be switched from cardioid to hypercardioid by attaching the provided PPC1000 Polar Pattern Converter to the microphone capsule. There's also an adapter, called the PB1000 Presence Boost, which adds 3 to 5 dB of high-end enhancement to improve instrument sound clarity and add definition.

For a Keb' Mo' Tone:

- Place the mic center between the sound hole and the 15th fret.
- Set the mic approximately four inches from guitar.
- Angle the mic capsule toward the body.

You can use these setups as a foundation for creating your own signature acoustic guitar tones when recording. 🎸

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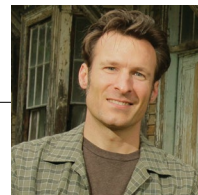


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{ CLASSIC GEAR }

BY DAVE HUNTER



1955 D'Angelico New Yorker

RELATIVELY FEW guitarists have had the privilege of holding an original D'Angelico archtop guitar; and upon close examination of a D'Angelico instrument — like this 1955 New Yorker — it's easy to see how the storied maker earned his stellar reputation. From the elegant curve of the woods to the decorative details (that don't look as over the top as they might on another instrument!) to the very feel of the thing — this is a guitar for which the term masterpiece seems barely adequate. It's the epitome of the archtop guitar from the golden years of the Jazz Age.

John D'Angelico was born in Little Italy, on Manhattan's Lower East Side, in 1905. He studied classical violin making and learned Italian-style flat-top guitar craftsmanship under the mentorship of his uncle, Raphael Ciani. Eventually, D'Angelico took over Signor Ciani's shop and management of its 15 employees. But, before long, the young luthier decided he was more of a lone craftsman than a manager. In 1932 he

opened his own workshop — at 40 Kenmare Street, in his Little Italy neighborhood. There, he pursued a line of archtop guitars inspired by the Gibson template, custom built to order and featuring elaborate and individual detailing. With the occasional help of just two assistants (at most), D'Angelico catered to the elite of the jazz world, turning out about 35 guitars a year at the peak of operations, several years later.

The New Yorker is generally considered the flagship of the D'Angelico line. Examples like this one, display a beautifully rich, complex tone that transports you back to cigarette-hazed nights at Birdland, the Five Spot and the Royal Roost. Its body is a massive 18 inches wide, across the lower bout, with a single Venetian cutaway. The fully hollow design features an arched top hand carved from solid spruce with

X-bracing for optimal resonance. Solid flamed maple is carved to create the arched back, sides and neck.

Just as striking, and perhaps more immediately eye catching, are this guitar's artistically rendered appointments. They include multi-ply binding on the body's top and back, the fingerboard, headstock and even the pickguard and f-holes. There's also a substantial "stairstep" trapeze bridge, a preponderance of pearl (including the fingerboard's block inlays and the headstock's elaborate Empire inlay), an incredible headstock design and many other hallmarks of the guitar maker's style. Typical of the D'Angelicos that needed to be amplified, this instrument features a DeArmond Rhythm Chief pickup — highly regarded in the jazz community and a collector's item in its own right.

In 1955, when this example was made, a young James D'Aquisto would have been three years into his apprenticeship with D'Angelico. Upon the master's death in 1964, D'Aquisto took over the shop and, after completing several D'Angelico Guitars orders, went on to build instruments branded with his own name. Alongside his mentor, D'Aquisto would become another of the most-respected archtop makers of all time.

Jazz greats Barney Kessel, Johnny Smith, Kenny Burrell and Oscar Moore played D'Angelicos

at one time or another — as did Chet Atkins before he signed with Gretsch. The occasional rocker has been drawn to the fold too, with Neil Young, Pete Townshend and Eric Clapton prominently wielding D'Angelicos over the years. ■

ESSENTIAL INGREDIENTS

- > Hand-carved, solid spruce arched top
- > Hand-carved, solid flame-maple back and sides
- > Multi-ply binding on body, neck, headstock and pickguard
- > Art-deco "stairstep" bridge
- > Fully acoustic, single-cutaway archtop design
- > Fully acoustic, single-cutaway archtop design



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BY CRAIG ANDERTON



How to Build a Virtual Blues Club Room

ONE OF MY most fond memories from opening for blues bands (aside from Buddy Guy's outstanding guitar tone) is of the sound of the club itself. These venues were often built for hundreds — not thousands, like today's venues — of people; and the hard walls, minimalist acoustic treatment and sheer number of high-frequency-absorbing humans resulted in a special kind of ambience.

I had never been able to re-create this sound with conventional digital reverbs, but once convolution reverbs became affordable, I had hope: All I needed was an acoustic impulse file to provide that sound. When I couldn't find any, I decided it was time to go rogue and make my own. I did it, and you can too. It may seem daunting, but it's easier than it sounds if you know how to use a DAW. What's more, the settings aren't all that critical, so take some time to experiment. Want to make your virtual club bigger? Simply increase the impulse's length.

Here's my step-by-step guide to creating your own blues club convolution reverb:

1. First, you'll need a white noise sample that lasts from about one-half to one second. This can be created from a synthesizer bundled with your recording software, or you can download a sample from the internet (check out <https://mc2method.org/white-noise>).

2. Load the sample into your recording software or digital audio editor, trim it to about 500 milliseconds, and insert an EQ plug-in followed by a chorus plug-in.

3. Next, filter out the sample's low and high frequencies. Set a low-cut (high-pass) filter with a 24 dB/octave slope to around 700 Hz, and a high-cut (low-pass) filter with a 24 dB/octave (or higher) slope to around 4 to 5 kHz. The slopes and frequencies aren't too critical, but these settings worked well for me.

4. Now, add chorus to create the comb-filtering

anomalies that resemble room acoustics. The type of chorus doesn't matter too much, but set the initial delay to around 15 ms and the LFO speed and width to the minimum possible (you don't want modulation).

5. Finally, set the mix to 50/50 delayed and straight sounds. Depending on your plug-in, that may require setting the mix at 50% or 100%. Check your plug-in's documentation.

6. Add a concave fade-out to the white noise clip starting at about 300 ms (a linear fade out can work too).

7. Bounce or export the clip so that it incorporates the effect from the signal processors and the fade-out, and then save the rendered clip as a WAV or AIFF file.

8. Now, create a new track for your guitar, load your favorite vintage amp sim sound, insert a little spring reverb if that's your thing, and follow it with your convolution reverb plug-in.

9. Check your convolution reverb's documentation to find out how to import an impulse, and then load the file you just exported.

10. Now it's time to play. Tweak the reverb's mix and other controls to create a vintage sound, then close your eyes. You just might feel like you've been transported back in time and are about to hear Muddy Waters sing "No Escape from the Blues."

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





{ THE FOLEY FILES }

BY SUE FOLEY



Debbie Davies

I WAS ALWAYS in awe and just a little jealous of Debbie Davies. Her 1993 solo debut, *Picture This* (Blind Pig), came out on the heels of her time as second guitarist to the Master of the Telecaster himself, Albert Collins, who is one of my all-time faves. From 1988 to 1991, she was a member of Collins' band, the Icebreakers, and it doesn't get much cooler than that. Debbie is still one of the most loved and respected members of the blues community. She plays it right — the way she learned from Albert and from so many other greats that she's shared stages with.

Looking at your history, it seems that camaraderie and jamming is a big part of your musical journey.

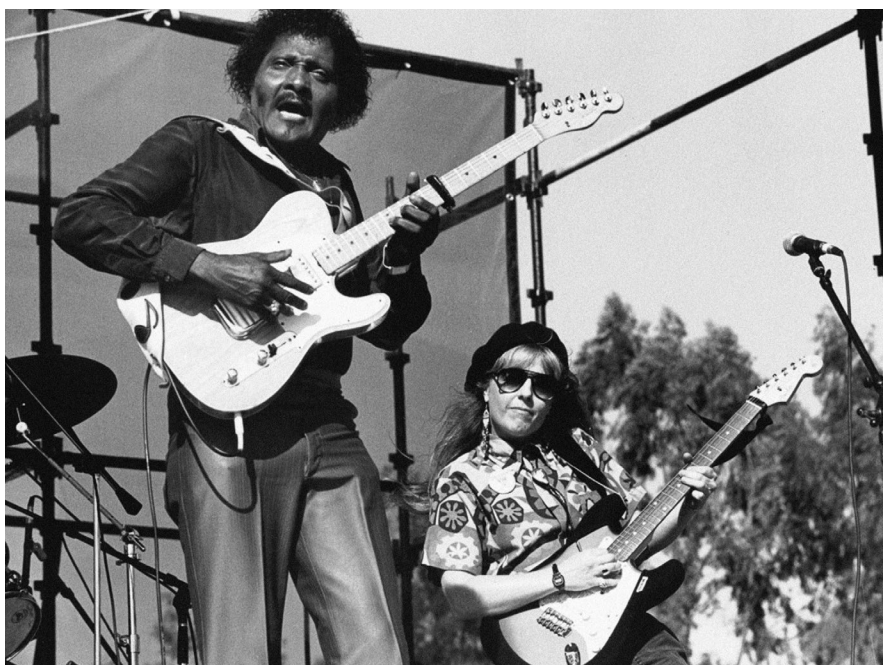
The blues thing has always had a lot of camaraderie, and I saw that when I was out with Albert Collins and his friends. If you're on the road, there is this sense of isolation, and jamming is when that isolation completely falls away.

Who are some of your favorites to play with?

Coco Montoya, because he and I have such a history, and there are actual tunes we have worked out together. I also love sitting in with [Delta blues guitarists] Kenny Neal and Tab Benoit because they're so deep into the blues. They are both very improvisational players. Albert Collins is my main man, though. Playing with him was an amazing time for me.

How did you land that gig?

Coco introduced me to Albert — he had been Albert's drummer in the '70s. We would go to barbecues and to Albert's apartment, and then Albert asked me to sit in with him at the San Francisco Blues Fest. At the time, he was going through some changes in his band. He was going to need someone to play a chordal instrument, and my name came up. The night before they were leaving on tour, I got a call from his manager, and they offered me the gig. That was a



Debbie Davies performs with Albert Collins in this undated photo

dream come true. I didn't really know what exactly to do to get my own thing going, and I thought, "Wow, what if I could back one of my heroes for a while?" So it was something I thought of, and it actually happened. Pretty amazing.

Were you intimidated to jump in with Albert's band?

What really helped was that half the band had been on the road with Ike and Tina Turner, so they were used to traveling with a mixed-gender band. That wasn't an issue for them, and they weren't trippin' on it. It was not an easy thing to do, but I was so driven and ballsy that I just did it.

Had you been a fan of Albert's music before?

Yeah, definitely. He was just so strong and so special as a player. When he played a flurry of notes, it was pretty intense. It wasn't easy at all. Everyone would sit around and try and get it. I got to hold his guitar, and I'll tell you, the

action was so low.

What tuning did Albert use?

The open tuning was an E flat minor. The A and the D strings were changed to make it a whole open chord. He'd play in D, so he'd have to capo way up the neck. I don't know how he bent those strings, but he sure did.

How did you feel when you first started going out on your own?

After I left Albert, I bought myself my first van and was booking myself between tours with Albert. It was a lot of work, but I was digging it. It was still a party.

How do you feel about the scene right now?

It seems to be getting better. Blues does go in cycles. I didn't know how lucky I was to have been out with Albert. It was such a ripe time for the blues. ■



{ VINYL TREASURES }

BY JIM CAMPILONGO

jazz winds from
a new direction
hank garland

with the allstars featuring
joe morello, drums
gary burton, vibes
joe benjamin, bass



Hank Garland, *Jazz Winds from a New Direction*

HANK GARLAND WAS born in South Carolina in 1930; a “natural” guitarist, by 18 he recorded his classic country instrumental, “Sugarfoot Rag.” Originally created as a warm-up for his left hand, the recording went on to sell more than a million copies. Hank played a Byrdland guitar, a model custom-built for him and Billy Byrd, taking its name from a combination of both men’s surnames.

Jazz Winds from a New Direction was released in 1961 on Columbia Records. Recorded in one day, the album chronicles Hank’s successful leap into becoming a bona fide world-class jazz guitarist. The lineup included 17-year-old whiz kid Gary Burton, bassist Joe Benjamin and drummer Joe Morello (from the Dave Brubeck Quartet).

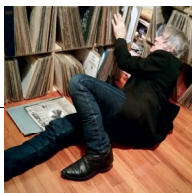
Every tune on it is a guitar tour de force. “All the Things You Are” features an improvised jazz-shaped Bach counterpoint between Hank and Burton and “Three-Four, the Blues” kicks off with a wonderful unison line, propelling into a reverb-laden Garland solo. “Move” features Hank ripping effortlessly over jazz blues changes, exhibiting spectacular dexterity and a deep jazz vocabulary. On “Always,” he plays acoustic guitar and “Riot Chous” is another fast blues tune, in the style of “Move.”

My personal favorite is “Relaxin’,” where

Hank demonstrates a deep wealth of ideas well beyond his years. You’re invited in with a great chord solo, filled with altered and dominant chord magic. It’s the kind of break one can sing along to. I studied this track obsessively, occasionally going back to it, to review his genius.

Understandably, *Jazz Winds from a New Direction* inspired young George Benson to play jazz guitar. But, it’s mind blowing that it was made by the same guitarist who rocked with Elvis Presley and supported Patsy Cline, bringing hillbilly jazz to new heights. Tragically, Hank was in a car accident (the same vehicle pictured on the cover of *Jazz Winds from a New Direction*) at age 30, suffering brain damage that prevented him from playing guitar at his former world-class level. In 2002, I emailed him telling him “thank you” — that he raised the bar for all of us guitarists — and his sister wrote back to me, with a charming reply that was lost when my computer crashed. She said that she’d read my email to Hank and it had brought tears to his eyes. I can’t really describe my feelings about this.

Maybe trying to get to the musical heights of Hank Garland is an act of futility, but it’s something I’m still trying to do, every day. And, no matter what, we can always be inspired by his great musical legacy. 🎸



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COLUMN

{ WHACK JOB }

BY TERRY CARLETON



1998 Italia Monza

AS A COLLECTOR of what we smarmy elitists call “weirdos” or, indeed, “whack jobs,” I have to say that the Italian birds of the 1960s still continue to amaze me. In particular, it’s the Italian designers from that period that blow my mind and capture my imagination: the clothes, the motorcycles, the accordions, the scooters, the cars... These, and more, stand today as testaments to a time when imagination met not only humor but industrial practicality. Italian guitars from the ‘50s and ‘60s, many of which were born out of retooled accordion plants, are no exception to that glorious, untethered lightness of design. Brands like Eko (which also produced guitars for Vox), Wandré, Crucianelli, Diamond, Panoramic, Welson, Galanti, Meazzi and Goya, to name a few, all share that unique and wonderful blend.

I guess I’m not the only guitar nut who feels that way, because the Italia Guitar Company — which was founded in England by designer and luthier Trevor Wilkinson — has been joyfully recreating that vibe for the past 20 years. This article is about one of Italia’s early retro Italian-inspired designs: the Monza.

WEIRDO FACTOR

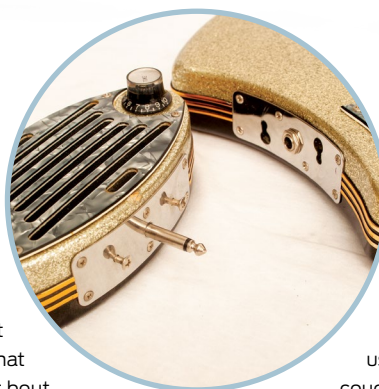
The shape is obviously a bit off-kilter, and the

colors — a champagne-sparkle wrap with a grey MOTS pickguard and matching headstock — help transport its style back to the ‘60s. The fact that there is a matching mini amp that attaches to the guitar’s lower bout, makes it an even wilder oddity.

PLAYABILITY & SOUND

Here’s the beautiful thing about Italia guitars: Unlike their early predecessors, which sometimes played a bit rough and needed to be wrangled, these have a modern and familiar feel. Built from stalwart components, they convey a sense of ruggedness and roadworthiness. Wilkinson designed not only that wonderful floating two-post, low-friction bridge (my personal favorite, by the way) but also the pickups, which are decidedly Fender-like, voiced somewhere between a Strat and a Tele. The maple neck with rosewood fingerboard sports 22 nicely dressed medium frets. Combined with a Graphalon nut, this baby sounds great and stays in tune. You can even dive-bomb the strings all the way slack and it will come back in tune quite nicely.

The little amp, held securely in place with a snap, is pretty much what you might expect



from a nine-volt-powered amp of its size, but what fun! Its clean tone gets about as loud as an acoustic guitar and is quite usable in a hotel room, on a couch, on a tour bus, or in the dressing room. Crank it to 11 and you

get a pretty gnarly distorted tone. The amp is easily removed with one little twist, revealing the guitar’s output jack. Neato! Um — I mean, dope!

VALUE

I paid \$400 for mine about 10 years ago. The Monza appears to have been discontinued, but used examples can be found for between \$600 and \$1,000.

WHY IT RULES

In addition to looking somewhat wacky, the Monza plays and sounds great and is quite affordable. What’s more, you’ll stand out with a guitar that doesn’t look like what everybody else is playing. To see Italia’s other builds, visit Italiaguitarsusa.com

If you’d like your own weirdo featured, feel free to contact me at rtcarleton@gmail.com

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SHAKE, RATTLE, & ROLL



GARY CLARK JR. TURNS IT
UP FOR HIS NEW ALBUM,
THIS LAND

BY ART THOMPSON

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARC DUCREST



{ GARY CLARK JR. }



I CONSIDER MYSELF an artist and there are no rules to it, because it's art, right?"

Gary Clark Jr. is talking about the pre-release tracks for what will soon become his fifth studio album, *This Land* (Warner), the follow-up to 2015's *The Story of Sonny Boy Slim*. While on the road in Europe, taking a break from the studio, he's offered *GP* an exclusive opportunity to hear the new songs in rough mix form. Listening to the tracks, I was immediately struck by the freedom and spontaneity of the music. Clark navigates through rock, soul, punk, R&B, hip-hop, even some reggae — all of it righteously juiced up by his explosive guitar playing and infused with shades of psychedelia. He cut much of the album with his new signature Gibson SG, which

"BLUES IS MY ROOTS, AND A LOT OF MY MUSICAL LESSONS CAME FROM THAT MUSIC. BUT I DON'T WAKE UP AND GO, 'I'M A BLUES GUY'"

features three P-90s, giving his guitar tone a more aggressive edge than usual. Not unlike Jimi Hendrix — who was a big influence on him — Clark has found ways to make music that pushes convention, while still maintaining the backbone of blues that's at the core of his style.

