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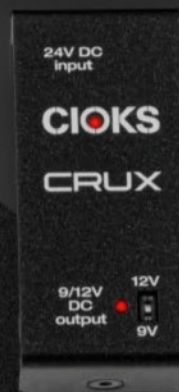
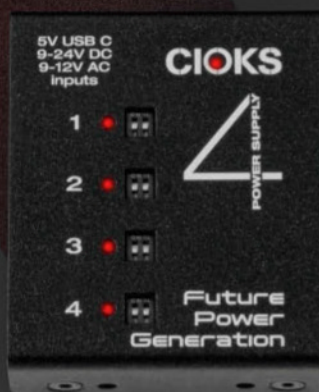
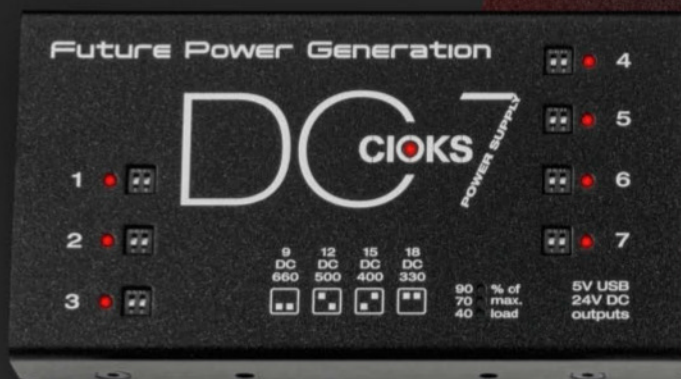
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A WORLD OF MATERIAL

▶ WHAT MORE CAN you write about George Harrison? I mean, people have been writing about the Beatles — almost nonstop — since 1963, when Peter Lorre, Andrés Segovia, John Coltrane, Stan Laurel and Bud Abbott still walked the earth. Well, to answer my own question, it might actually be a story like this issue's cover feature — a story where all of George's albums (including everything by the Beatles) are laid out, side by side, in chronological order, along with some of his most important side trips and guest appearances, making it all seem like one huge body of work, which — guess what! — it is. It's a feature in which — for better or worse — oddities like *Wonderwall Music*, *Encouraging Words* and *Is This What You Want?* are given the same space and word count as major players like *Abbey Road*, *Revolver* and *All Things Must Pass*.



But perhaps the cherry on top is our new interview with George's son, Dhani Harrison — he of the new *no2*, *Fistful of Mercy* and solo fame — who sheds some light on another major player in George Land, *Living in the Material World*. Then again, in the eyes of your average, non-Beatles-adoring music fan, *LITMW* isn't all that major a player (in the sense that it's not as famous or "part of the culture" as, say, *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*). But, as pointed out on page 68, it's an album that's ready for rediscovery — or, for many listeners, plain old discovery. As we've written in these pages in the past, *LITMW* is home to some of Harrison's best compositions and guitar work, from the swingin' title track to "Give Me Love (Give Me Peace on Earth)" to "The Light That Has Lighted the World."

And if our Dhani interview is the cherry (assuming we're sticking with the "pieces of fruit being placed on top of other things" metaphor), our interview with frequent Harrison — and John Lennon — collaborator John Barham is the, well, let's call it the apple, since his contributions can be heard on much of Harrison's Apple-era work, as well as one of the last albums George produced and played on, Ravi Shankar's *Chants of India* from 1997. Enjoy!

— **Damian Fanelli**

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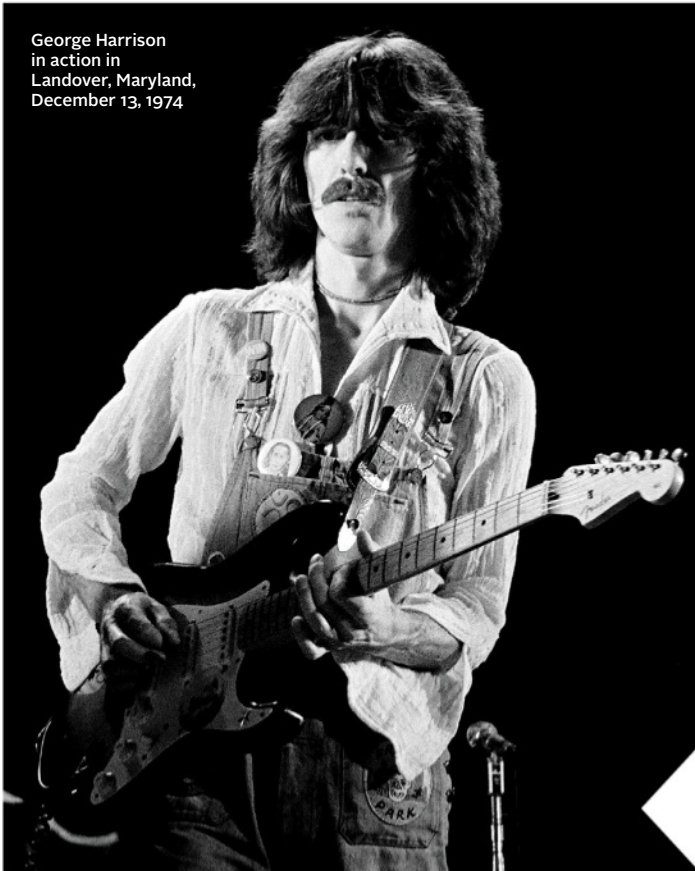
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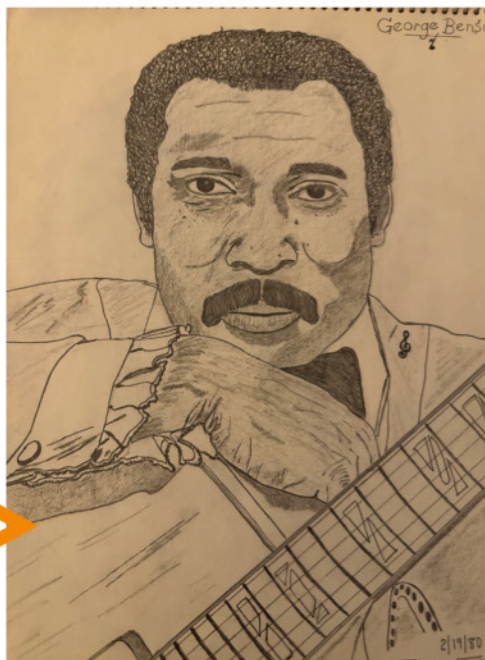


READER ART

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 GWSoundingBoard@futurenet.com with a .jpg or screenshot of the image.

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



GEORGE BENSON BY SAL FORGIONE



EDDIE VAN HALEN BY STEPHEN McANNALLY

DEFENDERS of the Faith



Nicholas Buller

AGE: 38

HOMETOWN: Escondido, CA

GUITARS: Seger YG, Obstructures .75oe, various Fender offsets with EGC necks, Fender American Strat, Gibson Custom Shop SG

SONGS I'VE BEEN PLAYING:

Hum "Step into You," Criteria "The Slider," *The Munsters* theme song

GEAR I WANT MOST:

Soldano SLO-30 combo



Quinn Lombard

AGE: 15

HOMETOWN: Virginia Beach, VA

GUITARS: Squier J Mascis Jazzmaster and Epiphone Les Paul Special (mostly)

SONGS I'VE BEEN PLAYING:

The Kingsmen "Louie Louie," Jimi Hendrix "Foxy Lady" and "Purple Haze," Led Zeppelin "Black Dog"

GEAR I WANT MOST: Early Fifties

Gibson Les Paul Junior



Ben S

AGE: 45

HOMETOWN: Wheeling, IL

GUITARS: Gibson Les Paul Slash Custom Shop, Gibson Les Paul Ro Custom Shop, Gibson ES-339, K-Line Springfield, T-style Partcaster, Martin D-28

SONGS I'VE BEEN PLAYING: AC/DC "Hells Bells," Ayrton Jones "Supercharged," Pearl Jam "Do the Evolution," Phish "Chalkdust Torture," Red Hot Chili Peppers "Snow (Hey Oh)," Slash "By the Sword"

GEAR I WANT MOST: Gibson SG Special with Pgos, Dr. Z Maz 18 amp



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Jinjer's Roman Ibramkhalilov with his namesake Jackson Pro Series Signature MDK HT6 Baritone

Times' New Roman

ON ALBUM NUMBER FIVE, JINJER GUITARIST ROMAN IBRAMKHALILOV IS LAYING DOWN SOME OF THE HARDEST-SWINGING RIFFS OF HIS CAREER

By Amit Sharma

▶ MORE OFTEN THAN not with metal bands, it's one or two guitar players who oversee the lion's share of the writing process, meticulously piecing together the riffs at the heart of every song. Ukrainian

metal quartet Jinjer, however, opted for a different creative path, with drummer Vladislav Ulasevich masterminding both melody and rhythm. It might be an unorthodox approach to composition,

but the fruits of his efforts have resulted in the group becoming front-runners in a new wave of exciting heavy music alongside Sleep Token and Spiritbox.

Some guitar players might struggle to keep their ego in check in such circumstances, but not Roman Ibramkhalilov, who believes the quality of the music should always come first.

"These songs were written by our drummer, like the last few albums," he says about their fifth full-length, titled *Duél*. "It's my sound, but they're not my riffs. ➔"

Vladislav plays a lot of instruments, so when he joined the band in 2016, he started to come up with more and more ideas. He'll have seven or eight ideas at the beginning of each album process and all of them will be great. We don't care who did what; it's all about how good the songs are. If the idea is good, we move forward. Maybe he has inspirations that I don't, but whatever he's doing, it just works. Together we are Jinjer."

What would you say are the hardest riffs on this album?

I don't find our heavy riffs that hard. It's the softer parts that can be more challenging, because I need to play those ideas as cleanly as possible. It's especially hard on stage, because you're sweating and the lights are going on and off. That's probably the toughest thing about playing guitar in this band; we have sections where I'm playing lines across every string going up and down. For example, the song "Hedonist" has verse parts that are like that. For people learning our songs, I guess "Tantrum" has riffs that are fast and require a lot of co-ordination and control, because using a lot of gain can lead to unwanted noises.

So how do you go about staying in control of all that distortion?

The main thing about our sound is to keep things as natural as possible. We don't use active pickups. We try not to use noise gates, because it will eat into the tone a little bit. We also like to use our hands to control the noise, rather than having presets or extra channels to change the tone. I just play harder for the heavy bits and softer for the quieter moments. There are no buttons to press. I'm lucky, my guitar and amp allow me to have more dynamics. I can control it all myself. I guess it's probably easier to play with a processor or active pickups, [but] it will always sound the same and you have less control.

It definitely feels like some of the time changes are quite out there...

It's funny, you don't need crazy signatures to confuse people. You can have an idea in 4/4 but make it as confusing as fuck! "Someone's Daughter" has some unusual time changes, but it's the accents rather than the signature. I guess it's a bit like how Meshuggah might write a riff. But I need to hear the snare to get it right. If not, I might play it wrong. Often the parts that don't sound hard can be hard and other parts that sound complex can be quite easy.

There aren't really any guitar leads in Jinjer, but some of the riffs can feel as challenging as a solo...



Ibramkhalilov
with Jinjer vocalist
Tatiana Shmayluk

"You don't need crazy signatures to confuse people"

You need to play fast metal rhythms to be in this band and also be able to get all around the neck quickly. We use some crazy chords and when we are making an album we know which ones will be a pain in the ass to play live, but we do it anyway. I don't care; if it sounds great, we have to keep it. Sometimes our drummer will ask us, "Are you sure you will be okay playing this bit every night?" and the answer is always yes. I make sure of that. It's all rhythm, anyway. There are no solos. You can just be a rhythm guitarist and play in this band, which is great for me because I'm purely a rhythm guy. I'm not good at solos. I've never wanted to play them or learn about those techniques.

Earlier in the year you partnered up with Jackson for your Pro Series MDK HT6 Baritone signature. Is that what we're hearing on the album?

Yeah! And I need to thank everyone who was involved in that process: people like Mike Tempesta, Peter Wichers and Tim Hillier-Brook. My signature is made out of ash and the guitar I play was built by Mike Shannon in the custom shop. I feel like it has a really grainy sound with a lot of low end. It's a really important part of my tone.

What else would you say is important for nailing the Jinjer sound?

I swear by my Boss Waza Craft Blues Driver, which works great with my Mesa/Boogie Royal Atlantic head. I've tried a lot of different pedals and never thought the Blues Driver would be good because the name makes you think it's not for metal. It took a long time for me to get round to checking one out but I found it helps my guitars sit in the mix better and cut through against all the cymbals and bass, while also adding a little more saturation. I find Tube Screemers take away too much bass. The cabinet is also important; I use Coffee Custom cabinets, which are made in the Czech Republic, fitted with the Mick Thomson DV-77 speakers by Eminence. I bought them to try out and was blown away, so I've stuck with those ones ever since.

Steve Hackett
performs in Spain,
June 25, 2023

**“Playing
progressive
music requires
lots of dynamic
adjustment”**



MY PEDALBOARD STEVE HACKETT

WHAT THE PROG-ROCK ICON SEES WHEN HE LOOKS DOWN

▶ “I WANT TO have control over things. There is no tyranny of volume. At one time, you would have to crank up very loudly to achieve the same result on record. By using reverb, I’m creating an artificial space to give the sound perspective. Playing progressive music requires lots of dynamic adjustment, so the volume pedal is absolutely crucial to be able to vary my own place within the band’s mix.

“I’ve had a number of pedalboards over time. There are modern things that reproduce vintage sounds, which gives you a number of simulations. I’m often using amp simulators when recording, so I can perform a screaming guitar solo while comfortably holding a conversation with an engineer, even though the beast seems to be screaming out and shaking the walls.

“It’s important not to kid yourself that just because you’re listening to something

loudly, it’s the only way to create power. We’re all looking for lightning in a bottle. When playing live, there are moments when I have my pedals on full throttle doing the delinquent thing while everyone else is doing the same. Sometimes, you just can’t help yourself. After all, live rock ‘n’ roll isn’t really about holding back!

“My smaller pedalboard starts with my Tech 21 SansAmp GT2 [tube amp emulator], which is very versatile. It provides very realistic tube distortion without having to crank up the sound. Next is my TC

Electronic Hall of Fame 2 Reverb. For a tiny unit, it’s extremely versatile. It can give those small, roomy sounds and also can simulate large spaces. A great little tool!

“That leads to my DigiTech Whammy WH5 [pitch shifter]. This can be used in several ways and is a versatile unit, which gives fixed harmonies and makes extra octaves available. Lastly, there’s my Dunlop Volume Pedal; progressive music needs you to constantly rebalance, and this volume pedal is essential for dynamic shifts.”

— Andrew Daly

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

“It would probably be the Tech 21 SansAmp because it blasts away like a heavily cranked Marshall or two. It gives me the power I need to produce a thrilling sound.”



Yasmin Williams lets things “unfold in an organic, natural way” on *Acadia*



Yasmin Williams

A FOLK GUITAR VIRTUOSO BRANCHES OUT ON HER THIRD ALBUM, *ACADIA*

By Jim Beaugez

▶ **THERE'S NO DOUBT** Yasmin Williams' inventive style of playing guitar — in a percussive, often, arpeggiated style built around hammer-ons and pull-offs, all while seated with an acoustic positioned on her lap — is the first thing to catch the eye of guitar players. But the sound itself is the truly mesmerizing part.

“I wanted to experiment,” Williams tells *Guitar World* of her approach. “I used different gadgets I found around my parents’ house to make the guitar sound different. I used a few hammers — I don’t

“I used different gadgets... to make the guitar sound different. I used a few hammers — I don’t recommend that”

recommend that. I used a frother to get a sustained sound on the strings. It took me a little while to get comfortable and play as fast as I wanted to play and do the percussion stuff, but [then it became] how I played guitar most of the time.”

Acadia, her third album, finds Williams expanding her trademark style and sound, collaborating with outside artists on instrumentals and band arrangements with vocals, as well as adding electric guitar to the mix on songs like “Nectar” and “Malamu,” where she trades solos with a saxophone.

Fellow acoustic-guitar virtuoso Kaki King duets with Williams on the cascading harmonics and pastoral fingerpicked passages of “Harvest,” while Carolina Chocolate Drops co-founder Dom Flemons plays rhythm bones on opener “Cliffwalk.” Banjoist Allison De Groot and fiddler Tatiana Hargreaves double her guitar melody on the sunny bluegrass jam “Hummingbird.”

But the fearless instrumentation choices

aren’t the only liberating part of her sound. She eschews conventional verse-chorus-verse song structures, leaving her open to chart her own musical territory.

“Early on in my playing career, I was more bound to a kind of pop-song structure. That’s just the music I grew up on,” she says. “I’m definitely more comfortable with just seeing where a song ends up [now], not being afraid of key changes, not being afraid of tempo changes, not being afraid of silence — to let things unfold in an organic, natural way.”

Ultimately, the point of her unconventional playing style, adventurous instrumentation and lack of guardrails is to find new horizons in folk music.

“My goal was to show people how folk can expand to embrace other influences, such as kora music of West Africa and rock music and jazz, and still be a folk record,” she explains. “Because folk, to me, is just the people’s music.”

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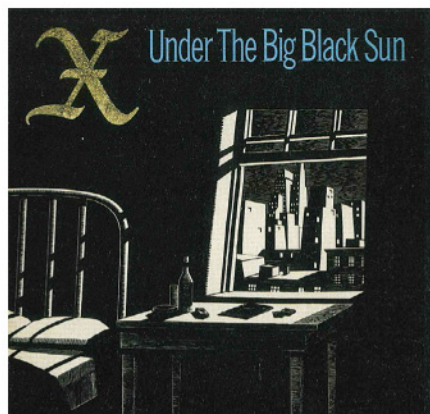
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LOST CLASSICS: X

BILLY ZOOM RECOUNTS THE MAKING OF THE ICONIC L.A. PUNKS' 1982 MAJOR-LABEL DEBUT, *UNDER THE BIG BLACK SUN*

By Mark McStea

L.A. PUNK LEGENDS X made their major-label debut in 1982 with *Under the Big Black Sun*. The record, which followed two critically acclaimed indie releases — *Los Angeles* (1980) and *Wild Gift* (1981) — spotlights a more refined and polished version of their sound while not losing an ounce of the urgency of the previous two albums.

As always, at the heart of the band's — and the album's — sound was guitarist Billy Zoom's sparkling '55 Gretsch Silver Jet. Zoom's under-appreciated (and killer) chops are the lynchpin that ties together the left-of-center vocal stylings of Exene Cervenka and John Doe, not to mention D.J. Bonebrake's rock-solid drumming.

Below, Zoom discusses the making of *Under the Big Black Sun* and then gets into gear, the band's latest album and his Austin-Healey Sprite.

***Under the Big Black Sun* sounds much better than the two previous albums. Why is that?**

As I recall, the total Slash [indie label] recording budget for *Wild Gift* was \$6,000, and Elektra's budget for *Under the Big Black Sun* was \$60,000. We didn't have to rush through everything before we ran out of money and time. *Black Sun* was produced and recorded a little better than *Wild Gift* or *More Fun*, but those two were really bad. I've never been able to listen to them. Having said that, maybe it was just a fluke that it turned out better.

The songs are credited to John Doe and Exene Cervenka. Did you not have a lot of input?

D.J. and I contributed quite a bit on the music but not too much on the lyrics, if at all. We rehearsed a lot, worked songs out together, recorded them at rehearsal and then picked them apart and reassembled them, etc.

I remember reading that X was basically your concept, a band that'd combine elements of Eddie Cochran and the Ramones. How hard was it to find other musicians who were on the same page?

Not as hard as I'd expected. Finding a good drummer is always hard, but John was only the second bass player I auditioned. Of course, John's sort of quirky songwriting added a whole new dimension that I hadn't anticipated, and when Exene came along, things really turned into X rather than just Eddie Cochran meets the Ramones.

Did you have all the songs ready prior to going into the studio?

I think so, pretty much. We did a lot of rehearsing and pre-production work, but it did become more of a push with each album. We had a few years to come up with the material for the first two albums, but after *L.A.* came out, we were on tour most of the time and just came back to California to write new songs and record, so maybe four weeks to come up with the songs and arrangements.

Did the songs change much in the studio?

"Dancing with Tears" was one that only existed in my head. Unfortunately, it mostly stayed there. What I wanted was a distorted rhythm guitar playing Ramones-style power chords, but with that clean, twangy style double-note lead guitar floating on top of it. The problem was — and it was a recurring issue that came up often in the studio — [producer] Ray Manzarek hated the sound of distorted guitar chords. He just didn't think they belonged in music. So I kept playing them, and Ray would keep fiddling with knobs trying to fix the sound. In the end, that rhythm guitar was there, but you can't really hear it or figure out what it's trying to do. Ray was fine with distortion on leads, just not chords. That's why whenever there was an X song with clean chords, like "I Must Not Think Bad Thoughts," the guitar sounds awesome, but power chords always sounded like Ray had over-EQ'ed them, trying to make them not sound like punk rock chords. It was always very frustrating. Ray didn't really like punk rock, but he loved John and Exene's poetry.

What guitars and amps did you use?

Most of it was my 1955 Gretsch Silver Jet through John's Traynor bass head and a 4x10 cabinet that I built, but I always brought everything I had to the studio. I'd use one combination for one little overdub and something else for another part. The lead on "Dancing with Tears" was my 1958 Strat that I'd bought years before, from an old man, for \$100.

You and D.J. clearly seem to be the band members with the chops. Was there any tension between you two and John and Exene, who had more primitive skills?

I don't know about D.J., but I think by the time we started X, I was already used to being the most talented and the most underappreciated band member. It's not always easy being Billy Zoom, but somebody has to do it.

There aren't many solos on X records, though what is there gets straight to the point with maximum effect. Were you frustrated at not being able to get in more solos, or were you more about the Ramones' side of the equation, where driving rhythm guitar was where it's at?

Every X song is a guitar solo from beginning to end. Sometimes John and Exene sing during my solos, but it doesn't bother me. I play while they sing, too. It's very rare that I just strum chords during the vocals. It's all structured and orchestrated.

"Motel Room in My Bed" has a couple of quick killer breaks. Would they be off-the-cuff ideas, or would you try different approaches?

I don't recall. What I played seemed to fit there okay. I just provide different textures to make the lyrical textures stand out more. I try not to think about it too hard.

"Blue Spark" has a great rhythm guitar with the slides. I'm guessing that was your idea to do those slides after each chord?

We recorded "Blue Spark" for Dangerhouse [indie label] in 1977, but it was never released, because our drummer at the time was too bad, even for Dangerhouse. Fortunately, we found D.J. not long after that. On the Dangerhouse recording I had to borrow a fuzz tone for the slides. The studio wouldn't let us turn up loud enough to get real amp distortion. The title of the song was about the bumper cars on Santa Monica pier and the sparks they made when the contact on their antenna rubbed the ceiling, which was electrically



Billy Zoom on stage
with X in Chicago,
November 23, 1983

energized. What I was trying to do was to make the slides sound like the buzz and sizzle of electricity arcing. I often try to make my guitar sound like the lyrics, either literally or like the feeling or mood that's being expressed. I want the sound of the song to be one integral thing — the lyrics, the beat, the guitar notes and tone; they should all be telling the same story.

“Come Back to Me” has some great rhythm lines. I guess that was no big deal for you with your extensive background in jazz, etc.

D.J. has the strongest jazz background. I like listening to good jazz, but I can't really play it very well. I can play jazzy, but more R&B-ish like maybe Ray Charles, not Thelonious Monk. “Come Back to Me” is more R&B, or at least that's where my head was when I played it. I was thinking of Steve Cropper; he's one of my heroes.

“How I Learned My Lesson” seems to be a lot closer to your Ramones template.

That was one of my favorites, but John and Exene don't like to do it live for some reason.

“It's not always easy being Billy Zoom, but somebody has to do it”

“The Have Nots” has a great feel on the rhythm guitar — a perfect mix of clean and crunch. I guess that's probably a good description of your sound in general, isn't it? It's a great showcase for your playing in that it combines your great rhythm chops with cool lead lines.

I've always thought it was too fast on the record. We do it a little slower live. I do play cleaner than most modern guitarists, and it's always just the amp, no pedals. Just the amp, cranked. I was playing my Silver Jet, probably through the Traynor and 4x10 cabinet.

How did you feel about the album when it came out?

I never liked any of our records when they came out. I never liked the way any of our albums sounded until [2020's] *Alphabetland*.

What was your guitar journey, from your first beginner's guitar to your first pro-level guitar?

My dad had a tenor guitar; that's a skinny neck and four strings. You don't see them much anymore. There was no name on it, but I think it was a mail-order guitar, built by Harmony. My dad started teaching me how to play chords on that when I was six. When I was eight, I found a Harmony archtop acoustic in the basement of my grandmother's house, on the floor behind the oil tank for the furnace. When I was 15, I had a Hagstrom, then later, when I was 19, I had enough money to buy a pre-owned 1962 Guild Starfire III with DeArmond single coils and a Bigsby. That was as close to a Gretsch 6120 as I could get, but it got me all around the country, including a stint on the West Coast with Gene Vincent.

What are your go-to guitars these days?

For the last 10 years, I've been using a Gretsch G6122T-59 Vintage Select Chet Atkins Country Gentleman. It's a reissue of a 1959 Country Gentleman that Chet Atkins modified and used throughout the Sixties. It's a single cutaway, with a 25½-inch scale, a slightly wider fingerboard, a Bigsby with the Chet arm, a master volume, a bridge pickup volume and a tone knob. I replaced the pickups with a Kent Armstrong vintage P90 at the bridge and a Seymour Duncan DeArmond at the neck. It has the stock bar bridge, but I installed Grover locking tuners because it makes it easier to change strings with a Bigsby, and my fingers aren't as nimble as they used to be. My arthritic fingers also prefer the longer scale and wider fingerboard. In my opinion, these G6122T-59s are the best guitars Gretsch ever made, period. I also have a silver 1999 Fender Custom Shop Strat and a custom Danelectro six-string bass that's in silver sparkle with three pickups. Those three are my main studio tools, along with my '55 Silver Jet, which still gets some studio use.

Who were your main influences?

Let me just say this: when I play rock 'n' roll guitar, I imagine Jerry Lee Lewis' piano. When I play tenor sax, I imagine Little Richard's voice.

What's coming up?

We just finished our last album, [2024's] *Smoke & Fiction*. The first farewell tour started in July. We'll be on the road a bunch, even more than usual. I'd like to design some more amps and recording gear, and whenever I get a chance, I'll be driving through the hills of Orange County in my Austin-Healey Sprite.



Zach Robinson [left] and Leo Birenberg take a breather between scoring *Cobra Kai* karate fights

Martial Artists

COBRA KAI COMPOSERS ZACH ROBINSON AND LEO BIRENBERG TALK GEAR, SEASON 6 AND HOW THEY CONSCRIPTED TOSIN ABASI, CHARLIE ROBBINS AND POLYPHIA'S TIM HENSON INTO THEIR MUSICAL DOJO

By Richard Bienstock

▶ SINCE DEBUTING IN 2018, *Cobra Kai*, a sequel to the original *Karate Kid* movies, has become one of the most popular streaming shows on TV. And while viewers have primarily been drawn to the spectacle of longtime adversaries Daniel LaRusso (Ralph Macchio) and Johnny Lawrence (William Zabka) teaming up to battle increasingly outrageous karate villains — and kick each other's asses while continually reliving their petty teenage karate rivalry — a key ingredient of the show's success is its brilliant, guitar-driven score. Building off the Eighties vibe of the original films, the show boasts a soundtrack that uses throwback hard rock, heavy metal and synth pop as its foundation, with a serious helping of six-string shred, among other sonic flairs, thrown in for good measure. The result is one of the freshest, most unique and, for guitar fans, awesome scores in recent TV history.

The two men responsible for this are Zach Robinson and Leo Birenberg, accomplished film and TV composers (their credits together include *Weird: The Al Yankovic Story* and the TV series *Twisted Metal*, among many others), who have been shaping the sonic environment of *Cobra Kai* since day one. Now, after six seasons, the series is wrapping with its final episodes. Over the years, the show has evolved, and its sound has followed suit. In the final

season, largely set at the Sekai Taikai, a fictional international karate tournament in Barcelona, the music takes on a more global feel (even as it remains anchored by the distinctive, high-octane guitar riffs and licks that made it stand out from the beginning), reflecting the diverse martial artists battling for supremacy. “We have fighters from all around the world who we’ve never seen before, with their own styles and their own dojo histories and lineages,” Robinson says. “It was really fertile ground for coming up with new musical ideas.”

On the eve of the release of the final five episodes of *Cobra Kai*, *Guitar World* sat down with Robinson and Birenberg to discuss the show, and in particular the musical path they’ve taken in Season 6. “I don’t think there’s a lot of longstanding

“I don’t think there’s a lot of longstanding gigs like this, especially ones that really kind of hit a cultural zeitgeist in the way *Cobra Kai* has”

gigs like this, especially ones that really kind of hit a cultural zeitgeist in the way *Cobra Kai* has,” Birenberg says. “It’s been so cool to be along for the ride and to be able to chart our own musical journeys along with it.”

For anyone that has been watching the show from the beginning, it’s clear that as the *Cobra Kai* universe has expanded, so has the variety of sounds and styles that make up the musical score. Nowhere is that more evident than in Season 6.

LEO BIRENBERG: The path of the show is that in every season the universe gets bigger. It really started in Season 3 when you started getting the [*sensei John*] Kreese backstory in Vietnam, or you see Daniel traveling to Japan. There are more new characters, there are more old characters returning from previous movies, there are more locations. That had us changing the palette and expanding out. And with Season 6, the obvious expansion is, now we have this international tournament in Barcelona.

Since the Sekai Taikai tournament introduces karate dojos from all over the world, it opens an opportunity to bring in so many different styles of guitar playing. And you also drafted some monster players to help you achieve this — in particular, Artificial Language and Syncatto phenom Charlie Robbins, and Polyphia virtuoso Tim Henson. How did you get them involved?

ZACH ROBINSON: It was honestly as simple as hitting them up. My Instagram feed is basically just filled with amazing musicians that I follow, and in the case of Charlie Robbins, we just DM’d him. When the concept of the Barcelona tournament came up, he was the first person we thought of, because his whole style is inspired by flamenco. He loves the nylon-string stuff, but he also has the metal sensibility. So it was perfect. And then with Tim Henson, we had a connection to his manager, and we knew he had done some soundtrack work and wanted to do more. For both guys we had cues in mind, and it was all fleshed out, except for the main melody part. We had written the melody, but we gave it to them to make it their own, essentially.

They contributed some amazing playing — Charlie on “Iron Dragons,” which accompanies the Hong Kong dojo of the same name, and Tim on a piece named after the Spanish dojo, “Furia De Pantera.”

ROBINSON: Well, Charlie was essentially on the payroll for five months. [*Laughs*] He’s featured on the “Iron Dragons” track, but

he's also all over the place. But both guys, we found that it renders the best results when you just let them cook, so to speak. They understood the assignment and we let them do their thing. And really quickly, I'll just add that in Season 4, and this is kind of an Easter egg, but Tosin Abasi plays on the track "Shirts Off." We did that really low-key, but I think this year we really wanted to kind of make it more of a statement and have these great players featured more on the soundtrack.

BIRENBERG: I would also add that our main guitar player is Andrew Synowiec, who is a top studio guy in L.A. He's been kind of the heart and soul of the guitar sound of the show since the very first episode.

ROBINSON: And our good friend Myrone, who plays on things like "Enter the Sekai Taikai." He played an amazing guitar solo on that. We give him a feature every season, and he's also a major part of the *Cobra Kai* sound.

There's another great shred piece this season, "Valley Bad Boys," that we hear during a fight scene between Johnny Lawrence and another karate "frenemy," Mike Barnes. Who's playing on that one?

ROBINSON: That's me, actually.

BIRENBERG: There are great Zach guitar parts sprinkled everywhere, though he doesn't like to admit it. [Laughs]

When you're writing and playing something like that, where are you taking inspiration from?

ROBINSON: That one in particular, I remember us being like, "We've just scored so many karate fights..." [Laughs] So instead of doing something that was just some sort of hard rock or metal thing, we went quasi-thrash. The setting of the fight is in a wood shop, and it felt very raw. Honestly, we were just like, "Let's do a Slayer thing." We've had some thrashy cues in the past — there's one called "Busted" in Season 2 — but we don't often have that speed and that sort of rhythmic chugging. It's a little bit of a one-off, in a way. And it was really fun.

What gear were you using this season?

BIRENBERG: I have a lot of pedals that I run synthesizers through — a ton of Strymons. Because there's also a huge synthesizer component to the show. One of the workhorses is a [Sequential] Prophet-6. And I have basically every variety of acoustic guitar, but no electrics in the studio. I was a jazz guy in high school. I played saxophone. Although I probably spent more hours listening to Pat Metheny in school than I have any other musician in my life.



"It's hard to find left-handed guitars that work well for this type of thing," Robinson says

ROBINSON: I use an Ibanez RG550, neon, left-handed. It's hard to find left-handed guitars that work well for this type of thing, although last season I found a feather-weight left-handed Gibson Explorer. I also use a Hagstrom Swede for some of the heavier stuff, and a Danelectro Baritone. When I want to get a seven- or eight-string sound, I just tune that down and it sounds pretty good. I think "Valley Bad Boys" might actually be the Baritone.

Then for amps I use a Kemper Profiler. I know it's become kind of a mainstay for a lot of live performance stuff, but it's amazing for composing. Because in our job, we have to write really quickly, we have to mock up a demo really quickly. With the Kemper, I turn it on and everything's just dialed in. I have my 15 or so presets that are ready to go, and the *Cobra Kai* ones, hopefully I'll get to use them again. [Laughs] But they have been very handy for the last five years.

You guys have established a unique, and very recognizable, musical world in *Cobra Kai*. But it's not the only thing you do. Where do you go from here?

BIRENBERG: I think one of our really strong talents is looking at a show or a movie and being able to prescribe what the sound

should be. Like, looking at *Cobra Kai* and saying, "This should be this crazy combination of guitars and synthwave and orchestra..." And then we go as hard as possible to make the score unmistakable. But the fact is Zach and I have very wide musical backgrounds, and there's a lot of influences and dormant skills that are fun to bust out when needed. So I think we always just want to find new opportunities that will allow us to create a new sound, or something that hasn't been heard before or hasn't been explored before. We do have some other projects we're working on now or have finished and are coming out soon that are really different, and that we're really excited about.

ROBINSON: I think we're now discovering that while we're incredibly proud of this sound and this score, we've become in danger of just being known as the "guitar composers." Because of *Cobra Kai* we've kind of become these people where other composers say to us, "I try to use guitars the way that you guys do." But we do lots of other stuff, too. [Laughs] And whatever we do, we put a lot of effort into it to make something that is super unique. With this project, we've been so fortunate to work with so many amazing collaborators, beginning with Jon [Hurwitz], Josh [Heald] and Hayden [Schlossberg], the creators. Not many people will let you cook and let you go as hard as they let us go. Because with *Cobra Kai* it's like, "Turn the gain all the way up!" That collaboration has been incredibly special. So no matter what we do, I think we need to be proactive in recreating that kind of lightning in a bottle every time.

"It was really fertile ground for coming up with new musical ideas"

MY LIFE IN THREE GUITARS: Paul Gilbert

THE TRIO OF AXES THAT HAVE MEANT THE MOST TO THE MR. BIG CO-FOUNDER AND RACER X WHIZ

By Mark McStea

I CONNECTED WITH Paul Gilbert as he was taking some well-earned R&R — that’s rest and relaxation, not rock ’n’ roll — shortly after completing the final dates of Mr. Big’s global farewell tour. Gilbert, a lifetime guitar nut, was eager to share the secrets behind his three favorite instruments. Unsurprisingly, given his long association with Ibanez, all three of his choices come from the Japanese shred manufacturer of choice for so many guitar heroes. Not only does he play a bunch of signature Ibanez axes, but he also likes to track down Eighties models such as the Blazer and Roadstar.

“I have a student at my online school who got me into vintage Ibanez guitars,” he says. “During lockdown, I had too much time to look at Reverb.com, and I found some really good prices on those Eighties models. The tremolo bridge on the RS315 has one of the best tones I’ve ever played.”

Gilbert was a little conflicted when it came to the three guitars that would make the cut. “I was tempted to include my new FRM350 signature in today’s list, but it’s a very new guitar, so I figured I’d give the honor to some instruments that have been around a little longer.”

1 Ibanez Kikusui Fireman (2009)

“This guitar is so beautiful. I remember opening the case, and it took my breath away. Then I picked it up and played it, and the tone and resonance were stunning as well. I think the spark of the idea to use a sake bottle to inspire the design was from Michael Anthony from Van Halen. He had that Jack Daniels bass, and I thought, ‘What drink would I like to model a guitar after?’ The light blue Kikusui bottle always stood out when I went shopping for sake, and the drink itself was certainly good. I sketched out some ideas on Photoshop and brought a couple of big bottles of Kikusui to the Ibanez custom shop so they could use the bottle caps to make the volume and tone knobs. I imagine they enjoyed the sake as well!

The other notable thing about that guitar is the baseball bat neck — it’s huge and deep. This really gives a guitar maximum sustain and resonance. I have large hands, so I don’t mind the extra reaching that a big neck requires, and this guitar has possibly the deepest neck in my whole collection. I used it to record “Everybody Use Your Goddamn Turn Signal” on *I Can Destroy*. I have the pickups wired out of phase, as I got into that sound for a while. I might rewire them back at some point; it’s an easy mod. The pickups are DiMarzio Air Classics. They sound beautiful with any level of distortion, compression or EQ. I’ve taken the Kikusui on the road a lot. It barely has any dings or scratches. I think anyone who gets near it gives it respect, including me. This would be the one I’d grab in the event of a fire.

All three of these guitars are actually very normal-sounding to me. I like normal as a starting place. Then I can use pedals and amps to shape the sound for whatever I’m doing. They’re all fitted with humbuckers; single coils can be fun, but since I usually play with a healthy amount of gain, I almost always switch to hum-canceling versions.”

2 Ibanez PGM 1000T (2022)

“This guitar just feels like a Cadillac. The neck shape is very different from the Kikusui. It’s quite wide and shallow — more like the Wizard neck Ibanez is famous for. I was surprised how quickly I got used to it, and I found that I can often get more clarity, as there is more room between the strings. The combination of the neck-through design and having a painted neck feels really good to me — super luxurious. The color was inspired by Randy Rhoads’ aged Les Paul. I liked how the aging process didn’t seem to affect the finish evenly. So I asked Ibanez to make a very subtle “cream burst” for my guitar. It looks so good close up, and on stage. This one also has DiMarzio Air Classics.

