

JOHN FOGERTY HOW CCR STRUCK GOLD IN '69

GUITARPLAYER.COM

Guitar Player



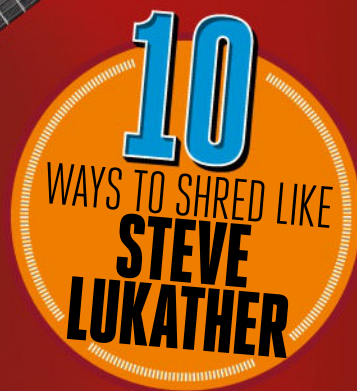
{“There is
life beyond
Bon Jovi!”}

New music,
jamming with
Clapton...
and what that
documentary
didn't tell you

Richie SAMBORA



SUE FOLEY
RYAN GULDEMOND
REB BEACH
VADEN TODD LEWIS
PETER STROUD



HERMANOS GUTIÉRREZ
Behind the year's
greatest instrumental
guitar album

NEIL FINN
His Crowded House guitar
strategy: “The mistakes
make it interesting”



DGT 15 AMPLIFIER

"When it comes to the tone and features, we did most of the heavy lifting more than a decade ago with the DG Custom 30. I've really got to give it to Doug Sewell and PRS for how thoughtfully the DGT 15 was designed. Doug was very meticulous and creative with updating some of the features while remaining true to the DNA of the Custom 30. From the first time I played through it, I was blown away."

- David Grissom



DGT
—15—

PRS
PAUL REED SMITH
GUITARS

The Ultimate Experience In Music Education!



BASS DRUMS KEYBOARDS VOCALS

Summer Session Dates

San Diego Session:
June 23-28, 2024

Nashville Session:
July 7-12, 2024

Toronto Session:
July 14-19, 2024

2024 ARTISTS INCLUDE:



Muriel Anderson



Eric Gales



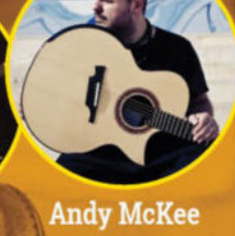
David Grissom



Gary Hoey



Laurence Juber



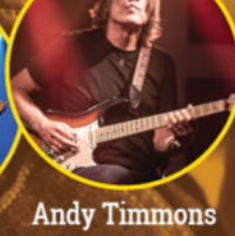
Andy McKee



Larry Mitchell



Matt Schofield



Andy Timmons

... AND MORE!



**CLASSES FOR
ALL LEVELS,
AGES, AND STYLES!**

For more information please contact us at:

905.567.8000 OR
www.guitarworkshopplus.com



*Finally, a guitar that can go from LAX to JFK to
STL and back without getting FKT.*



www.travelerguitar.com

EST. 1992 in REDLANDS, CALIFORNIA



TRAVELER[®]
GUITAR



EVH

SA-126

The brainchild of Wolfgang Van Halen, this instrument was created with versatility in mind, fusing EVH High performance features with the definitive warm tones of a classic design.

The next step forward for EVH guitar design.

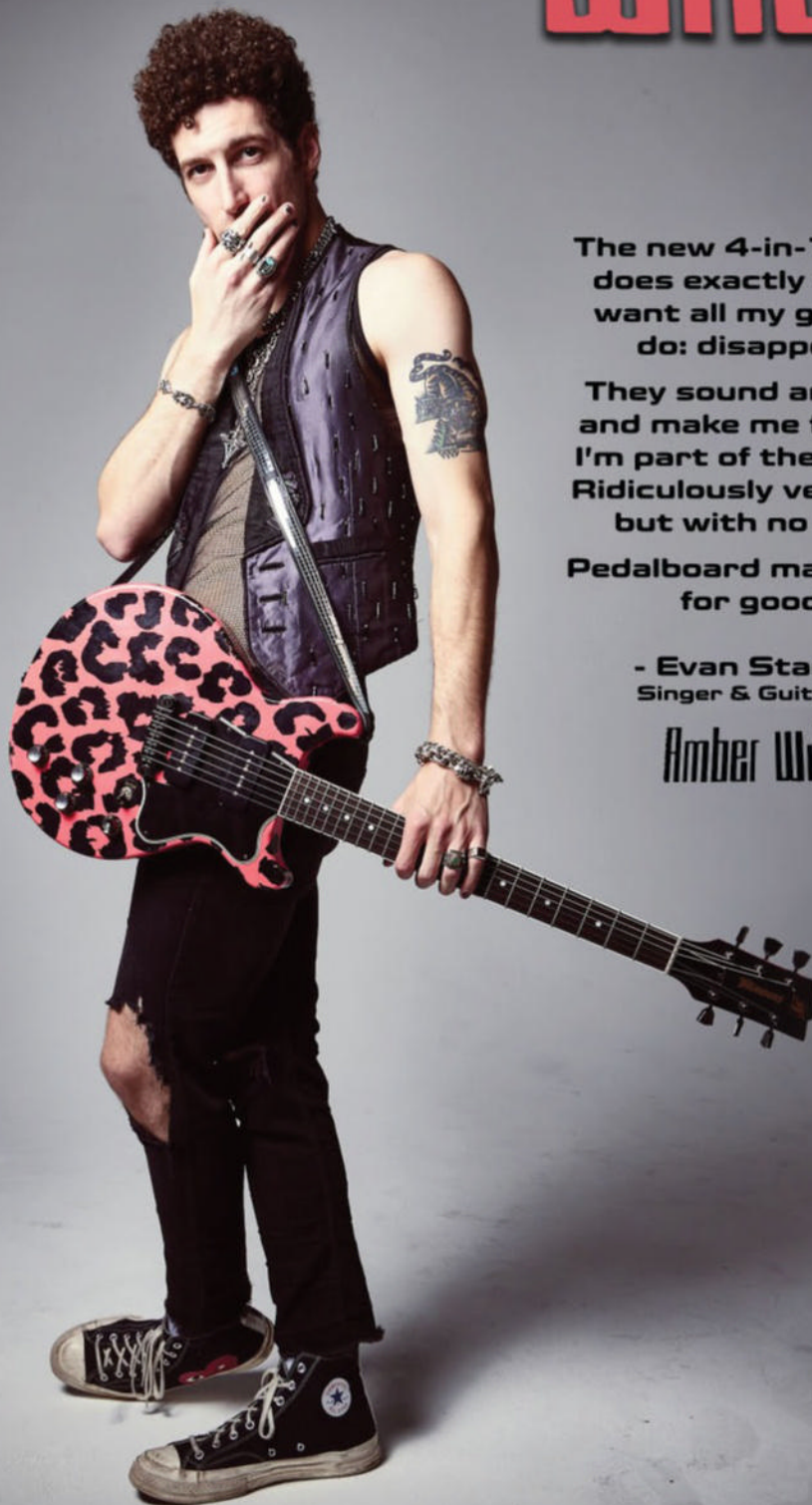
www.evhgear.com

©2024 EVH Brands, LLC. EVH® is a trademark of EVH Brands, LLC. All rights reserved.



FROM MILD TO

Wild



The new 4-in-1 series
does exactly what I
want all my gear to
do: disappear!

They sound amazing
and make me feel like
I'm part of the guitar.
Ridiculously versatile,
but with no fuss.

Pedalboard mainstays
for good!

- Evan Stanley
Singer & Guitarist

Amber Wild

THE NEW 4-IN-1 SERIES FROM KEELEY ELECTRONICS
LEARN MORE AT RKFX.COM

 KEELEY
f @

Go with the grain.

Every guitar's wood grain is unique. Produced by a once-in-a-lifetime combination of factors, each pore and fiber weaves together to shape your tone. That's why we let you pick your instrument — right down to the grain.

Sweetwater



Sweetwater.com
(800) 222-4700



SBS VS200
VINTAGE SERIES
\$379



SBS CS260
CUSTOM SERIES
\$259



SBS Guitars from Trixter guitarist Steve Brown.

Solid Alder and Poplar bodies. Genuine Kiln Roasted maple necks. USA designed Alnico II Pickups. Premium hardware and high gloss or hand-aged finishes.

All SBS Guitars are sold Warehouse-Direct at wholesale prices.

Every SBS Guitar features Coil Taps for the humbuckers and our unique "Treble-Saver" circuit for crisp and clean tone as the volume rolls off. Necks feature jumbo frets and the fretboard edges are rounded for ultimate playing comfort. Neck heels are radically contoured for ultimate effortless high fret access.

SBS Guitars, Pickups and Accessories are designed in the USA and sold exclusively Warehouse-Direct by Guitarfetish.com. All guitars are shipped from our climate controlled facility in Sarasota Florida USA.



STEVE BROWN SOUND

SBS PRODUCTS CAN BE PURCHASED EXCLUSIVELY AT WWW.GUITARFETISH.COM



Martin & Co.
EST. 1833

D-12E

built

FOR
THE
ROAD



STRANGER IN THIS TOWN

ROCK AND ROLL DOESN'T have too many breakthrough moments, those instances where an underground movement roars to life and becomes a cultural phenomenon. Elvis, the Beatles, the Sex Pistols — all came out of nowhere and profoundly reshaped the musical landscape for years to come.

You should add Bon Jovi to that list. *Slippery When Wet*, the New Jersey hair-metal group's 1986 breakout hit, marks the moment when metal became a pop-culture force, and on a global scale at that. And for guitarists of that era, the player who led that revolutionary charge was Richie Sambora, the co-writer and riffmaker behind monster hits like "Livin' on a Prayer," "You Give Love a Bad Name" and "Wanted Dead or Alive."

So it's more than a little odd that Richie was never on *Guitar Player*'s cover during the era he's most associated with. After all, if the early 1980s were a time of EVH-inspired technical proficiency, it was Richie who brought a love for '70s-inspired blues rock back to music's forefront, along with a healthy dose of period-correct melodic shred. As both Bon Jovi's guitarist and one half of the team behind their biggest hits, he defined songwriting and rock guitar for the era and for future players raised on the stylistic fusion he created.

With the arrival of Richie's new four-song set — his first truly solo work since his 2012 album, *Aftermath of the Lowdown* — we thought it was time to correct that oversight. Released over four consecutive weeks this past May, the quartet of Bob Rock-produced tracks — "I Pray," "Songs That Wrote My Life," "Livin' Alone" and "Believe (In Miracles)" — are among the strongest tunes we've heard from Richie in his solo catalog and serve to remind us how much of his musical vision was behind Bon Jovi's anthemic ballads and energetic riff-oriented rock.

Not coincidentally, those new songs arrived in time for the Bon Jovi docuseries *Thank You, Goodnight*, a riveting in-depth look at the group's 40-year history. Naturally, the series devoted a fair amount of time to Richie's 2013 departure from the band, and he has publicly expressed his dissatisfaction with how his exit was framed. We thought the opportunity was right for us to get his side of the story and to catch up on the events that led to this latest chapter in his solo career.

While that discussion is a large part of the story, we also spoke with Richie about his influence on music — he makes a valid case that his acoustic guitar work on songs like "Wanted Dead or Alive" precipitated the 1990s acoustic boom — and his latest batch of tunes. It was also refreshing to hear him discuss his love of blues and his friendships with everyone from Eric Clapton to Jimmy Page to Buddy Guy.

In addition to Richie's feature, I'm excited to present interviews with two other guitarists who have not appeared in these pages enough: John Fogerty and Crowded House's Neil Finn, both of whom offer illuminating insights into the art of songwriting and their own individual takes on guitar playing.

So dig in. This is another packed issue of *Guitar Player*.

Chris Scapelliti

CONTACT US

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Renewals/Questions: help@magazinesdirect.com

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

Guitar Player

Vol. 58 No. 8

AUGUST 2024

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 Philip Cheesbrough,
philip.cheesbrough@futurenet.com

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

LOS ANGELES EDITOR Jude Gold,
judegold@gmail.com

FRETS EDITOR Jimmy Leslie,
jimmyleslie.com

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

SENIOR IMAGE MANIPULATION TECHNICIAN
Gary Stuckey

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

ADVERTISING SALES

ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR Robert Dye,
robert.dye@futurenet.com, (732) 241-7437

ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE Jeff Donnenwerth,
jeff.donnenwerth@futurenet.com, (678) 427-1535

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

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

130 West 42nd Street, 7th Floor, New York, NY 10036

© 2023, Future PLC. All Rights Reserved.



Future plc is a public company quoted on the London Stock Exchange (symbol: FUTR) www.futureplc.com
Chief Executive Officer Jon Steinberg
Non-Executive Chairman Richard Huntingford
Chief Financial and Strategy Officer Penny Ladkin-Brand
Tel: +44 (0)1225 442 244



The Business Information Association, a division of SIA



DUAL FALCON 20 2x10 COMBO

CREAM BRONCO VINYL WITH OXBLOOD GRILLE



Gibson

INTRODUCING THE NEW DUAL FALCON 20 2x10 COMBO *THREE DISTINCT FLAVORS*

Now featuring the all-new, twin-channel Dual Falcon 20 2x10 Combo, Gibson's Falcon Series pays homage to our rich history of innovation and offers the versatility demanded by today's players in home studios, on stages, and beyond. Handcrafted in Petaluma, California, these all-tube tone machines feature Jensen® Blackbird Alnico speakers, spring reverb, and onboard power attenuation for touch-sensitive, harmonically rich American tone in three compact and easily portable configurations.

The Gibson Falcon amplifiers are available now via authorized Gibson dealers and [Gibson.com](https://www.gibson.com)



CONTENTS

AUGUST 2024 | VOLUME 58 | NUMBER 8

PLAYERS

32

Hermanos Gutiérrez

38

Richie Sambora

52

Neil Finn

60

John Fogerty

FRETS

72

Sue Foley

NEW & COOL

17

Thorn Florentine Empirial

ALBUMS

20

Mother Mother's
Ryan Guldemon

TIPSHEET

22

Peter Stroud

FIVE SONGS

24

Reb Beach

ON THE COVER

Richie Sambora, by Jen Rosenstein,
photographed at home,
in Los Angeles, May 8, 2024



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 US LLC, 130 West 42nd Street, 7th 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.



CHICAGO

MUSIC EXCHANGE



Only here.

CME EXCLUSIVE

Fender®
AMERICAN ULTRA

EXPLORE FENDER'S PINNACLE OF
PERFORMANCE, IN COLORWAYS
YOU CAN ONLY FIND AT
CHICAGO MUSIC EXCHANGE!





COLUMNS

28

Dave Hunter's Classic Gear
Silvertone H63 Espanada

30

Jim Campilongo's
Vinyl Treasures
Judy Henske — *High Flying Bird*

31

Terry Carleton's
Whack Job
Custom Flying Fretless
11-string baritone

LESSONS

78

Steve Luthaker's
Session Secrets

83

Dickey Betts' acoustic
moments

GEAR

84

Fame Forum IV Modern
20th Anniversary Burl
Stonewashed Blue



86

Dean Vengeance Select
Floyd Fluence
Charcoal Burst

88

Line 6 Catalyst
CX 100 combo

90

Positive Grid Spark Live

92

D. Kowalski Rare Earth
Germanium Device Pedal

HOW I WROTE...

98

Vaden Todd Lewis
on the Toadies'
"Possum Kingdom"



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, 130 West 42nd Street, 7th 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 © 2023 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.

USE WHAT THE PROS USE!

FU-Tone Guitars Come Loaded With The Upgrades That You Expect!



- FU2 Tremolo with 42L Brass Big Block
- EVH D-Tuna for Drop D On The Fly
- P.M.S. Pickup Mounting System
- Heavy Duty Noiseless Springs
- FU-Tone Humbucker Pickups
- Titanium Saddle Inserts
- Brass Claw and Screws
- Brass Tremolo Stopper
- Coil Tap Switches
- Strap Locks
- Kill Switch

BIG BLOCK

PERFORMANCE



New FU-Tone Guitars From The Original Tremolo Upgrade Company!

www.fu-tone.com

AL NESBITT AND THE ALCHEMY

'A Million Shiny Things' is a mesmerizing musical journey that easily slips through genres and styles, but stays firmly planted in its inspiration of guitarists like Di Meola and McLaughlin. Diverse soundscapes, evocative melodies and rich arrangements all come together to make a bold musical tribute to one of Hollywood's most iconic and legendary landmarks.

Band:

Al Nesbitt	<i>Guitars</i>
Wayne Tapia	<i>Guitars</i>
Jeff Eason	<i>Bass</i>
Bill Ray	<i>Drums</i>

Guest Musicians:

Tony Franklin
- Bass on 'Allegories and Guillotines'

Michael A. Levine
- Violin on 'Allegories and Guillotines'

Co-Produced by Al Nesbitt and 'Big' Chris Flores
Mixed and Mastered by 'Big' Chris Flores at The Rehab Studio

A MILLION SHINY THINGS



AL NESBITT AND THE ALCHEMY

“ Al, I love the fresh and energetic creations you make - your music is so different than mine - I do appreciate it and admire your virtuosity which you put to such good musical use. A very moody, swingy beauty of an album ”

Nicholas Hooper

Guitarist and Film composer for Harry Potter
'The Order of the Phoenix' and 'The Half Blood Prince'

Now available on your favorite streaming platforms, including: Spotify  and Apple Music 



Ron Thorn took a bite of the Big Apple when designing his Florentine Empiral.

NEW YORK STATE OF MIND

West Coast luthier Ron Thorn took a trip to the Big Apple. He came back with his stunning new **Florentine Empiral**.

BY DAVE HUNTER

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ROBERT HANSEN-STURM

ASK CALIFORNIA GUITAR maker Ron Thorn how it feels to have departed the world-renowned Fender Custom Shop to make guitars on his own again, and he doesn't beat around the bush. "I'm back to doing what I love!" Thorn declares. "Building guitars completely from scratch, where I've made all the design choices, selected every board, chiseled every binding corner, soldered every joint. I didn't realize just how much I missed that until diving back into it refreshingly revitalized my passion for guitar building."

Just one look at the new Thorn Florentine Empiral reveals how that renewed passion has translated into a next-level, master-grade electric guitar. To catch the general drift, you might call it the love child of a '59 Les Paul

and golden-era D'Angelico New Yorker, conceived on a night when a 1942 Epiphone Emperor and a 1960 Gibson Byrdland were tangling in the room above. That said, we can equally look to two of Thorn's more exalted pre-Fender models, the Artisan Florentine solidbody and Grantura semi-acoustic, to probe the roots of this stellar new creation. Either way you choose to look at it, the Florentine Empiral is a stunner.

Thorn's history with the Fender Musical Instrument Corporation extends through three decades. He was the Fender Custom Shop's sole supplier of custom inlay work from the mid '90s on, while earning a reputation as a highly respected custom-guitar maker in his own right. In 2018, FCS

hired Thorn outright as a principal master builder, and he was named director of the Custom Shop a short time later.

Anyone who has laid hands on one of his guitars — before, during or after Fender — will understand that Ron Thorn doesn't just make guitars; he crafts them to within an iota of perfection. Having played several in the past, and even owned a couple, I can attest that I have rarely been more impressed by the merging of talent, passion and innovation than by what I've found in his work.

A quick look at Thorn's history suggests it might just be in his blood. His grandfather and two uncles were finish carpenters, and his father was an armorer for the Royal Canadian Navy who kept a master-grade woodworking

“THE EMPIRIAL CAME FROM MY FIRST TRIP TO NEW YORK A FEW YEARS BACK. THE VIBE, THE PEOPLE... THE PIZZAS”

shop in the garage. Dad's job took the family to Burbank, California, in 1979

when Ron was 10, and his own drive to craft things of wood and metal converged with the California music scene at the height of Eddie Van Halen's fame. A master luthier was born, and we might say his ultimate expression of the art has coalesced in guitars like this Florentine Empirical 45 years later.

Fundamentals of the model include a 14 1/2-inch wide, 2 1/4-inch thick semihollow body made from mahogany, with a solid, arched flame-maple top and a mahogany neck with complex glued-in dovetail joint (options include a solid spruce top and korina body and neck). It's built to a 24.65-inch scale length, with a 10-degree headstock angle, a 12-inch fingerboard radius, and a width of 1.687 inches at the nut. The fingerboard on this example is made from the optional Brazilian rosewood and shares its highly decorative multi-ply binding and white-and-gold mother-of-pearl inlays with the headstock. Further Brazilian rosewood appointments include custom deco knobs, pickup bezels, headstock facing, trapeze

tailpiece and truss-rod cover with hand-cut sterling silver “Thorn” inlay, all made by

Thorn himself (ebony features are otherwise standard in these positions).

It all positively glows alongside the top's faded cherry sunburst finish in thin nitrocellulose lacquer, hand-aged to place it within the era of its inspiration. And for the builder himself, what exactly was that inspiration?

“That came from my first trip to New York, a few years back,” Thorn tells us. “The vibe, the people... the pizzas. It was all incredible. But what really struck me was the architecture. The heavy use of art deco had me enthralled. I was taking pictures of doorways and window details, lamps and even an elevator's floor-indicator frame. Deco was everywhere — sometimes subtle, sometimes very apparent, such as in the Chrysler and Empire State buildings — but always beautiful.

“Couple that with spending a few hours in Rudy's Music checking out their collection of guitars built by the masters, and saying I was inspired is putting it lightly. I felt compelled to





Art deco elements are obvious in the Florentine Empirial's metal pickguard and (left) tuner buttons and control knobs.

design a model representing this experience. The following day, I spent the entire five-hour flight back to Los Angeles drawing and detailing the Empirial."

As stunning as those details are, several aspects of the guitar's build that you don't see are equally impressive. Asked to highlight a few of the instrument's under-the-hood features, Thorn points to the massive amount of neck/body contact that's produced by his dovetail joint; the ingenious method of supporting the pickguard through the f-hole with an internal bracket cantilevered off the partial center block; the mid '50s-style single-action truss rod in a straight, yet inclined channel; the tag board under the bridge pickup for easy pickup swaps without having to extract the entire wiring harness through the pickup cavities: the metal-reinforced jack plate... And the list goes on.

As for pickup swaps, I suspect few players will likely want to change out the stock units, a set of four-conductor Ron Ellis Signature humbuckers made to the PAF formula by one of the most respected pickup winders working today. They connect to a wiring

harness comprising Bourns pots, NOS Soviet-era paper-in-oil .033µF tone capacitors, and a six-position Free-Way switch disguised as a traditional three-way toggle, for coil-splitting options. A Faber ABR-1 bridge and Grover Imperial tuners complete the hardware set.

In the hand, the guitar plays flawlessly. The immaculately dressed frets with blind slot ends, a sublimely shaped '59 "C" neck carve and a back ribcage comfort contour don't hurt at all here. It all proves wonderfully expressive into either a tweed Deluxe-style 1x12 combo, a 65amps London head and 2x12 cab or a wide variety of presets on the Fractal FM9. Given some dirt via a cranked amp or overdrive pedal, this elegant guitar rocks with gusto, and in a way that belies its outwardly refined appearance, although it also displays nuanced dynamics, articulation and a controllable playability you don't find in many humbucker-equipped guitars.

On cleaner settings, the Florentine Empirial's subtler shades shine through, heard in ringing, blooming upper-harmonic overtones, and a buoyant richness and depth

that never clouds its inherent clarity. Adding to the Ellis pickups' native humbucker girth, the six-position Free-Way switch taps shimmering single-coil tones that broaden this instrument's capabilities exponentially. The Florentine Empirial quickly proves itself a guitar that not only looks fantastic but also utterly refuses to put any limits on whatever you intend to do with it.

Thorn concurs. "Of all the guitars I've built in my career, I feel the semihollows have always stood out as being extra-special sounding to me," he explains. "The wider spectral tonal range, the ability to react to the varying dynamics of playing and the sheer versatility of musical styles that they work so well with have always felt to me like the characteristics of a really fine instrument."

In the Florentine Empirial's case, "really fine" is a major understatement, but such is this luthier's modesty. Then again, it really is difficult to find words adequate to express the achievement this guitar represents. **■**

CONTACT thornguitars.com
PRICE \$12,950

DEATH BECOMES THEM

TikTok gave **Mother Mother** a second lease on life. Now they take on the Grim Reaper with *Grief Chapter*.

BY ANDREW DALY

MOTHER MOTHER HAVE been hard at it since 2005, when Ryan Guldemon formed the band in Quadra Island, British Columbia. Along the way, the alternative-pop rockers dropped eight records heading into the thick of the COVID-19 pandemic, but they never managed to resonate on a larger scale.

All that changed after “Hayloft,” a cut from 2008’s *O My Heart*, exploded with the help of TikTok, catapulting Mother Mother to millions-of-streams-per-week success. Since then, the upward trend has continued, with the group’s latest record, 2024’s *Grief Chapter* (Warner), looking to be their biggest yet.

Reflecting on Mother Mother’s journey, Ryan Guldemon tells *Guitar Player*, “If you want to marry your art with commerce and success, you probably should just get on social media and do whatever it takes to be noticed, just because it is that hard.

“I feel like our story is too romantic to be viable,” he continues. “It’s so impossibly miraculous that we stumbled into a pandemic on an app called TikTok, and that was the thing that opened the world for us. You really can’t write that story.”

But success isn’t changing Guldemon. If anything, he’s doubling down, adding string arrangements to the group’s infectiously hooky tunes and his own angular electric and intricate acoustic guitar work. “Me marrying the deeper, more intellectual qualities of jazz and classical birthed a schizophrenic sensibility in the writing. And that’s fine,” he says. “When you start writing a song by

having no limits, following your whims, doing what feels right, that’s what’s great about being creative. But for me, guitar is really a tone chase; it’s an energy quest.”

“It’s not about creating a stage for the guitar as much as it could be, considering my background,” he concludes. “But I’m cool with that because I love songwriting more than guitar playing.”

Can you give a rundown of the themes present in *Grief Chapter*?

Over eight albums, we hadn’t really dug into the topic of mortality, so I guess it was time. It could be a byproduct of getting older and some people around you dying, but it’s also the windfall of unforeseen and seemingly cosmic success that Mother Mother fell into.

To your point, Mother Mother has been around since 2005, but things are kicking off now.

The pandemic and TikTok helped reframe

life as precious and finite and something to be savored, not taken for granted. Thus, I think that the theme of the inevitable end burst quite naturally out of all those aforementioned experiences.

Why do you feel Mother Mother is rising after being at it for almost 20 years?

I think it was just time for the music, especially the early catalog, to resonate culturally. In terms of where the industry was, that just wasn’t the time; it took a new generation, Gen Z, and all its revolts against convention and normalcy to understand, connect and identify with early Mother Mother, which shares a lot of traits with the current youth culture.

Do you think that’s because Mother Mother perpetually lives in a no-man’s-land as far as genres go?

I mean, we just love music; we don’t love a genre. We love the whole gamut, and I’m the



principal writer. I was fortunate enough to be brought up in a robust musical household and went on to study jazz and classical. During my time in music college, I discovered songwriting in a more meaningful way and borrowed from bands I grew up loving, like the Pixies and the Beatles.

As far as guitars go, what's your process for creating your parts?

I came up as a guitar player through my childhood and teens, and I had a guitar teacher and majored in jazz guitar. But then I started writing songs, and my philosophy shifted to serving the song. That's always been the case. So when it comes to my playing, I don't take a lot of solos or show off; I try to do what's right for the lyrics.

Most assume you lean toward Mosrite guitars, but there's a technicality to that, right?

The funny thing is, I don't own a proper Mosrite. My great uncle gifted me a Silvertone, which was a Mosrite copy from the '60s, and I just kinda fell in love with that kind of guitar. It had a certain midrange bark and a surfy kind of brightness. I came up and learned on that guitar, went to school with that guitar, and wrote so much of the early Mother Mother music on that guitar.

Are you still using that guitar?

When it came to fleshing out my arsenal, I thought it would be fun to keep the look consistent, so I had a custom guitar built in the spirit of a Mosrite, and then I bought another Mosrite copy. So the irony is that I don't actually own one, but everyone thinks I'm a Mosrite guy.

What types of amps helped shape your tone on *Grief Chapter*?

I used a [Fender] Bassman a lot. There were just so many quirky, strange, small, vintage combo amps in the studio, and we'd cycle through them. But I am abysmal when it comes to retaining gear knowledge. I just don't care. It's something that I don't love

“LOVE WHAT YOU DO. THAT WAY, WHEN YOU FAIL AND LOOK BACK, YOU CAN AT LEAST SAY, ‘I LOVE WHAT I DID’”



RECOMMENDED LISTENING

Grief Chapter

“Nobody Escapes,” “Explode!,” “Goddamn Staying Power,” “God’s Plan,” “Grief Chapter”

about myself as a musician, but it's the truth. I'll just be more excited about the sound that's concocted in the moment and often won't know which amps we're using.

Do you use many pedals?

There's a lot of pedals, like fuzz and octaves. And we had a tray of Eventide pedals that

were almost used as a hardware insert, like plugging hardware in and running stuff through that. There was literally a table with 150 pedals, and again, it was the heat of the moment. You're just plugging stuff in and don't even know what the chain is.

Which of your new songs proved to be the most rewarding to record?

You know, tender, intricate acoustic parts are often hard to execute, both to capture and in performance. So the song “Grief Chapter” took me a while to lay down. And “To My Heart,” that solo is fast and hard to get your hands around. It's one thing to play a solo live, where the sloppiness is part of the excitement, but in the studio, you really have to nail the intonation and have your touch perfect. But Mother Mother guitar parts are easy. It's a lot of power chords and catchy melody runs that aren't too virtuosic.

You're experiencing massive success after a meteoric rise via social media, which is unconventional according to old industry standards. What does that say about the future of the music business?

It's vindicating to get your big break via inexplicable, utterly organic ways. After so many years of pursuing typical strategies and having it not seem to work, the fact that we got it when we weren't vying for attention was like, Of course! That's the way it should work if you focus on your craft and make honest music.

But I can't even say I'd give that advice to an artist, like, “Oh, don't try to be successful. Just let it happen and focus on your craft.” I don't know if that works. I think it's just an impossibly difficult industry. The odds are stacked against those who choose to participate, so love what you do. That way, when you fail and look back, you can at least say, “I love what I did.” 📺

Ryan Guldemon's guitars include a custom modeled after a Mosrite and a Mosrite copy. “But everyone thinks I'm a Mosrite guy,” he says.



TIP SHEET

How did **Peter Stroud** become the right-hand man to Sheryl Crow, Don Henley and many others? It took talent — and these five rules.

