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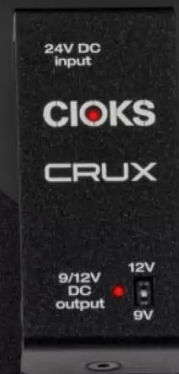
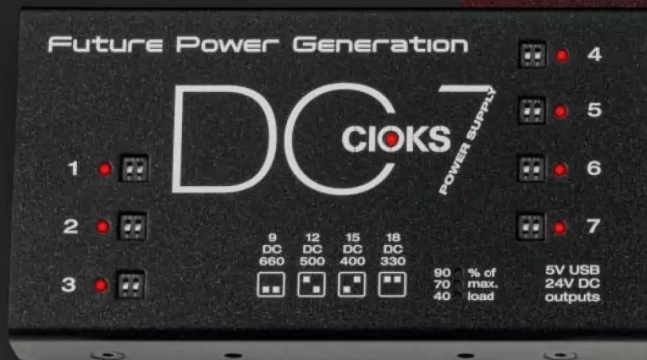
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TAKE GW-85 TO GA-20

DOES ANYONE ELSE remember 1985? Unlike the previous year, when one album clearly topped our collective “guitar album of the year” charts (a little something called *1984* by Van Halen), 1985 was more of a smorgasbord. For young me, it was all about Stevie Ray Vaughan and Double Trouble; I saw them a few times that year, including their famous September 21 show at the Capital Theatre in Passaic. I even wrote to *Guitar World* that summer, and they mentioned me on page 73 of the Vaughan-fronted November 1985 issue (pictured on page 54 in this issue). But there was so much more than SRV in 1985, and we’ve tried to capture a bit of that year’s “anything goes” vibe by revisiting albums by Run-D.M.C., Megadeth, the Dead Milkmen, Heart, Kiss, Aerosmith, Simple Minds, the Cult, Talking Heads, Hüsker Dü, Whitney Houston and more. And please note that, even though we weren’t able to connect with Dire Straits’ Mark Knopfler for this issue (we’re still working on it, if you really wanna know), we do have a transcription of the band’s 1985 mega hit, “Money for Nothing,” which — believe it or not — has never been transcribed in an American guitar magazine. I find it a little hard to believe that no one thought to transcribe it before now, but it seems to be true. And keep in mind that the 1985 festivities continue over on our Power Tools page (110), where we celebrate the ‘85 birth of the eternally stylish PRS Custom 24.



In terms of bands that have nothing to do with 1985, be sure to check out our feature on Boston’s GA-20. Our headline, “GA-2.0,” refers to the fact that they’re kicking off a new era, complete with a new guitarist and drummer. I saw them in Brooklyn in December 2023, and I look forward to seeing version 2.0 in action. Anyway, don’t just sit there. Dig in!

CORRECTION: In our Spiritbox feature [April 2025], we said the band’s 2021 album, *Eternal Blue*, hit Number 50 on *Billboard*’s year-end hard rock chart. It actually hit Number 13 on *Billboard*’s Top 200.

— Damian Fanelli

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GUITAR WORLD (ISSN 1045-6295) is published 13 times a year, monthly plus Holiday issue following December issue, by Future US, INC., 135 West 41st Street, 7th Floor, New York, NY 10036. Phone: 212.378.0400. Fax: 917.281.4704. Web Site: www.futureplc.com. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and additional mailing offices. Newsstand distribution is handled by CMG. Subscriptions: One-year basic rate (12 issues) US: \$26.95. Canada: US\$26.95. Foreign: US\$42.95. Canadian and foreign orders must be prepaid. Canadian price includes postage and GST #R128220688. PMA #40612608. Subscriptions do not include newsstand specials. POSTMASTER: Send change of address to Guitar World, P.O. Box 2024, Langhorne, PA 19047-9957. Ride-along enclosure in the following edition(s): None. Standard enclosure: None. Returns: Pitney Bowes, P.O. Box 25542, London, ON N6C 6B2, Canada. Entire contents copyright 2025, Future PLC. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part is prohibited. Future PLC is not affiliated with the companies or products covered in Guitar World. Reproduction on the Internet of the articles and pictures in this magazine is illegal without the prior written consent of Guitar World. Products named in the pages of Guitar World are trademarks of their respective companies. PRODUCED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA. **SUBSCRIBER CUSTOMER SERVICE:** Guitar World Magazine Customer Care, P.O. Box 2024, Langhorne, PA 19047-9957. Email help@magazinesdirect.com. **BACK ISSUES:** www.magazinesdirect.com **REPRINTS:** Future PLC, 135 West 41st Street, 7th Floor, New York, NY 10036.



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GUITAR WORLD EDITORIAL/ADVERTISING OFFICES

347 W. 36th St., 17th Floor/Penthouse, New York, NY 10018

FUTURE US, INC.

135 W. 41st St., 7th Floor, New York, NY 10036, www.futureplc.com

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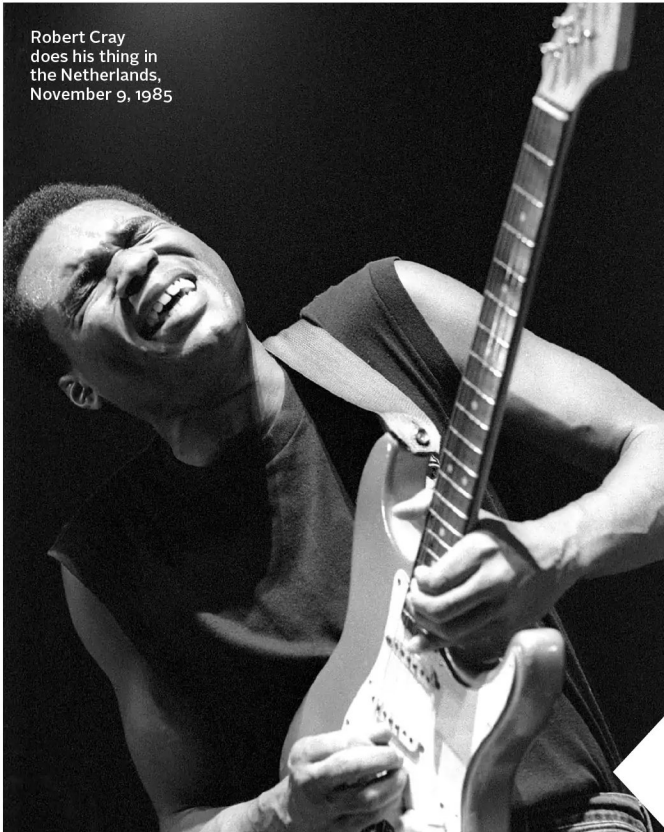
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A Chuck Berry flashback

The letter from Dave Parker in the March 2025 issue mentioned the band Bang. I'm not sure if it's the same band, but my very first concert, back in December 1972, was Chuck Berry with White Trash and Bang. Holy cow, what a festival of guitar! The show took place at the Louisville (Kentucky) Convention Center.

Attached are some items from my scrapbook. The reviewer from *The Louisville Times* (the afternoon newspaper back then) wasn't too impressed with Bang. She mentions Jerry LaCroix — the singer for White Trash — but no one else. Did she not notice Edgar Winter or Rick Derringer? Too early in their careers, I guess. She did enjoy Chuck's set! I snuck a camera into the show, hidden in my coat. After a few old-school flashbulbs in his eyes, Chuck gave me "the look," but I think I might have blinded him one or two more times after that. Ha!

— Bo Gray, *Prairie Village, KS*

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.

— Scot Hamilton

Speer in the spotlights

I've been a subscriber for nearly a year now and want to echo a recent commentary from the sounding board [March 2025]. I second the subscriber's recommendation for introducing some of the younger crowd as a compliment to the regularly scheduled tips-of-the-hat to the timeless guitarists. I haven't heard of Jon Suh or Al Joseph, but a newer, emerging guitarist that has caught my attention and brought me further inspiration to my own playing styles has been Mark Speer of Khruangbin. I caught wind of this trio in 2020 via Travis Scott's .Wav Radio podcast and they blew me away. I've been rocking with their music ever since.

Khruangbin just released a new album last year, but I believe they've been on the scene for about 10 years. Mark Speer stands out and leads this group on guitar. They have a fairly indie sound that I don't typically gravitate to, but the licks this guy rips out are face melters in the most subtle way. Most could probably listen to their tracks in an idle manner, but after going through one of their albums I started to wonder, "Who is this guy on guitar for this group? He is absolutely shredding." Mark Speer is the guy. He got his start playing for a mega church in Houston but takes heavy influence from Afghani/Arabic music and has a very particular and different sound. Let your audience know about this guy; young and old can probably all recognize his talents as timeless and Khruangbin's music as a new sound none of us have ever heard. Thanks for all you guys do. I'm a huge fan of *Guitar World*! Best regards...

— Travis L. DeGoeys

Here's to busking on Bleecker in NYC!

I took particular pleasure in reading your March 2025 editor's column (always entertaining) as I busk my straight-rock on Bleecker Street — at Thompson Street — every chance I get [pictured at right]. As you wrote, get out there and enjoy life as you still have it! Stay safe, happy and healthy, in that order, in whatever form they take. Sincerely, and rock on...

— Johnny Cooper, NYC



Peeved about a Peavey omission

Incredibly, no mention was made of major [Peavey] users Lynyrd Skynyrd in the [Peavey 60th anniversary] article [April 2025]. I mean, look at their live album

cover [1976's One More from the Road], for crying out loud. I always thought Skynyrd put Peavey on the map — way before Van Halen. Peavey's CEO should have acknowledged that. Thanks.

— Joe Cesare



RANDOM PHOTO OF THE MONTH

Chris Difford [left] and Glenn Tilbrook of Squeeze do their thing at the Roundhouse in London, November 22, 2024. "It's fair to say Squeeze play to a dedicated fan base — but tonight has a slight edge to it," wrote photographer Brad Merrett in his review on *loudersound.com*. "Could it be the fact the show is being filmed, or that it's the last night of their tour? Whatever the reason, gone are the softer fan-club vibes of past gigs. The tempo is high and the songs come in great thundering waves of sound."

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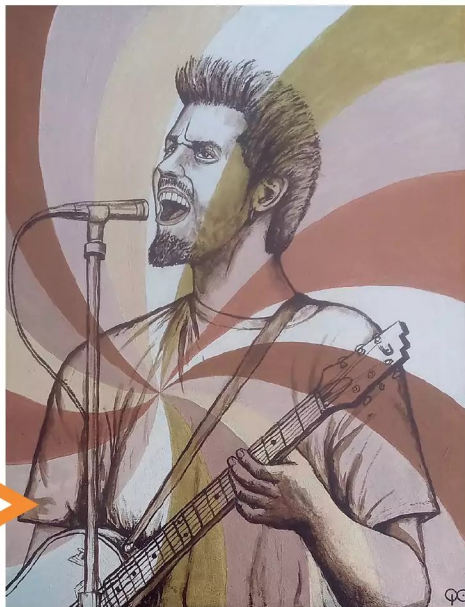
OF THE MONTH

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CHRIS CORNELL BY QIN OCULLIAN



VH BY BRODY O'DONOHOE

My son, Brody O'Donohoe, made this for me for Christmas in his wood shop class. The stripes are burned in. "VH" is red paint inlay. We are huge fans of Van Halen. Love you guys! **Brian O'Donohoe**

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"I'm a big Ibanez Artist fan," Sebastian Forslund says. "I've been collecting them over the years and have some rare finishes"

We Have Lift Off

ON ALBUM NUMBER SEVEN, SWEDISH ROCKERS THE NIGHT FLIGHT ORCHESTRA FACED SOME MAJOR TURBULENCE — BUT THE WIND IS BACK BENEATH THEIR WINGS

By Amit Sharma

▶ **DESPITE THEIR CONNECTION** to the Swedish melodic death metal scene, with members who also play in bands like Arch Enemy and Soilwork, the Night Flight Orchestra are wholeheartedly devoted to making music that's feel-good and uplifting. This year's seventh full-length, *Give Us the Moon*, continues to blur the lines between AOR, funk and disco — cooking up an infectious brew of cinematic hooks, key changes and triple harmonies. For guitarist Sebastian Forslund, who stepped into a lead-songwriter role after founding guitarist David Andersson passed away in 2022, the last few years have been a period of unanticipated transition. The group now find themselves beginning a new chapter with some of the finest songs of their career and a new guitarist in Rasmus Ehrnborn.

"David was our lead songwriter and most creatively driven member," Forslund says. "He started the band back in 2007; it was his vision at the beginning. I was asked to mix the debut and felt it needed percussion to make the songs sound even bigger. When the band started performing live, they wanted to keep that."

It was this chain of events that led to an invitation to join the band as a full-time member, originally as a percussionist, before eventually adding guitar duties to the mix.

"I slowly moved toward doing guitar work," he says. "I joined just before the first record. I was free at the time so I became part of the live band. I already knew the →

songs, so it was fun to jump on stage. Later, they needed a second guitar player, and I felt I could do that as well.”

On stage you play guitar and percussion at the same time. How exactly do you manage to do both?

I guess it's quite strange. I'll be using my foot and sometimes my hands in between strumming chords. Our keyboardist can play one set of keys with one hand and do something different with the other. It can sound like two musicians playing together. For us guitarists, however, it's not that easy. You can only really play one thing because your hands are locked in. On songs like “West Ruth Ave,” I need to play congas and bongos as well as chords. I'll strum a chord and then play percussion in between. Some songs need it less, so that's when I focus more on guitar. Of course, it would be great to have one person doing only percussion, but we already have eight people on stage.

What's the secret to writing music that feels like it's from the early Eighties?

We're trying to recreate that golden era of music from 1978 to 1983, which was a time when writing really advanced. The songs were almost progressive because the ideas were smart, but also catchy. That's what drew us in. We often talk about the magic of those five years and what made those songs stand the test of time. Beyond that, we don't really know where our songs come from. Maybe it's good to not know — design by accident can be a blessing. David was such an amazing writer. He had this ability to spit out 10 songs in a row. All of them would be great, then he'd pause for three weeks and come up with 10 more. It was very hard for us when he passed away.

How can a band survive a huge loss like that?

It takes time. We were wondering what the hell to do, because me and our singer Björn were suddenly responsible for everything. There was a lot of writer's block. Half a year went by and we were struggling to top the things this band had already done. Then we realized we should just write music that made us happy. Some ideas didn't feel like the Night Flight Orchestra at the beginning, but they did once everyone started playing together.

The riffs and leads come from more of a modal place rather than anything too bluesy. What kind of musicians inspired this?

I appreciate good shredding, but I'm more into melodies. When I was young, I loved players like Kee Marcello from Europe.

Night Flight Orchestra
guitarists Rasmus Ehrnborn
[second from left]
and Sebastian Forslund
[fourth from right]



“We’re trying to recreate that golden era of music from 1978 to 1983”

Steve Lukather is also great for that; what he plays is always very tasteful. I love the first three Toto records, particularly the second one, *Hydra*. I'm also drawn to guitarists who sound a bit different, playing through stuff like the old Tom Scholz Rockman amp or the ART SGX 2000 rack. There was something really exciting about Eighties guitar tones.

So how do you go about attaining those



sounds in the studio?

A lot of amps got used on this album. The main heads were made by Orange and MLC. For the harmonies we used a Rockman to get that old-school sound. Our bass player often jokes that once my chorus pedal is on, it never gets turned off. There's a slight chorus on everything, then we turn it up more in places. I'm a big fan of old Boss pedals, things like the CH-1 Super Chorus and the DC-2 Dimension C. Our new guitar player Rasmus was using computer simulators like the Neural DSP John Petrucci plugin for clean sounds that were overdubbed later. That software sounds great. As for guitars, I'm a big Ibanez Artist fan. I've been collecting them over the years and have some rare finishes. Rasmus is an ESP endorsee, so he sticks with a Firebird lookalike.

Songs like “A Paris Point of View” are very textured and harmonically rich. Is that hard to recreate live?

A lot of clever things are happening, and it can be challenging to perform them all live. Luckily our keyboard player can help with harmonies. I am trying out the Boss PS-6 Harmonist. You can tell it what key you're in, so it's a clever pedal. The only problem is if you go outside of the key, you might have to play a different note to find something that works, which is a very strange feeling. We arrange our guitars like strings in an orchestra... probably because we're huge ABBA fans.

Field Music

HOW “GESTURAL THINKING” HAS HELPED PETER BREWIS TRANSCEND INFLUENCES AND FIND HIS OWN UNIQUE LANGUAGE

By Bill DeMain

▶ AT AN IN-STORE performance at Monorail Records in Glasgow, Peter Brewis is bending his fretting hand into some origami-like shapes. Minor second clusters bloom into open-ended 11th chords, flying out from his red Strat with chiming bravado. Field Music, the Sunderland, England-based band he fronts with his brother David, are here celebrating their ninth album, *Limits of Language*. Led by ear-worm tracks “Six Weeks, Nine Wells” and “Guardian of Sleep,” it features their singular brand of what they’ve called “collage rock” — imagine Eighties King Crimson making *Rubber Soul* with Prince

producing. Their latest is synth-heavy. Hence the origami. Brewis is copping keyboard parts. Aside from both being strong singers, he and David also jump fearlessly from drums to keys to bass to guitar.

“I don’t know if I’d call myself a multi-instrumentalist,” Brewis says, “but I will say I have no shame when it comes to trying things out.”

Brewis discovered guitar at age eight, through the “Johnny B. Goode” scene in *Back to the Future*. “I owe my entire career to Robert Zemeckis,” he says with a laugh. As he became more serious about learning

“On this album, we told ourselves, ‘We’re Led Zeppelin making *In Through the Out Door*’”



Field Music's Peter Brewis; that's his brother, David, on drums [below]

the instrument, he approached it “like an artist using gesture drawing” — favoring action and spirit.

“I think a lot of modern guitarists want to get all the notes right,” he says. “But if you listen to Jimi Hendrix or Jimmy Page, it’s beautiful playing, with loads of mistakes — full of gesture, swing and groove. It’s unpredictable and dangerous. That’s what excites me.”

Field Music favors “the gestural” in their songwriting, too, to help transcend influences. “We may start with a very direct influence — like on this album, we told ourselves, ‘We’re Led Zeppelin making *In Through the Out Door*’ — but then let ourselves not get it quite right. It’s more about capturing the essence.”

Brewis’s go-to guitars are a Fender Aerodyne Strat and Gordon Smith SG, with P90s (“I like that Richard Thompson bite,” he says), through a Deluxe Reverb or Vox AC10. His favorite pedal is the Strymon Deco Tape, which “does a really nice tape saturation.”

In their 20-year career, Field Music has had chart flirtations and a Mercury Prize nomination. But Brewis admits that making records in Sunderland’s geographical remove may limit them to cult status. “But if what we do appeals to people who really like music, then we haven’t wasted our time. That’s really all we can ask for.”



Jonathan Hultén

THE EX-TRIBULATION GUITARIST GOES DREAM POP ON HIS SOPHOMORE RELEASE

By Amit Sharma

► SWEDISH GUITARIST JONATHAN Hultén rose to prominence as the founding guitarist from gothic metallers Tribulation, though it's his solo work since leaving the band in 2020 that's given listeners a real taste of his mind. Debut album *Chants from Another Place* married his love of Nick Drake's dark folk with the celestial sounds of church choirs, yielding some truly stunning results. The music was so compelling, it convinced him to leave the band he'd devoted 15 years of his life to.

"It was an existential thing, we only have so much time on Earth," he says. "Serious thought should be paid to what we do with it. I should also point out that *Pink Moon* by Nick Drake is one of my favorite albums ever made. I can't imagine what he was going through when he wrote it. There's a depth and power that inspired me greatly. I'm also influenced by an artist called Anna Ternheim, who uses an incredible finger-style technique to write wonderfully intimate songs."

This year, Hultén is releasing his second solo album, *Eyes of the Living Night*, which is more of an electric affair that its predecessor, pairing his Ibanez AEL40 electro-acoustic with an old Epiphone Sheraton II in Violin Burst. It's the only electric he's ever used in the studio, he reasons, before admitting his current studio is more of an abstract DIY concept than anything too grandiose or official.

"I record everything in my walk-in

"I record everything in my walk-in closet"



Jonathan Hultén with his Ibanez AEL40

closet," Hultén says. "I will use mattresses for isolation and try not to bother the neighbors too much. As for going electric, I was just following the songs to see what happens. When you find an idea that resonates, it will tell you 'I need this to grow!' You then follow the song to its end. I've been using that Epiphone for a long time. We know each other well. And the Ibanez was my first acoustic but, sadly, it's about to fall apart."

As an esoteric balladeer who creates from a remarkably holistic perspective, one

where the continuum of intimate reflection dictates what note should come next, the notion of parting ways with his trusty acoustic is something that triggers a great deal of heartache.

"I changed the pickup at one point and the tech said it would cost as much to buy something new," he says with a sigh. "However, that didn't feel right. I wasn't ready, even though the buzzes and crackles can be heard on recordings or when I play live. It's starting to become a compromise, but I'm just not ready to say goodbye yet."

HALCYON

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Bare Knuckle



King Diamond [left] and Andy LaRocque, who's playing his new signature ESP LTD prototype

Rough-Cut Diamonds

KING DIAMOND GUITARIST ANDY LAROCQUE ON 40 YEARS OF CREATING EXQUISITELY GHOULISH HORROR-METAL, HIS NEW SIGNATURE SHRED-MACHINE, NEW MUSIC AND MORE

By Gregory Adams

▶ **ONCE HE FINALLY** opens it up to the public, King Diamond's *Saint Lucifer's Hospital 1920* album is going to be insane.

It's been a few years since the Danish occult-metal icon started talking up this much-anticipated project — which will be his eponymous band's first full-length release since 2007's *Give Me Your Soul... Please*. The famously falsetto-flying frontman first teased its storyline around a supernatural asylum when he dropped the “Masquerade of Madness” single in 2019.

Though *Saint Lucifer's Hospital 1920* has been inching along in the background since then, the launching of King Diamond's tour last fall showed great promise for the project when the group debuted two brand-new bangers at their opening date in San Antonio — “Spider Lilly,” a phantasmagoric prog-metal slam propelled by a pinch-squealing

walkdown riff from longtime guitarist Andy LaRocque, and a chugging creeper called “Electro Therapy.”

LaRocque says both songs are part of their developing concept record about “this place where you kind of end up between life and death,” an oddly prescient parallel to a record seemingly caught up in production purgatory. But when it came to “Spider Lilly,” which features neo-classically sculpted and shredded solos from LaRocque and co-guitarist Mike Wead (the latter also performing with the King in equally evil-sounding metal greats Mercyful Fate), the song actually came together quickly.

“King presented the idea of ‘Spider Lilly’ maybe a week before we left,” LaRocque says from an Atlanta tour stop, adding that the full band — which also features bassist Pontus Egberg and drummer Matt Thompson — cut the track between their

respective home studios before hitting the road. The guitarist recently gave it a rough mix from his Sonic Train facility in Varberg, Sweden.

“We have about four songs more or less recorded,” LaRocque says of the broader progress. “As soon as we get back from the tour, we're going to pick that up again and really work it out. Once we have the arrangements, it's only going to take us a few days to record. We'll send King a basic rough mix, and he can start doing the vocals.”

Before we behold the full bedlam of King Diamond's next album, LaRocque discusses 40 years of making exquisitely ghoulish horror-metal alongside the face-painted metal royal, the guitarist's new signature shred-machine and more.

You and King have mentioned over the past few years that these next songs would be, in some form, a return to the earliest King Diamond records. What elements from the past did you want to tap back into?

It's mainly to get that organic sound back, where everything doesn't have to be... placed perfectly in time, or even in pitch. There's got to be some rock 'n' roll to it.

[Laughs] If you listen to an album that's totally perfect, it gets boring. We wanted to make an album where it's a little bit more alive, like it was in the Eighties. We're trying to avoid the stiffness of the albums of the Nineties and early 2000s. Really, we're just trying to loosen it up a little bit. Then again, we also had a talk about going back to the roots with the songwriting. Some parts are going back to *Fatal Portrait* and *Abigail* when it comes to the riffing style, but it's also going to be totally different from what you've ever heard from us before.

You're nearly 40 years into your partnership with King. What do you recall about linking up with him during the *Fatal Portrait* sessions, and coming into the band after they'd already started making the album?

That was a really cool thing. I knew [drummer] Mikkey Dee from Gothenburg, where we both lived; we'd been jamming together back in '83-'84. And then when he joined King Diamond, I thought, "Hey, this is really cool!" They were in the studio for about two weeks [in 1985] when Mikkey called me and said, "The guitarist didn't really work out for us, so I think you need to come down and meet the guys."

I was working in a music store at the time, so the same day I called my boss and said, "Hey, I really gotta do this. I have to quit." The next day I left for Copenhagen with my Marshall head and my guitar, and I met the guys at [Sound Track Studio]. I listened to a few of the songs, and then later in the afternoon they asked me to audition on a song called "Dressed in White." I played along a few times, worked out a solo and recorded it, and then they had a meeting. After an hour or so, they said, "Welcome to the band!" That was a great moment. That solo was the first thing I ever did for King Diamond.

You shaped that solo, but ultimately the bones of those songs were already there. Do you have a different relationship with *Fatal Portrait* as compared to anything from *Abigail* onwards, because of that?

I guess a little bit. It was [mostly] written by the time I came down to the studio. The only thing left, I believe, were the vocals and solos from me and [former King Diamond/Mercyful Fate guitarist] Michael Denner. But when I came down to the studio and first heard all the songs, I was blown away. The horror feel... I'd always been into that — Kiss, Alice Cooper, Black Sabbath. That, mixed with Dracula and Frankenstein movies. That was a totally cool thing to me.

Before joining King Diamond, had you been involved in any projects that went for that grand, theatrical presentation?

No, it was mostly local bands. My first show with King Diamond was in Copenhagen a couple of days before Christmas 1985. At that time, we'd gotten our first stage set, which was not as grand as what we have now... but it was still epic! We had parts of an old castle up there, and little gates. People were freaking out over the show.

What's your setup on this latest tour, and how different is it compared to that first show?

Back then, I had two Marshall cabinets, a 50-watt Marshall JMP head and an Ibanez Tube Screamer. That was about it. Very basic, but that's what you had in the Eighties. Nowadays, me and Mike are doing the Neural DSP Quad Cortex, which is really convenient because you can do your own captures. I had a Marshall head and cabinet in the studio, a really good microphone in front of the cab and an overdrive from a Swedish company called ZETA — great pedal, kind of like an

"They're not laid-back, bluesy solos at all. You've got to keep your tongue in your mouth to be able to pull it off"

aggressive Tube Screamer. I did a capture of that with the Neural, and that's what we are using live. I've got the Neural and an analog wah pedal. No cabs. Everything is coming out of the wedges and the PA.

How about guitar-wise? You're an ESP player at the moment, right?

I love ESPs. I was with Dean at the time, but I tried one of Mike's ESPs around 2015 and was like, "This is exactly the neck I want." So I talked to Chris Cannella, who worked for ESP at the time, and he hooked me up. Right now, I'm with LTD, which is also owned by ESP. I'm actually playing a prototype of a guitar that will be my new signature model. That's going to be released sometime [in 2025], I believe. It's based on a Horizon. One single coil, a Seymour Duncan STK-S6 and one JB Humbucker. With a Floyd Rose. The cool thing is it's not the Strat scale; it actually has the Les Paul scale, which is a little shorter. It's 24.75" instead of 25.50". I feel more comfortable with the shorter scale; it's easier to play

this way. When I presented the idea to ESP, they were like, "We can't believe we didn't do this earlier!" I just love it.

This tour has introduced new material, but what are some of the older songs you're excited to be playing again after five years off the road?

We start with "Arrival" from *Abigail*, which is a great song. I would say some other favorites would be "Sleepless Nights" or "Eye of the Witch." We also do "Welcome Home" into "Invisible Guests," which are really intense songs to play back to back. You really have to be focused when you play those leads. They're just crazy, the things we came up with in the Eighties.

What side of your technique are they pushing the most?

You have to be an acrobat to play some of those solos. They're just very intense and fast and all over the neck. Some whammy bar things. They're not laid-back, bluesy solos at all. You've got to keep your tongue in your mouth to be able to pull it off.

How has your philosophy on solos changed since the Eighties?

Back then you thought you had to compete with all the other guys, in a weird way. You were listening to Yngwie Malmsteen, Steve Vai, Paul Gilbert... all kinds of crazy-fast players. And you tried to keep up with them. Over the years, though, you start to feel more relaxed and confident with everything. It doesn't have to be 120mph. Parts of it can be fast and flashy, but a basic melodic structure is so much more important to me now than it was back then.

You said there are four new songs recorded. Does the band have an arrival time in mind for the next album?

We're going to do some festivals in Europe next summer, so everything has to be recorded and done before we do that, that's for sure. We're still working on some of the other stuff we have. It's going to be eight or nine songs on the album, I believe.

You're touring with King Diamond again, and you've got the record in the works. How has this affected the flow of your job producing and engineering out of *Sonic Train*?

It hasn't ever been a problem, because the people that come into the studio absolutely understand that I'm a touring musician, too. [*Sonic Train*] has never really been a conflict with what we're doing with King Diamond. I know I'm going to be busy with King Diamond for the next year, so I'm not making lots of plans in the studio right now.



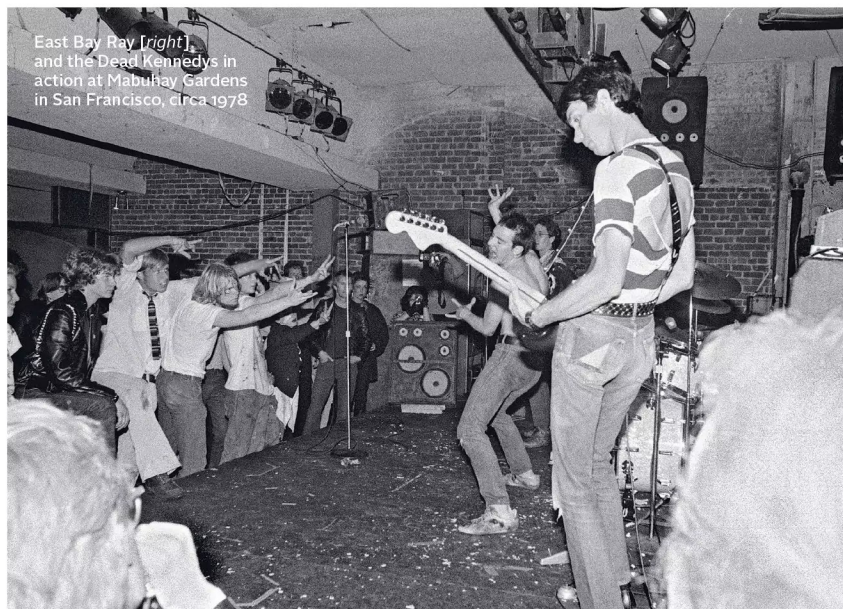
LOST CLASSICS: Dead Kennedys

EAST BAY RAY TAKES US INSIDE THE MAKING OF THE SAN FRAN PUNKS' CLASSIC 1980 ALBUM, *FRESH FRUIT FOR ROTTING VEGETABLES*

By Mark McStea

► WHEN CALIFORNIA PUNKS Dead Kennedys released their debut album, 1980's *Fresh Fruit for Rotting Vegetables*, they'd already scored a hit single in the U.K. the previous year with "California Über Alles." Riding high on the optimism that overseas success had brought them, the band was determined to capitalize on its momentum, putting in hours of pre-production time in rehearsals prior to going into the studio. Their labors were rewarded, with *Fresh Fruit...* garnering favorable reviews in the press and charting around the world, though not in the U.S., which was always more resistant to the charms of the early punk bands.

The band split in 1986, with always controversial singer, Jello Biafra, going on to release a number of spoken-word albums and popping up on talk shows espousing his left-of-center political beliefs. The remaining band members — guitarist East Bay Ray, bass player Klaus Flouride and drummer D.H. Peligro — reformed with a new singer, Brandon Cruz, in 2001. Cruz left after a couple of years, but the band has continued to tour up to the present day, with a number of different singers. Nowadays, Ray and Flouride are the only remaining original members. Ray is proud of the band's legacy, and is delighted to look back over one of American punk's seminal albums.



East Bay Ray [right], and the Dead Kennedys in action at Mabuhay Gardens in San Francisco, circa 1978

Were you already playing the songs from *Fresh Fruit...* live before going into the studio, and did they change much during the recording process?

Yes, but we did pre-production rehearsals. As I was essentially producing, I had sheets with info about where overdubs would go and what was supposed to happen in certain places. So we knew what we were going to do when we got into the studio, which meant it was a fairly quick process to make the record. We did the whole album, including the mixing, for \$6,000.

What was your process in terms of layering guitar parts?

We were on a very limited budget. We recorded on 16 tracks. What happened was I'd record a guitar track with the bass and drums and then I'd usually overdub a second guitar, hopefully playing it with a few less mistakes. [Laughs] That overdubbed track would be the main guitar, and the original one would be a little less prominent, to help thicken the sound, as I'd essentially be attempting to play both parts identically. Some of the solos would be overdubbed as well, of course.

What guitars and amps did you use?

My main guitar was a pawn shop Telecaster-style guitar that was made in Japan. I hot rodded it and put in a brass Schecter bridge and a Seymour Duncan PAF pickup at the bridge. I kept the single coil at the neck. For the amp, I was using a Sixties Fender Super Reverb, 40 watts with four 10-inch speakers. However, I'm a bit of a science nerd, and I modified it and essentially turned it into a Marshall

by wiring one tube into another like the Marshall master-volume style or the early Mesa Boogies. The original Marshall was actually modeled on the Fender Bassman anyway, so I was kind of replicating that approach. [Laughs]

"California Über Alles" and "Holiday in Cambodia" have become classics. Did you have any idea they were going to be special when you recorded them?

At the time, we were just writing songs and didn't think any were more significant than others. The original single of "Cambodia" came out in England in 1979. When we re-recorded it for the album, it ended up being a lot longer, with a lot of stuff we just improvised as we were laying it down. That was how we played our songs live — extending and improvising. Hey, we were a jam band like the Grateful Dead. [Laughs]

What was the writing process? Was Jello bringing in the songs fully formed?

We actually wrote as a band, where in effect, due to the chemistry between us, it was a case of two and two equaling five, you know? None of us has had a solo career that was bigger than Dead Kennedys, which, to me, shows the power of a bunch of talented people getting together and creating something that was far greater than the sum of its parts. Jello didn't bring in the songs. I know he's created the myth that he wrote them all, but the question here is that if he did, why didn't he ever do anything significant after leaving the band? Iggy left the Stooges and had a career; ditto Lou Reed with the Velvet Underground or Morrissey with the Smiths. Where's Biafra's

solo career with a bunch of great songs? The songs were written in numerous different ways. “Cambodia” started as a jam in the rehearsal studio. Other times, I’d have ideas for riffs that I’d put on cassettes and Biafra would find lyrics in his notebook. Klaus was important, too, in that he was the most trained musician in the band, and he was good at putting things together. Very few songs were written by one person.

What got you into playing?

When I was growing up, my dad was into big band jazz, but he was also into Delta blues players. He took my brother and me to see Lightnin’ Hopkins. After that, the Stones got everybody into Chicago blues, which my dad didn’t like so much, but I did. I never listened to Top 40, but I discovered *The Sun Sessions* by Elvis Presley. I loved Scotty Moore’s playing with the echo unit. I also discovered the first Pink Floyd album with Syd Barrett [1967’s *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn*]. Anyway, between Scotty and Syd, I decided I had to get an echo unit. I bought a Maestro Echoplex, which I still have. I started experimenting with it and really loved the sound.

Scotty Moore and Syd Barrett are a long way from Dead Kennedys. What turned

you toward punk?

In the sense that rock ‘n’ roll in the mid Fifties and Sixties was a new sound, punk was an extension of that. I saw the Weirdos at a club in L.A. in 1978, and the hairs on the back of my neck stood on end. I just thought, ‘This is it, this is rock ‘n’ roll!’ I put the band together soon after that. There didn’t seem to be any particular magic in the air when we started rehearsing, but when we started doing shows, something changed. There seemed to be a whole new energy. I think we got confidence. The whole “unknowable chemistry” thing kicked in.

What did you think of *Fresh Fruit for Rotting Vegetables* when it came out?

It was an amazing feeling to have the record in our hands back then. [Mix engineer] Chris Lord-Alge and I went back into the studio to remix it in 2022, and it was very interesting to listen to those songs after all those years and hear the details. After you’re done making a record, you don’t really listen to it again, so I’d never paid much attention to what it sounded like over the years. The remix is much better than the original release, which sounds kinda boxy to me. I know people will always love the original and have no time for remixed

versions, and I get that. It’s almost like it’s a part of their DNA. That’s the reason we have two versions now — the original and the remix. We didn’t know what we were doing when we made the album, so it was a chance to put things right for me. I feel like the remix is like going from 2D to 3D.

