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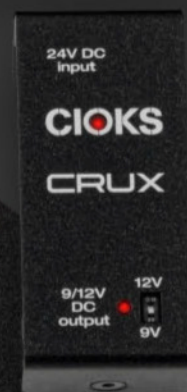
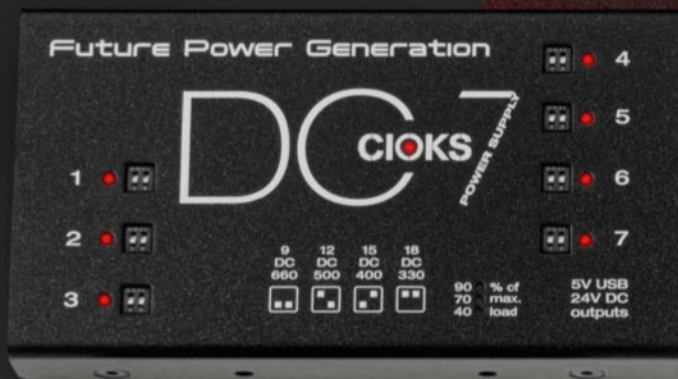
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A man with short brown hair, wearing a blue t-shirt, blue jeans, large black headphones, and aviator sunglasses, is seated in the cockpit of a small aircraft. He is playing a white Traveler guitar. The cockpit features a dashboard with several analog gauges and a yoke. The view out the window shows a mountainous landscape with a winding river. The text "Flying Solo" is written in a white, cursive font in the upper right. The Traveler logo is on the guitar's body. The background is a composite image of a cockpit interior and a scenic landscape.

*Flying
Solo*



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ROOM FOR SPHERES

▶ **IT ADMITTEDLY DOESN'T** do a lot of good to try to "sell" the issue here on the Woodshed page. I mean, by the time you've reached this section of the magazine, you've theoretically already bought the issue, pulled it out of your mailbox or picked it up at your (very cool) dentist's office before enjoying another (very uncool) root canal. Still, I'm gonna say it: Our cover story is just as fascinating as the wholly unexpected musical partnership between Bob Weir and John Mayer. There's so much to find interesting — so many things to latch onto — from the ins and outs of the "Dead Spec" version of Mayer's PRS Silver Sky to the audiovisual wonders on display at Sphere in Las Vegas (which I haven't yet experienced — but now I really want to; and while I'm talking in parentheses, I'll add that this is probably the first time a venue has played such a central role in a *Guitar World* cover story) to Dead & Company's mantra of blending "heritage and futurism" to the ongoing "pushing air" debate (a.k.a. that unflinching desire to have a blazing guitar amp — tube, especially — nearby in every performance situation) to Mayer's ongoing learning curve (my words) as a member of the band — and how he addresses his role in terms of interpreting the late Jerry Garcia's constantly evolving approach to guitar over the decades. Honestly, I've never been a Deadhead; I've always had a more general appreciation for "the Grateful Dead experience" — the great guitar playing (not to mention Garcia's offbeat taste in guitars), the famous tunes (with the *In the Dark* period being my favorite; it was groovy witnessing their late-Eighties comeback as a young'un) and their undeniable influence on music and culture — but you probably wouldn't find me at Dead shows at the Nassau Coliseum in '90 or Pine Knob Music Theatre in '91. That said, I'd give anything to be at one of Dead & Company's upcoming shows at Sphere, a venue I've always found only "fairly" interesting — till now. To quote our cover story, I want to watch Weir, Mayer & Co. "weave the venue's unique features into the fabric of their performance." Read on!

— **Damian Fanelli**



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Two years after their Final Tour, Dead & Company are rolling back to Sphere in Vegas for another residency. Bob Weir and John Mayer break down the Sphere experience, some recent adjustments and their ever-evolving musical partnership.

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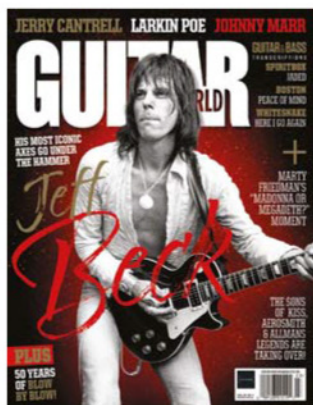
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In 1967, Jordan Electronics decided to expand its business beyond Cold War atomic age devices like Geiger counters and dosimeters by entering the world of electric guitar effects with the Jordan Juniors series of products, including the Boss Tone fuzz.

SOUNDING BOARD

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



Jeff Beck still gets 'em thinking

Upon excavating the March 2025 issue from beneath the pile of envelopes in the mailbox, which I had neglected for many weeks, my brain took delight in seeing Jeff Beck on the cover and happily exclaimed, "Things are looking up!"

Request: I wonder if there's a chance in the (guitar) world that we can get a close-up photo of his 2022 pedalboard featured on page 63?

Beautiful shot of the '54 Les Paul (Oxblood), BTW. Wraparound tailpieces (no bridge) confound me, only having seen them in pictures and never really researching. My bad there, but if you're ever lacking for a little something to fill space, a piece (pun might be intended) pertaining to the subject would be interesting. No intonation adjustment? String height? The angle of the tailpiece on that guitar in particular is even more mysterious. I'd never seen it as his right hand was always covering it.

Thanks to everyone involved at GW. It's the only real reason to open my mailbox anymore. That, and the mailman gets a little cranky when he runs out of room for my "supplemental mail," which is nearly all he puts in

there anymore. A monthly peek inside for my issue of GW ensures a cleanout every fourth week. Very sincerely...

— Jason Page,
Virginia Beach, Virginia

Thanks very kindly for the Gilmour

Thank you for the David Gilmour issue [December 2024]. His solo work is amazing. I would love to see an issue like this and/or articles about Robin Trower. Keep up the great work. Thanks, an avid fan...

— Scot Hamilton

How about a tribute to Alexi Laiho?

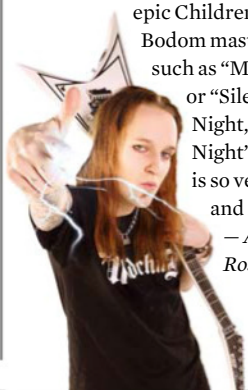
I was reading my latest copy

of *Guitar World* with Dime on the cover [January 2025] and I thought of someone that many others besides just me would probably love to see featured again. He's no longer with us, but can GW help cure a fan's Alexi Laiho withdrawal syndrome and feature this talented shredder? Maybe include guitar tab for some

epic Children of Bodom masterpiece, such as "Morrigan"

or "Silent Night, Bodom Night"? Alexi is so very loved and missed.

— Angie Rose



People, get ready for LEGO Jeff Beck

Hello, *Guitar World*! I am just a kid shredder who wants to send a photo for the photo of the month. I made a Jeff Beck out of LEGO [bricks] and wanted to share it with the GW team. I love all of your issues! Could you guys (and gals) please do more magazines about Lynyrd Skynyrd and ZZ Top? You guys are the best guitar magazine there ever was! Thank you!

— Carson Elstun, age 12



RANDOM PHOTO OF THE MONTH

Knocked Loose guitarist **Isaac Hale** performs at Sala Mon in Madrid, November 23, 2022. "There are rap shows that are more aggressive than any metal show — losing your mind isn't specific to just metal," Hale told *GuitarWorld.com*'s Phil Weller last year. "Our tent at Coachella reached capacity before we started, and not all of those 7,000 people were Knocked Loose fans. Many heard rumblings that a metal band was playing and wanted to check it out. Because of that, a lot of people came away seeing something they'd never seen before — and they were either terrified or low-key connected with it."

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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

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with a .jpg or screenshot of the image.

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



PETE TOWNSHEND BY JOHN BEADLE



SLASH BY PAUL DEESEN

DEFENDERS of the Faith



Jack Zhou

AGE: 29

HOMETOWN: Vancouver, Canada

GUITARS: Ibanez RG550 Genesis, Ibanez RG7620, Ibanez RG1XXV, Ibanez Premium RG870QMZ, Ibanez IC420

SONGS I'VE BEEN PLAYING:

Racer X "Technical Difficulties," Joe Stump "Speed Metal Messiah," JS Bach "Prelude No. 5 in D Major BWV 850"

GEAR I WANT MOST: Ibanez PGM301, Ibanez RG760, Ibanez Universe UV7PWH



James Swartz

AGE: 63

HOMETOWN: Port Townsend, WA

GUITARS: Kiesel Vader 6, Kiesel Osiris 6 and 6X, Ibanez JS1CR, Ibanez JS2450, Gibson Les Paul Custom, PRS SE 277 Baritone, Fender Precision Pro Bass

SONGS I'VE BEEN PLAYING:

Extreme "Rise," Charlie Robbins "The Back of My Mind," Mark Lettieri "Magnetar"

GEAR I WANT MOST: Whatever Fractal Audio comes out with next to replace my Axe-Fx III, which I absolutely love and consider my most essential piece of gear!



Kevin Jennings

AGE: 50

HOMETOWN: Gravesend, UK

GUITARS: Epiphone SG Standard, Faith Neptune Blood Moon, Norman B20, Admira classical

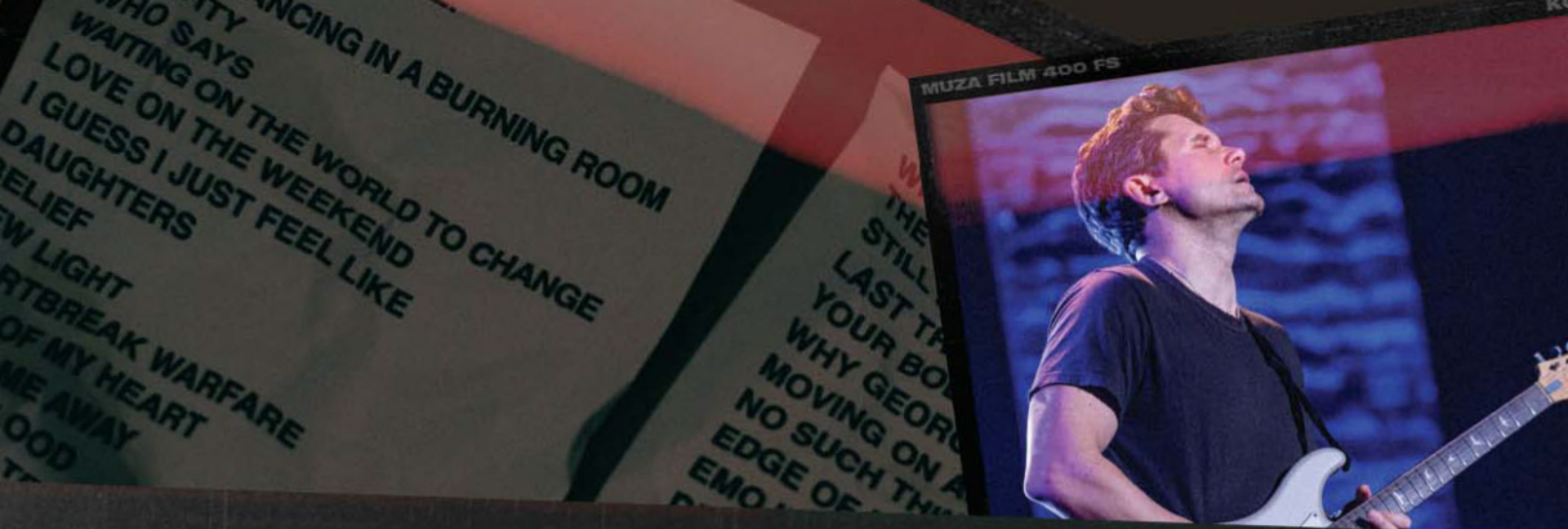
SONGS I'VE BEEN PLAYING:

"Tears in Rain," JS Bach "Prelude in C Minor" and my own compositions

GEAR I MOST WANT: Fender Telecaster



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



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Satch Unchained

JOE SATRIANI ON HIS NEW RIG, CHANNELING EDDIE VAN HALEN AND THE NEW G3 LIVE ALBUM

By Amit Sharma

▶ **THOUGH HE'S FAST** approaching his 70s, Joe Satriani remains one of the busiest guitar players in the game. There's a new live album out, documenting the original G3 lineup's sold-out reunion tour of last year. He's been paying tribute to Eddie Van Halen in the ongoing Best of All Worlds tour alongside Sammy Hagar, Michael Anthony and Jason Bonham. And there's the recently announced Surfing with the Hydra tour with the Satch/Vai band, ➔

where they'll be performing new original music written together and solo tracks as one group for the very first time.

For a six-stringer who released his debut EP way back in 1984 and now has 18 solo full-lengths under his belt, plus two albums with Chickenfoot and all kinds of collaborations stretching across the last four decades, there's no shortage of wind in the sails. Perhaps it all comes down to his work ethic — despite all the awards and accolades, he's still humble enough to see himself as a student of music with plenty of room for expansion. You can hear it on *G3 Reunion Live*, where Satriani, Steve Vai and Eric Johnson play some of their most famous tracks alongside more recent innovations that document their growth as world-commanding purveyors of melody and harmony.

"It's pretty remarkable," says Satch from a studio room where he's surrounded by 3rd Power heads, Marshall cabs and Fender combos, as well as nearly every iteration of his Ibanez JS series. "Every night I'd be watching them create new worlds to inhabit. Steve is the kind of player who wants to redesign his whole space before filling it with new music. Then you have Eric, who has pursued a sonic refinement that's very special. He's tireless in trying to enhance the sound of a Stratocaster going through his pedals and his amps. I have the best seat in the house. They are both so original and yet so different to each other in how they play."

The tonal differences are also huge. Eric uses a lot less gain than you and Steve, and it's more of a fuzz sound than overdrive or distortion.

Funnily enough, the day after we recorded the live album, we were at EastWest Studios. The three of us stood together and plugged into my Marshall, passing the cord around. The one thing Eric said to me was "Wow, there is so much gain!" We all have different ways of building our own gain structure to create melodies that soar. Eric has more of a germanium fuzz sound. Steve is more of a preamp gain guy. And I'm more of a power amp circuitry kind of player. It didn't matter who had the cable, we all sounded like ourselves, but you can hear the differences in our own rigs.

Eric's take on Jeff Beck's "Freeway Jam" is terrifically moving.

Eric knows how to reach into a song and find something unique. Jeff was a fantastic example of someone who was always moving forward. He was continually reinventing himself. Beck's *Blow by Blow* is loose and makes you go "Wow!" because



[from left] Joe Satriani, Steve Vai and Eric Johnson blow minds on last year's G3 reunion tour

"I quickly realized the order of Eddie's embellishments is really important to the fans"

the performances were comped and no one's really in tune. But the vibe and compositions supersede that and achieve this magical thing. Whenever I saw Jeff, he was always in the moment. Every time he played "Where Were You," one of the most brilliant things any player has conceived, it would be different. All of his recordings were mostly improvised. He would prepare but then invite danger into every performance. That's why he sounded fresh.

Is "The Sea of Emotion, Pt. 1" a good indication of what to expect from the Satch/Vai debut?

I wrote that song as a first volley. I pictured us growing up and referenced all the classic bands we loved — Hendrix, Zeppelin and Sabbath — almost like private jokes between us. Then I wrote a second part and Steve wrote a third. It sounds like a Spinal Tap joke, but it's a trilogy. The rest of the album is quite diverse. Stylistically, it's all over the place. We're both venturing into unknown territory.

You designed a new amp for the Best of All Worlds tour, geared more toward chordal ideas than single-note lines higher up. Talk us through the 3rd Power Dragon 100.

Going back some years, when David Lee Roth and Alex Van Halen first called me about a tribute, I started this deep search

into Ed's tone. His sound was lighter and thinner than my JVM, which was designed to make all my high notes super fat. That's what I usually do for two hours on stage. I'm not playing many chords. But when I play with Sammy, it's 95 percent rhythm and then eight or 16 bars of solo. A quick rip before coming back.

Edward's tone changed a lot through the years, which probably makes this gig even more challenging.

Ed had a million sounds. "Ain't Talkin' 'Bout Love" to "Panama" is a huge jump, then to "Summer Nights" is a crazy jump. He went from mono to mono with a little bit of stereo from the Eventide to widen the pitch, and then full stereo. He used Marshall, Soldano, Peavey and EVH. Those are huge changes in terms of preamp gain and compression. He went from a lot of midrange to quite scooped. So I asked Dylana Scott at 3rd Power Amplification to solve it for me. We went for the 1986 *Live Without a Net* tone, because it was all Marshalls but with the extra stereo-ness.

What have been your favorite tracks on the setlist and why?

Opening with "Good Enough," "Poundcake" and "Runaround" is amazing. I quickly realized that the order of Eddie's embellishments is really important to the fans. Even though Ed would move things around, this audience knows the studio versions and they will want the scream here, the harmonic cascades there and the finger tapping there. As for challenges, the "Poundcake" drill is hard to nail. The beginning of "Summer Nights" is difficult because of the picking and gain structure. I don't think I got the intro right until halfway into the tour. It felt so odd to my fingers.

COVER MODELS

GUITARIST
MARTY FRIEDMAN

GUITAR
1991 JACKSON FIREBIRD
CUSTOM SHOP PROTOTYPE

GW COVER DATE
DECEMBER 1991

THIS INTERVIEW
JANUARY 2025

PHOTOGRAPHER
NEAL PRESTON

Q: When and where did you buy this guitar?

I'm sure I was somewhere on the road, right around the time of the photo shoot, when Jackson presented me with several guitars of very cool shapes. It might have been a prototype.

Q: What drew you to it?

I loved the shape. Jackson should get more recognition for being the first top-tier company to make guitars of radically "heavy metal"-looking shapes way before anyone else did. Arguably, they were the only top-tier company making them for a very long time. Before Jackson, all the weird-shaped guitars were sonically and visually suited to other genres, like surf music or retro stuff.

Q: Did you modify it to fit the music you were playing at the time?

I've never needed to modify any Jacksons.

Q: How did this guitar — as opposed to others — impact how you played?

At this time, in [Megadeth], we used only a pretty basic palette of guitar sounds, so any given guitar taken on tour would have a similar tone — a big, thick rhythm sound and a juicy lead tone. That was all I needed to get the job done. I was playing my signature model, the KE-1, for most of any given set, so I would bring this guitar out once or twice because it looked like a curvy version of my main guitar. That was the main difference.



Q: What notable recordings or tours did you use this guitar on?

[Megadeth's] *Countdown to Extinction* — the album and tour — and maybe one or two more after that. I didn't play it much.

"It might have been smarter to choose my signature model!"

Q: Did you use this guitar post-Megadeth?

Doubtful.

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

I probably just got it and was in love with the shape. It might have been smarter to choose my signature model, though!

Q: Do you still have this guitar?

It was sold at a charity auction that I held in 2011 for the victims of Japan's tsunami/earthquake. — *Andrew Daly*

Zeal & Ardor

FRONTMAN MANUEL GAGNEUX ON THE AVANT-GARDE METAL BAND'S NEW ALBUM AND HIS UNORTHODOX PLAYING

By Jon Wiederhorn

BORN 11 YEARS ago out of an experiment to combine Norwegian black metal and American slave songs, Zeal & Ardor has developed its inchoate, one-man demos into a cohesive, multi-dimensional band that integrates alt-rock, industrial, pop, math-metal, classical and indie-rock. *Greif*, the group's fourth full-length, is an offbeat, schizophrenic and sometimes unnerving collection of occult-themed songs united by a desire to expand, evolve and consume like a virus.

"The tendrils have grown in every which direction," agrees racially mixed Swiss-American founder Manuel Gagneux. "What can I say? I'm easily bored. I always want to elbow my way out to have more room to explore."

To that end, Gagneux invited his bandmates (lead guitarist Tiziano Volante, bassist Lukas Kurmann and drummer Marco Von Allmen) to contribute original ideas to the finished tracks (for the first time), which adds to the eclecticism and depth of the album. Conversely, the frontman retained a fist-tight grip over the primary compositions despite his self-described "limited skillset" — especially on guitar.

"I'm self-taught and my technique is terrible," he says. "I don't even use my pinky. But I'm worried that if I learn to play in a technically correct way, some of my



One of Manuel Gagneux's favorite approaches to writing involves setting up a chain of at least six effects — many not meant for guitar

AXOLOGY

- **GUITARS** Aristides Raw o6o (with active pickups), Charvel Pro-Mod Style 1 with tremolo and passive pickups (Gagneux); Aeschbach custom seven-string (Volante)
- **AMPS** Studio: Marshall JCM800, Vox AC30, Fender Twin Reverb; live: Neural DSP Quad Cortex (both)
- **EFFECTS** Various Logic Pro plug-ins, EarthQuaker Devices Palisades Overdrive (Gagneux); modded Pro Co Lil' Rat (Volante)

creativity will disappear because my limitations make me search for unique things that don't sound like anything else."

One of Gagneux's favorite approaches to writing involves setting up a chain of at

"I'm worried that if I learn to play in a technically correct way, some of my creativity will disappear"

least six effects — many not meant for guitar — in Logic Pro and tweaking the settings to create wildly unorthodox tones. "Nine times out of 10 it sounds horrible, but that one time I come up with something cool, I loop it and find ways to use it," he says.

While Gagneux enjoys playing high-quality instruments, he sometimes thinks of his guitar as an adversarial entity. "I swear it can be my greatest antagonist, and I sometimes have to put it down before I smash it to pieces," he says. "Other times, it bends to my will and helps me create things I hadn't even thought of before I picked it up. It's kind of magical in that way."



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"It's crazy going from the Sinatra shows... to playing in clubs with my heaviest band," Mark Tremonti says. "It's definitely a different vibe"



Tracking Down Tremonti

WHETHER HE'S PLOTTING WITH CREED, ALTER BRIDGE OR HIS EPONYMOUS SOLO PROJECT, MARK TREMONTI IS ALWAYS UP TO SOMETHING INTERESTING. TODAY IT'S ALL ABOUT GEAR, HIS IN-THE-WORKS PEDAL COMPANY AND LATEST ALBUM, *THE END WILL SHOW US HOW*

By Gregory Adams

▶ THE END IS near, but time is on Mark Tremonti's side. It's got to be — he planned it this way. When *Guitar World* reaches the legendary Floridian guitar force in late November 2024, he's just stepped into a Toronto hotel room on a day off from Creed's extremely successful and rapturously received reunion tour, which packed arenas throughout much of the year. To say he's caught during a moment of downtime, however, might be a stretch.

Once this interview wraps, he'll be warming up his voice in preparation for another round of "Tremonti Sings Sinatra" shows, black-tie events where he smoothly

croons Ol' Blue Eyes' standards. He's also touching up some songs he wrote for an upcoming album with Alter Bridge, his other long-running and beloved hard rock project. He may QC a pair of wah-styled prototypes for a long-promised pedal-making project. He and his family are going to sneak in some Christmas shopping while wandering through the Canadian metropolis, too.

Even after tackling all that, the guitarist will be sitting in the hotel relearning rhythmically crushing riffs from *The End Will Show Us How*, the latest album from his eponymous and more metallically

tinged Tremonti project. He'd made sure to finish that record at the top of 2024 to avoid conflicts with Creed's weighty tour schedule, but the pendulum is swinging back toward the musical multi-tasker's heaviest outfit for 2025.

"In my now very-layered career with all these bands, I've got to work about a year and a half ahead of schedule to make sure everything's on time," he says of an ever-morphing creative flow.

Throughout *The End Will Show Us How*, Tremonti and the rest of his group — co-guitarist Eric Friedman, bassist Tanner Keegan and drummer Ryan Bennett — are a

wrecking ball of kineticism. They're smashing darkly anthemic choruses into ominously quarter-bent alt-rock gloom ("The Mother, the Earth and I"); they're busting out bare-knuckled baritone riffage alongside pinch-and-burn soloing ("One More Time," "Nails"). But while generally several shades heavier than Creed or Alter Bridge, *End* also unveils tender rock balladry ("It's Not Over").

First single "Just Too Much" may be the record's most unique surprise. Sporting an infectiously quirky verse groove built around alternating 8- and 9-bar phrases, the song passed Friedman and Tremonti's smell test immediately. Perhaps more irregular to the band leader was how his wife was an instant fan, too.

"That was one of the only songs I've ever worked on in my studio where my wife was like, 'What was that thing you were playing last night? That was really cool!'" Tremonti says through a hearty laugh. "She thought it was Audioslave-ish, which is one of her favorite bands. So I was like, 'All right, we're onto something!'"

You've called "The Mother, the Earth and I" one of your favorite songs you've ever done with this band. Pardon the pun, but what makes it so elementally "Tremonti"?

I heard the initial demos back and it just hit a spot with me. And when it kicks into the chorus chord progression, that's musically the most satisfying part to play. I like setting up an atmosphere and finding a lyric that fits the mood. When I was writing this song, I just spit out those lyrics. I thought it would be a fun thing to tackle, this love for the earth. Finding beauty and peace in nature while the world is in shambles, and everybody's killing for religion and politics. It's about sitting back in that tranquility of the earth itself... that's something we all share, no matter what you believe.

"One More Time" kicks off with a gnarly, gun-turreted rhythm riff that locks in with a monstrous double kick. It's one of the heaviest grooves on the record.

That's signature Tremonti. Whenever I have a riff in a rhythm that needs to stay super tight, and it has an almost speed metal-y approach to it, that's definitely earmarked for Tremonti. If I brought that to [Creed bassist and drummer] Scott Phillips and Brian Marshall, they'd look at me funny. They like rock. They like progressive rock. But I don't know if they like speed metal as much as I do. So I do as much of that as possible with Tremonti. That's one of the main reasons I started this band — to be able to get that side of my songwriting out.

They don't have to be heavy, but that's definitely a flavor of this band.

There's this bending lick you do in the bridge breakdown of "One More Time" that had one YouTube commenter asking, "Did I just get Weezer-ed?" because it shares a similar feel to the end of Rivers Cuomo's solo on "Buddy Holly." Had you come across that comparison yet?

No... I'm not too familiar with Weezer. I'd have to go back and listen to it, but it's definitely not a tribute to Weezer. [Laughs]

Parallel thoughts, perhaps. A good lick is a good lick!

It's just rock 'n' roll! There are 12 notes; it's all been done. When that lick came together for "One More Time," I thought it was great for the song. It wasn't because I was listening to a Weezer record, I'll tell you that much. [Laughs]

In your last interview with *GW*, you talked up your love for the clean channel of your PRS MT 100 head. Did that end up being the primary clean tone on *The End Will Show Us How*?

The MT 100 is the primary amp in general. Our producer Elvis [ed. Michael "Elvis" Baskette], absolutely loves that amp. That being said, I've always been a firm believer in having multiple amps doing any given job. It's been a career-long quest for me, pairing amps to find these perfect marriages between tones.

We had the MT 100, and I brought in a couple of new Dumbles that I love. I honestly think there's no better tone in the world than a slightly overdriven Dumble. When you mix that with the MT 100, it's just bliss to me. And then Elvis loves my Cornford RK100, so I brought that in for layering the high-gain rhythms and leads. I think we had it all covered between those three or four amps.

A while back, you'd started teasing the idea of producing your own pedals. Where are you at with that project?

Just yesterday I tried out two pedals, but I'm trying to be as picky as I can and not pull the trigger until I'm perfectly happy with it. I'm trying to come up with something cool that's also very affordable and road-worthy. When you put your name on something, you've got to make sure it's right. We've been at it for a few years... but we'll get there.

What were you testing out, specifically?

They were two wah pedals, but we've worked on a tremolo, a Uni-Vibe-type of

pedal, and a dual overdrive; I love the idea of a stackable overdrive. I also want to do an octave pedal at some point, but the parts are a little tougher to come by than you would think. So, it's been [about] hunting some of that down. I want to come out with three pedals when it launches and then come out with a pedal a year after that.

How much octave pedal work is on this record?

Any time there's a big, single-string heavy riff, there's got to be some kind of layered octave on there. What we usually do in that case is we'll put a layer of Micro Synth in there, too. Micro Synths have some of the nastiest fuzz tones. If you listen to "All the Wicked Things," there's a section in the bridge where it drops to a real heavy single-string riff. I'd be surprised if we didn't layer some sort of octave on there.

How excited are you to start promoting this record with Tremonti? That's going to be a different vibe than these Creed arena shows...

Oh, absolutely. All my bands feel so different. It's crazy going from the Sinatra shows, where I'm wearing a tux and playing with all of these incredibly gifted performers, to going over to Europe and playing in clubs with my heaviest band. It's definitely a different vibe. You've got to take a different approach. I can't get on stage with Tremonti and be like, "Hey, you all look beautiful tonight, thank you for coming to the event," like I would with a Sinatra performance.

Maybe you're underselling the power of that. Everyone loves a compliment!

I feel like when I do Tremonti, I become a different character. When it's heavier music, I become a WWE wrestler: "Get up, everybody!" Whatever the music pulls out of you, you know...

On the idea of pulling out music through these different personas, is there any other music you're working on at the moment? Whether with Alter Bridge, Creed or Tremonti?

I'm going into the studio with Alter Bridge in March. I put together nine demos last month that I've shared with everybody. I'm always thinking about volume two of *Tremonti Sings Sinatra*. Every record that we put out [donates proceeds] to the National Down Syndrome Society, so I want to keep raising funds for that. And it's also just a lot of fun to do. We're still looking at what happens [in 2025] with the Tremonti tours, stateside. And then we're looking at Creed as well. We'll see how it all pans out!



LOST CLASSICS: Echo & the Bunnymen

WILL SERGEANT TAKES US INSIDE THE MAKING OF THE U.K. POST-PUNKS' CLASSIC 1984 ALBUM, *OCEAN RAIN*

By Mark McStea

▶ WHEN ECHO & the Bunnymen released their fourth album, *Ocean Rain*, in the spring of 1984, it received decidedly mixed reactions. The dramatic change in the band's sound — which included the use of a 35-piece French orchestra — was a big factor, although the Liverpool four-piece had already hinted at the shape of sounds to come with “The Killing Moon,” the album's lead-off single.

Porcupine, which came out the previous year, had scored the band their biggest success to date, and there was an expectation that the new record would offer more of the same. What the band delivered, though, was a surprisingly ambitious collection of songs rooted in Sixties pop, but with a distinctly European bent. The passing of time brings perspective, however, and the subsequent 40-plus years have seen *Ocean Rain* constantly reappraised as one of the most significant albums of the Eighties, if not the band's most fully realized work.

Guitarist Will Sergeant is writing the third installment of his autobiography, which is focused on the *Ocean Rain* era. Luckily, he was fully immersed in collecting his thoughts on that period when we spoke.

***Ocean Rain* is very cinematic, covering a huge sonic soundscape. Did you have a sense that you were trying to create**

something that was different from your previous records? Was there a notion of embracing a concept?

It was totally a concept. We knew we wanted to record it in France. We were all into Scott Walker, Jacques Brel and Love, particularly when they had those orchestral tracks. We knew we wanted to use an orchestra, and we wanted to bring a Parisian vibe to the record. So yeah, it was definitely a concept album.

You had played some of the songs at your shows and radio sessions. Had you always planned that they'd be reworked with a 35-piece orchestra?

Yes, we knew what we wanted them to sound like. We had a French string arranger lined up, but me and Mac [*singer Ian McCulloch*] went out for a meal with him, and we really didn't like him; we thought he was an arrogant asshole. Anyway, if anyone's going to be arrogant, it's McCulloch, isn't it? He doesn't allow anyone else to be arrogant in his company. [*Laughs*] We'd done some work with Adam Peters, who'd played cello on some of our stuff — he was only 19 — so we called him up. I think he was at the Royal College of Music at the time. Anyway, we told him about our vision, and he totally got it and was totally on our wavelength. He worked out all the string arrangements and conducted the orchestra in the studio.

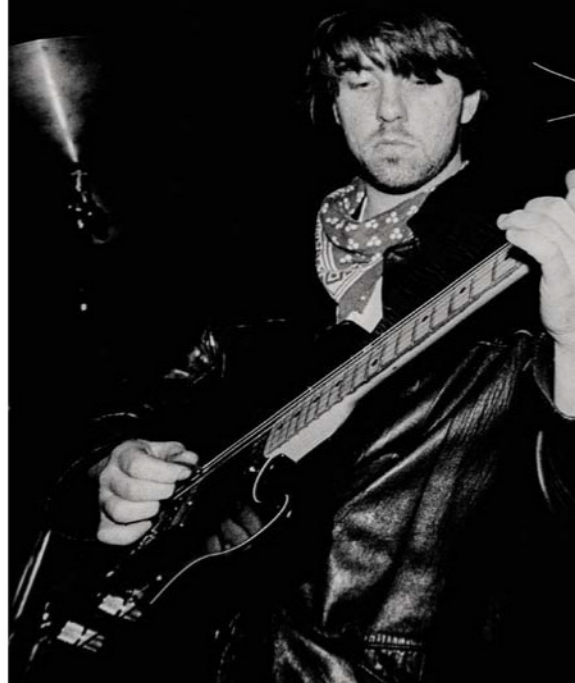
What was the band's writing process?