"Blues is my roots, and a lot of my musical lessons came from that music," he says. "But I don't wake up and go, 'I'm a blues guy.' I think my being from Texas, and the way I am, it's always going to sound somewhat bluesy. But it's just soul music to me."

Clark's knack for bringing modern sounds and grooves into his songs have kept him on the leading edge of what might be loosely termed "blues rock." But when asked about the stylistic diversity of the songs destined for *This Land*, he replies, "A lot of it was just being inspired by things — the good times, the bad times and just my experiences over the last few years. Another part of the inspiration was that my friend



MARC DUCREST

Sean McCarthy, who works with Jimmie Vaughan, gave me this hard drive with a bunch of music on it. So I was listening to stuff I hadn't heard before and just strumming around on an electric guitar. I started messing around, making beats and chopping samples, and just kind of built it from there. But it's taken me a long time because I haven't released an album in a while."

Indeed, the past few years have been busy ones for Clark's personal life. In 2016, he married his girlfriend, model Nicole Trunfio, and the couple now have two children: a son, Zion, and a daughter, Gia, who was born this past January. Between the making of *This Land* and touring, he hasn't had

much time to ponder the finer points of the album's creation. "We spend so much time out on the road, and now I have these kids running around too," Clark says. "So it's kind of on and off between the road and home. I haven't thought much about how it all happened, but it took me about six months to get it done."

Can you cite any differences in the way you approached this project?

I went in to Arlyn Studios in Austin with this producer/engineer named Jacob Sciba, and he basically just let me freak out for a couple of months. We tried a bunch of things — different tones, instrumentation



and just trying to use the whole spectrum in the studio — we wanted to use all the colors. I started off doing everything by myself, and then I got a real drummer in there — a guy named Brannen Temple — as well as John Dees, a keyboard player from Austin. Mike Elizondo and Alex Peterson [of the Peterson Brothers] played some bass, and I got Sheila E to do some percussion stuff out in L.A., which was an amazing experience. Afterward, I'd go back and layer other things over what they'd added.

So it wasn't really like a band all out on the floor type of thing; it was a kind of like "figure it out as we go," just doing whatever fit the vibe of who we had playing on the track.

The song "Gotta Get Into Something" has a raw, Ramones-like roar that sounds like you were really cranking in the studio. Was that the case?

Yeah, and I've really never done that before. I've always tried to be respectful, but this time it was like I had no manners. It just sounded better to be able to open the amp up all the way and then dial it back with the guitar. There's something very freeing about that, and it opened up everything for me. I could play from zero to 10 and everything in between. In fact, I just put the phone in my other ear and noticed that I have lost some hearing in the recording process. Remember those earplugs, kids! [laughs]

How much trigger time did your new SG get on these tracks?

Well, I was using my TV-color [gloss yellow] SG with three P-90s, until I stupidly didn't unplug it and walked away. I got the cord caught up in my boot and snapped the headstock off — I cried a little bit about that. But Gibson was real nice and they made me a red SG with three P-90s, which I plugged into a Cesar Diaz 100-watt head running through a Marshall cabinet. Joe Walsh, who is a real sweetheart of a guy, gave me a 12-string Takamine that I used on a song called "Guitar Man." Those were pretty much all the guitars I used.

Was there anything in particular about the music you were listening to at the time that made you decide to cut loose

in the volume department?

No, I think it was just the idea of having a new guitar. For the electric stuff it's just loud SG cranked all the way up.

What gauge strings do you put on that guitar?

It's like an .011 through .050 set — nothing too crazy. I also use a medium pick, but I don't know what it is.

What effects did you bring to the sessions?

Early on I got into fuzz because of Jimi Hendrix. So I'm using a Fulltone Octafuzz, as well as a Crybaby wah, a Strymon Flint reverb/tremolo and a Hermida Audio Zendrive — although I didn't use that one much this time because I couldn't really dial it in for the sounds I wanted. But mainly it was volume. I'd just turn it all the way up and use the guitar's tone knob to dial it in however I needed to.

What's the rotary-speaker effect on "I Walk Alone"?

That's the Strymon Flint. That was a fun one to record, and it started with me being in the studio in L.A. with Joseph Angel, who is a great writer and artist. I brought this idea to him and he helped me arrange it. He made it kind of like an R&B track,

which was like a beat, and we built it from there with J.J. Johnson on drums. That song means a lot to me and I love how it turned out.

Were you pushing your voice harder on these songs?

Yeah. I think I've been a little bit shy about exploring my voice because it's hard for me to perform in the studio. I don't want anybody in the studio when I'm singing at all. I get way back in the vocal booth and I turn the lights as low as possible so I can still see what I've written. I might have a

"I'VE ALWAYS TRIED TO BE RESPECTFUL, BUT THIS TIME IT WAS LIKE I HAD NO MANNERS"

tequila or two, and I just let loose.

But I've always kind of held back and sung to reach the notes and not really to evoke emotion or paint a picture or become a character for a particular song. It's always been like my normal voice over everything — either falsetto or my lower register. But this time I was experimenting with all





kinds of things, because I've come to realize that your voice is an instrument and it can change and it can be manipulated. I guess I'm just becoming more comfortable with it. I'm not getting any younger either, so I want to have fun with it and let loose before I can't do it anymore.

"Feeling Like a Million" is a powerful tune that really grabbed me with the melody and story line. How do you come up with lyrics?

I think I've gone completely mad searching

for lyrics for this album. They don't come easy, and I second-guess everything because I want it to be from an honest place. I want to be able to still sing it 10 years down the line. You know what I mean? I'll do the whole lyric and lay it down, and I'll listen to it over and over and then go, "Forget that. I'm going to come up with something else." I'll either redo it or change a few lines, but I want the story to be complete and to paint a picture. I want every line that goes by to be some kind of visual for me, so when I hear it I can see it as

well. If that doesn't happen, I'll just scrap it and redo it.

Isn't it time consuming to be rewriting lyrics in the studio?

Yeah, and my deep thanks to Jacob and [assistant engineer] Joseph Holguin, because those guys were very patient while I would be in the booth for hours and hours trying to figure something out. That song in particular I sung over and over trying to get a pre-chorus that felt right. Then I'd sing the hook and switch words around, and they're like, "Dude, it's cool now." But I'm going "No!" Once it felt like it was really right though, they said, "Okay, we get it." That one definitely took a while, but you know, they all took a while. Like I said, it doesn't come easy for me. But for a lot of the songs I often came back to where my instincts were initially. I'd pull a tune apart and try to make it bigger or more complicated, and that would take a few days, and then I would come back to the original idea.

Do you ever get writers block, and how do you deal with it?

Well, "Feed the Babies" was one of those songs where I had to stall for a while. The music was there, but I just couldn't come up with anything. Jacob saw I was stuck, and he said, "Well, I've kind of got something for this. I know it's not really my place, but I've been listening to these roughs and this is my idea." Have you ever seen the movie, *Ray*, where this guy is going "I've got this song," and he gives it to Ray Charles? It was like that. Jacob kind of shyly sang it to me, and I went in there and basically polished it up or whatever. So I've got to compliment Jacob, because he wrote at least 80 percent of that song, and it was something he wanted to put out there in the world. It's not an easy thing to do when you're not really a songwriter or a performer and you present something to an artist and say, "What do you think about this?" It could have been terrible, but it turned out to be an absolutely beautiful song.

I understand you did all the drum programming for this project, so can you talk about how you created "I Got My Eyes on You"?

I was in L.A. for a couple of months when



"JIMMIE VAUGHAN LOOKED DOWN AT MY PEDALBOARD AND SAID, 'WHAT THE FK YOU GOING TO DO WITH ALL THAT?'"**

MARC DUCREST

my wife was pregnant with our daughter; and I was at home in my little make-shift studio room with my Akai MPC X, and I came up with this drum pattern and chord progression. I just started off with the organ and kick drum and I was getting familiar with arranging and making multiple parts and adding dynamics and layers to that. I was really trying to figure out how to make a song on the MPC X and not just a looped beat — I wanted something that went somewhere. When I got back to Texas, I put some guitars on it as

“I’VE GONE COMPLETELY MAD SEARCHING FOR LYRICS FOR THIS ALBUM. THEY DON’T COME EASY”

well as drums and other live elements. It was really exciting to have Sheila E come in for a couple of days and play on four songs. When she heard the first chorus of “I Got My Eyes on You,” she goes, “Stop! I’ve got to get on this!” She just hopped up and created this amazingly beautiful stuff. In fact, the whole thing changed when she played on these songs.

Is your live setup different from what you used to record with?

No, it’s pretty much the same except for using some backline amps on this tour, which — not to be negative — don’t sound as good as mine. The Cesar Diaz head belonged to Arlyn Studios and they let me borrow it. I’m trying to figure out if I can buy it from them, or I’ll just end up stealing it somehow. [laughs] The Fender Vibro-King is still in my setup, as is the SG, and I have my “Blak & Blu” Epiphone Casino, and that’s it. I was all over the place for a while but I’ve kind of reeled it in. It’s like this is what works for me, this is what I know, and it feels great. The same pedalboard that I used in the studio is with me on tour, and nothing’s really changed over the years at all — fuzz, reverb, tremolo, wah and maybe a boost here and there.

But mainly volume and tone does it for me on the guitar.

I’m a little bit gun shy about pulling out all the effects. I got up onstage to do some shows with Jimmie Vaughan and he looked down at my pedalboard and said, “What the fuck you going to do with all that?” I said, “I don’t know man, I guess

nothing.” [laughs] Watching him play, I’m thinking, “Is all this necessary?” I mean, it really is kind of telling when someone who is basically just using their fingers can make guitar sounds like that. It’s pretty incredible. But you know what? I love you Jimmie, but this is my life and I’m going to stomp on my fuzz! 🎸

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BLUES TRAVELER

SAMANTHA FISH HAS SHREDDDED HER WAY UP AND DOWN THE MISSISSIPPI TO BECOME THE GENRE'S MOST EXCITING — AND LEAST PREDICTABLE — RISING STAR

BY JIM BEAUGEZ PICTURES BY J.B. LAWRENCE

SAMANTHA FISH CLIMBS the steps of her 19th-century New Orleans home, shouldering her Arctic White Gibson SG as she retreats from the midday summer sun into a wide parlor. The air is thick with bayou humidity, but as a Kansas City native who spent her first 20-something years weathering winter blizzards, Fish doesn't seem to mind.

As she finds a spot on her couch, the muted thud of drums sounds through the walls of a recording studio, situated next door in a former church. In New Orleans, music is everywhere.

"You could walk down any street and come up with an idea," the acclaimed blues guitarist says. "There's so much music around, and the people are inspiring."

Fish grew up hearing bluegrass, Americana and hard rock, eventually finding her way to the blues through classic rock and roll. She taught herself the basics on guitar, then picked up licks from records and the jazz

and blues players she found in her hometown. She broke out of the Midwest blues scene with a power trio that showcased her fiery guitar playing and inimitable, howling vocals. "I would pick up things here and there from other guitar players, just little theoretical bits," Fish says. "A lot of what I do I learned by ear."

Her early solo records — *Runaway*, *Black Wind Howlin'* and *Wild Heart* — track her progression from traditional blues-rock to a rawer interpretation of hill country blues. Her slow-burning cover of Screamin' Jay Hawkins' "I Put a Spell on You" and faithful rendition of Black Sabbath's "War Pigs" became highlights of her live sets and showed her musical range.

After absorbing the swampy Delta blues of the Mississippi, Fish followed the big river to the bottom of the basin, where it all flows together in a gumbo of sounds. Her latest albums, *Chills & Fever* and *Belle of the West*, both released in 2017 on Ruf Records, expand on her



{ SAMANTHA FISH }





recipe. The brassy and noirish *Chills & Fever* nods to classic soul and R&B; it was recorded with the Detroit Cobras and a horn section from New Orleans. *Belle of the West* digs deeper into Americana — with R.L. Burnside and Mississippi Fred McDowell influences — revealing her songwriting chops and ear for haunting melodies.

“What inspired me to start playing is sort of all over the map, and the blues always glued everything together for me,” she explains.

On a rare weeklong break between tour dates with her seven-piece band, Fish took *Guitar Player* through her evolution from

**“WHAT INSPIRED ME
TO START PLAYING
IS SORT OF ALL
OVER THE MAP, AND
THE BLUES ALWAYS
GLUED EVERYTHING
TOGETHER FOR ME”**

blues shredder to bandleader.

What attracted you to blues music?

I think it was just years of listening to guitar-oriented music and finding that a lot of it was based in blues. When I found Stevie Ray Vaughan and Jimi Hendrix — and even the Rolling Stones and Led Zeppelin — their love of blues music was so evident throughout everything they did, so I started just going backwards. It’s such a passionate, raw, emotive music, and it’s stayed relevant and evolved. It cuts to the heart of what most people feel and are going through. I just felt connected to it.

How did being in Kansas City shape your playing?

Kansas City has a long history of jazz and blues, and they had jams every day. That was why I started picking up standards: I had to bring songs that were oriented to the jams, songs that I could jump up and play and people could follow. I was going out every night of the week for a while there, at like

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18, 19 years old, for years. I'd go to work or school and then get off and go play.

All of your albums have their own signature sounds. How have you grown as an artist throughout your releases?

I think the songs became a little more important than the solo. We've added more instrumentation. I grew up loving soul singers, which isn't something I talked about much because I came up as a guitar shredder in a trio. [On *Chills & Fever*] I wanted to show everybody this other side, which is soul music. Then with *Belle of the West*, it was my love of Americana music and North Mississippi. There's still a lot of guitar playing on it; there's just a lot of layers now.

What about that North Mississippi hill country style made an impression on you?

I loved that there was this backbeat, this groove. It was very danceable. There was just this raw slinkiness to the music, and

the guitars always sounded aggressive to me. It's a layered kind of music, and if you really listen to it and dissect it, there's some beautiful melodies.

***Belle of the West* opens with Shar-dé Thomas playing fife on "American Dream." You can't get more hill country than that.**

That's real stuff. She's a direct descendant of [fife and drum player] Otha Turner. We had so much great talent on that record, and

**"I'M JUST TRYING TO
TAKE WHAT I LOVE
AND INTERNALIZE IT
AND MAYBE PUT OUT
SOMETHING THAT
SOUNDS A LITTLE
DIFFERENT"**

there were more females in the studio than ever. All these beautiful female voices—Lillie Mae sang on it and played fiddle, [upright bassist] Amy LaVere, Tikyra Jackson played drums. We had a choir of sirens.

Releasing two records in a year is a bold move these days.

We recorded *Belle of the West* really close after *Wild Heart* came out. We were just so fired up. There's no overdubbing. You're singing into this mic, you're playing into this mic — you can't really fix things. Then the concept for *Chills & Fever* came about, and it just seemed like the time to try that. They're diverse records. I don't think they would've worked if we put out two records that were blues-rock.

How did you hook up with the Detroit Cobras for *Chills & Fever*?

I'd made three albums that were trio-based, rockin' guitar and stuff, and I wanted to



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spread out a little bit. I met Bobby Harlow, who produced the record, and he knew the Cobras pretty well. He and I had this idea for covering obscure soul classics — B-sides that weren't hits, but should have been. We got this cool mix of classic Detroit R&B and soul, but also this rock and roll band backing it up. Then we brought in horns from New Orleans.

You expanded from a power trio to a seven-piece band in the process.

At first, I was afraid I was going to lose too much guitar, but there's so much more to play to. It makes me be more creative, and we can take things further than we could before. When I hit the solo, it's a little more surprising than when I was always playing all the time. A horn section can add such a great pad and lift and dynamic change that I couldn't do as a trio all the time. I have a whole other element to play with onstage.

What gear are you using to bring out these styles live?

I've got an SG, and a Jaguar for light stuff like "Hello Stranger," the Barbara Lewis song [on *Chills & Fever*]. I've got a Delaney 512—you can get some funky feedback notes out of it. I have my Delaney signature model, the Fishcaster. I use that a lot for slide stuff. And cigar-box guitars, of course. I have one that's called a Stogie Box Blues guitar, and it sounds mean as hell. And then my acoustic koa Taylor. My main [amp] rig right now is four 12s and a big Camille head [all Cat-gory Five].

What role do pedals play in recreating such a wide array of tones?

I did away with pedals for years, but now I love using delay — I've got three delays on my board right now, and I've got them all set to different things. There's a moment in the show where I'll do crazy, pitch-bending stuff with the delay pedals because you can

work the knobs against each other, make crazy psychedelic noises, and you can slow the pitch down. One of my favorites is the King of Tone. That's my go-to if I have a big solo. It sounds so nice, like the tubes are warmed up to the perfect temperature and the amp is turned up to the right volume.

Five albums in, how do you view your role in the blues?

That's tough, because I don't know what my role is within blues music. I'm just trying to take what I love and internalize it, and maybe put out something that sounds a little different. I think that's important, because you turn on new people to it that way. I love what the Black Keys did, and Jack White, because you could tell they were big fans of Delta blues. Young kids who maybe never would have heard a Junior Kimbrough record will maybe go out and buy one. So just take it and move forward with it, and always keep it as inspiration. ■



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BLUES CRUSADER

RICK SPRINGFIELD RAGES AT THE ABYSS WITH A DARK ALBUM FULL OF FIERCE GUITARS

BY MICHAEL MOLENDRA PICTURES BY ELIZABETH ATTENBOROUGH

YOU'RE READING THE headline "Blues Crusader" and you're looking at a photo of Rick Springfield, and you're probably asking yourself, "How can that be? The *Guitar Player* staff must have been hit by a communal acid flashback that fried their collective neural networks." O ye, of little faith...

At this point in his career, Springfield shouldn't be perceived solely as an actor/musician who scored a 1981 pop-rock mega hit with "Jessie's Girl." In fact, he has released 19 studio albums celebrating guitar riffs, guitar solos and balls-out rock and roll — albeit with a Beatles-esque approach to melodic hooks — and his live shows always deliver a take-no-prisoners intensity. The guitarist — who has a home studio to record his song ideas and album parts — has been honest about his own bouts of depression. The current state of the world sparked some very deep and emotional reactions, driving him to the blues and serving as inspiration for his latest album, *The Snake King* (Frontiers Music), released earlier this year.

While the new album is likely best categorized as a blues-pop-rock hybrid, the songs definitely have hellhounds on their tails. Each track is full of wall-to-wall guitar textures and intense and unhinged solos. One song, "Orpheus in the Underworld," is even a very un-radio-friendly 14 minutes long. *The Snake King* is a brilliantly savage guitar opus by an artist who feels life intensely and has the guts to share his demons to warn, engage and inspire.

As *The Snake King* displays depth, scope and stylistic latitude, *GP* are curious how you developed your own definition of blues music for the album.

