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FOR 2025
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ULTIMATE GEAR GUIDE

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*of the
Year!*

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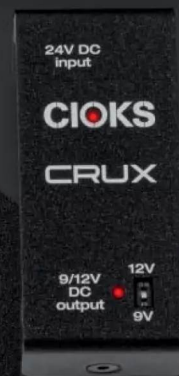
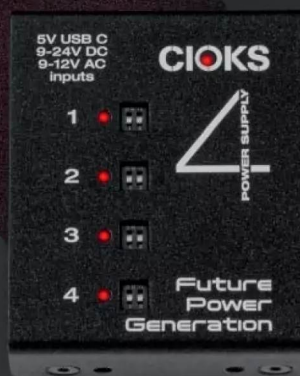
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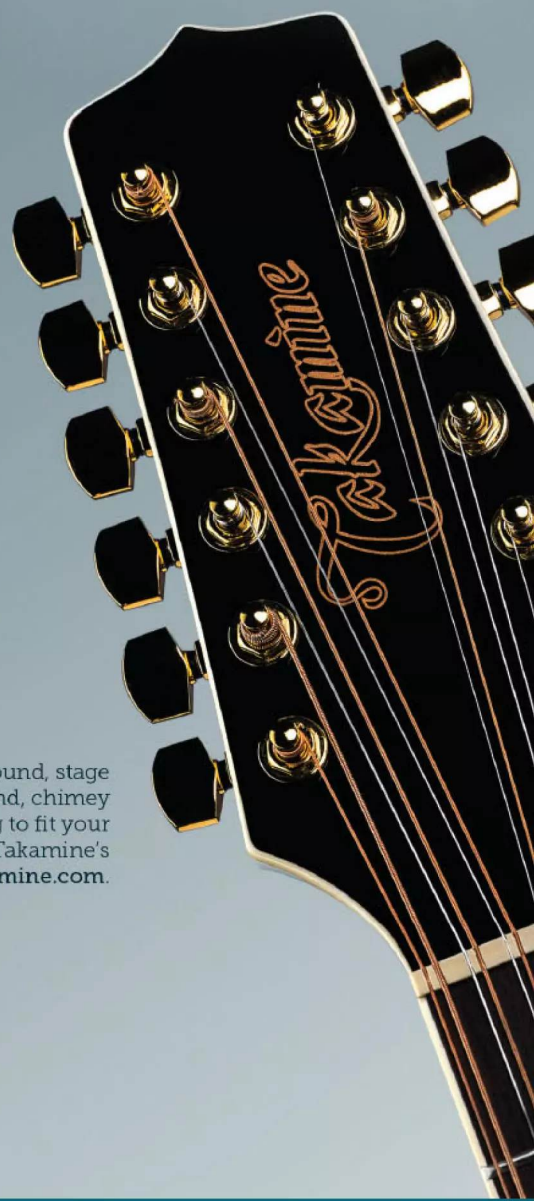
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GJ72CE-12 / GJ72CE

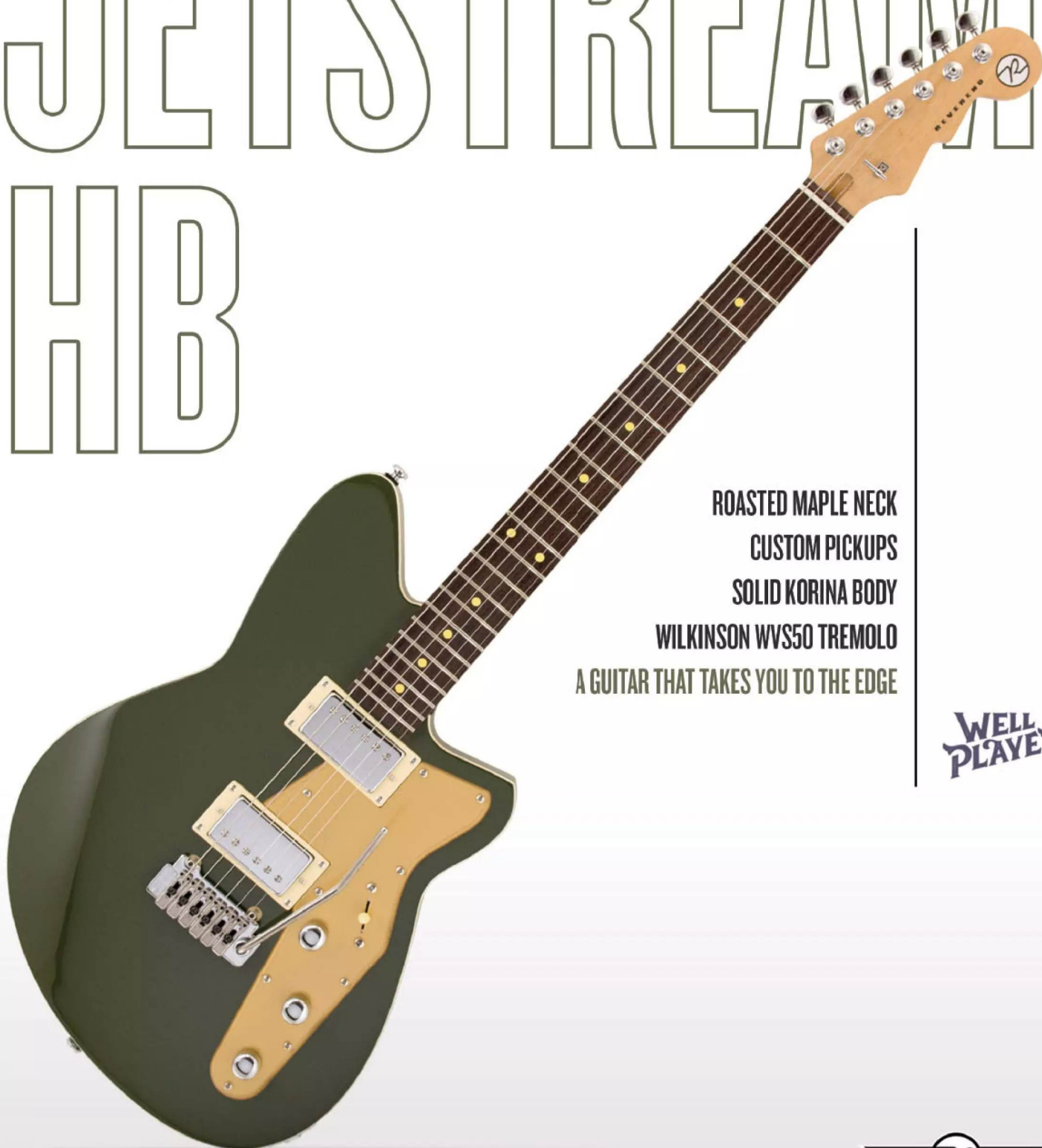


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90 WHAT'S NEW

Get an exclusive first look at some very awesome gear slated for release this holiday season and into 2025!

THE YEAR'S TOP GEAR REVIEWS

Before you shop for a single piece of music equipment, check out this collection of the best-reviewed gear of the year, all comprehensively and real-world tested by the editors of *Guitar World*, *Guitar Player*, *Music Radar* and *Electronic Musician*.

100 ELECTRIC GUITARS

114 ACOUSTIC & LIVE

120 AMPS

124 EFFECT PEDALS

132 ACCESSORIES



ON THE COVER: (main image) PRS SE NF; (clockwise from top) Klön Grand Cutaway Mini, Interstellar Audio Supernova Zoeldrive, Dr. Z Z-80 amp and Nakupenda Guitar Stool

ULTIMATE GEAR GUIDE

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OF MY HEART
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- Reinforced Plain Strings provide greater tuning stability and strength
- Unique core to wrap & tension ratios for a balanced & smooth playing experience



AKG C414 XLS and XLII

AKG's C414 range contains the most respected studio and stage microphones in audio history. The new C414 XLS and the C414 XLII offer nine pickup patterns that enable them to choose the perfect setting for every application. Both mics have three switchable bass cut filters as well as three pre-attenuation levels that allow lead vocals and solo instruments to be placed in even the densest mixes. The C414 XLS maintains the sonic character of the legendary C414 B-ULS, the longest-lived C414 model. The C414 XLII is the successor of the famous C414 B-TL II. It shows the unique sonic signature of the highly sought-after AKG C12, which enables lead vocals and solo instruments to be placed even in a dense mix. The up-front sound is also well known for distant miking applications like classical music recording or drum ambience miking. **\$tbc, akg.com**



Big Bends Nut Sauce

Nut Sauce is a special state-of-the-art lubricant that is the secret sauce to keeping in tune and eliminating string breakage at all times. This special nut sauce is applied to the guitar's nut, string guides, bridge, saddle and pivot points. Big Bends Nut Sauce is the perfect way to precisely apply lubricant at the exact place you need. Your guitar is guaranteed to remain in tune, no matter how hard you strum the strings and yank the whammy bar. Used and trusted for more than 20 years by professionals the world over.

\$12.45, bigbends.com



Cableworks Backline Cables

Cableworks has added new XLR cable sizes to its Composer and Backline Series. The new 15- and 25-foot XLR cable options enhance the versatility of both series, catering to a range of audio needs both in the studio and on the stage. The Backline Series by Cableworks offers reliable and durable XLR cables, designed with flexible jackets, high-quality connectors and oxygen-free copper conductors that ensure clear signal transmission for musicians and audio professionals. This series is ideal for those looking for dependable, cost-effective solutions for live sound or studio environments. For those seeking a more advanced option, the Composer Series provides professional-grade XLR cables, featuring low-capacitance conductors and enhanced shielding for superior signal flow and reduced interference. The Composer Series also includes Cableworks' patent-pending connectors with TORIColor ID rings, making cable identification easier when managing multiple connections.

\$tbc, gatorco.com



Charvel MJ DK24 HSH 2PT Mahogany

The MJ DK24 HSH 2PT blends Charvel's legacy of designing high-performance instruments with an assortment of top-end features and stunning finishes: the company has now unveiled the MJ DK24 HSH 2PT Mahogany. Crafted from a mahogany Dinky body with a flame maple or solid top, the DK24 delivers a punchy tone with solid high-end response and a touch of brightened treble. The instrument features a scalloped lower back bout and a sculpted shredder's cut heel, and the bolt-on wenge neck is reinforced with graphite for stability, complemented by a hand-rubbed oil finish. The heel-mount truss rod adjustment wheel allows for quick neck relief tweaks, ensuring optimal playability. At the heart of the MJ DK24's sonic capabilities lies an HSH pickup configuration, featuring a custom Seymour Duncan Full Shred TB-10 humbucking bridge pickup, a Seymour Duncan Custom Flat Strat SSL-6 middle pickup, and a custom Seymour Duncan Alnico II Pro APH-1N humbucking neck pickup.