The only song that was fully formed would have been “Ocean Rain.” We had a deal with Washburn, and they gave us a load of guitars for free. That meant me and Mac started playing a lot of acoustic guitar together. I had a TEAC [*Tascam*] four-track at the time, and I'd keep it at Mac's house, and we recorded loads of song ideas on it. His house got broken into and everything got stolen, including all the ideas we'd recorded. I'd love to hear what was on that tape — they could have been classics!

“The Killing Moon” was the big hit from the album, but you didn't do that one in Paris, did you?

We did that at Crescent Studio in Bath [*England*]. A lot of work went into it because it was definitely seen as being the key single. Adam played cello and double-tracked it, and David Lord, the engineer, had a Kurzweil synthesizer, which generated string sounds, and that was very much the template for what was to follow in Paris. The intro, which is something people often remark on, was just something I did without thinking before we recorded the track. We went for a curry, and David,

Will Sergeant [*left*] and Ian McCulloch perform in Chicago, April 11, 1981



who was putting the mix together, spotted that run and put it at the start of the song. I did the middle bit on a Vox 12-string that was mic'd with two mics, not through an amp. I actually use a copy of it now by Phantom Guitar Works, which is a much better guitar. Every time I did that dive bomb on the track, I had to retune it.

Every song has a lot of textured, layered guitar parts. Did you plan everything before going into the studio?

A lot of that happened in the studio. I'd know what the structure was going to be, but then, once you get into the studio it's like having a paintbox with all these new colors to play with. We were kids, and we didn't even know what the studio was capable of. We were never worried about how much time we were spending or how much it was costing because it was shielded from us by our management. We'd hire Ovation and Martins, and they'd just sit in the studio for three weeks, unused, at about £100 a day or something. Nobody ever says to you, when you're a new band, that you're going to be paying for everything in the end. [*Laughs*] When it comes to putting parts down, I'm someone who often second-guesses himself. I'll play something then wonder if it is any good, you know? Kind of like imposter syndrome, but then when I hear the part in the track it sounds OK.



Which bands influenced you?

Television, the Velvet Underground, Roxy Music, David Bowie, T. Rex and Dr. Feelgood; Wilko Johnson was a big influence. I saw them quite a few times when Wilko was in the band. You can really hear that on “Crocodiles.” I was playing it with the same fingerstyle he used, and by the end of it my knuckles were covered in blood. I also really liked Zal Cleminson in the Sensational Alex Harvey Band. At that time, though, I never thought I could be in a band. It seemed like you had to be a genius to be in a band — but then punk came along, and you didn’t.

What did you start out on and what was your first decent guitar?

I had a Hofner that I bought off someone I knew — I don’t know the model; it was covered in sticky-backed plastic. I found a way to plug it into a record player and I’d make noises with it — I couldn’t play at all then. I actually sold it for £3. I then traded a pair of PVC punk trousers for a Kay cheapo copy that I sawed up into a coffin shape. Then, in 1978, I got a job as a commis chef and got a Telecaster — because of Wilko. I also bought a Fender 12-string acoustic and a drum machine. I liked Brian Eno, and I was using the drum machine to try to get some of his sounds. Then it was a case of me and Mac at my dad’s house — two acoustic

guitars and a drum machine. That was how we started writing songs together. These days my main guitar is a Jazzmaster, and the Phantom that’s based on the 12-string Vox.

What were your main guitars and amps for *Ocean Rain*?

A Telecaster and the Vox. We also had a couple of Strats that Fender gave us. Mac had an ES-335 and a Fender Thinline Tele. We didn’t have a lot of guitars, though. I hired a Rickenbacker 12-string that was used at the end of “Killing Moon.” We always hired a Coral sitar. We’d think it would sound trippy and psychedelic, but they always sounded shit, really. [Laughs] I have a bulbul tarang at the minute, which is a bit sitar-like, and it does sound really good. For amps, I was using a Fender Twin and a Dual Showman. That would have been what I used live at the time as well; it was all I had, anyway. [Laughs]

“There is an album that is being made, but I’m not involved. McCulloch’s basically taken over on that front”

For the tracks where Ian plays guitar, would you have worked things out between you to try to complement what each other was doing?

No — in those days nobody worked out anything with each other. There was no one who was the boss telling each other what to play. We all just did whatever we wanted, and I think that’s probably the secret to why it worked. Ian was a brilliant rhythm guitarist anyway. We never got involved in each other’s parts unless someone did something that was really cheesy. If that happened, we’d tell them it sounded like something we knew that they wouldn’t like, like maybe Howard Jones or something. [Laughs] That would be the end of that.

Were you happy with it when it was released?

I’ve never, ever been happy with anything I’ve done. I never listen to a record I’ve made once it was done — unless maybe I hear a track in the supermarket or something. You’ve heard the album so many times in the studio and you’re so focused at the time, that you don’t ever need to hear it again. Anyway, I’m always listening to my parts and thinking they should have been a bit louder. [Laughs] I’m not really bothered about what everyone else was doing.

How do you feel now, looking back at it?

I did play it last year, when I was preparing to play it live in its entirety, and I think the main thing that happened was that it reminded me of the process of recording it, and stuff like me and Mac riding around Paris on bicycles during the sessions. I think it stands up well, though, and it achieved what we set out to achieve.

What is the current status of Echo & the Bunnymen?

We have a handful of Bunnymen shows coming up, but when it comes to recording new music, that’s down to Mac; he seems to have taken control of that whole process. There is an album that is being made, but I’m not involved with it at all. McCulloch’s basically taken over on that front.

You’ve released a number of solo albums. Is that still part of the game plan going forward?

The new book seems to have taken over from the solo work because it takes so long. I am playing on an album for an old friend from Liverpool who is very well known, though I can’t say who it is. Who knows? I might not even end up on it when it comes out. [Laughs]

MY LIFE IN THREE GUITARS: Orianthi

THE TRIO OF AXES THAT HAVE MEANT THE MOST TO THE FORMER ALICE COOPER GUITARIST

By Mark McStea

▶ ORIANTHI'S DEBUT SOLO album, 2005's *Violet Journey*, immediately put the guitar community on notice that a major new talent had arrived. Her unique blend of blues-fueled virtuosity turned heads from the very start, leading to countless endorsements from major-league gear manufacturers. The subsequent years have seen her release four more highly acclaimed albums; in fact, we caught up with her as she was completing work on her sixth album, which is due sometime this year.

This means *Guitar World* managed to find a spot in Ori's hectic schedule to discuss the three guitars that have meant the most to her over her career. "I've got so many guitars that mean a lot to me for all kinds of reasons, but I guess — when push comes to shove — these are the three I always return to. I still find myself on guitar-hunting expeditions when I get a day off on tour, but if I could only own three guitars, these are the three that would make the cut."

1 Maton Australian EA80C

"This was the first guitar I bought for myself, when I was 14. My dad had bought me a few other guitars before, but I managed to finally get enough money together to buy this. I thought that the fact that Maton was Australian was cool. They're such a great brand — such well-made guitars. I brought it over to America with me, and the wood got cracked during the flight. It holds a lot of great memories for me, sitting and writing with it in those early years. I came up with all the songs for *Violet Journey*, which got me the deal with Jimmy Iovine, on this guitar. I actually started out on an old, beat-up classical guitar that my dad had, that he was happy to let me play. He didn't trust me with his Gibsons and Fenders at that time. Then, when I was seven, he gave me his cherry red Gibson ES-125, on the condition that I only used it at home. He was always telling me to be very careful with it — it was a really beautiful guitar. It was a left-handed hollow body — my dad is left-handed — so we converted it to right-handed, which was actually kind of weird. I would sneak it out to school after my dad left for work, but he came home early one day and saw me coming back in with it. I was busted, and he was shocked at first, but I told him that I'd played a song I'd written at school assembly and I had some friends dancing with me. I think he was impressed that it was like a proper show, so that got me off the hook. I was really spoiled as a kid when it came to guitars; after he gave me the 125, he gave me a red Fender Strat and then a PRS. My parents could see how dedicated and serious I was about playing the guitar when I was a child. I guess they thought I probably wasn't going to be able to do anything else except maybe feed the animals in a zoo, so maybe I could become a guitar player. My dad was a real tone freak and guitar obsessive, and I think that's where I got my obsession from."

2 PRS Custom 24 (one-off)

"You can plug this guitar into anything, and it sounds amazing. I've played it next to a '59 Les Paul for comparison, and also next to my '62 ES-335, and it sounded just as good. It's got Paul [Reed Smith]'s special pickups that sound really full; it sustains wonderfully. It's a real workhorse; it never goes out of tune. There are so many unique details about this model. It's got mother-of-pearl all over it — it was specially flown out for the guitar. There's pink mother-of-pearl and all kinds of extravagant stuff on the neck, and my "O" symbol is also made from the same material. The entire guitar is made from one piece of Brazilian rosewood, so it's very heavy. I love vintage guitars, but taking them on the road causes me anxiety, because I worry about someone stealing them, but this purple PRS has been everywhere with me. It's definitely my Number 1 guitar. I actually buy a seat on the plane for it. It travels with me everywhere; it stays with me in my hotel room. It is literally with me all the time; it's a bit psychotic, I guess. I've had five guitars stolen from me, and when you love something the way I love this guitar, you don't take chances. I played the national anthem at a football game in Miami in 2009 on a Les Paul with a Floyd Rose. I turned my back for five minutes and it got stolen from behind me. I've had four great PRS guitars stolen as well. That's why I make sure if I'm taking this guitar with me anywhere, it stays right by my side."

"I've had five guitars stolen from me, and when you love something the way I love this guitar, you don't take chances"

3 Gibson SJ-200 (signature)

"It was a huge honor to be asked to collaborate with such an historic company. On top of that, to then be told that my model is their third-best-selling SJ-200 ever, after Elvis and Bob Dylan — what stellar company to be in! — is just really amazing. According to Gibson, they're so popular that they've been on back order for five years, which is mind-blowing. I'm working with them to produce an Epiphone version, as the Gibson model is a little on the expensive side. Having said that, the expense is justifiable, with the quality of the wood and the extras like the crystals, and we spent a long time developing the LR Baggs pickups. It also has a built-in compressor. Basically, if the sound guy passes out drunk or something, you can fix everything from the guitar. Everybody asked me why I picked such a big guitar, but it just sounds like a grand piano. The sound is huge, and the tonal spectrum is so broad, it's just immense. When you're accompanying yourself, playing an acoustic gig, the worst thing for me is that horrible, thin sound you often hear. You need the sound to be fully rounded out, and the Baggs pickup captures every detail of the full-bodied sound of the guitar. I wanted something that had a neck that was a bit more like an electric guitar — I always found regular acoustic necks a bit too chunky. I'd played an ES-345 with what seemed like the ideal neck, and that was the inspiration for the neck on my signature model. It's been really cool to collaborate with Robi Johns at Gibson — he's an amazing luthier. His wife is into crystals, as am I, so we immediately connected. I said I wanted amethyst on the controls, and he just said OK, whatever you want — that was just for my own Number 1 model; the others have mother-of-pearl instead, though there is an option to have crystals. I thought we'd better give people a choice as not everyone is as into crystals as I am!"





[from left] The Chameleons' Stephen Rice, Mark Burgess and Reg Smithies in 2023

The Chameleons

THE U.K. QUARTET, A MAJOR INFLUENCE OF SHOEGAZE AND NINETIES ALTERNATIVE ROCK, RETURN TO THE STAGE AND STUDIO

By Jim Beaugez

▶ WITH OASIS REUNITING for a stadium tour and the jittery, post-millennial indie rock of Interpol and Editors making a comeback, it's fitting that the Chameleons — the Manchester group to whom all these groups, as well as artists like Billy Corgan, owe a debt of influence — would also be back in action.

The Chameleons emerged in 1981 as part of the U.K.'s post-punk scene, arriving between the demise of Joy Division and the rise of New Order and the Smiths. The group fused late-Seventies punk with prog and new wave, creating an intoxicating, atmospheric guitar-pop sound that foreshadowed shoegaze and

"Madchester" bands like the Charlatans.

"When we started, Reg [Smithies] wasn't using any effects — it was just what came through the amp, like vibrato and things like that," says frontman and bassist Mark Burgess. "Once Dave [Fielding] got his Roland Space Echo, it changed the vibe of what we were doing. And it kind of just developed from that and a lot of marijuana."

On "Where Are You?," the title track of the band's 2024 comeback EP, Smithies and Stephen Rice, who joined in 2021 in place of Fielding, dialed the amps to 11 with a rawer guitar tone to complement Burgess's ethereal vocals. While the sound is less effects-laden than their older

material, the guitars are no less biting on their first new music in two decades.

"I didn't want us to start trying to emulate who we were 20, 30 years ago for the sake of appeasing tradition," Burgess says. "I wanted it to reflect who we are now. And I think it does that."

The Chameleons have been busy playing on both sides of the Atlantic since reuniting in 2021. Coinciding with the band's 2024 tour, during which they played the 1986 fan-fave album *Strange Times* in full, they released the *Tomorrow Remember Yesterday* EP, featuring new recordings of some of the band's earliest songs. Burgess, Smithies, Rice and co are currently working on *Arctic Moon*, their official follow-up to 2001's *Why Call It Anything*.

"I've come from the point of view of saying to [Smithies and Rice], 'I've got this song and I know there's a great song in there, but I don't really know how to execute it,' because it doesn't feel like a Chameleons song to me," he says. "And each of them have suggested different directions to take it, and we've ended up taking the Chameleons forward."

AXOLOGY

- **BURGESS** Gibson SG bass, Ampeg SVT-7PRO amp
- **SMITHIES** Custom Hanley guitar, Mesa Boogie amps
- **RICE** Micro Frets and Shergold guitars, Mesa Boogie amps

"I didn't want us to start trying to emulate who we were 20, 30 years ago for the sake of appeasing tradition"

Patrick Patterson
in action with
Cymande at SXSW
2022 in Austin



Cymande

AFTER BEING SAMPLED BY DJS FOR DECADES — AND THEN STARRING IN AN EYE-OPENING 2022 DOCUMENTARY — THE BRITISH FUNK LEGENDS ARE BACK ON THE RADAR, NEW ALBUM AND ALL

By Andrew Daly

▶ THROUGH DJ KOOL Herc, Grandmaster Flash, De La Soul and — most infamously — the Fugees, British funk-meets-psych outfit Cymande gained cult status in the Eighties and Nineties after dissolving into obscurity in the Seventies.

For those who know, *Cymande* (1972) and *Second Time Around* (1973) are cratedigger classics revolving around oodles of funky guitar rhythms. But none of that impacts how founding guitarist Patrick Patterson approaches *Renascence*, Cymande's first record in 10 years. "I felt like I needed to get away from how I used to play," Patterson says. One wonders why, given the greatness of cuts like "Dove," which the Fugees illegally sampled on 1996's *The Score*. But Patterson has the answer: "Just to freshen up. I wanted to identify a new approach that's not too involved."

The approach might have changed, but when it comes to Cymande's new songs, like "Chasing an Empty Dream," "Coltrane"

and "How We Roll," the gear hasn't. "I tend to play Gibsons," Patterson says. "I like my Gibson ES-339. It's not as if we've been out of music completely for the last 50 years. I've maintained some consistency, which has been very productive."

The perception for many, though, is that Cymande completely went away; it's not



entirely true. Yes, Patterson and his partner in crime, bassist Steve Scipio, disbanded Cymande in the mid to late Seventies. Yes, Cymande probably only came to the forefront, if you could call it that, because of hip-hop. But outside of hip-hop and vintage vinyl-loving circles, Cymande was a myth — a legend, a coulda-shoulda-been that never was. But that's changing again. A 2022 documentary (rereleased in 2024), *Getting It Back: The Story of Cymande*, brought the group back to the masses, leading to more shows (including a U.S. tour in February) and the new record, which dropped at the end of January.

"We always felt the music had a life of its own," Patterson says. "We felt it had value and could sustain itself. We set out as young musicians to play music and put our thoughts and musical ideas out there, hoping they'd be appreciated. That's proved to be true. That speaks greatly to the legacy of Cymande, what we created, and what we're hoping to create going forward."

[from left] Mark Sayer,
Dan Flitcroft, Jim Camp
and Josh Gallop



Sergeant Thunderhoof

WATCH OUT THAT THESE U.K. ROCKERS' THUNDEROUS RIFFS (AND CUSTOM CABINETS) DON'T SWEEP YOU BACK TO MEDIEVAL TIMES

By Gregory Adams

▶ SERGEANT THUNDERHOOF SAY that the making of *The Ghost of Badon Hill* was an exercise in restraint, but the resultant sound is just as epic as ever.

Mark Sayer, the U.K. rockers' founding guitarist, says that following the towering gloom of their 2022 double album *The Sceptred Veil*, the veteran group felt like they needed to streamline their approach. With *The Ghost of Badon Hill*, they've achieved that in a technical sense — limiting the record to a single piece of vinyl — but still, none of its six songs of sorrow-stirring, spaciouly chorded stoner-doom sits beneath the five-minute mark; the closing gloom-swing of "Beyond the Hill" actually tops out at 10½ minutes. One major difference is that they've slimmed down on ultra-extended lead sections after hearing feedback that things had gotten "a little self-indulgent" over the years.

"We were just writing music, man," Sayer says with a laugh. "Not so much on this album, but there'd been three-minute

[instrumental] passages or solos, which were just ridiculous — and knacker to play live! It was like, 'Oof, don't stick that in the beginning of the set because that'll blow me right out of the water to start off with.'"

The Ghost of Badon Hill was recorded at the group's own Stage 2 Studios in Bath, which is operated by vocalist Daniel Flitcroft. While their frontman scripted out a concept album based on Arthurian mysticism, Sayer and co-guitarist Josh Gallop were tapping into the magic of their signature Hoof cabinets — which happened

"There'd been three-minute passages or solos, which were just ridiculous — and knacker to play live!"

to be built by their bandmate's father.

For the past decade, the elder Flitcroft has been constructing acoustically monstrous-sounding custom cabs out of resonant birch plywood. He semi-recently began retailing casings to U.K. consumers, too, but you'll have to load up your own speakers. If you want to go all-in on the Thunderhoof sound, Sayer's got his wired-up with a classic set of Celestion G12T-75s. "It's like an amphitheater inside," the guitarist says of the heft of his Hoof cab, which he hooks up to a modded JCM2000 TSL 100 and a Cort MGM-1 six-string.

Indeed, Sayer and Gallop's riffs'll blow your hair back to medieval times throughout *The Ghost of Badon Hill*, whether they're powering through swampy pull-off motifs ("The Orb of Octavia") or palm-muted metal melancholia ("Blood Moon"). Sayer further shouts out "Salvation for the Soul," the record's most tempo-juiced choogle, as "an absolute tank of a song." The leanly arpeggiated solo he cut off the cuff, though, is a bit of a sticking point with him.

"I'm a bit miffed, because I feel the end of the solo is a bit weak," he says, adding that he's since restructured its closing melody. He adds with mock-derision of printing the primordial take: "I hate that we committed to it."

INQUIRER ANDY FAIRWEATHER LOW

THE FORMER ERIC CLAPTON, ROGER WATERS AND GEORGE HARRISON SIDEMAN ON THE "WELCOME TO THE MACHINE" STRUM HE WISHES HE COULD TAKE BACK

Q: What was your very first guitar?
My first proper guitar was a Höfner Verithin that I got when I was 17 from a guitar shop I worked in — Barratts of Manchester in Cardiff, Wales. I really wanted a Futurama, though, as it was going to be my Christmas present, but I never got it; the person in our estate [who ran a Christmas savings club] embezzled the money! Because of that, I never got it. I actually own a Futurama now.

Q: What was the first song you learned to play?
"Rocket Man" by the Spotnicks [Swedish instrumental group], which I learned by ear. That song really sort of hit me. Through that song, I got introduced to the music of Chuck Berry and Jimmy Reed. And because you can play a thousand songs once you learned those little licks, it opened the door for me.

Q: What was your first gig?
I was in a band called the Firebrands, and we played the Kennard Rooms, a venue in Cardiff. We played for 30 minutes to an empty room! Our drummer was in the Boys' Brigade, so everything we did tended to have a bit of a military beat to it. But even though nobody was there, once I'd been on that stage, that was it — nothing was going to stop me.

Q: Ever had an embarrassing moment on stage?
I've had a couple of embarrassing moments, but one was with Roger Waters that happened after I'd only just joined him. It was on the *The Pros and Cons of Hitch-Hiking* tour during "Welcome to the Machine." Because it was a big setup on stage, we had to wear headphones, which involved learning the art of taking the headphones off first before you took your guitar off. I managed that no problem, but I was also playing with a jacket on, which I wasn't used to doing. And the first chord of "Welcome to the Machine" is this strum

Andy Fairweather Low performs in Oxford, England, July 9, 2022



on a 12-string. Well, I strummed, but the sleeve of the jacket and my guitar caused the strum to sound like a "blurt"! I can still see that look from Roger now. Obviously, I was forgiven — because I spent 24 years with him.

Q: What's your favorite piece of gear?
I've got a guitar made by Gordon and Robert Wells from Knight Guitars that's called a Knight Arena, and it's just fabulous.

Q: There's an emergency, and you can save/protect only one guitar. Which one would it be?
It'd be a little Gibson archtop. My mate, Micky Gee, a guitar player from Wales, who played with Shakin' Stevens and Tom Jones, found the guitar in a skip down the bay in the early Seventies. It had been in a fire, so the body was rippled a bit, but I put some strings on it and got it set up and really loved it. I offered to buy it from him because he wasn't using it; I paid £47

and told him if he ever wanted it back, he could have it back for £47. I play it all the time; it's the guitar that stays at home.

Q: When was the last time you practiced? What did you play?
I play every day and need to. I spent 26 years playing rhythm and not playing solos. I was always the guy that played that part. But ever since I went out in my own band in 2007, the wheels have been oiled when it comes to playing solos, and because of that, I need to continue to familiarize myself with it all. What I can't do, and would make me a most fabulous guitar player, is actually utilize all the things I've learned. That's where great players come from. They access all their information like that.

Q: What guitar advice would you give your younger self?
It wouldn't be about the guitar, it would be about life. I'd tell myself to enjoy it more. When I worked with Eric Clapton, not so much with Roger, I thought I was getting fired every tour, because at the end of every tour, you never knew whether you were doing the next tour. Whoever you were — and it didn't matter who you were — you never knew because in truth, Eric never knew which way it was going to go, too. So, it would be, enjoy it for goodness' sake and let it run its course!

Joe Matera

"When I worked with Eric Clapton, I thought I was getting fired every tour"

Smith/Kotzen's
Adrian Smith [left]
and Richie Kotzen



Black and White Sequel

SUPER-DUO ADRIAN SMITH AND RICHIE KOTZEN — BETTER KNOWN AS SMITH/KOTZEN — RETURN WITH *BLACK LIGHT/WHITE NOISE*, A MASTERCLASS IN MODERN ROCK

By Andrew Daly

▶ IN 2021, LONGTIME Iron Maiden guitarist Adrian Smith and nomadic virtuoso Richie Kotzen came together to form the aptly titled Smith/Kotzen, a blues-based duo showcasing the two veteran guitarists' chops and vocals. The self-titled record was a surprise hit, leading to further collaboration by way of album number two, *Black Light/White Noise*, the title of which reportedly has nothing to do with their idiosyncrasies, though Kotzen admits that "would be a really cool spin."

According to Smith, *Black Light/White Noise* is "more cohesive" than *Smith/Kotzen*, which is interesting as their process is decidedly separate — until it's not. "I tend to do guitars on my own," he says. "Richie will disappear upstairs and have a coffee, and I'll do a solo. Sometimes, Richie will come down, and I'll sit there while he plays his solos. It's quite mind-boggling what he does. I don't know how he does it. He's got endurance in his hands that's natural to him."

The light and shade throughout Smith/Kotzen's music shouldn't be surprising, as the two couldn't be more different. "I started on guitar because I wanted to be in a band and meet girls," Smith says. "Richie wanted to be a guitar player, probably because he wanted to play guitar, so his technique is very individual."

Smith and Kotzen's vibes and origins are so different that one wonders how the project works at all. But it does, and Kotzen has an idea why. "Maturity," he says. "We don't really feel like there's anything to prove in this situation. If I were playing in a straight-ahead jazz band, I might feel like I've got to convince people that I know what I'm doing. But neither of us feels that kind of desperation. We find ways to fit together; somehow, that creates a big picture that wouldn't be there had we not collaborated. I'm not going to drag Adrian into a full-blown jazz-funk-fusion jam-out. And Adrian's not going to drag me into a full-on heavy metal gallop."

"I don't think too many people do what we're doing by having two singers and two guitarists"

Q: *Black Light/White Noise* is your second record together. Has the success of the project surprised you?

ADRIAN SMITH: I had a good feeling about it and was pleasantly surprised by the success. Although this started as a [*Covid*] lockdown project, we were determined to get it out. Music isn't a given; you've got to have good music. But getting it out there, and getting it heard meant it did really well. We're thrilled about that.

RICHIE KOTZEN: I've learned not to have expectations. I don't mean to sound dark, but when you're making music, if you're doing stuff you like, at that point, you're winning. That's always been my attitude. I said to Adrian, "Let's see what we can come up with," and we hit it off and had a great time. I'm happy it's being well-received.

Q: Adrian, you're known for metal, but Richie seems to bring out your bluesy side. Would you agree?

SMITH: With [*Iron*] Maiden, Dave [*Murray*] and myself grew up playing more bluesy rock, you know? Even [*Jimi*] Hendrix was heavily rooted in the blues. But, yeah, this gives me an opportunity to do that; the songs have much more space in them, and I like that. Sometimes you don't have to play so much; it's about phrasing. I don't think too many people do what we're doing by having two singers and two guitarists. It's different.

Q: Richie, you've been all over the map in your career. What does Adrian bring out in you?

KOTZEN: I think Adrian brings out the blues in me in some weird way. He's really such a blues guy — but a lot of people don't realize that. He's known for being very →

“I think he brings me in a bluesier direction than I would if I’d been left to my own devices”



melodic, which is fantastic, and he’s hook-oriented. I think he brings me in a bluesier direction than I would if I’d been left to my own devices.

Q: That shared love for the blues aside, what’s the main overlap?

SMITH: Even though Richie’s done things in the blues space, he takes it into the stratosphere. He’s got this whole technical prowess and more of a technical background than I do. With me, it’s more about phrasing, tone and choice of notes. But it just kind of works, even though Richie is far better technically than I am. But as long as you have enough technique to express what’s in your head, it’ll get across to people.

KOTZEN: Adrian is in the greatest heavy metal band of all time. He’s a primary writer and, like I said, definitely rooted in heavy blues and the soulful rock arena. But [*Bad Company’s*] Paul Rodgers comes to mind when I hear him sing. I’m a rock guy; I make rock records. I listen to Curtis Mayfield and George Benson, yet I’m plugging a guitar into a Marshall stack.

Q: What was the process in terms of composing songs and solos for this record?

SMITH: When we first got together, we had a jam at my house and became friends. I’d sit down on my own and think, “Where do we go?” So I’d come up with an idea for a song or a riff, and I’d think, “I could see me and him doing that.” I’d take it to Richie and he’d come up with a chorus. We’d swap

vocals, and that became the blueprint for what was to be our double-vocal, double-guitar thing.

KOTZEN: Sometimes there are parts in a song where it’s obvious, and you say, “You should play over that.” But that can work either way; it can be me or him. One or the other might say, “Hey, man, go take that section. I think you’d do it better than I would.” I might say, “Adrian, do you want to see if you can make this come to life?” It’s those simple conversations that lead us into something that maybe would’ve ended up on the back burner.

Q: Do you ever feel like there’s not enough space to shine?

SMITH: No. We discuss the whole thing we’re writing, and we’ll come up with sections. The meat and potatoes of the song are the verse and chorus — and we have a little bit of fun with the instrumental bits

and split the solos up the middle. We just say to each other, “You play this bit,” but we roughly split it up 50/50.

Q: Is there a song from this record that best demonstrates who you are as a duo?

KOTZEN: That’s a good question. “Black Light” is a standout. If someone were to say, “Oh, you’re playing with Adrian? I had no idea. Let me hear the new record!” I might play that song for them. It meets in a place where it’s still funky and wacky enough to be associated with Richie Kotzen, but it’s heavy and blues-driven, so Adrian is well represented. And “Darkside” is unlike anything I might have done on my own. That’s what happens when I’m associated with something outside of my wheelhouse.

Q: Adrian, what’s the recipe for your tone while working with Richie?

SMITH: It’s pretty straightforward. In the Eighties, when I joined Maiden, I spent many years chasing tone. Something was in my head that maybe didn’t exist. It’s mostly in your fingers. As long as you’ve got a good amp and a good guitar, you should be able to dial in a sound. So I mostly used this little hand-wired Marshall that Richie had. I wanted a little extra pop, so I used a [*Ibanez*] Tube Screamer for sustain, and I always put on a little bit of delay.

Q: How about you, Richie?

KOTZEN: It’s the same room and amp we used on the first record. [*Laughs*] Actually, on the first record, we had one of my Victory amps and some other stuff — and then we went to the Marshall, my hand-wired 1959HW plexi. I have a lot of them, but there’s one in particular that we used on the album; it’s the same amp I used on *Nomad*. I just plug it in and we mess around with pedals.

Q: What have you learned from working together that you might not have learned otherwise?

KOTZEN: I’ve been recording myself since my late teens, so I don’t know if I’ve picked up any studio trickery, but through years of being in situations, I think I’ve learned “people.” The ultimate goal is to move the composition forward and make sure you’re both excited about it. It transcends well beyond just working on one album when you’re working with people in a creative environment. You have to feel good. That’s the most important thing. You have to feel good about your music. **GW**



Black Light/White Noise is out April 4.



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ELECTRO-HARMONIX

From the blistering fuzz of Jack White to the atmospheric echoes of David Gilmour and revolutionary tones of Jimi Hendrix, it's hard to overstate the influence of Mike Matthews and **EHX**

By Jacob Paul Nielsen

MIKE MATTHEWS DOESN'T play guitar. He's a businessman. Always has been, always will be. Business opened for Matthews in his hometown — the Bronx, New York — circa 1946, when he was just five years old. As a child, he'd stop at nothing in his feverish pursuit for profit, collecting golf balls from New York City sewers with a coat hanger and sneaking out to the lake to collect fishing lures during his time at summer camp.

After high school, Matthews attended Cornell University and, at the request of his father, majored in electrical engineering. A product of the Great Depression, Matthews' father insisted that he pick something that would ensure financial stability for his son. Sure enough, after graduation, IBM came knocking and offered Matthews a job. Still, his entrepreneurial spirit simmered. Matthews' schedule at IBM was flexible, and when the Rolling Stones released "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction" in 1965, that simmer turned into a boil.

Can you describe the first time you saw the need for a guitar pedal?

On the radio while I was at school for IBM, the Number 1 hit was "Satisfaction" by the Stones, and Keith Richards playing the Maestro Fuzz-Tone. Then, 10 weeks later, I went out again to another school, and "Satisfaction" was still the Number 1 song. Everybody wanted fuzz tones, but they couldn't build them fast enough. In those days, all of the music business was on 48th Street in New York City. There were about 10 music stores, different repair shops and this and that. One guy in a repair shop said to me, "I'm building these fuzz tones one at a time. You want to come in with me?"

Then I can get them out much faster." I said, okay, but then he didn't do anything and I was stuck trying to figure out how to get these fuzz tones built. So I found a contractor in Long Island City called All Instruments, and they built the fuzz tones. Meanwhile — I don't remember how or why — but Al Dronge, the president of Guild Guitars, contacted me and said he wanted to buy all the fuzz tones. He decided to call them Foxey Ladies.

I had them printed up every two or three weeks, and I'd leave IBM to pick up a few hundred of these fuzz tones at All Instruments. Then I'd drag them out to the Guild warehouse in Hoboken, New Jersey, where Guild would write me a check. After that, I'd go back to work at IBM. That's how I got started.

Was the Foxey Lady the catalyst for your friendship with Jimi Hendrix?

No, I didn't collaborate with him at all, but the first Big Muffs I made, I brought to Manny's Music on 48th Street. A few days later, Henry Goldrich [*son of founder Manny Goldrich*] told me he had sold one to Jimi Hendrix. Jimi had used the Fuzz Face on his early recordings, but he always invited me to go down to the studio, and I saw on the floor that he was using a Big Muff.

Back when I was in college during the summers, I hooked up with a place called the Highway Inn in Freeport, Long Island, and I said, "Look, let me bring in some acts. I'll promote it. I'll take the gate, and you'll have a big bar."

In those days you could buy acts real cheap. Chuck Berry, I booked him for \$1,000 a night for two nights, with the General Artists Corporation (GAC). Then that same promoter from GAC called me up and said, "Mike, I need you to take this other band.

