

THE STRAT TURNS 70!

WITH RITCHIE BLACKMORE, YNGWIE,
BUDDY GUY, BELEW, LIFESON & MORE

GUITAR WORLD

GUITAR & BASS
TRANSCRIPTIONS

OZZY OSBOURNE

MAMA,
I'M COMING HOME

LIT

MY OWN WORST ENEMY

MATTEO MANCUSO

DROP D

DICKEY BETTS

HOW A GW EDITOR
BECAME THE ALLMAN
LEGEND'S BANDMATE

BRIAN MAY

THE ULTIMATE INTERVIEW!

DUANE EDDY

(1938-2024)

NILE RODGERS

JAMIE WEST-ORAM

FAILURE

ACCEPT

PRS
MT 100
AMP
REVIEWED!

**MARK
TREMONTI,
SCOTT STAPP**
AND THE RETURN
OF THE COOLER-
THAN-EVER

FUTURE



EVH

SA-126

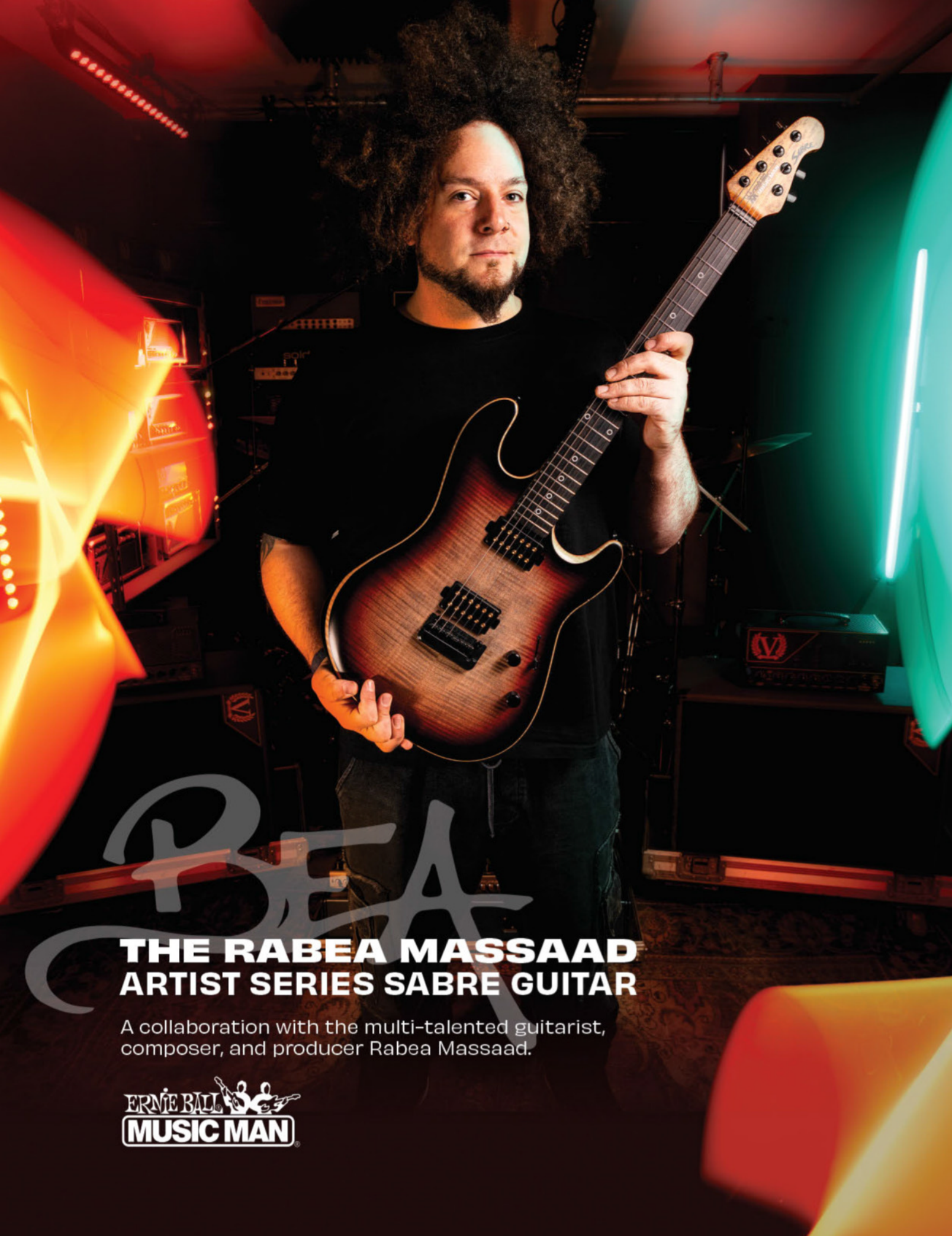
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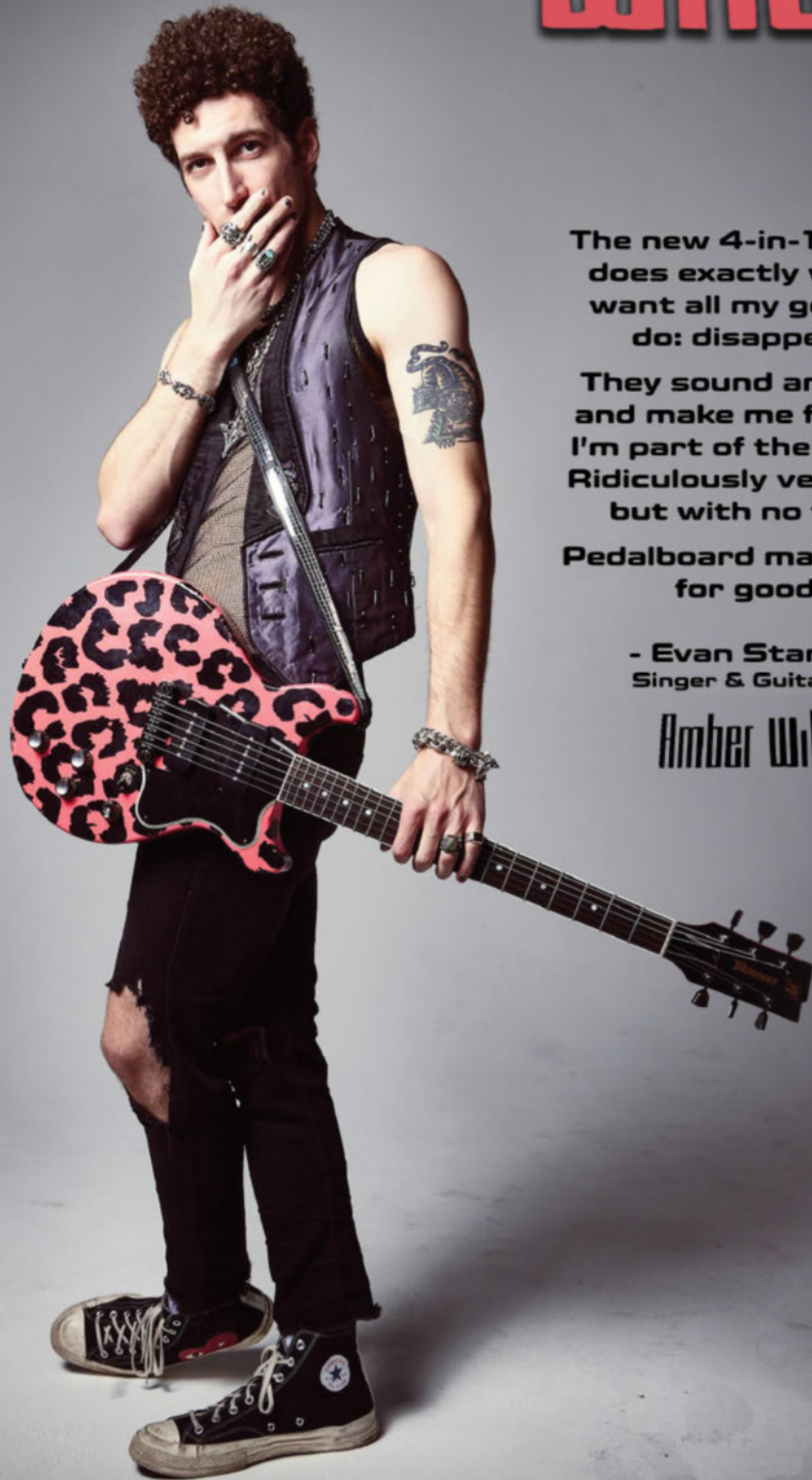
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VOL. 45 | NO. 8 | AUGUST 2024

THE GREAT CREED REVIVAL

FIRST, LET ME welcome Creed back to the GW cover for the first time since, well, since this little number right here — our very interesting-looking April 2002 issue. Exactly what was the “the Great Creed Mystery”? Outside of the page designer’s decision to use that font, I have no idea! Anyway, if you can’t tell by now, I love busting out vintage GW covers — and you’ll find a lot of them in this issue in particular (including another vintage Creed cover on the opposite page). I also love nostalgia — I admit it! — so, yeah, it’s cool to see the word “Creed” plastered across our cover for the first time since the days of the 5GB iPod. Be sure to track them down on a tour that’ll have them hoppin’ from July to December (with a cozy little break in October), complete with support from the awesome Big Wreck, Mammoth WVH and many others.



When I read for pleasure these days, it’s always about history (I’m in the middle of *The Wide Wide Sea* by Hampton Sides, and I’ve got Erik Larson’s *The Demon of Unrest* locked and loaded...), so maybe that’s why I get such a big kick out of our “Strat World” feature on page 46. I can never get tired of people like Robert Cray, Adrian Belew, Alex Lifeson, Buddy Guy and Ritchie Blackmore talking about stuff that took place 20, 30, 40 years ago — especially GW-related stuff, like cover photos that meant a lot to a much younger version of me.

And sticking with the nostalgia theme, I can’t continue without mentioning our latest losses — Dickey Betts and Duane Eddy. Who among us hasn’t played a solo (or even part of a solo) that — whether intentionally or not — borrowed even a tiny bit from Betts’ distinctive major-key melodies from “Jessica” or “Blue Sky”? Oddly, I never saw Betts live — but our very own Andy Aledort more than makes up for it; he was in Betts’ band for nearly 10 years. I *did* get to see Eddy — once — perform with Jeff Beck at a Gretsch event in January 2017. It’s weird to consider all the greats who have left us since that recent-seeming time, including Duane, Dickey, Jeff, Eddie Van Halen, Gary Rossington, Robbie Robertson, Tom Verlaine and so many others.

— **Damian Fanelli**

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GUJAR WORLD



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According to Seymour Duncan, the JB humbucking pickup is the company's best-selling model, which essentially makes it a very strong contender for the best-selling replacement pickup of all time.

COVER PHOTO: CHUCK BRUECKMANN

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FUTURE (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: JUL94, JUN19, APR01, FEB91)

SOUNDING BOARD

Got something you want to say? **EMAIL US AT: GWSoundingBoard@futurenet.com**

We have one vote for a 1985 issue

[In our May 2024 issue, we celebrated the great guitar albums of 1984; we also asked if 1985 deserves the same treatment.] Yes, please! Give me a feature on Rush's underrated *Power Windows*! (with tabs for "The Big Money" and "Marathon.") BTW, it was awesome reading about King Crimson's *Three of a Perfect Pair*, but now with Steve Vai essentially joining King Crimson, I'd love to see a cover story with Adrian Belew and Vai (and Tony Levin) and an issue devoted to *Discipline-Era* Crimson... complete with tabs! "Elephant Talk," "Frame by Frame," "Neal and Jack and Me," "Neurotica," "Sleepless," "Dinosaur" and "Vroom"!

— Ryan Sullivan

Let's get Anna Calvi on the GW cover

To be honest, I did an eye-roll when I saw EVH on the cover of the May Issue. I think we all get Van Halen's contribution, but how many times do we need to go over it? And we certainly know what he looked like by now. But you were redeemed when Anna Calvi, my favorite guitarist, was the first feature: two whole pages! Why not put her on the cover next time? Also, I'm happy to hear Billie Joe Armstrong's opinions, [which are] representative of a long line of protesting musicians. As an artist once said, the times they are a-changin'.

— Jon C. Lundell

You're right — it was Lakeland, Florida!

First and foremost, I really enjoy *Guitar World*! I love the stories and the lessons. I did not really start lessons and playing till much later in life, though I did noodle around in my teens. I'm now in my 50s and trying to teach my old fingers new tricks. I wanted to let you know: December 12, 1976, was when

Ace Frehley was almost electrocuted..... In Lakeland, Florida — not Lakeville. I was six at the time, but I was born and raised here and saw many shows before Tampa and Orlando created bigger venues. My first concert was Yngwie opening up for Iron Maiden on the Somewhere in Time tour. I've seen Mötley Crüe, Def Lep, Poison, Winger, GNR and others at our old civic center. Anyway, I'm not calling you out; Ace has been around, and he quite possibly forgot. I love your mag and just wanted to let you know. Please keep printing the stories and lessons! I need them; the wife decided to get me a real ax (PRS 24 Custom Turquoise, which y'all decided to review after Christ-

mas) instead of my garage-sale guitar. Know y'all are loved.

— Brice Holley
(actually, Brice & Barb)

Viva variety!

I've been reading *Guitar World* since the Eighties. I enjoy it now more than ever because I believe you've changed your formula. I suppose I didn't realize how broad your coverage had become until the April 2024 issue. I was very pleasantly surprised to see articles about Marco Pirroni, Frank Infante, Sam Shipstone of Yard Act and Drop Nineteens. I also want to say that the March 2024 article about Eddie Martinez was illuminating. Finally,

regarding the current issue, Earl Slick briefly quit music to sell timeshares?!?!? My point is that there are a lot of artists that did not receive deserved coverage in guitar magazines back in the day, but it seems you've recognized that. And you're covering current musicians who don't fit the stereotype of a guitar hero. Kudos! My only complaint is the transcriptions. Do we really need another "Even Flow" or "Bad Moon Rising" transcription? Based on the content of the past few issues, why not a Smiths, Sonic Youth, Slayer or Yard Act transcription?

Bottom line, whatever you're doing, keep it up!

— Bryant Brabson



COMPETELY RANDOM PHOTO OF THE MONTH

Lyricist **Peter Sinfield** [left] and guitarist **Robert Fripp**, two co-founders of King Crimson, deep in the creative process. This intimate studio shot shows the duo in 1969, the year of Crimson's landmark debut album, *In the Court of the Crimson King* — a mind-melting cocktail of rock, jazz, folk and symphonic styles that helped officially kick-start the age of prog. — Ryan Reed

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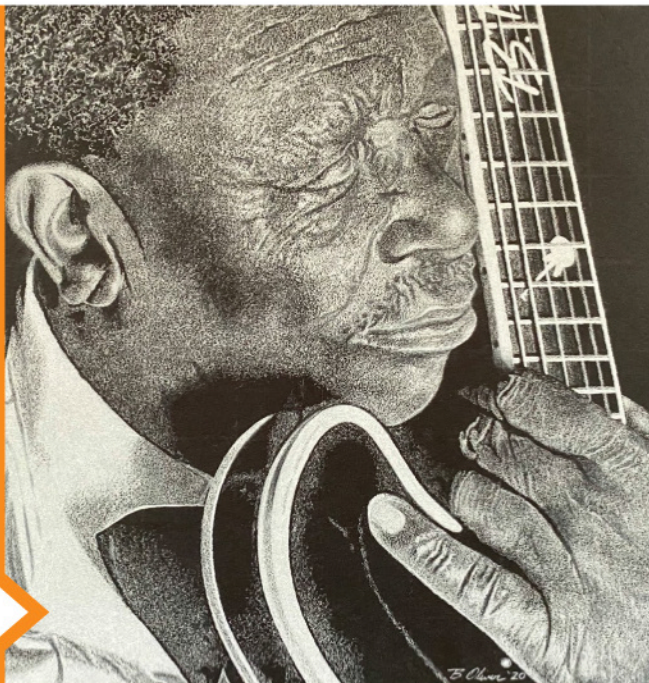


READER ART

OF THE MONTH

If you've created a drawing, painting or sketch of your favorite guitarist and would like to see it in an upcoming issue of *Guitar World*, email **GWSoundBoard@futurenet.com** with a .jpg or screenshot of the image.

And (um, obviously...), please remember to include your name!



B.B. KING BY BRIAN OLIVER



KISS BY BIANCA BABCOCK

DEFENDERS ⚡ of the Faith



Keith Zorn

AGE: 62

HOMETOWN: Fond Du Lac, WI

GUITARS: Les Paul Classic, Les Paul Special, SG Std, Martin HD28, James Burton Tele, '50s Strat, Gretsch 5120, PRS Zach Meyers

SONGS I'VE BEEN PLAYING: Deep Purple "Highway Star," Golden Earring "Radar Love," Led Zeppelin "Rock and Roll," Van Halen "Ice Cream Man" and "Dance the Night Away," Brad Paisley "Nervous Breakdown"

GEAR I WANT MOST: Gretsch 6121 Western Roundup, Gretsch 6120 BS Hot Rod



Dave Ferreira

AGE: 51

HOMETOWN: Fremont, CA

GUITARS: Gibson Les Paul Standard, Gibson Les Paul Deluxe, Gibson Les Paul Artist, Fender Telecaster Standard, Fender Telecaster Ultra, Gibson J45
SONGS I'VE BEEN PLAYING: Death Valley Gypsies "Problem Child," Led Zeppelin "Ramble On," Deep Purple "Hush," Sweet "Fox on the Run"

GEAR I WANT MOST: 1974-76 Gibson Les Paul Recording, Martin D28, Gibson J-200, 1970 Hiwatt 100-watt amp



Mark Dittmer

AGE: 67

HOMETOWN: Clinton Township, MI

SONGS I'VE BEEN PLAYING: Blues/jazz/rock backing tracks and classic rock, including anything by Tom Petty or AC/DC

GUITARS: Fender American Deluxe Stratocaster, Fender American Player Telecaster, Gibson Les Paul Studio and PRS S2 Custom 24

GEAR I WANT MOST: Gibson Les Paul Standard



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

AL NESBITT AND THE ALCHEMY

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

A MILLION SHINY THINGS



AL NESBITT AND THE ALCHEMY

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Wayne Tapia	Guitars
Jeff Eason	Bass
Bill Ray	Drums

Guest Musicians:

Tony Franklin
- Bass on 'Allegories and Guillotines'

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

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

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

Nicholas Hooper

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

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"When I moved to Switzerland, I started using Neural DSP and working with them on videos," Jack Gardiner says



Jack of All Trades

FROM FUNK FUSION TO SYNTH POP, GOSPEL AND NURSERY RHYMES, THERE ISN'T MUCH JACK GARDINER CAN'T DO WITH A GUITAR. HERE'S HOW HE GOT THERE

By Amit Sharma

IF YOU'VE BEEN following the Neural DSP channels in recent years, you'll probably have come across the name Jack Gardiner. The English Ibanez endorsee, who is based in Switzerland, has become one of the rising stars of modern fusion — blending influences from Guthrie Govan, Rick Graham and Tom Quayle into his own unique style.

As it turns out, he was coached by the latter in his mid-teens, and it was Quayle's guidance that helped him navigate the fretboard and become the player he is today. Not everyone, as Gardiner rightfully points out, gets that kind of support in their

formative years. On the other hand, help will only take you so far. As history has proven time and time again, every musician is ultimately a result of the amount of time and sweat he or she has put into their chosen art form. In Gardiner's case, the dedication — from control and theory to technique and phrasing covering just about every style — is crystal clear from the moment you hear him.

What was it like studying with legato mastermind Tom Quayle so early on?

I had around eight or nine lessons with him. When I was around 16, he'd invite me

to come and hang out with him and Rick Graham. Seeing those two play in real life was a big eye-opener for me. I'd be sitting there thinking, "Oh, God, they can actually do that stuff." I would later reflect on how lucky I was to have been taught by those players. For my style, I would say people like Tom and Rick, as well as Guthrie, are the masters. It's like they've come from a whole other planet.

What tips can you offer rock players hoping to bridge into fusion?

Definitely listen to Matteo Mancuso or anyone who fills in the gaps with a lot of →



“The proper outside stuff like Allan Holdsworth still scares me. Players like that think in a different way”

chromaticism. You could take an Fmaj7 arpeggio around the eighth fret, for example, and then add notes in — so play something like the eighth, 10th, 11th and 12th frets on the A string, the 10th on the D, and then the ninth and 12th on the G. Then return back to the ninth and play every note up to the 12th that second time. I will often follow the exact same thing on the next strings going an octave up, but change the structure of those enclosures. You can apply that concept to any arpeggio. I’ll do it with pentatonic runs. Guthrie and Richie Kotzen use those ideas a lot. You can get away with anything if it’s in between.

So how far does your theory training stretch?

The proper outside stuff like Allan Holdsworth still scares me. Players like that think in a different way. When people start talking about the Messiaen modes of limited transposition, my brain turns off. Even with melodic minor, I try to simplify it as much as I can. I remember transcribing a Wayne Krantz lick from “Whippersnapper,” and it took me a second to realize it was whole tone — the stuff I’d been avoiding. Most of my lines come from melodic fusion players like Frank Gambale.

You typically play a custom-built Ibanez AZ into a Neural DSP Quad Cortex. Would it be fair to describe your tones as “spanky”?

Definitely! I started out with a bad Les Paul copy. My first proper guitar was an Ibanez

JEM555. I loved it for shred stuff, but it didn’t have the Strat sound. The AZ models are great, being Superstrats with 22 frets. Weirdly, I can’t seem to play on 22 frets. It’s this symmetry thing that freaks my mind out, so I need 24. I was begging Ibanez to make me a 24-fret HSS AZ, and apparently it needs a slightly different shape to get that neck pickup close enough to the 24th fret. In the end, they did.

When did you realize it was time to move from analog to digital?

I used to be a tube amp guy. I had a Friedman BE-100 at one point, which was my dream amp, though I was mainly using it for Eighties pop gigs with China Crisis. When I moved to Switzerland, I started using Neural DSP and working with them on videos. I got sick of not having the same tones live, and then the Quad Cortex came along. Suddenly I could have a compressed Fender funk sound, a Vox chime or even a BE-100. Traveling became the easiest thing, so I’m digital from now on. I’m working on more stuff with Neural, plus new solo material.

Your session work stretches from gospel music to playing for China Crisis. What have you learned from those experiences?

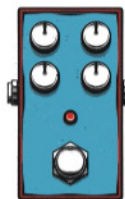
My biggest shows have been with China Crisis. There was one festival we did with A-ha and Seal in front of 40,000 people. Before that, I was doing session stuff for high-end gospel musicians. Tom Quayle

noticed that’s when my playing really started to improve, because they’d throw crazy changes into songs like “Valerie” by Amy Winehouse without explaining what was happening. I’d be sitting there at 19 years old, super innocent, having never heard chords like that. I’d record memos on my phone and work it all out later. Then I realized how it linked into what Eric Gales does, using re-harmonizations that are tasteful and soulful in equal measure.

Fusion players tend to be quite serious, but we’ve seen you turning songs like “The Wheels on the Bus” and “Baby Shark” into re-harmonized jazz odysseys.

That stuff comes from the Swedish band Dirty Loops. When they formed, they decided to have fun covering songs like “Baby” by Justin Bieber, precisely because fusion players can get very serious. When my daughter became obsessed with nursery rhymes, I tried showing her how to play them on the keyboard, but she lost interest. Hours later, I’d be still playing them, having more fun than I imagined. Honestly, I never thought I’d be talking to *Guitar World* about “The Wheels on the Bus” and “Baby Shark.”

Stone Mecca's pedalboard;
[below] Mecca in action in
Forth Worth, Texas, April 28, 2018



MY PEDALBOARD STONE MECCA

WHAT THE HIP-HOP SESSION ACE
SEES WHEN HE LOOKS DOWN

Interview by Andrew Daly

“I LOVE THE sound of my pedals to be analog. I minimize them to only the exact ones I need and dig deep to dial in the specific sound I’m looking for. If I ever do use a digital pedal, I never use factory sounds. I’ll dial in my own combinations to make a unique and warm sound. The setup I have running through my Fender Twin is amazing; I run it through my wah and delay last to affect the overall sound to how I like; it’s been amazing.”

“You wouldn’t think it with hip-hop music, but it’s the perfect effect for cutting through the mix”

IF I HAD TO CHOOSE ONLY ONE PEDAL FOR A FULL SHOW:

“I’d go with the Boss Metal Zone, but I wish I could also have my DOD Digital Delay. But the Metal Zone is my favorite pedal for distortion and allows me to do a lot of things. You wouldn’t think it with hip-hop music, but it’s the perfect effect for cutting through the mix and making the guitar stand out.”



“My board starts with my Boss Chromatic Tuner [TU-2], which is basic but great. The chromatic tuner goes into my Boss Metal Zone [MT-2], which I’ve had forever and, despite what people say about it, is my favorite dirt box. After the Metal Zone, the next pedal is my [Boss] Super Overdrive [SD-1], which leads into my Pigtronix [EP-1] Envelope Phaser. I’m good friends with the people at Pigtronix, and it doesn’t get better.”

“After that, my board ends with my [Dunlop 535Q Cry Baby Multi-] Wah, and the chain ends with my DOD Digital Delay [DFX9], another pedal I’ve had forever.”

Have someone in mind for a My Pedalboard feature? Let us know!

Whitney Petty [left] and Molly Sides in action in Seattle, September 2, 2023; [below] Petty in Seattle, April 15, 2022



Thunderpussy

THE SEATTLE TUNE-SLINGERS REDISCOVER THEIR MOJO AND BOUNCE BACK WITH A NEW ALBUM, THANKS TO A TRIPPY JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY DOWN SOUTH OF MEXICO WAY

By Jacob Uitti

▶ THUNDERPUSSY LEAD GUITARIST Whitney Petty prayed for this. A handful of years ago she was at rock bottom, depressed and creatively lost. Her Seattle-born all-woman classic rock-inspired band left the major label it had signed to and her relationship with Molly Sides, the group's Grace Slick-like lead singer, had frayed. But Petty found solace in new surroundings. She moved to Guatemala, met local musicians and indulged in a new spiritual side. The result is the band's exultant new sophomore album, *West*.

"I went down to Guatemala pretty broken and fairly convinced my career was done and there would be no more Thunderpussy," Petty says. "But when I went down there, the whole script flipped."

It began with internal investigation, bolstered by traditional Mayan fire ceremonies. She asked questions of the flames: "What's next for me? What's the new chapter?" When the answer came, Petty

knew she had a path forward. "A voice came to me," she says. "It said, 'You're an entertainer. Stop crying and bitching. Pull yourself up.' I thought, 'Okay, that's true! Maybe I can do it.'"

The dynamic musician first found the guitar when she was 12, stunned by the spectacle of the bright orange instrument her father had bought her. She spent as much time perfecting her windmills and glam rock facial expressions jumping on a bed in front of a mirror as she did working on scales. Now she's part of a loud, lithe and empowering group that's co-signed by Pearl Jam's Mike McCready, who gifted Petty one of his signature Gibson Les Pauls.

In Guatemala, she honed her drumming and record producing chops as much as her sense of the world. She's at peace now, welcoming the sonic future. Her depression lifted. "Next thing you know," she says, "I'm playing music again." The nine-track *West*, which is the result of more than five years of honing the guttural songs on the

"I went down to Guatemala pretty broken and fairly convinced my career was done and there would be no more Thunderpussy"

LP, rises molten from Thunderpussy's rock volcano. The band will debut it live at Seattle's Benaroya Hall, backed by the hometown symphony.

On the album, Petty bows her electric guitar (like hero Jimmy Page) on the nine-minute epic, "Misty Morning," and ravaging opener, "I Can Do Better." She takes advantage of her organ-like POG and Cry Baby Wah, too. But more than any piece of gear, the new record was about powering through — songs, takes, the pain of the past. "Goddamn," Petty says, with a deep breath, "it turned out good."



Mr. Tabs

SURE, THE LIVE TABS ON HIS YOUTUBE CHANNEL ARE GREAT AS IS, BUT THIS SMALL-TOWN CANADIAN GUITARIST DELIVERS THEM WITH JUST THE RIGHT GEAR, CLOTHING AND BACKDROPS

By Adam Kovac

▶ YOU MIGHT NOT know Patrick Dwyer's face, but if you're a guitar aficionado who spends time on YouTube, odds are you're pretty well acquainted with his hands, not to mention his snazzy wardrobe.

For the past few years, Dwyer has been cranking out videos with a remarkably simple concept: he takes a popular guitar-based song and plays it all the way through as a tab rolls by on the bottom of the screen. It's not a unique concept — guitar covers are their own sub-genre of the medium. What makes Dwyer stand out is the commitment to the bit: for the past few years, the St. John's, Newfoundland, resident has taken to not only aping a guitarists' playing style, but also their choice in ax and clothing. Playing through "Highway to Hell"? He busts out a schoolboy outfit and SG. Poison? He's got a C.C. Deville-esque cutoff denim vest and pointy Jackson at the ready. Guns N' Roses' "Nightrain"? Lots of leather, lots of bracelets and a Les Paul (one can only imagine there's a top hat just out of the frame).

The channel is the logical endpoint for a talented player who

has a degree in music, paid his dues in bar bands and teaching gigs before working as an electrician to pay the bills. With the channel's popularity (almost 700,000 subscribers and more than 150 million views), Dwyer is now able to focus on guitar full time. And it's a good thing because while a Nirvana tune can be flown through in a single take, Dwyer has found his hands full with some of the more difficult material.

"'Cliffs of Dover' was definitely the biggest challenge for me on the page. I didn't even think I was going to be able to do it. Some of the songs I thought would be out of my range, technique-wise. You can tell there's a lot of takes in that video; I'm not doing from start to finish in one video take; I'm doing it in sections."

[top] Mr. Tabs in some of his many on-screen personas, including Angus Young, John Lennon and Marty McFly; [right] Patrick Dwyer, the man behind Mr. Tabs

As for the rather impressive stockpile of guitars that appear in the videos, many are from Dwyer's personal collection, while others get borrowed from friends or rented from music stores, while the clothes shopping sprees came out of a desire to grow his channel, but also as a business imperative.

"I felt like if this channel becomes a thing, the clothing and

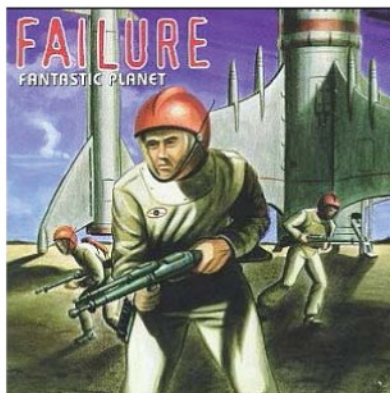


"'Cliffs of Dover' was definitely the biggest challenge for me on the page. I didn't even think I was going to be able to do it"

everything becomes tax write-offs, because you know, that is my living," he said. "Every guitar is like an investment on the channel. People like seeing the guitar for the artist."

The channel has expanded so much that Dwyer has actually had to recruit some backup — his friend Jason Sheppard is now stepping in to play some of the tunes. It's a long way to come for a player who grew up jamming to GNR tunes in a small Canadian town.

"It seems to be resonating with a lot of people, what I'm doing," Dwyer says. "If it resonates with people, and this is what I love to do, I'll just go all in for it."



LOST CLASSICS: Failure

GUITARIST/BASSIST KEN ANDREWS DISCUSSES THE DRAMATICALLY HEARTBREAKING SOUNDS AND CIRCUMSTANCES BEHIND THE L.A. TRIO'S 1996 SPACE-ROCK ODYSSEY, *FANTASTIC PLANET*

By Gregory Adams

▶ LOS ANGELES TRIO Failure were coming off a buzz-building global tour with longtime friends Tool when they set out to make their ambitious, career-defining *Fantastic Planet* in the mid-Nineties. But after playing the biggest shows of their career up to that point, guitarists/bassists Ken Andrews and Greg Edwards and drummer Kellii Scott escaped to metal god Lita Ford's home in Tujunga, California to track their third full-length. The results were otherworldly.

The ecosystem of their 17-song *Fantastic Planet* is alive with neon lilac, alt-gloom-gaze ("Heliotropic"); high-drama chord pivots ("Pitiful"); and distorted tones seemingly conjured from a most melancholy jet engine ("Stuck On You"). Reflecting different rhythmic philosophies, Edward affixed an elegant elasticity to his standup bass sections, while Andrews anchored into steady low-end bass chording amid the hypnotic lock groove of "Another Space Song."

While partly inspired by 1973 French sci-fi film *Fantastic Planet*, Edwards' lyrical contributions reflected the alienation of a burgeoning heroin addiction. He navigated drug busts and police intimidation ("Sergeant Politeness"); its most enduring number, "The Nurse Who Loved Me," is a tragically beautiful, phaser-stunned glam ballad where a health worker is praised for handing the narrator the "pharmacy keys." Romantic, in a messed-up kind of way.

Andrews considered their wide-scope celestial odyssey "the best record we had



[from left; all ID's left to right] Greg Edwards at Lollapalooza 1996; Failure in a 1996 promo photo (Troy Van Leeuwen, Edwards, Ken Andrews and Kellii Scott); Edwards, Andrews and Scott in the studio

made so far," but when their label folded, *Fantastic Planet* got put in limbo for 18 months. It was depressing, but Andrews, Edwards and then-Tool bassist Paul D'Amour distracted themselves at Ford's house by subverting new wave hits as the Replicants. When Warner Bros. picked up *Fantastic Planet* in the summer of '96, Failure enlisted future Queens of the Stone Age guitarist Troy Van Leeuwen to fill out the live sound, though interpersonal struggles imploded the quartet within a year.

That said, the mythos of Failure skyrocketed in the '00s through file-sharing and big-boost covers from A Perfect Circle (Van Leeuwen co-founded that band; Edwards was a touring member in 2018) and Paramore. And after working apart for the bulk of two decades, Edwards, Andrews and Scott reunited in 2014, having since delivered another three albums' worth of pensive, personal space rock.

While taking a break from self-pro-



ducing a full-length documentary on the history of the band, due sometime in 2025, Andrews tells *Guitar World* how being left to their own devices — and vices — led Failure to explore the outer reaches of their *Fantastic Planet*.

How did you end up renting Lita Ford's house?



One of Failure's peers was this band Medicine. I think I saw [guitarist/vocalist] Brad Laner at a party in L.A., told him that we'd just gotten the thumbs up from Slash to self-produce this third record, and that they gave us money to buy our own gear to record it. We were looking for a space to rent, and he was like, "That's pretty funny, because I just rented this little house up in Tujunga for a month, and we finished a new Medicine record up there."

It wasn't a luxury home. The foundation had been cracked in the '94 Northridge earthquake. [Lita] wasn't living there. This was her three-bedroom starter house that she bought with the first money that she made in the music business. She couldn't sell it, so she was looking for anyone to rent it. We moved in a week after Medicine moved out. We were there six months with Failure, and then another three months making the *Replicants* album.



What did you like about the setup there?

We were renting it for \$2,000 a month; that's what a regular recording studio in L.A. cost per day. The whole purpose of buying the gear and renting a cheap house was to remove the time restrictions and allow us to essentially write in the studio.

You mentioned buying recording equipment before moving into the house, but did you level up your guitar gear?

