

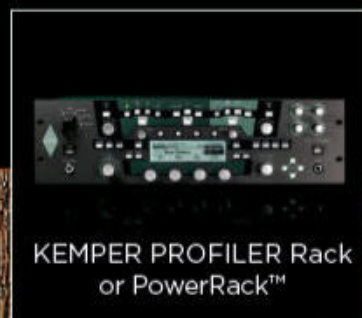


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Guitar Player

40

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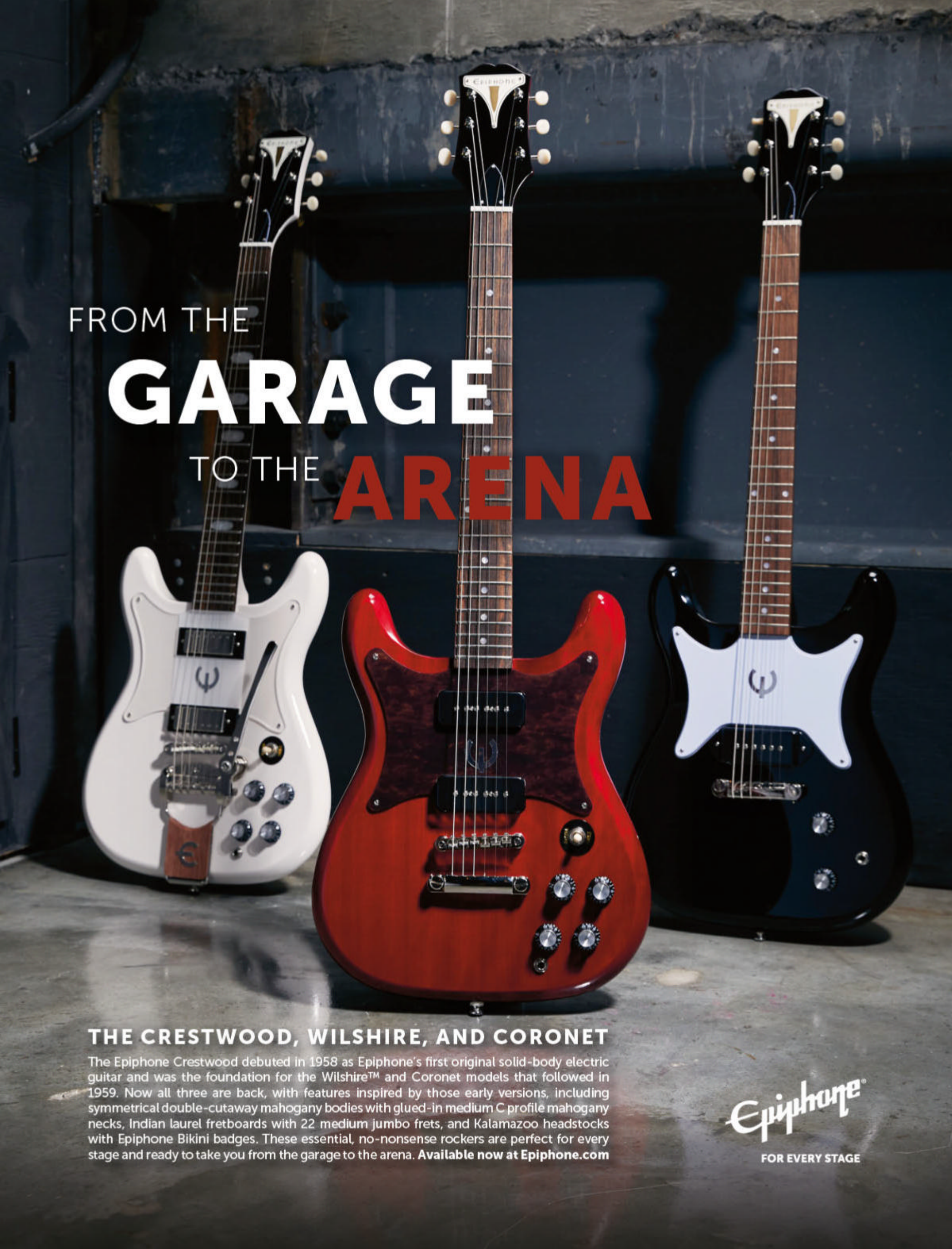
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{ From the Editor }

Gimme Danger

I GREW UP THINKING of hard rock as dangerous music. I wasn't entirely wrong. As a young musician with older brothers, and parents who indulged our musical interests, I was exposed to everything from the Who to the MC5 in the 1960s, well before I turned 10, and saw some hard-rock acts of the day performing at free outdoor concerts in and around the Detroit area. It was a rough scene in a rough place, a sense that perhaps no band

represented better in their music or stage show than the MC5, a truly revolutionary band of musical rebels. But like most rebellious things, it was seductive as well, and I soaked up everything I could from that time, especially local acts like the MC5, Grand Funk Railroad and the Stooges, whose singer, Iggy Pop, summed up the attitude best when he ominously crooned, "Gimme danger, little stranger." I can't think of three bands who could better warp a young child's mind.

By the time Deep Purple came around with *In Rock*, in 1970, I was hooked on loud, aggressive guitar rock. I didn't know much about that group's guitarist at the time, only that, given the ferocity of his playing, he must be a sight to see onstage. In time, I would learn that Ritchie Blackmore was one of the most unhinged guitarists to grace a stage from that era, and a man who showed no mercy to his guitar. Sure, Townshend smashed them, and Hendrix set one on fire. But the destruction was spontaneous and over quickly. Blackmore, on the other hand, prepared for the act and dragged it out, flaying his Fender Stratocasters with methodical menace. As Rich Bienstock details in this issue's cover story, Blackmore was especially fond of snapping off his guitars' vibrato bars, something he managed even when his tech fortified the device by increasing its diameter.

When we first got the idea to celebrate the guitarists of hard rock, it was players like Blackmore and Grand Funk's Mark Farner, as well as Pete Townshend, Jimmy Page, Jimi Hendrix and Jeff Beck, who sprang to mind — in short, artists who

were at the genre's forefront when it was coming into its own as the predominant form of rock and roll at the dawn of the 1970s. But as we began making lists of other hard-rock guitarists over the decades, the choices quickly became harder, in part because the lines began to blur. Consider Queen's sugared mix of hard rock, glam, pop and progressive rock, or the herd of 1980s rockers who walked, and more often than not, crossed the line between hard rock and metal. Far from being monolithic, hard rock is among the most diverse, creative and malleable genres within rock and roll, capable of melding with everything from freeform jazz in the hands of the MC5 to rap as practiced by Tom Morello's various bands.

In the end, we put the question to our readers with an online poll that asked you to vote for your favorite hard-rock guitarists. In addition to presenting you with a list of our choices, we left room for you to name some players we hadn't thought of. The top 40 selected of them are contained in this issue's features, lessons and other stories. We thank you for your assistance and selections, and hope you like the results.

Looking over this issue, I'm reminded not only of the sense of danger hard rock once imparted to me but also how its stylistic diversity produced so many of my favorite groups and songs that have made music, and my life in it, such a thrilling ride all these years.

Chris Scapelliti

Guitar Player

Vol. 55 No. 2

FEBRUARY 2021

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CONTENT

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF Christopher Scapelliti,
chris.scapelliti@futurenet.com

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

ART EDITOR Rosie Webber,
rosie.webber@futurenet.com

PRODUCTION EDITOR Jem Roberts,
jem.roberts@futurenet.com

LOS ANGELES EDITOR Jude Gold,
judegold@gmail.com

FRETS SECTION EDITOR Jimmy Leslie,
j@jimmysleslie.com

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

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

MUSIC COPYISTS Jeff Perrin, Matt Scharfglass

ADVERTISING SALES

DIRECTOR OF U.S. MUSIC SALES Jonathan Brudner
jonathan.brudner@futurenet.com, (845) 678-3064

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

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

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CHIEF CONTENT OFFICER: Aaron Asadi

BRAND DIRECTOR, MUSIC: Stuart Williams

COMMERCIAL FINANCE DIRECTOR: Dan Jotcham

HEAD OF ART: Rodney Dive

CONTENT DIRECTOR, MUSIC: Scott Rowley

HEAD OF DESIGN (MUSIC): Brad Merrett

GROUP ART DIRECTOR: Graham Dalzell

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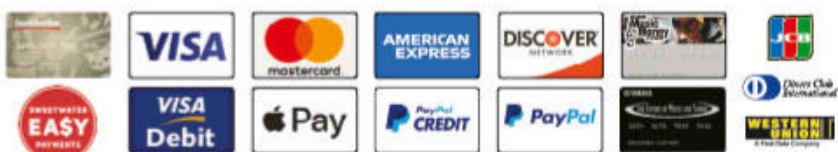
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**HARD-ROCK
HEROES****32**

Rock of Ages

38

Ritchie Blackmore

46

The Classic Era

52

European Voices

56

Grand Funk Railroad

66

The Shred Planet

AFICIONADO**62**

West Laboratories

NEW & COOL**20**

Bartlett Retro Mk 2

ALBUM**22**

Black Stone Cherry

FIVE SONGS**24**

Kim Thayil

ON THE COVER

Ritchie Blackmore, April 1974

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Guitar Player (ISSN 0017-5463) is published monthly with an extra issue in December by Future, 11 West 42nd St., 15th Floor, New York, NY 10036. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. Canada Post: Publications Mail Agreement #40612608. Canada Returns to be sent to Bleuchip International, P.O. Box 25542, London, ON N6C 6B2. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Guitar Player, P.O. Box 2029, Langhorne, PA 19047-9957.

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CONTENTS

FEBRUARY 2021 | VOLUME 55 | NUMBER 2

COLUMNS

28**Classic Gear**

1962 Gretsch Country Club

30**Vinyl Treasures**Deep Purple, *Machine Head***31****Whack Job**

1967 Domino Californian

LESSONS

76

John Frusciante

78

Strap-Hanging Strategies

GEAR

80Epiphone Limited Edition
1959 Les Paul Standard**82**

Mesa/Boogie Badlander

84JHS Legends of Fuzz Bender
and Smiley Fuzz Pedals**86**Godin Multiac
Grand Concert Deluxe**88**Rainger Mini Bar
Liquid Analyser**90**

MXR Tremolo



OPENING NOTES

18

GP readers weigh in.

HOW I WROTE...

98

"Blue Collar Man"



MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

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When It's Love

I've only gotten about halfway through the issue [*Holiday 2020*], but I had to stop and let Matt Blackett know what an amazing writer he is. The EVH tribute is so heartfelt and well crafted. Excellent use of the quotes, superb storytelling and masterful weaving of personal feelings and observations with professional knowledge and experience from himself and others. And kudos to the entire staff at *GP* for getting the issue together quickly and thoughtfully. Excellent! Even to the detail of the EVH guitar graphics on the sides of the pages.

Yes, I am of the Beatles, Hendrix and Clapton generation. But Eddie was special. I can't say any more here than you most eloquently already have. I just wanted to thank you at *GP* for a job well done. —SCOTT REYNOLDS, GLENDALE, CA

I've been a professional writer and creative director for nearly four decades. I like to think I can turn a phrase. But I don't think I have ever seen anyone capture an artist so perfectly or as succinctly as Jude Gold did when he referred to Eddie's playing as "joyriding in a stolen Ferrari." That is just absolutely brilliant writing. —ROB HENDRICKSON, TROY, MI

I would like to thank you all for the recent holiday issue. It is the most absolute and fitting tribute to Edward Van Halen one could ever have wished for. In my early teens I witnessed Jimi Hendrix, but when EVH rose to fame, there was no denying that this guy was the real guitar god we were all waiting for!

In terms of musicianship, showmanship, personality, technique, innovation and out-of-this-world-godly tone, we are to face a long waiting time before such a hero will walk the Earth again. Forget other monster players like Vai, Satriani or Malmsteen. Eddie was and will forever be *the* cornerstone. This tribute issue has really made me relive my hard-rock days! —SERGE SORBER, BELGIUM

The transcript of Jas Obrecht's interview with Eddie was the icing on the cake — and this issue is one amazingly good treat already! Seeing those pics of Jas and Eddie was a blast too. It's obvious that those two dudes connected, and the smile on Ed's face tells you how thrilled he was to be interviewed by *GP*. —TOM KAPLAN

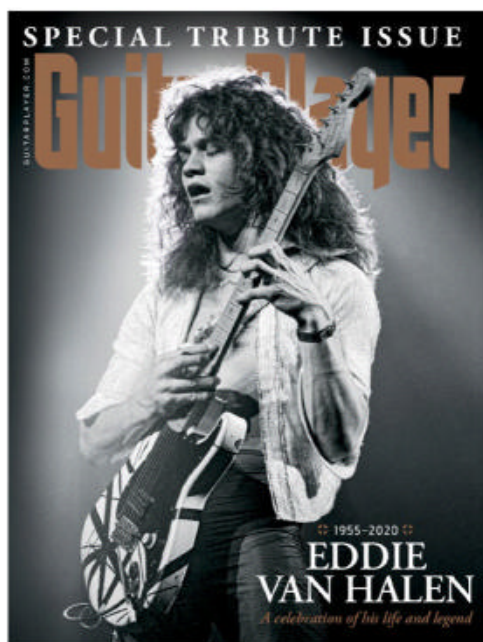
Fingerpicking Good

Thanks for the lengthy profile of a legendary guitar hero: his innovative approach, his lasting legacy, his profound influence on a generation, his astonishing technique and even the brutal mods he made to his gear to pursue his unique sound. I refer, of course, to Leo Kottke. —GEORGE KIRCHWEY, DALLAS, TX

Jimmy Leslie's interview with Leo Kottke was a highlight of your December and Holiday issues. It was especially fortuitous that the second part of his interview ended up in an issue devoted to another genius of the guitar — Eddie Van Halen. They each represent the best of their respective genres and instruments. —CHUCK PETERS

Jazz Hands

I always enjoy the lessons in *Guitar Player*, but the two-parter on chord soloing was one of the best I've seen in years [*Chord Soloing Jazz Style, November/December 2020*]. I've always wanted to learn the style and had no idea where to begin, but Milton Mermikides' instruction gave me plenty of guidance. I'm no Pat Metheny (but then who is?), but my hands are finally getting the knack of it, thanks to you. —MIKE FENNER, DAYTON, OH



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Online and Social Media Managing Editor
jackson.maxwell@futurenet.com

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THE MAGAZINE



CHRISTOPHER SCAPELLITI

Editor-in-Chief
chris.scapelliti@futurenet.com



ART THOMPSON

Senior Editor
arthur.thompson@futurenet.com



ROSIE WEBBER

Art Editor
rosie.webber@futurenet.com



JUDE GOLD

Los Angeles Editor
judegold@gmail.com



JIMMY LESLIE

Frets Editor
j@jimmysleslie.com



DAVE HUNTER

Gear Section & Video Contributor
dhunterwordsmusic@yahoo.com



JIMMY BROWN

Lessons Editor
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Adapting to ever-changing CITES regulations, Tom Bartlett updates his Retrospec model with the Retro Mk2.

BY DAVE HUNTER

SUCH IS THE difficulty of establishing an original new guitar design that many otherwise talented builders abandon the effort altogether and simply re-create their own version of the Stratocaster, Jazzmaster or Les Paul. Contrary to this, Canadian luthier Tom Bartlett made a new classic in grand style a few years back when he teamed up with Kim LaFleur of Historic Makeovers and Swedish designer Magnus Melkersson to develop the Retrospec model [reviewed in GP, July 2014]. Previously known for his high-end, detail-perfect guitars created through fastidious research of original 'Bursts, Bartlett packaged the essential ingredients and proportions of a vintage-style Les Paul into the Retrospec's uniquely stylized body and immediately won plaudits from players who normally wouldn't touch anything but a guitar shaped exactly like the real thing.

Now Bartlett has ported the unique asymmetrical, rounded-dual-horned body and offset-peaked headstock shapes into the Retro Mk2. While retaining the general dimensions, electronics and neck feel of a good 'Burst, the new model changes up the formula with some wood substitutions and more playfully colorful top finishes to dress up a guitar that has no top flames to display.

"I've been dealing with Brazilian rosewood for years," Bartlett says, "and everything needs to ship with CITES [*Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species*] certification. And it's not a major hassle for me, but touring musicians could get into huge trouble if they don't have the right documentation for their guitar.

"The Mk2, on the other hand, is a non-CITES, easily traveled guitar. There's nothing about it that needs a special permit:

There's no pearl inlay, no Brazilian rosewood. It's all above-board, non-CITES wood. I would have built the Mk2 anyway, because I'd been wanting to make a korina-based model for some time, but the fact that it avoids CITES issues should be a bonus for many guitarists."

Outwardly, the Retro Mk2 retains many essentials of the classic Les Paul specifications morphed into an appealingly retro-alternative body style. They include set-neck construction on a 24.75-inch scale length, dual humbuckers with four knobs and a three-way switch, and a back-angled three-per-side headstock.

In place of the original Retrospec's traditional LP-inspired solid-mahogany body and neck and carved maple top, the Retro Mk2's foundation is constructed of old-growth korina, with a chambered one-piece body with carved two-piece korina top, and

PHOTOS COURTESY OF TOM BARTLETT



The Retro Mk2 is also offered in Matte Gold (shown left) and Shell Pink. (left) The holly headstock is finished in black, with a white tip.

a glued-in one-piece neck. The backs of these are done in a natural nitrocellulose finish that lends a glow to the lovely grain of this wood, while the top is shot in Daphne Blue nitrocellulose lacquer, with a thin matte finish that reveals the texture of the top's grain. (The Mk2 is also available in Matte Gold and Shell Pink.) In hand, the style and beauty of the creation comes out much more fluidly than any photos can capture — the complementary contrast and flow from powder-blue top to off-white binding to characterful korina is especially lovely — and the overall veracity of the chassis' design is immediately apparent from all angles.

"The Mk2 design was sort of my personal beliefs of what I wanted in a guitar at that moment," Bartlett tells us. "And korina is so underutilized, but such a wonderful tonewood. People who don't use it, or use it some but would like to use it more, say that it's so hard to get in good quality, and that is true. But the payback is so great on it."

The fingerboard is a dark slice of old-growth Indian rosewood, inlaid with cellulose-nitrate position markers with what might be called a rounded trapezoidal shape. Body and fingerboard binding are made from

Bartlett's own custom cream Royalite stock, with matching pickup rings and pickguard and complementing cupcake control knobs. Further tasty stylistic touches include the

white-finished tip of the otherwise black holly headstock veneer, making a canvas that beautifully accentuates the gold silkscreened Bartlett signature.

In a further nod back to the period-correct, LP-inspired specs of the model's predecessor, the nut is cut from hard, self-lubricating nylon 6/6, and the playful style follows through with Bartlett's own empire truss-rod cover design and simple three-on-a-plate Kluson tuners with off-white buttons. Down at the other end, a compensated MojoAxe wraparound bridge keeps things suitably simple, yet tightly anchored.

The pickups are a pair of custom-wound humbuckers from OX4, a British maker that has been getting a lot of attention for its reproduction PAFs in recent years. The pickups' DC resistances read 7.68k ohms in the neck position and 7.92k ohms in the bridge, par for the course with low-wind PAFs. The traditional four-knob electronics with three-way switch are done up with '50s-spec wiring and include CTS pots and paper-in-oil Bumblebee tone capacitors.

The body's slightly offset waist helps it balance nicely on the lap, where playing comfort is further enhanced by the light seven-pound weight,

and a sweet, late-'50s C-shaped neck profile that sits beautifully in the left hand. Played unplugged, the guitar rings loud and lively, with some emphasis in the upper mids and

a certain high-end sparkle, versus the lower-mid grunt that you might expect from a solid slab of mahogany and maple in, say, a Les Paul played acoustically.

Tested into a tweed Deluxe-style 1x12 combo and a Friedman Small Box head and 2x12 cabinet, the Retro Mk2 proved a versatile performer that ably spans aspects of the Les Paul/SG/ES-335 skill set, while adding plenty of its own character. The latter comes largely in the form of that signature korina upper-midrange sizzle, with a certain chewiness in the midrange overall and some bounce in the wound strings, and a bass that isn't overly prominent but is well balanced and focused.

Low-wind though they are, these humbuckers drive an edge-of-breakup amp very well, knocking it into juicy overdrive when you hit hard, with a little furry graunch from the low notes and an appealing blend of compression and bite throughout the range. With a bit more drive applied to either amp, there's snarl and sting in lead runs and a gritty thickness to rhythm parts. With full-on overdrive, the Mk2 exhibits good sustain without excessive feedback, and a singing, reedy quality that adds a "blown" character to the notes, making it an expressive lead machine with plenty of personality. Between the cheery looks and lively playing response, the Retro Mk2 is a fun and inspiring guitar all around, and a welcome breath of fresh air from up north. 🎸

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"KORINA IS UNDER-UTILIZED, BUT SUCH A WONDERFUL TONEWOOD. THE PAYBACK IS SO GREAT"



Ben Wells with his Gibson Les Paul Classic



Chris Robertson with his Lucky Dog Evangelist

Balancing Act

Black Stone Cherry's Ben Wells and Chris Robertson perform a hard rock/country crossover on *The Human Condition*.

BY MARK McSTEAD

BLACK STONE CHERRY are more than a band. They're practically a family. The American hard-rock quartet's members have been friends for more than 20 years and began playing music together when they were still at school in Edmonton, Kentucky. They even have a familial connection with another area group, the Kentucky Headhunters; Drummer John Fred Young is the son of the Headhunter's rhythm guitarist, Richard Young.

Consisting of Young, bassist Jon Lawhon, lead guitarist and vocalist Chris Robertson and rhythm guitarist Ben Wells, BSC have a unique take on the traditional southern rock sound, adding pulverising downtuned riffs that have won them fans in the metal and hard-rock arenas, all while maintaining a

roots feel that has helped them score airplay on mainstream country radio. Their new album, *The Human Condition* (Mascot), builds on that reputation with a set of infectious songs that make good use of BSC's double-axe threat. Robertson handles the majority of lead vocals and solos, while Wells plays a handful of solos but covers a multitude of parts. After many months off the road, the group is looking forward to returning to the road in 2021, with a year's worth of postponed shows now rebooked.

The new album sounds more commercial than your previous albums. There are a lot of memorable songs that sound like hit singles. Is that a deliberate move?

Ben Wells The word *commercial* can have bad connotations, but ultimately we want to

write songs that are memorable. We never want to write songs that are different just to be different. We would never want to generate something to fit a particular outlet, but we always want to write songs that are catchy and hooky.

"WE ALWAYS WANTED TO SWITCH THINGS UP, LIKE THE ROLLING STONES OR LYNYRD SKYNYRD, WHO HAD THREE GUITARISTS"

BSC are very prolific. You put out albums on a regular basis and released the two *Black to Blues* EPs in 2017 and 2019. Why is it important to you to release new music in an age when albums are so hard to sell?

Chris Robertson We spend a lot of time on the road, and releasing records gives us new music to play to keep things fresh for the fans, and for us. Besides, we're always coming up with new ideas for songs, so we need the outlet of a new release for that material.

Wells And you can't stop making music if you're creative, but you may need to find different ways of doing it, which is something we've done. We try to be economical in terms of recording costs. We're lucky that Jon Lawhon, our bass player, built a great studio, and that's where we record. You don't need to pay \$100,000 to a producer anymore.

There are a couple of very emotional songs on the album: "When Angels Learn to Fly" and "In Love With the Pain." They have the ability to appeal equally to a rock or country audience. Were you aware of that crossover potential when you were recording them?

Wells Our tastes in music have always been pretty well balanced in terms of the styles we like to listen to and to play. But it's never calculated.

Robertson I think we do have songs that can appeal across the board, but as Ben says, we've never tried to do that. I guess the many different things that influence us will always come out in our music.

The album has an exceptional cover of Electric Light Orchestra's "Don't Bring Me Down," with a hefty dose of ZZ Top swagger. How did that one come about?

Wells Thanks! The ZZ Top reference is a huge compliment. It was already a perfectly written song, so all we had to do was put our stamp on it. Some of the vocals are in a pretty high register for us, but the vocal harmonies were so great on the original that we really wanted to recreate them.

Robertson We thought we might do it as a B-side, but it



SERGIONE INFUSO/CORBIS/GETTY IMAGES

BSC performing at Alcatraz, in Milan, Italy, November 27, 2018

turned out so well that we had to include it on the album. We're all big Jeff Lynne fans, and I just thought it would be a song we could bring something to.

Anything new for you guys on the gear front for this album?

Robertson I still used a lot of PRS guitars on the album, and a Kemper for most of the amp sounds. I also played a couple of guitars made by Lucky Dog Guitar, which is a one-man business in Tennessee. The owner, Anthony Sims, builds everything himself from scratch. My effects included the Dos Fuzz by Analog Pedals, which produces an Octavia type of sound. It will be released soon as a signature model.

Wells As usual, I mainly used a Les Paul, but I also played a Telecaster copy made by Nash, which is a great boutique guitar company. My main amp was a Peavey 5150.

It's noticeable that you resist the temptation to overplay. Is that a conscious attempt to keep the focus on the songs?

Robertson When it comes time to do the solo, the temptation is to just let it rip and play something real badass, and there are times when I'll do that. I had some great advice from Greg Martin from the Kentucky Headhunters a long time ago, who told me that you should always be able to sing your guitar solos. That's something I've worked on. I try to play for the song as much as I can.

Wells We could jam for hours, but that can get old. We always

keep in mind that the song is the most important thing.

After playing together for 20 years, do you two instinctively know who will do what on a song?

Robertson For the most part. I did all the solos, except for the first one on the ELO track and a couple of other songs. Ben does most of the overdubbed guitars and acoustics.

Wells It's subconscious. We know each other's strengths. Chris might say he's not feeling a solo, so I'll do it. We don't have any issues with ego; we're trying to complement each other. With solos, we always wanted to switch things up like the Rolling Stones or even Lynyrd Skynyrd, who had three guitarists and they were all important players.

Who were your influences starting out?

Robertson Hendrix, Clapton, the first three Skynyrd guitarists, ZZ Top and, oddly enough, Eddie Van Halen, even though I don't sound anything like him. [laughs]

Wells The two biggest things that inspired me were Elvis and Aerosmith. I love a lot of country music and I particularly love rockabilly. Rockabilly and chicken picking are what I like to work on when I'm practicing.

What's next for BSC? Are you planning another blues EP after the success of the last two?

Wells The blues EPs were a great way to keep some new material out there in between our original albums. We might well do another EP, but not necessarily blues. Maybe rockabilly. [laughs] The point of the EPs is to show a different side of the band, so anything goes. We always like to shake things up in Black Stone Cherry. 🎸



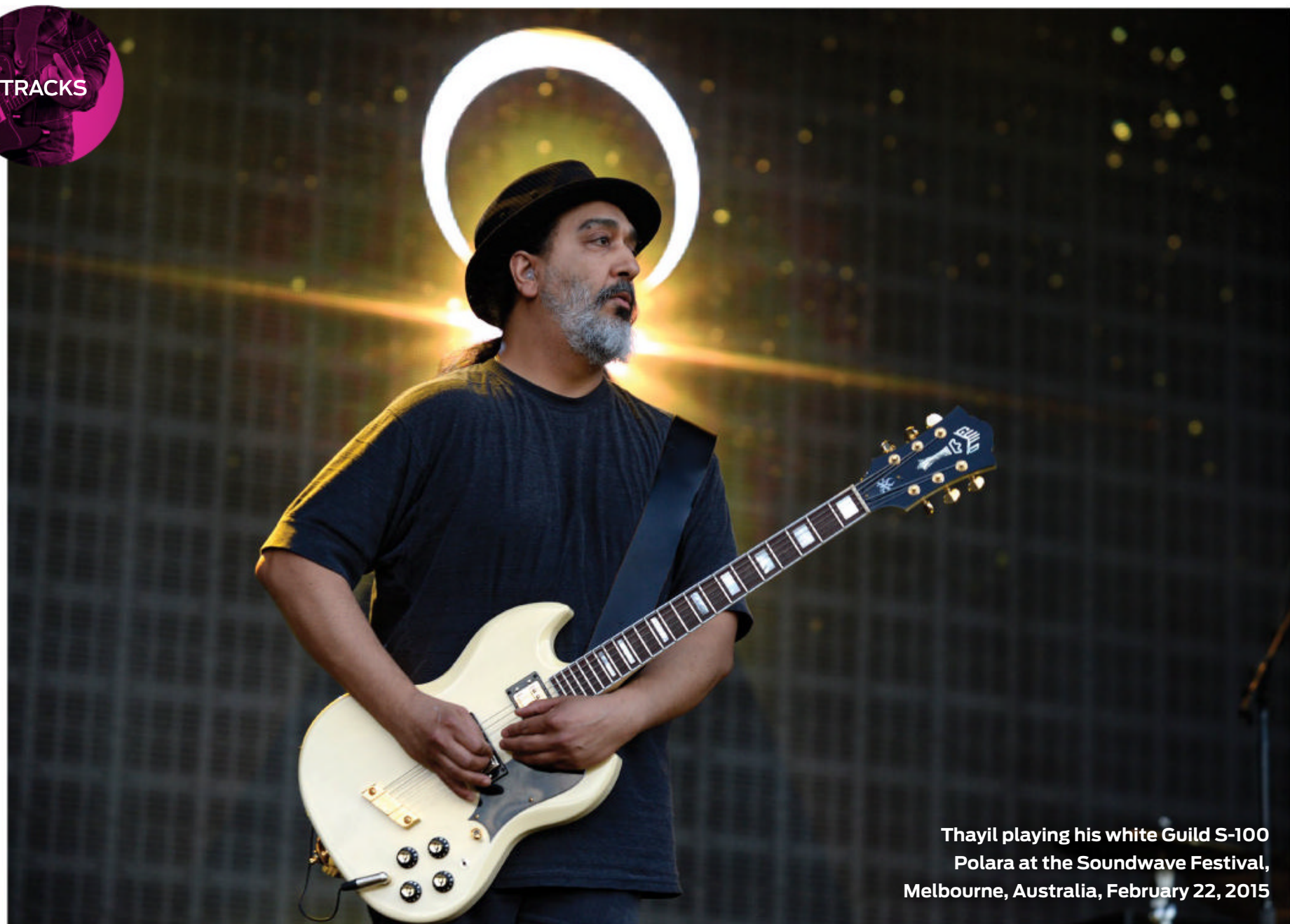
RECOMMENDED LISTENING

The Human Condition

"Ringin' in My Head," "Again," "When Angels Learn to Fly," "In Love With the Pain," "Don't Bring Me Down"



TRACKS



Thayil playing his white Guild S-100
Polara at the Soundwave Festival,
Melbourne, Australia, February 22, 2015

MARTIN PHILBEY/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

My Career in Five Songs

Kim Thayil never wanted his guitar playing to be about one thing. Here's a career-spanning assortment of tracks that show him at his diverse best.

BY RICHARD BIENSTOCK

OVER THE COURSE of more than three decades as lead guitarist and co-songwriter for Soundgarden, Kim Thayil was responsible for crafting some of the most twisted, psychedelic and downright heavy riffs and solos in the modern rock canon. So it's not surprising that when people think of him as a musician, "the first thing that comes to mind is the body of work that I did with Soundgarden," Thayil says. But, he adds, "there's other stuff that I'm really satisfied with as well."