"THE FIRST BIG MUFFS I MADE, I BROUGHT TO MANNY'S ON 48TH STREET. A FEW DAYS LATER, THEY SOLD ONE TO JIMI HENDRIX"

[counterclockwise from below] An early — and well-worn — LPB-1 Power Booster; the brand-new POG III ("It was so complex, it took four and a half years to come out," Mike Matthews says); the Small Stone phase shifter, one of the most popular EHX pedals of all time; Matthews at EHX HQ, NYC, in 2012



DAMIAN FANELLI (LPB-1) JOBY SESSIONS (MATTHEWS)

I can give them to you for three nights for \$500.” So I hired this band called Curtis Knight and the Squires. I didn’t know what the hell they were. Chuck Berry would do two shows a night and after the first show, I went in to count the gate while Curtis Knight and the Squires went on. Steve Knapp was the second guitar player backing up Chuck Berry, and he came running to me, telling me, “Hey, you got to hear this guitar player. This guy is really great. Jimmy James [an early stage name used by Jimi Hendrix] is his name.” I liked his playing.

After that, Jimi and I became friends. Every couple of weeks, while I was working at IBM, I’d take a break and go up and visit him. He was staying at a hotel in Times Square. [It was a] fleabag hotel and had no bathroom in the room. He had his hair set in these pink curlers and we would just talk band drama. I went to see him at a gig; during the break he sat down with me and said, “Mike, I gotta quit. I want to form my own band. I want to be the head writer.” I said to him, “Well, if you’re going to be the head writer, then you’ve got to sing.” He says to me, “Well, that’s the problem, Mike, I can’t sing.”

“Look at Bob Dylan,” I said. “Look at Mick Jagger. They don’t sing, but they ‘phrase’ great and people love them.” He says, “Mike, you got a point.”

What can you tell me about the beginning of Electro-Harmonix?

In early 1968, the problem was that when you pick a note on the guitar, you could easily have a circuit that builds up the amplitude and it dies out, so when you play a new note, you get all these pops and crashes because the circuit could not respond fast enough to hitting the new note. A guy at IBM recommended this circuit designer, Bob Myer, who was a big inventor for Bell Labs. I went out to Bob’s house to listen to a prototype. The prototype he built was a little box.

I says, “Bob, why do you have this box plugged in?” He says, “Well, I didn’t realize that the output of a guitar was so low, so I built a little one-transistor preamplifier to boost the signal.”

Now, in those days, back in ‘68, all amplifiers were designed to have a lot of headroom, so you’d turn an amp up to 10 and they wouldn’t distort. I took Bob’s one-transistor preamp and put on a volume control.



When you turned the volume up enough, it would get into overdrive. I started selling that [via] mail order. That was the first Electro-Harmonix product, the LPB-1 Power Booster. I sold hundreds of thousands of them throughout the years.

What philosophy has kept Electro-Harmonix so potent for more than five decades?

In the early days, I would tell the designers, “I want this,” and then they would do it. In more recent years, I would let our designers come up with different proposals. [At other companies] designers usually come up with too much stuff to stick in. This is a business, so you’ve got to get a product out. If you put in too much stuff, you never get the product out. That’s how we’ve run the last few years. Right now, we have a tremendous number of sensational circuit designers. The most senior is a guy named David Cockerell who lives in England and worked for us full time back in the mid Seventies. He’s the one that designed the Small Stone [phase shifter], which was the biggest-selling Electro-Harmonix product of all time.

Even though EHX thrives in simplicity, have you ever seen a complex product work?

Yes. I was sick for a time, and I let the engineers overdesign this product called the POG III, which we finally got out. It was so complex, it took four and a half years to come out, and we spent a fortune. But finally, POG III is out. That’s our Polyphonic Octave Generator, and it’s really sensational. We just started shipping it in November. **GW**



“THIS IS A BUSINESS – IF YOU PUT IN TOO MUCH STUFF, YOU NEVER GET THE PRODUCT OUT”



ELECTRO-HARMONIX (PEDALS)



**FIRST WITH
PRINCE**

1999
(1982)

Oneman
(1999)

**FIRST SOLO
ALBUM**



GENE SWEENEY JR./GETTY IMAGES



DEZ DICKERSON

The former member of Prince's Revolution reflects on time spent with his fellow Minneapolis musical prodigy and explains why he has no regrets about going his own way

By Joe Bosso

DURING THE MID Seventies, in and around the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and Saint Paul, the big music buzz was on Dez Dickerson. The hotshot guitarist and singer had been gigging as a pro since his high school days — his parents even wrote notes to his teachers so he could travel to out-of-town shows. “People compared me to Hendrix,” he says. “I had a power trio and I did the whole thing. I was building a following, and I was sure I was gonna make it.”

As the decade wore on, another young Minneapolis-based musician was quietly making a name for himself.

Dickerson hadn't formally crossed paths with Prince Rogers Nelson, but he was aware of him, particularly once the music press picked up on this young virtuoso musician who signed a contract with Warner Bros. Records and played every instrument on his debut album, 1978's *For You*. “The funny thing is, I was that guy a few years earlier,” Dickerson recalls. “Everything people were saying about Prince they had said about me.”

The guitarist borrowed his sister's copy of *For You*, and with youthful arrogance, and perhaps a tinge of jealousy, thought, “It's pretty good.

I could do better.” By this time, Dickerson's band Romeo was in a death spiral, and as he pondered his next move, he spotted an ad in the *Twin Cities Reader*: “Warner Bros. recording artist seeks guitarist and keyboardist.” “I knew the only person in town who had a deal with Warners was this kid Prince,” Dickerson says, “so I thought, ‘If he's gonna break big, I'm going along with him.’”

After a 15-minute audition, Prince tapped Dickerson to join his backing band, which over time would become the Revolution. It didn't take long for the band (which also included bassist André Cymone and drummer Bobby Z., as well as keyboardists Matt Fink and Gayle Chapman) to become a live powerhouse; even so, Prince treated the studio as his near-exclusive domain, and on albums like *Controversy* and *1999*, he used band members sparingly. Among Dickerson's most notable studio contributions were “1999,” on which he sang co-lead vocals, and the breakout hit “Little Red Corvette,” which featured his backing vocals and a stinging guitar solo (which he remembers as being ranked number 64 in *Guitar World*'s 100 Greatest Solos of All Time. “I thought that was pretty cool”).

Dickerson quit the Revolution in 1983 for reasons both musical and personal — amicably, he stresses. “There was never any bad blood between us.” Several years later, he relocated to Nashville, where he worked as an executive and producer for Christian music labels. “Nashville is like the town where rock 'n' roll comes to semi-retire, and I say that lovingly,” he quips. He gigs around town here and there, but more and more, music has taken the backseat to other ventures. Last summer, he accepted an invitation to host a local talk radio show, and within minutes he felt like he'd come home. “I'm definitely eyeing doing more radio,” he says. “Live radio, podcasts — it's all about performing. The same creativity I used to put into a searing guitar solo, I can put that into words at a microphone.”

It's been nine years since Prince's death, and Dickerson still finds it hard to believe that his longtime friend and onetime boss is really gone. “We would talk from time to time,” he says.

“I KNEW THE ONLY PERSON IN TOWN WHO HAD A DEAL WITH WARNERS WAS THIS

"Sometimes we'd hook up when Prince was in town. Every time we got together, it was like no time had gone by at all." He remembers their last conversation occurred three weeks before Prince's passing. "We spoke on the phone, and it was kind of strange. After we hung up, I had a weird sense about his mortality. I even remarked about it to my wife. Three weeks later, he was gone."

When you first met Prince, did you think he was going to be a star?

Actually, I didn't. [Laughs] You know, I had been doing my thing for nine years before I met Prince. I formed bands and grew an audience. Prince had been on my radar, though. I started hearing about this kid who plays all these instruments, and he's amazing.

The two of you must have hit it off when you auditioned for his band. All it took was 15 minutes.

Yeah, what happened was, I called his manager, who arranged an audition for me. Of course, Prince and everybody were two hours late. I went up to the manager and said, "I'm on my way to an out-of-town gig. Can I go first?"

And did you?

I did. Prince and the rest of the band eventually came in. André Cymone was the bass player at the time. He fell in with Bobby Z., and they started riffing. I played some rhythm stuff, and when Prince looked up and nodded, I did my thing. I felt like I said what I needed, then I went back to rhythm. It was like that for 15 minutes till I had to leave. Prince asked me to go outside to talk in the parking lot, and he asked me some amazingly career-oriented questions for a kid that young. He said, "Look, I know you've been doing your thing, but would you help me do my thing? When we get there, I will empower you and do what I can so you can do your own thing."

True to his word, he did just that. He hooked me up with management, and they got me booking agents. They put me on the road opening for this band called the Producers. Then it went to Steve Stevens, who was a big fan of mine. His girlfriend worked at Frontier Booking, so thanks to both of them I ended up on Billy Idol's *Rebel Yell* tour.

Prince [left] and Dez Dickerson on stage in Minneapolis, January 5, 1979

Did Prince ever tell you what he liked about your playing?

Not really. His whole thing was, he was kind of looking to have a band like Sly and the Family Stone — not just in how we looked, but in the musical push. It's kind of funny, because he told me and André that he wanted the three of us to be frontmen. I remember him coming to rehearsal one day, and he told me, "I want us to be like the Black Glimmer Twins. I'll be Mick and you be Keith." If you look at some of the early videos, Prince and I are singing at the same mic like Mick and Keith.

Of course, Prince was a badass guitar player. Did you have to adjust your style to fit with his playing?

In terms of rhythm parts, I had to copy what was on the records. As for leads, he loved what I did and wanted me to be me. Truth be told, he thought I was a better lead player than him at this point. There was a time when he came into the dressing room and said, "From now on, you're going to play pretty much all the leads on stage. I'm going to focus on putting the guitar down and being a frontman." He treated me as an equal.

You guys opened for the Stones in Los Angeles in 1981. That gig famously didn't go well — the crowd booed and threw stuff on stage.

Yeah, but those shows have gotten twisted out of context. We played two gigs opening for the Stones, something like 120,000 people. Statistically, they say 5 percent of any audience isn't going to like what you do.

Five percent of 120,000 equals a lot of people.

It was mostly Hell's Angels. They didn't like Prince's bikini underwear. I found out later that the Stones' audience threw things back at them — that was their way of showing their love. Prince got freaked and cut the set short. [Promoter] Bill Graham came out and started cussing people out, and they booed at him. The rock stations reported that we got booed off the stage, but that wasn't true. Anyway, we went to the dressing room and found out that Prince had gone straight to the airport. He went home and wasn't coming back. There was a day off between the shows, and Mick Jagger called Prince and asked him to come back, but

he said, "No. I'm not doing it." Then management called him, and same thing — he wouldn't do it.

Finally, management came to me and said, "Look, Prince listens to you. Will you call him?" So I did. I appealed to our manhood as a band and said, "We can't let them run us off like this. We'll never live it down." He came back and we did the second show.

Little by little, Prince started bringing band members into the studio to record. Let's talk about your "Little Red Corvette" solo. Did he give you any kind of direction for what he wanted?

Not at all. He called me up and asked me to come to his house. By this time, he had a second home with a killer studio. He played me the track and said, "Here's where the solo goes. I want you to solo here." As far as direction, he just said, "Do what you do." I did five passes and we comped them — that's what became the solo on the record.

Did you use your Vox Explorer on that track?

I had custom-made Explorers. There was a music store in town called Newt Coupe, and they built me a couple of custom Explorers from Schechter parts. That's what I played on "Little Red Corvette."

Did you and Prince sit around and talk guitars and gear? At this point, he wasn't a multi-millionaire, so I imagine he didn't have a ton of guitars yet.

He zeroed in actually on a Hohner Tele. That guitar had a sound he really liked. He wasn't really a gearhead. He'd find a couple of things that he liked and use them. He had three Boss pedals and played through a Boogie. He liked the saturated channel on the Boogie. That's about it — it wasn't about gear. We talked about the band.

Was there a pattern for how Prince played you and the band new material? Did he make elaborate demos? Did he pick up a guitar and play songs live?

Most of the time songs were recorded — it was everything from "rough roughs" to sort of board mixes he did in his studio. Sometimes he'd play me things in their early stages. When the tunes got more complete, that's when he'd get the rest of the band to learn them.



KID PRINCE, SO I THOUGHT, 'IF HE'S GONNA BREAK BIG, I'M GOING ALONG WITH HIM' "



He hadn't yet built Paisley Park.

No. Here's an interesting tidbit: When he built Paisley Park, the chief engineer had me do these guinea pig sessions. I went in for a week and did my thing so they could debug the A and B rooms. So I actually recorded at Paisley Park before Prince. [Laughs]

What exactly made you want to leave the band?

I left five years from when we started. Prince and I had a conversation... We had a lot of conversations in dressing rooms. I was feeling that we were becoming too slick; what kind of brought us to the party was being this raw, unscripted band. Now Prince wanted us to become slick and polished, more choreographed. I said to him, "This isn't what we are, and I'm just not as comfortable anymore." I wasn't

Dickerson performs at a Prince tribute show in Austin, March 17, 2017

happy, and I was becoming kind of surly on the road. Soundchecks were going on for a long time, sometimes six hours where we were

getting LinnDrum sounds.

You left before *Purple Rain* broke Prince huge worldwide.

We were rehearsing the songs. "Raspberry Beret" [from 1985's *Around the World in a Day*], we played it in soundcheck and on the bus. "Baby, I'm a Star," we hashed that out on the 1999 tour. He gave us all copies of the *Purple Rain* script, and the part that ended up being a composite of Wendy and Lisa was actually originally written as my part because I was still in the band. I was going to do the film. Actually, I'm in the film as a cameo; me and my band are doing a song called "I Want 2 B A Millionaire."

During the middle of pre-production,

I was in L.A. having meetings with A&R people. Prince called me and asked me to come home to talk. We sat down and he said, "Once this film is done, I want us to tour for at least two full years. I need you to either solidly re-up, or you can go off now and do your thing if you want to." I thought about it for a few seconds, and I was just tired. I wanted to get back out and do what I did. It didn't take much for me to decide on door number two.

No regrets about leaving, especially when you saw *Purple Rain* become a massive hit?

None. I knew it was my time. I was so grumpy... There was a soundcheck when [keyboardist] Matt Fink, who himself will admit to being the most annoying person on the planet, said something to me, and I just snapped. I grabbed a boom stand and went after him. Two crew guys stopped me, and they knew, "This guy's going to hurt him." I knew I was done. No regrets.

Prince always championed your lead playing, but he was a badass guitarist himself.

Oh yeah. What happened was, after I left the band, [guitarist] Wendy [Melvoin] technically took my place. Now, Wendy's not a lead player, so Prince kind of took that role back. I saw him grow as a guitar player during that time. He didn't have to timeshare the guitar — it was just him.

One of his greatest guitar performances was when he played the end guitar solo on "While My Guitar Gently Weeps" at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame ceremony in 2004.

That performance was kind of the culmination — now he's fully that guy.

And, of course, he was quite a showman. When he threw the guitar in the air and his tech caught it —

Which, by the way, he got that from me. I used to throw my guitar up neck first, spin it, throw it as high as I could, like, 20 feet, and my guitar tech would catch it. Everything is borrowed. Everything is recycled.

Did your guitar always wind up in your tech's hands?

I missed a couple of times. About 98 percent of the time, I did it successfully. A few times it landed and bounced. **GW**

"I WASN'T HAPPY, AND I WAS BECOMING KIND OF SURLY ON THE ROAD"

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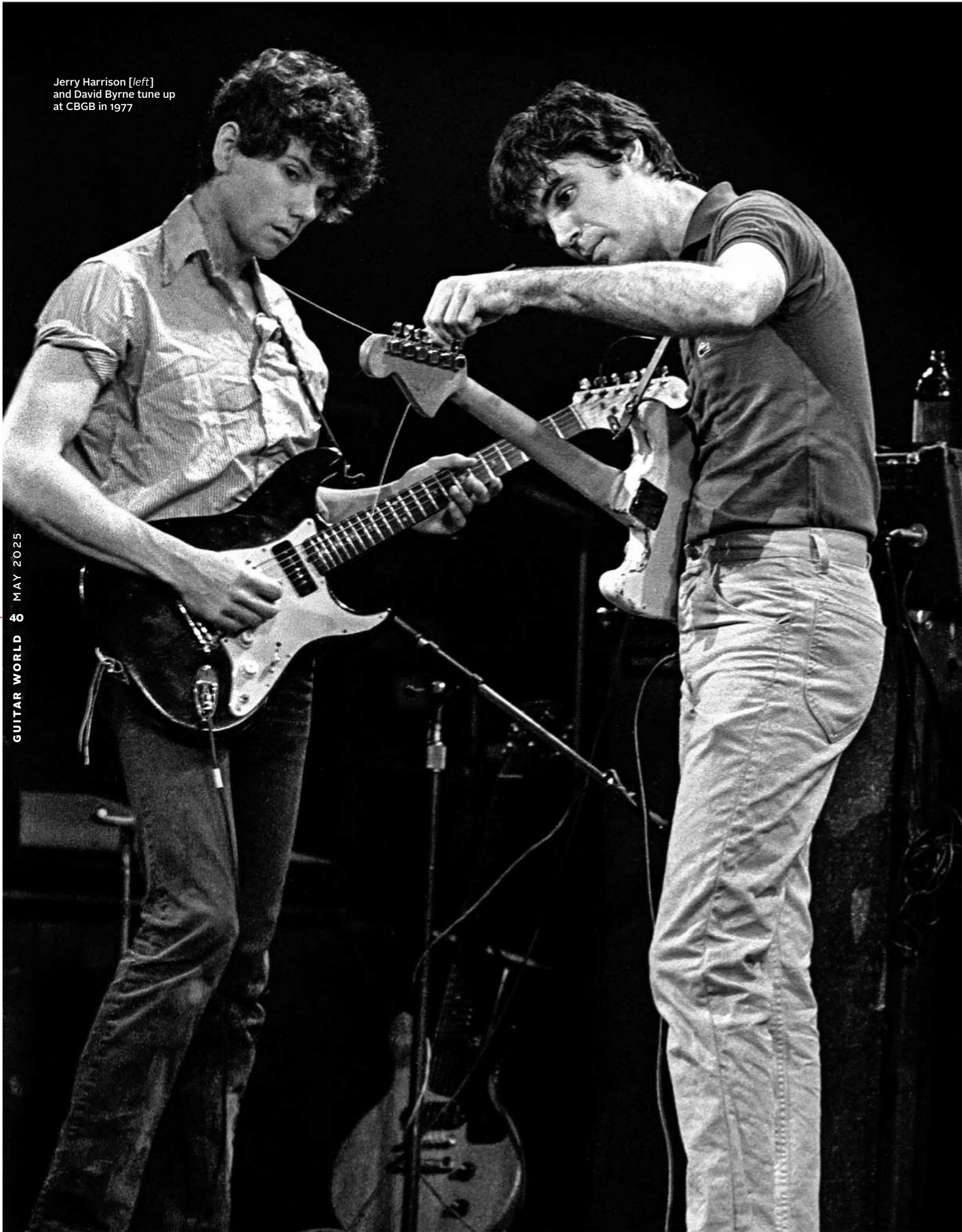
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Jerry Harrison [left]
and David Byrne tune up
at CBGB in 1977



Spirit of '77

GUITAR
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BY
HENRY
YATES

Granting a rare interview to promote **Talking Heads'** newly reissued debut album, new wave pioneer **Jerry Harrison** lives up to the name of his iconic band, holding forth on everything from the thrills of the CBGB scene to the perils of mimicking your heroes

TAKE A LATE-NIGHT walk down the street known as Bowery in New York City, stop outside the John Varvatos fashion boutique at 315, and with a little imagination, you can still hear it. The subterranean clatter of drums, the furious pelt of cheap guitars and, every few minutes, another rabble-rousing count-in ("1-2-3-4!"). Depending on the sharpness of your mind's eye, you might even see the leather and curled lips of the bands and punters flowing into the fabled CBGB club that stood on this spot in the late Seventies.

It's all gone now, of course (along with many of the greatest exponents of punk and its open-minded offspring, new →

→ wave). But you couldn't ask for a better chronicler of that cultural flashpoint than Jerry Harrison. Cutting his teeth with proto-punks the Modern Lovers, the Milwaukee-born guitarist joined the wilfully artsy, fiercely individual, genre-eluding Talking Heads just in time for their studio debut before applying his thumbprint to a catalog that took in everything from funk to Afrobeat.

Almost half a century later, as that seminal first album, *Talking Heads: 77*, is reissued as a Super Deluxe Edition including live cuts and curios, the 75-year-old guitarist still sounds staggered by his musical fearlessness as a young man.

Are you pleased with the reissue?

Very much. I'm delighting in all these different versions of the songs, and the growth of the guitar parts that David [Byrne, *frontman*] and I are playing. It's like, "Wow, there's so many different ways these songs were played." I'd kinda forgotten, because you zero in on the album version. The re-release of these records reveals this sort of growing complexity in the jam sections. Particularly on "Psycho Killer" — the ending of that song would be this long rave-up, to use some Sixties terminology.

Talking Heads recruited you shortly before that debut album. The story goes that you were intrigued — if not exactly impressed — when you saw them live.

The first time I saw them, I thought they were totally unique. But then, when I saw them again maybe six months later, I realized how brilliant it was. Then they asked me to come and try out for them. That's an amusing story. They were looking for a keyboard player. My previous band, the Modern Lovers, had sort of bankrupted me. I was really, really broke. So the only way I could get to New York to do the trial for the Talking Heads was to take a family, who were moving there, in the band van.

When we got the van full, there wasn't enough room to put the organ in. So I showed up with a guitar. They said, "We thought you were a keyboard player." And I said, "Well, I am, but let's just play some music." They lived on Chrystie Street in this funky loft, and we went out for Chinese food, came back then started playing. I wanted to enhance the way they sounded, whereas I think a lot of other people who tried out felt they should show how dextrous they were

[and show] all the things they could do.

I tried to be a light touch and listen to what Tina [Weymouth, *bass*] and David were playing, sometimes doubling or going off on a part influenced by both the bass and the guitar. And so it seemed a little more seamless. It was fun playing guitar with David, and I'm not going to say that we got to the point of [Television's] Tom Verlaine and Richard Lloyd, but we had great interplay and this kind of back-and-forth.

One thing that strikes you hearing the '77 album now is that you never played the guitar clichés. Where did that rebellious streak come from?

It's because I never learned to play guitar by trying to mimic other people. I'm also not the best person to go jam with. I don't hear licks and changes that way. If I have to go play with someone, it's like, "Give me a chord chart, let me listen to it, give me a little preparation" — because I just never made myself as facile at that.

"We shared with all the other CBGB bands this idea that we're gonna do things our own way"

I also noticed that with some guitar players from high school, the ones who had learned every lick that Eric Clapton or Jeff Beck did, if you knew those records, you recognized the solos. But the best players finally got to the point where it felt like their own. It's like when I produced Kenny Wayne Shepherd [on 1997's *Trouble Is...*]. He's obviously influenced by Stevie Ray Vaughan and studied Albert King and various other great blues players. But when I hear him, I still feel like his internal mind is coming up with the licks, and they're his at that moment. But a lot of people who spent their time learning to copy other things, they never quite escape it.

Do you recognize yourself as a guitar player on that debut album?

Well, I think I've evolved a long way from then. I mean, I can hear it all the way through the development of the records. The peak being, I would say, *Fear of Music* [1979]. When I joined

Talking Heads, I had played guitar for not that long. So yeah, I think I got to be a better and better guitar player. And a better musician all around. I mean, there's nothing like going on tour for a musician. You can sit around and practice at home, but when you play with other people, and put yourself in front of an audience, and you're seeing their feedback... whether they're wincing if someone hits a bad note, or they're totally excited, if you're sensitive to it, that feedback makes you a better player, a better singer and all of those things.

CBGB is often described as punk and new wave's ground zero.

What are your feelings about that late-Seventies scene now?

I give Hilly Kristal [CBGB owner] all the credit in the world. He was very fair. The band got the majority share of the door and he let musicians hang out there. So it drew us all together. The CBGB scene focused it. To have this one club, y'know?

At the time, the record companies were into bands like ELO, Emerson, Lake & Palmer, Yes — what I call "academy rock." Like, everybody had to go to the music academy to qualify to play in these bands. And the Modern Lovers were part of the beginning of this idea — and then of course the punk movement was the flourishing — that, 'No, we want to go back to real, straightforward rock 'n' roll. We have something to say and we're gonna say it.' It's about the energy, even the sex appeal. Nobody's playing a 15-minute solo. The Ramones are the ultimate example of this. They'd do a 30-minute set and play 16 songs, y'know? Also, with almost all the CBGB bands, there was a rejection of blues-rock. Y'know, we don't bend notes.

But it was also the fairness. Because the record companies were ignoring it, everybody was mutually supportive and excited by the bands. It's like, the Ramones, Television, Talking Heads and Blondie are the sort of pillars of that early movement. And then you have bands like the Dead Boys and Tuff Darts. Each of us were really different: different influences, different ideas about what excited the audience. But we all respected and liked each other. The minute we all got signed and were leaving New York and going on tour around the world, it became more competitive. I'm not gonna say "less friendly." But of course we weren't seeing each other every week when we were all hanging out at CBs.

What do you remember about the Talking Heads: 77 sessions at Sundragon Studios?

We had this producer who didn't understand us at all, Tony Bongiovi [*cousin of Jon Bon Jovi*]. He really understood the technical sound aspects of music, and he brought in Lance Quinn as a co-producer. Lance was also a session guitar player, and if Tony would get frustrated when we were slow to play a part, he would go, "Lance! Go play it!" But then Lance would say, "Tony, for me to play it like they do will take much longer than just getting them to play the part right." Tony would be reading magazines about airplanes. Which I think is one of the reasons why, when we met Brian Eno, we'd go, "We really want to have a producer who thinks like we do."

Lou Reed was also briefly in the frame to produce 77.

I think it would have been different. But I think Lou, at that time, would have been impatient. I'd known Lou when he was at the height of his speed addiction, when he did *Rock 'n' Roll Animal* [1974]. He gave David an interesting piece of advice, though, which was, "Wear long-sleeve shirts; no one wants to look at hairy arms." The other thing he said was, "Once you have a look, never change, because you want people to recognize you." Of course, his good friend David Bowie turned that on its head.

Journalists always struggle to put Talking Heads in a genre. What do you think?

We shared with all the other CBGB bands this idea that we're gonna do things our own way. I think that when we did "Take Me to the River" on *More Songs About Buildings and Food* [1978], everyone went, "Oh! I was trying to figure out what their influences are, but it was really R&B." That was the thing we all loved.

Even on the first record, there's the African-sounding guitar on "The Book I Read."

That side really came alive when we did "I Zimbra" on *Fear of Music*. We had all been listening to Manu Dibango and Fela Kuti. But that song almost didn't make the record because there was no singing on it. So David and I flew back from Perth to New York on this 30-hour flight to work with Eno, who came up with this idea of using dada poetry as lyrics. I think we all recognized, y'know, "Let's keep going with music like this..."



Harrison — with his '64 Strat — in action with Talking Heads in New York City circa 1977

TALKING HEADS: 77

You've always been a Fender player. What was the key guitar on that debut?

When I started playing guitar in the Modern Lovers, Jonathan Richman had switched from a Telecaster to a Jazzmaster. So he gave me his [*mid-Fifties*] Telecaster, and that was the guitar I started with. Then I bought that black '64 Stratocaster that I always used. So those were the two guitars I had for that first Talking Heads record. I also had a little Epiphone I used on "No Compassion" in an open tuning.

What are you playing these days?

I actually still have that yellow Tele and the original black Strat. I also have a Fender Custom Shop Telecaster that I put a hotter pickup on, and that's become the guitar I play when I'm with Adrian Belew. Because it's a guitar that, were someone to steal it, I could probably have it remade. I don't want to take out the ones

that go back into the ancestry. It's like you leave the guitar onstage and someone runs up and takes it. It's happened.

What amp were you plugging into for 77?

I very much followed David's lead. He was playing a Vox Super Beatle, and I got one of those. Also, by that point, I bought these used Ampeg V4s and bottoms with the 4x12s that I think both David and I used. The Talking Heads were very careful with our money, because we never wanted to be indebted to the record company — it's really essential not to do that. Later, Tina, David and I started using Gallien-Krueger, and so it was a solid-state sound, not a tube sound. And then, when Adrian joined the band, he introduced us to the Roland JC-120, and I loved the chorus on that. Nowadays, I play a Twin Reverb and I have a Deluxe that is my favorite.

Did that first album turn Talking Heads into all-conquering rock stars?

Well, it certainly didn't make us rich and famous. We would go around to the radio stations. And it was at the time when all the FM radio stations had windchimes, like [*whispering DJ voice*], "You're listening to WCOC Buffalo," y'know? And they'd go, "I've been listening to all this punk music coming out of New York and I literally can't stand it. But out of all of them, you're the one band that I can tolerate..." **GW** *Talking Heads: 77 (Super Deluxe Edition) is out now on Rhino.*



Norman Harris at his shop — Norman's Rare Guitars — circa 2017

NORMAN'S CONQUEST

Just in time for a new Netflix doc, *GW* sits down with Norman Harris — iconic owner of Tarzana, California's Norman's Rare Guitars — to discuss 50 years of sales and the birth of the vintage guitar market

BY ANDREW DALY

WHEN NORMAN HARRIS founded Norman's Rare Guitars in 1975, he had no idea that his little shop would become an institution in vintage guitars. And that's mostly because, back in the day, people didn't really care about the "vintage" concept.

"The word 'vintage' wasn't even used,"

Harris tells *Guitar World*.

That makes sense, as the beloved bursts, Strats and semi-hollows we've come to love weren't even very old; it would be like referring to your 2004 Toyota Camry as "vintage" in, say, 2023. "They were just used guitars," Harris says.

With the help of Harris, the perception of these instruments began to change.

"People think I just made up the prices," Harris says. "But it was always based on my knowledge and what I and other stores had to pay for guitars. It was always a supply-and-demand thing."

The supply and demand for vintage guitars has ebbed and flowed into a wild and crazy market where all shapes, sizes and varieties of vintage guitars fetch previously unthinkable prices online, in stores and at auction. Harris saw a business opportunity in the Seventies but didn't see any of that coming, though he did know guitars were collectible outliers. "What I have always called it is 'functional art,'" he says. "Like, a stamp or coin, you can look at it and go, 'Well, that's cool,' and look at it for 10 minutes, put it away, and that's it. But with a guitar, it makes music. Each one sounds different, plays differently and feels different. I think that's what gives them pizzazz; it's the love people have put into them."

Since imprinting himself on the guitar scene in '75, with the help of guitarist and friend Rick Vito, who penned an article for *Guitar Player* about the shop's merit in late '76, Harris's store has grown in stature. He's moved into larger spaces twice, settling into his current location on Ventura Boulevard in Tarzana, California.

Harris, who is or was beloved by customers ranging from musicians like Robbie Robertson, Joe Bonamassa and Richie Sambora, and Kiefer Sutherland to the everyday Tom, Dick and Harry, is well-known in guitar circles. Still, people don't generally care about guitar nerdery outside of that. And yet, a Netflix documentary outlining his life and exploits, *Norman's Rare Guitars*, cropped up in 2024.

Is there a shift in general views toward guitars? Do "regular" people care about guitars more than we think? Or is Norm Harris's life just that interesting? According to Devin J. Dilmore, the doc's director — and good friend of Harris's daughter, Sarah Edwards — the doc's roots were rather simple.

"Norm's daughter and I have been friends since junior high," he says. "She always praised her dad as the coolest guy on the planet with the coolest store. As time went on, his store grew and everything was blowing up, and it was always in the back of my mind, 'God, what a cool story that would be to tell.' Sure enough, Covid hit, and Norm was like, 'Okay, you could do maybe a 10-minute documentary.' I was like, 'That's not possible. Your legacy is too large.'"

Smiling, Harris says: "By the way... as far as my daughter thinking I'm the coolest guy on the planet? That's not true. [Laughs] She thinks I'm a big nerd, like every daughter."

Guitars, guitars, guitars. That's the name of the game here. Maybe America, overall,

is ready to embrace guitars as works of art as they have cars. Or perhaps, much in the same way that various fetish-driven shows on TV and the internet have, it's the nerd aspect that Harris mentioned that's fascinated viewers, enticing non-guitarists to watch a Netflix doc about a guitar-loving guy who sells guitars to the people who play them in a shop that's devoted to them.

Harris errs toward romanticism when waxing about his life's work. "There's something about a guitar," he says. "The way you can bend a string and get a vibrato is almost like a human voice. It's a lot easier to sell something when you really love it. You're telling someone why it's really good rather than just throwing a sales pitch at someone you don't care about."

To that end, the greatest achievement of Norm Harris, and the documentary about his life and work, isn't the number of guitars he's sold. "It's how many hearts he's touched, including mine," Dilmore says. "Every single person I've talked to loves him to death. He's everybody's favorite person. That was really comforting to me. I knew I was doing something right. It's about the music, the guitars and, of course, telling [about] a man's legacy, hard work and giving love to everybody. That's a really important element and factor — being human."

Harris is indeed human. In 2022, while filming the documentary, Harris announced he had been diagnosed with a rare form of cancer, appendiceal neoplasms. For those keeping score, it really is rare, accounting for less than 1 percent of all cancers. But Harris fought through it, bucking the odds, and returned to his post at his shop with no endgame in sight.