Has too much happened with Jello to ever think you could work together again in the future?

It’s not an issue for me or Klaus. It’s Biafra that turns down any offers for us to do something; we don’t have any problem. He got caught with his hands in the till and wants to blame us for getting caught, but he should never have put his hands in there in the first place. [The band brought a lawsuit in 2000 accusing Jello Biafra of withholding royalties. Biafra lost and had to pay the band outstanding royalties and punitive damages.]

What’s going on with the band at the moment?

Klaus and I have decided to wind things down a bit. We’re reducing the number of shows, and we won’t be doing long tours. We’re not 20 anymore, and we don’t play the kind of music that you can sit down to play. [Laughs]



“The Garcia”
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MY LIFE IN THREE GUITARS: Jimmie Vaughan

THE TRIO OF AXES THAT HAVE MEANT THE MOST TO THE FOUNDING FABULOUS THUNDERBIRD

By Mark McStea

► **TEXAS BLUES VETERAN** Jimmie Vaughan has been on the road for the best part of 60 years. It took two major health scares to temporarily derail his schedule at the start of 2024, but within months he was back on stage, opening for Eric Clapton. Speaking to *GW* from his home in Texas, with the sound of his chickens in the background, Vaughan was upbeat about the state of his health. “I feel fabulous — I’m doing really good, and I’m planning my next album now that I’ve got a little time off the road.”

Vaughan’s most recent albums have seen him cover obscure blues classics, but that seems set to change. “I’m always thinking about cutting a record of original material. I get up every day, think of ideas and write them down. I’ll probably still throw in a few of my old favorites. In the end I just want to play what I like and what flicks my switch.” Vaughan still has most of the guitars he’s ever owned way back from when he started, and he had no hesitation in nailing down the three most important guitars in his collection.

1 **Gibson ES-125T ¾ (1957)**

“This was my first electric, so I guess that makes it pretty special. My dad bought this for me for 50 bucks from one of my relatives. I don’t know whether he factored in the fact that it was a three-quarter-sized model when he bought it, but it was a little easier to get around on as a kid. My dad knew a lot of guitar players, and they’d come around to our house on a Saturday night and plug into amps. That was what made me want to play. I don’t know what I would have picked myself, given a choice, but I was happy to get this guitar. Although it was smaller than the full-sized version, the body depth was about the same, which was quite slim. It had a fantastic single P90 in the neck position. It was made in 1957, though I got it in 1964 when I was 12.

“After this guitar, my dad bought me a sunburst Gibson ES-330 **[1a]** from Arnold & Morgan, which was a great music store in Dallas. I used that when I started to play shows six nights a week at the Hob Nob Room in Dallas. At that point Stevie started playing the ES-125. A friend of mine’s dad had a Tele that he’d loan to me, so that made me want to get one myself. I got a ‘51 Nocaster from Arnold & Morgan for \$175. I did use that for quite some time before I got my first Strat, a sunburst ‘57. I used that for a lot of the first *Fabulous Thunderbirds* album. I gave the Nocaster to Stevie; at first I’d catch him playing it, even though I’d told him not to, and then I realized I wasn’t really playing it anymore. He played it for a year or two, then he sold it; years later it turned up at an auction and someone paid a million dollars or something for it.”

“I gave the Nocaster to Stevie; at first I’d catch him playing it”

2 **Fender Stratocaster (1963)**

“I bought this off Bill Campbell [*Austin blues scene fixture in the Seventies*] for about \$150. The body is from a ‘63 Strat, but the neck is one Bill gave to me, so I guess it’s kind of a ‘parts’ guitar. It was really put together by Charley’s Guitar Shop in Dallas and René Martínez, who was a fantastic guitar tech. I’d wanted a white Strat for years; it felt like it was unobtainable when I was a kid. I remember seeing Gene Vincent and the Blue Caps in an old movie, and they all had white Strats with the maple neck. I just thought it looked better than the dark rosewood, so I replaced it. I know there are people who think it makes a big difference to the sound, but I really don’t think it does. I know Stevie always sounded the same whether it was a rosewood or maple neck.

“This guitar spent a lot of time on the road. René was a fantastic tech, and he did a ton of maintenance on this guitar. He worked with Stevie a lot. When the T-Birds and Stevie were on tour together, there were a couple of occasions where he re-fretted my guitar and Stevie’s Strat between the soundcheck and the show. I used this on every T-Birds album after the first one, and I guess it’s the one people probably most associate me with. It’s in the Grammy Museum touring exhibition, along with Stevie’s Number One Strat. I hope they’re taking good care of it.” *[Laughs]* “No — they’ve always been careful with things I’ve loaned them. I’ve never had a guitar stolen, or sold one that I regretted, which is a fortunate position to be in when you’ve spent as long on the road as I have. I’ve got everything I’ve ever had that I was bothered about — they’re all safe.

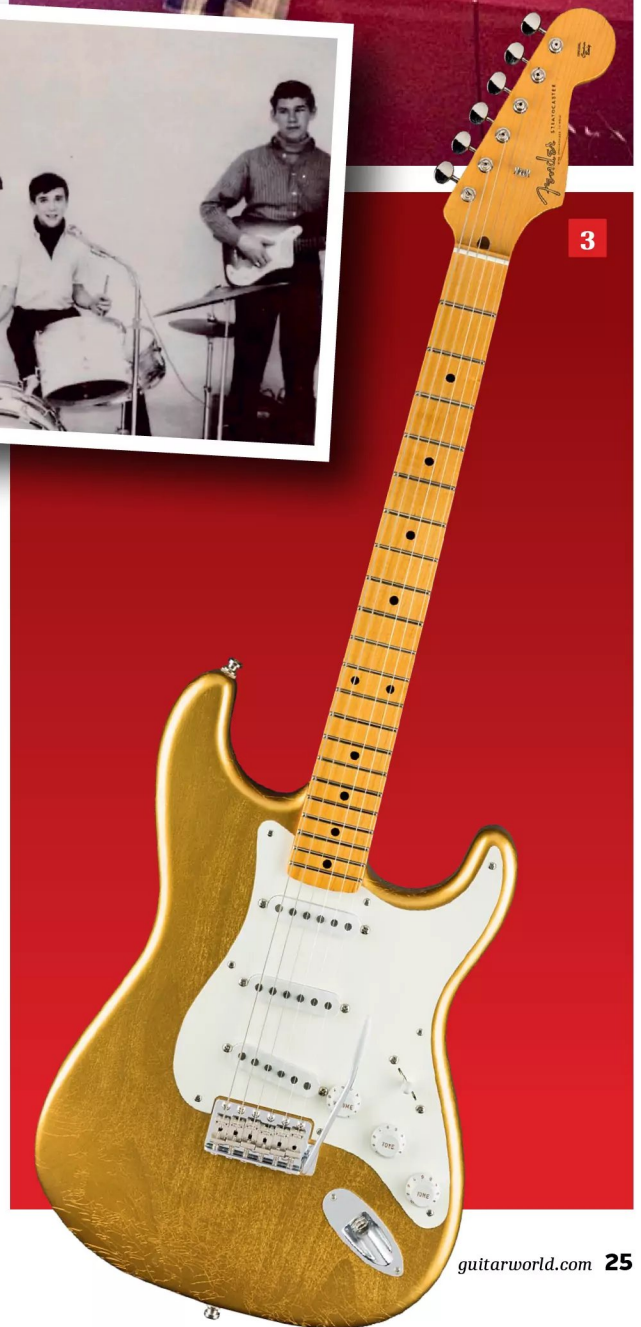
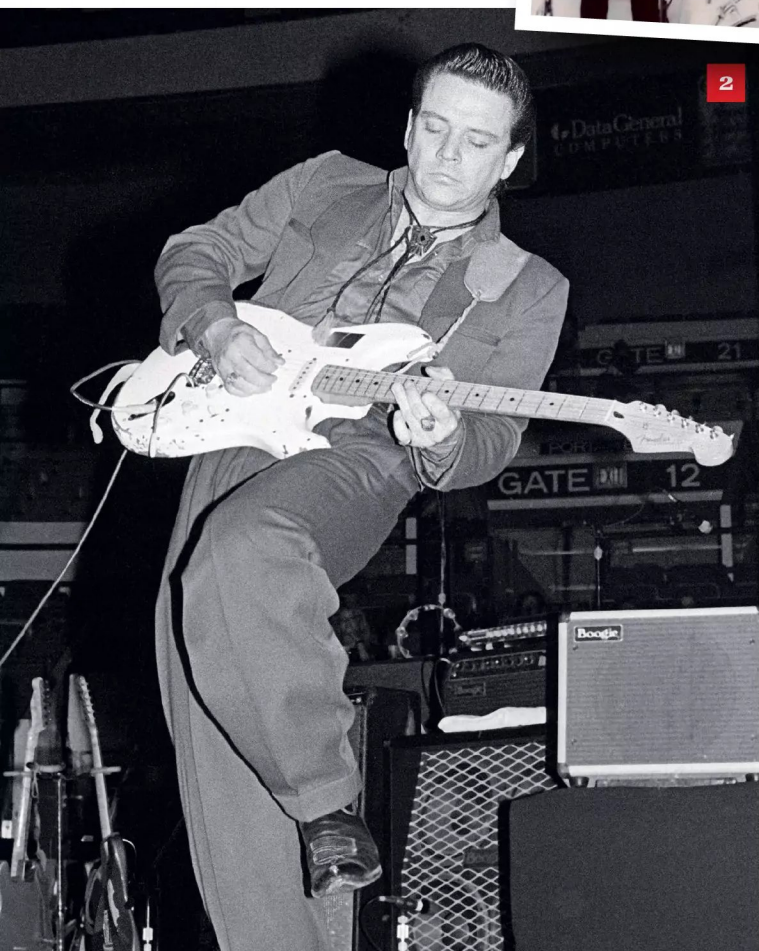
“Fender made some Custom Shop models based on this one. They’re so accurate that I can’t tell them apart, even down to the pin-up girl on the back. People wonder why she’s upside down, but when I play the guitar behind my head, she’s the right way up.”

3 **Fender Custom Shop Signature Strat (2022)**

“I have three Custom Shop Strats that I take on the road. The Olympic White is my favorite, but I also take a two-tone sunburst and a gold one on the road; that’s the three colors they make them in, and they are actually my three favorite colors for a Strat. I had them modify the wiring from a regular Strat; the middle pickup is reverse-wound, which gives a kinda different tone. Mike Lewis from the Fender Custom Shop — who sadly passed away in March last year — used to send me a bunch of different necks and I’d switch them around on the guitar to see what worked. He was real collaborative and would make sure every detail was exactly as I wanted it.

“Basically, though, the necks are patterned after the one on my old white Strat. I used to happily play my regular *[signature Fender]* Tex-Mex Strats on tour, but these new custom shop models pretty much nail down everything I’m looking for in a Strat, so I guess it’s even more a case of where I could just pick one up in a store and go to a show. I guess the only difference is that I would put flatwounds on them, which people often think is a strange thing to do on a Strat, but as I always say, the first Telecasters came with flatwounds. They don’t buzz like roundwounds, they last forever and actually seem to sound better the older they get. I started using them in the Nineties; I have my own gauge custom wound with a 10.5 on the top E.

“As much as I love Strats, the way they sound, the way they look and the whole cool vibe, if I’m sitting at home watching TV or something, the guitar I’m most likely to grab is one of my old Gibson ES-5’s. I have a few early Fifties models in sunburst, but my favorite is a blonde model from 1951 that looks like the one T-Bone Walker used to play. With the signature Strats and the ES-5s, I guess I’ve got all I need; if I go in the studio, I know what I’m going to use.”





Bonnie Trash's
Emmalia Bortolon-Vettor
with one of the Strats
heard on *Mourning You*

Bonnie Trash

MEET THE CANADIAN QUARTET TWISTING POST-ROCK
WITH GOTHIC NOISE AND AVANT-GARDE SURREALISM

By Amit Sharma

▶ **ON THEIR SECOND** full-length, *Mourning You*, Ontario post-punk quartet Bonnie Trash are purging the darkest depths of their souls and holding a mirror to the most unsettling aspects of the human condition. At the heart of the music is Emmalia Bortolon-Vettor's heavily fuzzed and delayed guitars, a cavernous cauldron of washy noise and screaming feedback underneath twin sister Sarafina's infectious, gothic serenades. It all makes for a sonic mass that's abstract, beautiful and bloodcurdling in equal measure.

"I wanted to use a lower tuning and more slide on this album to wail away with a sense of dread," the guitarist says. "It was all about layering the noise to tell an emotional story, rather than just creating background textures. I took it to a new level of exploration."

This is well documented on tracks like "Haunt Me (What Have You Become)," where the atmospheres become intoxicating and ruthless in their quest to drown the

listener in chilling ambience. For a band with only one six-stringer, the secret weapons behind the monolithic wall of sound include a Pigtronix Infinity Looper and a DIY ring slide that can be found in any hardware store for \$1.

"The looper is what carries those big strummy ideas," Emmalia says. "I like to build the layers into a whining banshee sound. And I love using my homemade ring slide. It's a piece of copper coupling that you can cut down to whatever size you want. For some reason, that seems to work best for me. If you lose gear as much as I do, you need more economical alternatives."

**"By removing
yourself from having
to be exact, you can
be artistically free"**

The two guitars used for the sessions were a 2008 Custom Shop Strat and a regular American Strat, which were fed into a Fender Deluxe combo. As for pedals, Emmalia sticks with a classic Tube Screamer and a Zvex Effects Box of Rock for extra gain stages, plus EarthQuaker Devices' Sea Machine for chorus and an Electro-Harmonix POG for extra depth. As we've already learned, however, this is a guitarist who has a very open position on what tools can be used to get the job done.

"Because I use single-coils, you can put anything through them," Emmalia says. "I like doing weird things like playing my phone through my pickups, and then looping that while playing over the top. It makes each performance different, with more of an improvisational element. By removing yourself from having to be exact, you can be artistically free. It's perfect for texture-based work. Once you unchain yourself from the burden of protocol, you can go anywhere."



Cradle of Filth's
Marek "Ashok" Šmerda
[left] and Donny Burbage

Cradle of Filth

THE BRITISH EXTREME METAL HEROES REVEAL THE GUITAR TONES BEHIND THEIR THEATRICAL METAL MAYHEM

By Andrew Daly

▶ EXTREME METAL, AS Cradle of Filth is classified, is polarizing. It's easy for instrumentation, such as Donny Burbage and Marek "Ashok" Šmerda's ripping dual guitars, to get lost in the spectacle.

Šmerda admits that with that comes pressure — but there's plenty of room for bits and bobs that fans might not associate with the extreme metal sphere. "You might be surprised," he tells *Guitar World*. "We definitely have outside-the-box influences..."

"I'm a very unusual guitar player," Burbage adds. "I don't like a lot of modern guitar tones. I like low mids and chunkiness. It comes across as a 5150 sound, but it blends nicely with British amp tones, like a Marshall JCM800 or a plexi. It's the best of both worlds."

Unsurprisingly, it's the same for Šmerda. "I find myself in the Marshall world," he says. "Donny mentioned the Plexi; that's the ultimate tone for me. It works for any kind of music and cuts nicely through the mix,

which I think a lot of "modern" guitar players might not realize."

Cradle of Filth has new music out, with its latest single, "Malignant Perfection," coming ahead of a new record for 2025. Burbage and Šmerda are excited — especially having navigated the rigors of the extreme metal machine since joining Cradle in 2022 and 2014, respectively.

It's been a challenge, but they're up for it. "It's not like we're playing crazy tech metal," Burbage says. "Image-wise and stage presence are the main things and fitting into the complete picture artistically

because Cradle is a lot about image and makeup."

Grandiose-meets-gruesome as the Cradle of Filth vibe is, Burbage says it doesn't get in the way of the music, saying, "It just adds to the show itself. If you go to see someone perform a show, and they're standing still, and there's nothing else to it, you can just listen to the record at home."

New music aside, be it the environment on stage, in the studio, or within the genre itself, extreme metal is about survival via aggression and expression. Having been in it for years, Burbage and Šmerda have advice, with Burbage saying, "You gotta be cool."

"You don't have to be the best player," he says. "The hangs — that's what it's about. You've gotta be able to learn the songs by ear. If you can only learn by tabs, you won't be as accurate as when you can learn by ear — especially with Cradle of Filth, where the tabs online are terrible."

**"I don't like
a lot of modern
guitar tones.
I like low mids
and chunkiness"**

Keith Streng with his
Bigsby B5-equipped
Supro Westbury



The Fleshtones

KEITH STRENG'S RHYTHMIC GARAGE RIFFS KEEP THE PUNK-ERA LEGENDS VITAL AFTER FIVE NON-STOP DECADES

By Jim Beaugez

► GUITARIST KEITH STRENG made his CBGB debut with first-wave NYC punks the Fleshtones in 1976, just as the scene was coalescing around young bands like the Ramones, Blondie and Talking Heads, all of which collectively brought a sense of abandon back to rock music.

"Everything was new and fresh, and everybody was bringing something to the table; it was exciting and unbroken ground," Streng says. "That's what motivated me to become a guitar player, because it wasn't all about scales and technique. It was just taking it back to what rock 'n' roll should be — minimal, emotional and simple."

In the heady early days of punk, the Fleshtones injected their garage-rock sound with classic R&B touches like sax and Farfisa organ. But Streng has always been the glue between those aesthetic touches and the band's stomping rhythm section, alternating tight guitar lines with funk-up chord vamps and keeping an emphasis on the melodic arrangement.

"To me, being a great guitar player is always coming up with the right part for the right song, or the right solo," he says. "The guitar player's job is rhythmic, and when there is a lead, it should be something that gets your attention and you can remember it."

Streng's performances on the band's 20th studio album, *It's Getting Late (...and More Songs About Werewolves)*, are remarkably on-brand. Those jangly guitar tones, largely coaxed from a prized pairing of his Supro Westbury guitar with a Supro Comet amplifier — his weapons of choice for at least 3,000 shows, he says — sound as raw and immediate as anything he's recorded.

Album opener "Pussywillow" has all of Streng's signature moves, culminating with a melodic solo that peaks on a screeching unison bend. "Wah Wah Power" rides on a back-and-forth guitar rhythm like its title suggests, while the sonics of songs like "It's Getting Late" rely on his garage-y clean strumming tone.

If it sounds like Streng never lost the plot, that is by design. The Fleshtones are probably the only band of its era to remain active without feigning a breakup or hiatus, and they remain as potent as ever nearly 50 years later. For his longevity, Streng swears by the most fundamental rule of guitar: keep practicing.

"A lot of guitar playing is a good thing," he says. "Play guitar as much as you can, even if you don't get better. It's just a lot of fun."

AXOLOGY

- **GUITARS** Supro Westbury, Gretsch Silver Jet
- **EFFECTS** Supro Comet, Fender Hot Rod Deluxe

"The guitar player's job is rhythmic"

Elliot Easton performs
at a Gibson event in
Anaheim, California,
January 16, 2020

**“The basis of the
Keeley 30ms pedal
is that John Lennon
hated doubling
his vocals”**



MY PEDALBOARD ELLIOT EASTON

WHAT THE CARS (AND EMPTY HEARTS) GREAT
SEES WHEN HE LOOKS DOWN

I LIKE TO have a great all-around board that'll give me the flavors of the different types of stuff I like to get into. I want to credit David Phillips at L.A. Sound Design; he builds pedalboards for everybody. I don't want to name names, but while I was there, he had boards — I think — for Carl Verheyen and Larry Carlton. He builds these beautiful pedalboards that are very clean. He did mine, and I love it.

“It starts with a TC Electronic [*Polytune 3*]; next to that, I have two pedals by Keeley — the California Girls Twelve String Simulator and the I Get Around Rotary Simulator. I Get Around is kind of like

a Leslie; California Girls is like a 12-string jangle box that I use for compression. Then I've got the Hermida Audio Zen Drive [*overdrive*]. It's like a Dumble in a box. Then there's a crunch pedal [*Crunch Box*] by a company from Australia called MI Audio, so there's two pedals in one. Instead of stepping on one side for one part of the song and the other side for another part, I have a loop for these two, and I keep them out of the way at the top of the board. So what you see after the I Get Around is a loop that holds the Zen and MI Audio pedals.

“Then I've got a Mini-Volume and a Mini-Wah, both by Dunlop. After that, I've got my Keeley 30ms [*Automatic Double Tracker*], which is a big part of what I do. The basis of that pedal is that John Lennon hated doubling his vocals. So the chief engineer at Abbey Road came up with a way to take his vocals, add slight delay, put it onto another track and, at various speeds,

put the vocals together. That's what the 30ms does; it's like a doubler — but organic sounding. Then I've got my Line 6 HX One [*multi-effects pedal*], which is a little smaller and has all the original effects of the larger version. That's followed by my Line 6 [*DL4*] MkII [*Delay Modeler*], my MXR Tremolo and my MXR Reverb. All of those are my wildcard pedals, where I can get all these crazy, beautiful sounds in modulation or when I'm looking for something unusual that I don't normally choose.

“At the top of the board, I've got my compression and sustain pedal, the Janglebox [*Classic*]. Basically, it gives that shining Byrds sound. And there's a button that puts it up another octave, giving extra shimmer and shine. I mentioned before why the overdrives are up there, and the board rounds out with my Truetone [*I Spot Pro*] power supply and my Voodoo Lab [*Pedal Power 2 Plus*] power supply.”

— Andrew Daly

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

“If I had a small, clean Fender combo with headroom, I'd take the MI Audio Crunch Box. If I had a Marshall with its own power for distortion, I'd take the Line 6 DL4 Delay.”

The heart and soul of Cracker: David Lowery [left] and Johnny Hickman



This Is Cracker Soul

CRACKER'S JOHNNY HICKMAN ON HIS "MICK AND KEITH" RELATIONSHIP WITH FRONTMAN DAVID LOWERY, THE JOYS OF "BONEHEADED RIFFS" AND THE BAND'S NEW *ALTERNATIVE HISTORY* COLLECTION

By Joe Bosso

▶ **NOT COUNTING ITS** two founding members — guitarist-frontman Dave Lowery and guitarist-singer Johnny Hickman — 18 various musicians have logged time in Cracker since the band formed in 1990. "It's called the 'Steely Dan model,'" Hickman says, "where you have two singer-songwriter guitar players who are the core of the operation. Cracker Incorporated is David and me. We've been friends since we were teenagers, and we've been writing songs together for 35 years." He laughs. "Wow, that's longer than some of our fans have been alive."

Hickman admits that he and Lowery have butted heads over the years, but the two have figured out that the best way to keep the peace is to maintain a safe distance. "David and I live across the country from each other," he says. "The only times we connect are when we're

in a rehearsal room or we walk out on stage. It keeps things healthy. We have something of a sibling relationship with a little bit of competition. That kind of thing always existed with Mick Jagger and Keith Richards. Tom Petty and Mike Campbell had it. The guys in Oasis — that's their whole thing. David and I have that same spark of competition."

The guitarist boils down the Cracker songwriting approach to a simple formula: "I'll come up with a big boneheaded riff, and David will create a song around it. Or it could be vice versa." It's a construct that's served them well, particularly during the band's Nineties heyday, when they logged a succession of riffy, rootsy hits like "Teen Angst (What the World Needs Now)," "Low" and "Euro-Trash Girl" that dominated college and alternative radio. In all, Cracker have recorded nine studio

albums over the years, all of which are present and accounted for on the whopping 3-LP vinyl, 2-CD set, *Alternative History: A Cracker Retrospective*. There is, however, a twist; rather than license existing tracks from their former record labels, Hickman and Lowery — following in the footsteps of Taylor Swift, Def Leppard, Prince, Squeeze and others — simply re-recorded their songs.

"We started this some years ago," Hickman says, "on our *Greatest Hits Redux* album [2006]. I'll explain it in layman's terms. Virgin Records — and all the people who have bought, sold and bought and sold that entity — own the recordings of those songs. But David and I very wisely never let go of our publishing and our ownership of our creative content, which means we're free to re-record them and make new versions of them for greatest-hits collections or whatever we want, including this new set."

For Hickman, the process of revising various tracks of the band's catalog allowed him to put a fresh spin on some of his guitar performances. "It's only natural — you go in with new ears and want to try something a little different," he says. "The more I play guitar, the more knowledgeable I've become

about what a song is asking for. The trick to re-recording is to not stray too far from the original, but you want to make it just a little bit better. I got to try different effects, different amps. I've kind of got my sound narrowed down to a Creston guitar and a Fender Deluxe Reverb. Of course, I love Strats and Les Pauls; they all have their place in what I do."

Let's talk about your guitar style. What got you into the guitar, and which players had a real impact on you?

My parents got me and my siblings into piano lessons, but when I was seven or eight, the Beatles became a thing. Like every other kid in America, I wanted to play guitar. My dad was in the military, and he went to Spain each year. He brought me back this tiny, nylon-string guitar made for small hands. It was really well made. I lucked out — most kids got a piece of junk for their first guitar. I had to go to a neighbor to figure out how to tune it. I never took lessons; well, later in life I had a few loose lessons.

The Beatles got me going, but pretty soon I got into more "guitar players' guitar players," like Jeff Beck and David Gilmour. The Kinks were a big influence, songwriting-wise.

You were very much into British rock.

Absolutely. Over time, I learned to appreciate the music that came from the United States — Otis Redding, the Ventures. Once I got into surf music, I realized, "Wow, the guitar really can be a voice."

Before Cracker, Dave made a name for himself in Camper Van Beethoven, and I remember you were in this band called the Unforgiven.

That's right.

That was one crazy group. You had this whole spaghetti Western vibe, and you had four guitar players. There was a big bidding war for the band, right?

Yeah, it was crazy. Elektra gave us a shot, but it didn't work out. There was a huge bidding war for us, and we signed a huge contract. Somebody got that money, but it sure wasn't me. We had four guitarists, which was unheard of at that point. It was two lead players and the other two guys were rhythm. We made it work; there was a place and a purpose for all four guitarists.

You guys needed a huge contract to pay for your wardrobe. Those leather dusters weren't cheap.

[Laughs] Yeah, we had the whole look down. It was a fun idea. We were all into



Hickman with the Gibson Les Paul he bought new in 1978

spaghetti Western films, Sergio Leone and Ennio Morricone music. The Unforgiven sort of blended the Clash, the Rolling Stones, Led Zeppelin with Ennio Morricone. I think we were just a little too weird for the main mainstream.

**ALTERNATIVE HISTORY:
A CRACKER RETROSPECTIVE**



You and Dave were friends as kids. Why were you never a member of Camper Van Beethoven?

Actually, I'm honored to say I was invited a couple of times, but I was a young guy and recently married. I had a little baby, so I couldn't move up to Santa Cruz [in northern California], which is where Camper Van Beethoven were based. Then I was in the Unforgiven and the whole bidding war happened. The stars didn't align until I quit the Unforgiven — it was apparent we weren't going to take off. I started writing songs, and eventually the time was right for David and me to do something together.

Cracker pretty much hit it right out of the box. You guys sounded alternative enough for the early Nineties, but you had that roots rock sound, too.

You could connect us to grunge a little



bit. I mean, we were a guitar band, and we sounded tough. We had that thing I talked about — the big boneheaded riffs and good, melodic songs. It worked from the get-go on alternative and college radio. That's

where "Teen Angst" went to Number 1; it wasn't on mainstream radio.

As the Nineties came to a close and we entered the early aughts, alternative

bands started to have a tougher time in the marketplace. Was that a difficult period for you guys?

Oh, you mean the ever-changing, ever-morphing, so-called music business, as we say in one of our songs? We just stayed true to ourselves and stuck to our guns. Our first record after we left Virgin [2003's *Countrysides*] was more country-based. I loved doing that stuff, and David loved it, too. I have a huge appreciation for people like Jerry Reed. His style was funky and kind of country twangy. I combine that with influences like Jimmy Page and Chet Atkins, and I make it one big guitar stew.

Various bands have stuck it to their former managers and record labels in songs. On *Countrysides*, you guys aimed your ire at Virgin Records with "Ain't Gonna Suck Itself." Pretty subtle.

Oh yeah! [Laughs] We realized at the time that we were getting nudged over to the little sub label. We had a solid fan base, but we saw that Virgin was signing Mariah Carey for \$80 million and they couldn't afford to give us the budget we needed. We put out consistently good records, but we didn't have another hit like "Low." We felt a little shafted, so yeah, "It ain't gonna suck itself, Virgin Records." [Laughs] **GW**

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THIRD MAN HARDWARE

With a line of products that range from the Triple Threat, a three-in-one distortion/phaser/echo pedal that you can probably afford after mowing a few lawns, to the Fender Jack White Pano Verb amp, **Third Man Hardware aims to inspire guitar players of all skill levels**

By Jacob Paul Nielsen

NOT MANY PEDAL companies have the luxury of road-testing their products. Then again, not many guitar pedal companies are run by Jack White. The team at Third Man Hardware is — perhaps surprisingly — small. Of course, there's White, the creative heartbeat of all things Third Man. Then there's Christina Inman and Dan Mancini. Inman, whose official job title is "The Wrangling Hellcat," handles most of the business side of Third Man Hardware while also managing merchandise for Third Man Records. Mancini, who describes Inman as a "total badass," has a Third Man business card that reads "Dan Mancini: Waste Management."

Though these job titles might seem arbitrary, they actually reflect the many hats Third Man employees wear. For instance, when Mancini isn't repairing and maintaining gear at Third Man's Nashville studio (as his job title suggests), he's on the road as White's guitar tech, crash-testing prototypes he's helped develop for his day job at Third Man Hardware.

You'd been Jack's tech for a number of years before you got started with Third Man Hardware, right? When did that happen?

It was 2019, when we were still developing the Triplegraph with the Coppersound guys. Jack had already done one or two pedals with Third Man Hardware before. We were going out with the Raconteurs, and I started helping in the final stages of development with little odds and ends. Christina had been helping keep the project moving along, asking me lots of questions along the way. Slowly, everyone was realizing I was a pretty good fit to help make things happen. [Now] I help out with the development and the technicals and creative elements of the gear with Jack.

How was the Triplegraph developed?

That was four years in the making, and it was something Jack had cooked up with the fellas. Coppersound sent, like, a little Morse Code pedal, just a single little killswitch. They just sent it to him, thinking he'd get a kick out of it. He loved it. Visually, it's really appealing and it's fun. In the White Stripes and on his more current guitars, like the Triplecaster, he loves killswitches. But then he wanted to take a step further, and he said, "It'd be cool if we actually put on three of those, and there were two octaves on it, and the killswitch or a looper in the middle."

They just chipped away at it over the years. We crash tested it with the Raconteurs [in 2019]. We had a prototype on the board, and over that last year or so we kind of really honed it and got it past that finish line. That was a really wacky one to put out. I'm glad it landed like it did.

The Knife Drop is another kind of "out there" or unique collaboration, like the Triplegraph. How did that come to fruition?

At a couple points, Eventide had sent out a couple of pedals they wanted to try and develop with us. We couldn't find a path with those immediately. They sent us another one later on, the H90 Harmonizer.



"I GET A BIT OF DIGITAL ANXIETY WITH OVERLY COMPUTERY PEDALS. YOU GET LOST. YOU LOSE YOUR SETTINGS. I'M ALWAYS A LITTLE SKEPTICAL OF THOSE..."



[left] Third Man Hardware's Dan Mancini and Christina Inman; [above] the Third Man Fuzz-a-Tron

COURTESY OF THIRD MAN HARDWARE

It's pretty funny. I get a little bit of digital anxiety with overly computery pedals. You get lost. You lose your settings. I'm always a little skeptical of those. But they sent the H90 over and I plugged it in at the studio and I started messing around. I found a couple settings and I was like, "Damn, this is some wild shit!" I took it to Jack and said he needed to hear this "Knife Drop" setting and he loved it.

So we said to Eventide, "Hey, I don't know that things are working out with this pedal, but what if we tried taking this Knife Drop sound and put it into one of your enclosures that you already make?"

I think that one took about a year or so. We tried simplifying it as much as we could on our end. For instance, taking it from their six-knob enclosure and reducing it down to three. Those six knobs still exist, but you have to hold a button and dive down the rabbit hole. Also, we really were fixated on the idea of always being able to get back to that core sound, so we ended up building in a cool little back door where you can hold the right toggle switch for, like, two or three seconds and it'll always come back to Knife Drop. So no matter how much you mess with all these settings, or say, kick your knobs on stage, all you gotta do is hold that switch for a couple seconds and boom, you're right [back] there.

We had so much fun doing all the artwork, too. We did that with Rob Jones, who's been a collaborator of Jack's for years, all the way back to the White Stripes days. He's done lots of posters and merch and all that stuff. That was a fun journey.

With the small team and the way things are handled in-house, there's definitely a DIY ethos to Third Man Hardware. Is that right?

You're totally right. I mean, the whole DIY element is why Third Man exists. Many of the people who work at Third Man are there because they all played in bands and put out their own records and made their own T-shirts. We do as many things in-house as possible. So that's definitely a thread going through everything.

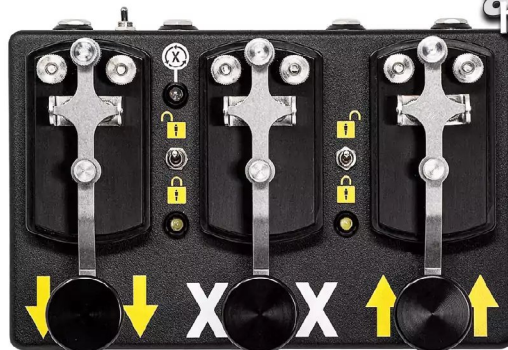
How does that extend to the pedals you make? Is that why the Fuzz-a-Tron was developed, for example?

Yeah. With the Fuzz-a-Tron, we really wanted to do

something at a lower price point that also got people inspired. [We've done] a bunch of boutique American collaborative pedals that were fun, but obviously, a little on the pricier side because of the small companies, and they're American made and all that. We really wanted to sow those seeds of creativity in people. You know, we're all people who fix stuff and solder away. For the Fuzz-a-Tron, we wanted to empower people to think, "Oh, I can fix my input jack!" or "Oh, yeah, I can fix that. It's just, fix the battery lead."

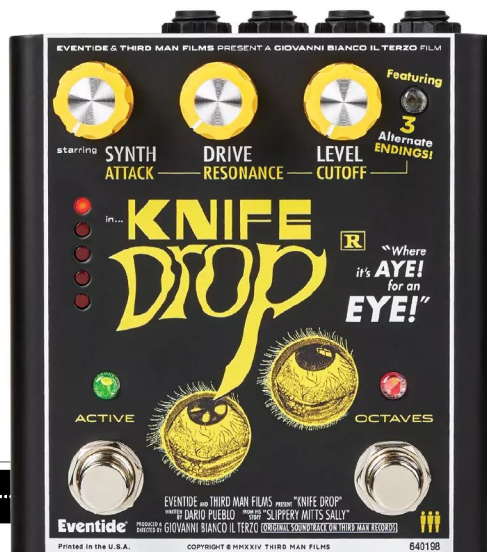
Bill Skibbe, who does Third Man Mastering, has his own electronics company. Back in the late Nineties, he tried doing a kit with a company called Heathkit, who is a Michigan-based company. They have great instruction manuals and you put the stuff together yourself. [That project] never got off the ground. It was basically a Mosrite Fuzzrite clone. It sat in his garage for years. So a year and a half ago, we started kicking our own ideas of what to do next and how we want to start making more of our own stuff. Bill said, "Oh, maybe we could try and do this Fuzz-a-tron. It's this Heathkit thing that I tried doing years ago that never took off. Maybe we can pump some life into it."

Bill had 85 to 90 percent of it kind of cooked up, but then I ended up testing out a couple other things in the circuit. You know, you can't find all those components anymore, so we had to adapt it a little bit. We tried out a bunch of stuff over at the warehouse and cooked up a nice manual. Some DIY kits can be kind of cold and uninspiring and too technical and everything. With the Fuzz-a-tron, we tried our best to make it inviting. We wanted a no-fail fuzz kit that people of any budget or experience can get excited about, and hopefully have a "win" with electronics. Hopefully people think, "I could be a person that has a little tool bench and solders away in my garage and makes cool stuff." It's as basic and as fail proof as you can get in a pedal where it's, like, four resistors of the same value, four capacitors. It gives you the opportunity to really imagine my little electrons are making their way in here, and we're making them do this little dance through circuits and put it right out the back end. It really demystifies a lot of it. **GW**



[clockwise from above] Third Man Triplegraph, Third Man Triple Threat and the Eventide/Third Man Knife Drop

"WE WANTED A NO-FAIL FUZZ KIT THAT PEOPLE OF ANY BUDGET OR EXPERIENCE CAN GET EXCITED ABOUT"





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JIM BABJAK

The Smithereens guitarist talks “A Girl Like You,” New Jersey lore, touring with Tom Petty and his guitar tone’s impact on Nirvana **By Joe Bosso**

IT’S ONLY TAKEN 45 years for the Smithereens to have hit the big time. Yes, they’ve bagged gold records and have toured the world, but recently they’ve hit what is surely the pinnacle of success with the propagation of Smithereens tribute bands. There’s Broken Pieces, Blood & Roses and Dead Àire, among others, and if the trend continues, guitarist Jim Babjak just might get in on the act. “I was joking to my manager, ‘These tribute

bands are probably making more money than me,’” he says. “Maybe I should form a Smithereens tribute group and be in it.”