Which is all the more reason why Thayil was happy to sit down with *Guitar Player* and discuss some of his favorite guitar performances from his long and illustrious career. Not content to stick with five tracks,

"WHEN 'BLACK HOLE SUN' WAS WRITTEN, I TOOK A STEP BACK. LIKE, DO WE WANT TO DO THIS?"

he gave us six worthy recordings to consider. They comprise, of course, plenty of Soundgarden moments, including the roiling drop-D psychedelia of 1987's "Nothing to Say," the dew-drop "Tinker Bell" notes of the smash 1994 ballad "Black Hole Sun" and the droning Eastern-sounding lines of "A Thousand Days Before," from Soundgarden's final studio album, 2012's *King Animal*.

But there are also surprises, like Thayil's first-ever recorded effort, with a punky, power-poppy Chicago combo named Identity Crisis, and his outside-the-box work with producer Steve Fisk's Pigeonhed. It's all incredibly varied and inventive, and also undeniably Thayil.

"Ultimately, I want to capture something that has elements of trippiness," he says of his singular guitar style. "I want there to be heavy elements, but they don't have to necessarily be viscerally weighty; they just need to be dark. And I want things to be beautiful, but not candied, and to have some sort of lullaby nature."

"So I'm thinking if I can tie all those things together — trippy, psychedelic, lullaby,

beautiful — with the darkness and the heaviness, that's how I want things to be," he adds. "That's what I like to listen to, and it's what I want to hear coming from my fingers."

"PRETTY FEET" IDENTITY CRISIS, *PRETTY FEET* EP (1980)

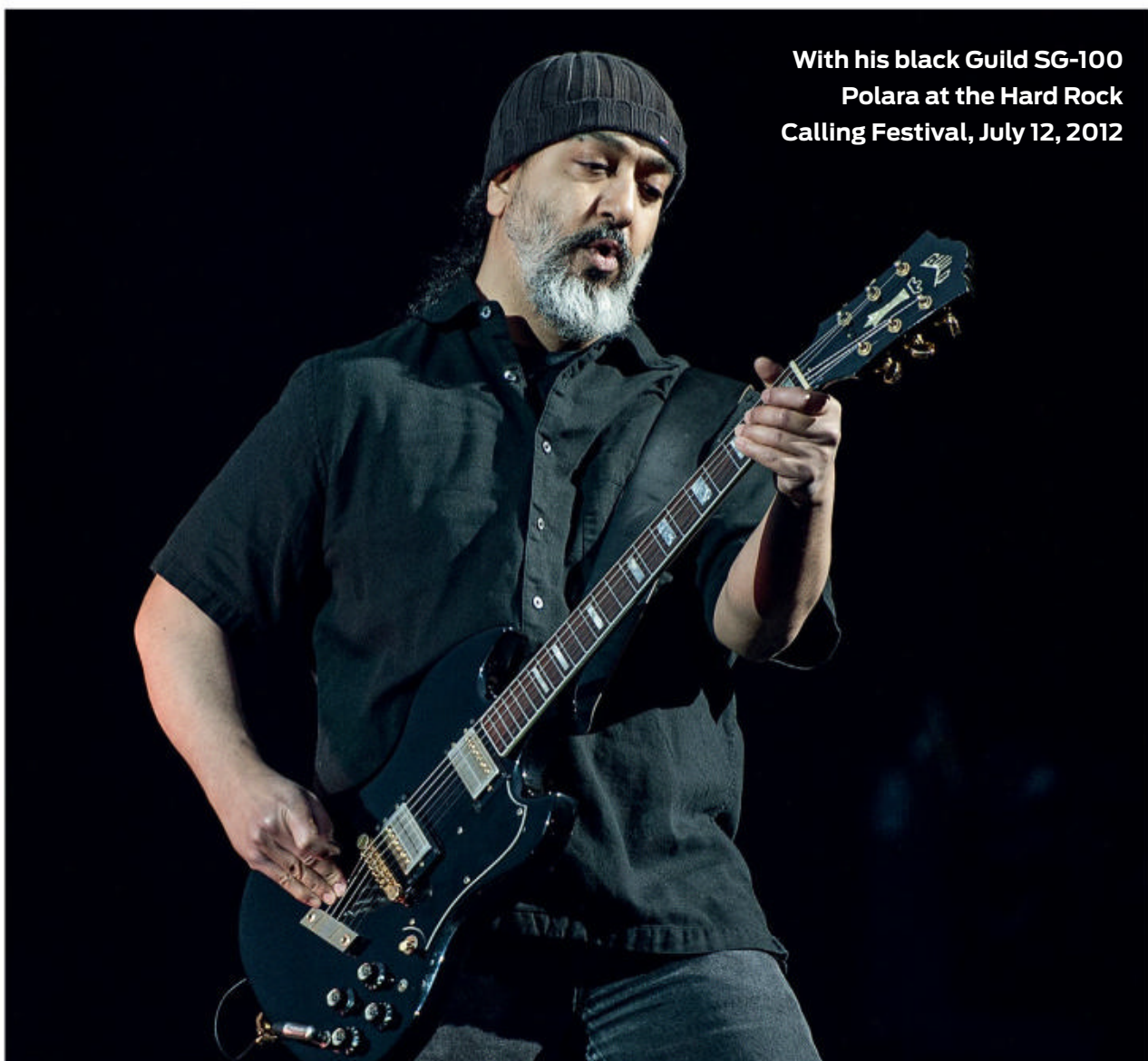
"We financed everything ourselves, and it was really satisfying to write songs and to actually record them and have it pressed on vinyl. I can't imagine how four guys in their late teens wouldn't be elated with that. We lived in the south suburbs of Chicago, and this guy brought down a four-track reel-to-reel, probably a Teac, and we set it up in our rehearsal studio, which was my dad's basement, and recorded three songs. One of them was 'Pretty Feet.' It's in the three-chord, power-chord, Kinks-AC/DC sort of vein, and I wrote the music and lyrics, which were kind of silly and flippant. I used a 50-watt Marshall combo that I borrowed, and a black Guild S-100 guitar that I still have. The guitar had the nickname Spider-Man because I put a Spider-Man sticker on it. Because I was once a teenager." [laughs]

"NOTHING TO SAY" SOUNDGARDEN, *SCREAMING LIFE* (1987)

"This was off our 1987 debut EP, which was our first foot forward. The next year we did another EP, *Fopp*, and in 1990 the two were paired together as *Screaming Life/Fopp*, which we are now celebrating the 30th anniversary of. I wrote the music for this one, and it's significant for a couple of reasons: It was the first song that we recorded in drop-D tuning, which ended up becoming a bit of a signature for Soundgarden. And it was the one that got some interest from record labels. People would say they were blown away by the uniqueness of the song. You have the heavy drop-D thing, and then it kind of moves up during the verse to this Eastern-sounding drone melody. It's dark, heavy and pounding, but it's also kind of psychedelic and has a lullaby quality to it. A lot of A&R guys thought it sounded familiar to things they'd grown up loving, but that it also sounded different. Whether it was the tuning or the Eastern thing or Chris [Cornell]'s wail, they said, 'Let's check these guys out!'"



Thayil and Chris Cornell in New York City, December 1, 1993



With his black Guild SG-100 Polara at the Hard Rock Calling Festival, July 12, 2012



“RUSTY CAGE” SOUNDGARDEN, BADMOTORFINGER (1991)

“This was Chris’s song, and it has one of the coolest arrangements. It’s a verse/chorus, verse/chorus thing, and then a C section and a D section ending. It’s trippy as hell. I remember I spent a lot of hours, days and months learning the main riff, because it’s not an easy one to play. Eventually it became easy and we were able to play it live, but I will say this: The fact that Chris could play the riff of this song and sing it at the same time... I don’t know if that’s more a testament to his abilities to weave a melody around a trippy riff or to his abilities as a guitar player. But it was pretty amazing to see.”

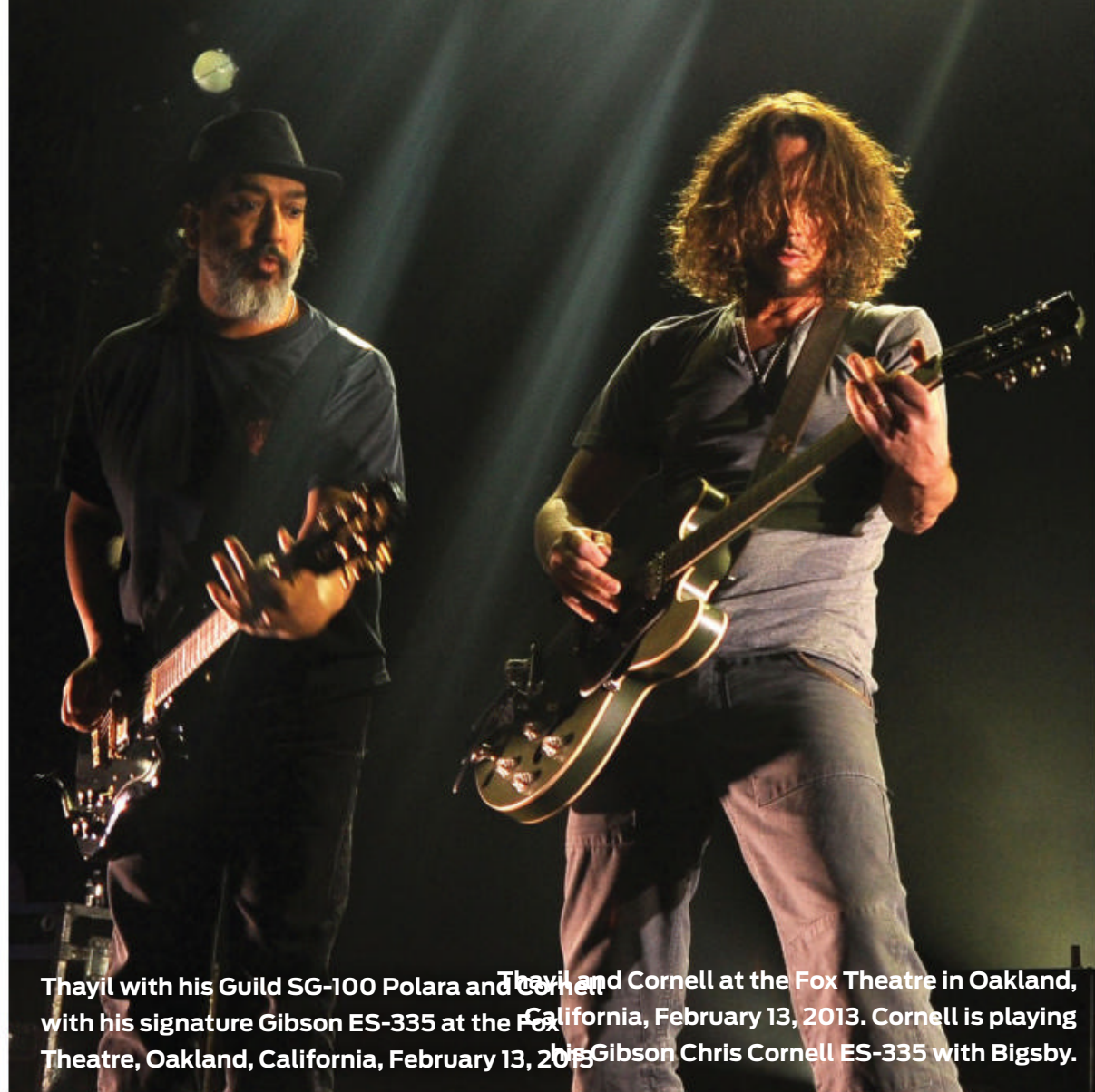
“BLACK HOLE SUN” SOUNDGARDEN, SUPERUNKNOWN (1994)

“When this song was written, I remember thinking there were aspects of it that sounded very Soundgarden-like, but there were aspects that didn’t. It was certainly expanding the criteria that people would recognize as being stylistically Soundgarden. I also remember thinking, Oh my god, this thing is a hit. As a rock guitarist. I kind of took a step back from that. Like, Do we want to do this?”

“Trying to learn the parts that Chris wrote was different for me, because the arpeggiated parts at the beginning of the song and through the verse were difficult. I was used to

“‘NOTHING TO SAY’ IS THE ONE THAT GOT INTEREST FROM RECORD LABELS. PEOPLE WOULD SAY THEY WERE BLOWN AWAY BY THE UNIQUENESS”

playing fast or brutal, or heavy or psychedelic. But to me, this sounded like Tinker Bell walking over the right hand part of the piano keyboard. *[laughs]* And I don’t do that. It was a particular challenge, and I’ve got to say I was not enthused at all about having to rein in my guitar style in order to record this thing. In the studio, I think Chris’s *[guitar]* tracks



Thayil with his Guild SG-100 Polara and Cornell with his signature Gibson ES-335 at the Fox Theatre, Oakland, California, February 13, 2013. Cornell is playing his Gibson Chris Cornell ES-335 with Bigsby.

C FLAIGN/WIREIMAGE/GETTY IMAGES

might have been cranked up in the mix, or possibly they might’ve taken me out. I can’t remember. But live, I ended up having to do it. Eventually it was like, Okay, I’m going to have to learn those little Tinker Bell parts, and I’m going to have to suck it up. And I did. And it became a fun song to play.”

“BATTLE FLAG” PIGEONHED, THE FULL SENTENCE (1997)

“Pigeonhed was a project by Steve Fisk and Shawn Smith. Steve produced Soundgarden’s *Fopp* EP, and he also did some early Nirvana sessions. We lost Shawn last year. He sang in a band called Brad, which was a side project of *[Pearl Jam guitarist]* Stone Gossard’s. I worked on a few songs on this record, and it was a different way for me to work. Steve would come up with some beats and sometimes a bass riff, and I’d go over to his home studio, and all I had to do was listen, come up with a guitar part and we’d track over it. And then I’d come up with a second or third guitar part to play along with the arrangement changes or to go over a riff I’d already put down. And that was a lot of fun. It left me a lot of room in which to do a lot of different things.

“The song ‘Battle Flag’ ended up being used in an episode of *The Sopranos*. By the way, I’ve never seen one episode of *The Sopranos* except for the scene that this song plays in. The funny thing is, the version they

used was a remix by a band called the Lo Fidelity Allstars. And in the remix they pretty much kept the groove and the vocal, and they cut out Steve’s keyboards and my guitar part. It makes it very difficult when the version of the song you recorded for your friend’s band is the version that doesn’t have you or your friend on it.” *[laughs]*

“A THOUSAND DAYS BEFORE” SOUNDGARDEN, KING ANIMAL (2012)

“The song’s working title was ‘Country Eastern.’ It was an idea that started some time in the mid ’90s. Then, of course, the band broke up in ’97, and so I took it with me. The tuning on that one is the same one that’s on *[Soundgarden]* songs like ‘Head Down,’ ‘Burden in My Hand’ and ‘Pretty Noose,’ which I believe is C G C G G E. And that tuning facilitated certain things, like doing octaves in different positions, and doing drones and unison playing, because you have the two G strings next to each other.

“So I had the tuning, and I just started farting around and that riff came up. It sounded a little bit country but also kind of Indian. And, hey, I’m an Indian guy, and I was born in Seattle, raised in Chicago, and I got my dose of Johnny Cash, so I just referred to it as ‘Country Eastern.’ And that’s how everyone else referred to it until Chris wrote lyrics to it prior to the recording of *King Animal*.”

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High Society

From the lineage of the Country Gent and White Falcon, the 6196 Country Club is an exalted, if lesser known, member of the Gretsch nobility.

WHAT BETTER VEHICLE to drive to the country club than a Cadillac? And what better guitar to pull out for that swanky gig than a Gretsch Country Club — and a Cadillac Green one at that. Introduced in 1951, the Country Club had changed substantially by the time our featured example from 1962 arrived, embodying a form that will be more familiar to most of today's players. Yet even then, it remained one of Gretsch's grandest electric guitars, and a sign that a guitarist had "made it."

Labeled with the 6196 model designation when dressed in a Cadillac Green finish, the Country Club sported a large, 17-inch-wide body like the Country Gentleman and top-of-the-line White Falcon, which was a clue to the guitar's exalted lineage. Even two decades later, the single-cutaway Country Club traced its roots to the big pre-war Gretsch jazz boxes that sported cat's-eye soundholes and solid arched tops of carved spruce, formidable acoustic machines that sought to rival the big-bodied archtops of Gibson and Epiphone.

As amplification proved the way forward, the Country Club evolved into a shallower body made from laminated maple, with sturdier bracing to combat acoustic feedback. The body's impressive width, however, and the guitar's 25.5-inch scale length — the majority of Gretsch electrics, other than the White Falcon, have a 24.6-inch scale — continued to link it to its predecessors. Incidentally, Gretsch made the guitar a full-depth model again in 1964, and the Country Club never moved into the double-cutaway body that most others adopted in the '60s.

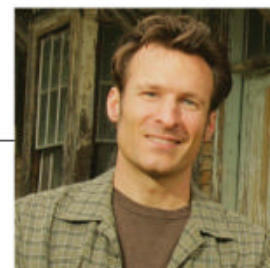
Electronically, the Country Club toes the line for upper-range Gretsch guitars of the era. It evolved out of its DeArmond-made





CLASSIC GEAR

BY DAVE HUNTER



(on the lower cutaway's horn), but no tone controls, which were replaced, coincident to the arrival of the Filter'Trons, by a three-way tone switch on the upper bout, adjacent to the pickup selector switch. The two-way toggle beside the mechanical mute knob on the lower bout is a signal-mute switch, or standby switch, which entirely cut the signal feed to the output jack (another of Gretsch's unique selling propositions from the period), but quite unnecessary when you can just turn the master volume to zero instead.

The Bigsby vibrato tailpiece, optional in the day, and a period-correct addition here, retains smooth action over the Space Control bridge. Originally designed to allow easy user adjustment of string spacing, this bridge also has the benefit of smoothly rolling saddles that help to avoid string-hitch during vibrato use. Up at the other end, across the zero fret that Gretsch guitars of the era carried, a set of Grover Imperial tuners dress up the headstock.

All hardware is gold plated, and the multi-ply binding and purfling around the body, ebony fretboard and headstock help to dress up the model. Given its body size, scale length and electronics, this guitar is entirely comparable in sound and performance to the early '60s White Falcon (the stereo model of which was featured here in the June 2019 issue), with a look that's slightly understated, but still elegant and upmarket. While the White Falcons of the era remain more collectible, players who prefer a little less

flash and glitz will probably be drawn to the Country Club.

Despite its long list of pluses, the Country Club never garnered many famous players, and hence it never quite attained the iconic

status of the 6120 Chet Atkins or White Falcon models. But if you're looking for a sound akin to what Stephen Stills, Neil Young or Billy Duffy achieved on the latter, or a slightly tauter version of Brian Setzer or Reverend Horton Heat's rockabilly on the former, the Country Club delivers, and with an upmarket sophistication all its own. 🎸

Dynasonic single-coil pickups in 1958 and into a pair of Gretsch-made Filter'Trons. Designed by Ray Butts at the behest of Chet Atkins — and developed in the mid '50s at a pace that rivaled Gibson's PAF humbucker, which beat it into production by about one year — the Filter'Tron humbuckers delivered a crisp, bright performance that aimed to retain the existing characteristics of “that great Gretsch sound,” while effectively eliminating much of the 60-cycle hum. While they don't offer the same midrange punch and easy grind as the slightly bigger, more powerful Gibson humbuckers, they do help the Gretsches that have them transition a little more easily from twang and jangle to crunched-up rock and roll.

One element of the design that many players today might rather dispense with is the mechanical string mute. Also found on other high-end Gretsch electrics of the day, it consisted of a bar covered with rubberized foam that could be raised up into contact with the strings between the bridge and bridge pickup by twisting a small knurled knob (the thing on the lower bout that looks like a miniature control knob, with a red felt protector ring beneath it). This “bonus feature” hails from an era when it was apparently deemed worth cutting a couple of holes into the top of a perfectly good guitar to install a clunky device that would save you from having to palm mute the strings yourself, thereby producing that *plinka-plinka* guitar sound (and often slightly out of tune at that).

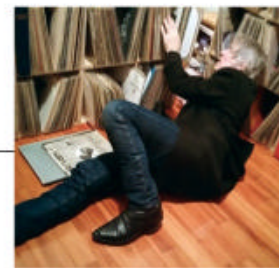
Relatively few players ever used the thing, and many removed it from their guitars either to save weight or to eliminate the rattling sound they sometimes produce, so it's a rarity to find it retained here.

Other features of the 1962 Country Club's hardware and control set include individual pickup volume controls and a master volume

ESSENTIAL INGREDIENTS

- > Fully hollow thinline single-cutaway body made from laminated maple
- > Arched top braced with parallel “tone bars”
- > Glued-in maple neck with bound ebony fretboard
- > “Thumbnail” position markers
- > Two Gretsch Filter'Tron pickups
- > Cadillac Green finish
- > Space Control bridge and mechanical string mute

THE COUNTRY CLUB'S LARGE, 17-INCH-WIDE BODY WAS A CLUE TO ITS EXALTED LINEAGE



‘Smoke’ Machine

Ritchie Blackmore brings the fire on Deep Purple’s 1972 hard-rock masterpiece.

I LOVED RITCHIE Blackmore when I was a young guitarist, and I still do. His solos were uniquely inventive, and he often incorporated harmonic minor scales, along with piercing string bends and a vibrato-bar assault that was all his own and could sound otherworldly and supersonic. Most importantly, his solos were mini compositions that were great musical adventures. As a guitarist, he was a great storyteller with a lot to say, and he does on Deep Purple’s *Machine Head*. Released in 1972 on the Purple label in the U.K. (and on the Warner Bros. label in the U.S.), it’s the group’s sixth studio album and the third to feature the Mark II lineup of Blackmore, Ian Gillan, Roger Glover, Jon Lord and Ian Paice.

Its hit “Smoke on the Water” is, I think, the perfect rock song. It recounts Deep Purple’s attempt to make *Machine Head* in Switzerland at the Montreux Casino and how they were forced to record at the nearly empty Montreux Grand Hotel after a flare ignited a massive fire at the Casino and burned it down. The song’s riff is a fixture in my DNA: The arrangement is stellar, patient and direct, and the chorus and harmony are beautiful. I love Ritchie’s solo, and to my ears, he’s the star of the show in a star-studded galaxy. Employing his version of “woman tone,” he dances over the changes until digging in fervently at the solo’s end. I always listen in wonder at how he ends the solo prematurely, allowing the main riff to be heard clearly. It’s like he’s giving us time to contemplate what we’ve just heard with a post-solo intermission.

But *Machine Head* has many other standout tracks. “Space Truckin’” is a great composition that employs modulations and spirited, eventful playing. As I approach retirement age, I don’t sink my teeth into lyrics like, “We always had a ball on Mars, meeting all the groovy people,” but Ritchie’s solo and

the instrumental composition stand up over time. “Highway Star” is one of the LP’s little masterpieces. Jon Lord’s organ solo invokes a Bach influence, and vocalist Ian Gillan tells the story wonderfully as we strap in for Mr. Blackmore’s iconic solo. Double-tracked and big as a house, it is required listening for any rock guitarist. Ritchie’s grand finale ends this terrific solo with his trademark mauling of the vibrato bar. “Pictures of Home” is another Blackmore showpiece, with a fantastic main solo and another timelessly wonderful one on the outro. It all makes me wonder if he’s underrated by today’s crop of guitarists.

Deep Purple’s riff rock occasionally tries too hard to be clever, but I continue to appreciate *Machine Head* because every note Blackmore plays on it is perfect. When the song needs some assistance, he jumps off the bench and raises the real estate tenfold. Check out his solo on “Maybe I’m a Leo.” The song isn’t a masterpiece, yet Ritchie’s solo is

a must-hear as he nails the changes and finishes his phrases with tremolo-bar earthquakes. It displays earthy, superb craftsmanship.

When I was learning to play and listening to the guitar heroes of the day, nobody played or behaved like Ritchie Blackmore. He was always dressed in black and appeared on the brink of explosive annoyance. I remember reading that, while dining at a four-star restaurant, he



was unsatisfied with the steak and threw it across the room at the chef. That’s when I wanted to read about rock stars. They were unhinged, self-destructive, on the brink of madness. Personally, I’d love to be shocked and challenged by musicians. There’s a lot to be pissed about, and I’d love to see it expressed. Me? I’m not going to do it. I’m concerned with being an adult, trying to improve my skills and hopefully making something beautiful. Likewise, Ritchie Blackmore plays acoustic Renaissance-style music with his wife, Candice Night, in Blackmore’s Night. He’s earned that right, and he’s still great.

But when Ritchie played guitar all those years back, he brought 100 percent of what may have been an abnormal chemical imbalance and played every note like his life depended on it. The Deep Purple-era Blackmore was an incredible artist and never boring. Thank you, Ritchie, for everything. 🎸

Look for Jim Campilongo and Luca Benedetti’s new release, *Two Guitars*, at cityhallrecords.com on CD and vinyl.

THE DEEP PURPLE-ERA BLACKMORE WAS AN INCREDIBLE ARTIST, AND NEVER BORING



PHOTO BY MAY YAM

The Phantom Menace

The 1967 Domino Californian was a Vox Phantom doppelgänger — at a quarter of the price!

AS A KID playing in garage bands in the '60s, I lusted over the smorgasbord of electric guitars that became available in that decade. The more garish their shapes and features, the better. The Vox Phantom, with its odd five-sided body, wasn't popular with a lot of rock stars of the day, but it made a deep impression on me and the guitar world at large. Teisco, Silvertone, Liban, Penncrest, Guyatone and many others created their own copies of it.

The Domino Californian shown here is just such an example, made by Kawai of Japan for the Maurice Lipsky Music Company of New York City, which also sold a copy of the Vox V222 Mark VI Teardrop. The Vox models were an odd choice to replicate, given that few big-name artists other than the Rolling Stones' Brian Jones and Bill Wyman played them at the time. Lipsky's Domino guitars were sold throughout North America for a fraction of what the originals commanded. Today, however, these odd-bodied guitars have become extremely popular, and, not surprisingly, prices on the vintage market have risen to reflect that.

WEIRDO FACTOR

The unusual shape recalls Salvador Dali's melting clocks. That aside, the Californian is actually quite nice, with all of the appointments of the day.

PLAYABILITY & SOUND

This Californian has low action and 22 skinny frets on a rosewood fingerboard, mated to a very narrow maple neck whose dimensions and feel are almost like a cross between a Fender Mustang and a Rickenbacker 325C. Each of the three single-coil pickups has an on/off switch, and there's a tone bypass switch that provides a bit of a boost for lead/rhythm options. The two very groovy "ice cream cone" knobs are for global volume and tone. The tremolo unit works very nicely. It has about a half-step of pitch drop, and comes back in tune pretty darn well. Look closely and you'll notice a chrome rocker lever attached to the bridge that brings up a foam-rubber mute beneath the strings. I suspect the foam on mine has hardened over the past 50-plus years, as it not only performs the equivalent of a heavy palm mute but also raises the pitch about a half step. Eat your heart out, Steinberger TransTrem!

The Californian sounds like most of the Teisco/Kawais of the day: raw and ready for garage rock! Its clean tone varies little from switch to switch, but throw on a bit of overdrive and it shows its attitude with

a snarky midrange attack unique to this type of Japanese pickup.

VALUE

The Domino Californian retailed for just \$75 — four times less than a Vox — in the late 1960s. Today, it commands up to \$1,200, which is close to the neighborhood of what you'd pay for the real deal.

DOMINO THOUGHT THE CALIFORNIAN MONIKER WOULD GIVE IT CRED WITH THE L.A./SAN FRAN CROWD

WHY IT RULES

Apparently, Domino thought the Californian moniker would give the model some cred with the L.A./San Fran crowd, something that this Californian appreciates. Beyond that, this is a

solid, far-out and groovy guitar that plays nice, is quite light (just six pounds) and has a wonderful look and sound.

Thanks to GP reader Jeff Byrd, who sold me this guitar at a very reasonable price. My appreciation as well to Paul Connet for the great setup and for bringing the finish and chrome back to life. 🎸

Got a whack job of your own? Feel free to get in touch with me at rtcarleton@gmail.com. Who knows? Maybe I'll write about it.

Rock of Ages

The progenitors of hard rock gave sound and shape to a divergent and ultimately diverse strain of rock and roll.

Jeff Beck

His inventive guitar techniques and use of effects established the template for hard-rock virtuosity and tone.

DAVID REDFERN/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

LIKE ROCK AND ROLL itself, it's not easy to pinpoint the origin of hard rock, its louder, noisier and more provocative offshoot. Driven by strong rhythms and dominated by loud guitars playing aggressive riffs with distortion, hard rock grew from the stylistic and tonal preferences of electric blues players like Willie Johnson and Pat Hare, and rock and roll guitarists such as Link Wray and Dick Dale. The first blossoming of a hard-rock scene occurred in the late 1950s and early '60s in Texas, Southern California and, especially, the Pacific Northwest, where garage-rock bands — including the prototypical hard-rock act, the Kingsmen — churned out three-chord tunes like “Louie Louie.” In this primitive state of its evolution,

hard rock was a germ looking for a healthy host to help it thrive.

It found several among the bands who arrived in the second wave of the British Invasion. The Kinks, the Who, the Rolling Stones and the Yardbirds were among the main acts who cranked up their amps or plugged into a distortion box to give their guitars a harder edge. Unlike their American garage-rock brethren, they approached it artistically, adopting its primal force to create a more musical — and in the onstage auto-destruction performances of the Who's Pete Townshend — physical manifestation of their generation's countercultural stance. The fact that so many of those groups enjoyed hit records only served to advance hard rock into the mainstream, from which new acts

emerged. By the end of the decade, Led Zeppelin, Jimi Hendrix and Deep Purple were leading the way to hard rock's future, while Black Sabbath represented the first splintering of the genre toward what would become heavy metal and, eventually, simply metal, with its own numerous subgenres.

But hard rock wasn't merely entering a phase of popularity — it was also developing into an art form. Practitioners like Hendrix, Jimmy Page and Jeff Beck used effect pedals to take their guitar tones to new realms, while Townshend wove his angst-ridden tunes into rock operas. In this way, hard rock began to evolve, securing its future and laying new paths from which other strains, like glam rock and prog, would eventually emerge.

HE CAME OUT of nowhere with a sound and style like no other. When Jeff Beck joined the Yardbirds in 1966, he took over from Eric Clapton, soon to be celebrated as no less than God for his fiery guitar playing with John Mayall and the Bluesbreakers. Another guitarist might have gone weak in the knees having to follow in Clapton's footsteps, but Beck was practical. “It occurred to me that it was a lack of dexterity or skill as a guitarist at that time that made me explore the weird sounds that I found I could make with it — feedback, echo and the like,” he told *Guitarist* magazine in 2009. “So I just delved into my brain box to find sounds that didn't sound like a guitar. I used to listen to Alvin Rey, the legendary pedal-steel player, who would create vocal wah sounds with the guitar. Also Les Paul using slap echo and multitrack really caught my ear. It was the hippest stuff I'd heard at the time.”