"The documentary is a combination," Harris says. "It's kind of a love story, a family story and a small-business story. It has a lot of heart."

"He's authentic," Dilmore adds. "He doesn't beat around the bush. He cares about the people and the guitars they're going to bring home. People identify with him. Everybody that comes in here loves guitars, so there's that aspect. But there's this kind-hearted man who wants to sell you the right guitar for the right job. The biggest thing I learned is that the guitar community is connected through music and connecting on a level where you can put everything aside except the love for the guitar. There's something to be said for that. Norm has touched people's hearts and makes them smile."

Norm, the documentary shows you to be a pretty humble guy. What were your initial thoughts about making a full-tilt documentary about your life and career?

Originally, it was just supposed to be



Harris in the business end of his shop with a Gibson SG signed by Tom Petty

something to show my grandkids [about] what I'd done. My daughter wanted to show the kids what their granddad had done, so I told her, "Listen, if we do something, I don't want you to start calling all my customers and bothering them..." And she basically did what a lot of daughters do and said, "Dad, shut up. I got it from here." [Laughs] It just kind of blew up into something.

Has this doc given you a minute to step back and take in your journey like never before?

When you're in the middle of doing stuff, you just do it; you don't really think about it. But it's great to be able to look back at it in

this context. Seeing the documentary helped me relive a lot of memories.

Without seeing the documentary, were you wholly aware of you and your shop's importance in the guitar scene and culture?

It happened gradually. And every time I think of myself as anything more important, I just say something to my wife, and she tells me to go take out the garbage. [Laughs] She lets me have it. There's no way I could think anything too good because she kind of chops me down a bit. [Laughs]

You had a lot of guitarists come out to talk about the shop, but one that stuck out for different reasons was Rick Vito, who wrote about Norman's in *Guitar Player's* December 1976 issue, which features Robbie Robertson on the cover.

I had a band with Rick for two years in L.A. called the Angel City Rhythm Band. So we'd put a band together, and he was there at the store early on. He knew the whole story, and he said, "Maybe [Guitar Player] would be interested in something..." He thought it was interesting because this was before people were really considering buying guitars as investments. This was 1976, and that was just starting to come around. At the time, a sunburst Les Paul was like \$2,500!

“Every time I think of myself as anything more important, I say something to my wife, and she tells me to go take out the garbage”



[this page page facing]
Norman Harris throughout
the decades (mostly the
Seventies and/or Eighties)
with some of the guitars and
guitarists — including Tom
Petty [bottom left] — that have
passed through his shop



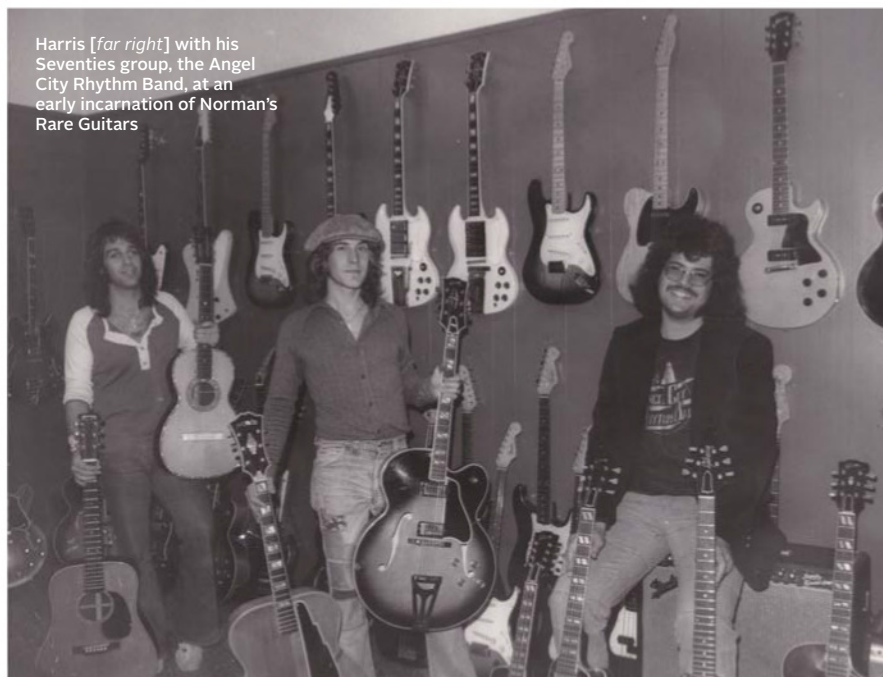
Was it tough to get Robbie Robertson – to whom had you supplied guitars for *The Last Waltz* and, like yourself, was suffering from cancer – to participate?

We were lucky to get Robbie. He said, “Look, I’m not really doing this kind of thing or any other interviews right now, but for you, I’ll do it.” He was keeping it under his belt; he wasn’t telling a lot of people what was going on with him. The people I’ve met are so nice. They really are just regular folks. A lot of people think of them as icons, but they’re just people, and they

“

They made some spectacular guitars. It’s one of the things we did in America that is super iconic and outstanding

”



Harris [far right] with his
Seventies group, the Angel
City Rhythm Band, at an
early incarnation of Norman’s
Rare Guitars

understand it’s just the way things happen. I was kind of blown away that we didn’t have people going, “No, I’m too busy.”

Also of note is Joe Bonamassa, who isn’t just a guitar collector but seems to be deeply woven into the fabric – and maybe even the future – of the store. How did you two meet?

I met Joe when he was around 12. He came out to L.A. to do something for a show, and he was just like this wunderkind. He went into a couple of stores in Hollywood, and one store where he picked up a vintage guitar told him to leave. But some guy in that store heard him play and said, “You might want to go check this guy out in the Valley. This guy called Norm will let you play his stuff.” That’s when we first bonded.

You mentioned that when you started, people

didn’t see vintage guitars as investments. When did that change?

I wasn’t the only person doing stuff back in the day. There was George Gruhn in Nashville and Mandolin Brothers in Staten Island, New York, so there were only about three or four stores in the U.S. There was no internet, so there were a lot of phone calls between me and other dealers, all going, “What are you getting for this? What are you getting for that? What did you pay for that?” The information slowly seeped out, and then, once the internet came, everyone had access to everything.

A few shops were doing it, but yours seemed to stand out.

A lot of times, when you’re doing business, you just keep your head down and do what you do. I don’t think too much about that.



It's hard to think about, but now that I see the documentary, it makes me feel good to know I did something that had some kind of importance to some folks.

If there wasn't a great demand for vintage guitars as collector pieces, why did you center your business around them?

I came out here to be a musician. I realized that when I told somebody I was holding a Gibson, Martin or Fender... when I showed it to somebody, I could say, "This thing is really great." But when I was trying to promote my music, I knew what I didn't like about it. It was hard for me to keep a straight face about it. I realized I was better at selling something I really believed in.

Why did people fall in love with vintage guitars?

They made some spectacular guitars. It's one of the things we did in America that is super iconic and outstanding. I mean... a lot of the cars they built in the late Sixties and Seventies have become trash heaps, but these guitars have stood the test of time. There's a continuous demand, and they're very durable and pretty low maintenance if they're kept well.

You're obviously biased, but is there any substitute for a good vintage guitar – and how do you view modern American guitars comparatively?

They're now making some of the best guitars they've made in 50 or 60 years. But there's a reason a lot of stuff is reissued: they really nailed it the first time out. Companies realized they were selling guitars for \$2,000 and that people were paying more than \$5,000 for the old ones. A light bulb went off, and the companies realized they must have been doing something good and thought, "What can we do to kind of compete with ourselves?"

Regardless of whether Norm's helped fuel the vintage guitar boom, the shop's rise coincided with the rise in interest in vintage guitars. Does that even matter, meaning, would you have had success in that era?

I think it was the perfect time. The prices →

Norm's Five Most Memorable Guitars

1959 Gibson J-200 "Phil Everly"

I have one guitar that means an awful lot, which is a Phil Everly J-200 that was used on *The Ed Sullivan Show* and *The Dick Clark Show*. It's one of the most photographed guitars the Everly Brothers used in their prime – and this was before the Phil Everly model. It's what I call "Exorcist Green," which is like a white-green, like pea soup, though it photographed like a blonde guitar on black-and-white TV, sort of like Gibson's TV Yellow. I got it from a guy who played with the Everly Brothers. It's one of the most important pieces of memorabilia I've ever seen.

1958 Fender Rosewood Neck Stratocaster

I had one Strat, a '58, but it was Desert Sand with a gold pickguard and an all-rosewood neck. It was like a predecessor to the all-rosewood Telecaster and a one-of-a-kind. The guy who owned it actually had a TV show in L.A., and he was friends with Leo Fender and said he wanted something that would look good on black-and-white TV. Leo made it with a rosewood neck – which showed up really dark – and the Desert Sand finish with the gold guard, which showed up kind of blondish.

George Harrison's Gretsch Country Gentleman

I got this one Country Gentleman, the one he's probably most famous for – but I didn't think anybody would believe I actually got it from George. This was way back before I was known by anybody; I figured I'd be almost embarrassed to tell somebody because they'd call me a liar. I should have just said, "Well, I'll take a picture," you know? I remember I kept looking at George; I had to do a double take. I was amazed I was sitting right next to him. The Beatles were a different category of everything. They're the highest... you could put all the celebrities in the world together; nothing is equal to a Beatle.



INTERVIEW 47 NORMAN HARRIS

Pre-War Martin D-45s

I had some of these in storage, and I sold one to Marty Stuart years ago. For guitars, it's kind of like a hotel here. They come in, stay and go. I've got to be practical about it and be a businessman, you know? There were so many things I should have kept, but having to pay rent and having a payroll... you've got to think in terms of how you're going to pay your bills. You kind of attach yourself to this stuff – and I did for many years – but my wife is usually the one to slap me into consciousness about that stuff.

John Fogerty's 1969 Rickenbacker 325

This guitar was actually a centerfold for *GW* many years ago. It just so happened that John's road manager, roadie or whatever you want to call it, had given the guitar to this guy, and it was the *GW* centerfold, and the guy was going to sell the guitar. So my friend with *GW* called me and said, "Hey, you might want to buy this guitar." I ended up buying it, and it was one of the more important guitars. It was used on *The Ed Sullivan Show*, like a John Lennon model, but it was Fireglo, and [Fogerty] had put a humbucking pickup in it and taken the Rickenbacker nameplate off the headstock. I ended up buying the guitar, and years later, I decided I was going to sell it. I was asking a certain price, I think about \$90,000, and John came in with his wife and was interested. He was interested in doing something but said, "You know what? I gave the guitar away. I feel stupid buying it." I said, "Well, you can have it for 40 [thousand]," and he just said, "I don't feel good about buying it and spending all this money." So he didn't buy it from me. I sold it to Gary's Classic Guitars, and he paid 90 [thousand], I think, for it. And then, John's wife decided she wanted to buy it for him. I'm not sure what she paid Gary, but I'm sure it was more than 90! – ANDREW DALY



DAVID FARRELL/REDFERNS, DENISE TRUSCELLO/GETTY IMAGES



Joe Bonamassa performs as part of a Norman's Rare Guitars benefit show in Studio City, California, September 8, 2024

of instruments were way down, and they were affordable. There wasn't as much information out there, so I supplied a lot of information to a lot of books about vintage guitars. Back then, the only way you could find something out was by asking questions, seeing original guitars and using them as a template. I played, felt and heard enough old guitars that I got used to what they were compared to new guitars, so people writing books called me for information, and I gave it. So would George Gruhn. That's how all the stuff that you now see on the internet came about.

To that end, the documentary is important because it shines a light on the importance of guitar shops on American culture.

Small businesses, in general, have a lot of

“

They came from somewhere, and a lot of times, these guitars are the inspiration that got people to write these songs

”

problems, trials and tribulations that you have to deal with. Even though it's guitar, it could apply to a lot of other businesses in other fields, too. The one thing about my store, which is very interesting, is that in my business, with old guitars, if I don't sell through my merchandise, it's a good thing.

Is that because of the perpetual increase in the value of vintage guitars?

Yes. A lot of times, if this stuff doesn't sell — and some of it I've had for years — it's worth that much more, you know? With clothing, by the end of the season, you want to get rid of everything you have so you're not stuck with last year's model. But with antique and collectible guitars, the blessing of the business is that it's the opposite. Fortunately, I had a good eye for clean, original stuff, and I stashed a lot of things away that I thought I'd never see again.

Obviously, the shop is how you've made money, but it's also become a legacy. What do guitars mean to you now?

I love my product. But if I were selling plumbing supplies, it would probably be a different feeling. [Laughs] With guitars, each one of them provides a sound and playability for all different reasons, you

know? We have guitars in all different price ranges for a lot of people, so it's an opportunity for somebody to get something that can get the music they hear in their heads out. They can make music with these things and write and create songs.

It must make you feel good to know that guitars you've sold are played on stages across the world and have been featured on songs we hear on the radio. You've helped give a second life to a lot of vintage instruments.

I don't know how many hit songs were written on guitars I've sold... but that makes me feel really good that I did something that provided music and joy for a lot of people. They came from somewhere, and a lot of times, these guitars are the inspiration that got people to write these songs. Man, I love what my product is.

At the end of the doc, it was clear that while you're getting older, there's no exit strategy for you when it comes to the shop. Has that changed?

I think about it all the time. I would love for somebody to take it over who loves it as much as I do, keep my employees and try to run it in the same fashion that I tried to. It's grown to become much bigger than it was; it's really hard for me to think about.

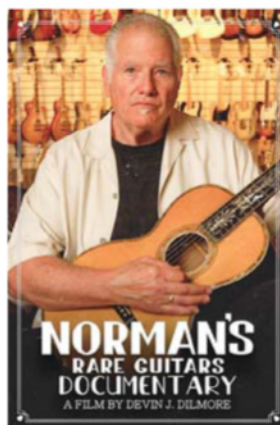
So, you don't want to stop, even though you know you'll eventually have to.

I'd like to do it until I can't do it, which is probably getting pretty near. I've had health scares, and I'm lucky I'm here at all right now. But like anybody who wants to be in the business they love, you get up in the morning, go to work and don't dread it. If you hate what you do, you go, “Oh, no, I have to go do this,” but I'm still excited to go in, even at my age.

Circling back to Joe Bonamassa, the insinuation was that he might be that person who could take over Norm's and run it as you do. Have you discussed that with Joe?

We've talked a little bit, but Joe has such a big career going right now that there's

nothing that should interrupt his career. If he wasn't doing what he's doing, he'd be a natural fit. He loves guitars, can play great and demo them great. He lives to promote young talent like I do. We've had a lot of young, undiscovered players and journeymen who really need more exposure, and because of our platform, we can expose a lot of these people to the public. Joe feels the same way about it. **GW**





TAKING THE PAST INTO THE FUTURE

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incredible dynamics, harmonics and string
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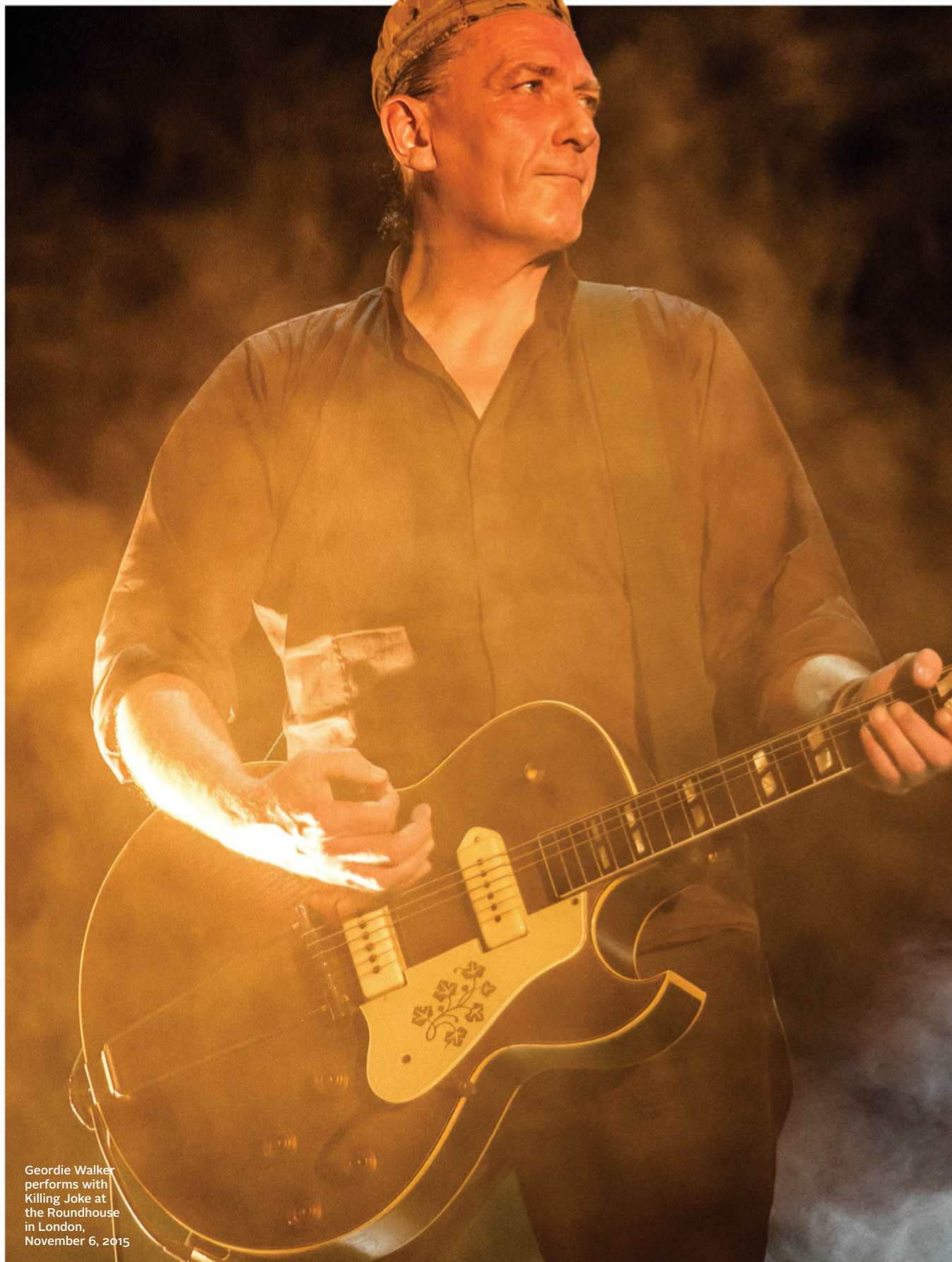
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Geordie Walker performs with Killing Joke at the Roundhouse in London, November 6, 2015

LORNE THOMSON/REDFERNS

REQUIEM FOR Geordie Walker

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF A TRUE LIGHTBRINGER, KILLING JOKE'S ONE AND ONLY GUITARIST

BY CHRIS GILL

4 GEORDIE WALKER, KNOWN for his steadfast role as the guitarist for Killing Joke throughout the band's entire existence from 1979 until his death in 2023, was far from a household name in the shallow, fickle world of pop music and rock 'n' roll fandom. Hell, his name barely seems to register within the greater guitar player community except among a discerning and knowing few.

However, his impact, influence and respect is much more far-reaching than most guitarists realize, spanning several generations of players. Jeff Beck, Metallica, Foo Fighters, Helmet, Fear Factory and Prong recorded covers of Killing Joke songs. Jimmy Page was a huge fan. Tool, Soundgarden, industrial titans Trent Reznor and Al Jourgensen, neo-psychedelic icons guitarist Kevin Shields (My Bloody Valentine) and singer Tim Burgess (Charlatans) and numerous others all sang his praises and acknowledged the impact that Geordie's massive sound had on their own music. Kurt Cobain borrowed heavily from him (and admitted it).

During his life, Geordie recorded 15 studio albums with Killing Joke and one album each with the side projects Murder

Inc. and the Damage Manual. Beyond a few non-album tracks recorded for EPs and singles and a multitude of official and non-official live albums, that was pretty much it for his recorded output. But every single one of them is completely worth a listen. The closest Killing Joke ever got to mainstream acceptance was their 1985 album *Night Time*, which was certified Gold in the U.K., where singles from that album also enjoyed some success on the charts.

But like Brian Eno's alleged quote that "the first Velvet Underground album only sold 10,000 copies, but everyone who bought it formed a band" or the Sex Pistols' fabled 1976 Manchester gig attended by only about 30 people, but most of those people later formed the Buzzcocks, the Fall, Joy Division, Simply Red and the Smiths and started Factory Records, Killing

Joke had a much more far-reaching creative impact on musicians who heard the band, loved it and were motivated to make their own music. Killing Joke, and especially Geordie's powerful riffs and symphonic rhythm textures, greatly inspired the sounds of dozens, if not hundreds, of industrial, goth, tribal, post-punk, alternative metal, grunge and numerous other bands of genres that defy the status quo.

Geordie's name rarely, if ever, appeared on guitar or music magazines' "best guitarists" lists, but that doesn't mean he wasn't highly influential or important. He rarely played guitar solos, and the ones that he did were mostly rhythmic and melodic. He wasn't a technical virtuoso in the traditional sense. He wasn't a shredder.

However, Geordie possessed something much more uncommon — a sound, style and imagination that were truly inimitable. From his uncommon rig that paired a vintage hollowbody with rare amps and obscure studio processors to the way he summoned dense, lush soundscapes and washes of dissonance from that gear, Geordie was truly one of a kind. Many players tried in vain to copy him, and at best the most persistent only managed to ➔

**"GEORDIE POSSESSED
SOMETHING UNCOMMON
— A SOUND, STYLE AND
IMAGINATION THAT WERE
TRULY INIMITABLE"**

Killing Joke in Camden, London, July 2, 1982; [from left] Jaz Coleman, Paul Ferguson, Paul Raven and Geordie Walker



stumble across their own distinctive sounds in the process. But isn't that the way it should always be?

The following is *Guitar World's* belated and long-overdue tribute to the iconic (in the true definition of the word, not the watered-down current social media usage) guitarist Geordie Walker. Honestly, the words here can't do him full justice. You'll need to listen to a good solid chunk of his work to fully grasp that, and we hope that this article inspires you to do so. And if you do, turn it up loud.

A NEW DAY

Kevin Walker was born December 18, 1958, in Chester-le-Street, County Durham, a small market town in northeastern England about 10 miles south of Newcastle upon Tyne. His father, Ronald, was a woodworker, and his mother, Mary, was a bookkeeper. He was the couple's only child.

A few years later his family moved about 200 miles south to Bletchley, only a short distance from the Marshall amplifier

factory in Milton Keynes. While attending Sir Herbert Leon Academy, his classmates nicknamed him "Geordie" — a common nickname for people from the Newcastle area — thanks to his thick Northeastern English accent and dialect that he had throughout his life.

Geordie told Brad Angle that he came from "a music-lover family" in a 2016 *Guitar World* article. "My maternal grandmother was apparently really good on the piano and learned it all by ear. The radio was always on in the house as I was growing up. The first song that I heard that really got me into the guitar was a band called Love Sculpture. The guitarist was Dave Edmunds and the song was 'Sabre

**"HIS GUITAR FILLED
A WIDER SOUNDSCAPE
AND SOUNDED UTTERLY
SYMPHONIC"**

Dance' [a cover of a piece by Russian classical composer Aram Khachaturian that became a hit in 1968]. Every time it came on the radio I would dive across the room and turn it up full." Geordie further caught the musical bug in the late Sixties when his mother took him to a concert where he saw Desmond Dekker and the Aces perform.

At first he started playing keyboards but soon switched to guitar. "When I was 15, my mum bought me a Les Paul, a real one," he told me in June 1994. "It was an early Seventies Deluxe, with a cherry sunburst finish and mini humbuckers. I replaced those with P90s the first chance I got. Later after I got a couple of real jobs, I saved my money and also bought an SG Junior."

After graduating from secondary school in 1977, Geordie moved further south to London to pursue a degree in architecture at a university. Here he became swept up in the punk scene at its early peak and attended numerous shows. He was particularly inspired by the playing of Siouxsie and the Banshees guitarist John

McKay, and he became determined to join or form his first band.

TOMORROW'S WORLD

In late 1978, Geordie saw an ad in the music publication *Melody Maker* that read, "Bass, lead, to tell the killing joke, we mean it man! Total exploitation, no information, anonymity."

"It looked rather serious, fanatical," he told Max Kay in a 1984 interview with *Music UK*. "I liked the sound of it. I don't know what it was but it clicked with me. I went down to see this guy [*Killing Joke* founder/singer Jaz Coleman] and immediately started arguing with him about his taste in music. I kept hassling them [*Jaz* and drummer Paul Ferguson] for some reason."

"This guy kept calling saying, 'I've never been in a band before, but I'm the best guitarist ever,'" Coleman told James Gill in a 2013 *Metal Hammer* interview. "I couldn't get rid of him, so at last I said, 'Alright, come 'round.' Geordie moved in three weeks before I actually heard him play. When he did it was like a fire from heaven."

Geordie, Coleman, Ferguson and bassist Youth [*Martin Glover*] formed Killing Joke in June 1979 and played their first show and recorded their first EP, *Turn to Red*, in August, which they released in October on their own Malicious Damage record label. The songs they recorded combined distinctive dub-inspired soundscapes and driving post-punk rhythms.

About a full year later in 1980, the band released its self-titled debut album, *Killing Joke*. The evolution of the band within a year's time was astonishing. The music was frantic, gripping and completely unlike anything else on the scene at the time. The first song on the album, "Requiem," was a bold statement of intent that built the foundation for the band's entire career in a taut three minutes and 45 seconds. It remained a consistent fixture of Killing Joke's live shows. "Wardance" and "The Wait" — the latter covered by Metallica on their 1987 *Garage Days Re-Visited* EP — were also standout tracks, but truthfully the entire album is killer. In one fell swoop, it became an instant blueprint for metal-inspired industrial and progressive thrash styles that followed. Geordie's guitar tones on the album were abrasive and metallic, and when his riffs locked with Youth's deep dub bass they sounded gigantic.

Killing Joke's follow-up 1981 album, *What's THIS For...!*, expanded the band's sound with its tribal-meets-death-disco rhythms and Geordie's increasingly dissonant textures. "Follow the Leaders" was a minor breakthrough success in the

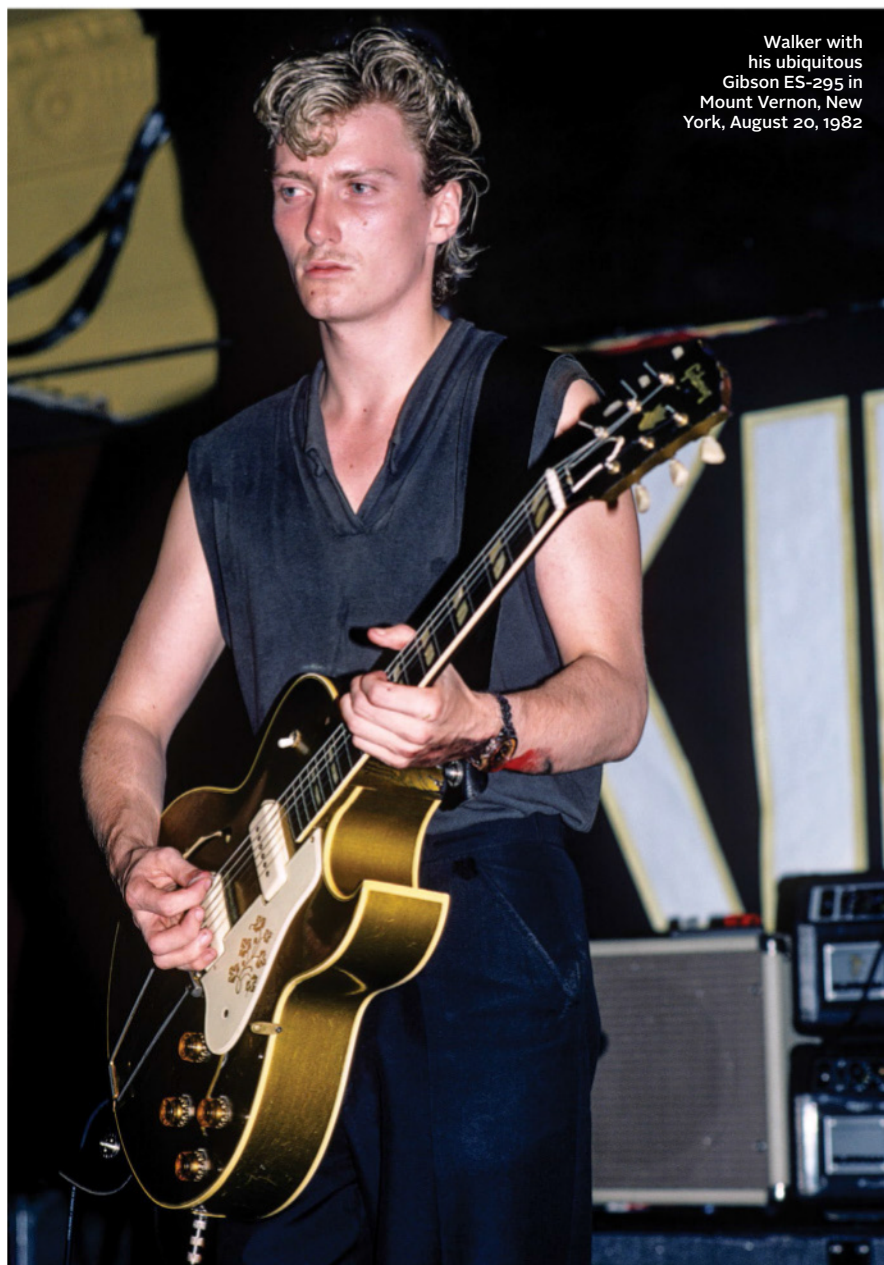
United States, receiving generous airplay on alternative/modern rock radio stations and reaching Number 25 on the *Billboard* Hot Dance Club Songs chart. To this day, it remains a surefire way to get sullen goths up off the floor and shaking their black linen-clad booty.

Geordie further refined and expanded his heavily modulated, textural guitar tones on 1982's *Revelations*. His guitar filled a wider soundscape and sounded utterly symphonic on large stretches of the album, but that would ultimately lead him to replace the Les Paul Deluxe that was his main instrument during this era.

The Les Paul Deluxe was Geordie's main guitar on Killing Joke's first three albums, but as his sound became more textured

and varied, he became increasingly frustrated with it. "I wanted a distorted sound while still being able to hear the notes if I played a complex chord," he told *Guitar World* in 2016. "So the idea was that I should get a semi-acoustic distorted sound, put a contact mic in it and blend the two sounds. But then I found that [*Gibson ES-295 goldtop hollowbody*] in a little store in West London for £640, which at the time was like \$1,000. As soon as I plugged it in, there was the sound!"

Plugged into a pair of Burman Pro 2000 heads (an obscure amp manufactured in Newcastle during the late Seventies through the early Eighties) each driving custom-made Burman 8x10 speaker cabinets, an Electro-Harmonix Deluxe →



Walker with his ubiquitous Gibson ES-295 in Mount Vernon, New York, August 20, 1982

EBET ROBERTS/REDFERNS



Walker [left] and Jaz Coleman at Riot Fest in Chicago, September 15, 2018

Memory Man delay and a pair of PA:CE/Bell Electrolabs ADT units, the ES-295, strung with heavy-gauge strings and tuned down a full step or more, took Geordie's wall of sound to a new level of unique character. The vintage 1952 goldtop hollowbody remained his main guitar from that point onwards.

EIGHTIES

Fire Dances was the first Killing Joke album to feature Geordie's newly expanded and highly characteristic resonant, reverberant sound, and it was also the first to feature the growling, gritty bass lines of Paul Raven, who had replaced Youth. E.G. Records had also signed the band, expanding Killing Joke's distribution and marketing/promotional efforts. *Fire Dances* was generally well received by fans and critics alike, but it was primarily an appetizer for the dazzling main course that followed, the 1985 album *Night Time*.

This was the album that should have pushed Killing Joke into mainstream success, but underneath the elegant melodies, cinematic guitar soundscapes and pounding rhythms was a subversive edge that made neon polyester-clad Reagan youth and John Hughes wannabe-movie

extras' skin crawl. The hauntingly beautiful "Love Like Blood" was Killing Joke's biggest hit and deservedly so, thanks to Jaz's brilliant melody and Geordie's chilling, endlessly chiming arpeggios. "Kings and Queens" with its dramatic, building riff was as elegantly powerful, and the violent, pile-driving "Eighties" became the unofficial anthem of pissed-off disaffected youth during the "just say no" era. The latter was an even bigger hit than "Follow the Leaders" ever was with modern rock radio.