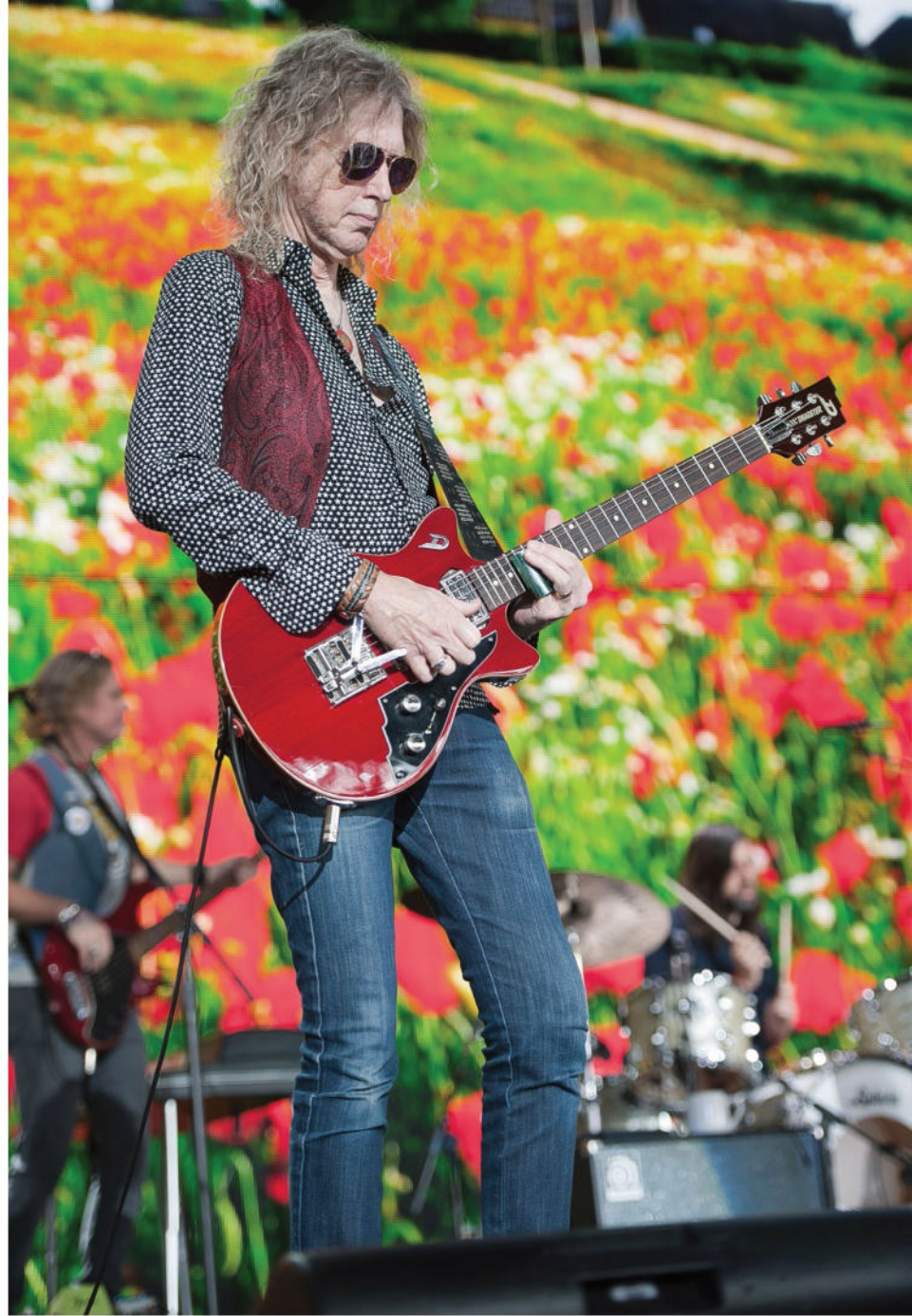
BY JOE BOSSO

YEARS BEFORE PETER Stroud set his sights on playing the guitar for a living, his father gave him a few non-musical pointers that would prove invaluable. “He told me, no matter what you do in life, be a good listener,” Stroud says. “That always stayed with me, the idea that you don’t always have to say something just because you can, and you don’t always have to be the first person to talk. Learn to read the room. Try to understand the people you’re dealing with.”

For Stroud, communication skills are as important as musical chops, especially when it comes to his long-running role in Sheryl Crow’s touring band as both guitarist and musical director.

“Sheryl is a dear friend, so we have that kind of relationship,” he explains. “On the other hand, she’s also my boss, and like anybody else who has to run an organization, she has a million things she has to deal with. There are days when she may appear upset about something and it comes across as she’s being grumpy toward me. You start to think, Oh, I must be troubling her. But that’s just a self-centered way to look at it, and that’s when I have to take a step back and understand what it is she’s really thinking about. Like my father said, you have to be a good listener, and that’s really important in getting along with somebody and a group of people. You’ve got to pull back and allow everybody to be themselves around you.”

In addition to his work with Crow, Stroud has performed with artists such as Don Henley, Stevie Nicks, Sarah McLachlan, Pete Dinklage and the Dixie Chicks. “Obviously, they’re very different as artists,” he says, “but my approach to working with them is the same:



I have to figure out what they need and want from me, which really comes down to helping them sound the way they want. It’s not about me — it’s about them. That’s something that I always have to keep in mind.”

Clearly, Stroud knows a thing or two about a thing or two, and here he imparts more kernels of wisdom that have served him well during his career.

1 STOP FOCUSING ON YOUR OWN PLAYING

“Whether you’re gigging or recording, you need to adjust your perspective accordingly. First and foremost, I would say that you have to listen to what the singer is doing. I’ve seen it time and again: Guitarists are laser-focused

on their own playing. I don’t know whether it’s an ego thing or if they haven’t trained themselves to work as part of a team in a band, but unless they listen to the singer, they’re not contributing to the number one goal, which is to make great music.

“Learn what it takes to complement the singer. Make your rhythm fit in and around the vocals. Know when to come in and when to get out of the way. Most of the time, you’ll find that a little is enough — less is more. This flies in the face of guitarists’ impulses, because they feel like they want to make their presence known. Just know, you’ll be valued if you play the right part at the right time. Nine times out of 10, and maybe it’s 10 times out of 10, overplaying isn’t what’s required.

ZUMA PRESS, INC./ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

"When I listen back to recordings I've been a part of, I always check myself to make sure I'm not noodling. If you need a good reference, check out anything Mike Campbell is on. He's the perfect example of playing the right thing for the song at all times."

2 BE PREPARED

"Whether you're going to an audition for a big artist or a local band, you need to be prepared. You'd be surprised at the stories I've heard about guitarists showing up at auditions who haven't bothered to learn the material they're expected to play.

"I got the gig for a Don Henley tour because I was totally prepared. I was told what songs I'd be expected to play, and I learned them top to bottom, back and forth. I learned the parts. I got my sounds down. I had everything memorized to the point where it was all second nature and I could just play. But it took work.

"Maybe you'll be hired right off the bat for some gigs because of your reputation, but most of the time that's not going to happen. Respect the artist and the other players, and learn the material."

3 MOVE SOME AIR

"I've been noticing that a lot of younger players are going direct into consoles with amp modelers. Even when performing live, there are people in Nashville who aren't using amps anymore.

"Don't get me wrong — there are great amp modelers. But the way I came up, I learned that the amplifier was 50 percent of your sound. I'd advise new guitarists to play with the amplifier. Learn how to interact with



Peter Stroud's long career with Sheryl Crow has benefited from his efforts to put her needs first.

"I HAVE TO FIGURE OUT WHAT THEY NEED AND WANT FROM ME, WHICH REALLY COMES DOWN TO HELPING THEM SOUND THE WAY THEY WANT"

it and how to use feedback. Learn how to get a clean sound with an amp. When you use an amp modeler, the way you touch your guitar and pick notes is going to be very different than when you go through an amp. To put it simply, you're not moving air.

"A friend of mine — a really great guitarist — was playing with an artist in Nashville. The people he was working with wanted him to go direct into the console, and he was struggling with it. He came over for a visit and told me, 'I just can't do it.' It didn't sound or feel right to him. But when I had him plug into my Marshall 'Plexi,' he was like, 'Oh, my god. There it is!' There's just nothing like that real amp sound. It can make all the difference in how you respond to the sound you're getting."

4 PLOT OUT YOUR CAREER

"If you're thinking of being a professional guitarist, it helps to have a goal in mind, whether you want to be part of a band or a session player. Read as much as you can, and talk to people. Nowadays you can contact people online, and they might respond to you.

"It's hard to predict where opportunities might arise, and that's not a bad thing. Sometimes you get that call or email about a gig, and it might not be anything you ever considered, but it could be the chance of a lifetime. Things happen that way, and you need to be ready to jump when opportunity calls. But a lot of the time, things happen because of something you did. It's because you put yourself out there in some way and people hear about you.

"So stay as focused on your career as you are on your desire to play well. Keep your career periphery wide, always be working and networking, and get out there and jam with people. It might be hard at first — maybe you've only played in your basement or your bedroom. But just get out there and perform and jam. Nothing happens in a vacuum. Find out who people are and let them know about you. You never know when they'll be looking for somebody just like you. But that won't happen unless they know who you are."

5 LEARN FROM YOUR MISTAKES

"We all make mistakes. You might screw up a chord onstage or you play the wrong part on a recording. But what I'm talking about here are career mistakes. For example, you say the wrong thing to somebody and you think, Oh man, I wish I hadn't done that!

"I've certainly made my fair share of wrong moves, and maybe once or twice I jeopardized an opportunity that could have worked out. It's important to learn from the moment and move on. And above all, to make sure you don't make that same mistake again."



How can you wow performers every time? See tip number two.



“NIRVANA HAD JUST COME OUT. ALL THE RADIO STATION PEOPLE SAID, ‘THIS WOULD HAVE BEEN HUGE IF IT HAD BEEN RELEASED AT A DIFFERENT TIME’”

MY CAREER IN FIVE SONGS

Four decades down the road with Winger, **Reb Beach** sheds his hair metal past with this quintet of metal and fusion cuts.

BY MARK McSTEAD

WINGER WERE GIANTS of the hair metal era, scoring hits and becoming a fixture on MTV with heavy rotation for their over-the-top videos. Like many bands of the era, they suffered the backlash of the grunge movement in the early 1990s when, almost overnight, the excess and extravagance of the big-production metal bands ran up against a cultural movement that considered the notion of fun in music to be almost obscene. Ironically, as we'll see in guitarist Reb Beach's five song selections, a fair amount of Winger's musical output was actually a departure from the bright and glossy excesses of the big, radio-friendly hits.

There are few bands that can say they still have their founding members 40 years down the road, and Winger are one of them. “Offhand, I can’t think of *any* bands who still have their original lineup from when they broke through,” Beach says. “The thing is, there are no jerks in the band — no big egos. In most bands there’s always one guy who’s a real asshole, but not in Winger. We’re all pros. We’ve all been in a ton of bands, and we know how to do our jobs and never complain. We’re great friends. We still eat lunch together every day when we’re on the road.”

The band’s most recent release is *Seven*, their first album since 2014’s *Better Days*

Comin’. Beach says he’s been delighted with the response to it. “People are really loving this album more than anything that we’ve done since *Pull* in 1993,” he explains. “I was thinking it was maybe too dark and intense, but it seems to have touched people who like our music, which has been super positive. It’s Kip’s baby, for sure. I bring him a bunch of ‘80s riffs and he crafts them into something musical.”

Beach played with many high-profile bands when Winger went on hiatus in the early ‘90s, and spent more than 20 years in Whitesnake — no mean achievement, given the revolving-door policy of mainman David Coverdale. “I’m pretty easy to work with,” Beach says. “I don’t make waves, I show up on time, I learn the parts and I’m never the problem.”

In addition to Whitesnake, Beach took over George Lynch’s guitar duties in Dokken. “I also followed Jeff Watson into Night Ranger, which was pretty intense, as I had no idea how to do that eight-fingered thing he does. That definitely wasn’t going to happen,” Beach declares with a laugh. “I had to figure out a way around that.”

PER OLE HAGEN/REDFERNS

"And Lynch, that was definitely a tough one! The first Dokken gig that I did, I got a sneaker thrown at me, but I always played the exact same solo live as on the original records. I think people liked that in the end, because George would always play different things each time they did the songs."

Keeping up with change seems to be one of Beach's strengths. He recalls being unfazed by his rapid change of fortune when Winger became major-league heavy hitters. "I don't mean this to sound in any way egotistical, but I was voted most likely to become a rock star at high school," he explains. "As soon as I saw Kiss, I knew that was what I was going to do. I was hungry and tenacious. As soon as I could, I left home to sleep on the floor of a friend's apartment in New York while I tried to get work as a guitarist. I got a job as a singing waiter and I pounded the pavement doing sessions for 50 bucks. I got my foot in the door and kept pushing. I knew I would eventually make it into a big band — I'd been preparing and working for it my whole life, right up to the point that it finally happened."

Success for Winger wasn't quite what Beach expected, at least not when it came to the financial rewards. "Winger signed one of the worst contracts in music business history," he maintains. "I have a friend who studied music law, and he told me that they spent a whole day looking at the deal that we signed. We signed through our producer, Beau Hill, and he made all the deals and refused to take any kind of advance for us. I had to look at Mick Brown from Dokken driving a Lamborghini, when all I had was a Subaru." He laughs at the

Winger performs in 1989. (from left) Paul Taylor, Kip Winger and Beach.

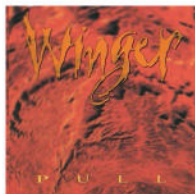


memory. "These guys were getting advances for millions, you know? We spent so much money on our videos — they were a couple of hundred thousand apiece — plus all our recording costs, that we were never recouping the money that was spent on our behalf, until 20 years later when out of the blue I got a check for 20 grand!"

As far as Beach is concerned, his only focus for the foreseeable future is Winger. "It's Winger all the way," he declares. "We decided that we'd really focus on booking the crap out of Winger all over the world and really work things to the max."

As for the mistakes Beach has made over the years, he has absolutely no regrets. "I wouldn't change anything," he says. "The terrible Winger recording contract was probably the only way we could have got signed, and everything else that I got in life led from that point. I got to be on the cover of the guitar magazines, and that was way better than working a regular job. I've never lost the thrill of getting up onstage and seeing that what I'm doing is moving people who've paid to come and see me. That's really what makes everything worthwhile."

"JUNKYARD DOG" WINGER — PULL (1993)

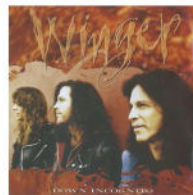


"I picked this one because so many musicians come up to me and the first thing they always say is what a great album they think *Pull* was. And the second thing they say is how they play this song for people who think they know Winger, and it blows their minds every time. It's a great, sinister riff. It's really heavy and it really

rocks. The whole song is very straight-ahead. I think it is so direct that people just get it right away — this dense chugging riff that's not too out there.

"There is a lot going on in the arrangement, and that keeps the attention focused for the listener. And, of course, it morphs into another song, 'Tears on Stone,' which is a really interesting transition. By this time, playing for the song was much more important to me than looking for an opportunity to shred. That was something I'd learned early on from doing sessions. Of course, when we did the first Winger album, I was looking to play every trick I knew at every opportunity — that was my chance, you know? [laughs] This is one of my all-time favorite Winger songs, plus, I'm a huge Aerosmith fan and it has a really cool change in it that reminds me of 'Seasons of Wither,' which I think is pretty cool."

"DOWN INCOGNITO" WINGER — PULL (1993)

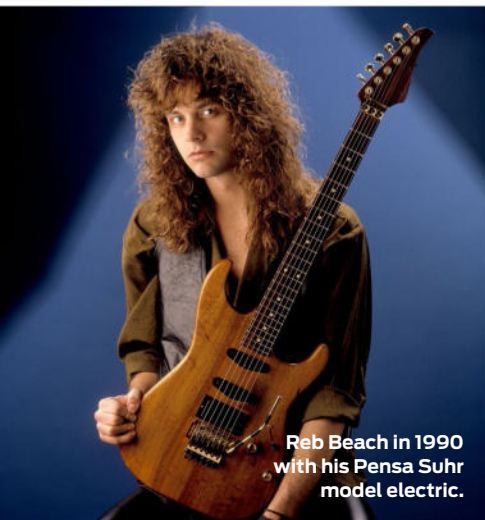


"This is one of the best riffs that I've ever written, yet it's a totally radio-friendly pop song, but unlike anything you heard from any of those '80s

bands back then. There's a ton of air in the arrangement — even the riff has a lot of air in it — and the chorus was huge, of course.

"The problem we had was that Nirvana had just come out, and all the radio station people we talked to told us, 'Man this would have been huge if it had been released at a different time,' but they just couldn't play it, because it was Winger. We were really going against the grain of bands like Nirvana and the other grunge acts in the minds of the people

PAUL NATKIN/WIREIMAGE(1990); PAUL NATKIN/GETTY IMAGES (1989)



Reb Beach in 1990 with his Penssa Suhr model electric.

who were controlling the airwaves. It kinda broke our hearts, because we thought this was a great song. It's funky, and it even has a harmonica solo, which was pretty unique.

"We had a \$300,000 budget to record *Pull*. We had three 32-track digital Otari tape machines running at the same time, and we were really meticulous about perfecting everything. For every song, I did four guitars playing exactly the same thing and two guitars playing single notes an octave lower on every song. I also played two guitars with Nashville tuning, so I was also playing all the parts an octave higher. We tried a ton of amps, but in the end it was the Mesa/Boogie Rectifier that was picked for all the songs, with my Pensa Suhr being the guitar of choice."

"TRAIN OF THOUGHT" REB BEACH — *THE FUSION DEMOS* (2001)



"This was from a time when Winger disbanded for a little while and I just figured I'd be a fusion guy. I thought, I'm famous now. But when I picked

up the phone to make calls, no one would take my call. [laughs] Originally, I was thinking that I wanted to do what I did before I joined Winger, when I was a session guy. I used to go home from all these different sessions and work on writing a lot of fusion demos for the album that I wanted to make, because I always wanted to be a Joe Satriani sort of

Beach plays in
Atlanta, May
26, 2002



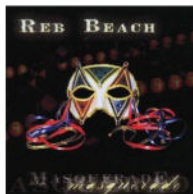
Winger and Beach perform in Fort Lauderdale, July 3, 2014.

"IT'S THE BEST SOLO THAT I EVER RECORDED. IN FACT, NEARLY HALF THE SONG IS MY SOLO"

player. Another of my favorite artists is Larry Carlton, so that's somewhere around the ballpark that I was aiming for.

"The actual sound on this track is terrible really, but that's just the way I did it as a demo when I recorded it in 1986. The guitar was recorded through a Rockman, or something like that, rather than an amp, and you can tell, because the guitar sound is tiny. I think the keyboard riff on here is great. This was in fact the first fusion song that I wrote. I tried to get a deal with Mike Varney at Shrapnel with these demos, but they knocked me back because it wasn't metal. I did meet him years later and he told me he really regretted that he didn't sign me, which made me feel a little better."

"FANATIC" REB BEACH — *MASQUERADE* (2002)

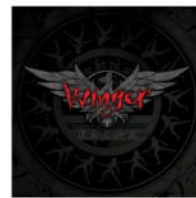


like that were so clever. When I came up with the riff for 'Fanatic,' I realized that I could change the chords under it and it would then become the pre-chorus, which I thought was

"I always wanted to write a song that had a recurring riff so that you could play the same bass part throughout the song. I always thought songs

a cool idea. There's a really great buildup in the song, and then at the end I pulled a total Aerosmith where I did those Hendrix-style unison bends on the B string up to the same note on the E string, in half steps over the riff, which turns the feel around. There's also a hint of Zeppelin's 'Immigrant Song' vibe in what I played. I think it's a song that mixes elements of great '80s and '90s rock, even though it was recorded in the 21st century."

"WITNESS" WINGER — *KARMA* (2009)



"I picked this one because I think it's the best solo that I ever recorded — in fact nearly half the song is my solo. [laughs] There was a lot of

pressure on me from Kip, who said that he was specifically writing the outro so that I could try to top what I did on 'Headed for a Heartbreak,' so that I could show the people that I've still got it and could do those long solos that really build.

"It made me a bit nervous, and when we went to record it, I was really bad — I mean it was scary bad. Kip was getting really frustrated as well. I said we should go to the pub, where I had a couple of beers, and as soon as we got back, I said, 'Okay, I'm ready.' We just went straight for it, and that was the solo that I came up with — a total, absolute first take. Kip was jumping up and down in delight. A lot of people have said it's my best solo. I know it's definitely out there a little bit, but it's totally from the heart." ■

ONE GIANT STEP FOR MANKIND

BURAK
YETER

THE ASCENDER STANDARD™



One Day in Space
The First 1-Hour Live
Concert from Space
Featuring Top 75 DJ
Burak Yeter
Coming Soon



FREE Backpack
use the code
GUITARWORLD
at checkout



THE ASCENDER STANDARD™

Professional Folding Electric
"Out of this World" Quality & Convenience

An ES for Less

Offered by Silvertone and Harmony, the **H63 Espanada** was the poor-man's version of Gibson's ES-175.

YEARS AGO, HARMONY and Silvertone guitars were mostly seen as low-level pawnshop prizes, funky junk or, at best, short-money noisemakers that might cut a dashing figure in garage bands or punk-blues outfits. But the people who designed and manufactured those guitars took pride in creating the more elevated models that ended up in the hands of stars like Roy Smeck, Buck Owens, Elvis Presley, Howlin' Wolf, Elmore James and Keith Richards.

Today, many guitarists now value those upmarket models as viable instruments that have a sound, vibe and look all their own. Moreover, they can help the player say something original onstage or in the studio, and do so with a sly sense of cool.

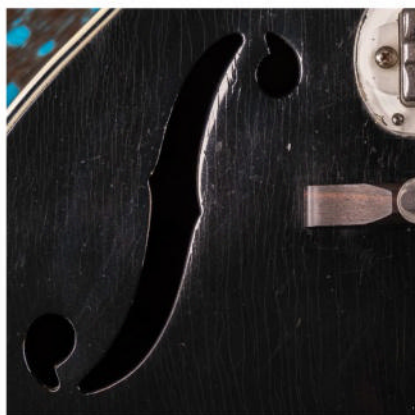
BUDGET JAZZ BOX

The Silvertone Model H63 Espanada featured here is just such a guitar. Design-wise, this instrument isn't far off the template of Gibson's ES-175 model from a few years earlier, before the new PAF pickup arrived on the jazz box in the late '50s. In fact, this Silvertone carries a pair of Gibson-made single-coil pickups that aren't a mile away from the P90 formula, as well as a single-cutaway body with a pressed archtop made from laminated maple, a glued-in neck of maple (rather than mahogany), a floating rosewood bridge and other features that put it in the ballpark. The elevated looks are there, too, in the multi-ply body binding, single-ply fingerboard binding and pearloid block inlays.

Look more closely, though, and you'll find signs that the quality isn't fully up to that of Gibson, Epiphone, Gretsch or other guitar makers of the era. The tuners and trapeze tailpiece are clearly of a lower standard, and the fingerboard is "ebonized hardwood" (often stained maple) rather



The H63 was a sharp-looking jazz box for budget-minded players.



than the rosewood it appears to be from a distance. The frets are made of a cheaper material and are less skillfully dressed, while the internal construction uses simple block "sound posts" rather than more complex bracing to support the arched top.



Even so, the Harmony/Silvertone H63 had everything a hardworking guitarist or hobby player needed to get the job done, and for much less than the competition. When introduced in the late 1950s, the Silvertone sold for \$135, while the same

PHOTOS BY TUCKER BEIRNE. GUITAR COURTESY OF SCRUFFS VINTAGE GUITARS



The P13 single-coil pickup has become a hidden gem.



guitar from Harmony cost, oddly, \$199. Compare either of those figures to the \$310 you would have paid for the ES-175D, and the H63's appeal becomes obvious. While you're at it, note that Gibson's solid-topped archtop electrics could cost more than double that.

THAT VINTAGE VIBE

Bear in mind, Harmony was no newcomer to the business. By the time the model H63 arrived, the company had been making guitars for Sears Roebuck's Silvertone brand for nearly 60 years. Harmony was founded in Chicago in 1892 by Wilhelm Schultz, who had emigrated from Hamburg, Germany, a few years earlier. Sears purchased Harmony in 1916 and used its factory to manufacture whatever stringed instruments happened to be in vogue, from ukuleles to mandolins to banjos. Harmony went independent again

ESSENTIAL INGREDIENTS

- Single-cutaway hollowbody archtop made from maple ply
- Multi-ply body binding, single-ply fretboard binding
- Glued-in maple neck, 25" scale length
- "Ebonized hardwood" (i.e. stained maple) fretboard with pearloid block inlays
- Two Gibson single-coil P13 pickups
- Individual volume and tone controls for each pickup

after being purchased by former company president Jay Kraus in 1940, and its prime focus returned to guitars with the rock and roll boom. In fact, from the mid '50s to the mid '60s, Harmony was the largest guitar maker in the world, churning out around 350,000 instruments a year at its peak.

Collectability has erased the price differences between the Harmony and Silvertone versions of the H63. Depending on condition and seller, either version can go for anywhere in the \$2,000-to-\$3,500 ballpark. Most records indicate that the Silvertone version was called the Model H63, while the Harmony-branded model is often tagged with both

BY DAVE HUNTER



H63 and Espanada, and the Espanada name sometimes resides on the front of the headstock, where the Harmony name would normally be found. Regardless, they are essentially the same guitars, and the name is colloquially applied to all of them today.

Amid the otherwise so-so build quality and playability, the H63 Espanada's pickup complement stands out as one of the guitar's more elevated features. The wide P13 single-coil units were made by Gibson and used on several of the Kalamazoo maker's earlier ES models prior to the development of the P90 in 1946. Created in 1940 by Gibson engineer Walter Fuller, the P13 uses a pair of Alnico II magnets on either side of a steel block, through which six adjustable threaded steel saddles pass. These are seen rising above the ridge at the center of the pickup's top cover in most examples, although some earlier P13s sport an undrilled ridge with hidden pole pieces beneath (which might be either fixed steel slugs or adjustable screw poles). The unit went through a few variations in design before settling in as the pickup commonly found on the Espanada of the late '50s and early '60s.

Broadly in the same sonic family as the better-known P90, the P13 usually reveals itself as a slightly warmer, darker pickup with relatively substantial output for a single-coil, and it has become a popular "hidden gem" with many jump-blues players. Such is the renewed interest that

respected pickup makers Curtis Novak and Dave Stephens have both offered re-creations of this final iteration of the Gibson component made for Harmony/Silvertone guitars. Catalog-grade reissue maker Eastwood

has also created its own rendition of the complete instrument as the Airline Espanada, which offers much of the overall vibe of the original, without precisely replicating its construction and components. ■

THE H63 HAD EVERYTHING A PLAYER NEEDED TO GET THE JOB DONE, AND FOR MUCH LESS THAN THE COMPETITION

BY JIM CAMPILONGO



Mother Folker

Dubbed the Queen of the Beatniks, **Judy Henske** ruled the roost on *High Flying Bird*.

JUDY HENSKE HAD a diverse recording career, and the folk-blues *High Flying Bird* appears to be something of an anomaly within her catalog. I have two other records of hers that are nothing like it: *A Little Bit of Sunshine* is a big-band vocal record, while *Farewell Aldebaran* is a psychedelic record that enjoys a cult following. Me? I didn't get it. That said, *High Flying Bird* is an outstanding album I've enjoyed for 30 years.

Released on Elektra in 1963, *High Flying Bird* overflows with great performances by Judy and her group, which includes guitarist Jack Marshall, the man who wrote *The Munsters* theme song. This being a folk record, Marshall plays acoustic throughout, and while he won't make you throw away your Eddie Van Halen records, to my ears he's simply fantastic on this record, with every lick and phrase perfectly placed. And while the entire group supports Henske like a gospel choir backing up a preacher, there's a not-too-subtle interplay

between Jack's guitar and Judy's vocals. I like to imagine his playing aims to seduce her.

Side one opens with the title track, on which Judy sings, "I got those sit down, can't cry, and I'm gonna die blues," while Jack mirrors her turmoil with agitated blues licks. Next up is the tender and hypnotic "Buckeye Jim." Supported by Marshall's repetitive guitar lines, it poetically and compassionately relates the tale of a heroin addict's death. I feel this track in my heart. It's followed by the jazz-tinged "Till the Real Thing Comes Along," on which Judy cuts loose and Jack turns in an impassioned solo that features double-stops



and even a bit of mandolin-style strumming. On "Oh You Engineer," Judy and company really let their hair down as she sings about an oversexed train engineer who combines business with pleasure and is about to be caught by his wife. "Baltimore Oriole" finds her singing an impassioned lyric about the hardships of searching for love, before Woody Guthrie's "Columbus Stockade" closes side

one. The latter is an infectious bluegrass two-beat about yearning for a lost love, and Judy sings it for all it's worth.

Side two kicks off with "Blues Chase Up a Rabbit," a personal favorite of mine. The band's late-night

pocket grooves with a 3 a.m. feel as Judy croons, "I wish I was a headlight on some lonesome southbound train / I'd follow you, baby, wouldn't be back again." It's followed by the similarly themed "Lonely Train," on which Judy sings, "There is a lonely train called the 3:10 to Yuma / and it's the only train left for me to ride." The song "Duncan and Brady" delivers a true account of an 1890 shooting

in a St. Louis bar, while the Billie Holiday standard "God Bless the Child" lets Jack Marshall display his jazz-tinged versatility. It's an exquisite version, and it nicely sets up "Good Ol' Wagon," a song originally covered by Bessie Smith. Judy tears it up, robustly singing, "You've been a good old wagon, but honey, you've done broke down." It's both funny and empowered. Up next is my least favorite track of the LP, "You Are Not My First Love." Its jazz style ventures into a bipolar listening experience that, lyrically, seems out of character for this record, although I may be nitpicking. Closing the show successfully on side two is the traditional reel "Charlotte Town," a lively singalong that beckons us to flip the record and do it all over again.

Judy Henske was exceptional, and her throaty style influenced both Grace Slick and Janis Joplin. When I listen to her, I feel like she's not only telling me her personal story — I also get the sense she could kick my ass. I like Judy Henske for many reasons, but that's an attractive trait in my book. Just look at the cover. Would you heckle this woman? **B**

Look for the release of Jim Campilongo 4TET's new album, *She Loved the Coney Island Freak Show*, in July 2024.