\$1,999 (black), \$2,199 (other finishes), charvel.com



Ciari Guitars Ascender Standard

The Ascender Standard is the world's first and only patented, professional-grade, full-sized, folding electric guitar. Combining award-winning design with expert luthier craftsmanship, the Ascender Standard embraces an asymmetric satin basswood body style, three-over-three headstock, natural-neck finish with ebony fingerboard, Ciari locking tuners, Seymour Duncan 59 Dual Humbucker Pickups, master tone and volume electronics, and a pick-up selector. The patented folding system combines an aircraft-grade mid-neck hinge, a translating locking strut to selectively immobilize the hinge, and a floating tailpiece to selectively tighten and loosen the strings, which enables the Ascender Standard to fold in half symmetrically for a folded length of 18.5". When the Ascender Standard is folded, string management keeps the strings in place and under light tension. Custom locking tuners ensure everything stays crisp and in tune when unfolded for play.

\$1,799, ciariguitars.com



ENGL E658 Steve Morse Signature 20

Steve Morse, the guitarist known for his work with bands like Deep Purple and the Dixie Dregs, has recently announced a new collaboration with ENGL Amps. The new Steve Morse Signature 20 is a compact and versatile amplifier that packs a punch in terms of both features and sound. With two channels, guitarists will have the ability to dial in a wide range of tones to suit their playing style. The E658 features a built-in noise gate, making it perfect for high-gain playing without any unwanted noise, plus a built-in delay and reverb as well as an IR loader, MIDI, headphone out. Whether you're a fan of Steve Morse's playing or just looking for a versatile and powerful amp, the ENGL Steve Morse Signature 20 is definitely worth checking out. With its compact size and impressive features, this head is sure to become a go-to for guitarists of all styles and genres.

\$tbc, engl-amps.com



Ernie Ball John Mayer Signature Silver Slinky Strings

These new Silver Slinky strings are the result of a new partnership between Ernie Ball and John Mayer. They feature a never-before-offered gauge combination along with Reinforced Plain Strings (RPS) for added tuning stability and durability. Each string has been meticulously engineered with specific gauges and core-to-wrap ratios to meet John's exacting standards, delivering the perfect balance of tone and tension. This combination consists of 10.5, 13.5, 17.5, 27, 37 and 47 gauges.

\$tbc, ernieball.com



EVH Star T.O.M.

EVH has announced the Limited Edition EVH Star T.O.M., a modern interpretation of the iconic guitar that helped shape the sound of Eddie Van Halen. This instrument includes modern performance enhancements, crafted from a resonant basswood body. Its single EVH Wolfgang humbucker captures the essence of Van Halen's powerful sound, while the momentary kill switch allows players to create unique stutter effects. The guitar features a 1-piece bolt-on quartersawn maple neck with an EVH modified "C" back shape, paired with a fast-playing ebony fingerboard. The 12" to 16" compound radius and 22 jumbo frets ensure that guitarists can execute pummeling riffs and lightning-fast licks with ease. Additionally, the Tuna-Matic Stoptail bridge provides exceptional sustain.

\$tbc, evhgear.com



Fender Buck Owens Signature Telecaster and Kingman

Fender has honored the late country great Buck Owens with a pair of signature guitars — the Limited Edition Buck Owens Telecaster and the Buck Owens Kingman. The Tele boasts the same Blue, Red and White Sparkle finish that was used on an older limited-edition run of Owens Teles way back in the 1990s. Under the bling, it's a regular Tele at heart, boasting a bound alder body and vintage 7.25" radius maple fretboard. It's joined by a similarly styled Kingman acoustic, which looks to recreate the vibe of the Harmony H169 that has become synonymous with Owens. **\$1,999 and \$699, fender.com**



Focusrite Adam Audio Speaker Monitors

Adam Audio is an established manufacturer of modern monitoring solutions. The T Series is their range of affordable, professional 2-way powered studio monitors, offering high performance at an attractive price point. The A Series delivers accurate, transparent sound across a full line of monitors. It is the right fit for professional and home studio, as well as broadcast, immersive and home audio environments. The S Series is Adam Audio's flagship reference monitoring range, made in Berlin. Complementing the portfolio of studio monitors is a range of professional subwoofers, designed for various applications and acoustic environments.

From €449.99, adam-audio.com



Focusrite Scarlett 4th Gen

Scarlett offers studio-quality connectivity, including Hi-Z, instrument and line inputs, ADAT, S/PDIF and MIDI. Hi-Z ensures great guitar tones, while line inputs facilitate synths, outboard gear and all other analog devices. ADAT and S/PDIF enable I/O channel expansion. The all-new headphone amp design sets the stage for the best playback you've ever heard from a Scarlett interface, driving high-impedance headphones louder and clearer than ever before. Focusrite Control 2 is a powerful app for your Scarlett to make session setup painless, so you can focus on what matters — capturing great performances. Available for iOS and Android. **\$tba, focusrite.com**



Fractal Audio VP4

The VP4 is a powerful, compact virtual pedalboard processor. It provides four simultaneous effects with a user-friendly experience inspired by traditional guitar pedals. The effects are based on the award-winning Axe-Fx III, with 400+ classic stompbox and studio effects to choose from, including drives, delays, reverbs, choruses, flangers, phasers, pitch, plex, EQs, compressors, wah, tremolo and many more. The VP4 is designed to work seamlessly with a traditional amplifier and also excels at providing pre- and/or post-effects with any modeler. Now you can choose your ideal setup and still enjoy Fractal Audio's legendary effects, vetted by the world's greatest guitar heroes. **\$tba, fractalaudio.com**



FU Tone Acoustic Bridge Pins

These Titanium and Brass bridge pins are designed for acoustic guitars — it looks like titanium and brass upgrades are not just for locking tremolos anymore. Take your acoustic guitar to the next level with the ultimate in acoustic upgrades. This is the easiest and most dramatic upgrade for your acoustic guitar, with increased sustain, clarity, definition and tone.

\$99.95, fu-tone.com



Fuchs Audio ODH Amp

Featuring an ODS-style all-tube preamp, operating at True High Voltage into a fan-cooled Ice power module, the ODH brings high-powered clean and overdrive tones to a compact size and affordable price point. A unique tube limiter circuit controls the Ice Power module input, while any signal clipping is (intentionally) non-linear so it responds just like a real tube amp. The ODH includes a two-way footswitch for channels and gain boost. A 30-second mute timer assures the tubes are warmed-up before the power amp goes live.

\$tbc, fuchsaudioelectronics.com



Gator Flying V and Explorer Cases

Gator Cases has expanded its Traditional Deluxe Series with two new custom cases designed specifically for Flying V and Explorer-style guitars. Constructed from plywood with a black Tolex exterior, both cases offer protection against bumps and dings during transit. Each case features a custom-molded interior tailored to fit the unique contours of its specific guitar. The inside is lined with thick plush padding to gently cushion the instrument, ensuring its angular body shape is supported at every point. The precise fit prevents movement during transport, reducing the risk of damage. For added convenience, the cases include an internal storage compartment for accessories, keeping essential items stored alongside the instrument.

\$tbc, gatorco.com



IK Multimedia iLoud Micro Monitor Pro Immersive Bundle 11

IK Multimedia has announced the iLoud Micro Monitor Pro Immersive Bundle 11 release, which incorporates IK's latest addition to the iLoud monitor lineup, the Micro Monitor Pro, and provides a cost-effective and versatile monitoring solution for anyone interested in immersive audio. With its ultra-compact size, super lightweight design and pro-quality performance, the Micro Monitor Pro is an immersive monitor setup that offers superior sound for this price and form factor.

\$2,779.99, ikmultimedia.com



JBL Bags Subpole 2032

JBL Bags has announced the release of a new low-profile subwoofer pole, designed to mount loudspeakers onto subwoofers for a more compact setup in smaller spaces. This shorter speaker pole offers a height adjustment range ideal for more intimate events, complementing JBL Bags' existing lineup of standard-sized subwoofer poles. It supports up to 132 pounds and adjusts in height from 20 to 32 inches. It features four preset locking pin positions, while also allowing users to secure the pole at any position within the height adjustment range. At the subwoofer end, a removable piece fits into 35-millimeter cup mounts, or when unscrewed, reveals M20 threads for threaded subwoofer mounts. The speaker end includes a removable sheath that expands to fit 38-millimeter speaker mounts or can be removed to fit 35-millimeter mounts.

\$tbc, jblbags.com



JBL Eon One MK2

This array of eight 2" tweeters includes a 10" woofer in an acoustically optimized cabinet that generates natural, smooth low end, down to 37 Hz. Variable Power Performance automatically optimizes the power performance to provide 4 dB higher output when connected to an AC source: 123 dB peak SPL using AC power, 119 dB peak using battery power. An easily swappable battery provides six hours of play time; the battery is integrated into a column spacer to improve stability and to optimize the cabinet acoustic volume for superior low-frequency response. The built-in 5-channel digital mixer is designed by mix engineers for optimized workflow, and three fixed EQ knobs allow fast, hands-on access to onboard EQ.

\$1,299, jbl.com



JBL IRX One

This C-shaped array of six 2" tweeters delivers superior clarity and rich sound. The 8" woofer with bass-reflex design generates natural, smooth low end, down to 40 Hz, with a built-in 3-channel mixer. The product features fixed bass and treble control, Automatic Feedback Suppression (AFS), phantom power and system tuning presets. Soundcraft Easy Ducking automatically turns down music when speech is detected. The column spacers and array cabinet conveniently fit into the back of the base unit, and the speaker automatically adjusts tuning depending on how many spacers are used for optimum sound performance.

\$949, jbl.com



Joyo Audio BSK-80 Acoustic Guitar Amplifier

The BSK80 is ideal for busking and street performances, boasting 80W of solid state acoustic amplification, with a huge range of inbuilt features and effects. With an inbuilt Lithium battery, the amp can be used on-the-go with an 8-hour battery life, and it even has a dedicated 9V/500mA output to power your effect pedals at the same time. Inbuilt effects such as Chorus, Delay, Reverb and an Anti-feedback control are all processed by the built-in high-performance DSP chip, plus the included footswitch allows you to control the effects, mute the output, and operate the built-in 30-second looper while you play. The BSK80 also features Bluetooth connectivity and an AUX input so you can connect your device and play along to your favourite songs and backing tracks.