The effect on Beck was profound, and ultimately proved vital to the creation of hard rock. Infusing his sound with all manner of effects — including fuzz as well as the aforementioned feedback and echo — Beck weaponized his guitar tone, making it louder and more menacing

than anything previously heard on record. As much as his effects heralded the dawn of psychedelic music, they also made the guitar snarl, buzz and scream in ways it hadn't yet in pop music. And it certainly didn't hurt that he had the chops necessary for the job. As his pal Jimmy Page rightly noted, “His guitar style is totally unorthodox to the way that anyone was taught. He's developed



**“HE'S EXPANDED THE
ELECTRIC GUITAR INTO
SOMETHING TOTALLY
UNHEARD OF”**

— JIMMY PAGE

a style of expanding the electric guitar using sounds and techniques and made it into something that was totally unheard of — and that's an amazing feat, believe me.”

Beck's early Yardbirds hits provide ample evidence. His fuzz-tone effect is all over “Heart Full of Soul,” “Shapes of Things” and “Over Under Sideways

Down,” songs on which he delves into Eastern-influenced melodies that would become commonplace in psychedelic music. But that was all a warm-up for late-1966's “Happenings Ten Years Time Ago,” on which Beck shares guitar duties with Page, then the Yardbirds' bassist. Together, they use their guitars to create a cacophony of sounds ranging from sirens to explosions, over which Beck lays down one of the fiercest solos of that or any other time in rock.

After parting ways with the Yardbirds, Beck continued to chase harder-edged sounds for 1968's *Truth*, his solo album debut, using blues-rock as a template. Among that album's highlights is “Beck's Bolero,” an epic track recorded two years earlier with support from Page, future Led Zeppelin bassist John Paul Jones, keyboardist Nicky Hopkins and Who drummer Keith Moon. Jimi Hendrix reportedly called it one of his favorite songs, and Duane Allman said it inspired him to take up slide guitar. But you don't have to listen very hard to hear in that 1966 recording the future sound of hard rock.

TOP TRACK: “BECK'S BOLERO”

Pete Townshend

His combative guitar style, theatrical sensibilities and thirst for volume defined the essence of hard rock. He was also behind the creation of every hard-rock guitarist's favorite piece of kit — the double stack.

NO GUITARIST OF the 1960s brought as much volume, aggression or savagery to rock and roll as the Who's Pete Townshend. Much of that is down to his use of distortion, feedback and power chords, but it was also due to the sheer volume he would achieve onstage. Indeed, Townshend was one of a handful of guitarists — including Ritchie Blackmore and Big Jim Sullivan — who pushed Jim Marshall to make his amps louder. And it was Townshend, along with Who bassist John Entwistle, who blazed the trail for the 4x12 double stack, now and forever a mainstay in hard rock.

But Townshend needed a stage presence to go with that big sound, and he got it by making his every move as big as possible: windmilling his arm to strum chords, springing skyward at key moments in a song and, of course, destroying his equipment at the end of the show. Townshend pushed the limits of rock and roll to make it louder and more visceral than ever.

"A lot of it was posing, trying to drag something out of the band that it was resisting," he said in 1990. "And as I got louder, John [Entwistle] got louder by inventing the 4x12 speaker cabinet, which he did with somebody up at Marshall. Then I got a 4x12 cabinet and



put it on a chair, so then he invented the 8x12 cabinet to get louder than me, and then I invented the stack by getting two 4x12s and stacking them up. [Marshall] were nagging me about the fact that the top cabinet was shifting and was going to fall off and get damaged, and I just said, 'So what?' and knocked it over!

There was a tremendous kind of arrogance."

While other guitarists worked hard to prevent feedback, Townshend embraced it. In a posture dubbed the Birdman, he would stand with his arms

outstretched to either side, his guitar hanging from his neck as the feedback howled to a peak. Though he was not the only guitarist of the time to use feedback, he made the most theatrical

use of it. "I believe it was something people were discovering all over London," he said. "These big amps that Marshall were turning out — you couldn't stop the guitars feeding back!"

Like Beck, Page and Clapton, he turned his guitar solos into emotionally packed moments that lifted the song to even greater heights, even if it meant playing just one note, as he did on the Who's 1967 hit single "I Can See for Miles." Coming at a time when those three guitarists were taking guitar virtuosity to new levels, was Townshend's solo an anti-hero move? "I'm sure it was a kind of defense mechanism," he admitted. It helped him not only survive but also cut his own path, leading the way for future guitarists from Brian May to Pearl Jam's Mike McCready.

TOP TRACK: "I CAN SEE FOR MILES"

**"THESE MARSHALL
AMPS — YOU COULDN'T
STOP THE GUITARS
FEEDING BACK"**

John Lennon

As a member of rock and roll's most popular band, he helped lead the pop masses to harder fare.

SURE, THE FAB Four's diverse musical history has blurred over time into a miasma of nostalgia, highlighted by pop fare like "Hey Jude," "All You Need Is Love" and "Strawberry Fields Forever." But the Beatles could get as heavy as the Who, Cream and the rest of the 1960s acts for whom they paved the way. Consider John Lennon's "Ticket to Ride," a 1965 rocker that featured Ringo Starr's heavy drum rhythms and a circular guitar riff performed by George Harrison on his Rickenbacker 360/12 and Lennon on his Fender Strat, all of it girded on the verses to Lennon's low, droning guitar notes. Later that year,

Paul McCartney plugged his bass into a fuzz box for Harrison's *Rubber Soul* track "Think for Yourself" and turned it into the rattiest-sounding lead guitar.

But all of that was just a warm-up for 1968, when the Beatles would release some of the most aggressive rock tracks of their career. First up was the 45-rpm version of Lennon's "Revolution," a raucous rock-and-roll number featuring some of the dirtiest fuzz-guitar tone heard up to that time. Beatles engineer Geoff Emerick later revealed the sound was created by plugging Lennon's and Harrison's guitars straight into a pair of mic preamps connected in series and



overloading them to just below the point of overheating the mixing console. The release of the band's *White Album* that November revealed even more hard-rock gems in the form of Lennon's chaotic "Everybody's Got Something to Hide (Except Me and My Monkey)" and McCartney's "Birthday" and "Helter Skelter." Among the four Beatles, Lennon in particular would continue to explore rock's more aggressive side in his early solo years and with the Plastic Ono Band on tracks like "Cold Turkey" and "I Found Out."

TOP TRACK: "REVOLUTION"

Jimmy Page

He single-handedly established the original template for hard-rock guitar tone, production and showmanship.

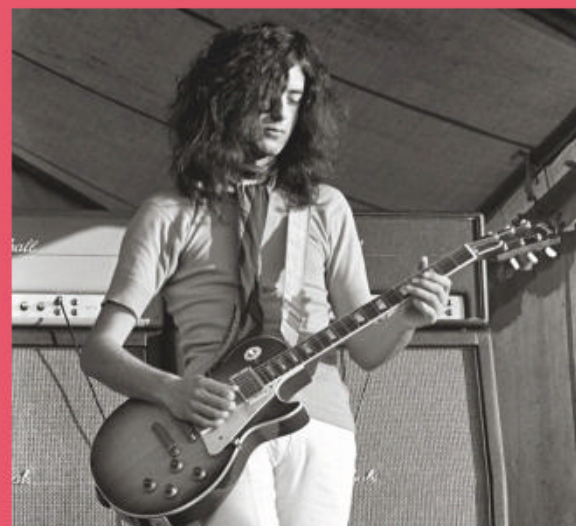
ALONG WITH HENDRIX and Beck, Jimmy Page is part of the triumvirate of guitarists who did the most to forge the sound of hard rock in its formative years. Like Beck and Hendrix, he brought a new level of aggression and virtuosity to guitar playing within the rock idiom, as well as a talent for crafting infectious riffs and sculpting tones unlike anything heard before.

After several years of anonymous studio work in the early to mid 1960s, Page came into his own with the Yardbirds, where he briefly shared lead "stereo" guitar duties with Beck in 1966. Their dueling guitars can be heard on "Happenings Ten Years Time Ago," a hard-rock milestone that also served as a proto-heavy metal track. When Beck left later that year, Page assumed a more prominent role, shifting the band's focus from singles to albums, and introducing longer tracks like "Dazed and Confused," on which he soloed and improvised

during an extended middle section. Taking a violin bow to his guitar for the 1967 track "Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Sailor" might have been seen as gimmicky, but Page was thrilled with the variety of sounds he could produce, and it made a great bit of showmanship onstage.

But it was of course in late 1968, with Led Zeppelin, that Page's talents came to fruition. As the band's guitarist, producer and main songwriter, he pushed their music to new extremes by experimenting with effects like the Maestro Echoplex and Sola Sound Tone Bender, and using distant mic placement to give more depth to his guitar. His remarkable gift for riffage resulted in a slew of Zeppelin classics, from "Whole Lotta Love" to "Kashmir," and established the template for hard-rock anthems.

The fact that it worked at all was down to his impeccable ear for tone and



choice of gear. To that end, Page wielded a '59 Fender Telecaster gifted to him by Beck, a '59 Les Paul Standard and a '61 Danelectro 3021, among many other electric guitars, and famously used a heavily modified Supro Conquistador amp on Led Zeppelin's groundbreaking debut album. From studio production to gear choice to songwriting and stage work, Page revealed the world of hard rock as a place ripe for experimentation, moving it beyond its blues-based origins to embrace folk, Eastern and even orchestral music.

TOP TRACK: "WHOLE LOTTA LOVE"

Jimi Hendrix

From his gear to his sound to his style, he reshaped rock and roll and demonstrated the full scope of what could be expressed with an electric guitar.

JIMI HENDRIX SO completely changed the music landscape in the late '60s that it's difficult to conceive how any guitarist of the last half century couldn't have been affected by him or his music. Without Hendrix, how would guitars with locking tremos have been developed? What about high-gain amplifiers and effects pedals?

Hendrix had Marshall amps, the Fuzz Face, the Cry Baby wah and the Octavia that Roger Mayer invented. He played a right-handed Strat that he flipped over so he could play it left-handed. For his short-lived career, it was all he needed to create game-changing music. He took the blues styles that he was well acquainted with to a whole new level via his use of distortion, feedback and sheer volume to create sounds that dovetailed with everything that the psychedelic '60s represented. Whether it was drugs, a generation of kids facing a war in a distant part of the world, social upheaval or whatever else, it didn't matter much when you were 14 and first heard "Foxey Lady" or "Purple Haze" detonating the airwaves. You just knew that this was really something else, and that things had changed big-time.

As Joe Satriani put it, "The first thing that really flipped me out was hearing 'The Wind Cries Mary' on the radio. Before that, I was a drummer, and I started from watching the Rolling Stones and the Beatles on *The Ed Sullivan Show*. But as soon as I heard Hendrix, that was it."



**YOU JUST KNEW THIS
WAS SOMETHING ELSE,
AND THAT THINGS HAD
CHANGED BIG-TIME**

Jimi Hendrix onstage with the Experience at the Royal Albert Hall, London, February 18, 1969

One of the most fascinating things about Hendrix is how he evolved from a blues and R&B player to become the world's most celebrated rock guitarist in such a relatively short amount of time. After a stint in the army (he was discharged in 1962), Hendrix worked with R&B artists, including the Isley Brothers and Little Richard. Frustrated with the R&B scene, he established himself in Manhattan's Greenwich Village and started his own outfit called Jimmy James & the Blue Flames.

Hendrix seems to have used the Blue Flames during their three-month tenure at the music hot spot Cafe Wha? to work out early versions of "The Wind Cries Mary," "Third Stone From the Sun," and his renditions of "Hey Joe" and "Red House." His sound was evolving as well. As blues guitarist Michael Bloomfield described it, "I can't tell you the sounds he was getting out of his instrument. He was getting every sound I was ever to hear him get, right there in that room with a Stratocaster, a Fender Twin and a Maestro Fuzz-Tone. He was doing it mainly through extreme volume."

With his songs and sound together, Hendrix exited the Blue Flames, and on September 24, 1966, he headed for London to work with producer Chas Chandler — former bassist for British rock band the Animals — and ex-Animals manager Michael Jeffery. Hendrix then enlisted bassist Noel Redding and drummer Mitch Mitchell and changed his name to Jimi. From then on, it was the Jimi Hendrix Experience, and between 1967 and '68, they would record three studio albums: *Are You Experienced*, *Axis: Bold as Love* and *Electric Ladyland*.

Jimi then switched gears, and with Billy Cox on bass and Buddy Miles on drums, the *Band of Gypsies* live album was recorded on January 1, 1970, at the Fillmore East in New York City. It was released March 1970, and plans were in place for the next album when Jimi died on September 18, 1970. We'll never know what might have been, but Hendrix made a mark on hard-rock guitar playing that echoes to this day.

TOP TRACK: "MACHINE GUN"



Wayne Kramer (left) and Fred "Sonic" Smith onstage with the MC5 in 1969

Wayne Kramer & Fred "Sonic" Smith

Combining defiant, high-volume rock with jazz and a take-no-prisoners stage show, they heralded a new level of intensity and showmanship.

IN A MUSIC scene teeming with talent — including Ted Nugent, Bob Seger and Mitch Ryder & the Detroit Wheels — the MC5 burst to the forefront of Detroit rock and roll in the late 1960s with a countercultural stance against institutionalized racism and twin guitars blazing through 100-watt Vox Super Beatles. Guitarists Wayne Kramer and Fred "Sonic" Smith forged a dual-guitar blast that combined bare-bones rock and roll with the avant-garde eclecticism of free

jazz. That fusion was loud and clear on *Kick Out the Jams*, the MC5's live debut, rallying a wave of hardcore rock fans behind the emerging hard-rock scene at a time when rock and roll was splintering into offshoots like heavy metal, acid rock and progressive rock. In that respect, the MC5 were among the bands most responsible for defining hard rock's extreme sound, rebellious attitude and adventurous spirit.

That it happened at all was down to Kramer and Smith, teen guitar-playing

friends who cut their teeth on the early rock and roll of the Ventures, Dick Dale and Chuck Berry. Each had his own group, but in 1964, as their bandmates began exiting for college, they joined forces with singer Rob Tyner, bassist Michael Davis and drummer Dennis Thompson and dubbed themselves the Motor City Five. With the purchase of those Super Beatles, the MC5 quickly became one of the city's hottest acts. "They made us the loudest band in Detroit, a title we wore with great pride," Kramer said. "And we discovered we could push the sound beyond what had previously been accomplished with electric instruments."

Kramer and Smith played a number of guitars over the group's early years, the most iconic of which were Kramer's American flag-finished Fender Stratocaster (hot-rodded with a Gibson humbucker in the middle position) and Smith's white Mosrite USA 65-SB. The MC5's initial run was brief — they disbanded in 1972, and Smith died in 1994 — but their intense guitar-driven music paved the way for punk and grunge. "This is not music for the faint of heart," said Kramer, who continues to perform and compose for soundtracks. "This stuff rocks hard."

TOP TRACK: "LOOKING AT YOU"

Keith Richards



HE TURNED ELECTRIC guitarists on to fuzz by plugging his Gibson Firebird VII into a Maestro FZ-1 Fuzz-Tone for the Rolling Stones'

1965 hit "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction," adding a level of intensity that ultimately helped transform blues rock into hard rock. Need more? Check out Keef's raging fuzz-and-feedback-drenched playing on "Citadel," from *Their Satanic Majesties Request*, or his hard-as-nails acoustic work on "Street Fighting Man."

TOP TRACK: "(I CAN'T GET NO) SATISFACTION"

Dave Davies



HIS USE OF power chords on early Kinks songs like 1964's "You Really Got Me" and "All Day and All of the Night" turned rudimentary chording

into ear-catching lead work. Davies also created early hard rock's definitive guitar sound by slashing the speaker of his small Elpico amp with a razor blade to produce blistering distortion, while using the combo itself as a preamp into his Vox AC30. Small wonder a gear-modification innovator like Eddie Van Halen was a Kinks fan.

TOP TRACK: "YOU REALLY GOT ME"

Eric Clapton



BETWEEN HIS BRIEF stint with John Mayall's Bluesbreakers and his mid-'70s solo career, Clapton took a break from traditional blues,

formed Cream and forged the kinds of heavy guitar tones and incendiary lead playing that defined hard rock's bluesier side. But his work during this time, cut largely with his 1964 Gibson SG repainted by Dutch art collective The Fool, drew equally from jazz, imbuing hard rock with a sophisticated modal interplay seldom heard before in rock.

TOP TRACK: "CROSSROADS"





**HARD ROCK
HEROES** RITCHIE
BLACKMORE

STONE COLD CRAZY

With *In Rock*, Deep Purple Mark II carved their place in hard-rock history. And it's largely thanks to the maniacal mind and guitar mastery of Ritchie Blackmore.

BY RICHARD BIENSTOCK

Ritchie Blackmore onstage with
Deep Purple, February 1973

IAN DICKSON/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

DEEP PURPLE IN ROCK is many things, but subtle is not one of them. Within literally seconds of listening to it, you're blasted by Ian Paice's frantic, slippery drums, Jon Lord's braying organ and, of course, Ritchie Blackmore's indelible guitar riffing and loopy tremolo flourishes. Along the way, singer Ian Gillan references and rearranges rock's DNA ("‘Good golly!’ said little Miss Molly / When she was rocking in the house of blue light!"), punctuating his Little Richard and Elvis Presley-inspired lyrics with ridiculously piercing and forceful shrieks and wails. For that matter, the frenzied rhythm, developed by bassist Roger Glover, emulates Jimi Hendrix's "Fire." From there, we're through two verses and choruses and on to bearing witness to a classic Lord-Blackmore organ-guitar battle. And we're only a minute into the record.

The song we're listening to is called "Speed King," and it's a wild and breathless launch to *In Rock*. It's also completely in line with what ensues over the next 40 minutes or so. From the snaky, metallized grind of "Bloodsucker" to the breakneck gallop of "Flight of the Rat," the monolithic guitar-organ groove of "Into the Fire" and the thundering "Hard Lovin' Man," the album is a relentless sonic juggernaut, its massive and over-the-top sound reflected in both the album title and the Mount Rushmore-aping cover art. In fact, the only moment where Purple drive the music with anything less than the pedal fully floored is the 10-minute epic "Child in Time." And given the fact that Gillan refuses to sing this one onstage anymore due to the practically inhuman vocal demands (there's also an explosive, elongated Blackmore solo that many consider one of his best), this might be the most intense track of all.

"If it's not dramatic or exciting, it has no place on this album," Blackmore once said of *In Rock*, and we'd be loath to disagree. There's nary a moment on the

record that isn't a full-on white-knuckled experience. But we'd also add the word *heavy* to the first part of Blackmore's statement. Because even today, 50 years after its original release, *In Rock* is a testament to just how intense (and, per Ritchie, dramatic and exciting) guitar-based rock and roll can be. A half-century ago? It sounded positively revolutionary.

The album arrived at a turning point in popular music culture. The '60s were, chronologically and spiritually, over. Woodstock had given way to Altamont, the Beatles were on the brink of breakup, and free love and the hippie dream had morphed into something darker and less idealized. There were heavy bands, but many of them — Cream, Jimi Hendrix, Vanilla Fudge, Blue Cheer — were either dissolved or on their last legs.

Into this moment stepped three British acts — Led Zeppelin, Black Sabbath and Deep Purple — that would push hard rock to new extremes and influence the generations of bands that were to follow. By 1970, Zeppelin had established themselves as the preeminent hard-rock outfit, with two blockbuster albums under its belt and a third brewing that would delve more deeply into folk and acoustic roots. Black Sabbath, meanwhile, were crafting a doomy and downtuned sound that, paired with Ozzy Osbourne's desperate wail and an overall exaggerated evil atmosphere, established the template for heavy metal going forward.

And then there was Purple. By 1970, they were already, by the relatively brief lifespan of rock bands at the time, something of a veteran act. They had

they were bigger than in their native U.K.) with covers of Neil Diamond's "Kentucky Woman," Ike & Tina Turner's "River Deep — Mountain High" and, most notably, Joe South's "Hush," which climbed to Number Four in the U.S. in the summer of '68.

Of course, while that band was very much Deep Purple, it was not the decibel-defying, instrument-destroying, amp-exploding act that laid waste to arena and festival stages throughout the early and mid '70s. Nor was the Ritchie Blackmore of this Deep Purple the

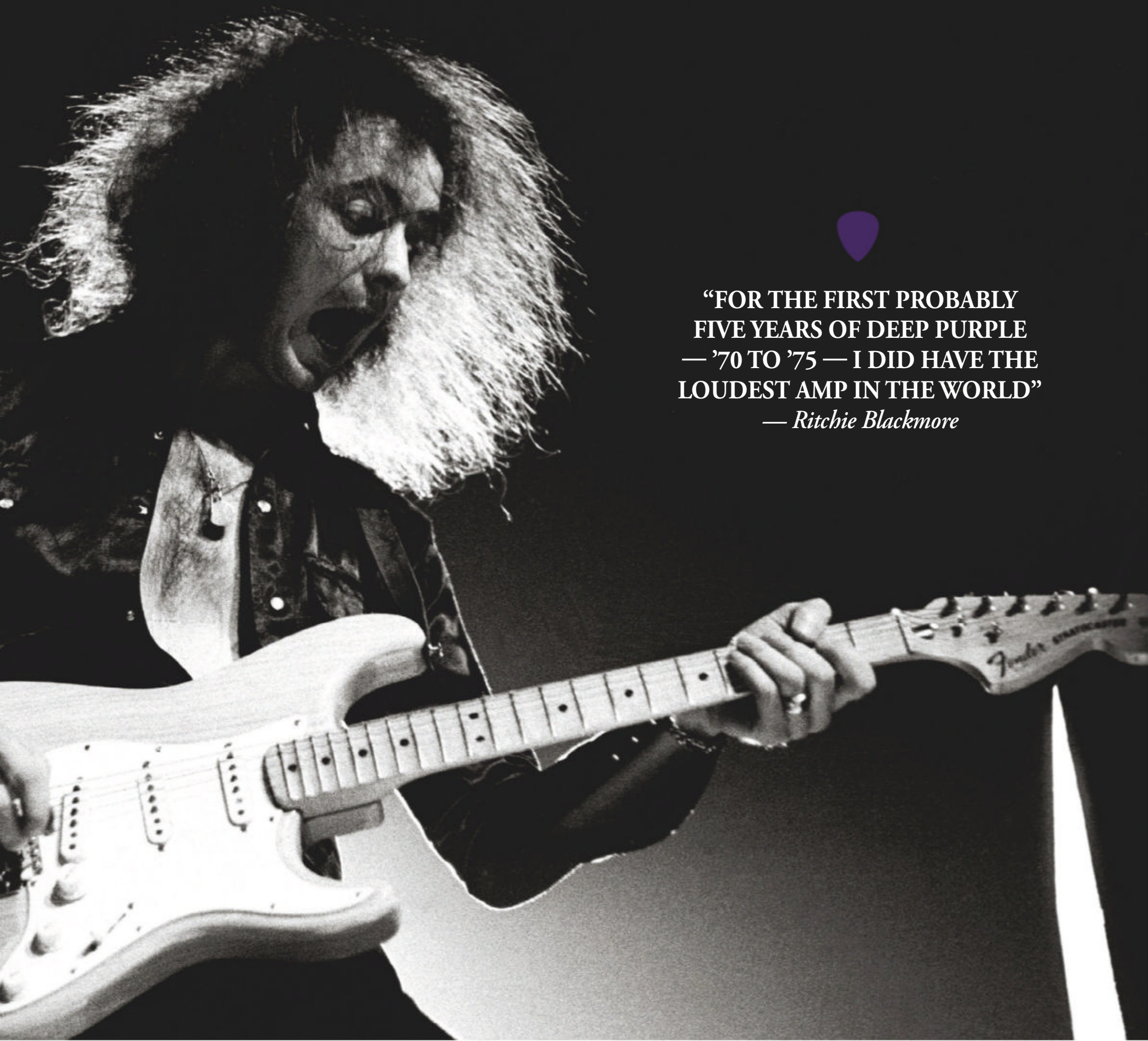
"I USED TO HAVE QUARTER-INCH [VIBRATO] BARS MADE FOR ME BECAUSE I'D KEEP SNAPPING THE NORMAL KIND"

— *Ritchie Blackmore*

released three albums — 1968's *Shades of Deep Purple* and *The Book of Taliesyn* and the following year's *Deep Purple* — and scored hits (at least in the U.S., where

IAN DICKSON/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES





**“FOR THE FIRST PROBABLY
FIVE YEARS OF DEEP PURPLE
— ’70 TO ’75 — I DID HAVE THE
LOUDEST AMP IN THE WORLD”**

— Ritchie Blackmore

wild-eyed-but-cool-as-ice Fender Stratocaster—wielding, neoclassical-guitar-pioneering, whammy-bar-abusing six-string hero he would come to be praised as. That all began, unequivocally, with *In Rock*.

Back in 1968, however, Deep Purple were a fledgling act led by Blackmore and Lord, the latter a classically trained pianist who had already logged years of recording, performing and session work (he claimed to have played organ on the Kinks’ 1964 hit single “You Really Got Me”). Blackmore, for his part, had spent time with a variety of acts, including the Outlaws, Neil Christian and the outrageous “horror-rocker” Screaming

Lord Sutch. He also worked as a session guitarist around London and had, in his younger days, taken lessons from British session ace Big Jim Sullivan, who lived near Blackmore and was at one point in the mid ’60s considered the top session man on the circuit alongside the likes of Jimmy Page. “He was teaching me classical — Bach, and things like that — and he was teaching me to read better than I was,” Blackmore said of Sullivan.

Like Page and many other British guitarists of the time, Blackmore cut his teeth on a wide variety of sounds and musical styles. He once called 1950s British teen idol and skiffle player Tommy Steele his “first hero.” Seeing

Steele on a TV show titled *Six Five Special*, Blackmore recalled saying to himself, “That’s what I want to do: I want to jump around with a guitar like Tommy Steele does. I don’t want to play it, necessarily. I just want to jump around with it, like he did.”

From there, Blackmore dove deep into guitar, immersing himself both in classical forms as well as in the playing of Hank Marvin, Les Paul, Django Reinhardt, Wes Montgomery, Scotty Moore and Cliff Gallup. His style, he said, “developed through sheer practice. When I was attending school, I was constantly practicing mentally. Then I would rush home and practice until the

early hours. I would practice about five hours a day. I was obsessed with playing.”

By 1967 Blackmore, with his ever-present Gibson ES-335, had made a name for himself around London both as a performer (Screaming Lord Sutch, he said, “pulled me out front and demanded I jump around and act stupid”) and session man (“It was funny sometimes to hear yourself on perhaps eight out of 10 records being played on the radio”). He was doing an extended stint gigging in Hamburg when he received a call to come back to England to audition for a burgeoning project conceived by British drummer Chris Curtis named Roundabout, which also included Jon Lord among its ranks. Curtis soon exited the project, and the band was rebuilt around Blackmore and Lord, who had found common ground upon meeting. “Jon and I both had classical leanings,” Blackmore said. “He more so than I, so we had something in common immediately.” Eventually they added bassist Nick Simper and, after some musical chairs, singer Rod Evans and drummer Ian Paice, who had played together in a band called the Maze.

It is this lineup that began gigging as Roundabout, and, soon enough, as Deep Purple, after Blackmore suggested they rename the band after his grandmother’s favorite song, a 1930s-era standard that had been covered by various big-band and pop artists over the decades. But there was also another consideration: “There were lots of ‘color’ bands around — Moody Blues, Pink Floyd, et cetera,” Blackmore explained. “Colors were in!”

By the summer of ’68, the new band had released its debut, *Shades of Deep Purple*, on EMI in the U.K. and Tetragrammaton Records (a brand-new label co-founded by comedian Bill Cosby) in the U.S., and notched a quick hit in the latter region with their organ-forward version of “Hush.” Over the course of *Shades* and their next two records, Purple veered between pop, blues, rock, psychedelia, ballads and baroque elements, without quite managing to carve out a distinct sound. Blackmore has acknowledged as much.

“I’m not particularly proud of the first three records,” he admitted. “They seem to be meandering all over the place. We didn’t really have a niche and we didn’t quite know where we were going.”

Unsured of their musical footing, facing declining sales after “Hush” and dealing with the demise of Tetragrammaton, which went broke and folded soon after the release of *Deep Purple*, the group knew a change was in order. Inspired in part by Zeppelin, Blackmore and Lord opted to take Purple in a heavier, more hard-rocking direction, and got Paice onboard with the idea. Their singer and bassist were less agreeable. “We thought that Rod and Nick had gone about as far as they

could,” Paice said. “We decided that if it was going to be a break, it was going to be a substantial one to refocus the band to look forward, to break this feeling of stagnation.”

Which is exactly what they did with the addition of leather-lunged vocalist Ian Gillan and bassist Roger Glover, both of whom hailed from British band Episode Six. Like Purple, Episode Six had struggled to break through to a wider audience. And like their soon-to-be bandmates, Gillan and Glover had grown tired of waiting for it to happen.

Thus, the classic Purple lineup, henceforth known as Deep Purple Mark II, was born. And while the intention all along had been to go in a heavier

FIN COSTELLO/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES





Deep Purple on *Top of the Pops* in 1971. (from left) Jon Lord, Ian Gillan, Blackmore, Ian Paice and Roger Glover

direction, ironically, the first fruits of their labors — the rather tame 1969 single “Hallelujah,” followed by the Jon Lord–spearheaded live classical album *Concerto for Group and Orchestra* — were quite the opposite. Blackmore, for one, was not amused. In the wake of *Concerto*, “The split between the musical side of Jon and the harder side of Ritchie came to a head,” Paice said.

“*Concerto for Group and Orchestra* was Jon Lord’s baby,” Glover observed. “People were confused about what kind of band we were. Subsequently, Blackmore firmly stepped up and changed the band’s identity into a jamming, hard-rocking force.”

The result of that step-up was *In Rock*. “That record was sort of a response to the one we did with the orchestra,” Blackmore said.

“I wanted to do a loud, hard-rock record. And I was thinking, This record better make it, because I was afraid that if it didn’t we were going to be stuck playing with orchestras for the rest of our lives.”

With *In Rock*, Blackmore recalled, “Ian Gillan and Roger Glover had come in, so that gave us new blood. I found my niche being much heavier music and playing with more sustain on the amplifier — that sort of thing. We consciously sat down and said, ‘Let’s have a go at being really heavy.’”

But before the heavy new Purple hit the studio, they hit the road. Much of the material that would feature on *In Rock* was worked up

onstage by the nascent lineup. A bootleg from an August 1969 gig at Amsterdam’s Paradiso — only the band’s seventh gig with Gillan and Glover — shows early versions of “Speed King” (then titled “Kneel and Pray”) and “Child in Time” were already in the set. A review of the gig described the chaos of those formative days, noting that, during the former song, “the whole stage seems to be in a state of general mayhem.”

