

SPECIAL TRIBUTE ISSUE

GUITARPLAYER.COM

Guitar Player



50-YEAR
CELEBRATION

Players

DAVID
CROSBY

MARK
FARNER

THE BLACK
CROWES

JOHN HIATT

NILS
LOFGREN



Duane Allman

From *Fillmore East* to eternity — inside the guitar legend's final days



MIRAGE DELUXE 87



RELEASE THE
CRACKLE!



ECLIPSE 87



ECLIPSE 87 NT



M-1 CUSTOM 87



SURVEYOR 87

The LTD '87 Series celebrates the mid-1980s, a time when ESP's guitars and basses grabbed the attention of high-performance players around the world. Now we're adding the classic and coveted ESP Rainbow Crackle finish to these faithful recreations of instruments from ESP's 1987 catalog. This special graphic finish is limited in availability, and designed for musicians who truly want to stand out from the crowd. Detailed info and specs at espguitars.com.

ESP
ESPGUITARS.COM



⊖ ≠ √ / **GOLDIE**

THE ST. VINCENT SIGNATURE GUITAR REIMAGINED



AVAILABLE NOW AT [MUSIC-MAN.COM](https://www.music-man.com)



Recording Direct?

Don't Sacrifice Tone

Trying to record some riffs but can't crank your amp to 10?

The SERIES 102i & 208i interfaces feature crystal clear Ultra-HDDA preamps and complimentary Amplitube modeling software. You'll easily be able to create amazing guitar tones that sound like they were tracked in a million-dollar studio.

In addition to Amplitube, the SERIES Interfaces also come with great software like Cubase LE, Izotope Neutron, and T-RackS—everything you need to record, mix, and master your songs.



PLUG. PLAY. CREATE.

TASCAM
TASCAM.com

A full-page photograph of the rock musician Slash. He is wearing a black top hat with silver studs, dark sunglasses, and a grey t-shirt. He has long, curly dark hair and a goatee. He is holding a red Epiphone Les Paul Standard electric guitar with a black pickguard and two humbucker pickups. The background is a blurred stage with warm, orange and red lighting.

Epiphone[®]

FOR EVERY STAGE

INTRODUCING

THE SLASH COLLECTION

FROM EPIPHONE

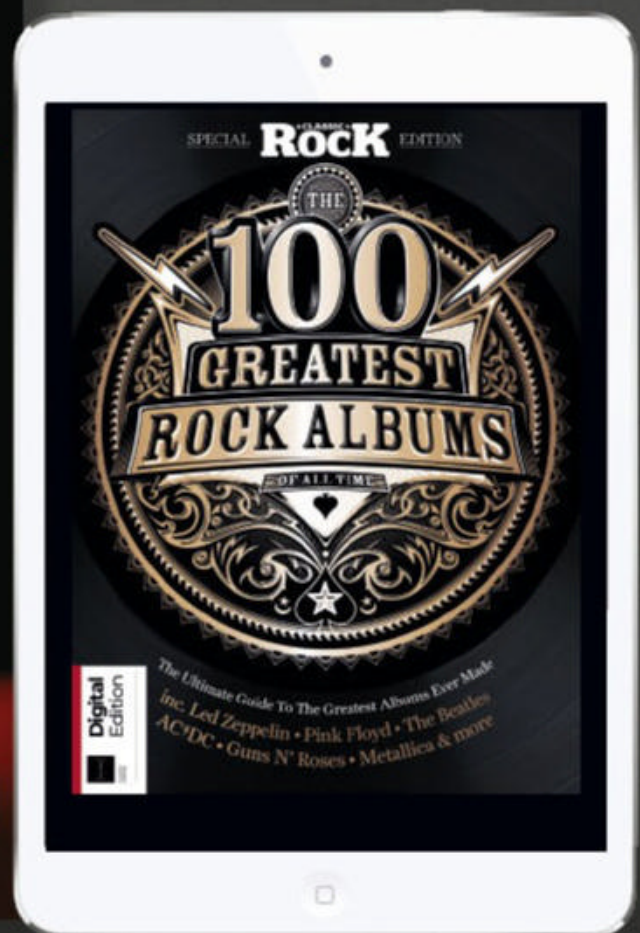
SLASH LES PAUL STANDARD

in November Burst, Appetite Burst, Vermillion Burst, Anaconda Burst & Slash "Victoria" Goldtop

SLASH J-45

in Vermillion Burst & November Burst

NEVER MISS AN ISSUE!
FREE BOOKAZINE
WHEN YOU BECOME A
GUITAR WORLD SUBSCRIBER



GREAT REASONS TO SUBSCRIBE

Save over 83% when you subscribe • Never miss an issue.
Get every issue delivered direct to your door.

TO ORDER, GO TO www.magazinesdirect.com/guw/B1HMAG
OR CALL **1-800-456-6441** AND MENTION CODE **B1IMAG**

*SEE ONLINE FOR PREMIUM AND DIGITAL PRICING. INTERNATIONAL PRICING MAY VARY. FIRST ISSUE MAILED WITHIN 6-8 WEEKS. DIGITAL BOOKAZINE WILL BE EMAILED ONCE PAYMENT HAS CLEARED.

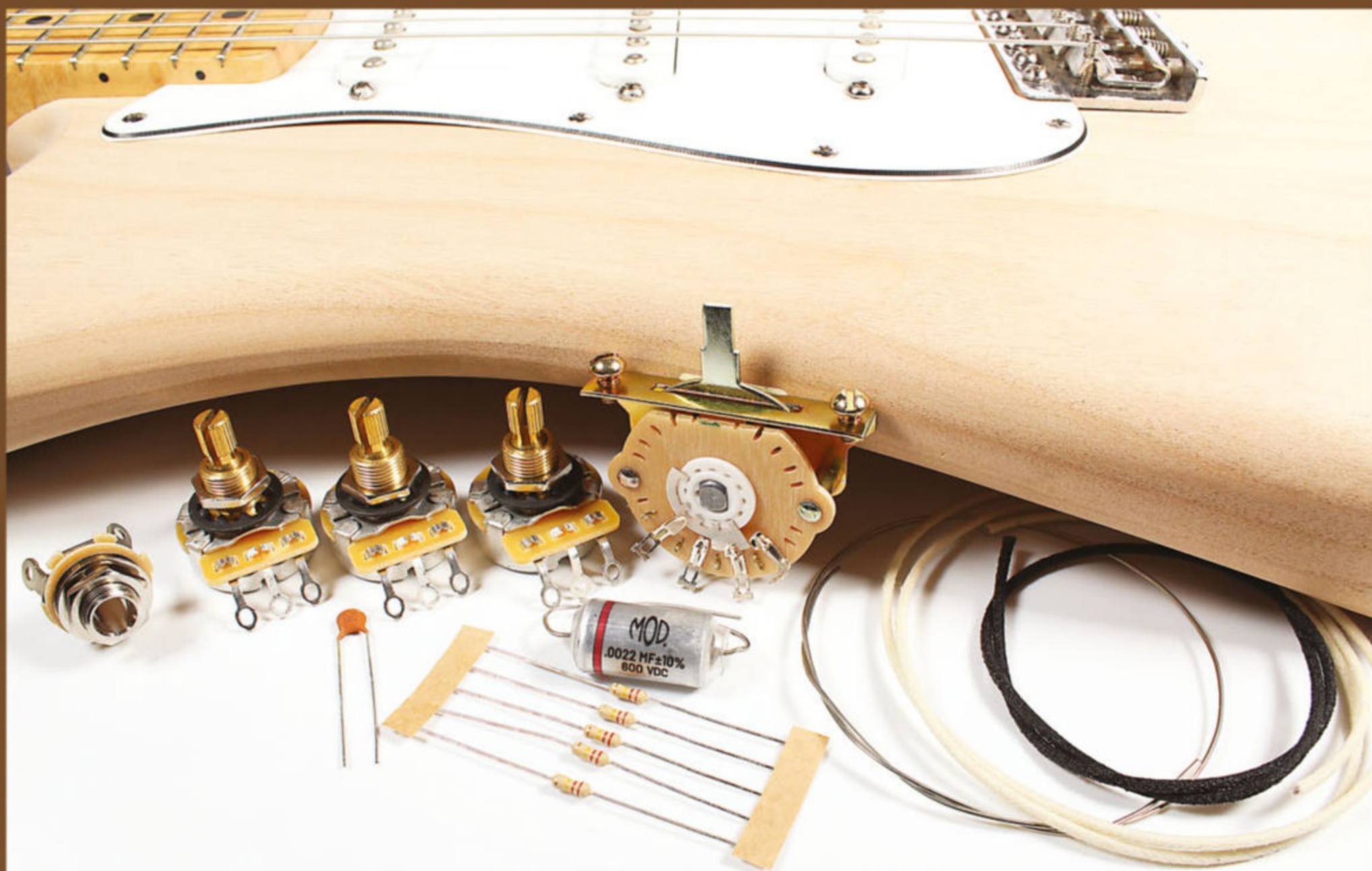


STILL HANDMADE BY HEATHER & KIM.

Heather and Kim have been using their hands to expertly craft and assemble our guitars for over 5 years, because we believe it's the only way to create the perfect tone. And it's that legendary tone that has inspired music icons and passionate guitar players for generations.

Hear their story and find your handcrafted Standard Series guitar at www.martinguitar.com/handmade.

Martin & Co.
EST. 1833



modelectronics.com

Mod® Guitar Wiring Upgrade Kits are beginner friendly kits that are simple to install and are tailored to your specific guitar. Used to upgrade your existing guitar electronics and learn along the way, Mod® upgrade kits use high quality parts and components to enhance your overall tone and playing experience. Clearly illustrated wiring diagrams and step by step instructions are included with each assembly

Available at Amplifiedparts.com

AmplifiedParts®



MADE TO ROCK HARD



"HOT ROD"

BARETTA CUSTOM GRAPHICS COLLECTION



KRAMERGUITARS.COM



WHERE IT ALL BEGINS

IT ALWAYS SEEMED acutely cruel that Duane Allman lost his life not only at such a young age — 24 — but also just as the Allman Brothers Band were achieving recognition after many years in the wilderness. The source of that fame, as everyone knows, was *At Fillmore East*, their 1971 live album. The era was ripe for the Allmans and their breakthrough. The dawn of the 1970s marked the start of the live album era, as improvements in sound reinforcement gave rock groups the audio power necessary to be heard in large venues. The MC5, the Rolling Stones, the Who, Band of Gypsys and Grand Funk Railroad were among the first acts to release live records, but it was the Allman Brothers who turned the format into an art form.

In this issue's cover story, acclaimed writer Alan Paul traces the history of this monumental work: how and why it came to be, and its impact on the Allman Brothers Band's fortunes and future. Alan is the Allman Brothers Band's foremost historian — his 2015 tome, *One Way Out: The Inside History of the Allman Brothers Band*, is considered the definitive history of the group — and his story brings this chapter in the group's lifetime into vivid detail, right up to the tragic death of Skydog on October 29, 1971, less than four months after the release of *At Fillmore East*.

Coincidentally, as we were planning this issue one year ago, Muscle Shoals' FAME Studios notified us they were renovating Studio B, the very facility in which Duane did a fair amount of his early session work and rehearsed the earliest lineup of the Allman Brothers Band. Martin McQuade followed the story and came back with a pair of enlightening features about the studio and Duane's time there. We're thrilled to present this issue's broad and compelling view of Skydog's brilliance and timeless legacy.

Chris Scapelliti

CONTACT US

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Renewals/Questions: help@mymagazine.co.uk

New Orders: help@magazinesdirect.com Phone: 800-289-9839

Mail: Guitar Player Subscriptions P.O. Box 2029 Langhorne, PA 19047

GUITARPLAYER.COM

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

WEBSITE & SOCIAL

guitarplayer.com • facebook.com/guitarplayermag • twitter.com/guitarplayernow

Guitar Player

Vol. 55 No. 10

OCTOBER 2021

guitarplayer.com

FOLLOW US



twitter.com/guitarplayernow



facebook.com/guitarplayermag

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

SUBSCRIBER CUSTOMER SERVICE

To subscribe, change your address, or check on your current account status, go to guitarplayer.com and click on Subscribe, email help@magazinesdirect.com, call 800-289-9839 or write P.O. Box 2029, Langhorne, PA 19047

ARCHIVES

This magazine is available for research and retrieval of select archived articles from leading electronic database and search services, including ProQuest. For microform availability, contact National Archive Publishing Company, 800-521-0600, or search the Serials in Microform listings at napubco.com. Back issues are available. For more information, contact www.proquest.com

REPRINTS/PERMISSIONS

This magazine may not be reproduced or quoted in whole or in part by printed or electronic means without written permission from Future. To obtain permissions, contact Wright's Media, 877-652-5295.

INTERNATIONAL LICENSING AND SYNDICATION

Guitar Player is available for licensing and syndication. To find out more, contact us at licensing@futurenet.com, or view our available content at www.futurecontenthub.com.

HEAD OF PRINT LICENSING, Rachel Shaw
licensing@futurenet.com



SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT - TECH, GAMES & ENTS: Aaron Asadi

BRAND DIRECTOR, MUSIC: Stuart Williams

HEAD OF ART: Rodney Dive

CONTENT DIRECTOR, MUSIC: Scott Rowley

HEAD OF DESIGN (MUSIC): Brad Merrett

GROUP ART DIRECTOR: Graham Dalzell

11 West 42nd Street, 15th Floor, New York, NY 10036

COPYRIGHT 2021, Future PLC. All Rights Reserved.



The Business Information Association a division of BIA



Future plc is a public company quoted on the London Stock Exchange (symbol: FUTR)
www.futureplc.com

Chief executive Zillah Byng-Thorne
Non-executive chairman Richard Huntingford
Chief financial officer Penny Ladkin-Brand

Tel +44 (0)1225 442 244

GUITAR PLAYERS GET MORE WITH SWEETWATER

At Sweetwater, we have a single goal in mind — to make you an ecstatic customer. Everything we do is focused on giving you the absolute-best prices, selection, service, support — and all the many extras we give you every day at no extra charge. From our meticulous 55-point Inspection on nearly all the guitars we sell and our free 2-year warranty to the fanatical way we make sure your instrument is **enjoyable right out of the case** — it's what we call the Sweetwater Difference. Call or visit us and experience the Difference today.

SKB56 - SKB1SKB-56 Les Paul Guitar Case - \$172.99

*Stickers not included.



Sweetwater.com | (800) 222-4700

Sweetwater

PLAYERS**30**

From *Fillmore East*
to Eternity:
The Last Days of
Duane Allman

42

The History of
FAME Studios

49

Duane and Gregg
Allman at FAME

52

The Black Crowes

60

John Hiatt

FRETS**66**

David Crosby

NEW & COOL**17**

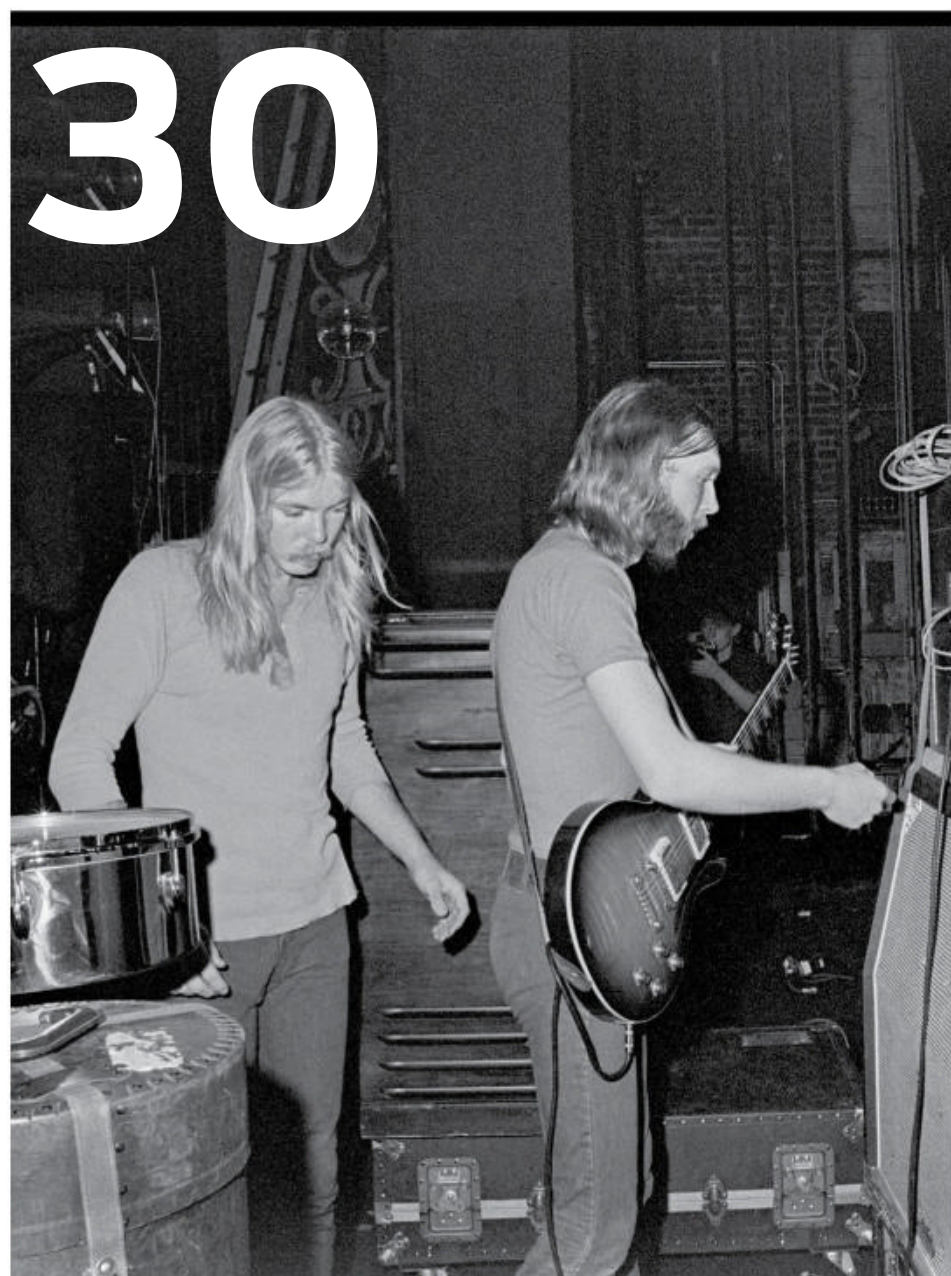
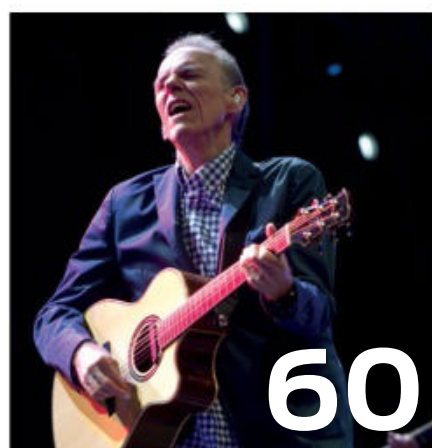
Martyn Booth
Signature

FIVE RIFFS**20**

Mac McAnally

FIVE SONGS**22**

Mark Farner



AMALIE R. ROTHSCHILD (ALLMANS); KEVIN NIXON (CROSBY); JORDI VIDAL/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES (HIATT); JEFF FASANO (CROWES)

ON THE COVER

Duane Allman at *Fillmore East*,
June 1971, Amalie R. Rothschild

JOIN THE GP COMMUNITY

twitter.com/guitarplayernow



facebook.com/guitarplayermag



instagram.com/guitarplayer

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.

SAVINGS SO REAL

YOU CAN ALMOST TOUCH THEM.



Switch to GEICO and see how easy it could be to save money on motorcycle insurance. Simply visit [geico.com/cycle](https://www.geico.com/cycle) to get started.

GEICO | MOTORCYCLE

[geico.com/cycle](https://www.geico.com/cycle) | 1-800-442-9253 | Local Office

Some discounts, coverages, payment plans, and features are not available in all states, in all GEICO companies, or in all situations. Motorcycle and ATV coverages are underwritten by GEICO Indemnity Company. GEICO is a registered service mark of Government Employees Insurance Company, Washington, DC 20076; a Berkshire Hathaway Inc. subsidiary. © 2021 GEICO 21_550729928

CONTENTS

OCTOBER 2021 | VOLUME 55 | NUMBER 10

COLUMNS

26**Dave Hunter's Classic Gear**
Foxx Tone Machine**28****Jim Campilongo's Vinyl Treasures**
Allman Brothers Band
— *At Fillmore East***29****Terry Carleton's Whack Job**
1968 Silvertone/Teisco EV3T

LESSONS

72

Learn fingerstyle tremolo

78

The genius of Chris Cornell

82

Understanding acoustic amps

GEAR

84

Supro Delta King 12

86**84****86**

Harmony Comet

88

Godin Montreal Premiere LTD

90Cordoba Fusion 5 Jet Black
Montreal Premiere LTD**90****92**Dawner Prince
Pulse

HOW I WROTE...

98

"Keith Don't Go"

**98**

GIJSBERT HANEKROOT/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

FOR CUSTOM REPRINTS & E-PRINTS PLEASE CONTACT Wright's Media : (877) 652-5295 or newbay@wrightsmedia.com **LIST RENTAL:** (914) 368-1024, jganis@meritdirect.com
PLEASE DIRECT ADVERTISING INQUIRIES TO GUITAR PLAYER, 11 West 42nd Street, 15th Floor, New York, NY 10036. Tel. (212) 378-0400; Fax (212) 378-0470; jonathan.brudner@futurenet.com. **EDITORIAL REQUESTS TO** chris.scapelliti@futurenet.com. **PLEASE DIRECT SUBSCRIPTION ORDERS, INQUIRIES, AND ADDRESS CHANGES TO GUITAR PLAYER**, Box 2029, Langhorne, PA 19047-9957, or (800) 289-9839, or send an email to guitarplayermag@icnfull.com, or click to subscriber services at guitarplayer.com.
BACK ISSUES are available for \$10 each by calling (800) 289-9839 or by contacting guitarplayermag@icnfull.com. *Guitar Player* is a registered trademark of Future. All material published in *Guitar Player* is copyrighted © 2021 by Future. All rights reserved. Reproduction of material appearing in *Guitar Player* is prohibited without written permission. Publisher assumes no responsibility for return of unsolicited manuscripts, photos, or artwork. All product information is subject to change; publisher assumes no responsibility for such changes. All listed model numbers and product names are manufacturers' registered trademarks. Published in the U.S.A.

PRS HX 100 & 50

AMPLIFIERS



THE ART of ENGINEERING

"We've had the opportunity to examine one of Jimi Hendrix's touring amps and understand not just the circuit but the modifications and the parts choices that were made as Hendrix continued to use the amp. We kept historic specs where it made sense, and we made substitutions based on availability, safety, and experience. In the end, I think we have made a great-sounding amplifier with exceptional build quality and enough power to blow your pantleg when you play it."

These HX amps are intended to sound exactly the same as Hendrix's touring rig, not look exactly the same. But we know this is hallowed ground. We feel privileged to reach back into history and bring something special into the current music landscape." - Paul Reed Smith

Jimi Hendrix



PRS PAUL REED SMITH
GUITARS

INTRODUCING THE NEW
NON-REVERSE THUNDERBIRD

IN INVERNESS GREEN, FADED PELHAM BLUE & SPARKLING BURGUNDY



AVAILABLE NOW AT [GIBSON.COM](https://www.gibson.com)

Gibson



FLAVOR ENHANCER

Martyn Booth improves upon the traditional SG recipe with his Signature electric.

TESTED BY DAVE HUNTER

ALTHOUGH HE'S BEEN designing, building and repairing top-flight guitars for professional players for some four decades, Martyn Booth is less well-known in the U.S. than he deserves to be. The British luthier's current flagship electric model evolved from a design he created while working for Gibson. It briefly graced the lineup from one of Japan's biggest makers, but it arguably never reached its ultimate form until Booth decided to make the thing himself.

If the outline of the Martyn Booth Signature looks familiar, chances are you've encountered this talented and respected British luthier's work without even knowing his name. Booth designed an acclaimed electric guitar manufactured by Yamaha in Taiwan in the late 1980s and early '90s known as the Image in the U.S. and the MSG in the U.K. While the upmarket versions never established the reach of their predecessors,

including the SG2000, many landed in the hands of notable pros. Given the value and quality it represented, the MSG Deluxe from that lineup has been sought after ever since production ceased.

In the early 2000s, Booth launched his own range of guitars, taking the MSG concept considerably upscale as a custom-grade instrument produced in limited numbers by the man himself. Since then, artists have continued to flock to the design. The late Alan Murphy (Kate Bush, Level 42, Mike and the Mechanics), John Etheridge (Soft Machine, Nigel Kennedy, Caravan), Graham Coxon (Blur, solo), Matte Henderson, Nicky Skopelitis and others have played his creations, and some early adopters segued straight from the Yamaha to Booth's hand-made update.

Put another way, the gist of the design certainly has legs, but it took several

permutations and a varied career to make it what it is today.

"The original idea dates from 1979," Booth explains to *Guitar Player*. "I was working for Norlin Music at their Gibson U.K. distribution center, doing repair and quality-control work. The team was asked what we thought of several new Gibson models, like the 335-S, the Paul and the SG. I immediately said I thought that there was a better way to design and market a solid 335. Top U.K. management were most unimpressed with my impertinence, but I drew up the first design anyway, thinking, Well, if you won't make it, maybe one day I will.

"As the idea developed, I realized that the advantages of lighter weight and better access were only the start. I could add coil splits to expand the versatility of sounds onstage, and I could use figured book-matched carved maple tops rather than the

typical poorly matched three-piece plain maple tops that were common at the time. And then the whole plan had to be shelved as Gibson closed the U.K. distribution center and I settled into a life of self-employment and guitar repairs.”

Through much of the '80s, however, Booth worked for Yamaha U.K. doing final setup and quality checks, and toward the end of that decade the maker wanted a follow-up to the successful SG range that could compete with the pointy-headstock, double-locking-whammy guitars of the era. Booth adapted his existing design to hold a Floyd Rose vibrato system, tweaked other specs for Yamaha's manufacturing, and the MSG — for Martyn's SG — was born. Yamaha USA settled on calling it the Image in the U.S. for fear of associations with the flavor enhancer monosodium glutamate.

“And just when you think everything is going well,” Booth adds, “in 1990 Yamaha

USA decided they wanted to run U.S.-designed guitars, not British. Bye bye, Martyn! It was very disappointing.”

Yamaha's loss, however, was eventually our gain. The guitars based on the foundational design Booth has produced in his one-man workshop in Sudbury, Suffolk,

“WHAT'S THE SECRET? RESONANCE, RESONANCE, RESONANCE!”

about two hours north of London, are truly things of beauty, as well as deceptively utilitarian workhorses. Though it has carefully engineered tone chambers, outwardly our sample Martyn Booth Signature has a body shape that obviously echoes a down-sized ES-335, with a thickness and materials

inspired by the Les Paul Standard, including a lovely book-matched flame-maple top and one-piece mahogany back. The glued-in mahogany neck has a comfortable “C” profile that merges the depths of the classic '59 and '60 carves, with a dark rosewood fretboard and, atop it all, a headstock that pays homage to Gibson's “open book” shape while decreasing the string angle from nut slot to tuner post. In short, it's a design that's easy to love at first sight, and even easier to fall head over heels in love with when you get your hands on it.

What's the secret to making the guitar what it is today? As Booth explains, it's “resonance, resonance, resonance! Every piece of wood is tap tested: *bonk* or *boing*? Only *boing* gets used. It even applies to fingerboards, frets and top nuts. All the new specifications were focused on the absolute best-quality materials I could find: top-quality woods, tremolos, tuners, pickups, et cetera.



Electronics include a Seymour Duncan Jazz humbucker in the neck, a JB in the bridge, a three-way switch, volume control and master tone with a push/push pot for coil-splitting.



The headstock recalls Gibson's "open book" shape.

No need for double-locking tremolos anymore, as Hipshot tremos and several brands of locking tuners were now available."

Booth believes the secret to his success is simplicity. "Although I do get asked for zillions of switches and sounds occasionally," he says, "the true Martyn Booth ethos is one of ease of use onstage and minimal electronics to get in the way of the natural resonance of the guitar and the unimpeded sound of the pickups." In the case of our example, that includes a Seymour Duncan Jazz humbucker in the neck and a JB in the bridge. The electronics include one three-way switch, one 500k linear volume pot ("I know, exactly the opposite of the 'received' wisdom," Booth says), one master tone with a single .022 cap, and a push/push pot for coil-splitting. "And it must be a push/push pot," he explains, "because you can tap it up and down even with sweaty hands under stage lights."

Tested through a Friedman Small Box head and 2x12 cab, a custom tweed Deluxe-inspired 1x12 combo, and a Neural DSP Quad Cortex into studio monitors, the Signature immediately revealed how successfully Booth's care and consideration have come together. And although the look and description might scream "modern do-it-all electric" to many players, some plugged-in quality time quickly proves that this guitar has a lot more heart and soul than that kind of pigeonholing often implies. This is



an extremely characterful instrument, and one that — in its time here — has proved endlessly inspiring, beyond its undisputed ability to efficiently get the job done.

All the essentials are there for the hard-working pro who needs a versatile guitar to cover the go-to tones on the palette: chunky crunch or sizzling rock leads from the bridge pickup, warm balladry or throaty blues leads from the neck, and the rest of it. The real surprise comes in how well all positions work with the coil-split switch engaged, which not only yields far more usable single-coil tones than nine out of 10 such guitars you might pick up but also provides some of the guitar's most appealing and individual voices overall. The middle

position with the pickups split is totally to die for — sparkling, sweet, lively and detailed. And come to think of it, the Signature sounds great in that position in full humbucker mode, too.

Overall, it swings impressively between anything for which you might use a great Les Paul, SG or ES-335, while doing quite a bit more than any of those are usually capable of. It also displays a heady dose of its own personality in the process. Which is to say, the Martyn Booth Signature is simply one of those breathtakingly right guitars, and one that's very difficult to box up and send back when the time comes. 🎸

CONTACT martynboothguitars.co.uk

PRICE \$6,500 to \$7,200, depending on specs

MY CAREER IN FIVE RIFFS

Mac McAnally shares the music that inspired his incomparable career.

BY JIM BEAUGEZ

PHOTO BY J.B. LAWRENCE

IT'S UNLIKELY THAT Mac McAnally's handiwork has escaped your notice. The Nashville session picker has been Jimmy Buffett's sideman and a hit songwriter, and he's been named Country Music Association Musician of the Year a total of 10 times. McAnally takes us from a porch in Belmont, Mississippi, to Muscle Shoals, Alabama, where he worked sessions as a teenager, and finally to Music City. Here are the top five riffs that shaped his life in music.

"WILDWOOD FLOWER" MAYBELLE CARTER

"We had an old Silvertone archtop guitar. It was too big for me to reach around, but my dad would sit and play 'Wildwood Flower,' and that was one of the first things I tried to play. Neither of us had a pick, so the Mother Maybelle thing was hard to do, but I used the back of my nail as a pick. I kept on with that for quite a while. Over the years in studios, I've played with a pencil, a razor blade. Anything that will make a racket on the guitar, I enjoy."

LESTER FLATT LICK

"The first band I had a job with was a country band in Iron City, Tennessee. The lead singer wasn't much of a bass player — he would play

random bass notes. I would reach over to his amp and flip the standby switch and kill his bass for the whole song. But his signature thing was at the end of every song, he would play the Lester Flatt lick in whatever key we were in. So he kept turning up his amp through the whole song, and at the very last chord I would flip the standby switch back on, and he would play an ungodly loud [sings lick]. That taught me a lot — maybe the edge of what you can get away with."

INTRO TO "ALIVE" MAC McANALLY

"I grew up worshipping Chet [Atkins]. I got a little record deal when I was 19, and the folks at ASCAP brought me to Nashville right after the record came out and carried me to meet Chet. He said, 'First song, second side of your album, you're doing some weird frailing thing in E minor. Show me what you're doing.' So the way I met my hero was him asking me how I played something. That gave me a little boost in confidence, severely needed."

"BLACKBIRD" THE BEATLES

"One of the songs that was kind of a hurdle I wanted to clear was 'Blackbird.' When I figured out Paul was just ringing the G string all the way through the whole song, I thought that was awfully cool. I was never trying to play it like Paul did; I just loved the notion of that common tone that rings in every chord in the song."