\$649 approx., joyoaudio.com



Knaggs Anniversary Navajo Sun

Knaggs Guitars has released its new Navajo Sun inlay package to celebrate the company's 15th anniversary. Featuring a new Navajo Sun fretboard inlay design and a Morning Star headstock inlay comprised of gold mother-of-pearl and Bloody Basin Agate or mother-of-pearl and turquoise, the Navajo Sun package includes Navajo Sun inlays and Morning Star headstock inlay, a maple top, maple binding and multi-level matching neck stains.

\$tbc, knaggsguitars.com



Korg Multi/Poly Analog Modeling Synth

This analog modeling synthesizer delivers breathtaking analog sounds combined with extraordinary digital power and flexibility. The original Mono/Poly boasted an unusually rich sound from its four stacked oscillators, as well as unique, experimental features like flexible x-mod and sync routing. Previously only attainable in large modular systems, the Mono/Poly delivered these features in a compact, user-friendly instrument. The new Multi/Poly is the first instrument to use Korg's next-generation analog modeling technology and builds on that distinctive combination of big sounds and modular-derived experimental features.

\$tbc, korg.com



Latin Percussion Alex Van Halen Signature 8" Cowbell

The new, American-made Alex Van Halen Signature 8" Cowbell is based on the classic LP Bongo Cowbell. The chrome-plated, mountable bell is embossed with Alex's signature and the iconic Van Halen logo. It is fitted with the patented Jenigor Ridge Rider Bar for dampening and durability and the patented, self-aligning eye-bolt that mounts to any 3/8" to 1/2" diameter rod. It pumps out high-pitch sound with dry overtones making it great for punching accents into any big groove. "I have loved every minute of working with LP to create my signature cowbell," Alex says.

\$99.99, lpmusic.com



LD Systems Anny

Enjoy complete freedom of movement when making announcements with the headset microphone connected to the Anny bodypack transmitter. With an 80-metre wireless range, you can even run across a field without losing the connection. With the integrated wheels on Anny 10 or the protective backpack for Anny 8, you can take your sound anywhere: in the city, in the garden, at gatherings, sports events, school and dance events, in bars or at parties. With Anny at your side, you'll create unforgettable moments wherever you are. Your setup options with Anny are as versatile as you are. With a built-in mixer and up to seven audio sources, you can create a wide range of setups with a mix of speech and music. And it's not just inputs: there's also a mix output to record your mix or send it to an additional loudspeaker.

\$tbc, ld-systems.com



Lollar Pickups Dogear P-90s

Lollar Pickups make it easier than ever to take your Casino or similarly-styled guitar to the next level with high quality, handmade pickups and pre-wired component kits, proudly American-made in Tacoma, Washington. Lollar's Dogear P-90s are available in a variety of cover options, including the classic Casino chrome. Pre-wired kits include your choice of paper-in-oil or Orange Drop capacitor.

\$115, lollarguitars.com



Louis Electric Cobra 183

The Cobra 6L6/183 sports a hand-selected, durable, and sleek brown leather cover with black and white accents designed to add a classic touch to any gear collection. Enjoy countless combinations of tone to discover your personal sound with the 6L6/183's 10-position custom feedback control rotary knobs. Designed with user experience and tone at the forefront, the 6L6/183 packs rich sound into a portable package. Sizing up at less than two feet long and a foot tall/wide, the 6L6/183 is suitable for on the road, at the gig, and plug-and-play jam sessions right at home. Controls are input, volume, treble, middle, bass, overdrive gain and level, master volume, presence and feedback.

\$4,495, louiselectricamps.com



Luxe By Martin Acoustic Cable

This advanced acoustic guitar cable helps unleash your unique sound. Carefully crafted and engineered for exceptional sound quality and durability, it uses the finest components to transmit more of your passion, timbre, and tones. The superior 99.9 percent oxygen-free copper, infused with silver multigauge conductor wires, delivers your instrument's expressive sound with all the rich harmonics and sustain possible, while incorporating a special dual shield construction that creates one of the quietest and most flexible cables available. Its advanced low capacitance design produces an expanded, more natural sound, allowing you to enjoy your instrument's full potential. These cables also have a lifetime guarantee to keep you sounding your best for years to come.

\$89.99, martinguitar.com



Martin Capo

Martin's first guitar capo delivers smooth, quick and reliable one-handed operation, all while accommodating a plethora of neck shapes. It also adjusts to fit any guitar neck profile.

\$14.99, martinguitar.com



Martin Reverb Select Custom 0012 Tasmanian Blackwood

Martin has released its latest Reverb exclusive: the Martin Reverb Select Custom 0012 Tasmanian Blackwood. This limited-run 12-fretter combines the striking look of flamed Tasmanian blackwood back and sides with a western red cedar top. Tasmanian blackwood is a close relative of koa, offering a balanced tone with a distinctive midrange punch. With African padauk binding and a gloss toasted burst finish, this Grand Concert beauty is a delicate dance of aesthetics and acoustics from Down Under. The Custom 0012 Tasmanian Blackwood follows the success of previous releases like the Custom GP Blonde, 1930 0012-42 Conversion and Custom M/0000 Satin Black models found on the Official Martin Guitar Reverb Shop.

[\\$tbc, reverb.com](http://$tbc, reverb.com)



Mooer Audio GE150 Pro Multi-Effects Pedal

Back in 2019, Mooer released its GE150 multi-effects pedal, offering guitarists a wide range of amp simulations and effects in a compact package. Building upon the features of the original, the GE150 Pro provides guitarists with 200 factory effect presets, ensuring that there is an effects chain for any scenario. Furthermore, 55 preamps and 26 high-quality cabinet simulations are provided. The pedal even supports the loading of up to 10 third-party IR cabinet simulations, adding to the versatility of the GE150 Pro's functionality. This pedal can be mapped to effect parameters for dynamic live control and also features a 'toe tap' feature to switch the mapping Expression to Volume control mode.

[\\$tbc, mooeraudio.com](http://$tbc, mooeraudio.com)



Mooer MSC20 Pro

Recently, Mooer has been focusing on getting back to basics with its classic electric MSC10 Pro — and now the MSC20 Pro. Unlike the GTRS intelligent series of electric guitars, the MSC20 Pro doesn't come with internal amplification and effects, but that's precisely what makes it so special. It's ultimately an enhanced version of this year's MSC10 Pro, featuring a similar Strat-style poplar body but augmented with a slick, gloss finish and selected ash top. Like the MSC10 Pro, this predecessor assembles its body and neck through bolt-on construction, a bone nut, a dual-action steel truss rod, and MTN-1 chrome tuning pegs. However, instead of the original tech ebony fingerboard, the MSC20 Pro features a unique Jatoba style, giving it a more organic, wooden feel. This natural look is added to with the guitar's minimalistic White Shell dotted inlay across 22 nickel-silver frets, keeping things simple but classic.

[\\$tbc, mooeraudio.com](http://$tbc, mooeraudio.com)



Protec Accessories

Established in 1969, Protec was one of the first specialty bag companies to design protective gear for professional musicians. Protec specializes in a wide range of bags, cases and accessories for brass, woodwind, fretted instruments and more. New products include leatherette mouthpiece pocket pouches for trombone, trumpet, and cornet; Micro-Zip cases for alto saxophone and tenor saxophone; Micro-Zip four-piece and six-piece mouthpiece cases for trumpet and trombone; vegan leather mouthpiece guards for trumpet; and two-piece and three-piece mouthpiece pouches for clarinet and saxophone.

[\\$various, protecstyle.com](http://$various, protecstyle.com)



Roland EARTH Piano

Roland's EARTH Piano is a powerful software-based musical instrument available exclusively on Roland Cloud. EARTH Piano brings Roland's acclaimed piano sound technologies to computer production workflows, offering multiple acoustic piano types and deep customization options via an intuitive user interface. EARTH Piano is available with a Lifetime Key purchase or Roland Cloud Ultimate membership, which users can try for free with a 30-day all-access trial. It features Roland's best and most modern piano sound technology, combining detailed multi-sampling with proprietary modeling techniques for the perfect blend of realism and playability. It includes seven distinctive instruments that can be modified to taste. There are resonant concert grands for jazz and classical styles, polished and punchy pianos for studio tracks, and upright, felt, and toy pianos filled with atmosphere and vibe for pop, electronic and cinematic productions.

\$249.99, roland.com



Xvive A58 Guitar Wireless

Xvive has created a new wireless option for guitarists and bassists: the A58 Guitar Wireless System. Whereas the popular U2 Guitar Wireless System broadcasts on the 2.4 GHz band — with excellent performance when there are obstacles between the transmitter and the receiver — the A58 system uses the 5.8 GHz band, a less crowded frequency that is less likely to encounter signal interference. The A58 system also boasts a wireless range of 100 feet, is compatible with active as well as passive pickups, automatically selects the most stable wireless channel, allows for onboard batteries to be easily serviced or replaced, and utilizes the industry standard USB-C charging cable. A58 offers both Active and Passive modes, making it compatible with all pickups from passive to high-output active units.

\$tbc, xvive.com



Xvive P3D Bluetooth Receiver

The P3D is an XLR Bluetooth audio receiver for mixers and active PA speakers. It connects smartphones, tablets and laptops to audio broadcast systems via Bluetooth to amplify music or other audio. P3 is for mono audio; P3D includes two P3 Bluetooth audio receivers for stereo audio. An internal rechargeable battery provides eight hours of operation, with a USB Type-C port for charging via any 5V USB power source. It offers stable connectivity over a 100-foot range (line-of-sight without obstacles).

\$tbc, xvive.com



Xvive U8 Acoustic Pickup

Xvive went to great lengths to custom design a supercardioid small-diaphragm gooseneck microphone that would accurately capture the nuances of acoustic guitars. This mic boasts a sensitivity of -45 dB and max. SPL of 142 dB, and can be positioned as desired relative to the instrument. It connects to a small wireless transmitter, clipped on the body of the guitar, which sends the audio signal over the 2.4 GHz wireless band to a small wireless receiver, plugged into an input on the soundboard. The system features high-fidelity, 24-bit/48 kHz audio, and has an imperceptible latency of only 5 ms. The wireless range is 90 feet (27.4 meters): truly liberating for acoustic and classical guitarists who want to take the music directly to their audience.