He might have a hard time with that, as the actual Smithereens’ touring dance card has been full as of late. That the band is performing at all is something of a miracle, as many assumed that the untimely passing of lead singer and songwriter Pat DiNizio in 2017 spelled the end of the beloved New Jersey-

based pop rockers. “You get knocked down, but you’ve got to find ways to keep going,” says Babjak, who a year earlier suffered the loss of his wife to pancreatic cancer. “Before she died, she said to me, ‘You’ve got to live your best life.’ That struck a chord with me. The fact is, people still want to hear these songs, and I want to play them because I put my heart and soul into them.”

Babjak and drummer Dennis Diken, who formed the band with DiNizio in 1980, are usually joined on tour by co-founder and bassist Mike Mesaros, but occasionally the bass slot is occupied by onetime member Severo “The Thrilla” Jornacion or longtime Joe Jackson bassist Graham Maby. Their frontman position is also a fluid situation. For the past few years, it’s alternated between Marshall Crenshaw and Gin Blossoms singer Robin Wilson, but recently John Cowsill (best known for his work as singer and drummer with the pre-Partridge Family band the Cowsills) has assumed the post.

“It all feels pretty natural now,” Babjak says. “Because Marshall plays dates on his own and Robin is busy with the Gin Blossoms, we needed a third guy. John Cowsill has been a friend for a long time, and he called us up and said, ‘Do you need a singer?’ And he was perfect. See, we know these people. After Pat died, people were telling us, ‘Listen to my tape. I sound just like Pat.’ That was creepy to me. Playing with people we know, it’s more like the band is just continuing with the same heart and soul we grew up with.”

For Babjak, whose tough and tuneful ways with riffs and solos have fueled a fleet of three-minute corkers like “A Girl Like You” and “Sorry,” working with Diken is a constant source of inspiration. “Every time I get on stage with him, I think, ‘This is what I live for,’” he says. “We feed off each other, and I benefit so much from the exchange. When I met Dennis, he was drumming like a pro — he could play like Keith Moon. I was just trying to keep up with him. But that’s the secret. I tell young people all the time, ‘If you’re forming a band, work with musicians who are better than you. They’ll make you better.’”

You, Dennis and Mike were already playing together when you guys

“I TELL YOUNG PEOPLE: IF YOU FORM A BAND, WORK WITH

hooked up with Pat. Did you know right away that he was the guy?

Oh yeah. We fit right in with Pat. We were looking for a lead singer who could write songs. I was trying to write, but I wasn't good at the time. We tried a few singers before we met Pat, but when we found him, it was all right there. We got a singer, and he got a band ready to go.

Did it take some time for you and Pat to get your guitar sound together?

That's the thing; we didn't really talk about it — it just happened. His demos were very basic, so I would try to fill the songs out and do interesting things. For instance, "Blood and Roses" has a C chord, but I would lift my index finger on the B string. I don't know what that's called — I just knew it sounded good. My forte was coming up with opening riffs and solos. When I played chords, I'd try to play differently from Pat, whether it was strumming or picking.

How did you come to pair your Rickenbackers and Teles with Marshalls?

Actually, I was using a Music Man early on. My brother, who's seven years younger than me, bought a Marshall JCM800 100-watt head. I plugged into that thing and was like, "I'm keeping this." Ever since 1983, I've been using the Marshall, and it's become my sound. It's got perfect feedback that I can control.

Given your love of Pete Townshend, I would think you might have tried Hiwatt amps.

I never had the money. That Marshall of my brother's? I had to trade him a '71 Strat and my original Rickenbacker 12-string.

Pat played mainly Strats and Jazzmasters...

That's right. He put those through a Mesa Boogie.

You called Pat's demos "basic." How much so?

They were pretty basic. Sometimes he'd play a song live. At this point, we were rehearsing in his basement with no PA. With some songs, we didn't know what the words would be. He'd have a title, but he would wait until the last minute to finish the lyrics. One thing I always liked:

[facing]
Jim Babjak in 2018;
[above, from left]
Pat DiNizio, Dennis
Diken, Babjak and
Mike Mesaros
in 1990



If a song sounded happy and jangly, the lyrics would be depressing. I thought that made the songs unique.

You guys played your fair share of New Jersey dives. There was the Dirt Club in Bloomfield...

Yeah, I used to love that place. The owner's wife kicked us out — twice. She thought we were too loud, and she didn't like Pat's voice. But there were some cool bands that played the Dirt Club. I remember the Catholic Girls got signed, and we were like, "Oh, cool! That means the Dirt Club is on the radar." Of course, nothing happened with us. We didn't give up, though. I didn't get a job so I could devote my time to the band. I got some insurance money after my car got stolen, so I used that to open a record store.

That way, I could be my own boss and do whatever I needed to stay in the band. Dennis and I opened a T-shirt store, which I let him keep. He was his own boss, too. Mike and Pat both lived at home. We

were lucky to have the time to keep pursuing a stupid dream even though people were saying, "You're not gonna make it." We just kept going. It took us six years to get anywhere.

Were there times, though, when you thought, "We're not gonna make it"?

I kept telling myself we'd make it, but in my heart I thought we wouldn't. Things got very tough. But then we recorded five songs on a low budget — we knew the engineer at the Record Plant, and he snuck us in after midnight — and we sent tapes around. All the major labels turned us down, but there was a small label in California, Enigma; they liked us and signed us. They put us together with Don Dixon, and we recorded the other six songs for \$5,000.

That was the 1986 album, *Especially for You*.

Yeah. I thought it was good, but I didn't think that many people would like it. I never thought "Blood and Roses" was a single. We buried it on the second side →

PAUL NATKIN/GETTY IMAGES

MUSICIANS BETTER THAN YOU. THEY'LL MAKE YOU BETTER™



as an album cut. Then it got in a movie and our video got on MTV. Scott Muni at WNEW started playing it, and then other radio stations picked up on it. Suddenly, it was like, “Holy shit, people like this!”

What was it like when you guys realized you had finally made it?

It didn’t happen for a while, and it kind of happened over time. You hear this from a lot of bands when they start selling records: I didn’t see any money from it. I remember at one point I was living in an apartment and we were opening for the Pretenders — three nights at Radio City. A guy living upstairs from me looked outside and saw me with a guitar case that said “Smithereens” on it. He was surprised that I lived there. But opening acts would get, like, \$500. Slowly, our price went up, but we were still traveling in a van. On the tour for *Green Thoughts* [1988], we got a Winnebago, and that seemed kind of dangerous. We didn’t get a bus until halfway through that tour.

Most of the money I’ve earned has been from the road. We made videos that cost a fortune; each time we did one, it was \$50,000 to \$100,000, and of course, it all got charged back to us. We made some great videos that didn’t get much play on MTV. So yes, we made it in a way, but our

[from left] Jim Babjak, Mike Mesaros, Marshall Crenshaw and Dennis Diken in action at Iridium in New York City, July 14, 2018

gratification came from the audiences at the shows. We’re used to not getting noticed. I remember *11* [1989] sold a lot — “A Girl Like You” was on it. I’d pick up *Rolling Stone* and go to the concert listings, and

we were never in it. I’ve lived with being under the radar all my life. Fuck it.

Don Dixon and Ed Stasium are two of the more notable producers you’ve worked with. What are their differences when it comes to recording guitars?

With Don, our albums sounded a bit more jangly; he might have sweetened us up a bit. Ed sweetened us up, too, but not as much. I think we were trying for a heavier sound with Ed. I remember when we recorded “A Girl Like You,” he had me play the riff eight times, and he said it had to be exactly the same each time.

Of the cover albums the band has done, *Meet the Smithereens!* and *The Smithereens Play Tommy* are beautifully played and recorded. *Tommy* is a strikingly clean recording.

Those records were done at the House of Vibes in [Highland Park] New Jersey; Kurt Reil [of New Jersey band *the Grip Weeds*] engineered and co-produced it with us. Pat didn’t play guitar on those; I did all the guitar work. On the *Tommy* album, I used

a Les Paul with P90s that I borrowed from Kurt’s wife, Kristen. I wanted to keep it simple and use only one guitar, make it more *Live at Leeds*. I played bass on “Tommy Can You Hear Me?” That’s me playing a Hofner with a pick.

Did you hear from either Paul McCartney or Pete Townshend?

No, no, no... I once had an opportunity to meet Pete Townshend. We were rehearsing at SIR in New York, and he was in the next studio with the people from the *Tommy* play. My guitar tech ran in and said, “Hey, you want to meet Pete?” I was too scared. I heard he could be a real curmudgeon so I didn’t want to ruin it.

You mentioned being under the radar, but a lot of people were paying attention. It’s been said that Kurt Cobain cited the Smithereens’ sound when Nirvana was cutting *Nevermind*.

Butch Vig told me about that. Before Capitol dropped us, they had us do “Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer” for a Christmas sampler. We were thinking of using Butch for our next album — which never happened — so we hired him to do the Christmas song. He told us about how they would be in the studio A/B-ing my guitar sound; they were trying to get these production ideas and stuff. I thought that was really cool.

“PEOPLE WERE SAYING, ‘YOU’RE NOT GONNA MAKE IT’...

Another big fan was Tom Petty, who in 2013 selected the Smithereens to open for him and the Heartbreakers.

Oh, man, that was so cool. I saw him in the hallway at one of the shows we were opening for him, and I actually asked him, "Did you really ask us to be on this leg of the tour, or is that bullshit?" And he said, "No, man. I love you guys." He had heard our song "Sorry," and he loved it. He said, "I wanted you guys on the tour." I was like, "Thank you!" Suddenly, I was talking to him about Del Shannon — we were friends with him. It's sad I didn't get more time to talk with Tom. People were coming up and doing photos — that sort of thing. And then, of course, he passed away. God, what a great songwriter he was.

When Pat started to experience health problems, did the band ever talk about breaking up?

No, never. Pat couldn't play guitar anymore, so we functioned as a three piece. In a way, it harkened back to the *Live at Leeds* thing Dennis and Mike and I did. Mike came back for a good solid two years, and the band sounded great. Pat's voice was great, too. He was a fighter. He'd been sick for five years — it was a slow decline. He could sing up to the last day of his life. We were even trying to work on new material. The last show we did, he had to sit in a chair, and that was really sad. After that, we thought, "We need to take a break and assess the situation." He died soon after. There wasn't much of a gap between that and us continuing.

The band is working on a new album. What can we expect?

Dennis and I laid down maybe six tracks, but I've got about 20. He's got some ideas, too. I have some songs earmarked for Marshall to sing and some for Robin to sing. If they want to contribute a verse or a bridge or something, they can, and we'll go from there. I don't want to rush it or put a deadline on it.

The other thing is, we have another 14 songs or so with Pat that were unfinished. He's singing and playing acoustic guitar on them. They're really good demos; they're not really finished, but they have full lyrics. There's drums on them, and last year Mike put bass on them. I'm on them, too. There won't be any AI involved; it's just us. It's going to be another "lost"-type record. I'm really looking forward to it. **GW**

HANDS OF GLORY

Jim Babjak revisits five classic Smithereens riffs

THE SMITHEREENS ARE, without a doubt, one of the greatest guitar bands to come out of New Jersey, which — scientifically speaking! — means Smithereens guitarist Jim Babjak has recorded some of the greatest riffs to come out of New Jersey. Below, Babjak goes to town on the roots and gear behind five of those riffs. And if you're gonna try to play them yourself, remember to tune down half a step, à la Jimi Hendrix or Stevie Ray Vaughan.

"A GIRL LIKE YOU"

'Pat came up with the opening riff, but I helped him out on some of the chords. There's an F chord in there, but I don't know what it's called, and I do a sort of unorthodox thing with the E minor. The solo is all mine. I played it on the demo because the song was originally planned for Cameron Crowe's *Say Anything*. In fact, that's why Pat sings, 'I'll say anything' at the end.

"We were definitely going for a heavier sound, and I needed something even tougher than my SG. I said, 'I gotta get a Les Paul.' I've never been one of those guys who will go into a guitar store and start playing 'Stairway to Heaven.' I was always kind of embarrassed by that sort of thing. We were recording in California, so I went with one of our assistant engineers to a used-guitar shop by the studio. I pointed to Les Paul and said, 'Can you plug that in to see what it sounds like?' He did, and I said, 'Okay, I'll take that one.' It was 1975 Les Paul. I put it through my Marshall, and it sounded great. I still have it — I don't want to give it up."

"DROWN IN MY OWN TEARS"

"There's a chord with the pinky on the E and the B of the fourth fret — I don't know what you call it. I was watching Del Shannon doing 'Runaway,' and he was playing that chord. I was like, 'Wow, that's really cool. I'm going to start doing that.' For the riff I play in the beginning of this song, I'm keeping my pinky on the E and the B while I move around with the other fingers.

"Around this time, I bought a new SG to get a heavier sound. It was a 1987 SG with regular humbuckers. Later on I put P90s in it. It was a good guitar and worked out fine, but I think an SG from 1967 or '68 would have been better."

"BLUES BEFORE AND AFTER"

"I used the same SG that I played on 'Drown in My Own Tears.' Same Marshall, too. I never veered too much from a winning combination. It's kind of funny, though; in the video, I play a Rickenbacker because we had an endorsement with them.

"The riff is pretty Kinks-ish, but heavier. It's the Kinks meets AC/DC. I had to play around with the riff because I didn't want it to sound like 'You Really Got Me' — you don't wanna get sued or anything. We worked everything out in rehearsals during pre-production. Mike came in with his basslines, so it all came together."

"ONLY A MEMORY"

"I came up with that riff during a soundcheck in Madrid on our first tour. There's always a lot of waiting and goofing around at soundcheck — people aren't always ready at the same time. So it's a good chance to play around with new ideas to see if anybody reacts. Back then, if you played something good, you had to play it over and over so you could remember it.

"The minute I played this riff, I was like, 'I think there's a song here.' The other guys looked at me — 'What was that?' When we got back to the States, Pat put some chords to it and wrote the lyrics, which were different at the time. We went to a rehearsal studio before recording the album and worked out the parts. When we recorded the song, I used the SG for the rhythm, but I played the riff with a Strat. The Strat just sounded better with the part. Don Dixon put some sort of effect on it, and it sounded weird but good."

"TOP OF THE POPS"

"Capitol wanted another 'A Girl Like You.' It was like the Kinks following up 'You Really Got Me' with 'All Day and All of the Night.' We were like, 'All right, we gotta give the record company that type of song again.' They told us that's what they wanted; they even said we had to use a click track. I was like, 'Are you fucking kidding me?' That would stifle the drums.' Dennis actually got really good at playing with a click, though I wasn't a fan of it.

"We did the demo of it, but I don't think Pat had all the lyrics yet. The song is in the key of A, just like 'A Girl Like You,' and I thought, 'How am I going to make it sound different?' I don't like to play solos on demos because I want them to be fresh in the studio. I just wait till we're recording and then I do a few passes. Eventually, the producer will say, 'Okay, we got it.'"

"Sonically, I tried to make the song different from 'A Girl Like You' in that I added an acoustic guitar under the electric on the opening riff. It added a little bit of texture and made it sound different. The electric was the '75 Les Paul I bought in L.A. The acoustic was a big-body Guild D-50."

— Joe Bosso

...WE JUST KEPT GOING. IT TOOK US SIX YEARS TO GET ANYWHERE"



GUITAR WORLD
JUNE 2025

A SMASHING PUMPKIN



Kiki Wong on her life, gear and technique before and since teaming up with Smashing Pumpkins' Billy Corgan and James Iha in the spring of '24

BY ANDREW DALY

BEFORE SECURING THE gig as a touring guitarist with the Smashing Pumpkins, Kiki Wong had all but given up her dreams of large-scale success with a big-time act. That's not to say she wasn't capable; one glance at her millions-strong social media following showed she was certainly up to the task.

But an unruly music business and a devotion to family led her elsewhere. Outsiders called Wong a "social media shredder" and a "bedroom guitarist." Forget that she was riffing heavy on gnarly guitars in front of millions of viewers; to her detractors, it wasn't enough.

"My biggest advice is to accept failure like it is your best friend," Wong tells *Guitar World*. "Some of your biggest failures will happen early on when you're just getting started or when you're in a vulnerable position. Failure sucks. It hurts. It stays with you. And you certainly don't want to do it again."

Wong processed the hurt and vulnerability the music biz slung at her and saw her star rise. So high, in fact, that when Billy Corgan held an open audition in the winter of 2024 to replace the departed Jeff Schroeder, he chose Wong for the gig over another 9,999 (seriously) applicants.

Since signing with the Pumpkins, things have gone well for Wong. She's toured the world with Corgan and James Iha in support of the Pumpkins' latest record, 2024's *Aghori Mhori Mei*, and fans have been welcoming, even if some felt her to be "too metal." Such is life as a Pumpkin; you can't make anyone entirely happy.

"Joining the Smashing Pumpkins has helped me become a whole lot more well-rounded player, adding a little alternative music to my style as well, and I am so grateful for that," she says.

As for what she'd be doing if she didn't beat out those other 9,999 applicants, Wong says: "Honestly, I'd probably be doing more TikTok and Instagram Reel videos at home

and being a mom, which wouldn't be a terrible life. However, I'm so grateful for having the second chance at fulfilling my dreams and exceeding my expectations of how far I could take my music career. It has been the best thing that's happened to me, besides, of course, my son being born."

From indie metal hopeful to social media guitar star to gracing the grandest stages worldwide playing iconic hits of the Nineties alongside one of rock's most seminal characters (here's looking at you, Billy), Wong's journey is an inspiration for anyone hoping to "make it." She's seen the bottom, which prepared her for the top.

"If you accept failure as a place for growth, the sky is truly the limit," Wong says. "I have 1,000 percent failed more than I've succeeded, and I truly believe that's why I'm here today. It allows you to see where you can improve in whatever it is you want to achieve and check your ego if things are going almost too well. That advice still stands to this day."

You've been playing with the Pumpkins since the spring of 2024. How has that changed your life?

It honestly has been one of the best things I could ever ask for. It still shocks me that I was literally living in the desert — between the masses of desert, almost in the middle of nowhere — and catapulting into a world tour with one of the most influential Nineties rock 'n' roll bands. I'm forever grateful. Most importantly, it has allowed me to improve as a musician and expand my musical understanding.

Does that mean you're a different player now than you were then?

Absolutely. I have a lot to attribute to Billy. He's developed a distinct playing style that when you hear it, you go, "That's Billy Corgan," which I think is what we all strive to do as musicians. Learning his style was hard, but it helped me play with more feel and vibe. The first week of rehearsal was like a musical boot camp that taught me more than 20 years of playing by myself did.

You were mostly known as a metal player going into the Pumpkins gig. Do you still consider yourself that type of player?

I honestly just wanted to play what I liked the most — which is metal — my whole life. It helped keep me super-focused and interested in playing and practicing. However, it did end up making me a one-trick pony, always blasting the dirtiest distortion and not really having a whole lot of dynamics to my playing.

How has your presence in the Smashing Pumpkins most impacted the live show?

I was worried at first how well I was going

"The first week of rehearsal was like a musical boot camp that taught me more than 20 years of playing by myself"

to mesh with the band since I felt like such a noob going into the project. However, the band was so patient and welcoming that it made it easy to find my place. I always say, "I might not be the best guitar player out there. In fact, I know I'm not the best guitar player out there. But I guarantee I'll always give one hell of a show." And the Pumpkins have given me space to be myself on stage, which has been so honorable.

What song was the most challenging to learn, and what songs still give you fits?

"Thru the Eyes of Ruby" [from 1995's *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness*] was one of the more difficult songs for me to learn since there were so many effects and different harmonizing parts. The tricky part about Smashing Pumpkins' music is the arrangements. It's orchestrated well and almost counterintuitively while still maintaining musical sensibility and mainstream appeal. It's really quite genius, but also hard to learn — and it sounds insane, but sometimes the easiest songs still get me nervous. Like, one note hanging can be more nerve-racking than a whole solo because if you miss that note, you screwed up the whole part. That's why "Today" [from 1993's *Siamese Dream*] sometimes gets me nervous. [Laughs]

What have you learned about Billy and James as guitar players that you didn't know before?

One thing I love about Billy's playing is that he plays his own style. When you hear it, you know that's Billy Corgan. He also taught me how to use my thumb more, which is very Hendrix, and also hearing intervals of fourths in his playing is really amazing. He's an incredible shredder and has a breadth of guitar understanding that could honestly blow away many modern guitarists. James is so inspirational because he understands music and sound as a design, which adds such a cool dynamic to the songs. He's developed a style that gives the music a vibe and lifts the air of the songs. It's truly incredible, almost like a Foley room artist for theatrical films. I have so much respect for him, and it has influenced me to want to use more effects in my playing as well.

What is the secret sauce to the Pumpkins guitar sound, and how do you fit into that?

With Smashing Pumpkins, it's all about feel, vibe and following the "Pumpkins pocket." Everything we play is by vibing and following each other. What you hear is exactly what is being played, and the ebb and flow of the pocket is what makes it truly an unmatched experience live.

Securing the gig the way you did gave hope to players that they could reach their dreams, too. Have you considered the impact and importance this has had on young players — especially young women — who want to break through?

One of my main goals in starting my TikTok account playing Daily Metal Guitar Riffs was to inspire young people to pick up a guitar again. At the time, some of our favorite guitar brands were filing for bankruptcy, and rock was "phasing out." My intention was to do the best I could to rekindle that. Now, joining the Smashing Pumpkins through the audition process has allowed me to show that hard work does pay off. It truly fills my heart knowing that people have been inspired by my story. It just helps strengthen my original goal: keeping the metal and rock 'n' roll alive!

As you've alluded, you've done an amazing job of promoting yourself on social media. Do you think you would you be here without that?

Social media is an extremely tricky topic. A lot of times, musicians don't want to take part in social media trends, and understandably so, because it can make you feel like you're selling yourself. But if you embrace that as a tool for you to get



Kiki Wong and bassist Jack Bates in action with the Smashing Pumpkins in 2024

NADINE JOY



[from left]
Wong, Bates and
Billy Corgan perform in
Lucca, Italy, July 6, 2024

yourself out there and connect with other people, it can be the best thing that will catapult your music career. At the end of the day, people want to feel connected with something or someone. Social media is a place where that can happen. Without building a following, there is no way I would have been able to connect with so many incredible fans and musicians, as well as have the opportunity to be a part of the Smashing Pumpkins.

Did you ever feel overlooked or cast aside as just a “social media” or “bedroom” guitar player? Do you feel people take you more seriously now?

It's tough because I have TikTok and Instagram to thank for my “claim to fame,” so to speak. But at the same time, I put in the hours and work playing in bands and writing our own music. I've played hundreds of shows before I even became popular on social media, good and bad. Though there is absolutely nothing wrong with social media influencers and bedroom guitarists, it wasn't all that was in my repertoire; the positive side is it sheds good

light on the fact that dreams can come true for those who are playing at home.

Can you elaborate on how your thoughts on gear have changed since getting the Pumpkins gig?

Distortion, distortion, gain and more gain were my digs before I joined the Smashing Pumpkins. However, they've introduced me to a whole new world with pedals. Really dialing in [my] tone and voicing has been an interesting journey for me musically. I'm grateful to Billy and James for being such huge mentors in that space.

Are there any downsides to living life on larger stages? If so, would you trade it?

“I might not be the best guitar player out there. I know I'm not. But I guarantee I'll always give one hell of a show...”

It's hard to call any of it a downside, to be honest. I've done so many makeshift tours in the back of vans, asking venues for food since we didn't have the cash to get it on tour when our wallets were stolen; the whole nine yards. The only thing I would say is that when you play to huge audiences, it's harder to connect with people since they are so far away, especially in stadiums. I do miss occasional eye contact and shoutouts, but it still happens; [you've] just gotta squint more. [Laughs]

At one point, you left music behind, but you're certainly back now. Beyond the Smashing Pumpkins, what does the future hold for you?

I gave up on touring with any big act after having my son because I wanted to dedicate my efforts to being a mother. But since the Smashing Pumpkins are so family-oriented and understanding, it's been a dream come true to be able to perform and be a mother with the help and support of my boyfriend and my parents at home. I'm able to continue my musical dreams, and for that, I will forever be grateful. **GW**

INTERVIEW

GUITAR WORLD JUNE 2025

GA-2.0



[from left] GA-2.0's
Matt Skubbs, Cody Nilsen
and Josh Kiggans

GA-20 — everyone's favorite bass-guitar-free Boston-based blues trio — debut a new guitarist and drummer on their latest EP, *Volume 2*

BY JOE BOSSO

MUSICAL DIFFERENCES" IS Matt Stubbs' explanation for his recent split with his GA-20 co-founder, co-guitarist and singer Pat Faherty. When pressed for a bit more detail, Stubbs remains mum. "We've got to leave it at that," he says. "There's powers above me, and it's been made clear that's where we're

at — musical differences."

Up till last year, Stubbs was on a rocket ride with the wild and woolly, stripped-down Boston-based trio (two guitars, drums, no bass) he and Faherty formed in 2017 that specialized in a jacked-up version of vintage Chicago electric blues. Their five albums (three studio discs and two live sets) debuted at either Number 1 or Number 2 on *Billboard's* Blues Albums charts, racked up a boatload of wins and nominations at the Blues Music Awards and the New England Blues Awards, and the group's crackerjack concerts attracted a loyal and growing legion of fans. And then things started to go wonky: Just as he was cutting ties with Faherty, Stubbs also saw drummer Tim Carman pack it in. The guitarist faced the prospect of rebuilding his band and brand from the ground floor up without losing steam.

Drummer Josh Kiggans, an acclaimed Boston session and touring ace, slipped right in — "a seamless transition," Stubbs says. However, guitarists hoping to fill Faherty's sizable shoes faced certain criteria. As Stubbs explains, "To be in GA-20, you've got to be a good singer.

You've got to be able to play solos and straight-ahead blues.

You have to be able

to cover the low end guitar-wise, so you've got to be something of a bass player, too. It's hard to find someone who can do all that." Stubbs was toying with a few candidates, but he had a special feeling about Cody Nilsen, a fellow Massachusetts native who had been making a name for himself, as a solo artist and with various bands, in the rock and alt country worlds. "I've seen Cody play over the years, so I asked him, 'Why don't you come over? Let's play,' Stubbs says. "There was no audition or anything like that. The minute we started playing together, I knew this would work." He laughs, then adds, "Cody lives one mile from me — that's a big plus."

The new GA-20 lineup (the group is named after a Gibson guitar amp produced from 1950 to 1961) quickly hit a local Cambridge studio and recorded a bracing four-song set, *Volume 2*, an EP composed of vibrant originals and a striking cover of Billy Boy Arnold's classic "Cryin' & Pleadin'." It's hot stuff — the spunky riffs, hot-rod grooves, spitfire solos and Nilsen's radiant vocals — and like the outfit's past output, the record is rooted in two worlds: There's a marvelous nostalgic quality to song structures and the bare-bones, live off-the-floor recording aesthetic, yet it all feels miraculously fresh. Stubbs insists that he's not trying to reinvent the blues as much as he's simply trying to keep the tradition alive. "I'm not going to come up with anything that's different from my heroes," he says. "I don't even listen to much blues past 1972. I'm just trying to maintain a timeless sound and spirit."

For Nilsen, one of the benefits to working with Stubbs is an opportunity to reconnect with music of his past. "What we're playing is different from what I'm used to, but it's not too far off," he says. "I grew up listening to blues music. The first records my dad gave me were by Son House and John Hammond Jr. I took a break from that style and headed in more of a country direction, but now I've gone back and I'm rediscovering my love for blues, which is pretty wonderful..."



Stubbs with his Waterslide signature model in Greenfield, Massachusetts, June 24, 2023

Matt, with two new members in a power trio, does it feel like a period of reinvention?

MATT STUBBS: I would call it an evolution. When I came up with the idea of doing a small trio in Boston, I put it together with Pat and my vision for stripped-down Fifties Chicago blues that pushed into the Sixties. We definitely got our sound. I wasn't looking to change anything with our direction, but with Cody and Josh coming in, there was a question mark: "What's it going to sound like?" They're different guys with different backgrounds. Cody's into

country music and Americana and rock 'n' roll as well as traditional blues. So there was a question as to how's it going to go? But man, we're sounding great. It sounds hot!

Cody, you've been doing your thing as a solo artist and with other bands. Were you not happy with your progress? From a career level, what appealed to you about joining up with Matt?

CODY NILSEN: Matt and I have known each other for a long time, and we've always flirted with the idea of getting together. I saw this as an opportunity to not only

continue to write songs I want to write, but also as an opportunity to work with someone I've looked up to for a long time. It felt like the right time to give this thing a shot, and once I did, that belief was confirmed.

Matt, as we've talked about, Cody's performed a lot of music that isn't strictly blues. Are you prepared for him to stretch your sound in some ways?

STUBBS: I love the way Cody plays and sings. Everybody's going to have their own sound and can freshen things up, or whatever you want to call it. We've been recording and rehearsing a lot in the last couple of months, and it's interesting — it still has the GA-20 sound. I mean, I love classic rock, Sixties and Seventies stuff. I used to go see Cody's solo thing. I'm very familiar with it. Since he's come in, we've really had the blinders on. We have a studio here in Providence, and we're basically there five days a week playing blues music. That's kind of where our heads are at right now. Just blinders on.

The two of you carry on the GA-20 tradition of two guitars, no bass. How does that affect the parts you come up with?

STUBBS: If you're going to write or cover a song, you have to arrange it in a way that it will sound full with two guitars. We discuss it a bit, but whenever we start playing a song, it's obvious who will sound better playing the top part or a solo. If it's a slide song, it goes right to Cody. It's no discussion — I'm terrible at slide. I think more than actual playing is the sound. We use two amps each to cover it: one big amp that's kind of clean with low end, and then one typical guitar amp that's a little distorted.

NILSEN: Getting the sound as well as the approach to the playing — what we call the "guitar weave." It requires a lot of intensive listening, as opposed to just plugging in and clicking on a pedal and saying, "Let's do this shit." We try not to step on each other tonally, and we try to do the bob and weave of actual parts.

"Guitar weaving" ... like the Stones.

NILSEN: Exactly.

Have you guys ever considered using an actual bass in the studio? Bands without a bassist — like the Doors, say — have done it.

STUBBS: Sure. Up to this point, there was one song we did with a little bit of bass on it. No one will know. It was like a little texture — it almost sounded like a horn or something. Moving forward, I'm not against it. If it makes sense and it makes the song better, sure, a bass player can be on there.

"We're in our studio five days a week playing blues music. That's where our heads are at — just blinders on" MATT STUBBS



Stubbs [left] with his 1967 Harmony Rocket H56 and Nilsen with his 1977 Ibanez 2335

We're going back into the studio in a week, so you never know what's going to happen.

Is that for a full-length album?

STUBBS: Exactly.

Is the EP a kind of preview of what we're going to get with the next album?

STUBBS: I mean, it's going to be right in that same ballpark. It's going to be blues and it's going to be recorded in a similar way. Yeah.

Guitar-wise, what are you two using these days?

STUBBS: On the EP, I believe I used my old Silvertone 1454, the three-pickup hollow body. That guitar has been my main recording instrument for years. When I first started touring with GA-20, I got into using Waterslide guitars, like a signature model. It's got a Tele-style body and gold foil pickups. I think that's on the EP, too.

How about your amps and effects? Do you use effects at all?

STUBBS: I don't have much going on in the way of pedals. Just a little tank reverb or maybe a Catalinbread Topanga Spring Reverb pedal. My amps in the studio have been my [Gibson] GA-20 in the room, and I put a '59 Fender Tweed Pro in a closet. I set that one to low-end.

Cody, how about you?

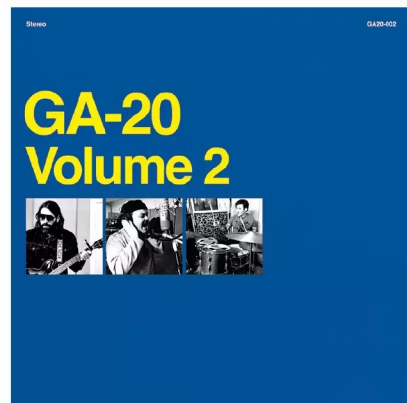
NILSEN: For these sessions, I used an

"Our approach to playing is what we call the 'guitar weave' — it requires a lot of intensive listening" CODY NILSEN

Ibanez "lawsuit" guitar — it's a '77 2335, like a black Les Paul Custom with P90s. It has a special sound. For my slide playing, my guitar is a Teisco Sharkfin ET460. It's got four pickups and a million switches. I've got it tuned to C#. It's a really cool guitar to get acclimated to. For effects, I know the volume gets used a lot. [Laughs]

I think I know the answer to this already, but would you guys ever use amp modelers? [Both men laugh out loud]

NILSEN: Uh-uh.



STUBBS: No way! I'll put six Bassman heads in my van if I have to.

A lot of guitarists like the convenience of amp modelers.

NILSEN: Yeah. Convenience is cute.

What's been the response from fans to your live shows with the new lineup?

STUBBS: We haven't done one yet.

Oh, wow... Not even a soft opening?

STUBBS: Zero so far. But we've got gigs coming up. The first gig we have is kind of a hometown show in Providence — it's about 20 minutes away. Yeah, we're jumping right in. No dry runs, no practice runs.

Cody, you have your own fans. Have you heard from them online about your decision to join GA-20?

NILSEN: Everybody seemed to say it made way more sense than they could have imagined. They've said, "You do have a bluesy voice, you have a soulful voice" — stuff like that. I'm still doing my own songs, still writing my own tunes. But GA-20 is definitely my priority, and it's taken over my vision for where I'm going. **GW**

A FEAST FOR THE EARS!

★ ★ ★ **THE** ★ ★ ★
OPULENT
GUITAR
SCENE OF
1985

In 1985, the world of guitar playing became a grand banquet, where styles, techniques and sounds from every corner of music collided to create a tasty, revelatory moment in rock history

BY BRAD TOLINSKI

A**T THE HEIGHT** of the Roman Empire, masses of exotic foods from thousands of miles away were brought to the tables of the elite, where livers of char-fish, brains of pheasants and peacocks, and even tongues of flamingos were served alongside rare vintages of wine. The sheer magnificence of these feasts was astonishing — even to modern historians.

That's exactly how it felt for guitarists in 1985. The breadth and magnitude of innovative guitar playing that year was nothing short of staggering; and the variety and originality of new ideas coming from the world of music were equally mind-bending.

Thrash metal was just emerging as a dominant force. Bands like Slayer (*Hell Awaits*), Exodus (*Bonded by Blood*) and Megadeth (*Killing Is My Business... and Business Is Good!*) harnessed the guitar's potential for speed, precision and aggression. Their complex riffing, rapid-fire solos and relentless technical demands pushed heavy metal into new realms of virtuosity. At the same time, a new crop of fleet-fingered virtuosos was blazing trails — neo-classical pioneer Yngwie Malmsteen and jazz-fusion innovator Allan Holdsworth redefined what could be achieved on the fretboard.

The post-punk era and its aftermath reshaped guitar playing, reverberating through today's alternative music landscape. Bands like the Smiths (*Meat Is Murder*), R.E.M. (*Fables of the Reconstruction*), the Replacements (*Tim*), Hüsker Dü (*New Day Rising*, *Flip Your Wig*) and the Jesus and Mary Chain (*Psychocandy*) each brought distinct sonic flavors that challenged conventional rock guitar norms.

At the heart of post-punk guitar was a spirit of experimentation and emotional rawness. Johnny Marr of the Smiths became a defining figure by blending jangle-pop sensibilities with intricate, ringing arpeggios. His approach was simultaneously delicate and powerful, weaving melodic lines that could evoke both melancholy and exuberance. Similarly, R.E.M.'s Peter Buck used a clean, chiming guitar sound — often employing open tunings and arpeggiated figures — that created a hypnotic, atmospheric backdrop, setting the stage for introspective lyrics and a laid-back yet unmistakable energy. The Replacements and Hüsker Dü, meanwhile, injected an edgier, more abrasive tone into the mix, while the Jesus and Mary Chain took a different approach — using layers of distortion and feedback to create a wall of sound that was both ethereal and menacing.

These bands weren't afraid to experiment with unconventional chord progressions and feedback, a contrast to the more meticulously crafted sounds of mainstream rock. This willingness to push the boundaries of traditional guitar playing helped cultivate an aesthetic that was as much about attitude and authenticity as it was about technical prowess.