But the stage was also paramount to the development and eventual sound of *In Rock*. Said Gillan, “If you’re going to write about *In Rock*, you’ve got to combine the making of the album with the live performances. They were so much more important than the actual

“IT DID REQUIRE THE REST OF US, BUT I’LL GIVE RITCHIE HIS DUE. HE WAS THE MOTIVATING CHARACTER IN THE BAND”

— *Roger Glover*

making of the record. Making records is almost an inconvenience, because you have to compromise in the studio.”

And while the combination of new members sparked a surge in writing — Gillan once remarked that he didn’t even know how “Speed King” happened — Glover also singled out Blackmore for being particularly inspired at the time. “Ritchie wasn’t just the guitar player,” the bassist said. “He was a brilliant innovator. Things he wrote defy description. He was a magnetic, dynamic writer. I don’t think he could have done it in a vacuum by himself; it did require

the rest of us. But I’ll certainly give him his due. He was the motivating character in the band.”

While *In Rock* serves as a showcase for every member of Deep Purple, it is without a doubt Blackmore who makes the biggest impression. While his riffing and rhythm playing is rock solid and infused with plenty of attitude and aggression (“Bloodsucker” practically verges on heavy metal), it is in his lead work that the guitarist truly shines, mixing classical-tinged technique (the explosive triplet pattern that caps the dramatic “Child in Time” solo), deft, intricate runs (“Flight of the Rat”), insane whammy-bar warbles and plunges (“Bloodsucker”) and barely controlled noise (“Hard Lovin’ Man”) into

an approach that manages to sound both studiously technical and completely unhinged.

Blackmore was clearly, as intended, taking his playing in a harder-edged direction. But there was more to his stylistic shift on *In Rock* than merely changing up his approach. Just

as significantly, he also overhauled his gear. Around this time, the guitarist traded his stalwart ES-335 for a new number-one guitar, a Fender Stratocaster. “I liked the way Hendrix’s Strat looked,” he explained. “A Strat has got that rock kind of look. So the visual thing attracted me first, even though it was an upside-down Strat in Hendrix’s case. I thought, I must try one of those someday.”

As for where he got his first Strat? “I knew Eric Clapton’s roadie. He was a friend of ours. And I think Eric had given him one of his Strats as a present. Probably because Eric didn’t want it.



Blackmore in 1969

I think it had a slightly bowed neck, which was making the action pretty high. [The roadie] said, 'I'll sell it to you for £60.' So Eric Clapton's throwaway Strat came in handy for me."

Blackmore used both the Fender and the Gibson on *In Rock* — "Child in Time" and "Flight of the Rat," at least, are Blackmore on the ES-335. But it is the Strat, and in particular the guitar's tremolo, that would come to dominate his sound. "I changed to a Stratocaster because the sound had an edge to it that I really liked. But it was much harder to get used to," he said, noting, "when you're playing a humbucking pickup, you've got that fat sound, and it's quite forgiving. But when you play with Fender pickups, they are so thin and mean and edgy and hard. And every note counts; you can't fake a note."

While the Strat didn't allow Blackmore room to "fake a note," it did make it possible for him to bend, bow, wobble and whammy the heck out of them. Which, of course, Blackmore did, making extreme trem abuse a cornerstone of his playing beginning on *In Rock*, and then throughout the rest of his '70s work with Purple. To be sure, Blackmore was hardly polite in his approach to the whammy bar. Rather, he said, "I went crazy with it. I used to have quarter-inch [vibrato] bars made for me because I'd keep snapping the normal kind. My repairman would look at me strangely and say, 'What are you doing to these tremolo bars?' Finally, he gave me this gigantic tremolo arm made of half an inch of solid iron and said, 'Here. If you break this thing, I don't wanna know about it!'"

"About three weeks later," Blackmore continued, "I went back. He looked at me and said, 'No — you haven't.' And I said, 'Yes I have.' In graphic detail, I explained to him how I would twirl the guitar around the bar, throw it to the floor, put my foot on it and pull the bar off with two hands. He was a bit of a purist, so he wasn't amused."

FIN COSTELLO/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES



Blackmore's whammy bar makes itself known less than 20 seconds into *In Rock*, with a loopy dip signaling the first chorus (and every subsequent one) of "Speed King." But he really leans into the bar on tracks like "Bloodsucker" and, in particular, the tour de force finale, "Hard Lovin' Man," which closes with roughly a minute and a half of pure six-string guitar mayhem, with Blackmore unleashing shredding licks as he pummels his tremolo, violently scrapes his strings and conjures all manner of screaming feedback. His bandmates, seemingly unable to keep up, eventually drop out of the mix, then return and drop out again, leaving Blackmore to finish the song — and the

guitar up and down the doorway of the control room to get all that wild guitar noise. So this bloke looks at me, and he's got this expression on his face as if I'd lost my mind."

Of course, Blackmore could also be subtle and nimble when the part called for it. Take the long break in "Child in Time," which sees him building something of a composition within a composition, his solo beginning with round-toned, bluesy phrases accented with moaning note bends, before gradually picking up speed, taking on a biting, snarling sound and exploding in a flurry of classical arpeggios. It's one of his most celebrated and complex solos, and what's more, Blackmore said years

later, he would sometimes play it much faster onstage. The only problem, he admitted, "was coming into that part at the end of the guitar solo that the band would do in unison. You can only play that so fast — unless you start tapping, which I don't do, out of principle. It's

just an A minor arpeggio, but it's all downstrokes. You try and play that really fast after you've had 10 scotches!"

Then there's "Living Wreck," where he constructs his solo almost entirely of long, vibratoed notes played in phrases that slowly make their way up the fretboard to reach a climactic end. The result is a passage that sounds almost violin-like in tone and texture, and contrasts with the distorted organ bleats that otherwise characterize the song.

**"HEARING IN ROCK WAS LIKE TAKING A BRICK
AND JUST SHOVING IT RIGHT IN YOUR HEAD.
IT'S TIMELESS. IT'S RIDICULOUS!"**

— *Yngwie Malmsteen*

record — on his own, going out in a hail of guitar screeches and moans and white noise. It is a literally show-stopping end to the record, and stands as arguably one of the most beautifully unhinged recorded guitar moments of the era.

"One of the engineers who originally worked on that album was this stuffy bloke who didn't like rock and roll music," Blackmore recalled. "While I was recording the solo on that song, I got this urge and started rubbing the



That push and pull between Lord's organ and Blackmore's guitar, it's worth noting, would become a key component of Purple's sound. And once again, it all began on *In Rock*. As Roger Glover once explained, "Jon played the blues when he was young, and that gave him a solid foundation, because when he played hard in Deep Purple, he was able to match Blackmore's massive guitar sound and transform the organ from a polite instrument and stand toe-to-toe with a guitarist as overpowering as Blackmore."

One way Lord did that, Glover continued, was by "abusing his instrument and sticking it through a Marshall instead of a Leslie to make it scream." Which was useful, as Blackmore tended to play loud. "I've always played every amp I've ever had full up, because rock and roll is supposed to be played loud," he told *Guitar Player* in 1973. "Also, keeping the amp up is how you get your sustain. I turn down on the guitar for dynamics."

Blackmore has always been a bit cagey when it comes to discussing his exact amp setup back in the day, though it is common knowledge that in the early '70s he was fond of both Vox and Marshall units. Eventually, he moved on to Marshall Majors, which he had modded with an extra output stage to give the amp "a fatter sound, a bit more distorted," he said. "This extra output stage basically made the 200-watt into a 280-watt. So for the first probably five years of Deep Purple — '70 to '75 — I did have the loudest amp in the world."

No matter what amp he was using, however, a mainstay of Blackmore's rig in those days was the Hornby-Skewes treble booster. "That is the sound I always used, coupled with the Vox or the Marshall," he said. "For a while, Jon Lord used the Hornby-Skewes and Marshall for his organ as well. We were looking for a distorted organ sound and I said, 'Why don't we plug your organ through my Hornby-Skewes and into my amp and see how an organ sounds like that?' So we did it, and of course he loved the sound."

And what's not to love, really? The massive sound that Deep Purple forged on *In Rock*, and then carried through on subsequent early '70s masterpieces like *Fireball* and *Machine Head*, would inspire and spawn literally generations of hard-rock and heavy-metal bands. One future guitar hero who found it impossible to look away from Blackmore was virtuoso neoclassical shredder Yngwie Malmsteen, who is clearly indebted to the Purple man in terms of sound, style and even choice of instrument. In a call with *Guitar Player*, he was eager to testify to the greatness of Blackmore and the band on *In Rock*. As a child growing up in Sweden, Malmsteen said, "Hearing *In Rock* was like taking a brick and just shoving it right in your head. It's heavy, it's fast, it's technical, it's sick. It's a really, really aggressive sound. 'Flight of the Rat,' 'Child in Time,' 'Into the Fire'... It's timeless. It's ridiculous."

Following *In Rock*, Deep Purple, of course, went on to experience greater

highs (there's that little *Machine Head* ditty "Smoke on the Water" for one), and also incredible lows. To the latter point, there is the rift that has lasted for decades between Blackmore — who now focuses primarily on acoustic Renaissance music, as well as occasionally playing with his reunited post-Purple act, Rainbow — and his former bandmates. In fact, when Purple were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, Blackmore, depending on who is telling the story, either declined or was prevented from standing alongside them to accept the honor. As Glover said in a 2018 interview, "He can be difficult to work with, but he is even more difficult to live with. Blackmore is a very unique character, and in the early days we had fantastic times and wrote great songs."

Indeed they did, and many of Purple's greatest are collected on *In Rock*, which, 50 years on, is still as alluring, mesmerizing and flat-out overwhelming as ever. It's the album, as Blackmore has said, where "everything clicked" for Deep Purple.

Or, as Malmsteen says, "It's the one where they go full out the most. Everybody talks about Led Zeppelin and Black Sabbath, and I love those bands, too. But *In Rock* is heavier and more metal than any of the other guys. It was just, 'Turn everything up and play as fast and as loud and as much as you can!'" He laughs. "I was eight years old when I heard it, and it messed with my head forever. Because I still do that!" ■

The classic era

As the hard-rock genre diversified and graduated from halls to arenas, these are the guitarists who defined the sounds and styles of the decade.

THE DAWN OF the '70s saw hard rock emerge as the predominant form of rock, a loud and brash style that excelled in arenas and stadiums, to which touring acts had graduated. Next to Led Zeppelin, two of the biggest groups of the time were Deep Purple and Grand Funk Railroad. After exploring pop and prog in the late '60s, Deep Purple found their groove with their Mark II lineup in 1970, releasing *In Rock*, the album that broke them into the mainstream. Meanwhile, Grand Funk Railroad became massively successful with their updated

power-trio format. Despite critical denunciations and little radio airplay, the band sold millions of albums and in 1971 sold out Shea Stadium in just 72 hours, something that had taken the Beatles several weeks to do in 1965.

Hard rock remained robust throughout the decade, branching off into glam rock with groups like Queen and the New York Dolls and growing proggy in the hands of acts such as Journey and Styx. Others, including Boston, Foreigner and REO Speedwagon, forged a slick and radio-friendly style of songcraft with anthemic choruses and dramatic arrangements that played well

in large arenas, earning it the "corporate rock" tag.

As the decade grew to a close, two new guitar heroes emerged: Eddie Van Halen and Angus Young. As the guitarist for Australia's AC/DC, Young was in many ways a throwback to an earlier era, with his Gibson SG, use of bluesy pentatonic licks and appropriation of Chuck Berry's duck walk. Van Halen was in every way his opposite, a blazingly fast and innovative shredder unlike any other, who played guitars he'd heavily modified to meet his playing demands. Both would give hard rock the kick it needed to remain vital into the 1980s.

Paul Kossoff



WITH THE **BRITISH** blues-rock band Free, as well as his later solo project, Back Street Crawler, Paul Kossoff proved himself to be a dynamic and expressive

guitarist with a blazing style that called on two of his biggest influences — Eric Clapton and Jimi Hendrix. His tough, sinewy phrasing with a Les Paul or a Strat through Marshall 100-watt amps is captured on the two-CD set from 2006, *Free: Live at the BBC*. He died tragically in 1976 on a flight from L.A. to New York.

TOP TRACK: "SONGS OF YESTERDAY"

Buck Dharma



BLENDING **RHYTHM AND** melody into a distinctive lead style, Dharma (born Donald Roeser) applied his memorable licks and riffs to Blue Öyster

Cult's songs, many of which he penned, including the hits "Burnin' for You," "Godzilla" and "Don't Fear the Reaper." Despite being lead guitarist for one of the era's most successful hard-rock acts, his playing never got the widespread acclaim it deserved, probably because he played no more than the songs required.

TOP TRACK: "BURNIN' FOR YOU"

Ronnie Montrose



HE BEGAN AS a journeyman guitarist, playing with Van Morrison, Herbie Hancock and Edgar Winter, among others. But it was with his own group,

Montrose, fronted by an unknown Sammy Hagar, that he established his legend as the precursor to the virtuoso likes of Eddie Van Halen. To many fans, Montrose was America's answer to Led Zeppelin, Deep Purple and Black Sabbath, and Ronnie had the chops to go up against any of their guitarists.

TOP TRACK: "ROCK CANDY"

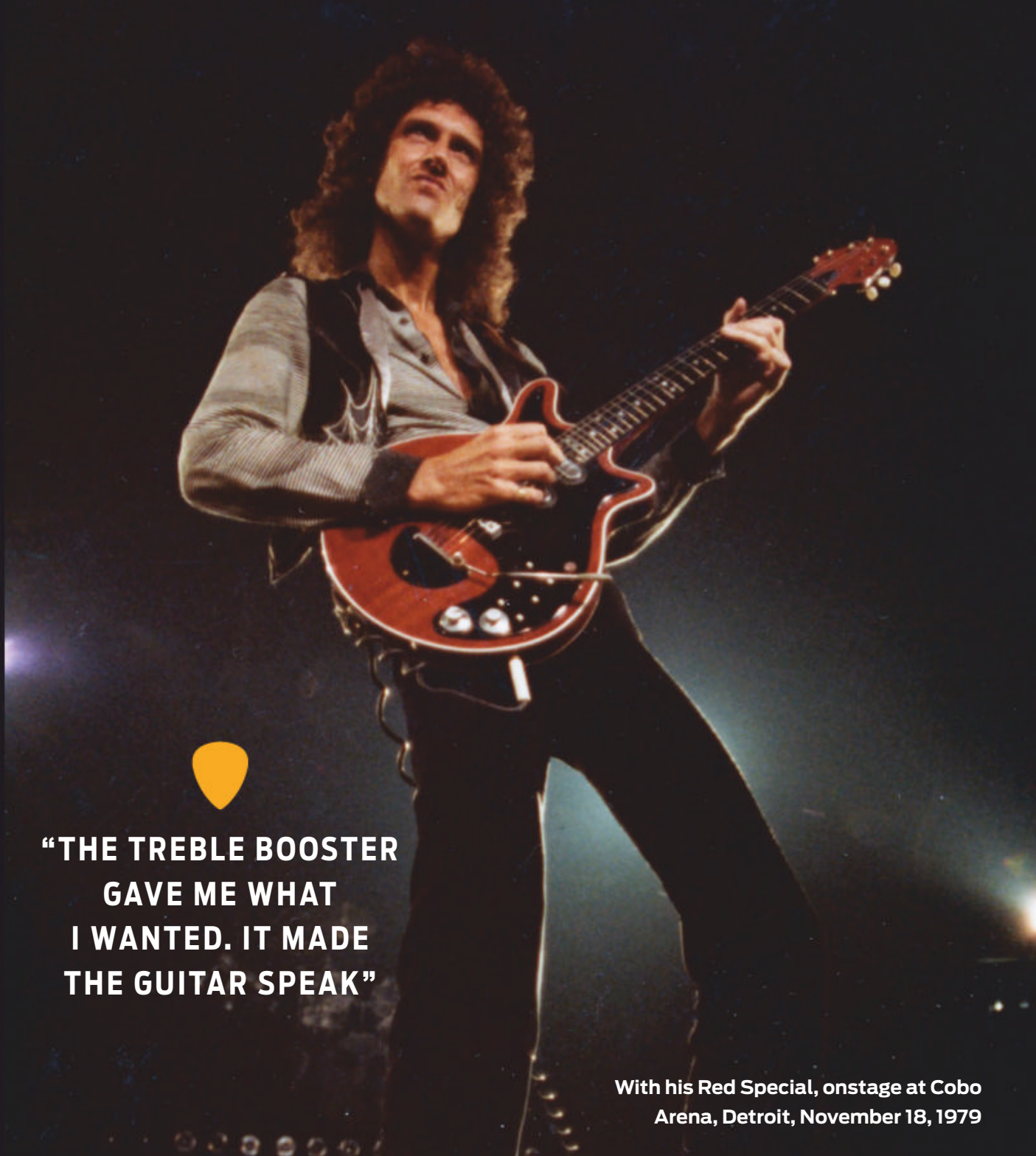
Brian May

His harmonized, treble-boosted lead guitar lines brought tasteful refinement and pop melodicism to the genre without diminishing its potency.

HIS BACKLINE OF up to 15 Vox AC30s was referred to as the Wall of Death for its sheer volume. That alone might qualify Brian May for inclusion on any list of hard-rock guitarists, but there is much more to his style. As Queen's guitarist for 50 years and, along with the late Freddie Mercury, one of its main songwriters, May expanded hard rock's stylistic palette, combining rock and roll with the theatricality of Led Zeppelin, the glammy camp of David Bowie's *Ziggy Stardust* era and the musical diversity of the Beatles. Along the way, he's made his ringing, harmonized lead work one of the most distinctive and recognizable guitar tones in all of rock.

His signature sound was nearly fully formed when Queen arrived in record shops in 1973 as a quasi-heavy metal/progressive-rock act. Their self-titled 1973 debut played to those strengths, but 1974's *Queen II* introduced elements of glam and found the band developing the multilayered overdubs and vocal harmonies that would become their trademark. "Led Zeppelin and the Who are probably in *Queen II* somewhere, because they were among our favorite groups," May said at the time. "But what we are trying to do differently from either of those groups [is] this sort of layered sound. The Who had the open-chord guitar sound, but our sound is more based on the overdriven guitar sound. I also wanted to build up textures behind the main melody lines."

Indeed, May's fretwork was the group's distinctive second voice to



**"THE TREBLE BOOSTER
GAVE ME WHAT
I WANTED. IT MADE
THE GUITAR SPEAK"**

With his Red Special, onstage at Cobo
Arena, Detroit, November 18, 1979

Mercury's own. While he's used a number of guitars over the years, including Fender Telecasters and Gibson Les Pauls, his main axe has been his homemade Red Special, sporting three Burns Tri-Sonic pickups, each of which can be put out of phase and used singly or in combination with the others, providing a vast range of tones. As for May's use of AC30s and a treble booster, he gives credit to his hero Rory Gallagher, whom he met in the late '60s following a gig by Gallagher's band Taste at the London Marquee. "I said, 'How do you get the sound? What is it?'" May recalled in 2015. "And he said, 'Oh, it's very simple. I have this amp – an AC30 amp – and I have this little [Dallas] Rangemaster Treble Booster.' So I went straight out and got the AC30 and the Treble Booster, and it gave me what I wanted. It made the guitar speak."

But they were only part of the formula. May's distinctive lead tone comes from plugging his treble booster

into his custom Deacy amp, built by Queen bassist John Deacon from a discarded transistor-radio amplifier circuit and a bookshelf speaker. Warm, smooth and sustaining, the resulting tone allowed May's Red Special to sound like a violin or even a human voice. The amp would prove especially useful starting with 1974's *Sheer Heart Attack*, where Queen settled into the hard-rock/pop amalgam that became their signature for much of that decade, allowing May's multitracked harmonized guitar lines to shine on countless Queen tracks, from "Killer Queen" and "Tie Your Mother Down" to "Stone Cold Crazy" and "Bohemian Rhapsody." So remarkable was the sound that, for a while in the 1970s, Queen's albums carried the disclaimer "No Synthesizers!" in their sleeve notes, lest listeners mistake May's remarkable layered guitar work for keyboards.

TOP TRACK: "KEEP YOURSELF ALIVE"



Onstage with Kiss in
Los Angeles, July 24, 1979

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Ace Frehley

He may not shred, sweep or tap, but the Spaceman launched a thousand future six-stringers.

MOST GUITAR FANS wouldn't consider Ace Frehley to be among the most technically advanced players in the hard-rock universe, and Ace would probably agree. "I don't know shit from Shinola," he once said. "I think that's one of the reasons that I'm original — I never took lessons or had any formal training." And make no mistake, Ace is indeed an original. To paraphrase a line commonly uttered about the Velvet Underground, a case could be made that practically every kid who heard and saw the Spaceman play in the 1970s went out and grabbed a guitar for him or herself.

Which is to say that while Ace Frehley doesn't tap, sweep or shred, he has nevertheless

served as one of rock guitar's most influential and pivotal figures almost from the day in 1972 that he walked into a New York City rehearsal space wearing one red and one orange sneaker and nabbed the lead-guitar slot in Kiss. And while his bandmates Gene Simmons and Paul Stanley did most of the visual and sonic scenery chewing throughout the '70s, it was Frehley's lead style —

**"I KNOW GREAT
GUITAR PLAYERS THAT
DON'T HAVE ANY IMAGE
OR PERSONALITY.
YOU NEED IT ALL"**

characterized by long pentatonic runs, wobbly vibratos and slurred triplets — that inspired generations of future guitar heroes, including Pantera's Dimebag Darrell, Skid Row's Dave "Snake" Sabo and

Pearl Jam's Mike McCready, to pick up their guitar and play.

Of course, Frehley — armed with his arsenal of two- and three-pickup Les Pauls — knew how to make an onstage spectacle of himself as well, whether it was planting smoke bombs in the guitar's pickup cavity, shooting rockets off the headstock or hanging his axe on a hook and having it fly up into the lighting tresses.

Since the 1980s, Ace has been in and out of Kiss, and he's launched his own band, Frehley's Comet, as well as a successful solo career. With nearly half a century invested in the music business, his influence and impact are firmly set in stone. "It's a combination of my songwriting, my voice, my attitude, my persona," he's said. "It's the package. I know great guitar players that don't have any image or personality. You need it all."

TOP TRACK: "SHOCK ME"

RICHARD CREAMER/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES



Joe Perry

Even at 70, the Bad Boy from Boston is still the baddest — and coolest — guitar slinger on the block.

THERE'S A REASON that, for decades now, Aerosmith singer Steven Tyler has introduced the man to his left onstage as “Mr. Joe fucking Perry.” It’s because the Massachusetts-bred Perry plays guitar, to put it one way, like a mutha. Whether keeping it tight and funky on “Walk This Way,” groovy and heavy on “Sweet Emotion,” fast and frantic on “Toys in the Attic,” or bluesy and deep-in-the-pocket on “Same Old Song and Dance,” he tackles every riff, lick and lead with unmatched cool, class and charisma.

As he’s said, “It’s all just attitude.”

What’s more, Perry is an avowed gear hound. He’s brandished a mouth-watering array of guitars over the years, from classics like ’59 Les Paul Standards and vintage Strats and Teles to unique examples that include his custom-built Tele-Rat, a Guild X-100 Bladerunner, a Chet Atkins Classical Electric (for the solo on “Janie’s Got a Gun”) and his own signature Gibsons, among others.

But perhaps the most distinctive thing about Perry’s guitar approach is

how intuitive and innate it feels. His funkiness never comes off as imitative or labored (check out his hard-grooving Fender Bass VI work on “Back in the Saddle”), and his blues riffs and phrases, in comparison to many of his peers, feel less weighted down by any strict adherence to tradition. What’s more, he’s also a stone-cold killer on slide, whether handling a Lucite Dan Armstrong for “Draw the Line” or a Chandler lap steel for “Rag Doll.”

As for his rock credentials, there’s a reason Aerosmith are often called America’s Greatest Rock and Roll Band. And while they’re also the biggest-ever-selling hard-rock

band in the U.S., as far as Perry’s concerned, that’s just coincidence. “People spend their careers trying to figure out what makes a hit single,” he has said. “But I learned a long time ago that you can’t anticipate what people want, because it’s always going to change. Play what you want to play.”

**“YOU CAN’T ANTICIPATE
WHAT PEOPLE WANT.
PLAY WHAT YOU
WANT TO PLAY”**

TOP TRACK: “WALK THIS WAY”



Neal Schon

As Journey’s guitarist, he’s brought a compositional approach to soloing.

WHEN JOURNEY FORMED in the early ’70s, it was a mind-blowing experience to witness this spectacular young guitarist — who as a teenager had turned down a job offer from Eric Clapton and left his gig with the Santana band — step out on his own and play with such fire, passion and intensity. As Journey moved away from their early fusiony sound and began transforming into the pop-rock megaband we know and love, Schon’s playing remained incredibly soulful and bluesy. He’s always crafted his solos with great compositional skill that moved the music and kept the listeners wanting more. Schon wasn’t labeled a “shredder” per se (which can be a good or bad thing, depending on one’s perspective), but he’s had a certain willful restraint in his playing that few pop-rockers have been able to display so naturally. He’s always sounded perfectly in sync with the songs, and was never one to blow solos for the sake of, well, blowing. Just listen to Schon’s lead work on “I’ll Be Alright Without You” or “Patiently,” or when he goes all-out on “In Self Defense,” and you’ll hear that soaring, voice-like quality in his playing.

TOP TRACK: “WORLD GONE WILD”

Tom Scholz

The Boston musician locked himself in his basement and came up with one of the most stunning albums — and guitar tones — of the past 45 years.

BOSTON ARE OFTEN maligned as “corporate rock,” an ironic categorization for a band whose debut album was conceived largely by one guy working alone in his wood-paneled basement after getting off work as a product design engineer for Polaroid. That guy, guitarist and songwriter Tom Scholz, not only managed to come up with Boston’s self-titled, multi-Platinum-selling 1976 debut album — he also revolutionized rock-guitar tone using little more than a goldtop 1968 Les Paul with a “neck like

a log” that he recorded at extremely low volume due to his less-than-adequate studio environs.

Scholz has identified that tone — characterized by a sweetly distorted and heavily sustaining guitar sound — as the combination of his Les Paul running into an old 100-watt Marshall head and a prototype power soak that he built “because of the need to bring down the gain, but without losing the saturation of the sound.”

It wasn’t just the sound of Scholz’s guitar that was unique, however — it was also the notes he played on it. The solos he constructed for Boston (and co-guitarist Barry Goudreau must be recognized here as well) are towering marvels that dip, soar and mount to explosive climaxes. Spiked with unusual harmony lines, bends and note choices, and just the right amount of flash, they can be listened to as mini compositions in and of themselves.

“LEFT TO MY OWN DEVICES, THE SOUND OF BOSTON IS WHAT I COME UP WITH”



ROB VERHORST/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

Despite the corporate rock tag, Scholz’s influence on critic-approved artists is now widely recognized. (Consider Kurt Cobain, who put more than a little of “More Than a Feeling”

into Nirvana’s “Smells Like Teen Spirit.”) Scholz also changed guitar tone with his development of the Rockman, the pocket-sized headphone amp simulator used by,

among others, Def Leppard on their bajillion-selling 1987 album, *Hysteria*.

After more than 40 years, Scholz’ tone and touch remain as unique and awe-inspiring as ever. “That sound grew out of what I did naturally,” he has explained. “It’s that simple. Left to my own devices, with no outside interference, the sound of Boston is what I come up with.”

TOP TRACK: “HITCH A RIDE”

Angus Young

AC/DC’s head honcho is responsible for some of the most towering and enduring riffs and licks in all of rock and roll.

ANGUS YOUNG AND AC/DC have been accused of making the same album over and over again for the past 45 years. But if you achieve high-voltage rock-and-roll perfection on more or less the first try, why would you change a thing?

The Aussie guitarist is certainly one of the most explosive and captivating players in rock and roll, with guitar and sartorial styles all his own. Mixing hopped-up Chuck Berry rhythms with blues boogie, pop songcraft and a hint of heavy-metal thunder, Angus and his late brother, rhythm guitarist Malcolm, constructed the riffs that power some of rock’s most monumental and iconic

songs, including “Dirty Deeds Done Dirt Cheap,” “Highway to Hell,” “Back in Black” and “You Shook Me All Night Long.” Regarding these riffs, Angus once said, “We always look for something that’s a little bit special. And a lot of it has to do with rhythm. We tend to go for, if we can, a bit more blues, a more rhythmic thing. Our riffs transport you. We don’t know where, though.”

His solos and melodies are just as immediate, hook-laden and “transporting,” mixing bluesy pentatonics with repeating motifs, open-string pull-off licks (hello, “Thunderstruck”), subtle hybrid-picked

figures and teeth-rattling double-stops, among other signature touches. What’s more, he’s often performed them sweaty and shirtless while convulsing on his back, duck walking across the stage or being paraded through the audience atop his singer’s shoulders.

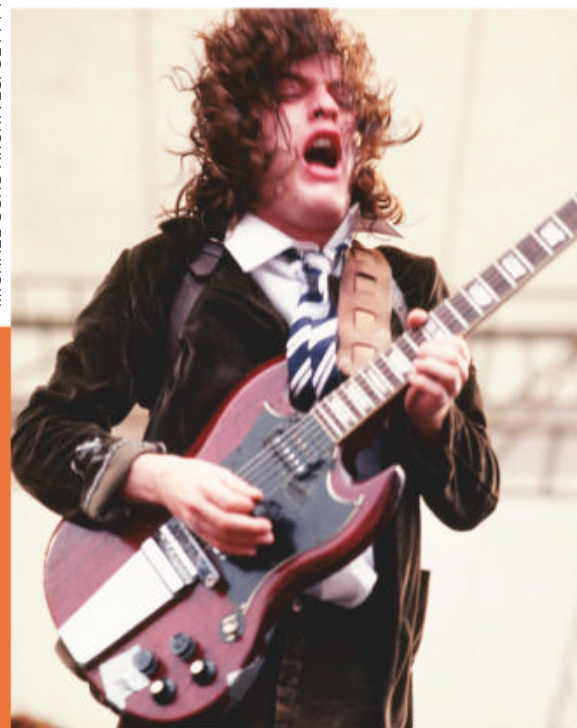
And let’s not forget that sound. Is there a more revered or sought-after tone in all of hard rock than the bright yet thick, spongy yet gritty, distorted yet somehow insanely clean sound of his Gibson SG through a 100-watt-Marshall? It’s as impressive and distinctive today, on AC/DC’s brand-new *Power Up* album, as it was on 1975’s *High Voltage*. And

Eddie Van Halen

He didn't just rewrite the six-string rulebook — he shredded it, changing the sound, style and look of the instrument like no artist before or since.

IN ALMOST ANY other case, it would be outrageous to say that rock and roll would sound entirely different were it not for one artist. But when the artist in question is Eddie Van Halen, who passed away in October 2020 at age 65 after a long battle with cancer, it's the stone-cold truth.

It took just 30 seconds of brain-scrambling, two-handed tapping in



maybe there's a reason for that. "If you're playing it right," Angus once said, "it's going to sound right somehow." Perfection, indeed.

