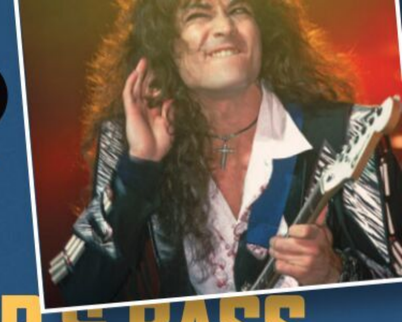
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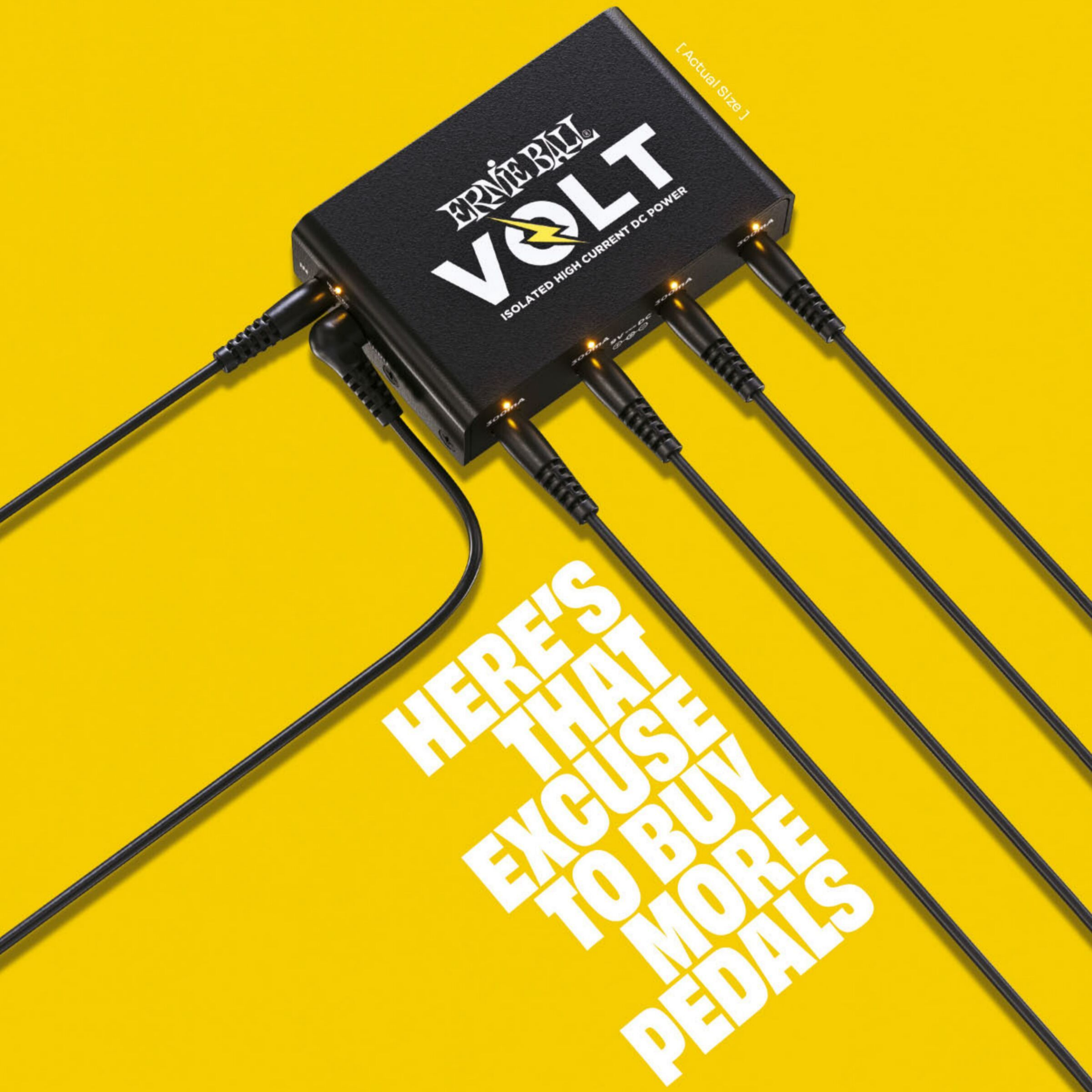


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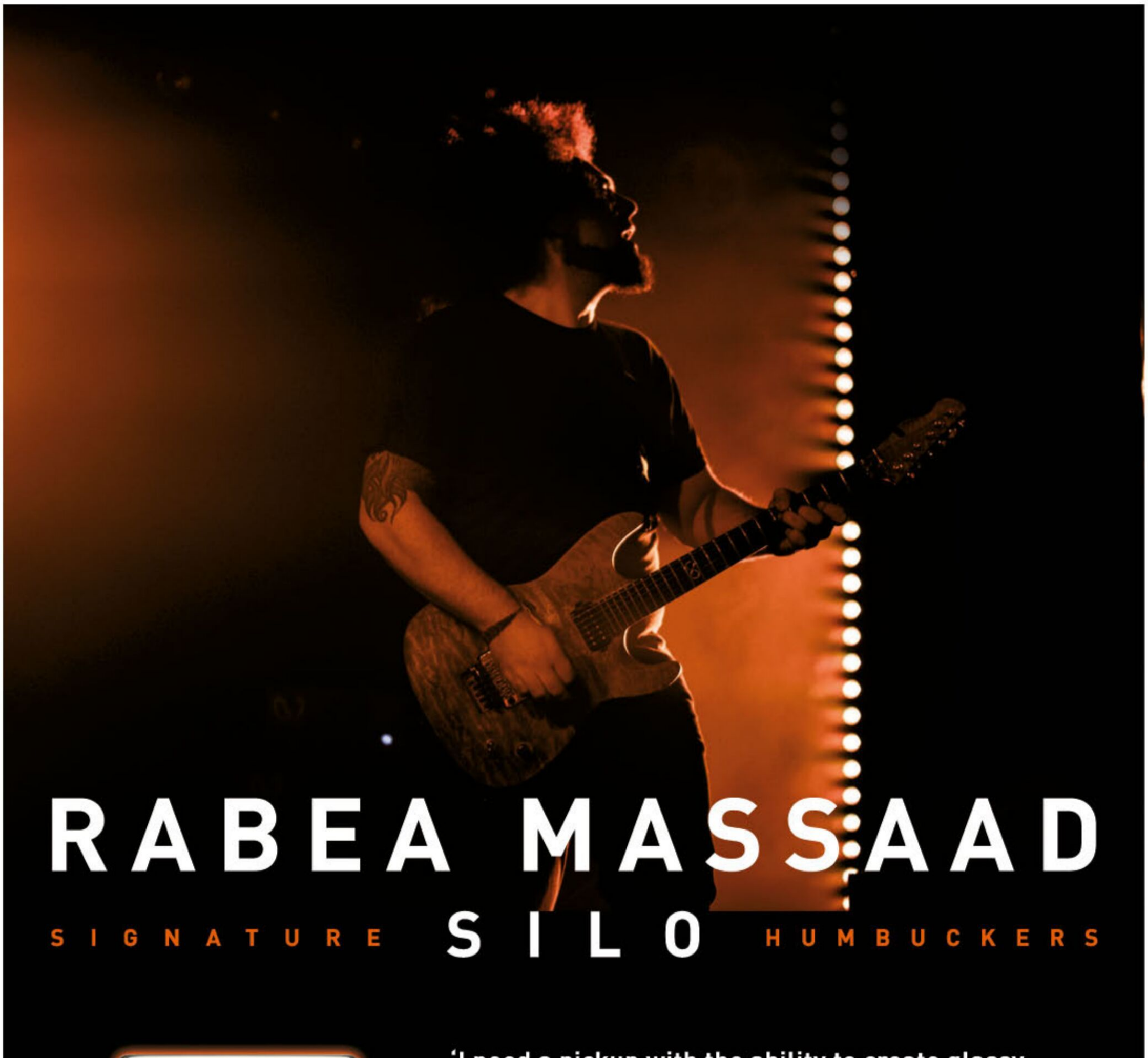
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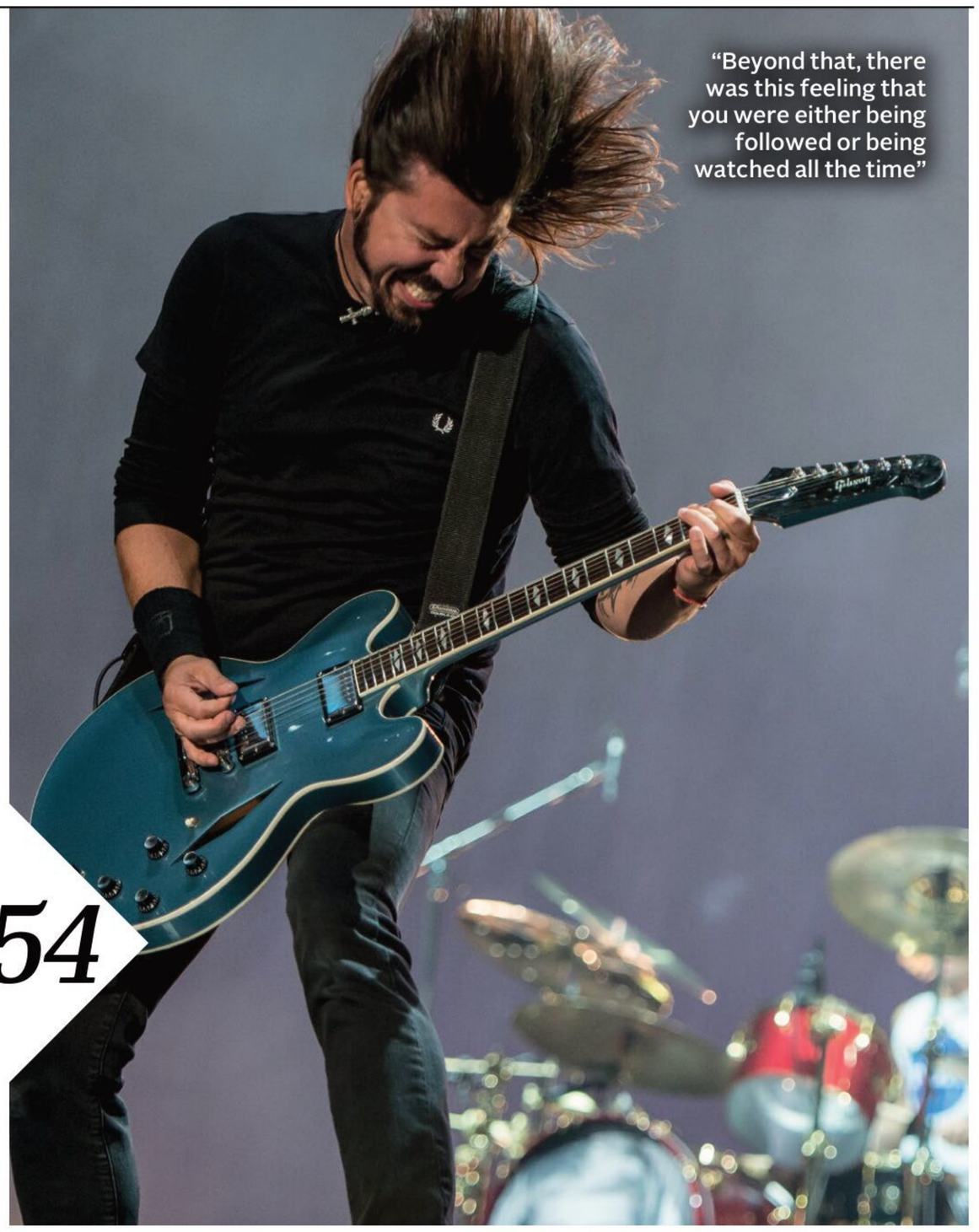
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KEVIN NIXON/FUTURE

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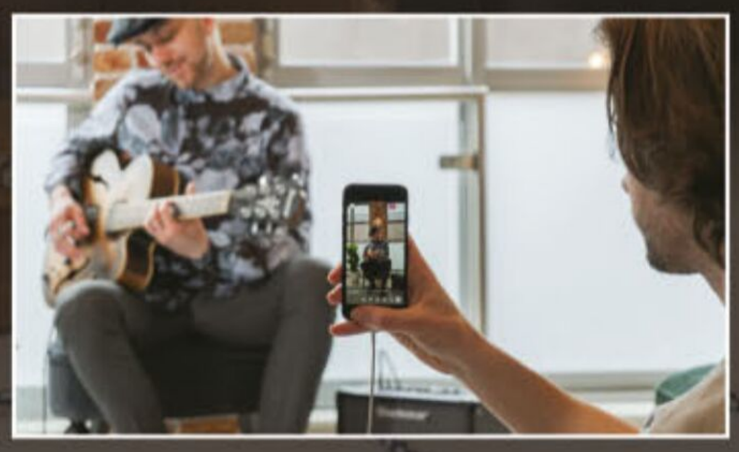
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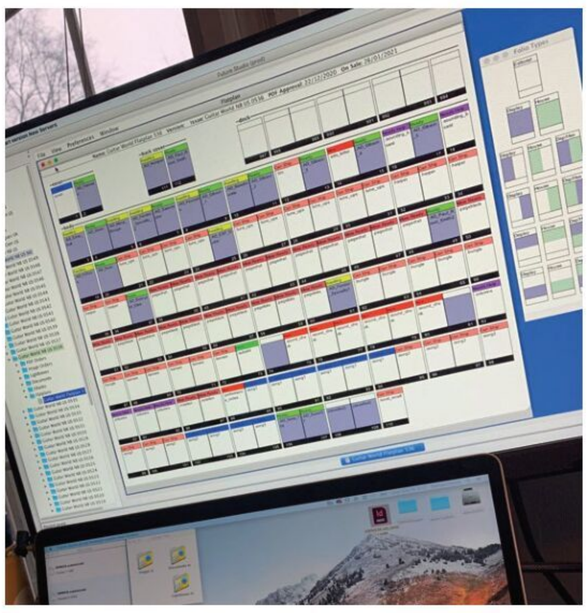
WOODSHED

VOL. 42 | NO. 4 | APRIL 2021

LIKE A FINE WINE...



IS OUR COVER photo of Dave Grohl a bit on the "vintage" side? Why, yes it is. Good eye! Since the pandemic struck, we simply haven't been able to assign that many photo shoots. For instance, if we wanted to get a new pic of Pat Smear to go with our two Foo Fighters features, we'd have to hire someone to track him down in the Canadian hinterland. (It sounds like he's been listening to Cracker's "Turn On Tune In Drop Out.") Anyway, because this issue's Foos coverage happens to focus on the band's 25-plus years of existence, we decided to go the "classic" route with Grohl — as we did with the "of a similar vintage" Jimmy Page photo that graces our March 2021 cover. As it happens, both photos were shot by Ross Halfin.



BEHIND THE SCENES: In case anyone has ever wondered, this is what a typical issue of *Guitar World* looks like as we're putting it together (This photo shows the March issue about three weeks into production). The program/software is called Studio, and every editorial page (and every ad) changes color as it gets closer to completion. We know we're done when everything turns bright green. Once the issue has gone to the printer, it turns an incredibly reassuring dark blue. At which point, we immediately start working on the next one.

THIS MONTH'S WOODSHED PHOTO... features a Danelectro Baby Sitar! Some of the bands I'm in have been known to play a Beatles song or two, and let's just say this "baby" comes in handy when performing "Norwegian Wood" or "Love You To." It has a Gotoh pickup and weighs about as much as a large sandwich. Mmmmmm... sandwich...



DAMIAN FANELLI
Editor-in-Chief

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Ultimate Indeed!

Let me say how much I massively enjoyed your "Ultimate Guitar Summit" feature [February 2021]! You assembled the perfect cast of diverse guitarists who collectively, and with mutual respect, proved that the future of the instrument is as solid as a rock. The realization that guitar-based music is so powerfully present across such eclectic media made this perhaps the most inspirational article I've read in the last 20 years. A huge thanks to all involved!

— Craig Isherwood

I Give John 5 a 10

I've always been a big fan of John 5 — ever since seeing him live with Marilyn Manson and then with Rob Zombie. But after reading the article about him in the February 2021 issue, I've gained an even higher level of respect for him. He has accomplished so much and has stayed so positive in spite of losing his parents, family and many friends — all while avoiding the many temptations of life, including drugs and alcohol. I'm sure he's a fantastic inspiration to many young aspiring musicians. John, your parents were (and still would be) very proud of you today, I bet! Great job, man! Thank you! P.S. Please transcribe an April Wine song!

— David Geist



And the Mailbox Will Rock...

I wanted to share a couple of projects I completed after the tragic passing of the one and only Eddie Van Halen. First, I made a beer opener with a Schlitz Malt Liquor can (for obvious reasons), and I just finished a Frankenmailbox in his honor [pictured]. Hope you like it!

— Alex Monroy



Behold the Scrap-Metal Strat!

This isn't exactly a drawing of an artist, lol. It's a Stratocaster sculpture. Hand welded to scale. The strings are welding rods. It's made of scrap metal. You can see more of it under "Rick's Metal" on Facebook. Hope you like it!

— Rick Bailes

GW Needs a Centerfold

I don't know if *GW* has done this before, but have you ever thought of having a centerfold?! Not the typical type but one of a super-cool guitar or of a guitar leaning on an amp. I love cool, old vintage gear but I know many of your younger readers get tired of the old stuff and love the new stuff. So, why not have a monthly or quarterly centerfold? I've received calendars with super-cool guitars and amps from the Fender Custom Shop as gifts from my awesome wife of 40 years and thoroughly enjoyed them. I know I'm not the only one of your readers that has lusted over a few guitars and/or amps in the past! Anyway, just a thought that I have been thinking about for a while.

— Phillip T.

Long Live the Prince!

I've viewed quite a few top "however many guitar players" lists in the last day or two, but your "top 20 guitarists of the decade" [January 2020] being the last I viewed and the reason for my email. Not to complain too much about said list(s) but what really boggles my mind is how not a single one of these lists includes one of the greatest guitar players ever to slide his fingers down a fretboard — the man, the legend, Prince Rogers Nelson! He was alive for part of the last decade so his lack of inclusion is pure travesty! I'm sure that being an editor of a guitar magazine you yourself play, and having said that, I can only be left with the question of "How can you possibly sleep at night knowing that one of the absolute greatest guitarists of the last 70 years has been omitted from not only yours, but many many other lists of great guitar players?" You should be ashamed.

— Travis

[*Editor's note: If you can handle another list, check out Prince's entry in our "40 Guitarists Who Changed Our World Since 1980" story in the December 2020 issue.*]

More Heavy Anniversaries

I really enjoyed the *Permanent Waves* 40th-anniversary cover story [October 2020]. I went to see them on that tour in May 1980 at Nassau Coliseum on Long Island, only my second concert. How about giving some love to some of the other all-time classic albums celebrating their 40th, including Black Sabbath, *Heaven and Hell*; Judas Priest, *British Steel*; Iron Maiden's debut; Saxon, *Wheels of Steel*; and Def Leppard's *On Through the Night*?

— Donald Taylor

Should Covers Sound Like the Original?

Cover songs are a quagmire for musicians. If you're in a cover band and you don't nail the songs, you probably won't be considered very good. If you're in an original band and you cover a tune exactly, because maybe they're your influence, now the cat's out of the bag and everybody knows where your original material is inspired by. There's nothing wrong with making a cover song your own! [Check out] CCR's "Midnight Special," Jimi Hendrix's "All Along the Watchtower," Van Halen's "You Really Got Me," Devo's "Satisfaction," Metallica's "Turn the Page," Weezer's "No Scrubs" and the Darkness' "Street Spirit (Fade Out)." We all know an acquaintance or two who was introduced to a song, not realizing it was a cover version in the first place. Sometimes it's better to sound like yourself, even in a cover song, than to wind up losing who you are musically in a sea of covers with dotted i's and crossed t's.

— Joe Zlotek

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OF THE MONTH

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Also, please let us know if you'd like us to share it on Instagram!



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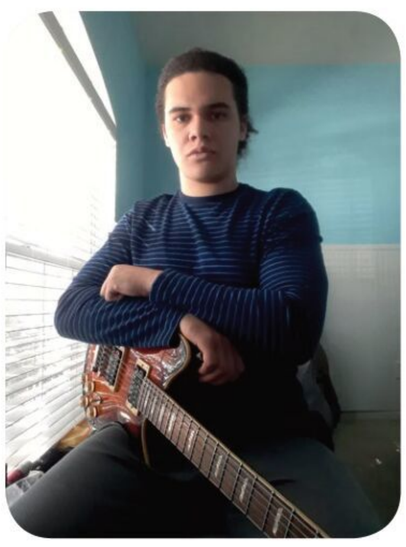
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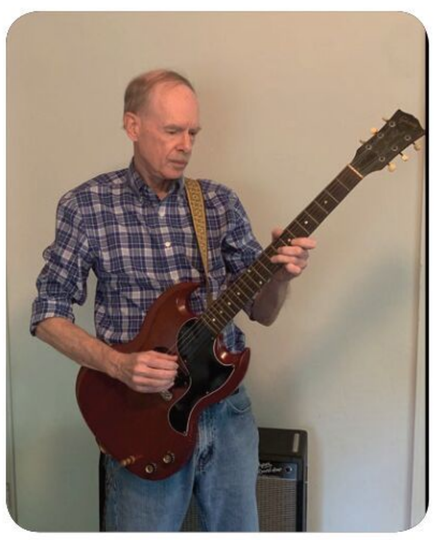
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AGE: 50
HOMETOWN: American Falls, ID
GUITARS: Gibson Les Paul Standard Premium, Epiphone Les Paul Tribute Plus, Epiphone Dot Deluxe, PRS Custom 24, Fender American Select Tele, Charvel San Dimas, Ovation Celebrity Elite, Breedlove Pursuit Exotic
SONGS I'VE BEEN PLAYING: Pink Floyd "Wish You Were Here," Aerosmith "Seasons of Wither," Lynyrd Skynyrd "Gimme Three Steps"
GEAR I WANT MOST: Gibson '59 reissue, Fender Deluxe '57 Custom Twin 40-watt amp



Simon Jesus Mora

AGE: 23
HOMETOWN: Katy, TX
GUITARS: Washburn WI66PRO, Washburn EA-20A
SONGS I'VE BEEN PLAYING: Plini "Electric Sunrise," Zequinha de Abreu "Tico Tico no Fuba," Birèli Lagrène "Made in France," Jack Thammarat "Falling in Love Again"
GEAR I WANT MOST: Washburn WI67PRO, Washburn WI595, Washburn J3TSK, Paris Swing GG-39



Tom Hord

AGE: 68
HOMETOWN: Raleigh, NC
GUITARS: 1961 Les Paul Junior, 1959 Fender Duo-Sonic and 1987 Les Paul Standard
SONGS I'VE BEEN PLAYING: The Rolling Stones *Get Yer Ya-Ya's Out*, Greta Van Fleet "Flower Power," Mary Osborne "I Love Paris"
GEAR I WANT MOST: Fender Blackface Dual Showman

Are you a Defender of the Faith? Send a photo, along with your answers to the questions above, to **GWSoundingBoard@futurenet.com**. And pray!

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Leslie West performs on *Don Kirshner's Rock Concert* December 13, 1975

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

Remembering Leslie West

THE BIG MAN WHOSE BIG GUITAR SOUND HELPED LAUNCH HEAVY METAL

By Alan di Perna

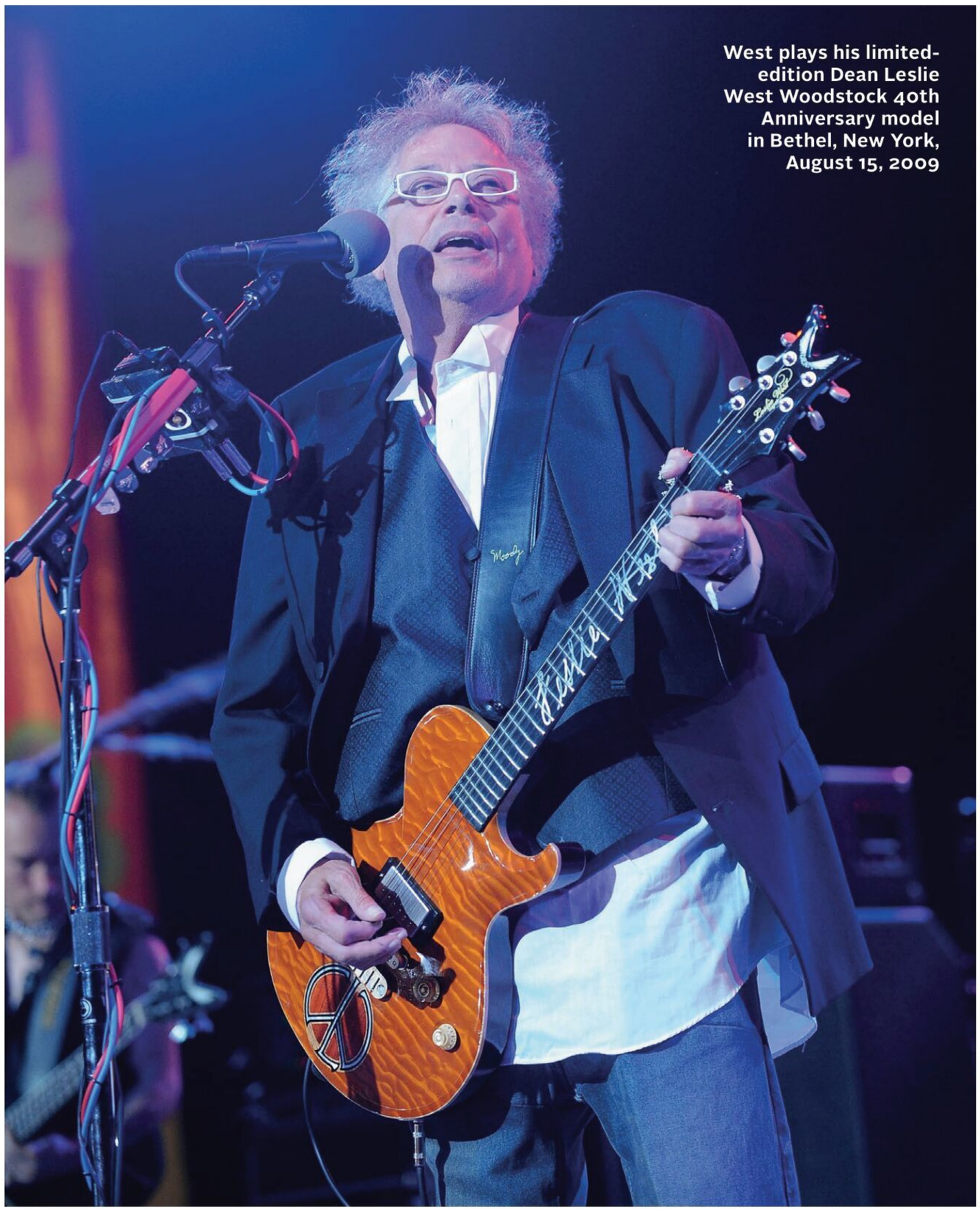
LESLIE WEST WAS always an unlikely guitar hero. His massive physical presence — he weighed 300 pounds at the dawn of the Seventies — defied the longstanding vogue for undernourished-looking, rail-thin rock guitar slingers. And he never cultivated dazzling fretboard techniques, relying instead on pure soul, a powerhouse singing voice, and one of the meatiest electric guitar tones ever to burst from a speaker cabinet.

"I didn't play fast," West said in 2011. "I only used the first and third finger on the fingering hand. So I worked on my tone all the time. I wanted to have the greatest, biggest tone, and I wanted vibrato like somebody who plays violin in a hundred piece orchestra."

West, who died of a heart attack on December 22, 2020, at age 75, was a key architect of the heavy guitar aesthetic that coalesced in the late Sixties/early Seventies and has been a staple of rock music ever since. He was born Leslie Weinstein on October 22, 1945, in Forest Hills, Queens, and grew up in the suburbs of Long Island and New Jersey. He bought his first guitar with money from his bar mitzvah at age 13. With his brother Larry on bass, he formed the Vagrants in the mid Sixties.

The Vagrants were a soul-inflected rock band in very much the same vein as the Young Rascals — major hitmakers in that era — and the Hassles, the band in which Billy Joel started out, playing Hammond B3 organ. The three groups worked the same club circuit in the metro New York area, and all drew extensively from the soul and R&B repertoire that record labels like Stax and Atlantic had brought to the fore at that time. The Vagrants scored a regional hit in 1967 with their version of the Otis Redding classic "Respect."

As a teenager growing up on Long Island in the Sixties, this was my first introduction to Leslie West — and the Vagrants' version of →



West plays his limited-edition Dean Leslie West Woodstock 40th Anniversary model in Bethel, New York, August 15, 2009

BOBBY BANK/WIREIMAGE

"Respect" was the one that garage bands like mine emulated. It was more hard-hitting than the Aretha Franklin version, and you didn't need the legendary Stax horn section that played on Redding's original. This was something else again — Long Island garage soul, a kind of regional subgenre that flourished briefly and contained the seeds of greater things to come.

Leslie West was destined to play a significant role in rock's transition from the Sixties to the Seventies. The bridge from the Vagrants to Mountain was record producer/songwriter/bassist Felix Pappalardi, who first came to late-Sixties prominence through his work with Eric Clapton's emergent supergroup Cream. Pappalardi produced some tracks for the Vagrants and helped West formulate what was initially to be a solo project called Mountain.

The name was a riff on West's formidable girth. He was enough of a showman to realize the value of turning what might have seemed like a negative body image (in today's parlance) into a visual hook. When Mountain morphed from a self-titled 1969 solo record into a band, West said to Pappalardi:

"There's never been a fat and a skinny guy onstage. We can't miss!"

West's guitar style had evolved considerably by that point. In an interview with journalist Jeff Tamarkin, West credited American session ace Waddy Wachtel with helping him reach a new level of six-string mastery.

"I started listening to Eric Clapton and Jimi Hendrix and I said, 'Whoa, I never heard anybody play the guitar like this,'" West recalled. "A friend of mine, Waddy Wachtel, lived in the same building as me in Forest Hills. He taught me how to play real guitar."

It was also Wachtel who sold West his first Gibson Les Paul Jr., an instrument that would become his signature axe. He combined with Sunn Coliseum P.A. heads and cabinets to create his trademark chunky, sustain-rich guitar tone. Many people heard that gigantic sound for the first time at the Woodstock festival in 1969. Mountain were one of three "baby bands" to play at the historic event. The other two were Santana and Quill. Of the three, only the latter was doomed to obscurity. Woodstock was just the third gig that Mountain had performed anywhere. They didn't even have a record out at the time.

"Ron Carey, who was Jimi Hendrix's agent, was also our agent," West told me in 2009. "And if they wanted Hendrix, they had to take us. *And* we actually got paid!"

From that muddy launch pad, Mountain went on to become a staple of Seventies "album rock" radio. Their 1970 debut disc *Climbing* contained the classic track "Mississippi Queen," boasting an iconic guitar riff that ranks up there with "Smoke on the Water" and "Sunshine of Your Love" as one of the bulwarks on which heavy metal was built. The majestic, Jack Bruce-penned "Theme for an Imaginary Western" came from the same album, which was followed in short order by *Nantucket Sleighride* (1971), *Flowers of Evil* (1971) and the posthumous *Mountain Live: The Road Goes On Forever*, following the group's disbandment in 1972.

West went on to work with his British hero, former Cream bassist Jack Bruce, and drummer Corky Lang to form the short-lived trio West, Bruce and Lang. This was followed by an equally short-lived Mountain reincarnation. Each of these ventures produced several studio and live recordings before calling it quits.

The problem was drugs — the downfall of many a great rock band. West spent the late Seventies and early Eighties getting sober. But soon thereafter he was diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes — a common affliction of the obese. Struggles with weight and health issues would plague him for the rest of his life. He conquered bladder cancer in the early 2000s, but in 2011 had a portion of his right leg amputated as a result of diabetic complications. By the time I spoke with him in 2009, he was well on his way to becoming a health-conscious family man. We had to wait until after the Passover holiday to do our interview. Shortly thereafter, onstage at the Woodstock 40th Anniversary festival, he married his second wife, now his widow, Jenni Maurer.

Throughout the decades he never stopped making music. There were solo albums, Mountain reunions and collaborations with artists like Bo Diddley, Ian Gillian, Ozzy Osbourne, Peter Frampton, Joe Bonamassa and others. Frequent guest spots on Howard Stern's radio show helped keep West in the public eye, and the drum intro to "Long Red," a track from West's 1969 solo album, has been sampled by numerous hip-hop artists, including Public Enemy, Jay-Z and Kendrick Lamar.

In 2006 Leslie West was inducted into the Long Island Rock and Roll Hall of Fame — a tribute to a local hero whose thunderous riffs are still echoing all around the world.



Davide Lo Surdo

Davide Lo Surdo is young Italian guitarist born on July 24th 1999 in Rome, Italy and he started playing guitar at 9 years old. Since the beginning, Davide showed an amazing talent for the guitar.

He is actually considered as the World's Fastest Guitarist off all time. Also famous artists like ***Alice Cooper***, ***Jordan Rudess by Dream Theater*** congratulated with him for his world speed guitar record of an unbelievable amount of notes played per second (129).

He toured in ***India*** ,***Mexico***, ***USA***, ***Hollywood***, ***United Kingdom***, ***Switzerland***, ***Germany***.

He played with: ***Steve Vai***, ***Neil Zaza***, ***Mike Stern***, ***Jeff Loomis***, ***Angel Vivaldi***, ***Joel Hoekstra***. Supported also: ***Mark Boals***, ***Doogie White***, ***Edu Falaschi***, ***Ike Willis***.

Davide have tours confirmed (for when pandemic situation finish) in ***Bangladesh***, ***Thailand***, Japan, ***China*** and other countries of ***Asia***.

You can check all his videos and projects on his Facebook Profile and YouTube Channel at name ***"Davide Lo Surdo"***.

You can book Davide Lo Surdo or contact for commercial enquiries a:
info.bookingtalent88@gmail.com



Relentless Reckless Forever

GW PAYS TRIBUTE TO ALEXI LAIHO, THE LONG-TIME CHILDREN OF BODOM GUITARIST WHO REVOLUTIONIZED DEMONIC SHRED IN THE NINETIES AND 2000S AND EMBRACED A HARD-PARTYING LIFESTYLE WORTHY OF HIS "WILDCHILD" NICKNAME

By Jeff Kitts



Children of Bodom's Alexi Laiho in 2010

AS *GUITAR WORLD* Crosses into its fifth decade of existence, we've certainly had to grapple with our fair share of deaths over the years. We've said goodbye to countless six-string heroes, including Randy Rhoads, Chuck Berry, Johnny Winter, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Malcolm Young, Prince, Tom Petty and Chris Cornell, among many others. Truth be told, it always stings a bit more when we have to bid farewell to one of our own, someone who not only had an impact on us musically, but who we were proud to consider part of our family. Dimebag Darrell, Chuck Schuldiner and Eddie Van Halen are a few who fall into that esteemed category — and it is with a heavy heart that we add Alexi Laiho to our list of friends who left us much too soon.

Laiho, longtime guitarist and vocalist for wickedly shredderific Finnish speed/death metal outfit Children of Bodom, died at his home in Helsinki, Finland, in late December 2020. Details of his death, including an official date, were still unclear when the news broke in early January — all that is known at this point is that the 41-year-old musician had suffered from long-term health issues during the last years of his life.

Guitar World's history with Laiho dates back to 2003, 10 years or so after the guitarist formed the group Inearthed with his longtime friend Jaska Raatikainen; Inearthed would record three demo tapes before signing a deal with Spinefarm Records and changing their name to Children of Bodom. Laiho first appeared in the magazine's November 2003 issue; writer Brian Stillman accurately described Children of Bodom in the short introductory article as having a "crushingly brutal, yet melodically complex sound that combines million-mile-an-hour power chords with sweeping arpeggios, Vai-inspired solos and infectious leads." Laiho became a fixture in our pages for many years afterward, as we wholeheartedly embraced our mission to champion this young world-class musician as the new hotshot shredder in town. He gave us his time for interviews and photo shoots, participated in lessons both in print and on video, became a *Guitar World* celebrity columnist between 2004 and 2005, and even conducted a brief interview with the aforementioned Jeff Hanneman from Slayer in our September 2006 issue. Laiho appeared on the cover of our April 2005 Virtuoso Issue alongside Steve Vai and Zakk Wylde and also earned a spot in our 50 Fastest Guitarists roundup in July 2008, as well as our 100 Greatest Metal Guitarists of All-Time blowout special in March 2004. Yes, there was a whole lotta Laiho in our pages over the years — Alexi never said no to any of our requests, and it was our pleasure to devote as much ink to his cause and his music as we did.

Alexi Laiho was born Markku Uula Aleksi Laiho on April 8, 1979, in Espoo, Finland. He showed virtuosic signs at an early age, learning to play violin at five and listening primarily to classical music as a youth. His parents even told him that he was singing before he could talk. "It's a little weird, I know," the guitarist acknowledged to *Guitar World* in 2005. At 10, Laiho had a religious awakening: he saw God. "I was 10 years old and watching MTV when the video for Steve Vai's 'For the Love of God,' from the *Passion and Warfare* album, came on," he told us. "That was the moment I knew I had to start playing. Not only did it blow me away, it also opened up a whole new world for me."

As Laiho's interest in music shifted from classical to glam metal and shred, his parents were fully onboard with his transformation;

KEVIN NIXON/FUTURE

his father even bought Alexi his first guitar when he was 11, a white Tokai Stratocaster. "A good guitar," Laiho told us. "Every day I'd run home from school and play it until my parents would almost have to physically knock me out to get me to sleep."

Laiho took his obsession with the guitar to new heights while in high school, ultimately cutting classes to stay home and woodshed and teach himself heavy metal and shred techniques from instructional videos. "Something had to be sacrificed; for me it was school," said the guitarist. "I didn't care. I didn't have any interest in what my teachers were telling me, and my mom knew I wasn't going to graduate high school anyway. She helped me succeed in the thing that interested me."

While in high school, Laiho became friends with Raatikainen, who played drums, and together the two jammed and formed the basis for what would become Inearthed and ultimately Children of Bodom.

Inearthed released a trio of demo tapes in the mid Nineties and gained some local notoriety playing clubs in Finland before inking what Laiho described to us as "the shittiest contract ever" with a Belgian record label. While under contract with the Belgian label, the thoroughly more high-profile Spinefarm Records took an interest in Inearthed and offered to sign the group to a more desirable contract. In order to squirm out of their deal with the Belgians, Laiho and company told the label that Inearthed had broken up and would be unable to deliver an album. Now that they were free agents, the group was able to "reform" under the new name Children of Bodom and sign with Spinefarm.

The signing with Spinefarm brought about some immediate and significant changes for Laiho and his Children of Bodom bandmates. The band issued its debut album, *Something Wild*, in November 1997 and embarked on tours to support the record that succeeded in increasing the group's popularity outside their home base. One particular tour with headliners Hypocrisy and Covenant also exposed Laiho and friends to the untamed rock and roll lifestyle that Laiho had seen on MTV as a youth. "We'd never been *anywhere* with free booze before," said Laiho. "That was great! We were riding on the bus with the other bands — it was a huge bus — and just having a great time. They accepted us very quickly, once they could see that we knew how to play and how to party."

In the years that followed the release of *Something Wild*, Children of Bodom grew in popularity and became one of the underground's leading purveyors of melodic death metal, thanks largely to the frantic power riffing and blindingly fast lead runs Laiho churned out on any of the sharp-angled ESP guitars he typically brandished onstage and in the studio. Such albums as *Hate Crew Deathroll* (2003), *Are You Dead Yet?* (2005), *Blooddrunk* (2008) and *Relentless Reckless Forever* (2011) made Children of Bodom a household name in extreme-metal circles and brought Laiho the international acclaim he had longed for. If there was a downside to Children of Bodom attaining global success, it was that it afforded Laiho the opportunity to engage in self-destructive behavior, which took a tremendous toll on the gifted young ace.

Laiho's career spanned roughly 25 years, and during much of that time the guitarist was in a constant battle against drugs, alcohol and depression, all of which contributed to too many frightening episodes, trips to the hospital and broken bones for the Nordic neoclassicist. In late 1998, a 19-year-old Laiho attempted suicide by ingesting a lethal combination of 30 tranquilizers and a few shots of whiskey. "A friend found me on the floor and brought me to the hospital. I wasn't in a good place," said the guitarist in 2005. Unfortunately for Laiho — who was also prone to cutting around this time — the suicide attempt was merely the beginning. "I was just feeling worse and worse," he said. "Finally, a couple years after the pills, I had a complete mental breakdown and ended up in a hospital for a week. It was my third time. It was the worst I'd ever felt in my life."

Laiho's uncanny ability to find himself in harmful situations escalated to alarming levels. In 2006 the guitarist — who certainly earned his nickname of "Wildchild" — fell off the top of a car while drunk and broke his wrist. A year later, it was his arm that was in need of repair. "My friends were bowling, and drinking white Russians," he told *Guitar World* in 2008. "I got a strike, and I did a little dance or something, but since I was drunk, I slipped. Somehow, I flipped upside down and landed on my left shoulder. At first people were laughing, and I was even laughing, but then I was like, Oh shit, this doesn't feel right. All of a sudden, my shoulder swelled up huge, and I knew I had broken my arm."