"THE WAY I MET CHET ATKINS WAS HIM ASKING ME HOW I PLAYED SOMETHING"

"GIVE IT AWAY" GEORGE STRAIT

"Every once in a while in the studio you'll get put in the hot seat, where someone says, 'Come up with a little intro.' I got it a few years ago on a George Strait record. I don't know how good I played, but it got heard a lot. The swampy aspect probably comes from a combination of Mississippi Delta and Muscle Shoals, Alabama — all the R&B I played mixed with the country I played." 🎸

More Online! Watch Mac play and discuss these riffs at guitarplayer.com/riffs-mac



Vintage MAGIC

Fifty Years of innovation comes full circle on this Boogie® to deliver the ultimate single channel, vintage-voiced and styled amplifier. The California Tweed™ 6V6 4:40 is a revolutionary update of legendary Tweed architecture featuring deep, lush Reverb and five iconic power options across classic wiring styles and bubbly 6V6-flavored wattage ratings, all yours on a simple rotary control packed full of old-school Tone.

Handbuilt in Petaluma, California, USA | mesaboogie.com



MY CAREER IN FIVE SONGS

Hammond B-3s and cowbells!
Mark Farner reveals the genesis of classic tracks from Grand Funk Railroad.

BY JOE BOSSO

DURING HIS SEVEN-YEAR tenure with the original Grand Funk Railroad, Mark Farner churned out an astonishing number of original songs, writing the lion's share of material for the group's 10 studio albums. Throughout much of the 1960s, however, while performing with bands such as Terry Knight & the Pack and the Bossmen, Farner never tried his hand at songwriting, believing it was something only the pros could do.

"Writing songs just seemed like this magical thing that I wasn't capable of," he says. "I came up listening to the radio, and I'd hear Buddy Holly and the Beatles, or there'd be all the great hits by Carole King, and I'd be like, 'How do they do it?' Were they just born with this gift that I didn't have? So even while I put a lot of work into playing the guitar,

I never used it as a tool for songwriting, because I thought I couldn't do it."

That all changed one night in 1966. After playing a gig with the Bossmen, he was hanging out with Dick Wagner, the group's leader and songwriter, and eventual hired gun for Alice Cooper, Aerosmith, Kiss and Lou Reed, to name a few. Farner watched, spellbound as Wagner developed new material right in front of him. "I said, 'It's like these songs just pour right out of you. How do you do it?'" Farner recalls. "And he said, 'Well, it's inside of you too. You can do it if you try.' I didn't believe him, but Dick said, 'I bet if I go to bed right now, I'm going to wake up in the morning and you'll have a song.' So I said I'd try, and that night I wrote 'Heartbreaker.' That's what started it for me, and I have Dick Wagner to thank for it."

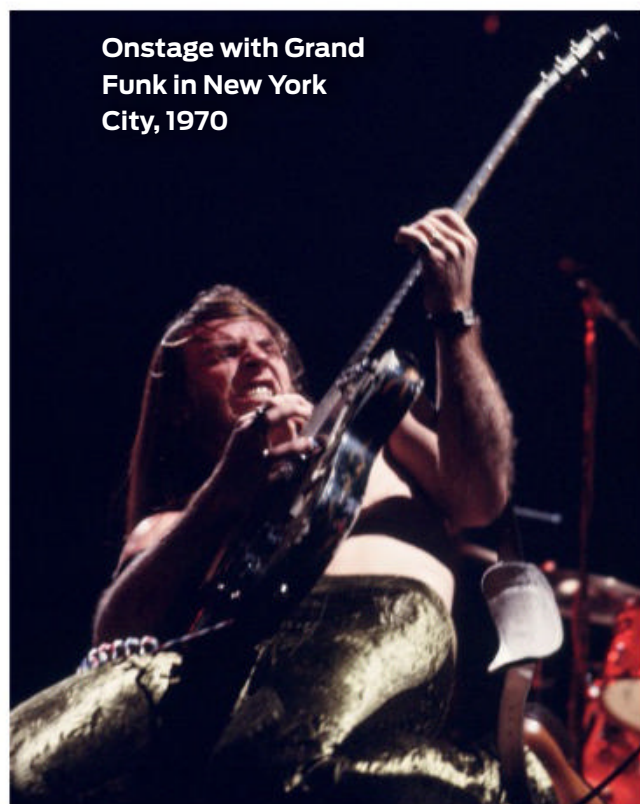
That one night unlocked a door for Farner, and it led to a cavalcade of hard-charging, soulful classics that he would go on to write for Grand Funk Railroad from the late '60s and well into the next decade. "I just needed the confidence that I could do it, and once I had it, I couldn't stop," he says. "I never analyzed songwriting. It's almost like I didn't want to. But it was incredible how I could get in this state of mind. I'd pick up my guitar, and at first I had nothing, but before long I'd have a complete song. How do you explain it?"

Farner is similarly unanalytical when it comes to his exuberant approach to guitar playing, a distinctive blend of robust rhythms, widescreen leads and irrepressible jams that ignited car radios, arenas and stadiums throughout the '70s. "My guitar playing has always been based on pure emotion," he says. "When I played with [drummer] Don [Brewer]

and [bassist] Mel [Schacher], I just got into this frame of mind, and I was cookin'. We all shared that mindset. I could never read music, but I knew how to put melodies across in my solos, and I could get the audience going."

After spending the past year and a half off the road, Farner is looking forward to playing live dates soon, and he's been keeping his chops in shape in a rather unusual style. "I'm 72 now, so I've got to work the muscles a little more than when I was a young guy," he says. "I came up with this stretch where I push my fingertips down into the couch, into the cushion next to me. I make my fingers go backward and hold them like that for a few minutes, and then I make them go the other way. It stretches my tendons, and when I'm ready to pick up the guitar, I'm good to go."

Below, Farner looks back at the recording of five noteworthy tracks from his long and remarkable career.



Onstage with Grand Funk in New York City, 1970



SCOTT GRIES/GETTY IMAGES (MUSIC MIDTOWN); WALTER IOOSS JR./GETTY IMAGES (NYC)



Mark Farner onstage at Music Midtown 2002, Atlanta, Georgia, May 4, 2002

“HEARTBREAKER” ON TIME (1969)

“This was my first attempt at songwriting. I just started playing the chords, played ‘em over and over, and soon enough the melody came to me. Then I started hearing everything — the drums, the bass, how I should play guitar. I had it in my back pocket for a few years before Grand Funk. In fact, we did it in the Bossmen for the last six months that I was with them. Dick Wagner really liked the song. We’d play it live, and there’d be the breakdown section where I do a guitar solo. The crowd loved it. It wasn’t so much that I was a great musician; it was because I was going after the audience. It was passion.

“I played it with Grand Funk pretty much the same way as I did with the Bossmen. There wasn’t any reason to change it. By the time we got in the studio, I could’ve played it in my sleep. It was a one-take deal. Of course,

the whole first album was done in three days — recorded and mixed. I used my Musicraft Messenger guitar and my West Fillmore amplifier, and I just ripped. I remember [producer] Terry Knight heard us track ‘Heartbreaker’ one time, and he said, ‘Okay, that’s done. What’s next?’ Listening back to it was thrilling. You know, we’re making a record, so I was like, ‘Wow, it’s really happening. Somebody pinch me!’”

“CLOSER TO HOME (I’M YOUR CAPTAIN)” CLOSER TO HOME (1970)

“I prayed for this song. I said the prayer my mother taught me, and I put a P.S. on it: ‘God, would you please give me a song that would

touch the hearts of those you want to get to?’ I got up and wrote the words — they were just there. Then I made a pot of coffee, reached over and grabbed my Washburn guitar, and I started playing. I played this inversion just by accident, and I was like, ‘How did that happen?’ Then I started singing, and the

whole song just came out. I took it to rehearsal that day, and both Mel and Don said, ‘Man, Farner, you wrote a hit. That’s a hit!’ I said, “God gave it to me. It better be a hit.”

“Tommy Baker did

the strings and orchestration for the song. That’s all his genius. When I played it for him, I got to the slow part, and he said, ‘After that, you need to play the chorus over and over. Just keep going and stretch it out. I’m hearing

“I SAID, ‘THIS SONG
NEEDS COWBELL. GO GET
SIX. WE’LL PICK THE ONE
THAT SOUNDS BEST’”

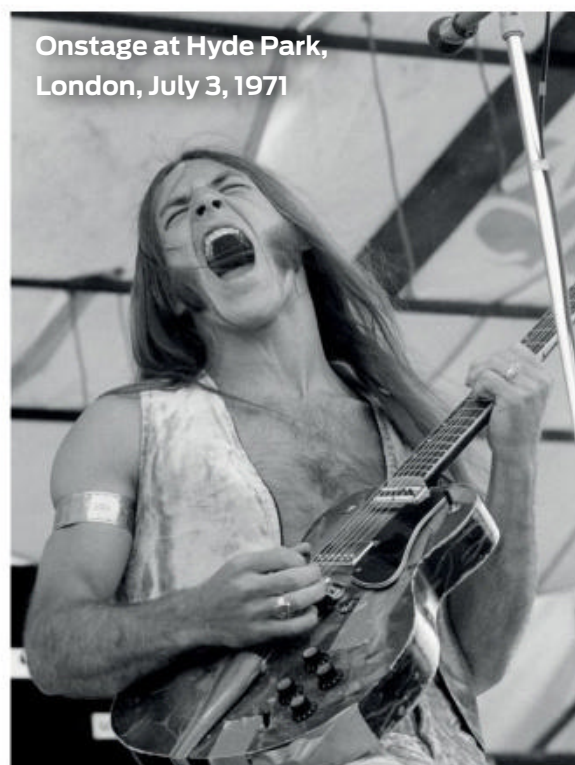
strings, French horn, cello.' I told Don and Mel, 'Tommy wants us to keep going until we can't play it anymore.' So that's how we cut it. It became an epic. The song was a huge hit for us. We pulled it off live pretty well; we got a dude to play the strings and the flute on a Mellotron. The audience never complained."

"FOOTSTOMPIN' MUSIC" E PLURIBUS FUNK (1971)

"I bought a Hammond B-3, and George Winters, who was working at this music store, Marshall's Music, told me, 'I'm gonna get you a couple of Leslie 145 cabinets. They're smaller than the 122s, but they really sing.' He brought them over to my house, and we set them up in the basement, where the band rehearsed. I walked up to the B-3, hit the starter button and let the tone generator start whirling. I had a set of organ foot pedals, so I started bouncing my foot on the low C while I was rocking with my right hand. I had never played that rhythm, but it sounded good.

"Don and Mel came over, and I said, 'Guys, I got a song!' I played it for them, but I asked Brewer to kick the shuffle instead of tapping it. When you tap a shuffle, it swings, and that's cool, but if you kick a shuffle, it rocks! This song needed to be a real shuffle rocker.

"The song started with that B-3, but I knew I had to get some guitar on it. Until I got loose and actually strapped on my guitar, I didn't know what I was going to play. I started the song on the B-3, and in the second verse I started answering myself on the guitar, doing



Onstage at Hyde Park,
London, July 3, 1971



The four-piece Grand Funk circa 1975. (from left)
Farner, Don Brewer, Craig Frost and Mel Schacher

blues licks and what not. Live, the song worked out beautifully. I walked away from the organ, stood in front of my amps, and from the second I put my fingers on the fretboard, I was on fire, like I could not miss."

"WE'RE AN AMERICAN BAND" WE'RE AN AMERICAN BAND (1973)

"Don brought the lyrics and sang it while playing a two-note chord on the guitar. It sounded good, but I suggested another way to sing it. He tried it out and said, 'Oh, yeah, I can do that.' Next, I said, 'This song needs cowbell,' to

which he said, 'But I don't have a cowbell.' So I told him. 'Well, go get one, 'cause this song needs a cowbell. And better yet, go get six of them! We'll pick the one that sounds best.' I just knew that a cowbell would make a big difference. We ended up putting duct tape on one, and that made it sound badass.

"Todd Rundgren produced this record. We went to Miami Beach to cut tracks. I played a Gibson L-5S in the studio, and I ran it through a Fender Super head. Live, I used two speaker cabinets, but we only used one while recording. The track came out fast — there wasn't a lot of fussing around. We hadn't played it onstage before we recorded it, but we could tell we had something. At this point, we were feeling pretty confident. I remember I cut a killer guitar solo, but when we listened to the playback I started playing a harmony on my guitar. Todd looked at me and said, 'That's it! Farner, get your ass back out there and do that harmony.' So off I went."

"BAD TIME" ALL THE GIRLS IN THE WORLD BEWARE!!! (1974)

"I'm really proud of this song. It didn't go to number one — it reached number four on *Billboard* — but it got a BMI award for being the most-played song of 1975.

"It all started in the dining room of my farmhouse. I had a spinet piano, and one day I was sitting playing, and my first wife was in the kitchen mumbling and muttering how she

was going to put a 12-inch cast-iron skillet through my forehead. I heard what she was saying, and I wrote, 'This is a bad time to be in love.' The melody came to me right there, and I wrote the lyrics

"MEL AND DON SAID, 'FARNER, YOU WROTE A HIT!' GOD GAVE IT TO ME. IT BETTER BE A HIT"

down on a legal pad.

"The band dug the song, and our producer, Jimmy Ienner, really thought that it was something special. As a matter of fact, when we were cutting vocals for the album at the Record Plant in New York City, he would bring different people into the control room while I was singing on this one. I'd be at the mic, and I would look through the glass and see all these people standing around. Jimmy loved the song so much that he wanted everybody to hear it, even while we were working.

"I think I played a Strat on this one, and I'm pretty sure the amp was my Fender Super. The song has got a cool solo, but I didn't write it out beforehand. The whole thing was done on the fly. I had them play the track and I just put my hands on the guitar's neck and worked out a nice melody line. It's not a superburner lead; the song didn't call for that. It's a melancholy song, so it needed a little subtlety." 🎸

LYNN GOLDSMITH/CORBIS/VCG VIA GETTY IMAGES (BAND); MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES (HYDE PARK)



Greg Koch

GRISTLE-TONE

SIGNATURE SERIES

P90

It was no surprise when Greg came asking to explore the possibilities of Fluence technology applied to the P90. Like his Fluence Gristle-Tone, Tele replacement set, Greg's P90s are deeply rooted in tradition, and then un-rooted in sounds that only Greg can conjure – satisfying all of his lascivious P90 needs!



FISHMAN FLUENCE®

For more information visit Fishman.com/Fluence



Foxx on the Run

Throughout its 1970s production, the Foxx Tone Machine was the dirt box to beat.

THE '70S WAS a bountiful time for analog effects pedals. Among the great fuzz boxes of the era, the Foxx Tone Machine stands proudly as one of the most expressive and more extreme. The pedal was the flagship of Foxx's lineup, which ran for a few years before vanishing in the latter part of the decade. Appropriately for a fuzz pedal, its metal case was covered in tightly cropped red or blue flocking that made it feel as velvety as it sounded. And while the pedals are hard enough to come by, the Stars & Stripes unit from 1972, shown here, is among the rarest. According to the Tone Machine's inventor, Steve Ridinger, very few of these red-white-and-blue beauties were made. "My memory is just a few, not 50 pieces," he says. "It was very laborious masking all the areas to get the different flocking colors."

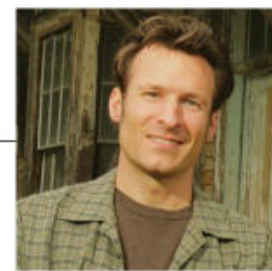
Ridinger created the Tone Machine in Los Angeles in 1971, when he was just 19 years old. The circuit within it (which would be used in other Foxx products) was a relatively complex affair that offered more control than the average Fuzz Face or Maestro clone, the likes of which constituted a large proportion of the fuzz boxes available at the time. The Tone Machine used four transistors and had a very effective octave-up sound (misspelled Octive on the control panel, though corrected in the brochures) that was activated by the toggle switch on the pedal's side. This was itself a major bonus that performed better than many other octave and octave-fuzz units on the market, underscoring the veracity of the Tone Machine's name.

The core sound is a thick, textured, gnarly fuzz, but the versatile Mellow-Brite tone

control takes it from warm and gooey to bright and razor-like. This knob gives the Tone Machine much more range than most two-knob fuzzes, and even outperforms many others with tone knobs. While many other lesser-known and also-ran fuzz efforts often failed to hold their own alongside the established classics, the Tone Machine quickly found an enthusiastic following and remained a highly regarded variation on the fuzz theme for decades to come.

Unlike the traditional stompbox-style Tone Machine and its partner, the Phase III, which arrived a little later, the majority of Foxx's notable products came in rocker pedals that better served their bonus features and put even more control right at the player's feet. Among them were the Wa & Volume, Fuzz & Wa & Volume, O.D. Machine,

PHOTO BY SOUTHSIDE GUITARS



BY DAVE HUNTER



The Tone Machine in its more familiar red-flocked covering

Down Machine (a bass wah-wah), Loud Machine (a passive volume pedal), and Clean Machine, which offered both mellow and fuzzy sustain.

The top dog was arguably the Fuzz & Wa & Volume, often considered the catch of the lineup. In addition to its three obvious functions, it had the useful Foxx octave-up effect and four voicing modes for the wah. The pedal packed plenty of sonic sculpting power, but it exhibited a few drawbacks. The volume pedal didn't work quite as it should, while further problems were occasionally caused by the pedal's inherently original looks. The fuzzy flocking that covered the metal enclosures often worked its way loose and ended up inside the box, where it gummed up the workings of the wah-wah potentiometer and gear.

But of all the Foxx company's pedals, the Tone Machine remains the one many players loved best, and it grabbed the attention of several star users during its run and after. To hear some of its more extreme sounds, check out much of Adrian Belew's work, particularly the song "Big Electric Cat" from his 1982 solo album, *Lone Rhino*. The pedal's thick fuzz and octave sounds were also creatively exploited by Parliament-Funkadelic's Michael

ESSENTIAL INGREDIENTS

- > Fuzzy flocked covering in red and blue or Stars & Stripes (very rare)
- > Controls for volume, sustain (fuzz), and Mellow-Brite (tone), plus Octive (octave) switch
- > Original four-transistor fuzz and octave circuit
- > Thick, evocative fuzz sound with useful octave-up option



Very few Stars & Stripes models were made due to the complex flocking design.

Hampton, Peter Frampton, Trent Reznor, Billy Gibbons and several other notables.

Having created such a legend in just a few years, and at such a young age, Ridinger continued to excel in the industry. In the 1990s, he rose to become head of the Evets Corporation, which purchased the Danelectro trademark in 1995 primarily to use the brand on a range of budget-friendly, retro-minded effects pedals. (Remarkably, Danelectro's reissue guitars only came along later, after much demand from customers.) Given Ridinger's experience in the pedal world, the fact that so many of these colorful and affordable early Danelectro stompboxes also sounded good becomes far less surprising. Among them, the French Toast was based on the original Tone Machine.

Several popular homages to the Foxx Tone Machine have hit the market over the years, including a Foxx-branded reissue in the 2000s. Unsurprisingly, given Ridinger's history, the more recent Danelectro 3699 Fuzz has received high marks from many players (and an Editors' Pick Award from *GP* in 2019). It includes the bonus of a Mid Boost switch and a second foot switch to kick in the octave effect. Incidentally, 3699 was the last four



Danelectro's 3699 fuzz features the original circuit, with some tweaks.

digits of the Foxx company's randomly assigned phone number in the early '70s (and it spells out "FOXX" on a traditional telephone

keypad). Other options include Warm Audio's Foxy Tone Box, which goes for the vintage-correct format but in orange flocking, and the Fulltone Ultimate Octave and Stomp Under Foot Silver Foxx, both of which also add a foot-

switchable octave. Wherever you get it, the Foxx Tone Machine is undoubtedly a mighty shape shifter of a circuit. 🎸

THE TONE MACHINE QUICKLY FOUND AN ENTHUSIASTIC FOLLOWING AND REMAINED A HIGHLY REGARDED VARIATION ON THE FUZZ THEME

BY JIM CAMPILONGO



Southern Comfort

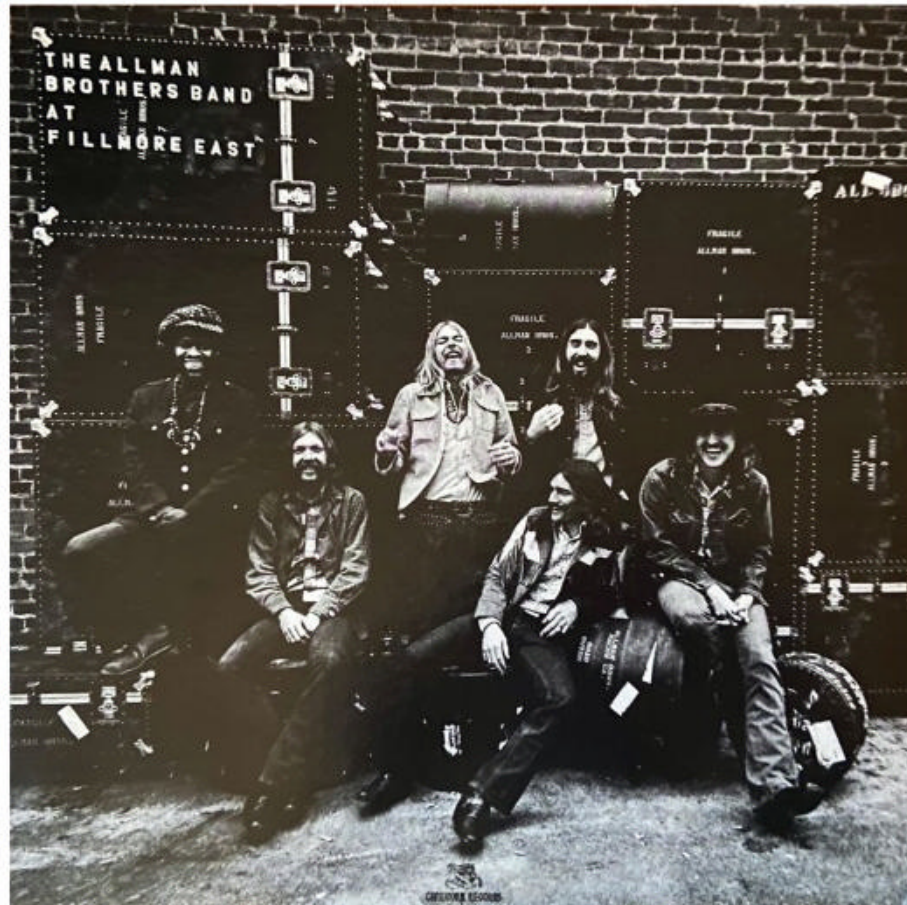
The Allman Brothers gave southern rock a home with *At Fillmore East*.

I SOMETIMES AVOID writing about an iconic record for fear that it's already overexposed. But *At Fillmore East* is so monumental and close to my heart that it's unavoidable. It's a great double-record set with a great cover. And who doesn't like road cases?

Released in 1971 on Capricorn Records, *At Fillmore East* captures the Allman Brothers — guitarists Duane Allman and Dickey Betts, keyboardist/singer Gregg Allman, bassist Berry Oakley, and drummers Jaimoe and Butch Trucks — in the zone and at the peak of their powers. All one can hope for when buying a live record is to hear the self-conscious studio restraints vanish and the intangible elements of spirit and heart make their way to tape for the ages. *At Fillmore East* delivers in spades.

"In Memory of Elizabeth Reed," my favorite track, exemplifies the Allman Brothers' magic. This Dickey Betts–penned composition ebbs, flows, peaks and simmers, while the entire group melds into a musical army. To me, this track is a mystical journey that never leaves the high altitude of stellar. It starts seductively with the iconic Am9 - Am, Am9 - D changes, and with volume swells and cinematic unison harmonies that preface a boulder rolling down a hill. Dickey and Duane play great solos, and the band churns in support.

Back in the day, my high school friends and I wouldn't leave for class until we had played "In Memory of Elizabeth Reed" in its entirety. Every day, this 12-minute track made me late for class, and not surprisingly I flunked first-period Psychology 101. Oh well. At least every note of "In Memory of Elizabeth Reed" is in my DNA. That's extra credit.



DUANE AND DICKEY PIONEERED AND DEFINED THE TIMELESS MARRIAGE OF HARMONY GUITARS

Other tracks, like "Statesboro Blues," still hold up 50 years after the fact as quintessential blues-rock tracks. Duane's Les Paul through a Marshall sounds like a flamethrower, while he exhibits a slide technique so exceptional, it's still the high bar for guitarists to aspire to. Absolutely no one before Duane sounded like him, and his contributions to the Allman Brothers and Derek & the Dominos' *Layla* sessions — not to mention his contributions to Boz Scaggs, Herbie Mann and Wilson Pickett — are part of

the significant legacy this young man left us before his untimely death at 24.

I love that the group is informed by Blind Lemon Jefferson, Muddy Waters, Blind Willie Johnson and the

like, but they take the next step of redefining the blues as they hear and feel it. The listener gets to hear them innovate the genre. "Done Somebody Wrong" features a great Gregg

Allman vocal, to which Duane answers by making the guitar seem like another human voice, while Dickey digs in, never to be upstaged or diminished.

Speaking of which, Mr. Betts has a style we could all learn from. He plants himself with a pentatonic idea so thoroughly, he torturously depletes its every possibility before ascending to the next chapter. His solos are like a slow walk up a dark stairway in a movie thriller. In my opinion, Dickey's artistry blossomed on the post-Duane LP *Brothers and Sisters*, and his original gem "Jessica" shows him at the top of his game. Together, Duane and Dickey are the quintessential guitar duo, and they pioneered and defined the timeless marriage of harmony guitars. Whenever I play harmonies with another guitarist, their example inevitably sits on my shoulders.

I think it's safe to say *At Fillmore East* influenced and opened the door for Marshall Tucker, Lynyrd Skynyrd, Elvin Bishop, Dixie Dregs and other influential southern rock groups that followed. The Allman Brothers' influence was so distilled and true, most of those groups couldn't help but retain the language and spirit of the southern rock genre the Allmans helped create.

For that matter, I find *At Fillmore East* continues to inspire me in new ways. A few years ago, I played a show with Nels Cline, Chris Morrissey and Josh Dion, and when we picked material, Nels picked "Hot 'Lanta." I had always thought of it as "the other song" on side three with "In Memory of Elizabeth Reed." After playing it, I realized what a great tune it is. Thanks, Nels, and thank you, Allman Brothers. 🎸

Jim Campilongo has 14 critically acclaimed instrumental records available on vinyl, CD and digital download at jimcampilongo.com.



BY TERRY CARLETON

Devil With a Blue Dress

This 1968 Silvertone/Teisco EV3T “Crying Phantom” is one hot little number.

AS A LONGTIME fan, collector and defender of Teisco guitars, I chuckle that I’m still somewhat surprised by just how good some of these darn things can sound and play. Granted, the 1968 Silvertone/Teisco EV3T shown here was never intended to be a professional guitar, nor was it priced to be, with an MSRP of 50 bucks circa 1968. But some 50 years later, Teisco guitars have found their way into respectability among not just collectors but also players and session musicians. This guitar comes from an important transition period in the Teisco story. According to my friend and noted Japanese guitar expert, Frank Meyers, this Teisco with the Silvertone branding (the name that Sears put on its guitars) is not exactly a Teisco — it’s a Teisco made by Kawai.

WEIRDO FACTOR

If the loud blue color and faux wood paneling pickguard aren’t odd enough, how about the shape of this beast? It’s like a cross between a Vox Phantom and a Teardrop, hence the model’s Crying Phantom nickname. Or in less delicate terms, it looks like a shovel in a Pride parade!

The late 1960s marked the end of the golden era spawned by the mid-’50s electric guitar boom. Designers were desperate for new designs that might sell a few more guitars. But other than its shape, this guitar is exactly like the Teisco EV3T, which is shaped like the five-sided Vox Phantom.

PLAYABILITY AND SOUND

This guitar plays well, but not great. If you’re a good guitarist, you’ll be able to play it without feeling like you’re wrestling with it. The action is low, the intonation is reasonable, and after you hear how it sounds, you may decide it’s worth sacrificing a little modern playability to cash in on the singularly unique wonkiness of these pickups.

Each of the three single-coils has its own kill switch. The multilaminated neck is slender and easy to play, and it has a truss rod. The rosewood fingerboard has 21 frets, plus a zero fret, and nice cream binding for smooth gliding up and down. The tremolo works remarkably well, but not for much more than half-step bends. The roller bridge is height adjustable, but not individually intonatable.

But the EV3T more than makes up for any shortcomings with its sound. The pickups are bright and chimy, with the bridge position possessing the most nasal snarkiness. The middle and neck positions are great for strumming, but my favorite combo is the bridge and neck pickups together, with just a bit of overdrive, for a full-bodied and outspoken tone. Like so many other ’60s Japanese guitars, this thing is a screaming banshee with full-on distortion. It’s great fun — unless you don’t like loud, whiny feedback fun!

VALUE

The EV3T’s original \$50 retail price was about a sixth of what you’d pay for Fender Stratocaster. And unlike a ’60s Strat, guitars like this can still be found in reasonably good condition and for well under a grand. I got mine at Guitar Showcase a while back for about \$500.

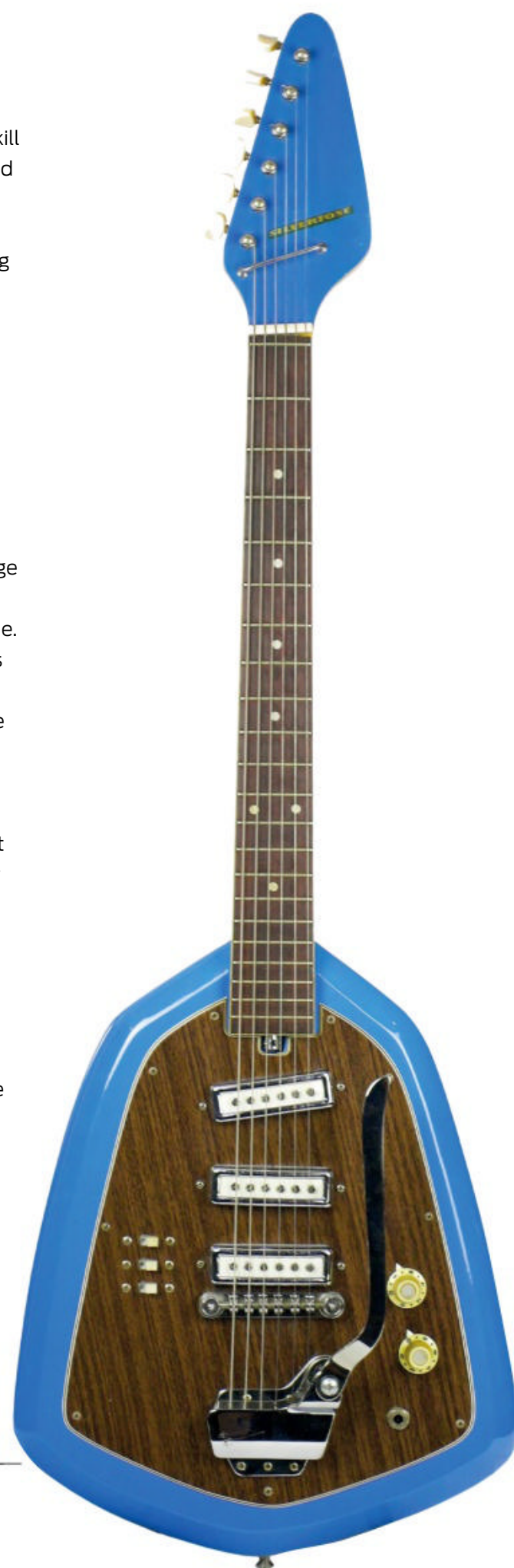
YOU MAY DECIDE IT’S WORTH SACRIFICING MODERN PLAYABILITY FOR THE WONKINESS OF THESE PICKUPS

WHY IT RULES

It’s light, wacky-looking and sounds terrific. To make your regular player guitar sound like this, you’d have to filter it through EQs and compressors. And did I mention — it’s cheap!

Thanks to Bert McIntyre at Guitar Showcase in San Jose, and Frank Meyers.

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



Live Wires

In 1971, a band of unknown southern rockers found fame — and lost their leader. This is the story of **the Allman Brothers Band's** landmark album, *At Fillmore East*, **Duane Allman's** last and greatest musical statement.

BY ALAN PAUL

PHOTOGRAPHY BY AMALIE R. ROTHSCHILD



**The Allman
Brothers Band
performs at the
Fillmore East.**

THE ALLMAN BROTHERS BAND'S 1971 double album *At Fillmore East* is often and rightly proclaimed rock's greatest live release. Fifty years on, it still sounds fresh, inspired and utterly original. It is the gold standard of blues-based rock and roll, but it's easy to lose sight of what a radical album *At Fillmore East* really was.

It took a lot of guts for the Allmans and their record label to release a two-LP live album as their third release. After all, when it came out in July 1971, the band was something of a commercial flop.