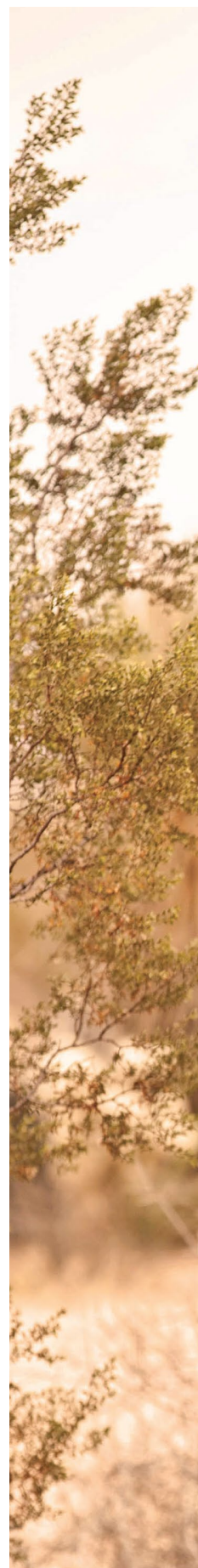
I wanted to do a blues-based thing, but I didn't want to be completely bound by the stuff purists would say, such as, "Well, you can't deviate from this or

that or it's not blues." Honestly, the blues came out of guys just playing shit. There were no rules for them. Sometimes they played a 13-bar blues, or an eight-bar blues or a 50-bar blues. They just did what they needed to do to get their songs out. So I thought about that, and I decided I didn't want to restrict myself. I didn't want to limit the appeal of the record, for one, and I also wanted to be truthful to myself because I have a lot of pop and rock in my soul, and my strengths as a writer are in those areas. Furthermore, I felt if I stuck to the definition of "straight blues" — lyrics and all — it would be a somewhat meaningless album for me.

How do you mean?

Most everybody who does blues albums basically redoes old blues songs. I didn't want to do that, because it has been done way better by other artists, and the originals are pretty fucking good, too. I'm also a hook whore, and I wanted people to go, "Hey, that's catchy." And then I had a lot I wanted to write about. So much was going on in my head, because I feel the world is just completely messed up. Evil is so prevalent, and it's really the end for my childhood belief that there's a benevolent god out there looking out for us. We need to do something soon or it's going to be over. That's what I wanted to write and sing about, and that's not the kind of content that suits a pure pop album. But the blues can absolutely be about some dark shit. So for the album to be meaningful to me, all of this pointed to writing stuff with a blues-infused approach.

Some of your stated influences — such as Eric Clapton and Jimmy Page — weren't solely regurgitating, say, Albert King licks in Cream and Zeppelin. They







also evolved a blues foundation into a hybrid.

Yes. I was encouraged by that. Those talented guys listened to all of the amazing blues originators, and then they went south with it. My favorite Clapton playing is on Cream's *Disraeli Gears*, where he was doing that incredibly melodic stuff. He did recycle a lot of the old riffs, but he begins and ends with some amazing shit, and that's what put him above the guys who were just recycling rote blues licks. And, wow, Jimmy Page took it completely somewhere else by infusing blues with Eastern stuff and British Isles folk and all that.

I kind of tried to follow the same path, but I didn't limit myself. I'd start out with a blues attitude, but if some other idea came along, I would go with it and try to incorporate it in whatever blues structure I had started with. For example, "Little Demon" is based around a basic rock riff, but the lyrics and the arrangement stick to the blues-infused plan.

And, of course, the lyrics were pretty central to the album's thematic journey. Absolutely. The words gave shape to the music, because a few of the songs initially started out with, what I'd call, standard

"I REALLY WANT THE SNAKE KING TO SELL SO THAT PEOPLE CAN HEAR IT. THAT'S WHY YOU DO STUFF LIKE THIS. YOU DO IT FOR YOURSELF FIRST AND THEN TO SHARE IT WITH OTHERS"

blues melodies and chord patterns. And I had to come up with something more than that. I couldn't just sing "la-la" lyrics about my baby and hope the songs would go anywhere interesting. I had to come up with lyrics that guided the songs to an appropriate thematic direction.

How did you approach the album sessions?

Initially, I was so unsure of the songs and the arrangements that I went into my home studio, put down click tracks, and played keeper acoustic and resonator tracks to give me an idea of the direction. Then I did rough vocals on all 12 songs, and I brought the tracks to EastWest Studios

[in Hollywood] to do drums and bass with a great room sound.

It's hard to believe that your band played the basics with such intensity, given they were hearing acoustic beds rather than screaming electric-guitar tracks.

Well, the original acoustic tracks are pretty frickin' intense. They're full-on Pete Townshend-style acoustics, where you go, "Okay, this guy is really hitting the guitar with a lot of energy." [Drummer] Jorge Palacios and [bassist] Siggy Sjursen are in my incredible road band, and all of us are the kinds of players who hit hard. That's just the way we play. It's always a fucking rock show. [laughs]

Did you track your electric-guitar parts back at home?

Yes. I don't like burning studio time by playing the songs and hoping everyone will figure out the right parts there, in the moment. I like to take my time and build the tracks, and my home studio is perfect for that. I can just sit there and try parts all day. If something doesn't work, I'll try something else. I don't have to worry about the other musicians sitting around going, "Oh, come on. Can we get to the next song already?"

What was the main guitar rig you used?

I have a lot of guitars, but most of them are hanging on my walls because I love the way they look — although if something isn't working, I'll pull a guitar off the wall to try it. Mainly, I used this wooden Dobro that has a plunky, authentic southern sound, and a Luna Steel Magnolia resonator. The electrics were a Strat and my '69 SG, which I used for some riffs. For slide, I played a '60s Montgomery Ward Airline guitar. It's a little piece of crap with an action so high you can't play it as a regular guitar, but it's a monster for slide. I only have one amp that I use a lot — the Morgan 12-watt that I also played on the last album — because, for me, the sound is in the guitar. That's also why I don't use pedals very often. [Co-guitarist] Tim [Pierce] had a whole bunch of amp heads connected to a speaker cabinet, so I think he tried different things, but I was listening to the sound rather than



watching what he was doing. His main guitars were a Strat and a very cool Les Paul.

We love that there are long guitar solos blasting all over the album.

Look, it's no secret that the guitar has taken a backseat to computer-generated stuff these days. That's the way it is. I'm not moaning about it, but I'm a guitar player, and I love guitar solos, so I played a lot of them. [laughs] Tim is the only other guitar player on the album, and he did a couple of solos, as well. He said, "Wow, it's so much fun to just take off on a solo, because usually people want me to play background stuff for the song."

There is so much guitar going on — acoustics, electrics, riffs, solos, sweetening parts and so on — that it must have been quite a chore to get all the layers and textures to speak clearly in the mix.

I like to think I create parts that don't conflict with other parts, but just because I can write a song and know what I'm doing in the studio, it doesn't mean I have a clue where everything needs to fit so that people can hear what's going on. Being an incredible mix engineer is a whole other gig. So I had Warren Huart mix the album, and he was absolutely the right guy. He got where the album was going and what it should sound like. He did a great job of pulling stuff out, leaving stuff off or sacrificing something I thought should be featured to live underneath the mix instead.

Any examples of those "sacrifices"?

When I did the acoustic guitar parts, I thought, These sound great; they need to be audible on the final mix. But that's not how Warren mixed them. They're not as loud as I thought they'd be, but they are still driving everything. That's what recording is about — knowing what parts work best to truly animate the song.

This seems like a very personal album — one you'd have made even if it sold almost no records because you had to get the songs out.

That might be true. Probably. But even so, I really want *The Snake King* to sell so that people can hear it. That's why you do stuff like this. You do it for yourself first and then to share it with others. ■

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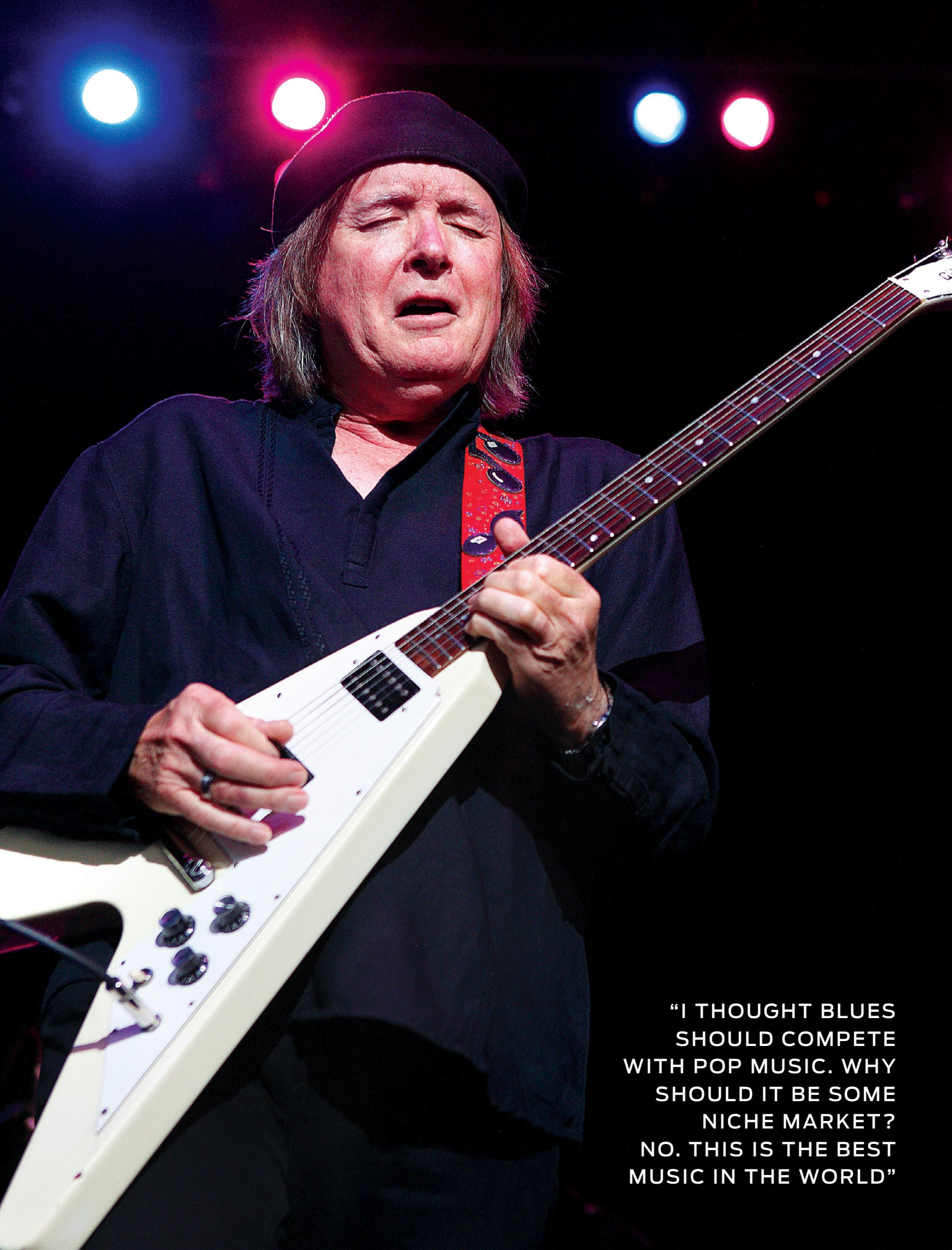
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SHOULD COMPETE
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NICHE MARKET?
NO. THIS IS THE BEST
MUSIC IN THE WORLD"



FRIENDS OF THE DEVIL

KIM SIMMONDS' EXTENDED MUSICAL FAMILY KEEPS SAVOY BROWN SOUNDING FRESH, YOUTHFUL AND GRITTY

BY MICHAEL MOLENDRA

PHOTOGRAPH BY KEN SETTLE

ROBERT JOHNSON MET Satan down at the crossroads all on his own. It was a different story for Savoy Brown's Kim Simmonds — he brought an entire caravan with him.

Simmonds, who founded his seminal British blues-rock band way back in 1965, embraces the “it takes a village” approach, when it comes to his artistry. Throughout the years, his creative team has included his wife, Debbie Lyons, as well as an entire army of band members (including drummer Bill Bruford, guitarist “Lonesome Dave” Peverett and bassist Andy Pyle) and a vast storehouse of influences from his constant absorption of diverse musical styles and other players.

Furthermore, his crew must have struck a hard bargain with ol' Lucifer, because Savoy Brown continue to be a vital force both live and on record. The 53-year-old group's latest release, *Witchy Feelin'* (Ruf), is all about gorgeous-toned, raging or sensual guitars, as well as driving grooves. The band plays everything with the fire and toughness of a bunch of snotty kids looking to prove something from an opening slot on a festival gig. Not surprisingly, Simmonds — who graced the cover of the January 1975 *Guitar Player* — credits Lyons, drummer Garnet Grimm, bassist Pat DeSalvo, and recording engineer/mixer Ben Elliott with helping him deliver such savage and spirited performances on *Witchy Feelin'*.

***Witchy Feelin'* sounds like it was cut by some brash kid rather than a blues-rock icon with decades of performance under his belt. How do you keep your playing and writing so vital?**

Actually, I've been doing a lot of thinking about that recently, and I believe it goes back to the very beginning of Savoy Brown. You see, I always had a very big vision for the music. Listen to “Mr. Downchild” [from 1968's *Getting to the Point*]: It starts quiet and builds to a crescendo. That was me thinking blues music should be orchestral in its dynamics. I thought blues should compete with pop music. Why should it be

some niche market? No. This is the best music in the world.

In addition, I didn't want to play groove- or rhythm-based blues that didn't have hooks. I certainly understand the beauty of grooves in blues — and a lot of artists never get very far away from that style — but that wasn't what I wanted to hear. Everything I did had to have a guitar lick. I was one of the first guys to do Willie Dixon's “I Ain't Superstitious” in the U.K. Why did I pick songs like that? Because they had real guitar hooks. Right from the start, all of the Savoy Brown music we recorded in the early days was mostly based around riffs and hooks, and that put the songs into the mainstream thing. In fact, to this day, one of the things I'm most proud of is that Savoy Brown — just a little blues band — really cracked the pop charts in America. When I've gotten it right through the years, you'll hear those hooks, those dynamics and those connections to pop and orchestral music. I certainly wasn't analyzing it back then, but that's what I was thinking.

How do you determine how far to push Savoy Brown songs without disrupting the expectations of your core blues-rock audience?

That's easy. We spent two years testing the songs onstage. In fact, “Thunder, Lightning & Rain” [from *Witchy Feelin'*] started off as a ballad and ended up as a down-and-dirty boogie. It just shows you that when you write a song, you might not quite understand it yourself until you play it live.

I love the old method of road-testing songs. I suspect few bands take the time to do that these days.

Listen — even my songwriting sessions are all done live. I think that certainly helps the energy. I've got a drum machine going, I'm playing my guitar, I'm going through the lyrics to see what fits, and I'm getting it all down there and then. Then, I'll know if it's trash or if it's good that very same day.



How did you pick the good ones for each album?

I don't. I never decide on my songs. I write too many of them to decide. I trust other people to say, "This is good. This is bad. This is average." I'm lucky to have my wife and a team of people around who support and counsel me, so that I can be artistic.

You mentioned "going through the lyrics to see what fits" when you're writing. Do you peruse your songwriting notebooks for ideas?

It's more that all the lyrics are completed before I even touch a guitar. I always start with the lyrics, because I feel if you have a good lyric, it can become any type of song. I could make it a country song, a folk song or a heavy-metal song. This is especially important when writing blues, because blues lyrics can cover a lot of genres. So I'll get some chords or riffs going, and I'll see which lyrics represent the

"I LISTEN TO ALL TYPES OF MUSIC ALL OF THE TIME, TO SEE IF I CAN GET SOME INSPIRATION FROM A GROOVE, OR A VOCAL, OR ANYTHING ELSE. IT COULD BE LIGHTNIN' SLIM OR A MODERN ROCK TRACK"

musical vibe I'm going for. It's actually very exciting, because the process of writing a song can go anywhere. Sometimes, you realize the title you have isn't the best title. The title is actually somewhere

in one of the verses.

Do any other elements inform your writing?

Definitely. I'm not one of those guys who plays in a void and invents something. I listen to all types of music all of the time to see if I can get some inspiration from a groove or a vocal or anything else. It could be Lightnin' Slim or a modern rock track. I mean, if you're going to write detective novels, you had better read a lot of detective novels, right? You've got to get inspiration from somewhere.

Furthermore, I'm not beyond listening to anybody. I love guitar players, and I'm fairly open-minded. Obviously, I'm a blues-rock guy, but I can recognize great talent on the guitar in any style, and I ask myself, "Hey, what can I learn from this?" For example, I learned a lot from Yngwie Malmsteen. I haven't heard what he has been doing since the '80s, but he had a



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beautiful guitar sound. I want beauty and poetry when I hear the guitar — which is why I also listen to all the jazz players.

Did you record the album tracks live in the studio, or build them up from the drums?

Yes, it was live. Of course. That's the way this music should be recorded. I overdubbed some guitars and vocals, although, on some tracks — such as “Witchy Feelin’”

— I kept the guide vocal, and what you hear on the album is exactly how we played it in the studio. I suppose I have the luxury of experience now, of knowing what I'm all about, so I'm not big on doing multiple guitar takes. It's going to go down once, and that's it.

Even the solos? If so, did you improvise them or work them out beforehand?

All those solos were done completely off

the top of my head, and I left them as is. It's a jazz sensibility. That's the era I grew up with. I don't want to overanalyze the whole thing, and I don't want to take the stuffing out of it. I know from experience I could disappear down the rabbit hole. Yeah, I could give you six solos, but, to me, the first one is going to be as good as any of the others; and, sometimes it's the best because it really captures your gut feelings. I mean, I did do a couple of takes on a few things — I don't want to give you the idea the process was one way and one way only — but, by and large, I'm a first-take guy.

Given that live and improvised approach to recording, were there any surprises or epic failures?

No failures, but a surprise — or a save. I had a vocal melody and lyrics for “Close to Midnight,” and I sensed straightaway, from the vibe in the studio, that nobody wanted to embarrass me by saying it wasn't



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PLAYERS

{ KIM SIMMONDS }

working. Luckily, I had a good idea: I said, "Let's do it as an instrumental." I could feel the angst go out of the room. [laughs] So I did a one-take thing, and I'm thinking, "I could play so much more on that. I could do these bends. I could rephrase some parts." I can't tell you how much 90 percent of my body wanted to go in and redo it. But the point of a song is not to show you that I can play guitar. The point of a song is to convey a feeling. So I stopped, and it was the right thing to do. We had it the first time. But I still listen to it today and say, "Let me do it again!" [laughs]

What gear did you bring to the sessions?