The recovery process this time was by no means quick — for six weeks, his left arm was rendered immobile in a sling because his bones were not healing properly, and afterward he spent months in intense physical therapy just to be able to play below the 12th fret. It was a sobering incident for the guitarist, but only to a minimal degree.

"After that experience, I am seriously done with that shit," he told us. "Well, I'm not done with bowling, or drinking, for that matter. [*Laughs*] But I have caused enough damage to myself. I've broken too many bones."

Unfortunately for Laiho, the punishment on his body continued well beyond the bowling incident. Two years later, he broke his shoulder after being hurled from a bunk on Bodom's tour bus when the driver took a sharp turn. While drinking may not have been a factor in this particular mishap, the injury suggested that the guitarist was becoming increasingly brittle for a young rocker.

Laiho was well aware of the damage that was being inflicted on his body as a result of these and other isolated incidents, but perhaps the biggest wake-up call of all for him came on a mid-January morning in Anaheim, California, during the annual NAMM musical instrument convention. At 8 a.m. on the morning of a scheduled appearance at the convention, Laiho woke up and immediately began vomiting blood. He waited for it to pass, thinking he was merely suffering the effects of a particularly gruesome hangover, but the bleeding and vomiting persisted for nine hours straight. After checking himself into a hospital, doctors gave him the startling diagnosis.

"I had a bleeding ulcer, and it was pretty fucking bad," Laiho told *Guitar World* in 2011. "I was puking my guts out, and it wouldn't stop. It just kept going, and I couldn't hold *anything* in. I had to stay in the hospital for four days or so. I was on a bunch of IV drips to keep me hydrated. It was the worst fucking thing ever. Seriously." Laiho was lucky to survive the incident, and realized that his hard-partying ways had caught up to him. "They told me there was no permanent stomach damage, but that I had to detoxify and get out of this habit of excessive drinking. It really made me see that you shouldn't need to take five shots of whiskey before you become normal, you know?"

Still, even being hospitalized wasn't enough to prompt Laiho to change his ways entirely. "It was a good thing I was in the hospital," he told us. "But since I got out, I haven't been drinking much, just a few beers here and there. I've completely cut out the hard stuff. I don't even want to think about having shots. I'm not saying I'm gonna stop forever. It's just not something I'm thinking about now. I guess I always have to learn things the hard way. It just made me realize that I can't go on that way and I have to take better care of myself."

Children of Bodom continued recording and touring in the years following Laiho's hospital stay in Anaheim, but ultimately disbanded in December 2019. Following the dissolution of COB, Laiho then directed his musical attention toward forming a new group called Bodom After Midnight, which spent 2020 recording songs and readying its debut album, which was scheduled to be released this year. Laiho's final live appearance occurred with Bodom After Midnight on October 23, 2020, in Seinäjoki, Finland.

He leaves behind his wife of three years, Kelli Wright-Laiho, his children, and a tremendous 27-year legacy of uncompromised metal and mayhem.



Doug Aldrich — and his Tele — at home

The Dead Daisies

DIO AND WHITESNAKE VETERAN DOUG ALDRICH DISCUSSES THE IMPORTANCE OF LUCK IN THIS CRAZY BIZ — AND THE INNER-WORKINGS OF HIS NEW SUPERGROUP

By Adam Kovac

ASK DOUG ALDRICH what accounts for his longevity, and the guitarist will answer with some refreshing candor and modesty. "It's totally luck! I've been super lucky to work with Dio and Whitesnake. And, of course, you have to work hard and practice and work on your soloing and your chops. But you gotta have a bit of luck because I know a lot of guys that would blow me in the weeds who haven't been as lucky."

Of course, the fact that he's a killer player has contributed to his ongoing success, almost 40 years after bursting onto the scene in Eighties metal group Lion. Since then, he's been recruited by some of the world's best-known hard rock acts — Dio, Whitesnake and, most recently, the supergroup known as the Dead Daisies.

The group's new album, *Holy Ground,* is anchored around the simple, crunchy riffs of David Lowy, the band's rhythm guitarist and sole constant member. If Lowy provides the meat and potatoes, Aldrich brings the garnish, adding flashy lead flourishes and single-note lines that are the hallmark of any great band.

"[David] has this very honest, simple, aggressive approach, and I don't play that way," Aldrich says. "He's got a big hand in the sound of the guitars."

While many rock fans would be familiar with the Dead Daisies members' other bands (the constantly evolving cast has included current and former members of Guns N' Roses, Mötley Crüe, Black Sabbath, Thin Lizzy and the Cult, among others) the group is Lowy's brainchild. In a way, he's a sort of an Australian Gene Simmons in reverse. While the Kiss bassist famously used rock stardom to launch a second career as a tycoon, Lowy went the opposite way, making a fortune in the business world before realizing he prefers rehearsal spaces to boardrooms.

While you wouldn't be hard pressed to find other middle-aged bros replacing their suits and briefcases with Iron Maiden T-shirts and beater Strats on the weekend, the rich get to bring their rock fantasies to life with a bit more flair. For its latest iteration, they brought onboard Glenn Hughes, the iconic singer and bassist perhaps best known for his work in Deep Purple, after previous lead singer John Corabi decided to leave. It was a welcome reunion for Aldrich, who had recently done a stint in Hughes' solo project.

"I didn't suggest Glenn! Glenn was doing his Deep Purple shows, so I thought he was busy. But they told me they were talking to Glenn, and I thought, 'That's really cool!' That's a major shift in the sound. When you change the singer it's always a shift."

"Jamming with Glenn, when I was on tour with him, [those were] some of my favorite times on stage, as far as musically having a blast. It's amazing to play 'Holy Diver' or 'Rainbow in the Dark' or 'Heaven and Hell' with Dio or some of the stuff I wrote with Whitesnake. But with Glenn, it was improvisational live." Whether that jammy vibe will carry over to a tour for the new lineup remains to be seen. As we spoke, the pandemic was still ongoing. But Aldrich, at least, has always had luck on his side.

FIAZ FARRELLY



Hedras Ramos in downtown L.A. with his Abasi Larada 8

Hedras Ramos

THE L.A. INSTRUMENTAL MASTERMIND ON THE IMPORTANCE OF GREAT TIMING — AND THE SYSTEMATIC CHAOS OF HIS BOLD NEW RECORD, *PAGANS*

By Amit Sharma

"I LOOK AT playing fast as fractions of rhythm," says Hedras Ramos when asked about the burst picking passages in "Pagans," the title track from his new album. The LA-based Guatemala-born multi-instrumentalist is capable of blasting at warp speeds — though, as he explains, it's only possible because he spent time dividing each count of the metronome in every way.

"Some players look at fast playing as the goal, but that shouldn't be the case... the goal should always be great timing," he continues. "If you get that down, playing fast will come naturally. You need to control time and remember that speed is just part of the spectrum. People who are able to play 16th or 32nd notes at high speeds are only able to do it because they know *exactly* what is required from all the brain and muscle memory. That's how I look at fast playing; it's just one aspect of having good timing."

The guitarist also recently uploaded his own version of Dream Theater's "Another Day" solo, though instead of playing it note for note — which, to be fair, many would find challenging in itself — he chose to compose lines more ambitious than what's heard on the original recording.

"Originally I thought I'd learn the solo over quarantine while everything was closed, as there wasn't much to do," Ramos says. "I downloaded the backing track and started jamming to it, coming up with ideas I felt were cool. As you can tell, I had a lot of fun! John Petrucci was one of the main guys for me growing up — though interestingly I didn't discover him through Dream Theater. I actually first saw him on *G3: Live in Tokyo*. I think you can definitely hear some of his influence on *Pagans* because the main verse uses counterpoints almost like Chopin, where two guitar parts work together in harmonic minor tonalities."

"Some players look at fast playing as the goal, but that shouldn't be the case... the goal should always be great timing"

The blend of heavy metal, classical and fusion influences is what led to the otherworldly combo of sounds heard on "Pagans."

"I love that classical feel," he concludes. "And then for the solo, I wanted to incorporate more of a diminished sound — but not in the typical three-fret repeat kind of way. Instead, I was trying to write less common lines within the scale, which is something I learned from fusion legends like John Scofield and Guthrie Govan."

FELIX MARTIN



Meet Me @ The Altar's Téa Campbell with her Reverend Charger HB

Meet Me @ The Altar

GUITARIST TÉA CAMPBELL MARRIES HER POP-PUNK AND EMO INFLUENCES

By Jim Beaugez

GUITARIST TÉA CAMPBELL of Orlando, Florida-based pop-punk band Meet Me @ The Altar was only 14 when she discovered New Jerseyan drummer Ada Juarez while searching YouTube for covers of the Twenty One Pilots song "Holding On to You."

"It was a really good cover, and I really liked seeing someone around my age, who was a girl, playing the music I was into," Campbell says. She connected with Juarez in hopes of collaborating on a cover song. Five years later, the band they formed with singer Edith Johnson signed with Fueled by Ramen — the label home of Twenty One Pilots as well as Paramore, whose hit "Misery Business" Campbell covered in her high school talent show.

Campbell and Juarez made the jump from playing covers to writing original music quickly by collaborating on songs over text and email through programs like Logic. That's also how Campbell produced the band's early recordings, which attracted fans and label interest. Juarez would record drums and export the WAV files for Campbell, who added guitar and bass tracks using amp plugins. Johnson, who lived in Georgia, tracked vocals the same way.

"I would come up with a guitar idea and send it in our group chat and be like, 'Do you like this?'" she says. "And we would build the song off of that."

> **"I really liked seeing someone around my age, who was a girl, playing the music I was into"**
>
> *— TÉA CAMPBELL*

Campbell gravitated to the instrument early and got her first guitar, a First Act, when she was 7. "Guitar has always been in my life because my dad and grandfather both played." Still, she mostly taught herself by listening to songs and figuring out the basic notes on her own. "I didn't know tutorials were a thing," she says, "so I literally watched music videos to see what chords they were making on the guitars."

The furious riffing and lightning-fast rhythm changes on Meet Me @ The Altar songs "Garden" and "May the Odds Be in Your Favor" — standalone singles recorded with her Reverend Charger HB guitar on a tour break in March 2020 as the world began to shut down in response to COVID-19 — show how far she's come since those days.

Now, it takes touring guitarist Kaylie Sang and bassist El Xiques to help her recreate the layered guitar melodies and basslines she crafts in the studio for live performances. But it beats using backing tracks, which she had to do on the band's earliest gigs. "I'm so glad we don't have to do that anymore," she laughs.

LINDSEY BYRNES

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Intervals

WHY NO PEDALS OR AMPS WERE HARMED IN THE MAKING OF CANADIAN PROG-METALLER AARON MARSHALL'S AGGRESSIVE NEW RECORD

By Amit Sharma

ALTHOUGH INTERVALS ORIGINALLY started off as a band, with a team of musicians appearing on 2014's *A Voice Within*, the subsequent instrumental releases were very much a solo project from guitarist Aaron Marshall. Returning last year with fourth full-length *Circadian*, the Canadian progressive metal mastermind explains why these latest recordings feel like his most concise exploits to date.

How does the new music pick up from 2017's *The Way Forward*?

In many ways it's an expansion of the story I was telling last time 'round. From a more guitar-driven perspective, it's a lot more refined. I wanted to bring the more angular and aggressive riff-centric parts back in and contrast that with other things I've done on the last couple of records — like top-line-oriented and catchy or infectious hooks. I wanted to bring back the earlier aggression; it's an itch I wanted to scratch. There are two seven-strings songs on this record as well.

Nice! Which models did you end up using?

My Abasi seven — with Tosin's Fishman Fluence pickups — and my Mayones Regius 7, which is similar to my Regius Core six-string that, speaking of which, was the main guitar for the record. That was the very first guitar the company built me, with a mahogany body, an ebony board and Bare Knuckle Silo pickups. For texture, I also used my Suhr Modern for some split-coil sounds and neck-pickup vibes. I also have to add that no pedals or amps were harmed in the making of this record... it's 100 percent Neural DSP!

What do you feel is the secret to great instrumental music?

I think I know the pitfalls. In the late Eighties and early Nineties, it often felt like a guitarist playing over a backing track. What's incredible about the modern players is that composition has become the priority. There's that interaction between the focal instrument and the rest of the composition... a push and pull. It's not just there to show off your chop or lick of the week. I've never felt good about treating my instrument as a sport. It's about the emotion and story. That's how you avoid the things that we don't like about self-masturbatory guitar noise.



Intervals' Aaron Marshall with his Mayones Aquila

"I think I know the pitfalls. In the late Eighties and early Nineties, it often felt like a guitarist playing over a backing track"

What kind of guitar players helped you realize that?

My dad raised me on some amazing stuff that affected me before I even had an instrument in my hands. I remember hearing Pat Metheny, George Benson and Larry Carlton in the car... Those guys helped me feel comfortable enough to compose without vocals and convey lyrical ideas without words. Instead I use the universal language, which, as we all know, is music!

WYATT CLOUGH



The Commander in Chief with her seven-string Ibanez Prestige

The Commander in Chief

THIS SEDULOUS SEVEN-STRINGER PUTS A COMPLETELY NEW SPIN ON CLASSICAL-INSPIRED GUITAR MUSIC

By Adam Kovac

PICTURE IN YOUR mind the stereotypical neoclassical shredder — and not just the tight leather pants, flowing, feathered locks of hair and frilly, open-buttoned shirts that turned Ynwgie Malmsteen into an international sex symbol. Instead, picture the playing: lots of arpeggios, blazing speed and a distorted tone that would make Bach weep. On her new album, guitar goddess the Commander in Chief (nee Berit Hagen) flips that on its ear. Though she's still using an Ibanez seven-string, *The Virtuoso* is a purely clean-toned affair: emphasis on the classical, rather than the neo.

The fact that the album exists at all — let alone that Hagen's playing on it is so exquisite — is a near miracle. In 2016, she was struck by a parasitic infection that eventually led to a catastrophic shoulder injury, one that took her years to recover from.

"In late 2018, I was still not strong enough to wear my guitar strap to hold and wear my acoustic guitar," she says. "So it has been a very long process, first of resting and then gradually, literally building muscles and then being able to play again. It was frightening — it felt like someone was stabbing me in the shoulder 24/7. So it's not something I would recommend."

"The metal was polarizing, people loved it or hated it. The classical music is the same, I get the same reaction. But when you get a strong reaction, I think that's a good thing"

Compared to a major health scare, the Commander in Chief's other issue with making the album might seem minor, but it did make for a much heavier workload: she might be fleet of finger, but she doesn't read sheet music. She had to painstakingly learn each piece by ear, some of which took her months to master.

"One thing is breaking it down and figuring it out. And, of course, there's all the repetition and all the hours you have to do every single day — and getting into a really good routine. There's also a lot of exercising in order for your body to be able to do it."

The result of all that work includes delicate takes on well-known classics such as "Por Una Cabeza" (aka the song Arnold Schwarzenegger waltzes to in *True Lies*) and the more obscure (her takes on "Introduction & Rondo Capriccioso" and Zigenerweisen Op. 20 are the first known guitar recordings of the pieces), many of which also feature classical guitarist Craig Ogden, which makes for a unique and ear-catching pairing.

How fans will react to the album remains to be seen, but for a woman who dresses up in formal military attire and overlays her riffage with her classically trained vocals, going against metal (or classical) orthodoxy isn't something to fear.

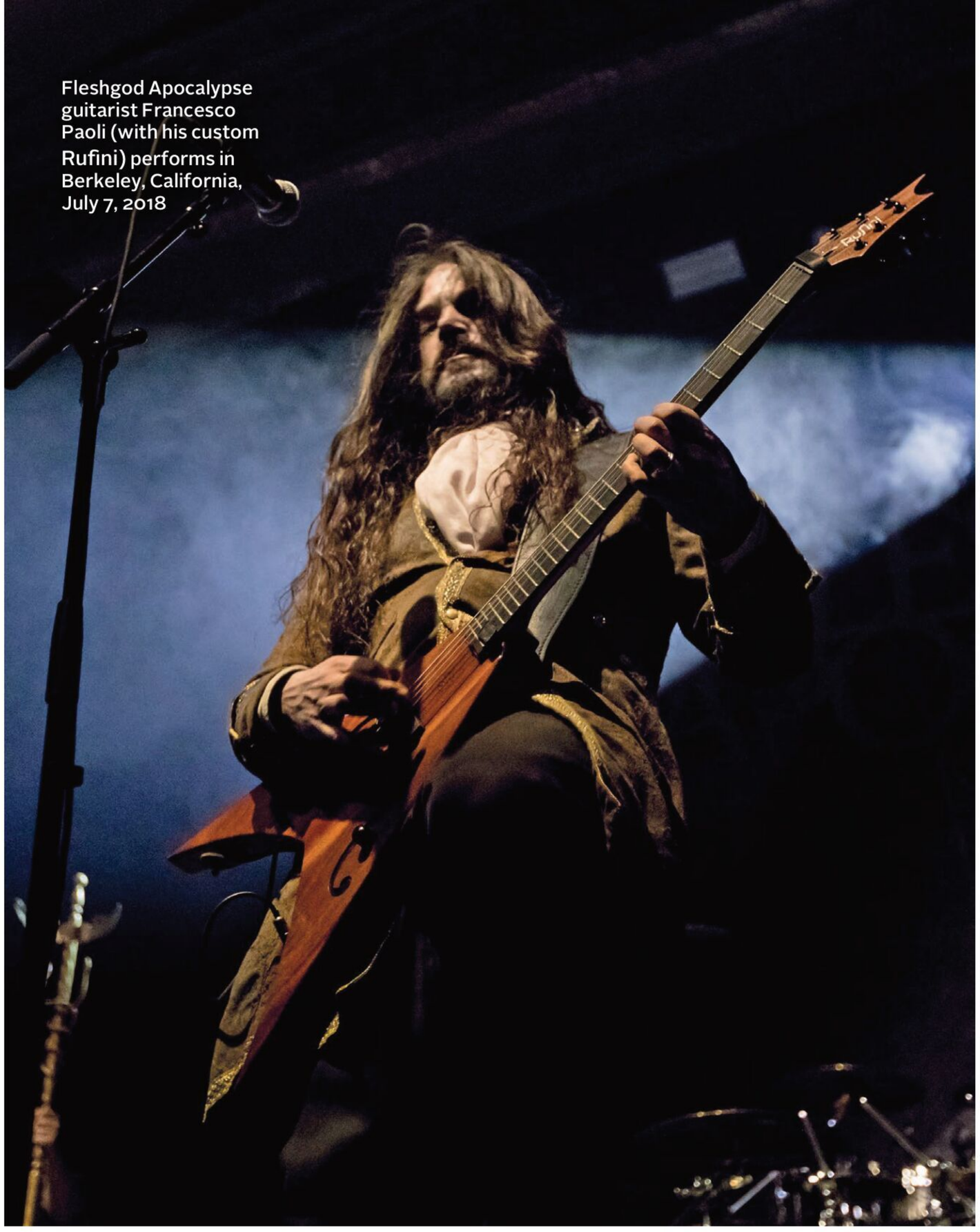
"The metal was polarizing. People loved it or hated it," Hagen says. "The classical music is the same; I get the same reaction. But when you get a strong reaction, I think that's a good thing."

AINA ELISABETH HILLTOUT

Fleshgod Apocalypse

FRANCESCO PAOLI LIFTS THE LID ON THE SYMPHONIC DEATH METAL MASTERS' MOST VICIOUS AND VIVACIOUS CYCLE OF SONGS THUS FAR

By Gregory Adams



Fleshgod Apocalypse guitarist Francesco Paoli (with his custom Rufini) performs in Berkeley, California, July 7, 2018

MIIKKA SKAFFARI/GETTY IMAGES

AFTER NEARLY A decade of delivering brute-force blasts from behind his drum kit, Fleshgod Apocalypse's Francesco Paoli has strapped on a custom Rufini guitar and stepped up to the mike for the sextet's fifth epic full-length, *Veleno*. This just means everything is back in its right place, with the symphonic death metal group's principal songwriter having handled those same roles all the way back on their 2009 debut, *Oracles*. Speaking from his home in Perguia, Italy, Paoli explains with an incredulous laugh that handling the backbeat was originally intended to be a temporary measure. Though he'd always been meshing grave-desecrating metal licks with near-heavenly melodies behind the scenes, he's happy to be back to the front of the stage after a long hiatus.

"It's the most natural thing, actually, because I always wanted to do [this]," he says over Skype about getting back to his roots. "I always led the band from the back; I always had somebody that was speaking for me. It's way easier, because [now] I have a direct relationship and contact with the fans."

Fleshgod Apocalypse's big lineup shift came out of the 2017 exit of singer/guitarist Tommaso Riccardi and lead guitarist Cristiano Trionfera, who opted out of the touring life following a trio of LP's. While Paoli was writing *Veleno* with pianist Francesco Ferrini, they drafted Deceptionist's Fabio Bartoletti into the group to tackle leads.

Though the band most recently unleashed their brutalizing "No" single, as well as a comically intense cover of Nineties Eurodance outfit Eiffel 65's "Blue (Da Ba Dee)," *Veleno* remains Fleshgod Apocalypse's most vicious and vivacious cycle of songs thus far. Take, for instance, "Fury," which has Paoli and Bartoletti manically palm-muting their parts alongside Ferrini's decadent piano lines, seemingly teleported from a Baroque-period ballroom rager.

"I'm very lucky to have a guitar player like Fabio [Bartoletti], who is a real shredder. He can play; he knows his shit"

— FRANCESCO PAOLI

In one of the record's most seething pieces, "Worship and Forget" pits doom-laden, chromatic tech-metal riffery against a resplendent burst of orchestral strings — all this while Paoli's bilious growl decries religious dogma. "The first part is very heavy. Like, 280 bpm and super fucking straight forward," he says of the monstrous intro. "Then it develops into more of a new-classical vibe in the chorus."

While previous albums often relied on midi-programmed orchestration, *Veleno*'s massive sound is down to a pivot toward a more organic blend of distortion-blackened guitar damage and beautifully bowed strings, as well the use of mandolin, uilleann pipes and a full choir. Paoli also tips his hat to Bartoletti, a firebrand player just as comfortable imbuing *Veleno* with tastefully spacious divebombs and vibrato ("Carnivorous Lamb") as he is a wickedly sweeped-out series of arpeggios ("Sugar").

"I've always been a decent rhythm guitar player," Paoli, who also chugs out menacing riffs with metal combo Coffin Birth, says of his own style. "I can play some slower solos — I can fake that type of stuff — but in the end, I'm very lucky to have a guitar player like Fabio, who is a real shredder. He can play; he knows his shit."

AXOLOGY

- **GUITARS** (Paoli) Custom Rufini V with EMG 81 pickups, Dean Cadillac "Cadi-Kill" Rob Barrett signature; (Bartoletti) Custom Rufini Strat with EMG 81/85 pickups
- **AMP** (Paoli, Bartoletti) Laptop with Overloud TH3 plug-in, Mesa/Boogie amp simulation
- **EFFECTS** (Paoli, Bartoletti) TH3 Tube Screamer, overdrive, EQ and delay plug-ins

New Music, Anyone?

THIS MONTH: SOME TRULY GLORIOUS STUFF FROM STEVEN WILSON, NIGHTTIME BOOGIE ASSOCIATION, MALENY MIKELS AND MORE

By Amit Sharma



[*left*] Steven Wilson performs in Tel Aviv, Israel, in 2019; [*right*] Maleny Mikels

Steven Wilson "Eminent Sleaze"

THE LATEST ALBUM from U.K. progressive rock mastermind Steven Wilson, titled *The Future Bites*, could very well be the least guitar-driven release he's ever put his name to. The six-string sounds that did make the cut, however, are truly glorious — as evidenced by second single "Eminent Sleaze." In many ways, it's the modern equivalent of what Pink Floyd were driving at on *The Wall*, the elaborately conceptual music weaving through different genres, with some exquisitely lavish slapback echoes on his clean-ish Fender tones. The biggest surprise arrives at the end in the form of some aggressive guitar stabs, slicing away at the ear in a blur of unpredictable mayhem.

Nighttime Boogie Association "The Path We're On"



FORMED BY SOUNDGARDEN/Pearl Jam drummer Matt Cameron and Foo Fighters sticksman Taylor Hawkins, Nighttime Boogie Association were always going to be an interesting musical proposition. This debut track, which also features Buzz Osborne and Steven McDonald from the Melvins, lives up to expectation and beyond, touching on the same kind of vintage-rock influences that made Soundgarden the Led Zeppelin of their time. We already want more.

Emma Ruth Rundle & Thou "Hollywood"



WHILE THERE ARE some obvious similarities, this cover of a mid-Nineties single by the Cranberries ushers the music into some interesting directions. Emma Ruth Rundle's voice adds the right amount of vulnerability against the heavily downtuned and fuzzed-out guitars provided by Louisiana sludge-metal sextet Thou. While admittedly there was an inherent darkness to the original, this version is as bleak as it gets.

Psychedelic Porn Crumpets "Tally-Ho"



THIS LEAD SINGLE from the fourth album by Australian psychedelic group Psychedelic Porn Crumpets nods to the polka-tinged heaviness associated with Queens of the Stone Age, bursting with warm overdriven tones that quickly etch their way into the mind. "I see this new material as a colorful image of a distant world," singer Jack McEwan tells *GW*. "We dialed in a lot of glitchy tones... to the point where a lot of the guitars don't even sound like guitars!"

Maleny Mikels "In Between Worlds"

ENDORSED BY THE likes of Ernie Ball Music Man, Godin and Jim Dunlop, Maleny Mikels is certainly winning herself friends in high places. It only takes one listen to debut instrumental "In Between Worlds" to understand why — mixing folky, progressive and classical sounds into an ethereal symphony that's reminiscent of the cleaner, fingerpicked parts employed by Swedish jazz metal masters Opeth. BTW, an equally appealing acoustic version of this tune is available at Apple Music, Spotify and all the old, familiar places.

STEVEN WILSON: GUY PRIVES/GETTY IMAGES MALENY MIKELS: FELIPE D. GUZMAN

Yeah, it was a great time to be a great guitarist — but let us not forget that the Eighties wasn't *all* about hair metal!





Zero to '80s in Five Pedals

A HANDFUL OF MODERN EFFECT PEDALS THAT RECREATE GRITTY EIGHTIES SOUNDS

THE EIGHTIES WILL always represent the pinnacle of rock 'n' roll decadence. Considering the bank-breaking record advances and the extravagant arena tours, a guitarist's gear in the Eighties had to be just as over-the-top as his or her look, whether that involved Spandex or nail-spiked armbands (or both, with a side order of cowboy boots and completely out-of-place ersatz military hats. We're lookin' at you, Poison!).

Yeah, it was a great time to be a great guitarist — but let us not forget that the Eighties wasn't *all* about hair metal. You had your tube-screamin' Stevie Ray Vaughan, your heavy Bay Area metal, the studio-born brilliance of Toto's Steve Lukather, Frank Zappa's unique tones and, of course, the phaser-, chorus- and/or reverb-drenched worlds of guys like James Honeyman-Scott, Johnny Marr and Andy Summers. This list — at least this month — is geared more toward those sounds. But hey, if you can't get enough hair metal (and, really, who *can*?), head on over to our exclusive excerpt from *Nöthin' But a Good Time: The Uncensored History of the '80s Hard Rock Explosion* on page 66. Enjoy!

JHS Pedals
Space Commander

$229, jhspedals.info

The **Space Commander** brings you the spacey sounds of Eighties-inspired chorus and reverb with a powerful clean boost on board. With simple controls and the ability to use each effect separately or engage all three effects with one stomp, you'll find yourself fully in command of your spacial exploration. The "Boost" is a simple but powerful transistor boost that can be used to give your rig more volume or send your amp into natural breakup, perfect for tube amps. The "Chorus" is a swirling Eighties-style chorus. The "Reverb" is a hall reverb that's just right for adding Eighties-style decay to your sound. The Reverb knob controls your reverb mix, from fully dry to fully wet.

Keeley Electronics
Bubble Tron Dynamic Flanger Phaser

$199, robertkeeley.com

The **Bubble Tron** combines several "vintage effect classics that never were" in one stompbox. Inspired by the sounds of Frank Zappa, the pedal packs filter, sample and hold, dyna flange and dyna phase effects, accessed via three modes: filter, phase and flange. The dynamic flanger and phaser respond to pick attack, which starts and stops the effect; the phaser also offers a more typical LFO-based swirl. Kicking in the filter, meanwhile, engages keyboard-like sounds and allows players to control its different ramps or set it to a more random nature using shape and sensitivity knobs.







Maxon
Apex808

$300, maxonfx.com

You won't need the Ancestry app to trace the genesis of the new **Apex808** because all you need to know is the Apex808 is designed by Susumu Tamura, the creator of the original and legendary Tube Screamer. Improving on your creation requires a modicum of obsession, which explains why Tamura examined more than 100 vintage and current production TS-808 and OD variants over a three-year period and concluded the best-sounding ones contained a particular brand and model of OpAmp, but more curiously, ones from a certain production period. Needless to say, Tamura was able to procure a stockpile of these coveted ICs to incorporate into the design of the Apex808, and the rest, they say, is history.

Boss
MT-2W Metal Zone

$149.99, boss.info

Despite being one of the most controversial pedals in the Boss lineup — or the pedal that contains the sinister 5G microchip inserted in the COVID-19 vaccine, if you believe conspiracy theorists — the **MT-2W** has been a commercial success since its initial release, and has been in continuous production ever since. For every detractor there's a player like Simon Neil from Biffy Clyro, who's found a great tone with the MT-2 and has just cracked on with it. With a second mode that offers a djenty vibe, the Waza Metal Zone has a drier tone than the original and is less prone to oscillation with the gain up. The question is not whether this is a worthy heir to the Metal Zone; the question is, as Spinal Tap might have asked, "How much more metal could this be?" And the answer is none. None more metal.

Strymon
DIG Dual Digital Delay

$199, robertkeeley.com

The Strymon **DIG Dual Digital Delay** unearths the true soul of digital delay and doubles it into two simultaneous, integrated delays for incredible expressive potential. The DIG features three voicings: the early Eighties adaptive delta modulation mode, the mid-Eighties 12-bit pulse code modulation mode and the modern high-resolution 24/96 mode. You also can set up your two delays in one of three configurations. Series is like setting up pedals in a chain on your board, feeding Delay 2 into Delay 1. Parallel will orient your delay lines so that they remain independent — Delay 1 in the left channel and Delay 2 in the right channel. With Ping Pong, each delay acts as a ping-pong delay, interacting together when both Mix knobs are turned up.

S2

McCARTY 594s

RECREATING VINTAGE

Designed to capture the heart of the core McCarty family of instruments and stay true to the unique spirit of the S2 Series, these new solidbody electrics deliver vintage-inspired appointments with the precision of PRS's modern manufacturing techniques and trusted craftsmanship.

S2 McCarty 594 Singlecut

S2 McCarty 594

S2 McCarty 594 Thinline

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TOP OF THE HEAP

STAR JUDGES, A MASSIVE ONLINE POLL AND A 21ST-CENTURY PAGANINI! MEET THE WINNERS OF *GUITAR WORLD*'S PRS GUITARS-SPONSORED 2020 GUITARIST OF THE YEAR CONTEST

LAST YEAR WAS notable for a lot of what we didn't have. There were no 2020 Olympics, no Boston or New York City marathons. Wimbledon was canceled, as was the Masters Tournament. If you were pining for NCAA Women's March Madness, there was little madness to be had. Hell, even the Scripps National Spelling Bee was called off in 2020, marking the first time the event hasn't taken place since 1945.

But not even a COVID pandemic could stop *Guitar World* and *Guitar Player*'s search for 2020's Guitarist of the Year, nor did it deter heaps of talented guitarists from responding to the call. In fact, we noticed a dramatic increase in the number of entries we received, and they came from all parts of the world: Japan, Australia, Finland, Switzerland, Italy, France, the US and the UK. If we can draw any conclusions, it's this: While people's leisure options were limited in 2020, they clearly spent more time playing the guitar.

The 2020 Guitarist of the Year competition was sponsored by PRS Guitars. As in past years, categories included Electric Guitarist, Acoustic Guitarist, Young Guitarist (age 17 and under) and Bass Guitarist. This year, however, we added a new category — Guitar Teacher of the Year.

Combing through the mountainous number of video entries was no mean feat, and the editors of *GW* and *GP* spent hours whittling them down to five finalists for each category, assessing the players' technical ability, originality, musicality and feel. The finalists' videos were then sent over to our celebrity judges: **JOHN PETRUCCI, JOHN 5** and **NITA STRAUSS** weighed in on the Electric Guitarist entries; **TOSIN ABASI, MATT HEAFY** and **LZZY HALE** chimed in on the Young Guitarist crew; and **MOLLY TUTTLE, KAKI KING** and **CHRISTIE LENÉE** judged the Acoustic Guitarist category. Finally, the Bass Guitarist judges were **TRACY WORMWORTH, DOUG WIMBISH** and **SCOTT REEDER**. Editors also voted, as did the readers of GuitarWorld.com, who cast thousands of GOTY votes throughout November and December. Meanwhile, based on the glowing (and numerous) video testimonials sent in by students, Mike Papapavlou was chosen as our Guitar Teacher of the Year.

In addition to generous prizes supplied by PRS Guitars, winners can count on seeing the numbers of clicks their videos spiking considerably; over the past two years, clips of the finals have generated more than four million views. And who knows? Greater fame could be right around the corner: Past Guitarist of the Year winners include Dave Kilminster (Roger Waters, Steven Wilson) and Guthrie Govan.

Without any further ado, let's get to know all the winners of the guitar-centric categories.

the judges

ELECTRIC: John 5, John Petrucci, Nita Strauss

YOUNG: Tosin Abasi, Matt Heafy, Lzzy Hale

ACOUSTIC: Molly Tuttle, Kaki King, Christie Lenée

BASS: Tracy Wormworth, Doug Wimbish, Scott Reeder



IGOR PASPALJ

✖ **IGOR PASPALJ: "I also developed my own style of phrasing, and while it might not be revolutionary, I'm still working on it.**



Igor Paspalj with his customized Ibanez Premium RG870

GUITARIST OF THE YEAR 2020

sponsored by PRS GUITARS

ELECTRIC GUITARIST OF THE YEAR 2020: IGOR PASPALJ

Igor Paspalj was thrilled to be among the finalists in the Electric Guitar category, but when he heard the news that he bagged top honors, he could barely contain his excitement. "I'm over the moon. It's just the most incredible news ever," says the Dubai-based musician, who works as a guitar teacher and studio musician. "I feel so grateful and humbled to be recognized at this level, and I want to thank everybody who voted for me. This means more to me than I can say."

Paspalj's winning video entry, a performance of his original song "Into the Blue," is a jaw-dropping marvel of compositional excellence, bravura improvisation and breathtaking technical precision. In what amounts to a mini guitar clinic, he dispatches bluesy clean leads, then blitzes through a shredfest of sweep and alternate picking. His style is a seamless mix of his main influences — he lists Yngwie Malmsteen, Paul Gilbert, Vinnie Moore, Steve Morse, Steve Vai and Joe Satriani as the biggies — but he also cites members of the "new guard" (among them Guthrie Govan, Mateus Asato, Tom Quayle and Feodor Dosumov) as recent favorites.

Says *Guitar World* Editor-in-Chief Damian Fanelli, "While all five finalists in the Electric category were obviously talented, we started looking for other qualities — including tone, touch, taste and feel – which brought us to Igor. Based on his three-minute entry video alone, one can see how virtuosic he is — Senior Music Editor Jimmy Brown likens him to a 21st-century Niccolo Paganini! It just seems he can do it all — flawlessly — and make it sound great as he's doing it. We look forward to hearing more from Igor."

Paspalj picked up the guitar at 13, learning chords, scales and simple riffs. His world changed dramatically when a friend gave him an audio cassette of instructional lessons, which also included recordings of Van Halen's "Eruption" and Yngwie Malmsteen's "Far Beyond the Sun." "Both of those songs were so different from anything I'd heard before," he says. "The sound, the energy — they had everything!"

Paspalj taught himself to play both tracks, and he devoured as many VHS guitar lesson videos as possible. He later enrolled in music school and earned a master's degree in music theory.

"During this period, I was also greatly influenced by classical music," he explains. "I developed a guitar language that owed a lot to the masters. I also developed my own style of phrasing, and while it might not be revolutionary, I'm still working on it. It's a never-ending journey."

In addition to his daytime gigs, Paspalj is an experienced live musician, who, in normal times, would perform up to six nights a week. "Because of COVID, there's no live shows anymore, which has been unfortunate because that's been my favorite part of being a musician," he says. "When you get to play live, you can try out new things in terms of improvisation and sound, even experimenting with your stage look. I'm hoping I can get back to gigging soon."

It's a never-ending journey." →



Alan Gogoll with his Åstrand Å-OMC

GUITARIST OF THE YEAR 2020

sponsored by PRS PAUL REED SMITH GUITARS

ACOUSTIC GUITARIST OF THE YEAR 2020: ALAN GOGOLL

In the past two years, acoustic guitarist Alan Gogoll won first place in the 2019 Furch Guitar International Guitar Competition and bagged the top spot in the 2020 Magic Guitars International Guitar Competition. One might think the Australian native has become jaded by all the acclaim, but Gogoll, who took the crown of *GW* and *GP*'s 2020 Acoustic Guitarist of the Year, quickly lays such a notion to rest.

"The full impact of winning hasn't really sunk in yet," he says. "I need to say to myself a few times, 'Alan, you've won the highest award for what you do in the world!' I'm very grateful to have had the chance to compete, and I want to thank everybody who voted for me, especially the judges who made the final decision. To receive that level of recognition from other professionals is really very special."

Gogoll's winning entry, a whimsical and transporting original composition called "Otter Rain," is a star-turn performance in which he displays his dazzling, innovative "bell harmonic" technique. Playing an Åstrand Å-OMC guitar (handcrafted in Sweden), he utilizes both hands to simultaneously pluck radiant, bell-like tones from the strings. He punctuates this technique with spirited, rhythmic raps on the guitar's body, thus dispensing with the need for an accompanist.

"I wrote 'Otter Rain' last summer in France, so it's quite a recent piece," Gogoll says. "Like pretty much every song of mine, it came about through practice and working on technique, not actively sitting down and trying to write something. So it was all very subconscious, you could say." He points out that live streams and his YouTube clip of "Otter Rain" have already become fan favorites. "The song holds a special place in my heart."

Having started on the guitar at 5, the mostly self-taught Gogoll discovered his love of harmonics when he was 9. "They unlocked this magical, beautiful side of the guitar," he says. "Perfecting how to use them was challenging and rewarding. Over time, I realized I didn't have to be in a band to get a full sound or make music. I could play bass notes and do all sorts of other things on just one guitar."

In 2017, Gogoll produced a video series called *Stringscapes* for which he built a custom guitar and camera rig to capture string vibrations from inside the guitar while looking out onto various landscapes. He's also released a number of albums, including 2014's *Whimsical Toad*, 2017's *Mulberry Mouse* and last year's *Moonlight Lantern*.

Thanks to his heavy presence on social media, he's been able to tour internationally, and he's looking forward to a post-COVID world in which he can perform live again.

LEFT: FRED + HANNA RIGHT: COURTESY OF MIKE PAPAPAVLOU

✖ ALAN GOGOLL: "I need to say to myself a few times, 'Alan, you've won the highest award for what you do in the world!'



GUITAR TEACHER OF THE YEAR 2020: MIKE PAPAPAVLOU

● MIKE PAPAPAVLOU WON'T have to look too far to thank the people who voted him Guitar Teacher of the Year 2020. The Manhattan-based instructor can extend his appreciation personally to his own students who sent in glowing video testimonials on his behalf.

There's David Arnstein, who said, "I picked up the guitar again after 30 years of not playing. I was nervous about how rusty I was and wondered if I could ever play again. Mike is a wonderfully gifted teacher who has really helped me along the way. He believes that playing music at any level will enhance the quality of your life." Mei Hui enthused, "Mike is the best guitar teacher because he is passionate about teaching and making an impact on people's lives."



Mike Papapavlou in New York's Central Park — and with students [*below*]

And Arianna Taylor summed it up succinctly: "He really believes in me, and I get confidence from him."

Papapavlou admits he was overcome by the heartfelt messages from his students, but at the same time he attempts to put the award in context. "It's the greatest feeling in the world to hear all the glowing words of praise, and I thank everybody who voted for me," he says. "I know that I'm not the greatest teacher around — there's always going to be somebody who knows more than me. But people don't care how much you know until they know you care about them, and this award proves that my students realize that I'm really invested in what they're doing."

Born in Cyprus, Papapavlou started playing guitar as a kid. His early favorites were hard rock and metal bands like Metallica and Iron Maiden, but in his teens he fell in love with Motown, pop, funk and blues. He played in local bands before moving to the UK to earn his undergraduate degree in music, and in his early 20s he emigrated to New York, where he received his master's degree in jazz guitar at the Allen Copeland School of Music. "I came here by boat to pursue the American dream," he says.