**I FEEL LIKE SHE'S
NOT ONLY TELLING
ME HER PERSONAL
STORY — I ALSO GET
THE SENSE SHE COULD
KICK MY ASS**

BY TERRY CARLETON



The Odd Job

With 11 strings and no frets, this custom Flying Fretless baritone is anything but ordinary.

GUITAR PLAYERS ARE notorious for futzing with their guitars. Hendrix modded his Strat's pickup selector for in-between settings, Yngwie scalloped the frets on his, and Jaco tore the frets off his Fender Jazz. And as everyone knows, EVH performed some radical surgery on his axes.

It's in that spirit that multi-instrumentalist/composer Gabriel Horn built this 11-string fretless baritone after being inspired by his fellow songwriter and fretless player Fletcher J. Dowell. As Gabriel explains, "The sounds one can make with fretless instruments are extremely expressive." While we're all familiar with the singing attributes of the violin and slide guitar, the fretless electric guitar remains an oddity, which is why I had to check it out.

WEIRDO FACTOR

If all you see is a Flying V — in this case, the body from a 1983 Ibanez Rocket Roll RR-150 — look again. In addition to that hand-painted Celtic-looking Rising Sun cross, there's a huge Motorola radio knob for the volume control and 11 strings. And what don't you see? Frets.

PLAYABILITY AND SOUND

A fretless baritone can sound convincingly like a fretless bass played in its upper register. But this guitar has 11 strings — double courses for all but the low E — making it sound like a fretless bass with chorus.

Because the Rocket Roll body has just one pickup cavity, Gabriel installed a Kent Armstrong MotherBucker, which consists of two stacked humbuckers.

Each pickup has its own output, and the hotter of the two is connected to the guitar's volume control.

Typically, Gabriel will use the hotter pickup for overdrive and adjust the distortion level with the volume control, while the other pickup's output is sent to a clean-tone amp and drenched in reverb.

The Warmoth maple neck has a rosewood fingerboard and is flat and super-easy to play. The flatwound strings are a custom-gauge set, .014–.065, and are tuned C f-F a-A d-D G-G C-C. Gabriel filled the original Strat-style tremolo bridge cavity with a pizza crust (I kid you not!) and encased it in clear epoxy. He says the hardest part of the build was cutting the 11 string ferrules and the nut. As for the vacant spot on the headstock, it's the perfect place for his Planet Waves chromatic tuner. As Gabriel says, his 11-string guitar actually has 12 tuners!

VALUE

The total cost of the build was well under a thousand bucks. Most of the parts were bought used, with the new Warmoth neck, at around \$400, the most expensive piece. And while a Rocket Roll in stock condition could fetch about \$1,500, Gabriel found his on eBay in rough shape and paid much less.

WHY IT RULES

It's lightweight, looks cool and plays great. But more than anything, it's a unique conduit for one guy's musical vision. And that rules!

Thanks to Gabriel Horn for the loan of his guitar. Check out his music with his band, Tiger Eye, at tigerseymusic.bandcamp.com.

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



THEMES FOR IMAGINARY WESTERNS

Estevan and Alejandro Gutiérrez weave haunting guitar instrumentals evocative of spaghetti-western scores. With *Sonido Cósmico*, they show why they are the most exciting guitar duo of our time.

BY JOE BOSSO

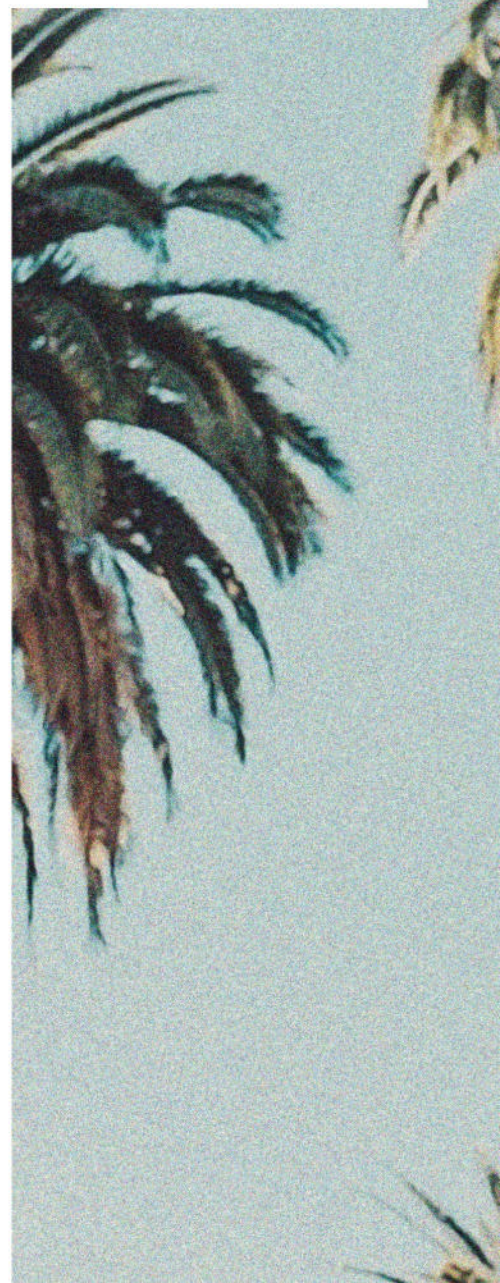
HERMANOS GUTIÉRREZ make music to get lost in. Brothers Estevan and Alejandro Gutiérrez weave intricate guitar parts to create haunting and beguiling instrumentals that work on a metaphysical level. They're not looking for a choreographed response from listeners. Instead, their unique blend of retro Latin and South American music — leisurely paced and drenched in reverb and echo treatments that evoke Ennio Morricone's spaghetti-western scores — invites you to simply sit back and chill. Or do whatever you want. They're okay with that.



"The truth is, we don't make music for other people," Estevan says. "For us, it's about connecting with each other by playing. Of course, it's beautiful that other people react to our music on whatever level they want. They can go on their own journeys and attach their own feelings to our songs. It's very personal music. It doesn't have to mean the same thing to everybody."

Alejandro, Estevan's younger brother by eight years, agrees. "I hear from fans who listen to our music while they're painting or cooking," he offers. "Some people meditate to it. I love that. We're part of this mini cosmos in people's worlds. They bring us into their lives in so many ways. I think that's pretty cool."

Born to an Ecuadorian mother and a Swiss father, and raised in Switzerland, the brothers recorded their first four albums on their own, perfecting their intoxicating dual-guitar soundscapes using minimal added instrumentation. "We really only need ourselves to set a mood," Alejandro says. "What my brother does on the guitar is so perfect, with his rhythm and fingerpicking. He's very inspired by salsa, and the way he



MICKEY BERNAL/GETTY IMAGES (TOP)



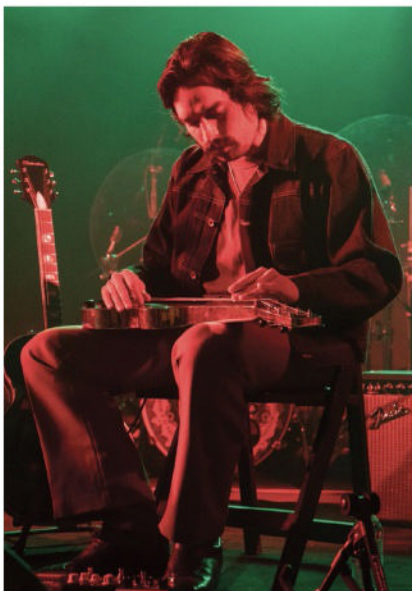
plays is so tight, you can almost feel a whole band behind him.”

Returning the compliment, Estevan says, “Alejandro plays amazing rhythms and patterns, too. Sometimes he comes up with things that make me so jealous. But I think he’s especially brilliant when he plays lap steel. I’ve tried to loop my guitar and play lap steel over it, and I’m like, ‘Fuck, I just can’t.’ But he never plays wrong notes. I’ve played guitar much longer than him, so I give him big respect.”

Two years ago, Estevan and Alejandro released their fifth album, *El Bueno y el Malo* (“The Good and the Bad”), which they recorded with Black Keys guitarist and producer Dan Auerbach at his Easy Eye studio (they also signed to his Easy Eye Sound label). While remaining true to the brothers’ innate, telepathic interplay, Auerbach thoughtfully introduced shades of percussion and organ to the mix, and even played a little guitar himself. Buoyed by the collaboration, Estevan and Alejandro teamed with Auerbach once again for their new album, *Sonido Cósmico* (“Cosmic Sound”), which, as its title suggests, takes off to interstellar space.

“We’re very inspired by films when we write music,” Alejandro says. “We both watched *Dune*. That film takes you to a new planet and immerses you in ways that are extraordinary. When we knew we were going to work with Dan again, we didn’t want to repeat ourselves. Estevan showed me an idea and I started to play over it, and it felt like we were taking this spirit from the desert and lifting it up to the universe. We both stopped the guitars and were like, ‘That’s a new sound. It’s a cosmic sound.’ That was the feeling we wanted to bring out.”

Sonido Cósmico unfolds like a long, unbroken dream. Whether it’s the sparse, languid lines of “Lágrimas Negras,” the cantering melodies of “Low Sun,” the almost discomfiting tranquility of “Los Navegantes” or even an affectionate nod to ’70s soul on “It’s All in Your Mind,” Estevan and Alejandro braid their parts like they’re guided by a shared muse. Everything



appears effortless and spontaneous. Surely, there’s work in what they do, but you never feel it. It’s all marvelously alive, and whatever production Auerbach brings to each song, he never imposes an artificial gloss. Bathed in luxuriant echo and reverb — and splendid treatments of watery wah, new to the Hermanos Gutiérrez mix — it’s a gorgeous sonic experience that will bewitch and fascinate listeners.

You two learned to play guitar in quite different ways, and of course, there’s an age difference between you. How did that inform your approach to playing with each other?

ALEJANDRO I got inspired by my brother. He always set the musical mood at home — classical guitar, the milonga,

these very romantic, melancholy melodies. It set the tone of what I liked to hear. He went away for a while, and I missed him, so I started playing guitar. I watched YouTube tutorials and learned some simple chords, but I never liked to play covers. I always wanted to find my own way of expressing myself.

ESTEVAN I started much earlier. I had a guitar teacher at school, and he showed me the classical milonga fingerpicking style. I fell in love with it and have played that music all my life. I lived in Ecuador for a year, and when I came back my brother could play the guitar. It was amazing. I remember we started jamming, and a friend walked into the room. He said, “That’s beautiful music. Is it a cover?” We were like, “This is our music.” That was the moment. Ten seconds later we came up with the name Hermanos Gutiérrez.

Is there any kind of formula or process to how you two write together? Anything you can identify?

ESTEVAN We simply trust that our ideas and melodies will come. But we don’t look for melodies; we just play and wait for those magical moments where we go, “Wow, that was something!” Sometimes we play and we’re like, “Fuck, this is nothing good.” Most of all, we’re grateful that we can allow our feelings to flow through our bodies and guitars and then out to the listeners. That’s how I feel during a concert. We don’t have this big party at our concerts. It’s more like an experience. People tell me, “I’ve never been to a concert like this.” It’s a real concert with real music.

**“WE DON’T MAKE MUSIC FOR
OTHER PEOPLE. FOR US, IT’S
ABOUT CONNECTING WITH EACH
OTHER BY PLAYING”**

— ESTEVAN

A lot of modern guitar instrumental music is based on fleet-fingered dexterity — you know, shred. You two steer clear of that.

ESTEVAN It’s not that what those other guitarists play is wrong, but the gift my brother and I have is our energy. We’re not trying to play like anybody else.

ALEJANDRO I don’t consider myself a guitarist in that sense. I see myself as a portal to what’s happening. It’s not about shredding or showing off, and it’s not about perfection. It’s about emotion and feeling.

I want to talk about your use of a wah pedal on the new album. It’s quite a predominant sound. At first, I thought it might be an envelope filter.

ESTEVAN It’s nothing wild, really. The only new thing on *Sonido Cósmico* is a Cry Baby wah. There were no envelope filters; everything was done by us. The big recipe is the Easy Eye sound — the microphones and the amps. I played

through a Magnatone amp, which sounded amazing. I used my old 1960s Gretsch 6120, which is unique. Honestly, that’s about it. Oh, and of course, there’s my main pedal, the Strymon El Capistan [tape delay], and the Strymon Flint [tremolo and reverb].

ALEJANDRO I used this old Flot-a-tone amp that was built in Milwaukee in the ’50s. It was at Dan’s studio — they used it for organ, and it’s just great. My guitar was my Silvertone 1446 from the ’60s. Also, I should mention the chief engineer, Alan Parker. He’s a big part of Easy Eye, him and Dan. We’d hear the raw mixes on the big speakers and we’d be like, “Okay, that’s cool.”

I’m curious how the Cry Baby entered your world. Like I said, it’s a near-constant feature on this record.

ESTEVAN My brother was like, “Let’s go back to the ’60s.” We’re huge vintage lovers. He loves psychedelic cumbia from the ’60s and ’70s. I think they used a special wah-wah for their sound. Maybe a year ago, he started using the wah-wah, and I was like, “Wow, that’s cool.” I decided to buy one and check it out. We just started adding it to the album. I used it quite a bit.

ALEJANDRO I just used it on one guitar track on “Cumbia Lunar” and on my lap steel on “Misterio Verde.”

Alejandro, are you still using your Rickenbacker lap steel, the Electro NS?

ALEJANDRO That’s the one. It was built after 1938, so it has the two knobs [volume and tone]. The metal body is hollow.

Do pedal effects and sounds inform your writing or the parts you’ll play? I’m thinking of songs like “Lágrimas Negras” and “Misterio Verde,” which feature poetic treatments of reverb and echo.

ESTEVAN That’s hard to say. Well, we do love reverb and echo, that’s true. It’s grown over time. On our first album, we used an amp and a tuner. People asked what effects we used, and there were none. We started using more pedals, like the El Capistan. I don’t know how I found that sound, but it works with how I do the slapping.

ALEJANDRO We always try to be very structured and have the songs written before we go to Dan’s studio in Nashville. We tried stuff out in Switzerland, but we knew that we could explore sounds in Nashville. And I knew that I wanted to play through that Flot-a-tone amp again.

Which one of you plays those beautiful glassy arpeggios on “Abuelita”?

ESTEVAN Actually, that was Tom Bukovac. He’s one of the greatest guitar



“We don’t have this big party at our concerts,” Estevan explains. “It’s more like an experience.”

players I've ever seen. We thought he might add juice to some of the songs, and he was just crazy. He listened to the songs for 10 minutes, and he wrote down chords, went into the studio, and it was like, "Whoa!"

That's what Tom does. He's a Nashville session legend.

ESTEVAN But he could come up with four different versions of what he was hearing, and each one sounded good. We looked at each other like, "We could use that... and that... and that." He never

"I NEVER LIKED TO PLAY COVERS. I ALWAYS WANTED TO FIND MY OWN WAY OF EXPRESSING MYSELF"

— ALEJANDRO

'70s. The song "It's All in Your Mind" evokes soul music from that period.

ALEJANDRO

We both love

wanted to put his melody before our melody; he was very respectful and allowed our melodies to stand out. I have the biggest respect for Tom. He's amazing.

You mentioned "going back to the '60s and

soul. That song was special in that we wanted to play another song together with Dan. We showed him the idea and he said, "Let's do it." We started to jam in the studio, and then we kind of rewrote that song — made certain parts longer. We did one solo part where Dan is playing.

Is he playing those octave lines? They're very Wes Montgomery.

ALEJANDRO That's Dan. It's very pretty, very soulful.

Unless I'm not hearing correctly, you two never use power chords in your music.

ALEJANDRO What's a power chord? Like, rock and heavy metal?

You know, playing the root and the fifth.

ESTEVAN No, we don't do that. I don't like power chords. I always try to play with more... how do you say... I like the higher strings.

You've achieved something all artists strive for: You have a sound all your own.

I wonder, though, do you see a time when you might reinvent your style completely?

ESTEVAN I don't think so. We're very authentic onstage and in the studio. We're always the same. I don't think that we'd ever do something that's not us. Right now, we're just doing what we feel, what we love, and we're happy. [pauses] I mean, never say no, right? [laughs]

ALEJANDRO I trust in the natural progression. I mean, I love having an open mind for whatever is out there. I'm not fighting against sounding different. As long as I love it and it's what I want to do, I'm cool with whatever. But we don't look at big names or big artists and say, "Oh, we want to sound like that." It's always been very natural. If a change happens in that kind of way, I'll be very happy. ■

"I see myself as a portal to what's happening," Alejandro says. "It's not about shredding or showing off, and it's not about perfection. It's about emotion and feeling."



DOUGLAS MASON/GETTY IMAGES



Richie Sambora poses with his custom Ovation 6/12 doubleneck guitar, used on Bon Jovi's *Slippery When Wet* and *Keep the Faith* tours as well as in the "Wanted Dead or Alive" music video.





PLAYERS | **RICHIE SAMBORA**

WHAT ABOUT NOW

He says the Bon Jovi documentary didn't capture his side of the story — or the band's spirit. In a *Guitar Player* exclusive, **Richie Sambora** comes clean about the past — and talks about the new songs that define his future.

BY JOE BOSSO

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEN ROSENSTEIN

IN THE 11 YEARS since he left Bon Jovi, Richie Sambora hasn't exactly flooded the market with new music. In 2017 and '18, he teamed with his then girlfriend, Australian guitarist Orianthi, and released a pair of EPs and an album, but in the ensuing six years he's been relatively quiet.

Or has he?

"I write every day," he says. "People think I stopped working since I left Bon Jovi, but I went right back to work on solo records and the music I did with

Ori. I look at myself as a new artist. Now, other people might not — they relate to me for what I've done, and I love what I did with Bon Jovi. I'm not ever saying anything bad about that because we did a bunch of damage in this world, and we had a great time. But right now, it's a new game."

Seated in his kitchen after a three-hour photo shoot, Sambora motions to the array of recording equipment set up in his adjacent living room. "It's my laboratory here," he says. "Everything works. It's got great mics, Neve

compressors and all that good stuff. It all sounds great.” It’s here that he’s been whacking away at songs with his longtime friend and producer Bob Rock, along with a group of musicians that includes Paul McCartney touring drummer Abe Laboriel Jr. and Mötley Crüe’s Tommy Lee, bassists James “Hutch” Hutchinson and Paul Bushnell, and keyboardists Adam Greenholtz and Zac Rae. “It’s great to work with Bob Rock again, and we’ve got a beautiful team,” Sambora exclaims. “Being in the studio with real human beings, it’s been one of the most pleasurable experiences I’ve had in a long time.”

Rather than releasing an entire album at once, Sambora — like many artists in recent years — has been posting a new song online each week. He doesn’t rule out a full-length set at some point, and to that end he claims to have amassed as much as three albums’ worth of material. But for the time

being, the one-track-at-a-time approach feels like the way to go. “The whole concept of actually sitting down and absorbing an album in one listen, people don’t have the time to do it,” he says. “The world is a crazy place these days. People are just trying to survive. I think what people can handle has changed.”

The three songs that were available at press time are far and away the strongest tunes that Sambora has delivered in what feels like ages. “I Pray” is a surging rocker that brims with indefatigable positivity and packs enough old-school fist-in-the-air hooks for six more songs. His voice is chesty

and robust, and when he fires off a short but showy guitar solo, he still sounds like he’s got something to prove. The soulful, midtempo acoustic ballad “Livin’ Alone” is richly poignant but not excessively sentimental, and on the rollicking and nostalgic “Songs That Wrote My Life,” the guitarist runs down his own musical memory lane, clicking off titles like “Tumblin’ Dice,” “American Pie” and “All the Young Dudes” while incorporating “‘Scuse me while I kiss the sky” in several refrains.

One doesn’t have to search too hard to notice a maturity and reflective quality in Sambora’s new lyrics. He turns 65 this year, which qualifies him for Social Security, although he obviously doesn’t need it. “Sixty-five is a big number,” he says. “When I listen to my stuff, I go, That doesn’t sound like a 65-year-old dude. It doesn’t match up.” Still, he doesn’t dispute the impulse to look back. “You have to

★
**“IT WAS MY JOB.
 IF ANYBODY TOLD JON
 THE TRUTH, IT WAS ME”**





bring all the wisdom to the table, all you've learned through everything. I'm talking about me — the experiences and opportunities I've had. There's nothing but gratitude. I feel very proud because I believe that music is noble and it has integrity. It makes people happy, and it comforts them. I continue to try to write songs like that: Hey, you feel like that? I feel like that too."

Whether it's coincidental or not, at the same time that Sambora has been issuing new music, he's been back in the public eye by way of *Thank You, Goodnight: The Bon Jovi Story*, a four-part docu-series that recounts the group's rise from playing New Jersey Shore clubs to their staggering mid-'80s global domination. Entertaining and engrossing, the film dispenses with standard-issue rock-star hagiography as it depicts — in unflinching detail — singer Jon Bon Jovi's ongoing struggles with vocal cord issues and his brave attempts to regain his voice through various treatments, including surgery. The multilayered doc also delves into the relationship between Sambora and Jon, and how the two devolved from young and loyal soulmates ruling stadiums to uncommunicative strangers,

their bond finally severing with the guitarist's departure in 2013.

Sambora was interviewed on camera for the documentary — his total involvement with the production — and soon after the series began airing expressed his dissatisfaction with how various aspects were portrayed, specifically the circumstances that led to him leaving the band. But he also believes the series didn't fully capture the true zeitgeist of the musical phenomenon he helped create.

"What the documentary missed was the unbelievable feeling of being on the world stage and your songs hitting people in the heart — making people happy, keeping them company," he says. "And I think that's the essential part of what music does. I would've just celebrated the songs and the fact that these kids from New Jersey had that kind of impact on the world."

As detailed as the documentary is, it still leaves some questions unanswered. It's been a while since you talked about your time in Bon Jovi. Was it hard to be candid — Mostly candid.

Oh. Okay...

Listen, man, there were a lot of inconsistencies at different places. I myself would rather celebrate what we actually did — as a family, being in a rock and roll band and being married to four other guys and being in close quarters and working as hard as we did for so many years. Everybody was going to go through stuff. People were dealing with fame and fortune. But as for me, I just worked harder.

Can you speak more about what you thought the documentary missed on a musical level?

The contributions that people made. They should be hailed for that, and especially for the songs and how they became known around the world. And the fact that we actually did it for that many years together — it's a miracle, for God's sakes! I have gratitude for it every day. And that stuff I was feeling for the 32 years I spent in the band — from the people of the planet and the fans that came to see us — that was not reflected in this 40-year celebration. It was not reflected. But I don't know... Everybody has their perspective, right?

I remember going to stand in line to see my heroes when I was growing up. Because there was no MTV or computers — there was nothing. We had *Don Kirshner's Rock Concert* and *The Midnight Special*. I stood in lines to get tickets. So when it was me suddenly standing on a stadium stage and feeling the emotional impact from being a big part of it, I looked at every guy and gal as being me.

Let's talk about making that music. In your songwriting partnership, what did Jon bring to you, and what did you bring to him?

We both brought everything. I mean, you could listen to my solo records — when I was in the band or after I left the band — and they're pretty consistent on the basis of sincerity. The people that I worked with were just unbelievable.

But when you're in a band like Bon Jovi, it's like this big, big thing, and you don't really have a lot of space to explore other avenues. And so... I thought it was time to take a break, man.

You've said that you don't feel that the documentary painted an accurate account of your exit from the band.
Perspective.

What was inaccurate?

There were a bunch of reasons behind my leaving — a lot of personal things that were happening to me. I... [*pauses, thinks*] I can't say anything about that — real life happens. On top of that, it's the amalgamation of being in one of the biggest bands in the world and still having to deal with normal, everyday people problems. I still do.

You were about to say something, but you stopped yourself.

No, no, no. I had to ask myself, Am I not telling you something?

You have said you were dealing with family issues at the time you needed to sort out.

Yeah. You know, when you're away for so

long... I mean, the Lord knows I was never allergic to work. But at that point my family needed me. I probably should have left after [2009's] *The Circle*, because I was really getting unhappy.

Unhappy musically?

No. Hey, look, it was a family. If you're together for 32 years, and especially when you're in close quarters and you go through all that kind of stuff, there's a lot of disagreements. But my talent and my passion were just being expelled a bit. And you know what? That's Jon's prerogative. But when he's not saying anything, and I'm just getting that "you're not happy either" kind of attitude. And I'm going, "What? What?"

Did you ever express that to Jon? Did you communicate your dissatisfaction with the situation and what you wanted?

Sure, sure. And maybe I was... The article we're doing should not be about

Jon, but you know, he calls himself a benevolent dictator. And there you go — great. His perspective is going to be his perspective. And my perspective is a lot different than that.

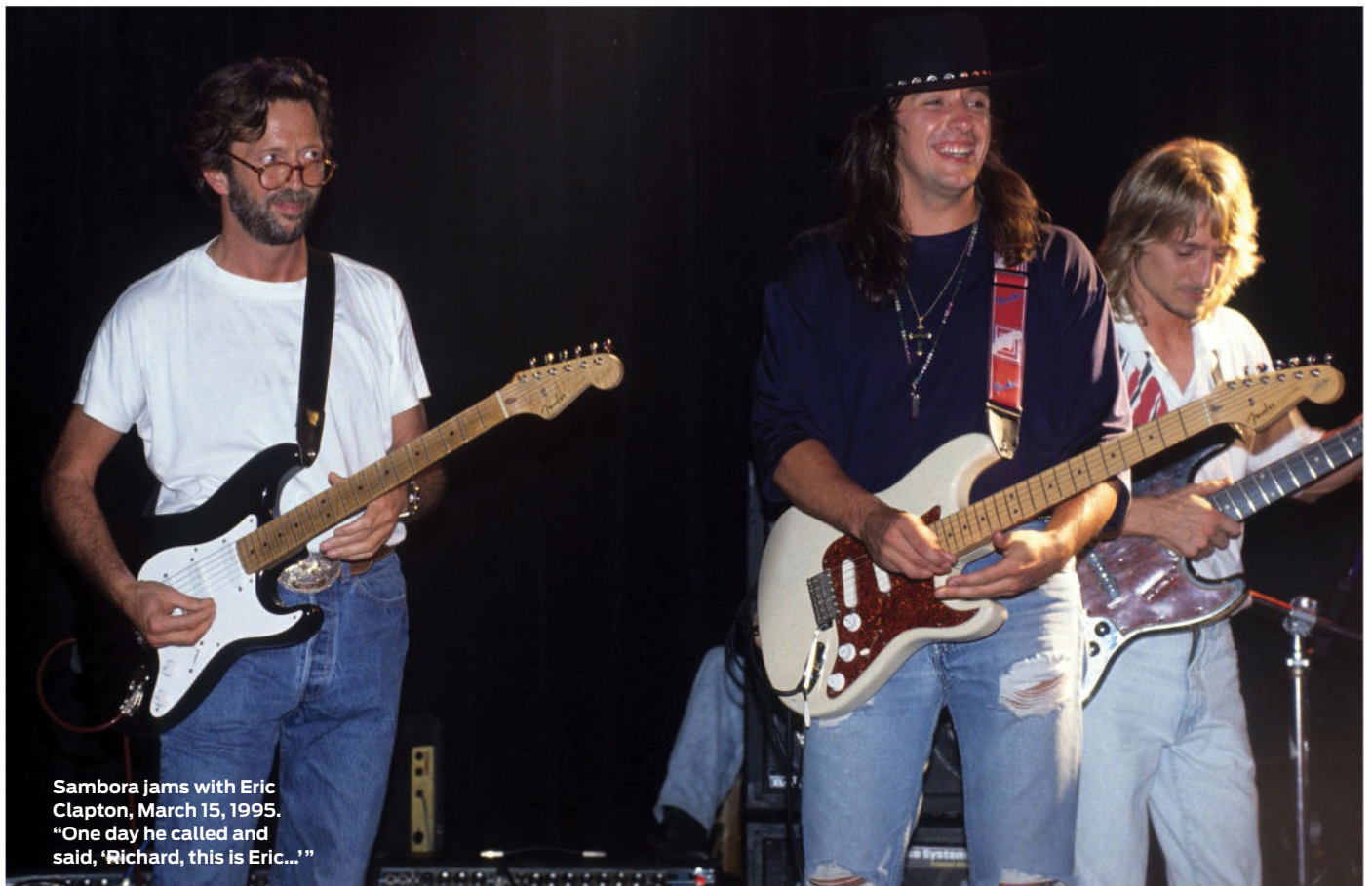
I'm a Jersey guy. You and Jon are Jersey guys. We're not always known for our moments of restraint with friends. Sometimes we fight.

A row. You have a row.

Right. But in the documentary, it was said that you two never really had a blowout.

Listen, there were discrepancies and fights — I do things differently sometimes. But I was in a band, and I considered myself a main part of that band. I was there and I did just as much work as Jon did — easily.

Going back to your question about the songs and the songwriting: See, I was also a fan of his. I could write Jon better than he could, almost. You know



Sambora jams with Eric Clapton, March 15, 1995. "One day he called and said, 'Richard, this is Eric...'"

KEVIN MAZUR/WIREIMAGE



Sambora poses with his 1958 Gibson Flying V, one of just 81 made in that initial year of the model's production.



**Richie lounges with
his 1959 Sunburst
Gibson Les Paul.**



HOME ADVANTAGE

Never mind the studio. Richie Sambora created his quartet of new tunes in the comfort of his house.

BY ANDREW DALY

“MY HOUSE, MAN, it’s a music church,” Richie Sambora exclaims over Facetime from his Los Angeles home. “I’m used to paying two thousand dollars a day to go to the studio, but welcome to Kitchen Studios! It’s just off the kitchen here — where I keep my guys fed, because I work them hard!”

Sambora chuckles, but the reality is that all four of his new songs were cut in the comfort of his home, and why not? After all, he had its architecture tweaked for maximum sonic value. “I recessed every ceiling, all at different levels,” he notes, explaining the effort made to reduce reflections that can ruin a recording. “And every room sounds great.” Here, Sambora walks us through his writing and recording comeback effort, song by song. And, he adds, “I’ve got a few more tracks in the can that I plan to release.”