For those who preferred more familiar flavors, there was plenty of meat on the bone. In 1985, blues phenomenon Stevie Ray Vaughan recorded his outstanding third album, *Soul to Soul*, while Dire Straits blew the doors off radio stations with *Brothers in Arms*. The latter went on to sell more



• Dire Straits frontman Mark Knopfler does his thing in St. Paul, Minnesota, August 1, 1985

than 30 million copies, becoming one of the best-selling albums of all time.

In the following pages of *Guitar World*, we'll delve deeper into these musical buffets, exploring the revolutionary techniques and groundbreaking sounds that defined 1985. It's a feast for the ages, and if you find yourself overwhelmed by the abundance of brilliance, don't worry, there's a handy vomitorium just down the hall... and when you've had a break, come back for seconds and thirds! →

“This willingness to push the boundaries of traditional guitar playing helped cultivate an aesthetic that was as much about attitude and authenticity as it was about technical prowess”

AEROSMITH DONE WITH MIRRORS

Aerosmith

Done with Mirrors

After a few weird years with replacement guitarists, by the mid Eighties, the Bad Boys from Boston were back and ready to prove themselves. We'll let Joe Perry explain the rest...

BY ANDREW DALY

AFTER JOE PERRY and Brad Whitford rejoined Aerosmith in 1984 after being away for four and two years, respectively, the Bad Boys from Boston launched their successful *Back in the Saddle* tour, which spanned the summer of '84.

"It was a pretty tumultuous decade," Joe Perry says while looking back on Aerosmith's mid-Eighties reboot. "It always felt like 'us against them.' But we really hung together as a band. Nothing was going to break us up, because we [*already*] went through all the stuff that usually breaks bands up."

Perry recalls the fans being there for Aerosmith, proving that the now-sober rockers had the juice that made them stalwarts of Seventies rock. This led to Aerosmith hooking up with Geffen Records and making their first record as a reunited force, 1985's *Done with Mirrors*. It would've been fun to say that *Mirrors* was a smash hit loaded with notable songs that topped the charts. It would've been cool to say that because of *Done with Mirrors*, Aerosmith claimed the Eighties as their own, just as they'd done in the Seventies. But that's not what happened.

Sure, Aerosmith would eventually shine in the Eighties — but not because of *Done with Mirrors*. The reality is the album basically failed to launch, sported some difficult-to-understand cover art and featured zero chart-topping hits. In fact, the sound of this record, which dropped at the onset of the hair- and glam-metal era, was more akin to 1976's *Rocks* than anything that Ratt, Poison or Quiet Riot — with whom Aerosmith was competing — were doing in the mid Eighties.

But *Mirrors* does have its moments. In fact, had it dropped just after *Rocks* or 1977's *Draw the Line*, odds are it would've been a hit. What's more, it's become something of a cult classic. But in the Eighties, *Done with Mirrors* left Perry feeling torn. Of course, time



ABOVE Joe Perry [left] and Steven Tyler on stage in Los Angeles during Aerosmith's *Back in the Saddle* tour, August 1, 1984

— and a string of subsequent world-beating records — heals all wounds. Now, when Perry looks back on the album, it's with a fresh set of eyes (and ears).

"I got a call some years ago about *Done with Mirrors* being on a list of, I don't know... top rock records," Perry says. "I forget what it was. But it was on a list, and people were regarding it as something that reminded them of our first record. I started listening to it, and I was really surprised. I saw it from a whole different viewpoint and saw what they were talking about. It's really rough and raw, and there are a lot of things about it that reminded me of the first couple of records."

Aerosmith had reunited in '84 and gone on the road prior to *Done with Mirrors*.

We had just gotten back together. We had done a tour and were getting comfortable playing together again. I had left for almost four years, and Brad had been gone, so we were getting comfortable with being together; that was part of the reason we went out on the road without a record deal. Well, one of the reasons was that we couldn't get a record deal.

It's hard to believe you guys couldn't get a record deal.

We had burned so many bridges that nobody would sign us. But we wanted to see if we had the old spark. We went out and toured for the *Back in the Saddle* tour that summer, and the fans showed up for us. That's it. They were there for us.

How did that impact the sessions for *Mirrors* in '85?

When we got into the studio to do that record, we were still learning how to write again. After doing records like *Rocks*, *Draw the Line* and even the first three records, you would think we'd be able to pick up from there and go on, but the pressure was on.

“It's really rough and raw, and there are a lot of things about it that reminded me of the first couple of records”

JOE PERRY

People were looking at us like, “Okay, what are you going to come up with?”

It must have helped that you were working with producer Ted Templeman, who had struck gold with Van Halen earlier in the decade.

We got to work with Ted, who had an amazing reputation, obviously, with Van Halen, which was incredible. They sounded monstrous, and I guess we were expecting more from him, so we were both kind of nervous. We were nervous to work with him, and he was nervous to work with us, which kind of surprised us.

How did those nerves impact the sessions?

I always felt like that record could have been better if we had worked on it some more, or if everybody got in the control room together and said, “We kind of feel uptight about working with you,” but I don’t know... it’s just how it went.

Aerosmith covered “Let the Music Do the Talking,” which came off the Joe Perry Project’s first album from 1980. How did you approach that?

We brought it to a whole ‘nother level, I think. I love the way we did it on my first solo record, but having the band play it — you know, Aerosmith! — really put it into fifth gear. And then, the rest of the songs just had a vibe to them.

Would you do *Done with Mirrors* over again if you could?

I still wish I could have maybe polished a few more things and put a couple more overdubs on. All in all, I think it did what it was supposed to do. It kind of showed me what we needed to do for the next one. We had to do that record to get to the next step and take ourselves out of the usual way we were writing and recording. After that, we took off up to

Vancouver and tried a whole new way of doing things [for *Permanent Vacation*, *Pump and Get a Grip*], and even worked with some other songwriters. That started a whole new thing for us.

And none of that happens without the learning experience of making *Done with Mirrors*?

We did three amazing records up in Vancouver. It was a really creative vibe, but anyway, I think we had to get through *Done with Mirrors*. One of the things we joked about is, like, “What did we do wrong?”

What did you come up with?

The first thing we did was print everything backward on the label, you know, with the artwork. [Laughs] We made it one step harder for people to figure out what it is. But the band was also at a point where we weren’t using mirrors for horizontal things [cocaine]. We were using them vertically, the way they should be used... It was kind of a subtle hint that the reason we’re back and able to continue on is because we made a lot of changes in our personal lives.

It seems your feelings on *Done with Mirrors* are ambivalent. Do you still relate to the album the way you do Aerosmith’s other records?

It’s more bits and pieces of each album. There are certain things that strike home with me for the kind of music that I like personally, but if we just stuck to one kind of music, I think we would have been able to do what we did. We wouldn’t have had as much balance as we did. We brought different things to the party. I mean, all I wanted to do was turn up and rock. [Laughs] It’s more about the bits and pieces that we all put there for each record to make it what they were. A lot of different spices went into the pot, and some records were more fun than others. But as far as musically, or one record, or another, it’s like I said: it’s more bits and pieces of every record, you know? →

“We brought different things to the party. I mean, all I wanted to do was turn up and rock”

JOE PERRY

BELOW Aerosmith in Clarkston, Michigan, July 11, 1984: [from left] Joey Kramer, Tom Hamilton, Joe Perry, Steven Tyler and Brad Whitford





Run-D.M.C.

King of Rock

"We were first with blistering, big guitars on rap," Eddie Martinez looks back on one of his many red-Hamer-packed masterpieces

BY ANDREW DALY

BEFORE HOOKING UP with Run-D.M.C., New York City session veteran Eddie Martinez had made his rounds with Blondie, Robert Palmer, Mick Jagger and David Lee Roth (and let's not forget his contributions to Run-D.M.C.'s self-titled 1984 debut). Still, he says that lending his licks to a hip-hop album, which became *King of Rock*, was a different animal.

"Big 'rock' guitar was associated with rap prior to me playing on 'Rock Box' and 'King of Rock,'" Martinez says. "But Larry Smith, who wrote and produced those classics, knew I could get the sounds and vibe because I'd played in rock and punk bands when we were kids."

Martinez suggests that despite the genre shift, his approach didn't shift all that much. "My objective was to bring authentic, big, crunchy guitars to the beats," he says. "It required finding the right sounds and approaching the songs with attitude and intention that translated to 'feel.'"

Also helpful was the fact that the members of Run-D.M.C. — Joseph "Run" Simmons, Darryl "D.M.C." McDaniels and Jason "Jam Master Jay" Mizell (the latter of whom was apparently most receptive) — trusted Martinez after fulfilling their rap-meets-rock vision on their 1984 debut. "After the success of [Run-D.M.C.'s 1984 hit] 'Rock Box,' they readily accepted that blending the two genres was explosive, special and most importantly, what the people wanted," Martinez says.

Yes, the people wanted it — as did Martinez and Run-D.M.C. — but making it happen was another thing. It took a specific blend of oh-so-Eighties gear and a Midas touch.

"The only gear I brought was a red Hamer prototype," Martinez says. "That guitar is magical. It powered several big hits. I used it on Robert Palmer's 'Addicted to Love,' David Lee Roth's

'California Girls' and Mick Jagger's *She's the Boss* album. With that, I used a Sound City 100-watt head. I used that head instead of the Music Man 2x12 combo I used for 'Rock Box.' In those days, studios provided the amps, which generally was a double drag because studios' amps were generally on their last gasps. But I was lucky; that amp provided the goods I needed. I also used my yellow Boss OD-1 [overdrive]; it gave me just the correct bump into the front end of the amp and the crunch I needed."

Despite the rock-tinged success Run-D.M.C. experienced with "Rock Box," Martinez says producers Smith and Russell Simmons were "instrumental in imploring Run-D.M.C. and Jam Master Jay that pairing rock and rap was the way to reach broader success." Still, no one had done it before Martinez; Run-D.M.C. made it a reality.

"The reason rock and rap paired so well is because of the space there is on those tracks," he says. "It was a blank canvas for me to get really large sounds to fill the space. It was a perfect match. It was a great metaphor for trashing the norms heretofore."

In the 40 years since, rock and rap have been joined at the hip, which is just one of many things that Martinez takes pride in when it comes to *King of Rock*.

"I thought the tracks rocked, but I never thought they would have such cultural significance," he says. "One of the immutable laws of marketing is that it's better to be first than better. We were first with blistering big guitars on rap. Kudos to Run-D.M.C. for putting their dope vibe on these tracks. 'King of Rock' and 'Rock Box' were the first to break a tradition and were true hybrids. The fact that this has given so much meaning to fans is something I will always remain grateful for."

"I thought the tracks rocked, but I never thought they would have such cultural significance"

EDDIE MARTINEZ

BELOW Eddie Martinez with his beloved red Hamer in Merrillville, Indiana, May 16, 1986. "That guitar is magical," he says





Stevie Ray Vaughan

Soul to Soul

The inside story of the Texas dynamo's third album, through the eyes of Chris Layton, Reese Wynans, Tommy Shannon and Joe Sublett

BY ALAN PAUL AND ANDY ALEDORT

AS STEVIE RAY Vaughan and Double Trouble entered Dallas Sound Lab to begin recording their third album in March 1985, they were nearing the end of a remarkable two-year run. After years of grinding on the Texas blues circuit with a series of near misses, including almost signing with the Rolling Stones' record label, the band burst onto the national scene with *Texas Flood*, released by Epic Records in June 1983. They followed that up less than a year later with *Couldn't Stand the Weather*. They had toured the world, played with many of their heroes and had videos in heavy rotation on MTV.

It was an incredibly productive 24-month period, but the band was on shakier ground than anyone on the outside could have realized. The frenetic lifestyle made it hard to work on new material and spurred an alarming increase in their substance intake, both of which became a problem as they started work on what became 1985's *Soul to Soul*.

"In the studio, you're under a microscope, and have to confront what you really sound like," says Double Trouble drummer Chris Layton. "*Soul to Soul* was difficult to make. It was like trying to run a race when you're very tired. You might make it and even get a good time, but it feels like it's going to kill you."

The sessions, which were produced by the band and longtime engineer Richard Mullen, needed a boost. That's why Vaughan called on three stalwarts of the Texas blues circuit to lend a hand: saxophonist Joe Sublett, keyboardist Reese Wynans and songwriter Doyle Bramhall. The latter, a great drummer and singer, was an old friend of Vaughan's, not to mention his vocal inspiration. As bandmates in the Nightcrawlers a decade earlier, the two had co-written "Dirty Pool," which appeared on *Texas Flood*. "Stevie needed songs and knew Doyle had them," Sublett says.



ABOVE Stevie Ray Vaughan — with his Number One Fender Strat — somewhere in the U.S. in 1985

“Soul to Soul was difficult to make, like trying to run a race when you’re very tired. You might make it and even get a good time, but it feels like it’s going to kill you”

CHRIS LAYTON

The group recorded two Bramhall songs, “Change It” and “Lookin’ Out the Window.” Wynans, who had just given two weeks’ notice to singer Delbert McClinton, was originally brought to the sessions to add piano to “Look at Little Sister,” but he couldn’t hear himself in a room that was set up with a massive wall of amps and a full PA, a setup that only made sense to Stevie, who wanted to recreate the feel of a live performance.

“You could not hear a piano over the roar, so I suggested we try a Hammond organ, where I could isolate the Leslie cabinet,” Wynans says. “I think my organ playing and the energy it added surprised them.”

Sublett faced the same issue, which was resolved by Mullen setting him up in an iso booth with a clean track to avoid audio bleed. “Richard had a lot of common sense,” says Sublett, who described the volume in the main room as “painful,” noting that the loudness “came from Stevie, who had a Frankenstein wall of amps.”

On Wynans’ first night in the studio, the band worked until seven in the morning, and recorded “Change It,” the instrumental “Gone Home” and “Say What!,” which bassist Tommy Shannon says had evolved out of a jam based on Jimi Hendrix’s “Rainy Day, Dream Away.” In the studio, Vaughan

suggested breaking the song down and singing “soul to soul,” which would eventually provide the album title. On that song, Vaughan used a wah wah pedal that had belonged to Hendrix, and which older brother Jimmie had swapped with the guitar god in 1968 when his band opened for the Experience.

As the sessions proceeded, it became apparent that Wynans was doing more than contributing keyboard parts; he also was aiding in arrangements and helped keep things moving. When Stevie showed the band a new song, the slow burner “Ain’t Gone ’N’ Give Up on Love,” a Wynans contribution helped lock the tune in.

“He came up with the great walk-up part in the bridge, which I thought was one of the coolest things about the song,” Shannon says.

Late one night, Shannon adds, with everyone “hanging out, high and drinking,” Vaughan abruptly asked Wynans if he wanted to join the band, much to the shock of Layton and Shannon. It was never discussed beforehand, but, Layton says, “We knew we had reached a point where we needed some help.”

The previous year, Vaughan wanted to add guitarist Derek O’Brien, in part to free him of some chordal duties so he could focus on soloing and singing. O’Brien played a run of Texas shows before manager Chesley Milliken nixed the idea, not wanting Vaughan to give up any spotlight. Stevie didn’t ask for permission this time.

Vaughan decided to record “Empty Arms” early one day when he and Shannon were alone in the studio. “We like to play bass and drums together,” Vaughan told Andy Aledort in 1986. “We were just messin’ around.”

Recalls Shannon, Stevie said, ‘Let’s do ‘Empty Arms’ real slow’ and sat down behind the drums.” Assuming that they were just messing around or establishing an arrangement, Mullen didn’t bother rolling tape until Vaughan insisted he do so.

“They had a little argument, then Richard turned



LEFT Vaughan — with his custom Hamiltone guitar — graced *Guitar World*’s November 1985 cover



it on — and that’s the take we kept,” Shannon says. “Stevie knew exactly what he had in mind, and he was a great drummer — if he could last through the song. On a shuffle, his arms would get tired.”

The song began at such a slow tempo, Vaughan recalled, that it was “hard to keep going at the same speed. We sped it up 13.5 percent with the Varispeed and recorded the rest of the song to it.”

Vaughan’s playing on “Empty Arms” did not represent the only drumming-related hijinx on the album. On “Looking Out the Window,” Layton and Bramhall played together on a single kit.

Recalls Layton, “Instead of playing on two drum sets, [Doyle] pulled up a stool and sat right next to me, and the two of us played one kit! I played the ride cymbal and the snare, and he played the hi-hat. So there’s a 4/4 thing going on the hi-hat, but a 6/8 thing with the ride and the bass drum. We tried to sit on the same drum throne, but we kept falling off! We just wanted to be able to say that we played the same drum set at the same time.”

Vaughan took a left turn with “Life Without You,” a moving soul ballad written for and dedicated to his close friend, guitar maker Charley Wirz, who had died suddenly in February 1985. The song also

“In the studio, you’re under a microscope and have to confront what you really sound like”

CHRIS LAYTON



reflects Vaughan's passion for soul singers like Curtis Mayfield and Donny Hathaway.

"He was so scared to sing 'Life Without You' because it was so personal," Shannon says. "He was afraid he wouldn't be able to do it right."

The song was largely finished when Vaughan presented it to the band, but they struggled to seamlessly play the form, which had "a lot of chord changes" and two different bridges. An astute suggestion by Shannon helped the song fall into place. The original moved down chromatically from the A chord to an F# and Shannon thought it would sound better resolving on a minor chord, so Vaughan switched it to F# minor. The bassist also suggested that the song had too many walks, going up from A to C#, again up from B to D and then a walk-down from D to B. They pared those down, then Shannon suggested that "it would sound cool" if Vaughan played a solo reminiscent of Hendrix's "Bold As Love," starting with a slow whine. Those changes locked the song in.

"The first time we ever played the song all the way through, we got to the solo section, and all of a sudden, the song became massive," Wynans says. "It had seemed so tentative up to that point, then

ABOVE [from left] Vaughan, Tommy Shannon, Chris Layton and Reese Wynans make a curtain call in Minneapolis, December 13, 1985

“The first time we played ‘Life Without You’ all the way through, we got to the solo section, and all of a sudden, the song became massive”

REESE WYNANS

it was like we could all relax, and he just let go.”

That, says Layton, was just the band's normal operating procedure: “Business as usual.”

Ultimately, four of the album's 10 tracks were new Vaughan compositions: the simmering, sultry slow blues “Ain't Gone 'N' Give Up on Love,” “Empty Arms,” “Life Without You” and “Say What!” He was also oddly credited with the swinging instrumental “Gone Home,” a slightly reworked cover of a song by jazz saxophonist Eddie Harris. *Soul to Soul* also included Bramhall's “Lookin' Out the Window” and “Change It”; R&B star Hank Ballard's “Look at Little Sister”; the Willie Dixon-penned Howlin' Wolf tune, “You'll Be Mine”; and New Orleans bluesman Earl King's “Come on (Part III),” which Hendrix had recorded on *Electric Ladyland*. With the help of Bramhall, Sublett and Wynans, the band had pulled together an excellent album, one that was destined to serve as a marker for the end of the first era of Stevie Ray Vaughan and Double Trouble's national career.

With the album largely complete, the band returned to the road as a four-piece. “I initially thought I was just going to play on the songs I had played on the record until the first show when Stevie told me I was playing on everything,” Wynans says. “He didn't want to play rhythm all the time so he could concentrate more on singing. Chris, Tommy and I focused on the groove and forming a tight three-piece rhythm section. They were a great band without me, and I just wanted to add to it.”

Soul to Soul, the band's third studio album in just over two years, was released September 30, 1985, and it reached Number 34 on the *Billboard* 200 chart, with the music video for “Change It” receiving heavy rotation on MTV. Stevie Ray Vaughan had risen from the gritty Texas blues circuit to become a mainstream artist, but *Soul to Soul* would peter out, selling less than each of the first two albums. Their record label was concerned that the group was losing steam, but they had bigger issues to deal with.

Stevie would introduce the new quartet by saying, “They're no longer Double Trouble; now they're Serious Trouble!” Whether or not he was making a sly joke, Vaughan was expressing a deeper truth than most fans realized. The drinking and drugging were out of control; Crown Royal and cocaine were the preferred substances, and Stevie and Tommy were the most serious abusers. The band's performances were becoming increasingly frenetic and chaotic, which would eventually make the recording and compiling of their 1986 live album, *Live Alive!*, excruciatingly difficult.

By the following fall, the castles made of sand began to crumble. On October 2, 1986, Stevie collapsed on a London stage and entered a rehab facility for drug and alcohol treatment. He wouldn't record another studio album until 1989's *In Step*, a recording that reflected Vaughan's sobriety in the lyrics of songs like “Tightrope” and “Crossfire” and in the clean flow of his playing and singing. It seemed like a glorious beginning to an exciting new era in SRV's career. Alas, it was to be the last album he ever recorded with Double Trouble.

Adapted from Texas Flood: The Inside Story of Stevie Ray Vaughan, copyright 2019, Alan Paul and Andy Aledort.



Talking Heads

Little Creatures

Jerry Harrison looks back at the Heads' classic sixth album, on which the art-rockers embraced Americana — and blew up on the nascent MTV

BY HENRY YATES

AMONG ALL OF Talking Heads' other talents — from fearless musical invention to killer fashion sense — the New York band had impeccable timing. A decade earlier, in the mid-Seventies, the lineup had formed in time to lead the New Wave scene from the sticky stage of CBGB to the global charts. Now, in June 1985, David Byrne (vocals/guitar), Jerry Harrison (guitar/keys), Tina Weymouth (bass) and Chris Frantz (drums) would release the most commercial album of their career just as music became a visual commodity, vying for the eyeballs of America's youth. "I don't think *Little Creatures* is the best Talking Heads record," says Harrison, four decades later. "But I'll tell ya, one of the reasons it's our best-selling record is that it's the beginning of MTV."

Certainly, it was hard to escape the two heavy-rotation hits, in the form of "Road to Nowhere"'s gospel/accordion-bolstered hoedown and the twitchy alt-pop shimmer of "And She Was." Yet neither song is representative of the Heads' evolving playbook. "*Little Creatures* was the beginning of Americana for us," says Harrison of an album that finds his guitar lines jousting with Eric Weissberg's pedal steel on cuts like "Creatures of Love" and "Walk It Down." "That record was basically short, melodic, succinct, straightforward songs once again. It wasn't 'African'-sounding at all. And it wasn't the big band we'd been exploring for about four years. In a way, it was fun to once again have the pressure back on the four of us."

Across their first 10 years and five studio albums, Talking Heads had recorded all over the map (1978's *More Songs About Buildings and Food* found the art-rockers in the incongruous setting of Compass Point Studios in the Bahamas). Now, with *Little Creatures*, the band put down roots. "We were very much of the opinion that each album should have its own identity and atmosphere," Harrison says.



ABOVE Talking Heads' Jerry Harrison at home in Milwaukee, August 30, 1985; his modified Telecaster is in the background

“Little Creatures was melodic, straightforward songs once again. It wasn't the big band we'd been exploring for about four years, and it was fun to once again have the pressure back on the four of us”

JERRY HARRISON

"On *Little Creatures*, I introduced us to Sigma Sound because I'd worked there when I produced Nona Hendryx. That was our home after that. They did a lot of disco and R&B, and the New York branch was a little different from Philly, but nevertheless, these were the people that had done Teddy Pendergrass and the O'Jays and the whole Philly sound. And y'know, that was very compatible with us."

That said, admits Harrison with a laugh, his favorite guitar part on *Little Creatures* was inspired by a rather more establishment figure. "I really like the end of 'And She Was' with that distorted guitar. I thought it sounded like Neil Diamond's 'Cherry, Cherry' — that was my influence on that song."

Little Creatures broke the *Billboard* Top 20, was crowned *The Village Voice*'s album of the year and went on to sell two million copies — not bad for a release that started life as the sweepings from another project. "*Little Creatures* was actually the outtakes from when David was writing songs for *True Stories* [1986]," Harrison says. "But I actually think it's a better body of songs, personally..." →

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Yngwie Malmsteen

Marching Out

The perennial Stratocaster champ explains how his explosive second album was actually meant to be his first

BY ANDREW DALY

YNGWIE MALMSTEEN WILL be the first to tell you that 1984's *Rising Force* wasn't supposed to be a hit. But it definitely was — and the young Swedish virtuoso's unexpected success led directly to the recording of a second album, 1985's *Marching Out*, and a world tour.

Malmsteen describes *Marching Out* as “quickly thrown together,” which didn't seem to matter, as it climbed to Number 52 on the *Billboard* charts. According to the shredder, the lightning-rod success of his two first albums came via his laser focus.

“I did my thing,” he says. “Not because people told

me to, but because that was what I thought I had to do. I never had other people write my songs. The bottom line is that it's been a straight line. I always had a very clear idea of what I wanted. As a writer, guitar player — everything — I always ruled with an iron hand.

“At every corner I've turned in my life, I've had people telling me what they think I should do. But the reason I'm here now is that I didn't follow people's advice. To win the game, you gotta play the game. That's still my thing, but not because people told me to do that. I did it because that is what I had to do, and I thought it was different.” On that note...

What are the origins of *Marching Out*?

In January 1984, I signed a solo deal with Polygram in America. It was totally solo. I was touring in Japan with Alcatrazz, and they said, “We must have a solo album,” so in July 1984, I left Alcatrazz. *Marching Out* was supposed to be my first solo record for Polygram.

Of course, you'd already released *Rising Force* in 1984.

Rising Force was supposed to be Japan-only, and *Marching Out* was supposed to be the first solo album. But, through word of mouth, people would go into Tower Records or whatever and spend \$50 and wait two weeks for an imported version of *Rising Force* from Japan. It sold so many records without promotion — and it was, like, five times the price of a regular record — that it hit the *Billboard* charts.

So *Rising Force* ended up making an unintended impact in America as an import, leading to *Marching Out* being your second record?

Yeah. Polygram was like, “Oh, shit, we've got to put this record out...” Basically, what was meant to be the first solo album in America, *Marching Out*, became the second one. *Rising Force* was a sensation nobody expected. We all know that if you don't promote a record, it won't sell. But it sold without promotion.

In essence, *Marching Out* is a sister album — or spiritual successor — to *Rising Force*. It's also worth noting that you made two solo guitar albums before such a practice was commonplace.

In the Eighties, you didn't release an instrumental rock guitar album. They didn't exist. You had jazz instrumental albums, but not rock. I can't think of anyone of significance before *Rising Force* and *Marching Out* [ed., both of which include a mix of instrumental and vocal tracks featuring Jeff Scott Soto]. When they told me to do a solo album when I was in Alcatrazz, they said, “No, we only want you to play guitar.” It's really weird. People now take it for granted because it's normalized.

In one fell swoop, you kicked off the shred and instrumental guitar era.

Look at Van Halen, Jimmy Page or whoever; they didn't do instrumental records. Think about this now for a second... by accident, it turned out to be like a blueprint for guitar albums.

When did you start to understand the impact you were having?

When I was inadvertently touring for two albums



“I always had a very clear idea of what I wanted. As a writer, guitar player, everything... I always ruled with an iron hand”

YNGWIE MALMSTEEN

LEFT Yngwie Malmsteen on our January 1986 cover, which — as any GW subscriber knows — was actually edited and published in late 1985



after the extreme success they created without any promotion. *Rising Force* went into the *Billboard* Top 100 without even being fucking released [in the U.S.]. Have you ever heard of that? It wasn't even in stores. You had to go into a store and say, "Can you order this album for me?" That's how many fucking freaks went out and bought it. [Laughs]

Did you feel the same wave of success with *Marching Out*?

Yeah, but there's an important thing; with that album — and people misunderstand this — it was never a band. In January 1984, I signed a solo-artist deal. Every single album I've made since then has been a solo record. I hired singers and musicians, but they were solo albums. However, some of the people who were hired to take part in these recordings have gotten this strange illusion that they were part of a band, which they never were.

That aside, we can't forget that you had a hand in shining a light on the Strat at a time when shred sticks were favored.

ABOVE Malmsteen mid-solo at the Aragon Ballroom in Chicago, July 5, 1985

“The Strat was about as ‘out’ as you could get! If you didn’t have a fucking Floyd Rose, it was like, ‘What are you doing?’ Unless you were a blues player, no one was playing Strats...”

YNGWIE MALMSTEEN

The Strat was about as “out” as you could get! That’s another thing that people forget. In the Eighties, the fucking Fender Strat, oh, man, like, dude, it’s like having an old car and someone saying, “Why are you driving that old piece of shit, man?” If you didn’t have a fucking Floyd Rose, it was like, “What the fuck are you doing?” Literally, unless you were, like, a blues player, no one was playing Strats.

Would you change anything about *Marching Out*, given the chance?

I gotta be honest... that album was thrown together really quickly. There are some highlights on there and some really good songs. There are a couple of kinds of filler tracks... almost — but I don’t regret anything because it’s all a learning curve.

What does *Marching Out* mean to you?

You know me. At the time, in 1985, I had a very clear idea of what I wanted to do. I wanted to do, like, heavy metal, you know... lean more toward heavy metal and have an instrumental record. That’s what I wanted to do — and I did it.





Heart

Heart

Nancy Wilson recalls the making of the band's perfectly timed comeback album — yes, indeed, the one with “What About Love” and “These Dreams”

BY MARK MCSTEAD

HEART'S CAREER WAS somewhat in decline when they signed with Capitol in 1985 after several years with Epic. Although sales of their previous two albums, 1982's *Private Audition* and 1983's *Passionworks*, would have been welcomed by many acts, by their own high standards, it was clear they needed to turn things around. Guitarist Nancy Wilson and her singing sister, Ann, were in no doubt that a major reboot was needed and eagerly embraced the opportunities that the deal with Capitol presented. We'll let Nancy take it from here...

Heart was your first album for Capitol, and it saw the band undergo a major makeover. Was that part of the conditions on which you signed the deal?

I think we'd reached the end of the average lifespan for most rock bands by that point. We decided that if we wanted to survive, we probably needed to find a new manager and a new record company and have some kind of major reset. We saw the chance to sign with Capitol as an opportunity to reinvent the band. I guess it was almost like the old saying, “When in Rome.” If we wanted to fit in with the whole new MTV era, we had to adapt to survive.

Producer Ron Nevison had told you that he thought the idea of using acoustic guitars was outdated, which must have made you feel a bit uncomfortable, as your acoustic playing was central to the band's sound up.

I felt a little pressurised, as my first love was always acoustic guitar. That was the element that I brought when I joined Ann's band, the idea of embracing electric and acoustic sounds, much like Led Zeppelin, for example. I guess the acoustic guitar was a little out of step with the digital Eighties. On the live stage it didn't really matter, as so many of our big songs did require me to play acoustic.



ABOVE Nancy Wilson during the making of Heart's “What About Love” music video in the spring of '85

You had four big hits with songs brought in by outside writers. Was that strange for you as a band who normally wrote their own songs?

They were great songs — timeless, really — and, of course, they brought us huge success, and we'd already fully embraced the notion that we would have to commit wholeheartedly to Capitol's plan for it to work. We actually spent a couple of days at Ann's house, with Ron, going through numerous songs to see if there were any we'd be happy to record. “Alone” is a particularly strong song that could have been recorded at any time over the decades. I guess we were a little jealous, though, because we didn't write them ourselves. [Laughs]

Was it a slow process, embracing the new technology?

Those were the cocaine Eighties, so everything was extraordinarily long winded. They devoted a whole day to auditioning snare drum samples to double-up the actual live snare drum, for example.

Did you spend much time in pre-production?

Yes, we spent a long time in a rehearsal studio, learning all the parts and working out the harmonies. Howard Leese would take tapes home from the rehearsal to work out his solos, which were amazing parts that were as important to the song as the lead vocal — parts that were intrinsic to the song.

Looking back, do you feel the trade-offs were worth the discomfort you felt at the time you were making the album and shooting the videos?

Yes, absolutely. It revitalized the band and gave us a new lease of life. It also took us up to a whole other level of global success, so there's nothing I regret about what we did or where we compromised.

“My first love was always acoustic guitar. That was the element that I brought when I joined the band, the idea of embracing electric and acoustic sounds, like Led Zeppelin”

NANCY WILSON

Megadeth



Megadeth

Killing Is My Business... and Business Is Good!

Chris Poland breaks down his contributions to an indisputable thrash metal classic

BY ANDREW DALY

CALLING MEGADETH'S DEBUT, 1985's *Killing Is My Business... and Business Is Good!*, a "landmark" album isn't hyperbole — it's a fact. It's a lynchpin of trash metal — and it served as a proper picking of oneself up off the deck for Megadeth frontman Dave Mustaine, who had been fired from Metallica in 1983.

The story of the Metallica-related chip on Mustaine's shoulder has been beaten like a dead horse. But former Megadeth guitarist Chris Poland sees it a bit differently.

"You know what? Maybe twice in the whole time I've known Dave has he ever said anything about Metallica," he says. If you believe Poland, as far as "the looming specter of Metallica" goes, there's not much to tell — aside from the fact that several songs from *Killing Is My Business* were originally intended for Metallica, namely the album's most notable track, "Mechanix."

Poland was incredibly new to Megadeth at the time, meaning Mustaine was very much in control.

"I kind of knew the songs," Poland says. "Dave took care of the rhythm parts, and mostly, I just did solos. But if it wasn't for a friend of the band who took Dave aside and said, 'You need to give Chris more solos,' I wouldn't have had those solos!"

If total control over an album's guitar approach sounds like "on-brand-Mustaine," that's because it is. But Poland comes to Mustaine's defense. "I'd only been in the band for maybe two weeks," he says. "I'd just met Dave; I was learning the songs. We didn't have a lot of money. We did the best we could under the circumstances."

Money was indeed a factor for Megadeth in '85. The reported budget for *Killing Is My Business* ranges from \$6,000 to \$8,000 (Poland says it was \$6,000), and to be fair, for such a tiny sum, Mustaine and company could've done a whole lot worse. "It was a blur, man," Poland says. "Guitar tone wasn't even a thought. Dave just took a Marshall and dined it!"



ABOVE Megadeth's Chris Poland [left] and Dave Mustaine perform in Chicago, February 12, 1987

"I'd only been in the band two weeks. I'd just met Dave; I was learning the songs. We didn't have a lot of money, but we did the best we could. Guitar tone wasn't even a thought — Dave just took a Marshall and dined it!"

CHRIS POLAND

He had a B.C. Rich Bich that had a 25dB boost. He'd just crank that up and punish that Marshall. And I just took a Rockman and plugged it into the front of a non-Master Volume Marshall."

In terms of tracking, Poland says Mustaine would be "pissed if I wasn't doing pull-offs when he was. If he was doing a pull-off when he was doing rhythm parts, we both had to; otherwise, we wouldn't be simulating double tracking." But what really made tracks like "Rattlehead," which Poland feels is the album's standout, unique — and difficult for future Megadeth guitarists to follow — was a freak high-school-era injury to Poland's hand.

"I cut my hand on the glass of a 200lb oak door coming at me," he says. "I put both my hands up, my hand hit the glass, and it broke. My hand got totally trashed. I looked down and could see the bone of my pointer finger. I lost the ability to bend that, and I can't feel my pinky from nerve damage. It drove me to play how I play."

Killing Is My Business... and Business Is Good! — not-so-killer budget and all — went on to become a classic, boosting the launch and subsequent commercialization of the genre — but Poland wasn't around to see it firsthand. He stuck around for one more album, 1986's *Peace Sells... but Who's Buying?*, before egos and substances got in the way. He has no regrets.

"I wouldn't want to change anything," he says. "What happened is what happened. I remember just how good those first two records are — but that first record was groundbreaking. I'm just proud to have been a part of it."



The Cult

Love

Billy Duffy reflects on the making of "She Sells Sanctuary" and what became the U.K. rockers' breakthrough album

BY ANDREW DALY

ON HIS WAY up the rock 'n' roll ladder, Billy Duffy — co-founding guitarist of the Cult — wasn't all that into heavy metal, leaning instead toward glam and proto-punk, genres centered on primal simplicity. "I just wanted to be like the Stooges," he says today. "Really, why can't you play four chords over and over again? [Laughs] It's hypnotic! I've always loved early Stooges records for [their] simplicity; they had a kind of hidden hypnotizing quality."

Although they definitely brought more than four chords to the party, Duffy and the rest of the band — singer Ian Astley, bassist Jamie Stewart and drummer Nigel Preston — succeeded in bringing a touch of hypnotism to their second album, *Love*, released in October 1985. Let's just say its grooving bass lines, lush melodies and massive guitar hooks put record buyers in a major trance, turning *Love* into the band's breakthrough release.

Love came on the heels of the band's 1984 debut, *Dreamtime*, which, although reaching Number 21 on the U.K. charts, wasn't the massive hit the band and the label — Beggars Banquet Records — had in mind. The vision for *Love*, which was produced by Steve Brown, who had helmed Wham!'s debut album and helped the Cult achieve success with "She Sells Sanctuary" back in May, was simple.

"I liked Bad Company and Free a lot," Duffy says. "To me, those bands, like David Bowie and Roxy Music, were all pop. But their albums had deeper cuts; that's what I hoped the Cult could pull off."