\$219.99 MAP, xvive.com



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Dean Vengeance Select Floyd Fluence Charcoal Burst

By Art Thompson, *Guitar Player*, August 2024

The Vengeance is a stylish metal machine that's available in both the USA Custom Shop and offshore-produced Select line, with options in pickups and hardware (including the Evertune bridge) to suit different needs. The Select Floyd Fluence carries a Floyd Rose 1000 bridge and locking R3 nut and a pair of Fishman Fluence Modern humbuckers: an AB1 (alnico) at the neck and a CB1 (ceramic) at the bridge. Powered by a nine-volt battery housed in a flip-open compartment on the back, these pickups offer Voice 1 (modern, high output) and Voice 2 (crisp, clean) modes that are activated by a push-pull function on the tone control. The Vengeance dishes out a fat, sustaining bridge pickup sound that is killer for lead with the tone knob pushed in. This setting also yields a wailing distortion tone from the neck pickup that is cool when going for a classic sound.

\$1,599 street, deanguitars.com



Donner Hush-X

By Chris Gill, *Guitar World*, February 2024

Way back in the early Forties, Les Paul invented a minimalist solidbody electric guitar that he called "The Log." About 80 years later, Donner Music has introduced perhaps the closest soulmate to that guitar since the introduction of the Steinberger in the Eighties. Donner calls the Hush-X a travel guitar, but it's really a full-size instrument that feels, performs, and sounds like a traditional solidbody, albeit one that can be packed into a compact case that looks like a carrying bag for a two-piece pool cue. Weighing less than five pounds, the Donner Hush-X is super comfortable to play, with the metal frame extensions helping balance the instrument and preventing neck dives. The neck feels the same as any good C-profile neck, and the fretwork is outstanding. The humbucker has a great classic rock growl through an overdriven amp, while the single-coil pickup has a Strat-like presence and zing that's perfect for blues, funk and slinky rock rhythms.

\$349, donnermusic.com



Epiphone Inspired by Gibson Custom 1959 ES-355

By Dave Hunter, *Guitar Player*, November 2024

Often considered an ES-335 with fancier looks, the ES-355 stands further apart thanks to its ebony fingerboard and Grover Rotomatic tuners, both present here. Most originals had a stereo output, rejected by many players as cumbersome, so the mono version with stop-tail — upon which this Epiphone Inspired by Gibson Custom 1959 ES-355 is modeled — has always been considered the design's zenith. The looks are all there, for sure. The top is trimmed with seven-ply top binding, with three on the back, five ply around the headstock and one along the fingerboard. Gold-plated hardware, a bound tortoise pickguard, and mother-of-pearl block inlays and split-diamond headstock inlay complete the luxury appointments. The pair of Custombucker pickups are the same PAF-style humbuckers used on the majority of Gibson Custom models, and produce a tone that stands out beautifully through myriad rhythm and lead applications.

\$1,299 street, [epiphone.com](https://www.epiphone.com)



Epiphone Joe Bonamassa 1963 SG Custom

By Art Thompson, *Guitar Player*, February 2024

Epiphone's latest limited-edition release focuses on a particular 1963 Gibson SG Custom that was special-ordered and obviously treasured by its original owner, and is now part of Joe Bonamassa's collection of prized vintage guitars. Finished in Dark Cherry Red to match the rare color worn by the original guitar, the JB 1963 SG Custom features a mahogany body and a glued-in neck that's carved in a SlimTaper C profile that melds into a smoothly contoured heel unique to this guitar. As such, the playing feel is very comfortable and bending strings is glassy smooth, courtesy of an ebony fingerboard with 22 medium-jumbo frets. The attention to detail is impressive, as evidenced by the flawless multi-ply binding and split-diamond mother-of-pearl inlay on the headstock, and by the single-ply binding around the fretboard, which has mother-of-pearl block inlays that are set without a trace of epoxy visible.

\$tbc, [epiphone.com](https://www.epiphone.com)



Ernie Ball Music Man Axis

By Chris Gill, *Guitar World*, December 2024

The Ernie Ball Music Man Axis was the original Edward Van Halen signature model before its name changed in 1995. However, the Axis has enjoyed immense success on its own terms for three decades now. Tweaks made to its design when the new name was adopted include the signature on the headstock being replaced by the Axis name; the three-way toggle switch moving from the treble horn to a position below the volume knob; the volume knob being properly marked “volume” instead of “tone”; a belly contour being added; the neck width around the 12th fret being widened by 1/32-inch; and the locking tremolo saddles with offset intonation adjustment screws replaced by non-offset saddles. Recent upgrades include a roasted maple neck and stainless-steel fret material. The finish options have also changed — the current offerings include Matcha (green), Honey Pot (amber), Charcoal (gray/black) and Ollalieberry (vivid purple/magenta). **\$3,199–\$3,339, music-man.com**



Ernie Ball Music Man Luke 4 SSS

By Chris Gill, *Guitar World*, March 2024

Music Man released its first Steve Lukather signature guitar — the Luke — back in 1994, and over the years it has evolved with various Luke II and Luke III models. To celebrate the Luke’s 30th anniversary, Music Man has introduced the Luke 4 30th anniversary model with an HSS pickup configuration similar to the original, plus new Luke 4 HH and SSS models. The 30th anniversary version is a hot-rodded Superstrat, but the SSS model we reviewed is more of a “Superbstrat,” based on the traditional triple-single-coil ’50s standard solidbody that guitarists know and love, but packed with a ton of high-performance upgrades, refinements and modifications. Most Strat connoisseurs should find that the pickups deliver the tonal qualities of their dreams. The midrange dip is right in the sweet spot to accentuate percussive treble snap and bouncy bass, while still providing full body and depth.

\$3,199, music-man.com



Fame Forum IV Modern 20th Anniversary Burl Stonewashed Blue

By Jimmy Leslie, *Guitar Player*, August 2024

Fame's Forum IV Modern 20th Anniversary model has a striking Burl Stonewashed Blue top and high-gloss finish. The guitar is loaded with features that include a GraphTech Resomax Tune-o-matic bridge with a Ghost piezo pickup that augments Duncan humbuckers. Gotoh tuners adorn the headstock, capping off a fingerboard that features a 20th Anniversary inlay. For about \$1.3K, you get a beautifully crafted guitar capable of a broad tonal spectrum. It is a beautiful beast with an attainable street price.

\$1,308 street, fame-guitars.de



Fender 70th Anniversary Vintera II Antigua Stratocaster

By Chris Gill, *Guitar World*, October 2024

The Fender 70th Anniversary Vintera II Antigua Stratocaster stands out for many reasons. It's the only Vintera II model in the lineup; it's the only hardtail; and it's the only model that's unapologetically based on Fender's '70s designs. Does the hardtail design's extra mass of wood beneath the bridge and pickups make a difference? It certainly seems that way. The tone is all a true Strat aficionado could ask for, from the instantly recognizable "quack" of the second and fourth dual-pickup settings to the Beck-like throatiness of the bridge pickup with its tone knob backed all the way down.

\$1,499, fender.com



Fender Vintera II '50s Jazzmaster, Telecaster and Mustang

By Art Thompson, *Guitar Player*, March 2024

Fender's recently introduced Vintera II series features classic colors, accurately replicated pickups and period-correct neck shapes. The popularity of Fender guitars from the 1960s has lifted the prices of vintage models, so it was cool to receive the very affordable Vintera II Strat and Telecaster. The '70s Mustang [pictured above] sports a pair of single-coil pickups with black plastic covers, and a pair of three-position slide switches to turn the pickups on and off individually, with center being off. All are hip guitars for those who appreciate Fender's outlier models.

\$1,249, \$1,149, \$1,149, fender.com

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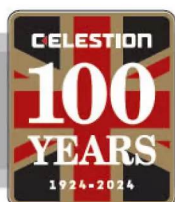
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G&L Espada HH Active

By Dave Hunter, *Guitar Player*, January 2024

The Espada's body is clearly a descendant of Leo Fender's seminal Broadcaster and Esquire solidbody designs of 1950, but with more comfortably rounded edges and a ribcage-sparing belly contour. The guitar is available in two wood choices, alder and ash, with two finish options for each of those timbers. The ostensibly Gibson-style, full-size humbuckers are a departure from the circa-'69 Espada design, comprising a G&L AS4255C and AW4368C with chrome covers, all made with alnico magnets. Meanwhile, the rest of the electronics and control section retain hefty portions of Leo's design DNA. The active and active-bright settings on the Espada HH Active are well specified, as the latter never sounds too bright even with the pickups in single-coil mode and the treble control up full. This model delivers an enticing blend of classic and modern, and proves itself incredibly versatile.

\$2,099, [glguitars.com](https://www.glguitars.com)



Gibson Jason Isbell "Red Eye" 1959 Les Paul Standard

By Dave Hunter, *Guitar Player*, November 2024

Any 1959 Gibson Les Paul is sure to set players' and collectors' hearts aflutter, so when the Gibson Custom Shop and Murphy Lab apply their skills to re-creating a legendary 'Burst from that same year, you can bet it will result in off-the-chart excitement. The guitar in question is Red Eye, the '59 Burst formerly owned by the late Ed King of Lynyrd Skynyrd, which now resides in the collection of Jason Isbell. It's crisp and clear into clean settings, yet still has lots of dimension and swirl — thick without being bloated. Unsurprisingly, the guitar really shines into edge-of-breakup or fully overdriven amp settings, with tons of texture to individual notes and a three-dimensional feel induced by the abundant harmonic overtones. Even into a hard-driven amp, it retains great string articulation, while the bridge is snarky and mean, and that in-between position — as discussed by Isbell — offers loads of nuance and shade in the blending.

\$21,999 list, [gibson.com](https://www.gibson.com)



Guild Polara Kim Thayil Signature

By Art Thompson, *Guitar Player*, Holiday 2023

Guild's new Polara — a model originally introduced in 1963 sporting a “kickstand” body shape and a distinctive spear point on the headstock — is the offset-batwing version that Soundgarden's Kim Thayil has been playing since 1978. This offshore-made version of the USA-built flagship model that features premium old-growth woods and Jason Lollar pickups has a gloss-black mahogany body and a glued-in mahogany neck with a comfortable soft-U carve. Sitting atop is a 24.75"-scale rosewood fingerboard that looks suitably upscale, with pearloid blocks and ivory binding, and carries 22 polished narrow-jumbo frets. A sweet player thanks to its slim neck and wide-ish, 12.5" radius fretboard, the Polara also benefits from a good factory setup that provides low, buzz-free action and tuneful intonation all the way up the neck. A solid-feeling guitar that sustains well and displays good vibrational qualities when played acoustically.