“I PRAY”

“I wrote ‘I Pray’ because there’s a lot of messed-up crap in the world. But I also realize that I’ve

had a chance to tour around the world and impact people’s lives in so many ways. So ‘I Pray’ is about hoping that, despite the world’s troubled state, we can find a way to ease the pain.

“I’ve been known to use a talk box over the years, and

guitar, which is just a slab of wood with a Floyd Rose and a [Seymour Duncan SH-4] Jeff Beck humbucker.”

“BELIEVE (IN MIRACLES)”

“Writing this song gave me fits. There were several versions of it before I found the finished one. I had to think to myself, Do I believe in miracles? *Should* I believe in miracles? The theme is similar to ‘I Pray,’ only it’s about thinking miracles can happen, even though the world is going to hell.

“Writing It was really a struggle. The song has a bunch of different movements, and when it comes out of the solo it’s totally different again. But once I had it the way I wanted, I said to myself, Okay, you’re a songwriter now! At the same time, I give all the credit to the musicians and producers. Many of them have been with me since the ‘90s, and when something moves me, I can say,



“WRITING IT WAS REALLY A STRUGGLE. BUT ONCE I HAD IT THE WAY I WANTED, I SAID TO MYSELF, OKAY, YOU’RE A SONGWRITER NOW!”

I pulled it out for this track. It’s an effect that I just love. I remember performing in a bowling alley in New Jersey when I was a kid, and even then I had a talk box — it was one of the originals. For this track, I paired it with the [Electro-Harmonix] POG octave pedal and an original Klon. I used so many guitars on these songs, but this one features my original Bon Jovi *Slippery When Wet*

‘I’m hearing it this way,’ and they make it happen.

“I recorded the guitar using a combination of amps, including my orange Marshall ‘Plexi’ from the ‘60s and a Hiwatt from the same era. For the solo, I used my left-handed Strat from the ‘60s, which is a custom-color red and just sounds so nasty! I think I used the POG but placed it low in the mix to provide some subtle support.”

“SONGS THAT WROTE MY LIFE”

“This song is my way of looking back on the things that influenced me. I was into the blues when I was a kid, and I was always a huge fan of the three Kings, too. ‘Songs That Wrote My Life’ is about that. It’s a fun song about remembering all the music that I’ve loved. It doesn’t have a lot of solos because — and I’m very proud to say this — I’m really all about serving the song, not going crazy with the guitars. I used my ‘57 Les Paul on this, along with a bunch of other guitars.

“There are just so many different guitars on these songs that it’s difficult to recall every one and where I played it. If you were to look around my house, I’ve got my amps out, and I bring all sorts of guitars out: Mary Kay Strats, some of my favorite Martins, old Gibsons... For amps, I probably used the Plexi and the Hiwatt, but the star of the show is my Dumble, which is [serial] number four! I got that in a trade for some other gear. So yeah, that amp is definitely on here.”

“LIVIN’ ALONE”

“This is a song that I started writing when I was 19 years old and still living in New Jersey. I never finished it or put it on my other albums. For some reason, all these years later, it finally caught up with me.

“It came up again during the pandemic, when I was home and was alone. For some reason, I was inspired to bring it out and finally finish it. I’m really proud of the way it came out and of the people who worked with me on it. I used two of my old 12-strings that I’ve had forever, including one of my older Martins and the [MC-12 41 Richie Sambora] signature model.”

what I mean? I would say, “No, maybe if you sang *that* instead...” Because the guy’s, like, this really good-looking guy, you know what I mean? The girls wanted to bring dudes to the show, and the guys are going, “I don’t need the pressure,” because he’s a good-looking heartthrob and that kind of thing.

Did things start to change for you around 1991, when Jon formed his own management company?

No, no. I think the bond was closer then, because Jon and I started to really manage the whole situation. We cut our bills down, and both of us prided ourselves on being businessmen. We got a chance to be involved with the business and become record company presidents, signing groups like Skid Row and Cinderella. We could do other things besides our albums and solo records.

So you felt you were part of the organization?

Oh, easily. I was a main part of the organization and also a main part of the business structure. It wasn’t called Sambora. Cool — I didn’t want it to be. We came up with a band name — Bon Jovi. It sounds really cool. It means “good life” in Italian. Rolls off the tongue nice. I never had a problem with any of that.

In 2007, you went into rehab for the first time. What did you feel you needed to work on at that point?

Well, first, I’ve been in rehab twice, and I went sober both times. I learned a lot, and listen, I’m not bullshitting you — you can ask — I became like a counselor to people. I was going, “Hold on a minute. Let’s go see where the demons are.” I did all the work, and I actually enjoyed it. For an adult to be able to take the time to refocus his life and do that is extraordinary. The psychiatrists and everybody were wonderful. I enjoy therapy.

That’s one of the other things that was reflected in the documentary: that people thought I was, what, a drunkard? Like I didn’t show up one day because I was high? That doesn’t make any sense

to anybody. That’s an incongruity. There was obviously an amalgamation of a shitload of things over a 31-and-a-half-year period. We couldn’t talk at that point. We weren’t talking — we weren’t communicating. And I was like, “That means it’s stale.”

“Stale.” That word pops up in the documentary during the recording of the *What About Now* album. You said the band was stale and that it was your job to say so. It was my job. Look, if anybody told Jon the truth, it was me.

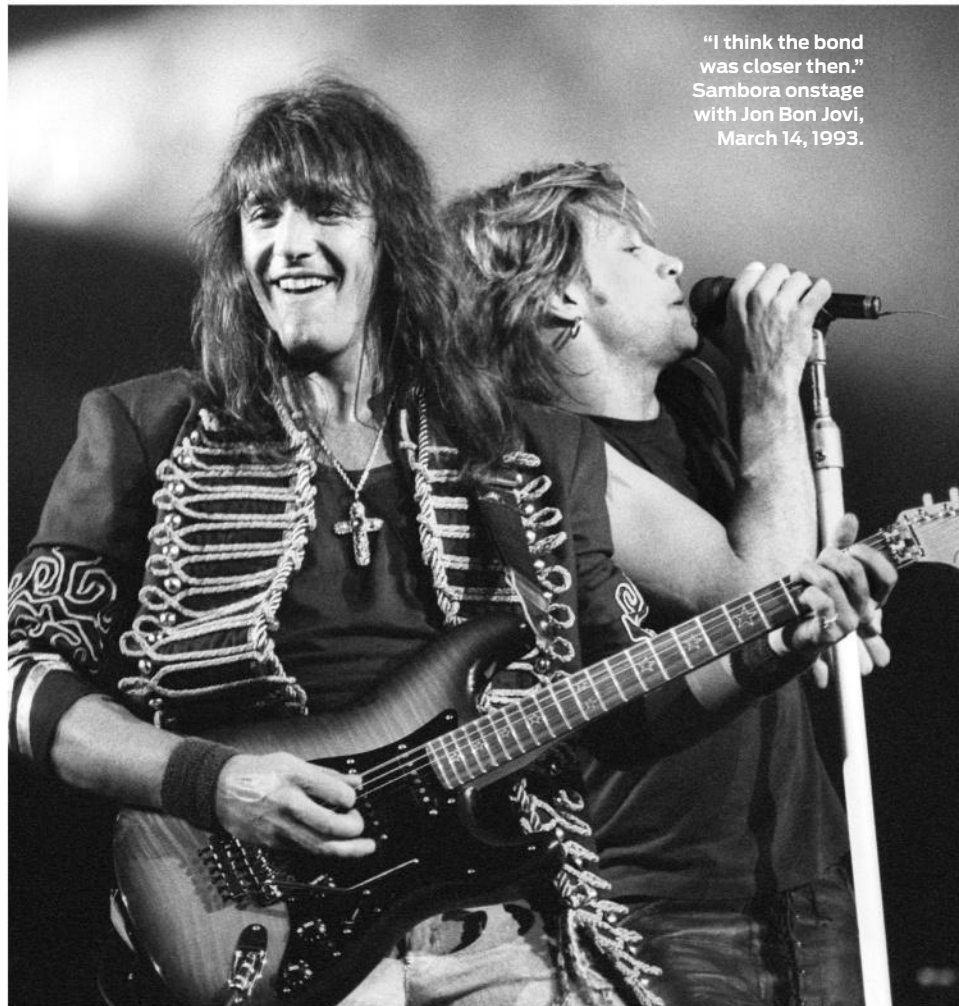
But when you did that, were you being heard? Did you feel that your opinions were being addressed?

No, I didn’t feel like that... I had just finished the tour for *Aftermath of the Lowdown*, a solo record that I made.

I got off the road after playing with these great musicians — it was pretty sharp — and I’m leading the band. I was killing it, and people were happy. It was a lot of fun.

And so I came off that and was back with the band. And Jon just said, “Well, you don’t have to worry about preparing anything. Me and [producer John] Shanks and everybody, we wrote all these songs. Don’t worry about it. Just come to the studio.” I said, “Play me a song.” And he did. And I said, “That doesn’t sound like Bon Jovi.” You know why? Because I was that part of the nucleus.

This is not a bragging thing, but I still had six co-writes on that album, including the first single [“*Because We Can*”]. That pissed him off, I think, because he just didn’t want the input anymore from me.



“I think the bond was closer then.” Sambora onstage with Jon Bon Jovi, March 14, 1993.



Sambora, Bon Jovi and Alec John Such perform at Nakano Sun Plaza, Tokyo, April 20, 1985.

Did you ever say to Jon, “Why don’t you want my input?” You two were a team, and you were good together.

Of course! Of course. Like I said, it gets so big and encompasses everything in your life. That’s why the Stones take two years off between what they do, and it doesn’t matter. It’s just like, when they come back, they’re back.

By this time, John Shanks was producing the band. Did you get along with him?

I did at the beginning, sure.

But eventually... not so much?

I guess. Clearly, while I was on the road with my group, there was a different plan that I would not be involved. And I’m not complaining. I’m going, “I understand, but I’m still around to help out.” “The Fighter,” a song that Jon wrote, it had a simple acoustic part, and I thought I could make it better. I’m saying, “You know how many acoustic parts I played? Three-hundred songs that we wrote?” I was trying to make it interesting, and they were both like [folds his arms, frowns] “Hmm...” I went, “Do you want to just make it that way? Okay.” See? Not a band.

In the end, John Shanks ended up playing the part on that song, “The Fighter” — and you weren’t happy about it.

“WHAT THE DOCUMENTARY MISSED WAS THE UNBELIEVABLE FEELING OF HAVING YOUR SONGS HIT PEOPLE IN THE HEART”

I left and said, “Okay, you play it. If you don’t want me to craft this and make this something like ‘Wanted Dead or Alive...’”

Why wouldn’t they have wanted you to do that?

Ask them. [laughs] Seriously. And I’m going, “It’s gonna take, like, 15 minutes.”

You bowed out of the tour for *What About Now* in March 2013, just about one month into a run that was scheduled to go through the rest of the year.

Yeah. And it’s rock and roll, man — I’m not making any excuses — but I had to make a decision. It was a tough one. Unpopular.

Had you already decided you were out? Was it a *fait accompli* in your mind?

Oh yeah. Why would I think I would be welcomed back at that point? Number one, no one understood personally what was going on with me. And then also the inter-band politics — that happens all the time. That just is what it is.

It’s surprising that nobody said, “Jon and Richie have to work this out,” for the good of everybody personally and for the band.

Hold on, listen. I said “yes” the whole way. Right? But when Jon goes out and says, “I cannot sing...” I don’t know. If I had that kind of problem and had to face 70,000 people every night... That’ll get you a little wound up.

So it sounds like you were both dealing with personal issues. Let’s say you did get back on the plane and commit to the tour. What do you think would have happened?

I wouldn’t have been able to stay. It was too much at that point. And look, don’t cry for me, Argentina, baby. I’m good. I did what I had to do as a man for my family, and I don’t regret leaving; I regret how it happened. But I had to just evaporate. The communication level... I might as well have been driving my head into a brick wall.

Phil X had already subbed for you on some shows in 2011. Did you know that he’d come back in 2013?





★
“I SAID TO JON,
“TWO GUITARS, TWO
MICS. LET’S SHOW ‘EM.
LET’S BE DIFFERENT””



No. How would I know? I think Phil’s great. The boy can play. I mean, Shanks can play. They can play, but they ain’t me. Listen, I’m not better than anybody else, but I will bring the passion to every performance.

In the documentary, Jon is asked if the two of you ever sat down to resolve your relationship since your departure. He said, “Not for lack of fucking trying.”

We’re talking perspective here, my brother. And that’s the only thing I’m saying, because facts will stand for themselves. That’s all. The truth will stand for itself. And this is a Jon line. He says, “rock and roll is not a life sentence” in that perspective. Now, for me, the reason I said, “Yes, I would go back to the band, and I would go back to the band now,” is because of the fans.

You’re saying that you would go back. At times, Jon has indicated a willingness to reunite with you.

Has that happened? *[laughs]* No, it didn’t happen. Of course not. I don’t know. It’s the politics of dancing, I guess. Who wrote that song?

It seems like you’re two guys who walk right up to that line, but no one steps over it. I know Jon is unsure that he can do a tour again. But what about you going back for an album?

Don’t you think I asked? Do you think any of the songs I’ve put out now would have been “It’s My Life” for Bon Jovi? “I Pray”? If I did that with Jon and he sang it with me? If he sang “Songs That Wrote My Life”?

You’ve asked him?

Yes! He said, “No, me and John Shanks got 30 songs, and we’re going in the studio and making a new record.”

Is it difficult for you to watch Bon Jovi without you? Have you listened to any of the records they made since you left? Or do you have to kind of tune it out?

I have listened. And look, I’m not going to... I can’t. It just is. There was a lot of common ground that was built from a lot of different places that are nuanced

in a way that is indescribable, really. It would take a book to explain it, and who cares? Everybody's asking me to write a book — who I did, what I did. Everybody knows what I did.

You go back a way with Bob Rock. He produced Bon Jovi's *Keep the Faith*.

Dude! *Slippery When Wet*, New Jersey [both engineered by Rock, produced by Bruce Fairbairn]. Bob and I worked hard, and I was a kid that wanted to live in the studio. He taught me a lot about everything: recording, compression, microphones and placement. I was always that guy that said, "I want to hang with you." We actually broke through together. I mean, I first heard Bob on a record by the band Honeymoon Suite — they had one hit or something, right? I loved the way the record sounded. I didn't want to sound like them, but I went, Boy, oh boy, I got "You Give Love a Bad Name," "Livin' on a Prayer," "Wanted Dead or Alive," "Never Say Goodbye" — I got that stuff in my pocket. Let's do that.

Does Bob have a special way of drawing great performances out of you?

Absolutely. All the guys I've worked with — Don Was, Neil Dorfsman, Luke Ebbin — they all brought it out of me in different ways. But Bob and I had this '70s rock and roll guitar sensibility. He understood the roots of what had influenced me. When the band was out there opening for the Scorpions and Judas Priest and Kiss, we were getting shit thrown at us because we're playing, [sings] 'Ooooh, she's a little runaway.' I turned the guitars way up to make it rock hard. It seemed like everybody else in the band was on the same page. And Bob and Bruce both understood that. When I walked in the studio and I heard our sounds as they had recorded them — the drum sounds, the guitar sounds, sounds I hadn't heard before that...

They knew the musical depth of my palette and the broad range of what I wanted to achieve. It's Hendrix for me, and it's improvisation. And what does Jimi do? He's singing through his fingers. I aim for the same thing. When

I'm doing a solo, especially if I'm making pop records, I have to make it a musical piece that people are going to remember.

You took part in Bon Jovi's Rock and Roll Hall of Fame induction. Did it feel good to play with the guys again?

Yeah, man: 'Cause it made people happy.

But did it make *you* happy?

Yeah — *to make people happy*. [He pauses and smiles.] No, it's true; I'm not making a joke. It was amazing. The rhythm section of Tico Torres and Alec John

Such, and then Hugh McDonald — we were rough and tumble. We stood up. We were one of those bands that got stuff thrown at us. Tico wore a Yankees batting helmet, and I was hearing quarters and nickels and shit going off his head. But hey, we got through it.

People are resistant to some bands as they're becoming popular, and then they finally go, "You know what? I do like them." That happened to Bon Jovi.

And you know why that is? It comes down to the songs. Like with "Wanted Dead or Alive" — I really wanted to bring acoustic guitar back to radio, like Led Zeppelin and "Over the Hills and Far Away." And it was huge.

When you and Jon performed "Dead or Alive" unplugged on TV, it changed a lot of people's perceptions about you guys.

I said to Jon, "Two guitars, two mics — let's show 'em. Let's be different."

★
"THE EXPERIENCES AND OPPORTUNITIES I'VE HAD. THERE'S NOTHING BUT GRATITUDE"



With Buddy Guy at the Grammys, February 8, 2015. "I was accepted by the blues community," Sambora says. "But I did the work."

LESTER COHEN/WIREIMAGE



“‘Cause it made people happy.” Sambora performs with Bon Jovi at the group’s Rock Hall induction ceremony, April 14, 2018.

And then everybody did an unplugged album after that.

Purely on a friendship level, do you miss those days?

Of course I do. But it’s like a lifetime ago now. It’s truthfully a lifetime ago. But it is beyond Bon Jovi. There is life beyond Bon Jovi. There has to be. I mean, what are you going to do? You’re going to depend on this one person to dictate your life for you? Hey, 31 and a half years, man. That’s a... [pats his own back]. I mean, that’s a clap of the hand.

So... You’re on the cover of *Guitar Player* magazine.

For the first time since... forever.

Do you feel as if you’ve been given your due as a guitar player?

It depends on who you’re talking to. I think a musician or anybody who makes records would understand that those records don’t happen by accident.

A famous guitarist once told me he was upset because he wasn’t mentioned in the same breath as guys like Beck, Page,

Clapton and Hendrix...

Well how about your teachers, the ones who helped you become a guitarist? They’re the unsung heroes. But you know what? They’re *my* heroes.

You know, when Jeff Beck died so damn suddenly... I had spent time with him, and we were friends. It’s the same with Jimmy [Page]. He signed me when I was 19 years old [*Mercy*, Sambora’s early 1980s group, was signed to Led Zeppelin’s *Swan Song* record label], but I didn’t really meet him until I was 28, in London. We became really good friends and played together a bunch. And then there’s Buddy Guy and Eric Clapton... You meet those kinds of people when you get inducted into that echelon.

In 1991, when I was finishing up *Stranger in This Town*, I wrote a song, “Mr. Bluesman,” about a young man like me following blues guys around. I asked Eric if he would play on it, and he obliged. One day he called and said, “Richard, this is Eric...” I’m like [drops his mouth in amazement] because I’m still crazy and starstruck. He says, “Buddy, George [Harrison] and I are playing the Roxy tonight. You’re going to come and

jam.” I’m like, “No, I’m watching the fucking *Price Is Right*, Eric!? ... I will be there, I promise you!” Meanwhile, I’m shitting my pants.

So Harrison didn’t show up, but it was Eric, Buddy, John Lee Hooker... and me.

Not too bad.

Wooo! They’re gonna bust the kid’s balls! I played every lick I knew about three times faster — whatever I had to do to get through the whole thing. Buddy’s like, “Come on, come on!” and Eric’s just laughing. We blew the roof off the place, and we were backstage at the end. Hooker looked at me and said [affects gravelly voice], “Hey boy, was that you playing them strings up there?” And I went, “Yes, sir.” He said, “You keep playing. You’re good.” I got on my knees and kissed his hand.

Every time Buddy was around or I was anywhere in the vicinity, we’d just call each other. B.B. was the same way. I was accepted by the blues community. But I did the work, man. I did the stuff. I played the blues clubs for a reason, and I loved every second of it. 🎸

NEVER BE THE SAME

Four decades in with Crowded House's ever-changing lineup, **Neil Finn** takes a trial-and-error approach to music — and guitar. “The mistakes make it interesting,” he says.

BY GARY GRAFF

CROWDED HOUSE'S RETURN five years ago was certainly a welcome one. The Australian-formed group had been dormant since 2016, when it played four shows at the Sydney Opera House and was inducted into the Australian Recording Industry Association's (ARIA) Hall of Fame. So frontman and co-founder Neil Finn's announcement of resumption and a new lineup — with original bassist Nick Seymour, original producer Mitchell Froom on keyboards, and Finn's sons Liam and Elroy on guitar and drums, respectively — was greeted with great anticipation, even if the pandemic delayed the group's return to the stage.

“It does feel like it's got a really good future, because everyone is super excited,” Finn enthused during the spring of 2021, when the new Crowded House released *Dreamers Are Waiting*, the band's first new album in 11 years. “We want to push it. We've got five people equally committed to exploring what it could be.”

That he meant business is proven by the new *Gravity Stairs* (Lester/BMG), Crowded House's eighth studio album overall. Produced by the band with longtime engineer Steven Schram, its 11 tracks are brimming with the particular musical magic that Finn, Seymour and drummer Paul Hester — who committed suicide in 2005 at the age of 46 — began making in 1985 as the Mullaneyes, before Capitol Records insisted on a name change. The melodies are, as is Crowded House's wont, rich and memorable, usually by the second chorus. The soundscape is intricately orchestrated with nuanced layers of guitars, Froom's Hammond B-3 accents, and lushly executed vocal harmonies that have always been Crowded House trademarks but now boast a familial potency thanks to having three Finns onboard.

The House, of course, has a strong foundation. Construction began in New Zealand, where Finn grew up as the youngest of four children. Brother Tim's musical aspirations rubbed off on Neil, who started playing guitar at age eight,

after Tim went off to boarding school in Auckland. They wound up playing together in the band Split Enz when Tim invited Neil to join during 1976 to replace co-founder Phil Judd. Neil quickly became a dominant force, sharing lead vocal duties with Tim and becoming the group's primary songwriter with tunes like the worldwide hit “I Got You.”

Finn formed the Mullaneyes in 1984 with Split Enz drummer Hester and Seymour — the younger brother of Hunters & Collectors' Mark Seymour — as well as another guitarist, Craig Hooper, who left just before Crowded House recorded its self-titled 1986 debut album. The band was a hit out of the box — *Crowded House* was number one and six-times Platinum in Australia, and also a million-seller in America. The singles “Don't Dream It's Over” and “Something So Strong” were worldwide hits, and even though the set represented Crowded House's commercial peak, it established a standard of quality that's kept people paying attention ever since.

Along the way, Finn has guided the band through an array of sonic and stylistic adventures, deflecting expectations whether it was the artistic moodiness of 1988's sophomore release *Temple of Low Men* or the sophisticated constructs on 1991's *Woodface* (home of other enduring favorites “Weather With You” and “Fall at Your Feet”) and 1993's *Together Alone*. The group took a couple



ABE MORA

of hiatuses along the way and made some membership changes — Tim Finn and Supertramp adjunct Mark Hart both logged time in the lineup, and Liam and Elroy Finn made their first appearances as guests on 2007's *Time on Earth* and served as touring members afterward.

Dad, meanwhile, has released four solo albums plus one collaboration with Liam (*Lightsleeper*, in 2018) and another with Paul Kelly (*Goin' Your Way*, five years earlier). The elder Finn and his wife, Sharon, also put together a side project called Pajama Club in which he plays drums and she plays bass in addition to their other instruments.

Crowded House's 2019 reformation was precipitated by Neil Finn's tenure with Fleetwood Mac — along with Mike Campbell from Tom Petty's Heartbreakers — during its final tour, in 2018–2019. Afterward, Finn recalls, "I was quite keen to turn around and do something creative, in the studio. I realized I had my own good band — maybe slightly

more humble in terms of success, but equally profound in my mind. The day after the tour finished, Crowded House were in rehearsal in Los Angeles. It was fantastic. That energy went right into that [rehearsal] and making new songs."

**"WHAT BANDS
BRING IS A SENSE
OF DIMENSION THAT
LETS THE LIGHT INTO
THE ARRANGEMENT"**

That, of course, yielded *Dreamers Are Waiting* — which had to be finished remotely during the pandemic — and the tour that followed. And now we have *Gravity Stairs* and Neil Finn at home in New Zealand with "the little toys that are around me" — a piano, a microphone, a Mellotron and recording devices. "I bring a guitar and bass in here occasionally, and I just make things from scratch," he says. *Gravity Stairs* is only the latest of what he expects to be a lot of things that will be made by the current Crowded House, which he doesn't dream will be over any time soon.

Was there any doubt five years ago that you were resuming Crowded House as a going concern?

Not really. I mean, we were awash with possibility at the moment, and having done a lot of touring, we were feeling like we were just getting started. There's nothing like playing a lot of shows to make a band kick up a few gears and trust each other and just relish the prospect of what might be possible.

Did it feel like yet another new era for Crowded House?

It is, yeah. But it's got a strange feeling of also returning to the source because of the presence of Mitchell Froom. And even Liam and Elroy, who bring with them a fresh energy and vigor, they have a life experience from right at the beginning, in the tour bus, hanging out with the band, and at sound

A young Neil (right) and Tim Finn perform with Split Enz at Pier 84 in New York City, June 25, 1982.



AL PEREIRA/GETTY IMAGES/MICHAEL OCHS



ABOVE LEFT:
Finn strums an acoustic onstage in Melbourne, Australia, 1998.

ABOVE RIGHT:
Performing with Crowded House at the Paradiso in Amsterdam, July 21, 1988.

LOWER RIGHT:
Crowded House in 1993. (from left) Paul Hester, Finn, Nick Seymour and Mark Hart, in Utrecht, Netherlands.

checks. Liam was doing guitar changes for me at the age of three. Elroy, on the other hand, showed more interest in turning off the main power for the lights 30 seconds before we were to go onstage — he actually did that. So it's new, but familiar, and the ethos and the humor and the aesthetic of Crowded House is deeply ingrained in all of us.

What's the greatest difference you hear in this version of the band?

The presence of these two guys, Liam and Elroy. They've had a lot of experience as songwriters, arrangers, performers. I hear combinations in what they bring of things they've done on their own and their experience growing up with [Crowded House]. Elroy's drumming is really impressive, and onstage he's come into his own as a very dynamic drummer with a beautiful, steady feel as well. He learned a lot of the ways he drums from Paul Hester, both directly and indirectly.

And Liam will have ideas for subverting the soundscape with pedals that wouldn't occur to me, but they're part of his thing. They've added quite a lot to it.

What kind of evolution do you hear in the band from *Dreamers Are Waiting* to *Gravity Stairs*?

That's a tricky question, because music just pops out in a very mysterious way all along, really. I think what bands bring is a sense of dimension that lets the light into the arrangement in a way you can't do on your own, 'cause anything you come up with is designed to paper over the cracks of your ideas and not expose them; whereas anything a band does is to sort of open them up to new possibilities. So you sit there and go, Okay, I wouldn't have done that, but I kinda like it, and it's letting a bit more light into my idea, so...

It's hard to point to specific tunes or a particular song, but there are some compositions Liam and Elroy have been involved with that are suggestive of a new direction. The youngsters — the comparative youngsters — are informing the process in a really cool way on songs like "Blurry Grass" and "Thirsty" and "The Howl." There's some indications of new directions there.

So what are those things you hear on *Gravity Stairs* that feel new?

BELOW TOP:
Touring for the
group's 1986
self-titled debut,
Rockford, Illinois,
March 14, 1987.

BOTTOM: The Finn
Brothers launch
Everyone Is Here,
their first album in
eight years, with a
show in London's
Regent's Park,
August 8, 2004.

Like I said, it's really hard to be more specific because my whole experience of music is very mysterious. I don't sit down, ever, really, and go, Okay, I'm gonna write a song today about this thing and I've got this feeling and I want it to be like an R&B song, or I want it to be like an English '60s kind of song. I never approach music like that. I always start with my headphones on — I start to build atmospheres and make things up from scratch. It's not a conscious process. I really rely on my subconscious delivering, and then I'll follow that thread, whatever it is.

How do you tend to start that creative process?

On piano, guitars... whatever. I often start with a drum machine or a loop or something that'll just keep me concentrating. It's like you're trying to sell

yourself on the idea before you've even had it by creating an atmosphere in which to operate.

And I pore over old jams. Like, I'll jam on the piano for half an hour, or a guitar, and I'll go through and find something. It may only be for 10 seconds, but it pricks my ear up and I go, Okay, I'll separate that and put it into a new context and maybe make a loop out of it or add a few things to it and just try not to be too conscious or judgmental while I'm doing that. I'll make several demos, and at some point I'll sing over it, and at that point I'm on the trail of a song and I'll make a deeper demo.

What on *Gravity Stairs* was drawn from things that you've had around for awhile?

Well, they've all been in demo form at some point or another. For instance, the last track on the record, "Night Song," is actually quite an unusual song in that it slips between time signatures and things. But the whole thing came from a jam I had on a Prophet synthesizer. I don't know how to play synthesizer, but I found a sound on it that was really fun. It had overtones and was suggestive of different chords, and I just jammed over it for a half hour and actually made a 20-minute piece of music from it by adding guitars and piano before I even tried to make it into a song. And that delivered what is the closing track on the record. If you use headphones you'll hear in the background a woozy, curly little synthesizer sound that was the original impetus for the song.

Once you have all that done, is there a methodology for how you layer in and orchestrate the guitars, which is a real hallmark of the Crowded House sound?

It's often the next stage after I've done a jam and I've identified some things that are quite interesting or cool. My normal thing on guitar is to try and find blurriness and add that to whatever I'm jamming on, and through that to get an unusual combination of chords or something that suggests a melody. I really try and keep it in the blurry, abstract zone for as long as I can in those early stages so I allow possibilities to exist and just put myself into the ether somewhere so I can latch on to something.

I'm not really interested in defining things on guitar as much as allowing notes that ring over. I'll find a little recurring pattern that'll ring over the jam, and that'll give me a little extra atmosphere to go and try vocals. It's a textural device in some way; it becomes melodic sometimes, but the guitar allows me to switch my brain off from trying to understand the music. I like being able to not understand it.

Does that explain why we tend to hear so many extended chords from you — the major 7ths and 9ths?





Crowded House today. (from left) Finn, Elroy Finn, Liam Finn, Seymour and Mitchell Froom.

“I’M NOT REALLY INTERESTED IN DEFINING THINGS ON GUITAR AS MUCH AS ALLOWING NOTES THAT RING OVER”

Yeah, I like that. Sometimes I think, I’ve got to make some definitions here and actually play straight chords in order to make the songs speak, and that often comes later on. I can listen to those blurry chords forever, but it gets to a point where I don’t know if I’m gonna take everybody with me. My wife sometimes comes in and she listens to what I’m doing, and you can tell it’s sort of not apparent enough to her, and I take that as a sign. So then I’ll strip away some of those extra notes and try to get the chords into a more understandable shape, and often that leads to a stripping down or an economy of thought that helps the listener, I think.