I used the guitar on the new Mr. Big album, *Ten* [2024], and it was my main guitar on our Big Finish tour. Unfortunately, all the guitars in our equipment trailer were stolen during a day off in Frankfurt, Germany, so I haven’t seen this guitar since then. If anyone out there hears any news about it, please let me know! I’d love to have that great instrument back.

Right before going on the road, I put large erasers under the pickups. I play pretty loud with Mr. Big, so I take extra precautions to keep feedback to a minimum. There is one more very subtle thing that I did (by accident) that will let me easily identify the guitar if I ever need to prove it’s mine. I’ll keep that a secret. If I get this guitar back, I’ll definitely take it back on the road; it’s one of my favorite guitars to play live.

I was lucky to be near a big Ibanez distributor when my guitars were stolen. They got me a PGM50, an FRM300 and an FRM350 within hours so I could get through the rest of the tour. The only setup I needed to do was to put on my favorite string gauge (*Ernie Ball Mighty Slinky with a .46 on the low E*) and lower the middle pickups on the guitars that have middle pickups.”

3 Ibanez FRM200 (2016)

“This was a factory sample that I got in order to approve it for production, which began in 2017. It just always sounds, feels and looks so good. Every time I play it live or in the studio, I seem to sound a little better than myself. The shape of the neck has just the right touch of “baseball bat” — big enough for great tone, wide enough for clarity, but not so big to stop you from getting around the neck easily. The DiMarzio PG-13 mini-humbuckers are the best I’ve ever heard. If I could put this guitar in the hands of any guitar player, I’d love to hear Johnny Winter play it a bit, but then I’d get jealous and want my guitar back. I use this one in the studio and on the road.

I played it a lot on *Behold Electric Guitar* [2018]. One of my favorite performances with this guitar was from a jam at Sweetwater. I played the Albert King song “C.O.D.,” and I must have counted it off too fast by accident, because the tempo is much quicker than what I’m comfortable with. Also the song is in F, which is not the easiest key for me. Those two factors would usually derail me a bit, but I still managed to play one of my best solos. There’s video of it on YouTube. It hasn’t received a lot of attention, but I check it out when I want to feel good about myself.

This was the first guitar that I tried using a magnet in the body for holding a slide in place. Ryan Lynn at Eastside Guitars in Portland routed a slot in the pickguard to prevent the slide from turning. After some playing, we realized the magnet was strong enough to hold the slide straight, and no slot was necessary. This guitar still has that slot though, and looks pretty stylish. The slide magnet gives me easy access to a slide all the time. It was fun developing my quick-draw technique of grabbing the slide and quickly putting it back. It allows me to add a new and expressive voice to my playing, and then jump right back to my normal shreddy self. [Laughs]





Neon Nightmare

HOW SPIRIT ADRIFT'S NATE GARRETT CREATED A BRILLIANT ONE-MAN HOMAGE TO TYPE O NEGATIVE

By Jon Wiederhorn

▶ WHEN NATE GARRETT first heard Type O Negative's "(We Were) Electrocute" in the 2003 horror movie *Freddy Vs. Jason*, he was awestruck by the blend of doomy riffs, rich, multi-textured composition and brooding atmospheres. Soon after, Garrett bought the band's entire catalog and thrilled to every gloomy, glorious moment.

"I had never heard anything like it," he says. "The songwriting and arranging were so ambitious. But there was always something that hooked you in."

In the decades that followed, Garrett listened to other gothic metal bands but never found anything that made the hairs on his neck stand up the way Type O did. So, late last year, during time off from his other band, Spirit Adrift, he created a

one-man homage to Type O Negative — Neon Nightmare — and wrote songs that captured the sound, mood and style of the group's late frontman, Peter Steele.

"Peter had a unique songwriting formula that's not easy to capture," Garrett says. "It's easy to put a chorus effect on a distorted guitar and sing in a low voice, but there's a lot more to it than that. So much of what he did reflected the wide variety of music he and his bandmates listened to."

As Garrett prepared the project, he researched old Type O interviews and learned that Steele's favorite records included Black Sabbath's *Paranoid*, the Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, Pink Floyd's *The Dark Side of the Moon* and Walt Disney haunted-house soundtracks. For Neon Nightmare's debut, *Faded Dream*, Garrett stayed true to Steele's vision while adjusting some of the parameters to match his own taste. "I wanted to do a tribute, not a rip-off," he says. "My points of reference were Sabbath's *Master of Reality*, the Rolling Stones' *Sticky Fingers*, Pink Floyd's *Meddle* and Eighties horror-film soundtracks."

With the pieces in place, Garrett's skill took over and he wrote, performed and

recorded like he was guided from beyond. He composed *Faded Dream* in December 2023 and tracked it in two months at Red Nova Ranch Studio in Cedar Creek, Texas.

Type O Negative fans will surely spot reverential nods throughout *Faded Dream* — progressive structures, bright downtuned guitar tones, angular riffs and haunting keys. And there are some other touches, such as the familiar logo design, cover art and lyrical references. In total, the accuracy of the tribute could divide Type O fans.

"I'm hoping the people this record is meant for will be ecstatic and feel like, 'Oh man, I've been needing this!'" Garrett says. "But I kind of want some people to be outraged because I feel like that would be a true way to honor Type O, who were always sarcastic and sometimes acted like they wanted people to hate them."

AXOLOGY

- **GUITARS** Les Paul Custom (rhythm), Fender American Pro II Series Strat (lead)
- **AMPS** EVH 5150, Marshall JCM800
- **EFFECTS** Jessup Amps Kenny Hickey Signature Chorus

"I kind of want some people to be outraged because... that would be a true way to honor Type O"



Sitting on top of the world: PureSalem Guitars fan Max Keyes

Spiral XP

SHOEGAZE SUPERFAN MAX KEYES EMBRACES OPEN TUNINGS, PITCH BENDS AND MORE ON HIS LATEST ENDEAVOR

By Gregory Adams

▶ SPIRAL XP'S MAX Keyes wasn't a natural-born guitarist. Though he tried picking up the instrument a few times in his youth, something about a six-string just didn't connect with him back then. That's why he started honing heavy rhythms as a drummer — most notably for Seattle-based noise-pop band Versing.

It wasn't until a Versing tour with cult Canadian jangle-pop trio the Courtney's — where he began obsessing over the latter outfit's gliding open-tuned melodies — that

Keyes changed his, um, tune. Later, after a friend gifted him an old Epiphone SG, Keyes was inspired to experiment with drop-D and open-D arrangements from his living room. This led him toward developing an elementally intuitive approach to fretting that finally unlocked the guitar's potential for him.

"I was like, 'I'm just going to move my hand around the guitar until it makes sense and sounds similar to the melodies in my head,'" he says of that game-changing



Jordan Mang with his Squier Paranormal Super-Sonic

period. "That method of creativity was something I'd never experienced before."

Keyes founded Spiral XP as a solo project while living further north in Bellingham, Washington (he's since returned to Seattle). From his earliest EPs up to the band's new *I Wish I Was a Rat* album — the latter also featuring guitar work from Jordan Mang and Kyle McCollum — Keyes has paired that open-style texturizing with gorgeously undulated licks that speak to his love for shoegaze bands like My Bloody Valentine, who knew how to write "really good pop songs... and then found ways to fuck it up a little bit."

While *Rat's* opening "Luna" and the infectious "Sinner" feature graceful trem-bar dips in their fuzz-blown choruses, the melancholy crush of the record's "Window Room" goes expertly gonzo with seasick, full-chord pitch-bending. On "Horse Money," Keyes grips his PureSalem Reverberation's vibrato arm hard through a raw and vulnerable guitar solo.

Indeed, both Keyes and Mang are whammy-loving offset aficionados — the latter hoisting a Jazzmaster. They also double-up on Fender Vibrolux amps, and fittingly both used Jam Pedals' gnarly, ProCo-cloning Rattler boost throughout the recording of *Rat*. But while Mang proudly talks up the extra heft Spiral XP harness while locking into riffs in unison, he also wonders whether he's putting himself on too similar of a tone journey as his friend.

"The thing about gear [and] bandmates is... [sometimes] you're like, 'Am I about to buy all the same stuff?'" Mang says through a sheepish laugh. While he reiterates that he's generally EQ'ed into a bassier range than Keyes, he briefly hesitated at slapping the same boost onto his board. "I bought the Rattler and was like, 'Max, I have to apologize, but this is happening... it just sounds too good.'"

COVER MODELS

GUITARIST
STEVE STEVENSGUITAR
1986 HAMER SS1
GW COVER DATE
MAY 1986THIS INTERVIEW
NOVEMBER 2024
COVER PHOTOGRAPHER
JOHN PEDEN**Q:** When and where did you buy this guitar?

I got it from Hamer. By then, I had done the "Rebel Yell" solo with the ray gun [effect] on it, so we tried to add the ray gun into the guitar. That guitar might've been one of those. There are three buttons on it.

Q: What attracted you to Hamer?

Paul Stanley actually got me my Hamer endorsement! I still own the very first Hamer guitar I got as an endorsement that was given to me before Billy Idol. I still have that [first] guitar, and I have the prototype, which was the guitar Andy Summers played.

Q: Have you used this guitar on any notable recordings?

Probably not. The first Billy Idol record [1982's Billy Idol] was recorded with a Les Paul. When I met Billy, I didn't really have an amazing guitar. He said, "Oh, you gotta have a Les Paul, mate." We went down to 48th Street [New York City], and Billy got me a '53 Les Paul that would have had the trapeze tailpiece on it but had been retrofitted for a Tune-O-Matic, and it had P90s on it, but originally, it had the PAF pickups. It wasn't a collectible; it was a workman and great-sounding. But on *Rebel Yell*, I had a Kramer Pacer, which I spent \$650 on at Sam Ash.

Q: What did the Hamer bring to the party that your Les Paul didn't?

Roughly, they were similar to Les Paul Juniors or Les Paul Specials. They were all mahogany and definitely in the Gibson school. They were the first kind of hot-rodded guitars out of the box. They came with DiMarzio pickups and had



great parts and paintjobs. It seemed like my heroes, like Rick Nielsen, were playing them. I was like any other kid; I was looking in the pages of magazines, seeing the ads, and I thought, "Oh, man, one day, I want to have one." It was a dream of mine to have a guitar endorsement and — eventually — my own model.

“There’s one guy who practically has a freaking museum of Steve Stevens Hamer guitars”

Q: Why did you choose the black Hamer for your GW cover shoot?

I'm not sure. [Laughs] I think it was the most recent guitar Hamer had built for me, you know?

Q: Do you still own this guitar?

I don't. A lot of my Eighties guitars kind of fell by the wayside. I've gotten messages from people who claim to have had guitars I played — and some are legit. There's one guy who practically has a freaking museum of Steve Stevens Hamer guitars. [Laughs] He's got a couple of the guitars I played, but a lot of the guitars people have sent me photos of definitely weren't mine.

— Andrew Daly

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Leona Lewis, Maroon 5, Alicia Keys)

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gear
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PEAVEY

Now celebrating six decades in the music business, **Peavey** offers something for every kind of player. CEO Courtland Gray looks back on the company's most beloved products, including gear designed with Eddie Van Halen

By Amit Sharma

WHEN WE THINK of the earliest electric guitar amps, names like Rickenbacker, Gibson, Vox, Marshall and Fender will often be the first that come to mind.

Peavey came into the picture not too long after, with the company dating way back to 1965. Founder Hartley Peavey — the son of a music store owner in Meridian, Mississippi — was a guitar player who dreamed of becoming a rock star, but quickly found out he was better suited to building the equipment being used by working musicians. This led to him acquiring his first patent in 1964 and starting the company from the upstairs room of his father's shop a year later.

Today the company is known for producing amps, guitars, basses, acoustics and ukuleles, as well as all kinds of pro audio systems and accessories. As current CEO (and Hartley's son-in-law) Courtland Gray explains, there is no singular Peavey sound; the company has manufactured equipment that's been used in all kinds of genres over the years. A lot of rock and metal players will be familiar with the Eddie Van Halen connection and the collaboration that gave birth to the original 5150 signature amps from 1992 to 2004, which continued as the 6505 after the partnership had come to an end. Then there are other big sellers like the Classic series — tweed-covered combos and heads capable of delivering American-style Class A tones as well as a throaty British crunch — or the famously affordable and solid Bandit series that have graced stages of every size the world over. With the company celebrating its 60th anniversary this year, Gray talks



GW through the legacy and gives us a look into Peavey's future.

What can you tell us about the first Peavey amps?

Early on, Hartley was making tube amps that were copies of older models that were out there. He'd made a reputation for himself, but that's not what got the company going. Amps were his passion, but he'd try selling them to the stores and they'd tell him, "The last thing we need is another amp. What we really need is a PA system." So Hartley looked at some of the main ones already out there, like the

[clockwise from above] Hartley Peavey with a Peavey T-60 guitar and Deuce combo; Hartley surrounded by Peavey gear, circa 1972; a vintage T-60, a model beloved by thousands, including Texas bluesman Johnny Copeland; a trio of Peavey Vintage Series amps

A COURTESY OF PEAVEY



Shure Vocal Master. He broke down the components inside and then realized he could make it and sell it for a lot cheaper. That's actually what launched the company.

So what kind of amps helped get him noticed after that?

He got into the solid-state side of things fairly early, having made contact with someone at RCA who developed a lot of their components. I've seen some of the letters back and forth about the designs;

eventually the guy said he'd come down and work for Hartley. That person's advice was a bit like,

"Throw out the manual

and forget what it tells you; here's what you need to do." It was a leg up over the competitors because Hartley now had some really good insight on the spec side of things. Those early Musician, VTM and Mace amps were great products that were very affordable. They all helped get the company noticed.

How did the Eddie Van Halen connection come about?

As I recall, Eddie was looking at doing his own amp. He contacted us about making some amps and guitars and started working with our engineers on the heads first, going back and forth, testing things out. Eddie spent a lot of time over here in Meridian, checking the tones and tweaking everything bit by bit to make a great product. I guess it must have been a big shock when little Peavey in Mississippi got the biggest guitar hero out there working on a signature product. But I think Ed just appreciated the quality of craftsmanship at Peavey. We built a rock-solid guitar amp with a team of highly skilled engineers to give Ed exactly what he was looking for.

The Wolfgang signature started life at Music Man in '91 and became a Peavey model in '96. →





Eddie Van Halen shreds on a Peavey Wolfgang in the Nineties

The Peavey 6505 amp [right]. "Having been founded in 1965, we decided to call our amp the 6505," Courtland Gray says

**"IT MUST
HAVE BEEN A
SHOCK WHEN
LITTLE OLD
PEAVEY GOT
THE BIGGEST
GUITAR HERO
OUT THERE
WORKING ON A
SIGNATURE"**



Yeah, he came to Hartley asking him to copy it. But Hartley wouldn't copy something in that way; he wanted to develop something a little bit different. We already had a body style that was similar, so a few adjustments were made. We already had the headstock as well, so that became a debate at one point, because Eddie wanted a certain headstock but we already had our own trademark. I think we let him have the body shape he wanted, but we kept that little scoop in the headstock, which was unique to the Wolfgang, and then the HP 2 which replaced it after he left. If you see the EVH Wolfgangs that have been coming out after we parted ways, you'll notice they have a cutout — almost like a can opener — because Ed couldn't use our scoop. It was the closest he could get without infringing on the trademark. Together we designed a really good-looking guitar that we still make to this day.

What can you tell about the end of that partnership?

The best we can figure is that we joined up with Joe Satriani and made a signature amp with him called the JSX. I think Eddie got rubbed up the wrong way because we had another superstar guitar player in our lineup, and he always figured he was the artist for Peavey. So he decided to leave. We gave him the 5150 name because that's what he wanted his amp to be called. But it was part of the agreement that we wouldn't make the guitar if he didn't make the amp. Shortly thereafter, we were at a trade show and heard this amp that sounded just like a 5150. And sure enough, he'd come out with his own version. I think he even used our engineer to develop the new one. That was in 2005, around our 40th anniversary. Having been founded in 1965, we decided to call our amp the 6505.

There have been a lot of famous Peavey users over the years. Which are the first that come to mind for you?

Hell, you can go back to Merle Haggard and Conway Twitty. Those are classic guys from way back when who were using Peavey gear. I've got to mention Adrian Vandenberg, because we recently reissued the old Vandenberg guitar we did with him back in the early Nineties. Obviously we've got some of the top metal guys using the 6505. We redid that amp a few years ago. We went and deciphered everything behind the sound. The tone had changed a little bit — we hadn't done anything to the design, but some people were swearing that something was different.

Did you ever find out the reason behind it?

We realized that the transformer had changed somewhat over the years — tiny changes in materials at the factory — and then the factory changed. Naturally, the specs got ever so slightly different over the years, so we went back and really dialed into that original output transformer to get it back to how it was. We also have the Invective, which is an iteration of that design with the addition of a top-of-the-line clean channel to add more dynamics



[clockwise from left]
Periphery's Misha Mansoor with the Peavey invective.120; the all-new Joshua Homme Decade Too; the Peavey HP 2 Poplar Burl Transparent Blue; the new-for-2025 Peavey Bandit Supreme Teal Stripe Preamp pedal



"HARTLEY ISN'T INTERESTED IN REISSUES, BECAUSE IN HIS MIND WE'RE ALWAYS PUSHING THE NEEDLE AND MOVING FORWARD"



into the player's pocket. We collaborated with Misha Mansoor on that. He's another great endorsee to have. It's an amp that can do it all. We have a guitarist who plays for one of the top country guys, Jason Aldean, and that's what he uses. It's become his go-to, even though he doesn't play heavy music. It's nice to see an amp like that being embraced beyond the metal community. Unlike Marshall or Fender, Peavey really doesn't have one sort of sound.

We've produced equipment being used by players working in different genres.

What's next for Peavey?

The Bandit is important for us historically, so we are working on a new version. I would say it's been quite frustrating in terms of development. We deviated from what it should be and tried to make it a little more than it needed to be. Eventually we realized we'd over-designed it, so we ended up scaling it back a little. That will come out [in 2025]. Some of the more unique Peavey products still get a lot of interest, and the aftermarket sales are strong, which shows we've designed things that have become very sought after. Hartley isn't interested in reissues, because in his mind we're always pushing the needle and moving forward. But there are some legendary Peavey designs that people want, so we have a series of preamp pedals coming with the old circuitry from historic products. We've also been talking about bringing the composite acoustic guitars back, but we'll have to see. **GW**

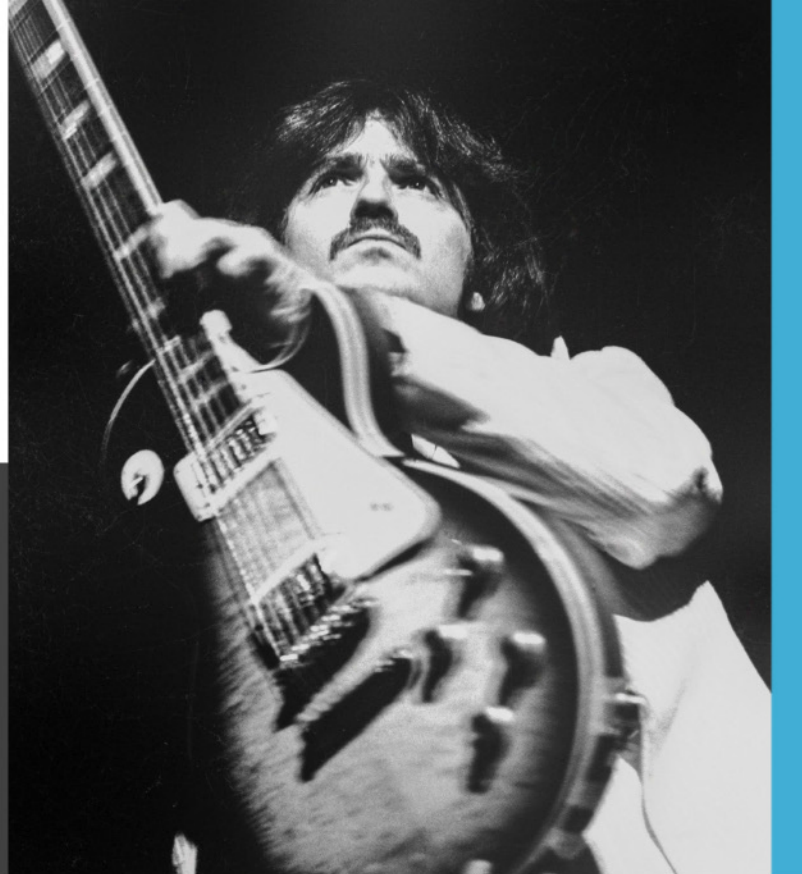




**THEIR
FIRST**
Blue Öyster Cult
(1972)

Ghost Stories
(2024)

**THEIR
LATEST**



BUCK DHARMA

Blue Öyster Cult co-founder Donald "Buck Dharma" Roeser reveals how the classic "Reaper" riff came about and the secret recipe to his beloved CheeseBerger guitar

By Joe Bosso

THE NAMES ARE invariably lifted from album and song titles. There's Agents of Fortune, Spectres, Secret Treaties and, of course, Dominance and Submission. They're just some of the various Blue Öyster Cult tribute acts floating around, and the very mention of their existence elicits a curious chuckle from BÖC's guitarist, singer and co-founder, Donald "Buck Dharma" Roeser. "I'm not aware of these things at all," he says. "I'd be interested in seeing them. I find the whole thing rather surprising."

Roeser has, however, kept tabs on artists covering Blue Öyster Cult

material, and he gives high marks to the late Lisa Marie Presley's take on "Burnin' for You" ("She slowed it down, and it was really nice"), as well as two versions of the band's signature song, "(Don't Fear) the Reaper." "Big Country did a cover that I thought was terrific. And Tom Rhodes did a really dark and compelling version of it for a video game. He didn't use the riff, but it still worked. I liked that one a lot."

Blue Öyster Cult is now a six-decade old operation. At first known as Soft White Underbelly, the group's five original members (Roeser, co-guitarist and singer Eric Bloom, keyboardist

and guitarist Allen Lanier, bassist Joe Bouchard and his drummer brother, Albert) released a string of albums during the Seventies and Eighties that became classic-rock gems. The band's manager and producer, Sandy Pearlman, envisioned them as "America's answer to Black Sabbath," and while the group certainly dished up their fair share of doomsday riffs and horror film imagery, they also incorporated elements of pop, blues, jazz and even blasts of proto-punk into their songs (check out frenetic, piano-driven corker "Baby Ice Dog," co-written by Lanier's then girlfriend, Patti Smith, on 1973's *Tyranny and Mutation*).

Recently, the band issued what could be their final studio album, *Ghost Stories*, a collection of archival material recorded between 1978 and 1983 (with the exception of a 2016 version of the Beatles' "If I Fell"), and Roeser also has released nostalgic solo track, "End of Every Song," which features Albert Bouchard on drums. "My friend Bear McCreary did the orchestration. He's a big Hollywood guy and has scored big TV shows and films," Roeser says. "I got Bob Clearmountain to mix it, and he was brilliant. I never had the chance to work with him in the past, and I wish I did."

Of the original band, Roeser and Bloom are the only two members who remain in the current BÖC incarnation (which also features multi-instrumentalist Richie Castellano, bassist Danny Miranda and drummer Jules Radino). The group continues to tour, though Roeser admits they don't maintain the same backbreaking schedule as they once did. "As long as we feel good and sound good, we'll keep playing," he says. "It's a different group, but the current guys have been in the band longer than the original guys. And we still have the same vocalists, so that's something. We're taking some commitments for 2025, but there's no promises for the future." He shrugs matter-of-factly. "We're getting old, like all the other classic rockers."

Going back to when you started playing, who were your main guitar influences?

I grew up with a crystal radio and

GUS STEWART/REDFERNS

"WE DIDN'T MIND THE SLOW BUILD. WE WERE HAVING FUN AND GOING TO DIFFERENT

caught the tail end of the doo-wop era and the beginning of rock 'n' roll — Elvis and then into the Beatles and the whole British Invasion thing. Then came Hendrix and Cream and all the San Francisco psychedelic bands. I loved Jimmy Page and Jeff Beck. Ritchie Blackmore was a big one, and so was Jerry Garcia. I was also into Robby Krieger and Carlos Santana. I played an SG in those days because of a lot of those guys.

Oh, but you know, another big influence was Danny Kalb from the Blues Project. In my college band, which Albert Bouchard was in, we played a lot of Blues Project covers. I had to woodshed to play Danny Kalb's licks. He was kind of a fiery, showy, fast guitar player. I got my core technique from copying his stuff.

Were you a natural on the guitar, or did you struggle with it?

I was willing to put the time in. I started out on accordion when I was nine, but that felt pretty square. Then I took drum lessons and played in my high school band. Eventually, I went to guitar. My brother got a Stella acoustic for Christmas, and I played that — just started figuring things out. I got the Mel Bay chord book and learned what I needed — the seventh chords, the tonic chords, major and minor. I didn't get too deep into the jazz chords.

Very early on, when the band was still called Soft White Underbelly and played around Stony Brook University (in Suffolk County, New York), you hooked up with Sandy Pearlman. That really gave you a leg up on all the other bands in the area.

That's right. Sandy Pearlman was a rock critic for *Crawdaddy* magazine, and he was being courted by record companies. He approached the labels — "I got this band here. Can we make a demo?" We went right into the recording studios. We were never really a club band before then. We got signed to Elektra early on and did some recording, but we never had a release because we fell out with the label due to Sandy's personality.

What was Sandy's role as a manager? Did he help to shape your music, or was he more of an impresario?

Donald "Buck Dharma" Roeser in action with Blue Öyster Cult at the Hammersmith Odeon in London, November 6, 1979

Sandy could have been an artist, but he really couldn't sing, and he couldn't play an instrument. But he was brilliant in terms of understanding what a song was. As a critic of music, he was really good. We all sort of learned as we went along. He recognized my talent as a player and really got me motivated to try music professionally. I probably wouldn't have done it on my own if I hadn't met him. I owe him my career in a big way.

Were you on board with Sandy selling you as "America's answer to Black Sabbath"?

That was a promo angle, but it wasn't a guiding principle of Blue Öyster Cult at all. Still, it was pretty cool to say. There was no American Black Sabbath, so it kind of framed what Sandy intended for the audience. In reality, we were a lot more eclectic and all over the place stylistically. But Sabbath was great. We were huge fans.

The band was a slow builder and amassed its audience over the course of several albums. That kind of thing wouldn't happen nowadays.

No, not at all. Hats off to Columbia Records, because they signed us to a seven-record deal, and they were willing to roll the dice again and again. We worked hard on the road, and our album sales increased incrementally. We weren't a pop act. We didn't have a hit single until "(Don't Fear) the Reaper" on our fourth record. But we didn't mind the slow build. We were having fun and going to different places around the country and around the world. As long as we were always on the rise, it was fine.

You must have played on some crazy bills. In the early and mid Seventies, there would be shows with three and four bands from completely different genres.

Absolutely. We headlined a lot of shows with bands that went on to be headliners themselves. Those were great times. Bill Graham used to book shows like that where you had bands of multiple genres all playing the same night.

What was that like for you guys to be on the same bill as, say, a folk act?

It was great — the crowd

would be into us. In fact, I would be embarrassed if our crowd gave another act a bunch of crap. We played with the Raspberries once, and our crowd wasn't picking up on what they were doing. I thought the Raspberries were really good.

You played an SG quite a bit back then. What kinds of amps did you pair it with?

We got Marshalls when those amps started to happen after Jimi Hendrix and Cream. And, of course, the only way to get the tone out of a Marshall was to turn it up. It was kind of funny; I was this short guy playing through a full stack, and the speakers were about five feet from my head. It's a miracle I can hear anything.

How did the band's three-guitar lineup evolve? And who came up with Eric Bloom being credited with "stun guitar"?

That came about because the three of us — me, Eric and Allen — played guitar, so we arranged our tunes for three players. Eric liked to step on a fuzz pedal for a lot of his parts, so we ended up calling it "stun guitar." We didn't really put a lot of thought into it in terms of intention. It's just what we did.

I imagine, however, you had to work out the parts so nobody was stepping on somebody else's toes.

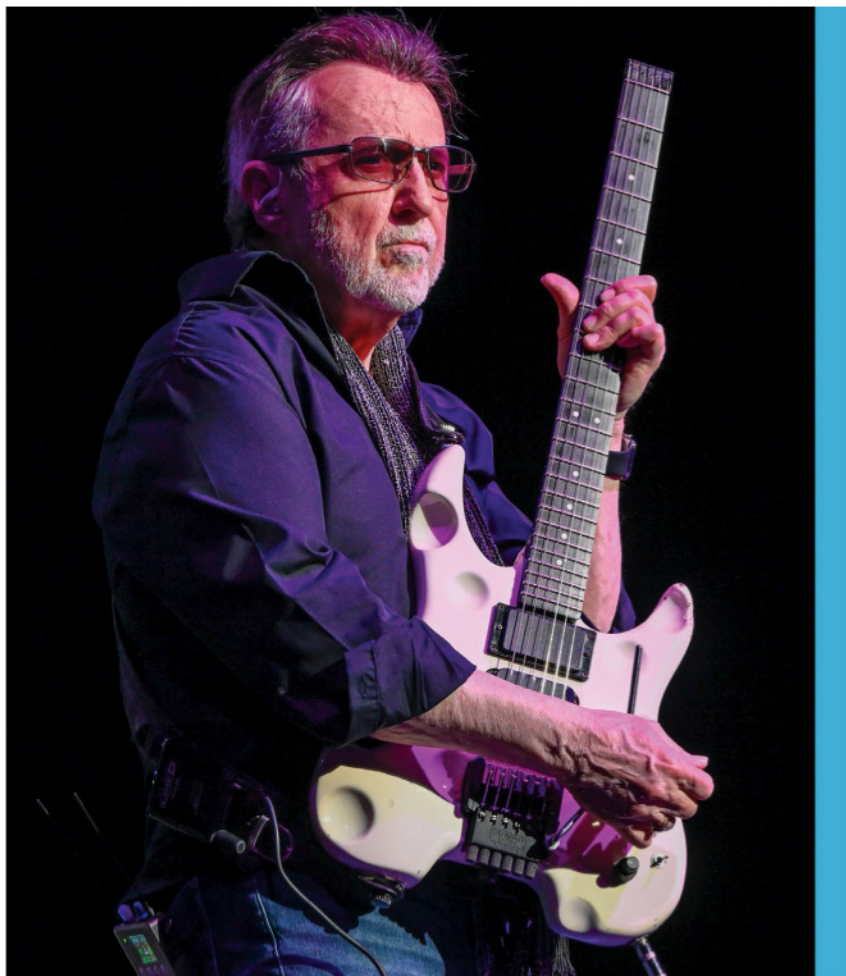
Yeah, of course you had to do that. You sort of learned about arrangements and stuff and how to make a song sound as good as you wanted it. It was trial and error.

Okay — "Reaper." The riff is iconic. Is that how it all started?

Absolutely. The riff came first. I wrote it using a TEAC 340S [reel-to-reel recorder], which was breakthrough technology for musicians at the time. Nowadays, you can overdub as much as you want on a laptop, but back then you couldn't do it outside of a recording studio. I was noodling around, and the riff just occurred to me. I recorded it and immediately began working on the song that became "Reaper."

The first two lines of the lyrics sprang into my head, too. After that, it was about six weeks of getting the story together, working on the bridge and the conclusion of the arrangement. I made a demo, ➔

PLACES AROUND THE WORLD. AS LONG AS WE WERE ALWAYS ON THE RISE, IT WAS FINE"



which is pretty much the way the band recorded it. They put some muscle and finesse into it, but it basically stayed the same.

I talk to musicians all the time who say, “I never thought such and such song would be a hit.” Did you think you had something with “Reaper”?

I think everybody thought it was a good song. Sandy Pearlman was pretty convinced it was going to go somewhere, and I thought, especially when the band recorded it, that it would be a strong FM cut. I didn’t know it was going to cross over to AM, which was pop radio.

Once you had a hit song, did the label pressure you to come up with another? The pressure was applied equally, but a lot of it was internal. When you have a hit,

Dharma with his Steinberger “CheeseBerger” guitar in Lincoln, California, April 1, 2023. “I’ve had the CheeseBerger for 30 years and I still play it,” he says

you want another one, and everybody expects another one. We thought, “Okay, we’re here now, and we’re going to follow this up and do whatever.” “Burnin’ for You” was a hit, and “Godzilla” was something of a hit, but the

kinds of songs that carry the day, we didn’t have ‘em one after another.

From what I gather, you weren’t bothered by the now-famous *Saturday Night Live* skit that lampooned BÖC cutting “Reaper.”

No, not at all. Frankly, we never took ourselves too seriously as artists. I mean, we liked to be appreciated, but we did a lot of stuff for the humor of it. Take a band like the Tubes — they would’ve been a lot bigger if people appreciated their humor. And, of course, we all thought Spinal Tap was hilarious.

When we did the *Hear ‘n Aid* recording session with Ronnie James Dio, the Spinal Tap guys were there. I heard a couple of artists grumbling, and I thought, “Really?”

Is there any one BÖC album that you feel epitomizes the band’s sound?

Hard to say. I think fans and critics would probably pick our first three records, and probably our third [1974’s *Secret Treaties*] would be their favorite. But then you’ve got *Agents of Fortune* and *Spectres*, and there are the records Martin Birch produced — *Cultösaurs Erectus* and *Fire of Unknown Origin*. They all represent sections of our career. To pick one really depends on which song you like or what period you want to go with. I don’t really have a favorite.

You’ve issued only one solo album — 1982’s *Flat Out*. Most of the material was songs the band deemed too “poppy.”

That’s true. I’m a pop guy at heart. I wrote a lot of stuff that wouldn’t go on the band’s records. “Burnin’ for You” was supposed to be on my solo record — that was the plan — but Sandy Pearlman convinced me to have the band do it. And that made sense since it would have been bigger with the band playing it than if it wound up on a Buck Dharma record.

Are you still playing that Steinberger “CheeseBerger” guitar?

I am. I went to a NAMM Show in ‘85 and came across Steinbergers for the first time. I’d seen other sort of jazzy players with them, but this was the first time I played one myself. I developed a relationship with the company and got a bunch of their guitars. The CheeseBerger was made after Gibson bought Steinberger, and they moved the factory from Newburgh, New York, to Nashville. I’ve had the CheeseBerger for 30 years now, and I still play it.

What’s the secret to that guitar?

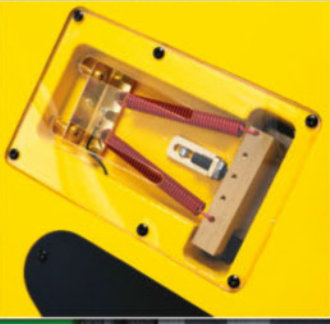
I really like the neck. The guitar is very durable as far as touring goes. It doesn’t warp, nor does it take a lot of maintenance. It just works. I like the EMG pickups, even though they don’t have a strong personality. They’re sort of neutral, which allows you to shape what the guitar sounds like. I just like it. **GW**

STEVE JENNINGS/GETTY

“WE LIKED TO BE APPRECIATED, BUT WE DID A LOT OF STUFF FOR THE HUMOR OF IT”

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CIRCLING BACK

From an incomplete Gregg Allman track to appearances by former ABB bandmate Derek Trucks, Warren Haynes' gripping new album oozes with Allman Brothers Band mojo

BY ALAN PAUL

WARREN HAYNES HAS been one of the greatest, most active musicians on the roots and jam scene for four decades now, working with Gov't Mule, the Allman Brothers Band and the Dead, among many others. Yet the new *Million Voices Whisper* is only his fourth studio solo album across all those years. Like its predecessors, it's a collection that focuses a bit more on the songcraft than jamming, a diverse set of songs with a heavy soul underpinning.

The headline for fans of the Allman Brothers Band is that Derek Trucks appears on three songs that the two guitarists co-produced. Though they've played together on stage many times since the ABB's last show a decade ago, these tracks represent the first studio collaboration between Haynes and Trucks since 2003's *Hittin' the Note*, the ABB's final album. One of the songs, "Real Real Love," was based on lyrics written by Gregg Allman, who never completed the song. These three tracks go a

long way in completing an unbroken circle for Haynes and Trucks, who played together in the ABB from 2001 to 2014.

"I always wanted to do one more Allman Brothers studio record, but that just wasn't meant to be," Haynes says.

The Allman Brothers Band's final concert, which took place October 28, 2014, was released in a newly remastered version on the 10th anniversary of the show, further adding closure to Haynes and Trucks' sparkling partnership in the group.

Million Voices Whisper also features guest appearances by Lukas Nelson and Jamey Johnson, whom Haynes toured with for several years as part of The Last Waltz Tour, a tribute to the Band. The album's core band, now on the road with Haynes, is John Medeski on keyboards, New Orleans drummer Terence Higgins and Gov't Mule bassist Kevin Scott. Though the quartet had never played together before the album sessions, Haynes says, "it felt really natural really quickly."

Haynes has been a fixture since he came to national prominence as a member of the reformed Allman Brothers band in 1989. Gov't Mule, which began as a side project for him and ABB bassist Allen Woody, who passed away in 2000, recently celebrated its 30th anniversary. He's also worked extensively with the Grateful Dead's Phil Lesh, toured as a member of the Dead and been at the center of countless classic jams, including at his mostly annual Christmas →

"I always wanted to do one more Allman Brothers studio record, but that just wasn't meant to be"

Jam. The holiday tradition has brought musicians including Dave Grohl, Billy Gibbons, John Paul Jones, Gregg Allman, Bob Weir and Dave Matthews to Haynes' hometown of Asheville, North Carolina, raising millions of dollars for Habitat for Humanity, building more than 50 homes and creating three new neighborhoods.

Million Voices Whisper feels a little different from anything else you've done. The songs really work together as a cohesive album. Did you write specifically for this project or did you end up with a certain number of songs that felt similar and then decide you should make a solo album?

A little of both. I wrote a few of the songs during the lockdown, but most of them are brand new, and once I started writing with a sonic goal in mind, it became easier to focus on what songs belonged together. It's a very song-oriented album that falls somewhere between *Ashes and Dust* and *Man in Motion*, which it's closer to because it's also very soul-music influenced.