\$899 street, guildguitars.com



Jackson American Series Virtuoso

By Jude Gold, *Guitar Player*, April 2024

For a long time, aside from buying pre-owned, the only way to get a coveted US-built Jackson was to order one from Jackson USA, and then wait. That all changed a year and a half ago when Jackson introduced the American Series Soloist SL3, the first U.S.-built production model Soloist available. Now that guitar has a baby brother: the new Jackson American Series Virtuoso. As you'd expect with two brothers, the Virtuoso and the Soloist have several core traits in common. These include a wide-radius, shred-friendly ebony fretboard replete with two octaves worth of fat, slippery nickel rails, a Floyd Rose locking trem, a pair of headstock-mounted Floyd-friendly hex wrenches, and locking tuners. If a modern shred axe with a bayonet-sharp headstock and a floating Floyd suits your musical vibe, you'll be thrilled with how useful this new Jackson is. Priced at just under two grand, the Virtuoso is a welcome addition to the Jackson American Series family.

\$1,949-\$1,999, jacksonguitars.com





Knaggs SSC-J Steve Stevens Signature

By Art Thompson, *Guitar Player*, July 2024

To date, Knaggs has released several Steve Stevens models, including the SS1 SS2, SSC, SS Severn XF, and SS Potomac acoustic guitar. Now comes the SSC-J, a stripped-down LP Junior-inspired affair that has the distinction of being Stevens' first signature model without a maple top. It features a 24.75"-scale mahogany set neck and a non-contoured mahogany body of choice with sumptuous graining. Weighing in at under seven pounds, the guitar feels light and nimble. It's an inspiring player, with its low action and well-groomed medium-jumbo frets on an East Indian rosewood 'board adorned with pearloid SSC block inlays that are like rectangular versions of Gretsch "thumbprint" markers. The neck pickup is great for blues in clean and overdriven modes, while the bridge 'bucker is killer for lead and dirty rhythm. It's pricey for sure, but you get your money's worth in a guitar that's the ne plus ultra of LP Junior-style axes. **\$4,550 street, knaggsguitars.com**



PRS SE CE24, SE Custom 24 Quilt and Swamp Ash Special

By Art Thompson, *Guitar Player*, May 2024

The latest additions to PRS's offshore-produced SE line include two guitars that date back to the 1980s — the Custom 24 and the CE24, introduced, respectively, in '85 and '88 — along with a reissue of an outlier model called the Swamp Ash Special. Featuring a mahogany body and a maple top with a shallow violin carve, the SE CE24 is a sharp-looking guitar with its striking Blood Orange quilted maple veneer. The exposed edge shows off the thickness of the maple cap beneath, while giving the effect of a binding layer between the top and the tightly grained mahogany back. The SE CE24 is a toneful and great-playing guitar that offers a lot of bang for the buck. However, if you have an extra \$300 in your wallet, you might consider the top-line SE Custom 24 Quilt. Making a comeback for 2024, and available only in the SE series, the Swamp Ash Special features a shallow violin carve on the top, and a bolt-on Wide Thin-profile maple neck. **\$699, \$999, \$849, prsguitars.com**



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PRS SE NF3

By Art Thompson, *Guitar Player*, November 2024

PRS's SE NF3 is so named for its Narrowfield Deep Dish (a.k.a. DD) "S" pickups. These unique PRS-design units have deeper bobbins to accommodate more windings and extra metal pieces between the magnets to yield a more powerful "single-coil" tone, while remaining noise-free because they are in fact humbuckers. A control set consisting of master volume, tone and a five-way blade switch allows the usual selections of bridge, middle and neck pickups by themselves and the neck-plus-middle and bridge-plus-middle combinations that allow the SE NF3 to veer into Strat-like territory in switch positions two and four. All of this makes the SE NF3 quite different from standard humbucker-equipped PRS guitars, although it follows the specifications of many other SE models. The flattop body on my lightweight review sample was finished in pearlescent Polar White and is contoured on the edges and the back for comfortable playing. **\$799 street, prsguitars.com**



Reverend Chris Freeman Signature

By Dave Hunter, *Guitar Player*, June 2024

The Chris Freeman Signature feels great in the hand, with a comfortable Reverend neck carve and smoothly dressed frets. I found it an inspiring instrument that sent me in some unexpected directions. Reverend's take on the P90 in the neck position offers few surprises, but it delivers a very capable performance for clean tones that are rich and warm. This was my first encounter with the Nuevo 90, however, and I dug it immediately. Blending slug-pole clarity and blade-pole beef between the plain and wound strings, respectively, it somehow still sounds like all six strings are firing through the same pickup, and delivers a great marriage of clarity and depth in the process. This position is not intended only for emo fans; I found it was fantastic for meaty twang and girthy chime alike, and when applying some gain, Reverend's clever Bass Contour circuit dialed it between Tele and PAF-like tones, all noise-canceling for worry-free lead work. **\$1,439 street, reverendguitars.com**



Yamaha Pacifica Professional

By Paul Riario, *Guitar World*, June 2024

If there's one thing that's overshadowing the stellar Yamaha Pacifica Professional guitar, it's the startling price tag. It's difficult to shake the fact that the Pacifica — which many consider the benchmark in budget electric guitars — now arrives in a Professional version at a cost that might be slightly out of reach for most players. Even so, it would be a shame for that to be the only reason to overlook this thoughtfully designed superstrat that undeniably proves it's a world-class performance instrument through and through. Yamaha partnered with Rupert Neve Designs, the company renowned for its pro audio recording consoles and preamps, to develop uniquely wound pickups that cover an exceptionally wide tonal response. The result is pickups unlike anything I've experienced before. Though it may sound like a fault, the Reflectone pickups lack coloration, but this is exactly what makes them extraordinary.

\$2,199, [yamaha.com](https://www.yamaha.com)



Yamaha Revstar Element

By Paul Riario, *Guitar World*, December 2024

The Revstar Element sports a chambered mahogany body with precisely sculpted tone chambers that reduce weight but significantly promote the guitar's clear breath of hefty, solid-body tone. I'm impressed that the Revstar's offset double cutaway frames the guitar with polished style and modern dimension. The Element's VH3 humbuckers feature Alnico V magnets and are controlled via a three-way blade selector and heavy-duty, knurled-chrome master volume and tone controls. The tone control is a push/pull that engages Yamaha's proprietary "Dry Switch" — an innovative high-pass filter that tamps down the lower frequencies and channels in single-coil tones without the hum or drop in volume. The guitar features a set-in mahogany neck with a rosewood fingerboard, an adjustable bridge with stopbar tailpiece, a 24.75" scale, a flat 12" fingerboard radius, 22 jumbo frets and diecast Kluson-style tuners.

\$549.99, [yamaha.com](https://www.yamaha.com)

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Bourgeois Touchstone Signature OM

By Jimmy Leslie, *Guitar Player*, July 2024

The Bourgeois Touchstone Series is intriguing because of its hybrid design and a build concept that involves Eastman Guitars overseas, making the crossover product much more affordable than a full USA hand-build. The intention is to deliver the essence of a full Bourgeois experience at almost half the price. Primary Bourgeois hallmarks include a hand-tuned top and a six-bolt neck attachment, and all Touchstone Series models retain these features. The neck profile is modern slim, and the factory action was nice and easy, but it's not trying to play like an electric guitar. A slight V is a historic nod that's great for a bit of a thumb anchor without being severe, like some classic acoustic designs. The width at the nut measures a unique 1.72 inches, making it slightly narrower than the modern standard of 1.75 inches and not quite as narrow as the 1.69 inches more common in the past, particularly on dreadnoughts.

\$3,599 street, bourgeoisguitars.com



Klōs Grand Cutaway Mini

By Jimmy Leslie, *Guitar Player*, May 2024

Carbon fiber lifestyle brand Klōs (pronounced "close") is rolling out a gang of new gear, and the Grand Cutaway Mini is particularly compelling because of its unique size and features. Travel guitars put Klōs on the map and remain its most popular size, but the company is gaining ground in the full-size market, and the GC Mini essentially splits the difference. The concept is a road-ready, seaworthy instrument that delivers fuller sound and better playability than a typical travel guitar, along with gig-worthy electronic options. It's significantly smaller than a triple or double O, but not too tiny, and the depth is similar. The 24.75" scale length is just long enough to give the Mini a proper string feel under the fingers, and the flexibility to handle dropped tunings while facilitating easy bending. In addition to being a great grab for a quick play at an office desk, it's ideal for nature treks, sailing trips, or a van-life excursion.

\$1,959 acoustic, \$2,399 with L.R. Baggs Anthem pickup, kloguitars.com



Martin DJR-10E Bass

By Jimmy Leslie, *Guitar Player*, February 2024

This little acoustic-electric bass is ideal for guitar players interested in doing a bit of bottom-end grooving without the heft or freight of a full-scale bass and requisite amp. The DJR-10E isn't even the size of a full dreadnought — it's a Junior — and the street price is pretty junior as well. The DJR-10E is available in natural spruce or sunburst, but the 'burst looked a bit more beautiful to these eyes, so that was the review unit requested. It's dusky, handsome and sports a flashy mother-of-pearl pattern rosette on a solid spruce top, with matching 28-style dot inlays on the Richlite fretboard. Of course, it's not as loud or robust as a full-sized acoustic bass, but it certainly delivers an impressive punch for its diminutive body, which sounds not at all boxy. When you want more juice, it's nice to be able to plug in and play. The onboard Fishman Presys VT Bass electronics do a fine job of bringing more bump, especially through a PA.

stbc, martinguitar.com



Martin GPCE Inception Maple

By Paul Riario, *Guitar World*, May 2024

This acoustic bears an imaginative design using sustainably harvested tonewoods, with a predominantly maple construction — hence its moniker, the Inception Maple — found along its sides and visually striking three-piece back made of maple, along with a prodigious centerpiece wedge of black walnut. Martin intended to make “maple sound better than it ever has,” and undoubtedly, the Inception succeeds in removing the strident and compressed overtones of maple and replaces it with a softer brightness, ringing midrange and a firm bass as you strum through cowboy chords. It's certainly a louder Martin guitar that belies its GP-body size and powerfully projects a crisp and airy tone with a snappy response. For fingerstyle playing, the Inception maintains a focused balance between the bass and treble registers where each note is heard cleanly. Its low oval neck profile and fantastic fretwork makes playing the Inception worth your time.