Although they drew raves for their marathon live shows that combined the

Grateful Dead's go-anywhere jam ethos with a far superior musical precision, their first two releases caused barely a ripple in the marketplace. The band's self-titled 1969 debut sold fewer than 35,000 copies, and the following year's *Idlewild South* did only marginally better despite two singles, "Midnight Rider" and "Revival." The band struggled to understand why.

"When the first record came out at number 200 with an anchor and dropped off the face of the earth, my

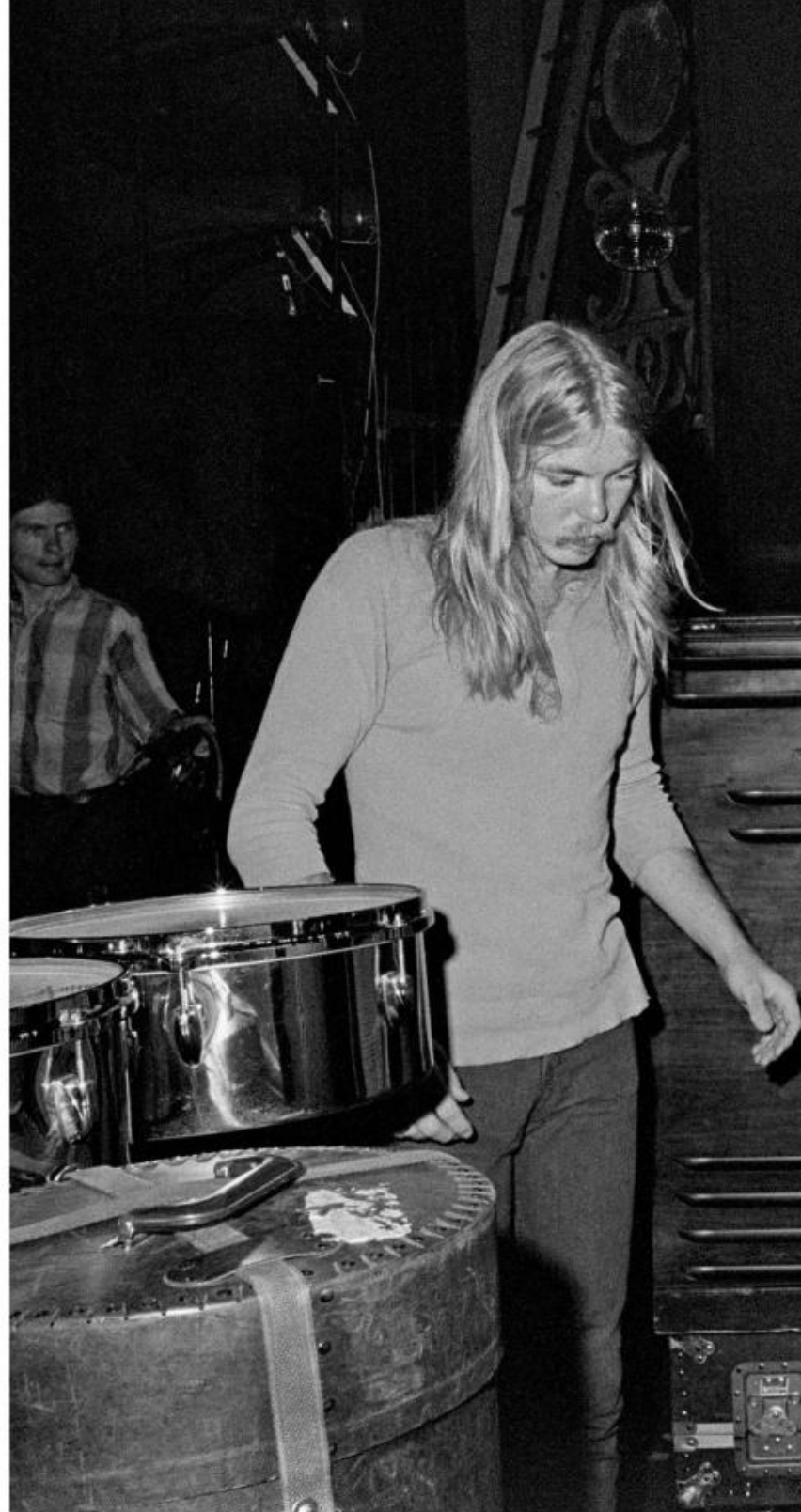
brother and I did not get discouraged," Gregg Allman recalled, a few years before his death in 2017. "But I thought *Idlewild South* was a much better record, and when that died on the vine, I thought, Damn, maybe we were wrong about this group."

But the lackluster sales didn't match the increasingly large and rabid crowds the band drew on its relentlessly paced tours. Fans loved the Allman Brothers' rare combination of blues, jazz, rock and country, and their willingness to play until somebody pulled the plug. Finally, it dawned on the band and its management that a live album was the only way to capture the group's real essence.

What resulted was a recording of two shows at New York City's famed Fillmore East, an album that still stands as a testament to a great band at the peak of its power. Sadly, it would prove to be the final record completed by guitarist Duane Allman, who died shortly after its release. As such, it has become an epitaph for both him and the Allman Brothers Band Mach 1.

"That album captured the band in all their glory," producer Tom Dowd said in a 1998 interview. Dowd, who died in 2002, was behind the boards for nearly a dozen Allman Brothers albums, including *At Fillmore East*, and worked with everyone from John Coltrane and Ray Charles to Cream and Lynyrd Skynyrd. "The

"WHEN *IDLEWILD SOUTH* DIED ON THE VINE, I THOUGHT, DAMN, MAYBE WE WERE WRONG ABOUT THIS GROUP"
— GREGG ALLMAN

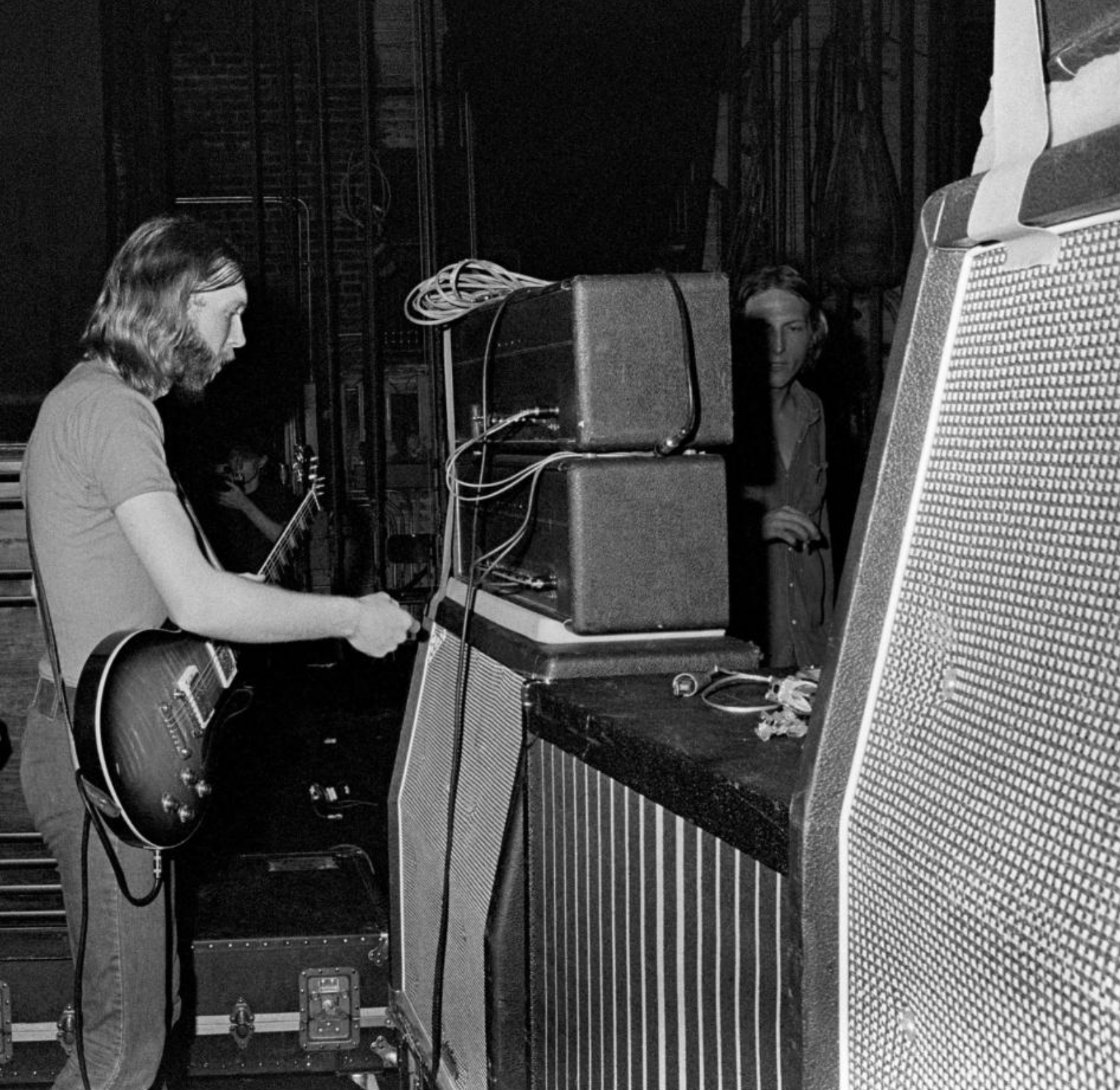


Allmans have always had a perpetual swing sensation that is unique in rock. They swing like they're playing jazz when they play things that are tangential to the blues, and even when they play heavy rock. They're never vertical but always going forward, and it's always a groove."

Certainly, the improvisation and length of the tunes on *At Fillmore East* was more similar to jazz than rock, with just seven songs spread over four vinyl sides, capturing the Allmans in all their bluesy, sonic fury. "You Don't Love Me" and "Whipping Post" both occupied full album sides, while "In Memory of Elizabeth Reed" clocked in at 13 minutes. Still, from the clarion slide guitar of "Statesboro Blues" that opens the album to the booming timpani roll of "Whipping Post" that closes it, there is nary a wasted note in the 78 minutes of *Fillmore's* music.

Propelled upward and onward by bassist Berry Oakley, whose free-range style uniquely roamed the middle of the band's sound, and the rhythmic onslaught of double drummers Jaimoe and the late Butch Trucks, the group seemed ready to blast off in any direction at any time. Dickey Betts and Duane Allman spurred each other on to new heights of

AMALIE R. ROTHCHILD



Gregg and Duane rehearse on the Fillmore East stage in 1971.

fretboard ferocity and creativity while pioneering guitar harmonies. Gregg Allman's authentic blues singing and surging organ vamps kept even the most ambitious jams firmly rooted to terra firma.

"There's nothing too complicated about what makes *Fillmore* a great album," Betts offers. "The thing is, we were a hell of a band and we just got a good recording that captured what we sounded like."

Adds Jaimoe, "*Fillmore* was both a particularly great performance and a typical night."

To truly understand the album, it helps to recognize just how hungry and desperate the band was at the time of its release. Then-manager and Capricorn Records president Phil Walden readily admitted he had begun to consider cashing in his chips and cutting his losses.

"It seemed like I had just been wrong and that they were never going to catch on," Walden, who died in 2006, said in a 1990 interview. "People just didn't grasp what the Allmans were all about musically or any other way. But they kept touring, state by state, city by city, going across the country, establishing themselves as the best live band around, and building a base."

Gregg Allman said the band played more than 300 nights in 1970, traveling most of the off days, a claim that seems only a slight exaggeration. As they continued to crisscross the country, jammed together in first a Ford Econoline van and then a Winnebago, their sound evolved and deepened. It's a process well known to the hardcore tape traders who exchange copies of these shows like so many pieces of holy grail. But there was a price to pay. "That kind of schedule puts a lot of wear and tear on your ass," Allman said.

Recalls booking agent Jonny Podell, "I started booking the band in June 1969. Phil Walden said, 'Get them dates. I don't care if it's Portland, Oregon, on Monday and Portland, Maine, on Tuesday.' I tried to do a little better, but that's what we did, and they never complained. This was run like a machine, like a military unit. There were six in the band, and management provided them with first five, then six

BUY THESE PHOTOS!

To purchase photographer **Amalie R. Rothschild's** classic photos of the Allman Brothers, including those shown here, visit:

Morrison Hotel Gallery
morrisonhotelgallery.com

Goya Contemporary Gallery
goyacontemporary.com

Heart of Gold Gallery
heartofgoldfineart.com

Monroe Gallery of Photography
monroegallery.com

crew, making maybe \$100 a night, which was pretty unusual for the time and really quite extravagant.”

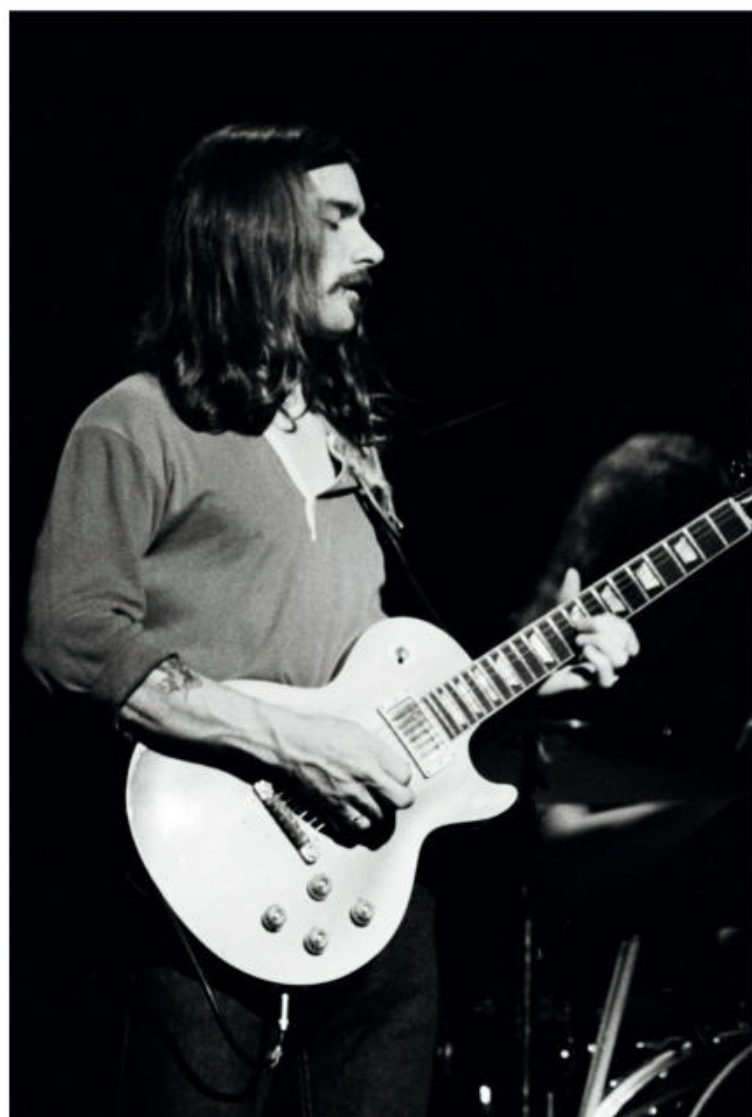
The first two weeks of September 1971, just after *At Fillmore East* was released, provide a snapshot of the band’s grueling schedule. The Allmans played Montreal on September 3 and Miami the following night. They had five days off, during which they went into Miami’s Criteria Studios with Dowd and laid down the first tracks for Betts’ “Blue Sky,” which would appear on their next studio album, *Eat a Peach*. They then played September 10 in Passaic, New Jersey, the following night in Clemson, South Carolina, and the night after that in Shippensburg, Pennsylvania. The band then had three days off and played September 16 in New Orleans.

“Don’t ask me how we did it, because I don’t know,” the band’s onetime tour manager Willie Perkins offered. “My own naïveté probably helped me, because we just did what was asked and made the gigs that were booked. But God! We used to call them ‘dartboard tours,’ because it seemed like someone had made the bookings by throwing darts at a map. We were zigzagging everywhere.”

With all that hard touring paying off and their fan base steadily growing by word of mouth, the band decided that it needed to capitalize on its concert success. The solution became apparent: Record a live album.



Duane plays acoustic slide in his hotel room before the Allman Brothers’ performance at the Sitar, Spartanburg, South Carolina, October 17, 1970.



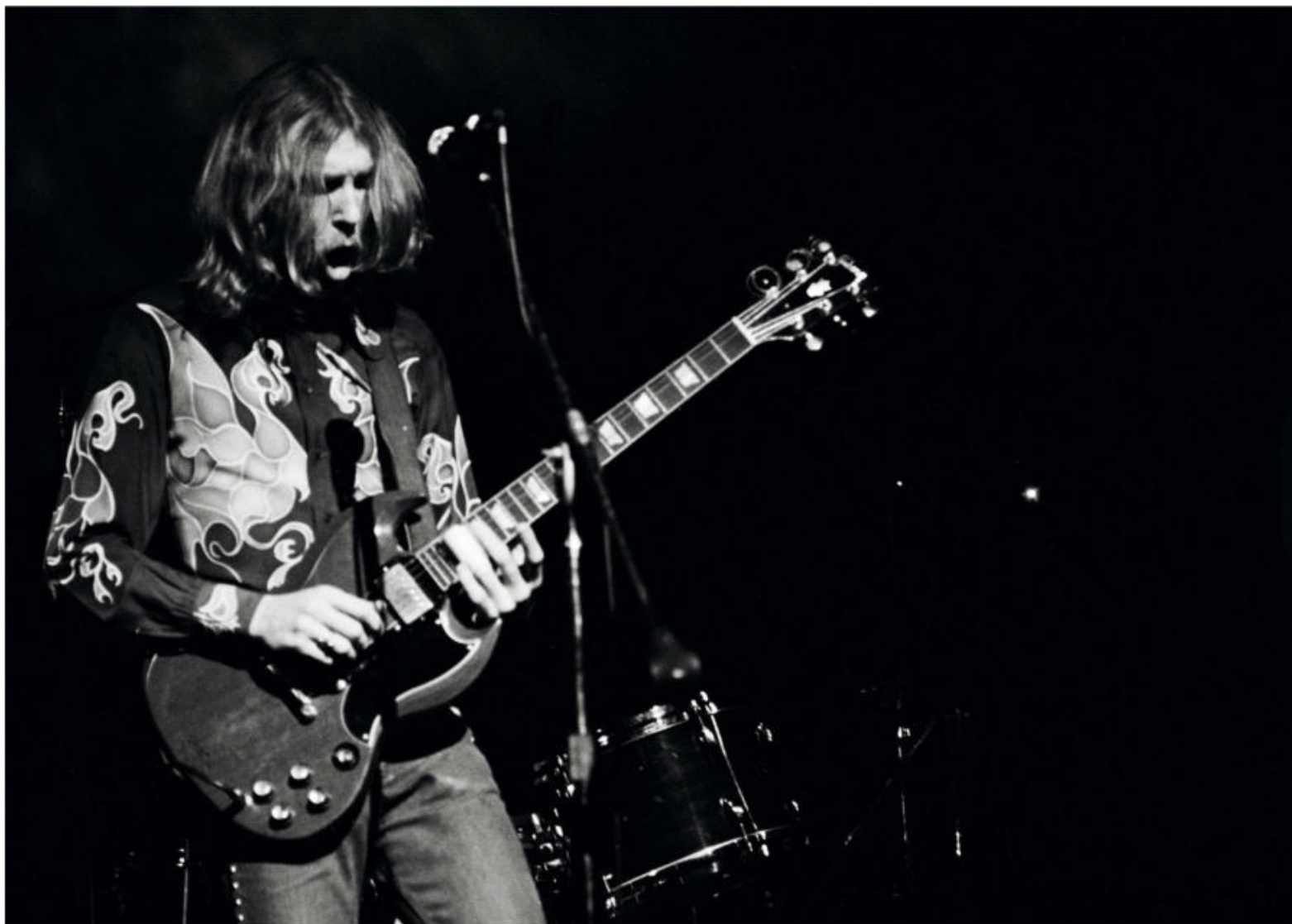
“We simply realized that we were a better live band than studio outfit because we were always ready to experiment — offstage as well as on, I may add,” Gregg explained. “And the audience was a big part of what we did up there, which is something that couldn’t be duplicated in a studio. A light bulb finally went off: We need to make a live album.”

Once the decision to record live was made — not an obvious choice in 1971, when live rock albums were still in their infancy — the choice of venue was simple. Promoter Bill Graham was an early and important supporter of the band, booking the Allmans repeatedly in his bicoastal rock emporiums, the Fillmores East, in New York, and the Fillmore West, in San Francisco, where they established themselves as an elite band.

The Allman Brothers Band had made their Fillmore debut on December 26, 1969, opening for Blood, Sweat & Tears for three nights. Graham promised he would have them back soon and often, paired with more appropriate acts. Two weeks later, they opened four shows for Buddy Guy and B.B. King at the Fillmore West. The following month they were back in New York for three nights with the Grateful Dead. These shows were crucial in establishing the band and exposing it to a wider and more sympathetic audience.

Something particularly special was happening between the Allman Brothers and fans in New York, which remained their most supportive audience throughout their career (they played their final show there, at the Beacon Theatre, on October 28, 2014). In those dark ages of rock promotion, the Fillmores were a significant step above all other venues.

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES (DUANE)



Dickey Betts
and Duane
Allman
onstage at
Fillmore East
on the venue's
final night,
June 27, 1971.

"The Fillmores were so professionally run, compared to anything else at the time," Perkins says. "And Graham would gamble on acts, bringing in jazz and blues and the Trinidad/Tripoli String Band, and he had taken a chance on the Brothers, which everyone appreciated and remembered. He never paid anyone top dollar at the Fillmore. A lot of bands went off to other promoters as a result, and Bill would feel like they had turned their back on him. But we loved playing there."

"New York crowds have always been great," says Betts, who parted ways with the Allman Brothers in 2000. "But what made the Fillmore a special place was Bill Graham. He was the best promoter rock has ever had, and you could feel his influence in every single little thing at the Fillmore."

"He called a spade a spade — and not necessarily in a loving way," Allman added. "Mr. Graham was a stern man, the most tell-it-like-it-is person I have ever met, and at first it was off-putting. But he was the most fair person, too, and after knowing him for while, you realized that this guy, unlike most of the other fuckers out there, was on the straight and narrow."

To cut the album, the band was booked into the Fillmore for three nights — March 11, 12 and 13, 1971 — as the middle act between opener Elvin Bishop and headliner Johnny Winter. The label and the band both wanted Dowd to produce the recording, but he was in Ghana working on recording the movie soundtrack for *Soul to Soul*, a concert featuring Wilson Pickett, Aretha Franklin, Louis Armstrong, James Brown and Booker T & the MGs. "I got off a plane from Africa and called Atlantic to

let them know I was back, and Jerry Wexler said, 'Thank God! We're recording the Allman Brothers live, and the truck is already booked,'" Dowd said. "So I stayed up in New York for a few days longer than I had planned."

A mobile recording studio was parked on the street outside the theater, with Dowd and a small crew set up inside. "It was a good truck, with a 16-track machine and a great, tough-as-nails staff who took care of business," Dowd recalled. "They were all set to go. When I got there, I gave them a couple of suggestions and clued them as to what to expect and how to employ the 16 tracks, because we had two drummers and two lead guitar players, which was unusual, and it took some foresight to properly capture the dynamics."

Things went smoothly until the band unexpectedly brought out sax player "Juicy" Carter and harmonica player Thom Doucette several songs into the first set. "One of the guys asked me how to mic the horn, and I thought he was joking," Dowd said. "They started playing, and the horn was leaking all over everything, rendering the songs unusable. I ran down at the break and grabbed Duane and said, 'The horn has to go!' and he went, 'But he's right on, man.' And I said, 'Duane, trust me, this isn't the time to try this out.' He asked if the harp could stick around, and I said sure, because I knew it could be contained and wiped out if necessary."

**"FILLMORE WAS BOTH
A PARTICULARLY
GREAT PERFORMANCE
AND A TYPICAL
NIGHT"**

— JAIMOE

The album's back (top) showing the Allmans' road crew. "That was my brother's idea," Gregg said. Posing for the front cover of *At Fillmore East* (bottom)



Years later, the band members insisted the horn would have worked out fine. "Juicy was playing baritone and would play basically along with the bass," Gregg Allman said. "We knew we were recording three nights and probably just figured we'd get it the next night if it didn't work out. We wanted to give ourselves plenty of times to do it because we didn't want to go back and overdub anything, because then it wouldn't have been a real live album."

Adds Jaimoe, "Dowd started flipping out when he heard the horn, but that's something that could have worked. There's no way that it would have ruined anything that was going on. It wasn't distracting anyone, and it was so powerful."

Betts probably sums up the Allman Brothers' thought process best. "We were just having fun, and everyone dug it," he says.

Though it was wiped from a few tracks (no one can quite remember which), Doucette's fine harp playing adds an extra dimension to "You Don't Love Me" and "Done Somebody Wrong."

"Doucette had played with the band a lot, so he was a lot more cohesive with what they were doing,"

Perkins states. "Duane loved horns, but he would also listen to reason, and I don't think he put up any fight with Dowd."

Doucette was actually a frequent performer with the band, an old friend of Duane's who had been offered a full-time position in the band but turned it down because he didn't want it to "feel like a job." "Duane was trying to shoehorn me in there," Doucette explains. "He and I were great friends and we really liked playing together and hanging out. I wouldn't trade playing in the Allman Brothers for anything, but they were complete. They didn't really need me, and I wasn't a joiner. I wanted my relationship with the band exactly how it was, and I asked Duane if I could do that. I said, 'I'll show up, I'll play, you pay me, we'll laugh and have fun, I'll split.'"

The harmonica player says Duane not only wanted him as a member but fully intended to add a horn section to the Allman Brothers' lineup. "The plan was to bring on the horns full time," Doucette says. "Duane would have liked to have 16 pieces. Duane had six different projects that he wanted to do, and he just thought he could do it all at once on the same bandstand."

Each night after playing, the band and Dowd would head uptown to the Atlantic Records studio and listen to playbacks of the night's performance. "We would just grab some beers and sandwiches and go through the show," Dowd explained. "That way, the next night, they knew exactly what they had and which songs they didn't have to play again."

The band was thrilled just to be able to listen back to what they had played, a rare occurrence at the time. "We loved having that opportunity," Betts says. "We just thought, Hey, this is cool! I didn't know I did that. That sounds pretty neat. We were just enjoying ourselves, because we would get a chance to listen to our performances. We didn't do a lot of [mixboard] recordings, and we weren't real hung up on the recording industry anyhow. We just played, and if they wanted to record it, they could."

"We were young and headstrong," he adds. "'We're gonna play. You do what you want.'"

The power of the music captured on *At Fillmore East* was in the group improvisation, the fact that six extremely unique musical voices were expressing themselves as one complete entity. At the heart of the group's sound was Betts and Duane Allman, who reinvented the concept of two-guitar rock bands. Rather than having one player who was primarily a rhythm player backing a soloist, the group had two dynamic lead players.

While Duane Allman is probably most remembered and revered for his dynamic slide playing, he was a fully formed, mature guitarist. Betts,

GAB ARCHIVE/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES (ALLMANS)



Duane and Dickey playing before the group's show at the Sitar. "We worked stuff out naturally because we were both lead players," Betts says.

while often in Allman's shadow, was also a wide-ranging, distinct stylist from the start. The pair had a broad range of techniques for playing together, often forming intricate, interlocking patterns with one another and/or bassist Berry Oakley, setting the stage for dramatic flights of improvised solos. And, uniquely, they often played harmonies together, a true rock and roll innovation that has been picked up on by countless bands.

"From our first time playing together, Duane started picking up on things I played and offering a harmony, and we'd build whole jams off of that," Betts says. "We worked stuff out naturally because we were both lead players. We got those ideas from jazz horn players like Miles Davis and John Coltrane and fiddle lines from western swing music. I listened to a lot of country and string [bluegrass] music growing up. I played mandolin, ukulele and fiddle before I ever touched a guitar, which may be where a lot of the major keys I play come from."

"It's very hard to go freestyle with two guitars. Most bands with two guitarists either have everything worked out or stay out of each other's way, because it's easy to sound like two cats fighting if you're not careful. But it was very natural how Duane and I put our guitars together. He would almost always wait for me, or sometimes Oakley, to come up with a melody, and then he would join in on my riff with the harmony."

The two drummers had a similarly easy and unique playing style, heard to full and perfect effect on *At Fillmore East*. Trucks and Jaimoe rarely played the same thing at the same time. Instead they played complementary parts that pushed the band to great heights and offered not only increased power but greater depth. Trucks provided a hard-driving beat

while Jaimoe deepened the groove and pushed up against the songs with all kinds of interesting concepts and rhythms. Jaimoe was deeply rooted in jazz and often played patterns and riffs straight off of Jimmy Cobb's work on Miles Davis's *Kind of Blue* album. He had also introduced the band to the album and to John Coltrane, both of which had a huge impact on the Allmans. This jazz influence can be heard throughout the expansive but never long-winded playing on *At Fillmore East*.

The symbiotic relationships between the two drummers and two guitarists carried throughout the band, which functioned like one organism with a single giant beating heart. Says Doucette, "You take any one of the six guys out and the whole thing doesn't exist. This was a band of men. There weren't any kids in it, despite our young ages. We'd all worked. We'd all been on the road and taken responsibility, and it came through in the music."

Also central to their strength and appeal was the depth and maturity of Gregg Allman's songwriting and singing. Though just in his early 20s, he conjured up the power and world-weary heaviness of the greatest blues singers. Recalls Doucette, "I knew Duane for a long time but had never heard Gregg sing until the first time I played with the Allman Brothers Band. Gregory starts playing that organ and singing, and I went, Woah. Now here's a guy who's in worse pain than I am. He pushed all that pain into his music and combined it with his artistry into something very special and unique."


**"DUANE WOULD
ALMOST ALWAYS WAIT
FOR ME TO COME UP
WITH A MELODY AND
JOIN IN ON MY RIFF
WITH THE HARMONY"**
 — DICKEY BETTS

Doucette recalls another Fillmore East date when Albert King came to jam with the group on a slow blues. “He’s up there in a lime-green suit, sucking on his pipe and doing his thing,” he says. “Then Gregg starts singing, and Albert damn near bit through his pipe. He’s never heard this voice before, and he’s looking around, literally swiveling his head trying to figure out who’s singing, and he sees this skinny blonde behind the organ just killing it and couldn’t believe it was him.”

Using only the last two nights recorded at the Fillmore, the Allman Brothers ended up with enough great material left over to fill more than half of their follow-up album, *Eat a Peach*, including the epic nearly 44-minute “Mountain Jam,” performed directly after the 23-minute “Whipping Post” heard on *Fillmore*.

“We just felt like we could play all night, and sometimes we did,” Betts recalls. “We could really hit the note. There’s not a single fix on *Fillmore*. Everything you hear there is how we played it.”

A few months after cutting the album, the members were in Capricorn Records’ Macon, Georgia, studio laying tracks when they learned that the live album was done and cover art had to be selected immediately. “We wanted to come up with something, because, left to their own devices, the people at Atlantic did horrible things,” Gregg recalled. “I mean, these were the people who superimposed a picture of Sam and Dave onto a turtle [for the cover of the soul duo’s *Hold On I’m Coming* album]! We wanted to make sure that the cover was as meat and potatoes as the band, so someone said, ‘Let’s just take a damn picture and

make it look like we’re standing in the alley waiting to go onstage.’”

Photographer Jim Marshall arrived and snapped the group sitting on their road cases outside the Macon studio. “We were up at daylight to take the photo for the album cover, and we were all in a real grumpy mood,” Betts recalls. “The photographer wanted us out there then, and we thought it was dumb. We figured it didn’t make a damn bit of difference what the cover was or what time we took it. This dude

Duane knew came walking down the sidewalk, and Duane jumped up and ran over and got a joint from this guy, then came back and sat down. We were all laughing, and that’s the photo captured on the cover. If you look at Duane’s hand, you can see him hiding something there. He had copped and sat down with a mischievous grin.”

On the backside of the album, the crew stood in the musicians’ place, probably the first and last time

“THERE’S NOT
A SINGLE FIX
ON *FILLMORE*.
EVERYTHING YOU
HEAR THERE IS HOW
WE PLAYED IT”
— DICKEY BETTS



roadies have ever been so prominently featured on an album cover. “That was my brother’s idea,” Gregg revealed. “The crew always played a special role in our band. It goes back to the very beginning, when we lived off the disability checks of Red Dog and Twiggs [Lyndon, tour manager]. It was like, ‘Want a job? Got any money?’ Putting them in a damn picture was the least we could do. They were the unsung heroes.”

The crew members at the time considered themselves a part of the band. They were paid the same \$90-a-week salary, and the word was Duane issued an edict that if money was tight the crew should always be paid first. “We felt like we were part of the band,” says crew member Kim Payne, one of those featured on *At Fillmore East*. “It was truly more of a brotherhood than any kind of employee/employer relationship. Everyone was equal.”