"Real Real Love" is a song Gregg Allman started and you finished. You co-wrote a lot with him. Was this something you had worked on together?

No. He had shown it to me, but we never did tackle it. Bert [Holman, *Allman Brothers Band* manager] sent me a copy of Gregg's incomplete lyrics and asked if I remembered the song, which I did. I don't know if he had music to it or not, but there's no evidence if he did. So I wrote the music and finished the lyrics, all based on how he would do it. We spent enough years writing together that I had a good idea of how to shape it in a way that would be reflective of what he would want it to be.

Did that impact how you sang it? Did you have his voice in your head?

Yeah, absolutely. More so than probably anything I've ever done. I was thinking of how he would sing it and how he would arrange it. That was one of the reasons I added the horn section — because I could hear Gregg saying, "Hey, we need to add horns."

Lukas Nelson, Jamey Johnson and Derek Trucks all make significant contributions to the album. Did you make a conscious decision that you wanted to do a project with a lot of collaborations?

Not really — except for Derek. When I finished writing "Real Real Love," I sent Derek a work tape and said, "We need to

record this tune together." It just made sense to have him on that side because of the Gregg connection. Then we decided to get together and write, so I went down to his farm in Georgia and we spent three days writing together and wrote quite a bit of music, including "These Changes," "Hall of Future Saints" and a couple of others that I think will surface because I really like them a lot.

Of the three songs, "Hall of Future Saints" has the most extended guitar jamming. Was it structured that way?

Sort of, but we were really getting into it in the studio and it became over nine minutes long with that extended outro. We kept the long jam at the end as opposed to fading it or cutting it out just because we felt like the fans would want to hear it. I think what we wound up with is the proper way to capture what we were trying to do, which is capturing the live energy and chemistry of everyone playing together in real time in addition to the songs themselves.

"Bert sent me a copy of Gregg's incomplete lyrics and asked if I remembered the song"

How did Lukas and Jamey end up on "Day of Reckoning"?

We worked together on *The Last Waltz* shows, and I loved the way our voices blend together and wanted to do something with the three of us. Lukas co-wrote "Day of Reckoning," making some suggestions that made a big difference, and then Jamie co-wrote "Go Down Swinging." Lukas plays the first two solos on "Day of Reckoning," and it was very exciting as it happened, which wasn't necessarily how it was structured. He was playing his Les Paul Junior through an AC30 that was in the studio, and it sounded amazing.

"Lies, Lies, Lies" sounds like it could slide onto a Gov't Mule album, partly because it's so driven by Kevin Scott's bassline. He seems to have unleashed something in your playing since he joined last year, and he's the only other connection between the two bands.

Kevin is such a strong musical personality that he's constantly pushing everyone else to play differently, based on his approach. Much of my music is pretty bass-driven,

but Kevin takes it the extra mile. This was the first time we had worked in the studio together, and it was interesting to watch the way he approaches recording as opposed to live performance. It's a very different thing, but his playing is very similar in both contexts, and I love that.

Most of the musicians I choose to work with don't get caught up in the recording traps. It's nice if we can approach the music much more similarly to the way we approach it on stage than the average person does. I've always tried to do that, but it's interesting getting other people's perspective on it, and we were forming a new band in the studio rather than on stage. Terence [Higgins, *drums*] and John [Medeski, *keyboards*] are such strong players that we easily forced a chemistry upon ourselves. I had played with everyone individually, but the four of us had never played together until then; it felt like a band right from the beginning, which is the most you can hope for. I always want a band, not a group of backing musicians, and I could feel that growing day by day. Then when we went on the road, we added [saxophonist] Greg Osby to the fold, which brought another fantastic sonic layer and it has continued to grow.

Your playing on "You Ain't Above Me" is very B.B. King inspired, almost a tribute. That may have sounded derivative 20 years ago, but it's so welcome now. B.B. is gone, and for those of us who miss him and that type of playing so much, it's very powerful and heartening to hear it so well executed — and there aren't many people who can do it justice.

Thanks. I agree that the more time that passes, the more it's not only okay to honor your heroes and influences, but absolutely the right thing to do. A lot of guitar players are going to keep B.B.'s style alive, but he influenced us all more than most people even realize. Still, this is just what happened naturally responding to what I was hearing. I did not write the song as a tribute to B.B. In fact, I thought of it more like a soul ballad, which is just a short walk away, and when we started playing it, I naturally gravitated toward that B.B. influence when Medeski started playing that gospel organ intro. That kind of thing is why I like to let the songs breathe and unfold as we work them out.

If you get the right people in the room, the right things will happen.

Yes, exactly right. You know, there's also a strong B.B. influence on "Go Down Swinging," so the second and third songs





Derek Trucks [left] and Haynes perform at the Tedeschi Trucks Band's "Garden Party" show in Boston, September 27, 2023

on the album tip the hat to B.B. King, which is fine by me.

You have a very nice, mostly clean, tube-driven sound throughout the album. What was your primary gear?

My two main guitars were my signature Les Paul and my blonde 335. On the bonus track, "Baby's On the Move," I played a signature J Mascis guitar that he gave me when I sat in with him. It's basically a Squier Jazzmaster, a very inexpensive, fantastic-sounding guitar. I really don't think I had ever played a Jazzmaster and certainly had never recorded with one and it was very cool and a lot of fun.

I used a combination of three amps, as I've been doing a lot recently. It was mostly

my little Alessandro recording amp, a Homestead combo and one of my Gibsons, mostly the prototype of the new Falcon. We swapped some stuff out, but that was my main combination. We would record all three, then decide what combination we wanted to use, which was different on every track but worked well.

"It's not only okay to honor your heroes and influences, but absolutely the right thing to do"

Effects wise, the [Hughes & Kettner] Rotosphere appeared here and there. I used a Boss OC-2 octave divider on the solo for "Day of Reckoning" and there are a couple of backwards solos on "Lies, Lies, Lies," where I just stepped on the Hardwire DL-8 pedal while playing. Maybe one was overdubbed and one was live. I keep saying I'm going to do more overdubbing, but I wind up keeping the solos from the track because it's so much more fun.

You've been telling me "The next one will have more overdubs" for 30 years!

I know. I start every album saying I'm going to do more overdubbing on this record and there are a few here, but I'm always going to favor playing live! **GW**

TAYLOR HILL/GETTY



Seven Stringer

WHO THE HELL are Spiritbox? That's what gaggles of boomers and other pre-millennials asked in

November when the Canadian quartet was nominated for its second Grammy in a row for Best Metal Performance. To the unfamiliar, Spiritbox seemed to storm the scene like a tornado through a gated community, emerging from blue skies to open 25 dates for Korn, collaborating twice with star rapper Megan Thee Stallion, decorating playlists with millions of streams and getting handpicked to play select dates with Linkin Park — all before releasing their second full-length album.

But to those in the know — including fans who've watched the band's 22 music videos — Spiritbox's ascent and their acceptance among the pantheon of greats (or, at least, their booking agents) is hardly a conundrum. It's the result of eclectic, accessible songwriting, out-of-the-box marketing and, yes, years of dues-paying. Not only have Spiritbox been around since 2016, the band's main songwriters, seven-string guitarist Mike Stringer and his wife (then girlfriend) Courtney LaPlante, honed their chops in the experimental metalcore band Iwrestledabearonce (IWABO). And, on top of their two full-lengths, Spiritbox have released four EPs, the latest of which, 2023's *The Fear of Fear*, reached Number 116 on the *Billboard* 200 album chart and included the Grammy-nominated "Cellar Door" (as well as "Jaded," which was transcribed in our March 2025 issue).

"It's so funny that a lot of people think

Spiritbox guitarist Mike Stringer dispels the illusion of the band's "overnight success" while being stoked about their new album and playing to massive crowds

BY JON WIEDERHORN

we came out of nowhere and were manufactured by the music industry to make them loads of money," says Stringer, days after the release of "Perfect Soul," the second single from the band's new album, *Tsunami Sea*. "That would probably be one of the worst investments from any company, ever. If you think of how long it has taken to get this band off the ground, it has been such a slow-moving process, and after 12 years playing in bands, we've finally gotten to the point where we can pay rent."

After leaving Iwrestledabearonce, Stringer and LaPlante's early gameplan was to create public awareness online before launching a tour. At the advice of management, Stringer spent two years writing electronic-inflected melodic metalcore songs that were less structurally complex and more tuneful than anything by IWABO, and showcased LaPlante's estimable vocal abilities. In October 2017, Spiritbox released their eyebrow-raising

self-titled seven-song EP and followed 18 months later with the EP *Singles Collection*. Riding the momentum of the well-received "Blessed Be," they were finally ready to hit the road, and headed to Europe in February 2020 to play shows with After the Burial and Make Them Suffer. Their timing couldn't have been worse.

"We had a song out that people really liked, and everyone was excited we were going to play shows," Stringer says. "Then the pandemic shut everything down and we had to pay 30 grand to come home overnight because there was a travel ban. We had no money and I went into major debt. When we got home I said to Courtney, 'Well, it looks like we're done here because we can't tour and now we're going to have to figure out how to pay this money off.'"

Frustrated, but still determined, Spiritbox returned to the writing room and continued doing what they'd done for the past 24 months. The result of their efforts, their first full-length, *Eternal Blue*, came out in 2021 and hit Number 50 on *Billboard*'s year-end hard rock albums chart.

Today, Stringer brims with optimism. The chuggy, textural and contagious "Perfect Soul" has accrued nearly three million streams. The video for the song has more than a million views, and there are still (as of this writing) three months to →

**"AFTER 12 YEARS
PLAYING IN BANDS,
WE'VE FINALLY GOTTEN
TO THE POINT WHERE
WE CAN PAY RENT"**

[from left] Josh
Gilbert, Zev Rose,
Courtney LaPlante
and Mike Stringer



go before the gripping, multifaceted rock/metal hybrid *Tsunami Sea* gets released. Dressed in a checkered red-and-white flannel shirt that covers most, but not all of the tattoo sleeve on his right arm, Stringer is stoked that so many marquee rock bands have taken an interest in Spiritbox, and he's excited to discuss the personal and musical growth the band underwent while writing *Tsunami Sea*, why it's okay for headbangers to like John Mayer and how feeling like an outcast in your hometown can be as creatively inspiring as it is depressing.

It must be strange to go from recording your debut album at home and developing a huge online fanbase to performing for huge crowds. It's like you skipped the dive-club-playing part of your career.

It's very weird. The band gained a lot of popularity when we couldn't go out and

play music. For years, everything happened behind the scenes. We've only recently been hitting it hard and touring. I sometimes get freaked out when I look out at the audience and all these people are singing along. It's so bizarre. It's like we existed in this big blank space of uncertainty, and then all of a sudden it was, "Wow, look what happened!" We're here now and we have to continue to strike while the iron is hot.

Was there pressure on you to follow up the success of *Eternal Blue*?

The expectations on us after *Eternal Blue* were enormous, and trying to outdo ourselves has been a real challenge. I feel like there's only so long that you have to dedicate to a creative project before you run out of ideas, and whenever I hit a brick wall I was like, "Man, we need to take this in a different direction and redo some things before it's too late." Those kinds of moments are really stressful. But, in the end, all you can do is remain true to yourself and your vision and hope people connect with it.

When did you start working on *Tsunami Sea*, and how did you want it to be an evolution from *Eternal Blue*?

We started in the fall of 2023. Instead of

trying to make something specific to fit some genre, I focused on making good songs, whether that meant they were full of hooks or crazy-heavy. We had just released the *Fear EP*, and we took a trip to Joshua Tree [National Park, California] for a week. I basically have three or four months a year when I feel extremely creative, so I just went for it, and sometimes I did a demo a day. I walked out of there with about eight songs. A month later, we took another trip there and came out with another 10 songs. I wrote about 30 songs that we demoed, and we narrowed those down to the best 11. By that time it was March 2024, so we recorded the entire thing over April and May. I was stressed and worried the entire time, but once we started playing the finished tracks for people and they were no longer little secrets on my iPhone, I felt so much better. And the reaction was great, which didn't hurt.

The first two songs you released from *Tsunami Sea*, "Soft Spine" and "Perfect Soul," exhibit two different sides of the band. "Soft Spine," which came first, is the far more aggressive of the two.

We wanted to show our old fans that we've grown but we haven't changed. The song

"IN THE END, ALL YOU CAN DO IS REMAIN TRUE TO YOURSELF AND YOUR VISION AND HOPE PEOPLE CONNECT WITH IT"

has an IWABO part. There's a Danzig-esque half-step part, and a disgusting, dissonant tapping part, which is something I used to do all the time when I was younger, so much that I got sick of doing it. But when I was making that song, I just felt like it was ridiculous and required a ridiculous part. And we hadn't done that in our catalog, so why not do a throwback? That's part of what makes the song so fun and special for us and our old fans. It's a wink-wink thing, especially when we play it live.

How did you get the gnarly, teeth-gnashing guitar sound?

I found a setting on the [EarthQuaker Devices] Rainbow Machine [polyphonic pitch shifter] pedal that sounded amazingly disgusting. When I found that sound, I thought, "Man, let's make the entire song revolve around this pedal sound." So 90 percent of the guitar sound is the Rainbow Machine going on and off.

"Perfect Soul" is far more commercial sounding than "Soft Spine."

For the first new songs we released, we wanted to show very different sides of the band. "Perfect Soul" is a good example of having balance and being atmospheric and catchy. There are still loud riffs and heavy guitar, but it's more about the melodic vocals.

Has it been hard for you to hold back more as a guitarist and allow Courtney the spotlight instead of constantly playing?

Yeah, at first it was — and you can hear it in the music. I was extremely riffy and filling all the space in the song. But as I got more open to different styles, my approach to playing and writing changed. Now, I don't think about how many notes I can fit into a part. I just want to try to make songs that will sound good with Courtney's vocals, and if that means being more reserved during a chorus so I can let her shine, then that's fine.

The songs on *Tsunami Sea* range from melodic rock to full-on metalcore, but there are certain thematic elements that run through the music.

We wanted to maintain a lyrical and musical flow from the beginning to end, so the entire record is tied in with ocean sounds, which gives it this lonely feel. The album has a lot to do with the disillusionment we felt after going back to where we grew up in Victoria Island in Canada and how uncomfortable it was.



Stringer in action with one of his signature Aristides o7o seven-string models

Why was it unpleasant to visit your hometown? Did people look down on you?

Time is a cruel mistress. We romanticized the lives we used to have, but when you leave your home to go on tour, everyone else's life continues, and your presence there gets put on pause. Our friends had been having children and meeting new people and getting new jobs and buying houses. When you go back, you can't take over where you left off with them, and that's hard to wrap your head around. Everyone wants to talk about the band. I totally get that and it's great. And I'll do that for sure, but after a while, I'm more interested in talking about them. I'll say, "Well, how are you? I want to know what you've got going on. What are you doing?" And a lot of times, they'll say, "Oh, you know, I haven't really been doing anything... So, what's it like to be on the road with Korn?"

Who are your biggest influences?

It's a mixture of a lot of players. I'm always

amazed by James Hetfield's rhythm playing because he's got the tightest right hand known to man. But then, I'm in love with Dimebag Darrell's vibrato and Misha Mansoor's tricky riffs. There are good tricks and incredible techniques you can learn from watching all your favorite players and keeping them in your brain and try to emulate without just imitating.

Do you have any non-metal guitar heroes?

John Mayer. I know everyone mentions him, but I cannot think of another guy that has been so tuned in with his instrument. Seeing him play is like watching a master craftsman at work. I'm like, "How the hell is that even possible?" Not only has he mastered his instrument, but he can write great songs. It's so rare to have a guitar player that can just get up onstage and totally dominate, and then have Number 1 singles. And his voicings are so incredible, so when it comes to left-hand stuff, especially, it bleeds into my playing, for sure.

You play Aristides seven-string guitars. When did you switch from six to seven strings?

My first band, Fall in Archaea, kept wanting to play lower and lower. We were already at drop B on a six-string, and then I started doing that Architects tuning from their [2009] *Hollow Crown* record, where they take that first string down to G# and they kept the top six back at drop B, so you have this weird, dissonant note on the bottom that mimics the seven to a certain degree. After I started doing that, I was like, "Nah, I just need to get a seven." So when I was 17, I got my first seven-string. I fell in love with it and there was no turning back. **GW**





John Petrucci with his signature
Ernie Ball Music Man 10th
Anniversary Majesty in Silver Chalice



DREAM REUNION

**"HAVING MIKE BACK,
AND ALL OF US BEING
TOGETHER IN THE
STUDIO MADE US FEEL
LIKE WE WERE
18 AGAIN"**

Forty years into their career, Dream Theater have received a vital transfusion via the return of original drummer Mike Portnoy.

John Petrucci takes you inside the reunion — and the band's new album

BY JON WIEDERHORN

FOR DREAM THEATER, it was a nightmare scenario. On September 8, 2010, after months of emotional turmoil, original drummer Mike Portnoy announced he was leaving the band. The move came as a shock to the band's fans, many of whom viewed Portnoy as the group's heartbeat, the precise, polyrhythmic pulse that anchored the songs and gave guitarist John Petrucci a colorful, well-lit lane in which to fervently speed, randomly meander, or passionately roll.

The natural chemistry between Petrucci and Portnoy dates back to their early days jamming together. The story began when the guitarist and his middle school buddy and bassist John Myung met the drummer in 1985 at the Berklee College of Music in Boston and started the band Majesty. For nearly 25 years, they had a nearly insatiable hunger for writing, recording and performing experimental prog-metal and rarely allowed personal matters to interrupt their musical ambition.

"We had lofty goals from the very beginning," Petrucci says from his hotel room in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, where Dream Theater just finished a show with Portnoy for their 40th Anniversary Tour. "We looked up to bands like Iron Maiden and Rush, who had long careers and were always putting out records. We wanted to do the same thing."

Starting with their 1989 debut, *When* →

Dream and Day Unite, the band combined their diverse influences (including Rush, Yes, Metallica, Dixie Dreggs, Iron Maiden, King Crimson and Al Di Meola) and created iconoclastic, mathematically complex prog-metal that shattered boundaries. The band became tighter and more adventurous with time. Multi-faceted full-lengths were followed by world tours, and soon after one album cycle ended, the next would begin. It was how Dream Theater flowed — like a huge, glittering waterfall in constant motion — and it allowed the band to maintain visibility through the grunge, alternative and nu-metal movements and retain a dedicated fanbase. But the decades of churning and burning took its toll on Portnoy. Having devoted 25 years to the band, the acrobatic drummer wanted to take at least a year off to decompress and focus on other projects. Such a request was unacceptable to his bandmates, so Portnoy bailed.

"It just came down to priorities," Petrucci says. "He wanted to take some time off, and we wanted to keep going with our busy schedule, writing and recording and then going on a full world tour that could last for a year and half or more. He wanted to stop, we didn't, and that was the decision we made. We did what we needed to do in order to keep going."

"I was starting to feel trapped, and they wanted me to commit to a certain date to start the next record, and I just wasn't ready," Portnoy told the podcast *Everyone Loves Guitar* in 2020. "I went with my heart and said, 'Look, I'd rather regret something I have done than something I haven't.'"

Soon after Portnoy quit, Dream Theater held rigorous auditions and hired Berklee professor and ex-Steve Vai tour drummer Mike Mangini, who more than capably played on Dream Theater's next five albums. Seeing someone else behind the kit created tension between Portnoy and Petrucci, but they stayed in touch and their daughters even shared an apartment in New York for about five years.

During the 13 years Portnoy was out of Dream Theater, he played on 40 albums with many bands, including the power trio the Winery Dogs (Portnoy, guitarist Richie Kotzen and bassist Billy Sheehan), which released four albums. As early as 2013, however, Portnoy said he was ready to return to Dream Theater, but wasn't overly optimistic that it would happen. "I would do it in a heartbeat," he told MetalInjection.com. "But I honestly don't think they ever will; they've closed their door on it and I think they're too headstrong in having to prove themselves



Dream Theater in 2024 [from left]: Mike Portnoy, John Petrucci, James LaBrie, John Myung and Jordan Rudess

without me. So I wouldn't count on it. But my door is always open."

Then when the Covid pandemic hit, tensions between Petrucci and Portnoy substantially dissipated. Life was just too short for lingering animosity over life choices. So, when Petrucci was working on his second solo album, 2020's *Terminal Velocity*, he invited Portnoy to play drums. The two had such a good time reminiscing and reconnecting that they decided to reform their instrumental prog supergroup Liquid Tension Experiment and recorded *Liquid Tension Experiment 3* — the follow-up to 1999's *Liquid Tension Experiment 2* with King Crimson bassist Tony Levin and Dream Theater keyboardist Jordan Rudess.

Many Dream Theater fans thought the writing was on the wall for Portnoy's return, but the rest of the band was happy with Mangini, and some were unsure how bringing Portnoy back would change the vibe in the band. "Fans speculated that all

the signs were leading to this, but we had no definite plans and it wasn't a sure thing," Petrucci says. "Then, one day the timing felt right and we all got together."

For Petrucci, the hardest part of the reconciliation was getting everyone into the rehearsal room at the same time. Yet he knew that once they were all together and started playing, the band would bond like a video of an exploding car projected in reverse. "We met Mike when we were teenagers and we played together as Dream Theater for 25 years, so we know exactly how to play together and sound great," he says. "When we finally did it, there were no surprises. Mike didn't miss a beat and everything was easy and exciting."

In February 2024, Dream Theater started writing new songs and setting up the conceptual threads for their 16th album, *Parasomnia*, their most adventurous, energetic and darkly metallic album in more than a decade. Determined to recapture the impulsiveness,



experimentation, heaviness and technical proficiency of records like 2003's *Train of Thought* and 2009's *Black Clouds & Silver Linings*, the band assembled an epic concept album about the dark side of sleep disorders that plunges into realms of terror, paralysis, and even murder.

"From the moment we started writing it, we knew it was going to be a heavy, aggressive album," Petrucci says. "Having Mike back, and all of us being together in the studio made us feel like we were 18 again. We just wanted to write super-heavy riffs and rock out."

When Petrucci uses words like "heavy" and "aggressive," he's not being hyperbolic. Not only is *Parasomnia* turbulent, dense and often fast, but some passages in "Night Terror," "A Broken Man" and "Midnight Messiah" feature guitar tones, palm-muted riffs and angular rhythms reminiscent of Metallica.

"To me, that's a huge compliment," Petrucci says, then smiles. "It was so

exciting to draw back on some of my early influences. I'm a huge Metallica fan, and majorly influenced by James Hetfield and Kirk Hammett. I infused that style of fast, chuggy rhythmic playing into my sound and you can clearly hear it on the first Dream Theater album. It was great to bring some of that stuff back."

Did you write any of *Parasomnia* in advance or did you get in a room with Mike and let fly?

Mike rejoined in October 2023, and we

"FROM THE MOMENT WE STARTED WRITING IT, WE KNEW IT WAS GOING TO BE A HEAVY, AGGRESSIVE ALBUM"

started working on the new album all together in February 2024. I didn't have any songs going in, but I'm constantly writing and collecting chord progressions and different ideas to complement them, so when we start working on an album I have some direction. What's interesting is that I've had the title *Parasomnia* in my head for a few years, and along with that came this idea of having a lyrical theme that deals with different types of sleep disturbances.

The conceptual thread of sleep disorders drives and provides cohesion for the songs. Is *Parasomnia* something you've experienced?

Not more than anyone else. The idea surfaced when I was talking to my son one day, and he mentioned the word "parasomnia." I was like, "Whoa, what's that? I've never heard that word before, but it sounds cool." We talked about it, and I said, "Man, that would be a great album title for Dream Theater. The word has such a cool ring to →

it. And once I started diving into what it entailed, it brought up all these ideas that provided a wealth of inspiration to write some really cool, dark, creative songs.

So, the concept helped guide the music as well as the lyrics.

It did. And one of the first things Mike said when we started writing the songs was, "Hey, what if this wasn't only a lyrically conceptual album?" as I had proposed. "What if we took it a step further and made the music have that concept album feel as well?"

Was that a turning point for you?

It was a great suggestion, and we ended up taking that as far as our imaginations could go. We had recurring themes and little vignettes between the songs to connect them and give them more of the feel of a record like *The Dark Side of the Moon*, which is meant to be listened to from beginning to end. So, the album is almost like an experience. It starts off with somebody going to bed and drifting into a sleep state. And all these weird things happen to them when they're sleeping, and in the end they come out of it. I thought that was a really cool way to make this album more intense, creative and epic because having all these connections created a cinematic element to the album.

Did having Mike back on drums fuel the band's creativity?

As soon as Mike was back on the kit, everything started taking shape for the whole band. I met him when we were 18, and we were always together for so long, so as soon as we started playing again it was like having my buddy back. We were all inspired and felt so creative. "Night Terror" was the thing we wrote.

That song is almost 10 minutes long, and it's the heaviest track you've recorded in years, building from bleak and doomy to fast and thrashy before leveling off when the vocals kick in before hitting the gas again.

That song gives you a little idea of what the vibe was like in the studio. That's a big part of why we released it as the first single. We wanted listeners to feel what we felt after Mike rejoined — the excitement of being back with him in the studio. There's a brotherly chemistry between us that's undeniable.

Did you plan to start out with a banger or did it just burst out of you when you plugged in?

It exploded out of us. That's the way it

"It's all my Ernie Ball Music Man signature Majesty," Petrucci says about the new album. "I used the eight-, seven- and six-string versions"



works for us. We were pumped, and we naturally set off in a direction. Whether that direction comes from a riff, a chord progression, or a drum beat, it begins the flow and then this stream of consciousness takes over and we all start coming up with ideas.

Was Mike Mangini, who played in the band between 2010 and 2023 understanding about your decision

to work with Portnoy again?

To his credit, he was wonderful about it. I called him and explained the conclusion we came to and he was really gracious and accepting, which helped make the change and transition very smooth and non-dramatic.

There are some contemplative tracks on *Parasomnia*, including the instrumental "Are We Dreaming"

and “Bend the Clock.” Did the heaviest material come to you first?

I think the second song we wrote was “Broken Man,” so yeah, I’d say we stayed heavy for a while, which was so much fun.

You’ve never constrained yourself musically, and *Parasomnia* is no exception. There’s a haunting, harrowing instrumental overture, crushing riffs, shredding solos, heartrending leads, narrative samples, and orchestral passages. Then, after 50 minutes, when most albums are coming to an end, you start “The Shadow Man Incident,” a nearly 20-minute feast of cinematic progressions, experimental flourishes and exotic rhythms.

“Shadow Man” is one of my favorite tracks. I really enjoyed, not just writing the music, but making the lyrics as well, because the topic was so intriguing. So, we had the best of all worlds — the perfect backdrop to explore the story line.

What’s it about?

Sleep paralysis, which is a really interesting phenomenon. People who suffer from it are awake and they can see and hear but they can’t move. It’s like there’s a demon on their chest holding them down, and some people who go through it — and there have been tons of reports over centuries — claim they’ve seen this ominous figure that’s been called the Shadow Man.

“Dead Asleep,” the second-longest track (11 minutes), starts as a haunting lullaby and then evolves into heavy riffs punctuated with pick harmonics before bounding off in a more ethereal and melodic direction.

When I wrote the chord progressions for the beginning and the end of that, I was thinking about Randy Rhoads, and how he would create these dark, dreamy chord progressions on the Ozzy Osbourne album *Diary of a Madman*. Everything else stemmed from that.

Was there anything new you wanted to do with guitars on *Parasomnia*?

I wanted to infuse some different tonal elements to the riff writing and the chord progressions. So I started studying some things I hadn’t done before — different types of scales, different types of chords, and chord movement.

Can you be more specific?

In “Night Terror,” I wrote the riffs and main guitar solo trying to stick to this mode called Super Phrygian, which added a weird



Mike Portnoy — behind the kit once again with Dream Theater — in Zagreb, Croatia, October 28, 2024

tonal element. I also did some classical things, in which a song doesn’t ever resolve to the root until the end, which is a cool technique that creates a more dreamy sound. I used really weird things like the Tristan chord and the Prometheus chord to give some of the songs a mystical vibe. When I did my homework for the album, I studied a lot of eight-note scales as well.

Do you work on different parts for different songs at the same time and build them as you go along or do you prefer to write a full song before moving on to the next?

We’ll work on one song at a time and try to finish it. But as we’re writing, sometimes we’ll go off on a tangent that doesn’t necessarily make sense for that song. At the end of “Bend the Clock” there’s a long Pink Floyd-y David Gilmour-inspired guitar solo that came out of a jam we were doing, and it stemmed from this bass part John started playing. It was so cool, but we knew it wouldn’t fit into the song we were working on, so we documented it and put it aside to work with later. That happens from time to time. But mostly, we focus hard on one song at a time, perfect it, and get the drum

performance recorded. Otherwise, we’d have a whole pile of material for a 70-minute record and we’d have to go back and try to remember how the hell we played everything. When we get the drum performance down, we also record scratch tracks, so now we have more than just a skeleton, we have the full song done and it’s just a matter of going back in and getting the overdubs done.

Parts of the instrumental overture, “In the Arms of Morpheus” and “The Shadow Man Incident” would sound great in a film soundtrack.

A lot of that comes from studying John Williams and trying to understand his epic, cinematic compositions. On the first vocal sections and verses of “Shadow Man,” the chord progressions are really strange and have some weird resolutions and key changes. And you can hear it in “Morpheus,” too, when the eight-string guitar kicks in. That chord that we whack after the F# downbeat is the Prometheus chord I was talking about, which is a series of tritones. And that’s something else I have been working on.

Why did you play an eight-string guitar on the overture?

We wrote the whole record and then decided to go back and make the listening experience more like *The Dark Side of the Moon* and create little musical and narrative connections between the songs. So, we wrote an overture that encompasses all of these melodies on the record. I had not used the eight-string yet, so I tried it and →

“PEOPLE WHO SUFFER FROM [SLEEP PARALYSIS] ARE AWAKE; THEY CAN SEE AND HEAR, BUT THEY CAN’T MOVE”

I was like, “This thing sounds great!” Just as soon as it kicks in, all hell breaks loose.

You played a seven-string in “The Shadow Man Incident.” Was everything else played on six strings?

Yes, but I mixed up the tunings, which I haven’t done since *Train of Thought* [2003]. “Night Terror” and “Bend the Clock” use standard tuning, but “Dead Asleep” is in drop B_♭, which was inspired by Zakk Wylde, who joined me at my Guitar Universe Camp. We jammed on a bunch of Black Label Society and Ozzy stuff. Zakk is always playing in drop B_♭, where you tune to C and you drop the [lowest string] down to B_♭. “Midnight Messiah” is in C, and “A Broken Man” is tuned down to D.

Did you use a variety of new and vintage guitars?

It’s all my Ernie Ball Music Man Signature Majesty. I used the eight-, seven- and six-string versions. I used different agencies, but it’s all on the Majesty. It does everything I need, whether it’s a great clean sound, a heavy, tight percussive, riffy sound or a soaring, creamy lead sound. I have the bolt-on version of my Ernie Ball Music Man JP15, which is amazing. And we have the neck-through version, which is now celebrating its 10th anniversary.

Are you trying out any new right-handed techniques?

There’s this hyper-speed alternate picking style I was trying to do for a while and finally got the hang of. You hear that a few times on the album, most noticeably right in the middle of “Night Terror.”

There’s some flashy interplay between the guitar and keyboards that almost sounds like guitar harmonies.

Jordan [Rudess] and I do it in “Night Terror” in the first instrumental break before the main guitar. And we do it again on “Midnight Messiah.” It’s a right-hand tapping Van Halen hammer-on technique that we’re harmonizing. I like to think of it as our version of a “Highway Star” unison-type harmony. And we also do some unison stuff in “Shadow Man,” in the Latin music-influenced section.

What inspired you to break into a Latin-inspired part?

One morning, as I would often do, I got to the studio before the guys, picked up my guitar, and started writing this really fast, galloping, tight riff. And that’s what the Latin part morphs into. So, that fast part came first, and I don’t know why I put this Latin-y thing in front of it. John was doing



Petrucci in action in Zagreb, Croatia, October 28, 2024; [below] the artwork for Dream Theater’s new album, *Parasomnia*

this line on bass, and somehow that sent me off into this vibey thing. It popped out of me and we all liked it.

You’ve never held back from abrupt sonic shifts. Is that part of the appeal of writing for Dream Theater?

Doing something that totally interrupts the flow of the song is just us having fun. We’re like, “Hey, let’s take them down this road instead,” so we put a twist in that surprises the listener and the song takes a sudden left turn. Some people might be thinking, “What? Why the hell did you do that?” But doing something that’s melodic or

straightforward, then playing something far more complex, then switch to something that swings or has a funky or jazzy vibe to it, and then morphing that into something that’s full-on Latin-sounding, is a lot of why I love Dream Theater. We’re not afraid to do stuff some other bands won’t try. We’ve earned the license to do anything. There are no rules so you don’t have to worry about how long a song is, how many styles you play, or whether it’s going to be a hit or not.

With all the lofty expectations from fans, did you feel under the gun to deliver?

There was pressure, but I think it was self-inflicted. You’d have to be dumb not to be aware of the anticipation that the announcement created in our fans, and we knew people would be looking forward to hearing what we could come up with. But thinking about all of that before we even walked into the studio was inspiring and pushed us to want to do our best. There was a real incentive to figure out how we could take this album to a level that’s going to be undeniable. And when I say undeniable, it’s not only how other people perceive it, but how we perceive it as a band when we’re working on it.

Does *Parasomnia* feel like a musical rebirth?

In a way, it does. It’s our 16th album, and it comes after our 40th year as a band. Those benchmark moments have created new enthusiasm, and renewed energy, and we’re all vibing on the anticipation that those moments bring. We’re thinking, “Man, this is an amazing time in our career. Let’s make sure we rise to the occasion.” **GW**



“WE’RE NOT AFRAID TO DO STUFF SOME OTHER BANDS WON’T TRY. WE’VE EARNED THE LICENSE TO DO ANYTHING”

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EXTRA TEXTURE

An album-by-album guide to George Harrison's greatest songs, solos, milestones and innovations

BY NEVILLE MARTEN [NM], DAMIAN FANELLI [DF], BILL DeMAIN [BD] AND IAN FORTNAM [IF]

THIS FEBRUARY 23, George Harrison would've turned 82. But, as is often the case, the universe had a different plan in mind, and — instead — the former Beatle left us at age 58 way back in 2001. But despite his early exit, Harrison left behind a staggering amount of “stuff to listen to,” much of which is — inarguably at this point — historically important, if not the fodder of legend. In this issue, we've attempted to pinpoint — album by album — his greatest songs, solos, guest appearances and production credits. We've started the timeline at 1963, excluding anything “unofficial” (sorry, Star Club, BBC and Decca!) but including his most impactful cameos. No, it's not complete (not gonna happen!), but all the biggies (and a few smallies) are here. Dig in! ➔



George Harrison
performs at NYC's
Madison Square
Garden, August 1, 1971



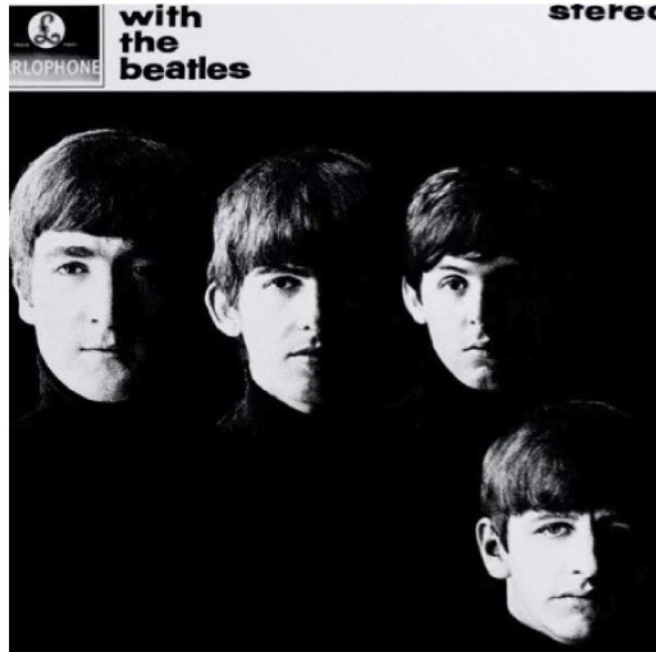
PLEASE PLEASE ME 1963

THE BEATLES' DEBUT album was drawn mostly from the group's stage act. Completed on February 11, 1963, with minimal vocal overdubbing, producer George Martin added piano ("Misery") and celesta ("Baby It's You") later. John Lennon, Paul McCartney and George Harrison conformed to their stated roles of rhythm, bass and lead guitar respectfully, Lennon holding down the chord side on his Gibson J160-E or Rickenbacker 325, with Harrison adding syncopations, fills and solos on his Gretsch Duo Jet or Chet Atkins Country Gentleman.

Kicking off with Paul's "One, two, three, four" count-in, "I Saw Her Standing There" sounded raw, sexy and exciting. Featuring George's R&B-style fills and a solo typical of its time, it remains one of the greatest debut-album openers. "Ask Me Why" finds George playing subtle Gretsch fills, with double-stops, chord stabs and a jazzy major 7th arpeggio to finish. Harrison sings two of the album's 14 tracks, the better of which is "Do You Want to Know a Secret," with his and Lennon's J160-E's plugged into their new Vox AC30s. The album's zenith sees Harrison providing the riff to Lennon's one-take throat killer, "Twist and Shout," an equally brilliant closer to one of pop's most significant records. **NM**

HARRISON HIGHLIGHTS

"I Saw Her Standing There,"
"Do You Want to Know a Secret,"
"Ask Me Why"



WITH THE BEATLES 1963

AFTER THE TRIUMPH of their debut album and a slew of hit singles, there was bounty in the pot for the follow-up. Album opener "It Won't Be Long" immediately reveals the record's more polished and "produced" sound. With eight band compositions including "Don't Bother Me," Harrison's first writing credit, and some well-chosen covers, *With the Beatles* also makes the most of the group's superb three-part vocal harmonies. Paul McCartney's "All My Loving," his best composition so far, is a musical tour de force driven by his loping bass and Lennon's relentless "triplets" rhythm guitar. Harrison's Chet Atkins-style solo, mostly played in sixths, is a mini marvel that reveals his unerring ability to conjure concise "melodies within melodies." Another perfect case in point is "Till There Was You"; over Starr's bolero-style drums George weaves a classical guitar break using diminished runs and dashing arpeggios (he repeated it, note perfect, albeit on his electric Gretsch, on the band's first *Ed Sullivan Show* appearance in early 1964). "Devil in Her Heart," another Harrison vocal, demonstrates more melodic savvy, with lilting Spanish-style intro and outro solo in thirds. George's big feature here, though, is on Chuck Berry's "Roll Over Beethoven," where he tightens up Berry's signature licks to supply perhaps the definitive version of the song. Also culled from the *With the Beatles* sessions were the group's next single's A- and B-side — "I Want to Hold Your Hand," the track that propelled the band to superstardom in the U.S., and the beautiful three-part harmony ballad, "This Boy." **NM**

HARRISON HIGHLIGHTS

"All My Loving," "Don't Bother Me," "Till There Was You,"
"Roll Over Beethoven"



A HARD DAY'S NIGHT 1964

THE ALBUM THAT kicks off with that chord! Harrison plays an Fadd9 on his Rickenbacker 360/12, doubled by Lennon on acoustic, with Paul playing a D bass note and George Martin adding a sustained piano chord. Martin doubled Harrison's Rickenbacker solo on piano, and George stylishly arpeggiated his Fadd9 to see out the song. The 12-string features on several tracks, complementing Lennon's rhythm or adding breaks to "I Should Have Known Better," the solo of which he ends on a neat-sounding sixth.