While exploring various musical opportunities, Papapavlou began teaching purely out of financial necessity, but it didn't take long for him to realize his true calling. "Lots of guitarists want fame and money, but how many can say they do something they're really proud of?" he says. "When I saw how I could impact people's lives — it's that look on their face when they learned something new — I understood I was doing something meaningful."

WHAT THEY WON

PRIZES FOR THE *2020 GUITARIST OF THE YEAR* CONTEST INCLUDE...



PRS S2 McCarty 594 in Dark Cherry Sunburst, signed by Paul Reed Smith



PRS SE T50E in Black Gold

PRS SE Hollowbody II Piezo

Spector Performer 4 in Metallic Red

The winner for each category will be invited to Future's studio, either in NEW YORK or LONDON, to record a live performance video and be interviewed by the editors.

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✖ **MIKE PAPAPAVLOU: "It's that look on their face when they learned something new — I understood I was doing something meaningful"**



Juho Ranta-Maunus with his PRS SE Custom 24

GUITARIST OF THE YEAR 2020 sponsored by PRS GUITARS

YOUNG GUITARIST OF THE YEAR 2020: JUHO RANTA-MAUNUS

● AS THE SAYING GOES, some people are just born with it. Such appears to be the case with 14-year-old Finnish prodigy Juho Ranta-Maunus, whose preternatural skills allowed him to edge out the other exceptionally talented entrants in the hotly contested Young Guitarist of the Year 2020 competition.

"It's amazing and unbelievable at the same time," Juho says. "I feel grateful that so many people viewed my playing and voted for me. I received lots of positive feedback and messages. I want to thank everybody who travelled on this journey with me. I also feel very honored that top celebrity players appreciated my playing. I'll definitely continue to work hard on my guitar playing and music making."

Juho worked for three months creating the prize-winning video of his prog-tinged original composition, "Diversity." As he explains, "Because of the three-minute time limit for the competition, I tried to include the most compelling and technical parts of the song." That he did; along with showcasing his keen sense of melody, the video is a brilliant display of the guitarist's fluid sweeps, tasteful phrasing, impeccable tone and masterful vibrato. (Anyone who wants to check out the full version of "Diversity" can do so on Juho's YouTube channel, and it's also available on Spotify, iTunes and other platforms.)

Juho, who lives in the western Finland city of Seinäjoki, was inspired to take up the guitar at age 8. "I fell in love with the guitar immediately, from the first touch," he says. After a few lessons at his local music store, he enrolled at the South Ostrobothnia Music Institute in Seinäjoki, where he studies electric guitar along with band, composition and piano. "Antti Honkanen has been my electric guitar teacher this whole time, and he's awesome."

At first, Juho played along to music from bands like Europe, Metallica, Bon Jovi and Megadeth. He cites John Petrucci as his biggest influence ("I discovered progressive metal because of him") and has also become enamored of Plini and Kiko Loureiro. "I really like Plini's prog-djent style and the exotic chords he plays, and I love Kiko's melodies."

His main guitar is a PRS SE Custom 24 M-SB Limited through a Blackstar HT20-RH MKII amp.

Making his own YouTube videos has sharpened Juho's producing chops – he cuts tracks on Garage Band and edits clips using either Final Cut Pro X or iMovie. As for the immediate future, he says that he'll continue to study with Honkanen, but once he leaves college, he dreams of turning pro.

"I want to play in a band and tour," he says. "I express my emotions through the guitar, and I think my voice on the instrument has grown over the years because of all the hard work I put into it."

JUKKA RANTA-MAUNUS

✖ JUHO RANTA-MAUNUS: "I fell in love with the guitar immediately, from the first touch"

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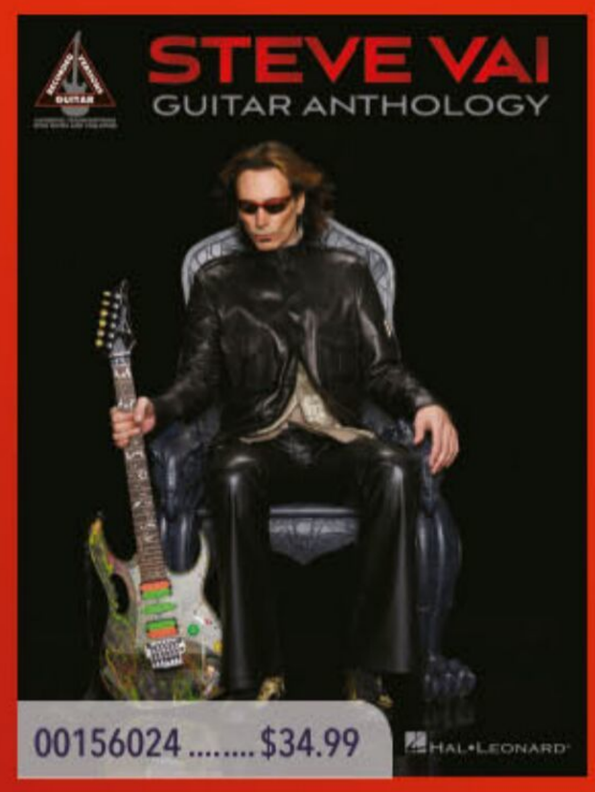
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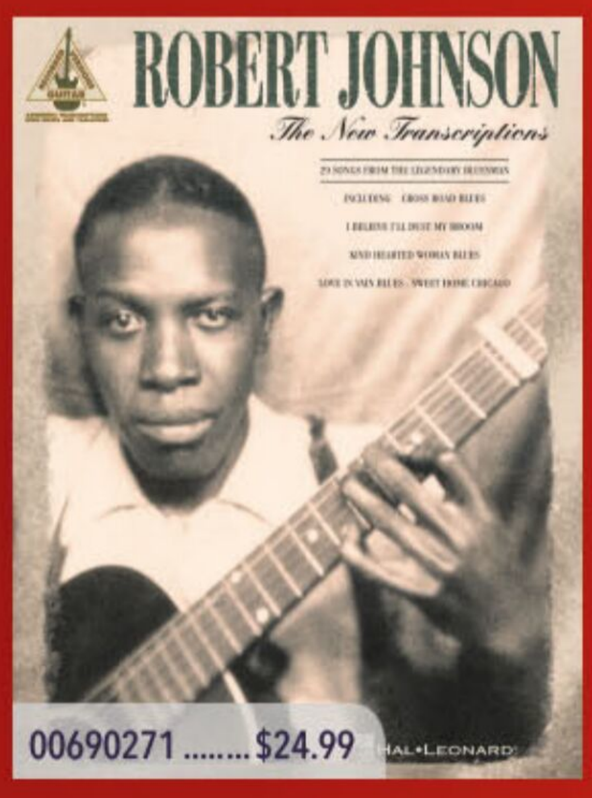










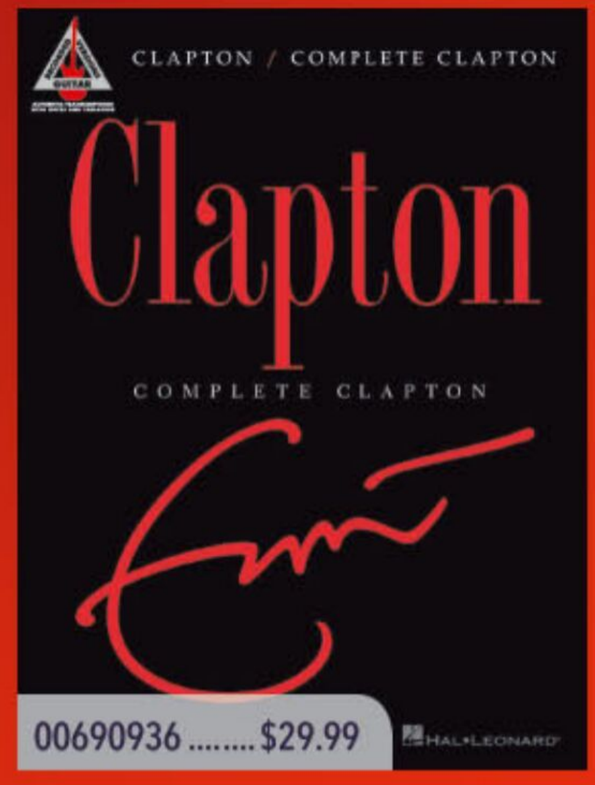












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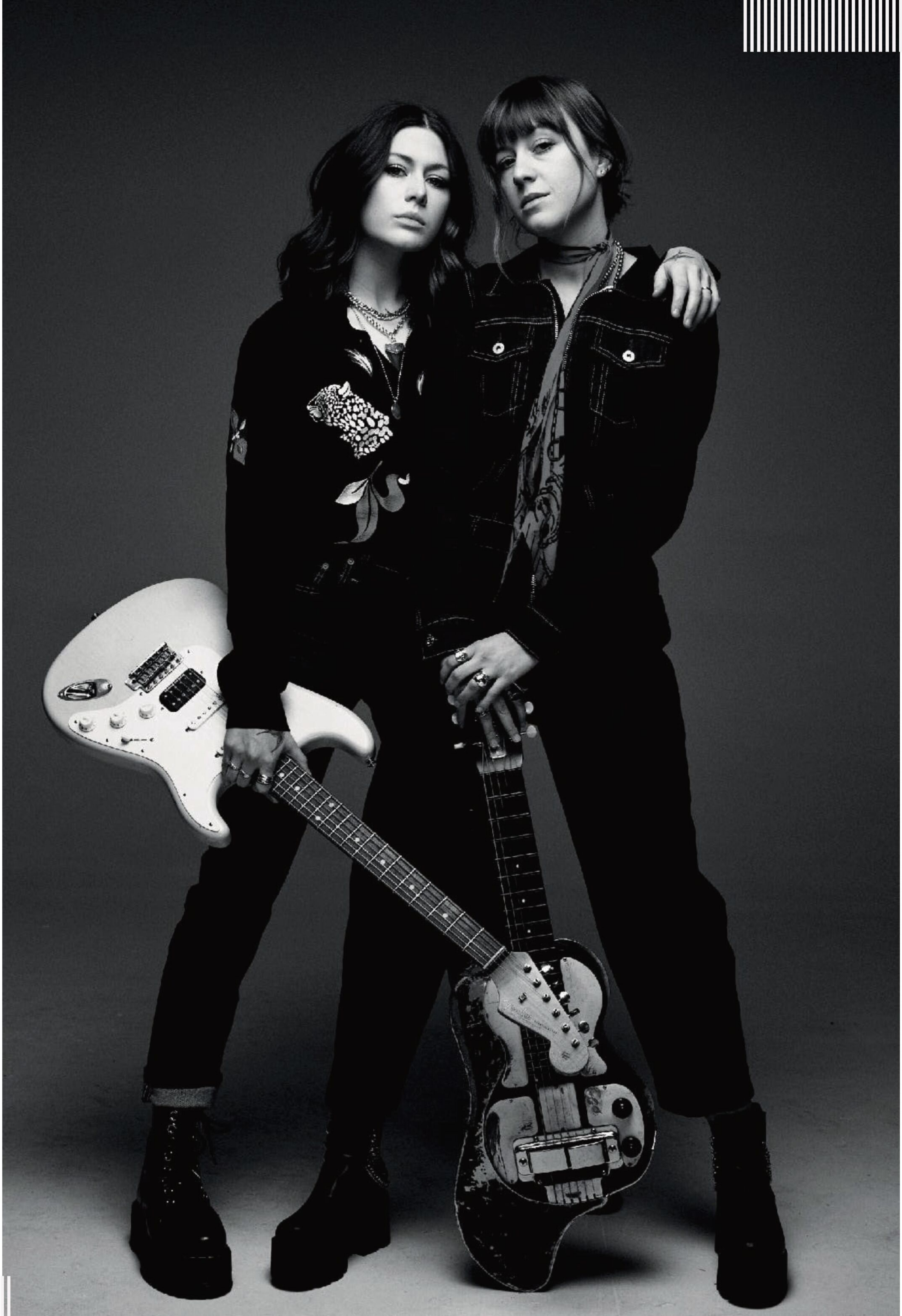
LARKIN POE

Six-string sisters REBECCA and MEGAN LOVELL talk us through the tones that grace their new covers record — KINDRED SPIRITS — and the musical telepathy that comes with growing up together

OVER THE LAST 10 or so years, sibling duo Larkin Poe have become one of the most exciting prospects in guitar music, thanks to their tasteful musicianship and heavenly harmonies. Latest release *Kindred Spirits* sees them return to the "covers" format that originally got them noticed, giving us their take on classic hits by Elton John, Neil Young and Elvis Presley, as well as more contemporary cuts by Lenny Kravitz and Post Malone.

By Amit Sharma • Photo by Robby Klein

Larkin Poe's Rebecca [*left*] and Megan Lovell with their respective main guitars — a Fender Strat and a vintage Rickenbacker B-series lap steel





"The beauty of the song selection for this was in how organically it all came together," says Rebecca Lovell, who sings lead and plays guitars, banjos and mandolins in the group while her sister Megan usually sticks with lap steel and harmonies. "And though it might not seem apparent on the surface, there's definitely a thread that connects all of these songs. When we first heard the Post Malone song, which features Ozzy Osbourne, I just thought that melody was so cool. And though it's super modern, Megan and I stripped it back and started playing around with singing it ourselves, trying to nip and tuck the verse parts into more Larkin Poe land."

"And it really came together," agrees Megan. "We thought it would be fun to use our approach with a newer song, just to see what would happen. I think it fits in with the classic songs, it kinda has the same feel to it."

Megan, what can you tell us about your main lap steel guitar?

MEGAN LOVELL: I first picked up a Rickenbacker. A family friend said they'd seen this really cool vintage one at Gruhn's Guitars in Nashville, which is an iconic guitar shop, and suggested I go and get it. They felt I would love the tone of the instrument and it wouldn't steer me wrong. At the time I was playing Dobro 100 percent of the time, so this was my first foray into electric instruments. I went with their suggestion and bought the Rickenbacker. I feel like I really lucked into it because this *is* my sound. I fell in love with it and set the Dobro aside because I felt the lap steel could tap into the sounds I was searching for.

Growing up listening to a lot of classic rock and electric stuff, the lap steel married my love of slide and those fat tones I'd been listening to for so long. That instrument lasted me a number of years until there was an unfortunate accident in a taxi cab in New York City. The driver slammed on the brakes and the instrument went flying; the neck broke off, unfortunately. That was my first love! I knew I needed an identical model to replace it, or one as close as I could find. I ended up looking all over the country and — surprise, an identical model popped up at a Guitar Center in Knoxville, Tennessee. So that's where my number one ax came from!

What else do you know about the specs?

MEGAN: It's a B6 model from the early Fifties. Nothing has been changed — it's all original down to the tuners, which are really bent! I've wanted to replace them for a while, but one thing about these vintage lap steels is that there aren't many replacement parts; there's not much of a demand for it. By default, things have to stay fairly original.

REBECCA LOVELL: And knowing my sister, I find this quite humorous, she's very much a tried-and-true individual once she finds something she digs. Her pedalboard has not changed in *years*. She basically buys the same lap steel over and over again, to the point where all of our musical friends immediately send her links when they see a lap steel that's even remotely similar on Reverb, Craigslist or eBay. And now as a result, Megan has these half-severed versions of this lap steel all over her house. Whenever parts give up, she tries to keep them rock 'n' rolling.

What kind of amps and pedals do you both tend to use?

MEGAN: I'm a Fender tube amp junkie. I have an old Vibrolux, but most of the time I'm touring with a standard Deluxe Reverb. Pedalwise, I'm pretty stripped back and don't really tend to use a lot of stuff. I do actually use [Rebecca's husband] Tyler Bryant's pedal, the TB Drive by Rodenberg, and it's a custom one that was made for me. Tyler had "Slide Queen" engraved on it for me. I love that pedal; the tones are great. I was using a Tube Screamer before, and this is almost like having two stacked on top of each other. It's so versatile.

REBECCA: *Kindred Spirits* was a bit of a twist and a turn for me because I don't actually play any electric on the record. I actually used this Beard Guitars Sidecar acoustic. He's an incredible builder in the north, I think around Virginia, predominantly focused on resophonic guitars — a lot of Dobros and square-necks [resonators] to an immaculate standard. Over the last couple of years, he's transitioned into making acoustics. My brother-in-law, Megan's husband Mike Seal — an incredible guitarist in his own right — was given one of these Beard Deco Phonic Sidecar acoustics, which I became obsessed with. I was borrowing it all the time and realized I shouldn't be stealing someone else's.

SUHAIMI ABDULLAH/GETTY IMAGES



Rebecca [*left*] and Megan Lovell perform during day two of the Formula 1 Singapore Grand Prix at Marina Bay Street Circuit on September 21, 2019

So, of course, you had to get your own.

REBECCA: Yup, I got one for myself and fell in love with it. I actually have two now; I bought one to replace the first one because it was used for *Kindred Spirits* and we're auctioning it off to raise proceeds for our one of favorite foundations, Reach Out and Read. It's a very special guitar; I've written a lot on it. On the Lenny Kravitz track, I broke out Tyler's pink resonator, which was built by Mule. He's another phenom builder, making these really cool resonators. I think the actor Jason Momoa is one of his biggest clients and is always promoting Mule. That was about it for me. On more traditional Larkin Poe days, I'm all about the Strat — I have two that are in main rotation. One belonged to Tyler but I've taken it now. [*Laughs*] And recently I've started stepping into the Telecaster world.

Rebecca, you've spoken of your electric influences in the past, but since it's an acoustic record, which players do you think had the most impact on your style?

REBECCA: I love this question because I've never been asked it before! We came up on bluegrass, so in our early teens that's what we were playing. My main introduction to rhythm acoustic guitar was in that field, and there's a very distinct style of the right hand with a lot of those players. There's this swagger that no matter how hard I try I can't quite get out of my right hand. If you listen to any of the players from the Del McCoury Band or someone like Dan Tyminski — there's this undeniable swagger, that's definitely the best word to describe it. When I accompany myself and Megan with an acoustic, that's always at the forefront of my mind — providing a lot of the rhythm, covering the backbeat and downbeat with my right hand to keep it propelling and moving forward in time. As for major acoustic influences and the players I'd aspire to channel into my writing, there's Skip James! He is the coolest acoustic guitar player. I find what he does so unusual, especially for a blues musician of that time period. Using all that cross-tuning, he really took it somewhere special. That's someone I listen to on pretty much a daily basis. If I'm not doing anything else, I'll have some Skip James going and slowly seeping into my own playing.

"[VIBRATO] SAYS SO MUCH ABOUT WHO YOU ARE AS A PLAYER AND THE EMOTIONAL QUALITIES YOU CAN EXPRESS. WHEN MEGAN PLAYS, IT SOUNDS LIKE SHE'S SINGING" — **REBECCA**

We couldn't help but notice you'd twisted an Elvis hit — "(You're the) Devil in Disguise" — from major into minor.

REBECCA: When we set out to select songs for the album, we obviously had hundreds to pick from, and already so many that we'd covered online. We wanted to branch out and treat people to something new from us. We love the idea of taking a happy song and turning it into minor, that feels very cinematic. We were scouring some of our favorite artists, and we hold Elvis in high esteem. Hearing those lyrics we immediately realized it would be so much fun to screw with and create this demonic dance...

MEGAN: Because those lyrics are *crying* out to be sinister!

REBECCA: We sat here in the kitchen and messed around. Megan cross-tuned her lap steel, which she doesn't do very often. Usually it's tuned to a major triad chord in G. This time it was minor.

What else would you say are important things for slide and lap steel players to look out for?

MEGAN: First off, pitch is *super* important. That's something you don't have to think as much about on guitar or any fretted instrument. That's a major part of it. I started out on violin, so intonation has always been a huge part of playing for me. One thing I actually didn't enjoy about playing fretted instruments is how it left me missing that part of it. I love



the fact that you have to be super cognizant of the pitch. Holding the bar, and using banjo picks, feels very awkward at first and very wrong. Just push through that. It won't last long; if you push through the awkward phase it will start feeling natural pretty quickly.

REBECCA: From an outside perspective, having been around Megan's entire lap steel career, what I think is super important is the *character* of the vibrato. And that's something she does innately. I recently watched a video where Mike Campbell was talking about the importance of developing the character of your vibrato. It says so much about who you are as a player and the emotional qualities you can express. When Megan plays, it sounds like she's singing.

Have you ever tried swapping instruments just to see what would happen?

REBECCA: I did try to play lap steel and I couldn't push through it. I didn't have enough perseverance. But what's important to note is that if you have the fortitude to get proficient and go through that awkwardness, it pays dividends. It's such a unique instrument and it's so emotional, there's nothing else like it. I have directly benefited from the fact that Megan has become such a beautiful player, because there's not many! I think people should stick with it... I don't know why it's not a more common instrument. People need to push through the awkwardness of the mechanics, keeping that bar on the frets, playing in tune with both hands working well together. Once they've done that, the main thing will be the vibrato. That's the absolute arrow and dagger to the heart of steel playing.

MEGAN: Side B of that equation is that, because it has such a vocal quality, you really have to be cognizant of the range you're playing with, especially if there's a singer. It's very easy to walk on the vocalist. I've spent many years working with Rebecca on how to intertwine myself around her voice; especially as two female singers, we have similar ranges. I think sometimes the lap steel gets pegged into a corner as more of a country or Hawaiian thing, but it's really versatile. I hope it becomes more popular.

As teenagers you found out that your family was connected to Edgar Allan Poe, the tortured genius who wrote "The Raven." That's a pretty cool relative to have.

REBECCA: This is true! And yeah, we actually didn't know about it for many years. We had a family genealogist who went back and did the work when we were in our mid-teens. Our folks home-schooled us, so we

COURTESY OF LARKIN POE





"[MEGAN] BUYS THE SAME LAP STEEL OVER AND OVER AGAIN, TO THE POINT WHERE ALL OF OUR FRIENDS SEND HER LINKS WHEN THEY SEE [ONE] THAT'S EVEN REMOTELY SIMILAR ON REVERB OR EBAY" — **REBECCA**

were kinda free-range children in the bookshelves and we were huge Edgar Allan Poe fans. To find that connection was special and carry that sense of family through our music, hoping there's a trickle-down effect of at least some shred of literary propensity! It's pretty exciting to be related to someone like that.

Having grown up together, as well as sharing DNA, do you find it's quite easy to finish each other's musical sentences without really talking out loud?

REBECCA: That is definitely the case. Long-standing musical relationships are built on trust. I've seen band members who have been together for years and years... it's a bit like how owners start to look more like their dogs. Everyone starts to lump together — there's a shared experience, shared memories and shared musical instincts. Looking at footage of Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers, you can see all of those guys can finish each other's sentences musically. In that sense, that's been earned by time. We've muscled through 15 years of playing together; what makes it special is that many sibling bands aren't able to weather that through. We are gifted with an extra *je ne sais quoi* in that we are sisters and our voices are similar and we are able to communicate on stage. There's a very strong siblinghood there that's undeniable. I find it tragic that, more often than not, a lot of sibling bands end up imploding because they cannot manage the weight being placed on the relationship of brother or sister. That's something we've been able to kill, I think, working through issues, writing together, owning a business together and being sisters, sharing family. There's a lot of trust and that's the main basis.

And does that ever feel hard to maintain?

MEGAN: Not really — though we've worked hard to maintain that trust. We're together every day working, but we also do fun things together. Just the other day we made apple butter and canned it. We have a special relationship built on so many years of touring together but also the fact that we're really close in age, less than two years apart, and were always a package deal from the very beginning!

REBECCA: I wish everyone could experience it. Hearing about sibling relationships that are fraught make me so sad... because it's us against the world. If we weren't making music together, I don't think either of us would have taken a shot at it professionally. It's a very challenging field and there's a lot of juggling that's required, but we have it down between the two of us. We're definitely a pack. It's nice to have a pack — hell or high water we will stick together and will keep making records until we can't walk anymore!

By the way, Megan — did you ever get around to fixing that original Rickenbacker?

MEGAN: I did actually find a lap steel body and put in that original pickup from that first one! The guts of that guitar found a new home and now that's become my hallowed instrument; I don't take it out on the road. It stays at the house and stays pristine. I also have this lap steel holder that I use to stand up on stage, because I cannot abide sitting down — I have to run around! So I have this retrofitted holder that my guitars slot into, and that's why they're all so beaten up. They're constantly sliding in and out of this holder and they get really scratched up. You would see that on any of the lap steels I've brought out on the road. The worst point is always the part that rests against my body; there's always a thick line of scratches on that side, which is weird!

REBECCA: It's really cool, though, because it's all worn away. Typically the lap steels are black and white, but now that's worn away and you see this green underneath. It's really crazy. We call the holder "the Bedpan," which is very unflattering, but it definitely looks like one... There's only one of them in the world. We've had fans around the world who've tried creating replicas for Megan, because if she lost it she'd be up shit creek! It's falling apart and is duct taped together, so she really needs a new one... GW

[*left and top*] Megan Lovell's main early Fifties Rickenbacker B6 lap steel, which (by the way) she usually plays in open G tuning (DBGDBG). Both pics also show "the Bedpan," aka Megan's retrofitted, masking-tape-covered lap steel holder, which allows her to play while standing up, "because I cannot abide sitting down — I have to run around!"
[*above*] One of Megan's earlier Rickenbackers — what's left of it, anyway. "There was an accident in a taxi cab in New York City. The driver slammed on the brakes and the instrument went flying; the neck broke off, unfortunately. That was my first love!"

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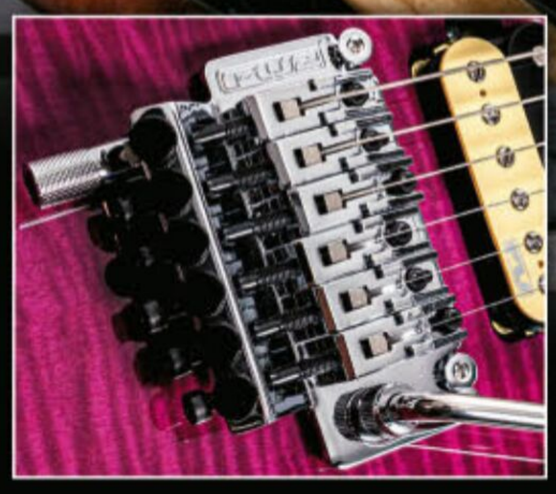
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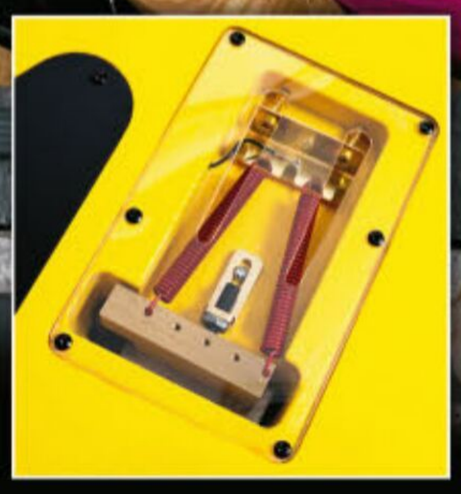
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VOICES IN THE SKY

PLINI — the guy Steve Vai once called "the future of exceptional guitar playing" — discusses the perils of "guitar fame," the challenges of a modern prog-rocker and his breathtaking new album, ***IMPULSE VOICES***

By JOE BOSSO Photos by CHAD DAO

Only 10 years after he started posting bits of music online and hoping that somebody — anybody — would give him a click, Australian guitarist Plini is now experiencing the kind of success he never dreamed possible. As both a support act and a headliner, he's trekked across the globe several times (he was the first instrumental artist to play the U.K.'s Download Festival), and on the strength of his dazzling 2017 debut album, *Handmade Cities*, he's been hailed by the likes of Steve Vai as "the future of exceptional guitar playing." (GuitarWorld.com readers were similarly bowled over, ranking the disc number five in a poll of the "20 Best Guitar Records of the Decade.")

If anybody needs further convincing that the prog-guitar wunderkind had indeed arrived, it came last fall when hip-hop star Doja Cat re-imagined her hit song "Say So" at the MTV Europe Music Awards by utilizing bits of Plini's song "Handmade Cities" — without the guitarist's knowledge or permission. Initially, Plini issued a statement, calling the lift "disappointing but not particularly surprising in a sector of the industry that is usually more interested in clout than creativity."

Given a bit of time and space, the guitarist now calls the incident "surreal." "It's probably one of the most surreal turns of events of my career so far," he says. "I think it's hilarious and amazing, mostly because I wrote that song in my bedroom at the end of 2016, and it's made its way to L.A. and inspired someone who thought, 'Oh, it would sound cool if I put this in this song.' If you ran some random probability generator, this would be something you would never think could happen."

"'Progressive' implies that you're trying new things... but if the music doesn't sound like what people grew up on, they don't like it," Plini says

Plini's newfound fame is bound to spread further with the release of his second full-length album, *Impulse Voices*. Throughout eight dizzying tracks, Plini takes listeners on something of a metaphysical mood journey. Performing alongside the guitarist are his longtime cohorts, bassist Chris Grove (who also co-produced and mixed the album) and drummer Chris Allison, as well as contributions from Dave Mackay on piano and synthesizer, John Waugh on saxophone and Amy Turk on electro-acoustic harp.

While there's plenty of breathtaking moments of wild and woolly guitar virtuosity ("Papelillo" includes thrilling flights of djent fretboard wizardry, "The Glass Bead Game" features soaring jazz-fusion runs, while the title track is a speed-picking marvel), the album succeeds more in terms of the emotions Plini evokes through artfully crafted soundscapes and adventurous, genre-bending arrangements than in rote shredding.

"I play the bare minimum amount of guitar that I can while also being a guitarist," he explains. "I love playing guitar, and I love to do things I've never done before on the instrument. Sure, I have my little guitar-hero ego that lives inside me and is like, 'Hey man, you should throw a sweep-picking lick here and let people know that you know how to do it.' But I think the biggest thing for me is just trying to write music that I think is interesting, and once I've done that, I find the room to put guitar on it, and that's the blend it becomes."

Before releasing your debut album, you gained attention by putting out music on social media and YouTube. Do you think your career would've been possible without such platforms?
Probably not. I wonder if I would have had the energy to write music, assemble a band and network enough in the hope that someone from a label would come to a show and think it was good enough to want to sign me. That's the traditional route, and I don't know if I would have been driven enough to pursue it. It's a total accident that I got to make music for fun and put it on the internet, and then the internet took care of the rest. Without YouTube and Bandcamp, I'd be a hobby musician.

Some guitarists start to tune out other artists for fear of being influenced too much. They think it impedes their originality. Where do you stand on that?
I constantly listen to music, and I think one of my biggest influences is simply the amount of different music I listen to. I don't even know where it's coming from, but I'll hear some sound and eventually try and use it in a song. I listen to a lot of necessarily great electronic music, Top 100 electronic stuff, because I know nothing about how it's produced. I'm always trying to figure it out. That stuff isn't really related to guitar, though. I'm listening to more and more different jazz guitar stuff, along with bands I grew up on — Meshuggah and Dream Theater.

It feels like you're spreading the waters of progressive rock. Is there anything that bothers you about the genre? Who's getting it right, and who isn't?
I don't know if anybody's getting it "wrong" per se, but some people do tend to get stuck on an idea of how progressive rock should sound. The very term "progressive" implies that you're trying new things, new sounds, but if the music doesn't sound like what people grew up on, they don't like it. On the other hand, a lot of people want the music to sound vastly different to what they know, so there's a bit of a divide going on.

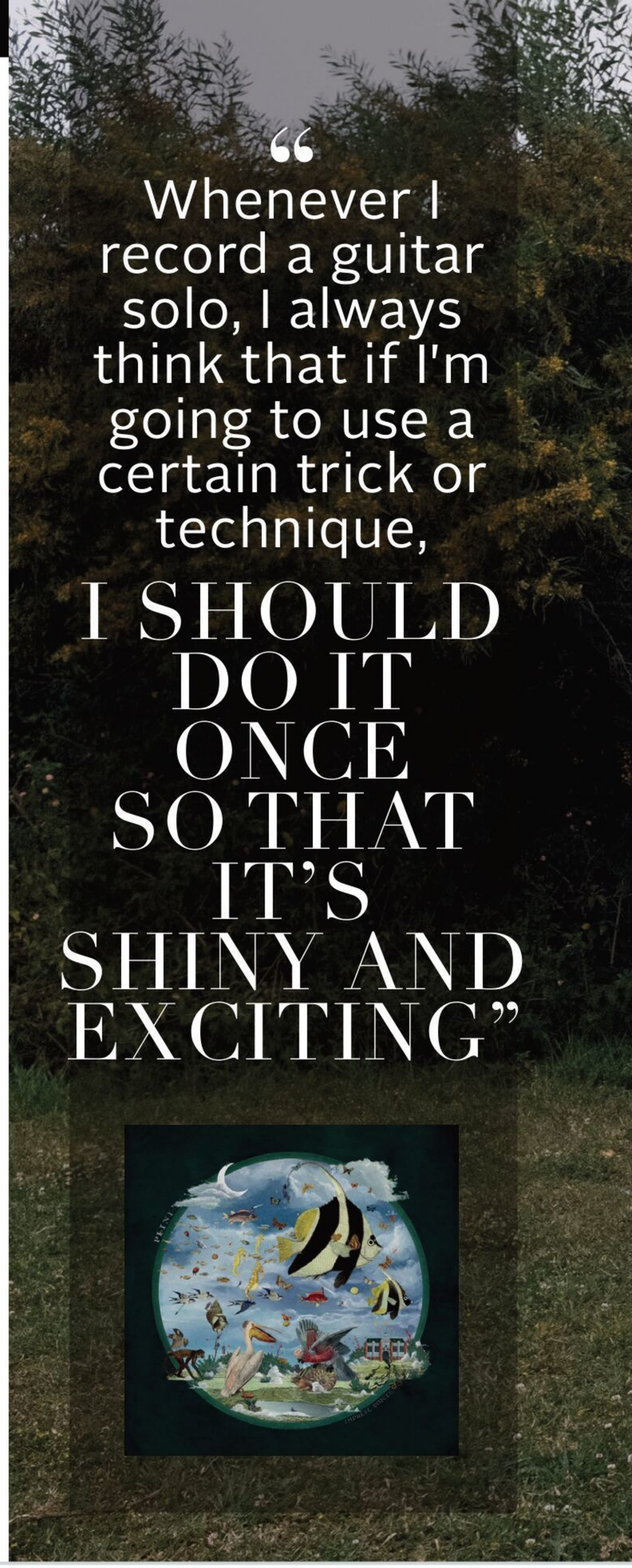
I think some people believe that it can't be progressive if it doesn't sound difficult or hard to play.
Yeah, sure. An attitude like that keeps people from being creative. If you're getting trapped talking about whether you need more technique or less technique for it to sound good, that's going to hold you back from making good music. Some bands worry too much that they need to include certain elements in order to stay relevant or fit in, when that might actually be doing them a disservice. You just can't worry about such things.

Has the forced time at home during COVID given you an opportunity to practice more than you normally would?
Absolutely. After finishing the album, I didn't play guitar too much, but I've just started getting back into it during the last couple of weeks, trying to figure out some new things and just trying to get better in every way. I'm also working on different production ideas, so when inspiration strikes I can tackle the idea of a new sound.

Because of COVID, some of the players on the new album had to record remotely.
That's right. I recorded all the guitars and most of the other instruments at home. Simon Grove played bass and mixed the record from home as well. With my drummer, Chris Allison, we demoed drum ideas by email. We were going to do the drums at one studio, but travel got shut down, so we had to book a different studio closer to home. We took a week there and did the drums. As far as the other stuff, the record was mostly remote.

It must be hard to direct people's performances remotely.
That could be a problem, but fortunately Simon has played bass with me for every show I've done, and I've done probably 100 shows with Chris, so we have a strong level of communication. They're really good friends, which makes it easy for me to tell them when something sucks, or for them to tell me when something sucks. [*Laughs*] With people that I don't know so well, there is something missing when recording remotely, but you just get through it.

Let's talk about some of the songs. On "I'll Tell You Someday," you don't seem to repeat a phrase or a trick, but it doesn't sound like mindless improvisation. You're telling a story.



I think that song is the most guitar solo-ish sort of song on the record. Whenever I record a guitar solo, I always think that if I'm going to use a certain trick or technique, I should do it once so that it's shiny and exciting. I carry that approach through all the songs. If I'm going to do something that's flashy, I'll try to only do it once. You want it to stand out.

What are you using on "Papelillo" to get those gorgeous sustained notes?
That is a lot of compression going into a drive pedal. I'm also using digital plugins — the same sort of concept. It's just really, really saturated.

On the title track, you do some marvelous staccato picking, but it's not your average showboat kind of thing.



Plini with his Strandberg Boden Plini Edition guitar — "It was tweaked in terms of the finishes, the pickups and the switching," he says

That's the clean stuff. I'm just picking really hard on a single-coil neck pickup. Hopefully, those parts sound like someone who's really good on the guitar just picked it up and started playing. In truth, that was me sitting there trying 12 different picks to see which shape and thickness got the best attack. The problem I've had with recording clean staccato clean guitar is that I can get too much pick attack — all you hear is the overtone of picking than the sound of the actual note. There's a lot of trial and error.

The delay on the main riff of "Ona" is as much a part of the song as the note pattern itself. I take it you came up with that riff pattern hearing that delay, right?
Yeah, totally. That's a plugin with the delay setting set to "maximum beautiful." I don't think I would have been able to come up with that melody hearing a dry tone. It would have been too simple, but the delay made it sound really cool and I turned it into a song. That's one of the best things about all the digital technology. I'll be home with my headphones on, and I'll sound like I'm in a really expensive studio.

You play six-, seven- and eight-string guitars. Can you pick each one up and feel immediately comfortable?
Definitely not. Honestly, I'm a six-string player. I'm getting more comfortable playing seven strings, but when I get on an eight-string, all I know is the lowest string; I always forget there is any more to it. When I record, I do it almost entirely on a six-string, unless I happened to write something on a seven-string. The eight-string's really there for the range, but I'm hoping to get more comfortable using it.

The shape of your signature Strandberg guitar is interesting. Was it designed more for sitting or standing?
The guitar is based pretty heavily on the Boden production model that Strandberg makes. It took years before it went into production, so I think it was designed for seated and standing positions. The signature model I have is just the production model, but it was tweaked aesthetically in terms of the finishes, the pickups and the switching.

If you pick up a guitar with a headstock, does it feel strange?
It does feel a little bit strange. I end up hitting people with the headstock if I turn around too quickly. [*Laughs*] GW

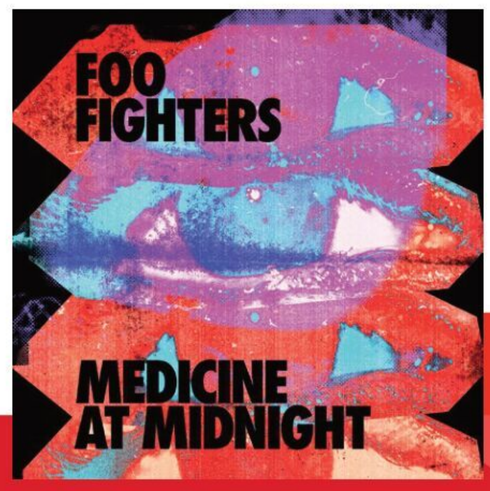
[*from left*]
Rami Jaffee,
Chris Shiflett,
Dave Grohl, Taylor
Hawkins, Nate
Mendel and Pat
Smear

MIDNIGHT

Foo Fighters' guitar triumvirate

DAVE GROHL, CHRIS SHIFLETT & PAT SMEAR

unleash their inner early-Eighties David Bowie (and SRV), bust out the ABBA beats and get decidedly "weird" — just in time for their 10th album, MEDICINE AT MIDNIGHT



MADNESS

"IT WAS THE FOO FIGHTERS' 25TH ANNIVERSARY, SO IT was going to be a big year," he says. "We thought, it'd be great to make an album, our 10th studio album, and I started planning around that — 'Let's circle the planet! Let's release this documentary thing that we've made! Let's do these van tours! We'll play the same cities 25 years to the date that we did on our first-ever tour... and in the same van we did the tour in!' Just all this shit, you know? Basically coming up with this world-domination-celebration thing."

Spoiler alert: 2020 did not work out the way anyone — Grohl and the Foo Fighters included — had planned. Which is why the singer and guitarist, rather than telling this story to *Guitar World* from the back of a beat-up van in some far-flung locale (that van tour, scheduled to begin last April, was cancelled as the world went into COVID-19 shutdown) is, like everyone else, at home, talking about his aborted world domination plot over — what else? — Zoom.

And when our narrative is enriched with brand new anecdotes courtesy of Dave's Foo Fighters co-guitarist, Chris Shiflett? That interview takes place over Zoom as well, with Shiflett safely confined in his home.



BY **RICHARD BIENSTOCK** *PHOTO BY* **ROSS HALFIN**

Dave Grohl
with a
Mosrite
Celebrity II



DANNY CLINCH

The final piece of the Foos guitar triumvirate, Pat Smear, meanwhile, is clearly not taking any chances. He speaks with *GW* via a crackly cellphone connection from the east coast of Canada, where he's holed up, he reports, "in the snow in a little cabin deep in the woods, with no mail delivery or garbage pickup."