I'm completely a non-technician, so this is going to be difficult. I don't even know what the guitars are called. The main one was a fairly new Dean Zelinsky model, and I also used a DBZ and an '80s Gibson Les Paul. For amps, we had an old Fender Blues DeVille and some boutique amp. I like to



run two amps simultaneously — one distorted and the other a bit cleaner — so we can choose one sound or blend the two for just the right tone for the track. A lot of the guitar tones were down to Ben Elliott of Showplace Recording in New Jersey. I had a lot on my shoulders with all the writing, arranging, pre-production, playing and singing, so it was great to not have

to worry about the tones. Ben says all he did was put up the faders, but he's being very modest.

It must be challenging to continually drive Savoy Brown toward creative success throughout its 53-year existence.

Right now, I'm very much aware of what being a leader means. It doesn't mean that you get everybody else to do the work and reap the benefits. On the other hand, I'm not that guy any more, where it has to be my way. I'm the guy with the vision, of course, but I'm very open to criticism, and I usually run things in my life by gathering input. More and more, I view leadership within Savoy Brown as owning the responsibility to do my thing, and that thing starts with the guitar. I've got to plug in that guitar, get as good of a Kim Simmonds sound as possible and do the job I love as best as I can. If I do that, all the pieces in my life fall spectacularly into place. ■

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LESSONS

{ STYLE }

Beyond the Box

USING MELODIC SUBSTITUTIONS TO BREAK FREE FROM BLUES CLICHÉS

BY JESSE GRESS

ONE GREAT WAY to escape the so-called limitations of blues and pentatonic scales is to blend your existing vocabulary of blues clichés with new ideas, derived from melodic substitutions. Take, for example, a 12-bar blues progression in the key of G. You're probably already aware that its inherent I, IV and V chords (G7, C7 and D7, or G9, C9 and D9 extensions) can be navigated using licks built from combinations of the G minor pentatonic, major pentatonic and blues scales.

Granted, there are countless ways to utilize these scales to produce both clichéd and non-clichéd licks. (It's always interesting when someone claims to be "stuck in a rut" with pentatonic and blues scales!) However,

substituting melodic lines drawn from other scales can open up endless new avenues for musical exploration and exploitation. To that end, we're going to look at how to treat each chord individually by approaching it with a relative minor mode.

MIX IN MIXOLYDIAN

Here's the theory behind the concept: Any harmonized major scale produces only one dominant seven chord built from its fifth scale step — G7 in the key of C, C7 in the key of F, D7 in the key of G and so forth — which also provides the root of its corresponding Mixolydian mode (think major scale with a ♭7). So, theoretically, a 12-bar blues in G is actually in three different major keys — C

Ex. 1a

G9 (I) 	C9 (IV) 	D7 (V)
-------------------	--------------------	-------------------

Ex. 1b

Dm7 	Gm7 	Am7
----------------	----------------	----------------

Ex. 2a

D Dorian 	G Dorian 	A Dorian
---------------------	---------------------	---------------------

Ex. 2b

Dm pent 	Gm pent 	Am pent
--------------------	--------------------	--------------------

for the I chord, F for the IV chord and G for the V chord. Now we could stop here and simply use each chord's Mixolydian mode as a melodic source — G Mixolydian for G7 or G9, C Mixolydian for C7 or C9 and D Mixolydian for D7 or D9 — but let's take it a step further and convert each dominant seven chord to its diatonically related IIm7 chord rooted either a fifth above or a fourth below. The idea is not to substitute the chords themselves — we'll still be playing over G9, C9 and D9 — but to think Dm7 (the IIm7 chord in the key of C) for G9, Gm7 (the IIm7 chord in F) for C9 and Am7 (the IIm7 chord in G) for D9. It may sound confusing on paper, but the shape-driven architecture of chords and scales on the guitar makes applying these

subs to the fingerboard a breeze. You'll see.

A DOSE OF DORIAN

Start by playing a 12-bar blues in G using only the G9 (I), C9 (IV) and D9 (V) chord shapes illustrated in **Ex. 1a**. Now compare these to their relative IIm7 chord shapes in **Ex. 1b**. Each pair of relative chords shares several common tones — you can easily spot a first-inversion Dm triad nestled in the top three notes of G9, a Gm triad sitting on top of C9 and an Am triad embedded in D9. (Tip: Omit the root of each ninth chord and you've got a relative IIm6 chord.) Next we build three Dorian scales/modes (root, 2, ♭3, 4, 5, 6, ♭7) from the root of each minor seven chord, as shown in **Ex. 2a**. Play each ninth chord followed by its corresponding

scale pattern — G9 for D Dorian, C9 for G Dorian and D9 for A Dorian — descending from its highest to lowest note (and vice versa) and dig the enhanced blues tonality. You can also reduce each Dorian pattern to a very familiar minor pentatonic “blues box” rooted a fifth above each ninth chord by omitting its 2 and 6, as shown in **Ex. 2b**.

Examples 3a–c feature a short D Dorian melodic motif applied first to G9, then transposed to G Dorian and A Dorian to cover C9 and D9, respectively. Notice how each line starts on the 5 and ends on the root of each chord. Try dropping these into select measures of a 12-bar G blues while filling in around them with your existing vocabulary of blues licks.

Applying intervallic and melodic sequences

Ex. 3a D Dorian
G9(I)

Ex. 3b G Dorian
C9(IV)

Ex. 3c A Dorian
D9(V)

Ex. 4a D Dorian in 3rds
G9(I)

Ex. 4b
G9

Ex. 5a D Dorian in 4ths
G9(I)

Ex. 5b
G9

**Ex. 6a** D Dorian in 5ths

G9(I)

Ex. 6b

G9

Ex. 7a D Dorian in 6ths

G9(I)

Ex. 7b D Dorian in 7ths

G9(I)

Ex. 7c D Dorian in octaves

G9(I)

Ex. 8a**Ex. 8b****Ex. 8c****Ex. 8d****Ex. 8e**

to each substituted Dorian pattern immediately transports you out of cliché-ville. **Ex. 4a** reorganizes the D Dorian pattern from **Ex. 2a** into descending diatonic third intervals, while **Ex. 4b** reverses the direction of every other pair of eighth notes on beats two and four. Play both sequences over G9. (Tip: Try reversing the order of eighth notes on beats one and three in either example.) These and all other intervallic

sequences can be transposed to G Dorian and A Dorian to cover the IV and V chords (C9 and D9). We continue with similar D Dorian sequences descending first in fourths (**Examples 5a and 5b**) and then in fifths (**Examples 6a and 6b**). After that, it's onward to **Ex. 7a**'s descending sixths, **Ex. 7b**'s sevenths and **Ex. 7c**'s octaves, all of which require some additional assembly to complete.

Though we won't delve into rhythmic variations in much detail (that's another lesson), **Examples 8a–c** present a few common rhythmic motifs as options. Applying each one to the previous intervallic sequences breaks you out of the straight-eighths mold and into less clichéd territory. **Ex. 8d** employs a 3/8 hemiola, via eighth-plus-quarter-note groupings that take three bars to recycle, while **Ex. 8e** utilizes 12/8

Ex. 9a

G9(I)

Ex. 9b

G9(I)

Ex. 10a

12fr.

G9(I)

Ex. 10b

9fr.

G9(I)

Ex. 11a

10fr.

G9(I)

Ex. 11b

7fr.

G9(I)

meter for a one-bar motif gleaned from Frank Zappa's "King Kong."

COMBINING CHROMATIC

It turns out you can add a chromatic passing tone to the Dorian and relative Mixolydian modes — a major 3 (F#) sandwiched between the 4 (G) and b3 (F) for D Dorian, which also functions as a 7 between the root and b7 for G Mixolydian — game on!

The pair of life-changing (for me) I-chord licks in **Examples 9a and 9b** demonstrates usage of what is sometimes called the D "Dorian+3," or the G "jazz-blues scale." It's the same lick played in two different octaves, but **Ex. 9b** features an additional demonstration of octave displacement on the A note. **Ex. 10a** shows the pattern from which **Ex. 9** originated. While the notes may be analyzed relative to Dm7, against

G9 we've got, in descending order, the root, 7, b7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2 and root. **Ex. 10b** illustrates the same scale played one octave lower, where it can easily be connected to **Ex. 10a**. **Ex. 11a** and its octave-lower counterpart in **Ex. 11b** invert the same scale to start and end on F, the b7 of G9, and **Examples 12a and 12b** follow suit, starting and ending on G9's 5 (D) and 3 (B), respectively. Remember that all four of these inverted



Ex. 12a

7fr.

G9(I)

T
A
B

Ex. 12b

4fr.

G9(I)

T
A
B

Ex. 13a G9(I)

T
A
B

Ex. 13b C9(IV)

T
A
B

Ex. 14 G9(I)

T
A
B

MORE ONLINE!

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scales can be transposed for application to C9 and D9. And don't neglect your favorite blues phrasing techniques. String bends, hammer-ons, pull-offs and finger slides are applicable to all of the previous examples. The embellished scale runs in **Examples 13a** and **13b** will get you on the right track.

Finally, **Ex. 14** reveals one of my all-time favorite altered-dominant licks pilfered long ago from a Ted Greene book. Though all

of its notes except C# belong to D Dorian, I tend to think of this run as an ascending G9 arpeggio (G-B-D-F-A), followed by a G-based #4-5-6-b7-#4-6 motif (C#-D-E-F-C#-E), ending with a descending, D Dorian-based root-5-b3-2-root move (D-A-F-E-D). Transpose it to cover the IV and V chords, and watch the sparks fly!

Once you've digested and internalized the information presented here, the goal is

to integrate these licks and principles into your pre-existing musical vocabulary. Do so as organically as possible, rather than quoting them verbatim. Mix, match, fragment and embellish them until they become embedded in your psyche — just like those beloved clichés you know so well. Hopefully, you've garnered enough new ideas to generate a fresh melodic approach to the blues genre that we all love so much. ■

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How to Embellish Pentatonic and Blues-Scale Licks

BY TOM KOLB

EVER WONDER WHY some blues-rock guitarists sound like they're playing much more than just minor pentatonic licks? Perhaps it doesn't quite sound like diatonic scales and modes but more like something in between?

Chances are the player is using minor pentatonics as a foundation and sprinkling in extra notes here and there at strategic points. This is a method used by many of the genre's master improvisers. Knowing which notes should be tossed into the mix, and when, are the key factors that separate chaos from musicality.

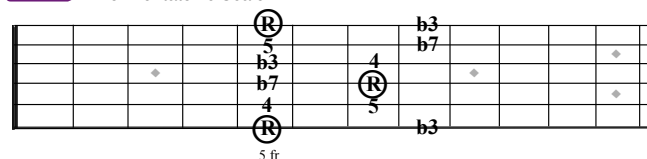
This lesson is designed to unveil some of the mystery of this playing style, offering enough practical know-how to get you ad-libbing those blues licks. Using the minor pentatonic scale as a platform, we'll take a look at a few neck diagrams, explore an assortment of licks and finish off by applying all the information in a full-blown blues-rock solo.

ADDING THE MAJOR THIRD TO MINOR PENTATONIC

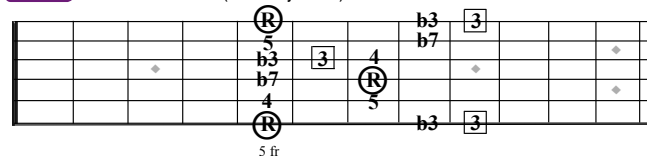
For the sake of continuity and familiarity, the A minor pentatonic scale (A-C-D-E-G; root-♭3-4-5-♭7) will be used as the foundation for this lesson. All examples are to be played with a shuffle, or swing-eighths, feel.

Ex. 1a shows a neck diagram of the classic, two-notes-per-string pattern we all know and love. **Ex. 1b** depicts the same scale pattern but with the addition of a major third (C). These major-third insertions are enclosed in little boxes for clear illustration.

Ex. 1a Minor Pentatonic Scale



Ex. 1b Minor Pentatonic (add major 3rd)



Ex. 2a

Ex. 2b

All examples performed with a shuffle/swing-eighths feel.



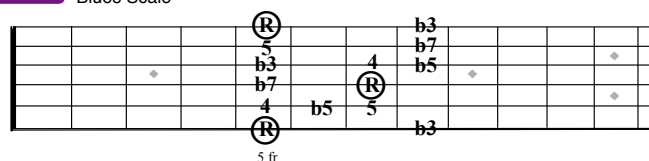
Ex. 3a



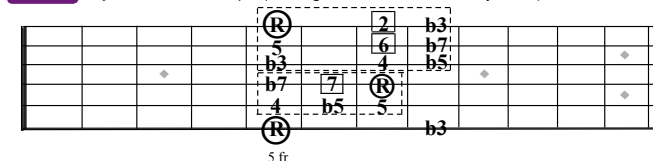
Ex. 3b



Ex. 4a Blues Scale



Ex. 4b Symmetrical Lineups (adding the 2nd, 6th and major 7th)



Ex. 5a



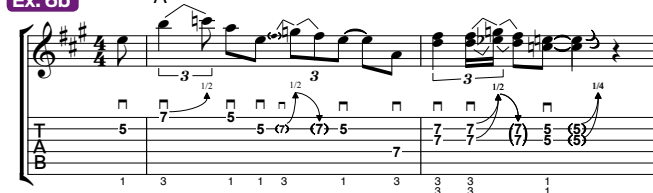
Ex. 5b



Ex. 6a



Ex. 6b



Ex. 7



Ex. 8



Ex. 2a offers a stock example of a minor-pentatonic lick cast over an A7 (A-C $\sharp$ -E-G) chord. This provides the familiar “ $\sharp 9$ ” tonality against the major-sounding chord. Now check out the counterpart lick in **Ex. 2b**. Cast from the scale pattern in **Ex. 1b**, it’s very similar in contour but tosses the major third (C $\sharp$) into the mix. This provides an active, “major/minor” push that is often at the very heart of blues music. Take note of how the interaction of the major- and minor-third pairings are formulated.

The first mating is produced with a hammer-on, while the second is the product of a half-step bend.

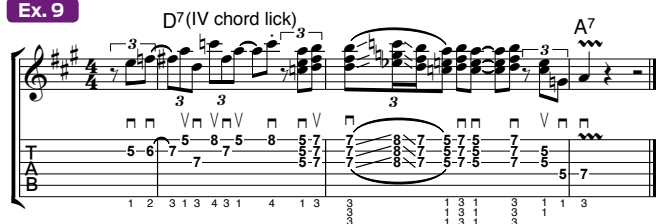
Ex. 3a is a “call-and-response”-style minor-pentatonic lick played out along the lower portion of the pattern from **Ex. 1a**. Again, this accentuates the minor, or $\sharp 9$, edginess of many blues-rock phrases. Using this lick as a template, **Ex. 3b** expands upon it, exploiting the pairing possibilities of the minor-pentatonic-plus-major-third scale from **Ex. 1b**. Thick-sounding, tritone

double-stops open the phrase, which moves to a crafty, pinkie-slide (C to C $\sharp$) on the low E string, followed by a wide intervallic leap to the fifth fret of the D string. The lick culminates on another half-step bend from C to C $\sharp$, this time on the low E string.

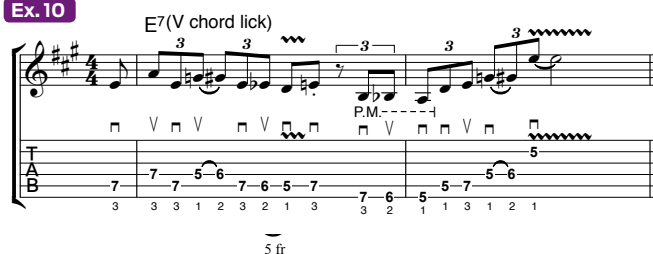
EXPANDING YOUR BLUES-SCALE LICKS

Add a $\flat 5$ to the minor pentatonic scale and you have what is commonly referred to as the blues scale or, in some circles, the

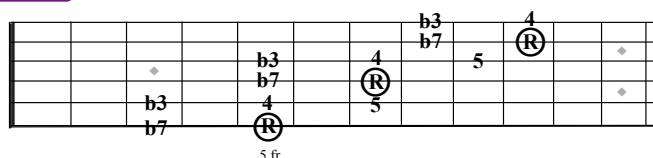
Ex. 9



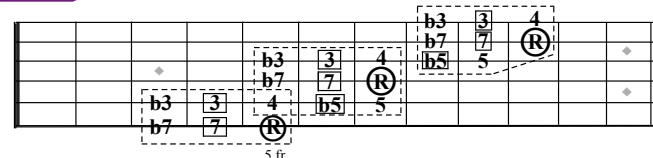
Ex. 10



Ex. 11a Extended Minor Pentatonic Pattern



Ex. 11b Symmetrical Lineups (adding the major 3rd, b5th & major 7th)



Ex. 12



Ex. 13



minor blues scale. **Ex. 4a** illustrates the A blues scale (A-C-D-E_b-E-G) transcribed in scale degrees: root-3-4- $\flat$ 5-5- $\flat$ 7. The inclusion of the $\flat$ 5 (E_b) provides a unique, chromatic sequence of notes (half steps apart) that can be used for smooth “linking” passages or edgy, angular-sounding phrases.

The lick in **Ex. 5a** features both of these qualities: The chromatic moves along the A string provide smooth passage between the fourth and fifth scale degrees (D and E), while the rapid slide to and from the 5th (E₅) on the G string provides the edginess.

Ex. 4b depicts some “added note” concepts that can really spice up your blues-scale licks. First, let’s look at the lower portion of the scale pattern, where the insertion of the major seventh (G $\sharp$) creates a visually symmetrical lineup of matching chromatic passages along the A and D

strings. The dotted line helps to illustrate this “mini-box” cluster of notes. While not generally used as a featured note, the $G_7^{\flat}$ can serve very effectively as a passing tone, connecting the $b7$ (G) to the tonic (A). This concept is demonstrated in **Ex. 5b**. Essentially a counterpart to the blues lick in **Ex. 5a**, it fuels the original phrase with more note choices.

Let's return to the neck diagram in **Ex. 4b**, this time focusing on the top three strings. Inserting the second and sixth scale degrees (B and F $\sharp$, respectively) on the B and high E strings creates a symmetrical box shape, that follows the contour of the pattern of blues-scale notes established along the G string (frets 5, 7 and 8). Again, a dotted line is used to illustrate this symmetrical lineup. **Ex. 6a** takes full advantage of this box with a series of double-stop maneuvers,

dispatched with 1st- and 3rd-finger partial-barre techniques. **Ex. 6b** begins with some half-step bends on the top two strings and ends with a double-stop bend. Careful here: Keep the strings parallel to each other as you bend and release to pitch.