TOP TRACK: "LET THERE BE ROCK"

FIN COSTELLO/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

**IT TOOK JUST 30 SECONDS
OF BRAIN-SCRAMBLING,
TWO-HANDED TAPPING FOR
ED TO COMPLETELY CHANGE
GUITAR'S VOCABULARY**

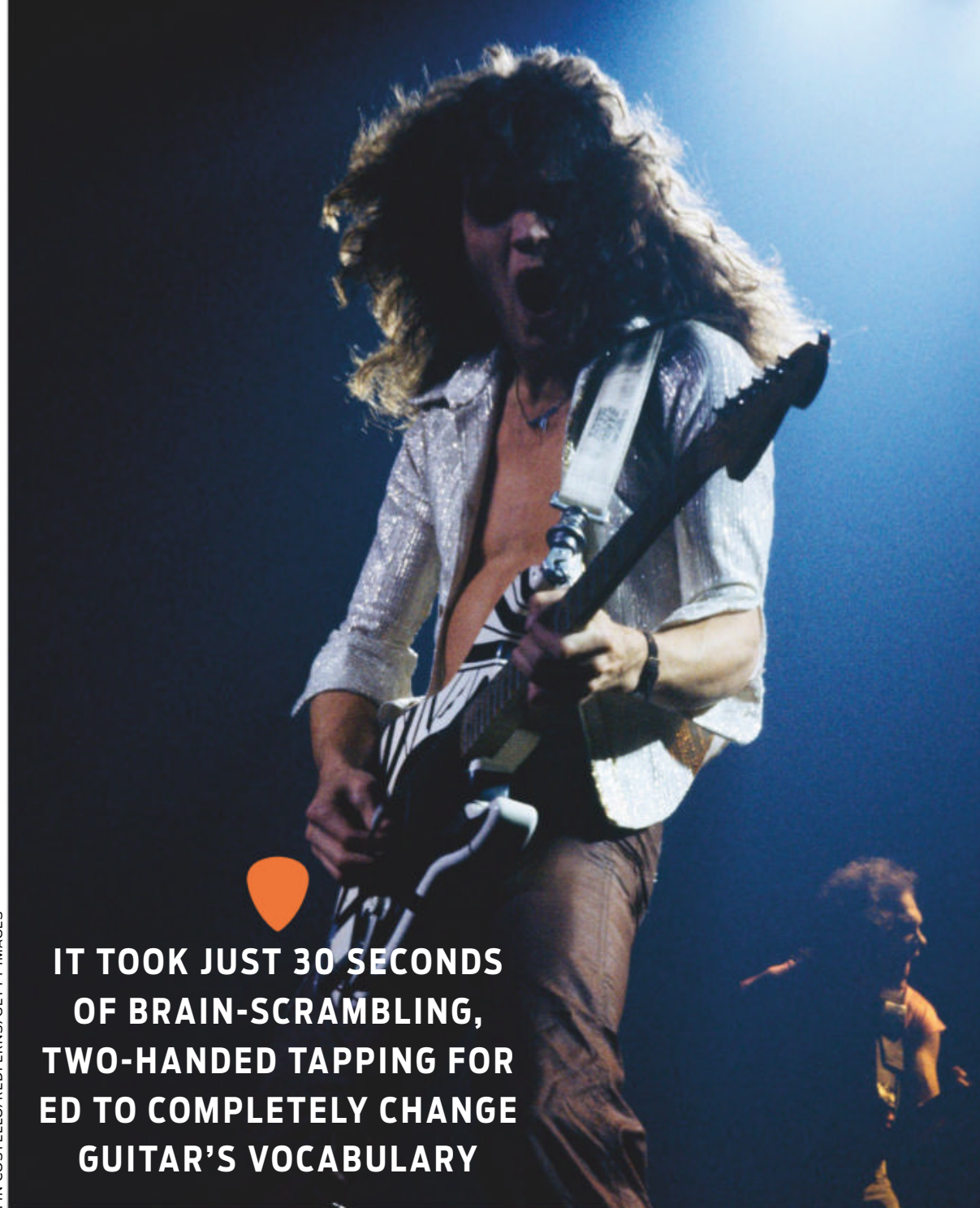
1978's "Eruption" for Eddie to completely change guitar's vocabulary. But that was just one act in his rewiring of the electric guitar's DNA. Eddie also blurred the line between rhythm and lead playing and made every song a thrill-a-second rollercoaster ride with his screeching pick slides, dive bombs, superhuman shredding, syncopated grooving and fiercely aggro-metal riffing. He may not have been the first player to use any of the above techniques, but no guitarist before him had combined them to such thrilling ends. In Ed's hands, six strings not only sounded like an orchestra — they also sounded impossibly alive.

Beyond his playing style and technique, Eddie changed rock tone. His coveted "brown sound" — created by running his homemade, humbucker-equipped Frankenstein guitar into a Marshall 100-watt with the voltage dampened by a Variac — quickly became the gold standard for tone. Every '80s shredder attempted to replicate it, but no one came close.

And as much as Ed transformed the sound of guitar, he also changed its look. With a body and neck purchased for roughly \$130, a PAF humbucker, a rudimentary tremolo and some gaffer tape and spray paint, he helped birth the Fender/Gibson-style hybrid now known as the superstrat — a hot-rodded, built-for-speed, often wildly finished shred machine. The Frankenstein, as Ed's guitar became known, was only the beginning. He continued to make gear advances later on with Kramer, Music Man, Peavey and, finally, his own EVH brand.

In the end, it would be impossible to sum up Eddie Van Halen's contribution to rock — contribution to music, even — in a few hundred words, or even a book, although his own thoughts begin to get at the heart of his approach: "You have 12 notes, and the 13th one is the octave," Eddie said in 2016. "Do whatever you want with them. It's really that simple. There are no mistakes."

TOP TRACK: "ERUPTION"





MICHAEL SCHENKER IS about to celebrate his 50th anniversary in the music business, since joining Scorpions in 1971. His first appearance on record was at the age of 16 in 1972, on *Lonesome Crow*, the debut Scorpions album. Soon after, the band was on tour opening for the U.K. hard-rock act UFO when Schenker accepted their offer to join. “I always said to the guys in Scorpions that if an English band asked me to join them, I wouldn’t hesitate,” Schenker recalls today. “England looked like the place to be if you wanted to have a career playing rock and roll, not Germany.”

Schenker’s work with UFO saw him quickly join the ranks of the great ’70s guitar heroes. His style influenced legions of subsequent legendary names, including Randy Rhoads, though unlike Rhoads his style remained more hard rock than metal. Ozzy courted him after Rhoads’ untimely death in 1982, but Schenker turned him down, as he had Aerosmith and many others. Following the glory days of the ’70s and ’80s, Schenker’s profile took a dip as he withdrew from performing in the early ’90s while dealing with personal issues. He acknowledges that difficult period as necessary to his spiritual development, and he is at peace with himself these days, enjoying life to the max. His

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NEVER SAY DIE

After years of being counted out, **Michael Schenker** is back at the top of his game and touting a new album rightly titled *Immortal*.

BY MARK MC STEA

playing is more fluid and inventive than ever, and he is currently riding the most successful wave of his career since the late '70s. Schenker is due to release *Immortal* under the Michael Schenker Group banner in January 2021. Coronavirus permitting, a world tour is set to follow later in the year.

Immortal is a strong album. It features many of the musicians in your Michael Schenker Fest band, so why are you releasing it as an MSG album?

Well, call it MSG, Temple of Rock, Michael Schenker Fest — it's all really the same thing, as long as Michael Schenker is in there. [laughs] The different names were created for particular musicians, but it also implies certain eras in my life and is a shorthand for those periods. There's always going to be some kind of a band around me; I can't do it on my own. But the names and lineups can be fluid because it always sounds like me.

What first inspired you to play?

My brother, Rudolf, who is six years older than me, got a guitar for his 14th birthday. He struggled with it at first. I used to pick it up and play it when he wasn't there, and I was fascinated by the sound. I started picking out single notes, and I quickly realized that I could, with the aid of a tape recorder, slowly work out how to play songs by the Shadows. The guitar came very quickly for me, to the point where I would teach Rudolf how to play songs... at a rate of one Deutschmark per song. [laughs] After about five years or so, I joined Scorpions and played on the *Lonesome Crow* album. I wrote all the music for the songs, although I didn't get the proper credits.

When did you feel that you'd started to find yourself as a player?

When I was 14. I started to listen to Deep Purple and Black Sabbath. That was when I started to realize what the guitar could do with the power of distortion. I knew that it was the best instrument on the planet to express human emotion. I became very successful very quickly, but the funny

thing is that I never tried to become famous. When I had my time away from the spotlight, I wasn't thinking about fame or fortune — I was concerned with my spiritual experiences and development. The years from 1990 to 1995 were the most profound of my life and enabled me to develop as a person.

You have been associated with the Flying V for most of your life, but your first pro-level guitar was a Les Paul. How did you come to make the switch?

When I was playing with Scorpions, Rudolf was playing a Flying V. I remember I broke a string and as I didn't have a spare, we swapped, and I played his V into his 50-watt Marshall. The feel of the guitar and the sound of the 50-watt amp — it instantly felt right. We swapped a couple more times, and I realized that was what I needed for my sound, so I bought the V off Rudolf. I've told the story in the past of how, when I was in school, before I ever played, I built a V-shaped guitar in woodwork class. Amazingly, my sister recently found this guitar and I now have it, over 50 years later. I was predestined to play a Flying V. I instinctively knew how to get the best out of it. I would lock the lower part of the guitar between my knees to hold it in place and use my whole arm to get my vibrato. I looked like I was doing all the classic rock-star poses without even trying. [laughs]

The third and final piece in your tone quest was a cocked wah pedal. How did that come about?

I was a huge fan of Mick Ronson's playing with David Bowie, and I saw him live several times. He was using his wah in the fixed position. I was experimenting with the pedal and found the sweet spot. I took the pedal apart to understand the mechanics of it. I put it back together so that it was fixed in the

one place and I could just knock it on and off for a solo boost. I never liked the sound of the wah at the extreme ends.

What songs or albums are you most proud of from your long career?

I'm not. I don't think it's good to be proud of things. I am very happy that I have been able to make so much music and be able to make playing the guitar my life. I have never lost my enthusiasm and excitement for playing the guitar. That's a wonderful gift.

How are things between you and Rudolf these days?

I say, "Love and peace, Rudolf, I wish the best for you!" But we need to maintain a social distance, as I feel he is dangerous for me. He has taken advantage of me over the years, but I wish him power and success, as that is

something that is very important to him. I am better off on my own. I have my own vision of what a successful career in music looks like, and it isn't the same as Rudolf's.

You arrived at your signature sound very early on. What advice would you give other guitarists trying to carve out their own identity?

It is a complicated thing, although perhaps it isn't if you know who you are. If you don't know who you are, you can become obsessed with chasing success and money. If you are creative, you will become consumed with the enjoyment of the moment and playing notes. Putting notes together when you're in that state of pure appreciation is where the chemistry develops that makes you sound like who you are. Ultimately, you can hopefully reach what I call "the art of guitar playing with pure self-expression," which is how I would describe my own playing. Remember that you are unique. Nobody can do what you can do if you aren't afraid to reach inside yourself and be truthful.



"RUDOLF AND I NEED TO MAINTAIN A SOCIAL DISTANCE, AS I FEEL HE IS DANGEROUS FOR ME"

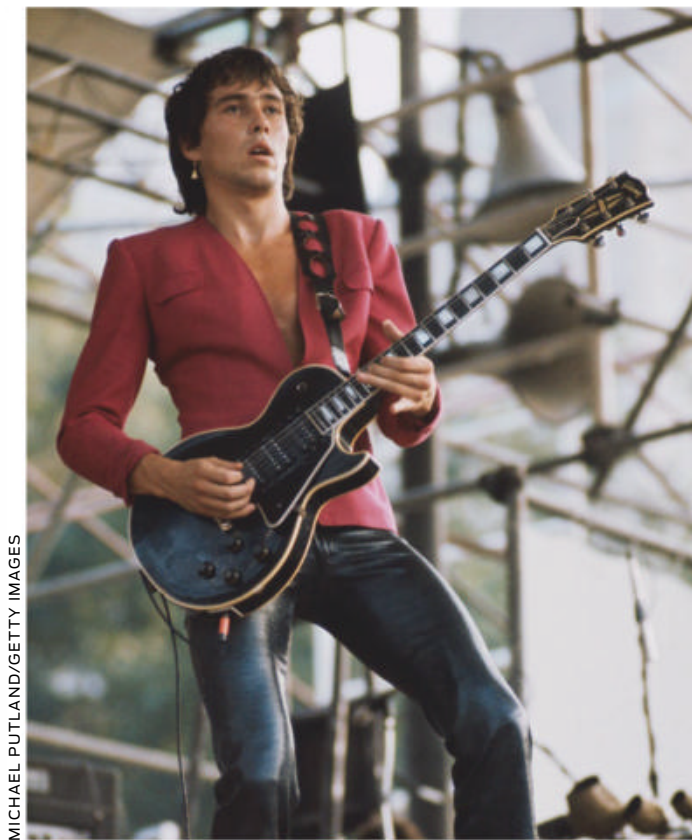
GEORGE KOOYMANS

He put the boogie in hard rock with “Radar Love.”

FOR MILLIONS OF American teens in the 1970s, there was no more perfect song for late-night cruising than Golden Earring’s “Radar Love.” Its shuffling boogie rhythm encouraged pedal-to-the-metal driving, while the lyrics captured the thrill of joyriding and, hopefully, getting lucky. Pushing it all along was the insistent riffing of guitarist George Kooymans, who punctuated the space between Barry Hay’s lyrics with some of the tastiest licks outside of a Dairy Queen drive-thru. “Radar Love” was and remains the quintessential American hard-rock road song.

So imagine how surprising it was for young listeners to discover Golden Earring hailed not from the U.S. but the Netherlands, or that the group had been

a going concern for more than 10 years by the time it scored its breakthrough hit. Kooymans and bassist Rinus Gerritsen had launched the band in the Hague as the Tornadoes, but had to change its name when the U.K.-based Tornados had a hit with “Telstar.” They took Golden Earrings from a song by the English beat group the Hunters, and found success as a pop act at home and the U.K. In 1969, the band dropped the s from its name and went full-on hard rock, earning an invitation to open the Who’s 1972 European tour and record for their Track Records label, just in time to release 1973’s *Moontan* and its single “Radar Love.” Kooymans’ guitar work, performed on his black, three-pickup Gibson Les Paul Custom, with exposed pickups, helped propel the song to the upper reaches of the U.S. charts, where it hit Number 13.



MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

Golden Earring’s fortunes faded in the late 1970s, but they scored a strong comeback in 1982 with the single “Twilight Zone,” from their album *Cut*. Though it was the group’s last hurrah in America, Golden Earring have continued to find steady support at home, while “Radar Love” remains for many Americans the ultimate car song of all time.

TOP TRACK: “RADAR LOVE”

RUDOLF SCHENKER

The Scorpions’ founder and driving force has defined European hard rock for more than 50 years.

HE ADMITS HE’S more about songwriting than guitar chops, but it would be unfair to exclude Rudolf Schenker from a hard-rock guitarist list. As the main force behind Scorpions’ 56-year run, he’s kept the group focused on delivering enthralling hard-rock hits such as “Big City Nights” and “Rock You Like a Hurricane,” as well as arena-rock power ballads like “Send Me an Angel” and “Still Loving You.” He’s even turned in some stellar solo work on a few of those tracks, as well as on the band’s worldwide hit “Wind of Change.” In a band known for having its share of great lead guitarists, Rudy holds his own.

Given their success, it’s easy to forget that the Scorpions were at one time both a hungry and decidedly edgy band. After enduring lineup hiccups in the early 1970s when Rudolf’s brother Michael left to join UFO, they hired aggressively cosmic guitarist Uli Jon Roth and developed into a storming hard-rock band with 1975’s *In Trance*. A year later they followed that with *Virgin Killer*. Both of these developments would ultimately dovetail into 1979’s landmark *Lovedrive* album, their most focused and groundbreaking work of the decade.

But it took a lot of jarring twists and turns to get there. Roth left the band in 1977, citing musical differences, and was replaced by Matthias Jabs. Michael Schenker rejoined in time for *Lovedrive*, where he mostly threw in a few leads here and there, but what monumental, brain-rattling leads they were! His work



KEVIN NIXON/CLASSIC ROCK MAGAZINE

is practically ground zero for all the insane shredding that was soon to come from all corners of the globe.

Though Michael moved on, Rudolf used the momentum to develop Scorpions’ amalgamation of power ballads and hard-rock over their next few albums, culminating in 1984’s *Love at First Sting*. With classics that include “Big City Nights,” “Still Loving You” and “Rock You Like a Hurricane,” it remains their biggest U.S. success and a testament to Rudolf Schenker’s vision.

TOP TRACK: “BIG CITY NIGHTS”



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Grand Funk Railroad onstage at London's Hyde Park, July 3, 1971.
(from left) Don Brewer, Mel Schacher and Mark Farner



AMERICAN BAND STAND

They sold out Shea Stadium faster than the Beatles. In the early 1970s, no U.S. hard-rock act was bigger than **Grand Funk Railroad**.

BY JOE BOSSO

RECENTLY, A PROLIFERATION of clips has appeared on YouTube in which young music fans document their reactions to hearing the music of Grand Funk Railroad for the first time. Their faces are braced with stunned, slack-jawed amazement as they listen. When the music stops and the talking begins, their assessments of the band are typically along the lines of, “Damn, those guys can really jam!” and “What did I just hear?!”

Asked if he’s familiar with the videos, Mark Farner lets out a robust laugh. “Hell yeah, I’ve seen them!” the former Grand Funk Railroad guitarist exclaims. “My friends send me those clips, and I just love watching them. I think it’s so cool seeing these young guys getting off to the music we made 50 years ago. What touched people’s hearts back then still moves them today. We were fierce.

We were big and loud, like we were busting out of the chute. And I was riding the bull, man. You can’t fake that kind of excitement. It’s either real or it’s not.” He chuckles, then adds nostalgically, “It sure was a fun time.”

For the better part of their career, which lasted from 1969 to 1976, the Flint, Michigan-based Grand Funk Railroad specialized in high-energy, meat-and-potatoes, blues-based hard rock. Consisting originally of guitarist and lead vocalist Farner, drummer and occasional lead singer Don Brewer and bassist Mel Schacher, Grand Funk Railroad formed after the breakup of a local outfit called Terry Knight & the Pack. The trio barnstormed its way through Michigan, performing on bills with fellow Midwestern acts like the Stooges, the MC5 and the Amboy Dukes. Guided by Terry Knight, who retired from the stage to act as the band’s manager, Grand Funk Railroad soon

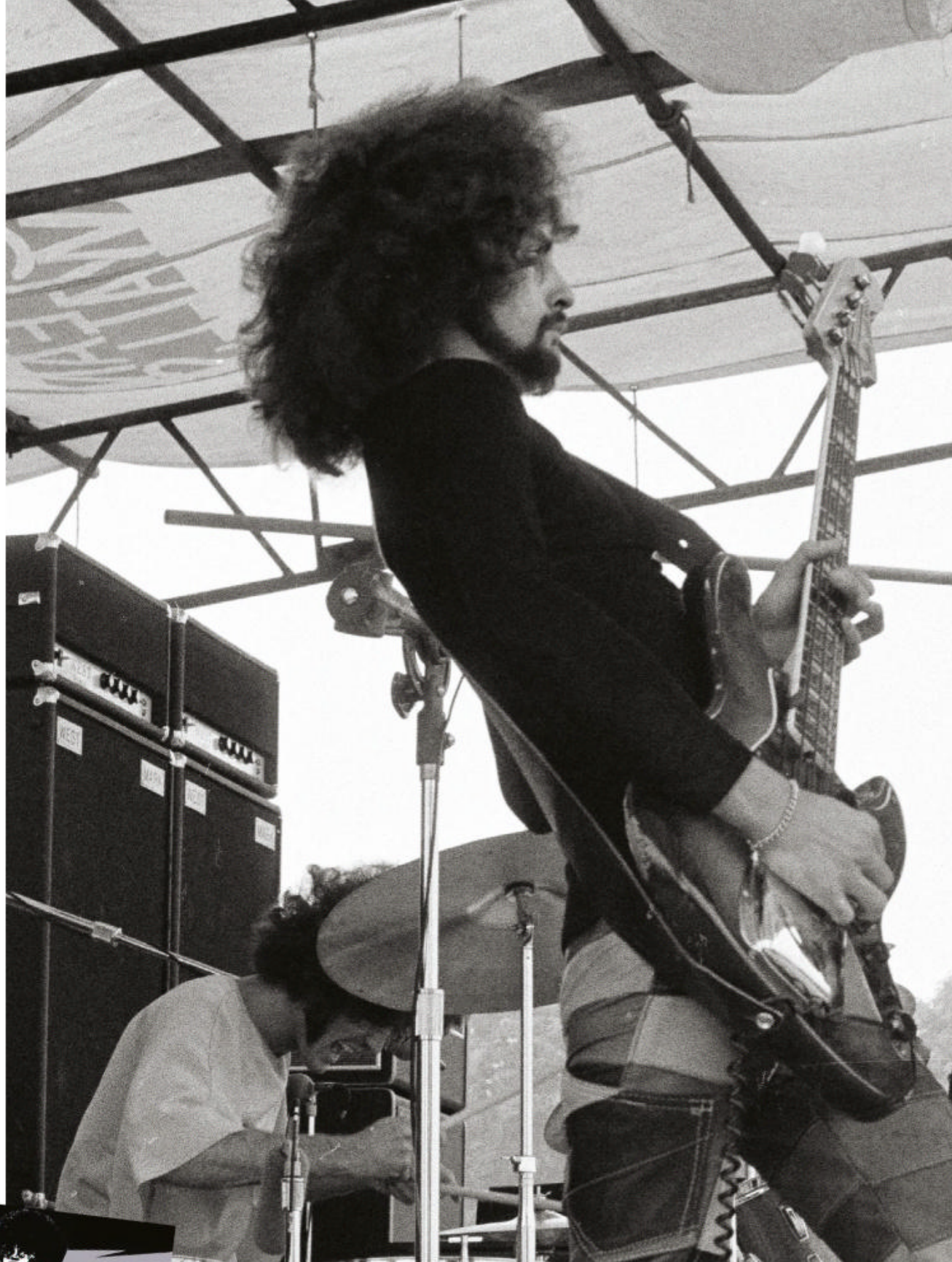
MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

exploded nationally, issuing a string of Platinum albums that included FM radio hits like “Mr. Limousine Driver,” “Inside Looking Out” and “Mean Mistreater.” With the release of 1970’s *Closer to Home*, which included the epic hit song “I’m Your Captain/Closer to Home,” the group was all but unstoppable.

“We were the people’s band,” Farner says. “We sold out Shea Stadium faster than the Beatles, and that was before we had Number One singles on AM radio. We were honest in how we played, and we were honest in what we sang about. It was the Vietnam era, and I was writing songs like ‘People, Let’s Stop the War.’ That song is as relevant today as it was back then. That kind of message resounds with people.”

Much of Grand Funk Railroad’s raucous sound was driven by Farner’s unbridled guitar playing, an exuberant mix of tight, power-chord rhythms and fuzzed-out, throat-grabbing leads. “I didn’t play nearly as fast as the other guitarists back then,” he says. “My whole approach was, How can I reach the people in the back row with my guitar? I wanted to accentuate the visual image of me onstage with what I played. So if it was simple, but it got the point across, that’s what I did.” He thinks, then adds, “That’s what I still try to do now, though I think I’m a little more mature with the notes I pick.”

During the last few years of their ’70s run, Grand Funk Railroad (later known simply as Grand Funk) became a quartet with the addition of keyboardist Craig Frost and defanged their sledgehammer sound, resulting in AM-friendly smashes like “We’re an American Band” and a cover of Little Eva’s “The Loco-Motion,” both produced by Todd Rundgren. While such moves attracted a new legion of fans, the band’s original admirers grew disgruntled. When the group couldn’t replicate its chart



success, it flamed out following the release of 1976’s Frank Zappa-produced *Good Singin’, Good Playin’*. “A lot of people didn’t like us being so poppy,” says Farner, who these days performs with Mark Farner’s American Band. “And I was right there, too. I voted against getting a keyboard player. I wanted to keep the emphasis on being a guitar band. It’s sad how things went down, but

I’m thankful for all we achieved. We hit heights nobody could have imagined. How many people get to say that?”

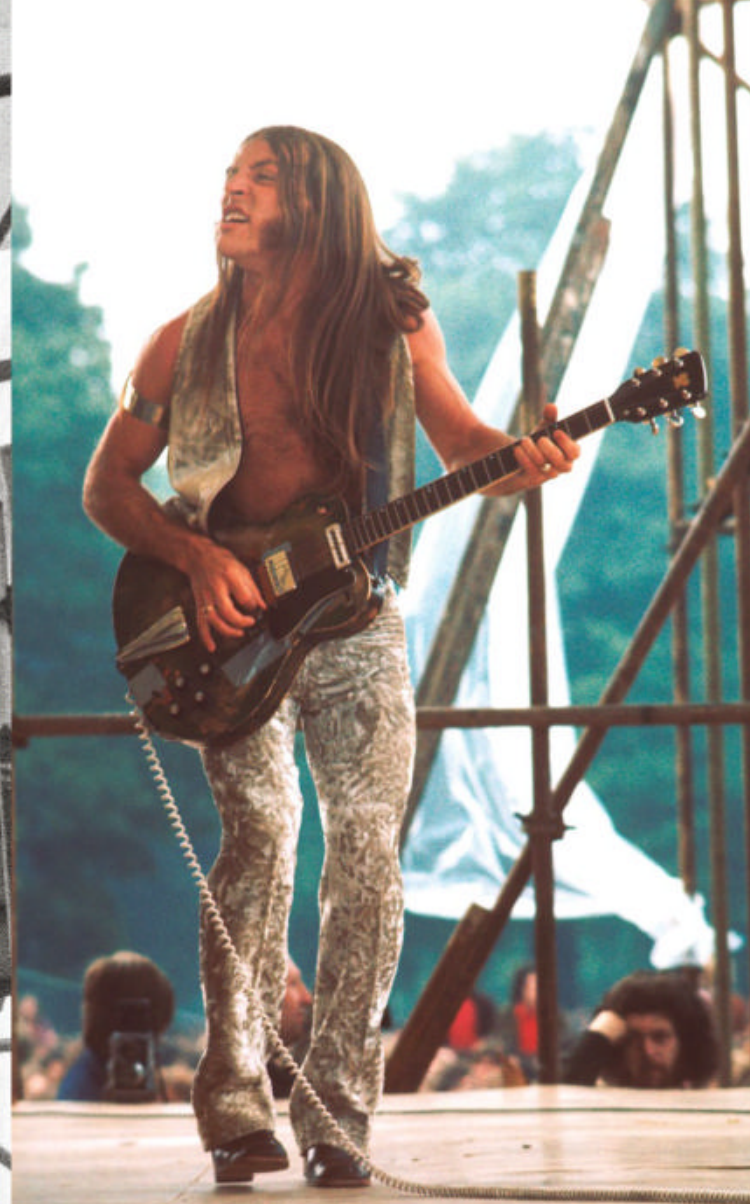
You’ve said the original trio was patterned after Cream. How did you distill that sound into something of your own?

We took that British influence, but we weren’t literally trying to be Cream. Our main influence was R&B. It’s what brought us to the dance floor. That’s what we wanted to do; that’s what I wanted to do as a guitarist. It wasn’t about playing long solos; it was about getting people to dance. I was attracted to rhythm, and I think the guys in Cream were too. They were soulful. We were soulful. When we first started playing gigs, I’d look out and see that half the audience was African-American.

You’ve cited Hendrix, Clapton and Beck as your biggest guitar influences. Was



At Hyde Park (here and right). (inset) The covers of *Closer to Home* and *We're an American Band*



there anybody before those guys who made a strong impression on you?

You can put Rick Derringer in there, too. I've always admired his style. Before him, there was James Burton, who played for Ricky Nelson and Elvis. I would listen to those leads and think, How does he do that? I was just a young guitar player with my Kay acoustic, and I could barely play that thing. The strings were so far off the neck, you could use them to shoot an arrow. And, of course, I dug the early rock and roll — Bill Haley and “Rock Around the Clock.” That was the stuff that got me going.

What about Pete Townshend? I have to think that he rubbed off on you a little.

Oh, sure. He was a very solid player; lots of energy and well-crafted parts. I especially liked what he did by

cranking up the volume. He took it way outside the norm, and that really rubbed off on me. I always liked messing around with volume.

Were you a natural on the guitar, or did you really have to woodshed and work at it to become good?

I had three lessons, and in the first lesson I was taught to keep my fingernails trimmed so they didn't touch the fingerboard. I would've had more lessons, but my teacher shot himself in the foot with a 12-gauge while he was hunting. He was all right, but he couldn't teach guitar anymore.

After that, I taught myself. I watched guys in high school bands and picked up the chords they were using. Once I got enough chords down, I was off doing it on my own. I loved playing guitar. I'd go to sleep with it on top of me. When I woke up, I'd think, Well, I'd better put it back in the case, but I never did. I always wanted the guitar around.

When Grand Funk were just starting out, how did you go about putting together your sound with respect to your guitar and gear?

We had gone to see the Kingsmen — they had that song “Louie Louie.” They were using Sunn amps, and they sounded so badass. So we went, “Wow, man, we need some Sunn amps!” But in our quest for them, we found Dave West from Flint, Michigan, and he was building his own amps that were just as big and loud as Sunn amps. They had big tubes and big cabinets. I actually worked in his factory for a time, soldering circuit boards and putting things together. So when Grand Funk took off, I said, “We've got to use West amps. He's from Flint, and we're taking him with us.”

“MY WHOLE APPROACH WAS, HOW CAN I REACH THE PEOPLE IN THE BACK ROW WITH MY GUITAR?”

Aside from their power and size, was there something in particular about the tone of West amps that worked for you?

As I came to discover, Dave West had inadvertently wired something backward in his circuitry. He was doing mods to make his 60-watt amps 100 watts, and then he went to 200 watts by accident. Something was all backward, and when he went to change it, I said, "No way, dude! You're going to screw it up. Just leave it the way it is." I really loved the sound of it with my Messenger guitar.

That would be your '67 Musicraft Messenger. Where did you get that?

One of the reps for Sunn said, "You've got to try one of these new guitars. They've got aluminum necks, and you can play up to the last fret without running into the body." I tried one and liked it. The neck dimension was the same from one end to the other. I paid the guitar off for \$25 per week. The thing was heavy to hold. Because the neck was aluminum and the body was hollow, it was off balance. If you took your hands off the guitar, the neck sank to the floor. I remember I stuffed the f-holes with foam and put masking tape on them. Then I did a psychedelic paint job on the guitar so it would glow in the dark.

You also used Micro-Frets guitars: a Signature and a Spacetone. Where did those come from?

I was playing [Ernie Ball] Slinky strings, but I noticed that I had a tendency to go sharp, even just playing an E chord. The Micro-Frets guitars stayed in tune. I played one and said, "These are gonna work!" I went to their factory in Nashville and struck up a deal with them, and they gave me some guitars to play. You had to work the truss rod a bit to straighten out their necks, but other than that they were great.