"He's turned into a Canadian frontiersman," Shiflett says with a laugh.

2020, to say the least, was weird.

But while the Foos didn't get to spend the year circling the planet delighting fans, they did manage to get some real work done. For starters, Grohl finished his documentary, *What Drives Us*, which finds him exploring the psychology behind why musicians drop everything to spend their lives traveling in, yes, a van, to bring their music to people. And the Foo Fighters — which is rounded out by drummer Taylor Hawkins, bassist Nate Mendel and keyboardist Rami Jaffee — recorded that celebratory 10th studio album. It's called *Medicine at Midnight*, and it's a killer.

> *"The greatest reference I had for this record was everything we've done in the past. And it was,* **'LET'S NOT DO THAT'"**

It's also unlike anything you've heard from the band before. Sure, there are all the Foos trademarks — indelible riff-rockers ("Cloudspotter," "Holding Poison"), tightly coiled ragers ("No Son of Mine"), soaring ballads ("Waiting on a War") and hooks ("Making a Fire") upon hooks ("Medicine at Midnight") upon hooks ("Love Dies Young"). But there's also something else going on: an adherence to groove and atmosphere — and a very particular sort of early-Eighties-pop-rock-new-wave-dance groove and atmosphere — that lays out a fresh sonic and stylistic launching pad for these songs. You hear it in the slinky, heavily syncopated rhythms of the album's first single, "Shame Shame," and you hear it even more in the bubbly, synthy riffs that power "Love Dies Young." And you hear it maybe the most in the sultry, heated funk of the title track, which nods heavily to David Bowie's 1983 pop-exotica classic "Let's Dance" in sound and style — and even the guitar solo, which finds Shiflett paying tribute to Stevie Ray Vaughan's bluesy work in the Bowie original.

"I'm sort of aping Albert King through the lens of Stevie Ray," Shiflett says of his lead work on "Medicine at Midnight." "I even said to our producer, Greg Kurstin, 'We might want to mix these licks up a bit, because it's really a homage." He laughs. "But, hey, that's rock 'n' roll!"

Shiflett approached the "Medicine at Midnight" solo not only from a unique perspective playing-wise, but also in his choice of guitar. "The Foo Fighters are generally a humbucker kind of group," he says. "I remember a few years ago I showed up at something we were doing with a Strat and Dave looked at me and said, 'Now there's something I never thought I'd see in my band!' Because we don't really do the single-coil thing. But for 'Medicine at Midnight' that's where we wanted to go. So I grabbed one of my Strats and worked out the solo stuff and it was really fun. And I love that about our band — that we still have these moments of getting to jump into things we've never tried before."

Grohl lays it out in more general terms. "After 25 years, and now we're making our 10th record, I wanted to be sure we didn't make 'Learn to Fly' again. Or 'Best of You' again. Or 'My Hero" again. We've done those already. If we want to be a band for another 25 years, then we have to be able to find something new. So the greatest reference I had for this record was everything we've done in the past. And it was, 'Let's not do that.' "

Or, as Smear puts it, "We just said, 'Fuck it, let's get weird on this one.' "

That weirdness began, in a way, much like past Foo Fighters records have begun — although that process is somewhat weird in and of itself. After

STRANGER THINGS HAVE HAPPENED

DAVE GROHL

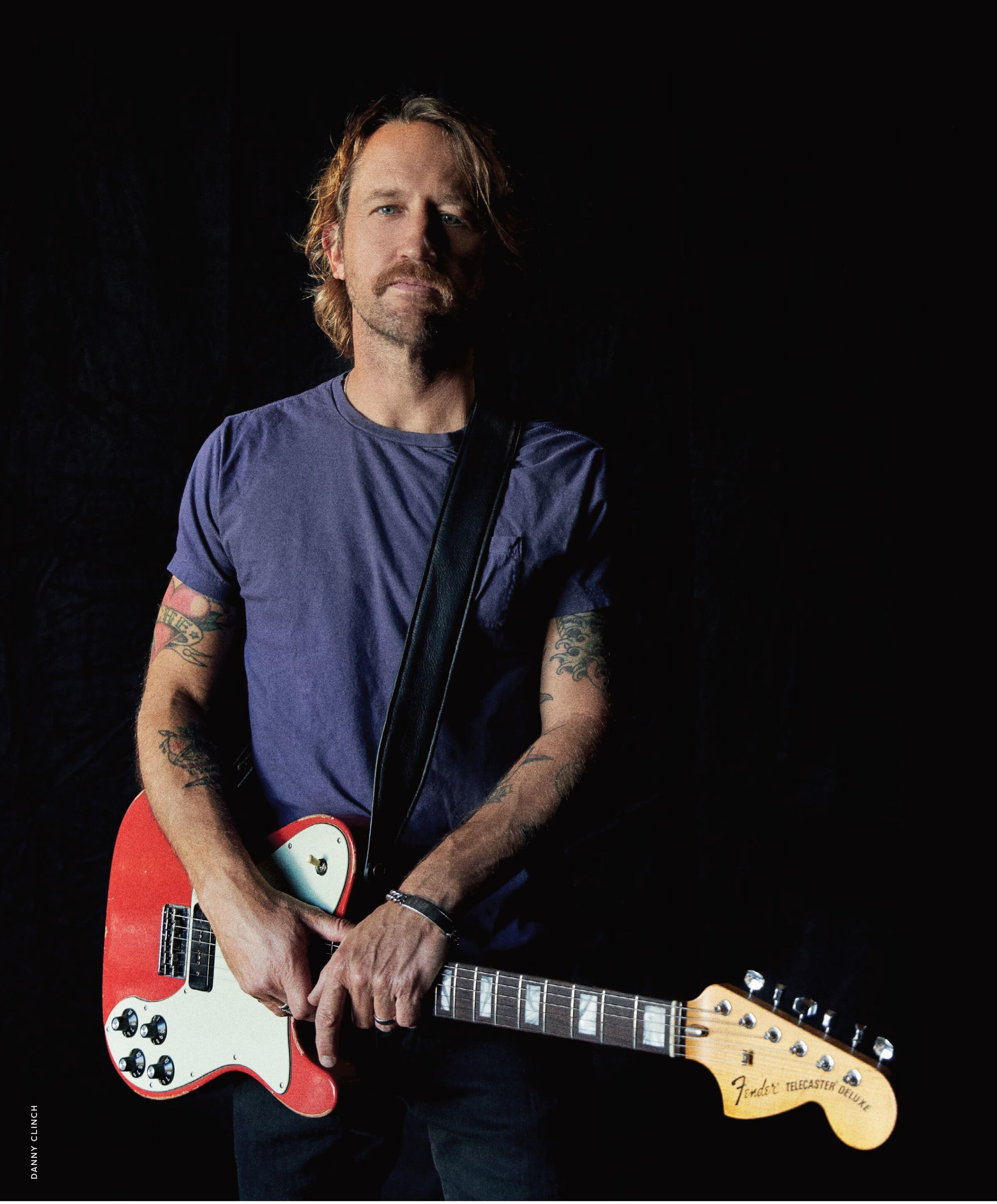
looks back on 25 (OK, 26!) years of Foo Fighters

"THERE'S A FAMOUS OLD JOKE: WHAT WAS THE last thing the drummer said before they kicked him out of the band? 'Hey guys, I got a new song I just wrote!' "

Dave Grohl told this oldie-but-goodie to *Guitar World* back in 1997 to describe his mindset during the Nirvana days, when he was not only, yes, the drummer, but also the drummer in a band that had already been through six of 'em previously ("and when you're the seventh drummer, it would be pretty big-headed of you to imagine yourself being the final drummer," he acknowledged). What's more, Kurt Cobain, the guy who was up front singing and playing guitar and writing Nirvana's songs? He also happened to be one of the greatest — if not *the* greatest, in many people's eyes — songwriters of his generation.

All of which meant that Grohl was happily resigned to bashing away behind the kit with Nirvana, which he did — rather excellently, we might add – from 1990 to 1994.

Of course, we all know what happened next — even if, at the time, the future wasn't very clear for Grohl. Following Cobain's death in April 1994 from a self-inflicted gunshot wound, Grohl initially dropped out of the public eye, traveling, spending time with his family and friends and generally just staying away from music. Eventually he picked up the drums again, recording the soundtrack to the fictionalized Beatles movie *Backbeat* as part of an all-star band, and also playing with Tom Petty, who went so far as to offer Grohl the drumming gig in the Heartbreakers. "It was such an honor," Grohl told *Rolling Stone* in 1995. "But I figured that I was 26 years old and didn't want to become a drummer for hire at the age of 26."



DANNY CLINCH

coming off a 16-month world tour in support of their 2017 album, *Concrete and Gold*, the idea was, as it often is with the Foo Fighters, to take a break. "We kind of work this cycle where we'll go into the studio and make a record, then we run around playing clubs and doing promo for a couple of months, and then we release the record and tour for a year and a half," Grohl says. "By the time we're finished with that cycle, we're all exhausted and we promise ourselves we'll never put each other through that fucking hell ever again." He laughs. "I say it every fucking time. You should ask my wife. She's like, 'I hear it every time — I'm exhausted. I'm never doing this again. This is the last record, *blah, blah, blah.*' "

> *The galloping rhythm part that I did in that song, it's like 'Eye of the Tiger.' It was almost like a joke. But we listened back to it and we were like,*
>
> **'HMM... THAT ACTUALLY SOUNDS PRETTY GOOD!' "**

Chris Shiflett with his Fender Telecaster Deluxe

"We always claim we're going to take this break and then... we miss it," Smear says. "We miss each other, we miss making music together."

"So within two and a half weeks, I'm demoing shit and sending it to the band," Grohl continues.

Smear concurs. "It's never more than a few months after we're home that we'll get a group text from Dave saying, 'Hey, I've been writing songs...' Then it's on."

The Foos began recording *Medicine at Midnight* before the pandemic hit. But whereas in the past they've tracked at various facilities, including the band's own Studio 606 and, for *Concrete and Gold*, EastWest, located in the heart of Hollywood, this time they took a different approach, taking up residence in a 1940s-era home in Encino, California, not far from Grohl's own house.

"The weird thing is, I actually lived in that house 10 years ago," Grohl says. "I



There was also another factor in his decision to pass on Petty. Beyond not wanting to be a mere hired gun, Grohl, musty old drummer jokes aside, also had songs.

Some of these dated back to the Nirvana days — one of them, a gentle tune titled "Color Pictures of a Marigold" (a. k. a. "Marigold"), with Grohl on vocals, drums and guitar, was even released as a B-side on Nirvana's "Heart-Shaped Box" single (a version also appeared on a 1992 album, *Pocketwatch*, that Grohl released under the pseudonym Late!). Another song, a grunge-pop rager titled "Alone + Easy Target," Grohl has played in demo form for Cobain during a break between *Nevermind* tours in 1991. Cobain, he recalled to *Mojo*, "was sitting in the bathtub with a Walkman on, listening to the song, and when the tape ended he took the headphones off and kissed me and said, 'Oh, finally, now I don't have to be the only songwriter in the band!' I said, 'No, no, no, I think we're doing just fine with your songs.' "

Which was truly how he felt. And which was also why, when Grohl, now band-less, entered Robert Lang Studios in Seattle in October 1994 to record some of his own songs — playing all the instruments himself, no less — he wasn't thinking much beyond making a demo mostly to hand out to friends. "I kind of just pulled myself up and thought, 'Okay, I've always loved playing music and I've always loved writing and recording songs for myself, so I feel like I need to do that just for myself," he told Apple Music earlier this year.

As for why he credited the collection, recorded in under a week, to the "band" Foo Fighters? "I wanted people to think that it was a group," he explained, adding, "Had I actually

considered this to be a career, I probably would have called it something else, because it's the stupidest fucking band name in the world."

Stupid or not, the name stuck. The demo, which featured now-classic Foo Fighters songs like "This Is a Call," the aforementioned "Alone + Easy Target" and the buoyant, sticky-sweet "Big Me," demonstrated that, like Cobain, Grohl's songwriting managed to wrangle all the disparate music he loved — punk and hardcore like Bad Brains and Hüsker Dü; sludgy art-damaged metal like the Melvins; power-pop like Cheap Trick and the Bay City Rollers; as well as a healthy dose of Eighties alt and indie sounds and straight-ahead Seventies riff-rock — into insanely catchy and often uniquely arranged modern aggro-rock anthems. "I loved the Beatles when I was a kid, but I loved the Bad Brains too," Grohl told *Guitar World*. "And there were a lot of bands in the early to mid Eighties that were a perfect blend of those things. Hüsker Dü had a searing guitar sound and breakneck speeds, but they'd do that as they were covering the Byrds' 'Eight Miles High.' It was just beautiful and powerful. I think that's probably where it all comes from. It's not necessarily blueprinted or calculated."

Not surprisingly, Grohl's modest demo wound up making its way around the industry; before he knew it, he had plenty of label interest.

What he didn't have was a band. While Grohl had spoken with former Nirvana bassist Krist Novoselic about coming on board, they eventually determined it would have loaded down the nascent project with too much baggage and expectation. Instead, Grohl recruited bassist Nate Mendel and drummer William Goldsmith, both of recently defunct Seattle emo act Sunny Day Real Estate, as well as *In Utero*-era Nirvana touring guitarist Pat Smear, and hit the road.

With Grohl still press-shy in the wake of Cobain's tragic death, the Foo Fighters had a deliberately low-key launch. They played a few intimate club dates, and then piled into a van to tour small clubs as the support act (and also backing band) for one of Grohl's heroes, former Minuteman Mike Watt; it is the routing for this series of spring 1995 shows that the Foos had planned to reenact for their 2020 "van tour" celebrating their 25th anniversary.

"That was a fun tour," Smear tells *Guitar World* today. "It was a real adventure. Plus we got to play twice every night!"



DANNY CLINCH

was going through a remodel at the time and needed a place close by to move into while my house was completely bulldozed. This place looks kind of like an old mansion, with these big iron gates out front. It sounds beautiful, but really it's a dilapidated, rundown, spooky old house in the middle of Encino. Amazing neighborhood, though — you can jump some fences and go be in Slash's yard, or walk six houses up and there's Steve Vai's place. Within, like, 75 yards, there's all this guitar-hero wizardry. It's insane."

As for how the non-traditional environment affected the recording process, Shiflett says, "it was a really different vibe than *Concrete and Gold*. That record was made at a beautiful, classic studio with multiple rooms, so you have that thing where, you know, one day you walk in and Lady Gaga is sitting on the couch in the lounge or whatever. But this time, because you're in a house, you remove all the sort of Hollywood entertainment elements of it. Which was great. You'd show up in the morning and, depending on where we were in the recording process, you might be working or you might just be hanging out in the kitchen, drinking coffee and shooting the shit. It was real laid back."

But if the band members themselves were relaxed, the house itself had a fair amount of activity happening. "I started demoing things there by myself around June of 2019, and it



Pat Smear with his Custom Shop Gibson guitar

> “We just said, **‘FUCK IT, LET’S GET WEIRD ON THIS ONE.’**

felt creepy,” Grohl says. “But I thought, well, you can creep yourself out if you’re alone in an old house at night recording rock songs. But then as we moved in, weird little things would happen here and there, whether it was guitars being detuned, settings moving around on the board or shit happening in the Pro Tools session that wasn’t supposed to happen.”

“It was a bit of an oddball house,” Shiflett acknowledges. “It has that look that’s sort of like it’s being reclaimed by the mountainside, and everything’s cracked and the pool is nasty and there’s vines everywhere. It had a vibe.”

“Beyond that, there was this feeling that you were either being followed or being watched all the time,” Grohl goes on. “And when more than one person is feeling that way but they don’t tell each other, and then all of a sudden everyone starts confessing, ‘Oh, this room in the house? This room is fucked up.’ Or, ‘That stairway? That stairway’s fucked up.’ When it all starts coming out you’re just like, ‘Oh my God...’ ”

Even Smear, who asserts that he “doesn’t really believe in magic and that kind of stuff,” admits, when pressed, that “there was a lot of odd and creepy goings-on happening.”

“So we recorded nine songs and got the

Of course, things didn’t stay low key in the Foos world for long: In the spring of 1995 Capitol Records (via Grohl’s own Roswell Records imprint) released *Foo Fighters*, and the album hit big. By the summer the band was playing the Reading Festival to tens of thousands of fans, and in less than a year *Foo Fighters* went platinum, with the videos for “I’ll Stick Around” and “Big Me” in constant rotation on MTV.

The Foos’ early years, however, weren’t all smooth sailing. Their next album, 1997’s *The Colour and the Shape*, was the first recorded as a full band, but during its recording drummer Goldsmith exited acrimoniously, after Grohl replaced the majority of his drum tracks with his own playing (later on, during the tour in support of the album, Smear, citing exhaustion, left the band as well, replaced for a short period by Grohl’s childhood friend Franz Stahl). The album’s subject matter, meanwhile, dealt largely with Grohl’s recent divorce from his first wife, photographer Jennifer Youngblood.

At the same time, *The Colour and the Shape* signaled several landmark moments in the Foos’ career. For starters, Goldsmith’s exit opened the door for former Alanis Morrisette touring drummer Taylor Hawkins, a monster musician who not only remains a key Foo to this day, but also serves as Grohl’s onstage foil and, often, comedic counterpart in interviews and music videos.

Furthermore, *The Colour and the Shape*, which saw Grohl move from the lo-fi grunge of the debut album toward a more hard-hitting and direct rock sound, was a massive success, launching three hit singles — the raging “Monkey Wrench,” the swelling “My Hero” and the indelible “Everlong” — and selling more than two million copies in the process.

With the success of *The Colour and the Shape*, the Foo Fighters were firmly established as one of the major rock acts of the late Nineties, with Grohl now recognized as much for his singing, songwriting and guitar playing with his own band as for his previous drumming work with Nirvana.

And while the Foos would remain incredibly consistent both in the studio and on the road, they didn’t rest on their laurels. Their next album, 1999’s *There Is Nothing Left to Lose*, saw the trio of Grohl, Mendel and Hawkins (Stahl had by this time departed) exploring a softer, more melodic sound. “At the time, music was going through this nü-metal shift, and it was

all screaming choruses with distortion pedals and creepy, quiet verses," Grohl told *Guitar World*. "It was all really in-your-face and brash. So we made that third album intentionally mellow by our standards, because it had become boring and all too easy to scream and step on your distortion pedal." The effort launched the band's then highest-charting single to date, the textured and chiming "Learn to Fly," and also nabbed a Grammy award — their first, but hardly their last — for Best Rock Album.

From there, the Foos continued to explore. Their next record, *One by One*, was the first to feature current guitarist Chris Shiflett, who brought a harsher, punkier edge to tracks like lead single "All My Life." Following that came the double album *In Your Honor*, which hosted one record of electric rockers (including the anthemic "Best of You," which Prince famously covered during his 2007 rain-soaked Super Bowl halftime performance — "my proudest musical achievement," Grohl has said) and one of mellower acoustic songs (among them "Friend of a Friend," a re-recording of a track from Grohl's 1992 *Pocketwatch* album). Regarding the acoustic side of the double album, Grohl told *Guitar World*, "One of my favorite albums of all time is Ry Cooder's *Paris, Texas*. So I envisioned finding a project that I could turn into my own version of *Paris, Texas*. After about a month of writing I thought, wait a second, this could be a killer Foo Fighters record."

2007's *Echoes, Silence, Patience & Grace*, meanwhile, brought the electric and acoustic personalities of the band into more direct contrast, alternating lighter fare like "Long Road to Ruin" and the pastoral "Stranger Things Have Happened" with angular and abrasive tracks like "Erase/Replace" and the crushing "The Pretender," and imbuing the whole thing with an adventurous, at times almost proggy approach to structure and arrangements. "There's four-piece rock band shit," Grohl told *Billboard* about the album, "but then there are songs where the middle sections turn into this mass orchestrated swarm and ridiculous time signatures."

By the time of 2010's *Wasting Light* (which also saw the return of Smear as a full-time member), the band had shifted focus once again, opting to record a back-to-basics rock record on fully analog equipment... in Grohl's garage. Also along for the ride was producer Butch Vig, who had famously produced Nirvana's *Nevermind* almost fuck outta there!" Grohl says with a laugh.

In fact, at just nine songs and 37 minutes, *Medicine at Midnight* is the Foo Fighters' most concise full-length to date. But not because they were trying to flee from supernatural forces. Rather, Grohl says, "we intended on making a record that was short and sweet, because it's inspired by a certain type of album that we all loved when we were young. Like an Eighties Bowie record — tight, full of grooves, lots of melodies, that's it. Let's go."

While the band ultimately traveled a very specific stylistic road, that intention wasn't set in stone right from the beginning. "There were a few things that got recorded that didn't see the light of day," Shiflett confirms.

"It was a bunch of songs and they were all great and they were all very 'Foo Fighters,' " Smear says. But then, he continues, "we did 'Shame Shame,' and that just changed the direction of the whole process."

Indeed, "Shame Shame," built on a stark, repeating five-note figure that is adorned with handclaps, keyboard accents and other sonic ephemera, is among the biggest stylistic departures on *Medicine at Midnight*, and maybe even within the entire Foo Fighters catalog.

"It was the first left turn," Grohl says. "And it's such a simple riff. When I did the demo I had that rhythm, and then I overdubbed this hand-clapping thing over it. Then we put the drums in a stairway, which sounded so fucking killer. Did more overdubs. Now all of a sudden it was a groove that we had never done before. And not only that, it had this tone and dynamic that we had never really gotten into. That really inspired us to start loosening the reins and just let shit fucking happen."

This change in attitude and approach resulted in songs such as the closing track, "Love Dies Young," which, according to Grohl, started out as a "strummy sort of song we've done a million times."

But that's not where it wound up.

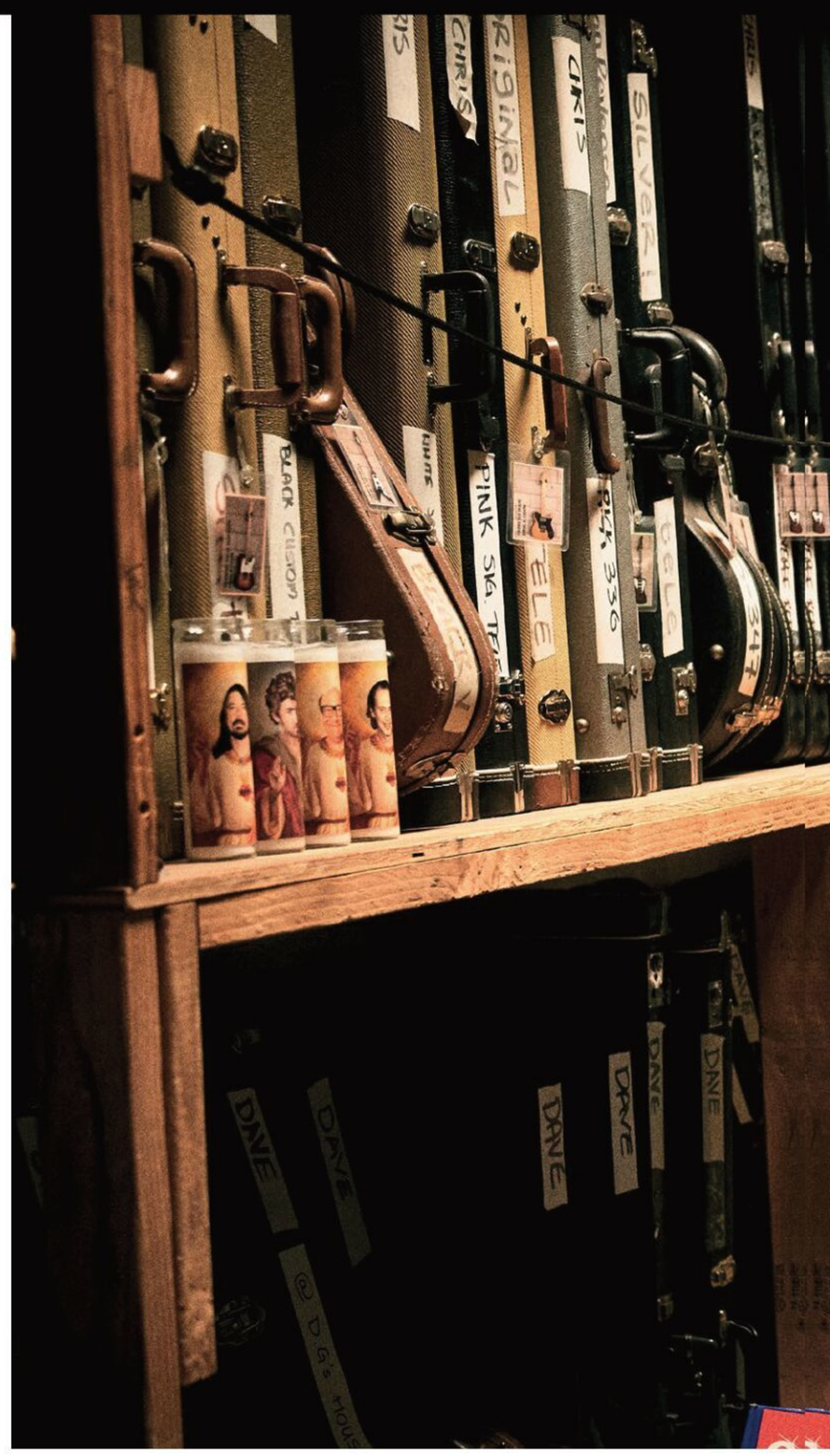
"Taylor [Hawkins] was like, 'What drum beat should we do? How about a 16th-note thing?' " Grohl recalls. "And I went, 'Fuck that! What about an Abba side-high-hat-disco thing? We've never messed with that before!' And then the guitar riff turned into a 'Keep Yourself Alive' type of thing."

Of course, one man's Queen is another man's... um, Survivor?

"The galloping rhythm part that I did in that song, it's like 'Eye of the Tiger,' " Shiflett says, bringing the musical references back around to the early Eighties. "It was almost like a joke. But we listened back to it and we were like, 'Hmm... that actually sounds pretty good!' "

That wasn't the only Eighties guitar reference Shiflett brought to the song. "I was also hearing General Public," he says. "You remember the guitar sound in 'Tenderness'? That twang? Well, I went for that same sort of Gretsch-y thing."

"Each instrument we put on, we were just sitting on the couch laughing because we're



doing the things we're not supposed to do," Grohl says. "We're not supposed to do the galloping flange guitar! We're not supposed to do the Abba beat! But we're just like, 'Fuck, load it up, man!' And then at the end of the day, we had something we'd never done before."

But no matter where a song ultimately ended up, for Grohl it generally always started in the same place — with the rhythm. "I basically wrote all of these songs on an acoustic guitar," he says. "As a drummer, when you're jamming with someone, you watch their hand and the accent of the way they strum their guitar. And what I do is I base the groove on the way a person strums a guitar — if the 'up' is harder than the 'down,' if the 'down' is harder than the 'up,' if there's focus on the lower strings... I don't read music so I don't know the proper terms for any of this shit, but I watch someone's feel on the guitar and I base what I'm doing on the drums from that.

"So if I'm sitting on the couch doing this whole thing by myself," he continues, "I'm already clicking my teeth when I'm playing and I know, 'Okay, here's the groove of the song and here's the accent. And this is the feel.' So a lot of the songs began with a specific feel more than a specific riff. It'd start with a kind of rhythmic foundation and then I'd go from there."

As for that other key component of the Foo Fighters sound — the melody?

"To me, that's the most important part of





[*left*] Grohl in the guitar (and prayer-candle) vault; [*right, from left*] Foo Fighters in 1995 — Pat Smear, Nate Mendel, Dave Grohl and William Goldsmith

a song," Grohl says. "And that comes from growing up with Beatles records and sitting down with a chord book, trying to understand why those harmonies do what they do and why the melody moves the way it does and why the composition and arrangement is like *this*. That's the Rubik's Cube, right? Screaming bloody murder and playing as many notes as you can, that's fun. But to me, the complicated puzzle of braiding those things together in a way that seems simple is the greatest challenge. It's like, 'Okay, great, I've got a groove — that's cool. I've got riffs — that's cool. But none of it's going to work unless there's a fucking melody.' And then you realize nobody's going to care about any of it unless you've got a lyric. So now you add your words. It's like baking a cake backwards."

To continue a metaphor, that cake also requires a few additional ingredients — chief among them, gear. And on *Medicine at Midnight*, the guys used *a lot* of gear. "As is usually the case with making a Foo Fighters record, everybody brings in their special stuff," Shiflett says. "So we had a room full of our favorite guitars and everybody's favorite amps." In Shiflett's case, that meant several Master Built versions of his signature Fender Telecaster Deluxe, as well as various Strats and Teles and a '57 Les Paul Gold Top with "old PAFs."

Amplifiers, he says, included a vintage tweed Fender Champ and Vibrolux, the latter loaded with a Celestion Greenback speaker, as well as a recent hand-wired Vox AC15 that he calls his "magic, go-to" amp. "And then one of our crew dudes brought some old Marshalls, an old Park head," Shiflett adds. "And there was also some really weird stuff that I wasn't even familiar with, like a kooky, regional amp that was made for harmonica players.

"I'd be lying if I tried to say what amp went on what song, because you're just kind of putting stuff together and trying different sounds and trying to add to things that are on the track already," he continues. "A big part of it is just finding something that sits where it needs to sit. And that's going to be through combinations of different guitars, different amps, different pedals. Like, I remember we used Greg's old space echo a lot, which I loved. It was like instant Clash when you plugged that in."

Adds Grohl, "There was a bedroom full of these things and it just came down to us deciding where we wanted to go sonically. And then we would blend different amps together — my guitar tech, Ali, brought in a lot of cool shit that we had over at [Studio] 606. As for guitars, for the most part I relied on my Trinis [his Gibson Trini Lopez models] — I had my number one, which is an old red one, and then a Pelham Blue one. I prefer Trinis because I feel they're more dynamic than most guitars. And a lot of it has to do with that tailpiece that almost rings like a snare — it gives the guitar a percussive element that,

20 years earlier. "Our last few records were really focused on exploring new musical ground," Grohl told *Guitar World*. "As you keep making records, you want to excite yourself. You want to prove the band's musicality, diversify and not make the same album every time. But inevitably you start to crave that feeling that you had when you made the first or second record. You go so far away from that to explore new and different things that, after a while, you miss the simplicity of plugging in, turning up to ten and screaming your balls off."

Not surprisingly, the Foos did a complete 180 for their next record, 2014's *Sonic Highways*, trading in simplicity in favor of crafting what is arguably their most ambitious outing to date. For the album (which was also paired with an HBO documentary miniseries of the same name), the band recorded each song in a different U.S. studio, joined each time by guests — ranging from Gary Clark, Jr. and Joe Walsh to Zac Brown and Cheap Trick's Rick Nielsen — with ties to the particular city they were in. "The scope of this thing," Grohl said to Britain's *NME*, "was fucking crazy."

By that point, however, Grohl, both with and without the Foos, had been on a crazy run of his own, from teaming up with Queens of the Stone Age's Josh Homme and Led Zeppelin bassist John Paul Jones in the side project Them Crooked Vultures, to producing the 2013 documentary *Sound City*, chronicling the history of the fabled L.A. studio where artists like Fleetwood Mac, Tom Petty, Neil

ABOVE: DANNY CLINCH RIGHT: MICK HUTSON/REDFERNS

depending on what you do with your hands, you can bring it up and down almost as if it were a drum."

He continues, "But, you know, I also had an old '73 Tele that I was using. Because it's all just a process — 'How do you hear the sound? What do you think it should be?' And you say, 'I think I need something that cuts, and has a little top end to it.' Okay, cool. My tech runs off, he comes back, puts the Tele in my lap and we're off."

As for Smear?

"I tended to just play whatever guitar I felt like playing that day," he says simply.

"Pat collects guitars — don't be fooled!" Grohl says with a laugh. "That dude has hundreds of fucking guitars!"

Indeed, Smear acknowledges that he's "more of a guitar guy than I am an amp guy, so I kind of don't really pay attention too much to amps. I'll say, 'Oh, I like the way this guitar sounds with that amp. By the way... what was that amp?' "

As far as his guitars on *Medicine at Midnight*, Smear will at least acknowledge that there was a "wobbly" Gibson SG in the mix. "You know how SGs can have a tendency to be very wobbly?" he asks. "Well, I have this one SG that's particularly wobbly, and I put light strings on so it would be extra, *super* wobbly. I remember putting that on a couple of things because I wanted that warble. But other than that, it was just, 'I feel like using this here.' Or somebody would say, 'Hey, play something with P-90s there.' We're not that organized, it's just kind of, 'That's right there. Let's use it.' "

At the end of the day, all three guitarists affirm it's all about just getting a good sound and then going for it.

"Nobody's a real technical diva in this band," Grohl says. "To this day, we're perfectly comfortable just grabbing a bunch of combos and putting them in the back of a truck and taking them to a pizza place and plugging them in and playing. We still operate on the level of, like, a weekend fucking keg party band."

That said, in 2020 there were, of course, no weekend keg parties — or, for that matter, 50,000-fan-strong stadium rock spectacles — to be had. Which certainly put a dent in the Foo Fighters' plans as far as releasing and touring behind what Smear characterizes as a "happy, fun party record."

Says Grohl, "As time went by, I wondered not only when, but how we would release the album, knowing that a big part of the Foo Fighters world, the touring and the shows, was taken away."

And in fact, *Medicine at Midnight* was delayed from its original release date, which was scheduled earlier in 2020.

"Everything ground to a halt," Shiflett says, "and plans kept getting pushed further and further back. But then at a certain point I remember Dave just kind of putting his foot down and saying, 'No, we have to get this record out and start doing stuff.' "

"I was like, 'Okay... I guess we're just going to release a new record,' " Grohl says. "Because it became clear that there was no use waiting for things to go back to normal. It just wasn't going to happen anytime soon."

Interestingly, after an extended period apart ("I went seven months without seeing Taylor Hawkins — that has just never happened in 20-whatever years!" Grohl says with mock outrage), when the band got back together, "we were really learning the new songs for the first time," Shiflett says. "Because we didn't do any pre-production or anything going into the record. But it was cool to come back to it with fresh ears and be like, 'It still sounds really good!' "

That said, adds Smear, "From the first rehearsals for the livestream show [*in November the Foo Fighters performed a benefit concert, sans audience, from the Roxy Theatre in Hollywood*], it was immediately 'home.' And I'll tell you, even the livestream — which, before we did it, it seemed like, 'Oh, this is so weird, we're gonna play a concert for roadies and cameramen?' — I can't tell you what a fun show it was. I don't remember the last time I had that much fun playing!"

Despite how much they enjoyed jumping around on a stage for a few cameramen and roadies, the Foos are steadfast in their determination to eventually bring *Medicine at Midnight*'s considerable grooves to life onstage, in front of thousands of sweaty, dancing fans. "As soon as we get the green light, we'll hit it," Shiflett says.

Until then? Well, the idea of unleashing a "party" record during a pandemic maybe isn't as incongruous as it might sound.

"To be honest, one of the things that really inspired me was this drum battle that I was having with this 10-year-old girl in England [*Grohl and the 10-year-old, Nandi Bushell, struck up a competitive friendship that went viral on social media*]," he says. "What I realized during this funny exchange, which we were posting online, was that it was making people happy in a time when you open up your computer and you're just waiting for the bad news. Or you pick up your phone and someone's texting you and you're just waiting for the bad news. But this thing that was happening with Nandi served one purpose, which was to bring people joy and happiness at a time when there's a great shortage of joy and happiness. And at some point I thought, okay, well, isn't that what music is supposed to do? So what are we waiting for? We wrote this music for people to hear — they should hear it if they want to."

Grohl laughs. "And sure, when we made it I imagined a stadium full of people bouncing around and dancing their asses off to it. Now maybe it's one person in their living room with a bottle of Crown Royal on a fucking Thursday night. So what? It's time!" GW



Young and, yes, Nirvana, had recorded landmark albums. He also put together the Sound City Players supergroup — featuring his Foo Fighters band mates and others alongside revolving guests like Paul McCartney, Stevie Nicks and Trent Reznor — to perform select live shows around the release of the film.

As for the Foo Fighters, there's been little down time ever since, with more tours and recordings, including 2015's *Saint Cecilia* EP and 2017's *Concrete and Gold* full-length, as well as the brand-new *Medicine at Midnight*.

And while Grohl tells us that "if this were the last record, we would be happy with what we've done," it's clear that, a solid quarter-century in, he has no intention of *Medicine at Midnight* being the final Foo Fighters statement.

"The foundation of the band is funny because originally it was just a demo tape I made," Grohl says. "And then we all decided that we'd get together and have a band and use these songs to jump in the van and go have fun. We did that, and then we looked at each other and said, 'Okay... do you want to do it again?' Some of us did and some of us didn't, but we kept the band going and we did it one more time. And then we looked at each other after *that* and said, 'Again?' So we did it again. And again. It was that way for maybe the first 12 years, and then it sort of turned into something else where we were like, 'Okay, well, we can't stop now!' "

Grohl laughs. "So I always say that the idea of this band ending is like the idea of seeing your grandparents get a divorce — it's just not going to fucking happen!"

— Richard Bienstock


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NÖTHIN' BUT A GOOD TIME

THROUGH THE EYES OF **JAKE E. LEE, VITO BRATTA, STEVE VAI, MICK MARS, SLASH, WARREN DEMARTINI, GEORGE LYNCH, REB BEACH, LITA FORD, NUNO BETTENCOURT, ZAKK WYLDE**

AND MANY MORE!

WRITTEN BY

TOM BEAUJOUR & RICHARD BIENSTOCK

PHOTOS BY **PAUL NATKIN**

Jake E. Lee performs with Ozzy Osbourne at the Poplar Creek Music Theater in Hoffman Estates, Illinois, July 13, 1986

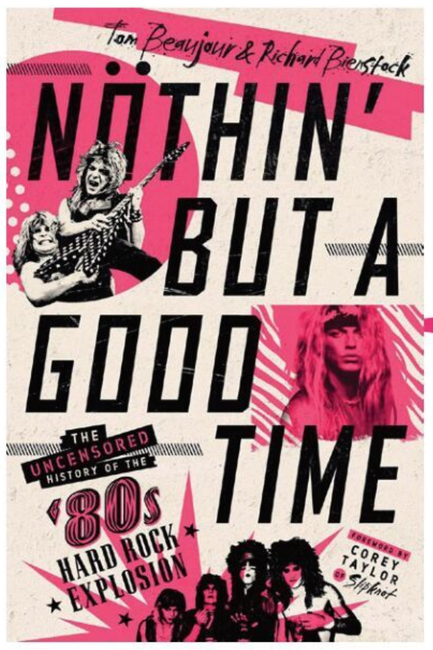
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White Lion's Vito Bratta performs onstage at the Alpine Valley Music Theater, East Troy, Wisconsin, May 29, 1989

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HARD ROCK IN THE 1980S WAS A hedonistic and often intensely creative wellspring of escapism that helped define a spectacularly over-the-top decade. Indeed, fist-pumping hits like Twisted Sister's "We're Not Gonna Take It," Mötley Crüe's "Girls, Girls, Girls" and Guns N' Roses' "Welcome to the Jungle" are as inextricably linked to the era as Reaganomics, Pac-Man and E.T.

Nöthin' But a Good Time, a new book from *Guitar World* writers and former editors Tom Beaujour and Richard Bienstock, captures the energy and excess of the hair metal years in vivid detail, weaving together more than 200 interviews with the musicians, managers, producers, engineers, label executives, publicists, stylists, costume designers, photographers, journalists, magazine publishers, video directors, club bookers, roadies, groupies and hangers-on who lived it in all of its outrageous glory.

But in an era characterized by big hair, brash stage wear and over-the-top production, it was the sheer talent of many of the era's fleet-fingered guitar heroes that shone brightest. From Steve Vai to Yngwie Malmsteen, Dokken's George Lynch to Ratt's Warren DeMartini, Extreme's Nuno Bettencourt to White Lion's Vito Bratta (who gave his only interview in more than two decades to the authors), the scene produced some of the greatest and most lastingly influential six-string practitioners in rock history.

In this excerpt from *Nöthin' But a Good Time*, these artists, as well as a cast of other contemporaries and experts, look back on the era of killer riffs, pointy guitars and glorious, glorious shredding.

Take it away, Steve...

STEVE VAI (GUITARIST, DAVID LEE ROTH, WHITESNAKE; SOLO ARTIST) When the '80s came along, the shift was more toward the rock star thing. Entertainment. But at the same time there was a desire to play the shit out of the instrument. We loved playing instruments.

ZAKK WYLDE (GUITARIST, OZZY OSBOURNE) The '80s were an amazing time for guitar.

VITO BRATTA (GUITARIST, WHITE LION) It was a really strange time period, because no matter what new band came out, everybody waited for the solo. "Let me see who the guitar player is." It was just one after another. Reb Beach. Nuno Bettencourt. This one. That one. Whoever.