When you do find a place for a lead line, is that more organic than academic or cerebral?

Pretty much, yeah. Playing lead guitar is a very interesting and mysterious process. I don’t do many

leads. I do a few onstage and they’re always a little different every night, but I have a certain rough form that I might try to follow. It’s just my way of doing things. In an ideal world I’d play it super melodic and be in complete control and have my brain tell me what the melody is and have my fingers obey.

But usually my fingers don’t obey. I rationalize that by saying the mistakes make it interesting and the lack of learning something allows lovely possibilities to exist.

But, like I say, that’s just my way. I have been asked sometimes what advice I would give guitar players learning their instrument, and I have staked my rationale on the idea that to learn someone else’s guitar solo at any point is probably not going to end very well, because you’re gonna end up sounding like an imitation of somebody. You’re better off to have it in your head, “Oh, I’m gonna slam it like Jimmy Page here,” and get it wrong, and by getting it wrong your personality comes through. Personality is a hard thing to come by in music these days, and it’ll be even harder once AI kicks in in a big way.

Are there players you considered influences early on?

I’ve got guitarists I would hold as absolute geniuses — Hendrix, Jimmy Page, Peter Green, among many others. There’s a lot of guitar players I admire, but I’ve never sat down and tried to learn one of their solos. I can’t even imagine doing it, but I have definitely at times gone, Oh, that sounds a bit like what Peter Green might’ve done, and followed that thread. And then got it wrong.

What’s changed most about you as a player now?

**“THE GUITAR
ALLOWS ME TO
SWITCH MY BRAIN
OFF FROM TRYING
TO UNDERSTAND
THE MUSIC. I LIKE
BEING ABLE TO NOT
UNDERSTAND IT”**

I think I’m more tuned into finding accidents in the way I play. Back in those days, I was actually trying to play properly and just making accidents. But now I’m more tuned into the interdimensional possibilities of making mistakes. When I’m talking about listening in jams, I’m almost usually going for a bar where I don’t quite hit what I hoped to hit, and it becomes more interesting. So I guess I’m listening more — I’m finer-tuned to listening than I used to be. I can follow interesting threads more than I used to, I think.

Who inspired your writing in any way?

In my early years of writing songs, it was obviously the Beatles, but also Neil Young, Carole King, Elton John, James Taylor — those were the kinds

of things I was listening to, and learning how to think about songs. David Bowie, very much — early *Hunky Dory*. That was when I was about 14. They were all on high rotation, those things. And Split Enz, with my brother, they were writing these magical songs I was influenced by as well.

Do all of those sources have something in common that

you recognize as part of your writing, or your philosophy of writing?

I was a big fan of melancholy. Songs with yearning. I liked the odd upbeat rock tune as well, but I more was particularly inspired by songs that had a little melancholy attached to them, but perhaps a little redemption in the chorus. That was common to all the people I’ve mentioned, I think. Take for instance



Carole King, “It’s Too Late.” It’s a real upbeat song but it’s a bad breakup song, so it’s that kind of a counterpoint of introducing some joy or redemption into a sad topic that’s always been of interest to me.

How does that manifest in your songs now?

Somebody said the other day that our early albums were exuberant and these [recent albums] feel more measured, which I sort of disagreed with. But when I thought about it later, I thought, Well, when you’re 25 there’s a sort of exuberance that you exude. But I much prefer the way I sound now as a singer, in



TIM MOSENFELDER/GETTY IMAGES (2007); JACO MARAIS/GALLO IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES (2010)



OPPOSITE TOP: Finn performs with his Gretsch G6131T Jet Firebird at the Grand Arena, Cape Town, South Africa, October 26, 2010, and with Seymour at Coachella, Indio, California, April 29, 2007.

ABOVE: Playing his Gretsch Double Jet with Mike Campbell in Fleetwood Mac, Las Vegas, September 21, 2018.

terms of being able to be more nuanced about the things I'm delivering. I think it's a better form at the moment, but it's related to my age and the amount of experience I've had. I can't really try to be that guy that was 25 years old and bouncing around all the time.

How is the experience of being in a band with your sons? It's one thing to be in the family business and quite another to be working in "the store."

Well, it's a very deep connection now, musically. We obviously have a very deep connection as a family, but having done all these gigs we've learned to really trust each other and jam onstage. Initially there might have been some degree of, Oh, I better make sure I don't upset the apple cart here and let Dad do what he does and support that. But they're deeply embedded now, and it's a very complementary situation and a very collaborative situation.

But now there's a little bit of confidence to sort of take up the lead every now and again, and certainly if I start jamming and free-forming on something, everyone's just willing to jump in, and that just comes from spending hours together, just understanding the way phrasing should be or where to let notes off and all of that. The familial thing we have is just a beautiful underpinning to everything.

How do you and Liam work together as guitarists?

Liam as a guitar player is becoming extremely important in the sound onstage and takes the audience on some pretty epic adventures I wouldn't be able to. Even theatrically, throwing his guitar up in the air and catching it. He hasn't dropped it yet, put it that way. It's pretty exciting stuff.

What does he do that you wouldn't?

He's more interested in effects pedals than I am. He's got some really good effects pedals and he knows how to use them, and they are genuinely uninged at times.

But we're quite complementary. We do some things similarly. He can be melodic, but he's got a spectacular sense of drama in his guitar playing that suddenly takes the song to a new place. I'm a little bit more of a keeping-the-groove-going and keeping-the-atmosphere-going guitar player, with an occasional flourish. So it's exciting when we're learning songs, 'cause it's sometimes wrong what he's doing, but it leads him to a really good place.

Crowded House have a 40th anniversary coming up next year. Anything planned for that yet?

We haven't really made any special plans, no. Anniversaries come quite often, so we should mark it in some form. But, yeah, I'll get back to you on that. If anybody's got any ideas, send 'em through. ■

STAR '69

As he hits the road for a long-awaited celebration of Creedence Clearwater Revival's music, **John Fogerty** recalls the year when it all came together in three hit albums and a little festival called Woodstock.

BY GARY GRAFF

THE NEW YEAR is just a few weeks old and John Fogerty is driving with his wife and manager, Julie, along a stretch of California highway. But as the road unwinds ahead of him, his thoughts are drifting back several decades, to 1969, as he recalls in vivid detail the albums and events that made it a banner year for his band Creedence Clearwater Revival.

"Well, first of all," Fogerty says, "I don't think at the beginning of 1969 I had a business plan outlined that said, 'Okay, we'll release an album in January, we'll release one in August, we'll release another in October...' I don't think I had any plan like that. When you're 22 years old, you can't see that far ahead."

In hindsight, however, CCR's 1969 was remarkable and certainly without precedent in the rock and roll era. It's

when the quartet — Fogerty, his older brother Tom, Stu Cook and Doug Clifford — reigned as rock's biggest act, kings on both the AM and FM dials, on the concert circuit and in critical circles. And, of course, CCR played the Woodstock festival that year, too. By some accounts, they were the very first band signed to the bill.

The tally was, in fact, three albums: *Bayou Country*, *Green River* and *Willy and the Poor Boys*. All three hit the Top 10 on the *Billboard* chart, with *Green River* making it to number one, and all were eventually certified multi-Platinum. They produced four top-five singles — "Proud Mary," "Bad Moon Rising," "Green River" and "Down on the Corner" — all of which have gone on to become pop music standards.

"It was certainly very special," Fogerty says now, chuckling at his own

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES



“AT THE TIME IT
WAS MIXED UP IN THE
FEELING THAT IF YOU
WORK REALLY HARD, YOU
WILL FULFILL YOUR
DREAM”

understatement. “If I’m looking back, it was absolutely precious and mind boggling. But at the time it was all kind of mixed up in the feeling that if you work really hard and keep moving forward and keep pushing, you will find success. You will fulfill your dream.”

It was in El Cerrito, California, where that dream began, where the guitar-playing Fogertys were raised and where John met drummer Clifford and bassist Cook at Portola Junior High School. The trio formed a band called the Blue Velvets, which also backed Tom Fogerty at the time. One Blue Velvets song was even played on KEWB in nearby Oakland by a then-local DJ named Casey Kasem. Renamed first Vision and then the Golliwogs, the group signed to the Bay Area-based Fantasy Records label a full four years before CCR would release its first album on the imprint.

In between, John and Clifford served in the U.S. Army and Coast Guard reserves, respectively. Upon their discharge the Golliwogs became CCR at the behest of new, soon-to-be-reviled Fantasy owner Saul Zaentz, the Clearwater part of their name inspired by a television commercial for the local Olympia Brewing Company. CCR



Creedence Clearwater Revival. (from left) Tom and John Fogerty, Doug Clifford and Stu Cook.

made the charts with their first single, a guitar-blazing rendition of Dale Hawkins’ “Suzie Q,” followed by a feverish cover of Screamin’ Jay Hawkins’ “I Put a Spell on You” that put Fogerty’s lead work to the fore.

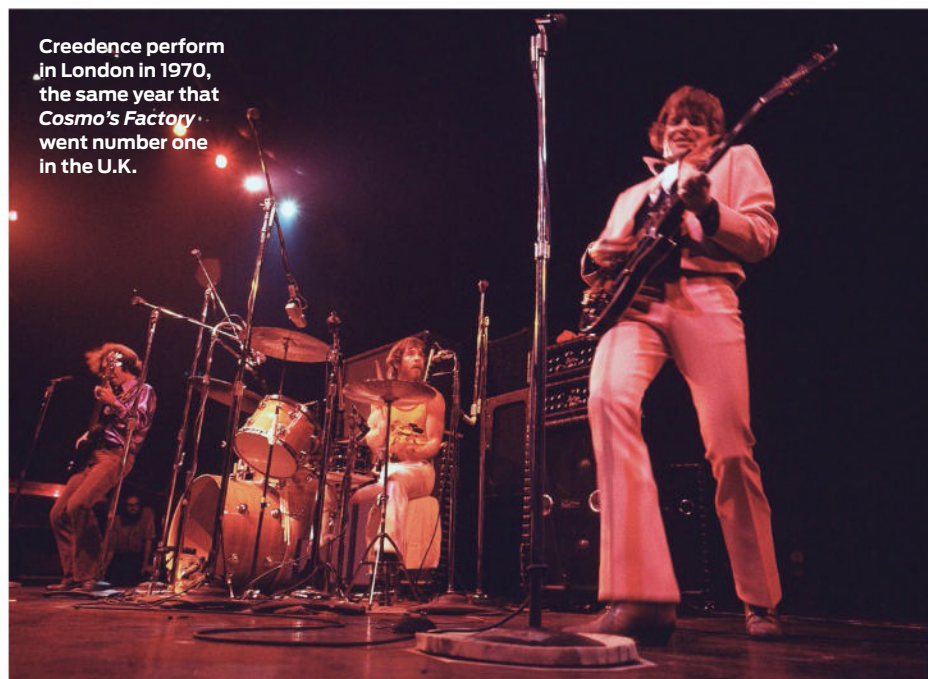
But while his six-string skills were a highlight of 1968’s *Creedence Clearwater Revival* album, Fogerty’s songwriting talents were somewhat less evident. That changed the following year with the release of the group’s next three albums, where Fogerty blossomed into a generational songwriter with a gift for

scene, character, mood and efficient storytelling. We certainly felt like we were rollin’ on the river when we listened to “Proud Mary,” and that we should toss a quarter in Willy’s open guitar case while the Poor Boys were playing down on the corner.

“I think that’s closer to the feeling of what I wanted [*the music*] to be then,” Fogerty explains. “I wasn’t really so concerned about some chart position, and certainly not about any money sort of position, because I didn’t understand any of that. In that moment I was just a very young man working really hard and achieving a dream I’d had from the time I was a child.”

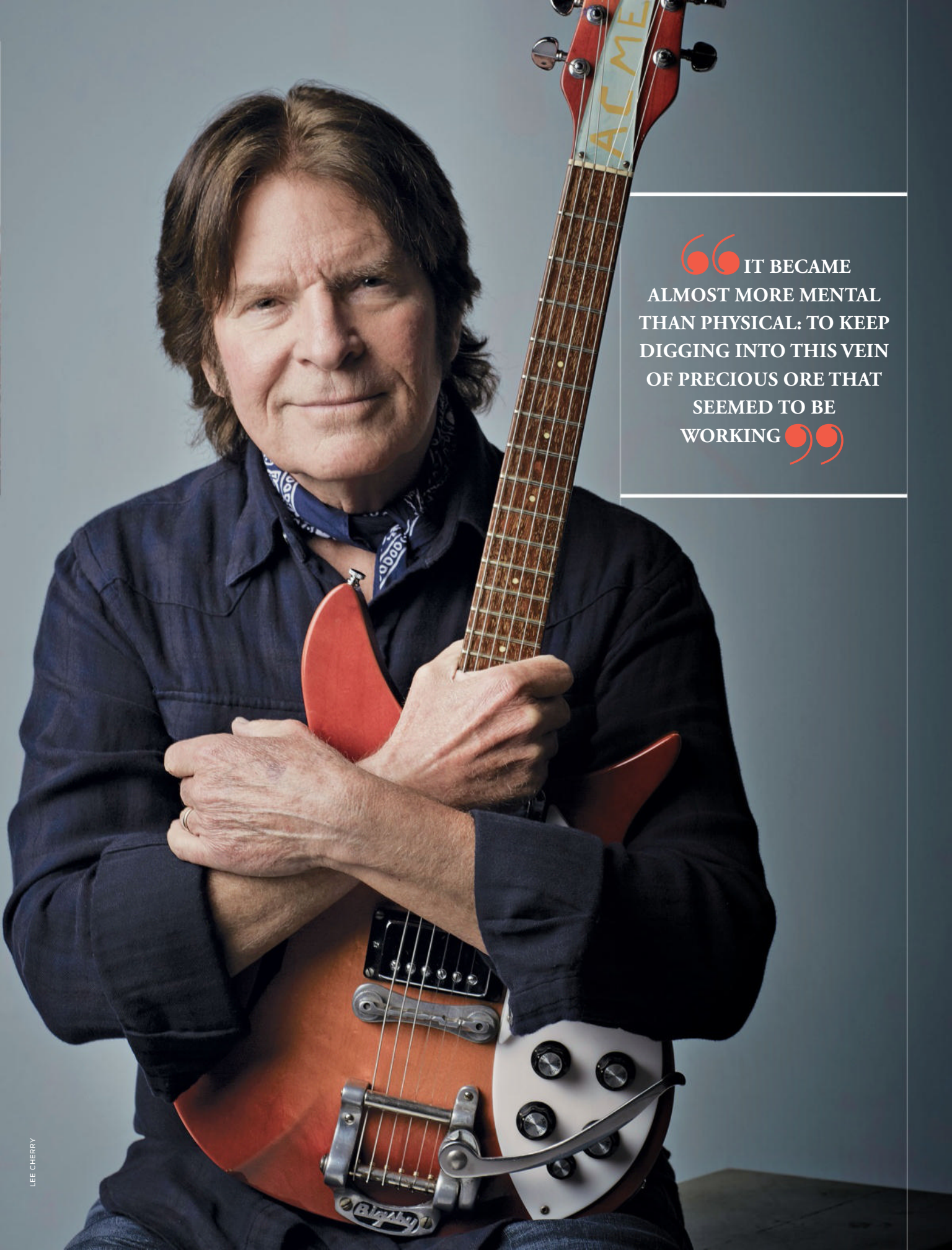
What was that dream, then?

The dream was, I think, to find a way to belong to music. I loved music, basically, out of the womb and was certainly showing everyone in my little circle, my family, that I loved music and that I was musical. So around the time I was about three and half years old, my mom made a little ceremony out of presenting me with a record of Stephen Foster songs. One side was “Oh! Susanna” and the other side was “Camptown Races,” and she explained to me who Stephen Foster was, that he was a songwriter. I just think that’s the most amazing and unique thing to show interest in for a child. I don’t think most kids that age even know that there’s such a thing as a songwriter. You might see Mickey Mouse



Creedence perform in London in 1970, the same year that *Cosmo’s Factory* went number one in the U.K.

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES (1970); GAB ARCHIVE/RED FERNS (PORTRAIT)



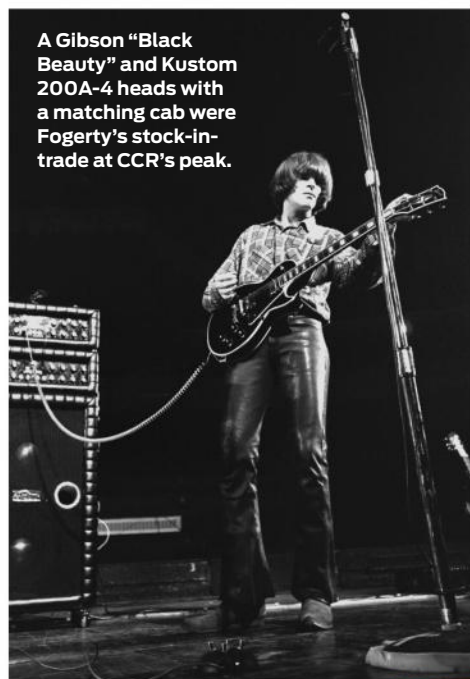
“IT BECAME
ALMOST MORE MENTAL
THAN PHYSICAL: TO KEEP
DIGGING INTO THIS VEIN
OF PRECIOUS ORE THAT
SEEMED TO BE
WORKING”

or SpongeBob singing a certain song, but you're not gonna have any idea how this is put together. But it just fascinated me.

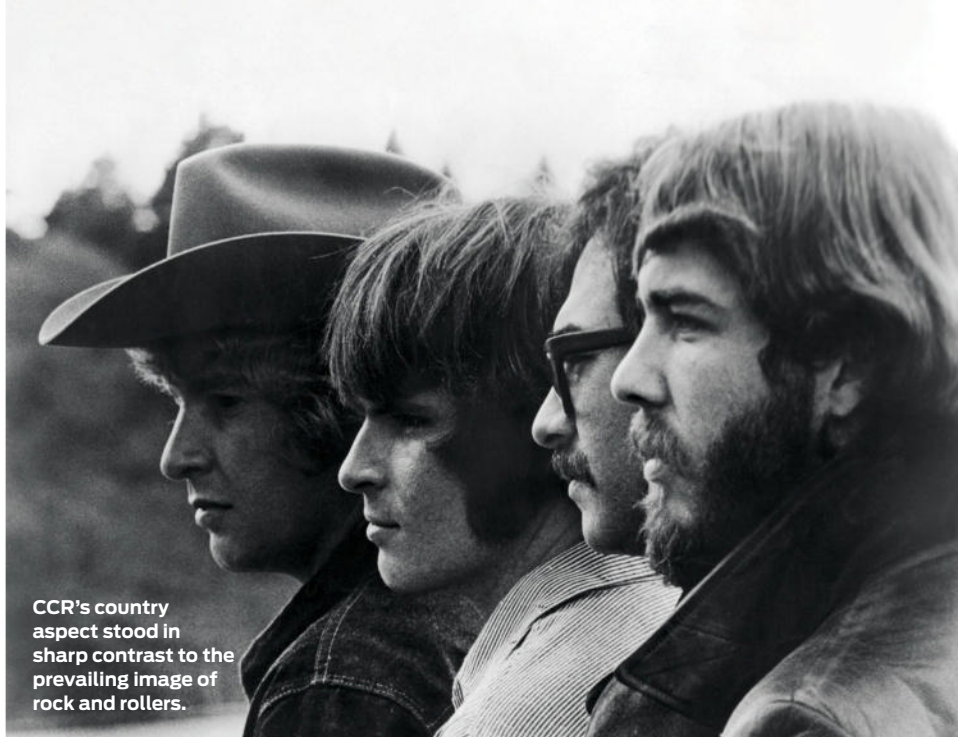
When did you start making your own music?

I wrote a song called "Wash Day Blues" one day when I was about eight years old. I was listening to the R&B station in the Bay Area, KWBR, before school, and at some point there was a commercial and the man talked about, "Do you have the wash day blues?" I'm sure he was talking about some kind of laundry detergent, and on the way to school I started making up a song called "Wash Day Blues," and it went to the refrain of the old Willie Dixon/Muddy Waters/Chess lick that goes [*sings "Mannish Boy"*]. That was hilarious, and for a while there I was pretty embarrassed that I had written a song called "Wash Day Blues," but now I'm past that and realize I was just being creative.

There's an aesthetic to Stephen Foster that certainly seems like a precipitator to Creedence music. But at the same time there's a lot there that must have conflicted with your worldview later on. Y'know, I was interested in Stephen Foster and the fact he was a songwriter.



A Gibson "Black Beauty" and Kustom 200A-4 heads with a matching cab were Fogerty's stock-in-trade at CCR's peak.



CCR's country aspect stood in sharp contrast to the prevailing image of rock and rollers.

I didn't know much about him until much later in life. Even during the Creedence time, I don't believe I realized yet that he didn't come from the South — he came from Pittsburgh, which turned out to be full of irony in that this person was a lot like me. In other words, he was fascinated by and wrote about the South, but he wasn't from the South, same as me. I started to learn about some of the other songs he had written, like "Swanee River" and "My Old Kentucky Home," and I think it had an influence on the type of songs that I would write.

Was there a "Eureka!" moment where you really envisioned yourself as a performer as well as a songwriter?

When Elvis came along, of course, that sort of gave it a little more focus: "Oh! I can sing into a microphone and play the guitar!" I don't think that I understood the mechanics of it, you might say. Elvis was very appealing to me.

When did you first hear him?

I was 10 years old. It was 1956, and I'm in this little general store. And it was on the jukebox and I was completely hypnotized by it. I've just got to find out what it is, and I run over to the jukebox and it's "My Baby Left Me." "Oh, it's Elvis! Oh my goodness!" It turns out it's the other side of "I Want You, I Need You, I Love You," which was the big hit, his second million-seller single after "Heartbreak Hotel." And I stood there and I looked at that record going around,

and I said, "I don't know what that is, but that's what I want to do." And without knowing any names or anything, I knew that there was guitar in there that was just incredible, and of course it was Scotty Moore. I wasn't to find out his name until years and years and years later, but I did know that Elvis had a guitar player who was incredible.

Who else hit you as a guitar player back then?

Y'know, it's interesting: I was guitar-centric from the beginning, maybe even before Elvis. I was probably fascinated with people on television, perhaps, or the *Grand Ole Opry* or other shows where there was somebody playing a guitar. I remember hearing "Suzie Q" and James Burton and adopting James as one of my guys, and then later on Duane Eddy. And of course by then there started to be a whole slew of them — Lowman Pauling playing in the "5" Royales, a song called "The Slummer the Slum." There were so many more from that guy. Carl Perkins, of course, "Blue Suede Shoes" and "Honey Don't." I wanted to do that, besides singing.

Elvis and Carl both came out of the same stable, if you will.

The Sun Records label was important to me — that sound. There seemed to be a definitive kind of sameness to that groove. That was, through the years, my very favorite. There were quite a few Creedence songs that I thought could have been on Sun Records, y'know?

“ON ‘PROUD MARY’
AND ‘BAD MOON RISING,’
THE GUITAR TAKES ON A
CHARACTER I WOULD
CREATE JUST FROM
THINKING THE SONG
NEEDED THAT”

Did you want to become a gunslinger, or were you trying to straddle a line as guitarist and songwriter?

I’ve thought about that a bunch of times, actually. Usually the guitar guy, whoever it is — Freddie King, B.B. King, Eric Clapton — you’ll listen to their records, and then when it comes time for the guitar, it’s usually that signature thing they do. I’ve just mentioned three guys that are kind of in that same school — they play single-note blues licks, which I love. That’s what they give you on their records, and that’s why they’re so identifiable.

Whereas I sort of honed my thoughts, and when it came to [CCR], there wasn’t another instrument that could take off and play a solo or do something else. Therefore I had to figure out more ways to be interesting. I suppose the Beatles were a bit of a teacher and an influence there. “Suzie Q” is full of a lot of single-note stuff, but on “Proud Mary” and “Bad Moon Rising” the guitar — my guitar, I mean — takes on another character that I would do just from thinking that the song needed that. So the focus gets spread out a bit. If you think of the guitars on a Creedence record, a lot of times it’s a 12-string or I’m playing chords. It’s not that single-



note blues stuff like those other guys were doing.

Was there a lot of trial and error in finding that direction?

I had no problem pushing myself to stay up into the wee hours every single night. Ever. Even when my band was on the

charts with “Proud Mary,” and perhaps even “Bad Moon” on the radio, I was pushing myself to stay up by myself in a room, perhaps not even with a guitar. It became almost more mental than physical: Sit there with just a little tablet, maybe a cup of coffee and try to keep pushing and digging into this vein of precious ore that seemed to be working. I was driven to have a career. I was driven to be the best. I daresay, I pretty much felt that I was the guy in my band, Creedence. At some point I sort of turned a corner and realized the other fellas weren’t gonna be able to do this, so it was up to me. That actually gave me more energy, I would say. I realized, Oh, gosh, I can’t take Sunday off because nobody else is gonna do it while I’m just sitting there. I’ve just got to keep pushing. And that’s what I did.

CO-PRODUCED BY FOGERTY AND ZAENTZ,

Creedence Clearwater Revival was a strong start to Fogerty’s career as a performer. The set featured four songs he wrote, two of which — “Porterville” and, with Tom Fogerty, “Walk on the Water” — were created while the band was still the Golliwogs. But the fact that the album’s two charting singles were covers threw down a gauntlet for him to deliver the goods.

“*Bayou Country*, the second album, was where my songwriting really comes into its own. The arrangements too,” Fogerty says. “Basically, within the scope of one year’s time there’s a pretty giant leap for myself, and also for the band. I had discovered what was gonna work for us. It might have been different had I been with another group of fellas. But what happened is I turned a corner and evolved, and I figured out how to create arrangements that the other guys would play, doing so based on my knowledge of them.”

How were you applying what you knew to come up with the Creedence sound?

I had intimate knowledge of their musicianship. We weren’t a band like, let’s say, Yes, with all sorts of chops and reading music and all that. We were pretty blue collar, meat and potatoes,



CCR rehearse at the Factory, their Berkeley, California, warehouse, circa late 1969.

and I figured out which things would work, which things we were good at, and I tried to keep my songwriting and arrangements within that sphere. It was like you're a little football team, and we can beat those guys over there if we just run these plays. And it seemed to be working. I really didn't entertain a whole bunch of other musical knowledge and didn't overthink anything. It was, That works. Let's just keep doing that. That was my attitude back then.

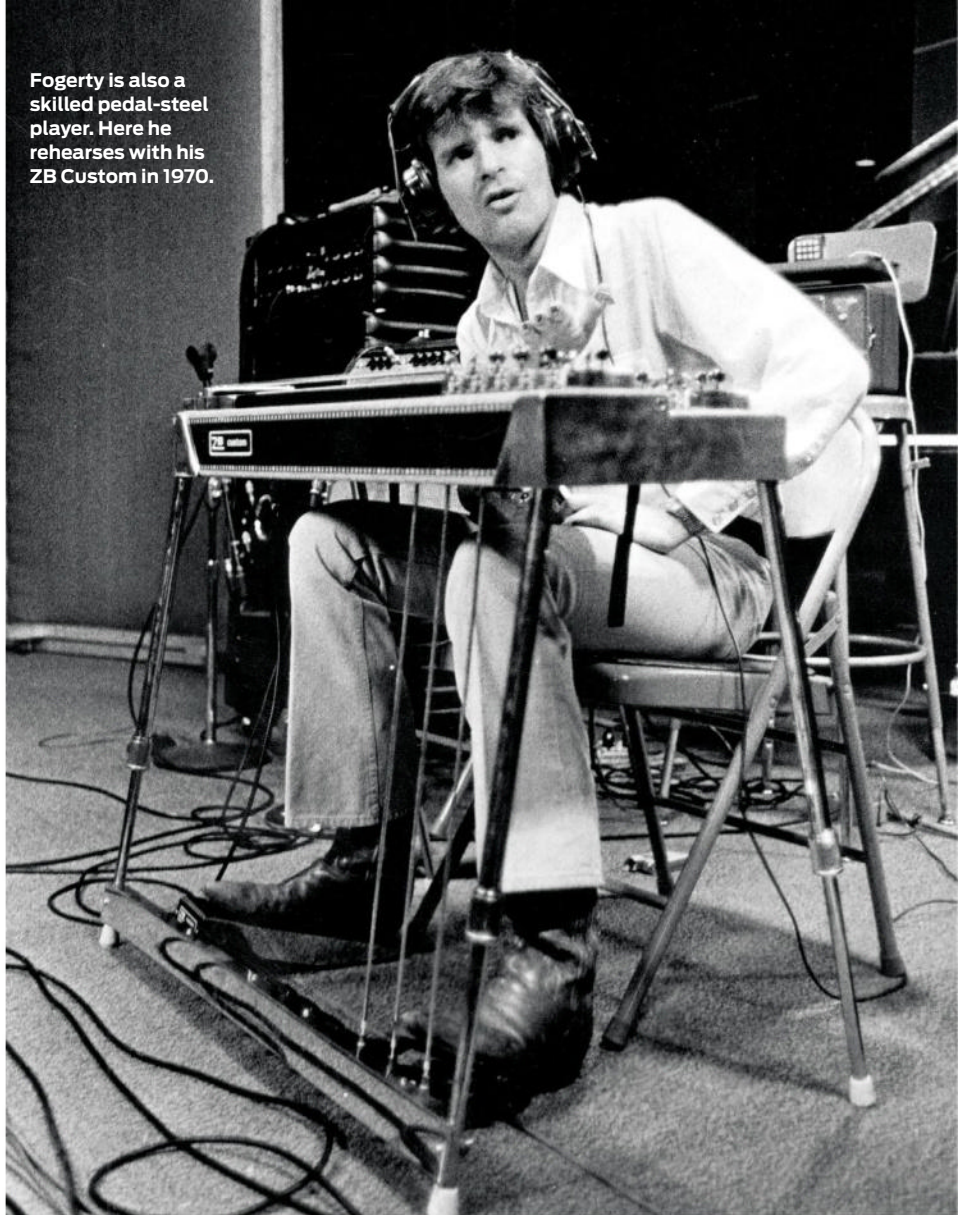
And "Proud Mary" set the mold.