Adds road manager Perkins, “Once, on my birthday, Duane asked for a \$100 advance. I said, ‘Are you sure? You’ve already taken a lot,’ and he said, ‘I’m sure.’ So I filled out the receipt, he signed it, I gave him \$100 and he handed it to me and said, ‘Happy birthday. Make sure that goes to my account and not the band’s.’”

“Duane truly appreciated everybody and understood that everybody was a piece of a puzzle,”



Onstage in Central Park, New York City, for the Schaefer Music Festival, July 21, 1971. (from left) Gregg, Duane, Jaimoe, Betts, Trucks and Oakley

Jaimoe says. “We all play together and every part is equally important, and that goes for the bus driver too. What you gonna do? Play all night and then drive the bus? Duane always said, ‘We’re all equal in this band.’ And that included the crew.”

Just 90 days after recording the album and just before its release, the Allman Brothers Band closed the Fillmore East down. The group was personally selected by Graham to be the hallowed venue’s final band after he had shocked everyone by announcing he was shutting the doors. “He closed the Fillmore with three nights and wanted us on all three, which I though was the kindest gesture and coolest thing,” Allman said.

“We were just dumbstruck when we found out that we were gonna close the Fillmore,” Butch Trucks said. “Can you think of a bigger honor at that time? Everyone wanted in on that gig. The Beach Boys showed up and unloaded all their stuff and said they’d have to play last, and Graham said, ‘Well, just pack up your shit. I have my closing band. So the Beach Boys had to swallow their pride.

“The next-to-last night, we played until the morning, and we did things that we had never thought of before or since. Those are the moments that have always made this thing work.”

Graham’s insistence that the relatively unknown Allman Brothers must be the Fillmore East’s final band must have seemed bold, even wacky, to most observers. But just weeks after the club shuttered its doors for good, *At Fillmore East* came out, forever linking the band and the venue in the pop-culture pantheon. Yet, the recording was almost never released in its extended, double-album form.

“Atlantic/Atco rejected the idea of releasing a double-live album,” Walden said. “[Atlantic executive] Jerry Wexler thought it was ridiculous to preserve all these jams. But we explained to them that the Allman Brothers were the people’s band, that playing was what they were all about, and that a phonograph record was confining to a group like this.”

Walden won out and was proven right when the record — “people priced” at three dollars below standard list for a double album — slowly became a hit and the Allman Brothers became the most heralded band in the nation. *Rolling Stone* proclaimed the Allmans “the best damn rock ‘n’ roll band” in the country, and by the fall, *At Fillmore East* was the Allman Brothers Band’s first Gold album.

“All of a sudden, here comes fame and fortune,” Gregg recalled. “In a three- or four-week period, we went from rags to riches — from living on a three-

dollar-a-day per diem to, ‘Get anything you want, boys!’”

Still, things were not easy within the band. They entered Criteria Studios with Dowd and recorded three songs in just about a week, then took a break and returned to the road for a short run of shows, ending on October 17, 1971, at the Painter’s Mill Music Fair in Owings Mill, Maryland. It had been a trying few months, with drugs and the band’s hard-charging lifestyle catching up with many of them, including Duane.

“Duane never stuck a needle in his arm, but he would snort heroin a lot,” Trucks said. “One night in the summer of ’71, in San Francisco, Duane followed me to my hotel room and jumped in my face. He said, ‘I’m pissed off! When Dickey gets up to play, the

rhythm section is pumping away, and when

I get up there you’re laying back and not pushing at all.’ I looked him dead in the eye and said, ‘Duane, you’re so fucked up on that smack that you’re not giving us anything.’

“He looked me in the eye and walked out the door. I think he knew I was telling him the truth and that’s what he wanted to hear. He needed someone to tell him what he already knew. It was one of the few times I had the balls to get in his face.”

“It was nuts,” Doucette adds. “Everything was everywhere.”

With almost everyone in the band and crew struggling with heroin addictions, Duane, Oakley, Payne and crew member Red Dog flew to Buffalo and checked into the Linwood-Bryant Hospital for a week of rehab. A receipt shows the band’s general bank account purchased five round-trip tickets on Eastern Airlines from Macon to Buffalo for \$369. Gregg was supposed to go as well, and a hospital receipt shows he was one of the people for whom a deposit was paid. Apparently, he changed his mind at the last minute.

The group spent less than a week in rehab, and then checked out. Duane spent a day in New York City, visiting with guitarist John Hammond and other friends.

“He came over to my loft and we played acoustic guitars and had a

blast for hours,” Hammond recalls. “I so wish I had taped it! He seemed to be in really good spirits, his head clear and excited to go on. Things were happening for them. The live album had come out and was a hit, and they were playing bigger places. Their star was rising. Which seemed exactly as it should be.

“We talked about him perhaps producing an album for me. There were all these songs that I played in my show that I talked to him about recording, and he said that he would like to be involved. There was nothing concrete, but he was talking business: what percent he would take, and this and that. I was not a business guy like that, and he was very together about the band, his finances, dealing with the business end of things. He was a very bright guy who knew how talented he was and wasn’t going to take himself lightly.”

Duane returned to Macon on October 28, 1971. That night, he visited Red Dog, the roadie who had been in rehab with him and whose loyalty to the guitarist was profound enough to call him an acolyte. “He wanted to make sure I wasn’t going to slide back into doing heroin, to make sure I was all right,” Red Dog recalled in a 1986 interview. “He sat on my couch, squeezing my arm and looking me right in the eye, and said, ‘You haven’t done any, have you?’ and I said, ‘No, man.’ And I fired right back on him: ‘Hey, have you?’”

The next day, Duane called Thom Doucette in Florida to check in on his old friend. Doucette had abruptly left the band on the road and returned home because of his own struggles with addiction. He had cleaned himself up and was thrilled to hear a vitality in his friend’s voice that indicated he too was overcoming his problems.

“He sounded great,” Doucette says. “He jumped through the phone, with an urgency in his voice, that shouted, ‘It’s me. It’s Duane! I’m back!’”

“He goes, ‘You doing all right?’ and I said, ‘Man, never better. I’m grooving and the fish are running. This is it, baby.’ He said, ‘I’ll be down tonight. I already booked a reservation. I’m gonna ride down to the office, get my mail and get some money. We’ll go fishing, and then we’re going back to work.’ I wasn’t so sure about going back to work with the band, but I was so happy to hear from him.”

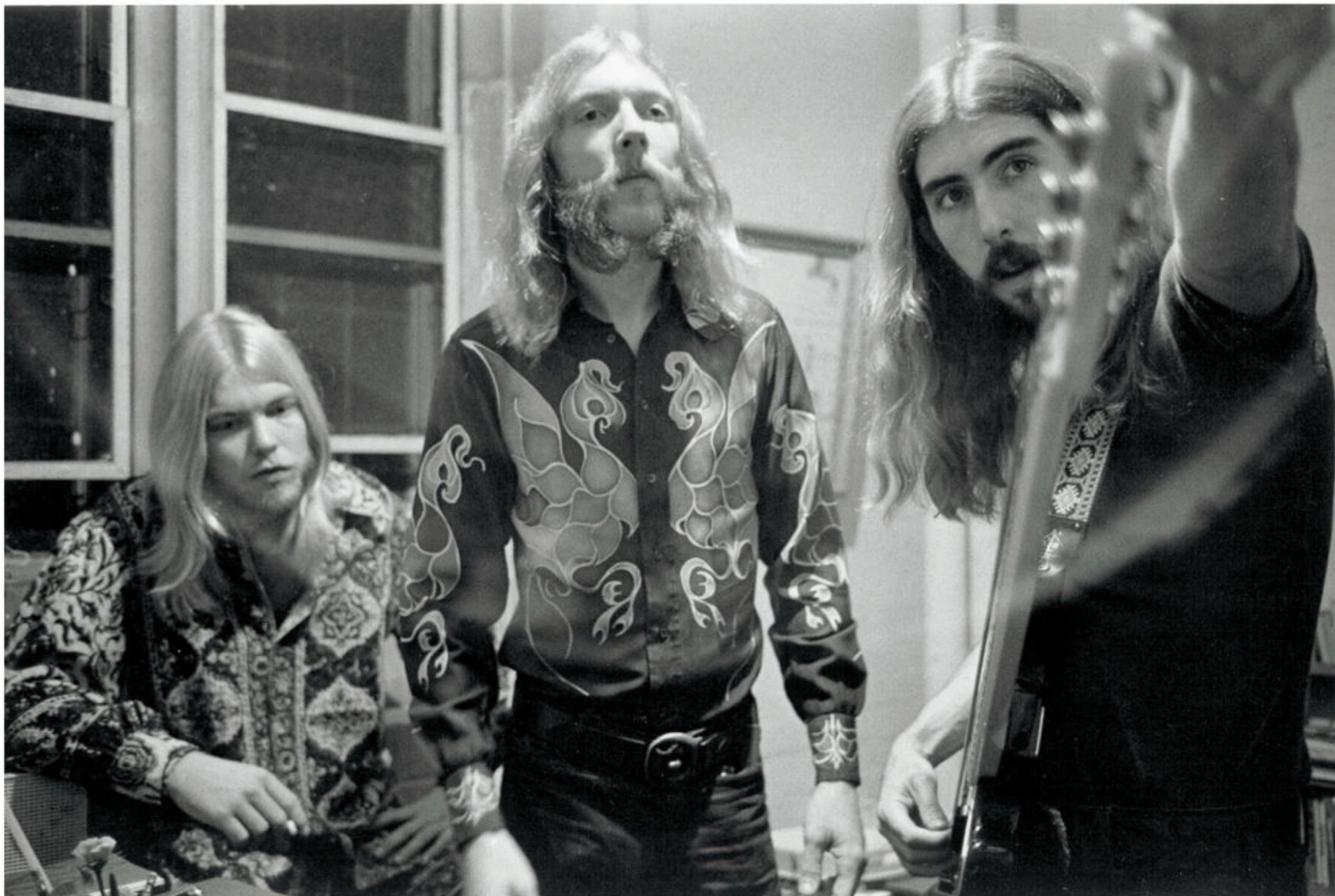
Shortly after hanging up with Doucette, Duane rode his motorcycle over to the group’s communal home, The Big House, where they were getting ready for a birthday party for Oakley’s wife, Linda. After visiting for a while, Duane got on his Harley-Davidson Sportster, which had been modified with extended forks that made it harder to handle.

Coming up over a hill and dropping down, Duane saw a flatbed lumber truck blocking his way. He

“THERE WAS AN
URGENCY IN
HIS VOICE THAT
SHOUTED, ‘IT’S
DUANE! I’M BACK!’”
— THOM DOUCETTE

Duane’s
gravestone
in Rose Hill
Cemetery,
Macon, Georgia





pushed his bike to the left to swerve around the truck, but realized he was not going to make it and dropped his bike to avoid a collision. He hit the ground hard, the bike landing atop him. Duane was alive and initially seemed okay, but he fell unconscious in the ambulance and had catastrophic head and chest injuries. As word of the accident began to circulate to band members and other family friends around Macon, many people began to drift toward the waiting room at the medical center.

"I was at my house when I got the call and went to the hospital," recalls band friend and producer Johnny Sandlin. "I was hoping it wasn't too bad and was planning on going in to see him. Guys were ending up in the emergency room from messing around with horses or bikes all the time."

As the group gathered, someone emerged from the operating room with the unthinkable news: Duane had died in surgery three hours after the accident. The cause of death was listed as "severe injury of abdomen and head."

"It was just unacceptable that he was gone," Trucks remarked. "Unfathomable. I walked around stunned for weeks."

At his funeral, Red Dog placed a joint in Duane's pocket. Gregg gave his brother a silver dollar.

Someone else added one of the Coricidin bottles Duane used as slides.

"We were all in shock," Linda Oakley said. "It was like our guts had been torn out."

Cowboy guitarist Scott Boyer, an old friend of Duane and Gregg's summed up the feeling of the entire band and larger musical community: "It was inconceivable how someone that alive could be dead."

Duane had lived to see the band's breakthrough coming, but was not able to fully experience it.

"We worked so hard so long to get there. Then, bam! He was gone," Gregg Allman said. "At the time, I thought, Shit, my brother really got shortchanged, because he never quite got to see what he had accomplished. I felt that way for years, but I've slowly come to realize that he left a hell of a legacy for dying at the age of 24 years old. And a lot of it has to do with the *Fillmore* album. I still listen to it and I marvel at how fresh his licks are and how great his tone is. That boy was one of a kind, man, just like Oakley was. The chance that all six of us would meet up and form a band is, like, unbelievable."

Allman paused for a second to exhale a long breath and lets out a little chuckle.

"If you want to hear what I'm talking about, go get you that album." ■

Gregg, Duane and Oakley prepare for their performance at the Sitar.



With a history that includes the Allman Brothers, Aretha Franklin and Jason Isbell, **FAME Studios** makes plans for a bright and very long future.

BY MARTIN McQUADE

LIVE FOLK

1. Duane Allman and Rick Hall in FAME Studios in 1968. 2. Etta James recording at FAME circa 1967. 3. The view from Studio B's console.



OR REVER

4. Jimmy Johnson, Junior Lowe and David Hood. 5. Wilson Pickett and Spooner Oldham. 6. Little Richard with "Bumps" Blackwell and Hall.

**FAME Studios
at 603 East
Avalon
Avenue, in
Florence,
Alabama**

MUSCLE SHOALS' WATERS are potent. For generations they have poured out hit records, a multitude of which have flowed from Alabama's FAME Studios.

The name stands for Florence Alabama Music Enterprises. In 1959, record producer/songwriter/guitarist Rick Hall founded the music hub as a place where race played no role. What mattered was serving the region's native musical stew, which featured the participation of artists ranging from Duane Allman and Otis Redding to Aretha Franklin and Etta James. Hall's son Rodney discloses the recipe in Shoals vernacular. "It's a swampy kind of music," he says. "Funky. A lot of bass, and a lot of kick drum. More than that, it's an amalgamation of country, rock and soul, put together in a gumbo that's been cooking in the Shoals for over 100 years."

FAME's past has been celebrated in the remarkable music made within its rooms. They include Wilson Pickett's "Mustang Sally" and "Hey Jude" (the latter featuring Duane Allman on guitar), Jimmy Hughes' "Steal Away," James's "Tell Mama" and Franklin's "I Never Loved a Man (The Way That I Love You)." Today, the studio anticipates a vibrant future through an extensive renovation, set in motion when producer Glenn Rosenstein was in the Shoals and urgently in need of a studio. Having collaborated with Rodney Hall at FAME's premiere Studio A, he hoped to use it again. However, only Studio B, built in 1967, was available. Rosenstein didn't dismay. Indeed, he had an epiphany. "I said, 'Rodney, B has tremendous acoustics,'" Rosenstein recalls. "Imagine installing

better gear, making alterations and revitalizing it.' Rodney, always plain-spoken, said, 'Put your money where your mouth is.' By December, 2019, we were rebuilding B."

"That's when we put the first crowbar into the wall," Halls adds. "Studio B's equipment was A's hand-me-downs. We envisioned taking a great-sounding underutilized studio and turning it into a world-class facility like A. We've surpassed that goal."

Rosenstein approached the endeavor pragmatically as well as reverentially. After all, Studio B is

where Duane Allman held auditions for what would become the Allman Brothers Band. He jammed there with drummer Jaimoe and bassist Barry Oakley, and, later, brother Gregg turned up to join the proceedings. "The room's pedigree was never lost on us, knowing the Allmans' accomplishments there," Rosenstein

**FAME IS RESTORING
THE STUDIO'S
ORIGINAL
HANDMADE
CONSOLE. "THE
ALLMANS' BAND WAS
THE FIRST TO RUN A
SIGNAL THROUGH IT"
— RODNEY HALL**



says. "B's sonics are ideal for vocals, tracking and much more. We avoided changing that vibe. However, we didn't want a museum but rather a working studio for people who appreciate outstanding acoustics. Standing on the shoulders of the greats is one thing; being able to create is another. We did the archeology carefully. We repurposed the control room with inherited equipment enhancing its functionality. As we removed things from walls and widened the room to accommodate modern equipment, we incorporated various iterations into the room's design and the wall coverings."

Musically, the room contains many treasured pieces from the past. "A favorite historic guitar available at B is a Cherry Sunburst 1972 Gibson Les Paul Custom that Keith Richards and Lou Reed have played," Rosenstein says. "We've added a Fairchild replica that producer/guitarist Eric Valentine created." Most impressive is Studio B's console: a beautifully restored, vintage Solid State Logic 6056E 56-channel console initially used in Stevie Ray Vaughan's studio to record three of his albums. In addition, FAME is restoring the studio's original handmade console. "The Allmans' band was the first to run a signal through it," Hall says.

In bringing the studio up to the present, Rosenstein carefully balanced vintage with state-of-the-art equipment. "We've got a lot of tube-based recording gear, the latest plug-ins, the latest versions of Pro Tools and other digital/audio work stations, high-end digital IO and analog 24-track," he says. "We're not limited to one tonality or style." Hall

COURTESY OF FAME; PREVIOUS PAGE: HOUSE OF FAME LLC/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES



Duane Allman and Rick Hall in FAME's office after the guitarist signed on with the studio in 1968

emphasizes FAME's analog capabilities. "We recorded Gregg Allman's last album to tape," he says, referring to the 2017 effort *Southern Blood*. "For remixes, we pull up sound from old multitrack recordings."

Although business dropped off during the Covid-19 pandemic, FAME adapted. "We remotely recorded Demi Lovato while her producers were in London," Hall says. Bookings are now strong again. The artists who have played at the revived B include guitarist/producer Tom Bukovac, country singer-songwriter Margo Price, the Raconteurs (featuring Jack White and Brendan Benson), gospel group the Blind Boys of Alabama, and the War and Treaty. Rosenstein just mixed an album for Bob Marley's guitarist Earl "Chinna" Smith. "We're stepping outside the box," he says.

For Hall, the refurbishment was extremely personal. "My dad died in 2018," he said. "Among his last wishes was to safeguard FAME's heritage by ensuring it remains a studio with two world-class facilities. Jimmy Johnson, who died in December 2019, was among the first people we invited upon finishing B. Jimmy was our studio guitarist and my dad's sound engineer. We think he put his blessing on it. In many ways, this is a tribute to Jimmy."

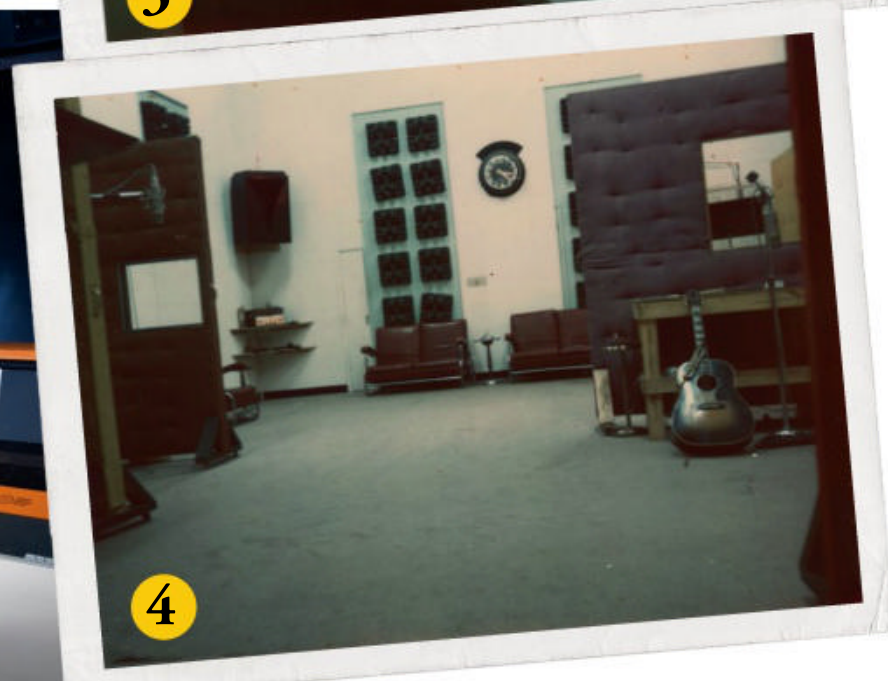
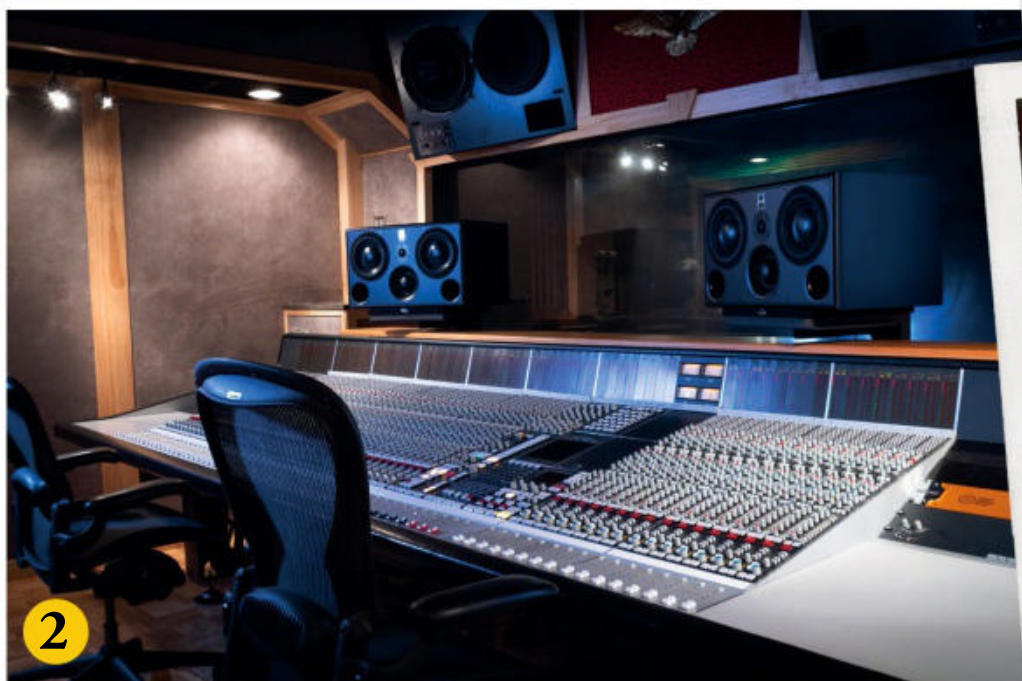
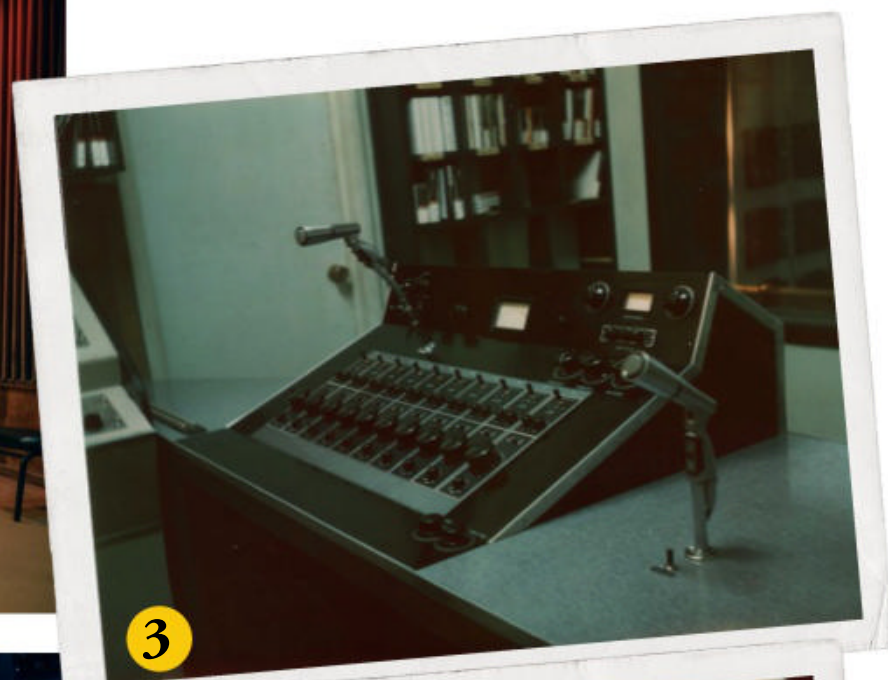
LEARNING HOW TO FLY

Bassist David Hood exemplifies FAME's deep heritage. He began there in 1964 with local Shoals band the Mystics. "We recorded 'Where Is My Little Girl?,' a bubblegum tune Rick released on FAME's

label," Hood explains. "Rick played in a band and recorded jingles for his car lot at a little studio." Located above the city drugstore in Florence, the studio was founded as Florence Alabama Music Enterprises in 1959 by Hall, Billy Sherrill and Tom Stafford. Hall took sole ownership in 1960 and shortened the name to FAME while temporarily moving the facility to Wilson Dam Highway in Muscle Shoals. It was there that the Shoals would have its first international success with Arthur Alexander's "You Better Move On."

"After 'You Better Move On,' Rick made enough money to build his own studio and assemble the first rhythm section," Hood says. A new facility was set up at FAME's current location, 603 East Avalon Avenue. "After some hits, the rhythm section moved to Nashville, and Rick had to form the second section. He got drummer Roger Hawkins, organist Spooner Oldham, bassist Arthur 'Junior' Lowe and guitarists Jimmy Johnson and Terry Thompson. Afterward, Junior didn't want to play anymore, so they called me. I said, 'Hot dog! The big time!'"

Hood developed as a studio player with each new opportunity, which included backing Percy Sledge on his 1966 hit "Warm and Tender Love." "I learned to be a studio player with original ideas," he says. "There wasn't music to read at FAME; we devised our



1. Studio B's live room. 2. The control room with the restored Solid State Logic console from Stevie Ray Vaughan's studio. 3. Studio B's original handmade console. 4. A view of the old studio.

own parts. If it didn't work, we'd try something else." The band played together in those days before multitracking became commonplace. "If you messed up, everybody repeated it," Hood explains. "Rick was tough. He'd embarrass us, saying, 'Why did you do that?' But he made the players tough. He insisted we understood what to do. I wasn't that great at first. I played with a pick, later switching to fingers because I saw Tommy Cogbill and Duck Dunn play that way." Hood, who also plays trombone, frequently recorded for Otis Redding. "When Otis produced other artists, he'd call me, such as for Arthur Conley's 'More Sweet Soul,' he says. "I often played with Wilson Pickett. I'm on his *Hey Jude* album. I'm on Etta James' 'Tell Mama' and 'I'd Rather Go Blind.' Etta wasn't excited initially, but when she heard 'Tell Mama,' she said, 'That's good!'"

Hood remained with FAME's rhythm section until 1969. "Rick signed a deal with Capitol, and he wanted the rhythm section exclusively," he explains. "We were working with different artists then and making more than Rick offered. So we bought a recording studio, what's now Muscle Shoals Sound, and we made a deal with Atlantic. First, they brought in Cher for her first solo album. Then we recorded 'Take a Letter, Maria,' with R.B. Greaves." Word of their new

studio began to spread. When the Rolling Stones were in America on their celebrated 1969 tour, they made a stop at Muscle Shoals Sound, where they recorded "You Gotta Move," "Brown Sugar" and "Wild Horses," all three of which appeared on their 1971 album, *Sticky Fingers*. "The Rolling Stones needed a studio where nobody knew them," Hood relates. "Half the band flew a Super Constellation airplane, smoking with dripping oil. The rest of the band went commercial." Although the group wanted to keep a low profile, "everybody knew something was happening because this huge plane landed at the airport," Hood says. "We swore to secrecy about them recording at our studio. Nevertheless, word leaked."

Like Hood, Spooner Oldham was a mainstay from the studio's very beginnings. "I probably met Rick Hall at Spar Studio in Florence, a makeshift publishing company preceding FAME," he says. "It had an upright piano and a mono recorder with struggling engineers, songwriters and musicians, like Rick. I was at FAME from day one, playing hundreds of times. Although I played with the first-generation band overdubbing on 'You Better Move On' and Jimmy Hughes' 'Steal Away,' I call myself part of the second-generation FAME house band, sometimes called the Muscle Shoals Rhythm Section, or the



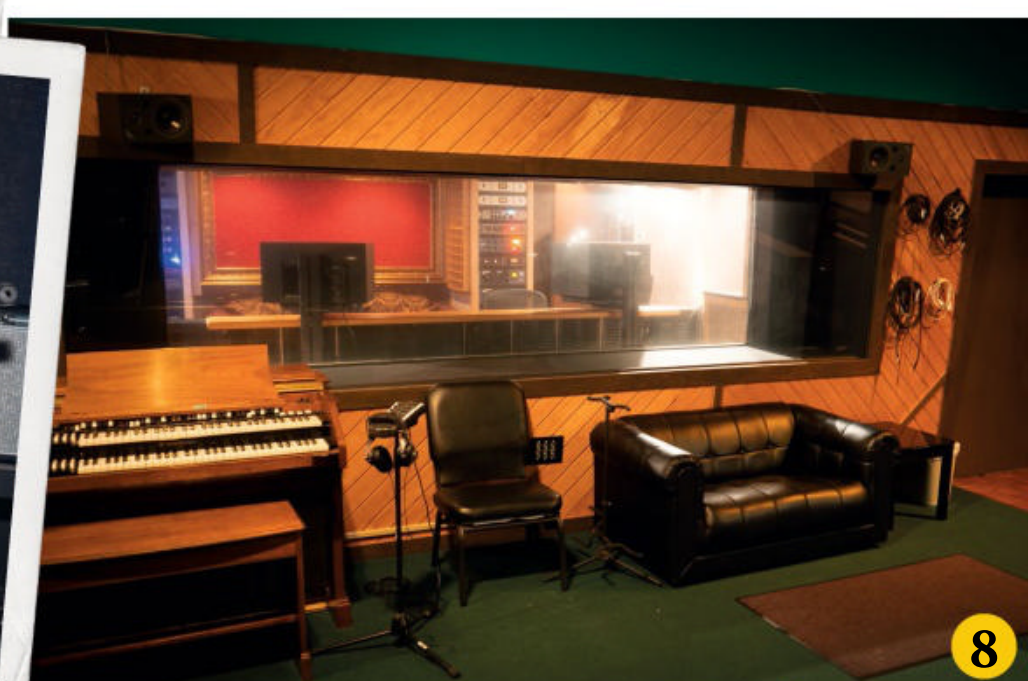
5



7



6



8

Swampers.” The Swampers received a bit of attention when Lynyrd Skynyrd gave them a shout-out in their hit “Sweet Home Alabama.” “But actually,” Oldham says, “we didn’t have a name.”

As he explains, part of the job requirement was to fill any role at a given moment. “If singers needed a band, we were it,” he says. “I played Hammond organ on Pickett’s ‘Mustang Sally.’ Wilson was fired up. I improvised a middle part emulating a Harley-Davidson driving through the studio, booming ‘whap-whap-whap!’”

FAME also established a publishing component in 1959. “I think Dan Penn, my songwriting buddy, was their first artist,” Oldham says. “We collaborated there for three years. We wrote ‘I’m Your Puppet,’ on which I played piano. Producer Papa Don Schroder said he didn’t have songs to record before their session. We sent him upstairs to the room where we stashed our song demos, where he found it.” Gregg Allman recorded the pair’s “Out of Left Field,” on *Southern Blood*. “I played with him when he recorded that at FAME, just before he died,” Oldham says.

**“WHEN WE ARRIVED
THE NEXT DAY,
THERE WAS A
SIGN: ‘SESSION
CANCELLED.’ ARETHA
NEVER RETURNED”**

— DAVID HOOD

A DATE WITH THE QUEEN OF SOUL

Of course, any history of FAME would be incomplete without highlighting the 1967 session that produced Aretha Franklin’s debut R&B record, “I Never Loved a Man (The Way I Love You).” The song was the first big hit of her career and was paired with “Do Right Woman, Do Right Man” on the B side. The plan

originally called for her to record both songs at FAME. “When Wexler signed Aretha, he said, ‘I know the perfect place: FAME Studios,’” explains Harvey Mason Jr., who oversaw many of her later recordings. “Wexler made an arrangement with Rick. Beforehand, she was uneasy about what might happen. Once she started singing, she became comfortable and excited.”

Hood was present at the session. “I was the only band member who knew her,” he says. “I was impressed, since she was jazzy before.”

The session began with the rhythm section recording “I Never Loved a Man (The Way I Love You).” “Then we came in, overdubbing the horns,” Hood says. “Meanwhile, they started working on

5. Etta James with Marvell Thomas (left) and Hood (right). 6. Swampers

Lowe and Johnson rehearsing in 1968.