BRAD TOLINSKI (FORMER EDITOR-IN-CHIEF, *GUITAR WORLD*) Eddie Van Halen was ground zero for the modern era. If you want to pull it backwards, it was like Elvis and the Beatles . . . Everyone knew that they were the kings, and everyone else just lived their life around that. Even amongst all the players, people like Reb Beach or Vito Bratta or Nuno Bettencourt, who might have actually had a better technical command of the instrument, they all acknowledged that it was really Eddie's world, and everything revolved around that.

NUNO BETTENCOURT (GUITARIST, EXTREME) The Bettencourt soup has a bit of a sprinkle of Eddie, it's got some Al Di Meola, it's got some Prince, it's got some Brian May, it's got Zeppelin. It's my soup. It's not anyone else's. But you also wanna compete. You wanna go in there and take those guys down . . . in a friendly way.

VITO BRATTA The first time I ever met Nuno, Extreme were opening for us in Boston. And we're playing this club. Half the club was a rock club, the other half was, like, a banquet hall. We were backstage, which was the banquet hall with the sliding glass doors closed. I'm there, I've got my guitar with a little practice amp, and Nuno's about twenty feet away, and he's got a guitar and a practice amp. And he's staring at me and I'm staring at him. It was a total scene out of Gunslinger or something.

BRAD TOLINSKI The interesting or sad or weird thing about shred guitar is that for years and years, rock 'n' roll was primarily rooted in this idea of deep personal emotional self-expression and the trauma of the black experience. And soloing was supposed to be this sort of anguished cry — that's what Eric Clapton and all the British Invasion guitar players were trying to replicate. But I don't think American kids could relate to that for even a second. And there's no reason why they should have. So what did the guitar become? It became this sort of extension of what high school kids were into — it became sports. Or because the guitar players tended not to be as extroverted as the singers, it became this idea of doing well at homework or achieving the American dream, where if you worked hard enough, you could become rich and famous. You could be the best and the brightest and have the brightest white smile.

STEPHEN QUADROS (DRUMMER, SNOW) Here's a story: At the Snow house [Snow was a popular late 1970s L.A.-based hard rock band that featured future Quiet Riot guitarist Carlos Cavazo] we had one phone that all the guys would get calls on. This is 1979, 1980. So one day I answer the phone

Excerpted from ***NÖTHIN' BUT A GOOD TIME: The Uncensored History of the '80s Hard Rock Explosion*** by Tom Beaujour and Richard Bienstock. Copyright ©2021 by the authors and reprinted by permission of St. Martin's Publishing Group. The book is available now from your favorite bookseller.



Ratt's Warren DeMartini performs at a music festival in Kalamazoo, Michigan, May 27, 1984

PAUL NATKIN GETTY IMAGES

and there's this girl on the other end and she says, "Can I speak with Carlos?" And I said, "Karen?" She says, "Hi, Stephen." This is a girl I used to hang out with, date, whatever. She's really cute, too. I said, "Um, I think Carlos is taking a nap. What is it?" She goes, "Well . . ." and there's this big uncomfortable pause. I say again, "What is it?" And she says, "Well, I'm calling for George." "George? George Lynch?" She says, "Yeah. I'm calling for George Lynch. George wants to challenge Carlos to a guitar battle."

VITO BRATTA It was just so perfect. Nuno and I didn't even say hello to each other. We didn't wave, 'cause that was, you know . . . guys don't do that. He's just sitting there doing all his warm-ups, and I'm like, "Oh, yeah?" And then I do my warm-ups. If I ever run into him again, I'm gonna ask him if he remembers that.

NUNO BETTENCOURT Um, okay. I'm not sure if I remember that but it's definitely possible. I mean, it would have happened but I don't know if his perception would be my perception. But I think Vito's a great, talented guitar player, without a doubt.

STEPHEN QUADROS So I say to this girl, "Okay, have George call me." And I hang up the phone. Within five minutes the phone rings. It's George. I go, "Hey, George. What's the deal?" He says, "I wanna challenge Carlos to a guitar battle." He wanted to do it at a Snow gig, while Snow was playing! He'd get up onstage and play guitar against Carlos. And I said, "No, no, no. That's not gonna happen." I told him, "You go get a following. And when you get a following and Snow opens for you, then we'll do a guitar battle." And that was the end of that.

CARLOS CAVAZO (GUITARIST, SNOW, QUIET RIOT) There was competition. Who could have the biggest hair. Who could have the loudest guitars. Who could bring the hottest chicks down. It was definitely a competition, but a friendly competition.

GEORGE LYNCH (GUITARIST, DOKKEN, LYNCH MOB) It was an interesting scene at that time. And there were a lot of really good guitar players.

JAKE E. LEE (GUITARIST, RATT, OZZY OSBOURNE) Before I moved to L.A. I asked everybody, "Okay, who are the hottest guitar players in L.A.?" And George was one. "You have to see George Lynch. You have to see Carlos Cavazo." And I had heard Randy Rhoads. In San Diego I was the hotshot guitar player. I was the man. But I would go up to L.A. and catch shows and be like, Fuck, is everybody in L.A. a fucking awesome guitar player?

WARREN DEMARTINI (GUITARIST, RATT) Jake had that thing where he elevated any band he was in. I saw him in different bands in San Diego and it was always an event. Like, this guy is going to be huge. He was already in that league of the people we were listening to on records. And I can't say that about anyone else.

RON KEEL (SINGER, STEELER, KEEL) People call it hair metal, but how can you take a guitar player the caliber of Jake E. Lee and put him in the hair metal category? Dude's amazing! That's music, man! It's like Elvis or Bach or Beethoven. But you call it hair metal? That's not giving the musicians enough credit.

JERRY CANTRELL (GUITARIST, ALICE IN CHAINS) I love the guitar players of that era. George Lynch and fucking Warren DeMartini . . . so many great guitar players. I loved a lot of that stuff.

RON KEEL I heard a cassette recording of Yngwie Malmsteen on January 1, 1983, at [Shrapnel Records founder] Mike Varney's apartment, and I thought he was the best guitar player I'd ever heard. And we called him and he was very hungry to come to America and make a career. It wasn't too long before he showed up in L.A. and we made that historic Steeler album together.

YNGWIE MALMSTEEN (GUITARIST, STEELER; SOLO ARTIST) I had a very heavy classical influence. In Europe they didn't really give a shit about that, but as soon as I came to America, where the classical music is not as ingrained in society as it was

where I came from, and I played 120 decibels through Marshall stacks, people fucking freaked out.

MARK SLAUGHTER (SINGER, VINNIE VINCENT INVASION, SLAUGHTER) Vinnie Vincent thought of himself as Yngwie Malmsteen. He even hired Yngwie's manager as his manager. He was getting more and more into wanting to be a guitar virtuoso. And Vinnie was an incredibly fast player, incredibly great technique. But it's about songs. Vinnie just wanted to frickin' . . . his foot was on the gas, you know? He'd start the show with a twenty-minute guitar solo. Before we even hit the stage.

TRACII GUNS (GUITARIST, L.A. GUNS) Our first record, L.A. Guns opened for the Vinnie Vincent Invasion. We did places like Harpos in Detroit. But it didn't last. Vinnie was not a nice guy and he would stand there onstage and play guitar for two hours during soundcheck and not let us soundcheck. Shit like that. And my guys were feisty motherfuckers, you know? Shit went down and we got sent home.

STEVE VAI Some of the extreme players in the '80s, guys like Yngwie and Eddie, it takes a whole lifetime of intense focus to be able to play like that.

SLASH (GUITARIST, GUNS N' ROSES) When Van Halen first came out in 1978, I hadn't picked up the guitar yet but I was really listening to stuff. And I was like, "Wow, that's fucking awesome!" But it wasn't one of those things where I tried to emulate it. It was just one of those cool things where you listen to it and you go, "God, that's fuckin' bitchin'!"

BRIAN "DAMAGE" FORSYTHE (GUITARIST, KIX) I remember I learned Van Halen's "Eruption" at one point, just to figure out what Eddie was doing, because it was so mind-boggling. But it wasn't our thing and I knew it. The interesting thing was there was a song that didn't make it on the first Kix record called "Rock and Roll Man." It was kind of a lame-ish song, but I did do a little . . . It wasn't fancy like Eddie Van Halen, but it was finger tapping in the solo. And I hate to admit that, because I always say, "I've never done that." But I have.

FRANK HANNON (GUITARIST, TESLA) George Lynch and Eddie Van Halen and all those guys, I realized that I really couldn't keep up with them. And so I just went back to writing more song-oriented stuff.

LITA FORD (GUITARIST, RUNAWAYS; SOLO ARTIST) Eddie Van Halen told me one time, "I am not a fucking rock star." He said, "But you are a rock star. What the fuck are you doing? Why are you fucking around? Just fucking do it." When someone tells you, "It's okay. You can do it," it depends on who that person is and what you're doing. I think if my mother had said the same thing, it wouldn't have had the same impact, but coming from Edward Van Halen, it was real. Nobody was taking me seriously as a guitar player because it was before our time: "Girls don't play electric heavy metal guitar." They might have played blues or they might have played bass or they were a singer, but they didn't play heavy metal guitar. I thought, I do. I want to prove to the world that it's me playing guitar. Because nobody believed me. That's why I insisted that I be the only guitar player in my first solo band. I wanted to put that in people's faces by there being no other guitar players onstage to look at. Within three months of doing that, I was out playing shows and I got signed. But let me tell you, even after that, when we did TV shows, I'd be playing the solo and the cameraman would pan over to the bass player, because he's a guy. It was absolutely ridiculous.

"WHEN WE DID TV SHOWS, I'D BE PLAYING THE SOLO AND THE CAMERAMAN WOULD PAN OVER TO THE BASS PLAYER, BECAUSE HE'S A GUY. IT WAS ABSOLUTELY RIDICULOUS"

— LITA FORD

KEITH ROTH (DJ, SIRIUSXM) Before Zakk Wylde joined Ozzy, he was in a band called Zyris that played at a bar where I worked in New Jersey called Close Encounters. Between sets he'd be downstairs with his Les Paul jamming to the Allman Brothers and Zeppelin. He would nurse maybe one Heineken. It was all about his playing.

DAVE "SNAKE" SABO (GUITARIST, SKID ROW) As an eighteen-year-old kid Zakk would come into Garden State Music where I worked and just destroy. Humbly destroy. He was very quiet at the time and he would pick up a classical guitar and he'd do these fingerpicking pieces. Then he'd go over and play something on the piano. Then he'd pick up a Les Paul and just go berserk.

SCOTTI HILL (GUITARIST, SKID ROW) He'd sit down at the store and just burn it up. And Snake and I would look at each other and giggle. We loved it.

BRAD TOLINSKI The musical content some of the guitar players were bringing to the table was often superior to the actual songs that they were playing in. George Lynch was a really talented guitar player, but I thought Dokken wrote the most clichéd, hackneyed songs ever. I had to interview George once around a Dokken live album, and I just remember fast-forwarding through the songs to listen to the solos.

REB BEACH (GUITARIST, WINGER) "Headed for a Heartbreak" was the one that definitely showed the other musicians that I was a good musician. Players of all ilks would come up and go, "Man, that 'Headed for a Heartbreak' solo is just smokin'!" But I felt like anyone that played over that song was gonna sound good. It's just made for that sort of longing guitar sound with long notes, you know? Even if you suck you sound pretty okay over that riff.

FRANK HANNON It was fun to learn new techniques at that time. It seemed like guitar was still blooming and a lot of things were being discovered — hammer-ons and pull-offs and whammy bar techniques and arpeggios, all that stuff. So we would discover a new trick on the guitar and then just try to put it in a song, for sure.

REB BEACH We opened for Bon Jovi and I couldn't believe it when Richie Sambora yelled my name. "Hey, Reb!" I turned around and there was Richie Sambora. And he walked up to me and he said, "You are the luckiest guitar player in rock." And I said, "Why is that, Richie Sambora?" And he

said, "Man, have you ever heard any of my solos? They're this long. But you've got the longest solo on MTV, on radio, of all time."

DAVE "SNAKE" SABO In Skid Row the song always came first. And then the song would dictate to us what we needed to do as far as the soloing. It's not that we didn't pay attention to all the shredders that were out there, it's just that, at least from a personal standpoint, the Yngwies of the world were way above my pay grade. And Scotti, his solos were always the singalong solos in the sense that they were so melodic and beautiful. But it's not because Scotti can't shred. Scotti can play anything.

SCOTTI HILL The solo in "18 and Life," my original ending was something more melodic. But I played it and I was asked by Michael Wagener, who produced the Skid Row record, "Can you give me something fast at the end?"

PHIL COLLEN (GUITARIST, DEF LEPPARD) There was a time, a place, it would usually be four to eight bars and anything more than that and it would start becoming indulgent. You would have to really make it work in that context so as not to fuck the song up. And that's where I heard everyone fall off the cliff. They'd go, "Oh, I can show how great I am." And you go, "You know, it's a shitty song, it's a shitty band, and now you just proved that you're a shitty guitarist!"

FRANK HANNON Tesla toured with Poison, and C.C. DeVille would always give me shit — "You play like an old man!" That's a C.C. DeVille quote. I think he meant it as a compliment, really. Because he was, like, totally just crazy squirrelly guitar playing, you know?

ACE FREHLEY (GUITARIST, KISS; SOLO ARTIST) I could play as fast as the other guys. But, you know, my favorite solos are the ones that you can hum. Speed metal just doesn't do it for me. Because the melody gets lost in all the screaming and the superfast solos and stuff.

MICK MARS (GUITARIST, MÖTLEY CRÜE) Everybody and their mother was playing all scales. "Oh, I'm a great guitar player now!" And everybody's playing the same lick over and over and over.

TOM WERMAN (RECORD PRODUCER, MÖTLEY CRÜE, DOKKEN, POISON) Mick Mars was a really good rhythm guitar player. I thought he was very, very underappreciated.

MICK MARS Was I kinda overlooked or put in a different category? Yes. My schooling, I don't know how to read music. It came from how I felt about the song and following the melody of the song. Playing something that fit and something that was memorable. It has a melody line to it, not just a barrage of notes. And because I didn't play all the scales or do this or that, you know, people thought that I was this crap guitar player. But it's okay.

BRAD TOLINSKI Guitarists personalizing their instruments was always popular in country music, and then in the '60s you had people like the Beatles, Eric Clapton, and Jimmy Page painting on their guitars. But when Van Halen appeared with his striped "Frankenstein" strat, I think that it really established this idea that your instrument should make a bold visual statement. That coupled with the rise of upstart guitar companies like Charvel, Kramer, and Jackson, who were jazzed about creating wild new "pointy" guitar shapes and actually interested in catering to the hair bands, really opened up the floodgates. A guitarist could order an axe with virtually anything painted on it — which, if you're twenty-two and horny, just might be a Trojan condom wrapper . . . or something even less tasteful.

JOEY ALLEN (GUITARIST, WARRANT) I had a Felix the Cat guitar where he's flipping you off, and his bag of tricks was a guitar and a bra hanging off. Erik [Turner] had a Trojan guitar. He had a money guitar — "In Sex We Trust." Everything was ramped up to this sexual innuendo level. Good times, man.

WARREN DEMARTINI My Bomber guitar was clip art from a Gary Moore album jacket, *Corridors of Power*. On the back of that there's a picture of Gary with a flight jacket on and there's Japanese characters going straight up and down. Charvel just copied that. Skip ahead two years in Japan and I'm doing an interview and they're like, "Why does it say 'London' on your guitar?" And I realized, man, that was a reckless thing to do. Because I didn't even know what the letters said. They could have said anything. I mean, can you imagine?

JOEY ALLEN I had a Jackson guitar that when I'd flip it over an arrow pointed to my member and it said, "Suck This." Where that came from, I don't know. I know that Richie Sambora did it as well.

BRAD TOLINSKI You could look at 1990 like the end of it, but it certainly didn't feel like it then. The height of it was when Steve Vai put out his solo record and then was hired by Whitesnake for untold money to come play for them. Steve was considered the king, and one of the bigger bands in the world hired him for all this money, he had the solo record out, he was in a movie . . . It looked for all intents and purposes like this was a trend that was going to go on for a very, very long time.

PHIL COLLEN When Nirvana came along they did something very different and it caused a big effect. It was a really cool thing, especially with guitar. It was like, this isn't an Olympic sport. It's about appreciating and enjoying the instrument for its purity. I thought Kurt Cobain did more for guitar than a lot of these '80s shredders, because they actually missed the point. What he was doing was a bit more kind of real.

BRAD TOLINSKI Slash more so than Kurt Cobain was the end of the whole shredder thing. Hair metal was about the pomp and majesty, and Slash brought it back into a sort of Keith Richards attitude.

PHIL COLLEN I loved Slash's playing. Guns N' Roses had some really killer songs, and Slash was always on it.

SLASH I hated that whole sort of whammy bar thing that caught the whole fucking country by storm so that every band was doing it, everybody was ripping Eddie off. My roots all came from a different place.

BRAD TOLINSKI And in terms of the guitar-playing audience, it's no wonder that they would somewhat breathe a sigh of relief when Slash came in. I think there was a little bit of a sense of alienation that these guys were getting so complicated that they were almost turning off their fan base.

VITO BRATTA When the whole grunge thing happened I was told by people, "You know what your problem is? You play too well." I'm like, "Okay . . ." Explain what I'm supposed to do with that comment.

GEORGE LYNCH It wasn't like most of us had incredible farsighted vision. It was pretty myopic reasoning, watching what every other band was doing and the way they were dressing and the songs they were writing and the sounds they were getting and the way they were shredding. And it unfortunately worked its way to an apex, and we backed ourselves into a corner and there was no place to go. Because you could only play so fast and then what does it really matter? And then the whole thing falls apart and Nirvana comes along and says it all with one nasty, dirty, attitude note. You go, "Ah, that's rock 'n' roll!" GW

SOUND CHECK



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GUITAR WORLD PLATINUM AWARD EXCELLENCE

Re-Shaping the Masterpiece

ERNIE BALL MUSIC MAN JASON RICHARDSON CUTLASS 6-STRING

By Chris Gill

ERNIE BALL MUSIC Man is well known for developing outstanding artist models that feature entirely new designs and distinctive, original body shapes. Recently, Music Man has taken a slightly different approach with a new breed of artist models by collaborating with guitarists on modified designs of the company's existing classic-inspired Cutlass and StingRay guitars. The artists involved with these models are not the usual obvious guitar heroes commonly touted within the musicians' community but rather highly talented players with original ideas who have somewhat flown under the radar.

That spirit of originality is reflected in the Cutlass model designed by country phenom Hunter Hayes, the minimalist StingRay by punk/alternative guitarist Stephen Egerton (Descendents, All) and the stripped-down-but-versatile stereo-capable humbucker/single-coil StingRay by post-hardcore/spiritual musician Dustin Kensrue (Thrice, solo). The new Cutlass 6- and 7-string models designed with Jason Richardson, known for his highly technical progressive metal playing as a solo artist and with Born of Osiris and All That Remains, represent possibly the most radical interpretations of the Cutlass model yet, with the introduction of a 7-string model and departures like a wider, flatter neck with 24 frets instead of 22 and fancier materials and construction for both. Comparing the standard Music Man Cutlass to the Jason Richardson model is like the difference between a stock 1932 Ford Deluxe 3-window coupe and a Roy Brizio deuce coupe street rod. Both do share an overall common vibe, but the



CHEAT SHEET

STREET PRICE:
$3,499
MANUFACTURER:
Music Man,
music-man.com

- Versatile switching and coil-split wiring provides a versatile variety of full humbucking and Strat-like single-coil tones.
- The master volume's push/push function toggles between a +20dB boost or no boost.
- The back of both cutaway horns is slimmed down and contoured to reduce weight and provide unrestricted access to the uppermost frets.
- The refined neck design features a flatter 15-inch radius and wider 1 11/16-inch nut width compared to the standard Cutlass 10-inch radius and 1 5/8-inch nut width.
- **THE BOTTOM LINE**
The Music Man Jason Richardson Cutlass 6-string provides a comprehensive, high-end upgrade to the classic Cutlass design to satisfy warp-speed shredders or anyone looking for a classy, versatile ax that plays like a dream.

latter is certainly more sleek, modern and high-performance.

FEATURES From the front the Jason Richardson Cutlass 6-string shares the same body shape and distinctive long 4x2 headstock of the standard Cutlass model, but from there on the departures come fast and furious. The lightweight alder body with buckeye burl top is rendered even more lightweight by slim contours on the back of both cutaway horns, with the lower horn providing completely unrestricted access to the uppermost frets. Our example had a Rorschach Red high-gloss, transparent red buckeye burl top with a natural flame maple binding, but the model is also available with a satin finished, natural buckeye burl top with a thin black burst. The Richardson also dispenses with the Cutlass model's pickguard in favor of top-mounted pickups in an HH configuration (not the standard HSS or SSS) and rear-mounted controls, giving the model high-end, custom appeal.

The five-screw/sculpted joint bolt-on neck design is also refined, featuring a 1 11/16-inch nut width that's about 2mm wider than before and a 15-inch radius that is flatter than the standard 10-inch radius. While the Richardson still has a 25 ½-inch scale length, it has 24 medium jumbo stainless steel frets instead of 22. The neck is crafted from roasted figured maple with a gunstock oil and hand-rubbed special wax blend and features an ebony fingerboard with dot inlays.

Electronics consist of a pair of Music Man Custom high-output humbucking pickups with ceramic magnets, a 25k ohm push/push master volume control with a custom Music Man "active" buffered output preamp with silent circuit (that's always engaged, and the volume push/push toggles between a +20dB boost and no boost), a 500k push/push master tone control with coil-splitting function, .022uf tone capacitor and three-way "fat bat" pickup selector toggle switch. The control cavity is shielded with graphite acrylic resin and an aluminum control cover to minimize noise and interference. The hardware is gold plated and includes a Custom Music Man floating non-locking tremolo with hardened steel saddles, knurled metal knobs and Schaller M6-IND locking tuners.

PERFORMANCE The three-way toggle and coil-splitting switches provide a surprisingly wide variety of tones. The neck and bridge positions each provide either full humbucker (series) or the outer single coil when the tone control's split function is engaged. Instead of the usual dual-humbucker setting, the middle (both) position engages the inner single coils of the neck and bridge pickups to produce Strat-like "in between" tone. This enables the Richardson to deliver a versatile variety of full humbucker and Strat-style single coil tones.

Note that we would argue that the output is *hot* — even with the gain boost disengaged the pickups generated overdrive grit with my Friedman Pink Taco at its lowest gain setting, which is usually clean with other guitars. The tone gets considerably bigger, fatter and wilder with the boost engaged, but thanks to the bright, lively tone courtesy of the ceramic magnet design, we found that individual notes remain clear, dynamic and nicely distinct.

To sum up, then, the construction is pretty flawless and the playability is as comfortable as a velvet track suit on a mild spring day.

There's a simpler way of putting it: it's a Music Man — enough said.



Springtime is all about starting over. Here are some fresh takes on some new gear.

Squier

CONTEMPORARY JAGUAR HH ST

The **Squier Contemporary Jaguar HH ST** is a modern remix of a classic model made for the player seeking enticing high-performance features and bold aesthetics. The guitar comes with a rich-looking roasted maple neck for optimal stability, a sculpted neck heel for improved hand comfort all the way to the upper frets, and a painted headstock with a chrome logo for a super-premium look. Other features include a pair of modern-voiced SQR Atomic humbucking pickups with coil-tap and series/parallel switching on the upper control plate, sealed-gear tuning machines, and a stop tailpiece for solid string feel in standard and drop tunings. The Contemporary Jaguar HH ST is offered in Sky Burst Metallic and Shoreline Gold finishes.

STREET PRICE: $449.99

fender.com



Martin Guitar

DJR-10E STREETMASTER

The **Martin Guitar DJR-10E StreetMaster** is an eye-catching acoustic with a cool vintage look and the booming, full sound of a Dreadnought — but in a smaller-bodied, more playable size. Its distinctive, distressed finish has a comfortably worn-in look that feels as if it's been played for years. The DJR StreetMaster is super-comfortable and playable, thanks to a thinner body and a high-performance neck taper. The guitar also features Fishman Sonitone electronics that makes it easy to plug-in and play, whether you climb on stage or step into the studio.

STREET PRICE: $699

martinguitar.com



GUITAR WORLD PLATINUM AWARD EXCELLENCE

Pole Position

BOSE L1 PRO16 PORTABLE LINE ARRAY SYSTEM

By Paul Riario

WHEN BOSE INVENTED the L1 system 17 years ago, no one could have imagined how indispensable its game-changing design and intended purpose would be today, considering the current musical landscape. With most soundmen sidelined and music venues shuttered due to the pandemic and social distancing, the need for a portable and powerful PA system — like the L1 — as an ergonomic sound solution for peripatetic performers having to adapt to where they play has never been more crucial. The last iteration of the system appeared in 2012, but the good news is Bose never stopped reimagining its modular L1 family despite the amount of competition and imitation in this space from a product they created. With that in mind, the company introduced three "new generation" models — the L1 Pro8, L1 Pro16 and the L1 Pro32, with a choice of two powered bass (subwoofer) modules (Sub1 and Sub2), all of which address specific power needs from musicians to DJs. Each model has been completely redesigned from the ground up with advanced functionality, app control (via Bose's L1 Mix app) and Bluetooth connectivity, and streamlined for easy transport. After spending some time with the L1 Pro16, the "middle child" of the three, I find Bose vastly advanced their modular L1 design with clear-cut improvements in sound and performance that will undoubtedly speak to solo artists and singer-songwriter duos looking for a compact PA that delivers on all fronts.

FEATURES Just like the rest of the L1 Pro line, the Bose L1 Pro16 possesses a more mature appearance with a contoured and sleek design that's far more refined than the austere boxiness of the former L1 Legacy systems. Part of that streamlined look has a lot to do with the rebuild of the L1 Pro16's integrated subwoofer that features a 10- × 18-inch high-excursion neodymium "RaceTrack" driver, which reproduces an equivalent performance of a conventional round 15-inch woofer in a novel oval design. While offering an impressive extended low frequency (42Hz), an added benefit of its narrow RaceTrack design results in a less bulky subwoofer that's much easier to carry by hand because it optimizes your center of gravity by bringing it closer to your body, and also maximizes space for vehicle transport. Up top, the Pro16 features a J-shaped line array with 16 articulated 2-inch neodymium drivers that cast a wide sound dispersion for 180-degree horizontal coverage so an audience uniformly hears from nearly ever angle whether the system is set up on the floor, an elevated stage or in tight corners.

A welcome highlight is the intuitive built-in three-channel mixer that can accommodate a variety of audio sources along with an uncomplicated control panel. The Pro16 features three illuminated rotary encoder knobs to access Volume, Treble and Bass parameters per channel, a Reverb for channels one and two only, a Signal/Clip LED below each encoder, and three illuminated channel Mute buttons. Channels one and two include combo XLR/1/4-inch inputs with phantom-power activation from a single button, and channel three features 1/4-inch and 1/8-inch (3.5 mm) aux inputs and a Bluetooth-pairing button. There is also an XLR line out and a ToneMatch port (to connect an optional Bose T4S or T8S mixer). In addition, the system includes ToneMatch preset buttons (Mic and Inst) on Channels one and two and a System EQ button to scroll through optimized EQ presets (Live, Music and Speech). For even more flexibility, Bose's L1 Mix app mirrors the control panel and allows you to wirelessly manage your settings in real time from your smartphone or tablet for a proper room mix, and also includes entire access

CHEAT SHEET

STREET PRICE:
$1,799.95
MANUFACTURER:
Bose, bose.com

- Bose's J-shape extended-frequency line array features 16 articulated neodymium drivers and wide 180-degree horizontal coverage that delivers sound evenly across the stage and throughout the audience.
- The Pro16 includes a comprehensive built-in mixer and an integrated "RaceTrack" subwoofer design that rivals the performance of traditional round drivers in a smaller footprint.
- **THE BOTTOM LINE**
The Bose L1 Pro16 is the complete package for a portable and powerful "next-gen" PA system with remarkable 180-degree horizontal sound coverage for small to medium venues and even outdoor spaces.

L1 Pro16
subwoofer
control panel



L1 Pro16

to Bose's extensive library of ToneMatch EQ presets for instruments and microphones, which you can also save as scenes for particular performances and venues.

PERFORMANCE Arriving in a slickly-packaged chair-shaped box, the Pro16 comes in three pieces: a subwoofer power stand, an array extension, and a mid-high line array — and no kidding — the whole system assembles in under a minute. Standing below seven feet tall, the Pro16 is ridiculously easy to set up for achieving a professional and balanced mix. Using the ToneMatch presets found on channels one and two for either your vocal microphone or instrument is done by a push of a button, and controlling volume, EQ, and reverb is accomplished by pushing in the illuminated encoder knob to select the parameter to adjust and rotating it to set levels. If you want to wirelessly stream music via Bluetooth (or plug-in), channel three is ideal for that purpose, and the System EQ works well for choosing a suitable sound. I found the Bose L1 Mix app to be essential for wireless tweaking of my settings on the fly and being able to ToneMatch my gear for an even more precise sound.

Bose touts the Pro16 as the "sweet spot" of the L1 line (from a size to performance ratio), and I'm inclined to agree here. It's a powerful system that can project plenty of volume with a great deal of robust clarity, and its 180-degree horizontal sound coverage that envelops a room from front to back is astounding to behold when listening from an audience perspective. Using my Taylor Builder's Edition 324ce and a Blue enCORE 200 vocal mic, the RaceTrack subwoofer's detailed low end depth and taut punch perfectly compliments the transparency of its line array top, and even digging in with the guitar and singing in lower registers, I didn't detect any muddiness. Needless to say, I won't be doing any death metal growling or syncopated djent chug through its sub and system, but I'm fairly certain instrumentalists and singers will find the L1 Pro16 as a superb all-in-one PA that's exceptional in cleanly articulating a broad frequency spectrum. Add to that Bose's available ToneMatch technology to further enhance your live sound, and this system really proves it's a cut above the rest.

Buzz Bin

GUITAR WORLD GOLD AWARD PERFORMANCE

Stage Right by Monoprice 30W Tube Guitar Amp Head and 1x12 Cab



OUTSIDE OF THEIR competitively priced audio/video cables and adapters, excellent headphones and myriad of electronics, I had no idea that Monoprice, the massive online discount retailer, sold musical equipment. Under the brand name Stage Right by Monoprice, their website has everything from pedals to pedalboards and, you guessed it, amplifiers. Monoprice is a popular online enclave for tech-savvy consumers, so it goes without saying I wondered if their Stage Right by Monoprice 30-Watt Tube Guitar Amp Head and 1x12 Cab would live up to the quality of some of their other well-received products. And at less than $600 for this complete bundle, I'd be lying if I said I wasn't impressed at its surprisingly outstanding sound and above-average construction.

The Stage Right by Monoprice 30-Watt Tube Guitar Amp Head looks overtly nondescript with all-black tolex, save for the triangular-perforated metal faceplate bearing the "SR/Stage Right" branding. It's very much a straightforward, selectable two-channel amp design with Hi and Low inputs, single Volume and Bright switch on the clean channel, Gain and Overdrive Volume on the overdrive channel, Channel Select switch, Bass, Middle and Treble EQ controls, Reverb and Tone controls and Power and Standby switches. The head is rated at 30 Watts of power and features a quartet of EL-84 power tubes and three 12AX7 preamp tubes, with a built-in tube-driven reverb powered by one of the preamp tubes and an effects loop on the rear. The cabinet is equipped with a single 12-inch Celestion Vintage 30 speaker. The package includes a two-button footswitch to select channel and reverb, and a 1/4-inch TRS speaker cable.

Before any brand snobs totally dismiss this as some generic overseas amp, let me inform you that the Stage Right head (despite its banal name) is an unbelievably fantastic amp. It's a finely tuned amplifier that really cuts, and I found great tone and touch-sensitivity at every volume level (and it can get loud!). Channel one has full-sounding cleans with plenty of chime and can work fittingly as a pedal platform. Switching to channel two presents plenty of warmth and a bit of high-end zing that can be tamed and smoothed via the tone control. Even with the overdrive knob dimed, it's not a saturated or flabby crunch, but rather a tight, musical drive that begs for an external overdrive pedal to fully compliment the overall tone when you push it. It seems almost every amp value (like EQ and reverb) is calibrated in moderation for ease in sculpting a powerful sound. For example, the built-in reverb is somewhat weak, but it doesn't get in the way of your tone, so surf guitarists will need to add their own reverb here, but again, what stands out is the overly stellar, no-frills tone the amp possesses. The 1x12 cab with the Celestion V30 sounds great, but I plugged the SR head into other cabs with even more dramatic and better results. But as a compact rig that just slays? I'm heading over to Stage Right. — *Paul Riario*

STREET PRICE: $599.99
MANUFACTURER: Stage Right by Monoprice, monoprice.com



GUITAR WORLD GOLD AWARD PERFORMANCE

Direct Effect

IK MULTIMEDIA Z-TONE DI

By Chris Gill

USUALLY USED IN a studio to convert a high-impedance unbalanced signal (such as an electric guitar or bass) to a low-impedance balanced signal for direct connection to a mic preamp or mixing console, the DI box is a highly useful tool for recording applications or even on stage for situations where a direct feed is helpful. IK Multimedia's Z-Tone DI features the patented Z-Tone interactive impedance-adapting circuit along with Pure and JFET preamp channels, all previously introduced on their acclaimed AXE I/O interface, to give guitarists flexible sound-shaping capabilities not available from normal DI boxes. Z-Tone DI's unique features make it easy for guitarists to capture expressive, dynamic guitar tones in any DI application.

FEATURES The Z-Tone DI active DI/preamp unit's front panel features an instrument-level ¼-inch input, a Link output that provides parallel connection of the direct unbalanced output to an amp or pedals and a Gain control that provides +/-8dB of input gain. There's also the Z-Tone section that provides a passive/active mini toggle switch for matching the input impedance of passive or active pickups, the Z-Tone variable impedance control for shaping the tone from "sharp" (highest impedance) to "bold" (lowest impedance) and a JFET/Pure mini toggle switch (which works only in the passive pickup setting) for selecting slightly colored, harmonically enhanced (JFET) or clean, transparent (Pure) preamp characteristics. The rear panel has unbalanced ¼-inch and balanced XLR outputs, a ground lift switch, -20dB pad switch and compartment for a 9-volt battery to power the unit. The unit can also be operated via +48V phantom power provided to the balanced output.
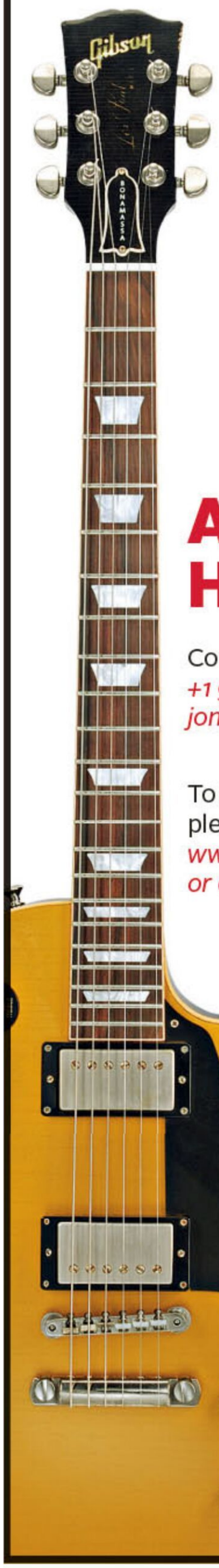
PERFORMANCE The Z-Tone DI's built-in preamp makes it an ideal match for a digital audio I/O interface in a home studio, which is how I tested the unit. Whereas most DI boxes can sound clinical and sterile, the Z-Tone DI's JFET preamp and Z-Tone variable impedance control allowed me to dial in direct tones with more satisfying and expressive character similar to a guitar amp. The JFET setting adds a slight midrange boost and enhanced harmonic complexity for vigorous, lively tones, while the Pure setting is great for blending a direct bass signal with the signal from an amp to provide snap and clarity from the DI with boom and growl from the amp. The Link output easily enables the latter application as well as simultaneous recording of a direct signal for reamping (the free AmpliTube apps that are provided are perfect for this), along with a miked amp.

CHEAT SHEET

STREET PRICE: $149.99
MANUFACTURER: IK Multimedia, ikmultimedia.com

- The Z-Tone variable impedance control can dial in a useful variety of tonal textures from crisp and brilliant to fat and dark.
- The JFET preamp setting slightly boosts midrange and enhances harmonic complexity to deliver amp-like tones and dynamics.
- **THE BOTTOM LINE:**
  A DI box is an essential tool for any home studio, and no DI on the market is a better match for guitarists than IK's Z-Tone DI thanks to its JFET/Pure preamps and the tonal versatility of its Z-Tone variable impedance control.

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STRING THEORY

by Jimmy Brown



For video of this lesson, go to GuitarWorld.com/April2021

I GOT RHYTHM, PART 15

The dotted-eighths treadmill

MOVING ON FROM the "Kashmir"-style cyclical rhythms that we explored in the previous two lessons, I'd now like to venture deeper down the rabbit hole of 16th-note syncopations and present some additional ones that are part of the common vocabulary of modern music. The examples in today's lesson are all based on chaining together *dotted eighth-note accents* into revolving patterns, which is something we had explored in I Got Rhythm, Parts 11 and 12 (see String Theory Holiday 2020 and January 2021). As such, they provide another batch of instructive exercises that bring to mind a few familiar songs. So put on your rhythmic running shoes and get ready to jump on the dotted-eighths treadmill!

FIGURE 1 shows a "rhythm-within-a-rhythm" pattern that has us playing a repeating a three-note motif — E, D, D — while alternate picking an unbroken stream of 16th notes in $\frac{4}{4}$ meter. Heard against the quarter-note pulse, the motif and its melodic contour naturally emphasize the higher E note and imply a "threes-on-fours" feel, which sounds like triplets played at a faster tempo. And, as we had seen previously with dotted-eighths syncopation chains in $\frac{4}{4}$ time, the cycle takes three bars to complete.

Now, if we were to simplify and "prune" the motif slightly, by removing the third note (the second D), we're left with a two-note, "da-dat" pattern that goes E - D but still repeats as before, as illustrated in **FIGURE 2**. Notice that we're now picking down-up every time, regardless of where the two-note motif begins. This breaks the rule of "pendulum picking" motion but makes for a more efficient and economical movement. And speaking of efficiency and economy, also notice that, where allowable, I've notated a staccato eighth note instead of a 16th note followed by a 16th rest within the same beat.

This two-note motif and chain of shifting accents brings to mind the intro to the Red Hot Chili Peppers song "Can't Stop," wherein guitarist John Friusciante plays a repeating line that matches the first 10 notes of **FIGURE 2**, but with the order of the two notes reversed (D to E) and the second note held each time. It also brings to mind the vocal breaks in the Doors song "Touch Me," specifically the syncopated line that Jim Morrison sang at the beginning of each verse: (*1*) "Come on, come on, come on, come on, now *touch* me, babe," which he started on the "and" of beat 1. If Morrison were to have sung our entire three-bar pattern here, it would have gone on *way* too long and sounded ridiculous, like a record or CD skipping. But, hey, Bill Withers pushed the envelope that way in "Ain't No Sunshine" and managed to "sell" his much longer phrase — "I know, I know, I know, I know, I know, I know," etc. As these song references illustrate, when it comes to creating actual music, sometimes it's best to use just part of a theoretical pattern.

FIGURE 3 presents another interesting phrasing possibility. Here, we've gone back to continuous 16th notes and a rhythm within a rhythm, as we had done initially. But now we have an additional pitch, B, played on the next lower string, forming a three-note arpeggio, E7-5. Notice that we're also now picking the first note with an upstroke and pulling-off to the second note. Why? Because it's technically more efficient to do so, as we can now utilize "outside the strings" picking.

FIGURE 4 uses different notes on higher strings and reverses the melodic contour of the previous motif — ascending versus descending — with a hammer-on employed instead of a pull-off. This pattern has a kind of Southern rock feel with a sophisticated rhythmic twist, which, like the previous figure, makes it a good tension-building repetition lick to play in a solo.

Have fun experimenting with these ideas, using various note combinations and patterns, and see what kinds of cool syncopated repetition licks you can come up with. And, as always, try counting the 16th notes while tapping your foot on each beat.