We definitely got a few new guitars. I don't know what happened to the main guitar that I had used on the first two records [1992's *Comfort* and 1994's *Magnified*], whether it was lost or stolen, but it had a unique sound. I'd built that out of mail-order parts from Warmoth. It was a Strat-style body and neck, but it had a humbucker in the bridge position and a single-coil in the neck, like a Van Halen-type thing. The [humbucker] was a Bill Lawrence. That's not super high gain, but it's teetering on it. Every time I hear old demos or the first two records, I just hear that pickup. The fact that I don't have it anymore bums me out.

The most significant guitar purchase before we moved into the *Fantastic Planet* house was a 1976 Les Paul Standard that I bought on Sunset at a great vintage shop. That guitar paid [itself] off; it's a staple of the band still. But there's a lot of single-coil on *Fantastic Planet*, too. That's either done with a Jazzmaster or a Tele.

Rig-wise, what's on this record?

My live rig at that point was a rack system that [Bob] Bradshaw had wired. It was a Marshall JMP midi preamp — the gold one — going into a Rocktron Intelliflex

"Fantastic Planet is the album that actually brought us back... Newer fans found it after we broke up, through file-sharing and CD burning"

multi-effects unit. A lot of times the Intelliflex would also feed into a huge rack-mount VHT stereo tube power amp, and then into two Marshall 4x12's. And then I would have a Fender Twin on top of one of the Marshalls that I would lean on for clean sounds. I also had a mega-crunch sound [while using] a Big Muff going to the Twin. The Big Muff and the Twin, together, is very scooped. Combining that with the Marshall was a big part of *Fantastic Planet*'s power chord sounds.

You and Greg are often switching off bass and guitar duties. Can you pinpoint the differences between your styles on either instrument?

He's a way more sophisticated bass player than I am. I play bass like a rhythm guitarist; I play a lot of chords. If there's a bass run or a sophisticated passing riff, I usually don't do that. With guitar, though, both of us really like weird, dissonant riffs and ambient things.

There's bittersweet glam grandeur to "The Nurse Who Loved Me." Where did that come from?

Greg had a very unusual cassette demo of that before we got to the house. You could

hear an acoustic guitar playing chords, and Greg was singing something, but it was shrouded in all these weird sound effects. I couldn't tell if there was an actual song playing [at first], but by the time I got to the end of it, I was like, "Holy shit, this is amazing."

I suggested making it more of a piano song than a guitar song — we had just found Lita's digital piano, a Korg she had left under a bed. Greg has great rhythmic feel on keyboards, so ultimately, we ended up recording the basic tracking with just Kellii playing drums and Greg playing piano. We didn't use a metronome on that song. We really wanted it to ebb and flow with the chord changes, and have some really specific retards in spots.

That's Greg's guitar solo on the record. I was playing the rhythm guitars on the song, but then [I thought I'd] take a crack at doing a solo. I tried for a half-hour, but didn't like anything I was coming up with. It was too sentimental, so I handed Greg the guitar and hit record. I don't even know if he had played guitar that day. That was his first take, stream of consciousness. Probably half the notes aren't in key, but I think it's a brilliant solo. I play it live now.

"Dirty Blue Balloons" features another solo that's working in and out of key.

I did that one! You'd probably think that the person who played the "Nurse" solo also played the "Dirty Blue Balloons" solo, but they're not the same person. They have the same ethos, though. A record I was listening to where I really love the solos is David Bowie's *Scary Monsters*, with Robert Fripp and Carlos Alomar. Their solos on that record are so art-school; very anti-solo. They don't rely on the blues scale. They're experimental; they're breaking a lot of rules. Those were the kinds of solos I was interested in at the time.

Band members started struggling with addiction through the making of *Fantastic Planet*. How aware were you of that at the time?

Greg's heroin usage was climbing, [but] it was still the honeymoon period for him. Whether it was breaking down his inhibitions in terms of writing and/or exploring himself as the subject of the lyrics, I don't know... I was starting to get worried, but at the same time he was coming up with some really good material. His contributions were just amazing to me.

When [*Failure*] started [using heroin], we were all doing it together. There was a certain amount of safety in that, in terms of people not doing it too much. But then Kellii and I both noticed that he started using with other people, and that's when we

"In 2014 we booked a show at the El Rey in Los Angeles, and it sold out in less than five minutes. That had never happened in the Nineties"

started to get really concerned. So, there was that darkness for sure. And then about five months into making the record, our manager calls and says, "I know you guys are almost about to finish up there, but I've got some bad news. Slash Records are trying to sell the label... It's quite possible that when the label is sold, whoever buys it will be under no contractual obligation for this to come out." That sent me into a very deep depression.

The songs that weren't finished at that point were the last two songs on the album, "Heliotropic" and "Daylight." In a way, they're the two darkest songs on the record. When I hear "Daylight," I hear despair and sorrow. I've been [re-evaluating] the lyrics I wrote for that song, and the underpinning there is that we're realizing that this [album] might never see daylight. I think "Heliotropic" was Greg admitting, "Yeah, I'm an addict. If I wasn't at the beginning of the record, I am now."

When *Fantastic Planet* eventually came out through Warner, you started touring as a quartet. How did Troy Van Leeuwen end up playing guitar in *Failure*?

I became extremely convinced that in order to support *Fantastic Planet* properly, we needed a second guitarist. I was looking at the sound of the album, and realizing how many times there were two very distinct guitar parts happening at the same time, not just one [rhythm guitar] playing chords that the bass was already covering. Everyone else who had heard the record was right there with me. Kellii is the person in *Failure* who knows all the musicians in L.A., and he had already been playing in one or two different projects with Troy, so we became friends. At some point we were like, "Yeah, this is the guy we should take on the road with us."

What kind of energy did he bring to the songs?

There's a certain heaviness and girth that you can achieve with two guitar players if they're both playing power chords. We didn't have Fractals then, so creating really

thick sounds live was hard. That part of it was really cool. I've been looking back at the very few old shows that we have on video from '96 and '97, and I can hear that he was definitely a better guitar player than I was. He would introduce alternate versions of riffs or melodic lines that were very static on the record — like the same figure looping every four bars. He'd turn an instrumental section into a pseudo guitar solo moment.

How do you remember this first phase of *Failure* winding down?

We did three or four tours that last year where we were supporting *Fantastic Planet*, and we ended the cycle with Lollapalooza '97. The last show we played was in San Francisco. That entire [tour cycle] was heartbreaking, because I was just watching my best friend get eaten alive by heroin. It was amazing to me how far gone he was, physically, but that he was still able to play the shows. Musically, there weren't that many times where the drugs were fucking him up, in terms of playing the wrong notes. There were a couple times where he was really focused on what he was playing but lost focus of his own balance. I remember a couple of our crew guys running out and pulling him back from falling off the stage. It was not a fun time.

You've been in this prolific reunion phase for the past decade. Set against the newer material, what is the legacy of *Fantastic Planet* to the members of *Failure*?

I definitely look at it as two halves of a career — we had our Nineties career, and we have our career now — but *Fantastic Planet* is the album that actually brought us back, if you think about it. Newer fans found it after we broke up, through file-sharing and CD burning in the aughts. We kept hearing all these rumors that *Failure* is more beloved now than in the Nineties. Then we started hanging out and enjoying each other's company again. We had kids; drugs were out of the picture. At some point we were like, "Let's see if these rumors are true," so in 2014 we booked a show at the El Rey in Los Angeles, and it sold out in less than five minutes. That had never happened in the Nineties.

It's kind of a cool story in that we can have our own little world and be completely understood and appreciated in a way that we never were in the Nineties. We were always being compared to grunge bands. We had some of that in our sound, but we were something else. The full understanding of the band didn't happen until after we broke up.

"We were nervous about the idea of making an album for a long time, as we'd never been in a studio for more than a couple of days," Leila Deeley says



FIVE QUESTIONS LEILA DEELEY

HOW THE LIME GARDEN GUITARIST CHANNELS HER TONY IOMMI INFLUENCES INTO SOME SERIOUSLY CATCHY INDIE ROCK RIFFS **By Mark McStea**

▶ U.K.-BASED LIME Garden mash up a unique mix of alternative, rock and electronic influences to create their own special sauce of indie-flavored pop with attitude. Guitarist Leila Deeley's lush sonic textures are the bedrock upon which the band's sound is built — never showboating, always keenly aware that the song is king. They've just released their debut album, *One More Thing*, an effervescent concoction of instant pop classics.

Q: What got you into playing?
My parents are huge music fans, although they don't play instruments themselves. I'd hear their music, which ranged from Black Sabbath — I loved Tony Iommi — and the Doors to indie music, and I absorbed it all. I started to play when I was seven on a scaled-down Strat copy. I had lessons when I was young, and I picked it up really quickly. My first serious guitar was a Gibson Les Paul, though I rarely play it now. I've been playing a Strat for about six years; the whammy bar became a huge part of our sound. Recently, I got a really beautiful Jaguar, which I put quite heavy strings on —

.11 or .12 on the E — to thicken up my sound a little. We've been getting a lot of support from Fender; they helped me out by changing the bridge on the Jag for a Jazzmaster bridge, as it felt more secure for bending.

Q: Lime Garden tracks like "Pop Star" and "Mother" are a million miles away from Black Sabbath. Do you ever feel the urge to break out the shred?

Absolutely. All the time. [Laughs] I have long periods where I'll spend a lot of time playing at home, working on technique, and that really fires me up as a player, but I suppose I do see myself as a songwriter. I really like playing slide guitar, though I still don't feel quite ready to bring that to our live shows.

Q: You released 11 singles before the first album came out. Was that a deliberate game plan?

We were nervous about the idea of making an album for a long time, as we'd never been in a studio for more than a couple of days. We spent two weeks recording the album, and it was really exciting; it was

"I've been playing a Strat for about six years; the whammy bar became a huge part of our sound"

always our dream to make an album. We'd had most of the songs already written for a long time, so we knew them inside out.

Q: What do you use for amps and effects?

I have a Roland Space Echo, which is on all the time for a slap-back effect, as is a TC Electronic Hall of Fame Reverb. I recently bought a Rat distortion pedal for super crunch when I need it. I also use an MXR overdrive and a Behringer Super Fuzz, which is my all-time favorite fuzz. It was really cheap, too — about \$30. I run everything through a Fender Hot Rod Deluxe.

Q: Everyone in the band seems to have widely disparate influences. How does that work with songwriting?

What we've been able to do is home in on where our various Venn diagrams intersect and use that as the core of what we do. We've played together for a few years and we're all comfortable bringing in ideas. One of us might think something is rubbish, but someone else will often see the potential in it — from a different perspective.

Wolf Hoffmann
on stage in
Madrid, Spain,
January 21, 2023



The Lone Wolf

WOLF HOFFMANN, THE LAST MAN STANDING FROM ACCEPT'S ORIGINAL LINEUP, TALKS GEAR, RIFF CONSTRUCTION AND THE BAND'S NEW ANDY SNEAP-PRODUCED ALBUM, *HUMANOID*

By Andrew Daly

▶ THE OLD GUARD will remember German heavy metal outfit Accept for their classic Eighties records *Restless and Wild* (1982), *Balls to the Wall* (1983) and *Metal Heart* (1985). And that's with good reason, as those records are iconic within traditional metal circles.

The Nineties, however, were a different story. Shifts in Accept's lineup and some interesting but somewhat unsuccessful experimentation led to a few albums that read back a little funny. Though resilient, by the Noughties, Accept was on the ropes. But in 2010, the period that lone heyday holdover Wolf Hoffmann calls "a new era" began. Now, 14 years later, with *Humanoid*, Accept is looking stronger than ever.

It'd be all too easy to take the shiny, new energy surrounding *Humanoid* and label it as Accept's best. Hoffmann, ever pragmatic, is aware of this, saying, "That's always a tough one because, man, I've been really close to it. I don't even like to judge my own records, to be honest. I think it's up to the fans. There's always a tendency to think, 'The latest album is the greatest of all,' you know? Of course, you're going to be so proud of it when you've just finished recording it; I get that."

So then, which of Accept's records means the most to Hoffman? "One special album for me is always [2010's] *Blood of the Nations* because it marks the rebirth of Accept," he says. "It convinced all the naysay-

ers who said, 'You could never come back with a new singer. It's not gonna work.' When that album came out, it surprised a lot of people and started a new era. I think this new album is every bit as strong, but at the end of the day, it's up to the fans."

Accept has been on a remarkable run lately. Why do you think?

I've said we have a new era in Accept since we found [vocalist] Mark [Tornillo] in 2009. We've made six albums together and have a very consistent team, including Andy Sneap, our producer. It's just been getting stronger and stronger; it's due to the fact that we pretty much know what we're going for. We have a style, we have

a dedicated audience, we have a legacy, and we're just trying to deliver on target. Having a distinct style and sound is a curse and a blessing; we don't really want to do crazy experiments and change our style. We just want to get better without being too different.

Obviously, there are expectations, but you want to challenge yourself, right?

Yes, absolutely. You want to push the envelope further. But that doesn't really mean you have to leave your past. You can go forward without changing directions. You can get better, but *[stay]* along the same path and in your style and your tradition.

Andy Sneap has the magic touch with classic metal bands like Accept and Judas Priest.

He's the man of the hour *[or]* the decade. He's been doing it for a long, long time, and this is probably album eight or nine that we've made together. This is, for us, the most consistent collaboration with a producer, ever. It's like one of those things, and when it works right, you never change a winning team. I love Andy; he's amazing.

Consistency breeds success, as they say in sports.

Exactly. To say he's a rare find sounds kind of weird, but he's everything for us. He grew up an Accept fan and kept that inside of him. He's still a very excitable Accept and metal fan. He's not only a world-class producer who knows how to get amazing sounds, but deep inside, he understands what fans want, what excites him and where it all started. It's very honest and genuine.

Has your riff-construction process changed over the years?

I don't think it ever really changed that much for me. I'll usually start when it's time to make a new album. I basically say to everybody, "Hey, guys, start writing songs. We need new material." But I've always been the one who has delivered most of the material. What I do is sit there and jam to myself, and I lay down some guitar riffs.

Do the riffs come easy for you?

I come up with riffs left and right all the time. That's the easy part. But a lot of times, the struggle is what *else* the song needs. After doing that for weeks and months, I usually have a collection of about 50 to 100 snippets. Some songs are complete, some have a vocal idea, like a chorus idea; some have nothing, just a riff.

You've been the lone constant in Accept and seem to be in the position of keeping the legacy and sound alive. Is that difficult?

It is a little bit because I'm not in this position by choice. I wish the chores would have been more divided, but it is what it is. I'm just the last man standing from the original lineup. I've always been one of the driving forces within the band, even when there were original guys. In every band and every combination of people working together, there's some who are more writers than others. That's the way it is. But yeah, you're right; I wish it wasn't all on me. But what can I do?

"People always thought that because I played that Gibson Flying V onstage in the Eighties, I used it in the studio, but I never did; I always had a Strat"

What about solos? There's been a lot of debate about how we move them forward. What's your viewpoint, specifically within the music of Accept?

Some people say, "The vocals are just the boring bits between the guitar solo," you know? I see it about 50/50. It's all about the vocal melodies at the end of the day because that's what people listen to the most. So, you could say *[that]* a guitar solo almost doesn't matter. I can kind of relate to that argument. I'm always challenging myself to have a part in the song somewhere that takes it to another level and brings in another element. I've been lucky enough over the years to come up with a lot of parts in so-called "classic" Accept songs that are as important as the vocal melody and, in some instances, even more important.

What are some examples?

There are some melodies in "Princess of the Dawn" or "Balls to the Wall" that everybody in the audience sings along to. Those were just little guitar melodies I came up with and thought sounded memorable. To have something that a listener can latch onto — something memorable, or a hook — that's the key. But that also depends on the

type of song. There are certain types of songs that require a loose, shredding, rock 'n' roll-type solo. Not every song needs a melodic solo, but I'm a big sucker for melodic solos when they fit, and I liked to put them in. I even use classical melodies; I've done that over the years, again and again.

What are some things you avoid to keep from being repetitive?

Obviously you try not to repeat yourself too much. But at some point, you realize when you have that many records, there's no way you can be unique, different and brand new every time. I try as much as I can, but it's not always possible. There's always going to be licks and phrases you've played before, but I guess that goes for any guitar player. There's a certain gray area where you say, "At what point is that my signature style?" and "At what point did I repeat myself too much?" I guess that's a fine line.

What's the secret to your tone on this record?

I've changed gear — going back to the Eighties — so many times. But at the end of the day, I realized it's all in the playing. How you play is more important than the gear, and I found it almost ironic that sometimes I'd use completely different gear and didn't really sound that different. In the end, it always sounded like me, which is good.

You're usually seen with your Framus V, but are there any different guitars you use in the studio?

Not anymore. But I'll tell you a little secret: a lot of people always thought that because I played that Gibson Flying V onstage in the Eighties, I used it in the studio, but I never used it in the studio; I always had a Strat. I preferred the longer scale, attack and grittiness of a Strat over a short-scale guitar. The Gibson didn't really sound right to me because it was made from mahogany, and it didn't have the attack or clarity I wanted. I don't know how to describe it, but this new Framus has that because it's got a lot of Strat features. I use a couple of overdub guitars, mainly an old Strat, but 80 percent of what you hear is the Framus.

Which songs from *Humanoid* best represent you?

"Unbreakable" is one, I'd say. But another one would be "Southside of Hell." That's a bit unusual because it's got a bit of an experimental beginning where there are a lot of riffs that are fun to play. It all seems a little unusual, but that makes it special.

Duane Eddy (1938-2024)

THE SOFT-SPOKEN GUITARIST INFLUENCED GENERATIONS OF FUTURE GREATS WITH HIS MINIMALISTIC APPROACH AND INSTANTLY RECOGNIZABLE TWANGY GUITAR SOUND

By Mark McStea

▶ DUANE EDDY, WHO died April 30 at age 86, was the first rock 'n' roll guitar hero. His unique twangy guitar lines were among the most truly distinctive sounds in the history of rock guitar; whenever producers wanted that unique vibe on a record, they'd only have to ask for a Duane Eddy-style guitar part, and everyone would instantly know what was required. Unlike anything that had come before him, Eddy — with his echo-drenched, deep-bass driven melodies — managed to encapsulate the essence of the new age of rock 'n' roll that was taking over the world in the Fifties.

Born April 26, 1938, in Corning, New York, Eddy picked up the guitar at age five and moved to Arizona with his family in his early teens; when he was 16, he started to play in local bars, where he met Lee Hazlewood, the singer, songwriter and producer who would go on to co-write and produce the majority of Eddy's hits. Hazlewood had heard Eddy playing bluegrass in a duo with Jimmy Dell and took them into the studio to cut two sides that he'd written, "Soda Fountain Girl" and "I Want Some Lovin' Baby," which Hazlewood released on his own label, Eb X. Preston. The record was a flop, but Eddy continued to work with Hazlewood, who managed to score a national hit in 1956 with "The Fool," a song he co-wrote (with Naomi Ford) and produced for Sanford Clark.

The following year was a big one for Eddy. First, he made a crucial change in his guitar of choice. "I knew I really wanted a guitar with a vibrato arm," he told me. "I traded my Les Paul for a Gretsch 6120 at Ziggy's Music in Phoenix. That was the key to everything that was to follow. I could hear what I wanted my guitar to sound like in my head, and now I could actually translate it into music." Eddy moved to Phoenix that same year, where he rented an apartment from Hazlewood. Bill Justis had a big hit with "Raunchy," the instrumental tune that inspired Hazlewood to suggest that Eddy should write his own instrumentals. The result was "Movin' 'N' Groovin'," which earned Eddy his first hit, reaching Number 72 on the *Billboard* chart.

With his foot firmly in the door, there was no looking back for Eddy. The follow-

up, "Rebel-'Rouser," gave him the first of many million sellers and established the quintessential twangy guitar sound that became his calling card. "I knew we'd hit on something special," Eddy said. "I couldn't really sing that well, so I knew that if I wanted to express myself, it was going to have to be through the guitar, and those real low notes just seemed to hit the spot. I cut 'Rebel-'Rouser' with my 6120 plugged into a Magnatone amp that I'd modified so that it ran at 100 watts. Boy, that was loud, but so clean and clear."

Eddy was quick to give credit where it was due and acknowledged that Hazlewood's production made a huge difference to the sound of the record. "[Hazlewood] really went to town with the echo," Eddy said. "We'd already recorded the track with quite a lot of echo in Phoenix, but then he took it to Gold Star Studios in [Los Angeles] and added even more."

Once the hits started to roll in, Eddy would tour up and down the States on Dick Clark's rock 'n' roll package tours. What most people might not know is that whenever the bus driver got tired, Eddy would take over. "I always wondered how Dick Clark reacted when he found out, because there really was a million dollars' worth of talent on the bus — and if I'd crashed it, the insurance claims would have been enormous!"

While Scotty Moore (with Elvis Presley), Cliff Gallup (with Gene Vincent) and James Burton (with Ricky Nelson) were pioneers of the burgeoning art of rock lead guitar, they were essentially sidemen. Eddy, meanwhile, was upfront and in your face, without vocals to dilute the impact. The lines he played might have seemed simple at times, but when he needed to, Eddy could blaze; witness the driving intro of "Movin'" or his killer blues licks on "Three-30 Blues." Eddy's fifth hit, "Peter Gunn" (1959), was written by Henry Mancini for the TV show of the same name and was clearly inspired by Eddy's sound. Eddy remembered meeting Mancini after he'd taken his version into the charts. "I was at the movie studios where he was working, and he called out to me to hold up a minute. He ran up to me and thanked me for making him so much money from 'Peter Gunn.'"



Duane Eddy with his signature Gretsch 6120DE in 2010



“There is all that magic just waiting to come out when you open it up, and every time you get the guitar out, it never lets you down”

Ironically, although Eddy made plenty of money for other people, his modest personality led others to take advantage of and exploit him. “I never got the royalties I deserved from Jamie, my record company,” he said. “Tour promoters ripped me off; I used to think we should be doing a lot better than we were, given our success, until I realized people were badly mismanaging me. Later, I signed to RCA, who got into a muddle with some of the money they owed me. When they paid it back, my representatives took the money as a single payment rather than spreading it out over the length of my contract, so it was taxed as a single year’s earnings.”

Eddy’s success wasn’t confined to the States; he scored hits around the world, particularly in the U.K., where he was an influence on the Beatles, the Rolling Stones and Jeff Beck. Rock ‘n’ roll maintained its popularity outside America long after the thrill had faded in the States; any act that toured the U.K. in the Fifties was greeted with the kind of hysterical scenes that would later become the norm for the Beatles, and the following for the music in England was so strong that a rock ‘n’ roll festival in 1972 featuring Chuck Berry, Little Richard, Jerry Lee Lewis and Bo Diddley filled Wembley Stadium, one of the largest outdoor sports arenas in the country.

The Duane Eddy Circle, one of the longest-running fan clubs for any artist, is based in the U.K. Founder Arthur Moir became good friends with Eddy over the decades and remembers that Eddy had a particular affection for his legions of fans around the world. Moir notes that Eddy was very modest about his status and place in the lineage of guitar greats. “He was very grateful for the numerous awards he won, and I think the respect he received from other artists was equally important to him,” Moir said. That respect was demonstrated by the amount of guest appearances Eddy made with numerous legendary figures over the length of his career, ranging from Foreigner to Hans Zimmer.

According to Moir, Eddy didn’t look back on his career with anything other than modesty. “I’m sure he was aware of his status and his place in history, but there

was no sign of ego,” Moir said. “He was the star, but he also felt that he was one of the band. He gave credit to the Rebels (his band) by including their names on album sleeves — not just the studio musicians but also the touring Rebels. That was unheard of at that time.”

The hits started to dwindle in the Sixties. “(Dance with the) Guitar Man” (1962) was his last significant chart entry, and Eddy spent a few years working as an actor, mainly appearing in Westerns. But he continued to record, releasing some of his most artistically satisfying albums, including *Songs of Our Heritage* (1960) and *Duane Does Bob Dylan* (1965). Dylan was a fan of the album and even cited it in his 2005 autobiography, *Chronicles: Volume One*, where he wrote, “My lyrics had struck nerves that had never been struck before, but if my songs were just about the words, then what was Duane Eddy, the great rock-and-roll guitarist, doing recording an album full of instrumental melodies of my songs?”

It seemed that the prospect of further chart success was a distant dream by 1975, yet — remarkably — Eddy scored a worldwide Top 10 with “Play Me Like You Play Your Guitar,” which was followed, even more surprisingly, in 1986 by a reworking of “Peter Gunn” by U.K. collective Art of Noise. In 1987, he released one of his greatest achievements, the annoyingly hard-to-find *Duane Eddy: His Twangy Guitar and the Rebels*, which features guest appearances and/or production by George Harrison, Paul McCartney, Jeff Lynne, John Fogerty and Ry Cooder, not to mention “The Trembler,” a one-of-a-kind Duane Eddy/Ravi Shankar co-write.

According to Moir, there are several unreleased treasures in the vaults that really should be available by now. “The most important is *Artifacts of Twang*,” he says. “One track includes a collaboration with Brian Setzer; another was the last ever track that Phil Everly recorded. There’s also an album he recorded for Colpix, but the label folded before it was released. He recorded *Tokyo Hits* for Reprise, to be issued only in Japan; it really needs a worldwide release.”

Eddy never tired of touring, frequently playing dates around the world, even in his eighties, and never tired of playing the old hits that he must have performed thousands of times, just as he never lost his enthusiasm for the guitar.

“There’s something that’s special about a guitar in its case,” he said. “You know there is all that magic just waiting to come out when you open it up, and every time you get the guitar out, it never lets you down.”

The Ramblin' Man

1943 - 2024

A personal ode to the late Allman Brothers Band legend **DICKEY BETTS** by Betts' former bandmate, *Guitar World's* Andy Aledort

| BY ANDY ALEDORT



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GUITAR WORLD

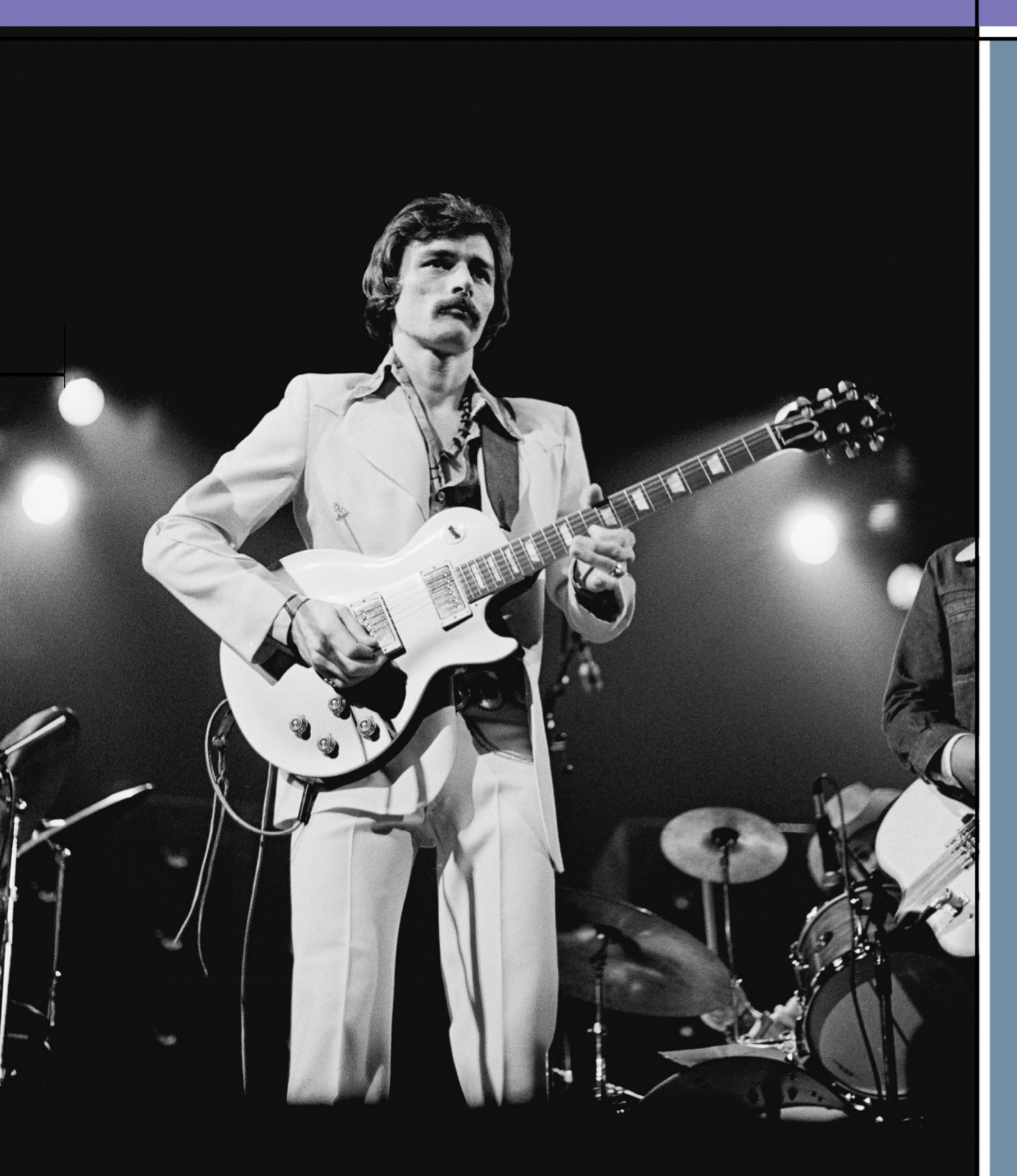
FROM 2005 TO 2014, I had the honor and privilege of playing alongside Dickey Betts in his band, Great Southern. Sharing the stage with Dickey for a decade constitutes some of the greatest musical experiences of my life, and it was truly a blessing to get to know him and call him a friend.

Dickey was a giant, universally revered as one of the greatest guitarists of all time. He possessed a purely distinct signature style and sound that was uniquely his own, distinguished by an ingenious blend of blues, rock, country, Western swing and Appalachian string music, delivered with the touch, tone and technique of a true virtuoso.

As one of the founding members of the Allman Brothers Band, Dickey, via his phenomenal playing and brilliant songwriting, laid the foundation for what was at the time a new style of music to be known as Southern rock. He and his co-guitarist, Duane Allman, weaved intricate harmonized guitar parts unlike any ever heard before; prime examples of these beautifully intricate harmonized lines are at the heart of songs such as "Blue Sky," "Revival," "In Memory of Elizabeth Reed" and many others. Betts' impact on generations of guitarists, as well as all musicians and the broad spectrum of American music, is immeasurable.

During my 10 years as Dickey's guitarist, we played upwards of 250 shows across the globe. We traversed the U.S. many times and traveled to Japan and performed in Germany, Poland and Spain on numerous occasions. As one might imagine, there's a flood of great memories from all of the shows and events shared over the years. My journeys with Dickey Betts taught me more about performing, and about life, than all of the years leading up to that point.

Betts has long been one of my favorite guitarists. I fell in love with his playing from my initiation to the Allman Brothers Band's music via their classic 1971 double live album, *At Fillmore East*.



Dickey Betts in action with
the Allman Brothers Band in New Haven,
Connecticut, September 15, 1975;
[facing page] Andy Aledort [left]
on stage with Betts in 2008

Dickey's Best

Dickey Betts in 12 essential tracks

"Blue Sky," from *Eat a Peach*,
The Allman Brothers Band (1972)

One of Dickey Betts' most well-known and revered compositions, it reveals his penchant for country and Appalachian string music re-imagined within the Southern rock realm. Betts' and Duane Allman's solos on this track attained "essential learning" status from the moment *Eat a Peach* was released 52 years ago. Be sure to check out the 1991 live version, performed for the German TV series *Ohne Filter*, where Betts delivers a fiery, virtuosic solo.



"In Memory of Elizabeth Reed,"
from *At Fillmore East*,

The Allman Brothers Band (1971)

This brilliant Betts composition melds the influence of the modal jazz of Miles Davis and John Coltrane with Latin rhythms, delivered with a progressive blues/rock approach. Betts and Allman devised exquisite harmonized lines for the song, and each delivers inspired extended solos on this seminal track.

"One Way Out," from *Eat a Peach*

A large part of the legacy of the Allman Brothers Band is their reworking of blues standards, such as this Sonny Boy Williamson classic, as well as Muddy Waters' "Trouble No More," Elmore James' "Done Somebody Wrong," T-Bone Walker's "(Call It) Stormy Monday" and Junior Wells/Buddy Guy's "You Don't Love Me."

Betts' intense solo on this track just might be the greatest blues/rock tone ever; one big fan is Martin Scorsese, who used Betts' solo as the soundtrack to the brutal bar fight scene in 2006's *The Departed*.

"Whipping Post," from *At Fillmore East*

For this extended Gregg Allman composition, Betts performs a four-minute solo that combines jazzy chromaticism and modally driven melodies with pure blues feeling. At the 13-minute mark, the band transitions into a different chord progression, Am-Bm-Fmaj7-E, which Betts would refer to as "Lullaby."



"Ramblin' Man," from *Brothers and Sisters*, The Allman Brothers Band (1973)

The quintessential Betts song — and the only Number 1 hit in the Allmans catalog. Betts combines elements of country and rock in a distinctly original and accessible

The Allman Brothers Band outside of Macon, Georgia, in 1969; [from left] Duane Allman, Betts, Gregg Allman, Jaimoe, Berry Oakley and Butch Trucks



“Dickey called and said, ‘My guitar player just quit and the tour starts in a week. Do you want to do it?’ ”

As an aspiring 15-year-old guitarist at the time, I remember hearing “Statesboro Blues” on a New York FM radio station, kicked off by the classic spoken introduction, “Okay, the Allman Brothers Band!” and Duane Allman’s laser-like slide guitar playing.

I had just started to play slide, and when I heard “Statesboro,” it inspired me to sit down in earnest to get it together, doing my best to learn every one of Duane’s slide solos, along with every single Duane and Dickey solo on the entire album. Thirty years later, this dedicated study would pay off in ways I never could’ve imagined.

As a longtime writer for guitar magazines, I’d had the opportunity to interview, play with and become friends with many of my guitar heroes, including Johnny Winter, Buddy Guy, B.B. King, Jeff Beck, Albert King, John McLaughlin and others. As of 2001, Dickey Betts had not been one of them.

During the Nineties, Allman Brothers’ guitarist Warren Haynes had become a friend, and throughout that time I found myself backstage at many Allman Brothers shows at the Beacon Theatre in New York City. There were a handful of times when I was within a few feet of Dickey; he’d always be sitting in a chair off the side of the stage, apart from everyone else, most definitely “in his own space.” His vibe was that he wanted to be left alone, and I respected the impression he gave.

In 2000, Dickey was unceremoniously “released” — fired — from the Allman Brothers Band. Stories abounded on both sides with a lot of negative statements made. *Guitar World* Editor-in-Chief Brad Tolinski thought it would be a good idea to offer Dickey a monthly column in the magazine, as it would afford him the opportunity to speak directly to his many fans around the world. I began working with Dickey on his column, called “True Grit,” which ultimately ran for more than a year and a half.