Harrison unleashes his José Ramirez classical for Paul's "And I Love Her," creating the statement intro that McCartney said dramatically aided the song's impact. In the verses George

picks out three-note arpeggios, and as the song changes key from E/C#m to F his solo mirrors the tune with genuine panache. But this is an unabashed "pop" album, so Harrison's guitar is used to color, punctuate and highlight and — while universally hailed as one of their finest albums — it really stands out on the aforementioned numbers. **NM**

HARRISON HIGHLIGHTS

"A Hard Day's Night," "If I Fell,"
"And I Love Her"

"HIS
UNERRING
ABILITY TO
CONJURE
CONCISE
'MELODIES
WITHIN
MELODIES'"



BEATLES FOR SALE 1964

RECORDED IN THE midst of Beatlemania and constant touring, *Beatles for Sale* was snatched together from recording days here and writing sessions there. Harrison's contributions include his cover of Carl Perkins' "Everybody's Trying to Be My Baby," with nods to his idol in the solos and a tight finishing lick. Also in the country vein is Harrison's work on Lennon's "I'm a Loser," where the coarse twang of his Gretsch Tennessean can be heard in the fills and Perkins/Chet Atkins-style solo. On "Baby's in Black," George's fills and solo are more experimental, with lazy bends and slurs and an almost out-of-tuneness that adds to the song's dark nature. On "I Don't Want to Spoil the Party" he provides more Perkins-style licks and a nicely paced solo. George's Rickenbacker 360/12 came out for "Eight Days a Week" with its groundbreaking fade-in guitar lick. **NM**

HARRISON HIGHLIGHTS "I'm a Loser," "Baby's in Black," "Eight Days a Week"



[from left] Paul McCartney, Ringo Starr, George Harrison (with his Gretsch Tennessean) and John Lennon in the U.K., March 28, 1965



HELP! 1965

IF BEATLES FOR SALE was their “country” album, *Help!* represented the Beatles’ Dylan phase. Acoustic guitars, contemplative lyrics and the addition of new instruments and effects gave the album its singular vibe. On the upbeat title track, Harrison created one of his signature licks, a descending run on the middle four strings. On strings five and four, starting at the seventh fret, was a rundown in chromatic minor thirds, but with the third and second strings played open. As for guitar innovations, on “The Night Before” John and George doubled the solo in octaves, while for “I Need You” Harrison introduced the DeArmond volume pedal to enliven the A-Asus2-Asus4-A sequence. On “You’re Gonna Lose That Girl,” George played his new Sonic Blue Fender Strat for the solo but aborted it due to the guitar’s heavy strings. He successfully re-recorded it later. **NM**

HARRISON HIGHLIGHTS “Help!,” “The Night Before,” “I Need You”



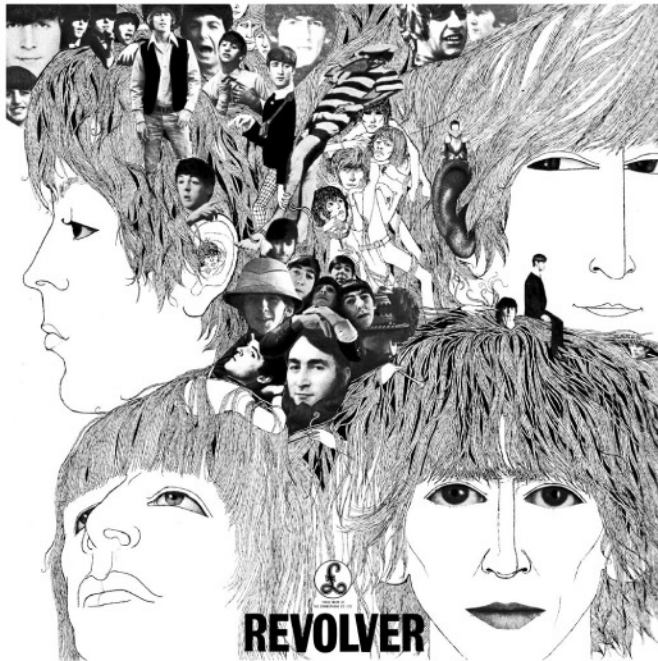
RUBBER SOUL 1965

WIDELY HERALDED AS bridging the gap between four mop-tops and the technically groundbreaking and socially aware group they were becoming, the Beatles also laid down the double-A-side single “We Can Work It Out”/“Day Tripper” during the sessions. Harrison supplied two compositions: “Think for Yourself,” which McCartney dominated with his overdubbed fuzz bass, and “If I Needed Someone,” the electric 12-string riff that took back from the Byrds the sound he’d unwittingly gifted them.

With no tour distractions, the band treated the studio like their personal music laboratory, searching for sounds that matched their ever-growing maturity. McCartney’s “Drive My Car” sees Paul playing the quirky guitar intro and slide solo. Harrison suggested he double the bass part with arpeggios on his Strat’s lower strings, following the chords and ending with the Hendrix A7#9 over which they sang “Beep-beep, beep-beep, yeah.”

For Lennon’s “Norwegian Wood (This Bird Has Flown),” George introduced a sitar. Although a neophyte on the instrument that can take an Indian classical musician a lifetime to master, his mirroring of John’s vocal melody foresaw the psychedelia and prog-rock that were just around the corner. On “Nowhere Man,” George creates a chord-based solo on his highly EQ’d Strat (possibly doubled with John’s), while for Paul’s “Michelle” he adds a warm-toned jazz-style break taught to him by Martin. **NM**

HARRISON HIGHLIGHTS “If I Needed Someone,” “Nowhere Man,” “Drive My Car”



REVOLVER 1966

ROLLING STONE'S ROB Sheffield called *Revolver* "the best album the Beatles ever made, which means the best album by anybody." "Paperback Writer" and "Rain" were recorded for *Revolver* but released as a single instead.

Having busted so many barriers with *Rubber Soul*, the way was clear for the band, with Martin plus enthusiastic young engineer Geoff Emerick, to create something unprecedented. And such was Harrison's progression that "Taxman" was deemed strong enough to open proceedings. Featuring George's spiky riff and 7th and 7#9 rhythm, it was McCartney, however, that supplied the sensational solo. "He did a little Indian bit on it for me," Harrison said.

Although the sitar-led "Love You To" was Harrison's greatest achievement on *Revolver*, the only guitar present is his distorted B₇ chord against the song's droning C key signature. On Lennon's radical "Tomorrow Never Knows" and dreamy "I'm Only Sleeping," we hear another Beatles innovation. Emerick turned the tape over so it ran the other way: George composed his guitar parts so that when the reel was flipped back, they'd be heard in reverse. It created an eerie but beautiful sound. "I Want to Tell You," another Harrison original, kicks off with a twangy, angular riff played on his Strat; it most definitely inspired the Monkees' "Pleasant Valley Sunday."

Harrison reprised the Rickenbacker 360/12 for his solos in McCartney's "Here, There and Everywhere," but he and Paul shared guitar duties on "And Your Bird Can Sing." The tone of their Epiphone Casinos, played in harmony against Lennon's own Casino, is another brilliant moment. **NM**

HARRISON HIGHLIGHTS

"Taxman," "I'm Only Sleeping," "Love You To," "And Your Bird Can Sing"

"HARRISON
DOUBLES
LENNON'S
VOCAL IN THE
BRIDGES AS
A SARANGI
PLAYER
WOULD"



SGT. PEPPER'S LONELY HEARTS CLUB BAND 1967

THIS ALBUM IS viewed by many as the Beatles' finest 39 minutes, 36 seconds. Although it was McCartney's concept, and largely dominated by his songs (and fabulous bass playing), Harrison's guitar still played a major role. But on his magnum opus, the Hindu-influenced "Within You Without You," he contributed only acoustic, leaving all the other instrumentation to London-based Indian musicians.

Harrison's more notable six-string contributions to *Pepper* include his beautiful electric 12-string intro to "With a Little Help from My Friends" plus some fantastic harmonized fills and a well-thought-out solo in McCartney's "Fixing a Hole." On John's psychedelic masterpiece "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds" he doubles Lennon's vocal in the bridges as a sarangi player would, while in the choruses his Leslie'd Strat follows McCartney's bass line. On "Getting Better" he overdubs a 15th-fret G octave on top of a third-fret Csus4 chord to give the song its bright attack. The title track's reprise is a whole-band effort, with George and John's heavy rhythm guitars and plenty of highly distorted fills from Harrison. On the album's legendary closer, "A Day in the Life," Harrison plays only maracas (and along those lines, that's Paul playing the blazing "Good Morning Good Morning" solo). The double A-side "Penny Lane" and "Strawberry Fields Forever" were recorded during the *Pepper* sessions and were originally intended for the album. George Martin described their omission as "the worst mistake of my professional life." **NM**

HARRISON HIGHLIGHTS

"With a Little Help from My Friends," "Fixing a Hole," "Getting Better," "Within You Without You"



MAGICAL MYSTERY TOUR 1967

THE ORIGINAL U.K. double EP of six new songs to accompany the band's 1967 Christmas TV special might have stood as the Beatles' farewell to psychedelia. But Capitol demanded a U.S. album, so 1967's singles, plus "All You Need Is Love," bulked MMT up to album status. On "I Am the Walrus" and "Penny Lane," there's little guitar of note, while on "Fool on the Hill" George merely strummed 12-string acoustic. For "Flying," he played tremolo rhythm guitar then overlaid the "sliding sixths" idea he'd revisit for "Don't Let Me Down." "Strawberry Fields Forever" is awash with orchestral instruments, Mellotron and studio trickery, but George's solo makes use of string bends, open strings and trills. For the Our World broadcast, "All You Need Is Love" was played partly live to an audience of around half a billion. George's Strat solo ends with a "clunk" that (oddly) wasn't fixed during the final mix. **NM**

HARRISON HIGHLIGHTS "Flying," "Strawberry Fields Forever," "All You Need Is Love"



WONDERWALL MUSIC 1968

THIS UNASSUMING LITTLE record represents a slew of firsts. It's George's first solo album. It's the first solo album to be released by any Beatle (unless you count 1967's *The Family Way*, but that's technically a McCartney/Martin project). It's the first album to be entirely produced by George. It's the first time Harrison and Eric Clapton recorded together. And because it beat the White Album (more on that soon) by three weeks, it was the first album to be released via Apple Records, the band's new label.

On top of all that, its title inspired a 1995 Oasis hit, and — with all its Indian music and musicians (in addition to all its Western music and musicians) — it arrived decades ahead of the world-music scene of the Eighties.

But for all its firsts, *Wonderwall Music* is, well, underwhelming. But when you consider that it's just an instrumental soundtrack album — for *Wonderwall*, an interesting little film by Joe Massot (the same gent who co-directed Led Zeppelin's *The Song Remains the Same*) — you're easily able to adjust your expectations and welcome it as a bit of "bonus Sixties George." Make that — on some songs — bonus Sixties George plus Ringo, plus Clapton. Unlike later big-budget soundtrack albums, there's no hit song here — no "Live and Let Die," "For Your Eyes Only" or "My Heart Will Go On." The closest thing to a catchy, standalone tune that you might hear on SiriusXM's The Beatles Channel is the oddly pleasing "Party Seacombe." And "Red Lady Too" is pretty cool (too). **DF**

HARRISON HIGHLIGHTS
"Party Seacombe," "Ski-ing,"
"Wonderwall to Be Here"

The BEATLES

THE BEATLES 1968

THE BAND'S DOUBLE, so-called White Album saw them drift away from psychedelia and revert to more straightforward songs while retaining groundbreaking production ideas. We'll mention only the tracks to which Harrison added significant impact.

After Starr had walked out of the "Back in the U.S.S.R." sessions feeling unloved, McCartney played drums and Harrison supplied the bottom end on Fender Bass VI. He also played the guitar solo and fills, but McCartney added the tremolo-picked 17th-fret A note over the last verse. Lennon's

"Dear Prudence" sees John using the fingerstyle pattern taught to him by Donovan in India. Harrison devised a glorious solo played in octaves then rising in arpeggios to the top fret of his

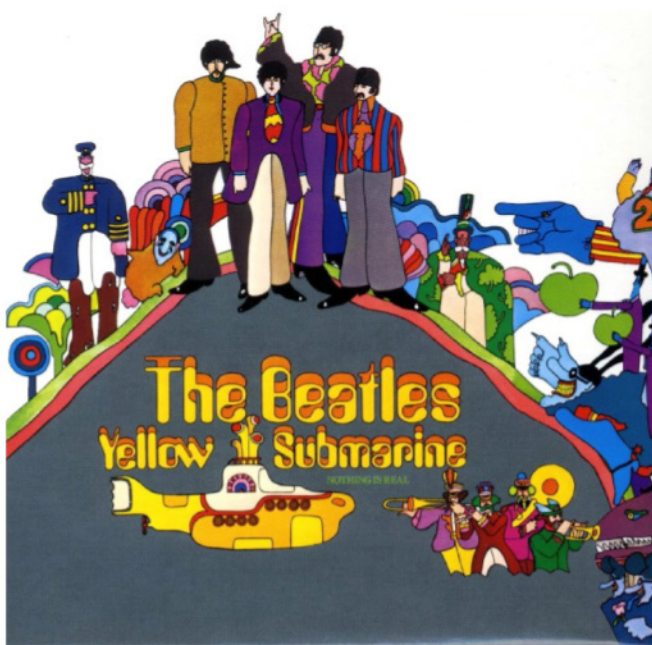
Les Paul.

Harrison contributed four compositions, and "Savoy Truffle" was a nod to Clapton's love for Good News chocolates. The track is heavy with Harrison guitar, doubling the vocal melody and with a tasty, searing solo. While Clapton famously helped rescue "While My Guitar Gently Weeps" with his stunning first-take soloing, George's only guitar contribution was his strummed Gibson J-200.

The band's favorite track is Lennon's "Happiness Is a Warm Gun," a composite of song snippets that Harrison helped John forge together. George plays stabbing chords and, most notably, the writhing, distorted solo on his Bartell fretless guitar. Other great moments are Harrison's acoustic "Long, Long, Long" and his solo on Paul's mighty "Helter Skelter." **NM**

HARRISON HIGHLIGHTS
"Savoy Truffle," "Long, Long, Long," "Happiness Is a Warm Gun," "Helter Skelter"

George [left] and Ringo in January 1969 during the *Get Back*/*Let It Be* sessions

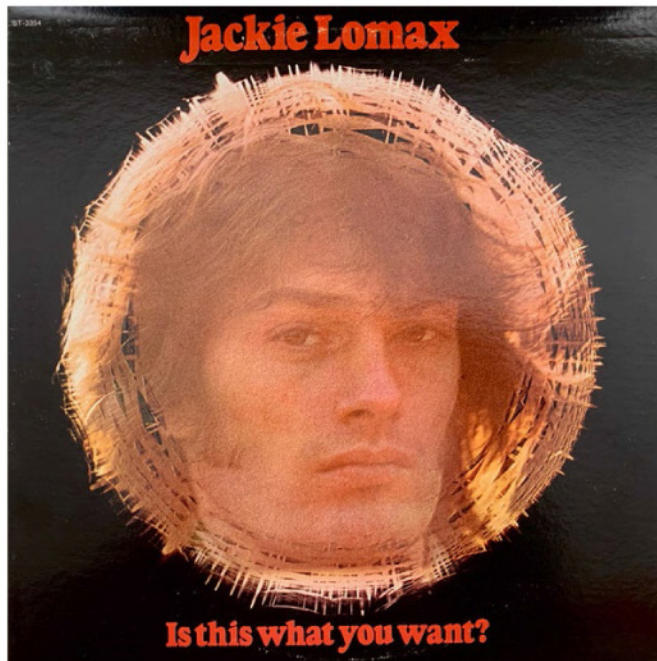


YELLOW SUBMARINE 1969

THE BEATLES WERE contracted to supply four songs for an animated film that fulfilled their three-movie deal. Although recorded before the White Album, it didn't hit the shops until two months later. Side one featured the four new tracks and two previous releases; the title track, on which Harrison played no guitar, and "All You Need Is Love." Side two comprised orchestral arrangements from George Martin. Of the four remaining tracks, Harrison's "Only a Northern Song" sees him playing Hammond organ but no guitar, and on McCartney's throwaway ditty "Altogether Now" he strummed acoustic only. However, his own Indian-inspired "It's All Too Much" is littered with guitar. The song begins with Hendrix-style feedback and sounds like George's Bigsby-equipped Epi Casino rather than the Strat that some have suggested. Although Lennon and Harrison are credited as lead guitarists, we think it's mostly George.

That leaves the album's best cut, "Hey Bulldog," where Harrison plays the blues scale riff on his SG then doubles it higher up before going into his spiky solo. Although credited to Lennon, it's surely George, John only underpinning it with typical "rhythm/lead" double-stops. **NM**

HARRISON HIGHLIGHTS "It's All Too Much," "Hey Bulldog,"
"All You Need Is Love"



IS THIS WHAT YOU WANT? 1969

THIS BRIEF STOP in our timeline represents another rung on the “producer George” ladder. Jackie Lomax — formerly of Liverpool rockers the Undertakers (“(Do The) Mashed Potatoes,” anyone?) — had a big, booming voice and should’ve been much more famous than he actually was. And you’d think Harrison’s production of this Apple Records release — sessions for which took place in London and LA (with George thus becoming the first Beatle to record in the U.S.) — would’ve helped a bit. Um, it didn’t. What’s even crazier is that the album features musical contributions by Harrison, McCartney, Starr, Clapton, Nicky Hopkins, John Barham and Klaus Voormann, not to mention members of LA’s Wrecking Crew; on top of that, lead-off single “Sour Milk Sea” was written by Harrison and features every Beatle besides Lennon, making it (arguably) more of “a Beatles song” than some of the stuff on the White Album and *Let It Be*. “Sour Milk Sea” tends to get all the attention (such as it is) these days, but be sure to check out the title track (the red-headed stepchild of “I Am the Walrus”) and Harrison’s very out-front “backing” vocals on “Going Back to Liverpool.” **DF**

HARRISON HIGHLIGHTS “Sour Milk Sea,” “Is This What You Want?,” “Going Back to Liverpool” (included on later reissues)

“GEORGE
CREATED
LANGUID
PHRASES WITH
DELIBERATELY
SLOW VIBRATO
OVER THE
FADE-OUT”

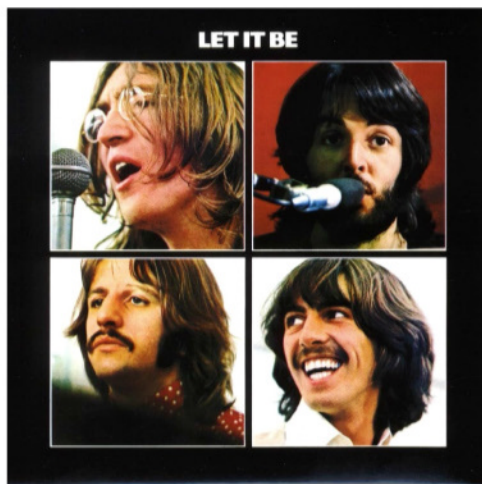


ABBEY ROAD 1969

ABBEY ROAD SHOWS the band at yet another musically creative peak. Harrison brought the album his two best compositions, “Here Comes the Sun” — with its flat-picked 7th-fret capo figure — and “Something,” which contains his finest “tune within a tune” solo. On “Come Together,” while John played the lead break following Paul’s Fender Rhodes solo, George created languid phrases with deliberately slow vibrato over the fade-out. And for Ringo’s “Octopus’s Garden” he whips around the frets of his “Rocky” Strat on the intro and rosewood Tele for the slicing main solo.

The guitar highlight is, of course, the three-way battle between Paul, who played first (Casino), George, who went second (Les Paul) and John who brought up the rear (Casino) on “The End.” Played live in two-bar sections, it highlighted their distinct styles and approaches. Studio engineer Geoff Emerick said, “They looked like they had gone back in time, like they were kids again, playing together for the sheer enjoyment of it.” But could George top this? Of course he could, and his exquisite solo after Paul’s “and in the end” couplet displays total understanding of what was required and is a fitting way to sign off. **NM**

HARRISON HIGHLIGHTS “Something,” “Here Comes the Sun,” “Octopus’s Garden,” “The End”



LET IT BE 1970

ALTHOUGH (MOSTLY) RECORDED before *Abbey Road*, *Let It Be* was held back due to the group’s dissatisfaction with the mixes. Lennon and Harrison suggested Phil Spector have a go at making things sound less scrappy, but his over-egging of the pudding angered McCartney, who later released a de-Spectored version, 2003’s *Let It Be... Naked*, with the orchestrations removed and John’s “Don’t Let Me Down” reinstated.

On McCartney’s “Two of Us,” Harrison’s riffy rosewood Tele licks complement the song’s lighthearted, folksy nature. Harrison added wah-wah rhythm to “Across the Universe,” while on “I Dig a Pony,” which is the live Apple rooftop version, George doubles John’s riff and adds country-style sixth fills and an angular solo. Of the album’s two Harrison compositions, “I Me Mine” is the more guitar-forward, with his acoustic, plus distorted electric intro, riffs and another of those distinctive, jagged solos. “For You Blue” is notable for George’s tight J-200 acoustic picking and Lennon’s Hofner lap steel solo. *Let It Be*’s title track featured Harrison’s C major pentatonic solo. On the album version it’s a hard-edged, not overly musical tone, whereas the single featured a more pleasing, Leslie-effected take. For “Long and Winding Road,” Harrison’s Leslie’d Les Paul is all but buried, but McCartney rekindles it on *Naked*. **NM**

HARRISON HIGHLIGHTS “Two of Us,” “I Me Mine,” “Let It Be,” “Dig a Pony”



ENCOURAGING WORDS 1970

FROM THE MOMENT Billy Preston galvanized the Beatles' *Let It Be* sessions in early 1969, he and Harrison became fast friends and collaborators. Preston was all over *All Things Must Pass* and the Concert for Bangladesh, while Harrison co-produced and played on both of Preston's Apple Records releases. Because the title track was a hit, his debut album, *That's the Way God Planned It*, is better known. But this 1970 follow-up is more consistent.

Preston was a facile and fierce keyboardist, so it makes sense that Harrison would naturally fall into more of a supporting role here. But there are standout guitar moments throughout — the fast, funky strumming and Steve Cropper-style hammered chord inversions on “You’ve Been Acting Strange,” the wah-wah fills laced into “Use What You Got,” the Leslie-swirled picking and fuzz tones on “Sing One for the Lord” (which George co-wrote). For more guitar power, Eric Clapton and Delaney Bramlett are also part of the all-star session crew.

If you need further proof of Harrison's generosity as a collaborator, he gives Preston first dibs on two of his best songs from that period — “My Sweet Lord” and “All Things Must Pass” (*Encouraging Words* was released a full two months before *All Things Must Pass*). Preston takes the former straight down the aisle of a rollicking southern Baptist church, while he invests the latter with grandeur and classical flourishes. The two friends were definitely in tune musically and spiritually. As Preston said, “I want to give people something that they'll really remember, to help their lives. And what I'm talking about is God — a good solid message that makes you think.” **BD**

HARRISON HIGHLIGHTS

“All Things Must Pass,”
“Sing One for the Lord,”
“You’ve Been Acting Strange”



ALL THINGS MUST PASS 1970

CONSISTENTLY CONSTRAINED BY his distinctly third-fiddle role in the Beatles, upon the band's ultimate dissolution Harrison the songwriter came into his own (and then some) on this mammoth triple album. Packed with choice material, much of which had been accumulated during his latter tenure as a Beatle, many tracks had been simmering on his back burner for some years.

“Isn’t It a Pity” and “Art of Dying” date from as far back as ’66. “I’d Have You Anytime” (co-written with Bob Dylan in Woodstock, New York) and “Let It Down” stem from late ’68. Meanwhile, an entire batch of material — “All Things Must Pass,” “Hear Me Lord,” the brash McCartney-targeted “Wah-Wah” — found its genesis during the Beatles’ *Get Back* rehearsals of early ’69. Driven and inspired, Harrison remained prolific throughout his transmutation from Beatle to solo entity (“What Is Life,” “Behind That Locked Door,” “Beware of Darkness”), but it was the album’s lead single, “My Sweet Lord,” that demonstrated the veritable sea change in Harrison’s approach to guitar playing.

Total immersion in studying sitar with Ravi Shankar had coincided with Harrison losing interest in the apparent possibilities of his lead instrument, but via Robbie Robertson’s slide-mimicking, fluid lead work on the Band’s *Music from Big Pink* and slide exponent Delaney Bramlett (who actually instructed Harrison in the ways of slide playing during 1969’s Delaney & Bonnie and Friends tour, although some say Dave Mason had a hand in it as well), he constructed a mellifluous signature style that was to largely define the remainder of his career. **IF**

HARRISON HIGHLIGHTS

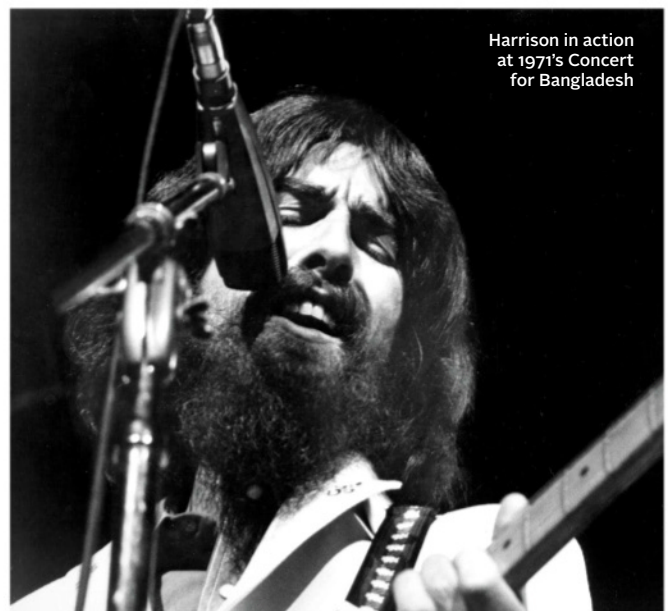
“All Things Must Pass,”
“Beware of Darkness,”
“Wah-Wah,” “My Sweet Lord”



IMAGINE 1971

CAN YOU IMAGINE the seeming awesomeness of “long-haired, cross-legged guitar picker” George Harrison’s life in the very early Seventies? His songs and guitar playing could be heard on the Beatles’ *Let It Be*, his own *All Things Must Pass* and *The Concert for Bangladesh* (more on that soon), songs by Gary Wright (“Two Faced Man”), Badfinger (“Day After Day”), Harry Nilsson (“You’re Breakin’ My Heart”), Billy Preston, Doris Troy, Ronnie Spector and Ringo Starr (again, more on that soon). Oh — and then there’s *Imagine*, John Lennon’s best-known (if not outright best) solo album. Harrison actually plays on half the album, adding brilliant slide solos to “Gimme Some Truth,” “Crippled Inside” (this one on a resonator) and “How Do You Sleep?” while providing some sympathetic backing to “I Don’t Wanna Be a Soldier” and “Oh My Love.” Harrison’s slide approach and tone would change over the years (compare 1971’s “How Do You Sleep?” to 1976’s “True Love” to Belinda Carlisle’s “Leave a Light On” from 1989), but his playing on *Imagine* represents the high point of that make-believe thing called George Harrison on Slide, Phase 1. **DF**

HARRISON HIGHLIGHTS “Gimme Some Truth,” “Crippled Inside,”
“How Do You Sleep?”



Harrison in action at 1971's Concert for Bangladesh

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES



THE CONCERT FOR BANGLADESH 1971

A YEAR AFTER the epic, three-disc *All Things Must Pass* made a wave or two, Harrison followed it up with yet another triple-discer — *The Concert for Bangladesh*, an album fed by two charity shows recorded on August 1. We're intentionally keeping the spotlight on Harrison's studio work, but we can't ignore this monstrosity's many fine points, including:

- The first-ever live, "by a Beatle" recordings of "Something," "Here Comes the Sun" and "While My Guitar Gently Weeps," on which Harrison finally plays a bit of lead guitar alongside Eric Clapton, the guitar star of the original 1968 recording.

- The first joint U.S. on-stage appearance by George and Ringo in five years — i.e., since the Beatles' Candlestick Park show in August 1966. Five years is essentially meaningless today, but in the much more musically fertile late Sixties and early Seventies, five years felt like a lifetime. And not just for a guinea pig.

- More Ravi Shankar than you can shake a stick at.

- A spirited live performance of Starr's Harrison-produced 1971 single, "It Don't Come Easy," which features sparkling, Leslie-infused guitar work by George. This seems as good a time as any to mention that Harrison's fretwork also graced two other Starr tracks from this era, 1971's "Early 1970" and 1972's "Back Off Boogaloo" (produced by Harrison), which — regardless of whether or not anyone agrees with me — features one of his greatest slide solos of all time. **DF**

HARRISON HIGHLIGHTS

"Something," "It Don't Come Easy," "Here Comes the Sun"



"‘HELP ME COPE WITH THIS HEAVY LOAD,’ HE PLEADS SOULFULLY"

that he's actually there), it captures a George still searching for enlightenment and possibly a little help on the career front. 'Help me cope with this heavy load,' he pleads soulfully, as only a man contractually obliged to deliver yet another hit record can.

Harrison's exhortations are again accompanied by a trademark "My Sweet Lord"-esque slide, plaintively mimicking human supplication (see also the karma-tastically pacy "The Lord Loves the One (That Loves the Lord)"). So, yes, there's God, but being George (remember "Taxman"), there's also Mammon with "Sue Me, Sue You Blues" bemoaning acoustically the ferociously litigious nature of ex-manager Allen Klein. "Living in the Material World" itself contrasts materialism with spirituality to the dual accompaniment of A-list Western

rockers (a name-checked Ringo included) and Indian classical tabla player Zakir Hussain. But the Harrison slide is probably put to best use on "Don't Let Me Wait Too Long," a no-nonsense Brill Building-style pop song that really ought to have been a single. So did the album sell? By the truckload. For more about *Living in the Material World*, head to page 68. **IF**

HARRISON HIGHLIGHTS "Give Me Love (Give Me Peace on Earth)," "Don't Let Me Wait Too Long," "The Light That Has Lighted the World," "The Lord Loves the One (That Loves the Lord)," "Living in the Material World"



RINGO 1973

WHILE THERE WAS significant, widely documented acrimony behind the ultimate breakup of the Beatles, all evidence would appear to suggest that no one ever managed to successfully fall out with Ringo. Clearly as likeable as his lugubrious public image would have us believe, when he put out calls for assistance to the great and the good in advance of recording his third solo album, they were all answered in the affirmative.

Ringo features contributions from (among others) Robbie Robertson, Levon Helm, Garth Hudson, Rick Danko, Steve Cropper, Martha Reeves, Harry Nilsson, Marc Bolan and — most notably — John Lennon, Paul McCartney and George Harrison. It was the first and only time all four Beatles turned out for a former band member's solo album. Its opening

track, Lennon's "I'm the Greatest," is arguably the closest the Beatles ever truly came to fully re-forming (you've got Lennon, Harrison and Starr, not to mention Klaus Voormann and, for added authenticity, *Let It Be* keyboardist Billy Preston); in fact, it feels like it's only a Giles Martin "tinkering" away from being a future Number 1 (overdub a McCartney bass line and harmony, stick Lennon's guide vocal upfront, and watch the cash roll in). Harrison's work on "Greatest" recalls some of his own greatest Fab moments from descending "Help!" arpeggios to sharp "Back in the U.S.S.R." rhythmic stabs; it's as dead-on as even the Rutles could have managed. Other standout Harrison moments include "Photograph," a co-write with Starr upon which he contributes up-front chiming 12-string acoustic; his "Sunshine Life for Me (Sail Away Raymond)," a decidedly countrified folk-rock, proto-Americana knees-up featuring David Bromberg and various members of the Band fiddling fiddles and plucking banjos as if their lives depend on it while Harrison adds Vini Poncia-abetted gang vocals and fluid picking; and album sign-off, "You and Me (Babe)." Co-written (by Harrison) with former Beatles roadie Mal Evans, "(Babe)" provides a sentimental coda to Ringo's all-star bash (an M.O. he clearly warmed to, if his various subsequent All-Starr Band tours are anything to go by) that saw neat supporting flourishes — including a further series of bold attention-grabbing arpeggios and a solo that, while celestial, has no intention of overstaying its welcome — from Harrison, prior to a fourth-wall-breaking, credit-listing spoken-word farewell from everybody's favorite Liverpudlian drummer. **IF**

HARRISON HIGHLIGHTS "You and Me (Babe)," "I'm the Greatest," "Photograph," "Down and Out" (non-album B-side)



DARK HORSE 1974

THINGS WEREN'T GREAT in Harrison's life during *Dark Horse's* creative process. There was the unexpected criticism levelled at *Material World*, a long-percolating split with first wife Pattie Boyd that had spilled over into soap opera (she conducted affairs with Eric Clapton and Ronnie Wood as George found solace in the arms of Ronnie's wife Maureen). Then there was all the post-Apple, post-Klein, post-"My Sweet Lord" plagiarism litigation. Plus, pulling together his own record label (also called Dark Horse), the drink, the drugs and the laryngitis he contracted during the latter period of recording, that carried over into a widely anticipated, if ultimately badly received, '74 tour with Ravi Shankar.

But misery often engenders surprisingly fertile creative ground, and *Dark Horse* has its moments, not least its title track. Weirdly placed near close of play, it's an inoffensive acoustic ditty, often weighed down with academic interpretations it doesn't really deserve. "So Sad," laden with "Here Comes the Sun"-contrasting grey, wintry imagery, captures a post-Pattie George at his most despondent (cue lashings of lachrymose slide). Harrison history wouldn't be any poorer for the loss of either a largely wretched near-cover of the Everlys' "Bye Bye Love" or the repetitions of "Ding Dong, Ding Dong," but these clangers are more than offset by "Simply Shady," a wordy, distinctly Dylan-esque examination of karmic consequences, rich in stinging, country rocking guitar asides with a lead vocal that actually benefits from the short-term ravages of laryngitis, and "Far East Man," a co-write with Ronnie Wood that cogitates upon the power of friendship. *Dark Horse* failed to dent the U.K. album chart. **IF**

HARRISON HIGHLIGHTS

"Simply Shady," "So Sad," "Far East Man," "Dark Horse"

THE PLACE I LOVE 1974

SPLINTER'S OVERLOOKED

DEBUT album actually came out a few months before *Dark Horse*, but we've taken some liberties here because it's easier to explain *The Place I Love* in the context of *Dark Horse*. Ya see, *The Place I Love* was actually one of the reasons *Dark Horse* was rushed, not to mention one of the (alleged) causes of his infamous case of laryngitis. He simply put so much of himself into the album — contributing 95 percent of the guitars, plus bass, harmonium, percussion, mandolin, Moog and backing vocals; assembling the band, which features usual Harrison suspects Klaus Voormann, Willie Weeks, Billy Preston and Jim Keltner; recording it at Friar Park, his home studio; and releasing it on Dark Horse Records, his own label. He didn't write any of the songs, but that doesn't mean the album isn't full of beautiful Badfinger- and late-Beatles-esque songplay, the spine-tingling highlight of which is probably the addictive "China Light." In terms of guitar, check out "Somebody's City"; it's interesting to hear Harrison employing his Strat and easily identifiable 1974 *Dark Horse* sound on someone else's song. It's the sorta thing that makes you think he could've put out a flawless album in 1974 if he somehow could've combined the best parts of *The Place I Love* with the best parts of *Dark Horse*. Anyway, for a few more "Wait! That's George sounding exactly like George but playing on someone else's song!" moments, check out "Situation Vacation" and the heart-melting slide on "China Light," which — have you noticed? — we keep mentioning.

Around this same time, George also produced (and played on) Ravi Shankar's *Shankar Family & Friends*, which only supports the case that he really was burning the candle at both ends in mid '74. **DF**

HARRISON HIGHLIGHTS

"China Light," "Somebody's City," "Situation Vacant"



EXTRA TEXTURE (READ ALL ABOUT IT) 1975

HARRISON CERTAINLY WASN'T

above revisiting his invariably profitable Beatle George persona should circumstances demand it, and considering the degree to which *Dark Horse* had stiffed in the marketplace, demand it they did. So Harrison combined every ounce of his creative power and mercenary acumen and basically threw everything at *Extra Texture*, his final album for Apple.

Largely dispensing with the services of his *Dark Horse* band (built around a core of Billy Preston, Willie Weeks, Andy Newmark and Tom Scott), Harrison relied on David Foster, Gary Wright and Leon Russell (keys), Jim Keltner (drums), Jesse Ed Davis (guitar) and Hamburg chum Klaus Voormann for *Extra Texture's* more commercial material.