Unfortunately, Killing Joke lost much of the bitterness and bite on their next two albums, *Brighter Than a Thousand Suns* (1986) and *Outside the Gate* (1988). Both albums seemed to be bids by the band to chase pop stardom as they softened their sound. Geordie's guitar was pulled back in the mix, and keyboard parts became more dominant. But while these efforts are disappointing when compared to Killing Joke's earlier work, they still were miles better than much of the slickly over-produced synth-pop and brain-dead glam metal that was prevalent at the time.

Killing Joke's comeback in 1990 with their *Extremities*, *Dirt* and *Various Repressed Emotions* was vicious, brutal

and brilliant. The band was pissed off at the music industry (E.G. had dropped them, so they signed with a German independent label) and the sorry state of the world. When Killing Joke entered the studio in August 1990, the Gulf War had just broken out, which inspired the dark and violent apocalyptic overtones.

Drummer Martin Atkins (Public Image Limited, Pigface) had recently joined the band, giving Killing Joke added punch and precision in the rhythm department. Geordie's tones were gargantuan, washed in thick reverb, but the notes were astonishingly clear and deliberate. The guitarist said that Revelations producer Connie Plank compared his guitar sound to hearing music on the radio during World War II. "When they played classical music on the radio," he told *Uncut*'s Peter Watts, "if you turned it up full, that was the sound I made, that dissonance. It was the best compliment I've ever had."

That description is a perfect fit for the orchestral magnificence of Geordie's playing on *Extremities*, Killing Joke's most overlooked and underrated effort. Journalists often described his sound as "multi-layered," but in truth his parts were usually single tracks with relatively few

overdubs, if any. His guitar tone was simply that big.

MILLENNIUM

What should have been a triumphant return to form unfortunately turned into an abrupt ending, albeit a temporary one. Coleman moved to New Zealand and started composing classical music. Geordie wandered into various projects, recording an album with Faith No More that ended with him erasing his parts and departing with a sizable paycheck and forming the side project Murder Inc. with both Atkins and Ferguson on drums, Raven on bass, vocalist/guitarist Chris Connelly and keyboardist/sample jockey John Bechdel. Geordie had also gotten married to Ginny Kiraly, and after their son Atticus was born in 1992 they settled in the suburbs of Detroit.

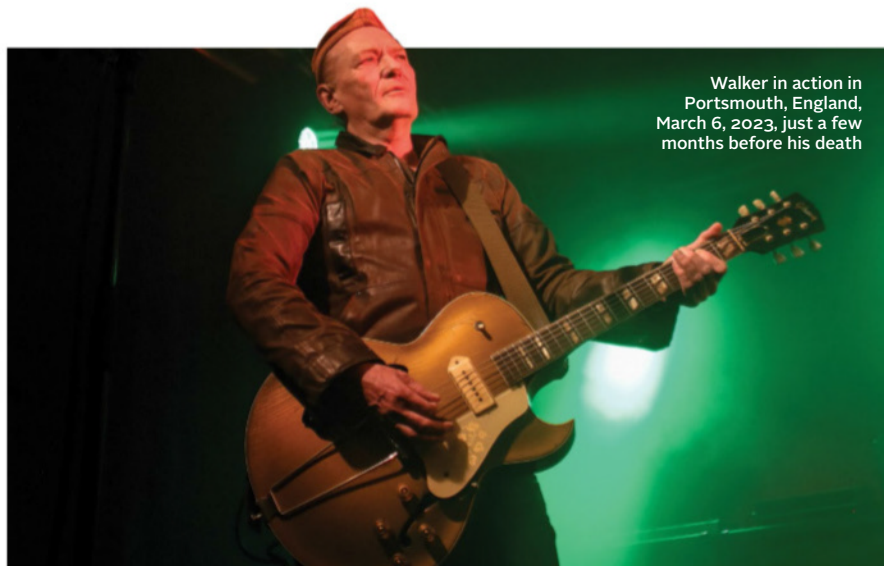
"The wife wanted to be back with family and friends," he told me in 1994. "We had lived in Italy and England, but after she carried our son for nine months I thought, 'Well, it's your agenda, dear. Whatever you'd like.' It's cool to raise a family, but not in Detroit, sir. No one lives in Detroit. It's the only city where you fly in at night and it gets dark as you fly over the center of town. It's grim. It's dangerous, but that's how I like it."

After a four-year hiatus, Killing Joke reunited with the original lineup featuring Youth and Ferguson, while Raven joined Prong. This resulted in the recording of the 1994 *Pandemonium* album, overwhelmingly hailed as yet another return to form. Coleman had become increasingly inspired by Middle Eastern music, and the album delivers a compelling blend of ethnic, electronic, metal and industrial styles — some vocal and string tracks were even recorded in the King's Chamber of the Great Pyramid of Giza in Egypt.

Geordie's guitar sound went through a radical shift as he adopted the tight, precise high-gain distortion tones of thrash metal in tight lockstep with Youth's basslines while dialing back the chiming, chorus-like textures that had become his signature sound.

"I plugged my 295 into a noise gate and cranked it right up," he said. "The sound was fucking solid. Youth told me to get out my Les Paul again, so I used that on the album too. It's on 'Pandemonium' and 'Millennium,' which sounds extra tight and tough because we had two Swedish guys sampling my riff, tightening it up. It's still my riff though, innit?"

While Killing Joke were making *Pandemonium*, they became involved in a bit of controversy when someone pointed



Walker in action in Portsmouth, England, March 6, 2023, just a few months before his death

"GEORDIE'S SOUND SEEMED TO GROW EVEN MORE VIOLENT AND POWERFUL OVER TIME"

out to them that the main riff in Nirvana's "Come As You Are" more than slightly resembled Geordie's riff on "Eighties." "Kurt Cobain is a bloody good songwriter," Geordie told *Guitarist* magazine at the time, "but he is a complete plagiarist."

Cobain initially denied the incident, saying that he had never even heard of Killing Joke. However, when Geordie mentioned that the band had received a Christmas card signed by all of the members of Nirvana, Cobain admitted the inspiration. [*Many have noted both songs' resemblance to "Life Goes On" by the Damned, released in 1982, but that's a matter for another day.*] Killing Joke never actually formally complained about the plagiarism, and it became a moot point when Cobain committed suicide in 1994.

It became even more of a moot point when ex-Nirvana drummer Dave Grohl offered to play drums on the entirety of Killing Joke's 2003 self-titled follow-up to 1996's *Democracy*. Produced by Gang of Four guitarist Andy Gill, the 2003 album was redundantly hailed as yet another comeback for the band — even though they never truly went away. If anything, the 2003 album was a continuation of the *Pandemonium* album, with a new version of "Seeing Red" also bringing things back full circle to the band's first EP release.

From there on out, Killing Joke went from strength to strength, releasing the albums *Hosannas from the Basements of*

Hell (2006, an ideal bookend to *Extremities* sharing a similarly dark dense sound and apocalyptic outlook), *Absolute Dissent* (2010), *MMXII* (2012) and their final studio full-length effort, *Pylon* (2015). Geordie's sound seemed to grow even more violent and powerful over time as he continued to refine and expand his vision. His rig remained pretty consistent throughout, although Marshall and Framus heads and THD amps periodically appeared on stage when it became too risky to take his Burmans on the road and random Framus hollowbodies occasionally appeared as well. Geordie's final recorded performance is heard on the *Lord of Chaos* EP released in 2022.

Geordie Walker died of a stroke in Prague on November 26, 2023, at the age of 64. He had moved to the Czech Republic in late 2000s, eventually getting a divorce from Kiraly in 2012 and settling in with his new partner, Alexandra Kocourkova, and their daughter Isabella, born in 2018.

"No man was cooler than Geordie, one of the very best and most influential guitarists ever," said Youth after Walker died. "He was like Lee Van Cleef meets Terry-Thomas via Noel Coward."

"[*Killing Joke*] really impressed me because Geordie's guitar sound was just really, really strong," Jimmy Page said in 2010 when presenting Geordie with *Classic Rock's* "The Innovator" award. "It was really intense." Page allegedly once attempted to convince Geordie and him to record an album together, only to have the Killing Joke guitarist shoot him down by saying, "I don't want your fucking guitar solos all over my music!"

Intense? Absolutely. Inspirational? Unquestionably. One-of-a-kind? There is no doubt. It will be impossible for Killing Joke to continue without him. **GW**

A full-page photograph of Adam Dutkiewicz, the lead guitarist of the band Limp Bizkit, performing on stage. He is wearing a black tank top, black shorts, and a black headband. He is playing a light-colored electric guitar. The background is a vibrant green with stage lights. The image is framed by a thin white border.

"Lead guitar is completely
a feel thing for me,"
Adam Dutkiewicz says



THIS FIRE STILL BURNS

Killswitch Engage guitarists Adam Dutkiewicz and Joel Stroetzel fill us in on everything that's been going on with the band since 2019's *Atonement* and the struggles and scrambles that went into their ripping new album, *This Consequence*

BY JON WIEDERHORN

THEY'VE NEVER FOLLOWED traditions or expectations, and that's what has kept Killswitch Engage at the top of the metal hierarchy for 25 years, despite facing numerous challenges along the way — maybe even from the start.

At a time when extreme bands were expected to rip and roar (sensitivity be damned), Killswitch Engage bucked the system by releasing the groundbreaking 2002 album *Alive or Just Breathing*, which intertwined soaring melodic vocals with

raging, caustic riffs. Over the next two decades they persevered through other uncertain moments, switching singers at three key points in their career, and proudly holding the torch for metalcore aloft long after naysayers were trying to extinguish it.

"We've always adjusted to whatever situation we were in and continued doing what we do," says guitarist and producer Adam Dutkiewicz with a shrug. "I think if you go into a record saying, 'Well, we need to be more like this,' that's when

→ ADAM STRAUGHN

you're doomed to fail."

Now, nine albums into their career, the western Massachusetts-born five-piece have returned from a five-year studio blackout (the longest in their career) with *This Consequence*, their most cohesive and heaviest offering since 2004's *The End of Heartache*. In some ways, the new album is a modern and prophetic reflection of a world gone mad, echoing with themes of societal fragmentation, betrayal, cruelty, rage and war. But it's also a reminder of the untethered turmoil, agitation and creativity of *Alive or Just Breathing* — a flashback to a hurt, hungry band with an ax to grind and nothing to lose.

"We got the rug pulled out from under us on our last album, *Atonement*," says guitarist Joel Stroetzel from the studio outside his Massachusetts residence. "We were two days into our tour and had to turn around because everything blew up with Covid. Of course, we weren't alone with that, but it was extremely frustrating to sit around and do nothing for two years. So when we started writing this record, I think we naturally gravitated toward a heavier, more pissed-off sound."

"I was bitten by the thrash metal bug, so

"I probably should practice more and learn some cooler licks, but at this point, a lot of it is second nature" ADAM DUTKIEWICZ

I've been trying to challenge myself to make my parts a little faster and more aggressive," Dutkiewicz says over a Zoom call from his home in San Diego. "I really pushed myself to down-pick a little faster and make the riffs more aggressive. I don't know. Maybe it's the old man in me struggling to try to feel young and fighting back against aging."

Dutkiewicz wrote much of the music for *This Consequence* during the long hiatus. Since he had an abundance of time and no deadline, he created a wide array of material, much of which contributed to the diversity of the new album. Other songs wound up on side projects, including an album with former Killswitch Engage singer Howard Jones and a death metal band with Cannibal Corpse vocalist George "Corpsegrinder" Fisher.

"I basically went crazy during the pandemic," Dutkiewicz says. "I didn't want to do a 'Covid' album, partially because a lot of us live in different parts of the country and we didn't feel like doing a record remotely. So writing was the best thing I could do to try to stay sane."

For most of the break, Stroetzel, bassist Mike D'Antonio and drummer Justin Foley also wrote from their homes. When

Killswitch Engage finally got together in the rehearsal room in 2022, they had a wealth of material for demos. However, unlike their past two albums, for which the band members presented completed songs, this time they played their bandmates fleshed-out, but incomplete ideas, then worked together to tweak and revise the material. For better or worse, the fluid circumstances in which Killswitch Engage worked on *This Consequence* kept Dutkiewicz and his bandmates motivated and on point. Despite the numerous sessions they had to record the album, there was no time to overanalyze the songs or become complacent. In addition to laying down a profusion of rapid staccato riffs, truculent breakdowns and multihued segues, Dutkiewicz spent an unusual amount of time in the studio with vocalist Jesse Leach. For various reasons, the singer was off his game, battling vocal fatigue and lyric gridlock, and needed to record and re-record, leaving everyone in the band wondering if his days in Killswitch were numbered.

In the end, Killswitch Engage's determination and dedication transcended their frustrations. We talked to Dutkiewicz

and Stroetzel about returning to form after a lengthy hiatus, the unanticipated obstacles they overcame during the sessions, and the challenges they navigated to make one of their best albums to date. We also addressed the secret to their fist-tight, dual guitar sound, their dedication to pre-production and escapism through side projects.

Your last two albums were mostly pre-written before they were recorded. Why did you decide to work more collaboratively this time?

DUTKIEWICZ: We had all been stowing away material and we wanted to get together to work it out as a band. It was great to be in the same room playing together as opposed to someone passing out a demo and saying, "This is the way it's going to be."

STROETZEL: By working it all out together, we had a better feel for where we were going with the songs, and that encouraged everyone to contribute more. We were able to jam on a lot of them in rehearsal and get them how we liked them before we came back to my place to program drums and do the demos.

How many song ideas do you want to have before you get into the rehearsal room as a full band?

DUTKIEWICZ: I always like having more material to choose from than less. If I'm inspired, something is going to come together when I write, so I present as many ideas to the band as I can. If some of them don't strike a chord with anyone, they can fall by the wayside. I have no problems throwing away ideas. That's part of being an artist. Create, create, create. The things that affect everyone will be the ones I'll want to work on. The rest can go into another project folder or in the trash.

This Consequence opens with "Abandon Us," which features a crushing, off-kilter rhythm reminiscent of Meshuggah or Gojira. Did you want to tap into that more percussive, modern style?

STROETZEL: A lot of us are Gojira fans and I'm a big Meshuggah guy. But I don't think that had a lot to do with our songwriting. We have our own sound, and if I'm going to be influenced by something, I usually go back to stuff like old Metallica and Testament, and those early thrash bands did a lot of weird, syncopated stuff, especially early on.

"The Fall of Us" has tremolo guitar lines and a brutal death metal vibe that provides an interesting contrast to the rest of the record.

DUTKIEWICZ: There's a funny story to that. I presented it to the band thinking it was too grimy and too fast and it was going to be shot down. I figured it would be good for the side project I'm doing with George from Cannibal Corpse. But the guys wanted to use it. So, there you go. That's why it's on there.

Despite all the thrash riffs, metalcore passages, and hammering beats, there seem to be more atmospheric passages on *This Consequence* than there were on *Atonement*.

STROETZEL: There were almost no clean guitars on *Atonement*, and this one has a lot of clean stuff, whether it's prominent or just in the background. We layered some parts and added clean overdubs, so there's more going on. And I think the mellow moments make the big, heavy parts stick out, which make the songs a little bit more of a roller-coaster ride.

What were the first songs you came up with, and was there a developmental curve before you were up to speed?

STROETZEL: As soon as we started



Joel Stroetzel on stage with Killswitch Engage in Auckland, New Zealand, September 16, 2024

working on the songs they started coming together. “Abandon Us” and “Discordant Nation” came pretty quick. “Aftermath” is one of the first songs [drummer] Justin [Foley] brought in that we worked on. And “Forever Aligned” and “Collusion” was pretty easy as well. And that’s, like, half the record. So, yeah, we were feeling pretty good and productive right away.

Did you work on any particular styles to showcase in your leads?

DUTKIEWICZ: Lead guitar is completely a feel thing for me. I probably should practice more and learn some cooler licks, but at this point, a lot of it is second nature. Obviously, there should be a setup to a solo and some crescendos, and then a part that ties it up. Mostly, we put leads in songs as musical interludes. It’s not so much that we need guitar leads on our records. It’s just nice to have a break from the vocals here and there.

To keep your leads spontaneous, do you improvise them in the studio or do you pre-write everything?

DUTKIEWICZ: I always pre-write everything when I do the demos because it takes pressure off in the studio. Pre-production is so important to me because it keeps everyone focused and saves studio time. It’s still inspiring to do the final version because, for the demo, everything is thrown together quickly and not necessarily played perfectly. Once we get into the studio, the real job is to perform the ideas that are on the demo, put some new life into them, and make them as tight as we can.

STROETZEL: I only did one lead on *This Consequence*, and it was on “Requiem.” I didn’t really pre-write it all at once, I wrote it over time. Over a couple weeks, I listened to the rhythm and threw stuff at the wall. I kept jamming it over, and when I came up with something I liked, I recorded it and moved on to the next part.

Do you prefer sweep picking or alternate picking?

STROETZEL: I’m terrible at sweep picking, so I do way more alternate picking, and hammer-ons and pull-offs. I also don’t do much tapping, Adam is a really good tapper and he does a lot of it in his leads. He was definitely an Eddie Van Halen kid, so I leave all that stuff to him.

Did you use a variety of guitars on the album or did you stick to your signatures?

DUTKIEWICZ: Mostly, we used our signatures. I have a Caparison [TAT Special FX “Metal Machine”], which I love. I believe we may have used some other Caparisons with single coils in them for the clean parts here and there. But they’re still all active pickups.

STROETZEL: I’m using the Caparison Dellinger’s JSM V2s, which is my new signature and I can use it for everything. →



[from left] Justin Foley, Adam Dutkiewicz, Jesse Leach, Mike D'Antonio and Joel Stroetzel

Why do you prefer active pickups to passive?

DUTKIEWICZ: Number one is the noise issue. Also, they're louder and tighter. Active pickups are perfect for aggressive metal. We don't want airy tones when we're rocking out.

STROETZEL: I really like the Killswitch signature Fishman Fluence pickup in the bridge, which has a crazy metal active mode. It isn't quite as hot as the traditional moderns, but it has a very focused sound so everything stays nice and tight. And I love the single coils for the less metallic stuff. They give you a slightly tubbier sound on the low end when you want it.

Do you have different approaches to playing and tone?

DUTKIEWICZ: No, Joel and I are on the same page when it comes to playing guitar, and where we should sit in the mix. Over the years, we've developed that brotherhood and symbiotic relationship where we're just locked in so it's natural at this point.

STROETZEL: Our playing is definitely complementary. But I think the way Adam and I use a pick is a little bit different.

I probably do more alternate picking stuff, and I think that comes from all the thrash riffs that I grew up with. I think Adam was more of a hardcore kid and did more down-picking. Now, he's more into brutal death metal. So, he's changed a little. And I think, in a strange way, we've become a bit more complementary as players over time. We put our heads together for the melodic stuff, and rip on the heavier parts.

Do you both track rhythms for every song or do you play on whatever you wrote?

DUTKIEWICZ: The person who wrote it knows how it should sound and how to play it best. So, it's always easier for that person to track all the parts he wrote, whether it's me or Joel.

What amps and effects did you use?

DUTKIEWICZ: We used a 5150, a Soldano, and a Fortin, and also used a cab simulator so the place wasn't rattling when we were in a B-room. But it's nice to be able to play with the amp while we're recording instead of using plug-ins. Everybody does everything on a DAW so often now, and for me, having an amplifier brings a certain

personality and charm to a record. It's nice to hear air moving.

STROETZEL: We busted out some cool reverb and delay pedals, too, so we could have some spacey parts on there. He's a big Strymon guy. I always go back to my old Maxon delay. And we did some layering stuff with the Hologram Microcosm. We set up these weird, almost micro-delays and the sound just trails off and does its own thing. I built some clean stuff around that and it worked out pretty cool.

Many bands record drums first, and their drummer plays to a click while the guitarists lay down scratch tracks. Why did you track the drums last for *This Consequence*?

DUTKIEWICZ: A couple records back, Justin [Foley] said he would have played some of the drum fills differently if he had known what the vocals were going to be like. So, this time I said, "Okay, why don't you go last?" I usually quantize parts, anyway so it wasn't a big deal and it worked out really well. He knew exactly what he wanted to play and he nailed it. So, yeah, as long as he's that prepared, I would do it like that again.

What was the greatest challenge you faced working on *This Consequence*?

DUTKIEWICZ: There was a tremendous obstacle, and it was our singer, Jesse Leach. We ran into problems with his screaming in the studio. He had learned a completely new screaming style to prolong the life of his voice on the road, where he doesn't scream as hard and it's less taxing on his throat. It's called the Fry technique, and you can't tell too much live. But once we started working on vocals in the studio, everybody was shocked at how different it sounded when we played it back. It wasn't aggressive enough. He went and took vocal lessons from Melissa Cross to learn to scream right, and then we re-recorded five or six songs. That took up a good chunk of time. And then he had some trouble writing the lyrics for these songs. Since everyone was so much more involved this time, we were more critical, and we all agreed that they weren't good enough. He had to go back and rewrite a lot of stuff.

He said there was a moment when he thought he might be out of the band.

DUTKIEWICZ: It was a struggle for sure, and it was stressful for everyone. But Jesse was a champ. He gets the gold star for being the hardest-working member. It took a lot for him to go back and rewrite and re-record these songs. He felt like we were beating him up and he was under attack. In the past, he was pretty married to everything he made. He had a tough time not liking his stuff. So, it was hard for him to accept that, 'Yeah, okay, I'm going to throw this away and start over.' But in the end, he understood we all wanted the same thing, and in the end, the vocals and lyrics he delivered are the best he's ever done.

In addition to spearheading Killswitch Engage, you've done various side projects. You mentioned the band you're doing with Cannibal Corpse's singer. You've also recorded albums by Times of Grace with Jesse. And now you're working with former KSE vocalist Howard Jones on his solo album. How did that happen?

DUTKIEWICZ: Howard and I had been in contact, and one day he said, "Hey, do you have any songs for me to sing on?" I said, "Funny you should ask me that. I have a whole folder of stuff." I pulled up a bunch of the stuff I wrote that wasn't right for Killswitch, and I said to Howard, "You wanna check them out?" He took a listen and said he'd love to work with it. Then, he started demoing the vocals and we just started recording. It was that simple.

"We put our heads together for the melodic stuff, and rip on the heavier parts" JOEL STROETZEL

What was it like to work with Howard again in the studio after 15 years?

DUTKIEWICZ: It was crazy hearing his voice again on my music. All these memories came flooding back. The friendship that he and I have is one of a kind, man. It's just great to hang out with him and make new music. I just hope we get to tour on the project because it came out really good.

Was it difficult to juggle the Killswitch album and the record with Howard?

DUTKIEWICZ: The priority was getting the Killswitch done first. There are contracts and release clauses that dictate how it could be released. Sometime in the next year, we'll put out the record with Howard. Scheduling is the tricky part. It was relatively [easy] recording with Howard because we did it during all that time that passed before the last session with Jesse.

How does the album with Howard differ from the Killswitch record?

DUTKIEWICZ: A lot of the songs are more atmosphere than the new Killswitch. But there are songs that sound a lot like Killswitch. It's me and Howard. How could it not?

Howard replaced Jesse in Killswitch in 2002 after *Alive or Just Breathing*. Jesse returned in 2012 after Howard, who was suffering from type 2 diabetes, quit. Considering the difficulties Jesse had in the studio this round, has he expressed any frustration or insecurity about you making a record with Howard?

DUTKIEWICZ: Jesse's an insecure person, for sure. That's always there and I feel like



if he spends too much time online reading what the internet trolls are writing, he's going to drive himself crazy. But at the end of the day, he's the singer for Killswitch Engage. He doesn't need to get too worried. The way I see it, I'm playing and making music with some good friends in my spare time. What's the problem with that?

Joel, you've got some side projects as well, but they're not nearly as loud as Killswitch.

STROETZEL: [Laughs]. Yeah, I play in two mellow, acoustic-based bands. One's called Brothers Born and the other is Hidden Skyline, and they're both with very dear friends. They're just fun outlets to get together and make music, and it's a nice change of pace from the metal stuff. I don't think there's any prospective touring with those bands. We're just making music and doing the occasional show.

You've also recorded albums with them. Anything new lined up?

STROETZEL: Hidden Skyline released an Americana record called *Causeways* last year [which I produced]. Next year, Brothers Born should be releasing a new record that's pretty much finished. [It'll be the follow-up to 2015's *Knife Wounds*]. We've been working on that for years off and on.

How different is the gear you use for those bands from what you play in Killswitch?

STROETZEL: I've used a Fender Telecaster a lot with them, and I have a Novo that's great. But I also use Caparison stuff. I've been with them for over 20 years, and the configuration on my new model will probably work better for those bands than some of the guitars I've used in the past. I'll usually play through Fender Princetons with some pedals to add some atmosphere.

Back in the day, when an established artist went and recorded with another band, it meant the beginning of the end. Have times completely changed?

DUTKIEWICZ: That can still be a problem for some people, but not for us. The thing is you have to be totally upfront about it. And the way I see it, if some of us are playing and making music with good friends in our spare time, what's the problem with that? **GW**

Dead & Company's
John Mayer [left]
and Bob Weir
photographed
in Hollywood,
January 28, 2025



Dead Forever (and Then Some)

Two years after their Final Tour, **Dead & Company** are rolling back to Sphere in Las Vegas for another mind-blowing residency. In this exclusive interview, **Bob Weir** and **John Mayer** break down the Sphere experience, latest gear adjustments and their ever-evolving musical partnership

BY RICHARD BIENSTOCK PORTRAITS BY JEN ROSENSTEIN

THIS YEAR MARKS a decade since John Mayer teamed up with Grateful Dead singer and guitarist Bob Weir and drummers Mickey Hart and Bill Kreutzmann to breathe new life into the band's iconic catalog under the Dead & Company moniker. At the time, it felt like a curious, if intriguing combination — a guitar prodigy with pop chops pairing with the legendary Dead members. But what has unfolded over the past 10 years is nothing short of remarkable. The band, rounded out by bassist Oteil Burbridge, keyboardist Jeff Chimenti and, more recently, drummer Jay Lane (who stepped in full time for Kreutzmann in 2023), has transcended its incongruous origins and become a genuine force in its own right, establishing itself as a must-see summer stadium draw — one that's kept the Grateful Dead's exploratory, improvisatory and highly musical spirit alive while forging a path forward with an energy all its own.

In 2023, Dead & Company embarked on what was billed as the "Final Tour," capping a years-long run that saw the group play to an estimated four million-plus fans since those first 2015 shows. But while it seemed like the '23 outing was it for this other one, Dead & Company soon set out to explore a new frontier: a residency at Sphere, the cutting-edge Las Vegas venue known for its state-of-the-art technology. Among its many innovations is a massive 160,000-square-foot LED →

JEN ROSENSTEIN

screen that encircles both the audience and the band, along with an unparalleled sound system — the largest concert-grade audio setup in the world — featuring spatial audio, haptic technology and more than 167,000 individual speaker drivers. At first glance, this ultra-modern setting might seem a mismatch for a legacy band with deep roots in traditional music. But it's actually a perfect pairing. "We were doing liquid projections on screens and stuff like that, where the visuals could move in time with the music, back in the 'Acid Test' days," Weir points out. Those days, it's worth noting, were more than a half-century ago.

The Sphere residency, titled "Dead Forever," spanned 30 shows from May to August in 2024. Mayer was the driving creative force behind the production, and the singer and guitarist skillfully balanced tradition and innovation, staying true to the band's roots while embracing the futuristic nature of Sphere's immersive visuals and sonics. As he puts it to *Guitar World*, the goal was to find a sweet spot "between 'Monster Mash' and *2001: A Space Odyssey*." It's a fine line, but one he and the band navigated expertly. Sphere's technology allowed Dead & Company to create breathtaking, dynamic visuals that amplified their performances, but Mayer and the band ensured the feeling stayed grounded — warm, human and connected to the core of their music.

Dead & Company's run at Sphere was an incredible success, and it's possible that of the handful of bands who have appeared there, they may have been the most effective at weaving the venue's unique features into the fabric of their performance. So it wasn't surprising that they decided to return. In March of this

year, the band launched a second Dead Forever residency, scheduled to run until May. This time, they're coming in as Sphere veterans. "So we've already learned what we can get away with and what we can't get away with," Weir says.

For Mayer, it's an opportunity to further the blend of "heritage and futurism" they explored last year. Sphere, he says, "really wants to be futuristic, so it's cool to also pull the storytelling back into something really human. This run has even more beautiful, situational places to hang out under the Sphere; there's a lot more feeling like you're somewhere organic and warm. It's an opportunity to make more worlds out of the ones we liked a lot and really fell in love with during the shows last year, where you go, 'Ahh, here it is...'"

Ultimately, the Sphere shows are a natural extension of what Dead & Company is all about. "With this band, we're able to open a portal," Mayer says. "And if it's not a portal to go back in time, it's a portal to enter those feelings that you didn't think you could go back and feel again." Those feelings, much like the music, clearly still strike a deep chord with fans.

Prior to the kickoff of the current residency, Mayer and Weir sat down with *Guitar World* to discuss a range of topics,

"The Sphere becomes like this big elephant at the circus that we work with"

JOHN MAYER

including adjusting to the audio and visual demands of the Sphere experience, their guitar playing and gear, and how their musical partnership has evolved over the past decade together. They also touched on the possibility of, for the first time, bringing Dead & Company's music from the stage to the studio. Two years after the Final Tour, it's clear that the phrase "Dead Forever" continues to ring true.

You're back for Round 2 at Sphere.

I can imagine that building and pulling off the shows last year was a massive undertaking. Did any lessons or insights from that experience shape how you approached this one?

JOHN MAYER: I suppose one thing I learned was that in terms of sensory experience, the audience can handle more. The first time through, I was being very careful about not disorienting anybody with what the Sphere does or can do. But I think I learned that having your senses pushed a little further, but not to the breaking point, the audience can handle it — and wants a little more of it. In terms of motion [of the visuals], you do have to keep it under a certain threshold. But as far as what kind of motion, I feel like people want a little bit of a thrill ride. So we'll push that just a little bit more this time.

The concert experience at Sphere is often looked at from the fan's perspective, but I'm curious — what's it like for you onstage, especially in comparison to a regular Dead & Company show?

BOB WEIR: As far as the experience of playing, I expect it is different, but I can't really quantify or qualify how it's different. We still have our sight lines. John and I still look at each other, we still take each other's facial expressions into consideration when we're playing something, all that stuff. For what it's worth, I can't see what everybody else is seeing of John, which is, you know, his head 30-feet wide on the screen behind me. [Laughs] That particular camera angle, that's not how I'm seeing him. But that would be great if I could watch him like that, if I could see what everybody else is seeing...

Is there anything unique about how you interact with the audience, or with the visuals?

MAYER: The first show, I remember we played "Mississippi Half-Step" and the crowd was roaring. The energy really hyped us up — so much so that I think we kind of had a hard time putting the song where we wanted to put the song. But over the next



A scene from Dead & Company's latest residency at Sphere, June 15, 2024

CHLOE WEIR

two shows we began to learn that the Sphere is our friend. It's our colleague. We know the crowd's going to ooh and aah, so we don't have to — we can continue to keep our energy where we want it. Then the Sphere becomes kind of like this big elephant at the circus that we work with. I think that's a pretty fair metaphor. It's this massive thing you have to respect, but it's a part of our show. You almost want to pat the side of the Sphere and go, "Good girl, good girl."

So it took us about one weekend to learn how to keep our breathing slow, keep our tempo right, even though we know that what's happening out there is incredibly dynamic. We had to learn to separate the musical dynamic from the visual dynamic. But when we figured that out, then things got sensational, because we could continue to make the music at our own tempo, in our own dynamic, knowing that it was merging with what was happening out there.

Did you have a favorite moment in the show during the first run?

MAYER: There are only a couple of times where I will let myself be a part of the experience the fans are having. One particular part that I was just so mesmerized by was when we return back to Earth [*toward the end of the show*], and we move through this particle field. I look up and feel it come over my head, and I take that time every night to be swept away by it. It's like, for one moment I get high on my own supply. [*Laughs*] And then I go back to the thing.

How about you, Bob? Are there times when you find yourself getting caught up in the visuals?

WEIR: Yes... but really, when I walk onstage, I walk into a hallucinogenic realm. I'm gone. I'm as out-there as a fellow gets, and I'm not sure I'm even going to notice the tech. We do have to watch the visuals at the beginning and the end of the show, because we have to time everything. But the visuals probably hit anybody else in that place harder than they do the people onstage, because the average guy onstage is in a hallucinogenic realm to begin with. That's the nature of our business.