FIG. 1

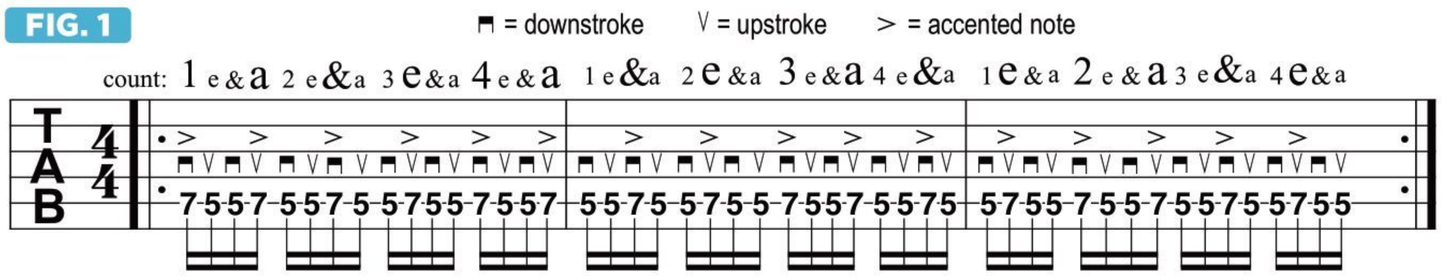


FIG. 2

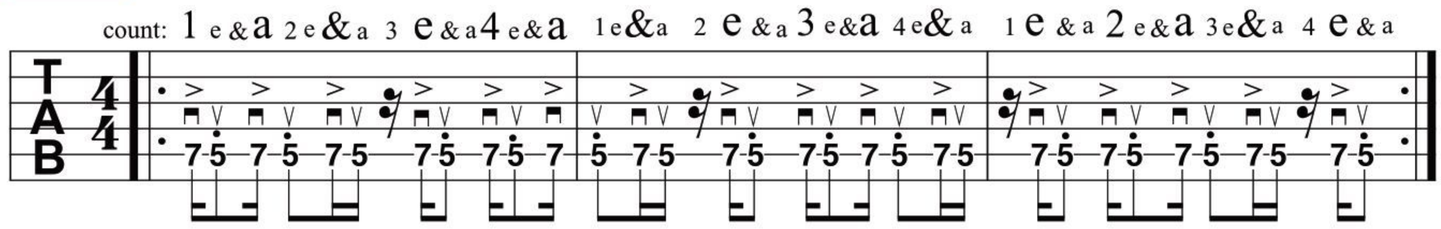


FIG. 3

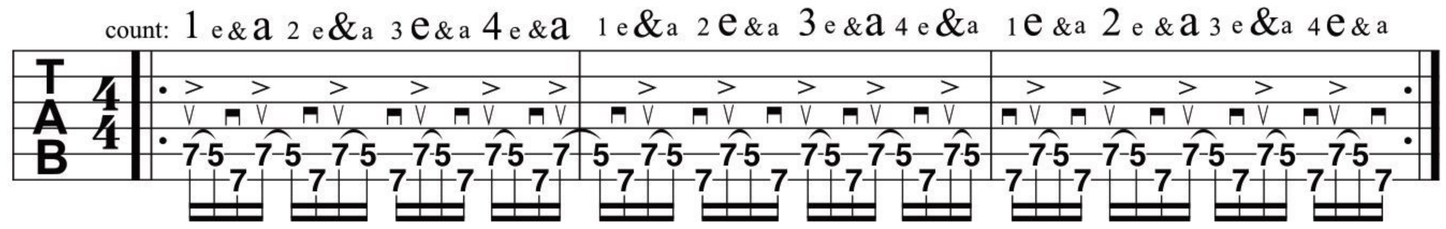
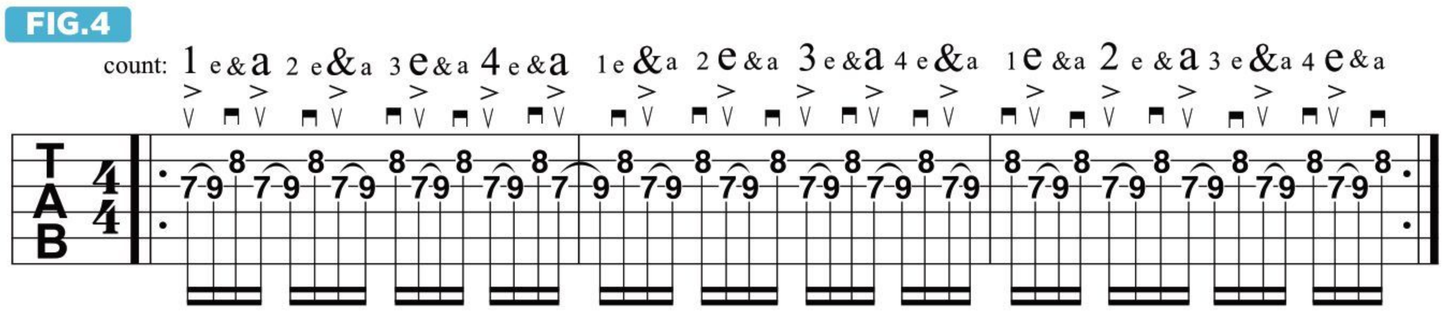


FIG.4



Senior Music Editor "Downtown" Jimmy Brown is an experienced, working musician, performer and private teacher in the greater NYC area whose mission is to entertain, enlighten and inspire people with his guitar playing.

COLUMNS

IN DEEP

by Andy Aledort



For video of this lesson, go to GuitarWorld.com/April2021

AROUND THE BENDS, PART 3

Expanding minor pentatonic string-bending techniques to the Dorian mode

IN THE LAST two columns, we explored string bending techniques and applications on the B string, utilizing the E minor pentatonic scale (E, G, A, B, D) as our point of focus. For each note in the scale, we looked at two basic approaches: bending up to it from below, and bending down to it from above via a pre-bend and release. This month, we'll apply this same approach to the more expansive E Dorian mode.

The term pentatonic means "five-tone," so a pentatonic scale comprises five notes. Each of the fundamental modes — Ionian, Dorian, Phrygian, Lydian, Mixolydian, Aeolian and Locrian — are derived from the seven-note major scale (also known as the Ionian mode), so each mode is comprised of seven notes. The Dorian mode is based on the major's scale's 2nd degree. For example, if we start with the D major scale (D, E, F♯, G, A, B, C♯), the Dorian mode is formed by starting from its second note, E, and recognizing that one as the new "1," also known as the tonic, or root note. And so the notes of E Dorian are E, F♯, G, A, B, C♯ and D. Intervallically, that translates to 1(root), 2, ♭3, 4, 5, 6, ♭7. **FIGURE 1** illustrates the E Dorian mode played entirely on the B string.

Let's now apply the approach of bending up to or down to each note of E Dorian on this single string: In **FIGURE 2**, we begin with the first fretted scale tone on the string, C♯. One option is to bend up to C♯ from one fret below, C, and use this technique as a means of developing an improvised phrase. As demonstrated in **FIGURE 3**, one can also bend up to C♯ by pushing down on the open B string from the nut, which is a technique Jimi Hendrix used often in his improvised solos.

We can then proceed up the string to each note of E Dorian. **FIGURE 4** begins with the note D and illustrates an improvised lick that incorporates a half-step bend from one fret below. **FIGURE 5** begins with a fretted E note followed by a whole-step bend from D to E and then a release back to the unbent D note, which serves to kick off the remainder of the phrase.

In **FIGURE 6**, we bend up to E from D♯, one fret below, and in **FIGURE 7**, we bend back to E by first silently bending up a whole step to F♯, via a pre-bend. A good exercise is to sound each note of E Dorian using bending techniques while ascending the string, as demonstrated in **FIGURE 8**.

Now that you have the idea, try devising a series of original improvised phrases that are built from these types of bends, and add some decorative finger vibratos to the held notes, as shown in **FIGURE 9**. See you next month!

FIG. 1 E Dorian mode on the B string

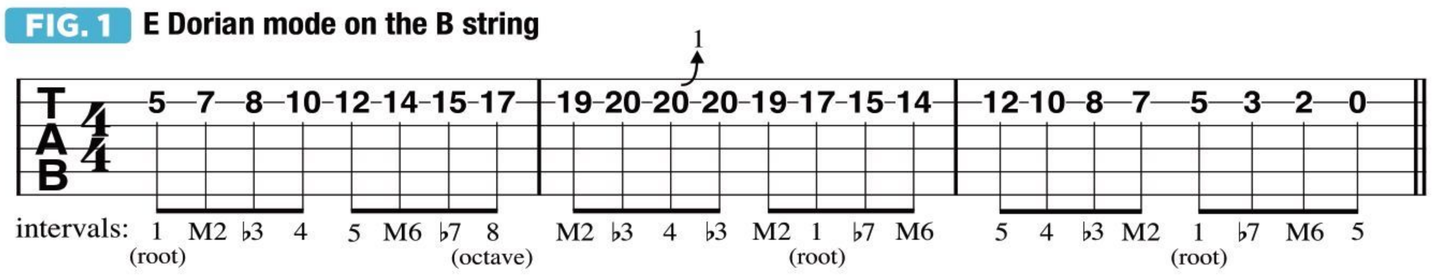


FIG. 2

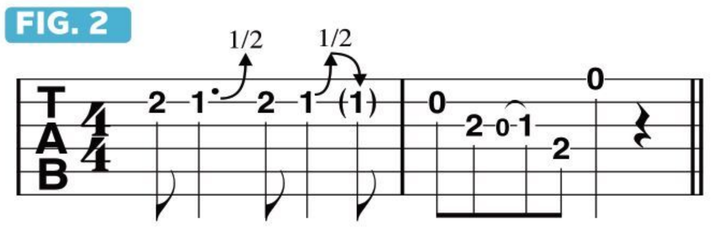


FIG. 3

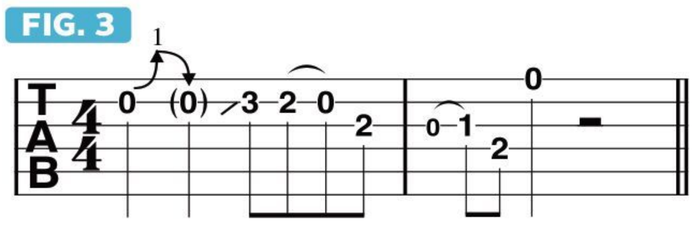


FIG. 4

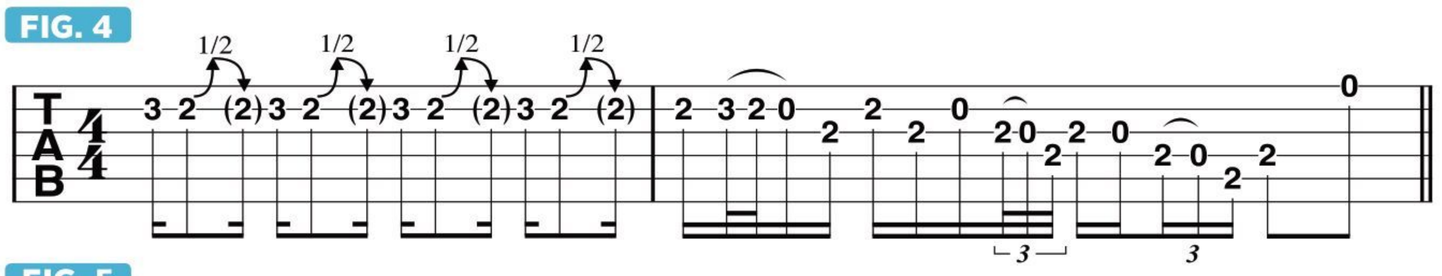


FIG. 5

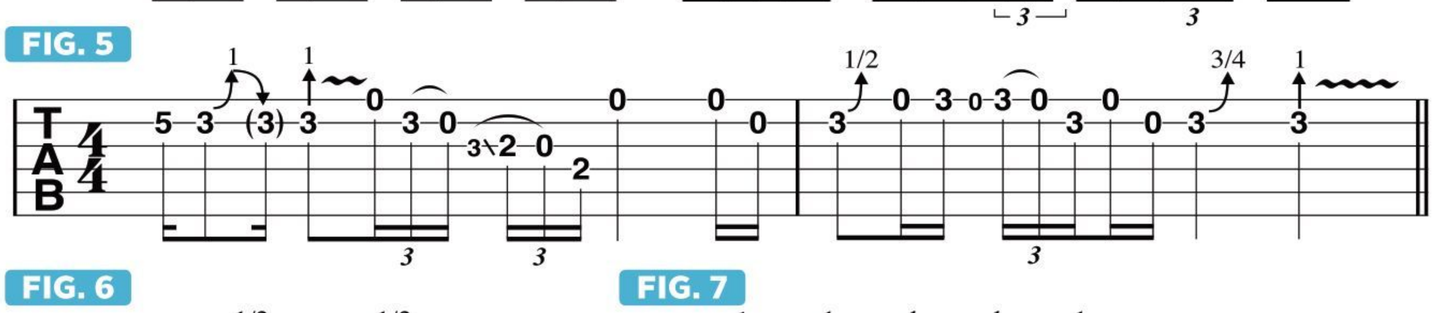


FIG. 6

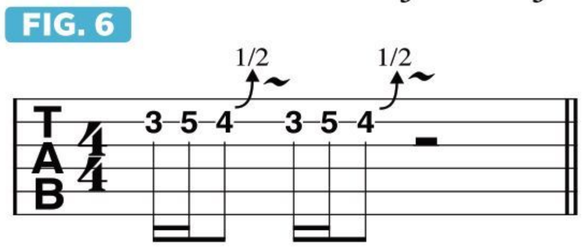


FIG. 7

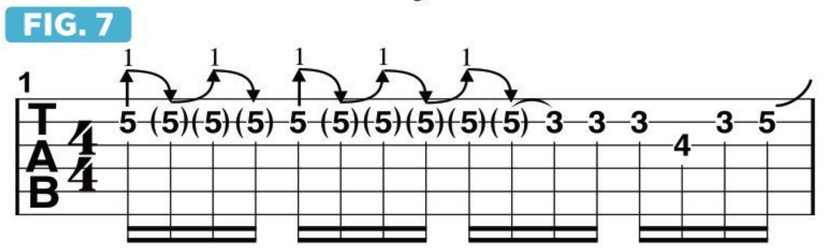


FIG. 8

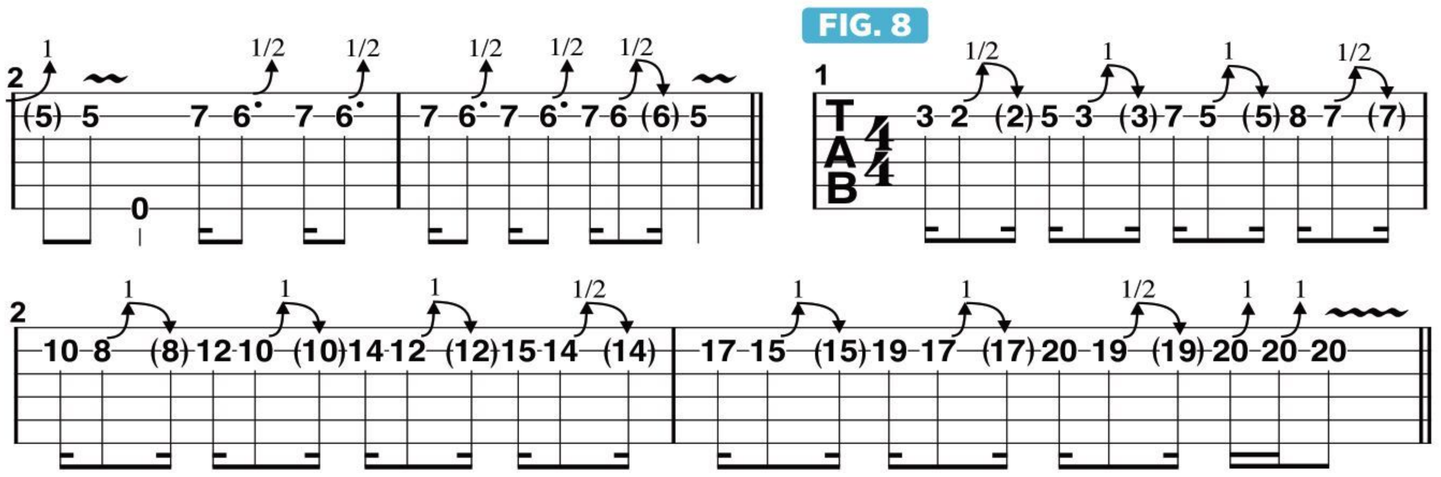
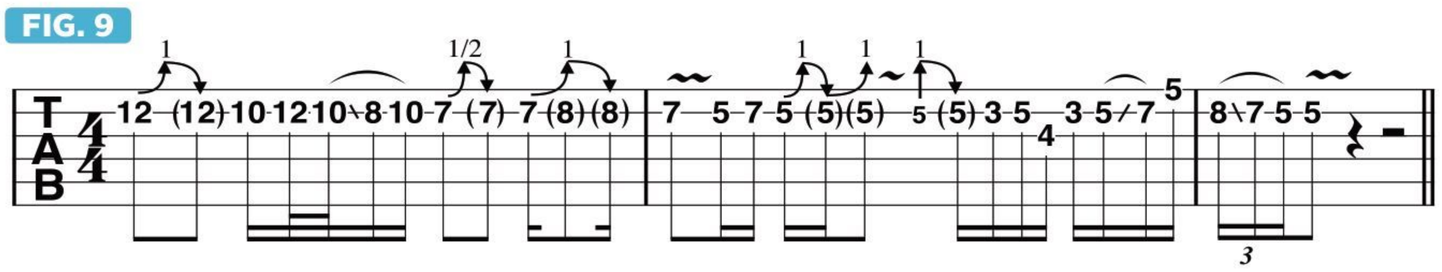


FIG. 9



Guitar World **Associate Editor Andy Aledort is recognized worldwide for his vast contributions to guitar instruction, via his many best-selling instructional DVDs, transcription books and online lessons.**

THE GRISTLE REPORT

by Greg Koch



For video of this lesson, go to GuitarWorld.com/April2021

COLLINS MIX

Soloing over a blues shuffle in the style of Albert Collins

HELLO, AND WELCOME to my column! Over the course of these lessons, I'll be discussing a wide variety of approaches to both rhythm guitar playing and improvisation in the realms of blues, rock, country and more... which begs the immortal question: Can you dig it? I think you can!

Years ago, I would often play duo gigs with a harmonica player, and when he'd take a solo, I had to cover the chords, bass line and groove with my guitar, "comping" behind his solos. We would play a lot of 12-bar blues songs, but instead of just sticking with a standard I - IV - V (one-four-five) chord progression, I would often throw in a few "jazzy" substitutions, without going total *jazzbo* (slang for jazz enthusiast.)

Let's use the key of G, for example. A standard I - IV - V "dominant"-type blues in G consists of the chords G7 (I7), C7 (IV7) and D7 (V7). **FIGURE 1** represents a 12-bar rhythm part in G that incorporates some additional harmony, via expanded chords like 9ths and 13ths, as well as a few passing chords that pull the music toward a jazzier sound. The example is played with a swing-eighths triplet feel, also known as a shuffle.

In bars 1-4, I supplement a G13 chord with a walking bass line, adding muted-string accents on most of the eighth-note upbeats (the "and" counts). On beat 4 of bar 4, I play a D♭9 chord to anticipate the change to the IV chord, C9, sliding down on beat 1 of the next bar. In bar 6, I play D♭dim7 on beat 3 as a passing chord back to the I, G7.

In bars 7 and 8, I add harmonic interest to the progression by moving through a series of chords every two beats: G7 - Dm9/A - Em9/B - E♭9/B♭. I then land on the V chord, D9/A on beat 1 of bar 9. In the last two bars, I spice things up by starting on G13 then chromatically descending B♭13 - A13 - A♭13 to round out the progression.

FIGURE 2 is an improvised solo played over this progression, for which I took an "Albert Collins" approach and emulate his distinct melodic style. A signature approach of Albert's was to alternate between parallel major and minor pentatonic-based riffs, and here I begin with lines based on G major pentatonic (G, A, B, C, E) and then switch to G minor pentatonic (G, B♭, C, D, F) in bar 4.

FIG. 1 Triplet Feel

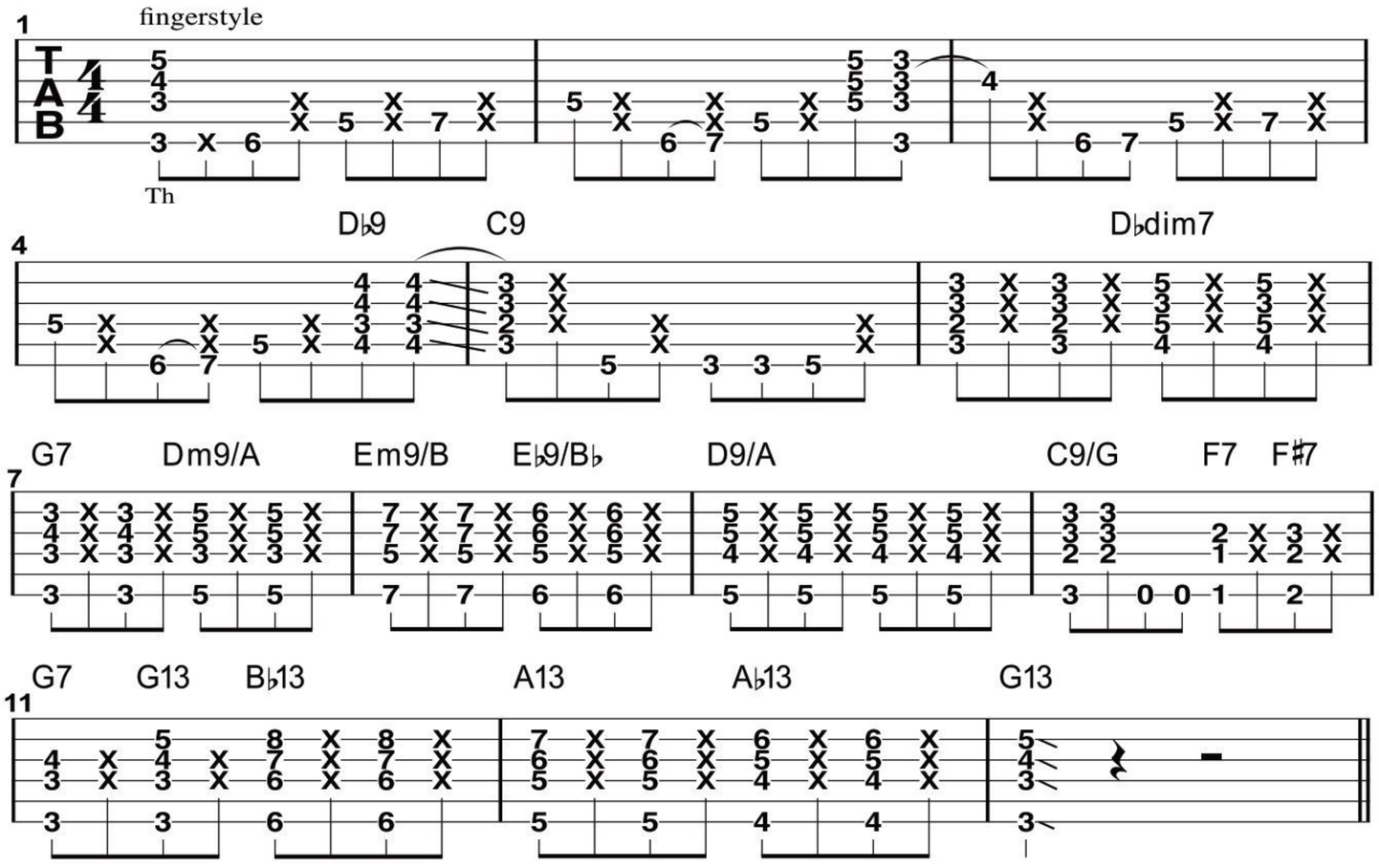
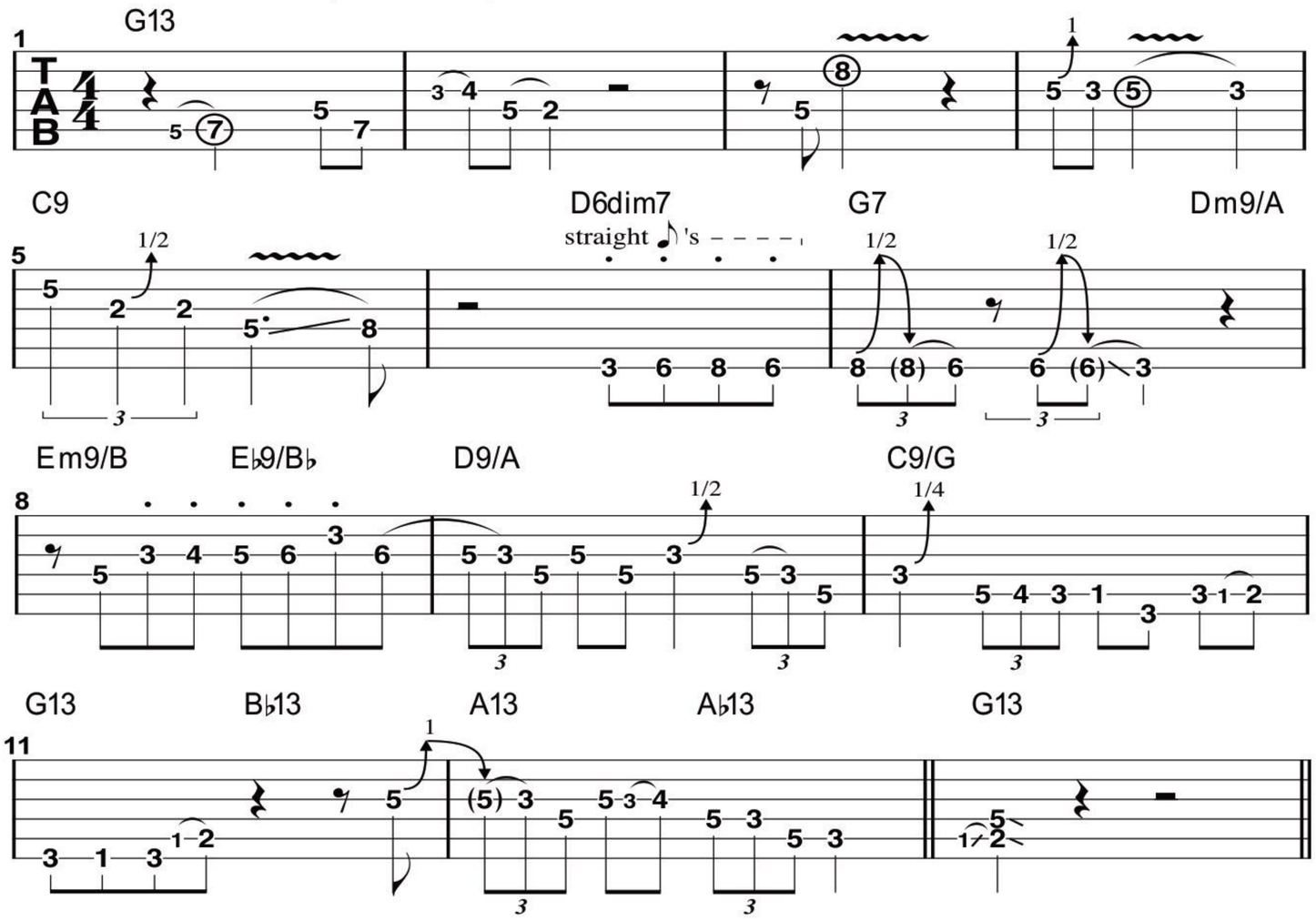


FIG. 2 Triplet Feel



As you play through the solo, you'll see that I continue to alternate between the two scales.

Albert picked aggressively with his fingers, snapping the strings against the fretboard, and I took the same approach here. Picking with one's fingertips in this way will provide the opportunity for greater musical expression via more pronounced contrasts in articulation and dynamics, so be cognizant of these factors as you play.

Greg Koch is a large human who coaxes guitars into submission in a way that has left an indelible print on the psyches of many Earth dwellers. Visit GregKoch.com to check out his recordings, instructional materials, signature musical devices and colorful hats.

TOM NOVIK

COLUMNS

MELODIC MUSE

by Andy Timmons



For video of this lesson, go to GuitarWorld.com/April2021

ON THE LINE

Playing up and down one string for greater musical expression and variation

HELLO, AND WELCOME to my first-ever series of columns for *Guitar World* magazine. In this first lesson, I'd like to get into the concept of where *melody* comes from, and how to better apply a melodic approach to your playing.

Many guitarists tend to focus on scales, such as the A minor pentatonic (A, C, D, E, G) shape shown in **FIGURE 1**. We then learn specific patterns and licks that lay the foundation of our soloing vocabulary, such as the line shown in **FIGURE 2**. When I solo, I'll sometimes rely on this kind of position playing, but over the years I've become more attracted to the idea of *horizontal* or *linear* playing, moving up and down the fretboard on just one or two strings. This approach frees me from thinking about scalar patterns, as I'm listening for melodic opportunities that avail themselves while I move freely around the neck.

For the next three examples, I'm thinking "globally" in the key of A minor and relying entirely on the notes of A minor pentatonic. Let's try the approach of using one finger on one string. In **FIGURE 3**, I sound each note of A minor pentatonic while ascending the G string. The concept here is to find and play each note and add a little vibrato as you move from one note to the next.

Moving up and down a single string like this, as opposed to playing positionally across multiple strings, is a great way to free yourself from all of those habitual licks and phrasing schemes that you have relied upon for years. This approach also forces you to really *listen* to the sound and expression of each note, which serves to fortify the natural, singing quality that we'd like to achieve. **FIGURE 4** is based on this approach, albeit with the occasional use of a few notes on the B string. This is a great way to blend and link together fragments of patterns in different positions.

In **FIGURE 5**, this approach is applied to playing over a static Am9 chord, playing the phrases with a "free" feeling, without any strict tempo or rhythmic grid. When playing this way — which is something you'll hear in some of Jimi Hendrix's solos, such as "May This Be Love" — one can zero-in on what I consider to be the most important aspects of playing: *touch, tone* and *dynamics*.

FIG. 1 A minor pentatonic

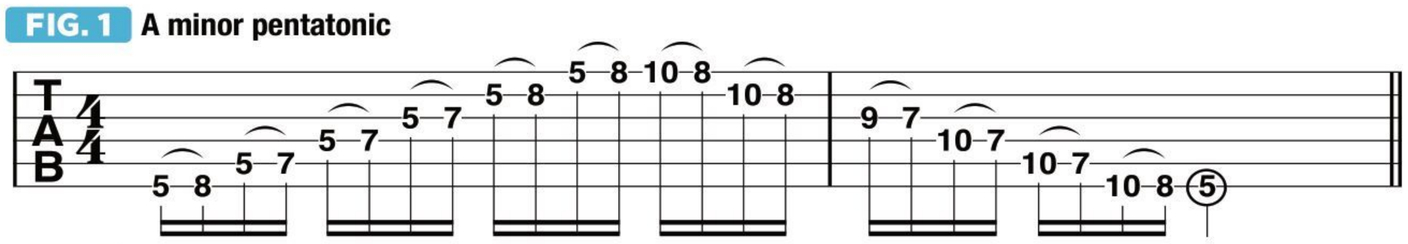


FIG. 2

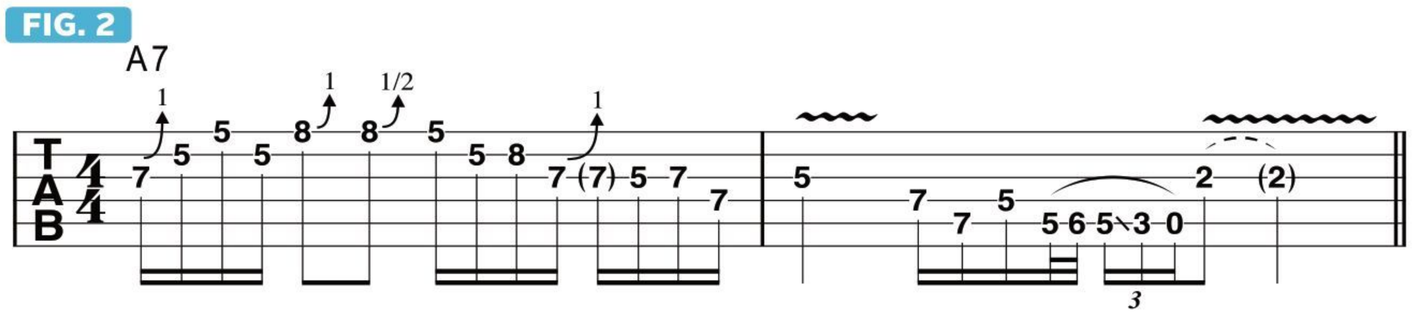


FIG. 3 A minor pentatonic on the G string

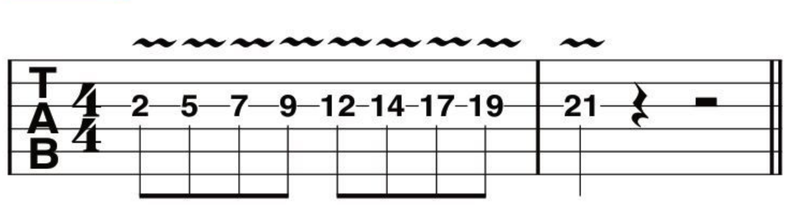


FIG. 4

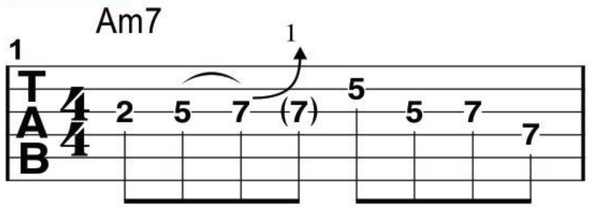


FIG. 5

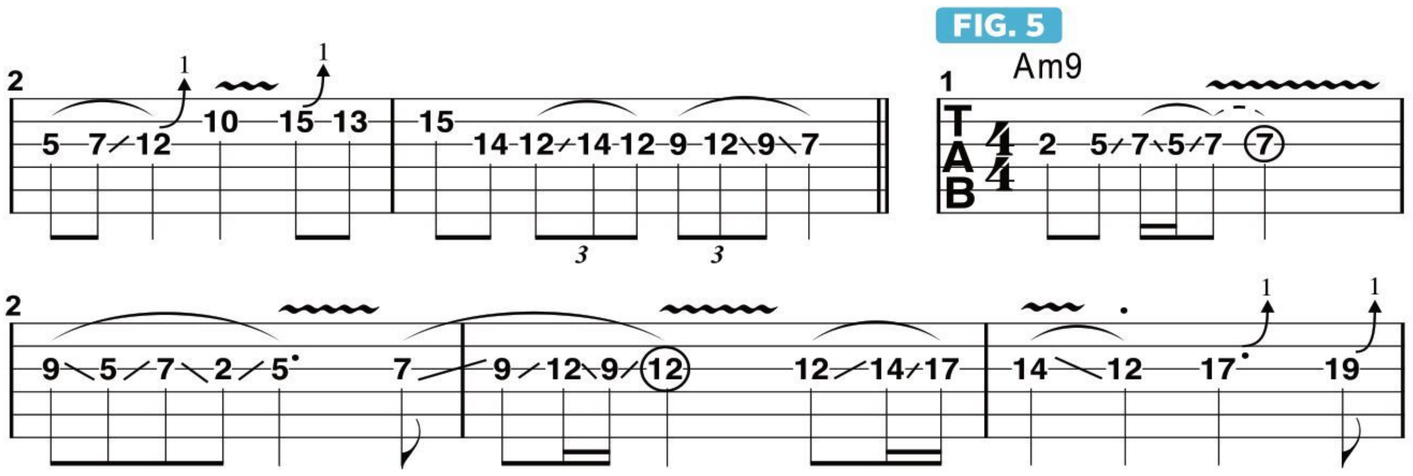


FIG. 6 A natural minor

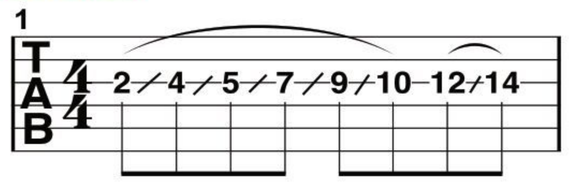
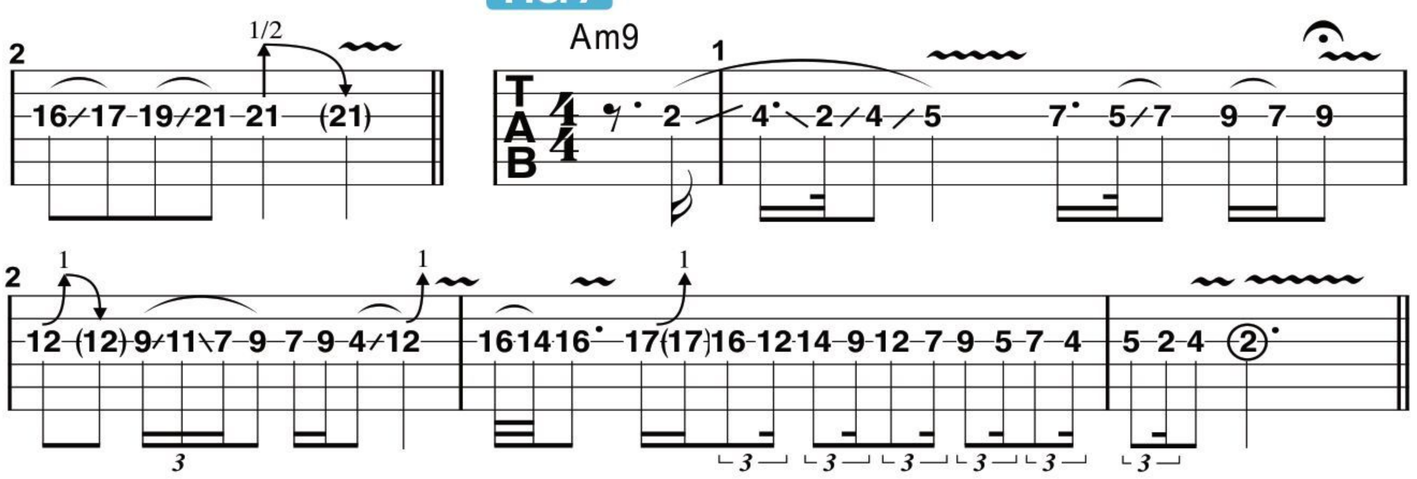


FIG. 7



If we add the notes B and F to A minor pentatonic, the result is the A natural minor scale (A, B, C, D, E, F, G) as shown in **FIGURE 6**. **FIGURE 7** offers an improvised solo based on A natural minor.

In the next two columns, I'll demonstrate some ways to expand upon this concept in the effort to fortify your connection to a more melodic approach to soloing.

See you next month!

Andy Timmons is a world-renowned guitarist known for his work with the Andy Timmons Band, as well as Danger Danger and Simon Phillips. Visit andytimmons.com and guitarxperience.net to check out his recordings and many instructional releases

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PERFORMANCE NOTES

...HOW TO PLAY THIS MONTH'S SONGS...

"ORB" Ichika Nito



THIS SUBLIMELY BEAUTIFUL solo instrumental by YouTube sensation Ichika Nito features the young guitarist and composer performing some seemingly superhuman sleights of hand with a gentle, flowing touch and great expressiveness. Using a dreamy clean electric tone with some delay and reverb and employing hybrid picking throughout, as well as numerous finger slides, natural harmonics and tapped notes, Nito starts off simply, with a sequence of sparse *diatonic 10th intervals* that effectively outline a four-bar chord progression in the key of E natural minor. He then proceeds to spin a series of inventive and more densely textured and technically complex variations on his initial idea in a way that brings to mind what baroque-era composer Johann Pachelbel famously did with his "Canon in D."

Beginning in bar 5, Ichika lays down a percolating rhythm of mostly 16th notes, crossing strings on just about every note and making great use of the open B string in conjunction with notes fretted high up the neck on the G and high E strings. When playing this section and those that follow, take care to not inadvertently "bump into" any ringing open strings with your fretting fingers. Also, there are quite a few wide fret-hand stretches required, so ease into them and rotate your wrist as needed to reach the notes.

We've included, at the beginning of the transcription, many of the numerous chord shapes that Ichika employs, although there are additional ones and arpeggiated shapes and inversions, for which the fingering does not remain throughout the beat. We figure that anyone brave enough to tackle this advanced-level piece should be able to determine suitable fingerings for the easier chord voicings appearing in the tablature. There are, nonetheless, some truly other-worldly note combinations happening here, so be patient and do your best to smoothly play and hold as many of the notes as you can.

— JIMMY BROWN

"BORN TO BE WILD" Steppenwolf



MICHAEL MONARCH'S PUNCHY electric guitar part in this classic rock anthem (represented as the Gtr. 1 part in our transcription) kicks things off with the instantly recognizable Chuck Berry-style E5-E6-E7 chord move heard in bar 2. This riff requires a bit of a fret-hand stretch to reach the high D note in the E7(no3) chord while still holding the E on the A string's 7th fret, so if you're having trouble making that three-fret span between the 9th and 12th frets with your 3rd and 4th fingers, consider using your 2nd finger to grab the B note at the 9th fret instead of your 3rd finger and using it to barre the full E chord too. Doing so may feel a little weird, but it may be worth doing and the lesser of two fingering evils, for the sake of making the pinkie stretch easier to negotiate.

During the song's pre-chorus (see section C, bars 17-25), Monarch opens up his part a bit by peppering his rhythm work with some tasty minor pentatonic-based lead licks (check out bars 18, 20 and 22, as well as *Fills 1, 3, 6* and *8*). Strive to make the entire section flow smoothly; there should be a seamless transition from rhythm to lead and back again, with no unintentional open-string notes sounding. You may find that fretting the 6th-string root notes of the G and A chords with your thumb, as Jimi Hendrix did in "Purple Haze," instead of barring the index finger will help facilitate these quick transitions. The index finger would then only need to barre the B and high E strings, which should make it a little easier to switch back and forth between the chords and single-note fills.