Aside from freshening things up with a distinct whiff of Smokey Robinson-inspired soul, there's significantly less spiritual yearning for universal karma and a lot more trad George. Not taking any chances, lead single "You" was co-produced by Phil Spector, pivots on a dynamite hook and features that most simplistic of all Beatles stand-bys, a chorus that repeats the word "love" until every listener succumbs to the inevitable and gets their wallets out. Sharing its feel and message of tolerance with "Isn't It a Pity," "The Answer's at the End" echoes "All Things Must Pass" before "This Guitar (Can't Keep from Crying)" mimics "While My Guitar Gently Weeps" to demonstrate that the bad reviews Harrison's '74 tour garnered were so hurtful that even his guitar broke down. Featuring excellent solos from Jesse Ed Davis, it's the standout six-string-based element of a largely piano-centred record. It returned Harrison to the U.K. top 20. Mission accomplished. **IF**

HARRISON HIGHLIGHTS

"You," "The Answer's at the End," "Can't Stop Thinking About You"

THIRTY THREE & 1/3 1976

WHILE PRIMARILY RELEASED on a slice of vinyl that revolved at 33 and 1/3 revolutions per minute, Harrison's seventh solo album was also coincident with his having attained that particular age. It also marked something of a return to form. Ill fortune might still have dogged his days outside the studio — hepatitis set in shortly after recording commenced, and during production his "My Sweet Lord" case was ultimately found in favor of the plaintiff — but, backed by a watertight band, his artistic output suffered no ill effects. Urban country/funk-fuelled opener "Woman Don't You Cry for Me," with its roots that date back as far as Harrison's '69 slide epiphany, is a stormer; it perfectly suits its soul-centred '76 zeitgeist, Harrison's slide tessellating perfectly with Willie Weeks' slapped bass, Alvin Taylor's tight-but-loose drums and David Foster's driving post-"Superstition" clavinet. "Dear One" is a light (Hindu monk/yogi/guru) Paramahansa Yogananda-inspired near-solo ditty perked up significantly by Richard Tees' keys. "This Song," written following a week in court trying to convince an NYC judge that "My Sweet Lord" wasn't a mere cynical rip-off of the Chiffons' "He's So Fine," is defined by its bittersweet plagiarism-based lyric, but it's Billy Preston's piano and Tom Scott's sax solo that elevate it into the arena of the excellent. Harrison was never more comfortable than as a member of a band, be it as a Beatle or a Traveling Wilbury, and on high-calibre compositions like "See Yourself," the Eric Idle-sparked surrealism of "Crackerbox Palace" and "It's What You Value," the *Thirty Three & 1/3* studio band sounds like a solid working unit rather than a cast of sessioners putting in the hours. **IF**

HARRISON HIGHLIGHTS

"Crackerbox Palace," "This Song," "Woman Don't You Cry for Me," "True Love," "Dear One" ➔





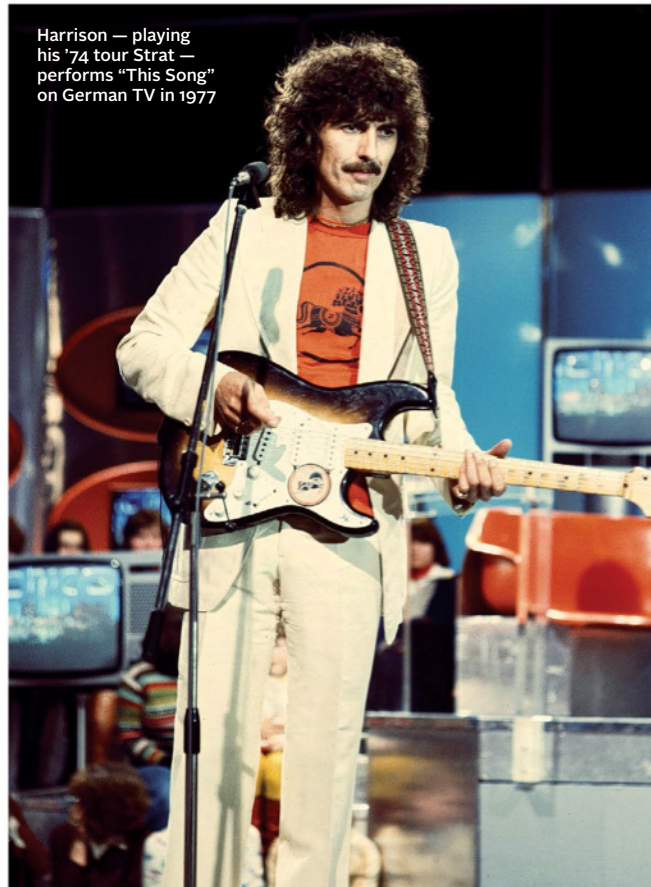
GEORGE HARRISON 1979

"SKY CLEARED UP, day turned bright" an unusually optimistic Harrison sings on "Blow Away," the first single from an eponymous effort that garnered unanimous critical approval. George was evidently in the pink; he'd married Olivia Arias and become a first-time father, to Dhani, during the album's gestation. Consequently, while contemporary opinion likened *George Harrison* positively to his *All Things Must Pass* solo zenith, it offered little darkness of which to beware.

Shot through with infectious optimism and featuring a politely insistent hook, a signature guitar intro from Eric Clapton and Stevie Winwood on synth (and backing vocals), "Love Comes to Everyone" (eventually covered by Clapton and Winwood in 2005) is a portent of the mega-commercial, coffee-table-smooth rock that came to dominate the coming decade. Written in '68 to debunk unfounded accusations thrown at the Maharishi by his fellow frontline Beatles and previously recorded during the fraught sessions for the White Album (it's available on *Anthology 3*), "Not Guilty" takes on a keys-driven (Winwood again, with Neil Larsen) featherlight jazz inflection. "Here Comes the Moon," "Soft-Hearted Hana" and "Your Love Is Forever" boast McCartney levels of likeability, but it's "Blow Away" — with its ample portions of inimitable slide and Beatles-era cheeriness — and a Phil Spector-mimicking Gary Wright co-write "If You Believe" (oddly reminiscent of contemporary ELO) that truly set a seal on the album's well-deserved reputation as a mid-career Harrison essential. That, again somewhat bafflingly, only managed to garner relatively modest chart action. **IF**

HARRISON HIGHLIGHTS

"Love Comes to Everyone,"
"Blow Away," "If You Believe,"
"Dark Sweet Lady"



Harrison — playing his '74 tour Strat — performs "This Song" on German TV in 1977



SOMEWHERE IN ENGLAND 1981

AFTER 1970'S INVOCATION of "My Sweet Lord," George Harrison never really stopped praying on his albums. Sometimes it was in the background. But when it found its way to the foreground, as on "Life Itself," the standout track here, it could make even an atheist feel devout. With its circular chord

progression and gospel-like melody, the song yearns upward. And Harrison's slide acts as a second voice, answering his lead with a sympathetic ache.

Harrison needed prayer power in 1981. He was at odds not only with a changing music scene, but Warner Bros., who rejected the first version of the album as "too laid back" ("Blood from a Clone" was Harrison's bitter riposte). It was only when he lyrically tweaked the already-recorded "All Those Years Ago" to be a tribute to recently deceased John Lennon that they heard a hit. It is a hooky tune, and features Ringo and Paul (not to mention Wings' Linda McCartney and Denny Laine), but what remains puzzling is, after the ultra-tasteful slide licks throughout, Harrison then forfeits the solo to that wonky synth. Surely it deserves a Beatle-esque guitar break.

More satisfying is the rockabilly pluck of "That Which I Have Lost" and "Save the World," which conjures up "Savoy Truffle" with jaunty fuzz and plaintive single-line work.

Of Harrison's solo albums, this sounds the most dated and distant. That's due to the excessive use of chorus effects, perfunctory songwriting and the inclusion of musty covers "Baltimore Oriole" and "Hong Kong Blues." **BD**

HARRISON HIGHLIGHTS "Life Itself," "All Those Years Ago,"
"Save the World," "That Which I Have Lost"



GONE TROPPO 1982

"THEY SAY I'M not what I used to be / All the same I'm happier than a willow tree," Harrison sings on "Mystical One." In that one couplet, he addresses the two most common criticisms of his 10th studio album, which are — it's his worst (it's definitely not), and it's his happiest (well, why begrudge the once-melancholy Beatle a breezy moment?)

If there's anything detrimental here, it's the sequence. The weaker material — the island-flavored "Wake Up My Love," the silly Fifties doo-wopper "I Really Love You" — makes Side One feel slight. It's rescued somewhat by the mostly instrumental "Greece," with Harrison's subtle gathering of volume swells, bell-like harmonics and dual slides rendering a dappled postcard.

The much weightier Side Two reminds us of how singular his songwriting could be. "Mystical One" features those deft, major-to-minor harmonic shifts that are instant George. Album standout "Unknown Delight," an ode to his wife Olivia, feels like a sequel to

"Something"; Harrison even briefly quotes a figure from it in his exquisite, shivery solo. "Circles," a meditative tune written in India in '68, is rescued from oblivion and given a synth-heavy treatment;

hey, at least those synths were played by Deep Purple's mighty Jon Lord. And let's not forget that the whimsically catchy "Dream Away" was both the theme song for Terry Gilliam's *Time Bandits* and a prescription for creativity. "Measure the mystery and astound," he sings. **BD**

HARRISON HIGHLIGHTS

"Unknown Delight," "Mystical One," "Dream Away," "Greece"

"ALBUM
STANDOUT
'UNKNOWN
DELIGHT'
FEELS LIKE A
SEQUEL TO
'SOMETHING'"



[from left] Harrison, Jeff Lynne and Eric Clapton in action at London's Wembley Arena, June 6, 1987



CLOUD NINE 1987

IN 1974, WHEN John Lennon was a guest DJ on WNEW in NYC, one of the records he played was ELO's "Showdown." In a bit of cosmic foreshadowing, he said, "I call them Son of Beatles." Lennon didn't live long enough to see that son grow up to become an honorary Beatle. Jeff Lynne would produce John's fleshed-out demos turned Beatles tracks, "Free As a Bird" and "Real

Love." But Harrison's 11th album was where he first entered the story.

George was coming off a five-year hiatus, and he hired Lynne, who he'd never met, as creative co-pilot ("It's handy to have someone to bounce ideas off of," he said.) It was a smart move. Harrison sounded refreshed, he had his first hit album in over a decade, and "Got My Mind Set on You" and the Beatles pastiche "When We Was Fab" were all over the radio and MTV. But there was a trade-off. Any artist who works with Lynne — from Dave Edmunds to Ringo Starr to Bryan Adams — can end up sounding more like ELO than themselves. And Lynne's sonic fingerprints are all over this record — the arid, bluesy "Cloud 9," the celestial synths and "Xanadu"-like churn of "This Is Love," the lush vocal stacks on "Devil's Radio." The ELO-ness can be so distracting that it even (sometimes) overpowers the presence of starry guests Ringo, Elton John and Eric Clapton.

What's more difficult to explain is how Lynne's entrance marked a shift in George's guitar playing. The previous decade and a half's lyrical solos, the honeyed dual slide harmonies started to give way to a leaner, bluesier approach. In a career that saw much stylistic evolution — from rockabilly picking to Indian sitar to psychedelic fuzz to lyrical slide — it's still a mark of Harrison's touch that the variation that began on *Cloud Nine* is immediately identifiable as him. **BD**

HARRISON HIGHLIGHTS

"Fish on the Sand," "Devil's Radio," "When We Was Fab," "That's What It Takes," "This Is Love"



BLUE SUEDE SHOES: A ROCKABILLY SESSION 1986

ROCK 'N' ROLL pioneer Carl Perkins did a fine job when assembling the talent for the televised October 1985 concert that was meant to showcase his classic Fifties tunes, many of which were covered by the Beatles. You had your Clapton, your Dave Edmunds, your Ringo and

your Rosanne Cash. But Perkins' biggest "get" was George Harrison, who was practically a recluse at that point. So Perkins was technically the star of the show, but Harrison was — you know what I'm sayin' here — the star of the show. The former Beatle, sporting a late-Fifties Gretsch 6120 — and delay so thick and friendly that Cliff Gallup and Brian Setzer were probably salivating — bopped his way through "Everybody's Trying to Be My Baby," which he and the Fabs recorded for *Beatles for Sale*. "Your True Love," which the Beatles tackled during the *Get Back* sessions, is another winner.

Also right around this time, Harrison's otherwise-lost cover of Bob Dylan's "I Don't Want to Do It" appeared on the soundtrack to *Porky's Revenge*; two mixes were released, one of which highlights Jimmie Vaughan on guitar. "[Harrison] was great," Vaughan told us in 2011. "We were trying to be cool, like, I wanted to ask him all these questions. I asked a couple, and then I kind of shut up because I didn't want to be just another guy pestering him." **DF**

HARRISON HIGHLIGHTS

"Everybody's Trying to Be My Baby," "Your True Love," "Glad All Over"

"AS HE WAS SURROUNDED BY HIS PALS, GEORGE THOUGHT, 'WHY NOT ENLIST THEIR HELP?'"



TRAVELING WILBURYS VOL. 1 1988

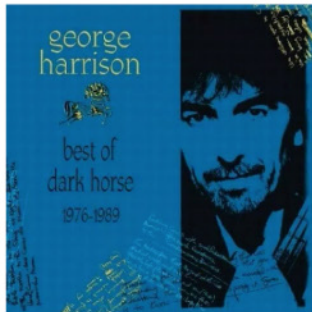
IN EARLY 1988, Warner Bros. asked Harrison to come up with a B-side for "This Is Love," a single from *Cloud Nine*. At the time, he and Jeff Lynne were hanging out with Tom Petty and Roy Orbison at Bob Dylan's studio in L.A. So as long as he was surrounded by his pals, George thought, "Why not enlist their help?" They wrote and

recorded "Handle with Care" in a day. Harrison knew it was too good to be a B-side. "The only thing I could think of was to do another nine and make an album," he said.

So they did. Written and recorded in 10 days, the album captures an infectious live energy — friends having fun. Of course, with such distinctive singers, the emphasis naturally stays on the songs and the vocal round robins. But amidst the lush acoustic strumming from all five, George steps out with a few tasteful lead moments — the Carl Perkins-style rockabilly licks on "Rattled"; the fuzzed, bleating slide on "Margarita"; the plaintive melodic twang on "Congratulations."

Supergroup is a word that gets overused. And often, there's a calculated impulse behind their formation. The Wilburys remain the most organic and musically joyous of them all (they even adopted cheeky fake names). "If we had tried to plan it, or said, 'Let's get this band with these people in it,' it would've never happened," Harrison said. "The thing happened just by magic." **BD**

HARRISON HIGHLIGHTS "Handle with Care," "Rattled," "Heading for the Light"



BEST OF DARK HORSE 1976-1989

A GREATEST-HITS compilation assembled by the artist instead of the label, this features familiar hits, plus deeper cuts such as “Here Comes the Moon” and “That’s the Way It Goes.” But the real attraction is the inclusion of three new tracks. “Poor Little Girl,” with its catchy call-and-response chorus and pizzicato strings, is cut from the same cloth as *Cloud Nine* — George-meets-ELO. The minor-key “Cockamamie Business” is a takedown of showbiz corporate corruption (“Didn’t want to be a star, just wanted to play guitar”).

And then there’s the real jewel, “Cheer Down” (which first appeared on the *Lethal Weapon 2* soundtrack). Co-written with Tom Petty, it shares a groove with “I Won’t Back Down” and pays tribute to Wilbury bandmate Roy Orbison with its swooping melodicism. In the final minute-and-a-half, George cuts loose with a slide solo that folds in everything from early rock ‘n’ roll double stops to Indian raga-style licks. It’s a tour-de-force and one of his all-time best guitar moments. **BD**

HARRISON HIGHLIGHTS

“Cheer Down,” “Poor Little Girl,” “Cockamamie Business”



TRAVELING WILBURYS VOL. 3 1990

TWO MONTHS AFTER the first Wilburys album was released, Roy Orbison died from a heart attack at 52. As a way to say things couldn’t be the same without him, the remaining members changed their nicknames and wrote a tribute to their departed “Lefty” in “You Take My Breath Away.”

This sequel favors rockabilly romps, like “She’s My Baby” (featuring Gary Moore at his blues-shreddy best), “Where Were You Last Night?” and “Wilbury Twist.” George gets

some tasty licks in on “Poor House,” where his slide mimics a pedal steel, the 12-string chime of “The Devil’s Been Busy” and “New Blue Moon,” with its harmony slide echoing “My Sweet

Lord.” It’s not as winning as the debut, but 35 years on, it’s hard to disagree with Jeff Lynne’s assessment: “All these amazing characters in the wild, just shouting words and writing them down, strumming a few chords. It’s a rare experience. Even I just go, ‘Wow! What are all these guys doing together?!’” **BD**

HARRISON HIGHLIGHTS

“The Devil’s Been Busy,” “She’s My Baby,” “Where Were You Last Night?,” “Inside Out”



LIVE IN JAPAN 1992

IN LATE 1991, Harrison hitched a ride to Japan with Eric Clapton and his band, including guitarist Andy Fairweather Low and bassist Nathan East, resulting in Harrison’s first tour since 1974 — and his only live album besides *The Concert for Bangladesh*, which is more of a “George Harrison & Friends” thing anyway. As we said a few pages ago, we’re here to talk about the studio albums; however, we simply can’t ignore...

• Harrison’s only official live performances of a slew of Beatles-era Harrisongs, including “I Want to Tell You,” “If I Needed Someone” and “Old Brown Shoe.” We even get the White Album’s “Piggies,” for Chrissakes.

• If you want to hear George playing slide guitar in a live situation, look no further. And we mean that literally; this is it — the only officially released live album featuring George Harrison on slide guitar. At least he made it count; check out “Cloud 9” and “Cheer Down.” That said, Harrison actually hired Fairweather Low to play some of the tour’s more intricate slide parts, which isn’t too difficult to fathom since Harrison was in frontman mode for most of the set. “Though I don’t play slide and never did, I knew this was a life-changing moment — one of those moments where everything’s going to change if it happens,” Fairweather Low told us late last year. “I thought, well, I’m either going to turn up at the rehearsal and they’re going to realize I’m an absolute no-go, or I can phone George and own up.” Let’s just say it turned out just fine.

• Is this the ultimate version of “While My Guitar Gently Weeps”? From a normal person’s POV, no; you’ll want to stick with the White Album track. But from the POV of someone who thinks Harrison — and not Clapton — should’ve played the solo in the first place, yes indeed. While the *Bangladesh* version features some decent interplay between Clapton and Harrison, it’s kinda messy. Twenty years later, they nailed it. **DF**

HARRISON HIGHLIGHTS “Cloud 9,” “Cheer Down,” “I Want to Tell You,” “While My Guitar Gently Weeps,” “Isn’t It a Pity,” “Dark Horse”



NINETEEN NINETY-FOUR 1994

HARRISON TEAMED UP with his Thames Valley neighbor — former Ten Years After guitarist Alvin Lee — a few times (Lee plays on Harrison’s “Ding Dong, Ding Dong” and Splinter’s “Gravy Train” and “Haven’t Got Time”; Harrison plays on Lee’s *On the Road to Freedom*), but their mid-Nineties hookup takes ye olde guitar-shaped cake. First there’s the bizarrely delicious few seconds of Harrison playing slide on the intro to John Lennon’s bluesy *Abbey Road* standout, “I Want You (She’s So Heavy).” Then there’s “The Bluest Blues,” which is, hands down (whatever that means), one of Harrison’s best, most emotional slide guitar performances. As *GW* wrote in 2017, “It’s a little crazy to hear Harrison playing blues slide guitar, but there it is. In his solo, which starts at 2:15, the former Beatle plays several throaty passages that recall his wicked playing on Lennon’s ‘How Do You Sleep?’” **DF**

HARRISON HIGHLIGHTS “The Bluest Blues,” “I Want You (She’s So Heavy)”



ANTHOLOGY-ERA RECORDINGS

1995 / 1996 / 2023

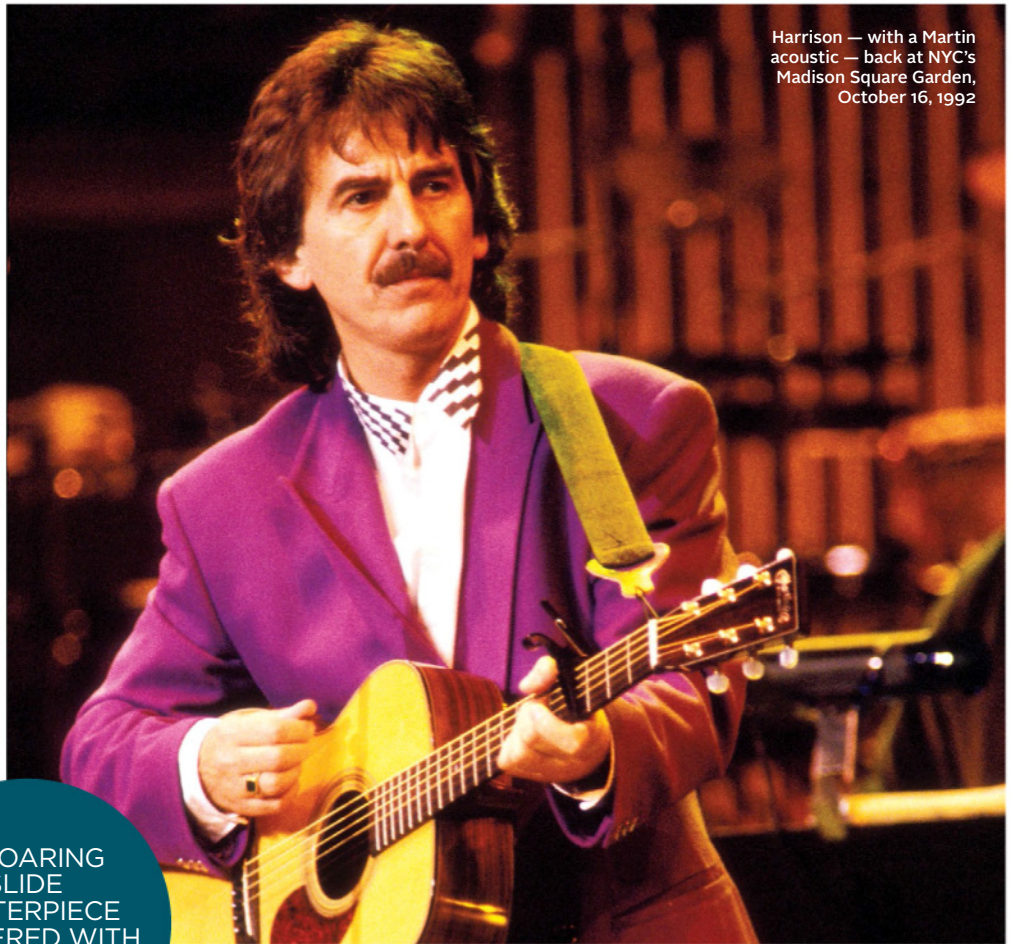
IN THE MID Nineties, George, Paul and Ringo were reunited with John's voice, courtesy of a cassette's worth of demos Lennon recorded in the late Seventies at the Dakota. The results were the Jeff Lynne co-produced "Free As a Bird" (1995) and its lesser-known follow-up, "Real Love" (1996). The beauty of both tracks is that they somehow manage to sound like true group recordings, with everyone getting a chance to shine — especially George. His brazen "Bird" solo break — which glides on a jet stream of lush *Abbey Road*-esque Paul/George vocal harmonies — is a soaring slide masterpiece delivered with a touch of overdrive that finds him truly owning the moment. He sounds a bit more like Beatle George on "Real Love," having some fun — slide-free, with his custom Bernie Hamburger guitar — on the bouncy fills and bendy solo.

The Fab Three worked on another track back in the day — "Now and Then" — but Lennon's voice was far too deeply intertwined with the tinny piano on the original demo (plus, rumor has it George was never a big "Now and Then" fan). Fast-forward nearly 30 years, and — lo and behold — the technology required to extricate Lennon's voice from the demo suddenly exists. As does — as of late 2023, 22 years after Harrison's passing — "Now and Then," aka "the last Beatles song." In terms of the visual proof, George simply provides a bit of strumming on his (or Paul's) Gibson acoustic. Sadly, he didn't play the song's slide solo (Paul did), and his spot-on intonation is, um, missed. **DF**

HARRISON HIGHLIGHTS

"Free As a Bird," "Real Love"

"A SOARING
SLIDE
MASTERPIECE
DELIVERED WITH
A TOUCH OF
OVERDRIVE"



Harrison — with a Martin acoustic — back at NYC's Madison Square Garden, October 16, 1992



BRAINWASHED 2002

THE FIRST THING you hear is George saying, "Give me plenty of that guitar." And sure enough, this is a roundup of his bountiful gifts as a player — from beautifully layered and precise rhythm feels ("Any Road") and rockabilly-style licks ("Vatican Blues") to lyrical slide playing ("Stuck Inside a Cloud") and Indian-influenced meditations (the exquisite, Grammy-winning "Marwa Blues").

Released a year after he passed in 2001, his final album had songs that stretched back over a personally challenging decade. Harrison endured financial problems and court cases (over HandMade Films), three different cancer diagnoses and courses of treatments and, horrifically, an attempted murder by an intruder in his home. Through it all, this project was a place of calm and sanity to which he returned. Toward the end of the Nineties, his health declining, Harrison realized he

might not live to see its completion. So he left extensive — and poetic — notes for his son Dhani and Jeff Lynne to finish it. "Sort out middle of 'Brainwashed'; cut down yew trees at back of lodge," went a typical entry. With that in mind, the pair worked during the year after he passed to provide what Dhani called "a cradle for George's voice and guitar."

That sensitive approach keeps the focus on the songs, which encompass all the many sides of George — Buddhist, cosmic consciousness traveler, black-humored curmudgeon, gardener, guitarist, former Beatle — while he considers this world and the next. As he sings on "Rising Sun" — *Until the ghost of memory trapped in my body, mind / Came out of hiding to become alive*. Another way of saying — George is forever. **BD**

HARRISON HIGHLIGHTS "Any Road," "Stuck Inside a Cloud," "Marwa Blues," "Rising Sun," "Brainwashed" **GW**

GEORGE'S **OTHER** MASTERPIECE

Living in the Material World, George Harrison's 1973 follow-up to *All Things Must Pass*, is a moveable feast that's ripe for rediscovery. Dhani Harrison dissects the making of the original album and producing the new 50th-anniversary box set

BY BILL DeMAIN

I F YOU'D BEEN taking bets in 1970 on which former Beatle would be the most successful in the new decade, George Harrison was definitely — to borrow the name of one of his future hits — the dark horse. But as he'd sing in that tune, "Baby, it looks like I've been breaking out."

In November, he turned the page on the Fabs with *All Things Must Pass*, a triple album brimming with artistic confidence and gorgeous, melancholy songs, not to mention the world's first-ever God-conscious Number 1 single. The album topped the charts around the globe, earned two Grammy nominations and had critics spouting superlatives about the formerly quiet one. As *Melody Maker* put it, "Garbo talks! — Harrison is free!"

Free maybe, but as 1971 unfolded, he was caught up in all kinds of trouble and strife. There was the prolonged legal drama of the Beatles' split, the newly filed copyright infringement case over "My Sweet Lord" (in the context of its similarity to the Chiffons' "He's So Fine"), a marriage on the rocks and a drug-addled producer who was losing his mind. To this, George had single-handedly taken on the Concert for Bangladesh, a combination concert-album-film, all to raise money for a country beset by natural disaster and genocide. The first-ever such relief project on the world stage, it was a logistical nightmare of trying to form a supergroup while convincing record companies and governments to forfeit profits. "I spent the month of June and

half of July just telephoning people," Harrison later said in a press conference.

If anything was keeping him sane during that time, it was meditation, music and guitar playing. And they all came together on 1973's *Living in the Material World*, a song cycle about the healing power of love and prayer in a harsh, unfeeling world. More than 50 years later, the album's life-affirming messages remain potent and evergreen. Is there a better couplet for our moment than, "Give me hope / Help me cope with this heavy load"?

Now released in a 50th anniversary deluxe box set edition

(about a year and a half late), produced by George's son Dhani and widow Olivia, and sporting a vibrant new mix by Paul Hicks, the album has never sounded or looked better. On a Zoom from Australia, Dhani talked to us about the challenges of assembling the project, why it's sometimes helpful to fire your producer and the evolution of his dad's unique slide guitar style.

You've been working with mixing engineer Paul Hicks for many years. How does your shared history give you creative insight into remixing your dad's albums?

We grew up as only-children

together, and our dads had been at Abbey Road at the same time. His dad [Tony] was in studio three with the Hollies; my dad was in studio two with the Beatles. And then Paul worked for Abbey Road for 18 years. He was very close with my dad, and I'm close with his dad. Paul has spent the last 25 years remastering and remixing all the Beatles records. So he has the perfect encyclopedic knowledge of everything. We had a really good success on *All Things Must Pass*. And people were really happy with that remaster. When you build confidence like that, you can kind of push things a bit more, and I think that's what we've really seen on *Material World*. We went back to the original 24-track tapes, as opposed to just a remaster. So this is what we call an ultra remaster.

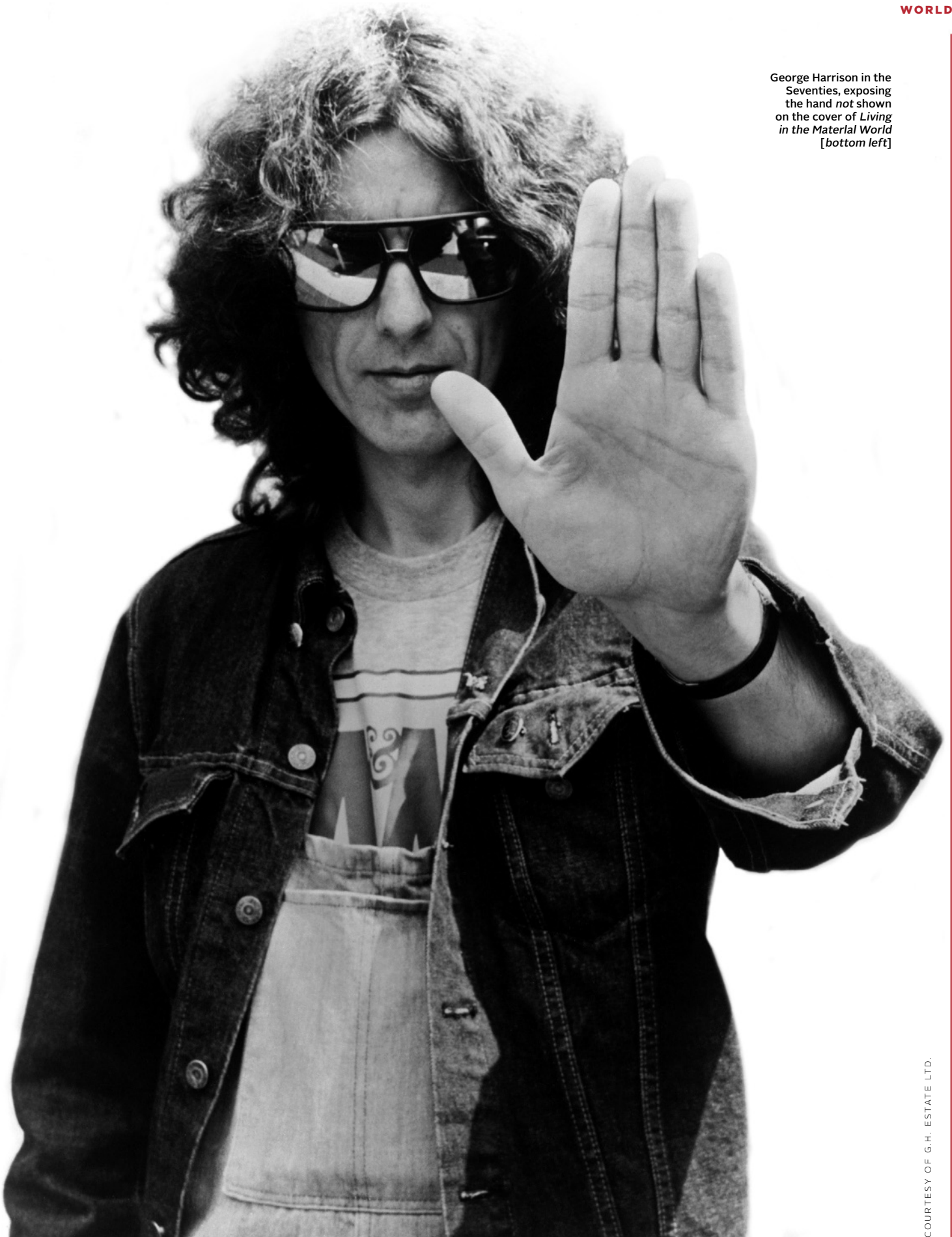
It was the first album your dad recorded at Friar Park, his home studio, right?

Yes, and maybe they hadn't quite dialed it in 100 percent yet, because they were still tuning the room. They were learning the songs in relation to how it sounds in the room. Since I've renovated the studio, there've been improvements that I made to the sound field, so you can get a truer mix. So I said to Paul, "It's possible that you nailed the mix a bit better than they did in the original one." And that's no insult to my dad and his engineers.

When you start a project like this, do you make a wish list for what you want to hear? →

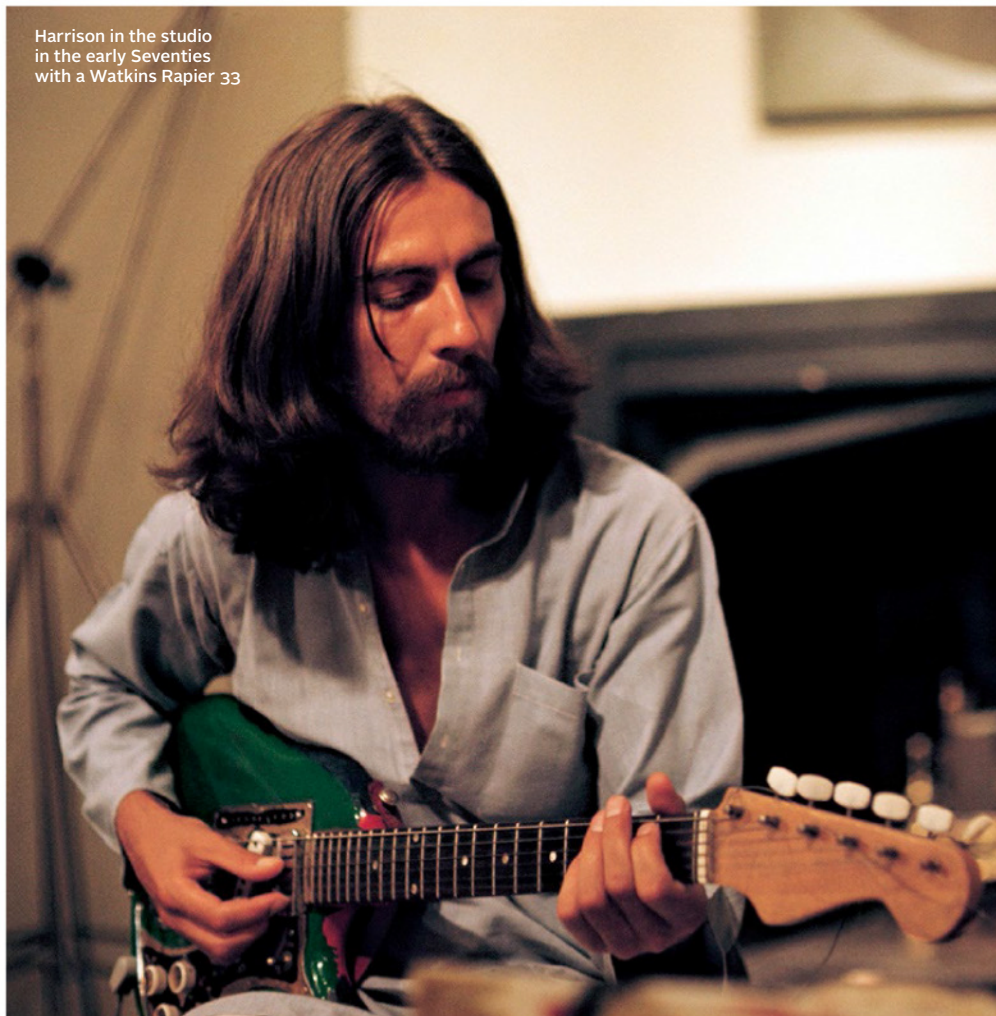


George Harrison in the
Seventies, exposing
the hand *not* shown
on the cover of *Living
in the Material World*
[bottom left]



COURTESY OF G.H. ESTATE LTD.

Harrison in the studio
in the early Seventies
with a Watkins Rapier 33



There's definitely the fan wish list that we consider. People really wanted to hear "Sunshine Life for Me (Sail Away Raymond)," so we made a vinyl 45 of that as a bonus. We have the most amazing archivists we work with. But you have to make choices about what will live in a digital space, and the stuff that's only available if you have a turntable. We try to consider the price and make it very competitive. It's expensive buying big box sets. It's not something a lot of people can afford right now. So that's why we were keen on keeping a lid on this one, making it accessible.

Your design background helps to give the box its visual appeal.

Thanks. They do have to occasionally reel me in on my design work, otherwise I'll make these Death Star-size box sets that no one can lift. [Laughs] But we always like to have very good quality, high-res photos and treat them as if they're part of a photo album or scrapbook, so people feel like it's something from their family, like something you've put together yourself.

What were the challenges going through the audio?

On some songs, we had up to 90 takes, all done with the band. We didn't want to drive everyone mad by including them all. [Laughs] I used to love my Beach Boys box sets, but after four takes of "God Only Knows" in a row, I want to go to the next track. I don't feel like I'm listening to an album anymore. On the *All Things Must Pass* box, we did the extra disc that was like the "de-Spectored version," for want of a better term — the no-reverb version of the record that was from the demos. And then there's the version you can listen to start to finish. I think people were surprised at how little we put on the *Material World* box set. But we went through all 90 takes of each song, and there are ones that just have the magic; those are the ones we included.

Did you have a favorite discovery?

"Be Here Now," and some of the alternate takes for that [George borrowed the title from the book on spirituality by American yogi Ram Dass]. That's just heartbreaking, and such an amazing song. We teamed up with the Ram Dass Foundation, making a beautiful video using the original illustrations from the Ram Dass book. They were riffing off each other, George and Ram Dass. That's something that really captures the vibe of what was going on during the making of this record.

"SOME SONGS HAD UP TO 90 TAKES. WE DIDN'T WANT TO INCLUDE THEM ALL!"

DHANI HARRISON

George had wanted Phil Spector to produce this album, but when Spector showed up in London, he was in bad shape, drinking a lot, paranoid, holed up in a hotel room.