The lessons were a hit with the readers, as each month he'd use the space to teach and discuss his most beloved songs, such as "In Memory of Elizabeth Reed," "Blue Sky," "Jessica" and "Ramblin' Man." Readers could see how deep-thinking and eloquent Betts was, as he spoke at length about the roots of his playing, which began at the age of five, when he played guitar alongside his violin-playing father and uncles.

The family's musical heritage originated from Prince Edward Sound in Nova Scotia, and this very distinct style can be found in indigenous Acadian recordings from more than 100 years ago. Elements of the unique melodic nature of this music served to lay the groundwork for Dickey's original and beautifully melodic soloing style on the guitar.

"An important element in the formation of my style is that my dad was a fiddle player, and I grew up surrounded by all of those great bluegrass fiddle melodies," Dickey said. "My dad was very into precision; he was a cabinet maker, and every nail had to be driven just right. He was the same way about music: the fiddle had to be tuned perfectly, and he played with the same precise approach.

"All of those beautiful Irish folk melodies of the fiddle had an impact on me early on, which I didn't even realize until I started trying to find my own voice on the guitar. The strong sense of melody I inherited from him had been deeply instilled in me. That's when I began to search for a strong sense of melody within the blues form, which I think is a good overall characterization of my style. One of the best examples of this influence coming to the fore is 'Jessica.'"

In putting the articles together, Dickey and I would speak at length on the phone. One day, I said to him, "Dickey, it would be great to sit in with you some time if the opportunity arises." His response was unexpected; he said, "Any show you can make, call my stage manager Mike, and he will make sure there is a half-stack Marshall waiting for you." No one had ever made such a generous offer to me. For the next three years, if Dickey had a show within 100 miles, I made sure I was there. Between 2002 and 2005, I sat in with Dickey and the band more than 20 times.

For most people, Betts was a bit of an enigma. His reputation as a hell raiser was well earned, and there's no way anyone could know what he was like on a personal level. He was definitely mercurial, but he was also one of the sweetest and most generous people you could ever meet. And his sense of humor was tremendous.

In 2003, before I joined the band, he invited me down to his house to celebrate his birthday with him and his family. It was

a nice gathering, with one of his daughters and his grandchildren; I was the only non-family member there. At one point I went outside to call my wife, and within a few minutes, the door opened and there was Dickey with a plate and a big piece of birthday cake. He said, "I was looking for you! Don't you want some of my cake?"

One morning in 2005, while I was standing in line at the bank, Dickey called and said, "Hey, listen — my guitar player just quit and the tour starts in a week. Do you want to do it?" At that time I had a full-time job with *Guitar World*, writing for five different magazines, plus two young kids at home. So I said, "Yes, definitely! When do you want me to come down?" He said, "Right now!"

It was a tall task to learn all of the intricate harmonized guitar parts for Dickey's entire three-hour show, and I had about two days to do it. His sets included some of his most difficult material, such as "High Falls," "Nobody Knows," "True Gravity," "Jessica," "Nothing You Can Do," "Revival" and so many others — almost *all* of the material from the Allman Brothers records as well as the Great Southern records and new songs, too. I transcribed reams of charts and brought them with me, and from the very first rehearsal, we were off to the races.

At our very first show, a private event at B.B. King's Blues Club & Grill in New York City, I went up onstage before sound check to plug in and get the sound together. Dickey came out, stood next to me, plugged in and said, "Let's play 'High Falls' together." As we started to play the opening harmonized lines, he stopped and said, "You should play the parts a little more delicately. Think of our guitars harmonizing in the same way that the Everly Brothers sing." It was such a beautiful way to describe the sound he was looking for, and I knew immediately what he meant. That one piece of advice changed the entire way I looked at playing harmonized parts with him for all of the songs.

I've been asked many times what it was like to work with Dickey. He was a great artist, and as such was very sensitive to every aspect of the music and the contributions of each member of the band.

He could be very impressionistic in his descriptions of what he was looking for. For example, for the last section of the final harmonized lines in "Jessica," he said, "For this part, imagine leaves falling gently in the breeze, drifting back and forth as they drop down from the sky." It was such a beautifully clear image, such a great mindset to have, and we all understood the nature of the sound he wanted.

On the first tour, we spent a lot of time

way; his solos are prime examples of his beautiful phrasing and sense of melody.

Be sure to check out the incredible 1973 version from *Wipe the Windows, Check the Oil, Dollar Gas*, recorded at Winterland in San Francisco.

"Revival," from *Idlewild South*, The Allman Brothers Band (1970)

"Revival" is the first song recorded by the Allman Brothers Band credited to Dickey Betts. It features great acoustic guitar work from Duane Allman and is highlighted by beautiful harmonized guitar lines performed by both guitarists. At the 0:53 point, the song transitions to a complicated harmonized line in D minor, which Betts referred to as the "gypsy dance."



"Melissa," from *Eat a Peach*

One of Gregg Allman's earliest compositions (it dates back to 1967), the version recorded for *Eat a Peach* was intended as a tribute to Duane, who had died in a motorcycle accident just weeks before. Betts augments Gregg Allman's vocals with beautifully understated lead lines, and his solo is a master class in melodic subtlety, expressive touch and exquisite tone.

"Jessica," from *Brothers and Sisters*

This instrumental gem evokes pure buoyancy and joy, and is one of Betts' and the Allmans' most beloved songs. Its high-spirited nature was inspired by Betts' then-infant daughter, Jessica, who danced along as Betts was writing the piece.

As Betts wrote in his *Guitar World* column, "I had a general idea of a melody and a feeling for 'Jessica,' but I couldn't get started on it; nothing was really adding up. My little girl Jessica crawled up to me and I started playing to her, playing to the feeling of the innocence of her personality. Soon the whole song just fell together. The song was justly named after her for providing the needed inspiration."

"'Jessica' also displays the influence of other elements that were important to my development, such as country-and-western swing music and the playing of Django Reinhardt. It is very rewarding that, as a solid piece of music, 'Jessica' seems to have stood the test of time, and audiences are still glad to hear it when we play it today."



"High Falls," from *Win, Lose or Draw*, The Allman Brothers Band (1975)

This 14-plus-minute instrumental epic is a true Betts masterpiece, display-

Betts [left] and Warren Haynes on stage in Atlanta circa 1994; [below] part of Betts' True Grit column from the November 2001 *Guitar World*

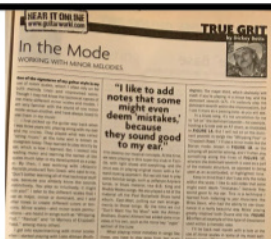


“ Dickey said, ‘I was looking for you! Don’t you want some of my birthday cake?’ ”

sitting together on the bus, and he would talk about his feelings regarding leaving the Allman Brothers Band. He often became very emotional about it. The music of the band he helped create, and the relationship between the band and the audience, meant everything in the world to him. There was a lot of frustration. But he would never say anything negative about anyone in the band. He always referred to Gregg Allman as “Gregory,” and he would say, “Gregory is one of the greatest singers I have ever heard. The man has a golden voice.”

In 2011, we had just returned from a Rock Legends cruise and were sitting in his music room — it was just Dickey, his guitar tech Carlos Rodriguez and me. We were talking about songs to add to the set, and I said, “People always ask for ‘Pony Boy’; it’s such a great tune.” Dickey said, “Oh, I played that on an acoustic resonator guitar, and I don’t think I even remember how to play it.”

He then picked up a resonator guitar that was next to him and proceeded to play the intricate slide guitar part of “Pony Boy” perfectly. It appeared to be absolutely effortless. Carlos and I had our jaws on the ground.



He then looked at me and said, “I gave you one of Duane’s slides, right?” I said, “No, you did not!” He walked to the other room and came back holding a glass Coricidin bottle. He said, “I could only find one — here you go.” I said, “Don’t give it to me if you only have one!” He said, “There are some others here somewhere. You don’t have to use it if you don’t want to.” I said, “I most definitely want to.” I used Duane Allman’s slide for every gig for the next six years.

Dickey was a complex person. He was very passionate about music and could be intense about what he wanted and expected from the band. Dickey set the bar very high and led by example. These are the things that made him who he was and made him such a great bandleader. He wanted and expected everyone to play their best, even better than they thought they could. The result was that everyone’s level of musicianship grew by leaps and bounds.

I am forever indebted to Dickey Betts for the opportunity to play with him and spend time with him. He blessed the world with his incredible music, and his great legacy will be celebrated for decades to come. **GW**

ing a combination of impressionistic beauty with powerful harmonized lines and adventurous, jazz-influenced soloing. It’s a perfect example of Betts’ genius as a composer and instrumentalist.



“Nobody Knows,” from *Shades of Two Worlds*, The Allman Brothers Band (1991)

When the ABB were nearing the end of the *Shades* sessions, producer Tom Dowd asked Betts to write a song in the vein of “Whipping Post.” Betts devised this fantastic track, played in the same 6/8 time signature. This sprawling, adventurous tune is over 11 minutes long. As Betts told *GW*, “‘Nobody Knows’ is one of the best lyrical songs I’ve ever written. These are nice, abstract, poetic lyrics. I wrote that about as fast as I could write the words down, at 4:30 in the morning after rehearsal.”

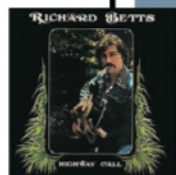


“Pony Boy,” from *Brothers and Sisters*

Betts performs this song using a slide on a wooden resonator guitar tuned to open E and displays his mastery of fingerpicked slide in the Delta blues style of Robert Johnson. The song is played with a joyous, uptempo “cut time” feel and might have been inspired by blues classics such as “Poor Boy Blues” and “Poor Boy, Long Way from Home.”

“Long Time Gone,” from *Highway Call*, Dickey Betts (as Richard Betts) (1973)

When it came time for Betts to record his first solo album, he embraced his country and acoustic string-music roots, resulting in this timeless classic. “Long Time Gone,” the opener, features complex harmonized melodies between Betts and pedal steel guitar virtuoso John Hughey, as well as incredible solos from both, including the barn-burning trades at the finale.



MORE ESSENTIAL TRACKS

“True Gravity,” from *Seven Turns*, The Allman Brothers Band (1990)

“Hand Picked,” from *Highway Call*, Dickey Betts

“Nothing You Can Do,” from *Dickey Betts & Great Southern*, Dickey Betts (1977)

“Good Time Feeling,” from *Atlanta’s Burning Down*, Dickey Betts (1978)

“Les Brers in A Minor,” from *Eat a Peach* — Andy Aledort

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JAMIE WEST-ORAM

The longtime guitarist for U.K. new-wavers the Fixx talks “One Thing Leads to Another,” “Saved by Zero” and how he cooked up his distinctive, super-chunky rhythm guitar sound

By Joe Bosso

FOUR DECADES AGO, the British new wave band the Fixx were having their moment in the sun. Hooky, slick and multi-textured hits such as “Red Skies,” “Saved by Zero,” “Stand or Fall,” “One Thing Leads to Another” and “Deeper and Deeper” turned the group into radio and MTV darlings. By the degree that success in the music industry is mea-

sured (platinum sales for 1983’s *Reach the Beach* and gold for its 1984 follow-up, *Phantoms*), it appeared as if the Fixx had it all nailed down.

By the end of the Eighties, however, things began to trend downward; the band’s last charting single of any significance was “Driven Out,” in 1989. But that doesn’t mean the Fixx’s music went away; in fact, over the past two

decades it’s reached new — and perhaps larger — audiences than ever before, via TV ads. Toyota and Fidelity Investments have run spots utilizing “Saved by Zero,” and the human-resources company ADP seized on the funky dance rhythms of “One Thing Leads to Another” to tout the synergistic effects of their data-driven insights.

“It’s a very funny thing, the way those ads hit people,” says Jamie West-Oram, the band’s longtime guitarist. “One of the bigger ones was when ‘Saved by Zero’ was used by the car company to promote its zero-financing deal, which certainly wasn’t what we had in mind when we wrote it. Some hardcore Fixx fans were like, ‘How could you let them do that?’ But it’s just music, you know? Let’s not get too upset about it.” He chuckles, then adds, “Whenever I hear one of our songs on TV or the radio or wherever, I feel somewhat amazed. The fact that we’re getting recognition after so many years is a nice feeling.”

Interestingly, while the Fixx were racking up hit after hit in the U.S., they got the cold shoulder from the music press and record buyers in their homeland; their highest-charting album in the U.K., *Reach the Beach*, stalled at number 91 (versus the U.S., where it enjoyed Top 10 status). “We were grateful for success anywhere we could find it,” West-Oram says. “We started out in London and built a bit of a following, but before we knew it, things started happening for us in America. MTV picked up on us, and then we got on a tour with the Police. They were at their peak with *Synchronicity*, and we opened up for them at stadiums. It was strange. As we kept having more and more success in the States, it became harder and harder for us to get gigs in the U.K.”

The band’s lineup has remained remarkably stable — along with West-Oram, who joined in 1980, it includes founding members Cy Curnin (vocals), Adam Woods (drums) and Rupert Greenall (keyboards). Bassist Dan K. Brown, who signed on during the *Reach the Beach* sessions, split in 1994 but returned a decade later. “We had a very brief hiatus somewhere in the Nineties,” West-Oram says. “We were thinking, ‘Is that it?’ I thought

“IF I SAW THE STONES, I’D WANT TO HEAR THEM PLAY ‘JUMPIN’ JACK FLASH.’”

LARRY MARANO/GETTY IMAGES

it was over, but eventually Adam said, 'Hey, don't we want to do some more?' That's all it took. We gave the band another shot, and we're still here."

The classic lineup has recorded a couple of albums since regrouping (2012's *Beautiful Fiction* was followed by 2022's *Every Five Seconds*), and on each record West-Oram's identifiable guitar sound looms large: elegant, understated riffs and leads, captivating soundscapes, and rhythm playing that alternates between super-slinky and rock steady, all of it filtered through a judicious and creative application of effects. All of this and more is front and center on the guitarist's first-ever solo album, 2023's *Skeleton Key*, an engaging, mostly instrumental affair (he sings lead on four tracks) on which he makes maximal use of artful minimalism. There are some unexpected detours, however, most notably on the striking single, "Knuckle Down," which sees West-Oram paying tribute to one of his heroes, Leslie West, while reclaiming his pre-Fixx blues-rock roots.

"Leslie was definitely an inspiration on that song," he says. "That's how I started out, really — loud and proud," he says. "I loved a lot of blues and rock guitarists. I played with a fellow named Phillip Rambow. He had a great band that included Mick Ronson; he was the guitarist prior to me. Mick was another one of my heroes, so when I joined Phillip's band I had some pretty big shoes to fill. That's where my head was at then, being a bit bluesy." He laughs. "With the Fixx, I had to try something different."

How did you come to re-engineer your guitar sound with the Fixx?

I suppose it was somewhat gradual. I went to music college in Leeds and learned a lot about chord structure. Everybody was playing quite fast at that time, but then punk happened and things started to change. I moved to London and realized that all you needed were two or three chords and lots of energy and attitude. I showed up at an audition with the Fixx wielding an old Les Paul Junior with one pickup. I plugged it straight into a Marshall and cranked it to 11. That was my sound. When we signed a publishing deal, I bought an

MXR Stereo Chorus, and then I realized I needed two amps. I bought another Marshall — and I had my stereo sound.

One of the first recordings we did with [producer] Rupert Hine was a song called "Some People." I heard a part that needed this... how do I put it? It was a "chang" sound I heard. I didn't have the right kind of pedals at my disposal, so I switched my amp to a clean setting. Through my headphones, I could hear our engineer, Steve [Stephen W. Taylor], playing with the sound. He put it through a Roland Dimension D and compressed it. I went, "Ahh! That's interesting." That was when I started to want to get some pedals. The band got on me a bit — "We don't always want harsh, dirty sounds. We want clean sounds." I rebelled at first, but then I saw the sense of it.

Around this period, synths were taking over. Did that have something to do with how you approached guitar parts?

Sure. The Fixx had a very creative keyboardist, Rupert Greenall, who was a mad genius at sculpting sounds. I had to find a way to fit lines and licks in with what he did, so sometimes less was more. He'd play something and I'd respond, or sometimes it was the other way around. We formed a great dialogue, the two of us.

A few years before the Fixx hit, guitarists like Andy Summers and the Edge had changed the landscape for the use of effects. Were they an influence on you?

I think we were all doing that at the same time, although I greatly admired those two players. I suppose they did influence me. That "chang-y" thing I mentioned, it could have come from them, but it also could have been Keith Levene from PiL.

We hear that "chang-y" thing in those punchy chords on "One Thing Leads to Another." Was your rhythm riff the basis for the song?

It didn't start out that way. The whole thing was written quite quickly in one rehearsal during a jam. Cy kept singing "one thing leads to another," and I was

playing around with it. I liked ska, but I was also listening to the Talking Heads and Nile Rodgers. I always admired Nile's guitar playing, so I suppose he was an influence. I wanted something choppy, and I searched for the right pocket — pushing here, pulling there. Eventually, I just kept strumming.

The song became a huge dance hit. Were you surprised?

We were. We thought it was a great song, but that doesn't mean it would be a hit. It was overwhelming to us how well it was received.

You guys recorded "Deeper and Deeper" for the 1984 film *Streets of Fire*. How did that come about?

That was pretty funny, actually. Cy and I were living on the same apartment block in New York at the time. One morning I got a call from him — "Quick. You've got to come over right now. [Soundtrack producer] Jimmy Iovine will be here in half an hour." Cy had forgotten that he'd set up a meeting with Jimmy to listen to the song we'd written for the movie, which we hadn't written 'cause he forgot. [Laughs] In half an hour, we wrote "Deeper and Deeper" and banged it down on a PortaStudio. We had a drum machine, so Cy laid down a bass part and I did a guitar part. We somehow came up with lyrics, and there it was. Jimmy came over and he loved it.

On the finished version, it sounds like you've got three guitar parts darting around doing various things. Am I hearing it right?

You probably are. I haven't listened to the track in a long time. I probably should.

That song and others, like "Saved by Zero," have very understated riffs that are absolutely essential. Did they pop right into your head? Trial and error?

I suppose it's like fishing; you're waiting for something to happen. It's partly a construction process, but in the end you surrender yourself to surprise. Some things just come out of the blue.

You started out on Gibsons, but with the Fixx you switched to John Suhr Strat-shaped models. (Also, as dis-

Jamie West-Oram on stage in Sunrise, Florida, July 4, 2015. "John Suhr built me a replica of the brown guitar, which I played the hell out of. I use it on every tour," West-Oram says

YOU HAVE TO MAKE SURE THE AUDIENCE HAS A GREAT TIME. THAT'S WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT"

cussed in the May 2019 installment of *GW*'s Tonal Recall, West-Oram played a Strat-style Ibanez Blazer BL-100 on "One Thing Leads to Another.")

I had gone to a club one night with Adam, our drummer. A jazz-fusion band was playing, and they had a killer guitar player named Adam Murphy, who sadly is no longer with us. He was playing a Strat, and I said to someone, "How does he get that sound out of that Fender?" The person said, "It's not a Fender. It's a Schecter."

A few months later, I was in New York and I went to Rudy's Music. John Suhr was the guitar tech. There were quite a few guitars he'd put together from Schecter parts. I thought they were beautiful. I tried out a few, and John said, "I've got one you might like." He showed me this brown guitar, and I loved it. John had put it together. Later on, John went to work for Fender, and then he started his own successful guitar company — Suhr Guitars. He built me a replica of the brown guitar, which I played the hell out of. I use it on every tour.

During the Eighties, did you rely on just a few pedals, or did you have one of those big Bradshaw rigs?

At first I had a few pedals taped to the stage. It was a primitive setup, really. Eventually, I had to get more professional, so our stage manager built a rack for me. He took the heads out of two Marshalls, put those in the rack, and somebody else put the innards of my pedals inside. I had the MXR stereo chorus and an MXR Dyna Comp, which was replaced by a Valley People Dyna-mite. I also had two Rat distortions; I think that was it.

Let's talk about *Skeleton Key*, your 2023 solo album. Why so long to do one? It's been 40 years!

Yeah. I recorded it during the pandemic. I have a fun wife, a garden and a shed full of recording equipment. I thought, "I'll record tracks and see what happens." I recorded everything at home except for the live drums. Nick Jackson, who produced two tracks on the last Fixx album, has a great home studio, so we did the drums there. Nick and I co-produced



the album. He'd listen to tracks and go, "A list, B list, dump it."

"Knuckle Down" has these funky, slinky guitar lines — classic Jamie stuff — but then you go into some bruising rock.

My goal on that one was to create something that makes use of space, so you have the funky thing with strategic spots of nothing, and yeah, then it takes off into the heavier bit.

Talk to me about how Leslie West informed your playing for the heavier section.

I always loved Leslie's beefy sound. I was taken with the whole concept of the band Mountain; you had Leslie's big, bellowing sound mixed with Felix Pappalardi's falsetto. They were heavy yet mystical. Leslie was kind of why I bought a Les Paul Junior back in the day. I'm known for clean sounds, but I do like dirty sounds, and Leslie was just incredible in that area. He was an inspiration for the dirty sounds.

"Cuckoos in the Nest" has a real nod to Sixties psychedelia. Am I in the right lane?

Yeah, I think. That wasn't the plan, but it was the end result. That track is about irrational fears and how our minds are polluted by unnecessary negative thoughts. If we think about it, we can just go, "Fuck off. I don't need negativity." I guess

the psychedelic vibe carries that across.

Your singing on the record is very strong and emotive. This is something you've kept under wraps over the years.

I don't pretend to be a proper singer, but I do background vocals with the Fixx. I like singing in the car or the shower. This album was going to be all instrumental, but Nick encouraged me to sing on a couple of songs. It's a guitar player throwing in a few vocal tunes. Hopefully, I'll get away with it. [Laughs] I'm not bothered by whatever anybody says.

At the time of this writing, the Fixx are getting ready to tour the States. At this point in your career, do tours feel like celebrations of your past? It's not like you have anything to prove.

I suppose that's the case. I think with each tour, we just want to get it right. [Laughs] I mean, we get it right, but we want it to be better. We discover something new in the old songs all the time. At this point, we've got hundreds of songs to choose from, but we're not one of those bands that won't play the hits.

That would be crazy! We're lucky to have had one hit, let alone several. If I saw the Stones, who I've never seen, I'd want to hear them play "Jumpin' Jack Flash." I'd be disappointed if they didn't play it. You have to make sure the audience has a great time. That's what it's all about." **GW**

The Fixx's Rupert Greenall [left] and Jamie West-Oram perform in Chicago, July 23, 1983; West-Oram is playing his "One Thing Leads to Another" Ibanez Blazer BL-100

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"LESLIE (WEST) WAS KIND OF WHY I BOUGHT A LES PAUL JUNIOR BACK IN THE DAY"

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Besley

THE LIFE OF BRIAN

BRIAN MAY DISCUSSES HIS RECENT GIBSON GARAGE VISIT, HIS BELOVED RED SPECIAL, AMP MODELERS, NUNO BETTENCOURT AND QUEEN'S GUITAR-FORWARD 1984 ALBUM, *THE WORKS*, WHICH CELEBRATED ITS 40TH BIRTHDAY IN FEBRUARY

AUGUST

WORDS BY ANDREW DALY

2024

HIS TONE IS unmistakable, his solos are breathtaking and his influence is boundless. Even if somehow, some way, you've managed to make it this far without knowing his name, undoubtedly, Brian May's music — most likely with Queen — has been a part of your life. With his trusty, self-built Red Special guitar in hand and a sixpence pick between his fingers, May — beside Freddie Mercury, his partner in crime — charged through soaring guitar solos and melodic riffs soaked through cuts like "We Will Rock You," "Bohemian Rhapsody" and "Hammer to Fall."

Mercury has been gone since 1991, but that hasn't stopped May from championing the music that Queen created. Since 2011, he's toured the world as Queen + Adam Lambert with Queen's original drummer, Roger Taylor, plus vocalist Adam Lambert, the 2009 *American Idol* runner-up who was tasked with upholding a legacy that was impossible to replicate.

“Freddie would love it,” May says. “I often wish Freddie was around and could share the joy of putting these shows together. But Freddie is with us; he makes little appearances in the shows. So he’s always in there, and I think it should be that way. He’s part of what we built together all those years and will always be massively important.”

Having just finished another slate of mega-shows, you’d assume May would opt for some downtime, but in February — to the surprise of many — he turned up at the grand opening of the Gibson Garage London (aka, “The Ultimate Guitar Experience,” a place where visitors can “try out a guitar, take a lesson, learn about Gibson’s history or see a live show”). Why, you ask? At the very least, for some hobnobbing with fellow legends Jimmy Page and Tony Iommi; beyond that, we *do* know May will have a new Gibson coming out in early 2025 — but we’ll just have to wait for the details.

Anyway, mega-tours, top-notch hobnobbing and Gibson collaborations are great, but after more than 50 years in the business, the thing that really brings a smile to May’s face is family. “I’ve just had a Red Special made for a dear relative,” he says. “When I got it and I opened the box, I thought, ‘Oh, geez, I really don’t want to give this away. I want to keep this.’ But I will give it away. I don’t think I’m ruining the surprise by saying this, but my grandson said he wanted a Brian May guitar for his birthday. He knew the exact specifications he wanted, so I got our guys to make him something super special.”

“He’s taken the bit between his teeth and really wants it,” he adds. “He’s marching down that road without being pushed by anyone. It’s great to see that passion coming out in somebody so young who has got my blood in his veins.”

You were at the grand opening of the Gibson Garage London with Jimmy Page and Tony Iommi. What are your thoughts on that event?

It was great. It was a really nice opportunity to socialize because none of us do much socializing. You might imagine we do, but we kind of have separate lives. It was good to see them, and the Gibson Garage

is great. Some people were saying, “Well, what the hell are you doing at Gibson? You’ve got your own guitar company.” But actually, I have a great relationship with [Gibson] now.

I think a lot of people were thinking you might do something with the Red Special associated with the Custom Shop or the Murphy Lab.

It’s not out of the question. We have spoken about such things, and it would be lovely to have an edition of the Brian May guitar based in the States. After all, that’s where I started with Guild. Guild made the first Brian May models, and then I went with Burns in [the U.K.]. And then things changed, and I just wanted to do it myself. Now we have our own Brian May Guitars company here, but to have the facility to have some made in the States would be wonderful.

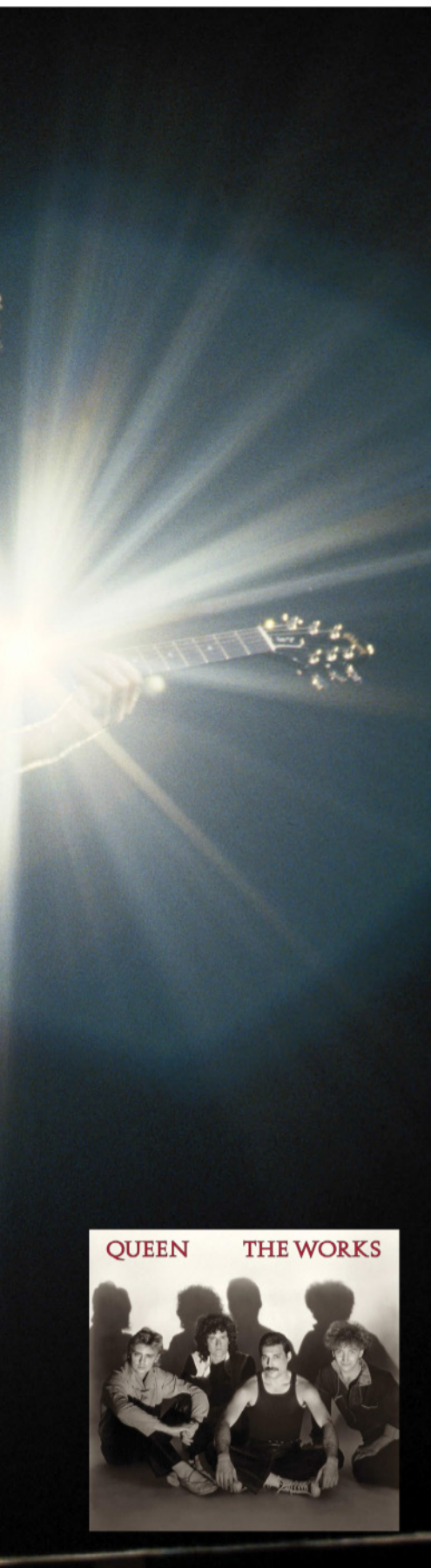
People will always associate you with the Red Special, but as I recall, you did use a Flying V and a Les Paul Deluxe as backups in the Eighties.

I was thinking everybody had forgotten that. But you haven’t! [Laughs] I had a Les Paul Deluxe for a long time; it’s a long story, but sort of a rich sugar daddy of a fan gave it to me. I used it for a while. It was a beautiful instrument, but it was never quite right for my gear. So eventually, [since] I always felt I wasn’t deserving of having been the recipient of it for nothing, and having received it for nothing, I gave it away. It now has a nice home, a secret home with somebody else.

Did you use those guitars on any notable recordings?

No, I don’t think I’ve ever used anything but my own, with one exception — the Telecaster I used for the solo on “Crazy Little Thing Called Love,” which is really a James Burton tribute. [The Red Special] makes that kind of sound, you know? With all the switching I invented for the guitar, you can have any combination of pickups, and there’s one combination that really sounds like a Telecaster. So we were in the studio [Musicland Studios] with [Reinhold] Mack in Munich, and I’m about to do this solo, which I hear in my head





as James Burton.

And I said, "You know, I can make this guitar sound like a Telecaster," and Mack, being a very "doer" German producer, says, "If you want it to sound like a Telecaster, why don't you use a Telecaster?" And I went, "Fair point." Roger [Taylor] just happened to have one, so I used Roger's Tele, which was a very early Telecaster. I think that's the only time I've used anything but my electric.

You mentioned the Guild and Burns renditions of the Red Special, and now you've got the ones you make yourself. Of all the reproductions, which do you feel is the most faithful to your original guitar?

The ultimate you can get now is what we call the [BMG] Super. It's all made by hand, and it costs a lot more because of that. But on this model, you get everything I put on mine, including my self-designed tremolo. Usually, we use other people's tremolos, which are really good these days, but the one I designed is a bit special. With the Super, you get that same design of trem, which rocks on a knife edge, which at that time was revolutionary. Everything else is done custom; my neck is thicker than normal, so you get everything. It's an exact replica of my guitar, [and it's] as close as you could possibly get. If I close my eyes with the Super, I don't know that it's not my guitar.

Going back to the Seventies, as the Red Special has ridden along with you, what were some of the things you've had to do to keep it up to par?

It's been surprisingly resilient; I've never re-fretted it, which everyone is shocked to hear. The only fret I've ever replaced is the zero fret. And it was designed to be replaced because I knew it was going to wear. That's where the strings rub when the term's working, so I think I've replaced that twice in its whole history. But not a single fret has been replaced.

There's been a little bit of a touch-up to the black surface of the fingerboard. And it's not an ebony fingerboard; it's because I couldn't find ebony when I was building the guitar. I wanted it to be ebony, but it's multi-layers of Rustins Plastic Coating. Some of those wore through at certain points, so we've touched those up. We have touched up the body, and it's mainly Andrew Guyton who's done that. Although the first repairs were done by Greg Fryer; he also made three replicas, which are fabulous. I still have two of them. Unfortunately, the other one's gone somewhere; I don't know where that is. We called them George, Paul and John. [Laughs]

Which of the two do you still have?

I have George and Paul. John is out there someplace, I think, because that's the one Greg kept. So, the neck of the guitar, I've never touched; it has lots of layers of plastic coating on [it], and it's the same as it always was. There's matchsticks in there with stain on them to fill up the worm holes because it had some dead wood worm in it. But it's never been touched since the day I finished it. It's worn incredibly well. The tremolo is exactly as it was, with no replacements ever. I replaced a few

Brian May playing his backup guitar — a Gibson Flying V — in 1982. "I was thinking everybody had forgotten that," May says. "But you haven't!"

little rollers; that was an invention of mine. Nobody had really dealt with the fact that when you work a tremolo up and down, it scrapes the strings over the bridge. I think somebody had designed a loose bridge, but really, you want each string to be able to move separately because they all move different amounts.

What did the process of coming up with that look like?

I made this little assembly — with grooves in the top — out of a piece of mild steel. Then I machined the shiny little rollers to sit in the grooves so the strings could go over the rollers. I think a few people have done that since, but everybody says, "Why didn't you patent it?" And I go, "Well, life's too short." Patents are a pain in the neck. If you take out a patent, it costs money and takes a lot of time and effort. Then you've got to protect your patent, go around the world policing it, and it's a real pain in the neck. I've tried it elsewhere. It's really not the way you want to spend your life. All my inventions in the guitar are out there for everybody to enjoy.

You undeniably have one of the most idiosyncratic guitar tones of all time.

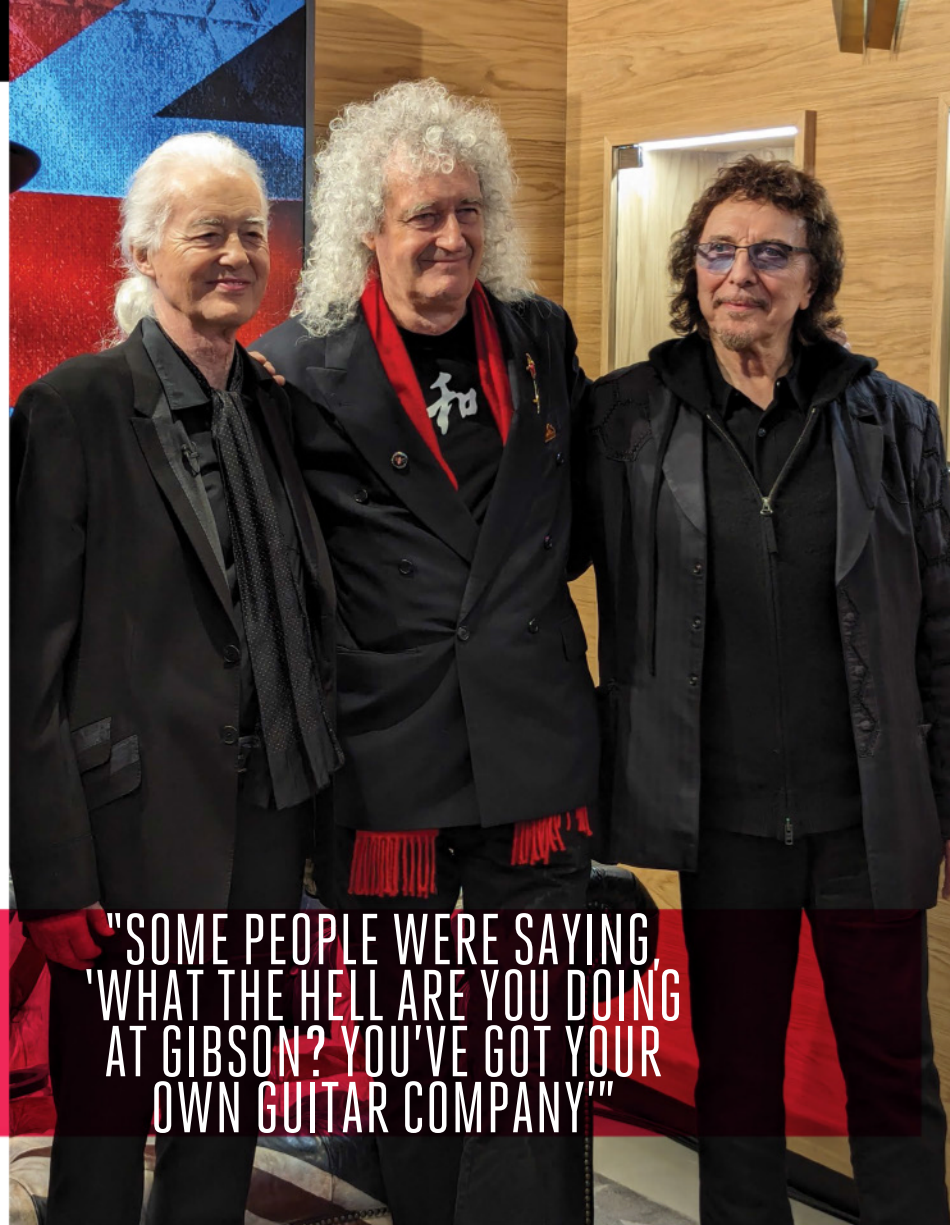
Oh, well, that's very kind of you to say.