\$3,999, martinguitar.com



Orangewood Juniper Sunburst Live

By Paul Riario, *Guitar World*, September 2024

Coming out of its included gig bag, the Juniper Sunburst Live feels solidly built with Orangewood's custom parlor-sized construction and a 24.75" scale length. At the heart of the Juniper's sound is Orangewood's methodical design for its rubber bridge. It is undeniable how much fun it is to play a rubber-bridge guitar, and the Juniper Sunburst Live is a solid and reliable vehicle to bring inspired life to this "deadened" and muted sound — which is further enhanced by the flatwound strings. Still, it's an entirely different universe compared to traditional acoustics, since all the ringing dynamics are dampened, but what you get in return is a plush tone that softly chimes like a plucked harp. **\$395, orangewoodguitars.com**



Taylor 50th Anniversary 858e LTD Grand Orchestra 12-String

By Jimmy Leslie, *Guitar Player*, September 2024

Equipped with ES2 electronics and shipped in a lovely Western Floral hardshell case, this 858e LTD designed to go on the road, not simply hang on the wall. The exquisite Indian rosewood selected for the back and sides is dusky and handsome, punctuated by its contrast with the bright white binding on the body and neck heel cap. The seams on the three-piece headstock-neck-heel design are barely noticeable. I couldn't find a blemish anywhere. It's a modern take on a classic Taylor tone. Rosewood and spruce is a tried-and-true wood combination, and if this were a Grand Auditorium it would essentially be a 12-string version of Taylor's most recognizable sound.

\$3,999 street, taylorguitars.com



Taylor GS Mini Sapele

By Chris Gill, *Guitar World*, February 2024

Over the last 14 years, Taylor has introduced a wide variety of GS Mini models and expanded the line, which now ranges in price from \$499 to \$1,199. The Taylor GS Mini Sapele occupies the lowest end of that price spectrum, and its top is solid Sitka spruce while the back and sides are layered sapele — an alternative to mahogany that is stronger and harder, resulting in slightly brighter overall tone. The ebony fretboard and bridge also remain from the previous iteration, but the neck is now tropical mahogany and the saddle is Micarta instead of Nubone. Tonally, the GS Mini Sapele sounds as good as ever, with impressive volume output and projection, rich, reverb-like resonance, brisk treble, and sweet, sonorous midrange. **\$499, taylorguitars.com**



Taylor 222ce K DLX

By Chris Gill, *Guitar World*, August 2024

Koa is a very attractive looking tonewood that is commonly associated with high-end models, and due to its higher cost, many guitarists haven't experienced koa's distinctive tonal qualities. Taylor 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, including this one. 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.

\$1,999 street, taylorguitars.com

Positive Grid Spark Live

By Paul Riario, *Guitar World*, August 2024

Positive Grid's 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, 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. 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.

\$549, positivegrid.com



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A woman with blonde hair, wearing a floral headband, a white lace top, and a blue patterned skirt, sits on a tree stump in a lush, misty forest. She is playing a brown acoustic guitar. Golden musical notes and swirling lines float around her, creating a magical atmosphere. The background features tall trees and a small stream.

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Blackstar HT Series MKIII HT-20, HT-5 and HT-1

By Chris Gill, *Guitar World*, October 2024

There will always be a time and a place for big, powerful 100-watt tube amps, but for a vast majority of guitarists today a smaller amp is much more practical for everyday recording, practice and performance applications. As with Blackstar's MK II versions, the MK III HT Series consists of a 1-watt head (HT-1RH) and combo (HT-1R), a 5-watt head (HT-5RH) and combo (HT-5R) and a 20-watt head (HT-20RH) and combo (HT-20R). Each combo has a single speaker — an 8-inch speaker for the HT-1R or a 12-inch speaker for the HT-5RH and HT-20H. Blackstar also offers matching 1x12 and 2x12 extension cabinets. The 1-watt, 5-watt and 20-watt models each have different tube complements, which gives each version its own distinctive tonal range and character, although there is an overlapping “Blackstar” personality throughout. The HT-1 amps have single ECC83 (12AX7) preamp and ECC82 (12AU7) power amp tubes; the HT-5 amps feature an ECC83 preamp and 12BH7 power amp tube; and the HT-20 amps provide a pair of ECC82 preamp and dual EL84 power amp tubes.

HT-20 \$749, HT-5 \$679, HT-1 \$449, blackstaramps.com



Dr. Z Z-80

By Dave Hunter, *Guitar Player*, May 2024

While Dr. Z has a strong reputation for originality, the Z-80 has its roots in Brad Paisley's beloved and ultra-rare Vox AC80. Designed by Dick Denney in 1963, the AC80 (also called the AC80/100 or AC100 “80 to 100-watt amp”) was created to help the Beatles rise above the noise of screaming teenage girls for the North American tours of the mid '60s. Fewer than 300 units of this 80-watt masterpiece of cathode-biased sonic splendor were built before the more familiar fixed-bias, 100-watt AC100 was introduced around mid 1965. Following the urging of Paisley, a frequent Dr. Z collaborator, and six years of development, the Z-80 tracks the circuit of the best-sounding of these early AC80s and adds a few features to suit the needs of 2024, without adversely impacting the tonal blueprint. At its heart it's an 80-watt, four-EL34 amp with two 12AX7s in the preamp and a 12AU7 phase inverter, with a single channel and a simple control set featuring volume, treble, middle, bass, and master.

\$3,599, drzamps.com



Fender Tone Master Pro and FR-10 Powered Cabinet

By Dave Hunter, *Guitar Player*, January 2024



The rampant quest for suitable amplifiers and speakers to reproduce all that DSP-generated guitar tone as sound waves has yet to produce a clear winner. Powered cabs by Kemper, Atomic, Line 6 and Friedman have won over some fans, while others have conscripted powered monitor wedges. But the gasp of relief heard around the world when Fender introduced its first full-range, flat-response (FRFR) powered cabs, the Tone Master FR-10 and FR-12, suggests that this sector is still very much up for grabs. Designed as a Hot Rod Deluxe combo cab with a top rear-facing control panel, this box looks almost identical in its black Tolex with silver grille cloth. The FR-10 is made from light plywood and contains a 1,000-watt, Class-D power amp driving a 10-inch special-design speaker and a one-inch wide-dispersion high-frequency tweeter. I found it was great sounding and extremely easy to use, delivering an impressive marriage of full-range response and amp-like feel, and giving an overall performance that I felt at home with much more quickly than some FRFRs at twice the price.

\$799, fender.com



Gibson Falcon 5 and 20 Combos

By Dave Hunter, *Guitar Player*, February 2024

These American-made Gibson amps include the Falcon 20 1x12 combo and Falcon 5 1x10 combo. In broad terms, these amps — the Falcon 20 in particular — pay homage to a short-lived version of the GA-19RVT Falcon from 1961. That combo had onboard reverb a good two years before any Fender amp did, and it provided a range of features and a power level perfectly suited to club gigs and studio dates. There's definitely more gusto in the bigger amp overall, and very usable headroom and punch on its full-power setting. There can be a certain magic to vintage single-10 combos, and the Falcon 5 reflects that in the detail and immediacy of its sound. Overall, I probably preferred the fuller midrange and overt throatiness of the Falcon 20's 12-inch speaker once I start to push it a little. And again, it's hard to avoid noticing that you get a lot more out of the larger combo for a mere \$300 extra.

\$1,499, \$1,799, gibson.com



Peavey Classic 20 112

By Chris Gill, *Guitar World*, May 2024

With its vintage-style tweed cloth covering and oxblood-color grill cloth, the Classic 20 112 retains the vintage visual styling of Peavey's Classic amp models from the Nineties. However, whereas those versions had top-facing controls like a Fifties Fender tweed amp, the Classic 20 112 features front-facing controls that are preferred by most modern players. The cabinet houses a Peavey Sheffield 1230+ 12-inch speaker, and an 8-/16-ohm impedance switch allows users to pair the amp with a single external speaker cabinet as an option to the internal speaker. The Classic 20's tones are very solid and working class, perhaps lacking the finesse of more expensive tube amps but still providing a good base for most styles of music as well as an attractive foundation for a pedal-based rig. Channel 1 is clean, generating only a hint of overdrive with the main volume control cranked. At the full 20-watt setting, this amp is very loud and can easily compete with many 50-watt amps — something to consider if you're looking for a compact amp for a club gig. At a price that's a penny below \$1,000, it's packed with a variety of useful features.

\$999.99, peavey.com



PRS DGT 15

By Art Thompson, *Guitar Player*, September 2024

"I wanted a lower-power version of my 30-watt amp so that I could get the same vintage output-stage overdrive at a lower volume, and I wanted it to be much more affordable," David Grissom says. Tucked into a blond Tolex-covered cabinet that measures 9.25 by 17.25 by 9 inches (HxWxD) and weighs 21.5 pounds, the DGT 15's steel chassis carries two EL84s in the power section, four preamp tubes — three 12AX7s and a 12AT7 — and a GZ34 tube rectifier. The DGT 15 and 1x12 cab makes a righteous rig for anyone who plies the club circuit, although as Grissom states, "I could play Madison Square Garden by putting a mic on it. I always mic the speaker — always." That explains why there's no "speaker simulated" out to be found here, and it also underscores the DGT 15's mission of delivering the best guitar tone possible from a modern design that embraces the best of vintage amplifier technology.

\$1,199, prsguitars.com



PRS Mark Tremonti MT 100

By Chris Gill, *Guitar World*, August 2024

When PRS introduced its first Mark Tremonti signature amp — the 15-watt MT 15 “lunchbox” head — in 2018, many guitarists welcomed it with arms wide open, but some wondered when a full-size, high-output version would follow. Six years later, after a period of extensive development and refinement, PRS has introduced the 100-watt MT 100. Its three channels (Clean, Overdrive and Lead) are fully independent and individually voiced, operating essentially like three different preamps. The design is straightforward and uncomplicated, providing fully independent sets of bass, middle, treble, presence, volume (Clean) or gain (Overdrive, Lead) and master volume controls for each channel and no shared “master” controls. Each channel has its own preamp tubes (V2 Clean, V3 and V4 Overdrive, V5 and V6 Lead), while V1, V7 and V8 are shared among all three channels for input, effects loop and phase inverter functions, respectively. The MT 100 can be considered a “metal” amp, but it’s also one of the most versatile amps that PRS has ever produced.

\$1,849, prsguitars.com



Suhr SL68 MKII

By Chris Gill, *Guitar World*, November 2024

The SL68 MkII offers guitarists everything they would ever want, from a blazing Marshall 100-watt plexi and more at a cost that is a small fraction of inflated vintage prices. The SL68 MkII features the same familiar tone and volume controls and four inputs as a classic Super Lead, but it adds one of the best designed master volume circuits available today, Fat, Boost and Bright switches and a Variac low-power mode. The tubes are a quartet of EL84s for the power and three 12AX7s for the preamp and phase inverter. There are numerous plexi clones on the market these days, but the difference between the Suhr SL68 MkII and most other clones is like the difference between a Domaine de la Romanée-Conti Grand Cru Burgundy and a mass-produced USA Pinot Noir. Every element, from the carefully selected components to the attention to the finest detail, is on another level. A key feature is its custom output transformer, which is designed to provide clarity, dynamic responsiveness and the elusive expressive feel of the real deal.