Dad told me it was a pain in the ass. And he took the hotel room next to Phil, because Phil was an addict. Dad would have to take

him to the hospital because he'd overdose, and he'd be just a mess, on all kinds of drugs. And that was a time when my dad was choosing the light, you know?

It was a blessing in disguise that Spector couldn't do the record because it pushed your dad into the role of the producer, working with a small ensemble, which I think is one of the strengths of this record.

Agreed. I don't think the Wall of Sound approach would've suited these songs. How many times have you heard that same thing where it's like, "We were doing the record and the producer just wasn't right"? And then it forced the artist to do it himself. And that's when they became the guy. I've had it happen myself. You know, firing the producer at the beginning is usually one of the best things you can do. [Laughs] If you want to make something that's true to yourself. George had needed the extra confidence with *All Things Must Pass*. It was a Number 1 album, and maybe he thought, "Okay, let's get Phil back in to do this one." But it was such a pain having to deal with him, because he was so out of it. My dad needed to free himself up from all of that dark energy. And then it turns into a band record. And it's a ripping band, with a lot of cool cats like Jim Keltner and Nicky Hopkins.

He was dealing with a lot of stress — the legal drama with the Beatles' breakup, the "My Sweet Lord" copyright case and then trying to organize this massive relief project for Bangladesh.

Yes, and this album really came about as a result of needing more money for Bangladesh, and the philanthropic movement he was trying to fund. Trying to get the money to go to the right places, in a charity sense, is very hard. But at the same time, I think you can also really hear how things are looking up for my dad, because he met my mother during this time. *All Things Must Pass* is a sad record. It was about the things that he'd gone through. On *Material World*, you can kind of see where the stuff he's writing has a new feeling. There's new foliage growing. It's not winter anymore.

The album opens with "Give Me Love (Give Me Peace on Earth)," which is such a deceptively tricky rhythm part.

It is! Actually, I did it recently with Eric Clapton at the Albert Hall, for one of his concerts. And I

remember doing it also at the Concert for George [in 2002]. It's really easy to get the signature wrong. I remember Jeff Lynne had a hard time with the syncopation. I think it was Jim Keltner's favorite track to play, because it's got that Indian rhythm influence, the Tihai [repeating a group of beats three times]. You know, like [sings], "Won't you please, oh, won't you please..." "Here Comes the Sun" has also got that Tihai.

Something that always blows my mind is that your dad didn't play slide guitar on any Beatles records.

Well, "Free As a Bird"...

Yeah, but on the original albums, from 1963 to '70 he didn't. And then in the early Seventies, he emerges with this distinctly beautiful slide sound.

I think that definitely came off the back of hanging out with Ravi Shankar and learning sitar. There was more discipline involved. I remember watching when my dad would be doing stuff in the studio at home, and he was so concentrated, really focused on double tracking harmonies — or "guitarmonies," as he called it. He had his method. When we went to finish things on *Brainwashed* [2002], there would be, like, 20 solos. And then if you'd pull them all up, they would still work! And then it was like, "Wait, which one is the one?" He would try so many things. But it wasn't just like he just did it once and forgot about it. He really workshoped his parts and solos. I think that approach was because he only had that little bit of spotlight in every Beatles song. So much of it was George Martin telling him what he could or couldn't play. So he had to be really clever. It might have not felt good at the time to be told what to play by George Martin, but I think that's what helped create that later style.

If you ever want to hear a solo that'll blow your mind, listen to the Belinda Carlisle song "Leave a Light On." It was a hit, and my dad played [slide guitar] on it. It's ripping, one of his better solos. And then there's "Cheer Down" from *Lethal Weapon 2*, which is fantastic. The live version from Japan is great as well. Dad really liked that Santo & Johnny "Teardrop" kind of style that they did on "Sleepwalk."

What's the story with "Sunshine Life for Me (Sail Away Raymond)"? Did he intend to record it in addition to giving it to Ringo? →

Wonderwall to Be Here

A Q&A with frequent George Harrison collaborator John Barham, whose arrangements sweetened everything from 1968's *Wonderwall Music* to 1973's *Living in the Material World* (and beyond) **BY BILL DeMAIN**

JOHN BARHAM WROTE the orchestral and choral arrangements for two of George Harrison's most celebrated albums: 1970's *All Things Must Pass* and 1973's *Living in the Material World*. Barham, who was educated at the Royal College of Music and the School of Oriental and African Studies, both in London, was an assistant to Ravi Shankar, a longtime friend of Harrison. Harrison and Barham first collaborated on Harrison's often-overlooked 1968 soundtrack album, *Wonderwall Music*, the first solo album to be released by a Beatle. We recently caught up with Barham for a rare interview — via email — about Harrison's skills as a producer.

When you met George in 1966, you shared a love of Indian music, which was hardly mainstream at that point. Was there a sense that you were outsiders in your chosen fields?

Yes, there was that sense, but we didn't really discuss it. We talked more about spirituality and philosophy. I remember that the other Beatles were curious about other aspects of Indian culture, too, in particular, their [1968] trip to Rishikesh [India] and being influenced by the teachings of the Maharishi and transcendental meditation.

In 1966, you did *Alice in Wonderland* with Ravi, and George wrote his first Indian-influenced song, "Love You To," for *Revolver*. Do you think it was scary for him to introduce Indian music onto a record by the Beatles?

I got the impression that he needed to be quite forceful to get his songs onto Beatles records. He was one against two of the greatest songwriters of their time. But also their equal. George was so intensely involved with Indian music as well as his work with the Beatles, and I think the strength of his conviction would have overcome any scary feelings.

***Wonderwall Music* was one of George's first forays into album production. What was it like working for him during those sessions? Was he completely in control or was he still learning as he went along?**

He was certainly in control — but I wouldn't say completely in control. One of the things I liked about working with him was his ability to give musicians the freedom to express themselves while following his leadership. I recently checked the Apple Records box set and saw how many productions George was involved in. He was a quick learner, and working with Billy Preston, Badfinger and Ronnie Spector would have offered George — and myself — plenty of opportunities to learn a few tricks of the trade.

How would you approach writing an arrangement for one of George's songs?

For the *All Things Must Pass* orchestral sessions, we first worked together at Friar Park [Harrison's home — and home studio — in Henley-on-Thames, England] in a large room with two chairs and an upright piano. George sang and played ideas on the guitar, and I suggested ideas on the piano. I notated everything we agreed on so that there would be no surprises at the recording stage. It was very straightforward and collaborative.

How did Phil Spector's production style on *All Things Must Pass* affect your choices?

Phil gave me complete freedom by not being present at the preparatory orchestral sessions. He left it to George and me. But during the recording, he demonstrated in front of the orchestra how he thought I should conduct.

Did having George as the producer on *Material World* give you more freedom in your arrangements?

The preparation and recording sessions were very similar, with the difference that Phil was not telling me how to conduct.

On the new remix, they really brought out your orchestral arrangements. Were you frustrated with the original mix?

I wasn't frustrated, but I thought the balance in the original mixes of *All Things* and *Material World*

was unsatisfactory. George's vocals were too low in relation to the backing. This recent remixing of *Material World* is excellent, especially in regard to correcting that balance.

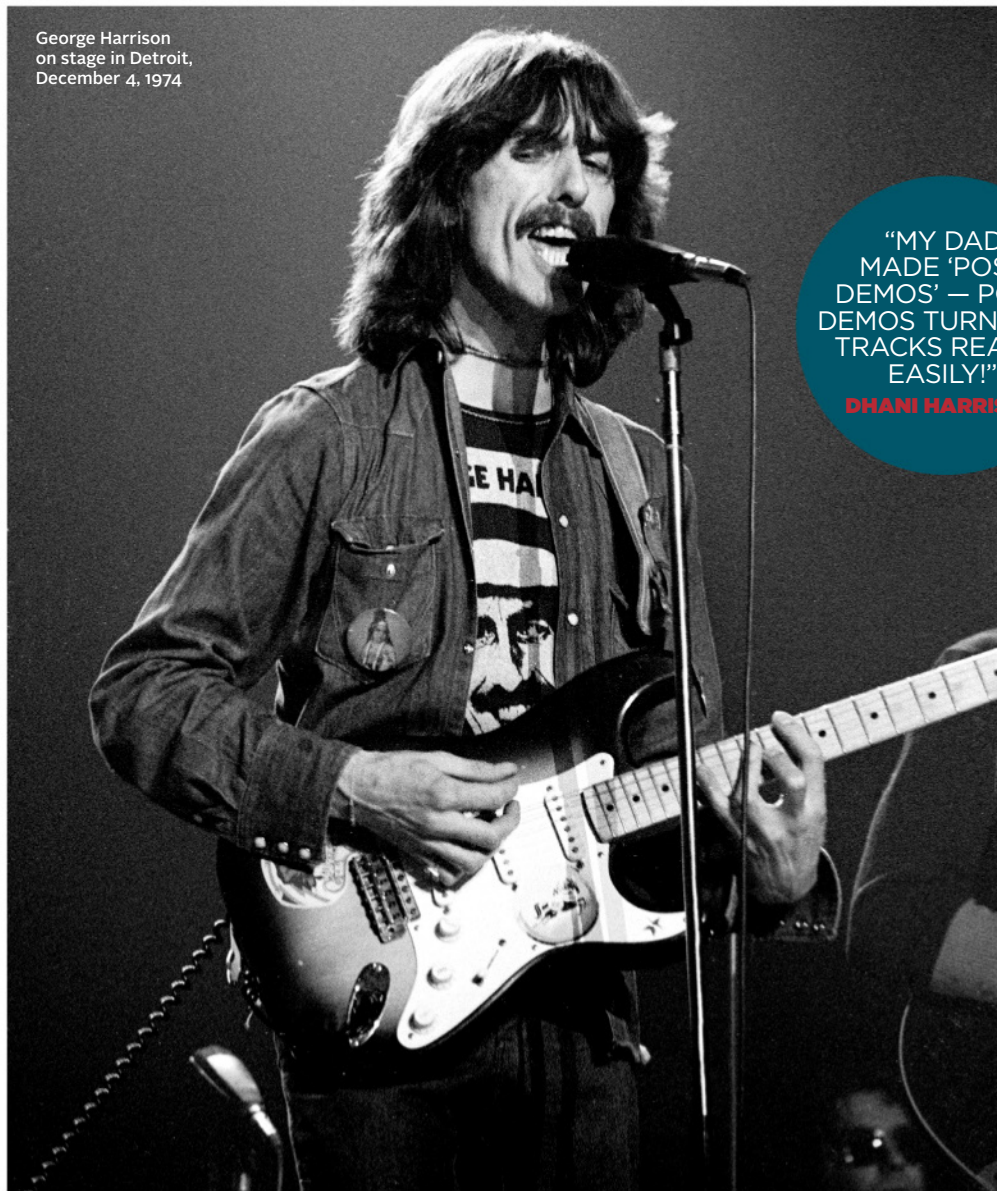
What do you think George's main gifts were as a guitarist?

I think his main gifts were his melodic sense, simplicity, clarity and, for me, an instantly recognizable style that embodied melodic ideas with rock rhythms and an influence of Indian music.



[from left] George Harrison, Aashish Khan and John Barham

George Harrison
on stage in Detroit,
December 4, 1974



"MY DAD
MADE 'POSH
DEMOS' — POSH
DEMOS TURN INTO
TRACKS REALLY
EASILY!"

DHANI HARRISON

the surviving players from the albums, such as Klaus Voormann or Jim Keltner?

Not really. I mean, I haven't spoken to Klaus for a long time. Keltner and I talk about stuff whenever we see each other. My mom had a good natter with him the other day, because he did two nights at the Albert Hall in London with Dylan. It's funny, I remember asking Jim to come on tour with me, Joseph Arthur and Ben Harper back in 2012 with Fiftiful of Mercy. And Keltner said, "No, I don't play shows anymore." And here we are in 2024, he's on the road with Dylan, and he's 82. So that was a lie. Thanks, Jim. [Laughs] Seriously, he's one of my favorite people in the world, and I know he was really proud of this record and loved it.

What's the status of the Concert for Bangladesh reissue?

We've got the audio done. It's a blinder of an album. We also have the whole second show, which no one's heard before. But we don't want to mix everything up and just put version after version of the same songs, because you lose perspective, and it ruins the listening experience. I'd rather hear the demo version from start to finish, then go on to the real version from start to finish, then the Day Two version from start to finish. We've started working on the film, using the same [AI-driven] algorithm Peter Jackson used on *Get Back*. We're working with Peter on restoring it, which takes a long time. It takes years to finish these projects. And that's with me trying to have my own career as well, in the meantime.

Do you have any new music in the works?

I just finished a tour that kind of drew a line underneath this year. It was a few select shows that we did for my last record, which was called *Innerstanding* [2023]. Hopefully next year, I'll be able to get a couple shows in with the band Huun-Huur-Tu, who are the Tuvan throat-singing lords. They are just incredible. I've got another project that we haven't announced yet, with one of my heroes of the English music scene. I can't say more than that at the moment. Also, I've been working a little bit with Anoushka Shankar, and we were collaborating with the Bulgarian Women's Choir of Sofia. So there's just always lots of stuff in the pipeline. **GW**

I don't know why it didn't go on this record, unless it was specifically written for Ringo [ed. It was one of several Harrison-contributed songs on Starr's hit 1973 album, *Ringo*]. I'm not sure. It's such a great song, and I'm glad we have two versions, because they're both great. It's a demo. But keep in mind, my dad's way

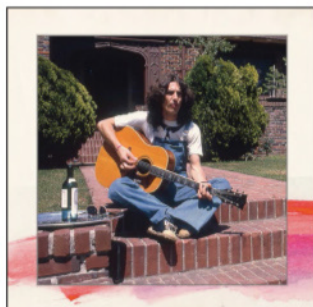
of making demos is what we call "posh demos" [Laughs], because you don't really need to do much with them afterwards. Posh demos turn into tracks really easily!

Do you remember the first time you heard *Material World*, and did you talk to your dad about it?

I remember talking to him about

the artwork, because I was discussing Wings, and I'd noticed that the Wings two-hands logo was like a double version of the *Material World* hand, and it was like, "Wow, cool!" Obviously, I knew "Give Me Love," which kind of lives separately in its own world. It's such a famous song, you don't think of it being part of the album. For me, I'm drawn to the album tracks. You go through each of my dad's records and you find tracks like "Here Comes the Moon" [from 1979's *George Harrison*] and you're like, "Wow, that's not something that I remembered!" And then for this album, it was definitely "Be Here Now." It's powerful stuff. I remember sitting around playing acoustics with my dad and asking him to show me that opening riff.

When you're working on these albums, do you ever consult with



A pair of George pics from the rare-photo- and detail-packed book that accompanies the new *Living in the Material World* box set

SOUND CHECK



Orange Dual Baby 100 and Gain Baby 100

By Chris Gill

ORANGE HAS PLAYED a trailblazing role in the mini and micro amp phenomenon with its Terror and Micro amps, but the firm is equally famous for building big, powerful amps that dominate the biggest stages. Orange's new Baby amps are a combination of both, packing full-featured, high-power amplification into a compact, lightweight package that you can carry around.

The Dual Baby 100 and Gain Baby 100 significantly expand the concept of Orange's popular Pedal Baby amp

introduced a few years ago. Unlike the relatively bare-bones Pedal Baby, this duo of new amps provides multiple switchable channels and comprehensive controls just like those of a full-size amp head. Both are worth consideration by players seeking maximum performance from a minimal-size rig.

Usability & Build Quality

Although the Dual Baby 100 and Gain Baby 100 are both two-channel models, they

differ in approach and tonal character. The Gain Baby 100 takes a more traditional approach by offering distinct Clean and Dirty channels. The Clean channel is straightforward, providing only volume, bass and treble controls plus a built-in VCA compressor with level knob, while the Dirty channel offers the full array of gain, volume, presence, bass, middle and treble controls plus a second footswitchable volume control for boosting of cutting levels for solos. The Dirty channel also has a Tight →



switch that can make bass frequencies more focused at high-gain settings.

The Dual Baby 100 is ideal for players who opt for tones like crunch rhythm/high-gain lead or contrasting high-gain lead textures. Each of its two channels have gain, volume, presence, bass, middle and treble knobs, and Channel A offers a Tubby switch while Channel B provides a Tight switch.

Both amps are powered by a dynamically responsive 100-watt solid-state class A/B power stage and single-ended JFET preamp stage. Both models also feature a buffered effects loop, balanced XLR direct output with ground lift switch, a pair of 1/4-inch speaker outputs and a channel-switching footswitch jack, with the Gain Baby also providing an additional volume footswitch jack.

These amps are both impressively versatile, providing a variety of tones and two fully independent channels. Each head weighs less than eight pounds and is about two rack units high (with the rubber bottom feet removed) — in fact, these amps can be rackmounted if desired.

Sounds

Guitarists who haven't gotten over their biases against solid-state amps should do a blind sound and feel test. These amps have tonal personality similar to Orange's Crush and Rockerverb tube amps. The Gain Baby 100's Clean channel is sweet and pristine and, best of all, never cold or sterile. The built-in compressor is a very useful addition that adds pop to single-note lines and punch to chords. The Gain channel delivers everything from gnarly crunch to beautifully complex saturated distortion tones, and the footswitchable second



volume control is almost like having a third channel.

The Dual Baby 100 is a great option for hard rock, metal and punk players (in fact, it has been thoroughly road-tested on tour by Captain Sensible with the Damned) who prefer crunch over clean. The crunch tones are harmonically complex and provide an

"Guitarists who haven't gotten over their biases against solid-state amps should do a blind sound and feel test"

intense bite, while the higher gain settings pump out that gut-walloping punch that Orange amps are famous for. You can certainly dial in clean tones as well, which are greatly aided by the Tubby switch that adds body and warmth. However, players seeking ample headroom at higher output levels should opt for the Gain Baby.

Both amp models pair particularly well with cabinets equipped with Celestion Vintage 30 speakers, which most venues should be able to accommodate for players who don't want to haul a speaker cabinet to a gig. Obviously, the amps deliver their optimal full-range push and punch with a

4x12, but I was impressed with the depth of the bass I got from smaller 1x12 and 2x12 cabs. Delivering 70 watts of output at 16 ohms, both amps are more than loud enough for the concert stage. Running a direct signal from the balanced XLR output to a mixer also sounded warm and natural with a speaker emulator in the signal chain. I got good results with a UAFX Ox Stomp pedal as well as a more expensive Suhr Reactive Load IR.

Verdict

If you want to minimize the size of your amp rig without sacrificing the versatility of a full-size multi-channel head, the Orange Dual Baby 100 and Gain Baby 100 provide a wide variety of tones and high-power output for assembling a fly rig with no performance compromises. **GW**

STREET PRICE: TBA

MANUFACTURER:

Orange Amps, orangeamps.com

PROS

- + Full-size output and performance from a compact format
- + Gain Baby 100's clean channel features built-in compressor
- + Gain Baby 100's channel B provides footswitchable volume boost/cut
- + Both models deliver a full range of tones from clean to super-saturated high-gain distortion

CONS

- Dual Baby's clean headroom only reaches moderate volume output levels
- Footswitches not included





Cort G250 SE

By Paul Riario

WHETHER YOU'RE A novice, a shredder or even a dabbler, there's a guitar that Cort can quickly curate for you. How so? Just head over to Cort's comprehensive website and you'll find a trio of dropdown menus that will generate the ideal guitar for your needs. While this sounds like I'm shilling for them, rest assured, I have no skin in the game; Cort has done just fine selling a dizzying amount of guitars, basses and acoustics without my help. What I *can* say is I've reviewed a few of the firm's guitars in the shredder and the more contemporary categories — the KX700 Evertune and the G290 FAT II, respectively — and both were genuinely outstanding instruments. Once again, I had the opportunity to check out Cort's latest modern classic, the G250 SE, which ticks all the boxes in a pleasing double-cutaway design with an HSS pickup configuration that's invitingly impressive in playability and tone. But you know what's bonkers? It comes with an affordable price tag that makes scooping one up all the more enticing.

Build Quality

The G250 SE has the familiar double-cutaway curves found on typical overseas S-style guitars with the slightly elongated upper horn. What sets it apart from others is the fact that its basswood body is slightly asymmetrical, making it appealing to many players digging on the trendier offset designs. From there, the guitar shares the same aesthetic as other S-styles by having a three-ply vintage black pickguard framing its attractive appearance in four muted and lacquered finishes of Ocean Blue Grey, Olive Dark Green, Vivid Burgundy and Black. Roasted maple necks with their

tried-and-true stability and golden brown hues are currently “de rigueur,” and Cort is on point offering it here as the guitar's bolted-on choice at no additional charge. The guitar does away with the common squared-off neck heel and replaces it with a smoothly beveled one for an effortless approach past the 15th fret. Also, the slim, C-profile neck is finished in satin with 22 medium jumbo frets and black dot inlays and features a 25 1/2" scale length. The G250 SE's vintage voice is powered by Cort's Voiced Tone pickups with a VTH-59 bridge humbucker paired with two VTS-63 single coil pickups, controls for volume and tone (with coil-tap) and a five-way selector switch. The guitar floats a two-point vibrato bridge with steel bent saddles, but you'll need to be judicious in your vibrato throw to not go out of tune because the guitar comes with die-cast (non-locking) tuners.

Performance & Sounds

It used to be that guitars with pinpoint playability and minimal upgrades in hardware and electronics would be straddling the \$500-600 mark, but now — at nearly half the price — the G250 SE seriously competes with those instruments and exceeds all expectations. From fit to finish, it's staggering how good this guitar feels and sounds, making it nearly impossible to fault. Setup was fairly good, but, as an experienced player, I made some minor adjustments in dropping the action by lowering the two-point vibrato bridge and a slight truss rod tweak of the neck. Playability felt effortless on its floating bridge in combination with the player-friendly carve on its roasted neck. Cort's

“From fit to finish, it's staggering how good this guitar feels and sounds, making it nearly impossible to fault”

Voiced Tone pickups are somewhat vintage-flavored, as evidenced by their mid-output and neutral tonal coloration. You can argue they lack the complexity or fuller-bodied tones of other popular brands, but what you'll hear instead is a prominent glassy sparkle from the single coils and a firm, chunky bite from the humbucker. The coil-tapped bridge makes an audible difference in tone without losing output, and when you factor in the combined brightness of bolt-on construction and a roasted maple neck, the guitar's overall sound snaps with biting clarity.

Verdict

A true modern classic with a price that's within reach for many players, Cort's G250 SE raises the bar in quality for a double cutaway guitar with player-centric upgrades. Whether it serves as your main guitar or as a backup, the G250 SE is a solid workhorse and a real joy to play. **GW**

STREET PRICE: \$349.99

MANUFACTURER:

Cort Guitars, cortguitars.com

PROS

- + Affordable in price and high in quality
- + Roasted maple neck ensures stability and reliability
- + Player-friendly neck profile and medium jumbo frets provide easy playability
- + Cort's mid-output Voiced Tone pickups produce brighter clarity and snap
- + Two-point vibrato is smooth and solid

CONS

- None at this price



Mooer Ocean Machine II

By Chris Gill

UNLIKE FILMS, SEQUELS in the guitar-gear world are often better than the originals, and that's certainly the case with the new and notably improved Mooer Ocean Machine II. It's been about eight years since the Ocean Machine developed in

SPECS

CONTROLS: Pre-Delay, Decay, Tone, Reverb Mix (reverb); Feedback, Time, Sweep, Delay Mix (delay A); Feedback, Time, Sweep, Delay Mix (delay B); Menu/Mix; Reverb algorithm; Delay A algorithm; Delay B algorithm

FOOTSWITCHES: Reverb/Tap/Bypass/Rec Play Stop, Delay A/Tap/Down/Half Speed, Delay B/Tap/Up/Reverse

JACKS: 1/4-inch stereo Inputs and Outputs, 1/4-inch TRS expression, MIDI thru, MIDI in, 9-volt 500mA center negative DC adapter, USB-C

collaboration with Devin Townsend made its debut, and while the Ocean Machine II maintains a similar dual-delay unit, reverb and looping effects foundation, it offers improved DSP algorithms, expanded specs, enhanced performance capabilities and better reliability. One detail that didn't change is the price, making the Ocean Machine II even more incredible value than its predecessor.

Usability & Build Quality

Like most sophisticated effects processors, the Ocean Machine II does have a bit of a learning curve, and reading the manual before you roll up your sleeves and get to work is highly recommended. Having said that, it's easy to find your way around thanks to the control knobs provided for the separate reverb and two delay sections. Each section has a nine-position rotary switch for selecting delay or reverb types plus four parameter control knobs — pre delay, decay, tone and mix for reverb;

feedback, time, sweep and mix for the delays. A large multi-color LCD, a rotary menu knob and front panel switches make it easy to tweak deeper parameters and function settings in fine detail.

Three footswitches provide stomp box-style performance ease and functionality. Depending on the selected mode, the switches can select the reverb and delay effects individually, provide bypass and preset up/down scrolling functions, control various looper functions or provide tap tempo functions for the reverb and delay effects individually. Full-size MIDI thru and in jacks and a 1/4-inch expression pedal jack further expand the unit's control capabilities via optional external devices. A USB-C jack is a new addition that facilitates firmware updates.

Sounds

The original Ocean Machine was an ambient music monster capable of



generating universes of strange, beautiful, disturbing, hypnotic and intoxicating soundscapes. The new unit does the same, only the overall sound quality is even more lush and three-dimensional. These are the kinds of sounds that used to require expensive studio gear costing tens of thousands of dollars but now are available in a pedal that costs the same price as a retrograde fuzz box made by an obnoxious hipster using primitive, low-tech components.

At its core, the Ocean Machine II is two standalone delay units and a reverb unit, but the sum is much greater than its individual parts thanks to the way it blends, morphs, distorts and manipulates those effects together. Users can place the effects in any order they please in series or parallel. It excels at shimmer and resonance effects where long reverb tails swell like accompanying synth parts, but it can also generate hallucinatory delay effects that swell and recede in musically and

“Unlike films, sequels in the gear world are often better than the originals, and that’s certainly the case here”

rhythmically fascinating ways. The textures can range from silky smooth to the gnarliest gritty distortion you’ve ever heard.

The algorithms for the delays include standard digital, analog, tape and echo effects, but the real fun lies in the more colorfully named liquid, rainbow, crystal, low-bit and fuzzy algorithms. The same goes for the reverb algorithms, which consist of room, hall, plate and spring reverbs plus the more adventurous dist-verb, fl-verb, filter, reverse and mod algorithms. Advanced modulation capabilities allow users to tweak these effects beyond oblivion.

With the recording time of the looper

section now expanded from a maximum of 44 seconds to 120 seconds, users can create more highly layered loops or sections that can form the foundation of an entire song. Combined with the unit’s outrageous reverb and delay textures, the Ocean Machine II is like Frippertronics to the nth degree.

Verdict

Much more than a dual-delay/reverb/looper effect, the Mooer Ocean Machine II is a sophisticated ambient soundscape generating device that is like an instrument unto itself, which can inspire hours of sonic exploration and composition creation. **GW**

STREET PRICE: \$299

MANUFACTURER:

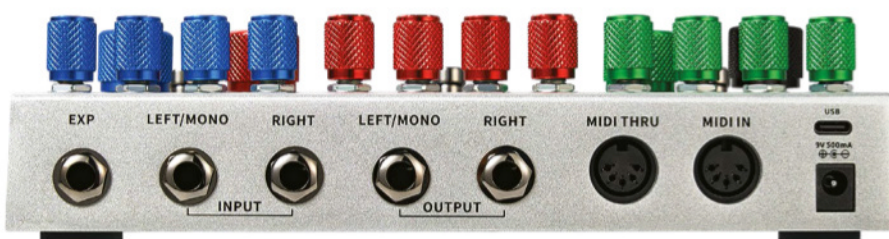
Mooer Audio, mooeraudio.com

PROS

- + Sophisticated blend of reverb and delay effects with advanced modulation
- + Maximum looper recording time is increased to 120 seconds
- + Footswitches make it easier to control various functions in live performance

CONS

- Due to the complex nature of the effects and the depth of its programming capabilities, the learning curve can be steep





Bare Knuckle Pickups PolyPaf Humbuckers

By Paul Riario

LAST YEAR WHEN I reviewed Bare Knuckle's fantastic Peacemaker humbuckers, I had also mentioned — in the same review — that its signature Adam “Nolly” Getgood Polymath humbuckers are extraordinary. Fast-forward a year, and I still stand behind that statement. If you haven't heard a guitar outfitted with Bare Knuckle Polymaths, you are woefully missing out on one of the most focused and refined humbucker designs in recent memory. The Polymaths were so unforgettable that I've been haunted by my missed opportunity for not installing a set in one of my own guitars.

When I heard that the dynamic duo of Adam “Nolly” Getgood and Tim Mills — Bare Knuckle's chief designer and founder — have collaborated once again under the “Poly” prefix for Getgood's newest signature humbucking creation, the PolyPaf, I jumped at the chance to review this freshly updated take on the renowned (and often misunderstood) P.A.F. pickup.

Build Quality

The PolyPaf humbucker's main ingredient is an unoriented Alnico V rough cast magnet. If you're stuck on the word “unoriented,” you're not alone. I don't have the space to explain the differences between an “unoriented” Alnico V magnet and, say, an efficient “oriented” one; just know that BK's “unoriented” choice offers

a bit of randomness in the pickup's magnetic properties, yielding tonal by-products of warmth, midrange focus and soft compression. PolyPafs also utilize high-carbon steel slugs tailored to optimize the wound strings sonically and a custom wind offset of 42AWG plain enamel wire for superior tone. Pickup resistances on the PolyPafs measure 8.3 kilo-ohms for the bridge and 7.6 kilo-ohms for the neck, and if you need a visual, Bare Knuckle's online EQ chart displays an upward staircase bump of bass, mid and treble, respectively.

The PolyPaf is available as a 6-, 7- and 8-string pickup with four- or two-conductor wiring, short or long mounting legs and 50mm or 53mm pole spacing. In addition, you can select from a staggering selection of open-coil bobbin colors, pole screw finishes, custom covers, radiators and TVs options, including making your own “custom cover” etching.

Performance & Sounds

Most guitar lore is fraught with mystery and misinformation, and the mythical P.A.F. is no stranger to both. Historically, vintage P.A.F. pickups are well documented for their inconsistencies regarding the type and length of Alnico magnets used (among other material build variations) and the number of coil windings that can result in tonal bliss or miss. For the PolyPaf, the goal

for Getgood and Mills was to reimagine a P.A.F.-style humbucker with concentrated consistency and renewed vitality, combining all the classic tonal hallmarks players romanticize over. After installing these humbuckers in my favored Les Paul Classic, I can reveal this is no clichéd P.A.F.-repro pickup because the PolyPaf is a completely reinvigorated paradigm of 21st-century P.A.F. tone. It might be audacious to say, but it's almost as if the PolyPaf was reverse-engineered from a digital snapshot “model” of an idealized, pre-produced bridge and neck P.A.F., and brought to life as detailed humbuckers with all the organic complexity, string-to-string separation and touch-sensitive nuance the vintage pickups were known for. The bridge's warmly sculpted tone is so clear and “in your face” that it's easy to perceive its mid-output as a “hotter” humbucker because it can bare its teeth and show muscle when pumped through a high-gain tube amp (in this case, my EVH 5150 III), all while maintaining an articulate voice. Switching to the neck and bridge/neck combinations offers even more “wide-openness” — I could coax juicy cleans or chunky honk as I opened them up through a Fender Deluxe Reverb. Even using guitar amp sims and modelers like IK's TONEX and Positive Grid's Spark 2, the PolyPafs genuinely enhance your touch and the sounds of the modeled tone with pronounced detail.

Verdict

Bare Knuckle's PolyPaf refreshes the iconic P.A.F. pickup in both a contemporary and classic manner. It's a modern-sounding P.A.F. that's wrinkle-free but injects all the expressiveness and detailed response of a prime vintage example, making it as timeless as a made-to-measure black suit and tie. Even so, the PolyPafs' fully dimensional, mid-output humbucking tones are the very kind of dynamic P.A.F.-style humbuckers many players have waited for. **GW**

STREET PRICE: From £163 (approx. \$202); from £314 (approx. \$390) for sets

MANUFACTURER: Bare Knuckle Pickups, bareknucklepickups.co.uk

PROS

- + Refreshing update on the classic P.A.F. pickup
- + Three-dimensional tones, rich harmonics and unmatched clarity. Expressive and responsive

CONS

- Pricey

D'Angelico Premier SS

By Chris Gill

SO MANY COOL new thinline semi-hollow electrics have emerged recently that it would be safe to say that we're in the middle of a semi-hollow renaissance. D'Angelico has played a big part in that development, with the company currently offering 22 different semi-hollow models across its entire line, from the upscale Deluxe series to the affordable Premier series.

The single-cutaway Premier SS model has been part of the D'Angelico lineup for a while now, but they've made a few tweaks along the way — so it's worth consideration if it hasn't already crossed your semi-hollow radar. Priced between \$699 and \$899 depending on finish option, standard or figured maple top and use of D'Angelico or Supro humbuckers, it's also D'Angelico's most affordable semi-hollow and one of the few single-cutaway models on the market.

Build Quality & Playability

The D'Angelico Premier SS is built from quality woods that include laminated maple top, back and sides, maple neck and pau ferro fingerboard. In typical D'Angelico style, it's no shrinking violet thanks to stylistic embellishments like its fancy headstock design, stairstep tuners, pearloid block fretboard inlays, ebony controls knobs, five-ply body binding and floating Scalini five-ply black or tortoise pickguard.

The body measures 15 inches across the widest portion of its lower bout and thickness is 1.75 inches — larger than a Les Paul but still on the slim and comfortable side when it comes to semi-hollow designs. The 22-fret set neck has a fast-playing 14-inch radius and C-shape profile with ample but not excessive mass, and the scale length is 25 inches.

Sounds

Our test example was the most affordable Premier SS version, featuring a standard maple top, Burnt Red finish (other options at this price are Surf Green and Solid Black)

“The single cutaway shape enhances overall warmth and slightly extends the range of the bass frequencies”

and D'Angelico humbuckers. The pickups are vintage-style with resistances measuring 8.03 kilo-ohms (bridge) and 7.41 kilo-ohms (neck). Each pickup has its own distinct character, with the bridge pickup providing an aggressive, full-bodied midrange growl that's ideal for rock while the neck pickup has bouncy, round punch that's great for blues or funk. The treble is clear but not thin or piercing, providing excellent clarity and note separation.

Thanks to the body's semi-hollow construction with full-size centerblock, the tone has the distinct barking midrange resonance of a semi-hollow but it can be played though a cranked up amp without unwanted feedback. The single cutaway shape enhances overall warmth and slightly extends the range of the bass frequencies. It certainly has its own distinct vibe and voice.

Verdict

The D'Angelico Premier SS is a great choice for guitarists seeking an affordable semi-hollow electric that both looks and sounds different from most of the other models available, providing big, full-bodied tones ideal for a wide range of styles. **GW**

STREET PRICE: \$699.99
 (\$899.99 with Brown Burst, Dark Iced Tea Burst or Black Flake finish)

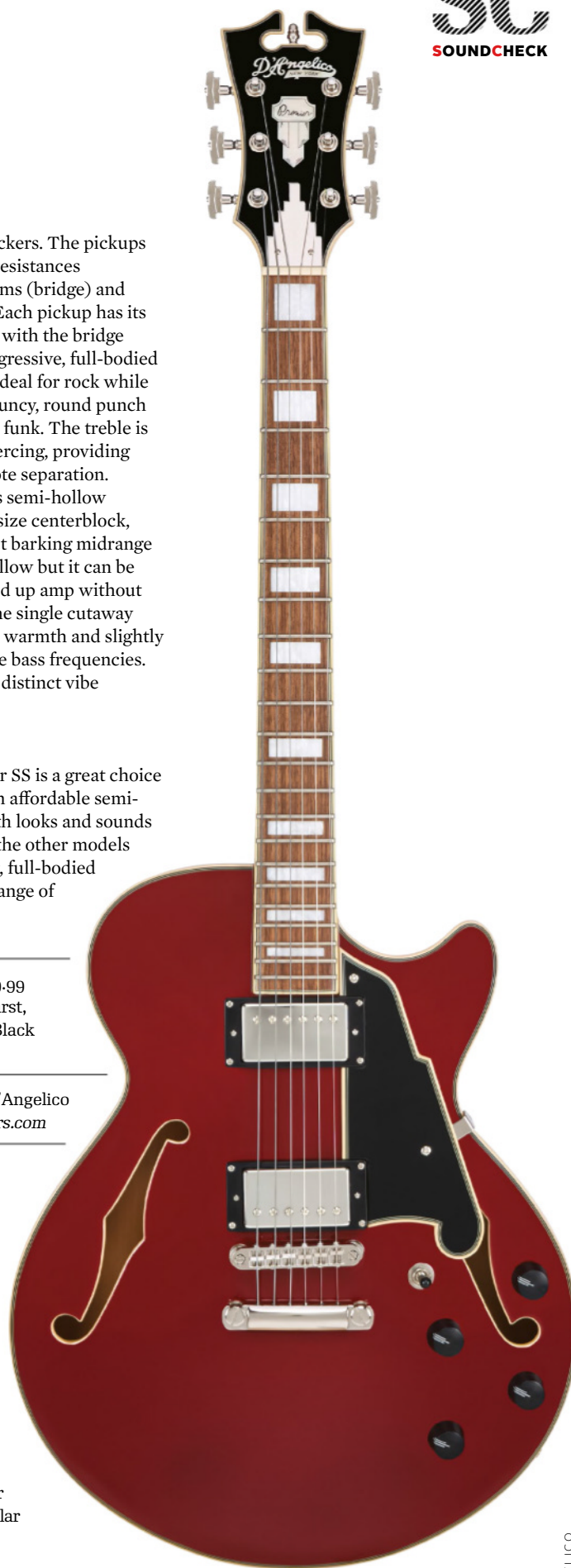
MANUFACTURER: D'Angelico Guitars, dangelicoguitars.com

PROS

- + Vintage-output humbuckers deliver full-bodied midrange ideal for a wide range of musical styles
- + Outstanding value
- + Cool upscale styling

CONS

- Players who prefer more treble sparkle may find overall tone somewhat dark
- Guitar is slightly larger and heavier than popular solidbody designs





For video of this lesson, go to
guitarworld.com/april2025

ROLLING THUNDER

More on neo-classical-style arpeggios

LAST MONTH, WE looked at the rolling, neo-classical-style arpeggios in the verse section of “Master Gracey’s Manor,” (*Charisma*). Mastering arpeggios like these can be both challenging and hugely rewarding for guitar players of virtually every style of music. You’ll find arpeggio-driven melodies and accompaniments at the heart of rock, blues, country, jazz and classical music. No matter what styles you like to play, working on arpeggios will fortify both your pick- and fret-hand technique tremendously.