Uh-huh. When I finished "Proud Mary," that was such an amazing experience — almost like being abducted by a flying saucer. I had never really written a great song before, even though I had tried many times. When I finished with "Proud Mary" and I was holding that piece of paper in my hand, almost 90 percent of it was on the page there, and I had a title and a chorus. And I could just hear it. And I realized I had just written what you'd call a classic. I was awestruck. I was excited, trembling. I was almost scared of it. It was almost as if you'd walked into a room and discovered some amazing treasure and secret. And at that first moment I was terrified that this might be it, that I would never get to do this again.

There's a very rootsy, Americana element to "Proud Mary," both lyrically and instrumentally, and to most of your other originals on *Bayou Country* for that matter. Is it an amalgam of those early influences you were talking about before?

I daresay my affinity with Stephen Foster had something to do with that, sure. I know that "Proud Mary" felt that way with me, and therefore throughout the rest of my life there's a certain type of music and song that resonates with me, that lets me know, Yes, this is really good. I'm saying that compared to my own standards of what a good song is, and I'm trying to define that. That may be different than the next fella, whose idol is Thelonious Monk. He would be equally as excited as I was but off in a completely different direction, perhaps. But for me, that's what works — when

Fogerty is also a skilled pedal-steel player. Here he rehearses with his ZB Custom in 1970.



I write a song that has a certain lilt to it. Nowadays we call that Americana. But when I hit it, I feel really special, like, There ya go, John! That's a really good piece there. You should keep going with that, 'cause that's gonna develop into something.

***Bayou Country* kicks off with "Born on the Bayou," which still stands as one of your most impactful guitar performances. You'd played some hot licks on the first album, too. Were you viewing yourself as a burgeoning guitar hero at the time?**

A guitar hero basically is the guy that stands right there in the spotlight, in front of the stage — like Eddie Van Halen — and kind of does a lot of single-note stuff. Eddie did it in such an enormous way that your mind can't even realize that it's single notes 'cause it's coming at you so quick. A lot of what I did, even something like "Centerfield"

later on, was more like fingerstyle, chords and things. I think in that sense it takes the focus away from the gunslinger type of attitude or approach.

It's like I was saying about the Beatles before: "A Hard Day's Night" was such a revelation, going in a different direction than, oh, "Please Please Me," perhaps. It seemed a lot more folky, if that makes sense. I think my attitude was to not just play like B.B. King, which is wonderful, but I was looking for other ways to play which, ironically, maybe diluted my status as a guitar hero.

How do you regard the *Bayou Country* album now?

That album was starting to be written probably even before the first album came out [Creedence Clearwater Revival was released in July 1968]. By that time I was pretty much thoroughly ensconced in this new sort of approach I was doing

“ I DIDN'T
OVERTHINK ANYTHING.
IT WAS, THAT WORKS.
LET'S JUST KEEP DOING
THAT. THAT WAS MY
ATTITUDE ”

of staying up, being very quiet, thinking a lot.

I did that all through the summer, whenever we weren't on the road. I was very consciously trying to create a whole piece, meaning an album. I was trying to create more than one song; I wanted to create a presentation of my band. I remember seeing in my mind a picture of what an album cover ought to look like. That's what I was after.

GREEN RIVER, WHICH FOLLOWED

Bayou Country by nearly eight months, was produced entirely by Fogerty and would be CCR's first number one album. "Bad Moon Rising," its lead single, followed "Proud Mary" to number two on the *Billboard* Hot 100, with the album's title track doing the same. The album also featured favorites such as "Lodi" and "Commotion" and displayed an even more disciplined focus on songcraft throughout its nine tracks.

"At the time, 'Green River' was my favorite song I had written," Fogerty notes. "Even though 'Proud Mary' and 'Bad Moon' were big, 'Green River' was the most precious in my heart because of the Sun Records connection to me.

"About the time I was eight years old, there was a drug store up at the end of my street, Ramona Avenue, in El Cerrito, that had a counter and soda fountain thing," he explains. "One day I'm sitting there and I'm looking right at the Green River bottle; it's full of this green syrup, and the label on it had a very simple drawing of what amounted to a sun over what was a river, or a creek really, and it said Green River. I looked at that thing and I told myself, I've got to save that. I wasn't really sure what I was saving it for, but I knew I had to save it for later.

"And a few years later, Sun Records comes along and it's Elvis and 'Blue Suede Shoes,' and then Jerry Lee Lewis, and at some point I'm hearing [Roy Orbison's] 'Ooby Dooby' — the order might have been different. So now in kind of the middle of 1969, I'd had 'Proud Mary' and 'Bad Moon Rising' on the charts, and I started to feel like, Man, I would like to get into my very



favorite thing. I would like to have a song that just reflects Sun Records, and that whole feeling of a simple little band with rhythm guitar, simple drums, maybe standup bass and a [singer] with a southern wail going on.

"I connected that to that Green River syrup and that thought I had all those

years ago, and memories of my parents and my childhood, and how I felt and what those surroundings were like. And then I put the feel of a Sun record together and taught it to my band. Then, as best I could, I wanted to keep that atmosphere on the album, almost as if 'Green River' was the centerpiece. And certainly that was the idea of naming the album *Green River*.

"'Bad Moon Rising' and 'Lodi' really seemed to fit well, and 'Wrote a Song for Everyone' and 'Cross-Tie Walker'... It all just sort of landed. It was my favorite place. And for years and years and years, not only did I think it was my favorite of all the Creedence albums, I thought it was by far the strongest. It was much later when I realized *Cosmo's Factory* [from 1970] was probably the strongest record, just 'cause it was chock-full of singles."

It was a little more than a week after *Green River*'s release on August 7 that CCR played at Woodstock, jetting there on a red-eye right after taping a performance on *The Andy Williams Show* in Hollywood. Fogerty recalls spending some of the late-night flight to Albany, New York, working on an arrangement of the traditional "The Midnight



The group poses in London, 1970.

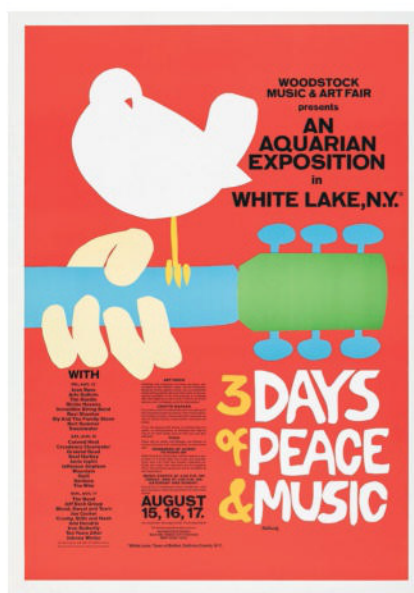
Special,” which would be included on their next album, *Willy and the Poor Boys*.

“I was excited to be at Woodstock,” he recalls, “but that summer there were quite a few festivals... which was kind of a new big thing, sort of based on Monterey Pop in ’67. Kids were getting used to going out in the open where there were many thousands of people. And I remember my thought about Woodstock was, God, this thing is huge! Riding in on a little World War II-era helicopter, coming up over a hill and suddenly seeing that crowd for the first time. That took my breath away.”

Upon landing, Fogerty’s excitement turned into “a sense of dread. I just thought to myself, Gosh, I hope nothing... Basically I didn’t want anyone to shout ‘Fire!’ in a crowded theater to get people stampeding or panicked or whatever. I was deathly afraid that something could go wrong. So that was on my mind during the whole time.”

Terms like “right” and “wrong” were relative at Woodstock, but things certainly didn’t go the way CCR had hoped and planned. With sets running late and the Grateful Dead running, predictably, long before them, Fogerty and his bandmates took the stage at

“RIDING INTO
WOODSTOCK ON A
HELICOPTER, COMING UP
OVER A HILL AND
SUDDENLY SEEING THAT
CROWD FOR THE FIRST
TIME. THAT TOOK MY
BREATH AWAY”



BILL WATERSON/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

12:30 on Sunday morning, August 17, not an optimal circumstance at all.

“I had hoped to have my band do a spectacular set in front of this enormous crowd,” Fogerty explains, “because Creedence was clearly on a rocket ship going almost straight up. I daresay we were probably the most consistently hot thing in music that summer. But even though we played well, the audience was very much asleep, and I was very disappointed. We came home, and after a couple of days I realized, What the heck, that’s just one disappointment; Creedence is still moving forward. So I didn’t worry about it too much.”

But CCR was unhappy enough about its Woodstock showing that the group wouldn’t allow its performance to be used in the 1970 film and companion album that were made from the festival. Fans wouldn’t get to hear — from a legitimate release, anyway — what CCR did that night until 40th and 50th anniversary box sets were issued.

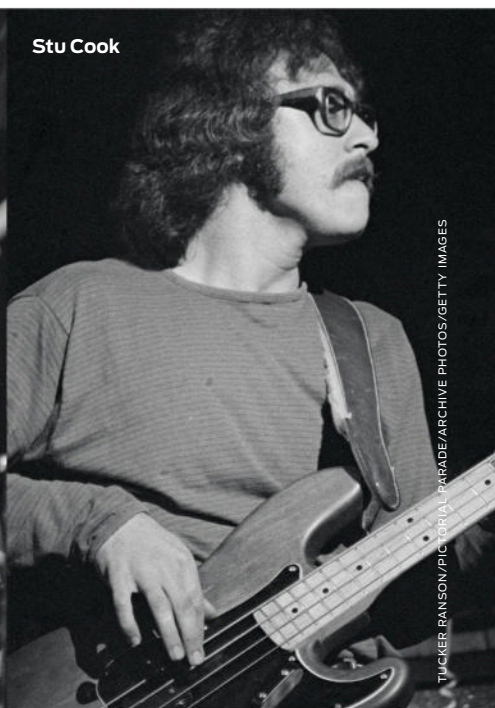
Fogerty recalls that Woodstock wasn’t the only major event that summer. The Apollo 11 moon landing happened nearly four weeks earlier, and the Manson family murders occurred roughly one week before the festival.



Tom Fogerty



Doug Clifford



Stu Cook

TUCKER RANSON/PICTORIAL PARADE/ARCHIVE PHOTOS/GETTY IMAGES



Fogerty and his bandmates (left) captured at their Woodstock performance.

Meanwhile, the Vietnam War continued to rage. “With all the things going on in the world that summer, I didn’t really have a feeling that Woodstock would be the thing that was remembered and gravitated back toward over the years,” he says. “And there were so many festivals going on, it was just another one to me. But that was the big one.”

TWO ALBUMS WOULD HAVE BEEN PLENTY for most bands in 1969. But Fogerty’s drive ensured that Creedence Clearwater Revival had enough new material to release a third record before the year was finished. Which is how *Willy and the Poor Boys* came about in the last months of the decade.

“I was already starting to draw together the music as well as the arrangements for what was going to be a third album of that year,” Fogerty

says. “Somewhere in the summer of ‘69 I started to realize that *Green River*’s gonna fall off the charts pretty soon and it’s gonna be time for me to have a new song for my band, a new album out. I was thinking, Yeah, we can probably record this and have it out in a couple of months. Which is what came to pass.”

Willy and the Poor Boys harkened back to Sun Records country with its first two tracks, the rootsy “Down on the Corner” and the twangy “It Came Out of the Sky,” positioning CCR as a kind of Americana version of Sgt. Pepper’s *Lonely Hearts Club Band*. But the band struck out in fresh directions, too, whether it was the roaring hard rock of the politically tinged “Fortunate Son,” the psychedelic expansiveness of “Effigy” or the group-sung rendition of Lead Belly’s “Cotton Fields.” The

fans certainly didn’t mind. *Willy* reached number three on the *Billboard* 200, with the single “Down on the Corner” giving the group its final top five hit of the year.

***Willy and the Poor Boys* is a kind of microcosm of all things Creedence to that point — a lot of what people had come to love about you and some things you really hadn’t done before.**

Well, that was my job as the musical leader of the band, and I always looked at it that way. Having studied and heard about other bands — but way later, not at the time — I realize I was doing much the same thing as they were. And because I was the guy designing the musical texture of the band, I looked at the landscape that was there so far, and there is this moment of clarity and invention at the same time. So I thought to myself, Man, we need a rocker, just a screaming rocker, so I commissioned myself to create that, and what I came up with was “Fortunate Son” — that driving beat, the guy screaming at the top of his lungs, and then a memorable guitar riff to go with it. ‘Cause I always thought those were the most memorable kind of records, the ones that had a little guitar thing in ‘em.

You really stepped out to say something with “Fortunate Son.” The song was a product of its times, of course, but were you comfortable making that kind of stand?

Y’know, it’s amazing to take it from sort of the accident that was “Proud Mary” and go through “Bad Moon Rising,” and then decide I want to write something about my very favorite place in music, which is “Green River” and Sun Records and all that. And then go past that and decide I want to write about what’s going on in the world, which is what “Fortunate Son” is. I mean, it’s fun to look at that journey, somebody who started that process seemingly in a place where he’s about eight years old, and now he’s going to a place where he’s about 30 years old. But that was my job. I was supposed to develop and evolve like that.

Were you ever able to, at that time, sit back and realize just how much you'd accomplished and how hot the band was?

I don't think there was one "A-ha!" moment, when something I didn't know 10 minutes ago suddenly revealed itself. I think it was a matter of working hard and to keep doing the process, which for me was going home every day and working long into the night to come up with more songs. At my age now, 78 years old, when I look back at that, it's scary how white-hot the afterburners were back then. I think what I'm trying to say is that to me it was an acceptable part of, Oh! This is how you do it! Perhaps at the beginning I didn't understand how Elvis or the Beatles had gotten where they got. But once the reward for the work started to show itself — meaning airplay on the radio, people at concerts singing along to your songs, that whole sort of hurricane that's part of the energy that defines your band — then it was acceptable: Okay, if this is what I have to do, I'll do it.

IT'S WELL KNOWN, OF COURSE, that Fogerty's leadership of CCR created some rancor within the band, and acrimony that continues to this day. Tom Fogerty left the band in 1971, and his

“ I THOUGHT THOSE
WERE THE MOST
MEMORABLE RECORDS,
THE ONES WITH A LITTLE
GUITAR THING IN 'EM



brother, Cook and Clifford recorded one album as a trio — *Mardi Gras* — before breaking up in 1972. Tom died in 1990 without reconciling with his brother. Clifford and Cook battled Fogerty in court in 1995 when he sued them for using the group's name for their own *Creedence Clearwater Revisited*. Two years before that, CCR's Rock Hall

induction turned into a nightmare when Fogerty performed the group's songs not with his bandmates but with an all-star pickup group that included Bruce Springsteen and Robbie Robertson. Fogerty was also angry that his bandmates had cut their own deals with Zaentz and Fantasy Records. He's never felt a need to make apologies for the initiative that he feels led CCR to its great success.

“Without getting into all the bad feelings and the politics, I still think that what I moved to and evolved to was the way to go,” he asserts. “In other words, I don't think we would've found any success some other way had I not written any songs or had someone else been the lead singer. Me and the fellas would've been playing down at a local club somewhere until the moment the wives all started saying, ‘Well, you better get a real job now.’

“So looking back after all these years, I still think what I blundered into, basically with hard work, was the right way to go. And then — how can I say it? — at some point human beings are the way they are. They get jealous of that guy getting the attention, or they want to try doing what he's doing. But that's why there's just one quarterback on a good team.”



CCR mime to “Down on the Corner” while performing on *The Music Scene* TV show, 1969.

FOGERTY IS STILL DOING IT these days. In fact he never stopped. He created a fictional group, the Blue Ridge Rangers, for his first solo album in 1973 (Fogerty played all the instruments), then went eponymous two years later.

But he harbored a deep grudge over his treatment by Zaentz and Fantasy, which owned his songwriting copyrights and his recordings. One of his albums, *Hoodoo*, went unreleased, and *Centerfield*, his chart-topping, double-Platinum 1985 return, led to legal problems. Early copies of the album featured the song title “Zanz Kant Danz” (“but he'll steal your money,” the chorus proclaims). Soon after *Centerfield*'s release, Fogerty changed the title to “Vanz Kant Danz” in an unsuccessful attempt to avoid a defamation lawsuit from Zaentz. More dramatically, Fantasy contended that



Fogerty poses with his 1964 Rickenbacker 325 Fireglo with Accent Vibrato.

the *Centerfield* hit “The Old Man Down the Road” plagiarized “Run Through the Jungle” from *Cosmo’s Factory* — in other words, that Fogerty had copied himself. But Fogerty won that suit and successfully sued Zaentz for attorneys’ fees and court costs.

Still, it still took Fogerty another decade, until the release of *Blue Moon Swamp* in 1997, before he’d even play CCR songs live again. Since then he’s been consistently releasing music and touring live, with his sons Shane and Tyler now in his band as well as operating their own group, Hearty Har.

The happy ending is that in January 2023, after a half century of legal machinations, Fogerty finally attained global rights to the CCR catalog. And he’s been celebrating ever since, as is evident from this summer’s Celebration

Tour, which will see him performing songs from CCR’s catalog.

“I’m not sure you’d say it’s ‘renewed energy,’ but it’s just something that gets added to the mixture, the gumbo that is John Fogerty and his songs and his family,” he says. “It’s the quest of a lifetime for any writer to finally get ownership of his creations, and the fact that these songs are revered and special in the world, I get to kinda go out and say, ‘Yeah, I wrote that!’ There’s certainly an element of pride in what I do. Without enough humility, perhaps, I get to say, ‘Well, yeah, a long time ago I wrote this song, and I get to sing it to you now.’”

“I daresay I’m humbled about it, but there is a special sense of pride about it, too. It’s just a sense of joy, I guess you’d say, and fulfillment.”

Fogerty — who published a memoir, *Fortunate Son*, in 2015 — is particularly stoked about working with his kids. His daughter Kelsy even joined her dad and brothers on 2020 pandemic recordings that resulted in an album, *Fogerty’s Factory*. “When I held them on my knee when they were little bitty babies, I did not envision them playing in my band someday,” he says. “I envisioned them being doctors, or being president” — he pauses to laugh — “like any parent. The fact they grew up and became musicians and it evolved to the point where they want to play with me and make music together — and of course with Julie being with us too, which means it’s an entire family endeavor here — it’s just the best. And being onstage every night is the actual presentation of that feeling that we get to carry around with us all the time.”

With Shane and Tyler writing songs for Hearty Har (you’ll find dad on their 2020 single, “Scream and Shout”), Fogerty says he’s also “trying to get to that place again.” He released a socially conscious single in 2021, “Weeping in the Promised Land” — ironically on January 6, the same day as the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C. But the guy who put out all that music in that banner year of 1969 says he feels like there’s more coming, even if he can’t specify when that might be.

“Look, I would love to have a spurt like that right now,” Fogerty says. “I’ve described to you the commitment that it takes, and finding the time to do that in an efficient way seems to be harder for a grown-up than it is for a 20-year-old. I saw a quote from John Lennon once. Unfortunately he didn’t get to live to be an old man, but somebody was asking him about that time he was writing ‘Please Please Me’ and ‘From Me to You’ and ‘A Hard Day’s Night,’ and he said, ‘Well, you can never be 24 and that hungry again.’ There’s so much irony to read that now. But I will be willing to do that when I can see the path is fairly clear. That’s my desire. I’m stating a potential, perhaps, rather than some clear vision.” 🍷





WONDER WOMEN

With her new solo acoustic *One Guitar Woman*, **Sue Foley** pays tribute to guitar's female trailblazers, from Elizabeth Cotten and Lydia Mendoza to Maybelle Carter and Charo.

BY JIMMY LESLIE

GUITAR MAY HAVE historically been dominated by male players, but as Sue Foley exemplifies on her fabulous new album, *One Guitar Woman* (Stony Plain), some super women boldly went where no one had gone before, paving the way for the far more inclusive guitar world we live in today. In fact, many of the earliest six-string heroes were ladies who wielded parlor guitars, entertaining families and handing down techniques through generations. Martin documents its first X-braced acoustic was a size 1 made in 1843 for Madame De Goni, who was the Eddie Van Halen of her time. We simply don't know much about players from that era because information is scarce.

We have a pretty good record since the advent of studio technology, and Foley has done a ton of research on the women who made significant impacts in all genres. Foley is widely renowned for her fiery electric blues, but she's also an acoustic aficionado, and what she's into may surprise you. Of course, she's steeped in the blues of Elizabeth Cotten and Sister Rosetta Tharpe, and it follows that she's a big fan of country music matriarch Maybelle Carter. Foley has put in the hours to cop the Carter Scratch and Cotten Picking, but she's also got a big nylon-string thing happening, drawing inspiration from around the globe. She covers classical, Tejano and flamenco quite authentically while

**“PIEDMONT
FINGERPICKING
IS A LITTLE
HAPPIER
SOUNDING,
OR AT LEAST
IT WAS WHEN
ELIZABETH
COTTEN
PLAYED IT”**



maintaining her own voice on *One Guitar Woman*. And as we've come to find out, she truly pulls the whole thing off on a single flamenco axe.

You're best known as an electric blues guitarist. Tell me about the acoustic side of your playing.

My first guitar was an acoustic, so I played that for a couple years before I even got a hollowbody, and then gradually moved to a solidbody electric. I started out as a country-blues player, which is why I gravitated toward using a thumbpick instead of a flatpick. I've used a thumbpick my whole career. I've also used my fingers and approached playing with an open right hand, which has been beneficial on both acoustic and electric.

I've always been fascinated with the sound of nylon-string Spanish guitars. I finally got my hands on one and started working on it a few decades ago. It's a completely different approach — the way you finesse it, the soft tones — so warm and inviting. I've also used steel-string acoustics through the years, but I always come back to the nylon because it sounds better to me. I took some flamenco lessons, and I ultimately chose a flamenco guitar over a classical because I realized that a flamenco guitar also sounds good playing blues. The flamenco's versatility is why I was able to execute so many different styles on this one guitar. I'm very happy with how

this flamenco negra responds to everything, from traditional blues to country, Spanish and classical.

I understand you found it on a 2022 excursion to Paracho, Mexico. How did that happen?

Going to Paracho was a pilgrimage. The town is completely dedicated to building fine classical and flamenco guitars. Builders are trained in the Spanish method, so you're able to get a great instrument for a very good price. You can also meet the builders and visit their workshops. There's a personal touch to all of it. Going down there to find the guitar for this album was part of the journey, making it all the more magical and mysterious. I visited several shops, but I'd found the right instrument right away. I came back to the first one, the workshop of Salvador Castillo.

How does the flamenco blanca compare to the negra?

I believe a traditional flamenco blanca is made with cypress back and sides, while a negra is made with rosewood. The negra is a little darker sounding, has more sustain and projection. I sincerely love both styles. This negra simply spoke to me. A flamenco guitar is different from a classical as it's a little more rugged and can take more of a beating. Flamenco guitarists play hard to get loud enough to be heard over the dancing and singing. There's also a percussiveness to flamenco guitars. A traditional classical guitar is a much more pristine instrument, requiring a gentler approach. Flamenco guitars are generally less resonant, so they respond better when you play aggressively.

How would you describe your attack?

I can be very delicate, but I generally do play aggressively. I sometimes use my thumbpick on the flamenco guitar, which might be considered taboo by some folks. I use extremely heavy Golden Gate thumbpicks. I also do strong rhythms where I strum quite hard. Flamenco guitars can handle almost anything, as they're very sturdy.

Most roots and blues players use steel strings. What are your thoughts?

I have nothing against steel strings at all. I love a good old Gibson or Martin flattop, or a big old jazz box. But the flamenco offers a different take, and it might be surprising to hear all these different styles played on an instrument that's known mainly for Spanish and classical music.

What inspired your vision for *One Guitar Woman*?

When I started out as a player, there were so few female role models in the guitar world that I always kept track

“CHARO WAS THE FIRST WOMAN I SAW PLAY THE GUITAR. SHE LEFT AN INDELIBLE IMPRESSION ON ME, AND SHE'S THE REASON THAT I PLAY SPANISH GUITAR”



of them. That sparked my interest in interviewing women guitarists. *Guitar Player* has published some of them. When I thought about how I would interpret this passion into my musical vision as basically a traditional artist, it made sense to study the women that came before all of us. It's interesting to note that you can go into a style like flamenco or classical from the blues. The blues is about expressing feelings with your personal nuance, and it makes you ask bigger questions about your musicianship in general. Using that foundation as a jumping off point has been handy going into these other genres.

How did you go about interpreting an array of artistic styles?

Each artist was so unique. It seemed very important to learn how to execute the technical aspects first and then try to find how they relate to me, Sue Foley, the blues player. I deliberately learned the technical elements needed for each style and then ran everything through my filter. A simply technical interpretation would be a little dull, and only being in my stylistic filter wouldn't be challenging enough or represent those artists accurately. I did a lot of woodshedding on how to play the music, and then did some soul searching on how to execute it from my perspective.

How about the challenge of Elizabeth Cotten's picking technique?

I learned how to fingerpick when I was in my teens, so I'm comfortable alternating bass lines with the thumb on the low strings while playing the melody on top. I remember the laborious and boring exercises I had to do to make my fingers and brain work together to make these patterns. It's quite complex, so you must start slow and be very deliberate about what each finger on the right hand is doing. You're holding down that bass line while playing a melody that usually follows the vocal line on the top strings, and then there are beats and rhythms in between that you're strumming and picking. It sounds hard, and I suppose it is, but once you get it under your belt,



Sue Foley performs at the Austin Blues Festival, April 27, 2024.

it's such a satisfying way to play guitar because you become a one-man band.

What are your thoughts about fingerpicking in a Piedmont style and how it pertains to Cotten Picking?

The Piedmont fingerpicking style is a little mysterious. It was a familial thing that people would pass down through generations. There are a lot of stories of mothers passing it down to their sons and daughters, because the mothers would have parlor guitars and they might have a little extra time to play at home for recreation and entertainment. The style seems to be borne out of piano parlor music as well, and you can hear that in the melodic way it feels in some of the runs. A lot of the Piedmont guitar style has a more major-sounding vibe than traditional blues, which has more minor notes. Piedmont is a little happier sounding, or at least it was when Elizabeth Cotten played it.

The classical, flamenco and Tejano stuff is particularly interesting because it's unexpected, and you execute it so well.

Can you please share insights about your take on Ida Presti's "Romance in A Minor"?

French classical guitarist Ida Presti was nicknamed "Ida Prestissimo" by Andrés Segovia. When Presti was a baby, her father was so determined she would play guitar that he stretched her little fingers while she slept. "Romance in A Minor" by Nicolas Paganini is a piece I found on [the album] *The Art of Ida Presti*. I was struck by her dexterity, depth of feeling, and ability to make the guitar tones round, smooth and warm, sometimes while playing at breathtaking speeds.

Jumping into the classical world was probably the most intimidating thing. I felt like people would rip me to shreds for even trying. That said, I feel like this song, in its minor key, has a bluesy feel, and because it's in free time there's a lot of space for interpretation. It was a bit

of a challenge for me to stick to the notation and the script, as I'm used to improvising. It's such a discipline to work within that framework. It took many months, but once I learned all the parts, I got comfortable expressing my own thing through it.

Tejano pioneer Lydia Mendoza's name often comes up in conversations about the origin of the 12-string. Can you share some thoughts on her and your interpretation of "Mal Hombre"?

Mendoza did play a 12-string, and, in the early years at least, her guitar was tuned down to a low B on the bottom string. I tried that with a regular 12-string and it felt a little too slack. As I understand, she may have played a bass instrument similar to a bajo sexto in the early days, which would have tighter strings and allow her to have it strung so low. She also sang high, which created a stark contrast between her guitar and voice. It's a very distinctive sound. I didn't tackle that directly. I wanted to play her song on my flamenco guitar, and I added a solo to continue the song's theme instrumentally. I chose to sing low to represent where I'm at in life. Rather than a young woman telling a story, it's an older woman recalling the past.

The public mostly knows Charo as an entertainer rather than as an accomplished guitarist, so it's great that you included her with an impassioned version of "La Malagueña."

Charo is a very serious musician. You cannot study at Andrés Segovia's school in Spain and not be trained in a very disciplined method. She reveres playing the guitar and she still practices every day to keep up her skills. She's obviously an amazing entertainer as well, and I tend to agree that her stage persona has overshadowed her musicianship at times. What makes Charo's style interesting and unique is that she is classically trained, but she also had gypsies that camped on their property who played flamenco, so she has both styles in her own playing. She has that fire, emotion and improvisation of flamenco mixed with a classical



discipline. It's an interesting mix, as sometimes these two styles, though they come from the same geographic place, are quite different in approach. Charo's playing has so much personality and character. I felt that when I worked on executing her version of "La Malagueña," especially in her improvisational parts. Charo was the first woman I saw play the guitar. She left an indelible impression on me, and she's the reason that I play Spanish guitar.

What would you like to share about the matriarch of country music, Maybelle Carter, and her famous technique, the Carter Scratch?

Learning the Carter Scratch was humbling. She made it look very easy, and I've seen videos where it seems like her right hand is barely moving. But to execute the Carter Scratch, you must be quite aggressive with your right-hand strumming, and it needs to be evenly timed. She has such good meter on those old Carter Family recordings. I imagine the Carters would've played for a lot of dancers back in the day, which requires great rhythm. Playing for dancers is a great way to learn. You must be loud, assertive and have perfect time.

I love how Maybelle played her lead parts on the low strings. It's so counterintuitive, but brilliant. And it kept the theme of the song moving forward. She wrote all of those parts herself, and each song would have its own little special lead. I didn't write many songs for this project, but "Maybelle's Guitar" came out quite naturally. I felt honored to pay tribute to Mother Maybelle and her famous guitar. I just visited the Country Music Hall of Fame in Nashville and saw her 1928 Gibson L5. She played that one beautiful guitar from that year on through her entire career. I was happy to see them acknowledge how influential she was and how her guitar style became one of the signature styles in country and folk music.

What's the key to your live acoustic sound when you perform *One Guitar Woman*?
I play with that same flamenco guitar



Foley performs with her Salvador Castillo flamenco negra in Warrendale, Pennsylvania, October 30, 2023.

through a 60-watt AER. Those AER amps are freaking amazing. I've taken mine everywhere for over a decade. It's like a little tank. It's such a relief to have your own sound wherever you go. I can

"MAYBELLE PLAYS HER LEAD PARTS ON THE LOW STRINGS. IT'S SO COUNTER-INTUITIVE, BUT BRILLIANT"



put that little amp into a suitcase and check it at the airport. Sometimes at the venue we'll mic the guitar as well, but often they'll just take the direct feed from its XLR output. It's a simple approach, and I'm happy to say that I can pull off all the songs live just like I did on the album. I like to share a little background information on each artist during the show, but I try to focus on the music. I could talk about these women all night, but I'd rather just play guitar.