7. Studio B’s original console today.

8. A modern view of the studio.



Duane Allman followed Aretha Franklin (center back) to New York City following her FAME session, as seen in this January 9, 1969 photo taken at Atlantic Recording Studios.

“IT BUILT MY MUSICAL FOUNDATION. WHO KNOWS IF I’D EVEN BE MAKING MUSIC AT THIS POINT?”
— JASON ISBELL

‘Do Right Man, Do Right Woman.’ They never finished. A horn player made fresh remarks to Aretha. Her husband/manager Ted White expressed disapproval to Jerry Wexler, who didn’t like it. Wexler told Rick to fire the guy, and he did. I’m speculating that when Rick and Ted returned to the Florence hotel, they came to blows and then went their ways. When we arrived the next day, there was a sign: ‘Session Cancelled.’” The incident, which is dramatized in the new Franklin biopic, *Respect*, marked the end of her association with the studio. “Aretha never returned to FAME,” Hood says.

Nevertheless, Mason says she had good memories of the facility. “Aretha told me she appreciated what Rick contributed and was complimentary of FAME,” he says. “‘I Never Loved a Man’ was pivotal for her, and many FAME musicians followed her to other sessions in New York.” Among them was Duane Allman, who in 1969 traveled to New York City, where he recorded “It Ain’t Fair” and “The Weight” with her.

BEYOND THE CLASSICS

Jason Isbell is among the younger generation of artists who have flourished at FAME. After college, he formed a music group with Scott Boyer, Jr, whose father’s band, Cowboy, recorded “Please Be With Me” with Duane Allman. Isbell

started at FAME after he approached its label for a record deal. “They just wanted my songs,” he says. “I joined their songwriting staff, remaining in that capacity for 15 years. I’d been playing guitar for years, never composing for other artists. Rick was encouraging and flexible. He let me make song demos to file. Half my dream came true.”

But FAME became a gateway toward fulfilling the rest of Isbell’s dream. “The Halls provided an opportunity to encounter many heroes who took me

seriously,” he says. He met Hood and soon joined his son Paterson in Drive-By Truckers. In 2004, the Truckers recorded some tracks for their fifth album, *The Dirty South*, at FAME. “We’d never made a record in the Shoals as a band, and it was my second album with them,” Isbell explains. He would go on to record his debut solo album, *Sirens of the Ditch*, in Studio B. “I had some songs that wouldn’t work for the Truckers,” he explains. “I didn’t make it intending to go solo, but that’s what happened. Studio B was very functional then. Rodney helped with engineering.”

Isbell recorded other albums at FAME, including *Jason Isbell and the 400 Unit* and *Here We Rest*, and he produced the title track of the Blind Boys of Alabama’s *Christmas in Dixie* as well as “Motherless Children Have a Hard Time,” from their album *God Don’t Ever Change*. It all serves as evidence of Isbell’s deep ties to the Shoals. “All my influences are there,” he says. “Country, rock and R&B. I was in the presence of giants. It built my musical foundation. My music would sound completely different if I had grown up elsewhere. Who knows if I’d even be making music at this point?”

Scott Sharrard, who became lead guitarist with the Gregg Allman Band in 2008, has also shared in the FAME experience. After recording Allman’s *Southern Blood* there in 2016, Sharrard returned to FAME for *Saving Grace*, his fifth solo album and first after Gregg’s death. “We recorded half of it at FAME with the Swampers, including David and Spooner,” he says “They did an amazing job. For the other half we utilized the Hi-Rhythm Section of Memphis. Drummer Steve Potts from Gregg’s band did a few songs.”

For Sharrard, who once remarked “Welcome to church” upon entering FAME, the studio is hallowed ground. “Think of those classic records Rick cut there. He was an independent who found the best talent in his backyard. This music remains relevant because Rick was beholden only to himself.” Sharrard looks forward to “letting it rip” at the newly renovated Studio B. “We called B ‘Gregg’s Hookah Lounge,’ because Gregg smoked weed when cutting there,” he explains. “I’m overdue to go down south and see the overhaul.”

With the renovation of Studio B, all involved hope it will be appreciated far and wide for its history and promising future. “FAME is one of the most important recording destinations,” Harvey Mason Jr. says. “The culture, vibe and energy are unparalleled. I would be honored to record there.”

Oldham echoes that perspective. “It’s the finest studio you could find, well designed, with the best recording equipment. It could compete with anywhere in the world.” ■

BROTHER TO BROTHER

From Duane's earliest sessions to Gregg's last, FAME remains hallowed ground for Allman Brothers history.

BY MARTIN McQUADE

OF THE MANY legends FAME has nurtured, none has inspired more adulation than Duane Allman. Astounding virtuosity and unfulfilled promise hastened his enshrinement. Now, Duane's legend resembles that of a knight-errant, replete with quests, triumphs, tragedy and even a holy grail — his 1957 goldtop Gibson Les Paul. Each formative recording has acquired mythic undertones, including those he hasn't played on.

Bassist David Hood, FAME perennial and co-founder of Muscle Shoals Sound Studio, frequently dispels such conjecture. "People want to know everything he's on, and they want him to have played on everything," he says. "I've checked my daily diaries. There aren't any more tracks he played on that aren't already noted on album covers, liner notes and so on." Regardless, Duane completists continually list dubious recordings and questionable sessions.

Hood witnessed his friend's emergence at FAME in the months after he and brother Gregg attempted to record as Hour Glass with Liberty Records in Los Angeles. "He and Gregg were in California with other Macon, Georgia-area musicians, trying to start a group," he recalls. "It wasn't going anywhere. The people paying them in California fired them, keeping Gregg until his contract ran out. After returning south, Duane stopped at Muscle Shoals seeking work, and hung around FAME." Reportedly, the guitarist pitched a tent in the studio's parking lot to stay close to the action. "Rick Hall, FAME's founder, wasn't interested," Hood continues. "Rick hated his loud playing. But, somehow, Duane talked Rick into letting him play. He had great ideas but had to learn

to conform to the studio thing — not play so loud and arrive at a certain time. Duane hated that. He would never be a nine-to-five guy. Duane thought that was boring and dumb. He wanted to be a rock and roller — a free spirit."

That much was apparent when Duane convinced producer Jerry Wexler to loan him his car. "Somebody said, 'You can't lend it to someone you don't know, especially someone weird looking, with long hair,'" Hood says. "We were all longhaired, which was unusual then. However, Jerry agreed. It was an early four-door Thunderbird. We traveled to the Cocanut Grove, a hippie area, looking to score pot. We visited a house, where people came out shaking their fists. We got back in the car, which wouldn't start. I thought, Our careers are over because we messed up Jerry's car. Luckily, we found a friend who helped with jumper cables. Just then, a cop arrived. I said, 'My

"FAME HAS ALWAYS BEEN FAMILY WITH THE ALLMAN BROTHERS"
— GLENN ROSENSTEIN



Duane jams at FAME in 1968 (top). Gregg with FAME founder Rick Hall (above). Gregg recorded his final album at the studio.

career's gone. I'm going to jail.' But he let us go. We got out of there and recorded again the next day."

Duane's guitars of choice at FAME were either his 1963 Gibson Firebird or '60s Fender Stratocaster. "He'd come whenever he was around," Hood says. "In 1969, at our Muscle Shoals Sound Studio, we made [British pop singer] Lulu's album *New Routes* and the album *Boz Scaggs*, featuring 'Loan Me a Dime.' Duane was brilliant but had little interest playing sessions.

"DUANE HAD TO LEARN TO CONFORM TO THE STUDIO THING — NOT PLAY SO LOUD AND ARRIVE AT A CERTAIN TIME"

— DAVID HOOD

Duane jams with Berry Oakley and Jaimoe at FAME in early 1969. Drummer Johnny Sandlin is behind Duane.

He wanted to start working on the Allman Brothers. There was an early version when I was still at FAME with Johnny Sandlin on drums, Paul Hornsby on keys — guys Duane knew from earlier bands. Only when Gregg came back did it start happening and become what became the Allman Brothers, and then Gregg went back to California. The last time I played with Duane was in Macon, recording the band Wet Willie. Soon he had his fatal motorcycle accident there. He'd

go a thousand miles an hour on a bike if he could. He wouldn't just ride — he'd fly on it. I miss him. He was everyone's guitar hero."

FAME stalwart Spooner Oldham also collaborated with Duane. "I think we met at FAME," he says. "They had just built Studio B, and he requested that I accompany him on a song he'd written. I don't think he sang. I've wondered what happened with that. I can't recall the title or even if we recorded it. What I do recall is that, in just 10 minutes, I knew he was intelligent, congenial and a great musician. I believe

we did one album. We also played on a few songs, including 'The Weight,' with Aretha at Atlantic Studios in New York."

EARLY ALLMANS

Richard Brent, executive director of the Big House Museum in Macon, chronicles all things Allman. "The Museum is the Allman Brothers Band headquarters," he explains. "For four months in 1970, Duane and Gregg lived here with the Oakleys [bassist Berry and his wife, Linda] in this Tudor mansion, which Linda Oakley found for \$225 monthly rent. It remained their communal home until 1973. We re-created their bedrooms. It still has original furniture and personal belongings. The closets even have their original wallpaper. We've preserved the Casbah Music Room, where everyone would be themselves, enjoying life."

Brent has charted Duane's timeline at Muscle Shoals. "He first passed through Muscle Shoals on April 22, 1968, in Hour Glass. They recorded 'Ain't No Good to Cry' and the B.B. King medley ['Sweet Little Angel'/'It's My Own Fault'/'How Blue Can You Get?']. Duane became unhappy with their label, Liberty Records, in California. He quit Hour Glass, returned to Muscle Shoals in September 1968 and became a session player at FAME, working with Clarence Carter, King Curtis and Otis Rush, among others. The arrangement of Wilson Pickett's November 27, 1968, recording of 'Hey, Jude' was Duane's idea. All the FAME guys had gone to lunch. Pickett, being African-American, and Duane Allman being a long-haired hippie, weren't welcome at too many places then, so they stayed at the studio. By the time the others returned, they had a completely different session going on. That put Duane on the map."

As Brent tells it, FAME is also where the first incarnation of the Allman Brothers Band took shape. After completing his session work, Duane would head to Studio B, where Jaimoe Johanson and Barry Oakley would be asleep, waiting for him. "He'd roll his amp in and they'd start jamming. That's where it all started," Brent says. "They were working on something they apparently considered a Duane solo record. Duane's last FAME recordings were in late February 1969. The Allman Brothers birthdate is March 26, 1969. That's not a big gap."

As for why Duane didn't stick around, "FAME didn't have what Duane was looking for," Brent says. "He left for Jacksonville to get the guys he wanted and put the Allman Brothers Band together as we know it. He brought them to Macon because he already was signed there to Capricorn Records, where they'd use the studio to rehearse and get that sound. Atlantic, Capricorn's parent company, had bought his contract from Hall on May 10."



THE LAYLA LES PAUL

After his final FAME recordings, Duane purchased his fabled goldtop 1957 Gibson Les Paul, which the Museum houses. “We call it the Layla. He used it on the first two Brothers records — *The Allman Brothers Band* and *Idlewild South* — and then with Derek and the Dominos. About a week after recording *Layla*, in September 1970, they opened for Stone Balloon, whose guitarist Rick Stine had a Cherry ‘burst Les Paul. Duane talked Rick into swapping his guitar for the Layla. Duane also had the pickups swapped out of them. The original goldtop pickups are still in the Cherry ‘burst. On ‘Layla,’ you hear the goldtop first, but the Jim Gordon piano part at the end was added three weeks after the trades. Duane used the Cherry ‘burst to do that slide work, but it’s the same set of pickups through the whole song because he swapped them out.”

“After Rick took possession, the guitar was bought and sold several times. In 1977, it turned up for sale at Coastal Discount Music in Daytona, where guitarist Scott Lamar bought it for \$475. The back was intact but the finish was sanded off the front. It was also missing some parts. He acquired the accurate period pieces and restored it a few times to get the way it looks today.

“Lamar sold the guitar at auction in 2019 for \$1.25 million. It’s now with a new owner. I’ve made it available for many people to play. It brings out the best of any player who gets their hands on it. They almost become possessed with those great sounds coming out. It’s a magical instrument. I believe it’s the greatest guitar in rock history.”

Scott Sharrard, who became lead guitarist with the Gregg Allman Band in 2008, has bonded with the Layla. “I first played it around 2013 on the road with the band,” he explains. “We had some shows in Macon. I went to the Big House, where I played it a while. Chank, Gregg’s best friend, was there. He said, ‘I want you to play that with Gregg tonight.’ I knew Gregg was annoyed that his brother’s guitars were regularly played onstage with the Allman Brothers. Chank interceded and Gregg happily agreed.

“When we played ‘Trouble No More,’ he came in and sang. I answered with a slide on that same guitar that’s on the record. It was spine tingling, almost more than I could take. It then became a tradition. Every time we played in Macon or Atlanta, Richard would bring it out. Richard would bring out the guitar when I came with my own band. I used it when we recorded *Saving Grace* in 2019 at FAME. I plugged it into my ‘65 Vibrolux and tweed Fender Deluxe copy that Sound of the Shoals makes. Rick Hall’s son Rodney said halfway through the session, ‘This is the first time that guitar has been played in this building



since Duane played it.’ You can hear it on several tracks, including the title song.”

**Wilson Pickett
and Duane
recording in
November
1968**

GREGG’S RETURN

Gregg’s last album, *Southern Blood*, marked his return to FAME. Sharrard composed its track “My Only True Friend” in Duane’s voice. “I wrote it based on a dream I had at Gregg’s house in Savannah, in his mom’s room, surrounded by pictures of Duane and Gregg,” he explains. “In the dream, I witnessed a conversation between them in their young days. Duane spoke the first verse: ‘You and I both know this river will surely flow to an end. Keep me in your heart. Keep your soul on the mend.’ Then I heard, ‘But you and I both know the road is my only true friend.’

I jumped out of bed about 6 a.m. as the sun rose over the boat slip and quickly wrote down the words,” he continues. “I ran downstairs, grabbed an acoustic, devised the intro, and put those words to the verse.

Two hours later, Gregg awoke.

I played it for him. He said, ‘This is the song.’ It took two years to write it to Gregg’s satisfaction.

“And here’s the strangest moment: Without knowing the story, the picture the photographer chose for the album’s cover is the sun rising over that same boat slip. There’s a lot of juju around the Allman name.”

Brent discloses that there are plans at FAME to record a 60th anniversary album, and FAME has requested the Layla for a few tracks. “The new owner, who remains anonymous, understands this guitar’s meaning to fans around the world and wants the guitar played, albeit in a limited way,” he says. Glenn Rosenstein, who helped oversee the recent renovation of FAME’s Studio B, is hopeful. “We’re working to put that together,” he says. “FAME has always been family with the Allman Brothers.” ■

**“‘HEY, JUDE’ WAS
DUANE’S IDEA.
THAT PUT HIM
ON THE MAP”**

— RICHARD BRENT

THE ROBINSONS' AFFAIR

Rich and Chris Robinson put aside their ongoing feud for a **Black Crowes** tour, only to be sidelined by the pandemic. At long last, they're shaking their money maker once again.

BY JIMMY LESLIE

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF FASANO



AS IF WE needed more evidence that 2020 was the most insanely improbable year ever, the long-separated and bickering brothers Robinson finally locked wings once again, only to have their reunion tour plans shot down by the pandemic. The show finally got back on track this summer with a national tour commemorating the 30th anniversary of *Shake Your Money Maker*, their landmark 1990 debut album and a record that kept roots rock relevant in

the Monsters of Rock era. The album's expanded deluxe anniversary edition features the rollicking single "Charming Mess," a hot take on Humble Pie's "30 Days in the Hole," and acoustic and original demo versions of the hit "She Talks to Angels," as well as an incendiary live set recorded in the Crowes' original stomping grounds of Atlanta, Georgia, at the height of *Money Maker* mania. For the anniversary tour, they're playing the original record in its entirety, from Rich's instantly recognizable slide riff that kicks off "Twice as Hard" straight

WHAT IS AVAXHOME?

AVAXHOME-

the biggest Internet portal,
providing you various content:
brand new books, trending movies,
fresh magazines, hot games,
recent software, latest music releases.

Unlimited satisfaction one low price

Cheap constant access to piping hot media

Protect your downloadings from Big brother

Safer, than torrent-trackers

18 years of seamless operation and our users' satisfaction

All languages

Brand new content

One site



AVXLIVE ICU

AvaxHome - Your End Place

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

ahead through standouts such as “Jealous Again” and their rough-and-tumble cover of the great Otis Redding’s “Hard to Handle.” The Crowes will also pick and choose from their vast catalog as they see fit at any given hootenanny.

“We’ll play ‘Remedy,’ ‘No Speak No Slave,’ ‘Cursed Diamond,’ ‘Sometimes Salvation,’ ‘Good Friday,’ ‘Soul Singing,’” Rich says. “The whole gamut.”

Rich Robinson has graced the cover of *Guitar Player* four times and been featured several times more, placing him in an elite club. Yet despite a remarkable career in which he’s sold more than 35 million records, written some of the most stalwart songs of his generation, and measured up to the herculean task of playing Led Zeppelin and Crowes music with Jimmy Page (as captured on 2000’s *Live at the Greek*), Robinson still flies under the radar when it comes to guitar god discussions. Maybe it’s because he’s more of a riff maestro than a flashy lead player. He can certainly soar, especially on slide, but as the Black Crowes’ rhythmic heart, he’s left the lion’s share of the lead work to others. A number of righteous string slingers have passed through group’s revolving door, including Marc Ford, Audley Freed (Cry of Love) and Luther Dickinson (North Mississippi Allstars), whose electric and acoustic expertise fleshed out the sound of the last few studio albums the group released between 2008 and 2010.

The second-guitar musical chair was first held by Jeff Cease, whose only studio album with the band was *Money Maker*. The new chair holder is Isaiah Mitchell, known for playing mind-altering instrumentals in *Earthless* as well as roots rock with Howlin’ Rain. Since the last Black Crowes tour, in 2013, with Jackie Greene on

guitar, Chris has mostly keep busy with the Chris Robinson Brotherhood while Rich made solo records and a few fine albums with fellow former Crowes guitarist Ford as the Magpie Salute. Tuning up for the big *Money Maker* tour, the Robinsons revamped their Brothers of a Feather acoustic show and did a short run of intimate venues last spring. *Guitar Player* caught up with them at the Chapel in San Francisco just before they put forth one of the best duo shows this Bay Area resident has seen here in ages. That turned out to be the last capacity indoor live show we’d witness for over a year and counting.

We connected with Rich on the phone for a quick update, and he delivered much news, including plans for a signature Martin based on his father’s 1953 D-28, and the return of beloved bassist Sven Pippien to an otherwise entirely new Crowes lineup that includes L.A. session drummer Brian Griffin and keyboardist Joel Robinow from the Once and Future Band. In addition, he reveals that he and

Chris have been busy writing new material in the same fashion they have since moving to opposite coasts years ago.

“I’ve sent him about 35 song ideas to work with during the past year,” Rich says. “He sings over them and sends them back. It was amazing to work closely with [original producer] George Drakoulias on the box set of *Shake Your Money Maker*, so we decided to get him involved again, and it will be

interesting to see where the new songs go. The band will gather in about a month to start rehearsals for the tour.”

Is the essence of your Black Crowes dynamic the way the vocal and guitar parts come from two completely different rhythmic angles, creating a unique push and pull no one could come up with strumming and singing simultaneously?

RICH ROBINSON Yes. That makes it what it is, absolutely. It’s funny when people who’ve tried to cover our songs ask, “What’s the deal? Did he mean to sing it that way?”

Yes, of course. There are melodies and counter melodies, rhythms and counter rhythms that all contribute to our thing.

CHRIS ROBINSON Great songwriting partnerships happen when two disparate entities come together. When I write with Rich,

I don’t know what the song is going to be. I may have a long poem of lyrics, or one word on a piece of paper. Take “Horsehead,” for example. That’s a tough riff. Considering the chemical choices I was making at the time, of course I would come up with lyrics like “Horsehead got you bug-eyed.” But both of those things have to happen at the same time. The emotional connection with Rich’s writing totally dictates not just the imagery but also the delivery. I’ve always done most of the arranging. Take “Jealous Again,” for example. Rich would come up with parts, saying, “This is the verse and this is the chorus.” And I would say, “No, that’s the verse and this is the chorus.”

How about your own guitar playing, Chris?

CHRIS I’ve always been around such accomplished guitar players that I really wouldn’t call myself a guitar player. I write songs on guitar. I wrote “High

“WE’D FIGHT ONSTAGE, ON THE BUS, AT THE AIRPORT, AND IN THE STUDIO, BUT WE NEVER FOUGHT WHEN WE WERE WRITING SONGS TOGETHER”

— CHRIS ROBINSON





Head Blues” in the early days of the Black Crowes, and then in the later era I wrote “Appaloosa,” “The Last Place That Love Lives,” “Roll Old Jeremiah,” and “We Who See the Deep.” But Rich is a rock and roll guitar player, whereas I play folky things. Even in the most psychedelic parts of the CRB [*Chris Robinson Brotherhood*], my whole thing was about trying to be expressive without having years of learning guitar. My guitar playing got better from *New Earth Mud* [his 2002 solo debut album] to CRB, but I’m still fairly limited.

Coming back after all these years, I get it. I can see the Black Crowes from such a different perspective now. After all of my frustrations and wanting to incorporate my music into the Black Crowes — which is something I don’t think Rich wanted to do — we’ve come full circle. If you listen to the Rolling Stones, there’s a difference between a Mick Jagger ballad like “If You Really Want to Be My Friend” and a rock song like “Bitch.” You’re not going to do that

kind of thing by yourself. The whole point of the CRB was not to do that. Coming from a band with the sound and the success of the Black Crowes, why would I?

It sounds as if the music for every Black Crowes song was rendered on a guitar.

RICH Yeah, with the one exception of “Lay It All On Me.” I wrote that on piano, which I can play enough to write a song but not actually perform it. I even wrote “Descending” on guitar and then transposed it to the piano. We’ve been playing “Descending” on this run of acoustic shows the way it was originally written. Chris and I have always felt that a good song holds up in its most basic form, with just an acoustic and a voice.

There are some cool acoustics onstage tonight, especially the one with the heart-shaped sound hole. Is that an original by Tony Zemaitis or one of the recent ones made under agreement with Lowden?

RICH That’s a Lowden. Tony’s acoustics were never that good. They looked great, but they were really heavy and didn’t resonate. I’ve checked out about 10 of them over the years and they were all duds. I never played a great one until Lowden made that guitar from the original schematics. It’s a prototype from one of the first three, and it is like the George Harrison model. There’s a jumbo element, but it has more bottom end. It’s got something that, say, a Gibson J-200 doesn’t, and I’m not sure why. Maybe it’s a little deeper, and perhaps the heart-shaped sound hole is a bit bigger. I’ve always felt that jumbos hold onto their tone, maybe because the sound gets lost in the cavernous body, whereas this tends to project a bit more.

What’s the story on the cool little Martin?

RICH I lost a ton of acoustics in the flood [*Hurricane Sandy*] and one of them was my great Martin D-18 from the late ’50s or early ’60s. My OMC was also

destroyed. I went to Gruhn Guitars, looking for replacements, and I got a couple of guitars that George [Gruhn] had ordered to specifications based on two he had from the '40s. One is a 0000, and the other is that parlor guitar.

I still have my 1953 D-28 that my dad gave me as well. I've written more songs on that than any other guitar. The other would be my Guild, which has needed a lot of repairs but now seems pretty solid. The last time I was in Nashville, I went to Gruhn looking for a replacement D-18 from the same era as the one I lost. I tried 20 of them, and this seems impossible, but they were all duds.

Isn't the variance among vintage guitars bizarre?

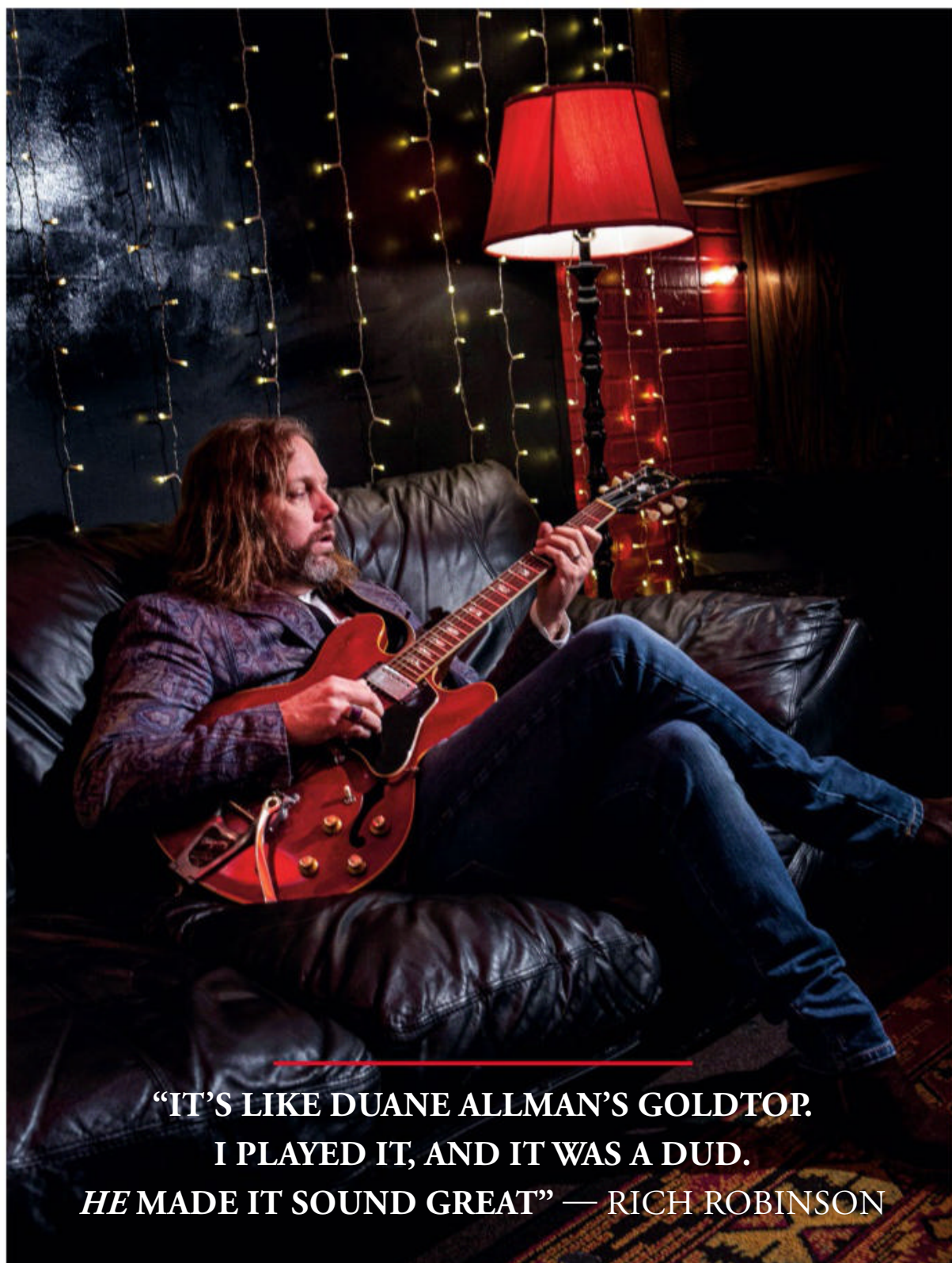
RICH Right. It's like Duane Allman's goldtop. I played it, and it was a dud. I mean, *he* made it sound great, but from an objective standpoint evaluating a Les Paul, it was heavy and just didn't project. It was really weird.

What opened your ears to altered tunings?

RICH Before I knew what open tunings were, I was always drawn to the songs. My first memories are of the way Stephen Stills played things like "Carry On" or "Suite: Judy Blue Eyes." Hearing Nick Drake for the first time sent me further into it. I appreciated everything about what he was doing, from the way he picked to the timbre of the strings, and the sound of his Guild that was dark and bassy, but present.

When you're in songwriter mode, do you keep guitars in various tunings lying around your house?

RICH I only keep a couple of guitars at the house, and I just kind of see what works. I'll throw on a capo and try different keys and tunings. One time when I was messing around, I tuned to a C chord, and then I dropped the low E down to a low C to create a second octave in the lower register. I wound up writing about 20 songs with that tuning [low to high, C C E G C E] including "Walk Believer Walk."



**"IT'S LIKE DUANE ALLMAN'S GOLDTOP.
I PLAYED IT, AND IT WAS A DUD.
HE MADE IT SOUND GREAT" — RICH ROBINSON**

What was the collaborative songwriting process like in the early days?

RICH For at least the first three records, we would be in the same room most of the time. I was living at home because I was 18 or 19 when we started writing *Shake Your Money Maker*. We'd record on a little boom box and send the songs to George Drakoulis. We started writing new songs the minute we finished the first album. It's like we ran away from *Shake Your Money Maker*. We never played the record in its entirety.

Can you share a thought on the tracks, starting with "Twice as Hard"?

RICH I remember writing the opening riff in open G tuning and thinking it was cool. And I remember getting into the studio and working out the guitar parts, with me doing the slide bit and Jeff answering.

What happened with him?

CHRIS I think he's in some Nashville groups. [He's in Eric Church's band.] You'd have to ask him about what happened. I'll say that it's hard enough to figure out life in your early 20s working a normal job. We went from nobody giving a shit about the band to selling six million records, and life was flying past fast.

RICH We stepped into a new place on "Jealous Again." We were going for a "Tumbling Dice" thing. I remember writing the intro, putting the song together with Chris, and bringing it to rehearsal, where everyone got it. The first time we played it live was opening for Drivin' N Cryin' in Nashville.

CHRIS "Jealous Again" was important because it was the first song that catapulted us from being an indie-rock band that sounded like a mix between R.E.M and the Gun Club.

RICH It was the springboard for the rest of the record, the first piece of the puzzle. Songs like “Twice as Hard” just started coming in.

And were you writing those riffs on your famous *Money Maker* Telecaster?

RICH Most of it was written on my Martin acoustic, but I did have my Tele. I bought it about six months before we made *Shake Your Money Maker*.

You still had that Tele when we featured the Black Crowes on the cover of the August 2008 issue. How about now?

RICH I did have it then, but I don’t anymore. I got rid of it and a lot of other stuff from a divorce and the flood, so it was two different kinds of floods. [laughs] Things hold energy. Some of those guitars had a lot of negative energy wrapped up in them. Sometimes I would pick up a guitar, and it would just feel gross. It got to that point and I didn’t want it anymore. Although I lost something like 70 guitars and all of my amps when that flood came, there was something about it that felt cleansing. But I do still have the goldtop Les Paul that was my other main guitar on *Shake Your Money Maker*. It was rebuilt. I played through Marshall Silver Jubilees for basically the whole thing.

Can you share some insights on “Sister Luck” and “Could I’ve Been So Blind”?

RICH “Sister Luck” sort of wrote itself and came together quickly. We were going for a Mick Taylor ending, and I remember feeling very excited about where we were able to go with it on the recording. “Could I’ve Been So Blind” is a pretty straightforward song that we didn’t play for a long time before coming back to it. We’re staying true to the original arrangements on the *Money Maker* tour.

How did “Seeing Things” happen?

RICH We were trying to create a Stax type of song at George’s suggestion. For my part, I was going for something like “I Got the Blues” from the Stones album *Sticky Fingers*, and I tried to cop a feeling like Steve Cropper.



Speaking of Cropper, it’s interesting to listen to his playing on the original Otis Redding recording of “Hard to Handle” and compare it to your version on *Money Maker*.

RICH Chris wanted to do the song, but we’re not a soul band. George came up with the idea to liken it to Aerosmith’s “Walk This Way,” so we totally credit him for turning it into a more rock and roll version that worked for us.

Is “She Talks to Angels” the oldest song on the first record?

CHRIS That’s one of the first real songs that we wrote, and it took about 20 to 25 minutes. The chords didn’t even matter so much, just that melancholy little intro was enough to serve as a launching point for the whole narrative.

RICH I was about 17 when I wrote that, but until recently, when George brought

it up, I’d forgotten that it didn’t have a bridge. He mentioned that it needed one, and we went to a park in Atlanta where there was an old train track we used to go to all the time when we were kids. George remembered that we went there and came up with it right then and there in about 10 minutes. We found the original demo, and sure enough, there was no bridge.

CHRIS We didn’t write much in the studio. George instilled that in us: Come in prepared. Songs are work. Songs are craft. Leave no stone unturned in terms of ideas, tempos, keys, trying a rocker as a ballad or vice versa. If Rich would play something that stumped me, I’d probably say, “What else do you have?” It’s a two-way street, and we’d move right along. That’s the one time we wouldn’t fight. We’d fight onstage, on the bus, at the airport and in the studio,

but we never fought when we were writing songs together.