\$3,449, suhr.com



Taylor Circa 74 AV150-10 Acoustic Amplifier

By Jimmy Leslie, *Guitar Player*, April 2024

The AV150-10 is a handsome, wood-crafted acoustic guitar-and-vocal combo packing 150 watts into a 1x10 enclosure with a tan grille cloth. It sits on a neat wood stand and looks like it would fit as easily into a home's decor as it would a studio setting. The AV150-10 features truly furniture-quality craftsmanship, with an elegant aesthetic that harks back to the golden age of vinyl, but it's also both modern and classic enough to work in a variety of settings. Solid mahogany never goes out of style, and the way the amp and its lovely mahogany stand fit together is rather ingenious. There's real power here from the Class D solid-state amp as well. Turn it up, and, boy, is it punchy. The AV150-10 helps notes sing out with strong sustain, and the mahogany cabinet seems to contribute to the punch and projection as you crank it up. This exciting era of acoustic-electronic innovation hasn't seen much action on the amp front, which makes the AV150-10 such a welcome addition. The fact that it comes from Taylor makes it feel familiar even as it arrives out of left field.

\$1,119 street, taylorguitars.com



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Boss BP-1W Booster/Preamp

By Chris Gill, *Guitar World*, June 2024

With the exception of the limited edition TB-2W Tone Bender, which was anomalous in numerous ways, all of the previous Boss Waza Craft pedals were based on pre-existing Boss pedal models. The BP-1W takes a radically different approach by adopting specific elements of classic Boss and Roland products — in this case, the preamp sections of the Boss CE-1 Chorus Ensemble and Roland RE-201 Space Echo — and reconfiguring them in the familiar Boss compact pedal format. The BP-1W's analog circuitry provides the preamp tones of the CE-1 and RE-201 in a pedalboard-friendly format without the excessive bulk of those devices or impedance mismatch issues that are optionally resolved by placing a buffer before their inputs. The BP-1W also includes a Natural setting that provides a transparent/"clean"-sounding boost effect. With the Level and Gain controls fully maxed, the overdrive texture is delightfully aggressive and gritty, but it never becomes flat or compressed. Attack remains razor sharp and note-to-note definition is precise.

\$129, [boss.info](https://www.boss.info)



Donner/Third Man Hardware Triple Threat

By Art Thompson, *Guitar Player*, May 2024

Combining three analog effects in a small package with a low price tag makes the Triple Threat an outsider among today's boutique boxes. However, it all makes sense considering that Jack White conceived this sleek little multi-effector for his Third Man Hardware line, partnering with Donner to produce the pedal in China. The Triple Threat features distortion, phaser, and echo effects that are arranged in right-to-left stompbox order, each of which can be controlled with a trio of small knobs. There's volume, gain and tone for distortion; level, rate, and depth for phaser; and level, feedback (repeats), and time for echo. Yellow rubber surrounds on the knobs make them easy to grip and more identifiable on the black top panel. Even though they're close together, I didn't find it a problem to reach down and turn them in live situations. Roughly the size of a TV remote, the aluminum-alloy enclosure has front-mounted input and output jacks, a center-negative jack for the included adapter, and an LED above each switch to indicate on/off.

Standard edition \$99, limited edition \$129,



EarthQuaker Devices Shadows II

By Chris Gill, *Guitar World*, October 2024

Time Shadows is an advanced multi-effects unit with three very distinctive algorithms or modes. EQD mode (developed by EarthQuaker Devices) is "an envelope-controlled suboctave filter delay" or "pitch-morphed fuzz delay filter;" DBA mode (contributed by Death By Audio) is a "multi-delay regenerating filter" or "multi-delay filter remorphinator;" and !; mode, a new addition that wasn't featured on the initial limited-edition version of the pedal, is a "pitch-warping dual delay" created by EQD's Jamie Stillman and completed for the new version of Time Shadows. Each mode has its own distinct personality, which gives the box functionality similar to three entirely separate multi-effect and/or synth pedals. Time Shadows provides only three controls for tweaking sounds — Time (delay time), Filter (filter frequency envelope and gate for EQD mode, filter frequency and phased delay line shift point for DBA mode, mix for !; mode) and Span (intensity) — but this modest seeming array can summon a multitude of compelling effects and textures.

\$199, [earthquakerdevices.com](https://www.earthquakerdevices.com)



Electro-Harmonix Lizard King Bass Octave Fuzz

By Chris Gill, *Guitar World*, December 2024

Delivering massive tones, the Lizard King is certain to please the most aggressive, distortion-loving bassists. However, guitarists are equally well served by its truly distinctive tones that hit many ideal sweet spots. Whereas most octave-up fuzz effects for guitarists sound like squealing mosquitoes in a bottle, the Lizard King produces a gut-punching effect that is the guitar equivalent of the King of the Monsters, featuring an updated circuit optimized for bass and a wider selection of controls for tweaking a bigger palette of sounds with greater precision. In addition to Volume and Octave knobs — the latter now dialing in more intense octave up effects when adjusted clockwise past 12 o'clock or providing deeper growl when twisted counterclockwise — the pedal also has a Blend knob for adjusting the mix between dry and effected signals, a Tone knob that provides full frequency response at maximum and rolls off high frequencies as it's turned down, and a Sun/Shadow micro toggle switch that boosts the fuzz effect's mids while scooping mids from the dry signal in the Sun setting while providing an unadulterated, tight fuzz effect in the Shadow setting.

\$129, ehx.com



Eventide Riptide

By Paul Riario, *Guitar World*, February 2024

The Riptide is a compact 2-in-1 pedal with an onboard overdrive and Uni-Vibe effect that can be run in stereo. Similar to the pedals in Eventide's streamlined dot9 series, Riptide's advanced functionality is buried under the hood and simplified to good old-fashioned knob twisting and button pushing on its surface. Its controls consist of Vibe (Mix for chorus/vibrato), Speed and Intensity, for "Vibe," while the "Drive" section includes Drive, Tone and Level... all easy to comprehend so far. The bonus here is that Riptide has dual voicings per effect that are accessed by pressing the LED buttons just above their corresponding Drive and Vibe footswitches. The color of the LED (green or red) identifies the voice selected. For Drive, green designates a dynamic, mid-focused "Screamer" crunch, while red introduces a smoother, crunchier boost. On the Vibe side, green ushers in a vintage Uni-Vibe swirl, and red delivers a deeply phased vibe. For even more versatility, there's an LED Swap button allowing you to change the order of the signal chain (Vibe into Drive or Drive into Vibe) and any combination of parameters can be mapped to an expression pedal.

\$299 street, eventideaudio.com



Interstellar Audio Machines Supernova Zoeldrive

By Paul Riario, *Guitar World*, December 2024

You may have already encountered Interstellar Audio Machines' unmistakable pedals online and in social media feeds if your search history consists of words like "Klon" and "fuzz." Each pedal is painted with eye-popping sci-fi artwork, and a new overdrive/boost pedal has entered Earth's atmosphere called the Supernova Zoeldrive from IAM. It features the common three-knob control set for Volume, Tone and Drive, along with a two-way Voice toggle switch that affects midrange response. The Zoeldrive features top-mounted 1/4-inch input and output jacks, a bright red LED indicator, and it's powered via a 9-volt battery or 9V power supply. As a bonus, the pedal's box is packed with "case candy" of IAM stickers, pick, pin-back button and an intergalactic IAM membership card. Whereas IAM's Octonaut Hyperdrive builds upon the iconic Klon sound, the Supernova Zoeldrive is an in-your-face overdrive/boost with classic "tweed-like" breakup and growl. It shares some of the warmth of the Hyperdrive but with more clarity and presence when the Voice switch is in the up position and the gain is turned down.

\$199, interstellaraudiomachines.com



Keeley Angry Orange, Blues Disorder and Super Rodent

By Chris Gill, *Guitar World*, July 2024

Keeley Electronics' recently introduced 4-in-1 series pedals offer something guitarists haven't really seen before. Combining two distinct effects in a single box, the pedals feature switches that allow users to mix and match the tone and drive sections of each effect. The 4-in-1 pedals all share identical configurations with Tone, Level and Drive knobs, Tone and Drive setting mini toggle switches on the top panel and mono 1/4-inch input and output jacks on the rear panel. The Angry Orange combines a "78 Japanese Orange Distortion" (Boss DS-1) with a "91 Soviet Civil War Fuzz" (Sovtek "Civil War" Big Muff); the Blues Disorder provides a "Bluesy Breaker" (Marshall Blues Breaker) and "OC Distortion" (Fulltone OCD) combo; and the Super Rodent delivers "classic yellow Japanese Super O-Drive" (Boss SD-1) and "Rodentia Michigander" (ProCo Rat) circuits.

\$199 each, robertkeele.com



Line 6 HX One

By Chris Gill, *Guitar World*, July 2024

The Line 6 HX One offers guitarists a quick and easy way to add Line 6's HX effect models to their rigs with minimum hassle. The unit is about as big as an average mid-sized stompbox (like an MXR Phase 100 but taller) so it can easily squeeze into a packed pedalboard, and its controls are smartly designed to enable quick tweaks on the fly just like a regular old effects pedal. Yet underneath its modest-looking exterior is an advanced processor that provides more than 250 pristine-sounding stereo effect models. Unlike larger HX units that provide simultaneous multi-effects, HX One is a "one effect at a time" processor, making it more of an effects stompbox with multiple personalities. The pedal sounds good when either plugged straight into a guitar amp's input or into an effects loop, but for optimal performance I recommend using the "four-cable method" where the signal is routed to an amp's input and effects loop simultaneously. Each preset can be programmed to "Pre" or "Post" insert positions, which allows users to route effects like delay or reverb to the effects loop and distortions, compressors, wahs or dynamic filters to the amp's input.