You're working on a book about women guitarists. How is that coming along?

The book has been in the making for many years and it is based around my interviews with other female players. Stay tuned for more on that, but I am getting close. Thanks so much to *Guitar Player* for putting my interviews in the public eye and keeping the book moving forward.

What are your parting thoughts on *One Guitar Woman*?

I'm just grateful to be able to do this. I am happy that I was able to stretch out as a player, and I feel very satisfied knowing that I turned my learning experience into something that will inspire people, men and women. I also hope I can help women know that they've had a seat at the table the whole time and that the history of guitar is also theirs. So many women think it's just a man's game, but it's for all of us and it always has been. ■



THE SESSION WHISPERER

Shred like the best of them with these 10 techniques gleaned from **Steve Lukather**, the legendary studio ace and Toto guitarist.

BY JEFF JACOBSON

TO TAKE A flyover of Steve Lukather's long and storied career is to essentially reminisce about the heights of the past 40 years of pop and rock music. He is both an original member of Toto — who have sold more than 40 million records worldwide, including timeless hits like "Africa" and "Rosanna" — and a prolific solo artist, with an impressive nine albums to his credit, including 2023's *Bridges*. These accomplishments alone would have most of us gratefully calling it a day. But when one takes a gander at the 18-page discography on Steve's

website — a comprehensive list of every session he's ever done, for a veritable who's who of iconic artists — the enormous impact he and his guitar have had on the world of music becomes clear. In this month's lesson, we'll look at some of the industrious guitarist's most celebrated classic works, starting from the very beginning.

In 1977, Lukather (or Luke, as he's often called) recorded his first sessions for singer/songwriter Boz Scaggs, who hired the then 20-year-old guitarist to lay down two solos on his album *Down*

Two Then Left. Throughout Lukather's solo in "A Clue," one can already hear hallmarks of his distinctive playing as he creatively combines searing melodies, modern rock licks (that still sound that way today) and a polished, sublime finger vibrato. What also stands out is the guitarist's rare ability among rock players to deftly negotiate challenging chord changes, a skill that is more commonly found among jazz musicians. To that end, Luke was inspired by one of his guitar heroes, the session legend Larry Carlton.

ALEX SOLCA

Ex. 1 brings to mind Lukather's stirring solo in "A Clue" and reflects his well-developed melodic savvy. The entire phrase is based on the B $\flat$ major scale (B $\flat$, C, D, E $\flat$, F, G, A) and is used over a chord progression so ubiquitous in jazz that it has made its way to pop music: the ii - V - I ("two minor - five - one"), with the numbers corresponding to the degrees of the scale. Here that means Cm7 - F7 - B $\flat$ maj7. Immediately, bar 1 targets a "color" tone, also referred to as an *extension*, a note of a chord that goes beyond the 7th. This is yet another jazz concept, and, right off the bat, we immediately target Cm7's 9th, D. Also note bar 3's use of an F triad (F, A, C) over the B $\flat$ maj7 chord, which touches on the 7th (A) and 9th (C).

Lukather loves to emphasize wide intervals in his single-note lines, and, after the first note, bar 3 sets up a series of 4ths (notes two and one-half steps apart) and 5ths (three and one-half steps apart) between the F, C and G notes. Notice the accent marks above the G and F notes, indicating to pick these notes louder than normal, and how they fall on "16th-note upbeats" (between eighth notes), making us feel rhythmically off balance for a moment.

In the last bar, we encounter a chord that might cause you to wince at first, but it's not as complex as it looks, and Lukather knows this. Ready for another jazz concept? (Last one!) The E7 $\flat$ 5 (E, G $\sharp$, B $\flat$, D) is the *tritone substitution* of B $\flat$ 7 (B $\flat$, D, F, A $\flat$), a tritone, or "augmented 4th," being three whole steps. Briefly, these chords can be substituted for each other because they share two defining notes, their 3rd and the minor, or "flatted," 7th. For E7 $\flat$ 5, these key notes are G $\sharp$ and D, respectively. Since G $\sharp$ is just another way of saying "A $\flat$," you can see that B $\flat$ 7 also shares those same two notes; the E7 $\flat$ 5 just has a bit of a funny bass note, and jazzers love that sort of thing. So what does Luke do? Similar to bar 4, he simply plays over it as if it's a standard B $\flat$ chord, never venturing outside the major scale. He targets a D note, which is the 3rd of our key, B $\flat$, and also the colorful flatted 7th of E7 $\flat$ 5. The main takeaway here is that by treating

Ex. 1
Ex. 2

the E7 $\flat$ 5 as if it's a B $\flat$ chord, Luke chooses the simplest option, knowing this will most often sound best. This is key to understanding why he has been a first-call session player for decades.

Let's take a break from all of these sharps and flats to have some fun with vibrato. Lukather often wields his like a samurai sword, and it's on full display in Toto's very first single, 1978's "Hold the Line" (from *Toto*). **Ex. 2** is not unlike Luke's solo — brash, aggressive and just plain nasty in the best possible way. To cop this bold attitude, your vibratos will need to be wide and even. Think of them as being like a series of bends and releases occurring in rapid succession, with the motion coming purely from your wrist. Notice in the tablature the prescribed use of the 2nd finger to fret and shake the E note on the B string's 17th fret, which offers you better control of the vibrato instead of your 1st, giving you more leverage for pushing the string upward (toward the lower strings).

Fast-forward to 1982, when Michael Jackson is at Westlake Recording Studios in Los Angeles, working on what would become one of the most seminal albums in music history, *Thriller*. By request of legendary producer/arranger Quincy Jones, Lukather appears on three of the album's songs. For "Beat It," Eddie Van Halen rightfully gets most of the attention, due to the rock guitar icon's master class of a solo. But Luke's rhythm part beforehand sets up the legend's guest appearance perfectly, creating tension that portends something special is about to happen. This sort of thing is what the best session players do every day, and without much fanfare. **Ex. 3** is reminiscent of the guitarist's killer funk-rock riff in this classic track.

During the recording of Jackson's "Human Nature," Jones felt the track didn't have the proper level of funkiness and tasked Lukather with resolving the issue. A tried-and-true move for session guitarists, and one that is often heard in classic Motown and R&B songs, is to add a "popcorn" part, consisting of stealthy, palm- and fret-hand-muted single notes that contribute a percussive, almost conga drum-like backing part

Ex. 3

Ex. 3 shows a guitar riff in 4/4 time. The melody is in G major (one sharp). The chords are G5, A5, G5, and E5. The tablature shows fret numbers 12, 14, and 12 on the B string.

Ex. 4

Ex. 4 is titled "Swing-16ths Feel" and is in 4/4 time. The melody is in G major (one sharp). The chords are (G) and (A). The tablature shows fret numbers 4, 12, 14, and 12 on the B string.

Ex. 5

Ex. 5 shows a guitar riff in 4/4 time. The melody is in G major (one sharp). The chords are (G) and (A). The tablature shows fret numbers 17, 18, 17, 15, and 17 on the B string.

Ex. 6

Ex. 6 shows a guitar riff in 4/4 time. The melody is in G major (one sharp). The chords are (G7) and (A). The tablature shows fret numbers 19, 18, 17, 20, 17, 18, 17, 20, 18, 17, 19, 18, 17, and 19 on the B string.

that fortifies the groove with notes that “agree” with the key. Not surprisingly, Luke added just the right amount of funkiness. In fact, Jones was so taken with his parts that he gave him an arranging credit on the album, a very rare occurrence for a session player.

Ex. 4 is reminiscent of the guitarist’s main part. To achieve the palm muting (“P.M.”), lightly rest your picking hand on the guitar’s bridge, resulting in a subdued attack and quick decay when notes are struck. Keep in mind that the pitchless, fret-hand-muted “dead” notes (indicated with Xs) are just as important, if not more so, to achieving the desired level of funkiness. To deaden notes, simply lift your finger so that it lightly rests on the string.

That very same year, Toto released what would become the group’s most successful album to date, *Toto IV*. The debut single, “Rosanna,” features Lukather playing two classic solos. He does something particularly nifty in the middle solo, along the lines of **Ex. 5**. After bending the initial note, continue to hold it while fretting the same string one fret higher with your pinkie. Doing this allowed Lukather to reach a note (C) that would otherwise be quite awkward to play, first having to release the bend, then reaching for it up at the 20th fret. As indicated, notes are played with a swing, or “shuffle,” feel. And be sure to nail the Luke-style wide, sexy vibrato on the last note.

As the story goes, while recording the song, drummer Jeff Porcaro continued playing when the rest of the band expected it to have ended, resulting in a spontaneous “outro jam.” Lukather immediately hits the ground running, delivering a 54-second blistering tour de force. **Ex. 6** is inspired by one of its many great moments. Over the G7 vamp, he begins by spitting blues fire then suddenly switches gears, playing a Dm7 arpeggio (D, F, A, C) which notably targets G7’s 9th (A) and 11th (C). Once again, because he’s aware of the available extensions, Luke can creatively introduce new colors to shift to a different gear. The guitarist follows the arpeggio up with a cool chromatically descending

Ex. 7

Ex. 8

lick, which is an especially clever way to move down the fretboard. Ex. 6 brings this crafty section to mind, and, as the song fades, we're left to wonder what sort of additional magic ended up on the cutting room floor.

Lukather clearly excels at outro solos, and in 1983, he would record another for ex-Commodore Lionel Richie's "Running with the Night," from *Can't Slow Down*, an album that would go on to sell over 20 million copies worldwide. In the studio, Lukather was playing along while listening to the track for the very first time. When the song ended, Richie declared, to the guitarist's surprise, that no further takes would be required; they had been recording and the solo was a keeper.

We can sense Lukather is playing quite freely here — possibly even a bit busier than he would have if he had known the red "record" light was on. His opening is a great example of the adage, "you never get a second chance to make a first impression," as how one begins a solo might just be the most important part. Luke is about to go into beast mode, but it's notable that he doesn't start there. Instead, he instinctively creates a *motif*, which, in a musical sense, refers to melodic and/or rhythmic patterns that can be repeated. Here it involves combinations of just three notes and a robust amount of space, either in the form of rests or a long-held bend. Leaving space builds anticipation, keeping the listener guessing as to what's coming next, and **Ex. 7** is informed by the guitarist's entrance here. **Ex. 8** brings to mind a later section where Steve again builds tension, this time with more notes, including a nod to the '80s shred ethos.

A couple of years earlier, in 1981, Lukather co-wrote and played on the Tubes' classic track "Talk to Ya Later," from *The Completion Backward Principle*. It remains a rock radio staple and is packed with great Lukather moments. **Ex. 9** brings to mind his dynamic intro, and it's challenging to keep up its blistering pace. *Dyads* (two-note chords) on the 2nd and 3rd strings alternate with chugging palm-muted 5th-string bass

Ex. 9

1. (A) (B)

P.M. --| P.M. P.M. --| P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. -----| P.M. P.M. --|

2. (B)

P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. --| P.M. --| P.M. P.M. --|

Ex. 10

(A) (B)

8va

let 3rd string ring

14 16 17 16 14 16 17 16 19 17 19 16

2 1

notes, requiring the 4th string to be repeatedly skipped over. Picked with all downstrokes, it's quite a workout.

Lastly, there's a cool *pedal point* lick in Lukather's earlier solo, something he does often. A pedal point is a sustaining or rearticulated note that's generally played below or sometimes above a melodic figure or accompaniment. **Ex. 10** is reminiscent of the guitarist's ping-ponging phrase at 3:38. Played on the G string's 16th fret, the pedal tone, B, is left to ring under the higher-pitched, *staccato* (short) notes with which it alternates. To keep each higher note from ringing, simply loosen your grip on the string so that it breaks contact with the fret.

Perhaps even more than his extraordinary guitar skills, it's Steve Lukather's uncanny aesthetic sense of what a song ultimately needs to blossom that has distinguished him for over 40 years. Whether providing subtle background parts or enduringly listenable solos, the guitarist remains an active and highly sought-after top gun in contemporary music. ■

Jeff Jacobson is a guitarist, songwriter and veteran guitar transcriber, with hundreds of published credits. For information on virtual guitar lessons and custom transcriptions, feel free to reach out to Jeff on Instagram @jjmusicmentor or visit jeffjacobson.net.

Best Betts

Known for his electric guitar work, **Dickey Betts** played a fine hand on acoustic too.

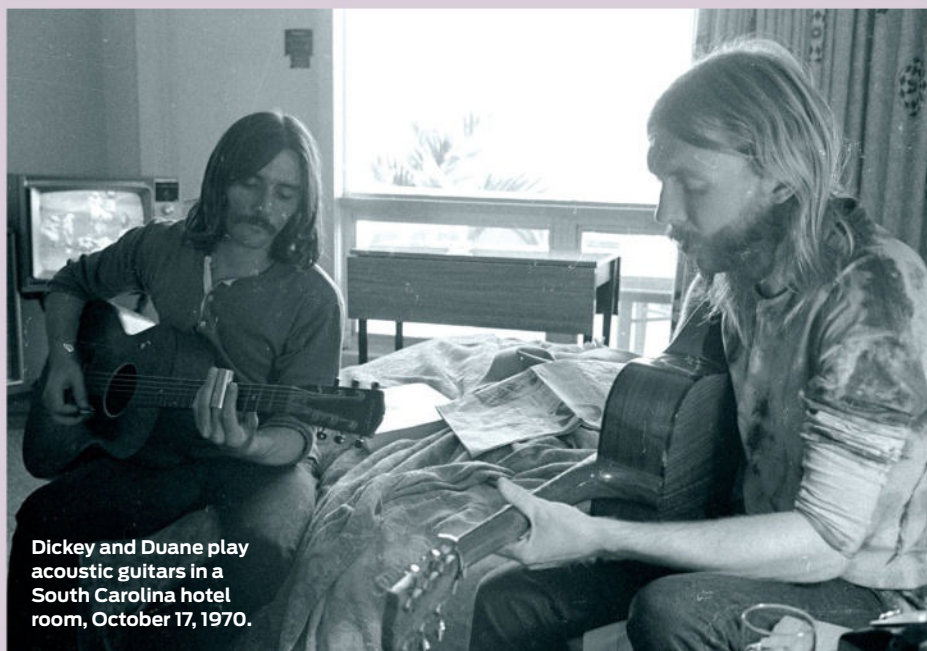
BY JIMMY LESLIE

DICKEY BETTS GREW up listening to country, bluegrass and fiddle tunes, so most of his songs were born from acoustic seeds that sprouted into epic electric arrangements with the Allman Brothers Band. With that said, you can still rock classics like “Blue Sky” and “Rambin’ Man,” as well as most Betts material, unplugged.

Betts, who died this past April 18, incorporated more fingerpicking in his acoustic work than in his electric, but — onstage, at least — he approached a dreadnought much like he did a Les Paul, attacking leads in a similar way and muscling the strings to achieve bends and vibrato. In the studio, however, Betts and his fellow Brothers used acoustic elements creatively. Here’s a closer look at a few choice cuts.

“LITTLE MARTHA”

This acoustic instrumental in open E tuning (low to high, E B E G# B E) first appeared as a guitar duo on 1972’s *Eat a Peach*. Duane Allman wrote it and laid down the main part on a resonator shortly before his passing in late 1971. Betts overdubbed the harmony line on a flattop. Their synchronicity makes it sound like a single player at times. Leo Kottke described “Little Martha” as “possibly the most perfect guitar song ever written,” and his arrangement is perfect for a solo player. It’s even more fun to play it with a buddy, Dickey-and-Duane style.



Dickey and Duane play acoustic guitars in a South Carolina hotel room, October 17, 1970.

“MIDNIGHT RIDER”

Gregg Allman wrote “Midnight Rider,” and Duane played acoustic on the studio version, while Betts played the lyrical electric lead. For a cool bluesy take that works well on a big box, check out Gregg’s solo version played in double Drop D (low to high, D A D G B D).

“JESSICA” & “REVIVAL”

Both are in the key of A and have acoustic intros. Betts played the primary electric part on his instrumental masterpiece, “Jessica,” while Les Dudek, who also plays the second electric part, played the acoustic. It takes at least two players to do justice to “Jessica.” Betts penned the hippie anthem “Revival” with its singalong chorus of “People can you feel it? Love is everywhere.” Duane played acoustic on the studio version. Acoustic guitar provides framework for the lovely leads that define “Jessica” as well as the extensive introduction on “Revival.” That tune works well campfire-style if you simply jump in after the prelude. The “second intro” riff is sort of an elder sister to “Jessica.”

“PONY BOY”

Betts penned this acoustic closer from 1973’s *Brothers & Sisters*, and it’s a fine example of how he mixed things up in the studio to provide a different tonality. Summoning some Allman signatures after the tragic loss of Duane, he plucks a Dobro in open E tuning and

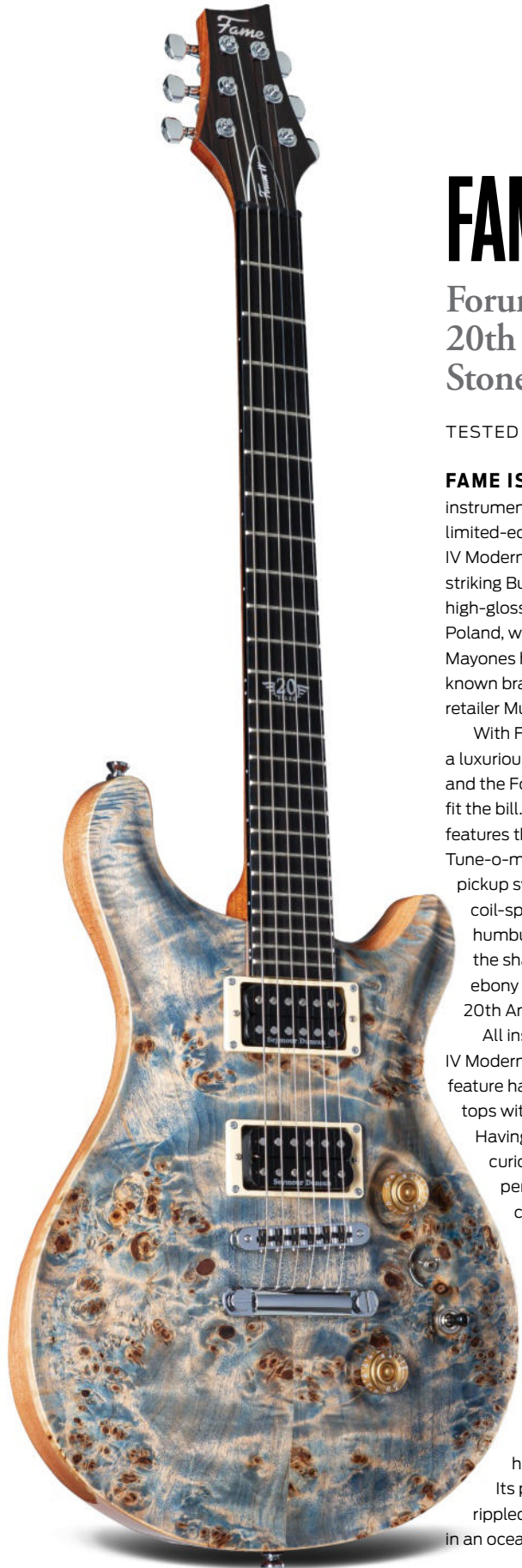
incorporates some fine slide. “Pony Boy” also featured Tommy Talton sitting in on acoustic guitar.

“SEVEN TURNS”

This Betts gem is the title track from the ABB’s 1990 comeback, which was the first to feature Warren Haynes on second guitar. It’s a major cowboy-style picker and strummer that rolls along simply, until the bridge solo takes a few minor twists and turns in Betts’ recognizable harmonic style. If you’re looking to sit down to strum and sing a Betts-based Allman Brothers tune with your friends, this is a great choice.

As a cat who plays the Dickey role in an Allman Brothers tribute band Trickey Frets in the Allmond Brothers, this is all very close to my heart. We have tons of fun joking around about “bustin’ a nut” — or in the Allmans’ parlance, “hittin’ the note,” the moment when all the players are united as one in the music. All respect to the innovators of southern rock, and to the man who kept the flame burning way past its initial spark [Editor’s note: We’ll present a full tribute to Dickey Betts in the September issue.] ■

Jimmy Leslie has been Frets editor since 2016. See many Guitar Player— and Frets-related videos on his YouTube channel, and learn about his acoustic/electric rock group at spirithustler.com as well as his Allman Brothers tribute band at allmondbrothers.com.



FAME

Forum IV Modern 20th Anniversary Burl Stonewashed Blue

TESTED BY JIMMY LESLIE

FAME IS CELEBRATING 20 years in the instrument game with a commemorative limited-edition series that includes this Forum IV Modern 20th Anniversary model with a striking Burl Stonewashed Blue top and high-gloss finish. What started in Gdansk, Poland, with a small custom shop called Mayones has grown into an internationally known brand in cooperation with the German retailer Music Store Professional.

With Fame, Music Store aims to produce a luxurious guitar with an economy price tag, and the Forum IV Modern seems designed to fit the bill. The guitar is loaded with premium features that include a GraphTech Resomax Tune-o-matic bridge with a Ghost piezo pickup system that augments a pair of coil-splitting Seymour Duncan humbuckers. Gotoh locking tuners adorn the shapely headstock, capping off an ebony fingerboard that features a winged 20th Anniversary inlay at the 12th fret.

All instruments in the Fame Forum IV Modern 20th Anniversary Series feature hand-selected premium burl poplar tops with unique grain and individual finish.

Having viewed the guitar online, I was curious to see if it looked as cool in person as it did virtually, and I can confirm that it does. Removing it from the gig bag revealed a stunning contoured top that lived up to my expectations. Players can browse through the product variants at musicstore.com and choose the exact guitar they find most appealing by serial number. This review unit was chosen for *GP*, and I couldn't have made a better selection myself. Its poplar burl has got a planetary vibe, rippled blue and tan, almost like islands in an ocean, with streaks of clouds above. I've

got a gang of stringed instruments hanging on my walls and must admit that it stands out as the fairest of them all. I showed it off at a respected recording studio and a backline company where folks see tons of guitars, and the Forum IV Modern struck everybody with its wow factor.

Players who have seen their share of solidbody electrics, including yours truly, will quickly notice the similarities between the Fame Forum IV and the hallmarks of a particular high-profile American manufacturer famous for its fancy double-cutaway designs. Some were quick to judge by comparison, but not everyone shared that opinion. One music biz veteran at the backline company said, "It looks like it has its own authority, to me. It looks like a beast!"

I plugged it into a Bogner amp, and it sounded beastly too as I ran some southern-style Dickey Betts licks. Gain tones were sweet and creamy from the pair of Duncans, which include an SH-2N Jazz in the neck position and an SH-4JB in the bridge. Power chords were robust, and single notes seemed to burst out like bubbles. You can feel the impressive body resonance and sustain even without amplification. With the guitar plugged into a Fender Deluxe at the studio, clean tones were strong and clear, and I got off entering slinky Strat territory via the coil tap.

Pulling the volume knob up to engage the Ghost piezo in the bridge saddles delivers even more pronounced clean pop with every pluck. You can blend in as much as you desire via the tone knob, which becomes a piezo volume with the Ghost system engaged. With the tone knob turned far left, the blend is at full piezo. I set it that way and tested the guitar through a Taylor Circa '74 acoustic amp, achieving a respectable acoustic-electric tone. Unfortunately, the magnetic and piezo signals are summed — I know, because I tried to create a dual-amp situation with a stereo cable — so you're limited to a single amp. But you probably won't mind, given the myriad tones available.

Playability out of the bag was pretty good and it could be great given a few fine-tuning tweaks by a setup pro. The action was a bit high for my taste for fretted playing, particularly way up in the short rows on this 24-fret lead machine, but I loved it for slide licks. You can play a 12-bar blues in E all above the 12th fret, which is so nice. The neck



The blue-stained burl poplar top is stunning to behold.



is voluptuous, with a D profile, and while I normally prefer a smaller neck with more of a C shape, this one felt pretty good to me. The fret edges were nice and smooth all the way up and down the fretboard, which is made of firm, dark ebony. The Gotoh locking tuners did a fine job of homing in and securing the variety of tunings I tried out.

The bottom line is that Fame hit its mark. For about \$1.3k, you get a beautifully crafted guitar capable of a broad tonal spectrum, with nice playability. The Forum IV Modern feels hearty and sturdy, but not too heavy in hand. The hurdles Fame faces are primarily about brand familiarity, the aforementioned similarity to another guitar maker and availability in America. Fame has no stateside retail distribution, so you must order from

Music Store and pay about \$50 for shipping overseas, which the website says takes five to 15 days — not too bad, all things considered. Though if you do have to phone customer service for any reason, bear in mind that you'll be calling an overseas number.

In the end, what you get in the Fame Forum IV Modern 20th Anniversary is a beautiful beast with a carved top and a set neck for an attainable street price, and it sure seems like a sweet guitar from a brand celebrating 20 years in business. I wasn't eager to ship it all the way back to Europe, but that was mainly because I truly dig the guitar, not because of the hassles of mailing it. I'd recommend taking a good look at the model online and reaching out to Fame with any questions that you have. 🎸

SPECIFICATIONS

Fame Forum IV Modern

CONTACT fame-guitars.de

PRICE \$1,308 street with gig bag

NUT Black Tusq

NECK Sapele mahogany with D profile

FRETBOARD Ebony with "20 Years" winged inlay, 24.72" scale, 12" radius

FRETS 24

TUNERS Gotoh locking

BODY Khaya mahogany with poplar burl top

BRIDGE Graph Tech Resomax Tune-o-matic with Ghost piezo pickup system (bridge saddles) and active preamp

PICKUPS Seymour Duncan SH-2N Jazz (neck) and SH-4 JB (bridge)

FACTORY STRINGS D'Addario .010–.046 set

CONTROLS Three-way magnetic pickup selector, mini-switch coil-tap, volume knob with push/pull piezo activate, tone knob/piezo blend

WEIGHT 5.8 lbs (as tested)

BUILT Czech Republic

KUDOS Stunning looks, fine craftsmanship and broad tonal versatility at exceptional value

CONCERNS Overseas shipping and service may be a problem for some buyers. Summed magnetic and piezo signal means no splitting into dual electric/acoustic amps

DEAN

Vengeance Select Floyd Fluence Charcoal Burst

TESTED BY ART THOMPSON

A HIGHLY EVOLVED spin-off of Dean's V model from the late '70s, the Vengeance is a stylish metal machine that's available in both the USA Custom Shop and offshore-produced Select line, with options in pickups and hardware (including the Evertune bridge) to suit different needs. The version on review here is the Select Floyd Fluence which, as the name suggests, carries a Floyd Rose 1000 bridge and locking R3 nut and a pair of Fishman Fluence Modern humbuckers: an AB1 (alnico) at the neck and a CB1 (ceramic) at the bridge. Powered by a nine-volt battery housed in a flip-open compartment on the back, these pickups offer Voice 1 (modern, high output) and Voice 2 (crisp, clean) modes that are activated by a push-pull function on the tone control.

The Vengeance features a mahogany body with a flame-maple top that's finished in gloss Charcoal Burst. The top is nicely set off by single-ply white binding, as is the edge of the set-thru, three-piece maple neck. Carved in a comfortable Slim C profile and topped with an ebony fingerboard carrying 24 polished jumbo frets, the neck is seriously playable, and the factory setup provided low action with accurate intonation and no fret buzz. An interesting aspect seen here is the dual texture on the back of the neck, where it's finished in super-smooth satin in the middle and transitions to gloss black at the heel and northward from the first fret. It all makes for a slick-feeling neck that looks cool too, with cosmetics that include pearloid Ultra Diamond inlays on the fingerboard and a

veneer of flame-maple on the headstock in matching Charcoal Burst. Very nice!

Grover mini tuners pull the strings to pitch, and the Floyd Rose bridge and locking nut keep the tuning stable under torturous whammy workouts. Even before plugging it in, you can really feel the body vibrating when playing this relatively lightweight guitar, and the combination of mahogany and maple helps make it resonant and sustaining.

Played through a '72 Marshall 50-watt driving Celestion V30 speakers, as well as a Universal Audio OX and studio monitors, the Vengeance dished out a fat, sustaining bridge pickup sound that was killer for lead with the tone knob pushed in. This setting also yielded a wailing distortion tone from the neck pickup that was cool when going for a classic sound

SPECIFICATIONS

Vengeance Select Floyd Fluence Charcoal Burst

CONTACT deanguitars.com

PRICE \$1,599 street

NUT Floyd Rose R3, 43mm

NECK Three-piece maple with set-thru construction. Slim C shape

FRETBOARD Ebony, 25.5" scale, 12" radius. Pearloid Ultra Diamond inlays and white binding

FRETS 24 jumbo stainless-steel

TUNERS Grover mini, 18:1

BODY Mahogany with flame-maple top and single-ply binding. Charcoal Burst finish

BRIDGE Floyd Rose 1000

EXTRAS Flame-maple facing on headstock with Charcoal Burst finish

PICKUPS Fishman Fluence Modern AB1 (neck), Fluence Modern CB1 (bridge)

CONTROLS Neck volume, bridge volume, tone control with push-pull voicing switch

FACTORY STRINGS D'Addario EXL 120 .009–.042

WEIGHT 7.94 lbs (as tested)

BUILT Indonesia

KUDOS A great-looking, lightweight and fast-playing guitar with a wide range of tones

CONCERNS Some damage occurred in shipping for lack of hard case or gig bag



The Floyd Rose bridge and locking nut kept the tuning stable under intense whammy workouts.



in the guise of, say, Dickey Betts, or perhaps more appropriately, Lonnie Mack. However you dice it, the Vengeance's maple top helps brighten things and adds some bite for solos. Pulling the tone knob makes the sound crisper and more

THE VENGEANCE BRINGS THE METAL THUNDER BUT CUTS IT FOR BLUES AND ROCK TOO

open, which is cool for dirty rhythm playing or when using the dual or neck pickup settings for very clean tones.