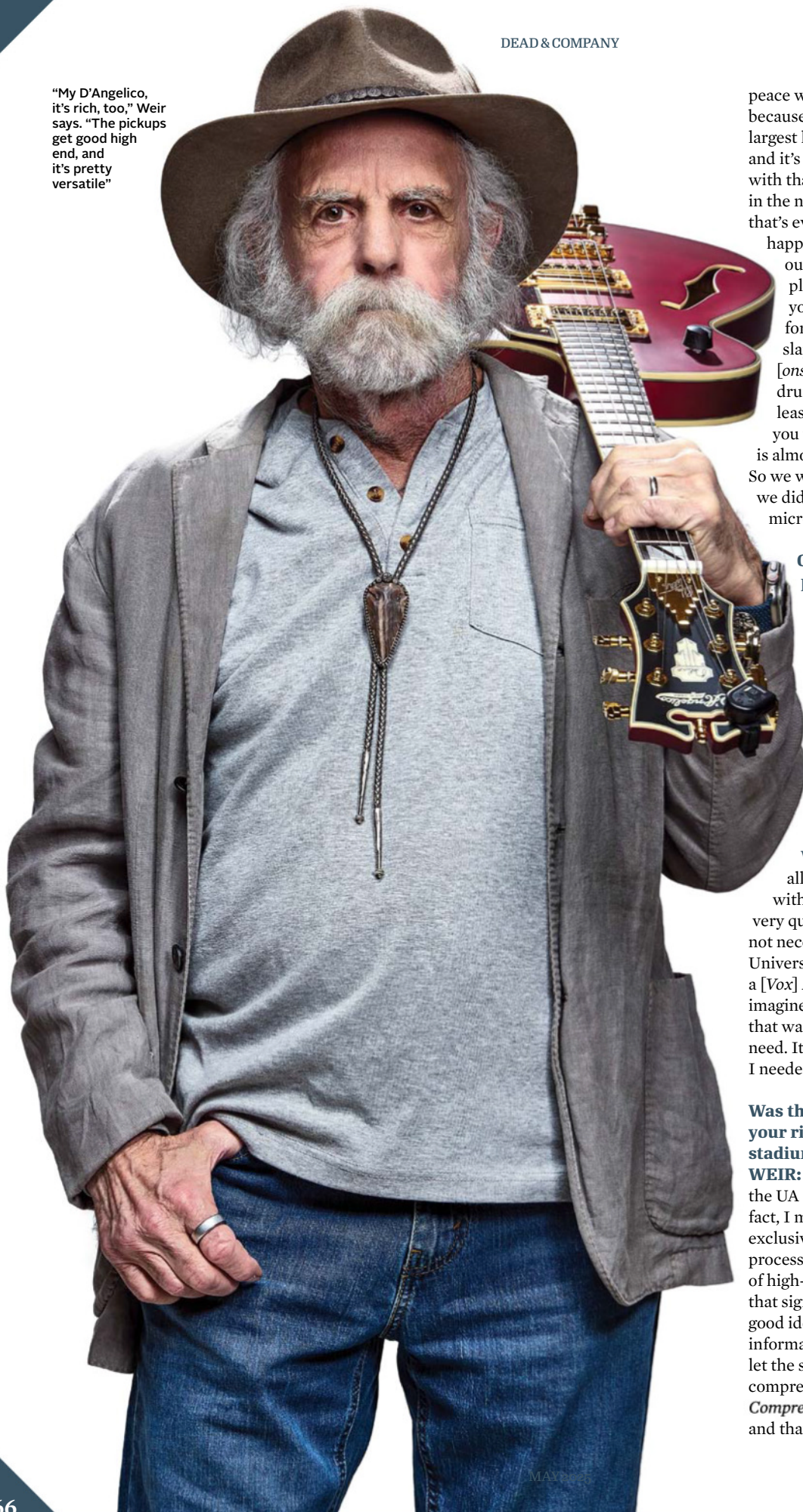
What has been your experience from an audio perspective?

WEIR: Well, the sound is real good in there. But I did have to make my

"Basically 90 percent of the show is handled by the Dead Spec [PRS Silver Sky]," Mayer says



"My D'Angelico, it's rich, too," Weir says. "The pickups get good high end, and it's pretty versatile"



peace with in-ears. We have to use them, because the Sphere is basically the world's largest hard, parabolic, reflective surface, and it's all pointed directly back at you. And with that comes a report that's somewhere in the neighborhood of a third of a second that's every bit as loud as anything that happens onstage. And it's almost always out of time with the song you're playing. So there's various things you can do. Overhead microphones, for instance, will hear nothing but slapback. And if you have them in your [onstage] mix, if you're listening to the drums, for instance, you're getting at least half slapback. And that's not what you want to hear, because that slapback is almost always out of time with the song. So we went to electronic cymbals, and we didn't have to deal with overhead microphones. And we went to in-ears.

Other guitarists who've performed at Sphere, like the Edge and Phish's Trey Anastasio, have noted that the venue's unique design makes it challenging, and also somewhat unnecessary, to use traditional amps onstage. The Edge, in particular, mentioned switching from tube amps to Universal Audio amp sim pedals for his setup.

WEIR: Well, you know, at first I had all this stuff with me — an iso chamber with a guitar amp in it, all of that. But very quickly, I was done with it. It was just not necessary. Instead, I've been using the Universal Audio Ruby, which is basically a [Vox] AC30 in a stompbox. I couldn't have imagined when I first walked in there that that was going to be pretty much all I'd need. It turns out it was pretty much all I needed. [Laughs]

Was that a big change from, say, your rig on Dead & Company's 2023 stadium tour?

WEIR: Actually, on that tour I was using the UA Ruby pretty predominantly, too. In fact, I might have been using it pretty much exclusively. Now, I use a little bit of signal processing, but not much. With the amount of high-end that I use on that Ruby, I find that signal processing in general is not a good idea, because I can articulate all the information from the string better if I just let the string speak. Other than that, I used compression — I have UA's 1176 [Studio Compressor pedal], a tiny bit of reverb, and that's pretty much it. →

Pigpen [left] and Jerry Garcia in action at Santa Clara County Fairgrounds in San Jose, May 18, 1968



The Grateful Dead by Jim Marshall

A new book of photos by the iconic photographer captures his unique relationship with San Francisco's favorite jam band **BY BILL DEMAINE**

PHOTOGRAPHER AMELIA DAVIS is the former assistant to the legendary Jim Marshall, best-known for capturing shots of Jimi Hendrix, Bob Dylan, Johnny Cash and many others. In the late Sixties, Marshall lived in San Francisco, where he was part of the creative family around the Grateful Dead. To celebrate the band's 60th anniversary, Davis and band historian David Gans have curated a lavishly illustrated coffee-table book — *The Grateful Dead by Jim Marshall: Photos and Stories from the Formative Years, 1966-1977* — which is out this summer via Chronicle Books. Below, Davis breaks down Marshall's relationship with the band — and what makes his photos so indispensable.

Jim Marshall shot more than 10,000 photos of the Dead. How did you choose which to include in the book?

We chose a mix of iconic images that everybody's seen, along with other photos that people haven't. We wanted to show the Grateful Dead as individuals, in their surroundings. Also, we wanted to include a lot of color. Jim is known for his black-and-white photos, but that Kodachrome slide film is so vibrant. We hope that all these photos together give an intimate sense of who they were and what they were surrounded by.

How did Jim become part of the Grateful Dead's inner circle?

In 1965, he was well-established as a photographer. They'd seen his album covers and his photos in different magazines. So they had a lot of respect for Jim. They knew that if he took their photographs, they'd be getting top-quality shots. Over time, he befriended them and became part of the family. They knew he'd never betray their trust. That trust was such an important part of how Jim built relationships with artists. You look at some of these shots, and Jim's right there, really close to Jerry [Garcia] and Pigpen [Ron McKernan] and Bob [Weir]. But you'd never know he was there!

What else comes through for you in these photos?

Diversity, integration. Haight-Ashbury was predominantly a Black family neighborhood

“Over time, he befriended them and became part of the family. They knew he'd never betray their trust”

before the Grateful Dead and the hippies moved in. But they embraced that difference. It was a community of people joining together to listen to music and experiment with culture and acceptance. Also, in the performance shots, I see that they were the inspiration for jam bands. They were improvisational. You get that feeling when you look at the audience and how they're interacting with the musicians. You can almost hear the music in your head when looking at these photos.

Jim seemed well-suited for that improvisational situation.

It was very much capturing the moment as it happened. He had to be ready to improvise with his cameras and what he was seeing. Also, Jim loved music, and you can tell that in these photos. He really was feeling and listening to the music as he was photographing.

What do you hope people get from this book?

I hope they see the humanity in the band, and what was happening in that time period. I also hope they see that photography, when done well, tells its own story. Maybe Jim can inspire a younger generation to push the limits of not just photographing somebody standing in front of a microphone, but telling the story of what else is going on around them.

John, you actually still had tube amps onstage with you during the first run at Sphere.

MAYER: I grew up playing tube amps. I grew up feeling the combustion. I really like the UA Enigmatic ['82 *Overdrive Special Amp*] pedal, and I think if you're a young guitar player, that's money well spent. But my style of playing relies on a certain amount of pushback. I need shocks on the tires. And I think that can only come from the ignition inside of a tube.

During last year's residency, you shared a video on your socials that gained a lot of attention, showing your guitar sound coming from speaker cabinets inside a shipping crate on the loading dock of the Sphere, which was mic'd up so that the audience heard it as part of the band performance.

MAYER: This is going to kind of merge into a very hot topic among guitar players — something they like to call “pushing air.” The Pushing Air Debate. For me, I know for a fact that I need a larger space for soundwaves to come out of a guitar amp and be caught a little bit further away than an iso box allows. There has to be more of a comet tail so that the note can bloom a little bit. So we had to devise a system that

would give a little more space to the speakers. And what we decided to do was use shipping crates as much larger iso boxes — kind of a “mini room.” In fact, Jeremy Nielsen, my guitar tech, decorated the inside of the box as if it were a small-scale studio, because that's how much of a genius he is. That gave us some dimension so that while I was playing, there was just that extra little bit of space for the note to grow. So my amps were onstage, but the speakers were in these boxes on the loading dock of the Sphere.

It looked like you had a few Dumble amps onstage, as well as a Fender Twin Reverb.

MAYER: Yeah. I really like the Small Special, and then there was an Overdrive Special and maybe a Dumble-modded Bandmaster, I believe. And the [Fender] Twin. Those are onstage, and the speaker cabinets are in the crates on the loading dock. Which... if you deduce from one more level of reasoning, the cabs onstage, let's just say they're there to help raise the heads of the amps so that I can reach them with my hand. [Laughs] Otherwise they'd be sitting on the ground. But if you walk through the back of the loading dock of the Sphere while the show is happening, you

will hear my guitar blaring out of a pile of road cases. That's what Derek [Featherstone, *Dead & Company* tour director/FOH engineer] is mic'ing up to use in the room.

Bob, your main guitar lately has been a Fender Stratocaster. But back in the Grateful Dead days, you weren't really known as a Strat player. What drew you to the Strat?

WEIR: The one I'm using is a '64. As for what drew me to playing a Strat, I can't really say. Every day your tastes change. And it was just one morning, I sort of woke up and I didn't want to hear the double-coil sound anymore. I'd been playing humbucker guitars for a while, and then I woke up and I wanted to play on a single coil. And you know, single coils, they get interfered with and all that kind of stuff, but they are richer [sounding].

At Sphere you alternated the Strat with a few other guitars — your signature D'Angelico semi-hollowbody, for one, and several Les Pauls, including a goldtop and a Black Beauty.

WEIR: My D'Angelico — it's rich, too. The pickups get good high end, and it's pretty



Weir in the spotlight during last year's Sphere residency; the venue features a 160,000-square-foot LED screen that encircles the audience and the band

versatile. There's a lot you can do with it, a lot of sounds you can pull out. And I've actually got three old goldtops and a few more black ones. The goldtops, Joe Bonamassa found one, maybe two of them, for me. And then the other one, I was talking to my luthier and he was touting the praises of Gibson's reissue of the Fifties goldtop. And I just said to myself, "Okay, I've gotta see what this is all about." That was my first one. And I was smitten by the goldtop, especially with the P90s in it. So now I have that one and the two older ones.

John, you pulled out several unique guitars during the first Sphere residency, including a Fender Custom Shop replica of Jerry Garcia's famous modded "Alligator" Stratocaster and a white Custom Shop Strat that had previously belonged to Jeff Beck. But you stuck primarily to two trusty PRS models — a McCarty 594 and, mostly, the "Dead Spec" version of your signature Silver Sky.

MAYER: Yes. Basically 90 percent of the show is handled by the Dead Spec, and then there's particular cases for the 594. That guitar, I call it the blowtorch. When I want to do late-Sixties-Fillmore-acid-test Grateful Dead, kind of SG/Les Paul-burning stuff, the 594 is perfect for that. It also has probably the best humbucker neck pickup I've ever played on a guitar. So when I want to do that barrelhouse thing, I pick up that guitar.

The Dead Spec, of course, is a customized take on your signature guitar, drawing inspiration from Jerry's original Alligator. Your model has several modifications, including an Alembic Blaster preamp that boosts the signal with 3-14 dB of gain, along with brass hardware to enhance brightness and resonance. Jerry's tone is not an easy thing to approximate, but I imagine having this guitar helps.

MAYER: There are certain inalienable details in Jerry's playing that are part of the music. It's like if you were going to play Miles Davis music you have to have a mute for your trumpet. You could say that's just a gear thing, but it's part of the vocabulary. So if you're playing Jerry's stuff, you've got to push the front end of the amp a little bit more than you normally would. And then you've got to get a little more accent on the high end so that you can really pick those notes. Because there's so much nuance in what Jerry was doing; he would use dynamics as a way to create motifs, almost like a horn player. So what you have to do is put a certain amount of boost in your signal



"Sphere is basically the world's largest hard, parabolic, reflective surface, and it's all pointed directly back at you," Weir says

"When I walk onstage, I walk into a hallucinogenic realm. I'm not sure I'm even going to notice the tech" BOB WEIR

so that you're giving the amp slightly more in the front end than the makers intended. If you play at, like, a five out of a 10, then the amp is happy. That's where you get that "steel drum" thing. And if you hit it a little hard, you're pushing the amp more than it wants to be pushed. If you can get certain notes to hit the red, that's the magic, man. That's where you can really have a blast.

I assume the Alembic boost helps with that.

MAYER: Yes, but that little trim pot in there, it's pretty low. Lower than you might think. You wouldn't get your money's worth if that was a boost pedal, because it's very, very subtle. But it's just enough to feed the amp a certain amount of level so that it kind

of stays on its toes. And another thing is that, of course, Jerry's guitar had so much brass on it. That's why the Dead Spec has a brass nut, a brass retainer bar over the strings. It's trying to get that string to pass over as much brass surface as possible to get that ring out. Because we started to learn that that brassiness in the tone comes from... brass. [Laughs]

In a way, the Dead Spec Silver Sky represents a fusion of your guitar design with Jerry's. There's a similar balance you have to achieve in your playing — respecting Jerry's legacy while still putting your own stamp on it. My observation is that over the years with Dead & Company you've →

Mayer with his PRS Silver Sky, Martin F7 [left] and Martin OM-45

DEAD & COMPANY



become more comfortable in this space, and now we hear more moments that break from what people might expect — guitar tapping in “Slipknot!” or “St. Stephen,” genuine shredding in “All Along the Watchtower.” Maybe you wouldn’t have done these things in 2015 or 2016.

MAYER: That’s a really interesting observation. And the answer is very complicated because there are so many variables that were changing from year to year. Let me try to take you on a tour through them. Number one, my understanding of the music in terms of its arrangement, right? These song arrangements, early on I would start playing what I thought was the main full solo in a song. And then when I got to the end of that solo, I would realize, that’s the mini solo. [Laughs] Then Bob would go back and sing and I would go, “Oh, no,

Bob thinks I wanted to take the mini solo and go that long on it. There’s still another solo to go, and that’s the big one.” So that’s one of the things — understanding the arrangements.

Another thing is understanding the totality of the show in terms of the balance of what can be done. On a good night, I can earn myself the right to take one song, leave the [Grateful Dead] philosophy behind and go, you know, pure Jimi Hendrix on “Watchtower.” Because that’s a cover anyway, right? I definitely feel more latitude to do what I want to do on covers, because the main contributor to the style of that song isn’t Jerry Garcia. So I can step up and be me thinking about Jimi, which is, I think, the right thing to do. And it’s probably a good moment of release for the audience as well, because it opens up the vocabulary.

Then you’ve got my interpretation of

Jerry’s playing style, which took me at least four years to figure out how much was enough and how much was too much. When it came to subdividing the notes. When it came to how fast to play. This happens when you’re studying someone’s music and that music has existed for a period of time where there’s different approaches to that music. The way Jerry played in ’69 is totally different than ’74. And ’74 is completely different from ’81. And ’81 is completely different from ’90.

And then to add to that, there is the way in which his music, his guitar playing, has been interpreted since his passing. You have to take all of that into a ball, and then you go, “I’m gonna do my best.”

And the constant here is that every tour I’ve ever done from 2015 on was the best I could have done at that moment. It was only after each tour was over that I would get back in the car and listen to more Grateful Dead recordings and realize I hadn’t come close. But the only way to realize you hadn’t come close is to have grown somewhere along the line, where you realize you now know better. So to me, every tour up until the Final Tour in ’23 was an opportunity to try to get it right, based on everything I had learned previously.

Bob, has your guitar playing changed over the past 10 years with Dead & Company? And do you think having John as your guitar partner has led you to approach the music differently?

WEIR: Yes, but I always do that. And that, I think, is more on account of the fact that I just keep changing. I wake up in the morning and I’m kind of different. You take all those mornings that I woke up kind of different and you add ‘em together, and after a while, you start amounting to a different guy. That’s kind of where I am now. So I’d be reluctant to say that anybody, whether it be Jerry or John or whoever, drew anything out of me that didn’t already want to come out. But one thing I will say about John is that he’s one of those deep blues guys. He can listen to a blues tune on a boombox and tell you who it is, who’s in the band, what era it’s from, who wrote the song, all that kind of stuff, just on a quick listen. He can dissect the music, the various styles of playing. That’s somewhere we haven’t been yet that I find very interesting.

John, what is something that you’ve learned from Bob over the years?

MAYER: That’s a good question. And don’t

“The thing I’ve learned from Bob is to let it breathe. And that’s changed my playing a lot” JOHN MAYER

think my taking a while to answer it means I have to fight to come up with something. It's just that there's so much. But the thing I've learned from Bob is to let it breathe. And that's changed my playing a lot. I feel like the two of us now have a very deep relationship, almost like a telepathic relationship. I know where I stand with him in the best of ways. He knows where he stands with me in the best of ways. And we don't have to talk about it.

Bob, what have you learned from John?

WEIR: "Don't sweat the small stuff." I don't know if there's more to it than that. I'm constantly evolving, and so is he. And I can't tell if it's on account of what I'm getting from him, or if it's something he's getting from me, but we sort of make room, make allowances, for those kinds of developments. And you know, he is a legendary guitarist. So I might be inclined to be a little bit under-spoken about what I express through my instrument. [pauses] But probably not. Because I remember the first night I played with him, when we were on TV. [In 2015, Mayer guest-hosted several episodes of *The Late Late Show*. During one of them, Weir, who was promoting the Grateful Dead's upcoming *Fare Thee Well* concerts, appeared as a guest. Following an interview, the two performed a pair of Grateful Dead songs, "Truckin'" and "Althea" together — a moment often credited with sparking the formation of Dead & Company.] I was surprised at how easy and how natural it was, right from the start. He had already mastered the kind of vocabulary I was used to on the instrument, to the point where we readily interacted. I don't remember any moments where I was thinking to myself, what the hell is he trying to get at here?

John, did you feel that in the moment?

MAYER: Maybe with that song ["Althea"]. But there's only about 140 other ones! [Laughs] I think anyone who plays Grateful Dead music could tell you, you may have one that you can make it through the gauntlet on. But then there's another one waiting right around the corner that might take you another two years to get your

head around. But I absolutely love the challenge. Before every show you will see me pacing my dressing room with Spotify open, with some version of some song I think is helpful for me to listen to before I go up to play the whole show, to just remind myself, "This is all it takes." Because I can overthink. You can hear me overthinking on the guitar sometimes. But every night I get to go onstage is a shot at pitching a perfect game. And I can tell you, when I try to pitch a perfect game, I lose my shutout in about the beginning of the second song. And I just love that moment where I go, "Whoops, not a perfect game. Have fun!"

Up until now, Dead & Company has been strictly a live entity. But back in the early days of the band, 2016 or so, I recall interviews where Bob would

talk about maybe going into the studio, either to record new material or to revisit songs that had only ever been played onstage by the Grateful Dead. Is this still a possibility?

WEIR: Oh, it's something I would still love to do. We've got our best guys on it... **MAYER:** It hasn't been discussed in a while, but I have a boilerplate response to ideas like that. Which is, "If Bobby and Mickey want to do it, I want to do it." You know what I mean? I want to follow them where they want to go. So if that's something that naturally comes up and it starts to materialize, you won't see me being the one to say no.

Clearly, you're still up for anything. You did the Final Tour in 2023, and just a year later, reimagined the Dead & Company experience for the Sphere residency. Is there anything you'd still like to explore with this band?

WEIR: I wouldn't mind taking it across the seas. This is a quintessentially American music that we're doing, and I would love to play it for people everywhere. It would be nice to be able to do that. Because we put on a pretty tight show. And for what it's worth, these are the same songs we've been playing all along, but we've somehow learned to make it a little more accessible. So whereas people from other cultures may have heard us in the past and maybe were not really able to relate, I think we could do better now.

What about you, John? As the guy who took the lead in helping to manifest the Sphere experience, what's the next frontier for Dead & Company?

MAYER: Well, right now someone somewhere is coming up with an idea that's so ahead of its time, I couldn't think of it. But I like that they think of, and for the last 60 years have thought of, Grateful Dead — even though we're not Grateful Dead, but Bob and Mickey represent that — as one of the first bands you would think to ask to be a part of these ideas. Because the mission statement has always been forward-facing. The music is so vast, they're who you'd want to use for whatever your technology is. So I think it made sense to do the Sphere. And whoever dreams up the next something incredible and wants us to be a part of it? I would never say no to that kind of experimentalism. **GW**



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SOUND CHECK



Taylor Gold Label 814e SB

By Chris Gill

“GOLD LABEL” IS a designation usually found on an upper echelon of “vice” products like spirits and tobacco, but considering the addictions many of us have to guitars it’s perfectly fitting that Taylor gave the “Gold Label” name to its latest collection of upscale guitars. Taylor describes the Gold Label Collection as instruments with an “old soul,” but it has developed a ton of new features to accomplish that. The Taylor Gold Label 814e with its mid-size new Super Auditorium body style and luxurious appointments is the kind of acoustic that’s

perfect for snuggling up with in your favorite leather chair, a glass of Scotch and a fine cigar within reach.

Build Quality & Playability

So, what exactly is new about the Gold Label Collection guitars? First is the Super Auditorium body style, which comes in about the middle in overall size dimensions in the entire Taylor lineup, slightly longer than the Grand Auditorium and smaller than the Grand Symphony. It’s a full-size guitar that measures 16 1/4 inches across

the lower bout and is 4 1/2 inches deep, but it doesn’t feel unwieldy or bulky. Its beautifully rounded curves evoke many of Gibson’s coveted vintage Depression-era flat-tops. Also new is the fanned V-Class bracing pattern with braces affixed by old-school hide glue and a long-tenon neck joint where the neck is attached to the body without glue. Also, of note, the headstock shape and Taylor logo are markedly different from current Taylor guitars — signifying an exciting new change and musical voice for this collection.

Tonewood options for the Gold Label Collection are Honduran rosewood or figured Hawaiian koa for the back and sides, with all current models having a torrefied Sitka spruce top. The neck is finely crafted from neo-tropical mahogany with a West African Crelicam ebony fretboard. That sounds like one hell of a prix fixe menu, and indeed the quality and combination of those woods make a wonderful recipe for tasty tone. Built-in LR Baggs Element VTC electronics preserve all the personality and nuances of the guitar’s natural acoustic tone, making for an equally pleasant experience when plugging in.

We were sent the “SB” model with Honduran rosewood back and sides, and featuring a honey-amber hued sunburst finish with a warm, smoky glow. Filigreed “Continental” mother-of-pearl inlays decorate the headstock, fretboard and pickguard, contributing an elegantly



understated vintage visual aesthetic that complements the natural beauty of the wood grain.

The Gold Label 814e's neck is sort of a modern interpretation of a pre-war neck, featuring a modern slim profile with a shallow curve and just the slightest hint of a "V" peak near the center. The action is super comfortable, making it easy to play all the way up the neck to where the body meets the neck at the 14th fret with solid, precise note definition and no fret buzz.

Sounds

The Gold Label 814e is truly a new guitar with an old soul. Its punchy bass, singing mids and shimmering treble remind me of smaller L-2 flat-tops from the early 30s, only the Taylor is like the 4K Dolby Atmos version compared to the Gibson's DVD



resolution. The sound is focused, loud and dynamic with sweet harmonic overtones and rich, reverb-like resonance. The balance between single-note lines and chords is remarkable, almost like having a sound engineer riding faders to match levels.

Although the Gold Label 814e is not inexpensive, it's also not overly expensive and it provides excellent value for players looking for a top-quality acoustic with sound quality that will mellow and mature gorgeously over the years to come. Even brand new from the factory it is exquisitely touch responsive, delivering notes with full body even when the strings are delicately stroked or plucked. It also has a distinct rich character that's instantly classic — as ideal for blues fingerstyle as it is for more modern rhythmic explorations. The LR Baggs Element VTC system keeps up no matter how hard or soft you play, never getting overdriven when the guitar is played vigorously and remaining whisper quiet when the strings are silent.

Verdict

The Taylor Gold Label 814e provides tones that are as dazzling and warm as its upscale, classic looks. Built from top-quality tonewoods with innovative new features and meticulous craftsmanship, it's an investment-grade, pro-quality guitar that will provide decades of playing enjoyment before it becomes a treasured family heirloom. **GW**



STREET PRICE: \$4,699 (as tested with SB finish); \$4,499 (natural 814e model)

MANUFACTURER:

Taylor, taylorguitars.com

PROS

- + A dazzling flat-top acoustic with vintage-style looks and timeless sound
- + Very comfortable slim neck profile that provides stellar playability
- + Natural-sounding built-in LR Baggs Element VTC pickup and preamp system

CONS

- Expensive, although the price is justified by the materials and craftsmanship
- Footswitches not included



Heritage Guitars Custom Shop Core Collection H-137

By Paul Riario

BY NOW, ANY review you've read concerning Heritage Guitars will include the storied background of the company founded in 1985 by former Gibson employees in Kalamazoo, Michigan, who continue to build outstanding guitars that follow the original Gibson recipe of craftsmanship. Yes, that's right: all the notable guitar models from Heritage today are made in the same factory and on the original machinery used to handcraft late-Fifties Les Pauls and ES models. We already knew this because Heritage Guitars has been no stranger to *Guitar World* since we reviewed its "truly impressive" Standard H-150 — a guitar that can give a Fifties-era Les Paul a run for its money. Now I'm about to take a stab at a "Special" single-cut model that genuinely epitomizes the impeccable quality and tone that Heritage Guitars is consistently churning out from its Custom Shop with the Core Collection H-137 guitar.

Build Quality & Playability

As a Custom Shop guitar, the Core Collection H-137 is a stunning work of craftsmanship and nearly impossible to fault outside of its "Custom Shop" price tag, which is twice as much as other rival "Special" guitars. While there is no denying the H-137 visibly shares a resemblance to an LP Special — outside of Heritage's signature headstock shape and logo with twin arrow inlay — no one can disagree Heritage's clear-cut refinements turn this time-tested design into a classically refined and remarkable instrument. For example, what could've been a wraparound bridge is upgraded to a tune-o-matic bridge and an aluminum stopbar tailpiece for precise intonation and unabating sustain, and the laser-etched "Heritage" logo Grover-style tuners (instead of button-style) turn with

reliable tuning accuracy. To capture that authentic P-90 tone, Heritage's 225 Classic P-90 pickups are wound in-house and wired to dual volume and tone controls. What's more, the guitar's premium electronics and upgraded hardware consist of CTS 500K potentiometers and Orange Drop .022uF capacitors, a Switchcraft toggle switch and a Pure Tone input jack. In hand, the H-137's single-cutaway slab mahogany body is well-balanced and midweight, with a thinly applied nitrocellulose lacquer in Faded Cherry that mirrors a factory-fresh Fifties-era patina (TV Yellow and Olive Drab finishes are also available). And in the "feel" department, the H-137 is very much a standard-issue Special with a 24 3/4-inch scale length, a mahogany neck with a palm-filling Fifties C-profile, rosewood fingerboard with 22 medium jumbo frets, dot inlays and a bone nut.

Performance & Sounds

I own and have sold many guitars throughout my career, and at one point, I played an LP Special religiously — as the rough-and-tumble live guitar that handled all the biting, single-coil snarl instead of humbuckers. Right now, this H-137 brings back all the joy I remembered from that experience. Strumming it acoustically, it rings like a bell, and the flat, single-slab of its mahogany body sounds fully resonant and responsive plugged in. Running it through a combo platter of a Marshall Jubilee and a Fender Deluxe Reverb, the H-137 is a firecracker, where you hear the raw power exploding from the guitar's dual P-90 voice. The custom-wound 225 Classic P-90 pickups capture all the vintage mojo and touch-sensitive expressiveness you'd expect from these warmer and punchier single coils. The bridge delivers

snappy definition and bite when overdriven, making it slice through any mix with swagger. Having both pickups at play makes the H-137 sound gutsy and full, and once I ran it through my Matchless DC-30, I got all the bell-like jangle you could ask for. Flipping up to the neck pickup reveals a fattened voice with lush articulation and body. Wherever you set the toggle, you have three tonal positions of snappy, gutsy and juicy at your disposal — poised to cover any of the raucous sides of rock, blues and country.

Of course, playing the H-137 is all about exploiting its stripped-down nature, and it delivers on all fronts. It has a Custom Shop setup; so action and playability are dialed in perfectly. Usually on an LP 3+3 headstock, a common hassle is the G-string often gets snagged out of tune, and what's great here is that the nut slots are cut properly, so you can go ahead and play with aggression and abandon and still stay smoothly in tune. Simply put, Heritage's Custom Shop H-137 is a guitar that's been flawlessly executed to deliver raw power and dynamic response, and if you're in the market for a single-cut on steroids with vintage charm, this is the one to wield.

Verdict

The Heritage Core Collection H-137 offers all the classic styling, key playability and powerfully raw tones delivered with aplomb in a Custom Shop "Special" model that exudes simplicity and elegance. **GW**

STREET PRICE: \$3,299

MANUFACTURER:

Heritage Guitars, heritageguitars.com

PROS

- + Impeccable craftsmanship
- + 225 Classic P-90 pickups deliver a wide dynamic range from crisp cleans to full-bodied throttle and bite

CONS

- Expensive



Third Man/Eventide Knife Drop

By Chris Gill

JACK WHITE HAS become the musical-instrument industry's renaissance man of late, collaborating with a variety of manufacturers from boutique builders to the big boys. In fact, at the 2025 NAMM Show, his Third Man company had an

SPECS

CONTROLS: Synth/Attack, Drive/Resonance, Level/Cutoff (second set of parameters accessed via "Alternate Endings" switch)

SWITCHES: "Alternate Endings," filter pre-/post-distortion, upper + sub octave/sub octave, active (on/off) footswitch, octaves (on/off) footswitch, mono/stereo, guitar/line level

JACKS: ¼-inch input, two outputs and expression pedal input (expression pedal not included), mini USB, 9-volt center negative DC adapter (adapter included)

entire booth overflowing with his highly creative and visionary guitar, amps, pedals and more.

White's Third Man workshop recently joined forces with Eventide to develop the mind-numbing Knife Drop pedal, which throws fuzz, octave and synth with envelope follower circuits into a single box to mangle and mingle with each other in ways that they couldn't if you strung together separate external devices.

Build Quality & Usability

Before I get into the pedal itself, I have to mention the incredibly cool and fun packaging with graphics inspired by an obscure Italian giallo film, including a short bio of its mysterious producer/director/score composer, Giovanni Bianco di Terzo (clue: translate from Italian). As for the pedal itself, it's housed in a standard Eventide pedal 4x4-3/8x1-3/8 inch metal box like the Black Hole and Riptide but with eye-catching (or is that eye-slashing?) graphics.

Don't be fooled by the three unassuming-looking knobs along the top edge — these are more devious and multifarious than they look, accompanied by a momentary LED pushbutton that accesses a trio of "alternate endings" or parameters as we call them in 'Merica. These knobs adjust the synth mix, fuzz drive and output level until the alternate ending switch is held down and they mutate into filter envelope attack, filter resonance and cutoff frequency controls.

Right above each of the two footswitches (effect on/off and octaves on/off) are more LED pushbuttons of the latching persuasion for toggling between filter pre- or post-distortion settings (effect on/off) and upper+sub octave or sub octave only settings (octave on/off). The pedal also provides access to five presets, each with its own LED.

There's more action "behind the scenes" where you'll find input, two output and expression pedal ¼-inch jacks, a mini USB jack (for software updates, MIDI



functions and programming via Eventide's free H90 Control software), a guitar/line level switch and a mono/stereo switch. An optional expression pedal can adjust several parameters simultaneously, enabling some truly groovy textures and chilling sound FX.