Around this time, you also used a '61 Les Paul SG Custom.

I got that from Stevie Marriott. He sold it to me for \$200. We had played with Humble Pie in the U.K., and we told them, "You guys need to come to America. You can open for us and we'll give you a big audience." Steve told me, "I've got this SG that I think you'll really like. I'll bring it with me when we come to the States." And he did. It had been epoxied, because the headstock had snapped on it. But I loved that thing. It was so easy to play and had a nice sound. I ended up giving it to my brother, and I don't know what he did with it.

Were these guitars and the West amps as good in the studio as onstage?

Definitely. Everything we had onstage was what we used to record with. Of course, I wouldn't bring all the cabinets into the studio. Half of what I had on stage wasn't even wired up. I had four cabinets per side that were active, and the others were just for show.

For the first half of the band's career, you were the main songwriter. Did you feel a lot of pressure?

I didn't feel any pressure whatsoever. It was flowing, man. The songs happened so fast, I couldn't stop 'em!

"I'm Your Captain (Closer to Home)" might be your signature song. Did you have any idea when you wrote it that it would be your breakthrough to radio?

I did. I prayed for that song. I remember saying a P.S. in a prayer: "God, would you give me a song that can reach people and touch their hearts?" And I got up in the middle of the night, picked up a legal pad, and, in a half-conscious state, I wrote it down. When I woke up, I poured my coffee and picked up a Washburn acoustic,

and I just started playing that opening lick. I thought, Wow, that's pretty cool! I remember looking down at this C inversion I was playing, and I thought, Man, I can't forget this C. I kept playing it till I knew I'd remember it.

Then I grabbed my legal pad and sang the rest of it. It felt good to me, so I took it to rehearsal, and Don and Mel said, "Hey, Farner, that song is a hit, dude!" Because it was way different than anything else we had done. It was there lyrically, and it had that refrain — "I'm getting closer to my home" — going out.

[Arranger and trumpet player] Tommy Baker did the orchestrations when we recorded it. He said to me, "Mark, man, I want that refrain to go on forever. Give me some room for the orchestration." We must have played it so many times.



Farner onstage at the Canyon Club, Agoura Hills, California, March 23, 2019

I remember looking at him like, Should we stop now? And he was just going, "Not yet. Keep playing!"

The story goes that at one point you guys made an overture to Peter Frampton to join the band.

The band discussed it, but we never actually spoke to Peter about it. This was around the time that Craig Frost came into the group as a keyboardist. Don wanted a keyboard player who he could write with. He wanted some of that

"WHEN WE FIRST STARTED PLAYING GIGS, I'D LOOK OUT AND SEE THAT HALF THE AUDIENCE WAS AFRICAN-AMERICAN"



Grand Funk Railroad perform at Korakuen Stadium, Tokyo, during a heavy rain, June 17, 1971.

“mailbox money.” Peter Frampton’s a great player, but we never got past the idea stage with that.

And, of course, you weren’t into the idea of a keyboardist.

I wasn’t. Keyboards are good as long as they’re edgy and fit in a rock-and-roll song. If they’re not edgy, I don’t like ’em. We never got into the progressive thing that was happening back then. We just wanted to stay in the groove.

Did you plan your solos out, or were they improvised in the studio? Your solo to the song “We’re an American Band” sounds perfectly composed.

They were pretty much spontaneous in the studio. I would have to listen back to them to replicate them onstage. Most of the leads for “We’re an American Band” was improvised. The only part that wasn’t was when I overdubbed the harmony part in the solo. We were listening back to it in the studio, and I just started singing a harmony line. Todd Rundgren looked at me and said, “You want to put that on there?” So I did.

What was it like working with Rundgren? He’s a pretty capable guitarist himself.

He was great — very laid back most of the time. He’d have his feet up on the console, reading a book. He was just kind of a “go for it” guy. But I remember once when he got really excited. It was on the second record we did with him [Shinin’ On, 1974], when we cut “The Loco-Motion.” We started playing, and when I did my guitar solo, he came out into the studio, grabbed the tape head of the Echoplex and moved it back and forth. It sounded like the guitar was eating itself. We had a lot of fun with that.

Let’s talk about how the band broke up. Was there a particular day when you realized it was all over?

Sure. It was one day in 1976, when Brewer came into rehearsal late — and he was never late for anything. He walked in and said, “Guys, that’s it. I’m over it. I’ve got to find something more stable to do with my life.” I said, “You’re shitting me.” And he looked at me and said, “No, it’s over, Farnier. I’m done.” So I knew it was over then. That was it.

You and Don reunited briefly as Grand Funk Railroad in the early ’80s, after which you went solo again. Nowadays, Don and Mel are leading their own version of the band. Is there any communication between you?

No. I haven’t seen them play, and I’m not interested. They’re a sham band.

What they’re doing isn’t Grand Funk, but they don’t tell the unsuspecting fans. They don’t let them know that the original lead singer and the guy that wrote 92 percent of the music isn’t going to be onstage. It’s underhanded.

But me, when I play, I’m taking it

to the people. I have it in my mind that these people are here because they like me. They’re on my side to start with, so I try to give them the nostalgia that they’re looking for. I play the songs like they heard them on record. That’s what I concentrate on. Even with solos, I don’t give ’em any impromptu lead guitar or something that goes on. I’ve seen bands that do that, and it just sucks, man. I give the people what they want. ■

“DON BREWER LOOKED AT ME AND SAID, ‘IT’S OVER, FARNER. I’M DONE.’ I KNEW IT WAS OVER THEN. THAT WAS IT”



WILD, WILD WEST!

AS THE TINY AMPMAKER BEHIND GRAND FUNK RAILROAD'S POTENT HARD-ROCK SOUND, WEST AMPS WERE A FORCE TO BE RECKONED WITH.

BY DAVE HUNTER

PHOTOGRAPHY BY EIJI OTA

BIG, POWERFUL AND seemingly primed to take over the world, the guitar and bass amps made in Michigan by David West and his West Laboratories in the late '60s and early '70s embodied a classic breed of local ingenuity. In an era when more was definitely more, they appealed to the archetypal American band.

Back in the golden age of rock, when the American amplifier market was still dominated by a small handful of major manufacturers, several notable regional makers often filled the void for local guitarists who couldn't easily access or afford the Marshall, Hiwatt, Fender, Ampeg or Sunn stacks that were slaying huge audiences in arena shows around the world. With a "Sure, I can build you a killer stack right here!" attitude, many of these smaller shops delivered a

near-classic or two to players in the Northeast, Midwest, West Coast and beyond. David West was just such a maker, and in an era when louder-than-loud was the name of the game, his was also one of very few regional amp brands that seriously threatened to break through on a national scale.

West began his foray into audio electronics as a hi-fi retailer in Flint, Michigan, in the early 1960s. He moved the business to nearby Lansing a few years later, where he built his best-known line of tube guitar amps under the West

"NOT ONLY DID THEY SOUND GREAT, BUT THEY LOOKED GREAT"

— DON BREWER

Laboratories brand between 1966 and 1972. Three core models populated the lineup: the 50-watt Avalon head with two EL34s (a.k.a. 6CA7s), the 100-watt Grande with two 6550s, and the 200-watt Fillmore with four 6550s, made famous by guitarist Mark Farner and bassist Mel Schacher of Grand Funk



Grand Funk Railroad were West Laboratories' biggest client. This photo shows some of the band's original gear, including their West guitar and bass heads and cabinets.

Railroad. According to Grand Funk drummer Don Brewer, West's amps were used on the group's first four albums — *On Time*, *Grand Funk*, *Closer to Home* and *Survival*. "Not only did they sound great," Brewer said of the amps, "but they looked great." Unfortunately for West, as Grand Funk had bigger hits, they moved on to other amps to suit their new pop-oriented sound.

West himself was a live-music enthusiast, and even managed several



regional bands for many years. His model names came from a penchant for the great rock and roll ballrooms of the 1960s: the Avalon and Fillmore (both in San Francisco, if you think “West”), and, closer to home, Detroit’s own Grande Ballroom, where Grand Funk Railroad frequently kicked out the jams alongside fellow Michiganders like the Stooges and the MC5.

“My dad’s amps were the sound of the Grande Ballroom,” his son Aaron

West told *The Lansing State Journal* for an obituary following his father’s death in November 2015 at the age of 71.

Inside the bulky, roadworthy cabinets of the Fillmore and its brethren, the quality of the amps’ construction could vary somewhat. The circuits themselves were fairly simple, and the components and wiring configurations could look rather sparse inside the capacious chassis. All wiring was hand-soldered, with circuits mixing generally smaller

eyelet boards loaded with Orange Drop capacitors and carbon-comp resistors, and with a lot of flying wires running somewhat pell-mell between these and the various tube sockets and controls.

All early non-reverb models shared essentially the same preamp topology, which used a 12AX7 to provide two gain stages — one before and another after the tone controls — with a 12AT7 as the phase inverter. If that rings any bells, it’s because those are the preamp tubes



found in those same positions in a late blackface or early silverface Fender amp if you knocked it down to one channel. Indeed, the general preamp topology of West amps appears to share some DNA with the Normal channel of the 50-watt Fender Bassman of the era.

That said, West was more likely emulating the powerful Sunn amps, created by Kingsmen bassist Norm Sundholm and his brother Conrad. On his now-defunct website (formerly at westlabs.com), West described being introduced to the glories of Sunn amps by local musician Dick Wagner, then of the Michigan band the Bossmen, and later a guitarist with Alice Cooper.

“Dick told me that his friends in a local band were the first band outside of Norm Sundholm’s own band to play the new Sunn amplifiers, and ‘Would I like to see one?’” West wrote. “I said, ‘What the heck, bring one in.’ The amp arrived in the shop and I proceeded to take it apart. Much to my surprise, it contained a completely stock Dynaco Mark III power amp and a very little modified Dynaco PAM-I monaural preamp.

“They were putting these items in a cabinet, putting JBL speakers in a cabinet, and getting large bucks for these things. I thought, If they can do it, why can’t I? Thus was born the original spark that led to West Laboratories and West guitar amps.”

Outside the chassis, West amps carried enormous Dynaco transformers, with the output transformer clocking in even bigger and heavier than the power transformer on the 200-watt Fillmore. Both were mounted at one end of the chassis — an odd choice, but not unprecedented — so these heads were heavy and unbalanced to carry. But hey, that’s what roadies are for.

Rob Grange, a bassist who later toured and recorded with Ted Nugent and the Amboy Dukes, built the cabinets

“OTHER AMP MAKERS WERE GETTING LARGE BUCKS FOR THESE THINGS. I THOUGHT, IF THEY CAN DO IT, WHY CAN’T I?”

— D A V E W E S T

for West Laboratories from 1970 onward. “[Dave] was like a mad scientist in the shop,” Grange recalled for the *Lansing State Journal* article. “He’d get these Fender amps and rip them all apart to see how they were made, and beat them up. He should

have been a multimillionaire. He was way ahead of his time.”

Whatever their origins, West’s amps produced big sounds, and they satisfied players and audiences with the massive sound-pressure levels required in

rock venues in the day. Punchy, powerful and largely clean until pretty far up on the dial, the bigger Fillmore and Grande produced tones that — if

we’re seeking more familiar reference points — were more akin to Hiwatt’s hi-fidelity breed of rig than Marshall’s crunchy, grindy flavors.

In the early ’70s, West signed over his brand name in what appears to have been a failed bid for wider national distribution. Ultimately, he turned away from the business after a dispute over the declining quality of the amp designs. “I walked away from the company in 1972, and left it to its horrible, solid-state ‘Motengator’ future,” he said, referencing the model name of a later West solid-state amplifier. In the 1980s, he launched a computer software business and made it his central pursuit for several years. But according to Aaron West, his dad continued to build the tube amplifiers that bore his name. He was working on three new amp prototypes when his health began to decline a year before his death. Said Aaron, “He never really stopped.”



Mark Farner's 1967 Musicraft Messenger (with taped f-holes) and West Grande head with XRS 2x12 cabinet



The original Grande design



The J500



The Mini I combo



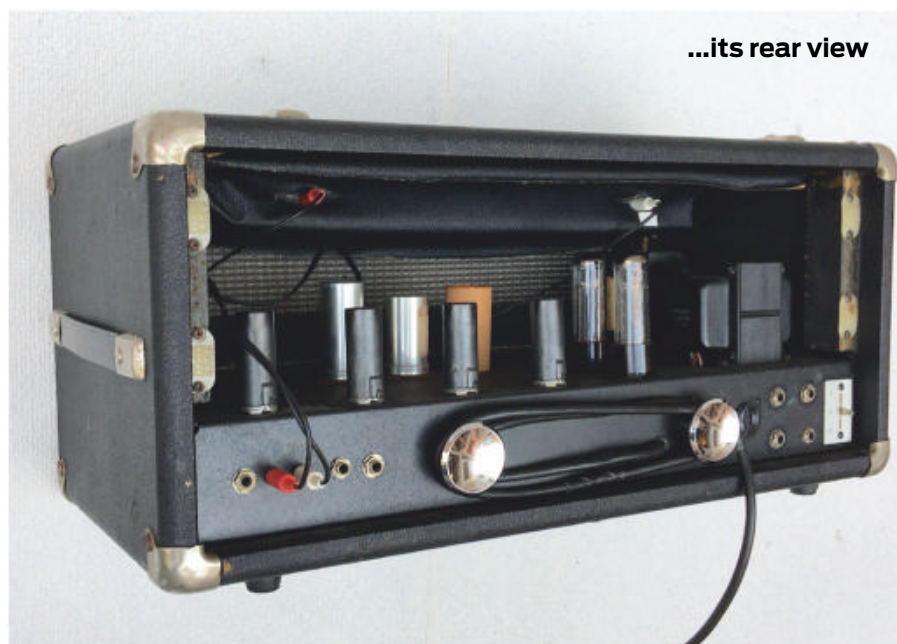
The Fillmore, front...



An Avalon R and...



...and back



...its rear view

John Sykes onstage at the Hammersmith
Odeon, London, March 12, 1983



THE **SHRED**PLANET

A new breed of virtuoso guitarists invades hard rock,
moving it further from its blues-rock origins.

JUST AS HARD ROCK had splintered into glam, at the dawn of the '80s it fractured again into a new brand of metal that incorporated some of its glamiest pretensions, as practiced by emerging bands like Def Leppard and Mötley Crüe. At the same time, established acts like Kiss and Queen skittered away from their hard-rock

roots to adopt, respectively, a more metal-pop and pop-rock sound.

Through it all, one artist led the way for most hard-rock guitarists: Eddie Van Halen. The early '80s saw his band reach the heights of popularity, resulting in a wave of guitarists who raised the bar for technique, speed and virtuoso shredding. John Sykes, George Lynch and Warren DeMartini were just the tip of the

supersized iceberg that included guitar wizards like Steve Vai and Joe Satriani, each of whom would carve out his own place in the more progressive realms of instrumental rock.

But not everyone abandoned hard-rock's origins. Slash and Mötley Crüe's Mick Mars showed there was still a place for blues-based lead work — and stood out from the pointy-guitar-wielding pack.

PETE CRONIN/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

JOHN SYKES

The former Thin Lizzy and Whitesnake guitarist supercharged blues-based riffing and soloing, and brought it squealing, and shredding into the brand-new decade.

JOHN SYKES MAY not be a household name, but any fan of '80s hard rock knows his work. That's Sykes' dynamic playing — part masterful melodist, part muscular shredder — on Whitesnake mega-hits like “Still of the Night,” “Is This Love” and the indomitable “Here I Go Again.” Describing his goal with the formerly pub-rocking Whitesnake — whom he joined in 1983 and exited, under acrimonious circumstances, just after recording the massive-selling 1987

self-titled album — he said he wanted to bring in a “modern, edgy guitar sound with melody, finesse and drive,” and that he did. It's also a pretty accurate description of Sykes' guitar approach throughout his career.

Sykes came on the scene in 1980 as a member of New Wave of British Heavy Metal also-rans Tygers of Pan Tang, but within a few he years hooked up with Phil Lynott in the final version of Thin Lizzy, joining the band for one album, *Thunder and Lightning*, and a farewell tour.

Tracks like “Thunder and Lightning” and the Lynott/Sykes co-write “Cold Sweat” showcased his massive, blues-rock-on-steroids-tone, which came courtesy of his 1978 Les Paul Custom “Black Beauty” through modded Marshalls (later Mesa/Boogies). They also demonstrated a truly overwhelming lead

style influenced by Sykes' rock and metal forebears (Page, Blackmore, Gary Moore, et al.), with the intensity increased by 10 notches. In his hands, pentatonic runs were blistering bursts of alternate-picked lines that climaxed in screaming sustained notes and squealing artificial harmonics, spiked with tapped flurries,

frantic tremolo-picked phrases and wide, vocal-like vibratos.

Sykes later helped bring Whitesnake kicking and screaming into the shred-obsessed '80s, where they sold a

bazillion units of their 1987 self-titled album. For what it's worth, Whitesnake leader David Coverdale had to hire not one but two guitarists to fill his prodigious shoes after Sykes left the band that same year.

KEY TRACK: “STILL OF THE NIGHT”

DAVID COVERDALE HAD TO HIRE TWO GUITARISTS TO FILL SYKES' SHOES AFTER HE LEFT IN 1987

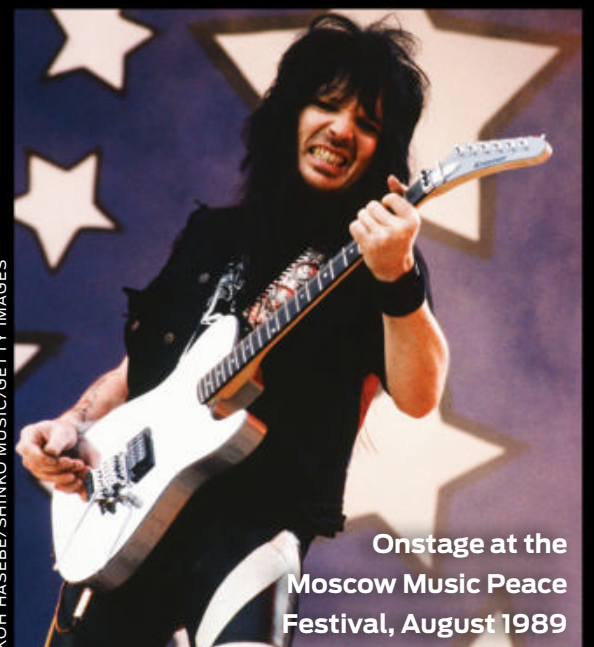
MICK MARS

The Mötley Crüe traditionalist churned out some of the loudest, rudest and most aggressive guitar licks of the '80s.

LIKE ACE FREHLEY, Mick Mars had the misfortune of working with bandmates whose antics, both onstage and off, effectively overshadowed him. What's more, Mars was a few years older than his '80s guitar-playing peers when he joined the band and something of a traditionalist compared to the rest of the Sunset Strip crew. After all, he had grown up listening to the likes of Clapton, Beck and Mike Bloomfield and playing in '70s-era blues rock bar bands, rather than woodshedding two-handed tapping and other EVH techniques in his bedroom.

Which means that he came at '80s hard rock and metal from his own distinct, and less-peacocking, angle. “My goal was always to play something that fit and something that was memorable, not just a barrage of notes,” Mars said. “And because I didn't play all the scales or do this or that, people thought that I was this crap guitar player.”

Maybe at one time. Nowadays it's widely known that Mars was the Crüe's secret songwriting and sonic weapon. He co-wrote '80s anthems like “Girls, Girls, Girls” and “Dr. Feelgood,” and where many of his Sunset Strip peers liked trebly, overly distorted tones, his sound was flat-out massive. Credit this in part to his decision, beginning with Mötley's 1981 debut, *Too Fast for Love*, to tune down a full step, as well as his attention to gear. In the band's early days, he was often seen wielding a not-insubstantial Les Paul Custom “Black Beauty,” and more recently has kept an arsenal of humbucker-loaded Strats nearby. His amp setup, meanwhile, has evolved to



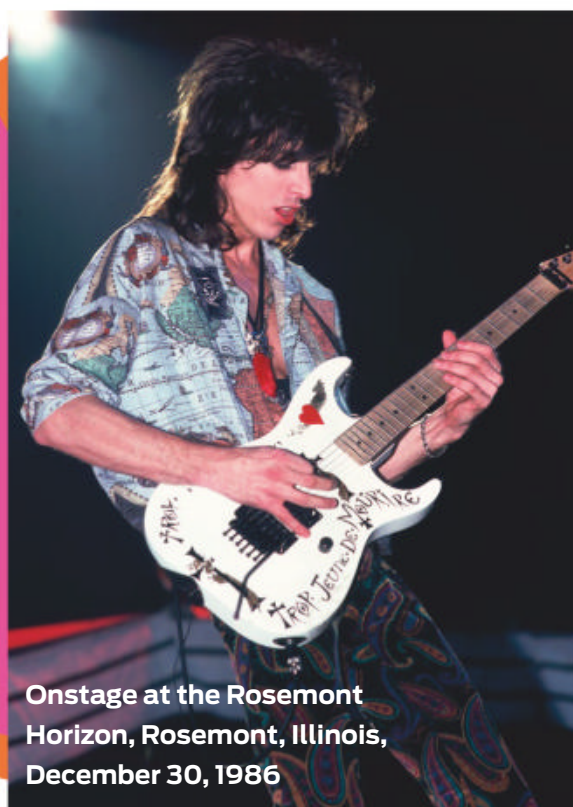
Onstage at the Moscow Music Peace Festival, August 1989

include a massive assortment of powerful units, from Marshall JCM800s and Soldano SLO-100s to Fryettes, Hiwatts and Riveras. “When I'm standing in front of my amp onstage, it's putting out 124 dB,” he's said. “But it doesn't hurt. It's just a really fat, warm tone.”

KEY TRACK: “GIRLS, GIRLS, GIRLS”

WARREN DeMARTINI

The Ratt man came out of the cellar and rose to the top of the post-EVH shredder heap.



Onstage at the Rosemont Horizon, Rosemont, Illinois, December 30, 1986

PAUL NATKIN/GETTY IMAGES

WARREN DeMARTINI WAS just 19 when he joined Ratt, and it didn't take him long to achieve rock immortality. One of the first things he brought to the band was the partial-chord-specked, insanely catchy, EVH-like main riff to what would become the band's breakthrough hit, "Round and Round."

DeMartini (along with co-guitarist Robbin Crosby) remained a first-rate riff man throughout the decade, and you'd be hard pressed to find a budding '80s player who didn't log endless hours learning how to play the hard-charging six-string parts that powered arena-rock anthems like "Lay It Down," "Back for More" and "You're in Love." But it was as a soloist that DeMartini truly shined and stunned. He was part of the first wave of post-EVH hotshots who could rip through insanely intricate note flurries effortlessly. And he did it with little more than a custom-graphic emblazoned superstrat (Charvels, in DeMartini's case) loaded with a high-output humbucker (a Seymour Duncan JB) and

a Floyd Rose, and plugged into a cranked amp (often a Marshall "Plexi," though he used a Fender Super Champ on Ratt's 1984 full-length debut, *Out of the Cellar*).

What's more, DeMartini's distinctive vibrato and use of techniques like four-notes-per-string runs and hammer-ons and pull-offs to create long, smooth legato lines added a layer of melody and finesse that many of his shred peers lacked. He could even get super-bluesy, as on the 1988 hybrid-picked hit "Way Cool Jr." The '80s, he has said, "was an exciting time for me because I had all these techniques and patterns but had never used them exactly in that way. So there was an element of coming up with something almost while I was actually recording it."

Ratt broke up (for the first time) in the early '90s, after which DeMartini assumed the lead-guitar positions in Dokken and Whitesnake, which left him having to master the guitar parts of predecessors like George Lynch, John Sykes and Steve Vai — no easy task! As always, he handled the riffs, licks and solos with supremely shreddy style.

KEY TRACK: "ROUND AND ROUND"

GEORGE LYNCH

The one-time Sunset Strip peer of Eddie Van Halen blazed a unique and idiosyncratic shred path through the '80s, and continues to today.

THERE WERE PLENTY of hotshot guitarists tearing it up on the Sunset Strip in the mid-to-late '70s, but three undoubtedly stood out: Eddie Van Halen, then-Quiet Riot guitarist Randy Rhoads...and George Lynch.

At the time, Lynch was playing with a band called the Boyz, who had enough clout — and Lynch enough of a rep as a

supreme shredder — that, in an oft-told story, Kiss's Gene Simmons and Paul Stanley came to see them headline at the Starwood in L.A. The story ends, of course, with Simmons taking the opening band that night, Van Halen, back to New York to record a demo. The rest, as they say, is history.

Lynch, however, went on to do just fine himself, hooking up with singer Don Dokken in his namesake band, Dokken, and quickly becoming lauded as one of the most technically proficient and idiosyncratic shredders in the '80s hard-rock and metal scene. His solos often took an "anything goes" approach, mixing pentatonics with more exotic scales and diminished tones, switching

between majors and minors, and incorporating wide finger stretches, warped vibratos, whammy-bar pitch bends, tapping, string skipping, screaming harmonics and more, all of it enacted with precision and at superhuman speeds on his custom-graphic ESP, and sometimes Charvel, superstrats. (He also made heavy use of a hand-built parts guitar that he dubbed Tiger.) When Lynch brought it all together, as on the 1987 instrumental "Mr. Scary," he created one of the most iconic guitar songs of the era. Since the '90s, he has been in and out of Dokken as well as led his own band, Lynch Mob.

KEY TRACK: "MR. SCARY"

SLASH

The top Gunner reintroduced blues-based riffing and soloing (not to mention the Les Paul) to rock and roll, and is responsible for one of the most famous guitar licks of all time.

BY THE MID '80s, the hard-rock guitar landscape was overrun with pointy-guitar-wielding, Aqua Net-abusing "Shreddy" Van Halen speed demons.

Until Slash came along. The Guns N' Roses guitarist is widely credited with triggering a 180-degree turn in the guitar universe, injecting the scene with a much-needed shot of bluesy soul and classic-rock style. And while those hair-conscious guitarists didn't exactly disappear with his arrival, you could rightly argue that hard-rock guitar playing styles changed dramatically after Slash came on the scene.

Furthermore, while there was certainly still a healthy representation of custom-graphic superstrats in Sunset



MARC S. CANTER/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

With Guns N' Roses, opening for Cheap Trick, at Fender's Ballroom, Long Beach, California, December 21, 1986

Strip clubs and MTV videos post 1987, when Guns N' Roses released their epochal debut, *Appetite for Destruction*, Slash returned the Les Paul to its iconic status — even if, as we all know now, his *Appetite* studio model was actually a copy built by luthier Kris Derrig.

Whether or not you buy into the mythology that's been built around him over the decades, it's hard to deny that Slash is the most influential and recognizable hard-rock guitarist of the past 35 years. His tone is so revered that a literal cottage industry of signature gear — led by massively popular Gibson guitars and Marshall amps, but also including pickups, pedals, strings and more — has blossomed around him, with generations of players aiming to nail his gritty, biting and bright rhythm sound as well as his

celebrated, ridiculously round, honeyed and often wah-inflected lead tone.

As for his playing? Suffice it to say many of his riffs and solos — from "Welcome to the Jungle" and "Paradise City" to "November Rain" and "Anastasia" — are standards of the guitar repertoire, as is the opening lick to "Sweet Child o' Mine."

These days, Slash is as busy as ever, releasing albums with his own band, Slash Featuring Myles Kennedy and the Conspirators, and taking part in

Guns N' Roses' Not in This Lifetime... outing, the third highest-grossing concert tour of all-time. At the dawn of his fifth decade in the public consciousness, he's still planted firmly at the top of the guitar heap.

KEY TRACK: "SWEET CHILD O' MINE"

THERE'S '80S HARD-ROCK GUITAR PLAYING PRE-SLASH AND POST-SLASH



EBET ROBERTS/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

George Lynch performing with Dokken in 1986

NUNO BETTENCOURT

The funky and fearless guitar acrobat is quite possibly the truest descendent of Eddie Van Halen's wild, boundless style.

NUNO BETTENCOURT DIDN'T appear on the guitar scene until the tail end of the '80s, but even then, at the height of the shred-guitar boom, he instantly stood out from the pack with his unique rhythmic approach, heightened melodic and songwriting sense, and absolutely devastating chops.

Bettencourt's playing was spiked with blistering picking runs, wildly off-kilter licks, classically influenced (but hardly neoclassical) tapping, and deep-in-the-pocket, syncopated rhythm work, and he approached it all with style, whimsy and a sense of barely controlled chaos. In that regard, of all the Eddie Van Halen acolytes — and by 1989, when Extreme's self-titled debut was released, there were

many — Nuno is arguably the one who best reflected that same spirit, groove and sense of high-wire bravado. More than 30 years after the fact, the lead work on tracks like "Play With Me" and "Mutha (Don't Wanna Go to School Today)" is absolutely mind boggling.

Which doesn't even touch on Bettencourt's true tour de force, the following year's *Pornograffiti*, which expressed his Brian May and Queen love as much as his EVH adoration, resulting in a pomp-metal masterpiece. And while the big hit was the acoustic lighter-waver "More Than Words," which showcased his harmony vocals as much as his guitar, the six-string work on the record represents the height of the era. For just

one head-spinning example, check out the extended, unaccompanied intro to "He-Man Woman Hater," where Nuno absolutely shreds "Flight of the Bumblebee."

Since then, he has recorded solo albums, launched his own bands, like Mourning Widows, played with Jane's Addiction frontman Perry Farrell in Satellite Party and served as the lead guitarist for pop superstar Rihanna. And he continues to play with Extreme, who have a new album scheduled for release this year. But no matter what it is, he's always had the same credo: "Be sincere... and love what you're doing."

TOP TRACK: "HE-MAN WOMAN HATER"



JOBV SESSIONS

TOM MORELLO

His inventive use of effects and his activist stance place him in a league all his own.

THE IMPORTANCE OF having an instantly recognizable style was clearly understood by guitarist, songwriter, singer and political activist Tom Morello, who radically reshaped the sound of rock guitar in the '90s with the rap-metal band Rage Against the Machine, and later, Audioslave and Prophets of Rage. Morello basically invented a new way of speaking guitar by infusing his crushing riff-rock style — which he says is based on '70s-era Jimmy Page, Tony Iommi and Ritchie Blackmore — with noise-making elements of Public Enemy's Bomb Squad productions, a major influence on Morello and his use of effects like the DigiTech Whammy Pedal.

Morello typically wields a Telecaster in drop-D tuning or, for standard tuning,

a customized Strat-style guitar with two humbuckers and an aftermarket hockey-stick neck. A few years back, he took a break from his hammering rhythms and incendiary solos laced with tapping and tremolo dive-bombing (as heard on songs like "Killing in the Name" and "Know Your Enemy") to usher in a softer side via his solo acoustic work as the Nightwatchman and the Street Sweeper Social Club. Underscoring his artistic flexibility, he's worked with artists as diverse as Wu-Tang Clan and Bruce Springsteen, and stepped in for E Street Band guitarist Stevie Van Zandt on the latter's 2013 Australian tour.