The next four examples combine all elements discussed so far and are designed to complement the changes of a 12-bar blues in the key of A. **Ex. 7** enhances blues-scale licks with major-third embellishments, while **Ex. 8** goes a step further with the inclusion of the major seventh (G $\sharp$) passing tone. Both of these examples are designed for the I7 chord (A7). The next lick (**Ex. 9**) is constructed for the IV7 chord (D7: D-F $\sharp$ -A-C). Based on the notes of the upper symmetrical box of **Ex. 4b**, it opens with a chromatic passage that targets the chord's third (F $\sharp$). This leads to

[illegible]

At the end of bar 4, a chromatic line on the low E string (launched with an open-string attack) anticipates the IV7 chord change (D7), dances around the lower-extension box and shifts back up to fifth position in measure 6. A rhythmic motif (repeating



Ex. 14 cont.

rhythm pattern) and hybrid-picking techniques are the highlights of this measure. Regarding the latter, hold the pick with your thumb and index finger, and use your middle finger to pluck the G string with a quick, aggressive attack. Bar 7 marks the return to the I7 chord (A7), and the frantic pace lightens somewhat with a minor-pentatonic-plus-major-third lick that slides into the upper-extension box described in **Ex. 11b**. Follow the fret-hand fingering suggestions carefully, as it is much easier to handle the high E-string bend with the second finger rather than the first!

The V7 chord (E7) arrives in measure 9, and we hang out in the upper-extension box for a tricky double-stop bend on the B and high E strings. When you go to bend the high E string with your third finger, allow it to snag and take the adjacent B string along for the ride, then strike both strings and return them to pitch. A cycled, chromatic lick targets the fifth (A) of the IV7 chord in measure 10. The suggested picking direction is designed for a powerful attack on the downbeats, but if the tempo feels too fast, go ahead and use alternate picking (consistent down-up-down-up motion). The aim is

to stay in the rhythm “pocket.” The first chorus goes out with a fiery turnaround phrase — a lick specifically designed for the last two measures of a 12-bar blues — that scoots from the upper-extension box back down to fifth position. This one is pure blues scale in construction, with heavy exploitation of the $\flat 5$ (E $\flat$). Follow the fret-hand fingering and legato moves strictly here, but feel free to experiment with the picking directions.

Whereas the first chorus was structured in four-bar, call-and-response fashion, the second chorus comes off more like two guitarists “headcutting” (playing one-upmanship) in two-bar tradeoffs. The first phrase (measures 13 and 14) is a two-note cycle (G and E) played with an aggressive hybrid-picking attack. Played in eighth-note triplet rhythms, it takes on an intriguing offset feel (be sure to mute the A-string pick attacks). The passage ends by moving the two-note pattern up two frets and climbing back down chromatically. The “answering” lick (measures 15 and 16) is a quarter-note, triplet-infused pentatonic passage fortified with aggressive string pulls (snap up on the string with your middle finger). The subsequent IV7-chord lick (measures 17 and 18) takes full advantage of both symmetrical boxes described in **Ex. 4b**. Basically, a sizzling run down every possible note in this “composite” scale pattern, it’s initiated with matching hammer-pull-pull legato moves on the top three strings.

A simple, yet effective melodic/rhythmic motif passage (measures 19 and 20) supplies a nice contrast to the preceding lick. A and G notes fuel the melodic theme, while two shuffled eighth notes provide the rhythmic foundation. The penultimate phrase (measures 21 and 22) zips way up the neck for a chord-tone-related move over the E7 chord. Juggling the $\flat 7$ (D), 3 (G $\sharp$) and 9 (F $\sharp$) of the chord, the lick drops down two frets to follow suit for the corresponding chord tones of D7 and caps off with a three-note burst from the A minor pentatonic scale in 12th position.

The curtain-closing lick finds us back in fifth position with a blistering, major-third-infused A blues-scale phrase. Okay, who won the duel on that second chorus? Votes, please! ■



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Echopark Detroit Gold Rose

BY RICHARD BIENSTOCK

OVER THE PAST several years, Gabriel Currie's Echopark guitars featured on stage in the hands of many top-line players, including Aerosmith's Joe Perry and Brad Whitford, Queens of the Stone Age guitarist Josh Homme, Jackson Browne, Jakob Dylan and Social Distortion's Jonny "Two Bags" Wickersham. Although he only established Echopark in 2012, Currie's credentials extend back decades, beginning with a stint in the 1980s at G&L in Fullerton, California, under the auspices of Leo Fender.

Currie's reverence for Fender, the man (as well as the company) is reflected in the instrument shown here the new Echopark Detroit Gold Rose. The guitar sports the body shape of a long-running Echopark model dubbed "the Clarence"—in tribute to his old boss and mentor, Clarence Leonidas Fender — and is, in effect, a

"EVERYTHING'S OLD-SCHOOL. HONESTLY, THAT'S THE ONLY WAY I KNOW HOW TO DO IT. I COULDN'T WRAP MY HEAD AROUND CNC STUFF IF I TRIED"

wider, longer take on a Telecaster. The rose pattern on its front serves as a nod both to Currie's daughter, whose middle name is Rose, and an old, short-lived Fender design: the 1968 Paisley Telecaster. "I remember seeing Elvis Presley's guitar player James Burton sporting one of



Gabriel Currie silk-screens the Victorian-era rose pattern on a Gold Rose guitar body

those Teles and thinking, Wow, that's awesome!" Currie says. "I really loved how intricate and delicate the design looked, but the way Fender did it back then was they used actual wallpaper and just glued it to the top of the guitar. I owned a '68 for a bit, and if you've ever played one of those Teles, they're kind of dense and plunky, and not very resonant. They weren't very good instruments, so I wanted to capture the essence of the design but do it right this time."

Currie has been building instruments sporting the rose pattern for years. The first example, a 2012 semihollow Clarence, went to Joe Perry. The Gold Rose came about more recently when he was commissioned to build a run of guitars

for a Saks Fifth Avenue fashion show and charity event, in conjunction with Detroit Music Week-end, in the Michigan city where Echopark now resides. "All the guitars sold immediately," he says, "but I held onto the Gold Rose."

The guitar features a body of super-lightweight old-stock swamp ash, upon which Currie applies the rose design — a Victorian textile pattern — using a silk-screening process. The base color goes down first, and once that layer is dry to the touch, he screens the rose print on top of it. "Then I do another burst to tie in the pattern with the sides of the guitar," Currie says. "That's what give the roses that 'appears to disappear' kind of look." The intent, he says, "is to have the





Newly finished guitar bodies dry at the Echopark shop

design not be just something aesthetic. I want it to be part of the instrument and really give it character."

On the Gold Rose, that character is rounded out by a number of high-end woods and appointments. A neck of old-stock figured big-leaf maple and a fretboard of milled old-stock Brazilian rosewood complement the swamp ash body. Hardware includes a five-ply tortoiseshell pickguard, a milled stainless-steel neck plate, a raw steel hardtail 1/2 bridge plate with intonating saddles, and Gotoh Ivoroid button tuners. Additionally, the guitar sports a pair of custom pickups: a '57 Goldie PAF clone in the neck and, in the bridge, a Gold Coil humbucker designed by Currie in conjunction with Rob Timmons of Arcane Pickups. The Gold Coil, Currie says, "is sort of like a Super'Tron meets a vintage PAF. It's hollow and chime-y but with a really tight, focused midrange and great crispiness. I use it in a lot of the guitars I've made for Joe Perry and Josh Homme."

The pickups are controlled by a Switchcraft three-way toggle and single Bakelite volume and tone knobs from the instrument panel of an aircraft carrier. "You can see that they go to 24," Currie adds with a laugh. "I have a little stash of those knobs, and I use them from time to time when I feel the instrument is unique enough to deserve them."

The Gold Rose is clearly one such instrument.



Like all Echopark guitars, it was hand-built by Currie and his small team in Detroit, with no CNC machines in sight. "Everything's old-school," Currie says. "Honestly, that's the only way I know how to do it. I couldn't wrap my head around CNC stuff if I tried. I'm a pretty hands-on kind of guy. Plus, we do smaller runs, which gives me more control over overall quality and also greater freedom to create — because you want each guitar to be special."

To that end, the Gold Rose — and all the

rose guitars — holds a particularly special place in Currie's heart. "The initial idea sprung from my attraction to the Paisley Tele, but then it turned into a way to honor both my daughter and Leo. So it feels very full circle to me," he says. "At the same time, it's a static pattern, but it will never get boring. It's always evolving and changing. A customer can personalize it, but it still maintains its identity, and it evokes a certain emotion when you look at it. It's really satisfying to be able to build guitars like that." ■



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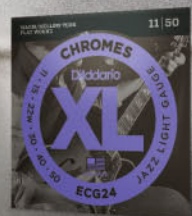
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David Barrett and author Vinnie DeMasi at the ancient ruins of Mayapan near Hacienda Sotuta de Peón. OPPOSITE: Barrett serenades the spirits of the pre-Columbian site

Yucatán Jam

FORGET SCALES AND TECHNIQUE. DAVID BARRETT'S CONSCIOUSNESS THROUGH MUSIC RETREAT AIMS TO IMPROVE YOUR PLAYING THROUGH MINDFUL LIVING

BY VINNIE DEMASI

TURN ON MOST news channels or visit any social media site and it becomes distressingly obvious that we live in a world of increasingly polarized political rhetoric, with the near-constant bombardment of corporate consumerism. And yet, almost as an organic counterbalance, there's an observable movement of people seeking a more conscious and holistic approach to living. This is evidenced by the growing popularity of yoga, meditation, organic foods and less dogmatic spirituality.

To help serve those in the music and art community searching for a more meaningful and interactive experience of self-discovery, veteran travel agents Cathleen Johnson and Michael Paul Halle have paired with Canadian guitarist David Barrett to create the Consciousness Through Music and Meditation retreat, a semi-annual gathering in Yucatán, Mexico, that focuses on a mindful approach to better living through music. A well-traveled axe man who has previously toured and/or recorded with

Platinum Blonde, Rush guitarist Alex Lifeson and Saga lead vocalist Michael Sadler, Barrett sees the retreat as a natural extension of the annual weekend guitar summits he hosted at the Ravenswood Estate in his home province of Ontario.

Eschewing traditional Yucatán destinations such as Cancún and Cozumel, the retreat is located several hours inland at Sotuta de Peón, a formerly abandoned hacienda/agave plantation now converted into a living museum and resort. Unlike other "guitar boot camps," the Consciousness Through Music and Meditation retreat is less focused on the intense practice of scales and notes and more interested in improving and refining musicians' headspaces.

"We wanted to put together an experience where the travel has a purpose and offers an opportunity to study a new field while discovering a more introspective approach to living," Barrett explains. "We're cross-training the mind. The idea being that if you study a different



Children play with the musicians' guitars after a free concert for the village of Sotuta de Peón

discipline, the main discipline that you practice will improve too, by default and/or osmosis. There have been times I've come to a creative block and the solution for pushing past it wasn't more practice — it was seeking outside inspiration and a new way to approach the creative process. As a result, I find that my composing more directly reflects my personality and how I'm feeling and isn't just an exercise in technique. When your art comes from a level of higher consciousness, the audience intuitively feels it."

Barrett says he has been inspired by Hazrat Inayat Kahn's book *The Mysticism of Sound and Music*, a tome that Pete Townsend also cited as a huge influence on his approach to composing. "And even when dealing with the purely mechanical aspects of music making, consciousness training can help raise your game," Barrett says. "For example, when playing a difficult passage in front of a live audience, our natural tendency is to become tense and activate our fight-or-flight

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response. By practicing meditation and visualization, we learn to relax, be present in the moment and give our full attention to the physical process we're engaged in."

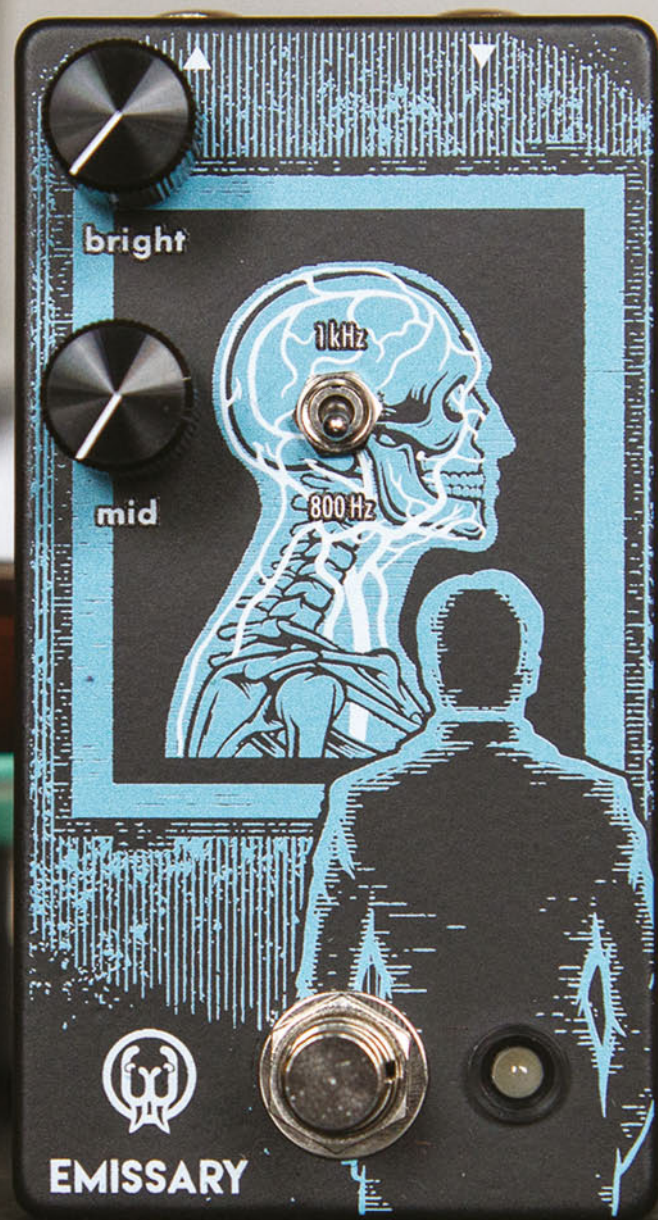
The retreat's de-emphasis on the mechanics of making music allows people of all skill levels to participate and benefit. Beginners and hobbyists find common ground with accomplished veterans and professionals. Steve Miller Band bassist Kenny Lee Lewis attended a previous retreat and notes, "The way I felt the spirits here



Barrett performs at the concert



Once an agave plantation, Hacienda Sotuta de Peón has been restored as a resort and living museum



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(Left to right) Paul Reid, Kenny Lee Lewis, Lili Duska, Barrett and Joaquín Escarrá perform

was through the animals. The morning doves that woke me up seemed to be nagging me a little, saying, 'Hey man, what are you doing? Get busy living or get busy dying. You have the talent. You have the equipment. Get back in the studio and make beautiful music.' Meanwhile, the iguanas — which are fairly ubiquitous and fairly huge here — were like the ancient Mayan kings, calmly perched on the rocks saying, 'We've been around for ages and we'll be around long after you're gone.' It reminded me to make the most of my short time here on Earth."

The hacienda of Sotuta de Peón is within traveling distance of ancient Mayan ruins and offers traditional Mayan therapies such as cenote bathing in underground limestone sinkholes, and temazcal, or sweat lodge, ceremonies. Barrett's own connection to Spanish music goes back to the 12-string laúd he purchased in the early '90s. A traditional Spanish variant of the lute, the laúd may be best known to guitarists as the instrument Steve Howe used during the "Your Move" section of Yes's classic "I've Seen All Good People" suite, and it has become a mainstay on many of Barrett's solo and DB3 (David Barrett Trio) releases.

“BY PRACTICING MEDITATION AND VISUALIZATION, WE LEARN TO RELAX, BE PRESENT IN THE MOMENT AND GIVE OUR FULL ATTENTION TO THE PHYSICAL PROCESS WE’RE ENGAGED IN”

On the retreat's final night, Barrett gave an impromptu concert at the neighboring Hacienda Community of Sotuta de Peón's town center, where I was fortunate to be able to join him and his young student Brooke Marshall-Robert on a few tunes. Our spirited jamming attracted many of the locals, including a few children who were thrilled at the opportunity to try out our guitars afterward.



TOP: Guests of Hacienda Sotuta de Peón can walk out of their front door and into their own private splash pool **ABOVE:** The nearby ruins at Mayapan are hours away from popular travel hubs and usually free of tourists

The central Yucatán's economy was once driven by the agave plant's fibrous innards, which were used for rope making. Unfortunately, the introduction of synthetic plastics for rope brought hard times to this once-thriving region. Many of the old, abandoned haciendas have been converted into resorts, however, and locals hope tourism, as well as a market for environmentally conscious biodegradable rope, will help revitalize the area.

Barrett sees the parallel between the region's economic transformation and his personal transformation as well. "I've been playing guitar for over 40 years," he explains. "There came a point where practicing more scales and techniques was offering diminishing returns. It was here that consciousness study took me to the next level."

He believes others will find the experience at the retreat as powerful. Kenny Lee Lewis, for one, agrees with him. "Come here with no preconceived notions," the bassist advises. "But expect to be transformed."

Upcoming Consciousness Through Music and Meditation retreats with David Barrett are scheduled for December 1–8, 2018, and March 5–12, 2019. For more info visit buddha.travel



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GEAR



Supro

1695RTH BLACK MAGICK REVERB

TESTED BY DAVE HUNTER

To the great delight of many guitarists, Supro has successfully revamped its popular vintage amp line. To make players even happier, the company has set about reimagining some of its original designs to incorporate features that better suit the needs of modern players. All the while Supro are ensuring these modern incarnations retain the essential elements of that irresistible lightning-bolt style and tone. Among the latest models to receive a thoughtful revision are the 1695RTH Black Magick Reverb head and 1790 Black Magick 1x12 speaker cabinet. The Black Magick name derives from a favorite Supro combo of Jimmy Page's, frequently used on Led Zeppelin studio dates and

which is currently on loan to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

The head reviewed here takes the cornerstone dual 6973 output tubes, that power the most revered original Supros, and wraps them in a package that affords more flexibility for the guitarist who works a range of stage and studio dates. Additions to the existing Black Magick layout include a two-knob EQ, a tube-driven reverb and a master-volume control, although the model's bias-modulating Tremolo is retained. Another nifty upgrade from the original Valco-made Supro models is the 1+2 input, which internally jumpers the two channels to produce the popular boost and voicing

traditionally achieved with a short jumper cable. I tested the head with the matching 1x12 cab, but other options include the Black Magick 1x15 and 2x12 extension cabs, or you can pair it with a cab of your choice.