Sounds

The Knife Drop provides a triple threat of felonious fuzz, ominous octaves and razor-sharp synth/resonant low-pass filter with adjustable attack, resonance and cutoff. Each one of these effects is awesome of its own accord, but the real magic and menace emerges by the way they're combined. These are not meek, mild-mannered effects by any means, and you will likely get chills every time you engage it. The octave fuzz effects are thick, delivering a shredding grind that sounds like the cosmos being shattered. The synth effect may be monophonic but it can make individual notes sound so huge that there's really no space for harmony. Even with all three effects pushing hard it only gives you the noise you want and none you don't need.

Dialing in settings for the synth section can be a bit intimidating for players who aren't accustomed to the secret mating

"These are not meek, mild-mannered effects, and you will likely get chills every time you engage it"

habits of envelope filters and how they react when subjected to plucked and stroked strings. For example, delayed attack settings will force you to slow down your playing and milk each note for all it's worth. However, there's no harm in randomly tweaking knobs and going on an exploration mission — just make sure you memorize how to save settings because the complexity of the parameters' interactions can make sounds difficult to duplicate.

The Knife Drop is obviously perfect for Jack White-style space-age alternative punk blues and mutant pop, but it's also quite wicked for low-down nas-tay funk, psychedelic psilocybin jazz and genres that haven't even been invented yet. I personally dig sounds both wild and weird, and within minutes this pedal had me composing crunchy concertos with beefy Bootsy basslines and hallucinogenic Hazel harmonies. Sold!

Verdict

Providing fuzz, octave and synth effects in a single box that can be combined to dial in a multitude of diabolical effects, the Third Man/Eventide Knife Drop delivers much more than the sum of its parts. It's perfect for players who prefer aggressive effects with a penchant for violence. **GW**

STREET PRICE: \$299

MANUFACTURER:
Eventide, eventideaudio.com

PROS

- + Furious fuzz, ominous octaves and sinister synths with funky filtering all in one box
- + Five presets are instantly accessible while playing live
- + Streamlined control configuration
- + Ability to manipulate several parameters at once using optional expression pedal

CONS

- Monophonic synth section limits playing to single-note lines (only when the synth effect is utilized)
- Dialing in sounds can be challenging for users not accustomed to envelope filters or synths



Abasi Concepts Micro-Aggressor

By Paul Riario

IN ADDITION TO being recognized as a trailblazing guitarist, Tosin Abasi has established himself as a savvy entrepreneur. Like John Petrucci and Joe Satriani before him, Abasi has cultivated a signature range of guitars and pedals that cater to his unique style and curated tones under the name Abasi Concepts, an LA-based company he co-owns with COO Ivan Chopik. While his brand is mostly recognized for its guitar models, Abasi has decided to release his first signature compressor pedal, the Micro-Aggressor. The Micro-Aggressor stands out as a boost-style compressor with two discrete parallel compression circuits built in. And if that sounds unusual, it is. But once you understand how both seamlessly interact to enhance your signal and infuse your attack, you may never want to live without this tone-shaping compressor on your pedalboard.

Build Quality & Usability

Out of its fancy box, the Micro-Aggressor appears well-built with a compact form factor and a modern-looking faceplate (that lights up the name and blinks the incoming signal). It's surprisingly lightweight as a stompbox and follows in line with other desirable pedalboard features like "non-tone-sucking" relay true-bypass switching, a durable soft-touch footswitch, top-mounted I/O jacks and a 9-volt power jack. Abasi Concepts states the pedal features a premium transformer at its core for its hi-fi compression, and I don't dispute that. The four ridge-textured knobs with compass arrow indicators feel high-end as the controls for Level, Clarity, Bloom and Smack. While the orientation of the knobs appears as a design consideration, they're actually smartly arranged with Level and Smack on top and adjacent to each other as the output level controls of the primary (Level/Boost) and secondary (Smack) parallel compression circuits. Also, Level controls the amount of signal boost with a noon setting achieving unity gain. Just below Level is Clarity, a tilt-style EQ that brings more high-end definition as you sweep up clockwise, and thickened warmth in counter-clockwise positions. At the bottom left is Bloom, which administers the amount of compression in the primary circuit and, in essence, sets the sensitivity of how much the compression is felt. Accordingly, Smack — the secondary parallel compression circuit — works in tandem with Bloom for added transparency and low-end content.

Performance & Sounds

The Micro-Aggressor eschews typical compressor controls — like Attack, Sensitivity, Ratio and Threshold — and boils it down to two knobs for Bloom and Smack to duplicate their particular functions in parallel paths. Using a compressor can seem foreign to guitarists, but here, you won't need to crack open a manual because the Micro-Aggressor compels you to use your ears to dial in the proper amount of attack and compressed coloration. Depending upon your rig and application, a compressor can do wonders for your tone or get in the way of it — but for enhanced compression that boosts your tone, the Micro-Aggressor is wonderful. If I had any criticism, I'd say because of its simplified control set, the Micro-Aggressor has limited functionality compared to other stompbox compressors. Still, this pedal seems more fine-tuned in its dynamic response and percussive attack for players who occupy tapping, avant-garde smacking and popping styles, and even those who need to elevate cleaner runs in

the jazzy, bebop space. I found dialing Bloom upwards best emphasizes the rich compression required for those techniques, whereas Smack increases thickened resonance as you move it clockwise or can tighten low end for transparency in the other direction. That said, if you're already using mid- to hi-gain from an amp, you'll need to dial back Bloom and Smack for the proper threshold so as not to clamp down on transients. Furthermore, the pedal's Clarity control comes in handy here to cleanly define any dense overtones or chugged riffage and articulate pick attack.

Turning on the Micro-Aggressor, you'll quickly hear how it can fatten and boost a clean signal well over the top with minimal coloration while latching onto notes for lingering sustain. It's a useful and smoothly compressed polish that accentuates your playing and the sound of your guitar, and by the same token, a baritone or other down-tuned and extended-range instruments. Whether I'm using a Les Paul or a Tele, I like setting Bloom around noon and Smack just past that for a "soft knee" compression curve, which cushions the signal and prominently lifts whatever I'm playing with plenty of sustain and body. It's quite pronounced, and the kind of compression that can boost or intensify your attack — so much so that you'll never turn it off.

Verdict

The Micro-Aggressor from Abasi Concepts flips the script on traditional compressors, coming in hot as a boost-style compressor with dual parallel compression circuits that are complementary. One path maintains thickness and clarity; the other elevates dynamics for pure sonic enhancement. For those who need more attack, the Micro-Aggressor is a nouveau compressor conceptualized for metal and progressive styles. **GW**

STREET PRICE: \$249

MANUFACTURER: Abasi Concepts, abasiconcepts.com

PROS

- + Smartly designed boost-style compressor with dual parallel compression circuits
- + Intensifies dynamics and adds percussive attack to signal
- + Responsive compression that enhances tapping and popping styles for guitar and bass
- + Uncomplicated control set

CONS

- Slightly limited functionality
- Compression is not for everyone



Gary with
Idles guitarist
Lee Kiernan

EarthQuaker Devices Gary

By Chris Gill

DESIGNED IN COLLABORATION with guitarist Lee Kiernan of Idles (whose records, T-shirts and commemorative plates we hoard and treasure), Gary is a versatile dirt box with a split personality, with one side providing gnarly automatic pulse-width modulation fuzz while the other side offers robust op-amp overdrive based on the green channel of EarthQuaker's classic Gray Channel dual overdrive. Mix up the letters of "Gray" and you get "Gary," which is a perfectly cromulent name for a schizophrenic stompbox if it's anything like the Garys we know (you know who you are, Gary!). The PWM fuzz and overdrive circuits are independent, each featuring a duo of controls and separate on/off footswitch so you can switch between or blend the effects at will.

Build Quality & Usability

The Gary pedal's design is about as simple as it gets. On the left side representing the overdrive section, there's a big knob labeled "Go" that adjust the gain level and a smaller "That's It" knob a.k.a. master volume. Directly below those knobs is the OD effect's footswitch with an LED. For the pulse-width modulation fuzz section on the right (which comes first in the signal chain), the big knob labeled "Yes!" dials in the sensitivity of the square wave fuzz's modulation and the smaller "Oosh" knob controls the fuzz effect's master volume. Just like the OD section, a footswitch for the fuzz section is located directly below its corresponding knobs. The names are really meaningless, encouraging players to use their ears to make adjustments, which is the way it should be. The large knobs are

designed to be easy to grab for quickly tweaking settings in the heat of performance, while the smaller master volume knobs are more set and forget for the most part. One extra cool added bonus is the side-mounted 1/4-inch jack for an optional expression pedal that can be used to manually sweep the pulse width.

Sounds

Why would anyone want to combine fuzz and overdrive in a single box? Simple, young grasshopper. Generally, the more gritty and spitty true square wave fuzz gets as its transistors are pushed to oblivion, the lower the volume output gets. To avoid getting lost in the background when performing, the fuzz effect needs some extra boost, and nothing fills that bill quite as well as overdrive. As far as Gary's fuzz goes, it's on the more extreme side of the genre, with glorious splatty textures that can be tweaked to horn-like envelopes and seemingly endless compressed sustain. Pulse-width modulation is the secret sauce that makes this effect more dynamically touch responsive than the average fuzz box. The overdrive section can be dialed to clean boost to pump up the dBs or it can be pushed hard to pile on luscious dirt that turns into sonic meltdown mayhem when the fuzz is added in. The expression pedal control function is plug and play, and the textures it generates are so cool that you'll

"Gary offers great two-in-one value in a compact box that won't hog space"



wonder why you were too lazy to bother with an expression pedal before.

Verdict

If your taste in fuzz leans toward the extreme, Gary has the personality to remain your lifelong best friend. Add an overdrive that sounds great on its own and can boost those fuzz effects up to the front and center of a mix, and Gary offers great two-in-one value in a compact box that won't hog space on your pedalboard. **GW**

STREET PRICE: \$199

MANUFACTURER: EarthQuaker Devices, earthquakerdevices.com

PROS

- + One of the most gloriously twisted and dynamically expressive fuzz effects known to mankind
- + Useful overdrive circuit that sounds great on its own or can boost fuzz to stage domination levels
- + Great value since it's two independent effects in a single box

CONS

- Fuzz tones may be too extreme, especially for people who wear Birkenstocks and drink chardonnay
- Control names may confuse small animals and agitate humor-challenged individuals

FOLLOW THE GROOVE

by Cory Wong



For video of this lesson, go to guitarworld.com/may2025

HOOK 'EM

Creating catchy, signature rhythm guitar parts

HELLO, AND WELCOME to my new column for *Guitar World*! Over the next few months, I will demonstrate many of the approaches I use to craft guitar parts. I'd like to start by addressing rhythm guitar playing and what I believe should be the mindset of a rhythm guitarist: why you should care, why it matters, and how you can make it fun!

For some players, their approach to rhythm guitar is, "Oh, someone else gets to do all of the fun stuff while I do this!" I suppose one could feel that way because they're not exploring all of the available creative options. When it comes to rhythm playing, my mindset is the momentum of the song and considering whether I need to add something harmonic and/or melodic.

Oftentimes, the keyboards or bass are covering the chord changes, so I don't need to play them. This gives me the freedom to think about melody or ways to outline or enhance the harmony. For example, if the chord chart says "G," there are many ways to interpret that. I could play **FIGURE 1**, which is a straight G barre chord strummed in a syncopated 16th-note rhythm. Or I could play **FIGURE 2**, utilizing an open G5 voicing. The same approach applies if the chart says G7, G9 or Gm. In these examples, I'm just playing a chord; it certainly doesn't sound like a song or riff.

One thing we can strive to do is make a rhythm part sound like a hook, iconic to the song. For example, if a cover band is playing the song, they would have to play that specific part. **FIGURE 3** presents a rhythm part that's both melodic and rhythmically syncopated. It contributes to the momentum of the groove while also being so specific that one could sing it.

Let's say I don't need as much harmony, but the song could use some rhythmic push and melodic content. Instead of being the "chords person," I'll think of myself as a bongo player who can play pitches. **FIGURE 4** offers an example of this approach: while strumming steady 16th notes, I alternate between sounding single notes and muted strings to create a rhythm part that's both harmonically and rhythmically strong.

Imagine playing multiple roles. Within a song, there might be a big chordal accent on

FIG. 1 G

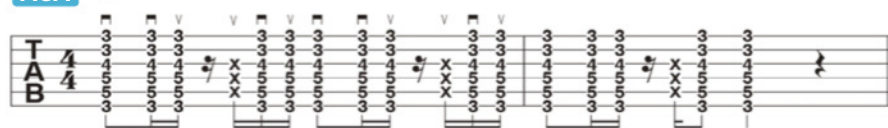


FIG. 2 G5

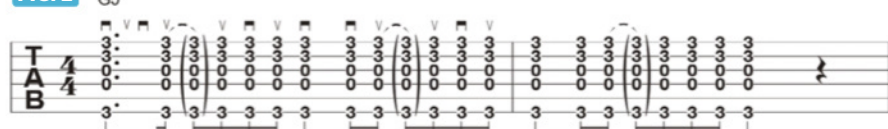


FIG. 3 G(9)

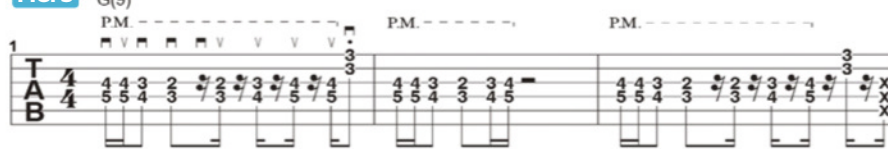


FIG. 4 N.C.(G)

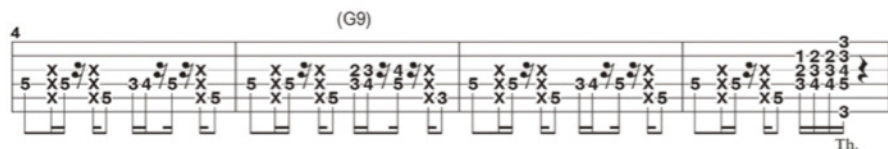
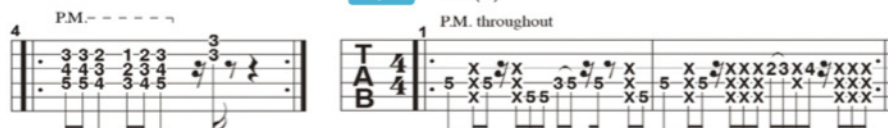


FIG. 5 G9 N.C.

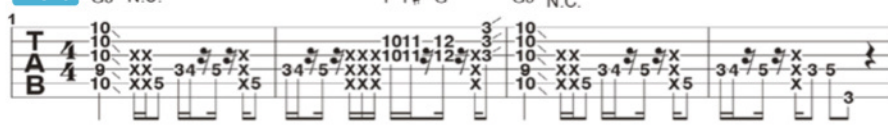


FIG. 6 (G9)



"one" played by the keyboards, followed by a percussion riff and then bookended by a horn phrase. I can roll all three of those elements into a single guitar part, as in **FIGURE 5**. I start with an accent on G9, followed by muted 16th notes and a single-note melody, then, in bar 2 by a two-note harmonized melody. **FIGURE 6**

offers another example, played at a slightly slower tempo.

The key is to create a unique part. My rhythm guitar approach can best be described as looking to create a song within the song, which fosters a more creative and expressive mindset that can help give the song a unique musical fingerprint.

Funk, rock and jazz pro Cory Wong has made a massive dent in the guitar scene since emerging in 2010. Along the way, he's released a slew of high-quality albums, either solo or with the Fearless Flyers, the latest of which are *Starship Syncopation* and *The Fearless Flyers IV*, both from 2024.



For video of this lesson, go to
guitarworld.com/may2025

BLUES EMERALD

A tribute to the great Rory Gallagher, part 1

THIS MONTH'S COLUMN is dedicated to the legendary Irish blues-rock guitarist Rory Gallagher, whose last name I recently learned should be pronounced, "Galla-her." I've been saying it wrong for my whole life! Later this year, on July 1, 2 and 3, I will be playing a three-night tribute to Rory at The Marquee in his hometown of Cork, Ireland. The shows are sanctioned by Peter Aikin, who was Rory's promoter, as well as Rory's brother Donal and Donal's son, Daniel. While I was preparing for these shows, it was politely mentioned to me the proper pronunciation of Rory's last name.

During rehearsals, the default for the tunes we'd be playing was Rory's landmark double live album, *Irish Tour '74*. The songs we focused on were "Bullfrog Blues," "Cradle Rock," "Who's That Coming?" and a few others.

When I was a kid and first heard **FIGURE 1**, which is along the lines of the initial notes of "Cradle Rock," the explosive opening track on this seminal album, I was floored! The intensity of Rory's guitar playing — the emotion, the sound and his incredible attack — was mind-blowing for me. These riffs are based on the E blues scale (E, G, A, B $\flat$, B, D). **FIGURE 2** is along the lines of the song's primary main riff, which moves from single-note phrases, performed with fast hammer/pulls from the open A string to B at the 2nd fret, to accented G5 and A5 chords.

Rory had a great way of choking down on the pick and picking hard, resulting in an array of fantastic sounding pinch harmonics (P.H.). **FIGURE 3** offers an example of E blues-scale riffs, with each note sounded with an aggressive downstroke in order to accentuate these harmonics.

Rory also possessed a fast and expressive vibrato, as demonstrated in **FIGURE 4**. This four-bar phrase is based primarily on the E minor pentatonic scale (E, G, A, B, D) and moves to the E blues scale in bars 3 and 4. I begin in 8th position, and after the initial whole-step bend and release from A to B at the 10th fret on the B string, I land again on the A and apply heavy vibrato. I then repeat the bend-and-release and follow it with E, on the G string's 9th fret, which I again aggressively shake. As

FIG. 1

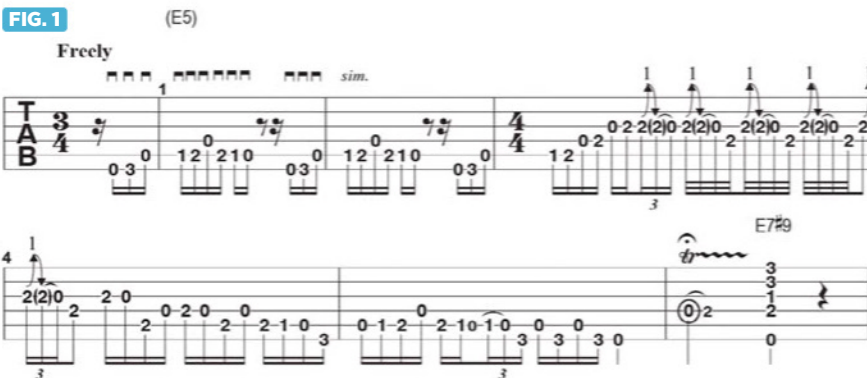


FIG. 2

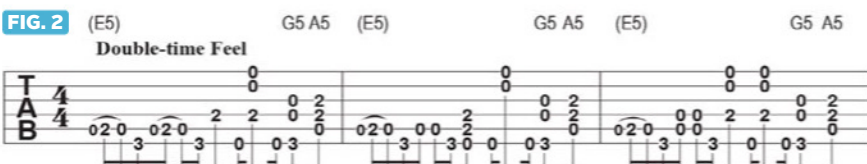


FIG. 3

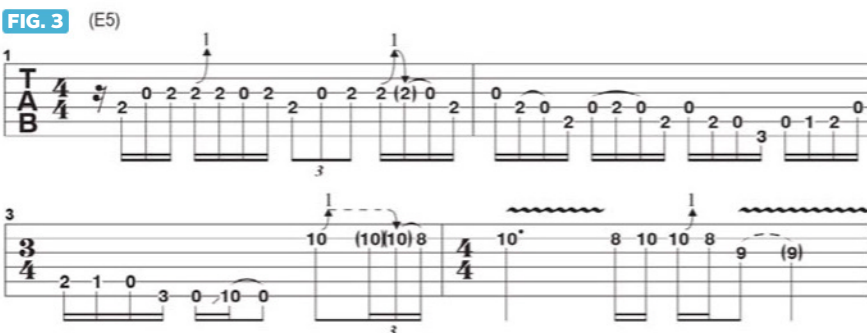
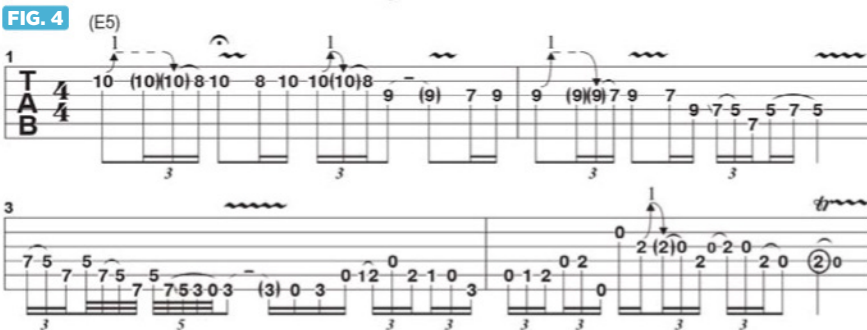


FIG. 4



I move through the rest of the phrase, I add a similarly heavy vibrato to each held note.

Rory was also an incredible slide player, in a variety of tunings. "Cradle Rock" is played in standard tuning, and Rory would grab a slide and play blistering solos, which can be heard on every live version of this track. An added bonus is that *Irish Tour '74* was filmed, so you can watch a lot of performance

footage featured on this recording.

Next month, we'll delve into a deeper examination of Rory's slide playing. He also has a great acoustic catalog, which included covers of Mississippi John Hurt songs played on a Martin D-28 or a D-35, and Rory's voice was, of course, phenomenal. Definitely check out as much of Rory's music as you can!

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/may2025

THE BLUES AND BEYOND

Finding new approaches to blues soloing

LAST MONTH, I demonstrated a Jimmy Reed-inspired eight-bar rhythm figure played with a funky, syncopated half-time feel, moving from the I (one) chord, A7, to the V (five) chord, E7, and back to the I, A7. As I almost always do, I perform the part with fingerpicking, using a thumbpick in conjunction with my first two fingers. I'd now like to demonstrate an improvised solo over this eight-bar rhythm part.

This eight-bar form consists of two bars of A7, followed by four bars of E7, and then wraps up with two bars of A7. Very often, I like to "follow" the chords when soloing; this means that I base my lines on scales and/or arpeggios that relate directly to each of the chords in the progression.

FIGURE 1 presents an improvised eight-bar solo. In bars 1 and 2, over A7, the lines are based primarily on the A blues scale (A, C, D, E♭, E, G), with the inclusion of C♯, the major 3rd. This is a common device in blues soloing, as it strengthens the connection between the solo and the related dominant 7 chord, which in this case is A7 (A, C♯, E, G).

In bar 3, when the chord changes to E7 (E, G♯, B, D) I move to lines based on E minor pentatonic (E, G, A, B, D) with the inclusion of the major 3rd of E, G♯, in combination with some phrases based on E major pentatonic (E, F♯, G♯, B, C♯).

FIGURE 2 illustrates the A blues scale in 5th position, which is the basis for the first lick in the solo. In **FIGURES 3** and **4**, you can see that, for this first phrase, I alternate the order of the notes, starting on A and moving up a minor 3rd to C, and then down a 4th to G, then back up to A. This up-down-up contour then continues through the A minor pentatonic scale in this position.

The up-down-up approach can also be applied to the A blues scale (A, C, D, E♭, E, G), as demonstrated in **FIGURE 5**. Here, the E♭ note (the ♭5) is included in the pattern, which serves to add a slight change to the contour of the line.

At the end of bar 1 of **FIGURE 1**, I move down to 4th position to play E♭ on the B string. This move is focused on in **FIGURE 6**. After sounding the E♭ at the beginning of bar 1, I shift back up to 5th position and

All examples are performed fingerstyle, with a thumbpick.

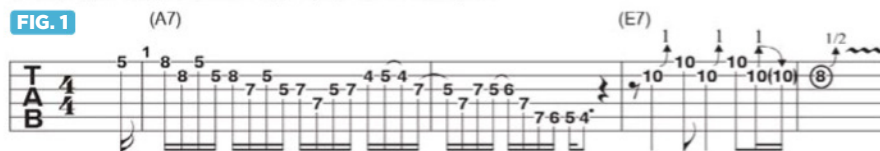
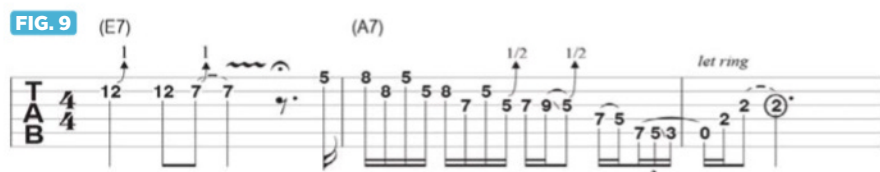
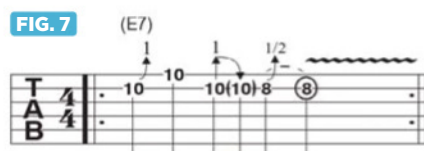
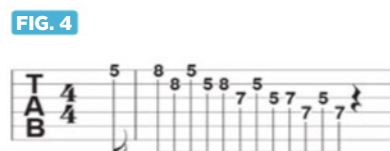
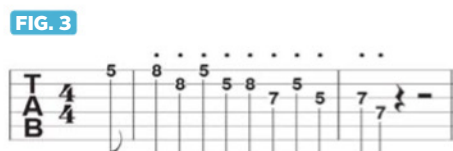


FIG. 2 A blues scale



then finish the line with the ascending chromatic row B-C-C♯ on the A string.

FIGURE 7 represents the shift to E7 and E minor pentatonic, and **FIGURE 8** illustrates a lick I learned from the great Roy Buchanan, starting with a double-stop hammer-on on the middle two strings, from D and G up to E and G♯. This is followed by an oblique bend: I bend D on the B string

up to E while holding a G♯ on the high E string. **FIGURE 9** represents the way the solo wraps up, with a simple E major pentatonic lick followed by a restatement of the phrase that I began with.

This will be the last installment of Tele-Pathy for now, so I hope these columns have been helpful to you. Thanks for reading!

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*.

HARDWIRED

by Jared James Nichols



For video of this lesson, go to
guitarworld.com/may2025

SNAP 'N' ROLL

String “snapping,” and utilizing banjo rolls

THIS MONTH, I'D like to delve deeper into what I feel are the advantages of fingerpicking. There are so many sounds to be discovered when one gets away from using a pick. I like to incorporate “chicken pickin’” sounds, as well as snapping the strings against the fretboard, to give my playing some “snap, crackle and pop.”

To me, an important determining factor in the sound and feel of a riff is which pick-hand finger I use to attack certain notes. For example, **FIGURE 1** shows a bluesy riff based on the G minor pentatonic scale (G, B $\flat$, C, D, F). I begin on a high B $\flat$ note, which I pick with my index finger, snapping the string against the fretboard while bending it up a half step to B. My thumb then picks an F “ghost note” on the B string, followed by a snapped and vibrato-ed G root note on the high E string. On beat 4 of bar 1, after bending C to D on the G string, I incorporate a “chicken pickin’” sound by alternately picking the G string with my thumb and index finger: the thumb picks the fret-hand-muted notes (indicated by Xs), and the index finger picks the open G note.

Players that come to mind in regard to this technique are Johnny “Guitar” Watson, Albert King and Albert Collins. **FIGURE 2** presents a lick played in Collins’ distinctive style. Here, I move from a low G root note to an aggressively snapped and vibrato-ed high G. I begin by alternately picking with my thumb and index finger, and the last four notes are all thumb-picked.

A good exercise is to take a pentatonic scale and snap every note. In **FIGURE 3**, the index finger picks every note in the G minor pentatonic scale.

Ultimately, you don’t want each note to have the same articulation, so it’s important to experiment with the amount of pressure you apply to a string when snapping it. In **FIGURES 4** and **5**, I change my fingerpicking attack slightly for each note.

It’s really about an attitude adjustment! This is a great concept for spicing up a simple riff. **FIGURE 6** offers a longer phrase, in which I vary the intensity of my pick attack to add feeling and musical expression.

Another of my favorite fingerpicking techniques is the “banjo roll,” which

All examples are performed fingerstyle.

FIG. 1 (G7)

FIG. 2 (G7)

FIG. 3 G minor pentatonic scale

FIG. 4 (G7)

FIG. 5 (G7)

FIG. 6 (G7)

FIG. 7 E
* p = thumb i = index finger m = middle finger

FIG. 8 (E)

FIG. 9 (E)

FIG. 10 (E)

involves successively picking three adjacent strings with the thumb and first two fingers, rolling from the low to high. **FIGURE 7** is played in the key of E on the top three strings and consists of the notes G $\sharp$, B and E, picked in this manner.

In **FIGURE 8**, I use the same fingerpicking technique while moving the notes on the G string from G $\sharp$ to A to B and back. In

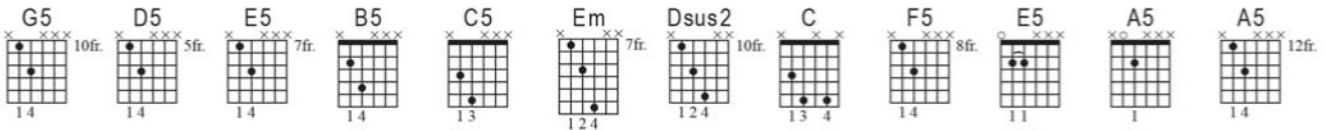
FIGURE 9, I add B $\flat$ to the mix, moving from G $\sharp$ to A to B $\flat$ to B and then back down, and in **FIGURE 10** I move all the way up to the 12th fret and back in a quicker rhythm.

Alternating between snapping the strings against the fretboard and incorporating banjo rolls is a great way to get your playing “out of the box,” especially when you add some speed to the rolls.

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

Words and Music by **STEVE HARRIS** • Transcribed by **JEFF PERRIN**

All music sounds one whole step lower than written.



1., 2., 3.

(B5)

1

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

TAB 4/4

4 5

4 4 4 5 4 5 7 4 5

5 4 5 4 5 7

(2) (2) (2)

4 5

Bass

TAB 4/4

4 5

4 4 4 5 4 5 7 4 5

5 4 5 4 5 7

(2) (2)

4 5

4.

(E5)

6 Gtr. 2

Gtr. 1

Bass

B (0:26)

(♩ = 128)

N.C. (E5)

Gtrs. 1 and 2

G5 D5

N.C. (F#5)

(G5)

(play 4 times)

(play 3 times)

10 P.M. -----

Bass

*Substitute note in parentheses third time.

C (0:46, 6:30) (♩ = 128)

E5

B5

C5

D5

N.C. (E5)

D5

Gtrs. 3 and 4 play Fill 2 second time (see below bar 18)

14 P.M. -----

1. 2.

1. I've been
4. You're

N.C. (E5)

D5

N.C. (E5)

D5

18 P.M. -----

Fill 2 (6:30)

E5

B5

C5

D5

Gtr. 3 (E-string notes)

TAB

Gtr. 4 (B-string notes)

D 1st, 2nd, and 4th Verses (1:03, 1:38, 6:47)

(1.) looking so long for you now You won't get away from my grasp
 living so long in hiding In hiding behind that false mask
 (2.) standing in the wings There I wait for the curtain to fall
 knowing the terror and holding I have on you all
 (4.) running and hiding in dreams I'm always there
 Phantom of the Opera I'm the Devil I'm just out to scare
 N.C. (G) (E5)

21 P.M. -----

1. 2. 4th verse, skip ahead to [Q] Outro (bar 137)

I've been And I'm the And Yeah I

24 P.M. -----

E Chorus (1:21, 1:55)

I know that you know that I ain't got long now to last
 looks and my feelings are just the remains of my past
 you know that I'm gonna scratch you and main you and maul
 you know you're helpless from my mesmerizing catcall

28 E5 B5 C5 D5 N.C. (E5) D5

Bass Fig. 1

1., 3., 4. 4th ending, skip ahead to [E] (bar 35) 2. Go back to [D] 2nd Verse (bar 21)

32 N.C. (E5) D5 N.C. (E5) D5 2. I'm

end Bass Fig. 1

*Substitute notes in parentheses on 4th ending.

G (2:15)

41 P.M.

Dsus2 C Em E5 D5
Rhy. Fill 2 — end Rhy. Fig. 1

D5 C5 E5 D5
P.M.

Bass Fill 2 — end Bass Fig. 2

C5 E5 F5 G5

65 12 15 12 14 12 15 12 14 15 12 14 14 12 14 12 14 (14) (14) 1 3 5 2 3 5 3 5 7 3 5 7 4 5 7 5 4 5 16

E5 C5 E5 F5 G5

68 1/2 1/2 1/2 1/2 18 (18)(18) 18 (18) 14 12 13 12 13 12 14 15 13 15 13 12

Gtrs. 1 and 2 play first three bars of Rhy. Fig. 2 (see bar 57)

Bass plays Bass Fill 3 (see below bar 75)

(3:30)
Freely

E5

Gtr. 3

72 15 17 17 12 8

Gtrs. 1 and 2

2 2 0 2 2 0 12 8

Bass

12 12 12 12

w/slight fdbk. (let ring next two bars)

(3:34)
(♩. = 144)

(E5)

Gtr. 3

74 12 17 17 12 8

(sustain note for next 16 bars)

*Chord symbols in parentheses reflect overall harmony.