\$299.99, line6.com



MXR Joshua Ambient Echo

By Paul Riario, *Guitar World*, July 2024

It's amazing how many players have chased after and adopted the Edge's signature delay tone. It's so identifiable that nearly every digital amp or guitar modeler would seem incomplete if there weren't a preset titled "Streets" in its menu. Yet, from U2's early recordings to his current rig, the Edge has always had that sound — whether he employed an EHX Memory Man Deluxe pedal or Korg SDD-3000 rack delays, and whether he merged longer and shorter repeats from these legendary delay units. It's no secret that the name of the MXR Joshua Ambient Echo is an overt tip of the hat to him and U2's *Joshua Tree*, the 1987 album that popularized many of the trademark delay sounds the Edge created. Despite the name, it's not a signature pedal. Still, it animates many of those modulated and textured delays, with primary and secondary echoes, reverb, up and down octave blends and rhythmic echo divisions. For those who revel in sonic soundscapes, let's just say this pedal's arrival is better late than never.

\$239.99, jimdunlop.com



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Revv Amplification Tilt Boost

By Paul Riario, *Guitar World*, March 2024

Session guitarist extraordinaire and influencer Shawn Tubbs stumbled onto something good when he partnered with Revv Amplification to release his signature Shawn Tubbs Tilt Overdrive pedal, which featured dual footswitchable overdrive and boost. Tubbs discovered that many players who had been using the pedal had become enamored with its boost side, with some foregoing the overdrive altogether and having the boost always on because of its tone-shaping abilities. Well, if all you need is boost and so much more, Revv Amplification has got you covered with the Tilt Boost, which is essentially the extracted boost portion of the Shawn Tubbs Tilt Overdrive, but with additional tone-shaping capabilities that push it far beyond other mere boosts. Much like the Shawn Tubbs Tilt Overdrive, the Tilt Boost's simplified control set is divided between its boost and Tilt EQ functions. On the left side, the Boost control adjusts output level and the two-position drive switch activates boost (up to 20dB of clean boost) or engages touch-sensitive clipping (fat, medium-gain overdrive). For the right side, the Tilt EQ control simultaneously attenuates bass and treble frequencies by adding more fullness and low-end clarity.

\$169, revvamplification.com



Strymon BigSky MX Reverb

By Christopher Scapelliti, *Guitar Player*, October 2024

Strymon's newly released BigSky MX pedal delivers new reverb machines, dual-reverb capability, full IR functionality and much more. Strymon didn't just revise BigSky's features for this new incarnation; they used the same kind of neural-tweaking techniques behind A.I. to create lifelike virtual spaces that respond to your playing. As for its sound, the 3-D realism is remarkable. Comparing my original BigSky to the BigSky MX... well, there is no comparison. The improved detail, sonic nuance and sense of being within an actual physical space is apparent, and the new presets do a good job of demonstrating what this box can do. Some of my favorites include the Impulse engine's 250 Long, Gate Reactor and Slinky presets, the Magneto machine's Moody Bounce and SmartWhales settings, and the Chamber's Sweet Neck, Pretty Chamber and Warm Chamber offerings. For raising the ambience bar to a new level, BigSky MX earns our Editors' Pick Award.

\$679, strymon.net



UAFX Anti 1992 High Gain Amp Pedal

By Chris Gill, *Guitar World*, Holiday 2024

Most guitarists know that the most famous high-gain amp to emerge in 1992 was the 5150, and that's exactly the primary character of what the Anti pedal offers. However, it goes further than that, thanks to its slightly wider EQ and gain range, built-in noise gate that delivers outstanding noise-free clarity and definition and TS overdrive (Tube Screamer) and TC preamp (possibly based on the rare TC Electronic Integrated Preampifier used by Meshuggah?) overdrive/boost features. It also includes mic/speaker emulations of five 4x12 and one 2x12 speaker cabinets, three of which being "bonus" download cabs provided to encourage registering the pedal. As a result, Anti is more than just an amp emulator as it actually provides the sounds and performance capabilities of a full rig. Anti features the same six-knob, three-toggle, dual-footswitch configuration of UAFX's other amp pedals. Here, the knobs consist of Pre Gain/Resonance, Presence/Gate, Output, Low/Overdrive, Mid/OD Tone, High/OD Level controls. The two footswitches can be set to four different modes: Live/Preset, Overdrive/Live-Preset, Gate/Live-Preset or four-cable mode.

\$399, uaudio.com



Universal Audio UAFX Lion '68 Super Lead Amp

By Art Thompson, *Guitar Player*, April 2024

The latest amp-emulator pedal from UAFX offers three models from a stable of 1968 100-watt Marshalls: the Super Lead, Super Bass, and Brown. Even with standard guitar amps, Lion performed admirably as a distortion pedal. Straight into a Fender Deluxe Reverb or '48 Dual Professional set clean, and with the cab simulation disabled, it was easy to dial in happening tones by turning up the volume I and II knobs for the desired level of grind and treble/bass balance. With its ballsy presence and smooth top, the Brown setting delivers killer saturated grind that's aggressive and heavy, yet can pull back to a fat, loose, clean tone when the guitar is rolled down. The convenience is unreal, too. By configuring Brown on the left foot switch and either the Super Bass or Super Lead as a preset for lead or rhythm on the right-hand foot switch, it was really easy to use Lion live. Another good option is to toggle between Brown and either of the other Marshalls with the right foot switch and deploy the left switch to activate a boost. **\$399, uaudio.com**

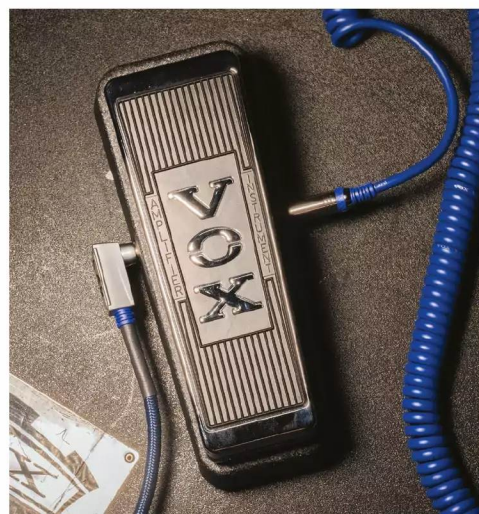


Vox VRM-1 Real McCoy Reissue Wah

By Dave Hunter, *Guitar Player*, October 2024

As Vox puts it, “the Real McCoy is voiced for the iconic nasal tone of the original wah model, with an accentuated midrange that imparts a warm and melodic character to your guitar.” In general, the Real McCoy lived up to Vox’s statement, although arguably with more nuance than this description might imply. “Nasal” might indeed describe the frequency range accentuated by this circuit, but depending on which other wah-wah you’re comparing it to (and certainly the V846 Vintage, in this case), I’d say maybe “warmer, throatier, and mellower” might also be appropriate adjectives. It does a good job of taming the Stratocaster’s potential bridge-pickup spikiness, for example, relative to many other wahs at least, and delivers a rounder, slightly darker rendition of that vocal-vowel sound that I believe a lot of players will enjoy. The throw from the rocker action is relatively short and sharp, as were the originals, so teasing out that chewy, vowel-per-note “talking” sound takes some precise foot work, but the circuit adds a little grind of its own that produces some appealing textures even in clean playing.

\$279 street, voxamps.com



Warm Audio Warm Bender and RingerBringer

By Chris Gill, *Guitar World*, October 2024

The Warm Bender is both a faithful reproduction of a Tone Bender with Attack and Level controls and a modern enhancement, thanks to the addition of a three-way switch that selects three different fuzz circuits. It's housed in a familiar-looking wedge enclosure with a gray hammered metal powder coat finish, but it's scaled down to about half the size of the original. The RingerBringer is pretty much a dead ringer for the discontinued Moogerfooger pedal it's based on, housed in a nearly identical enclosure with wood sides, and featuring identical top-panel control knob and rear-panel jack configurations. Even the rocker switches are the same shade of blue. If you're not familiar with what a ring modulator does, the simple explanation is that it takes a modulation signal (such as an electric guitar, synth or vocal mic) that is combined with a carrier signal (usually a sine wave at a set frequency) and outputs the sum and difference to create unusual, atonal, metallic-sounding textures (the middle section of Devo's “Too Much Paranoias” is a classic example of ring modulation).

\$199, \$219, warmaudio.com



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Nakupenda Guitar Stool

By Jimmy Leslie, *Guitar Player* May 2024

Nakupenda has put a ton of research into making what it calls “the world’s first ergonomic guitar performance stool,” which is designed to hug hips and align the spine and pelvis to improve posture, thereby relieving back and neck pain by evenly distributing the player’s weight. The chair is handcrafted from FSC-certified sustainable North American walnut and is available in two heights. Once while attempting to get comfortable on a bar stool at soundcheck, Leo Kottke remarked, “I always feel like a marionette sitting on one of these things.” Not so with the ergonomic Guitar Stool. Better still, it has a handy built-in guitar stand on the back.

\$495, nakupenda.co



Tonespeak Manchester 1290 Guitar Speaker

By Dave Hunter, *Guitar Player*, October 2024

The Manchester 1290 represents Tonespeak’s take on a high-wattage driver that captures vintage-inspired personality and responsiveness. Using Celestion’s Classic Lead 80 as a jumping-off point, this 90-watt speaker employs a fiberglass coil-former and 1.75” copper voice-coil with large-diameter dust cap centered in an engineered-paper cone. The Manchester 1290 showed a distinctively British character while proving somewhat more balanced throughout the spectrum than the Birmingham. Displaying less distortion at edge-of-breakup settings, it admirably lived up to the goal of a more characterful voice at clean and semi-clean settings and presented no detrimental artifacts when used with lower-powered amps. Hit with more volume from a cranked 50-watt head, or slammed with overdrive pedals, it remained tight and articulate through the distortion, without flubbing out on the low end or caving into a hazy slur in the midrange.

\$149 street, tonespeak.com



Ultimate Ears Pro UE 150, 250 and 350 Ultimate In-Ear Monitors

By Paul Riario, *Guitar World*, October 2024

Ultimate Ears Pro’s new, affordable line of premium in-ear monitors — the UE 150, UE 250 and UE 350 — feature a universal fit that offers sealed-in comfort, high fidelity and durability. All three IEMs come with an assortment of foam and silicone tips in every size (XS, S, M and L). These IEMs feature more drivers as you go up a model, with the UE 150 having a single driver, the UE 250 with two and the UE 350 with three, and with both the UE 250 and UE 350 including a two-way crossover that enhances musical detail. Testing out all three in several environments — monitoring music and backing tracks, as a guitar IEM for my amp modeler and blending a separate monitor mix of instruments and vocals — I got a good read of the strengths of each model. Most importantly, these IEMs fit snugly in my ear and never fell out, which is surprisingly great for a universal fit.

\$199-\$399, pro.ultimateears.com



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