Some of it is the Red Special, but surely a lot comes from the fingers. What did the evolution of your gear look like in terms of harnessing that tone?

The truth is, it hasn't changed very much — except to make it more robust. Talking about amps, I love the [Vox] AC30 sound; to me, it's perfect. The moment I first plugged into an AC30 with a treble booster, I knew that was me. That was my voice. That was my sound. The only problem with them has been that they're not very road-worthy, so you have to keep on top of them, maintenance-wise.

How do you go about keeping up with them?

The ones I use now have been completely rebuilt. They started off as classic; they come from the Seventies, but they've been rebuilt inside, or hard-wired, and [are] very robust



"SOME PEOPLE WERE SAYING, 'WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING AT GIBSON? YOU'VE GOT YOUR OWN GUITAR COMPANY'"

and [have] a lot of ventilation. You have to ventilate the valves, or they get too hot, and then performance suffers and eventually they peg out. The guy who does it for me now is a genius. He's really rebuilt all my AC30s, so they have all the original character, but I think you could probably drop them from a plane and they'd still work. [Laughs]

Have you gotten much into effect pedals, or is it mostly just the Red Special into the AC30?

It's very simple, my rig, except that I've always had a stereo chorus built in. That was sort of, again, a dream from when I was a young boy; I realized that if you get a chorus, and you get this lovely, broad effect, if you turn it up, the components of the chorus, the pitch-shifted ones, interfere with the original signal, and it all becomes distortion and you lose your breadth.

Very early on in our career, I found a machine that provides those phase shifts, and it has two separate outputs. One I put to the left side, one to the right side. And those separate outputs have separate amps, so if they go into distortion, they're completely separate. They

[from left] Jimmy Page, Brian May and Tony Iommi at Gibson Garage London in February. "It was a really nice opportunity to socialize," May says

don't interfere with each other; you don't get the inter-modulation effect, which is so ugly.

So, you get your breadth; in fact, the breadth gets more and more as you go into distortions. And that's just kind of my sound, the stereo sound. The middle is straight through, the left is one pitch shift, and the right is the other pitch shift. It's a very gentle pitch shift, but just enough to give it breadth. That's how I hear my guitar in my head; it's always stereo, and it maintains its width when you turn it up full.

As a tube amp devotee, would you ever consider using a modeler?

I've tried modelers, and there are some very good ones now. There's a great simulator; it's a pedal [Catalinbread Galileo] that really does a very good job of simulating my sound. But, of course, there's nothing quite

like the original when it comes down to it. In the heat of the battle, all those tiny little peculiarities count, and when I'm at top level and top volume, there's nothing quite like those amps. They have a personality of their own, and I couldn't swap it for anything. And I wouldn't like to be on stage with the amps someplace else; I need my amps to interact with my guitar — physically, in the air — and interact with me because I feel it in my body as well. I don't think I could do the modeling thing live on stage.

Many people's introductions to the tone we've been talking about came through *The Works*, Queen's 1984 album, which celebrates its 40th anniversary this year. It was a bit more guitar-forward than Queen's early Eighties albums.

With me, it always starts off with a burst of activity, belief and inspiration. And thinking, "Ah, this is gonna change the world." And it's usually followed by a period of complete insecurity, thinking, "Oh, no, this is rubbish. This is never gonna work. Everyone's gonna, you know, my band's gonna hate it." And then working through it.

Was it that way for a track like "Hammer to Fall," for example?

I think that's true of "Hammer to Fall" because I came upon this riff, [and] I thought, "This is great. I can do anything with this; this is just what I want to hear when I put my guitar on. This is what the audience is gonna want to hear..." And then I got into the studio and played it to the guys, and they went, "Yeah, okay." It wasn't like, "We love it!" And then I got back in and worked on the song. That one came fairly easily; I had the idea for the lyric pretty early on, but I had to build it up and build it up to the point where I could play it to them as an almost-finished song. And then they got it; they went, "Oh, yeah. Okay, we like this. This is going to be great." It takes a bit of belief, I think, to get from the first riff to the point where you're happy with the result.

Oscillating between confidence and discomfort is something I think a lot of creative people can relate to.

I think it's common to a lot of peo-



ple — that moment when you spring it on your people around you, and you're looking at their faces, and you feel very insecure in the moment. When I sing a song to someone, it's always nerve-racking for me, no matter who it is. If they've never heard it before, I get all kinds of insecure. You just have to get over that.

Freddie [Mercury] was always great. I used to sing stuff to him, and he was always very encouraging. Of course, I was generally writing for him. I was conscious that I had to write something that would work for him, not just for me. And generally, he would take hold of it very quickly. In many cases, I'd say, "Oh, yes, yes, yes, I can do this, darling. Just give me a chance; just put me in there, and I'll do this." [Freddie] was always very upfront; he had an amazing amount of drive, optimism and energy. He was very helpful with my insecurities — and he kind of chose me as his guitarist in the early days.

Even when Freddie was nothing and nobody, he was Jimi Hendrix in his mind. And I enabled him to have that at his fingertips. He always said, "You can do anything anyone can do, Brian. You can do this for me." That sounds like I'm making him out as big-headed, but he wasn't; it was just this enthusiasm of, "We can do this together. We can be the best thing in the world."

Freddie's voice is iconic, but your guitars were almost like a second vocalist because of how distinct your tone is.

I always saw my guitar as a voice.

I was looking for that voice in the early days; I was inspired by those people who first made the guitar speak, like James Burton and, of course, Hendrix and Steve Cropper. Those guys, to me, are still the bedrock. They're the beginning of that kind of expressive playing that comes from country, blues and something inside, which was new. I've just had the pleasure of working on a record for Steve Cropper. Do you want to hear the story?

Let's hear it!

My old friend [composer/producer] Jon Tiven has loads of Grammys; I mean... my mantelpiece is not decorated with Grammys, but his is. He's produced lots of really nice blues records, and he has a very instinctive, light touch. He said I needed to make a guest appearance on the Steve Cropper record. I went, "I'd love to. Steve Cropper's a hero of mine, but I'm incredibly busy. I'm not feeling very energetic, and I'm too stressed. Too much stress. Apologies, but I don't think I can do it right now." That was my email to Jon. Jon emailed me back and said, "Okay, I've used your email to write the song, and it's called 'Too Much Stress.' So now, you have to play on this." I just smiled and went, "Okay."

He wrote all the lyrics from my email, and his singer, Roger, sang it and very graciously said, "Let's split the vocals." So, I sing it as a duet with him and play some guitar on it. Billy Gibbons also played some guitar on it, so we shared the soloing. It's become an inspiring project from something that started off as just a whisper. That's the kind of stuff I love in my life — when things just grow out of a momentary conversation.

You've just given us some insight into what piques your interest, inspiration-wise. But since you've been at it for so long and have an established sound, it is difficult to keep from feeling repetitive.

If you do a lot of touring, it's incredibly productive in some ways, but it can hold you back from having that freedom. I have been feeling that a little bit. I'm not 35 anymore; I'm 76, and you have a certain amount of energy. If you use it all up by touring, your spontaneous creation side tends to suffer. I have been feeling that. This project came as a welcomed beacon to me like,

A few closeups of May's Red Special (photographed in 2014), including [from left] the bridge and Burns Tri-Sonic pickups; one of the knobs that May built on a lathe just before Queen formed, circa 1970; the neck, made from a piece of mahogany cut from the remains of a century-old fireplace, still mirror-smooth after decades of use. "It's been surprisingly resilient," May says. "I've never re-fretted it, which everyone is shocked to hear"

"Okay, this stuff is still here. You can still go in the studio and create spontaneously; it still happens." I found that influential in the way I feel right now.

You still seem filled with energy and have done an incredible job of keeping Queen's legacy alive.

I am when I'm on stage. I can do it, and I have the physical capability. I train; I work on that. And I take my training seriously now physically. I think Roger and I are playing together probably better than ever, which is great. We don't always get on, but we always play together great. [Laughs] We've both grown up and mellowed over the years, so we don't fight as much as we used to, but there's definitely that chemistry.

I've been proud of the way we're playing, but I'm wary of it becoming too much of a formula. I'm always aware of that. I like the freedom to evolve, and sometimes, I've been questioning whether we still have that. But yeah, I've been proud of the shows — especially production; I think our team is amazing. Those shows are way beyond anything we could do in the early days.



Which of your classic solos are the most difficult to undertake on stage?

It's all difficult, really! I think it's all difficult when you think about treading that fine line between giving people what they want to hear in terms of recognizability and keeping it fresh. So, the little changes that you make consciously and unconsciously need to be there or you become a fossil. *[Laughs]* I'm always treading that line.

Do some songs require more nuance than others?

Some of them have to be reproduced pretty closely, like the "Bohemian Rhapsody" solo. That isn't particularly difficult for me, *[but]* strangely enough, the riffs in that song are quite difficult. They're not the kind of places your fingers naturally go to play those riffs in B $\flat$ and A $\flat$, which are the keys that Freddie liked to play in. That stuff never gets easier for me, playing the heavy-riffing thing in "Bohemian Rhapsody." You have to keep the energy going; you can't get too studied about it. But at the same time, you have to hit the right notes, and, as I say, *[they]* don't fall naturally under the fingers. I've got to keep a watch on that.

There are all sorts of things that might not be the things you expect. You know, on "Another One Bites the Dust," I didn't play the rhythm; John *[Deacon]* played that. He played it on a Stratocaster, I think. He was very much influenced by the punk guitarists, which I'm not so much. So for me to get the feel he got on the record is quite hard.

How do you approach something like that?

I approach it from different directions, with different pickup combinations. And with a pick, without the pick, but it's never quite what John did. I'm always conscious of that, so I told myself, "I can't be John. I can just be me, and I'll be me *[in]* the best way I can." But that's not easy. It's not an easy groove for me to hit, especially as you have to hit the ground at 100 mph, do it for three minutes and then stop. It's not something I can organically fit into my playing. People might be surprised; they might think that's the easy bit, but it's really not *[easy]* to do that rhythm. I find it takes an application of mind and body.

Are there any young players out there today who have caught your ear?

The young people to me are people like Nuno *[Bettencourt]*. *[Laughs]* I know he's not young anymore, but boy,

he's beyond belief. I know he's influenced by me; he's kind enough to say so, but he's very influenced by Eddie Van Halen, as should be the case. He always pays wonderful tributes to Ed, and he has that magic in his fingers that Ed had, I think. Nuno, to me, is just stratospheric in the way he plays. These are the people I adore, really. And if I were that kind of person, I would be deeply jealous because I can't do that shit. *[Laughs]* But I'm not, because I just love it; I love seeing him do it... I'm awestruck by all sorts of people I see on the internet. I'm on Instagram and there's so many kids out there that are just beyond belief in terms of technique. They start where we left off, and I couldn't even go there. I couldn't even begin to emulate the stuff they do... Ah, and I should mention my friend Arielle.

She's incredible.

She's an extraordinary technician who doesn't let technique hold her down. She's very expressive, very free and old-school in many ways. She loves analog recording; she loves the old tubes and stuff. She's a beautiful player. Her tone is magnificent. And there's still this thing in every business where women are slightly undervalued. It's changing, thank God, but she's experienced people not quite taking her as seriously as they would have. But she's an awesome player.

Do you have any other old favorites?

For me, my favorites are still, I suppose... I think the generation that kind of follows mine is other people who moved me the most. That's why I'm so into Nuno. Steve Lukather is

[from left] May's first guitar, an Egmond acoustic, had a zero fret, so he adapted the idea for the Red Special; May stuck this sixpence, one of thousands made to promote his first solo album, 1992's *Back to the Light*, to the Red Special's headstock circa 1998; the guitar's switching system provides May with as many tonal options as possible. "With all the switching I invented for the guitar, you can have any combination of pickups," he says

an awesome player, beyond belief. I look at him and think, "How do you do that?" He has so many influences. His ability when he moves into the jazz area is phenomenal. But he's a rock player through and through, and his technique is indescribable. I don't know if he's on people's list of the world's greatest guitarists, but to me, he's unforgettable and a model of what a guitar player should be. I should also mention Paul Crook. He took such loving care of our dear friend Meat Loaf. I have great admiration for Paul, not only for his amazing fireworks guitars but also for taking over the production of those albums and absolutely maximizing whatever power Meat had left, who was fighting a hard battle.

What's a parting piece of advice for young guitarists?

Believe more. Smile, be confident and don't apologize for anything. Just be proud of being yourself, the best you can be. I spent too much time being nervous, uncertain and worried that I wasn't good enough. Be confident, even if you don't feel it right down in the deepest part of your soul. Play as if it's there; build on that belief that you put inside yourself that you are good enough — that wherever you are, you're what it takes. **GW**

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70

YEARS OF THE STRAT

STRAT

WORLD

In honor of the Fender Stratocaster's 70th anniversary, **RITCHIE BLACKMORE, YNGWIE MALMSTEEN, ADRIAN BELEW, MICK MARS, BUDDY GUY, ALEX LIFESON, TOM MORELLO** and more discuss THE STRATS they're holding on classic *Guitar World* covers

TO CELEBRATE THE 70th anniversary of the Fender Strat, we've put together a special "Strat only" edition of Cover Models. For those who don't know, Cover Models is a recurring one-page feature (usually found in the Tune-Ups section) where we ask *Guitar World* cover stars to tell us about the guitars they're holding in their cover photos. In addition to

the names listed above, we've also connected with Robert Cray, Steve Lukather and Los Lonely Boys' Henry Garza to bring you something that's truly unique and truly *GW* — plus bonus "Strat chats" with Nile Rodgers, Ana Popović and Larkin Poe's Rebecca Lovell. You'll also notice you're getting a double shot of Yngwie covers because — as Yngwie always says — more is more!

INTERVIEWS BY ANDREW DALY (EXCEPT WHERE INDICATED) PHOTO BY JEFF FASANO

70
YEARS OF THE STRAT

Marshall

Marshall

REVIEWED! NEW GEAR FROM PRS, GIBSON, XOTIC & MORE

GUITAR: BASS

AFROIN JONES

REJOICE IN THE RAINBOW

NEW BATTERY

CATAPULT

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DEADWATER REVISUAL

THE WOOD TONIC

GUITAR WORLD

MICK

MARS

"Flash things out with

Mötley

Crüe?

It's past... impossible..."

THE GUITAR WORLD

INTERVIEW

BY JEFF LABRECQUE

EDDIE KRAMER

BOOP NINETEENS

DRAGONFORCE

ADRIAN BELEW

FRANK INFANTE

YANO ACT

STONE ISLE

THE DARKNESS

Mick Mars, photographed in Nashville in late 2023 for our April 2024 cover. His 1996 Strat was one of at least five different Strats he brought to the shoot. "It is really an eye-grabber for sure," he says

Guitarist:**ADRIAN BELEW**

Guitar: Fender Strat, precise year unknown (Belew says the serial number is 253265.)

GW cover date:

May 1982

Where, when and why did you buy this guitar?

I had a plain, natural-finish Strato-caster when I joined Frank Zappa's band [in late 1977], and I used it only on the American tour because it never made it home. I don't know if it was stolen or if the airline lost it, but that Strat was never seen again. I had two weeks before we were going to start the European dates [in 1978], and we were going to rehearse in London for 10 days or something. At the time I was in Nashville, where I live now. I went to a local used guitar store and was poking around, and in the back they had this kinda ugly Stratocaster hanging on the wall — like a brown sunburst. [Laughs] I said, 'How much for this one?' They said, "It doesn't have a case, so we'll give it to you for \$285." A pretty good buy, I thought.

Seymour Duncan used to live where I grew up in Cincinnati, and he was a spectacular guitar player in that area long before I even played out. I called up Seymour when I was back out in California, and I said, "What am I gonna do? I have this ugly-ass guitar." He said, "I know what to do." He got in the trunk of his car and took out all these things — files and a screwdriver and spray paint and lighter fluid. He laid it on the lawn, and before I could say anything, he took the lighter fluid out and squirted it on the face of the guitar and set it on fire. I said, "Well, I guess I'm committed now!" [Laughs] It looked just like the beginning of *Bonanza*. Then he went to work. He dragged it through the grass. He sanded the back of the neck and put motor oil on it. He took screwdrivers and things and chipped some of the stuff off of it. I did the spray paint — a few bits here and there. I'm gonna be bold and say that might be the first relic'd guitar — and you can thank Seymour Duncan for that.

I took it back the next day, and Frank said, "If you wanted to ruin your guitar, Adrian, why didn't you loan it to a friend?" [Laughs]

What songs or albums did you record with it?

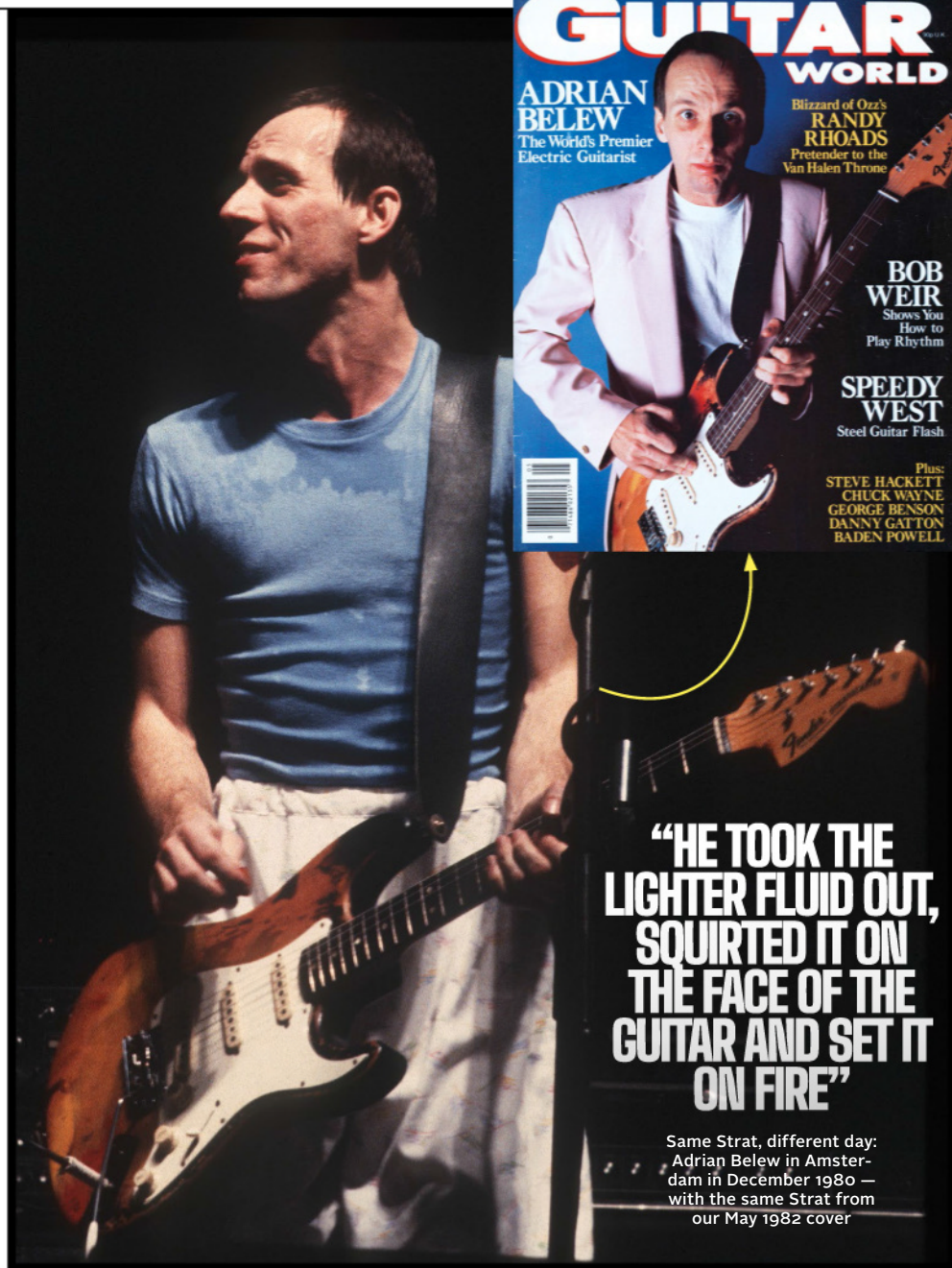
I used this guitar on my European tour with Zappa in '78, and because some of [Zappa's 1979 album] *Sheik Yerbouti* was done from live shows in Europe, that guitar will be on there. I used it again when I jumped into David Bowie's band — and to make *Lodger* and the live record, *Stage*. Then I joined Talking Heads, and in 1980, I used it for five albums that were Talking Heads-related: *Remain in Light*, Tom Tom Club's [self-titled album], Jerry Harrison's *The Red and the Black*, David Byrne's *The Catherine Wheel* and *The Name of This Band Is Talking Heads*. In fact, it was the only guitar I had through this whole period.

I probably did some other projects in that period, including Laurie Anderson. I was really busy then, and everybody wanted me to jump on their record. Then I joined King Crimson, and the next one everyone would know for sure was [1981's *Discipline*]. The next year I put

out my first solo record, *Lone Rhino*. The cover was made in Japan, and I explained to the photographer, Mr. [Masayoshi] Sukita, that I wanted to be standing in a field with a rhinoceros, wearing a red suit with that guitar.

Any stories/quirks/anecdotes about it?

Maybe one of the most well-known songs [it was featured on] would be [Tom Tom Club's] "Genius of Love," which has been a huge hit now three times. It's been sampled 166 times by different artists, which is something I only learned recently when [Latto's "Big Energy"] came out in 2022.



Same Strat, different day: Adrian Belew in Amsterdam in December 1980 — with the same Strat from our May 1982 cover

I was at a King Crimson show, I was signing autographs and somebody handed me Mariah Carey's record and said, "Would you sign this?" I said, "I don't even know Mariah Carey. Why would I do that?" They said, "Oh, you're right here. It says you co-wrote this." They opened it up and showed that I co-wrote [her 1995 hit "Fantasy," which samples "Genius of Love"] with [Talking Heads] Chris [Frantz] and Tina [Weymouth]. I was amazed. That's exactly how I learned about it — otherwise I might have never known. It was the Number 1 record in the country at the time, but I don't listen to mainstream radio. I called up my manager the next day, and he didn't know either. This guitar has crossed over a lot of people's ears.

Do you still have it?

It's in the Number 1 spot on the wall of guitars in my studio, where I'm standing right now. The *Twang Bar King* guitar is Number 2.

— Interview by Ryan Reed

Guitarist:

STEVE LUKATHER

Guitar: 1964 Stratocaster, aka "The Robot Strat"

GW cover date: September 1983

Where and when did you buy this guitar?

It would have been the late Seventies. I don't remember where I got it — not Norm's [Norman's Rare Guitars]; it would have been a wannabe Norm's down in Studio City. I guarantee the spot doesn't exist anymore.

Why did you choose it?

I just wanted a Strat. [Laughs] It felt good, and I liked it. There wasn't that much more to it beyond that. I had played Les Pauls and other guitars, and for whatever reason, I was searching for a Strat. I came upon that '64, and that was it.

You ended up modifying it, right?

I did. That guitar has a massive history and looks totally different [now] than it did on the cover. If you remember that funny-looking guitar I had back in the Eighties with the robot painted on it, that's the same guitar as the one on the cover. I had put EMG pickups in and didn't care



that the guitar was vintage because I had no connection to it. I ended up bringing it to Valley Arts Guitars and said, "I'll let you fuck with this guitar; it doesn't mean much to me," and they made me a new neck, put a humbucking EMG and two single-coil EMGs in — and they painted the robot.

What notable recordings did you use this guitar on?

Literally, every record I did from mid 1984 to 1993. After I got it back from Valley Arts, the Robot Strat was my main guitar until I started using Music Man. If you look at any live show from the Eighties, you'll probably see me playing it — especially in '86 and '87, when that guitar was everywhere. I played on about a billion records, and that guitar was on all of them.

GUITAR WORLD

COVER MODELS

Cover Photographers

NOV81	(Lifeson): Jonathan Postal
MAY82	(Belew): Jonathan Postal
SEP83	(Lukather): John Livzey
JAN86	(Malmsteen): John Livzey
JAN87	(Malmsteen): John Peden
JAN89	(Cray): Jeff Katz/Retna, Ltd.
FEB91	(Blackmore): Lorinda Sullivan
JUL91	(Beck/Guy): Kevin Westenberg
JAN05	(Garza): Clay Patrick McBride
AUG05	(Morello): Ross Halfin
APR24	(Mars): Jeff Fasano

Why did you choose this guitar for your GW cover shoot?

It's funny because, at that point, the '64 Strat had not become the Robot Strat with the EMGs and the Valley Arts neck, so it wasn't my main guitar, per se. So, the same day I was supposed to do the *Guitar World* shoot, I was working at the studio with [producer] Keith Olsen, and I had to run, so I grabbed the first one I saw. I was like, "Shit, I need a guitar for this shoot. This one will do. I had no allegiance to any guitar then, so I grabbed the Strat and ran to the shoot.

Do you still have this guitar?

I still have it. I went through a phase where I was getting rid of shit, and I sold some vintage shit I could have made a lot more money on, but whatever; how many can you play at once? But I still have it; it's in its case at home. It's been a while since I broke it out and played it, but it felt pretty good the last time I did. I bet it needs an upgrade, so who knows when we'll see it again. I only kept the guitars that meant something to me and have a history, so that fits the bill. I saw people were making bogus copies of it in Germany and Japan, though, so it must have meant something to other people, too.

Guitarist:

HENRY GARZA

Guitar: Fender Custom Shop '60s Reissue Stratocaster, aka "Tejana"

GW Cover Date: January 2005

Where and when did you buy this Strat?

At Ray Hennig's [Heart of Texas music store] in Austin in 2000.

Why did you choose this Strat, and what made it special?

I felt like we chose each other. What made it special was the way I felt when I looked at her; it seemed like she was already mine. Also, my brothers were there with me when I got her.

Did you use this Strat on any notable recordings?

Yes, on almost everything [Los Lonely Boys' five studio records].

How about on tour?

A memorable moment that I will cherish about this guitar is when we were on tour with Carlos Santana, and he picked it up and played it at soundcheck.

What about this Strat felt right in your hands?

It just felt right all up and down her neck and all the way to her body.

Why did you choose this Strat for your GW cover shoot?

Her name is "Tejana," and she is my Number 1.

I assume it's safe to say you still own Tejana?

Yes, and I still play this guitar. She is my Number 1.

What does the Fender Strat mean to you?

I'll say this: my grandson is named Fender. What does that tell you?

Guitarist:

ROBERT CRAY

Guitar: Late-Eighties American Standard Strat
GW cover date: January 1989

How did you acquire this guitar?

I think I got that one from Fender because I needed one in an emergency or something like that, so I grabbed it. I think that's the one with the maple neck — an American Standard Strat. So it must have been somewhere around the time when we did the shoot for the magazine.

What are some of the things that made this guitar special?

What was cool about it is that I didn't have a maple-neck Strat besides my '58 Sunburst with a maple neck, and I don't play that one too often unless I'm in the studio. So I wanted another one, and I liked the way that neck felt. That was my reasoning for that guitar.

What felt different about the maple neck compared to a rosewood one?

I've always been used to having a rosewood fingerboard, so that's what I continue to use on stage. But just for a different feel and sound, occasionally I will use a sunburst, but more likely, only in the studio because, live, I'm just so used to having a rosewood fingerboard. And [maple] does have a little bit of a different sound; it's a different feel. It's something I'm not so comfortable with, but there is a little bit of a brighter sound with the maple fingerboard, so, on occasion, I will use one.

Did you use this Strat on any notable recordings?

I don't recall off the top of my head. I did take it out on tour. I think it's in open G tuning or something like that. I left it that way after Sonny Landreth had to borrow a guitar when we did some shows together in Europe, and one of his guitars didn't make it. So he asked to borrow one, and when I got it back, it was tuned that way; I left it in that tuning — and that's been some years.

Why did you choose this Strat for your GW cover shoot?

I probably just liked the color scheme. It could have been

Ritchie Blackmore in action with Deep Purple in London, March 14, 1991. He is most definitely *not* playing the white Strat shown on our February 1991 cover. "I only use one, my favorite Strat, which is locked away for recordings or playing onstage," he says

**"FOR £60,
I BOUGHT
ONE OF ERIC
CLAPTON'S
OLD STRATS"**

something as simple as that. Because sometimes I do things just to be different, to be honest. [Laughs]

Do you still own this guitar?

I still have it. I've looked at it probably within the last six months. I have maybe 15 [Strats], I think.

Did this guitar impact your signature Strat, which came in 1990?

The one on the cover didn't have

anything to do with the making of the Cray model, but the '58 Strat with the maple neck and a '64 rosewood [fingerboard] Strat had a part in it. The feel of the neck was a combination of both of those guitars, and we worked with Fender to try and find a compromise between the two.

What drew you to Strats, and what's kept you using them?



What really got me going on the Strat was I had the opportunity to watch Phil Guy play a Strat. This one concert was in a hall, and he was playing through a [Fender] Super Reverb with just the right amount of reverb, and the way the Strat just tore that amplifier up, it was different from anything I'd heard before. After that, I was on a mission to find a Strat. It just so happened that this was in 1979, and a guy had this '64 Strat for sale, the Inca Silver one that I've used for the longest time. It's retired now, but that was the first Strat I got. And that was, like I said, in 1979. That's what drew me to it, and I just stayed with it ever since.

What does the Strat mean to you?

It's just a good, honest workhorse. It's basically set it and forget it. And the rest is up to you. The only thing I changed is the pickups, but the volume and everything is up to you. It's just there... it's there for you, and it's got everything I want. And it's also helped me to create the sound that people recognize.

Guitarist:

RITCHIE BLACKMORE

Guitar: Fender Stratocaster (year unknown)

GW cover date: February 1991

Where and when did you buy this guitar?

I have no idea. I have probably 12 Strats, but I noticed when looking at the picture that it's not one of my more favored Strats. I think I picked it up because sometimes when I do a photo session, I take a guitar that I very rarely use. I still do it today with the acoustic guitars that I play some of the Renaissance music with.

So there wasn't really anything special about it?

Just because it's in the photograph, it usually means I don't use it. And looking at that guitar, it definitely looks like one of my substandard Strats. Whereas if it was my favorite Strat, it may get lost, I may forget it or leave it somewhere or it might get damaged in transit. So the reason I'm playing that guitar in the photo is because it isn't one of my favorite guitars — in case I lost it. My good

ones are usually under lock and key.

Do you know what year it was?

No. But the Strat I play now is an '82. It's a separate body put together with a different neck.

Did you use the Strat on the cover for any notable recordings?

No. I only use one, my favorite Strat, which is locked away for recordings or playing onstage. For photo sessions, as I said before, I use anything I can find.

How did this guitar feel compared to your favorite Strat, which you've just mentioned?

I think we should start speaking about my favorite Strat. And that is obviously white, and has a concave neck between the frets, which I usually do myself. It's a very arduous process that takes about four days to shave down the wood. I cover the frets with tape, but I usually wind up having the guitar re-fretted with Gibson fat frets. I like really thick frets. I find the Fender frets are a bit too thin, personally.

You gave me an idea of why you chose this Strat for your GW cover shoot, but are there any anecdotes from the day to share?

Not really. As I said before, it was just a guitar lying around, so if I forgot it in the photo studio, it would be of no consequence in comparison to my good guitars.

What got you started with Stratocasters?

I do have a short story about my history with Strats. I was in Deep Purple in 1969 and I was living in Acton, London. We were all in the same house, the whole band, and Eric Clapton's roadie came by the house because he knew one of my roadies, and he brought a Strat with him. I think it was black. So I said to him, "Do you want to sell that guitar? It looks interesting, and I wanted to try out a Strat."

He said, "I'll sell it to you for £60." I said, "Okay, you're on." So, for £60, I bought one of Eric Clapton's old Strats that he obviously didn't want because he gave it to the roadie. That was my initiation into playing a Strat. Up until then, I always played a Gibson ES-335.

Did you use that Strat on any notable recordings?

I think we made a record named

Larkin Poe's Rebecca Lovell
[left] and Megan Lovell
on stage in San Francisco,
February 9, 2023

**"BONNIE [RAITT]
OR SUSAN
TEDESCHI WITH A
STRAT PAVED THE
WAY FOR WHAT'S
POSSIBLE FOR
PLAYERS WHO
LOOK MORE
LIKE ME"**



REBECCA LOVELL

The **LARKIN POE** guitarist on the joys of being part of Leo Fender's ever-expanding Stratosphere

What first attracted you to the Strat?

My introduction to Fender guitars was a Jazzmaster. One of my heroes is Elvis Costello, and he always has that signature profile with the beautiful Jazz, so I started playing it on stage. I'm 5' 6"; I'm not huge and I'm not tiny, but I was struggling to run around with a guitar of that great stature. So being able to pick up something that was a little bit lighter weight, smaller and aerodynamic made sense.

How has the Strat shaped the way you play?

I'm certainly a different player. The Stratocaster is so idealized, you know, when you think about the history of the level of musicianship that it has attracted, from Jimi to Stevie [Ray Vaughan], like, those are two out-of-the-box ultimate guitar heroes. But even from my perspective, players like Bonnie [Raitt] or Susan Tedeschi with a Strat are the individuals who paved the way for what's possible for players who look more like me.

So I've continued my journey with the Strat, understanding that it's like a symbol of rock. Being able to roll that energy into your level of musicianship with those who've come before and allowing that to carry along with the momentum of whatever stories and licks I'm trying to bring to the guitar, it begins to pile on, if you will.

What's your go-to Strat?

My husband [Tyler Bryant] is also a Strat

player, so the first Strat I started taking out on the road just to toy with was one of his, which is a Sixties-style Shell Pink with a white overlay. I was so taken by the HSS [pickup configuration] situation. So the first Strat I bought for myself as my main guitar is Vintage White with the humbucker in the bridge. I ultimately put a tortoiseshell pickguard on it, and that's my main baby. It's starting to get a lot of cool wear; I love that you can see a player's personality through the wear their guitars slowly amass over time.