Frontman John Kay provides some guitar work of his own in his band's signature song in the form of slide parts, heard in bars 54-59 (at the end of the organ solo) and 64-74 (the song's outro). Since these parts (labeled Gtr. 3) are brief, and it's impractical to wear a slide while performing the rest of the song, you might want to try playing these melodic lines without a slide, using finger slides and string bends to emulate the "scooping" sound of the slide.

— MATT SCHARFGLASS

"PARANOID ANDROID" Radiohead



AN EPIC MODERN rock masterpiece, this song represents a crowning compositional achievement for Radiohead, for which the band creatively strung and wove together a diverse arrangement of musical themes and interludes with vastly contrasting textures and dynamic levels, creating a rich musical journey that spans nearly six and a half minutes, in a way that brings to mind Queen's "Bohemian Rhapsody." Guitarists Ed O'Brien, Jonny Greenwood and Thom Yorke contribute tastefully constructed and interwoven riffs using acoustic figures and electric parts that are subtly colored by various tonal effects (distortion, phaser, tremolo, slapback delay and octave-up doubling).

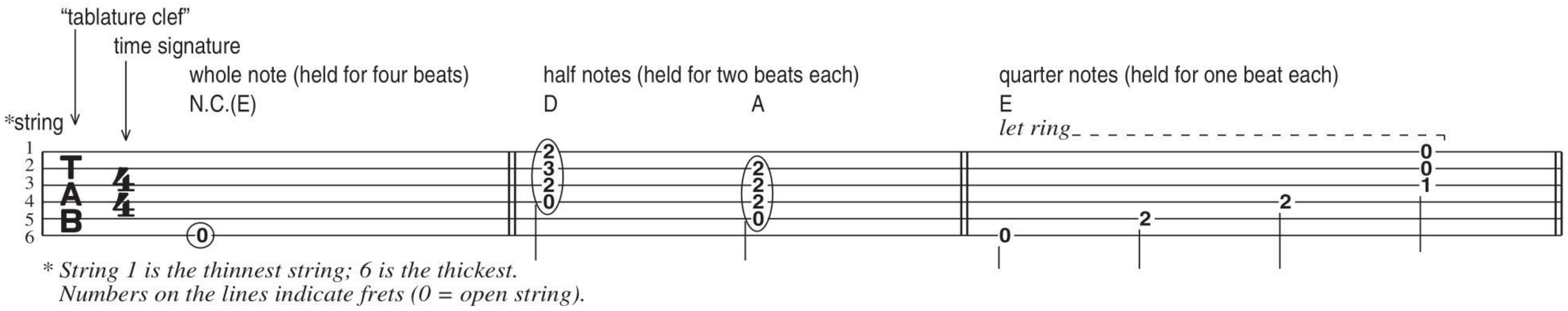
You'll see that the song incorporates some unusual chord shapes, voicings and progressions that are outside the common vocabulary of rock riffage. For example, the semi-arpeggiated "picky-strummy" acoustic figure that begins the song and repeats for the first two verses (see *Rhy. Fig. 1*, bars 1-6) combines some atypical fretted chord "grips" with open-string "color tones," such as an added 6th or 9th.

When playing this figure, as well as the Gtr. 2 part that enters at the end of bar 3, use 16th-note "pendulum picking/strumming," picking any note or chord that falls on the first or third 16th note of the beat — and this includes any eighth notes — with a downstroke and using an upstroke for any 16th-note upbeats. You'll find that the lowest notes would then be picked with downstrokes and the highest notes with upstrokes. This "outside the strings" picking approach minimizes the amount of movement and effort required, making for a smooth, flowing performance.

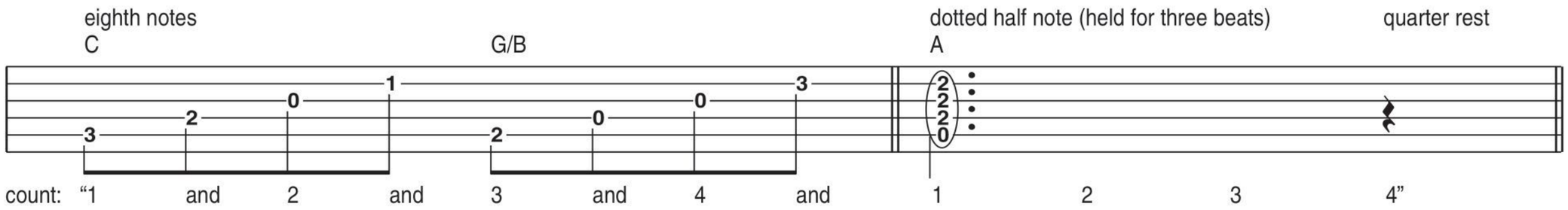
This same picking approach works equally well for the sinister-sounding two-bar electric riff that debuts in bar 34 (labeled *Rhy. Fig. 2*) and serves as the primary theme for the song's remaining verses. It also works well for the odd-time chord strumming riff in $\frac{7}{8}$ meter introduced in bar 38. For this bar, strum "down down up down up up up down up down up."

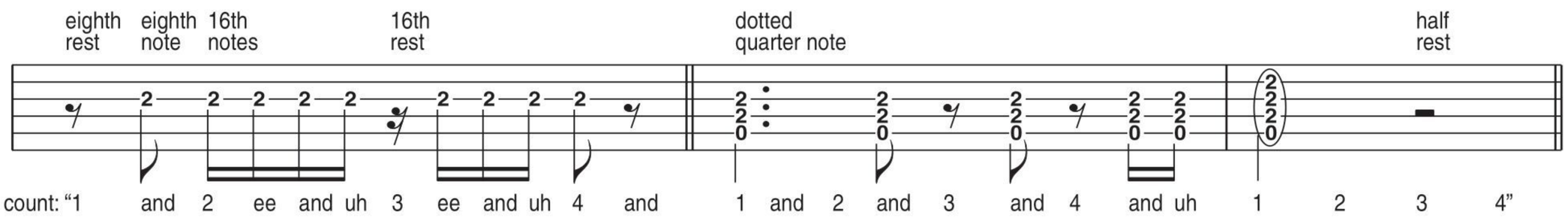
— JIMMY BROWN

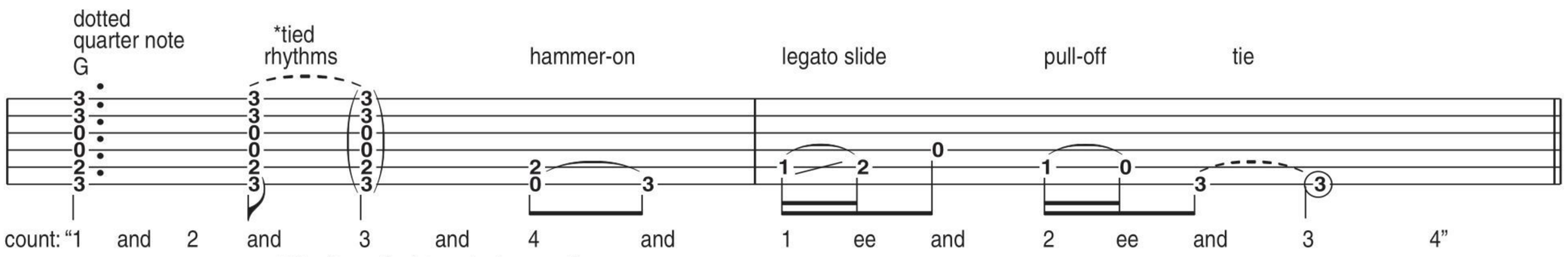
NOTATION GUIDE



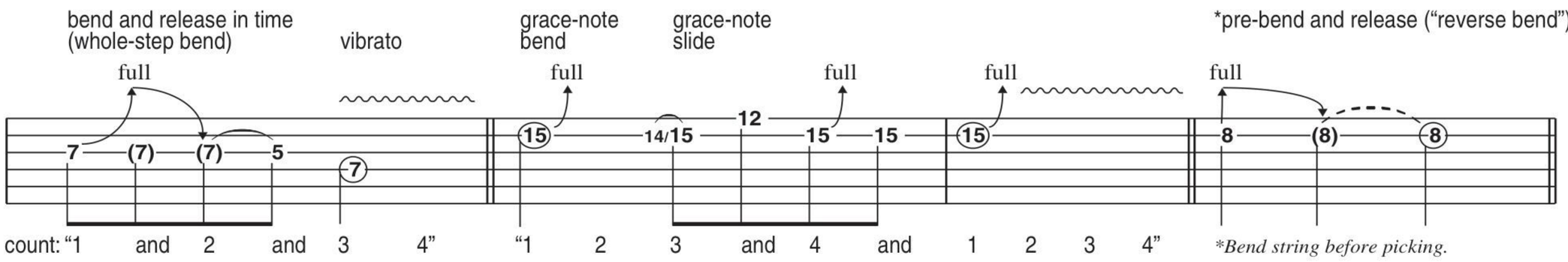
* *String 1 is the thinnest string; 6 is the thickest.*
Numbers on the lines indicate frets (0 = open string).



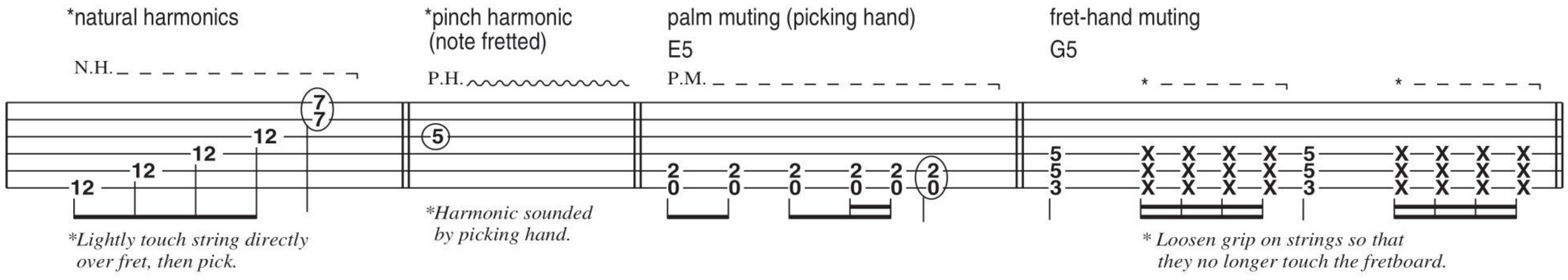




* *Don't rearticulate notes in parentheses.*



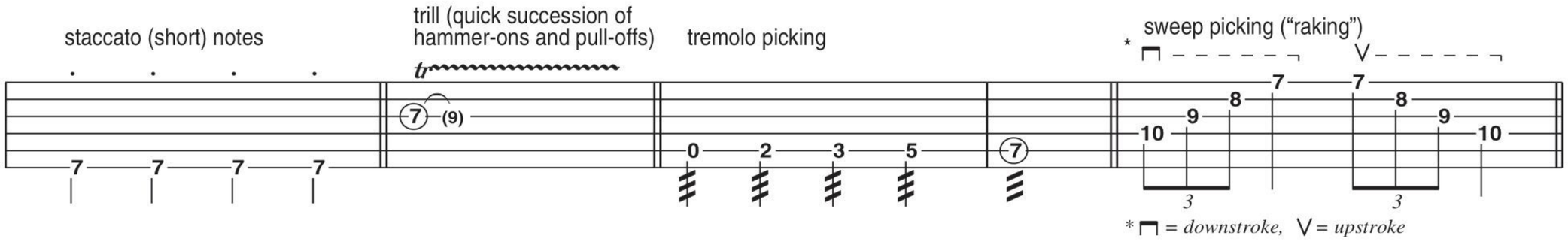
* *Bend string before picking.*



* *Lightly touch string directly over fret, then pick.*

* *Harmonic sounded by picking hand.*

* *Loosen grip on strings so that they no longer touch the fretboard.*



* ⊓ = *downstroke,* V = *upstroke*

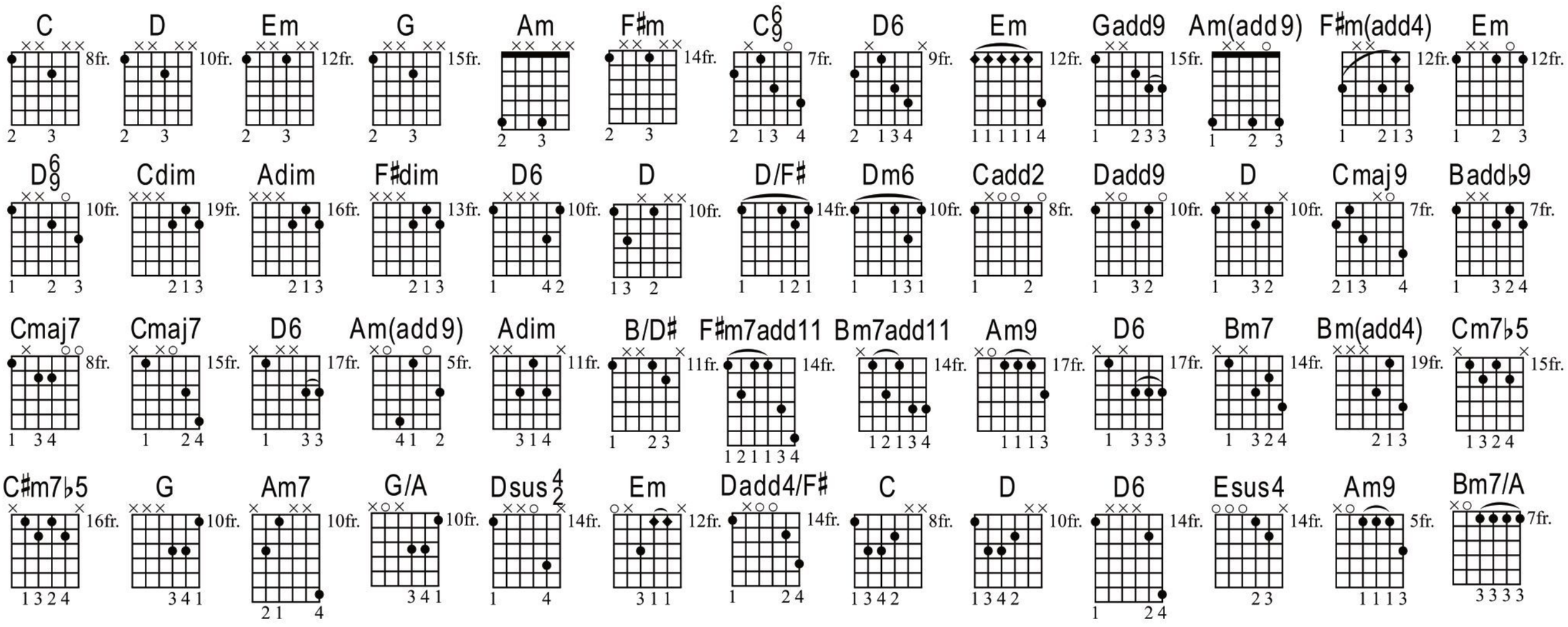
"ORB"

Ichika Nito

As heard on **NITO**

Written by ICHIKA NITO • *Transcribed by* JEFF PERRIN

Guitar is tuned down one half step (low to high: E♭, A♭, D♭, G♭, B♭, E♭).



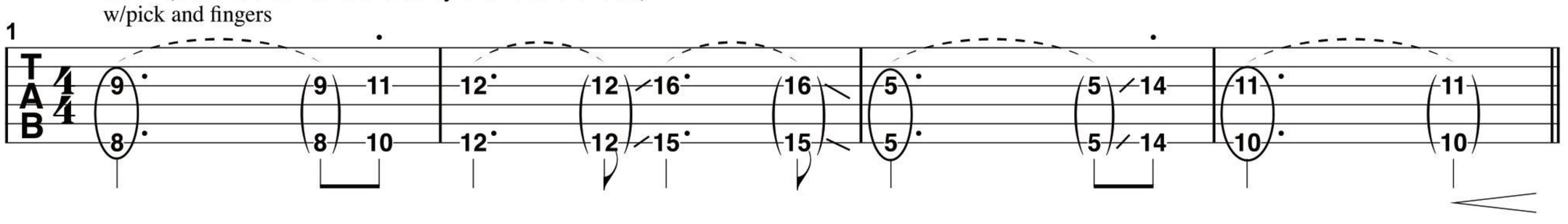
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Moderately ♩ = 85

C D Em G Am F♯m D

Gtr. 1 (elec. w/clean tone and delay and reverb effects)
w/pick and fingers

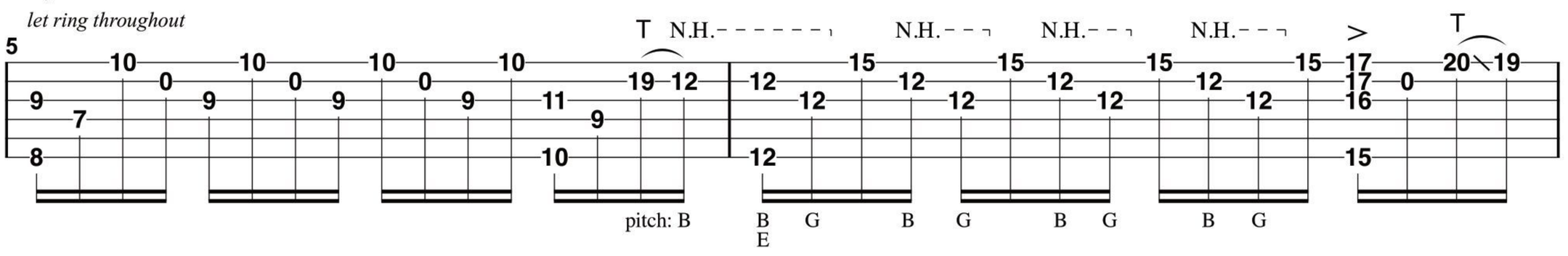
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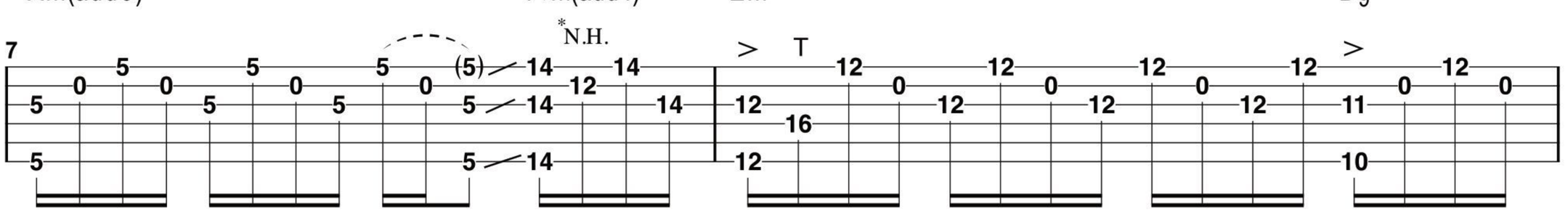
B (0:13)

C6/9 D6 Em Gadd9

let ring throughout

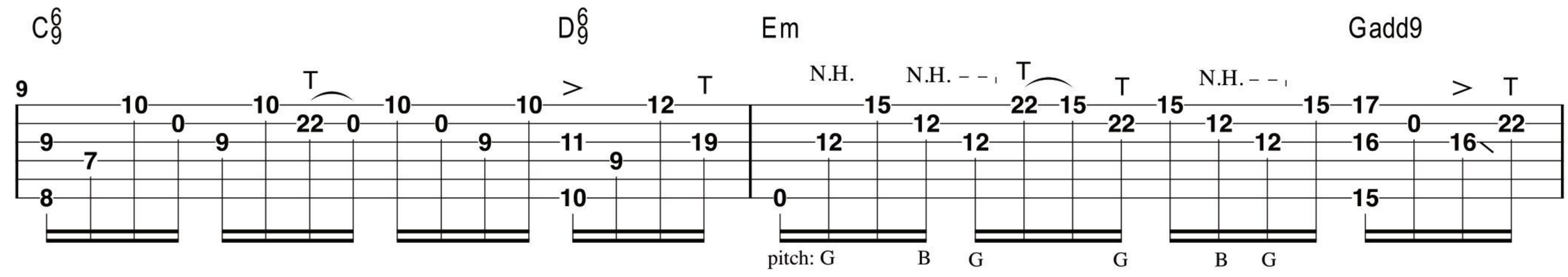


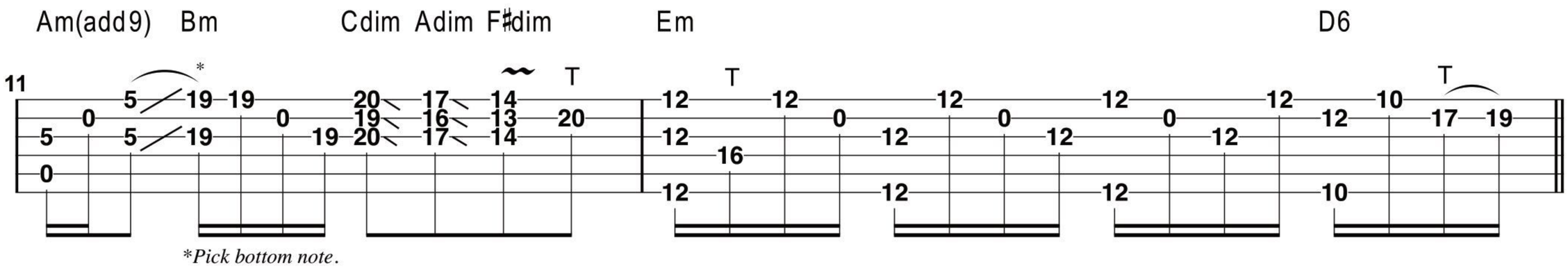
Am(add9) F♯m(add4) Em D6/9



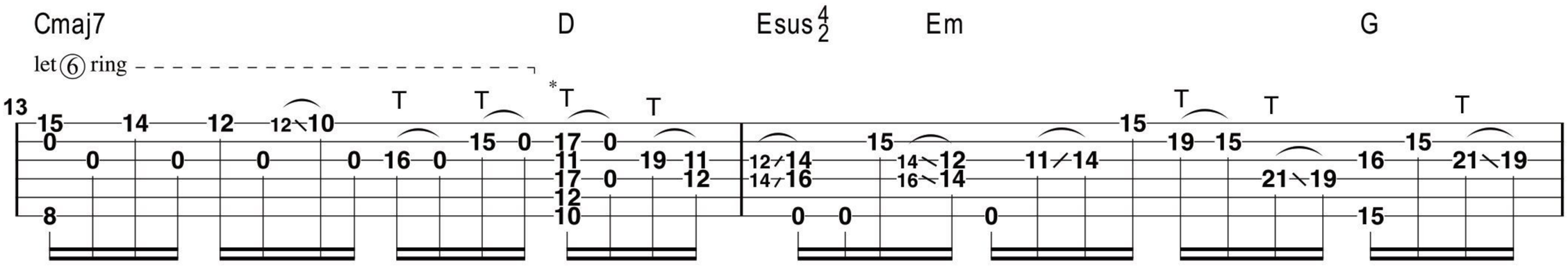
**Perform harmonic note (B) w/underside of index finger.*

"ORB"
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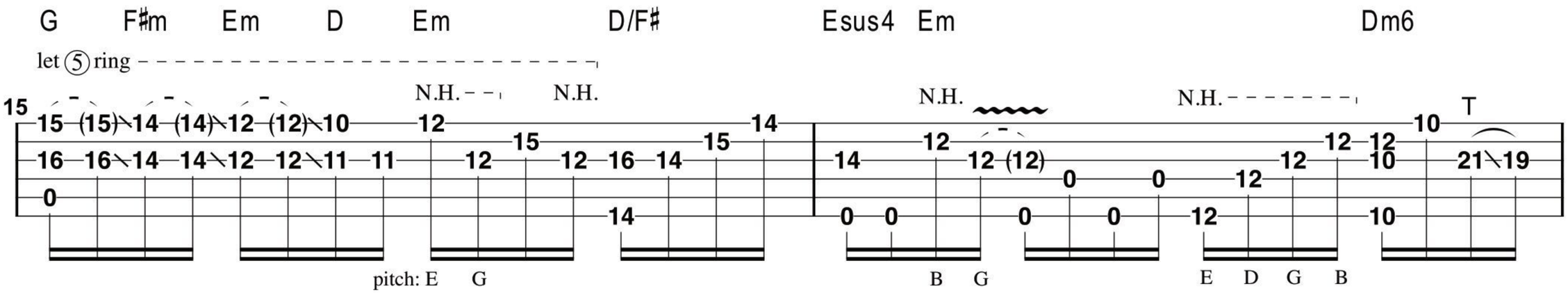


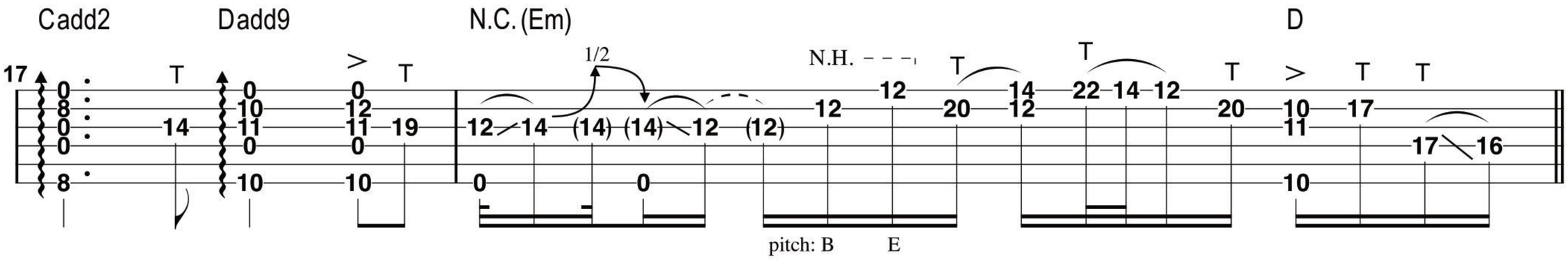


C (0:35)

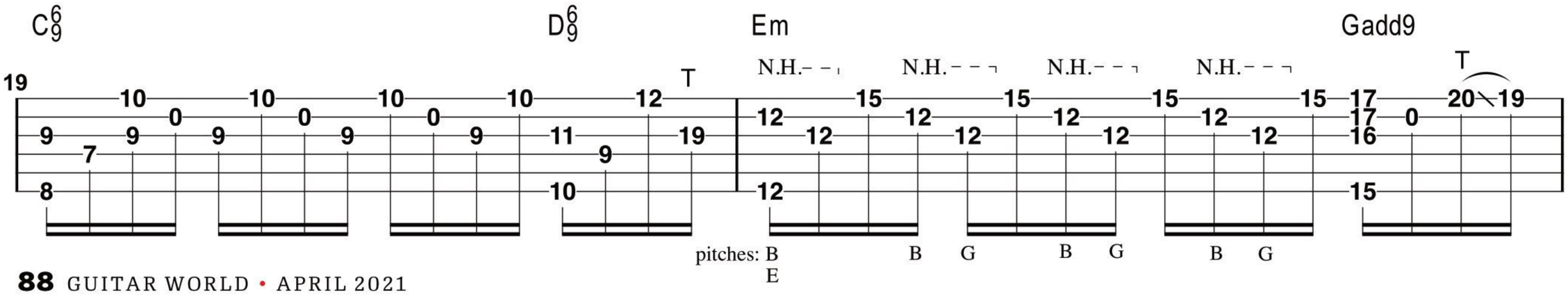


**Perform tap to 17th fret notes w/pick-hand index and middle fingers while performing fret-hand "hammer-on from nowhere" to remaining chord tones.*





D (0:52)



Am(add9) F♯m(add4) Em D6/9

21

*N.H.

*Perform harmonic note (B) w/underside of index finger.

Cmaj9 D6/9 Em G

23

N.H. N.H.

pitches: B G B

Am(add2) Badd♭9 F♯dim Adim Cdim Em D6/9

25

N.H.

pitches: B G

E (1:15)

Cmaj7 Badd4/D♯ Esus4/2 E N.C.

27

*Tap both notes together using pick-hand index and middle fingers.

**Harmonic note (B) on top note only.

Badd♭9 F♯dim Adim Cdim Em7add♭6 Em

29

Cmaj7 D6 Esus4/2 Em D/E

31

F (1:35)

Freely

Am(add9) Adim B/D♯ F♯m7add11 Bm7add11 Esus2

33

*Tap both notes together using pick-hand index and middle fingers.

Slowly ♩ = 42

Am9 D6 Bm7 Bm6 Bm7 Bm(add4) A♭5 G

36

(grad. decrease tempo)

Am D N.C.(Em) Cm7♭5 C♯m7♭5

38

*Tap both notes together using pick-hand index and middle fingers.

G (2:09)

(♩ = 85)

Cmaj7 Esus4/2 Em G

40

Am7 G/A Dsus4/2 Em Dadd4/F♯ G

42

N.H.

pitch: G B

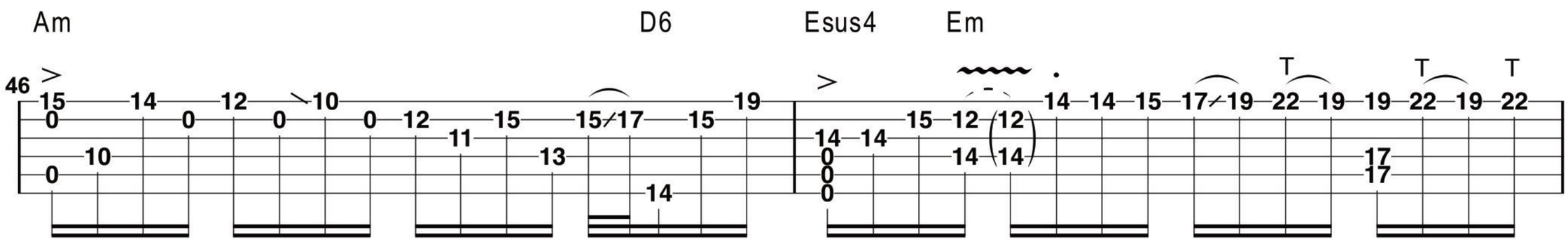
C D Esus4/2 Em G

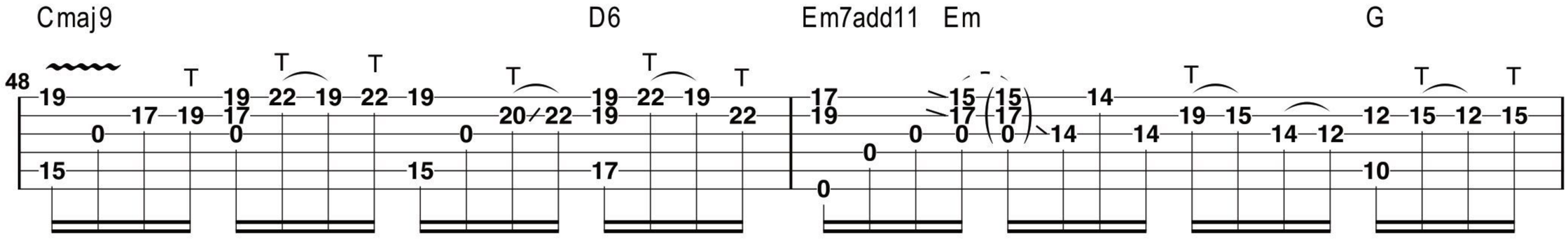
44

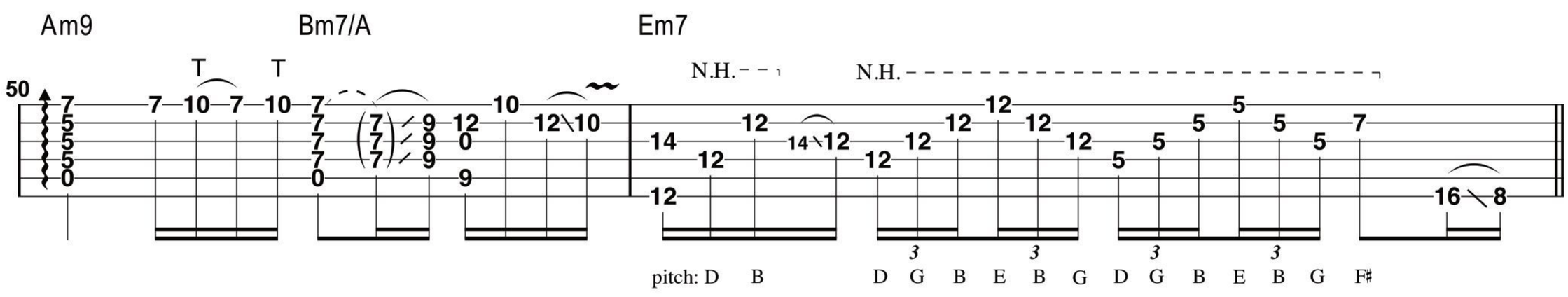
**Tap top two notes together using pick-hand index and middle fingers.

**Tap top note only.

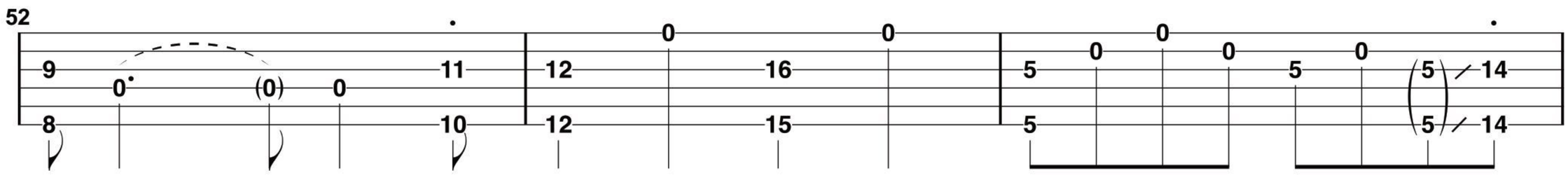
***Tap 4th string (17th fret) note only.

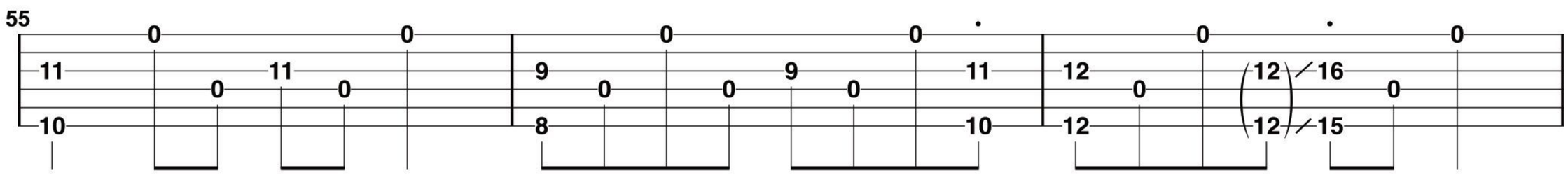




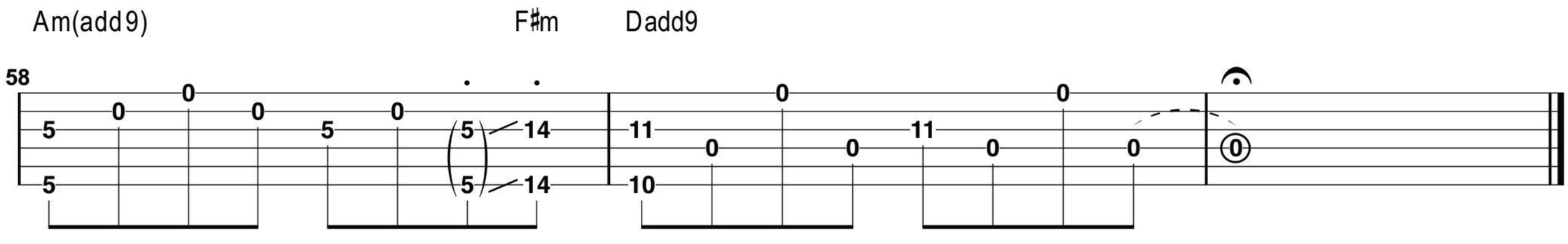


H (2:44)





(grad. decrease tempo)

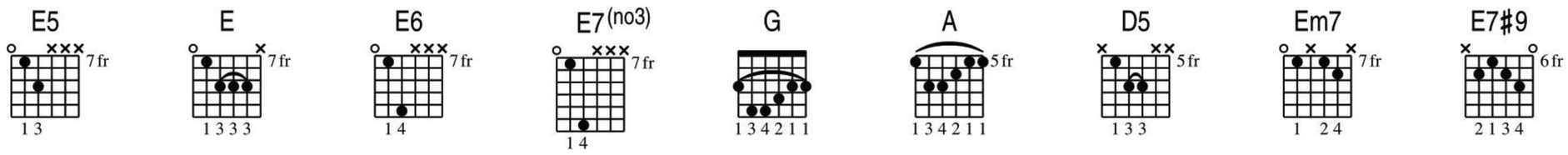


"BORN TO BE WILD"

Steppenwolf

As heard on **STEPPENWOLF**

Words and Music by **MARS BONFIRE** • *Transcribed by* **ANDY ALEDORT**



A Intro (0:00)

Moderately Fast Rock ♩ = 148



Rhy. Fill 1 (0:14, 0:40, 2:10)

Em7

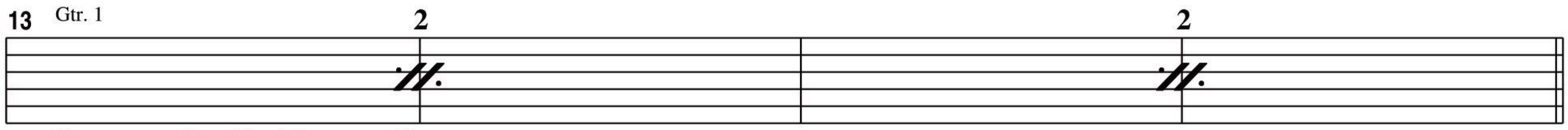
*Gtr. 2 (elec. w/light dist. and rotary chorus effect)

*Hammond B3 organ arr. for gtr.

"BORN TO BE WILD
WORDS AND MUSIC BY MARS BONFIRE
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Lookin' for adventure in whatever comes our way
racin' with the wind and the feelin' that I'm under

13 Gtr. 1



Bass repeats Bass Fig. 1 (see meas. 9)

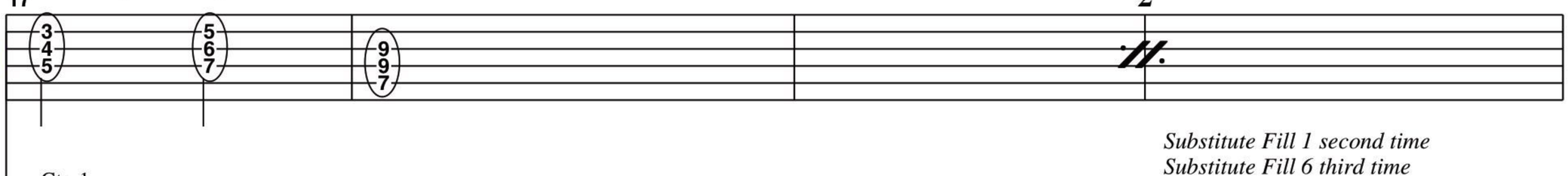
C Pre-choruses (0:27, 0:54, 2:23)

1. Yeah God I'm gonna make it happen Take the world in a love embrace
2., 3. Yeah darlin' gonna make it happen Take the world in a love embrace

G A N.C.(E5) G A N.C.(E5)

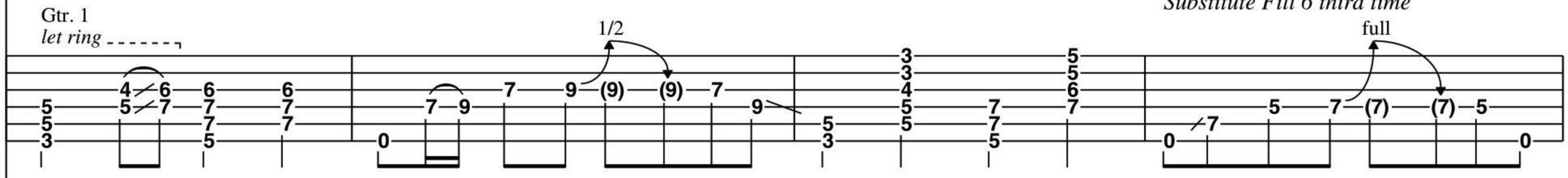
Substitute Fill 2 second time
Substitute Fill 5 third time

17 Gtr. 2 (organ arr. for gtr.)

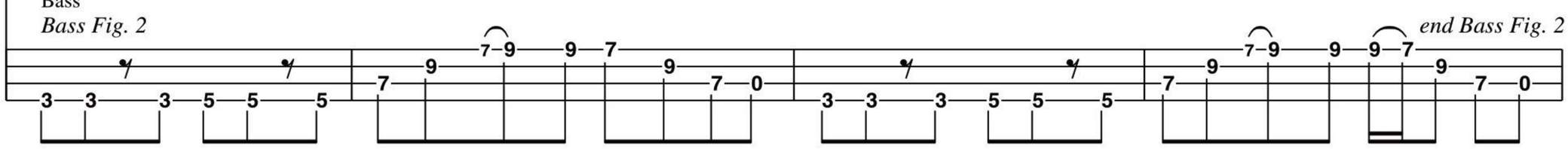


Substitute Fill 1 second time
Substitute Fill 6 third time

Gtr. 1
let ring



Bass
Bass Fig. 2



end Bass Fig. 2

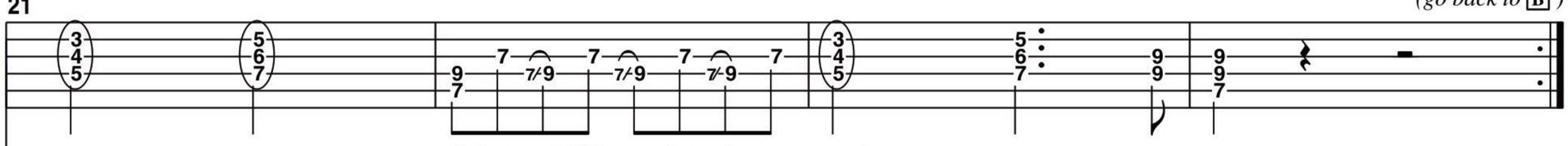
1.