Many players mistakenly think of 6973 tubes as being similar to EL84s because they use the same nine-pin sockets and are housed in similar-sized bottles. In fact, they sound very different and have a signature tone that can't be achieved with another commonly available output tube. This is perhaps best heard in their meaty, muscular midrange drive, good balance throughout the audio spectrum and surprisingly punchy, bold performance for their total



wattage rating. Inside, the Black Magick Reverb displays the rugged PCB construction that we've seen from other models in the rejuvenated line. The partially open-back cab is made from void-free poplar, measures 20.5 by 18.75 by 8.75 inches and is loaded with a 12-inch British-voiced Supro BD12 speaker at 8Ω and 75 watts power handling.

Tested with a Gibson Custom Shop 1958 Les Paul Reissue with humbuckers and a Novo Serus J with P-90s. This new Supro rig delivered a tone that was throaty, bold and commanding, with an appealingly raw edge to the breakup when cranked. But there's a ton of headroom available too, which might surprise players unfamiliar with this Supro format. For those wanting more controllable

grind, the master is a major bonus; otherwise, this thing is a loud 25 watts, for sure. Thick, thumping and somewhat warm leaning, it has enough sparkle when you need it to jangle and chime. It's the essence of garage rock but makes a

punchy contender, within the band mix, for just about any breed of rock and roll.

Thanks to these characteristics, the new Black Magick is a great platform to push over the top with your favorite drive pedals. It loved the TS9 Tube Screamer, Wampler Tumnus Deluxe and JHS Angry Charlie that I tested it with. The reverb sounds great and the trem is particularly sweet and evocative. All in all, the Black Magick Reverb proved an appealing and well-designed rig, and one that stands out onstage as a stunning piece of equipment. ■



SPECIFICATIONS

CONTACT SuproUSA.com

1695RTH Black Magick Reverb

PRICE \$1,129 street

CHANNELS Two

CONTROLS Vol 1, vol 2, treb, bass, verb, speed, depth, master

POWER 25 watts

TUBES Four 12AX7s, one 12AT7, two 6973 output tubes

EXTRAS Footswitch for tremolo and reverb, dual outputs for 4 ohms and 8 ohms, and single output for 16 ohms

SPEAKER 1790 Black Magick 1x12 cabinet (\$485 street)

WEIGHT Head, 28 lbs; cab, 32 lbs

BUILT USA

KUDOS Captures the classic Supro punch and grind with several well-conceived updates for modern players

CONCERNS The tubes might be a touch tricky for some users to replace, due to the inset socket mounts



The Hamer Sunburst Flat Top (top)
and Monaco Special K (bottom)

Hamer

SUNBURST FLAT TOP AND MONACO SPECIAL K

TESTED BY DAVE HUNTER

FOR 39 YEARS, Hamer Guitars were a favorite of artists and weekend warriors alike, who wielded the company's instruments as better-made alternatives to similar offerings from major manufacturers. Despite its stellar reputation, the U.S. guitar maker dissolved in the shifting guitar market of 2012.

But you can't keep a good brand down, and last year the Hamer name reappeared on a small lineup of import-only guitars. The roster has been expanded for 2018 with another two models that are fresh to these shores. There's no renewed American production — not yet, anyway — but fans of the style and attitude that Joel Dantzig and Paul Hamer founded back in

1973 are likely to receive these affordable creations with a welcoming smile. I tested both through a Carr Mercury V combo and a Friedman Small Box with 2x12 cab.

SUNBURST FLAT TOP

The Sunburst model name has a long history at Hamer, having originally graced the guitar that the company saw as its cleverly reconfigured, double-cutaway update of the Gibson Les Paul. Similarly, if confusingly, the model name Standard was given to Hamer's early Explorer-like design due to its flamed top, sunburst finish and body binding. The ingredients in the Sunburst Flat Top will be familiar to most Hamer-philies. It

includes a double-cutaway design, a flat (non-arched) flame-maple top in cherry sunburst on a solid mahogany back, a glued-in mahogany neck with an unbound ebony fretboard, a 24.75-inch scale length, through-body stringing via a six-saddle bridge and a pair of humbuckers.

The pickups are Hamer's own Zebra Hard Rock models (throw up those horns, people!). They're wired through the control section with individual volume and master tone controls and a three-way switch that further recalls the company's Explorer and V-fueled beginnings (as does the signature "trimmed-down "open-book" headstock"). Internal wiring is tidy, and while the Sunburst Flat Top uses the smaller

SPECIFICATIONS

CONTACT Hamerguitars.com

Sunburst Flat Top

PRICE \$699 street

NUT WIDTH 1 11/16" graphite

NECK Mahogany

FRETBOARD Ebony, 24.75" scale

FRETS 22 medium

TUNERS Die-cast OEM

BODY Flame-maple top with mahogany back

BRIDGE Through-body hardtail bridge with individually adjustable saddles

PICKUPS Two Hamer Hard Rock humbuckers

CONTROLS Independent volume and master tone controls, three-way switch

FACTORY STRINGS D'Addario .010–.046

WEIGHT 7.9 lbs

BUILT Indonesia

KUDOS A powerful and appealing rock machine at a reasonable price, capable of some sizzling crunch and lead tones

CONCERNS Setup may need to be adjusted for optimal playability

SPECIFICATIONS

CONTACT Hamerguitars.com

Monaco Special K

PRICE \$699 street

NUT WIDTH 1 11/16" graphite

NECK Korina

FRETBOARD Ebony, 24.75" scale

FRETS 22 medium

TUNERS Die-cast OEM

BODY Korina

BRIDGE Wilkinson wraparound with individually adjustable saddles

PICKUPS Hamer P-90 single-coils

CONTROLS Independent volume and tone controls with push-pull coil splitting and three-way switch

FACTORY STRINGS D'Addario .010–.046

WEIGHT 7.3 lbs

BUILT Indonesia

KUDOS Impressively rich and textured P-90-meets-korina tones that are rarely accessible at this price

CONCERNS Setup may need to be adjusted for optimal playability

generic potentiometers found on many offshore guitars, it has the bonus of featuring a durable enclosed barrel jack. The woods are all nice-looking cuts, and the neck is constructed with a scarf joint extending toward the headstock from behind the 2nd and 3rd frets. Carved to a rounded C profile, the neck has a decent amount of heft to it.

Straight out of the box, the guitar needed to have its bridge saddles lowered and truss rod tightened slightly — normal setup stuff your dealer or distributor should take care of — after which it played smoothly and evenly, with no hitch from the nicely dressed frets. Plugged in, the Sunburst Flat Top easily dished out the muscular tones for which it was intended. Playing the guitar through the Friedman, I coaxed everything from meaty power-chord crunch to sizzling bridge-pickup leads, and teased more nuanced blues-rock inflected rambles with it plugged into the Carr combo. These are hot pickups (14.52k Ω bridge and 9.12k Ω neck), so they're not inclined to clean up much. Yet the neck pickup sounded respectfully warm, reedy and musical through the Carr when set just shy of breakup. While the bridge easily pushed the same amp settings over into raw, rootsy snarl. Plugged into the Friedman's lead channel, though, these pickups issued impressive sustain and incendiary grind that took the Sunburst Flat Top back to the arena stage, where it is clearly most at home, confirming it a very able performer at this price.

MONACO SPECIAL K

The Monaco is a slightly later, but also long-running style from Hamer, that mutated into several variations over the years. The Monaco Special K takes the last part of its name from its Les Paul Special-like shape, appointments and 24.75-inch scale, and the fact that it's made from korina (rather than, say, breakfast cereal) — thus echoing the moniker applied to a Hamer Custom Shop model circa 2005.

Rarely seen in guitars costing less than \$1,000, korina is often described as being like a lighter-colored mahogany. But, it has a sweeter and more textured midrange (I sometimes hear it as "chewy," or "swirly"), with a silkier zing in the highs. It is often significantly lighter, too, a perk for a lot of guitarists. This model's body is made from two pieces of the honey-hued Central American timber. Its neck is from a single piece that

has been carved into the same rounded but full "C" profile as the Sunburst, and it carries an unbound ebony fretboard. The bridge is a Wilkinson wraparound with an adjustable B- and G-string saddle section. A pair of Hamer P-90s populate the engine room, routed through individual volume controls, a master tone and a three-way switch. Like the Sunburst Flat Top, my Monaco Special K test model wanted its bridge lowered to achieve a civilized playing action, but proved an easy, enjoyable ride once it got there.

There's something magical about the combination of slightly gritty, edgy P-90 pickups and the granular, textured swirl of a korina guitar, and the two come together again beautifully in the Monaco Special K (which is quite a revelation at this price!). Hamer has wisely kept these pickups to a medium wind (8.28k Ω bridge

and 7.96k Ω neck), so there's good clarity and articulation amid the grind and a delectable, multi-dimensional chewiness, when you dig in for leads with some gain applied. In short,

this is a rock and roll machine through and through. The bridge pickup can be mean and snarky, or sweet and nuanced with the volume eased back, while the neck pickup is throaty and rich. Between those extremes, the Monaco Special K is roundly snappy, with the bonus of hum cancelling. This guitar is a big performer for the money and all the more fun for its functional simplicity.

In conclusion, the Sunburst Flat Top and Monaco Special K represent two welcome additions to Hamer's rejuvenated offshore lineup, and each offers timeless styling and solid performance at a very reasonable price. Although the Sunburst has the fancier looks, I was particularly taken with the sonic personality that gushed from the Monaco Special K's marriage of P-90 pickups and korina tone-wood. Tasty stuff! ▶



IK Multimedia

iRIG STOMP I/O

TESTED BY MICHAEL ROSS

IK MULTIMEDIA HAS long been at the forefront in providing iOS audio/MIDI interface solutions for guitarists, but the company's new iRig Stomp I/O (\$299) takes it to another level. The USB pedalboard controller integrates a professional 96kHz/24-bit audio interface and Class A preamp with MIDI I/O for iPhone, iPad, Mac and PC.

IK Multimedia is located in Italy, not far from the Ferrari auto factory, and this piece of gear is as sleek, solid and stylish as a Berlinetta. It features four onboard metal stomp switches, plus an expression pedal with a virtual switch, all with LED indicators. You can connect two additional switches or pedals, and the MIDI IN/OUT ports allow you to control external processors using iRig Stomp I/O as a stand-alone MIDI foot controller. The device bay is a unique feature that provides a place to charge your iOS device. It even has

a rubber lip that secures your device in the bay — just one indicator of the thought that went into designing this product.

Your guitar enters a 1/4-inch XLR combo jack, is passed through a phone, tablet or laptop, and sent out through two balanced stereo outputs. You can connect to external amps, DAW mixers and PA systems, and there's a 1/4-inch stereo headphone out for silent

monitoring. Input gain and output volume are controlled on the front panel. The iRig Stomp I/O also comes with more than \$800 worth of software and apps, including AmpliTube for Mac/PC and iOS.

You can find more features and specs on the IK website, but I want to get right into the experience. First I tried the Stomp I/O with an iPad as a virtual pedalboard into two combos. Booting up AmpliTube, shutting off the amp simulation and just using the virtual fuzz, overdrive, wah and delay, I experienced no discernable latency. Assigning switching and continuous controllers in AmpliTube iOS was simple. I just had to hold my finger (very still) on the virtual switch, knob or rocker pedal I wished to control until an assign-learn screen appeared, and then hit the appropriate hardware switch or rock the onboard expression pedal. Other iOS



The iRig Stomp I/O can operate as a stand-alone MIDI controller or connect with your phone, tablet or laptop (below)

SPECIFICATIONS

CONTACT ikmultimedia.com**IK Multimedia iRig Stomp I/O****PRICE** \$299**CONTROLS** Expression pedal, 4 footswitches, input gain control and output volume control**POWER** USB or DC Adaptor**CONNECTIONS** Neutrik Combo socket for mic and instrument input (auto selecting), +48V phantom power switch, 1/4" headphones output, 2 x 1/4" TRS balanced floating line outputs, MIDI input/output, 2 x TRS External controllers sockets, B-type USB (for Mac/PC), Mini-DIN iOS connector, Barrel DC-in socket for power and charging devices**EXTRAS** Software bundle (includes AmpliTube 4 Deluxe and T-RackS 5 mixing and mastering suite), Device bay with charging capability, lightning to Mini-DIN cable, USB A-type to USB-type cable**BUILT** Italy**KUDOS** A great way to control the new wave of iOS apps for guitar**CONCERNS** None

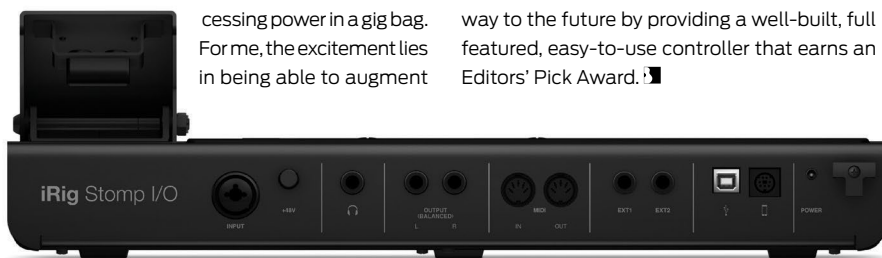
apps I used have different methods of assigning MIDI, but all instantly recognized Stomp I/O as a controller.

Plugging into my iMac to use the Stomp I/O as a USB-powered audio interface and MIDI switcher was just as easy. Ableton Live recognized it as both audio and MIDI sources. Assigning the Stomp I/O's expression pedal to the frequency parameter of Live's Auto Filter gave me a unique sounding wah effect.

More and more guitarists are comfortable using modeling systems in live and studio situations, while the new, powerful tablets let players carry all that processing power in a gig bag. For me, the excitement lies in being able to augment



traditional sounds, whether created by hardware or modeling, with some of the granular and spectral processing available in iOS apps, but as yet unavailable in pedal form. Whatever system you prefer, Stomp I/O helps point the way to the future by providing a well-built, full featured, easy-to-use controller that earns an Editors' Pick Award. ■



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Jacques

BÊTE NOIRE SCAN DISTORTION

TESTED BY ART THOMPSON

COMBINING MULTIPLE EFFECTS in one box is a good way to maximize pedalboard space and can result in better interaction between effects than chaining two or more single-effect pedals together. The new Bête Noire (\$300 street) pairs distortion and analog phasing in a convenient package that features a Variac (gain) control, a switchable brown mode, Chomp (bass) and high controls, a scan switch for activating the modulation, sweep and speed knobs, and mix and level controls. The metal enclosure has a silent true-bypass footswitch, an external-power jack, and a board-mounted receptacle for a 9-volt battery that is accessed by removing the bottom plate. There's an LED for bypass status and another LED that illuminates when the phasing is activated and blinks in time with the speed setting.

Although the term *bête noire* (literally translated as "black beast") has come to mean something that is detested, the pedal itself is very

much the opposite. Auditioned with a Tele and a pair of new Tey Gypsy Queen guitars (one with dual humbuckers and other with a trio of P-90s), the distortion sounds were meaty and savage, in a good way, of course. Activating the brown switch adds tube-like richness and girth that is super satisfying, but if you prefer more upper-midrange emphasis and less compression, just leave brown off.

Gain adjusting is done via the Variac knob, and this circuit — which simulates the effect of lowering an amp's operating voltage to increase distortion — provides a ton of sustain when turned up. EQ-wise, the passive high control is nicely complemented by the Chomp knob, an active "bass attack control" that delivers low-end mass to the point that I never needed to turn it more than halfway up.

The Bête Noire is great for players who like that juicy combination of phase shifter and over-driven British amp. The pedal sounded cool with

a Fender Deluxe Reverb reissue as well as with smaller tube amps, such as a mid-'60s Champ and a '50s-era Premier. With a few tweaks, it also did a good job of replicating the badassness of an Electro-Harmonix Big Muff driving into an MXR Phase 90. The Bête Noire's depth and speed controls work beautifully in tandem with the OD circuit to unleash harmonically engorged swirl at speeds that can travel from blurry fast to sloth-like crawl. Having the ability to blend the phasing and distortion in just-right proportions is very handy, and while a slight drop in volume was noticeable when the phasing was switched on, it's barely an issue because this pedal has output to spare. Bottom line, the Bête Noire is an aggressive OD machine that lives up to its name as a killer choice for hard rock and metal.

KUDOS A potent pairing of distortion and analog phase shifting

CONCERNS None.

CONTACT jacquespedals.com



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{ FIELD TEST }



Electro-Harmonix

OCEANS 11

TESTED BY ART THOMPSON

THE NEW OCEANS 11 Multifunction Digital Reverb (\$147 street) is the most powerful compact reverb Electro-Harmonix has produced. Its control set includes FX level, time and tone knobs, an 11-position reverb type selector, and a mode switch that provides up to three different options for many, though not all, of the effects, significantly expanding the Ocean's palette of sounds. The pedal also has an Infinite function that allows the selected reverb to play in the background ad infinitum, while you hold down the bypass switch, or when an external momentary footswitch (not included) is connected to

Infinite jack. At the same time, you can independently use and control a reverb of the same type with the time and tone knobs. The pedal's buffered-bypass footswitch also doubles as a tap-tempo button when the echo setting (actually echo plus reverb) is active. With this setting, the mode button selects between three different subdivisions of the tapped echo time — $\frac{1}{4}$, $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{3}{4}$ — with different color LED indications for each. The tone control varies the feedback (number of repeats), and you can have endless repeats with zero degradation in sound.

The Oceans 11 has a trem setting as well, and here the mode button provides three waveshape choices — sine, triangle and square — while the FX level knob adjusts reverb mix, tone alters depth, and time varies the trem speed. There's no tap-tempo in this setting.

The selection of reverbs includes familiar ones such as hall, plate, reverse and mod (modulated), as well as more advanced types like Dyna (dynamic); Auto-Inf (tracks your playing and crossfades to a different reverb as chords or notes change); Shimmer (a beautiful-sounding



octave-shifted reverb); and Poly, a reverb with two selectable bidirectional pitch shifts that sounds incredibly cool and spacy. These latter two reverbs create lush soundscapes that can be inspiring whether you're just playing around with new sounds, seeking some songwriting inspiration or recording a TV or film soundtrack in your project studio.