On the gear front, Fender last year released the Tom Morello Stratocaster



JOBV SESSIONS

— featuring a Floyd Rose double-locking trem, kill switch and "Soul Power" sticker — and Morello recently co-developed a new signature Dunlop Cry Baby wah. It's bright red, of course, and inscribed with two of his sayings: "Sometimes History Needs a Push" and "You don't need a weapon when you were born one."

TOP TRACK: "BULLS ON PARADE"

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18 years of seamless operation and our users' satisfaction

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We have everything for all of your needs. Just open <https://avxlive.icu>

MIKE McCREADY



HIS POWERFUL LEADS helped make Pearl Jam one of the biggest acts to emerge from Seattle in the 1990s. Inspired by the likes of Jimi Hendrix and other blues-rock players,

McCready plays by feel rather than technique. His solos on standout tracks like “Alive” and “Yellow Ledbetter” are among the finest in the 1990s hard-rock canon. And don’t forget his hand in Temple of the Dog, Mad Season and Walking Papers.

TOP TRACK: “ALIVE”

PETER HAYES



TAKING THEIR NAME from Marlon Brando’s bike gang in *The Wild One*, Black Rebel Motorcycle Club deliver blistering garage rock that harkens to hard rock’s primordial

rumblings. Fueling it all is Peter Hayes’ fierce but economical guitar work, played with altered tunings and stereo rigs drenched in effects. More textural than melodic, Hayes’s style is powerful, dynamic and full of rock and roll attitude.

TOP TRACK: “WEAPON OF CHOICE”

JERRY CANTRELL



THE ALICE IN CHAINS guitarist’s fondness for metal is obvious in his use of dissonant harmony, Sabbathian string bends and the Phrygian mode — consider the main

verse riff in “Would” as just one example of the latter. But the fast legato and lyrical pentatonic lines he plays in tracks like “Grind” reveal his early influences, namely Hendrix and Van Halen, while songs like “Nutshell” find him fusing elements of traditional blues phrasing with hard-rock attitude.

TOP TRACK: “ROOSTER”

“I’M INTO PEOPLE WHO TRY TO BRING SOME KIND OF MELODIC STRUCTURE TO THE SOLO, SO IT’S ALMOST LIKE A HOOK” — ANDREW STOCKDALE

DEAN DeLEO



AS STONE TEMPLE PILOTS’ guitarist, Dean DeLeo has made his mark with inventive chord voicings, exquisitely layered tones, and visceral but melodic leads, creating some of the

most sonically and harmonically interesting and innovative writing and playing in the rock guitar lexicon. He’s also a talented riffmeister and tasteful soloist, but DeLeo leaves his indelible mark without getting in the way of the vocals, allowing the songs to breathe by using space and chord inversions.

TOP TRACK: “TRIPPIN’ ON A HOLE IN A PAPER HEART”

JUSTIN & DAN HAWKINS



AS THE GUITAR tandem in the Darkness, brothers Justin and Dan Hawkins lay down authentic-sounding ’70s-style riffs and solos in their glam-inspired hard rock. But look

beyond their signature sense of humor and campy, larger-than-life personae and you’ll find two seriously talented guitarists who, between them, can cover everything from filthy edge-of-seat rock and roll (Dan) to Angus-inspired riffing and heavily vibratoed Brian May lead lines (Justin).

TOP TRACK: “I BELIEVE IN A THING CALLED LOVE”

ANDREW STOCKDALE



WOLFMOTHER EARNED COMPARISONS to Led Zeppelin, Blue Cheer and Black Sabbath when they roared out of Sydney, Australia, in 2005. Credit for that is

down to the guitar work of Andrew Stockdale, who counts Jimmy Page, Keith Richards, George Harrison and Robby Krieger among his main influences. “I like guitarists who don’t necessarily just shred,” he’s said. “I’m into people who try to bring some kind of melodic structure to the solo, so it’s almost like a hook.”

TOP TRACK: “JOKER AND THE THIEF”



John Frusciante onstage in Germany during the Red Hot Chili Peppers' *Blood Sugar Sex Magik* tour, February 12, 1992

IAN DICKSON/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

Funky Monk

Learn how to master John Frusciante's exemplary rhythm-playing approaches on the Red Hot Chili Peppers' classic *Blood Sugar Sex Magik*.

BY CHRIS BUONO

ON SEPTEMBER 24, 1991, three albums were released that would go on to change my world. Two were from bands out of Seattle, and the third from Los Angeles. Care to guess which albums? Here are some hints: Both bands from Seattle named their albums with words spliced together to form one perplexing title. One was a colloquialism that a youthful grunge culture with no spellcheck at the ready blindly accepted, while the other was a snarky play on words meant to scoff at a Montrose song. The L.A.-based band named theirs with not a care in the world for syntax or for spelling all the words properly. Despite all three bands disregarding the written word, this trifecta would go on to sell in the millions, define a generation and basically change everything for everyone. Give up? It was Nirvana's *Nevermind*, Soundgarden's *Badmotorfinger* and the Red Hot Chili Peppers' *Blood Sugar Sex Magik*.

For me, the latter's impact was so great that it altered my own artistic trajectory almost overnight and set me on a path that I still enthusiastically follow nearly 30 years later. This is due, in large part, to the fearless playing and composing of a then 21-year-old guitarist named John Frusciante in his first tenure with the Peppers. Together with his bandmates — vocalist Anthony Kiedis, drummer Chad Smith and bassist Flea — and lauded über-producer Rick Rubin, Frusciante created this seminal suite of well-written songs that featured some of the phattest and funkier riffs and grooves ever. Armed with vintage Fender Strats and Jaguars, mythic Marshall amps, such as the 100-watt Super Bass and the beefy 200-watt Major heads, and an array of scrappy pedals, including a Boss DS-1, an Ibanez WH-10 wah and a pivotal Boss CE-1 analog chorus, Frusciante wrote the manual for '90s funk guitar that still invaluablely informs

today's players. *Blood Sugar Sex Magik* is not only the album that made the RHCPs superstars, it's also the one that made every aspiring rock and pop guitarist (including yours truly) grab a Strat, take an ad out in a local music rag and start a funk band. Whether you had an established connection to funk music or you were a clean slate, after hearing *Blood Sugar Sex Magik* you were hooked and wanted to sound like it. In this lesson, I'm going to show you what I did to do just that.

To wrap my head and hands around any new style, I examine its best practitioners by studying and learning an entire record. Whatever sticks I then morph, or "recompose," into my own. The examples throughout this lesson follow that ethos and highlight the essential concepts I gleaned from Frusciante's stellar work throughout *Blood Sugar Sex Magik*. Starting it off is a look at his clever uses of 4th intervals, or

MORE ONLINE!

For audio of this lesson, go to guitarplayer.com/feb21-lesson1

4ths, for short. **Ex. 1** is a riff in D minor not unlike the intro from “If You Have to Ask.” Making use primarily of a perfect 4th (C-F) on the G and B strings, this two-bar vamp rocks to a foundational 16th-note polyrhythm featuring percussive, fret-hand-muted “scratch” strums. Indicated by Xs in the notation, those pitchless scratches are achieved by loosening your fret-hand’s grips on the strings while still lightly touching them as you strum with the pick. To play this figure without any unwanted string noise creeping in, try fingering the C-F dyad with the tips of your 2nd and 3rd fingers while your 1st finger lightly lays across the top three strings. For the final two chords in bar 2, shift your hand so that your 1st finger frets the G string at the 5th fret and the rest will fall into place.

Inspired by the open high-E-string idea that Frusciante employed in the intro and verses of “The Power of Equality,” **Ex. 2** incorporates additional harmony (Dmaj9). In this example, the initial perfect 4th (D-G) should be fretted with your 3rd and 4th fingers, with the 1st finger then reaching back to grab the 5th-fret E note on the B string. In the Dmaj9 chord, switch to the fingering scheme from Ex. 1 for the fretted C# and F# notes (2nd and 3rd fingers). This will set you up nicely for the melodic movement on top of the chord during beat 3 of bar 2. At all times, be careful not to arch your 1st finger so that you don’t inadvertently dampen the open high-E string.

Frusciante is a master of crafting irresistibly catchy single-note melodic verse riffs that sit perfectly behind vocals, as epitomized by the chart-topping single “Give It Away.” **Ex. 3** similarly travels from 5th to 8th positions as it juxtaposes major and minor tonalities. Like Frusciante, use an aggressive pick attack to coax the most tone from each note, and don’t overlook the quarter-step pull-bend inflection applied to the 5th-fret C note on beat 3 in bar 1. Using these subtle bends, also known as “curls,” is a staple phrasing technique that Frusciante liberally employs in his playing.

CHRIS MCCAY/WIREIMAGE/GETTY IMAGES



Onstage at the Arena at Gwinnett, Duluth, Georgia, October 26, 2006

Ex. 1

Dm7

Musical notation for Ex. 1, Dm7. The notation shows a 4/4 time signature with a 16th-note polyrhythm. The guitar tablature (TAB) is provided below the staff, showing fret numbers and string positions. The TAB includes 'x' marks indicating fret-hand-muted strums.

Ex. 2

Em7

Dmaj9

Em7

Dmaj9

Musical notation for Ex. 2, showing a sequence of chords: Em7, Dmaj9, Em7, and Dmaj9. The notation includes a melodic line with a pull-bend inflection. The guitar tablature (TAB) is provided below the staff, showing fret numbers and string positions. The TAB includes 'x' marks indicating fret-hand-muted strums.

Ex. 3

N.C. (A7)

Musical notation for Ex. 3, N.C. (A7). The notation shows a single-note melodic line with a pull-bend inflection. The guitar tablature (TAB) is provided below the staff, showing fret numbers and string positions. The TAB includes 'x' marks indicating fret-hand-muted strums.

Examples 6 and 7 demonstrate John's penchant for using barred double- and triple-stops on the treble strings. Ex. 6 is informed by the "Mellowship" chorus groove while at times incorporating a minor add9 sound by raising the note on the 1st string a whole step (two frets) above the barre. You can hear these same kinds of voicings in the intro riff and chorus sections in "Naked in the Rain." While this two-bar groove doesn't have you playing consistent 16th notes like Ex. 1, it's still to your advantage to have your strumming strokes follow a constant 16th-note motion, which some call 16th-note pendulum strumming, and apply the downstroke or upstroke

GREETSIA TENT/WIREIMAGE/GETTY IMAGES



**Performing at the Megaland,
Landgraaf, Netherlands, June 5, 2006**

Ex. 4

N.C. (B7)

Ex.5

N.C. (E7)

E9 E6

Fmaj9 C7

E7#9

Musical notation for "The Wind" (12/4). The staff shows a melody in G major (three sharps) with a 12/4 time signature. The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes, with some measures containing rests. The TAB below the staff shows the fretting for the melody, with numbers 7, 9, 8, 5, 8, 8, 7, 7, 6, 6, 7, 7.

Ex.6

Bm(add9)

Bm

 $C_{\#m}$

Bm(add9)

Bm

$$B_m(\text{add9})$$
[illegible]

Ex. 7

N.C. (E₂m7)

Fm

 $E_b m$

1

 $3\frac{1}{2}m$

Frusciante's chorus riff writing is another brilliant aspect of his musicality. My personal favorite is the deep pocket heard in "My Lovely Man," an homage to fallen founding RHCP guitarist Hillel Slovak, whom Frusciante credits as his main source of inspiration and guidance when he was first getting his own funk chops together. **Ex. 8** captures the spirit of the iv-v-i changes (Am7 - Bm7 - Em7) in the chorus. Note the use of eighth and 16th rests on several of the downbeats in bars 1 and 2, as well as the jumps from the whole-step hammer-ons on the 4th string to the perfect-4th dyads on the top two strings. Although in this song Frusciante played his finishing touches in Em in 7th position, I shifted the idea up to 12th position and added an additional lower E root note on the D string's 14th fret, much like "Catfish" Collins did on funk standards such as "Soul Power" and "Flashlight."

Once more resting on the downbeat, **Ex. 9** chromatically descends a Dm riff starting on the root, much like Frusciante does in the chorus riff in “Power of Equality,” before it switches to a more minimalist approach in bar 2, reminiscent of “If You Have to Ask.” For extra “stink,” be sure to nail the staccato phrasing throughout bar 1 and keep it clean as you play the syncopated 10th-fret C notes (the b7) in bar 2 following the slinky three-fret slide from A (the 5th) to C.

Ex. 10 offers another example of John's supercatchy and grooving chorus riff-writing style, with a concentrated approach inspired by his phrasing in "Funky Monks." Bar 1 is close to the original idea, with an added pull-down bend on the low-E string borrowed from "The Greeting Song." Bar 2, however, takes John's riff and displaces it up an octave while maintaining the pitch range of the low-F and low-E root notes.

Stepping away from riffs that serve verse and chorus sections, **Ex. 11** offers up

[illegible]

Ex. 9 N.C. (Dm) (Dm7) (G)



T
TAB

12—12—12—11—11—11—10—10 12—11 10

x
x
x

10—13

10—10

Ex. 10

A5 N.C. (C5) (F7) E

full

3 4 4 3 3 2 11 10 11 10 8 10 9 9 1/4

Ex. 11 N.C. (Gm) Gm/B $\flat$ F5 G5 N.C.

TAB

0 0 3 5 x x 3 5 5 5 3 3 3 3 4 3 1 2

Ex. 12

E7#9 G/D E7#9 A/E

TAB

0 8 7 7 0 5 5 0 8 7 7 5 6 7 7 2



a brawny mash-up riff in G minor that's a condensed amalgamation of the "Suck My Kiss" and "Funky Monks" intro figures. As you've come to know, a consistent ingredient in Frusciante's secret musical sauce is the use of staccato (short and crisp) articulations and phrasing throughout.

Taking a cue from the mammoth, yet carefully spaced outro riff from "Apache Rose Peacock," **Ex. 12** strategically applies a couple of Frusciante's go-to chord voicings on the middle four strings for E7#9 and the 2nd-inversion major chords G/D and A/E.

Applying Frusciante-style tight 16th-note syncopations to a single-note line, **Ex. 13** twists the intro riff to "Mellowship" into a Hendrix-like vibe on the bottom two strings. The influence of both Hendrix and Curtis Mayfield is undoubtedly heard in John's rhythm work. Consider his playing throughout the breakout single "Under the Bridge." In **Ex. 14**, a similarly styled approach is shown, demonstrating that time-tested style of clean-electric chordal embellishment, with tastefully soulful, decorative hammer-ons and pull-offs to "chordal extensions" nested within larger common barre chord shapes.

Ex. 15 takes you on an eight-bar journey reminiscent of the outro section of "Sir Psycho Sexy." Throughout this jam, you'll find defining Hendrix-style elements, such as the clearly stated major or minor chord or root of the implied chord at the start of bars 1–7. In addition to the nested, ringing legato embellishments throughout, oblique, pedal steel-style bends are featured in bars 1–4, which bring to mind Jimi's classic riffing in his solo in "Little Wing." Finally, regarding the mash-up elements, look for added expanded motives from Frusciante's own trick bag that we've presented in this lesson.

Hopefully, playing these recomposed renditions of John Frusciante's rhythm guitar creations featured on *Blood Sugar Sex Magik* will inspire you to do the same on your own. While it's a challenging journey, it's also one that's fun and potentially very rewarding. Keep the funk alive! 🎸

Ex. 13

N.C. (E5)
w/ dist.

TAB

Ex. 14

E B C#m G#m A

TAB

Ex. 15

Em Eb

TAB

Bb D

TAB

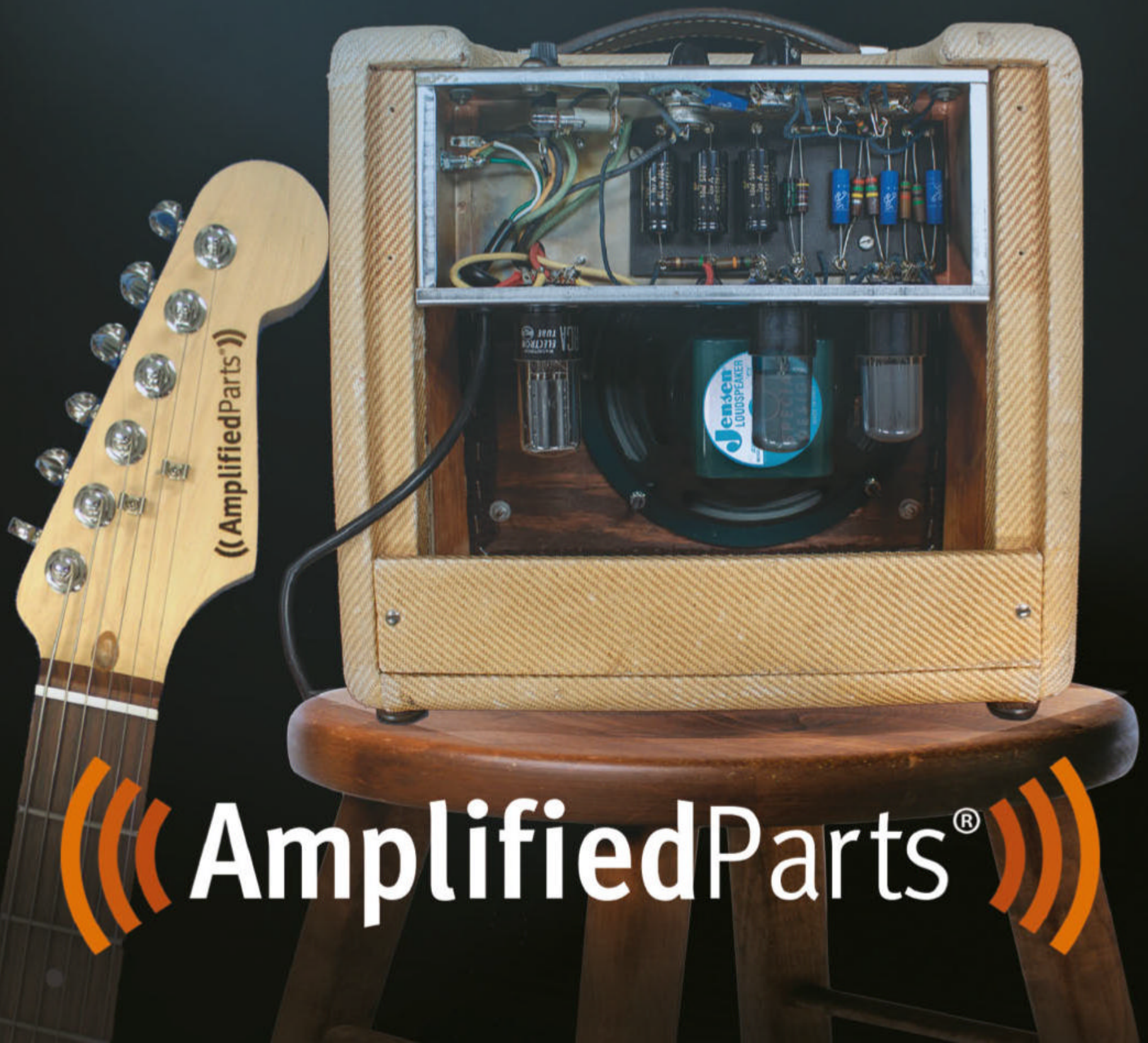
N.C. (Ab) Cm

TAB

Ab N.C. (G)

TAB

Build Your Tone



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Good Hangs

These three strap-button strategies can make a big difference in how your guitar plays.

BY JIMMY LESLIE

THE STRAP BUTTON is easily overlooked, but its placement is a huge factor in playability and a small factor sonically. At least one button is generally provided by the manufacturer and placed smack dab in the middle of the lower bout. Placement of second strap button is such a personal choice that some manufacturers leave it up to the player. Other manufacturers make the decision for some models but not others. So why do they put those strap buttons where they do, and if not, where should you?

GOING STRAPLESS OR BUTTONLESS

Players who sit and strum don't need a strap, let alone a strap button. Everyone else needs a strategy for second-button placement or can simply leave it off. The upside of having no button is having no intrusion into the instrument or obstacle for the fretting hand to get caught on. For eons, folk performers have used a bit of string or lace to tie the strap around the headstock, just past the nut. The resulting hang feels natural for playing in a straightforward style, where you can use your fretting hand to "drive" the hang as close to or far from your body as you like. Think of Johnny Cash. The downside can be literal. If you adjust the angle to allow for more advanced techniques further up the fretboard, the guitar can slide down off the side of the hip.

PLACEMENT ON THE TREBLE SIDE OF THE NECK

The most common place to put the second strap button is about halfway up the treble side of the neck attachment, as it is on all acoustic-electric Martins and many Taylors. That's usually a very good-feeling hang, as the strap pulls the guitar from the outside of the neck, in toward the player's body. Disadvantages include dampening from considerable body contact as well as having the button to contend with when playing in the highest position. Interestingly, it's somehow not that intrusive unless you're really going after the highest frets on a cutaway instrument.

PROS AND CONS OF OTHER PLACEMENTS

The primary advantage of placing the strap button away from the neck attachment is to remove it as an obstacle for ripping away up in the "short rows." For example, Taylor's Builder's Edition K24ce and 324ce guitars have the strap buttons placed just inside the heel at the base of the neck block because those guitars feature a double-beveled cutaway designed to make upper-register playing a breeze. Disadvantages are that the guitar doesn't hang as close to the body, and the neck tends to dive downward when not in play with a hand holding it up. On the other hand, the back is quite free to vibrate.

Two other guitars that I happened to have on hand utilize completely different approaches. Both the Martin SC-13E and the Fender Paramount Travel guitar have the second strap button on the top side. The downside to that strategy is it requires another hole in the instrument plus an internal wood block to secure the button, as the side alone is simply not strong enough. The upside is that the hang is nice and snug, and the button is completely out of the way. Interestingly, the first strap button on both instruments is placed up near the top of the guitar rather than in the middle of the lower bout, due to battery compartments. Both tend to hug the hip and belly well, which is great when moving around onstage but does equate to slightly more back dampening, and the combination of those button placements facilitates a hang where the fretboard faces slightly upward for fantastic access.

There are benefits and drawbacks to every strap-button strategy. Experiment with different options at the music store before you pull the trigger on a new instrument or drill a new hole in an old acoustic friend. It's definitely worth the effort to get a good hang with excellent playability. 🎸

Special thanks to Tim Teel at Martin and Andy Powers at Taylor for their insights on this column.



Johnny Cash, master of the buttonless hang

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

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Epiphone

LIMITED EDITION 1959 LES PAUL STANDARD

TESTED BY DAVE HUNTER

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN two of our most storied American guitar makers goes back to 1957, when Gibson purchased the New York-based Epiphone company and applied the brand name to new guitars built alongside its own in the Kalamazoo factory. Come 1970, Epiphone was shifted into more of a downmarket option, with production moved overseas and prices aimed at entry-level players. The new Epiphone Limited Edition 1959 Les Paul Standard, however, represents a return home of sorts. Although manufactured in China, it's the first

SPECIFICATIONS

Limited Edition 1959 Les Paul Standard

CONTACT epiphone.com

PRICE \$799 street

NUT Graph Tech NuBone, 1 11/16" wide

NECK Mahogany, 24.75" scale length, rounded "C" profile

FRETBOARD Indian laurel, 12" radius

FRETS 22 medium-jumbo

TUNERS Epiphone Deluxe with tulip keys

BODY Solid mahogany back with carved maple top and AAA flamed maple veneer

BRIDGE Epiphone LockTone ABR-1 and stop-bar tailpiece

PICKUPS Gibson Burstbucker 2 & 3

CONTROLS Two Volume and two tone controls, three-way switch

FACTORY STRINGS Epiphone .010–.046

WEIGHT 9.3 lbs

BUILT China

KUDOS An impressive collaborative effort that delivers a tasty dose of vintage-inspired looks, feel and tone at a very accessible price

CONCERNS Fret ends could use a bit of dressing to reduce sharpness



The Epiphone Limited Edition 1959 Les Paul Standard is offered in Aged Cherry Burst (left) and Aged Burst finishes.



The carved hard maple top's flames come courtesy of a AAA-figured maple veneer.

Epiphone guitar made in collaboration with the Gibson Custom Shop in Nashville, and as a result, it displays a wealth of enticing vintage-inspired details for a Les Paul with a price tag well under \$1,000.

“Our relationship with Gibson Custom Shop has always been great,” Epiphone product manager Aljon Go says. “In this new era for Epiphone and Gibson, our product-development team’s synergy takes full advantage of everyone’s combined experience, contributing to the success of all of our brands. For this ‘Inspired by Gibson Custom’ guitar specifically, we wanted to bring that authenticity and quality that people associate with our Custom Shop, but make it accessible with this ‘Vintage for All’ mentality.”

While we have to expect that some corners were cut to boil a \$5,000 Gibson Custom Shop Les Paul down to a sub-\$1k price tag, Mat Koehler, head of product development at Gibson Brands, insists, “There is no quality gap, just a detail gap, in my opinion.

“And therein is the main benefit of the Custom Shop team oversight. For decades, Gibson Custom Shop has been pushing the limits of historical accuracy to 1959 in both construction and the minute aesthetic details. So this is really a chance to apply as many of those meaningful ‘geek specs’ as possible to the Epiphone platform, from the long neck tenons to the vintage-style wiring harnesses to the unbeveled pickguards.”

Other noteworthy specs include a AAA maple top, full-weight mahogany back, genuine Switchcraft toggle and jack, CTS 500k potentiometers, Mallory tone caps,

Gibson Burstbucker 2 and 3 humbuckers, tall pickup rings, 1950s-style wiring, rubbed VOS-style finish, custom switch-plate medallion and a historic-style brown case with pink lining. The hand-rolled fingerboard edges that enhance the rounded ‘59 neck profile are worth a mention, and to my mind — or left hand, at least — certainly take the playing-feel factor upmarket on this guitar. “It’s a tremendous value and an undeniable set of features for a Les Paul,” Koehler says, “Epiphone or otherwise.”

It’s worth clarifying that the top is made from carved hard maple with a AAA-figured veneer to add the flames (you wouldn’t know one way or the other just from looking at it). And while a vintage-correct, nonbeveled pickguard is specified, the one included on the review guitar was, inexplicably, beveled. Acknowledged in the spec sheet, the fingerboard is of Indian laurel rather than rosewood, but it captures the same general look and feel, with perhaps marginally less richness in the hue and with the benefit of not being an endangered species. And while the guitar lacks a period-correct bridge, the larger insets and format of the Epiphone ToneLock ABR-1 bridge and stop-bar tailpiece represent an upgrade in a guitar at this price point.

The finish on this guitar feels more matte than the lightly aged VOS of most Custom Shop guitars, but it’s appealingly tactile to the touch and has a nicely played-in look. Likewise, the neck feels great — chunky and rounded in the style of a late-‘50s Gibson carve that I really adore, but not so clubby that it’s likely to put off many players. The fret crowns are well dressed, and the guitar plays well in all positions, although the fret ends are

themselves a little sharp and can hitch slightly as you run your hand the length of the neck. Likewise, the two forward corners of the Graph Tech NuBone nut can dig in if you back into them too hard. All in all, though, at this price and given the wealth of bonus features, it’s a job very well done.

So what does it sound like? A Les Paul! Tested through a Friedman Small Box head and 2x12 cab and with several presets on the Fractal Axe-FX III into my studio monitors, the Epiphone Limited Edition 1959 Les Paul Standard does everything you’d expect of a good Les Paul — which is to say it exudes a range of tones that need no introduction. The Burstbucker 2 and 3 in the neck and bridge, respectively, are tried and tested, used in many Gibson U.S.A. models, and they deliver a broadly successful rendition of “that Les Paul thing” into both clean and overdriven amps. From raucous, crunchy power-chord rhythm to barking, screaming bridge-position leads to warm, throaty blues excursions on the neck pickup — the seminal sounds are all there and entirely stage-ready.

The core voice of this guitar might not be quite as Burst-precise as, say, the Gibson Custom Shop 1958 Les Paul Reissue I have sitting next to it (currently rotating through sets of high-end reproduction PAFs for an upcoming roundup in these pages), but of course that’s a much more significant investment. Sling the Epiphone over your shoulder, fire up your amp of choice, and go at it down at the local rock dive on a Saturday night when such pursuits are once again an option, and likely no one in the crowd will know the difference. That and your smile will give away how much fun you’re having. 🎸



GEAR



Mesa/Boogie

BADLANDER 100-WATT HEAD



TESTED BY ART THOMPSON

BORN FROM A long line of high-gain Rectifier amplifiers that dropped on the heavy-rock scene in the '90s — and rapidly evolved from the Dual and Triple Rectifiers to the Road King, Roadster, Mini-Rectifier and Recto-Verb 25 — Mesa/Boogie's new Badlander is its most sophisticated yet. It boasts all-new preamp and power sections that have been designed to do several things: Stay tight on the bottom end and sweet and singing on top, deliver exceptional dynamic and touch sensitivity, and allow the character of the guitar and the player to come through, no matter how the gain is set.

The 100-watt Badlander on review here starts out with five 12AX7s and a quartet of EL34s (or a pair in the 50-watt model), and can be quickly rebiased for 6L6s via a switch on the back. Channels 1 and 2 are selectable with a front-panel switch or the included single-button foot switch. Both channels have what Mesa calls 3 Mode Channel Cloning, which provides independent switching of the Clean, Crunch and Crush modes — which each provide different gain/voicing options — along with independent

gain, treble, mid, bass, presence and master controls. A front-panel switch selects 100-watt, 50-watt or 20-watt operation (all operate in class A/B, with the 20-watt position rewired to Triode operation), and there's a tube-buffered series effects loop as well as a trio of speaker jacks: two four-ohm and one eight-ohm.

The Badlander has a cool and stealthy look, with black diamond plate and silver piping on the upper front panel, black Taurus vinyl covering and leather corner protectors. The head weighs 36 pounds and is easy to carry with its thick stitched-leather handle. If a more traditional look is desired, optional covering and grille treatments are available, several at no additional cost.