Have you modified your Strat at all?

I've kept my main guitar pretty stock. I'm nerd-ish, you know? I have some mental qualities, like digging into the details, but I'm kind of plug-and-play. Once I find something that works, it takes a lot for me to dig in and tweak things. I have the energy with my guitars of, "If it's working, or it ain't broke, don't fix it."

Is there really much difference between a vintage Strat and a new one?

Guitars, like any man-made inanimate object, attract energy over time. When you pick up some guitars, you just sense the weight of time that they possess. But I think it really is in the setup. I've played super-cheap Strats that have a good setup, and, for me, that's half the battle. I'm not a fairly pragmatic player; I love the romance of a guitar with the story. The beauty of human experience is that

we can imbue meaning into stuff. But also, it's like, dude, if you can find a luthier in town, or a good setup guy, you can take a piece of junk, get it set up, and it'll play as good as anything you've ever touched.

One of a Strat's best features is its five-way switch. Which position do you favor most?

To be honest with you — and this is something I'm trying to get more competence on — I'm always on the bridge. [Laughs] There is no part of my stage show right now where I'm anywhere else but the bridge, which is a little bit lacking in imagination. Because the guitar, like, clearly the Strat is so versatile. In the studio, I'm all touchy-feely with the neck, my blend and all that stuff. But onstage, I like it balls to the wall, so that's something I do want to engage with more.

What does the Strat mean to you?

Humans are storytellers. We're memory keepers. We can exist in this world, take a barrage of random circumstances and sheer randomness and make meaning from them. And that beautifully represented skill set we possess is represented in an abstract concept like a Stratocaster.

Being able to build something and give it a story that goes out into the world and is independent of us makes you feel so many things. So, from where I sit, the Strat really is one of the greatest symbols of rock 'n' roll. The profile, aerodynamics and art quality of the instrument breathe rock 'n' roll. So that's what it means to me. I feel like I'm continuing that story whenever I pick up a Strat and carry it on stage. And that's sick, you know? It just feels awesome to play a Strat and be a part of the ongoing chain of generations that is making the Stratocaster what it is.

“Emmaretta,” and I used a wah-wah pedal with that Strat. However, the neck was a little bit too bowed, so I moved on from that Strat to buying another Strat from my friend’s shop in London. It was a sunburst Strat and a black Strat. I often used to change necks on my Strats, sometimes with the three or four screws on the back of the neck. If I remember correctly, I changed the neck from the black Strat to the sunburst Strat because I preferred that neck.

Was that, by chance, the guitar you used on “Smoke on the Water”?

At this point, I had three or four Strats. The “Smoke on the Water” guitar, I believe, was the sunburst guitar with the black Strat’s neck. A lot of people ask me which guitar I used. I like the sunburst Strat color because of Buddy Holly, but I was always fascinated by the white Strat. I remember Colin [Manley] from the Remo Four playing a white Strat back in ’66. He was the first player I saw play with a white Strat, and it was very majestic and to me. It kind of said, “I don’t have to be any color because white stands out.”

I wore a lot of black on stage and liked the contrast. Then I saw Jeff Beck had a white Strat, then Jimi Hendrix had a white Strat. But like I said, the first one I saw was Colin from the Remo Four playing it in Hamburg, Germany. My subliminal thinking was, “I would really like to get a white Strat one day.” Now it would seem every guitar player that gets a Strat is playing a white Strat, so I may have to rethink my thinking on that one.

The white Strat is kind of synonymous with you, though.

Maybe I should get a green or yellow one. There was a time after seeing Albert Lee playing a black Les Paul Gibson in ’63, and I wanted a black Les Paul; however, by the time I got around to buying a black Les Paul, they had become so popular, everyone had one. I always liked to be different, so that put me off getting a black Les Paul. I stayed with my red Gibson [ES-335]. Les Paul was an incredible influence on me in the early Sixties.

OK, just one more question about the Strat you’re holding on the



February 1991 GW cover! Do you still own it?

I have about three or four Strats, as I am a firm believer in not having loads of them. I can only play one at a time, so... And I do have a very special Strat. I also went through a period in the Eighties of playing with a tremolo arm, but I kept breaking them, so I had them made twice as thick so I wouldn’t break them. Funnily enough, I still broke them. So I had them made three times as thick [with] a 1/2” round tremolo arm. I have two Strats I count as my favorites. One has a 1/2” tremolo arm, and one has a really nice neck that I tend to play when I’m playing rock. It’s also very heavy, and I find that with my back problem, it’s very hard to stand on stage with this guitar because it’s so heavy, so I usually sit on a stool, which I know is not very rock ’n’ roll, but that’s what happens when you’re 78.

Do you know what happened to the less-favored Strat you posed with on the cover?

I’m not exactly sure what happened to the guitar on the cover. But whenever I would store the guitars or amps that I wasn’t using, and we would go on tour, they were stored in London. I would come back, and they were usually stolen.

What does the Fender Strat mean to you?

A way of paying the bills. It also happens to be an incredible guitar. It’s very adaptable for all sorts of music [like] country, rock [and] jazz.

Guitarist:

ALEX LIFESON

**Guitar: Early Eighties “Hentor Sportscaster”
GW cover date: November 1981**

How and where did you acquire this Strat?

The story begins in 1978 when I modified a Fender Stratocaster that I purchased new. I replaced the bridge single coil [pickup] with a Gibson humbucker, reversed the input jack for easier access and added a Floyd Rose

tremolo to replace the Fender tremolo.

I used this guitar as a spare primarily and started using it increasingly for the Floyd Rose. It was renamed “the Hentor Porkflapso-caster.” Shortly after, I commissioned Veneman Music to build a replica incorporating a shark neck, Floyd Rose and Bill Lawrence L500 pickup. This was the Hentor Sports-caster. This became the model for the Lervax Limelight [Lifeson’s new signature guitar with Godin].

What initially led you to choose this Strat over the semi-hollow-bodied Gibson guitars you’d been playing with Rush?

Although I was known primarily as a Gibson player, I did own several Fenders and liked the difference. I owned a 1956 Strat in 1973 as a backup to the [Gibson] ES-335. It made me think and play differently. I was becoming more enamored with the use of the tremolo bar, and the Floyd Rose made that very effective — and it sounded great.

Did you use this Strat on any notable recordings?

From [Rush’s] *Moving Pictures* on, I used the Hentor on a lot of recordings and particularly liked it for soloing. One stand-out recording is the solo from “Limelight.” It was the perfect selection to create the soulful, elastic and unstable character for the solo of that song.

What made this Strat special beyond the modifications?

The neck was bare wood, so I felt an immediate connection to that neck. I stripped a [Fender] Tele neck a few years later, and that guitar became my go-to for writing. I must have used that guitar for writing 75 percent of Rush’s material.

Why did you choose this Strat for your 1981 GW cover shoot?

I used the third Hentor [overall] and the second one built by Veneman Music for that shoot to match my red jacket and tie. I was so fashion-conscious!

Do you still own this guitar? If not, what happened to it?

No, I think I gave it to a tennis pro friend years ago. That was a mistake, as he’s left-handed! The Hentor

Sportscaster was sold at auction two years ago, and the original black Hentor is in a museum in Ottawa, Canada. They're gone now, but their spirit lives on in the Lersxst guitar series. Those are faithful replicas of the originals.

Guitarist:

TOM MORELLO

Guitar: Modified Designer Series Strat

GW cover date: December 2002

Where and when did you buy your "Soul Power" Strat?

What's interesting about the Soul Power guitar is that I had never played a Strat before. But around the time Audioslave was forming, I was looking for a new guitar to be my primary form of expression. I ended up going into a Guitar Center in Hollywood, and I found this Strat on the wall and took it home.

Why did you choose this Strat above the others at Guitar Center?

I literally saw it as a blank canvas. I wanted to have something totally different from what I'd had previously. I loved its stock form but needed to make it my guitar. I wanted it to be unique to point toward a new batch of songs. We were entering this new sonic landscape led by Chris Cornell's amazing vocals, so I wanted a guitar that could undertake that new level of nuance and undertake new sounds that I hadn't heard before from my other guitars.

Did you use this guitar on any notable recordings?

I used it on songs like "Cochise," "Like a Stone" and "I Am the Highway." It was the guitar I used on all three of Audioslave's records. The Soul Power guitar was the Audioslave guitar!

What about this guitar felt right in your hands compared to your "Arm the Homeless" guitar?

I liked that this guitar spoke to me deeply. I've been known to scrawl things on instruments, and almost the second I got home, I took a white marker and scrawled "Soul Power" on the guitar because I knew this was going to be a new era and a new band with Audioslave. The Arm the Homeless guitar has taken me on

one journey, and I'd used that on a lot of stuff. I also used my baritone Telecaster on the Rage Against the Machine stuff, but I wanted this guitar, the Soul Power guitar, to be something different from what that had been.

What were some of the modifications you made to the Soul Power Strat?

Soul Power had to be different from the other guitars I had, so within 72 hours of owning it, I added the kill switch for the stuttering sounds, some Seymour Duncan Hot Rails pickups and an Ibanez whammy bar. I also had this idea of the fretboard being like what Ace Frehley would've had on, like, [Kiss's] *Alive II*, so I believe I had it re-fretted a couple of times too.

Though you'd never endorsed a guitar before, Soul Power became your first signature guitar with Fender.

I'd never done any signature guitar stuff before and had never really wanted to do any sort of endorsement. But if I was going to do one, it had to be something I believed in, that was done the right way. I'm very proud of the fact that when I did the Soul Power guitar with Fender, they came out exactly like my original guitar. I still have the original at home, and I have one of the ones we did with Fender — and they're exactly the same.

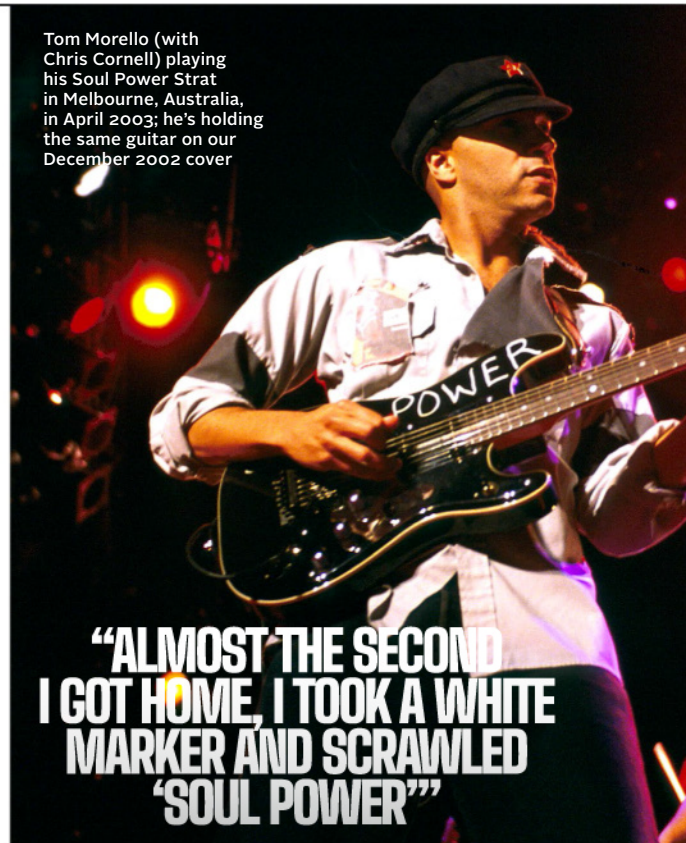
Why did you choose the Soul Power Strat for your GW cover shoot in 2002?

That would have been when we were promoting the first Audioslave record [Audioslave], and that was the Audioslave guitar. It's what I used on the record, and it was the main guitar I was playing, so Soul Power was definitely going to be the one I'd choose there.

You mentioned you still own the original Soul Power Strat, but when did you last play it?

Around 48 hours ago. [Laughs] I'm working on some new music, and it's one of the guitars I still play regularly. But it's funny — I've been relegated to being a rhythm guitarist in my house, as my 12-year-old plays my other [signature] Soul Power

Tom Morello (with Chris Cornell) playing his Soul Power Strat in Melbourne, Australia, in April 2003; he's holding the same guitar on our December 2002 cover



guitar, and he's a shredder!

What does the Soul Power Strat mean to you, considering that most people associate you with Arm the Homeless?

It's an important guitar because it represents a transitional period in my career with Audioslave. Soul Power was a new way to express myself during this new phase with this new band that included Chris Cornell, Tim Commerford and Brad Wilk. It became an instrument of liberation, was about inspiration and was not overthought from the second I grabbed it off that wall.

Guitarist:

MICK MARS

Guitar: 1996 Stratocaster

GW cover date: April 2024

How did you obtain this Strat? It's certainly different from your typical choices.

Yeah, the pink champagne. [Laughs] I bought it from a friend of mine. He has a vintage guitar place. His name is Lloyd; I can't remember his last name at the moment. I called him and [said] I wanted some pink sparkle guitars. That particular Strat happened to be one of them. It is really an eye-grabber for sure.

You're usually seen playing your worn-looking white Strat. Why did you choose a pink sparkle one?

You know, that one right there, the white one, good lord, I bought before they even started coming out with the aged Stratocasters; I had my own aged [one]. But I don't know... I just liked the pink one. I think it's a 1996, though I'm not positive. But I think it's a '96, and it came like it is.



Have you modified the pink sparkle Strat at all?

I did put a Seymour Duncan in the bridge [position].

What do you like about the Seymour Duncan pickup in a Strat?

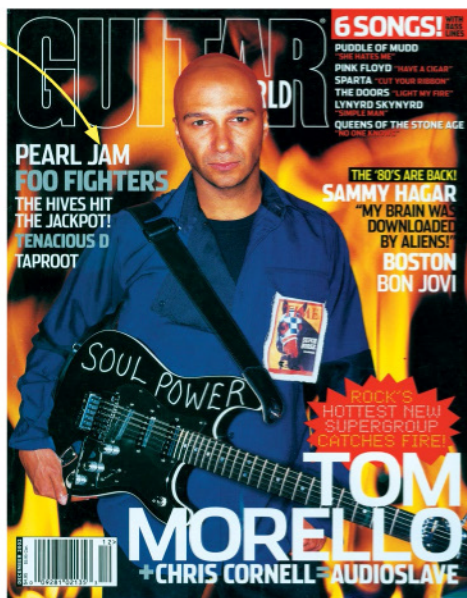
The [Seymour Duncan] has a bit more output; I think a standard Strat [pickup] has a 5.6, or even a 5 ohm. Seymour's have like a normal humbucker [sound], which is like around 7.5 or 8 [ohms]. I wanted a little more power in the back to make less treble and top end and still sound even.

Did the pink sparkle Strat make it onto your new record?

Actually, no. But I did use it in a lot of photos [Laughs], and I've played it to write songs and stuff, but it didn't end up on any of the songs. [It was] mostly the normal, beat-up white one that I have, Isabella. That's the one I used the most.

You've had Isabella for a long time and have been seen mostly with it. How did you acquire it?

It came from Fender, actually. I had an endorsement with them, so I would normally get a couple of guitars through the endorsement thing. That's where that one came in; it was in one of the first bunches,



and again, I changed the pickup on it to the one I used, which was 16 ohms, not 8. I'm overkill on everything, I guess. [Laughs]

But that guitar sounds different from any of the other guitars I have. Maybe that particular guitar has a bit more of the lower mid-range, which is what I like — lower mid-range and higher highs to give it a distinctive sound. You know, it's a real player. You can tell by how beat up it is.

How does the pink sparkle Strat from the GW cover compare to your trusty white Strat?

The sparkle one has less output, of course. Like I said, it's about 8 ohms, but it also has a rosewood neck, which makes the guitar sound warmer. A maple neck like Isabella's gives it more of an edge — a brighter, edgier sound.

What drew you to Strats in the Eighties, a time when most people weren't really using them aside from you and maybe a few others?

That's exactly right. Nobody was playing them except me! [Laughs] I like to... I don't know... step out of the thing. It's like, "He's playing blah, blah, blah" and "He's playing all the pointy, sharp guitars." I wanted to, of course, take a Strat. I played a Tele for a while, but I loved Strats forever, and I had to step away from the pointy era. [Laughs]

Given your history with your white Strat, why did you choose the pink sparkle Strat for your GW cover shoot?

I thought it jumped. I thought it was, like, a cool thing, and a lot different. For me, anyway, to come out with a pink Strat, I'm sure a lot of people would expect to see my white one out there. But yeah, I threw that one in to give them a curveball.

It's safe to assume you still own this guitar. Have you ever played it live?

No. That one has not seen the road. I have a couple other sparkle ones — a purple sparkle and a gold sparkle. They saw the road once on the final tour — well, not the final

tour, but the last stadium tour that we did when I was in Mötley [Crüe].

What does the Strat mean to you?

It's a very iconic guitar. I chose the Strat because I just like 'em. I like the way they look; I like the way they sound; everything about them is me. One of my first real guitars I had was a 1954 Stratocaster 'burst. They had two-tone 'bursts, more like a tobacco 'burst thing, and I got that in high school from a friend. He gave it to me because he really liked the way I play guitar, and he didn't play, so he gave it to me. The serial number, I remember, [was] 0140, and I wish I still had that thing. I kick myself in the butt all the time; that was actually the very first Strat I had. And it was a very low serial number!

Guitarist:

BUDDY GUY

Guitar: 1990 Eric Clapton Signature Stratocaster

GW cover date: July 1991

Where and when did you acquire this Strat?

I used an Eric Clapton Strat when we were doing [1991's] *Damn Right, I've Got the Blues*. I think Fender sent that guitar over [producer John Porter is said to have asked Fender to send one to the studio]; I used it on the record, and I took that guitar home with me after we were done.

Why did you choose this Strat?

What made it special, considering you're known for using your polka dot Strat?

I always liked the sound of a Stratocaster. Back when I first started using 'em, not a lot of people used Stratocasters for the blues. I just always liked the way they felt. The polka dot Stratocaster didn't come out as my signature guitar with Fender until a little later [1995].

The Clapton Strat we hear on *Damn Right, I've Got the Blues* — is that the same guitar that's on the GW cover? If so, why did you choose it?

Oh, I don't know. I guess I woulda chosen this Stratocaster because I had used it on the record, and I liked the way it felt and sounded then. I probably just liked how it looked, and since I was using it a lot

then, and it was before the polka dot Fender guitar, I went with that one.

Can you tell me more about how your signature Strat came to be?

The polka dots were something Fender said they couldn't do in 1991. But finally, they got a guy who was able to do it, and I can't remember the year, but after telling me the polka dots weren't going to work, they figured out a way to stamp them right and finally made me one.

Did you use the guitar on the GW cover for any other notable recordings after *Damn Right, I've Got the Blues*?

Yeah, I think I used it, but I can't tell you which ones because back then, I was using a few different ones. Some of the things, you know, you'd have to give me a flashback, and I'd say, "Yeah, I used that."

Jeff Beck is on the cover with you. That must have been quite a shoot.

Yeah, it was. When we did the cover, they said that back in 1965, Jeff Beck, Eric Clapton and Jimmy Page didn't think a Strat could play the blues. But then they all went to buy Strats after they saw me because, as a matter of fact, one of 'em told me I threw the guitar, and I caught it back in the right key.

And I don't even remember that, man, because I think somebody flashed a light, and I missed the damn guitar. But they surprised me because they thought back then that the Strat was for Texas, Tennessee and country/western; they were always playing those kinds of guitars. But I just liked the Strat. Even if it was busted up and had a few scratches on it, it played like somebody stole it.

Do you still have the Strat from your '91 GW cover shoot?

Yeah, that cream-colored guitar we're talking about, I still got it. My son Greg takes care of all my guitars, so he would know best, but actually, I still do play that guitar. I might have used it in January [2024] at my club [*Buddy Guy's Legends in Chicago*].

How did it feel and sound?

It's still got that tone, you know? It's like an Edsel car from 1959. You get in there to drive, and it just feels a



certain way. It's like my old friend Junior Wells would say, "Man, you can pull your woman so close to you in the car that you could kill her headache," and with the guitar, it's the same way.

It's still got that tone, but a lot of people forgot about the tone. And a lot of people ask me about that tone, and it's still got it. But they start looking at the looks, and just like a car, the looks sell it more than the ride; it's about how pretty it looks. But I don't care how pretty it is; if it don't run, I don't want it.

What does the Fender Strat mean to you?

I've dedicated just about all my life to it. I started with the Guild, but I've been a Stratocaster man ever since. The first one I had, man, I had to play at this lady's club until I paid her back for it. I can't tell ya how much I was makin', but it took me a long time to pay it back. [Laughs] But I kept it, and somebody broke into my apartment, and that one got scratched up; I intended to keep it the rest of my life, [but] they stole it. Then I finally was able to say I could go buy one, and all of a sudden I started getting my guitars [for] free, so that was a blessing.

Guitarist:
YNGWIE MALMSTEEN

Guitars: Late-Seventies Stratocaster (Sunburst), 1964 Stratocaster (Candy Apple Red)

GW cover dates: January 1986, January 1987

Where and when did you get these Strats?

I probably got the Seventies Strat [1986 cover] somewhere in L.A. the day before the shoot. The Candy Apple Red Strat [1987 cover] wasn't even mine! It was just something that was probably lying around in the studio. [Editor's note: While editing this feature, we noticed that on page 6 of the January 1987 issue, it says, "1964 Candy Apple Red Fender Strat graciously provided by Mr. Danny Shea of NYC for this shoot." We would've shared this info with Yngwie, but our interview took place about a month before we make this Sherlock Holmesian discovery. — D.F.]

Why did you choose these Strats for your GW photo shoots?

The Sunburst was just a guitar I had because I got it the day before, so I said, "Well, I'll just use this." But it's funny because I didn't really use guitars with rosewood necks, and I think I changed the neck out for a maple one later. The red one, like I said, wasn't mine; it was just there. If you look at it, the neck isn't even scalloped; it's not like a guitar I'd play.

Did you use the Seventies Strat on any notable recordings?

No, I don't think I did. Back then, I started getting really into the Sixties Strats. It was weird because the trend was to use Charvels, which were really good guitars, and stuff like that. I was really into the way things looked. I was on the road, and I found this 1956 Strat, and I got it for, like, nothing. Nobody wanted it, and I used it for a long time. I also bought a '60 or '61 Strat in L.A. not long before a magazine photoshoot, and I started using that a lot too.

Did it feel odd using older Strats in an era when hot rod guitars were so popular?

Yes and no; the funny thing is I was never too concerned with what other people did. As far as what kind of equipment I gravitated toward, I probably was the only person on the planet who didn't use the Floyd Rose or humbucking pickups. Even with scalloped frets — I did it because it felt natural. I didn't want to cheat. It ain't broke, don't fix it. That was my philosophy.

Aside from the scalloped frets, why didn't you modify your Strats much?

The thing that I always considered, which is very important, is that it really, truly is a thing of beauty. It's such a beautiful instrument. It's amazing. I think when people started hacking them up and putting humbuckers in them and stuff, it ruined the look. I did some things, like put bigger frets and scallops on the guitars, but other than that, I kept them stock. And I never understood what the problem was with the tremolos. It never goes out of tune for me!

Why did you start scalloping the frets?



Buddy Guy in action in 1991 with — is it the same Strat shown on our July 1991 cover? It sure looks like it!

The principle [and] the concept of scalloping, it's just a different way of getting to that point. I'm a "more is more" kind of person, so I scalloped the neck really deeply and put high frets on it, so I'm just a freak all around. When I was a little kid, I didn't really spend much time in school because I had to play guitar; that was more important to me than going to school. Funnily enough, I had straight A's anyway!

Since I didn't really go to school, they said, "You go to this luthier shop; they need somebody to teach," so I said, "Why not?" They were wearing lab coats and working on 17th-century violins and stuff like that. It was very high-tech and high-level. And this old instrument came in, and it had this scalloped look to it.

As a kid, I was interested in model planes and things like this; I didn't mind cutting stuff up and changing my [guitar's] neck. So I just scalloped between the frets and said, "Wow, this is kind of cool," because the wood didn't get in your way. I started doing that little by little on my better guitars, and the funny thing is, I didn't know that other people actually did that too. I had no idea because there was no way I'd find that information in the 1970s in Sweden.

You mentioned you didn't use rosewood-necked Strats much. Why did you prefer maple? Is it because maple has a snappier sound?

You're gonna laugh at this. I think it looked better. [Laughs] I think the big headstock looks better, too. It's a better-looking guitar! I actually like rosewood necks; I like a white cream Strat with a roasted neck; it looks superb. I don't dislike them by any stretch. I have many of them. I love them, but I guess I also prefer the snappier sound [of maple]. Yeah, you're right; maple seems to be a little snappier.

I get the feeling you're almost one with the Strat. Why is that the case?

Leo Fender was the Thomas Edison of guitars. He didn't even know how to play an E chord; he wasn't a guitar player, but the contoured body and the horn that goes higher on one side than the other — it's all about weight distribution. You put it on your knee, and it won't fall back or fall forward; it's perfect. It just feels perfect.

The limitation, I would say, would be in the pickups. If you turn it up, it's going to start humming a lot. But I was so in favor of the way the guitar looked that I refused to put humbuckers in. I wasn't really a big fan of that; I was more of a fan of the more direct tone of the Strat. It's very unforgiving, and the instrument is very unforgiving. It's got a longer scale and a smaller radius neck. You can have the action as low as you can, but the string is going to be tougher. It's just harder work, but it seems to me that everybody who plays them has a very personal sound, whereas a lot of people who play other instruments have a little less.

Do you still own the Seventies Strat?

I probably still own it, but I think I swapped the neck.

Where would you be without the Fender Stratocaster?

It's an interesting question. It's the same thing as asking where you think I would have been if I didn't come to America. I think that one way or the other, I would have found my way to the point that I am now because I was just so relentless, and I am actually still [relentless]. It's really funny.

I wake up every day and have this relentless drive; it's ridiculous. I think the instrument, obviously, to me, was the pinnacle of an instrument. I worked really hard to buy my first one, and then, of course, when I had the honor of having not only a signature model and the first one but also a 30th-anniversary signature model with Custom Shop and a tribute model, and so on. I'm extremely honored by that. When you persevere and stay true to your vision, you will always find that at the end of the rainbow, there's something there for you. **GW**

NILE RODGERS

The **CHIC** legend — and celebrated Bowie, SRV and Jeff Beck collaborator — dives into the history of his Hitmaker Strat

What first attracted you to the Strat?

Somebody else playing through my amplifier and sounding better than me! [Laughs]

What guitar were you using before the Stratocaster?

That particular night when that incident happened, I was playing a [Gibson] Barney Kessel, it's a wonderful jazz guitar, but it was feeding back at relative medium live volumes. You gotta remember this was 1973, and we were playing in a club, and we didn't have a proper PA. All the music that would spill from the stage was the volume the audience would hear. And my jazz guitar would feed back, and when this kid plugged into my amp and played this Strat, his guitar did not feed back — and he was playing louder, better and cooler than me. I was like, "Whoa."

So you bought your Hitmaker Strat in 1973 in Miami, and it's been your one and only, right?

I never changed. I bought that guitar in 1973, and I've never changed since I had it. I still carry it on my shoulder to this day. And I'm 71 and a half years old.

What was it about that Strat that attracted you?

Where I'm speaking to you right now is from my studio here in Miami, just a few blocks from where I bought the guitar. I wasn't particularly attracted to it for any reason other than the fact that it was the cheapest guitar in the store. I'm being perfectly honest. And when I traded in my jazz guitar, the guy gave me back \$300. I got the Hitmaker and \$300. That was the best deal I probably have ever made in my life.

Talk about a return on investment.

Man, you have no idea! [Laughs] It was like buying Bitcoin at 15 cents on the dollar.

Once you had the Hitmaker, did it take you long to realize you had a special guitar?

Shortly thereafter, one reason was that our shows got better right away. We [Chic] were

Nile Rodgers with his Hitmaker Strat in Madrid, July 11, 2023. "I bought that guitar in 1973, and I've never changed since I had it," he says. "I still carry it on my shoulder to this day. And I'm 71 and a half years old"



opening for the Jackson 5; we only did a couple of shows for them standing in for the O'Jays, but those shows got better right away because, all of a sudden, I was able to play with a hell of a lot more confidence. Once I got the Strat, my partner Bernard Edwards basically took me into the woodshed and just started teaching me how to chuck. He said, "Man, with your harmonic knowledge, if you get this down..." And I just was in there for hours and hours and hours every day, and when we got back on the Jackson 5 tour, we were killing it.

Is it safe to assume the Hitmaker all but shaped what would become your signature style?

Yeah, but the thing that's really interesting, though, is that because I had already learned to play guitar on acoustics, mainly classical and jazz, my muscle memory was my arms being extended out over the guitar a bit because of the depth of an acoustic and the jazz box. So I had to re-adapt, not realizing that, in that re-adaptation, I was coming up with something that wound up making my chucking cooler.

So by trying to make my arm not go out as far, I kept it pressed against the body of the Strat, thereby having the ability to lay my right hand across the bridge, which gave me further muting power. I could mute with my left hand and my right hand, and I developed a technique where I could play very complicated jazz voicings and classical voicing, which you could easily do by fingerpicking.

How did the Hitmaker — being a hardtail

and a little bit slimmer — impact things?

My Strat is a unique instrument — it's really one of a kind. It's not only a hardtail but the thinnest hardtail I've ever seen. God knows I've tried to buy hundreds to see if I could get another one. God forbid this one broke; what was I gonna do? Because that sound uniquely is my sound.

Hardtail Strats were rare back then, too.

I only realized it was that special once I played it and then tried to play other Strats, and I was like, "Wait a minute... What is this?" And then someone said to me — and it's really hard because people tell you stuff, and you take it as the gospel — but they said to me, "Hardtail Strats are hard to find because out of every 100 Strats they make with whammy bars, they only made one hardtail."

To me, that was the gospel. So I went around looking for other hardtails, but none of them were as thin as mine. Then I meet guys who are super aficionados, like Richie Sambora, and he says, "Nile, that's not just a regular Strat; that's a Mary Kaye, and it's a hardtail." And I'm like, "How could you... say that? They would have had to have made 100 Mary Kayes and then do one hardtail." He said, "I'm telling you, there are Strats that are that thin." So I don't know what the hell it is, and I'm tired of all the folklore. All I know is mine is awesome, and it's the only one. [Laughs]

Did you modify the Hitmaker right away?

I modified it the day I got home because I used to be a guitar repairman. I don't remember what color the Strat that I bought was, and it's amazing that I can't remember. But I was probably so zeal-

"RICHIE SAMBORA SAYS, 'NILE, THAT'S NOT JUST A REGULAR STRAT; THAT'S A MARY KAYE, AND IT'S A HARDTAIL'"

ous about changing it because I played a jazz guitar. I love jazz guitars with a sunburst finish, but I hated solid-body guitars with sunburst finishes.

So I made it white like Hendrix, so the finish that's on my guitar, even though it's deteriorated somewhat since 1973, I did it myself. I used to work at a shop on 48th Street [New York City], and my guitar repair impresario was a guy named Giuliano Balestra. Giuliano and I painted it; we only put one coat on the guitar because I wanted to paint it antique yellow like Jimi's as quickly as possible. And that's it; I've never tried to fix it up and make it look any better. I actually wanted it to appear to be the age it was because I bought it in '73, but it's a '59/'60 Strat, so it already had "age" when I bought it. I wanted it to weather quite quickly, or at least have a weathered look, because that was the vibe back in those days.

And then there's the unique speed knobs and pickguard.

I put on speed knobs because, in those days, there were a lot of songs where the guitar had to cry. I didn't have enough money to buy a volume pedal, so we would do it with our fingers. I would just put my pinky down and fool with the tone or the volume control, whichever one sounded the closest to whatever song I was playing.

And I put on the reflective... it's almost comical, but I put the reflective plate on it. What was cool is that when I put that plate on it, playing for an audience — especially in small nightclubs — you would be lucky if they had a little spotlight on you. But if they did, you could move the guitar and shine it in a cute girl's face. [Laughs] It was my silly little show business way of trying to meet girls. And it worked. It was actually pretty effective.

What does the Hitmaker mean to you?

Everything. It's my life, my competition tool and my performance tool. I'm doing a film score today for a John Malkovich film, and even though I have a keyboard next to me, in the old days, I used to do all my scoring on a keyboard, but now, I can hear it on guitar.

I can play my full arrangements on guitar, and I could write out the score with just my Strat. It's just a great tool to have something that is friendly; I mean, really, my Strat feels like my best friend when it comes to music. And I'm confident I could perform any kind of job, even if I'm working with someone that they ultimately don't like what I did. That's okay; I go into any musical situation fearlessly.

Ana Popović,
photographed
in Paris with a
preferred Strat,
March 13, 2023

ANA POPOVIĆ

How a blues queen's Strat obsession got off to an early start

What first attracted you to the Strat?

I grew up in a family with guitars around the house — and good music. My dad is a guitar player, sort of a hobby guitar player. I wanted to play guitar since I was a little girl; I'd look at my dad's guitars, but I couldn't touch them. He liked to keep them tidy and clean, and we couldn't touch any of the instruments, so it was an object of obsession for me growing up.

Can you remember your first Strat?

It came when I was 18; I bought a '73 Strat with my own money that I [had] saved.

Which of your Strats means the most to you?

The '57 reissue I got from my parents means the most to me. I got it when we were really poor. Back in the day, when we were traveling to Holland and the car broke down and we had no money, my dad called a family meeting and said we can't spend any money on this vacation — or get this guitar. But my mom and sister said, "We don't need anything; just get her the guitar." That's how I got my Fiesta Red Strat, which I've been playing forever. And about 16 years ago, I got my original '64 Strat. That's my road warrior; it's an amazing guitar, a very inspirational piece. I've played it at all my shows since.

And then there's your signature Strat, too.

Yes. I've got a new one that I hope you heard about; it's called Foggy. It's the Mirror Chrome Strat; there's so much joy... it's incredible. I love it. I love that I had so much input in making it and that I could have it exactly how I wanted it. It's tailored to bring something new to my music. I didn't want to copy any of my other guitars; I wanted something different.

What sets it apart from your other two favorites?

It has a Seymour Duncan 78 [pickup] in the bridge, and it's got a warm tone. It's got a large C-shaped neck and jumbo frets. It's different from what I had, but not too far out. It's such a joy to play live; I get so much positive feedback on how it looks and reflects the light... It's the 70th anniversary of the Strat, so it was the perfect moment for Foggy to come out.

What does the Strat mean to you?

It's been an everlasting and inspirational tool for my music. If there's one thing that unites all the music I put out throughout the years, it's a Strat. That's the glue. The Fender Strat is the glue of my projects, styles and songs. It's a reflection of me; it's the one thing that's been consistent in my life.

"MY MOM AND SISTER SAID, 'WE DON'T NEED ANYTHING; JUST GET HER THE GUITAR!'"

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PHOTOS BY
CHUCK BRUECKMANN

CREED





**“HAVE WE EVER LAID
EVERYTHING OUT ON
THE TABLE AND DONE
A KIND OF METALLICA
THERAPY SESSION?
NO, THAT’S NOT
HAPPENED”**

COVER STORY



“WE DIDN’T PLAN

any of it,” MARK TREMONTI says. “I don’t think anybody could have planned it. Everything just fell into place and happened organically. It’s pretty incredible.”