Along with "She Sells Sanctuary," which ended up on side two of *Love*, singles like "Rain" and "Revolution" provided the hits, while "Nirvana" and "Phoenix" served as the types of deep cuts Duffy yearned for. All in all, *Love* was a winner; in the 40 years since it was released, it's sold nearly three million copies and has earned its status as a mid-Eighties rock classic.

"It's my favorite of all of [our albums]," Duffy says. "I have no complaints. It's a very special record."

“It's my favorite of all of our albums. I have no complaints. It's a very special record. I don't listen to it often, but when I do, I'm like, 'It holds up, doesn't it?'"

BILLY DUFFY

I don't listen to it often, but occasionally, when I do, I'm like, 'It kind of holds up, doesn't it?'"

Going into *Love*, where was the Cult at, band-wise, after your 1984 debut, *Dreamtime*?

It was a massively important period for the band. *Dreamtime* was sort of cobbled together from singles and EPs, so it was a bit of a mishmash. It was a decent enough record, but from '84 to '85, it sort of felt like our peers in the U.K. were all having hits, so we felt pressure to come up with one.

Is that why you released "She Sells Sanctuary," which ended up on *Love*, months ahead of the album?

In some ways, it sounds a bit naïve now, but we did "Sanctuary" as a single before we went in to make the album as a trial to check out this producer called Steve Brown. We were actually after Steve Lillywhite, as everybody was in those days, but he was probably too busy with Simple Minds and U2. [Laughs]

Steve Brown produced Wham's first album, 1983's *Fantastic*. Did you feel he was right for the Cult?

He turned out to be a brilliant character and the perfect guy for what we needed at the time. He brought a lot of pop sensibilities, but our record company said, "Look, this is a gamble. Why don't you go in, do one song with him and see how it goes?" That turned out to be "Sanctuary."

"Sanctuary" was recorded at Olympic Studios in London. What was that like?

It was an old rock studio that had been used by Led Zeppelin, Free and loads of [other] people. It wasn't very modern; it was quite old fashioned. We wanted to go somewhere that had some kind of spirit and energy. So, we went in, did the single there and got lucky that it was a hit. That changed everything. Basically, everybody around us — the management, the record company — said, "We'll have more of that, please," which was understandable.

You recorded the rest of *Love* at Jacobs Studios in Farnham, which I'm assuming was very different from Olympic, right?

We went in to do *Love* in the middle of 1985 on the back of "Sanctuary," which had a slow climb up the British charts — but it stuck around for a long time. But the studio where we did the rest of the album had a Mitsubishi digital desk. We even had a Japanese bloke whose job was to sleep there and make sure if the desk went down, he could fix it. [Laughs] Looking back on it, we wanted to go the organic route with "Sanctuary" and capture the spirit, and we ended up in a ridiculous state-of-the-art studio. But it all worked out.

What guitars and amps did you bring into the studio?

We didn't have a lot in the way of equipment. I had a couple of Gretsch guitars — a [White] Falcon and a Country Club that I'd painted black, and I believe Ian had a Telecaster, which I borrowed but didn't use often. And there was a Vox [V223 Mark XII] Teardrop 12-string that you can see in the "Revolution" music video. It was a red thing. A whole load of them from the Sixties appeared in London; they found them in



ABOVE Billy Duffy and his Gretsch White Falcon on stage with the Cult in London, 1985

a warehouse and put them together — they had bolt-on necks. And there might have been an acoustic knocking around, but I don't remember owning one.

Would that have been the acoustic we hear on “She Sells Sanctuary”?

I think there's a sample of an acoustic on “Sanctuary” — that “ca-chin-chin” kind of thing — which was done at the very end of the recording. That was Steve Brown being a producer. He said, “Put a little acoustic thing on it.” As much as we enjoyed being organic, we weren't afraid to play around with technology.

Amp-wise, what was the secret to your tone?

There would have been a Marshall, and there would have been a Roland JC-120, so that would have been my go-to setup. But Ian also had this odd Yamaha that was a copy of a Fender Twin that I've never seen since. It had, like, red dials. But honestly, I remember not ever feeling comfortable with the tone until I blended all the amps together with various mics and distances. And Steve Brown was pretty mental; he'd basically go for anything. I think we might have taken everything we had and just blended them. It was basically like a wall of about four amps.

Do you remember recording “Rain”?

“Sanctuary” wasn't a fluke, but it just happened. With “Rain,” it was much harder because I was tasked with coming up with a follow-up single, and I found “Rain.” I'm actually more proud of “Rain” than I am

“It was very important to us not to be a one-hit wonder and to come up with quality songs once we had the ear of the public. Suddenly, rather than being sub-cultural, we were open to the entire British music market”

BILLY DUFFY

of “Sanctuary” because “Sanctuary” really was a gift, but “Rain” was a bit more perspiration. [Laughs] It had some guts to it; we were trying to heavy-up our sound.

Love ended up being a big hit in the U.K., topping out at Number 4 while also gaining a decent foothold in the U.S. Given the success of “She Sells Sanctuary.”

Did you expect that at all?

Steve Brown had this pop sensibility, but his foundation was rock, and he had a very cavalier attitude. He was very focused on pop and wanted to bring out the commerciality in the band. He felt we had talent but hadn't quite gotten our pop hooks together. He was instrumental in helping us work on that. It was just one of those things where the album was meant to happen, but we didn't take it for granted.

What does Love mean to you as a guitarist, and what did it mean for the trajectory of the Cult?

It gave me confidence. We found our identity. That album meant a lot to us, and it gave us confidence that we were on the right path. There were a few moments of doubt after *Dreamtime*, and we might have had a few dark evenings of self-doubt, though having a big hit single like “Sanctuary” helps. But it was very important to us not to just be a one-hit wonder and to come up with quality songs once we had the ear of the public. Suddenly, rather than being sub-cultural, we were open to the entire British music market. It was interesting!

WHITNEY HOUSTON



Whitney Houston

Whitney Houston

Paul Jackson Jr. breaks down the sessions for one of the best-selling albums of all time

BY ANDREW DALY

BY 1985, SESSION man Paul Jackson Jr. had already appeared on records by Anita Baker, Sheena Easton, Gloria Gaynor, Aretha Franklin, B.B. King and — most notably — Michael Jackson, on a little something called *Thriller*. So, given his track record, it wasn't much of a surprise that he got the call to lend his licks — along with master six-stringers Dann Huff, David Williams and Louie Shelton (Mr. “Last Train to Clarksville”) — to an at-the-time relatively unknown Whitney Houston's self-titled debut album. He definitely had the chops and the mindset to lay back and make his contributions count.

Speaking of that mindset... “There are two things you need to know as a session musician,” Jackson Jr. says. “Number one, the customer is always right. Number two, it's the same thing as your report card in kindergarten where it says, ‘plays well with others.’ The idea is to listen to the song, listen to where it's going, listen to the arranger, the producer, and see what you can do to make sure you're adding to make the song feel good.”

Jackson Jr., who features on soaring Whitney Houston album cuts like “Greatest Love of All” and “Saving All My Love for You,” had the “feel good” vibe down to a science. He also had the help of album arranger Gene Page Jr. and co-producer Michael Masser.

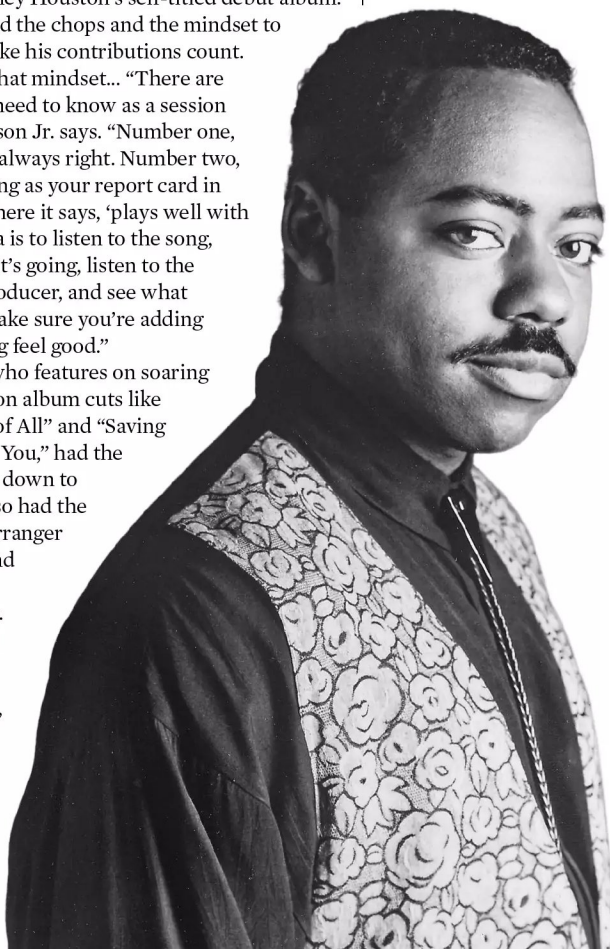
“Gene would write out some rhythms and things like that,” Jackson Jr. says. “He'd write out some changes,

“You have to listen to the song, listen to where it's going, listen to the arranger, the producer, and see what you can do to make sure you're adding to make the song feel good”

PAUL JACKSON JR.

ABOVE Paul Jackson Jr. on a tour stop with Whitney Houston. “I didn't know how amazingly talented she was. But obviously, we all found out,” he says

BELOW Jackson Jr. in 1988



and it was my job — though not just me, but everybody on the record — to take what he wrote and try to take it to the next level. Michael Masser was a very interesting guy. I had to work hard to understand him because we'd do lots of takes, and I finally understood the thing with him was that there was an intangible in his head. Sometimes you get it the first time, and sometimes it takes 10 tries. We'd record until the switch went off, like, ‘Eureka! I got it!’”

Like any good session player, Jackson Jr. entered the studio with plenty of tools to get the job done. “I brought the famous Paul Rivera-modified Fender amps, one being a Deluxe and one being a Virbolux, the latter of which I put in a 12-inch EV speaker. The other thing I brought was my Valley Arts Strat made by Mike McGuire. It was a rosewood Strat with a bird's eye maple neck and an ebony fingerboard. It's actually the same guitar I used on ‘P.Y.T. (Pretty Young Thing)’ from *Thriller*.”

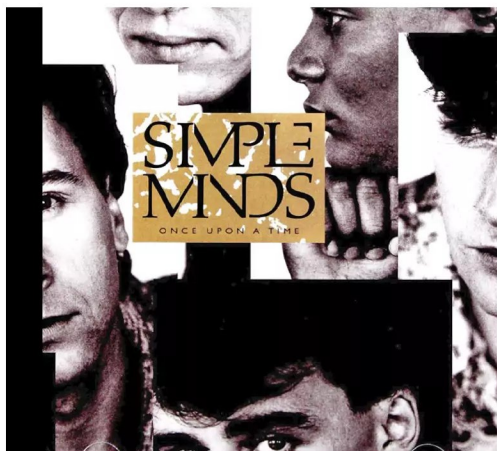
For the sessions, Jackson Jr. says his approach was based on “running with what felt good” and finding the “interplay between everyone — including the arrangers — and making them and the producers happy.” Interestingly enough, one person who didn't have much to say regarding Jackson Jr.'s input was Houston. The guitarist chalks this up to the singer's youth and relatively unknown status. “She mostly went with the flow,” he says.

Did Jackson Jr. know he was working with a future legend? “No, not at the time,” he says. “I didn't know how amazingly talented she was. But obviously, we all found out.” Oh, yes we did. After its Valentine's Day release in '85, *Whitney Houston* went on to become one of the best-selling albums of all time, selling more than 25 million copies and earning diamond status with the RIAA. Still, Jackson Jr. says he did have a feeling that the album would be a hit.

“It was nice to see her come out with a record that immediately started doing well,” he says. “It was a wonderful feeling to watch that. I consider it a blessing from the Lord to be able to have done some of the things I've done. I'm super blessed.”

Looking back, Jackson Jr. is proud of his work, but gives Houston all the credit.

“It was an important record — not just with the songs I played on, but the entire record established Whitney as an A-list, mainstream, first-call artist. To jump from relative obscurity to being at the forefront of everyone's A-list was major for her.”



Simple Minds Once Upon a Time

Don't you forget about this one! Charlie Burchill revisits the Scottish rockers' Jimmy Iovine-produced seventh album, plus Live Aid, '80s gear acquisitions and more

BY MARK MCSTEAD

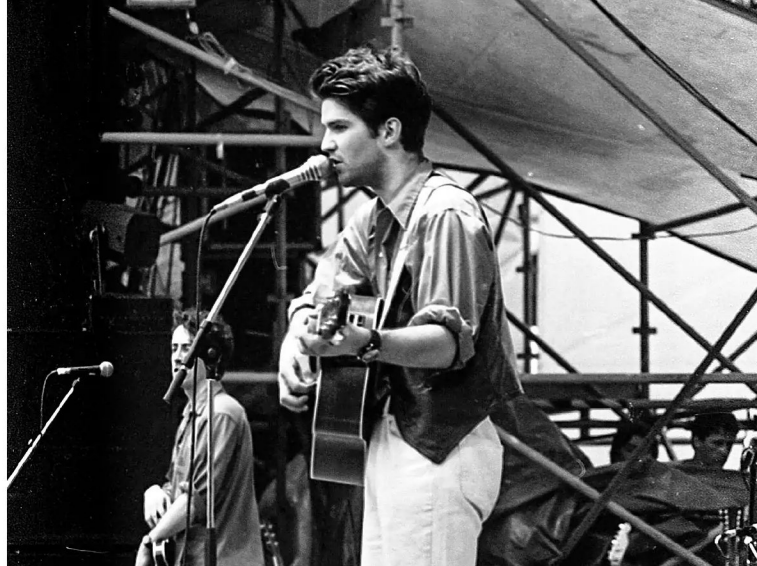
WITH THE HUGE success of "Don't You (Forget About Me)" taken from the soundtrack of the 1985 John Hughes film *The Breakfast Club* — and their subsequent album, *Once Upon a Time* — Simple Minds became a household name in the U.S. in 1985, with four subsequent Top 10 singles pulled from the album, including "Alive and Kicking" and "Sanctify Yourself." The band — still a household name — have continued to enjoy success around the world since those heady times and are scheduled to tour North America in May and June. Guitarist Charlie Burchill has fond memories of the era.

You brought in Jimmy Iovine to produce the album. What was the thinking behind that, and what did he bring to the process?

We were really feeling, as a band, that we were ready to start working in America. We'd already released six albums that had sold really well around the world, so we thought we'd try to break the States, and he was very much the man to help us with that. He's a real 'song' guy — if some of our ideas were too esoteric, he could really focus on the essentials and help pull us in. I have to give equal credit to Bob Clearmountain, who co-produced and engineered. They were both full of enthusiasm and great fun to work with. It was a very quick process — about four weeks to do everything.

There were only eight tracks on the album, half of which became hits. Was that the plan when you were in the middle of the recording process?

We were definitely making a statement by only putting eight tracks on the record — as if we were saying, "This is what we're offering and we think it's really good," you know? We had no plans for any songs to become singles; that was a decision that we came to once we'd finished, and certain songs seemed like obvious contenders.



ABOVE Simple Minds' Jim Kerr [left] and Charlie Burchill on stage in Dublin in June 1986

It seemed strange that "Don't You" wasn't included, given its massive success. Didn't the record company put pressure on you to include it?

Oh yeah, big time. I wish they had won, looking back. We were digging our heels in, but in retrospect, we often ask ourselves what the fuck were we thinking? [Laughs] It was recorded at the same time as the album anyway, and obviously sounded like it should've been on there, but I guess we were a bit arrogant and stupid. [Laughs]

The success of "Don't You" and the album must have been transformative for you as a band.

It marked a huge change for us. We actually did Live Aid from Philadelphia as we were Number 1 in the States at the time, and we were spending so much time in America. In fact, we reached a point where we started to think that we'd better focus a bit more on Europe as we didn't want to lose our support there, having spent so much time away. The financial rewards were great, of course. I bought loads of guitars, including Fifties and Sixties Fenders and Gretsches, which I've still got.

Although there aren't a lot of overt "lead guitar" moments, the album is actually swamped with layered guitars. What gear did you use to make the album?

I'm glad you noticed that. It was mainly a Strat and a Gretsch White Falcon. My amps at the time were a Marshall JCM900 and a Roland JC-120 Jazz Chorus. My effects were also by Roland; I had three 555 Space Echoes and a CE-1 chorus pedal. I was deliberately staying away from the sound of humbuckers. I needed a cleaner tone; when you have keyboards in a band you have to try to carve out your own sonic space, and it seems easier with a cleaner sound.

How do you feel looking back at the album?

We're always making new music, so we don't really look backwards. I think it's one of the most focused albums we made. Whenever I hear any of the tracks, I think they haven't really dated, and sonically, it sounds fantastic. The only regret I have is that we didn't include "Don't You" on it! [Laughs]

"I think it's one of the most focused albums we made. Whenever I hear any of the tracks, I think they haven't really dated, and sonically, it sounds fantastic. The only regret I have is that we didn't include 'Don't You' on it!"

CHARLIE BURCHILL





Dinosaur Jr.

Dinosaur

J Mascis revisits his beloved band's debut album and the dawn of his signature guitar tone

BY ANDREW DALY

LOOKING BACK ON the off-the-wall gene-riding journey that was Dinosaur Jr.'s 1985 debut, *Dinosaur*, bandleader and guitarist J Mascis, in his usual monotone shrug, says, "I was just learning guitar. I picked it up to write songs and start a band, so whatever I was writing... that's all I could play, pretty much."

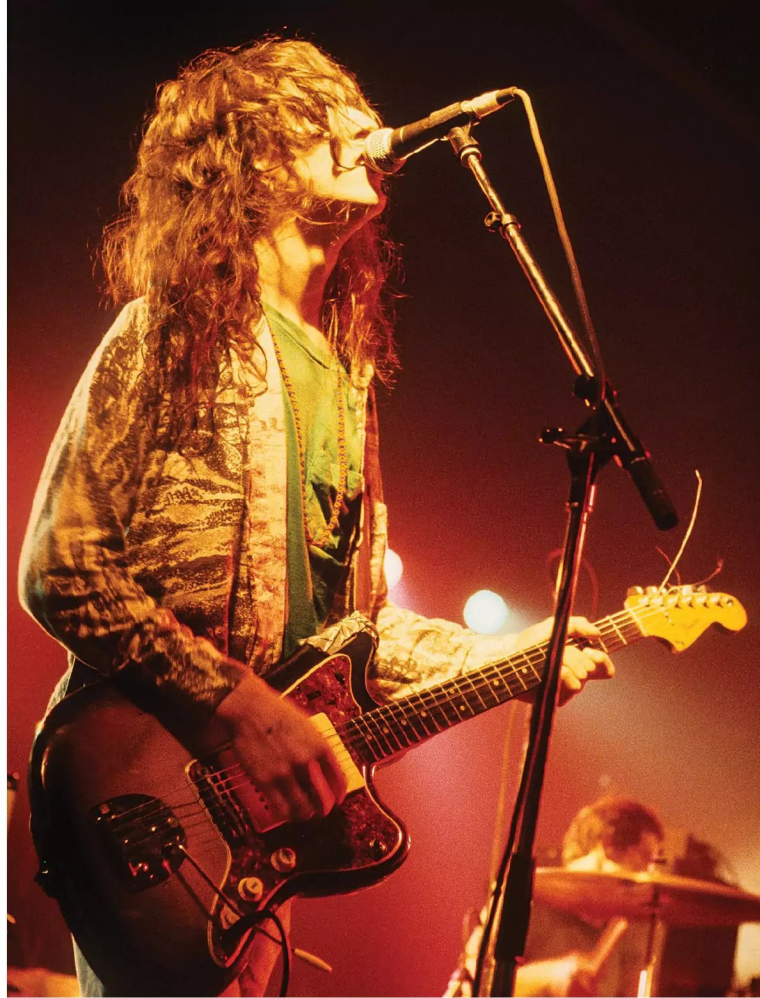
Dinosaur, despite its seeming lack of structure and virtuosity, wasn't without a guiding light — even if Mascis essentially stumbled upon it. "I didn't know much about guitar tone," he says. "I remember I had this Yamaha [G-100] solid-state amp because I saw that Bob Mould [Hüsker Dü] had one. I thought, 'How bad could it be if Bob Mould has one?' Then the hotshot guitar player at our gig said, 'Your guitar sounds terrible.' I had the deluxe [Electro-Harmonix] Big Muff, and he's like, 'You should leave that thing on' because I had it clean. So I turned on the Big Muff and was like, 'Yeah... okay.'"

With that, the quintessential Dinosaur Jr. guitar tone was born, although Mascis — who wasn't even sure what he wanted his band to sound like — was still experimenting with genres and approaches while recording *Dinosaur*.

"I don't know that the record had a direction," he says. "We were kind of just throwing stuff against the wall and seeing what stuck. We didn't have a 'sound' yet; every song seemed different. There was a country song, a Joy Division song. Plus, I hadn't been playing guitar for that long. A lot of the chords had two fingers because I couldn't do Barre chords; they hurt my hands. I'd just make up chords with the least amount of fingers possible." [Laughs]

Still, the band seemed to have found its footing on one *Dinosaur* track in particular, "Repulsion." "That was the first song we recorded where I thought we found out our sound. It was the first song I was kind of excited about."

After completing *Dinosaur*, Mascis, who was just 20, bassist Lou Barlow and drummer Emmett Jefferson Murphy III, aka "Murph," were happy



ABOVE J Mascis — with a familiar Fender Jazzmaster — performs at Futurama Festival in Deinze, Belgium, October 31, 1987

enough with the results, but they knew they could do better. "We thought it was alright," Mascis says. "You know... not the greatest album, but I thought it was okay."

In the 40 years since its release, Dinosaur Jr.'s "okay" debut album — which was recorded in a cabin in the woods for about \$500 — has become a fan favorite. Initially, however, it only sold 1,500 copies. In fact, if Sonic Youth hadn't come across the album, Dinosaur Jr. might've simply gone extinct. But they hooked up with Sonic Youth as tour openers in '86, leading to a wider audience grabbing copies of *Dinosaur*, followed by 1987's *You're Living All Over Me*, followed by one hell of a career.

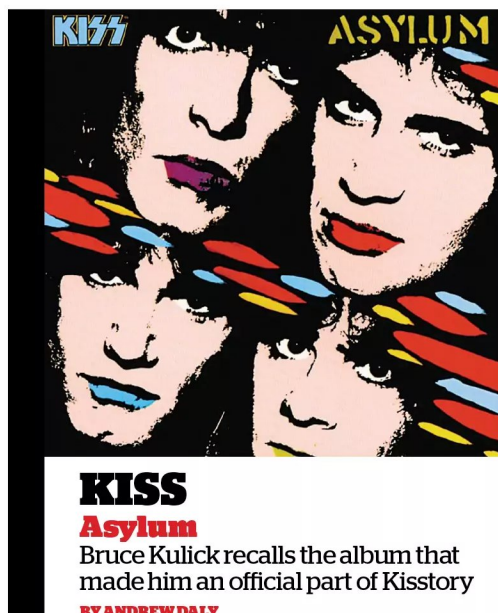
"That was our first tour," Mascis says. "And it was probably our best tour. We weren't sick of each other then." [Laughs]

In the end, *Dinosaur* served its purpose, big time. It gave Mascis experience on guitar, allowed the young band to find its footing and eventually gave them a whole neighborhood's worth of street cred within the indie and alt-rock scenes. "It's an interesting artifact," Mascis says. "We were trying to form a band, trying to find out the sound and going in all these different directions. We play a lot of the songs live now, and people seem to like them more, I guess, even though they sound a lot heavier now."

If he had the chance, would Mascis do *Dinosaur* over again? "I don't know! That's hard," he says. "I have no idea. I might change everything — on everything — if I could. But we just kind of let it go and hoped for the best."

“I hadn't been playing guitar for that long. A lot of the chords had two fingers because I couldn't do Barre chords; they hurt my hands. I'd just make up chords with the least amount of fingers possible”

J MASCIS



BY 1985, KISS had been through three guitarists in three years. Founding member Ace Frehley quit in '82, giving way to Vinnie Vincent, who was fired in '84, leading to Mark St. John, who, due to a rare form of reactive arthritis in his hands, gave way to Bruce Kulick, also in '84. In Kulick, Kiss had found their man. He had style and chops and wasn't afraid. He'd played in place of St. John on two songs from 1984's *Animalize* — "Lonely Is the Hunter" and "Murder in High-Heels" — and toured in support of *Animalize* after St. John's arthritis flared up. But Kiss's next release, 1985's *Asylum*, was his first proper Kiss album.

"I really wanted to prove myself worthy of being Kiss's new guitarist," he says. "I'd toured for *Animalize* and was appreciated by Gene [Simmons], Paul [Stanley] and the fans, but could I co-write songs and contribute solos that were memorable?"

Frehley had done just that to perfection. And Vincent, while a malcontent, followed Ace's lead. As for St. John... let's say Kulick couldn't do any worse. "My goal was to follow Gene and Paul's requests when performing on the songs," Kulick says. "If I could make them happy, that would be a job well done."

Kulick had undoubtedly learned how to make Gene and Paul happy. But then again, after what they'd been through on the guitar front, the fact that Kulick was coherent and trouble free had to be a breath of fresh air. But wait, there was more! Kulick could seriously play — and he got what it meant to be in Kiss.

"The time spent with them taught me how they worked individually and together," he says. "Gene and Paul saw some things differently. I needed to keep that in mind — but I always felt confident that my relationship with them was strong and that I could rise to the occasion."

It also helped that Simmons and Stanley didn't expect — or want — Kulick to be an Ace Frehley throwback. "It was about being a competitive guitarist in the Eighties," Kulick says. "That was

a completely different playing style than Ace was known for. Just look at *Asylum*'s first song, 'King of the Mountain.' Everything from the composition to the guitar solo is very different from the classic Kiss makeup-era albums."

Meanwhile, the gear Kulick brought to the party was a far cry from Ace's Les Paul and stock 100-watt Marshall. "One unusual item was a modded Marshall cabinet, I believe, loaded with EV speakers," Kulick says. "As for guitars, this was pre-ESP, so I was relying on my custom silver Charvel that I'd toured with." Kulick used that same Charvel at [New York City's] Electric Lady Studios when crafting the solo for *Asylum*'s big hit, "Tears Are Falling."

"The construction of the solo is special," he says. "All the verses are in a major key, but my solo starts with a minor theme, bringing emotion and attention to it. Then I incorporated other fancy riffs and an exciting, speedy ending as the climax. Naturally, it's a solo I'm very proud of."

Kulick also favors "Uh! All Night" and "Who Wants to Be Lonely," revealing that once he heard the finished product, he knew *Asylum* was a winner. "I was thrilled," he says. "I had three co-writes and plenty of memorable solos. Paul was especially pleased with the music."

Asylum was popular upon its release in September of '85 — but not quite as popular as its predecessors, 1983's *Lick It Up* and '84's *Animalize*. Nevertheless, it still went gold.

"I could say all the non-makeup Kiss albums are underrated," Kulick says. "I never really get into what album is better or worse from my era of Kiss. Each album has its standout songs and performances, and I think *Asylum* fares very well overall in Kisstory. It wasn't as big as *Animalize*, but the three singles and videos are iconic!"

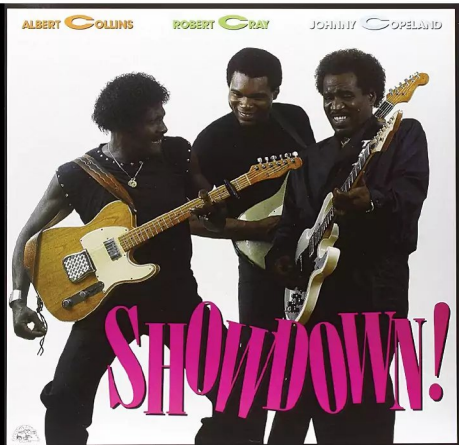
But for Kulick, *Asylum*'s success wasn't just measured in sales, but the fact that he'd become a part of Kiss's legacy. "Having my face on the cover of the LP was a thrill," he says. "*Asylum* represented a real accomplishment for me personally: it was clear that I was the new guitarist for Kiss. Every Kiss record represents a certain time in the band's evolution. It's up to fans to decide what they love about *Asylum*, but I am forever grateful to be associated with this album."

“Having my face on the cover was a thrill: it was clear that I was the new guitarist for Kiss. I am forever grateful to be associated with *Asylum*”

BRUCE KULICK

BELOW Kiss backstage in East Rutherford, New Jersey, March 29, 1985; [from left] Bruce Kulick, Paul Stanley, Gene Simmons and Eric Carr





Albert Collins, Robert Cray and Johnny Copeland

Showdown!

Robert Cray revisits one of the true highlights of the early-to-mid-Eighties blues-guitar boom

BY ANDREW DALY

DESPITE ALL THE hair metal, shred, synth-pop and early-stage hip-hop, the Eighties was actually an incredibly fertile period for blues guitar. Obviously, the Fabulous Thunderbirds, Robert Cray and Stevie Ray Vaughan & Double Trouble were among the primary forces behind the genre's rebirth (in its traditional and/or modern forms); but, just as the British blues boom of the mid Sixties had inspired young listeners to look beyond Eric Clapton, Peter Green and Mick Taylor and rediscover an earlier generation of American blues masters, fans of the Vaughan brothers started to look backwards and rediscover their heroes' heroes.

Interestingly, a lot of those heroes — including Albert Collins, Son Seals, Lonnie Mack, Johnny Winter and Roy Buchanan — had found a home on Chicago's Alligator Records by the mid Eighties. It is against that backdrop that in 1985, Alligator released one of its most popular and successful albums, *Showdown!*, which brought together three guitar greats — Alligator Records star (and outright Texas legend) Albert Collins, young Strat hero Robert Cray and Mr. Texas Twister (and big-time Peavey T60 fan), Johnny Copeland.

The two Texans — Collins and Copeland — had known each other since the Fifties; meanwhile, Cray had known Collins since the Seventies. So, in some ways, though not entirely directly, the three were connected prior to the sessions, leading to Alligator dubbing *Showdown!* an album "Thirty Years in the Making."

According to Cray, *Showdown!* took a day or two to assemble, and they felt good about the finished product, though none of the three could have predicted the results. *Showdown!* became one of Alligator's best-selling albums, even netting a Grammy for Best Traditional Blues Recording.

“At the Grammys, there were stairs to the stage, and as the three of us walked up, we did the Three Stooges thing where we all bumped into each other. It just reminded me of all the fun we had in the studio. It was still with us”

ROBERT CRAY

“We just had fun,” Cray says. “One thing that cracked me up was for the [Grammy] ceremony, when they called our names, as we were walking to the stage, there were [stairs], and as the three of us walked up, we did the Three Stooges thing, where we all bumped into each other. It just reminded me of all the fun we had in the studio. It was still with us.”

Did you know Albert and Johnny all that well going into the sessions?

I'd known Albert for a while because we used to work with him quite a bit. Whenever he was on the West Coast, we were his backup band. That started in about '76 or '77, long before we did *Showdown!* But I didn't know Johnny Copeland. I only met Johnny when he was coming into the studio. When we got to the studio, Albert and I were standing outside talking because we'd arrived at the same time, and while we were talking, Johnny pulled up in a car, and he was hunched over. Albert went over and spoke to Johnny — they went way back to the Fifties in Houston — and he asked Johnny what was going on. Johnny said he was fasting. Albert was like, “What are you doing that for?” and just started making fun of him. [Laughs] I watched this go down, and we took all of that ribbing, so to speak, into the studio.

So the vibe going in was nice and light.

Yeah, it was pretty cool. The idea had actually come about, I guess, with [co-producers] Bruce Iglauer and Bruce Bromberg, who I worked with, wanting to have Clarence “Gatemouth” Brown on the album so that there would be three guys from Texas. I don't know why Gatemouth didn't do it, but I was invited.

Do you remember putting together the set of tracks?

We went in, did some of those songs and the ones they had in mind, met the rhythm section and started messing around. Then we started laying down tracks. Bruce Bromberg and I wrote “The Dream” [Bromberg used a pen name, David Amy, for his writing credit]. I think Bruce came up with the lyrics, and I put the music together on the spot. The idea was for Albert to play the solo in the middle because in all the years I'd played with him, I'd always wanted to hear him play something in a minor key — and he smoked it!

How did you blend your three styles?

It was pretty easy for us to get along. Albert is a great comper. When he comes in, he's like a jazz organist. When you go back and listen to some of those instrumentals he did, that was Albert's thing. So, with that in mind, I did the counter to that; Johnny just did what he did. There was no stepping on anybody's toes or anything like that.

A lot of people are familiar with you and Albert, but not as many people know Johnny's work. What made him special as a player?

Johnny is a great singer and a great songwriter, and he has his own thing. I mean... he's really well-versed in all those things I mentioned, like being a songwriter and performer; it was cool.

What did you learn from Albert and Johnny?

I'd been a fan of Albert's for a long time, and



I'd worked with him. With Albert, he just needed great support, and he'd take it to another level from there. The thing with Albert was, you know, one of the great things we were able to do was to be in a position to be in a backup band and watch somebody like Albert, who had some years on us, knew how to work an audience, knew what to do with a guitar and bring out the best. It was just killer, man. He was a take-no-prisoners guitar player. There are very few of those around these days.

What sort of gear did you three bring into the studio?
We each just brought in one guitar, I think. [Laughs] I think Johnny was playing a Peavey; that's where he was at. Albert had his Tele, and I had a Strat. It was very simple. We flew in from L.A., Bruce Bromberg and I — or I might have come in from San Francisco — and we all met in Chicago. I only took one guitar as far as I can remember. The amps were in the studio, I think. I probably played through a [Fender] Super Reverb, and Albert — I'm not sure what he played through. He might have played through a Super Reverb, but at one point, he had a Quad Reverb, and that was a pretty powerful amp. I don't know what Johnny played through.

ABOVE [from left] Albert Collins, Robert Cray and Johnny Copeland trade licks in Chicago, June 2, 1985

“Albert knew how to work an audience, and how to bring out the best. He was a take-no-prisoners guitar player. There are very few of those around these days”

ROBERT CRAY

Did you cut the record live and in the same room for the most part?

We played together. We might have done some overdubs, but I think it was all done in a day, maybe two. Yeah... it was a short, little thing; it was so much fun that it just happened fast.

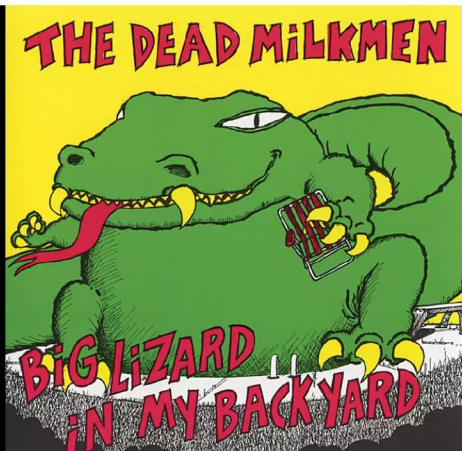
Showdown! was a considerable success, taking home a Grammy for Best Traditional Blues Recording. That must have been rewarding.

Oh, it was great. It was the first [Grammy] for all of us. But Albert and Johnny — especially Albert — were all teared up. It was just really heartfelt. After all the years he'd been around, it was really touching to feel his emotion, you know? It was really cool.

Looking back on Showdown! 40 years later, what does it mean to you?

I look at the cover, and I go, “Who's that guy?” [Laughs] It cracks me up! But also, at the same time, it puts a smile on my face. I'm really proud of having had the opportunity to record with Albert [who passed away in 1993] and Johnny [who passed away in 1997] — and to have the opportunity to meet Johnny. Having the record be recognized still means a lot.





The Dead Milkmen

Big Lizard in My Backyard

Joe Genaro — aka Joe Jack Talcum! — dissects the Philly punks' debut record (yeah, the one with "Bitchin' Camaro" on it)

BY ANDREW DALY

IN 1985, GUITARIST Joe Genaro and the rest of the Dead Milkmen — bassist Dave Schulthise, drummer Dean Sabatino and vocalist Rodney Linderman — were young and, let's just say, not always incredibly serious. After all, the artwork for their debut album, 1985's *Big Lizard in My Backyard*, gloriously depicts a giant reptile on the verge of crushing a lawn chair. Comedy rock, indeed — but that doesn't mean the Milkmen were rudderless.

"The main songwriting objective was to come up with catchy, funny songs that engaged and entertained audiences," says Genaro, aka Joe Jack Talcum. "I was a relatively new guitar player, so from that perspective, it was a matter of keeping things rudimentary."

Unsurprisingly, since we're talking about the mid Eighties, Genaro gravitated toward what he calls "super-distorted, chorused guitar sounds." But, if you listen to *Big Lizard*, sometimes it seems Genaro went in the opposite direction.