Beyond its circuit tweaks, the Badlander is also the first Mesa to offer the CabClone IR, a built-in cabinet simulator and reactive load that comes packed with eight Mesa "live" (i.e. dynamic- and ribbon-miked) cabinet IRs. The CabClone IR itself has a level control, a balanced XLR direct out and a 1/4-inch headphone out (both adjustable for volume with the IR level control) and a ground-lift

SPECIFICATIONS

Badlander 100-watt head

CONTACT mesaboogie.com

PRICES \$2,299 street, 100-watt head or rackmount head. \$1,999 street, 50-watt head or rackmount head. \$2,199 street, 50-watt 1x12 combo

CHANNELS 2

CONTROLS Both channels: Gain, treble, mid, bass, presence, master. Clean/Crunch/Crush switch. Channel-select switch (middle position for foot switch). 100w/50w/20w switch. Power switch (Bold/Variac), standby switch. Input and foot switch jacks. Rear panel: Cab select rotary switches (channels 1 and 2), USB, IR level (also controls headphone volume), headphone jack (1/4"), XLR direct out, ground/lift switch

POWER 100 watts, 50 watts, 20 watts

TUBES Five 12AX7 preamp tubes, four EL34 output tubes

EXTRAS CabClone IR with selectable cabs. Bias switch (EL34/6L6), buffered tube-driven FX loop, 4Ω (x2) and 8Ω speaker jacks. Single-button foot switch included. Aluminum chassis

WEIGHT 36 lbs

BUILT USA

KUDOS Awesome tonal range and dynamic sensitivity. Well-conceived features, including a built-in CabClone IR with simulations of various Mesa speaker cabinets

CONCERNS None

switch. There are also two eight-position rotary switches (one for each channel) that independently select the following IRs:

- **Preset 1** 4x12 Rectifier Standard (closed back)
- **Preset 2** 4x12 Rectifier Traditional (closed back)
- **Preset 3** 2x12 Rectifier Horizontal (closed back)
- **Preset 4** 1x12 Rectifier (closed back)
- **Preset 5** 1x12 Thiele (closed back, front ported)
- **Preset 6** 2x12 Lone Star (open back)
- **Preset 7** 2x12 Lone Star 23 (open back)
- **Preset 8** 1x12 California Tweed 23 (open back)

I started by auditioning these presets using a Gibson Historic '59 Les Paul, a '63 Les Paul Junior with a single P-90 and a Fender 70th Anniversary Esquire, and listening through studio monitors, headphones and a small P.A. system. These Mesa cabinets provide a range of tones: from the thumping and very upfront, focused tones of the Recto closed-back 4x12, 2x12 and 1x12 IRs to the more open, reflective sounds of the open-back Lone Star and California Tweed selections. Different cabs can be dialed up for each channel, and it's interesting to try out various IR combinations to see how they affect the textures of the clean and dirty sounds. And since the Badlander's speaker outputs remain active, you can also combine real cabinets with the IRs to get that cool layering effect of playing through different types of speakers and cabs.

In general, the open-back California Tweed and Lone Star IR selections were very cool for clean playing, with plenty of latitude depending on your definition of "clean," since that can also mean "very gritty" if you're the type who likes to navigate the guitar's volume control for rhythm and lead. The denser 1x12 and 2x12 Rectifier selections sounded great, too, especially when running Channel 1 moderately distorted and Channel 2 a few notches higher in gain. And with three preamp modes per channel — each one capable of adding more grind as you travel from Clean to Crunch to Crush — the possibilities for foot switching between exactly the right rhythm and lead tones for the style of music you're playing are practically endless.

The Standard and Traditional 4x12 Rectifier IRs are the bomb for heavy and



smoking lead tones in general, as they combine that low-end kick, with splintering midrange presence and high-end bite to spare. Mesa miked the cabs for a live response and feel, and they sound natural and very alive, like you're actually experiencing them in the room. The front-ported Thiele 1x12 setting even has a hi-fi response that could work for acoustic guitars. Nothing is out of the question in the IR world, and since the CabClone IR is an open system that provides third-party compatibility via the USB connection, you can use any IRs of your choice (space is provided for storing IRs beyond the eight factory-loaded presets). Just note that managing the IR file directory requires a USB-to-computer connection and a USB 2.0 A-to-B cable, which is not included.

Digital gymnastics aside, the Badlander is a tube amplifier that's pure old-school and designed to be used with Mesa's matching 2x12 and 4x12 cabinets or anything else you choose. Since our high-power review model can be dialed down to 50 or 20 watts, I was able to safely use a variety of cabinets loaded with Celestion G12M Greenback, Vintage 30 and Heritage G12-65 speakers. As Mesa notes, "The Variac position on the power switch provides even more ways to sag and showcase harmonically with its reduced voltage response that affects the entire character of the amp. It really shines in the clean to classic-rock gain ranges, although players into heavier sounds will likely want to stick with the normal setting for the tightest tracking low-end and aggressive attack."

The Badlander's flexibility is outstanding, and the range of tones it can deliver at all levels of gain is amazing. But this amp really stands out in the clarity and definition of the

sound. It's as if a clean signal is always being blended in, so that nothing ever sounds obscured or masked, and the personalities of my test guitars came through beautifully even when running massive amounts of gain generated by the Crunch and Crush modes on Channels 1 or 2.

The Badlander makes it so easy to get just the right amount of distortion and sustain needed for soloing, while also maintaining a springy dynamic feel that is super reactive to picking dynamics and doesn't feel compressed or spongy. Switched to the Clean mode on either channel, the Badlander delivers very crisp and detailed sounds with crystalline clarity at any volume level — and yet this wide-ranging mode can still crank out a surprising amount of distortion when you turn it up. Depending on the mode you select and how the gain and EQ knobs are set, the Badlander can cover everything from sparkling-clear rhythm tones to fiery blues, and from modern country-rock to muscular hard-rock and metal.

Between its master-volume controls and power-reduction features, the Badlander is as suitable for the big stage as it is for a gig at the local brewery. Turn it up to where the EL34s are flexing their muscles and you'll be where this amp lives in all its furiously loud glory. Yet, the Badlander also retains its rich harmonic complexity, ferocious attack, and great dynamic feel and touch sensitivity even when the volume is dialed way back.

With its awesome tonal range and the convenience of the CabClone IR's cabinet selections, the Badlander is an amp for the times. It's well equipped for recording and for live performance, whenever and however that manifests. An easy winner of an Editors' Pick Award, the Badlander is, in a word, *badass*. 🖤



JHS

LEGENDS OF FUZZ BENDER AND SMILEY FUZZ PEDALS

TESTED BY DAVE HUNTER

INTRODUCED IN THE early 1960s, the fuzz box was one of the first genuine solid-state effects pedals for guitar. It speaks to its expressiveness that the effect has remained both timeless and eternally in fashion in at least one prominent genre of

SPECIFICATIONS

Legends of Fuzz Bender

CONTACT jhspedals.com

PRICE \$179 street

CONTROLS Volume, tone, attack. Mode switch
I/O Input and output, center-negative 9-volt DC adaptor input

EXTRAS True-bypass switching, LED indicator

BUILT Assembled in USA

KUDOS A thick, meaty, aggressive vintage-toned fuzz in a fun and tastefully simple retro package. Bonus gain mode

CONCERNS None

popular music (and sometimes several) for the better part of six decades. The sound of a good fuzz pedal never seems to wear thin, and time and again it has been at the forefront of the latest wave of guitar-fueled fury as practiced by players ranging from Keith Richards and Jimi Hendrix to Billy Corgan and Jack White, and beyond. Pedal maker JHS is celebrating the many-splendored world of fuzz with retro-styled re-creations of four gnarly noisemakers in its Legends of Fuzz series, the two most seminal of which we took under foot this issue.

JHS is known for its creative and occasionally complex effects pedals, but those in the Legends of Fuzz series — all of which are based on analysis of several original pedals in proprietor Josh Scott's collection — signal what the company sees as a “post-boutique” wave. Says Scott, “I feel like maybe we’re coming back around and people are going to start playing simple stuff again. Everything’s cyclical. It’s like you go for 10

years and then you want simple again. That’s how it’s been since the ’60s.”

Simple it may be, but a good fuzz pedal offers tremendous sonic potential, and these Bender and Smiley pedals are no exception. I tested both with a Fender 40th Anniversary 1954 Stratocaster reissue and a Gibson 1958 Les Paul reissue into the Plexi-like clean channel of a Friedman Small Box head and a 2x12 cab with Scumback speakers.

BENDER

Subtitled “1973 London,” the Bender takes its inspiration from what Scott calls the most prized Tone-Bender in his collection, a silver-and-orange 1973 Sola Sound Tone-Bender Mk3. The original was manufactured with three germanium transistors, which could sound fabulous when they were in the mood to cooperate, but could also prove finicky and temperamental. For the sake of consistency and dependability, JHS transmuted the circuit into a modern PCB

using silicon transistors, while adding true-bypass switching, an LED indicator, and a nine-volt DC converter input (with an internal nine-volt battery clip for old-school power). Controls, all on the front-facing panel, include attack (fuzz level), tone and volume. A red push-button switch on the side of the pedal engages a JHS mode for added gain and a midfrequency boost.

The pedal is housed in a simple, wedge-shaped, bent-steel enclosure with a black crinkle-coat finish. Circuit nerds will enjoy opening the bottom plate to discover three legends printed around the edge of the PCB: “Gary Hurst was here... kinda... / My father was Ge but I am Si. Will I ever live up to his standards? / Thank you Denmark Street for giving me a chance.” The first and third refer, of course, to the engineer who created the original Tone-Bender in the back room of Macari’s Music at Denmark Street, London, in 1965, while the second is a reference to the change from germanium to silicon transistors. The first 100 or so of Hurst’s original Tone-Benders were made inside wedge-shaped wooden boxes and can cost upward of \$15,000 to \$20,000 on the vintage market — if you can find one.

Stomp the Bender’s Fuzz On switch and the pedal yields a blend of razory bite and slightly raspy edge that gives cutting power to this fuzz’s thick, snarling core tonality, all of which combines to embody a familiar classic-rock sound of the early to mid ’70s. Think Jimmy Page on much of Led Zeppelin’s recordings of the era, Jeff Beck’s expressive

SPECIFICATIONS

Legends of Fuzz Smiley

CONTACT jhspedals.com

PRICE \$179 street

CONTROLS Volume, fuzz, Mode switch

I/O Input and output, center-negative 9V DC adaptor input

EXTRAS True-bypass switching

BUILT Assembled in USA

KUDOS Ably re-creates that warm, woolly late-’60s Fuzz Face sound, in a fun and tastefully simple retro package

CONCERNS Some players might like a means of attaining more brightness and bite (though this is accurate to many fuzzes of the era)



fuzz work, or Mick Ronson’s lead sound with *Ziggy Stardust*—era David Bowie, and you’ll be in the ballpark.

This pedal works equally well with the Strat and Les Paul, and also did a great job of the woman-tone fuzz when I rolled the tone controls on either test guitar down to zero, where the Bender enables an expressive, vocal, woodwind-like sound that makes for delightfully moody soloing. As with many good fuzz pedals, it cleans up surprisingly well from a guitar’s volume controls, too, allowing a textured enhancement that’s a little more characterful than the guitar-to-amp clean sound with the fuzz switched off.

The pedal’s own tone control is useful as well, dialing between a voicing that’s cutting and bright and one that’s warm and mellow. Engaging the JHS mode boosts gain and midrange, as advertised, and provides a handy second voice. Trigger it on the fly if you’re wearing pointy-toed boots, as should any user of classic early ’70s fuzz.

SMILEY

Subtitled “1969 London,” the Smiley recreates the late-’60s iteration of the legendary Arbiter Fuzz Face, whose circuit featured silicon transistors, giving it the tighter, crispier tone Jimi Hendrix was said to prefer. Smiley’s construction and features are like Bender’s, other than its inclusion of just two control knobs, like the original, for fuzz and volume. Also slightly different, the JHS mode engaged with its left-side push-button switch induces a severely gated high-gain fuzz tone.

Removing the bottom panel also reveals hidden inscriptions on the edges of the circuit board: “Turn it up to ten! / Fuzz came to us from different lands, like England, the United States and even Japan.” A bit of advice, and some instructive history.

Plugged in, the Smiley exudes a smooth, round, ball-of-hair fuzz tone that harkens to a slightly earlier era than that of the Bender, reminding us why many early fuzz pedals were marketed as a way to make your guitar sound like a sax or trombone. This one likes to have its volume control pushed to three-quarters or beyond to get the juice flowing, where it becomes a bit more articulate and transparent, while sounding hotter overall.

The Smiley leans a little dark with the Les Paul, though it can still be richly expressive, but the ’50s-style Strat’s bright single-coil pickups bring a lot more cutting power to the fray, this partnership arguably making the Smiley more versatile. Like the Bender, the Smiley does a great woman tone, and it responds well to the guitar’s volume control. It’s a pretty spitty, spluttery fuzz circuit to begin with, which is part of the fun, but engaging that JHS mode button slips it into a super-voltage-starved gated mode that can be a blast, if something of a novelty.

All in all, these two examples of the Legends of Fuzz series admirably dunk us into vintage-fuzz waters and provide some fun playing experiences, along with easy access to dependable new simulations of classic sounds that remain very usable on today’s pedalboards. 



GEAR

Godin

MULTIAC GRAND CONCERT DELUXE

TESTED BY JIMMY LESLIE

THE NEW FLAGSHIP in Godin's venerable Multiac line of hybrid instruments is a top-shelf nylon-string guitar that results from the company's renewed collaboration with the acoustic-electrification experts at L.R. Baggs. The two manufacturers have an extensive history of innovation dating back to 1988, and the Grand Concert Deluxe represents a significant step forward. Baggs created custom electronics around hexaphonic pickups and a Lyric microphone to capture percussive elements from the Grand Concert Deluxe's solid cedar top. In addition to volume, EQ, phase and blend controls, the onboard preamp features an adjustable tape-saturation simulation slider

SPECIFICATIONS

Multiac Grand Concert Deluxe

CONTACT godinguitars.com

PRICE \$1,795, gig bag included

NUT WIDTH 2", Graph Tech

NECK Mahogany

FRETBOARD Richlite, 25.66" scale

FRETS 19

TUNERS Open gear, 16:1 ratio

BODY Mahogany back & sides, solid cedar top

BRIDGE Richlite

ELECTRONICS Custom voiced L.R. Baggs system with Lyric mic, individual gold hex acoustic saddles, tape saturation simulation

CONTROLS Sliders for volume, bass, middle, treble, blend (mic and pickups) and tape saturation plus phase button

FACTORY STRINGS Godin HTC Nylon gauges .0285, .0327, .0410, .030, .036, .044, .056

WEIGHT 7 lbs

BUILT Canada

KUDOS Innovative design yields a fantastic array of acoustic-electric tones. Fine playability. Neat and sturdy North American craftsmanship

CONCERNS None

to emulate the warmth and subtle drive that results from recording to analog tape.

The modern/classic hallmarks of Godin's Multiac line are on full display and in play on the Grand Concert Deluxe. The overall aesthetic is contemporary, but a slotted headstock featuring open-gear tuners set along a pair of fancy-looking engraved metal strips adds an old-world aesthetic. Cream-colored binding between the red cedar top and the dark mahogany back and sides provides nice contrast and appears particularly striking in low light. The wood and woodworking looks wonderful everywhere, and the golden saddles on the acoustic hex pickups and distinctly modern onboard preamp section hint at the cutting-edge electronics under the hood.

Hexaphonic pickups are individual piezo transducers located under each string saddle and have been used for MIDI functionality on other Multiac incarnations, but that's not their purpose here. On the Grand Concert Deluxe, the isolated signals from each string are summed into a clear, powerful global undersaddle sound, which can then be coupled with the Baggs Lyric acoustic guitar microphone, which is also positioned under the saddle just a few millimeters from the top. The Lyric is designed to focus only the top vibrations, which sound open and light in comparison to the fundamental piezo tone. Playing in a percussive fingerstyle, I found an awesome balance of balls and nuance by setting the blend slider smack dab in the middle. Amplified via a little Fender Acoustic Junior Go, the



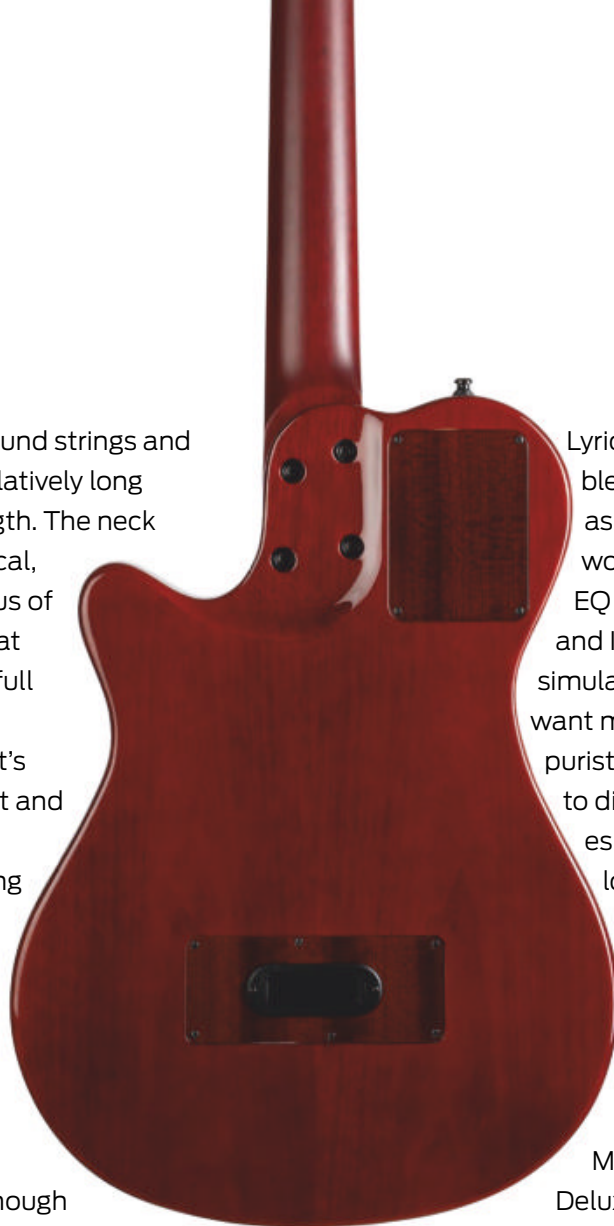
tone was surprisingly huge. I was able to get quite loud before encountering feedback, and when the low mids did start to wail, a simple press of the phase button ate it right up.

The amplified sound is certainly the star attraction, but the acoustic tone is better than one might expect. It's not very loud, but a dual-chambered solid mahogany body and solid cedar top give the Grand Concert Deluxe an inherently nice warm quality. Little holes in the preamp area act as escape hatches for pressurized sound waves in the body chamber. It serves the dual function of allowing for greater amplified volume before feedback as well as acting like a little speaker positioned perfectly for the player's ears and adding a bit of natural compression. The Grand Deluxe is far heavier than a typical acoustic guitar and about a pound lighter than a typical solidbody electric guitar.

This Grand Concert Deluxe played wonderfully right out of the box. I loved the snappy string quality, which is especially

noticeable on the wound strings and attributable to the relatively long 25.66-inch scale length. The neck feels distinctly classical, with a fretboard radius of 24 inches and width at the nut measuring a full two inches.

Undoubtedly, that's going to feel quite flat and wide for players accustomed to playing steel strings. But the Grand Concert Deluxe is ideal for serious nylon-string performers requiring fine playability and a top-shelf amplified tone that's flexible enough to suit any style on any stage. The powerfully articulate tone from the hex pickups alone is awesome, as is the spacious



Lyric microphone tone, but the blend is truly the bee's knees as it offers the best of both worlds. Having a three-band EQ at your fingertips is handy, and I dug the tape saturation simulation slider. Purists may not want much of that, but I'm no purist and felt it was totally cool to dial up some drive, especially when playing lower stuff on the wound strings. With so much flexibility built into the design, there are bound to be sounds found for all to appreciate, and the hybrid nature of the Multiac Grand Concert Deluxe offers a nylon-string option perhaps more attractive to players that might not otherwise consider a traditional classical acoustic path. ■

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Rainger

MINI BAR

LIQUID ANALYSER



TESTED BY MICHAEL ROSS

AT NAMM 2020, Rainger unveiled a drive/distortion/fuzz mini-pedal that changed its sound depending on which liquid you put into a plastic container embedded in the chassis. Reactions ranged from “What?!” to insert-your-laughable-liquid-joke-here. That was then, but now the time has come to check out the seriousness of this intriguing stomp box.

Some of the Mini Bar Liquid Analyser’s appeal is its off-the-charts cool factor. Carnival colors plaster the small casing, and the single output knob is bright orange. The plastic liquid container lights up when the effect is engaged, and a small green light under the fluid flashes when you play.

So far, so fun, but how does it sound? Well, if you don’t put any liquid in it, it doesn’t sound at all. However, add just enough fluid to cover the zinc-plated contacts at the bottom of the container and the Mini Bar can spit out some fabulous forms of grit. The amount and tonal characteristics of the dirt vary greatly or subtly, depending on the chosen liquid.

I began with basic tap water, which produced low-distortion gain with plenty of midrange push, like a vintage treble booster. Thanks to Covid, I had some beard oil on hand, so I tried that next, and the difference

SPECIFICATIONS

Mini Bar Liquid Analyser

CONTACT raingerfx.com

PRICE \$149 street

CONTROLS Volume

FEATURES Plastic container that holds various liquids to shape sound

BUILT Assembled in United Kingdom

KUDOS Fantastic, fun way to create an endless variety of cool, gritty tones

CONCERNS None



was striking, with much more gain, volume and, appropriately, a fuzzier sound.

Being a Bloody Mary fan, I have a ready supply of Worcester and Tabasco sauce. The former featured low volume and a very dark tone — too clean for distortion, but possibly good for an EQ effect — while the latter produced a nice warm drive. Isopropyl alcohol served up lots of thick, Fuzz Face-style gain, brighter than that of the beard oil. Hydrogen peroxide offered lower gain and a tone focused in the low midrange, perfect for fattening an already broken-up amp or pedal.

Between experiments, I cleaned the previous liquid out with a damp paper towel. If you don’t thoroughly clean the container between fillings you might get an adulterated blend, though you may want to mix liquids on purpose for even more tonal variations.

So, how does it work? According to David Rainger, the secret is the number of free ions in the liquid of choice. Water has many and so it conducts well, producing low distortion. Alcohol has very few and creates high distortion. Olive oil apparently has none, resulting in the same silence as no liquid at all. In addition, the Minibar has a band-pass filter that adjusts according to the opacity of the liquid.

This pedal might easily have been a novelty item to play with during pandemic boredom, rather than a pro device, but the results frequently sound great. I was able to get everything from raging rock fuzz, huge on its own into a clean amp, to more subtle tone-shaping dirt that did marvelous things to slightly driven amps or pedals.



Ultimately, the Mini Bar lets you design the dirt that works for you. And, unlike other pedals, when you get bored with that sound, you can raid the medicine or liquor cabinet for inspiration (for you *and* the pedal). For sound, innovation and pure fun, the Mini Bar gets an Editors’ Pick Award.

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MXR TREMOLO



TESTED BY ART THOMPSON

IT'S ALWAYS NICE when a product offers more than meets the eye. MXR's new Tremolo pedal seems straightforward enough at first blush, but this compact pedal is one powerful modulation box, with six tremolo styles that are selected by pushing the gain knob, which also controls the volume of the effect. The Tremolo carries depth and speed controls — along with input and output jacks and a nine-volt input for the included adapter — but it quickly gets much deeper thanks to a CTR (control) jack and accompanying two-position slider switch that allows the use of an optional foot switch for tap tempo, or

SPECIFICATIONS

Tremolo

CONTACT jimdunlop.com

PRICE \$159 street

CONTROLS Gain (push to cycle through modes), Depth, Speed

FUNCTIONS Six tremolo modes: MXR, Bias, Revo, Opto, SQR, Harm

I/O Input, output and CTR (control)

EXTRAS CTL is selectable for optional tap or expression pedal operation, as well as stereo in/out and other functions. 9-volt adapter included

KUDOS Excellent range of tremolo sounds. Very flexible and controllable

CONCERNS None



an optional expression pedal to blend between two different tremolo settings. Depending on how the switch is set, there are also three available stereo (TRS) modes: Stereo Input, Stereo Output, and a mode for panning the tremolo effect from one output to another.

Furthermore, you can access an Envelope mode by pressing and holding the gain knob for three seconds. This allows the Tremolo to respond to picking dynamics, and by holding the knob down you can adjust the sensitivity — the picking strength needed to trigger the effect — with the depth knob and the rate of the effect with the speed knob. Yet another manipulation of the controls allows the pedal to be switched from true-bypass (the default setting) to buffered bypass.

These more-advanced functions aside, the Tremolo is easy to use and offers a ton of great sounds. Each of the trem settings is indicated by either a green or red LED and they're accessed sequentially in this order:

- **MXR** Classic MXR M159 sounds (green)
- **Bias** A vintage-style bias modulation waveform that emulates the compression of tubes (red)
- **Revo** A reverse optical waveform that produces exaggerated peaks and valleys (green)
- **Opto** An optical waveform that emulates the smooth pulse of vintage amp tremolo (red)
- **Sqr** A square waveform for choppy effects (green)
- **Harm** A vintage-style harmonic tremolo with frequency modulation (red)

Running the Tremolo through a Fender Deluxe Reverb reissue and a Mesa Mark 5:25 combo — and



with a Gibson Les Paul Traditional Pro V and a Fender American Pro II Stratocaster plugged in — I found the sounds were all excellent and provide plenty of variety to make this pedal useful for a lot of different tastes and applications. For example, Harm produces a warbly, slightly pitch-shifted effect that contrasts nicely with Bias, which is the go-to setting if you're chasing blackface Fender-type sounds. The MXR setting is a little more pronounced, and also very clear and richly detailed, but it's not quite as jagged as Revo, which has big peaks and valleys that really stand out in a mix. The effect is a bit more ethereal in Opto, which is great for adding subtle pulse in situations where a more obvious trem sound isn't really desired. For that sort of action, Sqr delivers the helicopter chop and very staccato effects at high depth settings that can make parts leap out with strobe-light intensity.

It's cool that you can adjust the Tremolo's volume with a twist of the gain dial (always handy), and the way this pedal offers so much additional flexibility via its CTR input makes it very customizable to your personal needs. The Tremolo certainly packs a lot into a footprint the size of a Phase 90, and it earns an Editors' Pick Award in the process. Bottom line: If there's only room for one tremolo on your pedalboard, the MXR Tremolo is a strong contender. 



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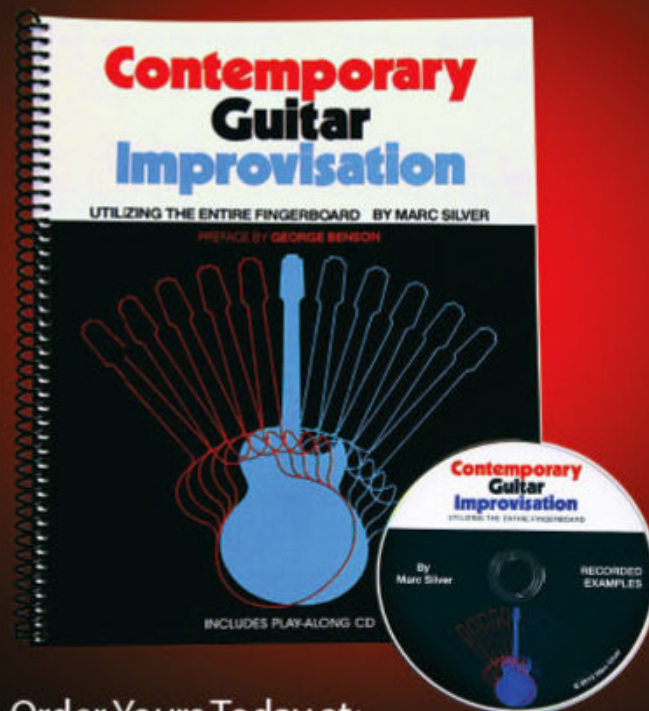
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How I Wrote...

“Blue Collar Man”

Tommy Shaw reveals the jolly green inspiration behind Styx's 1978 hit.

BY JOE BOSSO

SOME SONGS HAVE a way of becoming both timely and timeless, and that's certainly true of Styx's feisty and impassioned tribute to the dashed dreams of everyday workers, “Blue Collar Man (Long Nights).” “It's a song that still hits home,” says its composer, guitarist and singer Tommy Shaw. “No matter who you are, even if you're in a successful rock band, you can relate to it. I know I do. I show up, suit up, do the job, and I love it. When something like that gets taken away from somebody, it's terrible.”

The rousing track, which features a corker of a guitar solo played by Shaw (who also turns in a gutsy lead vocal), was the first single from Styx's 1978 album, *Pieces of Eight*. Reaching No. 21 on *Billboard*, the song went into quick rotation on AOR radio and, along with another Shaw-penned cut, “Renegade,” propelled the disc to triple-Platinum status. “We were really on a roll during that period,” Shaw recalls. “We'd worked hard, and it seemed that no matter which direction we wanted to go, we just nailed it.”

SOUND AND FURY

Contrary to Wikipedia, it wasn't the sound of a motorboat that inspired Shaw to write “Blue Collar Man,” but a nautical expedition was involved. “It was the end of a tour and a bunch of us went deep-sea fishing in Maui,” the guitarist explains. “Before we got to our boat,

“SOMEBODY GAVE US A LITTLE MAUI WOWIE. WE WERE ALL HIGH AS KITES”

somebody gave us a little Maui Wowie, so by the time we got to the dock, we were all high as kites. We got on the boat, and for 45 minutes we sat there not saying anything. I kept listening to the waves breaking. It was this lurching sound that became a soundscape that stuck in my head. I thought it might make a good intro for a song.”

At the same time, Shaw had been thinking about a friend of his, Pete, who'd been laid off from his railroad job. “He loved his work, and here he was at the unemployment office, standing in line for a check,” Shaw says. “This was devastating to him. He didn't want a handout. I grew up in a blue-collar family, so I understood how he felt. That's what inspired the song lyrically. Then it was just a matter of picking up the guitar and putting it together.”

IN SYNC

Shaw hadn't yet purchased a four-track recorder, so he laid down his ideas on a

cassette. But when he first performed the song for his bandmates, he played it on an acoustic. “It almost sounded like a folk song,” he says. “But as soon as the keyboards came in and

[co-guitarist] James [Young] started playing guitar, it became a Styx song.”

Before recording the track at Paragon Studios in Chicago, the band woodshedded it in a rehearsal room. “It was one of those

songs that came together really fast,” Shaw remembers. “There weren't a lot of changes to the original idea. James and I were totally in sync with our guitar parts. All of those little turnaround parts where we mimic the chorus hook came about very naturally.”

For the recording, Young played a '65 Fender Strat. “I think he used either a Fender or Marshall amp,” says Shaw, who played a white Les Paul Custom through a Plexi Marshall with a 4x12 cabinet. “For my solo, I pretty much improvised it. I had a basic idea of what I wanted, but I really winged it. There's a pull-off thing I do at the end. That was kind of my style at the time.”

HITTING HOME

Neither Shaw nor the rest of Styx knew “Blue Collar Man” would be the first single from *Pieces of Eight* when they first heard a playback of the completed track. “We just knew it sounded great, and we were proud of it,” he says. “It had a very Styx-sounding chorus and all the other elements of a great Styx song. We were really looking forward to playing it live.”

The song remains a staple of the band's shows. “We always play it toward the start of the set, and it really sets the pace for the evening,” Shaw says. “And it still speaks to people. I get letters from fans who tell me, ‘I went through this when I got laid off.’ Styx has never been a political band, but I think we believe the basic things like everybody else: Love each other, respect each other, and work hard. That's what the song's all about.”



Styx in 1978. (from left) John Panozzo, James Young, Tommy Shaw, Dennis DeYoung and Chuck Panozzo



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