There's also a great Spring setting that's modeled on the Fender 6G15 Reverb Unit, a tube-driven reverb from the early '60s. The Ocean's time knob functions like the dwell control on the vintage unit, which means that infinite reverb isn't possible. However, double-tapping the footswitch produces a bouncing-spring sound similar to what occurs when a real unit is suddenly jolted. Use caution when doing this stunt to not have the FX level set too high, otherwise what comes out of the speakers can be jolting indeed!

The black metal case sports a nine-volt external power jack (battery power is not an

option but an AC adapter is included), and there's an internal switch that can be activated if you want the reverb tails to be immediately cut off when the pedal is bypassed. I tested the Oceans 11 with amps that included a '66 Marshall JTM-50, a '50s-era Premier five-watter and a Fender Deluxe. It sounded excellent across the board — whether it was used for warm blackface-style reflections, super splashy surf effects or adventures into sonic realms that defy description. The pedal is very quiet and therefore great for recording, and its well-implemented features make it both easy to use and exceedingly flexible for a broad range of applications. It doesn't have a stereo signal path, but for its overall performance and bang for the buck, the Oceans 11 earns an Editors' Pick Award.

KUDOS A potent pairing of distortion and analog phase shifting

CONCERNS None

CONTACT jacquespedals.com



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Bose

S1 PRO MULTI-POSITION P.A. SYSTEM

TESTED BY DAVE CRIMMEN

THOSE WHO WORK hard to make a living as a musician, take note: There's a new sheriff in town — the Bose S1 Pro Multi-Position P.A. system (\$599 street). Its flexibility and innovative features were certainly a boon to my gigging business over the months that I used it. For solo acoustic shows, the super-portable S1 Pro is great for reducing time and labor, as it is an all-in-one guitar amp and P.A. system. Weighing in at about 15 pounds, it's far lighter than just one of the wedge monitors I have to lug around for band shows.

The S1 Pro's versatility is something to behold. It has three channels, including two combo inputs (XLR and 1/4-inch) for guitar or vocal, and a choice between a 1/8-inch aux input or Bluetooth (the wireless range is approximately 30 feet), to connect a playback system. The system configuration allows the S1 Pro to be placed straight up on its bottom, angled onto its back, set on its side like a monitor or mounted on a tripod. An internal auto EQ produces the right sound dispersion for whatever orientation you choose.

Solo musicians know that many venues' dedicated space for music is often the size of a postage stamp — fingers crossed it's in a spot where there's an available wall outlet! You may also be barraged by environmental noise from the kitchen or bar. However, throughout a couple

of months of gigging in various locales, the S1 Pro helped me overcome all of these challenges, and more, like a not-so-secret weapon.

First off, it has a hefty volume output, offering more than enough headroom to amplify my sound over obnoxious patrons, noisy espresso machines and the like. I was also able to use the S1 Pro during band performances, to improve the natural sound of my acoustic guitar. The S1 is so easy to carry — and is small enough to position easily on a crowded stage — I could transport it in along with my electric-guitar amp. In both situations, the sound is clean and clear and you'll never feel underpowered.

NO-SWEAT AUDIO BLISS

The onboard EQ is bare bones — you just get bass and treble on the two vocal/instrument channels. But thanks to the Bose ToneMatch circuitry, which tailors the preset EQ frequency to a voice or a guitar, you are guaranteed good sound. I was able to dial in warmer tones in coffee shops with wood floors and big windows, and I could get enough attack to compensate for cushioned booths and carpets in upscale restaurants.

Even the preset reverb is nice. You can't adjust blend, type or size, but the tone is expansive without being sharp or bright. I could always

SPECIFICATIONS

CONTACT bose.com

Bose S1 Pro Multi-Position P.A. System

PRICE \$599

CHANNELS 3

CONTROLS Independent volume control on all channels; Channels 1&2: reverb, bass and treble; Channel 3: Bluetooth

POWER 150 watts (100-240V — 50/60Hz)

EXTRAS 2 combo XLR inputs, ToneMatch, auto EQ, Bluetooth, TRS line output, rechargeable lithium-ion battery, compatible with Bose Connect app

SPEAKER Bose integrated high-excursion woofer

WEIGHT 15.7 lbs (7.1kg)

BUILT USA

KUDOS Portable, great sound, versatile, rugged and wireless — what's not to love?

CONCERNS None

find the perfect reverb level to enhance my guitar playing and voice without overwhelming it, which can sometimes be tricky in ambient performance spaces.

Those who venture out into wide-open spaces to perform will appreciate the built-in, rechargeable lithium-ion battery, with up to 11 hours play time. A quick charge feature lets you recharge the S1 battery pack in a hurry, and the S1 will trickle charge the battery when plugged into AC power. Additional S1 battery packs are available for \$99 each, if needs be. The S1 Pro is also compatible with the Bose Connect app (iOS and Android) for streaming Bluetooth audio to two S1 units. In addition, the system's cool factor is upped with several new accessories, including a backpack and a slipcover, and an upcoming option for premium covers in a variety of colors.

Acoustic-guitar amplification and portable sound system technology have made major leaps forward in the past few years, and the Bose S1 Pro marks yet another evolutionary stride towards easy gigging. I loved the system's ultra-lightweight profile, and the S1 Pro let me get my solo-acoustic act out to a number of different-sized venues with pristine audio quality, some useful features and the ability to position the system to match the room. Brilliant! ■

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FRETTS

A GUITAR PLAYER SPECIAL ACOUSTIC SECTION

BEN HARPER

ON HIS ACOUSTIC BLUES
COLLABORATION WITH
CHARLIE MUSSELWHITE

EDITORS' PICK
FISHMAN MATRIX
INFINITY MIC BLEND

LEARN
SEVEN WAYS TO IMPROVE
YOUR SOLO ACOUSTIC GIG

ELEMENTAL EVOLUTION

BEN HARPER AND CHARLIE MUSSELWHITE MOVE THE BLUES FURTHER ALONG THE LINE WITH *NO MERCY IN THIS LAND*

BY JIMMY LESLIE

PHOTOGRAPH BY DAN MONICK

“THE ACOUSTIC SIDE of making a blues record is important to me because it counterbalances the electric aspect,” Ben Harper says. “I don’t want to make a record that’s entirely one way or the other, which is what traditionally has been done. It’s exciting to mash them up and blend the two successfully.”

When Harper and blues harmonica legend Charlie Musselwhite teamed up for *Get Up!*, their 2013 collaboration, they proved a winning combination, receiving the 2014 Grammy for Best Blues Album. Harper’s next musical partner was his mother, Ellen; a singer-songwriter and multi-instrumentalist, she manages the Folk Music Center in Claremont, California, an institution founded by her parents 60 years ago. Mother and son released the entirely acoustic, aptly titled, *Childhood Home* in 2015, before Harper reunited with the Innocent Criminals, his longtime backing band, for 2016’s *Call It What It Is*. But, in March of this year, he rejoined Musselwhite to produce another badass batch of progressive/traditional blues on *No Mercy in This Land* (Anti-), featuring guitarist Jason Mozersky and bassist Jesse Ingalls, both of whom perform with Harper in the group Relentless 7.

“The blues has to shapeshift in order to move down the line, through the ages,” Harper says. “Purists and academics may fight me on that, but I’m going to hold my ground. I love the evolution. Charlie and I carved out a niche that honors tradition and hopefully brings the blues into the 21st century. It fit too well to not continue down the road.”

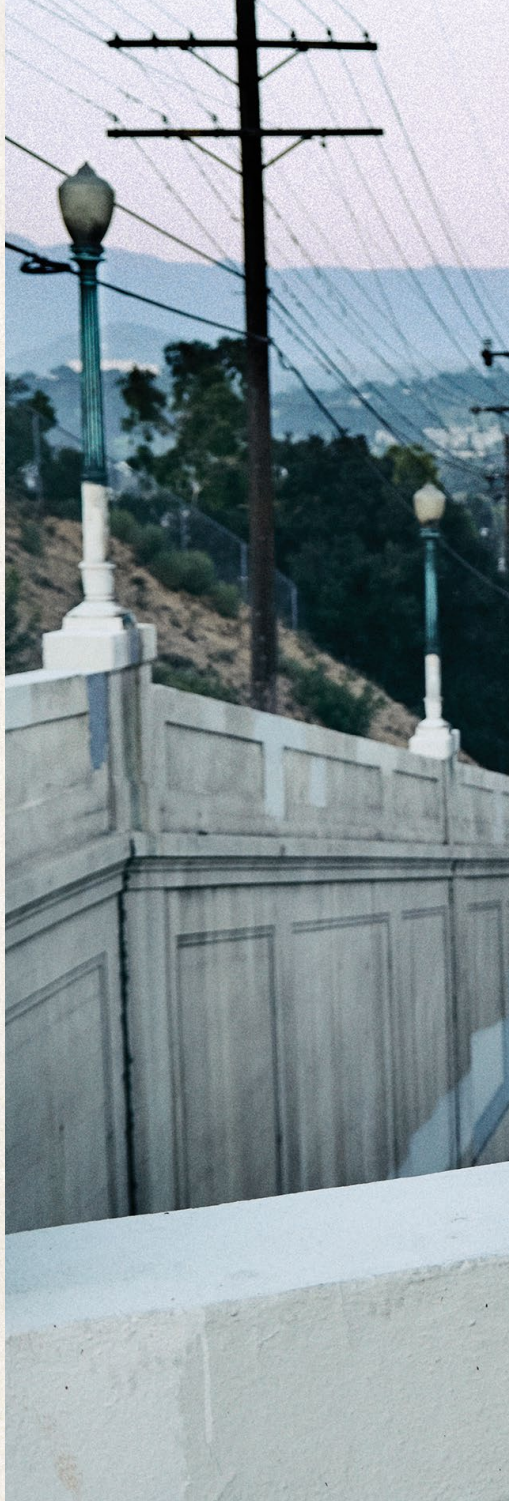
Where does the inspiration for your acoustic blues start?

Blind Willie Johnson set the precedent for acoustic slide guitar. I bet David Lindley, Ry Cooder and Bonnie Raitt would say the same. Blind Willie Johnson is the mojo hand for steel guitar. For players that haven’t checked out Blind Willie Johnson yet, I’d start with “Dark Was the Night, Cold Was the Ground” tuned to open D — from strings six to one that goes D A D F# A D. You can also take that tuning up or down a step, and it’s sometimes called Vestapol tuning.

What kind of guitar and slide did he use?

That’s a damn good question. No one

knows for sure. I believe there’s only one photo of him playing. My guess is an early Gibson L-0, or one of the other early L models because they were the main game in town. It could have also been a Stella or a Tonk Brothers, because those were going around back then. Blind Willie’s slide style always struck me like he was playing it on his lap, but he wasn’t, and given that he played back in the ’20s and ’30s, he probably played bottleneck using the end of an actual wine bottle. When I started studying Blind Willie’s playing back in my early 20s, I found that I could reach deepest and get closest to his sound playing overhand on lap steel. I prefer a nickel-plated brass slide in medium thickness for speed



and dexterity.

How did you develop your obsession with the Weissenborn Hawaiian lap steel in your early days?

I was Weissenborn crazy because, of all the instruments in the family’s music store where I was raised, the Weissenborn spoke loudest. For a lot of players, hearing Hendrix play a Strat for the first time was their moment. Well, I heard all sorts of players come in and play the



Ben Harper (left) and Charlie Musselwhite (right)

Weissenborn, but when David Lindley played it, he set the place on fire. I thought, “There it is!” I had the same reaction when I heard Ry Cooder come in and play the Weissenborn for the first time.

Were your acoustic intentions completely focused on the Weissenborn?

I always had my hands on a fretted round-neck acoustic for songwriting and picking apart the blues. I started learning Robert Johnson tunes note for note, including

“Come On in My Kitchen” and “Terraplane Blues.” Going to school on that bottleneck stuff requires a roundneck acoustic, specifically. I eventually realized that I had to choose a lane — try to purvey tradition or focus on songwriting in my own original style.

Your blues influences have always been apparent, but the music you’re making with Musselwhite is the real deal. How does playing with him inform your blues?

Playing with Charlie gives it a framework where the blues belongs. It’s not just traditional. It’s not just the ‘50s-to-’60s influence. It’s all of that wrapped into this crazy amalgam that is Charlie’s and my commitment to the blues.

Get Up! kicked off acoustically, with “Don’t Look Twice.” What was the guitar and tuning on that track?

The tuning is open E, and the guitar is my signature Martin.

The tech specs indicate that the guitar combines an M-style body's 16-inch width with a 000 depth. Can you speak about those choices?

When you're playing folk hip-hop with the Innocent Criminals bringing the funk, there's a lot of low end kicking around onstage. I couldn't have too much bottom coming out of my instrument, but I didn't want to sacrifice all of it. For my signature model, we resurrected the M-style body, which is actually a 0000. It's a little bigger than a triple O, but not as big as a dreadnought and not quite as elongated either. I went with the shallower depth of a triple O to limit feedback onstage. I'll use a feedback buster in the soundhole to save my ass if I have to, but I'd rather go without one.

Can you shed some insight on the neck?

It's a low-profile neck that's a little wider than a standard dreadnought neck but not as wide as a typical classical neck. It's actually like a triple O neck. It's the kind of neck you want to put your hands on when you pull a guitar off the wall.

I checked listings online at Guitar Center and Sweetwater, and it appears to be out of stock.

Yeah. It was a limited run back in 2008 or 2009, and I assume they've sold out, but I think you can call Martin and get one custom made. I actually need another, so let me know if you find one!

"THE BLUES HAS TO SHAPESHIFT IN ORDER TO MOVE DOWN THE LINE, THROUGH THE AGES"

Did you play your signature Martin on the new record's title track, "No Mercy in This Land"?

That's actually a "war period" Martin D-28, meaning circa 1943 or '44. The song is in open C tuning, so it's all Cs and Gs with the third — E — on the third string [low to high, C G C E G C]. Once you're tuned that way, it's relatively straightforward to figure out how to fingerpick those blues licks.



DAN MONICK

How did you get that old-timey folk blues sound on "Trust You to Dig My Grave"?

That's a 12-string Fraulini guitar. Todd Cambio from Fraulini is dedicated to faithfully recreating guitars made during the Lead Belly era between, say, 1930 and 1940, such as Stella and Tonk Brothers. He's obsessed to the point of using wood from the era. Blind Boy Paxton is a contemporary traditionalist who is true blue old-school, and he plays Fraulini guitars. "Dig My Grave" is in a crazy low open A tuning with the third on the top string. From low to high it goes A E A E A C♯.

How did you find that?

I don't remember where I found that tuning specifically, but the rumor and myth of the Lead Belly 12-string is that he used to get free piano strings from a piano refurbishing company. After they'd do a job putting on new ones, they'd give him the old piano strings. Of course, they were thick, so they'd bend the neck of his guitar if he didn't lower the tuning way down. That became the Lead Belly 12-string sound. "Trust You to Dig My Grave" is a thumping fingerpicking blues, played in the style of Mississippi John Hurt or Furry Lewis.

What guitar did you use for "Bad Habits"?

That song was written and recorded on



an old plywood Stella guitar. It belongs to Jackson Browne, and it was completely customized by a friend of Jackson's who owns this funky guitar shop in East L.A. It's got a soft wood nut and a leathery covering on the bridge saddle. It has a funky Django Reinhardt tone. The song came leaping out of that guitar using standard tuning in the key of A.

Did you use a Weissenborn for any tracks on *No Mercy in This Land*?

Yes, on one track, "Love and Trust," tuned to open D. It's a Weissenborn Style 4, which is one of the early, transitional ones, from when he was trying to decide whether he was going to do a Kona or a hollow neck.

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FRETS

{ BEN HARPER }

It's not a Kona, but [like a Kona] it's got a square solid neck up to around the 7th fret, and then it goes hollow. The body is a bit thinner than the final design he used into the '30s, before he went out of business.

"Love and Trust" started out as a demo of just me playing the Weissenborn and singing when I was working on *Call It What It Is*, but I actually wrote it for Mavis Staples because I had got a call from her management looking for a song. I wouldn't have written it otherwise, so it went to Mavis first. Mavis did an extraordinary job on it, and hers is actually the version. But I had this demo sitting dormant, so I built this version around it with Charlie and the band.

Have you had any recent epiphanies about amplifying acoustic guitars onstage?

For years, I would simply plug my signature Martin with its killer onboard Fishman Ellipse system into a D.I. box running straight to the house, so I'd hear it back through

the stage monitors. But I recently did a solo gig at a festival where there weren't enough channels to have a separate D.I. for the acoustic, so I ran it through my amp, and it sounded great. The amp on that gig was a '50 Fender Tweed Deluxe,

"I HAD TO CHOOSE A LANE — TRY TO PURVEY TRADITION OR FOCUS ON MY OWN STYLE"

but my main stage amp is a Dumble Over-drive Special.

Now I always use a blend of the direct signal with the amp sound, and my acoustic has never sounded better. I was already blending a D.I. and amp tone from the Weissenborn onstage, using the signal from

a Seymour Duncan Mag Mic pickup, and I'll use pedals with that too; but with the Martin I'll run the amp clean. The Dumble sparkles like a Fender Twin.

Are you doing any studio work?

I'm producing a band called Hey, King! that recently signed to Anti-. They're a female couple duo. Natalie London is a badass songwriter and guitar player — electric and acoustic. We're five songs in.

What's on the horizon for your own material?

I'm making my first lap-steel instrumental record. The idea is for it to be a combination of the Weissenborn and my other main acoustic lap steel, an archtop made by John Monteleone. I might even incorporate some electric lap steel, but really clean. I may add a symphonic component or some other instrumentation for texture. I'm not sure if the instrumental record will be next, but it's rapidly approaching. ■



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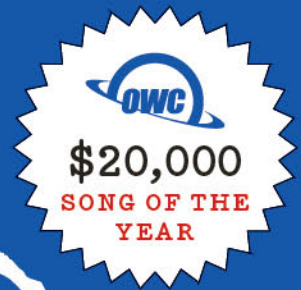
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SEVEN TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL SOLO ACOUSTIC GIG

BY JIMMY LESLIE

THERE'S NOWHERE TO hide when you go it alone acoustically, but here are a few things to consider in order to make your show as musically interesting and entertaining for the audience as possible.

> If You're Playing Near Home, Go Big

Bring as many guitars as you can manage. If you've got a ukulele or mandolin you can incorporate into the set, do it. Folks like to see solo performers play different instruments, and most people — especially other players — simply dig looking at musical gear. It's also great for starting conversations before and after the show.

> Otherwise, Travel Light

When driving a small vehicle or flying, bring your most versatile instrument — which is usually a mid-sized acoustic-electric setup to accommodate a variety of plucking and playing styles. If 12-string is a big part of your thing, there's simply no substitute. Otherwise, fake it with a chorus pedal. I recommend keeping your essential acoustic pedals separate from your electric ones and on a dedicated "acoustic" pedalboard. Save money when flying by packing it smartly in bubble wrap inside a piece of standard hardshell luggage, rather than paying weight overage fees for a heavy-duty case on every trip. Or, consider a handy all-in-one pedal, such as the Tech 21 Acoustic Fly Rig.