How about the rest of the tracks?

RICH For “Struttin’ Blues” we were going for something along the lines of “Hot ’n Nasty,” the first song on Humble Pie’s album *Smokin’*. I tuned to open G, slapped a capo on at the second fret, and I wrote it on the spot. To me, the most amazing bit of “Stare It Cold” was the ending, the coda out. There was something about the way the rhythms were going back and forth between Chris and I — the way he sings against what I’m doing on the guitar, like you were talking about at the beginning of the interview. On the vinyl record, if you let it play for a while, there was a little minute-long blues thing that was unlisted called “Live Too Fast Blues/Mercy Sweet Moan.” It’s just me playing my dad’s D-28 and Chris singing.

What’s your gear strategy for the *Money Maker* tour?

RICH I bought a pair of 1961 Fender Twins — the brownface ones with blonde cabinets — and combine those with the same Marshall Silver Jubilee head I played on our first couple of tours. It had been in my warehouse untouched for years, and I was amazed how great it sounded when I pulled it out. It still has that special magic, and that’s what’s so cool about analog gear. Some of it is crap, and some is brilliant, and that brilliance is the gift that you don’t get with digital. I’m going to run the Marshall through a pair of 2x12 cabinets.

How about guitars?

RICH I’m touring with about 30 guitars and driving my tech crazy. He has his own company called Bonneville guitars and he made me a cool custom guitar that’s like a [Gibson Les Paul] TV Junior. I have my goldtop and another Les Paul that’s really cool. I got a Pelham Blue Firebird from the Gibson Custom Shop, which is amazing, as well as a couple of 335s. I have the Zemaitis [by Lowden] acoustic, my Gretsches, including the White Falcon. I’ve been playing a couple of Strats, and I have three or four Teles,



including a black custom Tele and a B-Bender.

What does new guitarist Isaiah Mitchell bring to the Crowes table compared to some of the band’s previous guitar players?

RICH Well, there have been a lot of guitar players. Marc and I have this musical connection that can’t be explained. **CHRIS** The cool thing about the era of *Southern Harmony* and the subsequent records with him was that, using the Stones analogy, if Rich was Keith, then Marc was Mick Taylor. Marc was really fluid and more of a conventional guitarist.

RICH Luther brought his own thing, and it was cool. But ultimately, Chris and I wanted a whole new band. We auditioned a ton of musicians. Isaiah is such a gifted guitarist. He’s coming from a different place musically, so he brings different things to the table, but he grew up listening to the Black Crowes too, so he has an understanding. I appreciate his note choices, and he has a great tone.

CHRIS Hard-rock fans will know Isaiah from Earthless, but he’s truly a guitar player’s guitar player. I’ve seen him play jazz and all manner of guitar styles.

I met him when he played lead guitar in Howlin’ Rain.

RICH We wanted a whole new band because we didn’t want to deal with any bullshit. Chris and I can sit in a room and deal with our own shit, but we can’t account for anyone else’s agenda. Bringing in the same old people with

their same old bullshit to sort of break this up and to try to vie for everything — which is what Steve [Gorman, drums] and a lot of people around us did — wasn’t going to work. Chris and I needed a whole new attitude, and the

“IT’S LIKE WE RAN AWAY
FROM *SHAKE YOUR
MONEY MAKER*. WE NEVER
PLAYED THE RECORD
IN ITS ENTIRETY”
— RICH ROBINSON

best way to do that was to bring around a new energy and take back control of the band. It’s always been our vision and our songs. It started with us before Steve or anyone else was in the band. We’re truly happy to be back in a positive place where we get along and have a shared commitment to making this work, because this is bigger than the band. It’s about being brothers, too.

CHRIS You have to have each other’s back. There has to be something else — some sort of mystic cosmic thing. Rich knows no one is going to sing our songs the way I sing them. And I know no one’s going to play that open-G shit like Rich. 🎸

**"Witchcraft and wizardry!
The greatest acoustic
guitar gadget since the
capo. Endless joy!"**

MIKE DAWES

World-renowned fingerstyle guitarist
On tour with Tommy Emmanuel, 2022

WATCH A DEMO NOW! ACOUSTIC EFFECTS NO AMP REQUIRED

Reverb, delay, tremolo, and more —
from the body of your acoustic guitar.



Watch Mike Dawes, the ever-charming master of fingerstyle guitar, as he takes an entertaining deep-dive into the inspirational features of the ToneWoodAmp—an award-winning acoustic effects processor

HEAR IT that *attaches magnetically* and requires *no cables, no pedals, nor an amp.*

- 8 acoustic effects.
- Easy installation—no tools!
- No permanent impact on the guitar.



TONEWOODAMP
TONEWOODAMP.COM   
PROUDLY MADE IN ARIZONA, U.S.A





TEMPLE OF TONE

John Hiatt and the **Jerry Douglas Band** record *Leftover Feelings* at Nashville's country music shrine.

BY ART THOMPSON

PHOTOGRAPHY BY PATRICK SHEEHAN

A LOT HAS CHANGED since John Hiatt recorded *The Eclipse Sessions* in 2018, and his latest release, *Leftover Feelings* (New West), is all the more significant for a couple of reasons: It was made during the 2020 pandemic, and it was recorded at Nashville's legendary RCA Studio B, during a time when tourists had virtually stopped visiting the historic site. As Hiatt explains, "If the pandemic had any plusses, it was that we were able to get in there and record during the day. Normally you can only record at night at Studio B, and you have to break your gear down after each session. We got in there last October and we settled on four days. Every day we got tested, and when we were in the control room we wore masks and stayed apart and all that."

It was worth the precautions to bring such a confluence of talent to bear on the project. Between the richness of Hiatt's songs and the awesome musicianship of Jerry Douglas's band — which includes Mike Seal on acoustic and electric guitars, Daniel Kimbro on bass and Christian Sedelmyer on fiddle

— *Leftover Feelings* is a superb, live-in-the-studio album that has the atmosphere of a very special room and the sense of togetherness that can only happen when players are in it as one. However, it wasn't a given that the project would actually take flight. "I think like everybody else I was initially just staying home, and I wasn't terribly creative at all," Hiatt says. "I was just fumbling around in the dark, doing some reading, but not really writing much."

"But after a while, I started writing some songs and making demos in my little home studio and got interested in that. Things that threaten life can also be life enhancing if you can turn them into something positive. To be able to make music during this time was just a miracle, and then to get together with Jerry and the guys and do the recording — we were just grinning ear to ear to be able to make music again after having not done it for a year."

The album rolls out of the gate with "Long Black Electric Cadillac," Hiatt's whimsical nod to a "green" tail fin-festooned luxury ride. "I hope there will be a 1,000-mile battery in a long black

electric Cadillac,” he says. “I’ll be first in line! It was fun to write that song and to start with something that had some levity. Then we head down to Mississippi [“Mississippi Phone Booth”] with another traveling song about a trip that a guy makes out of his personal hell, and he’s making the phone call home, saying, ‘Please don’t hang up on me this time!’”

Leftover Feelings is all about the light and dark contrasts in Hiatt’s stories, and so it follows that tracks like “Buddy Boy” and “Keen Rambler” offer respite to the album’s heavier songs, like “Light of the Burning Sun,” where he reveals the emotional weight of his brother’s suicide. “He was 21 and I was about 11,” Hiatt explains. “There were seven of us, and he was the oldest. So it’s the story of what happened and how it impacted the family, as suicide does. I was finally able to write a song about it.

“I write songs as kind of a way to get my bearings at a certain point in my life, or maybe figure out things by telling stories. I figured it was bound to come up, and it was good to write about it. I was kind of reluctant to put it on the record, to be honest, because I thought it was too dark. But Jerry said, ‘Man, people have been through this and have lost loved ones this way, and they need to hear it.’”

How was the decision made to record the album at RCA Studio B?

It’s funny, because Ry Cooder and I had talked about doing a project there when he was here in 2019, and we went and looked at the studio. And then we thought maybe we should do it at FAME, down at Muscle Shoals. So we kind of logged that, but we crisscrossed paths and the songs didn’t come together for that project, and we put it on hold. And then I started talking to my manager about what we might want to do for a new record, and he said, “How about Jerry Douglas?” I thought that was a fantastic idea, and so when that came up, I immediately thought RCA Studio B. Jerry played with Chet Atkins, and he’s done a lot of recording there. He came to



Hiatt with Jerry Douglas (left) and Daniel Kimbro in RCA Studio B. (right) Onstage at the 36th Annual Austin Music Awards, February 28, 2018

Nashville in ’78, about eight years after I did. But I never recorded there. It’s funny, because I wrote for Tree Publishing, which was just up the street. When I came to town in 1970, the music business was on two streets: 16th Avenue South and 17th Avenue South. And all the publishing houses and all the studios, except RCA, were in houses. And next door to a publishing company would be a boarding house with six or eight songwriters living there. I lived just five blocks up the street from RCA, and my first year I rented a room in a boarding house with four or five other songwriters

and paid 11 bucks a week for my spring bed, a hot plate and a bare light-bulb hanging down. I was writing songs and thinking I was all in it.

It’s interesting that you’ve come full circle to recording at a place that was

once ground zero for country music.

When I got here, I didn’t write country songs and really didn’t know much about country music. Coming from Indianapolis, I wasn’t raised on it necessarily. I

listened to AM radio as a kid. I knew Hank Williams and Jimmie Rodgers and some of that stuff, but I didn’t really

**“THINGS THAT THREATEN
LIFE CAN ALSO BE LIFE
ENHANCING IF YOU
CAN TURN THEM INTO
SOMETHING POSITIVE”**



know the depth of country music until I got out here and started getting schooled a little in what it was all about.

What was the live scene like in Nashville at that time?

The first year or two I was here, Tut Taylor, the great Dobro player, opened the Old Time Pickin' Parlor, and people like Norman Blake, John Hartford and even Dylan played there. That was a place for acoustic music, and then I think, in '70 or '71, a couple of guys opened the Exit/In, and all of us sort of oddball singer-songwriters who had come to Nashville at the same time — guys like Chris Gantry, Jimmy Buffett and myself, who didn't exactly fit the country-music mold — had a place to play. I heard more great music there in the seven years I lived in Nashville, from

'70 to '77. Everybody from Weather Report to Chick Corea to Larry Coryell and Eleventh House. I remember Billy Joel did one of his first gigs from *Piano Man* there, and I opened for him.

Did you rehearse much before recording, and were there any songs you worked on that didn't end up on the album?

We only rehearsed once. I sent Jerry 16 or 17 songs, and he picked out 13 that he thought we should attempt. The guys made charts, and we got together and just ran 'em down. We didn't want to get serious about any arrangement things; we just wanted to make sure sure we knew the songs when we went in to record. So that took a day, and I think we went in two or three days later. We did cut an older song of mine called "Angel," which was on the album *Perfectly Good*



Guitar, and we recorded an acoustic version of "Slow Turning," which didn't make the record but may come out on something later. The first thing we cut was "Lilacs in Ohio." I think we did three takes and everybody felt like we've got something going here.

It's cool to hear a new version of that song, especially since there's no drummer on this record. I didn't even notice that right away, because the sound is so full.

You're not the first person to say, "Jeez, we were halfway into the record before we realized there wasn't a drummer on it." I thought, Well that's pretty good. Most of us stringed-instrument players fancy ourselves drummers anyway, so I think I kind of called it upfront and said, "Let's just do it acoustically." I thought to just let the instruments speak, and it worked out pretty well. When this project came up, "Lilacs in Ohio" was the first thing I thought of in terms of being fun to redo and something that would lend itself to Jerry and his band. It was on *Beneath This Gruff Exterior* from 2003, so it's been nearly 20 years since we did that rocking, four-piece combo version of it.

What originally inspired "Lilacs?" It's quite different from anything you've written.

I stole the lyrics directly from a film called *The Lost Weekend*. It's a black-and-white film made in the '40s. Ray Milland plays a drunk, frustrated writer who can't write the great book, and he sits at the bar and talks to Sam the bartender about it endlessly. In one of the scenes,

he's at the bar getting drunk and he's talking about this woman he's met and is infatuated with. He's describing as he comes up to meet her in her building in New York City, and he says, "You notice how the gray of the light hits the gray of the drainpipe alongside her window. You're there to have lunch with her, but she sends a note down regretting that she can't come today, and you open the note and it smells like all the lilacs in Ohio." And I thought, Man, what a beautiful image! So I just stole the line and sort of told a fictitious story about a guy trying to write a book, and he's trying to make time with this girl and his life's a mess. So that's where the story came from. You know, songs to me are about telling stories.

The album closes with "Sweet Dream," which I'm guessing is a true story.

That's kind of imagery from various trips I've taken crisscrossing the country over the years, and from hitchhiking when I was 17. I was actually up on Bear Mountain, and I was there the whole night because somebody had dropped me off on the old road and there was a new road that was sort of a bypass. It wasn't until morning that I was picked up by the shoe salesman, as it says in one of the verses. So I used that imagery. It's all about the sweet dreams that we hold on to in our passage through life. They are equal parts delightful and sometimes a little terrifying and scary.

What guitars did you use in the studio?

I played one acoustic guitar the whole four days, a 1946 banner-head Gibson LG-2 that I bought two years ago. I miked it with a gray AEA re-creation of an RCA R44 ribbon microphone that [AEA founder] Wes Dooley has created so lovingly. That was also my vocal mic, but it also caught a lot of my acoustic guitar, so it was just a matter of getting the balance between it and a second mic on the guitar.

"IT'S ALL ABOUT THE SWEET DREAMS THAT WE HOLD ON TO IN OUR PASSAGE THROUGH LIFE"

On a video of "Terms of My Surrender" you're playing a PRS acoustic. What's the story on that?

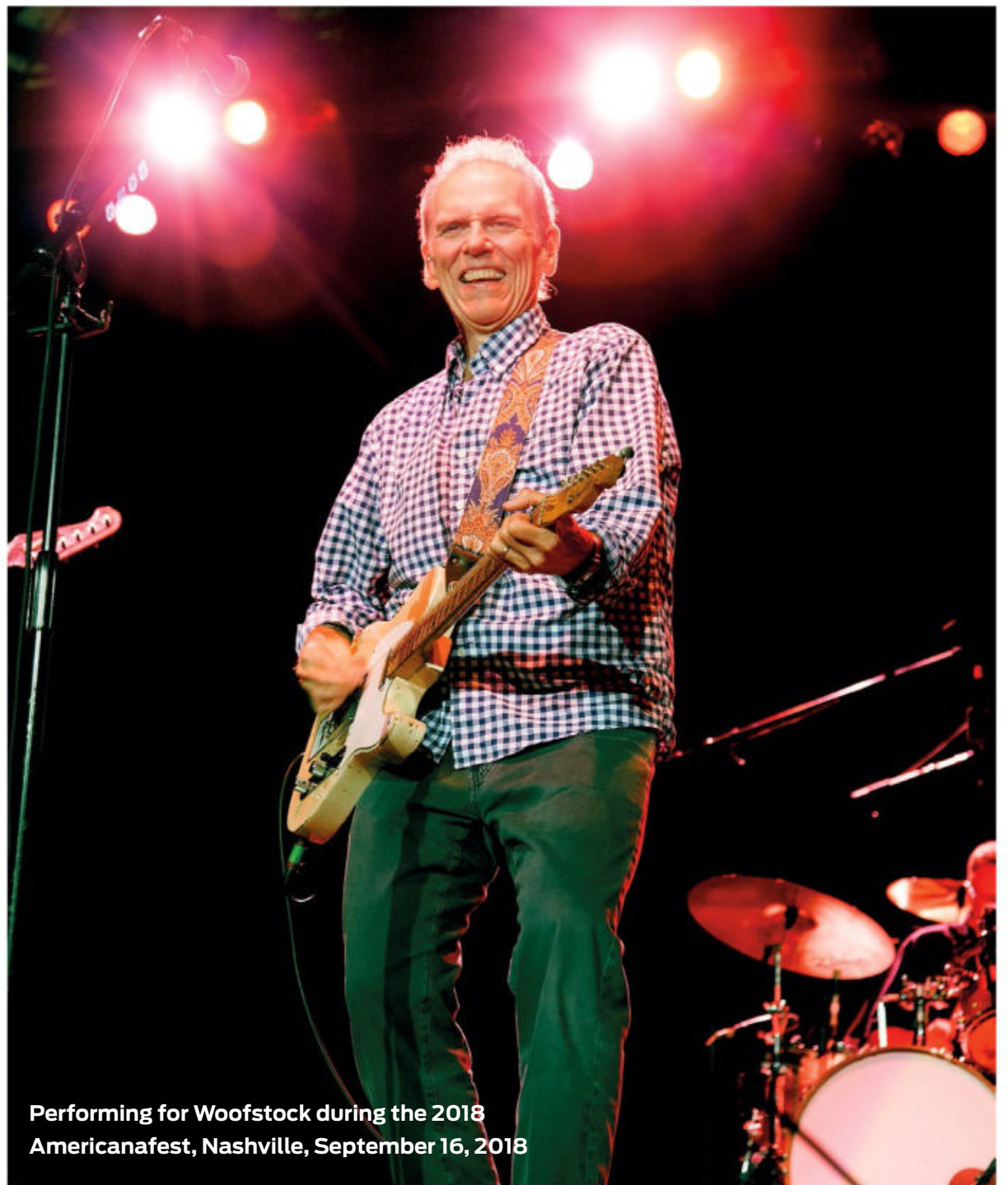
I have two that I really love: an Angelus and a Martin Simpson signature model that has a wider neck. I love the sound of PRS acoustics. Paul Smith is more known for his electrics, but I think this Martin Simpson model sounds fantastic. It's got a big, fat neck for fingerpickers, and I play with my fingers.

I used a flat pick for years, but I just lost that ability. I'll tell you what happened: For 10 years — from when I was 40 to 50 — I was at a very amateur level driving race cars on oval tracks around the south. One day, a buddy of mine and I were in the pits working on my car because I thought the cooling fan wasn't cooling the motor, and I stuck my index finger right into it, as if to point out this is

what's wrong, and the tip of the index finger on my right hand got shredded all to hell.

I went to the hospital and they stitched me up so that I have a Y-shape scar on the fingertip pad, and from that point on it didn't feel right holding a flat pick, so I just started playing more with my fingers. Ry Cooder for years had tried to get me to do that. He said with the fingers you get better tone.

But anyway, once that happened somewhere in my mid 40s, I went to using my fingers, and I use them, I guess, in a somewhat unusual way. I take the thumb and index fingers as if I'm holding a pick and I downstroke with the index finger as if I'm flat picking. But then I upstroke with the thumbnail, so it's back and forth, and then I add the second finger and get an even more rambling rhythmic thing going between the three fingers. It's kind of a Reverend Gary Davis approach, but I don't recommend sticking your finger into a cooling fan to have a similar result. ■



Performing for Woofstock during the 2018 Americanafest, Nashville, September 16, 2018

NASHVILLE CAT

Jerry Douglas brings his instinct for tone to **Hiatt's** *Leftover Feelings*.

GIVEN THE HUGE array of artists that Dobro wizard and 14-time Grammy winner Jerry Douglas has worked with over the decades, it's almost inconceivable that the only time he'd been in a studio with John Hiatt was on a session for the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band's *Will the Circle Be Unbroken: Volume Two*, in 1989. But the planets aligned in 2020 to allow Douglas and Hiatt to finally team up for the new album, *Leftover Feelings*, which JD produced and performed on with his band.

"This record was supposed to have been recorded a year ago in April, and of course that didn't happen, because the studios were all shut," Douglas says. "Nobody knew what we were up against or how long it was going to take, so we just shelved everything.

"But John and I kept on talking and working on songs, and it all kind of fell into place as everybody converged on RCA Studio B in Nashville, which is an

amazing place and a whole story in itself. It was Chet Atkins' playground in the '60s and '70s, and so much amazing music came out of that place. It's like at night the ghosts come out and stare down at you. We couldn't get in the studio to play until late October of 2020, and because it's owned by the Country Music Hall of Fame, we initially thought we were going to have to tear down every night and set up again, because they have tours that come through there. But because of Covid, there were no tours, and that made it possible to stay in there and work. So we found four consecutive days when everybody could get together, and we went in and cut it."

How did you go about choosing songs for this record?

John gave me a list of songs, and I kind of went through them and I'd think, This one wouldn't sound right if we don't have a drummer — that kind of thing. We had

decided in advance that we wouldn't use drums and that we would just try to keep it grounded and make it as much of an acoustic record as we could. But we're all so percussive in this band that we hear where something should go, and somebody just does it. It's like somebody's got the backbeat or the bass or the low end, so it's covered.

What are some of the things that stand out to you about John Hiatt?

He doesn't do co-writes with a bunch of other people. Like now in Nashville, a country single comes out and there are eight writers on it. I'm still trying to figure out how that works! John works alone on his songs, and

they come from thoughts long ago, or they come from something that may have happened yesterday, and some are very personal. But he holds these phrases that he hears,

or something he might remember in an old movie, and things like that, and he stores them up. And then when it comes to writing songs, he's got the twist. When you start looking at his discography and the songs he's written, it's just amazing. John is one of the most important American songwriters that we have.

Have you previously spent much time in RCA Studio B?

Yes, with Chet Atkins, actually. There are strong places in the room and there are weak places, and it's been explored by different engineers for 60 years. So I love playing there. It's got its own life and its own sound. You need to know how to use it, because you can overdrive the room if you get too loud. It's got the old tile floor, and that stuff is not coming up. It's that floor and the size of the room that works like another player. You have to deal with that and use it to your advantage.



What was your main Dobro on the album?

The guitar I used the most is one that I worked on with Paul Beard, who is probably the preeminent builder of Resophonic guitars in the world. It's all mahogany, and there's no binding on it. The construction is wood on wood, all the way around the edges, so it just turns the whole thing into one piece, more or less. It has a translucent black finish, so we call it Blackbeard.

As always, you get great tone on this record. How did you mic your guitar in the studio?

There are two mics I'll ask for whenever I go to any studio. First choice is a Neumann U67, and my second choice is a Neumann M49. Those two microphones are just magic from the past. They give you such a heads-up on every other microphone for Dobro and for vocals. I put two mics on it whenever possible. If you're looking at the cover plate like a clock dial, and noon is straight up toward the neck, the real sweet spot on a Dobro to mic is around two or three o'clock on that dial.

Then I have another mic suspended above the treble-side screen hole, which is actually the bass chamber of the guitar. It's the smallest part of the guitar, but that's where all the bass goes. I usually use a ribbon mic in the bass area because they just love that low end, and then with the Neumann at the two or three o'clock position, it's a pretty nice complete sound of the guitar. The Dobro is such a vocal instrument, and that's what I shoot for. I'm trying to be a voice and make the instrument sing. — AT

WOODEN SHIPS

As he sets off on new acoustic adventures with *For Free*, David Crosby delivers insights into the guitars and tunings of his classic period.

BY JIMMY LESLIE

DAVID CROSBY IS an iconic acoustic captain at the helm of his ever-fantastic ship, always listening for a song on the wind that might lead him to some mystical, musical port of call. More than ever lately, he appears to be a man on a mission, perhaps making up for lost time. He's dropped five albums since 2014. Snarky Puppy ringleader and bass ace Michael League produced 2016's *Lighthouse*, and they've continued a working relationship that Crosby regards as a band. Otherwise, the guitarist's primary co-captain is his son James Raymond. Crosby refers to their collaboration as Sky Trails, which is the title of their 2017 album, and James also produced the new album, *For Free* (BMG). The colorful folk-rock legend sounds almost too good for having lived a pirate's life. His voice is unbelievably unweathered. His fingerpicking and signature six- and 12-string sounds are well intact, but as Crosby reveals in the following feature, there is trouble on the horizon in the form of treacherous tendonitis. Before sailing into the sunset, he's being as creative as possible.

What he hasn't been doing is working with the company of Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young. It's well documented that much love has been lost on that front. No more new musical magic is expected from the quartet, but

there is a fantastic new 50th anniversary boxed-set edition of *Déjà Vu* featuring insightful guitar-and-vocal demos and extensive liner notes by Cameron Crowe. What we can expect at some point, according to Crosby, is a major documentary produced by Nigel Sinclair and Tim Sexton (Sinclair recently produced the stellar *Bee Gees: How Can You Mend a Broken Heart*).

For Free gets its title from the Joni Mitchell classic that Crosby covers on the new album. He credits her for opening his eyes to alternate tunings, which he still uses to create deep, cosmic textures. "Think I" is a crafty composition with exceptional acoustic guitars and vocals that exemplify Crosby's breezy, existential vibe. Steely Dan fans will dig the funky groove and jazzy changes on his collaboration with Donald Fagan, "Rodriguez for a Night." Clever electric guitar comes courtesy of session legend Dean Parks (Willie Nelson, Paul Simon, Steely Dan), who also wrote the music for the soldier song "Shot at Me." There are some catchy

commercial hooks here as well, including "River Rise," which features backing vocals courtesy of another cat from the Steely Dan camp, Michael McDonald. Most cuts feature

Crosby's acoustic at the core, and he's a better guitar player than he often gets credit for, considering how much attention is paid to his voice and

"I'D GUESS I'VE GOT ABOUT ANOTHER YEAR TO PLAY GUITAR, IF I'M LUCKY. IT'S NOT A SOLVABLE PROBLEM"



character. He's actually quite humble about his playing and understands why most of the guitar cred from his crew has gone to Stephen Stills and Neil Young, "Naturally it would go to them, man," he says. "Those guys are lead players and have different levels of competency."

Crosby is a true acoustic aficionado, and he can't help himself from boasting a bit about his awesome collection. He still uses most of it, including his classic Martins from the Woodstock era. Perhaps his most infamous Martin is his six-to-12-string conversion D-18. Martin has released limited-edition signature versions, first as the D-18DC in 2002, and then as the D-12 David Crosby,

ANNA WEBBER



featuring a reversed string course in the third slot, in 2009. Frets fortuitously caught up with Croz on the heels of recent features with other notable 12-string appreciators from his generation, Leo Kottke and Taj Mahal.

How did your six-string roots start you down the 12-string path?

It's an interesting story. The first guitar I bought was made by a banjo company that produced a 12-string guitar. Bob Gibson [*an American folk singer and a key figure in the 1950s/'60s folk revival*] played one, and he was one of the folk guys I liked, so I got one too. But the first good one was a Martin D-18 that I bought at a

music store in Chicago when I was living there. When I moved to California, I took it to Jon Lundberg in Berkeley and asked him to convert it to a 12-string because I was entranced with 12-strings. He did, and to this day it's the best. Kottke is going to argue with me about this, but I have a handful of the best 12-strings existing in the world. That one is still the king. It's better than my D-45 12-string from the Martin Custom Shop, which is killer fucking good. Or my Roy Smeck Gibson that the folks at Alembic converted into a 12-string, and that looks exactly as if there had been a Roy Smeck Gibson 12-string. Or the copy Martin made of my D-18 for the prototype of my

signature 12-string. That has an ebony neck, and it is still hanging on my wall. I truly love 12-strings, and the best one I've ever had is still that first one.

Why?

Every single one is different, like snowflakes. Maybe it's the wood combination. Maybe it's all the love I've poured into it over the years. I'll line them all up and let you play them, and you'll come to the same conclusion. Although I've got to say that the D-45 rings like a bell.

The original modified D-18 has 12 frets to the body, correct?

Yeah, that puts the bridge a little further back, and for some reason that works. I don't know why. It is what it is.

What inspired you to have the modification done in the first place?

It was the sound of the guitar. It sounded so good as a six-string, and I should have left it like that, but I was enthralled with the 12-string, so I took the chance, and it worked, out of sheer luck.

Why were you so enthralled with the 12-string? Who was turning you on at that time?

Bob Gibson and Pete Seeger are the two that jump to mind. I just liked 12-strings right away, and I still do. I was playing that D-18 conversion last night.

It's interesting that you come to the 12-string from a folk perspective and wind up in the Byrds, perhaps the most famous jangling-rock outfit ever, yet you jump to an electric Gretsch six-string and Roger McGuinn does all the jangling on a 12-string Rickenbacker, correct?

Yeah, it's not me, it's Roger. He was always a much better guitar player than me. When he got one of the first Rickies, it sounded like a glass avalanche. Unbelievable. He's such a gifted musician. He basically does one thing, but he does it really well. He's also brilliant at voicing something into a different form, like turning "Mr. Tambourine Man" from a terrible goddamned demo into that brilliant record. I started out playing a Gretsch Tennessean in the Byrds, but then switched pretty quickly to a Country Gentlemen, which was a better guitar.

Even more interesting is that you wind up returning to the acoustic for the act that defines folk rock, Crosby, Stills & Nash. In fact, you all start out on acoustic for that, right?

Yeah, Stephen and I are both crazy about acoustic guitars. Graham likes them, but it's not quite the same. Stephen and I kind of worship them. We love them a lot. We each have multiple stunning guitars, and that's why we fall in love with them. I have five Martin D-45s.



What were you thinking when Martin re-introduced the D-45 in the late '60s?

We knew that Martin had the best wood stashed, because they'd been buying it before anybody else, and that they'd uncorked their stash of Brazilian rosewood, which is now gone. And they had a stash of top wood that they thought was their absolute best. They combined them, and that was irresistible to us. We could get one for about five grand, and as far as we were concerned that was the best guitar anybody was making. I think we were right. I have three of those 1969 D-45s. They're the ones with all the wear from being played at the concerts. I also have one made of koa, and it's a mind-boggling guitar with an unbelievable sound.

Can you share the story of "Wooden Ships" from the Crosby, Stills & Nash debut in 1969?

I wrote it on that 12-string [longtime tech John Gonzales says Crosby refers to the guitar as "the Wooden Ships 12-string"]. I'd say that 90 percent of the chord changes are mine. I brought the music to Stephen and Paul Kantner. Stephen added a couple of very significant changes that really helped. We were on my boat in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. I was docked at a friend's house and they both came down to visit. We wrote it right there, sitting in the main cabin. Paul gave me some key lyrics that started it going really well. You can guess which verse Stephen wrote: "Horror grips us..." [laughs]

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES (WEMBLEY); CBS/GETTY IMAGES (BYRDS)



With Crosby, Stills Nash and Young at Wembley Stadium, September 14, 1974

good enough to play them in standard tuning. Some guitar players can approach playing the same stuff as a piano player, using closed positions in standard tuning, but the guitarist can only produce six notes, so the piano player has got you by at least four. I couldn't do it, but in alternate tunings, different inversions of the chords came up. I started to get to those strange, mystical places I wanted to go.

The chords on "Déjà Vu" can be found simply by barring the top three strings at the 3rd and 5th frets. It's a matter of which order you pick the notes. I fingerpick with my thumb and first three fingers. The rhythm on "Guinnevere" goes 1-2-3, 1-2-3, 1-2, which is actually very normal. The main guitar is one of the 1969 D-45s. There are a couple of guitars along with it on the intro, and one of them is probably the 12-string. There are a couple of guitars on "Déjà Vu," but I'm not sure which ones. We didn't record it until the *Déjà Vu* album [released in 1970], but I had the music early on when I was leaving the Byrds and started hanging out with Stephen Stills.

The 50th anniversary edition of *Déjà Vu* includes the demos for "Almost Cut My Hair" and "Laughing," which isn't on that record but becomes a signature guitar track on your solo debut [If I Could Only Remember My Name, 1971]. Can you offer some guitar insights?

I'll guess that I'm playing one of the '69 D-45s on "Almost Cut My Hair." That song is in standard tuning, although it might be dropped a whole step for the

demo. "Laughing" is in an alternate tuning that, from low to high, goes D G D D A D, and again the demo might be dropped a whole step from the full studio version.



With Roger McGuinn, January 28, 1965

That's in standard tuning, but you were into alternates, as evidenced by the haunting sound on "Guinnevere." How did you arrive at that unique tuning?

A kid from the Midwest showed me that tuning that, from low to high, goes E B D G A D, and I got "Guinnevere" and "Déjà Vu" out of it. I'll tell you what got me started: My brother turned me on to jazz early on and I liked some keyboard players, including Bill Evans and McCoy Tyner. They'd play chords that were like huge freaking tone clusters. Thick stuff. My hand wasn't

"WHEN ROGER GOT ONE OF THE FIRST RICKIES, IT SOUNDED LIKE A GLASS AVALANCHE. UNBELIEVABLE"

The vibe that tuning summons is similar to the slow section on "Suite: Judy Blue Eyes." Did you get that from Stills, or did he get it from you?

More he got it from me. The people who taught me the most were Joni [Mitchell] and Michael Hedges. Stephen got into tunings pretty much right away, but he was a blues player, so he could take them to a different place than I could. Joni and Michael worked tunings to the most sophisticated level. They're both geniuses at it. And once I found out what kind of music I could write — "Guinnevere" being a good example — I loved it. So, of course, I kept exploring tunings.