I’d now like to present the arpeggios I play in the chorus to “Master Gracey’s Manor,” which is in the key of G minor and is played in $\frac{6}{8}$ meter. The chorus progression begins on the iv (four minor) chord, Cm, followed by a return to Gm then D7, which is the V7 (five dominant 7) chord, then back to Gm. **FIGURE 2** illustrates the progression for the first four bars of the chorus.

FIGURE 1 shows the arpeggios I play during the tune’s eight-bar chorus. In bar 1, I play a Cm arpeggio in steady 16th-note sextuplets, moving quickly up and across the fretboard and using alternate (down-up-down-up) picking, mostly one note per string, the only exception being the fourth and fifth notes, C and E $\flat$, which are both played on the 4th string.

In bar 2, over Gm, I start with a descending jump from a high G note on the 1st string’s 15th fret down to D at the 10th fret.

Playing one-note-per-string arpeggios quickly and cleanly is challenging, so it’s best to start slowly then gradually increase speed while focusing on clean articulation.

FIGURE 3 has the Cm and Gm arpeggios played in a slower rhythm, as eighth notes.

I find it helpful to visualize the components that make up an arpeggio from a broader perspective. For example, as shown in **FIGURE 4**, I first lay out the C root notes of the Cm arpeggio in three octaves then bring in the minor 3rd, E $\flat$, and the 5th, G.

FIGURE 5 illustrates the descending Gm arpeggio as played in eighth notes.

Moving back to **FIGURE 1**, bars 3 and 4 illustrate the lines I play over the altered V chord, D7 $\flat$ 9, and the i, Gm. The D7 $\flat$ 9 arpeggio in bar 3 is made up of the notes A,

C, E $\flat$ and F $\sharp$, which may also be analyzed as E $\flat$ dim7. **FIGURE 6** focuses on these two bars in detail, and **FIGURE 7** illustrates a way to look at related diminished chord voicings and their symmetrical inversions.

Bars 5 and 6 of **FIGURE 1** are based on a I $\flat$ 7 (one dominant 7) chord, G7, followed by the four minor chord, Cm. **FIGURE 8** illustrates this chord change, followed in **FIGURE 9** with a look at how these two

arpeggios work together.

The chorus wraps up in bars 7 and 8 of **FIGURE 1** with a fast line built from 16th-note triplets, which I perform with light palm muting, à la Al Di Meola. And there you have it!

This is the last installment of The Woodshed for the time being. I hope you’ve enjoyed and benefitted from these columns. I will see you on the road!

Andy Wood is an extraordinary virtuoso and master of everything from bluegrass to metal. His latest release, 2024’s *Charisma*, is available from andywoodmusic.com

TALES FROM NERDVILLE

by Joe Bonamassa



For video of this lesson, go to
guitarworld.com/april2025

MOORE POWER

The enduring legacy of the great Gary Moore

SIMPLY SAID, IF there hadn't been a Gary Moore, there would be no Joe Bonamassa. For me, he wrote the playbook, along with Walter Trout, Rory Gallagher and a few others, for British-style blues-rock guitar from the Seventies, Eighties and beyond.

Moore's playing revealed his Irish background and musical influences, along with his love of American and British blues traditions. He had a phenomenal tone and touch, often produced with his 1959 Gibson Les Paul Standard. Gary also had a highly expressive finger vibrato and great sense of melody. He was able to weave incredibly huge thematic riffs together to create many great performances, such as "Still Got the Blues" and "Parisiennne Walkways."

One of my songs, "Is it Safe to Go Home?," is a bit of an homage to Gary.

FIGURE 1 presents a line that I might play over the tune's chord progression, which is in the key of A minor, with phrases based on the A minor pentatonic scale (A, C, D, E, G) with some additional notes from the A Aeolian mode (A, B, C, D, E, F, G).

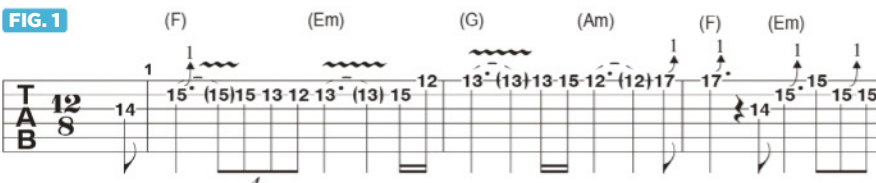
Gary would oftentimes play aggressive, speed-driven lines meant to stun an audience. **FIGURE 2** exemplifies this approach and includes some fast trills that move quickly down the neck within the structure of A Dorian (A, B, C, D, E, F#, G).

One of my favorite things about Gary's playing was the way he would switch from his guitar's neck pickup to its bridge pickup while holding a bend, adding a huge burst of aggression to the solo. **FIGURE 3** offers an example of this: playing lines based on G minor pentatonic (G, Bb, C, D, F), I begin on my neck pickup and then switch to my bridge pickup on beat 2, immediately after striking the bend.

FIGURE 4 offers a longer Moore-style line that is blues-based but expands the harmony with notes from the G harmonic minor scale (G, A, Bb, C, D, Eb, F#). The line begins with a fast ascending phrase then settles into a more melodic and expressive approach.

Even during his time with Thin Lizzy, Moore was an effective singer and guitar player, but it was always about the vibrato. **FIGURE 5** is filled with intensely wide and fast vibratos meant to emulate Gary's signature touch, with phrases again based

FIG. 1



(Am)

FIG. 2 (Am)

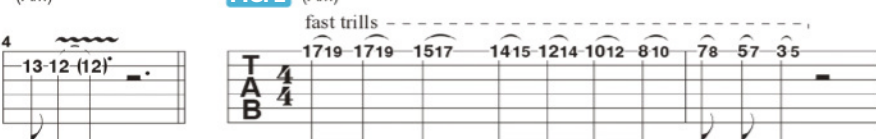


FIG. 3

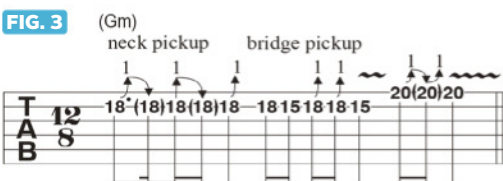


FIG. 4

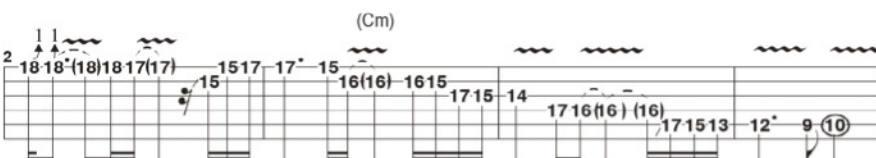


FIG. 5 (Gm)

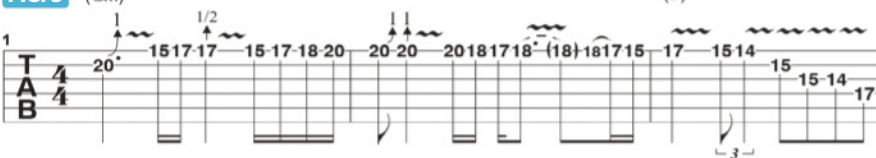
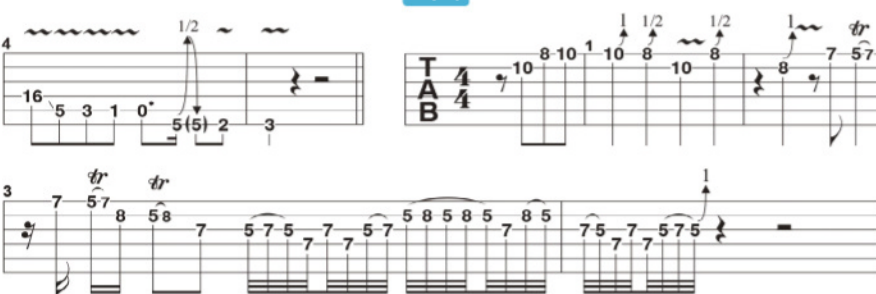


FIG. 6



around G harmonic minor.

Gary's approach to soloing was like placing a brick on a car's gas pedal — the brick would go down, and he would never stop! He had infinite passion and musical ideas, like SRV and Jimi Hendrix.

One of my favorite tracks of Gary's is "Too Tired," which he recorded live with

two of his heroes, Albert King and Albert Collins. And he showed them no mercy!

FIGURE 6 offers an example of some of the blazing types of runs that Gary could effortlessly tear off.

Gary was also a really nice guy. Sadly, he passed in 2011 at only 58, and I miss him very much.

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.

TELE-PATHY

by Jim Oblon



For video of this lesson, go to
guitarworld.com/april2025

FUN TO REED

A cool Jimmy Reed-inspired fingerpicked rhythm part

TODAY I WOULD like to present a neat fingerpicked blues rhythm pattern inspired by the great Jimmy Reed. It's in the key of A and is based on a simple eight-bar progression, as opposed to the more common 12-bar blues form, and it's a fun and refreshingly different template to play and improvise over.

The structure of the progression is two bars on the I (one) chord, A, followed by four bars on the V (five) chord, E, with the last two bars returning to A. Additionally, I think of the groove as a mid-tempo backbeat, like a half-time feel, at around 78 beats per minute, as opposed to a more country-style "two beat," with quarter notes at 156 bpm.

FIGURE 1 presents the eight-bar rhythm pattern. On the A(7) chord, I thumbpick all the notes on the A string and fingerpick the notes on the higher strings. Likewise, on the E(7) chord, I thumbpick the low E string and fingerpick the A and D strings.

Bar 1 of **FIGURE 2** shows the three-note A5 chord shape upon which the pattern is built, with the open A note joined by E and A, barred at the 2nd fret on the D and G strings with the 1st finger. Bars 2 and 3 state the initial pattern. The open low A note and the octave-higher A on the G string remain constant throughout, as the notes on the D string move up and down, initially from the 5th, E, to the 6th, F $\sharp$, to the 7th, G.

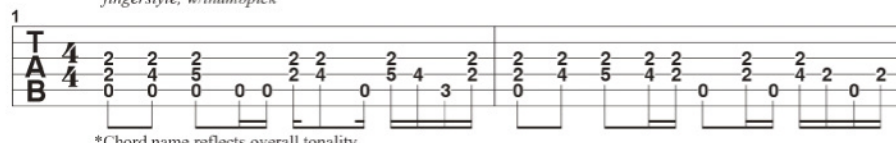
The pattern's syncopated rhythm is built from eighth and 16th notes, with an eighth note played on beat 1 of each bar and followed by various combinations of eighths and 16ths. The result is a series of shifting rhythmic syncopations, which are accentuated by where the thumbpick drops in the low notes.

FIGURE 3 shows the change to the V chord, E(7). Here, I use the same shapes as I had for the A chord, now moved down one string, with the open low E and octave E note on the D string remaining constant while notes on the A string ascend and descend, initially from B to C $\sharp$ and D (the 5th, 6th and 7th of E). The syncopations are the same as before, but some of the riffs are a little different here, in terms of my use of hammer-ons and pull-offs.

FIGURE 4 presents a cool twist on the A(7) pattern. Occasionally, I'll add the

FIG. 1 *A(7)

fingerstyle, w/thumbpick



*Chord name reflects overall tonality.

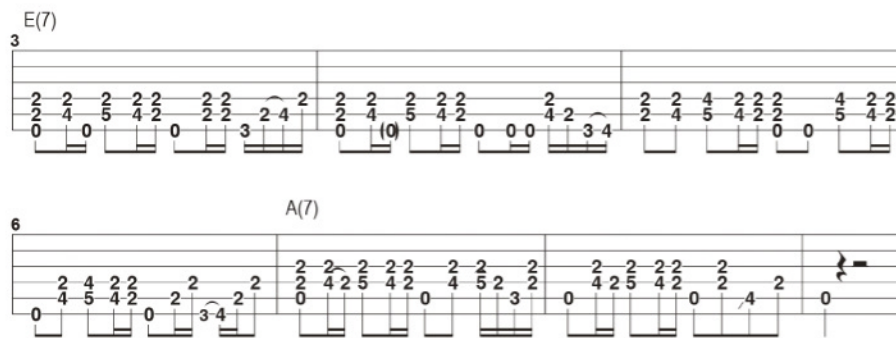


FIG. 2 A5 A(7)



FIG. 3 E(7)

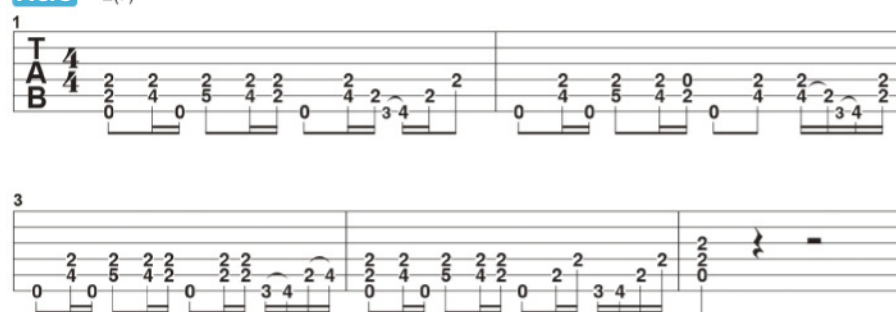
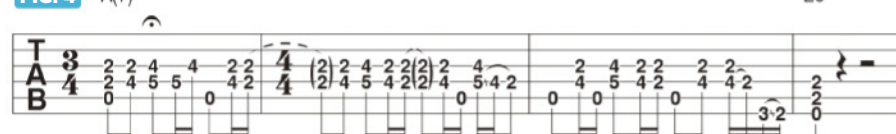


FIG. 4 A(7)

E5



chord's 2nd, or 9th, B, above the flatted 7th (G). As shown in bar 1, on beat 2, the B note on the G string's 4th fret is fingerpicked together with G at the 5th fret on the D string. These two notes are a major 3rd apart and produce a sweet-sounding

dominant-9th harmony within the pattern.

I use the same approach over the V chord, in bar 5 of **FIGURE 1**. Here, I pair the flatted 7th of E — the D note on the A string's 5th fret — with the 2nd, or 9th, F $\sharp$, at the 4th fret on the D string.

Virtuoso guitarist/multi-instrumentalist Jim Oblon has toured and recorded with Paul Simon, Lucinda Williams and many others. His latest album is 2023's *I Wanna Be Loved*.

JIM OBLON

HARDWIRED

by Jared James Nichols



For video of this lesson, go to guitarworld.com/april2025

DEAD THUMB

How to thumb-pick bass notes while playing a melody

A GREAT WAY to accompany yourself while playing a melody on the guitar is to simultaneously play a repeating low bass note, usually on an open string, which can add rhythm and harmony to what you're playing. This is a technique that has been used to great effect by some of my biggest blues heroes — everyone from Lightnin' Hopkins and Guitar Slim — to players like John Fogerty, Lindsey Buckingham and Dan Auerbach. With this technique, which many refer to as *dead thumb*, as it's typically performed with the pick hand's bare thumb and palm muting, which muffles, or deadens, the sound, you can almost sound like a one-person rhythm section.

As a fingerstyle player, it's natural for me to use this technique to self-accompany licks. To demonstrate, **FIGURE 1** presents the vocal melody to my song "Easy Come, Easy Go," which I play with a swing feel and repeating thumb-picked open low E notes. I palm mute the open low E string throughout, in order to produce a tight, thumping rhythm and prevent the bass notes from over-ringing and overpowering the melody. I begin with a quarter-note pickup for my first open low E bass note then proceed to thumb-pick quarter notes through most of the 16-bar passage, which establishes a steady rhythmic pulse, as well as an E tonality.

While keeping the open low E bass notes going, I pick the melody on the higher strings with my first two fingers. The melodic line is based on the E minor pentatonic scale (E G, A, B, D), played primarily in 12th position. In bars 1-3 and 5-7, the melodic phrases begin each time on beat 1, followed by the next note falling on the upbeat of beat 2. This creates a nice syncopation between the low-E quarter notes and the melody notes.

In bars 9-16, the melodic accents switch to quarter-note downbeats primarily, which changes the vibe of the line while also emphasizing the thumping quarter-note pulse.

Let's look at some other ways to use dead thumb. **FIGURE 2** is an eight-bar melodic line based on the E major pentatonic scale (E, F#, G#, B, C#). As with the previous

FIG. 1

N.C.(E7)

fingerstyle, w/palm muting on the low E string throughout

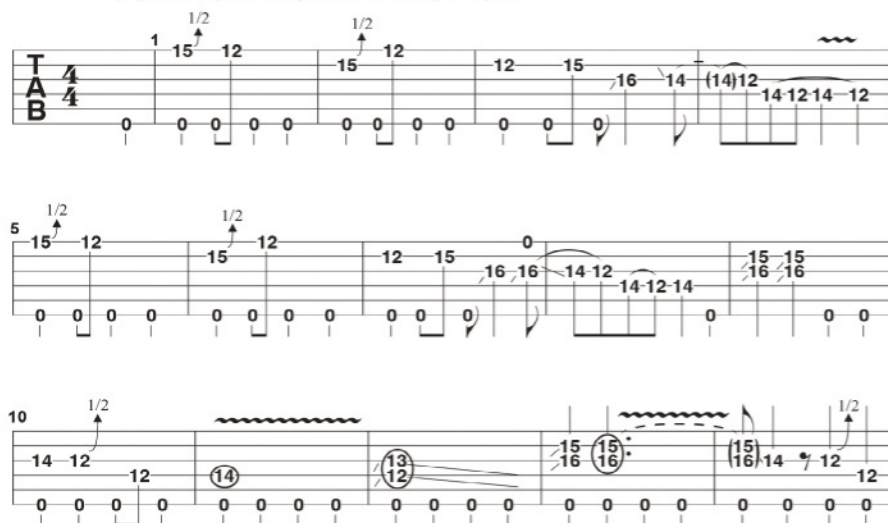


FIG. 2

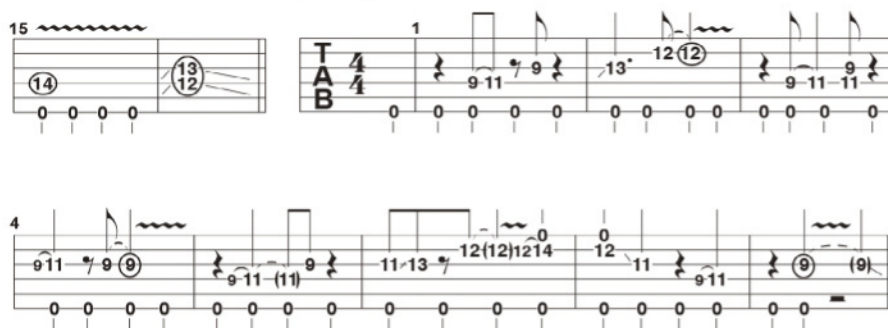


FIG. 3



example, I thumb-pick palm-muted quarter notes on my open low E string here and kick off the phrase with a pickup on beat 4. The melody enters on beat 2 of bar 1. Again, try to maintain a steady quarter-note rhythm with the thumb while fingerpicking the melody notes. Start out slowly and tap your foot as you play. The goal is to train your brain to isolate the two elements — the steady quarter-note bass line and the more rhythmically complex melodic figures — similar to the way a piano player uses two

hands at once.

FIGURE 3 is an exercise that will help develop your dead thumb technique. Here, the thumb down-picks the open low E string in steady eighth notes while simpler, sustained melody notes are performed above the bass line on the higher strings.

Playing in a power trio, with bass and drums, I find that using low drone notes can help fill out the sound of my guitar parts while also adding to the heaviness of the overall sound.

Jared James Nichols is a true blues-rock titan with two signature Epiphone Les Paul models (and a Blackstar amp) to his name. His latest album is 2023's *Jared James Nichols*. For more info, go to jaredjamesnichols.com

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Performance Notes

HOW TO PLAY THIS MONTH'S SONGS By Jimmy Brown

“DOGS OF WAR”

Mötley Crüe



FEATURING THE GREAT

John 5 on guitar, this ominously rocking new song from Mötley Crüe includes a bunch of cool, sinister-sounding riffs that are both fun

and challenging to play.

John begins the song with a repeating, alternate-picked root-5th-octave sequence, which he plays entirely on his high E string (Gtr. 1 part). This requires a wide stretch, between the pinkie and index finger at the 7th and 12th frets. In bar 3, the riff morphs into an even more technically formidable variation, with the open E note now replaced by B_b at the 6th fret: B_b-B-E. John doesn't play this variation live, so it's hard to say for sure if he brought his 2nd finger into play here (1-2-4) or just slid his 1st finger from the 6th fret up to the 7th. He probably uses three fingers. Either way, it's a bitch to perform this part cleanly, so unless you have long fingers, you'll need to repeatedly shift your hand up and down one fret, in order to reach the lowest and highest notes.

At section B (bar 9), the guitarist launches into the song's heavy, menacing main riff, which includes a few dissonant, evil-sounding “diminished power chords” — root- $\flat$ 5-root, or “dim(no3).” Notice that he slightly bends the Ddim(no3) chord at the end of bar 10, which, while subtle, adds to the riff's haunting quality. This triple-stop bend is best performed by pulling the strings downward, in toward the palm.

As the 1st verse begins at section C (bar 15), John plays a sort of country-style oblique bend within a chord, pulling the F $\sharp$ note on his B string's 7th fret downward to bend it up a half step to G and transforming the Esus2 voicing to Em, in an almost “B-bender” fashion. When playing the song live, though, he just fingers an Em triad shape here and focuses on the ringing, clean-tone chord arpeggiation that ensues.

John's eight-bar solo at section H is chock full of his celebrated string bending, legato phrasing, tapping and alternate picking shred techniques, all of which sound effortless, thanks to his strong work ethic and unwavering dedication to his craft and maintaining his Olympic-level chops.

“HOLY DIVER”

Killswitch Engage



KSE'S COVER OF this early-Eighties Ronnie James Dio metal classic not only does the original song justice but also adds value to it, with stellar perfor-

mances all around and some exciting modern-era enhancements in the band's ensemble arrangement and production. As always, guitarists Adam Dutkiewicz and Joel Stroetzel mesh together perfectly with their tasteful, polished rhythm and lead work and sound inspired, conveying a sense of joy in their riffing and soloing.

Most of the song's riffs are downpicked, the only exceptions being the 32nd-note bursts in bars 25-29 and gallops in bars 31-37 and the 16th-note triplets that both guitarists play in their solos at section F, for which they momentarily employ alternate picking. Notice also how Adam and Joel selectively palm mute (P.M.) certain notes or chords, so as to subdue their tone and volume, then lift up on the muting to accentuate others and make them “pop.”

The quarter rests in bars 25-29 require the use of both hands to completely silence the strings, which is essential to replicating the riff's precise, punctuated execution. Also, in bars 26 and 28, notice the wide-interval hammer-pulls between the 5th and 10th frets that Dutkiewicz (Gtr. 2) performs, which necessitates a massive five-fret stretch between the 1st and 4th fingers.

One of the funnest things about this cover is how, in bars 9, 13 and 30, both guitarists add shimmering pinch harmonic “squeals and shakes” to single notes, a flash element that would surely make Zakk Wylde grin. A pinch harmonic (P.H.) is performed by downpicking a string while simultaneously grazing it with the tip of the pick-hand thumb directly over a *node*, which is one of several points along the string where a harmonic resides, comparable to where you would find natural harmonics on an open string. The locations of the nodes, however, are different for every fretted note, so in order to consistently nail a particular pinch harmonic you need to “hunt and peck” with the pick to find the sweet spot for it in the area over the pickups and memorize said location.

“BRIDGE OF SIGHS”

Robin Trower



HIS SIGNATURE SONG, this meditative, downtempo title track from Robin Trower's 1974 solo album showcases the celebrated English

blues-rock guitarist's tasteful playing in an understated but musically expressive and impactful way. Trower harnesses the power of his Jimi Hendrix-inspired rig — a Fender Strat (middle pickup engaged) plugged into a preamp boost pedal, a Uni-Vibe four-stage phaser and a 100-watt Marshall amp with a midrange-focused EQ setting and a copious wash of room reverb — to conjure a swirly, trippy psychedelic tone, which, by design, does half the work for him here.

Another key element contributing to the recording's dreamy, otherworldly feel is the nature and construction of the riffs that Trower plays throughout the song. He uses the rich timbre and sustain of a 1st-position Em7 chord, voiced on the outer pairs of strings, as a foundation for the intro and verses and often allows the low E note to ring as he plays bluesy fills based primarily on the E minor pentatonic scale (E, G, A, B, D). Notice how the guitarist employs legato slides, hammer-ons and pull-offs, string bends and finger vibrato to craft soulful, vocal-like phrases.

Additionally, Trower adds harmonic and melodic color to his phrases by touching upon the $\flat$ 5 tone, B $\flat$, which lives within the E minor blues scale (E, G, A, B $\flat$, B, D). And, in a few spots, he also adds the major 6th, C $\sharp$, and the 2nd, or 9th, F $\sharp$, which reside within the dark yet warm-sounding E Dorian mode (E, F $\sharp$, G, A, B, C $\sharp$, D).

When playing the high G note in bars 2, 4, 6 and elsewhere, use the complete three-finger Em7 grip illustrated in the first chord frame at the beginning of the transcription, fretting the D note on the B string's 3rd fret with your 3rd finger, even though that note isn't played every time. Doing so will ensure that it, and not the open B, will ring sympathetically with the high G note. To perform the recurring double-stop half-step bends in these same measures, barre your fret-hand's available middle finger (2) across the G and B strings and push them slightly upward.

"DOGS OF WAR"

Mötley Crüe

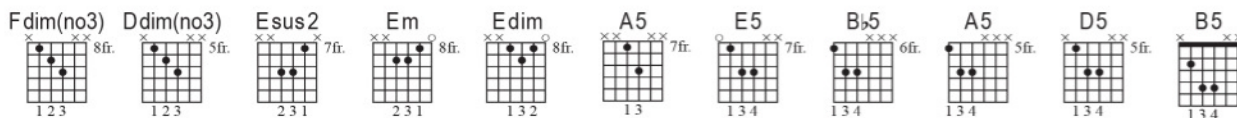
As heard on **CANCELLED**

Words and Music by JOHN LOWERY, NIKKI SIXX and TOMMY LEE • Transcribed by JEFF PERRIN

All guitars are tuned down one whole step (low to high: D, G, C, F, A, D)

Bass tuning (low to high: D, G, C, F).

All music sounds in the key of D minor, one whole step lower than written.



A Intro (0:00)

Moderately ♩ = 96

(drums) N.C.(E5)
Gtr. 1 (elec. w/dist.)

1 0 7 12 0 7 12 0 7 12 0 7 12 0 7 12 0 0 7 12 0 7 12 0 7 12 0 7 12 0 7 12 0

Gtr. 2 (elec. w/dist.)
Riff A

5 5

Gtr. 2 plays Riff A four times (see bar 1)

Gtr. 1

Riff B

3 6 7 12 6 7 12 6 7 12 6 7 12 6 7 12 0 6 7 12 6 7 12 6 7 12 6 7 12 6 7 12 0

Gtr. 3 (elec. w/dist.)
Riff B1

*

0 0

*Staccato articulations performed with pickup kill switch (mute button).

Bastards

Gtr. 1 plays Riff B twice (see bar 3)

Gtr. 3 plays Riff B1 twice (see bar 3)

5 Bass

14 14 14 14 14 14 14 14 14 14 14 14 14 14 12 12 12 12 12 12 12 12 12 12 12 12 12 12 12 12

"DOGS OF WAR"

WORDS AND MUSIC BY JOHN LOWERY, NIKKI SIXX AND TOMMY LEE

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Bastards

Bastards

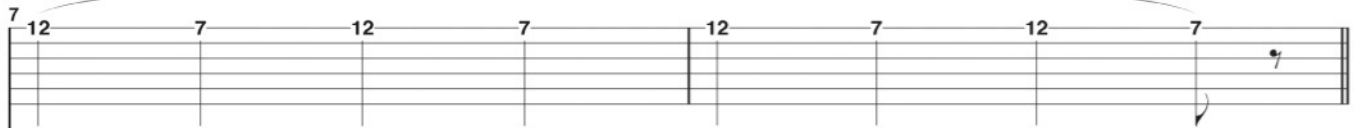
Get it

*w/bar

-1/2

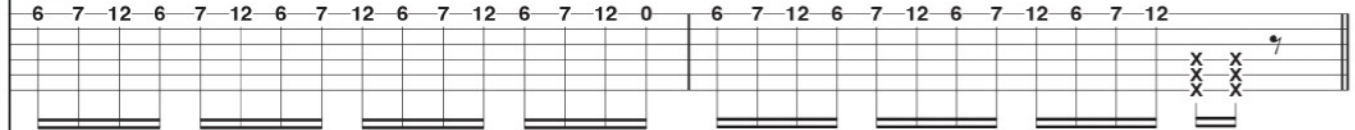
-3/4

Gtr. 4 (elec. w/dist.)

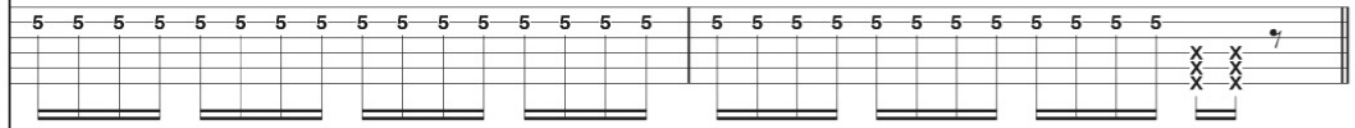


*grad. depress bar

Gtr. 1



Gtr. 2



Gtr. 3



Bass

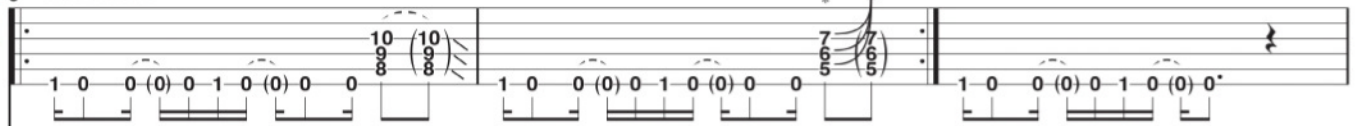


B (0:21)

1. 2.

(F5)(E5) (F5)(E5) Fdim(no3) (F5)(E5) (F5)(E5) Ddim(no3) (F5)(E5) (F5)(E5)

9 Gtrs. 1 and 2



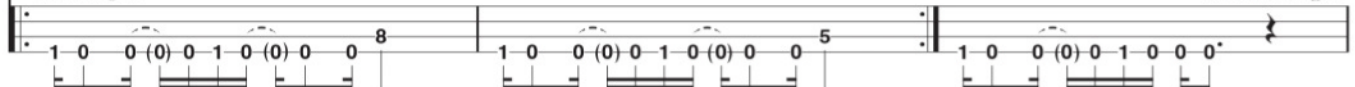
*Chord symbols in parentheses reflect implied harmony.

*note bends performed by Gtr. 1 only throughout.

Bass

Bass Fig. 1

end Bass Fig. 1



1. 2.

(F5)(E5) (F5)(E5) Fdim(no3) (F5)(E5) (F5)(E5) Ddim(no3) (F5)(E5) (F5)(E5)

12 Gtrs. 1 and 2



Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 (see bar 9)

C 1st Verse (0:42)

Don't let the dogs of war

Come knocking at your door

As we're crawling 'cross the floor

Esus2

Em

Edim

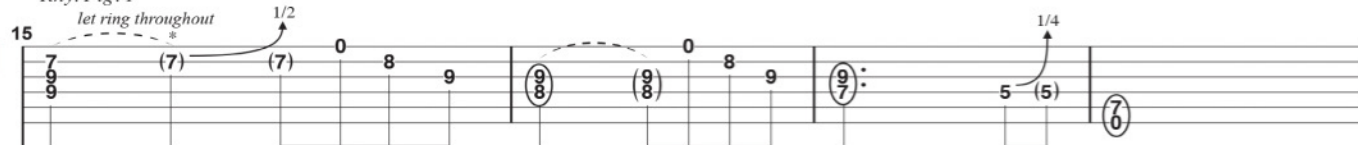
A5

N.C. (E5)

Gtr. 1 (w/clean tone)

Rhy. Fig. 1

let ring throughout

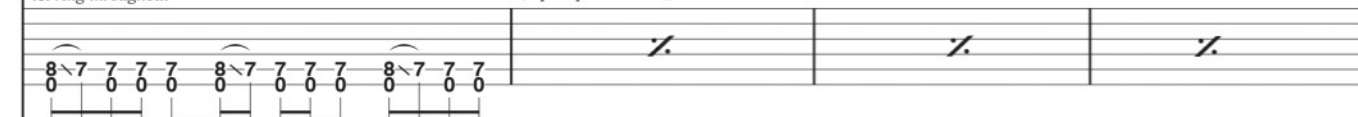


Gtr. 2 (w/clean tone)

Rhy. Fig. 1a

let ring throughout

(repeat previous bar)



Bass



They'll make your skin crawl

They'll make the stars fall

Do they matter after all

Get it

Esus2

Em

Edim

A5

N.C. (E5)

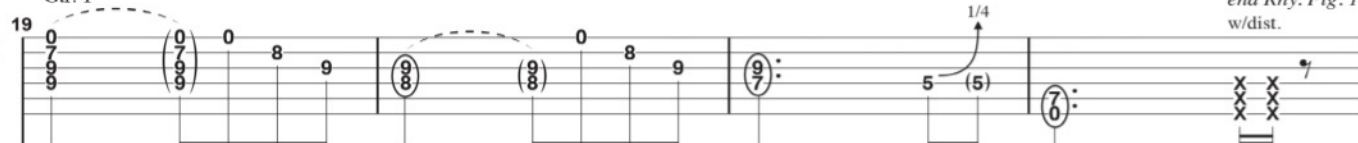
Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fig. 1a four times (see bar 15)

Gtr. 1

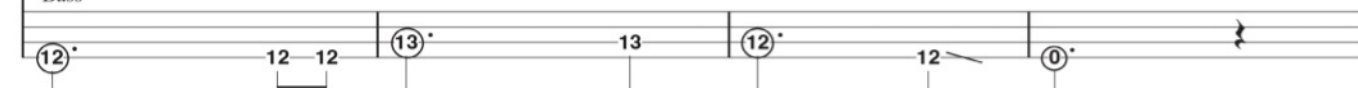
Gtr. 3 plays Fill 1 (see below bar 24)

end Rhy. Fig. 1

w/dist.



Bass

**D** Pre-chorus (1:01, 1:57)

oh (Whoa oh)

Whoa
Whoa

1. oh (Whoa oh) Whoa

2.

oh (Whoa oh)

(F5) (E5) (F5) (E5)

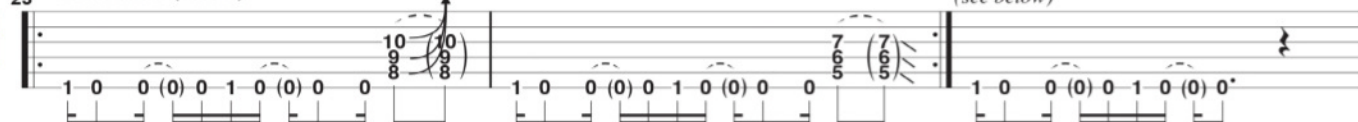
Fdim(no3)

(F5) (E5) (F5) (E5)

Ddim(no3)

(F5) (E5) (F5) (E5)

23 Gtrs. 1 and 2 (w/dist.)



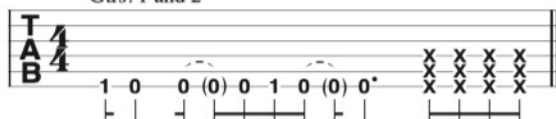
Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 (see bar 9)

Rhy. Fill 1 (2:04)

N.C. (F5) (E5)

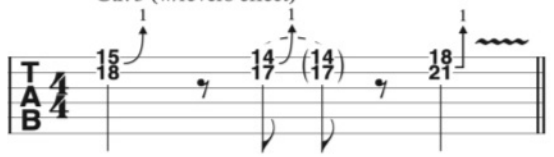
(F5) (E5)

Gtrs. 1 and 2



Fill 1 (1:54)

Gtr. 3 (w/reverb effect)



E 1st and 2nd Choruses (1:11, 2:07)

Down down Down down Don't let them take your crown Don't let those bastards get you

E5 B♭5 A5 N.C. (G5) (G♭5) (F5)

Gtr. 1
Rhy. Fig. 2

Gtr. 2
Rhy. Fig. 2a

Bass
Bass Fig. 2

Down down (Ah) Down down (Ah) Don't let those bastards Bastards bastards get you down

E5 B♭5 A5 N.C. (G5) (G♭5) (F5)

(2nd time) Gtr. 3 (w/dist.) w/bar -8

2nd time, skip ahead to
[H] Guitar Solo (bar 44)

Gtr. 1
end Rhy. Fig. 2

Gtr. 2
end Rhy. Fig. 2a

Bass
end Bass Fig. 2

F (1:31)

N.C.

Gtr. 1

Gtr. 2

Bass

G 2nd Verse (1:37)

Black out the bright white noise

Stand up and we'll destroy

We don't love you anymore

Esus2

Em

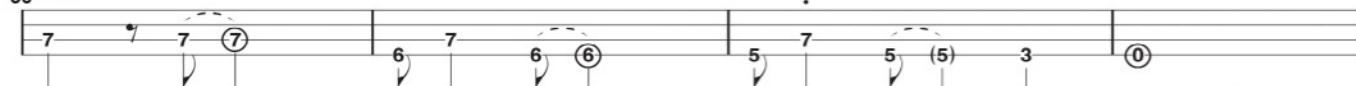
Edim

A5

N.C. (E5)

*Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 1 simile (see bar 15)**Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fig. 1a eight times simile (see bar 15)*

36 Bass

Go back to **D** Pre-chorus (bar 23)

A black wolf is standing

(Yeah)

at our back door

Staring at the bloodstain on the floor Get it

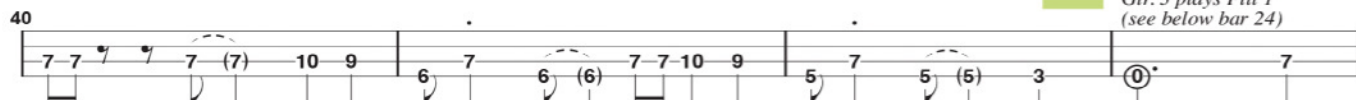
Esus2

Em

Edim

A5

N.C. (E5)

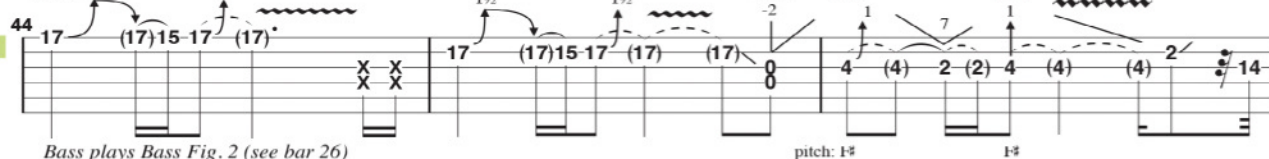
Gtr. 3 plays Fill 1 (see below bar 24)**H** Guitar Solo (2:27)

E5

B $\flat$ 5

Whoa!