> Soundcheck Before the Show

Do a thorough soundcheck of all your gear at home, because you might not get one at the club. Have a handle on the various characters of your instruments and the settings on your pedals. At the venue, it should all be about dialing in that specific room. If you can speak the language of frequencies, the sound tech will appreciate it. Andy McKee, for example, keeps a list of notes and their corresponding frequencies, so when there's a feedback

issue with a certain note on his fretboard, he can speak specifically about where to cut or boost the mixer EQ.

> Strategize Your Set List

Flexibility is at your fingertips with no band to worry about, but it's good to have a strategy and at least arrange your tunes into clusters that work well together. Tunings are key to such groupings, and if you're switching guitars, then it's paramount to have groupings so that you don't spend half the show picking up and putting down variously tuned instruments. Learn which guitars hold which tunings best and lend themselves to certain styles. Plan your set accordingly.

> Mix It Up

In addition to tunings, consider keys, tempos and the blend of instrumental to vocal tunes. Two or three songs in the same key become bland, but a couple in a row can work — especially if they are at different tempos. Bob Weir does a cool thing where he places the second song in the same key at exactly half or double the tempo of the one before. Consider tones, as well. Songs with groovy ambiance can sound even more interesting when placed between dry ones, and vice versa.

> Expand

Looping is the most common way for the modern solo-acoustic performer to expand sonically. It's an awesome tool in any case, but live looping is much more exciting than preset loops. Adding percussive guitar hits to expand the sound is practically its own genre — and it is being taken to extreme levels — but simply adding a select few slaps and taps can be effective. Looping those can provide a firm groove foundation to play over. If you're a singer, consider adding a vocal harmonizer to expand

the sound of your voice.

> Play Like Your Life Depends on It

No matter what, cherish those minutes onstage, and give it your all, even if it's a lame scene, a low-paying gig or a poorly attended show. If any of these factors warrant less than your maximum effort, you've lost, because then the only gig worth your very best is a sold-out Carnegie Hall. 🎸



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TESTED BY JIMMY LESLIE

FISHMAN HAS BEEN at the forefront of the “plugged” revolution for decades; and now the company has significantly updated the stalwart Acoustic Matrix Infinity Pickup & Preamp System it introduced a quarter century ago. There are now two new options, both consisting of the Matrix undersaddle pickup and Infinity endpin preamp: the Matrix Infinity VT (\$159 street) — with its significantly updated preamp optimized for modern acoustic amplification — and the Matrix Infinity Mic Blend system (\$299 street), on review here, which also includes a multiposition cardioid condenser mic capsule and other features. It arrived inside a Martin OM-21, which is always nice.

The Matrix Infinity Mic Blend is designed to be super stealthy and features a redesigned, sealed enclosure with fingerwheel tone and volume controls. On my test OM-21, the enclosure was mounted topside of the soundhole, and another, with a blend thumbwheel, was mounted on the bottom side. The

mic was affixed to the top, at the lip of soundhole on the bridge side, while the nine-volt battery pack was stashed on the treble side of the back’s upper bout. All together, the system did add weight to the instrument, but as my test proved, it was most certainly worth it.

To begin, I plugged into a Fishman Mini Charge acoustic amplifier and spun the dials to their midpoints. Although the guitar and amp were small, the tone was bountiful, with a warm, open-air quality that not only reflected the Martin’s lovely natural tone, but also enhanced it. The Fishman made a great guitar sound better via super-sensitive dynamic response and sky-high headroom. The tone knob was especially useful at scooping the midrange, and rotating the mic on its swivel produced significant tonal changes: downward for a more hollow sound, or upward to fill up and round out the tone. The “voicing” switch, located between the tone and volume controls, accommodate instruments of different size via a slight bass

boost. It all adds up to a lot of flexibility right under your fingers.

I went on to conduct tests through an AER Tommy Emmanuel Signature amp, an L.R. Baggs Synapse Personal P.A., a Tech 21 Acoustic Fly Rig and the house P.A. at a club. The results were consistent: The OM-21 sounded richer than several other larger guitars, and I could almost make it sound as big as a dreadnought — if I felt like it. My old Taylor Grand Auditorium is equipped with a Fishman Prefix blending system that sounds great, but it has an intrusive footprint with lots of controls. The Mic Blend’s product literature is right about all those old-fashioned units being unnecessary with today’s full-range amps and P.A. systems, and truth be told, I tend to leave it set the same way all the time. I wound up using the OM with the Matrix Infinity Mic Blend mostly for open-tuned songs because they sounded so full and clear. Finally, I brought the Fishman-equipped OM-21 to a weekly open-stage gig I run in San Francisco, where I always allow anyone brave enough to come up and use the gear I bring. Every player was stunned by the awesome sound, and feedback was never an issue.

What a joy it is to experience such naturally bold, responsive and harmonically satisfying amplified acoustic tones! I tried every technique — from fingerstyle to aggressive plectrum strumming to percussive slap-and-tap stuff — and the Fishman Matrix Infinity Mic Blend system rang true. This is one of the easiest Editors’ Pick Award decisions I’ve ever made. Try one! 🎸



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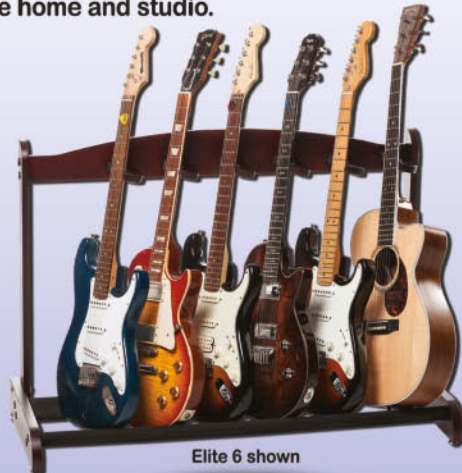
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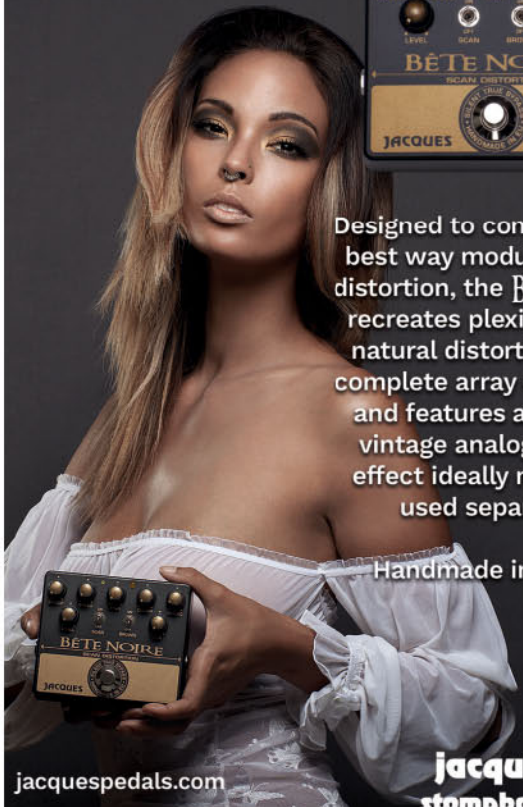
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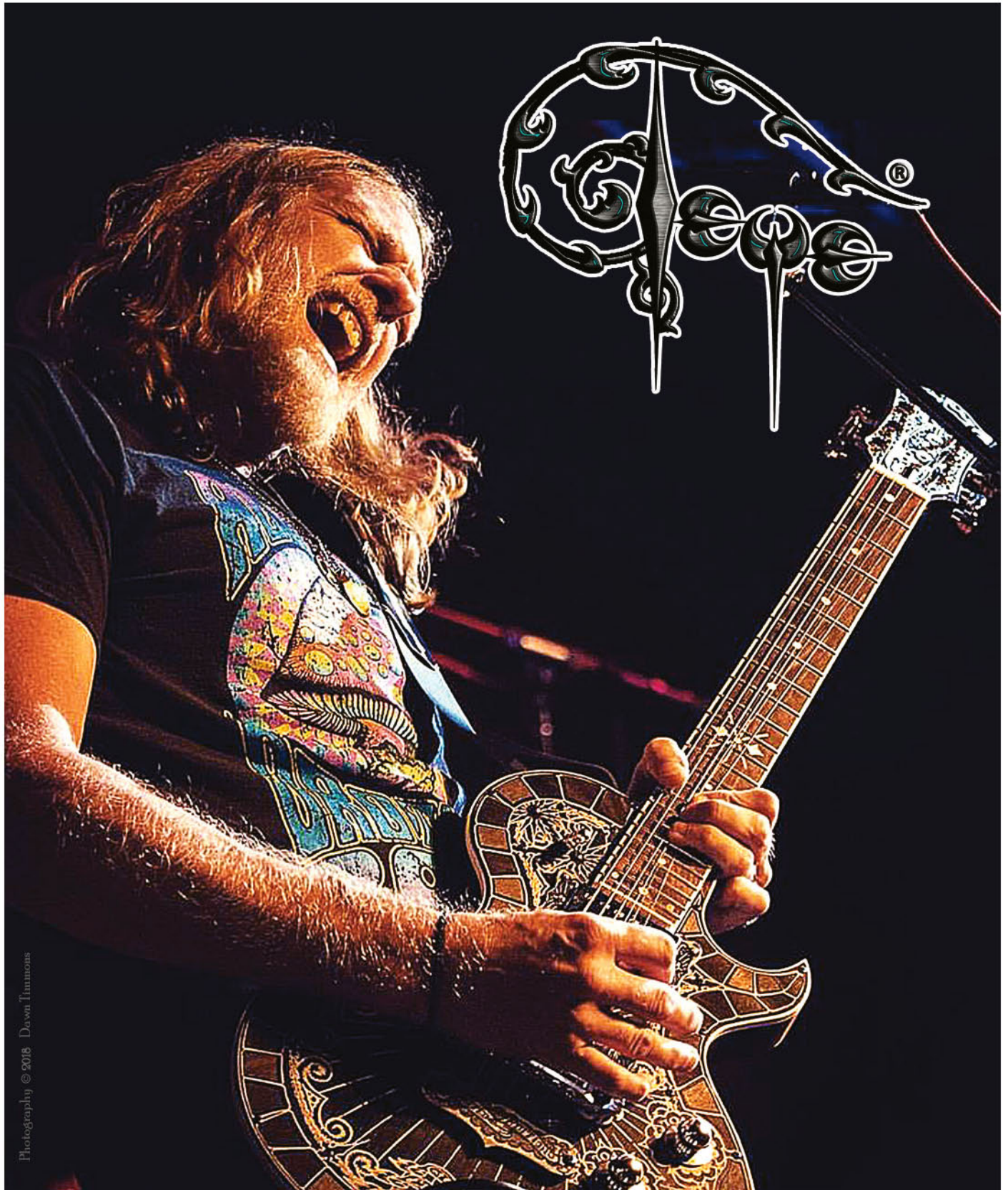
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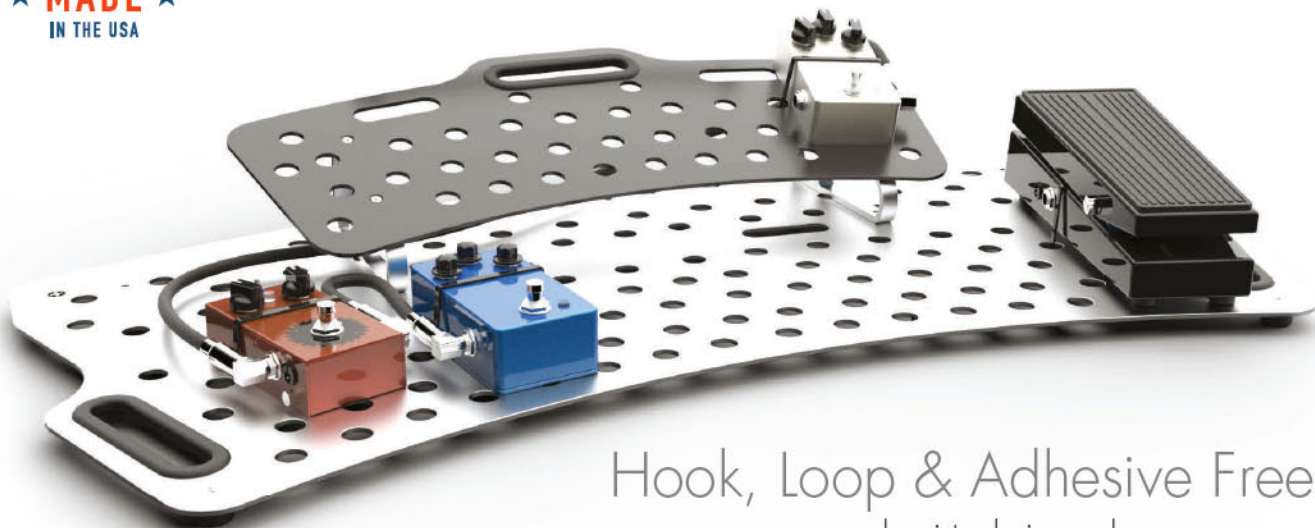


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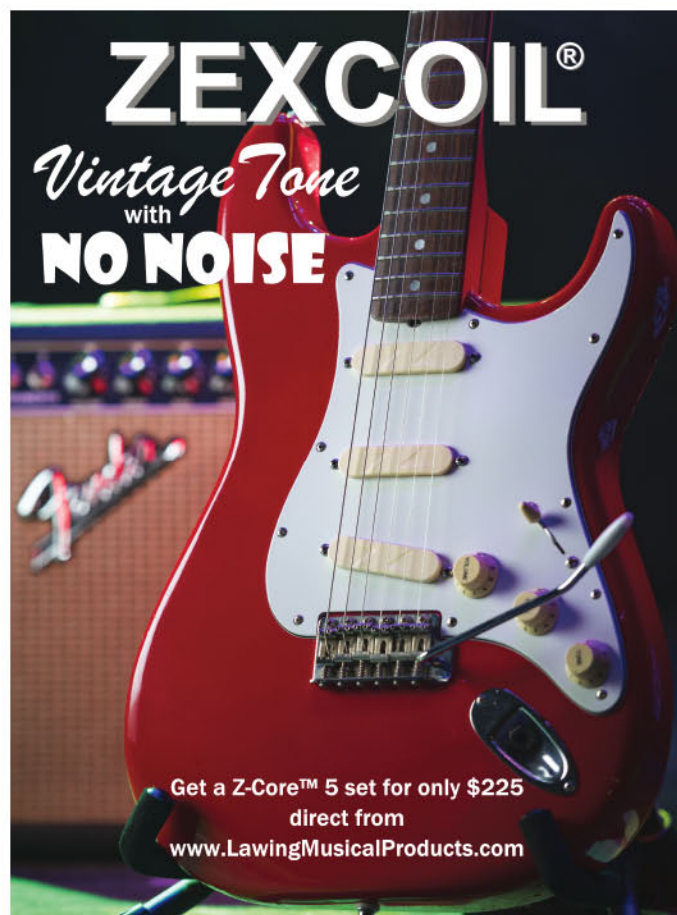
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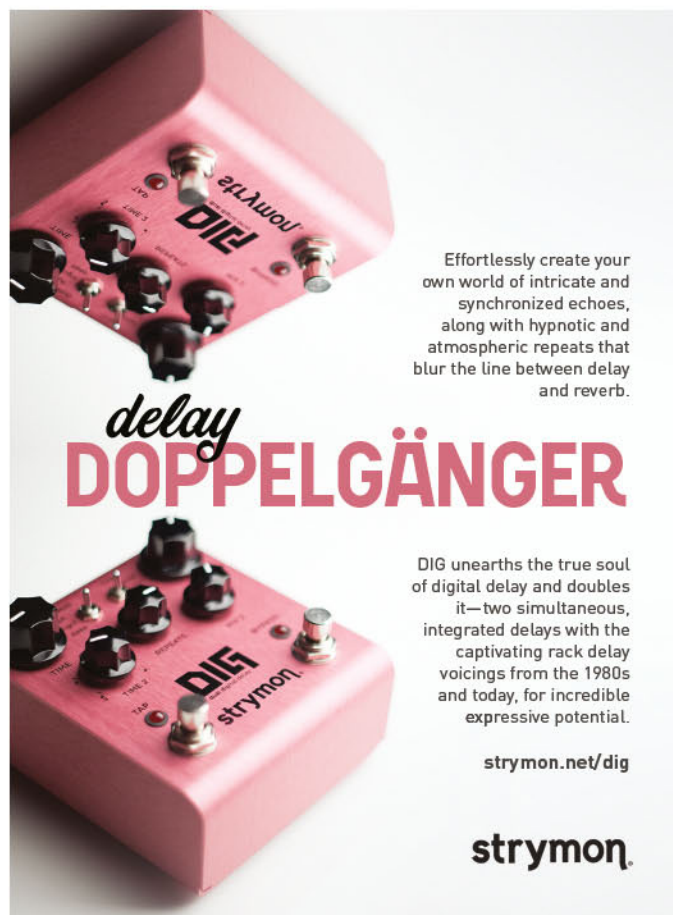
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Susan Tedeschi

Five Acts of Legend

> As front-woman for the Tedeschi-Trucks Band, Susan Tedeschi mines the singular vein of potent blues she became famous for as a solo artist in the late '90s. Freely mixing the blues with R&B and gospel influences, she has integrated the genre's diverse strains into a fluid and powerful amalgam of fiery guitar work and impassioned vocals.

> Born and raised in the Boston suburb of Norwell, Tedeschi was influenced by the Mississippi John Hurt and Lightnin' Hopkins records in her dad's vinyl collection and the gospel music of the black Baptist churches she attended. She wrote her first songs at 13 before studying at the Berklee College of Music and launching her own band in '91.

> After years of fine-tuning the Susan Tedeschi Band, she burst onto the scene in '98 with her major-label debut, *Just Won't Burn*. The album earned rave reviews and blazed a trail for a new breed of young female blues artists.

> The success of *Just Won't Burn* earned her spots on Lilith Fair and opening slots for the likes of B.B. King and the Allman Brothers Band — where she met the group's slide guitarist, Derek Trucks. The two married in '01 and soon began touring as the Soul Stew Revival.

> In '10, the couple formed the Tedeschi-Trucks Band, where Tedeschi puts her passionate, Janis Joplin-like vocal style and beefy Telecaster tones in the service of the group's original compositions.



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