"I didn't have any distortion pedals — or any pedals [at all] for that matter back then," he says. "I tried out a borrowed pedal once in practice, but it wasn't working with the band. My sound was just my Gibson SG plugged into a Yamaha G100-112. Any distortion came from the amp itself. It was considered a rather clean sound compared to other punk bands."

Genaro says "Plum Dumb" and "Spit Sink" were "written before [*the Dead Milkmen*] existed as a real performing band." As for "Bitchin' Camaro," Genaro says, "That was inspired by a conversation we overheard in line at a 7-Eleven in Philly. Rodney wrote down the lyrics for the fast part, and I put them to music. Then, in band practice, we ad-libbed the conversation part."

Genaro says the Milkmen had zero studio

“A nuance I added was to try to bring subtle melody out in my strumming by emphasizing specific notes in the particular chord inversion, since we didn't have a lead guitar player to play melodic riffs”

JOE GENARO

experience at the time, which led to “recording everything live and then replacing scratch vocals with new vocals. Maybe we'd double-track guitars. It was very basic and quick.”

As for “producer” John Wicks, Genaro says, “John was hands-off. We accidentally gave him a co-producer credit, but he was the studio owner and engineer. He had some subtle suggestions for how to strum some of the songs, as I recall.”

With Genaro being a relatively new guitarist, it's easy to see where the raw nature of *Big Lizard* comes from. But there was still some magic there, even if Genaro says there was no secret sauce in the recipe. “A nuance I added was to try to bring subtle melody out in my strumming by emphasizing specific notes in the particular chord inversion since we didn't have a lead guitar player to play melodic riffs.”

Considered a cult favorite of college rock radio, *Big Lizard in My Backyard* granted the Dead Milkmen residency within the punk and college-rock scenes. As for Genaro, he felt it was a winner out of the gate.

“I thought it was memorable,” he says. “I had higher sales expectations for it than the record company seemed to have. It helped bring our quirky Philly punk scene more national attention. Getting a lot of college airplay across the country, especially ‘Bitchin’ Camaro,’ helped a lot. It meant we'd be able to make another album, though we were required to make another since the contract we signed for *Big Lizard* was for four albums — unless the record company opted to let us go, which they did not!”

BELOW Joe Genaro in action with the Dead Milkmen in Chicago, March 3, 1989



HÜSKER DÜ

NEW DAY RISING



Hüsker Dü

New Day Rising

Bob Mould dispels the legends of the Minnesota rockers' iconic third album

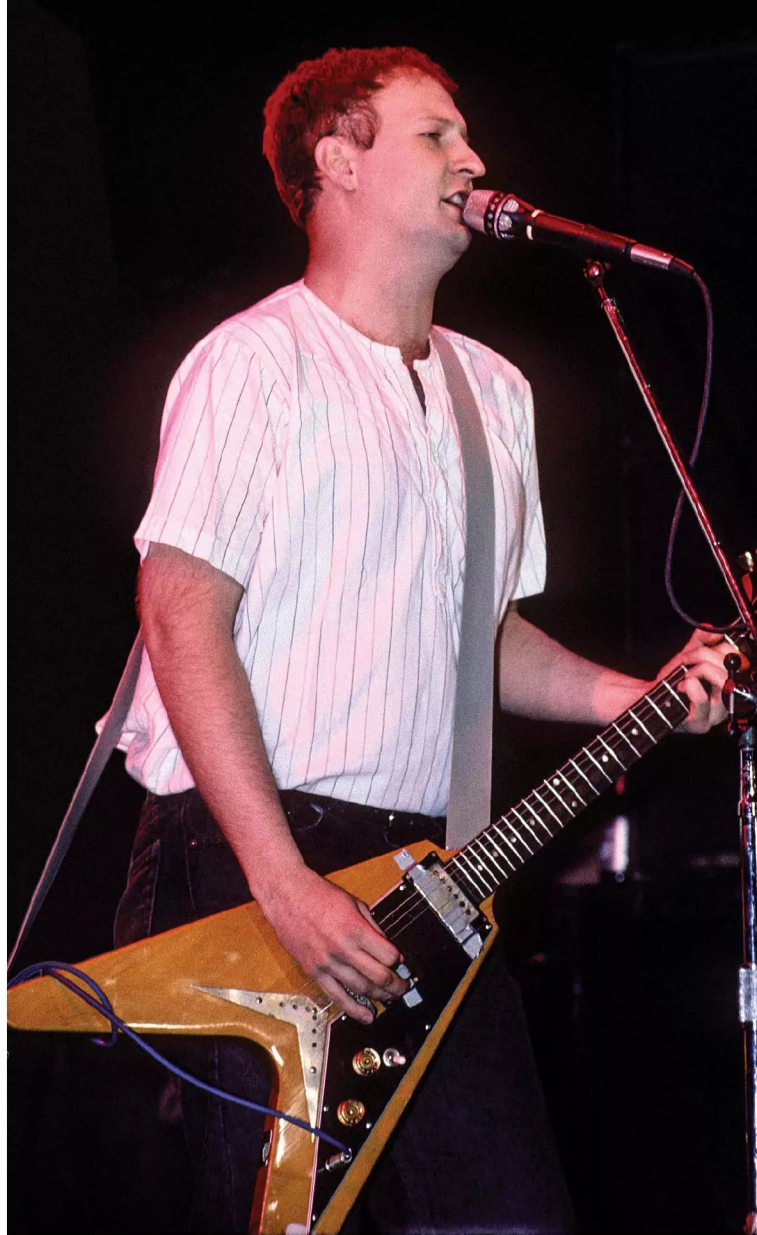
BY JON WIEDERHORN

THROUGH THE REVISIONIST lens of rock history, Hüsker Dü's third full-length album, *New Day Rising*, is often viewed as highly anticipated and groundbreaking. It's seen as an album that upped the ante on the success of the band's abrasive, semi-melodic second record, *Zen Arcade*, by incorporating more open chords and hooks into their scratchy, sloppy hardcore. And in the process, the legend goes, the Minnesota trio fueled their enmity toward one another and their label into their music, creating melody-tinged songs that created the groundwork for angst-fueled alternative rock.

While some of this is true, *New Day Rising* wasn't created out of pure spite or painstakingly cultivated to reinvent hardcore or create a new breed of pop. It was more like a natural progression of the spontaneous sound of three ambitious, frequently drunk punks pushing boundaries and sprinting headlong toward a destination that didn't exist.

"When we did *New Day Rising*, we didn't have a big following or the blessings of the critics," guitarist Bob Mould says. "We were moving forward and getting better and what did, whatever that was. But to me, it's a very transitional record, the midway point between *Zen Arcade* and *Flip Your Wig*."

Hüsker Dü started working on *New Day Rising* soon after they finished their 1984 double concept album, *Zen Arcade*. Their label, SST, immediately asked for a follow-up, so the band loaded up their practice space with beer and went back into writing mode. Hüsker Dü hoped to self-produce *New Day Rising*, but SST insisted they reconnect with California-based in-house producer Spot, who had worked on the band's last two records. As a compromise, the band agreed to work with Spot if they could record the album at Nicollet Studios in their hometown of Minneapolis. To correct a common misconception, the tension that fueled the record was caused mostly by friction with SST, and not because of any bad blood between the members (as would eventually be the case).



ABOVE Bob Mould — playing an Ibanez Rocket Roll — on stage with Hüsker Dü circa 1987

“We were all on the same page, determined to grab back the reins from anyone who was holding them and do the album the way we wanted it to be done”

BOB MOULD

"I don't remember any conflict inside the band," Mould says. "We were all on the same page trying to make another record and were constantly driven to keep going and going. And we were determined to grab back the reins from anyone who was holding them and do the album the way we wanted it to be done."

Hüsker Dü recorded *New Day Rising* in just a few days and often tracked songs in one or two takes. For the sessions, Mould played the same Ibanez Explorer he used on *Zen Arcade* through a Fender Silverface Deluxe Twin Reverb and an MXR Distortion Plus.

While he considers *New Day Rising* as an evolution of the band's sound, Mould stops short of calling it revolutionary, and scoffs at the myriad critics who have ranked it among the best and most influential albums of all time. "For me, it was just a continuation of the direction we were heading with *Zen Arcade*," he says. "We had become better songwriters, so *New Day Rising* was a more melodic record. More than anything, though, it was the step before *Flip Your Wig*, which was the best moment for us as a band." **GW**



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SOUND CHECK



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Gibson Victory and Victory Figured Top

By Chris Gill

THE ORIGINAL GIBSON Victory models (the dual-humbucker MVII and triple-pickup MVX) date back to the early Eighties when Gibson was losing serious market share to Fender and super Strats from upstarts like Charvel, Jackson and Kramer. While it still retained a good chunk of Gibson DNA, the Victory's offset asymmetrical double cutaway shape and clever pickup switching options made it a strong competitor that got overshadowed by flashier designs. The Victory lasted only a few years during the end of the Norlin era and the relocation from Kalamazoo to Nashville, but over time it has earned status as a sleeper model.

Gibson's recently revived Victory model

looks similar to the original MVII, but the new model is more of an update than a replica. As one of Gibson's more attractive forgotten models from its recent past (thankfully the butt-ugly Corvus from the same period doesn't seem to be on Gibson's radar), the new Victory offers guitarists an attractive alternative to traditional Gibson designs both in form and function.

Build Quality & Playability

Several notable differences distinguish the new Victory from its Eighties predecessor. The body is mahogany instead of boat anchor-heavy hardrock maple; the neck is also mahogany and has a 25.5-inch scale,

24 frets and compound radius instead of a maple neck with a 24.75-inch scale, 22 frets and 14-inch radius; the headstock has an angled "hockey stick" Explorer-style shape instead of a straight "Firebird-esque" design; the new pickguard is smaller; the electronics include 80s Tribute humbuckers, push-pull coil split and inner/outer coil select switches and a three-way toggle instead of custom Tim Shaw humbuckers (plus a stacked middle single-coil size humbucker on the MVX) and a five-way blade pickup selector; and the new model's neck joint is contoured to provide even better access to the upper fret region.

Features that remain the same in addition to the offset body shape include an ebony fretboard, Tune-O-Matic bridge with stop tailpiece, black top hat knobs, side-mounted output jack, uncovered pickups with zebra bobbins and offset dot inlays. Gibson also offers a new alternate version of the Victory with a figured maple top for an additional \$500.

Our test examples were a Figured Top model with a Wine Red Burst finish and a regular model with a Gold Mist Satin finish. The satin finish models have open pores and a rougher feel compared to the smooth, mirror-glass surface of the Figured Top models' gloss finishes. Construction is solid and meticulous — I especially appreciated the classic approach to having the fret nibs overhanging the single-ply neck binding. Even with the 25.5-inch scale, compound radius necks with 24 medium jumbo →



frets, these guitars still have that signature Gibson feel, partially thanks to the silky smooth ebony fretboards and slim, rounded C-shape profile that reminds me of a mid-Sixties SG. The extra deep treble side cutaway provides the best upper-fret access any Gibson model other than the Flying V has ever offered.

Sounds

The Victory's slim body (less than 1.5 inches thick), mahogany body and neck tone woods and dual-humbucker design land it pretty solidly within SG territory, but its longer scale length gives it more brightness and percussive twang while its coil-splitting and inner/outer coil selection capabilities expand its tonal palette. Although Gibson specs list just "80s Tribute Model" for the bridge and neck humbuckers, each pickup is different, with the hotter bridge model providing 15.8k ohms resistance while the neck pickup's resistance measures about 7.25k ohms. The master volume pot's push-pull coil split function provides sweet single-coil sparkle and spank, but the master tone pot's inner/outer switch

delivers only a very subtle difference, noticeable when both pickups are engaged.

Our Figured Top example had bolder midrange heft and body than the standard Victory, which had a brighter scooped-mid character. Both models are hard rock beasts with ballsy punch when plugged into an overdriven amp, but the split-coil tones sound sweet and Strat-like with clean settings and a touch of reverb. The MV designation for the original Gibson Victory meant "multi-voice," and the new models live up to that description as well.



Verdict

Gibson's new Victory models are a great choice for players who love classic Gibson tones (particularly like an SG) but want more tonal versatility, different looks and modern performance upgrades like a fast compound radius neck and 24 frets. **GW**

STREET PRICE: Victory, \$1,999;
Victory Figured Top, \$2,499

MANUFACTURER:
Gibson, Gibson.com

PROS

- + Gibson tones and feel for players who prefer super Strat-style looks.
- + Coil-split function expands range of tones.
- + High-performance upgrades that include a compound radius and 24 medium jumbo frets.

CONS

- Satin finish on the regular Victory model has a rough feel, especially on the neck.
- Inner/outer coil select function makes only a subtle difference in tone.

MXR Rockman X100 Analog Tone Processor

By Paul Riario

I OWN TWO original (circa 1987) Rockman X100 headphone amplifiers (ya know, just in case one of them breaks, right?) because I'm still one of the biggest fans of the band Boston. The Rockman X100 — created by Boston's principal musical mastermind and guitarist, Tom Scholz — was essentially the “Boston guitar sound” concentrated into a portable, belt-clipped headphone amplifier with four presets of distortions and cleans along with chorus and echo, all selected via slide switches. Somehow, during the Eighties, the heavily chased “EVH tone” was briefly eclipsed by the unmistakable crunchy-chorusy guitar sound of the Rockman, which permeated the airwaves and music videos of some of the hottest bands, from Def Leppard to ZZ Top. But why did this guitar sound become the default tone for so many players? It's rather simple; it was a perfectly “pre-produced” guitar tone (and possibly, the very first amp modeler) that had all the proper harmonic distortion and compression without having to mic a guitar amp — regardless of the fact that sometimes it sounded like it was yanked from a cheesy Jan Hammer *Miami Vice* soundtrack.

Now, just when you thought that retro sound had faded away, along comes MXR to revive those Rockman guitar tones of yore in the form of a smartly designed stompbox. Love it or hate it, the MXR Rockman X100 Analog Tone Processor is an undeniable guilty pleasure. It's a nostalgic joy ride that will evoke urges to play along to those early Boston albums or some Eighties pop and hair metal vinyl records.

Build Quality & Playability

With the proper graphics and color palette, the MXR Rockman X100 Analog Tone Processor looks on brand — like the latest iteration of the Rockman family. No longer a headphone amp, it's a true stompbox meant to be plugged into an amp with input and output jacks, an old-school control panel of two sliders for Volume and Input Gain (more about that later), a Mode button for toggling through its four presets of Clean 1 and 2, Edge and Distortion, and a button for the Chorus effect. For hands-free capability, a CTRL jack allows an external footswitch to cycle through the Mode presets consecutively. The pedal also has an internal mono/stereo output switch set in default mono mode (naturally), but

for more sonic thrills, turn on the chorus, set the switch to stereo and use a TRS splitter cable from the output jack to fluctuate the effect between two amps or audio sources for a more shimmering spatial experience. Finally, the pedal requires a 9-volt DC adapter for power.

Performance & Sounds

Let's be clear: This is not a pedal you'll want to gain stack with your favorite Screamer (although you could), because it's less of a stompbox and more of an “amp-in-a-box” with four clearly defined sounds that are huge and compressed, and yes, “dated,” and yet, completely satisfying. If you love “The Big 80s” and more aptly, the “Boston guitar sound,” the Rockman X100 pedal faithfully delivers those arena-sized tones with an onboard chorus. The preset sounds are fixed, so your only means of tweaking is with the amount of compression, which is yoked to the Input Gain. As you increase the IG slider, you add compression to the signal of the selected preset to intensify or enhance the dynamics of your playing. For example, in Edge Mode, it's effective for tightening the crunch as you slide back the Input Gain.

But let's get to the sounds. All the presets are alike yet audibly different and very compressed. Clean 2 has a crystalline punch, like rolling the volume down on a humbucker, whereas Clean 1 has more mid-focused sparkle and brightness similar to a single-coil pickup. Edge offers up a tightened and firm crunch ideal for rhythm playing, and Dist mode rewards you in spongy distortion with endless sustain. Which brings me to the fact that no matter what amp or guitar you run the pedal through, it spits back its clear-cut Rockman tones devoid of nuance. While that sounds like a fault, it's exactly what it's supposed to do, and I can also objectively admit by today's standards, its tones can sound coldly transistorized. However, using this pedal in a recording or a band framework, the Rockman sound becomes richly complex, and running it in stereo with the chorus activated broadens its modulated swirl to make the guitar sound double-tracked — so much so, you're not going to miss its omission of the original unit's echo. The only drawback is the pedal emits an audible hiss that disappears once you play. Regardless, the iconic Rockman



tones still stand the test of time, and considering the buzz surrounding it, it's worth having this well-executed time capsule as a pedal.

Verdict

The MXR Rockman X100 Analog Tone Processor is a faithful interpretation of the Rockman headphone amplifier in a pedal — an Eighties wayback machine that brings you to a time with enough big-sounding, chorused guitars to fill an arena. **GW**

STREET PRICE: \$229.99

MANUFACTURER:

Dunlop, jimdunlop.com

PROS

- + The return of the legendary X100 Rockman in a smartly designed pedal form.
- + Classic “Boston guitar tones” in a box; 2 crystal-clear cleans, 2 saturated drives with the ability to inject shimmering chorus
- + Dual slider switches regulate input gain (for compression) and output volume.
- + Sophisticated built-in compression circuit, tailored for slow release in the Clean 1 and 2 Modes, and a quicker release for Edge and Dist; mono or stereo operation (using a TRS splitter cable).

CONS

- Immutable and distinct “Eighties” tones that some may consider “dated.”



SOMA Harvezi Hazze

By Chris Gill

THE HARVEZI HAZZE may look like an ordinary fuzz/distortion box, but anyone familiar with SOMA — the company that invents outlandish and awesome alternative instruments like The Pipe, Enner and Terra — knows that “ordinary” does not exist in SOMA’s vocabulary. Featuring a waveshaper circuit based around a unijunction

SPECS

CONTROLS: Spoil, Spread, Level, Tone, Gain

SWITCHES: Distortion/Feedback Mode, Tone Stack, Bass Boost, Tone Mode, Notch Freq, High Cut, Compressor, Effect on/off true bypass footswitch

JACKS: ¼-inch input, ¼-inch output, 9-volt center negative DC adapter

transistor (whereas typical fuzz devices usually utilize bipolar junction transistors), a component often employed in early synth oscillator circuits for sawtooth waveform generation, the Harvezi Hazze provides a vast universe of distortion and fuzz effects and much more.

Build Quality & Usability

The Harvezi Hazze is actually more complex than it seems on the surface, featuring a signal chain that goes from an optical compressor with fixed parameters to a dual-mode soft/harsh clipping distortion amplifier to the aforementioned waveshaper and finally to a tone stack. Six mini on/off switches on the right side allow users to switch the compressor and tone control in or out of the signal path, while

the Bass Boost, Tone Mode, Notch Frequency and High Cut switches affect various tone characteristics.

Of the five knobs on the top panel, the bottom three are familiar Level, Tone and Gain controls while the Spoil and Spread controls on the top row are dedicated to the waveshaper section and respectively change timbre/response and the severity of the distortion character. A three-position mini toggle in the center of the top row selects the distorting amplifier’s soft clipping, harsh clipping or total feedback mode settings. Other features include a true bypass footswitch, mono ¼-inch input and output jacks and a 9VDC/50mA 2.1mm center negative power adapter jack.

As one would expect for a distortion stompbox, it is very easy to operate this



pedal and dial in sounds. However, thanks to the side-mounted switches and three-position distortion/feedback mode switch, the Harvezi Hazze can generate an outrageous variety of tones and textures. Since it doesn't have any memory capabilities, you will want to take detailed setting notes when you come across sounds you love. The Tone knob provides dramatic EQ sweeps rather than the typical "mush to bright" range of a typical fuzz/distortion box, and its range and characteristics vary depending on which switches are engaged or disengaged. When the total feedback mode is selected, sounds can get very wild and wooly, and higher gain settings can become gated and stutter unpredictably.

Sounds

The range of overdrive, distortion and fuzz textures that the Harvezi Hazze generates is impressive, especially since most of its tones and textures are unlike anything else on the market. Although some settings can get very compressed with seemingly

endless sustain, the guitar's attack dynamics and the inherent sonic personality of Strat, Tele, P90, Filter'tron and humbucking pickups are preserved, even in total fuzz meltdown annihilation settings. The tone stack and the Bass Boost, Tone Mode, Notch Frequency and High Cut switches provide some pretty deep tonal modification and shaping capabilities, but unlike most fuzz/distortion box tone sections that have only one or two great sounds, this pedal's tone section has more sweet spots than the 90-piece Discovery box from Le Choclat Alain Ducasse.

While the overdrive and distortion characteristics are quite nice, this pedal's biggest strength is its glorious and highly aggressive fuzz textures. If "The 2,000 Pound Bee" defined the Ventures' early Sixties fuzz, the best description for the Harvezi Hazze's fuzz is the 50-megaton murder hornet. Fuzz textures can range from laser-sharp buzz saws to fat pummeling blasts that miraculously maintain stellar note definition even when playing chords.

Verdict

The Harvezi Hazze is an outrageously versatile distortion/fuzz box that generates a huge variety of highly musical dirty tones and textures that users can fine tune to their discriminating taste. **GW**



STREET PRICE: 290 Euros

MANUFACTURER:

SOMA Laboratory, somasynths.com

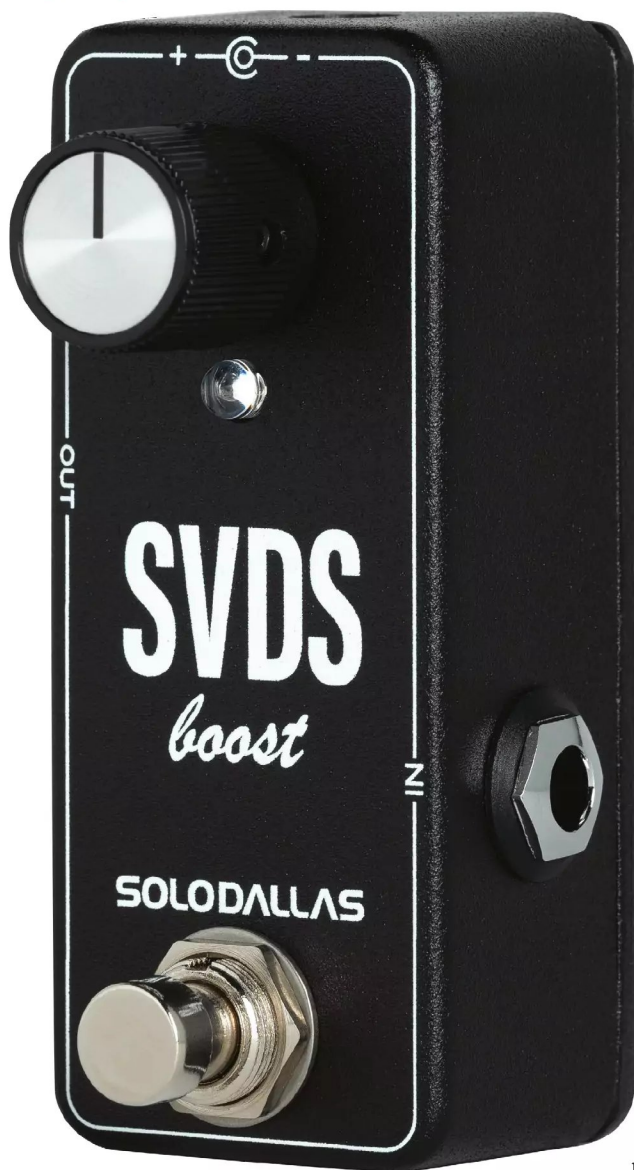
PROS

- + Truly unique distortion/fuzz tones and textures.
- + Side-mounted switches provide detailed tone shaping capabilities.
- + Excellent dynamics and note definition.

CONS

- No memory for saving settings.

"The Harvezi Hazze provides a vast universe of distortion and fuzz effects and much more"



SoloDallas SVDS Boost

By Paul Riario

NOT JUST ANOTHER boost pedal, the SoloDallas SVDS Boost is refreshingly unique, made all the more cool because of its esoteric pedigree. Sometime between the late Seventies and early Eighties, an innovative wireless system called the Schaffer-Vega Diversity System (SVDS) was scooped up by nearly every A-list player. Angus Young, David Gilmour, Eddie Van Halen and others adopted this unit — not just for the wireless freedom and signal integrity it afforded but for the fact that it seemed to inject a noticeable bump in

harmonically rich tone. A prime example is Young's SVDS-enhanced lead guitar sound on AC/DC's *Back in Black*. Call it the "secret weapon with the secret sauce," but the SVDS's state-of-the-art circuit combination of a clean boost, a compressor and an expander ("componder") — plus enhanced EQ and an optical limiter — made Young's amplifiers sing with enriched harmonic boost and dynamic range. Young got that boosted tone by plugging a 1/4-inch cable from the monitor headphone output jack of the SVDS receiver into his Marshall input and cranking the monitor level knob.

In essence, the effect of this clever hack of exploiting the SVDS's monitor opamp circuit can be heard not only by Young and others, but on many live recordings, from *Kiss Alive!* to countless Grateful Dead bootlegs. Now, SoloDallas, a company of passionate tone connoisseurs, has reproduced that exact circuit for the SVDS Boost — a full-frequency

boost colored with harmonically rich gain in a pedalboard-friendly mini-pedal.

Build Quality

The SVDS Boost is rugged and robust in construction, and by all appearances, it's undoubtedly built to last. It's completely analog and features a high-quality PCB with gold contacts, a heavy-duty footswitch, a bright blue LED, commercial-grade pots and Neutrik input and output jacks. Its sole knob allows for up to 30dB of gain boost. Under the hood, an internal gain pot (that's factory set halfway) can either maximize your guitar's pickup response or be driven to increase even more harmonic clipping.

Performance & Sounds

What distinguishes the SVDS Boost from

other boost pedals is that it does indeed inject analog coloration and refined harmonic content into your guitar tone. On its own, it offers a fattened gain bump and increased output as you dial its knob past unity gain (around 9 o'clock), where the pedal starts to sound sharper and crunchily-crumbly in all the best ways. Here, backing off your guitar's volume knob allows the articulation of your playing to become front and center while offering a bolder definition of your guitar's tone. But many players will find the SVDS Boost becomes better suited when placed after any of your gain-stage pedals or through the front end of your preamp, where it adds a fair amount of subtly sweetened midrange gusto that's instantly smile-inducing.

The SVDS's magic lies in how it boosts with thickened body and extra sustain without squashing the attack as you stack it with overdrives and fuzz pedals — and even juicing the front end of a classic Marshall or cranked Vox. I was able to nail Young's string "zing" on the solo of "Back in Black," where his fast pentatonic runs and droned open strings have a warmly sweetened edge that sings with clarity. It's almost impossible not to realize the SVDS's charm lies with its interaction with pedals and amps; seamlessly coloring it with a touch more saturation, a dollop of compression and a percussive boost. As a result, it tames all the rough edges organically, while sculpting your tone in a way that brings out all the dynamics of your playing. And who doesn't want that?

Verdict

The SoloDallas SVDS Boost offers up to 30dB of gain boost, but its superpower is punching your guitar tone with presence, thickened gain and sustain, and percussive harmonics, which truly enriches the dynamic "feel" of your playing. **GW**

STREET PRICE: \$129

MANUFACTURER: SoloDallas LLC, solodallas.com

PROS

- + A novel gain boost with vintage coloration and up to 30dB of boost.
- + Delivers rich harmonic content, fattened gain and singing sustain.
- + "Goalpost" EQ enhances harmonics and the extreme ends of the frequency spectrum, while maintaining the integrity of your midrange.

CONS

- Some might want a true clean or more transparent boost.

Shure MV7i Smart Microphone & Interface

By Chris Gill

IN TODAY'S INCREASINGLY online world, it seems that everyone is a podcaster. Recently, the Shure MV7 and MV7+ became the favored microphone choices of podcasters for their excellent vocal clarity and internal DSP capabilities. Now Shure offers the MV7i, which offers the same outstanding sound quality, ease of use and internal DSP of these mics with the added benefit of a built-in 2-channel audio interface and combo XLR and 1/4-inch input to provide a simple, streamlined recording or audio streaming rig that's ideal for studio and on-location applications.

Build Quality & Usability

Like its MV7 and MV7+ predecessors, the MV7i is a dynamic cardioid mic that connects directly to a Mac/PC computer or iOS/Android phone or tablet via USB-C. To control both channels and the MV7i's DSP features, you'll need to download the free MOTIV Mix desktop or MOTIV Audio mobile app. MOTIV provides auto level mode with Smart Gate, high-pass filter (off/75 Hz/150 Hz), real-time denoiser, digital Popper Stopper and reverb (plate, hall, studio) functions plus customizable tone and sound signature (speech, singing, acoustic/instrument), gain, EQ, compression and limiter controls for each channel. Muting for each channel can be engaged by tapping the LED panel on the mic itself, and the multi-color LED makes it easy to monitor levels.

Setup is simple and uncluttered. A USB-C cable connects the mic to the computer or mobile device, and a second sound source (additional mic, guitar, synth keyboard, etc.) plugs into the combo input jack. In addition to controls for each channel's settings, the MOTIV software includes a simple recording function that can be set up to capture stereo, mixdown or multi-track mixes and save them in the app's Library section where you can later perform basic editing functions like trimming and splitting.

Sound Quality

Like its predecessors the MV7 and MV7+, the MV7i is an excellent vocal mic that

provides a slick, pro broadcaster polish to almost any voice with outstanding clarity and low-noise operation. The MOTIV software's auto level, Smart Gate, real-time denoiser and Popper Stopper functions are like having an engineer constantly monitoring and making crucial adjustments to keep the vocal audio signal pristine. When using a direct electric guitar, I found that its signal would usually drown out the vocal mic when both inputs used the auto level settings, but it was easily tamed by using the software's manual level setting for the guitar input.

If you plan on using MOTIV's recording capabilities to record podcasts, I recommend using the combo input for a second microphone rather than plugging an electric guitar or other instrument direct to the input. If you're fine with the sound of direct electric guitar with only reverb and light compression, go ahead and plug it in, but if you want distortion, various effects and speaker cabinet emulation you'll need to connect an external processor between the guitar and the MV7i's input. However, since the MV7i is both a mic and 2-channel audio interface, you can connect the mic/

interface directly to a DAW on your computer or mobile device and insert your favorite guitar processor there.

Verdict

Combining the excellent vocal audio capturing capabilities of the acclaimed Shure MV7+ mic with a 2-channel audio interface, the Shure MV7i is an affordable and extremely useful creative tool for podcasting, streaming and studio or location recording that provides helpful processing for delivering consistent professional-sounding results. **GW**

STREET PRICE: \$349

MANUFACTURER: Shure, shure.com

PROS

- + Built-in 2-channel audio interface streamlines and simplifies multiple audio source setups.

CONS

- Electric guitar needs external processor before input for distortion and other effects when using MOTIV software.



FOLLOW THE GROOVE

by Cory Wong



For video of this lesson, go to guitarworld.com/june2025

PERFECT PAIRS

How to stack and blend guitar parts

THIS MONTH, I'D like to talk about some effective approaches to weaving multiple guitar parts together, whether working with another guitarist or layering parts for a recording. In my previous column, I talked about how to devise rhythm guitar parts that best serve the song and the groove. For me, it's not just about playing chords; it's about finding compositional and "hook" elements in your playing.

A common question is, "How do you figure out what to do when there are two guitarists?" The answer is the same as for "What do I do when playing with a keyboard player?" or "What do I do when there's a horn section?" It always comes down to knowing what my function and role are within this specific arrangement.

In some songs, I might be the one that's driving the rhythmic momentum, and in others, my role might be to lay down a bed of harmony that sits in the background, like a cloud that "hugs" the whole tune together. Other times, my part might be out front as much as possible, such as during a guitar solo, serving as the focal point of the music.

I approach working with another guitarist in the same way I do with any other instrument: what is their role, what is my role, and how can we collaborate most effectively? The first thing you need to do is listen to what the other instrumentalist is playing and see if what you're doing can enhance that by doing something similar, or something completely different.

One of the typical things I'll do when layering parts is to play a chord-based figure and then add a single-note "bubbly" part. **FIGURE 1** offers a rhythm part built from a C9 chord that's embellished with simple single-note melodies. Throughout most of the pattern, my pick hand strums steady 16th notes in a down-up-down-up fashion; notice the use of muted-string accents and 16th and eighth rests, which add rhythmic contour to the part.

If I were to add a second part, it wouldn't make sense to play **FIGURE 2**, which just sits on a C7 chord. I'd be more prone to play a bubbly single-note part such as **FIGURE 3**, which accentuates the 6th, A, and the minor 3rd, E $\flat$, and adds a Meters-type vibe.

We now have two completely different parts with different functions that mesh

FIG. 1 C9

1. B $\flat$ 7 (B $\flat$) (B) (C)

2. (B $\flat$) (B) (C) B7 C7 C9

FIG. 2 C7

FIG. 3 (C7)

FIG. 4 (C7)

well together: one is based on a solid chord rhythm and the other is based on a melodic line played with a different tone.

FIGURE 4 offers another example of a melodic part, this time built from unison bends, 6th intervals and single-note lines. I begin with a high-G unison bend on the top two strings and then ascend chromatically in 6ths fretted on the D and B strings.

In bar 2, I switch to a single-note line that incorporates some chromaticism. This two-bar figure then repeats three times with slight variations.

Whatever you choose to play, your mindset should be, "how can I best serve the song, without taking away from the focal point," be it a lead vocal or instrumental solo.

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.

TALES FROM NERDVILLE

by Joe Bonamassa



For video of this lesson, go to
guitarworld.com/june2025

SLIDE AREA

A look at Rory Gallagher's slide guitar brilliance

LAST MONTH, WE started looking into the playing style of the legendary Irish guitarist Rory Gallagher, who is without doubt one of my all-time favorite players. Rory always played with a fiery intensity and communicated great emotional depth in every performance. He was also a brilliant slide player, which is the focus of this month's column.

When playing slide, Rory often tuned to an open tuning, such as an open A, G, E, or D. For this month's examples, my guitar is in open A tuning. With my low E, high E and A strings tuned normally, I tuned my D, G and B strings up a whole step, to E, A and C $\sharp$, respectively.

"Who's That Coming" is a great example of Rory's prowess as a slide player. **FIGURE 1** presents a slide lick played in his style on this track. Picking the strings with my bare fingers and wearing a metal slide on my fret-hand ring finger, I begin by sliding up to the 3rd fret on the 2nd string to sound E, followed by G at the 3rd fret on the 1st string, describing an A7 sound. I then slide back down the 2nd string from E to D, followed by a slide up to C on the 3rd string's 3rd fret, and then pull-off to the open string, sounding an A root note. At the end of the bar, I add a low A note on the open 5th string for punctuation and to bring some low end into the lick.

I play this phrase three times, with slight variations, and follow it in bar 4 with slides into C and D chords. This bar ends with a high A chord, sounded by laying the slide across the strings at the 12th fret.

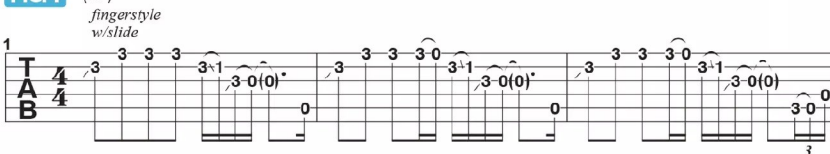
In **FIGURE 2**, the riff is moved up an octave higher, starting on the 15th fret on the top two strings, and the melodic line and phrasing are similar to the initial melody. Notice how cool it sounds to pull off from the 15th fret to the open 1st string. In bars 4 and 5, the C - D - A chordal figure is played twice.

Rory often used open A tuning for his slide playing, sometimes along with a capo, as on "Bullfrog Blues." Caped at the 2nd fret, the open A tuning sounds an open B tuning. **FIGURE 3** illustrates a "rock 'n' roll" chordal figure fretted without a slide.

Rory had a great slide vibrato and achieved a very sharp attack by using a pick. I myself usually fingerpick when playing

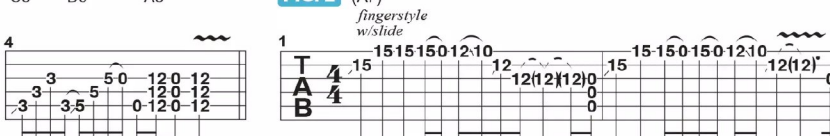
All examples are performed in open A tuning (low to high, E A E A C $\sharp$ E).