The guitarist is responding to the strange, unexpected and borderline paranormal phenomenon that swept the nation last fall when Creed — that’s right, Creed, perhaps one of the most polarizing bands of the past 30 years, mercilessly derided by critics as overly earnest Pearl Jam knockoffs but adored by millions of music fans — were publicly embraced by not one, but two professional sports franchises.

The Texas Rangers were the first to get the ball rolling. The baseball team were facing a midseason slump when they started psyching themselves up to Creed’s music in their locker room. Before long, the Rangers’ fortunes turned around and they began pumping Creed’s anthemic 1999 hit “Higher” during home games at Globe Life Field in Arlington, Texas, resulting in rapturous fan singalongs. By the time the Rangers swept the Baltimore Orioles 3-0 in ALDS playoffs, Creed’s streams were up 175 percent on Spotify. Baseball’s Creedmania culminated with the Rangers winning their first-ever World Series against the Arizona Diamondbacks. Online videos captured the team celebrating in their locker room with a Champagne-soaked, full-throated rendition of “Higher.”

A similar scenario unfolded in the NFL world, when Minnesota Vikings quarterback and dedicated Creed fanboy Kirk Cousins used “Higher” as a locker room team motivator. One victory led to another and another, and as the team rode a five-game winning streak, they moved Creed’s music from the clubhouse to the stadium. Vikings

fans adopted “Higher” as their own rallying cry and sang along mightily as the track roared over the P.A. at U.S. Bank Stadium. During one game, in which the Vikings defeated the New Orleans Saints, the audio dropped out, but the crowd kept right on singing without missing one lyric.

Madison Avenue got in on the zeitgeist with a Super Bowl ad for Paramount Plus that featured Drew Barrymore, Patrick Stewart and other stars trapped on snow-covered Paramount Mountain. Various rescue methods are shot down by Stewart until he hears the opening chords to “Higher” and sees Tremonti and Creed singer Scott Stapp rocking out. What follows is even more surreal: An inspired Stewart (who reveals a Creed tattoo on his lower back) grabs the animated character Arnold (from *Hey Arnold!*) and tosses him like a football while crooning, “I just threw him hiiiiigher, to a place where we won’t freeze.” Watching it all, a vaguely dazed-looking Barrymore joins the chorus.

In the late Nineties and early 2000s, hating on Creed was something of a public pastime (remember those “Even Jesus Hates Creed” T-shirts?). But the sweet serendipity of the events that gave rise to the band’s recent revival (fueled even further by young, meme-making TikTokers, many of whom weren’t even born during the group’s heyday) has led to a stunning reversal of perception: *Creed are cool*. And not just some ironic form of nostalgia cool, but cool as in the genuine article.

None of which surprises Stapp one bit. “I’ve always said that Creed was cool with the fans,” he says. “The critics and the media painted this narrative that didn’t reflect 95 percent of the population. You don’t sell millions of records and sell out multiple nights in arenas if you’re uncool. The media put this idea out there because we were so big, and it wasn’t the story they wanted moving forward. But it’s the people that matter, not the press.”

Scott Stapp [left] and Mark Tremonti, wearing his ubiquitous PRS signature model. “I remember... when I opened up the [PRS] guitar case on a stage. That was one of the coolest days of my career”

Tremonti draws a straight line between the backlash and the band’s massive popularity, noting, “Whether it’s LeBron James in basketball or Creed in rock ‘n’ roll, anytime somebody is on top, people want to see them knocked down. We were on the radio non-stop, and we were playing your city every other

month. Some people push back on that. You’re seeing it now with Taylor Swift. She shows up at a [Kansas City] Chiefs game, and everybody wants to hate on the situation. It’s just a shame. Don’t hate on people because they’re successful.”

On their own, Creed, who haven’t toured since 2012, began laying the groundwork for a comeback last summer when they announced a “Summer of ’99” cruise in which they would headline concerts featuring 3 Doors Down, Buckcherry and other acts. The cruise sold out in 30 minutes, and the band quickly put another nautical experience on sale. When it, too, sold out, it became clear that the demand for Creed called for a full-scale summer tour of sheds and amphitheaters, which was soon extended to a fall arena run.

“I remember when Bon Jovi came back and blew up arenas, I thought, ‘I sure hope this happens with Creed,’” Tremonti says. “People grow up and they want to relive their youth and see the bands they loved. Lo and behold, here we are doing exactly what I hoped would happen. We put the summer tour on sale, and it took off well beyond what we imagined. I spoke to my agent, and he said, ‘This is bigger than you guys were at your prime, ticket sales-wise.’ It’s unbelievable.”

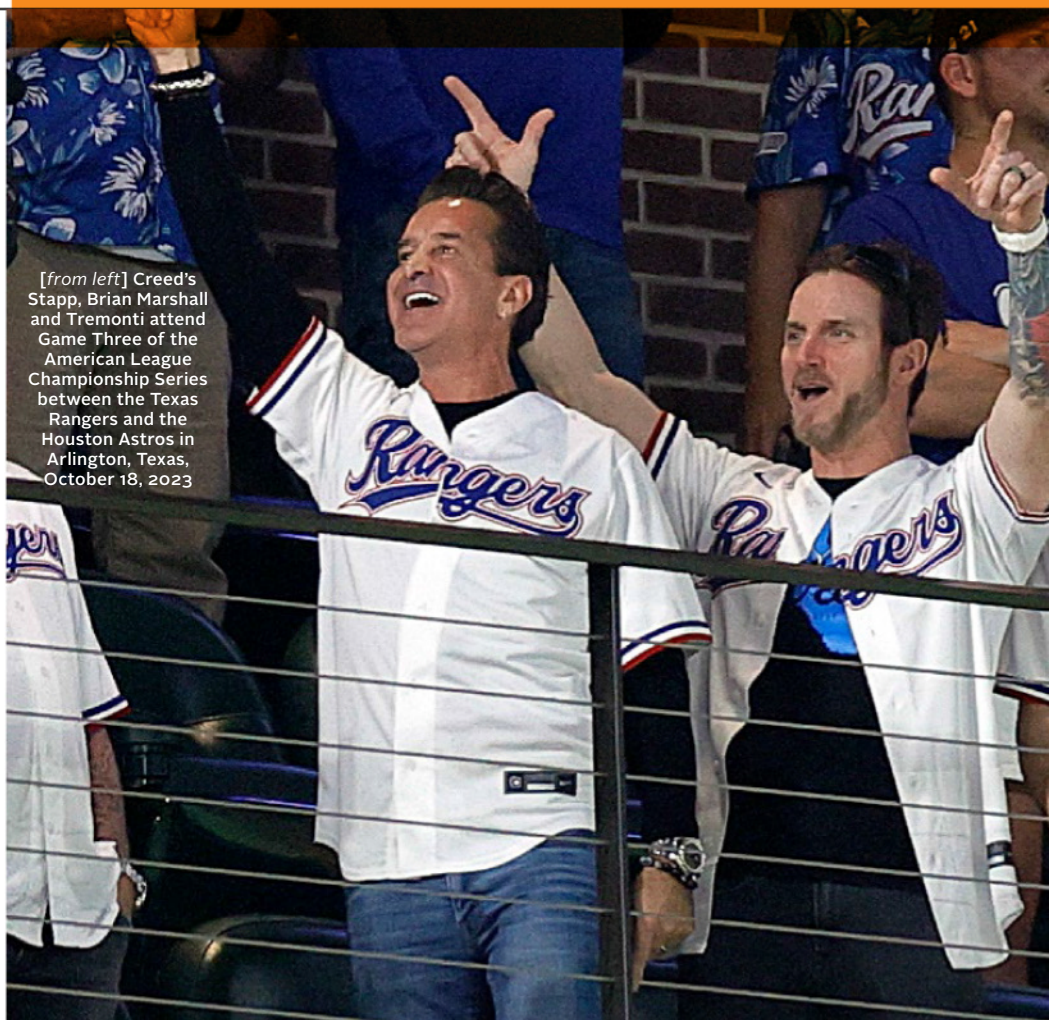
Coming out of Tallahassee, Florida, Creed (which also includes bassist Brian Marshall and Scott Phillips) took the music scene by storm during the first wave of late-Nineties post-grunge. The combination of Tremonti’s widescreen riffs and solos and Stapp’s commanding baritone was catnip for both alternative and hard rock fans. Along with their huge and heavy sound, Creed had the tunes. Dispensing with any

sense of anti-commercial pretense, they knocked out hooky, radio-ready slammers — “With Arms Wide Open,” “What’s This Life For,” “One,” “What If,” “One Last Breath,” “My Sacrifice” and, of course, “Higher” — that drove sales for their first three albums (1997’s *My Own Prison*, 1999’s *Human Clay* and 2001’s *Weathered*) into the tens of millions. All told, the band has sold more than 53 million albums worldwide.

Critics did their level best to topple Creed, but the band ultimately did themselves in. Friction between Stapp and the other members grew heated, and Marshall left the group in 2000 to battle alcohol dependency. Stapp’s own drug and alcohol use escalated, and by 2004 his relationship with Tremonti and Phillips was beyond repair. Stapp went solo, and Tremonti formed Alter Bridge with Marshall, Phillips and lead singer Myles Kennedy. Creed would eventually reunite in 2009 for a well-received album, *Full Circle*, and a touring cycle that lasted till 2012, but after attempting to record a fifth album, the group went on hiatus in 2013. For the next decade, any future band activity remained in doubt.

Fast-forward to today. Nine years sober, Stapp looks healthy and cheery, and he’s ready to put the past behind him. Appearing on Zoom with Tremonti, he says, “I think time heals. You grow up and mature, and things that kind of mattered 20 years ago don’t matter now. Whatever issues I had, I can’t even remember what they were. It’s been nothing but good vibes since we’ve been in rooms together and hanging out. But have we ever laid everything out on the table and done a kind of Metallica therapy session? No, that’s not happened.” He laughs. “Mark, you think we need to do that?”

Tremonti doesn’t answer that question outright, but he echoes Stapp’s positive outlook. “I think things are going perfect right now,” he says. “I had a conversation with my wife, and she asked me, ‘How are things between everybody?’ I told her, ‘We’re all rooting for one another. We’re all on each other’s side.’ This feels good — no negativity here. It feels like when we got our first record deal. We were all pushing for one another and trying to make this the biggest thing in the world.”



[from left] Creed's Stapp, Brian Marshall and Tremonti attend Game Three of the American League Championship Series between the Texas Rangers and the Houston Astros in Arlington, Texas, October 18, 2023

Let's go back to the beginning. When the band formed, did the two of you feel like you were a good fit musically?

MARK TREMONTI: We were a mismatch all around. I was the metalhead. Scott Phillips was more chill — Living Colour, soul, rock, funk. Brian Marshall was a classic-rock Rush-meets-Iron Maiden-type thing. Even though Iron Maiden is metal, I was into Slayer and speed metal. Scott grew up on Elvis and the Doors. When I came in and started playing heavy metal riffs, everybody looked at me like I was crazy. We had to fall into place with one another, and once we did, the Creed recipe came together.

SCOTT STAPP: I think there's no doubt that we had tremendous chemistry. When we're playing and writing together on stage, it's undeniable. If Mark is just noodling, I'll hear something that inspires me to create in that moment. Despite our differences, I think it was the perfect recipe for the soup to make the music that Creed made.

What did you have in common, then, musically? What was the glue?

STAPP: I was such a fan of Mark. Everything he played was awesome, so I tried to write over whatever he played me. We kept digging through stuff until we found what we both connected with. Mark was very patient with me and allowed me to find my niche as we were

trying to find our sound together. I remember the first time we got together, and he played all these riffs and heavy metal things I had never gotten into before. But I didn't care, man! [Laughs] I loved what he was doing, and I tried to write songs over it.

TREMONTI: We went to high school together, but then we met back up in college at Florida State University. I was desperate to get a band going; that's all I wanted in life. I would find local musicians. It was easy to find another guitar player, a little bit harder to find a bass player, but it was impossible to find a great singer.

Scott came to town and just blew everybody else away. There was nobody who could sing like him. I was like, “Wow, we have this absolute powerhouse of a vocalist that we can work with here.” I even remember going back into the studio on the *Full Circle* record, when I hadn't heard Scott sing in the studio for years. His voice was a mile wide. He



LOUD & PROUD

MARK TREMONTI WALKS US THROUGH HIS NEW SIGNATURE **PRS MT 100 AMP** By Amit Sharma

has an iconic voice that millions of people in the world can immediately put their finger on. I think that's a massive strength.

STAPP: I feel the same way about Mark. As soon as you hear his guitar playing, you know it's him. He's got an undeniable sound, and he's an incredible writer with an amazing melodic sense. I'll go to my grave saying he's probably one of the best guitar players of our generation.

The sound of your first album owed a lot to grunge. Did you think at the time that perhaps you should move away from that sound?

TREMONTI: At the time, there was more of a poppy rock thing — Third Eye Blind, Marcy Playground. When we came out with “My Own Prison,” it was the moodiest song on the radio. I think that kind of set us apart. We were fans of a lot of the grunge bands, but I don't think we ever tried to fall in line with them. We were just doing our own thing.

LAUNCHED BY PRS in 2018, the MT 15 would go on to become a hit with players needing something versatile that could take them from bedrooms to smaller stages. Six years later, after a whole lot of tweaking, Mark Tremonti is unveiling his second signature amp — a 100-watt behemoth capable of conquering venues of any size.

“I wanted three channels this time, so I could replicate my favorite amps at home,” he says. “The Fender Twin-like clean is one of the things I'm most proud of, because with high-gain amps, that channel is often there as a side note. A lot of metal players won't care; they just want to play metal. But cleans are important to me.”

The middle channel also required some extra attention to detail; Tremonti says he didn't just want it to work as a “gained-down version of channel three.” It had to stand on its own two feet and inspire the player to do different things. Having owned six Dumble amps over the years, Tremonti knew exactly how he wanted to dial that second channel in.

“There's a certain something that happens when you play a Dumble,” he says. “When the pick hits the string, you hear this certain quality that I tried to replicate with this amp. You can turn the gain down, sit on a note and it will bloom — which is a beautiful thing if you're playing something slow and sweet. It won't if you're burning like Malmsteen!”

The latest signature amp is also notable

for its old-school sensibilities. You get three independent channels, but don't expect any USB connectivity, power attenuation or cab sims. Things like that, Tremonti says, can often get in the way.

“When I was growing up, we didn't need all those functions,” he says. “I've seen comments where people were wishing it had a bunch of bells and whistles, but that's not what this amp is. This is not a Kemper or something you program 10,000 presets into. This is a tube amp. I didn't want too much because when things go wrong, you don't know what the hell's happening. I also wanted to keep the price down. I told Paul Reed Smith to keep it around \$1,800 because that's the breaking point between affordable and expensive. You still get three excellent channels that are individually voiced and completely isolated, sharing nothing but the effects loop.”

So what can we expect next from the longstanding PRS devotee?

“I think it would be good to do another line of baritones,” he says. “When we did that in the past, they sold out quickly and people missed out. I'm spitballing here, but we've also talked about doing a limited run of MT 100s with hand-painted Joe Fenton art. A 50-watt combo could be good. We've also talked about doing replicas of my Charcoal Burst with the Dimebag sticker — beaten up so they look like mine. We're always discussing things.”

“A LOT OF METAL PLAYERS WON'T CARE; THEY JUST WANT TO PLAY METAL. BUT CLEANS ARE IMPORTANT TO ME”

FULL CIRCLE

MARK TREMONTI COMMENTS ON SOME OF THE BIGGEST BANDS OF THE NINETIES

IN THE SPIRIT of the Summer of '99 tour, we asked Mark Tremonti to weigh in on some of the biggest bands of the Nineties. Just for kicks, we threw in a surprise at the end.



HOLE

"Great songwriting — great emotional, moody tunes. I like it when somebody puts it all out there and doesn't hold back, and that was definitely Courtney Love."

STONE TEMPLE PILOTS

"Great band. Iconic. Some of the best musicianship to this day. I loved seeing them live. We had our ups and downs with their old frontman back in the day, but they wrote some tremendous albums."

SOUNDGARDEN

"One of my favorite bands of all time. Kim Thayil is one of the coolest and most inventive guitar players ever. He was a huge inspiration to me as a guitarist and songwriter. Chris Cornell is definitely in my Mount Rushmore of singers, no matter the

STAPP: When we wrote a song called "Grip My Soul," we all kind of looked at each other and said, "We found it. We found who we are." From that day forward, we pumped out song by song what would end up becoming the *My Own Prison* record.

Scott, quite a few writers criticized you for sounding like Eddie Vedder. That must have stung.

STAPP: Hey, they said the same thing about Darius Rucker. He was the Eddie Vedder rip-off before they called me the Eddie Vedder rip-off. I felt like I was in good company, and I was honored by the compliment.

The second album, *Human Clay*, featured more riff-oriented hard rock. Was that in any way a response to critics who called you grunge copycats?

TREMONTI: That all kind of happened naturally. What was terrible about the first three records of our career was, everybody was talking about how we were going to fail. Each next step was going to be a disaster. We came out with "My Own Prison," and everybody said, "You're going to be a one-hit wonder." Then we set a record for Number 1's in a row on a debut record, and then everybody said, "All right, now you're going to have the sophomore slump with *Human Clay*."

We pushed as hard as we could to stay alive. Imagine the pressures that we had being probably the most heard band on radio and MTV. Record labels and publicists saying, "You gotta do this, you gotta do that." No matter how much you tour — "Scott, you gotta take Advil to keep your voice going. They were just pushing us like we were invincible. When *Human Clay* came out, that was a band trying to fight and survive.

STAPP: And we had four Number 1's off that record.

Creed had the classic hit band scenario: You had years to write your first album and months to write your second.

STAPP: I think it was a key to our success. From my perspective, I didn't feel any pressure.



"WE WERE FANS OF A LOT OF THE GRUNGE BANDS, BUT I DON'T THINK WE EVER TRIED TO FALL IN LINE WITH THEM. WE WERE JUST DOING OUR OWN THING"



Tremonti with "Stella," a one-off custom guitar by PRS

[left] Hole's Courtney Love in 1994

[right] Alice In Chains' Layne Staley and Jerry Cantrell in action in 1993

With *My Own Prison*, we immediately went to headliner. We were writing songs that would be on *Human Clay* on tour at soundcheck. Then we'd play them live so we could do a longer set. I felt so confident in the band and the songs Mark and I were writing. We'd play these new songs for fans that were written a week before, and after seeing their responses I walked into *Human Clay* with tremendous confidence — and to be honest with you, call it youthful naivete. The thought of failure never entered my mind.

Mark, had you already made the switch to PRS guitars on *Human Clay*? Could that be why it's more riffy than the first album?

TREMONTI: I remember being in an arena, so it had to have been the second record when I opened up the [PRS] guitar case on a stage. That was one of the coolest days of my career. So that was probably during the second single of *Human Clay*.

I talk to musicians all the time who say they never knew what song would be a hit. When you guys wrote "Higher," did you have any idea how big it would be?

TREMONTI: We felt really good about it.

STAPP: [Laughs] Yeah, we did!

TREMONTI: We were standing up writing that song. Scott liked to play this game where he would put the band on the spot and say, "We're going to write a song." In our college years, he would do that in front of a live audience at a club, and I would just start riffing out. The band would follow me and he'd start singing. The chorus of "Higher" was born that way. That song was written in front of a live group of people.

STAPP: It was probably in front of 4,000 people. It was a freestyle. I still like to do that — I'm sure the band guys around me hate it. But it's fun and you get in a flow. Mark can trigger me with some of his licks and interludes between songs. When I hear it, I roll with it. I'm glad Mark jogged my memory on that, because that's how that chorus was born.

As you were having such success, the press kept treating you like battering rams. How hard was that to deal with?

TREMONTI: I remember thinking, "If you want to do what we do and you want to have the success we had, you'd better have thick skin." I did get to the point if, say, my brother called me up and said, "Hey, this person said this," I'd be like, "Dude, do me a favor: Don't tell me anything negative. Just tell me things that are positive. I don't need negativity." I'm looking out at these thousands of people we're playing in front of every night, and they're not complaining.

With *Weathered*, you guys debuted at Number 1. That didn't suck, did it?

STAPP: No. And if the press were right, the album wouldn't have done that.

TREMONTI: When we came back for our reunion with *Full Circle*, Michael Jackson had just passed. We were on our way to another Number 1 record, and then his whole catalog kind of stole the charts.

STAPP: He put out a record from the grave, so our album ended up debuting at Number 2. Had that not hap-

genre. Matt Cameron on the drums was absolutely phenomenal."

NIRVANA

"I was a fan before the rest of the world. I got *Bleach* soon after it came out, and I was showing everybody how cool the band was. I bought *Nevermind* the day it came out. My older brother Mike wasn't into my music much; he was into Van Halen, Kiss and Ted Nugent — you know, popular rock. I played him "Smells Like Teen Spirit," and it blew him away. I must have listened to that song 30 times that night. When I first heard that song, it changed the world in my lifetime. That song moved more mountains than anything I've ever heard in the music business."

GREEN DAY

"I thought they were an English punk/Sex Pistols-type band. It shocked me when I heard them — 'They're Americans!' We did some touring with them in Canada, and they always put on a great show. Great songs. They're another iconic band."

ALICE IN CHAINS

"I think Jerry Cantrell is one of the best rock songwriters of all time for our kind of music. I'm not talking Beatles or Led Zepelin, but among modern-age songwriters, he's an all-time favorite. We've gotten to do a lot of shows with him. He actually came on tour with us when we were doing the last Creed reunion. I remember him coming onto our tour bus and playing some demos he was working on. Layne Staley was one of my favorite vocalists back in the day. All I wanted was to sing like him. When it came out, the *Facelift* record stayed in my CD and tape players all the time."



WEEZER

"I never bought any Weezer records, but I've always appreciated what they did. I think they're great songwriters, and they definitely had their thing. I remember somebody telling me at the time that Weezer and Veruca Salt had signed two of the biggest record deals for new bands. When I heard Weezer, I was like, 'I get it. They know how to write a song.'"



PEARL JAM

"Pearl Jam were the biggest band in the world when I was in college. You couldn't walk anywhere without hearing *Ten* coming out of every dorm room. It was a very special record. I remember seeing the video for 'Alive' on *Headbangers Ball*, and it seemed so different. Eddie Vedder's voice grabbed everybody right out of the gate. The *Temple of the Dog* record was another special record to me — incredibly emotional and so well-written. Chris Cornell and Eddie Vedder back to back were so good. I must have played 'Hunger Strike' a couple of thousand times."

CREED

"When I think of Creed, it's almost like another lifetime. I feel like I was a kid when we first came out. It was such a long time ago when we were doing it, and now all these old videos are popping up of us playing the clubs before our record deal. It's funny how different things were. We had mosh pits and we were all aggressive; I tried to push the metal thing. It was before 'With Arms Wide Open' kind of tamed down our crowd a little bit."

— Joe Bosso

[above] Pearl Jam's Eddie Vedder gets carried away in 1992

pened, we would've had our third consecutive Number 1 album. But you know what? We'll give it to the king.

Mark, let me ask you about *Full Circle*. It's far heavier than any of the prior Creed albums. Did your time doing Alter Bridge rub off on Creed?

TREMONTI: From day one, I was pushing the heavier side of the music to the band. I would get pushed back, but I'd keep pushing. I'm just that constant force of pushing it to the guys and seeing what I can let slip by. Little by little, I won 'em over as far as getting those riffs put forward. I think the biggest difference [on *Full Circle*] was that I was used to the layered guitar sound. The first three Creed records were just me doubling myself. Even the live thing. I hate just being the only guitar player up there. I used to like it, but now I'm like, "It could be so much bigger and better."

I'm writing a Tremonti record right now, and I can play with the drummer all day long, but as soon as [guitarist] Eric Friedman steps in the room and we got two guitars going, it fills so much more space. On *Full Circle*, I had already fallen in love with that dual-guitar thing, but I was the dual guitar with myself. When we played live, Eric came out and played guitar with us. There were rhythm parts behind the solos. It felt naked to me without that rhythm guitar.

Scott, are you an Alter Bridge fan?

STAPP: I'm a fan of anything Mark does.

Mark, how do you feel about Scott's solo work?

TREMONTI: I think it's great. Like I said, he's got an iconic voice. He's got a great song sensibility and delivers every night on stage.

No doubt people are wondering if you're going to work on a new album. Any plans?

TREMONTI: This year's been so crazy, so we would've had to plan way ahead to have new music for this tour. But we've always got tons of ideas in the hopper ready to go. It's just a matter of getting



it done and doing it in the proper manner before the next time we get out.

STAPP: Let's see what happens. Let's do these tours and let's see where we are. If it compels us and inspires us to take that next step and do a new record... you know what I mean?

By the time of *Weathered*, the band began to have serious personal issues. When did the two of you feel like you were headed for trouble?

STAPP: We gave it a shot even after that. In 2004, we got back together to try to make another record, but I was in the throes of addiction, and so it just didn't manifest. We weren't ready to throw it away in 2002 or move on. I'll have to take ownership of that one, because there would've been a follow-up to *Weathered* had I not been in the throes of my addiction.

TREMONTI: It was just a whirlwind. It was a pressure cooker leading up to that point, and our personalities just got pushed kind of apart. You've got to give it up for anybody that's on top and they stay mentally healthy, because it's definitely a challenge for anybody. It's very rare to see a band like Aerosmith staying together, but I'm sure they've had their ups and downs as well.

STAPP: You throw in the disease of alcoholism and addiction, and we dealt with that with another member in the band who was suffering and dealing with that issue. And then it got me. It's not a new story in music. It's unfortunate that it happened, but here we are today with so much good in front of us.

It's nice to see the two of you are in a good place once again. It feels like you guys want to make the most of this reunion.

STAPP: I do — 100 percent.

TREMONTI: Yeah. I've got people coming out of the woodwork. They're so excited to see Creed back on stage.

STAPP: Reliving the past is good for reading, but that's not what we're focused on, man. We're focused on today, riding this wave and just trying to keep things positive and the vibe as cool as possible. I guess the story is good because there's other people always out there suffering from alcoholism, addiction and mental health issues. If our story of renewal, rebirth and healing through overcoming those obstacles can be told by what's happening with this band, then it can help other people out of the darkness. I pray that it happens, because there is hope. **GW**



Vintage Creed...
Tremonti performs
with Creed at the 2001
My VH-1 Music Awards
in Los Angeles;
[left] Stapp and Tremonti
on stage in Camden,
New Jersey, in 2009

MARK TREMONTI'S FINEST CREED GUITAR MOMENTS — SO FAR

By Rob Laing

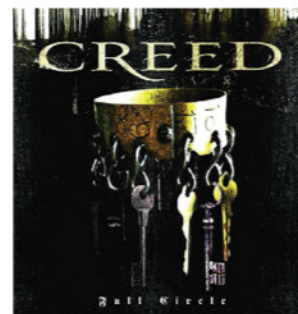
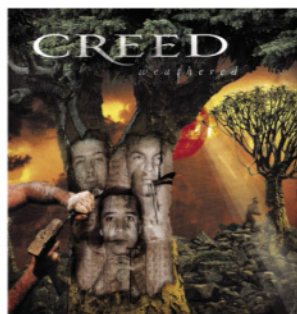
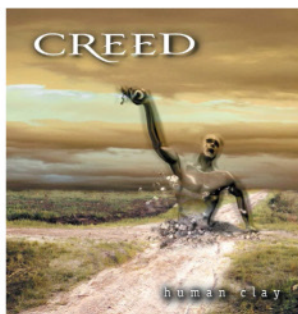
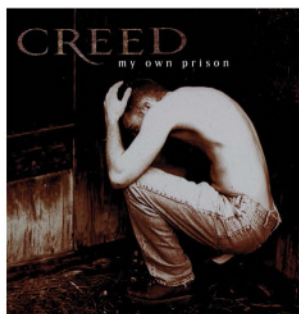
“Say I,” from *Human Clay* (1999)

“Live, I’d say it’s my favorite song to play,” Tremonti once told me, and it’s easy to see why. “Say I” is a prime example of the guitarist’s often-overlooked knack for allowing breathing space in Creed songs; its sparse, moody arpeggiated lines not only let Brian Marshall’s underrated basswork shine but also allow Tremonti’s riffs to hit so much harder when they kick back in.

The song also managed to bottle the raw energy Creed captured as they crafted and road-tested *Human Clay*’s material on the *My Own Prison* tour to fill out their live sets; a version of “Say I” was debuted as far back as August 1997 at a hometown show in Tallahassee around the release of their debut album, with Tremonti playing the red 1986 Les Paul that was stolen in 1997 and recently returned to the guitarist. It’s sure to be a highlight of their 2024 shows.

“One Last Breath,” from *Weathered* (2001)

Tremonti’s fingerstyle came to the fore like never before on this huge hit from Creed’s third album (and their most-streamed song on Spotify to date). It was an approach inspired by his teenage heroes Metallica and... J.S. Bach? “When I was young, one of the first things I learned to play with my fingers was Bach’s ‘Bourrée in E Minor’; they had the transcription to that in a guitar magazine,” he said. “I couldn’t read the rhythm of it or anything so I just made up how it should sound. I didn’t know how to do traditional fingerstyle so I just used my thumb and my pointer finger. I learned ‘The Call of Ktulu’ by Metallica too, and I played those songs quite a bit. They kind of developed the style of my right hand for fingerstyle.”



“Faceless Man,” from *Human Clay*
Human Clay’s centerpiece is Creed’s greatest epic — a slow build, fall and cinematic payoff that moves between atmospheric Jimmy Page-esque strumming and Tremonti’s infectious melody hook. “Faceless Man” proves that drop-D tuning wasn’t just for heavy bludgeoning in the Nineties and understandably remains Tremonti’s proudest studio moment with the band. Creed were confident enough to preview “Faceless Man” two months before *Human Clay*’s release in front of around 200,000 people at Woodstock ’99.

“It’s probably my overall favorite just to listen to,” Tremonti said. “I wrote it in my early days of experimenting with open D5 tuning. I just remember coming up with the opening line and really digging it, then I wrote a few melodies for the bridge. I called Scott and said, ‘I’ve got this cool idea going on.’ He said, ‘I do too.’ He was writing these lyrics, and when we got together they fit really well. We put that song together partly that night and the next day at soundcheck.”

“Ode,” from *My Own Prison* (1997)
 For those who think they have Creed pegged based on their massively popular mid-tempo singles, the metal-leaning moments from their early days will be an ear-opener. Some of the right-hand riff discipline Tremonti would explore much later in his solo band is showcased here in the drop-D riffs. Meanwhile, Stapp sounds surprisingly Layne Staley-esque on the vocal side. It’s a potent combination.

“Time,” from *Full Circle* (2009)
 Creed’s 2009 comeback album from their first reunion remains an underrated listen; it saw all four members putting their musical experience into the pot to explore new ground. And even for those familiar with Tremonti’s startling evolution in Alter Bridge, the reflective track’s guitars sound unexpected.

“On ‘Time,’ I used an open G tuning,” he said. “But it’s different from the open G tuning I’ve used previously. I tuned the high string down so it’s open G minor. I just kind of stumbled upon that tuning and wrote a bunch of ideas with it, and it turned out to be my favorite song on the record.”

“The harmonics were something that really opened up for me in that tuning — the

“YOU COULD REALLY CREATE A MELODY ON THE GUITAR WITH THE NATURAL HARMONICS IN THAT (OPEN G MINOR) TUNING”

placement of all the harmonics,” Tremonti added. “You could really create a melody on the guitar with the natural harmonics in that tuning.”

“My Own Prison,” from *My Own Prison*

The term “post-grunge” has been played with fast and loose, and it’s a tag Creed never asked for, but here the link to Seattle holds weight. Contrary to the late-Nineties radio-friendly rock of the time that featured sunnier sounds, Creed’s breakout single had more in common with the brooding dynamics of the rainy Northwest Pacific than the band’s detractors may care to admit.

“When Creed first came out, all the bands of rock radio were kind of upbeat, more pop rock,” Tremonti told *Metal Hammer* in 2023. “Bands like Third Eye Blind were really big at the time, and Marcy Playground and Semisonic, stuff like that. So when we came out with ‘My Own Prison,’ to me at the time, it was the only somber song that was doing well on the rock charts. I think the seriousness of it grabbed people’s attention. The grunge scene had a lot of that moody stuff going on, but when we had come about, it had been years since the grunge thing really popped.”

“To Whom It May Concern,” from *Human Clay* (two-disc-edition bonus track)

Some of Creed’s most powerful moments aren’t just their deeper album cuts but songs that didn’t even make their albums. However technically proficient Tremonti is as a guitarist — and how adventurous his alternate tunings would become with Alter Bridge — this *Human Clay*-era power ballad

shows just how effective a less-is-more approach can be in his undeniable songwriting chemistry with Stapp. Tremonti works a mournful melody into octave strumming in drop D before letting the power chords drive home a huge chorus and outro — one that also reminds us of how integral his vocal harmonies are to Creed’s sound.

“On My Sleeve,” from *Full Circle*

Rock guitar and string orchestration can be a risky partnership; too often the endeavor can come off as mawkish and overblown. But this *Full Circle* highlight confidently walks the line and finds Tremonti ambitiously moving between 12-string acoustic and “Kashmir”-sized riffage to inspire Stapp’s exposed and confessional vocal.

“It started with a little acoustic guitar line, and I had put a bunch of harmonics in it,” Tremonti said. “You can hear them in the beginning, and then I cut them out. When I first wrote it I thought it was cool — but repeated too many times, it became redundant. So I kept it as an arpeggiated clean line and then we threw the chorus together when the band met up and began piecing the song together, singing harmonies together.”

The monolithic bridge, bookended by a descending syncopated run from the guitarist with the string section, is a climactic point — but it seems it was something he already had on file well before the band’s writing sessions.

“With the bridge, when we come up with a song that has a verse and a chorus I’ll just jump on my computer, pull out my bridge ideas and throw them out to the band and wait until one of them sticks,” he said. “And everybody dug that bridge.”

“Stand Here with Me,” from *Weathered*

A deeper *Weathered* cut that features a rare and soaring guitar solo from Tremonti in the Creed catalog — a taster for the histrionics he’d unleash on Alter Bridge’s debut single, “Open Your Eyes,” three years later. But “Stand Here with Me” showcases another Tremonti strength in Creed: how he’d utilize drop-D tuning to create a bigger one-guitar sound (Eric Friedman didn’t join the live lineup on second guitar until their 2009 reunion). Live footage from the *Weathered* touring era, circa 2002, proves just how well Tremonti’s verse riff filled arenas.

SOUND CHECK

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in review



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RODE
NT-1 Signature Series



Paul Reed Smith Mark Tremonti MT 100

By Chris Gill

▶ WHEN PRS INTRODUCED its first Mark Tremonti signature amp — the 15-watt MT 15 “lunchbox” head — way back in 2018, many guitarists welcomed it with arms wide open, but some wondered when and if a full-size, high-output version like the amps Tremonti used on stage would follow.

Six years later, after a period of extensive development and refinement, PRS has finally introduced the 100-watt Mark Tremonti MT 100. Much more than a bigger version of the MT 15, the MT 100 is the first PRS amp with a three-channel design, providing a compelling range of clean, overdrive and high-gain tones to satisfy the performance needs of modern guitarists.