Bottom line, the

Fluence pickups provide everything you want from a humbucker — muscular output, good clarity when you roll the

volume and/or tone knobs down, and dead quiet performance — a great aspect of Fishman's unique design. They're a great match for the Vengeance and its main mission of bringing the metal thunder, but this guitar easily cuts it for blues and rock too, while delivering all the Dean moxie and attitude you expect from a brand that began life as a forerunner of the boutique guitar scene. **D**





The middle of the Catalyst combo range, the CX 100 offers a huge range of Helix amp and effects sounds at an entry-level price point.

LINE 6

Catalyst CX 100 combo

TESTED BY DAVE HUNTER

IN UPDATING ITS Catalyst combo lineup, introduced a few years back with the new-and-improved CX range, Line 6 reminds us that it was born as a modeling amp company. The AxSys, Flextone and Spider released in the early years following the company's birth in 1996 provided many players with their first taste of digital amp modeling. While many would agree those products have been far outshone by the tones and capabilities of more compact units today, there's no denying Line 6 provided players with an aural glimpse of what a fully digitized guitar-tone future might sound like.

The CX 100 is a 100-watt, 1x12 combo, and is flanked by the smaller 60-watt 1x12 CX 60 and larger 200-watt 2x12 CX 200. While the range doesn't bring Line 6 entirely full circle to the company's beginnings, it does acknowledge that a faction of guitarists remain more comfortable using traditional-looking amps, and as such it makes sense to present these in an entry-level lineup.

The amp's front end is derived from the Line 6 Helix amp-and-effects processing platform and includes 12 amp voicings and 24 HX-quality effects in four categories: Delay, Modulation, Pitch/Filter and Reverb. The amp models run the gamut from clean to crunch to high gain, and they feature many Helix favorites, such as the Aristocrat (based on a Dumble Overdrive Special), the Carillon (Vox), the 2204 MOD (Marshall), and the contemporary metal/shred-certified models Oblivion and Badonk. When used with Line 6's basic two-button LFS2 channel switcher (sold separately), the combo's two-channel architecture allows you to store and select two amps paired with up to two effects at a time. While accessing and editing the models on the amp is initially a little confusing, the manual explains the procedure well and it becomes second nature after a few edits, saves and recalls.

A six-position selector knob rotates between Clean, Boutique, Chime, Crunch, Dynamic and High Gain settings, each of which can be configured to access two different amp banks, for a total of 12. Any of these can be adjusted via the gain, bass, mid, treble, presence and channel volume controls — and tweaked with effects and boost, if you desire — and saved for later recall by giving a long press to either the ChA or ChB button. Similarly, Effect 1 and 2 wet/depth controls

and their related on/off/edit push buttons let you select from between the 24 offerings in that department. The master control sets the global output level regardless of which preset or channel is selected, and it also governs headphone volume. Alternatively, you can engage Manual mode and simply use the Catalyst as a traditional amp that performs according to where you set the knobs.

In addition, a MIDI controller can be connected via the back panel to select from 12 presets loaded into six slots each in ChA and ChB and to control a plethora of functions using MIDI CC (control change) messages. All of this begs the question, "How do you program so many presets into the thing using such basic front-panel controls?" Answer: Line 6 provides a Catalyst Edit app for use on Mac and Windows computers and iOS and Android mobile devices, allowing far deeper editing of amp and effects parameters than the amp's control panel allows.

The app opens up a range of bonus parameters, including cabinet and mic selections, which are only accessible via the editing software — although it's worth noting that these are only applied to the DI, headphone and USB outs, not the combo's onboard speaker, which is intended to provide that "guitar cab" live tone. The app provides access to three cabs (1x12, 2x12 and 4x12) and 16 mics, including most of the usual suspects

The Catalyst Edit app for Mac, Windows, iOS and Android allows deeper editing of amp and effects parameters.

in the dynamic, condenser and ribbon range. On a personal note, I was happily surprised to find one of my favorites, the Coles 4038 ribbon, among them.

The amp's back panel has an output power switch for mute, ½-watt, 50-watt, and full 100-watt settings. This is followed by a USB-B port, a five-pin MIDI input, a foot-switch jack, a ⅛-inch aux in, a ¼-inch phones out, an FX loop with send and return and mode switch (Loop/Power Amp In), and an XLR DI output with ground-lift switch. When the loop is in Power Amp In mode, its return can receive another modeler's output, allowing the Catalyst CX 100 to act as a powered cab without engaging its own modeling stages. The USB-B port enables Catalyst Edit connections and use of the amp as a recording interface to send a 24-bit/44.1kHz or 48kHz signal to your DAW and/or receive audio signal to monitor through the headphones or the speaker.

It's all swaddled in a combo cab that measures 22 by 20 by 10.3 inches and weighs a mere 32 pounds. Made from fiberboard (MDF), the cabinet is open-back in the extreme, with just a four-inch panel at the bottom covering any of the rear air space. The speaker is a 12-inch Line 6–branded HC 100 rated at 100 watts and four ohms.

Given the Catalyst CX 100's \$399 list price, it's clear

compromises were made somewhere, and most of them likely revolve around the cabinet and speaker, as well as the power amp used to drive the entire rig. Obviously the



amp, FX and cab-sim selections are reduced from what's offered on Helix products, which requires less processing power (and expense). But when you consider what portion of the production budget would be left for the hardware that makes this a "real" amp rather than a floor unit or plug-in software, it's easy to guess where compromises might be heard.

In use, that assumption largely plays out. Tested with a Fender Stratocaster and a Gibson ES-355, the Catalyst CX 100 pumps enough power into a rehearsal room or club stage to fully cut it as a stand-alone, two-channel amp with the standard included foot switch attached, or a more fully featured sonic Swiss Army knife with my Morningstar MCB MIDI controller programmed for extra selections. Its amp models and effects sound decent when used as such, and at times are rather compressed, boxy and flat. Connecting my Fractal FM9 and Neural DSP Quad Cortex

— both of which have several killer tones that fly in other settings — to the Catalyst CX 100 in Power Amp In mode proves that the power amp, speaker and cabinet are the culprits.

However, when played through headphones, or DI'd into studio monitors or an FRFR (Full Range, Flat Response) cab, the Helix-derived models really come into their own, with significantly greater dynamics, dimension and overall realism than the in-the-box rig allows. That's no great surprise, and it's really no major ding against the Catalyst CX 100. With it, Line 6 has delivered a modeling combo with highly tweakable guitar sounds and functionality at a rather unbelievable price. It's an impressively affordable modeling rig housed in an in-the-room combo when you need it, and a great product by any measure when used for private practice or in a home studio. **B**

SPECIFICATIONS

Catalyst CX 100 Combo

CONTACT Line6.com

PRICE \$399 street

CHANNELS 2

CONTROLS Selector (model), boost, gain, bass, mid, treble, presence, Ch vol, effect 1, effect 2, master, with push-buttons for ChA, ChB, manual, boost on/off, FX on/off, and tap/tuner

POWER 100 watts

MODELS 12 amp models and 24 effects, derived from the Helix platform

EXTRAS Output Power switch (Mute, ½W, 50W, 100W); USB-B port, DIN MIDI In, Foot-switch jack (for two-button LFS2, sold separately), 1/8" aux in, ¼" phones, FX loop with send and return and mode switch (Loop/Power Amp in), XLR DI with ground-lift switch

WEIGHT 32 lbs

BUILT Malaysia

KUDOS An impressive bundle of modeling features in an extremely affordable package

CONCERNS Live, in-the-room sounds are compromised by budget hardware

LINE 6 HAS DELIVERED HIGHLY TWEAKABLE GUITAR SOUNDS AND FUNCTIONALITY AT AN UNBELIEVABLE PRICE



A host of onboard controls makes it easy to adjust your tone on-the-fly in Manual mode.



POSITIVE GRID

Spark Live 4-Channel Smart Amp & PA System

TESTED BY CHRISTOPHER SCAPELLITI

POSITIVE GRID'S LINE of Spark smart amps has looked like a process of miniaturization over its five years of evolution. The original Spark 40-watt desktop amp led to the portable Spark Mini combo, which led to the pocket-sized Spark GO. In any form, Spark has given guitarists a huge range of virtual amps, cabinets and effects along with Smart Jam Live virtual jam partners, Auto Chords to instantly learn any song, Bluetooth-streamed music and more.

For the new Spark Live smart amp and PA system, Positive Grid has gone the opposite direction, creating a combo you can actually gig with. But to think of Spark Live as just a big version of its siblings would be a mistake. It's a four-channel Swiss Army knife for electric and acoustic guitars, bass, vocals, stereo keyboards, drum machines and more. And with an optional rechargeable-battery pack onboard, Live can go wherever you perform, from parks to street corners to campsites. Packing 150 watts of digital power, as well as what Positive Grid refers to as a Sonic IQ computational audio engine that brings a host

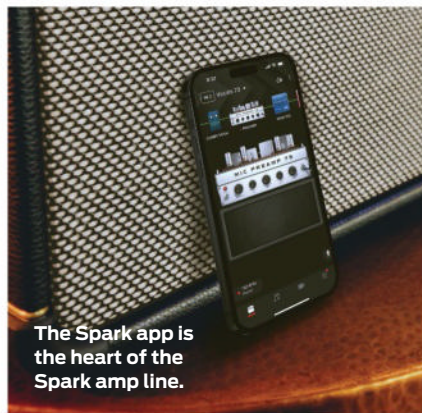
of sound enhancements, Live delivers a sonic punch and sounds good doing it.

Weighing in at just under 27 pounds, Live is dressed in matte black vinyl with corner protectors and the black-brown basketweave grille cloth seen on previous Spark amps. A recessed strap handle pulls out for carrying the amp, and a receptacle on the opposite side allows Live to be mounted on a stand if you choose. Live can be oriented on the floor vertically or horizontally, and with either scenario, a kickstand on the rear can be unlocked from its compartment to lean the amp back for better projection and sound. A G-sensor within the cabinet automatically detects Live's orientation, causing the

Auto-EQ (one of those new Sonic IQ enhancements) to deliver a more focused mono signal when the amp is vertical and wider stereo separation when horizontal.

Positive Grid has laid out Live's channels and controls in a clear fashion. Channel one, the guitar and bass channel, is situated handily on the amp's front, along with the power switch and the LED indicators for Bluetooth and Wi-Fi connection status. From the left, channel one includes a ¼-inch guitar input, a programmable selector for quick selection of eight presets, and controls for gain, bass, mid, treble and volume (labeled "Guitar"). The last knob controls the volume of any music streamed into Live.

It's a well-chosen complement, and while the tone controls didn't make a dramatic difference to my guitar sound, that's probably by design, given that the bulk of tone shaping is done via the Spark app in your phone or tablet. As with other Spark amps, the app is the heart of the operations, and it includes all the familiar presets we've come to know — with 33 amp models for electric, acoustic and bass guitar, plus 43 effects models — as well as any presets you've created for previous versions of Spark. Eight can be saved to Live's programmable preset control and selected by pressing the control knob or spinning it.



The Spark app is the heart of the Spark amp line.



The rechargeable battery option provides up to eight hours of use.

Live's back panel is where you'll find all other channel inputs and controls, including the master controls. Channel two is designed for acoustic guitar, bass or vocal and has a combo ¼-inch/XLR input, a volume control and a programmable preset selector for another eight presets using three amp models for vocal, bass and acoustic guitar, as well as 50 effects. Channels 3 and 4 are situated below and include left and right inputs for stereo gear like keyboards and drum machines, and a volume control. The master has controls for volume and high, mid and low EQ, and these govern the overall sound for all four channels.

Below this are MIDI in and out jacks, and left and right outputs for connecting to a soundboard. Another panel running vertically alongside channels two and three hosts a Bluetooth pairing button, a ⅛-inch headphone jack, a USB-C interface for two-channel in/out recording, and a USB-C charging dock for phones, tablets and laptops. Lastly, there's the compartment for the optional rechargeable battery. One wasn't provided with our unit, but Positive Grid reports that it supplies up to eight hours of AC-free power.

Four channels of audio — not including streamed music — is a lot for a compact amp/PA to handle. Live does it with a complement of speakers that include

a pair of custom-designed 6.5-inch woofers and two one-inch compression tweeters, all of it set up for stereo sound dispersion. These can readily be seen by snapping off the amp's grille. A pair of reflex ports enhance the bass response and help explain why such a small amp sounds so full and dimensional across an impressively wide audio spectrum, from 45 to 20,000 hertz.

But the real work is done inside via Positive Grid's audio enhancements courtesy of the Sonic IQ audio engine. In addition to the aforementioned Auto-EQ, it delivers bass and vocal enhancement, stereo widening and dynamic range compression. Together, they make audio from Live's four channels sound clear and powerful in any situation, from bedroom practice to coffeehouse gig.

Live can be oriented vertically or horizontally and angled back using the kickstand on the amp's back.

I tested Live with a range of electrics and acoustics, including a Fender Jazzmaster, a Gibson ES-335 and a Gibson J-160E, as well as with vocals, stereo keyboards and rhythm machines. I was especially curious to try some of my favorite presets through this larger amp, and I wasn't disappointed by what I heard. Presets I've long enjoyed in other Spark amps have new depth and realism — not to mention volume. Vocals were clear and benefited from the range of effects on offer in the Spark App. Live also proved itself with an electric piano, stereo synths and a drum machine, handling the piano's broad dynamic range with ease and keeping its composure at both the low and high frequency ranges of the synths and rhythm boxes. Far from being

a guitar amp with a trio of extra channels thrown in, Live provides high-quality inputs and sound across the board. The effort is obvious and goes a long way toward making Live a valuable piece of

kit for solo performers and small combos.

In terms of output, Live's 150-watt digital power rating makes it perfect for coffeehouse gigs with another guitarist and bassist or keyboardist, but it's going to break a sweat in a loud four-piece rock combo. Even so, it's pretty easy to imagine all the places you can take Spark Live and the uses you can put it to. As a grab-and-go amp for casual gigs and jams, it can hardly be beat. But what I find equally impressive is its long-range usability: Should you upgrade to an inevitable future version of Spark combo, Live can be

recommissioned for vocal duties or used as a personal stage monitor. It's an amp you won't outgrow and one you'll have loads of fun using from day one. For all its innovation, great tone, connectivity and enjoyment, Spark Live earns an Editors' Pick Award. 

SPECIFICATIONS

Spark Live

CONTACT positivegrid.com

PRICE \$549; optional battery, \$79

CHANNELS 4

CONTROLS Channel 1: Guitar preset selector, gain, bass, mid, treble, master, volume, music channel volume. Channel 2: Volume, preset selector. Channels 3 & 4: Volume. Master: Low, mid, high, volume

I/O Channel 1: ¼-inch. Channel 2: Combo ¼-inch/XLR; Channels 3 & 4: Two ¼-inch. ⅛-inch headphone

POWER 150 watts

MODELS Channel 1: 33 amp models for electric, acoustic and bass guitar; 43 effects. Channel 2: 3 amp models for vocal, bass and acoustic guitar; 50 effects

EXTRAS MIDI in and out, two ¼-inch line outputs, Bluetooth pair button, USB-C recording interface (2x2 in/out, 48kHz/24-bit), USB-C charging dock

WEIGHT 26.45 lbs

BUILT China

KUDOS Four channels with a vast array of amp and effect models in a very portable combo, with plenty of volume for small gigs. Sonic IQ audio engine delivers optimized sound for guitar, bass and vocals

CONCERNS None

**IT'S EASY TO IMAGINE
ALL THE PLACES YOU
CAN TAKE SPARK LIVE
AND THE USES YOU
CAN PUT IT TO**

D. KOWALSKI

Rare Earth Germanium Device Pedal

TESTED BY DAVE HUNTER

ALMOST ALL GUITARISTS associate germanium with fuzz boxes. But in fact, this chemical element was used to make transistors and diodes for myriad applications before silicon components became more widely available. Amp maker David Kowalski has something of an obsession with germanium. Based in McAllen, Texas, Kowalski — whose Dark Gene micro amp was reviewed in our November 2021 issue — has created the Rare Earth Germanium Device to bridge the gap between overdrive and fuzz.

QUIRKY CIRCUITS

Inspired by the iconic two-transistor Tone Bender Mk 1.5 and Fuzz Face circuits of the '60s, Kowalski spent years testing and selecting appropriate germanium components for his Germanium Device. He ultimately decided to work with suitable transistors from a range of makers, including



The Rare Earth uses quality electrical and mechanical components throughout.

“I REALLY JUST WANTED TO CREATE SOMETHING I THOUGHT JEFF BECK WOULD HAVE USED”

otherwise obscured upper-midrange cut and definition,” he tells me. Working in conjunction with the Expander mode switch and swell control, his circuit “elegantly bridges the

Telefunken, Mullard, RCA, Brimar, NKT and — as found in our review sample — Amperex. Controls for swell and expander govern the input and output gain stages, respectively, and the pedal runs on an internal nine-volt battery only, as is Kowalski’s preference for germanium circuits.

The vagaries of these transistors mean that some pedals (my test model included) carry a mini-toggle Expander switch on the side, which converts traditional output control operation to a frequency-widening mode that extends various portions of the range. It takes advantage of a quirk that can be tapped from some germanium circuits and not others, and Kowalski points out that those pedals that don’t feature the switch function optimally without it.

In creating the Germanium Device circuit, Kowalski set out to undo aspects of the Tone Bender Mk 1.5 and Fuzz Face circuits that inhibited their range. “I modified the feedback portion of the circuits and capitalized on transistor leakage to restore

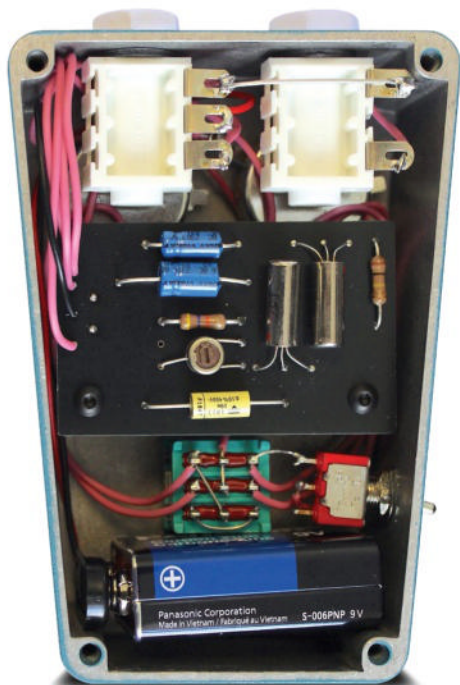
gap between less defined, complete saturation and articulate, raw germanium overdrive,” he adds.

Putting it more simply, Kowalski explains, “I really just wanted to create something I thought Jeff Beck would have used.”

FUZZ FACTOR

It’s all housed in a crinkle-finished, powder-blue trapezoidal metal enclosure with a ‘60s-style font, large white reproduction RCA radio knobs and white British-made Cliff jacks. A soft-click Gorva foot switch, Alpha potentiometers and Vishay capacitors add to the quality parts count in an elegantly handwired circuit that harks to the glory days of these pedals.

Tested using a Fender Jaguar and a Gibson ES-355 into a tweed Deluxe-style 1x12 combo and a 65amps London head



The Expander switch offers a frequency-widening mode.



and 2x12 cab, the Rare Earth Germanium Device Pedal slathered hairy and occasionally unpredictable harmonic saturation over my tone across its full range of gain settings. Although Kowalski voices his desire to coax overdrive from the circuit, to my ears it doesn't dip much below the clipping levels of a classic fuzz pedal with its first knob set low — and I'd say that's a good thing. Crispy and edgy at lower levels, with great playing dynamics, the Germanium Device segues into gradations of full-on fuzz about halfway up the swell knob's rotation, and that's where the party really begins.

At higher swell settings with the expander knob advanced (and/or the

Expander mode switch flipped), the pedal coughs out inspiringly quirky dirt that's occasionally glitchy and gated in a fun, freaky, frequency-dependent way. The result is often heard in a joyfully random response to your playing. For instance, the dissimilar voices of my guitars' bridge and neck pickups were treated dramatically differently at times (the Jaguar's "strangle switch" became a powerful tool here), unison bends in some positions induced crazy pulsing modulation, and the pedal slipped from smooth to snarly at different playing positions along the neck.

All in all, it makes for an inspiring variation on the iconic germanium fuzz.

Kowalski's Rare Earth Germanium Device Pedal brings new and fun aspects to the humble fuzz box, and for that it deserves our Editors' Pick Award. 

SPECIFICATIONS

Rare Earth Germanium Device Pedal

CONTACT dkowalskiamplifiers.com

PRICE \$259 direct

CONTROLS Swell, expander, Expander mode switch (only on pedals that require it)

EXTRAS Single input and output, two hand-selected germanium transistors, internal battery only

SIZE 4.375" x 3" x 1.5" (LxWxD)

BUILT USA

KUDOS A harmonically saturated medium-gain fuzz pedal with a fun random edge

CONCERNS No on/off indicator light or DC power input



GROVER®
WORLD'S FINEST MACHINE HEADS

www.grotr.com



V97-18NAR
(V97-18 Series)
STA-TITE™

SUBSCRIBE AND SAVE UP TO 80%*

NEW! full digital access to 50+ back issues when you subscribe!*



B4HMAG

ORDER FORM COMPLETE ALL INFORMATION BELOW & RETURN WITH PAYMENT TO: GUITAR PLAYER PO BOX 2029 LANGHORNE, PA 19047-9957

SUBSCRIBE TODAY

- ☐ **FOR FASTEST SERVICE**
CALL 1-800-289-9839
AND MENTION CODE **B4HMAG**
- ☐ **PAYMENT ENCLOSED**
(CHECK PAYABLE TO GUITAR PLAYER)
- ☐ **24 PRINT ISSUES**
FOR \$43.99
- ☐ **12 PRINT ISSUES**
FOR \$23.95

T-SHIRT SIZE

☐ M ☐ L ☐ XL ☐ XXL

BILL TO ADDRESS

NAME (PLEASE PRINT)

ADDRESS

CITY

STATE

ZIP

E-MAIL

☐ Check here for news and offers from other Future brands.

SHIP TO ADDRESS

☐ **YES! THIS IS A GIFT SUBSCRIPTION**

NAME (PLEASE PRINT)

ADDRESS

CITY

STATE

ZIP

Offer is valid on US orders only, visit us at magazinesdirect.com or call 1-800-289-9839 for international pricing and other subscription options. Free gifts are fulfilled once payment is processed. T-shirt design may vary. Your first issue and t-shirt will arrive 4-6 weeks after your payment is processed, please allow additional time for overseas deliveries. Newsstand cover price is \$9.99, 12 issues annually.**Access to the digital library will end with your subscription.

Lollar[®]
TACOMA, WA **PICKUPS**



The Broiler's Back!

After a years-long hiatus, we've brought back our popular Broiler™ pickup. With plenty of shimmering top-end chime that's present but never brittle or harsh, the Broiler is a drop-in replacement for Rickenbacker® 6-string and 12-string guitars.

Visit the url below for more details including a video demo.

lollarguitars.com/broiler • 206-463-9838

30 YEARS
— YOUR TONE —
OUR PASSION



FRALINPICKUPS.COM | (804) 358-2699

Fralin **30 YEARS**
PICKUPS

They said it couldn't be done.

*6 years in the making, the **Z-80** represents the pinnacle of Dr. Z's line.*

The challenge was laid out ... create an amp with the magical tone of the famed "unicorn" Vox AC80, with modern reliability and build quality. Most thought it was a futile endeavor, but Dr. Z got to work ... then kept working.

We could not be more proud of this amp.



HAND MADE IN THE U.S.A.

SEE FULL SPECIFICATIONS,
REVIEWS, AND VIDEO DEMOS
AT WWW.DRZAMPS.COM



DR. Z AMPS
SINCE 1978



**MORE POWERFUL, PRECISE
FRETBOARD AEROBATICS.**



RAILHAMMER.COM

Narrow rails under the wound strings, oversize pole pieces under the plain strings. A revolutionary design that tightens lows and fattens highs for exceptional clarity and punch. Railhammer nails the tone you've been searching for.




**“Big Bends
Gem-Tone Wipes
should be in
everyone's guitar
case. They will keep
your strings
sounding the way
they should and
help them last
longer too.”**

Joe Satriani

GEM-TONE™ String Wipes
25 & 50 Count

bigbends.com
888-788-BEND

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

\$45.00 USD (includes shipping in the U.S and U.S. territories)

Get more for your used gear.

Create your first listing today!

ZERO SELLER FEES

when you redeem earnings in the form of a Sweetwater Gift Card!

 **GEAR**
EXCHANGE
Powered by **Sweetwater**

Sweetwater.com/used

How I Wrote...

“Possum Kingdom”

It launched an urban legend that lives to this day. Vaden Todd Lewis reveals the true story behind the Toadies’ hit.

BY JOE BOSSO

THERE’S A REASON the Toadies’ 1994 alt-rock hit “Possum Kingdom” remains a classic 30 years on: It has a knockout guitar riff, slamming ensemble playing, impassioned vocals and a ghoulish lyric about a murderer who haunted Possum Kingdom Lake in North Texas in search of a woman to take as his bride. As the song explains, one night the killer found his victim, and horror ensued.

There’s just one caveat.

“It was complete B.S.,” says Vaden Todd Lewis, the band’s singer-guitarist and chief songwriter. But Todd stuck to his story at the time, and as a result, he says, “fans came up with their own interpretations that involved serial killers and the occult.” He chuckles. “But it’s cool that people dig it. I can’t complain.”

ABOUT A GIRL

The origins of “Possum Kingdom” are found in an earlier Lewis song, “I Burn,” which was inspired by his “hell on wheels” girlfriend of that time. “I had a dream in which she got me to this party where

I set myself on fire as a way of reaching otherworldliness,” he says. “After I wrote it, I was like, ‘I’m breaking up with her.’”

Instead, Lewis decided to continue the theme in a new song. “I thought, What would this guy do now?” he says. “He’s smoke, so now he has to convince somebody to do the same thing so he’ll have a partner. That’s what ‘Possum Kingdom’ is about.”

“FANS CAME UP WITH THEIR OWN INTERPRETATIONS THAT INVOLVED SERIAL KILLERS AND THE OCCULT”

and Rob Schnapf (fresh off a big hit with Beck’s “Loser”), the Toadies set about recording their debut album at Record Two Mendocino in Comptche, California.

There was one catch, however: The label strongly suggested that the band remake “Possum Kingdom.” “Nobody said outright, ‘That song is why we signed you’ — which is good, because I would have resisted,” Lewis

Lewis found that his lyrics suited a syncopated riff and rhythm chord pattern he’d come up with while noodling on his Epiphone Les Paul. “It’s in 7/4 and 4/4, but the words fit, so I kept writing,” he explains. “I had fun smooshing it all together.” Using a cardboard box for drum accompaniment, he laid down a demo on a Tascam four-track recorder and played it for the band. “They changed little flourishes, but the meat of it was there.”

BIG BUDGET, BIG SOUND

The Texas-based Toadies — which included lead guitarist Charles Mooney III, bassist Lisa Umbarger and drummer Mark Reznicek — recorded the track for their self-produced

1993 indie EP, *Pleather*. “We did five songs in five hours,” Lewis recalls. The release caught the attention of Interscope Records, who signed the band to a sizable deal. With a major-label budget and the hot production team of Tom Rothrock

says. “But they wore me down. I was like, It’s a decent song — fine. At least I’ll get to hear it the way I want.”

Lewis attempted to perform his parts on a Gibson Melody Maker (“I played it through some sort of homemade amp,” he recalls), but the instrument wouldn’t stay in tune. Eventually, he switched to his trusty Epiphone Les Paul. Darrel Herbert, who replaced original lead guitarist Mooney in 1993, re-created the lines that Lewis had written. Recalls Lewis, “I remember listening to the recording on my headphones and thinking, Wow, this sounds really great! This is what it’s supposed to sound like.”

COMING CLEAN

“Possum Kingdom” was an immediate radio hit, reaching the top five on *Billboard*’s Modern Rock chart. Its accompanying video, which alternated shots of the band in performance with eerie images of a body bag being dragged from the water, scored big on MTV. The combination fueled massive sales, and before long the album *Rubberneck* was a million seller.

As for the song’s legacy, one which has been mythologized by everyone from vampire enthusiasts to conspiracy theorists, Lewis is now happy to let sleeping urban legends lie. “For a while, it was out of control,” he says. “I had goth kids in Florida coming to shows, and they had so many crazy ideas of what the song meant. We did a documentary a while back, and I finally came clean and was like, ‘No, this is what it’s really about. I was just pissed off at a girl.’”



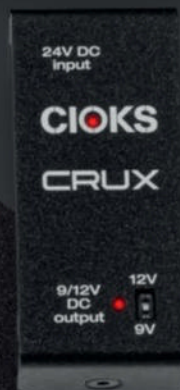
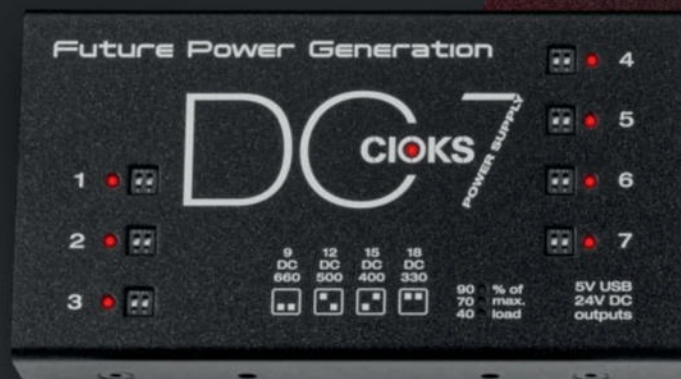
The Toadies perform in New York City, August 1995. (from left) Vaden Todd Lewis, Darrel Herbert, Lisa Umbarger and Mark Reznicek.

CIOKS

Future Power Generation

RANGE HIGHLIGHTS

- Groundbreaking 1-inch profile and super low weight
- 2-stage switch-mode power supply topology
- Ultra-low noise achieved by multistage filtering
- 660mA at 9V DC on each standard outlet
- Advanced LED status indicator on each outlet
- 4 selectable voltages on each standard outlet (9, 12, 15 & 18V)
- Modular system with DC7 as the base unit
- 5-year worldwide warranty



TONE IS SUBJECTIVE POWER IS NOT

www.cioks.com



Knaggs™
GUITARS

@knagsguitars
f knagsguitars
knagsguitars.com