A5

*Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 2 (see bar 26)**Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fig. 2a (see bar 26)**Gtr. 3 1*

Bass plays Bass Fig. 2 (see bar 26)

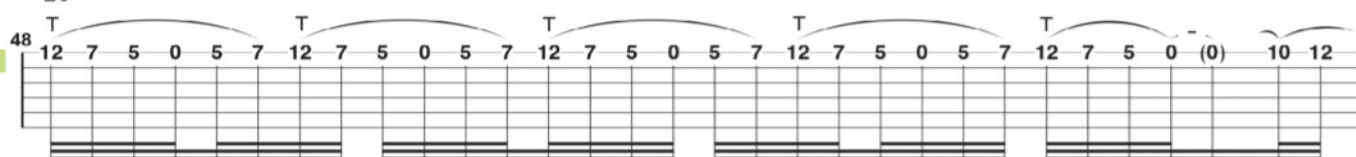
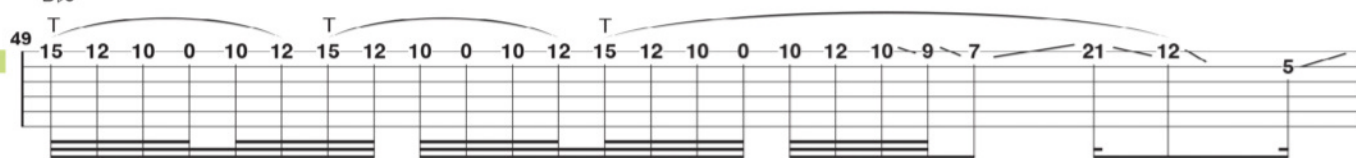
N.C. (G5)

(G $\flat$ 5)

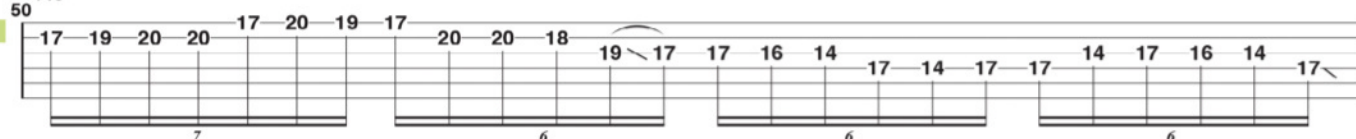
(F5)



E5

B $\flat$ 5

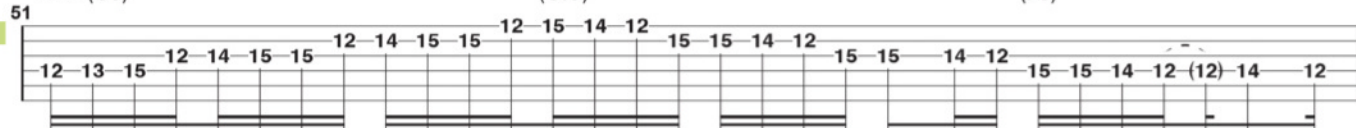
A5



N.C. (G5)

(G $\flat$ 5)

(F5)



I Bridge (2:47)

I will stand my ground I will not back down Ah - ah - ah - ah - ah

(E5)

Gtr. 3

52

Gtrs. 1 and 2

Bass

Whoa - oh I will stand my ground I will not back down

D5

B5

N.C. (E5)

55 Gtrs. 1 and 2

Bass

Ah - ah - ah - ah - ah

(B5)

(A5) (G5) (E5)

*Gtr. 1 (w/harmonizer effect doubling pitch once octave higher)

58

*Gtr. 2 (w/harmonizer effect doubling pitch one octave lower)
*(Gtr. 1 plays top notes. Gtr. 2 plays bottom notes.)

J (3:07)

(F5) (E5)

(F5) (E5)

F dim(no3)

(F5) (E5)

(F5) (E5)

60 Gtrs. 1 and 2

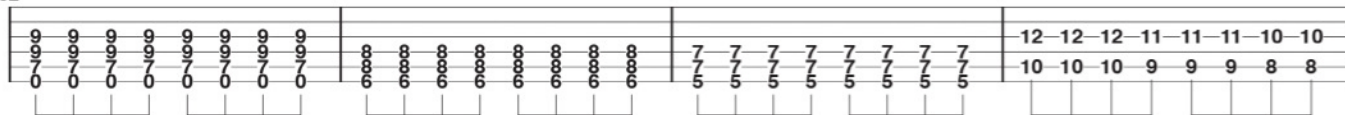
Bass plays last two bars of Bass Fig. 1 simile (see bars 9 and 11)

K 3rd Chorus (3:12)

Down down Down down Don't let them take your crown Don't let those bastards get you
 E5 B♭5 A5 N.C. (G5) (G♯5) (F5)

Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fig. 2a (see bar 26)

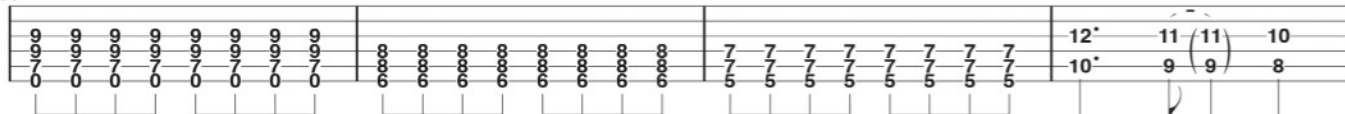
62 Gtr. 1



Bass plays Bass Fig. 2 (see bar 26)

Down down Down down Don't let those bastards Bastards bastards get you down
 E5 B♭5 A5 N.C. (G5) (G♯5) (F5)

66



Down Down down down (Ah) (Ah)

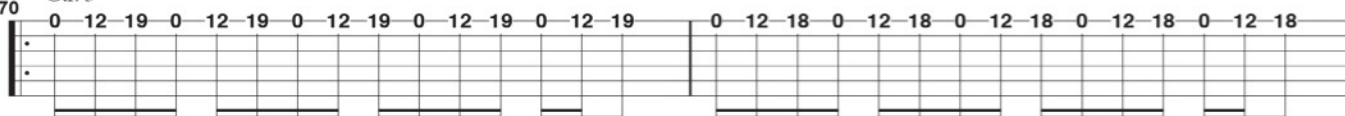
Down Down down down (Ah) (Ah)

E5 Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 2 (see bar 26)

Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fig. 2a (see bar 26)

Gtr. 3

70



Bass plays Bass Fig. 2 (see bar 26)

Don't let them take your crown
 Don't let those bastards

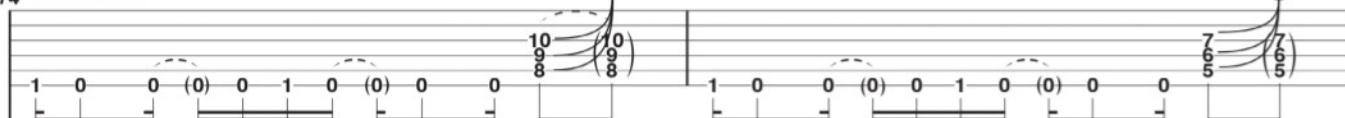
Don't let those bastards get you down
 bastards let those bastards get you down
 N.C. (G5) (G♯5) (F5)

72 A5

**L** Outro (3:52)

(F5) (E5) (F5) (E5) Whoa oh (Whoa oh) Whoa
 Fdim(no3) (F5) (E5) (F5) (E5) Ddim(no3)

74 Gtrs. 1 and 2

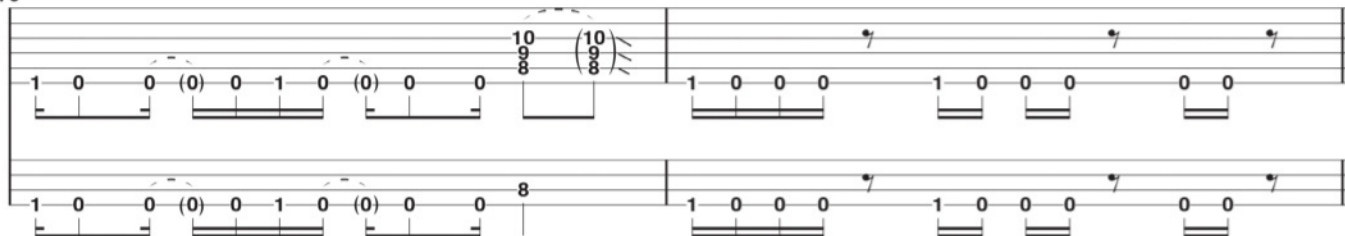


Bass



oh (Whoa oh) Whoa oh (Whoa oh) Whoa!
 (F5) (E5) (F5) (E5) Fdim(no3) (F5) (E5) (F5) (E5)

76



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"HOLY DIVER"

Killswitch Engage

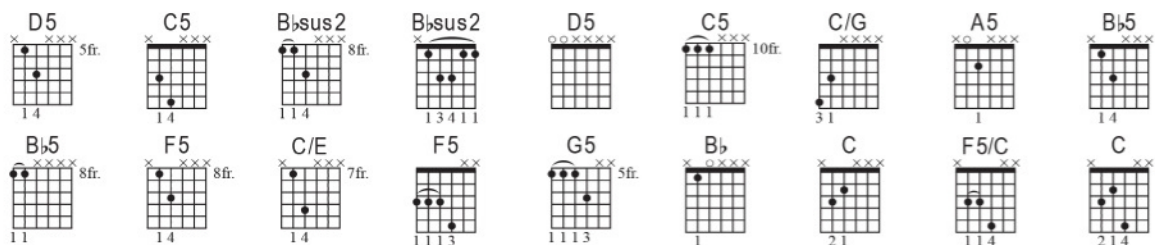
As heard on **AS DAYLIGHT DIES**

Words and Music by **RONNIE JAMES DIO** • Transcribed by **JEFF PERRIN**

All guitars are in drop-D tuning, down one whole step (low to high: C, G, C, F, A, D).

Bass is in drop-D tuning, down one whole step (low to high: C, G, C, F).

All music sounds in the key of C minor; one whole step lower than written.



A Intro (0:00)

Moderately ♩ = 93

N.C. (D5)

(E5) (F5)

(D5)

(F5)

(C5)

Gtrs. 1 and 2 (elec. w/dist.)

Rhy. Fig. 1

1 P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M.

TAB 5 0 0 0 5 0 0 0 5 0 7 0 8 5 0 0 0 5 0 5 7 8 (8) 3

Bass Bass Fig. 1 5 0 0 0 5 0 0 0 5 0 7 0 8 5 0 0 0 5 0 5 7 8 (8) 3

(D5) (F5) (C5) D5 C5 D5 Mmm

3 P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M.

TAB 5 0 0 0 5 0 5 7 8 (8) 3 7 5 0 3 (3) 0 7 5 (7) 15

Bass 5 0 0 0 5 0 5 7 8 (8) 3 5 0 3 (3) 0 5 (5) 12

Yeah

N.C. (Dm)

(Em) (F)

(Dm)

(F)

(C)

Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 1 (see bar 1)

Gtr. 2

Rhy. Fig. 2

5 P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M.

TAB 8 0 0 0 8 0 0 0 8 0 10 0 12 8 0 0 0 8 0 8 10 12 (12) 7

Bass Bass Fig. 1 (see bar 1)

"HOLY DIVER"

WORDS AND MUSIC BY RONNIE JAMES DIO.

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yeah

(Dm) (F) (C) D5 C5 B $\flat$ sus2 N.C. (C5)

Gtr. 2 P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.H. P.H.

Gtr. 1 P.M. P.M. P.M. P.H. P.H.

Bass

pitch: E

pitch: E

B 1st, 2nd, and 4th Verses (0:22, 0:55, 2:34)

1., 4. Holy diver you've been down too long in the midnight sea Oh what's becoming of me 4th verse: (No Yeah)
 2. Shiny diamonds Like the eyes of a cat in the black and blue Something is coming for you Look out

D5 Bsus2 D5 C5 B $\flat$ sus2

Gtr. 3 plays Fill 2 on 4th verse (see below bar 37)

Gtr. 3 plays Fill 1 on 2nd verse (see below bar 14)

Gtrs. 1 and 2

10 P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.H. P.H.

Bass

pitch: E

2nd time, skip ahead to **D** 2nd chorus (bar 23)
 3rd time, skip ahead to **H** 3rd chorus (bar 51)

Ride the tiger You can see his stripes but you know he's clean Oh don't you see what I mean Gotta
 Race for the morning You can hide in the sun 'till you see the light Oh we will pray it's alright Gotta

D5 Bsus2 D5 C5 D5

Gtr. 3 plays Fill 3 on 4th verse (see below bar 43)

(pick scrape)

14 P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.H. P.H.

Bass

Substitute Bass Fill 1, 2nd verse (see below bar 37)

Fill 1 (1:00)

D5 C5 B $\flat$ sus2

Gtr. 3

TAB

C 1st Chorus (0:43)

get away

Holy diver

B $\flat$ sus2

N.C. (D5)

(E5) (F5)

(D5)

(F5) (C5)

Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fig. 2 (see bar 5)

Gtr. 1

18

Composite: Multiple layered guitars arranged for two guitar parts.)

18

10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 15

8 8 8 8 8 8 8 8 8

5 0 0 0 5 0 0 0 5 0 7 0 8

5 0 0 0 5 0 5 7 8 (8) 3

1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 10

5 0 0 0 5 0 0 0 5 0 7 0 8

5 0 0 0 5 0 5 7 8 (8) 3

Go back to **B** 2nd verse (bar 10)

Yeah

(Got)

(Dm)

(F)

(C)

D5

C5

B $\flat$ sus2

21

21

8 0 0 0 8 0 8 10 12 (12) 7

5 0 0 0 5 0 5 7 8 (8) 3

7 9 (9) 10 (10)

5 0 7 (7) 0 8

5 0 0 0 5 0 5 7 8 (8) 3

7 5 0 3 (3) 0 1

5 0 0 0 5 0 5 7 8 (8) 3

5 0 3 (3) 0 1 (1)

D 2nd Chorus (1:16)

(w/double-time feel)

(end double-time feel)

get away

Get away

B $\flat$ sus2

C5

Gtr. 2

23 Riff A

23

10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10

8 8 8 8 8 8 8 8 8 8 8 8 8 8

10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10

8 8 8 8 8 8 8 8 8 8 8 8 8 8

10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10

8 8 8 8 8 8 8 8 8 8 8 8 8 8

1 1 1 1 1 1 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

3 3 3 3 3 3 5 5 5 5 12

100

B-5

100

(end half-time feel)

No need to look so afraid

Jump Jump

33

D5 C5 B $\flat$ 5 (pick scrape)

P.M. (pick scrape)

Jump on the tiger

You can feel his heart but you know he's mean

35

D5 B $\flat$ 5

Gtrs. 1 and 2 P.M.

Bass

Some like can never

be seen

Yeah

37

D5 C5 D5

Gtr. 1 P.M.

Gtr. 2 P.M.

Bass

Fill 2 (2:34)

D5
Gtr. 4

TAB 4 (18)

Gtr. 3

Bass Fill 1 (1:13)

D5

TAB 4 (0)

F Guitar Solo (2:02)

C5 D5
Gtr. 3
39 (Joel Stroetzel)

1/2

F5 D5

Gtrs. 1 and 2
Rhy. Fig. 3

Bass
Bass Fig. 2

F5 D5

F5

C/E

41

C5 D5
Gtrs. 1 and 2 play Rhy. Fig. 3 (see bar 39)
Gtr. 4
(Adam Dutkiewicz) P.H.

43

pitch: G

Gtr. 3

Bass plays Bass Fig. 2 (see bar 39)

Fill 3 (2:44)

D5
Gtr. 3

P.M. -1 P.M. -1 P.M. -1 P.M. -1 P.M. -1 P.M. -1 P.M. -1 P.M. -1 P.H.

TAB

pitch (1st time): F
pitch (2nd time): Bb

45

C5 D5

Gtr. 3

F5 D5

F5

G5

*cont. bend & release into next two bars.

Gtrs. 1 and 2

Bass

G (2:23)

[illegible]

Go back to **B** 4th Verse (bar 10)

B₁
Gtrs. 3 and 4 plays Riff B (see bar 47)
Gtrs. 1 and 2

49 P.M. - - P.M. - - P.M. - - P.M. - - P.M. - - P.M. - - P.M. - -

0 1 1 0 1 1 0 1 1 0 1 1 2 3 3 2 3 3 2 3 3 13

Bass
Bass Fig. 3 - - - - -

5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 7 7 7 7 7 7 12 12 12 12 12 12 12

H 3rd Chorus (2:54)

get away
get away

Get away
Get away

Gotta

Yeah

Bbsus2

C5

C5

Gtr. 2 plays Riff A simile (see bar 23)

51 Gtr. 1

Bass
Substitute Bass Fig. 3 on repeat (see bar 49)

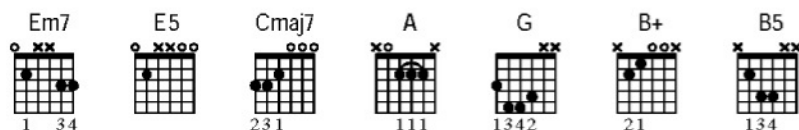
"BRIDGE OF SIGHS"

Robin Trower

As heard on **BRIDGE OF SIGHS**

Words and Music by **ROBIN TROWER** • Transcribed by **JEFF PERRIN**

All instruments are tuned down approx. one quarter step.



A Intro (0:06) (0:15)

Slowly ♩ = 48

N.C.

* Em7

E5

Gtr. 1 (elec. w/dist. and Univibe)

(chimes)

1

TAB

0 (2)

3 (3)*

3 2 2 (2) (2)

0 2

9 (9) 7* 9*

* Chord symbol reflects overall tonality.

Em7

4

3 (3)*

3 2 2 (2) (2)

0 2

7 5 7 5 6 5*

E5

Em7

6

Gtr. 1

3 (3)*

3 2 2 (2) (2)

0 2

0 3 0 2 (2)* (2)

3

*Flick pickup toggle switch back and forth.

Bass

Bass Fig. 1

7 9 7 0 5*

let ring -

7 (0) 9 7 0 5 7

Em7

8

3 (3)*

3 2 2 (2) (2)

0 2

7 (7) 9 8 9

let ring -

7 (0) 9 7 5 7 9 7 0 5 7

**Bottom note is fretted but not sounded.

end Bass Fig. 1

B 1st Verse (0:54)

The sun don't shine the moon don't move the tides to wash

Em7 Gtr. 1

Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 twice simile (see meas. 6)

me clean

Em7

The sun don't shine the moon don't move the tides to wash

Em7

me clean

Em7

*Open G string is sounded by pull-off.

C 1st Chorus (1:35)

Why so unforgiving and why so cold Been a long time crossing Bridge of

Cmaj7 Gtr. 1

Bass
Bass Fig. 2

end Bass Fig. 2

D (1:50)

sighs

Em7 Gtr. 1

Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 simile (see meas. 6)

23 **Em7** **E5**

**Flick pickup toggle switch back and forth.*

E 2nd Verse (2:10)

Cold wind blows the gods look down in anger on this poor child

Em7 **E5**

Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 twice simile (see meas. 6)

27 **Em7** **E5**

Cold wind blows and gods look down in anger on this poor

Em7 **E5**

child

31 **Em7** **E5**

F 2nd Chorus (2:51)

Why so unforgiving and why so cold Been a long time crossing Bridge

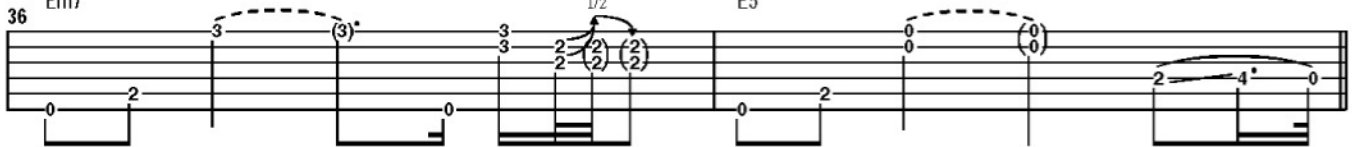
Cmaj7 **A** **G** **B+** **Cmaj7** **B+** **B5**

Bass plays Bass Fig. 2 simile (see meas. 18)

G (3:06)

of sighs

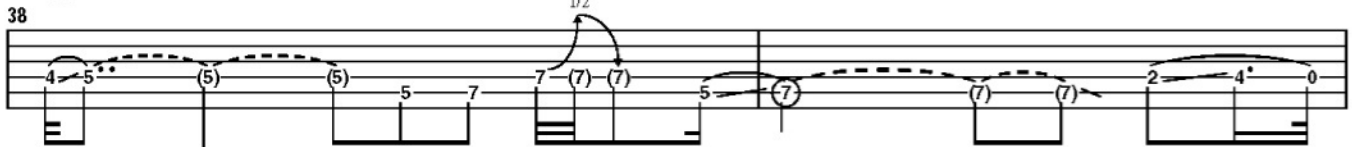
Em7



Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 simile until **I** (see meas. 6)

H Outro (3:16)

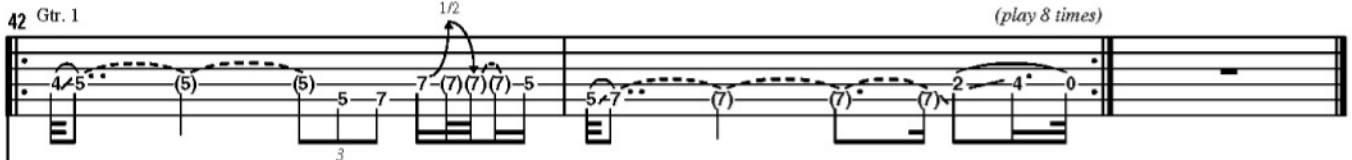
* Em



* Chord symbol reflects overall tonality.



I (3:36)

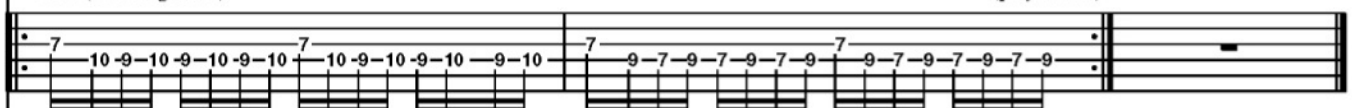


fade out w/wind sound

(play 8 times)

Gtr. 2 (elec. w/light dist.)

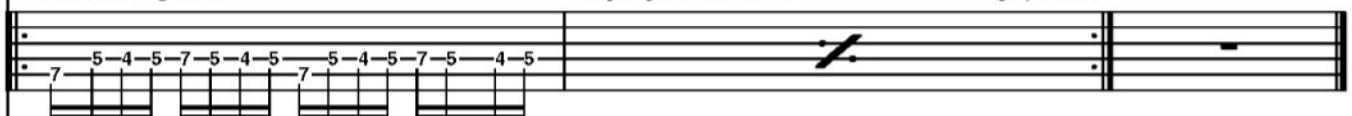
(play 8 times)



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

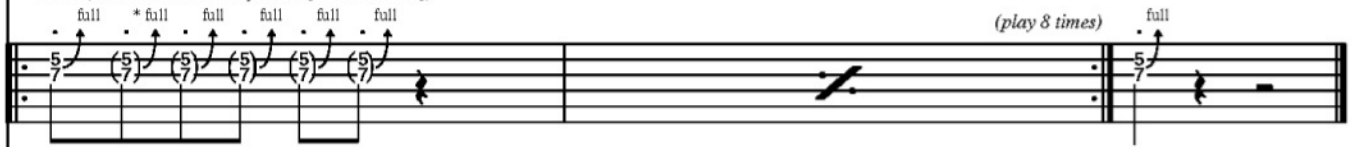
(repeat previous measure)

(play 8 times)



Gtr. 4 (elec. w/dist. and delay effect [enter 3rd time])

(play 8 times)



* Notes in parenthesis are produced by delay effect.

Bass

let ring *

(play 8 times)



* Play note in parenthesis 7th and 8th times.



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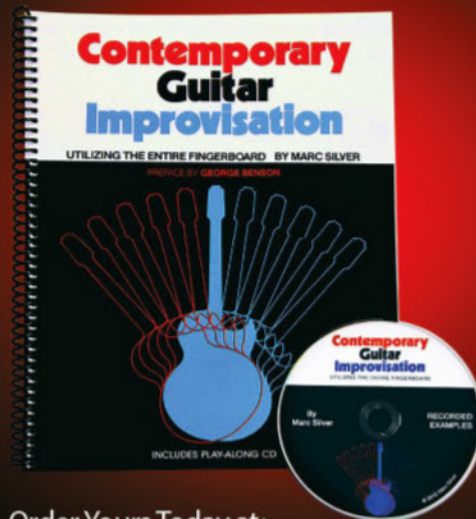
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1975-PRESENT B.C. RICH MOCKINGBIRD

CATEGORY: SOLIDBODY ELECTRIC GUITAR

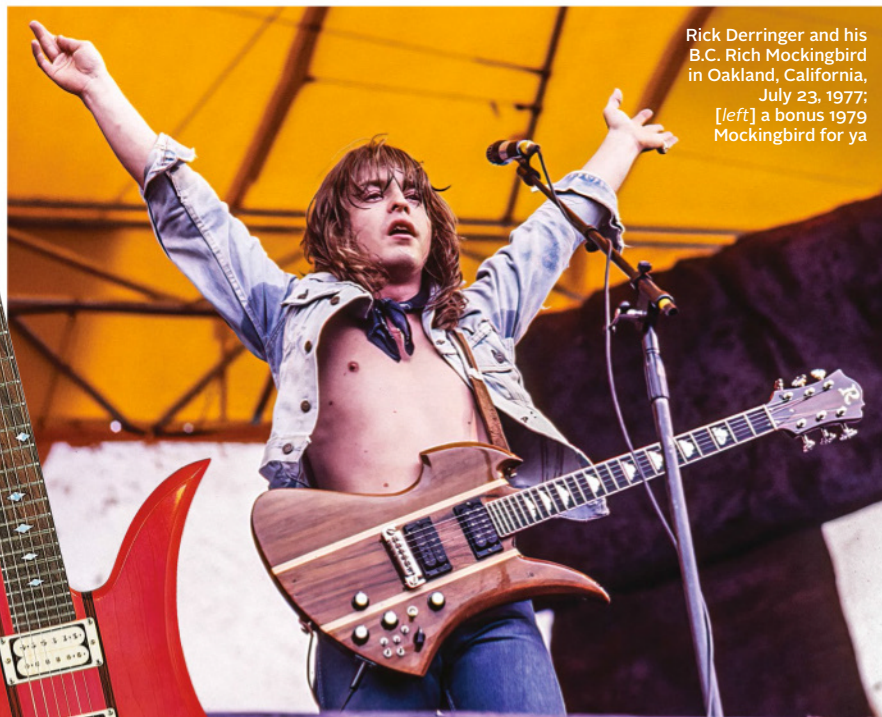
IN MY HUMBLE

opinion, the B.C. Rich Mockingbird is the most symbolic electric guitar of the Seventies, both because it is so damn wickedly cool and because it checks all of the right boxes. Natural laminated-wood hippie-sandwich with neck-through construction? Check. High-output humbuckers? Check. Custom electronics with a confusing array of switches? Check. Radical original body shape? Check. Just by strapping on a Mockingbird you can feel your mustache getting bushier and your heels lifting several inches higher.

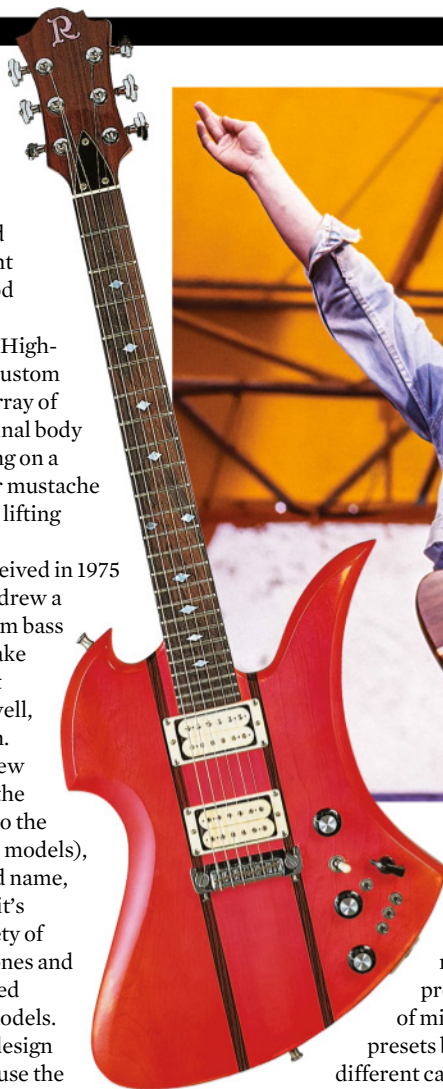
The Mockingbird was conceived in 1975 when Johnny “Go-Go” Kallas drew a unique body design for a custom bass that he wanted B.C. Rich to make for him. Bernie Rico thought it would make a great guitar as well, and the Mockingbird was born. Neal Moser, who designed a new electronic circuit featured on the guitar (which was also added to the pre-existing Seagull and Eagle models), came up with the Mockingbird name, which both reflected his circuit’s ability to generate a wide variety of humbucking and single-coil tones and conformed to the avian-inspired names of previous B.C. Rich models.

The original Mockingbird design is called the “short horn” because the treble cutaway horn is shorter than the bass horn. About a year later Rico modified the design with a longer treble horn that more elegantly complements the offset body’s lines and sweeping curves, also becoming the true godfather of the “pointy” guitar designs that proliferated in the Eighties. Hardware on the original models was top-quality, with Grover Imperial “stairstep” tuners, a Strap Lock System and a Leo Quan Badass Wraparound bridge being standard features.

Pickups were a pair of custom DiMarzio Dual Sound humbuckers, which were Super Distortion models with four-conductor wiring to enable coil splitting for each pickup and master phase switching. Moser’s circuit also included an active preamp with an on/off switch and level control for boosting the signal enough to overdrive



Rick Derringer and his B.C. Rich Mockingbird in Oakland, California, July 23, 1977; [left] a bonus 1979 Mockingbird for ya



an amp. A six-position Varitone-style rotary switch provided a variety of midrange tone presets by engaging different capacitor values at each setting. The other

controls were a master volume, master tone and three-position pickup toggle.

During the late Seventies, the Mockingbird was available in “entry level” models made of walnut or mahogany, but most buyers paid the extra \$100 or \$200 for the more deluxe versions made of exotic koa or figured maple. B.C. Rich was essentially a custom shop (with workshops in East Los Angeles and Tijuana, Mexico), so there’s quite considerable variation in examples

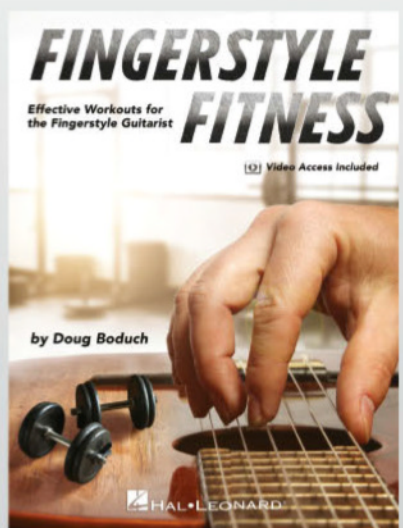
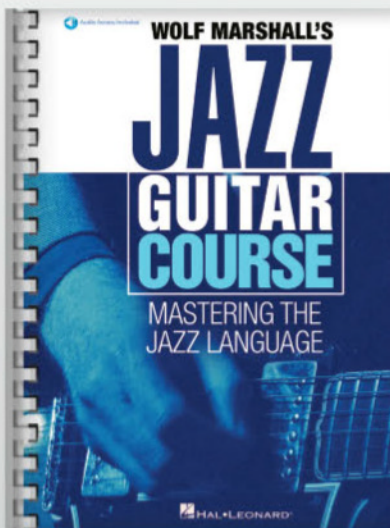
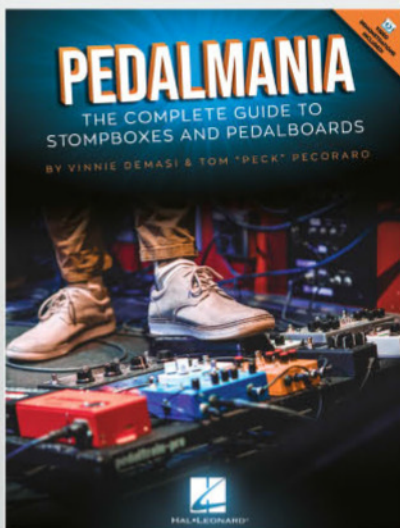
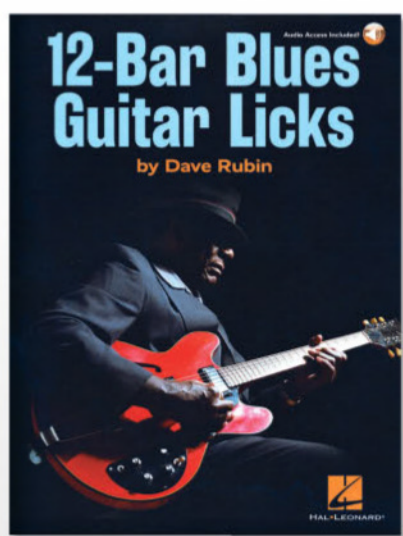
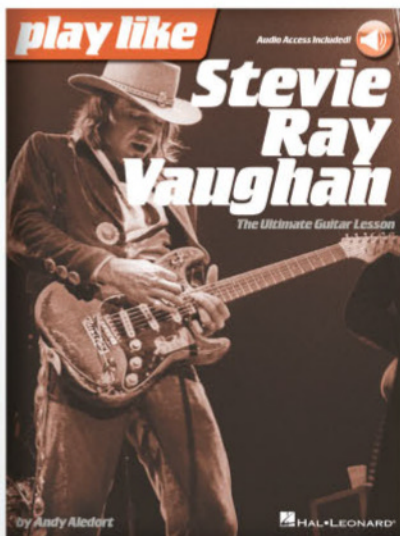
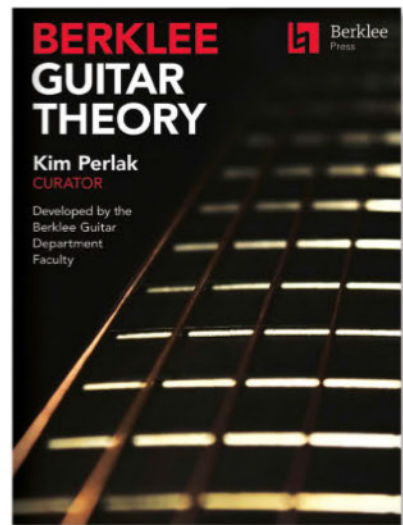
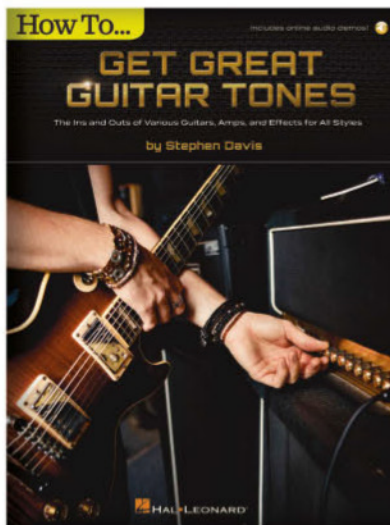
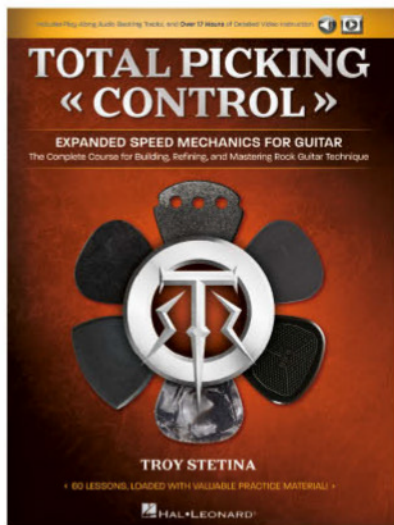
from the Seventies, particularly in nut widths and neck carve profiles as each instrument was truly handmade and individual craftsmen had different approaches. If you have your eyes on a vintage Mockingbird, it’s highly recommended to try before you buy.

Dick Wagner was an early adopter of the Mockingbird, which he played in the studio and on stage with Alice Cooper. However, the Mockingbird’s popularity really took off thanks to Bob “Nite Bob” Czakowski, who introduced the model to Joe Perry and Brad Whitford while he was doing sound for Aerosmith. Other notable Mockingbird players over the years have included Rick Derringer and Elliot Easton during the Seventies and C.C. DeVille, Lita Ford, Kerry King, Bruce Kulick, Chuck Schuldiner and Slash during the Eighties.

B.C. Rich has undergone a number of ownership changes over the years, and quality has varied considerably from the heights of the Seventies/mid Eighties to the lows of the Nineties. USA Custom Shop models have consistently been quite good but expensive, and under new ownership recent models are making an impressive comeback in quality and value. **GW**

“The Mockingbird’s popularity took off thanks to the guy who introduced the model to Joe Perry and Brad Whitford”

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