The MT 100’s three channels (Clean, Overdrive and Lead) are fully independent and individually

voiced, operating essentially like three different preamps. The overall design is very straightforward and uncomplicated, providing fully independent sets of bass, middle, treble, presence, volume (Clean) or gain (Overdrive, Lead) and master “master” controls for each channel and no shared “master” controls.

Each channel even has its own preamp tubes (V2 Clean, V3 and V4 Overdrive, V5 and V6 Lead), while V1, V7 and V8 are shared amongst all three channels for input, effects loop and phase inverter functions, respectively. All of the preamp tubes are 12AX7s, while the power amp section is driven by a quartet of 6L6GC tubes.

The rear panel is similarly straightforward, providing a 1x16-ohm and 2x8-ohm ¼-inch speaker outputs, a 7-pin DIN jack for the included footswitch with three switches for selecting channels and a



buffered effects loop with 1/4-inch mono send and return jacks. Bias jacks and an adjustment pot facilitate monitoring and adjusting each power tube's bias. That's it — no line output, MIDI, 1/2 power switching, etc., which helps keep the MT 100's price very competitive.

Plugging into the PRS MT 100, it's immediately evident that the primary emphasis was on sound and performance. The Clean channel is exactly that, delivering some of the best clean tones I've ever heard from a 100-watt head. The headroom is outstanding, with only the slightest hint of overdrive emerging when the Volume control is cranked all the way up and humbucking pickups are used. The character is very much like a pristine blackface Fender Twin Reverb, although with a little tweaking of the midrange, treble and presence controls users can also dial in chime reminiscent of a clean AC30.

The Overdrive channel is a different

beast altogether, with a pronounced midrange that is very expressive and musical. Plexi-like character can be dialed in with the Middle control below 12 o'clock and sparkle added via the Treble and Presence controls. With the Gain fully cranked and the Middle control dialed past noon, the MT 100 delivers deliciously fat yet articulate tones that are dazzling for metal, rock, hard blues or Beck-like fusion leads.

The Lead channel is high-gain from the get go — even the most diehard metal gain fanatics will find the blazing textures they crave without needing to crank the Gain control past noon. This channel's tone controls are very interactive, with full mids that consistently retain body and dominance in a band's mix even when the bass and treble tone controls are boosted. The noise level is surprisingly low, allowing players to forego a noise gate if desired.

Whereas many 100-watt amps need to be

cranked up to relatively high volume levels to truly deliver the goods, the MT 100 sounds excellent from moderate "bedroom" levels to full stage output. It absolutely roars when paired with a 4x12 cabinet, but similar tones can be summoned using a 1x12 with the volume levels no higher than 10 o'clock. Another example of just how well the tones are dialed in is how I was able to play at high volume levels for over an hour without the ear fatigue I usually get when playing through most guitar amps.

While the MT 100 will certainly appeal to modern metal and hard rock guitarists thanks to its association with Mark Tremonti and its fire-breathing high-gain channel, players who specialize in more classic styles should still give it a spin for its stellar clean and overdrive channels. Yes, the MT 100 can be considered a "metal" amp, but it's also one of the most versatile and tonally satisfying amps for all styles that PRS has ever produced.

CHEAT SHEET



STREET PRICE
\$1,849
MANUFACTURER
PRS Guitars,
prsguitars.com

● **PROS:** Three fully independent and individually voiced channels; tones sound equally good at moderate to full stage volume output; very low noise performance even on Lead channel; buffered effects loop; channel-switching footswitch controller and 7-pin DIN cable included.

● **CONS:** Effects loop cannot be controlled by included footswitch controller; no preamp or line output jack.

● **THE BOTTOM LINE**
The PRS Mark Tremonti MT 100 performs like three entirely different amps, delivering a wide range of stellar clean, classic overdrive and modern high-gain tones that are easy to dial in thanks to its uncomplicated, straightforward design.



Taylor 222ce-K DLX

By Chris Gill

▶ KOA IS A very attractive-looking tone wood that is commonly associated with high-end models or expensive custom or boutique instruments. Because of its higher cost, many guitarists haven't experienced koa's distinctive tonal qualities, which are sort of a "goldilocks" combo of the powerful bass of rosewood, sweet, warm mids of mahogany and brilliance of maple.

Taylor, which offers more koa models than any of the other major acoustic guitar companies, is now making full-size guitars with tops, backs and sides made of Hawaiian koa more accessible to the masses with the introduction of two new 200 series guitars — the 222ce-K DLX Grand Concert and 224ce-K DLX Grand Auditorium — that cost almost half the price of their 700 series koa instruments, which previously were Taylor's lowest priced full-size koa guitars.

We looked at the 222ce-K DLX, which is basically identical to the 224ce-K DLX with the exception of its smaller Grand Concert body dimensions and shorter scale length. In addition to its attractively striped Hawaiian solid koa top and layered koa back and sides with a shaded edge-burst gloss finish, the 222ce-K DLX features a neo-tropical mahogany neck with a matte finish, West African Crelicam ebony fingerboard, 24 7/8-inch scale length and 20 medium-tall frets that are all easily accessible thanks to the Venetian cutaway.

The "DLX" means the guitar is adorned with deluxe appointments that include a gloss body finish, faux pearl Sentinel fretboard inlays and single-ring rosette, black top and back binding and gold hardware. It's also equipped with Taylor's acclaimed Expression System 2 electronics with side-mounted volume, treble and bass controls

and behind-the-saddle pickup with three sensors. And this DLX model arrives in a Taylor deluxe hardshell case.

With its compact Grand Concert body that measures about 15 inches across the lower bout and X bracing, the 222ce-K DLX provides a well-balanced overall tone that is particularly well-suited for fingerstyle playing. The treble has a sweet, alluring chime that accentuates upper spectrum harmonics but never sounds thin — a quality that also comes through quite nicely via the Expression System 2 electronics when amplified. The warm, full midrange and focused bass will certainly please traditionalists, and thanks to the aging characteristics of koa the sound will continue to become sweeter and warmer the more it's played over the years.

The neck's shallow C-shaped profile is ideally comfortable for fingerstyle players, particularly those who anchor their thumbs in the center of the neck. Thanks to the 1.6875-inch nut width, the strings are comfortably placed far enough apart for clean fretting yet close enough to facilitate fast chord changes without too much stretching.

Typical of all Taylor guitars from the entry-level Baby and GS Mini models through their high-end Builder's Edition models, the construction and attention to detail is immaculate. Although the 222ce-K DLX may cost twice as much as its Sitka spruce/walnut counterpart the 212ce, the koa version's beauty is much more than skin deep and the upgrade is worth the price if you're a discriminating fingerstyle player who can appreciate its more intriguing and sonically complex character.



CHEAT SHEET



STREET PRICE:

\$1,999

MANUFACTURER:

Taylor Guitars,
taylorguitars.com

● **PROS:** Gorgeous Hawaiian koa top, back and sides; well-balanced tonal personality that is ideal for fingerstyle playing; Venetian cutaway provides unrestricted access to upper frets; very affordable koa model.

● **CONS:** Costs twice as much as the 212ce and \$600 more than the comparable 212ce Plus.

THE BOTTOM LINE

By offering a true all-koa body guitar at a significantly reduced price, Taylor has made it easier than ever for guitarists to experience the alluring "goldilocks" tonal qualities of a koa acoustic.



CHEAT SHEET



STREET PRICE:

\$549

MANUFACTURER:

Positive Grid, positivegrid.com

● **PROS:** 4-channel, all-in-one performance solution for guitar, bass, keyboard, vocals and more; Companion app for thousands of presets; Crystal clear, high-fidelity sound; Rugged, compact design; Bluetooth audio streaming; Adaptive EQ detects and optimizes horizontal and vertical orientation.

● **CONS:** Battery sold separately (\$79)

● **THE BOTTOM LINE:** Spark Live is an engagingly comprehensive smart instrument amp and portable PA rolled into one robust design primed for solo, band and stage performances.

Positive Grid Spark Live

By Paul Riario

▶ **IF THERE IS** one music technology company to watch these days, it's Positive Grid. Their line of compact guitar amplifiers — including the Spark, Spark Mini and Spark Go — has kept guitarists continually plugged in and engaged in the practice zone with immersive sound and a companion app with more than 50,000 preset tones. Now, with the release of Spark Live, Positive Grid has determinedly set its sights on the stage.

Spark Live, the company's most prodigious Spark to date, arrives as a portable and gig-ready, four-channel multi-instrument smart amp and 150-watt PA system with a mixer. It's also moderately lightweight at 26 lbs, with compact combo dimensions (L 18.26" x W 9.86" x H 12.04") and can be battery-powered. Much like the other amps in the Spark series, it's an intuitive and uncomplicated plug-in-and-play affair — yet for the first time, Spark Live can accommodate bass, vocals and keys, in addition to electric and acoustic guitars — all at once — in its specific channels.

Channel one will seem familiar to Spark users with its controls for Gain, three-band EQ, Guitar (volume), Music (Bluetooth/USB audio volume) and Preset (Eight onboard pro-

grammable presets). Paired with the free Spark companion app, you can call up 33 different amp models, 43 effects and more than 50,000 tones from the ToneCloud library; you also can switch between channels. The condensed rear panel features a second channel that supports an instrument or a mic with a combo 1/4-inch/XLR input, Preset (Eight onboard programmable presets) and Volume controls; global three-band EQ and master volume controls; stereo 1/4-inch outs and MIDI in/out; stereo inputs for Channel 3/4 that share a volume control; Bluetooth pairing button; headphone out and dual USB-C ports for charging and audio. You'll find a compartment on the back for the Spark battery (sold separately) that can power Spark Live for up to eight hours. There's also an extendable tilt stand to position Spark Live as a wedge or kickback, and a port on its side to mount it on a speaker stand.

What's impressive is Spark Live employs its proprietary Sonic IQ — Positive Grid's computational audio engine — which dynamically adapts to whatever is plugged into it to enhance clarity and frequency range, achieving proper sound dispersion and defined audio separation between instruments. Another wow factor is its built-in G-sensor, which auto-



Because I'm so used to hearing my other diminutive Spark models at practice levels, it's satisfying to hear Spark Live cranked up

matically detects and optimizes the orientation of the Spark Live whether you position it vertically — for a focused “in your face” mono output — or horizontally (in wide mode) for a spacious stereo experience.

While it might not have the jacked wattage of other popular powered speakers and some FRFRs, Spark Live is powerful enough to handle most live situations, including busking, rehearsal spaces and even small club settings. Because I'm so used to hearing my other diminutive Spark models at practice levels, it's satisfying to hear Spark Live cranked up to stage volumes. Turning it up loud made my electric guitar sound remarkably clear and surprisingly tube-like with a few user presets that I've downloaded from Spark's ToneCloud. I found that positioning it vertically really upped

my electric tone a notch with gutsy focus. And for pure width and stereo spread, the horizontal “wedge” orientation is thoroughly enjoyable in this FRFR position.

But it's meant for live use, so I gave it a go at a coffee shop gig, set up on a mount. Besides its room-filling volume, what really floored me was the crisp fidelity and distinct audio separation between my vocal mic, backing track and acoustic guitar. I also love that I didn't have to fiddle much with mixing outside of matching volumes; its onboard Sonic IQ pretty much handles all the full frequency heavy lifting, and the available presets for the vocal mics, acoustic and bass are seriously dialed-in to where only minor tweaks are needed.

Size matters, so Spark Live won't be able to compete with a loud drummer or cover bigger rooms, and if I'm nitpicking, I wish there were a few more channels and inputs. Still, this is a first-generation Spark with live capability and multi-instrument inputs — and that's OK. And with forthcoming firmware updates, I have no doubt Spark Live is only going to get better from here.



THE SPECS



- **TYPE:** 4-channel smart amp and PA system
- **OUTPUT:** 150W RMS / 450W Peak, Class D amplifier
- **SPEAKERS:** 2 x 1-inch compression tweeter with custom angled horn, 2 x 6.5-inch custom-designed woofer, 2 x reflex port
- **BATTERY:** Spark battery sold separately
- **FRONT PANEL CONTROLS:** Channel 1: eight programmable preset selector, amp controls (Gain, Bass, Mid, Treble, Master), volume & music channel volume
- **REAR PANEL CONTROLS:** Pair button, Channel 2: eight programmable preset selector, channel 2 volume; channel 3 & 4 volume; center-click master controls (Low, Mid, High, Volume)
- **ONBOARD EFFECTS:** Channel 1: 33 amp models & 43 effects. Channel 2: 3 amp models (for vocal, bass, acoustic guitar); 50 effects
- **CONNECTIVITY:** 1/4" instrument input x 3; XLR / 1/4" combo input x 1; 1/8" headphone output x 1; 1/4" line output x 2 (L/Mono & R); Din 5-pin MIDI jack x 2 (In & Out); bluetooth 5.0 & USB interface for recording, 2 in x 2 out
- **DIMENSIONS:** L 464 x W 250.6 x H 306 mm (L 18.26 x W 9.86 x H 12.04 inch)
- **WEIGHT:** 12kg (26.45lbs)
- **SOFTWARE MOBILE APPS:** Spark app for iOS and Android (included)

On-Stage AG5000 Amp Glider

▶ **WE CAN ALL** agree that transporting combo amplifiers and speaker cabinets is back-breaking. The makeshift remedy usually involves a dolly or roller cart, where neither is completely stable and both take up precious room in your vehicle. Not to mention, I've seen plenty of vintage amps ruined by casters drilled into the undercarriage.

If you're looking for better maneuverability without drilling or modifications, I'd suggest checking out the On-Stage AG5000 Amp Glider. It allows you to secure nearly any amp or speaker cabinet onto its fully adjustable frame while its swiveling, solid casters let you roll your stuff pretty much anywhere. The Amp Glider is super sturdy with a heavy-duty steel frame and cross-brace that expands or contracts in length and width to accommodate most combos and cabinets on top of it. The four padded corner brackets

grip to the base of your amp or cab securely while the four tightening knobs found underneath (two each for the length and width) permit you to lock in those dimensions once you fit to size. When you need to lift the amp — upstairs or onto a stage — you can do so without the Amp Glider dropping out, and the padding won't scratch or dent finishes or damage tolex coverings. What's more, the Amp Glider can handle up to 140lbs on its frame, but I'm sure no one is gigging with anything that heavy.

Once you're set up and parked, locks on the casters keep the Amp Glider firmly in place; when you're done, you can collapse its lightweight frame for storage. A life of heavy lifting at gigs might just be in your rearview mirror because you'll find the Amp Glider



makes putting your amp or cabinet on casters a cinch to transport. From now on, you can just let it roll. — **Paul Riario**

CHEAT SHEET



STREET PRICE:

\$79.95

MANUFACTURER:

On-Stage,
on-stage.com/amp-glider

● **PROS:** Puts amps or cabs on casters without drilling or modification; adjusts in length and width to fit and grip your amp; supports your gear with reliable stability; enables you to roll and firmly park a wide range of amps and speaker cabinets; padded contact points protect your amp's finish.

CONS:

None

THE BOTTOM LINE

Be on a roll with the On-Stage Amp Glider, which puts your amp or cab on casters without drilling or modification for smoother steering and transport.

Technicks

▶ **NEXT TO GUITAR** strings, the type of pick you use is your most fundamental choice as a guitarist. You can mull over the materials, shapes and sizes of the myriad picks that are available, but in the end, it's all about which one best matches your "feel." Knowing this hasn't stopped me from discovering a variety of recently developed picks that aim to improve tone, control and articulation. Case in point: Technicks is an Italian company made up of musicians and music fans who also happen to be material engineers with backgrounds in thermoplastics. Lately, they've been burning up social media with their advanced picks, which seemingly fuse materials used in the aerospace, sports and textile industries. Technicks stand out because they have a different material makeup that's tangibly perceived in stiffness and how each pick details nuances of attack, tonal response, low pick noise and dynamics.

The Technicks collection is available in three geometrical shapes — the Standard

(symmetrical geometry similar to the 346 pick shape, with an optimized bevel and a tapered central "flower" for grip), M (asymmetrical geometry with three different tips) and J (single sharp tip geometry with a reduced size similar to the "Jazz" pick) models.

Technicks sent me the Standard model with five different picks (TP1 black, TP2 creamy white, TP3 cool white, TP4 brown and TP5 dark gray); it's a fine assortment for diverse playing styles with an average thickness of 1.45mm and a width of 29.8mm. Right off the bat, you can see and feel the difference in material between each pick with the TP2 and TP3's almost nylon texture, the TP4 possessing a polished gloss and the TP1 and TP5 having a dry, matte feel. For high stiffness, the TP1 and TP5 are super-rigid and primed for precision in jazz and metal. The TP2, TP3 and TP4 have varying degrees of medium stiffness and work well to reduce friction from your picking hand for a speedier attack. Metal players will dig the



TP1 and TP5 for the increased volume and sharper attack. Still, my favorites are the TP3 and the TP4 for their soft articulation and smoother tone that works whether I'm flatpicking an acoustic or shredding on an electric. After putting in some wear and tear for a few months, I can report that these Technicks are built to last for a while — and that, as my Italian brethren say, is "molto buono." — **Paul Riario**

CHEAT SHEET



STREET PRICE:

\$37 (as reviewed; set of five different picks)

MANUFACTURER:

Technicks,
technicksitaly.myshopify.com

● **PROS:** Novel and innovative use of high-tech thermoplastic materials in their picks; variety of shapes, stiffness and tonal response that will appeal to most playing styles.

CONS:

Some may prefer more traditional materials, shapes and sizes of other brands

THE BOTTOM LINE

Technicks' innovative use of thermoplastic materials in their picks yields a perceptible articulate and dynamic response that has an edge over traditional plectrums.

Rode NT1 Signature Series

By Chris Gill

THE RODE NT1 microphone — introduced way back in 1991 — played as important a role in the home studio revolution as affordable digital recording technology did. The NT1 was the first pro-quality large diaphragm condenser mic to sell for less than \$200, and it provided very impressive specs and sound quality that significantly leveled the playing field for musicians making demos and low-budget commercial projects at home.

Rode recently introduced a 5th generation NT1 with updated specs and modern performance features like USB connectivity. At the same time, Rode also rolled out the less expensive NT1 Signature Series, which offers the same sonic character and specs as the 5th generation but without USB, shaving \$90 from the 5th gen's price, and, most remarkably, selling for even less than the original NT1 (and that's even without adjustment for inflation).

The Rode NT1 Signature Series mic features a 1-inch condenser capsule with a focused, single-sided cardioid polar pattern. It delivers incredibly low noise performance (4dB) and can handle exceptionally high sound pressure levels up to 142dB. Its frequency range is 20Hz to 20kHz, and it has the exact same frequency response as the NT1 5th gen, which is exceptionally flat with the exception of a boosted peak around 10kHz. The mic requires 48V phantom power and connects to an interface, preamp or console via a three-pin XLR jack.

The 10kHz boost makes the NT1 Signature Series a great choice for recording crisp vocals with detailed articulation, "air" and clarity that cuts through a mix. Like the previous NT1 mics it's also a general purpose workhorse that sounds particularly good on electric and acoustic guitars and drums. With its 142dB maximum SPL, the mic can be placed close to a speaker driven by a fully cranked amp without distorting the mic. The tight cardioid pattern enables users to capture vocals or instruments in near-total isolation even when other instruments are also playing.

Same as it was way back in 1991, this latest version of the NT1 is an ideal first mic for anyone configuring a home studio. But it's also a worthy addition to your stu-

dio if you already own a previous version of the NT1 thanks to its different frequency curve, which makes it a nice complement to its predecessor's flatter sonic character. The Signature Series package includes a studio-quality shock mount, pop filter and XLR cable, which makes it even more of a bargain, and it's available in six different colors (black, blue, green, pink, purple or red) to add some style and flair to your studio.



CHEAT SHEET



STREET PRICE:

\$159

MANUFACTURER:

Rode Microphones,
rode.com

● **PROS:** Even more of a value than it was 33 years ago; incredibly quiet (4dB) noise; maximum 142dB SPL means it can mic very loud amps or handle volume spikes without distorting; package includes shock mount, pop filter and XLR cable.

● **CONS:** The frequency boost at 10kHz gives the mic a distinct sonic personality that some users may not prefer.

THE BOTTOM LINE

The Rode NT1 Signature Series outperforms its price range (which is even more of a value now than it was during the Nineties) with its super-quiet low noise specs, high SPL handling capabilities and crisp, airy sonic personality perfect for modern vocal performances.

IN DEEP

by Andy Aledort



For video of this lesson, go to guitarworld.com/august2024

MAKING CHANGES

How to craft a solo to follow changing chords

LAST MONTH, I discussed how to use open-string drones as a songwriting tool, using the song “Hymn,” from my new album, *In a Dream*, to demonstrate. I’d now like to offer the guitar solo in “Hymn” as an example of how to effectively craft a solo to closely follow and acknowledge the chord changes.

FIGURE 1 presents the first solo in “Hymn,” which is 16 bars long. The song is played in $\frac{6}{8}$ meter, which is essentially two beats per bar with each beat subdivided into three evenly spaced eighth notes, or triplets.

My goal with this solo was to be as melodic as possible, adhering to the “song within a song” concept. It’s played over the tune’s verse (or “A”) section and is an eight-bar form played twice. Each chord in the progression is acknowledged in the solo melody with a corresponding chord tone.

I begin in bar 1 with a phrase built from the D major pentatonic scale (D, E, F $\sharp$, A, B), highlighting the D chord’s root and major 3rd, F $\sharp$. Bar 2 is played over Csus2, and here I target the chord’s major 3rd, E, and C root. On beat 2, I anticipate the return to the D chord with a line based on the D Mixolydian mode (D, E, F $\sharp$, G, A, B, C). **FIGURE 2** offers a closer look at this two-bar phrase.

In bar 3, a beat of D is followed by a beat of G. Over the D chord, the melody is based on D major pentatonic, and over G, it’s based on G major pentatonic (G, A, B, D, E). Bar 4 moves to the V (five) chord, A, and here I play a line based on the six-note A major hexatonic scale (A, B, C $\sharp$, D, E, F $\sharp$).

Like bars 3 and 4, bars 5 and 6 move from D to G to A, but here I use D major hexatonic (D, E, F $\sharp$, G, A, B) over the D and G chords, switching to A major hexatonic over A. Bar 7 moves from the vi (six minor) chord, Bm, to the IV (four), G. Over Bm, I play notes from the B minor pentatonic scale (B, D, E, F $\sharp$, A), which is made up of the same notes as D major pentatonic. I then wrap up the first eight-bar section of the solo with a return to D major hexatonic.

The end of bar 8 sets up the beginning of the second pass through the eight-bar progression. Here I switch to my guitar’s bridge pickup and play a series of low-note figures based on D major pentatonic, including the

Triplet 16ths Feel (♩ = $\frac{1}{3}$ ♩)

FIG. 1

Figure 1 shows the first solo in "Hymn," which is 16 bars long. The notation is written for guitar in standard tuning (E A D G B E) and 6/8 time. It includes fret numbers, accidentals, and chord changes. The solo is played over the verse ("A") section of the song. The notation is divided into two systems, each with 8 bars. The first system covers bars 1-8, and the second system covers bars 9-16. The solo is played over the following chord progression: D, Csus2, G, A, Bm, D, G, A, Bm, G, D, G, A, Bm, G, D. The notation includes various musical symbols such as triplets, bends, and slurs.

FIG. 2

Figure 2 shows a closer look at the two-bar phrase (bars 1-2) of the solo. The notation is written for guitar in standard tuning (E A D G B E) and 6/8 time. It includes fret numbers, accidentals, and chord changes (D, Csus2). The notation includes various musical symbols such as triplets, bends, and slurs.

“lower neighbor” passing tones of F to F $\sharp$ and B $\flat$ to B. These are each articulated as a hammer-on into an ascending finger slide. The remainder of the solo follows the same scale applications applied in bars 1-8.

This is the last edition of *In Deep* for the

time being, as *GW* will be bringing in a cast of new columnists. I’d like to thank everyone who has been following the column all of these years. You can find many of my instructional videos on my website, andyaledort.com and on my YouTube channel.

Andy Aledort’s 2024 album, *In a Dream*, can be found on all streaming platforms and is also available for download from longsongrecords.bandcamp.com

TALES FROM NERDVILLE

by Joe Bonamassa



For video of this lesson, go to guitarworld.com/august2024

POWER TO THE PEOPLE

The influence of Tower of Power guitarist Bruce Conte

MY LATEST RECORD, *Blues Deluxe Vol. 2*, features a song called “Hope You Realize It,” written by me and my good friend Tom Hambridge. We were looking to create an uptempo song in the vein of Tower of Power and decided to go all the way, right up to the lyric, “Are they going to sue us or not?”

All kidding aside, one of my favorite guitarists, especially in regard to a Les Paul player, is TOP’s Bruce Conte. Man, he was killer! Bruce played an all-mahogany ’57 goldtop, so much so that he’d worn through the cover of the neck pickup! He’d plug straight into a Fender Super Reverb, and his sound was phenomenal. Bruce played almost exclusively on the neck pickup, so we’re going to keep the toggle switch on the Les Paul in the up/neck pickup position.

The vibe of “Hope You Realize It” is along the lines of TOP’s “What Is Hip?,” which is played in the key of D. “Hope You Realize It” is a whole step lower, in the key of D, and begins with single-note guitar lines, shown in **FIGURE 1**, that are inspired by Bruce’s great playing on the TOP track. All of the licks in this figure are based on D minor pentatonic (D, F, G, A, C), and end on a G7 chord. Sticking in 10th position in this way, **FIGURE 2**, is also an homage to Bruce.

To me, he treated the Les Paul like a Strat, with clear, bluesy lines played with a clean tone. **FIGURE 3** is a four-bar phrase that begins in 10th position, moves up briefly to 13th position, then ends on the bottom two strings in 8th position.

To stay on the neck pickup and get the lines to jump out with the right kind of presence, you need to have plenty of treble dialed in on the amplifier. This can sometimes make things a little problematic, because when you switch to the bridge pickup, it will be too bright. If I have my amp set that way, I’ll turn my bridge pickup’s tone knob down to 5. This way, when I switch to the bridge pickup, I won’t tear people’s faces off. For these examples, I’m playing through a vintage Fender Vibroverb with two 10” speakers and 6L6 power tubes, so the “punchy” sound is very similar to that of a Super Reverb.

Let’s look at how the sound transitions

FIG. 1 (D)
Freely

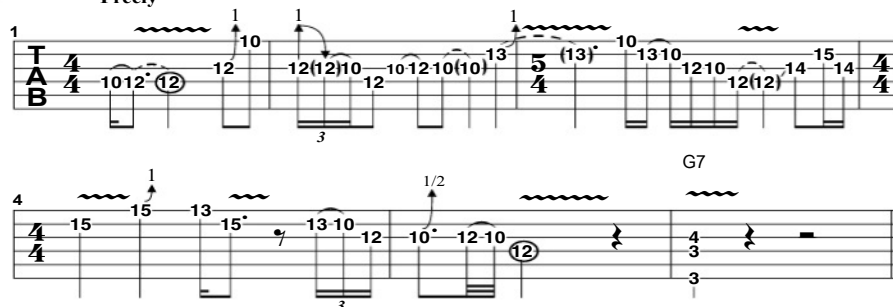


FIG. 2 (D)

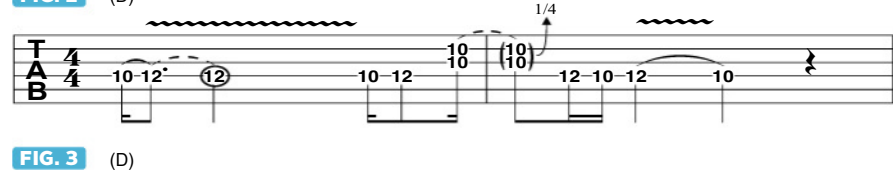


FIG. 3 (D)

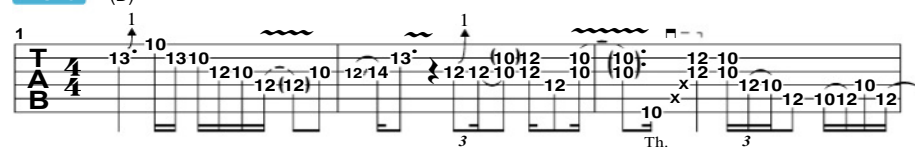


FIG. 4 (D)

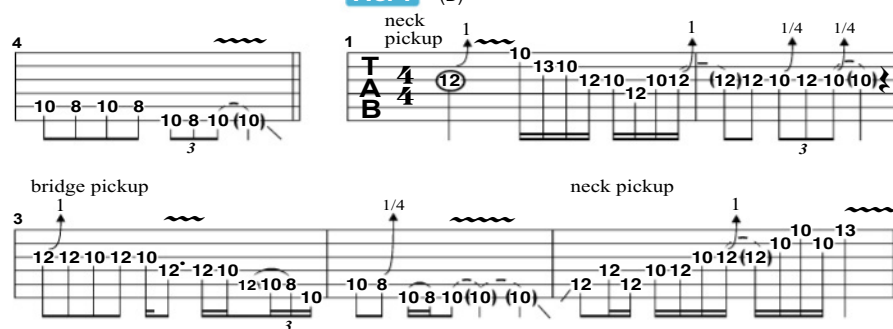
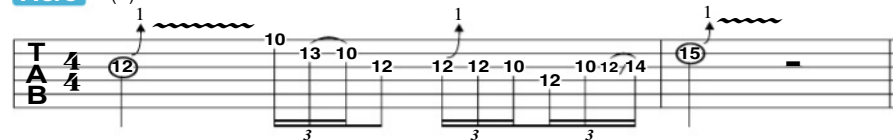


FIG. 5 (D)



back and forth between the neck and bridge pickups: in **FIGURE 4**, I start on the neck pickup with a two-bar D minor pentatonic phrase in 10th position. In bar 3, I switch to the bridge pickup as I move down to 8th position. The sound has more bite, but there’s a nice balance with the neck pickup. In bar 5, I switch back to the neck pickup.

I always loved Bruce’s finger vibrato, which was wide, fat and very vocal-like.

FIGURE 5 begins and ends with vibratos meant to emulate his signature sound.

Bruce was a funky soloist, great rhythm player and essential member of one of the greatest American bands of all time. It’s nice to pay tribute to your favorite players, but you also want to have your own identity. My approach has always been to pay homage to my heroes and have fun doing it, and hopefully the audience will enjoy it too.

Joe Bonamassa is one of the world’s most popular blues-rock guitarists — not to mention a top producer and de facto ambassador of the blues.

MELODIC
MUSE

by Andy Timmons



For video of this lesson, go to
guitarworld.com/august2024

FOLLOW YOUR VOICE

Using a voice-leading approach for soloing

MY APPROACH FOR guitar solos, whether for recordings or live performances, encompasses various strategies. I try not to think too much about what the approach will be at any given moment. Instead, I prefer to listen and react as naturally and instinctively as possible.

That said, I'm aware of the "tools in the box" and it can be fun to focus on a specific approach in a conscious way. Last month, I demonstrated soloing ideas that come from a blues sensibility. Today, let's consider a voice-leading approach for soloing over the same progression.

The voice-leading approach targets chord tones that move up or down. I prefer to mingle this approach naturally with the blues approach, but there is a raised awareness of the direction of the lines and how those targeted chord tones are set up.

FIGURE 1 offers a 16-bar solo improvised over the chord progression Em - A7 - Em - A7 - Cmaj7 - B7⁹ - Cmaj7 - B7⁹, with each chord played for two bars, followed by a return to the tonic, Em. These chords and their voicings are shown in **FIGURE 2**.

FIGURE 1 begins over the initial two bars of Em, and I start off by sounding the major 2nd, F $\sharp$, followed by the minor 3rd, G and then the E tonic. In this way, the F $\sharp$ and G notes set up the root note. **FIGURE 3** offers a closer look at this melodic movement.

FIGURE 4 illustrates E minor hexatonic (E, F $\sharp$, G, A, B, D), which can be thought of as E minor pentatonic (E, G, A, B, D) with the addition of the major 2nd, F $\sharp$.

In bar 3 of **FIGURE 1**, over A7, I hammer-on from A to B, the major 2nd of A, then pull-off back to A, followed in bar 4 with a half-step bend from C $\sharp$, the major 3rd of A, to D, the suspended 4th. As you can see, I'm using the chord tones of Em (E, G, B) and A7 (A, C $\sharp$, E, G) to melodically describe the chords. In bars 5 and 6, I take this idea of emphasizing the major 2nd and minor 3rd of Em to a new place via string-bending. In bars 7 and 8, over A7, I again emphasize C $\sharp$ and D but with quarter-note triplets.

Bars 9 and 10 are played over Cmaj7, and instead of targeting the C tonic, I prefer to lean on the E note, as it has a nice dual function: E is the major 3rd of Cmaj7 and also

FIG. 1 (Em) (A7)

(Em) (A7)

(Cmaj7) (B7⁹)

(Cmaj7) (B7⁹)

(Em)

FIG. 2 Em A7 Cmaj7 B7 Cmaj7 B7

Th. Th. Th.

FIG. 3 Em9

FIG. 4 E minor hexatonic

the root note of the key we're in. So it pulls the improvised melody back to familiar territory.

When B7⁹ arrives in bar 11, I bend the E note up a whole step to F $\sharp$, which functions as the 5th of the B7⁹ chord (B, D $\sharp$, F $\sharp$, A, C). I then release the bend and slide E down a half step to D $\sharp$, which is the major 3rd of

B. Through the next three bars of Cmaj7 to B7⁹, I move freely between the B and C notes, blurring the line between the two chords.

In bars 17 and 18 of the example, the solo then wraps up back on Em, and I revise the emphasis on F $\sharp$ and G over E via more string bending.

Andy Timmons is a world-renowned guitarist known for his work with the Andy Timmons Band, Danger Danger and Simon Phillips. Check out his new instructional course, "The Art of Story Telling."



For video of this lesson, go to guitarworld.com/august2024

MODES OF THOUGHT

Using a modal approach to solos, and more on “Lucy G”

LAST MONTH, I went through all of the primary guitar parts for the song “Lucy G,” which first appeared on my 2007 debut record *Loud Music*, and is also included on my most recent live album, *Trio Live 2020*.

“Lucy G” is in the key of C# minor, and as I mentioned, I prefer to think of the key modally, with the song being in the “key” of C# Dorian. I like to think of it this way because the chords and solos are primarily based on the C# Dorian mode (C#, D#, E, F#, G#, A#, B). Intervallically, this results in 1 (root), major 2nd, minor 3rd, 4th, 5th, major 6th, flatted 7th.

There are three basic approaches I like to take for soloing on this tune: a C#m11 chord is played throughout, and this chord is based on the Dorian mode of B major. So one approach to soloing would be to just think in terms of the B major scale (B, C#, D#, E, F#, G#, A#) throughout the entire song. As you can see, these are the same seven notes of C# Dorian but oriented around a B root note instead of C#.

Overall, I prefer to think in terms of C# Dorian, because this mindset will lead me back to the C# tonic, as illustrated in **FIGURE 1**. This four-bar phrase is based on C# minor pentatonic (C#, E, F#, G#, B), and each part of the phrase naturally leads me back to C#. Also, I use hybrid picking here, as this enables me to sound the open B note along with notes picked on the lower strings.