Bass

12 14 14 16 14 14 16 14 14 16 14 14 16 14 14 16 14 14 16 14 14 16 14 14 16

Rhy. Fill 1 (2:31, 2:45)

Em E5

Gtr. 2 P.M.

T 4 4 7 9 12 7 9 9

A 4 7 9 12 7 9 9

B 4 7 9 12 7 9 9

Bass Fill 1 (2:31, 2:45)

Em E5

T 4 4 7 9 9 7 7

A 4 7 9 9 7 7

B 4 7 9 9 7 7

Bass Fill 3 (3:28)

F5 G5

T 6 8 8 10 10 12 12

A 6 8 8 10 10 12 12

B 6 8 8 10 10 12 12

(Em) (D) (C) N.C.

85

19 15 17 17 14 15 15 12 13 17 15 13 17 15 13 18 17 15 17 16 14

15 12 12 14 10 10 12 8 8 17 15 13 17 15 13 17 15 13 17 15 13

7° 7° 7 7 7° 10 10 10° (10) 10 10° 12 12 12 12° (12) 12 12° 10 9 7 10 9 7 10 9 7 10 9 7

(Em) (D) (C) N.C.

89

L (4:31)

E5
Gtrs. 1 and 2
Rhy. Fig. 3

G5

A5

C5

N.C. (B5)

end Rhy. Fig. 3

93

E5
Gtrs. 1 and 2 play Rhy. Fig. 3 (see bar 93)

G5

A5

C5

N.C. (B5)

Bass

97

M (4:44)

(♩ = 109)

E5
Gtrs. 1 and 2
Rhy. Fig. 4
P.M.

G5

A5

C5

D5

end Rhy. Fig. 4

101

end Bass Fig. 4

2nd time, skip ahead to **P** (bar 129)

*Note in parentheses played second time only.

end Rhy. Fig. 5

Bass plays Bass Fig. 5 three times (see bar 113)

G5 A5 C5 D5

119

E5

Gtr. 3

121

G5 A5 C5 D5

123

E5

Gtr. 4

125

Go back to [N] (bar 105)

G5 A5 C5 D5

127 P.M.

P (6:12)

E5
Gtrs. 1 and 2 play Rhy. Fig. 4 twice (see bar 101)
Gtr. 3

129

Gtr. 4

Bass plays Bass Fig. 5 simile (see bar 113)

Go back to **C** (bar 14)

Q **Outro (7:04)**

137 Gtrs. 1 and 2

Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 (see bar 23)

haunt	you	I	taunt	you	I	torture	you	back	at	my	lair
E5			B5			C5		D5			E5

94 GUITAR WORLD • MAY 2025

Performance Notes

HOW TO PLAY THIS MONTH'S SONGS By Jimmy Brown

"PHANTOM OF THE OPERA"

Ghost



GHOST'S UNHOLY FATHER Tobias Forge and his band of Nameless Ghouls did this epic Iron Maiden metal classic musical justice with their

faithful, tributary cover, nailing all of the original arrangement's ensemble guitar and bass parts to a T. They also put their own creative stamp on their reading of the song, with some suped-up original lead solo licks and a crisper, more modern-sounding production, in the process breathing new life into the song and helping to introduce it and Iron Maiden's glorious legacy to a new generation.

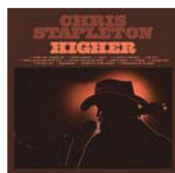
The first two minutes of the song feature intense and tightly articulated and synchronized triplet riffs, which offer a great study in harmonizing single notes in diatonic 3rds within the E natural minor scale, also known as the E Aeolian mode (E, F[♯], G, A, B, C, D). Since the drums don't enter until section B (bar 10), performing the song's opening riffs tightly requires a clear count-off, leading up to the pickup notes. Foot tapping on each beat will help ensure a steady rhythm and help the guitar and bass parts tightly lock-in together.

The pummeling triplets feel, or "metal shuffle," abruptly switches to an even-eighths (commonly referred to as a "straight-eighths") groove at section G (bar 37), with the underlying tempo unchanged. Notice the wide-stretch Em arpeggio voicing in the Guitar 2 part in bars 37-40, 42 and 43. When reaching up to fret the G note with your pinkie at the 12th fret on the 3rd string, you can momentarily let go of the lower E and B notes and allow your fret hand to drift and shift up slightly, which is fine, as the notes are intentionally articulated separately here, with palm muting, and aren't intended to ring together.

More fret-hand stretches are required for the harmonized arpeggios at section P (bars 129-132), as Guitars 3 and 4 play wide-interval hammer-ons and pull-offs on their top two strings. These obviously need to be done with the index finger and pinkie. Allow your wrist to rotate as needed to maximize your reach here.

"WHITE HORSE"

Chris Stapleton



THIS EMOTIVE NEW song by Chris Stapleton serves up a hearty helping of the popular, prolific songwriter's characteristically

simple but well-crafted "meat and potatoes" country-rock-style electric guitar riffing and chordal accompaniment, along with his great singing and lyrics and some tastefully simple melodic lead playing.

All the guitar parts in this song are performed *as if* they were in the key of A minor, with a capo placed at the 4th fret transposing everything up four semitones, or half steps, to the concert key of C[♯] minor, which is the key that bassist J.T. Cure plays the song in and in which Stapleton sings it. This is why we included two sets of chord names throughout our transcription — one for the guitars and a courtesy one for the bass and vocals.

As is common practice when using a capo, you need to disregard the frets that are behind it and think of the capo as now being the nut, or "zero" fret, in terms of visualizing chord shapes and their names and reckoning all the tablature numbers, which are notated relative to the capo position. So, in this case, "0" is actually the 4th fret, "1" is the actual 5th fret, "2" is the 6th fret, "3" is the 7th fret, etc. Everything is "+4." For example, when playing the notes tabbed as "10" and "8" in bars 6 and 7, know that those notes are played at the actual 14th and 12th frets, respectively.

When performing "White Horse" live, Stapleton forgoes recreating the big one-and-one-half-step over-bends at the 9th fret on the G string (which is the actual 13th fret) in bars 42 and 51, no doubt to keep his capo-ed guitar from slipping out of tune. Instead, he frets what would be the target pitch of the bend — G, relative to the capo, B at concert pitch — with his middle finger on the B string's 8th fret, which is the actual 12th fret. Doing so sounds perfectly fine, with only a slightly noticeable difference in articulation — two extra pick attacks, versus a smooth bend-release portamento — and keeps things solid and more easily manageable in the always potentially hairy live performance situation.

"PAPERBACK WRITER"

The Beatles



WRITTEN PRIMARILY BY Paul McCartney, this 1966 Beatles classic from the band's creatively transformative middle period features one

of the most iconic electric guitar riffs ever recorded, allegedly performed by McCartney on an Epiphone Casino, with its bridge-pickup tone overdriven by his Vox AC30 amplifier.

The riff is introduced in bar 5, following a cascading round of rich, a cappella vocal harmonies, and is built on a root-5th-octave G5 power chord shape, with the index finger barring the bottom three strings at the 3rd fret and the ring finger and pinkie adding notes at the 5th fret on the A and D strings, respectively. Notice the inclusion of the open B note with the fretted F in bar 6, which seems to have been a "happy accident." The open B note adds a warm G7 coloring (G, B, D, F) to the otherwise 3rd-less riff.

The riff is best picked with a combination of downstrokes and upstrokes, with the low G notes down-picked and the higher notes either up-picked or down-picked, depending on your preference.

The guitar settles into a supportive role during the verses with a Chuck Berry-style root-5th/6th boogie pattern, which requires a demanding four-fret stretch. If you find this shape, with the 3rd finger fretting the D note at the 5th fret on the A string, too arduous to form and hold, try fretting that note with your 2nd finger instead. As the hand's first two digits naturally have much more flexibility between them than do the 3rd and 4th fingers, this alternate grip should facilitate a more comfortable reach up to the 7th fret.

Another advantage of using this 1-2-4 fingering is that it can enable you to combine Guitar 2's high, ringing G5 chords from *Rhy. Fill 1* (see bottom of page 102) with the low-string boogie pattern, by fretting the top two strings with the base of your index finger at the 3rd fret as it holds down the low G note on the 6th string and arches over the unfretted D and G strings. You could do the same thing at the 8th fret with the C5 and C6 chords in bars 15 and 16.

"WHITE HORSE"

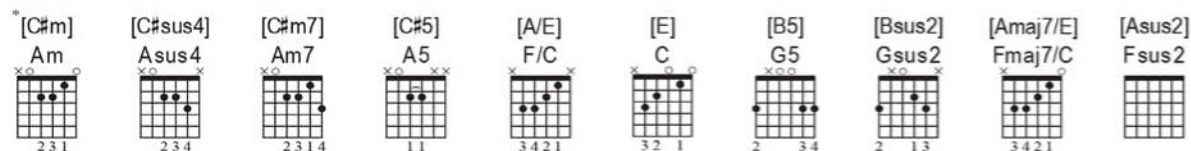
Chris Stapleton

As heard on **HIGHER**

Words and Music by DANIEL WILSON and CHRIS STAPLETON • Transcribed by JEFF PERRIN

All guitars are capoed at the 4th fret.

Bass tuning (low to high): E, A, D, G.



*All chord shapes and tablature positions are relative to the capo.
Chord names in brackets reflect concert-key harmony [key of C# minor].

A Intro (0.00) (0.08)
Moderately Slow ♩ = 75

[C#m] [C#sus4] [C#m] [C#m7]
Am Asus4 Am Am7

Gtr. 1 (acous.)
w/pick and fingers
let ring throughout

(cymbal roll)

Gtr. 2 (acous.)
w/pick and fingers
let ring throughout

Am Asus4 Am Am7 Am Asus4

Gtr. 3 (elec. w/overdrive)

Gtr. 1

Gtr. 2

[C#m] [C#sus4] [C#m] [C#m7] [C#m] [C#sus4]
Bass

"WHITE HORSE"

WORDS AND MUSIC BY DANIEL WILSON AND CHRIS STAPLETON.
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Am Am7 Am Asus4 Am

6

[C#m] [C#m7] [C#m] [C#sus4] [C#m]

B (0:33)

* A5

** Gtrs. 1 and 2 (elec. w/overdriven tone)
(w/pick)

9

[C#5]

Bass

9/ (11) 11 11 9

*Chord symbols reflect overall harmony.

**Composite: Two guitars arr. for one part.

11

[C#5]

C 1st Verse (0:46) (♩ = 73)

This

love

is gettin'

kind of dangerous

[A/E]

[E]

[B5]

[C#m]

F/C

C

G5

Am

Gtr. 1

Rhy. Fig. 1

13 let ring throughout

13

[A/E] [E] [B5] [C#m]

[illegible]

My my it's turning like a cloud of dust

17 F/C C G5 Am

[A/E] [E] [B5] [C#m]

The image shows a musical score for a song. The top staff is a guitar melody with chords F/C, C, G5, and Am. The bottom staff is a bass line with chords [A/E], [E], [B5], and [C#m]. The melody includes various techniques like triplets and bends, while the bass line features fret numbers and bends. The lyrics 'My my it's turning like a cloud of dust' are written above the melody.

My heart always wants to run Oh oh oh If you want a

F/C C G5 Gsus2 G5 Am end Rhy. Fig. 1

19

The musical score shows measures 19 through 27. The top staff contains a melodic line with various chords indicated above it: F/C, C, G5, Gsus2, G5, Am, and a final measure labeled 'end Rhy. Fig. 1'. The bottom staff contains bass notes with corresponding chord symbols: [A/E], [E], [B5], [Bsus2], [B5], and [C#m]. Measure numbers are written below the bass staff: 12, (12) 14/16, 16, 14, 16, 14, 16.

D Chorus (1:16, 2:18, 3:17)

cowboy on a white horse riding off into the sunset If that's the kind of love you want to wait for

G5 Am Fmaj7/C C Fmaj7/C G5 Am Fmaj7/C

Rhy. Fig. 2

22

let ring - 1 2* (2)

*High E string played by Gtr. 1 only throughout.

[B5] [C#m] [Amaj7/E] [E] [Amaj7] [B5] [C#m] [Amaj7/E]

Bass Fig. 1

Hold on tight girl I ain't there yet No I ain't there yet No I ain't there yet

C Fmaj7/C C G5

end Rhy. Fig. 2

25 let ring -

[E] [Amaj7/E] [E] [B5]

end Bass Fig. 1

E (1:35, 2:37, 3:36)

On repeat of 2nd time, skip ahead to **G** (bar 40)

On repeat of 3rd time, skip ahead to **J** (bar 49)

horse

White

28 A5

(play repeats simile)

[C#5] Bass Fill 1

F 2nd Verse (1:48)

Someday

maybe you could have your way

Right

now's just not the time

Fmaj7

C

G5

Am

F

C

Gr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 1 (see bar 13)

Gr. 2

let ring throughout

31

[Amaj7] [E] [B5] [C#m] [A] [E]

Bass

Some things

a man just got to do

G5

Fsus2

C

G5

Am

34

[B5] [Asus2] [E] [B5] [C#m]

Go back to **D** Chorus (bar 22)

I wish you could change my mind Whoa oh oh If you want a

Fsus2 C G5 Am

37

[Asus2] [E] [B5] [C#m]

G (2:47)**H** 1st Guitar Solo (2:50)

(w/double-time feel)

[C#5] [B5] [C#m] [Amaj7/E] [E] [Amaj7/E][B5]
A5 G5 Am Fmaj7/C C Fmaj7/C G5

Gtrs. 1 and 2

*Gtr. 1

Gtr. 2 plays first three bars of Rhy. Fig. 2 (see bar 22)

40

*Doubled simile throughout.

Bass plays Bass Fill 1 (see bar 30)

Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 (see bar 22)

(end double-time feel)

If you want a

[C#m] [Amaj7/E] [E] [A/E] [E] [B5]
Am Fmaj7/C C F/C C G5

43

Gtrs. 1 and 2 play Rhy. Fill 1 (see bar 48)

Bass plays Bass Fill 2 (see below bar 45)

(let ring into next bar)

I Breakdown (3:03)

cowboy on a white horse riding of into the sunset If that's the

G5 Am F/C C F/C G5

45

let ring - - -

[B5] [C#m] [A/E] [E] [A/E] [B5]

Bass

2 14

Bass Fill 2 (3:00)

[E] [A] [E] [B5]

Go back to **D** Chorus (bar 22)

kind of love you want wait for Am Fmaj7/C Hold on tight girl I ain't there If you want a C Fmaj7/C C G5

Rhy. Fill 1

47

J (3:46)

K Outro (3:49)

(w/double-time feel)

[C#5]
A5

[B5]
G5

[C#m]
Am

[Amaj7/E]
Fmaj7/C

49 Gtrs. 1 and 2

Gtr. 1

Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fig. 2 (see bar 22)

Bass plays Bass Fill 1 (see bar 30)

Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 (see bar 22)

(end double-time feel)

[E]
C

[Amaj7/E] [B5]
Fmaj7/C G5

[C#m]
Am

[Amaj7/E]
Fmaj7/C

[E]
C

[A/E] [C#m]
F/C Am

51

(decrease tempo)

G5
Gtr. 1

F/C C

G5

Am

54

Gtr. 2

1/4

let ring

[B5]
Bass

[A/E] [E]

[B5]

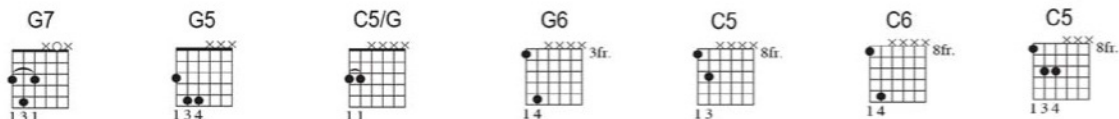
[C#m]

"PAPERBACK WRITER"

The Beatles

As heard on 1962-1966

Words and Music by JOHN LENNON and PAUL MCCARTNEY • Transcribed by PATRICK MABRY and MATT SCHARFGLASS



A Intro (0:00, 0:49)

Moderately Fast ♩ = 160

Paperback writer
(Paperback writer)
(Paperback writer)

Vocals re-enter
on repeat.

1. Dear
3. It's a

N.C. (C) (G) (Am11) G5 G7 C5/G G7
Gtr. 1 (elec. w/dist.) let ring

1

Bass (w/pick)

Bass enters on repeat.

B Verses (0:13, 0:31, 1:02, 1:20)

(1.) sir or madam will you read my book It took me years to write Will you take a look It's
(2.) dirty story of a dirty man And his clinging wife doesn't understand His
(3.) thousand pages give or take a few I'll be writing more in a week or two I can
(4.) really like it you can have the rights It could make a million for you overnight If you

G5 G6 G5 G6 G5 G6 G5 G6 G5
Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fill 1 (see below)

7

*Add grace-note hammer-ons on 2nd Verse only

**Substitute notes in parentheses on 2nd Verse.

Rhy. Fill 1 (0:13, 0:31, 1:02, 1:20)

(G5) (C5)
Gtr. 2 (elec. w/light
dist. and tremolo)
(play 8 times)

"PAPERBACK WRITER"

WORDS AND MUSIC BY JOHN LENNON AND PAUL MCCARTNEY.

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100

100

The musical score for 'The Rose Tree' is presented on a single staff. The melody begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The tempo is marked 'Allegretto' and the time signature is 3/4. The score consists of two systems. The first system contains measures 1 through 6, and the second system contains measures 7 through 10. The melody is written for a single voice part. The notes are as follows: Measure 1: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter). Measure 2: C5 (quarter), B4 (quarter), A4 (quarter). Measure 3: G4 (quarter), F4 (quarter), E4 (quarter). Measure 4: D4 (half), C4 (half). Measure 5: B3 (half), A3 (half). Measure 6: G3 (half), F3 (half). Measure 7: E3 (half), D3 (half). Measure 8: C3 (half), B2 (half). Measure 9: A2 (half), G2 (half). Measure 10: F2 (half), E2 (half). The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and repeat signs. The lyrics 'The Rose Tree' are written below the staff, aligned with the notes.

let ring - - - - - let ring - - - - - Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fill 2 (see bottom of next page)

27

D Outro (1:51)

Paperback writer (paperback writer)
 G5 G6 G5 G6 G5 G6 G5 G7
let ring - - -

31

Paperback writer (paperback writer)
 G5 G7 G5
Rhy. Fig. 1 - - - - -

35

Paperback writer (paperback writer)
 G5
Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 1 simile until fade (see bar 37)
 Bass G7

39

Fade out

43

Bass Fill 1 (0:39)

(G5)

Bass

Rhy. Fill 2 (1:49)

Gtr. 2

G5

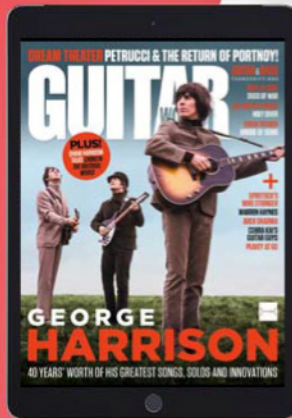
(repeat simili until fade)
Bass Fill 2 (1:20)

Bass

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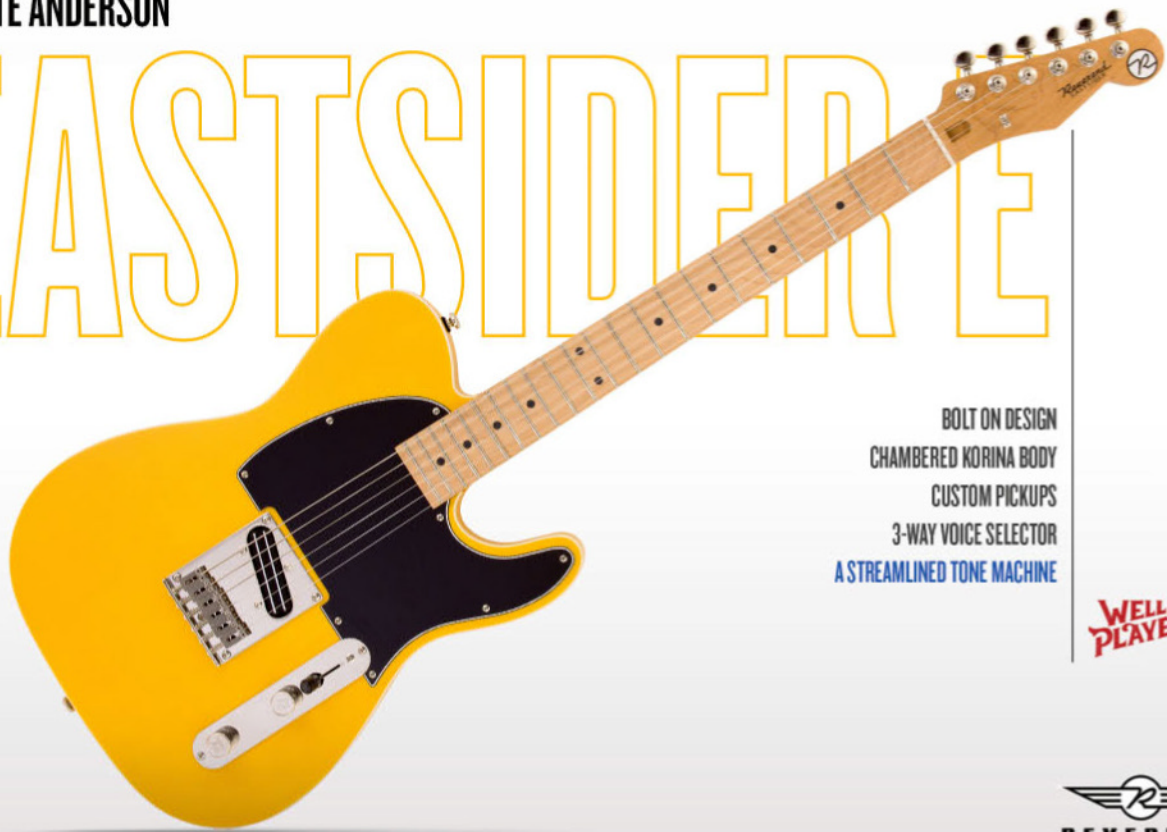


BORN IN THE USA

KYSER

THE PETE ANDERSON

EASTSIDER



BOLT ON DESIGN
CHAMBERED KORINA BODY
CUSTOM PICKUPS
3-WAY VOICE SELECTOR
A STREAMLINED TONE MACHINE

WELL
PLAYED



The First Two Lessons Will Transform Your Playing Forever

Lesson 1

By learning 5 simple patterns and the chords that match up to them, you form the foundation for shattering the barriers that are holding you back. You'll start hearing notes and chords that you recognize from listening to your musical heroes. Your fingers and ears will work together like never before.

Lesson 2

By connecting the five patterns, the fingerboard suddenly becomes a familiar superhighway that takes you anywhere you want to go. You'll understand how and why these related patterns and chords work together so well across the entire fingerboard. *Lessons 3 through 8 will take you even further.*

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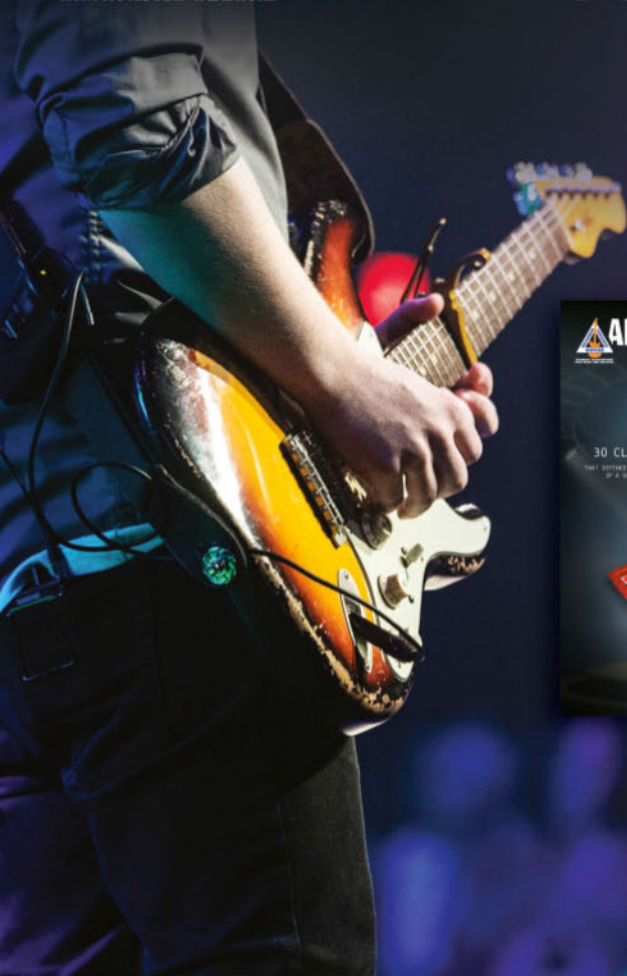
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JORDAN BOSS TONE

CATEGORY: FUZZ PEDAL

WAY BACK IN the dark ages of the late Sixties, the music industry experienced a sudden explosion of fuzz pedals that popped up on the market like mushrooms on cow dung after a spring rain. In an instant the market was flooded with all kinds of square-wave distortion devices with names like the Tone Bender, Fuzz Face, Pep Box, Buzzaround and even a few other names that weren't cheeky drug references.

Sometime in early 1967, Jordan Electronics decided to expand its business beyond Cold War atomic age devices like Geiger counters and dosimeters by entering the wild and wacky world of electric guitar effect devices with the Jordan Juniors series of products. These were compact devices housed in small plastic boxes that plugged directly into a guitar's output jack and sold for only \$29.95. Products included the Vico Vibe tremolo and Boss Boost treble/bass booster, but by far Jordan's most popular effect was the Boss Tone fuzz, which sold by the thousands thanks to its low, low price and absolutely wicked, ripping tones.

The Boss Tone features one of the simpler circuits out there, using two silicon transistors, a pair of diodes, a small gaggle of capacitors and resistors and little else. Since Jordan's focus was more on quantity than quality, the specific components used changed often due to availability and market prices, so the tonal characteristics of one vintage unit compared to another can vary considerably. Generally, Jordan Boss Tone boxes are classified in three distinct categories: Alhambra (for the factory in California where the devices were first built), Pasadena (where the factory moved in the late Sixties) and Nashville (where the Boss Tone was licensed to Sho-Bud in the mid

"The original Jordan Boss Tone was probably used by four out of five garage bands in the late Sixties"



Seventies, renamed the Sho-Sound Boss Tone and distributed by Gretsch).

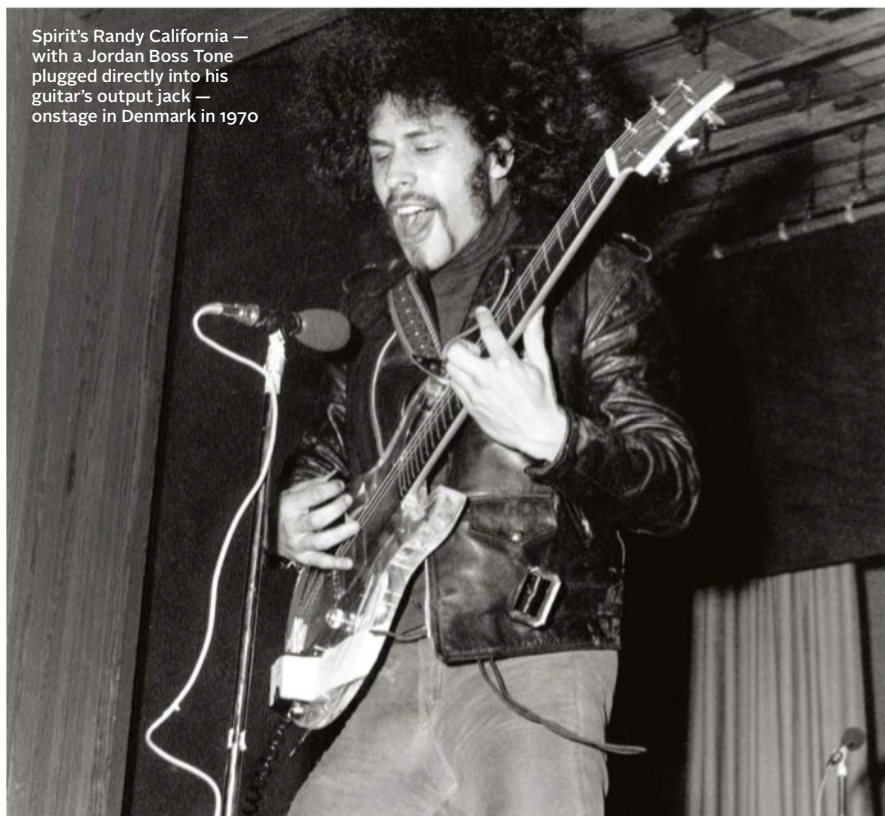
The early Alhambra units have a buzzy, trebly paper-shred tone that can cut through a mix like samurai sword through whale blubber.

The Pasadena units generally have more aggressive scooped mids and bigger bass, while the Nashville version sounds the most balanced and "modern." The Boss Tone's controls are Volume and Attack, with the former operating like a master volume and the latter working like a gain control. The effect cleans up when you back down the guitar's volume control. In addition to full buzzsaw square-wave fuzz effects with super sweet sustain, the Boss Tone can dial in distortion and gritty overdrive, and depending on where you set the knobs, pickup selection (and type) and how you play, it can also generate cool octave up or down textures.

The original Jordan Boss Tone was probably used by four out of five garage bands in the late Sixties, when it was also a favorite of Spirit's Randy California and James Gurley with Big Brother and the Holding Company. Norman Greenbaum had an early Alhambra unit built into his Telecaster, which provided the righteous buzz of "Spirit in the Sky" thanks to a dying battery. During the early Seventies the Boss Tone found favor with everyone from Billy Gibbons with ZZ Top to John McLaughlin with Miles Davis (particularly on the *Jack Johnson* album and sessions), as well as with numerous pedal steel players, which led to the Sho-Bud transfer. Dan Auerbach of the Black Keys has kept the Boss Tone buzz going in more recent times.

Thanks to its simple circuit, numerous clones and DIY kits abound, but the closest thing to the real deal is the Jordan Buzz Tone made by Chris Mahoney, who has probably seen more original Boss Tone units than the factory workers who assembled them back in the day. Mahoney offers the Buzz Tone in both the original-style plastic housing and a normal roadworthy stompsbox format. **GW**

Spirit's Randy California — with a Jordan Boss Tone plugged directly into his guitar's output jack — onstage in Denmark in 1970



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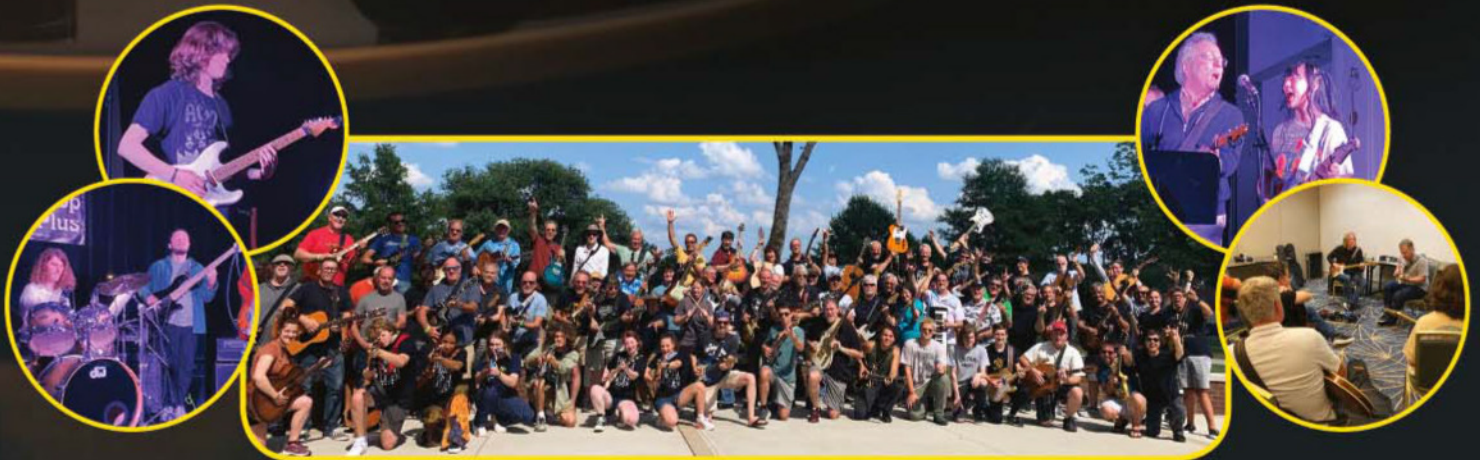
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