Fire all of your guns at once and explode into space

G A N.C.(E5) G A E5

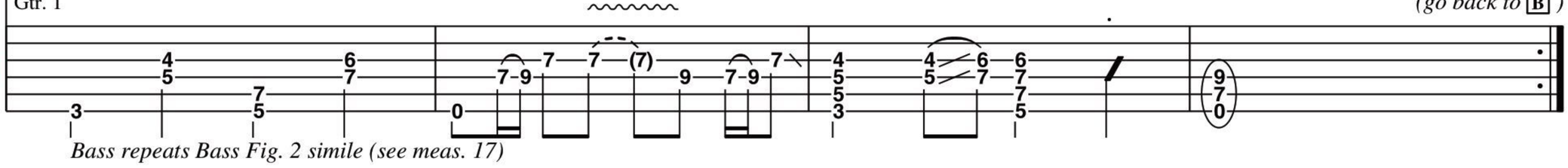
Substitute Fill 4 second time (see next page)
Gtr. 2 *Substitute Fill 7 third time (see next page)*

21 *(go back to B)*



Substitute Fill 3 second time (see next page)
Substitute Fill 8 third time (see next page)

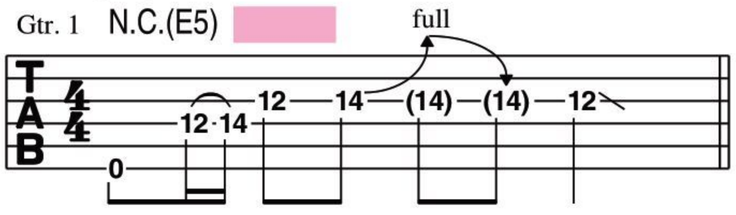
Gtr. 1 *(go back to B)*



Bass repeats Bass Fig. 2 simile (see meas. 17)

Fill 1 (0:59)

Gtr. 1 N.C.(E5)

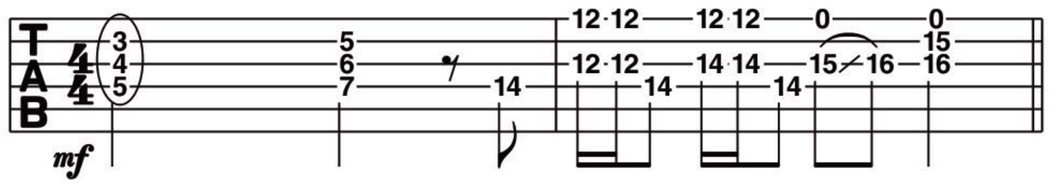


Fill 2 (0:57)

G A N.C.(E5)

Gtr. 2 (organ arr. for gtr.)

w/pick and finger

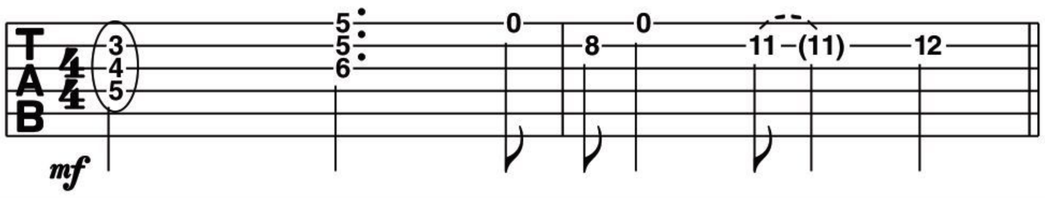


Fill 5 (2:26)

G A N.C.(E5)

Gtr. 2 (organ arr. for gtr.)

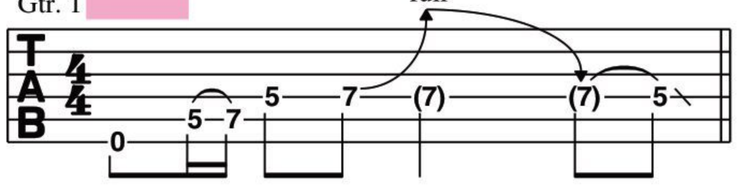
let ring



Fill 6 (2:28)

N.C.(E5)

Gtr. 1



2.

D Chorus (1:07, 2:36)

Like a true nature's child we were

E5 E G

25

Gtr. 2

Gtr. 1

Bass

(repeat previous measure)

born born to be wild We can climb so high I never wanna

A G

28

Fill 3 (1:02)

N.C.(E5)

Gtr. 1

grad. bend full

1/2

Fill 4 (1:00)

G A N.C.(E5)

w/pick and finger

let ring

Gtr. 2 (organ arr. for gtr.)

Fill 7 (2:29)

G A N.C.(E5)

w/pick and finger

let ring

Gtr. 2 (organ arr. for gtr.)

Fill 8 (2:31)

N.C.(E5)

Gtr. 1

1/2

(1:20, 2:49)

die Born to be wild

E5 E5 (D5)

32

w/pick and finger until meas. 46

f

mp

*Chord is tied 1st time only.

(2nd time on 2nd Chorus) ***To Coda*** *(skip ahead to* **F** *)*

E **Organ Solo** (1:34)

E D5 E

36

let ring

Rhy. Fig. 1

2nd time only

Bass Fig. 3

Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 1 twice simile (see meas. 38)

Gtr. 2

40

let ring

Bass

end Bass Fig. 3

Bass repeats Bass Fig. 3 one and one half times simile (see meas. 38)

E5 Em7

Gtr. 2

44

let ring

w/pick

P.M. P.M.

Gtr. 1

Rhy. Fig. 2

Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 2 twice (see meas. 46)

48

Gtr. 2

Bass

52

Gtr. 3 (elec. w/light dist.)

w/slide throughout

mf

let ring

Gtr. 2

E

Gtr. 1

Bass

D.S. 𝄋 *al Coda* ⊕

(go back to **B** *and take 2nd ending)*

N.C.

drum fill

56

Gtr. 2

Gtr. 1

Bass

Coda

F **Outro** (3:03)

E

Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 1 four times simile (see meas. 38)

60 Gtr. 2

Bass

Bass Fig. 4 *end Bass Fig. 4*

64 Gtr. 3

Gtr. 2

Bass repeats Bass Fig. 4 simile (see meas. 60)

Em7

Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 2 twice (see meas. 46)

68 Gtr. 2

Gtr. 3

Bass *Bass Fig. 5* *end Bass Fig. 5*

E7♯9 N.C.(E5) ***fade out***

72 Gtr. 3

Gtr. 2

Gtr. 1

full full 1/2

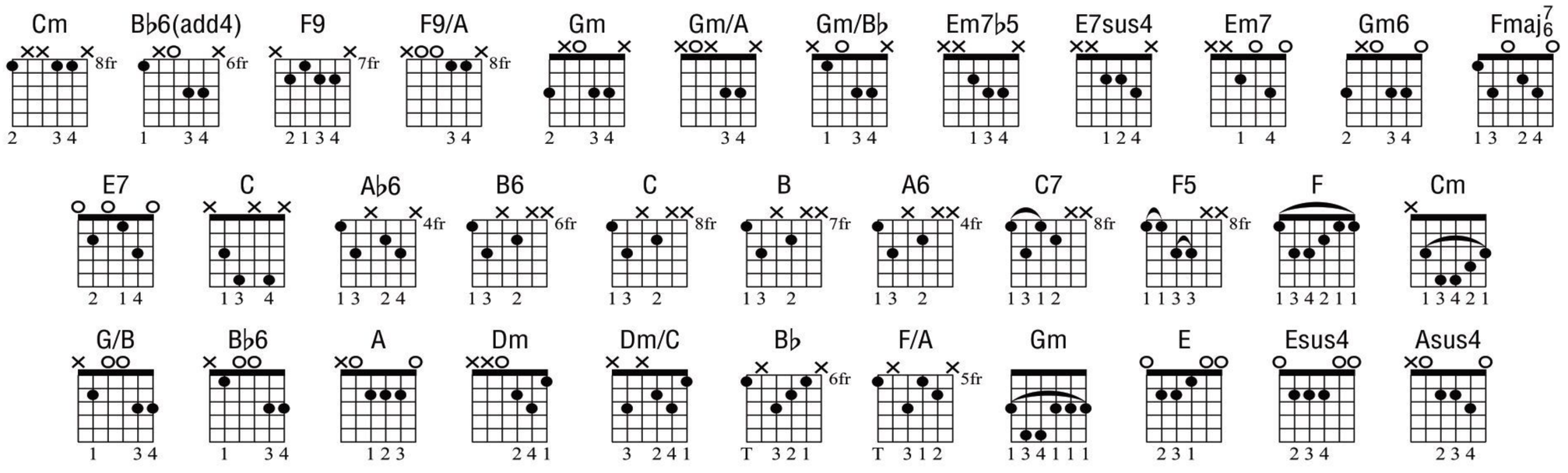
Bass repeats Bass Fig. 5 (see meas. 68)

"PARANOID ANDROID"

Radiohead

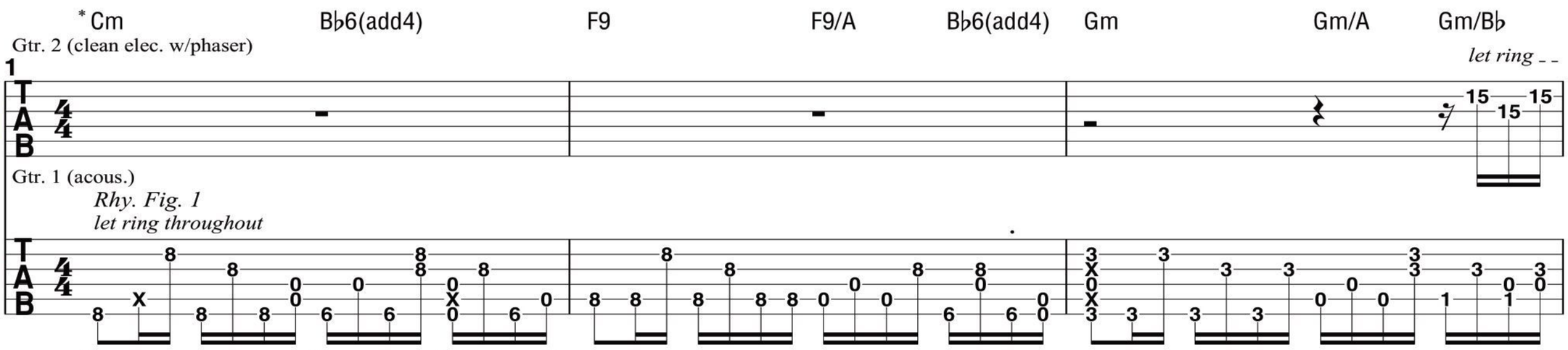
As heard on **OK COMPUTER**

Words and Music by **THOMAS YORKE, JONATHAN GREENWOOD, COLIN GREENWOOD, EDWARD O'BRIEN** *and* **PHILIP SELWAY** • *Transcribed by* **JEFF PERRIN**

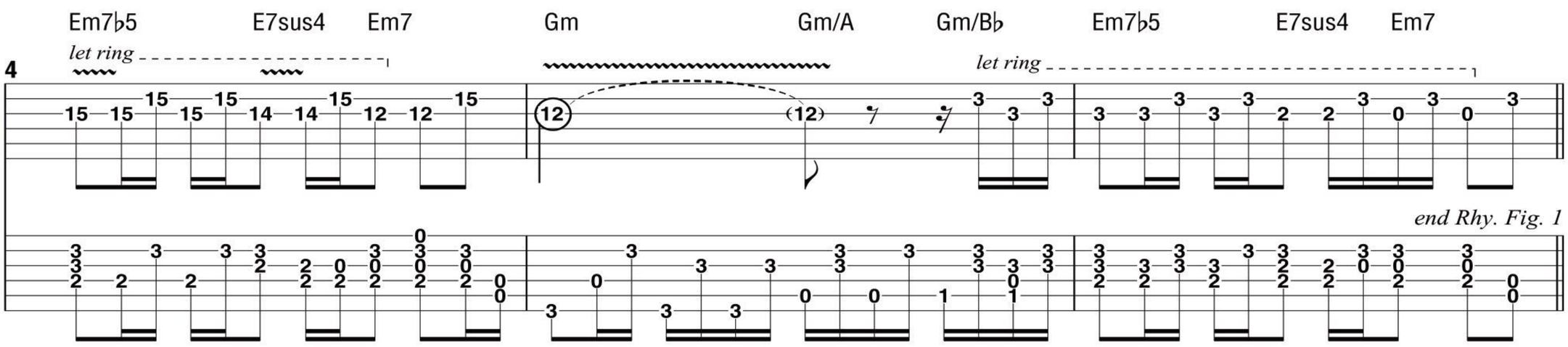


A **Intro** (0:00)

Moderately ♩ = 82

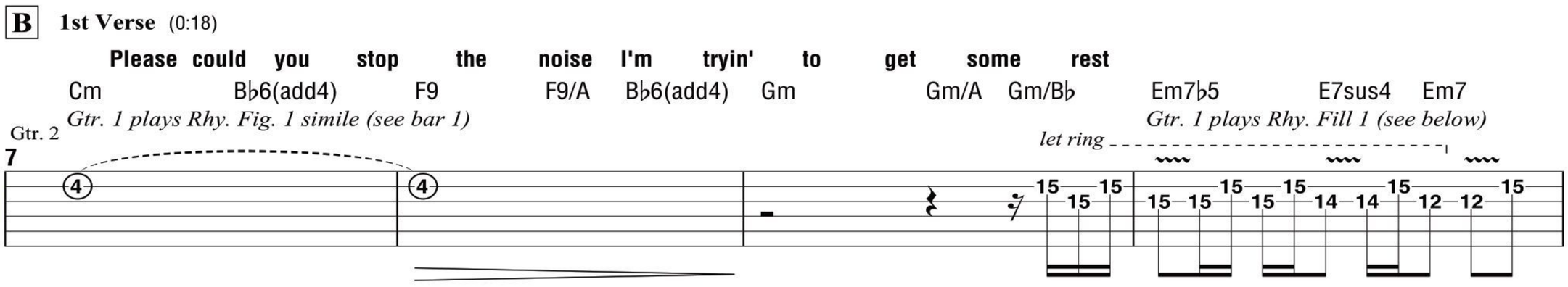


*Chord names reflect overall harmony implied by the guitar parts.

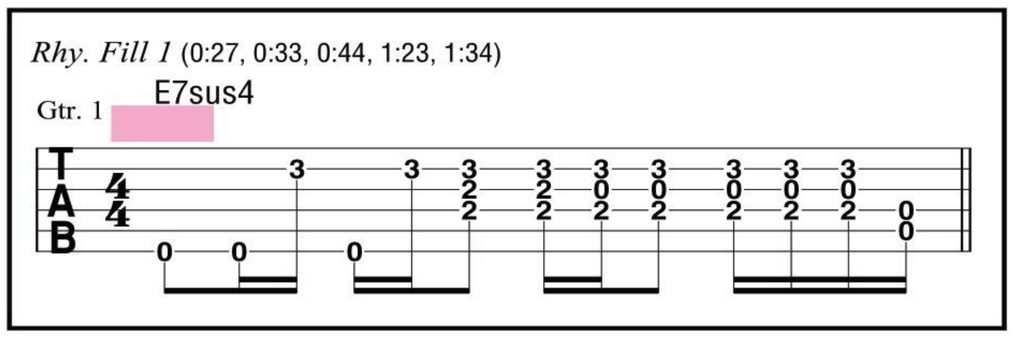


B **1st Verse** (0:18)

Please could you stop the noise I'm tryin' to get some rest



Rhy. Fill 1 (0:27, 0:33, 0:44, 1:23, 1:34)



"PARANOID ANDROID"
WORDS AND MUSIC BY THOMAS YORKE, JONATHAN GREENWOOD, COLIN GREENWOOD, EDWARD O'BRIEN AND PHILIP SELWAY
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From all the un -

Gm Gm/A Gm/B♭ Em7♭5 E7sus4 Em7 Cm B♭6(add4)

Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fill 1 simile (see page 1)

Gtr. 1 plays first three bars of Rhy. Fig. 1 (see bar 1)

11

let ring

born chicken voices in my hand

F9 F9/A B♭6(add4) Gm Gm/A Gm/B♭ Em7♭5 E7sus4 Em7

Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fill 1 simile (see page 1)

Gtr. 2

14

let ring

1/2 1/2

Bass

C (0:47)

What's there? (I may be a
What's there? (I may be a

Gm6 $F\text{maj}^{7}_{6}$

*Gtr. 3 (clean elec. w/tremolo and pitch shift effect)

Riff A

17

**Notes sound one octave higher than written due to pitch shifting effect.*

**Gtrs. 1 and 2

let ring throughout

***Gtr. 1 doubles Gtr. 2 simile*

Bass

1. **paranoid but no android)**

2. **paranoid but no android)**

E7 E7

end Riff A

19

(repeat previous bar)

D **2nd Verse** (1:08)

When I am king you will be first
With your opinion which is of

Cm B♭6(add4) F9

Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 1 simile first time (see bar 1)
Gtr. 1 plays first three bars of Rhy. Fig. 1 on repeat (see bar 1)

Gtr. 2
let ring throughout

22

P.M.

Bass

1.

against the wall
no consequence

Gm Gm/A Gm/B♭ Em7♭5 E7sus4 Em7

24

2.

at

Gm Gm/A Gm/B♭ Em7♭5 E7sus4 Em7 Em7♭5 E7sus4 Em7

Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fill 1 simile (see page 1)
Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fill 1 (see page 1)

26

E (1:37)

all What's there? (I may be a paranoid
What's there? (I may be a paranoid

Gm6 $Fmaj^{7}_{6}$

Gtr. 3 plays Riff A (see bar 17)
(Gtr. 1 doubled Gtr. 2 simile)

29

**Play note in parenthesis second time only.*

1. **but no android)**

2. **but no android)**

E7 E7

31

(1:57)

N.C.(Am) (G♯) (Am) (G♯)

Gtr. 3 plays Fill 1 (see below)

Gtr. 1

Rhy. Fig. 2

33

(Am) (G♯) (Am) (G♯)

Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 2 simile (see bar 34)

Bass

36

F (2:04)

C A♭6 B♭ C A♭6 B♭

Gtr. 1

38

Bass

(1st time) **Ambition**

C A♭6 B♭ C C B B♭ A♭

40

1.

E **2nd Verse** (2:20)

makes you look pretty ugly **kicking squealing Gucci little piggy**

N.C.(Am) (G♯) (Am) (G♯) (Am) (G♯) (Am) (G♯)

Gtr. 1 plays first bar of Rhy. Fig. 2 first time simile (see bar 34)

Gtr. 2 (w/light dist., slapback delay and phaser)

Gtr. 3

42

P.M.

Bass Fig. 1

end Bass Fig. 1

Fill 1 (1:58)

Gtr. 3

2.

H **4th Verse** (2:42)

You don't remember you don't remember Why don't you remember my name

(Am) (G♯) (Am) (G♯)

Gtr. 1 plays first bar of Rhy. Fig. 2 four times simile (see bar 34)

Off with his head man off with his head man

(Am) (G♯)

Gtr. 2 (w/dist.)

*w/Digitech Whammy pedal

1/4 1/2 3/4 1 1 1/2 2 2 1/2 3

46

P.M. N.H.

pitch: F

*Note bends produced by Digitech Whammy pedal effect.
**Rhythms produced by momentary switch on guitar.

Gtr. 3 (w/dist.)

Bass

Bass Fig. 2

Why don't he remember my name I guess he does

(Am) (G♯) C7 A♭ B♭ F5

49

N.H.

Gtr. 1 out (in mix or doubles Gtr. 3 simile)

Rhy. Fig. 3

C7 A♭ B♭ F5 C7 A♭ B♭ F5 C7 N.C.

51

trem. pick

end Bass Fig. 2

I **Guitar Solo** (3:05)

N.C.(Am) (G♯) (Am) (G♯)

Gtr. 2

54

1 1/2

tr

Gtr. 3

w/bar

Bass plays Bass Fig. 2 simile (see bar 46)

(Am) (G♯) (Am) (G♯)

56

w/bar

C7 A♭ B♭ F5 C7 A♭ B♭ F5

Gtr. 3 plays Rhy. Fig. 3 simile (see bar 50)

Gtr. 2

58

C7 A♭5 B♭ F5 C7 N.C. F

Gtr. 2

60

N.H.

pitch: A

Gtr. 3

w/slight fdbk.

Bass plays Bass Fill 1 (see below)

J **Interlude** (3:34)

Slower ♩ = 63

1. Ah **(ah)**

2., 3., 4. Rain down rain down

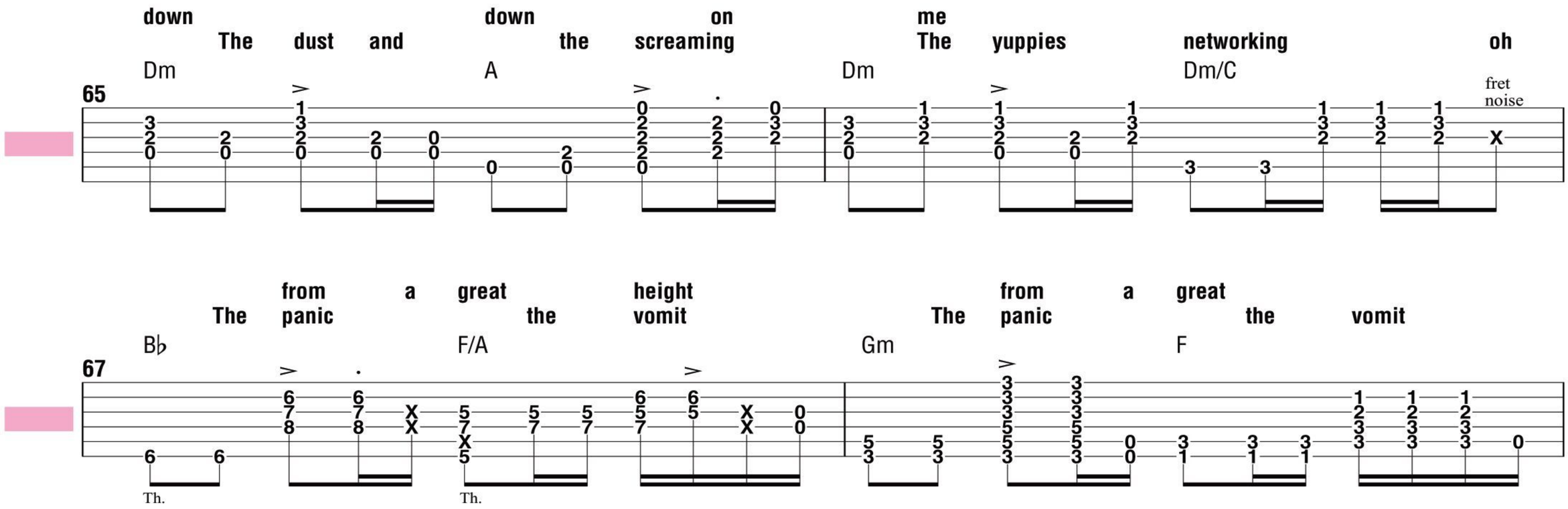
(4th time) **That's it sir you're leaving The crackle of pigskin**

Cm G/B B♭6 A

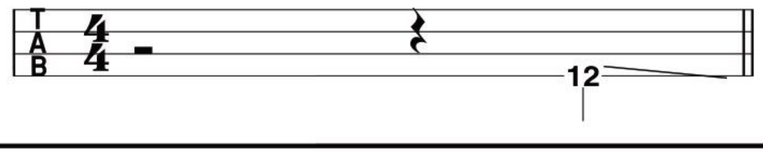
Gtr. 1

63

Bass Fill 1 (3:27)



Bass Fill 2 (5:36)



L **Outro** (5:47)

C7 A♭ B♭ F

w/ad lib vocal effect

76

P.H.

pitch: C

Rhy. Fig. 4

C7 N.C. N.C.(Am) (G♯)

79

trem. pick

Bass plays Bass Fig. 2 simile (see bar 46)

(Am) (G♯) (Am) (G♯) (Am) (G♯)

w/filter effect

filter effect off

81

**Rhythms produced by momentary "kill" switch on guitar.*

C7 A♭ B♭ F C7 A♭ B♭ F

Gtr. 3 plays Rhy. Fig. 4 simile (see bar 76)

Gtr. 2

84

C7 A♭ B♭ F C7 N.C.

Gtr. 2

86

Gtr. 3

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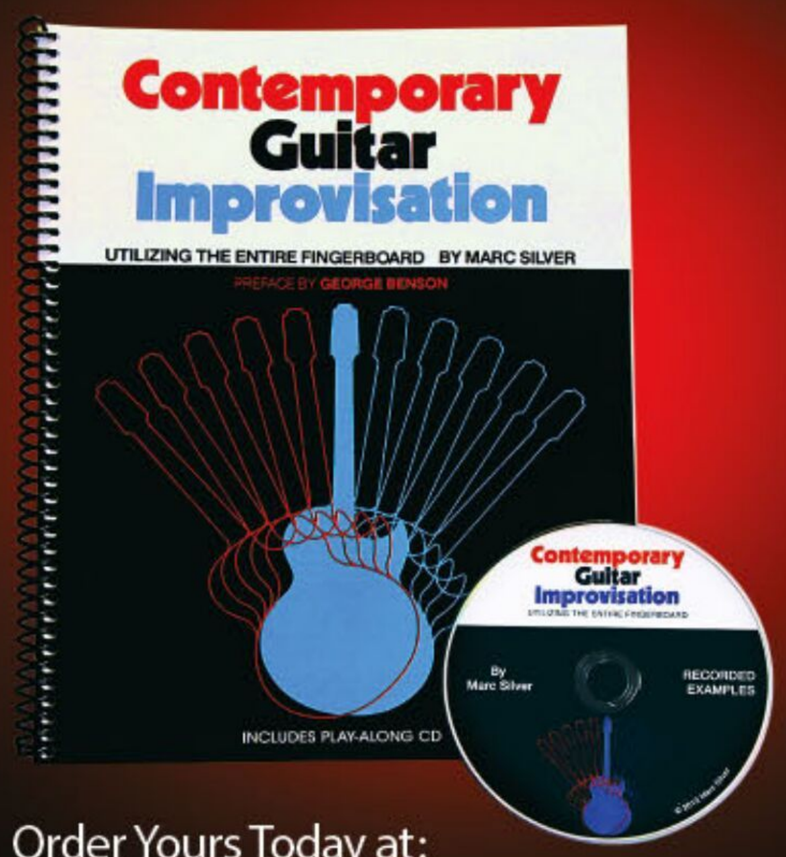
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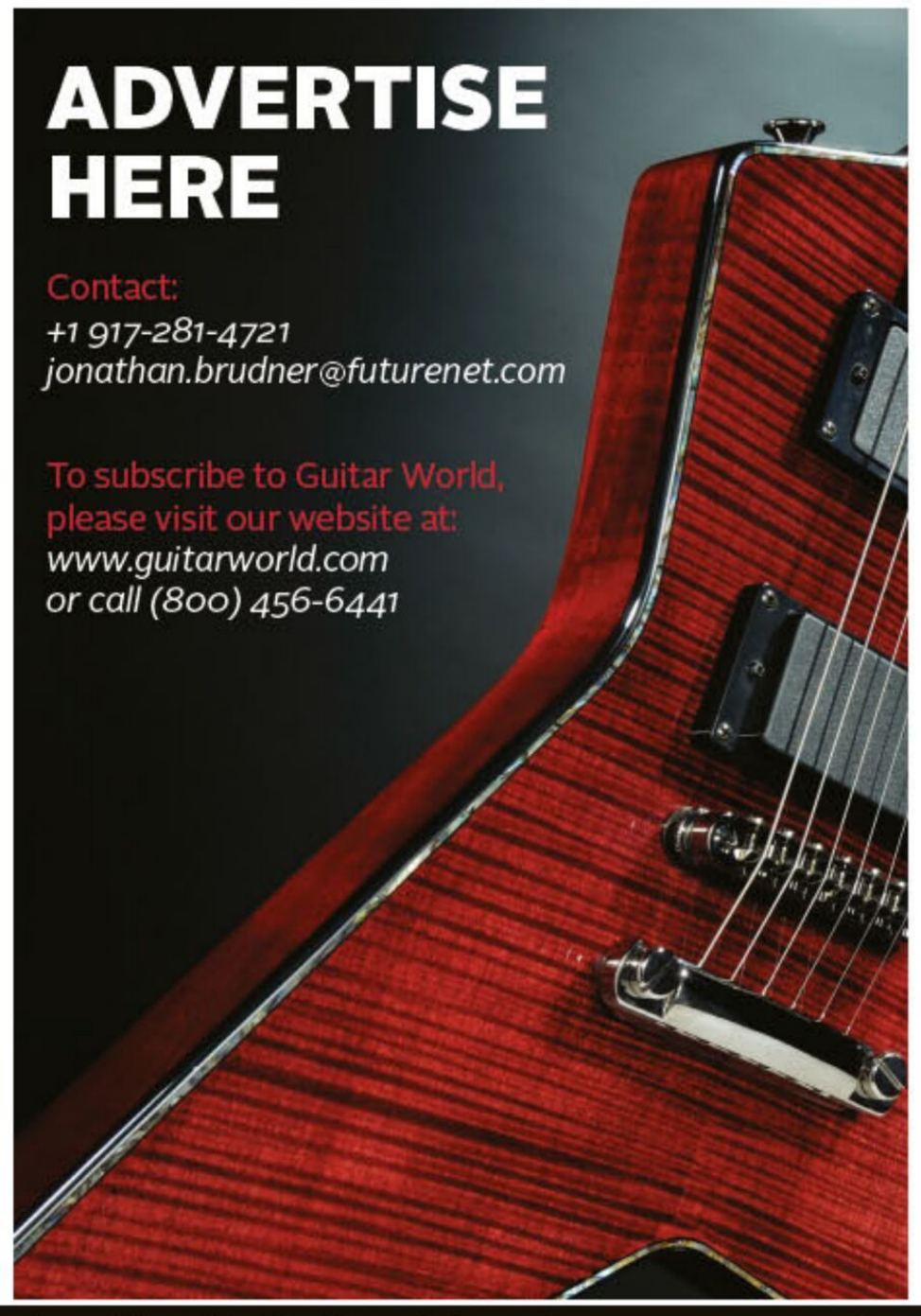
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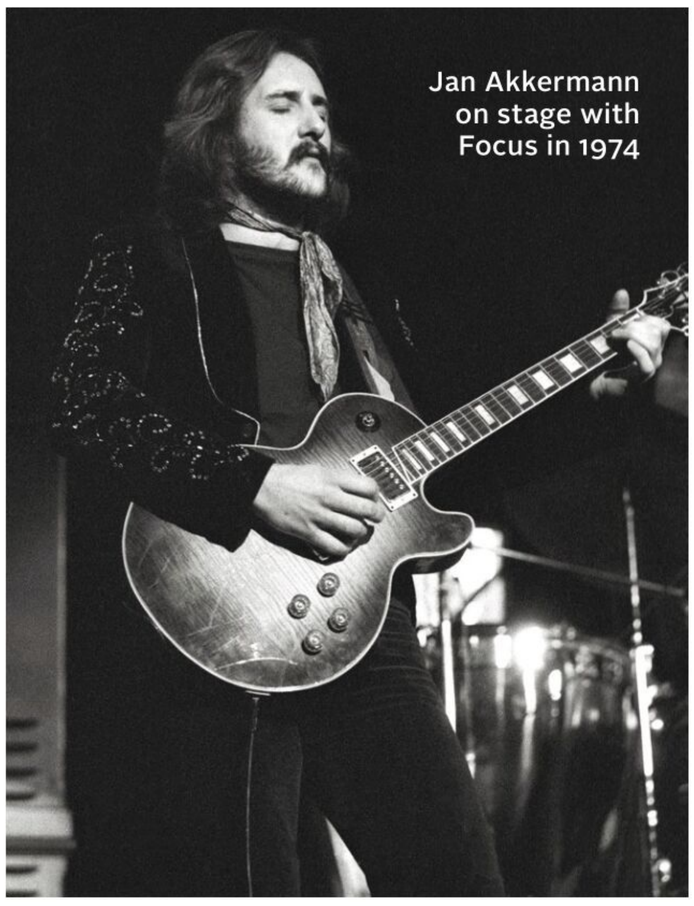
FOCUS | *MOVING WAVES*, 1971 | GUITARIST: JAN AKKERMAN | STORY BY CHRIS GILL



TRIVIA QUESTION: WHO was the first Dutch guitarist to record a song called "Eruption"? The answer is not Edward Van Halen, but rather Jan Akkerman, who recorded "Eruption" with his band Focus in 1971 for the album *Moving Waves* (titled *Focus II* in Europe), although Focus' song was a sprawling 23-minute prog-rock concerto based on the tale of Orpheus and Euridice instead of a blazing solo showcase. Akkerman's performance on "Eruption" is certainly dazzling, but the song that mesmerized fans of Euro shred guitar long before Schenker, Roth, Van Halen, Malmsteen, et al. is the album's scorching opening track, "Hocus Pocus."

Driven by a heavy distorted guitar riff punctuated by jazzy major 7th chords and ripping hyperspeed solos that explored harmonic minor and Hungarian minor scales, "Hocus Pocus" was a showcase for Akkerman's proto-shred style back when Ritchie Blackmore was still noodling around the pentatonic box. In between the riffs and solos were a bizarre assortment of auditory oddities, including yodeling, flute playing and whistling accompanied by accordion. An edited version of the song became a Top 10 hit single in the U.S. in 1973 and was certainly the last time an instrumental guitar song with accordion, flute and yodeling charted on the *Billboard* 100.

Despite using a rig that was better suited to mostly clean jazz-inspired tones, Akkerman crafted a wonderfully gritty distortion and razor-sharp treble that was as heavy and metal as Blackmore, Iommi or Page back in the day. Surprisingly, Akkerman created his glorious tones by using a solid-state Fender SS1000/XFL1000 Super Showman, from Fender's much-reviled solid-state line of amps that were largely to blame for the CBS era's bad reputation. The Super Showman consisted of a three-channel preamp head with built-in effects like fuzz, tremolo, reverb and Dimension IV "oil can" rotary and a power amp/speaker cabinet unit. Akkerman's distortion didn't come from the built-in fuzz but rather from a Colorsound Power Boost — one of the very first overdrive pedals ever produced. Akkerman's ax for the sessions was a late-Sixties Les Paul Custom with stock humbuckers (he later installed Gretsch Filter'trons) and ultralight .008-.038 strings.


Jan Akkermann on stage with Focus in 1974

Tube amp purists may scoff at Akkerman's rig, but by running the Super Showman clean and getting distortion from the Power Booster, he was able to dial in a wonderfully aggressive grit and grind that maintained perfect clarity and note-to-note definition for the major 7 chords. The amp's bright switch and high treble settings on the amp and Power Boost make Akkerman's Les Paul almost sound like a Strat. A few overdubs were recorded with the guitar plugged into channel 3 to exploit its lush spring reverb.



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- **Fender Champion 50XL 1x12 combo**
- **Throbak Overdrive Boost**

TONE TIP: *The Throbak isn't cheap, but its tone controls and overdrive flavor nail Akkerman's Colorsound tone. However, a less-expensive overdrive like a Boss SD-1, Electro-Harmonix Hot Tubes Nano or MXR Distortion + can also put you in the ballpark.*





ORIGINAL GEAR

GUITAR: Late-Sixties Gibson Les Paul Custom (bridge pickup), Volume: 10, Tone: 10

AMPS: Amp: 1970 Fender SS1000 Super Showman preamp head (Channel 1, Volume: 7, Fuzz: 0, Bass: 3, Mid: 7, Treble: 9, Bright: On, Master: 6) with two XFL1000 4x12 power amp/speaker cabinets with Oxford speakers

EFFECTS: Colorsound Power Boost (Treble: 7, Bass: 2, Volume: 2)

STRINGS/TUNING: Ernie Ball Extra Slinky .008, .011, .014, .022, .030, .038/Standard

PICK: Herco Gold light

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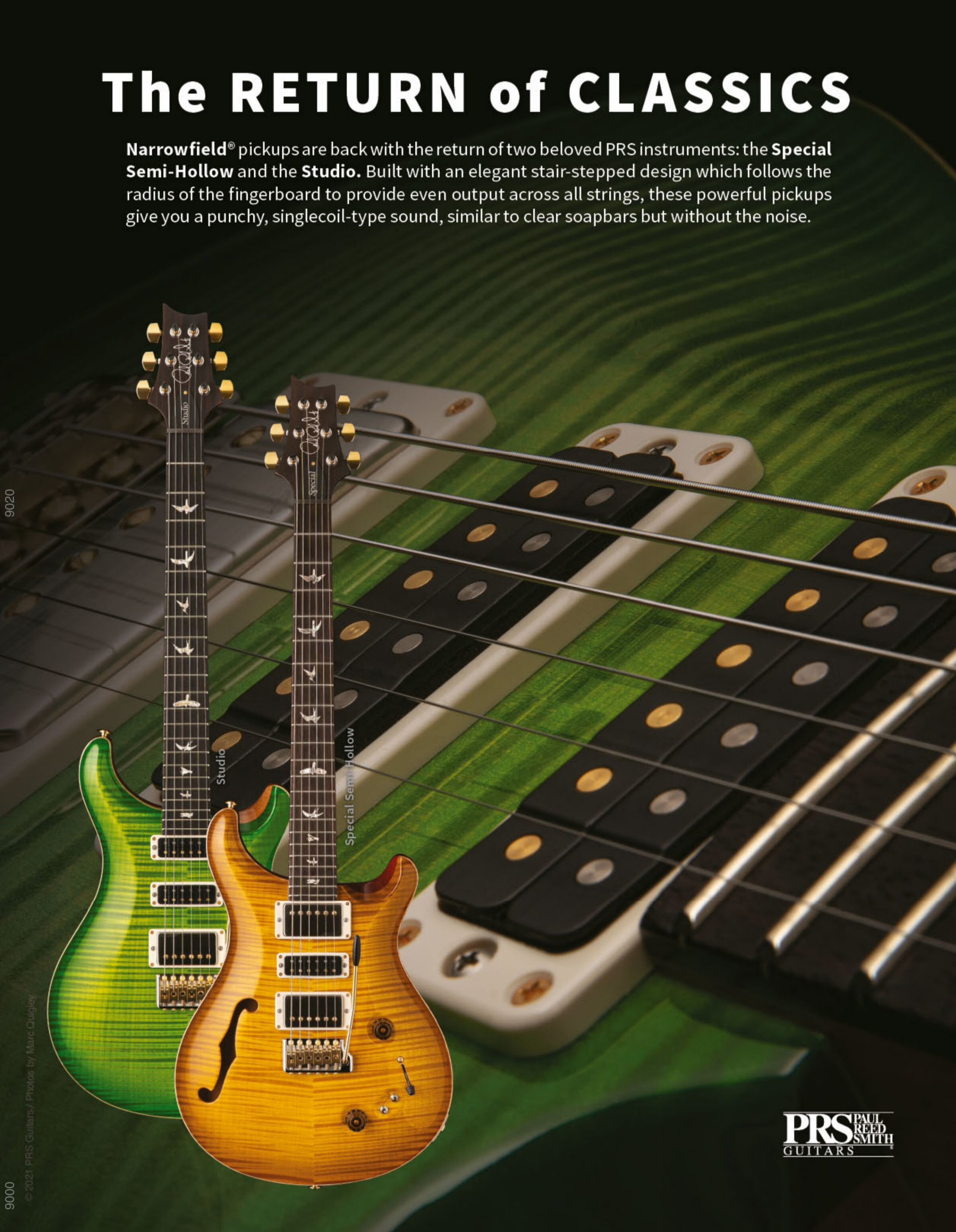
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