That said, a great way to come up with different flavors and patterns is to purposely come at it from the angle of B major, as well as the F# Mixolydian mode, which is the fifth mode of B major and is made up of the same seven notes: F#, G#, A#, B, C#, D#, E.

FIGURE 2 offers a quick review of the chord progression that I solo over: C#m7 - E5 - F#. Let's look at soloing from the angle of F# Mixolydian. **FIGURE 3** shows the mode played in 1st position. F# Mixolydian includes the chord tones of F#7 (F#, A#, C#, E), so that's the chord that's referenced by the mode. If I look at the fretboard and imagine approaching solo ideas from F#7, I'll play phrases along the lines of **FIGURES 4** and **5**. In **FIGURE 4**, I briefly include C natural, or B#, which makes brief

FIG. 1 (C#m7)

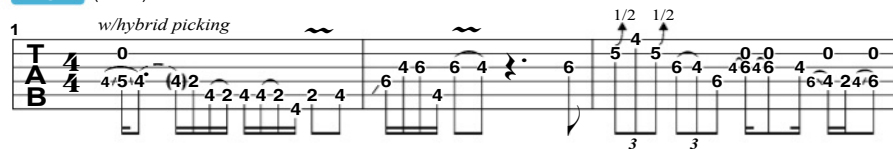


FIG. 2 C#m7 E5 F# C#m7

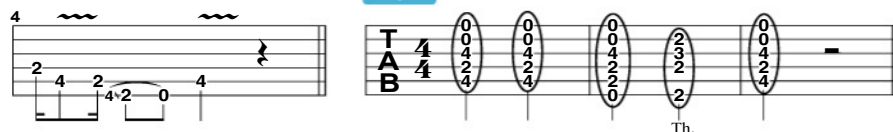


FIG. 3 F# Mixolydian mode

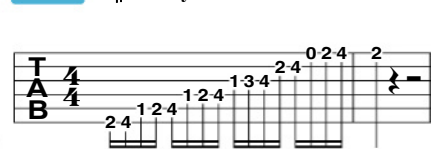


FIG. 4 (F# Mixolydian/C# harmonic minor) (C#m7)



FIG. 5 (F#7)

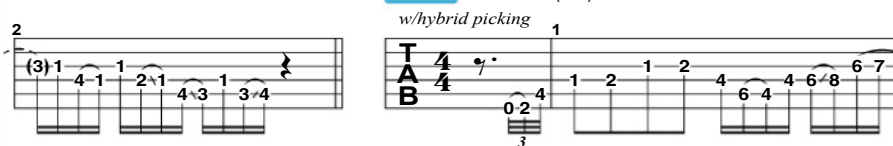


FIG. 6 B major scale

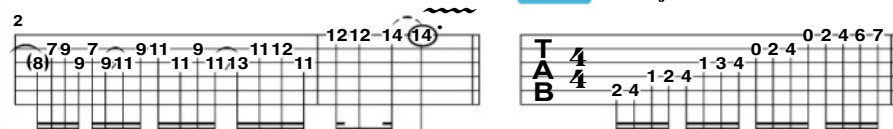
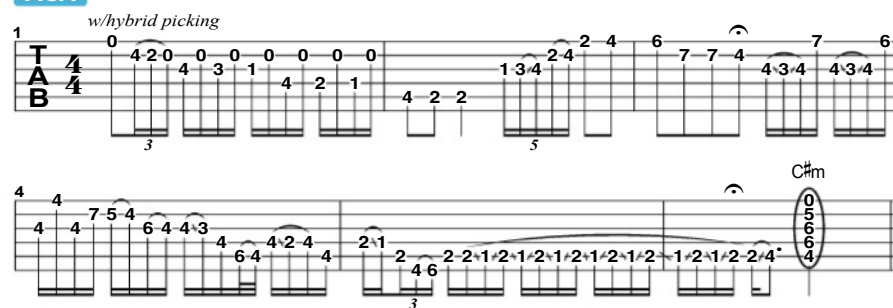


FIG. 7



reference to the C# harmonic minor scale (C#, D#, E, F#, G#, A, B#). **FIGURE 5** sits squarely in F# Mixolydian.

FIGURE 6 illustrates the B major scale. If I approach improvising from the perspective of B major here, I might play phrases along the lines of **FIGURE 7**. I be-

gin these licks by alternating off the open B string, and focus on the B note as a starting and landing spot throughout.

There is great value in seeing the relationship between these relative modes, as this awareness will result in many more options for melody making.

David Grissom has toured or recorded with Buddy Guy, John Mellencamp, Storyville, the Allman Brothers Band, Robben Ford and John Mayall. In 2022, *Guitar World* named him one of the 30 greatest Texas guitarists of all time.

“MAMA, I’M COMING HOME”

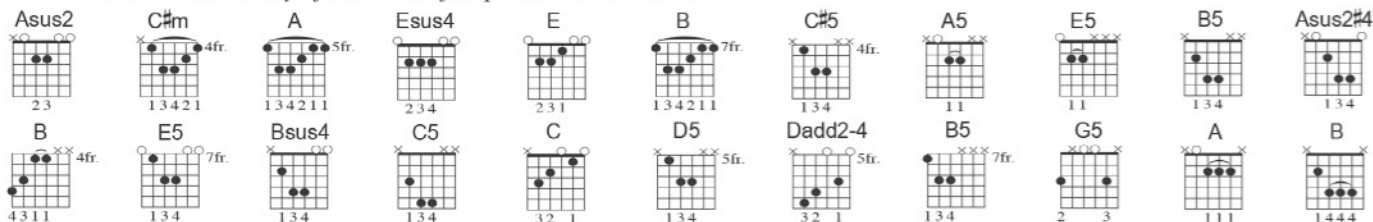
Ozzy Osbourne

As heard on **NO MORE TEARS**

Words and Music by OZZY OSBOURNE and ZAKK WYLDE • Transcribed by CARL CULPEPPER and JIMMY BROWN

All guitars are tuned down one half step (low to high: E_b, A_b, D_b, G_b, B_b, E_b). Bass tuning, low to high: E_b, A_b, D_b, G_b.

All music sounds in the key of E_b, one half step lower than written.



A Intro (0:01)

Moderately Slow ♩ = 70

N.C.(E)

Gtr. 1 (6-string acous.)

Gtrs. 1 and 2 (12-string acous.)

let ring throughout

B 1st Verse (0:15)

Times have changed and times are strange

Here I come but I ain't the same

N.C.(E)

Rhy. Fig. 1

Mama I'm coming home

E

(Esus4)

(E5)

end Rhy. Fig. 1

Times gone by

It seems to be

you

could have been a better friend to me

Asus2

Mama I'm coming home

N.C.(E)

You

F Chorus (2:02)

sunshine yeah 'Cause Mama Mama I'm coming home I'm coming

E5 A5 A5 B5 C5 D5 E5

Gtr. 4 Rhy. Fig. 2

Gtrs. 1 and 2 Asus2 Bsus4 C Dadd2-4 E

G Interlude (2:16)

home

C5 D5 B5 G A E (G) (E)

Gtr. 6 (nylon-string acous., fingerstyle) N.H.

P.M.:

C Dadd2-4 B G5 A E G5 E

H Guitar Solo (2:30)

G A E (B) (Asus2) (E5)

Gtr. 4 plays Rhy. Fill 2 (see previous page)
Gtr. 3 (w/dist. and delay)

N.H.

G5 A E B Asus2 E5

*Gtrs. 1, 2 and 4

*Open B and high E strings played by Gtrs. 1 and 2 only.

*Gtr. 4 only plays bottom two notes of each chord (next two bars).

** P.M for Gtr. 4 only.

[home](#)

I'm coming

home

Dadd2-4

Gtr. 4 repeats first bar of Rhy. Fig. 2

Gtrs. 1 and 2

(play 3 times)

w/improvised fills on repeats

(play 3 times)

(3:56)

N.C. (E)

E

53 Gtrs. 1 and 2

Performance Notes

HOW TO PLAY THIS MONTH'S SONGS By Jimmy Brown

"MAMA, I'M COMING HOME"

Ozzy Osbourne



WITH SO MUCH well-deserved attention paid to Zakk Wylde's flashy lead guitar playing, it's all too easy to overlook the burly axman's diverse musical-

ity and songwriting and arranging talents. This beautifully constructed power ballad, conceived during his fruitful collaborative tenure with Ozzy Osbourne on their classic 1991 album, *No More Tears*, showcases Zakk's versatility and command of traditional acoustic guitar playing approaches and techniques, in addition to his trademark metal and hard rock electric guitar swagger.

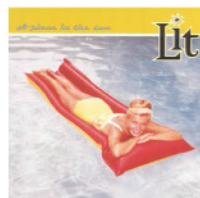
Following an opening pedal steel-style oblique pre-bend and release, performed on acoustic, Wylde commences the song's repeating two-bar verse riff (bars 1 and 2), for which he deftly employs flatpicking and ringing open strings to play a shimmering descending figure that walks down the E major scale (E, F#, G#, A, B, C#, D#) on the 3rd string. Notice the picking indications below bar 1 and how the guitarist uses a recurring crosspicking pattern (one note per string), with each fretted note picked with a downstroke and followed by open E and B notes on the top two strings, both picked with upstrokes.

Zakk adopts a similar flatpicking approach to arpeggiate the open Asus2 chords in bars 7 and 11, employing consecutive downstrokes when moving low to high then switching to consecutive upstrokes when he changes direction and moves back across the strings from high to low. Ditto for the arpeggiated B barre chord in bar 16. When arpeggiating the Asus2, Bsus4, C and Dadd4-2 chords during the chorus (bars 35, 36 and 38), with more frequent changes in direction, he'll switch from consecutive downstrokes to upstrokes and back, to best steer the pick in the direction in which it needs to travel to play the following note.

We've also included pick strokes for the challenging string skipping Zakk does during the song's interlude (see section G, bars 40-42, Gtrs. 1 and 2). When playing this part, try to make your picking motions as small and efficient as possible, by keeping the hand and pick close to the strings, as if you were palm muting.

"MY OWN WORST ENEMY"

Lit



WITH ITS PLAYFUL feel, sardonic lyrics, bouncy riffs and big, ringing chorus, this super catchy rock song from 1999 is just fun to play.

Guitarist Jeremy Popoff kicks off the arrangement with a sprightly repeating two-bar riff built from strummed octaves and punctuated with two power chords at the end of the second bar. After sliding from E to F, the guitarist repeatedly strums F octaves in even eighth notes, using all downstrokes for a crisp, uniform attack. He also uses fret-hand muting to create staccato (short, clipped) articulations, indicated by the small black dots above the tab numbers. After strumming each eighth note, Popoff momentarily loosens, or relaxes, his grip on the strings, just enough so that they break contact with the frets and cease vibrating. It's a small movement, as the fretting fingers never leave the strings.

In bar 5, a second guitar (Gtr. 2) enters underneath the repeating strummed octaves riff with a supportive complementary low part that later serves as the song's verse accompaniment. For this part, Jeremy strums three-note power chords (root-5th-octave), again using fret-hand muting to silence the strings after strumming them and create long rests, or big sonic "holes." The guitarist employs upstroke strums for the 16th-note rhythms here, otherwise using all downstrokes for the eighth and quarter notes.

In the two bars that precede each chorus, Popoff doubles his Gtr. 2 part but with added "beeps," which are high-pitched feedback resulting from cranking up the distortion and amp volume. This part is shown in *Fill 1*, with the feedback moments indicated by X's in the tab.

For his guitar solo (section D), Jeremy keeps things simple and melodic, building upon his strummed octaves motif with an interesting climb up the F major scale (F, G, A, B, C, D, E). He builds musical tension in bars 35 and 36 by switching to denser-sounding 16th-note strumming (down-up-down-up), which he tempers with a legato slide on each downbeat. When sliding, try not to squeeze the strings any harder than necessary, so as to minimize undue friction.

"DROP D"

Matteo Mancuso



THIS INTRICATE FUSION instrumental by Italian guitar phenom Matteo Mancuso showcases the brilliant young innovator's novel, jaw-dropping

virtuoso technique, as well as his tasteful, highly sophisticated musicality as a composer and improviser.

Mancuso plays fingerstyle exclusively, picking the strings with the nails of his right-hand fingers. Watching him perform, you'll notice that he'll vary the angle at which his fingers attack the strings for different types of parts. When playing scalar single-note lines, he'll use the *appoggiato* technique commonly employed by electric bassists and flamenco guitarists, with the fingers positioned perpendicular to the strings. With this approach, he'll pick notes with his first three fingers while resting the pad of his thumb on the 6th string. When he plays chords or one-note-per-string arpeggios, Matteo will rotate his hand diagonally to the *tocco libero* posture used by classical and folk guitarists and pick the strings with his thumb and first three fingers, all aligned with the strings. And sometimes he'll do fretboard tapping or strum a chord with his thumb or one or more fingers.

I suspect that, like me, most guitarists who are fans of Matteo and this tune are awestruck by his highly developed right-hand techniques but are probably not inclined to devote countless hours to mastering playing without a pick at this level of precision, speed and fluidity, not to mention committing to maintaining natural or prosthetic fingernails like a classical guitarist. Nevertheless, one can try playing many of this composition's parts with a pick and using hybrid picking to perform certain passages more economically. Obviously, you'll need to experiment. But there are many cool licks here that are playable with conventional techniques.

Regarding the fret hand, some of the chord voicings Mancuso uses are highly unusual and require very wide stretches of four or five frets. When attempting to finger these Holdsworthian grips, allow your wrist and elbow to pivot and rotate as needed to maximize your reach.

"MY OWN WORST ENEMY"

Lit

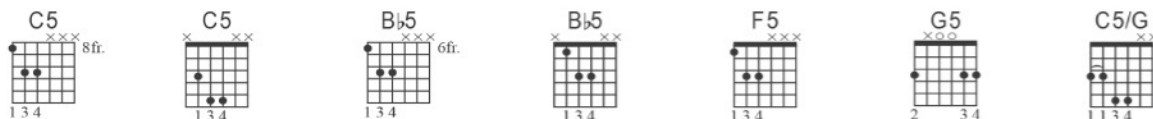
As heard on **A PLACE IN THE SUN**

Words and Music by JEREMY POPOFF, JAY POPOFF, KEVIN BALDES and ALLEN SHELLENBERGER • Transcribed by JEFF PERRIN

All guitars are tuned down one half step (low to high: E $\flat$, A $\flat$, D $\flat$, G $\flat$, B $\flat$, E $\flat$).

Bass tuning (low to high: E $\flat$, A $\flat$, D $\flat$, G $\flat$).

All music sounds in the key of E, one half step lower than written.



A Intro (0:00)

Moderately ♩ = 103

N.C. (F5)

C5 B $\flat$ 5 N.C. (F5)

C5 B $\flat$ 5

Gtr. 1 (elec. w/dist.)

Riff A

1

TAB 4/4

Gtr. 1 (elec. w/dist.)

Gtr. 2 (elec. w/dist.)

Bass

F5

C5 B $\flat$ 5 F5

C5 B $\flat$ 5

Gtr. 1 plays Riff A twice (see bar 1)

Gtr. 2

5 Rhy. Fig. 1

Bass

Bass Fig. 1

Fill 1 (0:32, 1:19)

F5

C5 B $\flat$ 5

Gtr. 1

*fdbk.

*fdbk.

*fdbk.

TAB 4/4

*Random feedback

B Verses (0:18, 1:05)

1. Can we forget about the things I said when I was drunk I didn't mean to call you that
2. It's no surprise to me I am my own worst enemy 'Cause every now and then I kick the living shit out of me

F5 C5 Bb5 F5 C5 Bb5

9 Gtr. 2

Bass
Bass Fig. 2

end Bass Fig. 2

I can't remember what was said or what you threw at me Please tell me }
The smoke alarm is going off and there's a cigarette still burning }

F5 C5 Bb5 F5 C5 Bb5

13 Gtr. 2

Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 twice (see bar 5)

Gtr. 1 plays Fill 1 (see below bar 5)

C Chorus (0:37, 1:23, 2:01)

why my car is in the front yard and I'm sleeping with my clothes

F5 G5 Bb5 C5/G

Gtr. 1 (1st and 2nd chorus only)

Riff B

end Riff B

17 let ring

Gtr. 2

Bass

Rhy. Fill 1 (2:17)

Gtr. 2 C5/G

TAB 4/4

Bass Fill 1 (2:17)

C5/G

TAB 4/4

3rd time, skip ahead to **E** (bar 37)

on

I came in through the window

last

night

(1., 2.) And

you're

(3.) (Ah)

F5

G5

B $\flat$ 5

C5/G

Gtr. 1 plays Riff B (see bar 17)

Gtr. 2

Gtr. 2 substitutes Rhy. Fill 1, third time (see below bar 17)

Substitute Bass Fill 1 third time (see below bar 19)

Bass

1.

gone

gone

F5

C5 B $\flat$ 5 F5C5 B $\flat$ 5

Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fig. 1 twice (see bar 5)

Gtr. 1

Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 twice (see bar 5)

2.

gone

gone

F5

C5 B $\flat$ 5 F5C5 B $\flat$ 5

Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fig. 1 twice (see bar 5)

29

Bass plays Bass Fig. 2 (see bar 9)

D Guitar Solo (1:51)

F5

C5 B $\flat$ 5

Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fig. 1 twice (see bar 5)

33

Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 twice (see bar 5)

Go back to **C** 3rd Chorus (bar 17)

Please

tell

me

F5

C5 B $\flat$ 5

35

E (2:19)

It's no surprise to me I am my own worst enemy 'Cause every now and then I kick the living shit out of me
(ooh Ah ooh Ah)

F5 G5 B $\flat$ 5 C5/G

Gtr. 1 plays Riff B twice (see bar 17)

37 Gtr. 2

Measures 37-40 of section E. The guitar part (Gtr. 2) features a series of triplets and single notes. The bass part provides a steady accompaniment. Chords F5, G5, B $\flat$ 5, and C5/G are indicated above the guitar staff.

Can we forget about the things I said when I was drunk I didn't mean to call you that
(ooh Ah ooh)

F5 G5 B $\flat$ 5 C5

Measures 41-44 of section E. The guitar part continues with complex fretting and triplets. The bass part follows a similar rhythmic pattern. Chords F5, G5, B $\flat$ 5, and C5 are indicated above the guitar staff.

F Outro (2:38)

F5 C5 B $\flat$ 5 F5 C5 B $\flat$ 5

Measures 45-48 of section F. The guitar part (Gtr. 1) features a melodic line with triplets and single notes. The bass part provides a steady accompaniment. Chords F5, C5, B $\flat$ 5, and F5 are indicated above the guitar staff.

"DROP D"

Matteo Mancuso

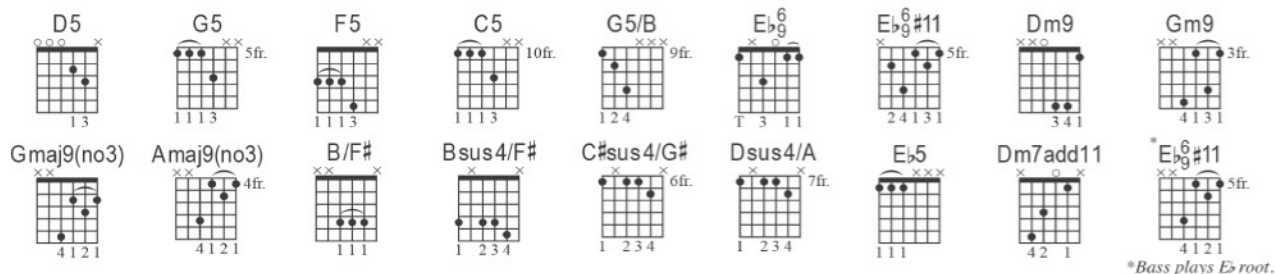
As heard on **THE JOURNEY**

Composed by MATTEO MANCUSO • Transcribed by JEFF PERRIN

Guitar 2 (w/slide) is in open D5 tuning (low to high: D, A, D, A, A, D).

All other guitars are in drop-D tuning (low to high: D, A, D, G, B, E).

Bass is in drop-D tuning (low to high: D, A, D, G).



*Bass plays E $\flat$ root.

A Intro (0:00)

Moderately Fast $\text{♩} = 220$

N.C.(Dsus4) (F) (G) (F) (Dsus4) (F) (G) (F)

Gtr. 1 (clean elec. w/light delay and reverb effects)
(fingerstyle)

Riff A

1

TAB 12/8

Gtr. 2 (elec. w/overdrive in open D5 tuning) (2nd time) w/slide

TAB 12/8

D5 G5
Gtr. 1 plays Riff A twice (see bar 1)
Gtr. 2

3

Gtr. 3 (elec. w/light overdrive)

*Doubled throughout.

Bass



D5 G5 D5 G5

Gtr. 2 w/delay

5

*Approximate "virtual" fretboard position over pickups.

Gtr. 4 (elec. w/dist.)

Gtr. 1

Gtr. 3

Bass

B (0:26, 1:10)

D5 F5 G5 D5 F5 G5

Gtr. 1 plays Riff A four times (see bar 1)

Gtr. 4

P.M.

Gtr. 3
Rhy. Fig. 1

Bass

D5 F5 G5 Dsus2 F5 G5

9

10^{*} 13 10 (10)^{*} (10)^{*} X 8-7 8 7 10 P.M. 7 10 7 (7)^{*} (7)^{*} 7 8 10 10

end Rhy. Fig. 1

0^{*} 0 3 4 5^{*} 5 5 4 5^{*} 0 X 2 3 4 5^{*} 5

C (0:39, 1:23)

C5 G5/B N.C. (D5) C5 G5/B E_b9

11

7^{*} (7)(7)(7) 10 P.M. (10) 7-10 8 10 P.M. 7-10^{*} (10)^{*} (10)^{*} X 7 5 7 5 8 7-8 7 5^{*} (5) (5) X

Rhy. Fig. 2

let ring

12^{*} 12 (12) 12 12 12 (12) 12 12 12 (12) 12 0 3 5 5 3 5/6 5 3 5 5 12^{*} 12 (12) 12 12 12 (12) 12 12 12 (12) 12 0 1 3 0 1 (1) 1 1 0

Bass Fig. 1

3^{*} 3 (3) 5 5 5 5 0 5 5 5 5 3 5/6 5 3 5 0 3^{*} 3 (3) 0 5 5 5 (5) 5 6 6 6 (6) 6 6^{*} 6 6 5

C5 G5/B N.C. (D5) C5 G5/B

13

7^{*} (7)(7)(7) 10 (10) 7-10 8 10 6 7^{*} 6 (7)^{*} 7 7 5 7 5 8 12^{*} 12

end Rhy. Fig. 2

12^{*} 12 (12) 12 12 12 (12) 12 12 12 (12) 12 0 3 5 5 3 5/6 5 3 5 5 6 12^{*} 12 (12) 12 12 12 (12) 12 12 12 (12) 12 0 6 8 12^{*} 12

end Bass Fig. 1

3^{*} 3 (3) 5 5 5 5 0 3 5 5 5 3 5/6 5 3 5 0 6 8 3^{*} 3 (3) 0 5 5 5 (5) 5 12^{*} 12

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Gmaj9(no3)

Amaj9(no3)

end Rhy. Fig. 3

25

F Bass Solo (1:54)

Dm9

Gm9

Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 3 twice (see bar 21)

Bass

29

Gmaj9(no3)

Amaj9(no3)

33

Dm9

Gm9

37

Gmaj9(no3)

Amaj9(no3)

41

Gtr. 1

B/F#

Bsus4/F# C#sus4/G# Dsus4/A

44

G 1st Guitar Solo (2:27)

D5 F5 G5 D5 F5 G5 D5 F5 G5

Gr. 3 plays Rhy. Fig. 1 twice (see bar 7)

Gr. 4

49

Bass

D5 F5 G5

52

D5 F5 G5 D5 F5 G5

53

D5 F5 G5

55

[illegible]

C5 G5/B N.C. (D5)

Gtr. 3 plays Rhy. Fig. 2 (see bar 11)

Gtr. 4

57

12 14 15 13 17 16 15 12 14 12 15 12 15 12 14 13

Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 (see bar 11)

3

C5 G5/B N.C. (D5)

59 P.M.

10° (10)° (10) 12 8 10 7 10 12° (12) (12) 10

6 8

The first system of musical notation is for the key of C major (C5) and the G5/B chord. It features a treble clef and a 6/8 time signature. The melody consists of eighth notes: C5 (quarter), D5 (quarter), E5 (quarter), F5 (quarter), G5 (quarter), A5 (quarter), B5 (quarter), and C6 (quarter). The bass line consists of eighth notes: G4 (quarter), F4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), D4 (quarter), C4 (quarter), B3 (quarter), A3 (quarter), and G3 (quarter). The system ends with a double bar line and a repeat sign.

[illegible]

H (3:11)

(♩ = 210)

N.C. (D5)

E65

N.C. (D5)

Gtr. 3

(E65)

[illegible]

I (3:25)

N.C. (D5)

Gtr. 3 plays Rhy. Fig. 4 (see bar 63)

Gtr. 4

E65

(2nd time)

67 Gtr. 4 (2nd time)

Bass
Bass Fig. 2

The guitar part (Gtr. 4) consists of two measures. The first measure has a whole note chord (F#m) and a half note chord (F#m). The second measure has a whole note chord (F#m) and a half note chord (F#m). The bass part (Bass Fig. 2) consists of two measures. The first measure has a whole note chord (F#m) and a half note chord (F#m). The second measure has a whole note chord (F#m) and a half note chord (F#m). The bass part is labeled "Bass Fig. 2" and includes a dashed line indicating a continuation of the figure.

J 2nd Guitar Solo (3:39)

N.C. (D5)

Gtr. 3 plays Rhy. Fig. 4 four times (see bar 63)

Gtr. 4

[illegible]

Bass plays Bass Fig. 2 four times (see bar 67)

**Bend string from behind the fret hand using a pick-hand finger while simultaneously performing note trill.*

E,5

K (4:06)

N.C. (Dsus4) (F) (G) (F) (Dsus4) (F) (G) (F)

Gtr. 4

77

12°

(12)

Gtr. 1 (w/clean tone)

P.M. ---

5 5 2 3 5 5 3 7 5 6 5 8 7 5 9 5 5 5 2 4 3 3

Bass

0°

5°

5° (5) (5) 10°

(Dsus4) (F) (G) (F) (Dsus4) (F) (G)

79

Gtr. 5 (elec. w/overdrive)

79

Drum (see introduction)

Gtr. 1

P.M. ---

Gtr. 3

P.M. ---

Bass

79

Drum (see introduction)

Gtr. 1

P.M. ---

Gtr. 3

P.M. ---

Bass

L (4:20)

C5 G5/B (D5)

Gtr. 3 plays *Rhy.* Fig. 2 (see bar 11)

Gtr. 4

[illegible][illegible]

Gtr. 3

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

0

6

Bass

The first system of the bass staff for 'The Sound of Silence' consists of two measures. The first measure contains a sequence of 16 eighth notes, all marked with an accent (^), representing the lyrics 'Hello silence'. The second measure contains a sequence of 16 eighth notes, also marked with an accent (^), representing the lyrics 'Hello silence'. The staff is labeled with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (Bb). The time signature is 4/4. The first measure is marked with a '12' and an '8' in the left margin, and the second measure is marked with a '6' and an '8' in the right margin.

N.C. (E $\flat$ 5)

The musical score for N.C. (E $\flat$ 5) consists of three staves. The first staff is a treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B $\flat$) and a 6/8 time signature. It contains a sequence of notes with fingerings: 6, 8, 10, 8, 10, 10, 11, 11, 13, 11, 13, 15, 11, 13, 14, 13-12, 15, 13, 12-14, 13, 13-15, 18-17, 18, 17, 19-20, 17-19, 18-20, 20, 18-17, 18, 17, and a final quarter note. The second staff is a bass clef with a key signature of one flat (B $\flat$) and a 6/8 time signature. It contains a sequence of notes with fingerings: 1, 5, 1, 1, 3, 5, 1, 0, 1, 3, 3, 1, 5, 1, and a final quarter note. The third staff is a bass clef with a key signature of one flat (B $\flat$) and a 6/8 time signature. It contains a sequence of notes with fingerings: 1, 1, 1-(1), 0, 1, 1, 1-(1), 0, 1, 1, 1-(1), 0, 1, 1, 1-(1), 0, 1, 1, 1, 0, 1, 3, 5, 1, 0, 1, 3, 3, 1, 0, 1, and a final quarter note. The score is marked with a wavy line and "P.M. -1" above the second staff.

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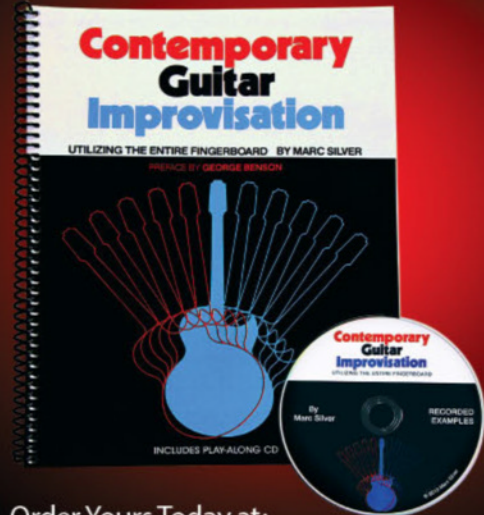
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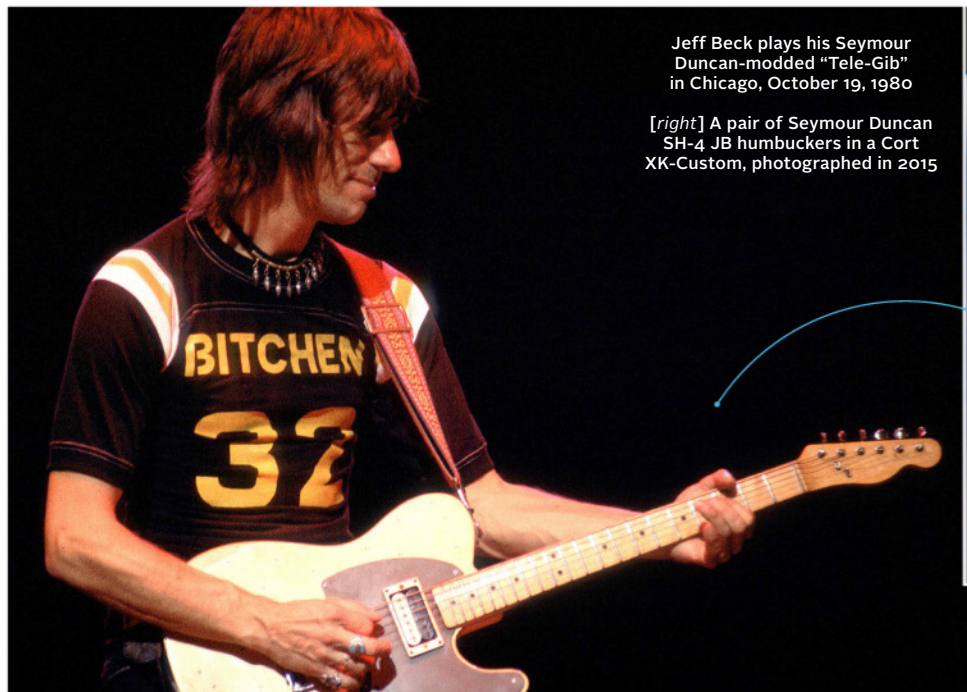
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1976-PRESENT SEYMOUR DUNCAN JB (SH-4, TB-4) HUMBUCKING PICKUP

CATEGORY: REPLACEMENT PICKUP



Jeff Beck plays his Seymour Duncan-modded "Tele-Gib" in Chicago, October 19, 1980

[right] A pair of Seymour Duncan SH-4 JB humbuckers in a Cort XK-Custom, photographed in 2015



The tonal character of a JB is defined by crisp, articulate treble, aggressive, singing mids and refined, tight bottom end

ACCORDING TO SEYMOUR Duncan, the JB humbucking pickup is the company's best-selling model, which essentially makes it a strong contender for the best-selling replacement pickup of all time. In addition to all of the individual JB pickups that Seymour Duncan has sold to DIY modders over the years, the JB is commonly supplied as stock factory equipment on a wide variety of popular guitar models made by companies that have included Charvel, Dean, ESP, Framus, Hamer, Jackson, Knaggs, Kramer, Schecter and dozens of other manufacturers — as well as the occasional Fender and Gibson (particularly on certain artist models).

Seymour Duncan created the first JB pickup in 1974 when he rewound a damaged pair of Gibson PAF pickups that came from an original Flying V owned by Lonnie Mack. Duncan wound the dual-cream bobbin pickup with wire that was lighter gauge than the original PAF spec, using extra turns to increase its output. The zebra bobbin pickup was wound with heavier gauge wire and fewer turns. He installed both pickups in a 1959 Fender Telecaster that he repaired, placing the cream pickup at the bridge and the zebra pickup at the neck. In mid-1974, Duncan gave this modified guitar, which he called the "Tele-Gib," to Jeff Beck, who used it while recording *Blow* by

Blow, most notably on "Cause We've Ended as Lovers."

When Duncan opened his own pickup rewinding workshop in 1976, he offered a "JB" wind that replicated the specs of the Tele-Gib's bridge pickup, and by the late Seventies Duncan started manufacturing the JB humbucker as its own production model. Build characteristics of the JB include about 6,500 turns of 44 AWG wire, an Alnico 5 magnet and about 16.4 to 16.8k ohms resistance. The JB has a 5.5kHz resonant peak, which in a "loaded" application (affected by capacitance of the guitar's circuitry and cable) results in about a 2kHz peak, which is an ideal sweet spot for mid-range that remains prominent in a mix. The tonal character of a JB is defined by crisp, articulate treble, aggressive, singing mids and refined, tight bottom end with hot output that can boldly push an amp into overdrive.

The JB is commonly paired with a Duncan Jazz Model (the original Tele-Gib configuration) or a Duncan '59 in the neck. It's available with standard string spacing (SH-4) or wider tremolo spacing (TB-4) in configurations for 6- or 7-string guitars. Duncan even offers an offset-coil version as a direct replacement for Gibson Nighthawk guitars. While the JB was designed for the bridge position, many guitarists also like

to install it at the neck, particularly players who often use the neck pickup for playing solos. The JB works equally well with either 500k pots, which provide enhanced treble, articulation and bite, or 250k pots, which tames the treble and results in a smooth, singing midrange with vocal-like character.

As one of the most popular pickups ever made, the Duncan JB has been used by an extensive list of guitarists. It practically defined the sounds of hard rock and metal in the Eighties through players like Randy Rhoads, Warren DeMartini, Jake E. Lee, Steve Stevens, Brad Gillis, Joe Satriani, Scott Ian, Dave Mustaine and Marty Friedman. In the Nineties, the JB continued to play a dominant role in the sound of hard rock as well as grunge, punk and alternative via players like Adam Jones, Jerry Cantrell, Kurt Cobain and Billie Joe Armstrong, and it remains a vital force in the 2000s, thanks to bands like Avenged Sevenfold, Steel Panther and numerous other artists.



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