FIG. 1 (A7)



C5 D5 A5

FIG. 2 (A7)



C5 D5 A5 C5 D5 A

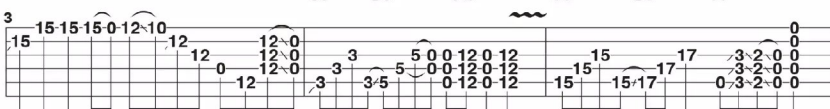


FIG. 3

E
fingerstyle
w/o slide

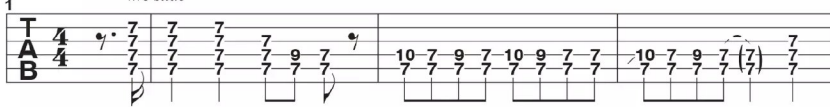
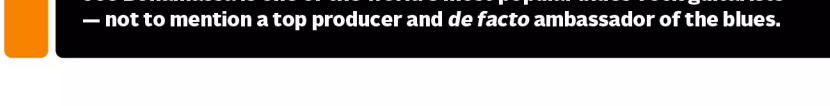
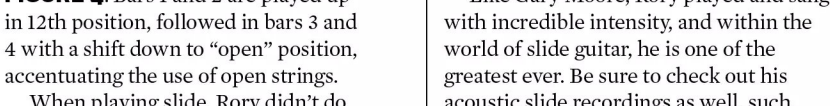
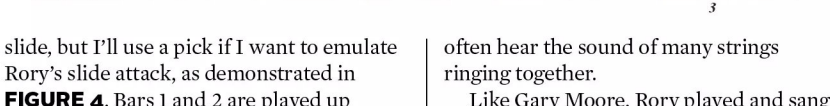
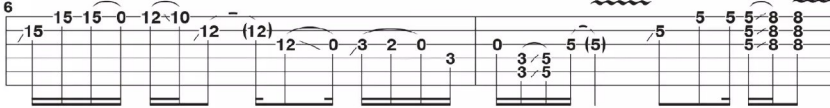
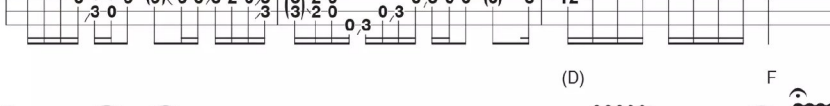
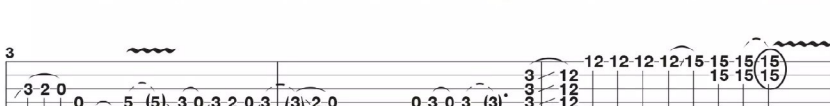
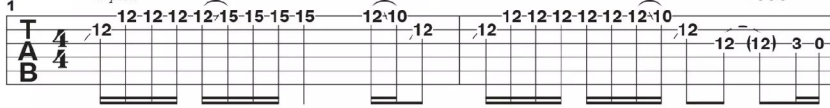


FIG. 4 (A7)

w/slide
w/pick



slide, but I'll use a pick if I want to emulate Rory's slide attack, as demonstrated in **FIGURE 4**. Bars 1 and 2 are played up in 12th position, followed in bars 3 and 4 with a shift down to "open" position, accentuating the use of open strings.

When playing slide, Rory didn't do much muting with either hand, so you'll

often hear the sound of many strings ringing together.

Like Gary Moore, Rory played and sang with incredible intensity, and within the world of slide guitar, he is one of the greatest ever. Be sure to check out his acoustic slide recordings as well, such as "Too Much Alcohol."

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.

ONE GUITAR WOMAN

by Sue Foley



For video of this lesson, go to
guitarworld.com/june2025

BLUES YOU CAN USE

Essential blues riffs for soloing, part 1

HELLO EVERYONE, AND welcome to my new column for *Guitar World*! Over the course of these lessons, I will be demonstrating many of my approaches to blues rhythm guitar playing and soloing, covering a variety of my favorite styles of the blues along the way.

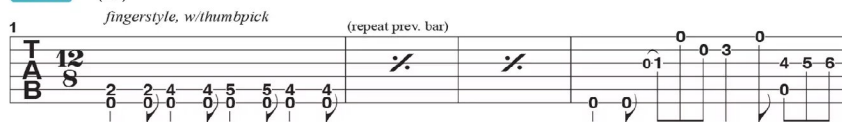
I'd like to start off with a blues lick that I love, one that I use all of the time and is "multi-functional," in that it's great for rhythm parts as well as soloing. Blues players often fall back into patterns: I always say that playing the blues isn't about scales, such as the minor pentatonic scale, the blues scale, the Mixolydian mode and what have you. It's not "scale-y" music; it's *pattern* music. So you need to learn the right patterns in order to sound bluesy.

A lick I lean on a lot is a "walk-up" that connects the I (one) chord to the IV (four) chord. You'll hear this specific lick in a lot of Chicago blues, such as the recordings of Muddy Waters with guitarists Jimmy Rogers, Dave and Louis Myers and Robert Jr. Lockwood.

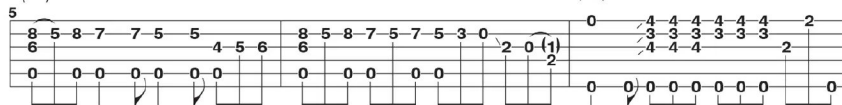
FIGURE 1 presents a 12-bar blues shuffle in the key of E, starting with three bars of switching on each beat between two-note voicings of E5 (E and B), E6 (E and C#) and E7 (E and D), implying an E7 sound overall. In bar 4, I anticipate the change to the IV chord, A7, by playing the open A string along with the ascending notes B, C and C#. Bars 5 and 6 are played over A7, and on beats 1-3 of bar 5, I play a melody on my B string along with the thumb-picked open A string. In bar 6, this melody is repeated in beats 1-3, followed by a shift down the neck to wrap up the lick and return to the I chord, E7.

Bars 7 and 8 are played over E7; notice in bar 7 that I incorporate an E7 voicing of B-D-G# on the top three strings. In bar 9, we arrive at the V chord, B7, and I play the same lick as bar 5 but transposed up a whole step, from A to B, utilizing the B7 chord tones of D#, A and F#, along with the 6th, G#. We return to A7 in bar 10 and repeat the lick from bar 6. The 12-bar figure then wraps up in bars 11 and 12 with a standard turnaround in E, as the chromatically descending notes D, C#, C

FIG. 1 (E7)

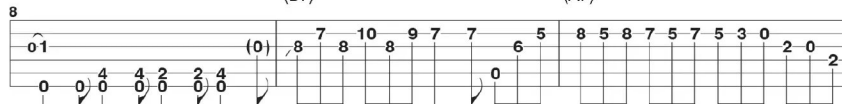


(A7)

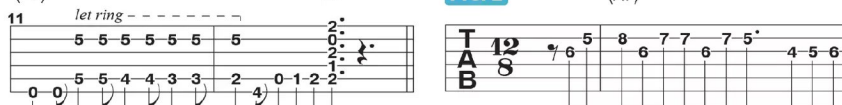


(E7)

8



(E7)



G# A5



FIG. 4 A7 A6 A5



FIG. 5 (A7)

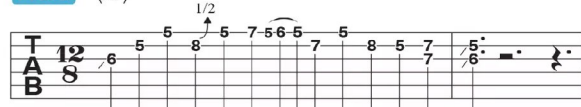
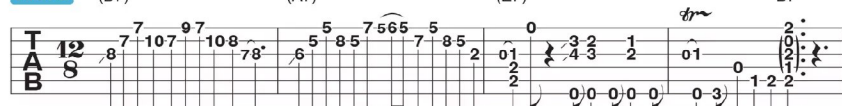
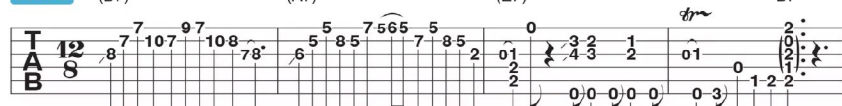


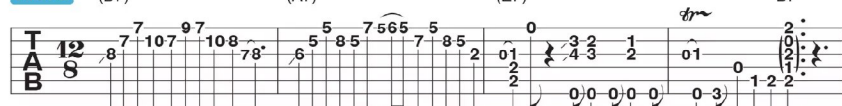
FIG. 6 (B7)



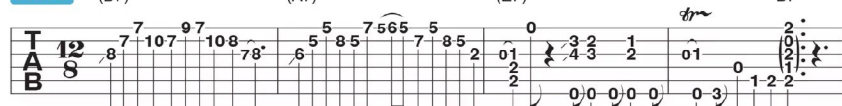
(A7)



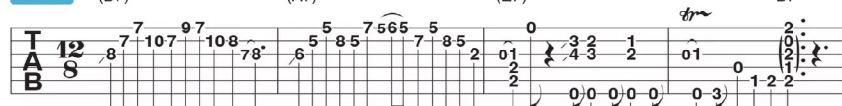
(E7)



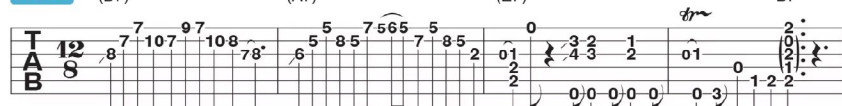
B7



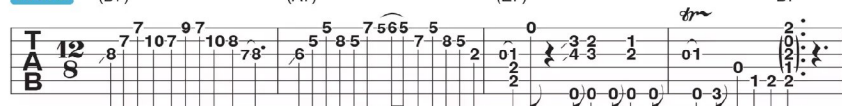
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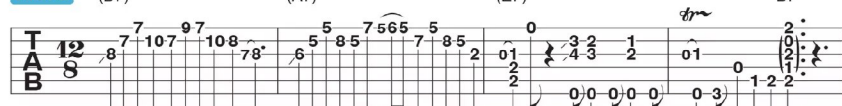
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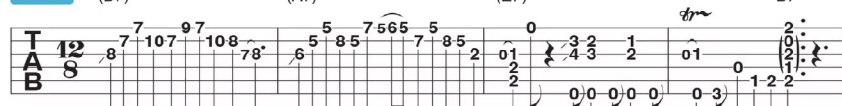
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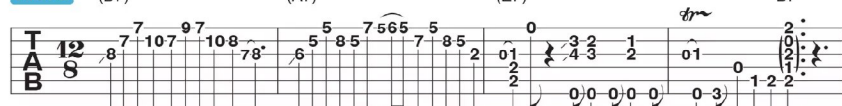
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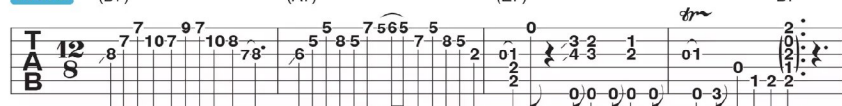
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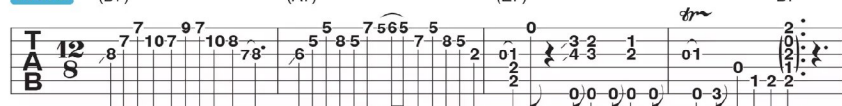
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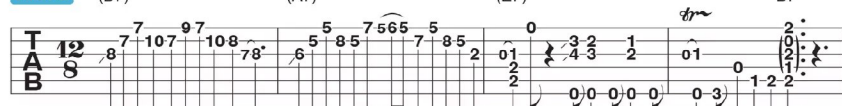
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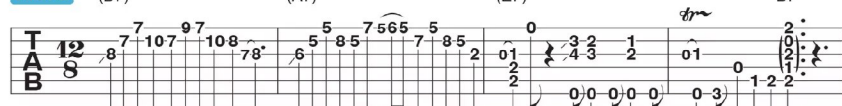
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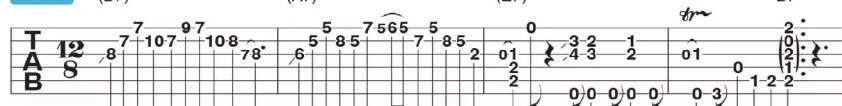
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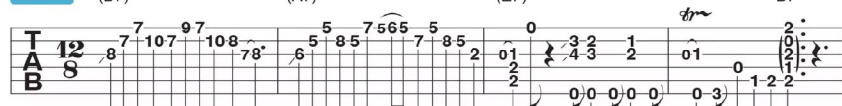
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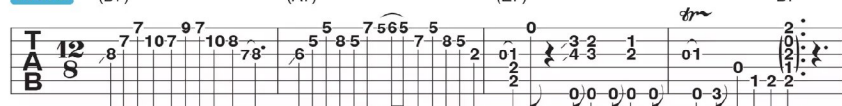
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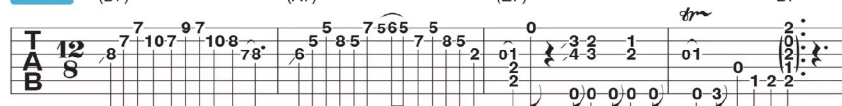
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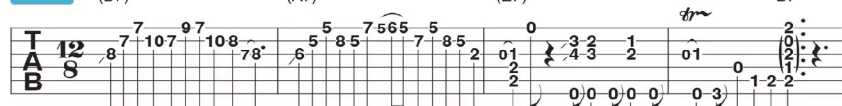
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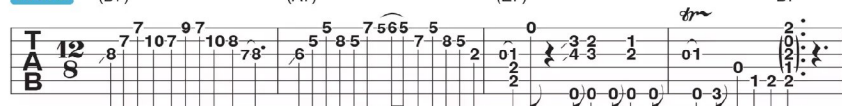
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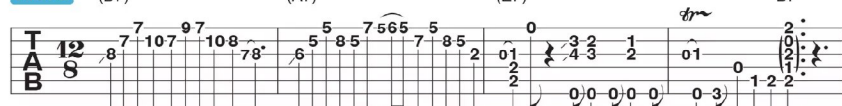
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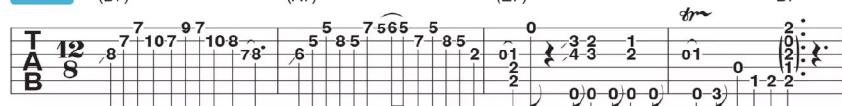
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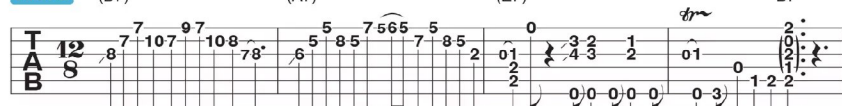
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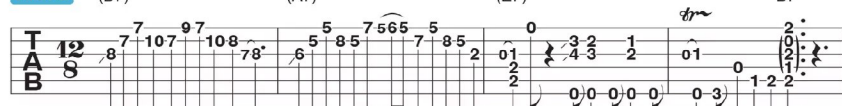
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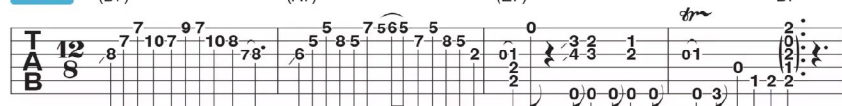
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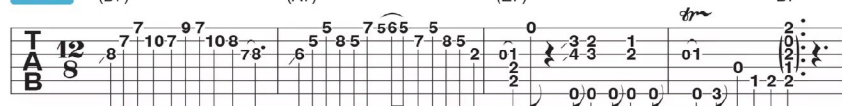
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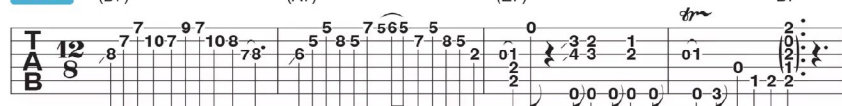
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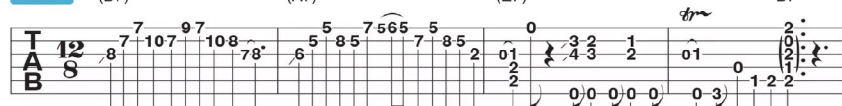
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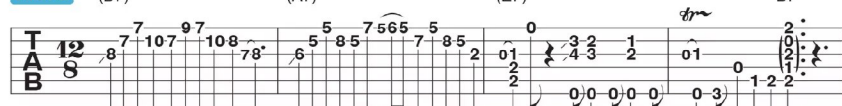
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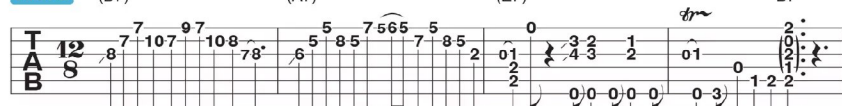
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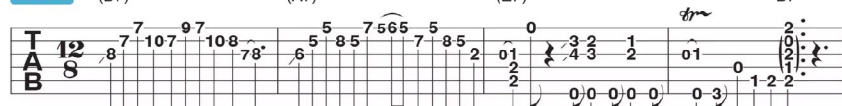
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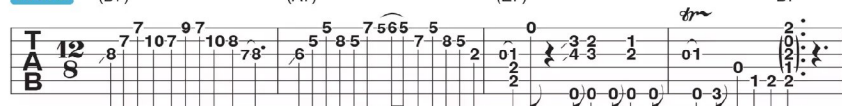
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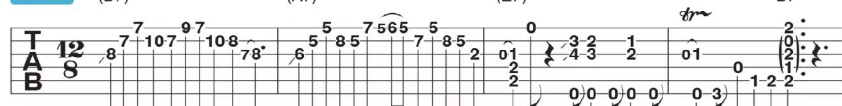
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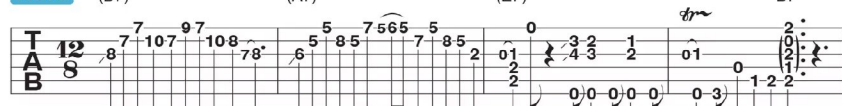
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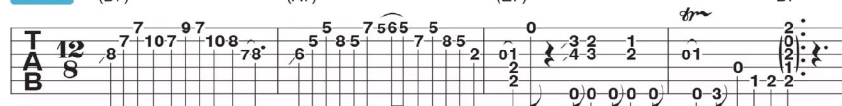
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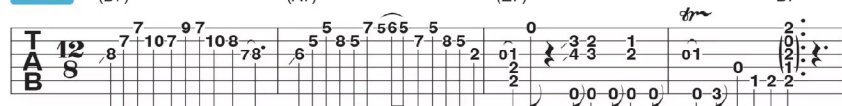
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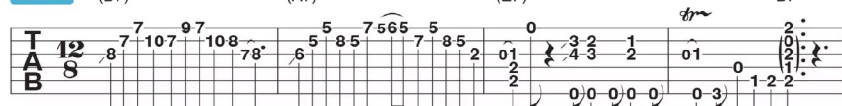
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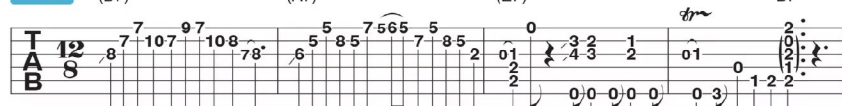
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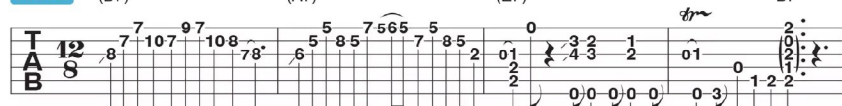
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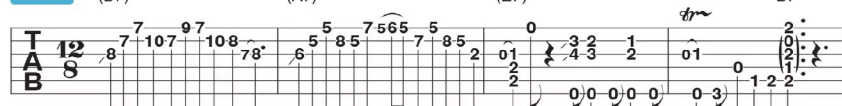
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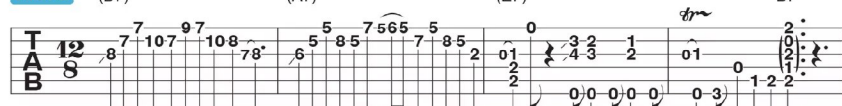
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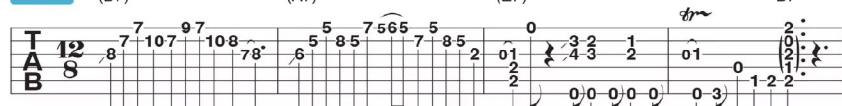
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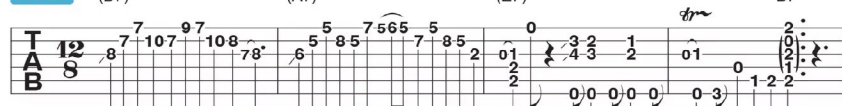
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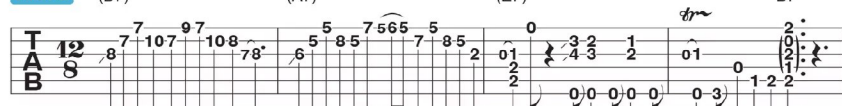
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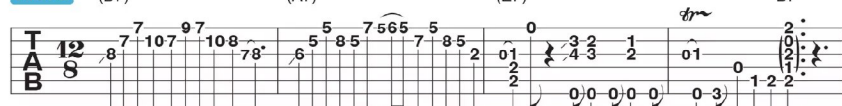
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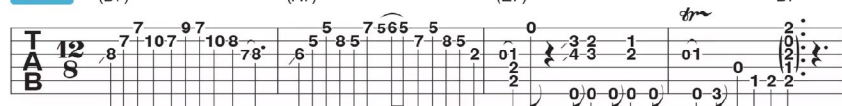
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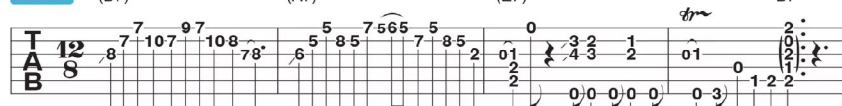
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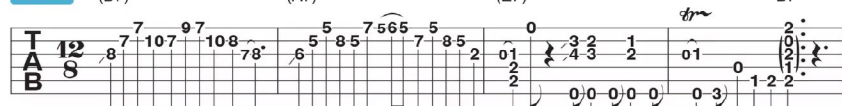
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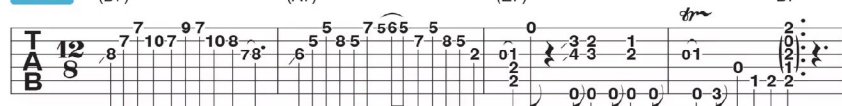
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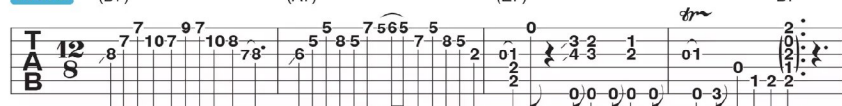
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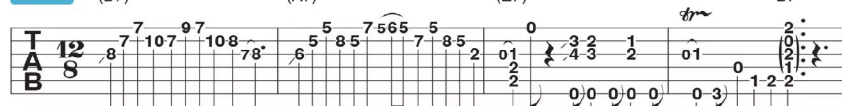
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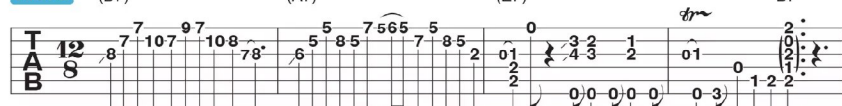
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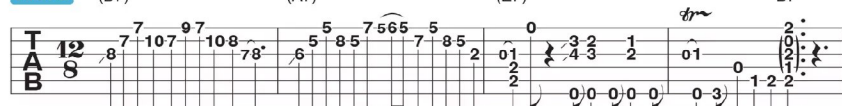
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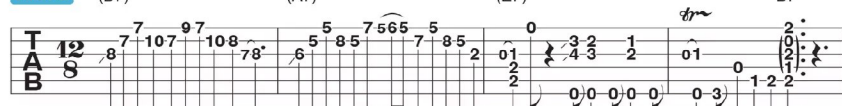
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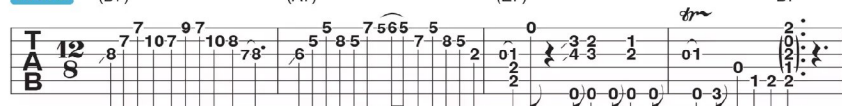
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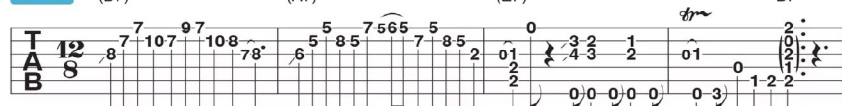
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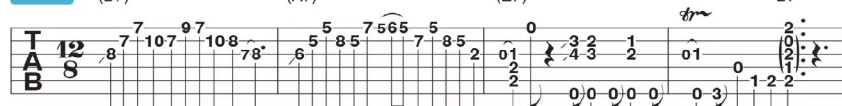
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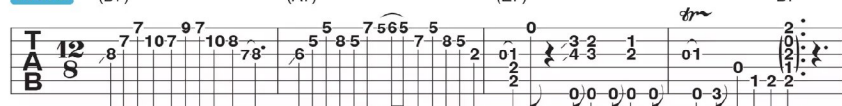
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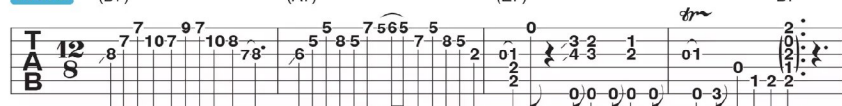
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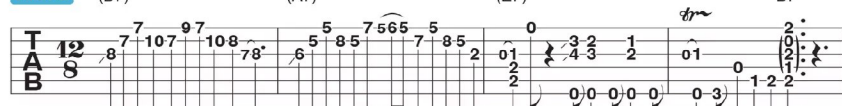
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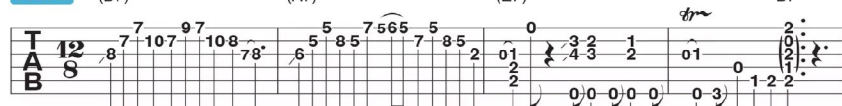
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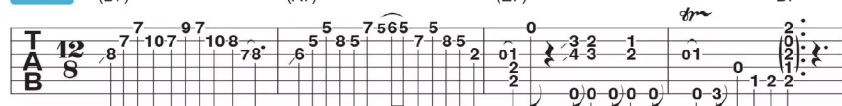
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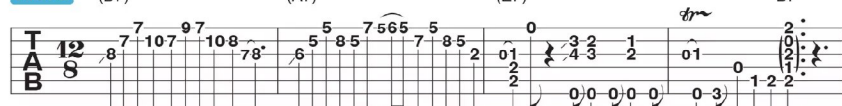
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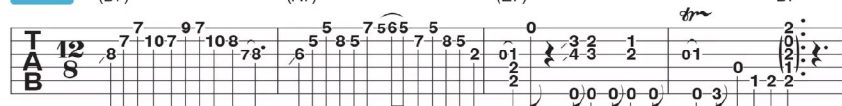
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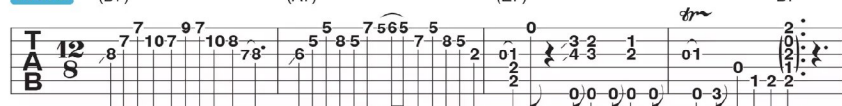
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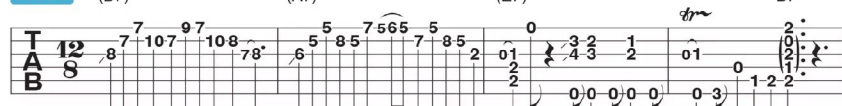
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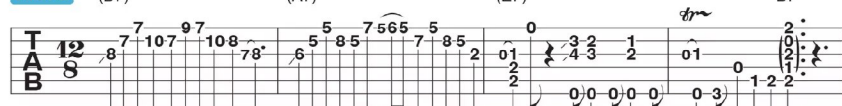
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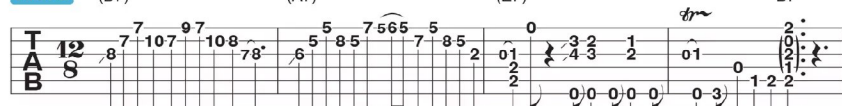
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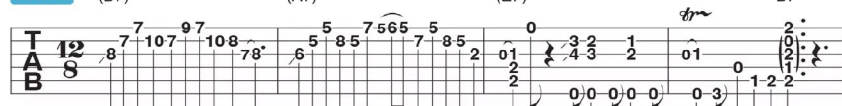
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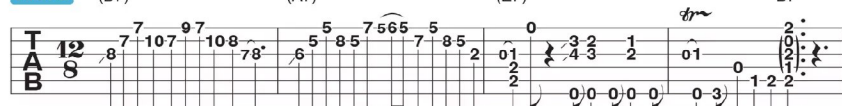
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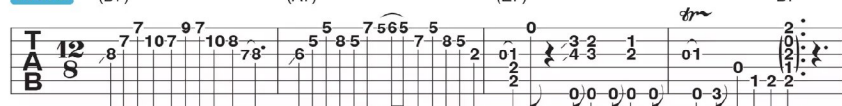
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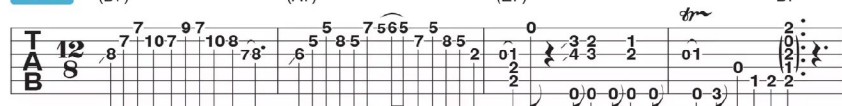
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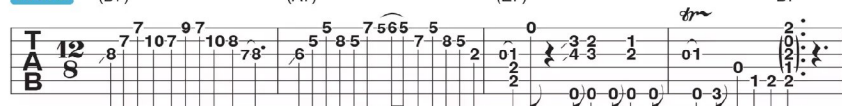
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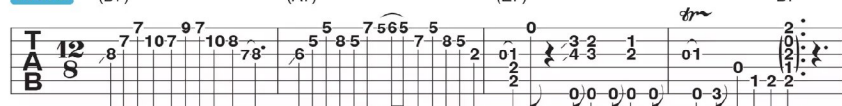
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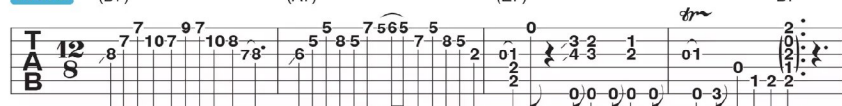
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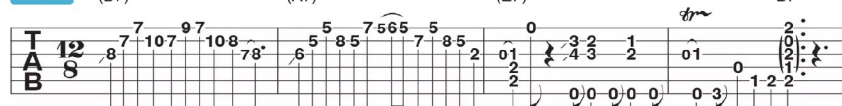
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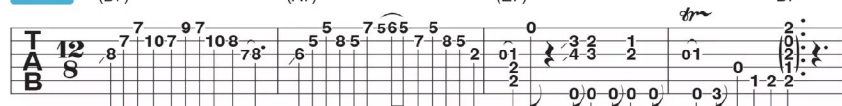
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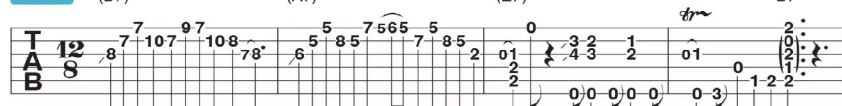
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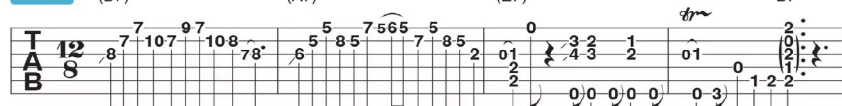
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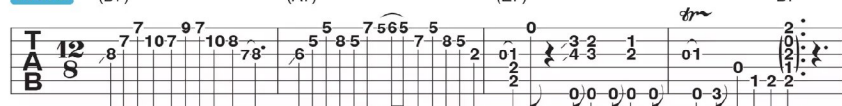
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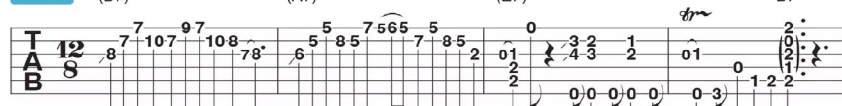
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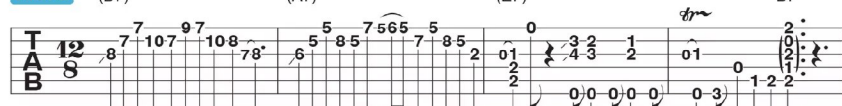
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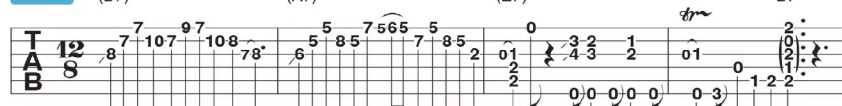
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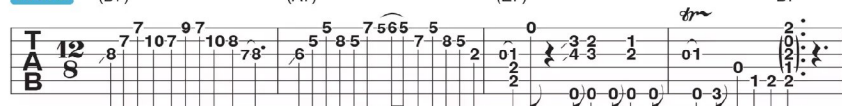
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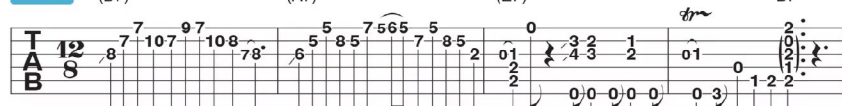
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HARDWIRED

by Jared James Nichols



For video of this lesson, go to
guitarworld.com/june2025

BUILD THE VEHICLE

Writing solid riffs

THIS MONTH, I'D like to discuss some of the approaches I use to create solid, memorable riffs that I can then build upon when writing songs. So often, as most guitar players do, I'll noodle around 'til I hit on a riff and say, "That's pretty cool." You know you have something special when you find a riff that you can feel inspired to build an entire song around.

For all of the material I write for my band, I always begin with a nucleus of an idea that I can then expand into a solid and effective song. A good example is "Honey Forgive Me." Writing this tune's riffs was all about using my open G string along with every note of the G minor pentatonic scale (G, B $\flat$, D, D, F). In **FIGURE 1**, I ascend through each note of the scale in 1st and 3rd positions while additionally sounding my open G string.

I wanted to come up with a hypnotic riff and had the Rolling Stones' "Miss You" in mind. **FIGURE 2** illustrates a phrase along the lines of that tune. I was also thinking about ZZ Top's Billy Gibbons, who has written a bunch of great songs built around open drone strings, such as "Jesus Just Left Chicago."

FIGURE 3 shows the motif that formed the basis for the main riff in "Honey Forgive Me." I added the open G string to each note in the phrase, resulting in **FIGURE 4**, which became the tune's chorus riff.

The "bread and butter" for me is honing a riff like this and figuring out where to go with it in order to put the pieces together to write a song. To me, if a riff is too "busy," it will make it harder to come up with a vocal melody that will work over it. Simple is always a better way to go. For example, I find that a good way to devise a verse riff is to simplify my initial idea and boil it down to something basic and groove-oriented that will support a verse vocal part without overshadowing it.

FIGURE 5 shows the verse riff in "Honey Forgive Me," which is built from a repeating F-to-G pattern played in sync with the open D and G strings.

I was very fortunate to have recorded this song with legendary recording engineer Eddie Kramer, who said to me, "Jared, with guys like you, it's all about the

All examples are performed fingerstyle.

FIG. 1 G minor pentatonic scale

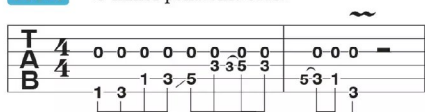


FIG. 2 (G)

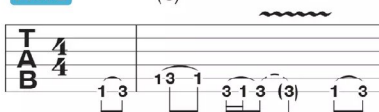


FIG. 3 (G)



FIG. 4 (G)

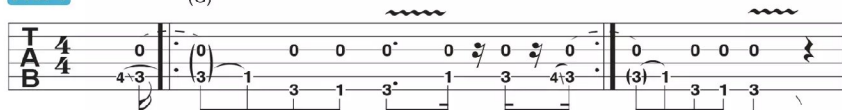


FIG. 5 (G)

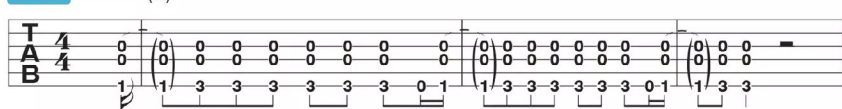


FIG. 6 (G)

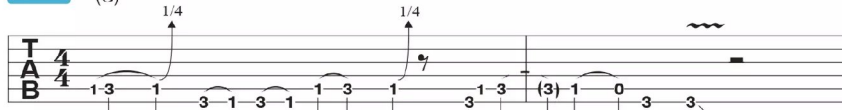


FIG. 7 (G)

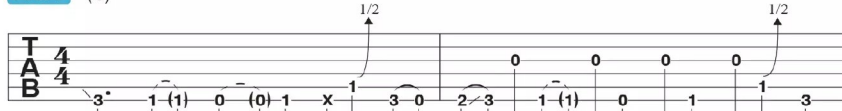
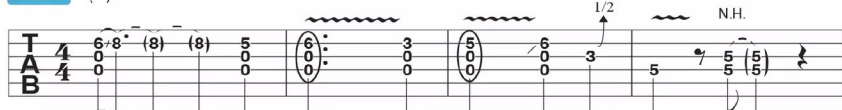


FIG. 8 (G)



riff." I showed him a few tunes, including this one, the way I had originally written it, which was a bit busier. He said, "All of your songs have too many riffs! Give me a great riff, then cut it down for the verse and then we can see where to go for the chorus. Take something small and try to get as much out of it as you can."