Over and over again, my best stuff is in alternate tunings. "Music Is Love" [from *If I Could Only Remember My Name*] is another example, although I can't remember that exact tuning right now [low to high, D A D G B D, and the original recording is dropped a half step]. That's another good example of the original 12-string's sound.

"Think I" from the new album has a classic Crosby sound, perhaps in some kind of C tuning.

It's in an alternate tuning that's been very good for creating several songs, although I can't say exactly what it is right now. There are two acoustic parts on there. Steve Postell played the beautiful acoustic lead at the end, and I played the fingerpicking part on one of the 1969 D-45s.

"Other Side of Midnight" is a lovely cosmic tune with a killer chord progression. What's the guitar story?

You're going to be pissed, because there isn't one. Every single sound on that recording is synthesized. My son James played all the guitar sounds on a computer. He's that good at it. You shouldn't be able to do that, but he can. I'm not sure if we should allow him in the country. [laughs]

Who's playing the high chimey intro on "Shot at Me"?

One of the best guitar players in the world, Dean Parks, wrote the music and played on that song. The lyrics are about guys coming back from the sandboxes in Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan. It wrecks them and really screws them up.

Do you still take your vintage Martins on the road?

I've been taking two of the three '69s, even though it's crazy to do so because they're worth, like, a hundred grand each. But I've been taking them on the road anyway because they're that good. I also have a Gibson J-200 made out of Brazilian rosewood from their custom shop that I have taken on the road.

And I have some guitars made by Roy McAlister up near Seattle. He showed up at my door one day saying he'd made me a guitar. It was a triple-0 body style, and I prefer dreadnoughts, but he mentioned that he was the guy at Santa Cruz Guitars who had made the copy of my 12-string, which is another one I have. So I invited him in, and it was one of the best guitars I'd ever touched. It's still the one closest to the bed. I've given five of his guitars away to other players, and I have five others that he made, including a mind-boggling 12-string. I take four of his guitars on the road.

Including the 12-string?

No, when I play 12-string in the live show it's an electric made by Alembic.

How do you electrify your acoustics?

We have gone through the stages of the cross when it comes to pickups. I don't use any pedals. The signal goes straight to the house, and I have two monitors: one for my voice and one for my acoustic guitars. I use a Magnatone amp for the electrics. [John Gonzales reports that the

acoustics all have D'Addario EXP16 strings and Fishman Matrix Infinity undersaddle piezo pickup systems that feed into Radial J48 direct boxes. The electric Alembic 12-string was custom built around 1970, and the Magnatone amp is a Twilighter.]

How are your hands?

I've got tendonitis in both. I can play, but I'm down to about 80 percent of what I used to be able to do, and it's steadily deteriorating. The middle finger on my right hand doesn't bend well. I had an operation done, but that actually made it worse. I'm not trying to whine and snivel here. I've just

got to cope with this reality. I'd guess I've got about another year to play guitar, if I'm lucky. It's not a solvable problem. That's just how it is. I've been playing for 70 years. I've had a good run, man.

Can you do any more tours?

I don't think I can tour anymore. Well, maybe limited, but I do think I can make a couple more records. I'd like to do another Lighthouse record with Michael League and that lineup, but he lives in Spain now, so we'll see. James and I have already started the next record. They don't pay us for them anymore, but we didn't start doing them for money in the first place. We started doing them because we loved doing them, and we still love doing them. Albums are still our art form. They are what we have based our life on, and we still love making music. They are what we are going to leave behind. ■



Onstage at the Royal Albert Hall, October 8, 2011

"WE KNEW THAT MARTIN HAD THE BEST WOOD STASHED, BECAUSE THEY'D BEEN BUYING IT BEFORE ANYBODY ELSE"

the
WOODSTOCK



Invitational
LUTHIERS SHOWCASE

October 22, 23 & 24, 2021

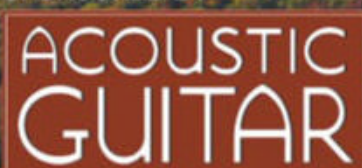
**Fine Handmade Acoustic Guitars &
Stringed Musical Instruments**

*Exhibited by Their Creators - Show and Sale - Live Music - Clinics
Workshops - Concerts - Special Events - Tonewood Festival*

**Bearsville Center
Woodstock, New York**

www.woodstockinvitational.com

SPONSORED BY



EASY PICKINGS

Learn a useful technique for fingerstyle tremolo picking with a beautiful original composition, “a Nela.”

BY ANDREW HULL

OUTSIDE OF MONKS, there is no more noble vow of poverty than that accepted by the classical guitarist. You’ve seen us performing at your local wedding ceremony or busking on the subway platform, or maybe we’ve served you at Starbucks, gazing blissfully into the distance with images of Carnegie Hall dancing in our heads (you can spot us by the long fingernails on our right hands). Like those humble hermits of lore, our detachment from both popular culture and the pursuit of the all-mighty dollar has given us access to moments of true beauty and, dare I say, great art. When you owe nothing to anyone, you can do anything. And so, without any concern for trends, and in the spirit of sharing something I’m personally very proud of, I present an original solo guitar composition of mine entitled “a Nela,” which I perform on a nylon-string guitar in the classical fingerstyle tradition, but with a novel twist that involves an unorthodox but highly effective tremolo-picking technique.

The inspiration for this little gem came to me while studying in Uruguay, a quiet little South American country nestled between Brazil and Argentina. When I first arrived there, I stayed with a friend’s aunt, whose name was Nela. She was serene, kind and generous. This piece is a mirror of that time.

THE PATTERN

The key recurring technical element of this piece, which is performed on a nylon-string guitar in drop-D tuning (low to high, D A D G B E), is the repeating right-hand fingerpicking pattern *p, i, a, m* — or *thumb, index, ring,*



middle. At its base, the sequence is a modified tremolo. Tremolo is a flamenco guitar technique that customarily involves picking a bass note with the thumb, followed by a melody note on one of the treble strings that is quickly rearticulated three times, which creates the aural illusion of a single held note that can be used to emulate the lyrical sustaining tones of the human voice or an instrument such as the flute or violin. The sequence is then typically repeated with single bass notes moving across the bottom three strings, one note per string, to form slow-moving arpeggios beneath the tremolo-picked melody.

The tremolo I employ in “a Nela” is a truncated variation of this traditional technique, for which each high melody

note is picked only twice instead of three times. This similarly produces a satisfying sustained-note effect, and it’s a little easier to do. It also frees up your right-hand index finger (*i*) to pick an additional arpeggio note, which throughout the piece is the second note of each four-note group, consistently performed on the 4th string (the “regular” D string).

For any arpeggio-based technique — and this also applies to approaches like sweep picking with a plectrum and tapping on electric guitar — you have to fully internalize the pattern to the point where you can forget about it and make music, and the only way to do this is through repetition. The first step is to separate the hands, as a preparatory

exercise. For a right-hand arpeggio like this, you'll want to mute, or dampen, all the strings with your left hand while picking out the pattern with your right. Do this a few times to see how the basic pattern plays out and feels, as you adjust your pick-hand posture.

You'll find that this approach is helpful and beneficial because, when you're playing normally, the strings themselves are moving. As a result, you're literally trying to hit a moving target at high velocity, which isn't easy. Muting, or muffling, the strings will immobilize them and allow you to concentrate on finger placement and acquire accurate muscle memory. Once you get that four-note "roll" flowing, work on adding the notes, and be mindful of not sounding any unintentional notes on unused strings.

Muffling the strings while honing the mechanics of the combined arpeggiation and tremolo picking also makes it easier to hear if the pattern is even or not. There's a common tendency with the tremolo technique to sweep through it with the right-hand fingers, which can create a lopsided, galloping effect, which is not the object here. For some great samples of how to make a tremolo pattern sound even and singing, take a listen to Pepe Romero's or John Williams' performances of Francisco Tarrega's "Recuerdos de la Alhambra," the most famous and celebrated example of tremolo picking in the classical guitar repertoire.

So how long does it take to master this technique? Days. Do it while listening to music, reading a book or streaming your favorite show. You need this technique to become like typing, where you're thinking about the words and not the individual letters. It needs to become second nature.

STARTING THE PIECE

I've attended a lot of classical guitar masterclasses. I saw Julian Bream back in the day, watched and played for Christopher Parkening, Pepe Romero and Eliot Fisk. Giving master classes is the cash cow for any classical performer, but the term is a bit of a stretch when

drop-D tuning (low to high: D, A, D, G, B, E)

$\text{♩} = 60$

⑥ ② ⑥ ⑥ ②

start under tempo, poco a poco accel.
(less 2nd time)

sim.

p i a m

⑥ ② ⑥ ②

a tempo

②

rit.

mf

⑥ ② ⑥ ②

p *mp*

⑥ ② ⑥ ② ⑥

p *mp*

extended outside a small group.

“Performance class” would probably be a better term. Otherwise, there must be tens of thousands of “master” classical guitarists out there. That aside, one thing I’ve seen over and over again is the “first-note move,” where the teacher won’t let the performer get past the first note in the piece. It’s a cruel lesson in how master classes work, and it happens in one way or another in every master class. Essentially, the poor kid gets onstage and begins to play, thinking he or she is going to perform the entire piece and then receive some advice. Instead the student plays one note, or maybe a phrase, and the teacher stops the performance, asks the student to do it again, and then again, and again, and again. (This kind of agonizing scenario was dramatized, in a jazz drumming context, in the 2014 movie *Whiplash*.)

Unnecessary intimidation and public-humiliation issues aside, the point is to teach the student there is more to the piece than the execution of the notes, as if to say, “all of your preparation was meaningless if you can’t create an entire universe with that first note.” Or put another way, the teacher is implying, “I could get up onstage and play a simple major scale and get more audience response than if you got up there and played Bach’s entire Chaconne.”

So how does this pertain to “a Nela”? For this piece, you’ll want to create an ambience of serenity while implying a quiet, confident virtuosity. Listen to the audio recording on GuitarPlayer.com, and you’ll notice that I create this in my performance by sitting on the first bass note for a moment. The idea is to mark the beginning, to let you know the piece has begun. And so I start well below tempo, so you can hear how cool the arpeggio is. I then proceed to slowly ramp it up so that you can feel how exciting my tremolo technique is and how easy I make it sound. I’ve made a musical and technical statement and done it in such a way that I can hit it every time, even just rolling out of bed on a Sunday morning. Which leads us to the next topic, CCRs.

11 *p* under tempo, poco a poco accel. *a tempo, poco a poco cresc.*

13 *mf*

15

17 2nd time on Da Capo

19 *p* *sub. p*

The musical score consists of measures 11 through 19. It is written for guitar with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The score includes performance markings such as *p* (piano), *mf* (mezzo-forte), and *sub. p* (subito piano). It also includes tempo and dynamics instructions: *under tempo, poco a poco accel.*, *a tempo, poco a poco cresc.*, and *2nd time on Da Capo*. The score is presented with both a standard musical staff and a corresponding guitar tablature (TAB) below it. The tablature uses numbers 0-5 to represent frets and includes fingerings (e.g., 1, 2, 3, 4) and other technical notations (e.g., 10-8, 8-7, 7-5, 5-3). The piece is in 4/4 time, and the notation includes various rhythmic values and accidentals.

CCRS

Can't-Cut-it Rubatos. I was introduced to this unofficial, humorous term back in college by a fellow classical guitar student from North Carolina. *Rubato* is a composer's performance indication in sheet music that tells you that "it's okay to take liberties with the rhythm by stretching and/or compressing it" (slower or faster) as you see fit, then "give it back" later in the phrase. Essentially, I'll speed up here, knowing that I'll slow down later, and it'll all even out in the wash.

A CCR is a special kind of rubato designed to help you deal with the stuff you can't play. There are many pieces in various musical styles that have this kind of technically dicey passage. And all too often we get caught up in the ego trip of attempting to rip through a piece with the fantasy that we'll be raising our hand at the end like Jack Butler, getting kudos from Legba and sending Eugene back to the woodshed (as in that other cool musician movie, *Crossroads*, from 1986).

But that doesn't usually happen. Most of the time, when we "go for it," we end up biffing it, don't get the gig or lose the competition (I've done this spectacularly, by the way) and have to go back to the woodshed alone. So why not ease into the tough stuff and catch up late in the phrase?

A perfect example here is bar 11, wherein my modified tremolo pattern is used to execute a descending tremolo scale. At tempo, this is a very difficult move to execute cleanly and consistently. Played that way, it's not as musically satisfying either. But with a little CCR, which I've indicated with the direction "under tempo, *poco a poco accel.*" (English translation: "accelerate, little by little"), what was once a terrifying trapeze act becomes a sublime moment. That's the best kind of CCR — one that feels like some deeply felt emotion plumbed from the depths of your being. Take a good, close listen to any of your guitar heroes and you'll see how they slow into the tough stuff, then catch up on the back end, all under the guise of "artistic expression."

21 *mp* *rit.* *D.C. al Coda*

23 *p poco a poco cresc.*

25 *mf*

27 *rit.* Harm 12

29 *rit.* Harm 12

LAST NOTES ON METRONOMES

If you want to play a solo piece like this well, kill your metronome. The beauty of playing solo classical guitar is that, since you usually have an infinitesimally small audience, and no one wants to dance along — really, they don't — you have incredible freedom with the tempo. It's art music, for crying out loud. That means you have absolutely no responsibility to be strictly in time.

In fact, because of this, you have more freedom than any other guitar player on the planet. Don't give that up to a metronome! A metronome is a great tool that has very worthwhile uses, namely as a pace setter and challenger for technique exercises, a progress checker, and, of course, a reliable reference for a given tempo. But it's not an end in itself. To illustrate, let me offer the following analogy.

The reason something like a Peloton, which is essentially an exercise metronome, works well for many people is it gives you a reason for all of the pointless exercise — competition. You're able to measure yourself against others in some way other than appearance (i.e., the traditional goal of exercise). This is an important insight because no amount of exercise will make you classically beautiful. That's based on some fairly set proportions that you are either born with or not. There may be something secondary to glean here, like "your scales are fast, but I don't care to hear them."

Ideally, on a piece like this, the tempo is elastic and constantly fluctuating, ebbing and flowing like waves on a beach, along with the volume, or *dynamics*, building and crashing down and then retreating once more. In the final analysis, the tempo should average

out to whatever it should be overall. So, by all means, check that metronome so that you can feel that pace that you're dancing around. But, for God's sake, don't let that computerized click dictate what you do here! It's not worth it, especially when you've taken this vow of poverty we call classical guitar. 🎸

Andrew Hull is a Guitar Foundation of America International Competition Finalist and Fulbright Scholar (Uruguay, Abel Carlevaro). A graduate of the San Francisco Conservatory (Dusan Bogdanovic), Andrew also studied at the University of Arizona (Thomas Patterson) and USC (William Kanengiser/Scott Tennant) and did preparatory study at CalArts (Stuart Fox). His 7 Family Miniatures were recently published by Productions d'Oz, and his 7 Studies for Guitar are available from Mel Bay Publications.



MUSIC, BOOKS, GEAR, FILM, MASTERING, PRESSING & MORE



we are here

WELCOME TO OUR UNIVERSE

THIRD MAN RECORDS



THIRD MAN BOOKS
thirdmanbooks.com

Publishing the best in poetry, fiction, speculative fiction, and non-fiction.

**THIRD MAN
HARDWARE**
thirdmanstore.com
Custom-designed pedals
and accessories.



THERE'S ALWAYS MORE
TO DISCOVER

FOLLOW ALONG
@THIRDMANRECORDS
THIRDMANRECORDS.COM

THIRD MAN PRESSING
thirdmanpressing.com

State-of-the-art vinyl
manufacturing plant
located in Detroit's
Cass Corridor.

THIRD MAN MASTERING
thirdmanmastering.com

Full service analog and
digital mastering studio
located in Detroit.

THIRD MAN PHOTO STUDIO
thirdmanphotostudio.com

High-quality analog
print processing and
photographic film
development located
in Nashville.

CUSTOM SHOP COLLECTOR'S EDITION

CUSTOM AGED. BRAZILIAN ROSEWOOD.

1958 KORINA EXPLORER
LIMITED PRODUCTION OF 19

1958 KORINA FLYING V
LIMITED PRODUCTION OF 81

Gibson
CUSTOM

AVAILABLE FOR A LIMITED TIME AT GIBSON.COM

SHINE ON

*To commemorate the 30th anniversary of the release of Soundgarden's, **Badmotorfinger**, we explore the songwriting and guitar playing genius of Chris Cornell.*

BY VINNIE DeMASI

MAY 17, 2017. It was one of the most tragic days in popular music history. In the middle of a reunion tour with Soundgarden, the groundbreaking Seattle-based band he had founded more than 30 years earlier, guitarist-vocalist-songwriter Chris Cornell was discovered dead in his hotel room from what was ruled a suicide. He was 52 years old.

Throughout his life, Cornell had struggled with substance abuse and depression, but the talented composer and lyricist managed to channel his inner demons into one of the most expressive and influential artistic voices of the modern rock era. Though mostly recognized as lead vocalist, rhythm guitarist and frontman of the Grammy-winning multi-Platinum-selling band, the extremely prolific Cornell left behind a remarkable body of work. He was the driving force behind Temple of the Dog — a side-project that included members of Pearl Jam — had recorded five solo albums, including the posthumously released *No One Sings Like You Anymore*, and made another three with Audioslave, the supergroup he co-founded with former members of Rage Against the Machine.



Chris Cornell onstage at Hellfest, June 22, 2014

Ex. 1

N.C.(D oct.)

4/4

E B G D A B

TAB

5 3

Ex. 2

N.C.(B oct.)

Elec. Gtr. w/dist.

(E oct.)(D oct.)(B oct.)

4/4

E B G D A B

TAB

12/14 14 14 0 7 5 0 5 2

Ex. 3

N.C.(Bm)

Elec. Gtr. w/dist.

4/4

E B G D A B

TAB

0 3/5 7 5 7 5 7 5 7 5 0 3/5 7 5 7 5 7 5 0 3/5 7 5 7 5 7 5 0 3/5 7 5 7 5 0 0 0 3 0

like the one shown in **Ex. 4**. This allows for nimble power-chord shifting to be performed with nearly the same ease and fluidity as single-note lines.

A stellar example of this technique in action can be found on the Soundgarden track “Outshined,” the essence of which is distilled in **Ex. 5**. You’ll notice that the music contains alternating bars of $\frac{7}{8}$ and $\frac{4}{4}$ meter, creating a slightly disjointed but nonetheless grooving pulse. Like Led Zeppelin, the Beatles and Rush, Cornell had a strong penchant and knack for incorporating odd-length phrases into his songwriting without making his riffs sound stilted or academic. Apply a light pick-hand palm mute (P.M.) throughout, with the fret hand staying mainly in 2nd position, as indicated by the fingerings.

If someone were to pick the quintessential '90s rock album, they'd be hard-pressed to find a more worthy candidate than Soundgarden's 1994 release *Superunknown*. The Grammy-nominated album sold close to 10 million units worldwide and catapulted Cornell and his bandmates to megastardom without compromising their sonic manifesto. In fact, *Superunknown* proved to be a musical quantum leap forward for the group, drawing on a diverse palette of influences and redefining what mainstream heavy rock could encompass. The album's pièce de résistance — and arguably Cornell's signature song — is “Black Hole Sun,” an anthemic masterpiece that combines the band's rhapsodic grandeur with a keen Beatlesque melodicism. Performed in drop-D tuning, **Ex. 6** echoes the song's winsome intro and chorus sections. Be sure to hold down the chord shapes throughout each bar.

By contrast, **Ex. 7** is templated on the verse's high-voiced triads. To catch the “Lucy in the Sky” vibe of the original, add a fast and heavy chorus or Leslie (rotary speaker) effect. Again, hold down the chord shapes to let the arpeggiated notes ring out.

Following *Superunknown*'s success, Cornell penned two hit songs for Soundgarden's follow-up album, *Down on the Upside*, using an unusual variation on open C tuning, for which the B string

Ex. 7 G6 Bdim/F A^b G
Elec. Gtr. w/light dist. and rotary chorus

let ring throughout

TAB

G Gsus2 E^b Dadd9

Ex. 8

N.C.(C)
Elec. Gtr. w/light dist. and slow flanger

4/4

TAB

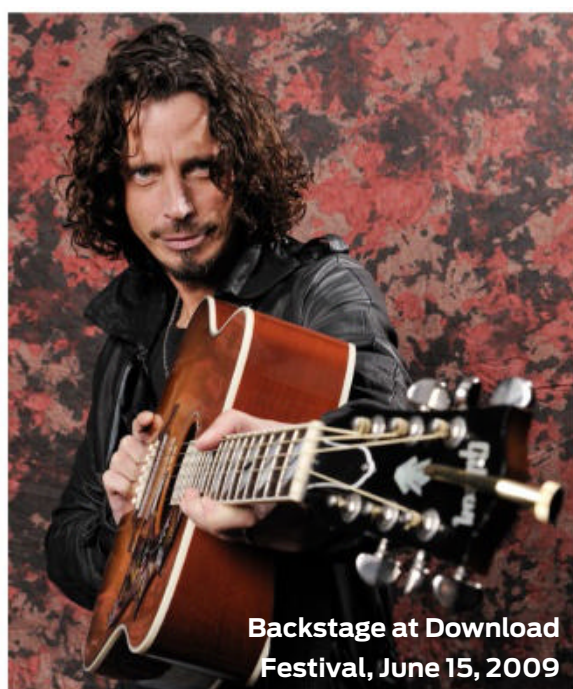
0 0 3 5 4 0 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ (2)

0 0 3 5 5 (5) 3 5

let ring

3 1 0 3 3 3 5 3 5

[illegible]



goes down to G — forming a unison with the 3rd string — as opposed to going up to C. The resulting tuning is, low to high, C G C G G E. The quasi-Middle Eastern opening riff of “Pretty Noose” is the inspiration for **Ex. 8** and the folky Celtic strum of the intro to “Burden in My Hand” is suggested by **Ex. 9**. Although the latter tune blossoms into a full-on electric rager, the part still manages to sound mighty heavy banged out on an acoustic.

Soundgarden broke up in 1997 and reunited in 2012. In the interim period, Cornell worked with Audioslave while maintaining a solo career that very often found him writing and performing in acoustic settings. Our final example (**Ex. 10**) is in standard tuning and pays homage to “The Keeper,” a Golden Globe–nominated solo ballad that Cornell composed for the soundtrack to the 2011 film *Machine Gun Preacher*. Like the original, our example is based on a Travis-picking pattern and features a Beatle-y minor iv chord — the Dm(add9)/A — again emulating Cornell’s harmonic sophistication and genius for assimilating his myriad influences into a singularly unique artistic voice.

Although he may have not made his name playing nimble-fingered solos or flaunting refined technical chops, Chris Cornell was truly one of the guitar greats of our time. His legacy will outshine his tragic death. 🎸

[illegible]

Ex. 100

Acoustic Gtr. w/slow chorus effect

fingerstyle

A D/A A A/C# A

A D/A Dm(add9)/A

Asus4 A A/D A/C# A

Stageworthy Strategies, Pt. 5

Understanding acoustic amps.

BY JIMMY LESLIE

DO YOU NEED a dedicated acoustic amp? If you play a significant amount of acoustic-electric guitar, especially in a performing group, then of course you do. The other members will bring their noise, and relying on house monitors can be a crapshoot. Troubadours traveling with a personal P.A. will be fine, especially if armed with some of the signal processors we've addressed in the past few columns. I usually bring an acoustic amp as well. It's nice to have as a monitor, helps with the overall sound, and is a handy backup for the larger P.A. system.

ACOUSTIC AMPS 101

An acoustic amp is designed to accommodate the signal from an acoustic-electric guitar, which is usually equipped with a piezo pickup and preamp. Compared to a magnetic pickup, a piezo delivers a broader frequency spectrum, so it generally doesn't sound awesome through an electric amp, with its narrow midrange focus. A magnetic soundhole pickup can sound great through an electric amp or an acoustic amp, but that setup is akin to turning the acoustic into a hollowbody electric guitar with a midrange emphasis. A piezo pickup into a P.A. will deliver a broad tonal range that's fine for a solo act or in the context of certain ensembles, but for most acoustic rock outfits it's easier and more appropriate to bring an acoustic amp. It maximizes the magic in the high midrange, where the acoustic sits best in a band mix. I love to use a dual setup, complementing it with a magnetic pickup feeding a beefy tube amp. Warning: Doing so tends to piss off the bass player!

ACOUSTIC AMPS 102: WHAT'S FOR YOU?

Whereas an old-school acoustic amp was



Godin's new ASG-8 acoustic amp

often simply an amp, many modern acoustic units offer all sorts of bells and whistles. Which one is right for you boils down to what you plan to do. If you're an acoustic-tone aficionado, sonic integrity is paramount. The amp must accurately deliver everything from delicate fingerpicking to aggressive strumming and percussive playing. There is simply no substitute for top-quality circuitry, which is why tone freaks such as Tommy Emmanuel and Eric Johnson go for something like an AER, which can cost twice as much as amps of similar size and power. AER co-founder Udo Roesner notably launched his own amp line in 2020. Such amps handle like sports cars designed to let the driver feel every nuance of the musical terrain. Manufacturers engineer the majority of acoustic amps more like sedans, designed to smooth out the ride and offer creature comforts for the average player.

ACOUSTIC AMPS 103: TRENDS

Most manufacturers have settled on a similar format for the modern acoustic amp: dual channels with at least one XLR input for a vocal mic, onboard effects, and medium solid-state power pushing a relatively small speaker

configuration, with extended I/O to accept extra signals such as Bluetooth and send everything out directly to a larger system. If not, then the amp acts like a little P.A. Many electric amp manufacturers are veterans in the acoustic arena as well, and more keep entering, with notable additions in recent years coming from Orange, Rivera, Hughes & Kettner and Mesa. Godin just announced its new ASG-8, which fits the format to a tee.

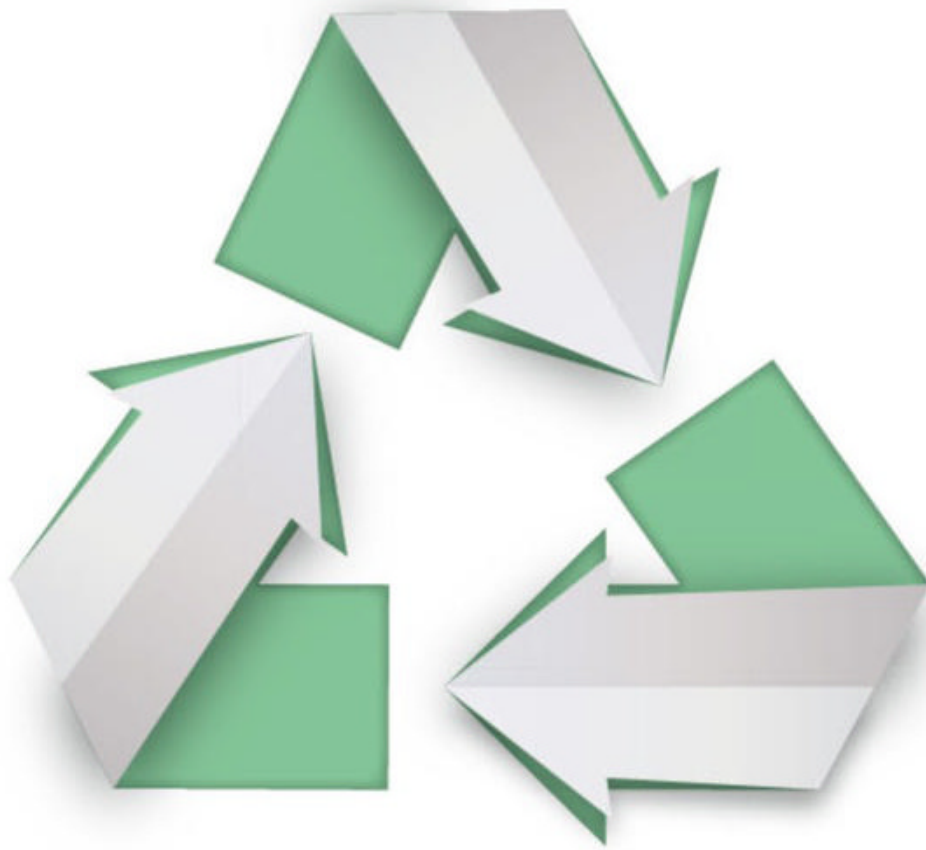
Digital effects improve with each generation. Vocal channels do too, and specialized offerings such as the Boss Acoustic Singer range include useful tools for the singer-songwriter, such as a



Fishman's Loudbox Mini Charge

vocal harmonizer and a looper. One of the most exciting trends is the year-to-year upgrade in über-portable battery-powered units, like the Fishman Loudbox Mini Charge and Fender Acoustic Junior GO, which earned an Editors' Pick in the April issue.

This is such an exciting time to be an acoustic-electric performer. With amps available for players of all styles and situations, it's never been easier to get a consistent signature sound. The right amp is your best gig buddy. Find your niche, dial in your tone and rock the planet! 🎸



PAPER REVOLUTION

Over 66% of paper and paper-based packaging in the U.S. is recycled into new products, one of the highest recycling rates of any material in the country.

Discover the story of paper
www.lovepaperna.org

Sources: American Forest and Paper Association, 2019
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 2017



SUPRO

Delta King 12

TESTED BY DAVE HUNTER

THE NEW SUPRO Delta King 12 takes its visual cues from the 1950s Valco-made Supro Comet, with its TV-front cabinet and vertical racing stripes. While the amp pays tribute to the blues roots that give it its name, Supro cleverly updates the formula with a handful of features that contemporary players will appreciate, paying homage to the original while expanding the Delta King 12's versatility.

At its heart, the Delta King 12 is still a simple, single-ended tube amp. It has just one output tube and requires a single 12AX7 preamp tube, since no phase inverter is needed. The output tube is a 6L6GC that delivers a full 15 watts, compared to the four watts or so that the single 6V6GT produced back in the day. (The Supro Supreme and other similar Valco/Supro amps of the era used two 6V6s.) Supro has hung a plethora of appealing features around that framework. Controls include volume, treble, mids, bass,

SPECIFICATIONS

Delta King 12

CONTACT suprousa.com

PRICE \$649 street

CHANNELS

CONTROLS Volume, treble, mid, bass, reverb, master. Boost and drive switches

POWER 15 watts

TUBES One 12AX7 preamp tube, one 6L6GC output tube

EXTRAS TRS foot-switch jack for boost and drive. Line out, power amp in

SPEAKER Custom 12" DK12

WEIGHT 28 lbs

BUILT Assembled in China

KUDOS A fun, stylish and compact tube amp with good versatility for its price and plenty of character to boot

CONCERNS Boost and drive aren't adjustable. Low end can get a little tubby with a neck humbucker



reverb and master, with toggle switches for boost and drive. Yes, Supro has judiciously ladled on solid-state bells and whistles to make this compact combo a kind of amp-and-pedals-in-a-box affair. Considering that effects maker Pigtronix is part of Supro's parent company, Bond Audio, the concept is intriguing. The boost is FET (Field Effect Transistor) driven, and the drive control engages Pigtronix's own FAT high-gain mode. Neither is adjustable, but both are foot-switchable. The solid-state reverb uses a genuine spring tank and is not foot-switchable. There are also line-out and power-amp input jacks on the back panel, alongside the TRS jack for a dual-button foot switch. No switch is included, but any standard unit will work.

In addition to its feature set, the Delta King 12's compact dimensions and easy-carry weight should help drive its appeal. The retro combo cab measures just 17 by 16 by 7.5 inches and weighs a mere 28 pounds, including the custom 12-inch DK12 speaker. (For guitarists who need or desire something even more diminutive, Supro offers the progressively smaller Delta King 10 and Delta King 8.) While our test model came in all-black vinyl with white piping and striping, Supro also offers a two-toned lacquered

tweed with black sides. Overall, the Delta King 12 is tastily and tidily put together and evokes the image of those luggage-like boxes of old.

Internal construction on this assembled-in-China Supro comprises consumer-grade stuff on a printed circuit board, but the amp appears robust and relatively roadworthy for the price range, with substantial transformers, and it revealed no issues throughout our testing. Played with a Gibson Les Paul with PAF-style humbuckers and a Fender Stratocaster with traditional single-coil pickups, the Delta King 12 proved a fun little combo with a reasonable amount of sonic shape-shifting capability. It has some of that toothsome single-ended give and compression in the attack, which is part of the appeal of this breed of amp, but Supro has wisely voiced it to be fairly crisp and tight on its own, up to a good halfway on the volume and master. The boost and drive kick in the dirt from there. Somewhat characteristics of such circuits, especially when packed into relatively small cabs, the bass can get a little flabby once you start pushing things (even with the bass knob dialed down low). That's especially true on a neck humbucker, but most players will learn to work with it.