For the chorus, I came up with a slight variation, shown in **FIGURE 6**, which nicely matches my vocal melody, in

a Jimi Hendrix kind of way.

When you have a rock-solid riff, it'll give you a great springboard for a solo section, so that the two parts will balance well against one another. **FIGURE 7** shows the riff for the tune's solo section. And for the solo, I jump up to the next higher octave and constructed the phrase depicted in **FIGURE 8**, which I built from a simple melody played on the B string in tandem with the open G and D strings.

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

Dire Straits

Words and Music by **MARK KNOPFLER** and **STING** • Transcribed by **JEFF PERRIN**

A Intro (0:00) (1:36)

Freely **Moderately Fast** ♩ = 134

I want my MTV...

G5 C5 G7sus4 C5 B $\flat$ 5 G5 B $\flat$ 5 G5 B $\flat$ 5 C5 B $\flat$ 5 G5

**Gtr. 1 (elec. w/dist.)
(play fingerstyle)

*(synth intro) † let ring - - - -

TAB 4/4

See Fill A below bar 9

**Gtr. doubled by Gtr. 2 simile throughout
† picking prompt indicates down or up-strum w/fingers

pick-hand fingering:

N.H.

C5 G5 C5 G5 C5 G5 C5 B $\flat$ 5 G5 N.H.

let ring - - - - -

F5 G5

pitch: D pitch: F $\sharp$

B (1:50)

G5 G7sus4 C5 Bb5 G5 C5 G5 Bb5 C5 Bb5 G5

Gtr. 1 let ring - - -

9 (cont. finger-picking method simile throughout)

Bass
Bass Fig. 1

Fill A (1:25)

Gtr. 1

G5 F5 G5

5 5 5 5

Bass Fill 1 (2:31, 3:04)

F5 G5

1 3 3 6 3 6 5

1. Now

13^{N.H.} C5 G5 C5 G5 C5 B $\flat$ 5 G5 B $\flat$ 5 G5 F5 G5

Rhy. Fill 1

end Rhy. Fill 1

end Bass Fig. 1

pitch: D

C 1st and 3rd Verses (2:05, 3:55)

(1.) look at them yo-yos That's the way you do it You play the guitars on the MTV
3. I should-a learned to play the guitar I should-a learned to play them drums Look at that

G5

Gtr. 1 substitutes Rhy. Fig. 1 simile,
2nd verse (see bar 43)

Gtr. 1

17^{N.H.}

pitch: D

Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 twice simile (see bar 9)

That ain't working That's the way you do it Money for nothing and your chicks for free
mama she got it sticking in the camera Man and we could have some And

21

Now that ain't working That's the way you do it Lemme tell ya Them guys ain't dumb
who's up there What's that Hawaiian noises He's banging on the bongos like a chimpanzee Oh that ain't

G5

C5 G5

G7sus4

G5 C5

B $\flat$ 5 G5

B $\flat$ 5 G5

B $\flat$ 5

C5

B $\flat$ 5 G5

25^{N.H.}

pitch: D

Maybe get a blister on your little finger Maybe get a blister on your thumb
working That's the way you do it Get your money for nothing Get your chicks for free

G5

C5 G5

C5 B $\flat$ 5 G5

29^{N.H.}

pitch: D

Gtr. 1 substitutes Rhy. Fill 1 simile,
2nd verse (see bar 14)

Bass plays Bass Fill 1
(see below bar 11)

Fill 1 (3:22)

Gtr. 2 E

T 4 9 7 x 7 (7) 7

A 4

B 4

Rhy. Fill 2 (3:43)

Gtr. 2 F5

T 4 10 8 10 8 10 7 10 0

A 4

B 4

D Chorus (2:33, 3:05, 3:37, 4:24)

E_b5

B65

ovens

E|5

Custom kitchen

deliveries

*Gtr. 2 substitutes Rhy. Fill 2
third time (see below bar 31)*
*Gtr. 2 substitutes Rhy. Fill 3
fourth time (see below bar 117)*

33 Gtr. 1

(play repeats simile)

Bass

We got to move these refrigerators

We got to move these color TVs

37. G5 C5 G5 G7sus4 G5 B♭5 G5 C5 D5

0 7 7 5 7 6 5 5 7 7 0 3 0 0 0 5 5 5 5 5 5 0 7 7 7 5 7 7 7 0

3 3 3 x 3 3 3 1 3 1 3 3 3 0 3 3 5 5 2 5 5

2nd and 4th times, skip ahead to **F** (bar 51)

3rd time, go back to **C** 3rd Verse (bar 17)

1st time: **Ow!**

E5

3rd time: **Looky here**

Look out

Gtr. 2 substitutes Fill 1 second time (see below bar 29)

Gtr. 2 substitutes Fi11 2 third time (see below bar 115)

41 *Gtr. 2 substitutes Fill 3 fourth time (see below bar 135)*

The second system of the musical score for 'The Rose Tree' consists of two staves. The upper staff continues the melody from the first system, starting with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. It features a series of eighth notes, with a triplet of eighth notes marked with a '3' and a slur. The lower staff provides the accompaniment, starting with a bass clef and a key signature of one flat. It features a series of eighth notes, with a triplet of eighth notes marked with a '3' and a slur. The system concludes with a double bar line.

E 2nd Verse (2:51)

The little **** with the earring and the make-up

Yeah buddy

That's his own

hair

G5

B5 C5

Gtr. 1

Rhy. Fig. 1

43 Rhy. Fig. 1

12 0 0 3 0 | 0 0 3 0 0 3 0 0 | 0 0 3 0 0 3 0 0 | 3 5 5 5 0

Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 simile (see bar 9)

Go back to **D** Chorus (bar 33)

That little **** got his own jet airplane

That little **** he's a millionaire

G5

end Rhy. Fig. 1

Figure 1 displays four musical staves, each representing a measure of music. The notation includes various note values (quarter, eighth, sixteenth notes) and rests, with some notes beamed together. The first staff shows a sequence of eighth notes and quarter notes. The second staff shows a sequence of quarter notes and eighth notes. The third staff shows a sequence of quarter notes and eighth notes. The fourth staff shows a sequence of quarter notes and eighth notes.

Bass plays Bass Fill 1 (see below bar 11)

F (3:23, 4:42)

1st time: Hoover mover

2nd time: Ow

ow ow ow!

G5 G7sus4 G5 C5 B $\flat$ 5 G5 B $\flat$ 5 G5 B $\flat$ 5 C5 B $\flat$ 5 G5

let ring - - - -

51 .

Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 simile (see bar 9)

1st time, go back to **D** Chorus (bar 33)

Uh

2nd time: Listen here

Now

C5 G5 C5 B $\flat$ 5 G5 B $\flat$ 5 G5 B $\flat$ 5 N.C. (G5)

let ring - - - -

55 N.H.

pitch: D

G (4:56)

That ain't working

That's the way you do it

You play the guitar on the MTV

G5 B $\flat$ 5 C5 G5

59 N.H.

pitch: D

Bass repeats Bass Fig. 1 simile through fade out (see bar 9)

That ain't working

That's the way you do it

Money for nothing and your chicks for free

63

Money for nothing

chicks for free

Get your

G5 G7sus4 G5 C5 B $\flat$ 5 G5 B $\flat$ 5 G5 B $\flat$ 5 C5 B $\flat$ 5 G5

Rhy. Fig. 2

67 N.H.

let ring - - - -

pitch: D

money for nothing

and your chicks for free

(1) Ooh and

(2) Oh money

(3) Ow

(play 3 times)

end Rhy. Fig. 2

C5 G5 C5 G5 C5 G5 C5 B $\flat$ 5 G5

N.C. (F5) (G5)

71 .

let ring - - - -

H (5:54)

Money for nothing

and your chicks for free

Get your

G5 B $\flat$ 5 C5 G5 C5 B $\flat$ 5 G5

Gtr. 2

75

money for nothing and your chicks for free Look at that Look at that Get your

G5 C5 B $\flat$ 5 G5

79 1 let ring

I (6:08)

(1) money for nothing and your chicks for free Money
(2, 3) money for nothing and your chicks for free Get your
(3) money for nothing and your chicks for free Easy easy
(backing vox) (I want my I want my MTV) Easy easy
G5 C5 G5 G7sus4 G5 C5 B $\flat$ 5 G5 B $\flat$ 5 G5 B $\flat$ 5 C5 G5

83 Gtr. 1 let ring

(play repeats simile)

for nothing and your chicks for free Get your
money for nothing and your chicks for free Get your
money for nothing and your chicks for free Easy easy
(I want my I want my MTV) That ain't

87 C5 G5 C5 G5 C5 B $\flat$ 5 G5 B $\flat$ 5 G5 N.C.(F5)(G5) G5 B $\flat$ 5 G5 (play 3 times)

J (6:51)

working

91 Gtr. 1 N.H. B $\flat$ 5 C5 B $\flat$ 5 G5

pitch: D

95 Gtr. 2 F5 G5

Gtr. 1

99 C5 G5 G7sus4 C5 B $\flat$ 5 G5 B $\flat$ 5 G5 B $\flat$ 5 C5 B $\flat$ 5 G5

103

C5 B $\flat$ 5 C5 G5 C5 B $\flat$ 5 G5 B $\flat$ 5 G5 N.C. (F5) (G5) G5

107

B $\flat$ 5 G5 B $\flat$ 5 C5 G5

111

C5 G5 C5 B $\flat$ 5 G5 B $\flat$ 5 F5 G5

115

C5 G5 G7sus4 C5 G5 C5 B $\flat$ 5 G5 B $\flat$ 5 G5 B $\flat$ 5 C5 B $\flat$ 5 G5

Fill 2 (3:54)

E5
Gtr. 2

Rhy. Fill 3 (4:29)

F5
Gtr. 2

119

C5 G5 C5 B $\flat$ 5 G5 N.C. (F5) (G5) G5

N.H.

pitch: F $\sharp$

N.H.

pitch: D

(begin fade)

123

B $\flat$ 5 G5 B $\flat$ 5 C5 G5

pitch: D

127

Gtr. 1

B5 C5 B $\flat$ 5 G5 N.C. (F5) (G5)

Money for nothing

131

G5 C5 B $\flat$ 5 G5 N.H. B $\flat$ 5 G5 B $\flat$ 5 C5 B $\flat$ 5 G5

chicks for free

Money for nothing

pitch: F $\sharp$

(fade out)

135

N.H. C5 G5 C5 B $\flat$ 5 G5 B $\flat$ 5 G5 F5 G5

chicks for free

pitch: D

Fill 3 (4:38)

E5

Gtr. 2

TAB

4/4

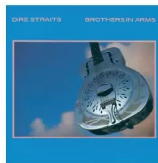
9 9 7 9 9 7 9 9

Performance Notes

HOW TO PLAY THIS MONTH'S SONGS By Jimmy Brown

"MONEY FOR NOTHING"

Dire Straits



USING WHAT WAS for him an uncharacteristic pairing of a Gibson Les Paul with a Laney amplifier and thick distortion, Mark Knopfler, ordinarily a

cleanish-tone Strat player, sought to emulate the richly saturated, midrange-y guitar voice of ZZ Top's Billy Gibbons on this classic hit single from 1985.

Another element that contributed to Knopfler's midrange-focused tone on the recording was the result of an inadvertent misplacement of two microphones in front of the amp's speaker. The mics were facing it at different angles and placed at unequal distances from it, with one picking up floor reflections, and mixing their respective signals with that of a distant room mic resulted in some out-of-phase frequencies and a boxy, nasally sound. The uniquely honky tone has since been a challenge for Knopfler to precisely replicate when playing the song live. Tip: Use a "cocked" wah pedal as a bandpass filter, or an EQ pedal, boosting only one of its inner bands.

Knopfler's fingerstyle playing technique was another defining factor of his guitar sound on his song. As indicated in bars 1-8, he uses his thumb and first two fingers to pick strings simultaneously, which produces a distinctly different chordal attack than a strum, which is technically a quick arpeggiation. Additionally, the guitarist will often mute a string right after picking it to achieve a crisp *staccato* articulation, indicated by a small black dot above a certain tab number, which tells you to cut short the note's duration by 50%. To do this with a fretted note, simply relax your grip on the string immediately after you pick it. You can also mute a string's vibration by damping it with the pick hand's fingers and/or thumb.

Throughout the song, Knopfler occasionally sounds a natural harmonic (N.H.) at the 7th, 5th or 4th fret on his B, G or D string, either intentionally or as a result of a "happy accident." To produce the natural harmonic, pick the string while lightly touching (but not pressing) it with a fret-hand finger directly above the fret indicated, not behind it.

"IDLE HANDS"

Kerry King



FORMER SLAYER GUITARIST and revered thrash metal titan Kerry King teams up with his longtime bandmate, drummer Paul Bostaph, ex-

Machine Head and Vio-lence guitarist extraordinaire Phil Demmel, bassist Kyle Sanders and vocalist Mark Osegueda to deliver this excitingly powerful, fast-paced musical juggernaut.

With all instruments tuned to E $\flat$ standard, King and company kick off the song by tightly doubling an aggressive low-string riff built from nimbly shifting two-note power chords and palm muted open low-E pedal tones. All 16th-note rhythms in sections A through G are alternate picked, and all other, slower rhythms are downpicked. Note the selective use of palm muting (P.M.) throughout.

Demmel takes the first solo, at section H, and liberally uses string bends with held high notes to make them wail. In bars 63-65, he tremolo picks an exotic-sounding melody up and down his B string, using notes from the E "Misirlou" scale (E, F, G $\sharp$, A, B, C, D $\flat$), which is nearly identical to E Phrygian-dominant (E, F, G $\sharp$, A, B, C, D). He concludes the solo in bars 73 and 74 with a couple of high-pitched natural harmonics (N.H.) at uncommon locations, the pitches of which he then manipulates and varies with some whammy bar whiplash.

The high A natural harmonic at the end of bar 73, with the tab indication "14.1" signifying that it's just to the right of the 14th fret, is faint by nature and can be elusive to sound. Peck away with downstrokes until you get it, then try to recreate it within the context of the phrase.

For his solo during the outro at section K, King takes a melodic approach and plays an eerie line based mostly on the E Phrygian mode (E, F, G, A, B, C, D), working his way up the neck and across the top four strings and culminating the phrase with some high bends followed by a series of gut-wrenching open-string whammy bar dives as the song comes to an end. Notice Kerry's application of finger vibrato to his held notes. Strive to make these shakes bold and fierce-sounding.

"BETTER MAN"

Pearl Jam



THIS HAUNTINGLY BEAUTIFUL, well-crafted ballad, written by Pearl Jam vocalist Eddie Vedder, features the band's poetic frontman softly

fingerpicking a lightly overdriven electric guitar and performing the song's intro, first verse and chorus mostly by himself, singer/songwriter-style, with a little bit of subtle organ in the background. Notice how Vedder shifts his initial D/F $\sharp$ shape up two frets, to E/G $\sharp$, then further up the neck to F/A and G/B, getting a lot of musical mileage out of this warm-sounding *1st-inversion voicing*, with the major 3rd in the bass. This part may be alternatively performed with pick and fingers, but pick the bass notes gently, so as to not overshadow the fingerpicked higher strings.

The rest of the band enters midway through the second verse, at bar 44, with guitarists Mike McCready and Stone Gossard joining in and loosely doubling Vedder's chord changes on acoustic and lightly overdriven electric guitars as the song builds in intensity.

At the second chorus (section H, bar 54), the arrangement expands with the guitarists playing different, complementary chord voicings. Notice McCready's use of Jimi Hendrix-style thumb fretting with his 10th-position D, Dsus4 and D6 chord grips (Gtr. 2 part), and also with his 5th- and 3rd-position A and G chords and their sus4 and major 6th embellishments. When playing these thumb-fretted chords, especially during the outro, beginning at section I (bar 72), avoid sounding the open, unused A string, mainly by avoiding it with the pick, and also by damping it with the tips of the fret hand's thumb and/or 3rd finger.

Throughout the song's extended outro, McCready performs a series of soulful double-stop licks over the repeating D-A-G chord progression. Notice how he barres the top two strings with his index finger and shifts his hand up and down the fretboard as he plays oblique hammer-ons on the B string, moving from the 5th to the major 6th of the underlying chord while holding the root note on the high E string.

“IDLE HANDS”

Kerry King

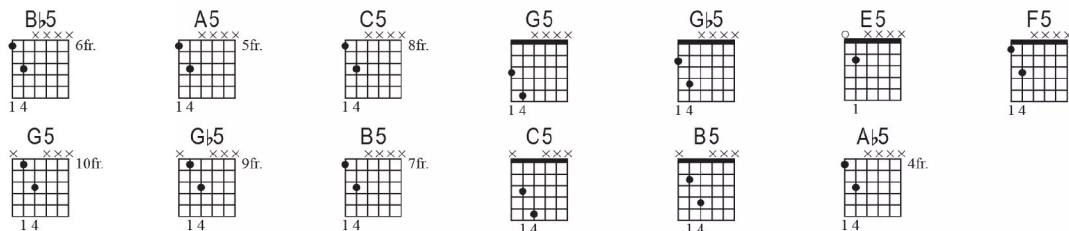
As heard on **FROM HELL I RISE**

Words and Music by **KERRY KING** • Transcribed by **JEFF PERRIN**

All guitars are tuned down one half step (low to high: E $\flat$, A $\flat$, D $\flat$, G $\flat$, B $\flat$, E $\flat$).

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

All music sounds in the key of Eb minor; one half step lower than written.



A Intro (0:00)

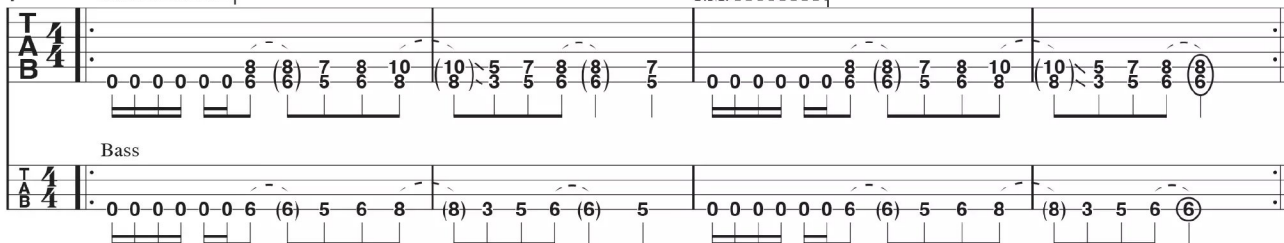
Fast ♩ = 182

N.C. (E5) B₅ A5 B₅ C5 G5 A5 B₅ A5 N.C. (E5) B₅ A5 B₅ C5 G5 A5 B₅

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

P.M. - - - - -

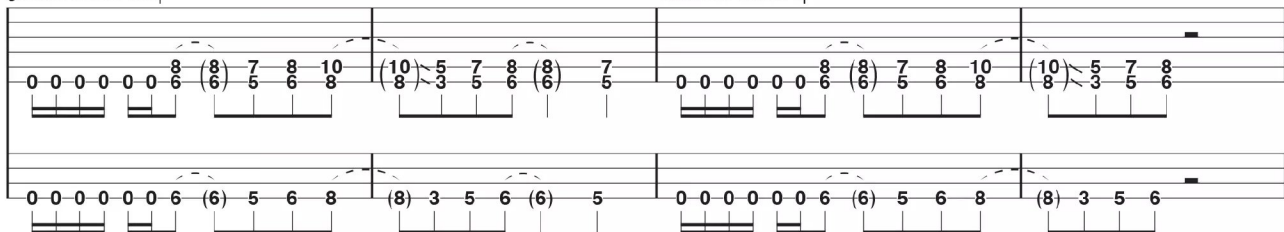
P.M. _ _ _ _ _



N.C. (E5) B₅ A5 B₅ C5 G5 A5 B₅ A5 N.C. (E5) B₅ A5 B₅ C5 G5 A5 B₅

5 P.M. - - - - -

P.M. _ _ _ _ _



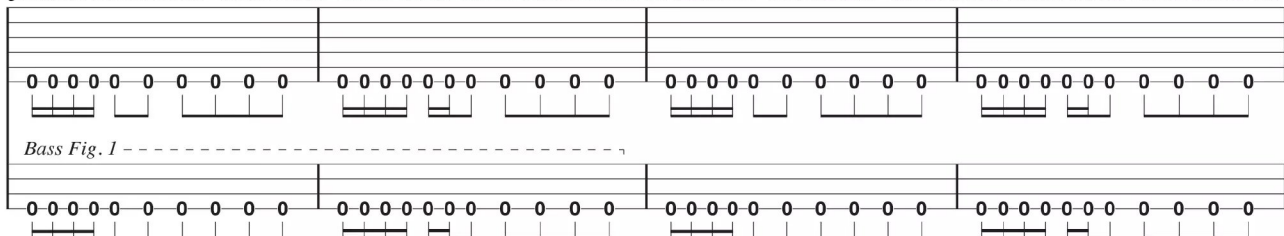
B (0:16, 1:01)

(♩ = 180)

2nd time: **work**

N.C. (E5)

9 P.M.



C 1st and 2nd Verses (0:21, 1:06)

1. So begins my revolution
2. Hatred is my ammunition

Violence Amplified
spreads my retribution
by my ambition

13 P.M.

Integrate retaliate I can't believe what I see with my own
Here I stand in pure defiance Fighting back your God reliance

17 P.M.

eyes
dies

21

G5 Gb5 G5 Bb5 A5 Bb5

D 1st and 2nd Pre-choruses (0:34, 1:19)

(w/double-time feel) (♩ = 196)

Can't dissect the truth from all the lies
Deviance is always on the rise

N.C. (E5)

G5 Gb5 G5 Bb5 A5 G5

23 P.M.

Ideology
Welcoming

the harbinger

at

the

core
war

De -
De -

N.C. (E5)

G5

G♭5

G5

B♭5

A5

B♭5

26 P.M.

- ceiver
- ceiver

or
or

believer
believer

your
your

faith
faith

I
I

don't
don't

need
need

any
any

more
more

N.C. (E5)

G5

G♭5

G5

B♭5

A5

G5

E5

F5

29 P.M.

Bass Fig. 4

end Bass Fig. 4

E Chorus (0:46, 1:36, 2:53)

(♩ = 196)

Where do I get in line

To question

E5

G5

G♭5

G5

G♭5

F5

E5

33

all devine

So many rules to bend

C5

A5

C5

B5

F5

E5

G5

G♭5

G5

37

1st time, go back to **B** (bar 9)
3rd time, skip ahead to **J** (bar 87)
(end double-time feel)

'Til the end idle hands

do the devil's

41

G♭5 F5 E5 C5 N.C. (A5) C5 B5

F (1.46)

(♩ = 182)

2nd time: (w/double-time feel)

work

N.C. (E5)

Gtrs. 1 and 2

P.M.

45

Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 twice (see bar 9)

G (1.56) (♩ = 188)

1.

2.

49

Gtr. 2 P.M. Gtr. 1 P.M. Bass

1.

2.

52

Gtrs. 1 and 2 P.M. Bass

Bass Fig. 5 end Bass Fig. 5

H Guitar Solo (Phil Demmel) (2:11)

(♩ = 194)

N.C. (E5)

Gtr. 3 (elec. w/dist.)

Ab5

G5

N.C. (E5)

Gtrs. 1 and 2
Rhy. Fig. 1—
P.M.

Bass
Bass Fig. 6—

*Second string "caught"
under ring finger.

N.C. (E5)

A5

G5

N.C. (E5)

Gtrs. 1 and 2 play Rhy. Fig. 1 twice (see bar 55)

Gtr. 3

57 ^{Gu. 5} 17 17 13 17 14 16 14 13 15 14 12 15 12 P.M. --- w/bar -8

Bass plays Bass Fig. 6 twice (see bar 55)

N.C. (E5)

Ab5

G5

N.C. (E5)

N.C. (E5)

Ab5

G5

Ab5

5

N.C. 4

N.C. (E5)

61 *Gr. 3* *P.H.* *1* *1/2* ***

9 (9) x 5 (5) (5) 6 x x 7 (7) (7) 7 4 4 4 4

pitch: C

**Notes played slightly 'behind' the beat.*

Gtrs. 1 and 2

Rhy. Fig. 2 -

P.M. _ _ _ _ _

Bass
Bass Fig. 7

N.C. (E5) A $\flat$ 5 G5 N.C. (E5)
 Gtrs. 1 and 2 play Rhy. Fig. 1 (see bar 55)
 Gtr. 3 (w/wah pedal)

63

Bass plays Bass Fig. 6 (see bar 55)

N.C. (E5) A $\flat$ 5 G5 A $\flat$ 5 B $\flat$ 5 N.C. (E5)
 Gtrs. 1 and 2 play Rhy. Fig. 2 (see bar 61)

65

Bass plays Bass Fig. 7 (see bar 61)

N.C. (E5) A $\flat$ 5 G5 A $\flat$ 5 B $\flat$ 5 F5 G5 A $\flat$ 5 G5
 Gtr. 3 1/2 3/4 1 1/2

67

Gtrs. 1 and 2
 Rhy. Fig. 3
 P.M. -----

Bass
 Bass Fig. 8

N.C. (E5) A $\flat$ 5 G5 A $\flat$ 5 B $\flat$ 5 F5 G5 A $\flat$ 5
 1/4 *

69

*Notes played slightly 'ahead' of the beat.

P.M. -----

N.C. (E5) A $\flat$ 5 G5 A $\flat$ 5 B $\flat$ 5 F5 G5 A $\flat$ 5 G5
 Gtrs. 1 and 2 play Rhy. Fig. 3 (see bar 67)
 Gtr. 3

71

Bass plays Bass Fig. 8 (see bar 67)

N.C. (E5) A $\flat$ 5 G5 A $\flat$ 5 B $\flat$ 5 F5 G5 A $\flat$ 5 (end double-time feel)

Gtr. 3

73 20 16 18 17 17 20 20 16 17 X 16 14.1 (14.1) (14.1) (14.1) 9 (9)

3 3 pitch: A E

Gtrs. 1 and 2

P.M. -----

Bass

0 0 0 0 0 0 6 4 (6) 5 3 6 4 8 6 (8) 3 5 6 4 (6) 1 3 4

I 3rd Verse (2:36)

(♩ = 180)

Testify that all God's hatred satisfies that nothing's sacred

N.C. (E5)

Gtrs. 1 and 2

75 P.M.

Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 twice (see bar 9)

(w/double-time feel)

Anarchy or blasphemy devour Christianity once

79 P.M.

Bass plays Bass Fig. 2 (see bar 17)

1.	2.	Go back to E Chorus (bar 33)
----	----	-------------------------------------

more faith I don't Your need anymore

G5 G♭5 G5 B♭5 A5 B♭5 B♭5 A5 G5 F5 F5

Bass plays Bass Fig. 3 (see bar 21)
 Bass plays Bass Fig. 4 on repeat (see bar 30)

J (3:07)

(w/double-time feel) (♩ = 198)

work

N.C.(E5)

Gtrs. 1 and 2

87 P.M. - - - - -

6/4

0 0 0 0 0 0 8 (8) 7 8 5 7 8 5 7

0 0 0 0 0 0 8 (8) 7 8 5 7 8 5

0 0 0 0 0 0 8 (8) 7 8 5 7 8 5

Bass plays Bass Fig. 5 twice (see bar 52)

*w/wah effect

K

Bass plays Bass Fig. 6 (see bar 55)

Bass plays Bass Fig. 6 (see bar 55)

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

Bass plays Bass Fig. 9 twice (see bar 101)

"BETTER MAN"

Pearl Jam

As heard on **VITALOGY**

Words and Music by **EDDIE VEDDER** • Transcribed by **JEFF PERRIN**

Chord diagrams for the song:

D/F# E/G# F/A G/B D A^V G^{III} A6^V Dsus2 D5 G6^{III}

Asus4^V Dsus4 G E7/G# F6/A Gsus4 G5 A D^X Dsus4^X D6^X

A Intro (0:23)

D/F#

Gtr. 1 (elec. w/light dist.)
fingerstyle; let ring throughout

1

* Open D note sounded second time only.

B 1st Verse (0:38)

Waitin' watchin' the clock

D/F#

It's four o'clock It's got to stop Tell him take no more She practices her speech As he

E/G# D/F# E/G#

7

C 1st Pre-chorus (0:54)

opens the door she rolls over Pretends to sleep as he looks her over

F/A G/B F/A G/B

13

D 1st Chorus (1:04)

She lies and says she's in love with him Can't find a better man She dreams in color

D A^V G^{III} D A^V G^{III} D Dsus2 D5

18

Organ arr. for Bass

Figure 1

Talkin' to herself

Figure 1

E7/G#

**Gtr.1* doubled *simile*
by *acous. gtr.*



G 2nd Pre-chorus (2:05)

world to come along Swears she knew it Now she swears he's gone

F6/A G/B F6/A G/B

49

H 2nd Chorus (2:14)

She lies and says she's in love with him Can't find a better man
 She lies and says she still loves him Can't find a better man

D Dsus2 D A^V G^{III} Gsus4 G^{III} D Dsus2 D A^V G^{III} Gsus4 G^{III}

*Gtr. 1

Rhy. Fig. 1

54

D Dsus2 A G5 D Dsus2 A G5

*Gtr. 2 (w/dist.)

Bass
Bass Fig. 1

*play simile on repeat

She dreams in color color She dreams in red red Can't find a better man
 She dreams in color color She dreams in red red Can't find a better man

D Dsus2 A G5 D A G5

Gtr. 1 repeats Rhy. Fig. 1 simile (see bar 54)

Gtr. 2

58

2.

better man Can't find a better man Can't find a better man
 A^V Asus4^V A^V Asus4^V D Dsus4 D Dsus4 A^V Asus4^V A^V

Gtr. 1

62

A Asus4 A Asus4 D^x Dsus4^x D^x Dsus4^x A^V Asus4^V

Gtr. 2

Bass

I **Outro** (3:02)

Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 1 twice simile (see bar 54)
Gtr. 2

She needs him yeah That's why she'll be back again

D^x D6^x D^x A^v G^{III} D^x D6^x D^x A^v G^{III}

(2.) Yeah

Gtr. 1

2

1.

better man) Can't find a better man (Can't find a better man) Can't find a better
 D^x A^v G^{III} D^x D6^x D^x A^v G^{III}

Gr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 3 simile (see bar 80)

Gr. 2

84

Th. Th.

2.

D^x (A6) (G6) D6^x D^x D6^x D^x A6^v A^v G6^{III} G^{III}

88

D Dsus2 D A^v G^{III} D Dsus2 D A^v G^{III}

Rhy. Fig. 3

(3:48)

(1.) Oh

(2.) Ah

Ah

D^x A^v G^{III} Gsus4 G^{III} D^x Dsus4^x D^x A^v G^{III} Gsus4 G^{III}

Gr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 3 six times simile (see bar 88)

Gr. 2

92

Ah Ah Yeah Ah Yeah

(D) (A) (G) (D) (D6) A^v G^{III}

Th. Th.

(4:11)

Slower

Freely

D^x Dsus4^x D^x A^v G^{III} G6^{III} G^{III} (D)

Gr. 2

100

D Dsus2 D A^v G6^{III} G^{III} Gsus4 G/A D

Gr. 1

Bass

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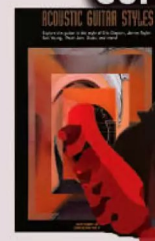
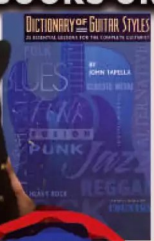
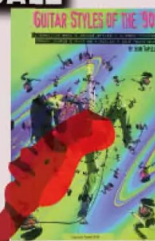

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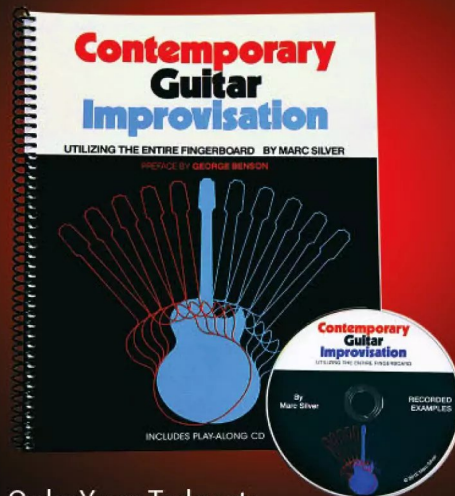
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VERY FEW CLASSIC guitar models have remained in continuous production for 40 years since their initial introduction. Gibson's Les Paul Model/Standard lasted only eight years from 1952-60 before its original design was temporarily discontinued and later revived in 1968, and even the venerated Stratocaster narrowly escaped the chopping block in the early Eighties during the final days of Fender's CBS ownership.

The PRS Custom 24 (originally just called the Custom) has recently joined this rare class of long-lived classic instruments by celebrating its 40th anniversary. Introduced in 1985, the Custom was Paul Reed Smith's first production model, and it made an immediate impressive first impression, thanks to its deft combination of skilled craftsmanship, high-quality materials and blend of classic features with modern upgrades. Making its initial bow during the height of super-strat mania, the Custom provided an attractive alternative for guitarists who yearned for the high-quality standards, tones and classic looks of a vintage instrument but with modern, high-performance upgrades.

Key Custom 24 features include a 25-inch scale length that provides a "just right" balance between the slinky feel of a 24-3/4-inch Gibson-style scale and

the twangy percussive attack of a 25-1/2-inch Fender-style scale, 24 frets and the super dependable non-locking PRS Tremolo System with a low-friction nut that keeps the strings reliably in tune. The original pickups Standard Treble and Standard Bass humbuckers were Smith's own design, and controls initially consisted of a master volume, five-position rotary pickup selector switch with humbucking and split coil settings and an innovative "sweet" switch that imitated a long cable's capacitance load effect on treble frequencies. The materials used for the highly figured flame-maple tops and one-piece mahogany backs come from Paul Reed Smith's impressive stash of quality tone woods. PRS collectors seek Custom 24 models made before 1991, when the necks featured Brazilian rosewood fretboards. Early examples with "Birds" inlays also command a premium over models with round "Moon" inlays.

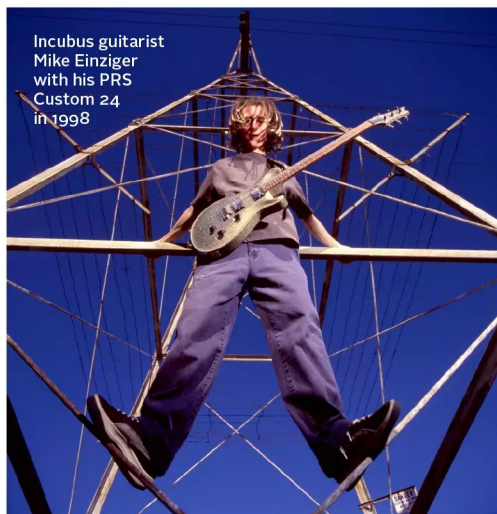
Paul Reed Smith constantly improved and refined the Custom 24's design, including various design tweaks to the tremolo system, tuners and the introduction of evolving pickup designs. One of the biggest changes came in 2011, when the controls were changed to a master volume, master tone and five-position blade switch configuration. In the early Nineties PRS started offering a stop-tail bridge option, and today, players can choose variations of the Custom 24 with Floyd Rose or piezo bridges.

The list of Custom 24 users is long and spans a wide variety of musical styles. Ted Nugent and Al Di Meola were some of the Custom 24's earliest adopters. The model enjoyed a huge boost in popularity during the Nineties and early 2000s via players like Mikael Akerfeldt with Opeth, Mike Einziger with Incubus and Mike Shinoda and Brad Delson with Linkin Park. More recent fans include Adam Nolly Getgood and Mark Holcomb of Periphery and Ryan Knight of the Black Dahlia Murder. **GW**

A PRS Custom 24 photographed in 2013



"PRS collectors seek Custom 24 models made before 1991, when the necks featured Brazilian rosewood fretboards"

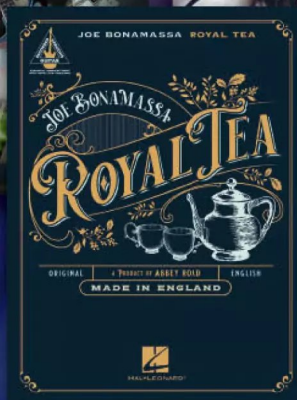


Incubus guitarist Mike Einziger with his PRS Custom 24 in 1998



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