Though they are preset, the boost and drive levels are well chosen and provide handy “more” and “even more” modes when you need them. A little oddly, while the boost seemed tailor-made to goose the Strat into a thicker, juicier dimension, it also delivered a bigger volume jump at some amp settings with the single-coils than it did with the Les Paul’s humbuckers, which might be characteristic of the design. Conversely, while the drive sounded good with both guitars, it could lean just a little jagged and tattered sounding with the single-coils on occasion, but was still very effective. The reverb sounds entirely decent for the price range and presents an appealingly lush wash that isn’t oppressive until near the top of its range.

While it’s not as loud as some prominent 15-watt combos, the Delta King 12 pushes enough decibels to hang with the average drummer in a small club — or, of course, anywhere, once you mic it up or inject its line out into the FOH. All in all, it has an appealing personality for a straightforward and affordable amp that can be dialed in for a range of blues, rock and roll, and alt-rock tones, even before you kick in the built-in overdrive modes. Put it all together and the package makes it a compact combo that’s easy to have fun with, or a great introduction to tube-amp land for those making their way up the scale. 🎸



HARMONY

Comet



TESTED BY ART THOMPSON

ESTABLISHED IN 1892, Harmony became the largest musical instrument manufacturer in America during its mid-1960s glory years, when it was owned by Sears, Roebuck & Co. The gear maker ceased operations in 1975, was relaunched by BandLab Technologies in 2018, and today Harmony guitars are built in the U.S. The Comet on review here — a modern take on the classic four-knob “pawnshop prize” H-72 thin-line model from 1966–’71 — features a compact semi-hollow mahogany body and a glued-in mahogany neck with a 25-inch scale ebony fingerboard carrying 22 finely worked medium-jumbo frets. The Comet wears a glossy Trans Red lacquer finish (also available in Midnight Blue and Sunburst), and the white

SPECIFICATIONS

Comet

CONTACT harmony.co

PRICE \$1,499 street, Mono soft case included

NUT WIDTH 1.68", bone

NECK Mahogany set neck with long-tenon joint

FRETBOARD Ebony, 25" scale, 12" radius

FRETS 22 medium jumbo

TUNERS Locking

BODY Mahogany semi-hollow with carved top and back

BRIDGE Tune-o-matic with stop tailpiece

PICKUPS Harmony Gold Foil humbuckers with Alnico 3 magnets

CONTROLS Volume (pulls for out-of-phase) tone, three-way selector

EXTRAS Nitrocellulose lacquer finish. Comes with premium Mono Vertigo Electric case

FACTORY STRINGS Harmony .010–.046

WEIGHT 6.1 lbs (as tested)

BUILT USA

KUDOS Plays very well. Excellent construction and finish. Lightweight and toneful

CONCERNS Toggle switch feels a bit flimsy

binding is flawlessly applied around the petite double-cutaway body. Hardware consists of a chrome Tune-o-matic bridge and stop tailpiece, along with a set of locking tuners on the red-finished headstock. White “cupcake” knobs, pickguard and truss-rod cover complete the plastic trim details of this hip-looking axe. Note that the guitar ships with a Mono Vertigo Electric soft case, which is a nice thing. So many new guitars come with unpadded gig-bags (or nothing at all), so bravo to Harmony for going the extra mile.

The Comet’s light weight facilitates an open, resonant and sustaining acoustic sound. It plays really well, courtesy of a C-shaped neck that feels similar to a late-’60s Gibson ES-335, and the factory setup provides low action, minimal fret buzz and tuneful intonation. The 25-inch scale also makes for an instrument that’s easier to play deep bends on than, say, a Fender Strat, while the 12-inch-radius fretboard and medium neck profile make the Comet super comfortable in the hands. In the electronics department, the Comet wields a pair of Gold Foil humbuckers that feed a volume control (with a push-pull function for an out-of-phase sound when both pickups are on) and a tone control that is voiced useably throughout its rotation and has a bit of wah-like inflection as you roll it down.

Tested through a Fender Deluxe Reverb (with hand-wired circuitry by George Alessando), and alternately a Fulltone OCD and a Hermida Zendrive for distortion, the Comet delivered bright, full sounds in all positions. There’s fat, twangy bite to spare on the bridge setting, which is killer for rock





or country, and it cuts beautifully without having to be ridiculously loud. The neck pickup's sweet, clear tones are cool for blues and jazz (with or without a little grind added), and the middle position is springy and open sounding. I also dig the funky tones available in the out-of-phase position, which yields a nice chiming sound that's not too thin or snarky and responds well to the voicing of

the tone control. The Gold Foil pickups definitely have their own thing going and are more single-coil sounding than standard humbuckers. Compared to the pickups on my Les Paul or ES-335, the difference is appreciable, and in a good way. They're also quiet and have enough output to drive an amp on par with a P-90. Granted, the covers on the Comet's pickups are less ornate than the Gold Foils found on vintage Harmony models, but they certainly look cool on this model with their gold "electric shaver" screened tops.

The Comet is a sweet guitar that's lightweight, toneful and stylish. It's a very "boutique" guitar compared to the budget models Harmony cranked out in the early days, soulful and popular as many of them were, and it's nice to see a new production electric-guitar on the market that's so deeply rooted in the American past. 🇺🇸



GROVER®
WORLD'S FINEST MACHINE HEADS

www.grotr.com



509 Series
LOCKING SUPER ROTOMATICS®

GODIN

Montreal Premiere LTD



BY MICHAEL ROSS

CANADA'S GODIN GUITARS has been making terrific, reasonably priced instruments for decades, yet the company remains something of an underdog in the United States. Founded across the border long before guitar gods like Clapton, Page, Hendrix and Beck roamed Earth, Godin never accrued the vintage cachet of Fender or Gibson.

Neither has it attracted the well-to-do collector market that dotes on expensive instruments made out of fancy decorative woods. Instead, Godin has specialized in high-quality tools for working guitarists around the world like Alex Skolnick and Lionel Loueke.

SPECIFICATIONS

Montreal Premiere LTD

CONTACT godinguitars.com

PRICE \$2,499 MAP

NUT WIDTH 1.72"

NECK Mahogany

FRETBOARD Richlite

FRETS 22

TUNERS Godin

BODY Cedar core, Canadian wild cherry top, back, and sides

BRIDGE T.O.M. with roller saddles and Bigsby

PICKUPS TV Jones Classic neck, TV Jones Classic Plus bridge

CONTROLS 1 Tone, 1 volume, 3-way switch

FACTORY STRINGS .010–.046

BUILT Canada

KUDOS Beautiful looking. Excellent build. Easy to play. Offers classic Filter'Tron sound

CONCERNS Individual volume and tone for each pickup would be nice

The Montreal Premiere LTD is one of those tools, but to call it that makes it sound pedestrian — and it's far from it. The high-gloss Imperial Blue finish with white binding and a pearloid pickguard makes for a striking look that is simultaneously classy and funky. The fingerboard looks and feels like a dark, close-grained rosewood or ebony but is, in fact, Richlite, a highly sustainable material made from resin-infused paper.

Speaking of feel, the mahogany neck's D-shape makes it comfortable in the hand, while the 24.75-inch scale combines with high, medium-width frets to make for easy bending and generally smooth playability. I initially thought the height of the frets would hamper sliding into notes and chords, but their flawless finish made it easy.

The Imperial's top, back and sides are constructed of Canadian Wild Cherry, anchored by Godin's Breathe-Through Carved Core. This involves three arches that are hand carved through the cedar core's lower half. The idea is to pair the advantages of a center block — increased sustain, stability and reduced feedback — with the tonal benefits of a fully hollow-bodied guitar.

Indeed, at lower volumes, despite its small body, the Montreal Premiere LTD offered up the airy woodiness of a quality archtop. The tone control is well voiced for jazzy excursions, capable of warming the sound without



muddying it. The TV Jones Classic Filter'Tron-style neck pickup also helped, offering clarity combined with girth.

With the amp set clean, the bridge pickup alone served up a Tele-style twang. Combining it with the neck pickup created the classic country sound of Chet Atkins or the Beatles version thereof. Adding some grit by playing through the tweed Deluxe emulation of a Crazy Tube Circuits Falcon pedal demonstrated why Filter'Tron-equipped guitars have become the darlings of the Americana set. Neil Young/Daniel Lanois sounds were instantly at hand.

Additional gain, courtesy of a Jetter Jetdrive or a Pigtronix Octava fuzz, revealed the Montreal Premiere LTD to be a full-on rocker, perfect for crunch chords à la Malcolm Young and creating thoroughly controllable and musical feedback when in close proximity to the amp. It would have been nice to have the tonal flexibility offered by separate

volume and tone controls for each pickup, but as caveats go, it's a small one.

This instrument isn't cheap, but to get the same quality and playability in a historic American brand, you would likely pay a grand more. The Montreal Premiere LTD is a prime example of why any pro or hobbyist picker sleeps on Godin at his or her peril. **D**



Lollar®
PICKUPS MADE IN
U.S.A.



Regal for Jazzmaster

The Regal for Jazzmaster pickup is based on the '72 Tele Deluxe's Wide Range pickups—but with some noted improvements to the volume and tonal balance between the neck and bridge. It has fat tone with clear top end sparkle and vocal midrange. Drop-in replacement for standard-size Jazzmaster pickups.

For more information, including
sound files, video and more, visit our website
lollarpickups.com/regalforjazzmaster
or call 206-463-9838.

HIGH-QUALITY HANDMADE PICKUPS SINCE 1995

CORDOBA

Fusion 5 Jet Black

TESTED BY JIMMY LESLIE

CORDOBA'S FUSION 5 LINE is aimed at steel-string slingers transitioning to nylon, and this model sports a sleek Jet Black finish that gives it a distinct appeal. Its full body features a cutaway and a solid spruce top with laminated mahogany back and sides. It's also available in Gloss Natural as well as Gloss Sonata Burst with flamed mahogany back and sides.

Laced with white bindings and a pearl decal rosette, the Jet Black is a bold beauty. Its thick high-gloss finish makes a pick guard unnecessary, and the whole thing reflects light like a dark mirror. Plated metal strips support unsealed tuners with black buttons on a slotted headstock. The aesthetic brings to mind black-hat good guys like Eric McFadden, so the style should appeal to acoustic rockers as well as outlaw country and classical/flamenco types.

SPECIFICATIONS

Fusion 5 Jet Black

CONTACT cordobaguitars.com

PRICE \$469 street

NUT WIDTH 1 7/8" bone

NECK Mahogany

FRETBOARD Pau ferro, 25.6" scale

FRETS 19

TUNERS Cordoba silver w/black buttons, 14:1 ratio

BODY Solid spruce top, laminated mahogany back and sides

BRIDGE Pau ferro with bone saddle

ELECTRONICS Fishman Sonitone Classical with sound-hole flywheel volume and tone controls

FACTORY STRINGS Savarez Cristal Corum High Tension 500CJ

WEIGHT 3.6 lbs (as tested)

BUILT China

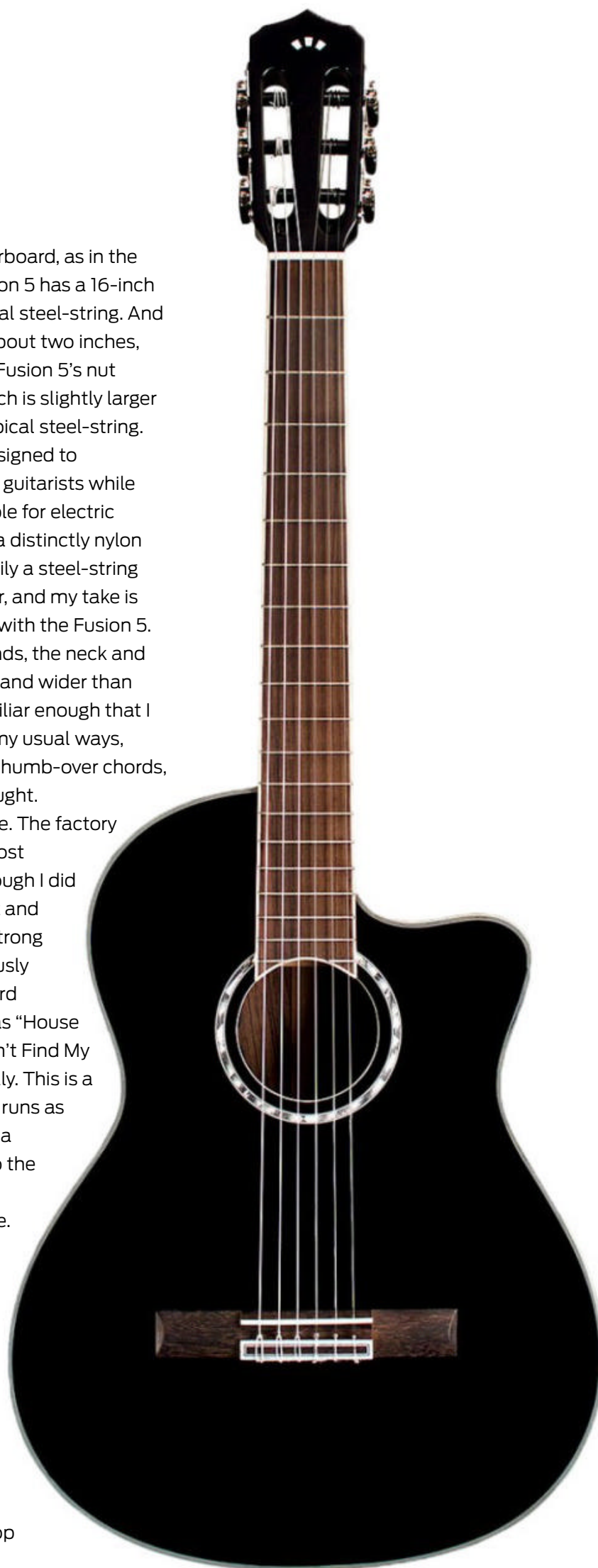
KUDOS Clever crossover design, cool look, good playability

CONCERNS Rough bridge edges, no strap buttons, some fret noise, no case or bag

Rather than a flat fingerboard, as in the classical tradition, the Fusion 5 has a 16-inch radius similar to a traditional steel-string. And instead of a nut width of about two inches, like a typical classical, the Fusion 5's nut measures 1 7/8 inches, which is slightly larger than what you find on a typical steel-string. This crossover is clearly designed to accommodate steel-string guitarists while being not too uncomfortable for electric players, all while retaining a distinctly nylon feel and appeal. I'm primarily a steel-string acoustic and electric player, and my take is that Cordoba hit that goal with the Fusion 5. In my somewhat small hands, the neck and fretboard surely felt flatter and wider than normal, but it was still familiar enough that I could play the Fusion 5 in my usual ways, bending strings and using thumb-over chords, without giving it much thought.

Overall playability is fine. The factory action is satisfactory for most plucking approaches, although I did encounter a bit of fret buzz and some splat when using a strong attack. The Fusion 5 obviously encourages fingerstyle chord progressions. Songs such as "House of the Rising Sun" and "Can't Find My Way Home" flowed naturally. This is a good guitar for single-note runs as well. It's interesting to play a nylon-string with 12 frets to the body plus a cutaway for extending the playing range. I enjoyed playing meandering electric-style melodies, such as "In Memory of Elizabeth Reed," as well as rocking quick flamenco-inspired lines in the vein of Angus Young's "Thunderstruck" intro.

That thick finish surely comes at a cost of some top resonance, but the slightly





shaded tone sounds appropriate for the Jet Black Fusion 5. It's deep and chunky, and present enough without the overabundance of treble common to many instruments in this price class. Plugged into a Fender Acoustic Junior GO, its amplified tone was representative of the acoustic tone and notably well balanced from string to string.

Craftsmanship is mostly exceptional. Attention to detail is apparent in elements

like the binding that rounds off the bottom of the neck, where it hits the body like a crescent moon, and the extra split fret at the end of the fretboard. The main oversight is sharp edges at the back of the bridge where the strings attach. Raking a palm over that with a flailing flamenco-style attack could split the skin of player. It's a bit surprising Cordoba didn't design this guitar with ball-end strings, as I'd bet many players drawn to this

instrument would prefer it. Another oddity considering the target audience is the lack of any strap pins whatsoever. For most, that means a trip to the luthier to get them installed safely and securely, adding additional dollars for live performers or anyone wanting to use a favorite strap. That said, overall value is still strong. Every guitar player should own a nylon-string guitar, and this is one that players of all stripes can afford and appreciate. **B**

Holeyboard®



Now available at:

Sweetwater
Music Instruments & Pro Audio

DAWNER PRINCE

Pulse

BY CHRISTOPHER SCAPELLITI

DAWNER PRINCE ELECTRONICS has caught the eyes and ears of many guitarists in recent years. Hailing from Croatia, the pedal maker has put its electronics wizardry to work on a small but versatile range of stomp boxes made with audiophile-quality components. Dawner first came to my attention with its Boonar multi-head drum echo, a spot-on emulation of the famed Binson Echorec, one of the finest magnetic echo-delay machines of all time.

The company has pursued even more rarified territory with its latest pedal, Pulse, a rotary-speaker effect based on the Gibson Maestro Rover RO-1. For those unfamiliar with the Rover, it's one of the oddest-looking effects from the 1970s, a roughly 21-by-10-inch vented "tin can" containing a six-inch speaker mounted at the end of a rotating cartridge that resembles an oversized medicine capsule. The Rover is remembered at all today because Pink Floyd's David Gilmour, a rotary-speaker maven if ever there were one, used the device, most notably for the recording of 1994's *The Division Bell*.

SPECIFICATIONS

Pulse

CONTACT dawnerprince.com

PRICE \$335 (street)

CONTROLS Slow speed, fast speed, distance, inertia, mix, volume left, volume right, fast/slow and on/off foot switches

CONNECTIONS Input, output, FX send & return, XLR balanced out, center-positive 18-volt DC adaptor input

FEATURES Stereo input and output, external control input

BUILT Croatia

KUDOS Spot-on emulation of the rare Gibson Maestro Rover RO-1 rotary-speaker cabinet. Stereo virtual mics with distance control allow for wide tonal range and adjustment

CONCERNS None



Unlike the Leslie 16/Fender Vibratone rotary-speaker cabinet, which contained a full-range 10-inch speaker and was designed as an extension cabinet for an amplifier, the Rover had an amplifier and could be used independently, though many players would have used its pass-along output to send the guitar's direct signal to another amp, as the Rover's output is rather modest. On its own, however, the Rover has a distinct and pleasantly grainy sound, thanks no doubt to the frequency limitations of its six-inch speaker, which seems to emphasize the 1–2kHz range and delivers fine cutting power.

As an owner of one of these oddities, I can attest that Dawner Prince has done a fantastic job re-creating the Rover's unique sound while improving on its feature set. The Pulse has controls to set the slow speed (from 0.4 to four revolutions per second) and fast speed (from four to eight revolutions per second), as well as a distance control to adjust the positioning of the pedal's stereo virtual microphones. Inertia controls the length of time it takes for the speed to ramp up and down when switching speeds, and mix sets the dry-to-wet ratio, from 100 percent dry to 100 percent wet, with a 50-50 mix at 12 o'clock.

Dawner Prince has wisely given the Pulse stereo inputs and outputs to get the most realism from the effect. The left end of the pedal has trim pots for the left and right outputs, the fast/slow foot switch ramps between the two speeds, and the on/off switch is true bypass. There's also an expression pedal input to let you control the speed manually.

I A/B'd the Pulse with my Maestro Rover and found no appreciable difference between the two, aside from the fact that the Pulse lacks the motor noise and faint 60-cycle hum of my vintage tin can. Anyone looking for a re-creation of the Leslie/Fender cabinet should be warned: This is not that. The Pulse absolutely nails the Rover's emphasized upper mids and really puts its brilliant shimmering rotary effect to the fore, but the distance control lets you tailor the effect's emphasis and tone to your taste. Even in mono, Pulse adds complex textures that make your guitar leap from the mix, while in stereo it captures an airy, three-dimensional tone. If you love rotary tone, and especially if you're a Gilmour fan, Pulse delivers the classic swirling effect like no other. For ingenuity and performance, this gets an Editors' Pick award. 🏆

**GREAT
PLAYERS THINK ALIKE**



Sadowsky®
Guitars • NYC • Est 1979

Shea Welsh • Vic Juris
Lionel Loueke • Dean Parks

www.sadowsky.com



LEAVE YOUR AMP AT HOME

Nothing reveals the true nature of your guitar and your playing like a world-class tube amp driving a perfectly matched speaker cabinet in a great sounding room. Now there is a pedal that truly delivers that sound and feel, with simple controls for effortlessly dialing in the perfect amp tone when going direct. Learn more at strymon.net/iridium.

strymon

*Not the right time for a
New Guitar?*

UPGRADE
with
**John
Pearse®**

****John Pearse® String Sets and Singles***

[Get the gauges YOU want!]

****Fine Wood ARMRESTS** of*

Boxwood, Rosewood and Ebony

for ALL the sound your guitar has to give!

****Beautiful BRIDGE PINS** of*

Bone, Horn, Brass & Faux Tortoiseshell™

put PLASTIC to shame!

****ACOUSTIC PICKUPS***

amplify the sound without changing the guitar!

****STRING SWIPES™***

Keep Strings Fresh!

Breezy Ridge Instruments, Ltd.

610.691.3302 info@jpstrings.com

**A CULMINATION OF YEARS OF USING ZT AMPS
IN THE STUDIO
AND ON STAGE.**

**NOW DESIGNED TO MY OWN SPECIFICATIONS.
I'M REALLY PLEASED WITH
THE RESULT. I THINK
OTHERS WILL DIG IT
TOO. - LEE RANALDO**

Introducing the ZT CUSTOM SHOP LEE RANALDO CLUB AMP. A collaboration in every detail with one of music's truly innovative guitarists. Each lightweight powerhouse is hand built in our Benicia, California lab and signed by Lee himself. Visit ZTAMPLIFIERS.COM to hear all about it.

BELIEVE WHAT YOU HEAR. | ZTAMPLIFIERS

FREE BOOKAZINE

— WHEN YOU SUBSCRIBE —

GREAT REASONS TO SUBSCRIBE!

- Save over 81% when you subscribe
- Never miss an issue
- Get every issue delivered direct to your door
- Free “100 Guitar Heroes” digital bookazine



TO ORDER GO TO www.magazinesdirect.com/gup/B1JMAG
OR CALL 1-800-289-9839 and mention code B1JMAG

*See online for premium and digital pricing. International pricing may vary. First issue mails within 6-8 weeks. Digital bookazine will be emailed once payment has cleared.

30 YEARS YOUR TONE OUR PASSION



FRALINPICKUPS.COM | (804) 358-2699

Fralin 30 YEARS
PICKUPS

GREAT PLAYERS THINK ALIKE



Shea Welsh • Vic Juris
Lionel Loueke • Dean Parks

Sadowsky
Guitars • NYC • Est 1979
www.sadowsky.com

A CULMINATION OF YEARS OF USING ZT AMPS
**IN THE STUDIO
AND ON STAGE.**
NOW DESIGNED TO MY OWN SPECIFICATIONS.
I'M REALLY PLEASED WITH
THE RESULT. I THINK
OTHERS WILL DIG IT
TOO. - LEE RANALDO



Introducing the ZT CUSTOM SHOP LEE RANALDO CLUB AMP. A collaboration in every detail with one of music's truly innovative guitarists. Each lightweight powerhouse is hand built in our Benicia, California lab and signed by Lee himself. Visit ZTAMPLIFIERS.COM to hear all about it.

BELIEVE WHAT YOU HEAR. | ZTAMPLIFIERS

carramps.com

CARR AMPS SHOP
100% SOLAR POWERED SINCE 2018

The First Two Lessons Will Transform Your Playing Forever

Lesson 1

By learning 5 simple patterns and the chords that match up to them, you form the foundation for shattering the barriers that are holding you back. You'll start hearing notes and chords that you recognize from listening to your musical heroes. Your fingers and ears will work together like never before.

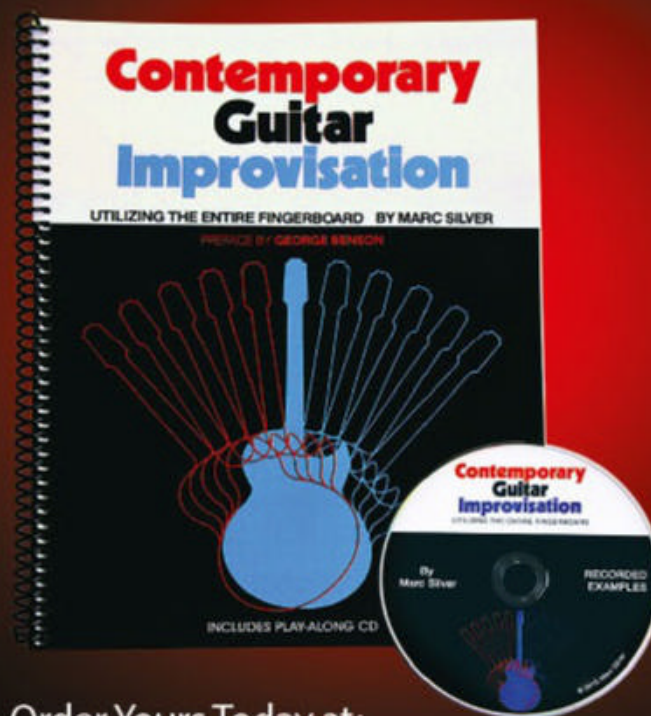
Lesson 2

By connecting the five patterns, the fingerboard suddenly becomes a familiar superhighway that takes you anywhere you want to go. You'll understand how and why these related patterns and chords work together so well across the entire fingerboard. *Lessons 3 through 8 will take you even further.*

Contemporary Guitar Improvisation will teach you:

- How to improvise across the entire fingerboard on any single chord
- How to improvise in one position over multiple chord changes and keys
- Chords with fingerings and voicings that you understand and can modify
- How to accurately (and creatively) interpret chord symbols
- How to substitute chords
- How to use pentatonic and blues scales over ANY types of chords
- How to apply the 5 patterns to sightreading
- How to analyze songs so you play the right patterns
- Chromatic connections
- Much more

You don't need any music-reading ability to get the full benefit of the book, and the included CD has over 50 helpful play-along examples to keep you on track as you progress.



Order Yours Today at:

MarcSilverGuitarImprov.com

\$42.00 USD (includes shipping in the U.S and U.S. territories)

VISIT US ONLINE www.HEADLESSUSA.com QUESTIONS? CALL US! 203-395-8013



HEADLESS USA

STEINBERGER SPECIALISTS.
RESTORATIONS BY JEFF BABICZ. CUSTOM REFINISHING.
NEW-USED-VINTAGE. BUY-SELL-TRADE. ACCESSORIES-PARTS.



ADVERTISE HERE

Contact:
+1 917-281-4721
jonathan.brudner@futurenet.com

To subscribe to Guitar Player,
please visit our website at:
www.guitarplayer.com
or call (800) 456-6441



XENOSONEX

DRIVE GAIN
TONE VOL
OUT
TRUE BYPASS
BLUE ICE

Tone matters

www.xenosonex.com

Guitar Player

EDUCATION AND TUTORIAL

Design and Construction of Tube Guitar Amplifiers "this book is incredible" www.translucdamps.com	
And now... Design and Construction of Guitar and Bass Speaker Systems	



Guitar Player

ADVERTISE HERE

Contact:
+1 917-281-4721
jonathan.brudner@futurenet.com

To subscribe to Guitar Player,
please visit our website at:
www.guitarplayer.com
or call (800) 456-6441

{ PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT }

Lil Luber/Groove Luber/Bench Luber Big Bends LLC

Available Now

Big Bends LLC is proud to introduce the complete line of Nut Sauce™ tuning lubricant applicators: the 0.5cc Lil Luber – for the guitar hobbyist; the 1.5cc Groove Luber – for the serious player; and the 6cc Bench Luber – for the guitar tech or repair shop. Accept no imitation!

MSRP: Lil Luber \$12.45, Groove Luber \$24.95, Bench Luber \$59.95

www.bigbends.com

1(888)788-BEND



How I Wrote... “Keith Don’t Go”

Nils Lofgren reveals
the roots of his
1975 ode to Keef.

BY JOE BOSSO

“IT WAS A sincere plea to one of my musical heroes to stick around and keep sharing his gifts with the world,” says Nils Lofgren, speaking about his driving rocker “Keith Don’t Go (Ode to the Glimmer Twin).” Featured on the guitarist’s eponymous 1975 debut album, the song has become one of Lofgren’s most enduring tracks (he’s never played a show without performing it), and over the years he says the sentiments behind it have grown in meaning.

“Throughout the decades, I have greater appreciation for the people who created the music that inspired me,” he says. “And while Keith Richards is alive and well — nothing to do with the song, of course — I’m happy knowing that my tribute to him has meant so much to so many people.”

THE LOST RECORDING

The song’s origins date to 1973, when Lofgren, a sometime member of Crazy Horse, was part of Neil Young’s band for the *Tonight’s the Night* album and its subsequent tour. That record had been made in tribute to Crazy Horse guitarist Danny Whitten and roadie Bruce Berry, both of whom died of drug overdoses. “When we hit the U.K.,” Lofgren recalls, “I kept running into Keith Richards’ friends, who were quite worried about him. It was a recurring part of our conversations — they were very concerned about his health. Nobody wanted to see Keith join other rock legends who died way before their time.”

Lofgren originally dismissed such worries, but he eventually took them to heart and set about putting his feelings to music. Armed with a forceful riff he had already laid down on cassette, he seized on a title (“Keith Don’t

Go’ — that’s pretty direct”) and quickly wrote out lyrics. “Once I had the concept, the actual writing didn’t take long,” he says. “The whole thing came pouring out.”

At the time, Lofgren was leading his band Grin. They recorded a version of the song with his producer and friend David Briggs, who was also Neil Young’s producer, and with assistance from Young himself. “Neil was passing through town, and he joined us in the studio,” Lofgren says. “He sang and played piano on the track, which was great because he doesn’t normally play piano on other people’s sessions.” The recording was never released, and Lofgren didn’t even know its whereabouts until Bob Dawson at Bias Studios in Springfield, Virginia, discovered the master many years later. The track was subsequently included on Lofgren’s 2014 box set, *Face the Music*. “It’s actually my favorite version of the song,” the guitarist says. “I like my own recording, but there’s something about Neil’s haunting voice that gets to me.”

“EVERYTHING JUST FLEW”

A year later, Lofgren signed a solo deal with A&M. With Briggs at the helm, and working with the rhythm section of bassist Wornell Jones and drummer Aynsley Dunbar, he set about recording a group of numbers, including “Keith Don’t Go.” In pre-production, Briggs worked vigorously with Lofgren and Jones to get the songs down cold. “It was a smart approach,” Lofgren says. “When Aynsley joined us, he could respond to

two guys who were really confident about the material. Everything just flew.”

For the song’s raging rhythm tracks and searing lead solo, Lofgren paired a Fender Strat with a blackface Super Reverb that he bought in the 1960s. “That amp had great speakers,” he says. “When you dialed it to seven or eight, it started to saturate and got really warm and ballsy. I loved that sound.”

WHAT DOES KEITH THINK?

Surprisingly, “Keith Don’t Go” was never issued as a single, but thanks to its lyrical theme, it quickly took on a life of its own and became a fan favorite at shows. “People really caught on to it,” Lofgren says. “I mean, who doesn’t love Keith and the Stones? It’s amazing when I play it live, particularly in the U.K. People yell out the simple chant. It’s always a joyful experience.”

As for the big question — has Keith Richards ever mentioned the song to him? — Lofgren laughs. “No, he hasn’t,” he says. “I don’t even know if he’s heard it. I’ve been

blessed to have met him a number of times, and he’s always been super friendly, but no, it’s never come up.”

Lofgren balks at the idea of ever mentioning it to Richards himself.

“Oh, no, I couldn’t do

that,” he says. “Whatever he feels about it, or if he’s heard it, the bottom line is it came from the heart and the words speak for themselves. It was an emotional sentiment to a musical hero, and I would hope it were taken as such, if he ever hears it.”



Nils Lofgren onstage in Amsterdam, 1975



THE BEST AMPS IN THE WORLD

THE PROFILER™

With Profiling™ KEMPER changed the world for all guitar players, making it a better place indeed. Because all the best guitar amps in the world – thoroughly mic'ed and recorded in the best studios – are available with the PROFILER™.

KEMPER-AMPS.COM



PURE ISOLATED POWER



CS12

"We've helped countless guitarists design pedalboards here at Sweetwater, and the Truetone 1 Spot Pro CS12 pedalboard power supply is exactly the kind of solution we recommend for flexibility and reliability."

- Sweetwater



CS6
Low Profile



CS7



TRUETONE®

Family owned & operated since 1995

TRUETONE.COM